Candidate Capital, Perceived Descriptive Representativeness and Competence, and Voting in India, Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom

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Abstract

Whether voters feel that politicians are like them is an important factor in vote choice and has implications for public views of the efficacy of the political system at large. There is often talk of a gap between voters and their representatives, in which the politicians are described as 'not like us' and 'out of touch' with the electorate. An important sub-literature has shown that social alienation on the basis of class can shape how people vote and whether they vote at all (Carnes and Lupu 2016; Vivyan et al. 2020; Heath 2015; Heath 2018). However, the extant literature has overlooked a wider conception of the three forms of capital that are related to class and other factors: economic, social, and cultural (Bourdieu 2000). This paper addresses the possible role of these forms of capital in politics by testing their effects on voters' perceptions of candidates. It deploys conjoint survey experiments fielded to representative samples in India, Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom to test whether candidates' incomes, acquaintances, and cultural tastes affect how they are perceived by the public in diverse contexts. Specifically, it investigates perceptions of the descriptive representativeness and competence of candidates, and whether these mediate the relationship between capital and vote-worthiness. As such, the paper sheds light for the first time on whether stocks of economic, social, and cultural capital affect how candidates are perceived by the public.

Keywords: voting, candidates, perceptions, descriptive representation, competence, capital, conjoint experiment, comparative.

1 Introduction

In democracies, the importance of the representation of the public by those they elect is reflected in the wide range of literature on the topic (Barbet 2020; Bartels 2016; Campbell and Cowley 2014; Dassonneville and McAllister 2018; Ezrow et al. 2011; Heath 2015; Heath 2018; Johnson, Oppenheimer, and Selin 2012; Lovenduski and Norris 2003; Reher 2021; Schlozman, Brady, and Verba 2020; Sobolewska and Begum 2020; Tripp and Kang 2008). The literature frequently draws on Hannah Pitkin's (1967) distinction between descriptive and substantive representation, and whether the former leads to the latter. When dealing with the descriptive form, the focus is often on representation of demographic groups such as women (Dassonneville and McAllister 2018; Lovenduski and Norris 2003; Tripp and Kang 2008), ethnic minorities (Johnson, Oppenheimer, and Selin 2012; Sobolewska and Begum 2020), working class people (Heath 2015; Heath 2018), and disabled people (Reher 2021) The representation of these groups is a key purpose of democracy, but we also need to take account of other signals that politicians send about whether they are like the public that they seek to represent.

In this paper I argue that, beyond demographic traits, the signals that politicians send about their statuses and backgrounds are used by the public to make inferences about how descriptively representative they are. Specifically, I argue that people use signals relating to economic, social, and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) to assess whether other people are like them, i.e., part of an in-group, or unlike them, i.e., part of an out-group (Tajfel 1982) The three forms of capital, considered holistically, are widely overlooked in political science but the signals that politicians send about their financial circumstances, who they know, and their pastimes can reveal a lot about their statuses and backgrounds. These signals can assist the public in forming their sense of whether, and how, politicians are like or unlike them, and thus their sense of how descriptively representative they are. This sense is important because it can shape candidate preferences (Campbell and Cowley 2014), but also because it may have implications for views of how well the wider political system is functioning.

2 Literature and Theory

2.1 Representation

In her seminal work on representation, Pitkin (1967) differentiated between four different ways in which the public could be represented by those they elect. Formalistic representation relates to the systems that are in place to authorise representatives and hold them accountable. Descriptive representation covers whether elected representatives "look like" their constituents in key respects, usually focusing on demographic characteristics. Symbolic representation focuses on whether representatives "stand for" those who elect them in terms of the ways they speak and what they talk about publicly. Finally, substantive representation is concerned with the behaviour of representatives once they are elected, in terms of whether the legislation that they support or pass, and the topics that they spend their time considering in the legislature, reflect the positions of the public or groups within it.

A great deal of literature has focused on substantive representation, descriptive representation, and the links between the two. In relation to substantive representation, the key indicator is often how close politicians are to the median policy positions of voters (Bartels 2016; Ezrow et al. 2011; Reher 2021), but work has also identified gaps between representatives and the public in terms of values (Bale et al. 2020), preferences for types of government (Bertsou and Caramani 2020), and the structuring of beliefs (Barbet 2020). In terms of descriptive representation, the focus is often on key demographic cleavages such as gender, ethnicity, class, and disability, as well as the links between those traits and substantive representation.

Beyond its relationship with substantive representation, descriptive representation also has implications for the political participation of groups within society. The decline in class-voting (Lipset and Rokkan 1967) is often attributed to the movement of party positions (Evans and Tilley 2012) and the changing sizes of classes (Best 2011). However, in the context of the United Kingdom, it has also been shown to stem from declining social representation

of working class voters, which has driven them away from both the Labour Party and voting more generally (Heath 2015; Heath 2018). These findings fit within the wider literature on lower participation in politics amongst marginalised groups (Anwar 2001; Fox and Lawless 2010; Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Lowndes 2004), which has has also been linked to the resources that they have available to them (Schlozman, Brady, and Verba 2020).

Resources, or the lack thereof, not only influence whether and how people participate but can also act as signals about the profiles of politicians. If politicians are distinctive in terms of their financial circumstances, social connections, or pastimes, those signals can activate identities, such as those relating to class, and make them politically salient (Bourdieu 1986; Bourdieu 1987). This is especially so in the context of growing inequality (Burkhauser et al. 2016), which shapes perceptions of inequality (Lübker 2004) and has contributed to support for radical parties (Jay et al. 2019), particularly amongst people with a sense of low status (Gidron and Hall 2017; Gidron and Hall 2020).

The signals that politicians send about their resources also matter because people have preferences regarding politicians' characteristics (Campbell and Cowley 2018), and link those characteristics to politicians' abilities (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993). The characteristics of candidates matter not only for inferences about whether they are "like" the public but also whether they are competent. Particularly important considerations are the education, previous occupations, and local residence of politicians (Campbell and Cowley 2014), which relate to their qualification to navigate the world of politics, their experience of the world outside politics, and their ability to speak for those they represent. In other words, just as voters use party cues to infer the positions of politicians (Conover and Feldman 1982), they can use the backgrounds of politicians to infer how competent they are. Thus, it is important to consider the implication of politicians' stocks of capital both for whether they are seen as descriptively representative and whether they are seen as competent.

2.2 Capital

The factors identified as relating to political participation in resource-based models (Schlozman, Brady, and Verba 2020) fit within the wider concept of capital, and specifically the three forms of capital identified by Pierre Bourdieu: economic, social, and cultural (Bourdieu 1986). The time and money that enable some people to participate in politics are components of economic capital, requests to participate constitute social capital, and psychological engagement with politics is a manifestation of cultural capital. However, each form of capital is broader than those specific facets. For Bourdieu (2000) , economic capital encompasses income and a range of facets of wealth including property, savings, and investments. Social capital encompasses the number of social connections people hold, the statuses of those who are known, and the mutual obligations that those relationships entail. In line with Putnam's (1995) bonding form, this conception of social capital acts as an asset to individuals and in-groups, rather than a general social good. Finally, cultural capital is institutionalised as educational qualifications, which formally validate the knowledge and skills held by individuals. Beyond education (Kam and Palmer 2008), people also hold non-institutionalised or informal cultural capital manifested in their cultural activities and tastes. Both formal and informal cultural capital, as well as economic and social capital, act as resources and as indicators of people's statuses and backgrounds. As such, people can also use signals about capital when making inferences about the statuses and backgrounds of others, including politicians.

The importance of capital as a manifestation of class, and as a factor relating to political participation has been observed in the United States (Katz-Gerro 1999; Friedland et al. 2007; Laurison 2015; Laurison 2016), United Kingdom (Mike Savage, Devine, Cunningham, Taylor, et al. 2013; Michael Savage 2015; Mike Savage, Devine, Cunningham, Friedman, et al. 2015), Denmark (Harrits et al. 2010; Harrits 2013), and France (Bourdieu 2000). Others have found that the capital possessed by people is related to characteristics including gender, ethnicity, and age (Bennett et al. 2009), and argued that it acts as a signifier of status rather

than class (Shipman 2004; Tak Wing Chan and John H. Goldthorpe 2005; T. W. Chan and J. H. Goldthorpe 2006; Tak Wing Chan and John H. Goldthorpe 2007). Capital can also be viewed as a manifestation of the wider concept of privilege, which encompasses the different experiences and advantages that people have as a consequence of characteristics including age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and disability (Crenshaw 1989; Kimmel and Ferber 2017).

Perspectives that do not draw on Bourdieu's work have also emphasised the importance of economic and social capital for political participation (Lewis-Beck, Nadeau, and Foucault 2011; Partheymüller and Schmitt-Beck 2012; Putnam 1995; Solt 2008) meaning that informal cultural capital in particular has been overlooked in the study of public opinion and political behaviour. This may be because critics argue that focusing on cultural capital takes attention away from key issues of economic inequality (Dorling 2013), and that it is theoretically and empirically unsound to treat cultural capital as constitutive of class (Mills 2015). However, these critics do not argue that capital is not a manifestation of privilege, nor that it cannot act as a signal of status and background. Thus, whether it is reflective or constitutive of class, the capital held by politicians can be used by the public to inform their views of how descriptively representative and competent those who stand for election are.

Capital may also act as an important signal because it is related to mobility into elite occupations (Friedman, Laurison, and Miles 2015) such as being an elected representative. Thus, alongside characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, and prior occupation, the capital possessed by politicians may be used as signifier of whether they are like those who they seek to represent. In other words, when constituents assess how well a candidate can represent them, it is useful to know whether they earn £100,000 working as a lawyer or £25,000 working in a call centre, have social circles including investment bankers and IT consultants or shop workers and waiting staff, and spend their spare time going to cricket games and the opera or football matches and the pub.

2.3 Signals and Groups

If we think of the decision about whether or not to support a candidate in terms of the calculus of voting (Riker and Ordeshook 1968), the voter's view may be influenced by both the policy positions and the characteristics of the candidate. In the case of the latter, we are dealing with the expressive element of the calculus, or the "D" term (Blais 2000; Blais, Young, and Lapp 2000; Hamlin and Jennings 2011), though it may also have implications for the benefits that voters estimate they will receive if the candidate is elected (or the "B" term). In other words, voters may take some expressive satisfaction from supporting someone "like me," but they may also think that someone "like me" is more likely to deliver benefits to them.

Given that voters often do not have full information on the options available to them, they may use the characteristics of a candidate as a heuristic (Simon 1985; Lupia 1994) to create a simplified view (Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Zimbardo 2002) of what they are like, and what they will do if elected. Such heuristics are more likely to be used by people with lower levels of interest in politics, who are less likely to have strong party identities and more likely to be "movers", which is to say more likely to update who they support based on new information (Arzheimer and Schoen 2016).

When dealing with expressive motivations and heuristics we are in the domain of System 1 (Kahneman 2003; Kahneman 2011), or the disposition system, which makes quick and sometimes biased decisions that are more likely to be influenced by emotion (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000). This contrasts with the slower, more detached and considered processes of System 2, which may be triggered by the surveillance system when habitual behaviour is not appropriate to the circumstances. These two-system accounts of human decision-making allow for the reconciliation of the "as if" models of rational choice and the "black box" models of political psychology (McGraw 2000).

Within the "black box," people use signals to make judgements about other people and themselves (Bem 1970; Conover and Feldman 1982). The perceptions that people form

based on signals are often inaccurate (Duffy 2019), and much of that inaccuracy stems from systematic errors in human estimation (Landy, Guay, and Marghetis 2018). Amongst those systematic errors is a heightened attention to negative signals (Lau 1982), which implies that signals of the difference of politicians from the public will have more impact than signals of their similarity. Given that people do not retain all of the information that they receive in detail but instead sustain impressions of politicians (Lodge, Steenbergen, and Brau 1995), they are likely to adjust impressions to a greater extent when negative signals are received, for instance about the economic, social, and cultural distinctiveness of politicians.

Such signals activate identities and shape whether others are seen as members of an in-group or an out-group (Tajfel 1982; Bourdieu 1985; Bourdieu 1987). Once activated, identities can be powerful drivers of how people react out-groups and their behaviour (Major et al. 2002) and to inequality (Roex, Huijts, and Sieben 2019), partly because of beliefs about their own statuses and the reasons for them (O'Brien and Major 2005). Given that inequality reduces social trust and cohesion (Jay et al. 2019), indicators of politicians being in a high status out-group are likely to lead to them being viewed less favourably. This also implies that people are less likely to project other positive characteristics onto them (Sherrod 1971; Martinez 1988). This is especially likely to be the case amongst people with low-status identities, who are more likely to be alive to inequality and privilege in various domains (Rosette and Tost 2013).

Receiving information about a politician's status and background, in the form of signals about their economic, social, and cultural capital, is a form of emphasis framing (Cacciatore, Scheufele, and Iyengar 2018), and people can use that information to make inferences (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993), including about the descriptive representativeness and competence of candidates. Indeed, people are particularly responsive to framing that highlights a divide between them and an elite out-group (Bos et al. 2020), such as politicians. That such frames relate to expressive motivations that function through System 1 is also reflected in people's heightened responsiveness to expressive rather than utilitarian frames (Maio and

Olson 1995).

In the context of an election, I expect members of the public to use the kinds of capital that candidates hold as signals enabling judgements about how "like me" and competent each candidate is. In other words, beyond their demographic, ideological, and partisan characteristics, the capital that candidates hold should help the public discern whether candidates are members of an in-group or an out-group, and whether they are qualified to take on the role of an elected representative. As such, I also expect those stocks of capital to affect the likelihood that candidates are voted for, and that part of this effect is due to the impact of capital on perceived descriptive representativeness and perceived competence, which themselves impact on vote likelihood.

3 Hypotheses

In light of the role of economic, social, and cultural capital as signals of status, and thus of in-group or out-group membership, I expect that candidates with high-status capital will be seen as less representative. Specifically:

- **Hypothesis 1a:** Members of the public perceive candidates with high economic capital as less descriptively representative than candidates without high economic capital.
- **Hypothesis 1b:** Members of the public perceive candidates with high-status social capital as less descriptively representative than candidates without high-status social capital.
- **Hypothesis 1c:** Members of the public perceive candidates with high-status cultural capital as less descriptively representative than candidates without high-status cultural capital.

By contrast, given that high status is seen as a result of things such as hard work by a significant portion of the population, I expect that candidates with high-status capital will

be seen as more competent than candidates without high-status capital. Specifically:

- **Hypothesis 2a:** Members of the public perceive candidates with high economic capital as more competent than candidates without high economic capital.
- **Hypothesis 2b:** Members of the public perceive candidates with high-status social capital as more competent than candidates without high-status social capital.
- **Hypothesis 2c:** Members of the public perceive candidates with high-status cultural capital as more competent than candidates without high-status cultural capital.

In light of the above, and stemming from the links between descriptive representation and group identities, I expect that:

- **Hypothesis 3a:** Members of the public are less likely to vote for candidates with high economic capital than for candidates without high economic capital.
- **Hypothesis 3b:** Members of the public are less likely to vote for candidates with high-status social capital than for candidates without high-status social capital.
- **Hypothesis 3c:** Members of the public are less likely to vote for candidates with high-status cultural capital than for candidates without high-status cultural capital.

I expect the effects of candidate capital on the likelihood of being voted for by members of the public to be mediated as follows:

- **Hypothesis 4a:** The negative effects of candidates holding high economic and high-status social and cultural capital on the likelihood of members of the public voting for them are mediated by perceived descriptive representativeness and perceived competence.
- **Hypothesis 4b:** The positive effect of perceived descriptive representativeness on the likelihood of members of the public voting for candidates is larger than the positive

effect of perceived competence on the likelihood of members of the public voting for candidates.

- **Hypothesis 4c:** The negative effects of candidates holding high economic and high-status social and cultural capital on their perceived descriptive representativeness amongst members of the public are larger than the positive effects of candidates holding such capital on their perceived competence amongst members of the public.

Finally, given that the above effects are argued to function on the basis of psychological processes relating to group identities, I expect them to be observed in an array of different national contexts:

- **Hypothesis 5:** The preceding hypotheses hold in all of the countries under study.

4 Data and Method

To test the effect of signals regarding candidates' economic, social, and cultural capital on perceptions of how descriptively representative and competent they are, a pre-registered conjoint experiment (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014) was fielded by YouGov in India, Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.[1] Such survey experiments have some of the benefits of field experiments (Rooij, Green, and Gerber 2009), in the sense that they do not take place in the artificial setting of the laboratory and can be fielded to large and representative samples. In this case, the experiment was fielded to at least 1,000 respondents in each country, and quotas were used to ensure that respondents are representative of the populations in Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, and of the online population in India. In the United Kingdom the experiment was included in an omnibus survey alongside an array of other questions, whilst in the other three countries the experiment was fielded in a standalone survey.

[1] Pre-registration DOI: https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/WFKPA

In fielding conjoint survey experiments to investigate the impact of candidate characteristics on public preferences for them, this approach builds on the work of Campbell and Cowley (2014), Carnes and Lupu (2016), and Vivyan et al. (2020), and extends it in two direction. First, it tests the effects of signals about all three forms of capital alongside traits that have been investigated previously, such as gender, occupation, and education. Second, it tests those effects in four contexts with distinct institutional arrangements and levels of inequality. Specifically:

- India is a quasi-federal parliamentary democracy that uses single member plurality voting to elect its lower legislative chamber (Lok Sabha) and single transferable voting amongst state legislature to elect its upper legislative chamber (Rajya Sabha). The country experienced colonial rule by the United Kingdom prior to independence in 1949 and, by global standards, currently has moderate levels of income inequality and high levels of wealth inequality, both with their roots in a particular historical social hierarchy (the caste system).

- Poland is a unitary parliamentary, or semi-presidential, democracy that uses proportional representation to elect the lower legislative chamber (Sejm) and single member plurality voting to elect the upper legislative chamber (Senate). The country has experience of a non-democratic communist regime that sustained low levels of inequality, and the transition to a capitalist economy during the 1990s and, by global standards, currently has low (but growing (Bukowski and Novokmet 2019)) levels of both income and wealth inequality.

- Sweden is a unitary parliamentary democracy with a unicameral legislature (Riksdag) elected using a proportional representation system. The country has a long social democratic tradition (Pfeffer and Hällsten 2012), including a dominant social democratic party, and currently has low levels of income inequality and high levels of wealth inequality by global standards.

- The United Kingdom is a unitary parliamentary democracy, but with devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and has a lower legislative chamber (House of Commons) elected by single member plurality voting and an appointed upper chamber. The country is a long established democracy with a political tradition that has been influenced by neoliberal policies (Grasso et al. 2019), and currently has low-to-moderate levels of income and wealth inequality by global standards.

The different contexts of the four countries in term of institutions and inequality may shape how people respond to signals that candidates are in high or low status in- or out-groups (Benoit and Laver 2006; Dalton and Anderson 2010; Lübker 2004; Roex, Huijts, and Sieben 2019). Alternatively, as hypothesised, given that some collections of beliefs are associated in multiple contexts (Bertsou and Caramani 2020), it may be that such signals plug into views about inequality between in- and out-groups in similar ways across contexts. Fielding the conjoint experiments in these four countries allows us to test whether signals about candidates' economic, social, and cultural capital have similar or different effects in different contexts.

In each country, the experiment presented respondents with three pairs of candidate profiles to choose between. The candidates were all presented as standing for either a major right-wing (or right of centre) or major left-wing (or left of centre) party within the country: BJP or Congress in India; Law and Justice or Civic Platform in Poland; Social Democratic or Moderate in Sweden; Conservative or Labour in the United Kingdom. Within each candidate profile, the characteristics that were varied were name, gender, occupation, education level, income, occupations of acquaintances, cultural pastimes, policy interest, and ideological position within their party. Reflecting the fact that people tend to encounter written information about candidates in media reporting, social media posts, or campaign materials, the profiles were presented as prose descriptions rather than tables of candidate characteristics.

For the first two pairs of candidates, respondents were asked to imagine that the political

party, varied randomly between the pairs, was giving local people the chance to shape its choice of candidate for the next general election.[2] The third pair was then presented as a choice between candidates representing the two parties in a general election. Across the pairs of candidates, the randomisation of names was constrained such that no name could appear to a respondent more than once, which was intended to avoid situations in which it appeared to respondents that the same candidate appeared in more than one pair. Further, the randomisation of three other characteristics was constrained:

- Candidates with occupations requiring a degree in that country had their education levels set to that level.
- Candidates with occupations that are unlikely to attract high levels of pay in that country had their income levels set at one of the two lower options.
- Ideologically, candidates in right-wing parties could only be moderate or on the right of the party, whilst candidates in left-wing parties could only be moderate or on the left of the party.

Following each pair of candidate profiles, respondents were asked to indicate three things:

- How "like you" each candidate is, on a seven-point scale.
- How competent each candidate is, on a seven-point scale.
- Which candidate they would be more likely to vote for.

The fieldwork took place in the United Kingdom on the 30th and 31st of August 2022, in India between the 6th and 8th of September 2022, in Poland between the 2nd and 8th of December 2022, and in Sweden between the 2nd and 12th of December 2022. The samples obtained were 1,767 in the United Kingdom, 1,009 in India, 1,316 in Poland, and 1,087 in Sweden, meaning that a total of 5,179 people completed the survey experiment across the

[2]See Appendix A for an example of how the candidate choice task appeared to respondents in the United Kingdom.

four countries. In all four countries the sample exceeds the figure of 1,000 that was used for power calculations prior to fieldwork. With a sample of that size, the choice task repeated three times, a target effect size of 0.05, and the highest number of variable levels being four, the power of the experiment in each country is 0.86 (Lukac and Stefanelli 2020). This means that, with a sample of 1,000, an effect size of 0.05 relating to a four-category variable will be correctly identified 86% of the time.

Prior to the main fieldwork, a pilot study was also conducted in each country to assess the perceived status of the occupations and cultural pastimes included in the conjoint experiment. This was to ensure that the occupations and pastimes represented high- and low-status as anticipated. The pilot was fielded to small convenience samples via MTurk (on 16$^{\text{th}}$ of August 2022) in India (n = 205), Prolific (on the 3$^{\text{rd}}$ and 17$^{\text{th}}$ of October 2022) in Poland (n = 309), Prolific (from the 3$^{\text{rd}}$ to 6$^{\text{th}}$ of October 2022) and MTurk (on the 15$^{\text{th}}$ of October 2022) in Sweden (n = 103), and to a representative sample via YouGov (on the 9$^{\text{th}}$ and 10$^{\text{th}}$ of August 2022) in the United Kingdom (n = 1,809).[3] For occupation, the perceived statuses are remarkably consistent across the four countries, though there is less variation in India. Doctors and lawyers are viewed as the highest-status occupations whilst waiters and shop assistants are viewed as the lowest-status. For pastimes, the three European countries again display remarkable similarities, with attending the opera and art galleries perceived as high-status but attending football matches and going to shopping centres viewed as low-status. In India, by contrast, there is much less variation in the perceived statuses of the pastimes. This has implications that will be discussed subsequently but, for now, it suffices to say that the pilot results indicate that a weak effect, if any, of pastimes should be expected in the experimental results in India.[4]

[3]In the United Kingdom, the pilot study was also fielded (on the 3$^{\text{rd}}$ of October 2022) to a small convenience sample via Prolific (n = 199), with very similar results.

[4]Results of the pilot study are available in Appendix D.

5 Results

In line with the order of the hypotheses, I present the results of the conjoint experiment starting with the effects of the varied candidate characteristics on perceived descriptive representativeness, then on perceived competence, and finally on likelihood of being voted for. I then consider the mediation effects and, finally, summarise the differences between the results in each country. Within each subsection, I present the results for each country separately. All of the results were produced in Stata 17 using the "conjoint" (Frith 2021) and "mediation" (Tingley 2011) packages. The resulting estimates of the impact of each candidate characteristics on perceived descriptive representativeness, perceived competence, and vote likelihood represent the effects of those characteristics across the random variation in all the other characteristics. In the mediation analysis, the randomised candidate characteristics were included alongside each other in each model and errors were clustered by respondent (because each respondent repeated the candidate choice task three times). This allows estimation of the paths from each candidate characteristic of interest through perceived descriptive representativeness and perceived competence to vote likelihood when accounting for other candidate characteristics.

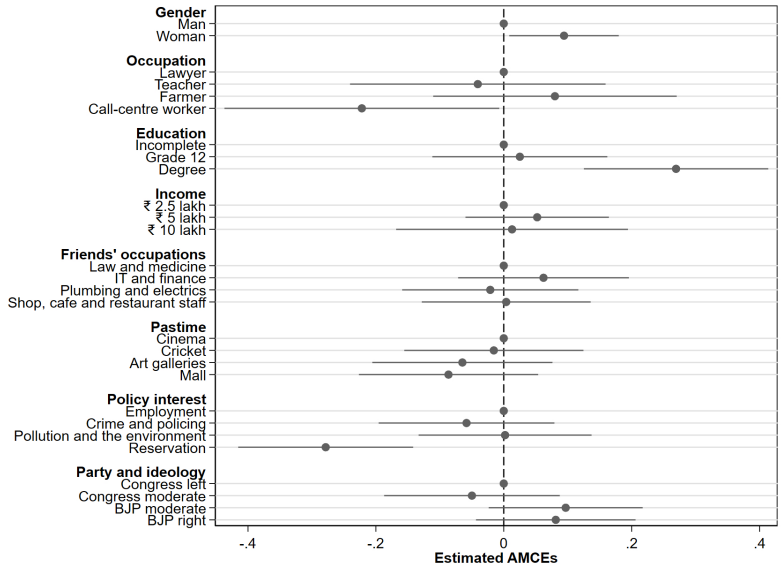
5.1 Perceived descriptive representativeness

Starting with Hypothesis 1a, Figure 1 shows that income is not statistically significantly related to the extent to which a candidate is seen as "like me" in India (panel a). By contrast, in Poland (panel b), Sweden (panel c), and the United Kingdom (panel d), income has the hypothesised negative relationship with candidates being viewed as descriptively representative. In Poland, compared to the reference category of earning zł 4,500 per month, candidates who earn zł 9,000 per month are seen as 0.147 points less "like me" on a seven-point scale, whilst candidates who earn zł 18,000 per month are seen as 0.173 points less "like me". In Sweden, the middle income category (600,000 SEK per year) is not statistically

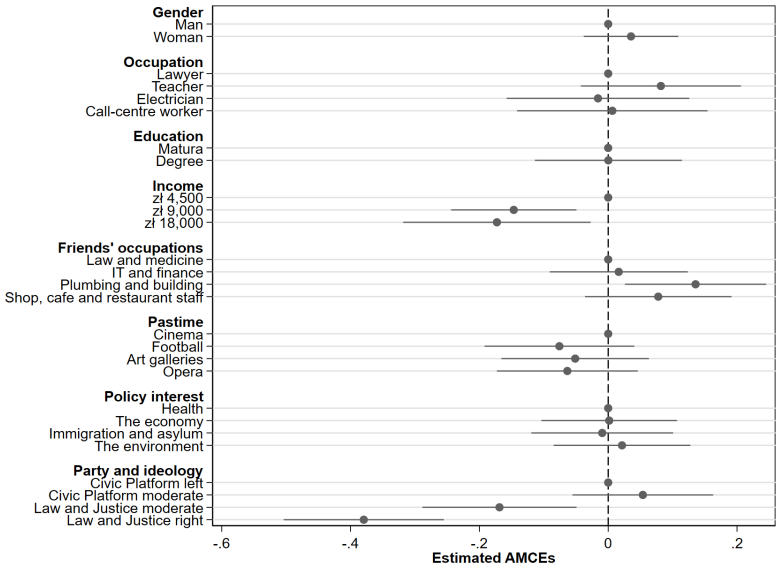
significantly different from the reference category (300,000 SEK per year). However, having the highest level of income (1,200,000 SEK per year) reduces the extent to which a candidate is seen as "like me" by 0.285 points. Finally, in the United Kingdom both the middle income category (£50,000 per year, 0.160 points less "like me") and high income category (£100,000 per year, 0.401 points less "like me") are negatively related to the perceived descriptive representativeness of candidates. Thus, in the three European countries that we consider, the experimental evidence supports the hypothesis that the economic capital held by candidates is negatively related to the extent to which they are perceived as descriptively representative.

Turning to social capital, there is little evidence in support of Hypothesis 1b. Only in Poland is the status of candidates' friends related in any way to the extent to which they are viewed as descriptively representative. Specifically, candidates with friends in occupations such as plumbing and building are seen as 0.136 points more "like me" than candidates with friends in the reference category (occupations such as law and medicine). This relationship is in the hypothesised direction in the sense that, compared to law and medicine (and IT and finance), plumbing and building are not high-status occupations and they have a positive effect. Overall, however, the evidence does not support the hypothesis that high-status social capital is generally negatively related to perceived descriptive representativeness.

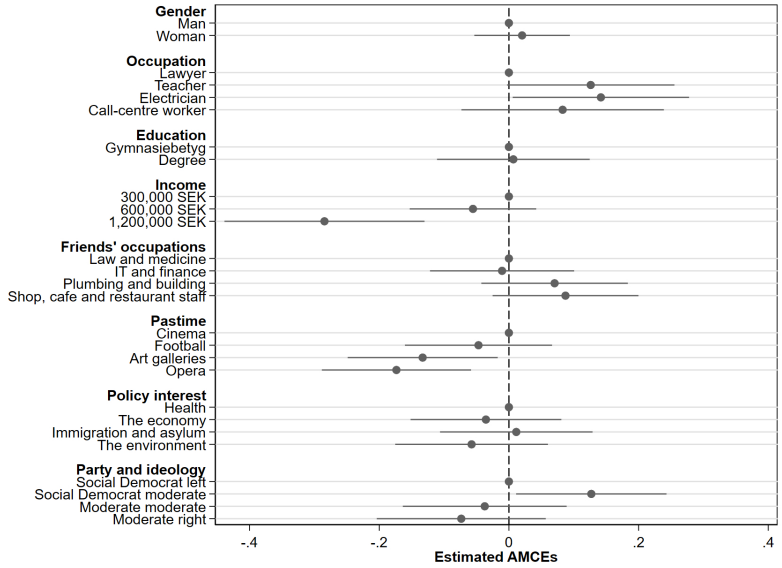
Finally in relation to perceived representativeness, the evidence regarding the effect of informal cultural capital varies between countries. In India and Poland there is no evidence that candidates' pastimes affect their perceived descriptive representativeness. By contrast, in Sweden, candidates who like to visit art galleries (0.133 points less "like me") or attend the opera (0.174 points less "like me") are seen as less descriptively representative than candidates who go to the cinema. In the United Kingdom, the negative effect of attending the opera (0.106 points less "like me") is also observed but the effect of visiting art galleries is not statistically significant. Thus, there is mixed evidence in support of Hypothesis 1c. It is only in Sweden and the United Kingdom that high-status pastimes undertaken by candidates have the hypothesised negative effect on their perceived descriptive representativeness.



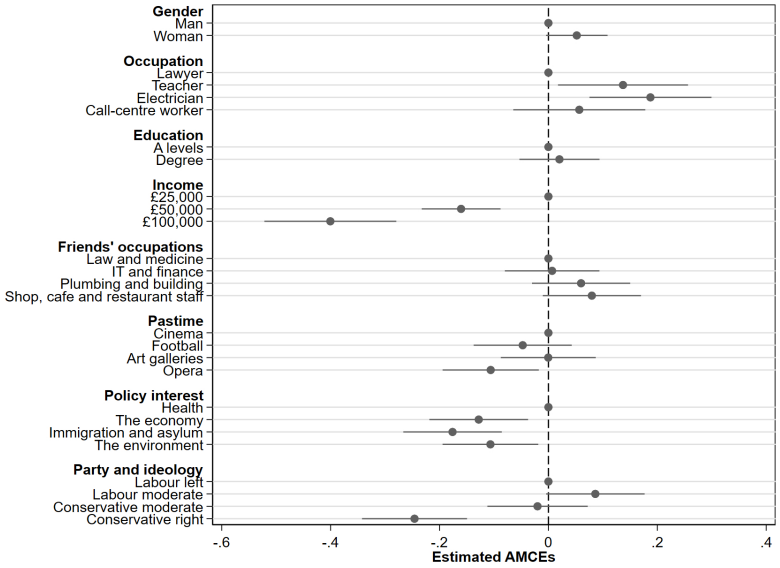
(a) India



(b) Poland



(c) Sweden



(d) United Kingdom

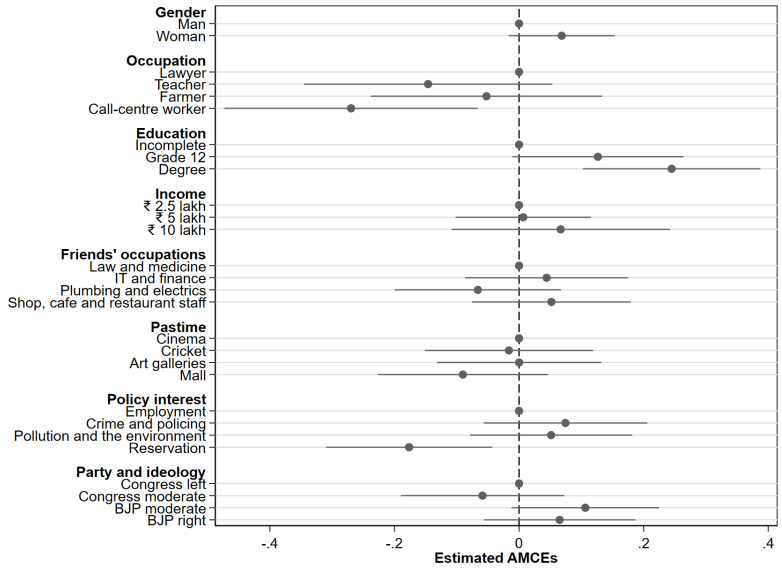
Figure 1: Average marginal component effects of candidate characteristics on perceived descriptive representativeness

5.2 Perceived competence

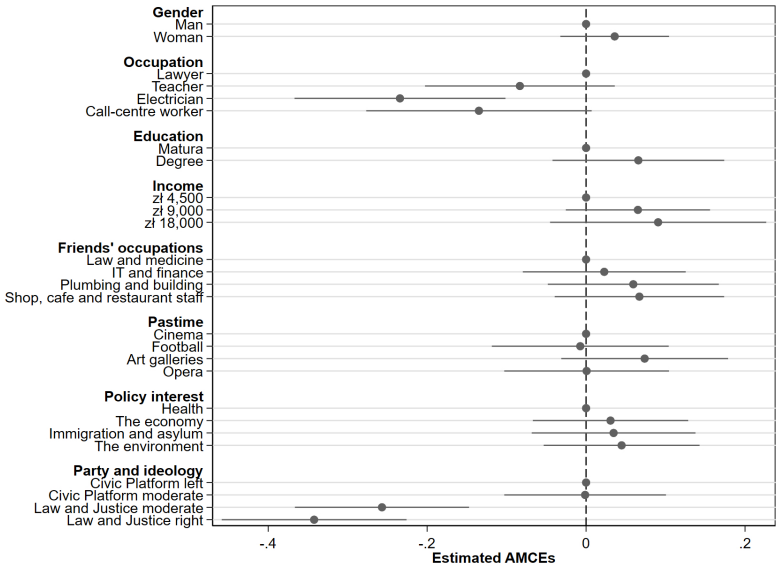
The results relating to the perceived competence of candidates offer no support for hypotheses 2a, 2b, or 2c, as can been seen in Figure 2. Only in the United Kingdom does candidate income (economic capital) have a statistically significant impact on their perceived competence (candidates with incomes of £100,000 are seen to be 0.127 points less competent, on a seven-point scale, than candidates with incomes of £25,000). Counter to Hypothesis 2a, this effect is negative rather than positive. Neither the statuses of candidates' friends (social capital) nor candidates' pastimes (informal cultural capital) have any statistically significant effect on perceived candidate competence in any of the countries under investigation. Thus, the evidence indicates that candidates' stocks of economic, social, and cultural capital bear almost no relation to how competent they are perceived to be by the public.

5.3 Voting

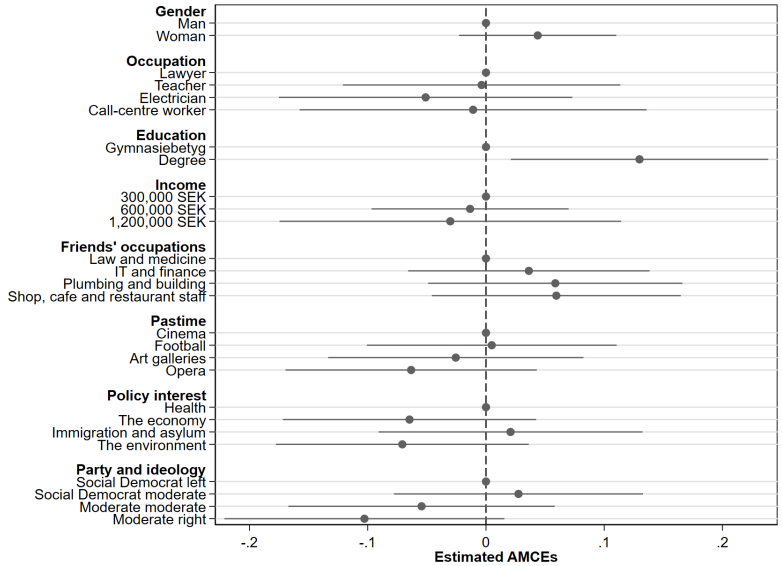
As Figure 3 shows, the picture with regards to vote likelihood is mixed. There is certainly evidence that, in line with Hypothesis 3a, members of the public are less likely to vote for candidates with large amounts of economic capital. This effect is not observed in India (panel a), but is observed in Poland (panel b), Sweden (panel c), and the United Kingdom (panel d). In all three of those countries candidates with the highest incomes (zł 18,000 per month, 1,200,000 SEK per year, and £100,000 per year respectively) are less likely to be voted for than candidates with the lowest incomes (zł 4,500 per month, 300,000 SEK per year, and £25,000 per year). In Poland, high income reduces the probability that a candidate is voted for by 0.06, whilst in Sweden and the United Kingdom the figure stands at 0.09. In Poland, candidates with the middle income category (zł 9,000 per month) are also have a 0.03 lower probability of being voted for than those with the lowest income category. Thus, the three European countries under consideration, candidates who are rich in economic capital are not only perceived to be less descriptively representative by the public but are also less likely to



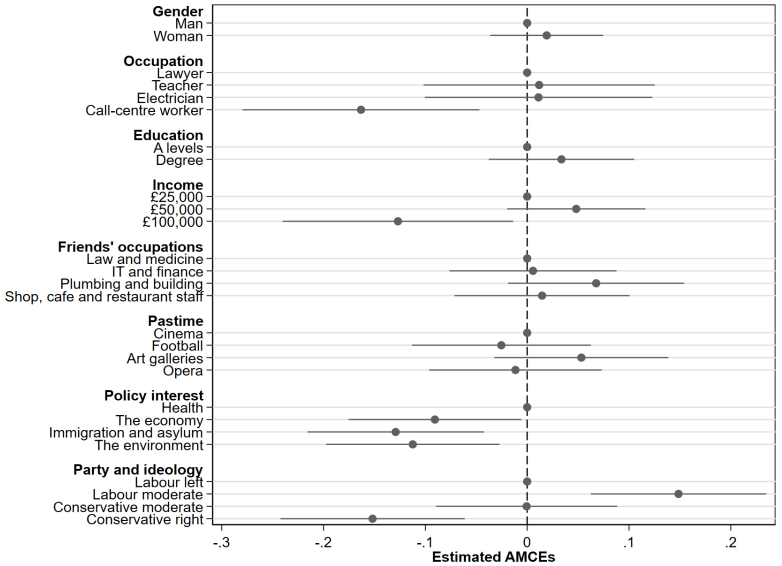
(a) India



(b) Poland

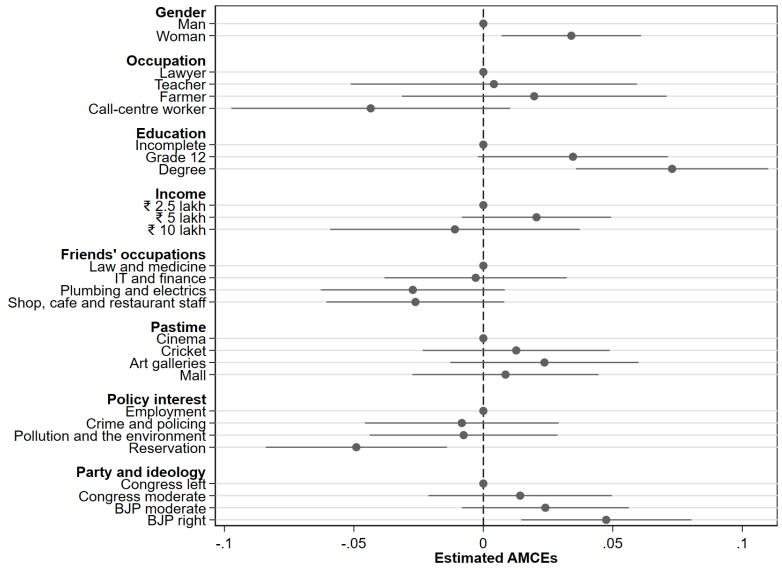


(c) Sweden

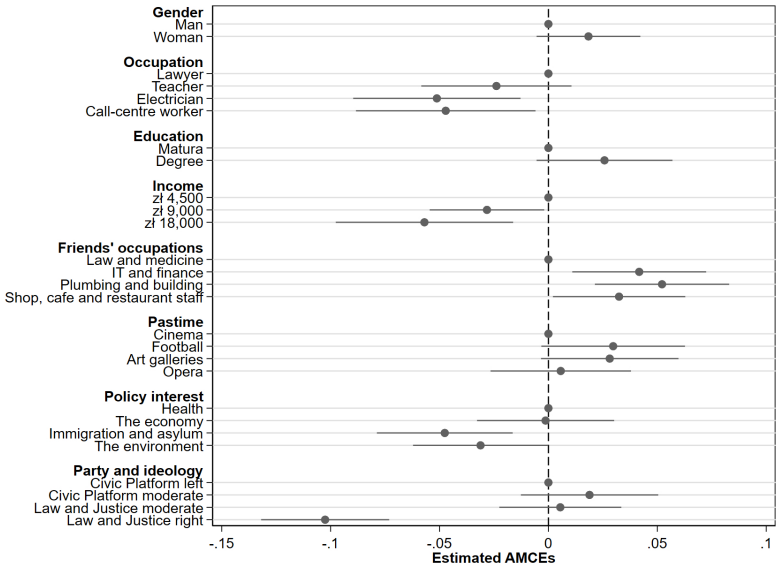


(d) United Kingdom

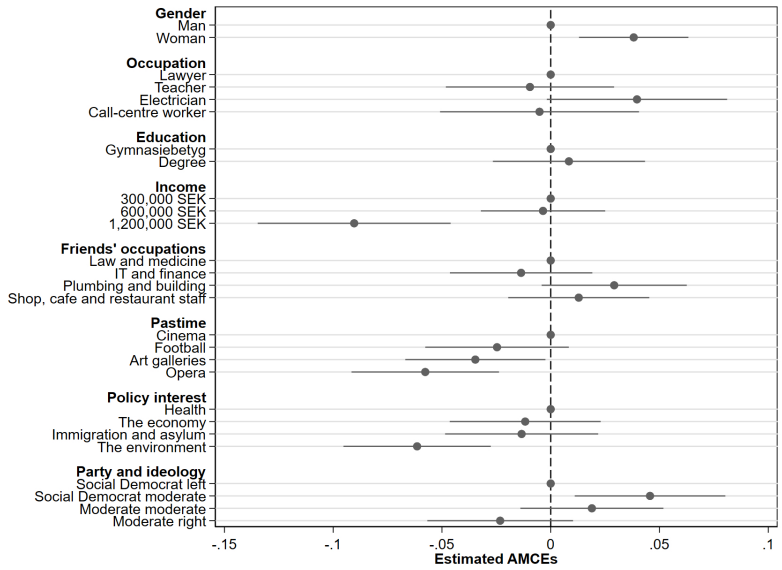
Figure 2: Average marginal component effects of candidate characteristics on perceived competence



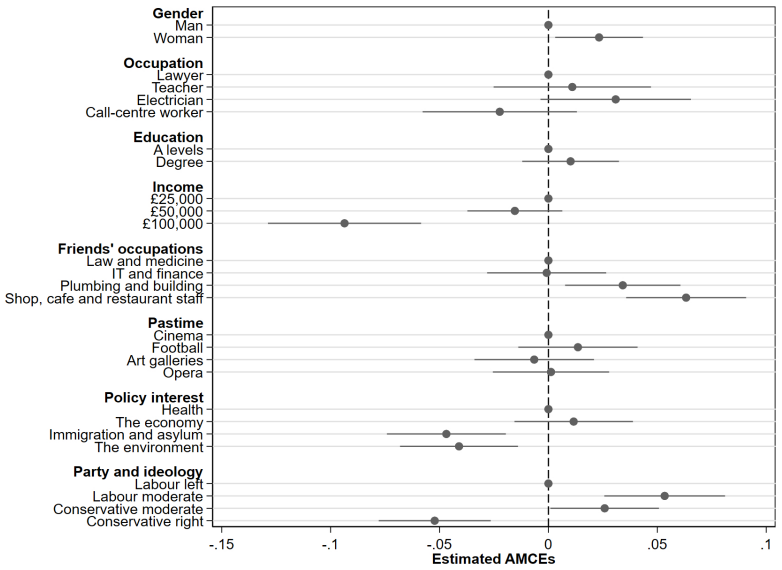
(a) India



(b) Poland



(c) Sweden



(d) United Kingdom

Figure 3: Average marginal component effects of candidate characteristics on vote likelihood

attract their votes.

It is also the case in some countries that, in line with Hypothesis 3b, candidates with friends in high status occupations are less likely to be voted for. This is most obviously the case in the United Kingdom, where candidates with friends in occupations such as plumbing and building (0.03 higher probability) or who work in shops, cafes or bars (0.06 higher probability) are more likely to be voted for than candidates with friends in occupations such as law and medicine. These results are also observed in Poland (0.05 higher probability for plumbing and building, 0.03 higher probability for shops, cafes or bars), where candidates with friends in occupations relating to IT and finance are also more likely to be voted for (0.04 higher probability) than candidates with friends in law and medicine. Thus, in Poland, it is particularly candidates who are friends with lawyers and doctors that voters are likely to avoid, whereas in the United Kingdom voters favour candidates with friends in working class occupations over candidates with friends in either pair of middle class occupations (law and medicine, and IT and finance). In these two countries, then, we find evidence that supports the proposition that candidates with high status social capital are less likely to be voted for.

Turning the informal cultural capital, and counter to Hypothesis 3c, the results show that it has no effect on the likelihood that candidates are voted for in India, Poland, or the United Kingdom. However, in Sweden, candidates with high status pastimes are less likely to be voted for than candidates with low status pastimes. Specifically, candidates who like to visit art galleries (0.04 lower probability) or attend the opera (0.06 lower probability) are less likely to be voted for than candidates who like going to the cinema. Thus, voters in Sweden are less likely to vote for candidate with high status informal cultural capital than for candidates without such capital.

5.4 Mediation

As outlined above, in India there were no statistically significant effects of candidates' stocks of economic, social, or informal cultural capital on perceived candidate descriptive rep-

resentativeness or likelihood of being voted for. Given this, it is unsurprising to observe that perceived descriptive representativeness does not mediate the relationship between stocks of capital and likelihood of being voted for. As such, Hypothesis 4a is not supported in India.

In Poland, by contrast, approximately 16% of the negative effect of candidate income on likelihood of being voted for is mediated by perceived candidate descriptive representativeness. When we test mediation relating to social capital, we find that the effect of candidates having high-status friends (either in law and medicine or IT and finance) on likelihood of being voted for is not mediated by perceived descriptive representativeness. However, 18% of the positive effect of candidates having friends in plumbing and building is mediated by perceived descriptive representativeness. In this case, the path from social capital to perceived descriptive representativeness and the path from the latter to vote likelihood are statistically significant, though the direct path from social capital to vote likelihood is not.[5] Given that informal cultural capital does not affect perceived descriptive representativeness or likelihood of being voted for in Poland, there are also no mediation effects. Thus, the evidence regarding Hypothesis 4a is rather mixed in Poland. As hypothesised, the negative effects of candidate economic capital and some elements of high-status social capital on likelihood of being voted for are mediated by perceived descriptive representativeness. However, counter to the hypothesis, informal cultural capital has no effects on perceived descriptive representativeness, perceived competence, or likelihood of being voted for.

Turning to Sweden, 18% of the negative effect of candidate income on likelihood of being voted for is mediated by perceived candidate descriptive representativeness. Since the status of candidates' friends has no significant effect on either perceived descriptive representativeness or likelihood of being voted for in the conjoint analysis there are no

[5]This result stems from an exploratory analysis based on the occupations that have a particular effect on vote likelihood (law an medicine, negative) and perceived descriptive representativeness (plumbing and building, positive). This also showed that 6% of the negative effect of candidates having friends in law and medicine on the likelihood that they are voted for is mediated by perceived descriptive representativeness. However, the social capital to perceived descriptive representativeness path is not statistically significant, meaning that the mediation effect is an artefact of the large, and statistically significant, effect perceived descriptive representativeness on vote likelihood.

mediation effects to observe in relation to social capital. However, 22% of the negative effect of candidates having high-status pastimes is mediated by the extent to which they are seen as "like me". Thus, in line with Hypothesis 4a, in Sweden the negative effects of both economic capital and high-status cultural capital on candidates' likelihoods of being voted for are mediated by the perception that they are descriptively representative. However, counter to the hypothesis, high-status social capital has no statistically significant effects to be mediated.

In the United Kingdom, the relationship between candidate income and the likelihood that they are voted for is again mediated (16%) by the extent to which they are seen as "like me".[6] There are no mediation effects relating to high-status pastimes in the UK because such pastimes have no effect on the likelihood that a candidate is voted for or the extent to which they are seen as "like me". Thus, as in both Poland and Sweden, there is evidence in the UK that the negative effect of candidate economic capital on the likelihood that they are voted for is mediated by the extent to which they are perceived as descriptively representative. However, as in Sweden but not Poland, there are no mediation effects relating to high-status social capital nor, as in Poland but not Sweden, high-status informal cultural capital.

Given that the capital held by candidates has no effect on their perceived competence in any of the countries under consideration, there should be no meaningful mediation effects relating to competence. This is the case in all four countries, and perceived competence mediates the relationship between candidates' stocks of capital and their likelihood of being voted for to a small degree at most. Where these mediation effects exists, they are often an artefact of the large positive relationship between perceived competence and vote likelihood, which means that even a small (and insignificant) effect of capital is estimated to be mediated by perceived competence.[7]

[6] A small percentage (6%) of the effect of candidates having high-status friends on their likelihood of being voted for is also mediated by their perceived descriptive representativeness. However, the direct effect of high-status social capital on perceived descriptive representativeness remains statistically insignificant so this mediation is an artefact of the direct effects of both high-status social capital and perceived descriptive representativeness on vote likelihood.

[7] See the Appendix C for a summary of the mediation effects relating to perceived competence.

Overall, these results offer support for Hypothesis 4a in the sense that the effects of some forms of capital on vote likelihood are clearly mediated by perceived descriptive representativeness. However, the support offered is partial because the effects are only observed in some countries, and there are very few substantively important mediation effects relating to perceived competence. By contrast, the results offer consistent support for Hypothesis 4b because the effect of perceived descriptive representativeness on vote likelihood is larger than the effect of perceived competence in all four countries. The difference between those effects is smallest, and not statistically significant, in India (perceived descriptive representativeness coefficient = 0.189, s.e. = 0.020, $p < 0.001$; perceived competence coefficient = 0.174, s.e. = 0.021, $p < 0.001$), and largest in Sweden (perceived descriptive representativeness coefficient = 0.298, s.e. = 0.017, $p < 0.001$; perceived competence coefficient = 0.083, s.e. = 0.016, $p < 0.001$). The difference is also sizeable in the United Kingdom (perceived descriptive representativeness coefficient = 0.280, s.e. = 0.012, $p < 0.001$; perceived competence coefficient = 0.077, s.e. = 0.012, $p < 0.001$), whilst it is smaller but statistically significant in Poland (perceived descriptive representativeness coefficient = 0.227, s.e. = 0.015, $p < 0.001$; perceived competence coefficient = 0.162, s.e. = 0.016, $p < 0.001$). Thus, in the three European countries considered, the perceived descriptive representativeness of candidates is more important than their perceived competence for the likelihood that they are voted for, and this is especially the case in Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Finally, in terms of mediation, Hypothesis 4c is supported in the three European countries, but not for the reason anticipated. In line with the hypothesis, economic capital has a negative effect on the extent to which candidates are seen as "like me", whilst high status social capital has this effect in Poland, and high status cultural capital has the same effect in Sweden and, to a lesser extent, the UK. However, rather than these negative effects being somewhat countered by smaller positive effects of capital on perceived competence, the three forms of capital have no effects on perceived competence. Thus, the hypothesis is correct that candidates' capital matters more for the extent to which they are seen as "like me" than

the extent to which they are seen as competent, but incorrect that capital has some effect on the latter. The hypothesis also does not hold in India, where the capital held by candidates has no effect on either the extent to which they are seen as "like me" or the extent to which they perceived as competent.

Together, the mediation analysis demonstrates that perceived descriptive representativeness is more important than perceived competence in driving vote choice, and is much more important in mediating the effect of candidates' stocks of capital on their likelihood of being voted for.

5.5 Country Differences

Hypothesis 5 is unsupported by the results, and there are clear differences between the results in each of the four countries. Unlike in the three European countries, there are no effects of candidates' capital on perceived descriptive representativeness, perceived competence, or likelihood of being voted for in India. There are also, therefore, no mediation effects observed in India.

By contrast, in Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, candidates' with high economic capital (i.e., income) are perceived as less descriptively representative and are less likely to be voted for. Indeed, in all three countries, perceived descriptive representativeness mediates the relationship between economic capital and vote likelihood, and to a remarkably similar degree. However, the effects of the other two forms of capital, and their mediation by perceived descriptive representativeness and competence, differ between the three countries. In Poland, high-status social capital is negatively related to both perceived descriptive representativeness and likelihood of being voted for, and the latter effect is mediated by the former. In Sweden, there are no effects of social capital but cultural capital has a negative effect on both perceived descriptive representativeness and vote likelihood, and the latter effect is mediated by the former. Finally, in the United Kingdom, high-status social capital is negatively related to likelihood of being voted for but not perceived descriptive represen-

tativeness, and there are no mediation effects in this regard. Thus, counter to Hypothesis 5, we can clearly see that the effects of the capital held by candidates on vote likelihood, and their mediation by perceived descriptive representativeness and perceived competence, vary between the four countries under study.

6 Discussion

The results of the conjoint and mediation analysis lead to one clear conclusion in the three European countries under study: the economic capital of candidates matters for the extent to which they are perceived as descriptively representative and the probability that they are voted for. In Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, candidates with high incomes are viewed as less "like me" and are less likely to be voted for by the public. In Sweden and the United Kingdom, these effects are the largest of any of the candidate characteristics that were varied, and in Poland the effects are second only to those of candidate party and ideology. In all three countries it is also the case that the negative effect of candidate income on the probability that they are voted for is mediated by its negative effect on their perceived descriptive representativeness.

These results add to previous experimental research showing the importance of candidate class for vote choice (Carnes and Lupu 2016; Vivyan et al. 2020) by demonstrating that it is particularly the economic component of class, and privilege more generally, that alienates the public from prospective representatives. In line with that previous research, candidates with non-elite occupations such as electrician and teacher are perceived as more descriptively representative in Sweden and the United Kingdom, though this does not translate into greater likelihood of being voted for. By contrast, candidate occupation has no effect on perceived descriptive representativeness in Poland but, counter to the previous research, candidates with working class occupations are less likely to be voted for. Thus, the effects of candidate occupation are not uniform across the countries under study.

Similarly, the effects of candidate social and economic capital vary between countries. Only in Poland are candidates with low-status social capital perceived as more descriptively representatives, but in both Poland and the United Kingdom such candidates are more likely to be voted for. In Poland, the effect of social capital on vote probability is mediated by its effect on perceived descriptive representativeness. In Sweden, by contrast, candidate social capital does not matter for perceived descriptive representativeness or vote likelihood, but informal cultural capital does. Candidates with high-status cultural capital are perceived as less "like me" and are less likely to be voted for, with the former effect mediating the latter. We also see the effect of high-status cultural capital on perceived descriptive representativeness in the United Kingdom, but it does not translate into an effect on vote likelihood.

This is the first time that the effects of the economic, social, and cultural capital held by candidates has been investigated and observed. The overall conclusion is that such capital can, and does, shape how candidates are perceived and the likelihood that they are voted. Further, these effects exist beyond those of candidates' demographic, partisan, and ideological characteristics. At the same time, it is clear that the meaning and significance of different forms of capital, and their effects, are context-bound. This latter point is underlined when we consider the results relating to India.

In India, candidate economic, social, and informal cultural capital are unrelated to their perceived descriptive representativeness, and their probability of being voted for. However, formal cultural capital institutionalised in the form of degree qualifications is positively related to both. These results may reflect the nature of the sample, which is representative of the online rather than the general population of India. This means that the sample is likely to be disproportionately literate, educated (including to degree level), and professional. It may also be the case that, in a context in which large numbers of people in the population live at subsistence-level or in poverty, any of the levels of capital that were attributed to candidates imply considerable privilege. This is best illustrated with reference to cultural capital. In the Indian context, anyone who has the time and money to undertake any cultural

pastime may be considered part of a privileged subset of the population. This possibility is also reflected in the results of the pilot study, which showed very little difference in the perceived status of the six cultural pastimes that were asked about in India.

Building on the above, it may be that capital and especially informal cultural capital only act as signifiers of privilege in contexts in which a certain standard of living has been attained by a large majority of the population. This is consistent with the fact that we most clearly observe effects of high-status cultural capital in Sweden, which is the country with the highest and most equal standard of living amongst the four countries under study. This suggests the possibility that informal cultural capital acts as a luxury signal of status and privilege, which is most salient when other indicators of status offer less distinction between people.

The finding that the signals that the public receive about candidates have different significance and effects in different contexts also suggests a further line of research. The conjoint experiment presented here afforded participants consistent information about all candidates, meaning that we know how they respond to each candidate characteristic in the presence of information about all of the other characteristics. However, when encountering candidates outside survey experimental contexts, the public are unlikely to have consistent information on each of them. As such, there is scope to conduct research on the inferences that the public make about candidates when they receive some signals but not others. In other words, it would be interesting and useful to know the judgements that the public make about candidates when they have information about their cultural capital but not their economic or social capital. Such research could also investigate the inferences that the public make about other indicators of status, such as candidates' education levels or occupations, when presented only with information about some of their stocks of capital. Finally, such research could improve external validity by further limiting the combination of traits seen by the public, such that there are fewer unusual combinations of, for instance, education, occupation, and income. It could also improve external validity, and perhaps the strength

of the treatments, by investigating the effects of encountering video and audio relating to candidates, rather than only text descriptions.

Beyond the above, there is also scope for further research that investigate how candidate characteristics interact with the characteristics of the public to shape perceptions of candidates. This paper has focused on establishing the main effects of candidates' stocks of capital amongst the public at large, but we might expect people with different statuses to react quite differently to high- and low-status signals about candidates. This is an important topic for further investigation. Finally, given the paucity of effects observed in relation to the perceived competence of candidates, further investigation of the factors that shape public perceptions of candidate competence is necessary. This is especially the case because of the strong effect of perceived competence on the probability that candidates are voted for. The results of the conjoint experiment indicate that candidate education and occupation impact on perceived competence in some contexts, whilst policy interests and, especially, ideological moderation can also play a role. The fact that, across all four countries, people do not make inferences about candidate competence based on candidates' stocks of economic, social, and informal cultural capital is a noteworthy in itself. However, these results raise the question of what other factors may drive perceptions of candidate competence in different contexts.

For now it suffices to observe that, in the European countries under study, candidates' stocks of capital, and especially economic capital, impact on the extent to which the public view them as descriptively representative and the probability that they will vote for them. This should concern those of us who believe that descriptive representation is an intrinsically important component of representative democracy. It also implies the need for further efforts to ensure that politics is not disproportionately the preserve of those with privilege and especially, given the results presented here, financial resources that set them apart from the population at large.

7 Project Information

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A Example Candidate Choice Task (United Kingdom)

YouGov

Please imagine that the **Conservative Party** has given people in your area a say over which candidate they should select to stand in the next general election. Two people who grew up in the area have put themselves forward and you must decide which one would do a better job of representing you:

Peter is a call-centre worker who left school after gaining his A levels and then pursued his career, and currently earns £50,000 per year. He remains friends with some of the people who he grew up with, many of whom have gone on to work as staff in shops, cafes and restaurants. In his spare time he enjoys going to art galleries, and he is particularly interested in policy issues relating to immigration and asylum. He is on the right within the Conservative Party.

John is an electrician who gained a university degree and then pursued his career, and currently earns £25,000 per year. He remains friends with some of the people who he grew up with, many of whom have gone on to work in occupations relating to IT and finance. In his spare time he enjoys going to art galleries, and he is particularly interested in policy issues relating to health. He is on the right within the Conservative Party.

On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 indicates that the candidate is ***not at all like you*** and 7 indicates that the candidate is ***completely like you***, how would you rate each of the two candidates?

	1 - Not at all like you	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Completely like you
Peter	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
John	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 indicates that the candidate is ***not at all competent*** and 7 indicates that the candidate is ***completely competent***, how would you rate each of the two candidates?

	1 - Not at all competent	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Completely competent
Peter	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
John	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

And which of the above candidates would you be more likely to vote for?

○ Peter

○ John

›

B Effects of Other Candidate Characteristics

Although they are outside the scope of the hypotheses, it is worth noting the other randomly varied characteristics that effect how candidates are perceived and the likelihood that they are voted for in each country.

Beginning with India, Figure 1 (panel a) shows that there are only a few traits that effect the extent to which candidates are seen as "like me" by respondents. The first of these is gender, with women candidates being seen as more "like me" than men candidates, despite the fact that slightly more than half of the respondents (51%) are themselves male. Candidates who are call-centre workers are seen as less "like me" than candidates in the other occupations (lawyer, teacher, or farmer), whilst those who hold degrees are seen as more descriptively representative than those with lower levels of education. This indicates the likelihood that the sample in India, which is representative of the online population, is more educated and tends to hold higher status occupations than the general population. Finally, candidates who are concerned with the issue of reservation, which is a system of affirmative action for historically oppressed groups in India, are perceived by respondents as significantly less "like me" than candidates who are interested in other political issues. Again, this might reflect the likelihood that the sample disproportionately represents people who are relatively advantaged, who may therefore be less concerned by reservation.

Figures 2 and 3 (panel a in each) show that there are similar results relating to perceived competence and likelihood of being voted for in India. In the former case, candidate gender does not have an effect but candidates with degrees are perceived as more competent whilst candidates who work as call-centre workers, and who are interested in reservation, are perceived as less competent. For vote likelihood, women candidates and those with degrees are more likely to be voted for than men candidates and those with lower levels of education, whilst candidates who are concerned with reservation are less likely to be voted for than those with other policy concerns. By contrast, being a call-centre worker does not impact on likelihood of being voted for, despite its negative effects on perceived descriptive representa-

tiveness and competence. Additionally, although unrelated to perceived representativeness and competence, candidate party and ideology have an effect on vote likelihood. Specifically, candidates on the right of the BJP are more likely to be voted for than their moderate co-partisans or candidates from Congress. Thus, in India, women candidates and those with degrees fare well in terms of how they are perceived and the likelihood that they are voted for, those who are call-centre workers are perceived more negatively but no less likely to be voted for, and those who are concerned with reservation are perceived more negatively and are less likely to be voted for. Finally, in relation to voting, Indian respondents take partisan and ideological cues into account and, reflecting recent electoral results in the country, prefer to endorse candidates who are on the right of the country's governing party.

In Poland, in addition to the effects of candidate income and acquaintances on their perceived descriptive representativeness, we see partisan and ideological effects. Candidates in the governing Law and Justice party are seen as less "like me" especially if they are on the right of the party rather than moderate (Figure 1, panel b). This effect also exists for perceived competence (Figure 2, panel b) but the overall partisan effect disappears when it comes to likelihood that the candidate is voted for (Figure 3, panel b), with only candidates on the right of Law and Justice being selected to a lesser extent. However, we also observe the role of issue preferences in candidate choice when it comes to voting, with candidates who focus on the environment or immigration and asylum being less likely to be voted for than those who focus on health and the economy. Thus, as in India, in Poland voters take account of the partisan and ideological positions of candidates when thinking about how descriptively representative and competent they seem. Further, the particularly value the signals that a candidate is a staunch right-winger, or focuses on less bread and butter issues, when choosing who they do not wish to vote for. There is also one final non-political candidate trait that plays a part in perceived competence and vote likelihood: current occupation. Candidates who are electricians are seen to be less competent than those in any of the other three occupations (lawyers, teachers, and call-centre workers), whilst both electricians and call-

centre workers are less likely to be voted for. Thus, counter to previous research in other countries (Carnes and Lupu 2016; Vivyan et al. 2020), Polish voters prefer candidates with high-status rather than humble occupational classes.

We also see an effect of candidate occupational class on the extent to which they are perceived as "like me" in Sweden. Specifically, candidates who are electricians are perceived as more descriptively representative than candidates who are lawyers (Figure 1, panel c) but, unlike in Poland, they are not seen as more competent (Figure 2, panel c), nor are they more likely to be voted for (Figure 3, panel C). We also observe policy, party and ideology effects in Sweden. Candidates who are on the left of the Social Democrat party are perceived as more "like me", and are more likely to be voted for, whilst candidates who take a particular interest in environmental issues are less likely to be voted for. Finally, as in India, we also observe a positive effect of candidates holding a degree on their perceived competence, though unlike in India this does not translate into greater likelihood that they are voted for.

Turning last to the United Kingdom, we again observe occupational, policy, partisan, and ideological effects. Beginning with perceived descriptive representativeness (Figure 1, panel d), candidates who are teachers or electricians are perceived as more "like me" than candidates who are lawyers. These effects are not observed in relation to perceived competence or vote choice, though candidates who are call centre workers are perceived as less competent (Figure 2, panel d). By contrast, the effects of policy interests, party, and ideology apply across perceived descriptive representativenss, perceived competence, and vote likelihood (Figure 3, panel d). Candidates who take an interest in the economy, immigration and asylum, or the environment are perceived as less descriptively representative than those who are interested in health. Candidates on the right of the Conservative Party are perceived as less descriptively representative than moderate candidates in either party or candidates on the left of the Labour Party. Further, candidates who take an interest in the policy areas other than health are perceived as less competent, as are candidates on the right of the Con-

servative Party, whilst moderate Labour candidates are perceived as the most competent. Finally, moderate candidates of both parties are more likely to be voted for, and those on the right of the Conservative Party have the lowest vote likelihood. Similarly, candidates who are interested in immigration and asylum or the environment, are less likely to be voted for than those who take an interest in health or the economy.

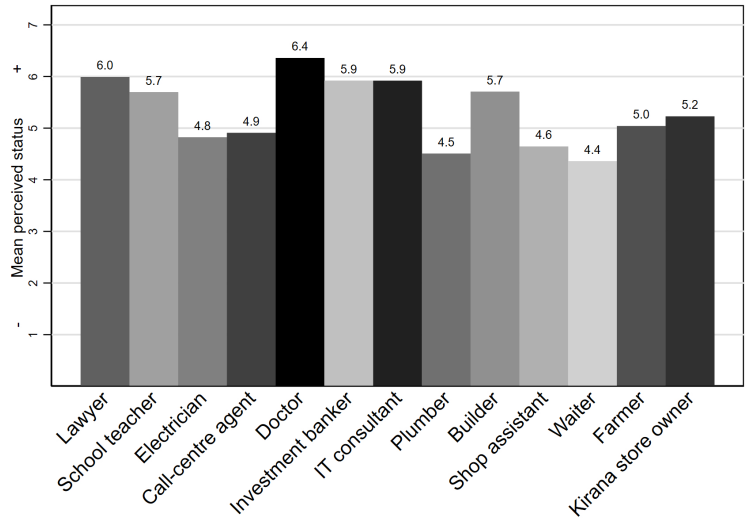
C Mediation by Perceived Competence

In India, perceived competence has a positive effect on the likelihood that a candidate is voted for. However, because the capital that candidates hold does is unrelated to their perceived competence and the likelihood that they are voted for, there are no mediation effects relating to perceived competence (as was the case in relation to perceived descriptive representativeness).

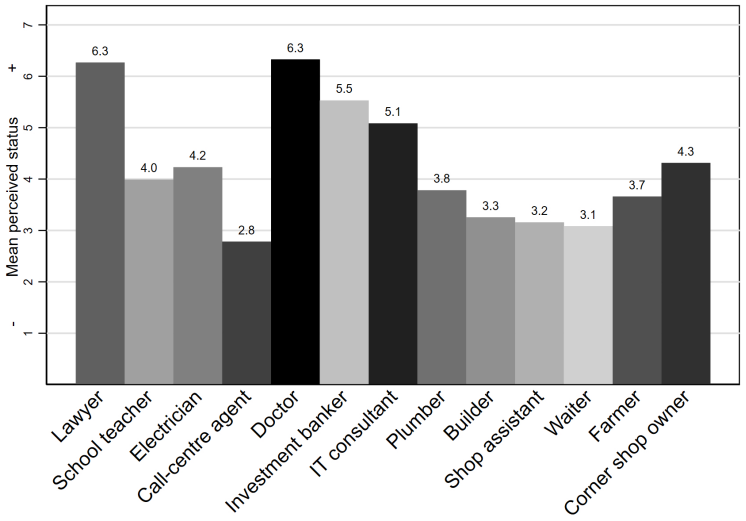
In Poland, candidate's holding high economic capital (income of zł 18,000 per month) has a statistically significant positive effect on perceived competence (coef. = 0.097, s.e. = 0.045, $p < 0.05$) and perceived competence has a statistically significant positive effect on the likelihood that a candidate is voted for (coef. = 0.162, s.e. = 0.016, $p < 0.001$). However, because of the negative effect of high economic capital on vote likelihood (coef. = -0.166, s.e. = 0.072, $p < 0.05$), the mediation effect is negative (-10%). In other words, to the extent that perceived competence mediates the relationship between high economic capital and likelihood of being voted for, it does so in the opposite direction to the direct effect of high economic capital on vote likelihood.

In both Sweden and the United Kingdom, there are some statistically significant but small mediation effects (ranging from -7% to 0.3%), indicating that perceived competence mediates the relationship between candidates' capital and their likelihood of being voted for. However, in all cases, the path from perceived competence to vote is statistically significant but the path from capital to perceived competence is not. This means that the mediation effects observed are an artefact of the significant and sizeable relationship between perceived competence and vote likelihood. This means that even if capital has an insignificant and small impact on perceived competence, a mediation effect is observed.

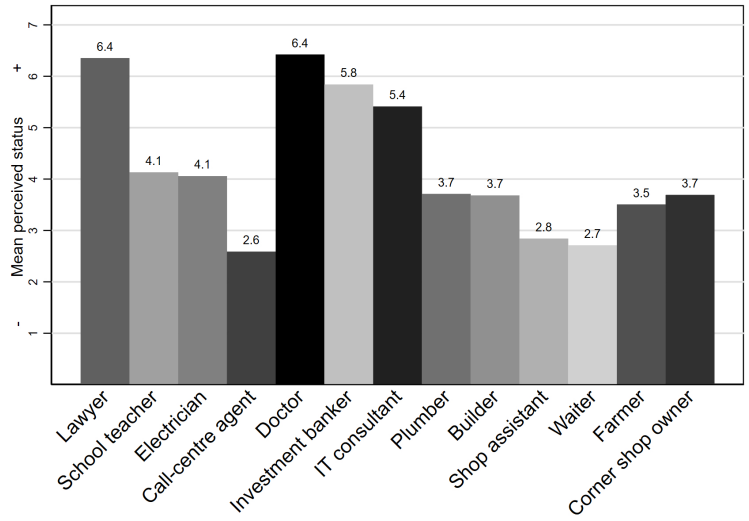
D Pilot Study Results



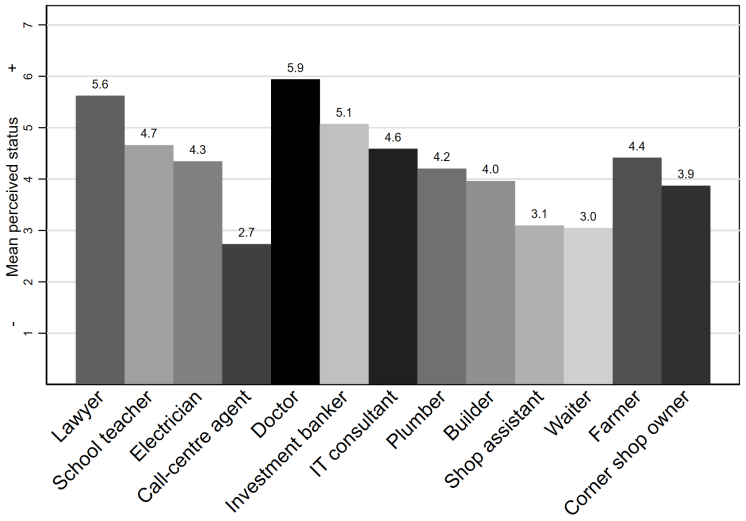
(a) India



(b) Poland

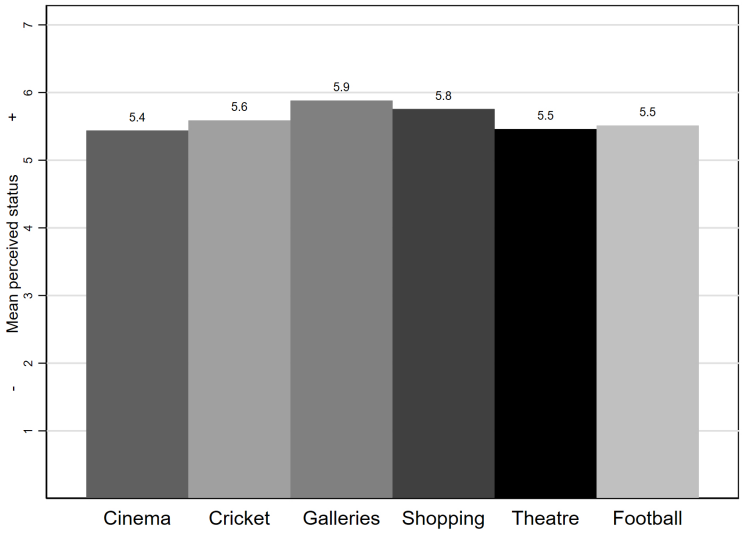


(c) Sweden

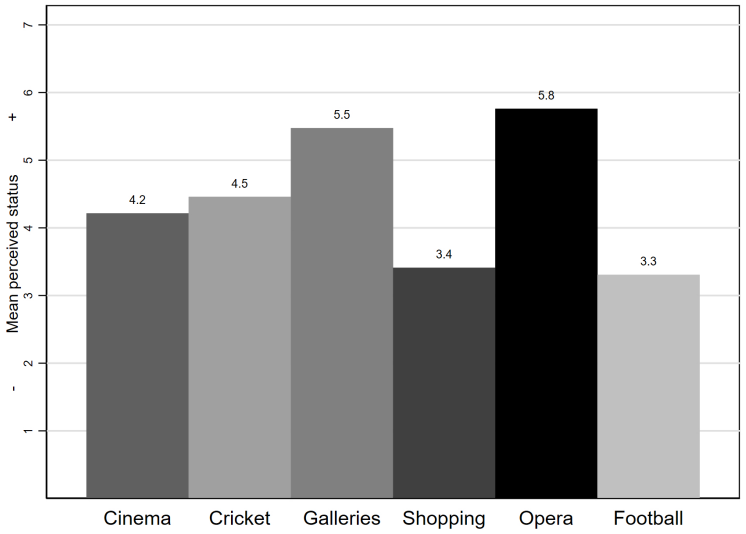


(d) United Kingdom

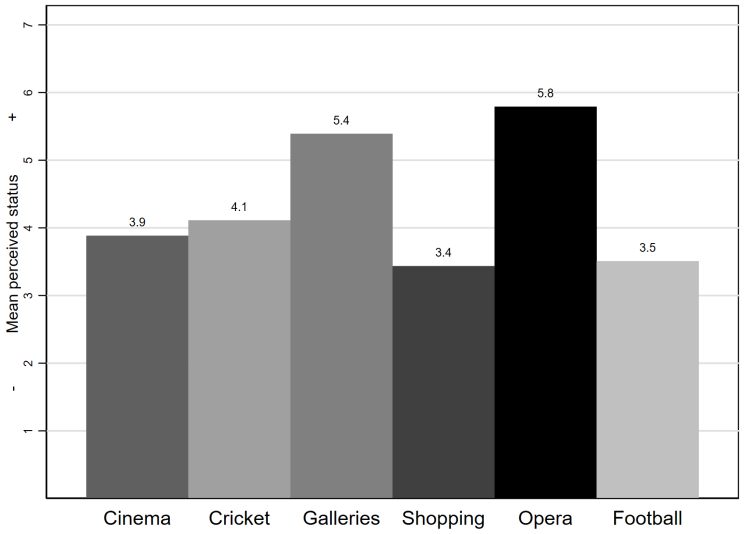
Figure D.1: Mean perceived status of thirteen occupations



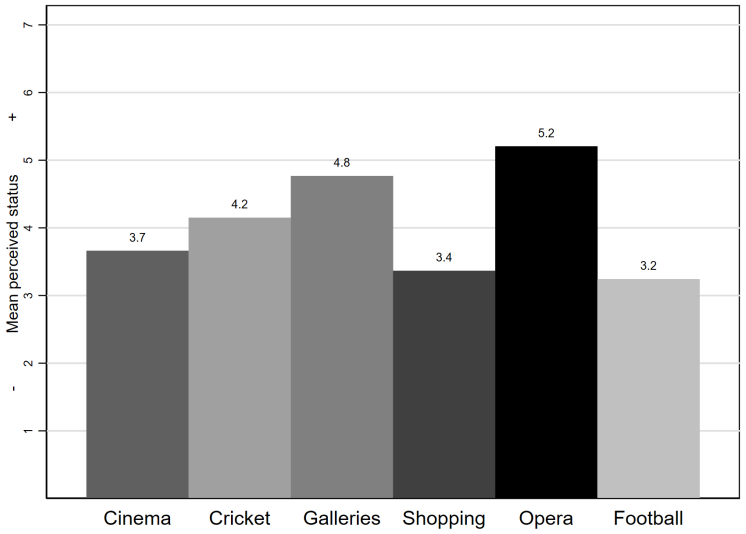
(a) India



(b) Poland



(c) Sweden



(d) United Kingdom

Figure D.2: Mean perceived status of six cultural pastimes