

Online Appendix for “Why is Turnout Low in Referendums? Lessons from Latin America”

Data Collection, Recruitment, and Ethical Considerations

This project was deemed exempt from ethical review by the Yale University Institutional Review Board (Reference Number: 2000023046).

Our participant pool began with a convenience sample that comprised legislators, politicians, and academics. Subsequently, we enlarged the sample by snowballing. We conducted interviews in-person in May 2018; between June and July 2019; and in October 2019. We conducted remote interviews throughout this period, based on participants’ availability. We sought to interview a range of individuals from across political parties and with different kinds and levels of expertise, such as seasoned legislators and political newcomers, government officials and bureaucrats involved with the peace negotiations as well as those involved with publicity campaigns, and activists and NGO workers.

Potential participants were contacted via e-mail and Whatsapp messages with a description of the project and the request for an interview. This initial communication also detailed how we obtained their contact information if they were referred to us, subject to the approval of the person who referred them.

The authors requested an hour of interviewees’ time but made clear that this was subject to the participants’ preferences. As a result, some interviews, especially those with senators, lasted approximately 15 minutes while others lasted over an hour.

Participants were free to choose the date and time of the interview, subject to coordination with the authors. They were also able to choose the location most convenient and comfortable for them. If the interviewee chose to meet at a cafe, the researchers offered to pay for coffee or a snack.

Consent was obtained verbally at the start of the interview. At that point, participants were also asked if they were comfortable with the researchers audiotaping the interviews on their cellphones or if they preferred notes to be hand-written. Participants could refuse to answer any question they chose and end the interview at any point.

Several key informants were interviewed more than once, either on the same research trip or on multiple trips. In such cases, the above procedure was repeated for each interview. Please see Table A1 a list of the public personalities and peace negotiators interviewed. This list does not include names of FARC party members and former combatants (3); NGO workers (3), academics (10), and the CEO of a private firm to develop an ad campaign to support the “Yes” side. We also leave out the names of six peace negotiators to ensure their safety. In total, we draw on data collected from interviews with 49 individuals.

All quantitative data used was publicly available. The referendums dataset was compiled from publicly available electoral data and historical record. Other quantitative data was drawn from publicly available surveys/datasets.

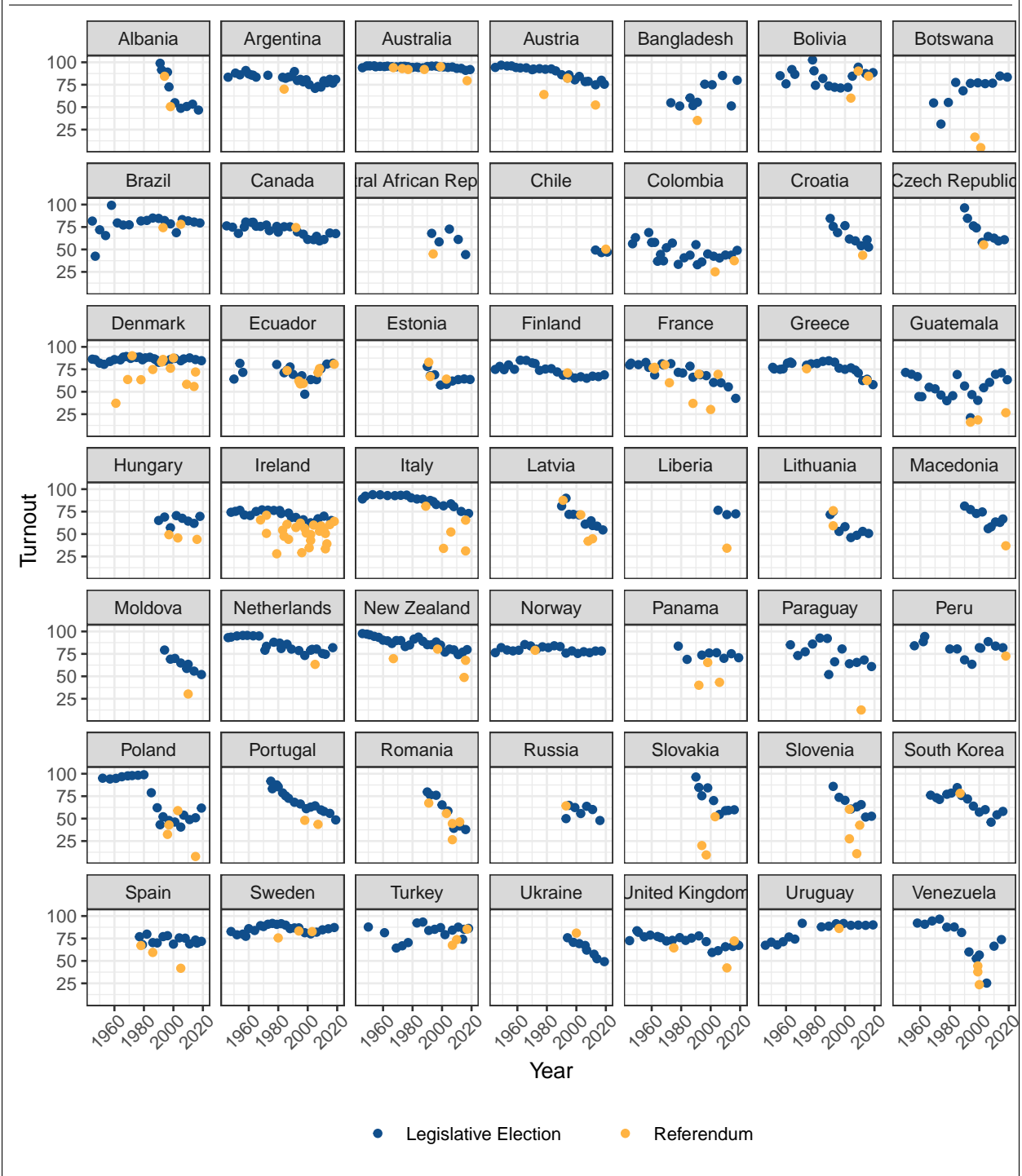
TABLE A1. Public Figures Interviewed

Name	Affiliation
Juan Carlos Vélez Uribe	Democratic Center (CD)
Juan Manuel Daza	Democratic Center (CD)
Paloma Valencia	Democratic Center (CD)
Juan Felipe Iregui	Democratic Center (CD)
María Fernanda Cabal	Democratic Center (CD)
María del Rosario Gueera	Democratic Center (CD)
Alfredo Ramos	Democratic Center (CD)
Carlos Andrés Arias	U Party (Partido de la U)
Roy Barreras	U Party (Partido de la U)
Guillermo Rivera	Liberal Party (Partido Liberal)
Juan Fernando Cristo	Liberal Party (Partido Liberal)
Humberto de la Calle	Liberal Party, Lead Peace Negotiator
Germán Córdoba	Cambio Radical (CR)
Felipe Ortegaón	Conservative Party (Partido Conservador)
John Sudarsky	Green Party (Partido Verde)
Duvalier Sanchez	Green Party (Partido Verde)
Juanita Goebertus	Green Party (Partido Verde)
Katherine Miranda	Green Party (Partido Verde)
Alvaro Pretel	Campaign organizer for Cali mayoral candidate
Anonymous party worker	CorpoVisionarios
Camilo Granada	High Commissioner for Communication
Alfonso Prada	Government Campaign Director for Referendum in Bogota
Sergio Jaramillo	Lead Peace Negotiator
Mauricio Rodríguez	Former Colombian Ambassador to the UK
Tatiana Duque	Political commentator, La Silla Vacía
Sybilla Brodzinsky	Colombia correspondent, The Guardian

Country-level Turnout Trends

When we consider within-country comparisons more closely, we see that turnout in candidate elections tends to exceed referendum turnout.

FIGURE A1. Turnout in Referendums versus Candidate Elections by Country



Global Trends in Referendum Turnout and Party Structures

All cases included in our sample meet three criteria:

- The vote was a referendum called by the government (not a citizens' initiative or abrogative referendum)
- The referendum was not held simultaneously with a national candidate election
- The referendum was held in a democracy

All models reported here are OLS with HC2 robust SEs.

Models 1 and 2 in Table A2 present the full regression results for the linear regression models illustrated in Figure 4.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	RRT _{PP}	
	(1)	(2)
PII	31.893* (12.953)	55.088** (19.291)
Compulsory Voting		35.444* (15.835)
PII * Compulsory Voting		-40.580† (24.176)
Constant	-33.207*** (8.830)	-53.217*** (11.989)
Observations	28	28
R ²	0.144	0.405
Adjusted R ²	0.111	0.331

Note: † $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

One of the benefits of analyzing RRT as the dependent variable is that we can measure the concept of RRT in multiple ways, to incorporate additional data and conduct robustness tests. The results presented in the main text (Fig. 4) measure relative referendum turnout (RRT) as the percentage point difference in turnout between the referendum and the most recent national candidate election (denoted by RRT_{PP} in Tab. A2). We present results in

terms of percentage-point change in turnout for ease of interpretation. However, we also calculate the same models using percent change in turnout as a robustness check. If turnout is already low in candidate elections, there is less room for it to drop in a referendum. To take an extreme example, suppose country A has 80% turnout in candidate elections and country B has 30% turnout in candidate elections. In country B, the maximum turnout deficit is 30% (turnout can't drop below zero). In country A, the maximum deficit is 80%. Thus, we also present results from models using a percent-change measure of RRT.

Where T_c is the predicted turnout from the candidate-election regression and T_r is the actual turnout in the referendum, the RRT-percentage-point variable is calculated $T_r - T_c$. In the alternative percent version, we calculate RRT as $RRT\% = (T_r - T_c)/T_c$. Results using this alternative RRT specification are in line with those presented in the main text (see model 1 in Table A3).

TABLE A3. Cross-national Analysis: Alternative RRT Measures

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	RRT _%	RRT _{LM}	RRT _{LOESS}
	(1)	(2)	(3)
PII	0.547* (0.231)	0.468† (0.275)	0.511† (0.286)
Compulsory Voting	0.243*** (0.072)	0.212* (0.085)	0.238** (0.092)
Constant	-0.689*** (0.126)	-0.599*** (0.147)	-0.634*** (0.160)
Observations	28	26	26
R ²	0.443	0.355	0.364
Adjusted R ²	0.399	0.299	0.309
<i>Note:</i>	† $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$		

As further robustness checks, we present results using two additional measures for RRT. To account for heterogeneous time trends in turnout and variation in the gap in time between a referendum and a country's most recent election, we draw on turnout data from the most proximate candidate elections both before and after the referendum. To calculate RRT, we estimate an OLS regression in which turnout is the dependent variable and the date of each election is the independent variable. This procedure yields estimated turnout trends over time in a country. We use this trend line to estimate the expected turnout for a hypothetical candidate election on the day the referendum was held. We then calculate the RRT as the percent difference between the actual referendum turnout and the predicted value from the regression. Where \hat{T}_{cLM} is the predicted turnout from the candidate-election

regression and T_r is the actual turnout in the referendum, the RRT-LM variable is calculated as $(T_r - \widehat{T}_{cLM})/\widehat{T}_{cLM}$. Results using the RRT-LM measure are presented in model 2 of Table A3.

In model 3 of Table A3, we use a LOESS model to estimate turnout trends. Each hypothetical turnout figure is estimated from a model including between three and 29 elections (varying according to how many national legislative elections occurred during the period where the country was continuously democratic).

In Table A4, we replicate the above models on a sample including referendums from all regions of the world, rather than just Latin America. The results hold in the worldwide models as well.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	RRT _{PP}	RRT _%	RRT _{LM}	RRT _{LOESS}
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
PII	11.544 [†] (6.132)	0.280** (0.093)	0.219* (0.105)	0.232* (0.110)
Compulsory Voting	12.024*** (2.231)	0.191*** (0.033)	0.174*** (0.038)	0.189*** (0.039)
Constant	-27.748*** (5.287)	-0.490*** (0.082)	-0.422*** (0.091)	-0.434*** (0.097)
Observations	152	152	142	142
R ²	0.081	0.113	0.086	0.095
Adjusted R ²	0.069	0.101	0.073	0.082
<i>Note:</i>	[†] $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$			

In Table A5, we add a control variable indicating whether the referendum had a participation quorum. Participation in referendums with participation quorums is not statistically different from referendums without participation quorums.

Finally, in Table A6, we present the main regressions with raw referendum turnout as the dependent variable. The substantive findings hold (indeed, the estimated coefficient for PII is largest in these models). However, as noted in the main text, specifications using raw referendum turnout instead of relative referendum turnout are more prone to potential confounding. We include these results for transparency, but argue that the RRT analyses are much more informative for the question at hand.

TABLE A5. Cross-national Analysis: Controlling for Quorums

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	RRT _{PP}	RRT _%	RRT _{LM}	RRT _{LOESS}
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
PII	31.817* (15.409)	0.575* (0.240)	0.495 [†] (0.283)	0.543 [†] (0.296)
Compulsory Voting	14.712** (4.794)	0.263*** (0.075)	0.227** (0.087)	0.257** (0.095)
Quorum	11.851** (4.177)	0.121 (0.076)	0.102 (0.065)	0.122 (0.077)
Constant	-42.417*** (9.057)	-0.725*** (0.135)	-0.631*** (0.156)	-0.672*** (0.171)
Observations	28	28	26	26
R ²	0.394	0.459	0.367	0.378
Adjusted R ²	0.319	0.391	0.281	0.294
<i>Note:</i>	[†] $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$			

Party Institutionalization Index

Variables included in index:

Party organizations

How many political parties for national-level office have permanent organizations?

0: No parties.

1: Fewer than half.

2: About half.

3: More than half.

4: All parties.

Party branches

How many parties have permanent local party branches?

0: No parties.

1: Fewer than half.

2: About half.

3: More than half.

4: All parties

Distinct party platforms

TABLE A6. Raw Referendum Turnout

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Worldwide	Latin America
PII	38.329*** (8.960)	47.156*** (13.640)
Compulsory Voting	26.210*** (3.169)	32.464*** (5.481)
Constant	21.562** (7.931)	9.836 (8.219)
Observations	152	28
R ²	0.263	0.634
Adjusted R ²	0.253	0.605
<i>Note:</i>	† $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$	

How many political parties with representation in the national legislature or presidency have publicly available party platforms (manifestos) that are publicized and relatively distinct from one another?

0: No parties. 1: Fewer than half. 2: About half. 3: More than half. 4: All parties.

Legislative party cohesion

Is it normal for members of the legislature to vote with other members of their party on important bills?

0: Not really. Many members are elected as independents and party discipline is very weak.

1: More often than not. Members are more likely to vote with their parties than against them, but defections are common.

2: Mostly. Members vote with their parties most of the time.

3: Yes, absolutely. Members vote with their parties almost all the time

Party linkages

Among the major parties, what is the main or most common form of linkage to their constituents?

0: Clientelistic. Constituents are rewarded with goods, cash, and/or jobs.

1: Mixed clientelistic and local collective.

2: Local collective. Constituents are rewarded with local collective goods, e.g., wells, toilets, markets, roads, bridges, and local development.

3: Mixed local collective and policy/programmatic.

4: Policy/programmatic. Constituents respond to a party's positions on national policies, general party programs, and visions for society.

Brazil Analysis

Table A7 presents the full details of the models summarized in Table 1, including the coefficients on all covariates. Table A8 replicates these models with party fixed effects. Table A9 replicates the RRT models from Tables A7 and A8 using the percent change in turnout as the dependent variable ($RRT_{\%}$) rather than the percentage-point change (RRT_{PP}). All models use HC2 robust SEs.

TABLE A7. 2005 Brazilian Referendum

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	Referendum Turnout			RRT	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Party Switchers	-1.919*** (0.220)	-0.710*** (0.189)	-0.668*** (0.189)	-0.545*** (0.153)	-0.575*** (0.152)
Poverty		-0.276*** (0.012)	-0.277*** (0.012)		
Per Capita Income		-0.015*** (0.002)	-0.015*** (0.002)		
Infant Mortality		0.039*** (0.009)	0.039*** (0.009)		
Log Population		-0.670*** (0.092)	-0.581*** (0.096)		
Percent Rural		2.846*** (0.469)	2.798*** (0.468)		
Homicide Rate			-2.662*** (0.645)		3.309*** (0.467)
Constant	76.317*** (0.114)	95.098*** (0.958)	94.571*** (0.969)	-12.247*** (0.076)	-12.544*** (0.086)
Observations	5,471	5,370	5,370	5,464	5,412
R ²	0.014	0.351	0.354	0.002	0.014
Adjusted R ²	0.013	0.350	0.353	0.002	0.014

Note: † $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Note: Relative Referendum Turnout uses turnout in the 2004 municipal elections as the benchmark ($Y = 2005$ referendum turnout $-$ 2004 municipal election turnout). All control variables were measured in the year 2000.

TABLE A8. 2005 Brazilian Referendum (with Party Fixed Effects)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	Referendum Turnout			RRT	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Party Switchers	-1.472*** (0.224)	-0.509** (0.192)	-0.468* (0.192)	-0.420** (0.158)	-0.445** (0.156)
Poverty		-0.272*** (0.012)	-0.273*** (0.012)		
Per Capita Income		-0.015*** (0.002)	-0.015*** (0.002)		
Infant Mortality		0.036*** (0.009)	0.037*** (0.009)		
Log Population		-0.652*** (0.092)	-0.561*** (0.095)		
Percent Rural		2.727*** (0.469)	2.688*** (0.468)		
Homicide Rate			-2.739*** (0.637)		3.145*** (0.467)
Constant	75.102*** (0.249)	95.029*** (0.980)	94.476*** (0.993)	-12.960*** (0.165)	-13.213*** (0.166)
Party Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	5,471	5,370	5,370	5,464	5,412
R ²	0.053	0.362	0.366	0.020	0.030
Adjusted R ²	0.049	0.359	0.362	0.016	0.026

Note: † $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

TABLE A9. 2005 Brazilian Referendum (Percent Change)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Referendum Turnout			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Party Switchers	-0.008*** (0.002)	-0.008*** (0.002)	-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.006*** (0.002)
Homicide Rate		0.032*** (0.005)		0.030*** (0.005)
Constant	-0.139*** (0.001)	-0.142*** (0.001)	-0.148*** (0.002)	-0.150*** (0.002)
Party Fixed Effects	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	5,464	5,412	5,464	5,412
R ²	0.004	0.012	0.026	0.034
Adjusted R ²	0.004	0.012	0.022	0.029

Note: † $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Interview Protocols

Interview Protocol A: Party Leadership and Higher-level Representatives who were involved with the referendum

1. Can you explain to me how mobilization by your party works for a regular election at the national level, say a Congressional election? How does this differ from your party's efforts in local elections?
2. What are the biggest differences between campaigning as a candidate or for a list and campaigning for a referendum/plebiscite?
3. What were the challenges in working together with other parties to organize for the referendum? [ONLY FOR "YES" COALITION]
4. Did your party attempt to mobilize voters for the referendum? If so, in what way, and who did you target? How did you attempt to activate lower level party workers?
5. In retrospect, were there things your party or the Yes campaign could have done differently? Could you give me three examples? [ONLY FOR "YES" SIDE]
6. In that referendum, turnout was fairly low (although it did meet the quorum). Why do you think that was?
7. For Conservative Party Members: There were some high level opponents of the peace deal, including Martha Lucía Ramírez and Andrés Pastrana. What do you think explained their lack of support for the deal despite party-wide backing? What do you think were the consequences of their public positions on the deal?
8. Can you put me in touch with your campaign manager(s)?

Interview Protocol B: Background with Academics, Experts, Political Analysts

1. What are the patterns of local presence of parties? Can you explain variation by party to me?
2. What does the hierarchy structure look like in parties for mobilization (especially in candidate elections, but also in referendums if it's different there)?
3. Does the party create any artificial incentives for mobilization among local actors in referendums (that is, beyond whatever utility they might get from strong local performance; this might be party resources, promise of future promotions, etc)?
4. How are the lowest-level party operatives incentivized to mobilize in candidate elections? Does this vary by party?

5. How do parties monitor the level of effort various activists are putting in to mobilization? Do they generally have good information on this?
6. How does campaign funding work? Does most of the party's funding (or candidates' funding) come from private donations? If so, are these kinds of donations allowed for referendum campaigns? Is funding regulated differently/more strictly limited in one kind of election versus another? If private donations are the dominant form of funding in campaign elections and allowed in referendums, how do the realized numbers compare between these two types of campaigns?
7. LAPOP data shows increasing intent to turn out as the referendum approaches. Why do you think this is? (Effective mobilisation or social desirability bias?) Do you know of any data that would help us track turnout intention in other elections, so that we can distinguish the effects of effective mobilisation from the effects of social desirability bias?
8. Can you put me in touch with any campaign managers or politicians? Is there anyone in particular you suggest speaking with?

Interview Protocol C: Campaign Managers/Party Workers

1. Can you please define your role in the party and the time you have been working with the party?
2. Why did you decide to pursue a career in politics?
3. Did you have any prior experience in politics or work in the field before joining this party? Were you a member of this or any other party?
4. How does your party mobilize? Is it primarily through door-to-door canvassing? Radio? Social media? Meeting with social groups (that meet in person, such as neighborhood associations, women's groups, sports clubs, etc)?
5. How do you decide who to mobilize?
6. What is the most local level of the mobilization structure?
7. For these individuals or leaders at the local level, to what extent do they have autonomy in deciding how and whom to mobilize?
8. What resources do you have for the campaign? Where do they come from? How sufficient do you think they are?
9. What do you think is the most efficient or effective way to use resources in a campaign?
10. Thinking about the 2016 plebiscite, did you participate in the campaign for this party?
11. Did you believe that your efforts at the local level would impact the final outcome, or not so much? Why?

12. What are the biggest differences between campaigning for a candidate or for a list and campaigning for a referendum/plebiscite?
13. As a party worker, do you feel as excited about campaigning for a referendum vote as for the party in a regular election? Why or why not?
14. What did you generally observe among your party colleagues?
15. Do you get the same kind of support from your party for a referendum campaign as you would in a regular election? If so, what kind of support did you get – resources, manpower, something else? If no, why not?
16. As I understand, there were several parties in coalition on the “yes” side. What were the challenges of working with other parties? [for pro-Yes]
17. In retrospect, were there things your party or the Yes campaign could have done differently? [Especially for pro-Yes party operatives.]
18. In that referendum, turnout was fairly low. Why do you think that was?
19. How much do you believe the positions voters took in that campaign reflected their views of the peace accords, and how much reflected their feelings about political leaders, like Alvaro Uribe and Juan Manuel Santos?
20. Did you agree with your party’s position in the 2016 referendum? (For those who didn’t), was it difficult to get involved in the campaign? Did you support the party’s position anyway, and did you try to get voters to turn out and vote for the Yes (the No)?
21. What do you believe the strongest arguments were in favor of the “Yes” side in the 2016 referendum? What were the strongest arguments in favor of the “No” side?
22. In your view, why did the No win?