



DE LAS HERAS
DEMOTECNIA

Navigating Public Perception

**Reframing the Value of Surveys in
Mexico's 2024 Electoral Landscape**

Dr. Luis Herrero-Corona

luis.herrero@demotecnia.com

July 2024

2024 Electoral Landscape

- As we navigate through the monumental **electoral landscape of 2024**, marked by an unprecedented scale of electoral engagements across **over 60 countries**, the reliance on public opinion **surveys** becomes increasingly pronounced.
- These surveys, diverse in their methodology and intent, serve as a **critical lens** through which societal attitudes, beliefs, preferences, and behaviors are discerned.



2024 Elections in Mexico

- Within this global context, **Mexico** stood out with its largest **electoral process** to date, with a staggering **20,367** public offices, including the **presidency** and various legislative and municipal positions, elected on June 2nd, 2024.



Survey's perceived value

- This democratic moment became the backdrop of an active **influx of survey data** which, while invaluable, was not without its pitfalls.
- The extensive dissemination of survey results, coupled with a wide variance in their quality and underlying motivations, **exacerbates existing public misconceptions** about the nature and utility of survey research.
- These misconceptions **undermine the perceived validity** and interpretative value of survey findings, casting a shadow over the credibility of this indispensable research tool (Fernández Martín & Vinuesa Tejero, 2014).



Algorithmo México
Encuesta a la alcaldía...



EL PAÍS
Qué dicen las encuestas sobr...



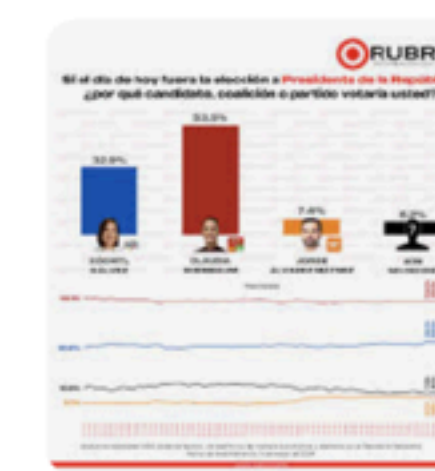
El Economista
Aventaja Sheinbau...



México Social
Las preferencias por encuesta a tres ...



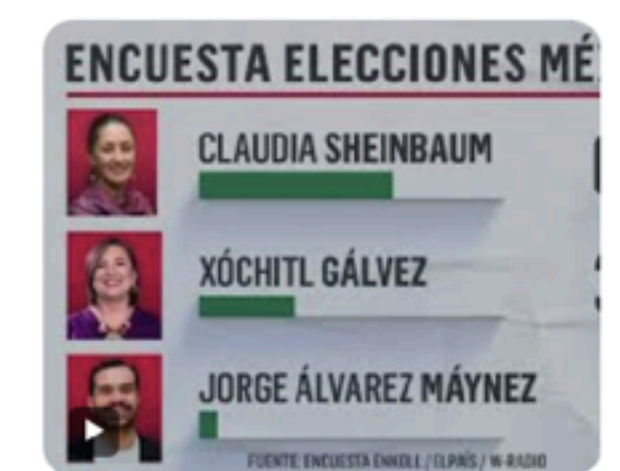
Enfoque Noticias
Así van las encuestas al arranque de ...



RUBRUM
Preferencias presiden...



Polls Mx
VOTIA: 47% votaría ...



Telemundo
Claudia Sheinbaum sigue a la ...

Survey's perceived value

- Survey **response rates** and concerns about the legitimacy of public opinion research may be linked to **people's views on civic and political life** (Silber *et al.*, 2022)
- While negative perceptions of specific pollsters do not necessarily translate into less trust in the findings of surveys (Johnson *et al.*, 2023), **positive attitudes** towards surveys have a **positive association** with providing **consent** for participating in them (Herold *et al.*, 2023)

Research Objectives

Descriptive study

- To evaluate common public perceptions and misconceptions about the **accuracy and reliability** of survey methods
- To examine whether these views differ according to **demographics** and **political beliefs**

Questions asked

- **Total Survey Error dimensions of Measurement and Representation (Groves & Lyberg, 2010)**
 - **Survey participation as a function of democratic engagement, trust in institutions, and perceptions of surveys (Silber *et al.*, 2022; Verma *et al.*, 2018)**
1. “Survey results always reflect the true opinion of the population” (Agree / disagree)
 2. “All respondents always answer honestly” (Agree / disagree)
 3. “From 0 to 100, what percentage of people would you say answers honestly in surveys?” (Percentage)
 4. “If you survey a relatively small number of people, for example, a thousand people, you can adequately represent the opinion of the entire population” (Agree / disagree)
 5. “From 0 to 100, how credible would you say are the results from face-to-face surveys?” (Percentage)

Methods

Quantitative face-to-face interviews

- National probabilistic sample of 1,400 adults (18+)
- Sample frame: country-wide database of electoral sections, nominal (electoral) list size of each section. Respondents were selected as follows:
 - The sections were classified into seven strata, according to the type of electoral competition registered in each section.
 - Each stratum was assigned as many interviews as those resulting from multiplying 1,400 by the proportion of voters corresponding to it.
 - In each stratum, as many sections as the result of dividing the number of interviews assigned by ten were randomly selected, then weighted by the nominal list of each section. Within each section, two area blocks were selected at random.
 - In each selected block, a systematic selection of homes was carried out with a random start. The person who came to open the door was interviewed, as long as they had a voter ID card domiciled in the municipality where the interview was taking place.
- With a 95% confidence level the expected statistical error is +/- 2.8%.
- Fieldwork: March 14 - 17, 2024

Social context



- In 2018 now-President Andrés Manuel López Obrador won by a **landslide**
 - His government's policies may be characterized as **populist** and **leftist**:
 - Focused on social welfare, anti-corruption efforts, fiscal prudence
 - Strong state involvement in key energy sector, infrastructure projects
 - Pragmatic U.S. relations, amidst ongoing challenges with security and crime

Social context

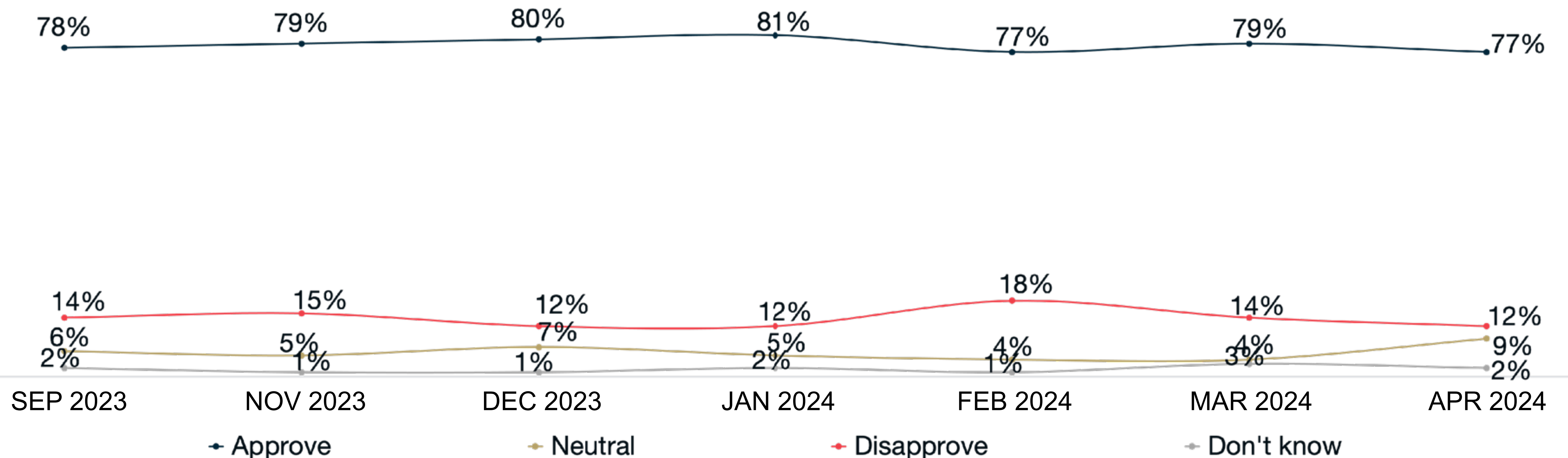
- These public policies have polarized Mexican public opinion
- People are **for or against** each topic on the public agenda depending on whether they perceive it to be **related to the President** and his government
- Those who disapprove of the President's government will be against any topic that seems related to him, and vice versa



Public opinion perception

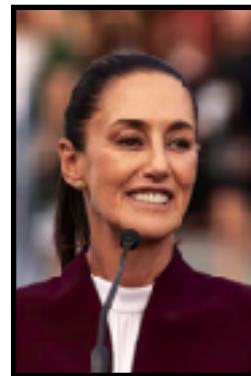
Electoral

Do you approve or disapprove of the work of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador?



Political group identification

Incumbent



Opposition

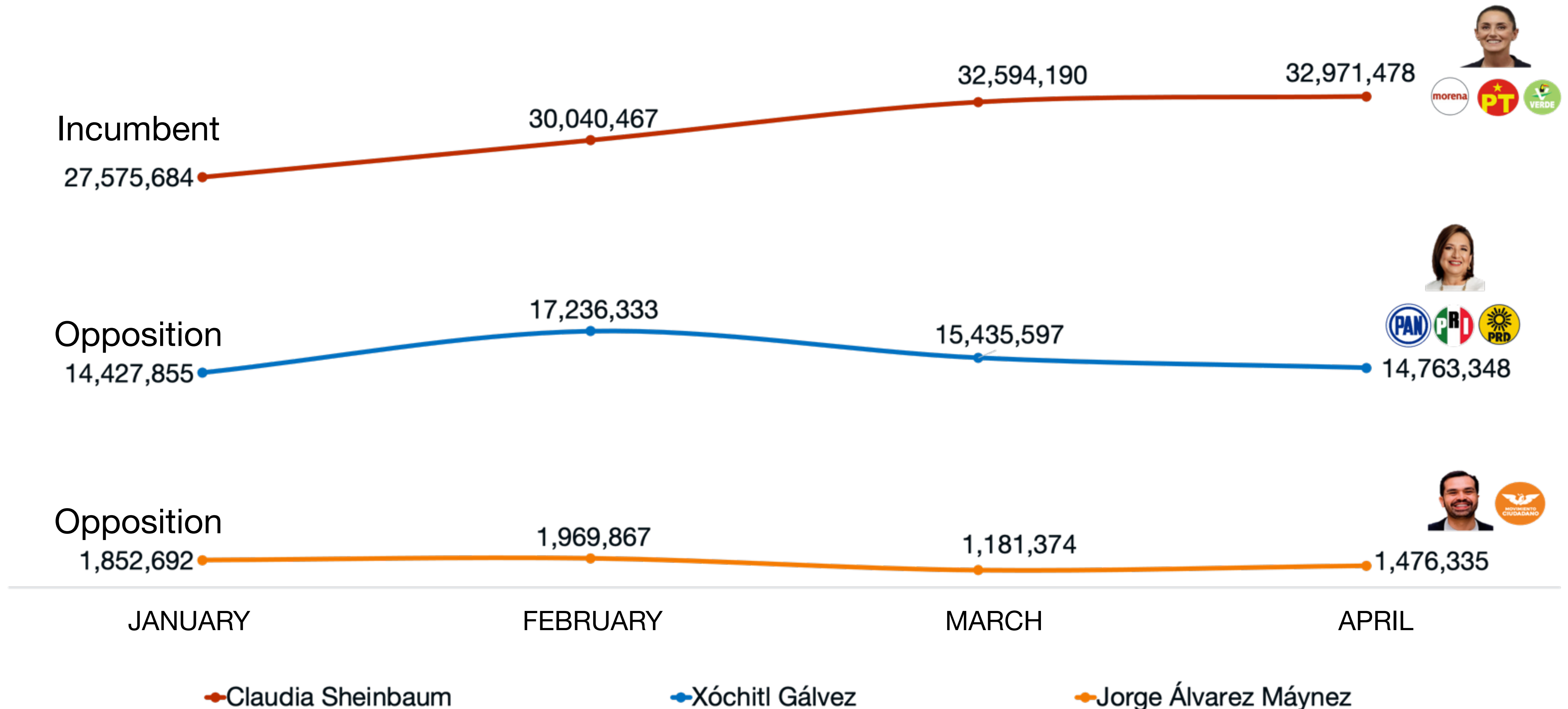


Opposition



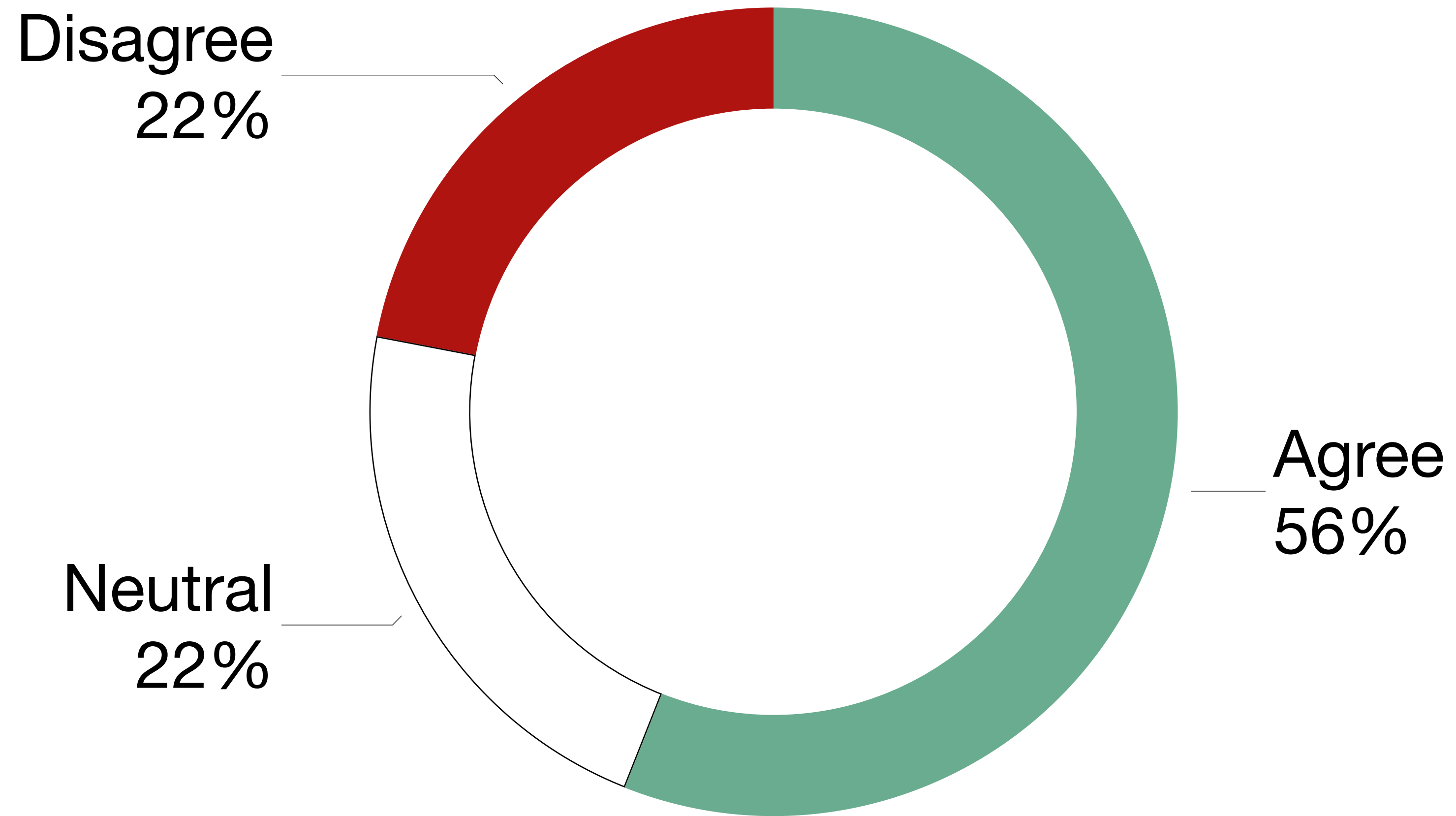
Public opinion perception

Electoral



Results

“Survey results always reflect the true opinion of the population”



Valid n = 1,258

("Valid n" excludes DK/NA)

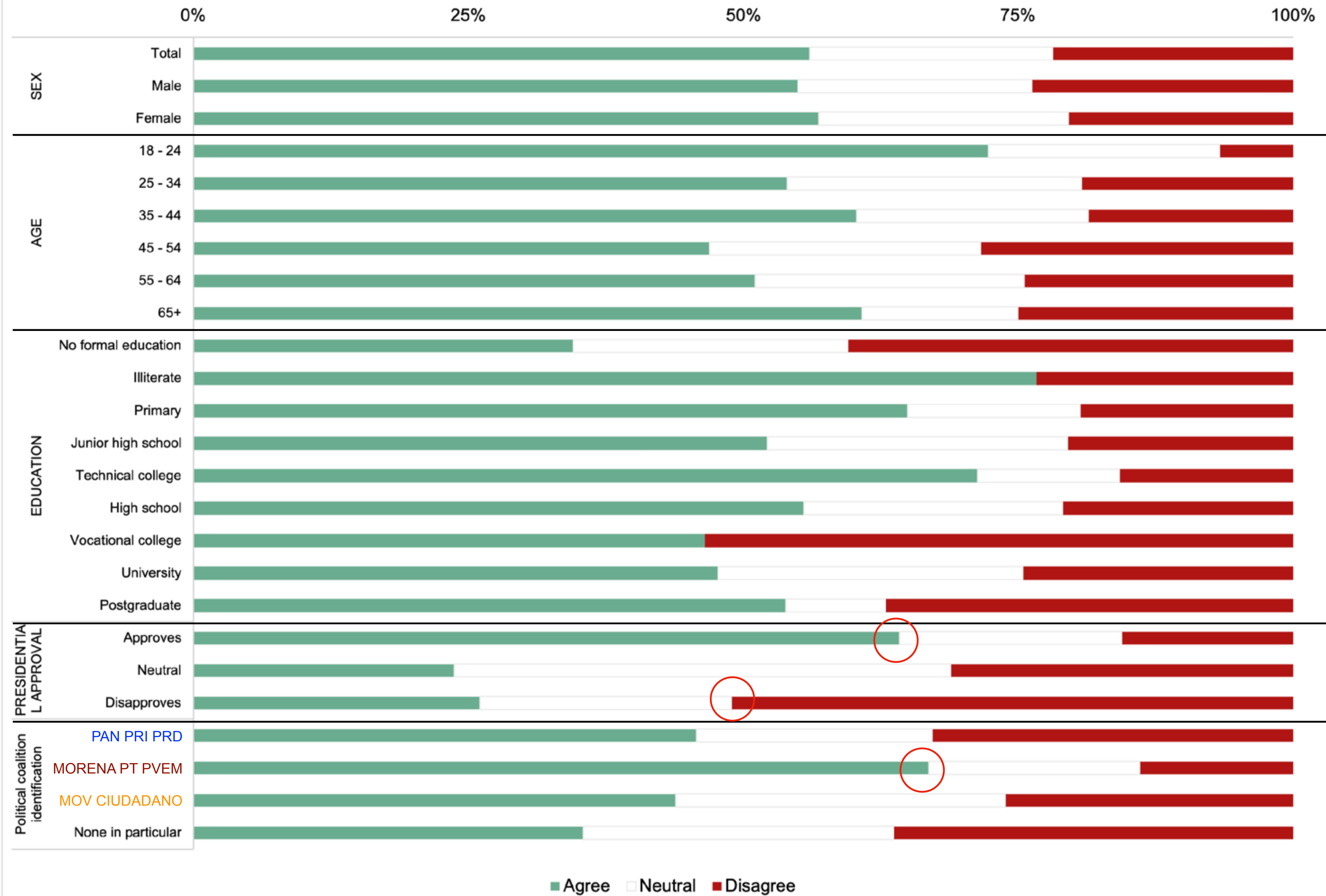
Comparison by groups

“Survey results always reflect the true opinion of the population”

CHI-SQUARE TESTS	Pearson Chi-Square Sig.	Contingency Coefficient
SEX	0.37	0.04
AGE	0.00*	0.18
EDUCATION	0.00*	0.20
PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL	0.00*	0.34
POLITICAL GROUP IDENTIFICATION	0.00*	0.27

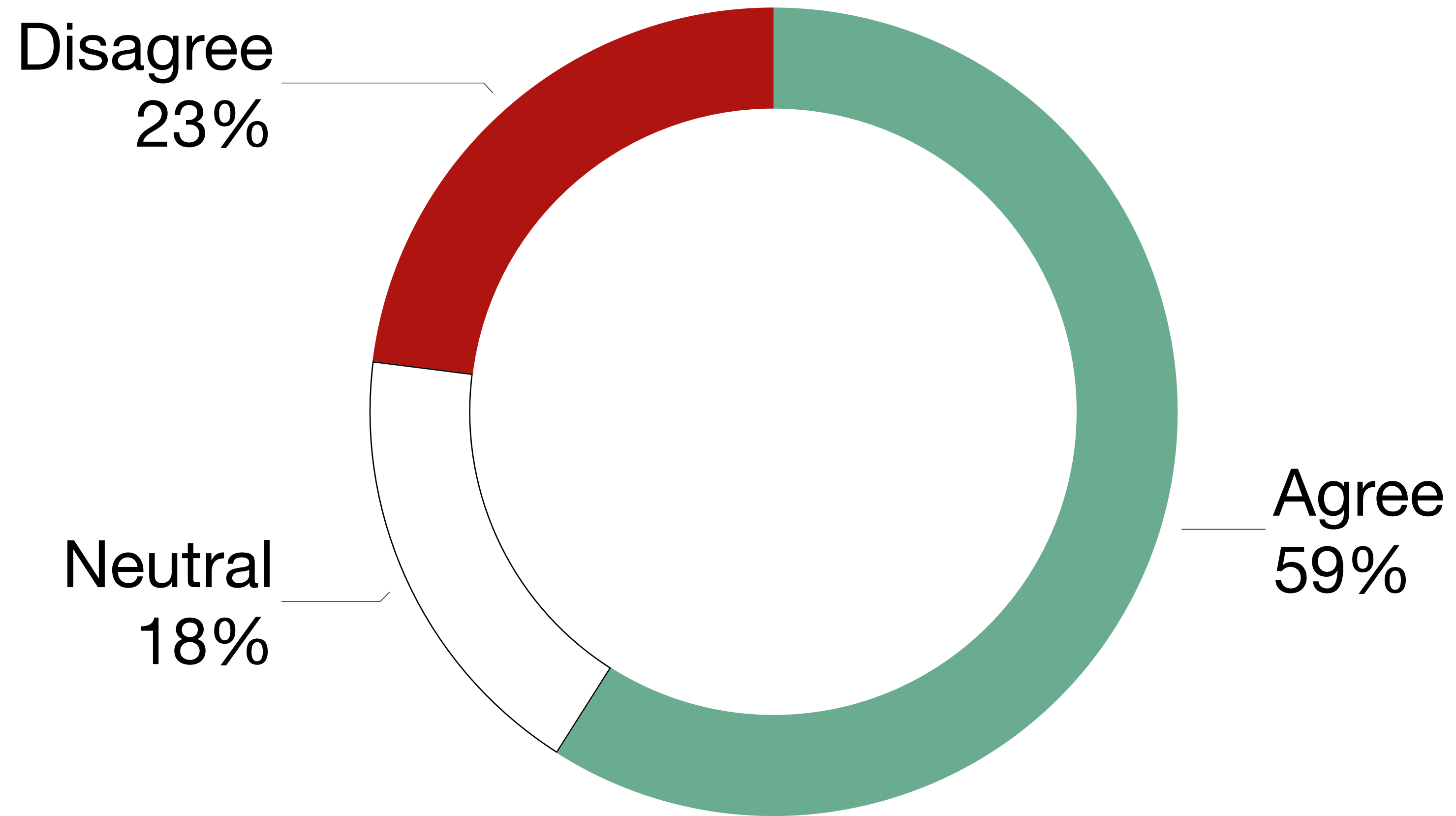
* Significant at $p < 0.05$

Survey results always reflect the true opinion of the population



Results

“All respondents always answer honestly”



Valid n = 1,288

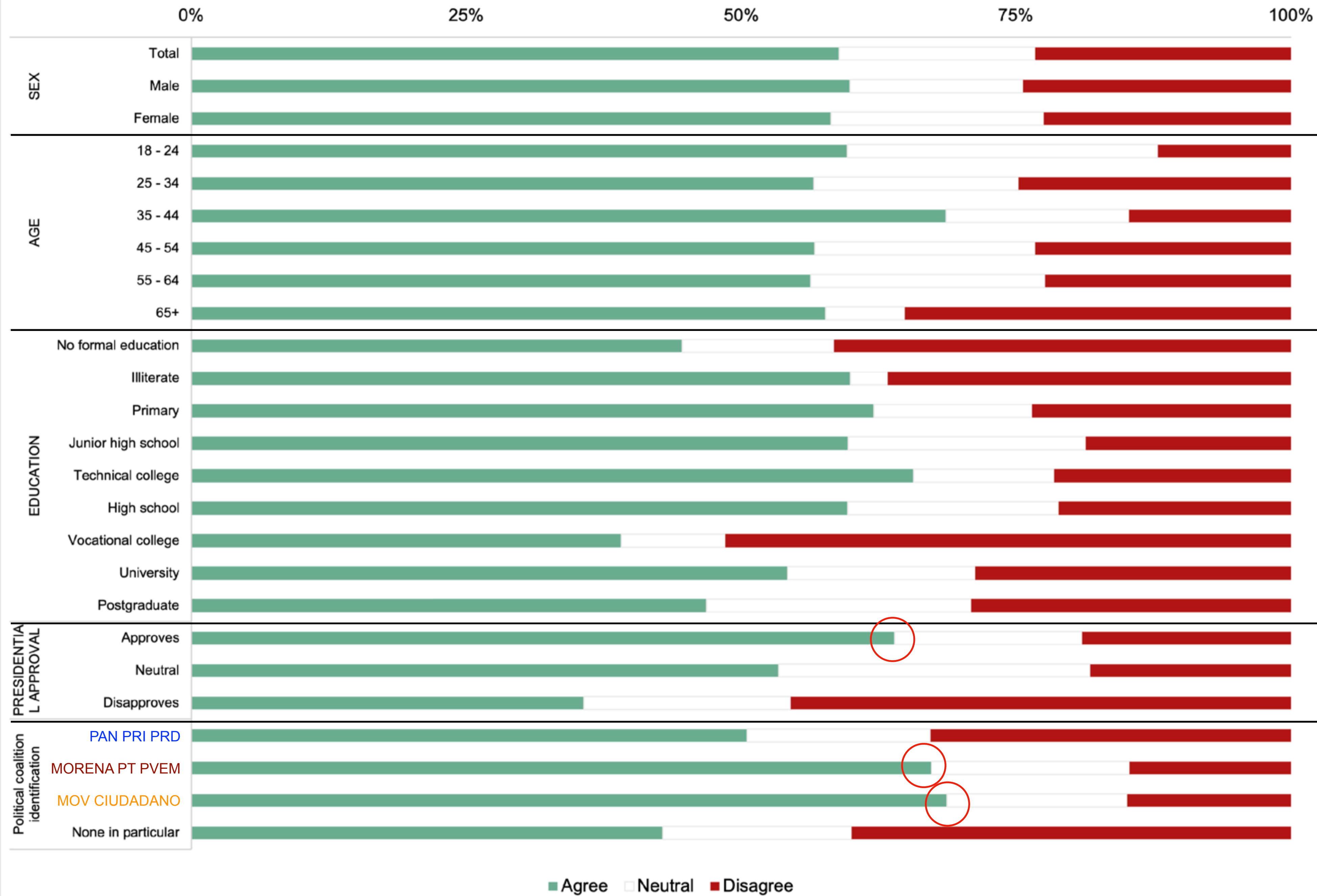
Comparison by groups

“All respondents always answer honestly”

CHI-SQUARE TESTS	Pearson Chi-Square Sig.	Contingency Coefficient
SEX	0.22	0.05
AGE	0.00*	0.21
EDUCATION	0.02*	0.15
PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL	0.00*	0.24
POLITICAL GROUP IDENTIFICATION	0.00*	0.24

* Significant at $p < 0.05$

All respondents always answer honestly



Results

“From 0 to 100, what percentage of people would you say answers honestly in surveys?”

Valid n	1,066
Mean	60.81%
Median	60.00%
Std. Deviation	25.47%

ANOVA	Sig.
AGE	0.53
EDUCATION	0.06
PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL	0.00*
POLITICAL GROUP IDENTIFICATION	0.00*

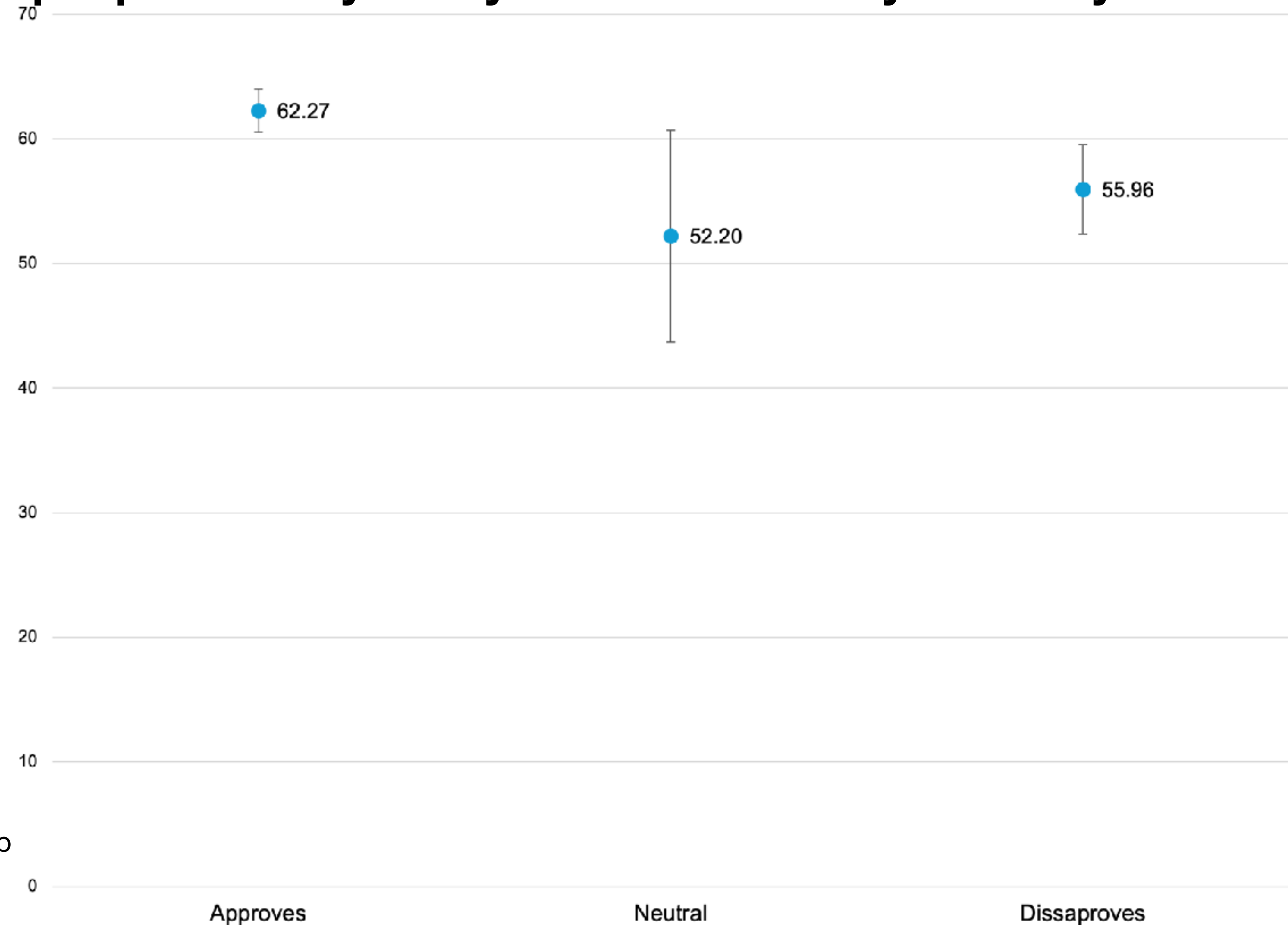
* Significant at $p < 0.05$

ANOVA Post Hoc tests

“From 0 to 100, what percentage of people would you say answers honestly in surveys?”

By Presidential approval

	Duncan _{a,b}	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
		N	1	2
Neutral		39	52.20	
Disapproves		177	55.96	55.96
Approves		833		62.27
Sig.			0.309	0.088



Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 93.565.

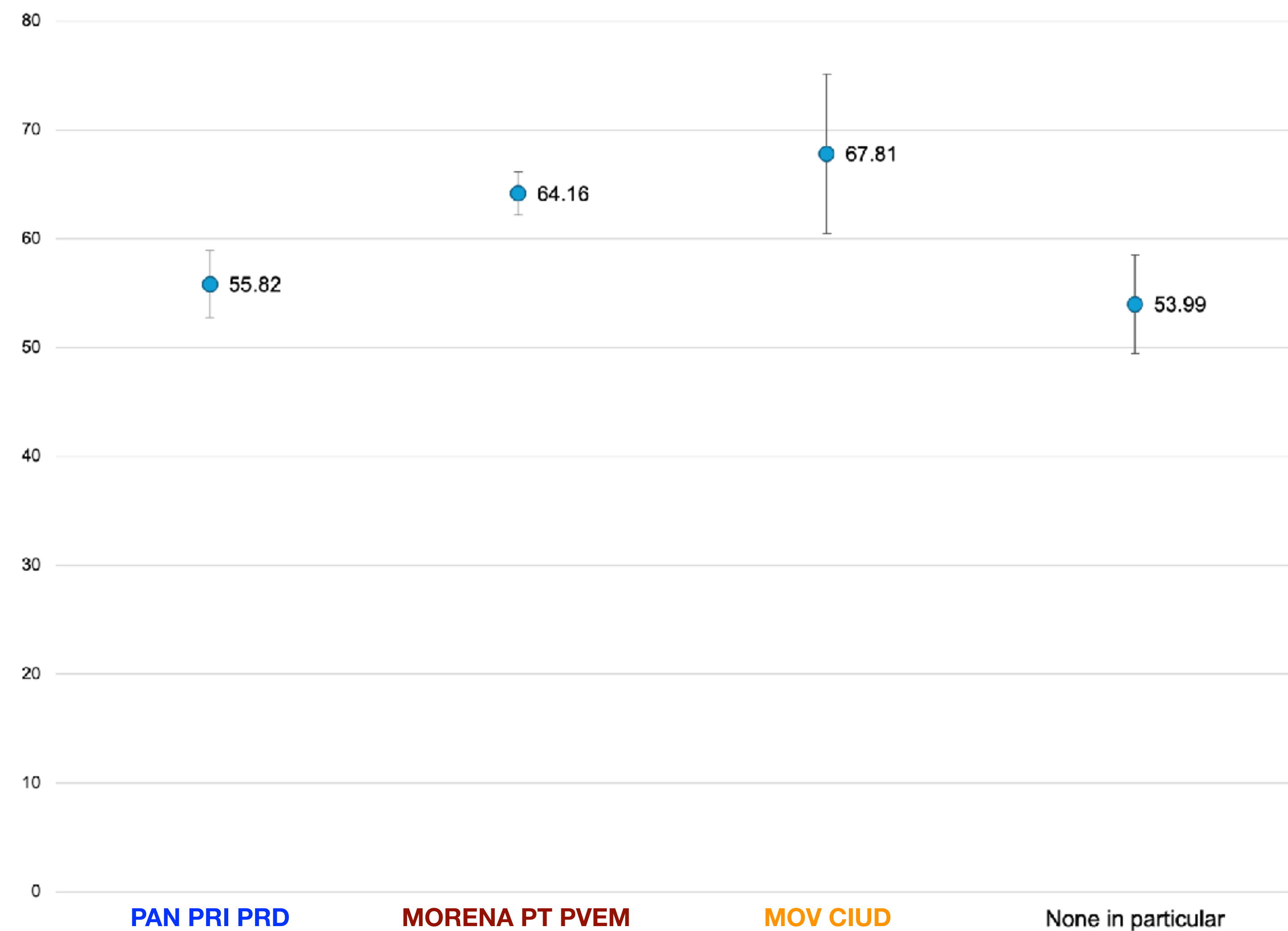
b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

ANOVA Post Hoc tests

“From 0 to 100, what percentage of people would you say answers honestly in surveys?”

By Political group identification

Duncan _{a,b}		Subset for alpha = 0.05	
	N	1	2
None in particular	148	53.99	
PAN PRI PRD	241	55.82	
MORENA PT PVEM	596		64.16
MOV CIUD	35		67.81
Sig.		0.607	0.305



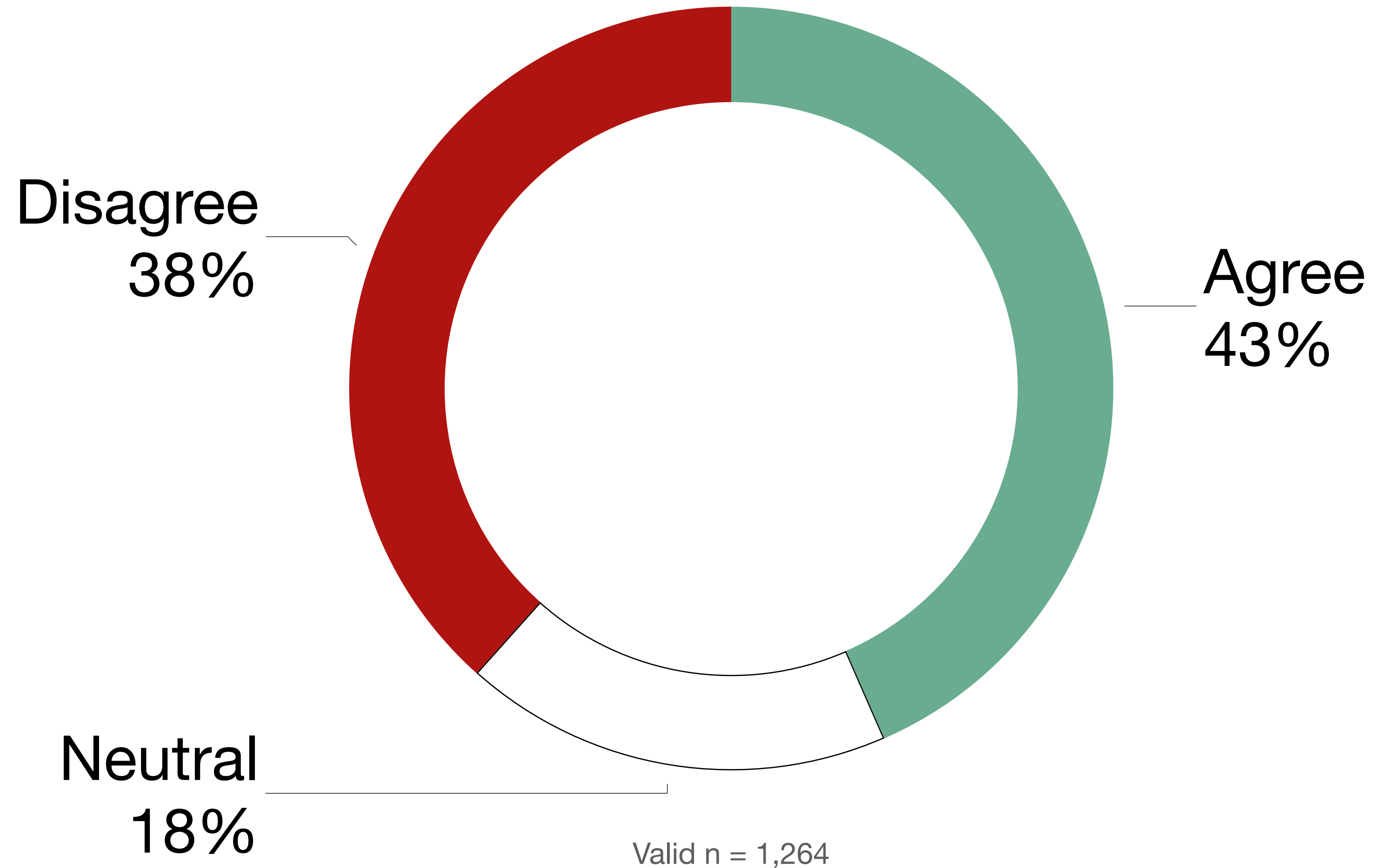
Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 99.133.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

Results

“If you survey a relatively small number of people, for example, a thousand people, you can adequately represent the opinion of the entire population”



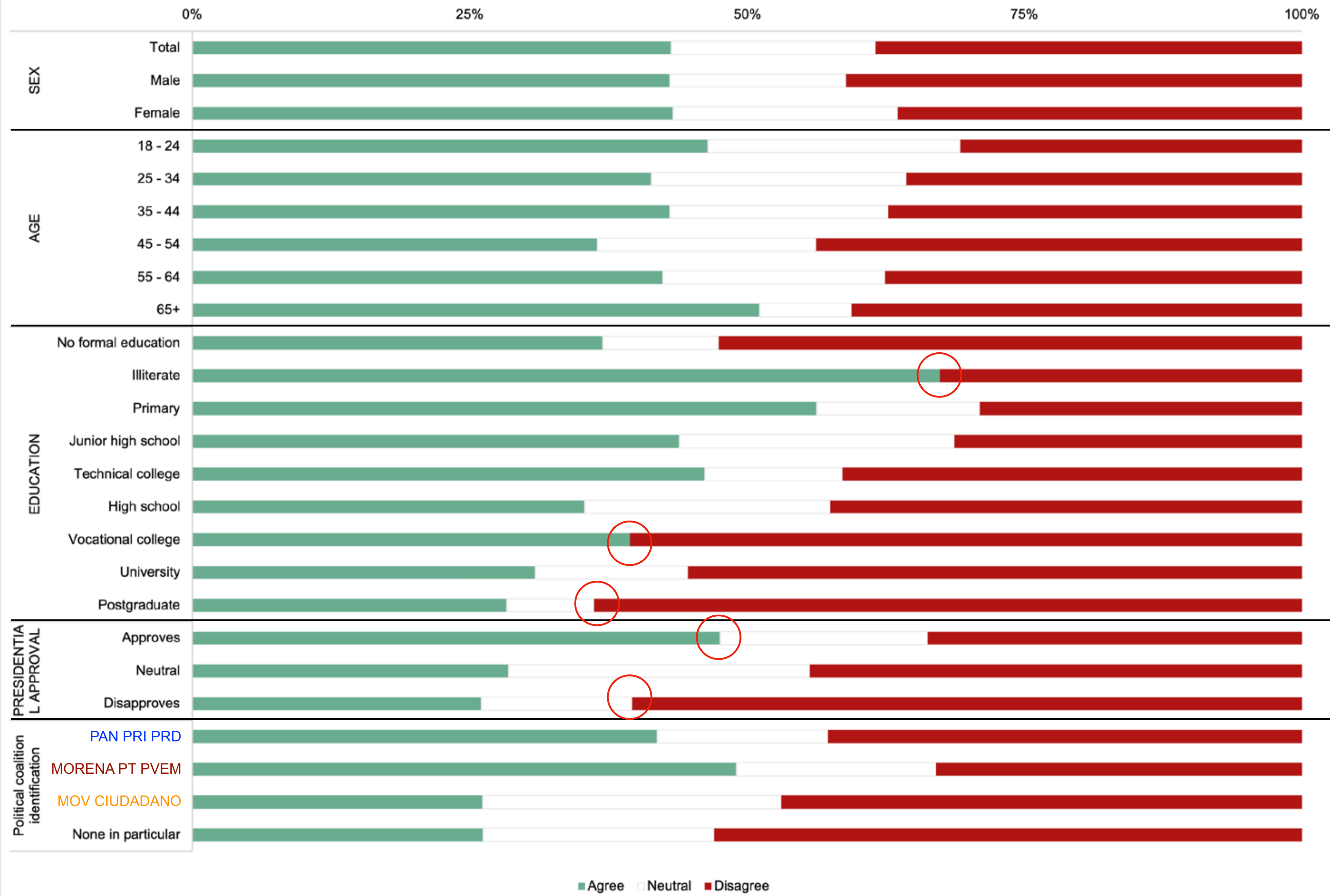
Results

“If you survey a relatively small number of people, for example, a thousand people, you can adequately represent the opinion of the entire population”

CHI-SQUARE TESTS	Pearson Chi-Square Sig.	Contingency Coefficient
SEX	0.08	0.06
AGE	0.00*	0.15
EDUCATION	0.00*	0.25
PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL	0.00*	0.20
POLITICAL GROUP IDENTIFICATION	0.00*	0.18

* Significant at $p < 0.05$

If you survey a relatively small number of people, for example, a thousand people, you can adequately represent the opinion of the entire population



■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree

Results

“From 0 to 100, how credible would you say are the results from face-to-face surveys?”

Valid n	1,253
Mean	70.25%
Median	80.00%
Std. Deviation	25.42%

ANOVA	Sig.
AGE	0.42
EDUCATION	0.47
PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL	0.00*
POLITICAL GROUP IDENTIFICATION	0.00*

* Significant at $p < 0.05$

ANOVA Post Hoc tests

“From 0 to 100, how credible would you say are the results from face-to-face surveys?”

By Presidential approval

Duncan _{a,b}		Subset for alpha = 0.05	
	N	1	2
Disapproves	186	59.63	
Neutral	46		66.85
Approves	999		72.59
Sig.		1.000	0.090

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 108.442.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

By Political group identification

Duncan _{a,b}		Subset for alpha = 0.05	
	N	1	2
None in particular	170	57.43	
PAN PRI PRD	267		67.60
MOV CIUD	37		69.46
MORENA PT PVEM	732		74.15
Sig.		1.000	0.068

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 106.159.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

Discussion

- These findings illustrate the importance of considering **presidential approval and political leaning** in assessing survey credibility in different groups
- The results further underscore the current degree of **polarization** present in the Mexican public's perceptions of different political views
 - In the **measurement** dimension questions related to the Total Survey Error framework (Groves & Lyberg, 2010), 6 out of 10 people believe in the ability of surveys to reflect reality
 - In the **representation** dimension questions, less than half understand or trust the power of statistical inference from samples
 - Having 70% **credibility in survey results is not ideal**

Discussion

- We aim to enhance the legitimacy and acceptance of surveys as essential elements of democratic discourse and decision-making
- However, surveys are increasingly being used as **tools for legitimization**
 - Like many other political issues, surveys have their **credibility divided** between supporters and detractors based on political beliefs and the favorability of the results
 - This has transformed surveys into a **political discussion**, leading people to distrust survey results, especially if they don't align with their political views

Discussion

- Assessing the size and extent of **current political leanings** will provide a useful lens for constructing targeted messages for survey methodology:
- Rather than becoming cynical about the potential political biases, we should strive to reaffirm the objectivity of surveys as scientific tools
- By **addressing and dispelling prevalent myths and misconceptions**, we can foster a more informed and receptive public attitude towards survey methodologies
- This approach will not only **restore trust in surveys** but also strengthen their role in **democratic processes**

References

- Demotecnia. (2024, April 26). *Encuesta Nacional Abril 2024*. De las Heras Demotecnia. <https://www.demotecnia.com.mx/encuesta-nacional-abril-2024/>
- Fernández Martín, E., & Vinuesa Tejero, M. L. (2014). El imaginario social sobre los sondeos electorales. *Revista Mexicana de Opinión Pública, julio-diciembre*, 71–86.
- Graefe, A. (2021). Poll Illiteracy: How the Public Misunderstands Polls. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3834394>
- Groves, R. M., & Lyberg, L. (2010). Total survey error: Past, present, and future. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 74(5), 849–879. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfq065>
- Herold, I., Bergmann, M., & Bethmann, A. (2023, January 27). Trust in surveys, income non-response and linkage consent-The SHARE perspective. *SHARE*
- Johnson, T. P., Silber, H., & Darling, J. E. (2024). Public perceptions of pollsters in the United States: Experimental evidence. *Social Science Quarterly*, 105(1), 114–127. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.13324>
- Silber, H., Moy, P., Johnson, T. P., Neumann, R., Stadtmüller, S., & Repke, L. (2022). Survey participation as a function of democratic engagement, trust in institutions, and perceptions of surveys. *Social Science Quarterly*, 103(7), 1619–1632. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.13218>
- Verma, N., Fleischmann, K. R., & Koltai, K. S. (2018). Demographic factors and trust in different news sources. *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 55(1), 524–533. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pra2.2018.14505501057>

Thank you!

Contact information



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/lherrero/>