Corruption information and vote share: A meta-analysis and lessons for survey experiments

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Introduction

Research Question

Do voters hold politicians accountable for corruption?

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

Methods

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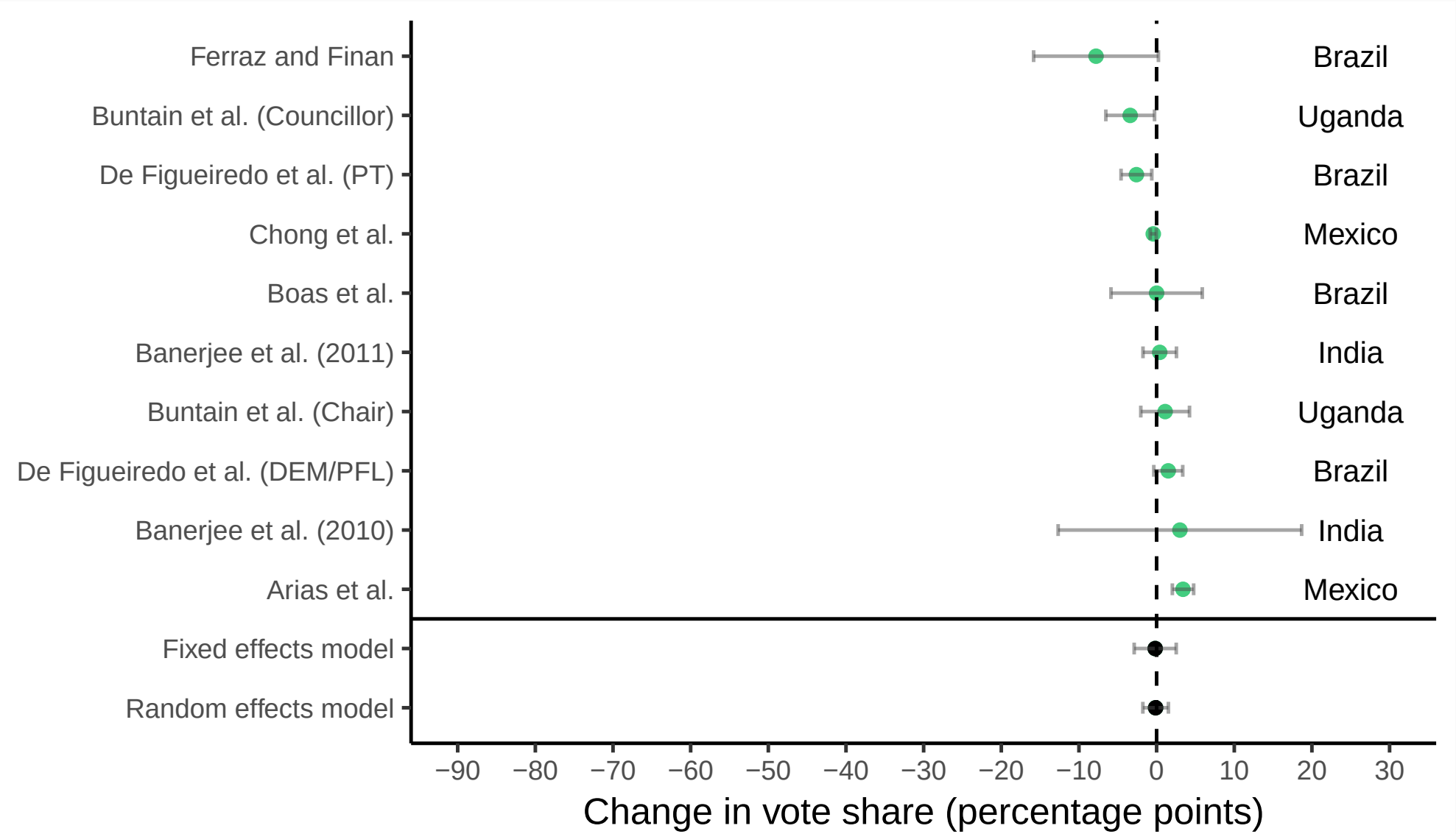
- Random assignment of corruption information $\rightarrow$ measurement of voting outcomes.
- As treatments are not always assigned identically, I take steps to standardize where possible. Details
- Includes both published articles and working papers.

Results

Results: Field Experiments



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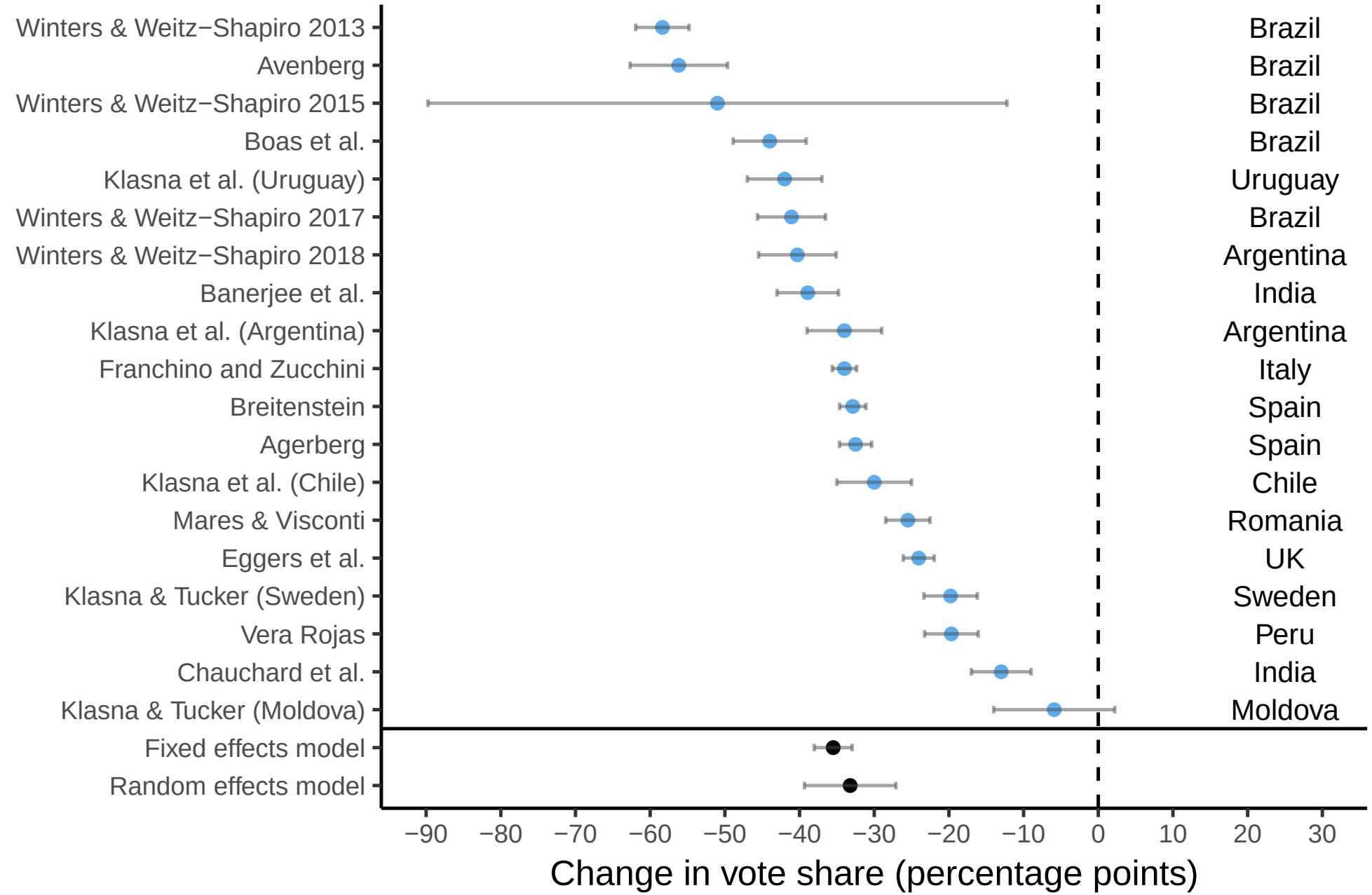

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  - 68% of the total heterogeneity across studies can be accounted for by including a dummy variable for type of experiment.
    - Mixed effects meta-analysis with moderator.
    - Point estimate of this dummy variable (0 = field, 1 = survey) is equal to -0.33 (significant at 1% level), the same as the overall estimate across all studies (with no moderator).

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- Publication bias and/or p-hacking
- Social desirability bias
- Survey context does not mirror real-world settings:
  - Non-compliance
  - Differences in outcome choices
  - Costliness/decision complexity

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- Tests for funnel plot asymmetry. Figures
- P-value not a significant predictor of publication status. Table

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- Not enough data for formal tests.

Social desirability bias

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- No costs to selecting the socially desirable option in hypothetical vignette.
- Voting against corruption in the abstract may therefore reflect the respondents' actual preferences.
- In actual election voters may discount information, or have strong material/ideological incentives to stick with candidate.

Differences in experimental context: non compliance

Treatments are weak and easily missed in field experiments.

- In survey experiments ITT = ATE = CACE (LATE)
- Field experiments measure ITT as they do not know the non compliance rate. Non compliance necessarily reduces the ITT.
  - $ITT = CACE \times \pi_C$

Differences in experimental context: outcome choice

Choice set offered to voters is not necessarily identical across experiments. Example:

- Field experiment: Candidate A is randomly revealed to be corrupt, and voters can cast vote for corrupt candidate A, or candidate B, who may be clean or corrupt.

- Survey experiment: Candidate A is randomly revealed to be corrupt, and voters can cast vote for corrupt candidate A, or counterfactual Candidate A who *is not* corrupt.

Differences in experimental context: complexity, costliness and conjoint experiments

Conjoint experiments: Randomizing more candidate characteristics may capture variety of moderating factors and reduce social desirability bias.

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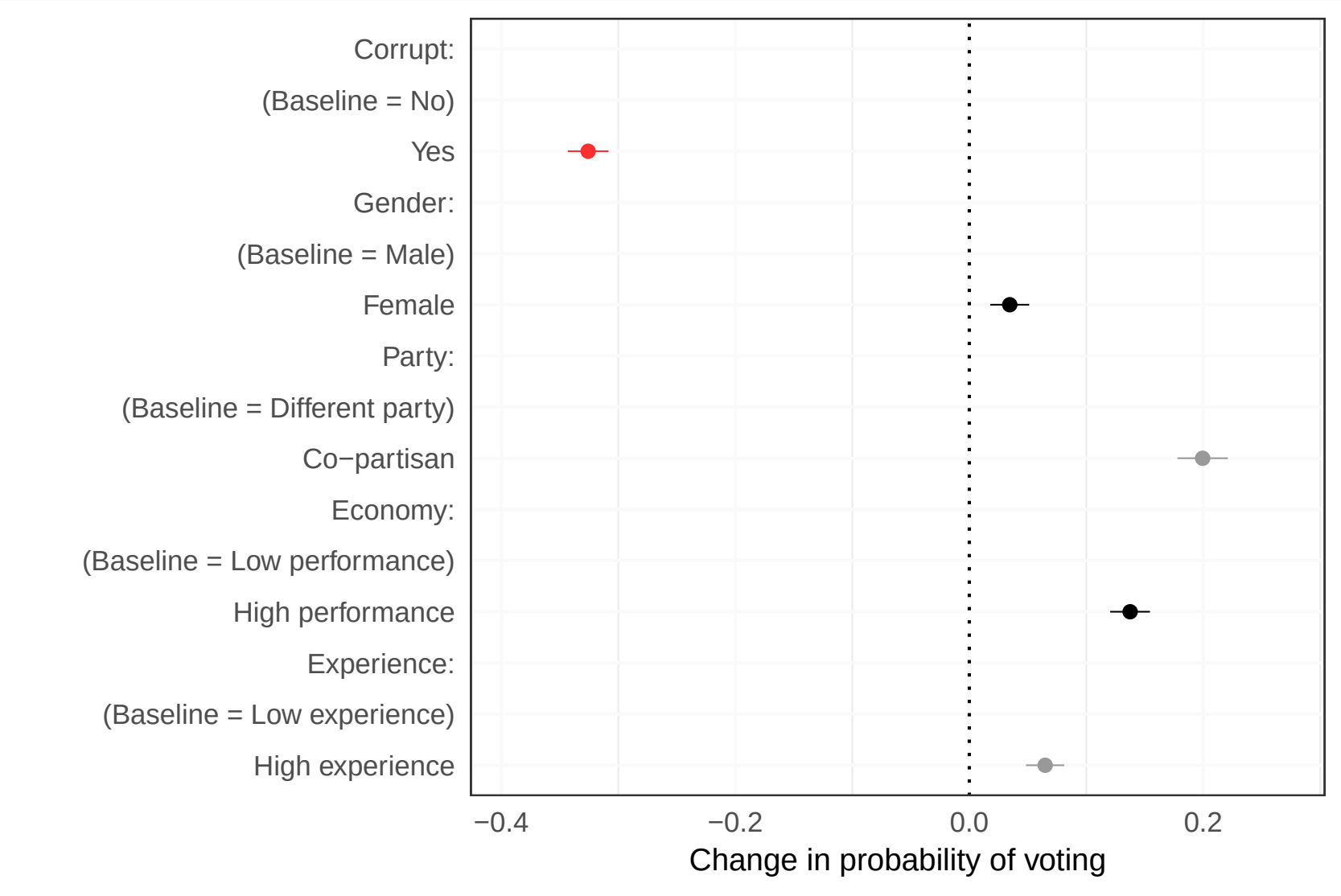
- But, traditional method of analysis (comparing magnitudes of individual average marginal component effects) may be misleading.

Differences in experimental context: complexity, costliness and conjoint experiments



Differences in experimental context: complexity, costliness and conjoint experiments

Proposal: When researchers have strong theories about the conditions that shape voter decision-making, a more appropriate method may be to calculate average marginal effects in order to present predicted probabilities of voting for a candidate under these conditions.

- E.g. Compare the probability of voting for a realistic candidate with outlier characteristics such as corruption to the probability of voting for a realistic candidate without this characteristic. Example 1 Example 2 Example 3

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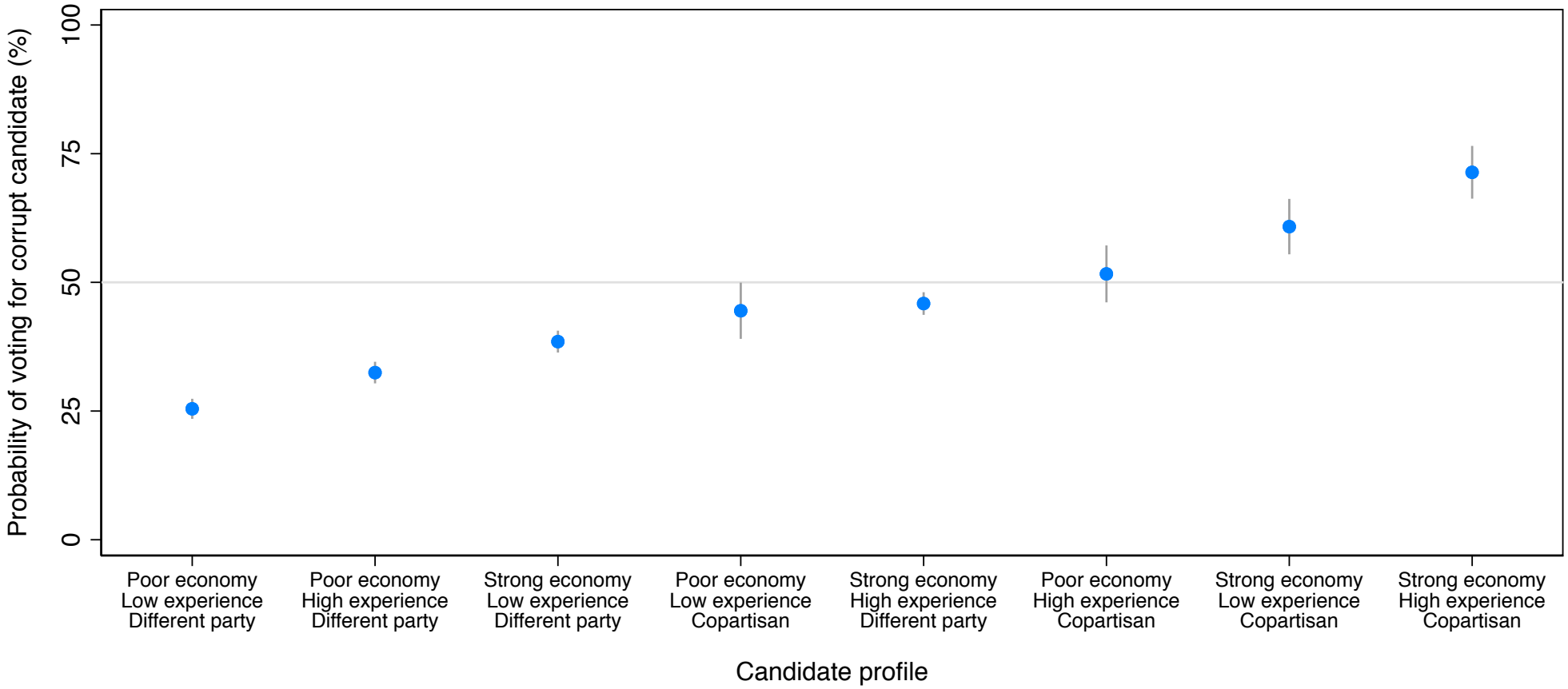

Figure 2: Breitenstein (2019) conjoint: can the right candidate overcome corruption?

Differences in experimental context: complexity, costliness and conjoint experiments

Proposal: When we do not have strong theories about the conditions that shape voter decision-making, we can use regression trees to illuminate them.

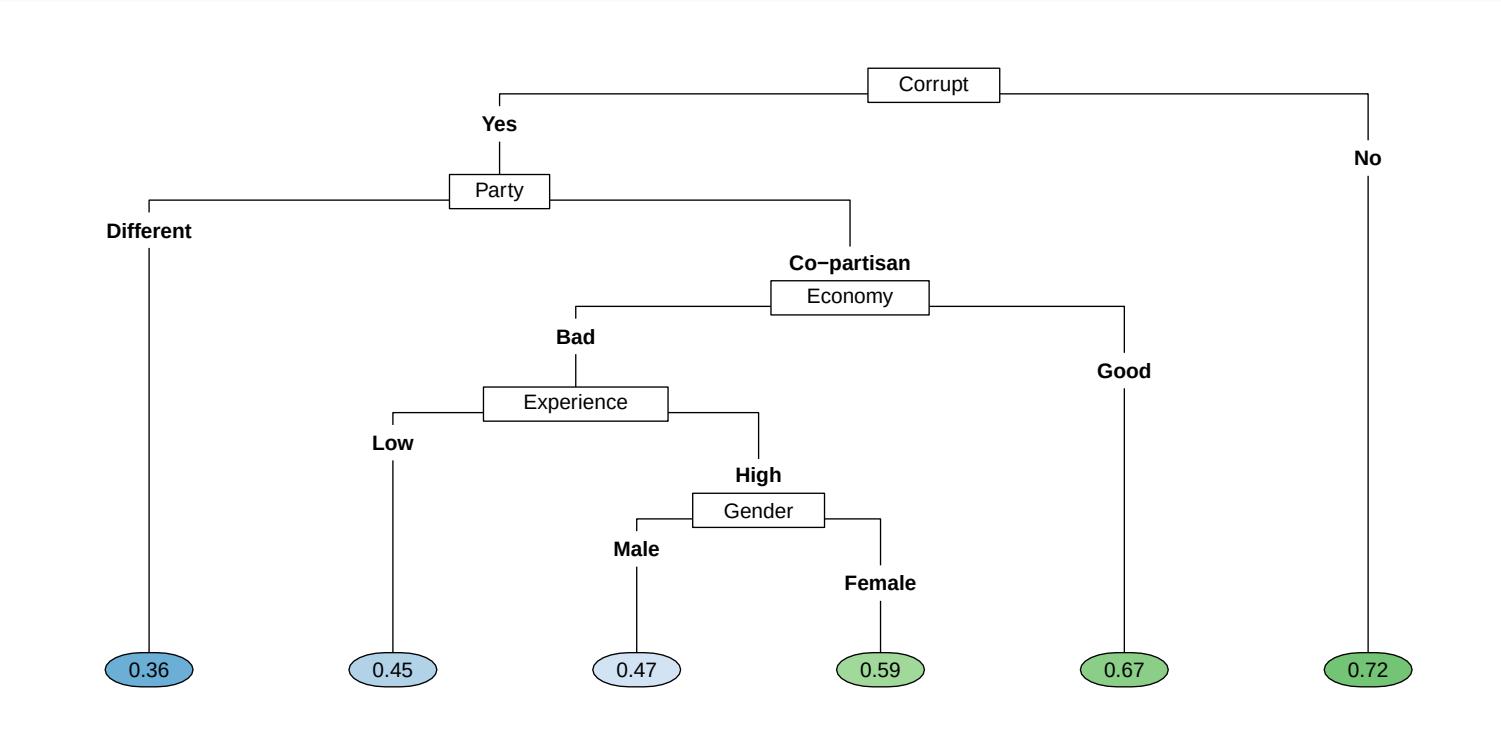

Figure 3: Breitenstein (2019) conjoint decision tree: predicted probabilities of voting for candidate

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- Discrepancy does not seem to be driven by publication bias/p-hacking.
- May arise from:
  - Social desirability bias
  - Survey context failing to mirror real-world settings:
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- Researchers should exercise caution when interpreting actions taken in hypothetical vignettes as indicative of real world behavior such as voting.

Supplemental material

Analytical details Back

- 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).

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- 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.
- Two field experiments include general anti-corruption treatments not specific to candidates. Robustness check excludes these studies.

Lab experiments

Back

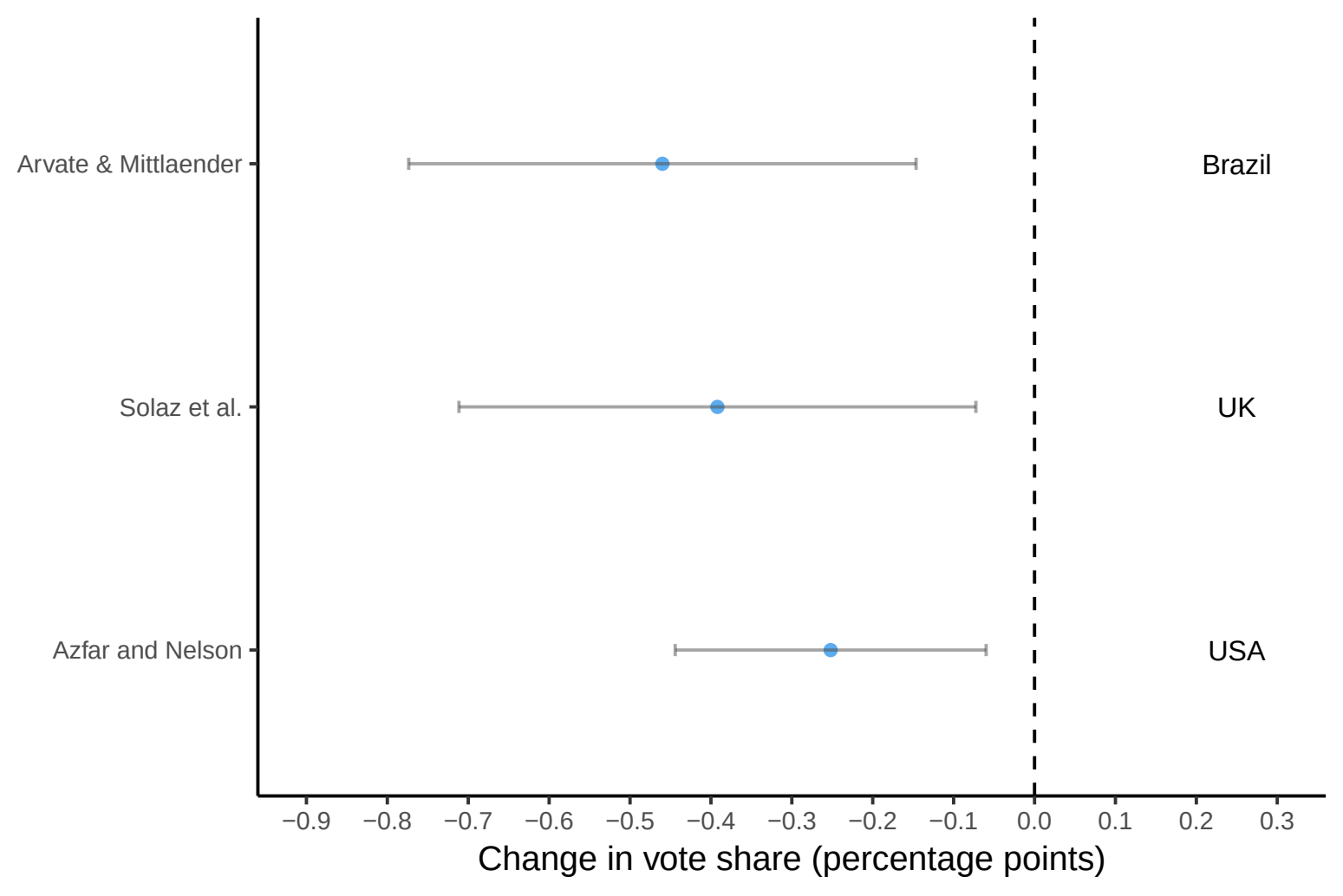

Figure 4: Lab experiments: Average treatment effect of corruption information on vote share

Robustness checks

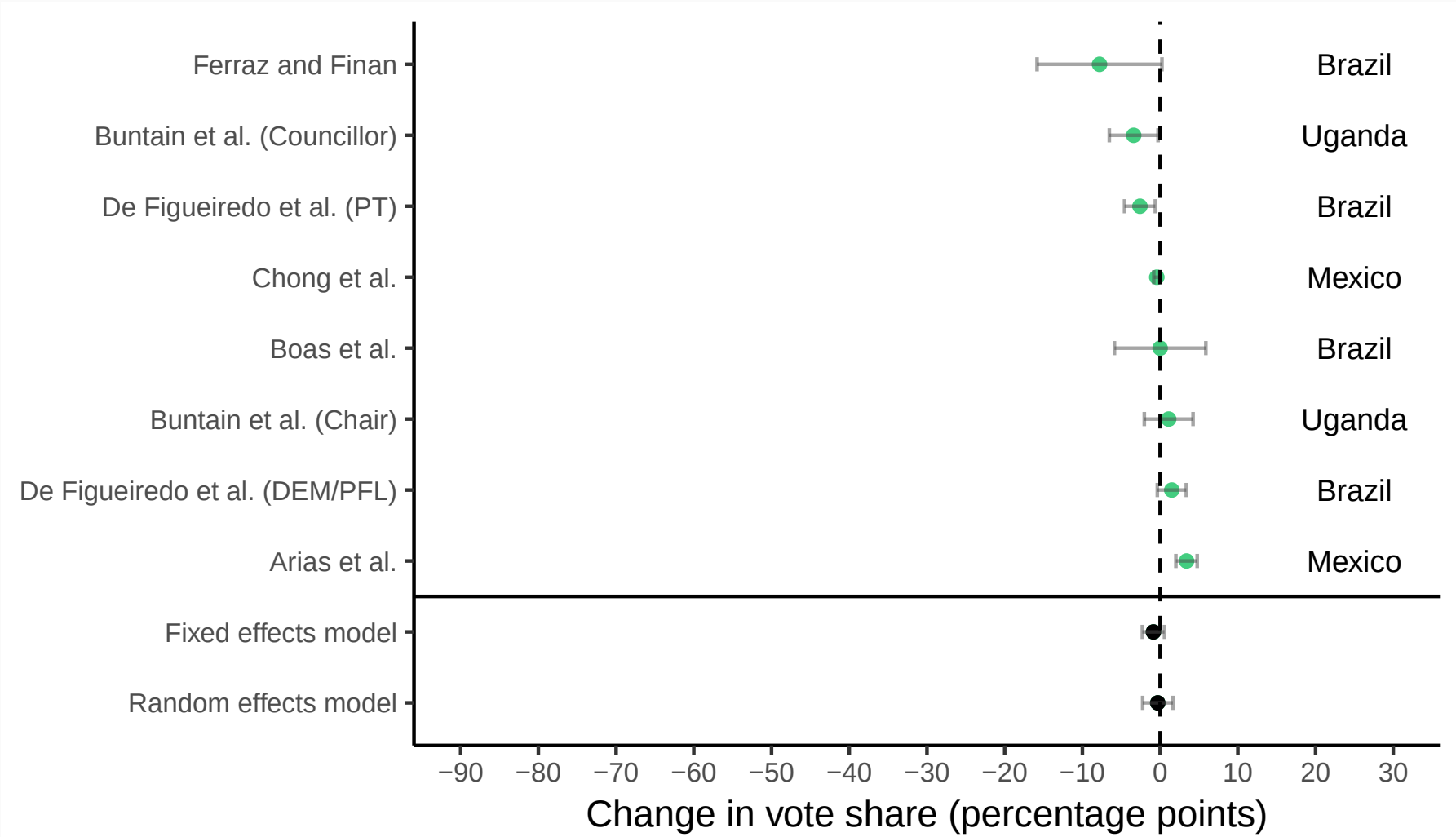

Figure 5: Field experiments: Average treatment effect of corruption information on incumbent vote share (excluding Banerjee et al. (2010) and Banerjee et al. (2011))

Mixed effects meta-analysis with survey experiment moderator

Back

Table 1: Mixed effects meta-analysis with survey experiment moderator

Value	Estimate
Constant	-0.005
	(0.035)
Survey experiment moderator	-0.326
	(0.043)

Note: Standard errors in parenthesis.

Funnel plot asymmetry

Back

Table 2: Regression tests for funnel plot asymmetry

Studies included	p value
All	0.0004
All with moderator	0.765
Field	0.840
Survey	0.630

Funnel plot asymmetry

Back

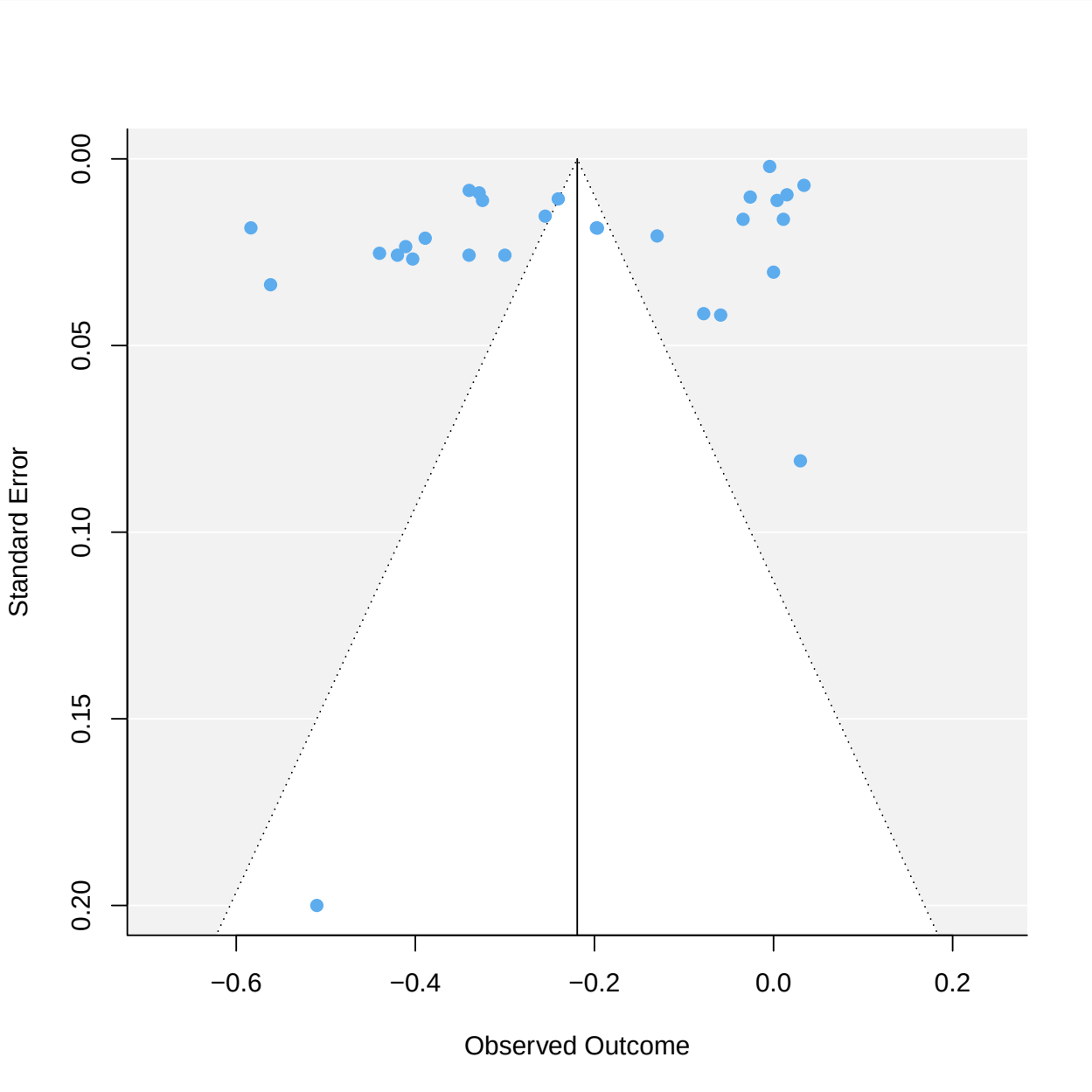

Figure 6: Funnel plot: All experiments

Funnel plot asymmetry

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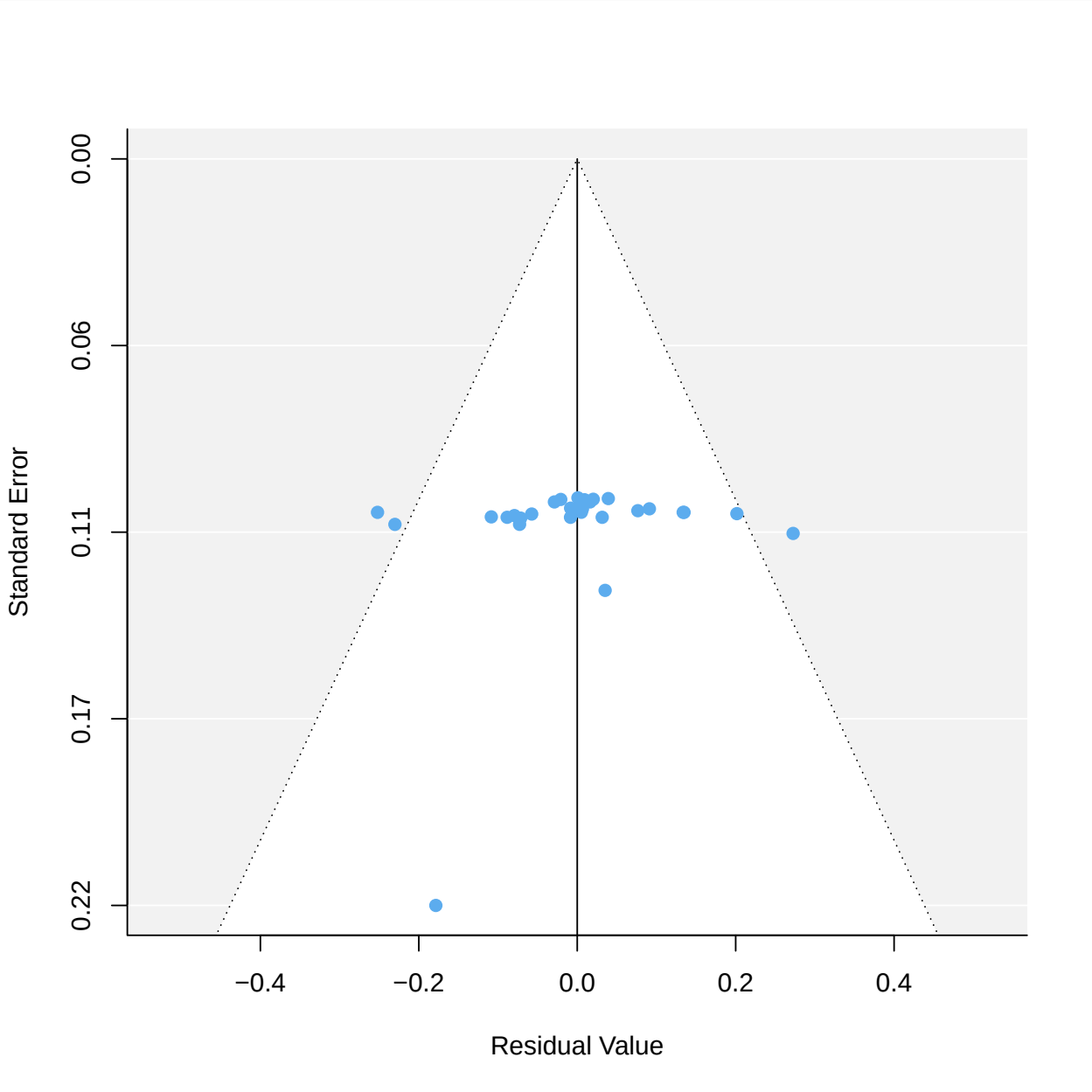

Figure 7: Funnel plot: All experiments with field experiment moderator

Funnel plot asymmetry

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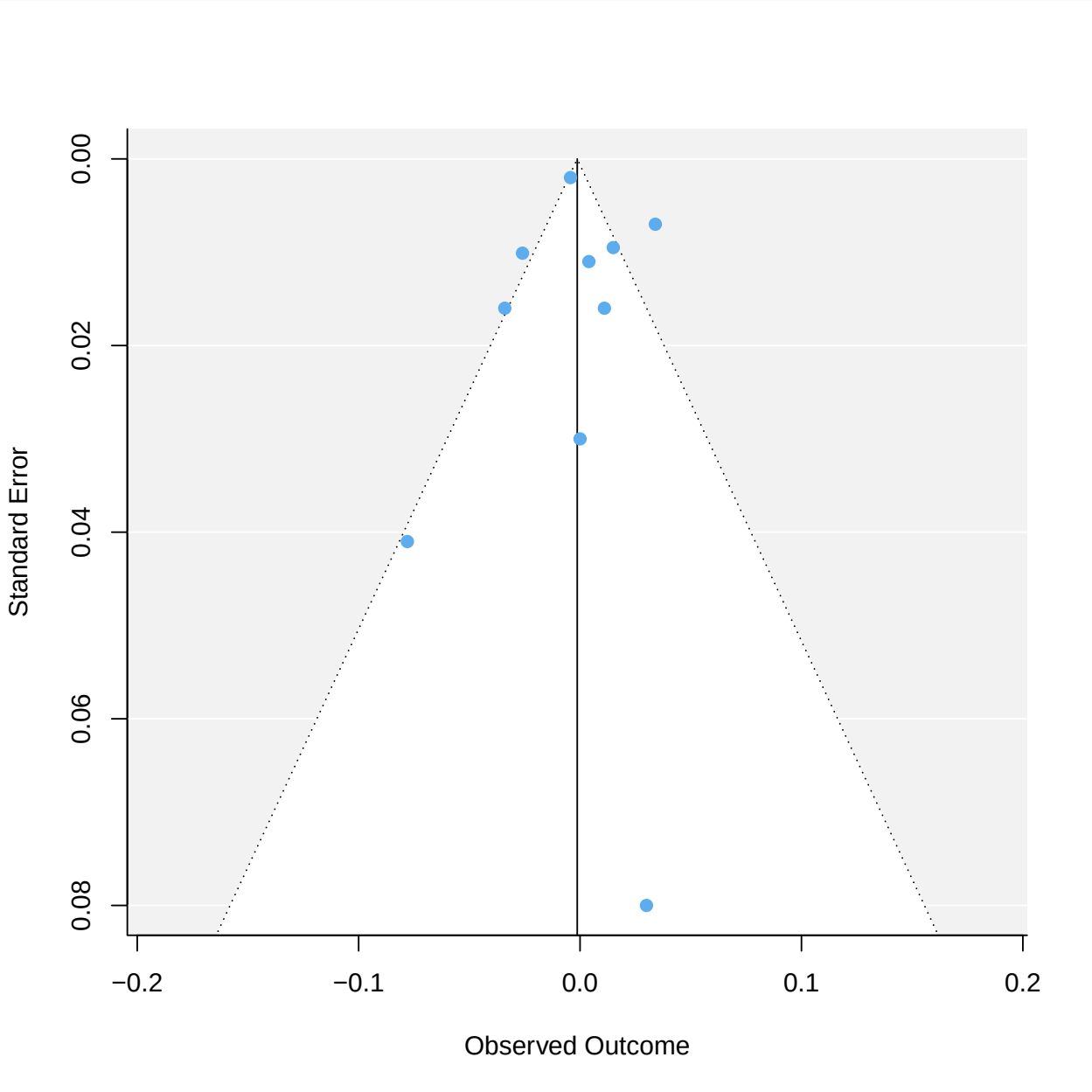


Figure 8: Funnel plot: Field experiments

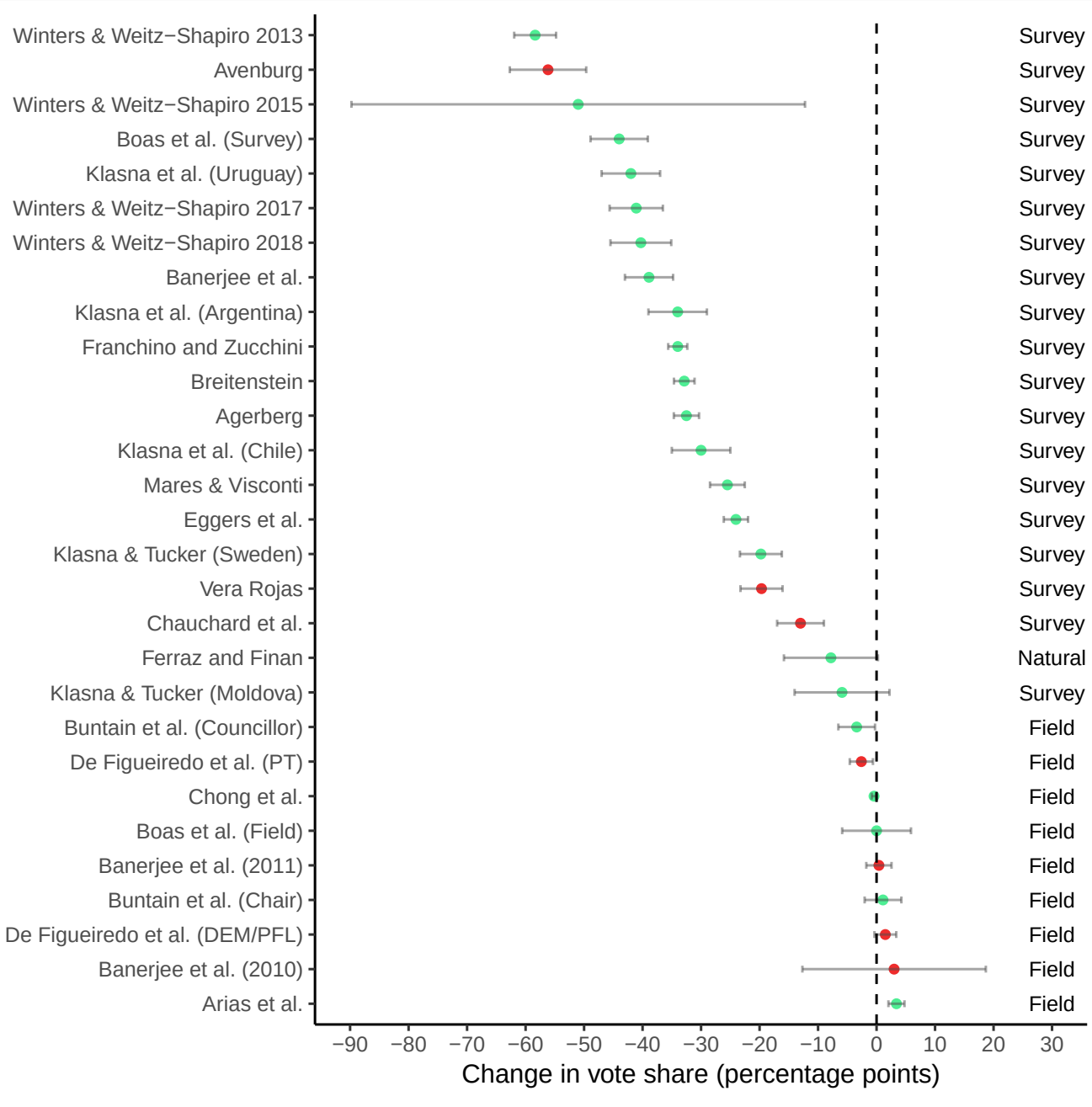
Does p-value predict publication status? Back

Table 3: Do p-values predict publication status?

	Dependent variable:	
	Published	
	OLS	Logit
Reference: P less than 0.01	0.84^{***}	1.67^{***}
	(0.10)	(0.63)
P less than 0.05	−0.18	−0.98
	(0.27)	(1.38)
P less than 0.1	0.16	14.89
	(0.44)	(2,399.54)
P greater than 0.1	−0.34	−1.67
	(0.20)	(1.03)
Observations	29	29
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

All experiments by publication status

Back



Additional conjoint replications: Franchino and Zucchini (2015)

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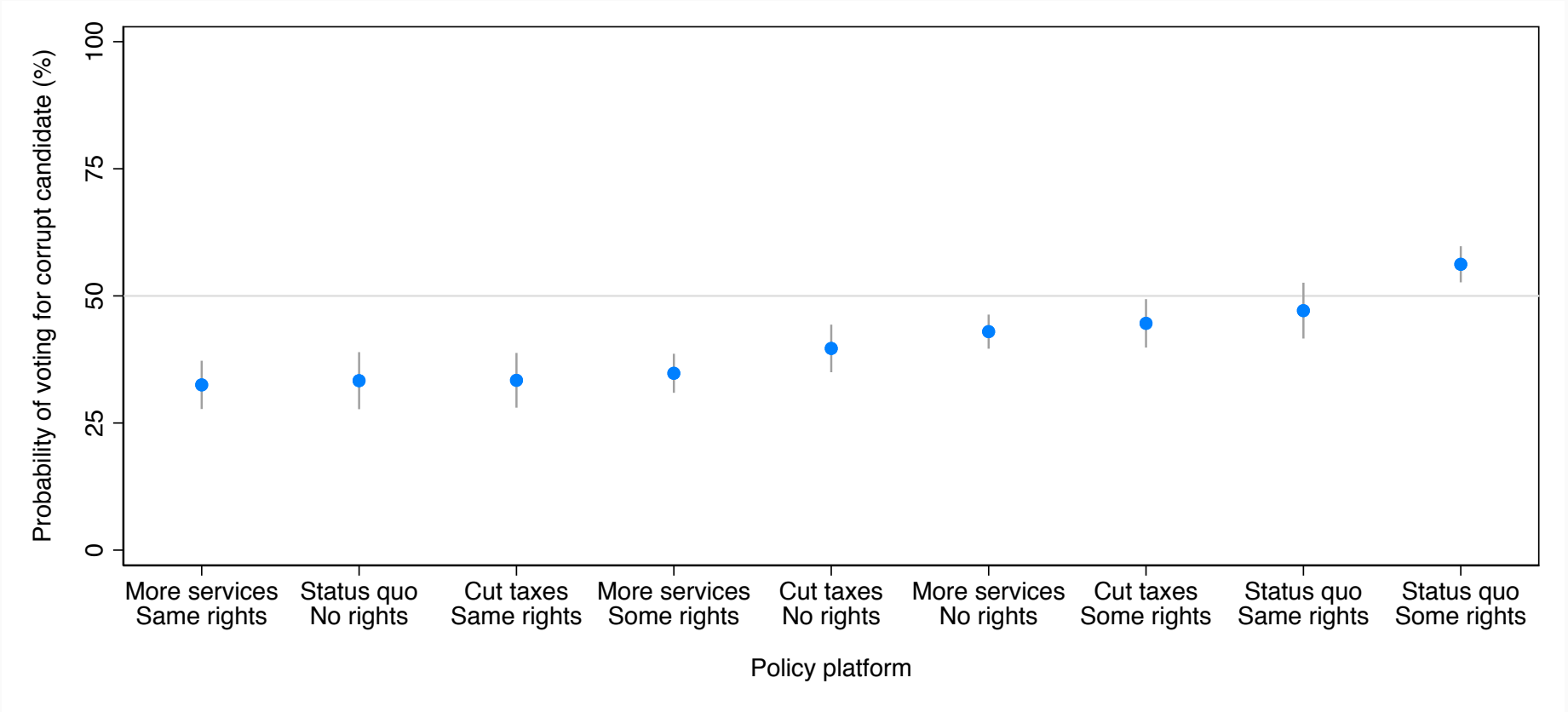

Figure 10: Franchino and Zucchini (2015) conjoint: can policy positions overcome corruption (conservative respondents)?

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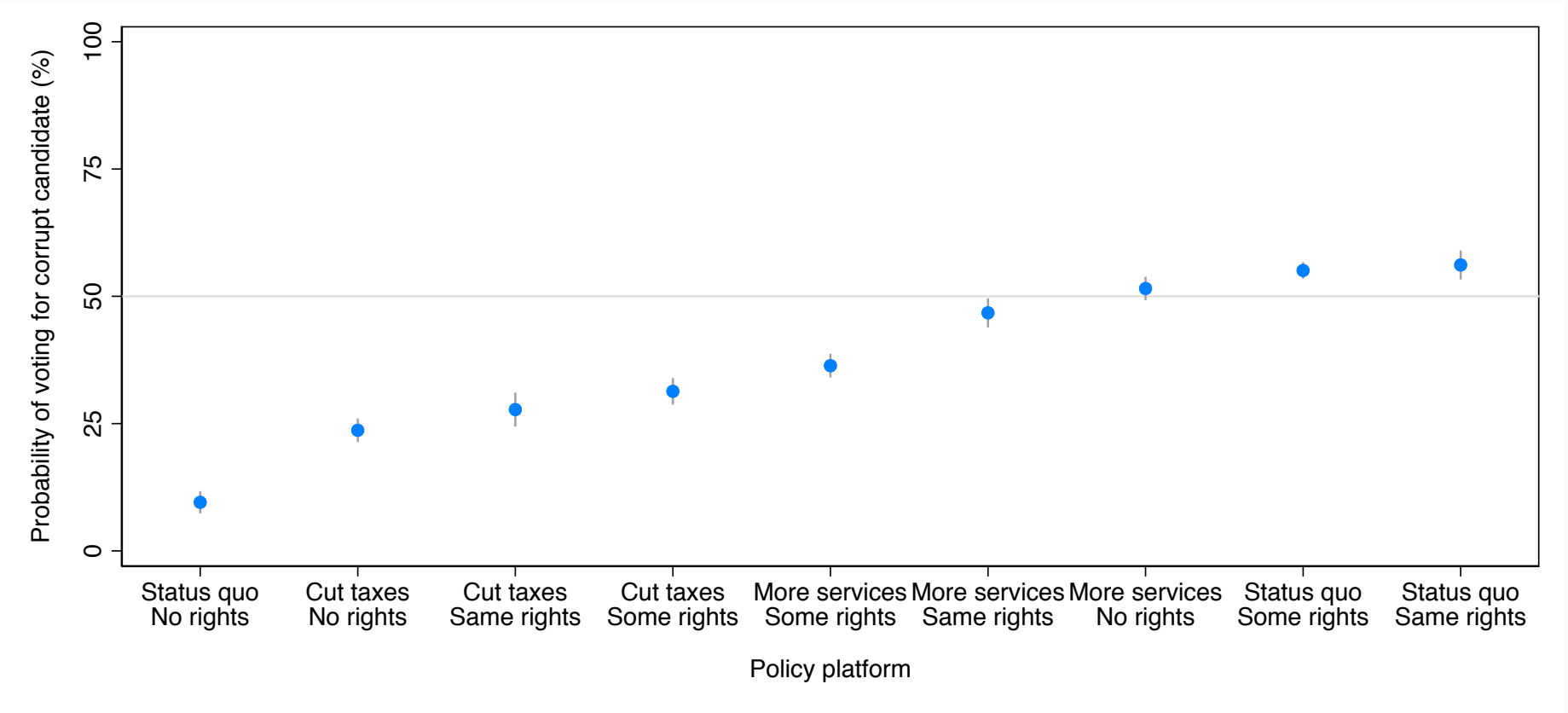

Figure 11: Franchino and Zucchini (2015) conjoint: can policy positions overcome corruption (liberal respondents)?

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