

Electoral Dis-Connection: The Limits of Reelection in Contexts of Weak Accountability

Julie Anne Weaver, Harvard University

Holding politicians accountable through reelection has long been a focus of empirical research, yet results are mixed in terms of whether electoral accountability works in practice. I offer a new theory of voter behavior to explain why electoral accountability may break down. Where voters perceive a greater likelihood of malfeasance in a second term, information about good first-term performance becomes irrelevant to predicting second-term performance. Instead, voters turn to horizontal accountability institutions for assurance that reelected incumbents will perform well. I test the argument in Peru using a conjoint experiment and regression discontinuity design. I demonstrate not only a mayoral incumbency disadvantage, but also that voters prefer challengers even over high-performing incumbents. I then show that voter preferences are affected by beliefs about increasing corruption and the low likelihood of good performance being repeated and that voter trust in horizontal accountability institutions attenuates the anti-incumbency bias.

When does reelection actually succeed in generating electoral accountability? At minimum, voters have to be willing both to reelect incumbents and to base their reelection decision, at least in part, on incumbent performance (Ashworth 2012), not only punishing poor performers, but also, crucially, rewarding good ones (Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes 1999). An emerging literature suggests, however, that in contrast to findings from the United States and other developed democracies, some developing countries exhibit an incumbency disadvantage, with incumbents systematically less likely than challengers to be elected at the subsequent election (Klašnja 2015; Klašnja and Titunik 2017; Uppal 2009). In such contexts, we know little about why a bias against incumbents develops or if good performance in office ameliorates their electoral handicap, making electoral accountability still possible. If not, what explains the success of the incumbents who are reelected, despite their electoral disadvantage?

To address these questions, my argument begins from the contention that a local-level incumbency disadvantage can emerge when voters doubt that incumbents will continue to

perform well in office if given another chance. This may be particularly likely if second-term mayors are assumed to engage more successfully in corruption than newly elected challengers, given on-the-job learning about how to avoid detection and the development of networks of collusion (Klašnja 2015, 2016). Weak oversight institutions mean incumbents may be particularly willing to act on this new knowledge because they face little risk of punishment if caught. Voters may then perceive that any draw from the challenger pool, who by default will be in her first term, will be less corrupt than a reelected incumbent.

However, a perception of strong governmental oversight of politicians may attenuate this type of incumbency disadvantage. Where horizontal accountability institutions—like the judiciary, ombudsmen, or a supreme auditing agency—effectively oversee politicians' behavior, they provide strong assurances that reelected incumbents will be constrained in office. Information about current performance may therefore become an uninformative signal of future performance unless it is coupled with credible enforcement of politicians' behavior. The vertical accountability of reelection can thereby

Julie Anne Weaver (julianneweaver@fas.harvard.edu) is a PhD candidate in the Department of Government at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Support for this research was provided by the Eric M. Mindich Research Fund for the Foundations of Human Behavior, the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, the Institute for Quantitative Social Science, and the Inter-American Foundation Grassroots Development Fellowship. The research was approved under Internal Review Board protocol IRB16-0872 and modifications MOD16-0872-02 and MOD16-0872-03. Data and supporting materials necessary to reproduce the numerical results in the article are available in the *JOP* Dataverse (<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/jop>). An online appendix with supplementary material is available at <https://doi.org/10.1086/711901>.

Published online September 3, 2021.

The Journal of Politics, volume 83, number 4, October 2021. © 2021 Southern Political Science Association. All rights reserved. Published by The University of Chicago Press for the Southern Political Science Association. <https://doi.org/10.1086/711901>

ooo

fail to generate political accountability when horizontal accountability institutions are weak.

I test this argument in the context of mayoral elections in Peru. Using electoral returns data from three elections, I first use a regression discontinuity design (RDD) to show that Peruvian mayors face an extreme incumbency disadvantage. Incumbents who narrowly won in the previous election—making their win “as-if” random—are 24 percentage points more likely to lose the subsequent election than the candidates who ran and barely lost.

Next, as an alternative test of the incumbency disadvantage, and to assess my argument that positive performance information may become uninformative to voters in reelections, I embed a candidate choice conjoint experiment in an original household survey. Respondents are presented with two hypothetical candidates, an incumbent and a challenger, and are asked which candidate they would vote for in a mayoral election. They are told explicitly about the incumbent’s performance, with five possible information conditions: no performance information, good (bad) performance in implementing public works projects, and good (bad) performance in providing individual financial assistance to constituents.

The results demonstrate that respondents on average prefer challengers to incumbents, even when those incumbents were described as performing well. In support of my proposed mechanism of on-the-job learning and corruption, I show that the effect is concentrated among respondents who doubt that a high-performing incumbent will repeat her good performance if reelected and who believe that incumbent corruption increases across terms.

Finally, to test my argument that confidence in oversight institutions helps attenuate the incumbency disadvantage, I use a heterogeneous treatment effects setup in the RDD design to study whether certain characteristics of the candidate or the municipality in which she runs condition anti-incumbency bias. In line with the conjoint’s findings, results suggest that among barely winning incumbents, those who perform well are no more likely to win reelection than those who perform poorly. Nor are incumbents more likely to be victorious where voters have greater access to political information. However, when incumbents run in districts where voters report higher trust in horizontal accountability institutions, they gain an electoral advantage relative to candidates in the previous election who ran and barely lost. A number of robustness checks and tests of alternative explanations support the validity of the results.

The findings have important implications for electoral accountability and beyond. Part of Mayhew’s famous concept of the “electoral connection” (1974) is that the incumbent’s action in the current period is constrained by her de-

sire for reelection in the next and by her assessment of what criteria voters will use to judge whether she should be reelected. If incumbents recognize that their chances of being rewarded for their effort are low, their incentive to perform well in office is reduced. Although more research has traditionally focused on voters punishing poor performers, rewarding good performance is just as important for ensuring responsive and high-quality governance (Manin et al. 1999). Furthermore, persistent disillusionment with politicians, such as the anti-incumbent attitudes shown here, may generate a self-reinforcing pattern whereby voters increasingly assume the worst about incumbents who then increasingly live up to those low expectations. Over time, this could also lead to disillusionment with democracy itself (Svolik 2013).

This article contributes to the broader literature on voting behavior in developing countries, including the recent scholarship on the incumbency disadvantage (Klašnja 2015; Klašnja and Titunik 2017; Uppal 2009). It most directly addresses the work on electoral accountability, which largely focuses on the role of performance information and the assumption that increasing access to information will generate electoral accountability (see, e.g., Dunning et al. 2019). In contrast, my findings suggest that even where voters have accurate information about the aspects of performance they value, electoral accountability can fail if current performance no longer predicts future performance. Relatedly, the results build on recent studies of voters with accurate performance information who appear to punish good performers (Adida et al. 2017; Boas, Hidalgo, and Torral 2019; Burstzyn 2016; de Kadat and Lieberman 2017). However, in these cases, voters “punish” good policy performance in one domain because they would have preferred the incumbent deliver on another. My findings therefore suggest a new type of case, as respondents punish incumbents who perform well in the very policies that they prioritize.

As I discuss in the conclusion, the argument applies to a number of other Latin American countries and beyond. The combination of high corruption and weak states can lead voters to believe even good performers will be corrupted if given the chance. Strong parties may mediate the effect by giving politicians an incentive to perform and by increasing incumbent reelection through partisan loyalty and the distribution of clientelist goods. However, weak party systems, particularly those without the types of nonparty political organization that facilitate clientelistic exchange, lack the organizational infrastructure to get incumbents reelected amid rising voter doubt about second-term performance.

THEORY

The logic of electoral accountability is that voters use information about how the incumbent performed when they

choose how to vote in reelections (Ashworth 2012). Much theorizing focuses on the role of performance information, with accounts varying in their emphasis on the extent to which voters have accurate information (Dunning et al. 2019), attribute blame (Martin and Raffler 2021), and judge new information relative to prior beliefs (Bhandari, Larreguy, and Marshall 2019). My argument about information is distinct: even if voters have accurate performance metrics that are relevant to the issues they value, electoral accountability can break down if current performance no longer predicts future performance. Where voters perceive incumbents as more likely to be corrupt in subsequent terms, vote choice is less influenced by performance in office and more affected by their assessment of whether oversight is strong enough to constrain incumbent behavior if granted another term.

My theory offers a challenge to Fearon's (1999) selection model, in which voters assess candidates in order to identify and elect "good types," meaning politicians who will implement voters' preferred policies. Voters have a variety of information at their disposal to assess type, from party affiliation to personal traits to platform promises. For incumbents, voters have an extra, albeit noisy, source of information: performance in office. Voters retrospectively assess performance to make a prospective decision about the incumbent's type, compared to what voters glean from available information about challengers.

In this framework, a good-type politician is one whose likelihood of performing well in office—meaning performing the way the voter wants—is high. I depart from standard accounts of retrospective voting by emphasizing that in some settings, as voters consider whether to reelect the incumbent, they make two separate evaluations: one about past performance in office and a second about the probability that the performance will be repeated. For incumbents to be rewarded, good performance must not only allow voters to infer type, but must also act as a credible signal of the likelihood of continued good performance if elected again.

In most settings, current performance in office is a strong predictor of future performance, as whatever component of type—inherent goodness, shared policy preferences, capacity to implement, or external incentive to perform—will continue into the next term. Though standard accountability models (e.g., Fearon 1999; Svobik 2013) assume continuity of type across terms, this may not hold if voters perceive a higher probability of engaging in corruption in a second term, even among incumbents who appeared to perform well in the first. Learning on the job may provide second-term politicians with a greater understanding of how to be corrupt without getting caught, both by better navigating the systems designed to detect malfeasance and by identifying potential cocon-

spirators within government agencies and the business community (Coviello and Gagliarducci 2017; Fisman, Schulz, and Vig 2014; Klačnja 2015). At the same time, weak oversight institutions mean the likelihood of punishment is small, even if detected. If the returns to corruption are high enough and the likelihood of being caught and punished low enough, even good performers in the first term could capitalize on their learning and become corrupt in the second.

Evidence from other contexts of high corruption and weak oversight provides empirical support for the notion that corruption may increase across terms. Incumbents who narrowly won accumulated more wealth during their second term than narrowly elected first-term politicians, both among mayors in Romania (Klačnja 2015) and state-level politicians in India (Fisman et al. 2014). Similarly, the procurement practices of narrowly elected second-term Italian mayors differ from narrowly elected first-term mayors in ways that suggest corruption through collusion with contractors (Coviello and Gagliarducci 2017).

Increasing corruption in a second term makes voters tend to prefer challengers even against high-performing incumbents because it increases the probability that the draw of a candidate from the challenger pool—who by default will be in her first term—will perform better than the good type who will be corrupted in the second (Klačnja 2015, 2016). Klačnja also argues that an incumbency disadvantage stemming from increasing corruption could be overcome if incumbents can convince voters that the quality of their performance also increases over time. I contend that there may be a different solution to the incumbency disadvantage generated by increasing corruption across terms: strengthening horizontal accountability. With increasing corruption, voters need some assurance of a check on politicians' power in order to believe that an incumbent will perform well if reelected. This assurance, I argue, can come through trust in the effectiveness of horizontal accountability institutions.

Where the vertical accountability of elections—so named for the vertical relationship between voters as principals and politicians as agents (Ashworth 2012)—is a form of external, nongovernment control, horizontal accountability refers to state oversight that comes from within. The system of checks and balances, such as Congress keeping a check on executive power, and "appointed" institutions given the autonomy to oversee other state agencies, like ombudsmen, supreme auditing institutions, or special prosecutors, are all examples of horizontal accountability institutions (O'Donnell 1998). Even in weak institutional environments, monitoring initiatives undertaken by oversight agencies can incentivize politicians and bureaucrats to perform well, particularly in terms of reducing corruption (Di Tella and Schargrodsky 2003; Lagunes

2018, 2019; Olken 2007). Effective oversight institutions can even incentivize mayors to perform in the absence of electoral incentives, such as with term limits (Ferraz and Finan 2011). Sanctions may be particularly important when norms of good behavior in elected office are weak (Fisman and Miguel 2007).

By generating a credible threat of being punished, strong oversight institutions keep the opportunity cost of corruption constant across terms. Although incumbents learn how to lower their risk of being caught, if the threat of punishment is high enough, second-term politicians will be deterred from acting on their new knowledge. Strong oversight can thereby help ensure that good first-term performance is a useful informational signal to predict future good performance by increasing the probability high-performing incumbents will perform well in a second term relative to the potential performance of first-term challengers.

Importantly, indicators of institutional strength may have an ambiguous effect on voter behavior. On the one hand, if voters see an increase in cases of politicians being punished for corruption, they may perceive that oversight institutions are effective and thus be more likely to trust an incumbent with a second term. On the other hand, they could interpret a rise in prosecutions as proof that politicians are more corrupt than they thought, thereby decreasing their willingness to reelect. In contrast, voter perceptions of the efficacy of horizontal accountability institutions would have an unambiguous impact on voter behavior.

To assess my theory, I test the following observable predictions.

Prediction 1. Politicians face an incumbency disadvantage, with voters on average preferring challengers to incumbents.

If the incumbency disadvantage results from voter skepticism about incumbent performance in a second term, then

Prediction 2a. Voters will, on average, tend toward preferring challengers even over incumbents who perform well.

More specifically,

Prediction 2b. Voters will particularly prefer challengers to the extent that they doubt high-performing incumbents will repeat their good performance if reelected.

Prediction 2c. Voters will particularly prefer challengers to the extent that they believe incumbents'

likelihood of engaging in corruption increases across terms.

Finally, if in such settings, voters turn to oversight institutions for assurance that incumbents will perform well in a second term, then

Prediction 3. Voters will be more willing to vote for incumbents in reelections when they have greater trust in horizontal accountability institutions.

Before turning to the empirical analysis of the Peruvian case, I provide a brief background for the context of the study, including describing horizontal accountability institutions, the prevalence of corruption, and the perception that it increases across terms.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND LOCAL ELECTIONS IN PERU

This study focuses on the most local level of government in Peru, the district municipality.¹ Mayors have significant responsibilities for managing local affairs and providing public services, from trash cleanup and granting business licenses to building roads, irrigation systems, health centers, and schools; generating municipal ordinances; and overseeing the town's yearly development plan. Citizen participation in municipal affairs is also required by law, including through participatory budgeting (McNulty 2011). Districts are largely reliant on central government transfers for their budgets (Loayza, Rigolini, and Calvo-González 2014).

Elections are held every four years to elect both the district mayor and a group of councilors (*regidores*) who are proportionally allocated seats on the city council (*concejo municipal*) based on party voteshare. In addition to passing municipal ordinances, councilors are charged with overseeing the mayor's performance and receiving citizen complaints. Voting is mandatory, and fines for not voting are enforced, leading to relatively high voting rates (Carpio et al. 2019). Mayors could be reelected indefinitely until a 2015 law banned immediate reelection beginning in the subsequent local elections held in October 2018.

As an important scope condition of the argument is the frailty of political parties and clientelistic organization, it is worth noting that Peru's party system is extremely weak (Levitsky and Cameron 2003; Seawright 2012). The party system breakdown that began in the 1990s ushered in an incredible proliferation of regional, provincial, and sometimes even district-level parties and of quasi-party groupings and alliances. Local

1. Peru is divided into 25 regions, 195 provinces, and 1,647 municipalities. For ease, I use the terms "district" and "municipality" interchangeably.

political organization is also sufficiently frail that it makes long-term clientelistic exchange difficult (Muñoz 2019).

Horizontal accountability institutions

I provide a brief overview of the horizontal accountability institutions that are designed to constrain incumbents' behavior. Importantly, these are visible, well-known organizations based out of the capital, Lima, but with a decentralized network of offices throughout the country. There are a range of channels via which voters may either directly experience or hear secondhand about the oversight activities of these institutions, thereby affecting their assessment of the institutions' effectiveness. For example, these organizations engage in direct outreach with citizens, including receiving and processing citizen complaints; receive media attention for their investigative reports; and run educational activities like campaigns against vote buying.

First, the Ombudsmen Office (Defensoría del Pueblo) investigates governments' compliance with their various legal requirements. The ombudsmen receive and investigate citizen complaints against any level of government or type of government agency, including mayors. Complaints can be lodged over the phone, online, or in person at one of the 38 offices located throughout the country, including in every region and at outreach events the office sets up (e.g., in town squares or markets). In 2014 alone, they processed 31,189 complaints (Defensoría del Pueblo 2015). They then conduct in-person visits to local governments to investigate complaints and develop remedies with the relevant officials. Though they have no formal sanctioning power, they make recommendations to other sanctioning bodies and use the soft power of publicity through disseminating their findings to the media. They also engage in media campaigns (e.g., to educate voters about the illegality of vote buying).

Second, Peru's National Elections Board (the Jurado Nacional de Elecciones) not only oversees elections, but also takes a proactive role in educating the public about electoral laws. They also manage the formal complaint system to remove public officials from office and corroborate the truthfulness of candidates' declarations about their background, education, and judicial antecedents.

Third, the Office of the Comptroller General (Contraloría General de la República), or the country's independent supreme audit institution, oversees public spending, conducts audits of other government agencies, sanctions for misconduct, and sends cases for formal prosecution. Like the ombudsmen, the Office of the Comptroller General receives and investigations citizen complaints about spending irregularities and conducts education campaigns to publicize the complaints system. From 2008 to 2014, the Office of the

Comptroller General received 7,453 complaints against municipalities, equaling 55% of the total complaints received during that period.² Evidence from a field experiment suggests being monitored by the Office of the Comptroller General (albeit in conjunction with a recognized anticorruption nongovernmental organization) in small-scale infrastructure projects led municipal governments to spend less per project, a downstream indicator of reduced corruption by eliminating cost inflation (Lagunes 2018).

Finally, in addition to the Office of the Comptroller General, a group of other agencies is tasked specifically with fighting corruption. The public prosecutor's office (the Fiscalía) has a set of specialized prosecutors for crimes of corruption of public officials and accepts direct complaints from citizens. The anticorruption prosecutor of the attorney general (Procuraduría Pública Especializada en Delitos de Corrupción) focuses on securing monetary reparations in corruption cases and also manages a citizen complaint system.

Corruption and increasing malfeasance in a second term

Corruption is quite a salient political issue in Peru. In the 2017 Latin American Public Opinion Project survey of Latin American countries, 77% of Peruvians said that more than half of all politicians are corrupt, the third highest rate across the region (Cohen, Lupu, and Zechmeister 2017). This perception seems to come from direct experience, as Peru scored fifth out of 27 countries in the percentage of respondents experiencing corruption (29.6%). Peruvians are generally intolerant of corruption, with only 17.6% of respondents reporting that paying a bribe was justified, slightly lower than the Latin American regional average of 20.5% (Cohen et al. 2017). Evidence also suggests corruption is seen as an urgent problem needing to be resolved. In the original survey presented here, respondents were asked how big a problem corruption is in the management of the municipal government compared to other problems; 65% said it was the biggest problem, and 86.3% said it was either a big problem or the biggest problem.

Peruvians also have pessimistic views of their politicians overall. In a 2011 survey from Peru's National Institute for Statistics and Information,³ respondents were asked about their opinion of politicians in general. Only 4.6% of the entire sample of almost 25,000 respondents reported believing that politicians cared about the population.

2. Statistics downloaded June 25, 2015, <http://www.contraloria.gob.pe/>.

3. The most recent year the question was asked was 2011. ENAHO Yearly Household Survey from Peru's Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, <https://www.inei.gob.pe/>.

Peru's reliance on extractive industries and the political effects of the resource curse at the subnational level also likely influence voters' perceptions of corruption and their negative assessment of politicians. Thanks to the commodity boom of the mid-2000s, the resources transferred to Peru's local governments rose 13-fold from 2004 to 2007 (Arellano-Yanguas 2011). Dissatisfaction resulting from inefficient spending of the windfall and conflict with local authorities over spending has been high (Arellano-Yanguas 2011; Ponce and McClintock 2014). The possibility of controlling these newly expanded local budgets may be drawing increasingly corrupt and lower-quality candidates to seek office (Brollo et al. 2013).

Evidence strongly suggests that Peruvians view the opportunity to be corrupt as greater for second-term mayors than for newly elected challengers. In the original survey reported here, respondents were asked if mayors who performed well in their first term would continue to perform well in their second if reelected. Only 40% said good performance was likely or very likely to be repeated. Those who answered "unlikely" or "very unlikely" were then asked why.⁴ More than half (53.4%) attributed the nonrepetition of good performance to the fact that reelected mayors are more likely to be corrupt because they learn how to do so effectively in their first period. Almost a quarter (23.5%) reported that there is not sufficient oversight to ensure reelected mayors will do a good job in a second term.

In congressional debates over the 2015 law prohibiting reelection, lawmakers' justifications for the ban also suggest an assumption of increasing malfeasance across terms.⁵ Every congressperson mentioned that the law's aim was to curb corruption. Though the ban was first put forward in 2011, speakers asserted that the reason the bill was finally being debated was the huge corruption scandals involving regional presidents, with the implicated politicians mentioned by name. Mayors were described as dishonest and corrupt, lacking capacity and a vocation to help their community, and only seeking reelection to continue robbing state coffers. Strong-performing mayors were the exception to this rule.

Legislators also referenced the idea that "power corrupts": mayors may enter politics with good intentions, but they quickly see the possibilities for malfeasance and decide they want to remain in office. Lawmakers worried about local politicians who want to be mayors for life and argued that reelection creates clientelism, as it induces incumbents to buy

off support for their reelection bid. Many suggested that Peru's corruption stemmed from the lack of institutional controls and that with proper oversight, reelection would not necessarily generate corruption. However, given Peru's generally weak accountability system, prohibiting reelection was seen as a necessary tool to curb corruption.

THE INCUMBENCY DISADVANTAGE IN MAYORAL POLITICS

To begin, I show that not only are mayors unable to marshal the benefits of office to their advantage, officeholding actually harms their future electoral success (prediction 1). Following the incumbency advantage literature (Lee 2008), I use a regression discontinuity design (RDD) to estimate the causal effect of incumbency on future electoral outcomes. A simple comparison of incumbents' and challengers' subsequent vote-share is problematic because whatever drove incumbents' win in the first place would influence their likelihood of winning in the future. Instead, I compare the electoral success in time t of incumbents who barely won in time $t - 1$ with the candidates that ran and barely lost. Assuming the win at time $t - 1$ is as-if random allows for causal identification of the effect of incumbency on electoral success in the next election.

I use data from Peru's National Elections Board for the local elections held in 2006, 2010, and 2014.⁶ The first local election after the post-Fujimori democratization process took place in 2002, so the 2006 election is the first in which incumbent mayors could have run in the post-2000 era. For each election year (2006, 2010, and 2014), I construct a data set of the electoral outcomes in that election year for all candidates who ran for mayor in the previous election year (2002, 2006, and 2010 respectively). Following Calonico and colleagues (2017), the ideal bandwidth from this aggregated data set is 9.7 percentage points, so the RDD analysis is run only on a smaller data set of candidates who won or lost within this margin in the previous election. This yields 8,948 observations, each of which is a candidate election year.

I find a significant incumbency disadvantage: candidates who barely won the previous election (incumbents) are 24 percentage points less likely to win the subsequent election (their reelection) compared to candidates who barely lost (challengers). Figure 1 visually depicts the results. Incumbents, meaning those to the right of 0 in voteshare margin in the previous election, have a lower probability of winning than the challengers they originally barely beat.

4. The question was open-ended, and enumerators were trained to classify answers into predefined categories.

5. I read each of the transcripts of the four debates held from June to October 2014. A fifth debate, held May 3, 2015, is not available online, and repeated requests to receive it have gone unanswered.

6. See Aragón and Pique (2019) for additional effects of incumbency using the same data and an RDD design. Though the raw data are available publicly, José Luis Incio provided me with a cleaned data set of all mayors who ran for and won reelection for the 2006, 2010, and 2014 elections.

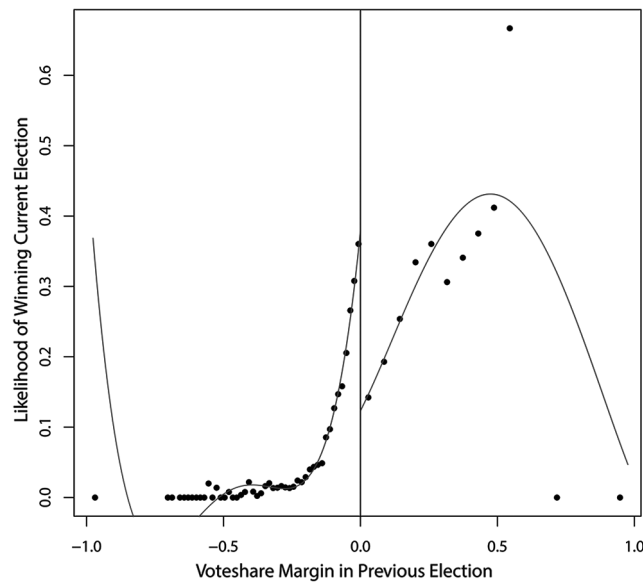


Figure 1. Incumbency disadvantage in Peruvian mayoral elections, 2006–14.

Additional figures in appendix A (apps. A–H are available online) show the results of a series of standard robustness checks. Figure A.1 (figs. A.1–A.7, B.1, G.1, and G.2 are available online) plots the estimates for a series of bandwidths, showing that the negative and significant effects are robust to bandwidth choice. Figure A.2 plots results of a McCrary (2008) density test confirming no manipulation in the running variable around the cutpoint (p -value .96). Figures A.3, A.4, and A.5 plot the results of separate RDD estimates per election (2006, 2010, and 2014), confirming that the incumbency disadvantage is not driven by recent legislative efforts to ban mayoral reelection, but rather has persisted from back in time, long before eliminating reelection became politically salient. Appendix section A.1 describes an alternative estimation using randomization inference following Cattaneo, Frandsen, and Titiunik (2015).

Recent critiques of the methodology (De Magalhaes 2015; De Magalhaes and Hirvonen 2019; Eggers 2017) highlight how differential selection into running between incumbents and challengers may bias RDD results. I first test for differential rerunning by conducting an RDD with the decision to run as the outcome variable. As figure A.7 shows, candidates who barely won (incumbents) are less likely to run in the subsequent election than candidates who barely lost. Given that the effect increases over time,⁷ this is neither surprising nor inconsistent with the existence of an incumbency dis-

advantage in the sense that incumbents are increasingly cognizant of their electoral handicap and decide not to run.

However, though there is differential rerunning, I demonstrate that it is not the main mechanism driving the results in figure 1. I run the RDD analysis on a subset of the data that only includes candidates in races in which the incumbent decided to rerun, and as figure A.6 shows, the results are robust to this sample restriction. Admittedly, the effect size is less pronounced ($-.13$) than in the full sample ($-.24$). That said, the fact that the effect is still negative and significant (p -value $< .001$) suggests that even when incumbents choose to rerun, they are systematically less likely to win than the challengers they barely beat. In other words, the bias against incumbents depicted in figure 1 is not merely a product of voters choosing challengers because the incumbent is not on the ballot.

Furthermore, figure 1 results are, following best practice, conducted unconditional on running, meaning that if a candidate decided not to run, they were coded as having lost by having won 0% of votes. This should be considered as the lower bound on an incumbency disadvantage, in the sense that every candidate who opted out of running necessarily loses. The upper bound is the one in which all candidates who choose not to run are simply removed from the data set, which is the analysis shown in figure A.6. The “true” estimate, though impossible to recover, is the one in which all candidates who barely win or lose decide to rerun, and it falls somewhere between these two bounds. Since both bounds are negative and significant, this result lends credibility to the finding of an incumbency disadvantage.

PREFERRING CHALLENGERS DESPITE GOOD PERFORMANCE

The RDD results provide compelling evidence that incumbents are disadvantaged compared to challengers. To provide an alternative test of anti-incumbent bias and to study the reasons it exists, I use a conjoint experiment to identify which candidate characteristics affect voter behavior in reelections.⁸ The conjoint allows for exploring the microfoundations of the aggregate-level electoral returns results.⁹ In particular, explicitly informing respondents about incumbent performance allows me to discount both the possibility that the incumbency disadvantage merely results from poor incumbent performance and the key alternative explanation in the

7. The effect sizes are -0.099 in 2006, -0.194 in 2010, and -0.251 in 2014, all significant at the 5% level or less.

8. The method in its current use was developed largely by Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto (2014). Carlson (2015) offers one of the first political science applications, studying how preferences for good performance vs. other candidate characteristics influence vote choice in elections.

9. A preanalysis plan was filed prior to launching the survey: <http://egap.org/registration/2762>.

electoral accountability literature (that voters lack accurate performance information with which to judge incumbents). Choosing between two candidates that vary on multiple dimensions also better reflects real-life voting and reduces the risk of social desirability bias, such as for choosing candidates with a history of poor performance in office or who engage in campaign gift-giving.

I embedded the conjoint experiment in an original household survey fielded among 1,061 respondents in 18 urban, periurban, and rural municipalities in the region of Cusco, located in the Peruvian Andes (app. E provides additional details about the survey and sampling). The surveys were implemented in person, using tablets. The conjoint questions were placed at the beginning of the survey to avoid priming effects. Candidate profiles were randomized at the level of the individual respondent. For each question item, two candidate profiles were randomly generated, each of which contained one of the possible values of each of the characteristics. Respondents saw the two candidate profiles side by side and were then asked, “Which of the following two candidates would you vote for to be mayor of your municipality?” The process was repeated four times, so the respondent saw four pairs of candidates and was asked the same question immediately after viewing each pair. Figure B.1 shows how the profiles appeared to respondents on the tablet.

I tested eight candidate attributes: incumbency, gender, links with social organizations, being from the respondents’ village, personal wealth, indigenous first language, political dynasty, and campaign gift-giving.¹⁰ Table C.1 (tables C.1, D.1, F.1–F.3, G.1, G.2, H.1, H.2 are available online) shows the values each attribute could take, and table D.1 presents the Spanish language used in the survey. In each pair of profiles, one candidate was always the incumbent and the other was always the challenger. The incumbent could take on one of five performance-related conditions: no performance information, good (bad) performance in public works projects, and good (bad) performance in offering individuals emergency financial assistance.

Electoral accountability research tends to assume a priori knowledge of the type of performance that influences voter decision-making. Instead, I use a later survey question to test directly the assumption that voters value the two performance metrics I use. Respondents were asked to rank the importance of six different potential mayoral responsibilities. For financial assistance, 80.3% of respondents described providing this kind of aid as a very important or important

10. As the focus of this article is incumbency, the other seven characteristics can be thought of as controls that allow for better identifying the impact of incumbency on vote choice.

responsibility of mayors.¹¹ For public works projects, 95.6% described them as very important or important.

The main outcome of interest is the respondents’ choice between two candidates when prompted by the question, “Which of the following two candidates for mayor would you vote for?” The outcome variable corresponding to each candidate is whether the candidate was chosen by the respondent. The data set includes 7,576 unique candidate profiles.

Results

Figure 2 depicts the main results. The points on the plot show the point estimates of the effect of each candidate attribute on the probability of the candidate being selected.¹² The interpretation of the estimate is the change in the probability that a profile will be selected when the trait is at the given level as compared to the baseline level. The plot depicts each trait’s baseline level as a line with no point estimate. The lines on each point represent 95% confidence intervals, and the dashed vertical line shows zero. Table F.3 presents point estimates and *p*-values for each trait.

The most noteworthy result is how respondents perceive incumbents. For the incumbency conditions, each point estimate represents the effect of that particular condition compared to being a challenger (which was set as the baseline condition). For example, the effect of the candidate being an incumbent with no performance information compared to being a challenger is that it reduces the likelihood of being selected by .16.

If electoral accountability was working as assumed, respondents would need both to punish poorly performing incumbents and to reward high-performing incumbents.¹³ Instead, the fact that all of the incumbency conditions have negative and significant effects suggests that regardless of the incumbent’s performance, challengers are preferred. Most significant, and in support of prediction 2a, challengers are preferred even to incumbents who did a *good* job as mayor, and this holds for both of the performance measures.

Furthermore, respondents give greater weight to incumbency status than to the other candidate characteristics, as all of the incumbency traits—with the exception of good public works performance compared to giving gifts—have point estimates that are greater in absolute value than any other trait. In other words, not only do voters prefer challengers on average

11. Qualitative interviews conducted in three regions of Peru prior to fielding the survey suggested this kind of financial help was common.

12. Following Hainmueller et al. (2014), the quantity is the average marginal component effect, which averages the effect sizes of that candidate trait across the values of all other candidate traits.

13. This is the expectation recorded in the preanalysis plan registered prior to fielding the survey.

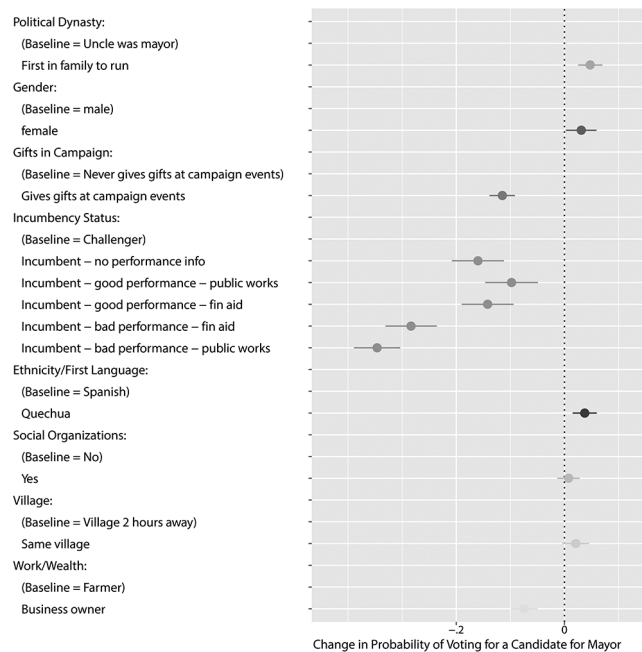


Figure 2. Effect sizes of candidate traits on probability of receiving respondents' vote. Dependent variable is whether the candidate profile was selected over the other candidate profile seen in the pair after being prompted by the question, "Which of these candidates would you vote for to be mayor of your municipality?" Clustered standard errors are calculated at the level of the individual to account for correlation between the same individual's candidate choices. Bars show 95% confidence intervals. Baseline values have no point estimates or confidence intervals. Color version available as an online enhancement.

and prefer them even over high-performing incumbents, incumbency status is the most important determinant of vote choice.

The results are robust to a series of checks standard for conjoint experiments, as described in appendix G. To discount carryover effects, figure G.1 shows the estimates are robust across the four different choice tasks, meaning responses are the same regardless of whether it was the first or subsequent pair of candidate profiles seen. To reject profile order effects, figure G.2 shows the stability of estimates regardless of whether the candidate with that trait was the first or second in the pair. I confirm that the randomization across candidate traits (table G.1) and across respondent characteristics (table G.2) were both successful.

Before turning to the mechanisms, it is worth emphasizing how the conjoint and RDD results measure different, though complementary, aspects of the incumbency disadvantage. The RDD design compares incumbents to challengers who ran in the previous election but lost, whereas the conjoint experiment does not specify whether the challenger has run before and therefore may include any type of challenger, either a career politician in her third election or a political novice. Thus the different empirical strategies are likely studying incumbency effects relative to different challenger types. Taken together,

the two sets of results suggest that incumbents are disadvantaged regardless of the type of challenger they face, career politicians or rookies alike.

Mechanisms

I argue that the electoral connection can break down if voters doubt that incumbents who perform well will repeat their performance if given a second chance in office. To test this mechanism (prediction 2b), I use a later survey question to assess whether beliefs about repeat performance are driving the bias against high-performing incumbents. Respondents were asked to rate the likelihood that an incumbent who performed well in her first term would repeat her performance if reelected. Figure 3 shows the conjoint results dividing the sample by beliefs about repeat performance. In support of prediction 2b, good performance is only punished among those who believe that it is unlikely to be repeated (fig. 3A). Those who perceive a high probability of good performance being repeated (fig. 3B) are indifferent between challengers and high performers; while they are not rewarding

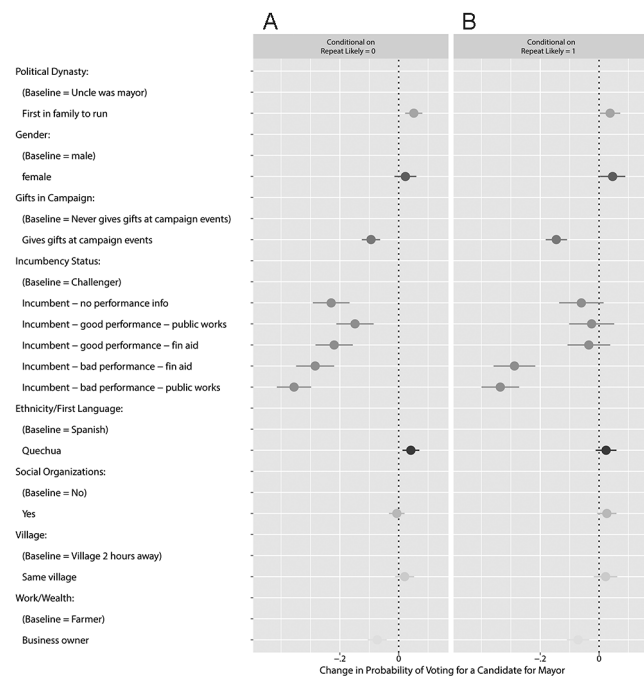


Figure 3. Conjoint results conditional on respondents' reported likelihood that good performance will be repeated. A, Analysis conducted on the subsample of respondents who believe that good incumbent performance being repeated if reelected is unlikely or very unlikely. B, Analysis for respondents who believe it is likely or very likely. The dependent variable is whether the candidate profile was selected over the other candidate profile seen in the pair after being prompted by the question, "Which of these candidates would you vote for to be mayor of your municipality?" Clustered standard errors are calculated at the level of the individual to account for correlation between the same individual's candidate choices. Bars show 95% confidence intervals. Baseline values have no point estimates or confidence intervals. Color version available as an online enhancement.

good performance, they are not punishing it either. This suggests that while all respondents have some anti-incumbent bias, those who doubt good performance will be repeated are driving the results in which strong performers are punished.

I also directly test the mechanism of voters’ belief in incumbents’ increasing corruption across terms (prediction 2c). Recall that survey respondents who reported that it was unlikely or very unlikely that good first-term performance would be repeated were then asked to explain their rationale in a follow-up question. More than half (53.4%) reported their belief that incumbents learn to be corrupt in office. I split the sample accordingly and reran the conjoint analysis. Figure 4 depicts the results. In support of prediction 2c, those who report that incumbents learn how to be corrupt in office (fig. 4B) are driving the effect of punishing good performers.

MEDIATING THE INCUMBENCY BIAS

The conjoint experiment’s results support the theory’s testable implication that voters prefer challengers even over high-

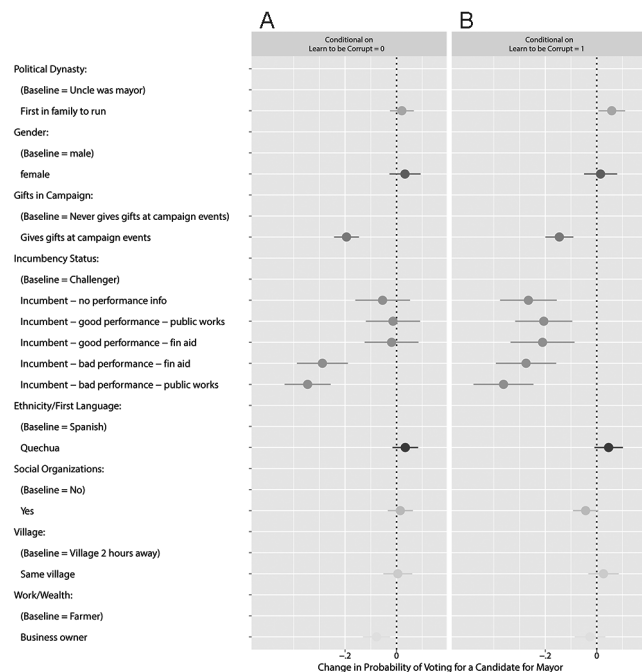


Figure 4. Subsamples divided by respondents’ reported justification for their belief that good incumbent performance being repeated upon reelection is unlikely or very unlikely. A, Analysis conducted on the subsample of respondents who did not report that incumbents learn to be corrupt in office as a justification. B, Analysis conducted on the subsample of respondents who reported that incumbents learn to be corrupt in office as a justification. The dependent variable is whether the candidate profile was selected over the other candidate profile seen in the pair after being prompted by the question, “Which of these candidates would you vote for to be mayor of your municipality?” Clustered standard errors are calculated at the level of the individual to account for correlation between the same individual’s candidate choices. Bars show 95% confidence intervals. Baseline values have no point estimates or confidence intervals. Color version available as an online enhancement.

performing incumbents (prediction 2a) and reject the alternative hypothesis that incumbents are disadvantaged because voters lack access to accurate performance information. As an additional test of these and other alternative explanations, I alter the RDD setup, using a heterogeneous treatment effects design to test for what “types” of incumbents are able to overcome voters’ anti-incumbent bias. In other words, I ask whether certain characteristics of incumbents—the districts in which they run, their performance, or their individual personal traits—attenuate the incumbency disadvantage.

I combine the RDD data set with data on voter trust in politicians and accountability institutions; measures of incumbent performance; candidate characteristics; and variables capturing the socioeconomic, political, and institutional context at the district level. I perform the following local linear regression, including the triple interaction between the treatment variable (incumbent), forcing variable (voteshare margin in the previous election), and relevant covariate (X), as well as all lower-order interactions, so that

$$y_d = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{incumbent}_d + \beta_2 \text{forcing}_d + \beta_3 X + \beta_4 \text{incumbent}_d \times \text{forcing}_d + \beta_5 \text{incumbent}_d \times X + \beta_6 \text{forcing}_d \times X + \beta_7 \text{incumbent}_d \times \text{forcing}_d \times X + \varepsilon_d.$$

The coefficient of interest is β_5 , the coefficient for the interaction term between incumbency and the relevant covariate. If significant, it would suggest heterogeneity in the incumbency effect in terms of that covariate. For example, if the coefficient on the interaction term “incumbent \times performance” was significant and positive, it would suggest that while incumbents are disadvantaged on average, those who perform well enjoy a higher probability of getting reelected than those who perform poorly. All of the interacted covariates have been standardized (mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1) to facilitate comparison.

Does performance or information explain incumbency bias?

I begin by using the RDD setup to provide a further test of the conjoint results, namely that challengers are preferred to even good performers (prediction 2a) and that the alternative hypothesis—that voters reject incumbents because they lack accurate information about their performance—does not hold. In both cases, results support the conjoint experiment’s findings. This section briefly describes these tests, with full details available in appendix H.

I use four measures of performance to test whether incumbents enjoy an electoral benefit from performing well in office. First, I include whether Peru’s conditional cash transfer

(CCT) program was added during the mayor’s term. Second, I test for performance in terms of execution of the budget for public works projects. Third, I include the change in the district-level human development index (HDI) over the mayor’s term. Finally, I use survey data on how respondents evaluate the mayor’s management of municipal governance, available for 2014 from a national household survey (Encuesta Nacional de Hogares, or ENAHO) conducted by Peru’s National Institute for Statistics and Information.

Table 1 depicts the results. The four performance measures are not significant, providing additional support for prediction 2a (voters prefer challengers even over incumbents who performed well) in terms of these metrics. Of course, this relationship holds only for these particular performance measures, and it could be the case that voters do reward for other aspects of performance. Still, the results broadly support the voter preferences expressed in the conjoint experiment and thus provide a real-world test of the conjoint’s validity.

Next, to rule out the alternative hypothesis that voters would reelect incumbents if they had access to accurate performance information, I use district-level data from the 2007 census, creating an average across three measures of owning information-related technology (cell phones, television, and internet). I also include two ENAHO survey questions asking

how often respondents inform themselves about politics and how much interest they have in politics. As table 2 shows, none of the variables associated with greater access to information is significant, suggesting that an information constraint—not knowing how the incumbent performed—does not explain why voters prefer challengers. Given respondents had perfect information in the conjoint and still on average preferred challengers, these results again provide strong support for the validity of the conjoint experiment’s findings.

The role of horizontal accountability institutions

To review, I argue that for electoral accountability to work in practice, voters have to be confident incumbents will continue to perform well in office if given another chance. If voters perceive increasing corruption in a second term, then information about good current performance becomes meaningless for inferring future behavior. In such contexts, before they reelect, voters need an extra assurance that incumbents will be constrained despite their increased ability to engage in corruption, and this assurance can come through belief in the effectiveness of horizontal accountability institutions.

To test whether voters’ trust in oversight institutions affects their willingness to reward incumbents (prediction 3), I use responses from the ENAHO survey described earlier for

Table 1. Regression Discontinuity Design and Incumbent Reelection: Impact of Incumbent Performance

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Incumbent	-.278*** (.022)	-.288*** (.024)	-.248*** (.019)	-.357*** (.049)
Voteshare margin previous	3.113*** (.235)	2.984*** (.261)	2.898*** (.196)	3.380*** (.576)
Incumbent × voteshare margin previous	-2.591*** (.313)	-2.448*** (.337)	-2.196*** (.270)	-2.593*** (.655)
Incumbent × CCT added	-.033 (.021)			
Incumbent × public works budget spent		-.018 (.025)		
Incumbent × change HDI			-.022 (.020)	
Incumbent × rate municipal performance				.026 (.052)
Constant	.386*** (.015)	.407*** (.016)	.371*** (.013)	.462*** (.035)
Observations	6,422	5,548	8,915	1,371

Note. Dependent variable: candidate won election. CCT = conditional cash transfer; HDI = human development index. District-level clustered standard errors reported in parentheses. Noninteractions and triple interactions “incumbent × margin previous × variable” estimated but not reported.

* $p < .1$.

** $p < .05$.

*** $p < .01$.

Table 2. Regression Discontinuity Design and Incumbent Reelection: Impact of Political Information

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Incumbent	-.247*** (.019)	-.266*** (.029)	-.265*** (.029)
Voteshare margin previous	2.907*** (.196)	2.865*** (.309)	2.873*** (.308)
Incumbent × voteshare margin previous	-2.262*** (.264)	-1.780*** (.420)	-1.810*** (.419)
Incumbent × communication technology index	.019 (.020)		
Incumbent × politically informed		.034 (.030)	
Incumbent × political interest			-.011 (.027)
Constant	.372*** (.013)	.378*** (.020)	.379*** (.020)
Observations	8,904	3,892	3,894

Note. Dependent variable: candidate won election. District-level clustered standard errors reported in parentheses. Noninteractions and triple interactions “incumbent × margin previous × variable” estimated but not reported.

* $p < .1$.

** $p < .05$.

*** $p < .01$.

a series of questions about trust in different government agencies and social institutions.¹⁴ The survey is implemented on a monthly basis, so I include responses from January to October for 2006 and from January to September for 2010 and 2014 (the mayoral election was held in November in 2006 and October in 2010 and 2014). I use only the most immediate time frame prior to the election because I hypothesize that this period would be the most likely to influence voter behavior; earlier lack of trust may already be resolved or have been forgotten by the time the election comes around.

I create a district-level measure of trust in oversight institutions by averaging responses to the trust question for all of the horizontal accountability institutions that are included in the ENAHO survey. In 2006, 2010, and 2014, the institutions are the National Elections Board, the judicial branch, ombudsmen, and the municipal government. The 2014 survey also asks about trust in four government agencies designed to fight corruption, so I include an average of these responses as well. The institutions are the anticorruption prosecutor of the attorney general, the office of the comptroller general, the public prosecutor’s office, and the High-Level Anticorruption Commission.

14. The question reads, “Currently, do you trust institutions such as . . .,” listing the institution then giving five options: none, a little, sufficient, a lot, and I don’t know. The latter answer I coded as missing. The questions are asked identically across years.

The results, presented in column 1 of table 3, provide strong support for prediction 3 (when voters report more trust in horizontal accountability institutions, they are more likely to vote for incumbents). The trust measures go from lower to higher trust, so a positive coefficient can be interpreted as higher levels of trust being correlated with a greater likelihood of the incumbent being reelected. The positive and significant coefficient on the interaction between incumbency and trust in oversight institutions suggests that incumbents who run in districts in which respondents reported higher levels of trust in horizontal accountability institutions receive an electoral boost relative to challengers.

I conduct a series of checks on the validity of the trust measure and the results. First, I test two measures of trust in institutions that are unrelated to accountability. One is trust in other politicians and levels of government, which is a district average of reported trust in the regional government, the provincial government, Congress, and political parties. The other is trust in the army and police. As columns 2 and 3 of table 3 show, neither of these measures is significant, suggesting that it is not the case that places with greater trust overall are more likely to reelect; rather, it is only trust in the specific institutions of oversight that matters for incumbent reelection.

Second, it is also not the case that higher trust in horizontal accountability institutions is merely a proxy for perceptions of better mayoral performance. The trust-in-oversight-institutions

Table 3. Regression Discontinuity Design and Incumbent Reelection: Voter Trust in Institutions

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Incumbent	-.276*** (.029)	-.283*** (.028)	-.283*** (.028)
Voteshare margin previous	3.129*** (.305)	3.126*** (.297)	3.125*** (.297)
Incumbent × voteshare margin previous	-2.211*** (.410)	-2.057*** (.399)	-2.062*** (.400)
Incumbent × trust in horizontal accountability institutions	.074** (.030)		
Incumbent × trust other politicians		.011 (.028)	
Incumbent × trust police army			.027 (.029)
Constant	.390*** (.020)	.393*** (.019)	.393*** (.019)
Observations	3,934	4,139	4,139

Note. Dependent variable: candidate won election. District-level clustered standard errors reported in parentheses. Noninteractions and triple interactions “incumbent × margin previous × variable” estimated but not reported.

* $p < .1$.

** $p < .05$.

*** $p < .01$.

variable is not correlated with any of the four performance measures.¹⁵ In addition, recall that respondents were specifically asked about their satisfaction with the municipal government’s public management, which, unlike trust in municipal or other institutions, is a direct measure of the incumbent mayor’s performance. However, as was shown in column 4 of table 1, this variable is insignificant, while trust in oversight institutions is significant and positive. This suggests both that the trust question is distinct from voters’ assessment of performance and that what affects incumbents’ electoral fortunes is not performance, but trust in oversight institutions.

Other alternative explanations

In addition to incumbent performance and access to information, I test for and reject a series of other alternative explanations for how incumbents overcome voter bias to improve their electoral prospects. I briefly describe the results here, with full details in appendix H.

I begin with explanations related to municipal-level politics. First, since more competitive districts may be simply harder for incumbents to win, I include the effective number

of parties from the previous election. Second, I use precinct-level returns to gauge whether incumbents can increase their reelection success either through enjoying wide support across villages or relying on high support in a small set of villages.¹⁶ Third, Peruvian law allows voters to petition to put the standing mayor up for a recall, and incumbents may fare worse where recalls occur. Following Holland and Incio (2018), I include binary measures for whether citizens began gathering signatures to petition for a recall and whether enough signatures were gathered to trigger a recall in both the current and previous term. As table H.1 shows, none of these variables is significant, suggesting they are not explanations for how incumbents increase their likelihood of reelection in the face of an incumbency disadvantage.

Finally, particular characteristics of the incumbent, say age or past experience, could also make it easier for certain incumbents to overcome voter bias. I test the seven characteristics included in the information candidates must submit to the National Elections Board, available for the 2014 election. As table H.2 shows, none of the characteristics is significant, suggesting the incumbency disadvantage is not mediated by particular traits of the incumbent herself.

15. The correlations are, respectively: average spending of public works budget (.078), CCT added to district (.018), change in HDI (.09), and rating of municipal performance in 2014 (.12).

16. Thank you to José Incio, who provided me with the effective number of parties measure and the precinct-level elections returns.

CONCLUSION

In the broadest sense, this article aimed to assess the conditions under which reelection succeeds in generating political accountability. It begins from the premise that, at a minimum, electoral accountability requires that voters are willing to reelect high-performing incumbents, thereby incentivizing politicians' good behavior in office. However, using electoral returns data across three local elections, I find a strong incumbency *dis*-advantage, in contrast to the well-documented incumbency advantage found in most advanced democracies, suggesting significant voter disdain for incumbents. Furthermore, in a survey experiment, I find respondents are so biased against incumbents that they prefer the challenger even when informed that the incumbent performed well.

I then present evidence in support of my theoretical argument. Using data from my original survey, I show how voters assume politicians are more corrupt in their subsequent terms and that as a result, they question whether good performance in one period is an accurate predictor of good performance in the next. I also document how these attitudes underpin respondents' preference for challengers, even over incumbents who performed well. I further argue that horizontal accountability institutions can ameliorate the electoral disconnection by constraining politicians' behavior in office, thereby providing an assurance of continued good performance if reelected. Combining existing survey data with the elections results on the incumbency *dis*-advantage, I show that where horizontal accountability institutions are perceived to be strong, voters are more willing to reelect incumbents.

These results have important implications for the study of political accountability and democracy more broadly. They suggest that the traditional view of incumbency, particularly that incumbents will be incentivized to perform well because voters are willing to reward good performance at the ballot box, may not apply universally. The results also highlight the importance of understanding how different types of accountability operate not in isolation, but interact. In particular, it may be difficult to generate the vertical accountability of reelection when horizontal accountability is weak.

Furthermore, the results found in Peru may be expected to travel elsewhere. Weak states and poor incumbent performance can generate disdain for politicians (Mainwaring 2006) that, when combined with widespread corruption, lay the groundwork for the view that even good performers can be corrupted in subsequent terms. Strong parties or clientelistic networks may maintain incumbent support despite these conditions as a result of partisan or personalistic loyalty. However, with neither parties nor clientelistic machines to deliver votes to incumbents, a perception of increasing

malfeasance across terms can translate into an incumbency disadvantage that applies to good and bad performers alike.

Taking just the case of Latin America—a region rife with corruption—Guatemala, Ecuador, and Panama join Peru in combining weak states, frail party systems, and high corruption. These countries also have relatively low reelection rates compared to other countries in the region. In Peru, Panama, and Ecuador, mayoral reelection runs between 22% and 33% (Jiménez 2019; Mejía Acosta and Meneses 2019). In Guatemala, incumbent reelection is the highest in the group at 41.2%, but RDD evidence suggests an incumbency disadvantage similar in magnitude to that of Peru (Morales 2014).

Overall, then, other developing democracies with similarly weak institutions, high corruption, and frail party systems may fall into an electoral disconnection disequilibrium in which voters reject the very premise of reelection and ignore politicians' good performance when they make voting decisions. Over time, the absence of electoral incentives may result in low-quality candidates increasingly running and in even worse performance in office, reinforcing voters' initial inclination to throw them all out.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Steven Levitsky, Torben Iversen, Horacio Larreguy, Pia Raffler, Fran Hagopian, Alisha Holland, and Audrey Latura for extensive comments and support; Chase Harrison for assistance with the survey; and José Incio for generously sharing data. I also thank three anonymous reviewers for their feedback and participants in the American Political Science Association 2019 Annual Meeting, the Northeast Workshop in Empirical Political Science, the Behavioral Models of Politics Conference, the Harvard-Massachusetts Institute of Technology Latin America Discussion Group, and the Harvard University Comparative Politics Research Workshop for helpful comments.

REFERENCES

- Adida, Claire, Jessica Gottlieb, Eric Kramon, and Gwyneth McClendon. 2017. "Breaking the Clientelistic Voting Equilibrium: The Joint Importance of Salience and Coordination." AidData Working paper 48.
- Aragón, Fernando, and Ricardo Pique. 2019. "Better the Devil You Know? Reelected Politicians and Policy Outcomes Under No Term Limits." *Public Choice* 182:1–16.
- Arellano-Yanguas, Javier. 2011. "Aggravating the Resource Curse: Decentralisation, Mining and Conflict in Peru." *Journal of Development Studies* 47 (4): 617–38.
- Ashworth, Scott. 2012. "Electoral Accountability: Recent Theoretical and Empirical Work." *Annual Review of Political Science* 15:183–201.
- Bhandari, Abhit, Horacio Larreguy, and John Marshall. 2019. "Able and Most Willing: An Empirical Anatomy of Information's Effect on Voter-Driven Accountability in Senegal." Unpublished manuscript.

- Boas, Taylor C., F. Daniel Hidalgo, and Guillermo Torral. 2019. "Accountability Backlash: Negative Electoral Responses to Public Service Provision in Brazil." Unpublished manuscript.
- Brollo, Fernanda, Tommaso Nannicini, Roberto Perotti, and Guido Tabellini. 2013. "The Political Resource Curse." *American Economic Review* 103 (5): 1759–96.
- Burstzyn, Leonardo. 2016. "Poverty and the Political Economy of Public Education Spending: Evidence from Brazil." *Journal of the European Economic Association* 14 (5): 1101–28.
- Calonico, Sebastian, Matias D. Cattaneo, Max H. Farrell, and Rocio Titiunik. 2017. "rdrobust: Software for Regression-Discontinuity Designs." *Stata Journal* 17 (2): 372–404.
- Carlson, Elizabeth. 2015. "Ethnic Voting and Accountability in Africa: A Choice Experiment in Uganda." *World Politics* 67 (2): 353–85.
- Carpio, Miguel Angel, Beatriz Córdova, Horacio Larreguy, and Julie Anne Weaver. 2019. "Understanding the General Equilibrium Effects of Compulsory Voting on Policy: Evidence from Peru." Unpublished manuscript.
- Cattaneo, Mattias D., Brigham Frandsen, and Rocio Titiunik. 2015. "Randomization Inference in the Regression Discontinuity Design: An Application to Party Advantages in the U.S. Senate." *Journal of Causal Inference* 3 (1): 1–24.
- Cohen, Mollie J., Noam Lupu, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. 2017. *The Political Culture of Democracy in the Americas, 2016/17: A Comparative Study of Democracy and Governance*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University.
- Coviello, Decio, and Stefano Gagliarducci. 2017. "Tenure in Office and Public Procurement." *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 9 (3): 59–105.
- de Kadt, Daniel, and Evan S. Lieberman. 2017. "Nuanced Accountability: Voter Responses to Service Delivery in Southern Africa." *British Journal of Political Science* 50 (1): 185–215.
- De Magalhaes, Leandro. 2015. "Incumbency Effects in a Comparative Perspective: Evidence from Brazilian Mayoral Elections." *Political Analysis* 23 (1): 113–26.
- De Magalhaes, Leandro, and Salomo Hirvonen. 2019. "The Incumbent-Challenger Advantage and the Winner-Runner-Up Advantage." Working paper no. 19/710. Department of Economics, University of Bristol.
- Defensoría del Pueblo. 2015. *Decimotavo informe anual de la defensoría del pueblo (Peruvian Ombudsman's 28th Annual Report)*. Lima: Defensoría del Pueblo.
- Di Tella, Rafael, and Ernesto Schargrotsky. 2003. "The Role of Wages and Auditing during a Crackdown on Corruption in the City of Buenos Aires." *Journal of Law and Economics* 46 (1): 269–92.
- Dunning, Thad, Guy Grossman, Macartan Humphreys, Susan D. Hyde, Craig McIntosh, and Gareth Nellis. 2019. *Information, Accountability, and Cumulative Learning: Lessons from Metaketa I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eggers, Andrew C. 2017. "Quality-Based Explanations of Incumbency Effects." *Journal of Politics* 79 (4): 1315–28.
- Fearon, James D. 1999. "Electoral Accountability and the Control of Politicians: Selecting Good Types versus Sanctioning Poor Performance." In Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin, eds., *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ferraz, C., and F. Finan. 2011. "Electoral Accountability and Corruption: Evidence from the Audits of Local Governments." *American Economic Review* 101 (4): 1274–311.
- Fisman, Raymond, and Edward Miguel. 2007. "Corruption, Norms, and Legal Enforcement: Evidence from Diplomatic Parking Tickets." *Journal of Political Economy* 115 (6): 1020–48.
- Fisman, Raymond, Florian Schulz, and Vikrant Vig. 2014. "The Private Returns to Public Office." *Journal of Political Economy* 122 (4): 806–62.
- Hainmueller, Jens, Daniel J. Hopkins, and Teppei Yamamoto. 2014. "Causal Inference in Conjoint Analysis: Understanding Multidimensional Choices via Stated Preference Experiments." *Political Analysis* 22 (1): 1–30.
- Holland, Alisha C., and José Incio. 2018. "Imperfect Recall: The Politics of Subnational Office Removals." *Comparative Political Studies* 52 (5): 777–805.
- Jiménez, Thaylin. 2019. "La mayoría de alcaldes electos son nuevos; 11 lograron la reelección." *Metro Libre*, May 8. <https://www.metrolibre.com/nacionales/134762-la-mayoria-de-alcaldes-electos-son-nuevos-11-lograron-la-reeleccion.html>.
- Klašnja, Marko. 2015. "Corruption and the Incumbency Disadvantage: Theory and Evidence." *Journal of Politics* 77 (4): 928–42.
- Klašnja, Marko. 2016. "Increasing Rents and Incumbency Disadvantage." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 28 (2): 225–65.
- Klašnja, Marko, and Rocio Titiunik. 2017. "The Incumbency Curse: Weak Parties, Term Limits, and Unfulfilled Accountability." *American Political Science Review* 111 (1): 129–48.
- Lagunes, Paul. 2018. "Guardians of Accountability: A Field Experiment on Corruption and Inefficiency in Local Public Works." Unpublished manuscript.
- Lagunes, Paul. 2019. *The Eye and the Whip*. Book manuscript.
- Lee, David S. 2008. "Randomized Experiments from Non-random Selection in U.S. House Elections." *Journal of Econometrics* 142 (2): 675–97.
- Levitsky, Steven, and Maxwell A. Cameron. 2003. "Democracy without Parties? Political Parties and Regime Change in Fujimori's Peru." *Latin American Politics and Society* 45 (3): 1–33.
- Loayza, Norman V., Jamele Rigolini, and Oscar Calvo-González. 2014. "More Than You Can Handle: Decentralization and Spending Ability of Peruvian Municipalities." *Economics and Politics* 26 (1): 56–78.
- Mainwaring, Scott. 2006. "The Crisis of Representation in the Andes." *Journal of Democracy* 17 (3): 13–27.
- Manin, Bernard, Adam Przeworski, and Susan C. Stokes. 1999. "Elections and Representation." In Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin, eds., *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Martin, Lucy, and Pia Raffler. 2021. "Fault Lines: The Effects of Bureaucratic Power on Electoral Accountability." *American Journal of Political Science* 65 (1): 210–24.
- Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- McCrary, Justin. 2008. "Manipulation of the Running Variable in the Regression Discontinuity Design: A Density Test." *Journal of Econometrics* 142 (2): 698–714.
- McNulty, Stephanie. 2011. *Voice and Vote: Decentralization and Participation in Post-Fujimori Peru*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Mejia Acosta, Andres, and Karla Meneses. 2019. "Who Benefits? Intergovernmental Transfers, Subnational Politics and Local Spending in Ecuador." *Regional and Federal Studies* 29 (2): 219–47.
- Morales Carrera, Ivan. 2014. "Efecto incumbente en elecciones municipales: Un análisis de regresión discontinua para Guatemala." *Revista de análisis económico* 29 (2): 113–50.
- Muñoz, Paula. 2019. *Buying Audiences: Clientelism and Electoral Campaigns When Parties Are Weak*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Donnell, Guillermo A. 1998. "Horizontal Accountability in New Democracies." *Journal of Democracy* 9 (3): 112–26.
- Olken, Benjamin A. 2007. "Monitoring Corruption: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia." *Journal of Political Economy* 115 (2): 200–249.

Ponce, Aldo F., and Cynthia McClintock. 2014. "The Explosive Combination of Inefficient Local Bureaucracies and Mining Production: Evidence from Localized Societal Protests in Peru." *Latin American Politics and Society* 56 (3): 118–40.

Seawright, Jason. 2012. *Party-System Collapse: The Roots of Crisis in Peru and Venezuela*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Svolik, Milan W. 2013. "Learning to Love Democracy: Electoral Accountability and the Success of Democracy." *American Journal of Political Science* 57 (3): 685–702.

Uppal, Yogesh. 2009. "The Disadvantaged Incumbents: Estimating Incumbency Effects in Indian State Legislatures." *Public Choice* 138 (1): 9–27.