

# Candidate Wealth, Education, and Criminality in the 2018 General Elections in Pakistan\*

Luke Sonnet<sup>†</sup>

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## 1 Introduction

A dominant theme of the 2018 General Elections in Pakistan was wealth, ill-gotten or otherwise. The incumbent Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, was removed from office by Pakistan's Supreme Court a year before the election and then sentenced to jail just 10 days before the election for wealth uncovered by the Panama Papers<sup>1</sup>. The origins of this wealth could not be explained, and as a result the family and their party were punished in the court room and at the ballot box. While cases of grand corruption and hidden wealth dominate much of the public's attention, the declaration of candidate's assets, as well as their legal history, can also be revealing about the political class, their representation of the country, and what implications there may be for governance.

From national level leaders (Besley, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, 2011) to local officials (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004), there is ample evidence that the characteristics of rulers can shape the effectiveness of governance, as well as the types of policies that get implemented. Understanding the wealth, education, and criminal background of political

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<sup>†</sup>Ph.D. candidate, Department of Political Science, University of California, Los Angeles, [lukesonnet@ucla.edu](mailto:lukesonnet@ucla.edu).

<sup>1</sup><https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/28/world/asia/pakistan-prime-minister-nawaz-sharif-removed.html>

candidates, and studying what kinds of candidates end up winning, can be revealing about how democracies and their institutions interact with candidate characteristics. In this report, I will document a new dataset of candidates declared assets, legal history, education, and other demographics for the vast majority of candidates for national and provincial assemblies in the 2018 elections.

I first describe the candidate affidavit declaration process, before turning to the a discussion of the data. Then, I demonstrate that election winners are significantly wealthier than candidates who end up second or worse, that certain political parties are far more likely to rely on wealthy candidates to fill out their ranks, before demonstrating that candidate wealth is not sufficient to explain much of the variation in electoral outcomes. I replicate analyses from India that show that parties may be willing to nominate candidates with criminal charges if they can finance their own campaigns and even contribute to political parties, before concluding with some potential takeaways and general recommendations.

## 2 Asset declaration forms and data

Since the enactment of a new set of election laws in 2002, candidates for the national and provincial legislatures in Pakistan must submit a statement of assets and liabilities, as well as an affidavit regarding their relationship with the nominating party, criminal cases, education, and more.<sup>2</sup> Any false statements on this affidavit can result in disqualification and can result in criminal charges. The forms remain largely unchanged since the 2002 election, and an example can be found in Appendix A.

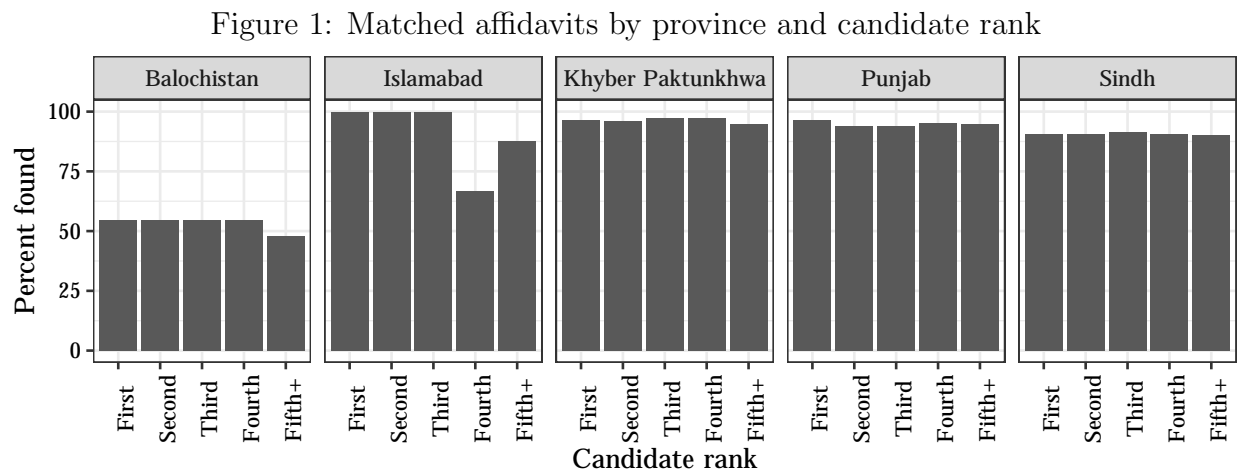
Despite the laws on the books, candidate asset data are not systematically released online or easily available at the ECP headquarters in Islamabad. When they are released, they are often low quality scans that are difficult to analyze en masse. In conjunction with the United States Institute of Peace, I have had all available data publicly released by the ECP for the

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<sup>2</sup>See the amendments to the 1977 election law starting on page 195 <https://web.archive.org/web/20190228182507/https://www.ecp.gov.pk/Documents/ElectionLaws/Volume-I.pdf>

2018 elections manually entered, cleaned, and merged with the 2018 election results. As a result of the low quality and incomplete nature of the released data, not all of the candidates who contested the 2018 elections have data available. It is unclear whether this lack of data is due to candidates not submitting their asset declarations to the ECP, or whether the files were corrupted, forgotten, or in such bad condition they could not be entered and merged.

In the data below, I will analyze candidate affidavit data for candidates we successfully located within the 2018 election results. From the ECP’s online results, we have a total of 11692 candidates who contested the 2018 elections.<sup>3</sup> Of those, we were able to enter the assets of 10392 candidates, a 88.9% recovery rate. Note that if a candidate contested more than one seat, I consider them a separate “candidate” in this count. Figure 1 shows how the missingness breaks out by candidate rank and province (i.e. the position the candidate got in their respective 2018 race). These data combine candidates for national assembly (separated by province) and provincial assembly.



Many of the candidates in Balochistan were not found in the ECP’s asset data. Most of this seems to be due to the ECP not uploading their asset forms, as entire constituencies in Balochistan were missing. In the other provinces and areas, missingness is much lower, and tends to go up as we consider lower and lower ranked candidates. Furthermore, there are always questions about the accuracy and legitimacy of self-reported data. As such, the

<sup>3</sup>See [https://github.com/colincookman/pakistan\\_election\\_results\\_2018](https://github.com/colincookman/pakistan_election_results_2018).

results presented below should be interpreted with some caution. Nonetheless, recent trends point to an increase in the honesty of reporting (Sonnet and Khan, 2018), and the penalties for lying are serious if uncovered and enforced.

### 3 Wealth composition of politicians

The affidavits that politicians submit require them to report income broken down by different categories. Table 1 outlines the different categories, as well as how much wealth was reported in each category. We report, in column-order, the percent of total wealth that is in each category, the percent of candidates that report some wealth in each category, and then the average and trimmed average wealth per candidate in both Pakistani Rupees (PKR) and United States dollars (\$). Candidates reported PKR values, and I use an exchange rate of 140 PKR to USD, which is valid for early 2019, but is higher than when these affidavits were submitted. Trimmed means (with the top and bottom 0.1% of outliers trimmed) are reported as several candidates are very large outliers and make the untrimmed averages unrepresentative.

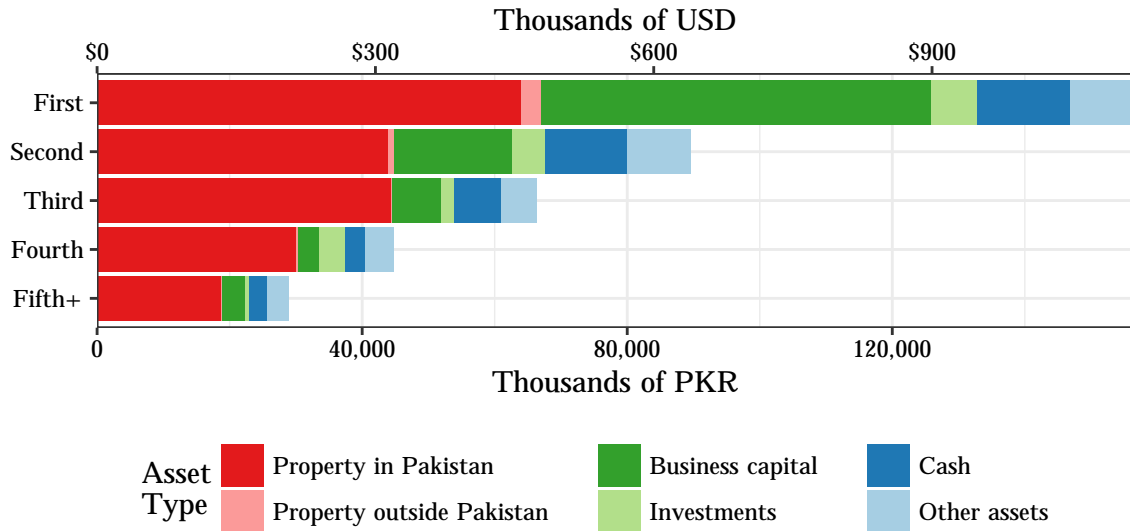
The vast majority of politicians in Pakistan have their wealth in property within Pakistan. Most candidates also report cash and jewelry, and around a quarter of candidates report business investments, although the amount of wealth in these categories is much lower than in property. These results confirm conventional wisdom that the political class in Pakistan is largely made up of land owners, and that they are significantly wealthier than the general population.

However, are all candidates wealthy land-owners, or are those who end up winning elections different from the rest of the candidate pool? Figure 2 shows the average income (with the top and bottom 0.1% of outliers trimmed) for each category by candidate rank. Winners are nearly twice as wealthy as second-placed candidates, and the further down the results one goes, the less wealth candidates report. Furthermore, winning candidates tend to have

Table 1: Breakdown of declared candidate wealth by category

	% of total	% reporting any	PKR		USD	
			Mean	Trim mean	Mean	Trim mean
<b>Property</b>						
Within Pakistan	62.6	61.0	46,942,107	24,867,499	335,301	177,625
Outside Pakistan	1.1	1.2	846,528	322,564	6,047	2,304
<b>Business capital</b>						
Within Pakistan	13.6	27.6	10,156,623	3,744,228	72,547	26,744
Outside Pakistan	6.1	1.5	4,562,649	128,193	32,590	916
Remitted	0.8	2.2	599,320	170,197	4,281	1,216
<b>Others</b>						
Investments	2.6	11.5	1,983,328	1,268,586	14,167	9,061
Vehicles	2.0	38.8	1,505,559	1,294,810	10,754	9,249
Jewelry	1.6	60.4	1,179,199	1,061,176	8,423	7,580
Cash	6.6	69.8	4,964,758	4,265,404	35,463	30,467
Other assets	2.9	58.7	2,201,294	1,667,627	15,724	11,912

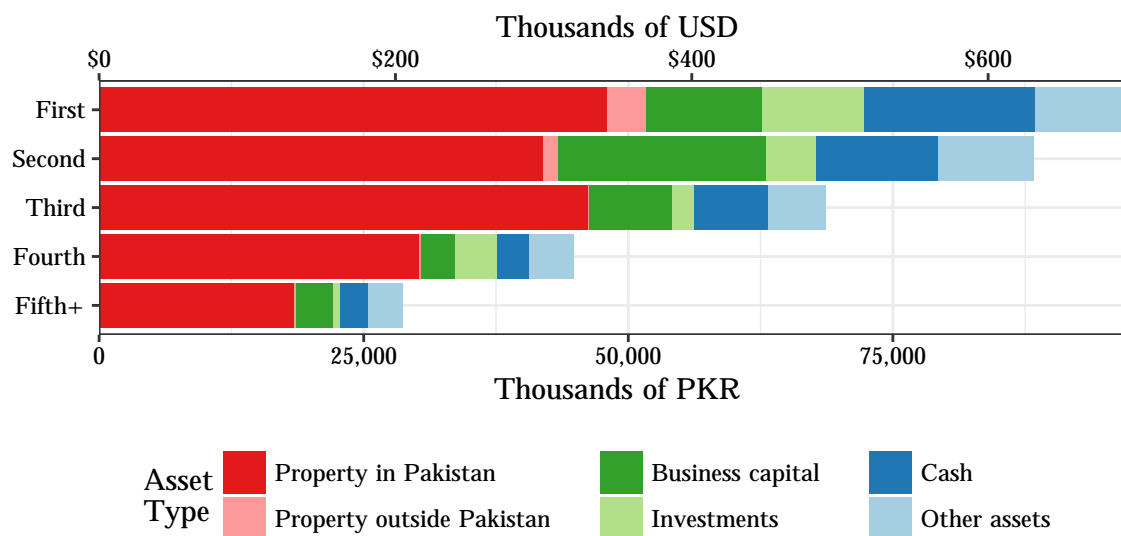
Figure 2: Trimmed average wealth composition by candidate rank



far more non-property business investments than other candidates, whose wealth is mostly made up of property.

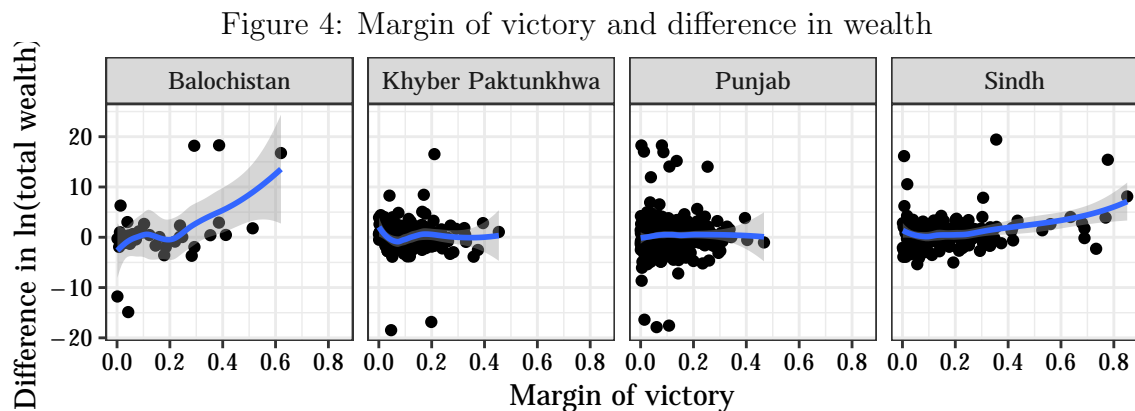
One possible interpretation of the above is that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), who won the plurality of provincial and national level seats, is simply made up of individuals with more business holdings. Indeed, when we look at Figure 3, which shows the same figure as the above but for candidates outside the PTI, we notice that both first and second place candidates have similar business capital and investments. Therefore, in other elections where the PTI did not dominate, winners may have had a more traditional wealth profile, with property holdings making up a greater share of wealth. Due to the relatively high amount of party switching in Pakistan, it is also possible that those with large business holdings are attractive to parties and move between parties and that the winning candidates always have large business holdings. Until data on other elections becomes available, we are unable to answer these questions.

Figure 3: Trimmed average wealth composition by candidate rank for non-PTI candidates



It is very difficult to ascertain whether wealth enables candidates to win office, or whether candidates who win office and get big ticket nominations are simply more likely to be more wealthy. However, we can look at how the margin of victory is related the the gap in

wealth between candidates, to see whether competitive candidates, regardless of whether they are winners, tend to be wealthy, or whether it truly is the case that rich candidates are dominating politics. Figure 4 plots the difference in wealth between the first two candidates against the difference in their vote shares. As you move right along the x-axis, the margin of victory gets larger, and as you move up on the y-axis, the wealth disparity also grows larger. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab, it seems that the top two candidates often have similar levels of wealth, regardless of the margin of victory. One interpretation of this data is that there is a large pool of wealthy candidates in Punjab and KP, and large wealth gaps do not lead to large gaps in performance. Indeed, there are not many races with large margins of victory. However, in Sindh and Balochistan, there are some races where one candidate completely dominated, and the increase in the wealth gap in those races indicates that wealthy candidates there are able to keep other wealthy candidates from entering the race.

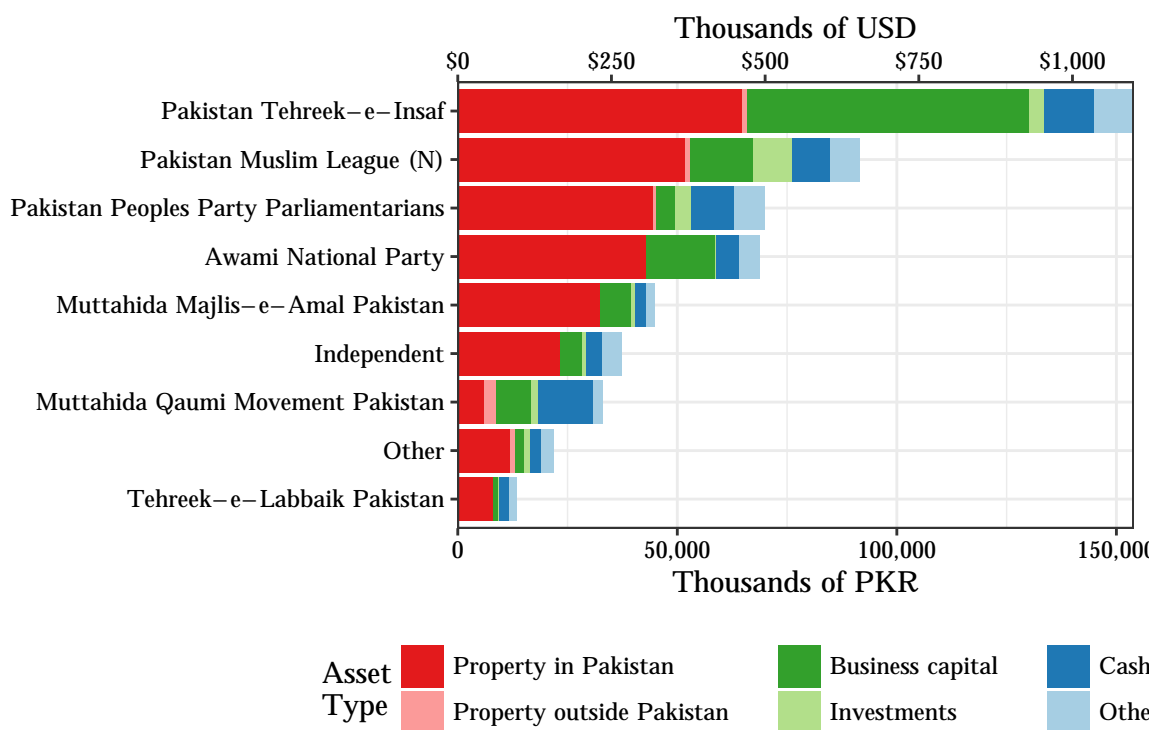


## 4 Wealth and political parties

Another possible interpretation of the above relationship is that parties that are growing in popularity in the run-up to an election are better able to attract wealthy candidates who can finance their own campaigns and are likely to be well known. If a party name and leadership are attractive for wealthy candidates to associate themselves with, then we should observe

the parties with the most to gain attracting wealthy candidates. In Figure 5, we show the wealth composition by major political party. PTI, who won the most seats and now run the federal government, have the wealthiest candidates. Furthermore, fitting their profile as a party that favors the business class, PTI candidates by far have the greatest business holdings. Other interesting patterns include the lack of property wealth of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) candidates. Largely an urban party, a greater share their candidate's wealth is in cash and non-property business holdings.

Figure 5: Trimmed average wealth composition by party

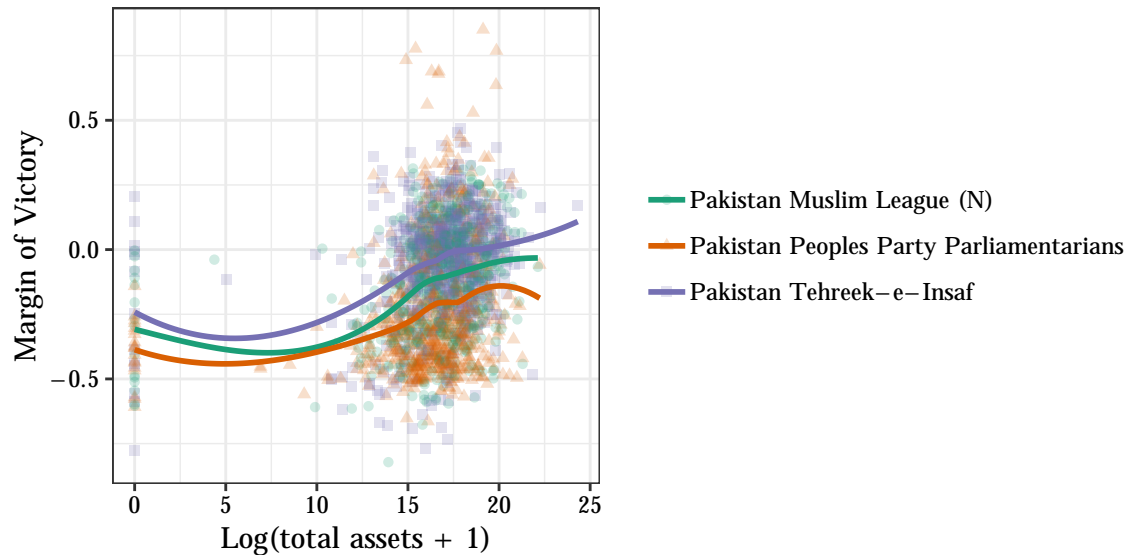


If we look within three of the major parties, we see remarkably similar trends, where the relationship between wealth and the margin of victory is very similar. The lines in Figure 6 show similar rates of increase in the margin of victory as candidates wealth increase (note: a negative margin of victory is the amount that the candidate lost by). However, the different heights of the lines shows that for a given wealth, candidates in the PTI did far better than candidates in the other parties. Therefore, wealth is clearly not sufficient to secure elections,



and even the wealthiest candidates cannot undo the power of party labels and the signals they send. This is likely good news for democratic accountability, as it demonstrates voters are responsive to parties and not just the power of the candidates nominated by the parties.

Figure 6: Wealth and margin of victory by major party



## 4.1 Criminality and party contributions

The relationship between parties and candidates is more complicated than parties simply seeking out wealthy candidates. One puzzle from the neighboring country of India concerns the large number of candidates with criminal backgrounds who receive nominations and win elections. In a series of essays Vaishnav (2012) argues that these candidates are nominated and win because they have the financial means to support their own candidacies and perhaps even support the party. In Pakistan, we also see evidence for this pattern. Figure 7 shows that as candidates report more wealthier, the percentage self-reporting criminal charges also goes up. Furthermore, Figure 8 shows that those wealthier candidates are also more likely to make contributions to their parties, and that the share of candidates with criminal charges contributing to their party is higher than for those without criminal charges for the higher asset deciles.

Figure 7: Percent of candidates with self-reported criminal charges by wealth decile

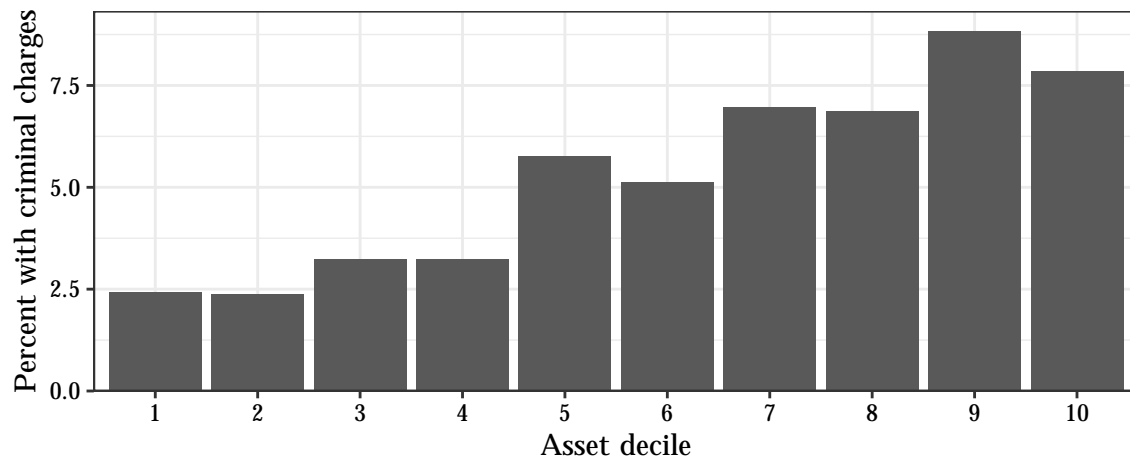
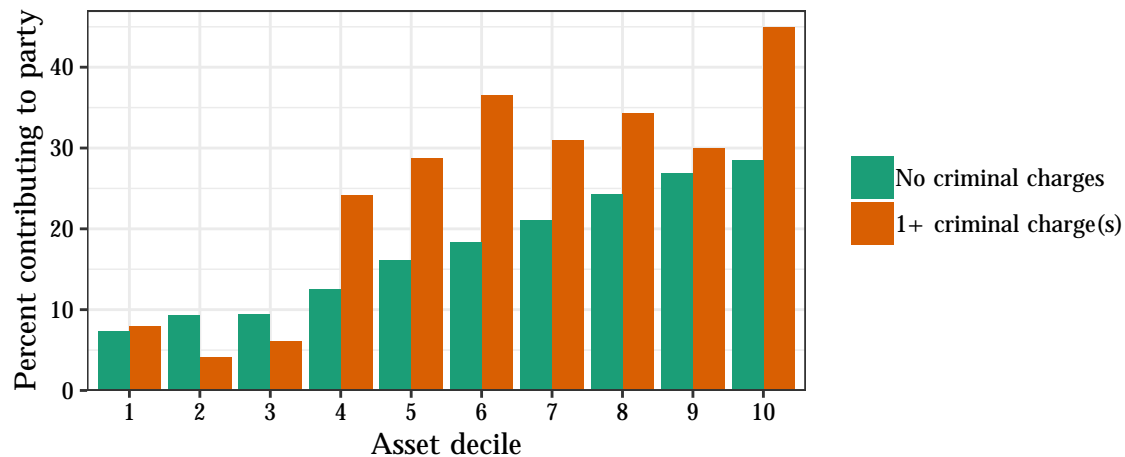


Figure 8: Percent of candidates contributing to their party by wealth decile



This provides suggestive evidence that parties are willing to look the other way for candidates with criminal charges, so long as they are wealthy and able to contribute to the political party. It is also possible that criminal charges are targeted at wealthier, successful candidates for political reasons. Unfortunately, it is very hard to know whether politically motivated charges are driving this relationship.

## 5 Conclusion

Candidates for political office in Pakistan are relatively wealthy, well educated, and wealth is correlated with performance in elections. Even when looking only among competitive candidates, a positive relationship between wealth and margin of victory remains. Nonetheless, party labels are still valuable, as even wealthy candidates had trouble winning on party tickets that were less fashionable. This provides evidence that parties have some bargaining power when their fortunes are looking upward. However, parties also appear willing to look the other way for candidates with criminal charges if they are able to finance their own campaigns and the parties themselves. This points to an inability or unwillingness of parties to avoid criminal candidates.

One possible solution to break the dependence of political parties on wealthy candidates is to introduce public funding for campaigns or banning contributions from candidates to parties. Indeed, the ECP has considered such a law.<sup>4</sup> Passing laws capping spending or providing public funds could increase competition and limit the influence of individual candidate finance on politics. Indeed, there is evidence that spending limits in Brazil promoted such equality (Avis et al., 2017). Furthermore, it may help empower parties to select candidates based on non-financial dimensions, such as competence, ideological alignment, and track record. Another possible solution is to strengthen the power of those elected via quotas. Recent evidence from Sweden indicates entrenched, lower capacity candidates are the ones crowded out by quotas (Besley et al., 2017). Pakistan has some quotas via party lists, however these legislators may easily be ignored as they do not represent constituencies and do not crowd out other candidates. Replacing quotas with reserved seats or privileging the quota politicians in legislative voting processes may be a step toward ensuring higher candidate quality.

Finally, this analysis and additional understanding of the political class of Pakistan is only possible because the ECP decided to release the forms online. Having this information

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<sup>4</sup>See [https://web.archive.org/web/\\*/https://www.dawn.com/news/1410255](https://web.archive.org/web/*/https://www.dawn.com/news/1410255).

be available is crucial to understanding the health of a democracy. The ECP should be applauded for making this information publicly available, and in the future should make efforts to systematize the collection and release of such data.

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**URL:** <https://web.archive.org/web/20180925210148/https://tribune.com.pk/story/1759015/2-asset-growth-tax-payments-poll-candidates-rise-sharply/>

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## A Affidavit and Asset Declaration Forms

## **AFFIDAVIT BY THE CANDIDATE FOR ELECTION TO THE ASSEMBLIES IN GENERAL ELECTIONS 2018**

I, .....s/o, d/o, w/o....., being a candidate for election to the National Assembly / Provincial Assembly of ..... (name of province) from constituency No..... filed / am filing my nomination papers on .....and in addition to Form A and Form B, I do hereby solemnly affirm and declare to the best of my knowledge and belief that,—

- A. I am registered as a voter at serial number ..... in the electoral roll of electoral area..... of Tehsil/Taluka ..... District .....
- B. No loan for an amount of two million rupees or more is obtained from any bank, financial institution, cooperative society or corporate body in my own name or in the name of my spouse or any of my dependents, or any business concern mainly owned by me or the aforesaid, stands unpaid for more than one year from the due date, or has got such loan written off; and
- C. I, my spouse or any of my dependents or a business concern mainly owned by me or the aforesaid, is not in default in payment of government dues or utility charges, including telephone, electricity, gas and water charges of an amount in excess of ten thousand rupees, for over six months, at the time of filing of nomination paper.
- D. The names of my spouse(s) and dependents are given hereunder which is correct and no name has been left out.

Sr.No.	Name of dependent	Relation with the candidate
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

*Note-I: Use additional sheet if required.*

- E. Neither I nor my spouse(s) nor any of my dependents mainly owns any business/firm/company except the following:

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**Explanation.**— For the purpose of these declarations, the expression —

- (i) “loan” shall mean any loan, advance, credit or finance obtained or written off on or after the 31<sup>st</sup> day of December, 1985, but shall not include the loan the recovery of which has been stayed or suspended by any order of a court or

tribunal, including the High Court and the Supreme Court;

- (ii) “mainly owned” shall mean holding or controlling a majority interest in a business concern;
- (iii) “taxes” include all taxes levied by Federal Government, Provincial Government or a local government, but shall not include taxes the recovery of which has been stayed or suspended by any order of a court or tribunal;
- (iv) “government dues and utility charges” shall, *inter alia*, include rent, charges of rest houses or lodges owned by the Federal Government, Provincial Governments, local governments or corporations established or controlled by such governments, but shall not include the government dues and utilities charges the recovery of which has been stayed or suspended by any order of a court or tribunal.

F. No case of criminal offences was pending against me, six months prior to filing of my nomination papers.

AND

The following cases of criminal offences were pending against me, six months prior to filing of this nomination:

Title and number of case	Name of the Court

G. My educational qualification is .....

H. My present occupation is .....

I. My passport number is .....

J. My National tax number, if any, is.....

K. The income tax paid by me during the last three assessment years/ financial years is given hereunder:—

Total Income	*Source of income	Tax Year	Total Income Tax paid

*Note-II: Attach copies of income tax returns of the years mentioned above.*

*\*If more than one income resource, attach detail.*

L. Detail in respect of my travel abroad during last three years and cost incurred thereon is as under: (attach complete copy of the passport and detail of expenditure).

Year	Detail of countries visited	Period of stay	Cost Incurred	Remarks

M. The agricultural income tax paid by me during the last three years is given below:

Tax Year	Land Holding	Agricultural Income	Total Agricultural Income Tax Paid

*Note III: Attach copies of agricultural tax returns of the last three years mentioned above or the certificate issued by the authority concerned in this behalf.*

N. Being elected as Member of National Assembly/Provincial Assembly from Constituency No..... in the year(s) ..... I made important contributions for the benefit of my constituency the details of which are as follows:

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

O. I have paid a sum of Rs..... by way of contribution to the political party which has awarded me party ticket for this election. (Attach detail, if any).

P. I have received a sum of Rs.....from the party which has awarded me the party ticket (Attach detail, if any).

Q. I shall make all election expenditures out of the money deposited in the exclusive account opened for the purpose detail of which has been mentioned in the nomination form and I shall not make any transaction towards the election expenses through an account other than the above account

R. I have not ceased to be a citizen of Pakistan nor have I acquired or applied for the citizenship of a foreign state.

OR

I possess Foreign Passport No..... issued by ..... [name of country(s)].

S. I have no objection if information concerning myself in relation to acquisition of citizenship of foreign State or application of such citizenship is provided by any foreign state to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Pakistan or Election Commission of Pakistan.



a.	Net assets as on 30 <sup>th</sup> June of current Financial Year.....
b.	Net assets as on 30 <sup>th</sup> June of previous Financial Year.....
c.	Increase/decrease (a-b).....

V. I hereby assure that I shall abide by the Code of Conduct issued by the Election Commission.

Thumb impression of candidate .....

Address.....

Contact No. ....

Dated.....

I, ..... s/o, w/o, d/o..... do  
hereby solemnly declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the above contents of this  
affidavit are correct and nothing has been concealed therefrom.

Date .....

Place.....

Attested by the Oath Commissioner.....

Page 4 of 4

**FORM B**  
[See Section 60, 110 & 137]

**STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES**

I,----- Candidate/ **Member,\*National Assembly/ Senate, Provincial Assembly**, Punjab/Sindh/Khyber Pakhtunkhwa/Balochistan from constituency No. -----/ from the seats reserved for women/non-Muslims hereby declare on solemn affirmation that no immovable and movable property, including bonds, shares, certificates, securities, insurance policies and jewellery, other than specified herein below, is held by me, my spouse(s) and dependents on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of June,-----.

**ASSETS**

ASSET	Cost of Assets	REMARKS
(1)	(2)	(3)
<p><b>1. <u>IMMOVABLE PROPERTY</u></b></p> <p>Open plots, houses, apartments, commercial buildings, under construction properties, agricultural property, etc.</p> <p>(a) <b><u>Held within Pakistan*</u></b></p> <p>(i) _____</p> <p>(ii) _____</p> <p>(iii) _____</p> <p>(b) <b><u>Held outside Pakistan*</u></b></p> <p>(i) _____</p> <p>(ii) _____</p> <p><b>2. <u>MOVABLE ASSETS</u></b></p> <p>(a) <b><u>Business capital within Pakistan</u></b></p> <p>(i) Name of business</p> <p>(ii) Capital amount</p> <p>(b) <b><u>Business capital outside Pakistan</u></b></p> <p>(i) Name of business</p> <p>(ii) Capital amount</p> <p>(c) <b><u>Assets brought or remitted from outside Pakistan*</u></b></p> <p>(i) Bank drafts/Remittances</p> <p>(ii) Machinery</p> <p>(iii) Other</p>		

\*Details to be annexed.

ASSET	COST OF ASSET	REMARKS
1	2	3
<p>(d) <b><u>Assets brought out of remittance from abroad*</u></b></p> <p>(e) <b><u>Investments</u></b></p> <p>(i) Stock and Shares</p> <p>(ii) Debentures</p> <p>(iii) National Investment (Unit) Trust</p> <p>(iv) ICP Certificates</p> <p>(v) National Savings Schemes</p> <p>- Defence Savings Certificate</p> <p>- Special Savings Certificate</p> <p>- Regular Income Certificate</p> <p>(vi) Unsecured loans</p> <p>(vii) Mortgages</p> <p>(viii) Any other</p> <p>(f) <b><u>Motor Vehicles**</u></b></p> <p>Make Model Reg. No.</p> <p>(i)</p> <p>(ii)</p> <p>(g) <b><u>Jewelery, etc.</u></b></p> <p>(i) Weight</p> <p>(ii) Description</p> <p>(h) <b><u>Cash and Bank Accounts*</u></b></p> <p>(i) Cash in hand</p> <p>(ii) Cash at Bank</p> <p>Account No. Bank &amp; Branch</p> <p>Current</p> <p>Deposit</p> <p>Savings</p> <p>Others deposits</p> <p>(i) <b><u>Furniture, Fittings &amp; articles of personal use</u></b></p> <p>(j) <b><u>Assets transferred to any person</u></b></p> <p>(i) Without adequate consideration, or</p> <p>(ii) by revocable transfer</p> <p>(k) <b><u>Any other assets</u></b></p>		

\*Details to be annexed.

\*\* Use extra sheets if necessary.

**LIABILITIES**

Liabilities	Amount	Remarks
(i) Mortgages secured on Property or land (ii) Unsecured Loans owing (iii) Bank Overdraft (iv) Bank Loans (v) Amounts due under Hire Purchase Agreement (vi) House Building Loans (vii) Advances from Provident Funds etc. (viii) Other debts due* (ix) Liabilities in the names of minor children (in respect of assets standing in their names) <b>Total</b>		

\*Details to be annexed.

**VERIFICATION**

I, ..... S/o, W/o, D/o .....  
do hereby declare solemnly that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the above statement of the assets and liabilities of myself, my spouse(s), dependent children is correct and complete and nothing has been as on 30th June, ..... concealed therefrom.

Date .....

Signature of the Member.”.

## B Other characteristics

Table 2: Breakdown of candidate characteristics by party

Party	Number of candidates				
	Total	Winning	With criminal cases	Made party contributions	With beyond HS education
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf	758	331 (43.7 %)	54 (7.8 %)	346 (50.1 %)	472 (68.4 %)
Pakistan Muslim League (N)	647	200 (30.9 %)	43 (7.2 %)	285 (47.8 %)	387 (64.9 %)
Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan	104	22 (21.2 %)	4 (4.4 %)	2 (2.2 %)	52 (57.1 %)
Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians	735	129 (17.6 %)	59 (8.9 %)	290 (43.6 %)	378 (56.8 %)
Awami National Party	198	11 (5.6 %)	14 (8.0 %)	67 (38.5 %)	90 (51.7 %)
Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal Pakistan	598	31 (5.2 %)	20 (3.7 %)	16 (3.0 %)	285 (52.9 %)
Other	2061	61 (3.0 %)	89 (5.1 %)	207 (11.8 %)	721 (41.1 %)
Independent	6037	54 (0.9 %)	245 (4.6 %)	604 (11.3 %)	2632 (49.1 %)
Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan	554	2 (0.4 %)	15 (2.9 %)	19 (3.6 %)	180 (34.5 %)