The Long-Term Careers of Political Brokers: Evidence from Mexico

September 2026

Abstract

Political brokers are central actors in developing-world democracies, yet little is known about their long-run careers. We fielded an original life-history survey of precinct chiefs of a major Mexican party, combining party rosters with a matched sample of party sympathizers and a representative state-level survey. We also matched both rosters to official candidate registries covering nine elections between 1991 and 2024, allowing us to observe political advancement independently of survey response. Brokerage is highly durable: average tenure exceeds two decades. Brokers report greater early political ambition and family activism than sympathizers but do not come from more advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. They are poorer than both sympathizers and the broader population and show little evidence of greater economic mobility across income, housing, job status, and wealth. Politically, brokers remain strongly partisan and are substantially more likely than sympathizers to enter electoral competition, yet only a small minority ever take office. The results portray brokerage as a durable political career that opens access to candidacy but rarely to office and is not accompanied by greater economic mobility. The study extends research on political careers and class representation beyond formal officeholders and provides a strategy for studying hard-to-reach political populations.

Keywords: political brokers; clientelism; political careers; party organization; social mobility; Mexico

Word Count: 10,820

1 Introduction

In many developing-world democracies, local intermediaries—commonly known as brokers—help organize political life (Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984; Lemarchand, 1972; Scott, 1972). They help provide public goods (Baldwin, 2015), mediate access to welfare and services (Auerbach, 2016; Rizzo, 2024; Garay et al., 2020), solve problems (Auyero, 2001; Szwarcberg, 2012, 2015), and mobilize electoral support (Díaz-Cayeros et al., 2016; Stokes, 2005; Stokes et al., 2013).

Brokers constitute a stable party workforce (Zarazaga, 2014; Tsai, 2007; Auerbach and Thachil, 2023). Parties depend on this stability: mass parties require permanent organizational personnel to sustain their activities and relationships with voters (Levitsky, 2001; Panebianco, 1988; Auyero, 2001). Yet research on political careers has focused overwhelmingly on individuals who hold formal office and are paid for their political work (Best and Cotta, 2000; King, 1981; Borchert, 2003; Allen et al., 2020). Most brokers, by contrast, work without contemporaneous compensation in expectation of future rewards, while only a subset receive valuable benefits after elections and between campaigns (Brierley and Nathan, 2022). Existing research does not follow brokers long enough to determine whether sustained political work translates into long-run economic or political advancement. We trace brokers over two decades to examine the durability of brokerage and their subsequent economic and political trajectories.

In this article, we show that brokerage can constitute a long-term career, with tenure spanning roughly a quarter century. A long-term perspective raises two questions: who enters brokerage, and what follows from sustained service? Brokers occupy an intermediate position between citizens and formal political elites: they are deeply embedded in party organizations and local political life but remain outside formal office (Auyero, 2001; Stokes et al., 2013). The implications of this position are not obvious. On the one hand, party connections, local visibility, and organizational experience may provide access to jobs and other material rewards (Brierley and Nathan, 2022; Oliveros, 2021) or facilitate entry into formal electoral competition (Novaes, 2018). On the other hand, if the value of brokerage rests on dense, localized relationships (Auyero, 2001), those ties

may provide fewer bridges to opportunities outside the neighborhood and be difficult to convert into broader economic or political advancement (Granovetter, 1995). We treat these as competing possibilities and examine which trajectories characterize brokers over the long run.

To study these questions, we combine four sources of data. The first is the PRI's own roster of every precinct chief serving in Nuevo León in 2014, seven years before our survey: 2,061 individuals covering the state's electoral precincts. The second is an internal party register of approximately 800,000 party sympathizers recorded from 1997 onward as attending party events, from which we draw a comparison group matched to responding brokers by precinct and gender. From these two frames, we fielded an original life-history survey of 90 respondents—53 precinct chiefs and 37 party sympathizers—whose retrospective accounts reconstruct careers extending several decades before the roster date. The third is the 2021 ESRU Survey of Social Mobility in Nuevo León ($N = 3{,}767$), a representative survey of state residents that uses comparable mobility measures and allows us to benchmark brokers against the wider population. The fourth is an original registry of 38,634 candidacies, compiled from official electoral records for nine state and municipal elections between 1991 and 2024 and matched by name to both party rosters. This final source allows us to observe candidacy and recorded office-holding for everyone in both frames, rather than only for those we could reach by telephone.

We document four broad patterns. First, for brokers who remain in their communities, brokerage is highly durable: average tenure approaches a quarter-century. Second, brokers differ from otherwise similar party sympathizers early in life, exhibiting greater political ambition and family activism but no socioeconomic advantage. Third, despite their durable organizational role, brokers remain economically marginal and experience limited upward mobility compared to both party sympathizers and the comparison population. Fourth, brokers are much more likely than sympathizers to enter formal electoral competition, but advancement to office remains rare. Across official candidate registries, 6.40% of precinct chiefs appeared on a ballot compared with 1.13% of sympathizers; 2.18% of brokers appeared on a ballot after they are observed serving as precinct chiefs in 2014, while only 1.60% ever took office. Thus, political connections appear to provide

brokers substantially greater access to candidacy without generally carrying them into formal office.

Our key contribution is to provide systematic evidence on brokers' long-term careers. Our life-history approach allows us to study both selection and long-term socioeconomic outcomes, while matching the party rosters to official candidate registries allows us to measure political careers for the full samples rather than only survey respondents. Our findings contribute to two main literatures. First, we add to a robust literature on political intermediaries. This literature has predominantly focused on the relationship between brokers and parties (Auerbach and Thachil, 2020; Camp, 2015; Langston and Castro Cornejo, 2023; Larreguy et al., 2016) and between brokers and voters (Auyero, 2001; Díaz-Cayeros et al., 2016; Finan and Schechter, 2012; Lawson and Greene, 2014; Lomnitz, 1988; Stokes, 2005; Stokes et al., 2013). Studies of brokers' monetary incentives have focused on compensation during and outside election seasons (Brierley and Nathan, 2022). Recent work on relational clientelism argues that clientelistic exchanges rely on stable intermediaries who sustain repeated exchanges with voters over time (Nichter, 2018; Yıldırım and Kitschelt, 2020). We focus on the long-term careers of the intermediaries who sustain these relationships.

Second, we contribute to research on the socioeconomic background of politicians (Best and Cotta, 2000; Carnes and Lupu, 2015; Dal Bó et al., 2017; Gulzar, 2021; Kirkland, 2021; Krcmaric et al., 2024; Motolinia et al., 2025) and the economic returns to officeholding (Diermeier et al., 2005). Existing research on formal political institutions finds that politicians tend to come from higher-income backgrounds than the broader population (Carnes and Lupu, 2023). However, this literature has predominantly focused on advanced democracies (Gulzar, 2021). We extend this body of research beyond formal office-holders to political intermediaries, one of the most common political actors in developing countries (Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984).

We find a starkly different pattern among brokers. Brokers do not come from wealthier or more educated backgrounds than the comparison population, suggesting that gaps in class representation may be less pronounced outside formal political institutions. One possible reason is that "street-level" politicians rely less on socioeconomic differentiation and more on local embed-

dedness (Balán et al., 2022; Baldwin and Raffler, 2019; Bhavnani and Lee, 2018; Kruks-Wisner, 2022; Szwarcberg, 2015). Embedded brokers are better positioned to sustain the relational ties that underpin long-term exchanges with citizens (Auyero, 2001; Díaz-Cayeros et al., 2016) and higher-level politicians. We also find that brokers display higher political ambition, family activism, and political discussion at home during childhood. We depart from recent work that finds limited class differences in nascent political ambition (Carnes and Lupu, 2025; Crowder-Meyer, 2020; Fox and Lawless, 2005). One possible explanation is that in weakly institutionalized settings such as informal political networks, personal characteristics play a larger role in shaping entry into politics (Gulzar, 2021).

Our study also speaks to the challenges of studying hard-to-reach political populations. Local brokers are hard to reach in ways documented by research on marginalized groups (Faugier and Sargeant, 1997; Jackson, 2025; Khoury, 2020), though ours is more politically connected than other marginalized groups, and the obstacles more closely resemble those in research on political elites (Kertzer and Renshon, 2022). Given these difficulties, we respond by triangulating our data against several other data sources. We benchmark brokers against party sympathizers drawn from the same precincts, then against a representative state survey reweighted to the brokers' composition, and finally compare our full rosters against official administrative records of electoral candidates.

Our inferences are therefore primarily descriptive: we do not claim to identify the causal effects of brokerage on socioeconomic mobility. What the design supports is a characterization of the trajectories of the brokers we are able to observe, benchmarked against groups assembled to be as comparable as this setting allows. The combination of an original survey, party rosters, administrative electoral records, and a weighted population survey, while it cannot substitute for causal identification, does provide a good description of a population that still remains largely unobserved (de Kadt and Grzymała-Busse, 2026).

2 The Long-Term Careers of Political Brokers

Political brokers mobilize voters, distribute benefits, and solve everyday problems for citizens (Auyero, 2001; Zarazaga, 2014; Szwarcberg, 2012, 2015). Brokers vary in their organizational and party ties (Holland and Palmer-Rubin, 2015). We focus on brokers embedded in territorial party organizations, rather than intermediaries operating primarily through other organizations or independently of parties. Existing studies examine brokers' organizational roles and the conditions under which they remain loyal (Langston and Castro Cornejo, 2023), but rarely trace their own long-run economic and political trajectories. Recent work emphasizes the relational nature of many clientelistic exchanges (Higashijima and Washida, 2024; Nichter, 2018; Yıldırım and Kitschelt, 2020). Relational clientelism is more prevalent when parties combine durable territorial organizations with sustained access to state resources, enabling repeated exchanges with voters over time (Yıldırım and Kitschelt, 2020). Such systems rely on stable intermediaries who maintain long-term relationships with voters and distribute benefits over time. These organizational conditions create incentives for continuity among intermediaries. We examine whether that continuity is reflected in brokers' long-term careers.

Recent work shows that brokers may work without compensation during campaigns in expectation of future rewards, while parties distribute valuable benefits such as jobs and loans selectively after elections and between campaigns (Brierley and Nathan, 2022). This raises a longer-term question: whether brokers eventually convert sustained political work into economic or political advancement.

A long-term perspective on brokerage raises two questions: who becomes a broker, and what happens to brokers over time. Past work emphasizes that brokerage relies on embeddedness—deep local ties and involvement in community life (Auyero, 2001). Because embeddedness is central to performing the role, it yields a clearer expectation about who enters brokerage than about what brokers subsequently obtain from it. Entry into brokerage may therefore depend less on economic advantage than on early political engagement and community involvement, reflected in

political ambition, family activism, and a record of community problem-solving. The implications of embeddedness for brokers' subsequent careers are less clear, however. We therefore do not impose a directional expectation for subsequent economic or political mobility. On the one hand, the local networks, party ties, and political visibility accumulated through brokerage may generate access to jobs and other material rewards (Brierley and Nathan, 2022; Oliveros, 2021) or facilitate advancement into formal political office (Novaes, 2018). On the other hand, these relationships may be valuable precisely because they are localized and sustained over time. Dense local networks may provide few bridges to opportunities outside the neighborhood, since information about jobs often travels through weak ties (Granovetter, 1995). If the value of brokers' political relationships is similarly difficult to transfer across settings, embeddedness may instead limit broader economic and political advancement.

These trajectories extend the study of political careers beyond formal office. Research on the social backgrounds of politicians finds that officeholders are disproportionately drawn from privileged strata (Carnes and Lupu, 2015, 2023). Brokers perform much of parties' organizational work in developing democracies but occupy a different political role. Placing their backgrounds alongside existing evidence on formal officeholders therefore shows whether the socioeconomic inequalities documented among elected politicians extend to this broader political workforce.

This framework applies most directly to parties with durable territorial organizations and sustained relationships between local intermediaries and voters. It should travel less readily to parties organized episodically around individual campaigns or to periods in which parties lack sustained access to distributive resources. The PRI organization we study represents the former type.

3 Setting

3.1 The Mexican Context: Institutionalizing Neighborhood Brokers

With more than 70 years of continuous rule by a hegemonic party, Mexico offers an important case for studying institutionalized brokerage. As in much of Latin America, economic liberalization

weakened corporatist party–labor linkages and expanded urban informality, increasing the importance of brokerage as a durable form of political mediation (Levitsky, 2003; Langston, 2018). Political brokerage became an organized role embodied in positions such as *lideresas*, *jefes seccionales*, and *comisarios*. Precinct chiefs spent most of their time engaged in "social brokerage"—off-season mediation and service provision—which underpinned their electoral effectiveness (Rizzo, 2015).[1]

The institutionalization of brokerage accelerated during a period of political and economic transformation. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, facing growing electoral competition and weakening corporatist structures, the PRI reorganized its territorial structure to rebuild local organizational capacity. In 1989, the federal government, under President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, launched the Programa Nacional de Solidaridad (PRONASOL); the PRI's territorial structure channeled its poverty-alleviation resources through newly formalized local leadership structures. This process reinforced the role of local intermediaries in distributing state resources.[2] In the late 1990s, the PRI incorporated local leaders—also known as *jefes auxiliares* or *líderes de colonia*—and willing *caciques* into the formal party structure, assigning them responsibility for electoral precincts. The PRI referred to these local leaders as precinct chiefs (*jefes seccionales*).

In doing so, the PRI sought to improve the party's targeting strategies by creating a network of locally embedded agents capable of allocating resources and persuading voters. By delimiting their jurisdictions, the PRI could also better monitor brokers' electoral performance (Larreguy et al., 2016), which became particularly important after the party faced its first competitive presidential election in 1988. Precinct chiefs were typically selected and legitimized in neighborhood meetings and charged with communicating local demands to higher-level party actors. While some precinct chiefs claim that their appointments can be revoked through elections, in most cases they were confirmed in their positions during neighborhood meetings. Interviews and data reported in Rizzo (2015) suggest a turnover rate of roughly 20 percent among PRI leaders; nonetheless, precinct

[1] While approximately 22 percent of Mexican voters report receiving gifts during elections (Nichter and Palmer-Rubin, 2015), and practices such as *acarreo* (transporting voters to polling stations) remain common, the literature's focus on electoral moments risks obscuring the extent to which brokerage functions as a year-round occupation.

[2] For a detailed analysis of PRONASOL's role in the PRI's territorial reorganization and resource-distribution strategies, see Díaz-Cayeros et al. (2016).

chiefs were rarely removed and often held their positions for decades. For individuals who became precinct chiefs during this period, the late-1990s formalization turned local political activism into a long-term occupation tied to neighborhood life and local party networks.

3.2 Monterrey, Nuevo León

The state of Nuevo León, in northeastern Mexico, has a population of more than 5 million, most of whom reside in the Monterrey metropolitan area, the second most populous in the country after the Valley of Mexico (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2021). Highly industrialized, the state accounts for 7.9 percent of Mexico's GDP (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2024) and underwent rapid urbanization and industrial transformation during the late twentieth century. This makes Monterrey an especially appropriate site for studying brokers' trajectories: it was the setting of the classic Monterrey Mobility Study (Balán et al., 1973), a pioneering analysis of social mobility in twentieth-century Mexico. Studying broker trajectories here lets us benchmark them against a setting where Mexican social mobility has already been measured. The combination of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and the PRI's institutional reorganization made political brokerage a common form of local political work for many residents of Monterrey's expanding neighborhoods.

4 Research Design

Our aim is descriptive. We document how brokers' long-run social and economic trajectories differ from those of politically active non-brokers and from the comparison population of the same state. Because broker status is not randomly assigned, our results should be interpreted as controlled comparisons describing patterns of selection and long-term trajectories rather than the causal effects of brokerage. The central design challenge is therefore comparative: identifying plausible benchmarks against which to describe brokers' long-run trajectories. We use two complementary comparisons. First, we compare brokers to party sympathizers drawn from the same local political

environments. Second, we compare brokers to the comparison population of Nuevo León using a reweighted representative survey.

4.1 Data

We use two previously untapped rosters produced by one of Mexico's largest political parties. The first is the full list of precinct chiefs active in Nuevo León as of 2014 (Roster 1; $N = 2{,}061$), which includes each broker's name, phone number, address, and occupation as recorded on their voter ID. Most of these chiefs had held the post for many years by then: among respondents who report a start year, the median began in 1992 and 97% were already serving in 2012. The second is a list of citizens recorded by the party as attending party events, begun in 1997 and last revised in 2014 (Roster 2; $N \approx 800{,}000$). The sympathizer list was maintained by the party from 1997 through 2014 rather than compiled at a single moment, so its records vary in age. Roster 2 accumulates entries over the preceding seventeen years while Roster 1 is a snapshot of chiefs serving in that year. We use these individuals as a comparison group of party sympathizers. Together, the two rosters identify two groups of party-connected citizens: precinct-level brokers and politically active sympathizers.

We linked both party rosters to the 2012 Nuevo León voter registry (*Lista Nominal*), which covers approximately 3.3 million voters and records sex, date of birth, municipality, and broad employment category.[3] Sympathizer records include the unique voter registry code, allowing exact matches. Broker records lack this identifier, so we linked them using blocked approximate string matching, obtaining valid matches for 78% of the roster ($N = 1{,}604$).[4]

We also assembled an original registry of candidates for all municipal and state legislative elections in Nuevo León between 1991 and 2024, drawn from the electoral authority's own published

[3]The Lista Nominal is not a public dataset. We were granted controlled access for record linkage only, carried out in a restricted environment, and retained only non-identifying demographic extracts for matched individuals. No individual-level registry records are held on research servers or included in the replication archive. OA Section A.1 describes the access protocol in full.

[4]Jaro–Winkler distance within municipality–district cells. We employed a conservative validation strategy: exact matches were automatically accepted; non-exact matches were retained only below a similarity threshold (JW $<$ 0.052) calibrated through visual inspection. See Online Appendix (OA) Section A.1 for full matching details and anonymization procedures.

registries and comprising 38,634 candidacies across nine elections. Matching both rosters to this registry by name lets us observe candidacy and office-holding for every individual in both frames, whether or not we reached them by telephone (OA Section A.1.4).

Reaching individuals listed in old administrative records required a flexible sampling strategy. For brokers (Roster 1), we consolidated all available contact information, removed duplicates, and identified 2,061 unique entries.[5] We randomly ordered the full broker roster and assigned cases sequentially to interviewers across three survey waves.[6]

Survey implementation proved difficult because the contact information was at least seven years old. Only 510 of 2,061 broker entries included a phone number. Of these, 135 were disconnected, 60 belonged to individuals who had died, 90 did not answer after repeated attempts, and 86 reached voicemail or a household reporting that the person had moved, leaving 139 brokers with a working, reachable line. Of these, 53 completed the interview, representing a 38% response rate among reachable contacts and 2.6% of the full roster (see OA Section A.8 and Figure A.1). The sympathizer records were likely older and posed similar logistical challenges. We therefore sampled a large pool of potential respondents; 1,805 of 5,559 sampled sympathizers (32.5%) had a reachable number. These constraints shaped the construction of the comparison group.

Our realized sample is therefore not random: it consists of the brokers and sympathizers we were able to reach from the original party records. One concern is that individuals with greater economic or political mobility may have been systematically less likely to be reached. We examine this possibility using characteristics observed outside the survey. Having a verified phone number strongly predicts survey completion among brokers, while prior candidacy does not: its association with completion is small, positive, and statistically insignificant (2.4 percentage points, $p = 0.32$; OA Table A.2). Prior candidacy likewise does not predict phone reachability among brokers ($+2.3$

[5]The roster contains 2,141 records. A small number of chiefs serve two adjacent precincts and appear once per precinct, so removing duplicates leaves 2,065 distinct individuals. Four of these could not be located in the 2012 voter registry, leaving the 2,061 brokers we use throughout. Registry demographics are available for 1,604 of them (78%).

[6]The survey was administered by nine trained undergraduate enumerators from Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey. Each received a project-specific SIM card, deactivated after survey completion. Enumerators submitted daily progress reports and were supervised through daily check-ins and call log review. See OA Sections A.3 and A.4 for full enumerator training and field protocols.

percentage points, SE $= 6.4$) or sympathizers ($+5.3$ points, SE $= 5.1$), and the difference between the two associations is not statistically distinguishable from zero (-3.3 points, SE $= 6.9$). Gender is the only observed characteristic whose association with reachability differs across groups: women are less reachable among sympathizers but not among brokers (OA Figure A.2). These checks provide no evidence that brokers with prior electoral candidacies were disproportionately excluded from the realized sample. Moreover, candidacy is observed in official electoral registries for the full matched broker roster, so the candidacy analysis itself does not depend on survey response.

4.2 Comparison Groups

We use two comparison groups. The first compares brokers to politically active non-brokers drawn from the same local environment (electoral precincts). The second situates brokers relative to the broader comparison population. Using multiple comparison groups is standard in the study of political selection and careers. For example, Dal Bó et al. (2017) compare elected politicians to the general population, non-elected candidates, their siblings, and members of elite professions. Access to a comparison group of party sympathizers is especially valuable because it allows us to approximate "marginal types"—individuals plausibly closer than the general population to the threshold of becoming brokers, though we cannot establish that their probability of doing so was equal (Gulzar, 2021). Such "unseen politicians" (Fowler and McClure, 1989) are often more difficult to identify and reach than the population of interest.

Our second comparison uses the 2021 ESRU Survey of Social Mobility in Nuevo León (ESRU-EMOVI), a representative survey of state residents aged 25–64 ($N = 3{,}767$) fielded by the Centro de Estudios Espinosa Yglesias (Centro de Estudios Espinosa Yglesias, 2021). We adapted the socioeconomic and mobility modules in our broker survey directly from EMOVI, allowing us to measure origin and destination status comparably across the two samples. We reweight EMOVI to match the brokers' demographic profile by gender and municipality. This creates a population benchmark with the same observable composition as the broker sample. The weighting procedure,

together with an assessment of cross-cohort comparability, is detailed in OA Section A.9.

The primary goal of these comparisons is descriptive: to characterize brokers' long-run trajectories in a comparable way. Party sympathizers provide a benchmark of politically active citizens drawn from the same precincts. The reweighted Nuevo León comparison population provides a demographically comparable benchmark with no necessary connection to politics. Both comparison groups were constructed to maximize comparability. Party sympathizers were sampled from the same electoral precincts as responding brokers, helping hold local context constant. The socioeconomic and mobility modules were adapted directly from the representative survey, so origin and destination status are measured equivalently across samples, strengthening the credibility of descriptive inference (de Kadt and Grzymała-Busse, 2026). While the design does not identify the causal effects of brokerage, it helps narrow plausible interpretations about the nature and extent of selection into brokerage versus the consequences of brokerage itself.

Ideally, we would randomly sample sympathizers matched to precinct chiefs on demographics, political histories, and location. Two constraints made this infeasible. First, the sympathizer list contains only age, gender, and last registered address. Second, the low response rate among brokers meant that a pre-specified random sample from the full sympathizer roster would have produced a large, heterogeneous comparison group relative to the small and geographically concentrated broker sample.

We therefore constructed the sympathizer sample after completing the broker interviews. After completing all broker interviews, we identified the electoral precincts and gender distribution of responding brokers and sampled control individuals from Roster 2 who matched these precinct-by-gender combinations.[7] This procedure produced a candidate pool of 5,562 individuals; 3,906 (70%) had a listed phone number, and 37 completed interviews.[8]

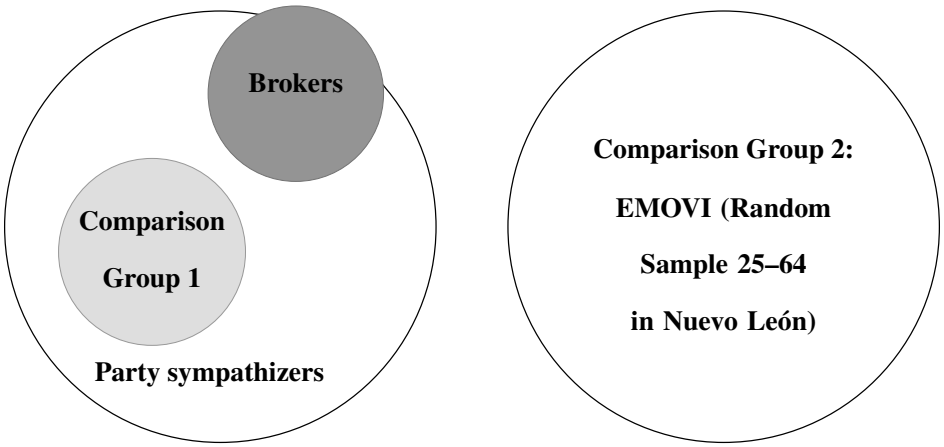
Response patterns may correlate with unobserved characteristics. Still, drawing sympathizers from the same precincts as responding brokers reduces the risk that differences reflect local context

[7] We did not match on age, as doing so would have reduced the eligible pool substantially given the anticipated rate of invalid phone numbers.

[8] See OA Section A.2.2 for a detailed discussion of the matching rationale and logistical constraints.

rather than broker status. Both rosters record politically connected citizens, and only those in Roster 1 held formal broker roles (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The three populations in our study



Notes: Brokers: precinct chiefs from Roster 1 ($N = 2{,}061$; surveyed $N = 53$). Comparison Group 1: party sympathizers from Roster 2 ($N \approx 800{,}000$; matched sample $N = 5{,}562$; surveyed $N = 37$). Comparison Group 2: EMOVI 2021, a representative survey of adults in Nuevo León ($N = 3{,}767$), reweighted to match the broker sample's demographic composition.

The final sample comprises 53 precinct chiefs and 37 party sympathizers (90 survey respondents), compared against the reweighted EMOVI benchmark ($N = 3{,}767$). Together, these data allow us to study three dimensions of brokerage: selection into broker roles, long-run political trajectories, and long-run socioeconomic mobility.

4.3 Survey Instrument

We implemented a 30-minute phone-based life-history survey of both brokers and a sample of sympathizers. To build rapport, respondents were told that the research team was interested in their experiences as community organizers.[9] The survey collected information on demographics, current and past political participation, household socioeconomic status at age 14 and at the time of the survey, employment, intergenerational educational attainment, social norms, and social networks. Full question wording for all variables used in the analysis is provided in OA Section A.5. Because

[9]Respondent consent and data-protection procedures are described in OA Section A.11.

precinct chiefs in the full roster average 66 years of age, questions about childhood circumstances required long-term recall. Such recall poses well-known challenges, since retrospective reports may be imperfect and systematically biased (Dex, 1995; Kjellsson et al., 2014; de Nicola and Giné, 2012). To address these concerns, we build on best practices from prior life-history survey approaches in similar contexts (Balán et al., 1969). We mitigated these concerns by using verbal cues to anchor respondents in specific life periods, maintaining parallel wording across time periods, and recording enumerator assessments of recall quality. Additional details are provided in OA Section A.4.

5 Results

5.1 Sample characteristics

Table 1 compares descriptive characteristics of precinct chiefs and party sympathizers. Precinct chiefs are, on average, significantly older (8.5 years) relative to party sympathizers. The fraction of female respondents is high in both groups (brokers: 69%, sympathizers 73%). Precinct chiefs have nearly 1.4 levels less formal education (1.40 on a 0–10 ordinal scale). There are no income differences at an early age. Brokers and sympathizers also differ substantially on political variables, both recalled and current, which we examine in detail in subsequent sections. A demographic comparison that also includes the reweighted Nuevo León comparison population is reported in OA Section A.7.

Table 1: Sample characteristics: precinct chiefs and party sympathizers

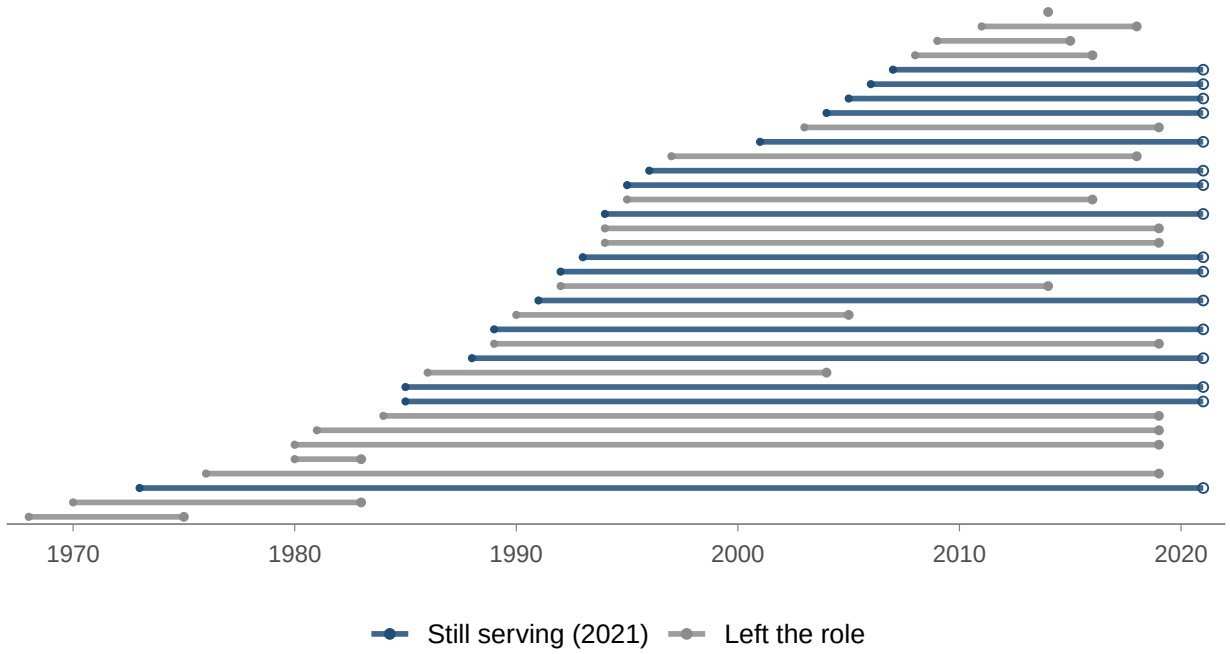
	Precinct Chiefs			*Party Sympathizers*			
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	Diff.
Panel A. Basic Characteristics							
Age	51	67.55	11.93	36	59.08	13.71	8.47***
Female	51	0.69	0.47	37	0.73	0.45	−0.04
Education	51	6.49	2.72	36	7.89	2.07	−1.40***
Income (age 14)	48	0.44	0.50	29	0.52	0.51	−0.08
Subj. Inc. (age 14)	42	5.10	2.40	26	5.12	2.14	−0.02
Panel B. Political Variables							
Pre-broker							
Family Activism	41	0.66	0.48	36	0.28	0.45	0.38***
Political Talk at Home	42	0.26	0.45	37	0.08	0.28	0.18**
Young Ambition	40	0.25	0.44	37	0.05	0.23	0.20**
Family Encouraged	35	0.40	0.50	24	0.46	0.51	−0.06
Current							
Political Interest	51	0.59	0.50	37	0.24	0.43	0.34***
Voted	41	0.95	0.22	37	0.89	0.31	0.06
Party ID	41	0.71	0.46	35	0.26	0.44	0.45***
Ran for Office	40	0.10	0.30	37	0.03	0.16	0.07

Notes: Survey of Precinct Chiefs (Nuevo León, 2021). Entries are group means and standard deviations; *Diff.* is the precinct-chief minus party-sympathizer difference in means. N varies across rows because of item nonresponse. *Variable definitions. Age:* age in years at the time of the survey. *Female:* $= 1$ if female. *Education:* respondent's own education on a 0–10 ordinal scale (0 = no schooling, 3 = primary, 5 = secondary, 7 = preparatoria, 8 = technical career, 9 = bachelor's, 10 = postgraduate). *Income (age 14):* $= 1$ if household income at age 14 was similar to or higher than other Nuevo León families at that time. *Subjective Income (age 14):* family income at age 14 placed on a 0–10 ladder. *Family Activism:* $= 1$ if "most" or "all" family members participate in social or political activism. *Political Talk at Home:* $= 1$ if politics was discussed at home "always" or "frequently" during childhood. *Young Ambition:* $= 1$ if the respondent aspired to a political career between ages 15 and 25. *Family Encouraged:* ordinal (-1/0/1) for parental discouragement/indifference/encouragement of political involvement during the respondent's youth. *Political Interest:* $= 1$ if the respondent reports "a lot" of current interest in politics. *Voted:* $= 1$ if the respondent voted in the June 2021 elections. *Party ID:* $= 1$ if the respondent currently sympathizes with a political party. *Ran for Office:* $= 1$ if the respondent has run as a candidate for popular election. See OA Section A.5.1 for exact question wording. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

5.2 Brokerage as a durable occupation

Brokerage in our sample is a long-tenure occupation, not an episodic role. Among precinct chiefs with complete service records, average tenure is 22.9 years. Those still active at the time of the survey had served 27 years on average, and even those who had left the role averaged nearly 20 years (Figure 2). Many served three or four decades in the same precinct.[10]

Figure 2: Tenure as precinct chief



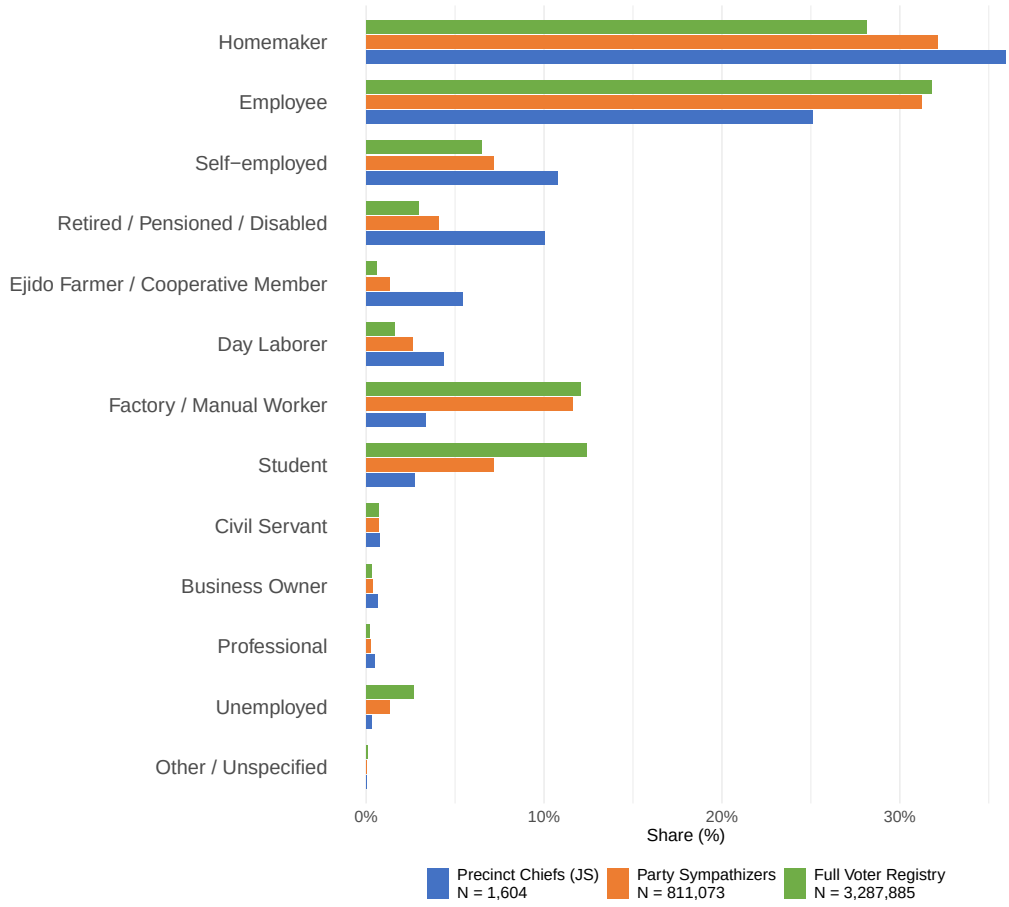
Notes: Survey of Precinct Chiefs 2021. Sample restricted to precinct chiefs with non-missing first and last year of service ($N = 36$). Each horizontal line represents one precinct chief, sorted by start year. Average tenure: 22.9 years (median: 24 years); still serving at the time of the survey ($N = 16$): 27 years; no longer serving ($N = 20$): 19.6 years. Open circles denote chiefs still serving as precinct chief at the survey date (2021); filled circles denote the year the chief left the role. "Still serving" denotes respondents who reported being active at the time of the survey (coded 2021). Tenure = last year − first year.

The occupational profile of precinct chiefs reinforces this picture of brokerage as a durable

[10]Five of the 36 chiefs shown here report leaving the role before 2014, the year in which the roster records them as serving, three of them in the 1970s or 1980s. Respondents may be reporting the last year they were actively doing the work rather than the last year the party listed them; alternatively, the party may not have removed lapsed chiefs from its records. We retain these cases. Because their tenures are shorter than average, doing so is conservative: excluding them would raise mean tenure from 22.9 to 24.8 years.

form of political work. Figure 3 compares three samples: precinct chiefs, party sympathizers, and the full Nuevo León voter registry. Across all three groups, homemakers and employees dominate the occupational distribution. Precinct chiefs, however, are especially overrepresented among homemakers and less concentrated among employees and factory workers than both party sympathizers and the full voter registry. They are also more likely to be self-employed or outside standard wage employment. Like the other groups, they are rarely represented among white-collar occupations. Although these occupations are recorded in the 2012 voter registry and may not capture employment during brokers' peak years of service, the distribution shows that precinct chiefs were drawn from outside white-collar employment.

Figure 3: Employment distribution across samples

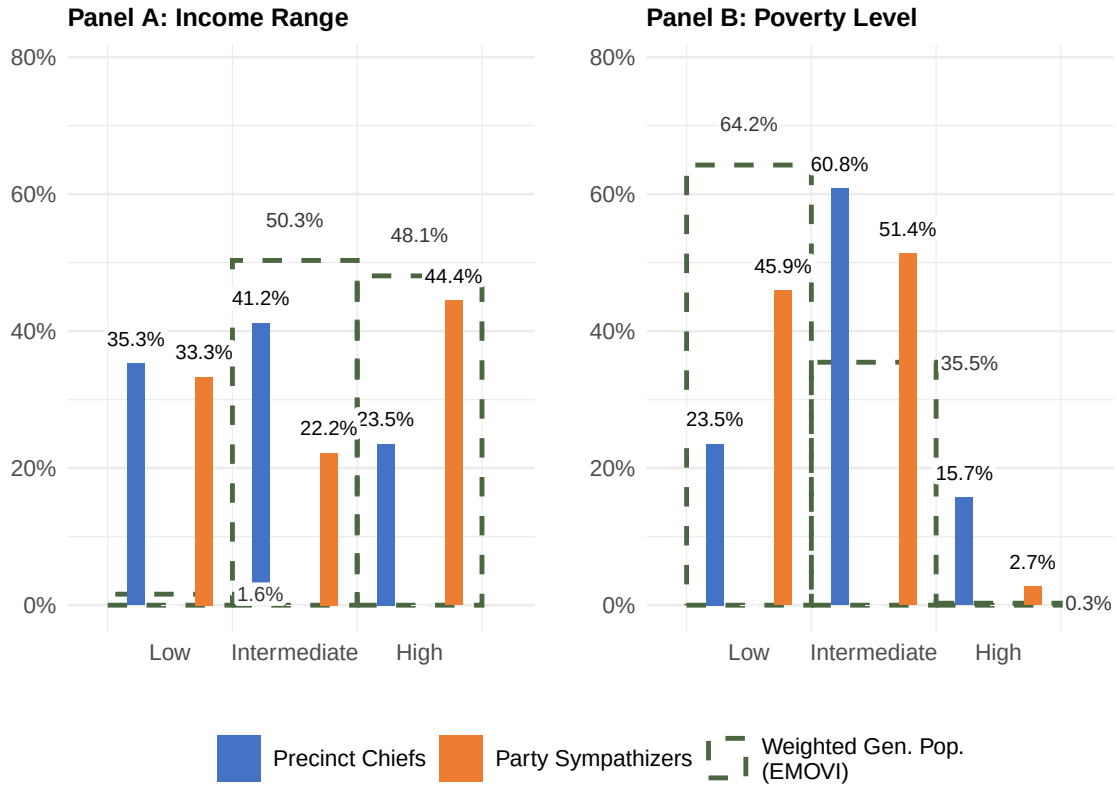


Notes: Share of each employment category within each sample, as recorded in the 2012 voter registry (*Lista Nominal*). Precinct chief administrative roster (Roster 1, $N = 1{,}604$); party sympathizers matched to the voter registry ($N = 811{,}073$); full Nuevo León voter registry ($N = 3{,}287{,}885$). Roster 2 and the full registry are drawn from the same underlying Lista Nominal. Figures describe the full rosters, not the surveyed samples

At the time of the survey, both PRI sympathizers and brokers were poorer than the Nuevo León comparison population, with brokers exhibiting the lowest income levels of the three groups. Figure 4 compares current socioeconomic status across brokers, sympathizers, and the reweighted Nuevo León comparison population. On current household income, brokers and sympathizers cluster in the bottom two terciles, well below the comparison population (panel a). The gap is even starker on the poverty index: roughly 16% of brokers fall in the highest-poverty tier, compared

with about 3% of sympathizers and less than 1% of the comparison population (panel b).[11]

Figure 4: Current socioeconomic status



Notes: Survey of Precinct Chiefs 2021 ($N = 53$ brokers, $N = 37$ sympathizers) and EMOVI 2021 ($N = 3{,}767$, reweighted). Panel (a): monthly household income in pesos, terciled from the combined broker–sympathizer distribution: low, up to \$2,133; intermediate, \$2,133–\$9,240; high, above \$9,240. The same cutpoints are applied to the EMOVI for comparability. Panel (b): poverty index levels. General population reweighted to match broker sample demographics. See OA Section A.6 for index construction.

5.3 Who becomes a broker?

Brokers differ from party sympathizers in recalled early political engagement, but not in childhood economic position. Table 2 reports regression-adjusted differences controlling for age, gender, and education. Brokers are more likely to report higher family activism, more likely to report that poli-

[11]The poverty index is a simplified adaptation of the AMAI *Niveles Socioeconómicos* classification. It combines the respondent's education and the household's bathrooms, rooms, and cars into a 0–100 score: Low poverty $\geq$65; Intermediate poverty 35–64; High poverty $<$35. See OA Section A.6 for construction and cross-survey harmonization with EMOVI 2021.

tics was frequently discussed at home during childhood, and more likely to report youthful political ambition. By contrast, parental encouragement does not distinguish brokers from sympathizers, and neither objective nor subjective income at age 14 is statistically significant. Brokers, then, do not appear to come from more advantaged childhood backgrounds. Instead, they grew up in more politically engaged family environments and report greater early political ambition.

Table 2: Selection into brokerage

	(1) Family Activism	(2) Political Talk at Home	(3) Young Ambition	(4) Family Encouraged	(5) Income	(6) Subjective Income
Precinct Chief	0.364***	0.198**	0.234***	0.028	−0.112	0.052
	(0.119)	(0.093)	(0.088)	(0.143)	(0.135)	(0.629)
Age	−0.006	−0.002	−0.004	−0.011**	0.004	0.021
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.025)
Female	−0.120	0.194*	−0.084	0.054	0.051	0.755
	(0.128)	(0.102)	(0.097)	(0.155)	(0.141)	(0.632)
Education	−0.030	−0.006	0.014	−0.012	0.036	0.367***
	(0.026)	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.033)	(0.025)	(0.126)
Observations	75	77	75	58	75	67
R^2	0.17	0.11	0.12	0.09	0.04	0.12
Control Mean	0.294	0.086	0.057	0.435	0.556	5.160

Notes: OLS estimates; the Precinct Chief coefficient is the regression-adjusted broker–sympathizer difference, controlling for age, gender, and education. Control Mean is the party-sympathizer mean. Outcomes: (1) Family Activism, $= 1$ if "most" or "all" family members are reported to engage in social or political activism; (2) Political Talk at Home (childhood), $= 1$ if politics was discussed at home "always" or "frequently" during the respondent's childhood, 0 if "sometimes," "rarely," or "never"; (3) Young Ambition, $= 1$ if the respondent aspired to a political career between ages 15 and 25; (4) Family Encouraged, ordinal (-1/0/1): 1 if either parent encouraged political involvement during the respondent's youth, 0 if indifferent, -1 if discouraged; (5) Income (age 14), $= 1$ if household income at age 14 was similar to or higher than other Nuevo León families at that time (0 if lower); (6) Subjective Income (age 14), family income placed on a 0–10 ladder at age 14. The number of observations varies across columns because of missing outcome values: 13 for Family Activism, 13 for Young Ambition, 31 for Family Encouraged, 13 for Income at 14, and 22 for Subjective Income at 14. Political Talk at Home has no missing values. Missing controls account for at most eight additional observations (age: 3; gender: 2; education: 3). See OA Section A.5.1 for the exact question wording. Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Qualitative evidence from an open-ended question asking respondents how they became brokers points to three common paths. First, some respondents describe their appointment as recogni-

tion for prior community activism and problem-solving: "[I] liked helping people"; "[I] was good at communicating with people from the community"; and "[I] was selected because I was so active and helped in all kinds of situations." In these cases, formal appointment appears to recognize de facto community leadership. Second, some respondents describe an internal partisan path, in which they first volunteered or performed lower-level party roles: "[I] distributed leaflets"; "[I] attended party meetings and was seen as very active"; and "[I] was invited by the party president." Finally, personal networks also mattered, with respondents describing recruitment through party, family, or neighborhood ties.

These patterns are consistent with Auyero (2000), who shows that brokers often present themselves as precocious activists with histories of family activism. These retrospective accounts should be interpreted with caution: Brokers had occupied these roles for many years by the time of the survey, and their narratives may partly reflect the self-presentation of long-standing political activists. Even with this caveat, the qualitative and quantitative evidence point in the same descriptive direction: brokers narrate entry into brokerage through community reputation and prior activism rather than economic advantage.

5.4 Socioeconomic mobility

5.4.1 General patterns

Here, we examine whether brokers' long-tenure political work is associated with upward socioeconomic mobility. We compare brokers to party sympathizers and, where possible, to the comparison population described above.We construct six mobility indicators, each coded so that positive values denote improvement: household-head education, children's education, job status, subjective income, subjective housing quality, and household wealth. Survey wording and operational details for each indicator are in OA Section A.5.1. We first compare brokers and sympathizers in a regression framework. For each mobility outcome in Table 3, we regress the outcome on a precinct-chief

indicator, controlling for age, gender, and education.[12] The coefficient on the *Precinct Chief* indicator reports the adjusted difference between brokers and sympathizers.

Across a range of educational, occupational, and subjective economic outcomes, precinct chiefs do not show significant gains relative to sympathizers. Only one coefficient is statistically significant: brokers' household-head education improves by 1.55 levels more than sympathizers' between age 14 and the survey (3, column 1). The remaining five estimates are not distinguishable from zero. Brokers thus experience greater generational educational mobility without parallel gains in subjective income, housing, job status, or asset wealth.

These averages conceal a gendered pattern: female brokers fare worse than female sympathizers in subjective income placement, job status, and housing mobility, whereas male brokers remain above their male sympathizer baseline (OA Section A.10).

[12]Formally, we estimate $y_i = \alpha + \beta\,\text{Precinct Chief}_i + \mathbf{X}_i'\boldsymbol{\gamma} + \varepsilon_i$, where Precinct Chief_i equals 1 for precinct chiefs and 0 for party sympathizers, and $\mathbf{X}_i$ includes age, gender, and education.

Table 3: Socioeconomic mobility

	(1) ΔHH Education	(2) Children's Education	(3) ΔJob Status	(4) ΔIncome	(5) ΔHouse	(6) ΔWealth
Precinct Chief	1.549*	0.263	0.033	−0.552	−0.069	−0.791
	(0.862)	(0.712)	(0.352)	(0.714)	(0.550)	(0.775)
Age	0.046	−0.004	−0.006	0.005	0.022	0.057*
	(0.033)	(0.039)	(0.014)	(0.029)	(0.020)	(0.029)
Female	0.484	1.151	−0.275	−0.839	−0.192	1.234
	(0.841)	(0.726)	(0.364)	(0.767)	(0.587)	(0.811)
Education	0.628***	—	0.055	−0.036	−0.229**	0.007
	(0.186)	—	(0.082)	(0.149)	(0.108)	(0.149)
Observations	54	45	49	61	72	64
R^2	0.22	0.06	0.04	0.03	0.11	0.10
Control Mean	3.042	0.630	0.429	0.400	0.393	1.433

Notes: OLS estimates. All specifications control for age, gender, and education, except column 2 (Children's Education), which omits the education control to avoid mechanical collinearity with the dependent variable (constructed as the difference between children's and respondent's own education on the same scale). ΔHH Education: current household head's education minus the household head's education at age 14. Children's Education: average of the respondent's children's education minus the respondent's own education, restricted to children aged 25 and older (positive values indicate children are more educated than the respondent, i.e., upward intergenerational mobility). ΔJob Status: occupational prestige relative to the father's job at age 14 (-2 to $+2$). ΔIncome: subjective income now vs. at age 14 (0–10 scale). ΔHouse: subjective housing now vs. at age 14 (0–10 scale). ΔWealth: difference in asset index (rooms + bathrooms + cars), current vs. age 14. The number of observations varies across columns because of missing values in the variables used to construct each outcome: 35 for ΔHH Education, 40 for ΔJob Status, 28 for ΔIncome, 16 for ΔHouse, and 25 for ΔWealth. Children's Education has no missing outcome values. Missing controls account for at most eight additional observations (age: 3; gender: 2; education: 3). Column 2 omits the education control by construction. Standard errors in parentheses. $^{***}\ p < 0.01$, $^{**}\ p < 0.05$, $^{*}\ p < 0.1$.

5.4.2 Breaking down mobility patterns

The regression results may mask heterogeneity in mobility patterns. We therefore construct origin–destination (O–D) matrices, shown as flow diagrams, that classify respondents into socioeconomic tiers at age 14 and at the time of the survey.[13] These analyses do not include controls, and several cells are small, so they should be read as descriptive patterns rather than precise estimates. They

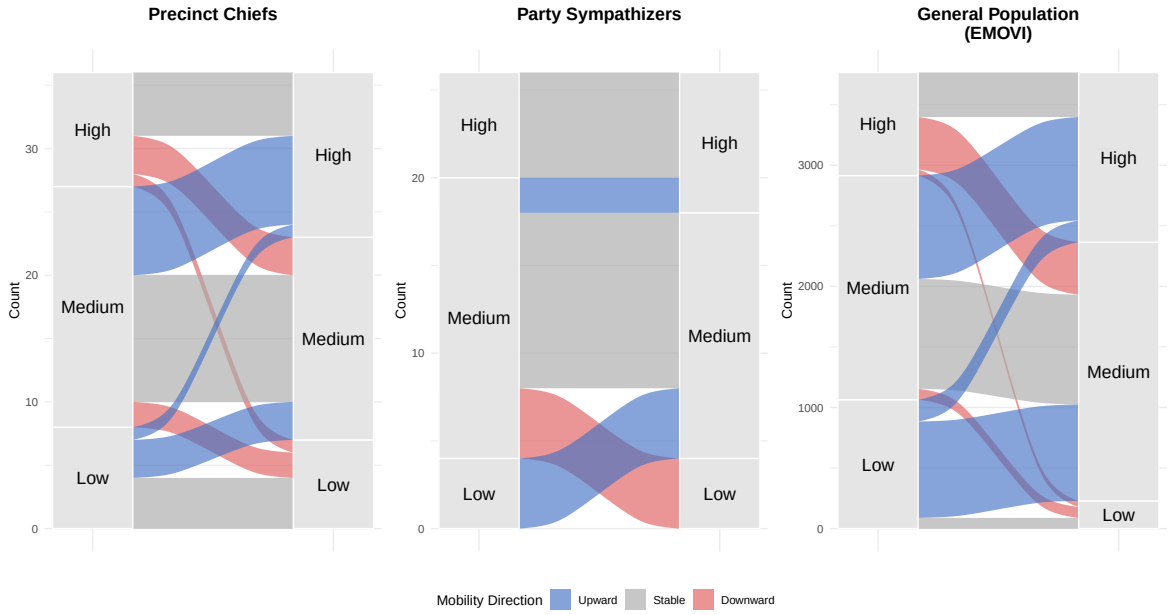
[13] O–D tables are common in classic analyses of social mobility and have also been used to study intragenerational mobility patterns (e.g., Balán et al., 1973).

nevertheless help separate upward from downward mobility.

Figure 5 traces subjective economic mobility. Respondents placed their family income on a 0–10 ladder relative to other Nuevo León families, once for age 14 and once for the present, with scores of 0–3, 4–6, and 7–10 forming the Low, Medium, and High categories. A respondent who reports 3 at age 14 and 7 today therefore moves from Low to High—not because absolute income increased by a fixed amount, but because their position in the local income distribution improved.

Compared to sympathizers, precinct chiefs exhibit a distinctive mobility pattern. Among those starting from high subjective income, 44% of brokers experienced downward mobility—33% to medium and 11% to low status—while 56% remained at the top. By contrast, all high-origin sympathizers remained in the top category. From the bottom, 50% of low-origin brokers experienced upward mobility (38% to medium and 12% to high). Middle-origin brokers show mixed outcomes, with 37% moving up to high status but 11% falling to low. The reweighted EMOVI panel shows greater upward mobility from both the bottom and middle, as well as more downward mobility from the top, than the sympathizer sample. Brokers' trajectories therefore resemble the broader population pattern more closely, but with significantly higher persistence at the bottom.

Figure 5: Economic mobility



Notes: Broker and sympathizer panels: Survey of Precinct Chiefs 2021; respondents placed their family income on a 0–10 ladder relative to all families in Nuevo León, separately for age 14 and the present; terciled into Low (0–3), Medium (4–6), High (7–10); $N = 36$ brokers and 26 sympathizers with both measures non-missing. EMOVI panel: comparable EMOVI 2021 items at age 14 and the present, on a 1–10 ladder relative to all Mexican households; reweighted to the six broker municipalities and the broker roster's gender composition ($N = 785$ active respondents). Reference population is Mexico-wide for EMOVI versus Nuevo León-specific for the broker survey; see OA Sections A.5.1 and A.9 for details. *Origin–destination percentages* (rows: origin tier; entries: % to Low / Medium / High at destination). Precinct Chiefs: Low → 50/38/12; Medium → 11/53/37; High → 11/33/56. Party Sympathizers: Low → 0/100/0; Medium → 25/62/12; High → 0/0/100. General Population (EMOVI): Low → 8/75/17; Medium → 5/49/46; High → 6/51/43.

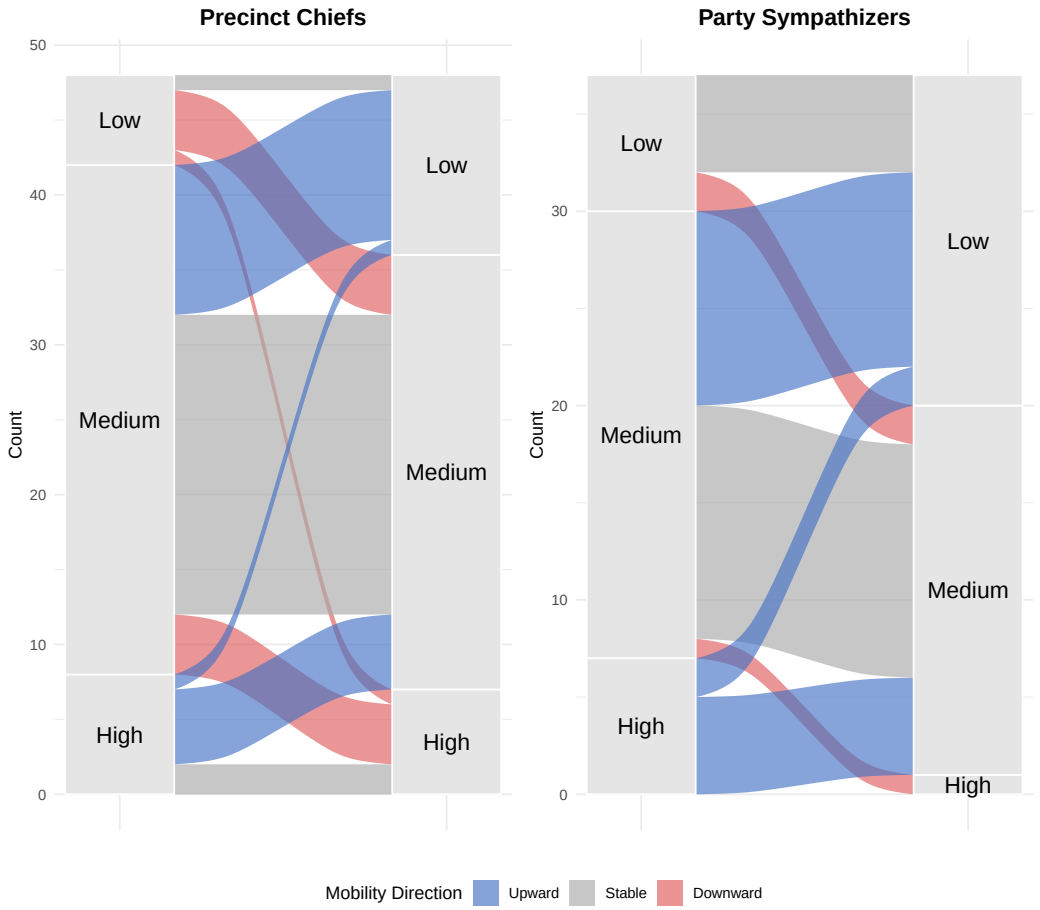
Figure 6 traces mobility on a composite poverty index ranging from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating lower poverty. The index combines four components: the respondent's education (40 points), bathrooms (25), rooms (20), and cars (15). Scores below 35 correspond to High poverty, 35–64 to Medium poverty, and 65 or above to Low poverty.[14] The same index is computed for the respondent's household at age 14, so a respondent who scores below 35 at age 14 and above 65 today moves from High to Low poverty.

The poverty index flows show greater poverty persistence among brokers than among sym-

[14]Simplified adaptation of the AMAI *Niveles Socioeconómicos* (NSE) index (Asociación Mexicana de Agencias de Inteligencia de Mercado y Opinión, 2018), the stratification framework widely used in Mexican survey and market research. See OA Section A.6 for the full construction and cross-survey harmonization with EMOVI 2021.

pathizers. Among brokers who start in high poverty, 25% remain there, 62% move to medium poverty, and 12% reach low poverty. By contrast, no high-poverty sympathizers remain in that category, although this comparison is based on small cells. Among medium-origin respondents, 12% of brokers fall into high poverty, compared with 4% of sympathizers.

Figure 6: Poverty mobility



Notes: Precinct Chiefs ($N = 53$) and Party Sympathizers ($N = 37$). Origin (age 14) to destination (current) by poverty index tier: Low (low poverty, $\geq$65); Medium (35–64); High (high poverty, $<$35). The same composite index (education 40%, bathrooms 25%, rooms 20%, cars 15%) is applied at both time points; bathroom and car components are binary at both time points to match EMOVI measurement. EMOVI is excluded from the main figure: binary bathroom ownership is near-universal in Nuevo León (approximately 97% at both time points), leaving less than 1% of the weighted sample in the High poverty tier and rendering the EMOVI panel uninformative. See Figure A.3 (Online Appendix) for the EMOVI variant with appropriate caveats, and OA Section A.6 for index construction. *Origin–destination percentages* (rows: origin poverty tier; entries: % to Low / Medium / High poverty at destination). Precinct Chiefs: Low $\rightarrow$ 17/67/17; Medium $\rightarrow$ 29/59/12; High $\rightarrow$ 12/62/25. Party Sympathizers: Low $\rightarrow$ 71/29/0; Medium $\rightarrow$ 44/52/4; High $\rightarrow$ 29/71/0.

Overall, brokers display more polarized trajectories than sympathizers: greater persistence at high-poverty origins (25% vs. 0%), less upward movement from medium origins (29% vs. 44% reaching low poverty), and downward transitions from low-poverty origins that sympathizers do not exhibit (17% vs. 0%). Across both figures, brokers combine upward and downward mobility, whereas sympathizers cluster on stable or improving trajectories. This mixture is consistent with the near-zero average coefficients in Table 3: gains for some brokers and losses for others wash out in the mean. Given the small cell sizes—particularly in the low-origin broker row and the high-origin sympathizer row—these origin–destination percentages should be interpreted as descriptive rather than precise estimates.[15]

5.5 Brokers' political careers

If brokerage does not generate economic returns, it may still serve as a pathway into formal politics. We find little evidence for this view. This section examines brokers' long-term political engagement and careers: their current political interest, partisan attachment, electoral participation, and broader history of political positions. Brokers report higher levels of current interest in politics than sympathizers, and identify with a political party at more than twice the rate of sympathizers (Table 4). Yet they are no more likely to have voted in the last election, and self-reported candidacy does not differ detectably either; both differences are statistically indistinguishable from zero. The survey is small, however, and we return below to the same question using the electoral registries, which cover both rosters in full. Brokerage is therefore associated with stronger political interest and partisan attachment, but not with greater electoral participation.

[15] OA Section A.9.3 reports full-population robustness variants.

Table 4: Political activism and careers

	(1) Political Interest	(2) Voted	(3) Party ID	(4) Ran for Office
Precinct Chief	0.408***	0.098	0.346***	0.047
	(0.112)	(0.066)	(0.110)	(0.060)
Age	−0.003	0.001	0.013***	0.001
	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.002)
Female	−0.111	0.015	0.118	−0.163**
	(0.119)	(0.072)	(0.119)	(0.066)
Education	−0.003	0.032**	0.007	0.001
	(0.023)	(0.014)	(0.023)	(0.013)
Observations	85	76	74	75
R^2	0.17	0.09	0.29	0.11
Control Mean	0.200	0.886	0.273	0.029

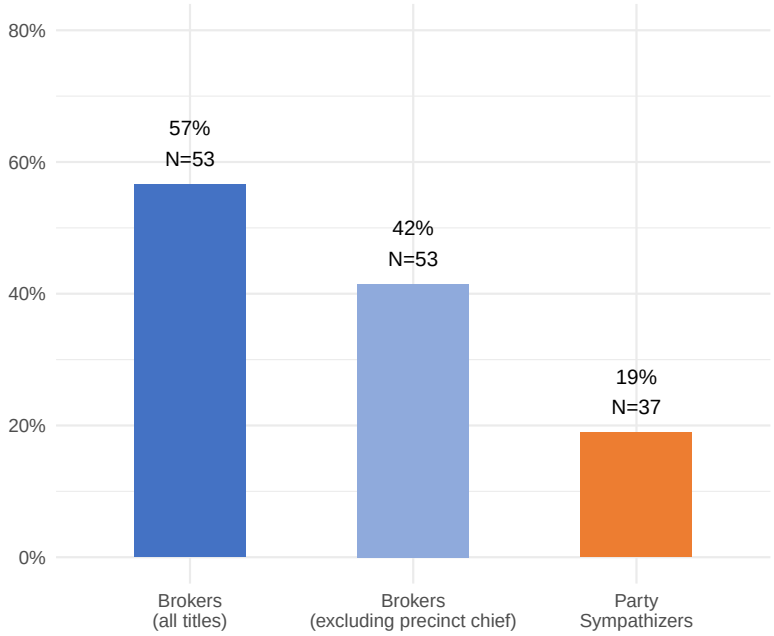
Notes: OLS estimates. All specifications control for age, gender, and education. Political Interest equals 1 if the respondent reports "a lot" of current interest in politics. Voted indicates whether the respondent voted in the June 2021 elections. Party ID equals 1 if the respondent currently sympathizes with a political party. Ran for Office equals 1 if the respondent has run as a candidate for popular election. The number of observations varies across columns because of missing outcome values: 2 for Political Interest, 12 for Voted, 14 for Party ID, and 13 for Ran for Office. Missing controls account for at most eight additional observations (age: 3; gender: 2; education: 3). Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

The survey also asked respondents to list up to five political positions they had held, recording the title, party, start year, and duration of each (OA Section A.5.2). Brokers are far more likely than sympathizers to have held at least one such position: 30 of 53 brokers (57%), or 22 of 53 (42%) once positions that are only *precinct chief* title variants are excluded, compared with 7 of 37 sympathizers (19%) (Figure 7). These positions are roughly evenly split between those that predate the broker appointment and those that follow it, rather than concentrated before appointment.[16] This difference operates on the extensive rather than intensive margin: brokers are more likely than sympathizers to have held any political position, but among position-holders, the average

[16]Among the 44 broker-listed positions for which both the position start year and the broker appointment year are recorded, 17 (39%) predate the appointment, 11 (25%) begin in the same year, and 16 (36%) follow it. An analogous split is not feasible for sympathizers, who have no appointment-year analogue and rarely report position start years.

number of positions is similar across groups (2.4 versus 2.1).

Figure 7: Share holding any political position



Notes: Survey of Precinct Chiefs 2021 ($N = 53$ brokers, $N = 37$ sympathizers). "All titles" includes any political position listed in survey slots 1–5 (30/53 brokers). "Excl. chief" excludes respondents whose only listed positions were *jefe seccional* title variants (8 brokers); excluding these yields 22/53. See OA Section A.5.2 for the classification of title variants.

Because only 53 brokers completed the survey, self-reported measures of political advancement are necessarily imprecise. We therefore matched every individual on both rosters by name to official candidate registries covering nine state and municipal elections between 1991 and 2024.[17] Table 5 shows that 6.40% of precinct chiefs appeared on a ballot, compared with 1.13% of party sympathizers—a difference of more than five to one ($p < 0.001$). The broker roster records precinct chiefs serving in 2014, so candidacies after that year necessarily follow observed service as a broker; 45 brokers (2.18%) subsequently appeared on a ballot. The gap between brokers and sympathizers is even larger for more consequential outcomes: precinct chiefs were 19 times

[17]The 1991 and 1994 volumes survive only as scans, and optical character recognition renders nearly every name without internal spaces (99.9% and 97.7% of records, against 0% in all later years), so matches in those two years are less reliable and the rates we report for them are lower bounds. Restricting the comparison to the seven cleanly printed registries (2000–2024) gives 5.77% of precinct chiefs against 0.99% of sympathizers, a ratio of 5.8 rather than 5.7, so the finding does not depend on them. OA Section A.1.4 documents sources, coverage, and the matching rule.

more likely to appear on a winning slate and almost 30 times more likely to take office. Yet advancement remained uncommon in absolute terms: only 2.77% of precinct chiefs ever appeared on a winning slate and 1.60% took office. Brokers are therefore much more likely than ordinary party sympathizers to enter formal electoral competition, but only a small minority ultimately reach office. Because these outcomes are observed for the full rosters, these comparisons do not depend on who could be reached for the survey.

Table 5: Candidacy and office-holding in the official electoral registries

	Precinct chiefs		Party sympathizers			
	Share	(n)	Share	(n)	Ratio	p
Appeared on a ballot	6.40%	(132)	1.13%	(63)	5.7×	<0.001
After 2014 (four elections)	2.18%	(45)	—			
On a winning slate	2.77%	(57)	0.14%	(8)	19.2×	<0.001
Took office	1.60%	(33)	0.05%	(3)	29.7×	<0.001
Roster size	2,061		5,559			

Notes: Both rosters are matched by name to the official candidate registries for nine state and municipal elections between 1991 and 2024. The table covers every person on each roster, not only survey respondents. Ratios divide the precinct-chief share by the sympathizer share; p-values come from two-proportion tests. The broker roster records chiefs serving in 2014, so candidacies after that year necessarily follow it; the row is reported for precinct chiefs alone, because the sympathizer roster dates from 1997 and the same window does not describe it. Names in the 1991 and 1994 volumes were recovered by optical character recognition and match at lower rates, so both years are lower bounds. "On a winning slate" records that the list a candidate stood on won the race, which includes alternates. "Took office" is a lower bound before 2018: proportional-representation seats are observed only from 2018 onward and are otherwise invisible. On the full party membership roll ($N = 811{,}075$), 1.59% appeared on a ballot, 0.35% stood on a winning slate, and 0.22% took office; the sympathizer sample is drawn from that roll and matched to responding brokers by precinct and gender.

All in all, brokers appear to have intense but somewhat marginal political careers. They are more partisan than comparable citizens and more likely to hold organizational roles around the broker position. Precinct chiefs are substantially more likely to appear on the ballot than comparable sympathizers—more than five times as likely. Office is another matter. Fewer than two percent are observed taking office in the registries, so brokerage functions less as a stepping-stone to higher office than as a route to candidacies that seldom convert.

6 Discussion

A natural question is whether the patterns we document reflect the effect of brokerage or selection into brokerage. Our design cannot fully separate these possibilities. Broker status is not randomly assigned, and the measures of early political engagement are retrospective. Still, the evidence helps narrow plausible interpretations. Brokers do not come from more advantaged childhood backgrounds than comparable party sympathizers: neither objective nor subjective income at age 14 differs systematically across groups. The main observable differences are political, not economic—brokers report greater early political ambition, family activism, and political discussion at home during childhood.

This pattern is difficult to reconcile with a purely economic selection story. If brokers were poorer simply because they originated from more disadvantaged backgrounds, we should observe clear baseline socioeconomic differences relative to politically active non-brokers from the same electoral precincts. We do not. Instead, brokers and sympathizers are similar in childhood socioeconomic status but differ in political ambition and activism. The pattern is therefore unlikely to be fully explained by economic selection alone.

Given their limited economic mobility, a natural question is why brokerage persists as a career. One possibility is that our survey misses some material benefits: small payments, favors, access to services, or benefits for family members. Unlike the patronage employees studied by Oliveros (2021), however, precinct chiefs do not hold state jobs tied to the incumbent's survival. They occupy a more informal and locally embedded position. At the same time, the candidate registries show that brokers receive substantially greater access to formal electoral competition than ordinary party sympathizers, even though only a small minority ultimately take office. Brokerage may therefore provide political rewards that fall short of formal advancement. It may also generate non-material returns, including local status, recognition, proximity to politicians, and an identity built around solving community problems (Auyero, 2001). Together, these political and non-material returns may help explain why brokers remain active despite limited economic mobility.

The local structure of brokerage is also consistent with the limited mobility we observe. Brokers accumulate neighborhood knowledge, dense local networks, party ties, and reputations through sustained involvement in their communities (Auyero, 2001; Szwarcberg, 2015). These relationships make brokers valuable within local party organizations but may be difficult to convert into opportunities outside the settings in which they were built. Dense local networks may provide relatively few bridges to opportunities elsewhere (Granovetter, 1995). The same embeddedness that sustains brokers' political role may therefore coexist with limited economic mobility and infrequent advancement from candidacy into formal office. Our evidence cannot establish that localized political ties produce these outcomes, but the pattern is consistent with a career in which political incorporation does not necessarily translate into broader economic or political advancement.

7 Conclusion

Drawing on an original life-history survey of precinct chiefs in Mexico's largest political party, we provide systematic evidence on the long-run trajectories of political brokers. Brokerage is highly durable: brokers report average tenures of more than two decades. Yet they remain economically marginal. They are poorer than comparable party sympathizers and benchmark below the broader population, and show little evidence of greater economic mobility across income, housing, job status, and wealth. Brokers are not drawn from more economically advantaged backgrounds. Instead, they report substantially higher levels of early political engagement—ambition, family activism, and political discussion at home during childhood—than party sympathizers. Politically, brokerage is strongly associated with partisan identification but not with higher rates of voting. Official electoral registries also show that precinct chiefs appear on ballots at more than five times the rate of comparable sympathizers, yet only a small minority reach office.

Taken together, these patterns characterize brokerage as a long-term political career. Brokers remain in the role for decades and gain disproportionate access to electoral candidacy, but they experience limited economic mobility and rarely reach formal office. Studying these careers yields

two contributions. First, it extends the study of political careers beyond formal office. Officeholders are disproportionately drawn from privileged strata (Carnes and Lupu, 2023); the brokers we study are not. Class gaps in political representation may therefore look different once we look beyond elected office. Second, the paper identifies a durable political workforce that sustains party organization from below (Langston and Castro Cornejo, 2023) whose long service is not accompanied by greater economic mobility. In this respect, brokers differ from patronage employees incorporated into the state (Oliveros, 2021). This pattern highlights an organizational dimension of relational clientelism that an electoral-mobilization literature focused on brokers as operatives has largely missed.

Our study has limitations. The survey relies on a relatively small sample from one Mexican state and on retrospective life-history reports, so we interpret the survey evidence as descriptive rather than causal. At the same time, linking the full party rosters to official electoral registries allows us to observe political advancement independently of survey response. More broadly, combining party rosters, administrative electoral records, matched comparison groups, and life-history surveys provides a strategy for tracing the long-run trajectories of hard-to-reach political populations.

These patterns should travel most readily to settings where parties combine durable territorial organization with sustained access to state resources—the conditions that support relational clientelism—and less readily where party organization is fluid and brokerage episodic (Nichter, 2018; Yıldırım and Kitschelt, 2020). Whether Argentine *punteros*, Indian *karyakartas*, and Brazilian *cabos eleitorais* follow similar trajectories remains an open question, though a substantial literature documents important similarities across these roles. Our case reveals a political career characterized by access without advancement: brokers reach the ballot at much higher rates than comparable party sympathizers, yet observed officeholding remains rare, while their long service is not accompanied by greater economic mobility. Brokers are deeply incorporated into party politics without generally converting that position into economic mobility or formal office.

Statements and Declarations

Competing Interests: The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding: This work was supported by the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University.

References

Allen, N., Magni, G., Searing, D., and Warncke, P. (2020). What is a career politician? theories, concepts, and measures. *European Political Science Review*, 12(2):199–217.

Asociación Mexicana de Agencias de Inteligencia de Mercado y Opinión (2018). Nivel socio económico AMAI 2018: Nota metodológica. AMAI methodology document. Available at `https://www.amai.org/descargas/Nota-Metodologico-NSE-2018-v3.pdf`.

Auerbach, A. and Thachil, T. (2020). Cultivating clients: Reputation, responsiveness, and ethnic indifference in India's slums. *American Journal of Political Science*, 64(3):471–487.

Auerbach, A. M. (2016). Clients and communities: The political economy of party network organization and development in India's urban slums. *World Politics*, 68(1):111–148.

Auerbach, A. M. and Thachil, T. (2023). *Migrants and Machine Politics: How India's Urban Poor Seek Representation and Responsiveness*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.

Auyero, J. (2000). The logic of clientelism in Argentina: An ethnographic account. *Latin American Research Review*, pages 55–81.

Auyero, J. (2001). *Poor People's Politics: Peronist Survival Networks and the Legacy of Evita*. Duke University Press.

Balán, J., Browning, H. L., and Jelin, E. (1973). *Men in a Developing Society: Geographic and Social Mobility in Monterrey, Mexico*. University of Texas Press.

Balán, J., Browning, H. L., Jelin, E., and Litzler, L. (1969). A computerized approach to the processing and analysis of life histories obtained in sample surveys. *Behavioral Science*, 14(2):105–120.

Balán, P., Bergeron, A., Tourek, G., and Weigel, J. L. (2022). Local elites as state capacity: How city chiefs use local information to increase tax compliance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. *American Economic Review*, 112(3):762–797.

Baldwin, K. (2015). *The Paradox of Traditional Chiefs in Democratic Africa*. Cambridge University Press.

Baldwin, K. and Raffler, P. (2019). Traditional leaders, service delivery, and electoral accountability. In Rodden, J. A. and Wibbels, E., editors, *Decentralized Governance and Accountability: Academic Research and the Future of Donor Programming*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Best, H. and Cotta, M. (2000). *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe 1848–2000*. Oxford University Press.

Bhavnani, R. R. and Lee, A. (2018). Local embeddedness and bureaucratic performance: Evidence from India. *The Journal of Politics*, 80(1):71–87.

Borchert, J. (2003). Professional politicians: Towards a comparative perspective. In Borchert, J. and Zeiss, J., editors, *The Political Class in Advanced Democracies: A Comparative Handbook*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Brierley, S. and Nathan, N. L. (2022). Motivating the machine: Which brokers do parties pay? *The Journal of Politics*, 84(3):1539–1555.

Camp, E. (2015). Cultivating effective brokers: A party leader's dilemma. *British Journal of Political Science*, pages 1–23.

Carnes, N. and Lupu, N. (2015). Rethinking the comparative perspective on class and representation: Evidence from Latin America. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(1):1–18.

Carnes, N. and Lupu, N. (2023). The economic backgrounds of politicians. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 26(1):253–270.

Carnes, N. and Lupu, N. (2025). Are there social class gaps in nascent political ambition? survey evidence from the Americas. *The Journal of Politics*, 87(4).

Centro de Estudios Espinosa Yglesias (2021). Encuesta ESRU de movilidad social en Nuevo León 2021 (ESRU-EMOVI Nuevo León 2021): Documento metodológico. Available at `https://ceey.org.mx/encuesta-esru-de-movilidad-social-en-nuevo-leon-2021/`.

Crowder-Meyer, M. (2020). Baker, bus driver, babysitter, candidate? revealing the gendered development of political ambition among ordinary Americans. *Political Behavior*, 42(2):359–384.

Dal Bó, E., Finan, F., Folke, O., Persson, T., and Rickne, J. (2017). Who becomes a politician? *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 132(4):1877–1914.

de Kadt, D. and Grzymała-Busse, A. (2026). Good description. Working paper.

de la Torre, R. and Espinosa Montiel, R. (2021). Informe sobre movilidad social en Nuevo León. Technical report, Centro de Estudios Espinosa Yglesias, Mexico City.

de Nicola, F. and Giné, X. (2012). How accurate are recall data? evidence from coastal India. Policy Research Working Paper 6009, The World Bank.

Dex, S. (1995). The reliability of recall data: A literature review. *Bulletin of Sociological Methodology*, 49(1):58–89.

Díaz-Cayeros, A., Estévez, F., and Magaloni, B. (2016). *The Political Logic of Poverty Relief: Electoral Strategies and Social Policy in Mexico*. Cambridge University Press.

Diermeier, D., Keane, M., and Merlo, A. (2005). A political economy model of congressional careers. *American Economic Review*, 95(1):347–373.

Eisenstadt, S. N. and Roniger, L. (1984). *Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society*. Cambridge University Press.

Escobar Latapí, A. and González de la Rocha, M. (1995). Crisis, restructuring and urban poverty in Mexico. *Environment and Urbanization*, 7(1):57–76.

Faugier, J. and Sargeant, M. (1997). Sampling hard to reach populations. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 26(4):790–797.

Finan, F. and Schechter, L. (2012). Vote-buying and reciprocity. *Econometrica*, 80(2):863–881.

Fowler, L. L. and McClure, R. D. (1989). *Political Ambition: Who Decides to Run for Congress*. Yale University Press.

Fox, R. L. and Lawless, J. L. (2005). To run or not to run for office: Explaining nascent political ambition. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(3):642–659.

Garay, C., Palmer-Rubin, B., and Poertner, M. (2020). Organizational and partisan brokerage of social benefits: Social policy linkages in Mexico. *World Development*, 136:105103.

Granovetter, M. S. (1995). *Getting a Job: A Study of Contacts and Careers*. University of Chicago Press, 2nd edition.

Gulzar, S. (2021). Who enters politics and why? *Annual Review of Political Science*, 24(1):253–275.

Higashijima, M. and Washida, A. (2024). Clientelism and the temporal dimension of political exchange. *Comparative Political Studies*.

Holland, A. C. and Palmer-Rubin, B. (2015). Beyond the machine: Clientelist brokers and interest organizations in Latin America. *Comparative Political Studies*, 48(9):1186–1223.

Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (2021). Censo de población y vivienda 2020: Presentación de resultados. Estados Unidos Mexicanos. Presentation of results, 25 January 2021. Metropolitan zones follow the SEDATU–CONAPO–INEGI delimitation. Available at `https://www.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/programas/ccpv/2020/doc/Censo2020_Principales_resultados_ejecutiva_EUM.pdf`.

Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (2024). Producto interno bruto por entidad federativa (pibe), 2023 (preliminar). Comunicado de prensa núm. 741/24, 6 December 2024. Available at `https://www.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/saladeprensa/boletines/2024/PIBEF/PIBEF2023.pdf`.

Jackson, J. M. (2025). Breadth and depth: Examining the limitations of large-n survey research in the study of marginalized populations. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, pages 1–6.

Kertzer, J. D. and Renshon, J. (2022). Experiments and surveys on political elites. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 25:529–550.

Khoury, R. B. (2020). Hard-to-survey populations and respondent-driven sampling: Expanding the political science toolbox. *Perspectives on Politics*, 18(2):509–526.

King, A. (1981). The rise of the career politician in Britain—and its consequences. *British Journal of Political Science*, 11(3):249–285.

Kirkland, P. A. (2021). Business owners and executives as politicians: The effect on public policy. *The Journal of Politics*, 83(4):1652–1668.

Kjellsson, G., Clarke, P., and Gerdtham, U.-G. (2014). Forgetting to remember or remembering to forget: A study of the recall period length in health care survey questions. *Journal of Health Economics*, 35:34–46.

Krcmaric, D., Nelson, S. C., and Roberts, A. (2024). Billionaire politicians: A global perspective. *Perspectives on Politics*, 22(2):357–371.

Kruks-Wisner, G. (2022). Social brokerage: Accountability and the social life of information. *Comparative Political Studies*, 55(14):2382–2415.

Langston, J. (2018). The changed nature of PRI local organization. *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, 10(2):33–56.

Langston, J. and Castro Cornejo, R. (2023). Why do clientelist brokers go rogue? parties, politicians, and intermediaries in Mexico. *Perspectives on Politics*, 21(1):43–58.

Larreguy, H., Marshall, J., and Querubin, P. (2016). Parties, brokers, and voter mobilization: How turnout buying depends upon the party's capacity to monitor brokers. *American Political Science Review*, 110(1):160–179.

Lawson, C. and Greene, K. F. (2014). Making clientelism work: How norms of reciprocity increase voter compliance. *Comparative Politics*, 47(1):61–85.

Lemarchand, R. (1972). Political clientelism and ethnicity in tropical Africa: Competing solidarities in nation-building. *American Political Science Review*, 66(1):68–90.

Levitsky, S. (2001). An 'organised disorganisation': Informal organisation and the persistence of local party structures in Argentine Peronism. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 33(1):29–65.

Levitsky, S. (2003). From labor politics to machine politics: The transformation of party-union linkages in Argentine Peronism, 1983–1999. *Latin American Research Review*, 38(3):3–36.

Lomnitz, L. A. (1988). Informal exchange networks in formal systems: A theoretical model. *American Anthropologist*, 90(1):42–55.

Motolinia, L., Klašnja, M., and Weschle, S. (2025). The super rich and the rest: Campaign finance pressures and the wealth of politicians. *American Journal of Political Science*.

Nichter, S. (2018). *Votes for Survival: Relational Clientelism in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press.

Nichter, S. and Palmer-Rubin, B. (2015). Clientelism, declared support, and Mexico's 2012 campaign. In Domínguez, J. I., Greene, K. F., Lawson, C. H., and Moreno, A., editors, *Mexico's Evolving Democracy: A Comparative Study of the 2012 Elections*, pages 200–226. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

Novaes, L. M. (2018). Disloyal brokers and weak parties. *American Journal of Political Science*, 62(1):84–98.

Oliveros, V. (2021). *Patronage at Work: Public Jobs and Political Services in Argentina*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Panebianco, A. (1988). *Political Parties: Organization and Power*. Cambridge University Press.

Rizzo, T. (2015). Motivated brokers. Working paper, available at SSRN.

Rizzo, T. (2024). Breaking the clientelist feedback loop: Evidence from a field experiment in the Yucatan peninsula. Working paper.

Scott, J. C. (1972). Patron-client politics and political change in Southeast Asia. *The American Political Science Review*, pages 91–113.

Stokes, S. C. (2005). Perverse accountability: A formal model of machine politics with evidence from Argentina. *American Political Science Review*, 99(3):315–325.

Stokes, S. C., Dunning, T., Nazareno, M., and Brusco, V. (2013). *Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism: The Puzzle of Distributive Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Szwarcberg, M. (2012). Revisiting clientelism: A network analysis of problem-solving networks in Argentina. *Social Networks*, 34(2):230–240.

Szwarcberg, M. (2015). *Mobilizing Poor Voters: Machine Politics, Clientelism, and Social Networks in Argentina*. Cambridge University Press.

Torche, F. (2020). Changes in intergenerational mobility in Mexico: A cohort analysis. CEEY Working Paper 03/2020, Centro de Estudios Espinosa Yglesias, Mexico City.

Tsai, L. L. (2007). *Accountability without Democracy: Solidary Groups and Public Goods Provision in Rural China*. Cambridge University Press, New York.

Yıldırım, K. and Kitschelt, H. (2020). Clientelism in cross-national perspective: A large-N analysis. In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Clientelism*. Oxford University Press.

Zarazaga, R. (2014). Brokers beyond clientelism: A new perspective through the Argentine case. *Latin American Politics and Society*, 56(3):23–45.

Online Appendix

The Long-Term Careers of Political Brokers: Evidence from Mexico

A.1 Data Details

A.1.1 Broker Data

We assembled a dataset of *jefes seccionales* (section-level party brokers) in Nuevo León from internal administrative rosters compiled by a major political party. The source files consist of Excel workbooks with one sheet per electoral district and include each broker's federal and local district identifiers, precinct/section identifiers, municipality, full name, and limited administrative information (e.g., address, phone number, and status indicators). After harmonizing variable names and stacking sheets, we constructed a unified broker-level dataset with one observation per roster entry totaling 2,061 unique valid observations.

A.1.1.1 Data Linkage to the Voter Registry

To obtain demographic characteristics for brokers, we linked the roster to the voter registry (Lista Nominal, LN) for Nuevo León. The LN contains administrative information recorded on voter identification cards, including sex, date of birth, municipality, and a broad employment category for almost 3.3 million voters in the state in 2012. Access to the LN was restricted: the registry was not provided as a freely shareable dataset. Instead, we were authorized to perform record linkage and extract non-identifying demographic variables for matched individuals. Following linkage, we were also provided with the same basic aggregate demographics for the full LN as well as for the subset of voters matched to the jefes seccionales data. All other data provided was aggregated; no other PII was shared. No other data from the LN remains in any of the research servers and is not included in the replication archive.

Because the broker roster does not contain a unique voter registry identifier, linkage was conducted using names and geographic information. We implemented a blocked matching procedure in which broker and LN records were first restricted to common municipality and federal electoral district cells. Within each geographic block, we performed approximate string matching between broker full names and concatenated LN names using Jaro–Winkler distance. For each broker, we retained the closest candidate match within the relevant block.

To minimize false positives, we employed a conservative validation strategy. Exact string matches were automatically accepted. For non-exact matches, we examined multiple string-distance diagnostics and applied a similarity threshold calibrated through visual inspection (JW < 0.052). Candidate matches above the threshold were manually reviewed using consistent criteria (e.g., agreement in surnames, plausibility of typographical variation, and rejection of clearly distinct individuals). Only exact matches, high-similarity automated matches, and manually validated matches were retained as valid links. For all other cases, LN demographic fields were set to missing rather than assigning uncertain matches. Using this procedure, we obtained valid voter-registry matches for approximately 78% of broker records (N = 1,604 out of 2,061).

A.1.1.2 Construction of the Analysis Dataset

The final linked dataset combines broker administrative variables (e.g., district, section, municipality, and roster status indicators) with voter-registry demographics for validated matches. We retain only a minimal set of registry variables necessary for descriptive analysis, including sex, date of birth, municipality, and employment category. This approach incorporates administrative demographics where linkage confidence is high while preserving a conservative treatment of unmatched observations.

A.1.1.3 Gender Imputation for Unmatched Cases

A subset of brokers could not be confidently linked to voter-registry records and therefore lack administrative gender information. To avoid systematic loss of observations in descriptive analyses,

we impute gender using a name-based procedure tailored to Spanish naming conventions. We first extract a first given name from the broker's full name string using standardized rules that account for initials, compound names, and common religious prefixes (e.g., "San" or "Santa"). We then apply an AI-assisted and manually verified dictionary of Mexican first names to assign a gender category.

Voter-registry gender is treated as the authoritative measure whenever available. Name-based imputation is used only when registry gender is missing. Ambiguous tokens, non-name entries, or cases without a clearly identifiable first name are left as missing rather than force-classified.

A.1.1.4 Anonymization and Data Security

Given the sensitive nature of the rosters and the registry linkage, all personally identifying information (PII) was anonymized prior to analysis and replication. Specifically, names, addresses, phone numbers, registry identifiers, and internal unique identifiers were replaced with randomly generated alphanumeric codes. The anonymization routine produces (i) an anonymized analysis dataset and (ii) a separate key file mapping original values to anonymized codes. The key file is stored securely and is not publicly released.

To comply with data access restrictions and protect confidentiality, the raw voter registry file was not retained after linkage. Only the anonymized linked dataset and a minimal anonymized extract of registry demographics are preserved for analysis. Consequently, the publicly shared replication materials contain no personally identifying information and do not permit reconstruction of the original registry records.

A.1.1.5 Estimating Age and Sex-Weighted Descriptive Statistics

To ensure that descriptive statistics on brokers are not driven by differential linkage rates or demographic composition in the matched sample, we report age- and sex-weighted descriptives using information from the voter registry (Lista Nominal, LN). Because the LN contains administrative demographic fields for the universe of registered voters in Nuevo León in 2012, it provides a

natural benchmark for the age and sex distribution of the relevant political population.

Consistent with the data access protocol described in the linkage section, we did not retain or directly analyze the full individual-level LN file. Instead, following linkage in a restricted environment, we were provided with anonymized demographic extracts and aggregate age and sex distributions for (i) the full LN and (ii) the subset of registry records successfully matched to the broker roster. These extracts contained only non-identifying variables (age, sex, and broad geographic identifiers).

We construct post-stratification weights based on joint age and sex cells. Individuals are grouped into mutually exclusive five-year age categories and sex, and we compute the share of each age–sex cell in the LN benchmark distribution. We then calculate the corresponding cell shares in the analytic sample of brokers with validated registry matches. Weights are defined as the ratio of the LN population share to the sample share within each age–sex cell. Unmatched observations are retained in unweighted descriptive summaries.

A.1.2 Voter Registry Data

The voter registry (Lista Nominal, LN) in Mexico is an administrative database maintained by the national electoral authority and provided to legally registered political parties for electoral purposes. The registry contains near-universal coverage of registered voters and includes individual-level administrative information recorded on voter identification cards. For this project, we worked with LN data corresponding to the 2012 registry for the state of Nuevo León, which contains approximately 3.3 million registered voters. Due to legal and confidentiality restrictions, the full individual-level registry cannot be freely shared or distributed outside authorized environments. Consistent with these restrictions, we were granted controlled access to the LN solely for the purposes of record linkage and the extraction of non-identifying demographic variables in a secure server environment.

Crucially, the complete registry file was not stored on local research machines. Linkage operations and demographic tabulations were conducted within the secure environment, after which

only anonymized, non-identifying demographic extracts and aggregate statistics were provided for analysis. No registry identifiers, full addresses, or other personally identifying fields were retained. The individual-level records were not shared with the research team as a portable dataset and are not included in the replication materials. All analyses relying on registry information therefore use either anonymized matched demographic variables or aggregate LN distributions, in compliance with the applicable data-access agreements and confidentiality requirements.

A.1.3 Party Sympathizer Data

Roster 2 consists of all citizens who attended party rallies and were recorded in the party's internal rally-attendance logs. These individuals are identified in our data by a binary indicator (`inprilist = 1`) appended to their voter registry record (Roster 2; $N \approx 800{,}000$). Because these individuals are already present in the Lista Nominal with a unique voter registry code (clave de elector), the match to demographic variables is exact, yielding a 100% merge rate to registry demographics. This stands in contrast to the broker roster, which lacked a registry identifier and required probabilistic name-matching (see above).

A.1.4 Candidate Registry Data

To observe political advancement independently of survey response, we assembled a registry of candidates for every municipal (*Ayuntamiento*) and state legislative (*Diputado Local*) election held in Nuevo León between 1991 and 2024. Gubernatorial races are excluded throughout. The registry contains 38,634 candidacies across nine elections and is built from the electoral authority's own published documents:

Year	Source document	Candidacies
1991	*Memorias Electorales* (scanned)	2,133
1994	*Memorias Electorales* (scanned)	2,579
2000	*Memorias Elecciones 2000*	3,773
2006	*Memorias 2006*	3,607
2012	*Registro de Candidatos*	4,091
2015	*Encarte 2015*	4,992
2018	*Memorias y Estadísticas 2017–2018*	6,547
2021	*Encarte 2021*	5,506
2024	*Candidaturas aprobadas* (XLSX)	5,406
Total		38,634

Coverage is complete from 2000 onward (51 of 51 municipalities and 26 of 26 districts in every year); the two scanned volumes reach 45 and 48 municipalities respectively. Three election years are absent: no consolidated registry could be located for 1997, 2003, or 2009. Election outcomes come from the Nuevo Leon National Electoral Institute's results files for 2015–2024 and, for earlier municipal races, from a published compilation of Nuevo León election results.

Matching. Both rosters are matched to the registry by name. Given Mexican last name conventions, match requires *both* surnames to agree exactly and the full given name to agree, allowing a single initial to stand for a complete token ("BLANCA E." matches "BLANCA ESTHELA"). Because the 1991 and 1994 volumes are optically recognized and their names carry no internal spaces, those two years are matched on a concatenated-string basis and should be treated as lower bounds. Independent candidacies are excluded from tests of whether a candidate's party won, since "independent" does not identify a contending party.

Office-holding. We distinguish appearing on a ballot, standing on a winning slate, and taking office. For 2018 onward we observe office-holding directly from the official lists of those who

took their seats. For earlier years we infer it from the statutory rule that the winning slate takes all relative-majority positions in a municipality, which is silent on proportional representation. Office-holding before 2018 is therefore a lower bound: 3,862 candidacies are confirmed seated, while a further 5,169 fall in a proportional-representation band that cannot be resolved from the published documents. For this reason we do not split office-holding by period in Table 5.[18]

A.2 Sampling Strategy and Construction of the Comparison Group

A.2.1 Broker Sample (Roster 1)

Because the administrative records were old—the broker roster dates from 2014 and the sympathizer roster was started in 1997, last revised in 2014—reaching listed individuals required a flexible sampling strategy. We consolidated all available contact information from Roster 1, removed duplicates, and identified 2,061 unique brokers. Using a fixed random seed, we generated a single random ordering of the full roster and assigned cases sequentially to nine interviewers across three survey waves, ensuring equal selection probability for all listed brokers.

A.2.2 Post-Hoc Matched Sampling for the Comparison Group

Ideally, we would have drawn a random pre-specified sample of sympathizers matched to brokers on demographics, political history, and location. In practice, two constraints precluded this approach.

Data limitations. The information available for Roster 2 is limited to age, gender, and last registered address—the same fields available for brokers—and the list had not been systematically

[18]Laura Nelly Medellín Mendoza and Jorge Enrique Murillo Martínez. (2015), *El sistema político-electoral en Nuevo León: Elecciones y efectos en el sistema de partidos (1979–2012)*. Monterrey: Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, Facultad de Derecho y Criminología, and Tribunal Electoral del Estado de Nuevo León. Available at `eprints.uanl.mx/8362`. We use its municipal winner tables for 1991–2012 and its per-year coalition legends, both verified row by row against the candidate registries.

updated since 2014. This constrained the variables available for pre-matching.

Logistical constraints. A preliminary check on the Roster 2 phone numbers indicated that approximately 49% of the individual numbers dialed were valid (i.e., not disconnected). Foreseeing that the total number of completed broker interviews would be small, constructing a pre-specified comparison group by random sampling from the full sympathizer roster would have produced a large, heterogeneous control group relative to the tiny and geographically concentrated treatment group—substantially increasing variance in potential outcomes and reducing statistical power.

The extremely low response rate among brokers confirmed this concern. We therefore adopted a *post-hoc matched sampling design*. After completing all broker interviews, we identified the electoral precincts and gender distribution of responding brokers. We then sampled comparison individuals from Roster 2 who matched these precinct-by-gender combinations. We did not match on age, as doing so would have reduced the eligible pool of controls substantially and rendered the design infeasible given the anticipated rate of invalid phone numbers.

The resulting comparison candidate pool comprised 5,562 individuals. Of these, 3,906 (70%) had a listed phone number; of those, 1,674 ultimately had a valid, reachable number. While this adaptive design departs from pre-specified independent sampling, it represents a deliberate trade-off: by drawing controls from the same precincts as responding brokers, we minimize the risk that outcome differences reflect differences in local context rather than broker status. Both rosters record politically connected citizens; those in Roster 1 held formal broker roles and those in Roster 2 did not (Figure 1 in main text).

We acknowledge that response patterns may be correlated with unobserved characteristics related to mobility outcomes. By sampling controls from the same geographic units as responding brokers, we mitigate concern about local context confounds, but selection on unobservables within geographic units cannot be ruled out. This constraint motivates our use of a second, independent comparison group based on the representative population survey described in Section 3 of the main text.

A.3 Survey Team and Training

The telephone survey was conducted by nine undergraduate students from Tecnológico de Monterrey, Monterrey. Enumerators received a two-day training covering survey administration, respondent engagement, and data security protocols. Each enumerator was provided with a project-specific SIM card that was deactivated upon survey completion.

One field supervisor monitored implementation through daily check-ins and review of call logs. Enumerators were required to submit daily progress reports documenting: (i) number of calls attempted, (ii) successful contacts, (iii) completed interviews, and (iv) appointment scheduling for callbacks.

A.4 Survey Logistics and Field Protocols

Each enumerator received lists of 50 names with contact information. The protocol required: (i) verifying phone numbers and respondent identity; (ii) scheduling interview appointments when contact was established; (iii) searching social media for alternative contact methods when primary numbers failed; (iv) maintaining detailed logs of all contact attempts with date and time stamps.

Enumerators were instructed to accommodate immediate interview requests when appointments were not feasible, requiring them to have the Qualtrics offline application ready and their tracking registry open. Contact information for principal investigators was provided to enumerators for cases requiring additional respondent verification.

A.5 Survey Question Wording

This section reproduces the question wording for all variables used in the analysis, drawn from the survey instrument administered to precinct chiefs and party sympathizers. Questions are presented in English translation with the original Spanish wording in brackets. Subsection A.5.1 covers the variables used in Tables 1–5 (sample characteristics, selection, political careers, and socioeco-

nomic mobility). Subsection A.5.2 documents the classification of political position titles used in Figure 7. Operational variable codes and cross-survey harmonization for the poverty index are in Section A.6.

A.5.1 Outcome Variables

Tables 1–4 use the variables described below. All variables are constructed from the broker phone survey. We translate each survey question from the original Spanish instrument; the original wording appears in brackets. Unless noted otherwise, "don't know" and "no answer" responses are coded as missing.

Treatment indicator. Equals 1 if the respondent is a precinct chief (from Roster 1), 0 if a party sympathizer (from Roster 2).

Control variables (all tables). *Age*: 2021 minus year of birth, entered as continuous. *Female*: equals 1 if respondent is female, 0 if male. *Education*: ordinal scale (0–10) coding the respondent's own educational attainment: 0 = no schooling, 2 = primary incomplete, 3 = primary complete, 4 = secondary incomplete, 5 = secondary complete, 6 = preparatoria incomplete, 7 = preparatoria complete (including technical preparatoria and *normal*), 8 = bachelor's incomplete or technical career, 9 = bachelor's complete, 10 = postgraduate. Adult-respondent answers in this survey realize values $\{0, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10\}$; the omitted code (1) corresponds to preschool, which does not appear as an adult educational attainment.

Table 2: Selection into Brokerage

The first four columns capture the respondent's recalled family political environment and political socialization; the last two capture childhood economic position. The Family Activism question is fielded inside the "Personal Political History" module, between recall items on the age at which one's interest in politics began and the parent or relative who introduced the respondent to politics,

so respondents answer in the context of their family of origin even though the Spanish wording uses present tense.

1. **Family Activism.** Binary. "How many members of your family would you say participate in social or political activism?" [Orig.: *¿Cuántos miembros de su familia diría que participan en activismo social o político?*] Response options: all, most, some, few, none. Coded 1 if "most" or "all," 0 otherwise.

2. **Political Talk at Home (childhood).** Binary. "Would you say that during your childhood politics was discussed at home…" [Orig.: *Usted diría que durante su infancia se platicaba de política en casa…*] Response options: always, frequently, sometimes, rarely, never. Coded 1 if "always" or "frequently," 0 if "sometimes," "rarely," or "never."

3. **Young Ambition.** Binary. "Thinking about your youth, between ages 15 and 25: did you aspire to have a career in politics?" [Orig.: *Pensando en su juventud, digamos cuando tenía entre 15 y 25 años: ¿usted aspiraba a tener una carrera en la política?*] Coded 1 if yes, 0 if no.

4. **Family Encouraged.** Ordinal (-1, 0, 1). Constructed from two items asking separately about the respondent's father and mother: "Did [your father/mother] encourage you to get involved in politics, was he/she indifferent, or did he/she prefer that you not get involved?" [Orig.: *¿Lo animaba a involucrarse en la política, le daba igual, o prefería que no se involucrara?*] Coded 1 if either parent encouraged involvement, 0 if indifferent, -1 if either parent discouraged involvement.

5. **Income (age 14).** Binary. "Thinking about your family's income when you were 14, compared to other Nuevo León families at that time, would you say your household's income was much lower than the average, lower, similar to the average, higher, or much higher than the average?" [Orig.: *Pensando en su ingreso familiar de cuando tenía 14 años, en comparación con otras familias Neolonesas de entonces, diría que el ingreso de su hogar era: muy inferior al promedio, inferior, similar al promedio, superior, o muy superior al promedio?*] Coded 0 if "much lower" or "lower" (*muy inferior* or *inferior*), 1 if "similar," "higher," or "much higher."

6. **Subjective Income (age 14).** Continuous (0–10). "Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 represents families with the lowest incomes and 10 those with the highest, where would you place your family's income at that time?" [Orig.: *Usando una escala de 0 a 10, en la que 0 son las familias con los ingresos más bajos y 10 las más altos, ¿dónde pondría su ingreso familiar de aquél entonces?*]

Tables 3 and 4: Socioeconomic Mobility

All six outcomes measure intragenerational change between age 14 and the time of the survey. Positive values indicate improvement.

1. **ΔHH Education.** Difference in the ordinal education level (0–10 scale) of the current household head minus the household head at age 14. The scale runs from 0 (no schooling) to 10 (postgraduate). Survey question for each period: "What was the last grade of schooling that [the head of household] completed?" [Orig.: *¿Cuál fue el último año de estudios que [el/la jefe de hogar] aprobó en la escuela?*]

2. **Children's Education.** Average of the respondent's children's education minus the respondent's own education, on the same 0–10 ordinal scale used for ΔHH Education. The average is restricted to children aged 25 and older. The survey question ("What was the last grade of schooling reached?" [Orig.: *¿Cuál fue el último grado de escolaridad alcanzado?*]) records current rather than eventual attainment, so children still in school enter as if their schooling were complete. Because sympathizers' children are markedly younger than brokers' (44% under 25 vs. 7%), including them biases the metric asymmetrically; restricting to children aged 25 and older removes the bulk of in-school censoring. Positive values indicate that children are, on average, more educated than the respondent (upward intergenerational mobility).

3. **ΔJob Status.** "If you compare the prestige of your job with the main job your father had during your childhood, would you say the prestige of your current job is…" [Orig.: *Si compara el prestigio de su trabajo con el principal trabajo que su padre tenía durante su infancia, diría*

que el prestigio de su trabajo actual es...] Five-point scale recoded to: -2 (much lower than father), -1 (lower), 0 (equal), 1 (higher), 2 (much higher).

4. Δ**Income.** Difference in subjective income placement (0–10 scale) between current and age 14. Both items ask: "Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 represents families with the lowest incomes and 10 those with the highest, where would you place your family's income [now/at that time]?"

5. Δ**House.** Difference in subjective housing placement (0–10 scale) between current and age 14. Both items ask: "Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 represents the poorest households and 10 the wealthiest, where would you place your household [now/at that time]?"

6. Δ**Wealth.** Difference in an asset index (current minus age 14). The index sums three household items: rooms used for sleeping [Orig.: *cuartos que se usaban para dormir, sin contar pasillos ni baños*], bathrooms with shower and toilet [Orig.: *baños completos con regadera y W.C.*], and cars or trucks [Orig.: *automóviles o camionetas*]. Respondents reporting "don't know" receive 0 for that component.

Table A.3 adds an interaction between the treatment indicator and the female dummy to capture gendered heterogeneity. HC1 robust standard errors are used.

Table 5: Political Activism and Careers

1. **Political Interest.** Binary. "How much interest would you say you have in politics currently—a lot, some, a little, or none?" [Orig.: *¿Qué tanto interés diría usted que tiene en la política actualmente? ¿Mucho, algo, poco o nada?*] Coded 1 if "a lot" (*mucho*), 0 otherwise.

2. **Voted.** Binary. "Did you vote or not vote in last June 2021's elections?" [Orig.: *¿Usted votó o no votó en las elecciones de este pasado junio del 2021?*] Coded 1 if voted, 0 if did not vote.

3. **Party ID.** Binary. "Regardless of which party you supported in the last elections, do you currently sympathize with any political party?" [Orig.: *Independientemente de a qué partido*

apoyó en las últimas elecciones, ¿en este momento simpatiza usted con algún partido político?] Coded 1 if yes, 0 if no or no answer.

4. **Ran for Office.** Binary. "Have you ever run as a candidate for any elected office?" [Orig.: *¿Alguna vez se ha lanzado como candidato a algún puesto de elección popular?*] Coded 1 if yes (once or more than once), 0 if never.

A.5.2 Political Position Variables

The survey asked respondents to list up to five political positions they have held, recording the title, party affiliation, start year, and duration for each. Brokers and sympathizers received parallel question batteries (`polpositionTX` and `polpositionCTRL`, respectively). Position titles were recorded as free-text entries by enumerators.

Because the survey targeted precinct chiefs, many brokers listed variants of the *jefe seccional* title itself (e.g., "jefe seccional," "jefa seccional," "presidenta seccional," "seccional," "representante seccional"). To avoid conflating the treatment definition with the outcome, we construct two measures:

1. **Any political position (all titles).** Binary. Equals 1 if the respondent listed at least one political position of any kind across the five slots. Among brokers, 30 of 53 (57%) report at least one position; among sympathizers, 7 of 37 (19%).

2. **Any political position (excluding *jefe seccional*).** Binary. Equals 1 if the respondent listed at least one position whose title is not a variant of *jefe seccional*. Eight brokers listed only *jefe seccional* variants and no other positions; excluding them yields 22 of 53 (42%). This measure captures political experience beyond the broker role itself. No sympathizers held *jefe seccional* titles, so the two measures are identical for the control group.

Titles classified as *jefe seccional* variants include: *jefe seccional*, *jefa seccional*, *presidenta seccional*, *presidente seccional*, *representante seccional*, *seccional*, and *auxiliar seccional*. All

other titles—including *juez auxiliar*, *gestora social*, *coordinador*, *delegada municipal*, *brigadista*, *candidato a alcalde*, and various party committee roles—are retained in the "excluding jefe" measure.

A.6 Socioeconomic Index: Construction and Adaptations

A.6.1 Why a Simplified Asset Index Rather Than Income

Measuring socioeconomic status for political brokers presents a specific challenge: income is the natural benchmark, but it is notoriously difficult to elicit reliably from this population. Brokers occupy informal, hybrid roles — they are party volunteers with no official salary, yet many receive sporadic payments in cash, favors, or access to government programs. These flows are irregular, partly in-kind, and socially sensitive to report. Standard income questions therefore tend to produce severe under-reporting, high rates of refusal, and responses that reflect only formal income streams. In pilot discussions, we found that income questions generated discomfort and defensive responses in a way that asset-based questions did not.

For these reasons, we follow a well-established practice in applied survey research in Mexico and adopt a simplified asset-based index rather than a direct income measure. Asset stocks — education, housing quality, durable goods — are less susceptible to recall error and social desirability bias, and they capture longer-run socioeconomic standing better than current income snapshots for a population whose earnings are volatile and informal.

A.6.2 The AMAI NSE Index as Reference Framework

We use as our reference the *Índice de Nivel Socioeconómico* (NSE) published by the Asociación Mexicana de Agencias de Inteligencia de Mercado y Opinión (AMAI) (Asociación Mexicana de Agencias de Inteligencia de Mercado y Opinión, 2018). The AMAI NSE is widely used in Mexican survey research and commercial market research to classify households into socioeconomic strata

(A/B through E). It has the advantage of being validated on representative Mexican samples, well-documented, and easily replicable from standard household survey items.

The full AMAI algorithm uses 13 variables scored on a 0–100 point scale and weighted via discriminant analysis. We implement a simplified four-variable version using the subset of items available in both the broker survey and EMOVI 2021, preserving the AMAI weighting structure:

Component	**Max. points**	**AMAI weight**
Education	40	highest
Bathrooms	25	
Number of rooms	20	
Cars	15	
Total	**100**	

Thresholds for the three poverty categories are fixed at equal thirds of the theoretical range: High poverty (Pobreza Alta) < 35 points; Intermediate poverty (Pobreza Media) 35–64 points; Low poverty (Pobreza Baja) ≥ 65 points. These thresholds are applied identically to all three groups (brokers, sympathizers, and EMOVI) to ensure comparability.

A.6.3 Adaptations to the Standard AMAI Algorithm

We make three deliberate departures from the standard AMAI protocol, each documented and justified below.

1. Education: respondent's own education, not the household head's. The standard AMAI NSE questionnaire asks about the education of the *jefe o jefa de hogar* (household head), because the index is designed to characterize *household-level* socioeconomic status for market segmentation purposes. In that context, if a well-educated adult child is the household head, the household correctly receives a higher score.

Our purpose is different: we use the index to characterize the *individual broker's* socioeconomic position and compare it across groups. For this purpose, the relevant education variable is the respondent's own. This distinction matters for our sample: 36% of broker respondents and 38% of sympathizer respondents report that someone else — in most cases an adult child — is the current household head. Mechanically applying the AMAI formula would assign these respondents the adult child's (typically higher) education, making the index reflect intergenerational household composition rather than the respondent's own attainment. For 64% of respondents who are themselves the household head, both approaches yield the same result.

We therefore substitute the respondent's own educational attainment for the household head's education. We flag this as a deliberate adaptation: the resulting index measures individual-level socioeconomic position rather than household-level classification, and should be interpreted accordingly.

2. Bathrooms: binary scoring to match EMOVI measurement. The standard AMAI algorithm distinguishes among multiple bathroom counts (0, 1, 2, 3+). The EMOVI survey, however, asks only a binary question at both time points: whether the household had a bathroom inside the dwelling (yes/no at age 14; yes/no currently). To make the two datasets measurement-equivalent, we recode the broker survey's bathroom count to a binary: 0 bathrooms $= 5$ points, 1 or more bathrooms $= 25$ points. This harmonization is necessary to avoid comparing two different measurement instruments.

A consequence of this harmonization, documented in the main text, is that approximately 97% of EMOVI respondents in Nuevo León — a high-income, highly urbanized state — report having at least one bathroom. This produces near-zero variation in the High poverty category for EMOVI and limits its utility as a comparison benchmark for poverty mobility (Figure 6). The EMOVI comparison is therefore presented as a supplementary figure (Figure A.3) with appropriate caveats.

3. Cars: binary from count. The AMAI algorithm scores car ownership in tiers (0, 1, 2, 3+). The EMOVI survey records car ownership as a binary variable. We recode broker survey car counts

to a binary consistent with EMOVI measurement.

A.6.4 Operational Variable Codes and Cross-Survey Mapping

Broker Survey Variables. The scoring for each component is as follows. Education (`jefe_edu14` = the household head's education when the respondent was 14; for current conditions, the respondent's own education, per Adaptation 1 above—not the household head's): no schooling or primary $\rightarrow$ 5 pts; secondary or technical $\rightarrow$ 15 pts; preparatoria or bachillerato $\rightarrow$ 30 pts; university or postgraduate $\rightarrow$ 40 pts. Number of bathrooms (`banios_14`; `banios`), binary after the recoding described above: 0 $\rightarrow$ 5 pts; 1 or more $\rightarrow$ 25 pts. Number of rooms (`cuartos_14`; `cuartos`): 1–2 $\rightarrow$ 5 pts; 3 $\rightarrow$ 10 pts; 4 or more $\rightarrow$ 20 pts. Number of cars (`carros_14`; `carro`), binary after the recoding described above: 0 $\rightarrow$ 0 pts; 1 or more $\rightarrow$ 15 pts. Respondents reporting "don't know / no answer" for any component receive 0 points for that component; cases with all components missing are coded as missing overall.

EMOVI 2021 Variables. The EMOVI 2021 applies the same index logic, using variables: respondent's own education (`p10`) for current conditions and father's education (`p36a`) for age-14 conditions; number of rooms (`p112` current; `p21` at age 14); presence of an indoor bathroom (`p115c` current; `p23c` at age 14); car ownership (`p119` current; `p26e` at age 14). Bathroom and car components are binary in both periods of EMOVI by survey design (as well as in our recoded broker variables), preserving cross-survey comparability.

General Population Weights. Main-text comparisons use `factor_broker_pop`, a custom post-stratification weight that restricts the EMOVI sample to the six municipalities covered by the broker survey and re-calibrates the gender distribution to the full *jefes seccionales* administrative roster (34% male). The construction of this weight, the corrections it incorporates relative to earlier versions, and the alternative `factor_emovi` (original EMOVI design weight) are described in detail in Section A.9.

A.7 Descriptive Statistics

Table A.1 presents demographic characteristics of the final sample. Brokers averaged 67.5 years of age (SD = 11.9), with 31.4% male. The comparison group of sympathizers showed similar distributions after matching on electoral section and gender. The Nuevo León representative survey respondents were younger on average (41.9 years) and more gender-balanced (50.1% male).

Table A.1: Sample characteristics by group

	Precinct Chiefs (Roster 1, surveyed)	Party Sympathizers (Roster 2, surveyed)	General Pop. (EMOVI 2021)
N	53	37	3,767
Age, mean (SD)	67.5 (11.9)	59.1 (13.7)	41.9 (11.6)
Female, %	68.6	73.0	49.9
Education, years (mean)	11.2	13.6	10.7
In six broker municipalities, %	100.0	100.0	51.5

Notes: Survey of Precinct Chiefs 2021 (BR, CTR columns) and EMOVI 2021 (Nuevo León adults aged 25–64; EMOVI column). *N* reports the total surveyed sample in each group; individual-row statistics are computed on the non-missing subset (BR: 2 respondents have missing age and 0–2 have missing values on other measures; CTR: 1 respondent has missing age). EMOVI statistics computed using the original survey design weight (`factor`). Education in completed years of schooling. "In six broker municipalities" is 100% by construction for BR and CTR (post-hoc matched sampling); for EMOVI it is the weighted share residing in Monterrey, Guadalupe, San Nicolás de los Garza, Santa Catarina, Apodaca, or San Pedro Garza García.

A.8 Response Rates and Sample Attrition

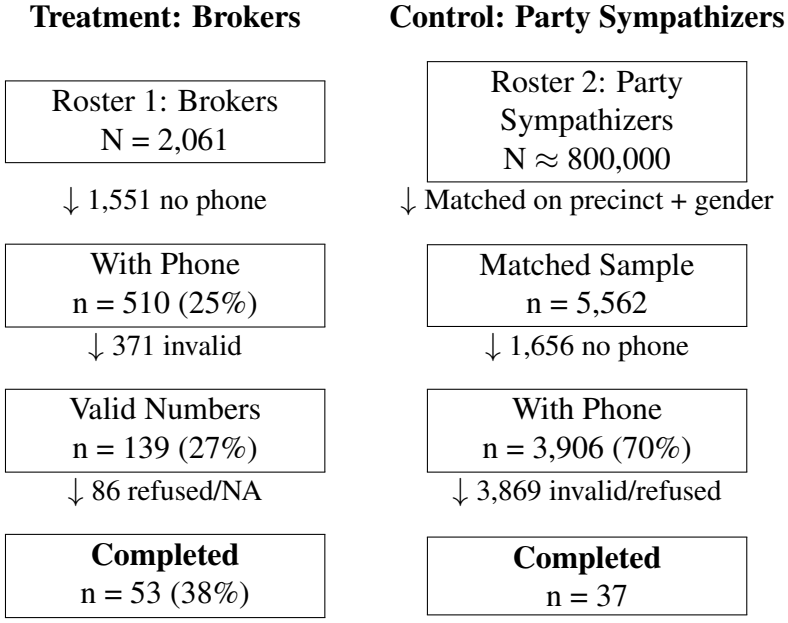
Implementation faced substantial challenges due to the age of administrative records. Of 2,061 unique brokers in Roster 1, only 510 (24.7%) had a verifiable telephone number on record. Of the 371 that did not yield a valid contact, 135 were disconnected, 60 belonged to individuals who had

died, 90 did not answer after repeated attempts, and 86 reached voicemail or a household reporting that the person had moved. This left 139 brokers with a working, reachable line, of whom 53 completed interviews (38% response rate among valid contacts; 2.6% of the roster).

Two caveats apply to the intermediate breakdown. First, the enumerators' call logs record dispositions per number and per attempt rather than per person: a broker could hold as many as four listed numbers and be called up to five times, and the same individual could be logged under more than one disposition across those attempts. The categories are therefore a field-team reconstruction rather than a partition of distinct people. Second, the final category in each stage is obtained as a residual rather than counted directly from the logs. The three anchor points—510 brokers with a number on record, 139 with a verified working line, and 53 completed interviews—are documented in the fieldwork files; the intermediate categories should be read as approximate.

Figure A.1 presents the complete sampling flow from initial rosters to the final analytical sample.

Figure A.1: Sampling flow from administrative records to final sample



The sympathizer roster (Roster 2) presented similar challenges. Two rates are relevant, and

they differ because they are calculated over different units. Counting people, 1,805 of the 5,559 sympathizers in the fieldwork frame (32.5%) had at least one number that enumerators verified as working. Counting telephone numbers, approximately 49% of the individual numbers actually dialed proved to be working lines. A sampled individual could have as many as four numbers on record, so the number-level rate is the higher of the two. The matched sampling approach yielded 3,906 numbers from 5,562 sampled individuals, with 37 completing interviews. These response rates, while low, are consistent with telephone surveys using decades-old administrative data.

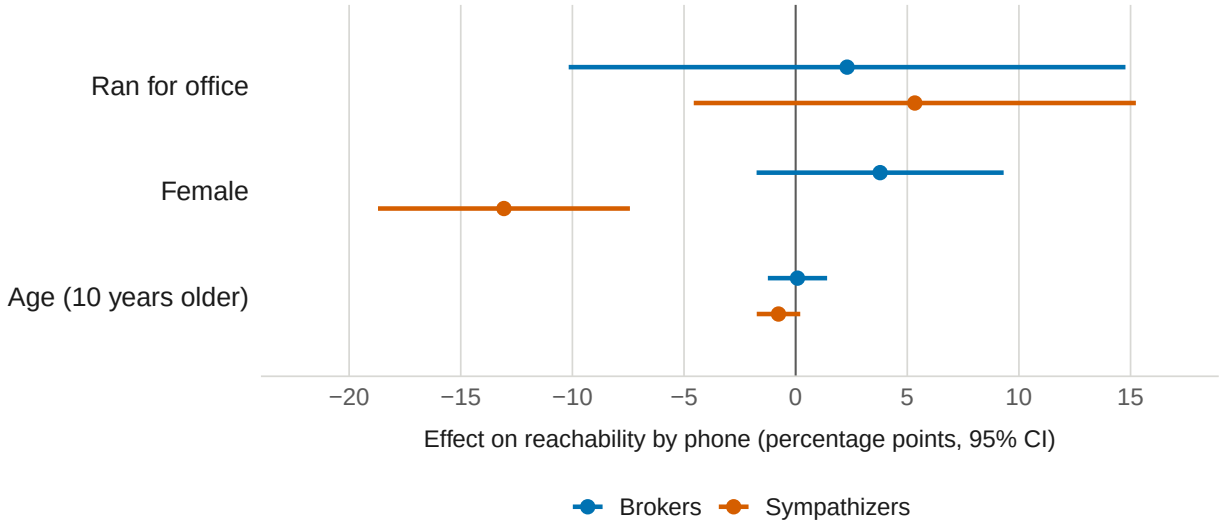
Table A.2: Selection into the realized survey sample

Panel A. Respondents vs. non-respondents				
	Respondents	Non-respondents	Difference	p
Reachable by phone	0.976	0.300	0.676	<0.001
Verified numbers held	1.293	0.352	0.941	<0.001
Ran for office	0.122	0.072	0.050	0.217
Ran before 2014	0.073	0.056	0.018	0.498
Won office	0.049	0.030	0.019	0.354
Female	0.683	0.534	0.149	0.032
Age	67.5	68.0	-0.5	0.811

Panel B. Completed the survey (LPM)	
	Estimate
Reachable by phone	9.03***
	(1.57)
Ran for office	2.42
	(2.44)
Female	1.58**
	(0.80)
Age (10 years older)	-0.01
	(0.32)
Observations	1,355

Notes: Brokers only. Enumerators worked a field list of 2,140 records, so completion is observed for every person approached rather than inferred. The estimation sample is the $N = 1,355$ of those records that link to a roster entry and carry age and sex, and includes 41 of the 53 respondents. Panel A reports means among respondents and non-respondents; candidacy and office-holding rows are tested with Fisher's exact test and the remaining rows with a linear model. Panel B regresses survey completion on the same observables and reports coefficients in percentage points, with standard errors in parentheses; the age coefficient is reported for a ten-year difference. Standard errors are clustered by local district throughout. $^{***}\ p < 0.01$, $^{**}\ p < 0.05$, $^{*}\ p < 0.1$.

Figure A.2: Predictors of phone reachability, by group



Notes: Linear probability models estimated separately for each group; the outcome equals 1 if enumerators verified at least one working phone number. Points are coefficients and horizontal lines 95% confidence intervals, in percentage points. Standard errors are cluster-robust (CR1) by municipality. The age row reports the association with being ten years older. Enumerators worked a fieldwork list of 2,140 brokers, of whom 1,687 are linked to a roster record and 1,355 of those also have age and sex from the 2012 voter registry; these 1,355, which include 41 of the 53 respondents, form the broker estimation sample. Sympathizers $N = 5{,}106$. Prior candidacy is measured by matching both rosters to official candidate registries for nine state and municipal elections, 1991–2024.

A.8.1 Item Missingness

The number of observations varies across the regression tables because of missing outcome values; the notes to Tables 2–4 report the counts for each column. Missingness also differs across brokers and sympathizers for several outcomes. It is higher among brokers for Young Ambition and Ran for Office (24.5% against 0.0%), Voted (22.6% against 0.0%), and Party ID (22.6% against 5.4%), and higher among sympathizers for Income at 14 (27.0% against 9.4%). Ten brokers are missing most of the later survey items, accounting for much of the difference across groups.

A.9 EMOVI Comparison Population: Weighting Strategy and Cross-Cohort Validity

This section documents the weighting strategy used to construct the EMOVI general-population comparison and evaluates the key methodological assumption underlying cross-cohort comparisons.

A.9.1 EMOVI Sampling Weights

The EMOVI 2021 (Encuesta ESRU de Movilidad Social en Nuevo León) survey covers $N = 3{,}767$ adults aged 25–64 residing in Nuevo León. The data include two weight variables:

1. **`factor_emovi` (original design weight)**. The Horvitz-Thompson expansion factor provided by ESRU-EMOVI, adjusted via post-stratification on age, sex, education, and occupation to match population benchmarks from the 2020 Censo de Población y Vivienda (Centro de Estudios Espinosa Yglesias, 2021). This weight produces population-level estimates for the full NL adult population aged 25–64 and is the weight described in the EMOVI methodology document.

2. **`factor_broker_pop` (broker-population-calibrated weight)**. A custom post-stratification weight that restricts the EMOVI comparison to the six municipalities covered by the broker survey and re-calibrates the gender distribution to match the full *jefes seccionales* (JS) administrative roster. Specifically:

    - *Municipality restriction*: Only EMOVI respondents residing in the six broker survey municipalities are assigned non-negligible weight (INEGI Nuevo León codes: 039 = Monterrey, 026 = Guadalupe, 045 = San Nicolás de los Garza, 047 = Santa Catarina, 006 = Apodaca, 019 = San Pedro Garza García). Respondents in all other municipalities receive a near-zero weight (≈ 0) and are effectively excluded.

- *Gender calibration*: The gender distribution of the EMOVI subsample is re-weighted to match that of the *full* JS administrative roster in those six municipalities (490 male / 951 female $= 34\%$ male), rather than the broker survey respondent sample (27% male). The respondent-sample gender composition reflects non-random response patterns and is therefore an imperfect target; the full roster provides the actual gender distribution of the broker population.
- *Normalization*: The adjusted weights are rescaled so they sum to the full EMOVI sample size ($N = 3{,}767$), preserving interpretability of weighted counts.

Figures in the main text use `factor_broker_pop` for EMOVI comparisons. Full-NL figures using `factor_emovi` (unfiltered) are reported in the supplementary appendix figures as a robustness check.

A.9.2 Cross-Cohort Comparability: Age Mismatch and Generational Mobility Regimes

The age gap. The broker survey respondents have a median age of approximately 69 years (born roughly 1940–1965), whereas EMOVI 2021 covers adults aged 25–64 (born roughly 1957–1996). The two populations therefore exhibit only partial birth-cohort overlap. We evaluate below whether this age mismatch compromises the comparison.

The "completed mobility" assumption. The comparison rests on the premise that intergenerational social mobility is largely *completed* by age 40: educational transitions, first occupation, and initial household formation — the primary channels through which origin status transmits to destination status — are mostly resolved within the first two decades of adulthood. If this is true, then comparing the *outcomes* of older and younger cohorts who completed their mobility in different decades is valid, provided the process itself was similar across generations.

The timing assumption is well-supported. Standard mobility research uses age-40 outcomes as

the benchmark for long-run socioeconomic attainment, and the EMOVI methodology itself targets 25–64 year-olds on the premise that most adults in that range have completed primary transitions (Centro de Estudios Espinosa Yglesias, 2021). Our poverty index relies on asset stocks (education attainment, housing characteristics, durable goods) rather than current income flows, which further reduces life-cycle bias: asset stocks are relatively stable past middle age, making a 70-year-old and a 50-year-old with similar childhood origins more comparable on our index than on current income.

Where the assumption is weaker. The *process* assumption is more contested. Research by Torche (Torche, 2020) using cohort analysis of EMOVI data finds non-linear trends: intergenerational persistence increased for cohorts born in the 1950s through the early 1970s, then declined for post-1970 cohorts, suggesting that different generations operated under qualitatively different mobility regimes. Two structural breaks are especially relevant for Nuevo León:

- *ISI-era industrial expansion (1950s–1970s)*: The Monterrey metropolitan area underwent rapid industrialization during the import-substitution industrialization (ISI) period, generating substantial upward mobility for working-class cohorts entering manufacturing during that era (Balán et al., 1973). Brokers born 1940–1965 reached their primary mobility window (ages 20–40) precisely during this period of peak structural opportunity. Younger cohorts in the EMOVI sample did not.

- *Post-crisis structural closure (1980s–present)*: The 1982 debt crisis and subsequent deindustrialization reduced occupational achievement opportunities across all strata (Escobar Latapí and González de la Rocha, 1995). ESRU-EMOVI 2021 data for Nuevo León show that downward mobility now exceeds upward mobility for the younger cohorts captured in the survey (de la Torre and Espinosa Montiel, 2021).

Direction of bias. The asymmetric generational advantage of older cohorts implies that, all else equal, brokers benefited from a more favorable structural mobility environment than the EMOVI comparison population. If mobility regimes differ, any observed similarities between brokers and

EMOVI respondents in current socioeconomic status most likely *understate* broker disadvantage: brokers attained similar outcomes despite facing the same working-class origins under a more favorable structural regime, while younger EMOVI respondents faced a more closed structure. The cross-cohort comparison is therefore *conservative* with respect to the paper's main argument that brokers are not economically selected from the upper stratum of their communities.

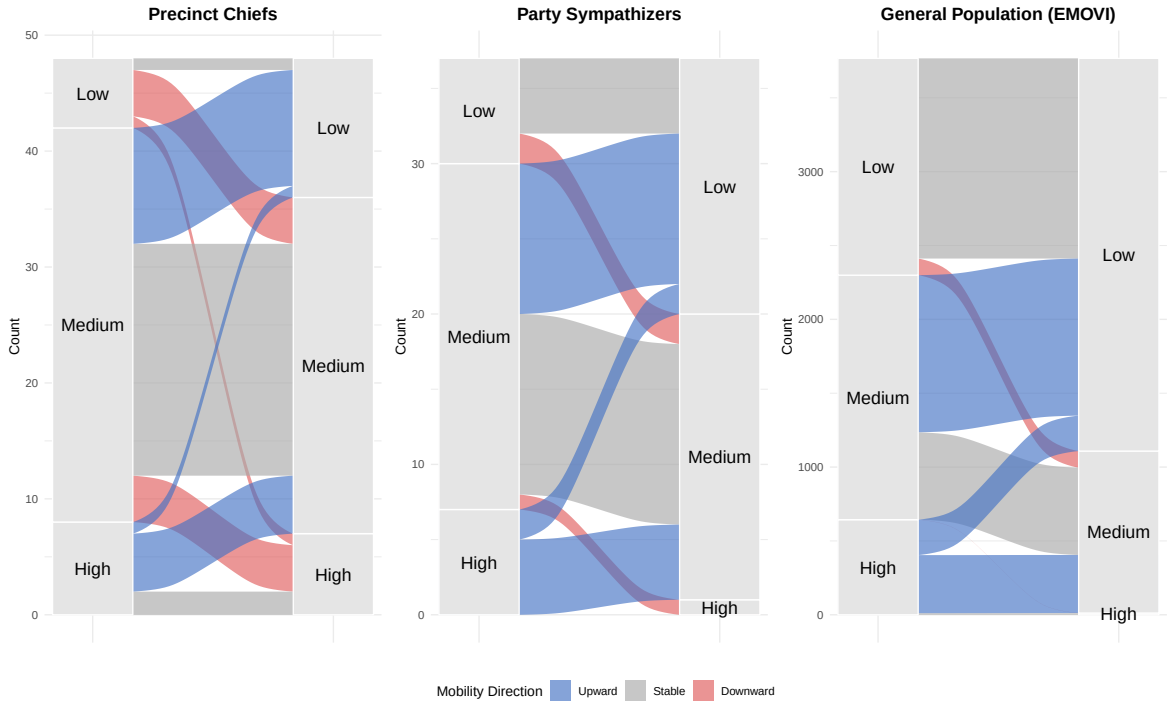
Survivor selection. A related concern is that the broker population, with a median age of 69, represents surviving members of their birth cohort. Given the correlation between poverty and mortality in Mexico, the poorest members of older cohorts are disproportionately likely to have died before 2021, making surviving brokers a positively selected subsample relative to their full birth cohort. This again stacks the cards against the broker disadvantage we document.

Summary. We conclude that the cross-cohort comparison is defensible, with the important caveat that any differences between brokers and the EMOVI reference population likely *understate* broker disadvantage. We report the EMOVI comparison as a descriptive benchmark rather than a causal estimate, and readers should interpret apparent similarities in socioeconomic outcomes as a lower bound on broker community embeddedness.

A.9.3 Variant Figures: EMOVI Inclusion and Full-Population Robustness

Figure A.3 reproduces the poverty mobility Sankey of Figure 6 in the main text with the EMOVI panel restored. The EMOVI panel is informative for upward transitions and within-tier persistence, but it understates High-poverty persistence by construction: under the binary bathroom recoding (Section A.6), approximately 97% of EMOVI respondents in Nuevo León hold at least one bathroom at both time points, leaving less than 1% of the weighted sample in the High poverty tier. We therefore exclude EMOVI from Figure 6 in the main text and present it here as a supplementary figure.

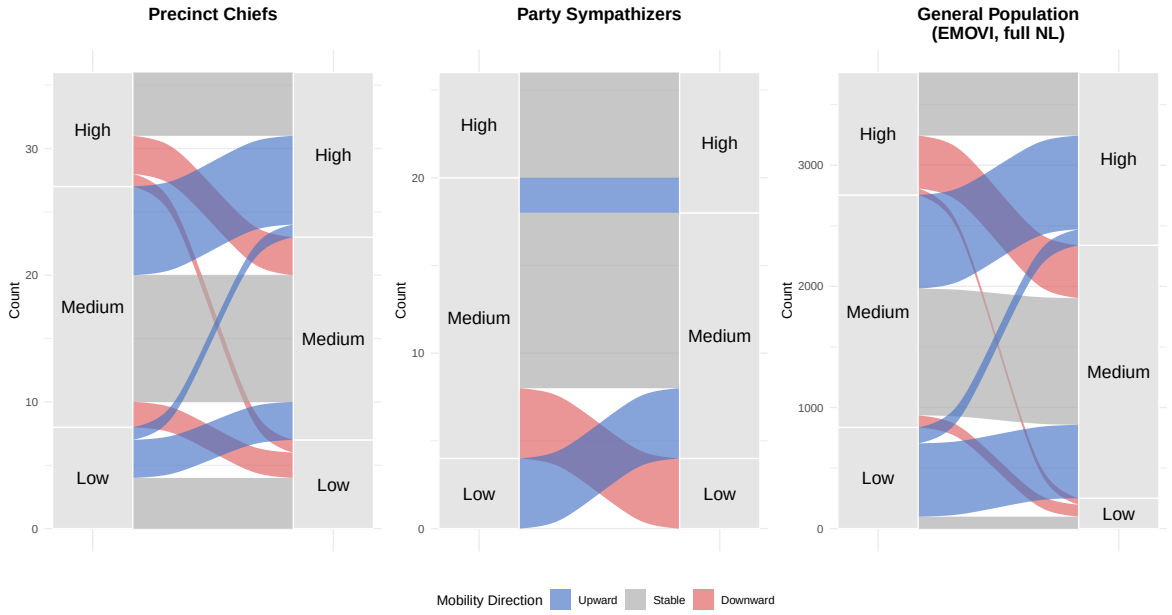
Figure A.3: Poverty mobility with EMOVI panel (supplementary)



Notes: Three-panel Sankey: Precinct Chiefs ($N = 53$), Party Sympathizers ($N = 37$), and EMOVI 2021 reweighted with `factor_broker_pop` (six broker municipalities, $N = 785$ active respondents; calibrated to 34% male using the full *jefes seccionales* roster). Origin (age 14) to destination (current) by poverty index tier. Index construction as in Section A.6; see caveat in the surrounding text on the EMOVI High-poverty tier. *Origin–destination percentages* (rows: origin poverty tier; entries: % to Low / Medium / High at destination). Precinct Chiefs: Low → 17/67/17; Medium → 29/59/12; High → 12/62/25. Party Sympathizers: Low → 71/29/0; Medium → 44/52/4; High → 29/71/0. EMOVI (`factor_broker_pop`): Low → 92/8/0; Medium → 64/36/0; High → 37/61/2 (the near-zero High-tier entries reflect the bathroom-recoding artifact described above).

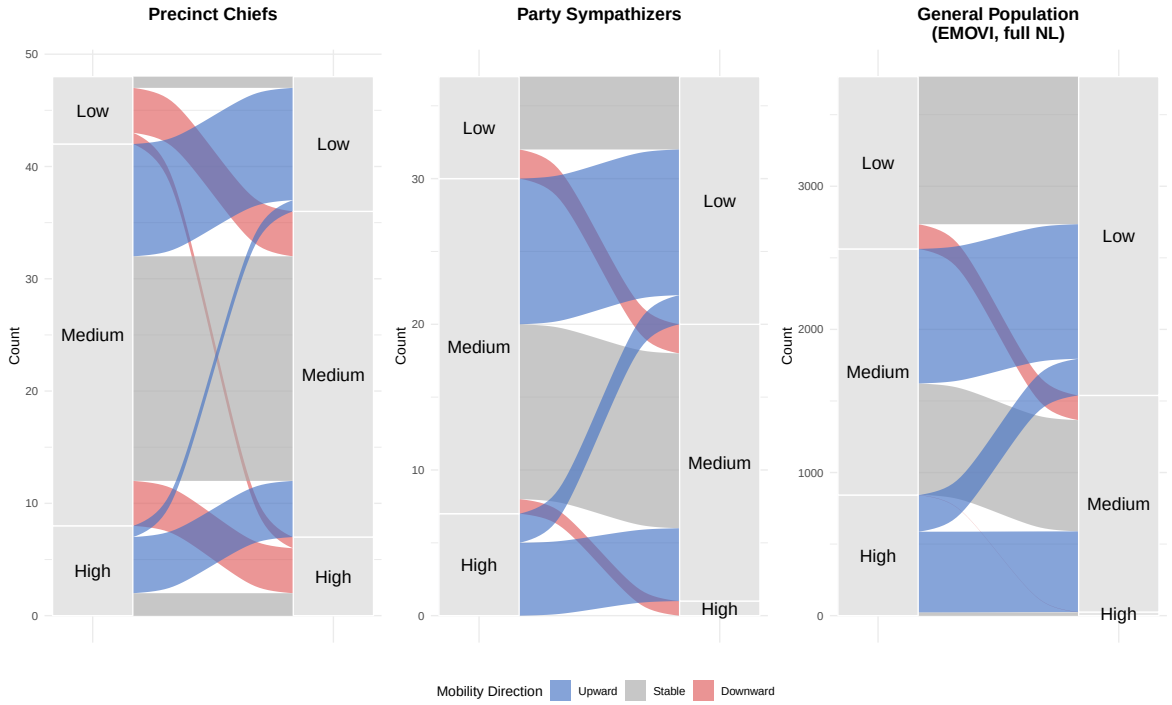
Figures A.4 and A.5 report the same economic and poverty Sankeys computed with the original EMOVI design weight (`factor_emovi`, unfiltered), covering the full Nuevo León adult population aged 25–64. Because the unfiltered EMOVI is not restricted to the six broker municipalities and is not gender-calibrated to the broker roster, it is not the most demographically comparable benchmark. We include these variants as a robustness check: the qualitative patterns documented in the main text are not driven by the municipality restriction or by the gender re-calibration.

Figure A.4: Economic mobility, full Nuevo León adult population (robustness)



Notes: EMOVI panel uses the original survey design weight (`factor_emovi`) with no municipality restriction and no gender re-calibration; full NL adult population aged 25–64 ($N = 3{,}767$). Broker and sympathizer panels unchanged from Figure 5. Variables and tercile cutoffs as in Figure 5 (main text). *Origin–destination percentages.* Brokers and party sympathizers: see Figure 5 notes. EMOVI (`factor_emovi`, full NL): Low → 12/72/16; Medium → 5/54/40; High → 5/43/52.

Figure A.5: Poverty mobility, full Nuevo León adult population (robustness)



Notes: EMOVI panel uses the original survey design weight (`factor_emovi`) with no municipality restriction and no gender re-calibration; full NL adult population aged 25–64 ($N = 3{,}767$). Broker and sympathizer panels unchanged from Figure 6. Index construction as in Section A.6; same bathroom-tier caveat applies as in Figure A.3. *Origin–destination percentages.* Brokers and party sympathizers: see Figure 6 notes. EMOVI (`factor_emovi`, full NL): Low → 86/14/0; Medium → 55/45/0; High → 30/67/3.

A.10 Heterogeneity by Gender

Table A.3: Socioeconomic mobility by gender

	(1) ΔHH Education	(2) Children's Education	(3) ΔJob Status	(4) ΔIncome	(5) ΔHouse	(6) ΔWealth
Precinct Chief	1.580	0.997	0.904	1.145	1.005**	−1.041
	(1.487)	(0.996)	(0.646)	(0.835)	(0.496)	(1.217)
Female	0.511	1.825**	0.514	0.481	0.734	1.045
	(1.259)	(0.807)	(0.642)	(0.783)	(0.572)	(0.982)
Chief × Female	−0.047	−1.048	−1.324*	−2.204**	−1.407*	0.333
	(1.721)	(1.321)	(0.717)	(1.078)	(0.776)	(1.452)
Age	0.046	−0.009	−0.005	0.003	0.021	0.058*
	(0.037)	(0.034)	(0.014)	(0.027)	(0.016)	(0.030)
Education	0.628***	—	0.069	−0.028	−0.231*	0.007
	(0.224)	—	(0.076)	(0.173)	(0.136)	(0.152)
Observations	54	45	49	61	72	64
R^2	0.22	0.07	0.13	0.07	0.12	0.10
Control Mean	3.042	0.630	0.429	0.400	0.393	1.433

Notes: OLS estimates. All specifications control for age, gender, education, and a Precinct Chief × Female interaction, except column 2 (Children's Education), which omits the education control to avoid mechanical collinearity with the dependent variable (constructed as the difference between children's and respondent's own education on the same scale). ΔHH Education: current household head's education minus the household head's education at age 14. Children's Education: average of the respondent's children's education minus the respondent's own education, restricted to children aged 25 and older (positive values indicate children are more educated than the respondent, i.e., upward intergenerational mobility). ΔJob Status: occupational prestige relative to the father's job at age 14 (−2 to +2). ΔIncome: subjective income now vs. at age 14 (0–10 scale). ΔHouse: subjective housing now vs. at age 14 (0–10 scale). ΔWealth: difference in asset index (rooms + bathrooms + cars), current vs. age 14. Standard errors in parentheses. Column samples are the same as in Table 3. The interaction does not further restrict the sample. $^{***}\ p < 0.01$, $^{**}\ p < 0.05$, $^{*}\ p < 0.1$.

A.11 Privacy and Data Protection Compliance

The survey data contained personal information (telephone numbers) of Mexican citizens, which are protected under Mexican data privacy law. Following legal consultation, we determined that provisions of the previous data protection law applied to our case, specifically regarding indirect

data collection. As the contact information was obtained through a third party in 2014, explicit consent was required from each respondent for data use.

The survey protocol included informing respondents about the indirect source of their contact information and obtaining verbal consent for participation. Respondents were assured that refusal to participate would result in immediate deletion of their personal information from all project records. An institutional contact number was provided for respondents seeking additional information about data handling or wishing to withdraw consent post-interview.