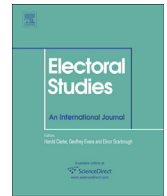




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## Partisan losers' effects: Perceptions of electoral integrity in Mexico<sup>☆</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

We examine the partisan, logistic, and contextual factors affecting citizens' perceptions of electoral integrity. Drawing on original survey data collected at different stages of the 2012 Mexican presidential election, we find that confidence in the integrity of the electoral process varies not only over time, but also across partisanship. While those who supported the candidate on the left consistently expressed concerns about electoral corruption, supporters of the incumbent party discredited the integrity of the election only after learning their candidate's defeat. Furthermore, we provide the first empirical assessment of the relationship between voters' perceptions of electoral integrity and the presence of observers and party representatives at the polling station. Our findings contribute to a better understanding of the political factors that influence citizens' trust in elections.

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### 1. Introduction

A fundamental aspect of democratic consolidation relies on compliance with the electoral result, which requires a minimal agreement about the fairness of the process. In principle, citizens' perceptions should accurately reflect the integrity of the election. In practice, however, these perceptions are idiosyncratic to the characteristics of the citizens and the political context surrounding the election. For example, there is evidence that the outcome of an election can bias *ex-post* perceptions of the process, depending on whether the result was favorable to the citizens' preferences (Baron and Hershey, 1988; Anderson et al., 2005). At

the same time, voters differ on their predispositions to trust given their divergent socioeconomic, ethnic, or partisan identifications (Alvarez et al., 2008; Gerber et al., 2012). Therefore, a consideration of popular perceptions on electoral integrity requires identifying its sources and potential biases.

The study of perceptions of electoral quality has progressed enormously as a result of recent scholarly works (Anderson et al., 2005; Birch, 2008; Rosas, 2010; Norris, 2013; Maldonado and Seligson, 2014; Carreras and Irepoglu, 2013). Nevertheless, many of these studies provide only static analyses of perceptions, and the validity of their results is therefore limited to the specific time in which the surveys were conducted. For instance, measuring citizens' perceptions of electoral integrity *before* the election day captures expectations of the quality of the electoral process, but it fails to incorporate potential logistical improvements that are only perceivable at the polling station. Alternatively, measuring citizens' perceptions *after* the result is announced captures not only the performance of the electoral administration, but also the disappointment or approval of voters with regard to the

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outcome of the election. While both approaches provide valuable in-put on the topic, in isolation they ignore the dynamic characteristics of perceptions of electoral integrity.

This paper addresses this gap in the literature by exploring the partisan, logistic, and con-textual factors affecting the perception of an election as a fair procedure. Using individual-level data from surveys conducted at different stages of the 2012 presidential election in Mexico, and complementing them with information about the characteristics of the electoral precincts where respondents cast their votes, we investigate the effect of voters' social and political context on their electoral trust. First, consistent with [Anderson et al. \(2005\)](#), we find that electoral losers have more negative opinions about the integrity of the election, though the reasons why they express distrust differ internally and temporally. On one hand, those who supported a candidate who was pessimistic about the integrity of the election consistently expressed concerns about electoral corruption. On the other hand, supporters of the incumbent party discredited the integrity of the election only after knowing about their candidate's defeat.

Second, we evaluate the perceived effects of a number of factors that directly influence the integrity of an election. In particular, we explore the role of logistic and contextual characteristics of the places where voters cast their ballots. We find that the partisan effects on perception of electoral integrity are not confounded by alternative potential explanations such as the presence of party representatives and whether the citizen lives in a place where the majority of voters share her electoral preference. These results depart from previous research asserting electoral minorities and the conditions of the polling station as determinants of electoral trust ([Atkenson and Saunders, 2003](#); [Karpowitz et al., 2011](#)).

The 2012 Mexican presidential election is an ideal case for studying perceptions of electoral integrity. As discussed in the following section, Mexico is a country marked by a long history of electoral distrust.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the Mexican case offers rich micro-level data to empirically assess the extent to which logistic and contextual factors shape trust in elections. In particular, we exploit a novel database tracking the presence of electoral observers and party agents at the polling station, which allows us to evaluate whether these actors affect voters' perceptions of electoral integrity.

We make three contributions to the understanding of perceptions of electoral corruption. First, our work contributes to the winner-loser gap theory by measuring predispositions toward electoral trust among those who voted for different losing candidates. We place this piece alongside other insightful analyses of the impact of partisanship on perceptions of corruption and electoral fraud ([Llewellyn et al., 2009](#); [Anduiza et al., 2013](#); [Beaulieu, 2014b](#)).

However, the uniqueness of our study is that we explore the effects of partisanship in a context with multiple losing candidates. Our findings uncover heterogenous effects of partisanship on perceptions of electoral integrity across supporters of different losing candidates. While negative perceptions of electoral integrity in one group of voters only appear *ex-post*, i.e. after the election, a different group of voters consistently express negative opinions about the quality of the election.

Second, while there has been an increasing interest in studying the role electoral observers and party agents play in the integrity of an election ([Hyde, 2011](#); [Kelley, 2012](#); [Sjoberg, 2013](#); [Casas et al., 2013](#)), there is little empirical work on how these actors affect citizens' trust in elections. By collecting data on the number of observers and party agents in the electoral precincts where survey respondents were assigned to cast their votes, this paper provides the first empirical evaluation of the relationship between voters' trust in elections and the presence of observers and party agents.

The third contribution of this article is methodological. Most of the literature on perceptions of electoral integrity relies on surveys conducted either before election day or after the results were made public. This convention inevitably creates noise in the accuracy of the reported assessments, as well as in the identification of voters and non-voters. To address these potential problems, we compare the attitudes of citizens before, during, and after election day. For this comparison we use pre- and post-electoral nationally representative surveys, as well as a large-scale exit poll, which is representative at both the state and the national levels. The latter instrument provides us with a proper time window for measuring voters' experiences: immediately after they cast their ballot and prior to knowing the electoral outcome. One surprising finding revealed by this approach was, for example, the identification of a group of citizens who voted while having no expectation of their ballots being respected and counted accurately.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, we provide a brief overview of electoral integrity issues in Mexico, and describe the political context that surrounded the 2012 presidential election. In Section 3, we outline our theoretical expectations and develop a set of testable hypotheses with regard to the partisan, logistical, and contextual factors that may affect voters' perceptions of electoral integrity. In Section 4, we describe our data sources and explain the research design. In Section 5, we present our main empirical results. In Section 6, we close the paper with a discussion on the implications of our findings and suggest further lines of research. [Supplementary information](#) and additional results are provided in the [Online Appendix](#).

## 2. Political context: electoral integrity in Mexico

Popular distrust in Mexican elections has its roots in the pendular democratization process of the country ([McCann and Domínguez, 1998](#); [Hiskey and Bowler, 2005](#); [Moreno, 2012](#)). Although elections were open to the general population and held without interruption after the

<sup>2</sup> The Online Appendix provides two figures to support this claim. First, as [Fig. 7](#) shows, Mexico holds the largest proportion in Latin America of respondents qualifying their elections as 'a fraud.' Second, [Fig. 8](#) shows that, when Mexican respondents are asked to evaluate trust in elections, they showed medium levels of trust in the region.

end of the Mexican Revolution, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI, by its Spanish acronym) controlled the electoral arena for close to seven decades (Magaloni, 2006; Greene, 2007).<sup>3</sup> Starting in 1929, the PRI consolidated a hegemonic party system (Sartori, 1976) that succeeded in carefully balancing “legitimacy” and authoritarianism by facilitating the creation of satellite or minor opposition parties and by holding elections regularly (Molinar, 1991). However, beginning in the late 1980s, the country went through a process of growing electoral competition that nurtured the development of a more authentic democracy. Opposition victories took place at the local level, then at the state level, and ultimately, in 2000, at the presidential level, when Vicente Fox of the National Action Party (PAN) defeated the PRI’s presidential candidate, Francisco Labastida. Therefore, despite the institutionalization of elections, their function as a legitimate process to select public representatives has been only a recent episode in the history of the country.

Mexico’s gradual transition to democracy was constantly delayed by the PRI’s electoral manipulation, which prevented crucial opposition victories. Voters on the right faced PAN’s non-recognized victories in at least a dozen elections between 1980 and 1995 (Lujambio, 2001, p. 55–56; Greene, 2007, p. 91), and there is documented evidence of electoral irregularities in several states during the late 1980s and early 1990s (Preston and Dillon, 2004, p. 117–180, 204–227). On the other side of the ideological spectrum, the left experienced systematic repression—particularly against the Democratic Revolution Party’s (PRD) candidates—during the first half of the 1990s (Greene, 2007, p. 95), not to mention the alleged electoral manipulation against the leftist candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas during the 1988 presidential election (Castañeda, 2000). It was not until the mid-1990s that, through a constitutional reform, the body in charge of organizing federal elections was provided with independence from the executive power, which facilitated the emergence of freer and fairer elections (Magaloni, 2006, p. 38).

However, democratic development in the country has failed to persuade citizens about the increasing integrity of elections. Allegations of fraud returned to the public discourse during the 2006 presidential election, when skepticism of the fairness of the process increased before the presidential campaign (Levin and Alvarez, 2009).<sup>4</sup> The 2006 results declared PAN’s Felipe Calderón the winner of the presidential election over Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the PRD candidate, with a margin of victory of just 0.56 percent. López Obrador rejected the results until a “full recount” of the votes was conducted, a request that was later

turned down by the electoral court. Two weeks after the election, a quarter of the population was skeptical about the integrity of the process (Lawson et al., 2007).<sup>5</sup> Yet, these pessimistic perceptions were uneven among candidates’ supporters. While fewer than ten percent of those who voted for Calderón disagreed with the statement that “elections were clean and fair,” the disagreement was closer to 40 percent among those who voted for López Obrador.<sup>6</sup>

The election to replace the outgoing President Felipe Calderón was held on July 1, 2012. His successor at the PAN, Josefina Vázquez Mota, ran against Enrique Peña Nieto of the PRI, Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the PRD, and Gabriel Quadri of the Partido Nueva Alianza (PANAL). Peña Nieto led for much of the campaign, and eventually was declared the winner with 38.2% of the vote, followed by López Obrador (31.6%), Vázquez Mota (25.4%), and Quadri (2.3%).

The election, however, was not free of alleged irregularities. Both López Obrador and Vázquez Mota complained about the PRI’s illicit campaign funding and the flagrant use of resources for patronage and vote-buying. However, as Serra (2013) highlights, losing candidates followed different paths toward their electoral defeats. While Vázquez Mota and her party recognized the electoral result, López Obrador’s coalition presented a legal complaint accusing Peña Nieto and his party of using gift cards to buy votes (Palmer-Rubin and Nichter, 2014). The main goal of López Obrador and the parties that supported him was for the Federal Electoral Court (TEPJF) to declare the election null and void due to alleged irregularities. Despite the accusations, the TEPJF argued that the mere existence of the cards was not enough evidence to prove that they were distributed by Peña Nieto and his coalition.

After the election, international observers and electoral experts praised the “professionalism of local and electoral institutions,” assessing that the observed irregularities did not affect the overall quality of the election (European Union Election Expert Mission, 2012).<sup>7</sup> The result, however, did not elicit the expected perception of voters. A month after the election, only sixty percent of Mexican citizens considered the electoral process free and fair (*El Universal*, August 13, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> At its inception in 1929, the PRI was created as the National Revolutionary Party (PNR).

<sup>4</sup> In 2003, only the PRI and the PAN took part in the renewal of the IFE’s council, leaving the PRD outside the decision. Furthermore, a year before the election, both the PRI and PAN attempted to impeach Mexico City’s mayor, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who was leading the presidential polls at that time. Public perception was that the impeachment was an illegitimate attempt to eliminate López Obrador from the contest, and the impeachment was ultimately withdrawn (Lawson, 2007, p. 46).

<sup>5</sup> The unresolved inconsistencies of the electoral process also hurt the perception of the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), negative opinions of which went from six to 20 percent between June and September of 2006 (Eisenstadt and Poiré, 2006; Pastor, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> The first two waves of the Mexico 2006 Panel Study do not include a similar question. However, the second wave, administered in April and May of 2006, includes a differently worded question about how fair these voters expected the election to be. Among those who declared their preference for Calderón, 26 percent responded “a little clean” or “not clean at all election.” The proportion of similar answers among López Obrador’s supporters was 35 percent.

<sup>7</sup> Using the Expert Survey of Perceptions of Electoral Integrity (Norris et al., 2013), the mean index of electoral procedures as “fair” for the 2012 presidential election in Mexico has a value of 80.35 on a 25–100 scale. This value is similar to the measurements of the 2012 parliamentary election in Japan (86.00) as well as the 2012 U.S. presidential election (76.33).

### 3. Theoretical expectations

To study the differences in popular trust of clean and fair elections, scholars have considered three different types of arguments: partisan, institutional, and contextual factors. While the literature often considers each of these approaches in a time-persistent and isolated manner, the joint analysis of these approaches remains scarce (Kerr, 2013). This section discusses each approach and generates the hypotheses to be tested in the empirical section.

#### 3.1. Partisan effects

Our first hypotheses builds on the seminal work by Anderson et al. (2005) and their theory of the winner–loser gap to understand how the electoral outcome produces different attitudes toward the political system. Given the negative emotional responses of losing, those who supported a losing party or candidate typically express more pessimistic evaluations of the electoral process to compensate for the gap between their beliefs and the outcome of the election.<sup>8</sup> While Anderson et al. (2005) present solid evidence that partisan identification has an amplifying effect for winners, their empirical findings among electoral losers are ambivalent. Our study complements the explanation of the expected decline of trust in the electoral process among supporters of losing candidates by further exploring the heterogeneous effects of partisanship among electoral losers.

We posit that the level of political trust expressed by both voters and candidates varies across losing parties, and that differences in the extent to which these actors challenge the integrity of an election are shaped by parties' platforms and previous winning experiences. On one hand, parties in developing democracies have the temptation to attract radical supporters and social activists who can help them defend the integrity of the election in exchange for future implementation of their policy goals (Trejo, 2014). As a result, voters with strong predispositions against the political status quo are willing to shift their support to the party that challenges the integrity of the election (Magaloni, 2006; Vázquez del Mercado, 2013). On the other hand, supporters of parties with no winning experience are more likely to express distrust for elections because they face more uncertainty about when their parties will be given the opportunity to rule (Anderson et al., 2005). Moreover, the extent to which a party has suffered instances of fraud in its recent history negatively affects its members' trust in the integrity of subsequent elections (Beaulieu, 2014a, p. 40–42). Therefore, the prevalence of negative perceptions of electoral integrity on the losing side depends on a combination of two factors: (1) radical voters supporting candidates who

challenge the system, and (2) previous electoral experiences of the party.<sup>9</sup>

Our first hypothesis is, then, that voters supporting the leftist candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, are more likely to show negative and time-consistent evaluations of their voting experience. As earlier mentioned, militants and candidates on the left faced electoral manipulation and systematic repression during the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s. Moreover, the narrow result of the 2006 election and the post-electoral protests increased skepticism about electoral integrity among leftist supporters, an issue continuously highlighted by López Obrador in his 2012 campaign.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, we expect that PRD voters will have more negative predispositions when evaluating the integrity of the election before and after knowing its result. We thus derive the following hypothesis for the PRD voters and their perceptions.

**Hypothesis 1.** At every stage of the election, supporters of the PRD's presidential candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, are more likely to have negative perceptions of electoral integrity than those who support other candidates.

In contrast, we claim that voters supporting the candidate of the incumbent party, Josefina Vázquez Mota, switched their perceptions of electoral integrity only after experiencing a negative result. The PAN was the incumbent party since 2000, and its supporters were confident about the electoral processes and institutions that produced their victories. The “loser effect” for PAN voters, then, comes after the results of the 2012 election are publicly known. Following the argument of the “winner-loser” gap, negative evaluations of the integrity of the election *ex-post* are rooted in the dissonance avoidance of the voters supporting a losing candidate. In this case, Vázquez Mota's voters

<sup>9</sup> Since our paper is focused on the partisan effects of electoral trust, the proposed research design cannot distinguish which of the two theories mentioned above has the strongest effect among PRD voters. A possible expansion of this project will be to explore the dynamic effects of electoral trust across multiple elections. However, in the [Online Appendix](#) we partially account for the effect of the voting choice on our dependent variable to not be driven by the opinion of the polarizing 2006 election. We do so by using a question available for the pre- and post-electoral surveys and using the dummy variable *López Obrador won 2006* with the value of 1 when the respondent thinks that the PRD's candidate won the election and 0 otherwise. Although the results show that this variable has a negative effect on our dependent variable, vote choice in 2012 remains significant, suggesting that past electoral experience has an important but not determinant effect.

<sup>10</sup> As an illustration, we cite some of the public declarations López Obrador made during the last month of his campaign. In the state of Michoacán, he complained about the negative campaign against him “What is the alternative that they will take if their negative campaign doesn't work? Fraud” ([Reforma, June 6, 2012](#)). After stating that PRI governors were pressured to get a certain number of votes for Peña Nieto, he later said that “It is important to act with decency and decorum. I call [the governors] to think about the negative effects of electoral fraud” ([Reforma, June 21, 2012](#)). Two days later, he declared in the state of Guerrero, one of the PRD strongholds, “We need many votes to compensate for those places where they can commit fraud” ([Reforma, June 23, 2012](#)). Finally, during his last campaign rally, López Obrador declared that “these days we're preparing ourselves to defend the vote, so another electoral fraud isn't committed” ([San Diego Union-Tribune, June 27, 2012](#)).

<sup>8</sup> This behavioral pattern is confirmed by recent work on the United States (Alvarez et al., 2008) and Latin America (Maldonado and Seligson, 2014).

conclude that the election was not clean as a way to explain their electoral defeat. Therefore, unlike the previous evidence that shows PAN's supporters with very positive perceptions of electoral integrity (Magaloni, 2006), we expect that PAN voters in 2012 switched their evaluations of the electoral process once their electoral defeat was known.

**Hypothesis 2.** Supporters of the PAN's presidential candidate, Josefina Vázquez Mota, are more likely to express negative perceptions of electoral integrity only after the electoral result is publicly known.

### 3.2. Logistic effects

The second group of explanations accounts for the redistributive consequences of the political institutions (Przeworski, 1991, p. 28). These explanations consider factors directly related to the efficiency of the voting process and the outcomes they provide. For example, cross-national studies have found that the highest levels of confidence in elections exist in those countries using proportional representation rules (Anderson et al., 2005), public funding of parties (Birch, 2008), and electoral management bodies outside the control of political parties (Rosas, 2010). At the micro-institutional level, examples of these factors include the type of ballot (Alvarez et al., 2008; Herrnson et al., 2008; Alvarez et al., 2013), the location of the polling station (Stewart et al., 2010; Karpowitz et al., 2011), the performance of the poll workers (Atkinson and Saunders, 2003), the waiting time to vote (Claassen et al., 2008), and the technological problems of voting machines (Hall et al., 2007). In summary, institutional explanations highlight the importance of the operative rules to enhance electoral trust and to suggest some areas for improvement during the election's organization.

We evaluate two different types of logistical factors that might have affected the performance and integrity of poll workers. First, we consider the role of election observers in the polling station and their effects on the perception of the citizens. Electoral observers are considered in the literature of democratization as relevant actors to deter electoral manipulation and to provide more objective and independent information on the quality of the process (Hyde and Marinov, 2014). While there is an increasing attention to the observers' direct influence on electoral integrity (Hyde, 2011; Kelley, 2012; Ichino and Schundeln, 2012), the relationship between the presence of observers and the confidence of voters in the electoral process has been unexplored.<sup>11</sup>

We expect that voters perceive the alleged deterrence of electoral fraud from electoral observers at the polling station. Since the main goal of electoral observers is to

guarantee the election's integrity, fraud perpetrators are not willing to disrupt the election in the presence of these agents, diminishing the likelihood of manipulation at the polling station. In consequence, voters casting their ballots at polling stations with the presence of election observers should be more confident about the integrity of the election.

**Hypothesis 3.** Voters who cast their ballot in precincts where observers were present during the election are more likely to feel confident about the integrity of the election.

We also consider the effects of party officials on the perceptions of voters. Unlike electoral observers, party officials are partial monitors whose main goal is not the integrity of the election *per se* but rather the performance of their party at the polling station (Casas et al., 2013; Sjoberg, 2013). In the Mexican case, party officials are agents in charge of reporting information about turnout and incidents during the election day to their party superiors (Mercado, 2013). Therefore, the presence of party agents might raise confidence from co-partisan voters while garnering skepticism from everyone else.

While the evidence on the effect of these agents is ambiguous (Alvarez Portugal, 2007; Larreguy et al., 2014), we expect that voters' trust in the election to increase in the presence of agents that support their preferred candidate. Given the partisan interests of these agents, the voter would feel more confident that her vote will be respected if the ballot can be safeguarded by a representative of the candidate she prefers. Therefore, the following hypothesis explores both the positive and conditional effects of party representatives on electoral trust.

**Hypothesis 4.** Voters will be more confident of the election's integrity when party agents present at the polling station support their preferred candidate.

### 3.3. Contextual effects

The final group of factors includes the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the voters, as well as their location. The effects of these factors on electoral confidence are related to pre-dispositions of specific groups in the population towards expecting a particular level of integrity. For example, Gerber et al. (2012) find that poorer voters have little trust in the electoral process and are more likely to report in surveys any violations against the secrecy of the ballot. Another contextual factor is the group identity of voters. Alvarez et al. (2008) find African-American citizens are significantly less confident about the electoral process in the U.S. Similarly, Ferree and Long (2012) find a positive correlation between the ethnic heterogeneity of specific regions and perceptions of voters' privacy during the 2008 presidential elections in Ghana. The evaluation of an election as a fair procedure is also less likely among minorities—whether they are ethnic (Norris, 2004) or partisan (Karpowitz et al., 2011). In essence, contextual factors have little to do with the performance of the electoral administration, but they do affect voters' perceptions of the integrity and fairness of the process.

We take into account that a voter's assessment of the quality of an election can be affected by whether or not she

<sup>11</sup> To our knowledge, Beaulieu and Hyde (2009) provide the only work on the consequences of electoral observers on perceptions of electoral integrity. Their work, however, focuses on the strategic decisions for electoral autocrats to invite electoral monitors to minimize international criticism and the response of opposition parties to boycott the election. By contrast, here we explore the relationship between the presence of electoral observers and the confidence of the voters at the polling station.

belongs to a partisan minority in her community. Following Karpowitz et al. (2011), a voter who prefers a candidate other than the candidate from the party with greater support in her locality is more likely to be suspicious of the integrity of the election. Therefore, in addition to the expected partisan effects discussed above, we expect citizens with electoral preferences that represent a minority in their community to express more suspicion about the fairness of the electoral process. To be precise, skepticism of the integrity of an election is more likely among voters casting a ballot for a party that is not the one supported by the majority in that particular precinct during the previous election.

**Hypothesis 5.** Voters who cast their ballot for a candidate other than Peña Nieto will be less confident in the integrity of the election if they do so in a precinct with a high number of PRI supporters.

## 4. Data and analysis

### 4.1. Surveys

We use three nation-wide surveys for the Mexican presidential election of July 1, 2012. The pre- and post-electoral surveys are representative at the national level, and consist of two non-panel samples of respondents interviewed two weeks before and one month after the election day.<sup>12</sup> In the exit poll—which is representative at both the state and the national levels—, more than 7000 voters were interviewed immediately after they cast their votes during the election day. In all cases, respondents were randomly selected using a stratified multistage cluster sampling design.<sup>13</sup>

In order to increase the likelihood of truthfulness, the questionnaire was administered using a procedure that simulated a secret ballot that had the candidates' names and party logos. All three surveys were administered by the same polling firm, which used very similar question ordering and wording, reducing the instrumentation threat when measuring the variables across time (Trochim and Donnelly, 2006, p. 162).<sup>14</sup>

Measuring perceptions of electoral integrity at different stages and population groups allows us to balance the shortcomings that each survey has if used in isolation. On one hand, the estimates from the exit poll reduce inaccurate estimates of individuals' political behavior. A common problem in the literature of political behavior is the overestimation of turnout rates and support of the winning candidate when using surveys administered at any other time than the election date (Noelle-Neumann, 1993; Wright, 1993; Atkenson, 1999; Katz and Katz, 2010). The estimates from the exit poll address this problem by

identifying the voting population in an accurate way and measuring voter perceptions immediately after citizens cast their votes, avoiding the influence of potentially omitted factors that may affect the answers of the respondents (Zaller and Feldman, 1992; Mullainathan and Washington, 2009; Larcinese et al., 2013).

Conversely, the advantages of the exit poll are also its main limitations. Since voters and non-voters differ in their demographic characteristics (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Verba and Nie, 1972; Verba et al., 1993; Blais et al., 2004), the results of the exit poll are not generalizable to the entire population. Also, the brevity of exit polls limits the information extraction of other covariates. To address these problems, we complement our analysis by using information from both the pre- and post-electoral surveys, which focus on representative samples of the general population of Mexico and that contain an extensive battery of covariates to include in the empirical analysis. In sum, the use of the pre- and post-electoral surveys as well as the exit poll provides a clearer picture of citizens' perceptions of electoral integrity than simply analyzing a single stage of the process.

### 4.2. Variables

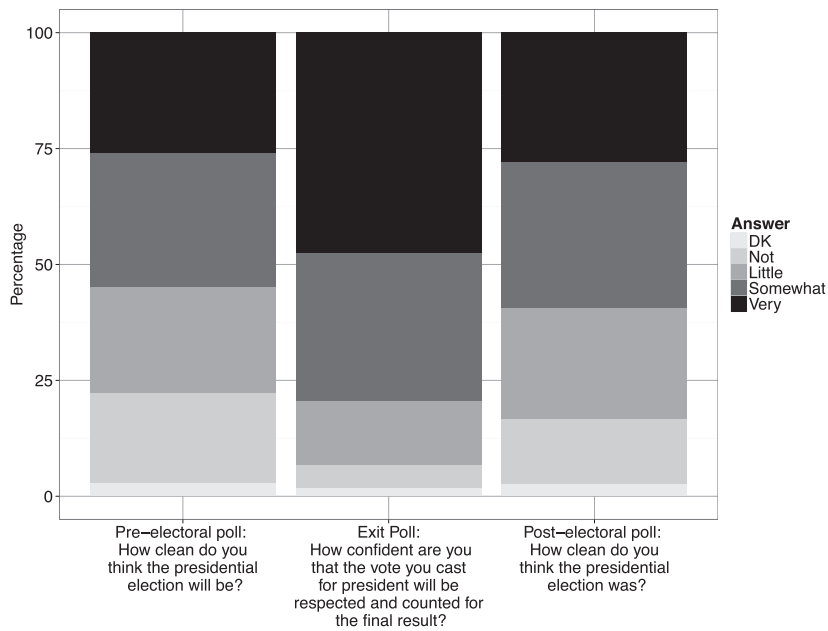
Our dependent variable measures citizens' confidence in the integrity of the election. For the pre[post]-electoral survey, we use the following question: "In your opinion, how clean will [were] the presidential elections be [held last July 1st]?" Respondents chose among the following options: "Very clean," "Somewhat clean," "A little clean," and "Not clean at all." From the exit poll, we measure the voter's confidence that her vote will be counted using the following question: "In general, how confident are you that the vote you cast for president will be respected and counted for the final result?" Respondents chose among the following options: "Very confident," "Some-what confident," "A little confident," and "Not at all confident." Fig. 1 shows the distribution of the different answers for our dependent variable before, during, and after election day. Compared with the general population, voters have a higher trust in the electoral process, confirming the argument that citizens with high levels of distrust in the electoral process abstain from casting their ballots (Levin and Alvarez, 2009; Simpser, 2013; Carreras and Irepoğlu, 2013). Nevertheless, the prospective and retrospective evaluations of electoral integrity in the population remained consistent, suggesting that perceptions of electoral integrity are invariable to the electoral outcome and the quality of the electoral administration.

From each survey, we also obtain the following independent variables. López Obrador, Vázquez Mota, and Peña Nieto are bivariate variables indicating the vote choice of the respondent given her vote in the simulated ballot. As the hypotheses describe, we expect that the confidence levels of the citizens are affected by their vote choice and survey timing. The surveys also include a battery of respondents' sociodemographic characteristics, such as Age, gender (*Female*), and Education. We also include the variable *Rural*, which accounts for the provision of public services in the localities of the precincts (IFE, 2011, p. 6–9).

<sup>12</sup> The pre-electoral survey was administered during the week of June 11–14, 2012 to 785 individuals. The response rate was 63 percent. The post-electoral survey was administered during the week of August 2–6, 2012, to 1000 individuals, and its response rate was 61 percent.

<sup>13</sup> A description of the methodology and sampling design used in each survey can be found in the [Online Appendix](#).

<sup>14</sup> See the [Online Appendix](#) for additional information.



Notes: This graph presents self-reported evaluations of electoral integrity *before*, *during*, and *after* the 2012 presidential election. The *before* and *after* measures are based on two nationally representative surveys conducted two weeks before, and one month after, the election day. Perceptions of electoral integrity *during* the election are based on the exit poll.

Fig. 1. Perceptions of electoral integrity *Before*, *During*, and *After* election day.

This variable has the value of 2 for those precincts classified as rural, 1 for the mixed precincts, and 0 for the urban precincts.

The pre-electoral survey and exit poll include two questions regarding the information level of the respondents. *Attention to campaigns* is a categorical variable that identifies whether the respondent paid much, some, a little, or no attention to the political campaigns. Similarly, *Decision time* is a dummy variable that identifies whether the respondent made her voting decision during the week prior to election day.<sup>15</sup> In line with Canache and Allison (2005) and their analysis on corruption perceptions, we expect that voters with higher levels of information and those who made an early choice are more confident in the quality of the election.

Further, we measure the logistic conditions of the election with two different types of variables. First, we include information about the presence of election observers and party officials in the precincts' polling stations of the precincts. Our variable *Observers* provides the average number of election observers in a given precinct's polling station. Although this variable does not account for

whether the voters in the sample actually acknowledge the presence of the observers while voting, we have no reason to expect that a particular socio-demographic or partisan group is more likely to notice the physical presence of observers than other voters in the same precinct.

Second, we account for the presence of party officials in the precinct. The variables *Agent López Obrador* and *Agent Vázquez Mota* divide the number of party agents for each of the candidates in a precinct by the number of polling stations within it. To test hypotheses 3 and 4, we create interactive variables for the number of electoral observers and party agents with the electoral choice of the respondent.

Finally, to test our contextual hypothesis, we take into account PRI's electoral strength during the previous presidential election. In this case, *PRI 2006* is the proportion of votes received by the PRI during the last presidential election in the municipality where respondents live. To identify voters preferring a minority party in the municipality, we create the interaction of this variable with the electoral support for either López Obrador or Vázquez Mota (Table 1).

We estimate the determinants of confidence in the election using an ordinal logit model. We also include multilevel models with random effects for precinct, municipality, and state levels. The estimates for both approaches are very similar, and we include these and other complementary tests in the Online Appendix. We first present the results of the exit poll and then compare the pre- and post-electoral surveys.

<sup>15</sup> The variable *Decision time* uses the question "When did you decide your presidential vote choice," and originally provides four possible answers: (1) "I always vote for the same party," (2) "since the candidates were announced," (3) "during the last week," and (4) "today." Given that the possible answers are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, we recode this variable giving a value of 1 to answers (3) and (4) and 0 otherwise.

**Table 1**  
Summary statistics.

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Exit Poll (July 1, 2012)					
Confidence on Electoral Integrity	7064	3.245	0.873	1	4
López Obrador	7064	0.296	0.456	0	1
Vázquez Mota	7064	0.215	0.411	0	1
Female	7064	0.522	0.500	0	1
Age	7006	40.692	15.528	18	97
Education	7033	3.225	1.225	1	5
Rural	7064	0.299	0.458	0	1
Decision time	6917	2.248	0.657	1	3
Attention to campaigns	7034	0.829	0.377	0	1
Observers	7030	0.065	0.161	0	1
Agent López Obrador	7030	1.817	0.971	0	6
Agent Vázquez Mota	7030	1.029	0.730	0	2
PRI 2006	7064	0.226	0.094	0.070	0.552
Pre-Electoral Survey (June 11–14, 2012)					
Confidence on Electoral Integrity	760	2.626	1.078	1	4
López Obrador	784	0.251	0.434	0	1
Vázquez Mota	784	0.193	0.395	0	1
Female	784	0.554	0.497	0	1
Age	782	3.522	1.243	1	5
Education	784	2.062	1.172	0	4
Attention to campaigns	784	0.610	0.488	0	1
Unemployment	784	0.105	0.306	0	1
PRI 2006	784	0.249	0.097	0.070	0.555
Post-Electoral Survey (August 2–6, 2012)					
Confidence on Electoral Integrity	973	2.751	1.024	1	4
López Obrador	1000	0.135	0.342	0	1
Vázquez Mota	1000	0.082	0.275	0	1
Female	1000	0.543	0.498	0	1
Age	1000	3.314	1.240	1	5
Education	1000	2.558	1.404	0	4
Unemployment	1000	0.099	0.299	0	1
PRI 2006	1000	0.250	0.105	0.070	0.531

## 5. Main results

### 5.1. Perceptions of voters at the polling station: exit poll

Table 2 shows the results from a series of models using the exit poll data. To compare these results with citizens' answers before and after the election, the model in column (1) only includes variables that are also available in the pre- and post-electoral surveys. In column (2), other relevant information from the exit poll is incorporated in the analysis. Column (3) includes characteristics of the electoral precincts, such as the presence of electoral observers and party officials as well as the vote share received by the PRI in 2006. Columns (4) and (5) replicate models (1) and (3) using a multilevel approach.

Consistent with our partisan hypotheses, we find heterogeneous effects on voters' predispositions after visiting the polling station—even when the outcome of the election was still unknown. The coefficient on *López Obrador* is negative and significant at the conventional levels across models, suggesting that his voters have more negative evaluations of their voting experience than those who voted for other candidates, *ceteris paribus*. In contrast, the estimates for those supporting *Vázquez Mota* are not significantly different from zero.

The ordinal logistic coefficients from model (1) were transformed into first differences in predicted probabilities and are presented in Fig. 2. We use *Zelig* software (Imai et al., 2007) to estimate the changes in the probabilities that a voter replies to each of the four categories of the dependent variable as a result of a change in the independent variable of interest, holding other attributes at the levels of their sample means. When compared to other respondents, López Obrador's voters are about sixteen percentage points less likely to feel "very confident" that their votes will be accurately counted, and about eight percentage points more likely to feel "a little confident" about the integrity of the election. This partisan effect is only statistically significant for López Obrador's voters, suggesting that it was not the electoral defeat what produced skepticism of electoral integrity among the PRD followers, but rather the negative predispositions they brought to the polling booth.

We do not find consistent evidence supporting our logistic and contextual hypotheses. As shown in column (2) of Table 2, the relationship between the number of electoral observers in the precinct and voters' trust is statistically indistinguishable from zero. This null relationship does not minimize the potential effects that observers possess to deter electoral manipulation, yet it suggests that the presence of observers does not influence the *perceived* cleanliness of an election. The results in column (3) indicate that the effect of observers remains insignificant when interacting the number of observers with the electoral preference of respondents. Fig. 9 in the Online Appendix depicts simulated first differences in the predicted probabilities of observing each of the four categories of the dependent variable if a respondent voted for López Obrador, conditioning on the number of observers per polling station in a precinct. We confirm that these predicted probabilities are not sensitive to changes in the number of observers, bolstering the idea that perceptions of electoral integrity are not influenced by the presence of electoral observers at the polling station.<sup>16</sup>

We also find weak evidence that partisan agents affect voters' electoral trust. As shown in columns (2) and (3), there is a positive correlation between the number of PAN agents in the precinct and the level of electoral confidence among voters. However, this effect becomes smaller in magnitude and statistically insignificant when estimating the multilevel model. Moreover, neither of the interactions between vote choice and party agents seems significant, failing to provide support to our hypothesis.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, we do not find evidence supporting our contextual hypothesis—i.e., the idea that minority voters exhibit lower levels of confidence in the election. In fact, against our expectations, we observe a positive relationship

<sup>16</sup> While the confidence intervals associated with these probabilities increase with the number of observers, we do not find this particularly worrying because the sample size shrinks importantly. For instance, only 10 percent of the respondents cast their vote in a precinct with more than an average of 0.25 observers per polling station.

<sup>17</sup> The predicted probabilities shown in Figs. 11 and 12 in the Online Appendix confirm that the presence of party agents does not significantly affect perceptions of electoral integrity.



**Table 2**

Estimates of the determinants of perceived electoral integrity (exit poll).

	Dependent variable: Confidence on the election				
	Ordinal logit			Multilevel ordinal logit	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
López Obrador	−0.572*** (0.053)	−0.569*** (0.055)	−0.919*** (0.176)	−0.558*** (0.060)	−0.971*** (0.256)
Vázquez Mota	−0.061 (0.059)	−0.065 (0.061)	−0.232 (0.179)	−0.051 (0.061)	−0.295 (0.234)
Female	−0.183*** (0.046)	−0.172*** (0.047)	−0.171*** (0.047)	−0.179*** (0.046)	−0.179*** (0.046)
Age	0.009*** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)	0.084*** (0.017)	0.065*** (0.018)
Education	0.096*** (0.021)	0.089*** (0.022)	0.089*** (0.023)	0.093*** (0.026)	0.074** (0.027)
Rural	0.289*** (0.052)	0.228*** (0.057)	0.206*** (0.059)	0.349*** (0.099)	0.243* (0.105)
Decision time		0.305*** (0.037)	0.304*** (0.037)		0.294*** (0.043)
Attention to Campaigns		0.939*** (0.062)	0.922*** (0.062)		0.949*** (0.085)
Observers		0.179 (0.150)	0.180 (0.226)		0.115 (0.305)
Agent Vázquez Mota		0.093** (0.035)	0.097* (0.047)		0.018 (0.077)
Agent López Obrador		−0.010 (0.025)	−0.023 (0.032)		−0.024 (0.460)
PRI 2006			0.999*** (0.296)		0.230 (0.709)
López Obrador × Observers			0.277 (0.345)		0.268 (0.443)
Vázquez Mota × Observers			0.145 (0.392)		0.298 (0.442)
Vázquez Mota × Agent Vázquez Mota			−0.086 (0.088)		−0.107 (0.095)
López Obrador × Agent López Obrador			0.013 (0.054)		0.004 (0.054)
López Obrador × PRI 2006			1.492* (0.598)		1.793* (0.462)
Vázquez Mota × PRI 2006			1.098 (0.745)		1.476 (0.908)
State fixed effects			Yes		Yes
Municipality				5.17e-34 (6.34e-34)	2.33e-33 (3.35e-33)
Precinct				0.437 (0.072)	0.319 (0.051)
Observations	6978	6787	6736	6978	6736
Municipalities				123	123
Precincts				414	414
Residual Deviance	15,716.66	14,834.18	14,745.52		
Akaike Inf. Crit.	15,734.66	14,864.18	14,847.52		
Wald $\chi^2$				134.00	1868.14

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered by municipality are shown in parentheses. \*\*\*Significant at the 0.1 percent level. \*\*Significant at the 1 percent level. \*Significant at the 5 percent level.

between electoral trust and the strength of the PRI in 2006 among those who voted for López Obrador. Fig. 13 in the Online Appendix shows simulated first differences in the predicted probabilities that a voter replies to each of the four categories of the dependent variable. When comparing López Obrador's supporters to other respondents, differences in the predicted probabilities of answering "Little confident" and "Very confident" decrease as the PRI municipal vote share in 2006 increases. This suggests that the electoral distrust expressed by those who voted for López Obrador does not come from voting with the minority of citizens in the municipality. The effects among the supporters of Vázquez Mota are statistically indistinguishable from zero.

Finally, consistent with the literature, we find that respondents who made their voting choices earlier were more confident about the integrity of the election. Likewise, respondents who paid a great amount of attention to the electoral campaigns were more likely to express confidence that their votes were counted. This result confirms what Maldonado and Seligson (2014) present in their cross-national study of Latin America, where voters interested in politics show more confidence regarding electoral integrity. Also, consistent with Birch (2008) and Rosas (2010), we find positive effects for Age and Education. Among these socio-demographic variables, though, gender has the largest effect on perceptions of electoral integrity. Female respondents are about four percent less likely to have an equal or higher confidence level than men with similar

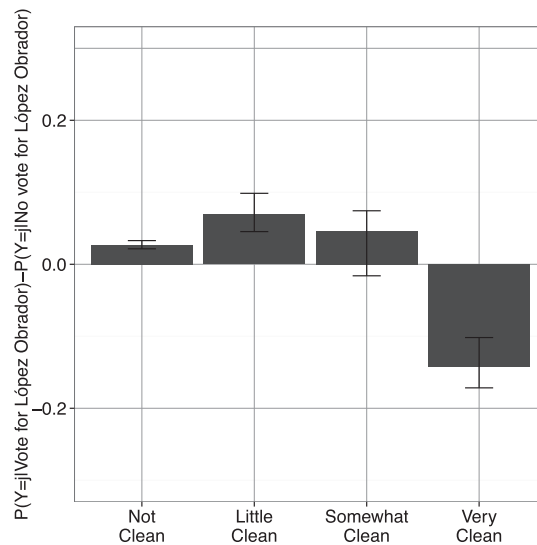
covariates. The results are also consistent with the evidence presented by McCann and Domínguez (1998), which concludes that voters in rural areas of Mexico are significantly more confident than urban voters that their vote was counted accurately.

The results presented thus far are based on interviews with voters. The fact that the exit poll includes only those who went to the polling stations may induce a downward bias in our estimations. As shown in other studies of Mexico (McCann and Domínguez, 1998; Hiskey and Bowler, 2005; Levin et al., 2009) and elsewhere (Franklin, 2004; Birch, 2010; Simpson, 2013; Carreras and Irepoğlu, 2013), perceptions of electoral corruption erode the likelihood of voter turnout. Therefore, one should devote attention to finding partisan effects on the integrity of the election among the sample of citizens who indeed went to the polling station. To broaden the validity of our analysis, we analyze below the responses of the general population before and after the election.

## 5.2. Citizens' perceptions before and after election day

Table 3 shows the analysis of our dependent variables using data from the pre- and post-electoral surveys. Columns (1) and (2) show the results of the pre-electoral survey and columns (3) and (4) present the estimates for the post-electoral survey.

The results provide evidence in support of our partisan hypotheses. Based on the data from the pre-electoral



Notes: This graph shows the simulated first differences in the predicted probabilities that a voter replies to each of the four categories of the dependent variable as a result of a change in the independent variable of interest, holding other attributes at their sample means.

**Fig. 2.** First differences in the predicted probabilities of confidence on the election (exit poll).

survey, two weeks before election day López Obrador's voters were already less likely to expect a fair and clean election. Conversely, the effect of declaring electoral support for Vázquez Mota is ambiguous and non-significant among the respondents of the pre-electoral survey. On the other hand, the results for post-electoral survey show negative perceptions of electoral integrity not only from López Obrador's voters, but also from those who supported Vázquez Mota. Contrary to what we observe in the pre-electoral survey, the strength of the correlation between perceptions of electoral integrity and vote declaration for Vázquez Mota is consistent across models.

Furthermore, note that the results in Table 3 still fail to provide evidence for the contextual hypothesis as the interactive variables for vote choice and the proportion of PRI votes in 2006 is not distinguishable from zero. As for the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics, consistent with the analysis of the exit poll, older citizens are more likely to have positive perceptions about the integrity of the election, and the statistical significance for Age holds across time. In contrast, with the exit poll, education, gender, and whether the respondent lives in a rural area are not significant predictors of citizens' confidence in the election.

By using the results from columns (1) and (3), which have the same set of independent variables, Figs. 3 and 4 show the predicted probabilities for the dependent variable in the pre- and post-electoral surveys by changing their declared electoral support and holding other attributes at their sample means. Before the election, López Obrador's voters were, on average, four percentage points less likely to expect a "very clean" election, while the effect among Vázquez Mota's voters is indistinguishable from zero.

In contrast, the size of the effect among López Obrador's supporters in the post-electoral survey is around four times larger than what was reported before the day of the election. Moreover, Vázquez Mota's voters are now twelve percentage points less likely to answer that the presidential election was "very clean." Consistent with the second hypothesis, the negative evaluations of electoral integrity among Vázquez Mota's supporters appear only after the electoral result was officially known. Unlike during the 2006 election, PAN's supporters used negative arguments about the quality of the election to switch their evaluation of it. The defeat of their candidate makes PAN's supporters open to receive new information and fix the dissonance between the result and their perceptions.<sup>18</sup>

In the Online Appendix Figs. 15–18, we plot changes in the predicted probabilities of perceptions of electoral integrity among supporters of López Obrador and Vázquez Mota, conditioning on the municipal vote share captured by the PRI in 2006. Along the lines of what we find using

<sup>18</sup> To further explore electoral distrust of the voters, the Online Appendix presents different Seemingly Unrelated Logit Regression models for whether respondents acknowledge the existence of four irregularities during the election: vote buying, biased media, vote misconduct, and campaign overspending. López Obrador's voters are more likely to declare the existence of each of the aforementioned irregularities, but the effects' size varies across models. Specifically, those who declared to have voted for López Obrador are twice as likely to declare the existence of vote buying than vote miscount. In contrast, the relationship between declared support for Vázquez Mota and acknowledging the presence of vote miscount is statistically indistinguishable from zero. Also, consistent with the results of Table 3, those who believe that López Obrador won the 2006 election are more likely to recognize every electoral irregularity.

**Table 3**  
Determinants of perceived electoral integrity before and after election day (pre- and post-electoral surveys).

	Dependent variable: Perceptions of electoral integrity			
	Before election day		After election day	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
López Obrador	−0.535*** (0.158)	−1.213** (0.437)	−1.536*** (0.174)	−1.722*** (0.455)
Vázquez Mota	0.058 (0.169)	0.150 (0.507)	−0.682** (0.209)	−1.241* (0.515)
Female	0.149 (0.132)	0.112 (0.141)	0.147 (0.119)	0.106 (0.125)
Age	0.185** (0.057)	0.130* (0.060)	0.120* (0.051)	0.104* (0.053)
Education	0.097 (0.061)	0.073 (0.067)	−0.018 (0.046)	−0.067 (0.051)
Unemployment		0.159 (0.229)		−0.583** (0.208)
Attention to Campaigns		0.872*** (0.154)		
Rural	0.214 (0.146)	0.186 (0.151)	0.217 (0.130)	0.098 (0.179)
PRI 2006		−0.711 (1.363)		0.0004 (1.087)
López Obrador × PRI 2006		2.275 (1.655)		0.732 (1.699)
Vázquez Mota × PRI 2006		−0.582 (1.909)		1.999 (2.040)
State Fixed Effects		Yes		Yes
Observations	758	758	973	973
Residual Deviance	2058.434	1910.396	2529.739	2409.112
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2076.434	1988.396	2547.739	2493.112

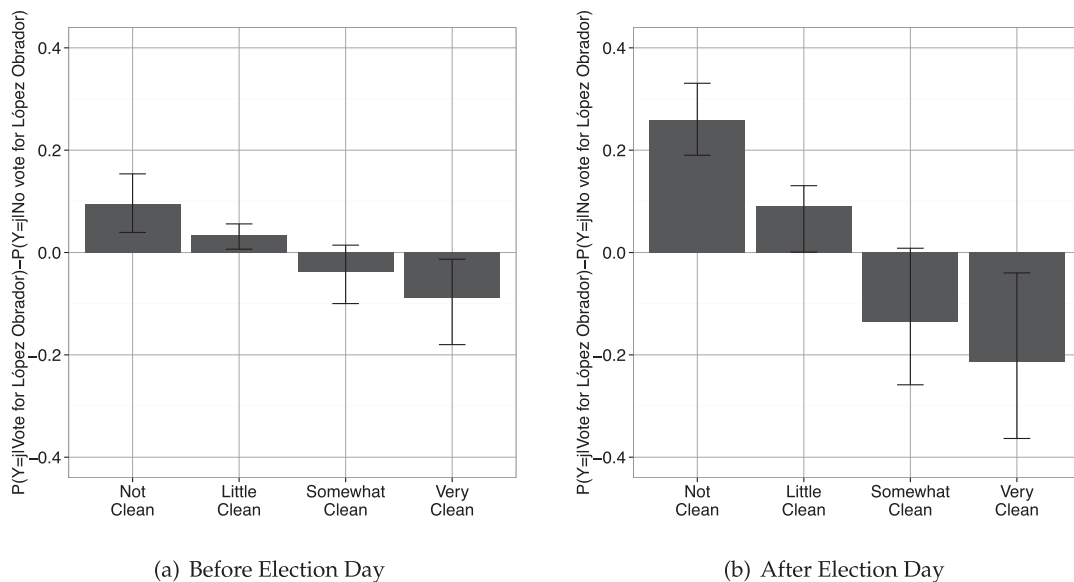
Notes: Robust standard errors clustered by municipality are shown in parentheses. \*\*\*Significant at the 0.1 percent level. \*\*Significant at the 1 percent level. \*Significant at the 5 percent level.

exit poll data, the results indicate that negative evaluations of electoral integrity reported before or after election day are moderately attenuated as the 2006 PRI vote share increases.

**6. Discussion**

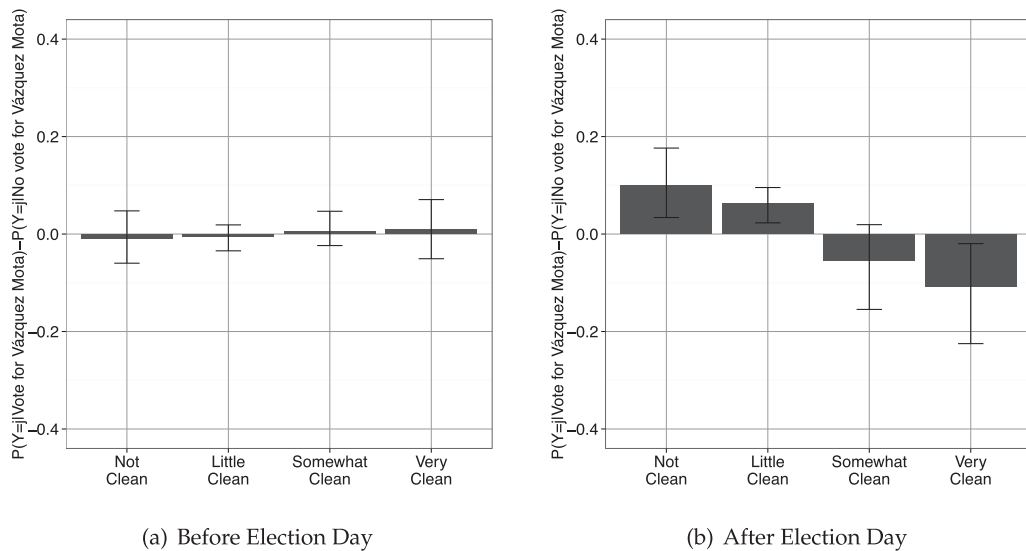
The perception of a fair procedure to select political representatives is essential to legitimize the outcomes that

democracy produces (Nadeau and Blais, 1993, p. 553). As such, an understanding of the factors that influence individual perceptions of electoral integrity is vital for the development of unconsolidated democracies. In Mexico's case, we find serious doubts regarding the integrity of the most recent presidential election among voters. Just seconds after voting, almost one in five citizens expressed little or no confidence that their vote would be respected and accurately counted. Furthermore, these perceptions differ



Notes: This graph shows the mean values for the simulated first differences in the predicted probabilities that a voter replies to each of the four categories of the dependent variable as a result of a change in the independent variable of interest, holding other attributes at their sample means.

**Fig. 3.** Change in predicted probabilities for perceptions of electoral integrity among those who declared their vote intention to López Obrador (Pre- and Post-Electoral Surveys).



*Notes:* This graph shows the mean values for the simulated first differences in the predicted probabilities that a voter replies to each of the four categories of the dependent variable as a result of a change in the independent variable of interest, holding other attributes at their sample means.

**Fig. 4.** Change in predicted probabilities for perceptions of electoral integrity among those who declared their vote intention to Vázquez Mota (Pre- and Post-Electional Surveys).

significantly across partisan groups. While only one in seven PRI voters has little or no confidence in the electoral process, one in four PRD partisans has the same impression.

In this paper, we have focused our attention on the factors behind this heterogeneity in confidence levels among electoral losers. We distinguish factors that can be modified by the electoral administration from those that are intrinsic to the voters and their environments. Our findings show that the latter group of factors plays an important role in shaping electoral trust and that losers' perceptions of electoral integrity do not respond in a uniform manner. On one hand, we show that confidence in the electoral process among supporters of the incumbent party decreased only after realizing that their candidate had lost. This change in the perceptions of electoral integrity responds to a pure "losers' effect," in which supporters of a losing candidate try to explain her defeat as a consequence of a poor electoral administration. On the other hand, we show that the discredit of electoral integrity among supporters of a party that has never won the presidential election is consistent over time. In this case, the skepticism from leftist partisans arose from both the systematic manipulation against left-wing parties during the twentieth century, and the dis-course of electoral distrust expressed by left-wing parties during recent presidential campaigns.

We highlight three implications and potential projects that the results of this study suggest. First, explaining different trends in the perceptions of electoral integrity among voters of the losing parties complements the evidence of [Anderson et al. \(2005\)](#) and their finding of heterogeneous effects among losers. We propose that measuring perceptions at different moments of the

electoral campaign unveils a clearer picture of the heterogeneity in opinion formation among supporters of losing candidates. Asking citizens about their electoral trust before, during, and after the election day enables a better understanding of how the electoral result underpins the evaluation of the electoral administration.

Second, we provide evidence that voters still show up at the polling stations despite poor expectations of how their votes will be counted. We agree with the literature on voter turnout, which generally concludes that electoral corruption has a negative effect on electoral participation ([Franklin, 2004](#); [Birch, 2010](#); [Simpser, 2013](#); [Carreras and Irepoğlu, 2013](#)). Nevertheless, based on the evidence discussed in this paper, the motivations for this group do not fit into the category of satisfying and affirming their "allegiance to the political system" or "one's efficacy in the political system" ([Riker and Ordeshook, 1968](#), p. 28). Instead, our findings suggest the expressive motivations of those voters who consider their instrumental benefits to be null ([Brennan and Lomasky, 1994](#); [Schuessler, 2000](#); [Tóka, 2009](#)).

Our results complement the pioneering work by [McCann and Domínguez \(1998\)](#) on perceptions of electoral integrity in Mexico. The authors find a significant group of citizens who, despite their negative perceptions about the regime, did not vote in the 1994 presidential election. Eighteen years later, we identify another group of voters who go to the polling station, but with no expectation that their vote will make a difference. Our study also confirms other analyses concerning voters predisposed to expect corrupt elections in Mexico ([Magaloni, 2006](#); [Levin and Alvarez, 2009](#)), yet we go a step further by suggesting that pessimistic voters still show up at the polling station

and their voting experiences do not alter their perceptions about electoral integrity.

Finally, we highlight the null relationship between the presence of electoral observers and citizens' electoral trust. While the contribution of these actors to monitor the integrity of the election has been significant for the international development of democracy, voters appear to be unaware of their role in the election. By providing the first empirical analysis that explores the effect of observers on voters' confidence, we call for more scholarly interest in the quality of the election to consider the underlying conditions in which voters evaluate the integrity of the electoral process.

In conclusion, this paper seeks to understand the perceived gap between the objective and subjective measurements of electoral integrity. In the case of Mexico, distrust in elections is a central challenge for the country's democratic consolidation. We have gathered and analyzed evidence suggesting that the key determinants of perceived electoral integrity are independent of how the elections are organized. Of course, this is not to say that such factors are irrelevant to understanding voters' compliance with the results and their satisfaction with democratic institutions.

## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data related to this article can be found at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2015.03.004>.

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