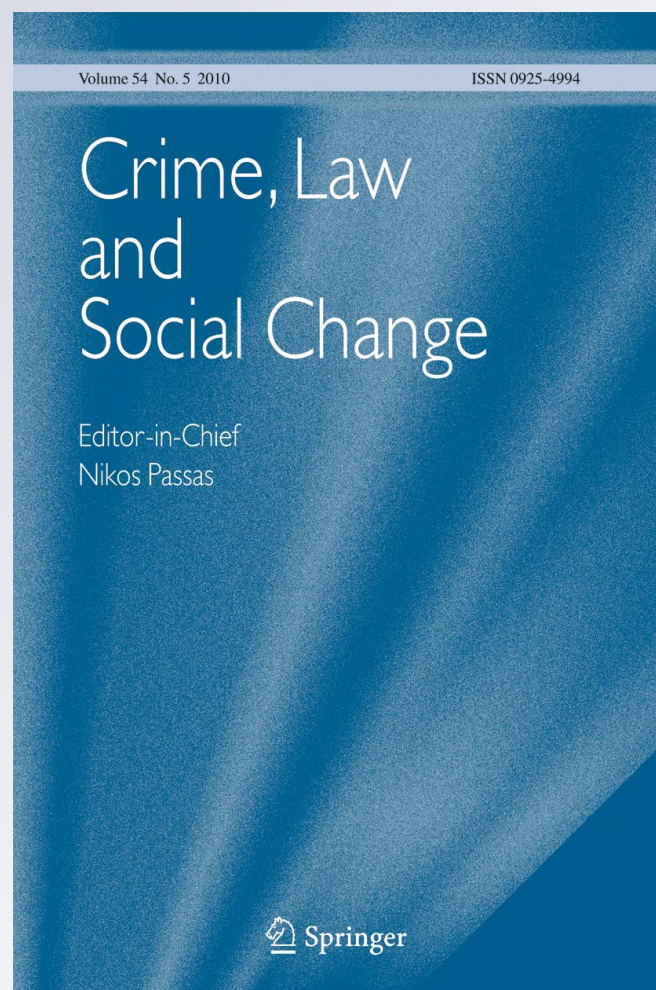


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## Vote-buying crime reports in Mexico: magnitude and correlates

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**Abstract** Vote-buying is a significant problem in developing democracies. If reports of vote-buying crimes are high, results may be challenged by competing candidates in electoral courts, and violent political confrontation may erupt. Also, if not prosecuted, there is danger of vote-buying becoming a common feature of electoral processes. This study assessed the magnitude and correlates of vote-buying crime reports during the 2006 elections in Mexico. It made use of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) survey on the Protection of Federal Social Programs of 2006 (ENAPP). Results showed that 8.8% of the survey respondents nationwide who were not beneficiaries of any federal social program reported to have been offered something in exchange of their vote, that is, a vote-buying crime under the legislation of Mexico. Ordinal logistic regression showed five independent correlates of vote-buying crime reports: Years of schooling, Indian language speaking, municipal marginality, population size, and PRD versus PAN governed municipalities. The paper discusses the reasons and consequences by suggesting other aspects to consider for future research.

### Introduction

Over the last two decades, Mexican democracy has received much attention from political scientists but not from criminologists. Mexican electoral studies have evolved considerably since Reyna's [16] early works on political participation and electoral results. Today there are several empirical studies on electoral fraud practices in the Mexican political science literature [1, 5, 7, 8, 10, 18]. Several scholars have statistically analyzed the 2006 presidential election results and reached the same conclusion: Absence of evidence with respect to the claims made with regards of a concerted fraud against any competing party [2, 15, 17].

Vote buying is a crime penalized by imprisonment in Mexico. These crimes are contained in the section of Electoral Crimes in the Mexican Federal Criminal Code

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(FCC). In this sense, approaches of particular significance for both political scientists and criminologists are not only the impact of electoral fraud or the magnitude of vote buying practices, but other valuable ramifications such as investigating what makes citizens to report via survey about their experiences with these crimes. As such, this study moves beyond the traditional Mexican political science approach to measure the magnitude and the impact of electoral fraud practices to consider what individual level and local contextual characteristics correlate with the self-report of vote buying crimes.

One important effort with regards to measuring vote-buying crimes self-reports can be found in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) survey on the Protection of Federal Social Programs of 2006 (ENAPP). The purpose of this survey was to assess the shielding and potential misuse of federal social programs during the 2006 elections. While a significant effort towards the development of data for the empirical analysis of electoral crimes in Mexico, this survey is still waiting for more analysis.

The purpose of this study was to assess the magnitude of vote-buying crime self-reports and correlates during the 2006 elections. Using the ENAPP survey, this article focused on a national representative survey of non-beneficiaries of federal social programs. The results reveal that of the 3,548 respondents, 314 (8.8%) reported to have been offered something in exchange of their vote, that is, a vote-buying crime. It was also found that frequencies of self-reports vote-buying crimes were higher among individuals with low levels of schooling (14.2%), Indian language speakers (13.2%), living in low-populated (10.0%), low marginalized (19.2%), and PRD versus PAN governed municipalities (12.6%).

The paper is laid out as follows. Section one is a literature review on vote-buying studies from developing democracies. Section two shows the data and methods utilized in this study. Section three presents the results from a set of statistical analyses. Section four is a discussion of the results and a summary of research actions needed to improve our understanding of the vote buying practices and crimes.

## Literature review

In Mexico, a vote buying crime is committed when someone requests the vote "...in exchange for a payment, favor, promise of money, or other type of reward during the electoral campaign or the day of the election" (Federal Criminal Code or FCC, Article 403, Fraction VI).<sup>1</sup> This crime is punished by a prison term of between 6 months to 6 years of imprisonment (FCC, Article 403). This legal definition of the crime has remained the same since the first electoral code of 1990 titled Federal Electoral Procedures and Institutions Code (COFIPE, Article 403)<sup>2</sup> However the COFIPE considered a lower penalty: 6 months to 3 years of imprisonment.

In addition, if a public official "...conditions the provision of a public service, government program, or public work... to the vote in favor of a political party or

<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.pgr.gob.mx/Que%20es%20PGR/Documentos/CodigoPenalFederal.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Article number is the same in the FCC as was in COFIPE.

candidate”, will be punished by a prison term of between 1 to 9 years (FCC, Article 407, Fraction II) and incapacitated for public service for up to 5 years (FCC, Article 402). Both legal definition and punishment have remained same since 1990.<sup>3</sup> Nowadays electoral crimes have a specific chapter under the FCC and do not appear in the current COFIPE.

Scholars have defined vote buying as the supply of consumer goods and/or money from political parties to the electorate in exchange of their vote [3]. These practices are so frequent in some countries that have come to be seen as a conventional strategy in electoral campaigning [4]. Among the countries in which such practices have been reported are Egypt, Cambodia, Philippines, Thailand, Russia, Serbia, Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, and Mexico. It is worth noting that most of the reports are based on anecdotal evidence.

In the Latin-American region, self-reports of vote-buying practices has been documented for the following countries: Argentina [3], Brazil [9, 19], Colombia [11], Venezuela [12], and Mexico [1, 5, 18]. Most studies report within-country regional variations in vote-buying incidence (Table 1). In Argentina, city size has been associated with the magnitude of vote-buying, in where incidence is higher in small cities. The probable causal mechanism is that vote-buying may be easier to execute in places with small social networks [3]. In Brazil, significant regional differences (2 to 1 ratio) have also been found. Vote-buying is more frequent in small and large municipalities, in comparison to medium-sized municipalities [3].<sup>4</sup> In Venezuela, it has been argued that voters in the poorer regions of the country are more likely to sell their vote [12]. Similarly, in Colombia, vote buying practices have been more frequent in the poorest regions, mainly due to the population's illiteracy and poverty [11]. In Mexico, it has been found a higher incidence of vote-buying practices in rural areas [1, 13, 18].<sup>5</sup> It has also been reported that vote buying practices are more frequent among voters living in the poorest areas within cities [5].

Vote-buying practices show to have demographic and socioeconomic correlates. In Argentina, vote-buying practices seem to be more likely among young, unemployed, low-income, and voters with no schooling, and also among those who are loyal to a specific candidate [3]. In Brazil, vote-buying is also more frequent among the young, low-income. However, neither gender nor level of education has been associated with vote-buying [19]. In Mexico, findings are contradictory. As in Argentina, vote-buying is said to be more frequent among low-income, illiterate, male voters [1]. However, another study has reported higher odds of vote-buying among older and high school educated males [5]. Additionally, other study showed higher odds of vote-buying among religious voters and those larger families [10]. Thus, it seems that neither the demographic nor the socioeconomic correlates have been clearly identified at this point in time. It may well be that the profile of the vote-seller changes from one election to another or that profiling is unattainable.

Social program benefits have been typically used as vehicle for vote-buying. This is an archaic strategy in clientelist politics. Among the countries in the region for which this misuse of social programs has been reported are Brazil [9] and Venezuela

<sup>3</sup> See: [http://normateca.ife.org.mx/internet/files\\_otros/COFIPE/cofipe15ago90\\_20070511.pdf](http://normateca.ife.org.mx/internet/files_otros/COFIPE/cofipe15ago90_20070511.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> No specific causal mechanism was offered for this finding.

<sup>5</sup> This is also the case for several southeast countries [4].



**Table 1** Correlates of self-reports of vote buying practices

Author	Country	Correlates	Effect on vote buying <sup>a</sup>
Vilalta [18]	Mexico	State of residence	(+/-)
		Marginality	(+)
		Schooling	(+)
		Income	(+)
Brusco et al. [3]	Argentina	Population size	(+)
		Age	(-)
		Unemployment	(+)
		Income	(-)
		No schooling	(+)
Cornelius [5]	Mexico	Loyalty to the candidate	(+)
		Cities	(+)
		Poor areas within cities	(+)
		Age	(+)
		High-school education	(+)
		Income	(-)
		Male gender	(+)
Horbath [11]	Colombia	Poverty	(+)
		Criminal violence	(+)
Aparicio [1]	Mexico	Rural areas	(+)
		Income	(-)
		Education	(-)
		Male gender	(+)
Horbath [10]	Mexico	Rural areas	(+)
		Marginality	(+)
		Income	(-)
		Religious individuals	(+)
		Family size	(+)
Wilhelm [19]	Brazil	Region	(+/-)
		Population size	(+/-)
		Age	(-)
		Income	(-)
		Social class	(-)
Lawson [13]	Mexico	State of residence	(+/-)

<sup>a</sup> Read as correlation. The sign (+/-) indicates variation regional, state, or population size differences

[12]. Also in Mexico, some studies have documented the misuse of social programs for vote-buying. It has been reported that the *Progresas*, *Procampo*, *Liconsa*, *Seguro-Popular* and *Oportunidades* social federal programs have been used purposefully during elections to buy votes among the beneficiaries [5, 7, 10]. The *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) party has been accused of being the origin of vote-buying practices in Mexico [13]. However, accusations have included the other

two major parties in the country, namely, the *Partido Accion Nacional* (PAN) and the *Partido de la Revolucion Democratica* (PRD) [5].

## Data and methods

The data source for this study was the 2006 Protection of Federal Social Programs (ENAPP) survey conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office in Mexico, between the 3rd and the 16th of July, just after the elections.<sup>6</sup> The target populations were three: Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of federal social programs, and local social program operators. As such it contains probabilistic multistage, stratified, cluster samples of beneficiaries ( $n=5,254$ ), non-beneficiaries ( $n=3,561$ ), and local social program operators ( $n=342$ ). These are national representative samples, meaning that data are generalizable to all of Mexico.<sup>7</sup> The margin of error of the estimates is  $\pm 3\%$  with a 95% confidence level.

Individuals in households were the unit of analysis. Municipalities were used as the primary sampling units, and blocks and households were used as subsampling units. Municipalities were stratified by marginality, social inequality, institutional capacity, and electoral competitiveness indexes levels.<sup>8</sup> After stratification, blocks and household were randomly selected.

This study focused on the population of non-beneficiaries. Half of the sample contains voluntary individuals who were selected randomly among the adults residing in the household. The other half contains household heads who accepted to participate.<sup>9</sup>

The survey questionnaire consisted of 80 questions. Respondents self-reported their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, and provided information on their knowledge of social program, experiences with vote buying and vote coercion practices, political culture, and electoral participation.

In this study, the dependent variable was the individual self report of a vote buying proposal. The survey question was "Have you been offered something in exchange for your vote for a political party?" (Question no. 34). Possible responses were two: No (1), Yes (2). As such, vote buying was defined similarly to Brusco's et al. [3] study. It should be noted that the study of the vote-buying practices has inherent complications. One complication is the reluctance of some respondents to answer questions in that regard [3]. My assumption is that although the respondent will hardly admit having participated in a vote-buying crime, he/she will admittedly report to have been offered something in exchange. It must be noted that vote-buying in Mexico, as any other type of crime in this country or others, is an evasive phenomenon. Any discrepancies between factual and reported vote-buying crimes can be the subject of future research.

<sup>6</sup> The elections were celebrated the 2nd of July.

<sup>7</sup> In addition to the national sample, ENAPP 2006 offers six state level representative samples. These states are: Chiapas, Guerrero, Jalisco, Sonora, Veracruz, and Yucatan. For these state samples, the margin of error of the estimates is  $\pm 3\%$  with a 90% confidence level.

<sup>8</sup> For a review of these indexes visit: [http://www.undp.org.mx/spip.php?page=publicacion&id\\_article=1051](http://www.undp.org.mx/spip.php?page=publicacion&id_article=1051).

<sup>9</sup> The methodological report of the ENAPP 2006 does not inform on the household or individual non-response rates in this respect.

Several correlates of vote-buying practices along with the coding are presented in Table 2. Previous studies have placed emphasis on individual level and local contextual correlates. Several proxy variables were already included in the ENAPP survey database. The original source of municipal marginality levels was the 2005 Mexican National Population Council (CONAPO) index of marginality. The CONAPO classifies municipalities according to the following levels of marginality: very low, low, national average, high, very high.<sup>10</sup> Population size data source was the 2005 Population Counting conducted by the National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Informatics (INEGI).

Levels of electoral competitiveness were estimated and included in the 2006 ENAPP database by the UNPD. The UNPD calculated an index of electoral competitiveness for each municipality which is a composite measure of the five following variables: Candidates for the municipal presidency have been elected in party primaries; the municipal governing party has lost the absolute majority in any previous election, whether it was a federal, state or a municipal election; the margin of victory in any previous election has been less than 10%, whether it was a federal, state or a municipal election; there have been a minimum of two political parties competing in any federal election; and there have been at least two different governing parties in the municipality. This index contains electoral data from 1989 to 2001. PNUD's logic in including this index in the ENAPP database is that the electoral context may stand out as an important predictor of vote-buying practices. Likewise, I assumed that municipalities with higher levels of electoral competition could motivate public officials and/or political party campaigners to offer an exchange of public goods or services for the vote in order to win. The municipality governing party was also included in the ENAPP database and in this analysis based on the multiple accusations of vote-buying among political parties.

I conducted a series of bivariate tests with Pearson's Chi-Square. This non-parametric statistical technique was utilized since the dependent variable is dichotomous. Binary logistic regression was later used to estimate the relationship of vote-buying crime reports with the complete set of hypothetical correlates.<sup>11</sup> A  $p$  value of  $\leq 0.01$  was the cut-off level of significance for all tests.<sup>12</sup>

## Results

First, I describe the magnitude of reports of vote-buying crimes. Then I report the results from the binary logistic regression analysis using individual's self-report of vote-buying crimes as the dependent variable.

<sup>10</sup> The index is a composite factor of seven socioeconomic variables. Factorial analysis is used to construct the index. The index itself is continuous, however, the Conapo ordinal categories are easier to use for interpretation and comparability purposes. Visit: <http://www.conapo.gob.mx>.

<sup>11</sup> As requested by one referee. For the first version of the article, several regressions were run including or excluding variables in search for robustness across different model specifications. The final regression model only retained the statistically significant variables.

<sup>12</sup> A  $p$  value of  $\leq 0.05$  was the cut-off level of significance for all tests in the preliminary version of the article.



**Table 2** Dependent variable and correlates

Dependent variable	Definition and coding
Vote-buying	The report of an offer of exchange of something for the vote (No = 1, Yes = 2)
Correlates	Definition and coding
Gender	Gender (Female = 0, Male = 1)
Age	Age group (1 to 4: 18–25, 26–40, 41–64, 65+ years old)
Schooling	Years of schooling (1 to 5: No schooling, less than 6 years, 6 years, 6–9 years, more than 9 years)
Marginality levels	Municipal index of marginality (1 to 5: very low, low, national average, high, very high)
Population size	Inhabitants in the municipality (1 to 3: <2,500, 2500–14,999, >15,000 inhabitants)
Governing party	Governing party in the municipality (PAN, PRI, PRD; 0 = No, 1 = Yes)
Electoral competitiveness	Level of electoral competition (1 to 7: Very low, low, below the average, average, above the average, high, very high)
Divided government	Governing party in the state is different from the governing party in the country (0 = No, 1 = Yes)
Concurrent elections	Presidential and Governor elections were held within the same month (0 = No, 1 = Yes)

Table 3 shows the frequency of self reported vote-buying crimes nationwide among the non-beneficiaries of any federal social program during the 2006 elections. Approximately 8.8% of the respondents reported to have been offered something in exchange for their vote.<sup>13</sup> Incidence is notably high considering that the percent difference in the final results between the first and second place competitors for the presidency in that election, PAN and PRD respectively, was 0.57%.

Chi-square tests detected several correlates statistically associated with higher frequencies of self-reports of vote-buying crimes (Table 4). Self reports of vote-buying crimes were higher among young (18–25 years old) and more mature individuals (41+ years old), with low levels of schooling (6<years), and among Indian language speakers. Also, respondents living in municipalities with low levels of marginality, governed by the PRD, and where electoral competitiveness was higher, reported more vote buying crimes than other subgroups of the population. Neither the respondent's gender, nor the population size of the municipality, the state's governing party, presidential and gubernatorial concurrent elections, or a state governed by a president and governor from different parties (i.e. divided government proxy) correlates showed statistical significance.<sup>14</sup>

Binary logistic regression results are presented in Table 5. There were five statistically significant correlates of self reports of vote-buying crimes: Level of schooling ( $p < 0.000$ ), Indian language speaking ( $p = 0.001$ ), marginality levels ( $p < 0.000$ ), population size ( $p = 0.001$ ), and political party governing in the municipality

<sup>13</sup> The margin of error is +/- 3%, with a 95% level of confidence.

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that noticeable higher size sample sizes in some cases (e.g. female gender) does not imply sample overrepresentation of any specific group.

**Table 3** Frequency and percent of self reported vote-buying crimes<sup>a</sup>

	Frequency	Percent
No	3,324	91.2
Yes	314	8.8
Total	3,548	100.0

<sup>a</sup>“Have you been offered something in exchange for your vote for a political party?”

( $p=0.003$ ). The strongest correlate was Indian language speaker status, followed by PRD governed municipalities in opposition to PAN counterparts.

Notice that population size became statistically significant only after multivariate analysis.<sup>15</sup> Also notice that for the governing party at the municipality correlate, the PRD was used as the category of reference in the model. It was so since respondents in PRD governed municipalities had reported the highest levels of vote buying crimes among other parties. As such, the results showed that individuals residing in PAN governed municipalities reported less vote buying crimes than counterparts in PRD municipalities.

The model was highly significant ( $X^2=101,249$ ,  $p<0.000$ ) and allowed to correctly classify 91.1% of the cases. However, the Hosmer-Lemeshow Chi-Square statistic could not corroborate that the complete model provided the best fit for the data ( $X^2=32.279$ ,  $p<0.000$ ). There were 213 respondent cases (6.2% of the sample) with residuals above or below 2 standard deviations from the arithmetic mean.

## Discussion

This study analyzed the magnitude and the correlates of self-reports of vote-buying crimes during the 2006 elections in Mexico. After establishing the magnitude, a binary logistic regression model allowed to identify the correlates of crime reports. Five independent correlates were identified: Level of schooling ( $p<0.000$ ), Indian language speaking ( $p=0.001$ ), marginality levels ( $p<0.000$ ), population size ( $p=0.001$ ), and political party governing in the municipality ( $p=0.003$ ).

There are at least two points to be made regarding the magnitude of the vote-buying problem. First, the 2006 ENAPP survey results showed that 8.8% (IC=5.8% and 11.8%, with a 95% confidence level) of the respondents nationwide, who happen not to be beneficiaries of any federal social program, reported to have been offered “something” in exchange for their vote. In this respect, Mexico is both a developing economy and democracy. Meaning that multiparty competition is recent and *clientelistic* politics is, unfortunately, a persistent factor. For instance, previous studies have identified *clientelistic* practices in everyday politics such as class conflicts over land property rights and usage, and the provision of public infrastructure in Mexico [6]. Thus, it should not be perplexing to find reports of either public officials and/or party campaigners promising goods in exchange for the

<sup>15</sup> The complete model was presented as a referee requested. The author would have preferred to present the most robust model.

**Table 4** Pearson's Chi-Square tests results

	n	Yes	Test statistic <sup>a</sup>
Gender:			
Male	1,224	9.7%	$\chi^2=1.873$ ( $p=0.171$ )
Female	2,323	8.4%	
Age group:			
18–25	547	10.6%	$\chi^2=30.617$ ( $p<0.000$ )
26–40	1,299	5.4%	
41–64	1,189	10.8%	
65+	511	11.2%	
Years of schooling:			
No schooling	299	8.0%	$\chi^2=57.863$ ( $p<0.000$ )
6<	812	14.2%	
6	820	10.9%	
6–9	774	5.3%	
9+	831	5.3%	
Indian language speaker:			
No	3,161	8.3%	$\chi^2=9.371$ ( $p=0.002$ )
Yes	357	13.2%	
Municipal population size:			
2,500<	30	10.0%	$\chi^2=0.070$ ( $p=0.966$ )
2,500–14,999	1,733	8.8%	
15,000+	1,785	8.9%	
Municipal marginality levels:			
Very high	130	8.5%	$\chi^2=106.843$ ( $p<0.000$ )
High	1,058	4.2%	
Average	693	8.5%	
Low	584	19.2%	
Very low	1,024	8.1%	
State level governing party:			
PAN	947	9.1%	$\chi^2=7.491$ ( $p=0.058$ )
PRD	1,901	8.4%	
PRI	510	8.4%	
Other	130	15.4%	
Municipal level governing party:			
PAN	576	7.6%	$\chi^2=11.893$ ( $p=0.007$ )
PRD	514	12.6%	
PRI	1,163	7.7%	
Other	1,218	9.0%	
Divided government (President/Governor)			
No	1,090	9.7%	$\chi^2=1.051$ ( $p=0.221$ )
Yes	2,459	8.5%	
Concurrent elections (President/Governor)			

**Table 4** (continued)

	n	Yes	Test statistic <sup>a</sup>
No	2,347	8.7%	$\chi^2=0.115$ ( $p=0.735$ )
Yes	1,201	9.1%	
Municipal electoral competitiveness:			
Very low	186	5.4%	$\chi^2=51.248$ ( $p<0.000$ )
Low	287	4.9%	
Middle low	517	5.6%	
Middle	163	3.1%	
Middle high	633	12.8%	
High	464	14.2%	
Very high	1,238	8.3%	

<sup>a</sup>  $\chi^2$  is the Pearson's Chi-Square statistic. Significance values in parentheses

vote —probably, even irrespective of the voter's status as a beneficiary of a federal social program or not. Second, the 2006 election was very intense. Presidential candidates repeatedly accused each other of corruption, misuse of public funds, and for exceeding legal campaign spending limits. Thus, again, the odds of political parties in using all means available to win the elections, including unfounded accusations and crimes such as vote buying, might have been high.

At the contextual level, the regression results showed a relationship of low marginality levels and PRD (versus PAN) municipalities with higher frequencies of

**Table 5** Results of logistic regression

Correlates	Coefficient	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender	-0.240	0.130	0.064	0.786
Age group	-0.058	0.076	0.443	0.944
Schooling	-0.278	0.056	0.000	0.758
Indian speaker	0.655	0.196	0.001	1.926
Municipal marginality levels	0.366	0.063	0.000	1.442
Municipal population size	-0.513	0.154	0.001	0.598
PAN governed municipality <sup>a</sup>	-0.671	0.224	0.003	0.511
PRI governed municipality <sup>a</sup>	-0.461	0.185	0.013	0.631
Other party governed municipality <sup>a</sup>	-0.385	0.206	0.061	0.680
Electoral competitiveness	0.088	0.040	0.029	1.092
Divided government	-0.294	0.194	0.130	0.746
Concurrent elections	-0.164	0.191	0.392	0.849
Constant	0.212	1.065	0.842	1.237

<sup>a</sup> The category of reference was PRD governed municipality. Dependent variable: self-report of a vote buying crime (No = 1, Yes = 2),  $n=3,426$ .

self-reports of vote buying crimes. Both local contextual conditions had an independent positive effect on survey respondents for reporting vote-buying crimes. Empirically, what these results suggest is that these types of areas, namely, low marginality and/or left-wing governed, versus high marginality and/or PAN governed (i.e. the party in the presidency since 2000), may create incentives for the report of electoral fraudulent practices, including vote-buying crimes naturally. A prime incentive might be that voters residing in low marginality places cannot be bought as easily as voters in high marginality areas; as marginality is a measure of local conditions of life and infrastructure, residents in municipalities with lower levels of marginality may be more resistant to *clientelistic* politics. Also, it might be that respondents in PAN municipalities wanted also the PAN to win the presidential election again in 2006, thus underreporting the event of having been offered something in exchange for their vote. Or it may simply be that more vote-buying crimes were reported in PRD governed municipalities since more crimes were actually committed in those areas, either by PAN and/or PRD public officials or party campaigners.

Tying together these local conditions with the fact that neither the municipal level of electoral competitiveness, concurrent President/Governor elections, nor divided President/Governor governments served as correlate predictors of reports of vote buying crimes, an important question for future research thus arises: In terms of predicting local and state vote-buying crime rates, could be marginality levels and “who governs” more important than the local history of electoral competition? In addition, the non-significance of the president/governor concurrent elections and divided government correlates, indicate that the municipal socioeconomic and local government context may be perceived more important to determine the frequency of vote buying practices than state and/or federal politics and elections.

At the individual level, regression results showed that middle age individuals (26–40 years old) were less prone to report vote buying crimes than younger and older counterparts. Logic is that not all age groups are equally vulnerable to vote buying. The young and the elderly may be more financially dependent, this turning them into an easier target for vote buyers. Interestingly, however, gender did not make a difference. This finding was inconsistent with previous studies [1, 5] that have showed female respondents less prone to report vote buying practices. Must be said that this correlate did not reach statistical significance ( $p=0.045$ ) in this study due to the high cut-off level followed ( $p\leq 0.01$ ) and not because of the sample size. According to previous studies though, the role of gender in electoral fraud may be due to the fact that women have been much more involved in popular social movements in demand of the provision of public services [14]. This might create an incentive among women for not reporting any arbitrary behavior from government officials, including a vote-buying crime. In partial agreement, this study did not find evidence of such female gender role since the population under study was the population of non-beneficiaries of federal social programs. However, a similar study that made use of the ENAPP 2006 found evidence of a negative relationship between female gender and the self report of vote-buying practices in the population of beneficiaries of federal social programs [18]. These contradictory findings between populations of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of social programs invite further research.

Individuals with low levels of schooling reported statistically significant higher frequencies of vote-buying proposals. One testable causal hypothesis is that, similarly to the young and elderly, less educated individuals may be more economically dependent, and this condition turns this subgroup into a target for vote buyers. Likewise, with respect to Indian language speaking respondents, they are a subgroup of the population with a history of oppression by elites and limited access to public goods and services. Thus it would not be an overstatement to argue that Indian language speaker respondents might have been approached by candidates or political campaigners to buy their vote in exchange of something during the 2006 elections.

To sum up, not much time has passed since 2000 when the first non-PRI candidate won a presidential election. However, as the study shows, Mexican democracy is far from being a consolidated fair-play democracy. Vote-buying crimes were part of the 2006 elections. In this sense, self reports of vote-buying crimes might serve as indicator of the level of development of a democracy. Because, what is the use of a democracy without fair multiparty competition? Electoral crimes may not be violent crimes but are as damaging as others.

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