

Capital and Perceived Candidate Representativeness and Competence in India, Poland, Sweden, and the UK

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Sources (clockwise from top left):
wiganoday.net, huffingtonpost.co.uk,
bbc.co.uk, news.sky.com.

Research Question and Aims

Research question:

- Do the signals sent by politicians about their capital affect public perceptions of, and support for, them?

Specific aims:

- Test the effects of candidates' signals about economic, social, and cultural capital on their perceived descriptive representativeness and competence, and vote likelihood.
- Test the above effects in distinct institutional, historical-cultural and, especially, equality contexts.

Literature

- Campbell and Cowley (2014) 'What Voters Want: Reactions to Candidate Characteristics in a Survey Experiment'
- Carnes and Lupu (2016) 'Do Voters Dislike Working-Class Candidates? Voter Biases and the Descriptive Underrepresentation of the Working Class'
- Vivyan et al. (2020) 'Do humble beginnings help? How politician class roots shape voter evaluations'
- Tajfel (1982) 'Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations'
- Bourdieu (1986, 2000) 'The forms of capital' and *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*

Hypotheses

- **H1:** High-status capital reduces perceived representativeness of candidates
- **H2:** High-status capital increases perceived competence of candidates
- **H3:** High-status capital decreases the likelihood of candidates being voted for
- **H4:** The effect of capital on vote is mediated by perceived descriptive representativeness and perceived competence

Method: Conjoint Experiment

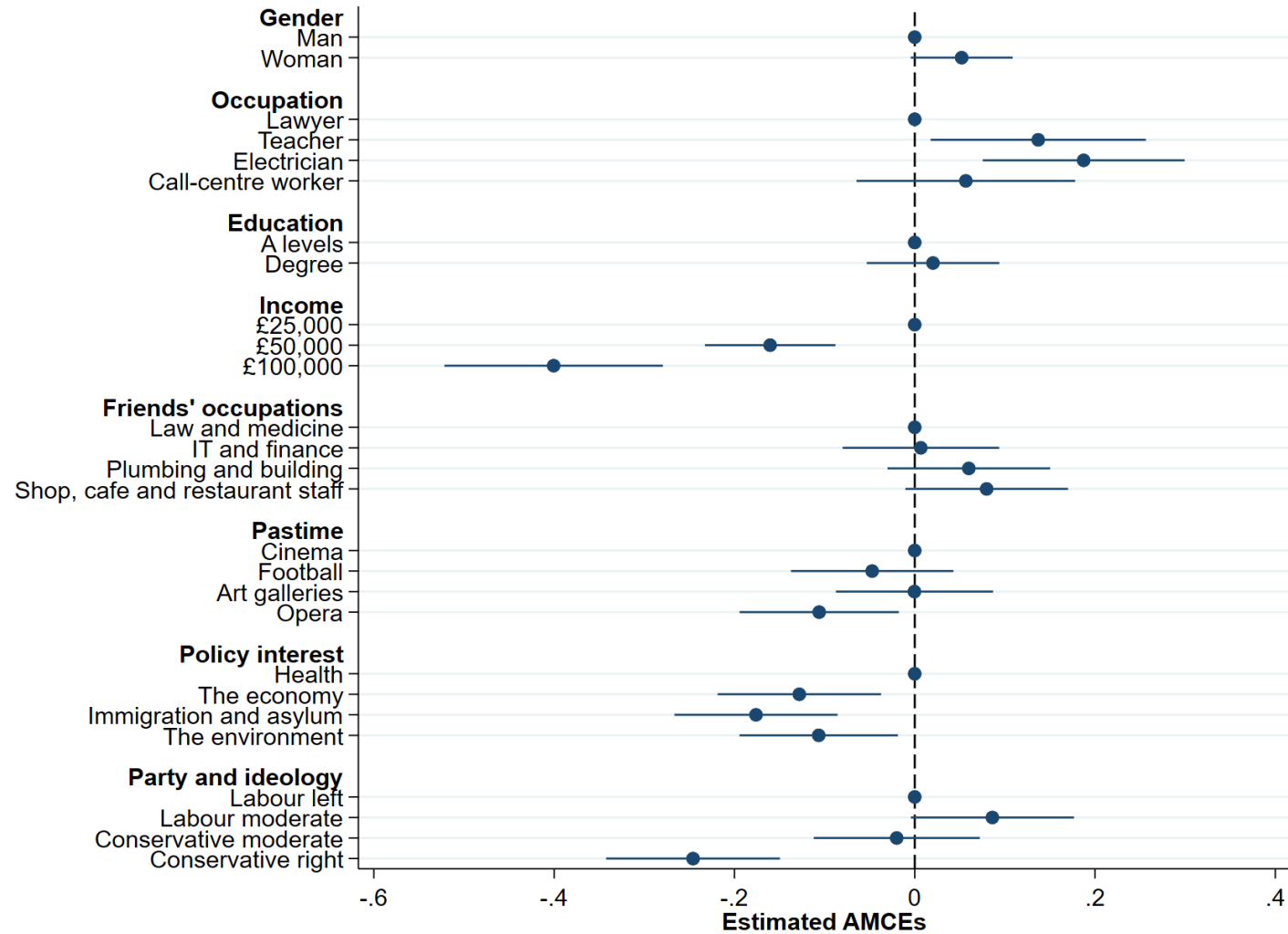


Please imagine that the **Conservative Party** has given people in your area a say over which candidate they should select to stand in the next general election. Two people who grew up in the area have put themselves forward and you must decide which one would do a better job of representing you:

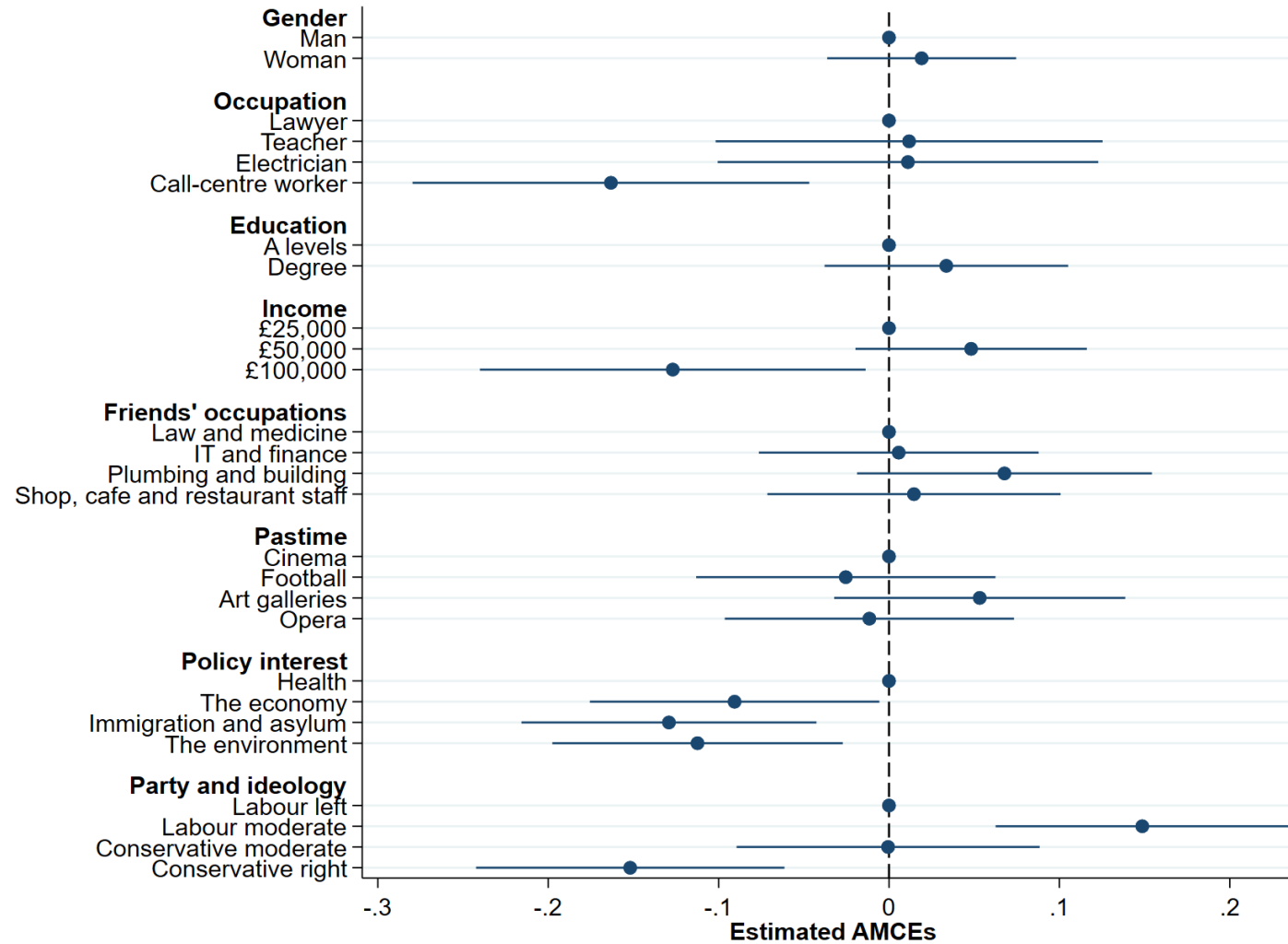
Maria is a call-centre worker who left school after gaining her A levels and then pursued her career, and currently earns £25,000 per year. She remains friends with some of the people who she grew up with, many of whom have gone on to work in professions such as law and medicine. In her spare time she enjoys going to art galleries, and she is particularly interested in policy issues relating to health. She is on the right within the Conservative Party.

Sarah is a lawyer who gained a university degree and then pursued her career, and currently earns £50,000 per year. She remains friends with some of the people who she grew up with, many of whom have gone on to work as staff in shops, cafes and restaurants. In her spare time she enjoys going to art galleries, and she is particularly interested in policy issues relating to the economy. She is on the right within the Conservative Party.

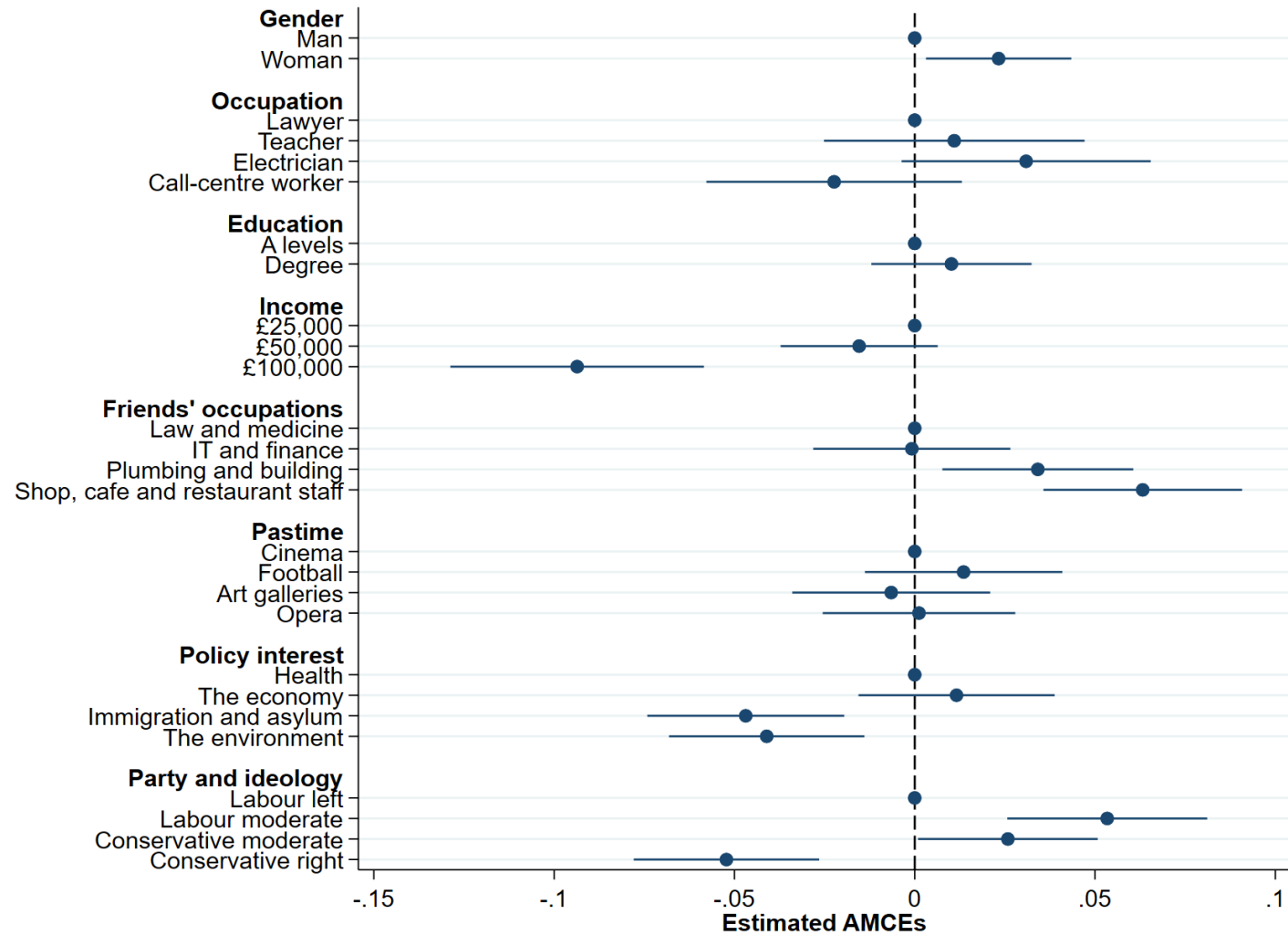
Results: 'Like me' Conjoint



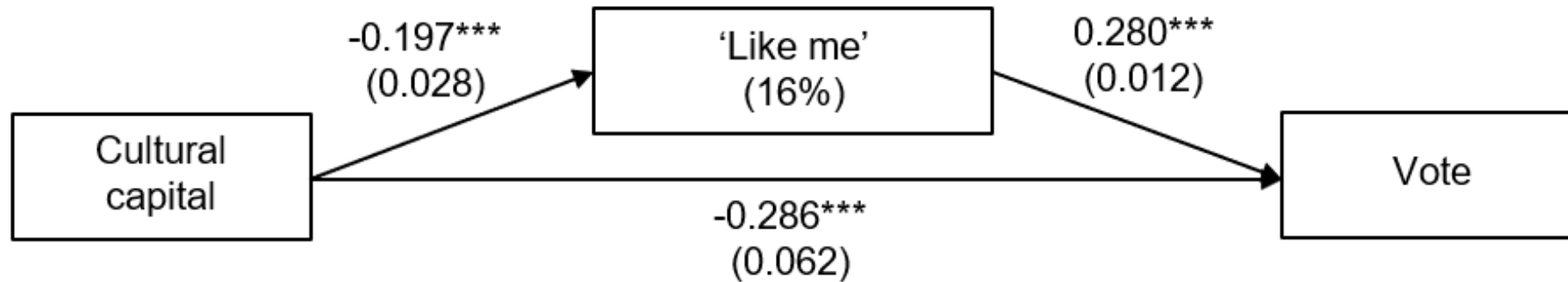
Results: 'Competent' Conjoint



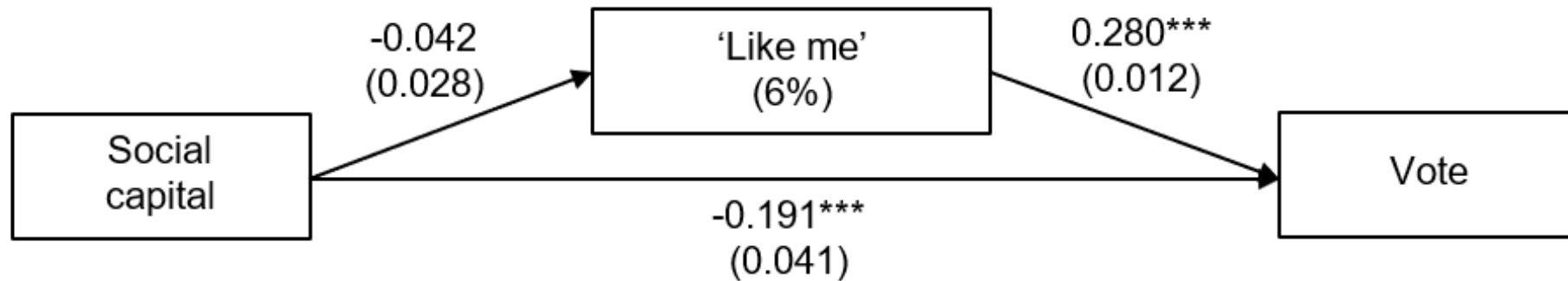
Results: Vote Choice Conjoint



Mediation: Economic Capital → 'Like me' → Vote



Mediation: Economic Capital → 'Like me' → Vote



Conclusions

- High economic capital has a significant negative effect on perceived descriptive representativeness, perceived competence, and vote likelihood.
 - Descriptive representativeness mediates its effect on vote.
- High-status social capital has a no significant effect on perceived descriptive representativeness or perceived competence, but does have one on vote likelihood.
 - Descriptive representativeness mediates its effect on vote to a small extent.
- High-status cultural capital has a significant negative effect on perceived descriptive representativeness but none on perceived competence or vote likelihood.
 - No mediation effects.

- Other things matter too, not least policy interests and ideological moderation.

Review of Hypotheses

- **H1:** High-status capital reduces perceived representativeness of candidates
 - Supported for cultural and, especially, economic capital.
- **H2:** High-status capital increases perceived competence of candidates
 - Not supported, and economic capital has the opposite effect.
- **H3:** High-status capital decreases the likelihood of candidates being voted for
 - Supported for economic and social capital
- **H4:** The effect of capital on vote is mediated by perceived descriptive representativeness and perceived competence
 - Partially supported: perceived representativeness mediates the effects of social and, especially, economic capital on vote

Appendix: 'Like me' Question

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

	1 - Not at all like you	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Completely like you
Maria	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sarah	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix: 'Competent' Question

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

	1 - Not at all competent	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Completely competent
Maria	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sarah	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

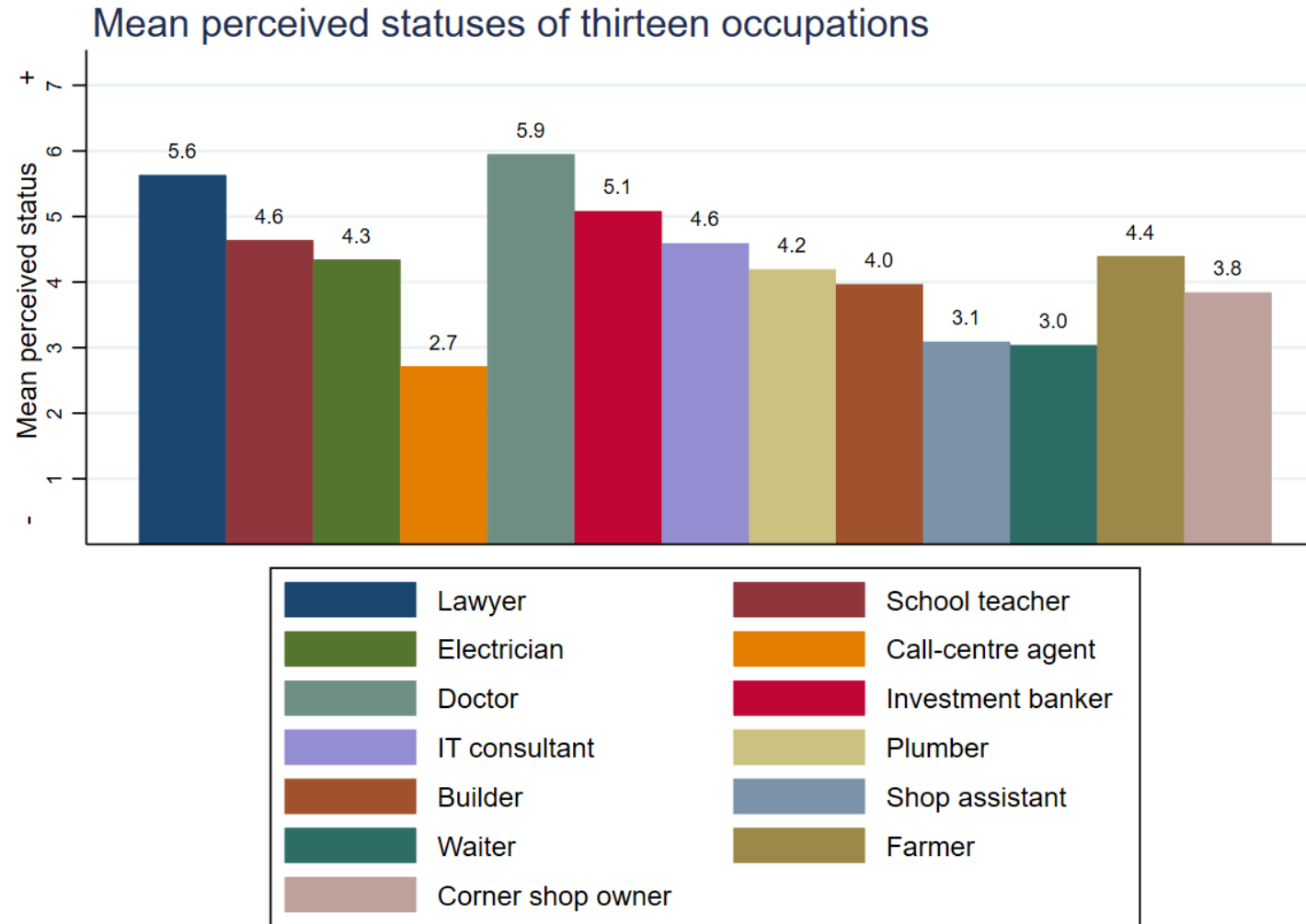
Appendix: Vote Question

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

Maria

Sarah

Appendix: Statuses of Occupations



Appendix: Statuses of Pastimes

