Do Electoral Eligibility Laws Hurt Political Candidacy of Specific Groups? Evidence from India [*]

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Abstract

Governments worldwide regulate political candidacy through various socio-demographic criteria. This paper examines electoral laws that disqualify citizens with more than two children from contesting local government offices in India. These laws aimed to leverage politicians' community influence to shape family size norms. Using variation in law adoption across states and a difference-in-differences framework, I analyze effects on political candidacy across major social groups. I find that fertility limits reduce Muslim candidacy but have no significant effect on overall candidate numbers or the candidacy of other major groups. I argue that this stems from the dilemma candidates' face between legal compliance and social norms regarding family size. An original survey of 500 village politicians supports this theory. The paper demonstrates that electoral laws established to impact social norms may deter marginalized groups from political participation, thereby raising concerns on equal representation opportunities to all.

Keywords: Political Entry, Electoral Laws, Candidacy, Local Politics, Population Control Policies, India

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1 Introduction

Laws restricting eligibility for political offices based on personal characteristics have existed since the earliest electoral systems, with common requirements focusing on citizenship, residency, and birthplace. These restrictions vary in stringency across different offices. For example, the U.S. presidency demands natural-born citizenship and 14 years of U.S. residency, while Senate candidates need to be citizens for at least 9 years and residents at election time. Some nations impose additional qualifications beyond these usual requirements. For instance, Argentina requires Senators to meet minimum income thresholds, while Pakistan and Nigeria mandate minimum educational qualifications for several key political offices. These electoral eligibility requirements create varying barriers to political participation across different groups. While research on voter identification rules has documented such consequences on turnout (Berman, 2015; Keyssar, 2009; Wehner and de Kadt, 2023; White, 2019), there is limited research on the consequences of electoral eligibility laws on candidacy.

In this study, I investigate whether eligibility rules challenging social norms influence the participation of specific groups for political office. While electoral rules establishing eligibility criteria for political office—such as education requirements—appear neutral like voting laws, they may inadvertently alter the candidate pool's composition by creating varying entry costs for different groups. Proponents contend that these laws improve the candidate pool's quality while creating role models who can promote desired societal behaviors (Shapiro et al., 2010). Critics, however, argue that regulating political entry often produces unintended and far-reaching consequences (Pande, 2015).

This study addresses this gap by examining how electoral laws that disqualify citizens with more than two children from contesting local government offices in India's local governments affect political candidacy of major social groups in India. The law disqualifies individuals who have additional children after its implementation but does not penalize those who already had large families. In other words, citizens with more

than two children prior to the law's implementation remain eligible for office, but any subsequent births will disqualify them. These restrictions were implemented to limit population growth by positioning elected representatives as role models for family planning (Anukriti and Chakravarty, 2019; Buch, 2005). These fertility limits were among the first amendments to vary entry requirements across states in the local governance act. The geographic and temporal variation in their adoption provides an opportunity for systematic analysis. I focus on the candidacy of upper-caste Hindus—the politically dominant group; Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs)—marginalized groups with constitutionally mandated quotas; Other Backward Castes (OBCs)—a large marginalized group without constitutional mandates but with quotas in most states; and Muslims—the country's largest religious minority and one of its most marginalized socioeconomic groups, without constitutional mandates for electoral quotas (Allie, 2023).

Why would laws limiting office to individuals with specific characteristics affect specific groups? Existing theories suggest that entry costs play a crucial role in the decision to run for elections (Gulzar, 2021; Tullock, 1965). I argue that when entry requirements challenge social norms, citizens who deviate from these norms to contest for office may face backlash from both their family and community. Since fertility decisions are fundamentally social decisions embedded in cultural and religious norms, fertility limits create precisely this type of norm-violating requirement, forcing potential candidates to choose between family planning preferences and political aspirations (Mishra and Parasnis, 2017; Munshi and Myaux, 2006). I expect these consequences are higher for groups with lower likelihood of winning and groups facing higher trade-offs. Moreover, if electoral rules are implemented imperfectly—a common issue in developing countries—they may enable elites to exploit the system for their own benefit (Anderson, Francois and Kotwal, 2015; Neggers, 2018). I expect that this could cause marginalized groups to sit out for fear of running into issues.

Using data from a nationally representative survey, I study the effects of fertility limits legislation on political candidacy, leveraging the variation in law adoption across states and a difference-in-differences framework. Fertility limits decrease both the likelihood of any Muslim candidate running and the overall share of Muslims on the ballot, suggesting a decline in Muslim political candidacy. However, there is no significant effect on the candidacy of other major social groups or total candidacy. These findings suggest that electoral laws designed to shape social norms may undermine the candidacy of specific groups—in this case, there is robust evidence of decline in marginalized minority groups' political candidacy.

To uncover the underlying mechanisms, I primarily rely on data from a phone survey of current village council members and runners-up in Maharashtra's village councils, as Maharashtra is one of the major states that adopted fertility limits. The survey findings show that preferences for more than two children are relatively higher among Muslims. This finding is consistent with the results from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), documented by Anukriti and Chakravarty (2019). Since family size preferences are heavily influenced by community norms, deviating from these preferences can impose substantial costs. Additionally, my findings show higher son preference among Muslims. This preference is particularly significant because Indian law bans fetal sex determination to prevent sex-selective abortions of female fetuses, a practice driven by son preference (Arnold, Kishor and Roy, 2002; Jayachandran, 2017). Consequently, son preference becomes a key driver of family size decisions.

The survey data also highlights the role of imperfect enforcement. Most politicians report that false accusations and misreporting of children to maintain eligibility are common in Maharashtra, even after two decades of the law's implementation. However, these illicit practices are reported equally across religious groups; hence, there is no evidence to suggest Muslims disproportionately choose not to contest out due to fear of false accusation. The survey also reveals an important insight about policy

4

design: Muslim respondents, who must compete without the benefit of quotas unlike other marginalized groups, report that political aspirants from their community would be more willing to comply with fertility requirements if exclusive quotas existed for their community. This suggests that the combination of family size preferences and the low probability of electoral success may explain the observed decline in Muslim candidacy.

Additionally, while there was no decline in candidacy for other groups, I find that these limits alter the age composition of candidates for most major social groups—i.e., the ratio between younger candidates (who are affected by the limits because they may not have reached their desired family size) and older, eligible candidates. The shift from young to old candidates can occur in two ways: 1) the decline in candidacy among young aspirants creates a void filled by older candidates, and 2) young citizens affected by fertility limits may recruit older, eligible family members to contest in their place. Data from the original survey of local politicians in Maharashtra support the second pattern, revealing that politically ambitious individuals who are ineligible due to fertility limits often arrange for others to run in their place. Although this arrangement allows for some degree of continued political participation, it raises concerns about democratic accountability. If elected, these replacement candidates can serve as proxies for the ineligible individuals they represent (Heinze, Brulé and Chauchard, 2025). It is important to note, given my main finding on Muslim candidacy, that this coping strategy only partially mitigates the impact of fertility limits, rather than providing complete replacement for marginalized minority groups.

This paper makes the following contributions. First, it examines the consequences of laws that restrict individuals from holding political office based on specific characteristics for unprotected marginalized groups. Despite the wide variety of electoral laws, which can significantly impact the social composition of the candidate pool, existing studies have predominantly concentrated on the consequences of filing fees and signature requirements—types of electoral laws that were designed to reduce the number of

5

political parties and have been argued to contribute to the demise of third parties in the US (Ansolabehere and Gerber, 1996; Burden, 2007; Drometer and Rincke, 2009; Stratmann, 2005; Tamas, 2018; Tullock, 1965; Winger, 2002). Second, it highlights the factors that influence entry costs. Existing literature on the determinants of political entry focuses on political ambition, the likelihood of winning and the benefits of running for office, such as rents and prominence within the community (see Gulzar (2021) for a detailed literature review). This literature mentions that entry costs are crucial, but does not discuss individual, household, and community-level factors that constitute these costs. Lastly, this paper contributes to the large body of literature on decentralization in India. Government structures have been extensively studied in recent years, primarily due to the large-scale adoption of constitutionally mandated gender- and caste-based quotas for those running for local government offices (Beaman et al., 2009; Bhavnani, 2009; Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Chauchard, 2017). However, while some laws aim to increase the representation of marginalized groups, several states have introduced laws that restrict office eligibility based on specific characteristics, such as minimum education requirements, toilet requirements, and fertility limits. Understanding the consequences of these laws is essential for assessing the benefits of representational gains from decentralization.

2   Conceptual Framework

How does restricting political office to candidates with specific characteristics affect the decision to run for office? The commonly held view is that barriers to entry through ballot access restrictions result in a decrease in political or electoral competition (Afzal, 2014). This is because these restrictions increase the costs of entry for candidates, making it more difficult for them to run for office (Tullock, 1965). These entry costs are an important part of my analysis, as they play a role in determining whether candidates impacted by the restrictions will choose to run for office (Kapoor and Magesan, 2018).

Electoral laws that challenge existing social norms create complex behavioral re-

6

sponses. Existing research has documented intricate relationships between formal laws, social norms, and individual behavior (Bénabou and Tirole, 2011; Lane, Nosenzo and Sonderegger, 2023). Lane, Nosenzo and Sonderegger (2023), argue that individuals, being inherently pro-social, respond to both, rewards for conforming to societal norms and sanctions for deviating from them. In this study, fertility restrictions create tension between maintaining cultural family size preferences and pursuing political aspirations. When family size norms differ substantially across social groups, these restrictions may have disparate impacts on different communities.

However, individuals might choose to deviate from these norms if the payoff is sufficiently high (Gulzar, 2021). The potential benefits of running for office may include the rents from being an elected representative, the gains from public service, or the opportunity to represent one's community (Gulzar and Khan, 2025). If the likelihood of winning an election is low, as is often the case for marginalized groups, the cost of deviating from family or community preferences may outweigh these potential benefits. Consequently, aspiring citizens from these groups may opt not to contest elections. I refer to this mechanism as internal costs, as they arise from individual, family, and community preferences.

EXPECTATION 1 *Electoral laws that challenge social norms may reduce political candidacy among groups that face both high costs for norm deviation and low electoral prospects.*

Now, consider a scenario where the state is unable to fully enforce a law. In such cases, groups with greater influence over the bureaucracy might violate the law without facing consequences (Anderson, Francois and Kotwal, 2015; Neggers, 2018). Furthermore, these influential groups could exploit limited state capacity to falsely accuse competitors. Even if a law-abiding citizen from a marginalized group decides to contest elections despite their social preferences, they may be deterred by the potential costs of facing false accusations. I term these external costs, as they arise from imperfect state

7

enforcement rather than individual or group preferences.

EXPECTATION 2 *Electoral laws with imperfect implementation can disproportionately affect marginalized groups, thereby reducing their political candidacy.*

3 Fertility Preferences and Political Candidacy in Rural India

In many societies, fertility choices are influenced by social, demographic, and economic conditions (Goldscheider and Uhlenberg, 1969; Mishra and Parasnis, 2017; Munshi and Myaux, 2006). Several studies highlight that marginalized minority groups have higher fertility rates. For example, Kulu and Hannemann (2016) found that women of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin in the UK have higher second-, third-, and fourth-birth rates compared to native British women, due religiosity and family norms than education or employment status. Similarly, Zang, Sariego and Krishnan (2022) showed that Black and Hispanic women without college degrees in the U.S. tend to have higher fertility rates than white women, driven by social and economic instability and differences in intended and unintended births. Additionally, Pew Research Center (2012) reported that Hispanic women have a total fertility rate of 2.4 compared to 1.8 among non-Hispanic white women, highlighting ongoing ethnic fertility differences in the U.S. These studies underscore how fertility preferences among marginalized communities are shaped by complex social, cultural, and economic factors.

The pattern looks very similar in India. Marginalized minority groups (Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Muslims) that are most economically marginalized tend to prefer larger families. Table 3.1 shows the preference for more than two children among socioeconomic groups, as reported by female respondents from three rounds of the nationally-representative National Family Health Survey conducted in 1992-93, 1998-99, and 2005-2006. Compared to 67% of Muslim women, only 48% of upper-caste women desired more than two children. There are several reasons for these preferences, and it is typically a combination of factors, such as high child mortality, low usage of

8

contraceptives, son preference, and lack of access and resources for sex-selective abortion, among others (Anukriti and Chakravarty, 2019; Buch, 2005).[1]

Let us consider the trade-off that Muslims face between contesting elections and limiting family size. Muslims, as a religious minority and one of the marginalized groups in India, lack the constitutionally mandated institutional protections afforded to Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).[2] In a typical constituency, if voters prefer to vote for candidates from their own group, Muslims may struggle to gain support without the backing of other social groups. Given their preference for larger families, those who choose to have the desired number of children might become ineligible under the law, which disproportionately affects their community. On the other hand, if Muslim households limit family size to meet eligibility requirements, they may not only face backlash from their community, but also be repudiated. Additionally, Muslims are less likely to win elections as they compete against politically dominant upper-caste Hindus in seats without quotas. Consequently, they might face more suspicions and accusations, as these tools of suppression are predominantly exploited by dominant groups (Buch, 2005). Therefore, it is rational for more Muslims to contest less, despite their personal preferences.

Table 3.1: Fraction of women whose ideal number of children > 2

Category	Fraction
Muslim	0.67
Scheduled Castes (SC)/Scheduled Tribes (ST)	0.56
Other Backward castes (OBC)	0.44
Upper Caste	0.48
Hindu	0.49
Other religions	0.33

Source: This table reports computations done by Anukriti and Chakravarty 2019.

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[1]Strong son preference is common across all social groups in rural India. However, disadvantaged groups are less likely to have the resources to illegally determine the sex and abort female fetuses (Anukriti and Chakravarty, 2019; Buch, 2005).

[2]In some states, there are quotas for economically disadvantaged Muslims, but they must compete with OBCs for those seats. Typically, these quotas are dominated by OBCs, as economically disadvantaged Muslims are both socially and economically more marginalized (Basant, 2007). Hence, many Muslim groups and political parties demand exclusive quotas.

In contrast, the consequences of fertility limits on marginalized groups with quota mandates in the Indian constitution, such as Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), are not obvious despite their preferences for larger families. Electoral quotas significantly affect their likelihood of winning and the repercussion they may face from deviating from family size norms. In a related study, Anukriti and Chakravarty (2019) find that fertility limits for candidates in village councils reduce the likelihood of having a third child among Hindu citizens, with the strongest effects observed among SCs and STs. The authors argue that this could be due to their desire to maintain eligibility to run for political offices reserved for them.

Lastly, the consequences for groups like Upper Castes and Other Backward Castes may not be as significant, since the majority among them prefer families with fewer than two children. That said, family size preference in this context depends on the number of sons (Arnold, Kishor and Roy, 2002; Jayachandran, 2017). For instance, if a couple has two daughters, they might exceed their preferred family size to have a son. Consequently, whether a family achieves their ideal number of sons may affect their actual family size.

4   Fertility Limit Legislation

In recent years, India has attempted to strategically mold local governance through electoral processes. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments of 1992 directed state governments to conduct regular elections at the local level and gave local councils the authority to oversee and manage expenses. Village councils began to play a significant role, with responsibility to provide public goods and decide who will benefit from the central and state government's development programs. These amendments not only strengthened local institutions, but also ensured underrepresented groups were represented by mandating quotas for them in elections. Specifically, one-third of the seats in local government bodies are reserved for women and a certain number of seats are reserved for scheduled castes, tribes, and other backward castes, based on their popula-

tion. Several studies have been conducted to assess the political and economic impacts of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments (Bhavnani 2009, Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004, Dunning and Nilekani 2013).

The constitutional amendment was a significant step forward for local governance in India, but several states made new laws with varying the entry requirements. One such law was the two-child limit for candidates in local bodies. In 1992, the National Development Council was established after the results of the 1991 Census were released, with the goal of controlling population growth. Following the recommendations of the 1992 apex committee on family planning, several states imposed a two-child limit for candidates in local government bodies based on the idea that local leaders could influence the fertility choices of their constituents by setting an example (Waldman, 2022). Initially, eleven states implemented this legislation beginning in 1992, which has reduced to only seven states since the other four repealed the law between. According to Anukriti and Chakravarty (2019), pressure from societal groups forced the state government to reverse the decision, because of cases in which elected representatives and aspiring citizens abandoned their wives or children or selectively aborted female fetuses due to fear of disqualification.

The law prohibits potential candidates who violate the limits from running for or continuing in political office after the policy goes into effect. All states provided a one-year grace period during which individuals could have additional children without affecting their eligibility. Incumbent politicians with two or more children who have another child after the policy takes effect will be disqualified from office, based on a complaint or petition to the district administration. According to administrative data from Buch (2005), several elected representatives were disqualified for violating the two-child limit in the states of Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. The study also documents cases of false accusations by political competitors and cases wherein no one complained against a violator. Based on in-depth qualitative interviews, Buch

(2005) argues that dominant caste elites frequently employ these strategies as political tools.

In many contexts, seemingly "neutral" institutional rules significantly contribute to low voter turnout among marginalized groups (Berman, 2015; Keyssar, 2009; Wehner and de Kadt, 2023; White, 2019). In the United States, policies such as disenfranchisement of those with criminal records and requirements for specific identification documents are considered primary factors in the persistently low electoral participation rates among Black and Indigenous voters. Unlike in other countries where such laws are often implemented by a particular political party with clear intent, in the Indian context, various political parties both implemented and repealed these measures across different states. Anecdotally, when these policies were initially adopted in some states, they may not have explicitly targeted specific communities, but were primarily implemented to address general policy concerns of population control, with later adoption following bureaucratic precedence.

Similar rules with potential disproportionate impacts have emerged in recent years. For example, several Indian states have adopted laws barring individuals from contesting local political office if their households lack toilets. These laws, implemented to reduce open defecation practices that particularly affected women, have interestingly been found to disproportionately affect upper-caste Hindus, as having toilets within household premises is ritualistically discouraged among some groups (Kumar, 2017). This case further demonstrates how local institutions are often leveraged by policymakers to implement laws ostensibly aimed at changing social norms, yet with disparate impacts on specific communities.

5 Data and Empirics

This paper estimates the causal effect of fertility limit legislation on candidacy patterns in Indian village council elections. The analysis leverages spatial and temporal variation in law implementation across states, using data from the 2006/09 Rural Economic and

Demographic Survey (REDS), which provides a nationally representative sample of rural India.[3] The household survey data was collected in two stages. First, a comprehensive listing survey gathered demographic data and information on local governance participation from 115,429 household heads across 243 villages. Second, a detailed household survey was administered to a subset of 8,569 households spanning 240 villages in 17 major Indian states. In addition, the village survey gathered administrative details, such as election year and reservation status for each seat on the council, from official village records.[4] The REDS 2006/09 dataset is particularly suitable for my analysis for several reasons. Firstly, the listing survey documents detailed information on participation in local village councils from all major states of India. Secondly, the survey includes retrospective data on local governance participation, providing a rich dataset on political outcomes across multiple electoral cycles.

Figure 5.1 presents information on election years by state and variations in the timing of the implementation of these laws across states.[5] The light gray shaded area in the figure represents the period during which fertility limits were in effect, while the diamonds mark the election years for the sample villages in each state. The data includes information for two elections per village; however, election timings varied across villages in some states, resulting in elections being spread over multiple years. The figure shows that some states had fertility limits throughout the study period, some had them for only one election cycle, and others never had fertility limits during the study period. In the survey data, the states that implemented the law are Rajasthan, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maha-
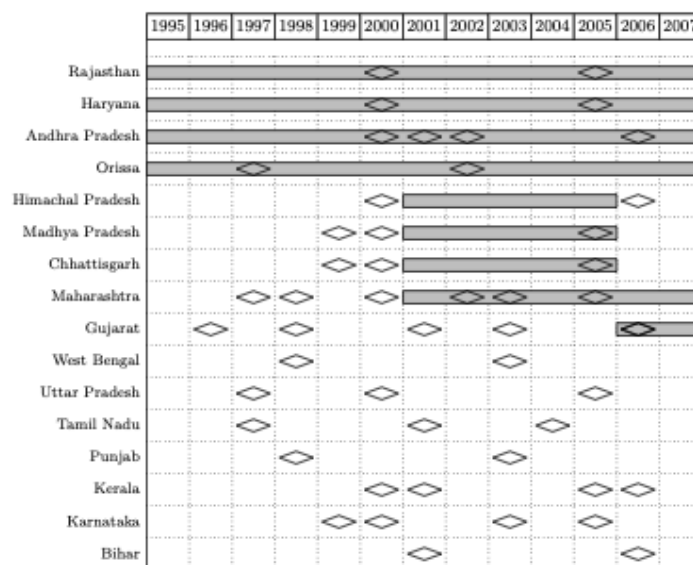
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[3]The Rural Economic and Demographic Survey, originally conducted in 1971 as the Additional Rural Income Survey, employs a stratified random sampling strategy across 252 villages. Subsequent rounds were conducted in 1982, 1999, and the most recent in 2006/09, making it one of the oldest running panel surveys.

[4]Information from Jharkhand is not available, so this state is excluded from my analysis.

[5]I primarily rely on Anukriti and Chakravarty 2019 for key policy dates, while verifying and correcting any discrepancies in the timeline. For instance, while Anukriti and Chakravarty 2019 reports that Maharashtra implemented the policy in 2001, state government records indicate implementation occurred in 2003.

rashtra, Gujarat, and Bihar. Among these, Bihar implemented fertility limits only on candidates in municipal councils (urban councils), so Bihar is used as a control state. Four states revoked the policy, but Himachal Pradesh is the only state in my sample that had elections after the policy was revoked. Consequently, I exclude Himachal Pradesh from the analysis, as carryover effects—where potential outcomes in the present period may be influenced by previous exposure—would violate the stable unit treatment value assumption (SUTVA).[6] Finally, the treatment group in our sample consists of the eight states that implemented restrictions on candidates in village councils.

Figure 5.1: Information on Election Years and Timing of Treatment by State

Notes: The light gray shaded period in the figure represents the years during which fertility limits were in place, and diamonds indicate the election years for the sample villages of the state.

Using the data from the census of household heads from villages, I identify households with candidates who contested village council elections based on responses to the following questions:

- Were you a candidate for the position of a council member in the current (previous) term?

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[6]The canonical difference-in-differences framework assumes that once a unit switches treatment status, it does not change (Callaway and Sant'Anna, 2021).

14

- Was any member of your family a candidate for the position of council member in the current (previous) term?

The first question is for the head of the household, while the second question is for other members of the household. If the answer is "yes" to the second question, the number of candidates is not specified in the response. Therefore, I define my measures in terms of candidate households rather than individual candidates. I use this information to create a village-level dataset, where each observation represents a village election. For Muslims and Upper Caste Hindus, I construct and use three measures: the number of candidate households, a binary measure indicating any candidate households, and the share of candidate households. I do not use the binary measure for OBCs, SCs, and STs, as most villages in the sample have at least one seat reserved for SC, ST, and OBC. Hence, the presence of any candidate from those groups is mechanical due to quotas. Table 5.1 presents the mean and standard deviation across candidacy measures for all major social groups by treatment status: never treated, always treated, and sometimes treated. The never-treated states never implemented fertility limit laws during the study period, while always-treated states had already implemented the laws in the period of study. Sometimes treated states had elections both before and after implementation.[7] The descriptive results show a noticeable decrease in total candidate households in sometimes treated states, dropping from 8.91 pre-implementation to 7.92 post-implementation (an 11% decline). Muslim candidacy decreases substantially in treated areas, with the share of Muslim candidate households dropping from 0.05 to 0.01 in sometimes treated states after implementation, representing an 87% decline. Upper Caste Hindu households also experience a notable decrease, with their share falling from 0.22 to 0.16 (a 28% reduction) and their absolute numbers declining from 1.6 to 0.84. ST candidate households show a similar pattern, decreasing from

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[7]Table A.1 shows descriptive statistics on key variables used for the analysis. It contains the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values for all outcome and control variables in the village and household frame.

2.31 to 1.70. In contrast, OBC candidate households increase from 3.64 to 4.10, with their share growing from 0.36 to 0.43. While multiple groups experience declines, the proportional reduction for Muslim candidates is substantially larger than for any other group, suggesting they are particularly affected by the fertility limit policies.

Table 5.1: Summary statistics of main outcome variables by treatment status

	Never Treated	Always Treated	Sometimes Treated	
			Pre	Post
Total Candidate Households	6.748	8.197	8.914	7.92
	(7.54)	(7.19)	(12.3)	(7.39)
Muslim Candidate Households	.656	.444	.186	.12
	(2.41)	(1.36)	(.8)	(.72)
Any Muslim Candidate Household	.202	.179	.071	.04
	(.4)	(.39)	(.26)	(.2)
Share Muslim Candidate Households	.079	.063	.045	.006
	(.2)	(.19)	(.18)	(.03)
SC Candidate Households	1.771	1.915	1.171	1.16
	(3.18)	(2.8)	(2.54)	(2.09)
Share SC Candidate Households	.256	.24	.104	.121
	(.27)	(.25)	(.19)	(.18)
ST Candidate Households	.092	.265	2.314	1.7
	(.4)	(.95)	(7.05)	(2.28)
Share SC Candidate Households	.037	.033	.274	.281
	(.16)	(.12)	(.37)	(.36)
OBC Candidate Households	2.94	3.402	3.643	4.1
	(4.55)	(3.93)	(5.58)	(5.1)
Share OBC Candidate Households	.382	.4	.356	.431
	(.36)	(.33)	(.34)	(.33)
Upper Caste Hindu Candidate Households	.913	2.12	1.6	.84
	(1.97)	(3.63)	(3.93)	(1.66)
Any Upper Caste Hindu Candidate Household	.344	.538	.386	.36
	(.48)	(.5)	(.49)	(.48)
Share Upper Caste Hindu Candidate Households	.157	.257	.221	.16
	(.27)	(.32)	(.33)	(.27)
N	218	117	70	50

Notes: Data from the listing questionnaire of Rural Economic and Demographic Survey (REDS) 2006 survey across 229 villages in 15 states of India.

The analysis employs a difference-in-differences design spanning two election

periods, exploiting both spatial and temporal variation in treatment adoption. The main specification used for the analysis is:

$$Y_{vst} = \theta_t + \gamma_s + \beta\text{Fertility Limits}_{st} + X'_{vst}\delta + \epsilon_{vst} \tag{1}$$

where Y_{vst} represents the outcome of interest, such as the share of Muslim or SC/ST candidate households, in village v, state s, for the election year t. Fertility Limits$_{st}$ is equal to one for elections with fertility limits and zero otherwise. The specification includes controls for time-invariant state-specific factors (γ_s), factors specific to a particular election year (θ_t), village demography controls, and time-variant village-specific controls, such as the share of council member seats reserved under each category (SC/ST/OBC/Women) (X_{vst}). The coefficient β captures the average treatment effect. Standard errors are clustered by state and wild-cluster-bootstrapped by state. Since the number of clusters is less than 20, the preferred method for calculating standard errors at the state level is the wild bootstrap-t procedure, as described in Cameron, Gelbach and Miller (2008).

The analysis relies on the parallel trends assumption between treatment and control states in the pre-treatment period. This requires data on the outcome of interest for at least two previous election terms before the implementation year. However, such data is unavailable because village elections either did not occur or were irregular before the 1992 constitutional amendment. To address this challenge, I follow the approach used by Cameron, Seager and Shah (2021), who faced a similar issue, and use data on related political outcomes from earlier periods. To do so, I compare pre-trends in state assembly election outcomes, as these policies were implemented by the state legislature, and use the following empirical specification:

$$Y_{ist} = \beta_1 Treatment_s + \sum_{t=T-k}^{t=T-1} \beta_{2t}\text{Fertility Limits}_s \times Term_t + \beta_3 Year_t + \epsilon_{st} \tag{2}$$

where Y_{ist} represents the related outcome variables, such as measures of candidacy, po-

litical competition in state-level elections, for unit i, in state s, in year t. Fertility Limits$_s$ is an indicator for states that implemented the policy, and $Term_t$ is a vector of election year fixed effects. The coefficients β_{2t} capture differences between states with and without fertility limits for each term. I examine the pre-trends for two sub-samples separately: always treated versus never treated, and always treated versus sometimes treated.

Figure B.1 and B.2 present the plots for estimates and confidence intervals of the coefficient of interest, β_{2t}, for the comparisons between always treated versus never treated, and always treated versus sometimes treated, respectively. The data used in this analysis was obtained from Agarwal et al. (2021) and provide information not only on election statistics but also on the religion, gender, occupation, and education of candidates and elected representatives in state assembly elections. The results show that there is no significant difference in pre-trends for both sub-samples across all outcomes. These results also suggest that the fertility limit may not have been adopted in certain types of state. If such a pattern were observed, then it raises the possibility that these laws were introduced to target specific communities.

To uncover the mechanism, I collect primary data using phone surveys of politicians from 147 village councils across 9 districts in Maharashtra. Table 5.2 describes the sample for each group: Muslims, SC/ST (Non-Muslims), and Others (OBC and Gen). The survey oversampled politicians from marginalized minority groups such as Muslims, Scheduled Tribes, and Scheduled Castes, and therefore was conducted in districts with a high share of their population. The main aim of the survey was to understand the opinions about fertility limits, trade-offs created by fertility limits, strategies adopted by politicians affected by the limits, challenges in enforcement, and investigate whether quotas can reduce the cost of fertility limits. Table A.2 provides summary statistics of the characteristics of politicians surveyed.

18

Table 5.2: Sample details for phone survey in Maharashtra

Sample	Observations
Total Sample	520
I. Muslim Politicians	188
1. Elected leaders	78.19 %
2. Runner-ups	21.81%
II. SC/ST Politicians	152
1. Elected leaders	70.39 %
2. Runner-ups	29.61 %
III. Other Politicians	180
1. Elected leaders	62.78 %
2. Runner-ups	37.22 %

6   Results

This section presents the analysis of the impact of fertility limits' on candidacy using REDS data. The analysis begins by examining how fertility limits affected Muslim candidacy, a marginalized minority group without quotas. Table 6.1 presents the effects on the number of Muslim households with candidates, a binary outcome indicating whether any Muslim household contested the election, and the share of Muslim households on the ballot in columns (1) through (3), respectively.[8] In column (1), I find that fertility limits lead to a roughly 23% decrease in the number of Muslim candidate households, but this coefficient is not statistically significant. This imprecise estimate may be due to the fact that in most village elections, either zero or only a single Muslim candidate household contests, which is expected given that the average share of the Muslim population in a village is around 6%. However, in some Muslim-majority villages, all candidate households are Muslim. In other words, the distribution of Muslim candi-

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[8]I report 95% confidence intervals instead of standard errors as I can calculate them for both clustering methods. The distribution of wild-cluster-bootstrapped standard errors is not invertible.

dates has excess zeroes and a long tail, which may mean that the sample is not suffi-
ciently powered to detect an effect on the intensive margin. In column (2), I find that
fertility limits reduce the likelihood of a Muslim candidate household contesting by 0.07
compared to elections without fertility limits. This estimate is statistically significant at
the 5% level and is robust to different clustering methods for standard errors. The re-
sults in column (3) indicate that fertility limits significantly decrease the share of Muslim
candidate households. The coefficients are significant at the 1% level for both clustering
methods.

Table 6.1: Effect of Fertility Limits on Muslim Candidacy

Outcome	# Mus. (1)	Any Mus. (2)	Share Mus. (3)
Fertility Limits	-0.153	-0.0766	-0.0719
	(-0.464,0.158)	(-0.141,-0.0124)**	(-0.118,-0.0259)***
	[-0.463,0.158]	[-0.150,-0.00279]**	[-0.117,-0.0265]***
Control mean	.656	.202	.079
N	455	455	409

Notes: Data from the village questionnaire of the Rural Economic and Demographic Survey (REDS) 2006 survey across 15 states in India is used. Treat is equal to one for treated elections in the states that imposed fertility limit laws, and zero otherwise. For control states, Treat is always zero. All specifications include election year and state fixed effects. Additionally, all specifications control for the share of council member seats reserved under each category (SC/ST/OBC/Women) and total number of seats in the village council. Standard errors are clustered by state and wild-cluster-bootstrapped by state. 95% CI in parentheses clustered by state, in brackets wild-cluster-bootstrapped by state. *p < 0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.

For robustness, I examine the effects using several different specifications, as
shown in Table A.3. The results remain consistent after including controls for the Mus-
lim population in panel A, time-invariant district-level characteristics (such as historical
factors influencing fertility preferences and bureaucratic culture affecting the enforce-
ment of fertility limits) in panel B, and the reservation status of the village chief seat in
panel C. One concern with staggered treatment designs is that trends in outcomes corre-
lated with the year of implementation of fertility limits might bias the results. Since the
sample includes two election periods, states with fertility limits in both periods might
violate the identification assumption if the effects are time-varying (e.g., more signifi-

cant in the second election after implementation). To address this concern, I show that the results are robust to excluding states with fertility limits in both election periods, as presented in panel D. Overall, the results provide robust evidence of a decline in Muslim candidacy.

Next, I investigate the impact of fertility limits on the candidacy of Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Castes (OBC) in panels A through C.[9] Table 6.2 presents the results for the number of candidate households of each group in column (1) and the share of candidate households in column (2).[10] The results suggest that there is no significant effect of fertility limits but the estimates are imprecise. Several factors may contribute to the inconclusive null findings. Firstly, the cost of deviating from preferences may be lower due to quotas for marginalized castes and the lack of competition from politically dominant upper caste Hindus. Furthermore, certain politically aspirational castes within these groups may be more likely to contest because they have a higher chance of winning if fertility limits discourage less politically aspirational castes from running for office. Existing studies have documented high political and economic inequalities between castes within these broad categories (Ahuja, 2019; Jaffrelot, 2023; Joshi, Kochhar and Rao, 2018).

Finally, I also examine the effects of fertility limits on upper-caste Hindus (a politically dominant group without institutional protection) in Table 6.3 and the total number of candidate households in Table 6.4. The results are statistically insignificant across measures and specifications, possibly due to the same reasons affecting politically aspirational marginalized groups.

Recall that restrictions on the number of children a candidate can have apply

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[9]SC households are those coded as Scheduled Castes and identify as Hindu, Sikh, or Buddhist for this analysis, as SCs belonging to other religions do not benefit from affirmative action policies. Since there are very few non-Muslim and non-Hindu households identifying as OBC and ST in the sample, OBC and ST households refer to OBC and ST Hindus.

[10]The binary measure for groups with institutional protection is not used, as most villages in the sample have at least one seat reserved for SC, ST, and OBC. Therefore, the presence of any candidate from these groups is mechanically ensured by quotas.

Table 6.2: Effect of Fertility Limits on Other Marginalized Groups

Outcome	# Cand. HH (1)	Share HH (2)
Panel A: SC Candidacy (only Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs)		
Fertility Limits	0.0522	0.00724
	(-0.531,0.635)	(-0.0630,0.0775)
	[-.44,.54]	[-.065,.079]
Control mean	1.771	.256
N	455	409
Panel B: ST Candidacy (only Hindus)		
Fertility Limits	-0.0427	-0.0132
	(-0.807,0.722)	(-0.0542,0.0279)
	[-.5,.42]	[-.054,.028]
Control mean	.092	.037
N	455	409
Panel C: OBC Candidacy (only Hindus)		
Fertility Limits	0.493	0.0890
	(-0.647,1.633)	(-0.0674,0.245)
	[-.66,1.6]	[-.082,.26]
Control mean	2.94	.382
N	455	409

Notes: Data from the village questionnaire of the Rural Economic and Demographic Survey (REDS) 2006 survey across 15 states in India is used. Treat is equal to one for treated elections in the states that imposed fertility limit laws, and zero otherwise. For control states, Treat is always zero. All specifications include election year and state fixed effects. Additionally, all specifications control for the share of council member seats reserved under each category (SC/ST/OBC/Women) and total number of seats in the village council. Standard errors are clustered by state and wild-cluster-bootstrapped by state. 95% CI in parentheses clustered by state, in brackets wild-cluster-bootstrapped by state. *$p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

only to those who have not yet reached their desired family size at the time the laws are implemented. Consequently, individuals who have already reached their desired family size before the fertility limits can still run for election, even if they have more than two children. Therefore, I examine whether fertility limits alter the age composition of the candidate pool.

To examine changes in the age composition of election candidates, I calculate the proportion of candidates in five age groups (under 30, 30-40, 40-50, 50-60, and over 60)

Table 6.3: Effect of Fertility Limits on Upper Caste Hindus

Outcome	# Cand. HH (1)	Whether any HH (2)	Share HH (3)
Fertility Limits	-0.321	0.0794	-0.0125
	(-1.696,1.055)	(-0.0965,0.255)	(-0.0837,0.0588)
	[-1.848,1.206]	[-0.111,0.269]	[-0.0933,0.0684]
Control mean	.913	.344	.157
N	455	455	409

Notes: Data from the listing and village questionnaire of the Rural Economic and Demographic Survey (REDS) 2006 survey across 15 states in India is used. Treat is equal to one for treated elections in the states that imposed fertility limit laws, and zero otherwise. For control states, Treat is always zero. All specifications include election year and state fixed effects. Additionally, all specifications control for the share of council member seats reserved under each category (SC/ST/OBC/Women) and total number of seats in the village council. Standard errors are clustered by state and wild-cluster-bootstrapped by state. 95% CI in parentheses clustered by state, in brackets wild-cluster-bootstrapped by state. *p < 0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.

Table 6.4: Effect of Fertility Limits on Total candidacy

Outcome	# of Cand. HH				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Fertility Limits	0.0511	0.0760	0.0422	0.127	-0.218
	(-1.682,1.784)	(-1.690,1.842)	(-1.919,2.003)	(-1.461,1.716)	(-2.423,1.986)
	[-6.621,6.723]	[-2.049,2.201]	[-1.795,1.879]	[-1.586,1.841]	[-2.293,1.856]
Control mean	6.748	6.748	6.748	6.748	6.748
N	455	455	455	455	338
Specification	Baseline	Dem. Controls	District FE	Control for Sarpanch	Exc. always treated

Notes: Data from the listing and village questionnaire of the Rural Economic and Demographic Survey (REDS) 2006 survey across 15 states in India is used. Treat is equal to one for treated elections in the states that imposed fertility limit laws, and zero otherwise. For control states, Treat is always zero. All specifications include election year and state fixed effects. Additionally, all specifications control for the share of council member seats reserved under each category (SC/ST/OBC/Women) and total number of seats in the village council. Standard errors are clustered by state and wild-cluster-bootstrapped by state. 95% CI in parentheses clustered by state, in brackets wild-cluster-bootstrapped by state. *p < 0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.

at the time of each election. I use the age of household heads who contest elections, combined with the election year, to track patterns over time in states that adopted fertility limits early, examining candidacy in two elections following implementation.[11] For early adopters, the second election occurs six to ten years after implementation, while for states with only one post-implementation election, this gap is less than five years. This timing is important because candidates in their 50s or 60s at election time would

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[11]According to the household survey, the median age of male parents at the birth of their last child is 30.

23

have likely completed their families before fertility limits were adopted.[12] It is important to note that the analysis uses a limited sample because age information is only available for household heads, not all household members who run for election. Since 33-50% of seats in each election are reserved for women and women rarely serve as household heads, the sample excludes a substantial portion of candidates.

Table 6.5 shows changes in candidacy across age groups of contesting household heads. The descriptive findings show that the proportion of younger candidates (below 40 years of age) decreases following the introduction of fertility limits, with an overall reduction of 0.06 for those under 30 and 0.07 for those between 30-40 years. Meanwhile, the proportion of candidates older than 40—those who should not be affected by the law—shows an increase, with the most substantial gains in the 50-60 age bracket (0.07 overall). This pattern suggests two things: 1) the decline in Muslim representation may be driven by the exit of young Muslim aspirants, as evidenced by the substantial decreases among Muslims under 40 (-0.11 for under 30, -0.09 for 30-40), and 2) The decline in candidacy could have been higher, but in some cases, young aspirants are replacing themselves with older eligible individuals from their community, as shown by the corresponding increases in older Muslim candidates (0.07 for 40-50, 0.11 for 50-60, and 0.11 for over 60). Similar patterns are observed for STs, OBCs, and general caste-contesting household heads, though not for SCs who show minimal changes in the under-30 category (-0.01) and more modest shifts across other age brackets (see Table 6.5). While these descriptive patterns indicate that fertility limits may affect those who have yet to reach their desired family size across major groups, the overall impact on candidacy varies. For non-Muslim groups, any potential decrease in younger candidates appears to be offset by increases in older, eligible candidates from the same community.

In summary, the results demonstrate that fertility limits significantly impact the candidacy of Muslims, a marginalized minority group largely without any protection.

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[12]I do not explicitly use age at the time of fertility limit implementation, as it cannot be computed for states without such limits.

Table 6.5: Fertility Limits and Change in Age Composition

Difference	Overall	Muslim	SC	ST	OBC	Gen
Proportion $\leq$ 30 years	-0.06	-0.11	-0.01	-0.17	-0.08	-0.08
	(0.02)	(0.07)	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.02)	(0.04)
Proportion between 30 and 40 years	-0.07	-0.09	-0.08	-0.02	-0.10	-0.10
	(0.02)	(0.10)	(0.04)	(0.08)	(0.03)	(0.05)
Proportion between 40 and 50 years	0.01	0.07	0.05	0.05	0.02	0.02
	(0.02)	(0.08)	(0.05)	(0.08)	(0.03)	(0.05)
Proportion between 50 and 60 years	0.07	0.01	0.12	0.09	0.06	0.06
	(0.02)	(0.07)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Proportion $\geq$ 60 years	0.03	0.11	-0.03	0.04	0.06	0.06
	(0.01)	(0.06)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.04)
N	2004	134	456	151	858	346

Notes: Data from the listing questionnaire of Rural Economic and Demographic Survey (REDS) 2006 survey across 15 states in India.

However, these limits show no significant effect on the overall candidacy of other major groups or the total number of candidates. The analysis shows that fertility limit laws reduce the proportion of young candidates, indicating changes in the age composition across multiple groups. This suggests a norm where affected young candidates (those directly affected by fertility limits as they have yet to reach their ideal family size) are replaced by those who are eligible (individuals who achieved their ideal family size before the laws were introduced). This replacement mechanism potentially offsets the impact of fertility limits for some groups, but fails to do so for largely unprotected, marginalized groups such as Muslims.

7 Discussion

In this section, I examine why Muslim candidacy significantly declined while the overall number of candidates and candidacy of other major social groups were not significantly affected. The analysis first considers "internal costs" - arising from individual, family, and community preferences. I then consider the costs arising from imperfect enforcement, such as false accusations and incorrect reporting in candidate affidavits, which I term as external costs. Finally, I consider the strategies used to cope with fertility lim-

its and explore how hypothetical quotas might influence these trade-offs. This discussion draws on primary data from a village politician survey conducted in Maharashtra, the largest state that adopted fertility limits. This survey comprises 520 politicians, including current village council members and runners-up from 147 village across nine districts in Maharashtra.
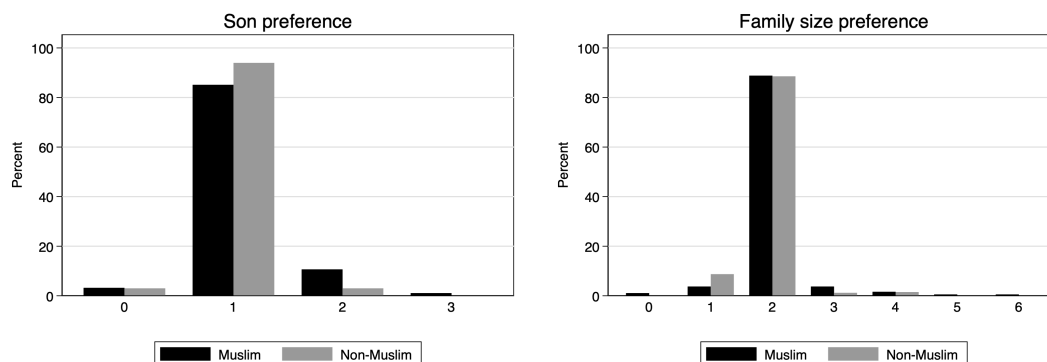
7.1 Internal costs

Recall that Muslims have a strong preference for large family sizes (see Table 3.1). These preferences suggest that a typical Muslim citizen who did not reach their desired family size before the implementation of fertility limits might choose not to contest elections if the desire for a larger family outweighs the desire to run for political office. However, it is possible that families running for political office have different preferences compared to the general population. Do these fertility preferences extend to politically aspirant Muslims?

To explore this further, the survey posed the following question to politicians: "Suppose your son or daughter plans to have children. How many sons and daughters would you want for them?"[13] Figure 7.1 illustrates the differences in son preference and family size preference between Muslims and non-Muslims. The responses indicate that a relatively higher proportion of Muslim politicians prefer more than two sons for their children and a family size that exceeds two children.

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[13]I adopted the methodology used by Jayachandran (2017) to avoid bias from retrospective fertility preferences, which could be problematic since politicians might have already achieved their desired family size.

Figure 7.1: Son preference and Family size preference
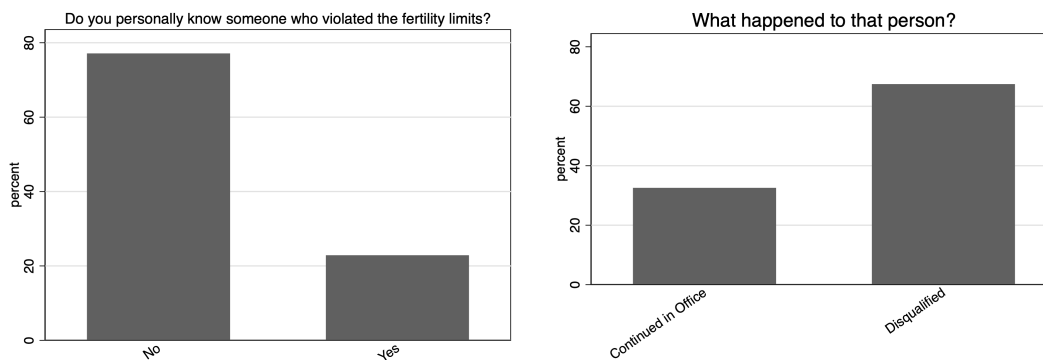Source: Authors' own survey in Maharashtra

The findings suggest that from the village politician surveys suggest that the cost of deviating from established preferences could be higher for Muslims, as family preferences and community norms, particularly regarding issues like family size and marriage, play significant roles (Desai and Andrist, 2010; Munshi and Myaux, 2006). The connection between a community's socio-cultural values and political behavior is thus evident.

7.2 External costs

Many studies on ballot access laws in western democracies assume that these rules are perfectly implemented, often focusing on direct costs such as filing fees, which may disproportionately affect poorly funded candidates or parties. However, in developing countries, evidence frequently points to imperfect implementation of rules, leading to the exploitation of marginalized individuals by elites (Anderson, Francois and Kotwal, 2015; Neggers, 2018). To assess policy implementation, the survey asked politicians whether they had direct knowledge of office holders who violated fertility limits (see Figure 7.2). Follow-up questions inquired whether these individuals were subsequently disqualified. Survey responses indicate widespread violations, with numerous office holders either initially ineligible or becoming ineligible during their tenure. That such enforcement challenges exist even in Maharashtra—a state with relatively high
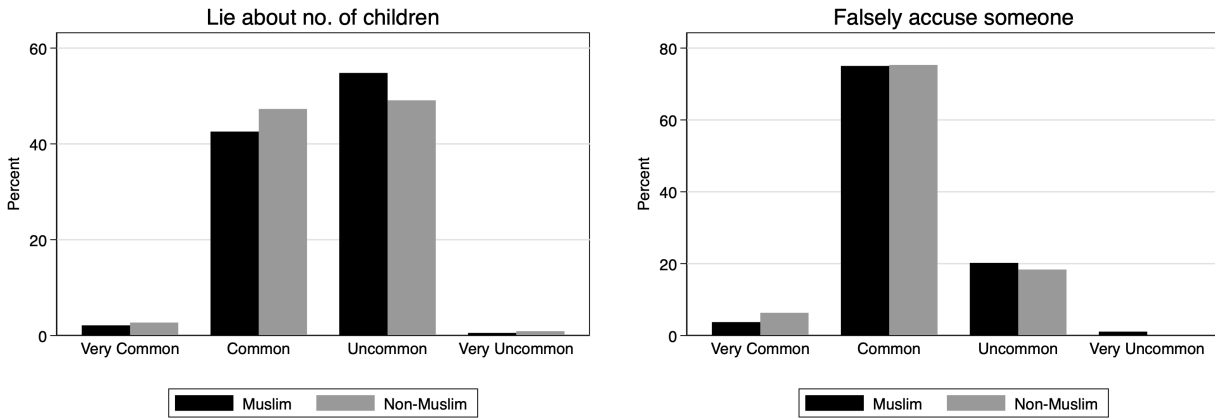
bureaucratic capacity—suggests implementation difficulties may be even more severe elsewhere.

Figure 7.2: Imperfect Enforcement
Source: Authors' own survey in Maharashtra

To explore the consequences of imperfect enforcement, I examine the prevalence of misreporting the number of children and making false accusations, as illustrated in Figure 7.3. The responses indicate that such practices are common, and there are no observable differences by religion. However, a related study on fertility limit restrictions by Buch (2005) conducted a detailed case study and relied on qualitative evidence to argue that it is easier for elites to misreport or level accusations against others. The author shows that false accusations served as tools of suppression, used by politically dominant groups to intimidate political aspirants from marginalized communities in Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and Rajasthan. The prevalence of such practices can disproportionately reduce Muslim candidacy, as Muslims predominantly compete with these dominant groups, unlike other marginalized groups in other states. Therefore, imperfect enforcement, especially the fear of false accusations, may discourage some individuals from running for office or, at times, result in coercion by elites.

Figure 7.3: Prevalence of illicit practices
Source: Authors' own survey in Maharashtra
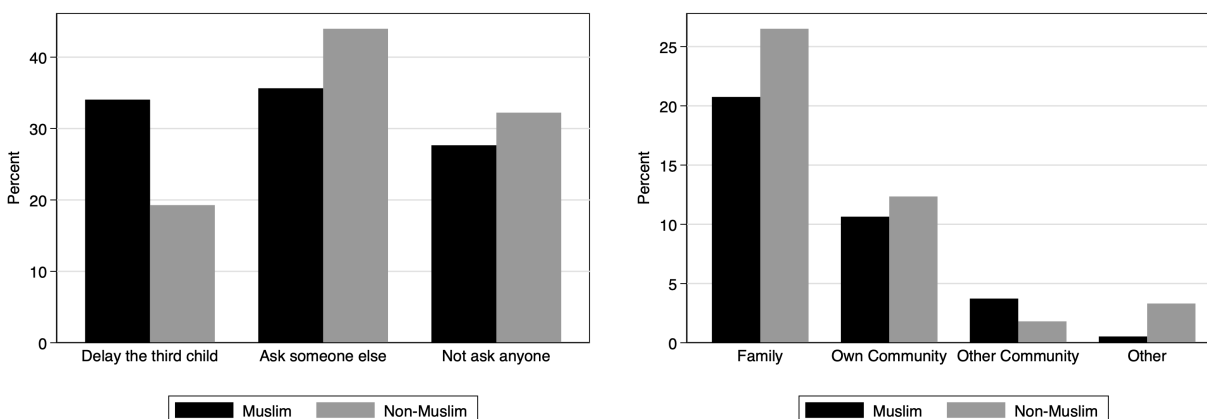

7.3 Coping with fertility restrictions

In this section, I discuss the potential choices made by aspiring candidates under fertility restrictions who wish to have more than two children. If a majority of their community has reached their desired family size and remain eligible, an ineligible candidate may ask someone else to run in their place. In the village politician survey, respondents were asked what aspiring citizens from their community would do if they preferred to have more than two child. Approximately 40% indicated they would ask someone else to contest, and of those, more than 80% said they would choose someone either from their own family or from the same community as the aspirant (see Figure 7.4).

The shifting ratio of young Muslims to older Muslims on the ballot, coupled with a decline in candidacy, suggests that young aspiring citizens affected by the restrictions may not always be replaced by older, ineligible community members. In other words, the decline in candidacy could be due to younger potential candidates dropping out without being replaced. Supporting this theory, the findings provide suggestive evidence that Muslims are relatively less likely to encourage someone else to run if they choose not do so. Moreover, when they do select a substitute, they are more likely to

choose someone from other communities, as shown in Figure 7.4. Often, these family members or relatives serve as proxies (Heinze, Brulé and Chauchard, 2025).

Figure 7.4: Fertility Limits and Replacement
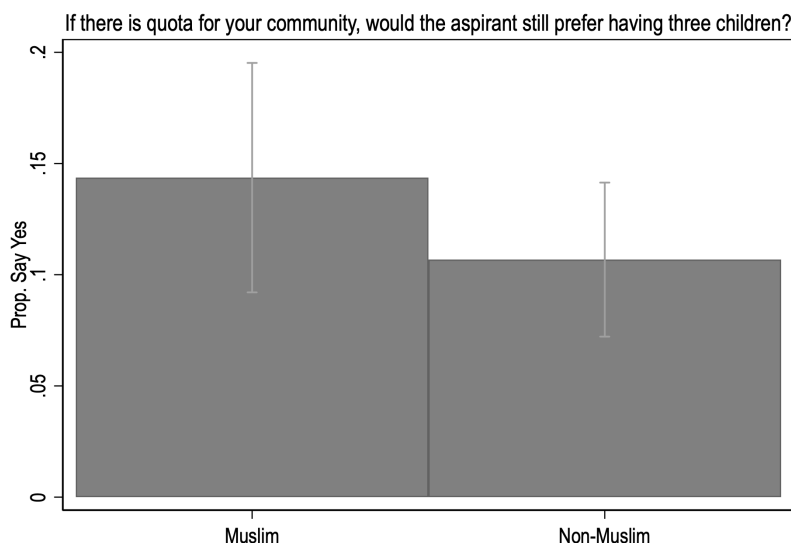Source: Authors' own survey in Maharashtra

7.4   Electoral quotas for Muslims

Now, let us consider the potential impact of introducing electoral quotas for Muslims. Would the costs discussed earlier be mitigated if a specified number of council seats, proportional to the population, were permanently reserved for Muslims, similar to the existing quotas for SCs and STs? Theoretically, electoral quotas could influence the desire to remain eligible as they limit competition to candidates from a specific community. Figure 7.5 indicates that in response to hypothetical scenarios about seats being reserved for their own community, most politicians—particularly those from marginalized groups—report that aspiring citizens from their community may limit themselves to two children to remain eligible. This observation aligns with the argument by Anukriti and Chakravarty (2019) that the desire to remain eligible for political office may lead to a relatively larger decline in fertility rates among SC/STs compared to other Hindus in states with fertility restrictions. Therefore, combining regulatory attempts to control political entry with electoral quotas might assist policymakers in achieving societal goals,

such as reducing the candidacy of groups whose preferences do not align with creating the role models policymakers envisioned.

Figure 7.5: Hypothetical electoral quotas
Source: Authors' own survey in Maharashtra

If there is quota for your community, would the aspirant still prefer having three children?

8 Conclusion

This study shows that electoral laws impede political entry for specific groups. I find that fertility limit restrictions for village politicians reduce Muslim candidacy, one of the marginalized social groups and the largest religious minority group in India. However, there is no significant effect on the overall number of candidates and candidacy of other major social groups. I argue that these results are driven by political aspirants who face the dilemma of choosing between complying with the law and adhering to social norms about family size. My argument is supported through an original survey of 500 politicians in Maharashtra. Additionally, I find descriptive evidence that aspiring candidates may continue to play a role in electoral practice through coping strategies like asking someone else to run for office. This potentially raises concerns about token or proxy candidates.

This research extends existing literature on political entry costs by decomposing

31

and analyzing their constituent components. Accordingly, this research highlights the role of cost induced as a result of social norms as trade-offs that aspiring citizens must navigate to remain eligible following the introduction of electoral laws. The barriers to political entry are not explored in depth because of the competing layers in the decision to contest. This study highlights community preference with respect to family size and its effect on the decision to contest. It also shows the implications of implementing electoral rules in regions with low bureaucratic capacity.

These findings carry significant implications for Indian democratic institutions and political representation. The study highlights how the trade-offs faced by aspiring citizens as a result of electoral eligibility laws may depend on the electoral prospects, which may further depend on the relationship between group size and probability of winning. In addition, it highlights the role of electoral quotas for unprotected marginalized groups as a strategic policy tool to provide just representative opportunities without compromising democratic integrity. This observation aligns with the argument by Anukriti and Chakravarty (2019) that the desire to remain eligible for political office may lead to a relatively larger decline in fertility rates among Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) compared to other Hindus in states with fertility restrictions. The findings suggest that combining entry regulations with electoral quotas may help policymakers balance representational and social policy objectives. Research indicates that local government representation often serves as a pathway to higher office, suggesting these effects may have broader implications for Muslim political representation across governmental levels.

Electoral eligibility restrictions similar to India's fertility limits exist in numerous forms across global electoral systems, functioning as significant barriers to political participation for specific groups. Educational qualifications represent one of the forms of these restrictions, with countries implementing various educational thresholds for candidates. For instance, Pakistan temporarily required graduate degrees for National As-

sembly members between 2002 and 2008, effectively excluding large segments of the population from political office. Financial barriers constitute another category of restrictions, including minimum income requirements in Argentina and property ownership prerequisites in the British Empire. These economic filters may systematically prevent lower-income citizens from seeking office, regardless of their political capabilities or community support.

Beyond explicit economic and educational criteria, many nations impose extensive residency requirements that disadvantage mobile communities. For instance, candidates in the United States face varying residency requirements ranging from 30 days to several years depending on the jurisdiction and office. Criminal record restrictions are well-documented in numerous electoral systems. In the United States, many states restrict candidacy based on criminal history. For instance, Texas law prevents individuals convicted of felonies from holding public office unless they have been pardoned or otherwise released from resulting disabilities. In India, the Representation of the People Act (1951) specifically disqualifies candidates convicted of certain offenses and sentenced to imprisonment of two years or more from contesting elections for a defined period after release. Chile's constitution prohibits those sentenced for crimes deserving afflictive punishment from running for Congress. These restrictions often affect marginalized communities due to disparities in criminal justice systems. Like India's fertility limits studied in the paper, these seemingly neutral criteria create a complex landscape of varying barriers to political participation, with their impact heavily dependent on existing social and economic stratification within each society. The effects of these restrictions warrant deeper examination of how ostensibly universal requirements may impede political representation for specific communities.

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Supplementary Information for "Do Electoral Eligibility Laws Hurt Political Candidacy of Specific Groups? Evidence from India"

List of Tables

List of Figures

A   Additional Tables

Table A.1: Descriptive statistics on key variables

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Panel A - Village level Frame				
Total Candidate Households	7.582	8.36	0	91
Muslim Candidate Households	.47	1.86	0	21
SC Candidate Households	1.648	2.9	0	27
ST Candidate Households	.655	3.03	0	56
Any Muslim Candidate Household	.158	.37	0	1
Any Upper Caste Hindu Candidate Household	.402	.49	0	1
Share Muslim Candidate Households	.061	.18	0	1
Share SC Candidate Households	.213	.25	0	1
Share SC Candidate Households	.1	.25	0	1
Share Upper Caste Hindu Candidate Households	.193	.29	0	1
Share OBC Reserved Seats in Council	.205	.2	0	1
Share SC Reserved Seats in Council	.131	.11	0	.67
Share ST Reserved Seats in Council	.069	.14	0	.88
Share Women Reserved Seats in Council	.24	.15	0	1
OBC Reservation for Village Head	.226	.42	0	1
SC Reservation for Village Head	.119	.32	0	1
ST Reservation for Village Head	.086	.28	0	1
Women's Reservation for Village Head	.288	.45	0	1
Total Households	465.701	524.5	54	6299
Muslim Households	40.101	115.39	0	864
SC Households	91.013	96.7	0	438
ST Households	27.2	60.03	0	450
OBC Households	186.668	223.2	0	2125
Upper Caste Hindu Households	96.851	222.02	0	2702
Total Seats	6471.468	10701.44	288	125980

Notes: Data from the listing and village questionnaire of Rural Economic and Demographic Survey (REDS) 2006 survey across 229 villages in 15 states of India.

Table A.2: Summary statistics of Maharashtra politician survey respondent, segmented by social group

Statistic	Muslims Mean (SD)/Percent	SC/ST (Non-Muslim) Mean (SD)/Percent	Others Mean (SD)/Percent
Age	44.27 (13.36)	40.31 (12.40)	41.98 (11.07)
Gender			
Male	54.26 %	44.74 %	49.44 %
Female	45.74 %	55.26 %	50.56 %
Education level			
Up to 5th grade	20.12%	7.80 %	9.53 %
6-9th grade	24.85 %	16.31 %	19.05 %
10-11th grade	21.89 %	19.15 %	16.67 %
12th grade	17.16 %	26.95%	28.57 %
Graduation and above	15.98%	29.79%	26.19 %
N	188	152	180

Table A.3: Effect of Fertility Limits on Muslim Candidacy (Alternate Specifications)

Outcome	# Mus. (1)	Whether Mus. (2)	Share Mus. (3)
	Panel A - Demography controls		
Fertility Limits	-0.0764	-0.0674	-0.0688
	(-0.401,0.249)	(-0.126,-0.00886)**	(-0.112,-0.0300)***
	[-0.413,0.260]	[-0.131,-0.00375]**	[-0.112,-0.0253]***
Control mean	.656	.202	.079
N	455	455	409
	Panel B - District fixed effects		
Fertility Limits	-0.0433	-0.0516	-0.0575
	(-0.378,0.291)	(-0.119,0.0160)*	(-0.118,0.00284)*
	[-0.357,0.270]	[-0.112,0.00847]*	[-0.117,0.00196]*
Control mean	.656	.202	.08
N	455	455	406
	Panel C - Controls for reservation of village chief seat		
Fertility Limits	-0.150	-0.0738	-0.0700
	(-0.487,0.186)	(-0.139,-0.00844)**	(-0.117,-0.0226)***
	[-0.483,0.182]	[-0.145,-0.00268]**	[-0.122,-0.0184]***
Control mean	.656	.202	.079
N	455	455	409
	Panel D - Exclude always treated states		
Fertility Limits	-0.343	-0.0965	-0.0900
	(-0.755,0.0700)	(-0.178,-0.0149)*	(-0.175,-0.00490)**
	[-0.805,0.120]	[-0.202,0.00868]*	[-0.178,-0.00244]**
Control mean	.656	.202	.079
N	338	338	302

Notes: Data from the listing and village questionnaire of the Rural Economic and Demographic Survey (REDS) 2006 survey across 15 states in India is used. Treat is equal to one for treated elections in the states that imposed fertility limit laws, and zero otherwise. For control states, Treat is always zero. All specifications include election year and state fixed effects. Additionally, all specifications control for the share of council member seats reserved under each category i.e., SC, ST, OBC, Women and total number of seats in the village council. Standard errors are clustered by state and wild-cluster-bootstrapped by state. 95% CI in parentheses clustered by state, in brackets wild-cluster-bootstrapped by state. *p < 0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.

B Additional Figures

Figure B.1: Pre-trends in Always treated states and Never treated states
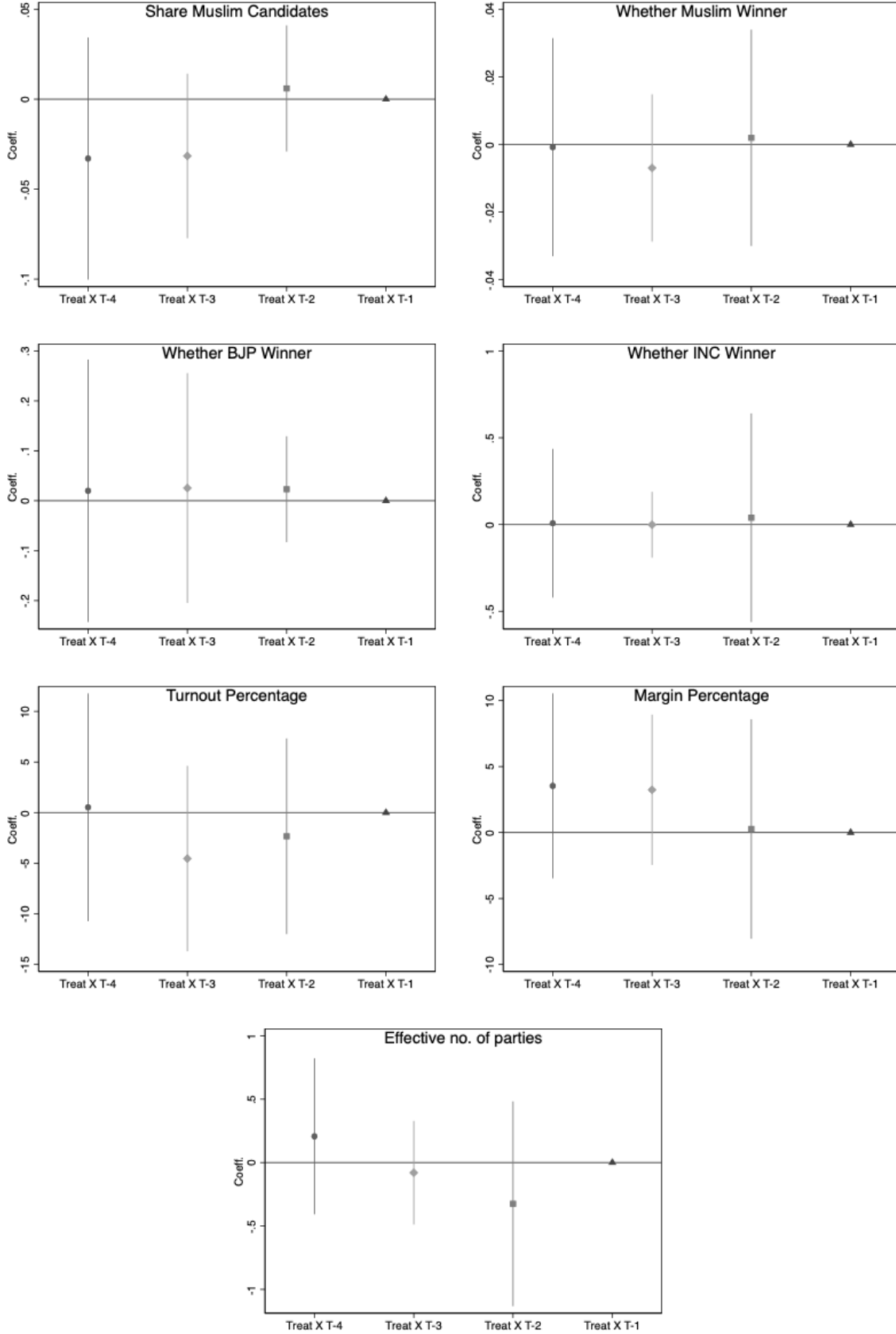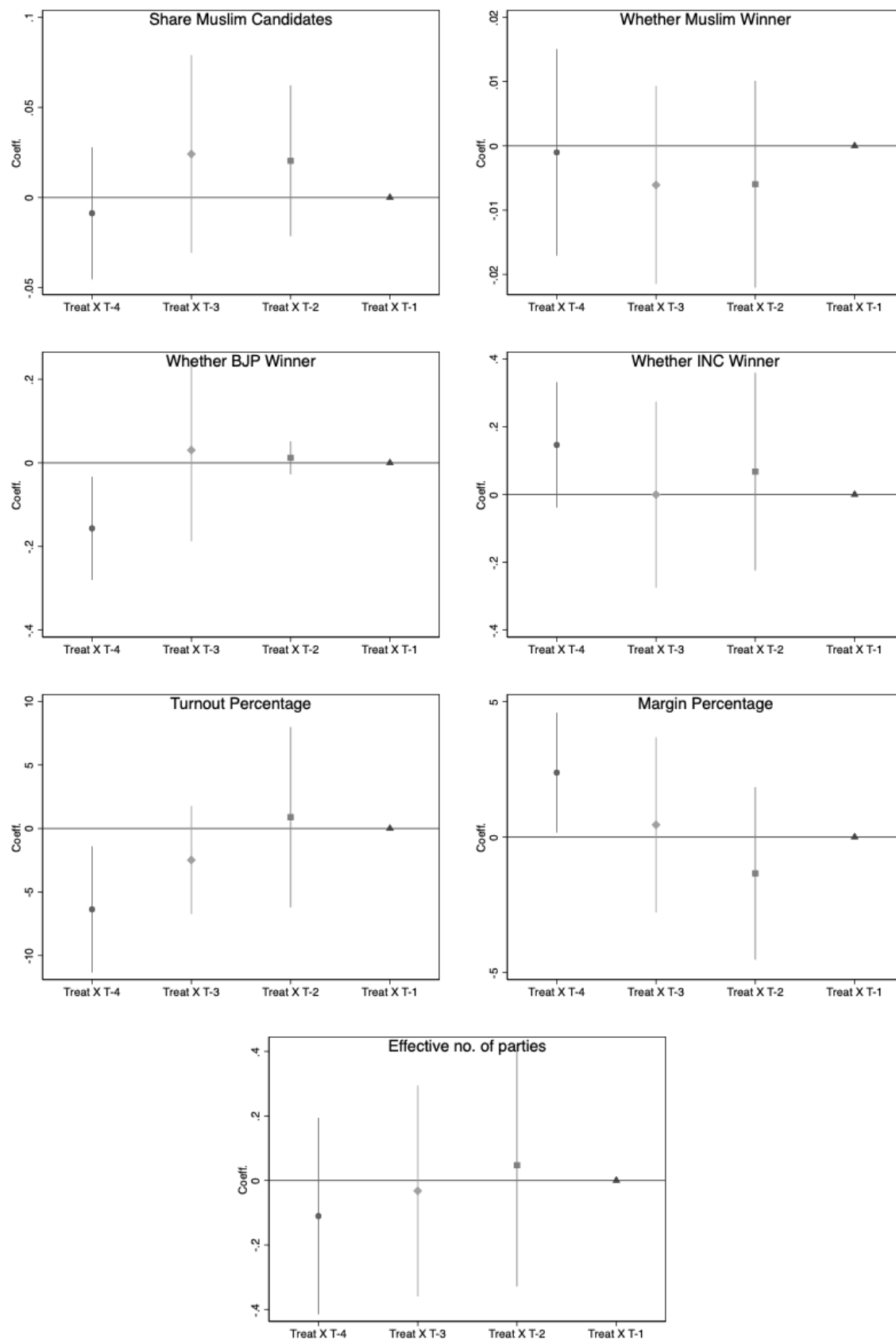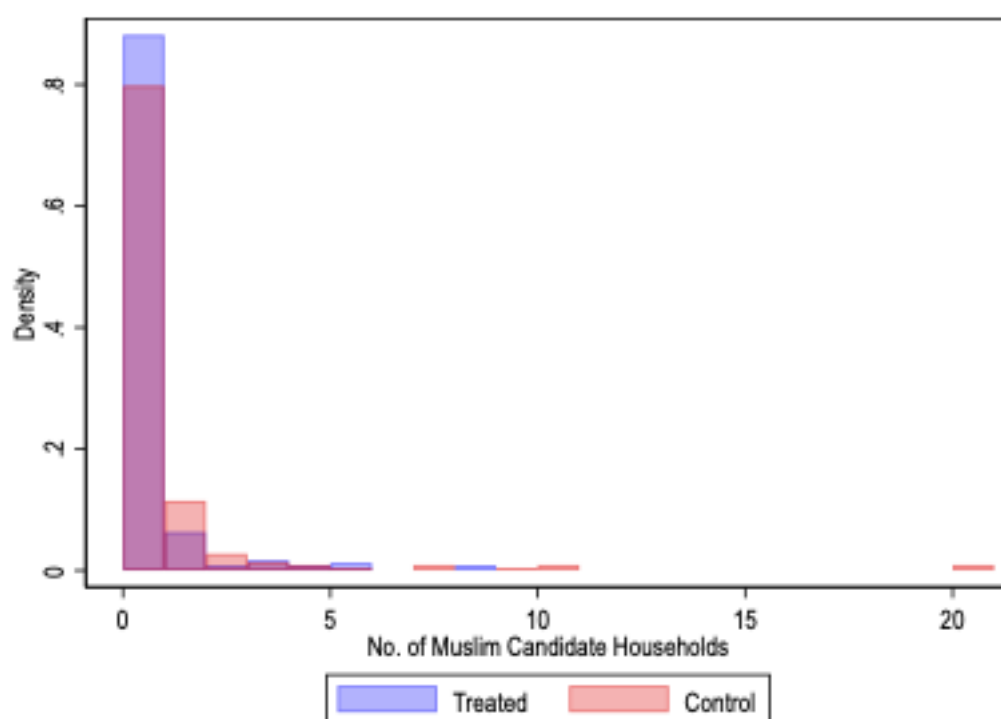
Note: The figure plots coefficients, β_{2t}, from equation 2 for three outcomes. The vertical lines are the 95 percent confidence intervals on the coefficients.

Figure B.2: Pre-trends in Always treated states and Sometimes treated states

Note: The figure plots coefficients, β_{2t}, from equation 2 for three outcomes. The vertical lines are the 95 percent confidence intervals on the coefficients.

Figure B.3: Distribution of Muslim candidate households

Note: The figure plots the distribution of the number of Muslim candidate households by treatment status.