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Are There Social Class Gaps in Nascent Political Ambition? Survey Evidence from the Americas

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ABSTRACT:

Why do so few working-class citizens go on to hold elected office in democracies? This paper tests an explanation motivated by the larger literature on descriptive representation, namely, differences in nascent ambition. Are workers less likely to be personally inclined to run? In this study, we use new data from 10 surveys administered to 13,535 respondents in the Americas to conduct the first cross-national analysis of social class gaps in nascent ambition (and one of the largest studies of nascent ambition to date). We find little evidence of social class differences in standard measures of nascent ambition, although we find substantial gender gaps, consistent with some past research. These findings mirror recent work on the US and suggest that external obstacles—not individual-level differences in nascent ambition—may be responsible for the global shortage of politicians from the working classes.

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Scholars of comparative politics have recently taken a renewed interest in the question of why so few less-affluent or working-class citizens—people employed in manual labor, service industry, clerical, informal sector, and labor union jobs—go on to hold elected office in the world’s democracies (e.g., Carnes and Lupu 2016; Griffin, Newman, and Buhr 2019; Wüest and Pontusson 2020; see also Best 2007). In Latin America, workers make up between 60 and 90 percent of the economy, but politicians from those occupations make up just 5 to 25 percent of national legislatures (Carnes and Lupu 2015). In Europe, blue-collar workers made up around half of electorates at the end of the twentieth century but rarely made up more than 10 percent of national legislatures (Best and Cotta 2000). This sharp underrepresentation of politicians from working-class jobs in many countries—and the numerical or descriptive overrepresentation of politicians from more affluent classes—appears to tilt policy in favor of the preferences of the affluent on economic issues (Carnes and Lupu 2015; Hemingway Forthcoming), social welfare policy (Han and Han 2018; O’Grady 2018), economic inequality (Alexiadou 2020), and even funding for cross-national defense organizations (Fuhrmann 2020).¹ It seems to matter that lower-income and working-class people so seldom go on to hold office in electoral democracies—and as such, scholars have begun to ask what keeps them out.

To date, comparative research on the shortage of politicians from the working classes has largely focused on the hypothesis that working-class citizens might be less qualified to hold office (e.g., Dal Bó et al. 2017) and the hypothesis that voters might prefer affluent or white-collar candidates (e.g., Carnes and Lupu 2016; Griffin, Newman, and Buhr 2019; Wüest and Pontusson 2020). However, neither explanation has yet found much support in the literature.

¹ It also seems to have broader consequences for democracies, including effects on the perceived legitimacy of democratic institutions (e.g., Barnes and Saxton 2019) and the racial or ethnic makeup of political institutions (e.g., Bueno and Dunning 2017).

In this paper, we test another potential explanation, namely, that lower-income or working-class citizens might have less *nascent political ambition*, that is, they might simply not have the personal “inclination to consider a candidacy” (Fox and Lawless 2005: 644). Nascent ambition is a prerequisite to officeholding in democracies; almost by definition, politicians are drawn from the pool of people with some intrinsic desire to become politicians. If this desire is less common among working-class citizens (because of differences in political socialization, differing perceptions of the value of officeholding, and so on), it would be an important part of the larger explanation for why democracies are so consistently governed by the privileged.

Nascent ambition gaps have been studied extensively in the literature on the numerical or descriptive representation of social groups in elected office, most notably in research on the shortage of female politicians in the United States, which finds that qualified women tend to exhibit less nascent ambition and that this gap helps explain the shortage of women in elected office (e.g., Fox and Lawless 2011; Lawless and Fox 2005, 2010a, 2010b; Preece and Stoddard 2015; Schneider et al. 2016; see also Fulton et al. 2006). In this paper, we ask whether there are analogous *social class* gaps in nascent ambition that could help to explain the shortage of working-class officeholders in the world’s democracies.

Our analysis draws on new data from 10 surveys administered to 13,535 respondents in the Americas. These data are the first cross-national analysis of social class gaps in nascent ambition (and perhaps the largest survey dataset on nascent ambition to date). Among respondents we can classify as potential candidates (those who have been previously encouraged to run for office or who self-report more traits that promote candidacy), we do not find clear evidence of social class differences in standard measures of nascent ambition (although we do find substantial *gender* gaps, consistent with past research). These findings suggest that external

obstacles—not differences in nascent ambition—are more likely explanations for the global underrepresentation of politicians from the working classes.

Nascent Ambition and Class

The study of nascent ambition is a relatively recent development in the literatures on candidate entry and representation. Research on the broader topic of political ambition dates back at least half a century (e.g., Schlesinger 1966), but for most of its history, it focused on how strategic considerations affect when and where ambitious people decide to run for office, run for reelection, or run for higher office (Gulzar 2021), not the question of why some people want to hold office in the first place.

The modern study of *nascent ambition* originated in research on the underrepresentation of women in the United States. In 2005, Fox and Lawless published their foundational work on the topic, defining nascent ambition as the “embryonic or potential interest in office seeking that precedes the actual decision to enter a specific political contest” (643). Whereas prior research on the shortage of women in office (e.g., Carroll and Jenkins 2005; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994) had focused on the incumbency advantage (men rarely left their seats) and the unequal makeup of the eligibility pool (men dominated the white-collar jobs that most politicians come from), Lawless and Fox showed that even women in the “pipeline professions” that supply most politicians were less likely *to want to be* politicians and that this gap would continue to discourage women from holding office even as strategic opportunities for women to run expanded (e.g., Fox and Lawless 2014; Lawless and Fox 2005, 2010b).

Today, the concept of nascent ambition is a mainstay in research on descriptive representation and candidate selection (e.g., Peterson and Palmer Forthcoming). Many studies of

women's representation in the US have followed Lawless and Fox's lead, investigating the role of nascent ambition gaps in women's underrepresentation and exploring the factors that contribute to nascent ambition, most notably early-life socialization experiences that may leave qualified women less likely to perceive themselves as qualified (e.g., Dynes et al. Forthcoming; Gaddie 2004; Kanthak and Woon 2015; Preece and Stoddard 2015; Schneider et al. 2016; Windett 2011).

Likewise, in the broader comparative literature on women's representation, scholars have asked whether gaps in nascent ambition help explain the shortage of female politicians in electoral democracies around the world (on Brazil, see Wylie 2018; 2020; on Canada, see Pruyers and Blais 2018; 2019; on Japan, see Kage, Rosenbluth, and Tanaka 2019; on Pakistan, see Rincker, Aslam, and Isani 2017; on Zambia, see Evans 2016; see also Piscopo 2019). Scholars have also begun to investigate whether nascent ambition gaps might help explain the underrepresentation of other social groups (often with an emphasis on the intersection with gender), including racial and ethnic groups, religious minorities, and working-class people (e.g., Carnes 2018; Holman and Schneider 2016; Moore 2005).

The basic theoretical argument in the nascent ambition literature is that candidate entry is a sort of winnowing process. Out of all citizens, only some are *potential candidates*, people who are legally eligible to run *and who have the basic personal qualities necessary to do so*. Of those potential candidates, only some develop nascent ambition, the desire to run, and of those only some actually put themselves forward as candidates, either within their party or in elections. Of course, nascent ambition is itself the product of a wide range of forces. Fox and Lawless (2005), for instance, argue that a person's interest in running for office can be influenced by strategic considerations (personal beliefs about the likelihood of success), ideological motivations,

minority status, political socialization early in life, and the life stage they are in. Other scholarship on gender gaps in ambition points to factors like women's aversion to conflict and power-related activities (Schneider et al. 2016). Comparative research also highlights the role that political parties play in fostering ambition by actively recruiting women (e.g., Hinojosa 2012; Lawless and Fox 2005; Norris and Lovenduski 1995).

Of course, not *all* inequalities in political officeholding necessarily reflect differences in nascent ambition. The factors that influence nascent ambition are complex and can cut both ways: members of underrepresented social groups might have an unusually strong desire to change public policy (which promotes nascent ambition) but may also be largely excluded from office (which discourages nascent ambition). The factors that influence nascent ambition may also vary over time and from place to place. For instance, comparative research has found that gender gaps in nascent ambition in some democracies may be smaller than those documented in the US (e.g., Rincker, Aslam, and Isani 2017). The role ambition plays in producing political inequalities may also vary. In political contexts where party gatekeepers play more important roles in candidate selection, nascent ambition gaps may matter less (Piscopo 2019).

Even so, there are reasons to ask whether there are social class gaps in nascent ambition that might help explain the underrepresentation of working-class citizens in elected offices. Theoretically speaking, nascent ambition is a necessary condition for candidacy in all democracies. If nascent ambition is distributed unevenly across social classes—if working-class people tend to be less interested in holding political office—it would undoubtedly represent a significant obstacle to representation that could help explain the phenomenon of government by the privileged (and would raise further questions about what drives the link between class and nascent ambition). Even in contexts where parties play a critical role in selecting candidates,

their slates of candidates may be skewed if potential leaders from one social class are less likely to agree to run.

In addition, given the importance of nascent ambition in the research on the underrepresentation of women, it seems only logical that research on other underrepresented groups should investigate whether nascent ambition gaps exist. Despite debates about the degree to which gender ambition gaps explain women's underrepresentation, it remains a hypothesis with a strong track record. If there is a similar social class ambition gap, scholars of class and representation ought to engage in similar debates.

Finally, research to date has not had much success explaining the unequal representation of working-class people. Working-class people do not seem to be much less likely to be potential candidates (e.g., Carnes 2018; Dal Bó et al. 2017) and when working-class potential candidates run for office they tend to do about as well as other candidates (e.g., Carnes 2018; Carnes and Lupu 2016; Griffin, Newman, and Buhr 2019; Wüest and Pontusson 2020). Although the case is hardly closed on these points, the existing empirical research suggests that scholars should focus on the question of why potential candidates from the working classes so seldom run for office, and differences in nascent ambition are an obvious possibility (as are extrinsic obstacles like resource constraints and elite gatekeeping, which might block ambitious working-class people from running over and above any effects they have on workers' nascent ambition; we return to these in the paper's conclusion). If we wish to understand why working-class citizens so rarely go on to hold office in the world's democracies, we need to investigate the possibility that working-class citizens are simply less likely to *want to* run for office.

Many of the factors that seem to influence nascent ambition or gender ambition gaps could very well differ across social classes in ways that would discourage working-class

potential candidates from considering elected office:

- *Strategic considerations*: Relative to professionals or white-collar workers, working-class potential candidates may be less likely to believe that they will succeed in politics. If people generally perceive running for office as resource-intensive, if working-class people are widely thought to be less capable (e.g., Haraldsson and Wängnerud 2019), or if political gatekeepers are more likely to discourage less-affluent and working-class people from running (e.g., Carnes 2018), working-class potential candidates may be more likely to doubt that they will win.
- *Ideological motivations*: Working-class potential candidates may be less likely to trust government to be responsive to their views and needs, and they might therefore be less likely to think that changing public policy is important.
- *Minority status*: In places where working-class potential candidates do not hold office in large numbers, they might be less likely to “feel like the political system is . . . open to them” (Fox and Lawless 2005: 646).
- *Political socialization early in life*: Working-class potential candidates might be less likely to be socialized to run for public office, for instance, if working-class potential candidates are less likely to have had early-life experiences like “being a leader in school organizations, [or] taking college preparatory courses” (e.g., Paulsen 1991: 96), or experiences like talking about politics with parents and friends.
- *Competitive personality*: Working-class potential candidates may be less likely to enjoy competition and therefore likely to want to run for office. Scholars have found that “middle-class parents [are] more likely to place an emphasis on their child’s self-direction (self-control, responsibility, curiosity, etc.) while working-class parents [stress]

their child’s conformity to external authority (cleanliness, good manners, obedience, etc.)” (e.g., Morgan, Alwin, and Griffin 1979: 157). If the same is true of electoral competition, working-class potential candidates may be less interested in running.

- *Stage of life*: If working-class potential candidates are less likely to experience life stages that offer material security and schedule flexibility, like retirement, they may be less likely to want to run for office.

But could social class gaps in nascent ambition be a *global* phenomenon of sufficient scope to explain government by the privileged around the world? In principle at least, it is quite possible. Economic inequality and social class stratification exist in every country. And nascent ambition matters in every electoral system: regardless of how candidate selection and entry works in a democracy, in every country in the world, a person must *want* to become a politician. Whether parties control nominations or citizens run in candidate-centered elections, nascent ambition—a personal desire to hold office—is a prerequisite to office-holding.

Of course, researchers should always be cautious when applying theories developed to study one underrepresented group to another. Class isn’t gender (although women are well-represented among working-class citizens and politicians, including in the data we examine here; see footnote 13 and Carnes 2015; 2020). Gender-based differences in socialization experiences are ubiquitous in modern democracies; the salience of class, in contrast, seems to vary over time and from place to place. It is entirely possible that class-related differences in political socialization are simply not as pronounced or as deleterious to working-class citizens’ political ambitions as gender-based differences in socialization are to women’s political ambition.

In the one extant study on this topic, Carnes (2018) failed to find expected social class differences in nascent ambition. The study’s methodologies were somewhat limited, however; its

analysis of nascent ambition rested on just one survey that asked respondents not whether they would consider running for office (the standard measure used in the literature), but rather whether they feel qualified to run and hold office (important precursors to nascent ambition, but not nascent ambition itself, as it has been defined in past research). That study should hardly be the final word on the subject, and it is by no means sufficient to rule out social class gaps in nascent ambition as a potential explanation for the global phenomenon of government by the privileged. Rather, it highlights the importance of collecting additional data; if nascent ambition is a consequential obstacle to representation in some contexts, research on the underrepresentation of working-class people in public office should test the possibility that working-class people express less nascent ambition.

Survey Data from the Americas

The founding studies of nascent ambition asked potential candidates—people who were legally eligible and politically qualified in some measurable way—whether they were interested in running for office, then looked for gender and other gaps in their answers. Unfortunately for our purposes, these studies often identified potential candidates based on their occupations. Lawless and Fox, for instance, used employment in the fields of law, business, and education (the “pipeline” professions from which most US politicians are drawn) as a proxy for being sufficiently qualified to be thought of as a potential candidate. Researchers cannot re-analyze data like these to determine whether working-class respondents exhibit less nascent ambition because, by definition, there aren’t any working-class respondents in these data in the first place.

To test the hypothesis that working-class potential candidates exhibit less nascent ambition (analogous to the gender gaps in nascent ambition documented in the US), we placed

questions on 10 nationally representative surveys across the Americas, including 13,535 respondents and covering eight countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, the US, and Uruguay.² The surveys were all fielded by Vanderbilt University’s LAPOP Lab between 2017 and 2019, and they include four probability-based face-to-face surveys and six nonprobability online surveys.³

These eight countries were ideal settings in which to look for class ambition gaps. In all eight—like in most democracies—working-class people are numerically underrepresented in their legislatures. As Table 1 illustrates, working-class people make up between 54 and 89 percent of the labor force, but in national legislatures, only between 2 and 17 percent of elected representatives held working-class occupations prior to entering politics. In each of these countries, something is keeping working-class people from holding office, and that something may be that workers are just not interested in governing.

More importantly, these eight countries differ in terms of socioeconomic and political

² Argentina was surveyed three times, but the questions on each survey varied, so we analyze all three surveys here and report results disaggregated to the individual survey to ensure that the inclusion of multiple Argentine surveys does not bias our findings.

³ Section A of the Appendix provides additional information on survey methodologies and compares the samples to population demographic benchmarks. Our analysis of the nonprobability online samples uses weights constructed by raking over distributions on gender, age group, and education. Our pooled analyses also weight each country equally. Unweighted, our online samples over-represent respondents at higher levels of education—because online panels in less affluent countries often have fewer panelists at lower levels of education. However, we remain confident in our results for three reasons. First, the fact that our nonprobability samples yield results similar to our probability samples is reassuring. Second, adding controls for education to our models does not change our basic findings (see Figure A3). And, third, our findings are the same when we disaggregate our results by individual surveys.

Table 1. Country comparison (c. 2017)

	AR	BO	BR	CL	CO	MX	US	UY
Worker representation								
Working-class proportion of adult population	73	89	74	78	66	83	54	76
Proportion of national legislators drawn from working class	8	17	3	8	3	10	2	17
Political variables								
Years of democracy (since 1800)	34	36	33	29	61	21	209	33
Electoral system	PR	Maj	PR	Maj	PR	Maj	Maj	PR
Average district magnitude, lower house	11	2	19	2	5	81	1	5
Legislative fractionalization	0.82	0.48	0.93	0.53	0.85	0.76	0.50	0.63
Candidate nomination	Mixed	Party	Party	Party	Party	Party	Primary	Party
Legislative gender quota	30%	50%	30%	40%	30%	50%	0%	37%
Socioeconomic context								
Economic development (ranking)	62	117	85	59	86	68	10	65
Human Development Index (ranking)	46	107	84	43	83	76	17	55
Female labor force participation	57	61	60	57	85	47	68	68
Unionization rate	28	39	19	20	10	13	10	30

Sources: Carnes and Lupu (2015); Database of Political Institutions; Hughes et al. (2019); International IDEA; International Labor Organization; Polity; V-Dem.

factors that may condition nascent ambition. As Table 1 illustrates, while most are third-wave democracies, they also include one first-wave democracy (US) and one second-wave democracy (Colombia). The political systems of these countries run the gamut from majoritarian to proportional, two-party to multiparty systems, with varying legislative gender quotas. Partly because of these systemic differences, these countries also use different methods to nominate political candidates. Even among those in which parties determine candidacy, there is a great deal of variation in how this is accomplished across countries and across parties (e.g., whether by national leaders or local committees). These countries also vary substantially in socioeconomic terms. Unionization rates are far higher in Bolivia and Uruguay than in Colombia and the US, possibly affecting how workers are socialized. Women also participate much more in the labor force in some countries than in others. Of course, these countries also differ considerably in

overall economic and human development.

Taken together, these countries cover a wide range of the variation on the political, social, and economic variables that might affect who has nascent political ambition. If we find similar results across these very different contexts, we can be confident that those results are not just unique to one country or one set of political institutions (Slater and Ziblatt 2013). We can also be confident that it is not these contextual differences that are driving our results (Gerring 2007).

Since we are interested in comparing individuals who are in pipeline professions (which we will call white-collar jobs or professional jobs here) to those who are in other lines of work (working-class), we cannot replicate the Lawless and Fox strategy for identifying *potential candidates*.⁴ Instead, our survey questions identify potential candidates using two alternative approaches. First, we follow Carnes (2018) and use seven survey items that asked whether respondents believed they had qualities that voters and party leaders most often say they want in a politician (without telling them that these qualities are related to politics): self-confidence, a strong work ethic, an ability to learn new things quickly, an outgoing personality, honesty, public speaking skills, and loyalty to their political party.⁵ These seven items essentially allow us to

⁴ It is standard in the literature not to examine the entire population. As Gulzar (2021: 5) notes, “Scholars select a study population that is already a high-ability one relative to the entire population of office-eligible citizens.”

⁵ The question asked, Which of the following phrases describes you? (1) I am very sure of myself, (2) I am hardworking, (3) I am good at learning new things quickly, (4) I am outgoing, (5) I am honest, (6) I am good at public speaking, (7) I am very dedicated to my political party. The order of the individual traits was randomized. One concern about multiple response questions like our candidate trait item is that respondents who rush through the survey may identify fewer traits. We find no evidence of this behavior. In the 2019 online survey in Argentina, we had access to information about how long a respondent took to answer each question. When we ignore respondents who answered this question in under 20 seconds, the

define potential candidates via negation; we can remove from our sample people who self-report that they *do not* have the traits usually associated with office holding—on the assumption that people who do not have many of these traits are less likely to have what Fowler and McClure (1990: 2) call, “some real prospect, however slim, of ending up in political office”⁶—then study ambition gaps only among those who are left, which is a more defensible pool of *potential candidates* than the public as a whole.⁷

Second, as an alternative, we also identified potential candidates by asking respondents whether anyone had ever encouraged them to run for public office.⁸ This approach is similar to Gulzar and Khan’s (2018) strategy of asking respondents to nominate others who *might* run for office (here, we directly ask respondents themselves whether they have been encouraged). The measure is also conceptually related to another common proxy for political qualifications—whether someone has ever run for office before—that is unfortunately not feasible to use in any study of nascent ambition (because *everyone* who has run for office in the past has had nascent ambition). If people who have run for office in the past can be defined as “higher-quality”

proportion of respondents who report six or more traits is basically unchanged (6.4%, versus 6.0% in the full sample).

⁶ Fowler and McClure’s (1990: 2) define “unseen candidates” (people who are close to running but often do not) as follows: “First, none is obviously a political crank. Second, each has given some serious thought, at least briefly, to running for Congress. And third, each has some real prospect, however slim, of actually ending up [in office].” Our approach attempts to remove people who are less likely to have the third trait, then study the presence of the second trait (nascent ambition). We do not measure the first trait, although we believe our approach could be fruitfully extended in future efforts that attempt to also remove political cranks.

⁷ Figure A1 plots the distributions of responses to these political trait questions across the countries where they were asked.

⁸ Specifically, the question asked, “Have you ever been personally encouraged to run in an election for public office?”

candidates, it seems reasonable to define people who have been encouraged to run for office as *potential candidates*. Of course, a person's social class may affect whether they are ever encouraged to run for office by elite actors like party leaders (e.g., Carnes 2018). As such, we study respondents who have been encouraged by political actors (like politicians, journalists, and interest groups) *and/or* non-political actors (like friends and family).

To measure nascent ambition, we asked a question similar to the measure Lawless and Fox used: "In the last few years, have you thought about running as a candidate in an election for public office, for example as a representative, mayor, or city council member?" This measure taps the personal "inclination to consider a candidacy" (Fox and Lawless 2005: 644) that has been found to be gender-biased in the US. (Importantly, as we show below, our data replicate Lawless and Fox's key findings regarding gender gaps, reassuring us that we are studying nascent ambition in a way that is consistent with their approach.)

To identify respondents from different social classes across eight different country contexts, we used three different measures of economic position: occupation, household income, and wealth. *Household income* is a common measure in political science and was included on most of the surveys that included our nascent ambition questions. However, income categories can conflate individuals with very different life chances and socialization experiences, and many respondents (around 20% in our Argentina surveys) refuse to reveal their household income to enumerators. As such, in face-to-face surveys, LAPOP researchers also measure respondent *wealth* using a series of questions about household assets: whether the household has a microwave, a flat-screen TV, etc. (Córdova 2008; Filmer and Pritchett 2001). This composite measure is a useful complement to household income, but of course it may still conflate people from very different classes (e.g., a young professional and a retired worker may both have

similar asset levels but would nonetheless be in very different positions in their economy and society).⁹

Our preferred measure of class is *occupation*, consistent with prior studies of class representation (e.g., Carnes 2013; Carnes and Lupu 2015; O’Grady 2018). As Manza and Brooks (2008: 204) succinctly put it:

Occupation provides the most plausible basis for thinking about how specifically class-related political micro processes and influences occur. . . . Workplace settings provide the possibility of talking about politics and forging political identity, and work also provides a springboard for membership in organizations where class politics are engaged: unions, professionals associations, business associations, and so forth.

As such, whenever possible, we asked to add occupation questions to the surveys that included our items on nascent ambition.

Due to space constraints, we could not ask every question we wanted on every survey. Nascent ambition was included on all 10 surveys. At least one of the three economic measures were included on all 10 surveys as well, although we were only able to include our preferred measure, occupation, on three of the surveys. Reassuringly, our results are similar regardless of which economic measure we use. Our seven-question battery of potential candidate attributes were included on eight surveys, and our encouragement question was included on six surveys. Table 2 summarizes which items appeared on each of the 10 surveys, along with the surveys’

⁹ In analyses of survey data from less-affluent countries, education is often used as a proxy for social class. But there are also good reasons to worry about its validity: many affluent business owners spend little time attaining formal schooling. In our surveys, education was indeed not closely correlated with occupation or household income. Moreover, studying education would not have increased the number of surveys available to us (e.g., the surveys that included education also included income, wealth, and/or occupation). As such, we do not include education in our analyses as a proxy for class, although research specific to the educational backgrounds of politicians seems to us a fruitful area for future research (e.g., Bovens and Wille 2017; Curto-Grau and Gallego 2021).

Table 2. Surveys, sample sizes, and items

Country	Year	Mode	N	Nascent Ambition	Potential Candidate Proxies		Economic Background			Gender
					Pol. Traits	Encour.	Income	Wealth	Occup.	
Argentina	2017	F2F	1,524	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Argentina	2019	Online	1,119	✓	✓		✓			✓
Argentina	2019	F2F	1,527	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bolivia	2019	F2F	1,682	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brazil	2019	Online	1,299	✓	✓		✓			✓
Chile	2019	Online	1,276	✓	✓				✓	✓
Colombia	2019	Online	1,298	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Mexico	2019	Online	1,299	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
US	2019	Online	991	✓	✓		✓			✓
Uruguay	2017	F2F	1,514	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓

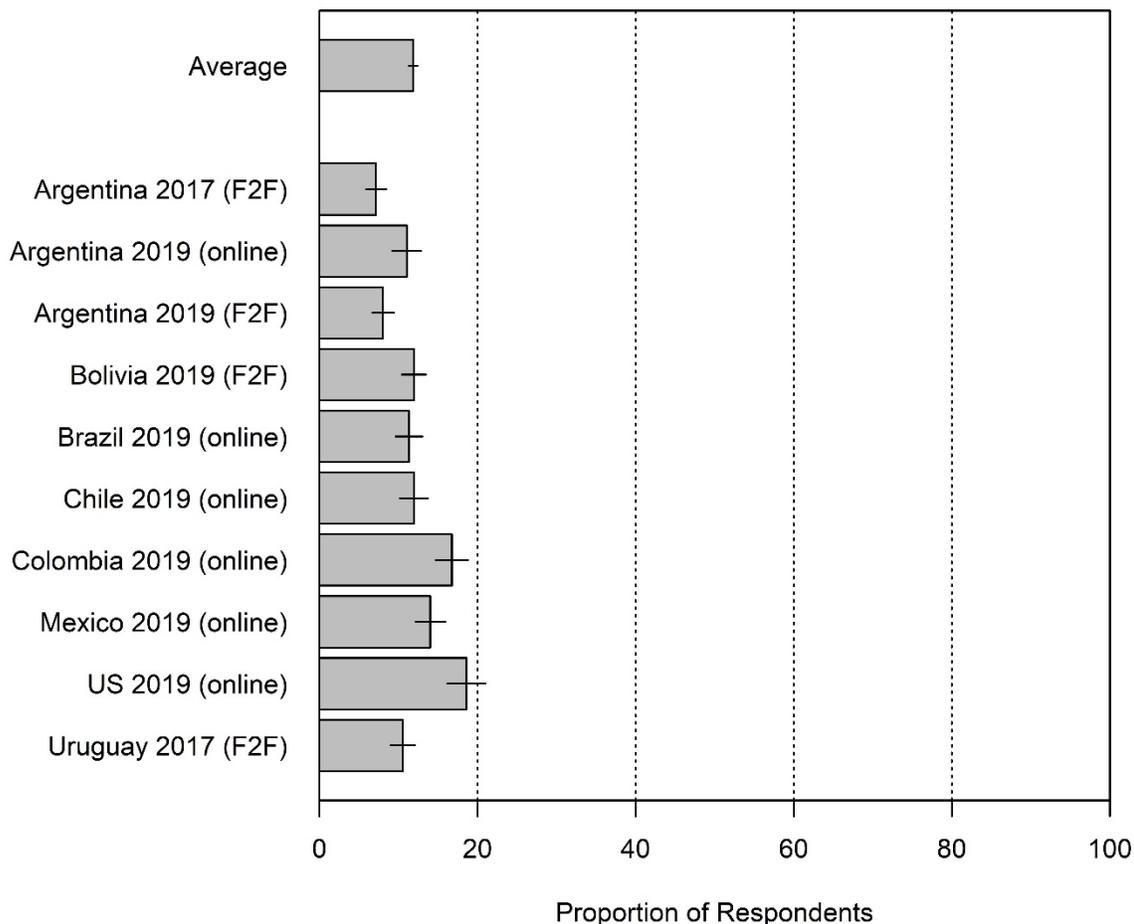
sample sizes and modes.

The data we collected on nascent ambition measure were remarkably consistent across the eight countries and 10 surveys we analyzed for this study (see Figure 1). In general, the vast majority of people *do not* exhibit nascent ambition; in the average survey, 12% of respondents said they had considered running for public office in the last few years. Across individual surveys, this figure ranged from 7% to 19%.¹⁰

Importantly for our purposes, our two proxies for identifying potential candidates—the seven-item battery of candidate traits and the encouragement measure—did not eliminate respondents from underrepresented groups. That is, our samples of potential candidates still

¹⁰ There were obvious minor differences by survey mode; online surveys tended to elicit slightly higher rates of nascent ambition than face-to-face surveys (perhaps because the added privacy made respondents less modest). But the overall variation across surveys and countries was quite muted. Argentina—which was surveyed three times using two formats—is an instructive example. The two face-to-face surveys elicited similar rates of nascent ambition (7.1% and 8.0%) despite being conducted two years apart; the 2019 online survey elicited an 11.0% nascent ambition rate—about three percentage points higher than the face-to-face 2019 survey, a modest difference in how respondents answered the question.

Figure 1. *Nascent ambition, by survey*



include working-class, lower-income, lower-wealth, and female respondents.¹¹ Table A3 reports simple regression models that relate three potential candidate measures—the number of candidate traits respondents self-reported, an indicator for respondents who reported 6 or 7 traits, and an indicator for respondents who reported encouragement—to indicators for our economic and gender measures (each entered separately). Most of the estimated differences are

¹¹ We define working-class respondents as those employed in manual labor, service industry, clerical, labor union, and informal sector jobs, following past research on this topic. We defined lower-income as being the bottom half of the income distribution among respondents within a given survey. We defined lower-wealth as being in the bottom three quintiles of the country-specific wealth measure provided in these surveys.

substantively small and/or statistically insignificant. None of the estimated gaps in the 6 or 7 trait indicator were larger than 20% of the sample mean or statistically significant. As we might expect,¹² the encouragement indicator varies more across the groups we study (all of the estimated differences are statistically significant and greater than 20% of the sample mean) but there is only one group for which we might have grounds for concern (3% of working-class respondents reported encouragement, compared to 18% of the full sample), and ignoring the results for that combination of economic measure and potential candidate proxy in our subsequent analysis does not change our substantive findings.

In the analyses that follow, we use both an indicator for respondents who reported having six or seven candidate traits and an indicator for those who reported encouragement as our proxies for potential candidates, but with the important caveat that we do so only for diagnostic purposes; we are not asserting a positive theory that these attributes are exogenous to nascent ambition. Obviously, the relationship between class, personal traits, encouragement, and nascent ambition is complex; here we are only interested in the “reduced-form” question of whether potential candidates from the working classes are less likely to exhibit nascent ambition, setting aside the question of what makes someone a potential candidate, which may itself be endogenous to class and/or nascent ambition (especially when we use encouragement as a proxy for being a potential candidate). In this paper, we seek only to determine whether among people who *seem* positioned to be candidates—those who have many of the traits parties and voters tend to like, or those who have been encouraged to run by others—are working-class people still less likely to

¹² The seven candidate traits we study have not been found to differ across social classes, but encouragement—which is the result of both ability and social processes that can be biased against marginalized groups—has consistently been found to be biased by class and gender (e.g., Carnes 2018; Crowder-Meyer 2013).

consider running? We leave questions about the larger causal relationship between class, traits, encouragement, and nascent ambition to future work and focus here on a question we think must be answered first, namely, do potential candidates from the working classes actually exhibit nascent ambition gaps analogous to those uncovered in research on women’s representation?

With these survey data, we can see for the first time whether there are social class gaps in nascent ambition in the Americas. These data also allow us to test whether gender gaps documented in the US and elsewhere exist in democracies across the Americas. More broadly, these surveys collectively constitute the largest dataset on ordinary citizens’ nascent ambition ever collected. This study is the first comparative analysis of social class gaps in nascent ambition—and the largest study of nascent ambition to date.

Class and Nascent Ambition in the Americas

Do potential candidates from working-class occupations, with lower incomes, or with less wealth exhibit less nascent political ambition?¹³ Figure 2 plots the percentages of respondents who exhibited nascent ambition (that is, who answered yes when asked if they had thought about running for public office in the last few years). Each panel of the figure divides respondents by one of our three economic traits or by gender. In each panel, the first pair of bars plots the rates of nascent ambition among all respondents (potential candidates or not); the next

¹³ Consistent with the larger literature on politicians from the working class (e.g., Carnes 2015; 2020), women were not under-represented in our less privileged economic categories. Among respondents with six or more candidate traits, women made up 41% of workers (compared to 39% of non-workers), 51% of low-income respondents (compared to 43% of high-income), and 55% of low-wealth respondents (compared to 40% of high-wealth). Among respondents who were encouraged to run for office, women made up 39% of workers (compared to 33% of non-workers), 46% of low-income respondents (compared to 38% of high-income), and 45% of low-wealth respondents (compared to 37% of high-wealth).

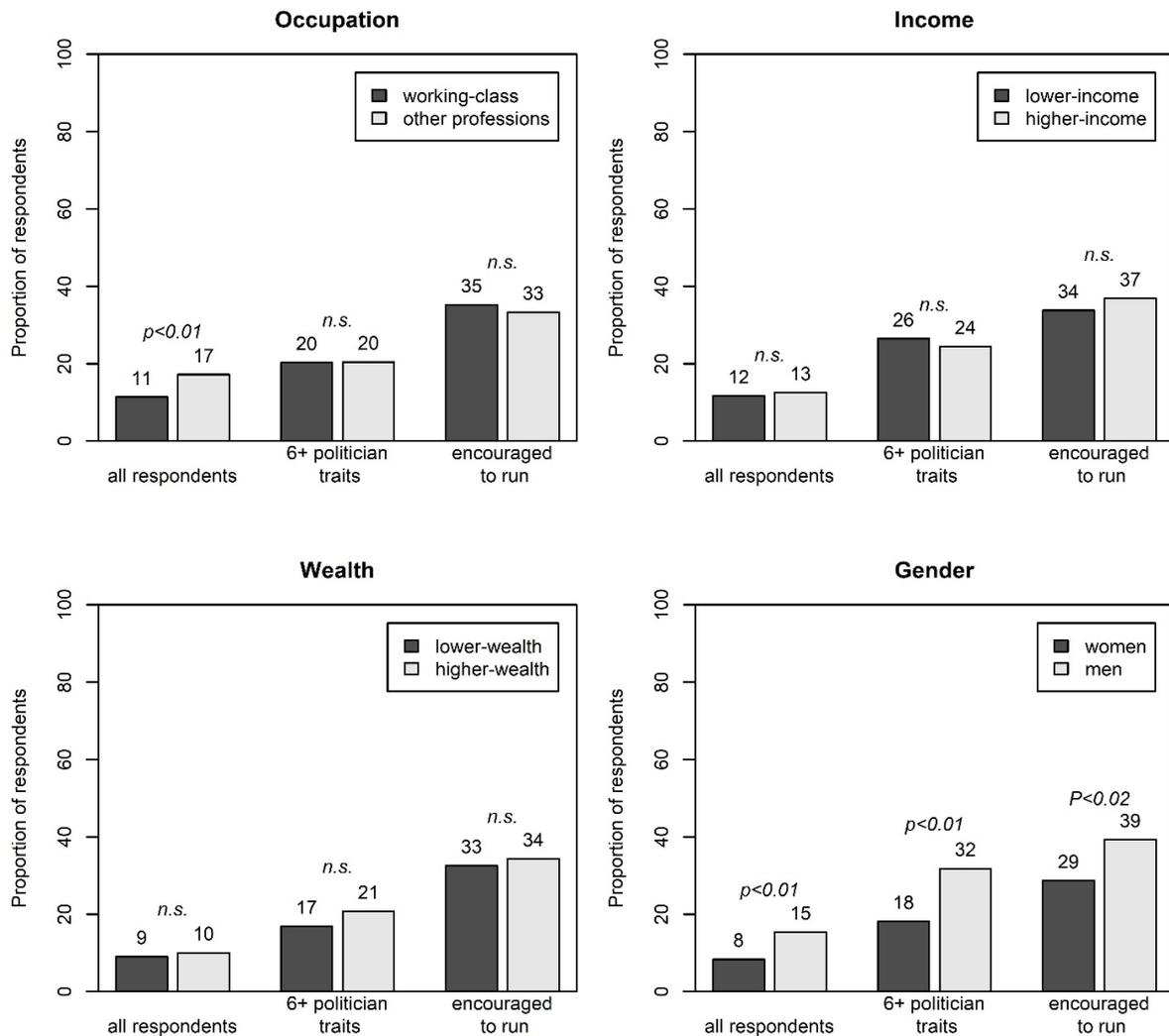
pair plots the rate among respondents who self-reported that they had six or seven¹⁴ of the candidate traits we asked about; the third pair plot the rate among respondents who indicated that they had been encouraged to run for public office. The estimates in Figure 2 come from simple regression models (reported in Table A4) that relate nascent ambition to one of the indicators (e.g., an indicator for respondents who were workers) and survey fixed effects (to account for the modest differences in average nascent ambition across surveys documented in Figure 1). The different panels in Figure 2 compare working-class respondents (those employed in manual labor, service industry, clerical, labor union, and informal sector jobs¹⁵) to non-workers (e.g., professionals), lower-income respondents (those in the bottom half of the income distribution among respondents within a given survey) to higher-income respondents (those in the top half), lower-wealth respondents (those in the bottom three quintiles of the country-specific wealth measure provided in these surveys) to higher-wealth respondents (those in the top two quintiles), and female and male respondents.

As we would expect, in every panel, respondents who were identified as potential candidates—those with six or seven candidate traits or those who had previously been encouraged to run—were more likely to say that they had considered running for elected office. Comparing potential candidates from different social classes, however, never yields statistically significant differences that might help to explain why so few working-class citizens go on to hold elected office in the world’s democracies. To the contrary, economic gaps are small and

¹⁴ Choosing six as the cutoff is, of course, arbitrary, but changing the cutoff does not alter our substantive results (see Figure A2).

¹⁵ Table A6 lists the survey occupation categories and how they were coded as working-class or other professions.

Figure 2. Gaps in nascent ambition



Note: Values represent estimated percentages of respondents who reported that they had recently considered running for elected office from regression models relating this nascent ambition measure to the attribute in question (e.g., an indicator for working-class politicians) as well as survey fixed effects (to account for the differences documented in Figure 1), with standard errors clustered by survey. Complete regression results are reported in Table A4.

often in the “wrong” direction. The lone exception is the gap between working-class respondents and other professions in our full sample, but that gap disappears (and even reverses) when we limit our attention to potential candidates, per the norm in the literature (it is also not robust to controlling for education, see Figure A3). In short, income, wealth, and occupation are never statistically significant predictors of nascent ambition among potential candidates; there is

nothing here that would help us understand why lower-income and working-class people are numerically underrepresented by 50 to 60 percentage points in most countries in the Americas (Carnes and Lupu 2015).

In sharp contrast, the gender gaps in nascent ambition that have been documented in the US were clearly also evident in these data.¹⁶ As the bottom right panel of Figure 2 illustrates, women were less likely to report nascent ambition in all three samples (the full pool of respondents and the subsets who had six or seven politician attributes and who had been encouraged to run for office), and the gender gap was always statistically significant. The gap was also substantively large: among potential candidates, women were 29 to 46 percent less likely (11 to 14 percentage points, in absolute terms) to say that they had thought about running for office in the last few years.¹⁷

¹⁶ The gender gaps in Figure 2, moreover, did not seem to be the result of women being over-represented among less advantaged economic groups. We reran the models with the clearest gender gaps (those estimated using only potential candidates defined as respondents with six or seven candidate traits), this time using separate indicators for less-privileged women (separately for each of our economic measures), more privileged-women, and less-privileged men (more-privileged men were the omitted reference category). The female “penalties” in these models were remarkably similar: relative to a male professional-occupation potential candidate, a female professional-occupation potential candidate was 19 percentage points less likely to express nascent ambition, and a female working-class-occupation potential candidate was 16 percentage points less likely. Likewise, relative to a high-income male potential candidate, a low-income female potential candidate was 11 percentage points less likely and high-income female potential candidate was 13 percentage points less likely. The only difference in the female “penalty” that was greater than two percentage points was on wealth, but the difference in the gaps was not statistically significant; relative to a higher-wealth man, a lower-wealth woman was 11 percentage points less likely and a higher-wealth women was 7 percentage points less likely.

¹⁷ We also attempted to more closely approximate Lawless and Fox’s original methodology by focusing only on respondents who worked in professional occupations (e.g., ignoring working-class respondents), then computing the gender gap in nascent ambition. Looking only at white-collar professionals, we found that women were 13 percentage points less likely to express nascent ambition, although the difference was just shy of conventional levels of statistical significance ($p < 0.055$).

Looking at one survey at a time does little to change our basic conclusions. Table 3 lists the ten surveys in our sample. For each one, we focus on respondents with six or more of the seven candidate traits (top panel) or respondents who indicated that they had previously been encouraged to run for office (bottom panel) and estimated the economic and gender ambition gaps among them. Occupation, income, and wealth do not consistently predict expected differences in nascent ambition; to the contrary, two of the three statistically significant differences are in the “wrong” direction (lower-income respondents were significantly *more* likely to report that they had considered running for office). In the remaining surveys, occupation-, income-, and wealth-based differences in nascent ambition were statistically insignificant, usually substantively small, and about as likely to be positive as negative.

In Table 3, gender is, again, the strongest predictor of expected gaps in nascent ambition (and the measure that is most often statistically significant in these individual surveys): in 13 of the 14 gender estimates in Table 3, nascent ambition was lower among female potential candidates than among male potential candidates, and 8 of those 13 gaps were statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ (an impressive feat given the small sample sizes that often result when a single-country survey is winnowed further to exclude respondents who are not coded as potential candidates). Viewed this way, the gender gap in nascent ambition appears to be remarkably consistent across countries in the Americas. Among potential candidates, there appears to be a widespread gender gap in nascent ambition that may help to explain why women are less likely to run for office than men. But we find no evidence that the same is true for the working class.

Table 3. Percentage-point gaps in nascent ambition, by survey

	Workers	Low-income	Low-wealth	Women
<i>Among respondents with 6 or 7 candidate traits</i>				
Argentina 2017 (F2F)				
Argentina 2019 (online)	-9.2	12.5		-2.7
Argentina 2019 (F2F)		-1.5	0.5	-11.2
Bolivia 2019 (F2F)	-0.9	-1.8	-6.8	-7.7
Brazil 2019 (online)		16.1		-20.9
Chile 2019 (online)	16.5			-18.4
Colombia 2019 (online)		-5.7		-25.3
Mexico 2019 (online)		8.8		-16.0
USA 2019 (online)		-4.2		-6.0
Uruguay 2017 (F2F)				
<i>Among respondents who were previously encouraged to run</i>				
Argentina 2017 (F2F)		2.5	-6.8	-16.7
Argentina 2019 (online)				
Argentina 2019 (F2F)	-4.8	-3.8	-4.4	-13.2
Bolivia 2019 (F2F)	6.4	-4.7	-2.0	0.5
Brazil 2019 (online)				
Chile 2019 (online)				
Colombia 2019 (online)		2.7		-11.9
Mexico 2019 (online)		4.5		-17.6
USA 2019 (online)				
Uruguay 2017 (F2F)		-15.4	3.3	-11.3

Note: Cells report the difference between the percentage of members of the group in question (workers, lower-income respondents, lower-wealth respondents, and women) who exhibited nascent ambition and the percentage among the group's complement (professionals, higher-income respondents, higher-wealth respondents, and men). Estimates are taken from regression models relating nascent ambition measure to the attribute in question (e.g., an indicator for working-class politicians). Complete regression results are reported in Table A5. Bolded estimates are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

Conclusion

Consistent with previous studies, our surveys found gender gaps in nascent ambition in the Americas. They did not, however, find similar gaps along class lines. Using our simple measures of potential candidates, there are about as many female potential candidates as there are male, and about as many less-privileged candidates as there are more-privileged candidates. But whereas female potential candidates are less likely to consider running for public office

relative to male potential candidates, lower-income, lower-wealth, and working-class potential candidates are about as likely to consider running as more affluent potential candidates.

Something keeps the less privileged around the world from running for office, but so far the evidence suggests that it is not a lack of nascent political ambition.

Of course, we should note several obvious caveats. First, these data come from just eight countries and 10 surveys, and our economic background measures were asked only sporadically across the surveys. Although this study uses the largest sample of nascent ambition data ever collected, even larger samples or more consistently-fielded economic measures could yield different results.

As it stands, however, the available empirical evidence suggests that nascent ambition—a pillar of research on the shortage of women in elected office—may not be a consequential factor in the global underrepresentation of less-affluent and working-class citizens. Gender is not class, of course. Something keeps workers around the world out of office, but it does not seem to be a lack of personal interest.

Future research should consider a wider range of potential obstacles. So far, studies have focused largely on potential voter biases, differences in ability (whether there *are* potential candidates among the working classes), and now differences in nascent ambition (whether working-class potential candidates want to run). Although the case is hardly closed on any of these potential explanations, so far research on these points has yielded little in the way of a concrete explanation for the global phenomenon of working-class exclusion from elected political office. What remains to be studied, then? Extrinsic obstacles like resource constraints and elite gatekeeping are obvious possibilities: perhaps working-class citizens are less likely to be able to shoulder the burdens associated with campaigning for public office or to receive

support from political parties and civic groups. Whereas research on voter biases and nascent ambition helped scholars understand the shortage of women in elected office, if we wish to understand why democracies consistently elect the privileged, scholars will likely need to consider these alternative explanations.

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Online Appendix for “Are There Social Class Gaps in Nascent Political Ambition? Survey Evidence from the Americas”

Nicholas Carnes and Noam Lupu

A. Survey Methodology and Diagnostics

The face-to-face surveys (Argentina 2017, Argentina 2019, Bolivia 2019, and Uruguay 2017) were part of the AmericasBarometer, the regional barometer fielded every two years by Vanderbilt University’s LAPOP Lab. These nationally representative surveys rely on multistage area probability samples. Additional information about the barometer’s sampling methods is available at www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop.

The online surveys (Argentina 2019, Brazil 2019, Chile 2019, Colombia 2019, Mexico 2019, US 2019) were also fielded by the LAPOP Lab, which contracted an online panel provider. The samples for these surveys were drawn from the provider’s proprietary respondent panels using the sample matching technique first proposed by Rivers (2007; see also Bethlehem 2016).

Table A1. *Fieldwork dates*

Survey	Start date	End date
Argentina 2017 (F2F)	03/10/2017	05/28/2017
Argentina 2019 (online)	10/11/2019	12/09/2019
Argentina 2019 (F2F)	02/16/2019	04/02/2019
Bolivia 2019 (F2F)	03/14/2019	05/12/2019
Brazil 2019 (online)	06/29/2019	08/09/2019
Chile 2019 (online)	06/17/2019	08/09/2019
Colombia 2019 (online)	06/18/2019	08/09/2019
Mexico 2019 (online)	06/17/2019	08/09/2019
US 2019 (online)	07/12/2019	07/24/2019
Uruguay 2017 (F2F)	03/11/2017	05/29/2017

Table A2. Sample demographic comparisons [[INCOMPLETE]]

Demographic	Sample (unweighted)	Sample (weighted)	Population
<u>Argentina 2017 (F2F)</u>			<u>2010 Census</u>
Gender			
Female	50.4	51.3	51.3
Male	49.6	48.7	48.7
Age group			
16-24	18.4	20.9	21.0
25-34	23.3	21.3	21.4
35-44	15.3	17.0	17.1
45-54	18.7	14.4	14.5
55-64	11.5	12.1	12.0
65+	12.8	14.5	14.1
Education			
Primary	49.0	56.8	56.7
Secondary	41.5	29.0	29.0
Tertiary	9.5	14.2	14.2
<u>Argentina 2019 (online)</u>			<u>2010 Census</u>
Gender			
Female	51.9	51.3	51.3
Male	48.1	48.7	48.7
Age group			
16-24	14.4	21.0	21.0
25-34	24.8	21.4	21.4
35-44	19.1	17.1	17.1
45-54	14.2	14.5	14.5
55-64	13.9	12.0	12.0
65+	13.5	14.1	14.1
Education			
Primary	21.1	56.8	56.7
Secondary	59.8	29.0	29.0
Tertiary	19.1	14.2	14.2
<u>Argentina 2019 (F2F)</u>			<u>2010 Census</u>
Gender			
Female	50.4	51.3	51.3
Male	49.6	48.7	48.7
Age group			
16-24	20.1	21.0	21.0
25-34	21.2	21.4	21.4
35-44	17.1	17.1	17.1
45-54	16.0	14.5	14.5
55-64	12.1	12.0	12.0

Demographic	Sample (unweighted)	Sample (weighted)	Population
65+	13.5	14.1	14.1
Education			
Primary	44.5	56.8	56.7
Secondary	43.2	29.0	29.0
Tertiary	12.4	14.2	14.2
<u>Bolivia 2019 (F2F)</u>			<u>2012 Census</u>
Gender			
Female	49.7	50.1	50.1
Male	50.3	49.9	49.9
Age group			
18-24	21.4	23.6	22.8
25-34	4.6	26.5	26.3
35-44	18.7	18.7	18.8
45-54	15.2	12.9	13.2
55-64	10.5	9.0	9.2
65+	9.7	9.3	9.5
Education			
Primary	37.8	42.2	42.2
Secondary	42.6	41.4	41.4
Tertiary	19.6	16.4	16.4
<u>Brazil 2019 (online)</u>			<u>2010 Census</u>
Gender			
Female	59.0	51.0	51.0
Male	41.0	49.0	49.0
Age group			
18-24	15.6	23.6	23.6
25-34	24.8	22.7	22.7
35-44	19.2	18.6	18.6
45-54	18.9	15.2	15.2
55-64	12.2	10.2	10.2
65+	9.5	9.7	9.7
Education			
Primary	24.5	45.1	45.1
Secondary	56.3	45.5	45.5
Tertiary	19.2	9.4	9.4
<u>Chile 2019 (online)</u>			<u>2017 Census</u>
Gender			
Female	57.4	51.1	51.1
Male	42.6	48.9	48.9
Age group			
18-24	8.4	14.2	14.2

Demographic	Sample (unweighted)	Sample (weighted)	Population
25-34	19.5	20.8	20.8
35-44	25.2	18.1	18.1
45-54	21.6	17.6	17.6
55-64	17.5	14.2	14.2
65+	7.7	15.0	15.0
Education			
Primary	4.4	24.2	24.2
Secondary	54.7	47.0	47.0
Tertiary	40.9	28.8	28.8
<u>Colombia 2019 (online)</u>			<u>2018 Census</u>
Gender			
Female	50.5	51.2	51.2
Male	49.5	48.8	48.8
Age group			
18-24	13.9	17.4	17.4
25-34	22.0	22.4	22.4
35-44	22.3	18.9	18.9
45-54	18.4	16.6	16.6
55-64	15.5	13.0	13.0
65+	8.0	11.6	11.6
Education			
Primary	49.1	36.5	36.5
Secondary	30.5	42.1	42.1
Tertiary	20.4	21.5	21.5
<u>Mexico 2019 (online)</u>			<u>2010 Census</u>
Gender			
Female	52.4	51.2	51.2
Male	47.7	48.8	48.8
Age group			
18-24	5.5	19.9	19.9
25-34	14.3	24.0	24.0
35-44	20.6	21.3	21.3
45-54	18.9	15.3	15.3
55-64	22.4	9.8	9.8
65+	18.2	9.7	9.7
Education			
Primary	24.5	37.8	37.8
Secondary	38.1	29.0	29.0
Tertiary	37.4	33.3	33.3

Demographic	Sample (unweighted)	Sample (weighted)	Population
<u>US 2019 (online)</u>			<u>2019 ACS</u>
Gender			
Female	53.3	51.3	50.8
Male	46.7	48.7	49.2
Age group			
18-24	9.7	14.0	11.8
25-34	18.3	19.1	18.0
35-44	18.1	15.5	16.3
45-54	15.9	15.3	16.0
55-64	19.0	15.6	16.6
65+	19.0	20.5	21.2
Education			
Primary	3.9	15.1	12.0
Secondary	58.5	54.5	55.9
Tertiary	37.6	30.4	32.2
<u>Uruguay 2017 (F2F)</u>			<u>2011 Census</u>
Gender			
Female	52.4	52.0	52.0
Male	47.6	48.0	48.0
Age group			
18-24	13.8	14.2	14.1
25-34	17.6	19.3	19.2
35-44	16.1	17.7	17.7
45-54	17.2	16.3	16.3
55-64	16.1	13.4	13.4
65+	19.2	19.3	19.3
Education			
Primary	66.3	40.3	40.3
Secondary	22.8	39.9	39.9
Tertiary	10.9	19.8	19.8

B. Additional Tables and Figures

Table A3. *Regression models relating potential candidate proxies to economic and gender indicators*

	# of traits	6+ traits	Encour.	# of traits	6+ traits	Encour.	# of traits	6+ traits	Encour.	# of traits	6+ traits	Encour.
Worker	-0.34 (0.19)	-0.03* (0.00)	-0.12* (0.00)									
Lower-income				-0.13 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.05* (0.01)						
Lower-wealth							-0.22 (0.24)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.04* (0.00)			
Female										-0.14* (0.05)	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.07* (0.01)
Survey indicators	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	2,623	2,623	1,850	8,411	8,411	8,036	3,160	3,160	6,148	10,405	10,405	8,818
R^2	0.008	0.020	0.020	0.032	0.015	0.013	0.003	0.007	0.012	0.032	0.017	0.018
<i>DV: sample mean</i>	3.26	0.15	0.22	3.27	0.12	0.19	3.03	0.16	0.18	3.22	0.11	0.19
<i>Gap (as % of mean)</i>	-10.4%	-19.8%	-54.0%	-4.0%	4.4%	-25.2%	-7.3%	7.0%	-23.5%	-4.4%	-14.7%	-36.9%

Notes: Cells report coefficients from regressions relating the outcome variable listed at the top of the column to indicators for working-class, lower-income, lower-wealth, and female (respectively) respondents and country indicators (coefficients available on request). “# of traits” refers to the number of the seven politician attributes that respondents said they possess. “6+ traits” is an indicator for respondents who said that they had six or seven of the seven attributes. “Encour.” is an indicator for respondents who reported that they had been encouraged to run for office by political leaders, community leaders, training programs, employers, friends, and/or family. Standard errors are clustered by survey. * $p < 0.05$

Figure A1. *Distributions of politician attribute question counts (out of seven), by survey*

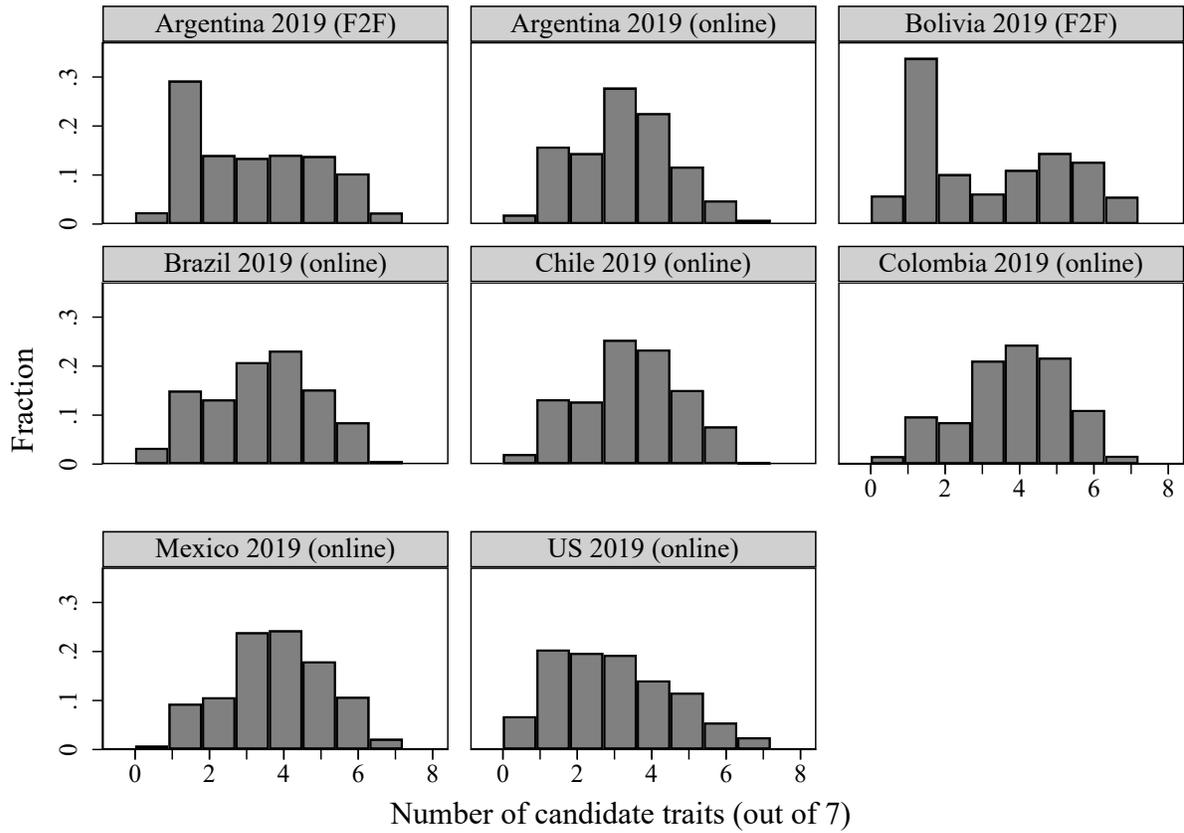


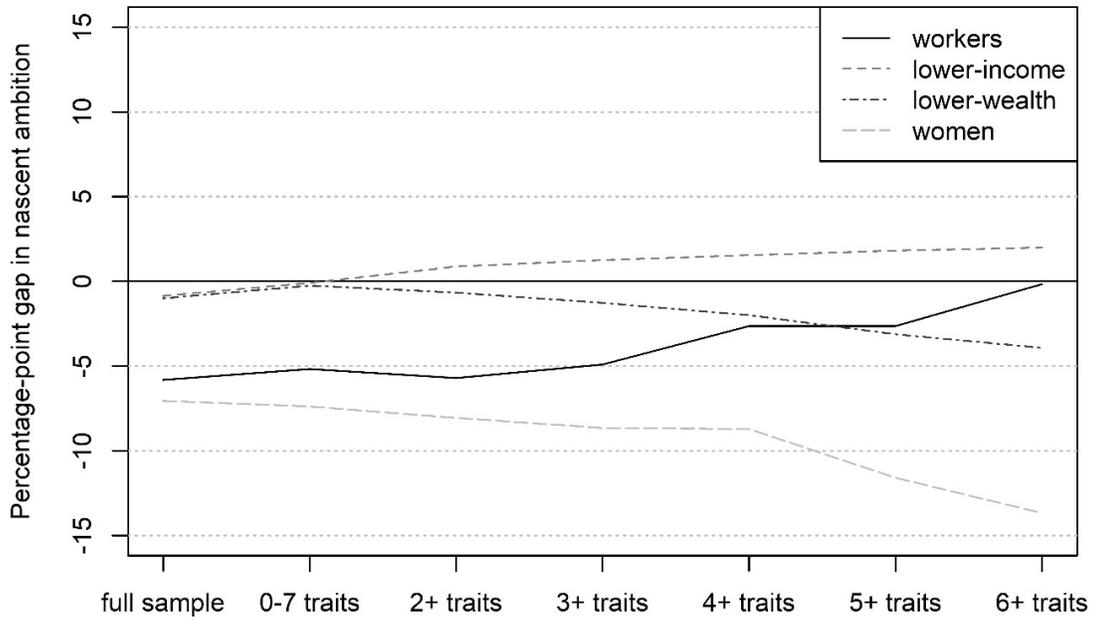
Table A4. Regression results summarized in Figure 2

	All respond.	6+ cand. traits	Enc. to run	All respond.	6+ cand. traits	Enc. to run
Worker	-0.058*	-0.002	0.019			
	(0.005)	(0.055)	(0.054)			
Lower-income				-0.008	0.020	-0.031
				(0.015)	(0.028)	(0.032)
Lower-wealth						
Female						
Survey indicators	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	2,632	385	416	11,075	1,035	1,512
Surveys	3	3	2	9	7	6
R^2	0.009	0.028	0.001	0.010	0.030	0.004

	All respond.	6+ cand. traits	Enc. to run	All respond.	6+ cand. traits	Enc. to run
Worker						
Lower-income						
Lower-wealth	-0.010	-0.039	-0.018			
	(0.005)	(0.034)	(0.021)			
Female				-0.071*	-0.137*	-0.106*
				(0.010)	(0.028)	(0.030)
Survey indicators	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	6,159	498	1,081	13,515	1,192	1,635
Surveys	4	2	4	10	8	6
R^2	0.005	0.004	0.001	0.022	0.051	0.015

Note: Results are from linear regression models that include survey indicators, with standard errors clustered by survey. Intercepts are not reported. * $p < 0.05$

Figure A2. Gaps in nascent ambition, varying the cutoff for the number of traits needed to be counted as a potential candidate



Note: Values represent percentage point gaps in the shares of respondents who said they had considered running for public office in recent years. The estimates are taken from simple regression models that relate nascent ambition to one of the indicators (e.g., an indicator for respondents who were workers) and survey fixed effects.

Table A5. *Regression results summarized in Table 3*

6+ candidate traits

	AR 2019 (F2F)	BO 2019 (F2F)	CL 2019 (online)	AR 2019 (online)	AR 2019 (F2F)	BO 2019 (F2F)	BR 2019 (online)	CO 2019 (online)
Worker	-0.09 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.07)	0.17 (0.12)					
Lower-income				0.12 (0.14)	-0.02 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.05)	0.16* (0.08)	-0.06 (0.09)
Lower-wealth								
Female								
Intercept	0.24* (0.07)	0.18* (0.07)	0.31* (0.08)	0.22 (0.12)	0.17* (0.04)	0.20* (0.03)	0.17* (0.06)	0.38* (0.04)
Observations	120	201	64	52	173	289	118	164
R^2	0.011	0.000	0.028	0.015	0.000	0.001	0.035	0.003

6+ candidate traits

	MX 2019 (online)	US 2019 (online)	AR 2019 (online)	AR 2019 (F2F)	AR 2019 (online)	AR 2019 (F2F)	BO 2019 (F2F)	BR 2019 (online)
Worker								
Lower-income	0.09 (0.07)	-0.04 (0.10)						
Lower-wealth			0.00 (0.05)	-0.07 (0.05)				
Female					-0.03 (0.12)	-0.11* (0.05)	-0.08 (0.05)	-0.21* (0.08)
Intercept	0.28* (0.05)	0.27* (0.07)	0.16* (0.04)	0.22* (0.04)	0.30* (0.09)	0.22* (0.04)	0.23* (0.03)	0.34* (0.05)
Observations	166	73	194	304	62	194	307	118
R^2	0.009	0.002	0.000	0.007	0.001	0.023	0.009	0.057

(continued)

6+ candidate traits

	CL 2019 (online)	CO 2019 (online)	MX 2019 (online)	US 2019 (online)
Worker				
Lower-income				
Lower-wealth				
Female	-0.18* (0.09)	-0.25* (0.07)	-0.16* (0.07)	-0.06 (0.10)
Intercept	0.37 (0.06)	0.48* (0.05)	0.40* (0.05)	0.27* (0.06)
Observations	101	164	166	80
R^2	0.041	0.067	0.029	0.004

Encouraged to run

	AR 2019 (F2F)	BO 2019 (F2F)	AR 2017 (F2F)	AR 2019 (F2F)	BO 2019 (F2F)	CO 2019 (online)	MX 2019 (online)	UY 2017 (F2F)
Worker	-0.05 (0.08)	0.06 (0.07)						
Lower-income			0.03 (0.07)	-0.04 (0.07)	-0.05 (0.05)	0.03 (0.06)	0.05 (0.06)	-0.15* (0.06)
Lower-wealth								
Female								
Intercept	0.39* (0.07)	0.29* (0.06)	0.35* (0.05)	0.32* (0.04)	0.37* (0.03)	0.36* (0.03)	0.38* (0.05)	0.40* (0.04)
Observations	149	267	170	207	332	307	232	264
R^2	0.002	0.003	0.001	0.002	0.002	0.001	0.002	0.023

(continued)

Encouraged to run

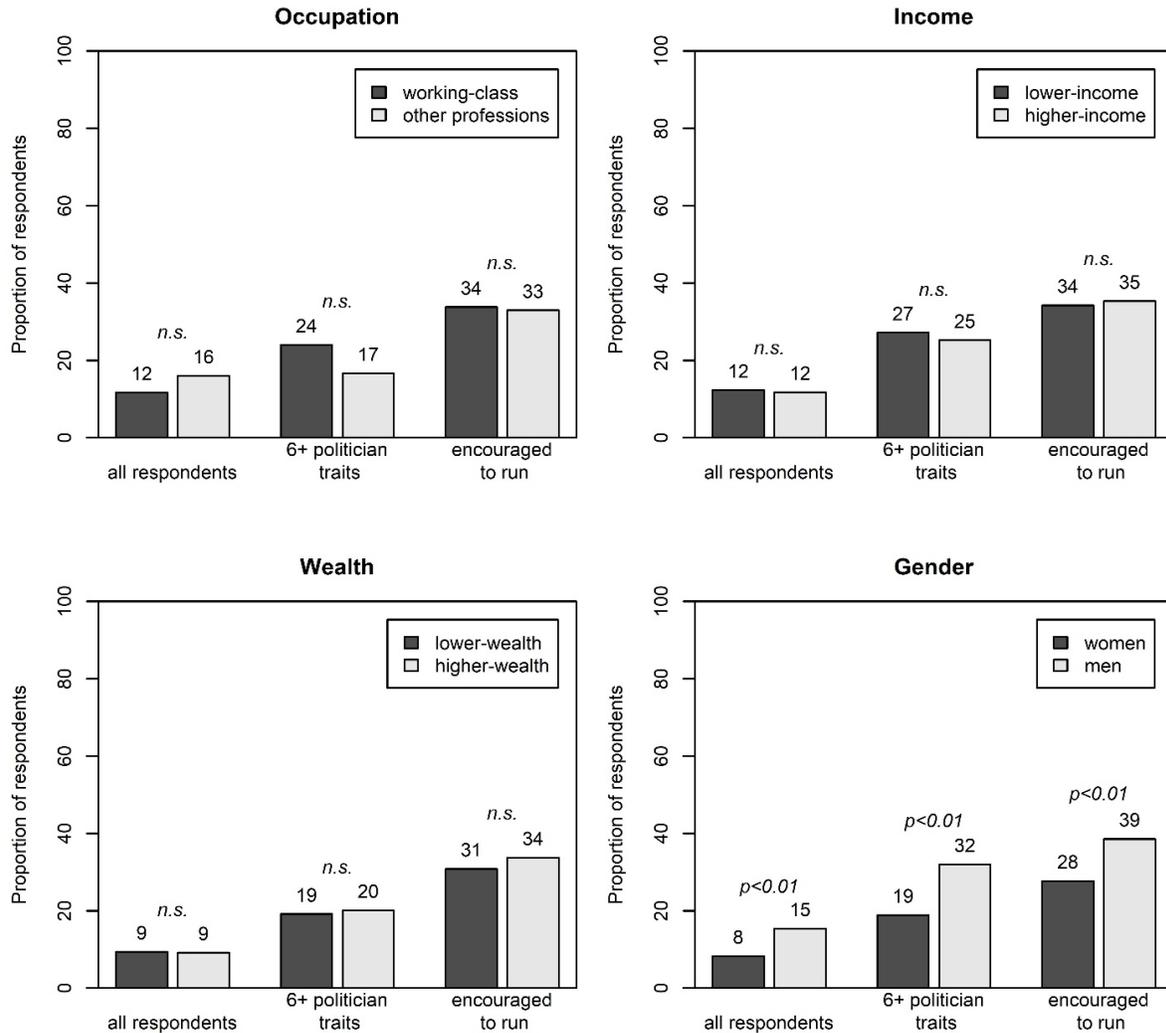
	AR 2017 (F2F)	AR 2019 (F2F)	BO 2019 (F2F)	UY 2017 (F2F)	AR 2017 (F2F)	AR 2019 (F2F)	BO 2019 (F2F)	CO 2019 (online)
Worker								
Lower-income								
Lower-wealth	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.05)	0.03 (0.06)				
Female					-0.17* (0.06)	-0.13* (0.06)	0.01 (0.05)	-0.12* (0.06)
Intercept	0.35* (0.05)	0.35* (0.05)	0.36* (0.04)	0.32* (0.04)	0.40* (0.04)	0.38* (0.04)	0.34* (0.03)	0.42* (0.04)
Observations	210	232	364	275	213	234	370	307
R^2	0.005	0.002	0.000	0.001	0.032	0.020	0.000	0.015

Encouraged to run

	MX 2019 (online)	UY 2017 (F2F)
Worker		
Lower-income		
Lower-wealth		
Female	-0.18* (0.06)	-0.11 (0.06)
Intercept	0.47* (0.04)	0.38* (0.04)
Observations	232	279
R^2	0.031	0.014

Note: Results are from linear regression models that include survey indicators, with standard errors clustered by survey. * $p < 0.05$

Figure A3. Gaps in nascent ambition (with added controls for education)



Note: Values represent estimated percentages of respondents who reported that they had recently considered running for elected office from regression models relating this nascent ambition measure to the attribute in question (e.g., an indicator for working-class politicians) as well as survey fixed effects (to account for the differences documented in Figure 1) and indicators for respondents with secondary and tertiary educations (primary or less was the omitted category), with standard errors clustered by survey.

Table A6. Coding of working-class and other professions

Argentina 2019 (F2F) & Bolivia 2019 (F2F)		Chile 2019 (Online)	
Directors and managers	Other	Occasional and informal minor jobs	Worker
Scientific and intellectual professionals	Other	Minor occupation, unskilled laborer, day laborer, domestic service	Worker
Technicians and mid-level professionals	Other	Skilled laborer, foreman, junior, micro-entrepreneur	Worker
Administrative support staff	Worker	Small businessmen or merchants	Other
Service workers and salespeople	Worker	Administrative Clerk, Qualified Salesperson, Secretary, Section Chief	Worker
Skilled farmers and workers	Worker	Primary and secondary teachers	Other
Officers, operators and artisans	Worker	Freelancers from traditional college majors	Other
Plant and machine operators	Worker	Independent professionals with technical careers, specialized technicians	Other
Elementary occupations	Worker	Manager or assistant manager of a medium or small company, medium executive of a large company	Other
Military occupations	Other	Independent professionals of great prestige	Other
(missing)	(missing)	Senior executives of large companies	Other
		Large and medium entrepreneurs or merchants, directors of large companies	Other
		I do not work	(missing)

Appendix References

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Rivers, Douglas. 2007. "Sampling for Web Surveys." Paper presented at the Joint Statistical Meetings, Salt Lake City, UT.