Hometown Advantage: Voter Preferences for Community Embeddedness in Local Contests

Joseph T. Ornstein* Amanda J. Heideman† Bryant J. Moy‡
Kaylyn Jackson Schiff§

June 14, 2024

Abstract

Every year, Americans elect hundreds of thousands of candidates to local public office, typically in low-attention, nonpartisan races. How do voters evaluate candidates in these sorts of elections? Previous research suggests that, absent party cues, voters rely on a set of heuristic shortcuts—including the candidate's name, profession, and interest group endorsements—to decide whom to support. In this paper, we suggest that community embeddedness—a candidate's roots and ties to the community—is particularly salient in these local contests. We present evidence from a conjoint survey experiment on a nationally representative sample of American voters. We estimate the marginal effect on vote share of candidate attributes such as gender, race, age, profession, interest group endorsements, and signals of community embeddedness—specifically homeownership and residency duration. We find that voters, regardless of political party, have strong preferences for community embeddedness. Strikingly, the magnitude of the residency duration effect rivals that of prior political experience.

Keywords: local politics, conjoint survey experiment, representation, community embeddedness

Word Count: 3,810

Competing Interests: The authors declare none.

*Assistant Professor, School of Public & International Affairs, University of Georgia, jornstein@uga.edu
†Teaching Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Marquette University, amanda.heideman@marquette.edu
‡Assistant Professor, Wilf Family Department of Politics, New York University, bryant.moy@nyu.edu
§Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Purdue University, schiffk@purdue.edu

1 Introduction

There are approximately 90,000 local governments in the United States, for which citizens elect hundreds of thousands of public officials each year (Warshaw 2019). Yet most studies of candidate preferences focus on the national level.[1] This is problematic for our understanding of elections and candidate choice because local electoral contests differ from national elections in important ways (Oliver and Ha 2007). Local elections are characterized by non-partisan races (for example, 77% of city council races use non-partisan ballots (MacManus and Bullock III 2003)), as well as lower information and lower attention on the part of both voters and the media. Our understanding of candidate choice and the tradeoffs that voters make from national contexts may therefore provide limited insight into local electoral contests. This study therefore addresses the following question: Which candidate attributes do voters value most in local political contests?

To explore how individuals evaluate different candidate characteristics in local elections, we use a conjoint experiment embedded in the 2022 Cooperative Election Study, which asks 1,308 respondents to choose between two candidates in five hypothetical nonpartisan local elections. We include candidate attributes previously explored in the literature—name, age, career, prior political experience, family, and endorsements—as well as two additional attributes that may be especially important in local elections: homeownership and the length of time the candidate has lived in the community. This allows us not only to compare our results on local elections to prior findings about key attributes in state and national contests, but also to contribute new knowledge on the relative importance of "community embeddedness," or a candidate's roots and ties to a community.

We find that several candidate attributes are as important in local elections as they are in national and state elections. Voters are more likely to prefer younger candidates, those with previous political experience, business owners, and candidates with families. In addition, we find that attributes signaling "community embeddedness" are particularly attractive to

[1] A few exceptions include Mares and Visconti (2020) and Berz and Jankowski (2022).

voters. Our respondents are 4.0 percentage points more likely to vote for a homeowner than a renter, and 7.6 percentage points more likely to vote for someone who has lived in the community for a decade (compared to the base category of 2 years). While Democrats and Republicans are split on the importance of homeownership (greater Republican preference for homeownership), there is bipartisan consensus on the value of being embedded in a community for a longer period of time. Moreover, the magnitude of the residency duration effect is on par with the prior political experience effect, an attribute shown to be considerably important in prior work. Overall, the results imply that voters prefer their local elected officials to have strong local roots, and future work should explore the mechanisms through which community embeddedness matters to voters.

2 Candidate Attributes and Voter Preferences

In an effort to combat the corruption and inefficiencies produced by party patronage that characterized many cities during the early part of the 20th century, Progressive reformers championed reforms that included the secret ballot, direct primaries, and the nonpartisan ballot. While the former – secret ballots and direct primaries – have been almost universally adopted by cities, the nonpartisan ballot characterizes only about 75 percent of municipal elections and roughly one-half of all elections in the United States (see discussion in Wright (2008)). Without party affiliation as a low-cost information cue, voters must turn to whatever information they have or can infer from the ballot.

2.1 Heuristics in Non-partisan Elections

One such source of information is incumbency status or prior political experience. Those who do show up to vote in local contests often rely on incumbency (Schaffner, Streb and Wright 2001, Squire and Smith 1988), especially as this information is frequently indicated directly on the ballot. Both incumbency and a candidate's political history can signal job

experience or that a candidate is higher quality after successfully defeating challengers in a prior election. Prior work has documented incumbency advantages for mayors and city council members (Trounstine 2011, Ferreira and Gyourko 2014) and has shown that individuals use information about candidates' political experience when party labels are absent (Kirkland and Coppock 2018).

Voters also draw on candidate demographics, including race and ethnicity (Pomper 1966), gender (Matson and Fine 2006), and age (Eshima and Smith 2022). While these characteristics are not indicated directly on the ballot, voters may be able to infer some of these characteristics from candidates' names. Individuals may even interpret race and gender as party cues in non-partisan elections (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993, McDermott 1998), and there is evidence that voters prefer to elect women to "stereotype-congruent" positions like school boards (Anzia and Bernhard 2022).

Furthermore, voters use information that they gather about candidates from campaigns, endorsements, and media coverage prior to heading to the ballot box. Profession, career history, and private sector experience provide valuable cues (Kirkland and Coppock 2018, Schaffner, Streb and Wright 2001, Lim and Snyder Jr 2015).[2] Voters value candidate qualifications, relevant training, and functional competence for office and use cues in the form of candidate occupation to assess who is or is not fit for the job. For example, Atkeson and Hamel (2020) find that voters prefer candidates with careers in education for positions on local school boards. In general, voters also tend to favor business owners and executives for the position of mayor. Kirkland (2021) finds that business owners and executives "make up the largest occupational category among US mayors—both over time and across regions of the country." Republicans voters especially prefer candidates with job experience (Kirkland and Coppock 2018), business experience in particular (Adams, Lascher Jr and Martin 2021).

Endorsements are another effective way for voters to overcome informational deficits. Endorsements from interest groups (Lupia 1994, Gerber and Phillips 2003), co-ethnics (Ben-

[2]In California, candidates may list their occupational background directly on the ballot.

jamin 2017), and newspapers (Ansolabehere, Lessem and Snyder Jr 2006, Lieske 1989) all seem to influence voter preferences. For example, McDermott (2006) finds that endorsements from groups with a shared common interest—such as unions and union members—effectively improves ideologically and policy-aligned voting. Similarly, Arceneaux and Kolodny (2009) find that endorsements can help the least informed make decisions in a relatively low information real-world setting.

Cultural stereotypes surrounding marriage and children also play an important role in shaping perceptions of candidates. Teele, Kalla and Rosenbluth (2018) find that voters and elites prefer candidates who are both married and have children. Moreover, candidates who are perceived as going against these traditional stereotypes are penalized. A large literature finds that these penalties are concentrated particularly among women as motherhood becomes more politicized (Deason, Greenlee and Langner 2015), uneven child-rearing responsibilities persist (Iversen and Rosenbluth 2006), and women pursuing leadership roles are seen as too ambitious (Dittmar 2015, Jamieson 1995).

2.2 Community Embeddedness: Homeownership and Residency Duration

Despite featuring prominently in campaign ads, less is known about how voters use information about candidates' community embeddedness—their roots and ties to the community expressed through attributes such as homeownership and residency duration—to make vote choices. We know that homeowners are significantly overrepresented among public officeholders at all levels of government (Einstein, Ornstein and Palmer 2022), but despite an extensive literature on how homeownership affects turnout and vote choice (Fischel 2002, Hall and Yoder 2022, Einstein, Glick and Palmer 2020, Einstein, Palmer and Glick 2019, Oliver and Ha 2007, Hankinson 2018), we know little about whether this overrepresentation of homeowners is driven by candidate selection or voter preferences.

Homeownership and residency duration may impact voter preferences in local elections

through three distinct mechanisms: as a signal of the candidate's investment in the community, as a marker of a shared place-based identity, and through the web of personal relationships that candidates cultivate with their friends and neighbors.

First, these attributes may signal candidates' investment of time and money into the community. Voters may prefer candidates with a stake in the long-term success of the community, and investments provide personal incentives to produce quality policies for the benefit of the community. Voters with large financial investments in a community tend to be more highly engaged in local politics (Fischel 2002); the same may be true for public officials as well.

Second, homeownership and residency duration may signal that a candidate shares the voters' identity and policy preferences. Since voters themselves are more likely to be homeowners with strong ties to the community, they may prefer candidates with similar experiences and in-depth knowledge of concerns in the community (Mansbridge 1999). Community embeddedness involves symbolic or place-based identity (Munis 2021), where voters reward candidates for living near them and identifying as part of the group. Work by Schulte-Cloos and Bauer (2023) argue that "the local roots of political candidates act as social identity cues to voters" (pg. 695). Place-based social identity instills in voters confidence that their neighbors will represent them effectively, whether through substantive or descriptive representation (Campbell et al. 2019, Meredith 2013).

Finally, voters may prefer candidates with whom they have a personal relationship (Sinclair 2012, Panagopoulos, Leighley and Hamel 2017), and candidates embedded in their communities are able to form deep personal networks over many years. Long-term residents have greater name recognition and a deeper understanding of the community and its voters' priorities (Hunt 2022). Furthermore, personal relationships play a significant role in politics, perhaps even more so in local contests than in statewide or congressional races due to the general lack of salient policy information. V. O. Key's concept of friends and neighbor voting is based on candidates winning support not due to their political positions but because they

reside near voters (Key 1949). Voters tend to "back the home-town boy" (Key 1949, p. 41).

For these reasons, we expect that voters will be more likely to select candidates who are homeowners, and those who have lived in the community for a longer period of time, over renters and newer residents. A key feature of the conjoint design used in this study is that we are able to evaluate not only the unique impact, but also the *relative* importance of these community embeddedness attributes compared to other candidate attributes with documented importance for voters' preferences. Moreover, the experimental design can help us distinguish between the three mechanisms outlined above. Because respondents are asked to evaluate fictional candidates, we can isolate the effect of community embeddedness from the effect of personal relationships. And by comparing preferences across different groups of respondents, we can begin to disentangle the first two mechanisms as well. For example, if homeowners and renters diverge on whether they prefer homeowner candidates, this would provide evidence in favor of the shared identity mechanism. If *all* voters prefer homeowner candidates, it would provide evidence in favor of the investment mechanism.

3 Experimental Design

We surveyed 1,308 respondents from the post-election survey module of the 2022 Cooperative Election Study (CES).[3] Of these respondents, 39% were men, 71% White, 12% Black, and 8% Hispanic. 27% live in urban areas, 40% live in suburbs, and 60% reported owning their own home. Our survey instrument is provided in Appendix Section A.1.

The survey included a conjoint choice task to assess the impact of candidate attributes on respondent's preferences (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto 2014). Conjoint designs have been used to study candidate preferences in a variety of contexts (Carlson 2015, Franchino and Zucchini 2015, Horiuchi, Smith and Yamamoto 2020, Carnes and Lupu 2016, Kirkland and Coppock 2018, Sung 2022). In our survey, each respondent completed five pairwise

[3]This "unmatched" sample is not constructed to be nationally representative, and does not include survey weights for 30% of the sample. All the results we present here are similar, albeit less precise, when using the nationally representative subsample. For details, see Supplementary Materials section A.2.4.

comparisons between hypothetical candidates, like the example in Figure 1. Seven attributes were provided for each candidate, drawn uniformly from the distributions in Table 1 with no restrictions on combinations.[4][5] The bolded attribute—Community Ties—represents our "community embeddedness" variables of homeownership and residency duration, randomized independently. Note that homeownership is not a perfect measure of community embeddedness and may suffer from an information equivalence problem (Dafoe, Zhang and Caughey 2018) in that it can signal other information like socioeconomic status, race, or that a candidate "has their act together," especially when combined with other attributes in the conjoint experiment. We expect that this is less of a concern for residency duration.

Table 1: Conjoint Task Attributes and Levels

Attribute	Levels
Name	123 names drawn from Butler and Homola (2017): 50% male and 50% female; 60% chance of a stereotypically White name, 20% chance of a stereotypically Black name, and 20% chance of a stereotypically Hispanic name
Political Experience	Previously elected to local office or no previous experience
Career History	High school teacher, construction worker, local attorney, police officer, real estate developer, business owner, not employed
Community Ties	Homeowner or renter; has lived in the community for 2 or 10 years
Family	Married with two children, married with no children, or single
Age	30, 45, or 60
Endorsed By	Association of local real estate developers, police union, teachers' union, local newspaper, county chamber of commerce, no endorsements

[4]Gender and race are not explicitly listed in the conjoint profiles, but are instead signaled by a set of racially-distinct names developed by Butler and Homola (2017). We chose this design to reduce the number of attributes that respondents needed to read, and to limit potential social desirability effects (Abrajano, Elmendorf and Quinn 2018). Strictly speaking, readers should interpret the Race AMCEs presented in the next section as the estimated causal effect of racially-distinctive names, not the causal effect of candidate race. See the Appendix Section A.1 for the complete list of names used.

[5]While all factor combinations are technically possible in the real world, we do note that some combinations, such as 65-year-old renters, may be deemed unusual by some respondents.

Figure 1: Example Conjoint Choice

YouGov

Candidate Profiles 1 of 5

	Candidate A	Candidate B
Name	Jasmine Joseph	Luke Phillips
Political Experience	Previously elected to local office	Previously elected to local office
Career History	High school teacher	Real estate developer
Community Ties	Has rented an apartment in your community for the past 10 years.	Has rented an apartment in your community for the past 2 years.
Family	Married with two children	Married with no children
Age	60	45
Endorsed By	No endorsements	The county chamber of commerce

Which candidate would you prefer to vote for?

- ○ Candidate A
- ○ Candidate B

Our analyses follow our pre-registration.[6] For each attribute, we estimate the Average Marginal Component Effect (AMCE), which in a forced-choice conjoint experiment has a straightforward, politically meaningful interpretation: it estimates the marginal effect of an attribute on a candidate's vote share (Bansak et al. 2022). We also estimate conditional AMCEs by respondent homeownership and political party identification, discussed below, and by other respondent demographics (gender, race, and urban/suburban/rural place of residence), reported in Appendix Section A.2.

[6]The anonymized version of our pre-registration can be found at Wharton Credibility Lab's AsPredicted repository under the project entitled 'Local Candidate Conjoint (CES 2022)' (#109549): `https://aspredicted.org/43K_6MW`.

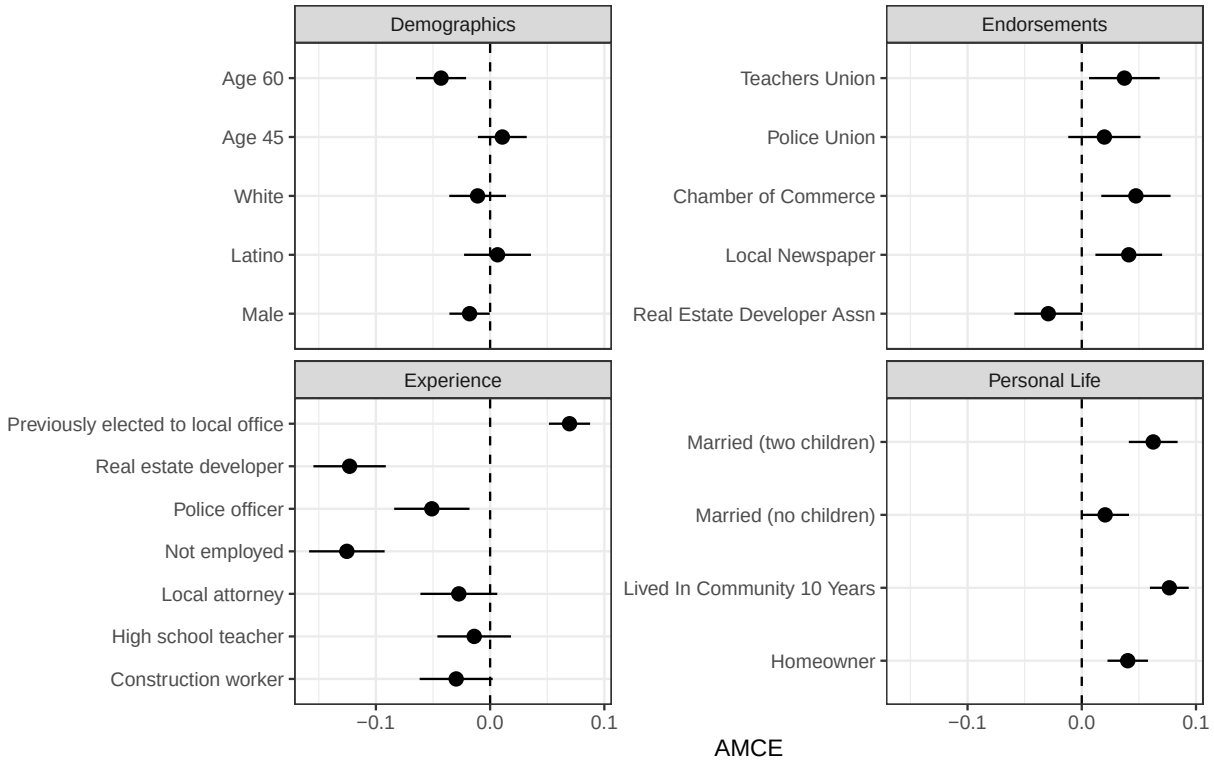
4 Results

4.1 Standard Candidate Attributes

Figure A5 displays the estimated AMCEs and 95% confidence intervals for each level of the candidate attributes. Many of the results are consistent with our expectations and prior research, with a few notable exceptions. Consistent with Kirkland and Coppock (2018), we find that voters are more likely to prefer candidates with previous political experience: respondents were 7.0 percentage points more likely to choose candidates that had previously been elected to political office than those with no prior political experience, all else equal. Respondents were also somewhat more likely to prefer younger candidates (4.3 percentage points less likely to choose a 60 year old candidate compared to the base category of 30, holding all else constant). Moreover, respondents preferred candidates who are married with children (+6.3 percentage points compared to single candidates), consistent with other candidate preference studies.

In line with previous research, we find that our respondents prefer candidates who are business owners more than any other career we included in the survey. Compared to the base category of business owner, respondents were less likely to choose unemployed candidates (-12.5 percentage points) and police officers (-5.1 percentage points), though we will see momentarily that there are large partisan differences in AMCE for these attributes. Notably, our respondents' preference for business owners does not extend to real estate developers, (-12.3pp compared to a generic business owner). Antipathy towards real estate developers—particularly among liberals (Manville 2021)—is an interesting recent development in US local politics (Monkkonen and Manville 2019), and we were surprised to find that it was one of the strongest estimated effects from our survey experiment, regardless of respondent's political party, homeownership status, and other demographic characteristics. These negative perceptions of real estate developers persist when looking at endorsements as well. Compared to no endorsement, respondents reacted negatively to an endorsement by an association of real

Figure 2: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) and 95% Confidence Intervals By Candidate Attribute



Notes: The figure displays estimated AMCEs with 95% confidence intervals. The reference categories for each attribute are: endorsement - no endorsements, family - single, political experience - no previous experience, age - 30, residency duration - 2 years, homeownership - renter, career history - business owner, race - Black, gender - Female

estate developers (-2.9pp), but positively to an endorsement by a teachers union (+3.7pp), chamber of commerce (+4.7pp), or local newspaper (+3.1pp). In the aggregate, we find no significant impact of a police union endorsement on hypothetical vote choice (although we will again see partisan differences below).

Finally, we find small and statistically insignificant differences in choices based on candidate race and gender. Though this could be the result of a weak signal (we did not explicitly list candidate race and gender, but included race and gender cues in the candidates' names), subgroup differences suggest that respondents are correctly identifying candidate race. For example, Black respondents are 7.6pp more likely to select Black candidates than White respondents (Figure A15). These results are is broadly consistent with those from other

conjoint experiments on racial discrimination (Butler and Homola 2017). In all, we find little evidence that the average respondent is discriminating on the basis of race or gender when selecting candidates.

4.2 Community Embeddedness

For our novel "community embeddedness" attributes—homeownership and residency duration—we find large and statistically significant impacts. All else being equal, respondents were 4.0 percentage points more likely to choose a homeowner over a renter, and 7.7 percentage points more likely to choose a candidate who had lived in the community for a decade (compared to the base category of 2 years). Strikingly, the magnitude of the residency duration effect rivals that of prior political experience, and the effect of homeownership is similar in magnitude to an endorsement from a local newspaper. In fact, the magnitude of the residency duration effect was the third largest of all of the candidate attributes that we examined (exceeded only by our respondents' distaste for real estate developers and the unemployed). This suggests that community embeddedness is quite important to voters in local elections, both in its own right and in comparison to other candidate features.

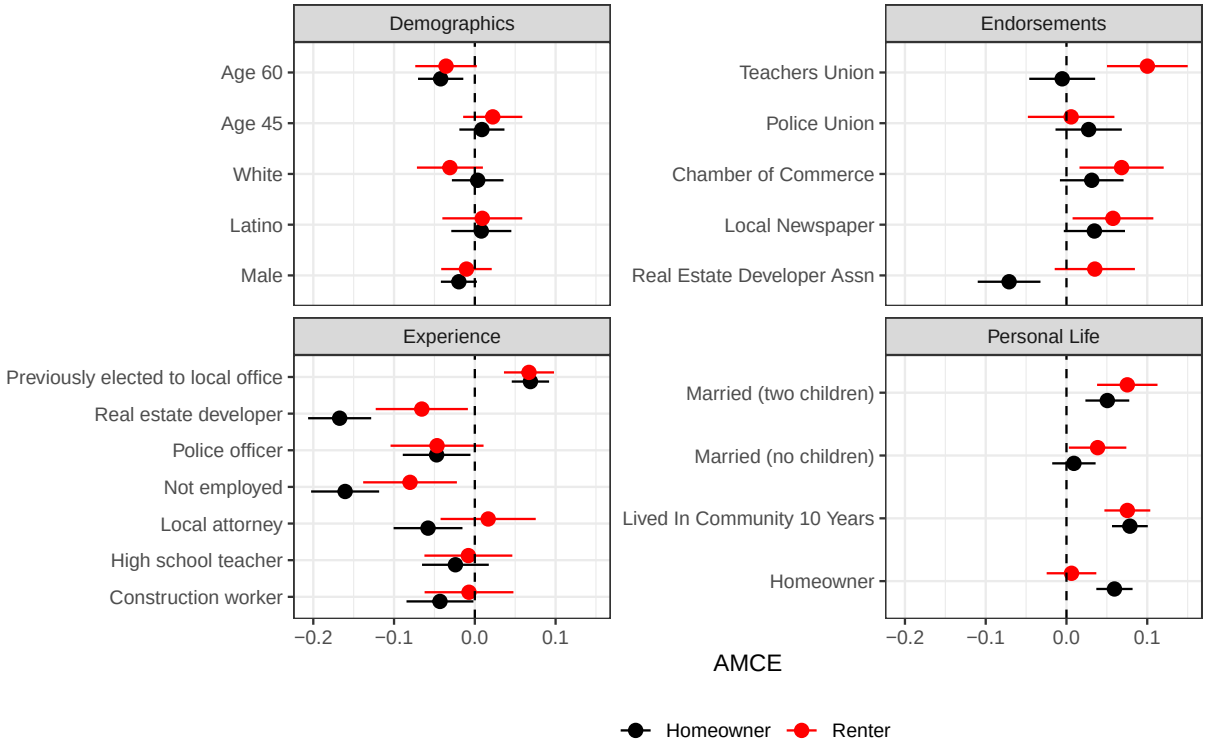
To examine the proposed investment and shared identity mechanisms, we estimate conditional AMCEs for homeowners and renters separately, as shown in Figure 3. These results suggest some evidence in favor of the shared identity mechanism—homeowner respondents prefer homeowner candidates, but respondents who are renters do not share this preference. It is notable, however, that renters do not appear to prefer renter candidates over homeowner candidates.[7]

When considering the residency duration attribute, we instead see evidence in favor of the investment mechanism—respondents of every kind prefer candidates who have lived in

[7]Conditional AMCEs can be a misleading measure of subgroup preferences when there are multiple attribute levels and the reference category is chosen arbitrarily. For this reason, Leeper, Hobolt and Tilley (2020) recommend comparing subgroup effects by estimating the difference in conditional marginal means. We perform these hypothesis tests in the Supplementary Materials (A.2), confirming that the subgroup preferences we describe in the main text are robust to this alternative specification.

their community for longer a longer period of time, one of the few estimated effects that holds regardless of the respondent's political party, demographics, or homeownership status. The estimated effect is somewhat smaller among respondents who reported living in their community for less than one year (see Figures A4 and A17 in the Supplementary Materials), but these differences are not statistically distinguishable from zero. We acknowledge that these are imperfect tests of these mechanisms, and we encourage future work to examine the contributing factors to perceived community embeddedness.

Figure 3: Conditional Effects by Homeownership



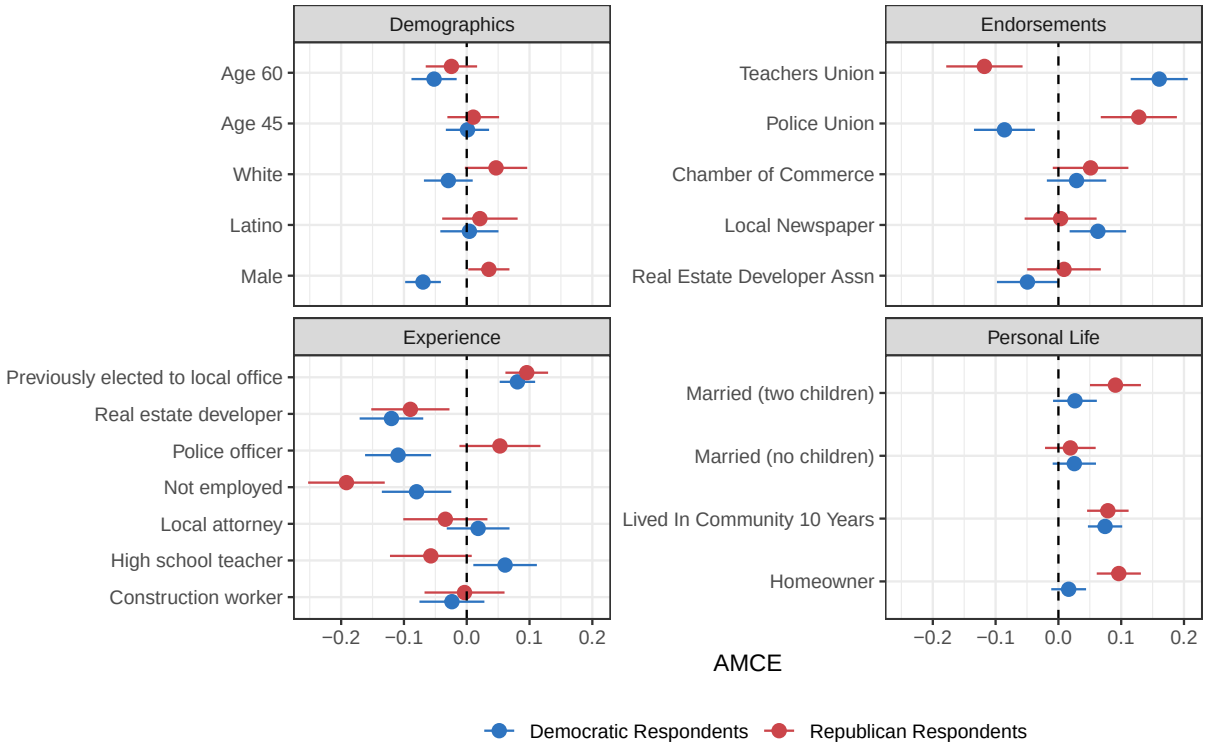
Notes: The figure displays estimated average marginal component effects (AMCEs) with 95% confidence intervals by respondent homeownership status.

4.3 Conditional Effects By Respondent Characteristics

In Figure 4, we estimate conditional AMCEs by political party of the survey respondent. We find a few substantial differences when comparing Democratic and Republican respondents.

For example, the relatively small average treatment effects for teachers union and police union endorsements in Figure A5 mask much larger conditional treatment effects by party. All else equal, Democratic respondents are 16 percentage points more likely to choose a candidate that has been endorsed by the teachers union (compared to no endorsement), while Republican respondents are 11.7 percentage points *less* likely. The reverse is true for endorsements by police unions: Republicans are 12.8 percentage points more likely to choose a police union-endorsed candidate (compared to no endorsement), while Democrats are 8.5 percentage points less likely. Similarly, Democrats are 10.9 percentage points less likely to choose a candidate who is a police officer (compared to a business owner).

Figure 4: Conditional Effects by Political Party



Notes: The figure displays estimated average marginal component effects (AMCEs) with 95% confidence intervals by political party ID of the respondent.

Looking at the community embeddedness attributes, we find a strong difference between Democratic and Republican respondents in their attitudes towards homeowner candidates.

All else equal, Republicans are 9.6 percentage points more likely to choose a homeowner, while Democrats are just as likely to choose a renter candidate. In contrast, there are no partisan difference in preferences to residency duration. Both Democrats and Republicans are more likely to choose a candidate who has lived longer in the community.

In Appendix Section A.2, we present conditional AMCEs and marginal means by respondent gender, race, place of residence, and residency duration. Though there is broad consensus among our respondents about most of these candidate attributes, there are a few notable subgroup differences. We find that women respondents have a stronger preference for both prior political experience and longer residency duration, and rural respondents are the most strongly opposed to candidates with real estate development backgrounds.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

Millions of voters cast ballots for local government representatives every year. These elections occur in highly-varied institutional, demographic, and political contexts, and have important consequences for the day-to-day lives of residents. In this study, we explored how individuals evaluate different candidate characteristics in local elections. Beyond previously studied demographic characteristics, career history, and endorsements, we examined the extent to which community embeddedness leads to greater support for local candidates.

We find that voters hold strong preferences for attributes that signal community embeddedness: living the community for an extended period of time, and to some extent, owning a home in the community. We argue that this in part reflects a desire for descriptive representation—homeowners prefer homeowner candidates while renters do not—but it also reflects a desire for candidates who have invested significant amounts of time into their community—a preference that holds across all respondent subgroups.

We emphasize that this study intends to initiate, rather than resolve, questions of community embeddedness in local politics. Indeed, our study tests only two dimensions of com-

munity embeddedness – residency duration and homeownership – and we acknowledge that homeownership can convey information about a multitude of candidate attributes. Therefore, future work should develop more extensive, validated measures of community embeddedness, including through employing careful survey, observational, and mixed-methods research. Moreover, we welcome future research on how the treatment effects from signaling community embeddedness differ across jurisdictional types and geographic context. We also encourage consideration of other theoretical mechanisms beyond signals of investment in the community and shared identity. We ultimately need a more comprehensive theory of community embeddedness, social ties, or deep roots in local politics.

In addition to our unique contribution to understanding the role of local roots in candidate choice at the local level, our results confirm and bring additional nuance to existing insights in the literature. In line with prior findings, our results suggest that voters in local elections prefer candidates with previous political experience and do not favor candidates associated with real estate development. We also observe significant differences between Republicans and Democrats regarding candidate profession and local endorsements, comporting with recent research that finds attitudes toward the police vary by political ideology (Navarro and Hansen 2023). Our work is similar – in spirit – to that of Hunt (2022) and Hunt and Rouse (2023) who find that candidates with deep local roots have electoral advantages in Congress and state legislatures. We see our work as extending this argument, finding electoral advantages in more local contests as well. Altogether, the findings suggest that voters evaluate candidates in local elections similarly to those in national and state elections, with additional emphasis also placed on local roots and community ties.

References

Abrajano, Marisa A., Christopher S. Elmendorf and Kevin M. Quinn. 2018. "Labels vs. Pictures: Treatment-Mode Effects in Experiments About Discrimination." *Political Analysis* 26(1):20–33.

Adams, Brian E, Edward L Lascher Jr and Danielle Joesten Martin. 2021. "Ballot cues, business candidates, and voter choices in local elections." *American politics research* 49(2):186–197.

Ansolabehere, Stephen, Rebecca Lessem and James M Snyder Jr. 2006. "The Orientation of Newspaper Endorsements in US Elections, 1940–2002." *Quarterly Journal of political science* 1(4):393.

Anzia, Sarah F. and Rachel Bernhard. 2022. "Gender Stereotyping and the Electoral Success of Women Candidates: New Evidence from Local Elections in the United States." *British Journal of Political Science* 52(4):1544–1563.

Arceneaux, Kevin and Robin Kolodny. 2009. "Educating the least informed: Group endorsements in a grassroots campaign." *American Journal of Political Science* 53(4):755–770.

Atkeson, Lonna Rae and Brian T Hamel. 2020. "Fit for the job: Candidate qualifications and vote choice in low information elections." *Political Behavior* 42:59–82.

Bansak, Kirk, Jens Hainmueller, Daniel J. Hopkins and Teppei Yamamoto. 2022. "Using Conjoint Experiments to Analyze Election Outcomes: The Essential Role of the Average Marginal Component Effect." *Political Analysis* pp. 1–19.

Benjamin, Andrea. 2017. "Coethnic endorsements, out-group candidate preferences, and perceptions in local elections." *Urban Affairs Review* 53(4):631–657.

Berz, Jan and Michael Jankowski. 2022. "Local preferences in candidate selection: Evidence

from a conjoint experiment among party leaders in Germany." *Party Politics* 28(6):1136–1149.

Butler, Daniel M. and Jonathan Homola. 2017. "An Empirical Justification for the Use of Racially Distinctive Names to Signal Race in Experiments." *Political Analysis* 25(1):122–130.

Campbell, Rosie, Philip Cowley, Nick Vivyan and Markus Wagner. 2019. "Why friends and neighbors? Explaining the electoral appeal of local roots." *The journal of politics* 81(3):937–951.

Carlson, Elizabeth. 2015. "Ethnic voting and accountability in Africa: A choice experiment in Uganda." *World Politics* 67(2):353–385.

Carnes, Nicholas and Noam Lupu. 2016. "Do voters dislike working-class candidates? Voter biases and the descriptive underrepresentation of the working class." *American Political Science Review* 110(4):832–844.

Dafoe, Allan, Baobao Zhang and Devin Caughey. 2018. "Information equivalence in survey experiments." *Political Analysis* 26(4):399–416.

Deason, Grace, Jill S Greenlee and Carrie A Langner. 2015. "Mothers on the campaign trail: Implications of politicized motherhood for women in politics." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 3(1):133–148.

Dittmar, Kelly. 2015. "Encouragement is not enough: Addressing social and structural barriers to female recruitment." *Politics & Gender* 11(4):759–765.

Einstein, Katherine Levine, David M Glick and Maxwell Palmer. 2020. "Neighborhood defenders: Participatory politics and America's housing crisis." *Political Science Quarterly* 135(2):281–312.

Einstein, Katherine Levine, Joseph T. Ornstein and Maxwell Palmer. 2022. "Who Represents the Renters?" *Housing Policy Debate* pp. 1–15.

Einstein, Katherine Levine, Maxwell Palmer and David M Glick. 2019. "Who participates in local government? Evidence from meeting minutes." *Perspectives on politics* 17(1):28–46.

Eshima, Shusei and Daniel M Smith. 2022. "Just a Number? Voter Evaluations of Age in Candidate-Choice Experiments." *The Journal of Politics* 84(3):1856–1861.

Ferreira, Fernando and Joseph Gyourko. 2014. "Does gender matter for political leadership? The case of US mayors." *Journal of Public Economics* 112:24–39.

Fischel, William A. 2002. *The homevoter hypothesis: How home values influence local government taxation, school finance, and land-use policies*. Harvard University Press Cambridge, MA.

Franchino, Fabio and Francesco Zucchini. 2015. "Voting in a multi-dimensional space: A conjoint analysis employing valence and ideology attributes of candidates." *Political science research and methods* 3(2):221–241.

Gerber, Elisabeth R and Justin H Phillips. 2003. "Development ballot measures, interest group endorsements, and the political geography of growth preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 47(4):625–639.

Hainmueller, Jens, Daniel J Hopkins and Teppei Yamamoto. 2014. "Causal inference in conjoint analysis: Understanding multidimensional choices via stated preference experiments." *Political analysis* 22(1):1–30.

Hall, Andrew B and Jesse Yoder. 2022. "Does homeownership influence political behavior? Evidence from administrative data." *The Journal of Politics* 84(1):351–366.

Hankinson, Michael. 2018. "When do renters behave like homeowners? High rent, price anxiety, and NIMBYism." *American Political Science Review* 112(3):473–493.

Horiuchi, Yusaku, Daniel M Smith and Teppei Yamamoto. 2020. "Identifying voter preferences for politicians' personal attributes: A conjoint experiment in Japan." *Political Science Research and Methods* 8(1):75–91.

Huddy, Leonie and Nayda Terkildsen. 1993. "Gender stereotypes and the perception of male and female candidates." *American journal of political science* pp. 119–147.

Hunt, Charles R. 2022. *Home field advantage: Roots, reelection, and representation in the modern congress*. University of Michigan Press.

Hunt, Charles Russell and Stella Rouse. 2023. "Local Candidate Roots and Electoral Advantages in US State Legislatures." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* pp. 1–11.

Iversen, Torben and Frances Rosenbluth. 2006. "The political economy of gender: Explaining cross-national variation in the gender division of labor and the gender voting gap." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(1):1–19.

Jamieson, Kathleen Hall. 1995. *Beyond the double bind: Women and leadership*. Oxford University Press.

Key, Valdimer O. 1949. *Southern politics*.

Kirkland, Patricia A. 2021. "Business owners and executives as politicians: The effect on public policy." *The Journal of Politics* 83(4):1652–1668.

Kirkland, Patricia A and Alexander Coppock. 2018. "Candidate choice without party labels: New insights from conjoint survey experiments." *Political Behavior* 40:571–591.

Leeper, Thomas J., Sara B. Hobolt and James Tilley. 2020. "Measuring Subgroup Preferences in Conjoint Experiments." *Political Analysis* 28(2):207–221.

Lieske, Joel. 1989. "The political dynamics of urban voting behavior." *American Journal of Political Science* pp. 150–174.

Lim, Claire SH and James M Snyder Jr. 2015. "Is more information always better? party cues and candidate quality in us judicial elections." *Journal of public Economics* 128:107–123.

Lupia, Arthur. 1994. "Shortcuts versus encyclopedias: Information and voting behavior in California insurance reform elections." *American Political Science Review* 88(1):63–76.

MacManus, Susan A and Charles S Bullock III. 2003. "The form, structure, and composition of America's municipalities in the new millennium." *Municipal yearbook 2003* 70:3–18.

Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. "Should blacks represent blacks and women represent women? A contingent" yes"." *The Journal of politics* 61(3):628–657.

Manville, Michael. 2021. "Liberals and Housing: A Study in Ambivalence." *Housing Policy Debate* 0(0):1–21.

Mares, Isabela and Giancarlo Visconti. 2020. "Voting for the lesser evil: evidence from a conjoint experiment in Romania." *Political Science Research and Methods* 8(2):315–328.

Matson, Marsha and Terri Susan Fine. 2006. "Gender, ethnicity, and ballot information: Ballot cues in low-information elections." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 6(1):49–72.

McDermott, Monika L. 1998. "Race and gender cues in low-information elections." *Political Research Quarterly* 51(4):895–918.

McDermott, Monika L. 2006. "Not for members only: Group endorsements as electoral information cues." *Political Research Quarterly* 59(2):249–257.

Meredith, Marc. 2013. "Exploiting friends-and-neighbors to estimate coattail effects." *American political science review* 107(4):742–765.

Monkkonen, Paavo and Michael Manville. 2019. "Opposition to development or opposition to developers? Experimental evidence on attitudes toward new housing." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 41(8):1123–1141.

Munis, B Kal. 2021. "Place, candidate roots, and voter preferences in an age of partisan polarization: Observational and experimental evidence." *Political Geography* 85:102345.

Navarro, John C and Michael A Hansen. 2023. ""Please don't be too nice": the role of political ideology in the approval of police use of force." *Policing: An International Journal* 46(5/6):724–738.

Oliver, J Eric and Shang E Ha. 2007. "Vote choice in suburban elections." *American Political Science Review* 101(3):393–408.

Panagopoulos, Costas, Jan E Leighley and Brian T Hamel. 2017. "Are voters mobilized by a 'friend-and-neighbor' on the ballot? Evidence from a field experiment." *Political behavior* 39:865–882.

Pomper, Gerald. 1966. "Ethnic and group voting in nonpartisan municipal elections." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 30(1):79–97.

Schaffner, Brian F, Matthew Streb and Gerald Wright. 2001. "Teams without uniforms: the nonpartisan ballot in state and local elections." *Political research quarterly* 54(1):7–30.

Schulte-Cloos, Julia and Paul C Bauer. 2023. "Local candidates, place-based identities, and electoral success." *Political Behavior* 45(2):679–698.

Sinclair, Betsy. 2012. *The social citizen: Peer networks and political behavior*. University of Chicago Press.

Squire, Peverill and Eric RAN Smith. 1988. "The effect of partisan information on voters in nonpartisan elections." *The Journal of Politics* 50(1):169–179.

Sung, Yu-Hsien. 2022. "How US Voters Elect Prosecutors: Evidence from a Conjoint Experiment." *Political Research Quarterly* p. 10659129221136852.

Teele, Dawn Langan, Joshua Kalla and Frances Rosenbluth. 2018. "The ties that double bind: social roles and women's underrepresentation in politics." *American Political Science Review* 112(3):525–541.

Trounstine, Jessica. 2011. "Evidence of a local incumbency advantage." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 36(2):255–280.

Warshaw, Christopher. 2019. "Local elections and representation in the United States." *Annual Review of Political Science* 22:461–479.

Wright, Gerald C. 2008. "Charles Adrian and the study of nonpartisan elections." *Political Research Quarterly* 61(1):13–16.

A Supporting Information for: "What Do Voters Want in Their Mayor? Evidence from a Survey Experiment"

Contents

A.1 Survey Instrument

This item is a preface screen that precedes a series of conjoint item questions. Respondents should not be able to go back after reaching this screen, and must click ahead to proceed. Participants will then advance to a new screen with a table similar to the one displayed below. Order of the attributes (column 1) should be randomized, except for Name, which should always appear first. Participants will see 5 profiles. Order of attributes should be the same for each profile (i.e., randomized across respondents but not within).

We are interested in what qualities you consider important for local political leaders, like your town's mayor or councilmembers. On the next few screens, you will be shown a list of candidates and their qualifications, and will ask which candidate you would prefer to vote for.

Table A1: Candidate Profiles X of 5

	Candidate A	Candidate B
Name	`HMOSName`	`HMOSName`
Age	`HMOSAge`	`HMOSAge`
Family	`HMOSFamily`	`HMOSFamily`
Community Ties	`HMOSCommunityTies`	`HMOSCommunityTies`
Career History	`HMOSCareerHistory`	`HMOSCareerHistory`
Political Experience	`HMOSPolitical`	`HMOSPolitical`
Endorsed By	`HMOSEndorsements`	`HMOSEndorsements`

*The following are the attributes and levels for inclusion in the profiles. Each attribute level should have equal probability of being displayed, except for the Name attribute (**`HMOSNAME`**), which should be sampled with 65% probability from List A, 15% probability from List B, and 20% probability from List C. Additionally, no name should be repeated within a single profile (i.e. Candidate A should not have the same name as Candidate B in any profile). There are no other conditional randomizations or restrictions.*

Attributes and Levels

`HMOSAge`:

1. 30
2. 45
3. 60

`HMOSCommunityTies`:

1. Has owned a home in your community for the past 2 years.
2. Has rented an apartment in your community for the past 2 years.
3. Has owned a home in your community for the past 10 years.
4. Has rented an apartment in your community for the past 10 years.

`HMOSCareerHistory`:

1. High school teacher
2. Construction worker
3. Local attorney
4. Police officer
5. Real estate developer
6. Business owner
7. Not employed, taking care of home/family

`HMOSPolitical`:

1. Previously elected to local office
2. No previous political experience

`HMOSFamily`:

1. Married with two children
2. Married with no children
3. Single

`HMOSEndorsements`:

1. An association of local real estate developers
2. The police union
3. The teachers' union
4. Local newspaper
5. The county chamber of commerce
6. No endorsements

`HMOSName`:

List A	List B	List C
Katie Novak	Tyrone Joseph	Carola Huerta
Logan Allen	Trevon Jackson	Margarita Velazquez
Sarah Miller	Deja Mosley	Jose Sanchez
Holly Schroeder	Latoya Rivers	Carmela Velazquez
Emily Schmidt	Precious Washington	Carlos Torres
Caitlin Schneider	Ebony Washington	Alfonso Gonzalez
Greg Adams	Keisha Rivers	Carola Ibarra
Luke Phillips	Terrance Booker	Eduardo Torres
Colin Smith	Rasheed Gaines	Eduardo Lopez
Allison Nelson	Latonya Rivers	Carlos Perez
Maxwell Haas	Jada Mosley	Carmen Barajas
Katherine Adams	Kiara Jackson	Cesar Zavala
Jack Evans	Darnell Banks	Maria Ramirez
Tanner Smith	DeAndre Jefferson	Rosa Orozco
Molly Kruger	Tyreke Washington	Beatriz Ibarra
Jay Allen	DeShawn Korsey	Enrique Huerta
Claire Schwartz	Shanice Booker	Rosa Perez
Connor Schwartz	Tyrone Booker	Luis Vazquez
Emma Clark	Jamal Gaines	Dolores Ramirez
Hunter Miller	Jazmine Jefferson	Jose Orozco
Bradley Schwartz	Xavier Jackson	Magdalena Perez
Garrett Novak	Darius Joseph	Margarita Garcia
Matthew Anderson	Alaliyah Booker	Carlita Torres
Anne Evans	Jamal Rivers	Teresa Jaurez
Carly Smith	Ebony Mosley	Juan Barajas
Kathryn Evans	LaShawn Washington	Maria Rodriguez
Carrie King	Tremayne Joseph	Edgar Sanchez
Cody Anderson	Dominique Mosley	Edgar Zavala
Brett Clark	Jasmine Joseph	Beatriz Martinez
Jill Smith	Deja Jefferson	Carmen Lopez
Katelyn Miller	LaShawn Banks	Jose Martinez
Amy Mueller	Jermaine Gaines	Cesar Vazquez
Kristen Clark	Alexus Banks	Jorge Cervantes
Jenna Anderson	Jasmin Jefferson	Dolores Sanchez
Wyatt Smith		Luis Hernandez
Geoffrey Martin		Blanca Ramirez
Jake Clark		Pedro Rodriguez
Madeline Haas		Juan Hernandez
Cole Krueger		Catalina Jaurez
Abigail Smith		Catalina Hernandez
Dustin Nelson		Hernan Garcia
Heather Martin		Javier Gonzalez
Todd Mueller		
Scott King		
Dylan Schwartz		
Hannah Phillips		

Each profile would include the following question. Include this question on the same page as the profile. A-E should be appended to end of each question depending on the round. E.g., round 1 is `UGA800a` *and round 5 is* `UGA800e`.

`UGA500post_a-UGA500post_e`:

Which candidate would you prefer to vote for?

1. Candidate A
2. Candidate B

`UGA501post`:

Did you vote in most recent local election for your town, city, or county?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Unsure

A.2 Additional Tables and Figures

A.2.1 Conditional AMCEs

Figure A1: Estimated Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE) and 95% confidence intervals by respondent gender.

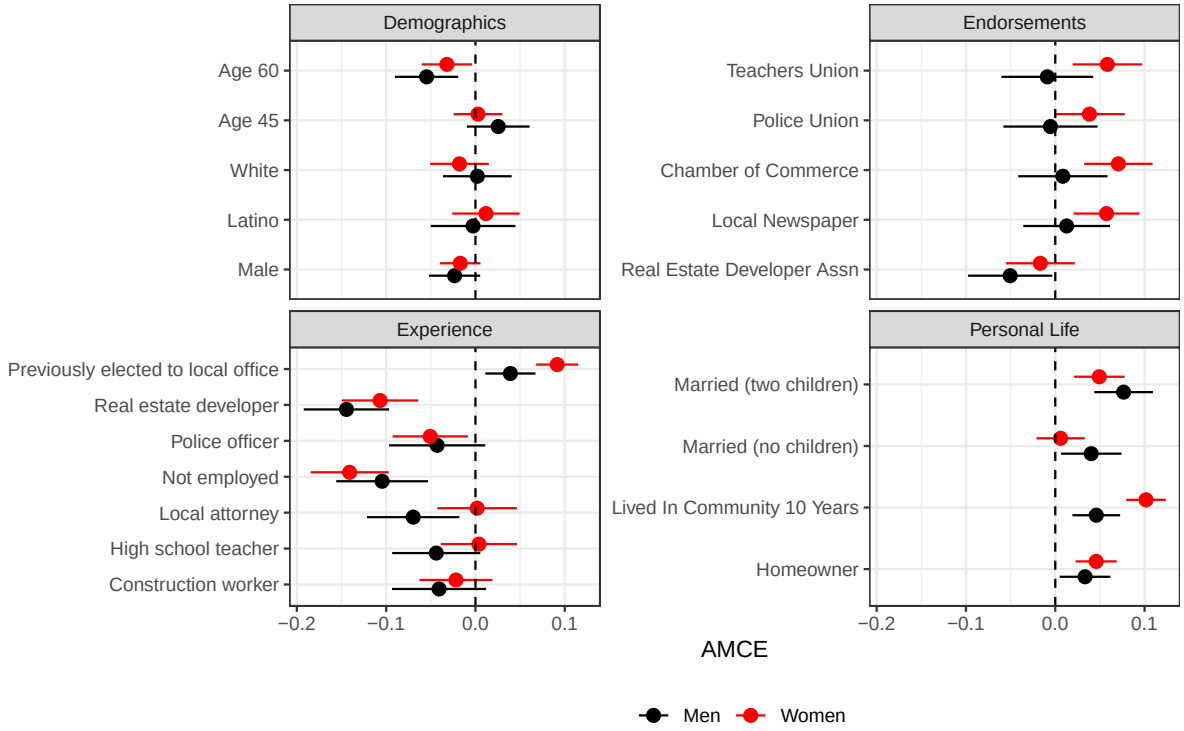


Figure A2: Estimated Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE) and 95% confidence intervals by respondent's race.

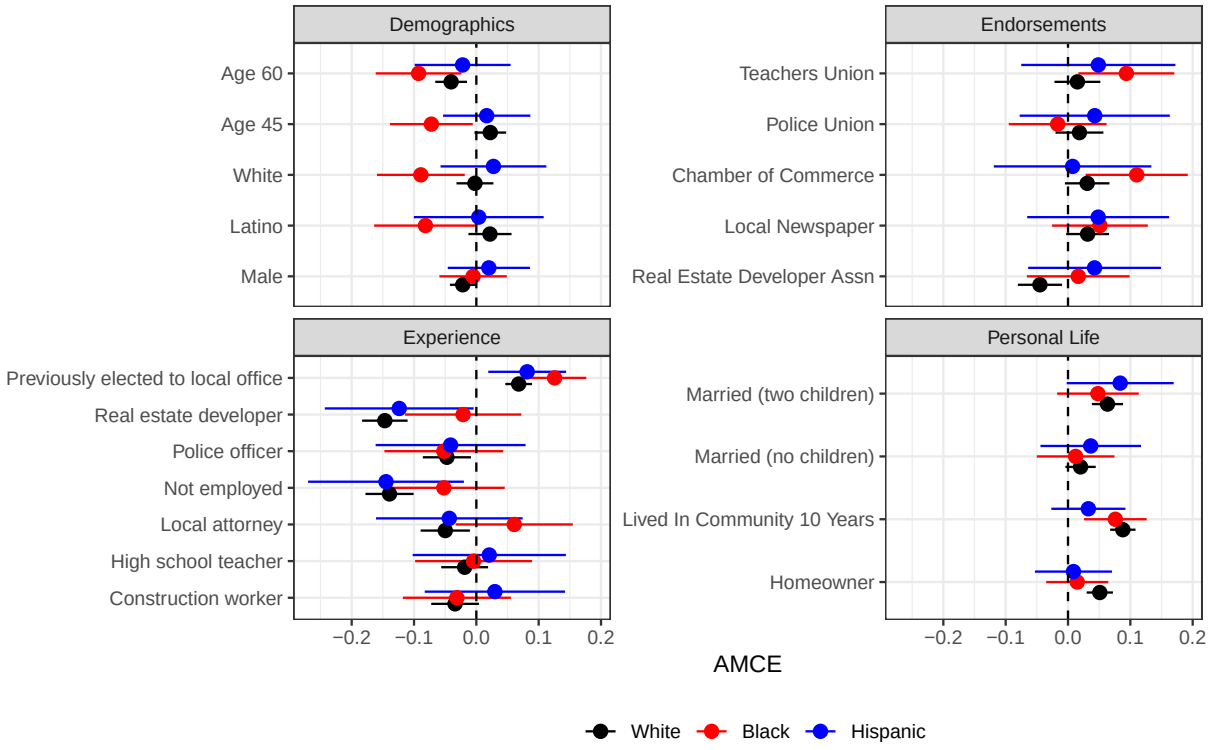


Figure A3: Estimated Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE) and 95% confidence intervals by respondent's place of residence.

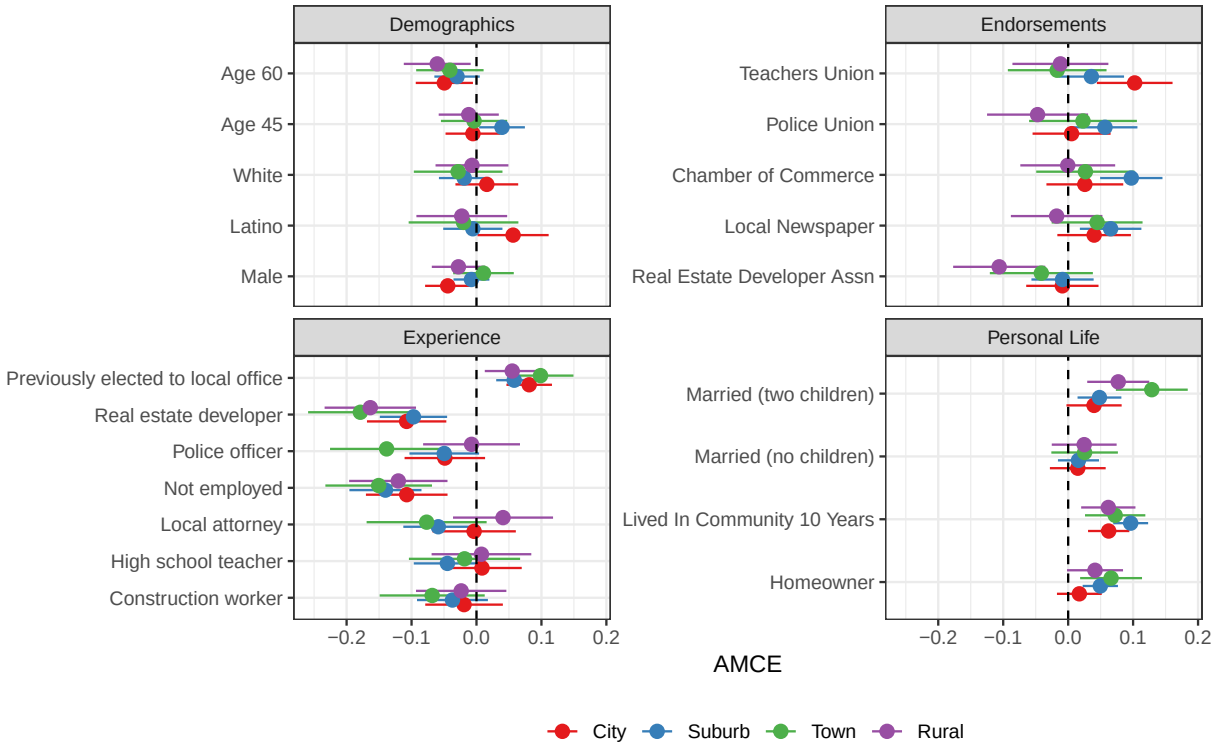
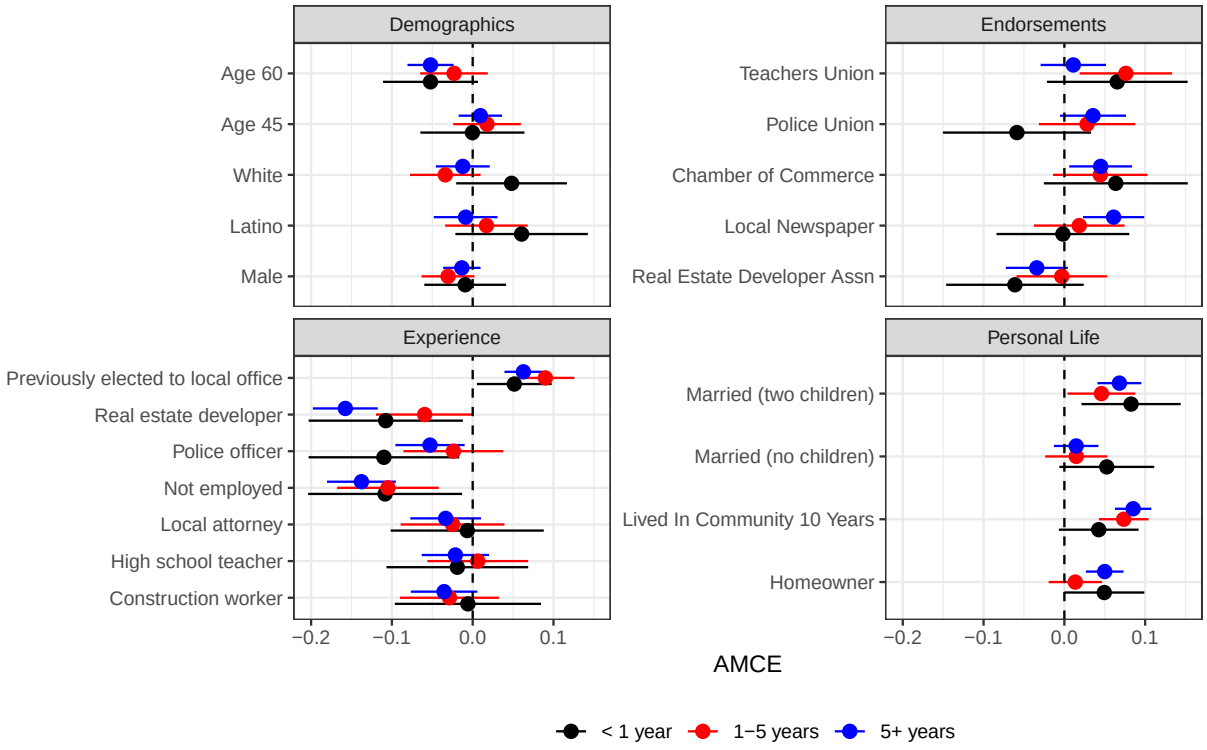


Figure A4: Estimated Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE) and 95% confidence intervals by respondent's duration of residence.



A.2.2 Conditional Marginal Means

Because the AMCE is defined relative to a reference category, conditional AMCEs can be a misleading measure of subgroup preferences if there are multiple categories for each attribute and the reference category is arbitrarily chosen (Leeper, Hobolt and Tilley 2020). To see why, suppose that we are estimating respondent preferences for Donald Trump, Barack Obama, and John Doe. If we choose Trump as the reference category, then the estimated AMCE for John Doe would be positive for Democratic respondents and negative for Republican respondents. But it would be erroneous to conclude from this evidence that Democrats like John Doe more than Republicans—particularly since one would come to the opposite conclusion if Obama were chosen as the reference category. A more reliable measure of subgroup preference is the conditional marginal mean: the percent of respondents from a subgroup who selected candidates with a given attribute. The difference between conditional marginal means better reflects each group's relative preference for an attribute level.

Figures A5 through A11 plot marginal means for the respondent subgroups we analyze above—grouped by homeownership, partisanship, gender, race, place of residence, and duration of residence. Figures A12 through A17 plot the *difference* in marginal means between subgroups, testing whether the differences in preferences between subgroups is statistically distinguishable from zero. All conclusions in the main text drawn from conditional AMCE estimates are corroborated by these difference in marginal means tests.

Figure A5: Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals

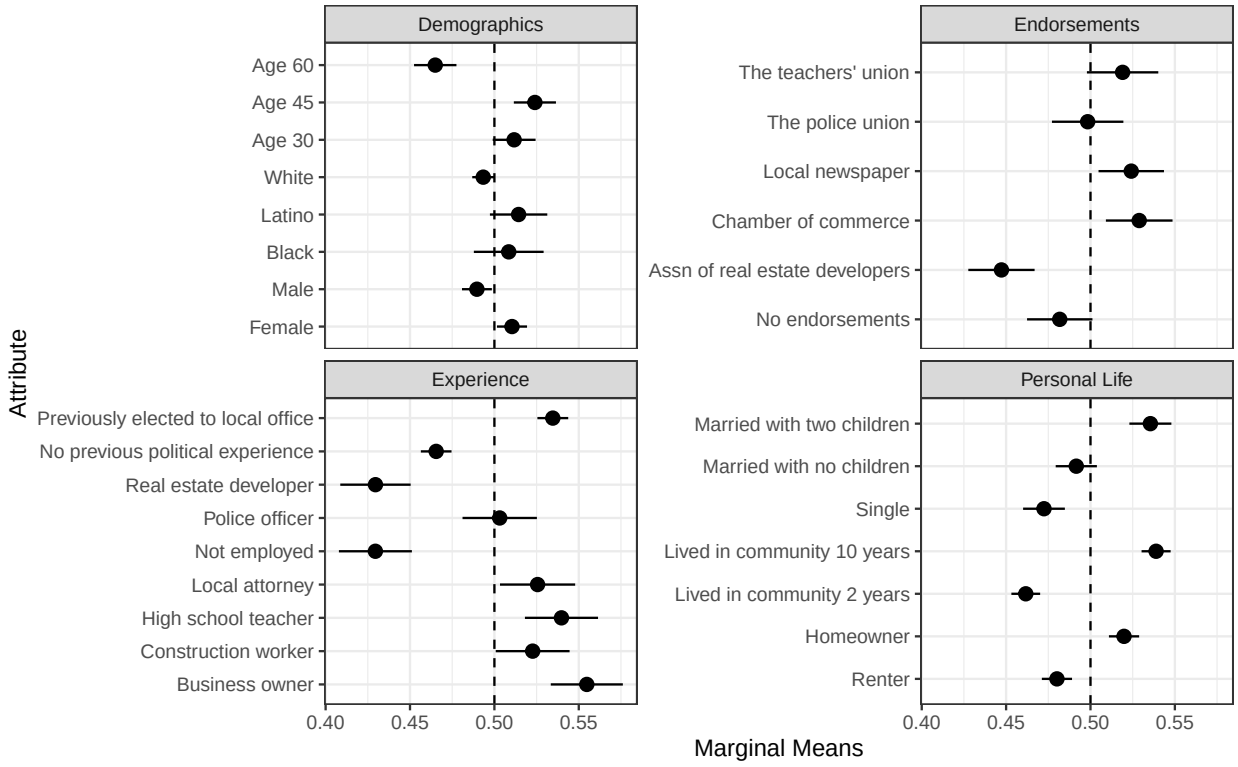


Figure A6: Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's party

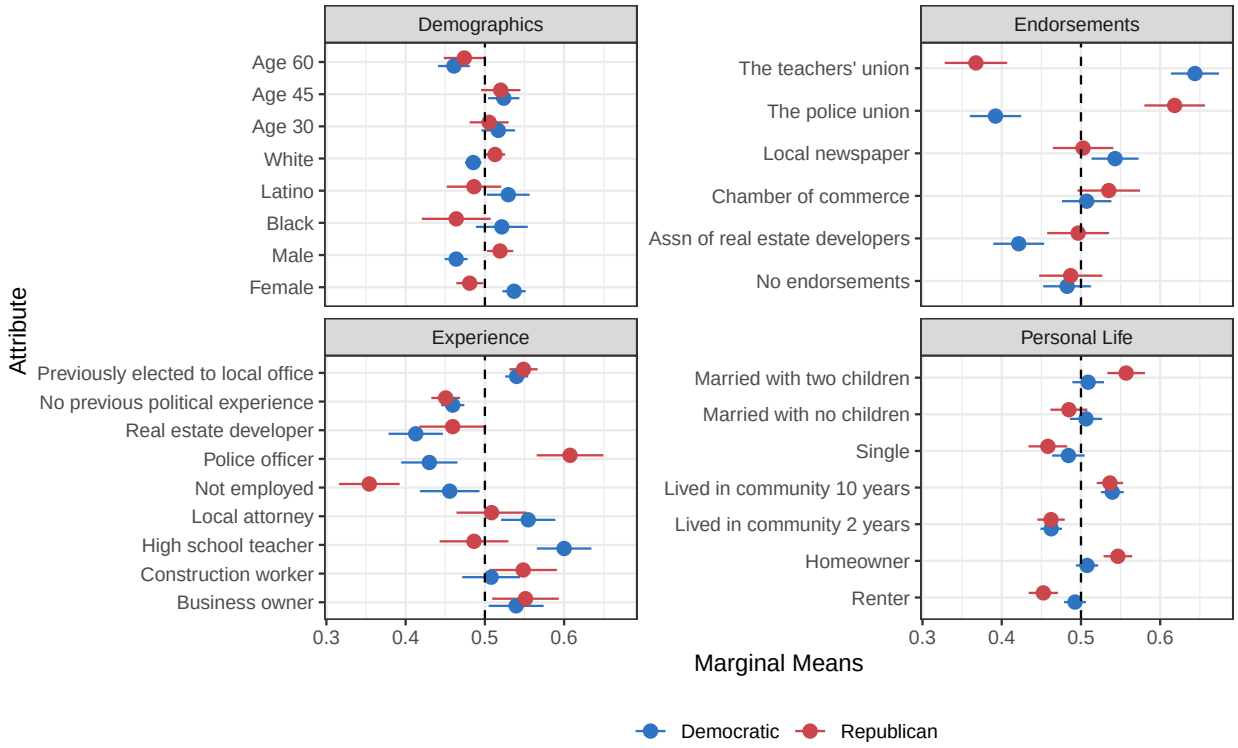


Figure A7: Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's homeownership status

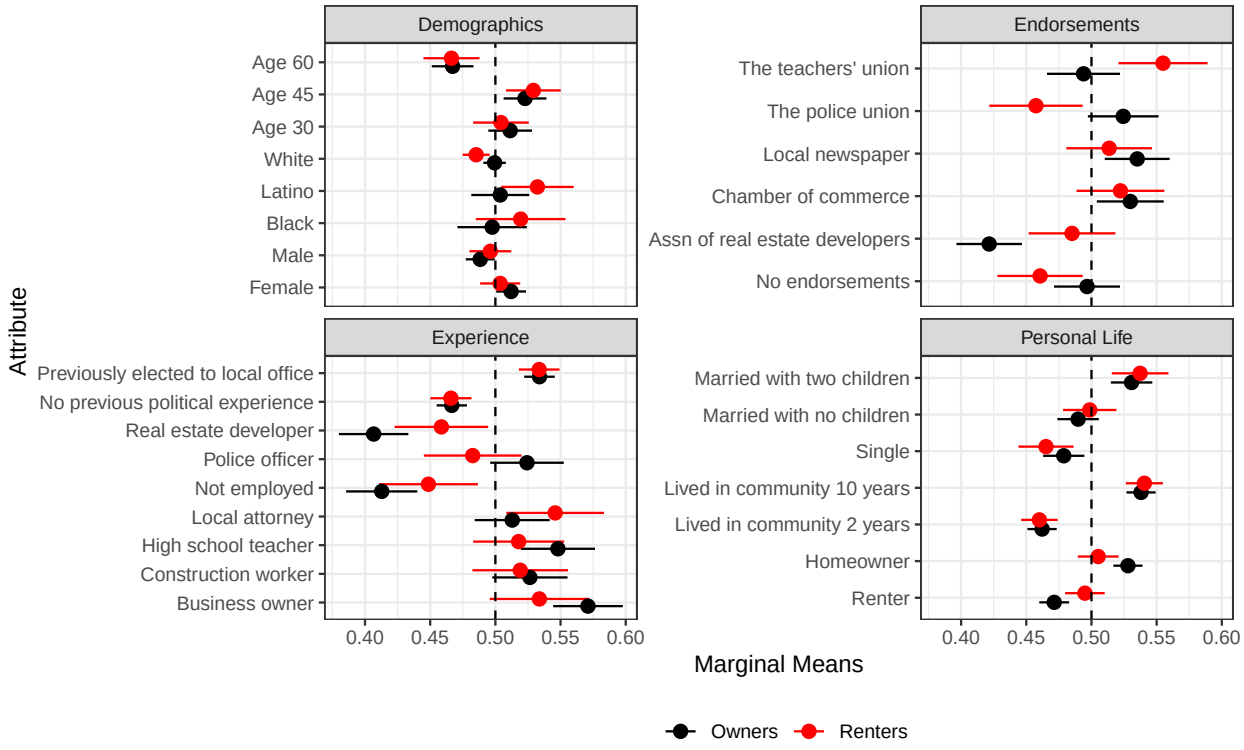


Figure A8: Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's gender

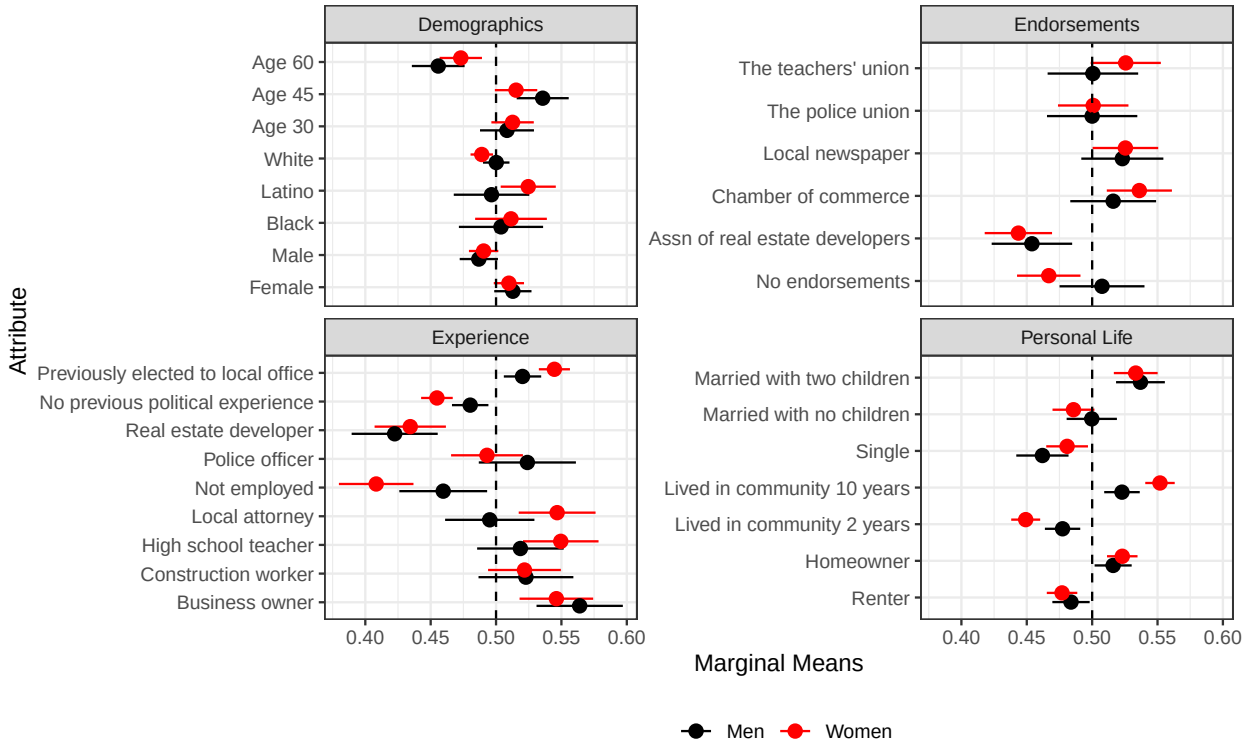


Figure A9: Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's race

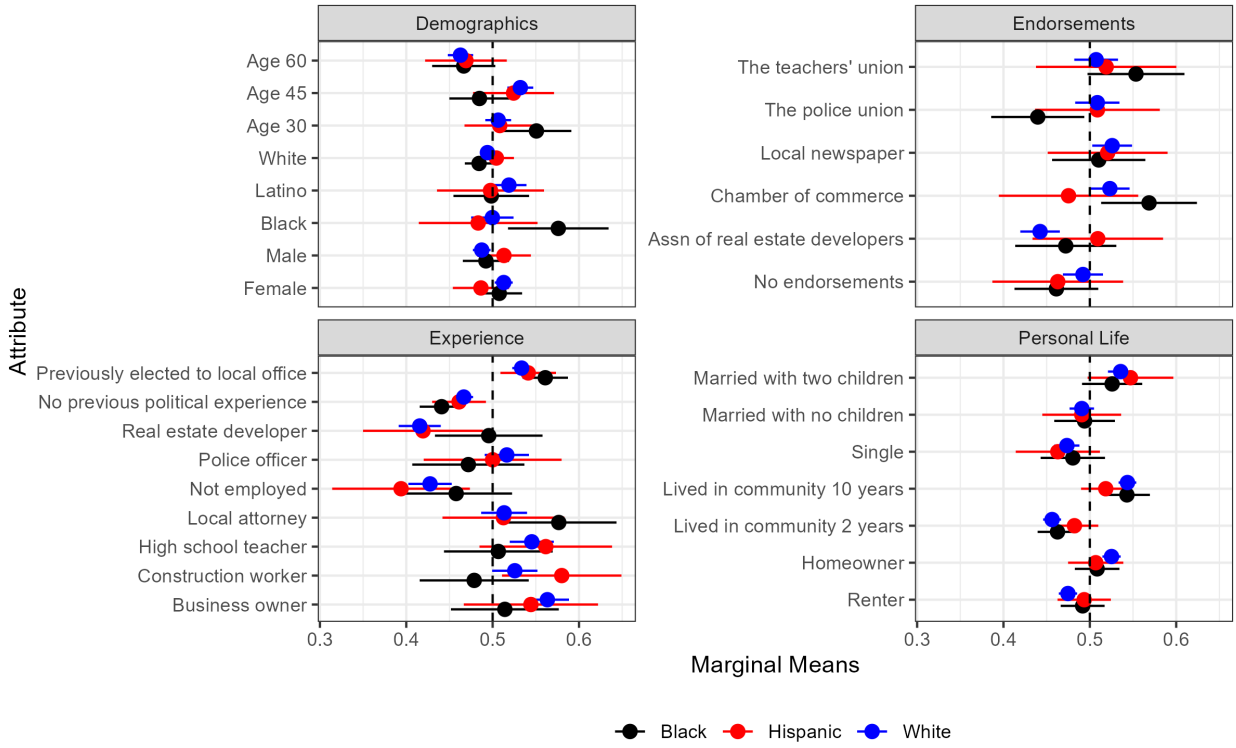


Figure A10: Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's place of residence

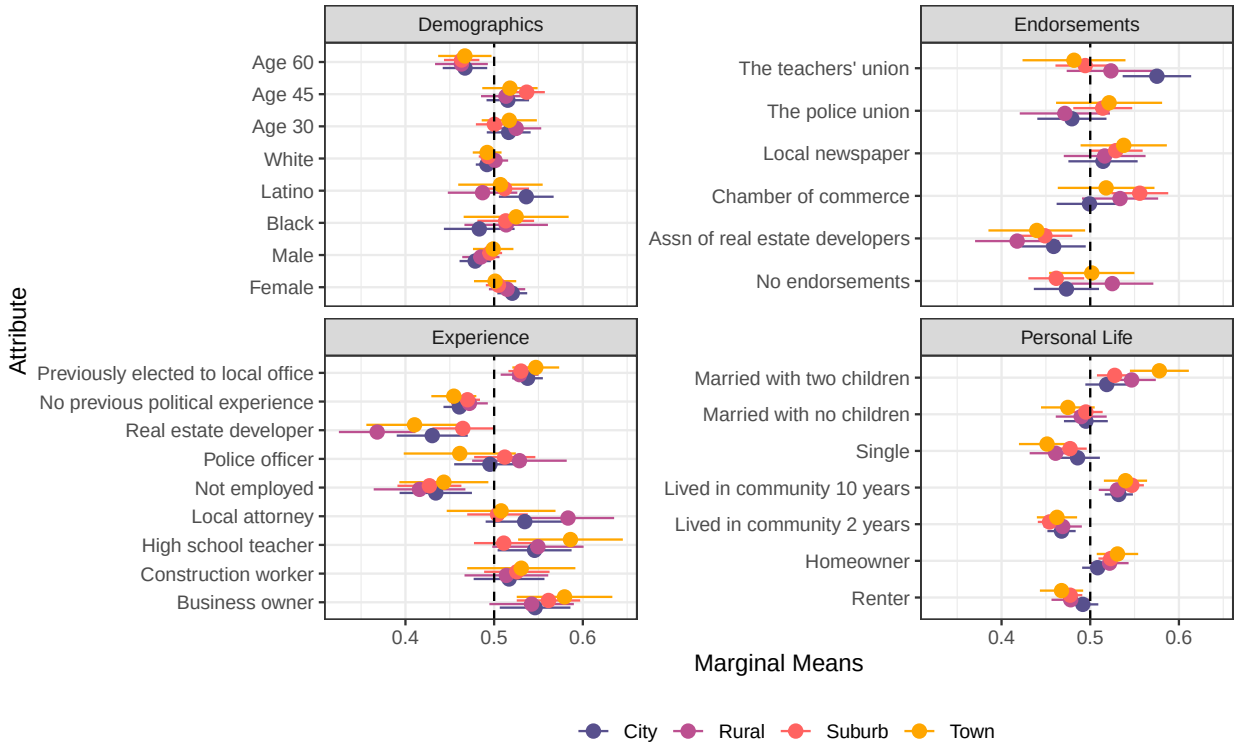


Figure A11: Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's duration of residency

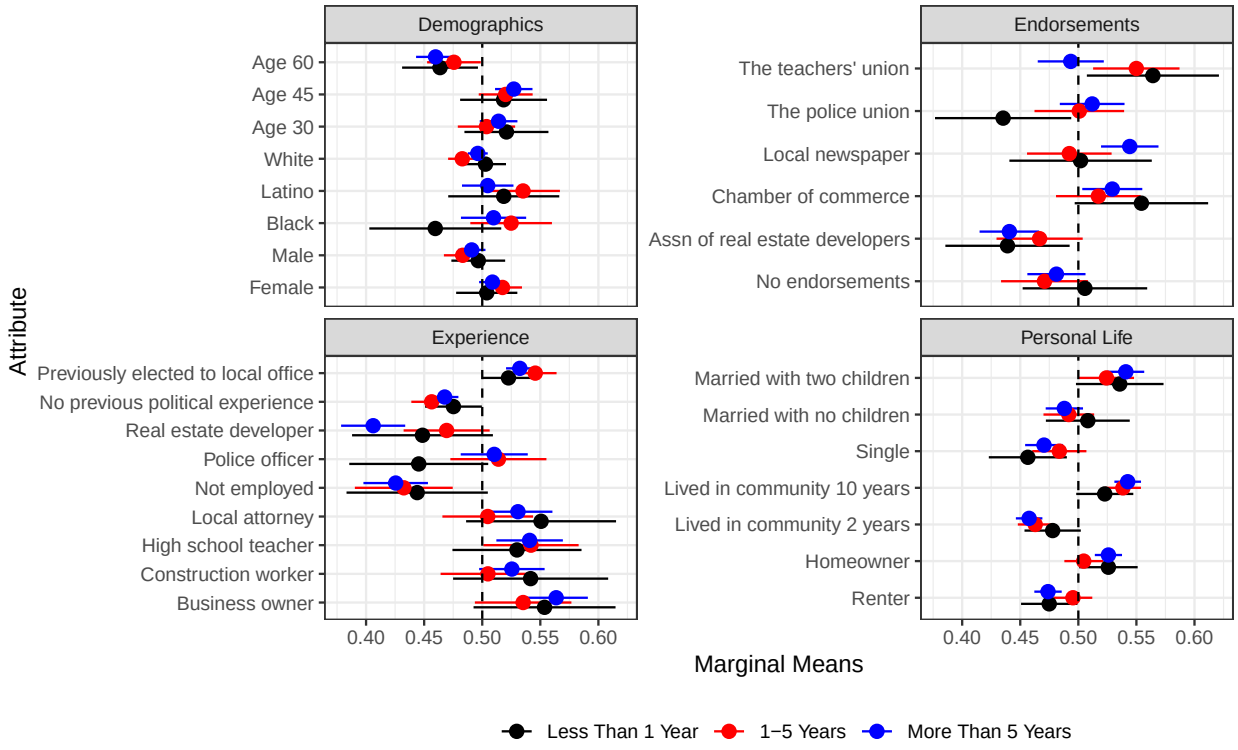


Figure A12: Difference in Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's party

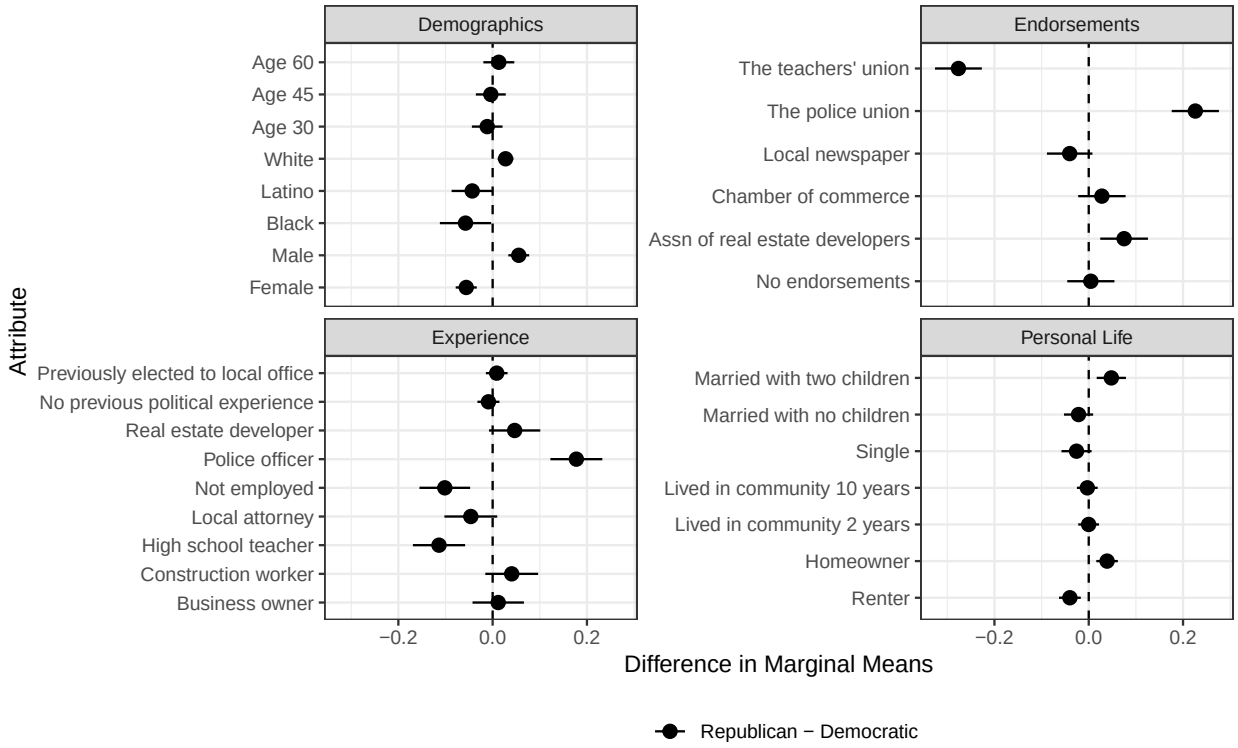


Figure A13: Difference in Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's homeownership status

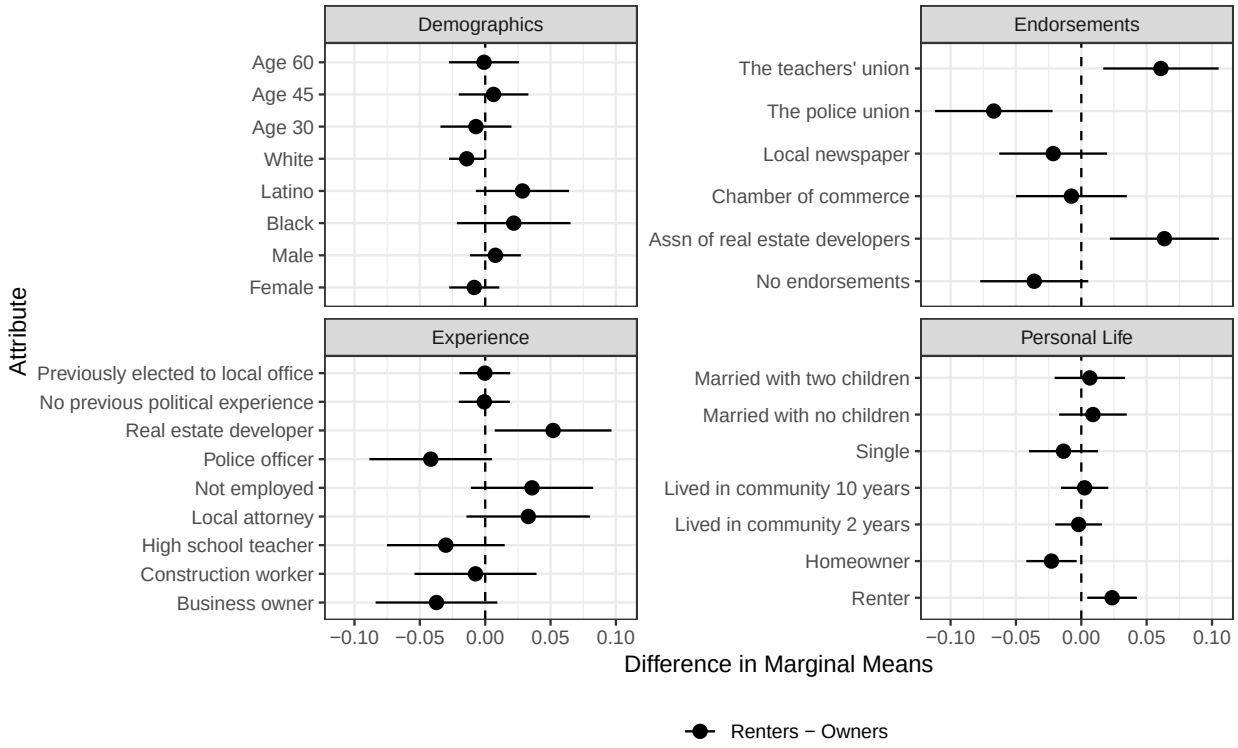


Figure A14: Difference in Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's gender

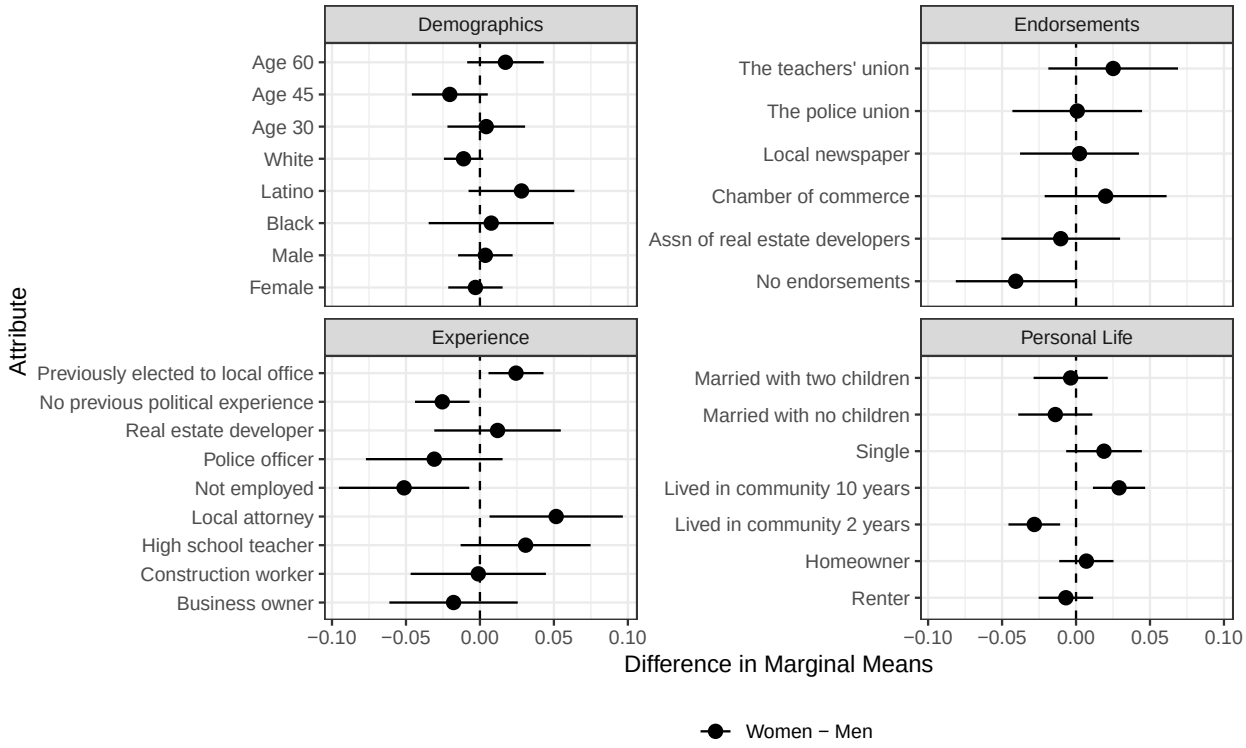


Figure A15: Difference in Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's race

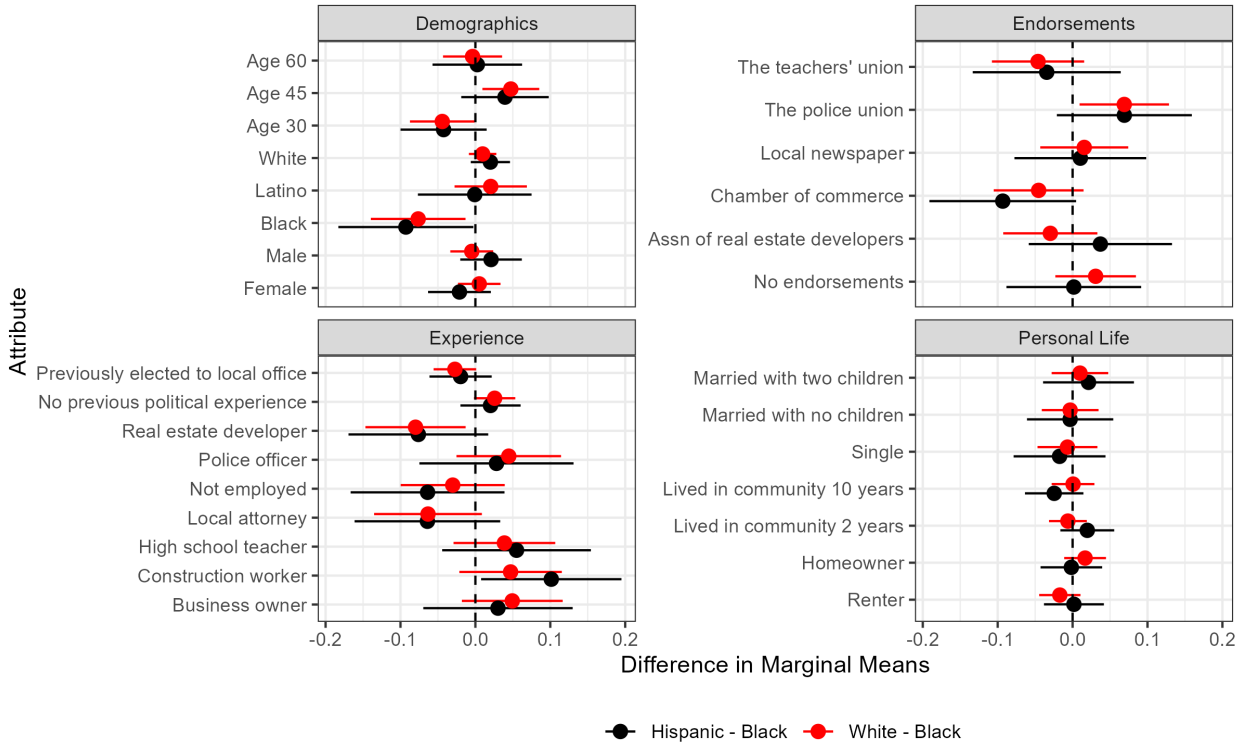


Figure A16: Difference in Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's place of residence

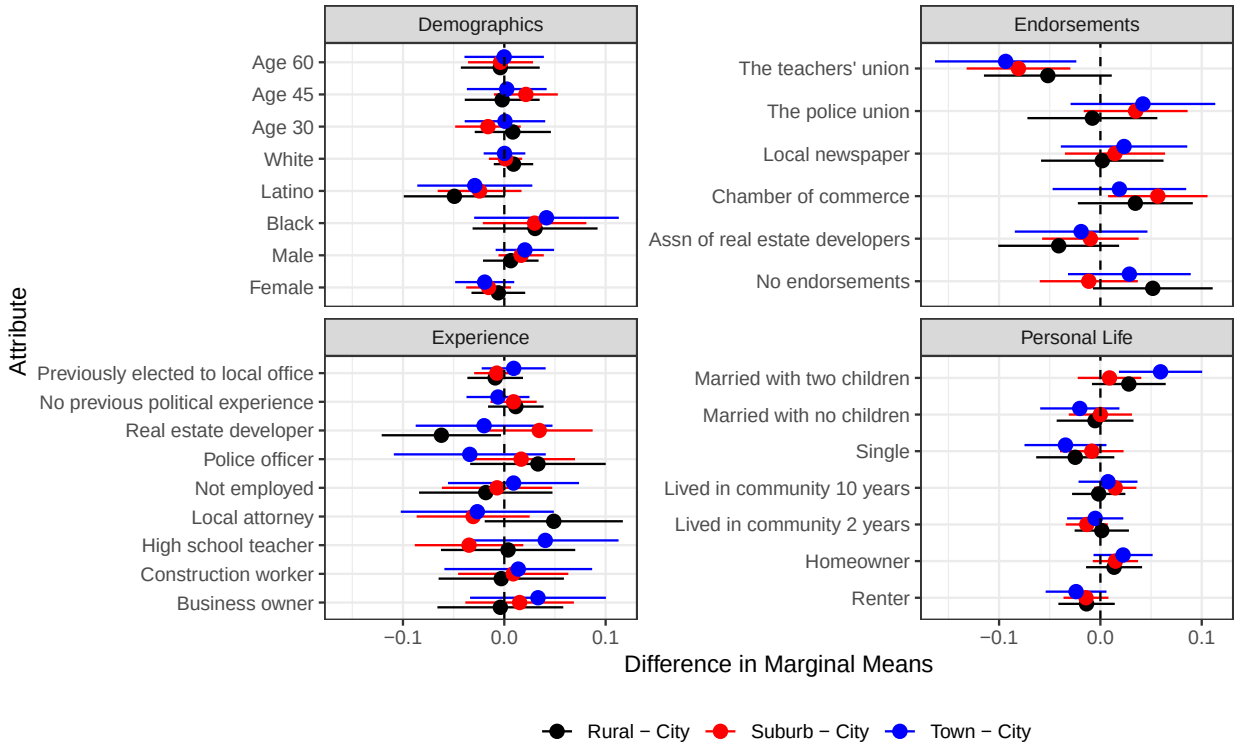
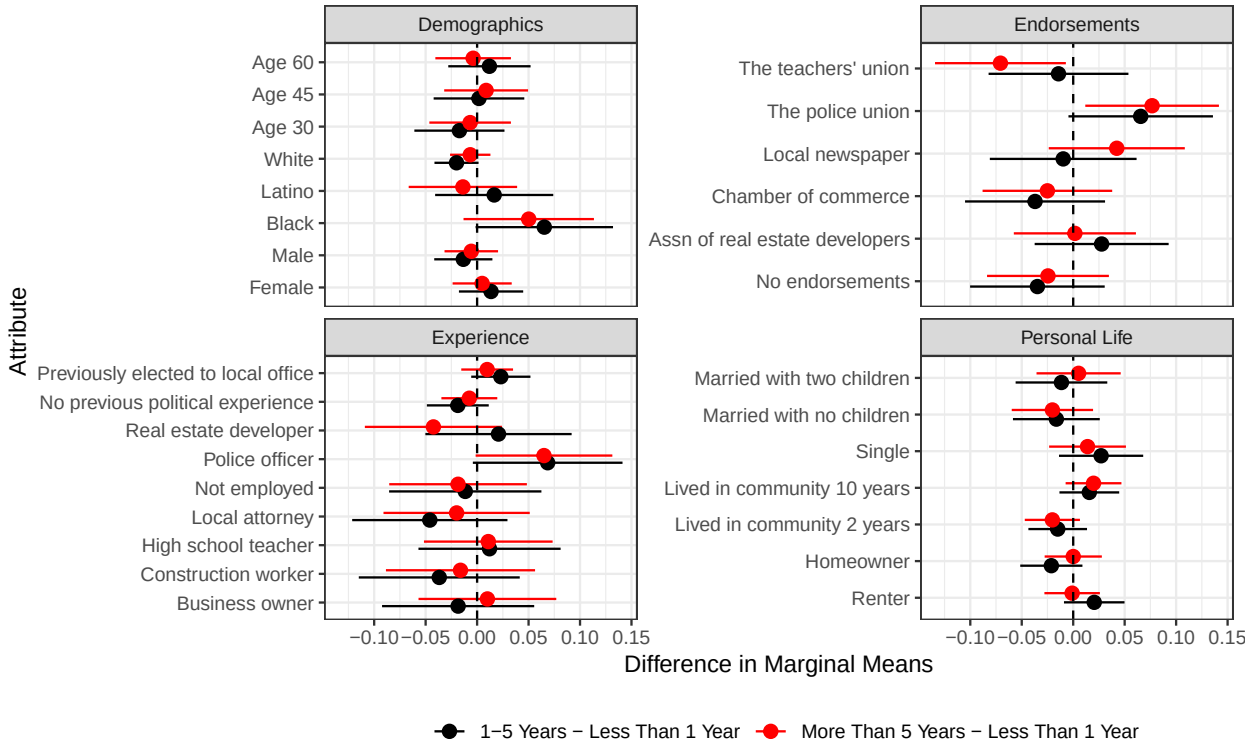


Figure A17: Difference in Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's duration of residency



A.2.3 Average Component Interaction Effects (ACIE)

Figure A18: Average Component Interaction Effects and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's age. Reference categories are Renter and Lived In Community for 2 Years.

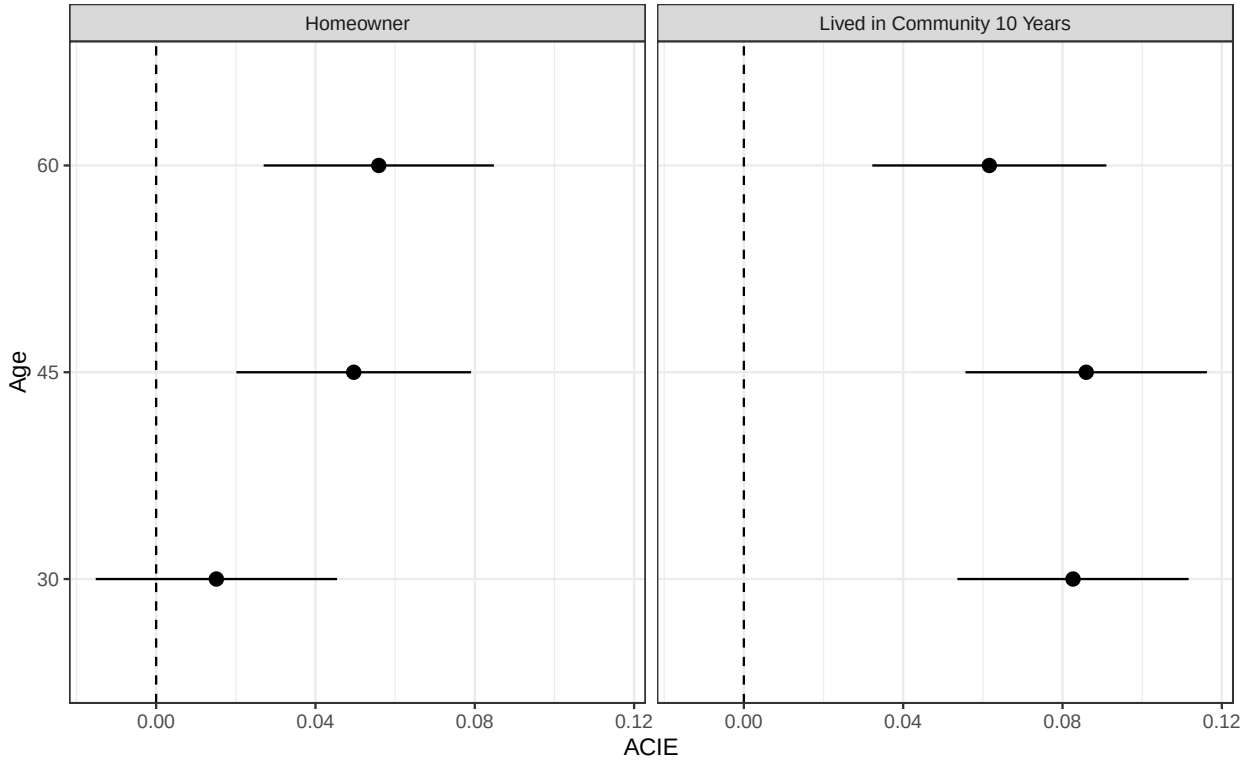
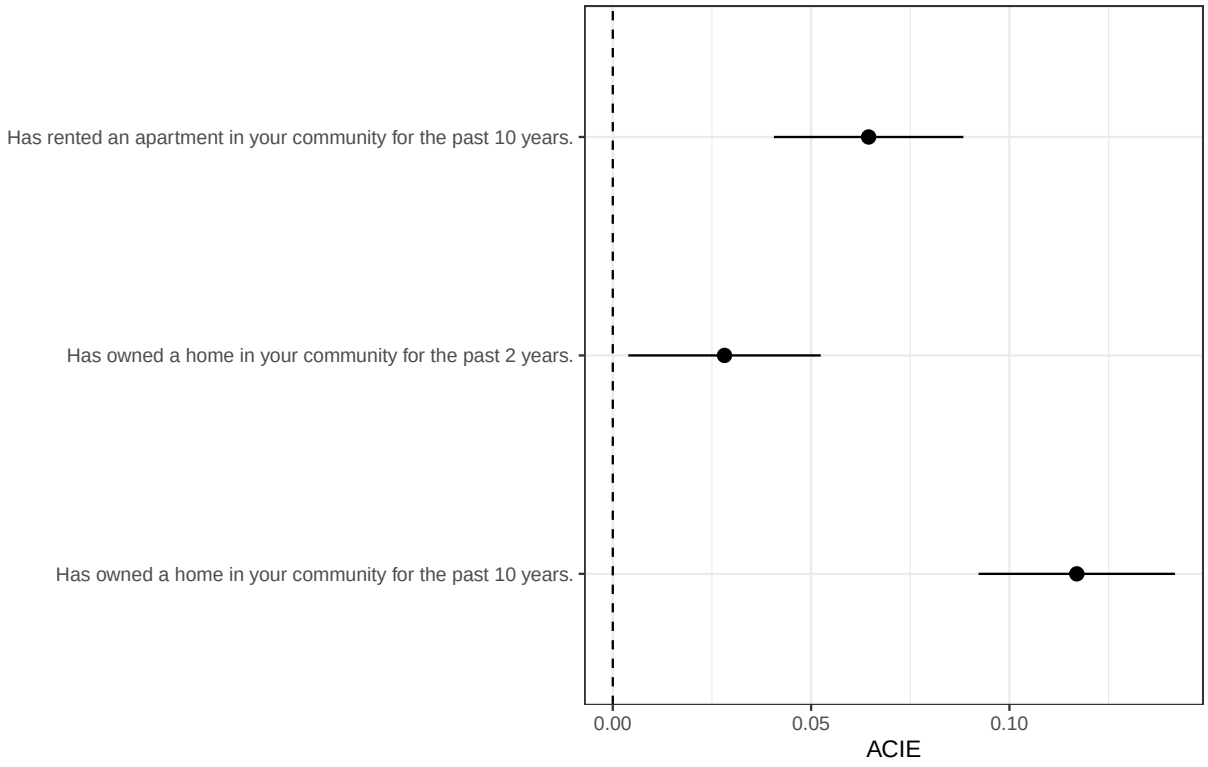


Figure A19: Average Component Interaction Effects and 95% Confidence Intervals for each level of the Community Ties variable. Reference category is "Has rented a home in your community for the past 2 years."



A.2.4 Results from Nationally Representative Subsample

In the main text, we present results for the full sample of 1,308 CES respondents who were assigned to the conjoint experiment. In this section, we replicate these results for a smaller, nationally representative subsample of 1,000 CES respondents. All marginal means presented below are survey-weighted.

Figure A20: Survey-Weighted Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals for Respondents in Nationally Representative Subsample

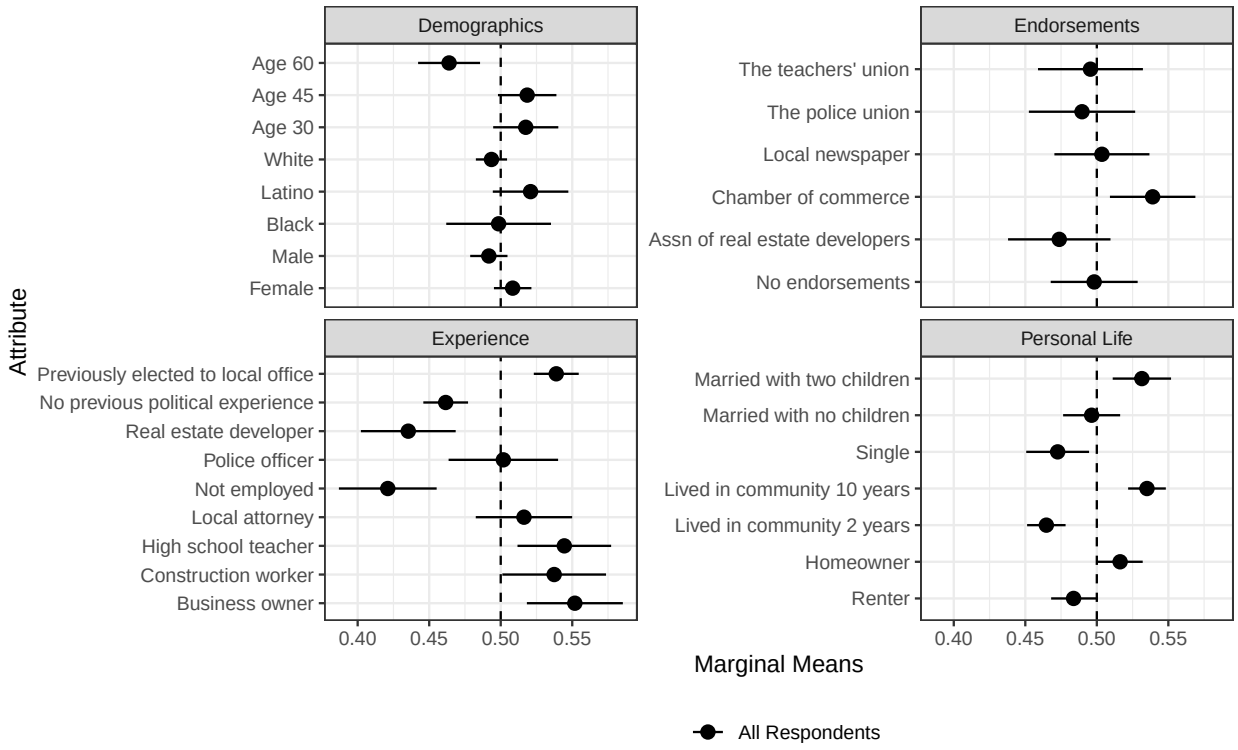


Figure A21: Survey-Weighted Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's party

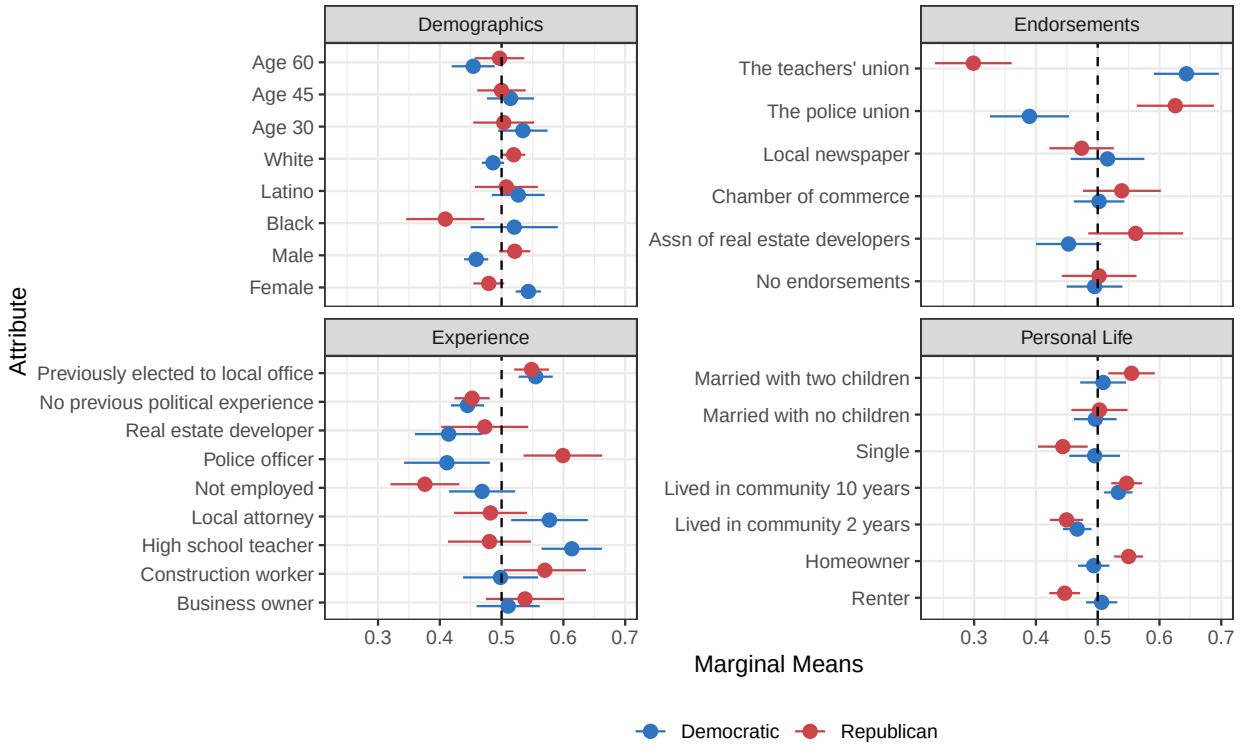


Figure A22: Survey-Weighted Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's homeownership status

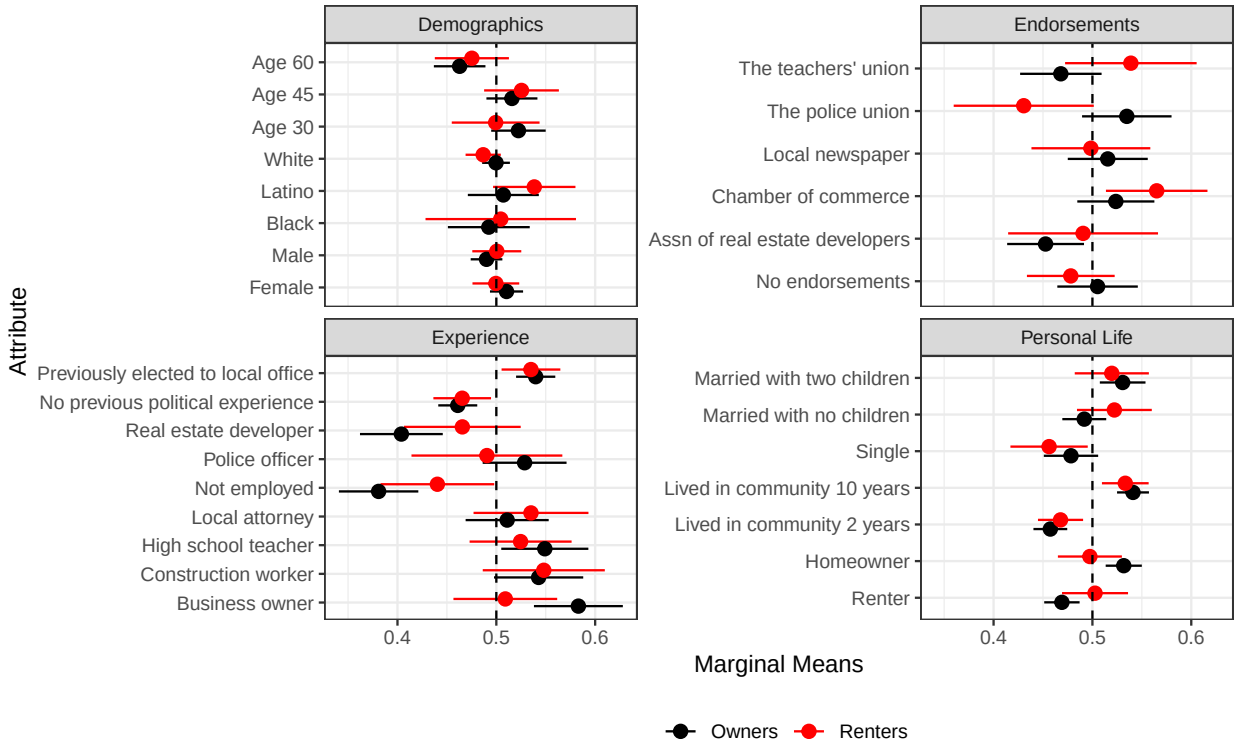


Figure A23: Survey-Weighted Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's gender

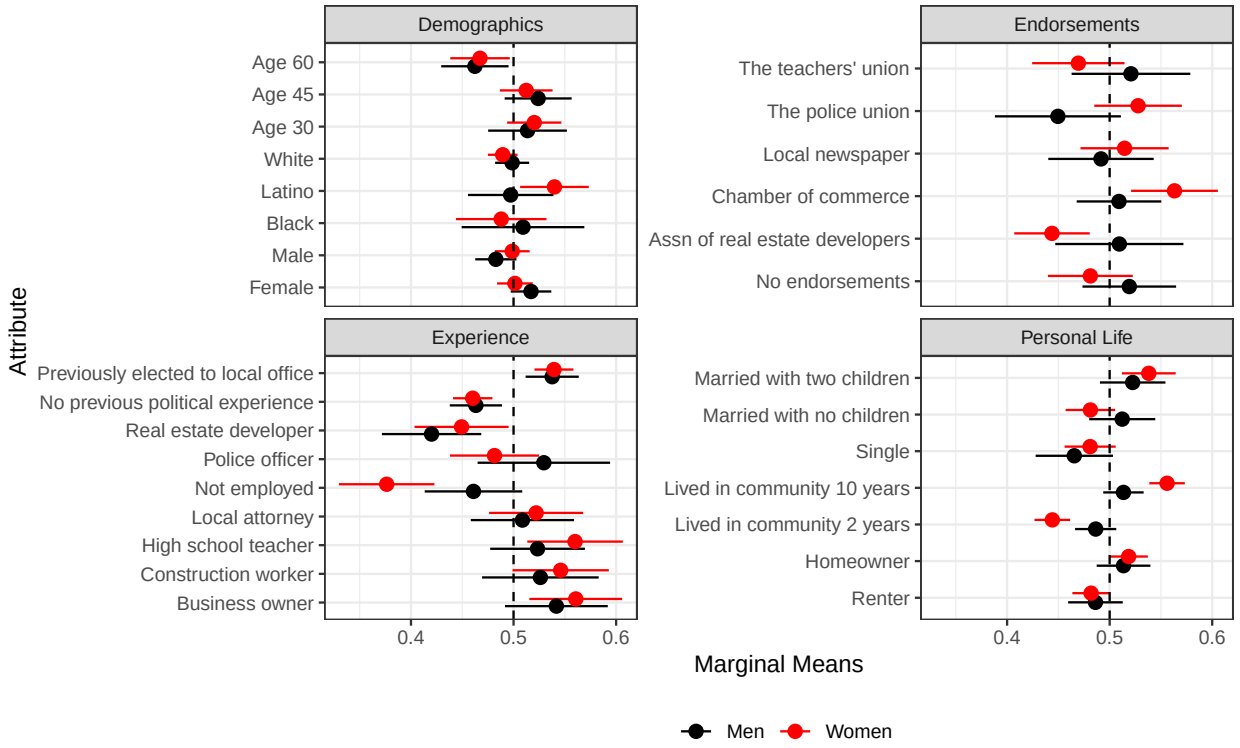


Figure A24: Survey-Weighted Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's race

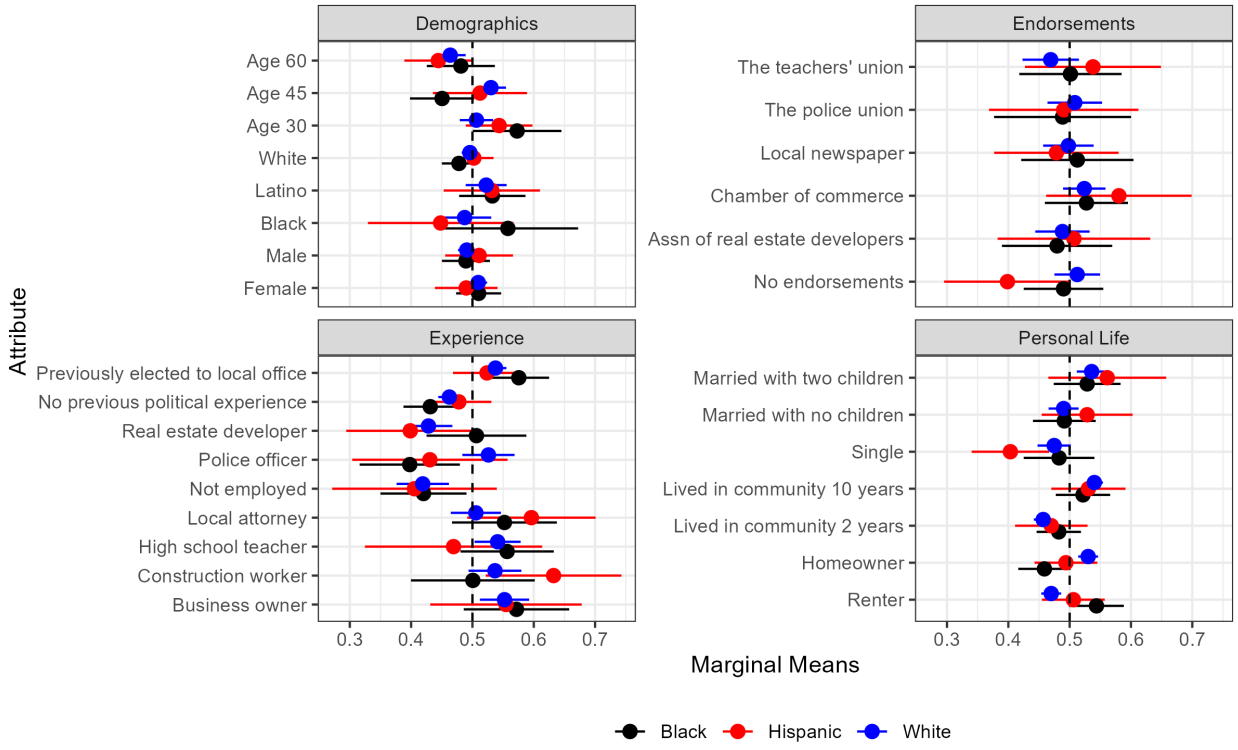


Figure A25: Survey-Weighted Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's place of residence

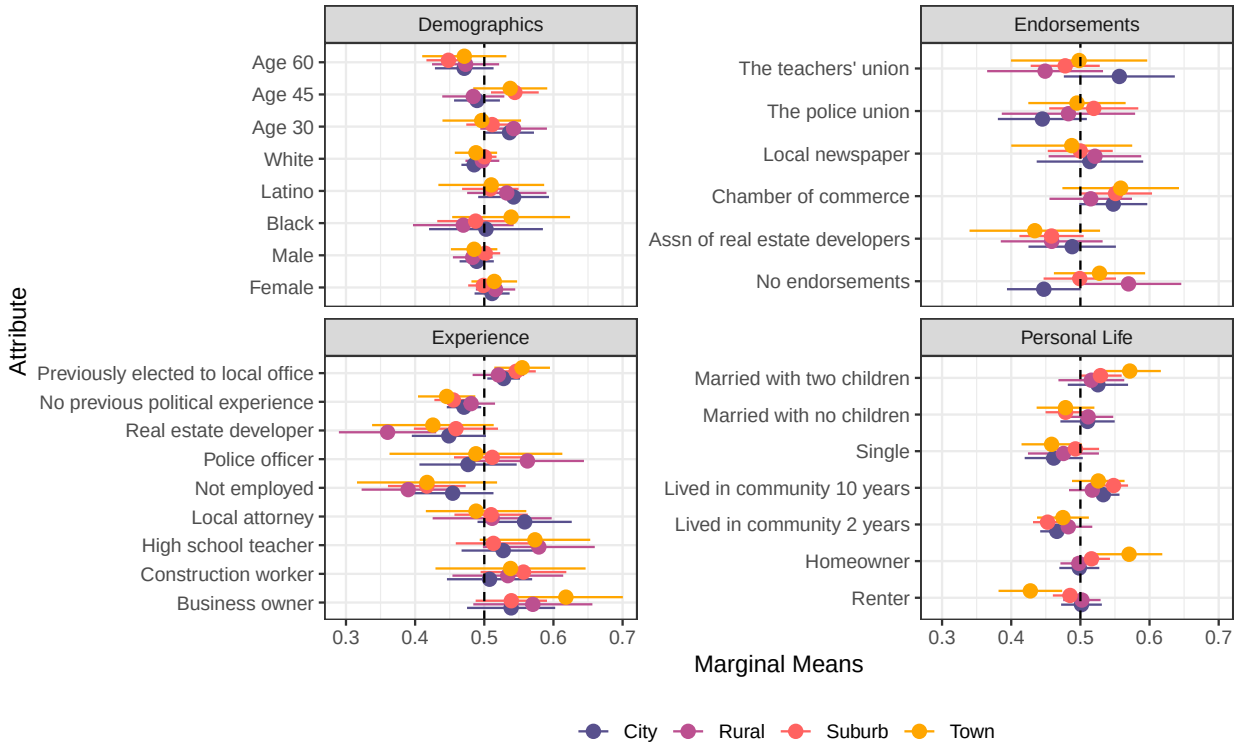


Figure A26: Survey-Weighted Marginal Means and 95% Confidence Intervals by respondent's duration of residency