

Are Poor People Less Likely to Run for Political Office?*

Pirmin Bundi[†]

Reto Wüest[‡]

University of Lausanne

University of Geneva

Paper prepared for presentation at the SPSA
Annual Conference & Dreiländertagung
Zurich, February 14-16, 2019

First draft:

April 10, 2019

* Reto Wüest wishes to acknowledge the financial support of the Swiss National Science Foundation (grant no. 100017_166238) and the European Research Council (grant agreement no. 741538).

[†] Institut de hautes études en administration publique; Université de Lausanne; Quartier UNIL Mouline; Bâtiment IDHEAP; CH-1015 Lausanne; Email: pirmin.bundi@unil.ch

[‡] Department of Political Science and International Relations; University of Geneva; 40 boulevard du Pont d'Arve; CH-1211 Geneva; Email: reto.wuest@unige.ch

Abstract

In almost all democracies, office holders are better off than most of the citizens they represent. Recent research has shown that this descriptive misrepresentation is in part due to bias against less well-off candidates among voters and parties. In this paper, we explore a third potential explanation: are less affluent citizens less likely citizens to run for parliament than affluent? To answer this question, we rely on original data from two surveys, one conducted among Swiss citizens and the other among political office-holders in Swiss municipalities. Our results show that affluent citizens are considerably more likely to run for parliament than less affluent citizens, suggesting that self-selection is a third factor contributing to the descriptive misrepresentation by income and social class that is so common in the political arena. These findings make an important contribution to the broader literature on political representation as they indicate that individual affluence and not only voter preferences plays a crucial role in the descriptive misrepresentation of political institutions.

1 Introduction

Most political bodies have made a long way from all white-male elite councils to more diverse places during the 20th century. This development has been motivated by the idea that the political decision-making process should reflect the interests and preferences of all citizens in order to ensure policy congruence (Rasmussen, Reher and Toshkov 2018). The same is also true for poor citizens, whose preferences are usually less likely to be represented in politics than those of their more affluent counterparts (Gilens 2015). According to Rosset (2013), citizens have, on average, a much lower income and class background than their representatives. This leads to lower support for redistribution within parliament and has consequences for policy-making (Carnes and Sadin 2014; Carnes and Lupu 2015; Pontusson 2015).

In this article, we investigate why less affluent citizens are less likely to run for political offices. The empirical analysis of how socio-economic factors influence the decision to run for a political office is not only relevant for the academic and general interest, but also refers to a more general question of the causes of underrepresentation in political institutions. Although most political institutions are much more heterogeneous in contemporary times than in the past, there are still important groups such as women, ethnic minorities, and the working class that are underrepresented in parliaments, executive bodies, and courts (Banducci, Donovan and Karp 2004; Fox and Lawless 2004, 2005; Hughes 2011; Gilardi 2015; Karpowitz, Monson and Preece 2017; Reher 2018).

Previous literature has studied the reasons for running for offices with respect to candidates' gender, motivation, and role models (Fox and Lawless 2004, 2005; Broockman 2014; Gilardi 2015). However, little interest has been given to the impact of financial and human capital. We build on these existing studies, but argue that socio-economic resources may play a critical role in explaining who decides to run for office and who does not. First, it is important to determine the effect of socio-economic resources on the motivation to run for a political office. While most existing studies have explored demand-side explanations

focusing on party and voter preferences for candidates, such a supply-side explanation may also be important in order to understand the misrepresentation of certain groups in political institutions. While demand-side explanations postulate that it is the voters or other selectors who are responsible for why government bodies are dominated by the affluent (Carnes and Lupu 2016), the supply-side explanation focuses on the self-selection of people into the pool of potential candidates for political offices (Carnes 2016).

Second, the different stages of a political career need to be taken into account. Most national parliaments consist of members that have previously held one or multiple subnational political offices (Ohmura et al. 2018). In order to study the misrepresentation of less affluent people in political institutions, one has to investigate not only individuals that do not hold a political office, but also current office-holders at the local level. While individual resources might play an important role in the initial decision of whether to run for a political office, they might be less relevant for the advancement of current office-holders to higher positions since the party plays an important role as a gatekeeper at that stage (Fortin-Rittberger and Rittberger 2015).

We rely on original data from two different surveys, one conducted among Swiss citizens and the other among political office-holders in Swiss municipalities (Freitag, Bundi and Witzig 2019). Based on the citizen survey, we first explore the effect of financial and human capital on the decision to run for parliament and any political office, respectively. Based on the survey among office-holders, we then analyze whether those factors are also important for those who already hold an office at the municipal level but aim to advance to a higher office. Our findings corroborate our expectation that affluent citizens are more likely to run for parliament than less affluent citizens. However, socio-economic resources do not influence the political ambition of local office-holders. In contrast, local politicians are more likely to pursue a higher political office the more they identify with their political party.

Our findings suggest that the greater likelihood of running for a political office among affluent individuals is an important reason for the descriptive misrepresentation by income

and social class that is so common in democratic political institutions. Yet, the effect of personal resources disappears as soon as an individual has entered the political arena. At that stage, political factors become more important. In addition to contributing to the literature on political participation, our findings underline the difference between various stages of a political career. They also demonstrate the crucial role that local political mandates play in the recruitment of “political animals” and “local heroes” for political parties.

2 Theory

Most holders of political office are vastly better off than the average citizen in their country. This imbalance matters due to a combination of two reasons. First, affluent office-holders, just like affluent citizens, tend to have different policy preferences than less affluent citizens (Brooks and Brady 1999; Doherty, Gerber and Green 2006; Gilens 2009; Ellis 2012; Flavin 2012; Rosset 2013). Second, the policy-making behavior of office-holders is influenced not only by the preferences of their principals (such as their party or constituents) but also by their personal backgrounds, life experiences, and preferences (Levitt 1996; Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004; Burden 2007; Carnes 2012; Griffin and Anewalt-Remsburg 2013; Carnes and Lupu 2015; Grumbach 2015). Descriptive misrepresentation by income and social class may therefore be one reason why policy-making in advanced democracies tends to be biased in favor of the preferences of the affluent (Bartels 2008; Gilens 2005, 2012; Hayes 2012; Gilens and Page 2014; Persson and Gilljam 2017; Elsässer, Hense and Schäfer 2018).

How can we explain that less well-off citizens are descriptively underrepresented among political office-holders in advanced democracies? So far, most studies addressing this question have dealt with demand-side explanations, viz., whether voters or other “selectors” prefer politicians who are better off. Carnes and Lupu (2016) show based on survey experiments conducted in Argentina, Britain, and the US that respondents in these countries do not prefer white-collar candidates over working-class candidates for local political office.

Based on a survey experiment among British citizens, Campbell and Cowley (2014) show that respondents prefer candidates with an average rather than a high income. For the US, Sadin (2015) also finds that participants in survey experiments favor candidates with a moderate income over candidates with high incomes. Wüest and Pontusson (2018*a*) conducted a survey experiment among Swiss citizens. Their results show that respondents are biased not only against well-off, upper middle-class candidates but also against less well-off, routine working-class candidates.¹ In an analysis of party lists in elections to the lower chamber of the Swiss parliament, Wüest and Pontusson (2018*b*) find that party bias is another reason for descriptive misrepresentation by income and social class: parties are more likely to assign favorable list positions to candidates from the average or upper middle class than to candidates from the working class.

Previous research thus shows that voters in democratic countries are either indifferent between candidates from different classes or have a preference for skilled working-class and core middle-class candidates over less affluent candidates from the routine working class and (very) affluent candidates from the upper middle class. Similarly, parties appear to be biased in favor of candidates from the average or upper middle class. However, there are good reasons to believe that the shortage of less affluent office-holders—and, vice versa, the abundance of fairly affluent, but not rich, office-holders—is not only due to demand-side but also supply-side factors. Literature on political participation has shown that less affluent and less educated citizens are less likely to be politically active (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995; Rosenstone and Hansen 2003; Solt 2008; Soss and Jacobs 2009; Schlozman, Verba and Brady 2012). Nevertheless, there are few studies that explicitly focus on supply-side factors to explain the numerical underrepresentation of the less affluent among holders of political

¹A possible reason why the findings of Wüest and Pontusson (2018*a*) differ from those of Carnes and Lupu (2016) is that the former presented respondents with a choice between candidates from the routine working class, skilled working class, core middle class, and upper middle class, while the latter presented respondents only with a choice between working-class candidates and white-collar candidates, which might have masked differences in respondents' preferences for candidates within each of these classes.

office. An exception is Carnes (2016), who relies on aggregate data for US states to explore the link between the share of workers in state legislatures and a range of demand- and supply-side factors that might affect the descriptive representation of working-class citizens in these legislatures. Carnes finds that of the supply-side factors considered in the analysis, only family income (but not political interest, ability, political aspiration, or self-assessed qualification) is positively related to the descriptive representation of the working class.

Our goal in this paper is to expand on the literature by analyzing the effect of socio-economic resources on political office-seeking at the level of the individual citizen and by exploring how explanations for citizens' office-seeking behavior vary between different offices. Numerous studies have shown that those who have more socio-economic resources, i.e., higher income, education, and occupation, are more likely to be politically active, both with regard to voting and "more difficult" political activity such as contacting officials or donating money to campaigns (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995; Rosenstone and Hansen 2003). In line with this research, we formulate our first two hypotheses as follows.

Hypothesis 1. *White-collar occupation, education, and income each has a positive effect on the likelihood of a citizen considering a run for political office.*

Hypothesis 2. *White-collar occupation, education, and income have a positive combined effect on the likelihood of a citizen considering a run for political office.*

Research on women in politics has pointed to the important moderating effect of encouragement on the relationship between gender and the decision to run for political office. Fox and Lawless (2004) explore gender differences in political ambition across the four professions that are most likely to yield candidacies for state legislative or congressional offices, viz., law, business, education, and politics. Their results show that even among these professional elites or "potential candidates," women are less likely than men to consider running for office. In a subsequent article, Fox and Lawless (2010) demonstrate that encouragement from political actors is a critical factor in candidate emergence. Although gender remains a

significant predictor of considering a run for office, encouragement by political gatekeepers partially closes the gender gap. Hence, we formulate our third hypotheses as follows.

Hypothesis 3. *The effect of white-collar occupation, education, and income on the likelihood of considering a run for political office is smaller for citizens who have received encouragement to run for office than for citizens who have not received such encouragement.*

If less affluent people are less likely to run for a political office, what does that mean for the representation of such citizens in the political arena? This paper aims not only to analyze whether socio-economic factors lead citizens to consider a run for a political office, but also how affluence affects current office-holders' decision to pursue a higher political career, as national political institutions mostly consist of individuals who previously held subnational offices. In short, the findings of prior studies suggest that individual resources only have little effect on the political ambition of local office-holders relative to other factors such as party support and intrinsic motivation.

In general, candidates to higher political offices are mostly recruited among individuals who currently hold an office at a lower stage. Offices at lower levels of government are considered an important recruitment pool for political parties (Gibson et al. 1985; Aldrich 2000). According to Crowder-Meyer (2011, 120), American parties frequently recruit legislative candidates from among local office holders such as county commissioner or mayors resp. town councillors. However, parties are not only a key player for the recruitment of candidates for political offices, but their existence is based on the “goal of placing their avowed representatives in government positions” (Janda 1980). Yet, previous research has failed to explain why some local office-holders are more likely to advance to higher office than others. Office-holders have different backgrounds. Ohmura et al. (2018, 178-180) distinguish between different types of parliamentary careers. While party animals, local heroes, and land legislators tend to first hold local offices, the late bloomers and career changers usually enter the parliament from outside the political arena. As a consequence, almost 60 percent of the members of the investigated German Bundestag hold a subnational office during their

political career. Therefore, the selection and election to a higher political office is highly dominated by the political party. The party often decides which candidates they want to advance to higher office.

Despite of this dominant role of political parties, the decision to run for a political office lies with potential candidates. In subnational parliaments, members often end their political career at their own request and not due to deselection (Matland and Studlar 2004; Heinsohn and Freitag 2012). A local office often provides some indication whether office-holders are made for such a job and whether they want to pursue a political career. Previous studies show that in particular women are affected by early retirement from the political arena. Plüss and Rusch (2012, 67) argue that women often feel an overload and that a possible explanation lies in structural factors such as the existence of extra-familial childcare service. In addition, women appear to be discriminated in the selection process of parties (Norris 2004). Butler and Preece (2016) find that female office-holders generally believe that party leaders will provide female recruits with less financial resources than male recruits. However, other personal factors might also decide whether a candidate pursues a political career. Bundi, Eberli and Bütikofer (2017) show that members of parliament who run for office at the national level invest more time for their political mandate than their colleagues who do not want to enter the national legislature. Moreover, this effect is even more pronounced for younger members of parliament, since older people tend to be less politically ambitious.

In sum, we expect that socio-economic resources are unlikely to affect local office-holders' decision to seek higher office. Instead, we expect it to be driven by their political and personal context. Current office-holders are more likely to run for a higher office when they are encouraged by their own party and in the case of having a strong intrinsic motivation. We analyze the same variables for both citizens and elites and investigate the impact of the party as well as the personal context for the pursuit of a political career in the following section.

3 Data and Models

Our data come from two original surveys: a citizen survey and an elite survey. The citizen survey was fielded in May, 2017, to a sample of over 4,500 Swiss citizens between the ages of 18 and 79. The sample was randomly drawn from an existing online panel maintained by the LINK Institute (a Swiss market research firm). While the scope of this survey was broader, we focus here on a number of items that asked respondents about their political ambition, whether they have been encouraged to run for political office, and a number of socio-economic characteristics.

The elite survey was conducted between October 2017 and January 2018 (Freitag, Bundi and Witzig 2019). All people holding a political office in 75 Swiss municipalities were interviewed in order to examine the conditions of the political system and individual experiences with municipal offices.² A total of 1,792 local office holders took part in the survey, which corresponds to a response rate of 47.5%. However, members of executive bodies (85.4%) participated significantly more frequently than members of parliaments (43.2%) and members of commissions (33.7%).

Our empirical analysis proceeds in two steps. In a first step, we rely on data from the citizen survey to evaluate how socio-economic resources and political encouragement affect citizens' initial decision to seek political office. We use two variables to measure citizens' initial decision to seek office. The first variable is an indicator that takes the value of one if a respondent has ever considered running for a seat in parliament (at the municipal, cantonal,

²60 municipalities were selected on the basis of the Swiss Volunteer Monitor Communities 2012. Traunmüller et al. (2012) selected a proportionally stratified sample from 1,217 municipalities that had taken part in a survey as part of the study "local structures and voluntary commitment in Switzerland 2010" (Stadelmann and Freitag 2011). The 60 municipalities were supplemented by 20 municipalities with a municipal parliament, as this type was underrepresented in the sample. The municipalities Biasca, Birsfelden, Rothen-
turm and Savosa and Thal (SG) decided not to take part in the survey despite being invited, so that 75 municipalities were ultimately included in the survey.

or federal level) and the value of zero otherwise. The second, more general, variable is an indicator that takes the value of one if a respondent has ever considered running for any political office and the value of zero otherwise. We regress each outcome variable on three sets of predictors, which leads us to estimate six models. The first set of predictors consists of three indicators for high incomes, high education, and white-collar occupations. The indicator for high incomes takes the value of one if a respondent has a gross monthly household income of CHF 10,001 or higher and the value of zero otherwise.³ The indicator for high education takes the value of one if a respondent has tertiary education (i.e., higher vocational or university education) and the value of zero if he or she has secondary education or less.⁴ The indicator for white-collar occupations takes the value of one if a respondent is currently in a white-collar occupation and the value of zero if he or she is currently in a working-class occupation.⁵ The second set of predictors consists of two indicators that

³According to the Household Budget Survey of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, the median gross monthly household income for the Swiss population was somewhat above CHF 8,000 in 2009-2011 (<https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/kataloge-datenbanken/tabellen.assetdetail.308364.html>, last accessed on February 5, 2019).

⁴According to the Swiss Labor Force Survey of 2017, 42.6% of the Swiss population had tertiary education and the remaining 57.4% had secondary education or less (<https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bildung-wissenschaft/bildungsabschluesse/sekundarstufe-II.assetdetail.4802237.html>, last accessed on February 5, 2019).

⁵The citizen survey contains information on respondents' occupations, which we recoded as follows. We first relied on the 16-category class schema developed by Oesch (2006*a,b*) to define two broad categories, viz., white-collar occupations and working-class occupation. We then classified each occupation in our data set into one of these categories. With regard to Oesch's class schema, white-collar occupations are defined by categories 1-6 (large employers, self-employed professionals, small business owners with or without employees, technical experts, and technicians), 9-10 (higher-grade or lower-grade managers and administrators), and 13-14 (socio-cultural professionals or semi-professionals), while working-class occupations are defined by categories 7-8 (skilled or low-skilled manual), 11-12 (skilled or unskilled clerks), and 15-16 (skilled or low-skilled service) (<https://people.unil.ch/danieloesch/scripts/>, last accessed on February 5, 2019).

combine the above-mentioned socio-economic resource variables. One indicator takes the value of one for “high-resource” respondents, defined as respondents who are in the high-resource group on all of the above socio-economic resource variables, and the value of zero for all other respondents. The other indicator takes the value of one for “middle-resource” respondents, defined as respondents who belong to the high-resource group on at least one, but not all, of the socio-economic resource variables, and the value of zero for all other respondents. Finally, the third set of predictors expands the second set by including an indicator that takes the value of one if a respondent has ever received encouragement to run for office and interactions between the encouragement indicator and the indicators for middle-resource and high-resource respondents.⁶ In addition, the third set of predictors also includes a number of control variables and random effects for cantons (Switzerland’s subnational units). The control variables are an indicator for female respondents, a variable measuring respondents’ age, and a variable for the political ideology of respondents.⁷ We fit probit regressions since both outcomes are binary variables.

In a second step, we investigate whether the same socio-economic resources also affect current office-holders’ decision to seek a higher political office. The dependent variable measures whether office-holders have ever considered to run for a seat in a parliament or executive body at a higher level of government (municipal, cantonal, or federal).⁸ This variable takes the value of one if an office-holder considers to run for a higher office and zero if this is not the case. We use the same three sets of predictors that have been described for the citizen models: high incomes, high education, and white-collar occupation as well

⁶Depending on whether the outcome variable is consideration of running for a seat in parliament or consideration of running for any political office, the encouragement variable measures encouragement to run for a seat in parliament or encouragement to run for any political office.

⁷We will z -standardize the respondent age and ideology variables in our analysis below.

⁸Members of municipal executive bodies were only asked whether they consider to run for an office at the cantonal or federal level, while members of municipal parliaments or commissions were also asked whether they consider an executive office at the municipality level.

as the combination of these attributes into low-, middle-, and high-resource groups. In contrast to the former models, we include additional variables for political context in order to explore the likelihood of running for a higher political office. First, we distinguish the type of office that respondents currently hold. Freitag, Bundi and Witzig (2019) show that conditions vary considerably between different offices at the municipal level. In particular commission members invest less time, but also obtain a significantly lower compensation for their political mandate. Next, we add a variable that measures whether office-holders consider their office as a springboard to further political offices. The values of this variable range from one (not at all) to four (absolutely). In addition, the models include variables that show whether office-holders are party members⁹ or obtain recognition from their own party (again, the variable ranges from not at all to absolutely). Finally, we also consider the amount of time office-holders invest in their political mandate, which we measured using several indicators.¹⁰ We include the same control variables (gender, age, political ideology) for the elite models as we used for the citizen models and we also fit probit regressions.

4 Empirical Analysis

Before we present the results of our analysis, we provide a descriptive overview of the distribution of socio-economic resources in the Swiss population as a whole, the subset of candidates in the 2007 election to the Swiss parliament, and the subset of successful candidates in the

⁹According to Geser et al. (2011, 46,66), around 15% of today’s executive office-holders at the Swiss municipal level only become members of a political party after taking office. The percentage of office holders without a party affiliation is still relatively high with 40%.

¹⁰We used indicators for the following activities: preparation of meetings, meetings, exchange with other office-holders, exchange with the municipal administration, exchange with public actors outside the municipality, exchange with interest groups, parties, associations, and federations, exchange with citizens, media contacts, public appearances, and social media (Freitag, Bundi and Witzig 2019). We also z -standardize this variable for our analysis.

2007 election. Table 1 shows the proportion of individuals with a gross monthly household income of CHF 10,000 or higher, the proportion of individuals with tertiary education, and the proportion of individuals in a white-collar occupation for the respective groups. For each variable, the proportion of high-resource individuals increases steadily as we move from the population at large to the pool of candidates in the 2007 election and from the pool of candidates to those who were elected. It thus appears that descriptive misrepresentation by income, education, and occupation is the result of both supply-side factors explaining the selection of individuals into the pool of potential candidates and demand-side factors explaining the selection of potential candidates into the pool of candidates and the pool of elected candidates.

Table 1: Distribution of Socio-Economic Resources in the Swiss Population and Among Parliamentary Candidates and Successful Candidates (2007)

	Population	All candidates	Successful candidates
Household income of CHF 10,000 or higher	33%	40%	66%
Tertiary education	31%	63%	83%
White-collar occupation	58%	87%	93%

Note: The table shows the proportion of people with a gross monthly household income of 10,000 or higher, tertiary education, and a white-collar occupation in the population at large, the pool of all candidates in the 2007 election to the Swiss parliament, and the successful candidates in the 2007 election. Own calculations based on data from the Household Budget Survey for income and data from the Swiss Labor Force Survey for education (see URLs above).

We now turn to the analysis of the effect of socio-economic resources and encouragement on citizens' initial decision to run for political office. Table 2 shows in columns 1-3 the estimated coefficients of the models in which the outcome variable is consideration of running for a seat in parliament and in columns 4-6 the estimates of the models in which the outcome is consideration of running for any political office. The results in Table 2 reveal two clear patterns. First, individuals with a high income, a high education, and a white-

collar occupation are more likely than their respective counterparts to consider running for parliament or running for a political office in general. The positive effect of socio-economic resources is even stronger when they are combined. Second, political encouragement plays a critical role in whether people consider a run for office: those who are encouraged to run are also more likely to consider doing so. What is more, encouragement decreases the effect of socio-economic resources on the likelihood of considering running for office.

Figure 1 shows how socio-economic resources, and their interaction with political encouragement, affect individuals' predicted probability of considering a run for office. As can be seen in the top panel of the figure, individuals with a high income, a high education, or a white-collar occupation are between 3.5 to 5.1 %-points more likely than their respective counterparts to consider running for parliament and between 5 to 6.9 %-points more likely to consider running for any political office. The middle panel shows that high-resource individuals, who have a high income, high education, and white-collar occupation, are 14.8 %-points more likely than low-resource individuals, who have a low income, low education, and working-class occupation, to consider a run for a seat in parliament and 19.2 %-points more likely to consider a run for any political office. Middle-resource individuals, who belong to the high-resource group on at least one, but not all, of the resource variables, are 6.7 %-points more likely than low-resource individuals to consider running for the former type of office and 9.3 %-points more likely to consider running for the latter type of office. The bottom panel illustrates how the effect of socio-economic resources depends on whether an individual has been encouraged to run for office. While resource availability tends to increase the likelihood of considering a candidacy for those who have not been encouraged to run, it has little effect for those who have been encouraged. Encouragement to run for office thus decreases, or even eliminates, the resource gap in individuals' initial decision of whether to run or not.

Next, we analyze whether these findings also apply to individuals that already hold a political office. We begin again with a descriptive overview of the distribution of socio-economic

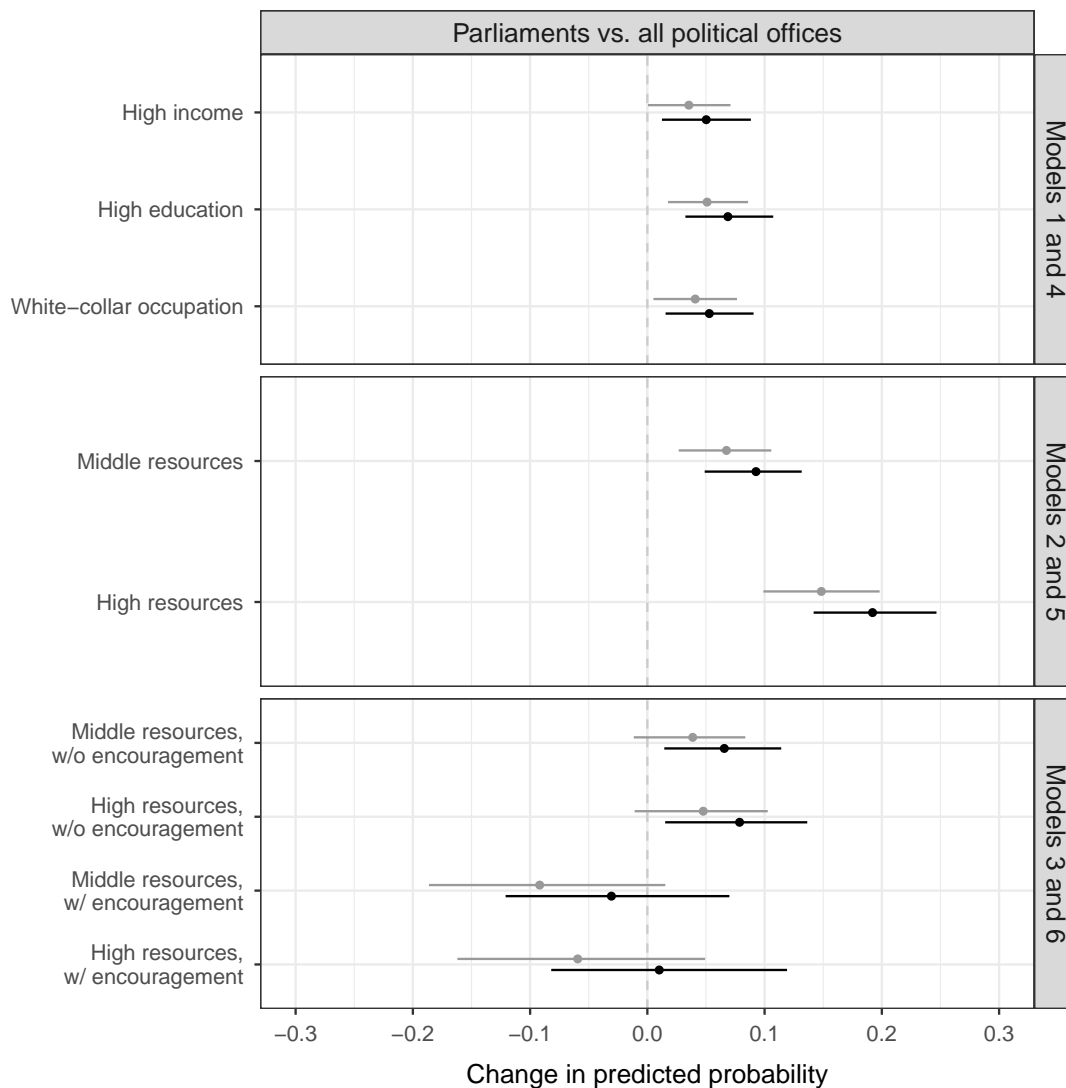
Table 2: Consideration of Running for Parliament or Political Office

	Parliaments			All political offices		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
High income	0.115** (0.055)			0.147*** (0.054)		
High education	0.163*** (0.057)			0.201*** (0.056)		
White collar	0.144** (0.064)			0.170*** (0.062)		
Middle resources		0.235*** (0.076)	0.177 (0.110)		0.296*** (0.073)	0.257** (0.108)
High resources		0.471*** (0.086)	0.209* (0.126)		0.564*** (0.083)	0.301** (0.124)
Encouraged			1.988*** (0.192)			1.937*** (0.184)
Middle resources × Encouraged			-0.485** (0.208)			-0.367* (0.201)
High resources × Encouraged			-0.417* (0.228)			-0.263 (0.221)
Female			-0.508*** (0.066)			-0.461*** (0.064)
Age			0.072* (0.041)			0.111*** (0.040)
Political ideology			-0.011 (0.031)			-0.028 (0.030)
Constant	-0.909*** (0.054)	-0.927*** (0.067)	-1.114*** (0.102)	-0.809*** (0.053)	-0.834*** (0.065)	-1.080*** (0.100)
Canton REs	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
N	2,678	2,678	2,497	2,674	2,674	2,488
BIC	3016.71	3007.075	2200.565	3255.019	3247.637	2392.11

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure 1: Change in the Predicted Probability of Considering to Run for Office



Note: The figure shows how socio-economic resources and political encouragement change an individual's predicted probability to consider a run for parliament and any political office, respectively. The baselines are: low income, low education, or working-class occupation in the top panel, low resources in the middle panel, and low resources without encouragement or low resources with encouragement in the bottom panel. All variables in a model that we do not vary are held constant at their modal value.

resources. In general, office-holders are a more homogeneous group than the population at large, yet they are not as homogeneous as successful candidates.¹¹ The proportion of office-holders with a gross monthly household income of CHF 10,000 or higher is 45%, the proportion of office-holders with tertiary education is 65%, and the proportion of office-holders with a white-collar occupation is 75%. All of these values are situated between those for the population as a whole and those for national parliamentarians (see Table 1). Hence, while low-resource groups are also descriptively misrepresented in political offices at the municipal level, their misrepresentation in higher offices is more extreme.

Finally, we analyze the effect of socio-economic resources on the decision to run for higher political office. Table 3 shows the estimated coefficients of the models whose outcome variable is local office-holders' decision of whether or not to run for higher political office. The results differ from those reported above for citizens' initial decision. On the one hand, local office-holders with a high income, a high education and a white-collar occupation are not more likely to consider running for a higher political office than their respective counterparts. Even if the resource variables are combined, they do not have a significant effect on officeholders' likelihood of seeking higher office. On the other hand, political and personal characteristics are important predictors of political ambition. First, the type of office is associated with political ambition. While members of municipal commissions and members of municipal executives are similarly likely to consider running for higher political office, members of local parliaments are more likely to do so. Second, office-holders who consider their office as a springboard for a higher political office are also more likely to run for such an office. The same is true for office-holders who invest more time in their political mandate. Lastly, parties play an important role in office-holders' political careers. The more office-holders are supported by their party, the more likely they are to run for higher office. In addition, party members are more likely to seek higher office than non-partisan office-holders. Female and older office-holders are less likely to advance their career, while political ideology has little

¹¹See Figure 2 in the Appendix.

effect on political ambition.

Table 3: Consideration of Running for a Higher Political Office

	Higher Political Office			
	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
High income	-0.068 (0.099)			
High education	0.119 (0.111)			
White collar	-0.029 (0.116)			
Middle resources		0.140 (0.116)	0.052 (0.125)	-0.036 (0.135)
High resources		0.089 (0.119)	0.092 (0.127)	0.063 (0.137)
Female			-0.291*** (0.109)	-0.271** (0.118)
Age			-0.419*** (0.007)	-0.336*** (0.057)
Political ideology			0.057 (0.048)	-0.002 (0.159)
Local Government				0.104 (0.159)
Local Parliament				0.292** (0.139)
Springboard				0.569*** (0.068)
Party Support				0.008** (0.004)
Party Member				0.406** (0.178)
Invested Time				0.121** (0.225)
Constant	-0.700*** (0.110)	-0.814*** (0.093)	-0.821*** (0.122)	-2.216*** (0.225)
Canton REs	X	X	✓	✓
Observations	802	965	946	911
Log Likelihood	-450.846	-524.522	-471.168	-399.059

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

5 Conclusion

Recent research has demonstrated that policy-makers and policy outcomes in advanced democracies are biased in favor of the preferences of affluent citizens. One possible reason for this bias is that most policy-makers are themselves well-off. The privileged backgrounds of politicians matter because the backgrounds and life experiences of politicians are likely to affect their policy preferences, which, in turn, are likely to affect their behavior in office.

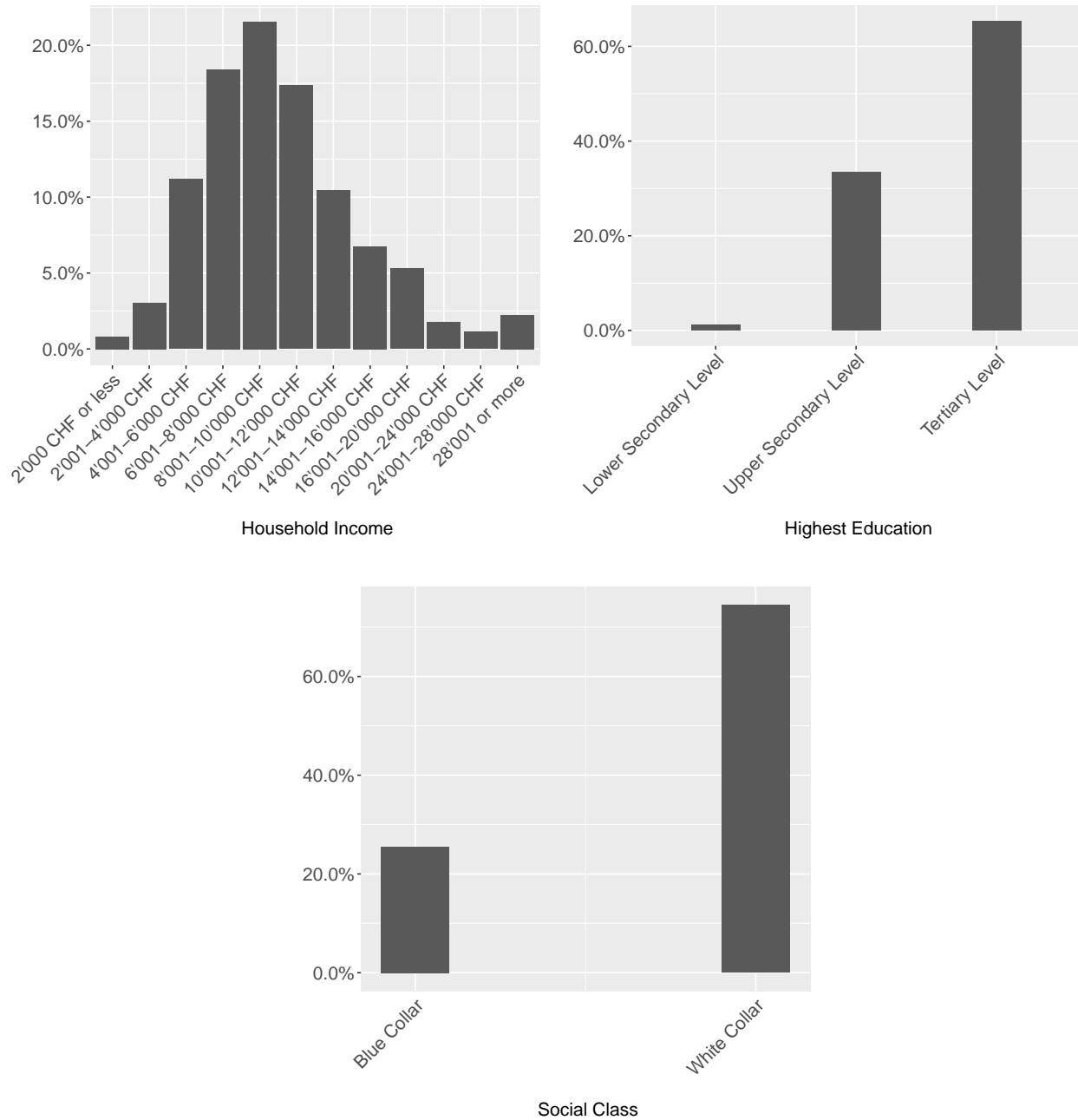
How can we explain that less well-off citizens are descriptively misrepresented among the holders of political office? So far, most studies addressing this question have dealt with demand-side explanations focusing on voter and party preferences for particular candidates. However, there are good reasons to believe that the supply side, i.e., the self-selection of citizens into the pool of potential candidates for political offices, might be another factor contributing to the shortage of less affluent politicians (and the abundance of fairly affluent politicians). Our goal in this paper was to explore this supply side of descriptive misrepresentation by income and class. Specifically, we asked the following two questions. First, how do socio-economic resources affect an individual's initial decision of whether or not to run for political office? Second, how important are socio-economic resources in explaining the decision of current office-holders to advance to a higher political office?

To answer these questions, we relied on data from two original surveys: one conducted among a sample of Swiss citizens and the other conducted among a sample of current holders of political offices in Swiss municipalities. The results of our analysis can be summarized as follows. Citizens with more socio-economic resources are more likely than citizens with fewer socio-economic resources to consider a run for office. However, the effect of resources on considering a run for office disappears when people receive encouragement to run for office: among those who have been encouraged to run, low-resource individuals are just as likely as high-resource individuals to consider a run. Finally, socio-economic resources have little effect on local office-holders' decision to seek higher political office. For those who already hold office, political ambition seems to be mainly associated with the type of office they hold,

the time they put into their work, whether they consider the office as a springboard to a higher office, and party affiliation as well as support from parties.

6 Appendix

Figure 2: Distribution of Ressources amongst Local Office Holders



Note: The figures show the distribution of office holders' gross monthly household income, the level of education, and the social class in 75 Swiss Municipalities. Own calculations based on data from Freitag, Bundi and Witzig (2019).

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