

Partners in Government: Politicians' Gender Preferences in Coalition Formation

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October, 2024

Abstract

Do politicians consider the gender of party leaders when selecting coalition partners? Little is known about the politicians' preferences when evaluating forming coalitions with political adversaries. I theorize that politicians prefer women as coalition partners for their perceived qualities like consensus-building, trustworthiness, and governance abilities, making them a less threatening option for politicians' aspirations. Conducting an original conjoint experiment with 979 Spanish mayors, I find that mayors prefer to form coalition governments with parties led by women. The analysis of mechanisms suggests that women leaders are perceived as easier to communicate and more competent to govern. The findings shed light on the mechanisms behind the selection of coalition partners and reveal the importance of the gender of potential partners.

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1 Introduction

In the annals of democratic governance, a question looms: Why does the underrepresentation of women persist in top positions of political power? The pursuit of gender equality across various facets of society has advanced, but the corridors of government often echo men's voices. Despite comprising approximately half the world's population, women have historically occupied disproportionately fewer seats at the tables where critical decisions are made. While women's representation in national parliaments has increased to 26.1% across the globe in 2023, only 8% of heads of state or prime ministers are women (World Economic Forum 2023). This disparity extends from national parliaments to local municipal offices, manifesting as a profound gender gap in political leadership. Understanding the mechanisms that propel political elites to these coveted positions and the obstacles they encounter along their path takes on significance as gender gaps in politics gradually diminish globally. This invites to explore whether this gendered imbalance persists not only in the overall composition of government but also in the processes that shape its formation.

While the reasons for women underrepresentation are multifaceted and deeply entrenched, it remains a challenge. Prior research has offered valuable insights into the various political institutions that impact women's access to high-level political positions. These include the electoral system (Tremblay 2012); the structure and rules of legislative committees (Heath et al. 2005; O'Brien 2012); the system of government (Krook and O'Brien 2012); the types of ministerial systems (Claveria 2014); or political parties' formal and informal practices (Folke and Rickne 2016; Fox and Lawless 2010; O'Brien and Rickne 2016; Verge and de la Fuente 2014). While we have made progress in comprehending the barriers that hinder women's advancement to high-ranking positions, a crucial aspect remains unexplored: the role of gender in the intricate bargaining process leading to government formation.

Recent studies have begun to delve into this realm by investigating how the gender of party leaders influences their ability to leverage political power during post-election

government negotiations. For instance, Huidobro and Falcó-Gimeno (2023) have revealed women's challenges in securing the mayor position even after electoral victories, but often ensuring their participation in the government under less favorable positions. This intriguing finding hints at a complex dynamic: women may be perceived by their political peers as qualified collaborators, but they are not granted full leadership authority. Thus, the unanswered question is whether and how the gender of potential government partners shapes politicians' decisions when forming coalitions.

The paper addresses this question by shedding light on politicians' preferences in coalition formation dynamics. Coalition governments are collaborative teams created in contexts of high uncertainty where politicians must choose from a pool of political opponents. In such scenarios, politicians are motivated to succeed while minimizing risks by assessing disparities among their potential partners in terms of governance competence, compatibility, reliability, or personal affinity. Individual preferences therefore can wield a considerable influence over the selection of one government partner over another. I then theorize how women politicians may be seen as desirable coalition partners due to perceived collaborative and governance skills shaped by gender stereotypes. These stereotypes emphasize their honesty and commitment to democracy, making them appealing in contexts like coalition formation, where loyalty and trustworthiness are crucial. As a result, politicians may prefer women as coalition partners to reduce costs, avoid conflict, and govern effectively. Indeed, the nuanced preferences held by politicians regarding their prospective coalition partners represent a pivotal and often overlooked dimension in the complex process of government formation.

Analyzing politicians' preferences regarding potential partners raises a methodological challenge because both the preferences of politicians and the gender of potential partners often go unobserved. Moreover, since politicians' gender is not randomly distributed between parties or municipalities in the real world, it is difficult to identify their impact in isolation in negotiations between politicians using observational data. To solve this issue, I conducted a conjoint experiment in an original survey of 979 Spanish Mayors between June 2018 and January 2019. This experiment simultaneously varies gender together with

five other characteristics of two candidate profiles and asks mayors to choose the one with whom they would prefer to form a coalition. Conjoint experiments allow for the comparison on a standard scale of how different individual and party-level characteristics affect preferences for whom to form a coalition with. To examine the potential mechanisms after revealing their preferences, mayors are asked to rate the hypothetical candidates based on their perception of similarity in political positions, ease of communication, ability to govern, and trust. This design allows for measuring politicians' evaluations of the candidates and to what extent this informs their decisions.

My findings reveal that the gender of potential coalition partners influences mayors' preferences when selecting a party leader with whom to form a coalition. On average, mayors prefer forming governments with women. Further analysis suggests that female candidates are often preferred for their communication skills and perceived governing abilities, particularly by male and older mayors, who may be influenced by stereotypical views of female partners. Additionally, politicians prioritize coalition partners based on political alignment, trust, and communication skills, often placing less emphasis on governing competence. This suggests a strategic trade-off, where compliance and reliability are valued over capability. The findings illustrate the complex factors shaping coalition choices, including ideological alignment and political trust, with expediency playing a significant role in partner selection.

This experiment makes two contributions. Methodologically, it demonstrates that it is viable to study the logic behind politicians' preferences through surveys and applies a novel way to study mechanisms. To the best of my knowledge, no previous conjoint experiment has analysed the mechanisms driving why some candidates are preferred over others by adding simple follow-up questions. Substantively, this research presents evidence that politicians have meaningful preferences about the personal traits that they look for in potential coalition partners. This finding opens up a new research agenda centred on the relevance of politicians' characteristics in shaping coalition formations.

This line of inquiry carries implications for the broader discourse on gender and political selection, with normative consequences for the descriptive and substantive representation

of certain social groups. Leaders' preferences when selecting coalition partners can lead to scenarios where certain profiles are relegated to specific roles within governments, perpetuating situations of inequality in access to positions of power. Increasing knowledge of these inequalities can help institutions create fairer and more egalitarian process designs to ensure that everyone has equal access to power and the selection of the most appropriate leaders.

2 Unexplained variation on governments formation

Comprehending why those who enter governments do so is crucial in understanding their performance and survival. In parliamentary democracies, political selection occurs at different stages, and one of the most important is government formation. Our knowledge of how leaders come to hold the reins of power has advanced significantly over the past decades. In the case of parliamentary democracies, a prolific stream of literature has crystallised into a whole subfield of government formation studies (Martin and Stevenson 2001).

Politicians leading government formation processes have rarely been the focus of analysis. Instead, most existing work considers party motivations and institutional factors as the main determinants of participation in coalition governments (e.g. Bäck and Dumont 2008; Laver and Schofield 1998). Parties have office and policy-seeking motivations and mainly strive to gain a place in government (e.g. Riker 1962). Party size – i.e., the number of seats in the legislative chamber – is the key determinant of party's bargaining power in the formation process. The largest party has the highest chance of reaching office, joined by one or more parties that can form a minimal winning coalition (e.g. Tavits 2008; Glasgow and Golder 2015). Parties, however, must be ideologically aligned to reduce the political costs of bargaining and produce desirable policies. Parties prefer to build a government that is ideologically homogeneous and survives as long as they remain ideologically similar (e.g. Baron 1991). Aspects such as the existence of institutions such as the investiture requirements or the *formateur* role give also parties an advantage in the negotiation over who gets access to political power (e.g. Ansolabehere et al. 2005;

Indridason 2011). Moreover, incumbency and other cultural and social norms have been shown to be a source of power in these processes (e.g. Fujiwara and Sanz 2020; Glasgow et al. 2011).

Political coalitions, however, are established for reasons beyond those mentioned above. Though we know a great deal about how institutions, party size, and ideology affect the coalition formation process, the preferences or personal characteristics of the political leaders involved in coalition negotiations have received little attention.

Coalition governments are work teams designed to execute government tasks and are created in contexts of high uncertainty in which potential team members do not know each other well. Under the assumption that politicians are principally motivated by retaining office while maximizing power, their preferences are molded by anticipations surrounding the capability of potential partners to collaborate and engage in successful collaboration effectively. Considering that politicians must often select coalition partners from a pool of political rivals, they probably prefer individuals with whom they calculate they are most likely to succeed, trying to minimize the risks of a coalition government.

Scholars in fields such as social psychology, management and organisational studies contend that people rely on social cues that pertain to the potential competence of their task partners (e.g. Kurzban and Leary 2001; Magee and Galinsky 2008). Accordingly, politicians traits may signal information about their capacity and intention to engage in successful collaboration (Driskell and Mullen 1990; Tsai et al. 2020). Political science identifies these mechanisms also from party gatekeepers in the selection of candidates. Party selectors prefer candidates with specific characteristics that determine how much time they will spend in party work (Norris and Lovenduski 1995) or how they collaborate during legislative activity (Barnes 2016).

Drawing upon this literature, my expectation is that politicians make strategic choices when selecting coalition partners. These choices are influenced by perceptions of effective and efficient governance, including ideological proximity, reduced interaction costs, trustworthiness, and governing capabilities. Within this contextual framework, the paper goes a step further by asserting that political leaders harbor discernible predilections

concerning the gender of potential coalition collaborators during the intricate process of shaping governments formation, which they consider along with other factors, such as political or ideological ones.

3 Why do politicians may prefer women?

Within the intricate landscape of gender dynamics in political arenas, a burgeoning body of scholarly exploration delves into an intriguing hypothesis: the calculated strategic utilization of women by politicians. This perspective posits that certain actors might strategically harness the presence and involvement of women in political roles to secure various advantages. These advantages could encompass, among other things, bolstering the credibility of their political parties or organizations, enhancing their own reputations as inclusive leaders, or even strategically mitigating certain controversies (Valdini 2019).

Parties, for instance, exhibit a greater propensity to amplified female representation in party lists and embrace gender quotas when electoral competition escalates, particularly when the discourse around gender equality is fervently contested to appeal to diverse voter groups, including women (Folke and Rickne 2016; Weeks 2018). Gender diversity elevated to a strategic instrument for political parties to project a more progressive and inclusive image (Besley et al. 2017). Politicians have strategically aligned themselves with women's issues to reap electoral advantages (Abou-Chadi et al. 2021). This perspective reflects a calculated approach to leverage the strengths associated with women's presence in political spheres, ultimately aimed at fortifying leaders' positions and broader political agendas.

In evaluating the gains inherent in forming a coalition with a political adversary, female politicians emerge as favored coalition partners, benefiting from the prevailing perception of their propensity for effective collaboration and ability to govern. Scholarly investigations into gender stereotypes consistently suggest that women exhibit a greater proclivity toward consensus-building and collaborative efforts (e.g. Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Kennedy 2003; Weikart et al. 2006; Volden et al. 2013). This contributes to making women a desired profile for potential collaborators. Additionally, female legislators collaborate more than males within their parties and across party lines (Barnes 2016). Analyses of political

performance suggest that women produce better welfare outcomes, secure more transfers from other levels of government and are more effective lawmakers than men (Anzia and Berry 2011; Brollo and Troiano 2016; Volden et al. 2013).

Feminine stereotypes also influence perceptions of women in politics, with a focus on their perceived honesty and commitment to democracy (Valdini 2019). Research on party loyalty states that female politicians are more honest, less corrupt and less rebellious than males (Cowley and Childs 2003; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2008; Clayton and Anderson-Nilsson 2021; Barnes and Beaulieu 2014). All this may result from their marginalisation in politics, their socialisation role and their tendency to avoid conflict and competitive environments (Lawless and Fox 2010; Barnes 2016). These qualities may be especially relevant in threatening and competitive contexts, such as coalition formation processes, where commitment and loyalty are highly valued.

These qualities and attributes associated with women can render them highly appealing choices for collaborative governance. My expectation is that politicians are likely to exhibit a heightened inclination toward selecting women as instrumental coalition partners in the pursuit of safe and successful governance. This preference stems from the perception that a female coalition partner possesses a special ability to reduce interaction costs in a coalition government since she is more consensual, more trustworthy, and capable of governing.

4 Research Design

No previous research has ever directly asked politicians about their preferences when choosing government partners. To find out what these preferences are and assess the impact of gender on selecting government partners, I design a novel conjoint experiment, which is then included in an original survey of mayors in Spain. The experiment has two goals. The first is to study whether the gender of potential partners affects politicians' preferences in forming governments, all the while attempting to determine which trait is most relevant. Secondly, the experimental design makes it possible to investigate the mechanisms by disentangling whether some politicians' profiles are preferred over others in potential

partners due to the expectation of communication, trustworthiness and performance.

4.1 Background and data: Spanish local elections

Spain has a decentralised political system, where citizens elect local councils every four years in more than 8000 municipalities. Depending on their size, municipalities elect a certain number of councilors using a proportional representation system (PR) with closed party lists. The electoral system and the mayor's decision on who to enter into coalition with determine institutional incentives for local government formation processes.¹ This system generates party fragmentation in municipal councils – an ideal scenario for the formation of coalitions.

The survey covers the 2,284 municipalities with more than 2000 inhabitants, clearly a sufficient number of cases to conduct a survey and a large-N quantitative analysis. Focusing on the local level provides me with many observations from within a single country, which allows me to hold constant potential confounding factors that vary across countries and might be relevant to explaining mayors' preferences to select coalition partners. Additionally, the presence of women in Spanish politics has increased rapidly in recent decades, while it has stagnated in the top positions. Spain is one of the highest-ranked countries in the global ranking of gender equality in politics (World Economic Forum 2023). Currently, almost half of the seats in the Spanish Parliament are held by female politicians, but only men have held the position of prime minister. A.1 Figure A1 shows that the presence of women in the Spanish Parliament over the last three decades has increased at a similar rate to most European countries. Spain is situated near the average in this comparison, but still lower than in some places.

In Spanish municipalities, the representation of female councilors is almost equal, while the number of female mayors is far from parity. Figure 1 shows the evolution of share of women across various political positions in Spanish municipalities, spanning from 1979 to 2015. Notably, the ratio of female councilors approaches parity, showcasing considerable progress. However, the representation of female mayors remains strikingly low, consistently

¹Municipalities below 250 inhabitants use an open-list PR system but are excluded from the analysis.

below 20% over the past decade. This gender gap between the representation of women in the local top political position and among councilors, observed in Spain, is also evident in comparable contexts. As demonstrated in A.1 Figure A2, there exists a significant gender gap—ranging from 10 to 20 percentage points—between the proportion of female councilors and female mayors in various Western European countries. This pattern highlights that women encounter similar challenges in attaining top political roles across different political contexts.

Figure 1 also reveals an intriguing observation: the position of deputy mayor boasts a substantial representation of women, comprising 42% of incumbents, surpassing even the overall proportion of female councilors. This gender gap raises questions about the dynamics of government formation, particularly in coalition scenarios where the deputy mayor position often falls to the leader of the junior party of the coalition government. The pronounced presence of women in this role may suggest a strategic selection process in which coalition-building efforts result in a higher likelihood of women being chosen as coalition partners. Such dynamics raise important questions about how coalition negotiations perpetuate gender imbalances in leadership roles, potentially positioning women as key partners without challenging the entrenched male dominance in the highest executive positions.

4.2 Experimental design

Selecting coalition partners is a complex task since competing possible partners differ on various dimensions, including sociodemographic characteristics, ideological positions and bargaining power. In order to examine the relative weight of different considerations, I use a candidate choice conjoint experiment. By asking mayors to choose from and rate hypothetical profiles that combine multiple attributes, it is possible to estimate the relative influence of each attribute on the resulting choice or rating (Hainmueller et al. 2014). This design reduces the social desirability bias implicit in asking politicians since sensitive attributes are mixed with non sensitive ones and make the respondent less aware of which profile is violating the social norm (Horiuchi et al. 2021).

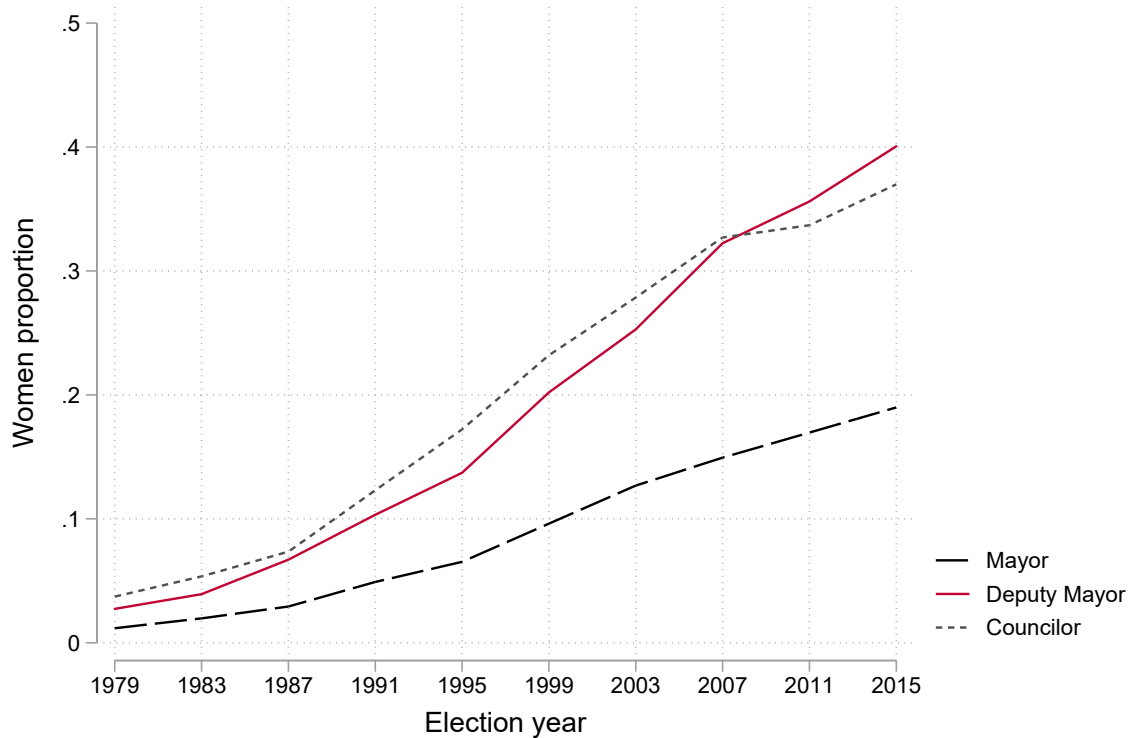


Figure 1: Women’s proportion by position in the city council in Spain from 1979 to 2015

I study mayors because of their role in municipal government formation. Two aspects are known to condition local government negotiation strategies: the council’s election of the mayor and the mayor’s appointment of the councilors that will join her team in government (Márquez 2003). The mayor is the person who leads the government formation process and who has the power to propose governments. After the electoral process, the mayor is elected by an absolute majority of the city council. However, if no agreement is reached in the first round, the councilor at the top of the list of the most voted party becomes the mayor. Later, the mayor appoints an executive committee. Spanish mayors, therefore, are important political players with considerable executive power. Thus, selecting between competing candidates for a potential local coalition government during the negotiation process is a familiar situation for mayors.

To measure partner selection, therefore, I use a standard conjoint approach. The experiment read as follows: “Imagine that you have obtained 5 councilors after the elections out of a total of 13 seats. If you could choose between two partners to form a government coalition with the following two leaders, which one would you choose?”

Table 1: List of random treatments in conjoint experiment

Dimensions	Attributes
Gender	Man
	Woman
Age	27
	36
	45
	54
	66
Education Level	Primary
	Secondary
	University
	Doctorate
	None
Terms in the City Council	One
	Two
	Extreme Left
Ideology	Centre Left
	Centre
	Centre Right
	Extreme Right
Number of Seats of the Candidate's Party	2
	3
	4

Note: Each hypothetical candidate had one randomly assigned attribute per dimension.

The survey then described a pair of hypothetical government partners. Table 1 lists the potential attributes of six dimensions of the hypothetical candidates. The experiment supplied each candidate's gender, age, and education level independently generated at random.² I also provided the candidate's previous political experience — worded as the number of terms in the city council – to avoid confounding the effect of age. Each profile also contained information on the ideology and the number of seats (main predictors of coalition formation) of the party to which the leader belongs in order to be able to compare the effect of individual level characteristics to the effects of these two established predictors. Providing this information also made the scenario more realistic. The dimensions were presented in a randomised order fixed across the two pairings for each respondent. Each

²I theorised that gender affect the selection of government partners by defining expectations and beliefs about them. I also include age, education level and seniority to be among the most important factors in determining the relationship between candidate selection and heuristics. Moreover, in my case, it is unrealistic to include other salient characteristics such as ethnicity or religion due to the homogeneity of the political class in Spain.

mayor was shown two conjoint matchups, each on a separate screen, so that each respondent made two choices.

Additionally, I designed a novel way to test the mechanisms of the mayor’s decision by asking them to rate substantive evaluations of the candidates’ profiles. This allows me to explore the aforementioned mechanisms (those that drive the decision to choose a candidate): the perception of similarity in political positions, ease of communication, capacity to govern and trust. After the mayors viewed the candidates, I asked a “forced-choice” question to force mayors to decide between the two candidates. After the forced-choice question, and for each candidate profile, I asked mayors to what extent they agreed with four statements about the similarity of the candidate’s political preferences to their own, how easy it would be to communicate with this person, how capable of governing this person is and how much they would trust this person. When evaluating the statements, mayors had to place themselves on a five-point scale, where 1 indicated that the respondents “Strongly disagreed” with the statement and 5 indicated that they “Strongly agreed.”³ Appendix B shows the full text of each question and how the survey was shown to respondents.

I received responses from 979 mayors, who represent 42.86% of the all municipalities of over 2000 inhabitants —a high participation rate for a survey administered to elites. The survey was programmed and administered online between September 2018 and January 2019. Appendix B includes detailed information about the data collection process. I complement survey data with a database containing politicians’ characteristics, assembled with information from the Spanish Ministry of the Treasury and Public Administration for this study. I also use a database on electoral outcomes compiled by the Spanish Ministry of the Interior comprising detailed information on local election results.

To ensure the representativeness of respondents, Table 2 compares the mayors who completed the survey to the whole population of mayors (all Spanish municipalities with more than 2,000 citizens), respectively. This table shows descriptive information for the observations by the mayor and council. The response rates were consistent between the

³Considering the difficulty of a conjoint experiment and the time constraints associated with the subjects’ status as mayors, these questions were only asked in the second round of the experiment.

sample and the population for all the main indicators under examination (gender, age group, education level).⁴ The proportion of female mayors was around 22%, on average they were 50 years old and had 16 years of education. Looking at the city council, the average size of local parliaments was around 14 seats and the number of parties that obtain at least one seat is close to four. Concerning the last elections before the experiment, no party obtained the absolute majority in 68.59% of the municipalities, making government negotiation processes necessary.

One potential concern is that the most ideologically polarized mayors would self-select into taking the survey. Table 2 shows that this does not appear to be the case, as evidenced by the respondents' reported personal ideology. However, I observed a slight difference between the responsiveness of mayors from local parties as opposed to the main national ones, which responded less. Another concern was that mayors from smaller municipalities would be more likely to respond. However, Table 2 shows that the average number of inhabitants is reasonably similar to the Spanish municipalities' actual number.⁵

4.3 Empirical models

To carry out the analysis of the conjoint experiment, I reshape the data matrix so that each candidate proposed per k of task j presented to respondent i is a different row. The respondents were presented with two tasks and there were two alternative candidates proposed per task, hence generating a total of 3,324 observations.

First, I am interested in the marginal effect of an attribute on the decision to choose a candidate. I estimate the Average Marginal Component Effect (AMCE), which represents the marginal effect of a specific attribute over the joint distribution of all other attributes. If respondents take intensely into account one dimension compared to others, these attributes will be stronger predictors than the baseline level. I use a simple ordinary least squares (OLS) linear regression to estimate elasticities. I include cluster-robust standard errors to

⁴Table A3 of subsection A.1 shows more detailed descriptive information on the survey respondents, the whole population of mayors and councilors of the municipalities analysed.

⁵To rule out any bias of respondents' self-selection, in Appendix D, I check for potential heterogeneous effects. Thus, I do not find that any causal effects of candidate characteristics vary systematically by respondents' type of party (Figure A16) or size of their municipality (Figure A17).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for the survey respondents vs the whole population

	Respondents				Population			
	Mean	SD	Median	N	Mean	SD	Median	N
By mayor								
Female	.215	.411	0	979	.221	.415	0	2285
Age	49.10	9.36	49	902	50.80	9.52	51	1680
Education	16.49	3.28	18	913	16.04	3.65	17	1550
Ideology	3.70	1.58	3	920	3.75	2.34	2	2265
Seat Share	.471	.149	.461	971	.475	.149	.470	2265
Vote Share	.427	.137	.425	971	.430	.137	.433	2265
PP	.150	.357	0	979	.218	.413	0	2287
PSOE	.338	.473	0	979	.406	.491	0	2287
Others	.511	.500	1	979	.376	.484	0	2287
By council								
Population	14094.71	39467.89	5210	977	19129.42	85645.40	5883	2285
Turnout	.693	.085	.700	977	.693	.085	.696	2283
N. of seats	13.96	4.19	13	977	14.48	4.59	13	2283
N. of parties	3.793	1.35	4	977	3.840	1.36	4	2283
Minority	.687	.464	0	979	.682	.465	1	2287

Note: *Education* refers to average years of education. *Seniority* refers to the average years in the city council. PP refers to the *Partido Popular*, the main conservative party in Spain. PSOE refers to the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, the main social-democratic party in Spain. *Minority* refers to the average number of municipalities without an absolute majority.

correct for within-respondent clustering. I regress y_{ijk} , which denotes the chosen candidate, on a series of dummy variables that take a value of one if respondents were exposed to the respective attribute. Whether respondent i chooses candidate k in task j is modeled as a function of X_{ijk} , a vector containing the attributes of the candidate presented to the respondent in that task, included as dummy variables. The model takes the following form:

$$y_{ijk} = X_{ijk}\beta + e_{ijk} \quad (1)$$

Second, I aim to ascertain the relative importance of substantive evaluations in influencing respondents' choices among potential partners. I adopt the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression method to accomplish this. Now, the variable X_{ijk} is a vector that encapsulates the responses to the 5-point scale evaluations assigned to each candidate. Finally, my analysis focuses on examining how individual attributes determine these evaluations. I once again employ the OLS linear regression approach while adhering to the same specifications delineated in Equation 1. However, the dependent variable in this

iteration shifts to encompass the responses to the evaluation questions. Here, y_{ijk} denotes the politician evaluation from 1-5. This shift allows for a comprehensive assessment of the effects that individual attributes included in X_{ijk} exert on these evaluations. For all the models, I cluster the standard errors by the respondent to account for possible non-independence of ratings from the same respondent.

5 Experimental results

The paper argues that politicians consider candidates' gender when choosing government partners. The conjoint experiment confirms my expectation that mayors prefer women as coalition partners together with other specific candidates characteristics. Figure 2 graphically presents which characteristics mayors prefer when they choose their partners, including all responses from mayors in the sample. The figure shows the estimated effect of each attribute on the probability of being selected to form a coalition, with 95% and 90% confidence intervals. Detailed results can be found in C Table A2.

Firstly, a few findings from the experiment are worth highlighting as they are consistent with classical theories of government formation, thus giving me confidence in the validity of the design. The results reveal that what drives mayors' preference to govern with a candidate are the latter's party's size and ideology. Mayors avoid choosing candidates with whom they do not reach an absolute majority of seats, but they are indifferent between forming a minimal-winning coalition or larger coalitions. As expected, ideology is also a fundamental factor in choosing a candidate to form a government with. Figure A7 in D further complete our understanding by indicating a preference among mayors for coalition partners who align ideologically with them. These results are consistent with prior analyses of party motivations, implying that similar considerations also drive politicians' preferences.

Beyond confirming the importance of ideology and the number of seats, the results show that mayors, on average, prefer female, middle-aged and educated candidates. First, a female candidate is about 9 percentage points (p.p.) [$b = 0.090$ (SE = 1.5)] more likely to be selected as a partner in government than a male candidate. The gender of potential

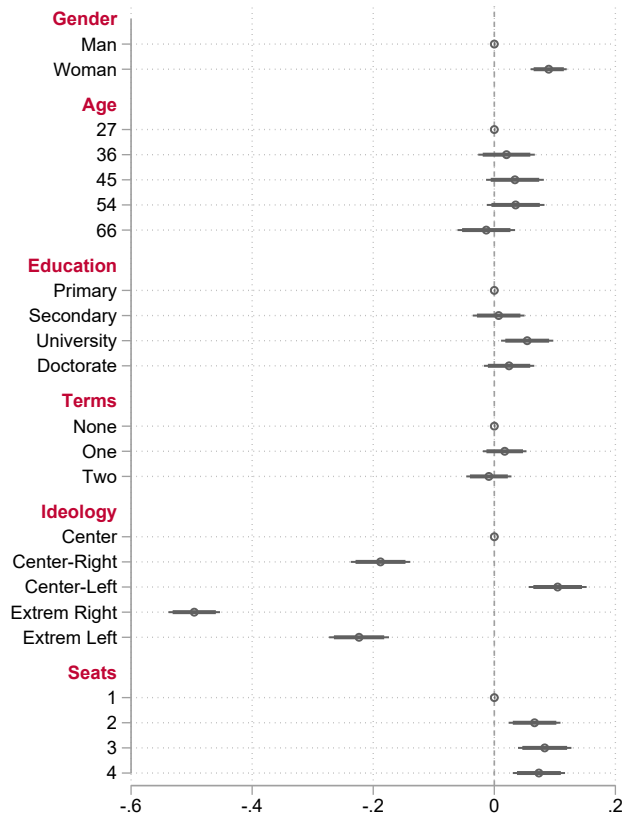


Figure 2: Candidate characteristics effects on choosing coalition partners.

Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the probability of choosing a candidate, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 90 and 95 per cent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category of each dimension.

partners appears to have a comparable influence to the classical variables, with the seats distribution having smaller effects on the decision to select a coalition partners.

Further analysis in D show that these preferences for women do not seem to vary depending on the gender of the mayor. However, they do vary according to the age and ideology of the mayors. Older mayors drive the preference for women. This could be explained by the fact that older adults tend to be more influenced by gender stereotypes due to their socialisation both inside and outside of politics. This result appears to be in line with the literature's expectations. Finally, I found that ideology strongly determines the preference for women partners. For the right-wing mayors, the gender of the candidate is not important, while those in the centre and on the left prefer to choose a woman to form a coalition with. These results may be the consequence of women being perceived as more liberal than men because of their gender, as suggested by previous studies (e.g. Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Koch 2000). An alternative explanation may be that left-

wing politicians show more concern and commitment to gender parity in selecting their government partners, as left-wing parties have demonstrated in the representation of women's interests (Campbell 2016; Campbell and Childs 2015).

The preferences for educated candidates may shed light on politicians' inclinations toward profiles that signal competence for the governance. University-educated candidates are about 6 p.p. [$b = 0.649$ ($SE = 2.3$)] more likely to be selected. This also suggests that mayors prefer candidates with better capabilities and a deeper understanding of politics. Political studies on performance demonstrate that high levels of education in politicians also positively correlate with integrity (Besley 2006; Mondak 1995), economic growth (Besley et al. 2011), and public goods provision (Martinez-Bravo 2017). Consequently, politicians' preference for candidates with higher education may stem from the perception of heightened competence and trustworthiness.

Yet, the preference for capable partners does not extend to candidates with previous city council experience, as the number of years in office is not a significant factor. This suggests that the reasons behind education may differ from having a deeper understanding of politics. Along these lines, in D Figure A7 I revise the experiment results dividing the sample by mayors education level and find that a university-level education is not universally preferred. The figure indicates that education homophily plays a role when choosing a governing partner, with mayors tending to prefer candidates of similar educational backgrounds.⁶ These findings align with recent studies that highlight a citizen's preference for candidates with similar educational levels, particularly among degree holders (Simon and Turnbull-Dugarte 2024).

5.1 Mechanisms: Candidates Assessments

Having elucidated politicians' preference for women when selecting partners, the attention now turns to the compelling question: Why are women often perceived as more suitable choices for governing coalitions? Central to my argument lies the premise that politicians employ gender as a heuristic for predicting potential coalition partners' future behavior.

⁶D Figure A14 shows the analysis of heterogeneous effects considering politicians' social class to rule out confounding effects with the educational level variable.

To delve into the factors guiding the selection of specific allies in coalition governments, I initially scrutinize the extent to which mayors' evaluations of candidate profiles inform their choices.

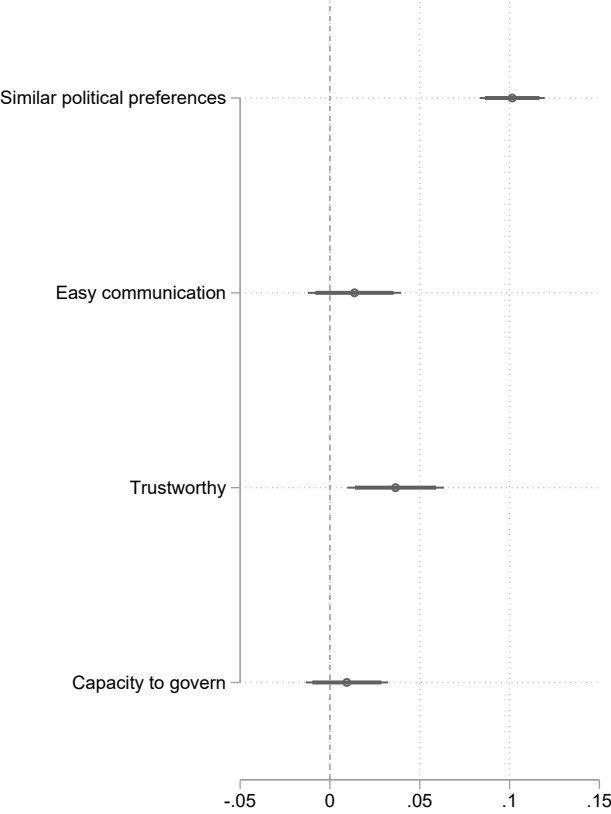


Figure 3: Assessment effects in choosing potential partners
 Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the probability of choosing a candidate, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 90 and 95 per cent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category of each dimension.

Figure 3 therefore dissects the impact of politicians' candidate evaluations encompassing: perceived similarity in political preferences, ease of communication, capacity to govern, and trust. The analysis hinges on a set of independent variables measured on a 5-point scale, gauging support for four statements that capture these critical aspects. Respondents prioritize coalition partners' political preferences, trustworthiness, and communication over their capacity based on the evidence. Specifically, politicians continue to prioritize partners who align ideologically or share similar policy preferences, but also those they perceive as trustworthy and reliable in supporting their agenda. This suggests that politicians are willing to trade off competence for compliance, with strategic considerations and political expediency playing an important role in coalition choices. This finding aligns with

the expectation, underscoring the complex interplay of strategic calculations, ideological alignment, and political trust in shaping coalition formation.

In light of these discerning insights, I embark on a deeper exploration, delving into the compelling inquiry of whether these expectations regarding the future behavior of potential coalition partners influence the previously observed preference for women. Suppose the main reason underlying mayors' preference for women candidates as coalition partners is that they are perceived as good coalition colleagues. In that case, I should see a positive assessment of women's abilities to be part of a team.

Figure 3 therefore displays the estimated effect of each attribute on the candidates' rating on each mechanism graphically. This shows that female candidates, on average, receive higher marks in the evaluation for communication and capacity to govern. Mayors feel that communication is easier with a female candidate than with a male candidate. D Figure A10 shows the estimates for the evaluation of ease of communication with the sample divided by gender and confirms that male mayors are the ones driving the results of this mechanism. Thus, the preference for female candidates is likely caused by gender stereotypes regarding women's leadership styles, which are portrayed as more consensual and collaborative. An alternative reason that could explain the preference for women candidates may be that male mayors may perceive them as more honest and trustworthy through the lens of gender stereotypes. Consistent with this claim, D Figure A12 in the appendix shows near-significant results for the interaction between mayors' gender and their responses for trust in the candidates. Male mayors seem to consider female partners as more honest and less likely to betray them.

On the other hand, it looks like the good evaluation of women's competence in government is mainly predicted by mayors' level of education. D Figure A11 in the appendix shows the evaluation of the capacity to govern within the divided sample. In line with my expectations, gender seems to provide an informational shortcut with regard to women's abilities to be part of a government, though this result is mainly driven by the more educated respondents.

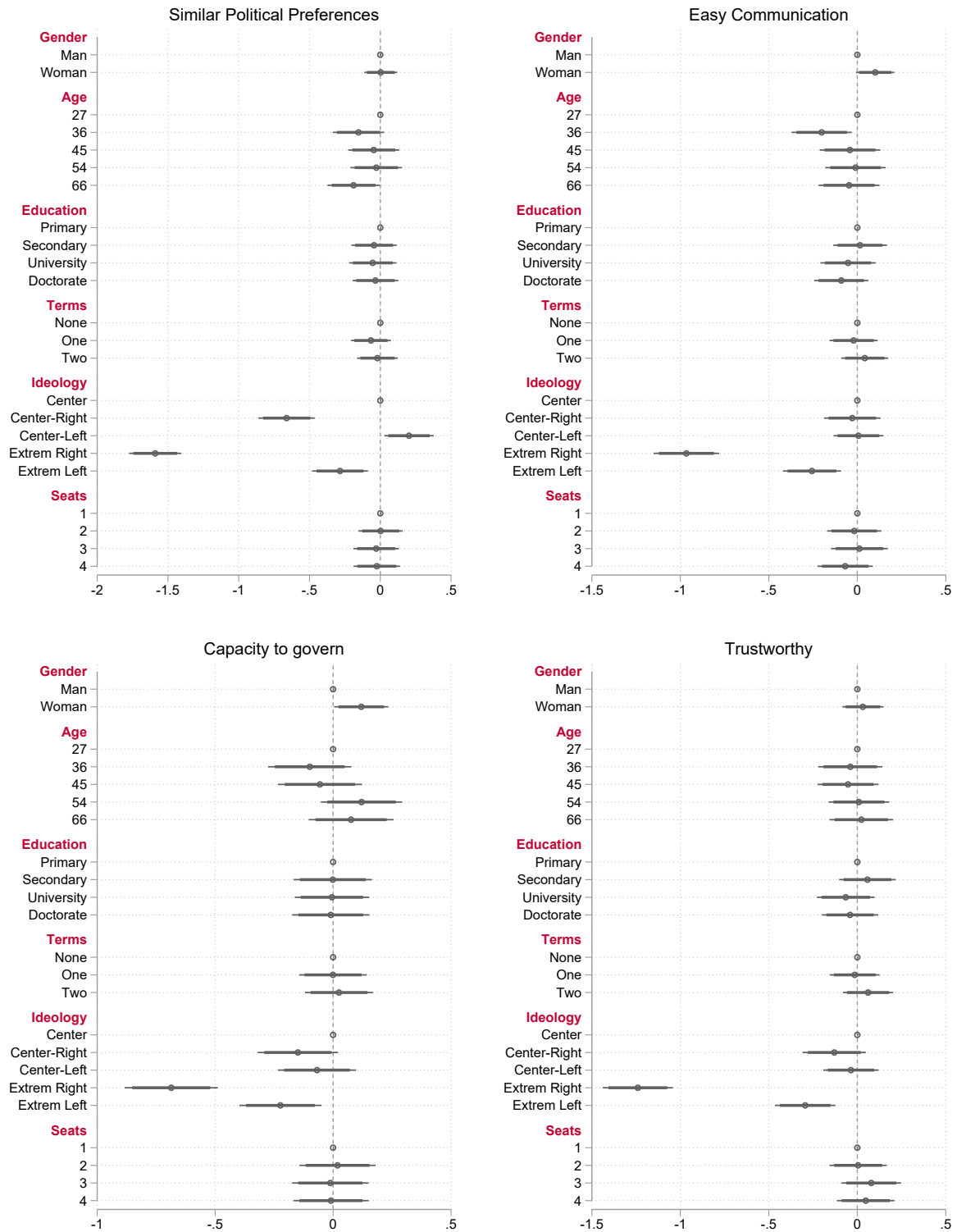


Figure 4: Candidate characteristics effects on coalition partners assessments

Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the rating of candidates for each of the four statements, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 90 and 95 per cent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category for each dimension.

6 Conclusion

Women's underrepresentation in top political positions endures. Despite our grasp of the impact of political institutions on this matter,²¹ a significant gap exists in our understanding

of the role of government formation processes. In parliamentary democracies, governments are often selected through bargaining processes between representatives. These negotiations constitute another step in the political selection process where the preferences and traits of the actors involved can play a determining role that may end up compromising the representativeness of the governments formed. While scholars have long considered party motivations and institutional rules, the individual preferences and biases of the politicians involved in these processes have typically been ignored.

To address this gap in the literature, I theorise that politicians have particular preferences for certain potential partners profiles such as women. This profiles are shaped by the expectation of potential coalition partners' future behaviour. To test this intuition, I ran a conjoint experiment in an extensive survey administered to mayors in Spain. The experiment uses six different dimensions of hypothetical candidates, including newly considered sociodemographic characteristics as well as long-studied government formation determinants. The findings suggest not only that said characteristics are relevant at the level of the potential partner being evaluated but also that the decision makers' own characteristics have an important effect on their selection. The results suggest that, mostly, what drives a leader's preference to form a coalition with another party leader is the latter's ideology and her party's size. However, the analysis also reveals gender as an important predictors of preferences.

Spanish mayors prefer to form governments with women. This preference for female candidates are the most important personal characteristic, being at the same level as the party's size effect. This preference seems to be driven by the former's perception of a reduction in the cost of communication and a good impression of women's competence in government. The greater support received by women from men and older mayors supports the idea that this result may be a behavioural consequence of stereotyping women's leadership styles. The findings also indicate that politicians rely more in their assessments of a potential partner's trustworthiness and communication skills than by their capacity for effective governance.

In accordance with the paper argument, politicians exhibit strategic behavior even

when forming coalitions. Politicians preferences are likely to be shaped by their individual cost-benefit assessments. Mayors prefer them as more collaborative and less threatening political profiles, which do not spoil the coalition consensus or threaten their leadership. Future research should make in-depth assessments of the leaders of their government partners and analyse whether the political leaders of these governments actually behave in a more honest, loyal and less threatening way.

These findings are crucial to expanding our knowledge about women's participation in politics in two ways. On the one hand, the results illustrate a political process that helps increase women's presence in government positions as coalition partners and an explanation for why this occurs. On the other hand, the research also suggests a new mechanism through which women are underrepresented in the top political position. Indeed, it could be surmised that they are evaluated through stereotyped lenses, which favour women in becoming junior partners but hinders their advancement to the first position.

Most research using conjoint experiments to evaluate women's underrepresentation from voters' demands has also shown the same preferences for women (Schwarz and Coppock 2022). But, like them, this finding seems counterintuitive in explaining discrimination against women in high positions of power. Although conjoint experiments are good at avoiding social desirability bias, they have some limitations in explaining discrimination against certain groups, such as women. They may be capturing respondents' attitudes toward these groups in general rather than in the context of coalition formation, and the comparison may not be realistic because the profiles of men and women who become party leaders can be very different in real life (Clayton and Anderson-Nilsson 2021). However, those women who reach that position likely have more competitive profiles for governing. So, it is plausible to think that politicians' preferences toward the general population of women, as I show them here, are essential when politicians are forming their teams.

Together with Huidobro and Falcó-Gimeno (2023) recent work, which illuminates that despite winning elections, women face barriers in securing the mayor's office and are relegated to junior partner positions within the government, the empirical findings underscore the presence of gender-associated roles in alignment with the role congruity

theory (Eagly and Karau 2002). The preference for women conveyed by gender stereotypes and how they fit the qualities of a good coalition partner is likely to generate a gender bias in how men and women manage government formation negotiations. Thus, women will likely be anchored to a junior role where governance efficiency or good communication skills are pivotal to coalition survival.

The research highlights the need for us to pay greater attention to the role of leaders' preferences and their personal traits in political processes, which may be crucial in relevant decisions and for the quality of representation in our democracies. Learning about our political leaders and their behaviour can help us design optimal electoral rules and implement selection procedures that lead to the most suitable leaders. Given the importance of improving political selection, the study of leaders' traits should attract more attention in years to come.

Funding Statement Support for this research was provided by the Spanish Ministry for the Economy, Industry and Competitiveness (grant CSO2016-79569-P).

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Appendix for ‘Partners in Government: Politicians’ Gender Preferences in Coalition Formation’

Alba Huidobro**

October, 2024

Contents

A External Validity	A2
A.1 Presence of female politicians in Europe	A2
B Details of the survey and conjoint experiment	A3
B.1 Details of the data collection process	A3
B.2 Details of the conjoint experiment survey instrument	A3
C Tables and Figures	A6
C.1 Descriptive information	A6
C.2 OLS Tables	A7
D Robustness and additional outcomes	A8
D.1 Main results of the conjoint experiment for a reduced sample	A8
D.2 Heterogeneous Treatment Effects by Mayors Characteristics	A12
D.3 Robustness to Additional Mayor Characteristics	A19

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A External Validity

A.1 Presence of female politicians in Europe

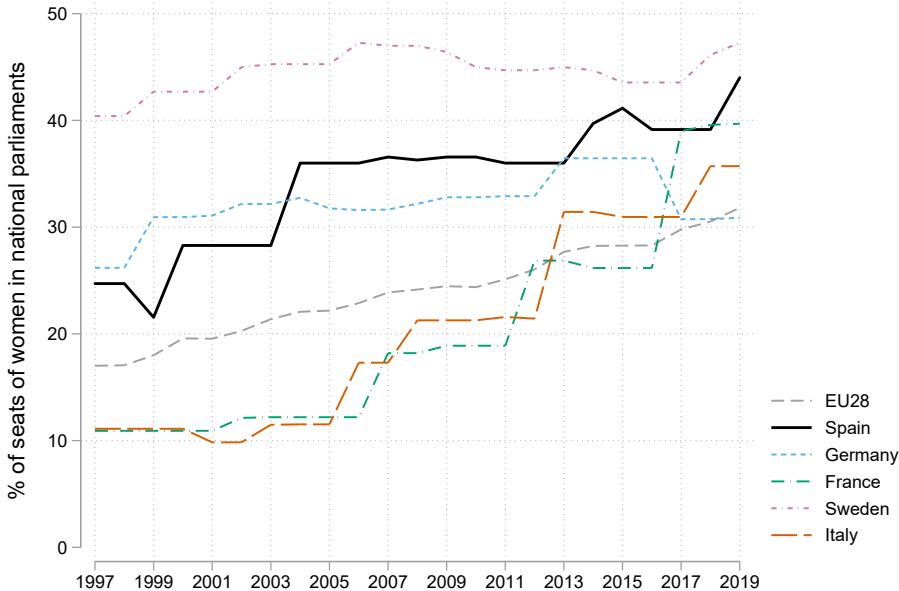


Figure A1: Share of women in European national parliaments
 Data Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

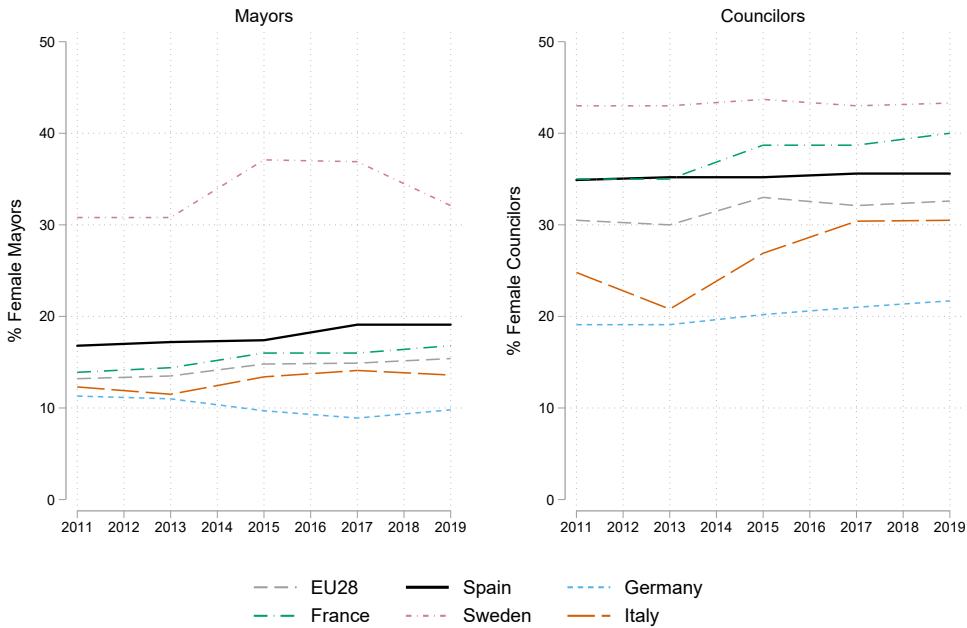


Figure A2: Share of mayors and councilors in European local institutions
 Data Source: European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE).

B Details of the survey and conjoint experiment

B.1 Details of the data collection process

The survey was programmed and administered online.¹ Respondents gave their informed written consent to participate in the research prior to the commencement of the survey. In conformity with the content of Spanish Organic Law December 15/1999 of the Protección de Datos de Carácter Personal (Protection of Personal Data), the written consent included information on the confidentiality of the data, as well as information on the person in charge and the objectives of the study.

To maximise control over data collection, I conducted it in-house with a dedicated team of research assistants. I was able to collect each mayor's official email address by consulting their websites and calling municipalities. To prevent mayors from delegating their responses to their subordinates, I sent the invitations to their official email addresses instead of to the generic institutional ones. In addition, both the invitation and the first page of the survey stressed the importance of the mayors responding for themselves.

The main fieldwork was conducted between September 2018 and January 2019.² I sent up to four reminders per respondent and made phone calls to all the municipalities that had not responded. I tried to talk to the mayor or (when this was not possible) to their assistants and sent personalised invitation emails after each conversation. Participation was not motivated by economic compensation, but the emails and reminders appealed to public service concerns. They mentioned that other mayors had already participated; and explained that the study was funded by the Spanish Ministry of the Economy.

B.2 Details of the conjoint experiment survey instrument

Figure A3 illustrates the experimental design for the conjoint analysis. It shows an example of one set of candidate profiles as how a respondent on the online survey would have

¹It was pretested through cognitive interviews with 12 politicians who were not in the sample (including retired mayors, deputy mayors, members of parliaments, and party leaders).

²In June 2018, a pilot study was launched with mailings to three regions. Later, some of the questions were adjusted based on an analysis of the initial 80 responses and the feedback received from participants by email.

seen the experiment. Attributes were fully randomised, as were the order in which the dimensions and the statements were presented. The content has been translated from Spanish to English for the reader's convenience.

Imagine that after the elections you have obtained 5 councilors out of a total of 13. If you could choose between two government partners to form a government coalition with the following list leaders, which one would you choose?

	Candidate 1	Candidate 2
Gender	Woman	Man
Age	36	54
Education	Secondary	University
Terms	One	Two
Ideology	Centre-Right	Centre
Seats	2	3

You would choose...

- Candidate 1
- Candidate 2

Thinking about Candidate 1 (left column): To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
We have similar political preferences	1	2	3	4	5
It would be easy for me to communicate with the candidate	1	2	3	4	5
I trust the candidate	1	2	3	4	5
The candidate is capable of governing	1	2	3	4	5

And now Thinking about Candidate 2 (in the right column): To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
We have similar political preferences	1	2	3	4	5
It would be easy for me to communicate with the candidate	1	2	3	4	5
I trust the candidate	1	2	3	4	5
The candidate is capable of governing	1	2	3	4	5

Figure A3: Conjoint Experiment Example

C Tables and Figures

Due to space constraints, I place several Figures and Tables referenced in the manuscript in the appendix.

C.1 Descriptive information

Table A3 shows descriptive information about the characteristics of respondents compared to the totality of the mayors and councilors of the municipalities targeted in the study.

Table A1: Characteristics of mayors who answered the survey compared to the whole population

	Respondents		Total Mayors		Total Councilors	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Total	979	-	2,287	-	29,316	-
Gender						
Male	768	78.45	1,779	77.79	16,916	58.17
Female	211	21.55	505	22.08	12,164	41.83
Age						
<30	13	1.44	18	0.97	1,608	8.34
30 - 45	325	35.95	585	31.60	8,891	46.09
46 - 65	533	58.96	1,138	61.48	8,280	42.92
>65	33	3.65	110	5.94	513	2.66
Education						
Primary	57	6.24	189	12.19	3,092	18.71
Secondary	259	28.37	369	23.81	4,121	24.94
University	597	65.39	992	64.00	9,311	56.35
Ideology						
Left	578	59.53	1277	56.38	15,978	55.15
Center	112	11.53	231	10.20	3,523	12.16
Right	281	28.94	757	33.42	9,472	32.69
Party						
PP	121	14.77	517	22.61	9,390	28.33
PSOE	282	34.43	923	40.36	9,965	30.06
Far left	40	4.88	154	6.73	1,680	5.07
Nationalist	84	10.26	270	11.81	2,477	7.47
Other	292	35.65	421	18.41	9,637	29.07
Population size						
2000 to 4999	398	48.60	985	43.07	10,813	32.62
5000 to 9999	197	24.05	550	24.05	7,176	21.65
10000 to 19999	111	13.55	350	15.3	6,001	18.10
20000 to 49999	80	9.77	255	11.15	5,334	16.09
50000 or more	33	4.03	144	6.3	3,825	11.54

Note: PP refers to the *Partido Popular*, the main conservative party in Spain. PSOE refers to the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, the main social-democratic party in Spain.

C.2 OLS Tables

Table A2: AMCE estimates of Candidates' attributes on profile selection and profile ratings

Dependent Variable:	Preference (1)	Similar Political Preference (2)	Easy Communication (3)	Capacity to Govern (4)	Trustworthy (5)
Gender					
<i>(base category = Men)</i>					
Woman	0.090*** (0.015)	0.003 (0.059)	0.101* (0.055)	0.119** (0.059)	0.032 (0.059)
Age					
<i>(base category = 27)</i>					
36	0.020 (0.024)	-0.154* (0.093)	-0.201** (0.087)	-0.099 (0.090)	-0.039 (0.092)
45	0.034 (0.024)	-0.046 (0.092)	-0.042 (0.087)	-0.056 (0.091)	-0.052 (0.088)
54	0.035 (0.024)	-0.028 (0.093)	-0.010 (0.087)	0.121 (0.088)	0.009 (0.087)
66	-0.013 (0.024)	-0.189** (0.094)	-0.047 (0.088)	0.076 (0.092)	0.023 (0.092)
Education					
<i>(base category = Primary)</i>					
Secondary	0.007 (0.022)	-0.044 (0.081)	0.016 (0.077)	-0.001 (0.085)	0.057 (0.082)
University	0.054** (0.022)	-0.053 (0.085)	-0.052 (0.079)	-0.005 (0.080)	-0.065 (0.083)
Doctorate	0.024 (0.021)	-0.034 (0.083)	-0.090 (0.078)	-0.010 (0.084)	-0.041 (0.081)
Terms					
<i>(base category = None)</i>					
One	0.017 (0.018)	-0.066 (0.071)	-0.021 (0.069)	-0.000 (0.073)	-0.015 (0.072)
Two	-0.009 (0.019)	-0.020 (0.073)	0.042 (0.068)	0.025 (0.073)	0.061 (0.072)
Ideology					
<i>(base category = Center)</i>					
Centre-Right	-0.188*** (0.025)	-0.662*** (0.101)	-0.028 (0.081)	-0.150* (0.087)	-0.130 (0.091)
Centre-Left	0.105*** (0.024)	0.203** (0.089)	0.006 (0.071)	-0.068 (0.085)	-0.036 (0.080)
Extrem Right	-0.496*** (0.022)	-1.590*** (0.094)	-0.966*** (0.095)	-0.686*** (0.101)	-1.240*** (0.101)
Extrem Left	-0.223*** (0.025)	-0.284*** (0.101)	-0.256*** (0.084)	-0.223** (0.089)	-0.294*** (0.087)
Seats					
<i>(base category = 1)</i>					
2	0.066*** (0.022)	0.002 (0.080)	-0.017 (0.078)	0.019 (0.082)	0.005 (0.082)
3	0.083*** (0.022)	-0.029 (0.082)	0.012 (0.082)	-0.012 (0.083)	0.079 (0.086)
4	0.074*** (0.022)	-0.025 (0.083)	-0.068 (0.080)	-0.009 (0.081)	0.048 (0.083)
Observations	3526	1767	1759	1744	1746
R^2	0.185	0.212	0.098	0.044	0.127
Number of Respondents	979	979	979	979	979

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table A3: OLS

Dependent Variable:	Preference (1)
Similar political preferences	0.101*** (0.009)
Easy communication	0.014 (0.013)
Trustworthy	0.037*** (0.014)
Capacity to govern	0.009 (0.012)
Constant	0.019 (0.034)
Observations	1701
R^2	0.132
Number of Respondents	979

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

D Robustness and additional outcomes

This section shows the results of the conjoint experiments for the interaction with seniority, types of parties and municipality characteristics — population size and type of government.

D.1 Main results of the conjoint experiment for a reduced sample

Conjoint experiments, respondents' attention to the profiles and questions is crucial. To test the robustness of my results, therefore, I dropped some observations from subjects who took a short time to look at the candidates' profiles. Figure A4, Figure A5 and Figure A6 show the experiment for a smaller sample of mayors who took more time to analyse the coalition partners profiles. These results demonstrate that the main findings are robust to the respondents attention during the experiment.

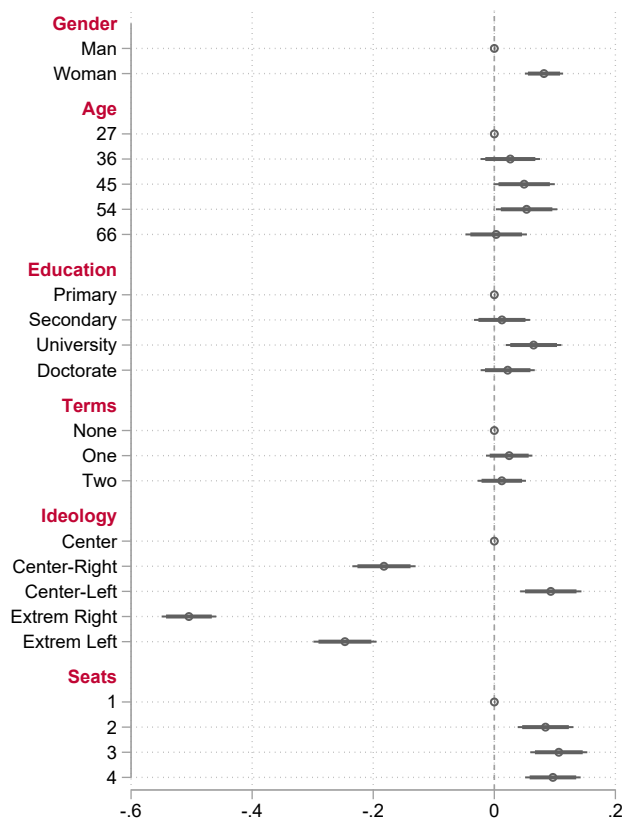


Figure A4: Candidate characteristics effects on choosing coalition partners for a reduced sample of mayors

Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the probability of choosing a candidate, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 90 and 95 per cent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category of each dimension.

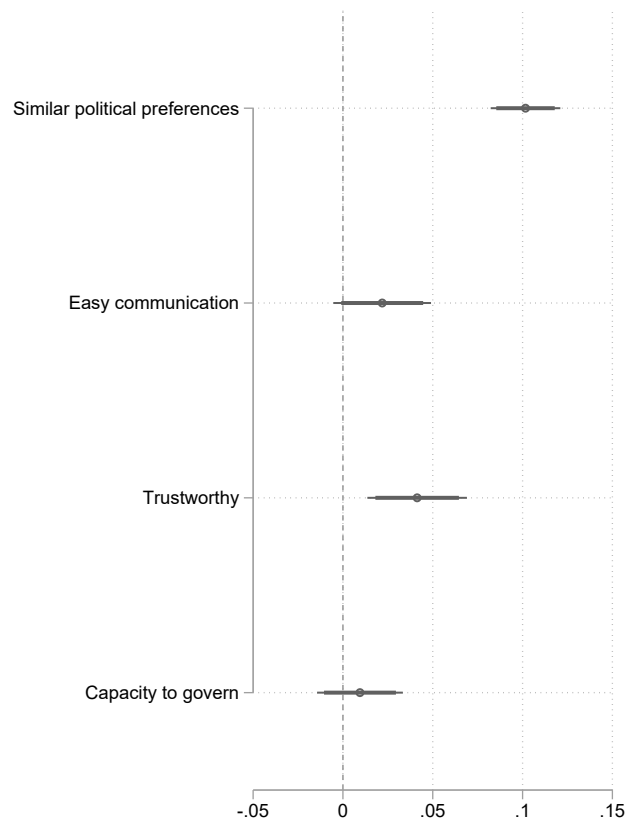


Figure A5: Assessment effects in choosing potential partners for a reduced sample of mayors

Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the probability of choosing a candidate, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 90 and 95 per cent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category of each dimension.

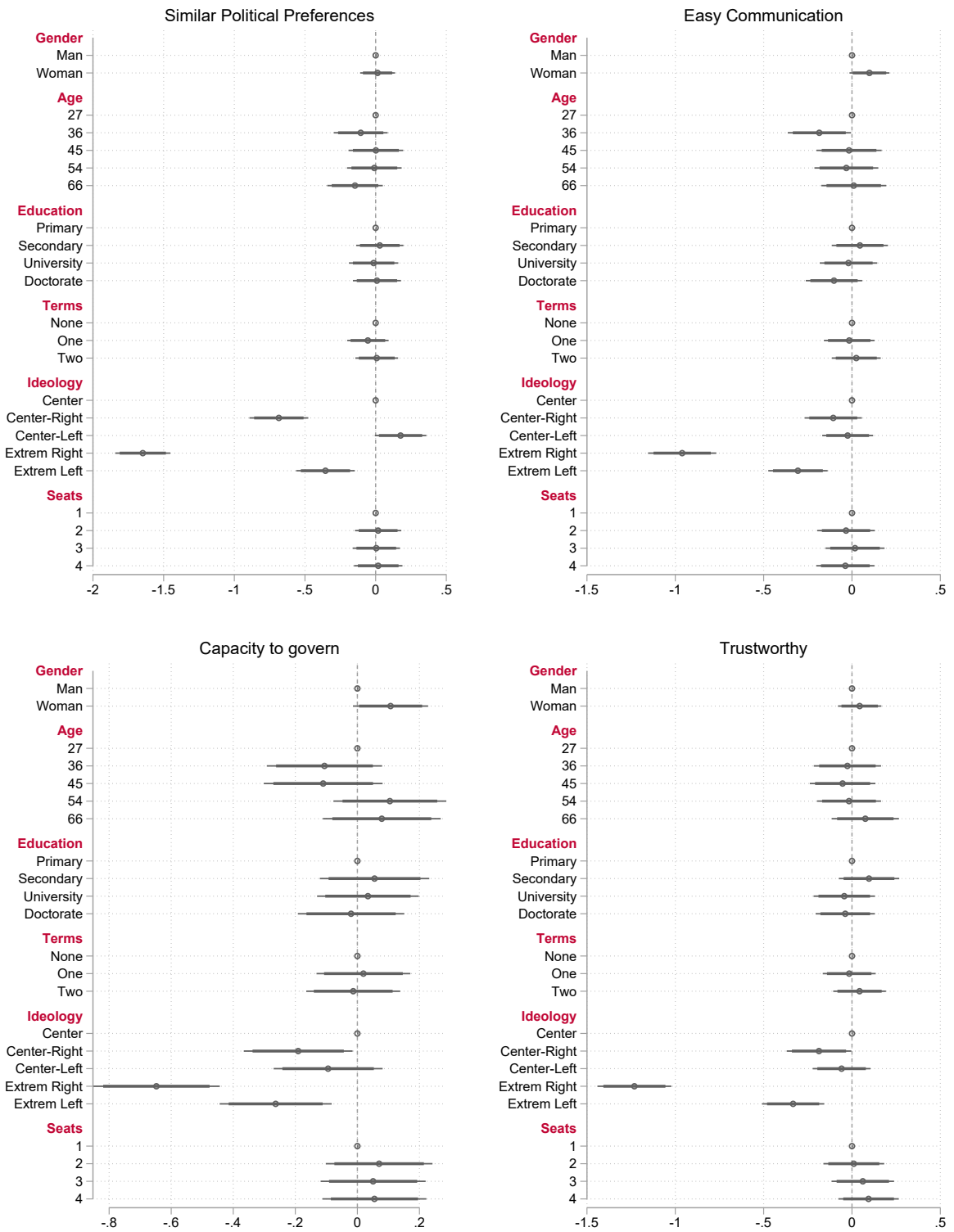


Figure A6: Candidate characteristics effects on coalition partners assessments for a reduced sample of mayors

Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the rating of candidates for each of the four statements, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 90 and 95 per cent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category for each dimension.

D.2 Heterogeneous Treatment Effects by Mayors Characteristics

Figure A7 graphically presents the preferred characteristics, including the interaction between the mayors' responses and their gender, age, educational level, and ideology.

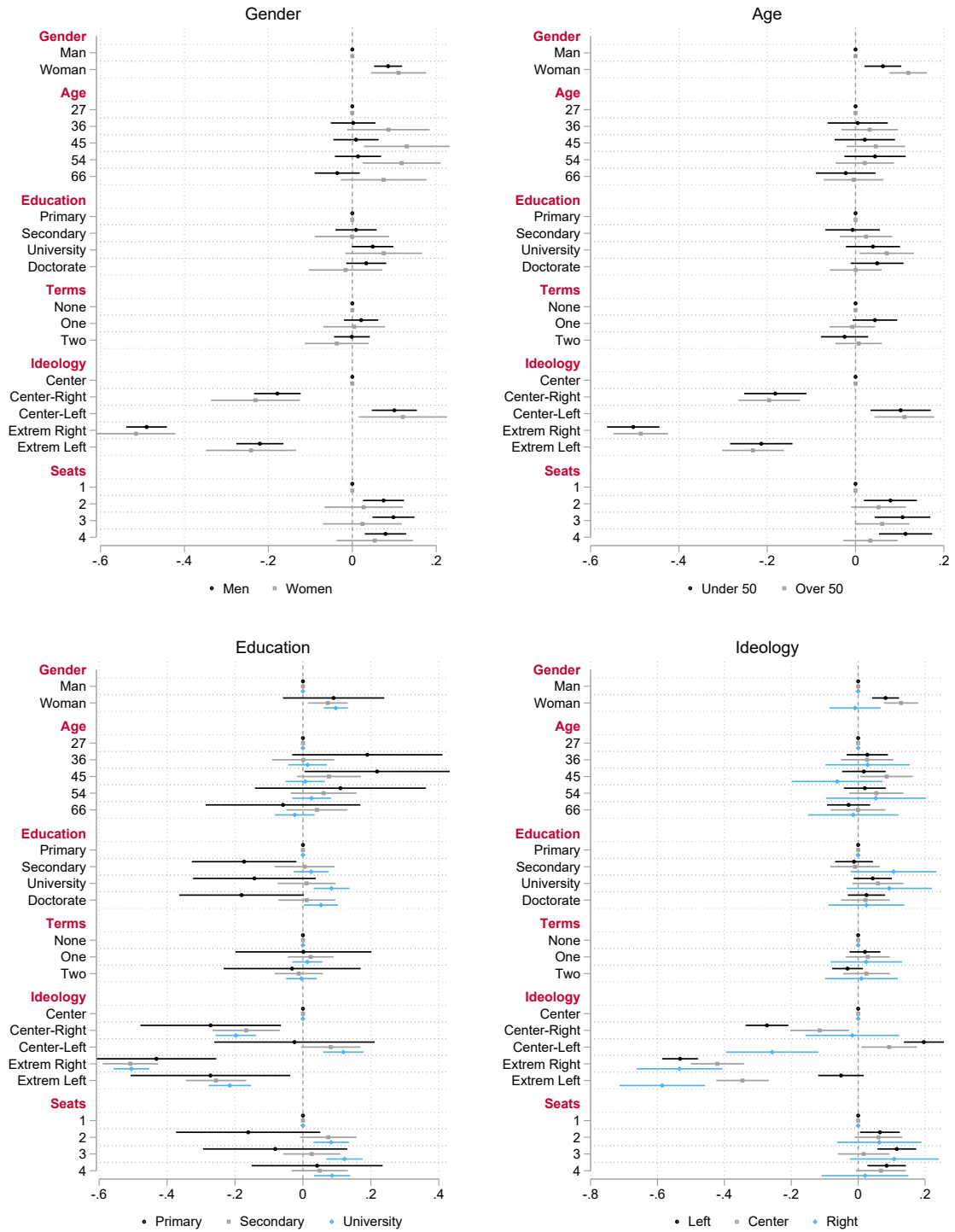


Figure A7: Treatment effects in the conjoint experiment by Respondents' characteristics
 Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the probability of choosing a candidate, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 95 per cent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category of each dimension.

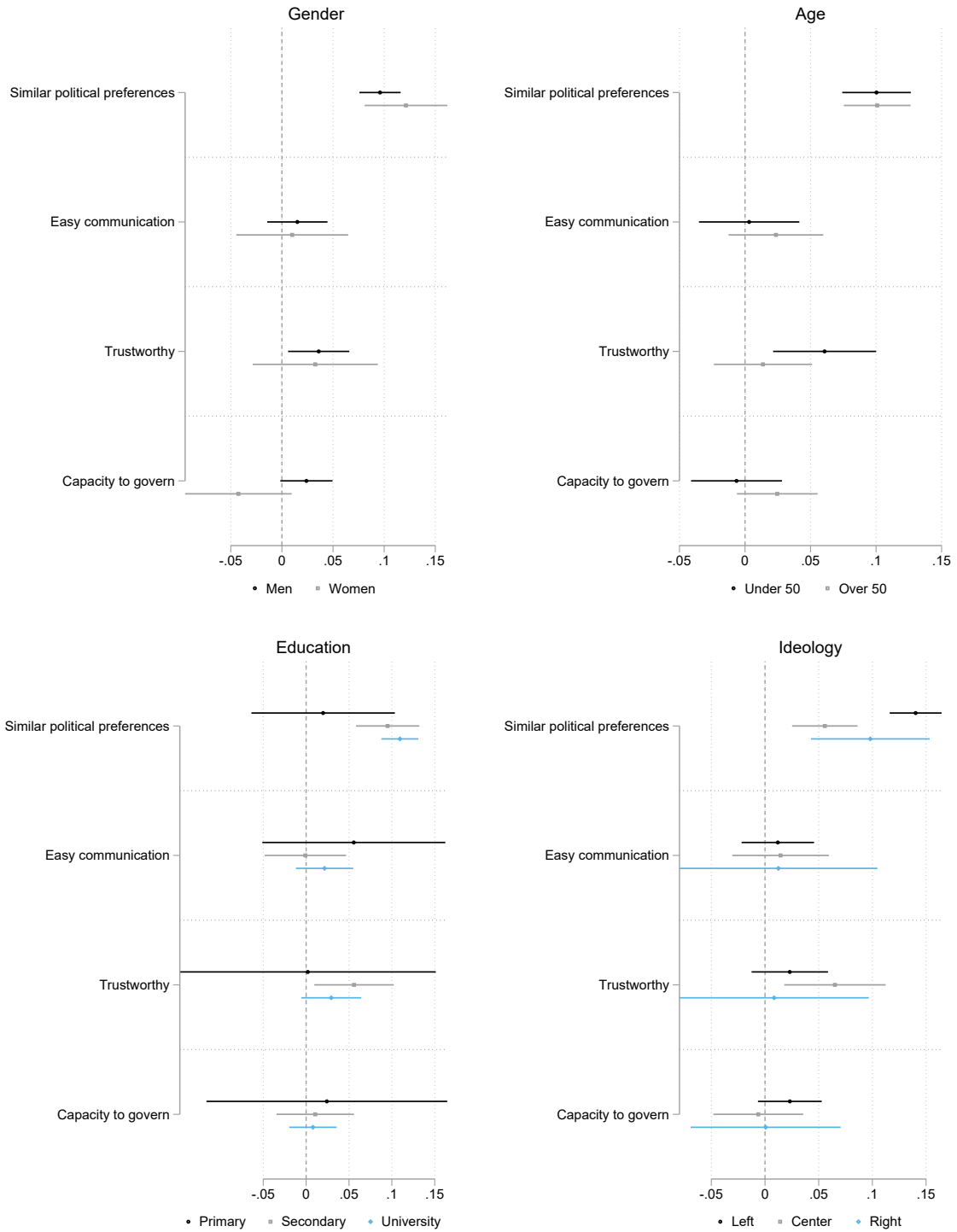


Figure A8: Treatment effects in the conjoint experiment by Respondents' characteristics
 Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the probability of choosing a candidate, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 95 per cent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category of each dimension.

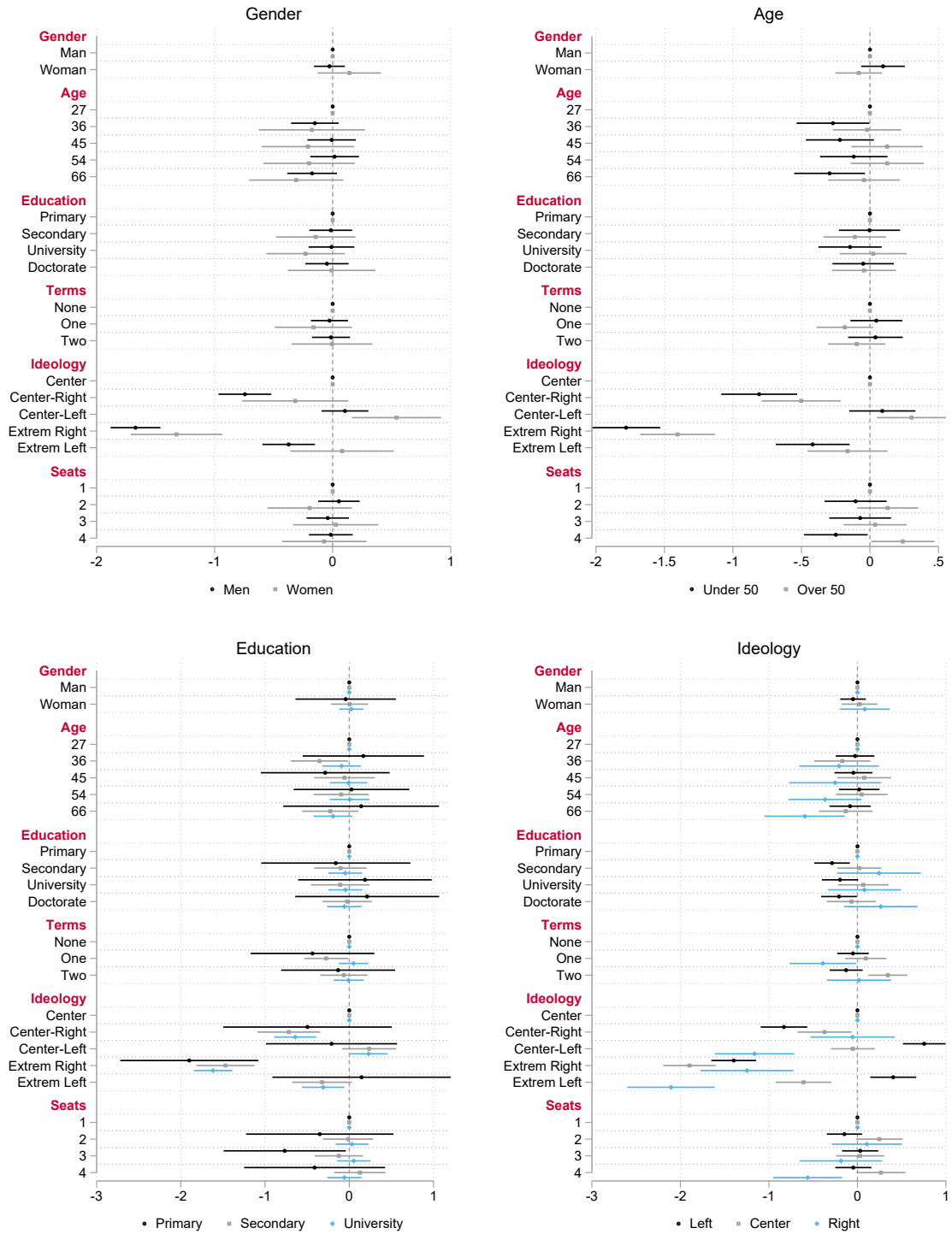


Figure A9: Evaluation on Similar Political Preferences by Respondents' characteristics

Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the probability of choosing a candidate, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 95 per cent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category of each dimension.

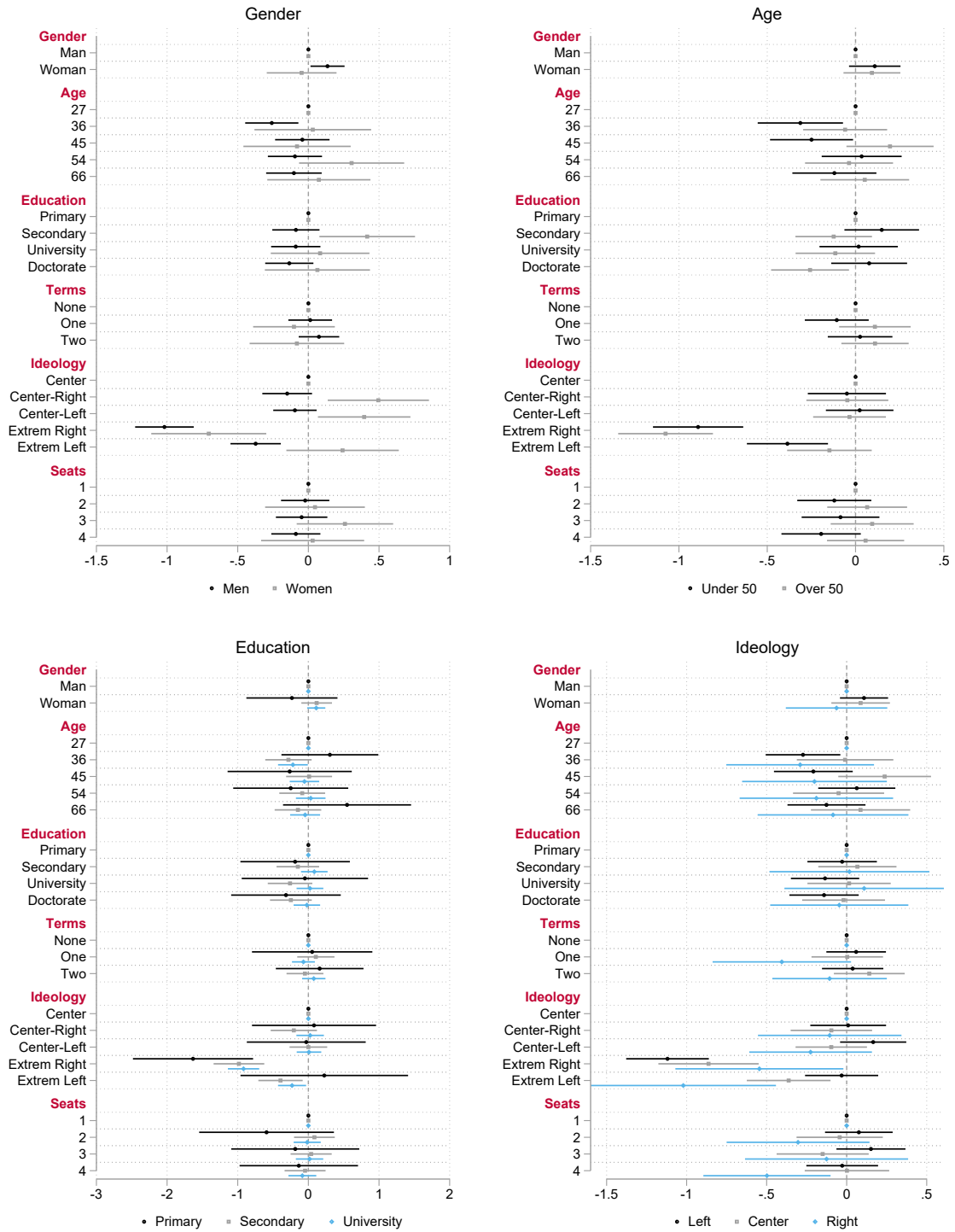


Figure A10: Evaluation on Easy Communication by Respondents' characteristics

Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the probability of choosing a candidate, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 95 per cent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category of each dimension.

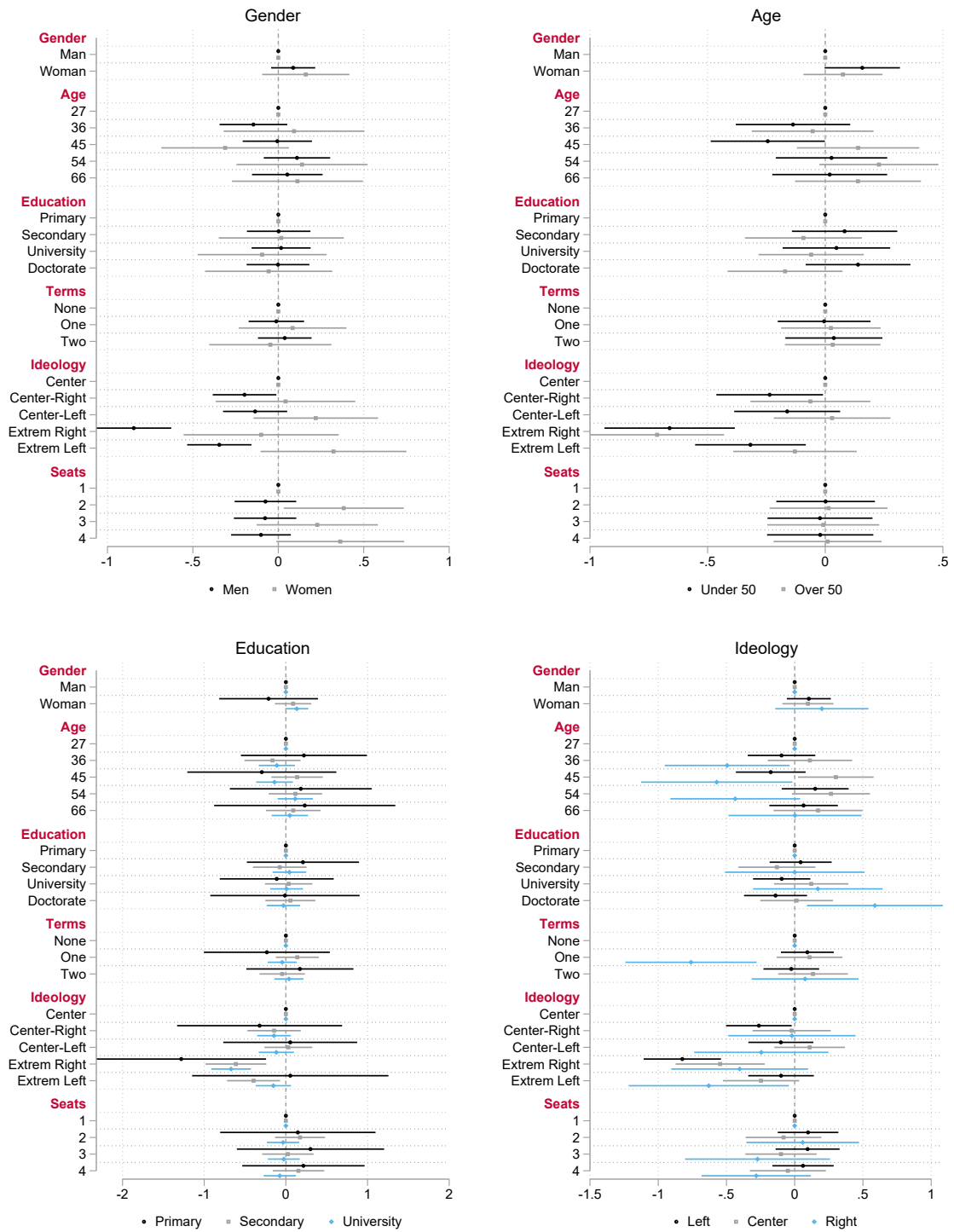


Figure A11: Evaluation on Capacity to Govern by Respondents' characteristics

Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the probability of choosing a candidate, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 95 per cent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category of each dimension.

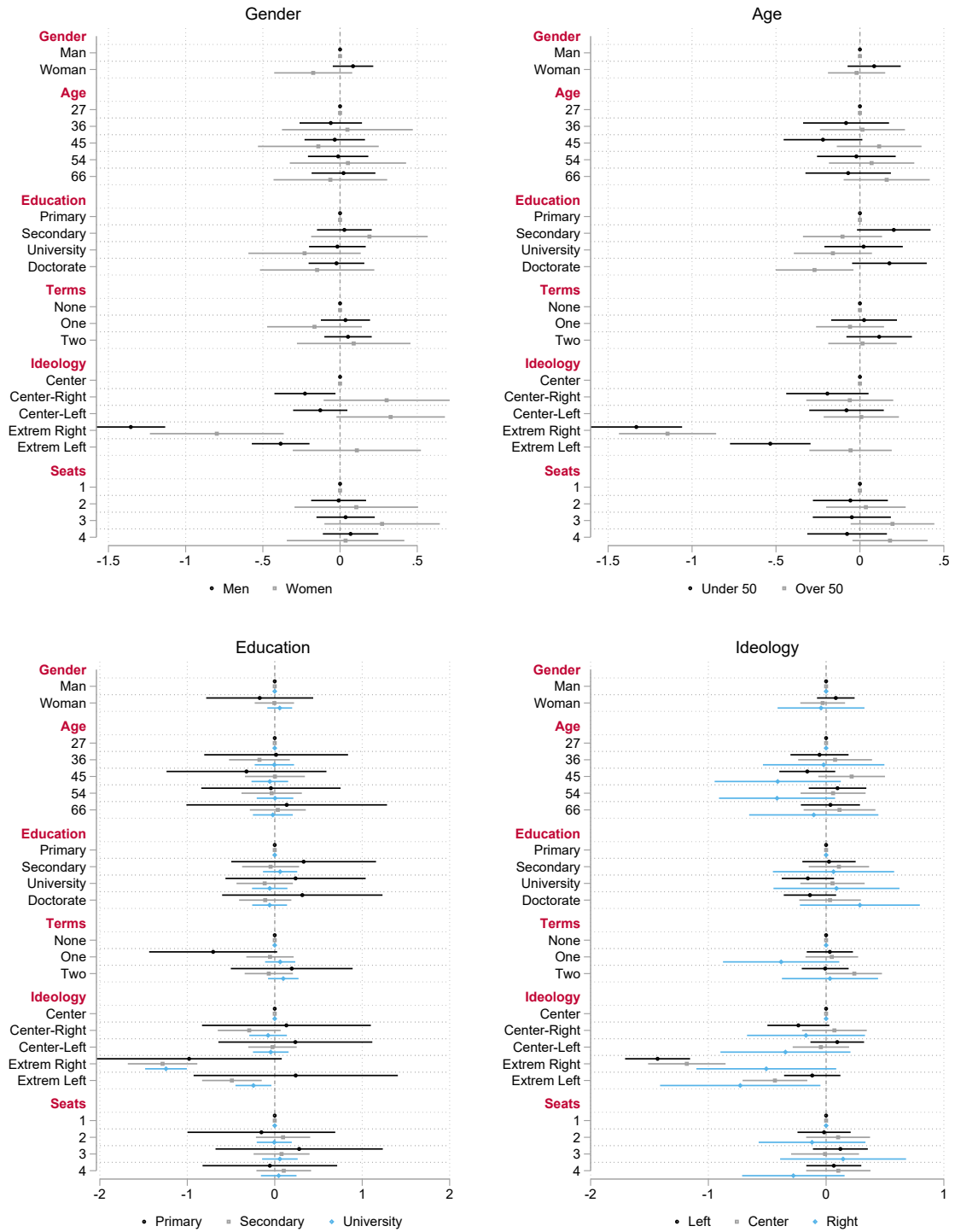


Figure A12: Evaluation on Trustworthiness by Respondents' characteristics

Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the probability of choosing a candidate, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 95 per cent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category of each dimension.

D.3 Robustness to Additional Mayor Characteristics

Figure A13 shows the results when dividing the sample by mayors' seniority, represented by a dummy variable that identifies whether the respondents had already been elected the last term or not.

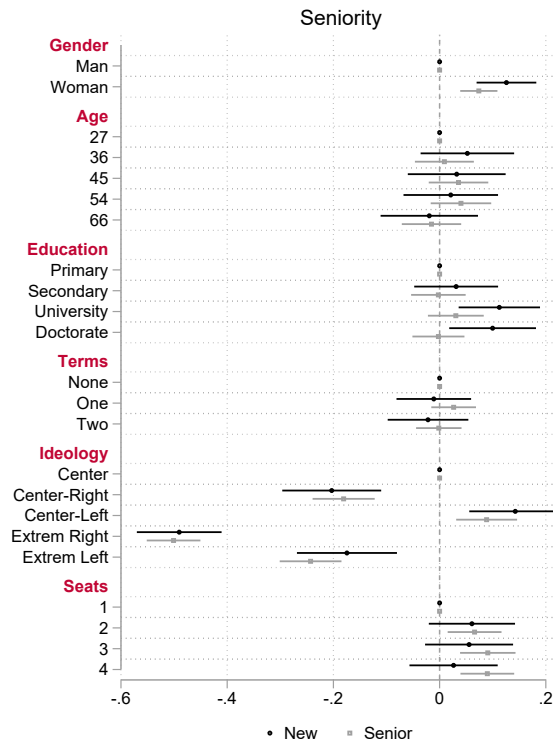


Figure A13: Treatment effects in the conjoint experiment by Mayors' Seniority

Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the probability of choosing a candidate, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 90 and 95 percent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category of each dimension.

One of the potential concerns is that the education variable has no confounding effect on the politicians' social class. The literature reveals an underrepresentation of working class politicians (Carnes and Lupu 2015). Moreover, this inequality is even more noticeable in the intersectionality between being female and working-class (Barnes, Beall, and Holman 2021). This could bring different interpretations of my findings, especially with the homophily effect that seems to be observed in educational level results. An alternative explanation may be that this result captures a homophily effect between social classes. On the other hand, this confounding might have implications for the evaluation of female politicians. Thus, as a proxy of social class, in Figure A14 I compare the main conjoint experiment results dividing the mayors' sample by white- or blue-collar workers, considering their occupation before holding their political positions.

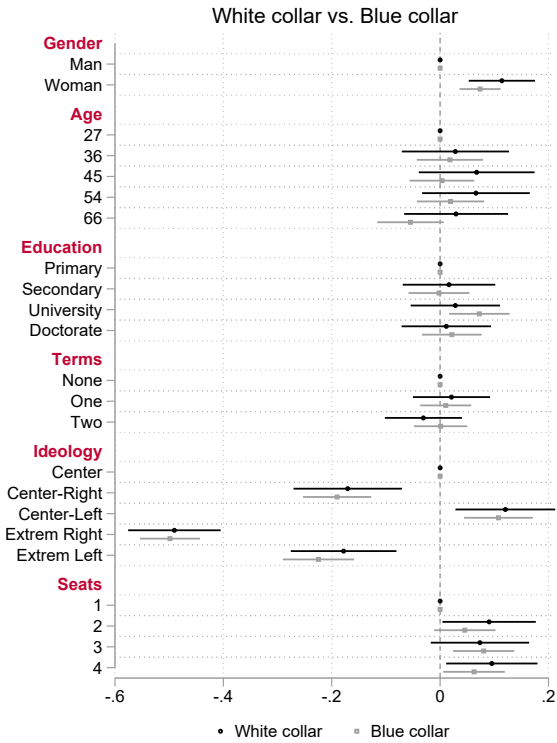


Figure A14: Treatment effects in the conjoint experiment by white- or blue-collar mayors
 Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the probability of choosing a candidate, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 90 and 95 percent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category of each dimension.

Figure A14 illustrates no significant differences between the preferences of these two groups of mayors in any of the attributes. There does not even seem to be the tendency of homophily observed with the educational level variable, nor a clear preference of either

group for female politicians.

In addition, certain politicians' profiles likely want to be more politically correct when choosing between potential partners. Although the design of the conjoint experiment largely avoids the social desirability bias by hiding the characteristics that are more sensitive among those that are not likely, some politicians may not be completely honest when answering the experiment. For example, Janezic and Gallego (2020) evaluating politicians' honesty using an experimental game found that a large and statistically significant proportion of the mayors of this same sample lied. They found that members of the two major political parties lied significantly more but found no gender differences between men and women.

Thus, it is essential to carry out an analysis of heterogeneous effects that can rule out that there are differences in the results between those that Janezic and Gallego (2020) identify as more or less honest. The game offered a non-monetary incentive (a personalised report) that mayors would only get if they flipped a coin and got heads. The vast majority claimed to want this report (88%) and to have gotten heads (68%). Although we cannot know exactly who is lying, by probability the authors claim that a significant portion of the latter was lying.

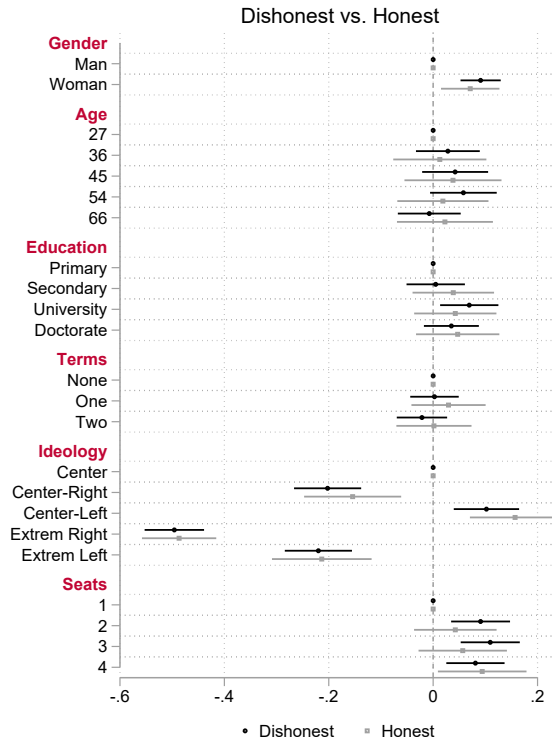


Figure A15: Treatment effects in the conjoint experiment by Dishonest vs. Honest politicians
 Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the probability of choosing a candidate, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 90 and 95 percent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category of each dimension.

Figure A15 shows how there are no significant differences between the preferences of the politicians who were supposedly more dishonest and the honest ones. Although I cannot completely rule out the existence of political profiles trying to be more politically correct when choosing potential government partners, these results reinforce the idea that the experiment is robust, even considering the most dishonest politicians.

Another potential concern is that the mayors who responded to the survey were more from minority parties at the municipal level than from major parties at the national level. In this sense, Figure A16 shows the results by dividing the sample by the type of the mayors' parties, representing a variable that identifies whether the respondents are part of the two main parties at the national level (PP and PSOE) or minor parties at the municipality level (Others). This graph shows us that although there may be an over-representation of mayors from minor parties, there does not seem to be much of a difference between the effect of each characteristic on their elections compared to those of mayors from major parties.

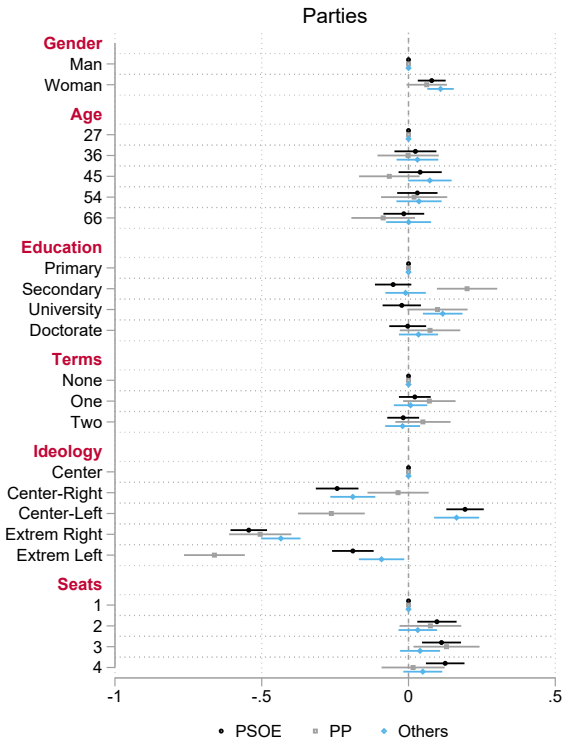


Figure A16: Treatment effects in the conjoint experiment by Dishonest vs. Honest politicians
 Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the probability of choosing a candidate, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 90 and 95 percent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category of each dimension. PP refers to the *Partido Popular*, the main conservative party in Spain. PSOE refers to the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, the main social-democratic party in Spain.

Along the same line of reasoning, there could be differences between the characteristics of the municipalities that can drive the results and the interpretation of this results. For this reason, I carried out the following analyses, which show the differences in the results when dividing the sample by population size and type of government. First, Figure A17 shows the results when dividing the sample into three groups of population size: small (<3,000), medium (3,000 - 10,000), and large (>10,000).

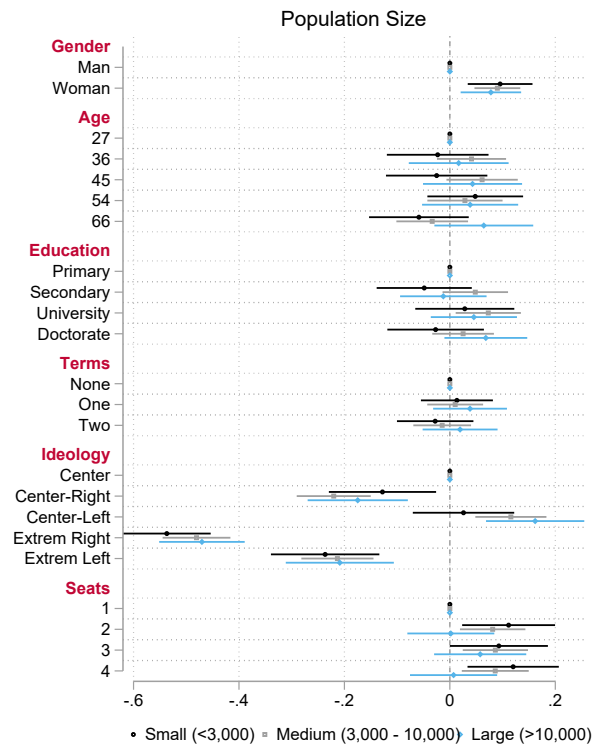


Figure A17: Treatment effects in the conjoint experiment by municipality population

Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the probability of choosing a candidate, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 95 per cent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category of each dimension.

Second, Figure A18 shows the results by type of government: Absolute majority, when the mayor's party obtained an absolute majority of the votes, and minority when not. In none of these cases do I find significant differences between the results of the different subsamples.

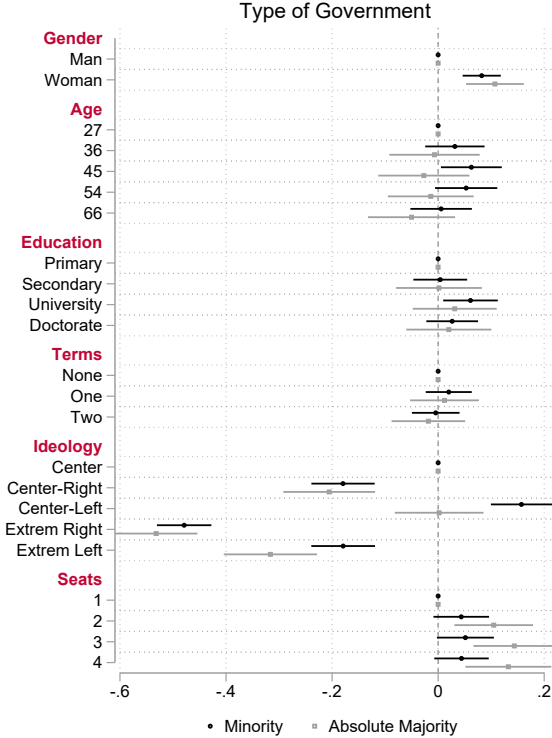


Figure A18: Treatment effects in the conjoint experiment by type of government
 Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the probability of choosing a candidate, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 95 per cent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category of each dimension.

To investigate the potential linkage between the inclination towards women in coalition governments and the anticipation of electorate valuing women’s governmental participation, a proxy approach is employed, leveraging the occurrence of feminist mobilizations in 2018. The outcomes, as depicted in Figure A19, segregate the sample into two groups: mayors in municipalities which experienced a feminist mobilizations and those untouched by such mobilizations. Notably, no discernible disparities are observed across these municipalities.

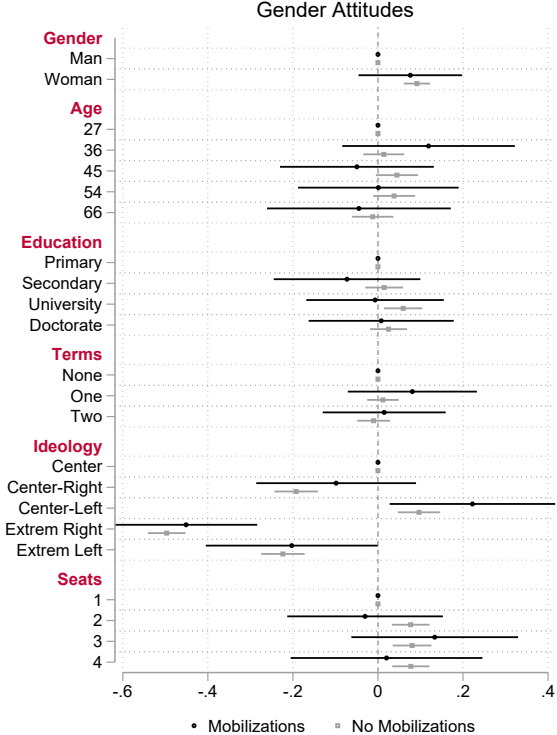


Figure A19: Treatment effects in the conjoint experiment by citizens’ gender attitudes
 Note: The dots represent the effect of an attribute on the probability of choosing a candidate, as estimated from a linear probability model with clustered standard errors at the respondent level. The bars are 95 per cent confidence intervals. A point without a bar indicates the baseline category of each dimension.