Does providing corruption information reduce vote share? A meta-analysis

Trevor Incerti

April 10, 2019

Introduction

Research Question

Do voters in democratic countries hold politicians accountable for corruption?

Research Question

Do voters in democratic countries hold politicians accountable for corruption?

- Key question of electoral accountability.

Research Question

Do voters in democratic countries hold politicians accountable for corruption?

- Key question of electoral accountability.
- Recent ARPS review (De Vries and Solaz (2017)): "Empirical evidence to date is mixed, and it often suggests that the electoral punishment of corruption is rather mild."

Research Question

Do voters in democratic countries hold politicians accountable for corruption?

- Key question of electoral accountability.
- Recent ARPS review (De Vries and Solaz (2017)): "Empirical evidence to date is mixed, and it often suggests that the electoral punishment of corruption is rather mild."
- Is evidence actually mixed? What have we learned from a recent explosion of experimental research on this subject?

Methods

Meta-Analysis

Meta-analysis of all experimental studies conducted to date.

Meta-Analysis

Meta-analysis of all experimental studies conducted to date.

- Treatment: corruption information provision.

Meta-Analysis

Meta-analysis of all experimental studies conducted to date.

- Treatment: corruption information provision.
- Outcome: (incumbent) vote-share.

Meta-Analysis

Meta-analysis of all experimental studies conducted to date.

- Treatment: corruption information provision.
- Outcome: (incumbent) vote-share.
- Random assignment of information regarding incumbent corruption, followed by measurement of voting outcomes.

Meta-Analysis

Meta-analysis of all experimental studies conducted to date.

- Treatment: corruption information provision.
- Outcome: (incumbent) vote-share.
- Random assignment of information regarding incumbent corruption, followed by measurement of voting outcomes.
- Includes both published articles and working papers.

Analytical details

- Where there are multiple corruption treatments (e.g. varying source of information), I replicate the studies and code corruption as a binary treatment (0 = clean, 1 = corrupt).

Analytical details

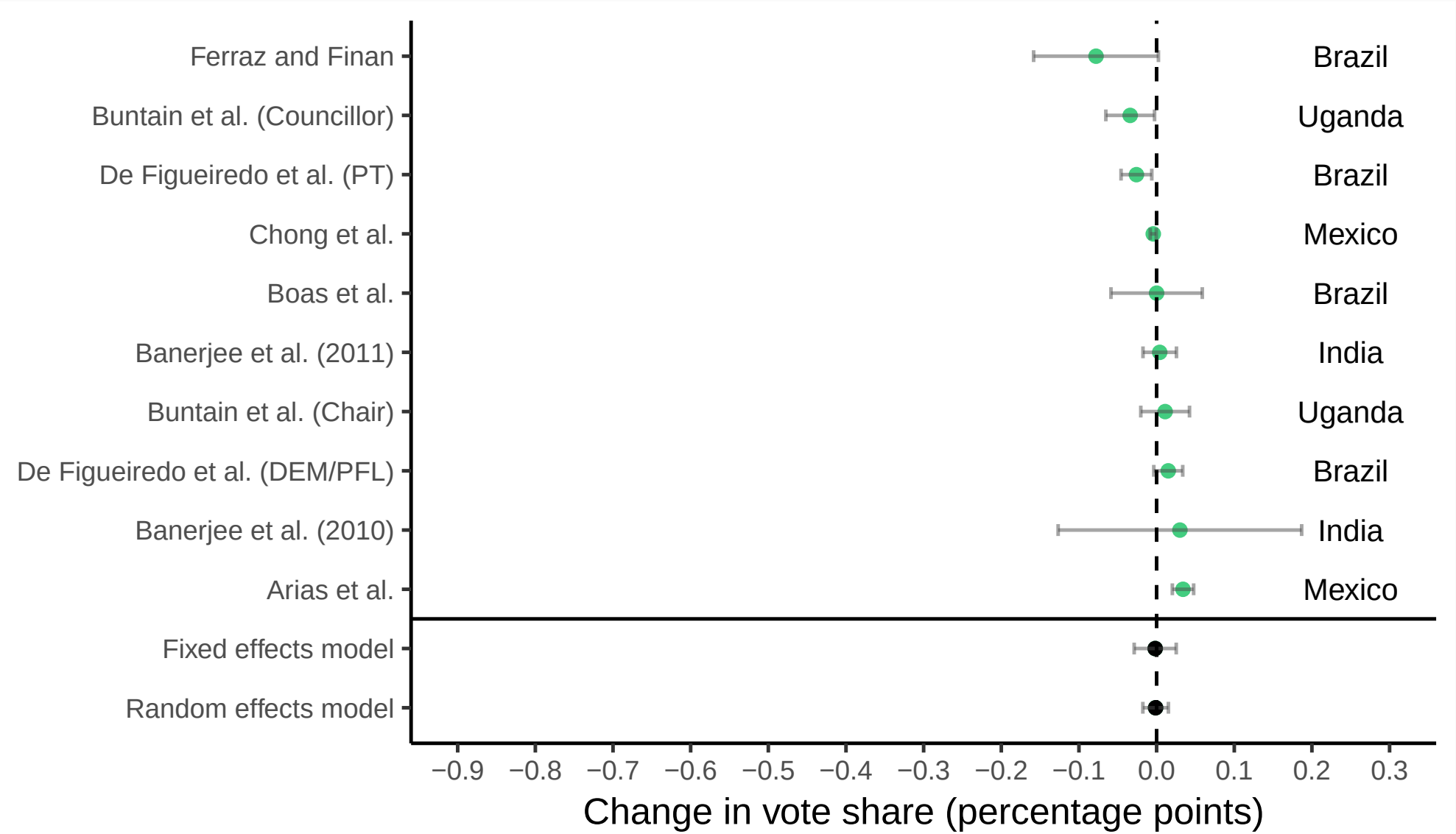
- Where there are multiple corruption treatments (e.g. varying source of information), I replicate the studies and code corruption as a binary treatment (0 = clean, 1 = corrupt).
- Studies that use non-binary vote choices are rescaled into a binary vote choice.

Analytical details

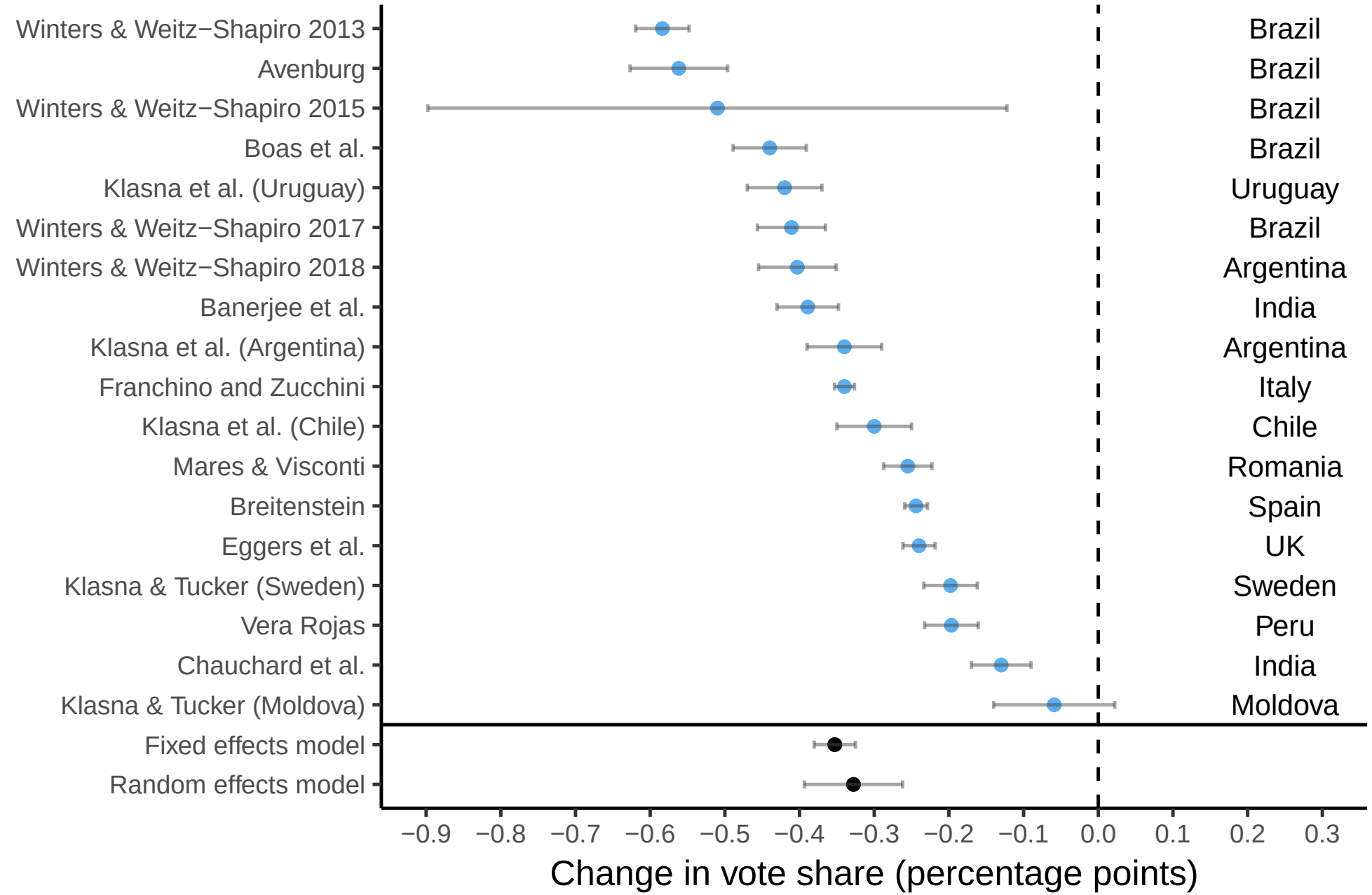
- Where there are multiple corruption treatments (e.g. varying source of information), I replicate the studies and code corruption as a binary treatment (0 = clean, 1 = corrupt).
- Studies that use non-binary vote choices are rescaled into a binary vote choice.
- Point estimates, standard errors and/or confidence intervals are not always explicitly reported (4 cases). In these cases standard errors are estimated by digitally measuring coefficient plots.

Results

Results: Field Experiments



Results: Survey Experiments



Results

- Survey experiments overestimate the ATE of providing corruption information to voters relative to field experiments.

Results

- Survey experiments overestimate the ATE of providing corruption information to voters relative to field experiments.
  - Corrupt candidates punished by approximately zero percentage points in field experiments.

Results

- Survey experiments overestimate the ATE of providing corruption information to voters relative to field experiments.
  - Corrupt candidates punished by approximately zero percentage points in field experiments.
  - Corrupt candidates punished by respondents by between 33 percentage points (random effects) and 35 percentage points (fixed effects) in survey experiments.

Results

- Survey experiments overestimate the ATE of providing corruption information to voters relative to field experiments.
  - Corrupt candidates punished by approximately zero percentage points in field experiments.
  - Corrupt candidates punished by respondents by between 33 percentage points (random effects) and 35 percentage points (fixed effects) in survey experiments.
  - 66% of the total heterogeneity across studies can be accounted for by including a dummy variable for type of experiment.

Results

- Survey experiments overestimate the ATE of providing corruption information to voters relative to field experiments.
  - Corrupt candidates punished by approximately zero percentage points in field experiments.
  - Corrupt candidates punished by respondents by between 33 percentage points (random effects) and 35 percentage points (fixed effects) in survey experiments.
  - 66% of the total heterogeneity across studies can be accounted for by including a dummy variable for type of experiment.
  - Point estimate of this dummy variable (0 = survey, 1 = field) is equal to 0.32 (significant at 1% level), while the overall estimate across studies is -.33.
    - Mixed effects meta-analysis with moderator.

Discussion

Discussion

What might account for this discrepancy?

Discussion

What might account for this discrepancy?

- Publication bias and/or p-hacking

Discussion

What might account for this discrepancy?

- Publication bias and/or p-hacking
- Social desirability bias

Discussion

What might account for this discrepancy?

- Publication bias and/or p-hacking
- Social desirability bias
- Lack of complexity in survey experiments.

Discussion

What might account for this discrepancy?

- Publication bias and/or p-hacking
- Social desirability bias
- Lack of complexity in survey experiments.
- Analyzing/interpreting results of survey experiments incorrectly.

Publication bias and p-hacking

Little evidence of publication bias within survey experiments:

Publication bias and p-hacking

Little evidence of publication bias within survey experiments:

- P-curve - virtually all results significant at 1% level (not clustered around 0.05).

Publication bias and p-hacking

Little evidence of publication bias within survey experiments:

- P-curve - virtually all results significant at 1% level (not clustered around 0.05).
- Tests for funnel plot asymmetry.

Publication bias and p-hacking

Little evidence of publication bias within survey experiments:

- P-curve - virtually all results significant at 1% level (not clustered around 0.05).
- Tests for funnel plot asymmetry.

Unclear with field experiments

- Five of eight papers published. Three unpublished papers all have null findings.

Publication bias and p-hacking

Little evidence of publication bias within survey experiments:

- P-curve - virtually all results significant at 1% level (not clustered around 0.05).
- Tests for funnel plot asymmetry.

Unclear with field experiments

- Five of eight papers published. Three unpublished papers all have null findings.
- Not enough data for formal tests.

Publication bias and p-hacking

Little evidence of publication bias within survey experiments:

- P-curve - virtually all results significant at 1% level (not clustered around 0.05).
- Tests for funnel plot asymmetry.

Unclear with field experiments

- Five of eight papers published. Three unpublished papers all have null findings.
- Not enough data for formal tests.

But, differences in experimental design likely account for the difference in the magnitude of treatment effects.

Social desirability bias

Social desirability bias

- Anti-corruption norms exist in most countries.

Social desirability bias

- Anti-corruption norms exist in most countries.
  - No costs to selecting the socially desirable option in hypothetical vignette.

Social desirability bias

- Anti-corruption norms exist in most countries.
  - No costs to selecting the socially desirable option in hypothetical vignette.
  - In actual election voters may discount information, or have strong material/ideological incentives to stick with candidate.

Social desirability bias

- Anti-corruption norms exist in most countries.
  - No costs to selecting the socially desirable option in hypothetical vignette.
  - In actual election voters may discount information, or have strong material/ideological incentives to stick with candidate.
- How to overcome social desirability bias in survey experiments?

Social desirability bias

- Anti-corruption norms exist in most countries.
  - No costs to selecting the socially desirable option in hypothetical vignette.
  - In actual election voters may discount information, or have strong material/ideological incentives to stick with candidate.
- How to overcome social desirability bias in survey experiments?
  - Perform experiments during actual elections using real candidates.

Social desirability bias

- Anti-corruption norms exist in most countries.
  - No costs to selecting the socially desirable option in hypothetical vignette.
  - In actual election voters may discount information, or have strong material/ideological incentives to stick with candidate.
- How to overcome social desirability bias in survey experiments?
  - Perform experiments during actual elections using real candidates.
  - Use list experiments, which have been shown to make a difference in admission to vote-buying (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al. 2012).

Survey complexity and conjoint experiments

Randomizing more candidate characteristics may more adequately capture moderating factors and reduce social desirability bias.

Survey complexity and conjoint experiments

Randomizing more candidate characteristics may more adequately capture moderating factors and reduce social desirability bias.

- But, traditional method of analysis (comparing magnitudes of individual average marginal component effects) may be misleading.

Survey complexity and conjoint experiments

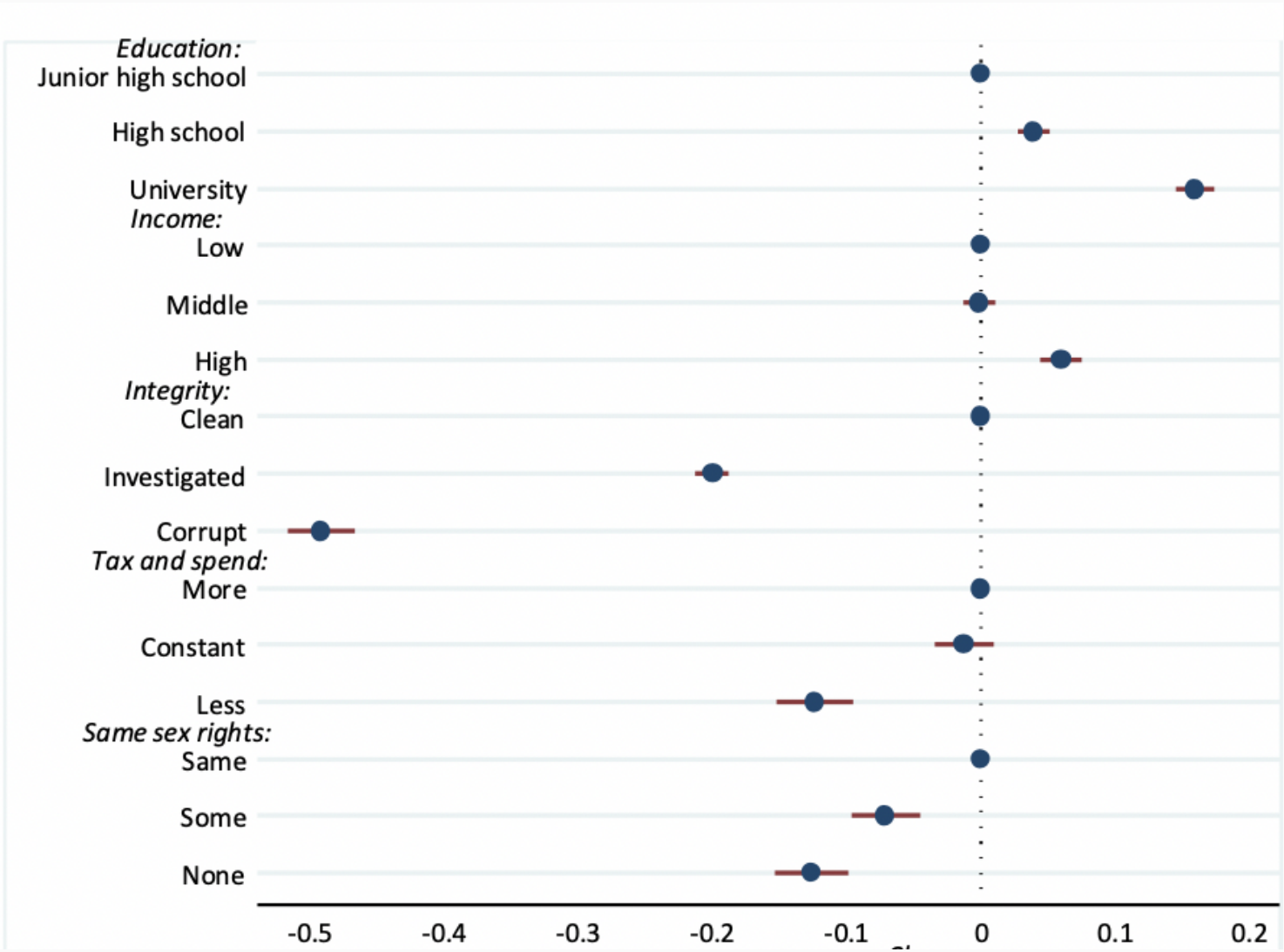


Figure 1: Franchino and Zucchini (2015) conjoint: AMCE plot

Survey complexity and conjoint experiments

Proposal: Compare the probability of voting for a candidate with outlier characteristics such as corruption to the probability of voting for a realistic candidate without this characteristic.

- E.g. What is the probability of a Democrat voting for a typical Democratic candidate who is corrupt?

Survey complexity and conjoint experiments

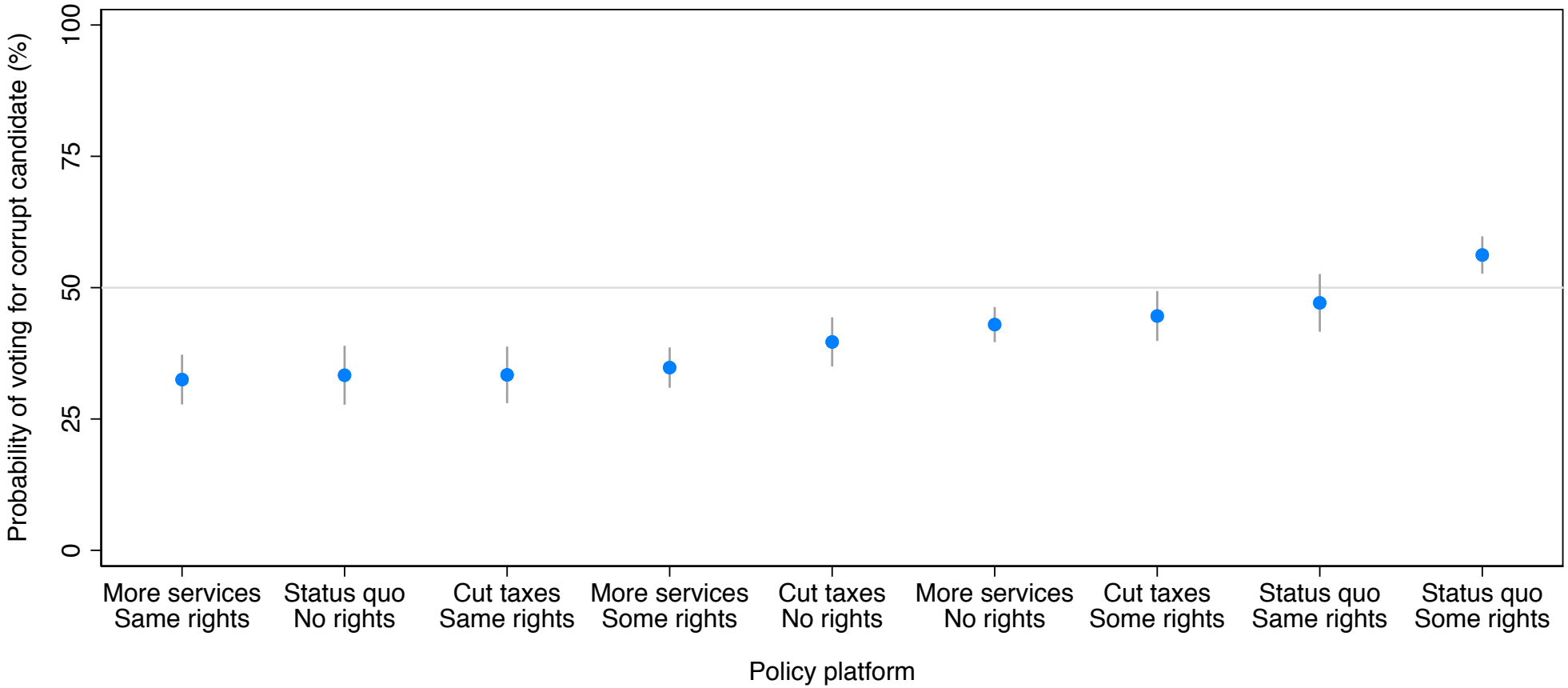


Figure 2: Franchino and Zucchini (2015) conjoint: can policy positions overcome corruption (conservative respondents)?

Survey complexity and conjoint experiments

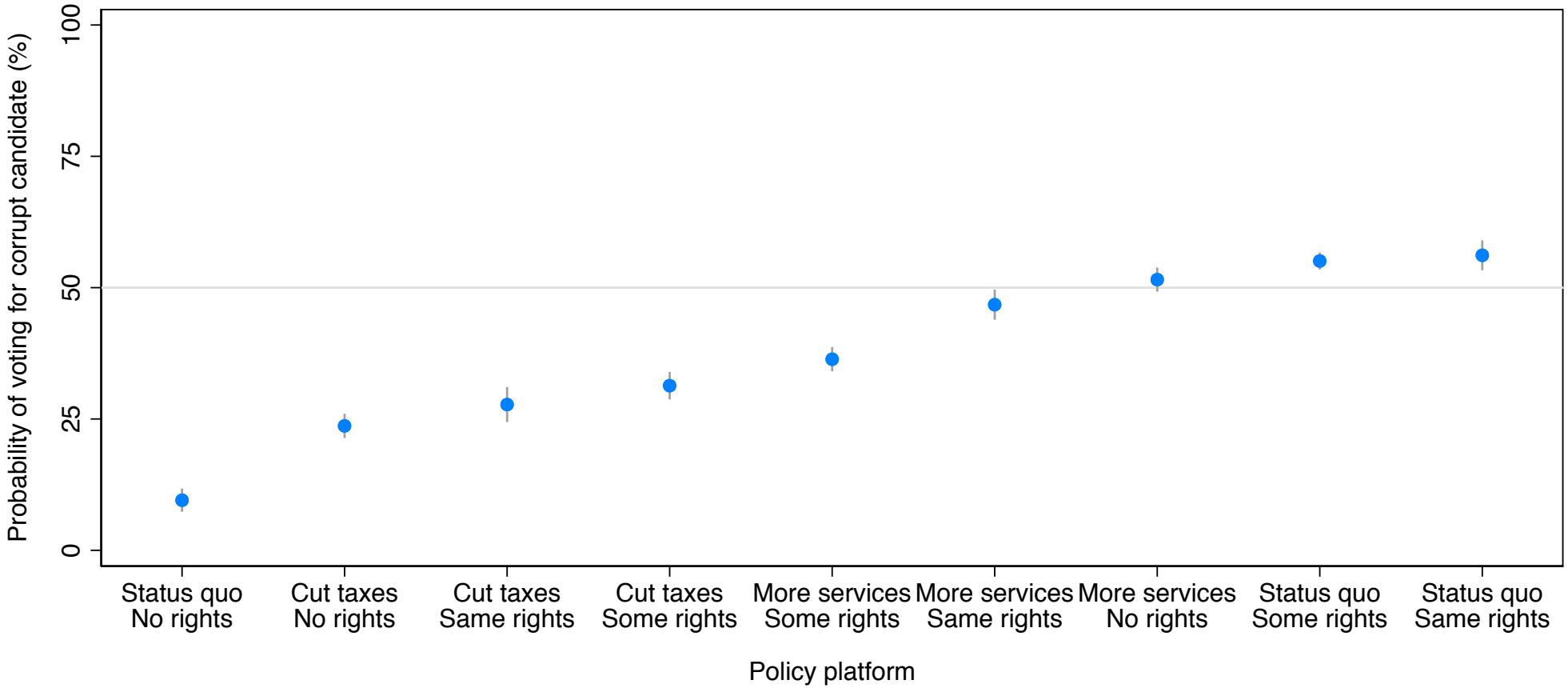


Figure 3: Franchino and Zucchini (2015) conjoint: can policy positions overcome corruption (liberal respondents)?

Conclusion

Conclusion

Conclusion

- Effect of corruption information on vote-choice differs drastically between field and survey experiments.

Conclusion

- Effect of corruption information on vote-choice differs drastically between field and survey experiments.
  - Zero in field experiments.
  - -33 to -35 percentage points in survey experiments.

Conclusion

- Effect of corruption information on vote-choice differs drastically between field and survey experiments.
  - Zero in field experiments.
  - -33 to -35 percentage points in survey experiments.
- Discrepancy does not seem to be driven by publication bias/p-hacking.

Conclusion

- Effect of corruption information on vote-choice differs drastically between field and survey experiments.
  - Zero in field experiments.
  - -33 to -35 percentage points in survey experiments.
- Discrepancy does not seem to be driven by publication bias/p-hacking.
- May arise from social desirability bias, lack of complexity and/or realism of hypothetical vignettes, and misinterpretation of results from conjoint experiments.

Conclusion

- Vote-choice survey experiments may provide information on the directionality of informational treatments, but point estimates they provide may not be representative of real-world voting behavior.

Conclusion

- Vote-choice survey experiments may provide information on the directionality of informational treatments, but point estimates they provide may not be representative of real-world voting behavior.
- Researchers should exercise caution when interpreting actions taken in hypothetical vignettes as indicative of real world behavior such as voting.

References

De Vries, C. E., & Solaz, H. (2017). The electoral consequences of corruption. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *20*, 391–408.

Franchino, F., & Zucchini, F. (2015). Voting in a multi-dimensional space: a conjoint analysis employing valence and ideology attributes of candidates. *Political Science Research and Methods*, *3*(2), 221–241.

Gonzalez-Ocantos, E., De Jonge, C. K., Meléndez, C., Osorio, J., & Nickerson, D. W. (2012). Vote buying and social desirability bias: Experimental evidence from nicaragua. *American Journal of Political Science*, *56*(1), 202–217.