

Party Monitors and Electoral Integrity: Evidence from Argentina

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“We have doubts about what happened in the election. [...] For example, in Santiago del Estero, we saw polling stations where we didn't have election monitors, and the result was 100 to 0 in favor of [Sergio] Massa. Where we had monitors, it was 60 to 55. So, clearly, there was fraud.”

Guillermo Francos, later appointed as President Milei's Chief of Cabinet Staff, October 26, 2023.

"We are providing our monitors all the tools, the electoral law, and the kit they need to take on election day. Our coordinator has 25 years in politics and knows all the things that can happen at the polling station, from being poisoned to cause diarrhea to ensuring that the food they receive is safe—all those incidents."

Gabriela Santander, Head of *Plataforma de Voluntariado Ciudadano*, Venezuela, August 12, 2024

Research Questions

- Does the presence of a party monitor change precinct electoral results?
- Are results systematically biased towards parties who can appoint monitors?
- Are parties who cannot deploy party monitor widely more likely to be penalized electorally?

- If so, elections are, by default, not free and fair
- Systematic disadvantages by small, new or poor parties *vis-a-vis* structured organizations
- The design of the electoral process may create biases in the democratic results

- Electoral fraud involves secretive and often illegal efforts to alter election results (Lehoucq 2003; McDonald 1972).
- Electoral manipulation can occur as a centralized (Callen and Long 2015) or decentralized strategy (Rundlett and Svulik (2016).
- Parties try to protect themselves appointing party monitors (Asunka et al. 2019; Sjoberg 2012) .
 - Report irregularities and coercive practices
 - Deter polling station officials from illegal activities
 - Discourage partisan actors from committing electoral fraud

- BUT... if **only one party** appoints monitors, create more opportunities for electoral tampering rather than cleaner elections?
- Fraud was reported at polling stations where certain parties lacked monitors (Cantú 2019, Ascencio and Rueda 2019, Duarte and Carrizosa 2024)
- The monitor's dilemma?

	Monitor	Not Monitor
Monitor	(2, 2)	(4, -1)
Not Monitor	(-1, 4)	(3, 3)

The case of Argentina ★★★

- Despite allegations, not the World Champion of fraud
- Polling station authorities (non-partisan) designated by Electoral Board
- In-person vote by paper ballots in 300-member stations, alphabetically distributed across schools, precincts and provinces
- Parties have the right of nominating monitors at each station
- Variation in the coverage at the station/school level
 - Variation in the share of parties' votes?

- Case: 2023 presidential election in Argentina (first round and runoff)
- Available data: Telegrams reporting the results of over 105,000 polling stations for each round
 - Handwritten names and signatures of authorities and monitors at the bottom of each telegram
 - Sometimes unclear, hard to capture by machine learning
 - Old-school DGP: RAs extracted the info by hand
- Stratified sampling to handle the data: 22% schools (34% of population) covering every province
- Comparison of (random) monitored vs. unmonitored polling stations at the school level

$$\begin{aligned} \text{vote margin}_{s,i} = & \gamma^A \cdot \text{UPP}_{s,i} + \gamma^B \cdot \text{LLA}_{s,i} + \gamma^C \cdot \text{JxC}_{s,i} \\ & + \gamma^D \cdot \text{UPP \& LLA}_{s,i} + \gamma^E \cdot \text{UPP \& JxC}_{s,i} \\ & + \gamma^F \cdot \text{LLA \& JxC}_{s,i} + \gamma^G \cdot \text{other (single)}_{s,i} \\ & + \gamma^H \cdot \text{other (multiple)}_{s,i} + \gamma^I \cdot \text{none}_{s,i} \\ & + \delta \cdot C_{s,i} + \mu_s + \epsilon_{s,i} \end{aligned}$$

Original Telegrams



DISTRITO CHUBUT

Destinatario: JUNTA ELECTORAL NACIONAL
Con copia a DIRECCIÓN NACIONAL ELECTORAL
SEGUNDA VUELTA ELECTORAL.
19 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2023

MESA: 456

SECCIÓN: 2-88EDMA
CIRCUITO: 20A-FUERTO MADRYN-GESTE II

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CONFIRMAR EN SU CARÁCTER DE PRESIDENTE DE MESA DEL DISTRITO POR INTRODUCIR LOS RESULTADOS REFERENCIA UNITE 102 Y 103 DEL CEN

NO INTRODUCIR EN LA URNA		EN Nº	EN letas
SEÑOR PRESIDENTE		2 6 8	Des Seris Octio
SEÑOR VICEPRESIDENTE		2 6 8	Des Seris Octio
NO INTRODUCIR EN LA URNA ENTREGAR AL EMPLEADO DE CORREO.		0 0 0	Des Seris Octio

Nº	AGRUPACIÓN NACIONAL	PRESIDENTE Y VICEPRESIDENTE
134	UNIÓN POR LA PATRIA (SERGIO MASSA - AGUSTÍN ROSSI)	095
135	LA LIBERTAD AVANZA (JAVIER MELE - VICTORIA VILLARRUEL)	15A
VOTOS NULOS		
VOTOS RECURRIDOS		
VOTOS DE IDENTIDAD IMPUGNADA		
VOTOS EN BLANCO		
TOTAL DE VOTOS*		
		268

LA PLUMA DE LOS TITULES DEBE SER CONCORDANTE CON LA CANTIDAD DE VOTOS UTILIZADA

INFORMACIÓN INDELEGABLE PARA EL COBRO DE LA COMPENSACIÓN -ANT TÍTULO PARA PODER CONFERIR CON EL TITULARMENTE-

FIRMA PRESIDENTE DE MESA DE LA MESA ES ESCRIBO	CON: <u>4111111111111111</u>	ADSCRIPCIÓN	FIRMA PRESIDENTE DE MESA DE LA MESA ES ESCRIBO	CON: <u>2019111111111111</u>	ADSCRIPCIÓN
<u>Cosio Cinda</u>			<u>Godoy Mahel</u>		

FIRMA FISCAL DELEGACIÓN Asignación: <u>2019111111111111</u>	FIRMA FISCAL DELEGACIÓN Asignación: <u>2019111111111111</u>	FIRMA FISCAL DELEGACIÓN Asignación: _____
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FIRMA FISCAL DELEGACIÓN Asignación: _____	FIRMA FISCAL DELEGACIÓN Asignación: _____	FIRMA FISCAL DELEGACIÓN Asignación: _____
_____	_____	_____



DISTRITO CHUBUT

Destinatario: JUNTA ELECTORAL NACIONAL
Con copia a DIRECCIÓN NACIONAL ELECTORAL
ELECCIONES GENERALES - 22 DE OCTUBRE DE 2023

MESA: 466

SECCIÓN: 2-88EDMA
CIRCUITO: 20A-FUERTO MADRYN-GESTE II

Página: 01/01

CONFIRMAR EN SU CARÁCTER DE PRESIDENTE DE MESA DEL DISTRITO POR INTRODUCIR LOS RESULTADOS REFERENCIA UNITE 102 Y 103 DEL CEN

NO INTRODUCIR EN LA URNA		EN Nº	EN letas
SEÑOR PRESIDENTE		2 7 2	Des Seris Octio
SEÑOR VICEPRESIDENTE		2 7 2	Des Seris Octio
NO INTRODUCIR EN LA URNA ENTREGAR AL EMPLEADO DE CORREO.		0 0 0	Des Seris Octio

Nº	AGRUPACIÓN NACIONAL	PRESIDENTE Y VICEPRESIDENTE	DEPUTADO NACIONAL	PROFESOR MEDICINA DENTRO DE LA ESPECIALIDAD
132/202	UNIÓN POR EL CAMBIO JUNTO POR EL CAMBIO (CARLOT)	26	25	26
133	HACEMOS POR NUESTRO PAÍS	17	16	NO USAR
134/204	UNIÓN POR LA PATRIA	89	79	80
135/205	LA LIBERTAD AVANZA	149	147	146
136/206	FRONTE DE SOLIDARIDAD Y DE TRABAJADORES UNIDOS	15	21	22
VOTOS NULOS				
VOTOS RECURRIDOS				
VOTOS DE IDENTIDAD IMPUGNADA				
VOTOS DEL COMANDO ELECTORAL				
VOTOS EN BLANCO				
TOTAL DE VOTOS*				
		277	277	277

LA PLUMA DE LOS TITULES DEBE SER CONCORDANTE CON LA CANTIDAD DE VOTOS UTILIZADA

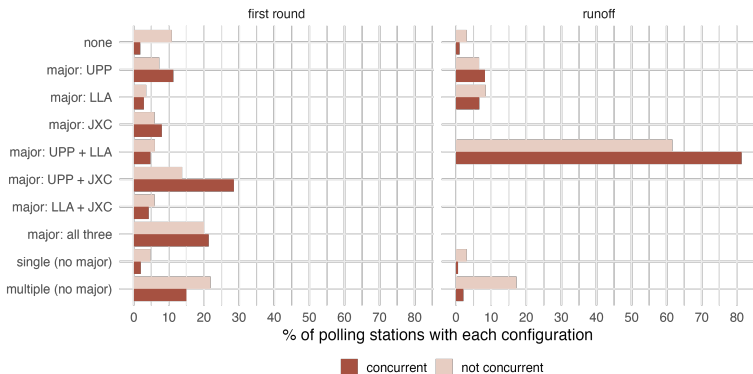
INFORMACIÓN INDELEGABLE PARA EL COBRO DE LA COMPENSACIÓN -ANT TÍTULO POR PODER CONFERIR CON EL TITULARMENTE-

FIRMA PRESIDENTE DE MESA DE LA MESA ES ESCRIBO	CON: <u>4111111111111111</u>	ADSCRIPCIÓN	FIRMA PRESIDENTE DE MESA DE LA MESA ES ESCRIBO	CON: <u>2019111111111111</u>	ADSCRIPCIÓN
<u>Cosio Cinda</u>			<u>Godoy Mahel</u>		

FIRMA FISCAL DELEGACIÓN Asignación: <u>2019111111111111</u>	FIRMA FISCAL DELEGACIÓN Asignación: <u>2019111111111111</u>	FIRMA FISCAL DELEGACIÓN Asignación: <u>2019111111111111</u>
_____	_____	_____

FIRMA FISCAL DELEGACIÓN Asignación: _____	FIRMA FISCAL DELEGACIÓN Asignación: _____	FIRMA FISCAL DELEGACIÓN Asignación: _____
_____	_____	_____

Coverage of Monitors by Party



Results 1: Monitor presence and electoral performance

	First Round		Runoff	
	UPP-LLA	UPP-JxC	LLA-UPP	UPP-LLA
Monitors: UPP only (0/1)	1.22** (0.398)	1.62*** (0.477)	0.402 (0.269)	0.513 (0.471)
Monitors: LLA only (0/1)	-0.184 (0.400)	0.380 (0.487)	0.564 (0.363)	-0.051 (0.379)
Monitors: JxC only (0/1)	0.386 (0.379)	0.268 (0.442)	-0.118 (0.290)	
Monitors: UPP & LLA (0/1)	0.368 (0.366)	0.473 (0.434)	0.106 (0.305)	-0.294 (0.472)
Monitors: UPP & JxC (0/1)	1.22*** (0.344)	1.31** (0.420)	0.084 (0.233)	
Monitors: LLA & JxC (0/1)	0.041 (0.341)	-0.204 (0.374)	-0.245 (0.304)	
Monitor: Other (single) (0/1)	0.452 (0.457)	0.910 (0.540)	0.458 (0.406)	-0.343 (0.624)
Monitor: Other (multiple) (0/1)	0.611 (0.330)	0.973* (0.415)	0.362 (0.261)	-0.022 (0.333)
No Party Monitors (0/1)	0.025 (0.502)	0.464 (0.542)	0.439 (0.345)	0.589 (0.944)
School FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N auth. FEs	No	No	No	No
# Registered voters (logged)	No	No	No	No
N obs.	21,594	21,594	21,594	21,595

Results may vary systematically across different subsets of provinces

- **Electoral calendar:** gubernatorial candidates in concurrent elections may put all their effort for selfishness, thereby improving the quantity and quality of monitoring
- **Allied governor:** provincial executives have better resources to ensure monitors' presence and commitment

Results 2: Electoral calendar and electoral performance

	UPP-LLA		UPP-JxC		LLA-JxC	
	(C)	(Not-C)	(C)	(Not-C)	(C)	(Not-C)
Monitors: UPP only (0/1)	2.03*** (0.604)	0.066 (0.375)	2.58*** (0.753)	0.325 (0.343)	0.552 (0.414)	0.259 (0.280)
Monitors: LLA only (0/1)	-0.537 (0.691)	0.018 (0.439)	0.186 (0.905)	0.364 (0.436)	0.723 (0.650)	0.346 (0.364)
Monitors: JxC only (0/1)	0.774 (0.569)	-0.062 (0.454)	0.739 (0.706)	-0.259 (0.430)	-0.035 (0.455)	-0.197 (0.305)
Monitors: UPP & LLA (0/1)	0.525 (0.669)	0.125 (0.353)	1.460 (0.848)	-0.531 (0.308)	0.936 (0.562)	-0.657* (0.278)
Monitors: UPP & JxC (0/1)	1.83*** (0.519)	0.249 (0.282)	2.19*** (0.655)	-0.001 (0.250)	0.365 (0.358)	-0.250 (0.223)
Monitors: LLA & JxC (0/1)	-0.372 (0.639)	0.266 (0.345)	-0.268 (0.728)	-0.300 (0.315)	0.104 (0.552)	-0.566 (0.312)
Monitors: UPP & LLA & JxC (0/1)	0.749 (0.948)	0.200 (0.484)	1.43 (1.24)	0.360 (0.454)	0.677 (0.871)	0.160 (0.390)
Monitor: Other (single) (0/1)	0.563 (0.526)	0.621 (0.331)	1.30 (0.692)	0.554 (0.299)	0.737 (0.419)	-0.067 (0.244)
Monitor: Other (multiple) (0/1)	-0.484 (1.14)	0.092 (0.504)	0.131 (1.27)	0.243 (0.461)	0.615 (0.680)	0.150 (0.357)
Concurrency (First Round)	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
School FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N auth. FEs	No	No	No	No	No	No
# Registered voters (logged)	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
N obs.	6,660	14,934	6,660	14,934	6,660	14,934

Results 3: Allied governor and electoral performance

	UPP-LLA		UPP-JxC		LLA-JxC	
	(UPP G)	(JxC G)	(UPP G)	(JxC G)	(UPP G)	(JxC G)
Monitors: UPP only (0/1)	1.51** (0.517)	0.212 (0.537)	1.98** (0.624)	0.347 (0.579)	0.463 (0.338)	0.136 (0.522)
Monitors: LLA only (0/1)	-0.455 (0.547)	-0.798 (0.810)	0.149 (0.674)	-0.730 (0.971)	0.604 (0.484)	0.069 (0.716)
Monitors: JxC only (0/1)	0.466 (0.515)	0.728 (0.493)	0.367 (0.613)	0.216 (0.570)	-0.100 (0.397)	-0.511 (0.495)
Monitors: UPP & LLA (0/1)	0.352 (0.460)	0.691 (0.660)	0.873 (0.557)	-1.10 (0.712)	0.522 (0.377)	-1.79** (0.663)
Monitors: UPP & JxC (0/1)	1.44*** (0.435)	1.01* (0.448)	1.61** (0.536)	0.637 (0.471)	0.168 (0.287)	-0.374 (0.406)
Monitors: LLA & JxC (0/1)	-0.133 (0.454)	0.954 (0.676)	-0.356 (0.492)	0.566 (0.683)	-0.223 (0.384)	-0.388 (0.703)
Monitors: UPP & LLA & JxC (0/1)	0.309 (0.681)	0.874 (0.744)	1.33 (0.841)	0.228 (0.796)	1.02 (0.603)	-0.646 (0.651)
Monitor: Other (single) (0/1)	0.768 (0.420)	0.113 (0.469)	1.16* (0.539)	0.158 (0.458)	0.396 (0.329)	0.045 (0.432)
Monitor: Other (multiple) (0/1)	-0.210 (0.759)	0.018 (0.630)	0.461 (0.813)	-0.092 (0.648)	0.671 (0.468)	-0.109 (0.561)
Concurrency (First Round)	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
School FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N auth. FEs	No	No	No	No	No	No
# Registered voters (logged)	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
N obs.	13,906	4,065	13,906	4,065	13,906	4,065

- When Peronist monitors are left alone, their about 1.4% estimated difference becomes significant
- No distinguishable effects in the runoff ((2,2) equilibrium)
- Concurrency enhances Peronists' revenues in about 1.5%
- A copartisan Peronist governor also implies a 1.5% boost

- While net benefits are not huge, they could become critical in close elections
- What's the problem, then?
 - Peronists' idisioncracy? (cannot ban them from competition)
 - Parties' incompetence over recruitment? (equal opportunities?)
 - Electoral technology and organization (australian ballot, electronic vote?)
 - Monitors' allowance? (if forbidden, (3,3) equilibrium?)

Thank you!