



**DINÉ BI NAHAT'Á**  
Diné Preferences for Navajo Government

*by*

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**Commission on Navajo Government Development:**

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**APPROVED DRAFT  
EXHIBIT A OF CNGD-09-04-24**

*VOTED AND SIGNED BY THE COMMISSION ON NAVAJO  
GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT ON OCTOBER 18, 2024*

**RESOLUTION OF THE  
COMMISSION ON NAVAJO GOVERNMENT  
DEVELOPMENT**

**APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE NAVAJO COMPREHENSIVE  
GOVERNMENT REFORM SURVEY REPORT ENTITLED "DINÉ BI NAHAT'A:  
DINÉ PREFERENCES FOR NAVAJO GOVERNMENT"**

**WHEREAS:**

1. By CD-68-89, the Navajo Nation Council established the Commission on Navajo Government Development ("Commission") and the Office of Navajo Government Development with quasi-independent authority to accomplish the Navajo Government Reform Project by instituting reforms necessary to ensure an accountable and responsible government; and,
2. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C. § 971(A) (2020 as amended), the purpose of the Commission on Navajo Government Development shall be to review and evaluate all aspects of the existing government structure of the Navajo Nation including laws, rules and regulations, practices, functions, goals and objectives of the central government as it relates to Chapters, and local communities and the relationship of Chapters and local communities to the central government; and,
3. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C. § 973(B), The Commission shall have the powers: Part 4. To collect, assemble, evaluate, interpret, and distribute information, data statistics and evidence that accurately describes the present Navajo government with emphasis on Chapter and local empowerment; and,
4. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C. § 977(B), The duties of staff are as follows: 1. To provide a full range of administrative and support services to the Commission and the Executive Director. 2. To act as resource persons for the Commission; 3. To collect information and maintain central files of all information, data, statistics and research materials; 4. To assist in preparing for Commission meetings by collecting and confirming information, notifying interested parties and preparation of materials necessary to conduct meetings. 5. To assist in the coordination of scheduling of Commission and subcommittee meetings and activities. 6. Perform other duties as directed by the Executive Director; and,
5. The Office of Navajo Government Development has been collecting data through individual surveys as well as hosting public listening sessions throughout its history; and,
6. Data is an essential part of policy development for use in analyzing the current impact of Navajo Nation law and policy and for identifying problem areas to develop comprehensive policy solutions at any level of government; and,
7. In 2023, the Office of Navajo Government Development created the *Navajo Comprehensive Government Reform Survey* to inquire how Navajo citizens wanted to govern themselves and advance the Navajo Government Reform Project with greater evidence-based decision making. The survey was based on historical, traditional, contemporary, and cultural government reform solutions documented since 1989; and,
8. The Office of Navajo Government Development hired Alex Richard Zhao, a Navajo Ph.D.

candidate from UC San Diego's Department of Political Science, to assist staff in research as a Statistical Research Analyst. Zhao fielded, analyzed, and drafted the report, alongside staff and the Commission on Navajo Government Development; and,

9. The Commission on Navajo Government Development finds the survey report substantially informative and resourceful towards further addressing the Navajo Government Reform Project.

**NOW THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED THAT:**

1. The Commission on Navajo Government Development hereby approves and adopts the *Navajo Comprehensive Government Reform Survey* report entitled "Diné Bi Nahat'á: Diné Preferences for Navajo Government", attached here as Exhibit "A".
2. The Commission on Navajo Government Development further authorizes the Office of Navajo Government Development to publicize the survey report on the Commission website and make it available for public review, distribution, and duplication at the Office of Navajo Government Development, provided that sufficient funds are available to cover the costs to duplicate the report.
3. The Commission on Navajo Government Development further authorizes Alex Richard Zhao to assist both the Commission and Office of Navajo Government Development in developing the survey data for use in other projects, education materials, presentations, and for his use with dissertation or other academic publications for peer review insofar proper notice and credit is given to the Office of Navajo Government Development and the Commission on Navajo Government Development.

**CERTIFICATION**

I, hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly considered by the Commission on Navajo Government Development at a duly called meeting in Window Rock, Navajo Nation (Arizona) at which a quorum was present and that same was passed by a vote of 7 in favor, 0 opposed, and 3 abstained, this 18<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2024.



Loretta Sewe ingywama, Vice-Chair  
Commission on Navajo Government Development

Motion: Larry Rodgers

Second: Marcus Tulley



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# Report Summary

The Commission and Office of Navajo Government Development are tasked with the Navajo Government Reform Project. This project was granted by the Navajo Nation Council in 1989 to provide comprehensive government reform in restructuring the Navajo government to reflect the interests of the Navajo People. A limitation to ongoing work is a lack of empirical data to inform evidence-based decision making. Therefore, in line with existing plans of operations, the Office of Navajo Government Development team underwent the process of designing, fielding, analyzing, and writing the results for a survey dedicated to understand *how Navajo citizens want to govern themselves?* Through conventional survey questions, a rank-order task, and a conjoint survey experiment, the Navajo Government Development Team have found compelling insights regarding Diné preferences for governance. The Navajo people want to maintain local governance, demand greater ethics and accountability from its political system, are more divided by age and fluency in *Diné Bizaad* than other identity features, and prefer more election options for the Nation's *Naataaniis*.

## Contributions:

Alex Richard Zhao: As a Statistical Research Analyst with the Office of Navajo Government Development and PhD Candidate from UC San Diego's department of political science, Alex took lead in each aspect of this report including survey design, coding, fielding, analysis, and writing.

Damon Clark: As a Policy Analyst with the Office of Navajo Government Development, Damon was imperative in facilitating project management, coordinating the research team, survey design, fielding, analysis, and writing this report.

Triston Black: As a Policy Analyst with the Office of Navajo Government Development, Triston was critical in survey design, raising cultural considerations, Navajo language translation and communication in the field and for writing this report.

Harrison Tsosie: As the Executive Director of the Office of Navajo Government Development, Director Tsosie supervised and guided the research team in its work identically to a research lab manager. Director Tsosie also assisted in survey design, fielding, and providing recommendations to the writing of this report.

## Acknowledgements:

The Office of Navajo Government Development genuinely appreciates the support provided by the Commission on Navajo Government Development in overseeing progress, providing recommendations, revising this report, and ensuring this work benefits the Navajo People. We also thank Tsinnaajinii Ranger, Mariah Stanley, and Wanda Nelson for excellent research assistance. Lastly, this project would not be possible without the informants from across the Nation who we thank for their time and thoughts.

# I. NITSÁHÁKÉÉS – TO THINK

*Nitsáhákéés* means **to think** in the Diné thought process and reflects the initial considerations for research dedicated to informing the Navajo Nation. This introduction emphasizes the role the Office and Commission on Navajo Government Development have in research, the motivation for this report to contribute to the Navajo Government Reform Project, how it contributes to existing work, and the long-term goals of this endeavor.

## Role of CNGD and ONGD in Research

In 1989, the Navajo Nation Council enacted Title II amendments creating the Commission on Navajo Government Development (CNGD) and Office of Navajo Government Development (ONGD) with quasi-independent authority to accomplish the Navajo People's project of instituting reforms necessary to ensure an accountable and responsible government. Since 1989, CNGD and ONGD have proposed government reform solutions with varying degrees of success, but are now directed toward comprehensive government reform. It is critical for CNGD and ONGD to engage with Navajo citizens across the Nation to ascertain their interests for the Navajo Government Reform Project.

As part of CNGD's plan of operations, the Commission is authorized to collect data and statistics related to the Navajo Government Reform Project and ONGD is tasked with supporting the Commission. Therefore, ONGD fielded the *Navajo Comprehensive Government Reform Survey* to support the Commission's mission. Throughout the report's development, staff provided updates to CNGD for invaluable feedback. Together, CNGD and ONGD sought to investigate Navajo citizens' government reform preferences and why preferences differ among various cohorts.



## Motivation: The Navajo Government Reform Project

The Navajo Government Reform Project was established by the Navajo Nation Council in 1989 when the the Nation's central government was restructured based on the US federal system, called the *Wááshindoon* Model. As previously mentioned, CNGD and ONGD are tasked with proposing to the Navajo People an alternative form of Navajo governance reflecting their interests and values. To this end, CNGD and ONGD cooperate in understanding what those interests are through community engaged research.

A key limitation for CNGD and ONGD has been a lack of nation-wide public opinion data regarding **how the Navajo people want to govern themselves**. The Navajo Nation is the largest tribal sovereign in the United States encompassing territory in northeastern Arizona, northwestern New Mexico, and southeastern Utah where about 173,000 citizens reside on the reservation (Census 2019). The Nation has its own form of federalism with 110 local chapter governments serving as pillars of community for citizens to collaborate, receive services, and participate in politics. Since time immemorial, our relations with each other, or *k'e'*, have made local governance a staple of Diné society. Since the inclusion of the Spaniards in the southwest of the 1500's, the Navajo people have engaged in international relations with various peoples, religions, corporations, and so forth which have influenced communities differently. Little empirical work evaluates the extent diversity within the Navajo Nation, or pluralism, affects Navajo domestic politics on a topic like government reform preferences.

Therefore, to further the Navajo Government Reform Project, CNGD and ONGD needed a method to engage with as many people as possible in a standardized manner to understand a general consensus of the Navajo People. This is where surveys come as an invaluable tool which have seen extensive innovation by academics over the last century. As a result, ONGD designed this report's survey using these reputable tools to investigate Diné preferences for Navajo government.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Due to miscommunication, the survey design failed to properly include CNGD. ONGD has worked

## Existing Research and Contribution

Throughout the United States, Indigenous Nations are actively engaged in government reform debates to better provide for their people. The historical roots for this under-discussed layer to American federalism originates from flawed Federal-Indian policy (Cornell & Kalt, 2000; Akee et al., 2012). Since the introduction of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (IRA), tribal sovereignty was more formally enumerated through tribal constitutions written and provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Akee et al., 2012).

This process imposes Western governance on Indigenous peoples and created Indigenous American governments with minimal legitimacy resulting in instability, violence, and corruption (Ruffing, 1976; Cornell & Kalt, 2000; Lofthouse, 2020). The Navajo Nation is a notable exception in rejecting the IRA by popular vote, but this did not protect the Navajo people from experiencing similar issues (Wilkins, 2013; Curley, 2019; Rosser, 2021; Curley, 2023). As a result, Indigenous peoples have been empowered to reform their political systems through constitutional conventions, legislation, referendum, initiatives, and other means to create governing structures aligning with their cultural beliefs and traditions (Lemont, 2006; Lyons et al., 2007; Hendrix, 2010; Dennison, 2012).

There have been several attempts to pass a formal Navajo Nation constitution, but all have failed to be presented to or be enumerated by the Navajo people. After rejecting the IRA in 1934, the first Navajo constitutional attempt was rejected by the Secretary of the Interior in 1937. Many of its features including the creation of the Navajo Nation Council, the blood quantum standard of one-fourth, and the approval process for sale, disposition, lease, or encumbrance of Indigenous lands were instead incorporated into the Nation's Code of Laws (Wilkins, 2013). In 1953, the Navajo Council, on its own initiative, submitted a constitution to the Secretary of the Interior inspired on the Navajo-Hopi Rehabilitation Act of 1953 - this proposed constitution was also rejected for excluding the Nation from existing federal law. Fifteen years later in 1968, Chairman Raymond meticulously to remedy this issue by adhering to all CNGD feedback in writing this report.

Nakai campaigned and promoted a constitution that never made it for a referendum vote. In 1989, the Navajo government was restructured into a three-branch system based on the US federal government, but this was not a formal constitution attempt. Instead the adoption of the *Wááshindoon* Model and the institution of separation of powers were amendments to Title 2 of the Navajo Nation Code. The “new” Navajo Nation three-branch system influenced the 2013 and 2016 constitutional development attempts. Their authors are unknown, but these attempts acknowledged the Treaty of 1868, Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Collective Rights of the Navajo People and Chapters, and called for an Elder’s Council to be established.

In practice, the Navajo Nation government operates through its enumerating Code of Laws, which has experienced change throughout history. From 1923 to 1989, the Navajo Nation operated as a unicameral assembly with an indirectly elected executive known as the Chairman (Wilkins, 2013). The system allowed the chairman to increasingly empower themselves with legislative and executive powers, which was fundamentally changed after the Window Rock turmoil in 1989. Council took action by ending the Chairmanship through the *Wááshindoon* Model of a three-branch government with separation of powers.

After the Nation’s transition to a three-branch system of government, the Navajo Nation Council created CNGD and ONGD to present government reform proposals to align with the people’s interests. The Navajo Nation does not have a formalized schedule of constitutional conventions like other Nations (Lemont, 2006) and instead delegated quasi-independent authority to the Navajo Government Development team. Originally in 1989, CNGD and ONGD were tasked with comprehensive government reform, but were redirected to formulate policy for local governance in 1994. This is the origins of Title 26: The Local Governance Act of 1998 which evolved the Navajo Nation into a federal system with 110 local chapter governments. ONGD would continue to work on alternative forms of local governance and create education materials. By 2002, CNGD and ONGD hosted the Red Rock State Park Convention which generated many government reform recommendations for the team to investigate. However in 2007, Navajo politics led to

the Navajo Government Development Act which dissolved CNGD. After litigation in Shirley V. Morgan (2010), CNGD and ONGD were established with their original 1989 plans of operation and proper funding to prioritize the People’s project of comprehensive government reform.

Other Navajo voices have contributed to government reform debates. Austin (2009) argues Western judicial institutions are incompatible with Navajo values and create a costly system incapable of resolving all issues, generating adversarial relationships, and lacking a relationship to Navajo traditions (pg. 39). Diné Policy Institute developed their own plans for restructuring Navajo governance (Yazzie et al., 2008) and more recently argued against regionalization (Curley & Parrish, 2016). Even ONGD’s recent Diné Local Governance Summit gave a platform to grassroots local and central government officials who demanded government reform to address functional and fiduciary roles (ONGD, 2023). This history and scholarly debate ground this report’s goals and design choices.

## Report Goals

The goal of this survey is to address *how Navajo citizens want to govern themselves?* This is a complicated research question to fully answer as government consists of numerous moving parts. As such, the survey was designed to use the cutting edge tools developed in existing academic research to address three notable areas of Navajo governance. This report discloses the results of conventional survey questions, respondent rank-orders of Navajo civic duties, and a conjoint experiment randomizing aspects of Navajo government. All informants voluntarily participated and could opt out from the study at any point. No personal or identifying information were collected.

The primary task of this report is to provide ONGD, CNGD, the Navajo Nation government, and the Navajo People the necessary information needed for evidence-based decision making in the Navajo Government Reform Project. To summarize, the Navajo people want to maintain local governance, demand greater ethics and accountability in

government, and desire more elections for the Nation's *Naataaniis*. Division in Navajo politics stems more from generational differences in age and fluency in *Diné Bizaad* than other sources. However, much work remains in studying Navajo politics and understanding what the people want from government. It is the Navajo Government Development Team's hope that the Diné thought process and this report can help guide ongoing research to use advanced empirical methods as efforts expand to collect, organize, store, and analyze data.

## II. NAHAT'Á – TO PLAN

*Nahat'á* means **to plan** in the Diné thought process and reflects the specific design choices made in the survey to measure the concepts of interest. ONGD spent a significant amount of time discussing plans for fielding a survey on the Navajo Nation. In this light, previous CNGD and ONGD activities, including the Diné Local Governance Summit, generate qualitative insights from specific groups within the Nation. Therefore, the goal of this survey was to find the general consensus from a broad sample of the Navajo people, which also empowers more complicated empirical models.

### Quantitative Approach

There is often debate on and off the reservation on whether to use surveys as semi-structured interviews to investigate a research question. The general understanding exhibited by programs in Window Rock is that quantitative data like statistics are better suited to describing patterns. Qualitative data collected through historical sources, interviews, and focus groups get at the mechanisms or the reason for those patterns. Ideally, a study would rely on both types of data. This report should be paired with the released *Diné Local Governance Summit Report* (ONGD, [2023](#)) to have a more complete view of current government reform preferences of Navajo citizens.

While the *Diné Local Governance Summit Report* (ONGD, [2023](#)) is its own product, it is limited in presenting the views of primarily chapter government officials. It would be unrealistic to conduct deep focus groups with a broad population across the reservation on numerous areas of government reform, which is where a survey in a quantitative study would be more appropriate and pair well with this existing work. There are numerous



aspects to survey design that ONGD spent significant time considering which resulted in a survey relying on common styles of questions and more innovative methods to provide more complicated measures of government reform preferences.

## Survey Design and Methodology

There are many points to consider when working with Navajo Nation citizens who are seldom consulted on their views in these matters, especially in academic style work. ONGD relied on its combined knowledge of Navajo tradition, culture, customs, and values to ensure the survey was accessible and understandable for the average Navajo citizen. This entailed incorporating the Diné thought process to the design and reporting phases of this project.

As a result, the survey was designed with four sections and limited to be respectful of respondent's time. In the first section, respondents were presented with a consent form detailing the information about the project and contained the contact information of the statistical research analyst if anyone had any questions. Respondents were instructed that their participation is entirely voluntary and that they may withdraw at any point in the survey. Furthermore, respondents could choose which questions they wanted to respond to and could leave the whole survey blank if they wanted.

In the second section, respondents were asked demographic information such as their registered chapter, ethnicity, fluency in *Diné Bizaad*, level of education, age, gender, occupation life-way/religion practiced, and common political questions asked in the American National Election Study. This includes what political party the respondent identifies with, their political ideology, and vote choice in the 2020 US and 2022 Navajo Nation presidential elections. Staff also included political knowledge questions which were incorporated in empirical models as an index.

In the third section, respondents were prompted more common style survey questions

on their views toward specific Navajo Nation policies. This includes whether the Navajo Nation should have chapters, approval ratings toward respondent chapter governments, approval toward Window Rock and the Navajo central government, whether the Nation should have a fourth branch as noted by Diné Fundamental Law, and what powers, economic policy, and services the Navajo government should develop moving forward. Respondents were also tasked with ranking eleven Navajo civic duties from the *Navajo Common Law Project* (Austin, 2009) which enables an analysis of how different groups may engage with the fundamental aspects of Navajo politics differently. More details are provided in the following sub-section.

In the fourth section, respondents were tasked with a conjoint survey experiment which has greater details below in its own sub-section. While CNGD and ONGD have fielded more straightforward surveys in the past, conventional survey questions about specific aspects of government cannot account for the multi-dimensional nature of comprehensive government reform. Therefore, ONGD relied on advances in this experimental technique to present respondents randomized hypothetical government reform proposals to compare with current Navajo governance. Respondents would then choose which system, current or hypothetical, they prefer, trust more, and find more aligned with their views of Navajo culture. Further analysis is presented in the appendix.

## **Rank-Order Task: Navajo Civic Duties**

A large quantitative study relying on a broad sample of Navajo citizens has the potential to provide answers to the following question; **To what extent does diversity within the Navajo Nation affects domestic Navajo politics?** The size of the Navajo population has generated considerable diversity in many aspects of life. Each agency, and within agencies, Navajo people engage with *Diné Bizaad* and cultural beliefs idiosyncratically. Navajo citizens reside all over the globe and provide examples to the contemporary divisions Deloria and Lytle (1984) discussed for Indigenous people broadly. Indigenous

Americans have to face differences in blood quantum (Rodriguez-Lonebear, 2021), cultural knowledge, geographic origin and residence, religious beliefs, and more (Deloria Jr, 1973; Deloria & Lytle, 1984). Scholars like Lee (2020) emphasize how Navajo identity is divided in terms of history, worldviews, language, relations, and the land. However, these arguments focus on philosophical thought and historical sources. This survey helps tests and validates these theoretical claims with empirical evidence produced by engaging with communities directly.

In this light, political scientists have regularly studied the different sources of division in societies to understand how they shape domestic politics. Initially, scholars focused on four main sources (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967), but have since expanded the potential list further (Lijphart, 1984).<sup>2</sup> Indigenous peoples have their own sources of division unlike the rest of the western world as discussed above (Deloria & Lytle, 1984; Lee, 2020). Thus, there is a whole literature of work that can assist the Navajo Nation in addressing this question. One excellent template is posed by Jacoby (2014) in examining how Americans rank-order the fundamental values of American citizenship. ONGD modified this approach to better fit the Navajo Nation and generated a list of Navajo civic duties from the *Navajo Common Law Project* for respondents to rank-order.

The rank-order task prompts respondents to rank eleven Navajo civic duties from *Table 1* in order from most to least important.<sup>3</sup> These civic duties are articulated as principles of *K'é*, the Navajo concept regarding individual relations with the social and natural worlds (Austin, 2009; Lee, 2006; Lee, 2020). *K'é* is the foundation of all Navajo guiding principles including traditional, customary, fundamental, and common law (*Navajo Common Law Project*). While these civic duties are not formally presented in a list in existing writing, they are articulated as components of *K'é* and present an appropriate conceptualization of the essential building blocks to Navajo domestic politics.

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<sup>2</sup>These include Socioeconomic, Religious, Cultural-Ethnic, Urban-Rural, Regime Support, Foreign Support, and Post-Materialist Differences.

<sup>3</sup>The order was randomized for each respondent.

Table 1: Civic Duties for Rank-Order Task

Civic Duties	Explanation
Rule of Law	To act in accordance with Navajo Nation law
Respect	To respect the rights and freedoms of all people regardless of their gender, their beliefs, their disabilities, their differences, their teachings and lifeways
Childcare	To provide for the health, safety and welfare of children
Education	To obtain an education and receive a certification of success
Not Harm	To abstain from harming all Diné, the environment, and property of others. This includes following public safety precautions and health mandates
Property Rights	To maintain and care for individual property, including livestock
Fairness	To be fair and honest in business and personal obligations
Public Servants	To serve as an elected or non-elected position benefiting the Navajo Nation without violating the public’s trust
Protecting Others	To protect and defend the Navajo Nation
Report Crimes	To report information to the proper authorities relating to any crime
Accountability	To be accountable for individual actions and their consequences

The product of this exercise is a dataset with individual rankings of these civic duties. This hierarchical data can be analyzed by replicating Jacoby’s (Jacoby, 2014) approach to transform individual rank-orders into directional vectors and plot their relative importance along the circumference of a circle. This allows individual vectors to point toward the civic duties respondents find most important. Furthermore, maximum likelihood estimation methods can use the magnitude of differences between identity features through “circular regression” (Fisher & Lee, 1992; Gill & Hangartner, 2010; Jacoby, 2014).

The results of which would help address what sources of division drive differences in the fundamental foundations of Navajo domestic politics. It is commonly held there are differences by religious affiliation on the reservation both on Navajo and abroad (Deloria Jr, 1973; Jacoby, 2014), but this may also encompass differences by geography (Lee, 2020), or political ideology (Jacoby, 2014; Grossmann & Hopkins, 2016). The circular regression can account for all of these and other identity features.

## Conjoint: Comprehensive Government Reform Preferences

In the future, CNGD and ONGD will have a proposal to put before the people to vote on which could alter the landscape of Navajo governance. This would change fundamental aspects of the current *Wááshindoon* Model into a Navajo designed system. Previous CNGD and ONGD surveys have grasped at specific government reform solutions, but do not have a means of evaluating solutions in competition with each other or simultaneously.

For example, first consider the future of local governance. Currently, the Navajo Nation has 110 chapters across the reservation and requires chapters to become local governance act (LGA) certified to have greater financial authority (Title 26). Chapters may also adopt alternative forms of local governance once LGA certified. In 2015, the Navajo Nation Council issued a referendum to regionalize the chapters, but was vetoed by the Navajo President. This perspective persists in Council, but others state the Nation should remove chapters entirely. The survey does prompt respondents whether the Navajo Nation should continue to have chapters. This does provide an answer to whether local governance is wanted in the future. However, how do local governance reform solutions compare to central government reform? Do the Navajo people prefer local governance reform over addressing other political issues such as the size of Council, electing the Speaker, or having a fourth branch of government as noted by Diné Fundamental Law? What are the right options for these other institutions? This is a multidimensional problem that cannot be solved with a single survey question, therefore ONGD turned to expanding academic research employing the conjoint survey experiment.

A conjoint survey experiment is another type of survey tool used to measure how people choose when presented multiple features of an item. It is commonly used in marketing research, but has seen greater uses in the social sciences (Hainmueller et al., [2014](#); Bansak et al., [2022](#)). The conjoint allows a researcher to mimic natural social processes, like car shopping, by varying different features of government reform. Put simply, the conjoint prompts respondents to answer questions regarding a randomly designed object of in-

terest multiple times. In each iteration, respondents are faced with a newly randomized object to assess. The survey prompts respondents to compare the current Navajo Nation government with a randomized hypothetical political reform system four times.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, the survey essentially presented respondents random options for the Navajo Government Reform Project proposal. *Figure 1* provides a visualization of this process. In each draw of the conjoint, respondents were provided a completely random right hand side of the experiment to compare against how the Navajo Nation currently operates. After examining this information, respondents were asked which system do they like more, trust more, and aligns with their view of Navajo culture. This provides a means to estimate what items within the random reform system are most and least preferred by Navajo citizens. This also identifies how specific government reform solutions compete against others within and across political institutions.

	<b>Current System</b>	<b>Reform System</b>
Election	Popular Vote	Popular Vote
Council Size	24 Delegates	1 Delegate Per Chapter (110 Total)
Chapter Reform	Need LGA Certification	Need LGA Certification
NN Civil Rights	No Focus	Protection to LGBT+, Multiethnic, Disabled
Policy Creation	Delegates and Difficult Referendum (Popular Vote)	Delegates and Easy Referendum (Popular Vote)
Executive Selection	President Elected By Voters	Prime Minister (Chairman) Selected By Council
Fourth Branch	No Fourth Branch	Office of Chief of Security (Public Safety and Veterans Affairs)

Figure 1: Example Conjoint Respondents Were Presented With (Randomly Selected)

<sup>4</sup>Since individual responses are correlated with each other, the analysis addresses this through cluster standard errors at the respondent level. For more information on conjoint and their applications, see Bansak et. al. (2022)



Table 2: Components for Profiles in Conjoint Experiment (Baseline Levels in Bold)

Component	Level
Council Size	<b>24 Delegates</b>
	1 Delegate Per Chapter (Currently 110 Total)
	48 Delegates Equally Representing By Population
	No Council
Chapter Reform	<b>Need LGA Certification</b>
	Empower Chapters
	Combine Chapters
	No Chapters
NN Civil Rights Focus	<b>No Focus</b>
	Protection to LGBT+, Multiethnic, Disabled
	Protection from US and Non-Natives
	Cultural and Philosophical Rights
Laws Created	<b>Delegates and Difficult Referendum (Popular Vote)</b>
	Only Referendum (Popular Vote)
	Only Delegates
	Delegates and Loose Referendum (Popular Vote)
Executive Selection	<b>President Elected By Voters</b>
	Prime Minister (Chairman) Chosen By Council
Speaker Selection	<b>Speaker Chosen By Council</b>
	Speaker Elected By Voters From Council Delegates
	Speaker Elected By Voters From General Population
Fourth Branch	<b>No Fourth Branch</b>
	Ethics and Accountability (People’s Council)
	Office of Chief of Security (Public Safety, Veteran’s Affairs)
	Traditional Philosophy (Elder’s or Practitioner Council)

Table 2 provides all of the potential government reform solutions that could be randomly selected within each political institution. The analysis stage does weigh each of these institutions appropriately based on the number of items within an institution and to account for the fact that respondents had one side held constant (the current system).

As an estimand of interest, the conjoint provides the Average Marginal Component Effect (AMCE) of a given government reform option compared to a baseline condition.<sup>5</sup> Since the AMCE is the marginal effect of a component’s level averaged over the joint distribution of remaining levels and all levels are randomized independently, ordinary least squares regression is perfectly suitable (Hainmueller et al., 2014). The bold text are the

<sup>5</sup>For subgroup analysis, it is more appropriate to rely on the marginal means of levels in aggregate (Leeper et al., 2020). This analysis is in appendix.

baseline conditions used in the AMCE analysis and are deliberately specified to identify how alternative government reform solutions compare to current Navajo governance. For example, when looking at the council size options, the model would provide estimates for having 1 delegate per chapter *compared to 24 delegates*, 48 delegates by population *compared to 24 delegates*, and no council *compared to 24 delegates*.

The alternative governmental institutions in *Table 2* originate from the various government reform solutions CNGD and ONGD have documented since 1989. ONGD focused on the major issue areas to include in the conjoint. This includes representation, local governance, citizen rights, the legislative processes, head of executive selection, head of legislature selection, and debates on the fourth branch as noted by the *Navajo Common Law Project* and Diné Fundamental Law (Austin, [2009](#)). The levels were carefully worded to account for the reality that most citizens do not know the differences between presidential and parliamentary systems (Campbell et al., [1960](#); Mayhew, [1974](#)). For example, the “48 Delegates Equally Representing By Population” level of “Council Size” serves as an indicator for proportional representation, which allocates representatives based on the size of the population.

The primary interest is in gauging which government reform solutions respondents prefer. Based on the design of this conjoint, the preference AMCE would not only provide a measure of government reform preferences, but demand for change compared to the current system. Asking respondents which do they trust, or perceive as more legitimate, and find reflective of Navajo culture, as a measure of perceived cultural congruence, are alternative measures of interest. However, the intention is to see whether these other concepts shape preferences which can be attained through mediation analysis (see Appendix).

### III. IINA – TAKE ACTION

*Iina* means **to live** or **take action** in the Diné thought process and reflects the survey activity implemented by CNGD and ONGD. The Navajo Government Development Team engaged with the Navajo people to educate citizens throughout the reservation and invite respondents to voluntarily participate. The survey was shared across the reservation, in border towns, on the internet, and with local and central government outlets. In general, the sample collected consists of a more politically active group of citizens which is corrected through survey weights constructed using census data.

#### Public Engagement: Data Collection

A critical component of CNGD and ONGD’s activities is engaging with the public to educate and understand their interests when it comes to government reform. To this end, CNGD and ONGD used the survey as an opportunity to further expand its public outreach by traveling to and connecting with various communities across the Navajo Nation. During this process, both CNGD and ONGD would travel out to set up information booths to provide educational materials on Navajo governance, answer questions about the office and Navajo governance, hear grievances toward the Navajo government, and share information regarding the survey for respondents to voluntarily participate.

The Government Development Team relied on convenience sampling from a wide array of sources. Surveys were coded in Qualtrics and made available for voluntary participation in-person through tablets. Staff were on site to help clarify any questions regarding the survey. For in-person respondents who wished to participate on their own time or with their own devices were provided information on how to respond online or through QR codes. Most importantly, members on the Navajo Government Development Team who are fluent in *Diné Bizaad* were available to translate and assist respondents on the

survey. For those off-reservation, the survey was shared online through ONGD's social media accounts. Lastly, to further engage with those working directly with the Navajo Nation's government and enterprises, the survey was shared with chapters, Navajo Nation announcements, and the enterprises.

CNGD and ONGD were able to collect 776 responses from across the reservation. There is survey attrition where not all respondents completed the entire survey. About 675 responses completed more than ninety percent of the survey, which provides an adequate sample. In the field, respondents commented they had never completed a survey like this before or had an opportunity to more formally report their concerns with their fellow community members. Many individuals walked up to the "Office of Navajo Government Development" canopy to voice their concerns and grievances with the Navajo Nation government. CNGD and ONGD listened, but did not record the conversations with individuals out in the field. Instead, concerned citizens were encouraged to participate and report their concerns in the relevant sections of the survey. These additional thoughts are summarized in the next section dedicated to the survey results.

It was remarkable for CNGD and ONGD to actively engage and visit communities across the Navajo Nation. The Commission on Navajo Government Development is composed of representatives from the Nation's five agencies, three branches of government, Diné College, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee through a graduate student, the Women's Commission, and a traditional practitioner. The Commission and ONGD staff found intrinsic value in visiting relatives from opposite corners of the reservation and reconnecting with extended relatives through *K'é*. It is further hoped that those visited appreciated the opportunity to learn from the Navajo Government Development team and benefit from the education materials produced on Navajo governance. ONGD staff are available to conduct further public outreach and presentations. To schedule, please send an email to [navajogovdev@gmail.com](mailto:navajogovdev@gmail.com) and the team will find time to prepare and visit the community.

## Survey Sites

CNGD and ONGD fielded the “Navajo Comprehensive Government Reform Survey” from July 2023 through October 2023 in over seventeen different locations across the reservation and in nearby border towns as presented in *Figure 2*. In general, information booths were set up across the reservation in larger public events like flea markets, education events, different regional fairs, and more. This includes Window Rock flea market, Navajo Nation Fair, Gallup flea market, Crownpoint flea market, Ramah Rodeo Fair, Dilkon flea market, Twin Arrows Chapter Training, Tuba City flea market, Lechee flea market, Page Indian Day, Kayenta flea market, Arizona Native Vote’s education campaign in Kayenta, Central Agency Fair, Diné College Commissioner recruitment, Shiprock Fair, Shiprock flea market, and the Diné Local Governance Summit in Farmington. These are reflected as blue points of interest in *Figure 2*.

71 respondents did not report their registered chapter, therefore *Figure 2* under represents the true geographic distribution of respondents. It is possible CNGD and ONGD were able to collect at least one to four respondents from every chapter, however this would assume respondents from Nageezi and Counselor simply did not want to indicate their registration there. It is unclear how representative this survey is compared to others conducted across the reservation, but it is great to have respondents report in from 108/110 chapters including the satellite chapters of Ramah, Alamo, and Tohajilee. It was another priority to ensure CNGD and ONGD visited communities all over the reservation and as many survey locations were scheduled in the time available. If there was additional time and personnel available, then greater efforts would have been made to have at least ten respondents from each chapter and ensure all chapters have respondents report their registration from there.

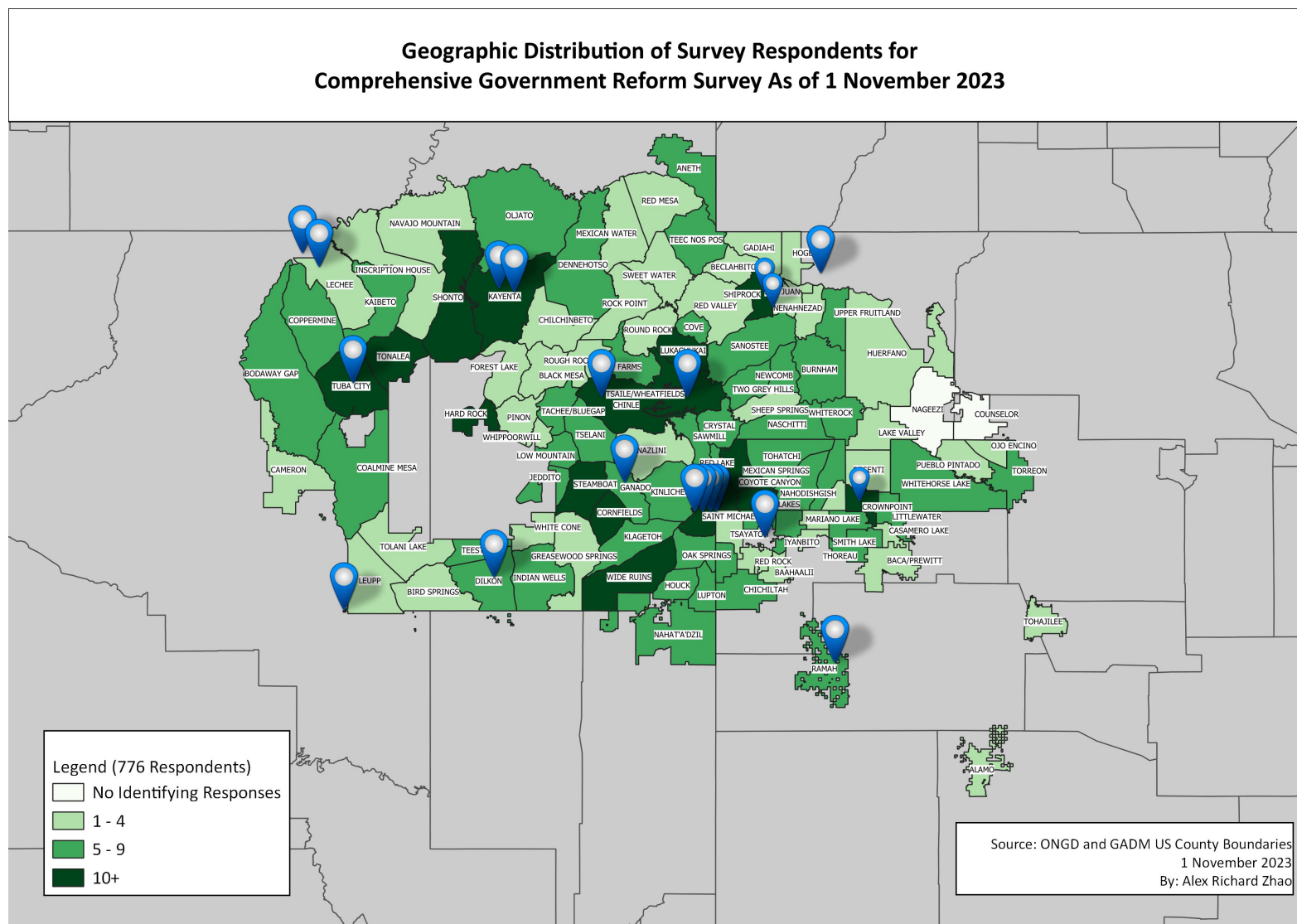


Figure 2: Number of Respondents In Each Chapter and Survey Sites Visited



## Descriptive Statistics

*Table 3* presents the demographic descriptive statistics for the sample collected by CNGD and ONGD during this period of extensive community engagement. The sample is mostly female, registered to vote, directly involved with the Navajo Nation government, fluent in *Diné Bizaad*, having some college or an associate’s degree, more senior in age, living on the reservation, are democrats, and do not identify with US conceptions of political ideology. This last characteristic was particularly surprising and so the analysis added a binary indicator to compare respondents who self-identify with an American political ideology and those who do not. It is statistically important in the rank-order task described in the next section.

Based on these sample demographics, it is reasonable to assume the survey was more successful in attracting the attention and voluntary participation of more civic minded citizens. This should not be surprising given the nature of a survey dedicated to comprehensive government reform and fits with the common participation of more vocal elements of Navajo domestic politics. From the experience of CNGD and ONGD, a majority of local chapter participants are the Nation’s matriarchs who tend to be older and have higher levels of education. At this time, CNGD and ONGD do not have reliable data on US political party identification and ideology on the reservation.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it is unclear how representative the US political views of this sample are. However, previous survey’s conducted in 1984 and 1994 with Navajo citizens also showed two thirds of the sample identify as Democrats (Wilkins, 1999; Russell & Henderson, 1999). This is an encouraging signal, but the goal of this survey is to be as representative of the Navajo Nation as possible. Demographics are important, but it is also important to take into consideration other aspects of the sample.

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<sup>6</sup>The same applies to how representative religious and life-way differences are as well as vote choice.

Table 3: Demographic Descriptive Statistics of Sample

Variable	Sample (n = 776)
<i>Gender (%)</i>	
Female	65.34
Not Female	34.66
<i>Registered To Vote In Navajo Elections (%)</i>	
Yes	92.78
No	7.22
<i>Navajo Nation Employee or Elected Official (%)</i>	
Yes	55.80
No	44.20
<i>Fluency in Diné Bizaad (%)</i>	
Fluent	45.17
Somewhat Fluent	31.85
Not Fluent/Prefer Not To Say	22.98
<i>Level of Education (%)</i>	
Advanced Degree	17.56
Bachelor's Degree	24.77
Associate's Degree/Some College	46.00
High School Degree	10.22
Some High School	0.14
<i>Age (%)</i>	
18-24	2.59
24-34	12.11
34-44	17.14
44-54	21.90
55+	46.26
<i>Reservation Residency (%)</i>	
On-Reservation	80.28
Off-Reservation	19.72
<i>Political Knowledge (%)</i>	
High	58.98
Medium	26.34
Low	14.66
<i>US Political Party Identification (%)</i>	
Democrat	62.63
Republican	19.07
Independent/Other	18.3
<i>US Political Ideology (%)</i>	
Liberal	20.10
Middle	24.23
Conservative	20.36
None of These Options	32.31
Prefer Not To Say	2.71
<i>US Vote Choice in 2020 (%)</i>	
Biden	59.45
Trump	16.38
Other	24.17

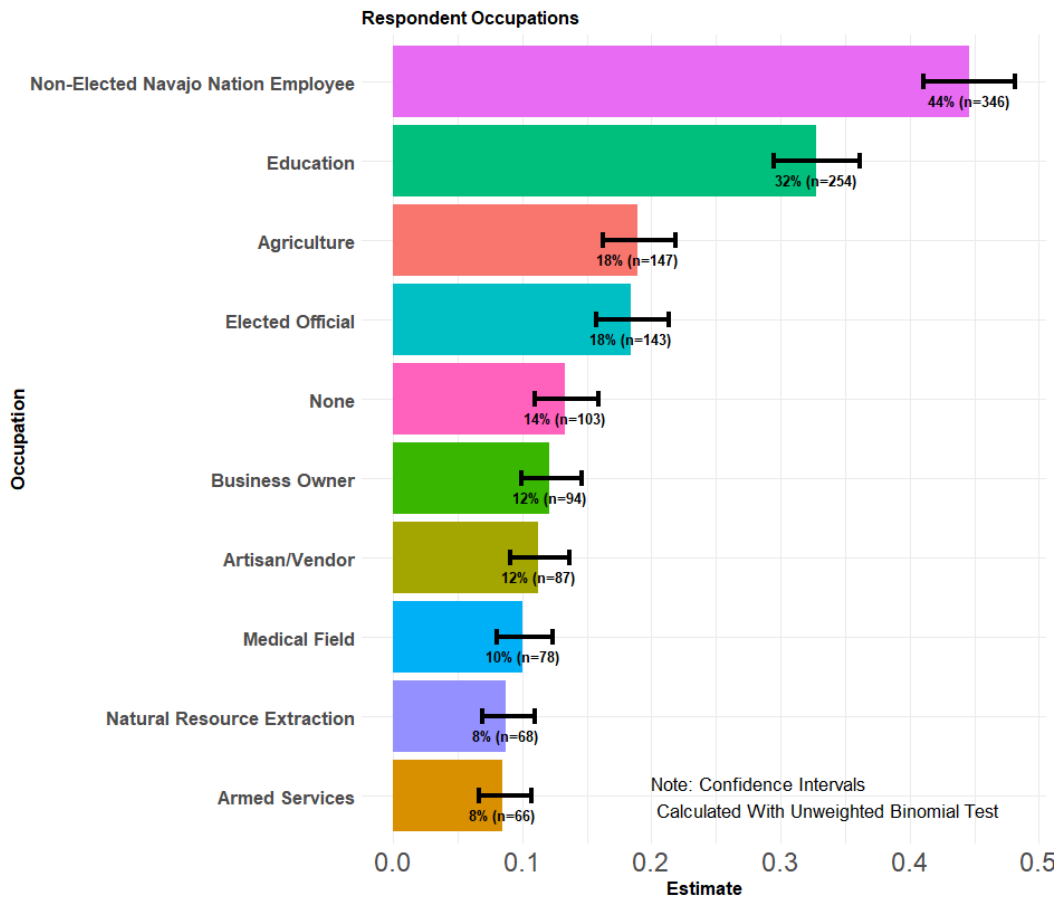


Figure 3: Respondent Occupations

Figure 3 plots the different occupations respondents held and the largest group, by far, are Navajo Nation employees. The next largest occupation in the sample are educators, followed by agricultural workers, and elected officials. There were roughly equal numbers of business owners, artisans, vendors, medical professionals, natural resource extraction workers, and members of the armed services participating.

Similarly as seen in Figure 4, most respondents identify as practicing traditional *Diné* lifeways. The next major group in the sample are those attending Native American Churches with the remainder belonging to other religions or lifeways.

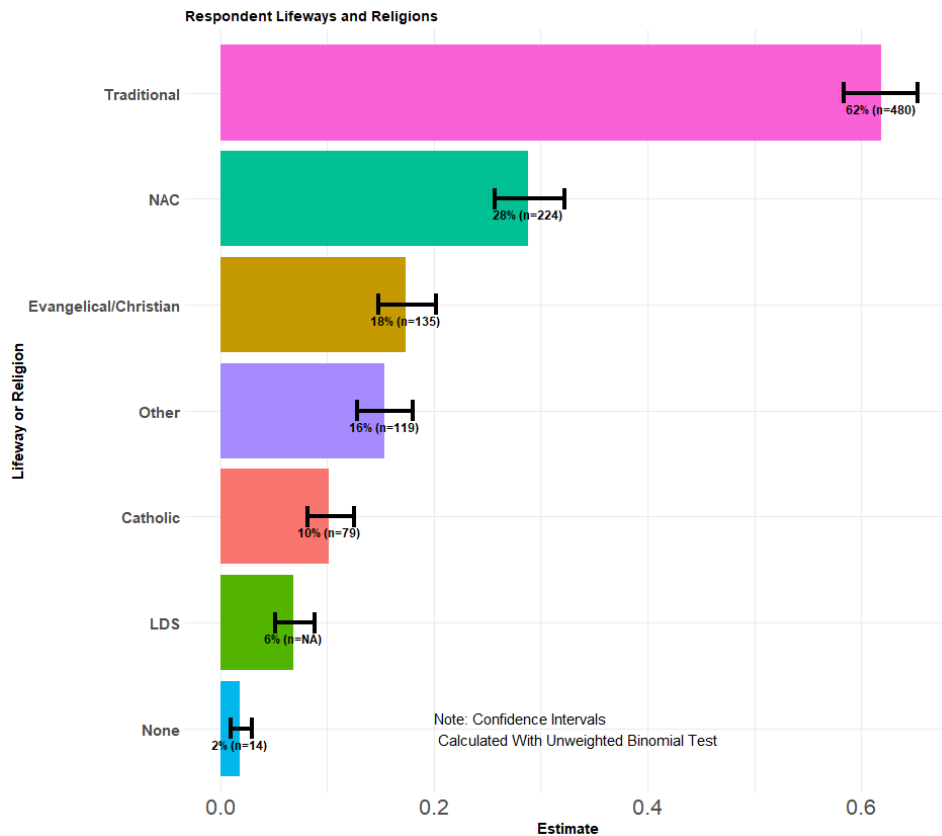


Figure 4: Respondent Life-way and Religious Preference

## Survey Weighting Through The Census

In an ideal situation, CNGD and ONGD would rely on a random sample of Navajo citizens to make inferences about the population. This would require relying on an entity who specializes in ensuring samples are nationally representative, but these resources do not exist on the Navajo Nation. For this reason, CNGD and ONGD relied on convenience sampling at public events and online which produced the sample discussed thus far. This sample is unique in being more politically active and involved with Navajo government compared to the general population. To address the imbalances between the sample and the general population of the Nation, the analysis stage first created survey weights.

Survey weights assign numerical values to respondents to adjust for the imbalances created by the differing probabilities citizens voluntarily participate. This helps make a survey, and its results, more representative of the population which should eliminate some bias

produced by over- and underrepresented groups. For example, according to the 2019 Census, the Navajo Nation is fifty-two percent female. In CNGD and ONGD's sample, sixty-five percent identify as female. This means results would over-represent females compared to other gender identities. A survey weight corrects this by applying a value of less than one to females while males and other gender identities would have a weight greater than one to balance out the proportions to match the general population.

For this survey's analysis, weights are constructed using this standard "raking" process using the regional margins from the 2019 Census and turnout data from the 2022 Navajo General Election. The respondent information used for the weights are age, fluency in *Diné Bizaad*, gender, level of education, whether a respondent voted in the 2022 Navajo presidential election, and whether a respondent works for the government. This weighting process should not only correct bias from different demographic groups but also with how prevalent Navajo Nation employees, elected officials, and politically active citizens are in the sample. For respondent's who provided their registered chapter, weights were constructed using census data from their agency while those who did not had weights constructed based on the overall Navajo Nation population. This regional component to the weights should also account for differences in geography at the agency level and *Table A1 to A2* in the appendix reports the population and sample margins used in this procedure. The patterns described above are consistent across agencies.

Survey weights cannot address the inherent design limitations of convenience sampling where some types of citizens will always participate in a survey and others will not. Therefore, this corrective process can only correct some bias, which is nonetheless an improvement. Bias can never be totally eliminated when working in the social sciences, but it should always be a goal to limit measurement error when possible.

## IV. SIIH HASIN – TO REFLECT

*Siih Hasin* means **to reflect** or **to evaluate** in the Diné thought process and resonates with the survey results analyzed by ONGD. First, the policy and political knowledge results measured through traditional survey methods are presented using a series of bar graphs. Afterwards, respondent's rank-orders of the Navajo civic duties are displayed using several methods to demonstrate how generational differences divide Navajo citizens more than other identity features. This section ends with the conjoint experiment results which provides comprehensive government reform preferences. For example, the conjoint emphasizes how Navajo citizens want to elect the speaker of the Navajo Nation Council. Additional empirical tests and information are available in the appendix.

### Policy Items

In terms of policy, CNGD and ONGD developed the survey to use more conventional survey methods to directly ask citizens their views on different policy areas. For local governance, respondents were asked about the role of chapters and what powers chapters should have. Similarly for central governance in Window Rock, respondents were prompted with answering what economic policy and services should the nation adopt as well as their thoughts on a fourth branch of government as noted by Diné Fundamental Law. Based on respondent approval ratings toward chapters and the Navajo central government, it is clearer to see why respondents prefer having more elections.



## Local Government Reform

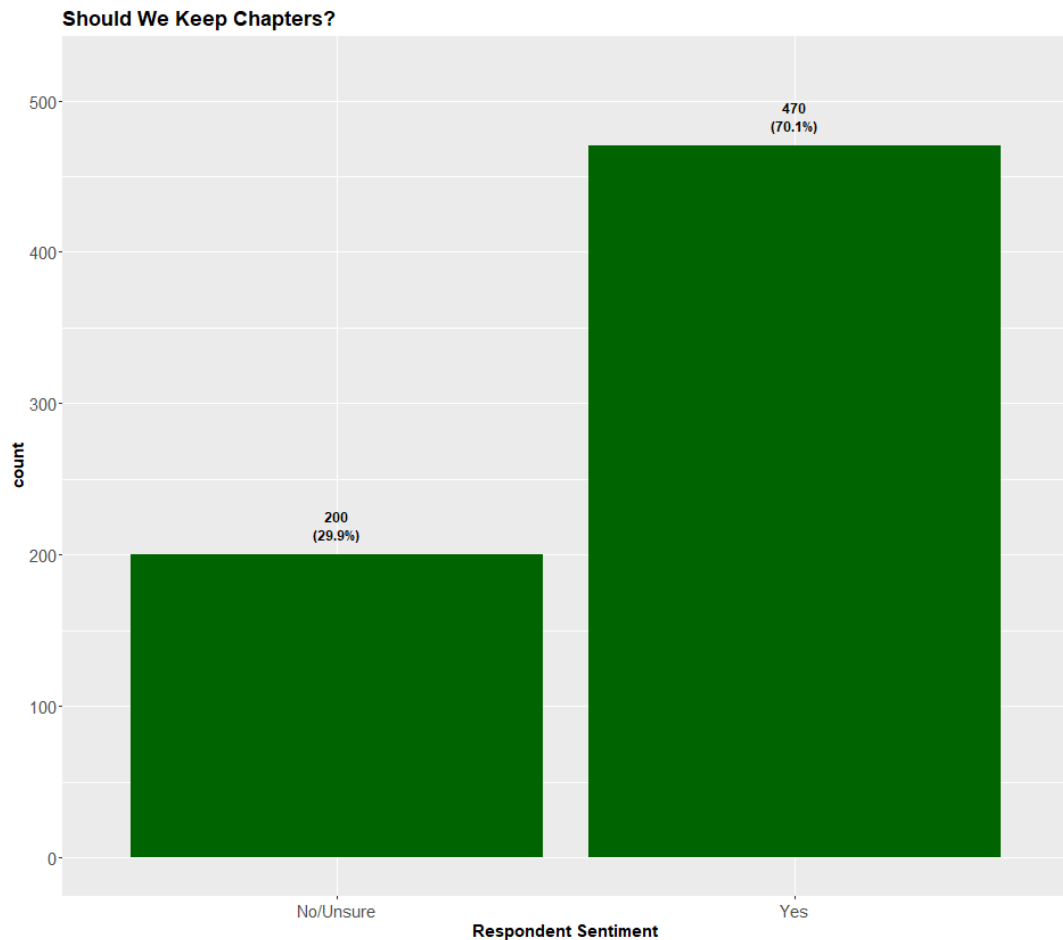


Figure 5: Should We Keep Chapters?

A major question in many folks minds is whether the Navajo Nation should keep Chapters? Seventy percent of respondents indicated “yes” which is a strong signal that citizens want to maintain local governance in the Nation. However, thirty percent of respondents did report “no” or were “unsure”, which is a significant minority to keep in mind, especially with ongoing debates on regionalization. For regionalization to be successful, further work would be needed to assess the theoretical gains to be had, GIS analysis of existing public services, and community engaged research to define the what constitutes a region. Quasi-experimental evidence suggests regionalization might not actually save administrative costs as anticipated (Blom-Hansen et al., 2016).

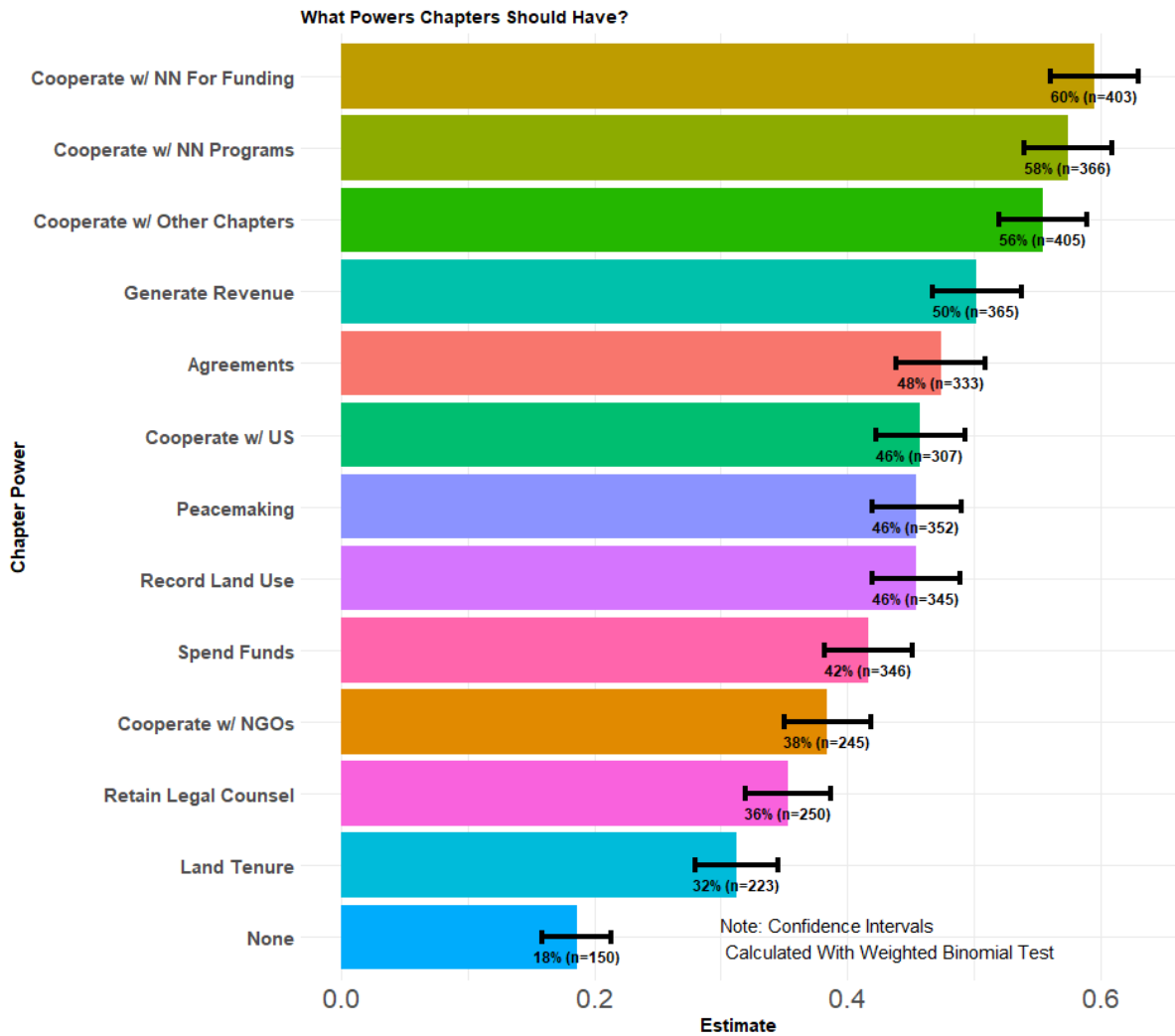


Figure 6: What Powers Should Chapters Have?

With most respondents wanting to keep local governance, the survey inquired what powers should chapters have? The most popular response was that chapters cooperate with for Navajo Nation funding, access to Navajo Nation programs, and with other chapters. This last option could be an informal alternative to regionalization as respondents also reported Chapters should generate their own revenue, enter into agreements for goods and services, cooperate with American federalism, engage in peace making, and record how land is used. Less popular options do consist of spending funding, cooperating with non-governmental organizations, retaining legal counsel, and developing a land tenure system within the chapter. While some powers are more popular than others, the general consensus is that respondents want chapters to have some of these powers.

## Central Government Reform

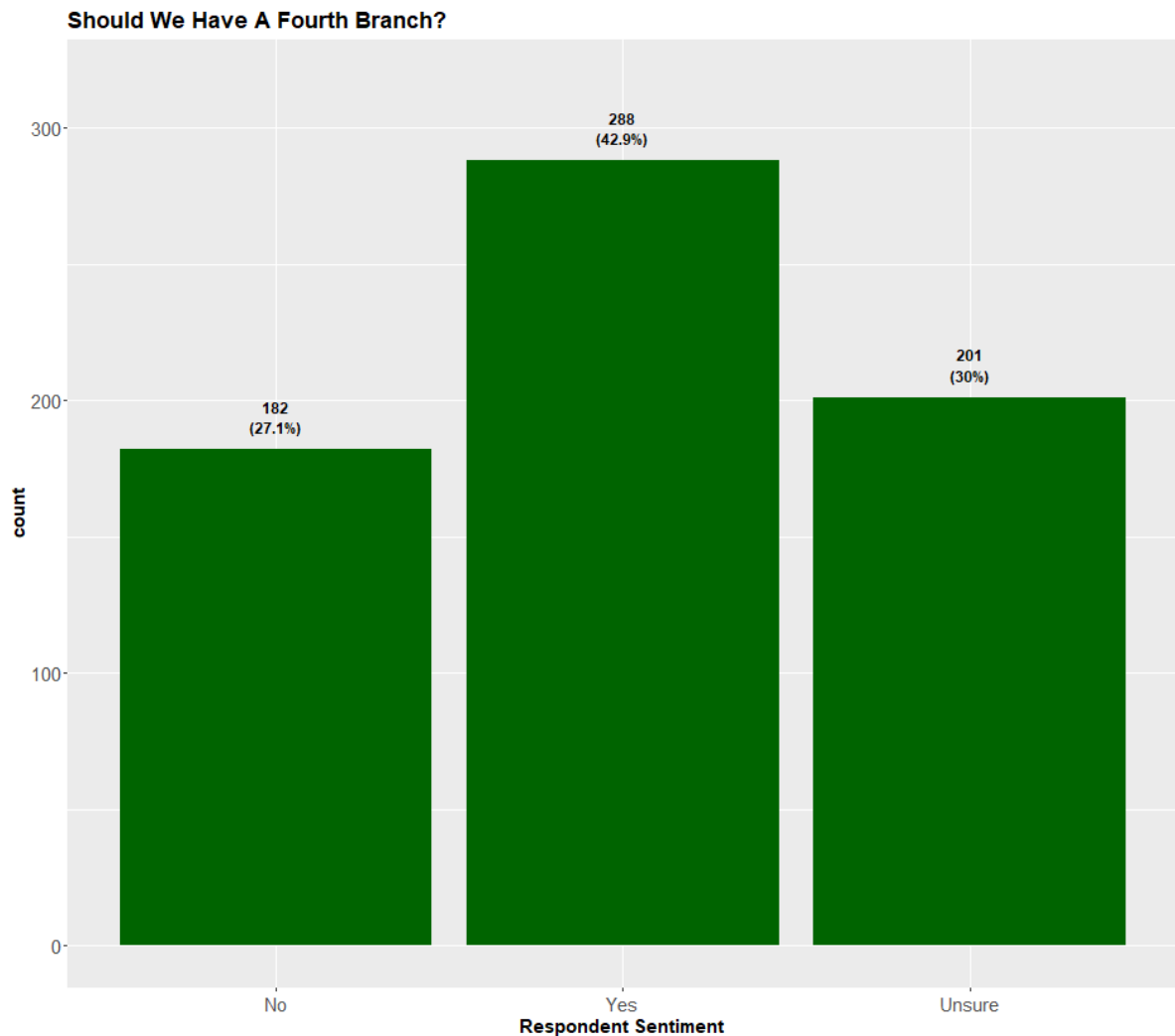


Figure 7: Should We Have A Fourth Branch of Government?

Diné Fundamental Law describes how the governing structure of the Navajo Nation should have four branches to which the *Navajo Common Law Project* provides further details. Originally, the fourth branch has been thought of as a War Chief, but was later envisioned as a Office of Chief of Security (*Navajo Common Law Project*). Other options mentioned throughout history includes an Ethics and Accountability Branch consisting of the People or an Elder's Council to maintain our cultural integrity (Yazzie et al., 2008). When asking respondents whether the Nation should have a fourth branch, a majority agree, but thirty percent are unsure.

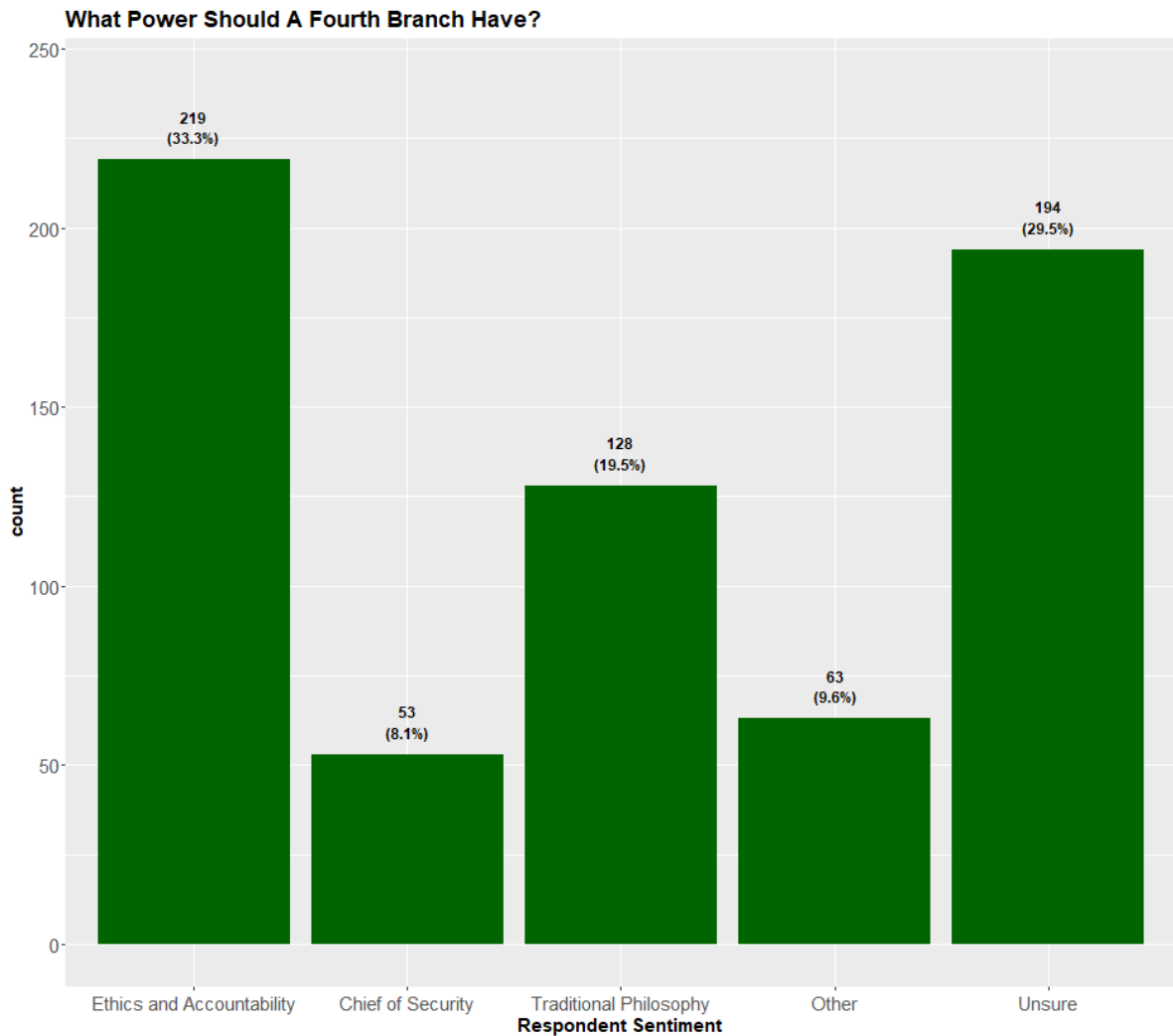


Figure 8: What Power Should A Fourth Branch Have?

This uncertainty extends into the answers for what powers should a fourth branch have where most favor either the Ethics and Accountability Branch or the Traditional Philosophy Council. However, thirty percent of respondents remain unsure. Other ideas raised in open-ended responses on the survey include combining these ideas together, focusing on the Nation's defense, its youth, another legislative branch, and incorporating chapters into the fourth branch. Of these options, the results for this question suggest a combined fourth branch of ethics and accountability with the traditional philosopher's council would be most supported.

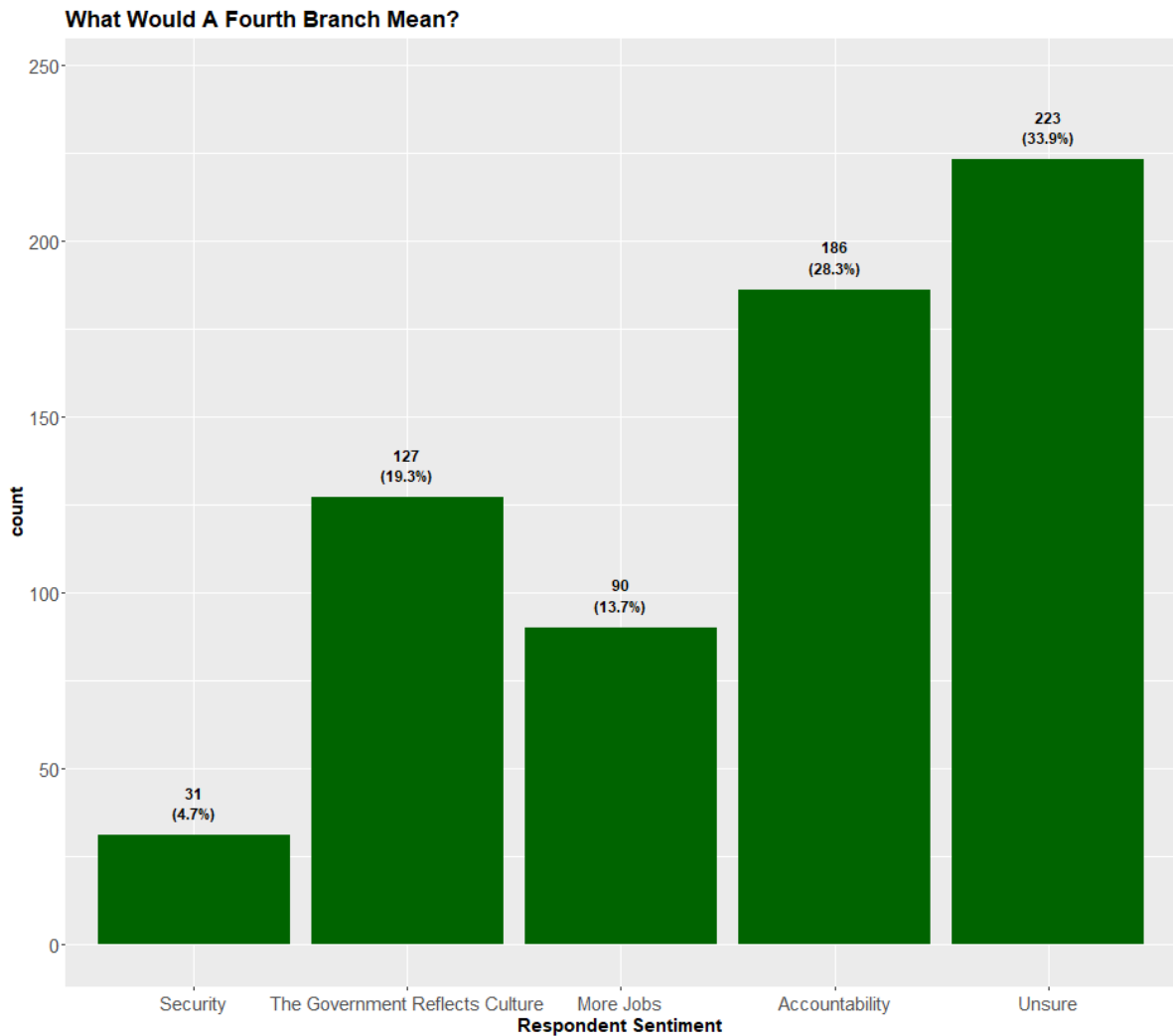


Figure 9: What Would A Fourth Branch Mean?

Respondents were asked what a fourth branch would mean to the Navajo People to ascertain their knowledge on Diné Fundamental Law where the correct answer was security. However, most respondents were unsure of this question and most seemed to replicate their previous answer of accountability and culture. 13.7 percent of respondents did indicate a fourth branch would mean additional jobs to the reservation which is 9 percentage points higher than the correct answer of security. This is somewhat suggestive that folks are unfamiliar with the fourth branch's cultural roots.

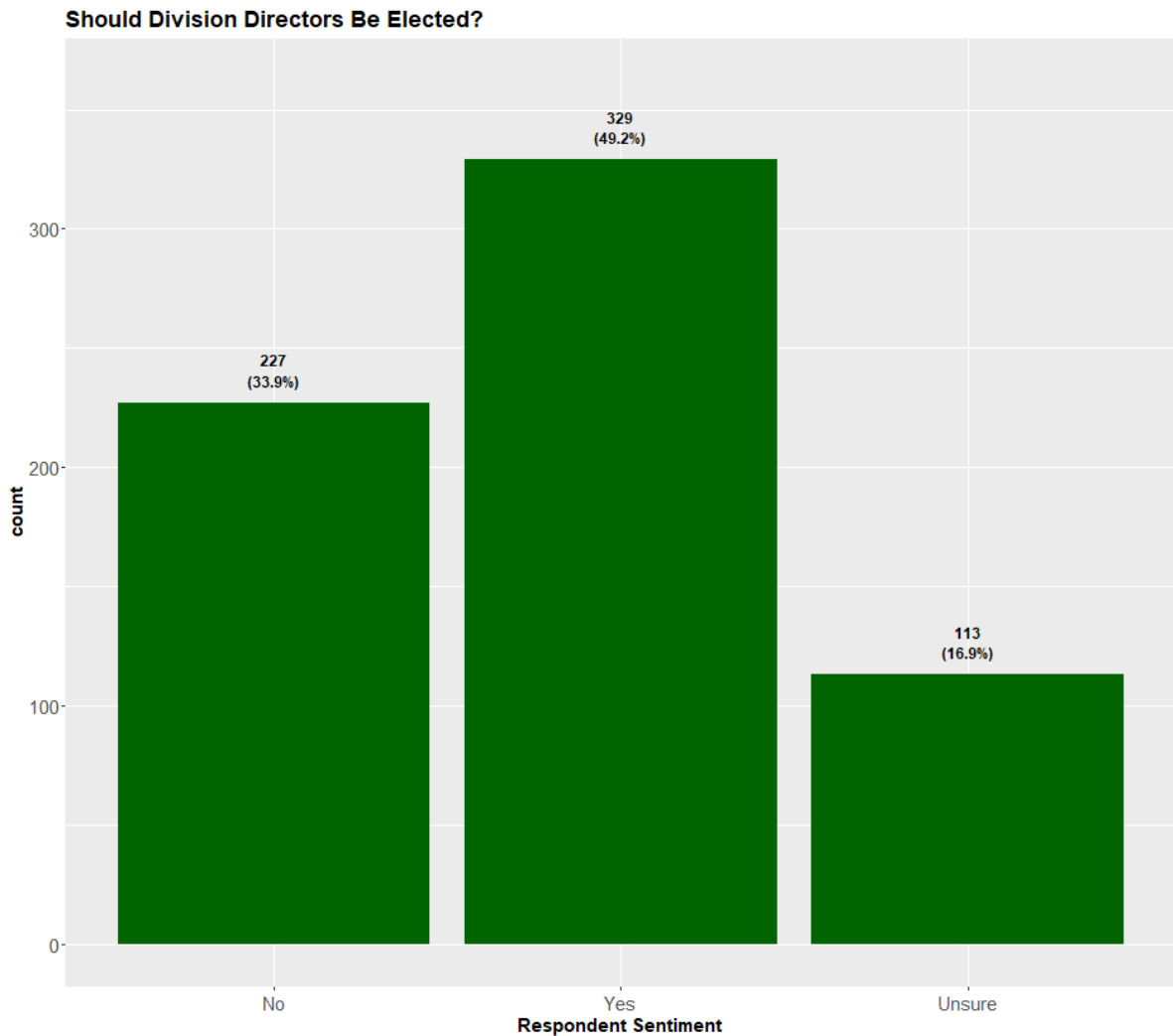


Figure 10: Should Division Directors Be Elected?

In similar aspects of central government reform, respondents were asked whether division directors in the executive branch should be elected. 49 percent of respondents reported they should be while 34 stated they should not. The remaining 17 percent were unsure. Elections are critical for a healthy democracy and the Navajo Nation has not had a two-term president since 2010. The Navajo Nation Council is not immune to this trend either as the last two Councils have experienced great turnover in its membership. Therefore, this idea of electing the leaders of departments who provide services to the people may resonate with this idea of improving government accountability. Considering, how the Navajo President and Vice-President are the only officials truly elected by the entire Navajo People, this response is logical based on current domestic politics.

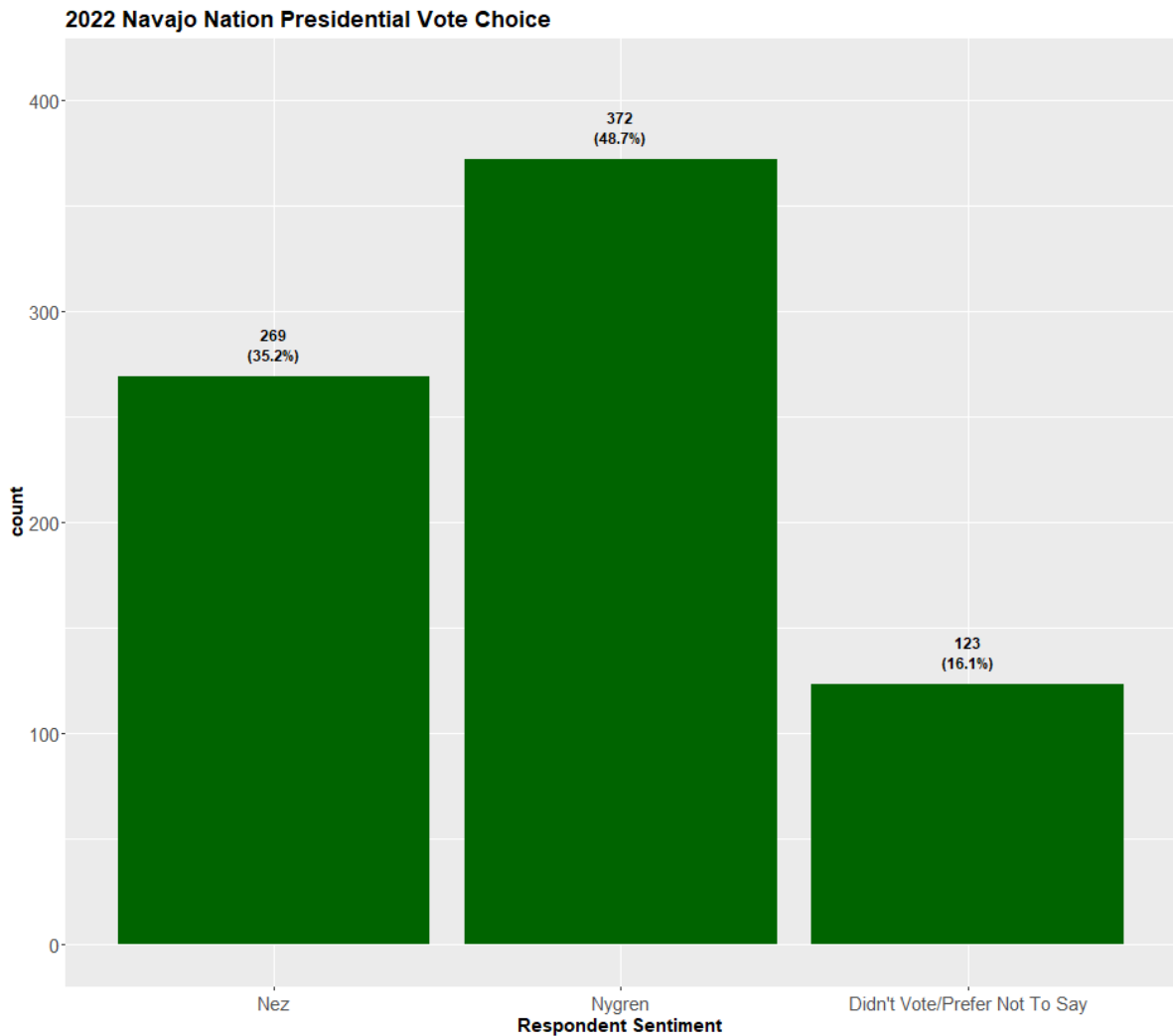


Figure 11: Which Candidate Did Respondents Support in 2022?

This logic is exemplified when respondents were asked which candidate they voted for in the 2022 Navajo General Election. 49 percent of respondents supported challenger candidate and now President Dr. Buu Nygren while 35 percent supported incumbent President Nez. The remaining 16 percent stated they did not vote or preferred not to say, but even if these were all supporting the incumbent, the sample would still be evenly split. After respondents were asked who they voted for, they were provided a list of reasons for why they may have supported their chosen candidate.

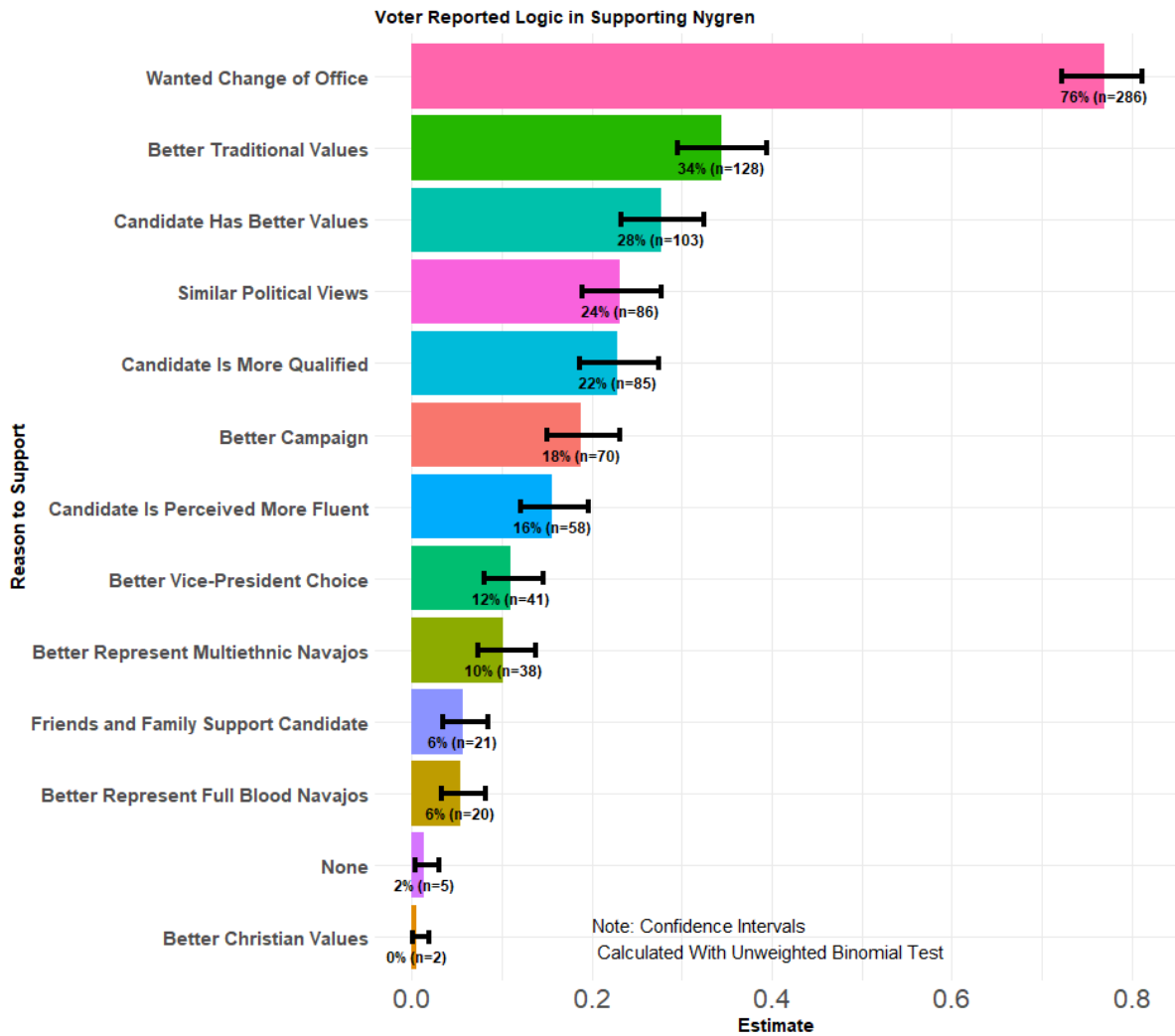


Figure 12: Reasons Respondents Voted For Nygren

*Figure 12* presents the results from respondents indicating they voted for Nygren. By a landslide, the most popular response by 76 percent of supporters is they wanted a change of office. Other considerations appear to be respondents believing Nygren had better traditional Navajo values, better personal values, and was more qualified with similar political views. Very few respondents reported they thought Nygren would better represent Christian values, full-blood Navajos, and multi-ethnic Navajos.



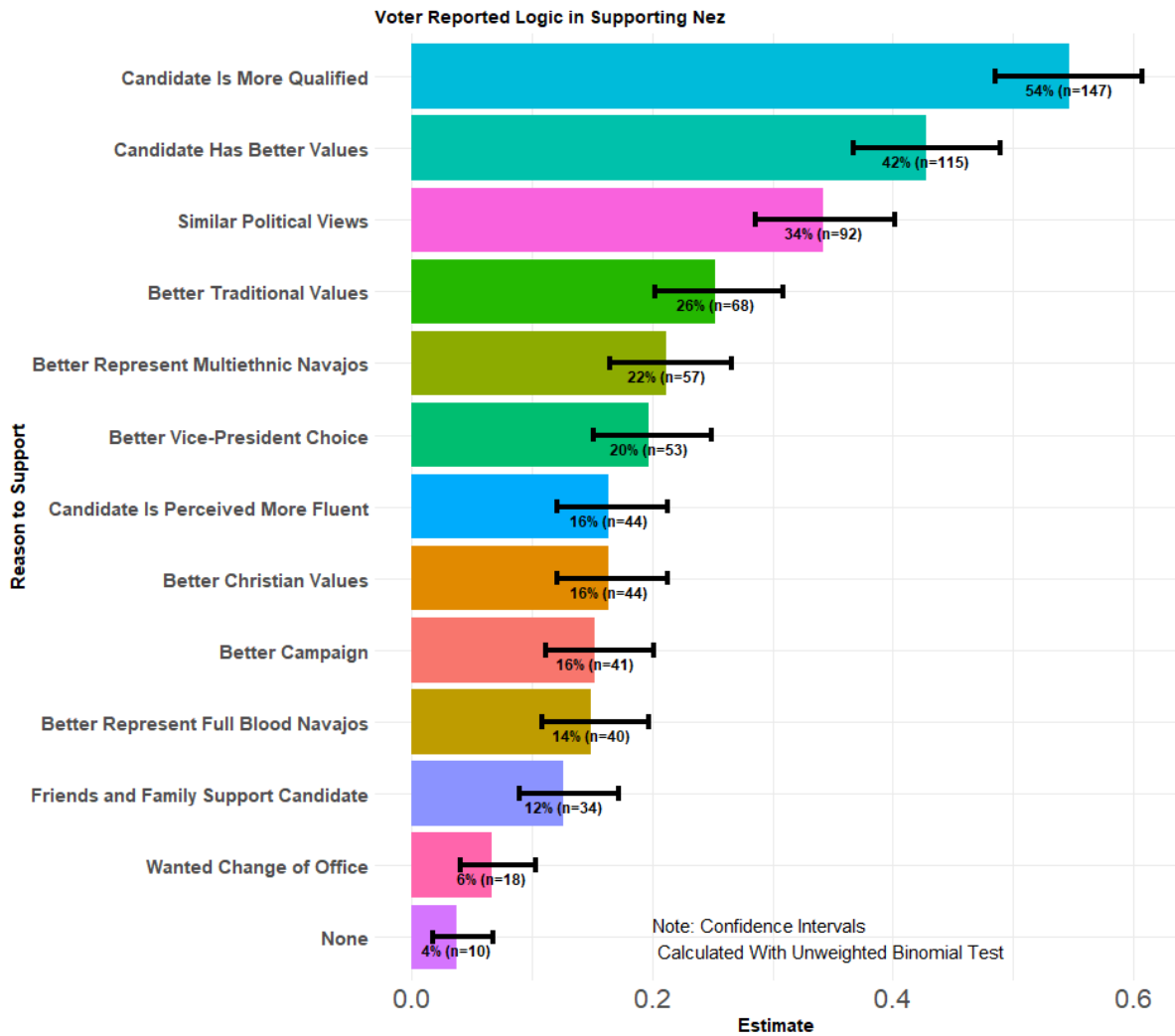


Figure 13: Reasons Respondents Voted For Nez

*Figure 13* presents the complimentary figure for respondents indicating they voted for Nez. Here, Nez supporters agree in believing the incumbent was more qualified, having better personal values, and sharing similar political views as them. Voters supporting an incumbent did accurately engage with the survey in very few respondents indicating they wanted a change of office for a re-election campaign.

All in all, elections are a vital part of a healthy democracy and so far the evidence suggests the Navajo People want further control in choosing who is in office. This result is replicated in the conjoint experiment when it comes to electing the speaker of Council, and may even extend to the judicial branch, but this last branch was not prompted.

## General Government Reform

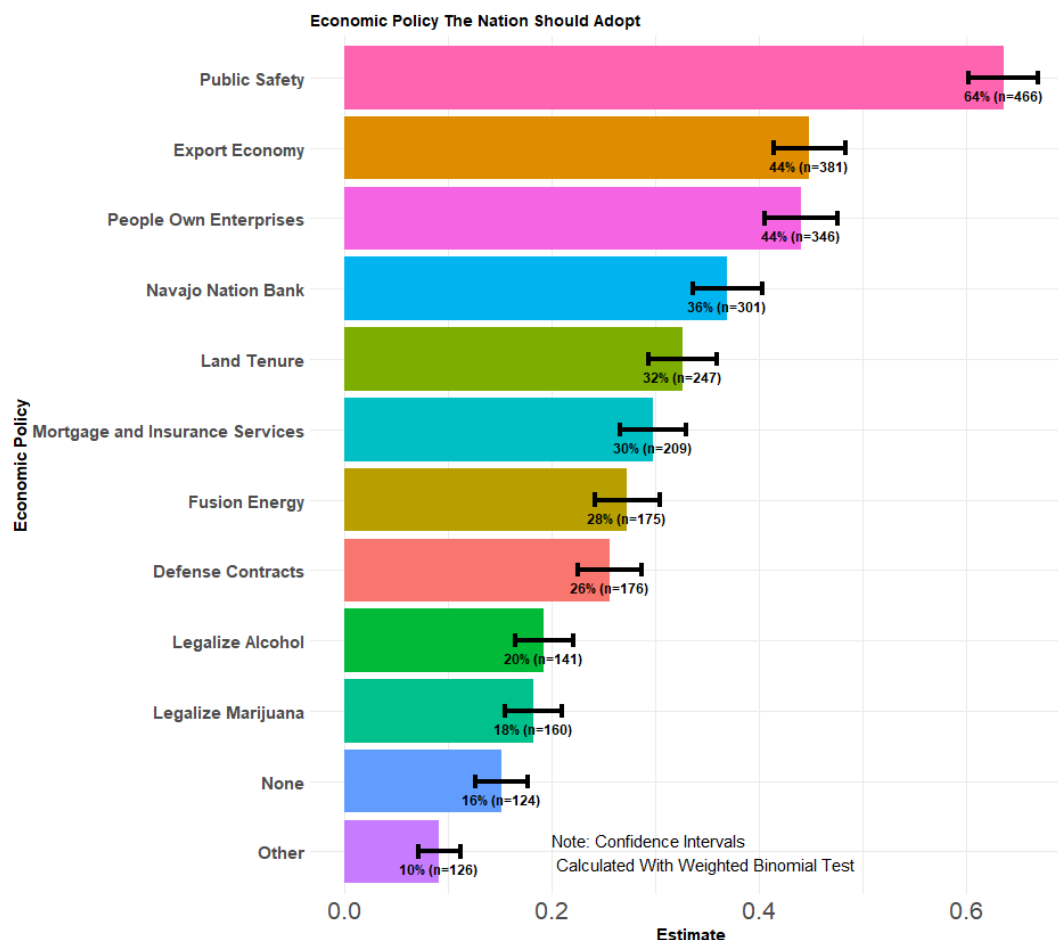


Figure 14: What Economic Policy Should The Nation Pursue?

When asking respondents what economic policies should the Nation pursue, respondents were most supportive of improving public safety. The next popular option was to have the Nation develop an export economy and place the enterprises under the people's control. Similarly popular were having the central government adopt the land tenure system, mortgage and insurance services, fusion energy, and defense industry contracts. The least popular options were legalizing alcohol and marijuana. Other options mentioned by respondents include supporting education, sustainable agriculture, elder care, comprehensive land planning, solar manufacturing, renewable energy, removing officials from enterprise boards, infrastructure, tech sectors, commercial sites, real estate, taxes, tourism, animal control, parks, gyms, and other recreational venues.

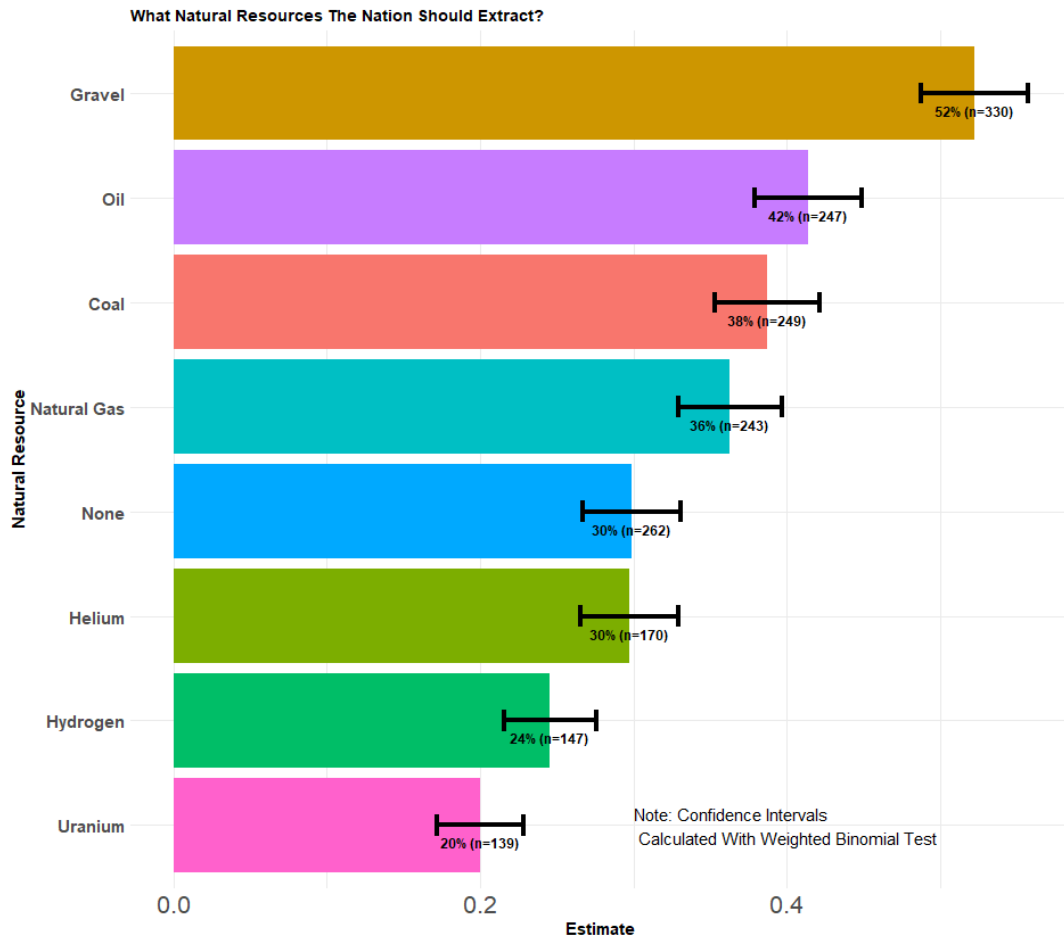


Figure 15: What Natural Resources Should The Nation Extract?

One specific dimension of economic development is natural resource extraction. When prompting respondents with “what natural resources should the nation extract,” most indicated gravel is a suitable solution. A similar level of weighted respondents noted oil, coal, and natural gas with similar preferences. These are statistically greater than those who responded no natural resources should be extracted with similar support for helium, hydrogen, and uranium. These latter three are least preferred where more people would prefer no more natural resource extraction than these resources.

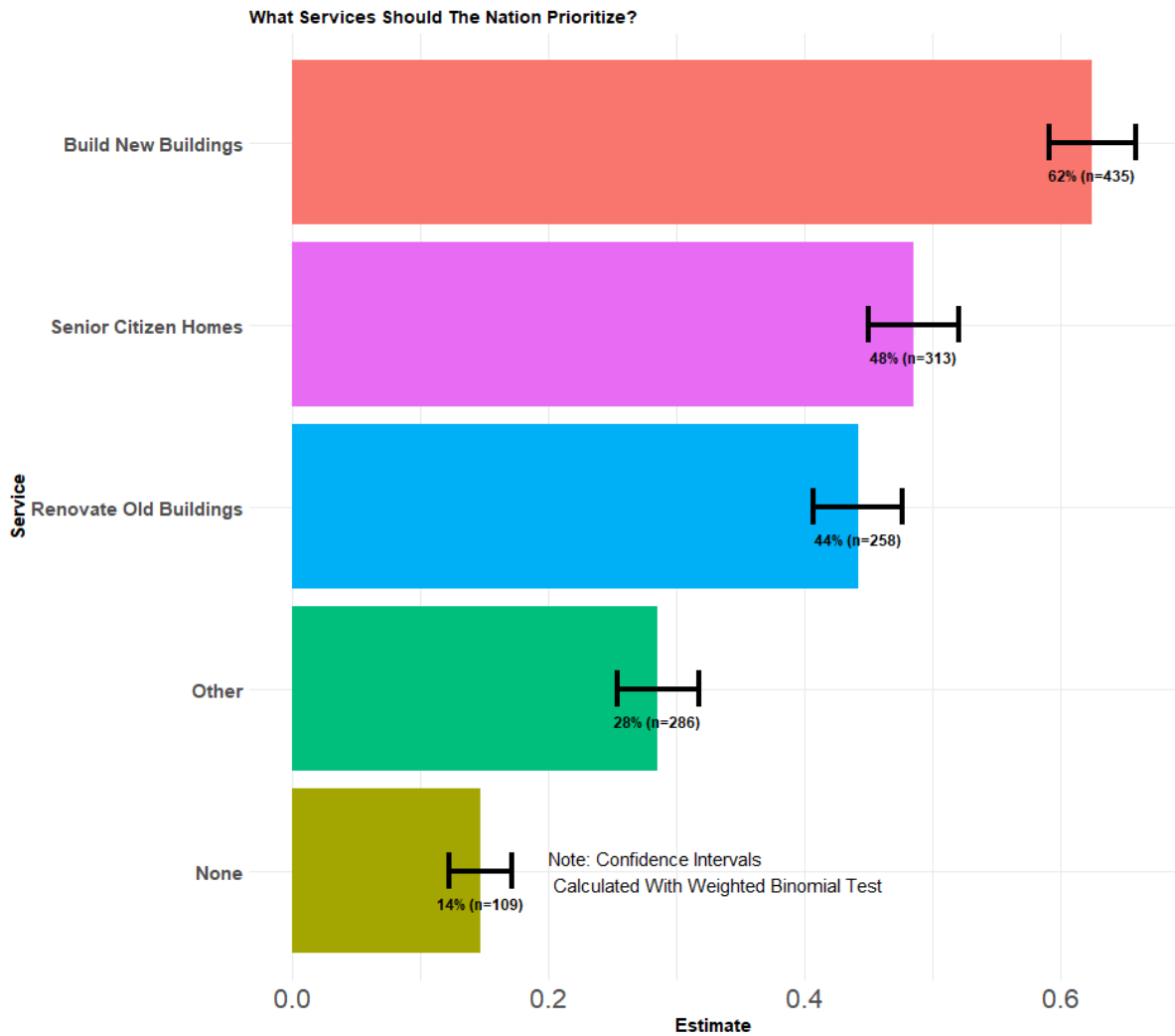


Figure 16: What Services Should The Nation Pursue?

This demand for expanding economic opportunity resonates with respondent thoughts toward what services should the nation pursue. Overwhelmingly most favor building new buildings with similar support for senior citizen homes and renovating old buildings. Other services mentioned in open-ended responses include rehabilitation centers, home nurses, infrastructure, waste management, housing, community centers, head start, rural roads/highways, rural addressing, cultural education, fire fighters, jails, water retention, broadband, libraries, government reform, LGA certify all chapters, community gardens, indoor markets, renting out industrial equipment to chapter citizens, landscaping, replacing grazing permits with rotational grazing allotments for each agency, and demolishing old buildings instead.

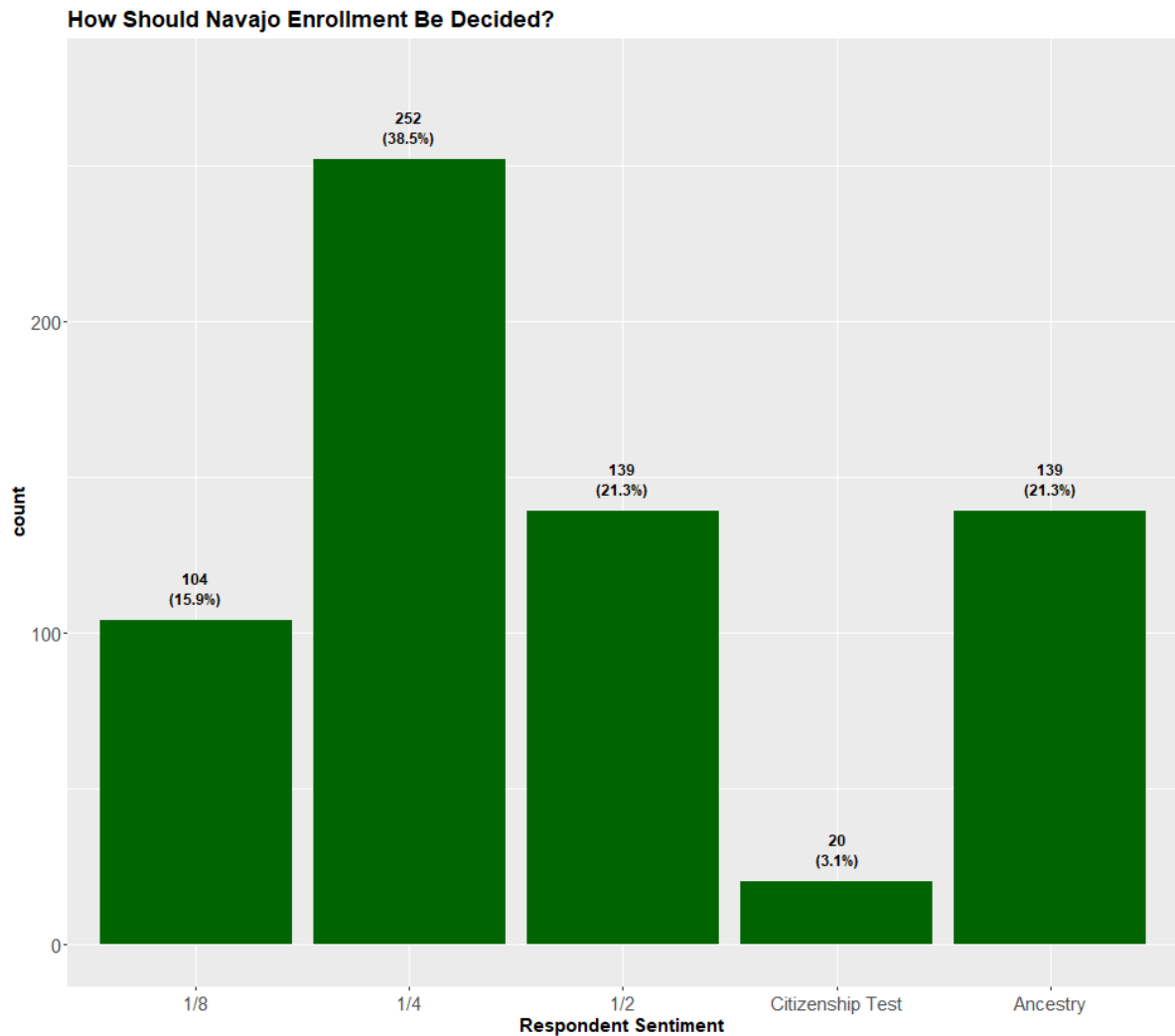


Figure 17: How Should Navajo Enrollment Be Decided?

Services and economic opportunity on the reservation are tied to Navajo citizenship. Currently, the process for individuals to become enrolled with the Nation are to provide evidence that they are at least one quarter Navajo by heritage. This is not a formal blood or DNA test, but instead a historical legacy of assimilation policy. Many Indigenous Nations have revised their citizenship requirements which entails relaxing it or making it stricter (Rodriguez-Lonebear, 2021). Most favor maintaining the current standard, but there are equal numbers of people who would tighten it to one-half or relax it demonstrate ancestral descent. Only three percent of respondents favored adopting a citizenship test to assess individuals interested in becoming citizens of the Navajo Nation. More work is needed to understand how the Navajo people perceive citizenship and Diné identity.

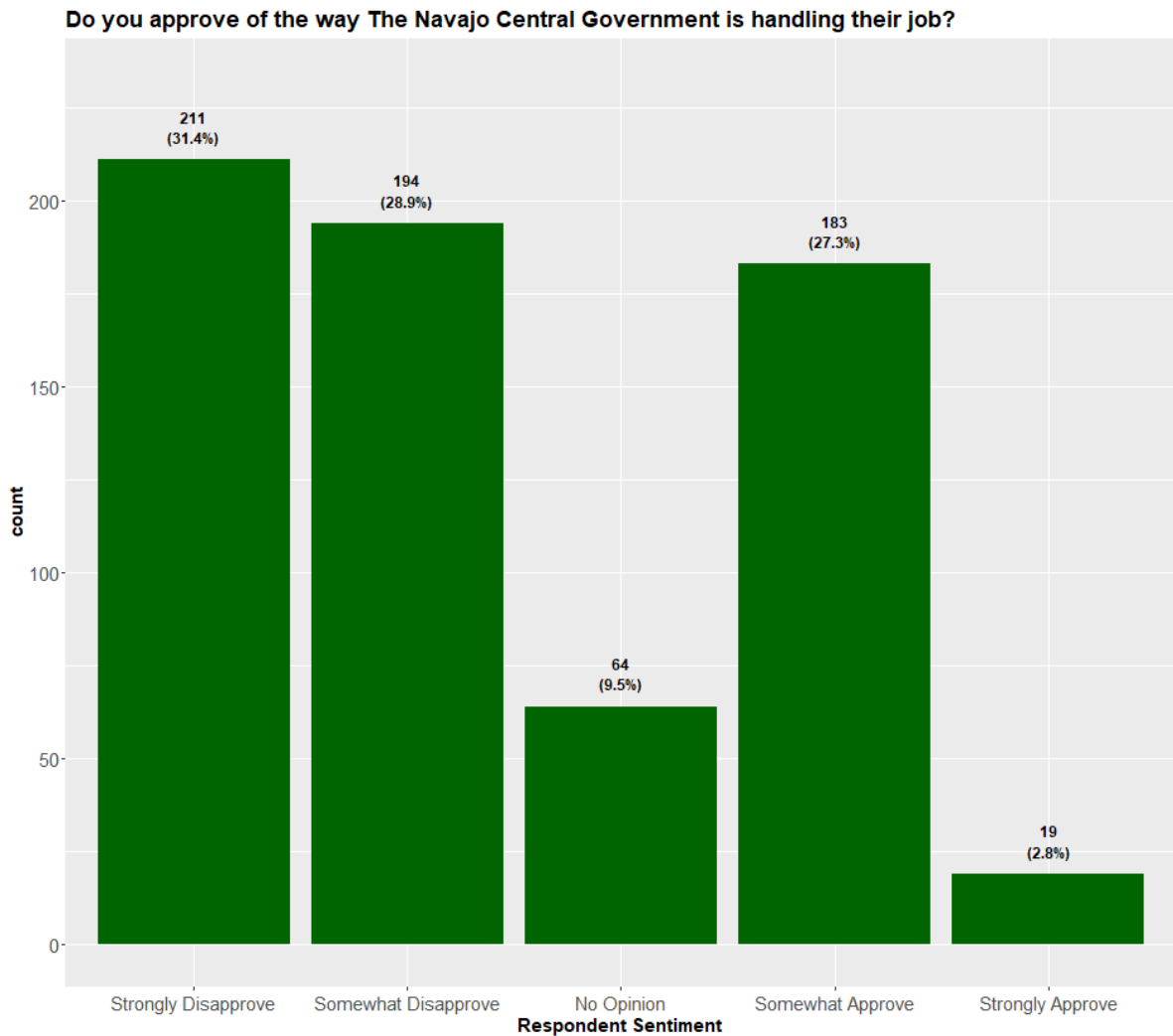


Figure 18: Overall Central Government Approval

Respondents generated many more potential economic and service opportunities for the nation to explore beyond key considerations from the survey design. This many widespread concerns may link to how respondents assessed the Navajo Nation central government. Most respondents expressed strong disapproval toward how the Navajo Central Government, its three branches under the *Wááshindoon* Model, is handling its job. A similar amount of people expressed either somewhat disapproval or somewhat approval. Only 2.8 percent of respondents expressed strong approval while 9.5 percent expressed no opinion. In aggregate around 60 percent of respondents are disapproving of the Navajo Nation central government which is concerning when about the same proportion of the sample are involved with the government as employees or elected officials.

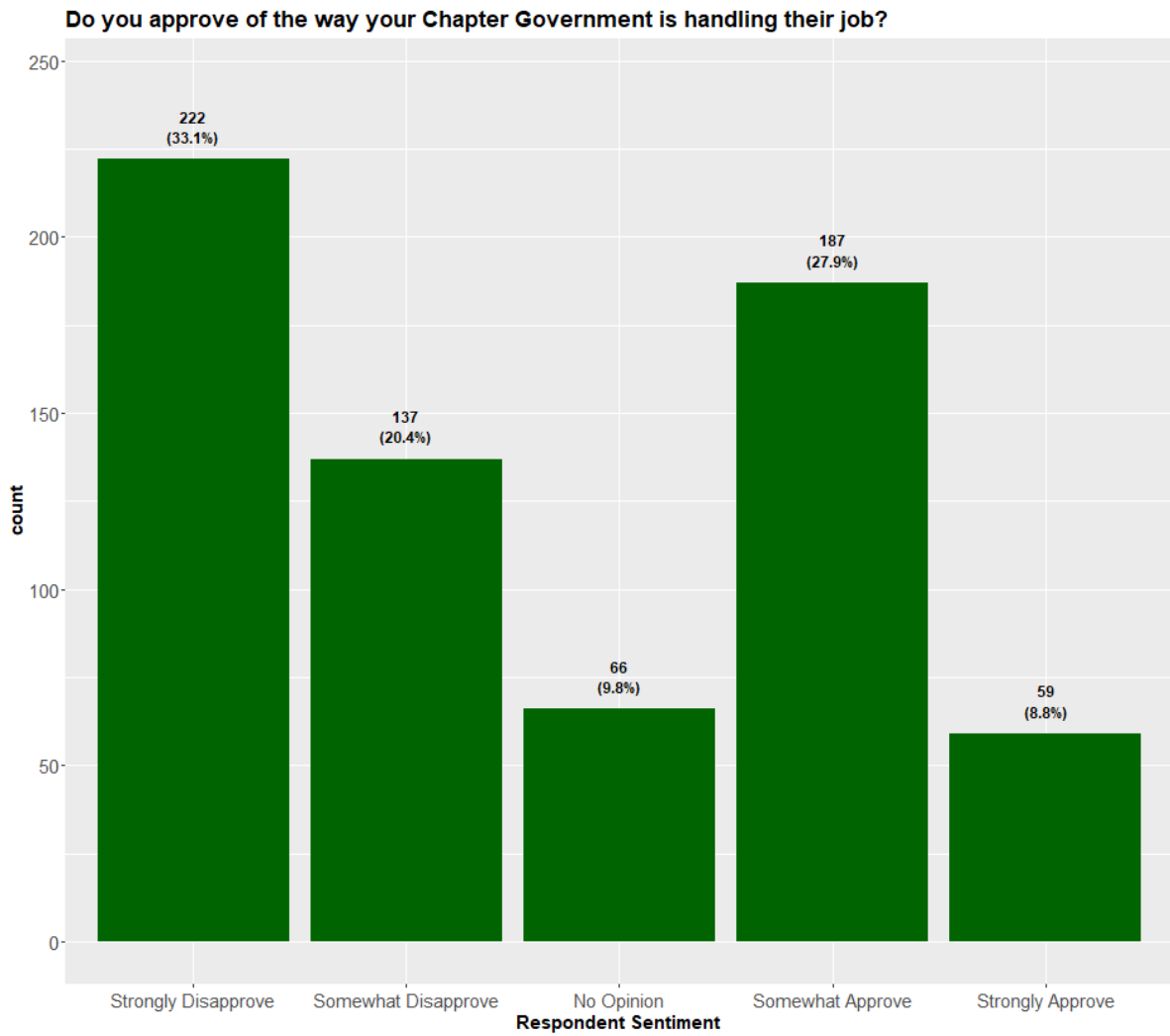


Figure 19: Overall Chapter Government Approval

Chapter governments are not immune from this widespread disapproval as reflected in *Figure 19*, which shows a familiar pattern. The primary difference between the central and chapter government approval ratings is that the somewhat disapproving column shrank while the others grew. In other words, compared to the central government, chapter government approval was more polarizing between strongly disapproving and strongly approving. However, the fundamental result is identical where most respondents are disapproving of current Navajo governance. There may be some concerns that the western educated respondents in this sample may lack an understanding of Navajo governance and this analysis dismisses these concerns in the next sub-section.

## Political Knowledge and Education

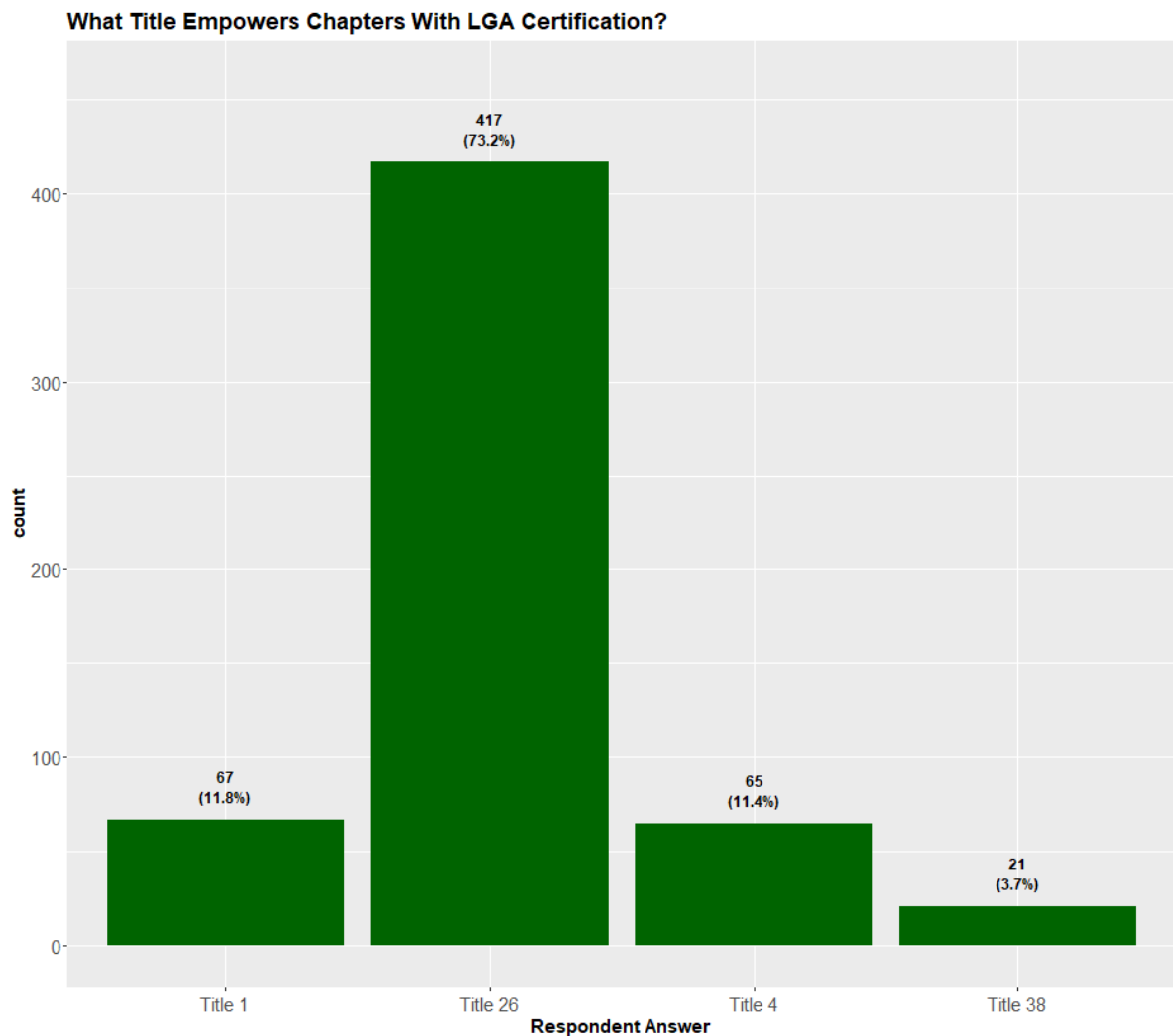


Figure 20: What Title Empowers Chapters with LGA?

Besides testing respondents on their knowledge of Diné Fundamental Law with the fourth branch in *Figure 9*, respondents were asked which Title empowers chapters with local governance. Most respondents answered this question correctly with Title 26, but about 27 percent of respondents did incorrectly attribute LGA to Titles 1, 4, and 38.



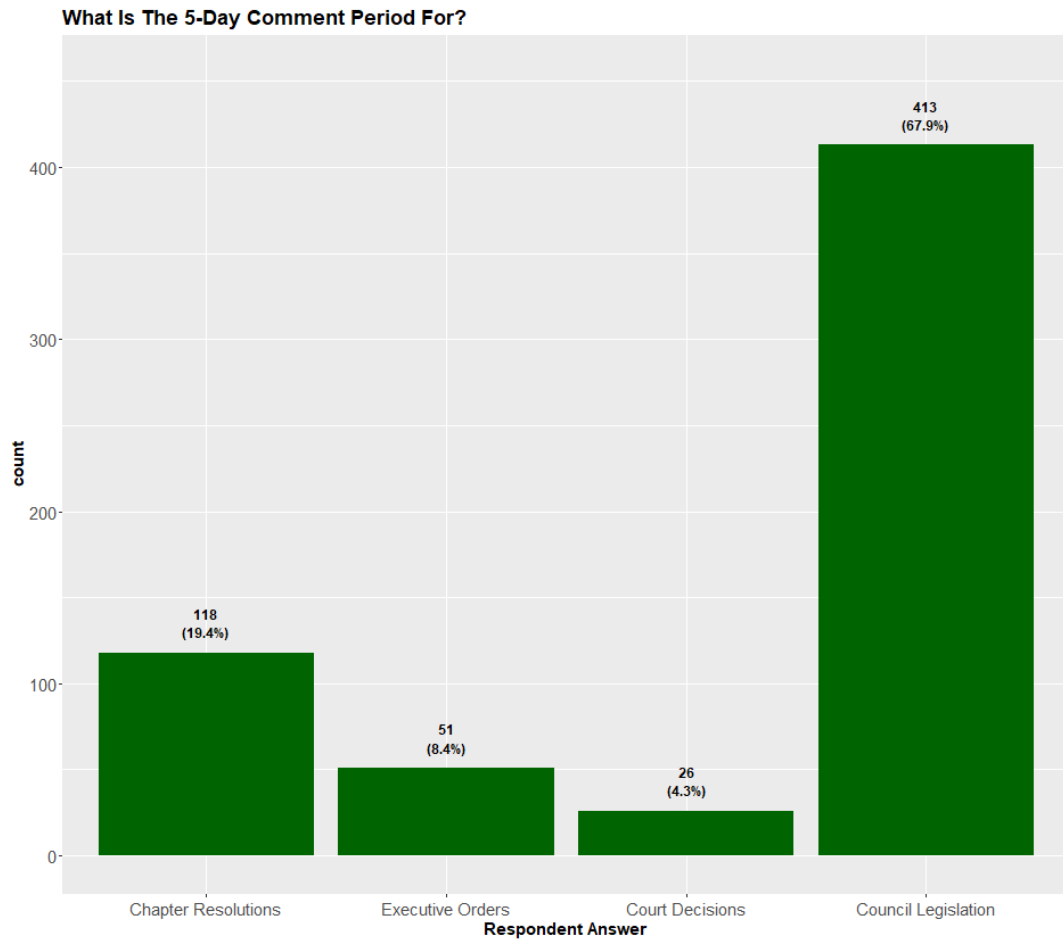


Figure 21: What Is The Five Day Comment Period For?

This relationship is consistent when asking respondents what is the five day comment period for where most were correct in answering “council legislation.” Almost 20 percent of respondents stated “chapter resolutions” which is surprising but in the same logic of legislation passed at the local level instead of the central level. From these different knowledge questions, it appears the majority of respondents are also knowledgeable on more subtle features of Navajo governance. However, with about a third of respondents answering these more contemporary questions incorrectly, education on Navajo governance should still remain a priority.

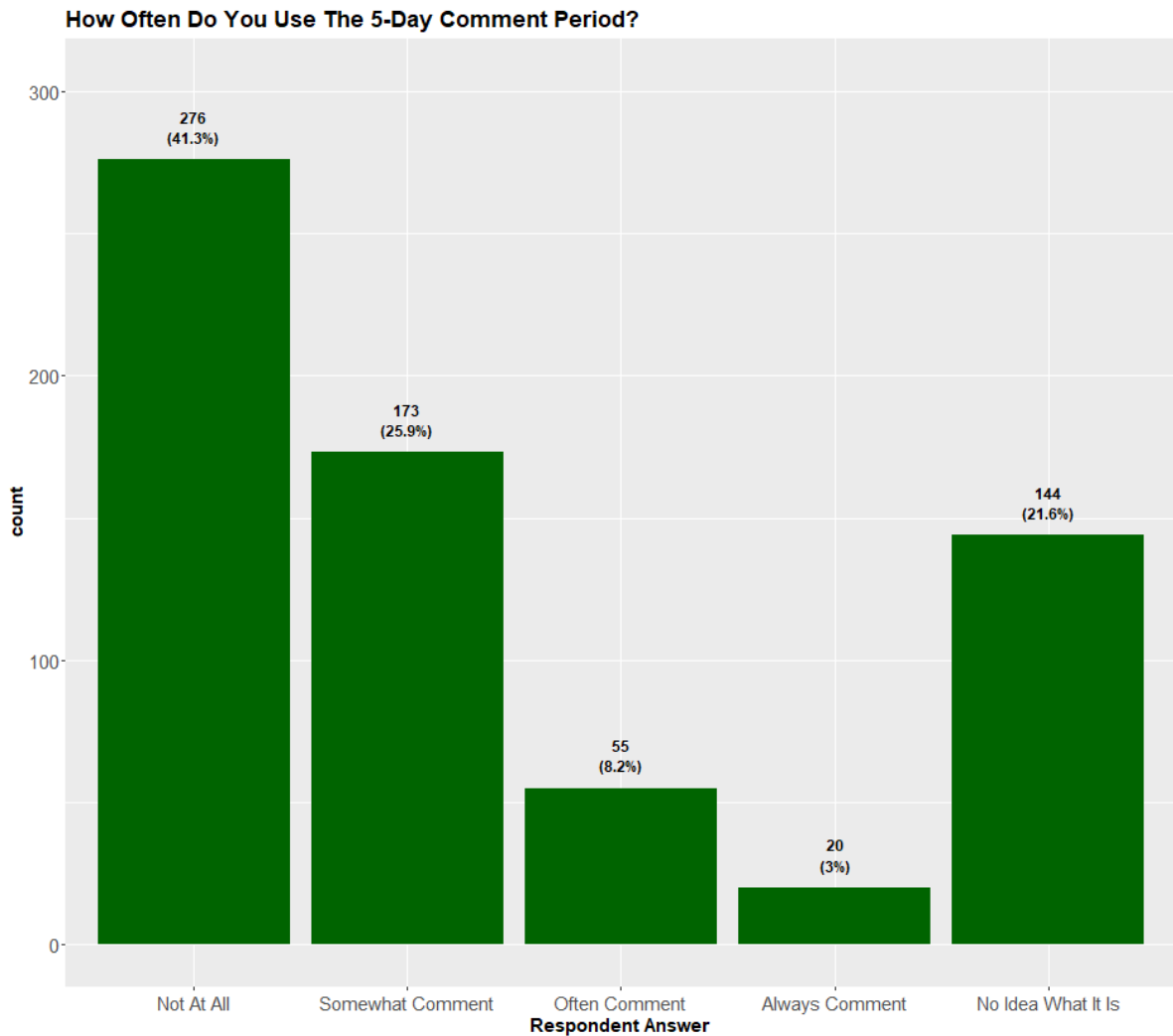


Figure 22: Do You Use The 5-Day Comment Period?

The 5-day comment period is a unique opportunity for Navajo citizens to respond to legislation passed by council. Yet, as seen on most legislation accessible on “DIBB” the councils public repository for active and past legislation and *Figure 22*, most respondents do not use the 5-day comment period. An almost equal number of respondents indicated somewhat comment on legislation and had no idea what the 5-day comment period is. This is another outlet for Navajo citizens to participate in governance, but remains under used and more education about its role may be needed. However, it is unclear to what extent the legislative branch adheres to 5-day comments and more research is needed in this area.

## Rank-Order Task Results

The goal of the rank-order task was to develop further understanding toward how Navajo citizens are divided in domestic Navajo politics. The Navajo people are traditionally non-partisan in domestic affairs where scholars focus on cultural and language differences as the drivers of generational disagreement (Deloria & Lytle, 1984; Lee, 2020). This also entails religious and other life-way differences which have long been speculated for shifting interests among Indigenous populations (Deloria Jr, 1973). However, time and time again the Navajo people have been cited as key actors in supporting the Democratic party (Wilkins, 1999). Therefore, with all of these potential sources of disagreement, CNGD and ONGD sought to provide an answer in what source matters. This was tested by having respondents rank in order of importance Navajo civic duties.

Table 4: Distribution of Importance: Navajo Civic Duties

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Accountability	17.71	15.62	12.72	11.27	7.89	10.31	7.25	5.64	5.15	3.22	3.22
Don't Harm Others	3.54	7.73	8.53	7.41	11.11	11.11	9.66	11.11	10.79	9.18	9.82
Education	8.53	9.66	12.24	12.24	9.34	8.70	11.92	8.70	9.02	5.64	4.03
Fairness	5.15	10.14	13.69	11.92	10.95	8.37	9.50	10.63	6.76	7.09	5.80
Property Rights	2.58	5.48	4.51	7.57	5.96	9.50	8.70	11.76	9.82	16.26	17.87
Protecting Others	7.41	6.60	9.18	10.47	11.27	12.56	9.82	7.89	10.31	7.25	7.25
Provide for Children	13.37	17.39	11.59	9.34	12.40	10.14	9.18	6.12	4.51	3.54	2.42
Public Servants	4.03	5.15	5.80	6.44	8.05	8.53	9.34	6.92	10.63	11.43	23.67
Report Crime	1.93	2.58	5.15	4.99	5.31	4.99	9.66	13.69	18.84	20.13	12.72
Respect	27.70	14.17	9.50	8.53	7.89	7.09	4.83	4.99	5.15	5.64	4.51
Rule of Law	8.05	5.64	7.25	9.82	9.82	8.70	10.14	12.56	9.02	10.63	8.37

Table 4 presents the distribution of importance for these eleven civic duties. The most important civic duty is respect with 27.7 percent of respondents placing it at the top of the list. Other popular options for most important was accountability, providing for children, and, to a lesser extent, education and rule of law. Respondents ranked serving the public, or “public servants,” as the least important civic duty. Property rights was also ranked as least important by 17.87 percent of respondents. Now to understand the systematic structure of this hierarchical data, a multidimensional model is needed as described by (Jacoby, 2014). This is obtained through dimension reduction techniques.

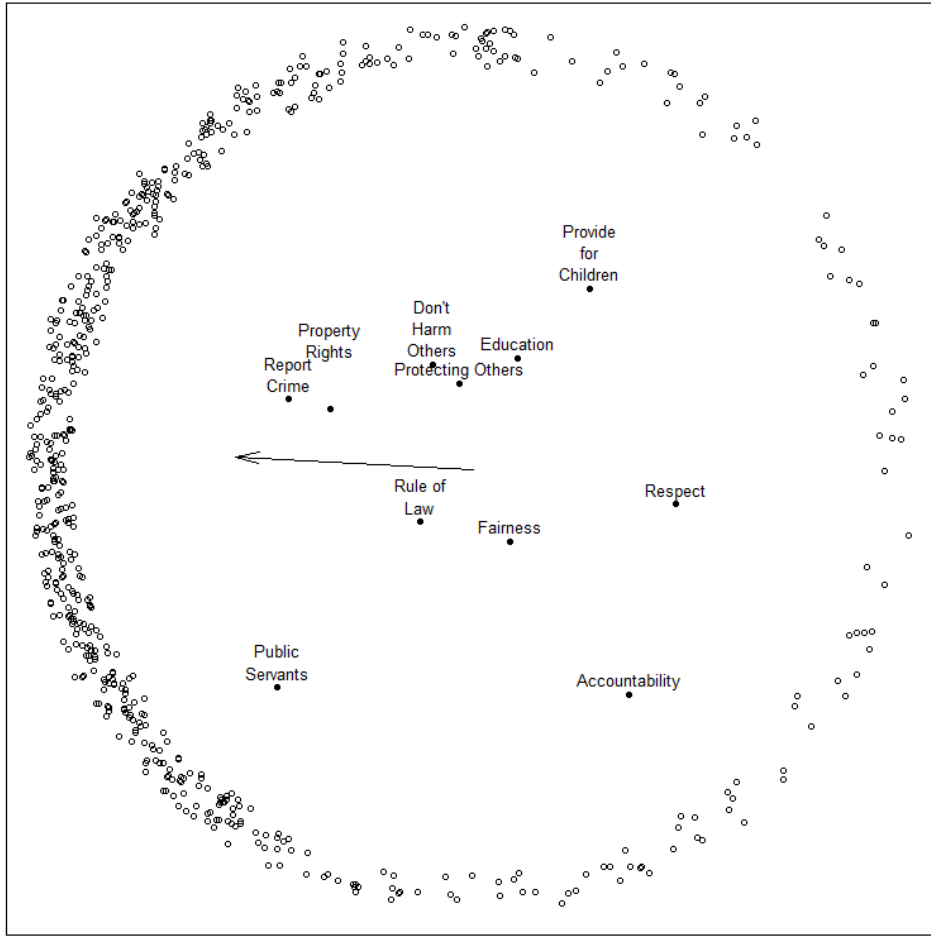


Figure 23: Circular Distribution of Respondents Weighted Rankings

A two dimensional model is acceptable as preliminary analysis indicates 66 percent of variation is explained through the first two dimensions of the weighted optimally scaled value importance of these rankings. In other words, reducing the dimensions to two axes explains about two-thirds of the ranking data. This is presented in *Figure 23* and shows how similar each civic duties are in respondent rankings. It also presents each respondent's individual vectors around the circumference, or edge, of the circle.

The civic duties are presented as solid points with labels within the reduced dimensional space where distance between points indicates degrees of similarity (Jacoby, 2014). For example, “Reporting Crimes” and “Property Rights” are ranked similarly while “Accountability” and “Providing for Children” are ranked quite differently from each other.

Even though “Accountability” and “Providing for Children” are considered the most important civic duty to 17.71 percent and 13.37 percent of respondents, respectively, these respondents have very different ranking structures. Hence, their distance from each other.

There is some clustering to label. These include material needs on the left hand side such as “Reporting Crimes” and “Property Rights.” In the northern section, “Providing for Children,” “Education,” “Protecting Others,” and “Not Harming Others” are more communal high level policy goals. In the southern section, “Rule of Law,” “Fairness,” “Respect,” and “Accountability” are more individual conceptual civic duties. The arrow points toward the central tendency of rankings, but as seen from *Table 4*, the majority of respondents do not rank “Property Rights” or “Reporting Crimes” as the most important civic duty. Instead, this suggests a split between the northern and southern hemispheres, but this needs to empirically investigated.

To do so, a “circular regression” is most appropriate in modeling the angular separation of each respondent which are the hollow points around the edge of the circle (Fisher & Lee, 1992; Gill & Hangartner, 2010; Jacoby, 2014). *Table 5* presents the maximum likelihood estimates for the circular regression using respondent age, fluency in *Diné Bizaad*, education, gender, reservation residency, christian, US party identification, US ideology, Window Rock approval, chapter government approval, vote choice, occupation, and registered chapter LGA status. Positive coefficients reflect moving the black arrow in *Figure 23* in the counterclockwise direction, while negative coefficients move the black arrow in the clockwise direction (Jacoby, 2014).

Therefore, older and more fluent Navajo Nation employees and elected officials ranked “provide for children,” “education,” and the other northern hemisphere civic duties as more important. The opposite demographic as well as those who did not believe in identifying as liberals, moderates, or conservatives ranked the southern hemisphere options as more important, which includes “fairness,” “accountability,” and “respect.”

Table 5: Circular Regression Results

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Angle
Age	−0.003510** (0.001814)
Fluency in <i>Diné Bizaad</i>	−0.053348* (0.035270)
Education	0.014788 (0.020348)
Female	0.048208 (0.051922)
Reservation Resident	0.04517 (0.063225)
Christian Indicator	−0.037906 (0.051483)
US Party Identification	0.017391 (0.039811)
Non-US Ideology	0.105536** (0.052425)
Window Rock Approval	0.017874 (0.019928)
Chapter Government Approval	0.009403 (0.018322)
Nygren Voter	−0.017662 (0.049772)
Biden Voter	0.045966 (0.061432)
Navajo Nation Employee/Official	−0.102451** (0.049839)
Business Owner	0.066123 (0.059695)
LGA Citizen	0.019271 (0.049407)
Intercept (mu)	−2.898 (0.04662)
Observations	565 (df = 15; 549)
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

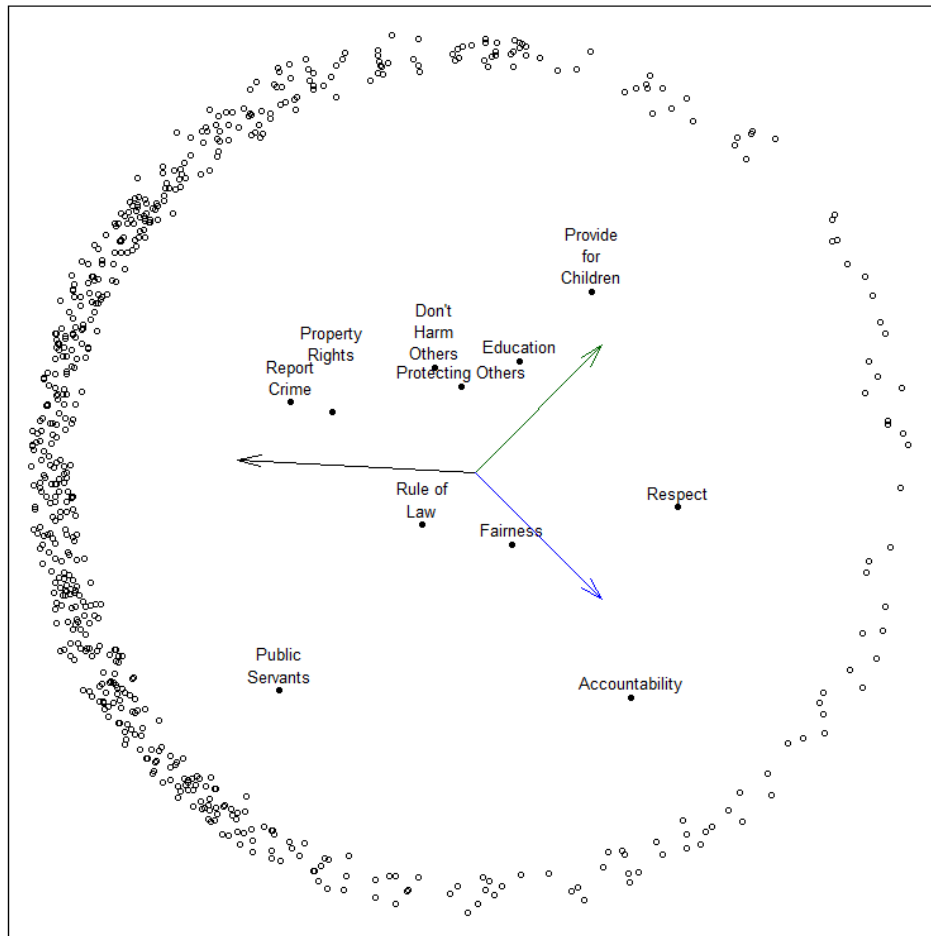


Figure 24: Circular Distribution With Arrows Reflecting Potential Coefficient Effects

To further illustrate the circular regression coefficients, *Figure 24* adds two additional arrows reflecting the potential effects of these coefficients. The exact magnitude in change from the black arrow is not calculated but the colored arrows presented are meant to visualize the clockwise or counterclockwise shifts. The green arrow reflects the potential impact of being older, more fluent in *Diné Bizaad*, and a Navajo Nation employee or elected official. The blue arrow reflects the potential impact of being younger, less fluent, and not identifying as a liberal, moderate, or conservative. These results suggest generational and fluency differences drive fundamental differences in Navajo domestic politics, not differences in US partisanship or religious life-ways as seen in Jacoby (2014).

## Conjoint Experiment Results

The goal of the conjoint experiment was to identify how Navajo citizens would respond to hypothetical options for the Navajo Government Reform Project and compare multiple government reform solutions simultaneously. This task is appropriate in providing a measure of preferences as well as preference intensity for different government reform solutions. The experimental results reveal what solutions Navajo citizens favor or reject as well as which are most or least favorable as seen below.

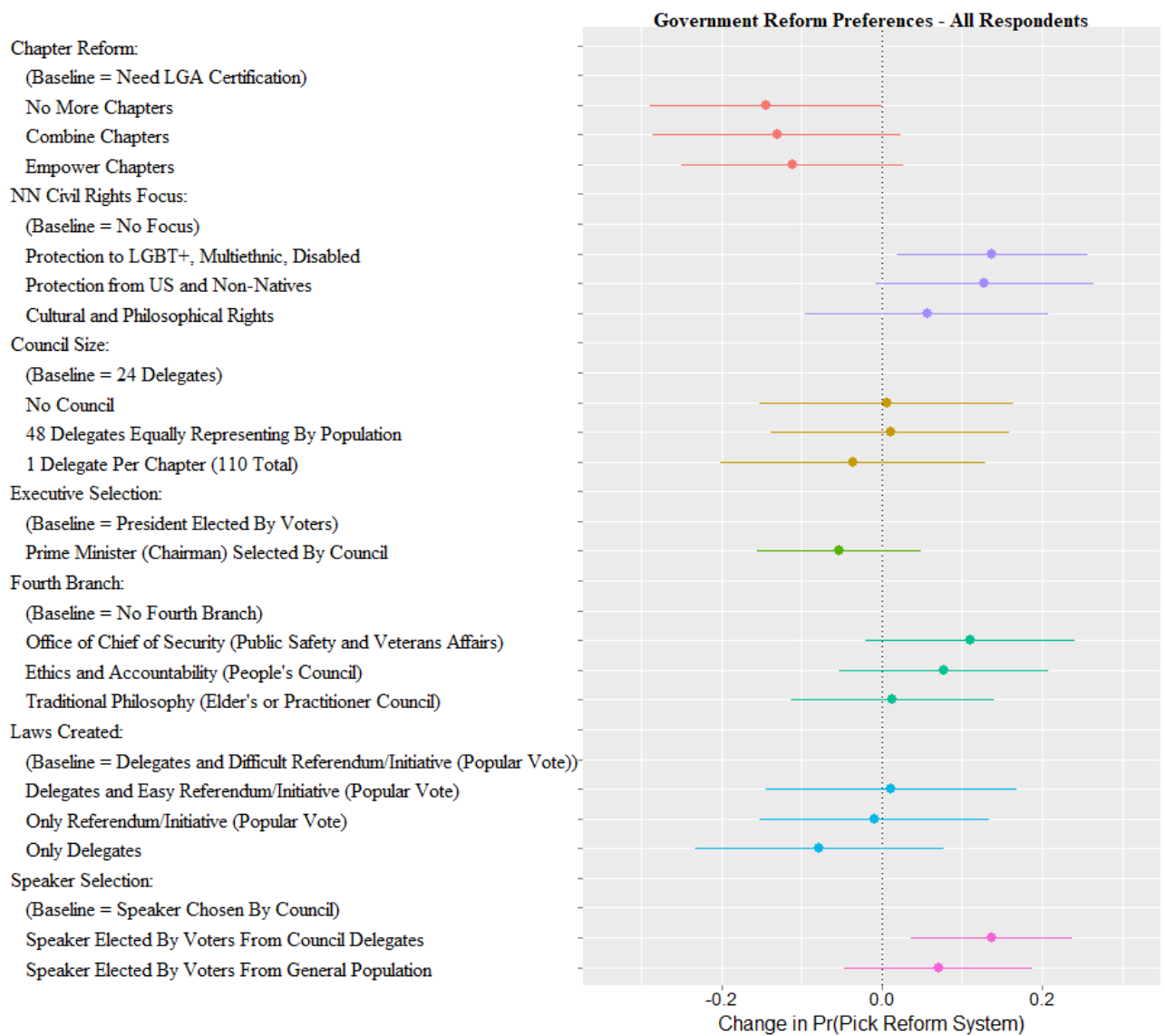


Figure 25: Conjoint Results — Weighted Government Reform Preferences



Figure 25 presents the conjoint results of the full sample’s weighted Average Marginal Component Effect (AMCE) for preferences.<sup>7</sup> Along the y-axis are different government reform solutions for various policy areas. Point estimates are represented as circles with ninety-five percent confidence intervals illustrated by the horizontal lines. Positive preferences are expressed by point estimates to the right of the zero line, while negative preferences are those to the left. Coefficients that are statistically significant have confidence intervals which do no overlap with the dashed vertical line at zero.

These point estimates reflect the estimated change in probability a hypothetical government reform system is chosen by respondents because of that specific government reform solution compared to how the current system runs in that policy area. For example, when examining the last policy area of “speaker selection,” there is a statistically significant positive effect from having the speaker elected by voters from the pool of Council Delegates compared to the current system of being chosen by the Navajo Nation Council. This is further evidence that Navajo citizens are systematically interested in using elections to determine who the Nation’s *Naataanii* are at the highest levels of office.

When it comes to other policy areas, the results vary. For “chapter reform,” most respondents reacted negatively to alternative options to the LGA process where even ending chapters is almost statistically significant (p value of 0.0505). The Navajo Nation currently does not have a focus in its civil rights legislation where respondents were statistically more supportive of providing protections to minority populations such as the LGBT+ community, multi-ethnic citizens, and those with disabilities.

In terms of “Council size,” respondents were seemingly ambivalent to other options. This includes removing Council, having proportional representation through Delegates representing by population, and single member districts or having one Delegate per chapter. This last option does have a slight negative effect that is statistically insignificant like switching back to the Chairman system compared to the Nation’s current presidential system. The items for the fourth branch and legislation process are all statistically insignif-

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<sup>7</sup>The AMCE plots for perceived legitimacy and cultural congruence are available in the appendix.

icant but generally have positive preferences associated with them. The lack of statistical significance in some policy areas does not necessarily mean Navajo citizens do not care about these areas of government. Instead, these results reflect what Navajo citizens cared most about. In this case, electing the speaker of Council, having protections for minority populations, and maintaining chapters are positive options for government reform.

Table 6: Comprehensive Government Reform Conjoint Experiment Results

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Preference (1)	Trust (2)	Cultural Congruence (3)
<u><i>Council Size (Baseline: 24 Delegates)</i></u>			
No Council	0.006 (0.088)	-0.044 (0.093)	0.001 (0.084)
48 Delegates Equally Representing By Population	0.011 (0.082)	-0.019 (0.083)	0.077 (0.069)
1 Delegate Per Chapter (110 Total)	-0.036 (0.094)	-0.104 (0.098)	-0.025 (0.104)
<u><i>Chapters (Baseline: LGA Certification)</i></u>			
No More Chapters	-0.144* (0.080)	-0.135 (0.089)	-0.082 (0.093)
Combine Chapters	-0.131 (0.087)	-0.060 (0.094)	-0.053 (0.095)
Empower Chapters	-0.111 (0.076)	-0.086 (0.078)	-0.075 (0.085)
<u><i>NN Civil Rights (Baseline: No Focus)</i></u>			
Protection to LGBT+, Multiethnic, Disabled	0.138** (0.065)	0.085 (0.058)	0.024 (0.069)
Protection from US and Non-Natives	0.128 (0.076)	0.118 (0.084)	0.108 (0.076)
Cultural and Philosophical Rights	0.056 (0.083)	0.065 (0.088)	0.146 (0.084)
<u><i>Laws Created (Baseline: Delegates and Difficult Referendum)</i></u>			
Delegates and Easy Referendum/Initiative (Popular Vote)	0.012 (0.087)	0.059 (0.089)	-0.001 (0.079)
Only Referendum/Initiative (Popular Vote)	-0.009 (0.078)	0.010 (0.093)	0.020 (0.083)
Only Delegates	-0.078 (0.086)	0.025 (0.090)	-0.119 (0.096)
<u><i>Executive Selection (Baseline: President Elected By Voters)</i></u>			
Prime Minister (Chairman) Selected By Council	-0.053 (0.056)	-0.004 (0.052)	0.049 (0.057)
<u><i>Speaker Selection (Baseline: Speaker Chosen By Council)</i></u>			
Speaker Elected By Voters From Council Delegates	0.137** (0.055)	0.190*** (0.063)	0.122** (0.057)
Speaker Elected By Voters From General Population	0.071 (0.063)	0.091 (0.069)	0.044 (0.062)
<u><i>Fourth Branch (Baseline: No Fourth Branch)</i></u>			
Office of Chief of Security (Public Safety and Veterans Affairs)	0.110 (0.072)	0.088 (0.073)	0.059 (0.079)
Ethics and Accountability (People's Council)	0.078 (0.072)	0.037 (0.069)	0.059 (0.062)
Traditional Philosophy (Elder's or Practitioner Council)	0.013 (0.069)	-0.039 (0.073)	0.097 (0.078)
Observations	4,636	4,578	4,518
R <sup>2</sup>	0.028	0.035	0.041
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.024	0.031	0.037
Residual Std. Error	0.495 (df = 4617)	0.494 (df = 4559)	0.493 (df = 4499)
F Statistic	7.401*** (df = 18; 4617)	7.108*** (df = 18; 4559)	7.612*** (df = 18; 4499)

Note: Includes wights and respondent level clustered standard errors

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

*Table 6* is another way of demonstrating the results from *Figure 25* with the added benefit of showing the estimated relationship between government reform solutions and trust or cultural congruence. Government reform solutions with stars next to them indicate statistical significance. Column (1) matches the results presented in *Figure 25* while columns (2) and (3) have their figures in the appendix. Across all three outcome variables, respondents systematically focused on electing the Speaker from the pool of Council Delegates with the strongest effects associated with fictional governments they would trust more than the current system. As mentioned earlier, Navajo citizens not only care about electing Division Directors for their programs and services, but also the speaker of Council as the highest office in the legislative branch.

All in all, the experiment confirms many of the findings discussed thus far. However, the ability for CNGD and ONGD to identify how government reform solutions compare to each other simultaneously is a key contribution not advanced in previous surveys. Further analysis into other features of this experiment are available in the appendix. This includes subgroup and heterogeneous treatment analysis to ensure highly motivated individuals are not biasing the experimental results (Abramson et al., [2022](#)). In addition, mediation analysis is conducted to further explain why respondents are so favorable to selecting the speaker of Council (Mazumder & Yan, [2020](#)). Perhaps it is because they are more willing to trust such a government, or they may find it more congruent with their perceptions of Navajo culture. The mediation results suggest it is for both reasons that respondents have a strong preference for electing the speaker from the pool of Council Delegates.

## V. TAKEAWAYS

### Recommendations for the Navajo Government Reform Project

Indigenous government reform is an act of sovereignty increasingly experienced across the country (Alfred, 1999; Hendrix, 2010). Indigenous Nations tend to experience widespread government reform rather than individual institutions seen in other contexts.<sup>8</sup> For example, the Cherokee and Osage Nations have both recently held constitutional conventions to address several institutions and citizen rights (Lemont, 2006; Dennison, 2012). The Navajo Nation has delegated this authority to the Commission and Office of Navajo Government Development to ascertain what are the people's interests in government reform.

This survey is dedicated to such a task and prompted respondents to voice their opinions on many of the government reform solutions heard over the last thirty-five years. Solutions and recommendations are raised throughout the main body of this report, however a few to summarize are as follows. The more conventional survey items reveals citizens do want to maintain local governance and are seeking greater ethics and accountability from government. Whether it comes from elections or from a fourth branch of government. On that note, a fourth branch is demanded to focus on ethics and accountability, but there is also support for developing a traditional philosophy council. Perhaps a synthesis of both ideas would be most beneficial. There is a huge demand for improving public safety as well as other ideas for like expanding the economy and services across the Nation. From existing development literature, there is a link between perceived public safety and

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<sup>8</sup>A common example is the shift from single-member districts to proportional representation (Vowles, 1995)

property rights for improved entrepreneurial behavior (Frye, 2004; Fioramonti, 2017) Without public safety to ensure a stable system, it can be difficult to convince citizens and investors to undergo the lengthy bureaucratic process of bringing businesses to the reservation (Lofthouse, 2019).

The rank-order task presents a complicated means of understanding the systematic structures of Navajo society and domestic politics. By having respondents rank in order of importance 11 Navajo civic duties from the *Navajo Common Law Project*, this report finds empirical evidence that the Nation is more divided along generational lines rather than by US partisanship or religious and life-way differences.

The conjoint experiment is an even more complicated approach to understand how government solutions compare to each other. The primary feature capturing the interest of respondents across three outcome questions was to elect the speaker of Council from the pool of Council Delegates. This fits with other findings regarding elections, ethics, and accountability. Further examination of the conjoint through subgroup, heterogeneous treatment, and mediation analysis reveal that after incorporating survey weights, there is little evidence regarding extremely biased respondents pushing the average treatment effects in a positive direction. Instead, respondents are consistent throughout the survey in wanting to have greater say in who is at the helms of the Navajo Nation.

## **Future Potential Research**

While this report is lengthy in its attempts to cover the entirety of the survey provided to the Navajo people, more work remains in the future. Some respondents would have liked to see survey items dedicated to the actual day-to-day issues of working within the government like the cumbersome 164 process (Yazzie et al., 2008). This is achievable with additional collaboration with different Navajo government departments and would likely require a combination of survey work and other administrative data.

In addition, much of this report focuses on the Navajo central government and more work is needed to fully assess the state of Navajo local governance. For example, what is the optimal design for chapter governments, has LGA been successful, what are other concerns citizens may have about their communities like public safety, nepotism, and so forth that could be learned through additional community engagement.

Lastly, in terms of the Navajo Government Reform Project, it would be valuable to understand who the Navajo people want as their leaders. It is clear more elections are demanded, but who are the types of candidates the Navajo people want in office? Are they politicians, educated youth, culturally wise elders, veterans, agricultural industry leaders, lawyers, judges, good community members? This delves into the “Attentive Democracy” hypothesis that citizens want a government that represents them but is also responsive to their needs, which is attainable through competitive elections (Hibbing et al., [2023](#)). However, it is unclear if this logic resonates with the Navajo people and calls to question *who do the Navajo people want in office?*

There is important research exploring the philosophical and theoretical components to Navajo society, but the time has come to test these arguments and support Navajo communities with knowledge. CNGD and ONGD have spent significant time developing, fielding, analyzing, and writing this public good for the Navajo people as part of the Navajo Government Reform Project. The Diné thought process has guided each step of this report where ideally the logic, methodology, and presentation of these ideas are useful for educators, policy makers, and others alike. As Navajo departments continue to seek methods for evidence-based decision making, the demands for data and analysis will continue to expand. Hopefully, this report can provide a template for these efforts as the Nation strives to provide for its people.

## Appendix

The Appendix contains additional information regarding the census data used for survey weights and additional conjoint results mentioned in the main body of the text.

## Sample and Target Population by Agency and Navajo Nation

Table A1: Distribution of Sociodemographics in 2023 Navajo Comprehensive Government Reform Survey: Samples and Target Population by Agency (Western, Central, and Eastern). Population Data from 2019 US Census and NN Wind Profile (Gender, NN Employee, Education, Fluency, and Age), 2022 NN Election Results (Voted in 2022 Election)

Variable	Western Population	Western Sample (n = 130)
Gender: Female	53	67
Gender: Not Female	47	33
Voted In 2022 Navajo Election: Yes	52	85
Voted In 2022 Navajo Election: No	48	15
NN Employee/Elected Official: Yes	34	60
NN Employee/Elected Official: No	66	40
Fluency in <i>Diné Bizaad</i> : Somewhat Fluent/Fluent	71	82
Fluency in <i>Diné Bizaad</i> : Not Fluent	29	18
Education: Advanced/Bachelor's Degree	9	41
Education: Associate's Degree/Some College	28	47
Education: High School Degree/Some High School	63	12
Age: 18-24	11	2
Age: 25-34	18	12
Age: 35-44	15	15
Age: 45-54	15	17
Age: 55+	30	55

Variable	Central Population	Central Sample (n = 90)
Gender: Female	53	72
Gender: Not Female	47	28
Voted In 2022 Navajo Election: Yes	55	91
Voted In 2022 Navajo Election: No	45	9
NN Employee/Elected Official: Yes	57	49
NN Employee/Elected Official: No	43	51
Fluency in <i>Diné Bizaad</i> : Somewhat Fluent/Fluent	68	82
Fluency in <i>Diné Bizaad</i> : Not Fluent	32	18
Education: Advanced/Bachelor's Degree	10	47
Education: Associate's Degree/Some College	30	43
Education: High School Degree/Some High School	60	10
Age: 18-24	10	2
Age: 25-34	10	24
Age: 35-44	16	21
Age: 45-54	14	21
Age: 55+	39	31

Variable	Eastern Population	Eastern Sample (n = 126)
Gender: Female	52	67
Gender: Not Female	48	33
Voted In 2022 Navajo Election: Yes	54	86
Voted In 2022 Navajo Election: No	46	14
NN Employee/Elected Official: Yes	33	61
NN Employee/Elected Official: No	67	39
Fluency in <i>Diné Bizaad</i> : Somewhat Fluent/Fluent	64	83
Fluency in <i>Diné Bizaad</i> : Not Fluent	36	17
Education: Advanced/Bachelor's Degree	6	12
Education: Associate's Degree/Some College	27	53
Education: High School Degree/Some High School	67	35
Age: 18-24	10	4
Age: 25-34	18	10
Age: 35-44	15	21
Age: 45-54	15	25
Age: 55+	31	39



Table A2: Distribution of Sociodemographics in 2023 Navajo Comprehensive Government Reform Survey: Samples and Target Population by Agency (Northern, Fort Defiance Agency, and Across The Navajo Nation). Population Data from 2019 US Census and NN Wind Profile (Gender, NN Employee, Education, Fluency, and Age), 2022 NN Election Results (Voted in 2022 Election)

Variable	Northern Population	Northern Sample (n = 101)
Gender: Female	50	61
Gender: Not Female	50	39
Voted In 2022 Navajo Election: Yes	52	81
Voted In 2022 Navajo Election: No	48	19
NN Employee/Elected Official: Yes	36	64
NN Employee/Elected Official: No	64	36
Fluency in <i>Diné Bizaad</i> : Somewhat Fluent/Fluent	64	75
Fluency in <i>Diné Bizaad</i> : Not Fluent	36	25
Education: Advanced/Bachelor's Degree	19	40
Education: Associate's Degree/Some College	36	52
Education: High School Degree/Some High School	55	8
Age: 18-24	9	2
Age: 25-34	20	9
Age: 35-44	14	9
Age: 45-54	15	37
Age: 55+	32	45

Variable	Fort Defiance Population	Fort Defiance Sample (n = 254)
Gender: Female	54	66
Gender: Not Female	46	34
Voted In 2022 Navajo Election: Yes	54	86
Voted In 2022 Navajo Election: No	46	14
NN Employee/Elected Official: Yes	47	56
NN Employee/Elected Official: No	53	44
Fluency in <i>Diné Bizaad</i> : Somewhat Fluent/Fluent	63	74
Fluency in <i>Diné Bizaad</i> : Not Fluent	37	26
Education: Advanced/Bachelor's Degree	9	43
Education: Associate's Degree/Some College	35	42
Education: High School Degree/Some High School	56	15
Age: 18-24	9	3
Age: 25-34	18	10
Age: 35-44	14	20
Age: 45-54	16	19
Age: 55+	34	48

Variable	Navajo Nation Population	No Chapter Sample (n = 75)
Gender: Female	52	55
Gender: Not Female	48	45
Voted In 2022 Navajo Election: Yes	53	52
Voted In 2022 Navajo Election: No	47	48
NN Employee/Elected Official: Yes	39	34
NN Employee/Elected Official: No	61	66
Fluency in <i>Diné Bizaad</i> : Somewhat Fluent/Fluent	66	55
Fluency in <i>Diné Bizaad</i> : Not Fluent	34	45
Education: Advanced/Bachelor's Degree	9	45
Education: Associate's Degree/Some College	31	48
Education: High School Degree/Some High School	60	7
Age: 18-24	10	3
Age: 25-34	18	12
Age: 35-44	15	11
Age: 45-54	15	16
Age: 55+	31	59

## Trust and Culture Conjoint Results

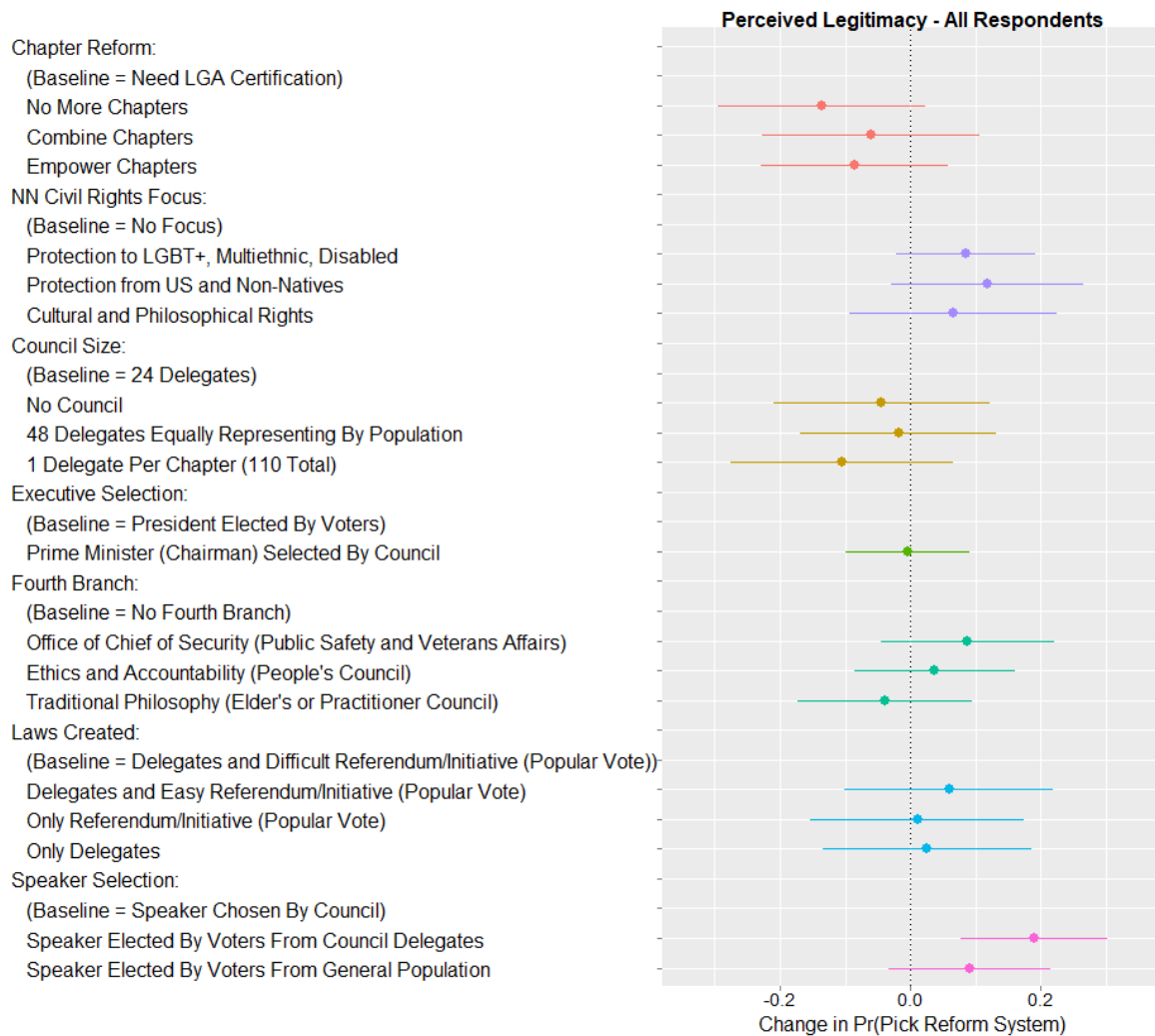


Figure A3: Conjoint Results — Weighted Government Reform Perceived Legitimacy

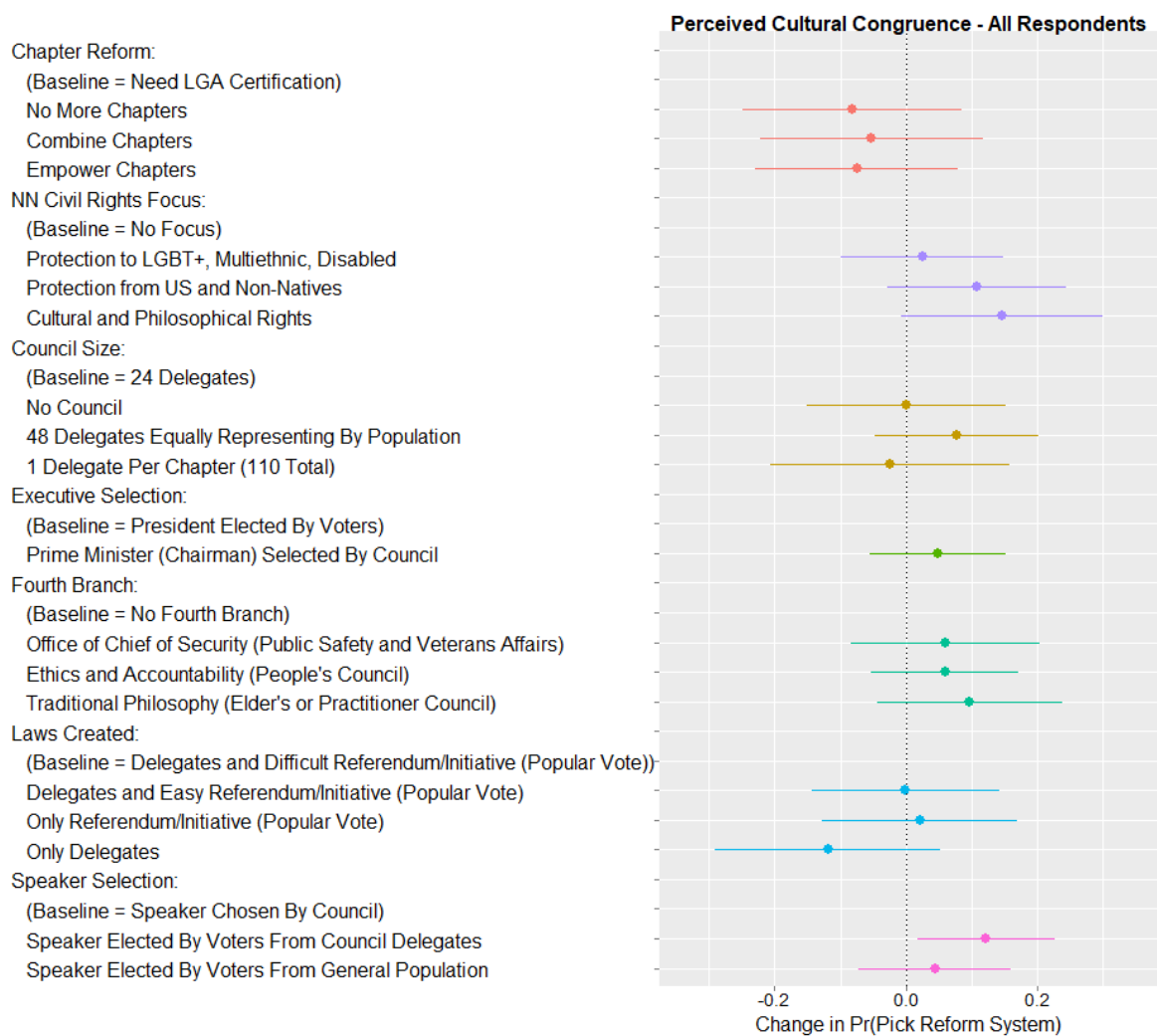


Figure A4: Conjoint Results — Weighted Government Reform Perceived Cultural Congruence

## Mediation Analysis Results

As pioneered by Mazumder and Yan (2020), this conjoint was also designed to investigate the importance of trust and cultural congruence through mediation analysis. Indigenous Americans research on government structure and the economic growth have argued it is vital for political institutions to be perceived as legitimate and culturally congruent (Cornell & Kalt, 2000; Lemont, 2006; Akee et al., 2012; Anderson, 2016). This relationship has not been empirically investigated as posed in the causal argumentation of these scholars. Therefore, this exercise relies on the variation in how respondents engaged with the outcome questions on preferences, trust in government, and perceived cultural congruence to see how they shape each other.

In this circumstance, perceived trust and cultural congruence act as mediators for the estimated AMCEs reported. In this appendix, the mediation analysis focuses on electing the speaker from the pool of Council Delegates. Identically to Mazumder and Yan (2020), mediation analysis relies on the following identification assumption.

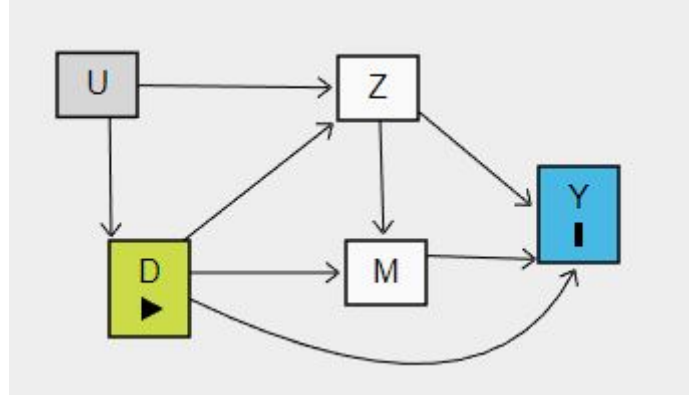


Figure A5: Directed Acyclic Graph of Identifying Assumptions for Controlled Direct Effects

“U” represents individual to individual identity features confounders, “D” represents the treatment of a component’s level (a government reform institution from *Table 2*, “M” is the mediator (perceived trust or cultural congruence in this case), “Z” would be intermediate confounders affecting the mediator and shaped by a treatment condition, which can be incorporated by collecting respondent level information. Lastly, “Y” is government reform preferences. Since “D” is perfectly randomized, then the only features we need to concern ourselves with is estimating the relationship between “D” to “Y” and “M” to “Y”. The causal paths between unobservable features in respondents is not driving selection into treatment (“U” to “D”).

The mediation analysis obtains estimates for the average controlled direct effect (ACDE) and average natural indirect effect (ANIE) for a given government reform solution. This assumes there is no treatment-mediator interaction, which is demonstrated in the relevant tables below. Obtaining the ACDE and ANIE is achieved through non-parametric bootstrapping to separate the estimates from the AMCE. The ANIE and ACDE informs us to what extent statistically significant effects are attributed to the direct effect of the treatment itself and the indirect effect of the measured mediator. Now, the mediation analysis must be separate starting with perceived trust in government, or legitimacy.

Table A6: Assessing the interaction effect assumption for causal mediation estimation

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Speaker Chosen By Council	Preference Speaker Elected By Voters From Council Delegates
	(1)	(2)
Government Reform Proposal	0.039 (0.026)	−0.044* (0.023)
Answer to Trust Prompt	0.579*** (0.015)	0.579*** (0.015)
Government Reform Proposal X Answer to Trust Prompt	−0.029 (0.035)	0.067** (0.032)
Constant	0.215*** (0.010)	0.215*** (0.010)
Observations	3,864	3,888
R <sup>2</sup>	0.331	0.351
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.331	0.351
Residual Std. Error	0.406 (df = 3860)	0.407 (df = 3884)
F Statistic	637.637*** (df = 3; 3860)	700.995*** (df = 3; 3884)

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

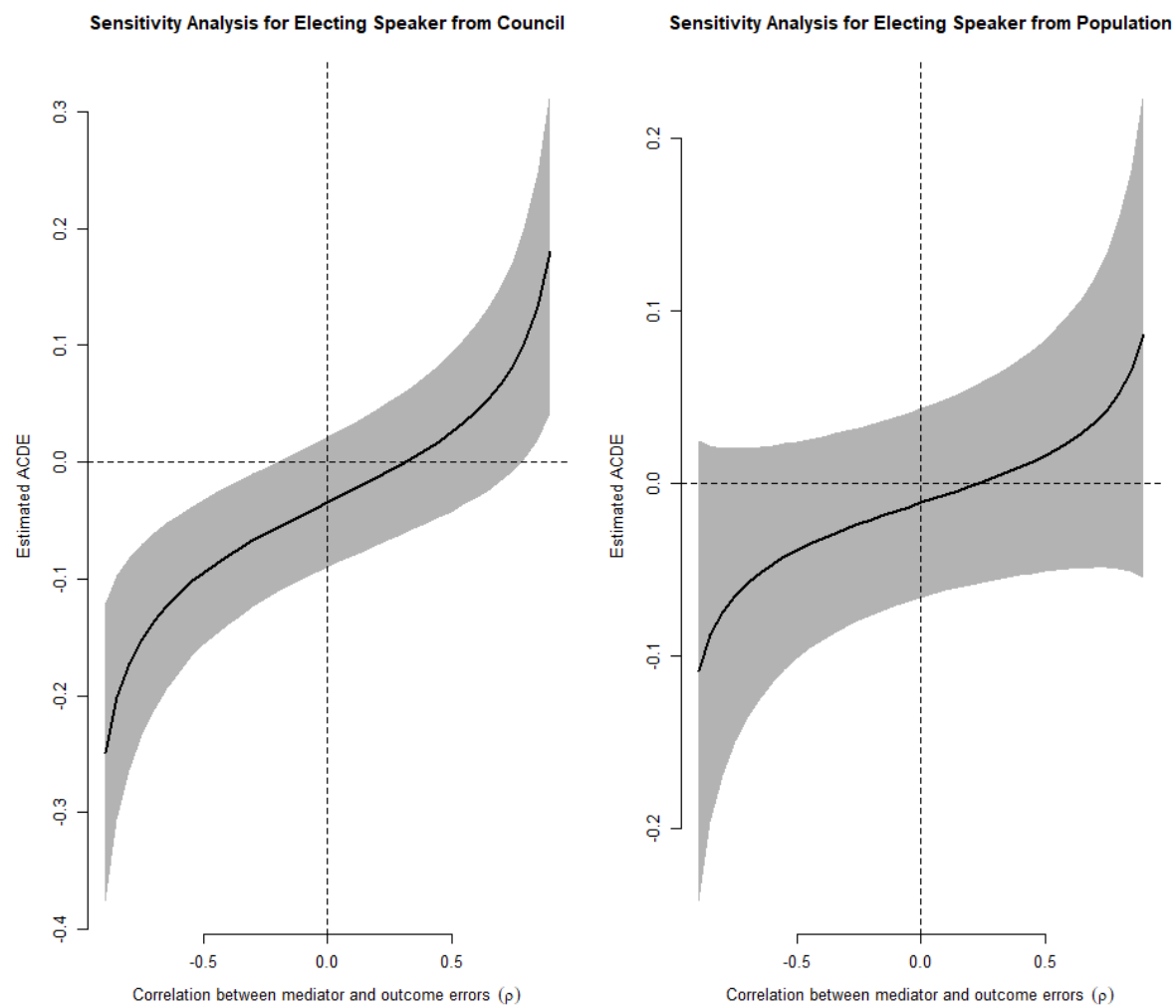


Figure A7: Sensitivity Analysis for Electing Speaker — Trust Mediator

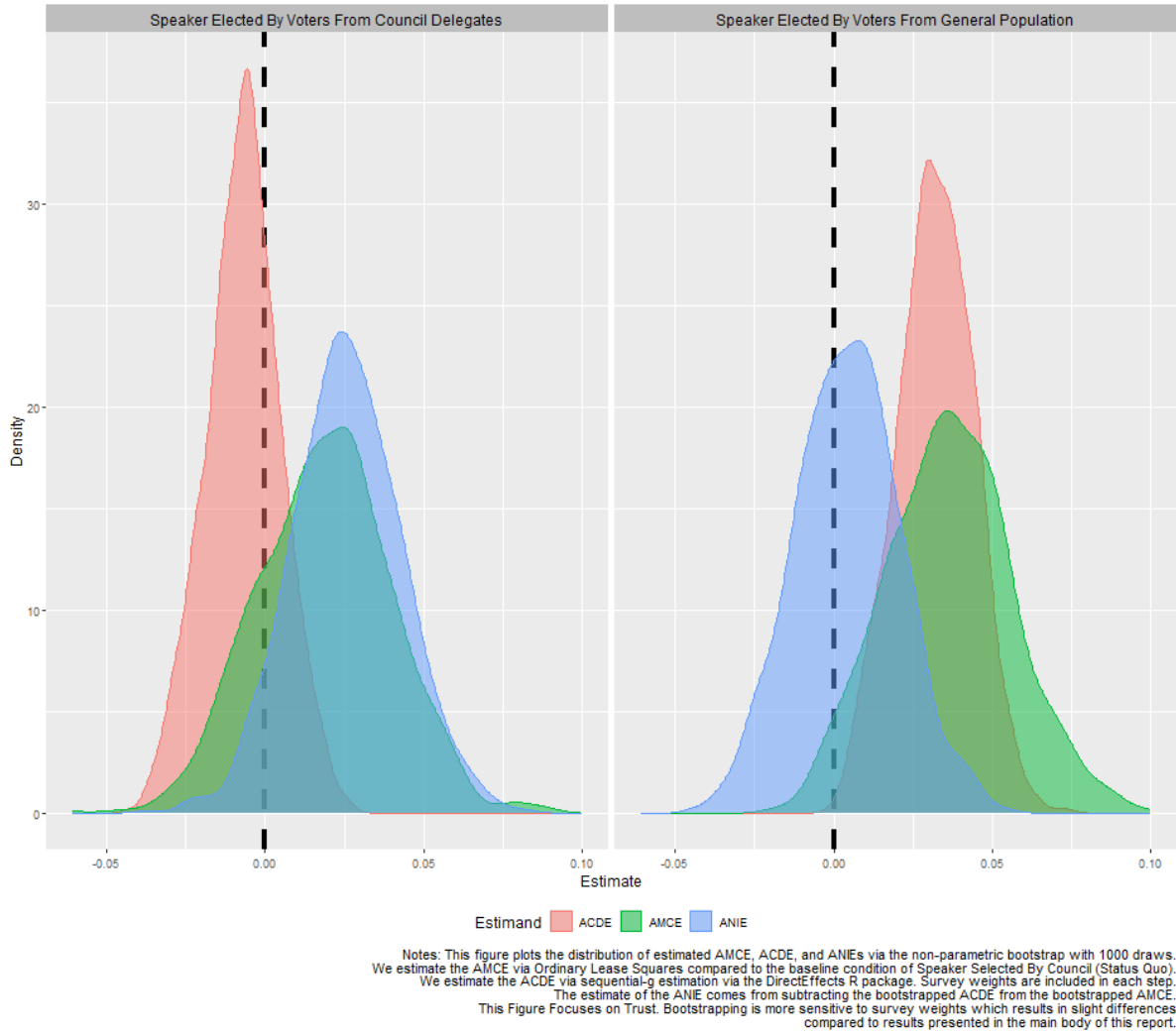


Figure A8: Mediation Analysis Results — Speaker and Trust in Government

*Table A6* and *Figure A7* assess the interaction assumption and sequential unconfoundedness assumption for mediation analysis. *Table A6* does demonstrate some relationship in interaction, but the sensitivity analysis shows the mediation effect is robust to changes in unmeasured confoundedness (outcome errors). This allows for mediation analysis through non-parametric bootstrapping and presents the average effects measured in green. The ACDE in red, and the ANIE in blue. In the case of electing the speaker from the pool of Council Delegates, the ANIE distribution is statistically significant while the ACDE is not. Therefore, the indirect effect, or the mediator of trust, is driving this result suggesting respondents would trust their government more by having these elections.

The right hand panel shows the opposite relationship, where there is a positive ACDE and null ANIE. This suggests a good feeling associated with electing the speaker from the general population, but due to a lack of trust for such a process the average effect is statistically indistinguishable from zero. In other words, trust and preferences conflict here producing a null finding.

Table A9: Assessing the interaction effect assumption for causal mediation estimation

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Speaker Chosen By Council (1)	Preference Speaker Elected By Voters From Council Delegates (2)
Government Reform Proposal	0.039 (0.026)	-0.044* (0.023)
Answer to Culture Prompt	0.579*** (0.015)	0.579*** (0.015)
Government Reform Proposal X Answer to Culture Prompt	-0.029 (0.035)	0.067** (0.032)
Constant	0.215*** (0.010)	0.215*** (0.010)
Observations	3,864	3,888
R <sup>2</sup>	0.331	0.351
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.331	0.351
Residual Std. Error	0.406 (df = 3860)	0.407 (df = 3884)
F Statistic	637.637*** (df = 3; 3860)	700.995*** (df = 3; 3884)

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

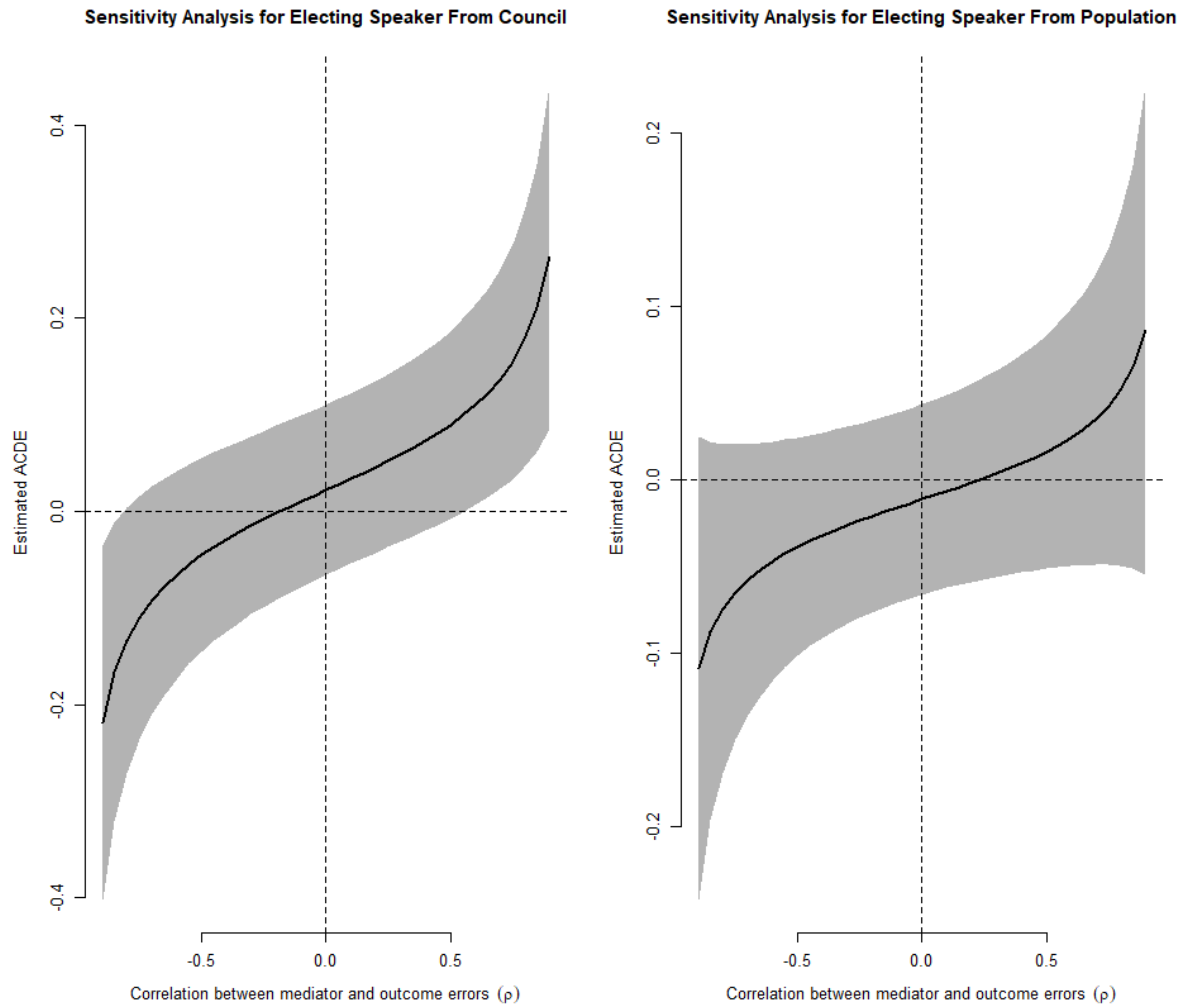


Figure A10: Sensitivity Analysis for Electing Speaker — Culture Mediator

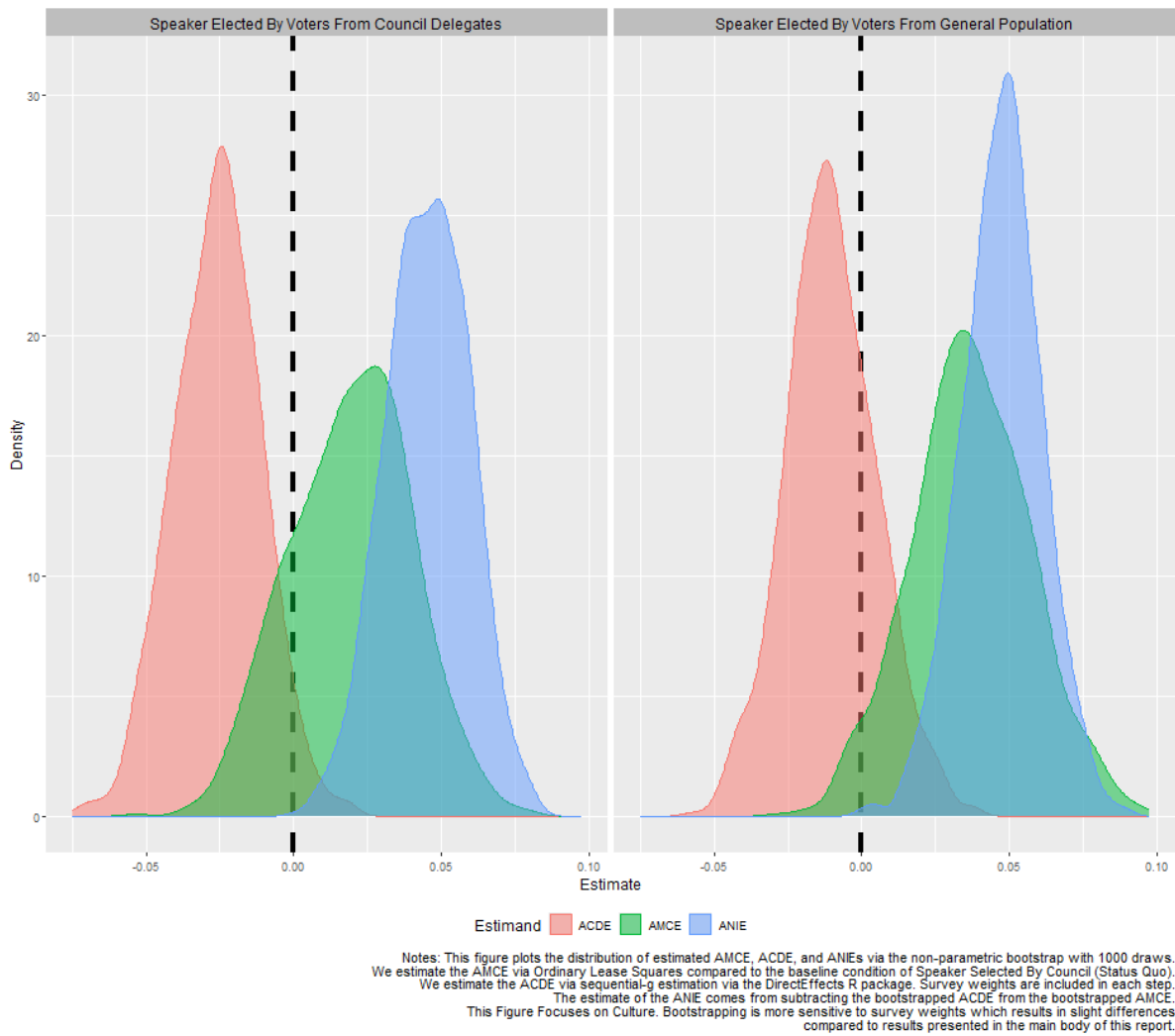


Figure A11: Mediation Analysis Results — Speaker and Cultural Congruent Government

The findings are identical with the trust results where respondents believe that electing the speaker from the pool of Council Delegates would produce a more culturally congruent government. These ideas conflict each other when respondents engaged with the option of electing the speaker from the general population.



## Subgroup Results

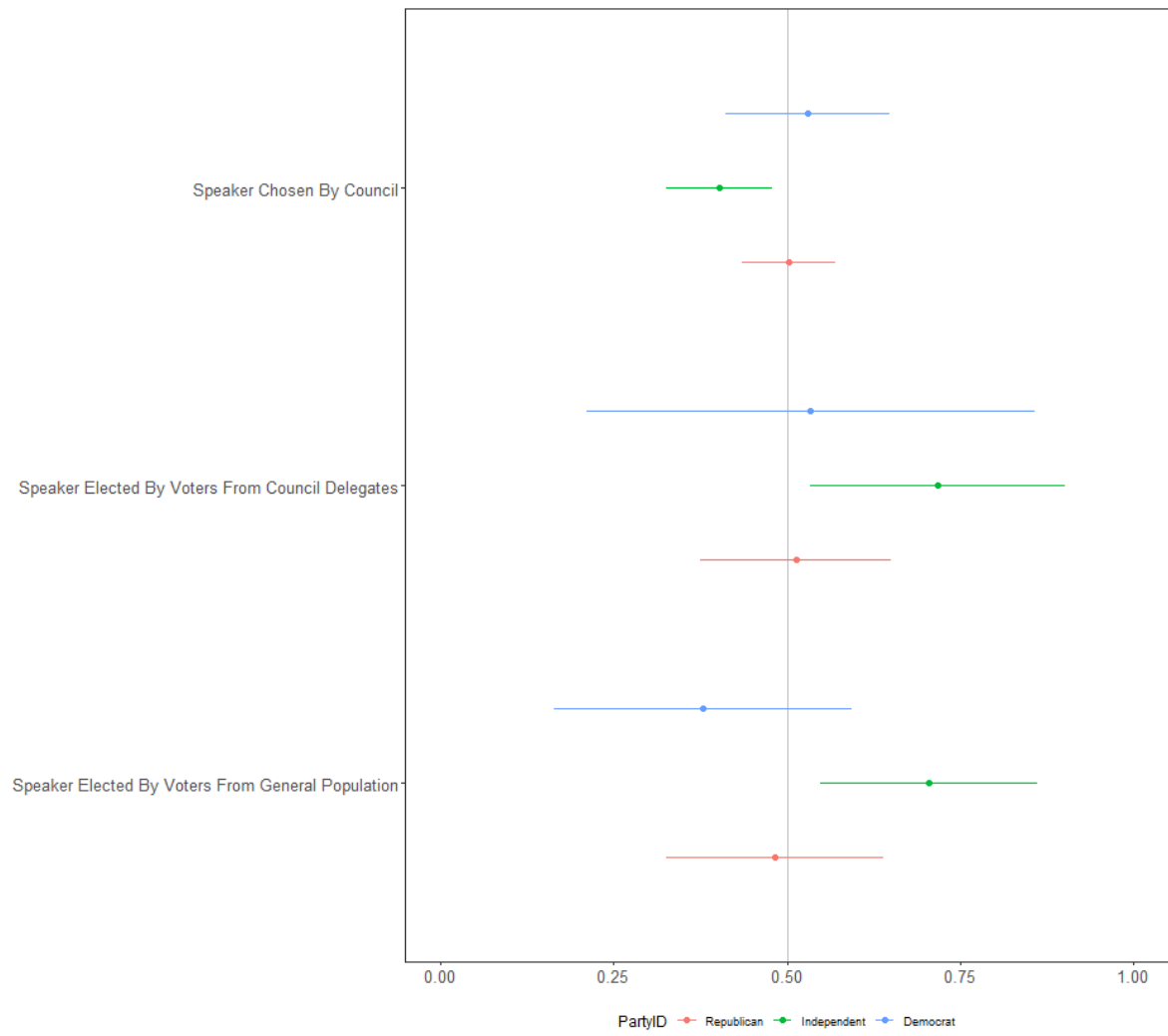


Figure A12: Subgroup Analysis Results — Speaker Selection and Party ID

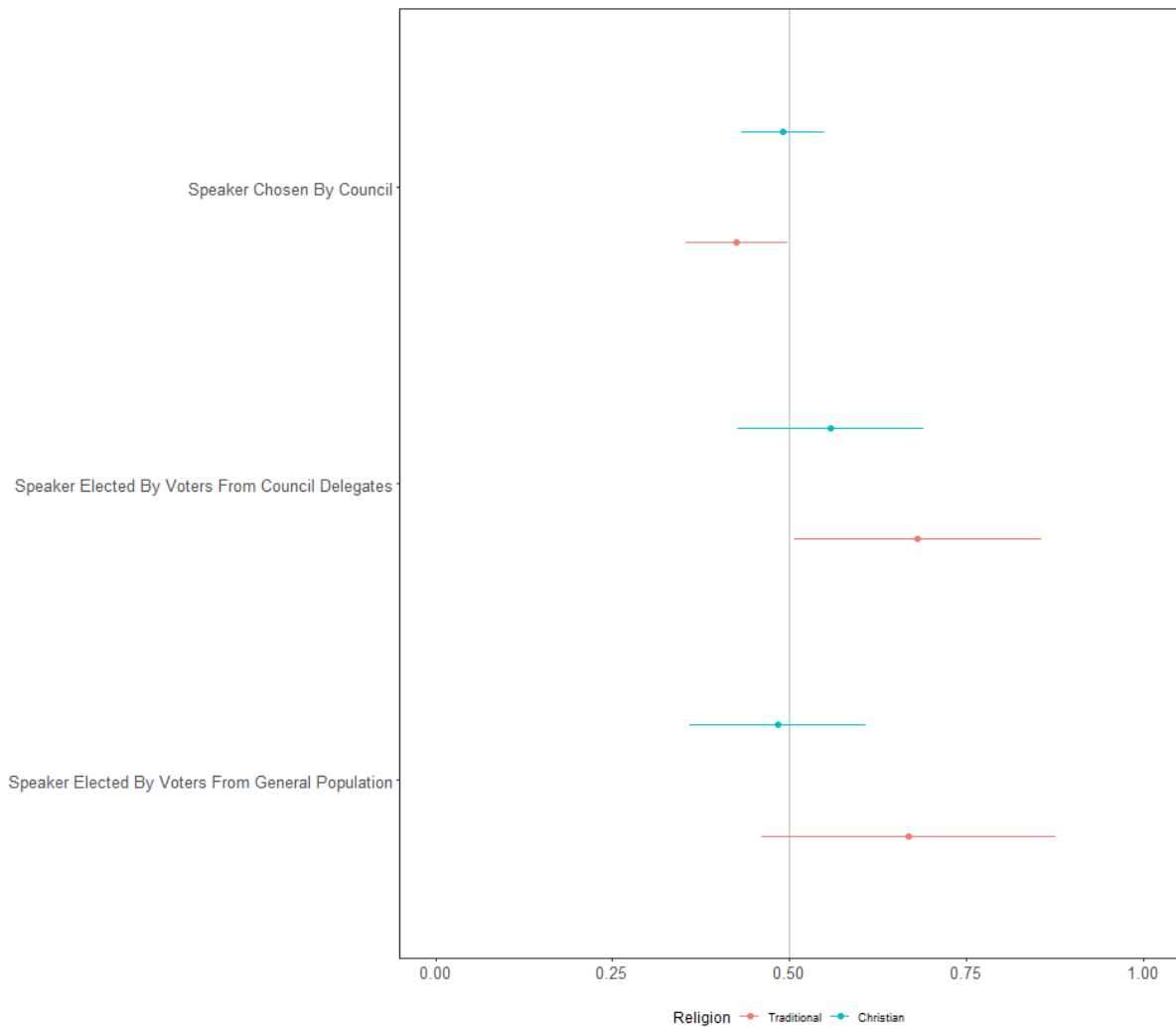


Figure A13: Subgroup Analysis Results — Speaker Selection and Life-ways

For subgroup analysis, it is more appropriate to rely on the marginal means of levels in aggregate (Leeper et al., 2020). When comparing respondents by US partisanship and religion, there does appear to be suggestive evidence of differences between subgroups, but these are not consistent when applying a formal interaction test in the weighted regression model.

## Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

A key limitation of relying on conjoint is the potential for bias by extreme preference intensities from those on the margins (Abramson et al., 2022). To address these concerns, the experiment was analyzed identically to Mazumder and Yan (2020) in using generalized random forests (GRF) to estimate individual causal effects for respondents in the sample (Friedberg et al., 2020). This approach generates confidence intervals based on the randomization of the sample and predicts individual level causal effects for a given respondent. In other words, the algorithm estimates how individuals reacted to the survey conditional on observable features available in the data which includes age, fluency,

education, whether they are a Navajo Nation employee/official, democrat, and more. The product allows a researcher to see heterogeneity within the sample and diagnose whether few respondents are overwhelmingly preferring one institution over another and creating unrepresentative average marginal component effects (Mazumder & Yan, 2020).

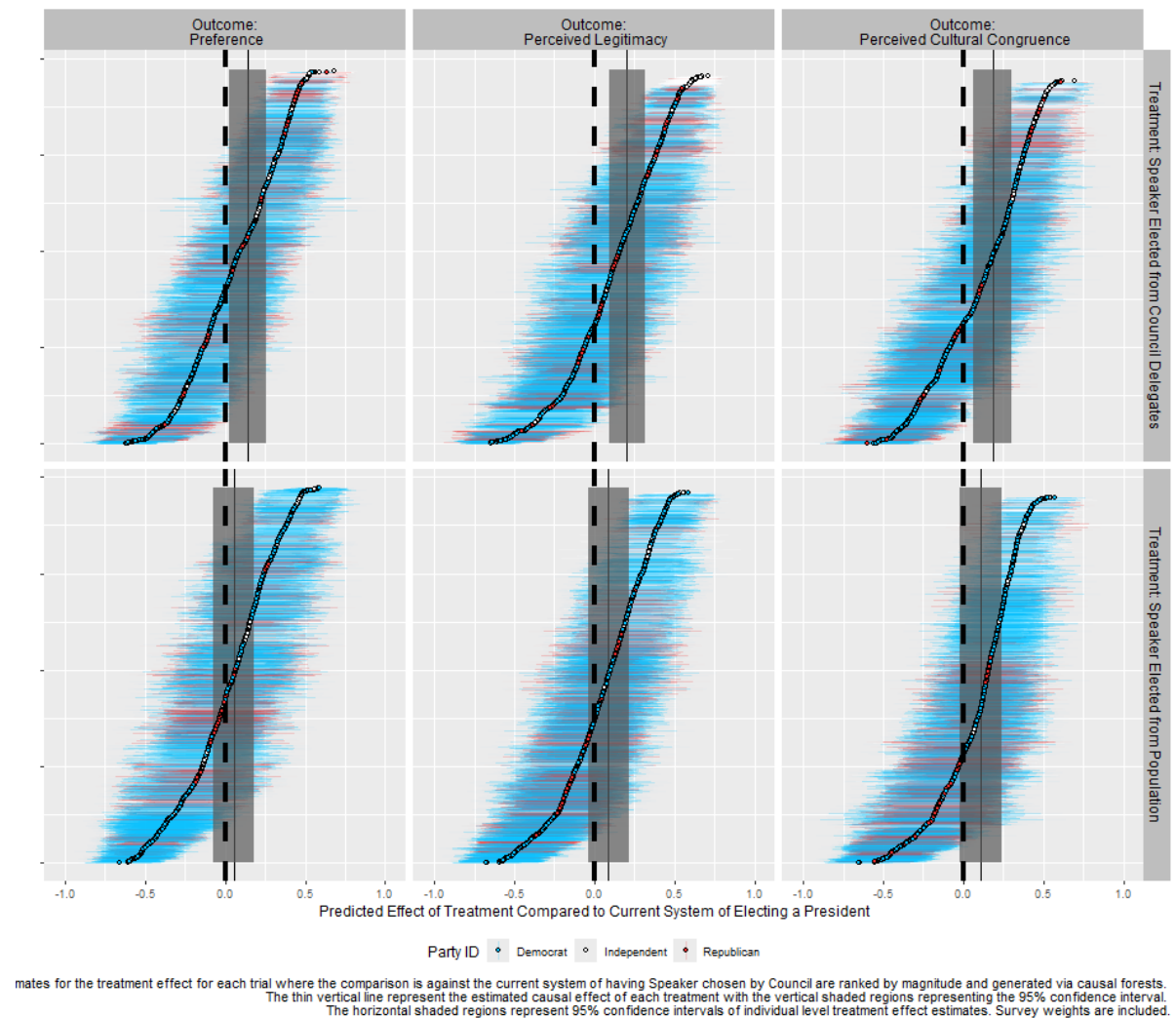


Figure A14: Heterogeneous Treatment Results — Speaker Selection and Party ID

For each conjoint level treatment, or government reform solution, the GRF predicts individual causal effects and categorizes respondents based on their partisanship (in color) with the estimated AMCE as the gray vertical bar. In general, there does not appear to be any lumping of partisans affecting results for the Speaker Selection, which is the main treatment condition consistent results were found. This indicates there are a range of individual preferences and no specific individuals push the results in one direction or another.

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