Working paper XXX-23018 February 2024

Can research with policymakers change the world?

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DIRECTED BY LSE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

FUNDED BY UKaid from the British people

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February 2024

Abstract

Over the past two decades, economists have increasingly sought to collaborate with policymakers in designing and executing research projects, as a way to achieve greater policy relevance. However, the extent to which such partnerships lead to actual policy changes remains underexplored, partly due to the lack of available data. To address this question, I construct a unique dataset of over 500 academic research projects in the field of development economics, which includes information on the level of policymakers' involvement at the proposal stage and tracks changes in policy decisions observed following project implementation. Projects developed in partnership with policymakers are 17 to 20 percentage points more likely to result in observed policy change. This relationship is fully conditional on academic achievement (i.e., publication), suggesting that it does not result from a sorting of policymakers into policy-oriented studies of limited academic value. Local political conditions affect when and where these partnerships are formed. I identify a "window of opportunity" for researcher-policymaker partnerships coinciding with the election cycle: these collaborations most often occur earlier in the term when political conditions are conducive to experimentation and reform.

JEL Classification: A11, D04, D89, H11, **O2**.

*I am indebted to Oriana Bandiera, Gharad Bryan and Robin Burgess, for their continuous guidance and support throughout this project. Conference and seminar participants of the LSE Development Workshop, the IFS Development Economics Seminar, the Applied Development Economics Conference (Lahore) and NEUDC (Boston) provided helpful comments. Excellent research assistance was provided by Sarayu Manoj and Chinmaya Singh. Financial support from the International Growth Centre and STICERD is gratefully acknowledged. Contact: Department of Economics, LSE, UK. Email: a.m.bonargent@lse.ac.uk

1 Introduction

How does research impact policy decisions? The increasing demand for evidence-based policymaking has intensified the pressure on academics to not only generate policy-relevant research but also to actively engage in ensuring its practical application. Over the past two decades, a novel approach to research production and dissemination, characterized by close collaborations between policymakers and researchers in designing and executing research projects and sometimes called *co-creation*, has gained traction among economists,[1] especially in the field of development economics (Duflo, 2017). This paradigm shift towards greater emphasis on practical application and policy engagement has come with a substantial increase in projects' budget and timeframe, as well as ethical concerns stemming from researchers' heightened involvement in the policymaking process (Drèze, 2022). Do such researcher-policymaker collaborations actually translate into observed changes in policy decisions? When are these partnerships successfully formed, and by whom? These considerations are essential for informing research production and dissemination, yet, they have remained largely unexplored within the literature in economics.

In this paper, I take the initial step towards answering these questions by constructing a unique dataset comprising over 500 academic research projects in the field of development economics, initiated out between 2009 and 2018, predominantly in Sub-Saharan Africa, and South and East Asia. To assemble this dataset, I collaborated with the International Growth Centre, an organization that awards research grants in development economics. This organization, committed to fostering policy change, has an obligation to report annually to its main donor, the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), on the policy impact of the grants it has awarded over the years. Consequently, it has established a comprehensive data collection system, centrally coordinated by a specialized team, which includes establishing local representatives responsible for liaising with governmental, public sector, and industry stakeholders, and regularly following up with research teams on their progress in stakeholder engagement.

Through this collaboration, I gained access to the organization's internal records, including

[1] An example of how co-creation has been institutionalized outside of development economics include the establishment of "Nudge Units" such as the Behavioral Insight Team set up by the British government in 2010.

project proposals, implementation, and policy impact reports, enabling me to develop project-level characteristics. From the proposals and implementation reports, I identified all entities actively involved in the design and execution of each research project. After listing all collaborative entities, I pinpointed those that qualify as policymakers, defined by three criteria: (i) a focus on public interest or social welfare, (ii) the capacity to implement, and (iii) a broad reach within the country where the research is conducted. The majority of the identified policymakers are government agencies, public administrations, public-private partnerships, with only a few being large NGOs or social enterprises, thus categorizing them predominantly as public policymakers. Using detailed policy impact reports produced by the organization, I developed a metric to measure evidence uptake. A project has resulted in evidence uptake if any of the following has occurred after its implementation: programmatic changes (e.g., intervention scale-up), operational changes (e.g., adoption of data management system) or the commissioning of new research. This definition is chosen to ensure it is objectively and externally verifiable, in order to avoid systematic discrepancies in detecting uptake between partnership and non-partnership projects. This approach will typically exclude impacts related to belief changes or capacity building, which are not readily observable.

I first investigate the relationship between implementing a project in partnership and evidence uptake. I expect that partnerships potentially lead to greater evidence uptake by allowing academics to effectively identify and address policy-relevant research questions, facilitated by direct input from policymakers and access to exclusive resources like datasets and field sites. Additionally, such collaborations can overcome information barriers and biases, enhance policymakers' understanding and utilization of research findings, and provide a direct channel for the implementation of research results, thereby increasing organizational capacity for program delivery and operational changes. Projects implemented in partnership with policymakers are 17 to 20 percentage points more likely to lead to evidence uptake. Compared to the 3% of non-partnership projects that yield evidence uptake, this imply that policymakers' involvement increases the chance of research utilization roughly 7 times. While I control for observable characteristics of the research team, I cannot fully account for the effect of researchers' ability and effort to engage

with policymakers, which would affect both partnership formation and utilization of evidence. As a result, the estimate must be interpreted as an upper bound for the effect of partnership on evidence uptake, or as the effect of partnerships including researchers' selection.

Instead of indicating a compromise of academic integrity for policy influence, my findings suggest that these partnerships may be a means for Western-based researchers to conduct policy engagement locally while maintaining academic standards. Firstly, partnerships do not correlate with poorer publication outcomes at the project level. In fact, the positive relationship between policymaker involvement and evidence uptake is entirely conditional on the production of an academic publication. Secondly, academics from top-rank institutions[2] are more likely to engage in these partnerships, especially when they lack locally affiliated researchers on their team. Collectively, these insights suggest that researchers are motivated to enter partnerships anticipating substantial academic benefits, and those from top-rank institutions are particularly well-positioned to seize these opportunities, given their access to ample resources and the resource-intensive nature of these collaborations.

I next examine the conditions under which these partnerships form. My analysis reveals that both the timing of partnership formation and the quality of these partnerships, in terms of their ability to yield evidence uptake, are significantly influenced by the political constraints faced by policymakers, as captured by the election cycle. Projects submitted to a funding call within the two years preceding an election (in the country where the research project will be implemented) are roughly 10 percentage points less likely to be initiated in partnership. This decrease is attributed to the reduced willingness and availability of policymakers to engage with researchers as elections near, due to competing priorities and the uncertainties of potential changes in leadership, and could be partially driven by researchers' internalizing these constraints. Furthermore, partnerships initiated in the two years prior to an election are around 15 percentage points less likely to lead to evidence

[2]The ranking of institutions in this study is based on the RePEC ranking of Economic Institutions. For the purposes of this analysis, a 'top-rank institution' is defined as one that falls within the top 15 Economics institutions according to the RePEC ranking. 'Medium-ranked institutions' are those that are placed within the 16 to 200 range in the same ranking. Lastly, 'lower-ranked institutions' refer to those that are positioned beyond the top 200 in the RePEC ranking.

uptake.

Researchers differ in their ability to withstand political constraints, depending on the rank of their institution of affiliation. Specifically, researchers affiliated with top-rank institutions are generally unaffected by elections; they have the capacity to establish partnerships that consistently lead to enhanced evidence utilization throughout the cycle. Those from mid-rank institutions engage in partnerships both before and after elections, yet it is only the post-election collaborations that yield a high rate of evidence uptake. Researchers from other institutions find themselves sidelined during the pre-election phase but are able to form effective partnerships after the elections. The findings align with the notion that, due to competing priorities, policymakers reduce their overall engagement efforts in partnerships, thereby necessitating additional effort from researchers to maintain the partnership's quality. Additionally, there appears to be a shift in policymakers' motivation for forming partnerships, moving from policy impact towards reputational concerns. Consequently, two types of projects emerge in the pre-election period: those that are policy-relevant and demand significant researcher involvement, typically pursued by academics affiliated with top-ranked institutions who have the resources to sup- port such involvement, and projects that focus more on enhancing visibility and reputation, which may lack in-depth policy substance and are often undertaken by researchers from medium-ranked institutions.

The findings support the concept of a *window of opportunity* for both the formation of partnerships and evidence uptake. This window opens early in a political term, when policymakers are comparatively less constrained by political pressures and have more time available to pursue policy-relevant research projects. It is important to emphasize that this analysis is positive in nature and does not provide a basis for normative conclusions regarding the advisability of involving policymakers in research design, nor does it prescribe which researchers should be involved in these partnerships. The measure of evidence uptake employed in this study is specifically designed to capture when policymakers respond to research, rather than to assess the suitability of these policy decisions. To determine whether such responses are optimal requires knowledge of the policymakers' priors and the specific information they were exposed to, an exercise better suited for a lab-in-the-

field learning experiment. Instead, the main objective of this analysis is to offer unique insights into the behaviors of both policymakers and researchers and to explore how their respective incentives interact to shape research outcomes.

This paper contributes to the expanding body of work on how research informs policy decisions. A significant segment of this literature examines the processes through which policymakers update their beliefs based on new information, a theme explored by various authors (Vivalt and Coville (2023), Nakajima (2021), Mehmood, Shaheen, and Chen. (2021), Toma and Bell (2022).) Hjort, Moreira, Rao, and Santini (2021) and Kremer, Thomas, Gallant, and Rostapshova (2021) demonstrate how impact evaluation can shape programmatic choices. Hjort et al. (2021) founds that Brazilian municipal officers are more likely to adopt reminder letter interventions if they are presented with impact evaluation evidence of their effectiveness. Kremer et al. (2021) presents findings that mirror those of the present paper: innovations funded by USAID's Development Impact Venture are more likely to be subsequently scaled-up by policymakers when the intervention has proven effective through an impact evaluation, or when researchers are attached to the grant. This paper most closely aligns with the works of DellaVigna, Kim, and Linos (2022) which investigates institutional features that increase research use by policymakers. The study shows that organizational inertia hinders the adoption of interventions that have proven effective, even when these interventions are evaluated by the organization itself.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. Section II and III describe the context and dataset. Section IV examines the relationship between research partnership and evidence uptake. Section V explores political and institutional conditions under which partnerships are formed and section VI concludes.

2 Context

2.1 The evidence-based decision-making paradigm

Development economics in the 21st provides an ideal setting for exploring the mechanisms through which research findings filter through policy, particularly in contexts where researchers actively engage with policymakers. Over the past two decades, the field has

experienced a significant transformation in both the types of questions it aims to answer, and the methods employed to pursue them. Development economists have increasingly focused on characterizing the markets failures and behavioral biases hindering individuals' choices, and on identifying micro-level intervention that effectively improve their economic and social welfare.

Methodologically, this period is marked by the rise of impact evaluations, often conducted through randomized controlled trials and involving large primary data collection exercises. Pioneering experimental work, such as that by Miguel and Kremer (2004), has come to symbolize this paradigm shift, focusing on identifying cost-effective interventions with potentially high social returns. The Nobel Prize in Economics awarded to Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo and Michael Kremer illustrates the profound impact of this new approach on the field of development economics and its recognition in the broader discipline.

These changes in the academic sphere are mirrored by a similar paradigm shift in the policy world, originating in the wake of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000. Calls for more accountability and results in the administration of public policy in low- and middle-income countries were formalized through a series of High-Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness held between 2003 and 2011. The conferences, bringing together bilateral and multilateral donors, aid recipients and other development organizations, aimed at reforming the way aid was delivered and managed to increase its impact. Joint co-operation agreements, including the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action, identified core principles for aid administration including "managing for results", which emphasized building robust data management systems, introducing performance and monitoring frameworks and, more broadly, "[using] information to improve decision-making."

These seemingly complementary trajectories observed in academia (i.e., increased focus on impact evaluation) and policy (i.e., greater emphasis on evidence-based programmatic decisions) naturally suggested a closer integration between development economics and the administration of public policy. The prevailing theory of the case posited that researchers would conduct rigorous impact evaluations, progressively populating evidence repositories to help identify welfare-enhancing interventions. Policymakers would then harness this growing repository of knowledge on effective practices to guide their decisions. Organiza-

tions such as the Jameel Abdul Latif Poverty Action Lab (JPAL), Innovation for Poverty Action (IPA), and the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)—which are dedicated to financing and conducting impact evaluations led by researchers in development economics —were established as key components of this ecosystem.[3] Today, 3ie's Development Evidence Portal includes over 12000 impact evaluation records and 1000 systematic reviews.

2.2 Ascent of co-creation

While producing rigorous research and publicly disseminating the resulting evidence are essential, experience has shown that these efforts are often insufficient to ensure that findings are utilized to inform policy decisions. Many challenges can explain low evidence adoption, ranging from information frictions (Hjort et al., 2021), limited generalizability and external validity of research results (Angrist and Meager (2023), **?**), as well as concerns over fidelity of implementation when recommendations are adopted and innovations scaled up (Bold, Kimenyi, Mwabu, Sandefur, et al. (2018).) More broadly, the disconnect between research and policy can arise from a misalignment of fit and purpose of the evidence produced, often due to academics' insufficient value judgment (or interest) in discerning what is policy-relevant, politically feasible, and realistic within local implementation capacity, among other factors.

The prevailing model of research production and dissemination in development economics has evolved to account for these shortcomings, with greater emphasize put on direct policy engagement.[4] In particular, the idea of involving policymakers in the initial stages of research design has gained traction as a potent method to overcome many barriers that typically hinder the uptake of evidence. This collaborative approach, often referred to as *co-creation*, has become increasingly prevalent in the field of development economics.[5]

[3]See the mission statements of JPAL, IPA, and 3ie for their foundational goals and principles, as stated in their original documentation.

[4]In 2009, JPAL launched a policy group whose mission was "to bridge the gap between policy and research". In its 2013-2018 strategic plan, IPA acknowledged that "translating evidence into large-scale programs requires that we do more than simply communicate results" and as a result, changed it policy outreach strategy. From 2012, 3ie stopped commissioning research projects through unrestricted, open funding calls and instead narrowed it focus on "Policy Windows" and "Thematic Windows" which involve the input of policymakers to select projects for funding.

[5]This is evidenced by the frequent inclusion of the terms "co-creation" "embeddedness" or "partnerships" in the values and mission statements of prominent organizations involved in funding and conducting

A prime example is given by a project led by Esther Duflo, Rohini Pande, and Nicholas Ryan, conducted in collaboration with the Pollution Control Board of the Indian state of Gujarat. The study, discussed in Esther Duflo's 2017 Ely lecture (Duflo (2017)), is especially relevant as it belongs to the set of projects funded by the International Growth Centre (IGC) which forms the sample for this analysis.

In this illustrative case, the Pollution Control Board of Gujarat was grappling with a pressing policy issue: despite regulations aimed at reducing carbon emissions from private enterprises, inadequate monitoring and misreporting resulted in substantial industrial pollution. A team of researchers, interested in optimal market design, then collaborated with the agency to develop and assess a third-party audit system. The evaluation revealed that the new audit system was significantly more accurate and leads to a reduction in emissions. Prompted by these insights, the agency overhauled its environmental audit system to include procedures informed by the study's recommendations. Moreover, the study and its impactful findings were featured in articles published in Econometrica and the Quarterly Journal of Economics (Duflo, Greenstone, Pande, and Ryan (2013), Duflo, Greenstone, Pande, and Ryan (2018)).

This simplified account captures the narrative typically put forward to illustrate the potential of co-creation: achieving high impact research that also makes significant academic contribution.

2.3 Co-creation at the IGC

The IGC was established in 2008 "to promote sustainable growth in developing countries by providing demand-led policy advice based on frontier research." [6] The IGC maintains that close engagement with policymakers is essential to fulfilling its dual mandate of academic achievement and growth promotion. Central to this approach is the belief that ex-ante engagement, or engaging at the onset of the research process, is at least as important as establishing effective communication channels for dissemination.

In practice, the IGC fosters ex-ante engagement in several ways: (i) by offering special

research, such as IPA, JPAL, 3ie, and DIME.

[6] This quote references the IGC's mission statement as it appears on its official website.

funding facilities, (ii) through its large grant commissioning process, and (iii) by making significant investments in country offices. The organization offers a class of small grants intended for scoping research, which can cover expenses related to travel for conducting in-country visits to meet local stakeholders, as well as the costs of developing and piloting projects with prospective policymakers. When commissioning larger grants, the IGC specifically inquires about local demand for the research, the engagement strategy, and the potential involvement of stakeholders in the project. This is to assess the project's potential for local policy impact, which is a key criterion for the final selection of these grants. Once projects are underway, research teams are required to report on the progress of dissemination and engagement efforts, in line with a strategy established at the beginning of the grant funding.

What really sets the IGC apart is its substantial investment in local country office infrastructure, designed to facilitate interaction between researchers and local stakeholders. This support is crucial for researchers who lack local connections or are unable to maintain ongoing communication with local actors throughout the duration of their projects. The IGC currently operates 11 country offices across Sub-Saharan Africa and South and East Asia, staffed by country economists who work to build and sustain relationships with both public and private policymakers. These economists can mediate in several ways: (i) by keeping up with policy debates and identifying local research needs to inform project designs, (ii) by facilitating meetings with policymakers who have expressed research needs and providing funding for scoping visits through the small grant facility, (iii) by acting as intermediaries to ensure continuous communication between research teams and stakeholders throughout the project, and (iv) by helping organize and participating in dissemination events and activities.

In this respect, the IGC is a leader in the co-creation movement, with a large portfolio of hundreds of projects implemented across the previous decades, which provides a rich dataset to investigate researcher-policymaker partnerships.

3 Data

3.1 Sample selection

As previously mentioned, the IGC was established with the mission of achieving policy impact by commissioning cutting-edge academic research. To fulfill this dual mandate of academic and policy impact, the organization employs a range of funding mechanisms.

Researchers can typically access two types of grants: small grants, distributed ad-hoc by country offices, and larger grants, allocated by a commissioning board. Small grants are usually awarded for scoping research, exploratory work, or projects addressing specific policy needs. The decision to award these grants rests is at the discretion of the country office where they will be used, leading to projects that are predominantly policy-oriented. Conversely, the commissioning board process involves assessment and selection by a committee that includes both scientists (development economists) and policy experts (country office staff), ensuring a blend of academic rigor and policy relevance. This study focuses on grants awarded by the commissioning board, which are indicative of mainstream academic research within the field of development economics.

The commissioning board issues one to two funding calls annually. These calls encompass a wide range of research areas and methodologies, with a primary emphasis on empirical analysis rather than purely theoretical work. While there is no cap on the award amount, the average project budget is around GBP 60,000, and it is rare for the organization to award grants exceeding GBP 125,000. These grants, though limited in amount, frequently serve to supplement a larger budget supported by other donors.

The commissioning board is composed of members from the IGC's scientific leadership, including research program directors and the senior management team, as well as staff from the country office, such as country economists and lead academics. Each proposal submitted to the funding call undergoes evaluation by a diverse panel of academic and policy experts, who are tasked with assessing both the academic contribution of the project and its capacity to influence policy decisions or contribute to local capacity. Projects are chosen by the board based on these evaluations, ensuring that each selected project meets a minimum standard of academic relevance.

I use all the grants awarded through the fourteen calls for proposals issued by the organization during the period under investigation. Multiple grants are sometimes required to finance a single research project, particularly for randomized controlled trials involving several rounds of data collection. The final task involves mapping each eligible grant to single research projects to prevent duplication. The final sample comprises 511 research projects, initiated between 2009 and 2018 and conducted in 38 low- and middle-income countries (see Figure?? for locations.) Notably, the sample comprises a quarter of the randomized controlled trials (implemented since 2009) referenced in a 2016 review paper by Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo, and Michael Kremer,[7] which underscores the importance of experimental studies in development economics research. This suggests that the final sample accurately represents the projects development economists have pursued over the past decade.

3.2 Measuring evidence uptake

The IGC has invested in developing a sophisticated data collection infrastructure that captures the policy impact of its grants. Central to this system are a dedicated MEL team and the technical staff based in the organization's country offices.

The MEL team is responsible for designing the data system aimed at documenting policy impacts and for coordinating data collection efforts involving internal and external actors. The technical staff based in the 11 IGC country offices, known as country economists, are tasked with liaising with local policymakers in both the public and private sectors. They keep abreast of local policy developments, identify areas of policy interest, and ensure that research results are disseminated.

Every financial year, the MEL team identifies the set of projects that qualify for policy influence and undergoes further investigation to document and characterize their policy impact. For those projects deemed impactful, the MEL team prepares a report in narrative form, supported by evidence, including, for example, email chains between policymakers and country teams and/or researchers, official minutes recorded by policy actors, policy documents (public and internal, such as drafts policies), public statements, or private

[7] See Banerjee, Duflo, and Kremer (2016).

statements from letters or interviews with policymakers. This meticulous process of documenting engagement allows the organization to directly link an observed change in policy decision to the evidence produced by its funded projects.

This setup by the IGC effectively identifies policy impact resulting from direct engagement by the research team or other actors involved in the project implementation. Such engagement can occur either ex-ante, at the project's inception, potentially leading to partnerships, or ex-post, after the project concludes, when findings are shared with relevant stakeholders.

I use the qualitative information from impact reports to develop two quantitative metrics of evidence uptake at the project level. The first metric is a binary variable set to one if any instance of uptake has been reported by the IGC. Among these instances, those that capture changes in beliefs, contributions to policy debates, and other non-externally observable impacts are typically self-reported by policymakers. This introduces the potential for measurement errors, which, although not necessarily problematic in the context of reporting on the IGC's impact, could compromise the results of the quantitative analysis. The first issue is the well-known problem of stated versus revealed preferences, where self-reports involve no opportunity costs for policymakers, making it challenging to verify their accuracy. The second issue concerns the ability to detect and, importantly, document changes in beliefs, which is inherently linked to the research team or country staff's level of connection and access to local policymakers. For these reasons, this metric is not the main measure of evidence uptake but will instead primarily serve as a measure of access.

To address these measurement error issues, I will focus on instances of uptake that are objective and externally verifiable. Consequently, the primary measure of evidence uptake is a binary variable set to one for any instance of research utilization that falls into one of the following categories: a programmatic change, an operational change, or the commissioning of new research. I refer to this measurement as *Observed policy changes*.

Programmatic changes are specific to impact evaluation. They occur when a program or intervention is adopted, scaled-up, redesigned, or scaled down following the completion of the research project. Additionally, instances where an official government document, like a

policy guideline, explicitly states an intention to adopt, scale-up, or adjust a program or an intervention are also considered as a programmatic change. This inclusion acknowledges that governmental actors, unlike other policymakers, face unique legislative constraints on their ability to set policy. Operational changes denote instances where research projects yield outputs that inform policymakers' operational processes. This mostly pertains to the adoption of data collection and data management systems developed during the project's implementation.

Lastly, commissioning the research team to conduct further research work is also recognized as evidence uptake. This approach captures instances where research influences outcomes that do not directly translate into programmatic or operational changes, because the findings do not offer immediately actionable recommendations. This situation typically arises during process evaluations of randomized controlled trials, where systemic and structural weaknesses in delivery mechanisms may be identified, leading to new projects aimed at improving the design and implementation of these mechanisms. Importantly, the IGC records instances of new research being commissioned even if the new project is not funded by the IGC, provided it is led by the original principal investigators.

3.3 Defining and identifying policymakers and partnerships

The first step toward determining whether a project is implemented in partnership with a policymaker consists in identifying all entities involved in the design and implementation of each research project. My primary sources of are internal documents provided by the IGC, which include the project proposal originally submitted for the funding call and implementation reports, and in some cases the working paper or final report produced by the research team.

The list of collaborating entities is diverse, covering NGOs, firms, institutional donors, and international bodies such as UN agencies. It also spans state actors like governments, public administration, and other state-regulated public service providers. To identify each entity and ascertain their degree of involvement, I manually review each document. The nuanced language often employed in project proposals by researchers requires human interpretation and hinders the possibility of automation. Researchers occasionally exaggerate

the participation of policy actors to emphasize the policy relevance and feasibility of their projects. A common practice might be to name officials encountered during preliminary discussions as government counterparts, even if no formal commitment was obtained. Consequently, I treat a claim as credible only if the specifics of the involvement are clear and verifiable within the proposal. If the proposal doesn't offer conclusive evidence, I corroborate these statements by referencing specific instances of involvement listed in the implementation reports and, on occasions, in the working paper. In situations where the proposal implies ongoing negotiations with an entity, the implementation reports again serve to confirm final participation.

Active engagement in the design and the implementation of the research project can take many forms. In the design phase, contributions range from shaping research questions and commissioning studies aimed at addressing specific policy challenges, to facilitating access to key data and, in the context of randomized experiments, participating in intervention design. Meanwhile, involvement in the implementation phase includes support in establishing data management infrastructures, conducting analyses, and delivering interventions in the case of randomized controlled trials.

Once all collaborative entities are listed, the second step consist in identifying those that can be considered as policymakers. I categorize a policymaker as an entity that possesses the following three traits: (i) a focus on public interest or social welfare, (ii) the capacity to implement, and (iii) a broad reach within the country where the research project is executed.

Research in development economics primarily focuses on improving the economic and social conditions of disadvantaged individuals. Therefore, it is necessary that policymakers prioritize social welfare to make research results (e.g., treatment effects from an impact evaluation) potentially valuable in guiding their decisions. For instance, if researchers partner with a Ministry of Education to introduce a novel teacher training aimed at improving student learning outcomes, it is reasonable to assume that the study's results align with the ministry's goals, possibly influencing future policy decisions. In contrast, consider a situation where researchers work with a large company to assess the impact of paying employees via mobile money versus cash on their saving and consumption habits.

If the ability of employees to save does not directly impact the company's profits, there is no basis to expect that the research question is relevant to the firms' objectives and that it would leverage the findings in its operations. The second and third traits, implementation capability and operational scale, ensure that the entity can act upon this information. Under these criteria, institutions like the World Bank would not be labeled as policymakers: although they can finance governments for policy execution, they lack direct implementation capabilities. Policymakers can be divided into public ones, encompassing government bodies and public administration, and private ones, which include companies delivering public services through public-private partnerships, as well as large NGOs and social enterprises (i.e., businesses explicitly driven by a social purpose, whose objective is not solely profit maximization.) Figure 2 offers further examples, illustrating how various types of partners are classified as policymakers.

All projects involving at least one policymaker actively participating in their design or implementation are classified as research-policymaker partnerships, thereafter *partnerships*. In the sample, partnerships represent 34% of all projects, including 27% of public partnerships and 7% of private partnerships. Partnerships take many forms. For instance, a microfinance institution concerned with broadening access to its products and minimizing default work with researchers to design and test a new contract that offers clients more flexible repayment options. A local government with limited capacity to collect taxes collaborates with researchers to digitize its data management system and develop a method to measure and detect tax fraud.

3.4 Measuring academic impact

Academic outcomes for each project are assessed by its academic output, which includes both working papers and published articles. For published articles, journals are categorized as follow. The first category includes the traditional "top 5" journals in Economics, namely the American Economic Review, Econometrica, the Journal of Political Economy, The Quarterly Journal of Economics and the Review of Economic Studies. Publications not included in the first category are ranked using ranking from the Research Papers in

Economics (RePEC) website.[8]

Since the field of economics is characterized by a lengthy publication process (Ellison (2002)), especially for top-rated journals, many of the more recent projects in the sample have no available research output or only a working paper. Conducting analysis on publication outcomes therefore requires focusing on a subsample of projects for which these outcomes are fully realized. Accordingly, any analysis performed with academic outcomes uses a subsample limited to projects that commenced before 2014.

3.5 Collecting information on education and professional background

An information extraction exercise was conducted to gather data on the education and professional experience of the nearly 900 principal investigators included in the sample. The process began by collecting curriculum vitae (CVs) from the researchers' personal or institutional websites. The CVs were initially processed using a professional resume parser and then manually refined to compile a timeline of the researchers' educational and professional experiences. For each degree earned, the type of degree, the institution's name and location, and the start and end dates of the program were recorded. Similarly, for each research position held, the position's title, the employing institution's name and location, and the job's start and end dates were documented. If a CV was unavailable online, LinkedIn profiles or other online profiles were used to retrieve the necessary information.

From this raw data, the following indicators were generated at the individual-project level. The rank of the institution of affiliation at the time of the project proposal submission is determined using the 2009 RePEc ranking of Economics Departments and Economic Institutions. The location of the institution of affiliation at the time of proposal submission is used to assess whether the principal investigator is locally affiliated with the country where the research project is implemented. The position title held by each principal investigator at the time of proposal submission is used to categorize their professional status into one of the following: full professor, associate professor, assistant professor, postdoctoral researcher, or PhD student. If any educational institution from which the

[8] RePEC (www.repec.org) is a crowd-sourced initiative providing rankings for journals, researchers and institutions based on the citations of their associated research output.

principal investigator had received a degree (including secondary and tertiary education) was in the country of implementation of the project, the principal investigator is classified as having received local education, which serves as a proxy for country of origin.

The individual-project level information is aggregated to create research team-specific indicators, such as the presence of at least one full professor on the research team, among other metrics.

3.6 Country characteristics and electoral outcomes

Country characteristics. The countries in which the IGC operates are democracies, at least to the extent that regular elections are held, with some countries transitioning into or out of democracy during the period from 2009 to 2018. To measure the strength of democratic institutions, I use the Institutionalized Democracy Index produced by the Polity Project. [9] GDP per capita information is taken from the World Bank database.

Electoral outcomes. For all countries where at least three projects have been implemented, election outcomes have been collected for the entire period under study. This data set includes the dates and results of elections, which is used to identify transitions of parties and heads of state. Additionally, it is used to determine the time span between the submission date of a project proposal and the date of the nearest election in the country where the project is implemented. For all countries, except India and Pakistan, national-level general elections are considered. In the case of India and Pakistan, state-level and provincial general elections are used, unless a project spans more than three states or provinces, in which case the national-level elections are used.

4 Empirical strategy

Why would partnerships result in greater uptake? They first enable academics to better identify and tackle research questions of policy relevance. Policymakers can directly provide information about their areas of interest and offer input on research design. Another

[9] Polity V is a prominent dataset that measures characteristics of democracies and autocracies for major independent states from 1800 to 2018. The Democracy Index is an additive eleven point scale that captures the competitiveness and openness of executive recruitment, the level of constraint on executive power and the competitiveness of political participation (see SystemicPeace for more details.)

potential pathway between partnership and increased uptake is that direct collaboration with policymakers helps overcome information barriers and biases, enabling them to better understand and utilize research findings that were previously accessible but not fully leveraged. Finally, involving policymakers in project execution provide a direct channel for research findings to be implemented, building the organization's capacity to deliver programs or introduce operational changes.

In this paper, I adopt a descriptive approach to examine the differences in academic and policy performance between projects implemented through partnerships and those conducted by individual researchers over the past decade. It is important to clarify that the aim of this study is not to determine the causal effects of partnerships on research outcomes. Instead, I argue that estimating these effects is either conceptually or practically unfeasible, or results in findings that lack relevance for policy analysis, depending on the underlying conceptual framework.

4.1 Challenge in estimating the causal effect of partnership

4.1.1 Defining the non-partnership counterfactual

The first challenge in estimating the causal impact of partnership stems from defining an appropriate counterfactual for partnership projects. Intuitively, one might compare evidence uptake resulting from the evaluation of a specific intervention co-designed and implemented with a public administration (as the treatment group) against uptake resulting from the evaluation of the same intervention designed independently and implemented with a small NGO (as the control group). The work of Bold et al. (2018) provides a relevant illustration. This study implements two replications of an intervention initially evaluated by Duflo, Dupas, and Kremer (2015), which investigates whether using contracts renewable based on performance for teachers improves student learning in Kenya. Bold et al. (2018) innovate by conducting one replication with a consortium of Kenyan NGOs, similar to Duflo et al. (2015), and the other with the Ministry of Education. While the study focuses on fidelity of implementation and the generalizability of results, a similar setup could be expanded to compare evidence uptake between government-led evaluations (treatment) and NGO-led evaluations (counterfactual).

Under this conceptual framework, the causal impact of partnership is defined as the effect of policymaker involvement on evidence uptake for a given research and policy question, e.g., a given intervention. However, this framework is not adequate to capture the full effect of partnership.

First, collaborative partnerships with government and state actors often provide academics with access to exclusive datasets, field sites, or other resources that are typically restricted or unavailable to the public. An example is the audit system evaluation conducted with the Gujarat Pollution Control Board, mentioned in the introduction. Since the public administration is the only entity authorized to regulate emissions and the audit system, the project can only be developed and implemented with the Board. In other words, the project lacks a conceivable counterfactual outside of this policymaker partnership and thus has only one potential outcome, in the "treatment" state.

Second, even for interventions that can be developed either independently or with a policymaker, like those described in Duflo et al. (2015) and Bold et al. (2018), keeping the intervention design constant between treatment and control essentially neutralizes the effects of partnerships. Bold et al. (2018) shows that the government-led replication is unsuccessful due to some critical design flaws, that make enforcing the teacher contract legally and politically unfeasible for a public administration. Had the intervention initially been designed in collaboration with the government, these issues could have been identified and addressed early on, potentially leading to an entirely different contract tailored to the unique constraints faced by governmental bodies.

The challenge in defining a counterfactual for partnership projects lies in the fundamental differences in research questions, policy issues, and methodologies arising when policymakers are involved. Therefore, the appropriate approach to establishing this counterfactual is not merely to keep the project design constant and compare NGO-led implementations with those led by the government. Instead, it requires to consider the project or set of projects that the research team would have developed had they been prevented from collaborating with policymakers. Given that potential counterfactual projects may investigate vastly different research questions, across various sectors and in different national contexts, identifying them at the researcher level would be impossible outside of a

controlled experimental setting.

4.1.2 Pitfalls of experimental designs

The second challenge in estimating the causal impact of partnership is that conducting such experiment is essentially impossible.

One main constraint is the lack of a systematic, scalable approach to fostering these partnerships. Successful partnerships hinge on the personal attributes of both policymakers and researchers, which encompass individual preferences and traits such as interpersonal skills and charisma, in addition to professional motivations, resource availability, and existing networks. The group of policymakers and researchers who are able to form and sustain partnerships effectively is a self-selected and limited set, which underscores the importance of studying this selection process.

Since the treatment effect is likely heterogeneous and correlated with the attributes that determine successful partnership formation, estimating the average treatment effect for the entire population does not yield relevant insights from a policy perspective. Instead, the treatment on the treated is the pertinent effect, providing the impact of encouraging partnerships among those most likely to succeed. However, given the probable low success rate of any initiative aimed at randomly generating partnerships, the sample size required to detect such an effect would likely be prohibitively large.

An alternative experimental design, both costless and effective, would be the reverse approach: randomly select a pool of researchers in academia and prevent half from collaborating with policymakers. Researchers committed to policy impact would then be compelled to devise alternative strategies and the resulting projects could be observed over the subsequent years. Over the subsequent years, we could observe the nature of the projects they initiate. However, this design would clearly be untenable from both ethical and legal standpoints.

4.2 A retrospective, descriptive approach to studying partnerships

Instead of estimating the causal impact of partnerships, I employ a descriptive approach that retrospectively examines a decade of co-created projects in development economics.

In collaboration with an organization that funds scholars in this field, I review over 500 projects implemented over the last ten years, aiming to evaluate whether these co-created projects achieve their promises of influencing policy while maintaining academic rigor. This study compares the academic and policy outcomes of these projects to assess their effectiveness.

I account for researchers' ability to engage with policymakers, which depends not only on individual preferences and personal traits, such as interpersonal skills and charisma, but also on their career incentives, available resources, and access to networks. To control for these factors, I consider the seniority of the research team members, the rank and location of their home institutions, and their secondary and tertiary educational backgrounds. It must be acknowledged, however, that controlling for these observable characteristics does not entirely capture the influence of researchers' ability and effort to engage on both the creation of partnerships and the subsequent uptake of evidence. Consequently, any derived estimates should be regarded as an upper limit of the impact of partnerships on evidence uptake or as reflective of the effects of partnerships inclusive of researchers' selection bias. Note that researchers' fixed effects are not an appropriate strategy to control for researchers' selection into partnerships, as engagement efforts vary across projects within researcher. An academic skilled in collaborating with policymakers might even be able to perfectly choose which projects to implement in partnership based on their policy relevance.

Another challenge arises if policymakers opt to evaluate projects they had already intended to implement, hence biasing the estimate upwards. Demonstrating a commitment to impact evaluation can serve as a valuable signal, either to secure funding from the donor community or to inspire confidence in the electorate. By analyzing information from the project proposal and implementation report, I can determine whether the research project evaluates an intervention or program originally designed by the policymakers, or one already implemented by them. Interestingly, I found only three instances of such partnerships in my sample. A plausible explanation for this is that, while both governments and NGOs commission evaluations of their programs for accountability reasons, these evaluations are more frequently carried out by consulting firms instead of academic

researchers, possibly because of their perceived limited academic value. It is also possible that the scientific committee tasked with selecting proposals for funding might systematically reject such commissioned evaluations. I conducted the analysis excluding these three observations as a robustness check, and the results remained largely consistent.

5 Partnerships and research outcomes

5.1 Researchers selection into partnerships.

To start the analysis, I study researcher selection into collaborations with policymakers, estimating the following model:

$$Partnership_{irct} = \alpha + \mathbf{X}_{rct}\gamma + \mathbf{V}_i\lambda + \rho_c + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{irct}$$

With $\mathbf{X}_{rc}$, characteristics of the research team (including institution rank, local education and affiliation and seniority, as described in the data section) and $\mathbf{V}_i$, characteristics capturing the scale of the project (including the budget, duration and size of the research team.) Funding call, or time, fixed effects control for systematic differences in the supply of proposals and the preferences of the selection committee and are captured by δ_t. Country fixed effects are captured with ρ_c. Results from the estimation are reported in Table 2.

There are two remarkable findings regarding the characteristics of research teams that achieve policy impact. First, projects led by researchers from elite institutions are, on average, the most likely to establish partnerships with policymakers. This relationship weakens when accounting for project scale, as indicated by budget and team size, suggesting that it is partially driven by these researchers' ability to secure funding.

Secondly, researchers with local connections (those working or educated in the country where the project is implemented) do not consistently form more partnerships, despite potentially having broader local networks. Qualitative evidence from the IGC's records suggests that while researchers affiliated with local institutions play a crucial role in engaging policymakers, they do so outside of project-level partnerships. Instead, they often serve in ongoing technical advisory capacities, utilizing a wide range of expertise rather

than depending solely on the results of individual studies.

The subsequent section will delve deeper into what underpins these average effects by examining the seasonality of partnership formation around the political cycle.

5.2 Partnership and evidence uptake

I examine the relationship between partnership and evidence uptake by estimating the following model:

$$Uptake_{irct} = \alpha + \beta Partnership_{irct} + \mathbf{X}_{rct}\gamma + \mathbf{V}_i\lambda + \rho_c + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{irct}$$

Results from the estimation are reported in Table 3. Researcher-policymaker partnership appear as the strongest predictor of evidence uptake. The magnitude and statistical significance of the coefficient is robust to the addition of controls and fixed effects. Designing and implementing a research project with a policymaker increases the likelihood of evidence uptake by 17 to 20 percentage points. The magnitude of the coefficient is remarkably high considering that only 3% of projects in the control group resulted in evidence uptake. The effect of partnership is remarkably homogenous across different characteristics of the research teams, suggesting that once formed, these partnerships have the potential to benefit researchers of all types (Figure 3.)

Projects led by researchers from higher-ranked institutions have a greater likelihood of influencing policy change, primarily due to larger budget allocations for those at top institutions. Additionally, both the budget and the size of the research team are predictors of evidence uptake. This trend is largely driven by the fact that large, resource-intensive projects like RCTs account for two-thirds of the observed policy changes.

5.2.1 Robustness: Alternative definitions of evidence uptake

The definition of evidence uptake used so far includes the commission of new research projects, which might be problematic for two reasons. First, it does not capture the same degree of policy impact as an actual programmatic or operational change. Second, including new research commission in the definition of uptake might increase the bias from

researchers' selection into partnership, as the outcome could capture the researchers' capacity to engage rather than their success in driving policy change. To address this, I conduct the same analysis using an uptake measure that includes programmatic and operational changes only. The results, presented in Table 5, show a decrease in the coefficient on partnership to 12 to 13 percentage points. Nonetheless, the scale of the impact is consistent with previous findings since the average rate of uptake in the group without partnership projects also falls from 3% to 2%. Projects executed in partnership are still about 7 times more likely to lead to an observable policy change.

Another way to measure evidence uptake is to account for all instances of policy impact documented by the IGC. This method leads to a higher overall rate of uptake because it encompasses changes that are harder to externally verify, such as capacity building, that might be more readily identified in projects executed in partnership. Additionally, this measure includes programmatic changes carried out by entities not considered as policymakers (by the definition provided in the previous section), like smaller NGOs. This is likely to increase recorded uptake for non-partnership projects. The findings are detailed in Table 6. Although the coefficients are broadly consistent with those in Table 3, the overall magnitude is lower since the average rate of uptake now registers at 30% among projects without partnerships.

5.3 Partnership and academic performance

The analysis reveals a strong relationship between partnerships and the use of research by policymakers. However, it raises the question: do partnerships achieve higher evidence uptake by compromising on academic achievement?

Two competing narratives can explain the success of partnerships between researchers and policymakers in achieving evidence uptake. The first perspective, championed by proponents of co-creation, is that working with policymakers allows researchers, in the words of Nava Ashraf, "to decide on the questions that have that beautiful area of overlap between something of great scientific interest and something of great policy impact." Additionally, research collaborations provide access to datasets and sites that are normally restricted or confidential, giving researchers an edge in pursuing innovative and novel ideas.

From this perspective, while collaborating with policymakers can be time-consuming and may require mobilizing resources to support larger projects such as randomized controlled trials, and maintaining continuous engagement throughout the project, it is ultimately rewarding from an academic perspective.

The competing narrative explaining the result is that policymakers might systematically select into policy-oriented study of more limited academic relevance. In this case, researchers might still opt for policy-focused work if it offers long-term benefits, such as eventual access to unique datasets, or if motivated by altruistic reasons. According to this narrative, the positive relationship between partnership and evidence uptake would be explained by a sorting between policy-oriented projects implemented in collaboration with policymakers and academic studies led by researchers alone.

If the second scenario is verified, one would expect the academic outcomes of projects in partnership to be lower than those of projects conducted independently. To investigate this, I first compare the publication rates of projects across partnership status. This analysis focuses on a subsample of projects whose academic outcomes are fully realized (i.e., projects commissioned by the IGC in or before 2014), effectively halving my sample size. The rates of publication, both in top journals and more generally, are similar between projects implemented in partnership and those conducted by researchers alone (Figure 4). [10]

These findings invalidate the notion that policymakers systematically sort into policy-oriented projects of limited academic value. However, even though collaborations may also happen for projects that result in publications, these projects might not be the ones driving the positive correlation with evidence uptake. If this is the case, then policy impact is still achieved at the cost of academic performance. To explore this further, I test the heterogeneity of the effect of partnership on observed policy changes across projects with different publication outcomes (Figure 5.) The coefficient for partnerships is, if anything, higher for projects that have resulted in published articles. Although the coefficient's difference is not statistically significant when focusing on publications in top-tier journals,

[10] The findings concerning the relationship between academic outcomes and partnership status are corroborated by regression analysis.

it becomes significant when all publications are considered. In fact, the only category of projects for which partnership is not associated with higher policy impact is those that fail to produce any published articles.

Why do projects that do not yield publications not benefit from partnerships? Insight from a qualitative exploration of the project information can help put these results into perspective. First, consider the group of partnership projects that remain unpublished. Part of these projects are often exploratory works, typically used as a foundation for future academic studies, that do not produce immediate recommendations. Another factor this is that papers producing no significant results often do not lead to observable scale-up or adoption, and tend to go unpublished. This may be due either to poor research design or implementation, or simply because of publication biases. In addition, the few projects in the sample that focus primarily on policy, with less emphasis on scientific contribution, produce findings that are more readily disseminated to policymakers due to their explicit aim of formulating clear and actionable policy recommendations. This observation supports the idea that researchers choose partnerships – which require considerable resources – primarily for projects expected to yield high academic returns.

These results do not negate the potential trade-off between academic and policy impact, nor do they dismiss the possibility that collaborations with policymakers could negatively influence research outcomes, as they should be contextualized in the light of the sample. Indeed, the sample is composed of projects chosen for their academic value and likely omits those that are entirely policy-oriented and commissioned by policymakers. Instead, the findings shed light on the existence of a class of projects that achieve both academic and policy impact, through the process of co-creation.

6 Political constraint and partnership formation

6.1 Seasonality in partnership formation

The previous section establishes that policymakers' involvement at the onset of research projects is a strong predictor of subsequent evidence uptake. This section further explores the circumstances under which such partnerships emerge. Using the electoral cycle as

a proxy for the political constraints faced by researchers in forming partnership, I show that partnership formation is less likely in the pre-election cycle and that this seasonality primarily affect researchers affiliated to lower ranked institutions.

Figure 7 shows the distribution of research proposal submissions over time. For each project, the duration (in days) between the deadline of the funding call for which the project proposal was submitted and the closest election in the country of implementation is calculated. A negative value indicates that the proposal was submitted prior to the (closest) election. The graph presents the distribution of proposal submissions separately for projects implemented in partnership and those not involving partnerships. There is a noticeable lag between the two distributions, which translates into divergent trajectories during the pre-election period. Proposal submissions for projects not conducted in partnership exhibit a rapid increase two years before the election, reaching their peak early in the term. In contrast, proposal submissions for partnership projects decline steadily during the two years leading up to the election, only to show a slight rebound a few months before the end of the term and become dominant in the second year of the term.

These descriptive facts are corroborated by quantitative analysis. I estimate the following specification:

$$Partnership_{irce} = \alpha + \beta Pre\text{-}election_{ic} + \mathbf{X}_{rct}\gamma + \mathbf{V}_i\lambda + \rho_{ce} + \varepsilon_{irce}$$

Projects submitted to a funding call within the two years preceding an election (in the country where the research project will be implemented) are roughly 10 percentage points less likely to be initiated in partnership, as shown in Table 8. As elections approach, the willingness and availability of policymakers to engage with researchers and begin collaborations decrease due to competing interests and the uncertainties surrounding potential leadership changes. To test this channel, I estimate the same specification on a subsample of projects implemented in countries with relatively stronger democratic institutions (as captured by the polity V democracy index.) If this seasonality is attributed to other factors coinciding with local elections, the competitiveness of the election should not affect the relationship between the pre-election period and partnership. The coefficient jumps

from 10 to 15 percentage point, lending credibility to the fact that seasonality is explained by political constraint. While this dynamic primarily applies to elected officials, it is likely to indirectly affect other types of policymakers, including bureaucrats whose appointment may depend on election outcomes, as well as large NGOs that collaborate with the government to provide public services.

A qualitative assessment of research proposals provides some evidence of internalization by researchers. Aware that policymakers might not be willing or available to engage in the lead up to an election, they time proposal submission accordingly, or select out of partnerships during the pre-election period. This is illustrated in the following passage from a research proposal (names have been redacted to ensure anonymity.)

> This request is especially urgent because it will enable us to respond to the political needs of the partner agency. Our relationship with the partner government is remarkably good. However, we recognize there is a narrow window in which [...] reform is feasible, before the [...] elections (in approximately 15 months), when political contingencies may disrupt this experiment.

6.1.1 Heterogeneity across institutional rank.

Interestingly, researchers vary in their ability to withstand this political constraint on partnership formation. Figure 8 presents the impact of the pre-election period on partnership formation for teams led by researchers affiliated with high-, medium-, and low-ranked institutions, as estimated by the following specification:

$$\begin{aligned} Partnership_{irce} = \alpha &+ \beta_1 Pre\text{-}election_{ic} \\ &+ \beta_2 Pre\text{-}election_{ic} \times High_r + \beta_3 Pre\text{-}election_{ic} \times Medium_r \\ &+ \mathbf{X}_{rct}\gamma + \mathbf{V}_i\lambda + \rho_{ce} + \varepsilon_{irce} \end{aligned}$$

Qualitative evidence suggests that collaborative projects advancing during the pre-election period frequently originate from long-established relationships encompassing a wide array of extensive projects. Various types of these enduring partnerships exist, spanning from informal working relationships with repeated projects over time to Memorandums of Un-

derstanding (MoUs) signed, for example, between a ministry and a research department. These MoUs typically encompass an agreed-upon research agenda and, occasionally, a lineup of prospective research projects. A more deeply integrated type of partnership involves the establishment of a research unit within the public administration, guided by academic expertise and conducting semi-autonomous research. In both scenarios, the researcher's deep-rooted connections within the organizational framework reduce their dependence on the direct involvement of senior policymakers who are subject to political constraints. This ability to effectively substitute for policymakers' efforts is likely a key factor explaining partnerships formation during the pre-election period. These enduring collaborations are mainly led by academics from top economics departments. Such academics typically possess the resources to undertake large-scale research, assemble sizable research teams and dedicate time to stakeholder engagement. In this scenario, decreasing involvement with researchers who have limited resources when policymakers are able to contribute only minimal effort, could be a strategic approach to preserving the overall quality of partnerships, regarding their effectiveness in generating policy impact.

An alternative interpretation of the results might be a shift in policymakers' primary incentives for initiating partnerships, rather than a reduction in their overall engagement efforts due to competing priorities. As elections approach, their focus for participating in partnerships could change from achieving policy impact to boosting their electoral prospects. In this context, the criteria for choosing partnerships would likely prioritize the prestige of the associated academic institution, which is perceived to reflect positively on the policymaker, over the researchers' specific execution capability and the project's policy relevance. Furthermore, policymakers may aim to preserve their connections with certain academics during politically charged periods by signing-up on projects with low policy impact but high academic value, which require minimal involvement from them. In both instances, this deviation from policy-oriented objectives is expected to lead to a reduced evidence uptake for projects implemented in partnership.

6.2 Political constraint and the quality of partnerships

The election cycle strongly influences the timing of partnership formation. Does this influence also shape the *quality* of a partnership, in terms of its potential for evidence uptake? Specifically, are projects initiated with policymakers during the pre-election period equally impactful on policy decisions?

As mentioned in the previous section, policymakers, facing pre-election time constraints, may prioritize collaborations with academics in top institutions as they have access to more resources and can substitute for policymakers' efforts. On the other hand, their focus may shift towards maintaining visibility and academic relationships, favoring high-profile or academically valuable projects with less policy substance. I first test whether the overall quality of projects implemented in partnership before the election is systematically different from post-election projects, by estimating the following specification:

$$\begin{aligned} Uptake_{irce} = \alpha + \beta_1 Pre\text{-}election_{ic} + \beta_2 Partnership_{irce} \\ + \beta_3 Pre\text{-}election_{ic} \times Partnership_{irce} + \mathbf{X}_{rct}\gamma + \mathbf{V}_i\lambda + \rho_{ce} + \varepsilon_{irce} \end{aligned}$$

Results are reported in Table 10. Projects initiated in the two years leading up to an election are about 15 percentage point less likely to result in evidence uptake, indicating that the incentives for policymakers to engage with researchers may shift away from achieving sounds policies in the pre-election period. Reassuringly, projects that do not involve partnerships seem unaffected by the pre-election phase, suggesting that the observed relationship is not due to other factors influencing project design and implementation in general during this period. However, it is worth noting that the proportion of projects leading to evidence uptake in the non-partnership group is low, making it more challenging to detect a negative effect.

An alternative explanation, which does not rely on projects characteristics and the incentives of policymakers that form these pre-election partnerships, hinges on political transitions. Indeed, projects commenced before elections are more likely to be concluded post-elections. The potential for a change in political leadership poses risks: a succeeding party might opt to halt projects initiated by their predecessors. To assess whether

this mechanism might be at play, I restricted the sample to projects implemented around elections that did not culminate in a party transition. The reduced sample size results in larger confidence intervals, but the coefficients for both partnership and non-partnership projects are remarkably robust, suggesting that administration transitions are not the predominant factor influencing pre-election project uptakes.

6.2.1 Heterogeneity across institutional rank.

Turning to the matter of researcher heterogeneity, I estimate the effect of the pre-election period on uptake for partnerships, examining each rank separately (high, medium, and low-ranked institutions). Consistent with previous findings on the timing of partnership formation, researchers from top-ranked institutions are largely unaffected by electoral cycles (see Figure 10.) They establish partnerships throughout the cycle, and these collaborations consistently lead to evidence uptake. In contrast, while researchers from medium-ranked institutions do form partnerships during the pre-election period, these collaborations are less likely to lead to observed policy changes.

A previously discussed potential explanation for the reduced policy impact of pre-election partnerships could be policymakers' readiness to allow researchers to engage in academically relevant projects with limited policy value during periods of unavailability, thereby preserving relationships throughout the election cycle. To test this channel, I examine academic outcomes of research projects conducted around the election cycle. Due to the limited sample size for analyzing academic outcomes, largely because these outcomes are not yet realized for later projects, I combine both partnership and non partnership projects and compare them before and after the elections, separately for each type of researchers.

The findings align with the notion of a sorting mechanism where researchers are distributed across projects with varying policy values during the pre-election period. Researchers from top-ranked institutions manage to secure projects with the highest policy impact, thanks to their substantial access to policymakers. In contrast, projects primarily aimed at enhancing visibility and reputation, which may lack substantial policy depth, tend to be undertaken by researchers from medium-ranked institutions.

7 Discussion

In this study, I explore whether research-policymaker partnerships influence policy decisions and under what conditions such partnerships are successfully formed. The analysis reveals that projects implemented in collaboration with policymakers are significantly more likely to result in evidence uptake without compromising academic achievement. Additionally, the study highlights how political constraints, captured by the election cycle, affect the formation of partnerships and policy outcomes. Specifically, I find that the likelihood of forming partnerships and achieving evidence uptake decreases in the period leading up to an election, attributed to policymakers' reduced engagement due to competing priorities. However, researchers from top-ranked institutions are less impacted by these constraints and can maintain effective partnerships throughout the election cycle, unlike their counterparts from mid-ranked and lower-ranked institutions who face challenges in forming partnerships before elections.

Qualitative evidence from policy impact reports shows that researchers from top institutions often engage in multi-year, repeated partnerships with policymakers, facilitated by their ability to mobilize resources. During periods when policymakers are less available, these researchers compensate by hiring local personnel who integrate into the local governance structures, effectively substituting for the policymakers' efforts.

Importantly, these results do not imply that all researchers should seek partnerships or that only co-created projects should be funded. This study is primarily retrospective and aims to document and illuminate a key feature of contemporary development economics that emerged over the past decade – the rise of embedded research where economists become involved in the intricacies of policy design and policymaking actively contributes to shaping research questions. It focuses on whether these co-generated projects have delivered on their promise of achieving greater policy impact while maintaining academic rigor. This project does not predict the policy and academic outcomes of projects that would be conducted by economists randomly assigned to work with policymakers, as such an experiment would not be feasible or informative in practice.

Moreover, direct policy change should not be considered the optimal outcome for every

research project. There is no consensus on what academic research should aim to achieve, how potentially competing objectives should be weighted, or what the objectives of individual researchers and their institutions should be. Although the finding of no apparent tradeoff between policy and academic achievement may alleviate some of these concerns, policy impact is not always immediately observable. Some highly relevant studies may not have actionable policy recommendations, particularly those that aim to highlight and characterize previously overlooked or misunderstood policy challenges. The concept of policy impact must be understood and studied in its complexity and not focused solely on a single definition.

Lastly, ethical considerations are crucial when considering the influence of academics in policy decisions. The deep involvement of primarily Western-based academics in the design and implementation of policies in low- and middle-income countries presents significant challenges. This issue is captured by the concept of policy overreach, discussed in works by Jean Drèze. Academics may not be fully equipped to interpret results while weighing competing goals and may display a bias toward presenting their policies as successful, similar to politicians whose incentives may not align with the welfare of local beneficiaries.

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8 Tables and Figures

Table 1: Summary statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Policy impact					
Policy change	511	0.09	0.29	0	1
All evidence uptake	511	0.40	0.49	0	1
Academic outcomes					
Top 5	511	0.08	0.28	0	1
Top 30	511	0.18	0.38	0	1
Publication	511	0.32	0.47	0	1
Career progression (at least one of:)					
PhD and Postdoc	511	0.45	0.50	0	1
Full professor	511	0.45	0.50	0	1
Highest rank among team members					
High rank	511	0.59	0.49	0	1
Mid rank	511	0.20	0.40	0	1
Low rank	511	0.21	0.41	0	1
Local affiliation					
No local affiliates	511	0.69	0.46	0	1
Mixed teams	511	0.23	0.42	0	1
Only local affiliates	511	0.07	0.26	0	1
Project scale					
Size of research team	511	2.68	1.19	1	12
Budget (in GBP 1,000)	511	4.85	4.00	0.00	31.22
Duration (in days)	511	18.32	10.13	0.97	72.57

Figure 1: Geographic distribution of research projects

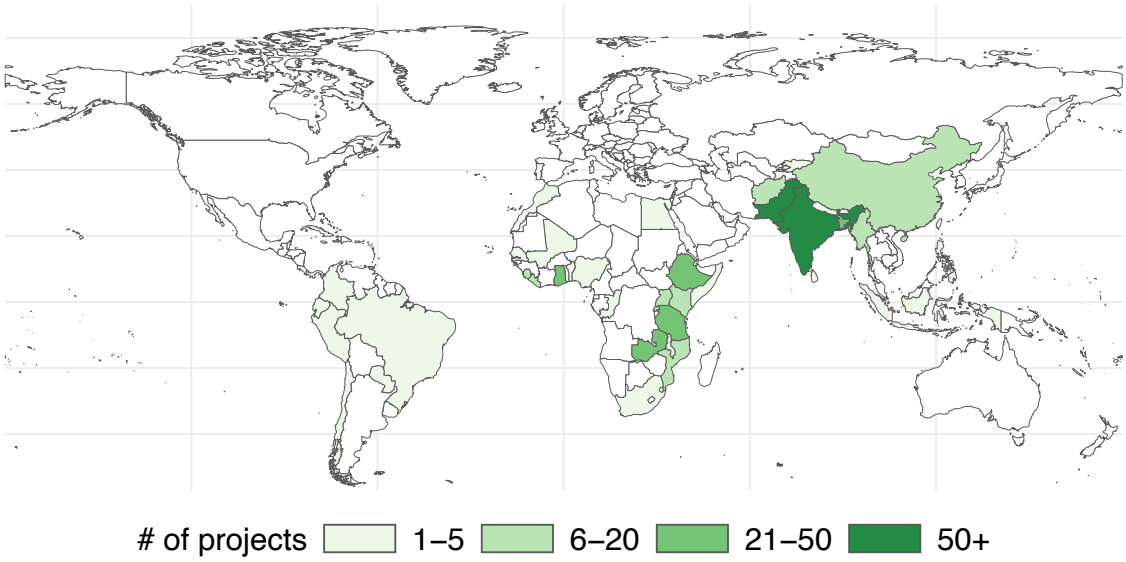


Figure 2: Policymakers and other partners

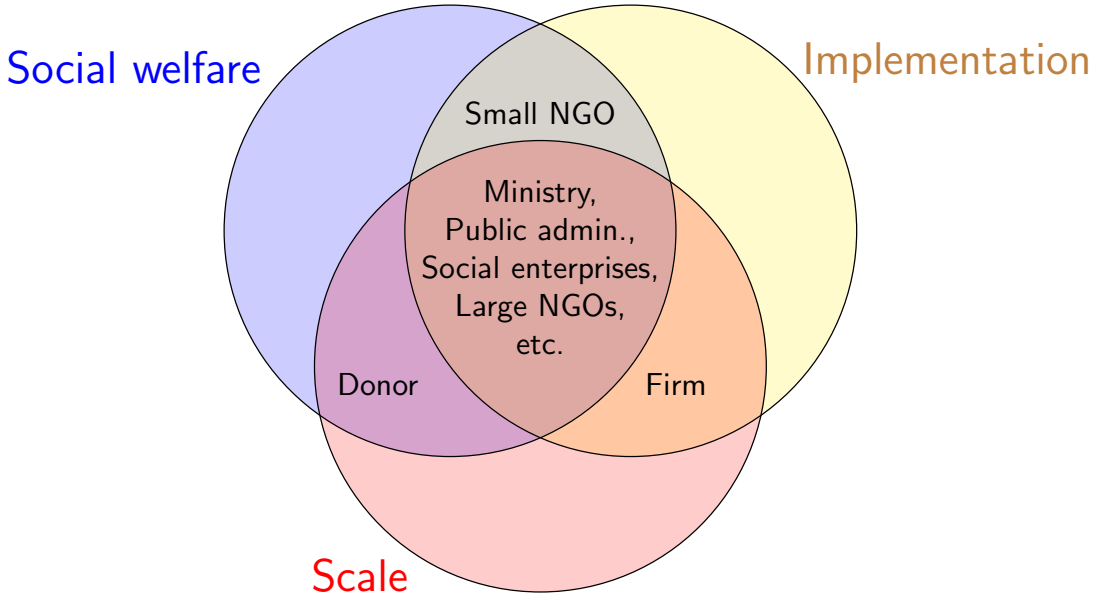
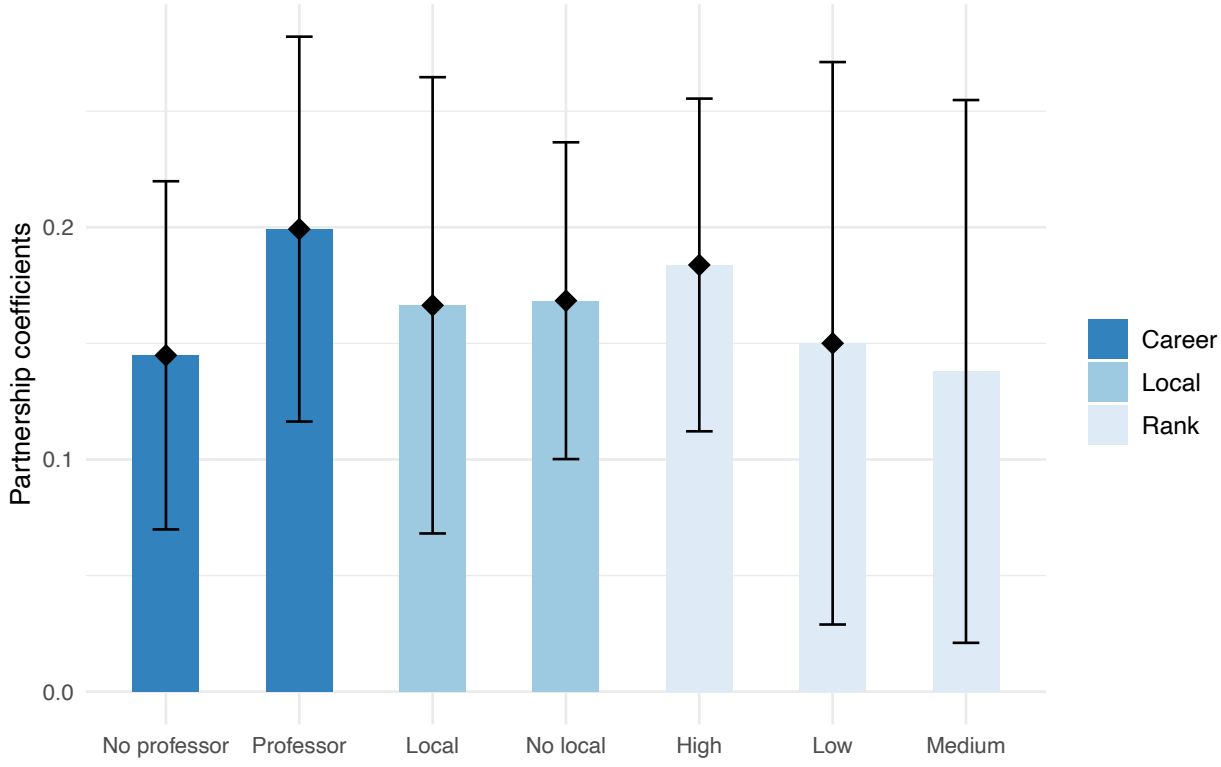
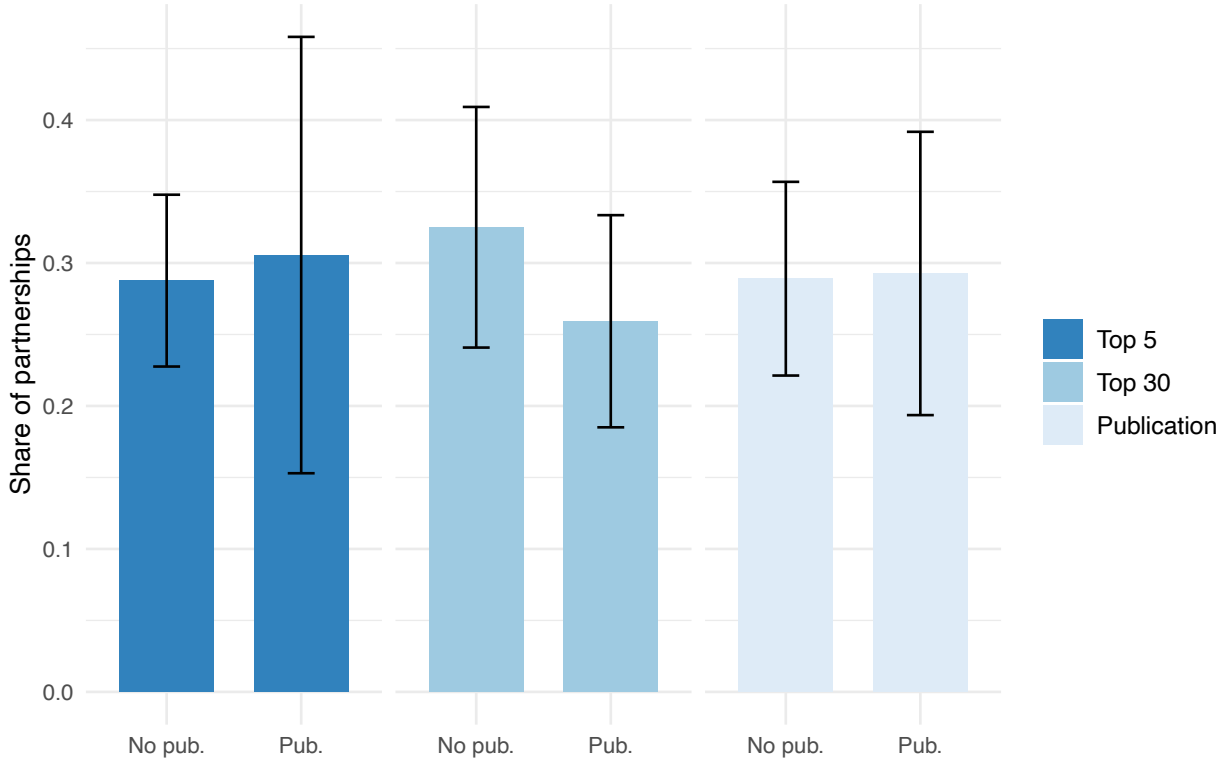


Figure 3: Partnership and policy impact (heterogeneity by team characteristics)



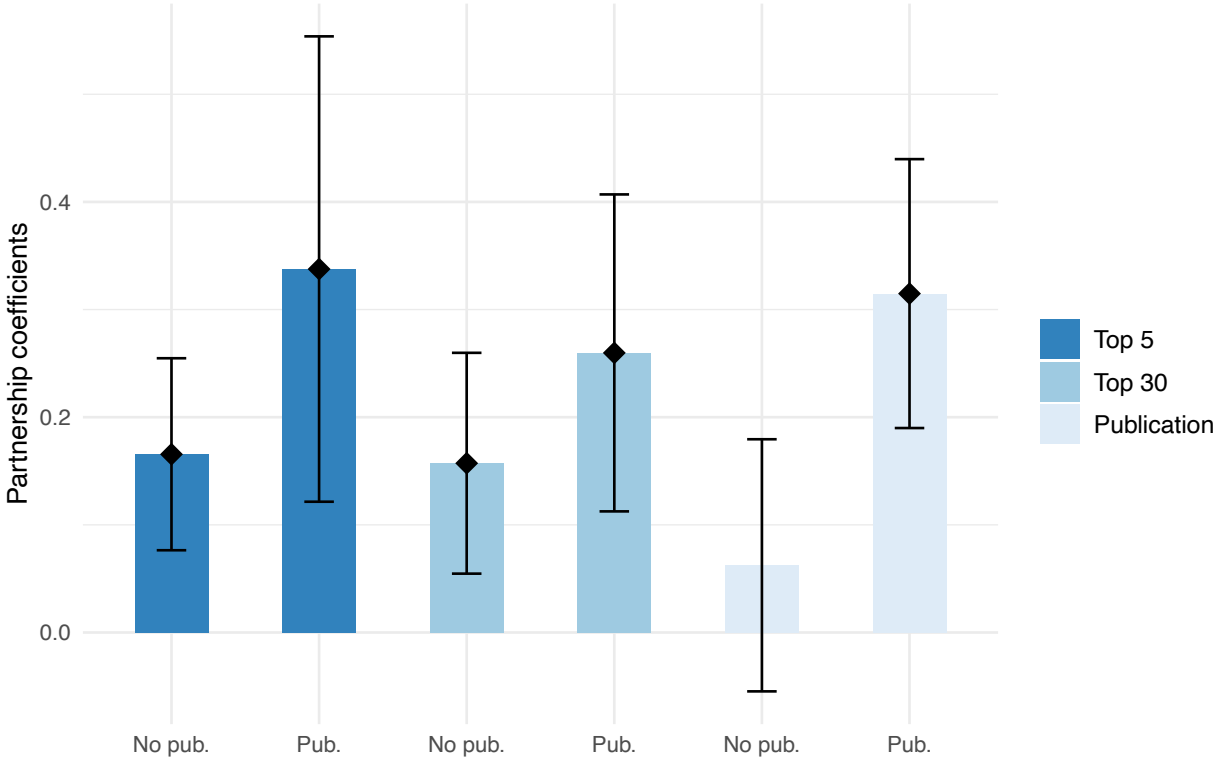
Note: This figure plots the regression coefficients for Partnership on Observed policy changes, conditional on various characteristics of the research team. The specification includes all controls for research team characteristics and project scale, as well as fixed effects at the funding call level. Confidence intervals are shown at the 90% level, and diamonds indicate significance at the 95% level.

Figure 4: Partnership formation and publication outcomes



Note: This figure shows the mean for Partnership conditional on various publication outcomes. Confidence intervals are shown at the 95% level.

Figure 5: Partnership and policy impact (heterogeneity by publication outcomes



Note: This figure plots the regression coefficients for Partnership on Observed policy changes, conditional on various publication outcomes. The specification includes all controls for research team characteristics and project scale, as well as fixed effects at the funding call level. Analysis is conducted on a subset of earlier projects with fully realized academic outcomes. Confidence intervals are shown at the 90% level, and diamonds indicate significance at the 95% level.

Table 2: Partnership formation and researchers' characteristics

	Partnership					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
High rank	0.149**	0.039	0.039	-0.032	0.188*	0.119
	(0.063)	(0.066)	(0.088)	(0.086)	(0.101)	(0.099)
Medium rank	0.125*	0.060	-0.058	-0.110	0.186	0.142
	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.093)	(0.088)	(0.115)	(0.110)
Junior	0.008	-0.006	-0.039	-0.032	0.012	-0.001
	(0.044)	(0.043)	(0.102)	(0.102)	(0.044)	(0.043)
Professor	0.027	-0.034	-0.204**	-0.216**	0.023	-0.035
	(0.042)	(0.043)	(0.083)	(0.084)	(0.042)	(0.042)
Local education	-0.010	-0.023	-0.014	-0.024	0.023	0.013
	(0.061)	(0.058)	(0.061)	(0.058)	(0.125)	(0.122)
Local affiliation	0.060	0.004	0.038	-0.012	0.088	0.082
	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.059)	(0.060)	(0.116)	(0.113)
High x Junior			0.048	0.010		
			(0.116)	(0.116)		
Med. x Junior			0.152	0.154		
			(0.135)	(0.131)		
High x Professor			0.280***	0.219**		
			(0.103)	(0.103)		
Med. x Professor			0.362***	0.310***		
			(0.120)	(0.118)		
High x Local affiliation					-0.174	-0.251*
					(0.142)	(0.137)
Med. x Local affiliation					0.159	0.089
					(0.155)	(0.148)
High x Local education					0.033	0.018
					(0.138)	(0.135)
Med. x Local education					-0.172	-0.142
					(0.155)	(0.150)
Project scale	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Fixed effects	Time, Cty	Time, Cty	Time, Cty	Time, Cty	Time, Cty	Time, Cty
Mean outcome	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33
Observations	511	511	511	511	511	511
R^2	0.260	0.310	0.274	0.320	0.274	0.324
Adjusted R^2	0.139	0.191	0.147	0.195	0.147	0.200

Note: This table reports the OLS regression estimates of the following model: $Partnership_{irct} = \beta_0 + \mathbf{X}_{rc}\gamma + \mathbf{V}_i\lambda + \delta_t + \rho_c + \varepsilon_{irct}$. With $\mathbf{X}_{rc}$, characteristics of the research team (including institution rank, local education and affiliation and seniority, as described in the data section) and $\mathbf{V}_i$, characteristics capturing the scale of the project (including the budget, duration and size of the research team.) Funding call, or time, fixed effects control for systematic differences in the supply of proposals and the preferences of the selection committee and are captured by δ_t. Country fixed effects are captured by ρ_c. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 3: Partnership and policy impact

	Policy change			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partnership	0.197***	0.196***	0.187***	0.168***
	(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.035)
High rank			0.091**	0.073*
			(0.039)	(0.039)
Medium rank			0.084**	0.066
			(0.042)	(0.041)
Junior			-0.027	-0.016
			(0.029)	(0.029)
Professor			0.023	0.026
			(0.026)	(0.026)
Local education			-0.029	-0.015
			(0.038)	(0.039)
Local affiliation			0.026	0.039
			(0.036)	(0.037)
Project scale	No	No	No	Yes
Fixed effects	No	Time, Cty	Time, Cty	Time, Cty
Mean uptake (non-partnership)	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029
Observations	511	511	511	511
R^2	0.101	0.216	0.231	0.255
Adjusted R^2	0.099	0.098	0.102	0.124

Note: This table reports the OLS regression estimates of the following model: $Uptake_{irct} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Partnership_{irct} + \mathbf{X}_{rc}\gamma + \mathbf{V}_i\lambda + \delta_t + \rho_c + \varepsilon_{irct}$. With $\mathbf{X}_{rc}$, characteristics of the research team (including institution rank, local education and affiliation and seniority, as described in the data section) and $\mathbf{V}_i$, characteristics capturing the scale of the project (including the budget, duration and size of the research team.) Funding call, or time, fixed effects control for systematic differences in the supply of proposals and the preferences of the selection committee and are captured by δ_t. Country fixed effects are captured by ρ_c. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 4: Partnership and policy impact (heterogeneity by research team characteristics)

	Policy change					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Partnership	0.159**	0.150**	0.199***	0.178***	0.125**	0.107*
	(0.072)	(0.074)	(0.053)	(0.051)	(0.057)	(0.057)
High rank	0.079**	0.063*	0.090**	0.072*	0.091**	0.074*
	(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.038)	(0.038)
Medium rank	0.085**	0.071*	0.081*	0.064	0.081*	0.064
	(0.038)	(0.037)	(0.043)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.040)
Junior	-0.026	-0.015	-0.027	-0.016	-0.053**	-0.042
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.025)	(0.026)
Professor	0.022	0.025	0.023	0.026	0.001	0.005
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.022)	(0.023)
Local education	-0.031	-0.017	-0.014	-0.004	-0.029	-0.014
	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.038)	(0.039)
Local affiliation	0.029	0.043	0.016	0.034	0.023	0.038
	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.036)	(0.038)	(0.036)	(0.036)
Interactions with Partnership:						
... x High rank	0.045	0.034				
	(0.082)	(0.082)				
... x Medium rank	0.004	-0.012				
	(0.101)	(0.099)				
... x Local aff.			0.022	0.013		
			(0.078)	(0.076)		
... x Local ed.			-0.044	-0.031		
			(0.079)	(0.079)		
... x Junior					0.072	0.072
					(0.069)	(0.067)
... x Professor					0.064	0.062
					(0.067)	(0.065)
Project scale	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Fixed effects	Time, Cty	Time, Cty	Time, Cty	Time, Cty	Time, Cty	Time, Cty
Mean outcome (non-partnership)	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029
Observations	511	511	511	511	511	511
R^2	0.231	0.255	0.231	0.255	0.235	0.259
Adjusted R^2	0.099	0.121	0.099	0.120	0.103	0.125

Note: This table reports the OLS regression estimates of the following model: $Uptake_{irct} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Partnership_{irct} + \mathbf{X}_{rc}\gamma + \mathbf{V}_i\lambda + (\mathbf{X}_{rc} \cdot Partnership_{irct})\theta + (\mathbf{V}_i \cdot Partnership_{irct})\phi + \delta_t + \rho_c + \varepsilon_{irct}$. With $\mathbf{X}_{rc}$, characteristics of the research team (including institution rank, local education and affiliation and seniority, as described in the data section) and $\mathbf{V}_i$, characteristics capturing the scale of the project (including the budget, duration and size of the research team.) Funding call, or time, fixed effects control for systematic differences in the supply of proposals and the preferences of the selection committee and are captured by δ_t. Country fixed effects are captured by ρ_c. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 5: Partnership and policy impact (only programmatic and operational changes)

	Only programmatic and operation changes			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partnership	0.131***	0.133***	0.130***	0.115***
	(0.028)	(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.030)
High rank			0.021	0.006
			(0.030)	(0.030)
Medium rank			0.053	0.039
			(0.036)	(0.035)
Junior			-0.011	-0.004
			(0.024)	(0.024)
Professor			0.009	0.010
			(0.022)	(0.022)
Local education			-0.025	-0.014
			(0.032)	(0.032)
Local affiliation			0.008	0.017
			(0.032)	(0.033)
Project scale	No	No	No	Yes
Fixed effects	No	Time, Cty	Time, Cty	Time, Cty
Mean outcome (non-partnership)	0.017	0.017	0.017	0.017
Observations	511	511	511	511
R^2	0.067	0.185	0.191	0.212
Adjusted R^2	0.065	0.061	0.056	0.074

Note: This table reports the OLS regression estimates of the following model: $Uptake_{irct} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Partnership_{irct} + \mathbf{X}_{rc}\gamma + \mathbf{V}_i\lambda + \delta_t + \rho_c + \varepsilon_{irct}$. With $\mathbf{X}_{rc}$, characteristics of the research team (including institution rank, local education and affiliation and seniority, as described in the data section) and $\mathbf{V}_i$, characteristics capturing the scale of the project (including the budget, duration and size of the research team.) Funding call, or time, fixed effects control for systematic differences in the supply of proposals and the preferences of the selection committee and are captured by δ_t. Country fixed effects are captured by ρ_c. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 6: Partnership and all instances of evidence uptake

	All evidence uptake			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partnership	0.301***	0.214***	0.220***	0.195***
	(0.045)	(0.046)	(0.046)	(0.047)
High rank			-0.087	-0.133**
			(0.061)	(0.064)
Medium rank			0.026	0.002
			(0.065)	(0.065)
Junior			0.018	0.005
			(0.042)	(0.043)
Professor			0.003	-0.026
			(0.041)	(0.042)
Local education			0.007	-0.007
			(0.057)	(0.058)
Local affiliation			0.059	0.030
			(0.056)	(0.057)
Project scale	No	No	No	Yes
Fixed effects	No	Time, Cty	Time, Cty	Time, Cty
Mean outcome (non-partnership)	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Observations	511	511	511	511
R^2	0.083	0.378	0.391	0.399
Adjusted R^2	0.082	0.284	0.290	0.293

Note: This table reports the OLS regression estimates of the following model: $Uptake_{irct} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Partnership_{irct} + \mathbf{X}_{rc}\gamma + \mathbf{V}_i\lambda + \delta_t + \rho_c + \varepsilon_{irct}$. With $\mathbf{X}_{rc}$, characteristics of the research team (including institution rank, local education and affiliation and seniority, as described in the data section) and $\mathbf{V}_i$, characteristics capturing the scale of the project (including the budget, duration and size of the research team.) Funding call, or time, fixed effects control for systematic differences in the supply of proposals and the preferences of the selection committee and are captured by δ_t. Country fixed effects are captured by ρ_c. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 7: Partnership conditional on academic achievement

	Policy change					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Partnership	0.189***	0.166***	0.189***	0.157**	0.191***	0.062
	(0.049)	(0.054)	(0.049)	(0.062)	(0.050)	(0.071)
Top 5	0.093*	0.045				
	(0.049)	(0.040)				
... x Top 5		0.172				
		(0.143)				
Top 30			0.042	0.014		
			(0.040)	(0.025)		
... x Top 30				0.103		
				(0.113)		
Published					0.033	-0.035
					(0.034)	(0.027)
... x Published						0.252**
						(0.109)
Researcher team	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Project scale	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fixed effects	Time	Time	Time	Time	Time	Time
Mean outcome (non-partnership)	0.033	0.033	0.033	0.033	0.033	0.033
Observations	255	255	255	255	255	255
R^2	0.319	0.326	0.313	0.317	0.312	0.341
Adjusted R^2	0.251	0.256	0.245	0.246	0.244	0.272

Note: This table reports the OLS regression estimates of the following model: $Uptake_{irct} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Partnership_{irct} + \beta_2 Publication_{irct} + \beta_3 Partnership_{irct} \times Publication_{irct} + \mathbf{X}_{rc}\gamma + \mathbf{V}_i\lambda + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{irct}$. With $\mathbf{X}_{rc}$, characteristics of the research team (including institution rank, local education and affiliation and seniority, as described in the data section) and $\mathbf{V}_i$, characteristics capturing the scale of the project (including the budget, duration and size of the research team.) Funding call, or time, fixed effects control for systematic differences in the supply of proposals and the preferences of the selection committee and are captured by δ_t. The sample is restricted to earlier projects for which academic outcomes are fully realized. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure 6: Proposal submission over the election cycle

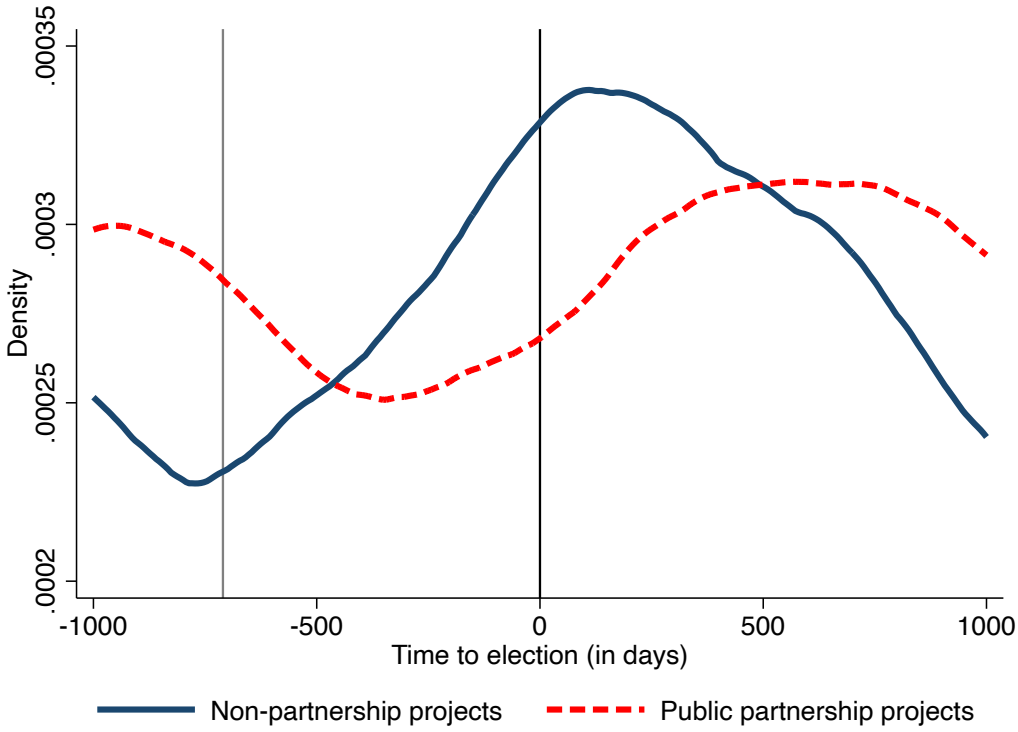
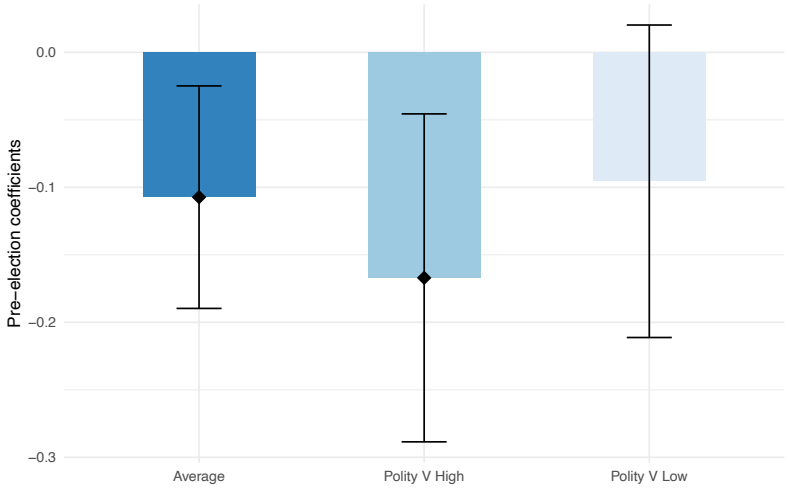


Table 8: Election cycle and partnership formation

	Partnership			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pre-election	-0.102**	-0.101**	-0.107**	-0.073
	(0.046)	(0.051)	(0.050)	(0.070)
High rank	0.153**	0.126*	0.021	0.022
	(0.061)	(0.070)	(0.072)	(0.072)
Medium rank	0.130*	0.109	0.052	0.054
	(0.071)	(0.075)	(0.074)	(0.074)
Junior	0.005	0.055	0.044	0.047
	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.047)	(0.047)
Professor	0.032	0.073	0.0002	0.002
	(0.047)	(0.048)	(0.047)	(0.047)
Local education	0.016	-0.032	-0.046	-0.050
	(0.057)	(0.067)	(0.065)	(0.065)
Local affiliation	0.016	0.041	-0.022	-0.020
	(0.062)	(0.065)	(0.066)	(0.066)
Polity V High				0.806***
				(0.276)
Pre-election x Polity V High				-0.076
				(0.102)
Project scale	No	No	Yes	Yes
Fixed effects	No	Election	Election	Election
Mean outcome (post-election)	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39
Observations	438	438	438	438
R^2	0.028	0.263	0.319	0.320
Adjusted R^2	0.012	0.093	0.155	0.153

Note: This table reports the OLS regression estimates of the following model: $Partnership_{irct} = \beta_0 + \beta Pre-election_{irct} + \mathbf{X}_{rct}\gamma + \mathbf{V}_i\lambda + \delta_{ct} + \varepsilon_{irct}$. With $\mathbf{X}_{rct}$, characteristics of the research team (including institution rank, local education and affiliation and seniority, as described in the data section) and $\mathbf{V}_i$, characteristics capturing the scale of the project (including the budget, duration and size of the research team.) Election, or time country, fixed effects are captured by δ_{ct}. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure 7: Effect of pre-election on partnership formation (heterogeneity by democracy index)



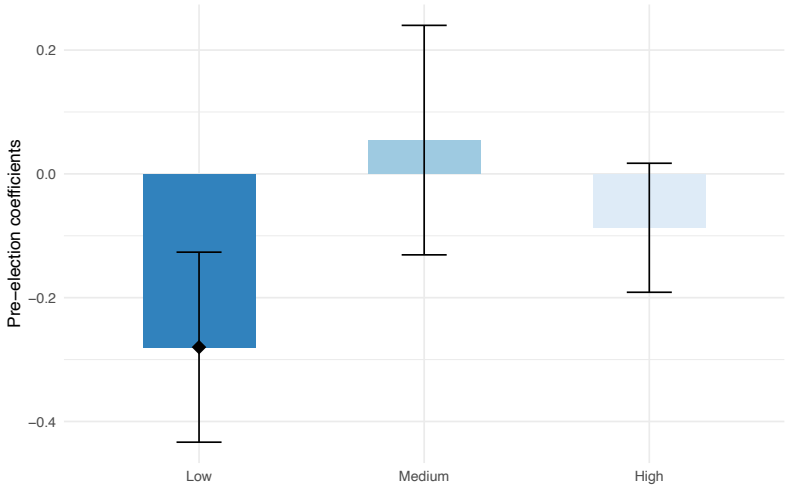
Note: This figure plots the regression coefficients for Preelection on Partnership. The specification includes all controls for research team characteristics and project scale, as well as fixed effects at the election level. Confidence intervals are shown at the 90% level, and diamonds indicate significance at the 95% level.

Table 9: Election cycle and partnership formation (heterogeneity by institutional rank)

	Partnership			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pre-election	-0.096**	-0.192**	-0.107**	-0.280***
	(0.045)	(0.080)	(0.050)	(0.093)
High rank	0.052	0.015	0.021	-0.056
	(0.065)	(0.079)	(0.072)	(0.086)
Medium rank	0.076	-0.007	0.052	-0.070
	(0.070)	(0.086)	(0.074)	(0.088)
Pre-election x High rank		0.090		0.193*
		(0.101)		(0.110)
Pre-election x Medium rank		0.235*		0.335**
		(0.135)		(0.141)
Project scale	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fixed effects	No	No	Election	Election
Mean outcome (post-election)	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39
Observations	438	438	438	438
R^2	0.100	0.106	0.319	0.330
Adjusted R^2	0.079	0.081	0.155	0.163

Note: This table reports the OLS regression estimates of the following model: $Partnership_{irct} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Pre-election_{irct} + \beta_2 Pre-election_{irct} \times Highrank_{rct} + \beta_3 Pre-election_{irct} \times Mediumrank_{rct} + \mathbf{X}_{rct}\gamma + \mathbf{V}_i\lambda + \delta_{ct} + \varepsilon_{irct}$. With $\mathbf{X}_{rct}$, characteristics of the research team (including institution rank, local education and affiliation and seniority, as described in the data section) and $\mathbf{V}_i$, characteristics capturing the scale of the project (including the budget, duration and size of the research team.) Election, or time country, fixed effects are captured by δ_{ct}. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure 8: Effect of pre-election on partnership formation (heterogeneity by institution rank)



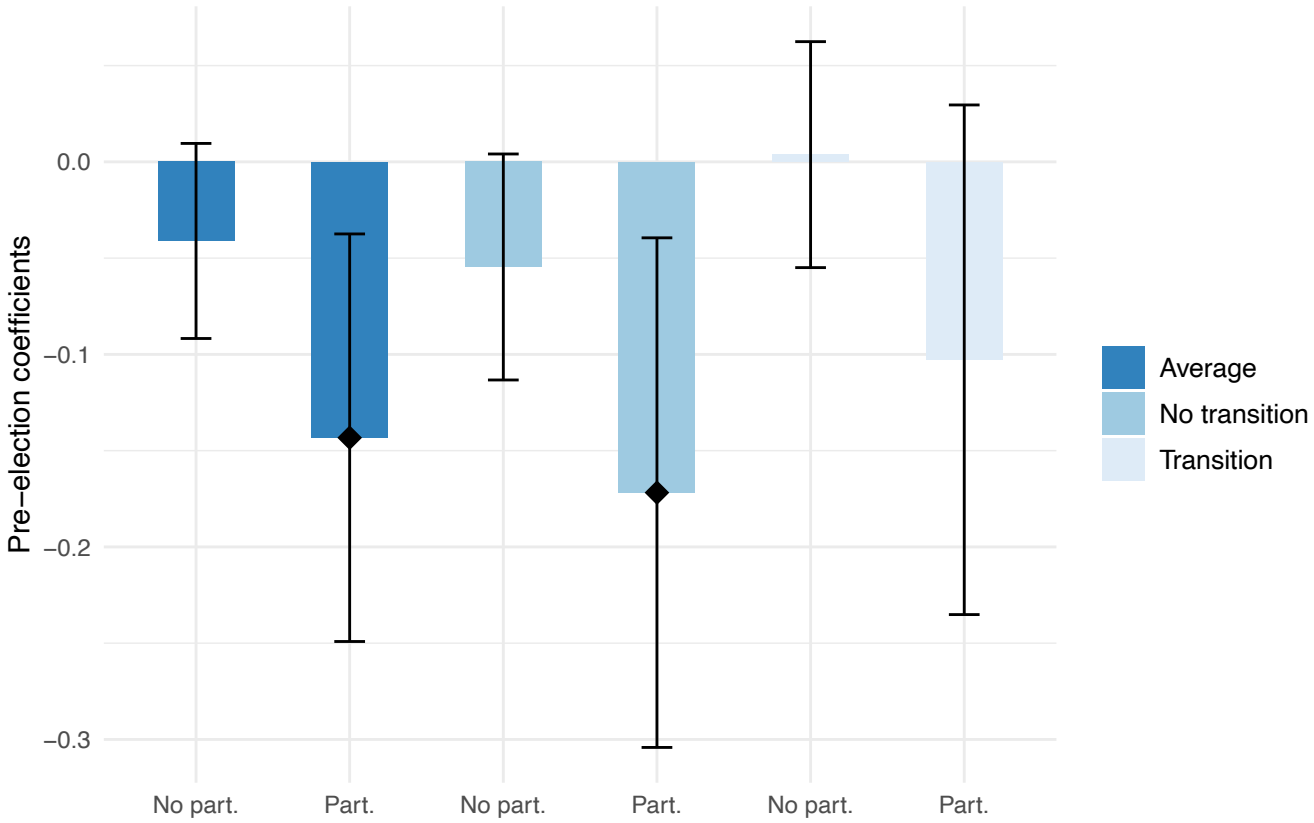
Note: This figure plots the regression coefficients for Preelection on Partnership, conditional on institutional rank. The specification includes all controls for research team characteristics and project scale, as well as fixed effects at the election level. Confidence intervals are shown at the 90% level, and diamonds indicate significance at the 95% level.

Table 10: Election cycle and policy impact

	Policy change				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Pre-election	-0.071**	-0.040	-0.041	-0.055	0.004
	(0.032)	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.036)	(0.058)
Partnership	0.179***	0.210***	0.191***	0.219***	0.136**
	(0.037)	(0.047)	(0.045)	(0.060)	(0.067)
Pre-election × Partnership		-0.091	-0.102	-0.117	-0.107
		(0.072)	(0.069)	(0.085)	(0.110)
High rank	0.125***	0.125***	0.115**	0.124**	0.103
	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.047)	(0.056)	(0.085)
Medium rank	0.099**	0.103**	0.088**	0.102*	0.093
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.043)	(0.054)	(0.074)
Junior	-0.039	-0.037	-0.024	-0.003	-0.060
	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.030)	(0.035)	(0.053)
Professor	0.025	0.026	0.026	0.021	0.012
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.036)	(0.056)
Local education	-0.021	-0.022	-0.010	-0.034	0.013
	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.043)	(0.050)	(0.077)
Local affiliation	0.042	0.044	0.063	0.071	0.066
	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.044)	(0.047)	(0.079)
Project scale	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fixed effects	Election	Election	Election	Election	Election
Sample	Full	Full	Full	No transition	Transition
Mean outcome (post-election)	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.12	0.13
Observations	438	438	438	272	166
R^2	0.237	0.241	0.275	0.307	0.261
Adjusted R^2	0.058	0.060	0.094	0.122	0.017

Note: This table reports the OLS regression estimates of the following model: $Uptake_{irct} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Pre-election_{irct} + \beta_2 Partnership_{irct} + \beta_3 Pre-election_{irct} \times Partnership_{irct} + \mathbf{X}_{rct}\gamma + \mathbf{V}_i\lambda + \delta_{ct} + \varepsilon_{irct}$. With $\mathbf{X}_{rct}$, characteristics of the research team (including institution rank, local education and affiliation and seniority, as described in the data section) and $\mathbf{V}_i$, characteristics capturing the scale of the project (including the budget, duration and size of the research team.) Election, or time country, fixed effects are captured by δ_{ct}. The first three columns present estimations conducted on the full sample. For the last two columns, the sample is spit between projects implemented around elections that did or did not result in party transitions. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure 9: Effect of pre-election and policy impact (heterogeneity by institution rank)



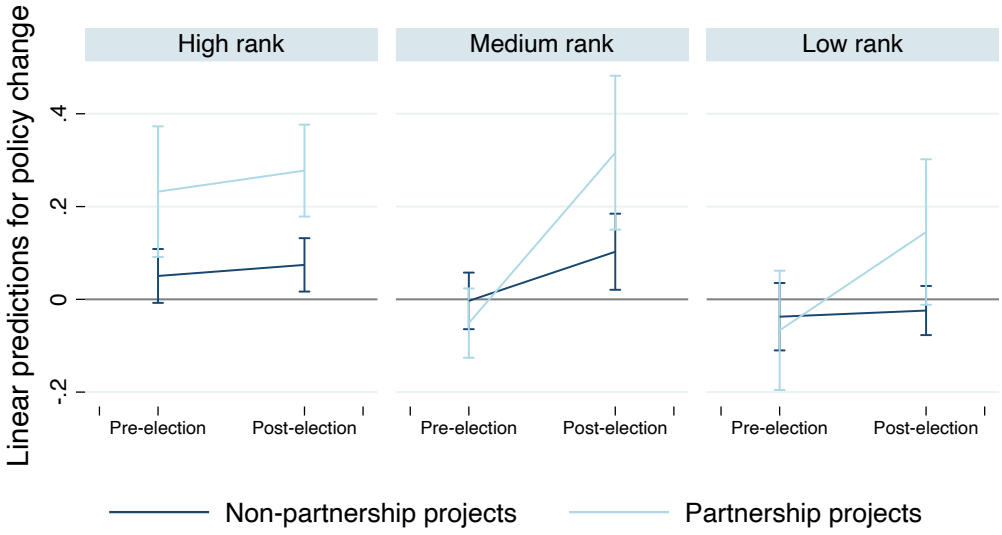
Note: This figure plots the regression coefficients for Preelection on Observed policy changes. The specification includes all controls for research team characteristics and project scale, as well as fixed effects at the election level. Confidence intervals are shown at the 90% level, and diamonds indicate significance at the 95% level.

Table 11: Election cycle and policy impact (heterogeneity by institutional rank)

	Policy change		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Pre-election	-0.023	-0.013	-0.013
	(0.023)	(0.033)	(0.034)
Partnership	0.177*	0.182**	0.169**
	(0.093)	(0.083)	(0.086)
High rank	0.012	0.104**	0.098*
	(0.038)	(0.046)	(0.051)
Medium rank	0.063	0.141***	0.127**
	(0.055)	(0.053)	(0.054)
Pre-election × Partnership	-0.172*	-0.192*	-0.199*
	(0.094)	(0.112)	(0.113)
Partnership × High rank	0.062	0.040	0.034
	(0.108)	(0.103)	(0.104)
Pre-election × High rank	0.037	-0.006	-0.011
	(0.040)	(0.050)	(0.053)
Pre-election × Partnership × High rank	0.124	0.187	0.177
	(0.137)	(0.152)	(0.148)
Partnership × Medium rank	0.024	0.058	0.044
	(0.143)	(0.134)	(0.130)
Pre-election × Medium rank	-0.055	-0.100*	-0.093
	(0.053)	(0.055)	(0.058)
Pre-election × Partnership × Medium rank	-0.038	-0.076	-0.063
	(0.145)	(0.163)	(0.160)
Research team	Yes	Yes	Yes
Project scale	No	No	Yes
Fixed effects	No	Election	Election
Mean outcome (post-election)	0.13	0.13	0.13
Observations	438	438	438
R^2	0.126	0.261	0.291
Adjusted R^2	0.095	0.069	0.099

Note: This table reports the OLS regression estimates of the following model: $Uptake_{irct} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Pre-election_{irct} + \beta_2 Partnership_{irct} + \beta_3 Pre-election_{irct} \times Partnership_{irct} + \mathbf{X}_{rct}\gamma + \mathbf{V}_i\lambda + \delta_{ct} + \varepsilon_{irct}$. With $\mathbf{X}_{rct}$, characteristics of the research team (including institution rank, local education and affiliation and seniority, as described in the data section) and $\mathbf{V}_i$, characteristics capturing the scale of the project (including the budget, duration and size of the research team.) Election, or time country, fixed effects are captured by δ_{ct}. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure 10: Election cycle and policy impact (heterogeneity by institution rank)



Note: This figure shows the linear predictions for the likelihood observed policy change, from the regression presented in Table 11. The specification includes all controls for research team characteristics and project scale, as well as fixed effects at the election level. Confidence intervals are shown at the 95% level.

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