

Captured by the Ballot: Non-Partisan Judicial Elections and Democratic Erosion in Mexico*

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Abstract

Public tolerance for democratic erosion is often attributed to voter partisanship. Voters are thought to overlook undemocratic maneuvers to support the partisan in-group. Yet, backsliders often disavow traditional parties and frame their reforms as non-partisan. I examine the role of voter partisanship in non-partisan elections, showing how elite manipulation of the information environment can generate partisan outcomes that facilitate backsliding—even when citizens prefer non-partisan outcomes on average. I examine Mexico's 2025 judicial elections, pairing a conjoint experiment with an analysis of the electoral results. While the conjoint indicates that voters preferred independent judges, the electoral results indicate that government-aligned candidates on illicitly circulated voter guides (*acordeones*) received the most support, contributing to the partisan capture of the Supreme Court. Elite manipulation of the information environment and electoral incentives—rather than partisan preferences among the eligible electorate—were primary contributors to the court's partisan capture.

Keywords: Partisanship · Mexico · Judicial Elections · Democratic Erosion · Conjoint Experiment

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Why do undemocratic outcomes persist in backsliding democracies despite citizens' pro-democratic preferences? A prominent response to this question has been to challenge the depth of citizens' democratic commitments. While some have questioned whether public preferences remain solidly pro-democratic (Foa and Mounk, 2016, 2017), the most widely credited explanation is that citizens prefer democratic candidates and outcomes, but are willing to overlook undemocratic behaviors to support co-partisan candidates (Graham and Svobik, 2020; Simonovits et al., 2022). This account centers partisan polarization, suggesting that partisan objectives overshadow voters' democratic commitments. Indeed, even more elite-centric accounts suggest that partisan voters are essentially tricked by elite rhetoric or motivated reasoning, which encourage them to view illiberal policies as democratic (Bessen, 2024; Krishnarajan, 2023).

These accounts have given scholars a firmer grasp of citizens' role in democratic erosion. Yet recent work suggests that they threaten to overstate the role of partisanship and understate the role of the electoral choice context (Huang et al., 2026). I center the electoral context by studying voter preferences in formally non-partisan elections—Mexico's 2025 judicial elections—where norms against judicial partisanship clashed with a partisan effort to seat government-affiliated judges. In these elections, the asymmetric supply of partisan information generated a partisan outcome that weakened judicial checks on the executive, despite citizens' aggregate preference for independent judges.

These elections speak to the broader debate about the desirability of non-partisan elections (Squire and Smith, 1988). In the United States, progressive reformers argued that non-partisan judicial elections “would produce the benefits of elections (accountability) while at the same time improving the quality of the bench” (Bonneau and Cann, 2015, 46). Detractors argued that elections would undermine judicial impartiality by encouraging judges to act like politicians (see, e.g., Geyh, 2003) and that, in practice, judicial elections fail to produce accountability because voters are too poorly informed to choose judges without party labels.¹ Recent empirical evidence suggests that, even in officially non-partisan elections, partisan preferences shape voter preferences for judicial candidates (Bonneau and Cann, 2015; Sen, 2017).

Further, Mexico's 2025 judicial elections are an important case for understanding the erosion of Latin America's second largest democracy (Aguiar Aguilar et al., 2025; Bessen et al., 2025). After voters elected more than 800 judges—including all nine Supreme Court justices—President Claudia Sheinbaum declared that “Mexico is the most democratic country in the world” (Sheinbaum Pardo, 2025). Alongside Sheinbaum, proponents of the judicial elections argued that these officially non-partisan elections would bolster legitimacy and eliminate the influence of unelected elites (Orozco y Villa and Velasco Rivera, 2025). Opponents of the elections, in contrast, argued that they were a maneuver for the government to capture the judiciary after the Supreme Court quashed its

¹For an overview of this debate see Dubois (1980) and Bonneau and Hall (2009).

proposals for electoral reform (Singh and Coronado Graci, 2024).

In Mexico, the judicial elections coincided with—and, for some observers, were the apogee of—Morena’s consolidation of federal political power. After his election in 2018, Morena’s López Obrador aggrandized the executive, attempting to restructure the electoral management body, moving to eliminate independent government oversight, and transforming civil-military relations by delegating civilian governance functions to the military (Aguiar Aguilar et al., 2025). At the end of his term, he leveraged the Morena supermajority achieved in the 2024 elections to pass the judicial reform requiring the direct election of judges. The elections themselves resulted in a Supreme Court (Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación, SCJN) held by Morena sympathizers. For Mexico’s opposition parties and many academic observers, the judicial elections are a case of judicial capture, like that observed in other backsliding democracies. Backers of the elections nevertheless claim that the electoral connection fosters representation and increases popular accountability. As Sheinbaum argued, “If we wanted to change the Judicial Branch in order to control it, what would be the point of holding a universal election?”²

I test the representational claims at the heart of this debate by placing citizens’ preferences alongside the results of the June 2025 election. In a conjoint experiment fielded in the weeks before the elections, I find that citizens preferred well-qualified, politically independent judges. That preference was driven more by aversion to out-partisan judges than enthusiasm for independents. In the conjoint sample, out-partisan antipathies roughly cancel, yielding an aggregate preference for judicial independence. The actual election, by contrast, drew low turnout dominated by Morena supporters (Driscoll et al., 2026), and produced a Morena-aligned court. Alongside the conjoint, I analyze candidate vote shares in the actual election: candidates on illicitly circulated voter guides were favored, while the attributes that mattered in the conjoint were less important. Moreover, following signals from partisan elites, the most informed opposition voters elected to stay at home, while informed Morena voters turned out. The elections therefore produced a deviation from popular preferences rather than the closer representation their proponents promised.

This article makes three contributions. First, I show that the electoral choice context—not voters’ tradeoffs between partisanship and democracy—drove the backsliding outcome. The judicial elections produced a partisan Supreme Court through the selective supply of partisan information and the design of the ballot—not because most citizens preferred partisan candidates, as much of the backsliding literature might suggest. Second, I provide new experimental evidence on what citizens want in a high court, in a country that has just replaced its bench by election. While citizens preferred well-credentialed, politically independent judges on average, that preference rests on aversion to out-partisan judges in a relatively balanced electorate. Partisan candidates dominate in a highly skewed electorate, as they did in the June 2025 elections. Finally, I highlight an

²Quoted in Sheinbaum Pardo (2025), my translation.

underappreciated mode of judicial capture. While backsliding research has focused on incumbents' manipulation of judicial appointments, this case reveals that politicized elections can likewise produce a bench loyal to the executive—even when citizens prefer independent judges on aggregate. This observation is relevant for ongoing debates about judicial selection around the world, as well as the continuing reform of the process for judicial elections in Mexico.

Voter Behavior & Judicial Capture

Courts are a common target for backsliding executives seeking to expand their power (Ginsburg and Huq, 2018; Stokes, 2025). Backsliders typically try to change the composition of the constitutional court in their favor by expanding the court (court-packing) and by formally or informally subverting appointment processes. Under the guise of democratizing the judiciary, leaders such as Hugo Chávez and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have increased the number of judges and altered their selection procedures (Sánchez Urribarri, 2011; Esen, 2025). When successful, attempts at judicial capture yield obsequious benches or benches that actively further backsliders' projects via "abusive judicial review" (Landau and Dixon, 2020).

Such processes are largely elite-led. Presidents and their legislatures typically control the reform process as well as the appointment and confirmation of new judges. Judicial elections, in contrast, introduce voters as key players in deciding whether the judiciary remains independent or is captured. While candidate selection can remain elite-dominated (Driscoll et al., 2026, 11–13), the final composition of the bench depends substantially on voters' candidate preferences and the electorate that turns out. Hence, voter behavior is decisive for whether elections favor competent, impartial judiciaries or loyalist judges like those appointed by backsliders. How, then, do voters evaluate judicial candidates?

On the one hand, evidence suggests that voters should value judicial independence, at least in the abstract. Judicial legitimacy is thought to spring from the idea that courts are different from other political institutions; judicial symbols convey the notion of "impartiality and insulation from ordinary political pressures" (Gibson and Caldeira, 2009, 9). Latin American high courts maintain relatively high levels of legitimacy (Driscoll and Nelson, 2018), which is often attributed to judges' political independence. In Mexico, the Supreme Court (SCJN) gained visibility and political independence following democratization (Ansolabehere, 2010, 88–99), which should have communicated the norm of judicial independence from party politics. If citizens adopt these norms, they should prefer politically independent, well-credentialed judges. Comparative evidence from a German conjoint experiment shows that citizens prefer exactly that type of judicial candidate (Engst et al., 2017).

On the other hand, voters do not set aside their partisan commitments when selecting judges.

Much of the evidence for this comes from US state supreme court races, where voters tend to favor co-partisan candidates, even in formally non-partisan elections (Hall, 2001; Bonneau and Cann, 2015). Experimental evidence suggests that partisan preferences extend to Supreme Court nominees (Sen, 2017). Outside of the United States, voters in Bolivia’s 2011 judicial election (perhaps the best analogue for Mexico’s) favored candidates who shared their partisan affiliations (Driscoll and Nelson, 2015). These patterns indicate that partisanship should influence candidate choice in judicial elections, just as it does in legislative and presidential contests (Lupu, 2015; Moreno and Méndez, 2007; Bessen, 2026, 12). The mechanisms of partisan influence, while less studied in the judicial context, are likely similar to those in ordinary elections: voters have instrumental reasons for favoring co-partisan judges (assuming that they will adjudicate policies in their favor) and expressive reasons for doing so (believing they will favor their partisan in-group).³

Prior research has not examined the influence of negative partisanship, or antipathy toward out-partisans (Abramowitz and Webster, 2016), in judicial elections, perhaps in part due to the strength of positive partisanship in the United States (Lee et al., 2022). Despite this, negative partisanship should influence preferences for judicial candidates. Negative partisanship structures preferences and voting decisions in regular elections, particularly in volatile electoral settings where positive partisan attachments are less common (Samuels and Zucco, 2018; Haime and Cantú, 2022). Moreover, negative partisanship may be particularly decisive in judicial elections, as voters are averse to judges affiliated with rival parties. Partisan affiliation is expected in non-judicial (i.e., legislative or presidential) contests. In contrast, the prospect of an out-partisan judge violates the norm that judges should be neutral arbiters of social conflicts (Weingast, 1997, 254). Particularly for those in the minority, out-partisan judges threaten unrestrained control by partisan majorities. Hence, voters should disfavor judicial candidates from parties seen with antipathy—and this penalty for out-party candidates may not be symmetric with the reward for in-party ones.

These arguments imply that voters should favor co-partisan judges and, perhaps even more decisively, reject out-partisan candidates. How might these preferences translate into the partisan capture or independence of the judiciary? As with ordinary elections, the outcome depends on turnout and the translation of votes to seats. If negative partisanship is widespread and turnout is relatively balanced between (negative) partisan camps, out-partisan antipathies may cancel out in aggregate, favoring independents. Titelman and Sajuria (2024) find evidence of this mechanism, showing that negative partisanship favors independents in Chilean elections. In theory, this electoral boon for independent or non-partisan candidates would produce a more independent bench.

Yet this cancellation mechanism is sensitive in two ways that, as discussed below, are relevant for Mexico’s judicial elections. First, low turnout can favor partisan majorities if independent

³See Huddy and Bankert (2017) on expressive versus instrumental partisanship.

voters abstain, leaving committed partisans in the electorate (Converse, 1966; DeNardo, 1980). This turnout issue is compounded if opposition supporters or voters hostile to the partisan majority decline to participate in elections with disputed legitimacy. Second, with many available candidates, plurality voting rewards party coordination as uncoordinated votes are dispersed among co-partisans and ultimately wasted on losing candidates (Cox, 1997). As I show below, these issues contributed to the partisan capture of Mexico’s high court despite aggregate preferences for judicial independence.

Mexico’s Judicial Elections

The constitutional reform requiring the direct election of judges passed with a Morena-led supermajority in September 2024 (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2024). It followed an extended effort by President López Obrador to reshape Mexico’s institutions under his political movement, the *Cuarta Transformación* (Aguiar Aguilar et al., 2025; Driscoll et al., 2026). After his election on a populist platform in 2018, Obrador’s Morena pursued the reform or elimination of federal institutions that constrained executive power, hamstringing the INAI (the government transparency and data protection agency), transferring civilian tasks and infrastructure projects to the military, and attempting to overhaul the INE (the National Electoral Institute) (Aguiar Aguilar et al., 2025; Sánchez-Talanquer and Greene, 2021). Alongside these efforts, Obrador used his daily press briefings (*mañaneras*) to deride these institutions in ways that undermined their public confidence (Bessen et al., 2025; Cella et al., 2026).

Among these institutional clashes, the attempt to reform the INE, Mexico’s election administration body, brought the Supreme Court into López Obrador’s sights. After falling short of the legislative support to diminish the INE through constitutional reform (the so-called Plan A), Morena passed a package of secondary legislation targeting the institution (the so-called Plan B) in December 2022 and February 2023. Amid public protests in defense of the INE, the Supreme Court ruled Plan B unconstitutional on procedural grounds. This ruling set the stage for Plan C, the constitutional overhaul that would require judicial elections. Following the June 2024 elections, in which López Obrador’s successor Claudia Sheinbaum won the presidency with 60 percent of the vote and Morena secured a controversial supermajority in the Chamber of Deputies, Plan C passed both chambers of Congress in September 2024.⁴

According to the constitutional reform, candidates for the judicial elections were chosen by three selection committees, one each from the legislative, executive, and judicial branches (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2024, art. 96). Each committee was to compile a list of the best qualified individuals meeting the minimum requirements for candidacy, then narrow the list to the

⁴For additional details see Driscoll et al. (2026), Cossío Díaz (2025), and Aguiar Aguilar (2026)

appropriate number of candidates via lottery. During the selection process, the judicial committee halted its work in response to an injunction (ignored by the other two committees). Consequently, the Senate used a lottery to choose from the list of individuals the judicial committee had found eligible (Organization of American States, 2025). The role of the legislature and presidency—both branches controlled by Morena—drew allegations of partisan influence on the selection process (Pozas Loyo and Ríos Figueroa, 2024), despite the officially non-partisan character of the elections. Party endorsements and campaign contributions were officially prohibited during the campaign period.

In the elections, held June 1, 2025, voters chose judges for the Supreme Court, the Tribunal de Disciplina Judicial, the electoral tribunal, and the circuit and district courts, each on a separate ballot. The Supreme Court ballot included 64 candidates (33 women and 31 men). Voters cast 5 votes for female candidates and 4 votes for male candidates to elect 9 justices. The ballots did not include party labels, but did indicate which of the three branches—legislative, executive, or judicial—nominated the candidate or if the candidate was a sitting justice. The elections used block voting (BV), multi-candidate elections in which voters cast as many votes as there are seats (Bormann and Golder, 2013, 361), with a nationwide district. Winning candidates were chosen by plurality rule by gender, i.e., the 5 women and 4 men with the most votes received seats.

This unusual electoral design matters for the—officially non-partisan—elections because block voting creates a premium for party coordination. A party can win every seat if its supporters concentrate their votes on a common slate of exactly as many candidates as there are seats (Reynolds et al., 2008).⁵ In contrast, uncoordinated voting among many candidates results in wasted votes dispersed between candidates from the same party (Cox, 1997).⁶ These properties were consequential for the judicial elections: voter guides (*acordeones*) allowed for party coordination and, ultimately, for Morena-supported candidates to win all nine Supreme Court seats.

These voting guides, which listed a slate of 9 Morena candidates, were distributed anonymously online and in print in the run-up to the judicial elections, in violation of the prohibition on campaign financing.⁷ They drew complaints from civil society groups and an investigation by the INE (Instituto Nacional Electoral, Comisión de Quejas y Denuncias, 2025a,b), which fined the benefiting candidates (Instituto Nacional Electoral, Consejo General, 2025; Carvajal, 2025), though the Electoral Tribunal (TEPJF) later overturned these fines (Martínez, 2025). As observers noted, the cheat sheets served as a partisan cue for voters facing the overwhelming informational task of

⁵Reynolds et al. (2008) note that the block vote can have “unpredictable and often undesirable impacts on election outcomes” (pg. 44).

⁶This is akin to the “over-nomination” issue in single non-transferable vote systems, where parties can err by nominating more candidates than can garner support in a multi-seat district (Cox and Niou, 1994).

⁷Reporting linked the distribution of *acordeones* to the *Secretaría de Bienestar* (Pedroza, 2025), though Claudia Sheinbaum denied this (Escobar, 2025).

choosing among dozens of candidates. Analysis of the electoral results reveals that vote shares for candidates on the cheats were highly correlated (Montfort, 2025). Moreover, appearing on the cheat sheets was associated with a significant electoral boost, particularly so in pro-Morena areas (Driscoll et al., 2026).

While the distribution of *acordeones* was against electoral law, it is not strong *prima facie* evidence against the representative function of the elections. As defenders of the *acordeones* argued, the cheat sheets provided information to voters, who were of course entitled to inform themselves (Jiménez, 2025). In theory, cheat-sheet information might improve representation on aggregate by allowing voters to select candidates matching their preferences. I show that this is not the case below. Rather, the voter guides and skewed turnout produced a bench at odds with popular preferences.

Research Design

I use a two-part design to examine voters' preferences and electoral outcomes in Mexico's judicial elections. First, I examine voter preferences using a conjoint experiment fielded in late May 2025, in the weeks before the elections. The conjoint measures voter preferences in an approximately representative sample where voters have relatively full information about the candidates (through the conjoint attributes). The preferences revealed in the conjoint, while hypothetical, are indicative of fully-informed preferences in the broader electorate. Of course, such conditions did not hold in the actual elections, which involved a byzantine information environment and turnout dominated by Morena supporters (Driscoll et al., 2026). Hence, the second analysis uses district-level election results to model candidate vote shares as a function of the candidate characteristics examined in the conjoint, candidates' appearance on the *acordeones*, and their position on the ballot. Taken together, these analyses juxtapose the attributes that shape candidate preferences in the full information setting of the conjoint with those that shaped the results of the June 1st elections.

Conjoint Design

The conjoint experiment was distributed through an online panel in late May 2025. Sampling included soft quotas on age, gender, socio-economic status, and region to approximate Mexico's population demographics. The analytic sample included 1,518 respondents. In the conjoint, respondents completed 9 candidate-choice tasks, each presenting a pair of hypothetical Supreme Court (SCJN) candidates described by seven randomly assigned attributes. Table 1 lists the attributes and their levels.⁸ After each task, respondents were asked: "Who would you vote for as

⁸For the original Spanish, see Appendix Table A1.

Supreme Court Justice?” The order of attributes was fixed for each respondent but randomized across respondents to prevent order effects. Following Clayton et al. (2023), Task 1 was repeated as Task 6 (not counted among the nine unique tasks) to estimate intra-respondent reliability.⁹

Table 1: Conjoint experiment: attributes and levels.

Attribute	Levels
Nominating Branch	Executive Judicial Legislative
Political Affiliation	Unknown Independent Morena Opposition
Most Recent Position	Sitting Justice Federal Judge Private Attorney Academic
Educational Background	Doctorate Master’s Bachelor’s
Gender	Man Woman
Ethnic Group	Mestizo/a White Indigenous
Age	30 years 40 years 50 years 70 years

Note: Each task (screen) presents two candidate profiles, each randomly assigned one level per attribute. Levels for Most Recent Position and Ethnic Group are displayed in gender-concordant form (e.g., *Ministra en funciones* for female candidates, *Ministro en funciones* for male candidates).

Two conjoint attributes signaled candidates’ partisan loyalties: political affiliation and (potentially) nominating branch. The affiliation categories were Independent, Unknown, Close to

⁹In the full sample, intra-respondent reliability, i.e., the proportion of individuals selecting the same profile in an identical task was 0.71, typical for a conjoint (Clayton et al., 2023).

Morena, and Close to the Opposition—the latter signaling the PAN and PRI (National Action Party and Institutional Revolutionary Party). The PRI and PAN formed a coalition in the June 2024 presidential election, making it appropriate to treat these parties as an opposition block. Further, I included a single opposition category to limit the number of categories and preserve statistical power. The nominating branch categories were Executive, Judicial, and Legislative, corresponding to the three branches that nominated judicial candidates. These categories might also signal partisan leaning, with nomination by the Executive and Legislative branches signaling proximity to Morena, though they are likely a weaker signal than overt partisan affiliation.

Two other attributes indicated judges’ professional credentials. The first indicated candidates’ professional role, with the categories Sitting Justice, Federal Judge, Private Attorney, and Academic. Of these categories, Sitting Justice and Federal Judge are arguably closer to the role of Supreme Court Justice and are therefore the more credentialed options. The second attribute, Educational Background, includes the categories Bachelor’s (*Licenciatura*), Master’s (*Maestría*), and Doctorate (*Doctorado*), with the latter being the most credentialed.

Lastly, the conjoint attributes included candidate demographics, Gender, Ethnic Group, and Age. Gender included Male and Female. While the effect of gender was somewhat limited by ballot design in the actual elections, this inclusion allows us to examine whether voters prefer male or female judges in the abstract. The Ethnic Group attribute included the categories Mestizo/Mestiza, White, and Indigenous. Interestingly, Hugo Aguilar Ortiz, elected president of the Supreme Court, made Indigenous identity central to his campaign (MND Staff, 2025; Merino, 2025). Finally, Age included the categories 30, 40, 50, and 70 years.¹⁰

Respondent Partisanship

I measured respondent partisanship pre-treatment (before the conjoint) to assess how partisanship shapes preferences for judicial candidates. The partisanship question asked respondents, “Which [of the following] parties do you most sympathize with?” Respondents who chose Morena or parties in the Morena coalition (PT or Partido Verde) were coded as Morena partisans while those who chose the PRI, PAN, or Movimiento Ciudadano were coded as opposition partisans. Partisan leaners—who answered “None” to this question—were asked a follow-up question prompting them to choose the party they felt closest to, and their partisanship was coded based on this follow-up.¹¹

¹⁰The 60-year category was omitted due to a coding error. This error should be non-consequential since age is randomly assigned with respect to the other attributes. I confirm this by repeating the analysis excluding choice sets that include a 70-year-old candidate; see Appendix Figure A8.

¹¹Partisan leaners comprise approximately one-quarter of the sample and are evenly divided between Morena and the Opposition. On disaggregation, Morena leaners resemble non-partisans, while opposition leaners resemble opposition partisans (Appendix Table A4). The overall results are not dependent on this coding choice; see Appendix A2 for marginal means with leaners coded as non-partisans.

Additionally, I measured negative-partisanship by asking respondents, “Is there a party you dislike so much you would never vote for it?” (following Haime and Cantú, 2022). Three-quarters of the sample reported a negative partisan identity. Of these, the 366 respondents who answered “Morena” were coded as anti-Morenistas while the 681 who chose the PRI or PAN were coded as anti-Opposition.¹²

Conjoint Results

Voter Preferences

The full-sample results indicate a general preference for politically independent candidates with stronger credentials and greater judicial experience. With full information, citizens prioritize the very qualities that critics of judicial elections claim voters would ignore.

Figure 1 presents marginal means from the conjoint experiment. Marginal means are the average probability of selecting a candidate at a given attribute level, averaging over all other randomized attributes. For instance, the marginal mean of 0.43 on Morena affiliation indicates that the Morena-affiliated candidate was selected in 43% of tasks where they faced an alternative non-Morena candidate.¹³ Comparing these marginal means to the 0.50 baseline of no preference gives the electoral premium or penalty for a given attribute level relative to no preference; e.g., Morena affiliation *reduces* the probability a candidate is selected by 7 percentage points, on average.

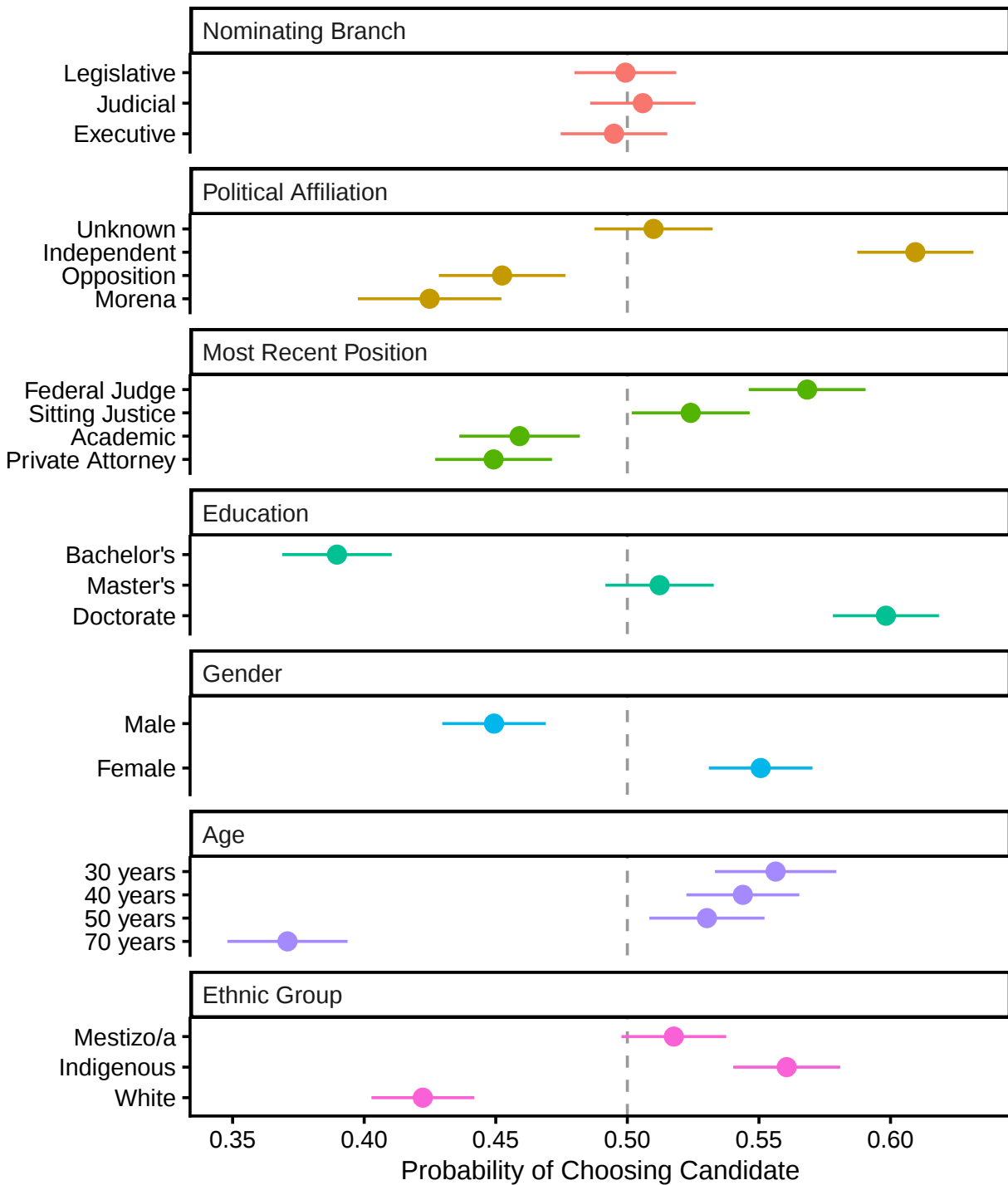
This modest penalty reflects a broader preference for independent candidates. Opposition-affiliated candidates, for example, fared similarly to Morenistas, winning 45% (CI [0.43, 0.47]) of tasks. Conversely, explicit political independence substantially increased support; respondents selected independent candidates 61% of the time (CI [0.59, 0.63]). Candidates with unknown affiliation were judged more neutrally, winning about half of the time ($m = 0.51$; CI [0.49, 0.53]).

Turning to the other attributes, respondents favored candidates with higher levels of education and past experience as judges. Respondents selected candidates with doctoral degrees in 60% of tasks ($m = 0.60$; CI [0.58, 0.62]), those with master’s degrees approximately half of the time ($m = 0.51$; CI [0.49, 0.53]), and those with only a bachelor’s degree in 39% (CI [0.37, 0.41]) of mixed-education choices. On judicial experience, respondents selected federal lower-court judges and sitting supreme court justices in 57% [CI 0.55, 0.59] and 52% [CI 0.50, 0.54] of tasks, respectively.

¹²The substantive results are unchanged when those who chose parties in the Morena coalition (PT and Partido Verde) are coded as anti-Morenistas and those who chose Movimiento Ciudadano are included as anti-Opposition; see Appendix Figure A4.

¹³Marginal means are estimated with the *projoint* package, which drops tied tasks (e.g., Morena vs. Morena) from each attribute’s marginal mean calculation. Because tied attributes are (by definition) selected half of the time, retaining them pulls the marginal mean toward .50; dropping them gives the probability a level is selected given the choice of an alternative on the same attribute.

Figure 1: Marginal means for Supreme Court candidate attributes.



Note: Marginal means with 95% confidence intervals. Dashed line at 0.5 indicates no preference.

Private attorneys and academics were relatively disfavored, winning 45% [CI 0.43, 0.47] and 46% [CI 0.44, 0.48] of tasks.

Among the demographic attributes, respondents were, on average, more favorable to female over male candidates ($m = 0.55$; CI [0.53, 0.57] vs. $m = 0.45$; CI [0.43, 0.47]). Respondents also generally preferred Indigenous candidates to White candidates ($m = 0.56$; CI [0.54, 0.58] vs. $m = 0.42$; CI [0.40, 0.44]), with mestizo/a candidates near the midpoint ($m = 0.52$; CI [0.50, 0.54]). Age effects were flat across the three younger levels but negative for the oldest candidates (70 years: $m = 0.37$; CI [0.35, 0.39]). The large electoral penalty for 70-year-old candidates is likely driven, in part, by the inadvertent discontinuity in age levels.

One question for the representational story is whether preferences for descriptive representation underlie these aggregate estimates (compare to Driscoll and Nelson, 2015). Do respondents prefer candidates who resemble themselves in gender, ethnicity, or age? The answer is, largely, yes.¹⁴ Female respondents were substantially more likely to select female judicial candidates, favoring them by 18 percentage points over male candidates. Male respondents, in contrast, had no gender preference. Indigenous candidates were generally preferred across respondent ethnicities, with the largest electoral premium among Indigenous-identifying respondents. Respondents also generally favored candidates closer to their own age, though the premium for age-related similarity was modest.

Lastly, the effect of nominating branch is, surprisingly, null. There was no detectable electoral premium or penalty caused by nomination by any of the three branches. While this null is surprising given the possible importance of the nominating branch in the actual elections, respondents appear to have relied on other characteristics, such as partisan affiliation, that carry more direct information in the conjoint.

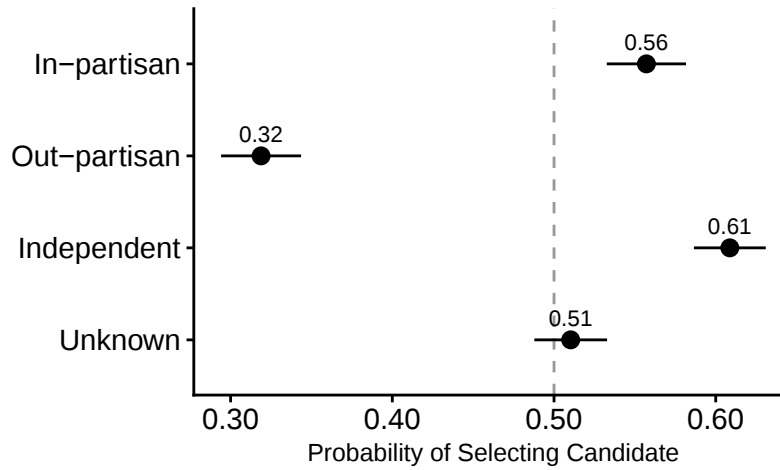
Partisan Preferences

The results thus far indicate a preference for independents, with Morena and Opposition candidates being relatively disfavored. This is a surprising result given comparative evidence that judicial partisanship matters (Sen, 2017; Bonneau and Cann, 2015). Further, partisanship is common in the sample, with three-quarters ($n = 1,134$) of respondents reporting a partisan identity on the first question (excluding leaners). What, then, explains the apparent distaste for partisan candidates shown above? Did respondents eschew candidates from their own parties?

Figure 2 addresses these questions, plotting marginal means with candidates' party affiliation recoded relative to respondent partisanship. As shown, voters did not eschew in-partisan candidates—they favored them, albeit modestly, voting for in-partisans in 56% of mixed candidate

¹⁴Appendix Section A.1 presents marginal means for demographic attributes subset by respondent traits on those same variables.

Figure 2: Marginal means by candidate affiliation, recoded relative to respondent partisanship.



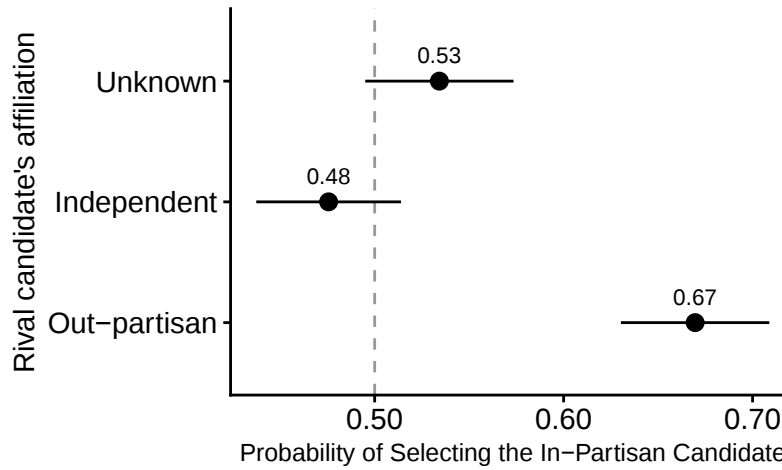
Note: Marginal means among partisan respondents (including leaners). Candidate political affiliation is coded relative to the respondent's own party. The dashed line at 0.5 indicates no preference. 95% confidence intervals shown.

aces (CI [0.53, 0.58]). Yet respondents overwhelmingly rejected out-partisans. They selected out-partisan candidates 32% (CI [0.29, 0.34]) of the time—an 18 percentage point penalty against the 0.50 baseline of no preference. On average, the sizable penalty for out-partisanship outstrips the more modest reward for in-partisans, disadvantaging candidates with known partisan affiliations. Independents benefit from this dynamic, winning 61% of mixed-candidate choices.

Figure 3 clarifies respondents' reasoning, showing choice-level marginal means. These choice-level estimates take into account information from both candidate profiles, allowing for an examination of how respondents evaluate tradeoffs between competing attributes (Clayton et al., 2023). In this case, Figure 3 presents the probability of choosing the in-partisan candidate *conditional on the party affiliation of the alternative candidate profile*. As shown, respondents opt for the in-partisan candidate in the majority of instances when they face an out-partisan alternative, choosing the in-partisan 67% of the time (CI [0.63, 0.71]). Yet this preference dissipates when an in-partisan candidate faces a non-partisan rival. When facing an unknown alternative, in-partisans are slightly favored ($m = 0.53$; CI [0.50, 0.57]), and they are slightly disfavored when facing an independent ($m = 0.48$; CI [0.44, 0.51]). Neither estimate is distinguishable from 0.50: facing an apparently non-partisan alternative, respondents choose the co-partisan about half the time.

The conditional effects of negative partisanship reflect this aversion to out-partisan candidates (Figure 4). Anti-Morenistas—those who would never vote for a Morena candidate—choose the Morena candidate in only 15% of mixed candidate races (CI [0.10, 0.21]), while favoring independents ($m = 0.70$, [0.65, 0.75]) and, more modestly, opposition candidates and those with unknown affiliation ($m = 0.58$, [0.54, 0.63] and $m = 0.56$, [0.51, 0.61], respectively). Anti-opposition

Figure 3: Probability of selecting an in-partisan candidate, by the rival's affiliation.

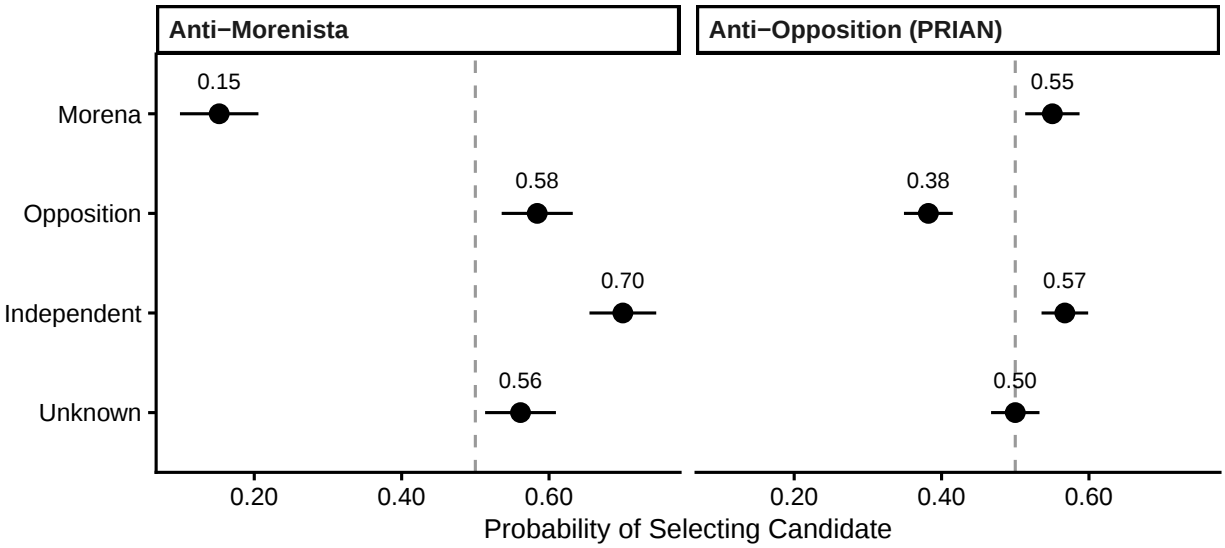


Note: Choice-level marginal means among partisan respondents (leaners included). Each point is the probability that an *in-partisan* candidate is selected when paired against a rival of with the affiliation shown on the y-axis. 95% confidence intervals shown.

respondents penalized opposition candidates, choosing them 38% of the time (CI [0.35, 0.42]), while modestly favoring Morena and independents ($m = 0.55$, [0.51, 0.59] and $m = 0.57$, [0.54, 0.60], respectively). The conditional effect of negative partisanship is seemingly asymmetric, with anti-Morenistas being more punitive toward the out-group. Still, this asymmetry should be interpreted with caution since the anti-opposition category includes both anti-PRI and anti-PAN respondents, and neither party is mentioned by name in the conjoint, potentially attenuating the effect.

These results indicate a consistent aversion to out-partisan judges and a weaker preference for co-partisans. Respondents are loath to choose judges who would adjudicate in favor of a rival party. In a mixed electorate, this aversion to out-partisans favors independents (Figure 1). The following section examines the sensitivity of these results to the partisan composition of the sample; I then turn to the actual electoral results.

Figure 4: Candidate affiliation preferences by negative partisanship.



Note: Marginal means for candidate political affiliation by negative partisanship. “Anti-Morenistas” would never vote for Morena ($n = 366$); “Anti-Opposition (PRIAN)” respondents would never vote for the PAN or the PRI ($n = 681$). 95% confidence intervals shown.

Sensitivity to Sample Composition

A potential concern is that the preference for independents and the penalty facing Morena-affiliated judges shown in the conjoint are artifacts of the sample. If opposition partisans or independents were substantially over-represented, they might pull the aggregate marginal means in a pro-independent, anti-Morena direction, despite real pro-Morena judicial preferences in the population.

This methodological concern is less severe than it might seem. Recent work is reassuring about estimates from online, non-probabilistic samples (Christenson et al., 2026), and benchmarking against a probabilistic sample, the *Mexican Election Study* (ENEM, 2024), indicates that Morena partisans are sufficiently represented.¹⁵ Moreover, the preference for independents cannot be driven by partisan composition alone, as *all partisan sub-groups* have at least a modest preference for independents (Appendix Figures A1 and A2). The marginal mean for independent candidates remains above 0.50 even among Morena partisans—though Morena candidates dominate in this group. Hence, the question of interest is: *How Morena-dominated would the sample need to be before we observe a definite pro-Morena preference?*

¹⁵See Appendix Table A2. Taking ENEM as a baseline, non-partisans are under-represented in the online sample while opposition partisans are over-represented. As shown below, the aggregate pro-independent, anti-Morena preference is robust to realistic alternative sample compositions. The sample also skews toward wealthier respondents; Appendix Figure A7 shows similar results with post-stratification weights as a correction.

Since candidate party affiliation is independent of respondent partisanship in the conjoint, we can evaluate how counterfactual partisan compositions shape the aggregate preference for Morena candidates:

$$MM^{\text{Morena}}(\mathbf{w}) = \sum_g w_g MM_g^{\text{Morena}}, \quad \sum_g w_g = 1 \quad (1)$$

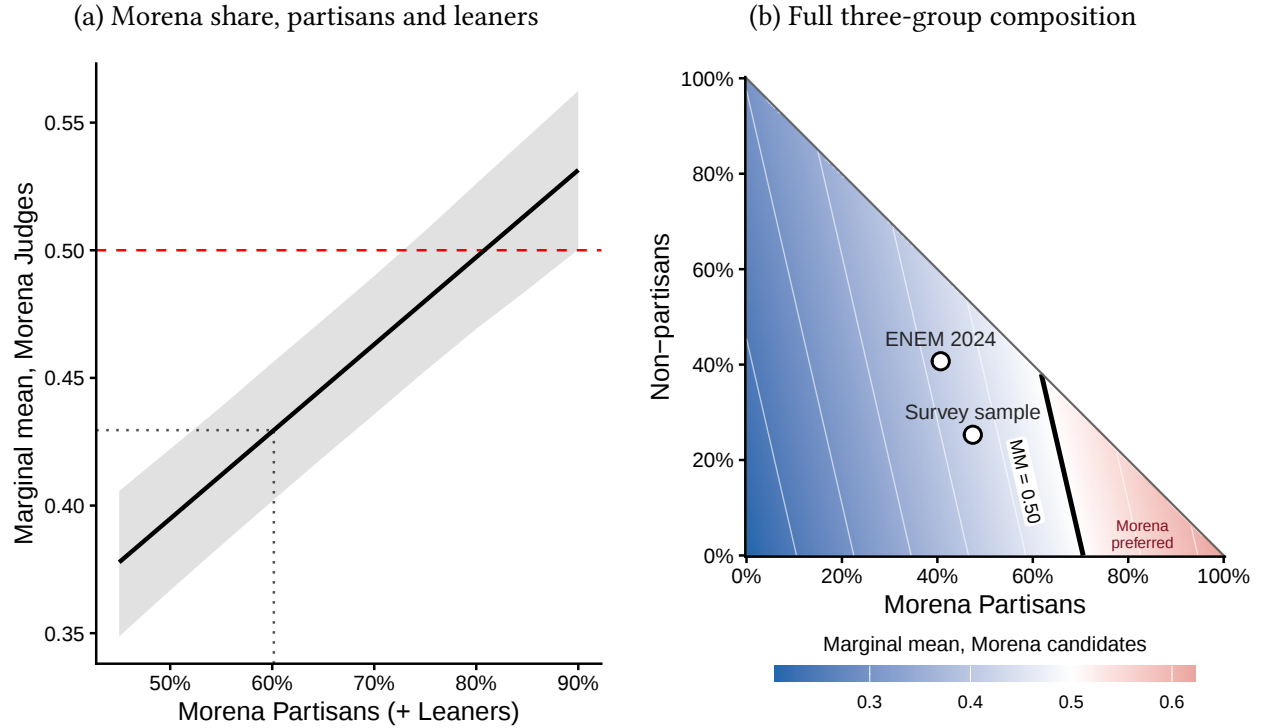
where $MM^{\text{Morena}}(\mathbf{w})$ is the marginal mean for Morena-affiliated candidates in an electorate with composition $\mathbf{w}$, w_g is subgroup g 's share of that electorate, and MM_g^{Morena} is the marginal mean for Morena-affiliated candidates among that subgroup. When the electorate matches the sample ($\hat{\mathbf{w}} = 0.47$ Morena, 0.27 Opposition, 0.25 non-partisan), the overall marginal mean for Morena candidates ($MM^{\text{Morena}}(\hat{\mathbf{w}})$) is 0.43, the estimate reported in Figure 1. To evaluate the preference for Morena candidates in various possible samples, I use the group-specific marginal means from the conjoint (Appendix Table A4) while varying party composition (w_g).

Figure 5 presents the marginal means for Morena-affiliated candidates over counterfactual partisan distributions of the electorate. The left panel shows $MM^{\text{Morena}}(\mathbf{w})$ over the proportion of Morena partisans, including leaners who initially declared no partisan preference. Because leaners might dilute pro-Morena preferences, the right panel shows $MM^{\text{Morena}}(\mathbf{w})$ over the proportion of Morena partisans excluding leaners (on the x-axis) and non-partisans (on the y-axis). In both panels, the proportion of opposition partisans is the residual, set so the proportions sum to one.

The results indicate that only an implausibly Morena-skewed sample produces an aggregate pro-Morena preference. The left panel of Figure 5 shows that Morena partisans and leaners would need to be at least 80% of the sample before the aggregate preference is pro-Morena. For comparison, Morenistas and Morena leaners make up 60% of respondents in the conjoint sample (the grey dashed line in Panel A). Even at an extreme skew, with Morena partisans and leaners making up 90% of the sample, the aggregate preference is only modestly pro-Morena, with $MM^{\text{Morena}}(\mathbf{w}) = 0.53$.

The right-hand panel shows this is also the case when we exclude leaners from both partisan groups. Assuming the 25% proportion of non-partisans in the observed sample, the proportion of Morena partisans would need to be roughly 65% before the aggregate preference is pro-Morena. In other words, Morena partisans would need to be a greater proportion of the population than the 60% *total vote share* won by their candidate, Claudia Sheinbaum, in the last presidential election (highly unlikely, since vote share includes non-partisans who broke for Morena). Including additional non-partisans preserves the aggregate anti-Morena preference because non-partisans disprefer Morena-affiliated candidates. A sample with 40% non-partisans (ENEM's non-partisan estimate), 60% Morena partisans, and 0% opposition—arguably the most pro-Morena feasible sample—still produces a marginal mean just below indifference, ($MM^{\text{Morena}}(\mathbf{w}) = 0.49$).

Figure 5: Marginal means for Morena candidates by counterfactual partisan compositions.



Note: Figures show the overall marginal mean for Morena candidates $MM^{\text{Morena}}(\mathbf{w})$ at counterfactual partisan compositions of the sample. *Panel A* includes leaners in the Morena and Opposition categories. The dashed red line indicates a marginal mean of 0.50 (a neutral preference) and ribbon indicates 95% CIs, estimated via 4,000 bootstrap resamples. *Panel B* excludes leaners from both groups, coding them as Non-Partisans. The shading of Panel B shows the overall marginal mean for Morena candidates, with red indicating a pro-Morena preference (a marginal mean above 0.50). The points show the observed partisan compositions of the conjoint sample and the *Mexican Election Study*.

This exercise indicates that the aggregate pro-independent, anti-Morena preference observed in the conjoint cannot be dismissed as a sampling artifact. Still, it bears noting that, to evaluate the effect of sample composition, I took party preferences as fixed—basing preference direction and intensity on estimates from the conjoint experiment. In real elections, preference intensity covaries with partisan composition, e.g., turnout by a small group of core partisans. Hence, these estimates speak to preferences for Supreme Court judges in the broader population, but are not intended to extrapolate to the composition of the electorate in the June 1st elections.

Judicial Election Results

The conjoint experiment indicates that widespread pro-Morena preferences for Supreme Court candidates are highly unlikely given realistic assumptions about the partisan composition of the population. The following section turns to the actual election results, where Morena candidates on illicitly circulated voter guides (*acordeones*) dominated nevertheless.

Model & Coding

I analyze candidate vote shares in the June 1st elections using data released by the INE (National Electoral Institute) shortly after the elections. The dependent variable is judicial candidate c 's share of total votes in electoral district d . With 300 electoral districts and 63 candidates, this yields 18,900 candidate-district observations.¹⁶ I regress candidate vote shares on candidates' appearance on the *acordeones*, candidate attributes similar to those in the conjoint, and their ballot position:

$$\text{VoteShare}_{cd} = \beta_1 \text{Acordeón}_c + \beta_2 \text{Morena}_c + \mathbf{X}'_c \boldsymbol{\gamma} + \delta_d + \varepsilon_{cd}$$

where Acordeón_c indicates candidates named on the *acordeones* and Morena_c indicates Morena-affiliated candidates not named on them (the baseline is non-Morena, non-acordeón candidates). The remaining candidate attributes are collected in $\mathbf{X}_c$, and δ_d are district fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by candidate because the main explanatory variables vary at the candidate level. The district fixed effects absorb district-specific variation, so that the coefficients capture the association between candidate characteristics and vote share within an average district.

I coded candidates' *acordeón*-status based on public complaints to the INE, which included photos of the circulated *acordeones* (Instituto Nacional Electoral, Comisión de Quejas y Denuncias, 2025a,b). These complaints matched journalistic coverage of the Morena *acordeones*, naming

¹⁶The denominator for candidate vote share includes valid votes, null votes, and uncast votes (each voter could select nine candidates, but many selected fewer). The substantive pattern is unchanged when the null and uncast votes are excluded as all candidate vote-shares increase by the same factor. The candidate count excludes Santos Mendoza Gloria Rosa, who dropped out of the elections but appeared on the (already printed) paper ballots.

nine candidates affiliated with the government party. To separate the *acordeón* premium from a grass-roots preference for Morena candidates, I also coded candidates with known Morena affiliations *who did not appear* on the most widely circulated *acordeones*. Candidates were coded as Morena-affiliated (or not) based on an AI-assisted web-search, conducted separately for each of the 63 candidates. Only candidates with clear institutional connections to the party were coded as Morena-affiliated.¹⁷

The model also includes nominating branch, indicating the federal branch that nominated the candidate. Nominating branch was included on the printed ballots, making it a potential heuristic for voters to judge candidates' closeness to the government. The nominating branch variable is coded Executive, Legislative, Judicial, and Other, where Other is a residual category including candidates with multiple nominating branches or who were sitting justices. Dual nominations should send a more mixed signal about candidate affiliation. The broad Other category also avoids collinearity with the professional experience variable (which includes sitting justice as a category, matching the conjoint).

Additional candidate characteristics were coded based on candidate information submitted to the INE's *Conóceles* page (part of a pre-election public information campaign) and electoral news including candidates' biographical details. Candidates' gender and educational level (coded Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctorate) were available on the *Conóceles* pages, while candidate age and professional position were coded through a by-candidate web-search. Candidates' professional position was matched to the closest category in the conjoint experiment: Academic, Sitting Justice (*en funciones*), Federal Judge, or Private Attorney. Candidate age was mean imputed when this information was unavailable, which was necessary for six candidates. As a proxy for candidate ethnic identity, I coded candidates' skin tone based on the official photos submitted to *Conóceles*, using AI agents to grade candidates' skin tone from 1 to 5.

Lastly, I include ballot position, based on candidates' ballot number. Candidates with lower ballot numbers, positioned toward the top of the ballot, may mechanically receive higher vote shares (Ho and Imai, 2008). Since the ballot was separated into male and female candidates (voted on separately), I number ballot position within gender, so that in each block lower numbers indicate a higher position on the ballot.

Results

In the June 1st judicial elections, candidates named on the *acordeones* dominated, while credentials and other features that mattered in the conjoint were less influential. Figure 6 shows coefficient estimates from the model, with points indicating the association between candidate attributes and

¹⁷See Appendix B.1, *AI-Assisted Coding Procedures*, for coding details.

vote shares.

Candidates included on the *acordeón* received, on average, 2.5 percentage points more vote share than non-Morena candidates ($p < 0.001$). The estimated *acordeón* premium is only slightly less than the *entire vote share* received by several winning candidates; e.g., Justice Sara Irene Herrerías won with 2.8 percent of the vote. As noted above, all candidates named on the widely circulated Morena *acordeones* won. This observation, alongside the magnitude of the *acordeón* premium relative to candidates' final vote shares, suggests that inclusion on the *acordeones* was sufficient for winning a seat.¹⁸ The decisiveness of the *acordeón* is also consistent with selective party coordination under block voting.

To distinguish the *acordeón* premium from bottom-up partisan support, I included a dummy variable indicating candidates with clear Morena affiliations who were not listed on the widely circulated *acordeones*. If the premium for *acordeón* candidates captured grassroots partisan support rather than party coordination, we might expect Morena candidates who were not listed on the *acordeón* to perform similarly well. They did not. Unlisted Morena candidates performed slightly better than non-Morena candidates, beating them by roughly a third of a percentage point ($\hat{b}_{\text{Morena}} = 0.31, p = 0.11$), but they substantially under-performed *acordeón* candidates, trailing them by about two percentage points.

In comparison, nominating branch is only modestly associated with vote share, despite its appearance on the ballot. The estimates in Figure 6 indicate that judicial nominees are slightly disfavored ($\hat{b}_{\text{judicial}} = -0.27, p = 0.08$), though none of these estimates are detectably different from zero at conventional significance levels (joint $F = 1.38, p = 0.25$). When *acordeón* status is omitted, however, nominating branch picks up some of this variation, and the estimates for judicial and legislative nominees become negative and significant relative to the residual other category (Appendix Figure B1; $\hat{b}_{\text{judicial}} = -0.77, p = 0.02$; $\hat{b}_{\text{legislative}} = -0.70, p = 0.05$). While both *acordeón* status and nominating branch are consistent with a preference for executive-aligned candidates, *acordeón* status appears to have been the dominant cue. This pattern is consistent with the null effect of nominating branch in the conjoint results, where voters similarly had alternative information about candidate affiliations.

For candidate credentials—candidate position and education—only sitting justices are favored ($\hat{b}_{\text{justice}} = 0.82, p = 0.03$). Importantly, sitting justice (*en funciones*) was listed on the ballot and all three sitting justices (Morena appointees) were also named on the *acordeón*. In contrast to the conjoint, federal judges were not preferred, nor were candidates with higher levels of educational achievement. The null on education is perhaps surprising, as seven of the nine elected justices hold doctoral degrees. Yet, two of the nine do not, and the highest vote-getter, Hugo Aguilar Ortiz,

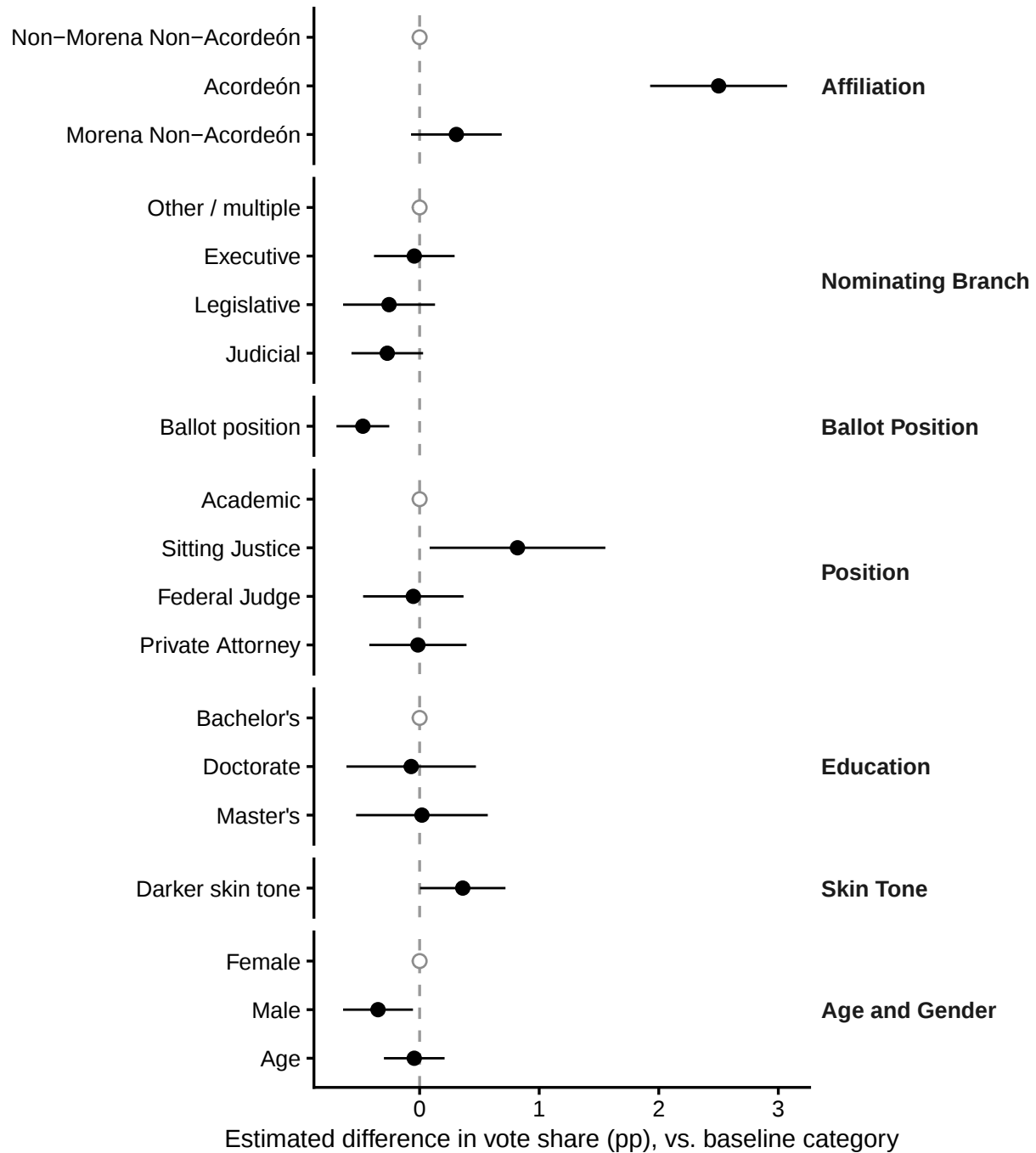
¹⁸Driscoll et al. (2026) find a larger *acordeón* premium—roughly 5 percentage points—using section-level returns and a mixed effects model.

holds the equivalent of a bachelor's degree (*licenciatura*).

On other demographics, the estimate on skin tone is positive and significant ($\hat{b}_{\text{skin tone}} = 0.36$, $p = 0.048$), suggesting voters favor darker-skinned candidates. This estimate is consistent with the conjoint results, where respondents favored Indigenous candidates. However, it should be interpreted with caution as the positive estimate is driven by Hugo Aguilar Ortiz's 5.3% vote share—it is null when he is dropped from the model. Still, the preference for Aguilar Ortiz in the electorate and positive effect of Indigenous identity in the conjoint are reassuring given concerns that racial stereotypes encourage voters to favor lighter-skinned candidates (Aguilar Pariente, 2011). Voters' gender preferences mirrored the conjoint, with male candidates receiving a slightly lower vote share ($\hat{b}_{\text{male}} = -0.35$, $p = 0.02$), on average. However, this association is partly a mechanical result of ballot design, as voters could cast 5 votes for female candidates and 4 for male candidates, augmenting female candidates' vote share.

Ballot design also mattered for candidate performance, with candidates higher on the list receiving a greater proportion of the vote share. A two-standard-deviation increase in ballot number corresponds to about a half-percentage point reduction in total vote share ($\hat{b}_{\text{ballot}} = -0.47$, $p < 0.001$). This result is consistent with research showing that ballot order is particularly influential for minor-party candidates—whom voters know less about—and in elections with larger candidate slates (Ho and Imai, 2008).

Figure 6: Candidate attributes and vote share in the 2025 SCJN election



Note: Coefficient plot from a district fixed-effects model (OLS) predicting candidate vote share (percentage points), with standard errors clustered by candidate ($N = 18,900$; 63 candidates $\times$ 300 districts). Points show the estimated difference in vote share relative the baseline, with 95% confidence intervals. Age and ballot position are standardized by two standard deviations for comparison with the binary variables.

Electoral Turnout

The gap between the pro-independence preferences shown in the conjoint and the dominance of acordeón-listed candidates points to highly skewed turnout in the June 1st elections. As the composition analysis suggests, the electorate would need to be composed overwhelmingly of Morena sympathizers for Morena candidates to dominate. Previous work corroborates this: turnout was higher and the *acordeón* premium was larger in Morena strongholds (Driscoll et al., 2026). But why did opposition supporters stay home? Were they too poorly informed to vote (lacking opposition acordeones) or did they cue on opposition leaders and boycott the elections? This section provides individual-level evidence that the turnout gap is better explained by doubts about the legitimacy of the elections than by information deficits among opposition voters.

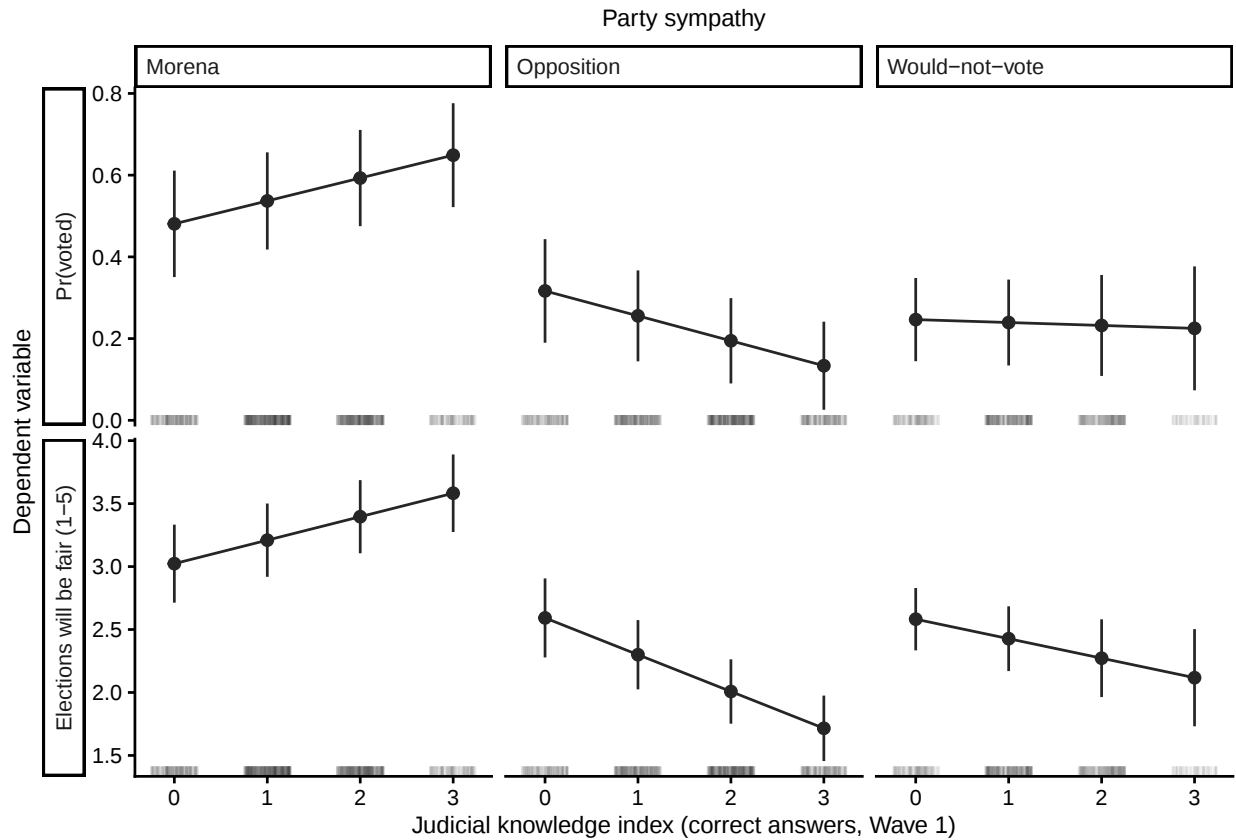
If opposition turnout was low because opposition supporters were too ill-informed to choose candidates, we would expect that the most knowledgeable opposition voters would still be relatively more likely to turn out. To test this proposition, I use data from the *Mexico Judicial Reform Opinion Panel* (Driscoll and Nelson, 2025), regressing self-reported turnout on partisan sympathy and its interaction with political knowledge.¹⁹ Partisan sympathy is coded based on vote choice in a hypothetical presidential election (due to item-nonresponse on the partisanship measure) while political knowledge is an additive index coded based on three factual questions related to the judiciary. I also regress perceptions of electoral fairness on these variables to supplement the analysis.

As shown in Figure 7, increasing political knowledge is associated with *lower* turnout among opposition supporters and higher turnout among Morena supporters (upper panel). Beliefs about electoral fairness follow this pattern as well (lower panel). The most knowledgeable opposition sympathizers were least likely to say the elections would be fair, while the most knowledgeable Morena sympathizers were most likely to say so. Perceptions of electoral unfairness and lower turnout among the most-informed opposition voters are inconsistent with an information-deficiency explanation.

Rather, this pattern points to contrasting cues from political elites, with Morena supporters accepting election-legitimizing rhetoric and opposition supporters accepting rhetoric that questioned the legitimacy of the elections. Opposition rhetoric calling for a boycott of the elections was in fact common (e.g., Castillo Jiménez, 2025), and there was a social media campaign promoting abstention. In hindsight, this was a dubious strategy: even a modest coordination effort by the opposition might have produced a more balanced bench—an idea I return to in the conclusion.

¹⁹Turnout was substantially over-reported in the sample (33% of respondents reported voting). See Appendix Tables C1 and C2 for the full model specification.

Figure 7: Judicial knowledge, turnout, and perceived election fairness, by partisan sympathy



Note: Predicted turnout (top panel) and perceptions of electoral fairness (bottom panel), among Morena sympathizers, oppositions sympathizers, and non-voters. The fairness question asks respondents to rate the fairness of the election on a scale ranging from (1) Unfair to (5) Fair. Predictions are from OLS models with heteroscedasticity robust standard errors and state-fixed effects. The rug plot indicates the distribution of the political knowledge variable. Controls include respondent demographics, political interest, and left-right ideology. See Table C1 for variable definitions and Table C2 for tabular results.

Discussion & Conclusion

Partisan chauvinism is often cited as a cause of undemocratic electoral outcomes in pro-democratic electorates (Svolik, 2019; Simonovits et al., 2022). Against this account, Mexico's 2025 judicial elections highlight the role of political elites in creating an electoral choice context—both an information environment and ballot design—that facilitated the erosion of the Supreme Court as a check on the executive. Somewhat ironically, the partisan predispositions shown in the conjoint favored judicial independence, as citizens were more strongly opposed to out-partisan judges than supportive of co-partisans. In the actual elections, selective partisan coordination through the *acordeones* and turnout by core Morena supporters overrode the aggregate preference for independents, resulting in the partisan capture of the Supreme Court.

The empirical analysis corroborates the claim that *acordeones* were decisive for candidate vote share. Acordeón candidates significantly outperformed unlisted but Morena-affiliated candidates. This pattern cuts against the alternative explanation that a grassroots preference for Morena candidates, rather than selective partisan coordination, drove the results. In addition, the turnout analysis suggests that opposition voters were not mobilized to vote; indeed, they were encouraged not to (Castillo Jiménez, 2025). The best-informed opposition sympathizers—who should be most attentive to elite cues and best able to overcome information costs (Zaller, 1992)—were least likely to report voting.

The turnout analysis and examination of candidate vote shares are, of course, correlational. Neither partisan sympathies (in the turnout analysis) nor candidate characteristics (in the vote share analysis) are randomly assigned, and the point estimates should be interpreted cautiously. Given that turnout is substantially over-reported in the survey, the association between political knowledge and turnout (e.g., among Morena voters in Figure 7) may only approximate real voting patterns. Even so, the broader patterns are consistent with voter coordination by pro-Morena elites and a haphazard strategy from the opposition, with many opposition leaders encouraging an electoral boycott. The June 2025 electoral results are better explained by selective information provision and asymmetric mobilization than by voters' partisan chauvinism.

The results call into question opposition leaders' decision to discourage voter participation. As the conjoint results illustrate, there was a reservoir of support for independent non-Morena candidates in the electorate. Even a modest effort to mobilize the broader electorate and coordinate opposition votes would plausibly have resulted in a more balanced Supreme Court. In this respect, the results confirm Gamboa's (2022) caution against electoral boycott as an extra-institutional strategy. In Venezuela's 2005 legislative elections, the opposition's boycott allowed Hugo Chávez's coalition to capture every seat. A core difficulty for the opposition, should they decide to engage in future judicial contests, will be navigating the formal ban on partisan coordination. The premium

that block voting places on coordination makes some degree of it indispensable.

The findings also indicate that the attributes seen as important in the full-information setting of the conjoint, such as educational credentials, were not systematically rewarded in the June 1st elections. At first, this may seem a truism: with 64 candidates, voters of course did not consider candidate characteristics for which information was not readily available. Yet this gap is notable given the prominence of conjoint experiments for examining voter preferences (Bansak et al., 2023; Horiuchi et al., 2018), including those involving democratic tradeoffs (Graham and Svolik, 2020). More importantly, the available candidate information was not fixed, but decided through political processes. The ballots themselves provided licit information about the nominating branch, while the *acordeones* provided illicit information about candidates' political affiliations. Any number of alternative ballot designs were possible, and might have included information about candidates' credentials or partisan affiliations.

Put differently, the gap between voter preferences and electoral outcomes is better attributed to electoral design than voter ignorance. The design of the 2025 judicial elections was largely set by Morena's legislative supermajority, and it ultimately favored their party. This coincidence is consistent with what we know about electoral design; political parties design electoral systems with their presumptive effects in mind (Benoit, 2007). These effects include *Realpolitik* concerns about resulting seat shares as well as perceptions of electoral legitimacy (Birch et al., 2002). The ongoing efforts to simplify the upcoming 2028 judicial elections seem motivated by legitimacy concerns, as the opposition has pointed out (Becerril and Martínez, 2026). But institutional changes often have unpredictable consequences (Díaz-Cayeros, 2005), and the norms around party coordination in judicial elections are contested, making the effect of such changes difficult to forecast.

Stepping back, Mexico's judicial elections are exceptional for their size and impact, but the mechanisms detailed here are not unique. Bolivia's judicial elections involved similar turnout dynamics, though opposition voters tended to cast null votes rather than abstain under compulsory voting (Driscoll and Nelson, 2019). Likewise, the *acordeón* premium is akin to the effect of appearing on a partisan slate in county circuit court elections in the United States (Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice, 2003). Finally, the clash between public preferences for non-partisan judges and partisan incentives for electoral manipulation is reminiscent of the evolution of US judicial elections. The institutionalization of non-partisan preferences in (some) US circuit and supreme court judicial elections took decades of institutional tinkering (Shugerman, 2012). Even where the public prefers an independent non-partisan judiciary, whether judicial elections produce judicial independence or capture depends on the electoral choice context. More generally, pro-democratic voters are insufficient to deter backsliders when electoral incentives distort their pro-democratic preferences.

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A Conjoint Experiment

Appendix A provides details and robustness checks for the conjoint experiment. All marginal means estimates are corrected for measurement error following Clayton et al. (2023), unless otherwise noted.

Table A1: Conjoint experiment (Spanish).

Atributo	Niveles
Poder postulante	Ejecutivo Legislativo Judicial
Afiliación política	Desconocida Independiente Afin a MORENA Afin a la oposición
Puesto más reciente	Ministro/a en funciones Juez/a federal Abogado/a privado/a Académico/a
Formación académica	Doctorado Maestría Licenciatura
Género	Hombre Mujer
Grupo étnico	Mestizo/a Blanco/a Indígena
Edad	30 años 40 años 50 años 70 años

Note: Attributes and levels as shown to respondents in the Spanish-language questionnaire. Levels for *Puesto más reciente* and *Grupo étnico* were displayed in gender-concordant form (e.g., *Ministro en funciones* for male candidates, *Ministra en funciones* for female candidates).

Table A2: Partisan Identification: Conjoint Survey vs. Mexican Election Study (ENEM), 2024

Party Affil.	Pct. Sample	Pct. ENEM	
		Demographic + Vote Weights	Demographic Weights
Morena	0.47	0.41	0.47
None	0.25	0.41	0.38
Opposition	0.27	0.19	0.15

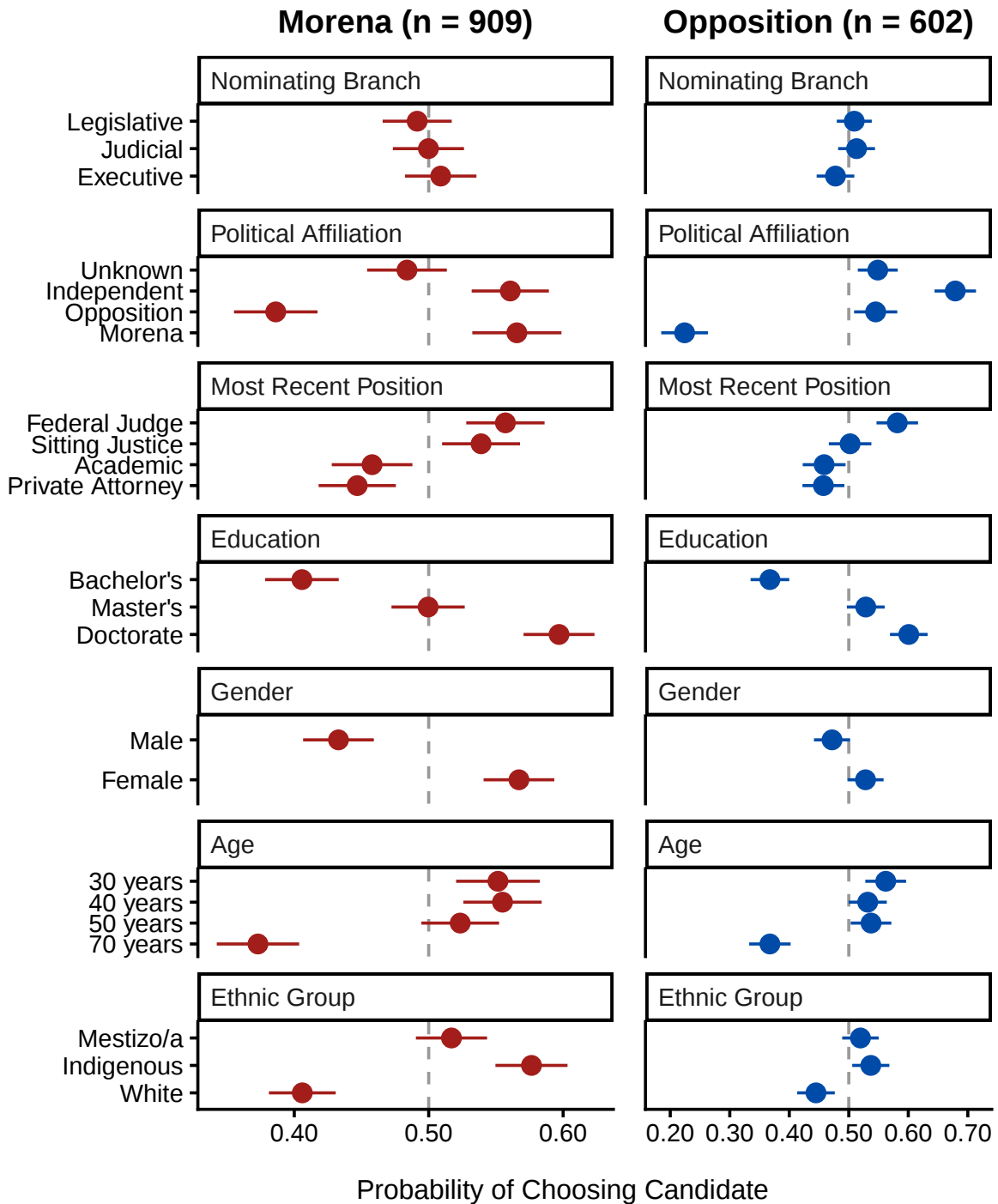
Note: Proportions from the conjoint survey ($n = 1518$, Offerwise, May 2025) and the 2024 *Mexican Election Study* (ENEM, *Estudio Nacional Electoral de México*; $n = 2591$, post-election probability survey; Castro Cornejo et al., 2024). Morena includes Partido Verde and Partido del Trabajo; Opposition includes PAN, PRI, PRD (ENEM only), and Movimiento Ciudadano. Respondents who declined to answer or said they did not know are excluded. ENEM proportions are reported under two weights supplied with the study: one adjusting for 2024 vote choice in addition to gender and age, and one adjusting for gender and age alone. *Question wording.* Conjoint survey: “¿Con cuál partido político simpatiza más?” ENEM: “Independientemente del partido por el que usted vota, ¿usted normalmente se considera panista, priísta, perredista, de Morena o de otro partido?”

Table A3: Respondent variables: conjoint subgroup analyses.

Variable	Values
Party Identification (leaners included)	Morena (includes Partido del Trabajo, Partido Verde); Opposition (includes PRI, PAN, Movimiento Ciudadano); missing if no lean
Party Identification (strict)	Morena; Opposition; None; missing if declined or don't know
Negative Partisanship	The party the respondent would <i>never</i> vote for: Morena anti-partisan ($n = 366$); Opposition anti-partisan ($n = 681$); missing otherwise
Respondent Gender	Female; Male; missing (other response)
Respondent Ethnicity	Self-reported: Mestizo/a; White; Indigenous; missing (Negra, Otra)
Respondent Age Group	18–29; 30–44; 45+

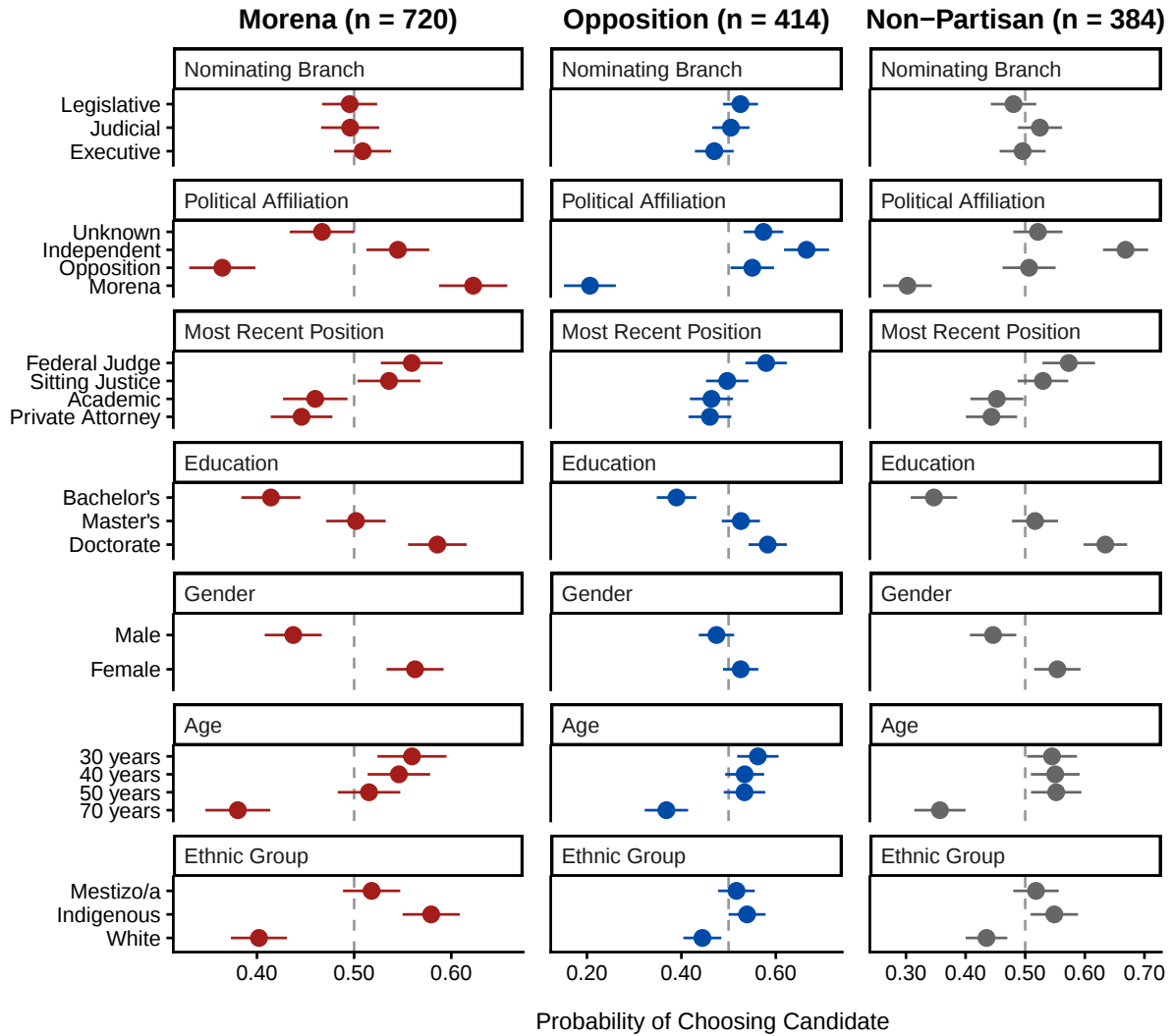
Note: Questions asked pre-treatment. Party identification with leaners included uses a forced-choice follow-up for respondents who initially decline to name a party. Opposition anti-partisan is coded as never voting for PAN or PRI.

Figure A1: Marginal Means by Party Identification



Note: Marginal means for Morena and Opposition partisans (party leaners included). 95% confidence intervals shown. Dashed line at 0.5 indicates no preference. Marginal Means for Morena candidate affiliation are $MM_{Morena}^{Morena} = 0.57$ and $MM_{Opposition}^{Morena} = 0.22$.

Figure A2: Marginal Means by Party Identification (Strict PID).



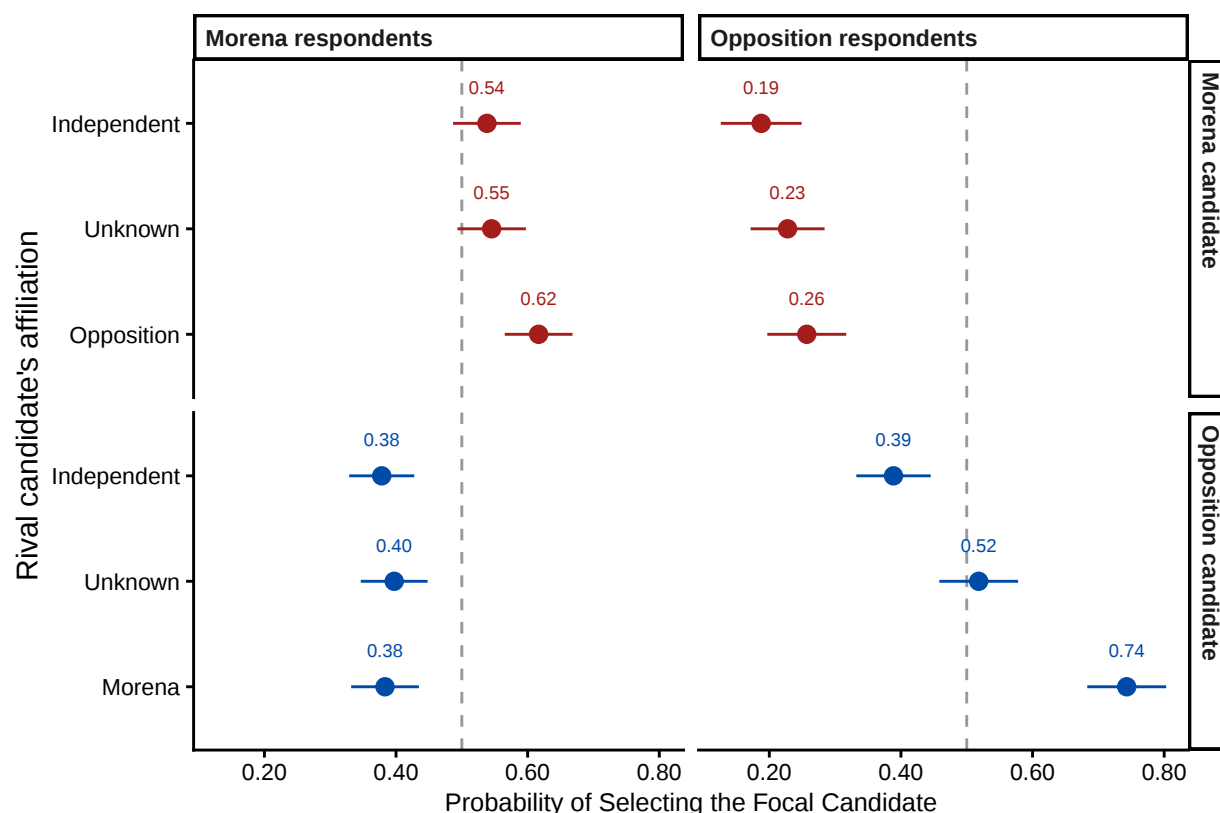
Note: Marginal means for Morena identifiers, Opposition identifiers, and Non-Partisans using strict party identification (excluding leaners). 95% confidence intervals shown. Dashed line at 0.5 indicates no preference. Marginal Means for Morena candidate affiliation are $MM_{Morena}^{Morena} = 0.62$, $MM_{Opposition}^{Morena} = 0.21$, and $MM_{Non-Partisan}^{Morena} = 0.30$.

Table A4: Candidate affiliation marginal means, by respondent partisanship.

Respondent group	<i>n</i>	Candidate Affiliation			
		Morena	Opposition	Independent	Unknown
<i>Party identification, leaners included — plotted in Figure A1</i>					
Morena (incl. leaners)	909	0.566	0.386	0.561	0.484
		[0.53, 0.60]	[0.36, 0.42]	[0.53, 0.59]	[0.45, 0.51]
Opposition (incl. leaners)	602	0.224	0.545	0.679	0.549
		[0.18, 0.26]	[0.51, 0.58]	[0.64, 0.71]	[0.52, 0.58]
<i>Strict party identification — plotted in Figure A2</i>					
Morena identifiers	720	0.623	0.364	0.545	0.467
		[0.59, 0.66]	[0.33, 0.40]	[0.51, 0.58]	[0.43, 0.50]
Opposition identifiers	414	0.206	0.550	0.665	0.574
		[0.15, 0.26]	[0.50, 0.60]	[0.62, 0.71]	[0.53, 0.62]
Non-partisans	384	0.302	0.506	0.668	0.521
		[0.26, 0.34]	[0.46, 0.55]	[0.63, 0.71]	[0.48, 0.56]
<i>Leaners only — not plotted in any figure</i>					
Morena leaners	189	0.351	0.476	0.622	0.548
		[0.29, 0.42]	[0.40, 0.55]	[0.56, 0.69]	[0.49, 0.61]
Opposition leaners	188	0.255	0.536	0.706	0.501
		[0.20, 0.31]	[0.48, 0.60]	[0.66, 0.75]	[0.45, 0.56]

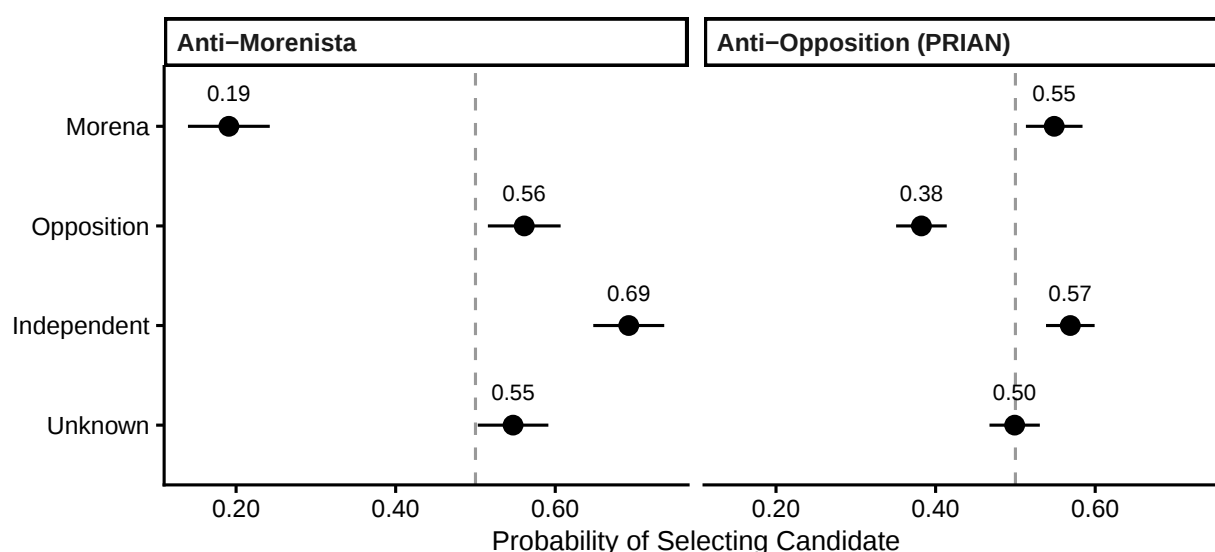
Note: Marginal means for the candidate’s political affiliation, estimated separately within each respondent group, with 95% confidence intervals in brackets. The estimates in Figure A1 include leaners, respondents who initially declared no partisan sympathy but indicated a preference on a follow-up forced choice question. The estimates in Figure A2 code leaners as non-partisans.

Figure A3: Probability of selecting a Morena and an Opposition candidate, by respondent partisanship.



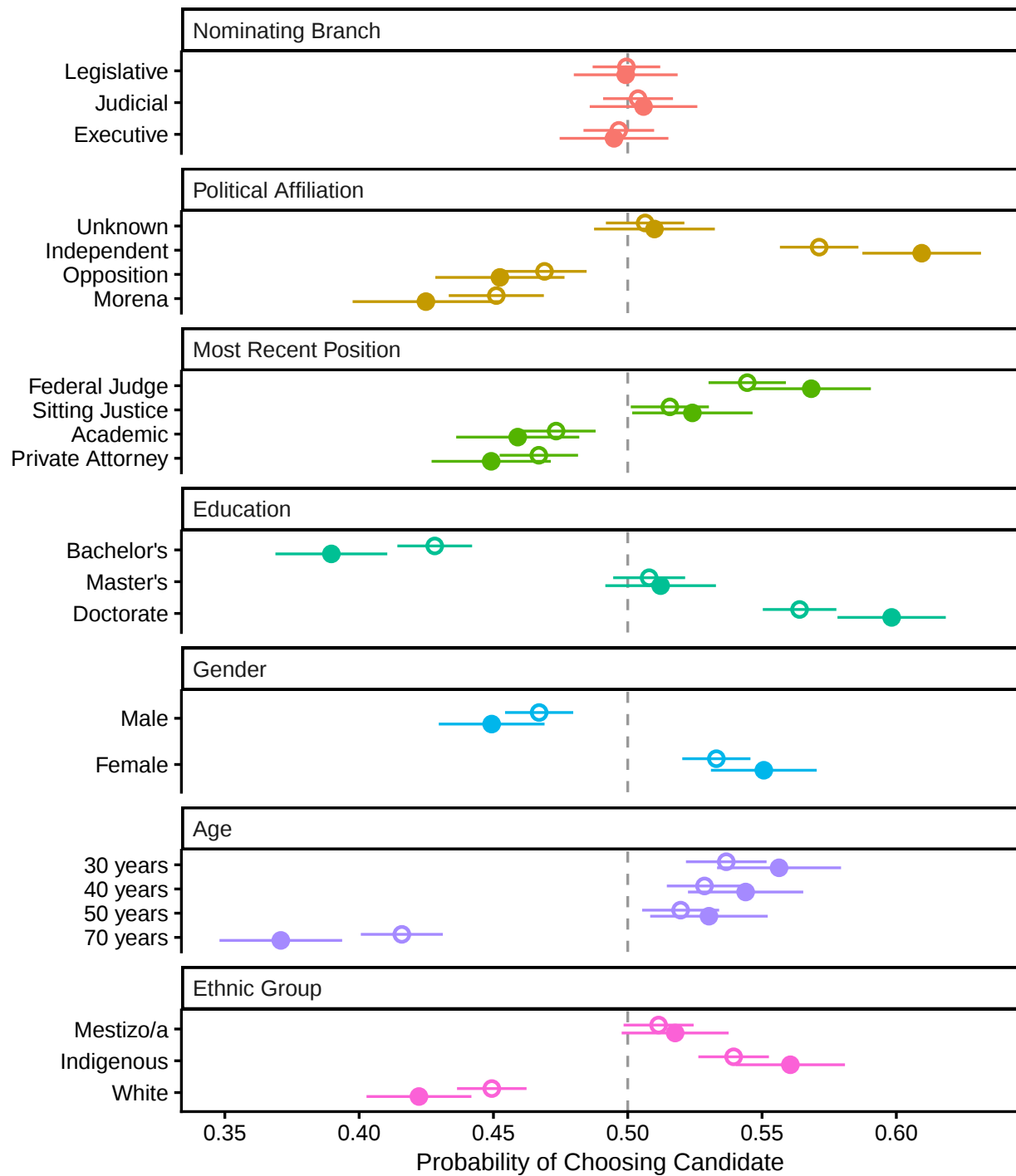
Note: Choice-level marginal means split by respondent partisanship (leaners included). Rows give the focal candidate (a Morena or an Opposition candidate); columns give the respondent's party. Each point is the probability the focal candidate is selected when paired against a rival of the affiliation shown on the y-axis. This is the disaggregated counterpart to the pooled in/out-partisan figure (Figure 3). 95% confidence intervals shown.

Figure A4: Candidate affiliation preferences under a broad coding of negative partisanship.



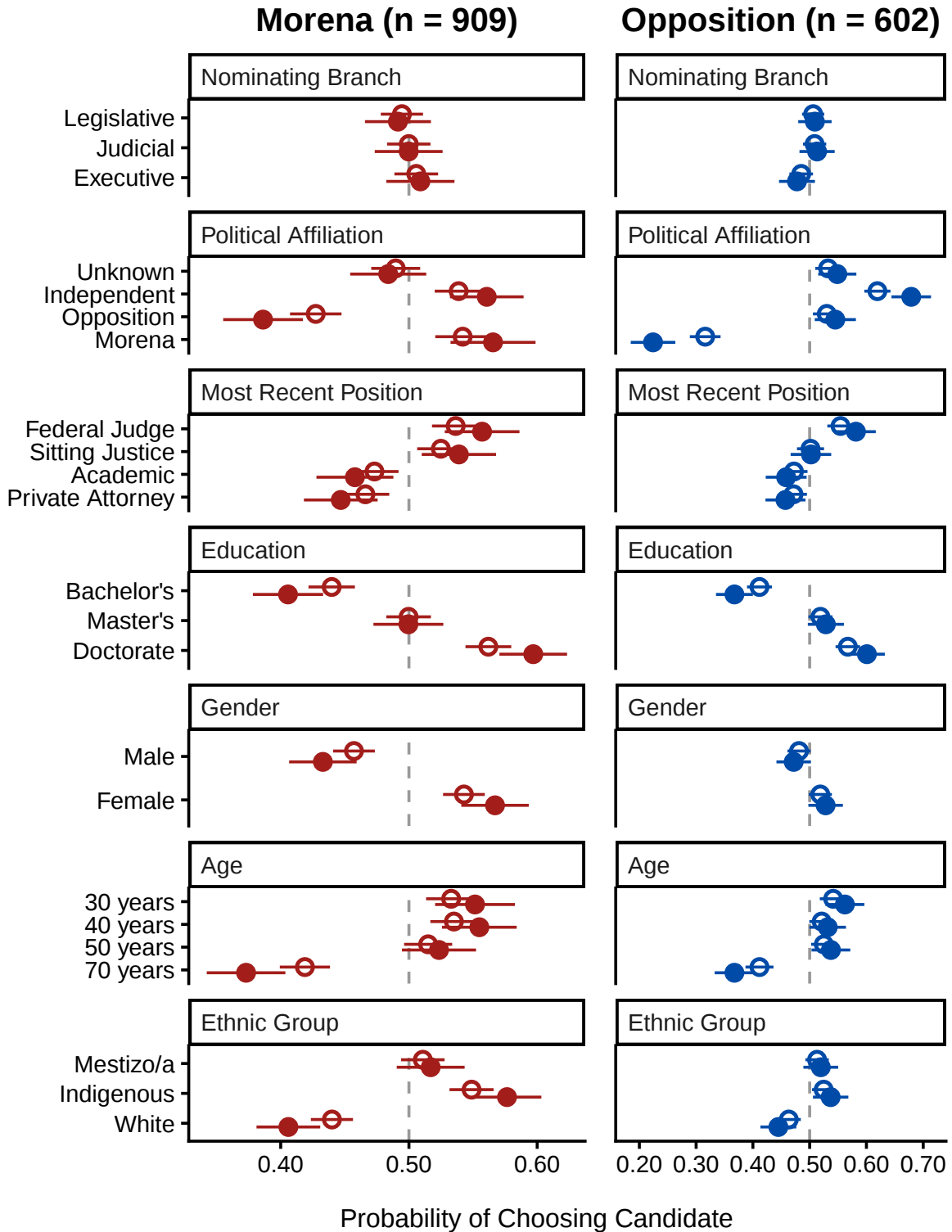
Note: Robustness check for Figure 4, which codes negative partisanship strictly—only respondents naming Morena itself are anti-Morenista ($n = 366$), and only those naming the PAN or the PRI are anti-Opposition ($n = 681$). Here the coalition partners are included: respondents naming the PT or the Partido Verde are also coded anti-Morenista ($n = 449$), and those naming Movimiento Ciudadano are also coded anti-Opposition ($n = 727$). Only the 342 respondents reporting no negative partisan identity are excluded. 95% confidence intervals shown.

Figure A5: Corrected vs. Uncorrected Marginal Means



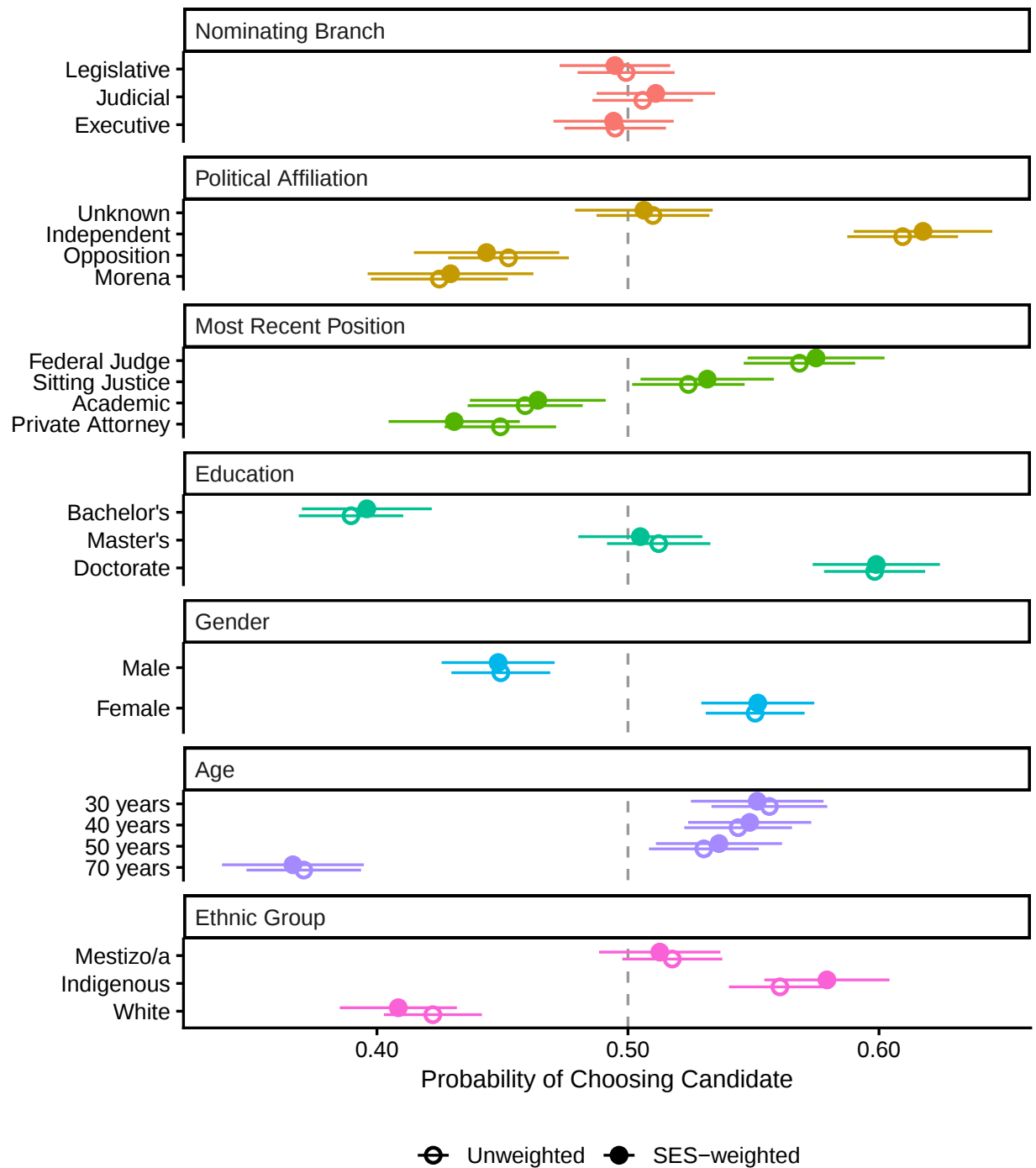
Note: 95% confidence intervals shown. Filled circles are corrected for measurement error; open circles are uncorrected estimates. Dashed line at 0.5 indicates no preference. Corrections follow Clayton et al. (2023).

Figure A6: IRR-Corrected vs. Uncorrected Marginal Means by Party Identification



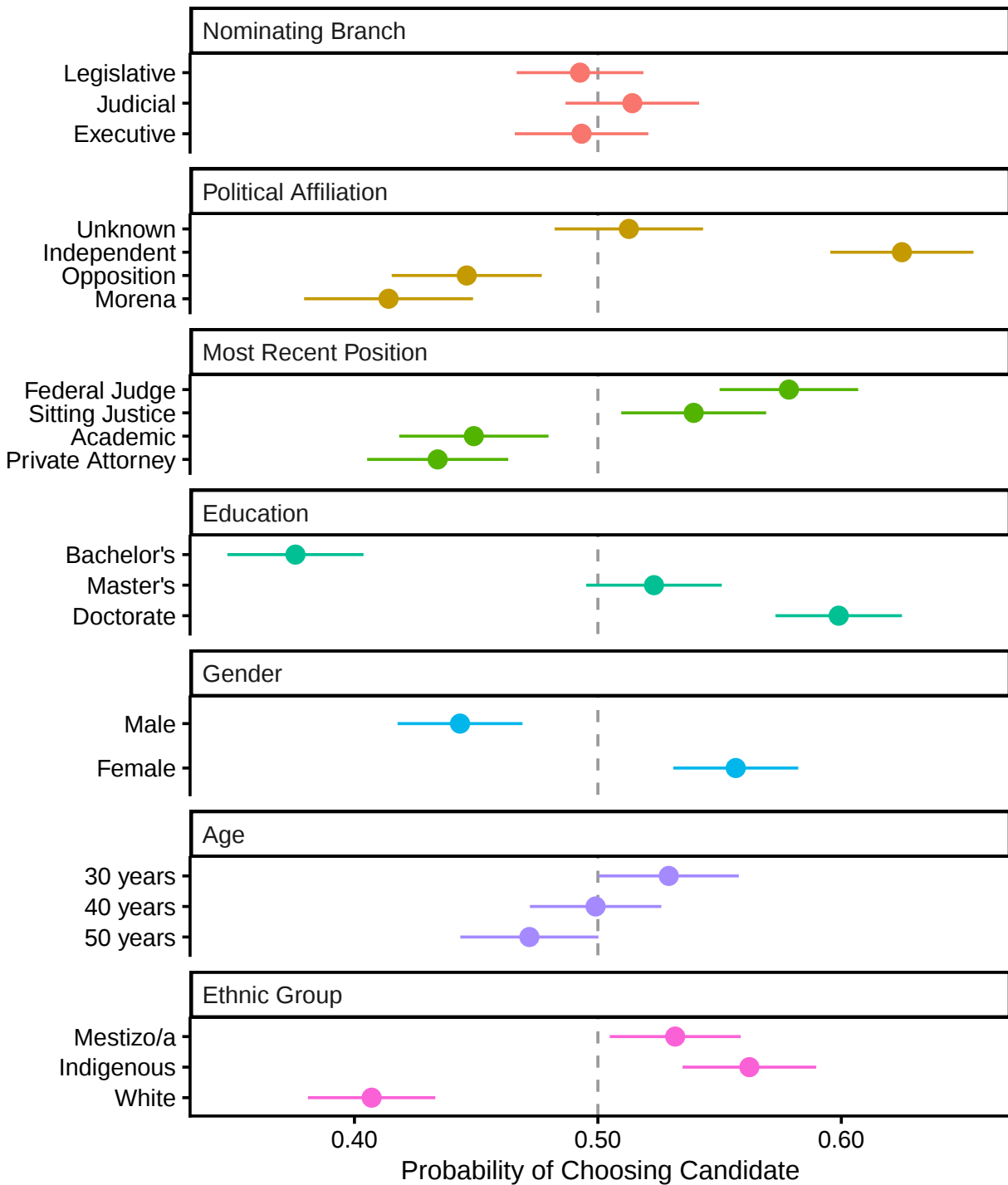
Note: Morena and Opposition partisans (party leaners included). 95% confidence intervals shown. Filled circles are corrected estimates; open circles are uncorrected estimates. Dashed line at 0.5 indicates no preference. Corrections follow Clayton et al. (2023).

Figure A7: Overall Marginal Means With and Without Socioeconomic Post-Stratification Weights



Note: Marginal means with weights correcting for socio-economic status. Weights are constructed to match targets from the *Asociación Mexicana de Agencias de Inteligencia de Mercado y Opinión* (AMAI), using their [2024 population proportions](#).

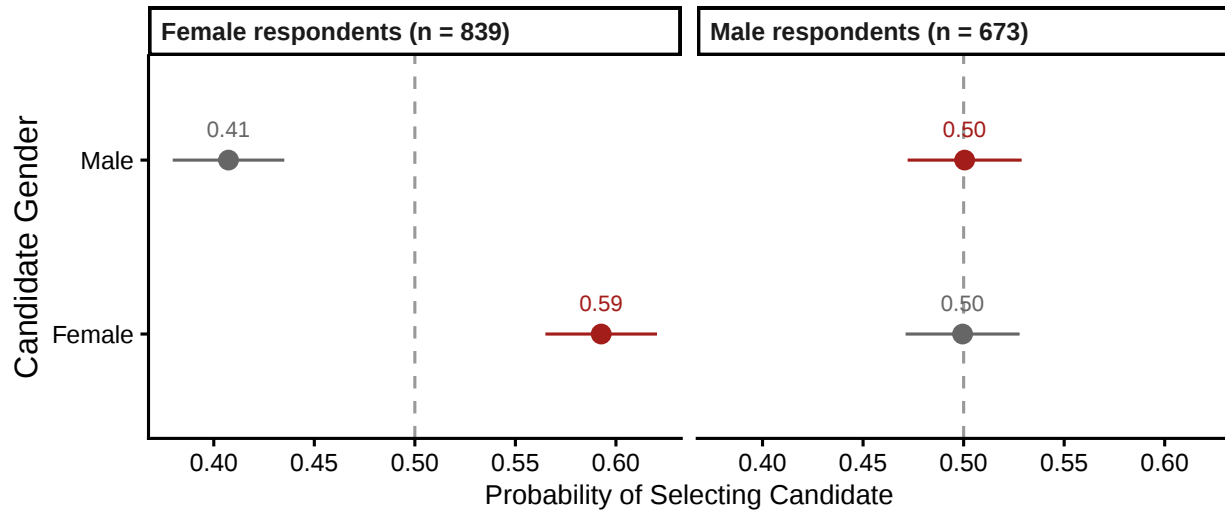
Figure A8: Overall Marginal Means Excluding Age-70 Choice Sets



Note: Marginal means with 95% confidence intervals, re-estimated after dropping every choice set (task) in which either candidate profile was assigned age 70 years.

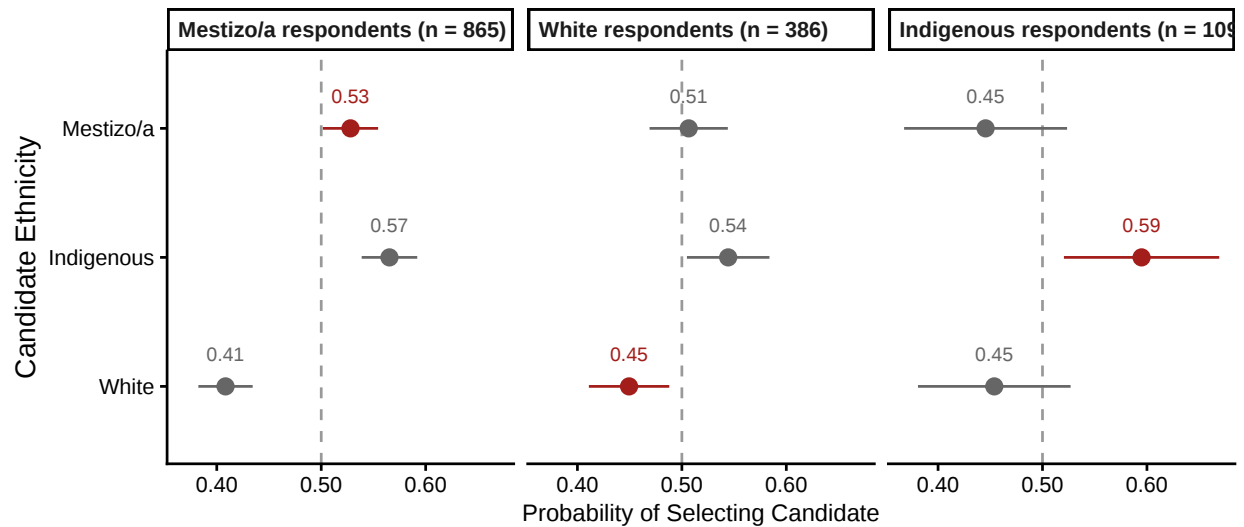
A.1 Descriptive Representation

Figure A9: Candidate gender preferences by respondent gender.



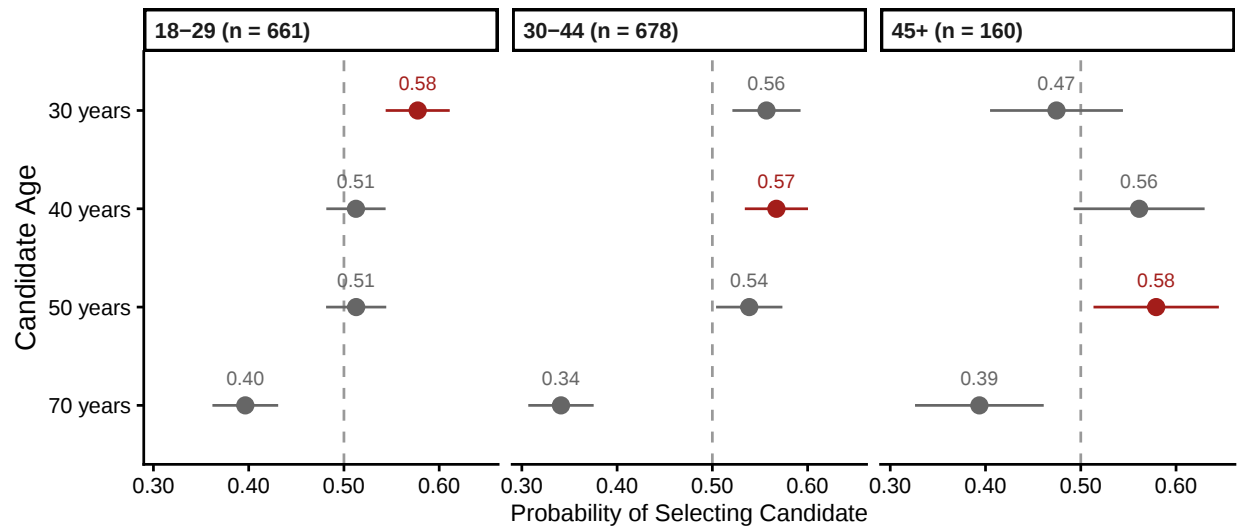
Note: Marginal means with 95% confidence intervals, estimated separately within respondent-gender subgroups. Highlighted (red) points mark the candidate level concordant with the respondent's own gender.

Figure A10: Candidate ethnicity preferences by respondent ethnicity.



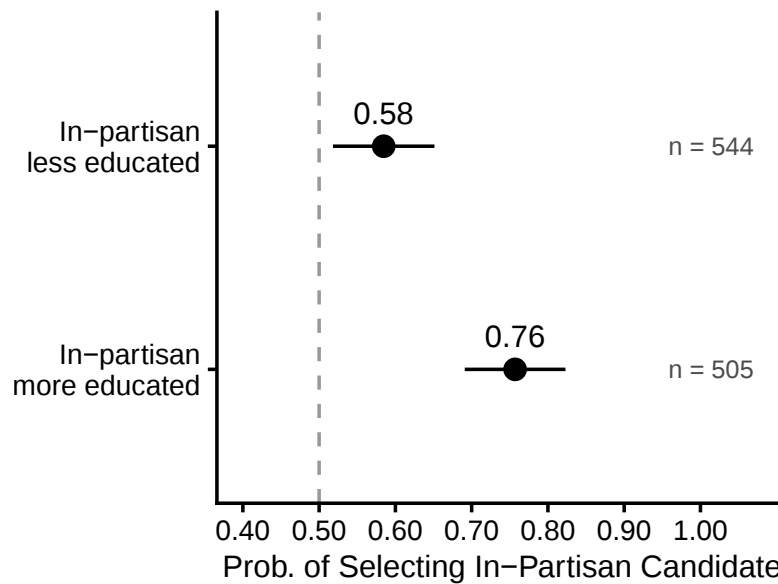
Note: Marginal means with 95% confidence intervals, estimated separately within respondent-ethnicity subgroups. Highlighted (red) points mark the co-ethnic candidate level. Respondents reporting other ethnicities (Negra/Otra) have no candidate counterpart and are excluded.

Figure A11: Candidate age preferences by respondent age group.



Note: Marginal means with 95% confidence intervals, estimated separately within respondent age groups. Highlighted (red) points mark the candidate age closest to the respondent's own age band (18-29 → 30; 30-44 → 40; 45+ → 50).

Figure A12: Partisanship versus education: probability of selecting the in-partisan candidate.



Note: Choice level marginal means indicating the probability of selecting the in-party candidate. The y-axis indicates the in-party candidates' education-level relative to the out-party candidate. Includes only tasks with fully partisan choices, i.e., those with Morena and opposition candidates. In- and out-partisanship coded based on congruence between the candidate and respondent partisanship.

B Observational Data from the Elections

Table B1: Variables in the candidate-performance model.

Variable	Coding
Candidate Vote Share	Model outcome: vote count / total votes $\times 100$ (percentage points)
Morena Affiliation and Ballot Guide	Non-Morena, not endorsed (ref.); Morena, not endorsed; on ballot guide (<i>acordeón</i>)
Most Recent Position	Academic (ref.); Sitting Justice; Federal Judge; Private Attorney
Education	Highest degree attained: Licenciatura/Bachelor's (ref.); Maestría/Master's; Doctorado/Doctorate
Skin Tone (standardized)	Mean of three independent coders' 1–5 ratings (1 = lightest, 5 = darkest) of the candidate's official <i>Conóceles</i> photograph, standardized by $2 \times \text{SD}$; higher = darker
Nominating Branch	Other (ref.); Executive; Legislative; Judicial. "Other" pools candidates nominated by more than one branch with the three sitting justices, who appeared <i>en funciones</i> rather than by nomination
Candidate Gender	Female (ref.); Male
Candidate Age (standardized)	Age / ($2 \times \text{SD}$); mean-imputed for 6 candidates with missing age
Ballot Position (standardized)	Ballot number / ($2 \times \text{SD}$); sequences run separately for male and female candidates
Electoral District	Fixed effect for each of the 300 federal electoral districts; absorbs all district-level variation

Note: All models estimated with `feols` (fixest), standard errors clustered by candidate ($N = 18,900$; 63 candidates $\times$ 300 districts). Morena affiliation and ballot guide distinguishes candidates on the circulated Morena ballot guide (*acordeón*) from Morena-affiliated candidates not included on it. Figure B1 reports an otherwise identical specification with candidate affiliation omitted.

Table B2: SCJN candidates on the *acordeón*, and Morena-affiliated candidates not on it.

#	Candidate	Basis for Morena coding
<i>Named on the acordeón (n = 9; all nine won; eight also coded Morena-affiliated)</i>		
3	Batres Guadarrama Lenia	Founding member of Morena (2014); legal adviser in the Mexico City government and adjunct counsel in the federal Consejería Jurídica; sister of Martí Batres (Morena, Jefe de Gobierno of Mexico City)
8	Esquivel Mossa Yasmín	Sitting justice; proposed to the Court by López Obrador (2019)
16	Herrerías Guerra Sara Irene	Head of the specialized human-rights prosecutor's office of the FGR under the López Obrador administration
22	Ortiz Ahlf Loretta	Sitting justice; proposed to the Court by López Obrador (2021)
26	Ríos González María Estela	Legal counsel (<i>Consejera Jurídica</i>) to López Obrador in Mexico City and federally (2021–24); defended him in the 2005 <i>desafuero</i>
34	Aguilar Ortiz Hugo	Coordinador General de Derechos Indígenas at the INPI (2018–24), directing the federal government's indigenous consultations for the Tren Maya and Corredor Interoceánico
41	Espinosa Betanzo Irving	Magistrate on Mexico City's administrative-responsibilities court; worked under Ernestina Godoy (Morena) across three decades in the city legal office, legislature, and prosecutor's office
43	Figueroa Mejía Giovanni Azael	<i>Coded based on acordeón appearance.</i> Academic (Universidad Iberoamericana); no documented post in a Morena administration or party organ, and he denies ties to any party and advance knowledge of the <i>acordeón</i> (Canchola, 2025).
48	Guerrero García Aristides Rodrigo	Citizen commissioner of Mexico City's transparency body InfoCDMX (2018–24); Morena affiliation reported
<i>Morena-affiliated but not on the acordeón (n = 9; none won)</i>		
12	García Villegas Sánchez Cordero Paula María	Career federal magistrate; daughter of Olga Sánchez Cordero (Morena senator and former Interior Secretary)
24	Pérez Romo Lorena Josefina	Career federal magistrate; closely associated with former Minister Zaldívar
25	Reyes Terán Arely	Appointed to Puebla's administrative court by Governor Barbosa (Morena); previously at the SAT and the Economy Ministry under López Obrador
31	Téllez Torres Orozco Natalia	Anti-corruption magistrate of the TFJA; reported as closely associated with Secretary Raquel Buenrostro (Morena)
36	Anaya Gallardo Federico	Honorary trainer at Morena's Instituto Nacional de Formación Política (2022); adviser to Martí Batres in the Senate (2021) and in the Mexico City government (2023–24)
42	Espinoza Hernández Raymundo	Head of the legal affairs unit of Conahcyt (2018–25), the federal science agency, across the whole of the López Obrador administration
50	Hernández Palacios Mirón Luis Rafael	Procurador Agrario, a presidential appointment (2018–24), then head of the legal unit of IMSS-Bienestar (2024–)
55	Molina Martínez Sergio Javier	Councillor of the Federal Judiciary Council (2019–24); cast the deciding vote in October 2024, alongside three Morena-aligned councillors, to release the judicial-election candidate lists to the Senate; married to a <i>secretaria de estudio y cuenta</i> in the chambers of Minister Yasmín Esquivel
60	Santillán Pérez Eduardo	Morena local deputy in Mexico City (2018–21) and UNAM professor; previously a PRD borough head (2009–12)

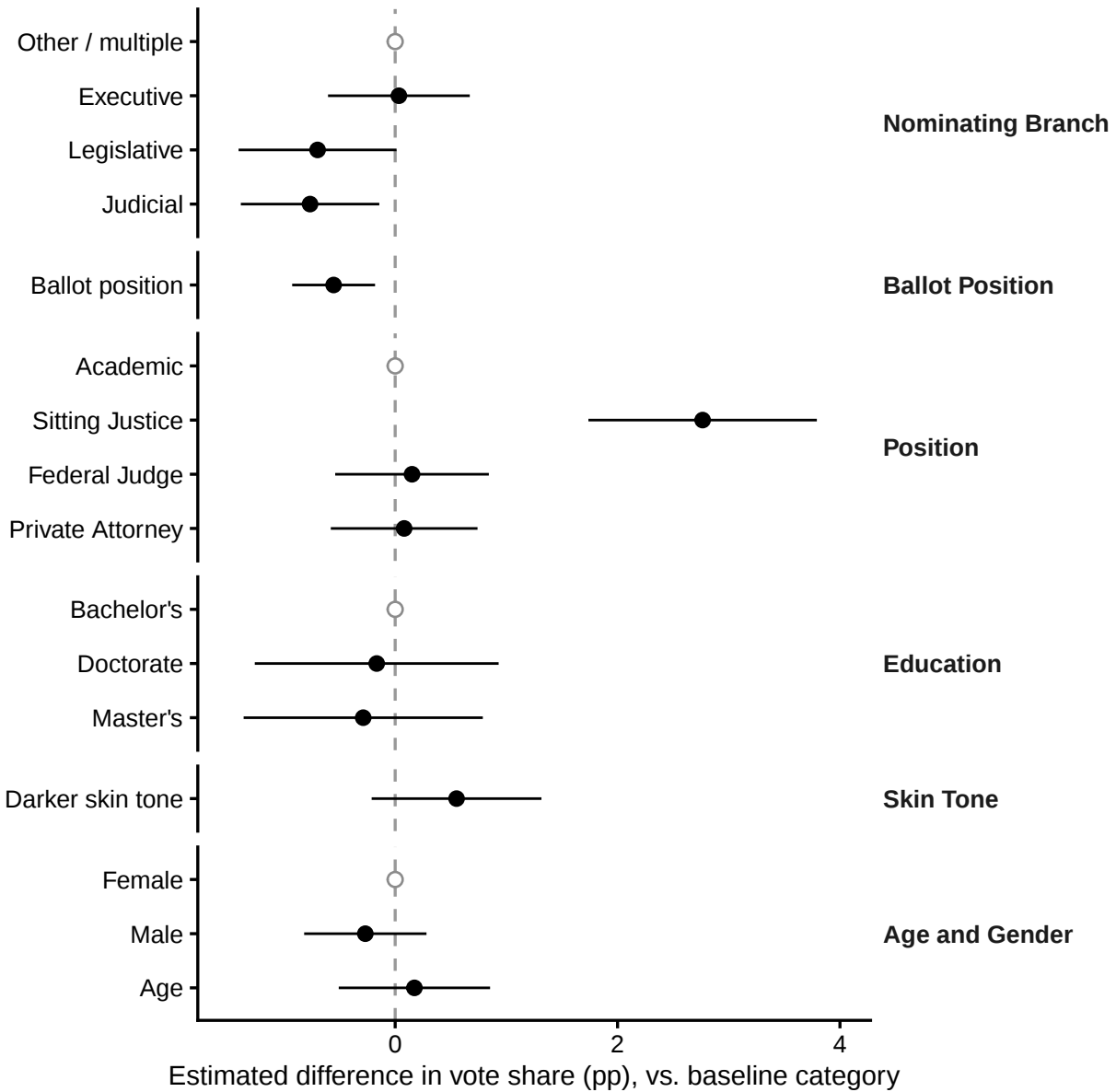
Note: Shaded rows are the nine candidates named on the *acordeón*. Since candidacies were legally non-partisan, affiliation is inferred from documented ties to the governing coalition, and every candidate coded Morena-affiliated held a post in a Morena administration, party organ, or elected office, or worked closely with, or had a familial tie to a senior Morena figure. The nine *acordeón* ballot numbers are documented in INE complaint proceedings (Instituto Nacional Electoral, Comisión de Quejas y Denuncias, 2025a,b).

B.1 AI-Assisted Coding Procedures

I used Claude Code to assist with coding candidate attributes not readily available from the National Electoral Institute's (INE's) records. Morena affiliation, candidate age, and professional position were coded via a by-candidate web-search, while skin tone was coded based on AI agents' ratings of candidates' skin tone, using the photos provided in the INE's *Conóceles* pages. All substantive coding decisions were based on publicly available primary source materials, with final coding decisions resting with the author.

- **Morena Affiliation.** I first had a (human) research assistant classify candidate affiliations, then used an AI-assisted web search to validate and refine this original coding. In the AI-assisted procedure, each of the 63 candidates was searched separately, with coding decisions cross-validated among four sub-agents (three of these were mutually blind; the fourth helped to adjudicate conflicts between them). Clear institutional or familial ties to Morena indicated Morena affiliation (Table B2). Nominating branch or unconfirmed press speculation were not sufficient for coding Morena affiliation. Seventeen candidates were coded as Morena affiliated, including eight who were on the *acordeones*. Figueroa Mejía, an academic with no clear ties to Morena, was listed on the *acordeones* (and coded as such), but is not clearly Morena affiliated.
- **Age.** Based on searches of candidates' birth dates, computed as of the June 1, 2025 elections. Sources included El Financiero, Animal Político, Infobae, N+ biographical profiles, and Spanish Wikipedia. Age was mean imputed for 6 candidates, for whom the information was unavailable.
- **Skin Tone.** Coded as the average of 3 independent (mutually blind) sub-agents' scores of candidates' skin tone, using the headshots embedded in the *Conóceles* PDFs. Skin tone was rated from 1 (lightest) to 5 (darkest). The average pairwise correlation between the three agents was 0.64, and the reliability of their mean score was $ICC(3,k) = 0.84$. Sub-agents were instructed to focus on the ears and neck when the lighting of the photographs presented an issue. I preferred a continuous measure (skin tone) to a categorical one (ethnicity) because ethnicity is a social identity not publicly stated by most candidates.
- **Position.** Based on separate web-searches for all 63 candidates. An AI agent first recorded the candidates' most recent professional position based on a web-search. This raw position was then translated into the closest category matching the conjoint: Federal Judge (31 candidates), Private Attorney (17), Academic (12), or Sitting Justice (3). Three candidates did not fit easily into these categories because they led or worked in executive agencies.

Figure B1: Candidate attributes and vote share, omitting partisan affiliation.



Note: The specification of Figure 6 with the affiliation variable (Morena affiliation and ballot guide) removed; all other terms, the district fixed effects, and the clustering of standard errors by candidate are unchanged ($N = 18,900$). Comparison with Figure 6 suggests that nominating branch operates as a proxy for endorsement.

These candidates were coded as Federal Judges, though the (null) results are unchanged by alternative codings.²⁰

For reproducibility, I recorded the prompts and sources used in coding these variables, which are available from the author on request. These materials also note which models (Opus, Sonnet, or Haiku) were used for each classification task.

²⁰Coding all three as Private Attorneys instead leaves the position estimates substantively unchanged: Federal Judge moves from -0.05 ($p = 0.80$) to -0.06 ($p = 0.78$), and Private Attorney from -0.01 ($p = 0.94$) to -0.01 ($p = 0.95$).

Figure B2: SCJN candidates by *acordeón* status, with coded age.

NAMED ON THE ACORDEÓN (n = 9)								
#3 Batres Guadarrama Lenia Age 55	#8 Esquivel Mossa Yasmin Age 61	#16 Herrerías Guerra Sara Irene Age 61	#22 Ortiz Ahif Loretta Age 70	#26 Ríos González María Estela Age 78	#34 Aguilar Ortiz Hugo Age 52	#41 Espinosa Betanzo Irving Age 49	#43 Figueroa Mejía Giovanni Azael Age 46	#48 Guerrero García Aristides Rodrigo Age 41
MORENA-AFFILIATED, NOT ON THE ACORDEÓN (n = 9)								
#12 García Villegas Sánchez Cordero Paula María Age 54	#24 Pérez Romo Lorena Josefina Age 48	#25 Reyes Terán Arely Age 63	#31 Téllez Torres Orozco Natalia Age 42	#36 Anaya Gallardo Federico Age 54	#42 Espinoza Hernández Raymundo Age 42	#50 Hernández Palacios Miron Luis Rafael Age 78	#55 Molina Martínez Sergio Javier Age 50	#60 Santillán Pérez Eduardo Age 51
NOT MORENA-AFFILIATED, NOT ON THE ACORDEÓN (n = 45)								
#1 Aguirre Bonilla Olivia Age 39	#2 Aladro Echeverría Rebeca Stella Age —	#4 Bonilla García Jazmin Age 40	#5 Castañeda Pérez Marisol Age 48	#6 Cruz Alcalá Selene Age 39	#7 Escudero Mendoza Silvia Age 56	#9 Estrada Tena Fabiana Age 49	#10 Fuentes Jiménez Estela Age 65	#11 García Mendoza Irma Guadalupe Age 55
#13 González Centeno Alma Delia Age 48	#14 González Tirado Rosa Elena Age —	#15 Güicho González Monica Arcelia Age 53	#17 Ibarra Olguín Ana María Age —	#18 Madrigal Valdez Lutgarda Age 65	#19 Martínez Valero Dora Alicia Age 49	#20 Morales Ibañez Marisela Age 55	#21 Mosri Gutiérrez Magda Zulema Age 53	#23 Ortiz Monroy Cynthia Age 27
#27 Rojas Olvera Margarita Darlene Age 50	#28 Rosillo Garfías Ma. Consuelo Age 63	#30 Tapia Gutiérrez Ingrid De Los Angeles Age 58	#32 Ucaranza Sánchez Veronica Elizabeth Age 51	#33 Zarza Delgado Luz María Age —	#35 Allier Campuzano Jaime Age 60	#37 Carlin De La Fuente Ulises Age —	#38 Corzo Sosa Edgar Age 59	#39 Davila Rodríguez Abraham Amiud Age 54
#40 De Paz González Isaac Age 44	#44 Flores Castro Mauricio Age 40	#45 García González Jaime Salvador Age 52	#46 García Guerra Ángel Mario Age 60	#47 Garduño Pastén Ricardo Age 48	#49 Gutiérrez Priego César Mario Age 49	#51 Illanes Olivares Roberto Salvador Age 46	#52 Jiménez Gutiérrez Javier Age 55	#53 López Andrade Guillermo Pablo Age 53
#54 Luna Jaime Francisco Age 37	#58 Molinar Rohana Luis Edwin Age 54	#57 Odriozola Mariscal Carlos Enrique Age 55	#58 Olmedo Piña César Enrique Age 38	#59 Regis López Gabriel Age 49	#61 Sodi Cuellar Ricardo Alfredo Age 65	#62 Sorela Castillo Antonio Age 38	#63 Torres Maldonado Eduardo José Age 68	#64 Tortolero Serrano Mauricio Ricardo III Age —

Note: Candidate images from the INE's *Conóceles* pages. The text notes ballot number, acordeón status, and age, as coded based on the procedure above (Appendix Section B.1). "Age —" indicates the six candidates whose age could not be verified (mean imputed in the model).

C Panel Evidence on Turnout

Table C1: Variable codings: Driscoll et al. judicial reform opinion panel.

Variable	Description
Outcomes	
Judicial Election Turnout	<i>Pensando en su participación en las elecciones judiciales del 1 de junio de 2025, ¿Fue a votar?</i> (Wave 3, post-election, June 24–July 8, 2025; 1 = voted, 0 = did not vote; “Prefiero no decir” [$n = 239$] coded missing. Self-reported turnout, $\approx 35\%$, exceeds official INE turnout, $\approx 13\%$.)
Perceived Election Fairness	<i>... Pensando en las próximas elecciones judiciales, ¿dónde las situaría en una escala de 1 a 5 en la que UNO significa que las elecciones se desarrollarán de forma injusta y CINCO que se desarrollarán de forma justa?</i> (Wave 2, pre-election, fielded May 6–18, 2025; 1–5, 1 = will be conducted unfairly, 5 = fairly; no reverse-coding.)
Moderators	
Judicial Knowledge Index	Sum of three factual SCJN items (1 = correct, 0 = incorrect/missing; Wave 1; range 0–3, higher = more knowledge): <i>¿Cuántos ministros/as componen la SCJN?</i> (correct: 11); <i>¿Quién ocupa la presidencia de la SCJN?</i> (correct: Norma Lucía Piña Hernández); <i>Cuando la SCJN dicta sentencia, ¿diría que...?</i> (correct: la sentencia es final y no se puede revisar).
News Consumption Index	<i>¿Con qué frecuencia sigue las noticias?</i> (radio/TV/newspapers/social media; Wave 1; 1 = Nunca ... 5 = Diariamente). Row mean of the four; range 1–5; robustness check only.
Partisanship	
Presidential Vote Intention	<i>Si esta semana fueran las próximas elecciones presidenciales, ¿qué haría usted?</i> (Wave 1. Reference: would not vote, collapsing “No votaría” and the blank/null option; Morena = “el candidato o partido de la actual presidenta”; Opposition = “un candidato o partido diferente”).
Controls	
Sex	Netquest panel metadata (Wave 1; man [ref.] / woman).
Age	Netquest panel metadata (Wave 1; numeric, years).
Education	<i>¿Cuál es el máximo nivel educativo que usted alcanzó?</i> (Wave 1; secondary [ref.] / none-primary / university.)
Socioeconomic Status	AMAI classification, Netquest panel metadata (Wave 1; 1–7, reverse-coded: 7 = AB highest, 1 = E lowest).
Ideology	<i>... una escala del 1 a 10 que va de izquierda a derecha...</i> (Wave 1; 1 = left to 10 = right; no reverse-coding.)
Political Interest	<i>¿Con qué frecuencia presta atención a lo que está ocurriendo en el gobierno y la política?</i> (Wave 1; 1–5, reverse-coded: 5 = Siempre, 1 = Nunca.)
Fixed Effects	
State of Residence	<i>¿Dónde vive?</i> (Wave 1; 32-level fixed effect, INEGI order.)

Note: Survey items from the Driscoll and Nelson Mexico Judicial Reform Opinion Panel.

Table C2: Judicial knowledge, partisanship, turnout, and perceived election fairness.

Dependent variable	Turnout	Elections will be fair	Turnout
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)
<i>Party sympathy</i>			
Would not Vote			
Knowledge	-0.007 (0.021)	-0.155** (0.056)	
News			0.053* (0.021)
Morena Sympathizers	0.234*** (0.046)	0.441*** (0.106)	0.274*** (0.083)
× Knowledge	0.063* (0.028)	0.341*** (0.067)	
× News			0.010 (0.027)
Opposition Sympathizers	0.070 (0.047)	0.010 (0.115)	0.197* (0.083)
× Knowledge	-0.054* (0.027)	-0.137* (0.068)	
× News			-0.067* (0.026)
Woman	0.001 (0.020)	-0.020 (0.046)	0.000 (0.020)
Age	0.001 (0.001)	-0.006*** (0.002)	0.001 (0.001)
Education: none/primary	0.005 (0.071)	0.211 (0.185)	0.000 (0.067)
Education: university	0.018 (0.023)	-0.130* (0.052)	0.018 (0.023)
Socioeconomic status	-0.003 (0.008)	-0.011 (0.017)	-0.003 (0.007)
Ideology (left–right)	-0.019*** (0.005)	-0.057*** (0.011)	-0.022*** (0.004)
Political interest	0.067*** (0.009)	0.123*** (0.022)	0.053*** (0.010)
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,058	2,265	2,096
R ²	0.196	0.278	0.191

Note: Models of self-reported turnout and electoral fairness perceptions. Models are OLS with state fixed effects, heteroskedasticity-robust SEs are reported in parentheses. Variable definitions are provided in Table C1. Stars: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$