

# *The Anti-Incumbent Effects of Conditional Cash Transfer Programs*

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## ABSTRACT

Scholars concur that conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs have a strong pro-incumbent effect among beneficiaries. Although no study has properly focused on the overall effect of cash transfers on incumbents' national vote shares, most scholars have deduced that this effect is positive; i.e., that cash transfers lead to the expansion of incumbents' electoral bases. This article analyzes survey data from nearly all Latin American countries and confirms that beneficiaries of CCT programs are more likely to support incumbents. However, it also shows that CCT programs may induce many voters who were previously incumbent supporters to vote for the opposition. As a consequence, the overall impact of cash transfers on incumbents' vote shares is indeterminate; it depends on the balance between both patterns of behavioral changes among voters. This study is the first to report evidence that cash transfer programs may have significant anti-incumbent effects.

In recent years, Latin American governments have increased efforts to fight poverty and income inequality, particularly through investments in programs that directly deliver cash to low-income sectors of the population. The spread of large conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs in the region has caught the attention of analysts, due to their high redistributive efficiency and obvious political consequences. Political scientists argue that beneficiaries of these programs tend to increase their support for incumbents, which could potentially affect electoral results in their favor. Evidence of this pro-incumbent effect has been reported in country studies of Brazil (Hunter and Power 2007; Licio et al. 2009; Nicolau and Peixoto 2007; Soares and Terron 2008; Zucco 2008, 2013), Colombia (Nupia 2011), Mexico (De la O 2013; Díaz-Cayeros et al. 2009), and Uruguay (Queirolo 2010; Manacorda et al. 2011). An undeniable connection between cash and vote is behind the electoral boost incumbents receive among beneficiaries, but most authors concur that the universalistic nature of CCT programs sets them apart from traditional clientelistic policies.

We contend that Latin American CCT programs are large and visible social policies that may affect the vote of all citizens, not only beneficiaries. In electoral cam-

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paigns, incumbent candidates tend to emphasize the social achievements resulting from investments in those programs, whereas oppositionists denounce their shortcomings, such as the political use of cash transfers, irregularities in the delivery of benefits, and the increased dependency of the poor on the state (Sewall 2008). Negative and positive views of CCT programs are widely portrayed in the media, both in and out of the electoral season (Biroli and Mantovani 2010; Marques 2008, 2010).

Moreover, studies analyzing the attitudes of Latin American business elites toward poverty and inequality commonly show that despite their awareness of, and sensitivity to, their countries' social problems, these elites tend to be little inclined to act (López 2013; Reis and Moore 2005). A comprehensive study of elites' attitudes in Brazil shows that they tend to prioritize policies that increase equality of opportunities through education while generally holding policies of guaranteed minimum income as either unviable or undesirable (Reis 2005). These views, to which voters are massively exposed, are likely to influence their opinions and the electoral choices they make. Because CCT programs are likely to affect some sectors of the electorate in negative ways, their aggregate effect on incumbents' overall performance is indeterminate, even if a distinct pro-incumbent effect exists among beneficiaries.

This article provides survey evidence that both patterns of behavioral change occur in countries that invest in large cash transfer programs. Beneficiaries join incumbents' ranks at higher rates than other citizens, but supporters who oppose targeted income redistribution are more prone to defection. Additionally, these pro- and anti-incumbent effects appear to linger after the first election following the launching of CCT programs. Anti-CCT voters keep defecting from the incumbent's electoral base at relatively high rates several years after the program is launched; the pro-incumbent effect, in turn, changes in the sense that it goes from persuading beneficiaries who were previous oppositionists to mobilizing nonvoters. These opposite effects of CCT programs are observed in virtually all countries where the programs are large and visible, but rarely in countries that invested in smaller programs. The important point is that these effects certainly offset each other at the aggregate level. The analysis is based on 21 AmericasBarometer surveys, conducted in 2010 by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP).

## **CCT PROGRAMS AND ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR**

A widely accepted finding about the politics of income redistribution is the negative association between individuals' income level and their support for redistributive policies. The proportion of individuals supporting public expenses that directly benefit the poor, as well as taxes necessary to fund these expenses, steadily decreases as they climb the income ladder. This assumption is present in the seminal article by Meltzer and Richard (1981) and in several recent studies proposing explanations for cross-country variations in the aggregate amount of income redistribution (e.g., Iversen and Soskice 2001, 2006; Lupu and Pontusson 2011; Moene and Waller-

stein 2001; Scheve and Stasavage 2006; Shayo 2009). This is also an important assumption made in this article, and some discussion about its suitability to the Latin American context is required.

In a recent review article, Kaufman (2009) identifies three factors that he believes explain why the lower classes in Latin America do not seem to demand redistribution. First, according to Kaufman, survey evidence reveals that Latin American citizens who believe that income redistribution is unfair do not display stronger preferences for higher taxes and welfare spending. Such evidence, combined with the fact that the average tax burden in Latin America tends to be considerably lower than in OECD countries, may indicate that the median voter, whose income is certainly well below the national average, is complacent with the status quo. Second, Kaufman points out, there is no apparent association between inequality and incumbents' vote losses. Apparently, this suggests that voters do not punish the government for the existing inequality in income distribution. Finally, the left has won elections and taken office in most countries primarily with the support of the middle class, not the poor, and this seems to be a consensual fact about Latin America's left turn in the 2000s.

In our view, these allegedly "inconvenient facts" do not make untenable the assumption that the lower classes prefer income redistribution. It is true that most leftist presidents rose to power with the support of the middle class, not the poor. Disappointment over the performance of neoliberal presidents probably led relatively well-off citizens to shift their vote to the opposition in the early 2000s, paving the way for the Latin American pink tide. Yet once leftist presidents took office and started to effectively redistribute income, the whole political landscape changed. For instance, the radical shift in the electoral bases of Brazilian president Lula da Silva when he ran for re-election in 2006 is well documented in the literature (Hunter and Power 2007; Soares and Terron 2008; Zucco 2008). Our own analysis shows that similar electoral shifts have happened in several other countries where levels of inequality had been decreasing. These rearrangements of incumbents' electoral bases are consistent with the perception that income redistribution is not associated with incumbents' vote losses, because they are the result of both vote losses and vote gains. Furthermore, we believe that it is still too soon to judge the extent to which tax and welfare systems in Latin America have changed as a result of the election of left-of-center presidents.

Regarding the assumption that higher-income groups oppose income redistribution in Latin America, compelling evidence can be found in recent studies of elites' perceptions of poverty and inequality. Scholars concur that Latin American business elites are aware of their countries' social problems and of the way poverty may directly affect them through crime and violence; these same elites, however, are generally little inclined to support policies that redistribute income and address the root causes of the social problems they perceive (López 2013; Reis and Moore 2005). When elites attempt to influence policymaking, they do so in order to maintain the status quo rather than effectively to redistribute income (Blofield 2011; Filgueira et al. 2012).

Reis analyzed data from elite surveys conducted in Brazil in the 1990s and 2000s and reports that despite their sensitivity to the country's social problems, the business elites would rank "increasing education levels" and "reducing the size of the state" as the top national goals, considerably above "eliminating poverty and reducing inequality" (2005, 37). They tended to endorse equality of opportunity through education rather than equality of outcomes, and to criticize the state's management capacity to implement social policies of any type. Moreover, "guaranteeing minimum income" was deemed considerably less viable and desirable to the elites than other social policies, such as universal basic education, universal health services, and popular housing programs (Reis 2005, 39). In sum, according to the author, "Brazilian elites have a strong preference for policies that would minimize direct redistribution" (Reis 2005, 51).

All these studies tend to contrast the attitudes of Latin American elites to the attitudes of their European counterparts, who, according to De Swaan (1988), have actively and rationally pursued social inclusion and the expansion of the welfare system in order to reduce the negative consequences to themselves of poverty and inequality. The reason for the different attitudes of Latin American elites has been attributed to high social distance (Blofield 2011), to a lack of perception of responsibility (López 2013), and to conservative modernization (Figueira et al. 2012). Although this article does not analyze elite surveys, these studies shed light on how the upper classes think and act in Latin American countries. Even when, strictly speaking, well-off citizens are not part of the business elites, as usually defined in these studies, these citizens are the ones most likely to be influenced by the way the business elites think, due to social and geographic proximity and media exposure. On the basis of this literature, it is fair to say that the Latin American upper classes are likely to react strongly and negatively to targeted cash transfers and tax increases.

The electoral implication of the proposition that income is negatively related to support for income redistribution is easy to see: assuming that individuals vote retrospectively, governments that redistribute income should expect vote losses among the upper classes and vote gains among the lower ones. As indicated above, evidence from Brazil suggests that this is exactly what happened between 2002 and 2006, the period of greatest expansion of the country's national CCT program *Bolsa Família* (Hunter and Power 2007; Soares and Terron 2008). Still, an assessment of the electoral costs of these programs with individual-level data is lacking in the literature, as the scholarly attention has been altogether directed to their electoral payoffs among the poor.

The reason for this neglect is partly the prevailing assumption, most of the time implicit, that vote choices of nonbeneficiaries are not affected by investments in those programs. This assumption has justified the common viewpoint that CCT programs can be considered national experiments, in which beneficiaries receive the treatment in the form of cash transfers and nonbeneficiaries function as a control group. Following this rationale, one would only need to compare the votes of the two groups in order to estimate whether the program led to an increase in the vote for the government (see Bohn 2011; Layton and Smith 2011; Licio et al. 2009;

Queirolo 2010; Zucco and Power 2013). The vast majority of studies using survey data to estimate the electoral effects of CCT programs have found that beneficiaries support the president responsible for the program's initiation or continuation at higher rates than nonbeneficiaries.

But since beneficiaries are not randomly selected by government authorities, they differ from nonbeneficiaries in several respects, the most important of which is their pre- and posttreatment levels of income. Beneficiaries of CCT programs are the very poor, while the income of nonbeneficiaries ranges from just above the program's eligibility threshold to the highest point in the national income distribution. A few authors have raised the possibility that confounding factors could be driving the differences observed in the behavior of beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries, leading them to propose more sophisticated techniques to reduce potential biases in their estimates. Treated units of analysis (either individuals or subnational areas) should be compared only with similar untreated ones. This was done by means of propensity score matching (Díaz-Cayeros et al. 2009; Zucco 2013), regression discontinuity analysis (Manacorda et al. 2011), or randomization of treatment in a field experiment (De la O 2013). These techniques allowed researchers to become more confident in claiming that the redistributive program actually caused a change in the behavior of voters who were direct recipients of its benefits. Generally speaking, they demonstrated that treated individuals support incumbents at higher rates than similar, untreated ones (Díaz-Cayeros et al. 2009; Manacorda et al. 2011; Zucco 2013); that incumbents' vote shares are higher in subnational units with higher CCT coverage than in similar subnational units with lower coverage (Zucco 2013); and that incumbents' vote shares are higher in subnational units that received early treatment as compared to those that were treated later (De la O 2013).

Yet none of these studies considered the possibility that nonbeneficiaries are not indifferent to investments made in redistributive programs, which means that they cannot simply be seen as "nontreated." In many countries, CCT programs have been massive, loudly advertised by the government during presidential campaigns, and well scrutinized by the media, national accountability offices, and opposition parties. Under these circumstances, the treatment also influences the attitudes and opinions of nonbeneficiaries. The problem is not only "contamination" due to interpersonal communication among individuals living in geographic and social proximity (Sinclair et al. 2012); the contamination here occurs because the "treatment" is hard to ignore by anyone who pays minimal attention to the surrounding environment. CCT programs certainly would generate a complex array of reactions among those who did not benefit directly from them; that is, those who are supposed to constitute the control group.

In view of the findings about elite attitudes, it is not unrealistic to expect that many voters will disapprove of CCT programs even if the programs are relatively cheap.<sup>1</sup> If disapproval of CCT programs (or income redistribution in general) leads these voters to defect from incumbents' electoral bases, the positive treatment effect reported in existing studies could be capturing an anti-incumbent effect as much as a pro-incumbent one. Even if the program had no effect on beneficiaries, for example,

sufficient migration of nonbeneficiaries to the ranks of the opposition could result in beneficiaries' voting for the incumbent at higher rates. Although the studies that seek to compare similar treated and untreated units greatly reduce this problem, the fact is that we know next to nothing about how nonbeneficiaries react to CCT programs.

This study argues, therefore, that the electoral impact of CCT programs is composed of their effect on both beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries. What matters is the net effect of the CCT program; that is, the balance of the (likely positive) effect it has on beneficiaries, the (indeterminate) effect it has on most nonbeneficiaries, and the (likely negative) effect it has on nonbeneficiaries who oppose income redistribution. This article provides a first estimate of these effects and establishes the plausibility of the notion that CCT programs affect different types of voters differently.

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study uses data from AmericasBarometer surveys conducted in 2010. These surveys provide key advantages for the kind of analysis implemented in this article. First, because the AmericasBarometer offers comparable data for all Latin American countries, we are in a position to investigate reactions to CCT programs in many countries simultaneously. Second, because AmericasBarometer surveys have indicators of respondents' electoral behavior at two different time points, we can assess the impact of CCT programs on changes in voters' behavior, not on their behavior in a single election. Third, AmericasBarometer surveys identify CCT beneficiaries in countries with the largest programs, allowing us to compare their behavioral changes with those of other groups. Furthermore, AmericasBarometer surveys are backed by a competent team of researchers, were generated through rigorous and transparent sampling and data-gathering procedures, and are freely and easily accessible from the LAPOP website, which not only facilitates our research but also its replication. The way we operationalize each of the variables we employ in our models is described in online appendix A.

We begin our analysis by identifying behavioral changes among survey respondents in each country. Consider that on election day, voters can behave in three possible ways: they can vote for the incumbent, vote for the opposition, or vote for neither of them (that is, abstain or cast an invalid vote). As a consequence, nine patterns of behavior can occur from one election to another: individuals can either keep voting the same way they did before or choose one of the two alternative courses of action.

Respondents' previous behavior was obtained through a recall question about their vote in the first round of the most recent presidential election; their current behavior was obtained through a question that asked their intended vote in the hypothetical scenario of an upcoming presidential election. Respondents who reported that they voted for the current president in the previous election but did not intend to do it again are called *defectors*; those who declared that they did not vote for the current president but intended to do it now are called *joiners*. It is the behavior of individuals in these two groups that matters for assessing the electoral impact of income redistribution programs. Extant studies assume that CCT pro-

grams would turn some voters into joiners but not into defectors. We claim that these programs produce both patterns of behavioral changes and that their overall electoral impact depends on the balance between them.

We estimate the electoral effects of CCT programs by assessing the rates at which different types of voters join, or defect from, incumbents' ranks. In particular, we assess the cross-election behavior of CCT beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries, as well as of opponents and nonopponents of income redistribution. Identifying CCT beneficiaries is straightforward, as respondents were asked directly whether they were recipients of cash transfer programs.<sup>2</sup> Identifying opponents of income redistribution is less so, and we describe our strategy in detail below.

We estimate probabilities that individuals would engage in one of the three alternative types of behavior (vote for the incumbent, vote for the opposition, or vote for neither) with a multinomial logit (MNL). The main explanatory variables are indicators of CCT status and of opposition to income redistribution. Each of these variables is interacted with two indicators of previous behavior: whether the respondent had voted for the opposition (Previous Opponent) and whether the respondent had either abstained or cast an invalid vote (Previous Apathetic) in the first round of the most recent presidential election. The reference group comprises respondents who had voted for the current president (Previous Supporter). Following the standard practice in models of voting behavior, we also include several control variables: dummies indicating that the respondent is female, white, attends or attended college, lives in an urban area, and is rich, along with an indicator of the respondent's age.

The models allow us to estimate predicted probabilities of vote intention for each respondent and assess if, on average, these probabilities increase or decrease as a function of respondents' CCT status and opposition to income redistribution. We focus on average marginal effects (AMEs), which are differences in predicted probabilities calculated when the CCT (and opposition to income redistribution) is present and when it is not, averaged across voters.<sup>3</sup> Thus, a pro-incumbent effect is present when the probability that CCT beneficiaries intend to vote for the incumbent is higher relative to nonbeneficiaries. If such an effect is found among individuals who had not voted for the incumbent previously, it indicates that the program increases the chance of their becoming joiners and that cash transfers bring about extra votes for incumbents. Similarly, an anti-incumbent effect exists when the probability of vote intention for the incumbent is relatively lower among "anti-CCT" respondents. When this effect is observed among previous supporters, it means that the program increases the chances of their becoming defectors and that cash transfers lead to vote losses among that segment of the electorate. The overall electoral impact of the program is the combination of these two effects.

Our analysis relies extensively on recall data—respondents' reported behavior in an election that may have occurred up to four years in the past. As the voting behavior literature has well established, a sizable minority of survey respondents tend to give inaccurate answers when asked to recall their vote in previous elections, subjecting our estimates to the possibility of misreporting biases. Consistency bias is one of



Table 1. AME of CCTs on the Probability of Intended Vote for Incumbent

Previous behavior	Argentina		Bolivia		Brazil		Colombia		Dominican Republic	
	AME	<i>p</i>	AME	<i>p</i>	AME	<i>p</i>	AME	<i>p</i>	AME	<i>p</i>
Oppositionist	-0.072	0.011	0.008	0.829	-0.004	0.962	0.191	0.079	0.001	0.984
Apathetic	0.014	0.756	0.135	0.024	0.143	0.031	-0.011	0.802	0.185	0.005
Supporter	0.104	0.217	0.037	0.245	0.029	0.380	-0.023	0.670	0.078	0.041
	Ecuador		Guatemala		Mexico		Uruguay		Venezuela	
	AME	<i>p</i>	AME	<i>p</i>	AME	<i>p</i>	AME	<i>p</i>	AME	<i>p</i>
Oppositionist	0.009	0.775	0.131	0.031	0.017	0.732	0.035	0.415	-0.024	0.024
Apathetic	0.105	0.105	0.171	0.001	0.075	0.250	0.198	0.050	0.040	0.604
Supporter	0.082	0.021	0.152	0.000	0.123	0.074	-0.023	0.250	0.160	0.004

Note: Shaded estimates indicate that they are significant at the 0.1 level. These results are robust to the exclusion of controls. The Guatemalan survey does not have the ethnic category “white,” and the ethnicity variable in its model indicates “ladino” citizens instead.



the most frequently reported in the literature; it occurs when respondents misreport their previous vote in order to align it with their current preference (Benewick et al. 1969; Himmelweit et al. 1978; Van Elsas et al. 2014; Waldahl and Aardal 2000; Weir 1975). Although it is almost certain to exist in AmericasBarometer datasets, consistency bias does not really pose a problem for our analysis: we are looking for inconsistencies in voters' behavior (i.e., previous opponents who became supporters, or vice versa), leading us most probably to underestimate the effect of CCT programs on voters' behavior. The dataset certainly contains fewer joiners and defectors than we would observe in the absence of bias; whatever effect we find will, therefore, be smaller than the true one. Thus, despite Zucco and Power's warnings (2013), our use of recall data to operationalize our indicator of previous behavior will not invalidate our inferences about the effect of CCT programs on changes in voters' choices. If anything, it will favor type 2 errors: failure to detect an effect that exists.

## THE PRO-INCUMBENT EFFECT OF CCT PROGRAMS

Overall, 12 AmericasBarometer surveys asked respondents if they benefited from cash transfer programs in 2010: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Since Venezuela does not really have a CCT program, the survey conducted in that country asked respondents if they benefited from one of the government's most important *misiones*, which are also large and highly redistributive policies that frequently deliver cash to beneficiaries. Surveys for Chile and Peru were excluded, the former because it did not ask respondents about their intended vote in a hypothetical upcoming election and the latter because it only asked respondents about their vote in the second round of the previous presidential election. Thus, we have ten surveys to analyze the effects of CCT programs (and Venezuelan *misiones*) on beneficiaries' behavior.

As explained, our MNL models estimate the effect of CCT status on vote intention. The inclusion of interactions between CCT status and indicators of previous behavior allows the effect to vary among previous oppositionists, previous apathetics, and previous supporters. The number of respondents who fall into each category of combined previous and current behavior in each country can be viewed in online appendix B, and the complete results for all ten models we estimated are in online appendix C. Table 1 displays average marginal effects of being a CCT beneficiary in the likelihood that respondents declare an intention to vote for the incumbent, conditioned on their behavior in the previous election.

These results confirm findings reported by others that CCT programs generate pro-incumbent effects among beneficiaries. In five countries (Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Venezuela), cash transfers significantly increased the likelihood that incumbents would retain their previous supporters. In these cases, the effect of the program was to dissuade beneficiaries from defecting and thereby limiting the amount of votes that the incumbent might have lost in the cur-

rent electoral cycle. This effect ranged from a low of 8 percentage points in the Dominican Republic to a high of 16 percentage points in Venezuela.

In two countries, redistributive programs increased the intention to vote for the incumbent among those who had previously voted for the opposition. This happened in Colombia and Guatemala, where, according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), we observe the largest expansion of the national CCT program under the incumbent president at the time the survey was conducted.<sup>4</sup> Colombian president Álvaro Uribe increased the number of families benefiting from the CCT program *Familias en Acción* by more than 370 percent from 2006 to 2010, and its coverage surpassed 20 percent of the population when the survey was conducted. In turn, Guatemalan President Álvaro Colom launched the CCT program *Mi Familia Progres*a soon after he took office in 2007, and by the time the survey was conducted in 2010, it also covered more than 20 percent of the population. Thus, nearly all respondents who declared to benefit from CCT programs in Colombia and Guatemala became beneficiaries within the period of the current electoral cycle. In all the other countries, current presidents inherited large programs from past administrations, and many of the beneficiaries in 2010 had already been in the program by the time of the previous election. It is likely, therefore, that in those countries the effect of the program on oppositionists had already manifested itself in previous elections.

This naturally raises the question of how long the pro-incumbent effects of CCT programs last. Analyzing the effect of the Brazilian program *Bolsa Família* on three consecutive presidential elections, Zucco (2013) has shown that it lingered over time and benefited candidates from different incumbent parties: José Serra (PSDB) in 2002, Lula (PT) in 2006, and Dilma Rousseff (PT) in 2010. The important argument in his study is that the program did not appear to generate long-lasting party loyalties, since voters rewarded incumbents, not program initiators, but it did produce important pro-incumbent effects over several consecutive elections.

We analyze data from only one time point, which does not allow us to properly analyze the dynamics of CCTs' electoral effects over time in the same way Zucco did. However, most of the results reported above refer to surveys conducted one or more electoral cycles after the program's initiation, and they also suggest that the program's electoral effect did last, benefiting incumbents who did not necessarily initiate it. Table 1 suggests pro-incumbent effects in Bolivia, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and Uruguay, all of which had relatively old CCT programs initiated before the previous presidential election.<sup>5</sup>

Still, in these countries, the program's pro-incumbent effect was restricted to previously apathetic voters, suggesting a mobilizing, not a persuasion effect. Although none of the presidents in these countries significantly expanded the programs relative to their size at the time of the previous election, their pro-incumbent effect lingered. Taken together with the results for Colombia and Guatemala, our evidence suggests that CCT programs' pro-incumbent effect changes in nature as time passes, from persuading oppositionists soon after the program is launched to mobilizing apathetic voters as the program ages.

We also found an unexpectedly significant negative AME of cash transfer programs among previous oppositionists in two countries, meaning that they reinforced beneficiaries' opposition to the incumbent. In Venezuela, this effect was markedly small and is not a reason for concern. In Argentina, however, it was large. We conjecture that in this country, the negative effect among previous oppositionists could be the result of beneficiaries' discontent or confusion with reforms implemented around the time the survey was taken. The survey question asked respondents if they benefited from any of three large cash transfer programs, Plan Familias, Plan Jefes y Jefas, and Asignación Universal por Hijo. But in 2010, the first two of these programs were in the process of being replaced by the third. Argentina is the only country where CCT programs were going through deep reforms at the time of the survey, and their programs also did not have any effect on previous supporters and apathetic voters.

Overall, the pattern we find is that CCT programs lead to an increase in support for incumbents among beneficiaries. In addition to dissuading previous supporters from defecting in five countries, CCT programs turned oppositionists into supporters where their coverage had been recently expanded and mobilized apathetic voters in some countries where their coverage had already been large by the time of the previous election.

## THE ANTI-INCUMBENT EFFECT OF CCT PROGRAMS

In 2010, only the Brazilian AmericasBarometer survey asked respondents' opinions about the national CCT program. It asked them if "the government should increase the number of families receiving Bolsa Família, keep it the way it was, reduce, or discontinue the program." We divided respondents into two categories: pro-BF are those who think the government should either expand or keep the program the way it was; anti-BF are those who believe that the number of families benefiting from the program should be reduced or that the program should be discontinued altogether. This classification reveals that the program is widely accepted by Brazilian voters. Only about 8 percent of 2,396 respondents were classified as anti-BF, a figure three times lower than the number of beneficiaries.<sup>6</sup> Not surprisingly, the proportion of respondents who were beneficiaries and anti-BF at the same time is negligible: 0.6 percent of the sample and 2.4 percent of beneficiaries.

Citizens who oppose CCT programs are also likely to oppose presidents who adopt them. To the extent that some of the incumbent's previous supporters were also anti-BF voters, the association of the incumbent with the program should lead to the loss of some votes in the next election. We assessed the impact of opposition to Bolsa Família on citizens' electoral behavior by reestimating the MNL model for Brazil, with the addition of the variable "anti-BF" interacted with indicators of respondents' previous behavior. Table 2 reports average marginal effects of being a Bolsa Família beneficiary and of having an anti-BF opinion on the probability of intended vote for the incumbent, conditioned on the vote cast in the previous elec-

Table 2. AME on the Probability of Intended Vote for the Incumbent

Behavior in 2006	BF beneficiary		Anti-BF		N
	AME	<i>p</i>	AME	<i>p</i>	
Oppositionist	-0.006	0.940	-0.147	0.021	228
Apathetic	0.131	0.053	-0.046	0.709	345
Supporter	0.019	0.569	-0.204	0.003	1,164

tion. The complete model and AMEs for the other two categories of intended behavior (vote for opposition and apathy) can be accessed in online appendix D.

The results in table 2 confirm that Bolsa Família mobilized apathetic voters between 2006 and 2010. They also show that negative attitudes toward the program had a substantively strong and statistically significant negative effect on the behavior of previous oppositionists and previous supporters: anti-BF oppositionists were almost 15 percentage points less likely to become joiners than other oppositionists, and previous incumbent supporters who were against BF were more than 20 percentage points more likely to become defectors than other supporters. Observing such a strong effect one electoral cycle after the birth of the program makes it particularly impressive. The program was launched in 2003, and many anti-BF voters had presumably already abandoned Lula during the 2006 election.<sup>7</sup> Thus, if the pro-incumbent effect of Bolsa Família, as we have seen, lingered among beneficiaries, particularly through the mobilization of apathetic voters, so did its anti-incumbent effect among supporters who believed it should be reduced or discontinued.

One could easily extrapolate from these results to the entire Brazilian electorate, although the fact that the survey was conducted months before the election poses important limitations to such an exercise. Consider that 105 survey respondents who were BF beneficiaries had been apathetic in 2006, and 91 respondents who were against the BF program had voted for Lula in 2006. A 13.1 percentage point increase in the probability of voting for the incumbent among the former and a 20.4 percentage point decline in this probability among the latter implies 13.76 and 18.56 absolute votes, respectively. That is, about 14 previously apathetic voters were expected to join the incumbent because of Bolsa Família, and about 19 previous supporters were expected to defect, due to their opposition to the program. Assuming that the survey sample is representative of the 135,355,682 registered voters in 2010, these results imply that the Brazilian incumbent candidate would gain about 750,000 votes and lose about one million votes as a consequence of the program.

Again, this estimate is based on a snapshot of respondents' attitudes, captured a few months before the beginning of the 2010 electoral campaign. Incumbent and opposition candidates would still have plenty of time to try to influence voters' opinions about the program before the actual contest, which could potentially increase the amount of votes gained and lost, changing the net balance. Without more precise instruments, we cannot determine the sign of the net balance of votes associated with reactions to Bolsa Família in that specific election, but the important message of this

exercise is that the electoral costs of the program might have been higher than one would probably anticipate and should be taken seriously by analysts concerned with CCT programs' overall impact on incumbents' electoral performance.

The surveys for other countries did not include a question that would allow us to directly observe respondents who opposed CCT programs. Yet individuals who oppose income redistribution tend to have some common characteristics, many of which are captured by AmericasBarometer. To begin with, current income and prospects of upward mobility negatively affect individuals' preferences for income redistribution, and scholars consistently control for those factors when explaining these preferences (see Alesina and Giuliano 2011; Alesina and La Ferrara 2005; Bénabou and Ok 2001; Meltzer and Richard 1981). For this reason, opposition to income redistribution is likely to be strong among individuals who are relatively rich and college graduates; the former because they pay, or think they pay, the policy's current costs and the latter because they expect to pay these costs in the future. Moreover, ideological liberalism is likely to be associated with opposition to redistribution. Citizens who oppose government intervention in the economy are likely to oppose policies that, in their view, distort economic incentives and generate entitlements. In addition, individuals may question the effectiveness and desirability of specific instruments that governments use to fight poverty. In highly unequal countries, such as the ones in Latin America, a large number of people may agree that the government should actively seek to reduce income inequality but strongly disagree about the best way to achieve this goal.

Based on questions from the AmericasBarometer survey, we created indicators of those four individual characteristics, which we called, respectively, "rich," "college," "liberal," and "skeptical," all of which are described in online appendix A. Logit models displayed in table 3 show that these variables are strongly associated with respondents' propensity to hold "anti-BF" opinions in Brazil. The first model has only those four variables as covariates; the second one controls for additional variables; and in the third model, the main explanatory variable is an additive index of "propensity to oppose income distribution" based on the four indicators used in model 1. Generally speaking, individuals who are rich, have attended some college, are liberal in their views, and are skeptical of current governmental poverty-fighting strategies are more likely to be anti-BF than others. Respondents without any of these four characteristics make up two-thirds of the sample and are more than 50 percentage points less likely to be anti-BF than individuals with all of them.

Our strategy to assess if CCT programs also engendered electoral costs in other countries is to use the "index of propensity to oppose income redistribution" as a proxy for opposition to those programs. It is true that opposition to CCT programs does not necessarily indicate opposition to income redistribution in general. As discussed earlier, Latin American elites tend to support policies aimed at enhancing the opportunities of poor citizens through education while rejecting guaranteed minimum income policies, such as cash transfers. But the results displayed in table 3 give us confidence that the opposite is likely to be true: rejection of income redistribution in general does indicate rejection of CCT programs. Additionally, the high visibility

Table 3. Logit Models

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	b	p	b	p	b	p
Rich	0.88	0.011	0.74	0.044		
College	1.49	0.000	1.59	0.000		
Liberal	0.76	0.000	0.65	0.003		
Skeptical	0.39	0.107	0.44	0.083		
Index					0.91	0.000
Female			-0.05	0.807	-0.03	0.854
White			0.51	0.006	0.59	0.002
Age (in decades)			0.21	0.000	0.19	0.001
Lives in urban area			0.19	0.534	0.21	0.507
Constant	-2.96	0.000	-4.23	0.000	-4.20	0.000
Average Marginal Effects of Main Covariates						
Rich	0.061	0.011	0.500	0.045		
College	0.104	0.000	0.106	0.000		
Liberal	0.053	0.000	0.043	0.003		
Skeptical	0.027	0.107	0.030	0.083		
Index					0.062	0.000
All zeroes to all ones	0.586		0.532		0.582	
N	2,059		2,026		2,026	
Wald test $\chi^2$	101.26		113.25		96.89	
$\chi^2$ p-value	0.000		0.000		0.000	

Note: Dependent variable: Respondent is anti-BF

that CCT programs have achieved in all the countries where they are large turns them into prominent targets of discontent among opponents of income redistribution.

Building on this rationale, we estimated MNL models using the “index of propensity to oppose income redistribution” as the main covariate, interacted with indicators of previous behavior, in a manner analogous to what we did to estimate CCT programs’ pro-incumbent effects. In this case, however, we extended our analysis to all AmericasBarometer surveys, including those that did not identify CCT beneficiaries. In countries that invested in large and visible CCT programs, our expectation is that opposition to income redistribution reduces the probability of intended vote for incumbents among previous supporters. Such an effect would indicate that CCT programs induce some voters to defect from incumbents’ ranks. In countries that invested in small and less visible CCT programs or did not invest in any important redistributive policy, we expect this effect to be much weaker or nonexistent, because income redistribution has not reached the status of a relevant political issue. As a consequence, voters who oppose income redistribution are likely to keep supporting incumbents at the same rates as other voters in those countries.<sup>8</sup>

Table 4. AMEs of Index of Probability that a Previous Supporter Remains a Supporter

	Most Important CCT Program	Coverage in 2010	AME for Index	<i>p</i>	N
<b>Surveys that identify CCT beneficiaries</b>					
Argentina	Asignación Universal por Hijo	8.77	-0.109	0.023	716
Bolivia	Bono Juancito Pinto	16.21	-0.052	0.016	1,600
Brazil	Bolsa Família	27.46	-0.047	0.041	1,643
Colombia	Familias en Acción	28.20	-0.068	0.004	983
Dominican Republic	Solidaridad	22.27	-0.076	0.000	1,110
Ecuador	Bono de Desarrollo Humano	42.34	-0.093	0.000	2,270
Guatemala	Mi Familia Progresá	22.11	-0.061	0.069	896
Mexico	Oportunidades	24.25	-0.061	0.032	899
Uruguay	Asignaciones Familiares	12.56	0.013	0.195	1,159
Venezuela	NA	0.00	-0.148	0.000	927
<b>Surveys that do not identify CCT beneficiaries</b>					
Belize	NA	0.00	-0.112	0.001	813
Costa Rica	Avancemos	4.31	0.008	0.794	927
El Salvador	Comunidades Solidarias	8.85	-0.009	0.668	1,111
Guyana	NA	0.00	-0.012	0.757	876
Honduras	Bono 10.000	14.33	-0.050	0.069	1,209
Jamaica	PATH	11.38	-0.002	0.957	923
Nicaragua	NA	0.00	-0.057	0.044	1,094
Panama	Red de Oportunidades	10.46	-0.031	0.167	1,099
Paraguay	Tekoporá	10.74	-0.024	0.374	872
Suriname	NA	0.00	0.036	0.489	1,014
Trinidad and Tobago	TCCTP	2.60	-0.083	0.012	867

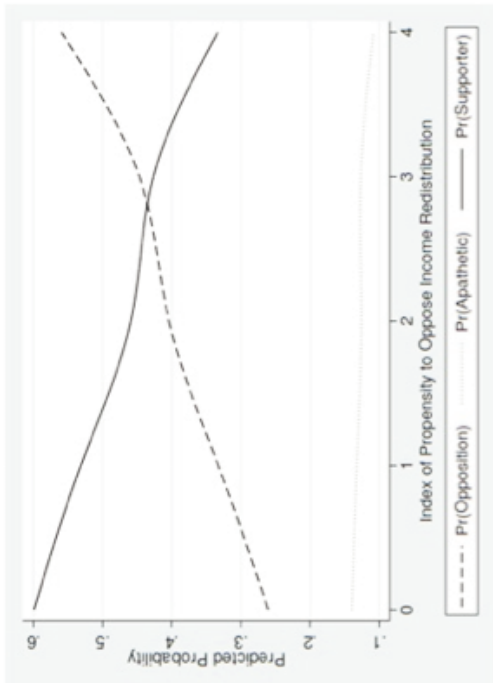
Note: Shaded AMEs are significant at the 0.1 level. The coverage of CCT programs in 2010 is the number of individual beneficiaries divided by the total population, according to data from ECLAC and the most recent national census. Venezuela does not have CCT programs, and the survey question purportedly identifying CCT beneficiaries actually identified beneficiaries of three large governmental *misiones*. Five AmericasBarometer surveys (Canada, Chile, Haiti, Peru, and the U.S.) were excluded because questions necessary for the operationalization of the main variables were missing.

Table 4 reports average marginal effects of the index on the probability that incumbents' previous supporters will intend to remain supporters.<sup>9</sup> The table divides the AmericasBarometer surveys into two groups: those that asked respondents if they benefited from CCT programs and those that did not identify beneficiaries, even though some of them were conducted in countries that had such programs. Coverage estimates presented in the table attest that CCT programs in the second group of countries tended to be much smaller and less visible, when they existed.

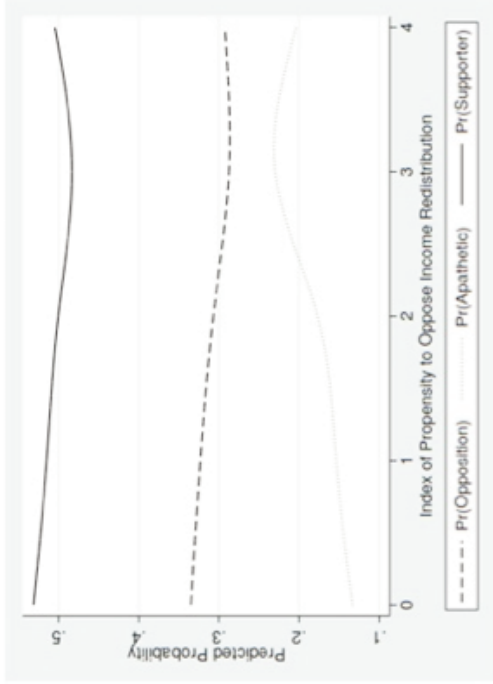


Figure 1. Previous Supporters' Median Predicted Probabilities of Intended Behavior, by Value of Index

**Colombia**



**Guyana**



The contrast between the two groups is evident. In the first, the index of propensity to oppose income redistribution is associated with higher rates of defection among incumbents' previous supporters in all countries but Uruguay. In the second group, the index is significantly associated with higher rates of defection in only 4 out of 11 countries. Note that one of the countries with significant AME in the second group is Honduras, the country with the largest CCT program among them. Another is Nicaragua, which in 2010 was ruled by a leftist president, the former guerrilla leader Daniel Ortega, who invested heavily in pro-poor programs, such as *Hambre Cero* (Zero Hunger).

Results for Belize and Trinidad and Tobago also indicate high rates of defection among respondents prone to oppose income redistribution, but the lack of research on the politics of those countries makes it hard for us to speculate about the causes of these voters' disappointment with incumbents. Overall, our results indicate that propensity to oppose income redistribution is a strong predictor of voters' defection from the incumbent's electoral base in countries that invested in large and visible CCT programs or other highly redistributive policies, such as the Venezuelan *misiones* and the Nicaraguan *Hambre Cero*. In countries that did not invest much in pro-poor policies, such as most of those listed in the second part of table 4, antire-distribution voters kept supporting the incumbent at rates similar to other voters.

To illustrate the effect of the propensity to oppose income redistribution on the likelihood of defection, figure 1 displays spline curves that cross the median predicted probability for previous supporters belonging to each of the index's five values in two countries. The first graph is based on the results for Colombia and is representative of the general pattern in countries that invested in massive CCT programs; the other graph, for Guyana, displays the pattern in a country that did not invest in them or in any important redistributive policy.

The figure shows that in Colombia, previous supporters with high propensity to oppose income redistribution tended to switch sides and become oppositionists, thereby imposing an electoral cost on the incumbent. The vast majority of countries in which the index significantly affected the behavior of previous supporters followed a similar pattern. In turn, in Guyana, Bharrat Jagdeo managed to retain most of his supporters after the 2006 election, and the index does not seem to have had any impact on their intended behavior in 2010. Other countries that did not implement income redistribution are also characterized by a lack of association between the index and electoral behavior.

The finding that citizens prone to oppose income redistribution punish incumbents only in countries with large CCT programs or other visible redistributive policies, such as Nicaragua and Venezuela, indicates that they are reacting primarily to these policies, not other issues. Lack of recognition of this finding created an important lacuna in the literature. Even studies of the most scrutinized case of a CCT program affecting electoral results—that is, the case of Bolsa Família and the 2006 Brazilian elections—never attribute the incumbent's vote losses to income redistribution. Most of them suggest instead that these losses are linked to the corruption scandals of Lula's first term.

Table 5. Perceptions of Defectors

	Problem 1	%	Problem 2	%	Problem 3	%	PoC	N
Argentina	Crime	20.0	Economy	17.5	Unemployment	17.0	3.0	200
Bolivia	Unemployment	20.6	Poverty	13.7	Corruption	12.8	12.8	321
Brazil	Violence	15.4	Unemployment	13.3	Health System	12.9	7.5	603
Colombia	Unemployment	32.4	Violence	17.5	Economy	8.9	4.6	349
Dominican Republic	Economy	36.7	Crime	17.2	Unemployment	10.7	6.1	262
Ecuador	Economy	26.9	Unemployment	18.6	Crime	15.2	6.5	781
Guatemala	Crime	34.9	Economy	23.8	Unemployment	8.9	2.6	269
Mexico	Economy	29.9	Unemployment	20.7	Crime	18.5	4.4	271
Uruguay	Poverty	15.7	Unemployment	13.7	Economy	11.8	0.0	51
Venezuela	Public Safety	24.8	Electricity	15.2	Economy	14.8	2.2	230
Belize	Economy	27.0	Unemployment	23.8	Crime	17.1	11.9	252
Costa Rica	Crime	41.3	Economy	11.1	Corruption	10.5	10.5	172
El Salvador	Crime	53.0	Economy	18.4	Unemployment	11.5	0.5	217
Guyana	Unemployment	29.4	Corruption	13.2	Economy	9.7	13.2	197
Honduras	Economy	16.2	Crime	15.1	Corruption	11.7	11.7	179
Jamaica	Crime	36.6	Unemployment	23.1	Economy	7.0	4.3	186
Nicaragua	Economy	50.7	Unemployment	32.2	Poverty	7.5	0.0	146
Panama	Crime	42.9	Economy	16.8	Unemployment	6.7	5.9	238
Paraguay	Unemployment	24.0	Public Safety	15.1	Poverty	11.5	8.6	338
Suriname	Housing	28.2	Unemployment	12.7	Poverty	9.9	2.8	71
Trinidad and Tobago	Crime	64.8	Unemployment	4.9	Inflation	4.9	3.4	267

Note: The table displays the proportion of defectors citing the three most cited national problems in an open-ended question in each country. When corruption was one these problems, the corresponding cell is shaded. PoC stands for perception of corruption and identifies the proportion of defectors citing corruption as the main national problem.

We concede that corruption might partly explain an incumbent's losses in that specific election, but our results strongly suggest the possibility of an alternative story. Moreover, according to AmericasBarometer data, corruption was far from the main concern among defectors. Instead, as table 5 shows, defectors tended to cite issues related to the economy and crime when asked what was the main problem affecting their countries, a pattern that does not vary much across countries. In Brazil, violence, unemployment, and the health system were the three national problems most cited by defectors, whereas corruption was cited by only 7.5 percent of them. The voting decisions of these citizens, just like the voting decisions of CCT beneficiaries, seem to be more strongly rooted in materialistic concerns than in post-materialist values, such as transparency and ethics in politics. We cannot say much about the 2006 Brazilian election, as our data correspond to 2010, but we find it hard to believe, in the face of this strong cross-country pattern, that the upper classes punished Lula for corruption, rather than for income redistribution.

Voters' reactions in countries with large CCT programs seem to have followed a similar pattern, independent of the ideology of the president. Rich, well-educated, liberal, and skeptical previous supporters migrated to the opposition in countries led by presidents who implemented CCT programs, whether they were conservative/liberal (Colombia, Dominican Republic, and Mexico), moderate leftist (Argentina, Brazil, and Guatemala), or radical leftist (Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Venezuela). A similar pattern was observed whether the president inherited the program from administrations led by opposition parties (Brazil, Ecuador, and Mexico) or launched or universalized it himself (Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, and Guatemala). Although income inequality is endemic in Latin America, crossing boundaries of language, colonial history, and political traditions, electoral behavior correlated more closely with social class and ideology only in countries where heads of government launched or maintained massive CCT programs or other redistributive policies. In countries where the president pursued no such policies, voters' socioeconomic backgrounds did not affect their vote decisions in any significant way.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our findings reveal that CCT programs have the potential to harm incumbents' electoral prospects, a risk that presidents who abstain from investing in them do not have to worry about. Although these programs are probably widely accepted in most countries, they also trigger negative responses among an important segment of the population. Richer, better-educated, liberal, and skeptical citizens who had voted for the incumbent in the past tend to abandon that electoral base and switch their loyalty to the opposition. That they constitute a minority of the population should not make incumbents less concerned. After all, this minority belongs to the middle and upper classes and controls resources with the potential to affect electoral results in favor of the opposition.

Targeted redistributive programs, therefore, do not necessarily help incumbents to win elections, as has been widely believed. They do, however, trigger an electoral

rearrangement and a transformation in the social composition of incumbents' bases of support. Most of the Latin American incumbents who invested in large, universalistic CCT programs attracted beneficiary voters at the same time that they repelled a segment of their upper-class supporters. Whether the net change was positive or negative probably depended on a number of factors that are beyond the scope of this analysis. What is important, however, is that losses linked to CCT programs did occur, and they might have been greater than most scholars and politicians are willing to believe.

CCT programs, like other aggressive redistributive policies, impel voters to re-evaluate past electoral decisions and choose candidates more aligned with their interests. In this sense, it is not too outlandish to say that the successful implementation of income redistribution policies in Latin America is making electoral choices more clearly class-based than they have been to date. In countries that are, at the same time, democratic and unequal, this should not come as a surprise. What would have been surprising is the absence of such electoral rearrangements. When presidents started to seriously tackle the pressing issue of social inequality in these countries, the material interests of both the poor and the rich became a leading behavioral motivation in the following election. Both social classes then learned the hard way that serving the material interests of one can be done only to the detriment of the material interests of the other.

## NOTES

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1. Fiszbein and Schady (2009) estimate that CCT programs rarely surpass 0.5 percent of the national GDP.

2. The relevant survey question ("CCT1" in most questionnaires) asks: "Do you or anyone in your house receive cash or in-kind monthly assistance from the national government, such as: [name of the national CCT program]?" Possible answers were: "(1) Yes; (2) No; (3) Doesn't know; (4) Didn't answer."

3. To estimate the AME of a dummy variable such as "CCT beneficiary," we first calculate predicted probabilities of intended behavior for all respondents assuming that they are beneficiaries, and then assuming that they are nonbeneficiaries. The average of the difference between these two predicted probabilities across all respondents is the AME of the explanatory variable. Another common approach to interpreting results of MNL models is to calculate marginal effects, fixing all control variables at their means. Both approaches produce similar results.

4. The ECLAC database on CCT programs can be accessed at <http://dds.cepal.org/bdptc/>.

5. Large pro-incumbent effects among previous apathetic voters were also found in Ecuador and Mexico, two countries with relatively old CCT programs; these effects, however, were not statistically significant.

6. Eighty-six respondents, or less than 5 percent of the sample, failed to answer this question and were coded as missing cases.

7. It has been widely noted that Lula's electoral base shifted in 2006 in terms of both social and regional composition. Analysts concur that Bolsa Família was the main cause behind the increase in support among poor and Northeastern voters, whereas the decline in support among middle- and upper-class voters in the South tends to be interpreted as a result of corruption scandals during Lula's first term (see Hunter and Power 2007; Singer 2009). While we concede that corruption may be part of the story behind Lula's vote losses, it should be noted that incumbents investing in CCT programs seem to be losing upper-class supporters all across Latin America, as we show later in this article. This pattern is more congruent with a story of the upper classes reacting to income redistribution rather than to corruption scandals.

8. The main drawback of using the index as a proxy for opposition to CCT programs is that it is bound to be associated with anti-incumbent attitudes in countries where income is being redistributed through other highly visible means. The main advantage is that it can be used to check if citizens with a high score on the index are not also punishing incumbents in countries where income is not being redistributed. If this expectation is met, we can be more confident that they are reacting primarily to income redistribution and dismiss the possibility that they are just more prone to punish incumbents than other citizens everywhere.

9. The number of respondents who fall into each category of combined previous and current behavior can be accessed in online appendix B. Complete models and AMEs corresponding to other categories (intention to vote for the opposition or to abstain) can be accessed in online appendix E.

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