POLITICAL INTERDEPENDENCE: EVIDENCE FROM EMIGRANT VOTER TURNOUT IN 1,267 ELECTIONS WORLDWIDE

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Abstract
We document political interdependence driven by international migration. To examine whether elections in residence countries impact emigrant turnout in homeland elections, we assemble a novel dataset covering 1,267 elections across 43 origin countries and 217 residence countries. Exploiting the quasi-random timing of elections between countries, we find that emigrant turnout increases by 7 percentage points in homeland elections held after residence country elections, compared to those held before. This is consistent with a model of salience where exposure to competitive residence country elections and expanded media coverage increases interest in the political process and drives emigrants to participate in their homeland elections. (JEL: D72, D83, F22)

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Teaching Slides

A set of Teaching Slides to accompany this article is available online as Supplementary Data.

1. Introduction

Political interdependence among nations—where political changes in one setting affect political outcomes in another—has become increasingly significant due to globalization, social media, and pivotal global events like the Great Recession and COVID-19 pandemic (Rodrik 2011; Funke, Schularick, and Trebesch 2016; Zhuravskaya, Petrova, and Enikolopov 2020). While much of the literature focuses on trade and financial flows (Franzese and Hays 2008; Tabellini and Magistretti 2024), less attention has been paid to how international migration reinforces political interdependence.

As migrants move across borders, they connect their country of origin with their country of residence (Spilimbergo 2009; Mercier 2016). Two emerging trends highlight the need to study the link between political interdependence and migration: there are around 280 million migrants worldwide, and more than 130 countries have extended voting rights to their citizens living abroad—with both figures expected to rise in the coming decades (Acostamadiedo et al. 2020; Fliess and Østergaard-Nielsen 2021; Wellman, Allen, and Nyblade 2023).

In this paper, we analyze how these flows and connections lead to political interdependence between electoral processes in countries of origin and residence. We exploit the phenomenon of transnational voting, where emigrant voters who reside in one political environment (residence country) vote in another (origin country), to causally demonstrate how migration flows create interconnectedness between national elections. For example, we test whether Spanish elections impact turnout in Philippine elections among Filipino emigrant voters living in Spain.

While prior work has largely focused on *general* factors shaping emigrants' political attitudes, such as exposure to country of residence institutions (Barsbai et al. 2017; Acemoglu et al. 2025) and society (Daudin, Franck, and Rapoport 2019; Manacorda, Ponticelli, and Tesei 2024; Melki et al. 2024), less is known about how *specific* political events shape their political actions. We study how elections in the residence country affect emigrants' participation in their homeland elections to highlight their role in driving political interdependence—an aspect notably absent in the economics literature. We argue that salient elections in the residence country serve as information shocks that increase emigrants' exposure to political news. As homeland media outlets start reporting about the residence country election results, emigrants gain easier access to news, rendering homeland electoral politics more salient. Other scholarly work has focused on the role of social networks as information providers in transnational political contexts (Beach and Hanlon 2023; Yarkin 2023). While networks take time to form and evolve, we demonstrate that immediate,

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short-term exposure to salient political events is a key, yet so far overlooked, factor influencing emigrants' political behavior.

Studying emigrant turnout is crucial given its potentially significant electoral consequences. In our data, emigrant voters account for 2.2% of the total electorate on average, reaching over 10% in some countries. Case study evidence demonstrates that emigrant voters have been pivotal in elections worldwide. Emigrant votes have swung elections in Cape Verde, Italy, New Zealand, Romania, Spain, and the US (Imai and King 2004; Gamlen 2015; Turcu and Urbatsch 2015; Østergaard-Nielsen and Ciornei 2019). They have helped make and break government majorities in Italy (Lafleur 2013), while in Hungary, emigrant votes won Viktor Orbán the extra seat required to amend the Constitution (Pogonyi 2017). Non-voting emigrants also impact domestic politics by depressing overall turnout, a worrying outcome for the health of democracy (Kostelka 2017). With the expected growth in migration, the political behavior of emigrants can only become more significant for domestic politics and processes of political interdependence—necessitating a deeper understanding of the factors shaping it.

The transnational context provides an ideal setting to demonstrate political interdependence through emigrant voter turnout, for two reasons. First, the date of elections in the country of residence can be considered independent of the date of the country of origin elections, and vice versa. Hence, the timing of the elections can be deemed as-good-as-random, solving the endogeneity problem of governments deciding to hold elections when conditions are favorable. Second, the difference between emigrants' residence and origin countries separates the institutional environment they are exposed to and the political setting they participate in. We can therefore do away with several endogenous factors usually marring studies that examine the relationship between institutions and turnout. In particular, some mechanisms that are applicable to the within-country context are not as relevant to our setting: voter fatigue can only matter when emigrants can vote in both elections, and residence country election campaigns are generally not targeted toward migrant voters.

Data limitations have so far rendered the study of transnational turnout difficult. For this reason, we construct a novel dataset of Emigrant Voting Patterns (EVP), the first and largest data source on emigrant turnout including 43 countries of origin (CoO), with voting statistics for each of their country of residence (CoR), and for national elections from 2000 to 2019. The size of the dataset allows us to use an identification strategy that exploits the number of and variation in CoO–CoR pairs.

In this work, we provide causal evidence of political interdependence measured as the effect of a CoR election on emigrants' turnout in their CoO election. Specifically, our identification strategy exploits timing differentials between CoO and CoR elections. In some cases, CoO elections are held before the CoR election, while in others, they are held after. We argue that due to the transnational setting, whether a CoO election occurs before or after is quasi-random, as is the number of days to/from the CoR election. To bolster identification, we focus on short election windows: our smallest sample considers a 30-day window—CoO elections that are at most 15 days before and after the CoR election.

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Leveraging the different electoral calendars of the CoOs and CoRs, we find evidence of political interdependence: emigrant turnout in CoO elections held after a CoR election is 7 percentage points (pp) higher than those held prior. This is both statistically and economically significant, given that the average turnout abroad is around 57%. This increase in turnout wanes in time, and eventually dissipates around 70 days after the CoR election. We also show that there is no pre-trend: turnout is stable for CoO elections held before the CoR election.

In addition, we perform a battery of robustness tests: (1) we use election time windows of varying lengths, (2) examine intervals between elections, (3) add controls and time-related or country-specific fixed effects, (4) implement sample adjustments, and (5) conduct a leave-one-out analysis, dropping one country at a time. Reassuringly, our results are robust to all these checks. Finally, we check for the plausibility of the identification assumption. Using balance tests, we show that key economic and political variables are statistically indistinguishable before and after the CoR election. We also conduct placebo tests using the originally scheduled election dates for elections that were postponed or rescheduled due to unexpected events. We find that results almost entirely lose statistical significance when the planned, rather than the actual, election date is used.

As an alternative empirical strategy, we employ two complementary approaches. First, we use the full sample and construct separate indicator variables for different time intervals between CoO and CoR elections. Second, we implement a regression discontinuity design (RDD), using as the running variable the number of days a CoO election occurs before or after the CoR election. Encouragingly, these alternative approaches, which use larger samples and more flexible specifications, support the robustness of our results.

A necessary condition for establishing political interdependence is the presence of salience: emigrants observe elections in the CoR and, in response, increase their turnout in CoO elections. We corroborate this mechanism through a set of cumulative evidence that demonstrates when and how political events become salient to emigrants and influence their political participation.

We begin by presenting direct evidence that CoR elections increase emigrants' political interest in their homeland elections. Using Google search data, we show that interest in CoO news organizations and electoral commissions remains stable before CoR elections, but rises afterward for emigrants whose CoO elections are yet to occur. This divergence suggests that observing CoR election outcomes raises the salience of homeland elections among emigrants.

We then turn to settings where salience is expected to vary based on predictions from existing literature. First, we show that close CoR elections have a larger impact on CoO turnout than non-competitive elections. Consistent with this, we document that close elections receive greater media coverage, and that turnout is higher when CoO media outlets report on the CoR election—an effect observed only when CoO elections occur after the CoR election.

Second, we compare national and local elections, based on the established view that local elections are less salient, and find no turnout effects and less media coverage following local elections. Third, we examine the electoral format, showing that one-

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round CoR elections, which produce definitive outcomes and tend to be more salient, generate larger CoO turnout effects and wider media coverage than elections with runoffs.

Finally, we consider a stark case where salience should be effectively neutralized: countries where voting occurs exclusively by mail. In these settings, emigrants often cast their ballots long before the CoR election occurs, preventing the CoR election outcome from serving as a salient focal event. In line with the salience mechanism, we find no effect of CoR elections on emigrant turnout in mail-in voting contexts. The consistent pattern of findings across multiple analyses supports salience as the key mechanism linking CoR elections to emigrant political participation in CoO elections.

Importantly, we also show that other mechanisms cannot rationalize our headline results. One set of alternative explanations relates to individual strategic behavior. We test whether the results are driven by voters learning about being pivotal, using a triple-difference strategy around close CoO elections. If emigrants learned about their pivotality from close CoR elections, we would expect a larger turnout response in close CoO elections, which the data do not support. Habit formation could also explain increased turnout if emigrants voted first in the CoR election, developed a voting habit, and subsequently turned out in the CoO election. However, using dual citizenship laws to proxy for emigrants who can vote in both elections, our results do not corroborate this channel. We investigate whether dissatisfaction with CoR election outcomes leads emigrants to develop a desire to return to their CoO, which could increase turnout as a signal of renewed political engagement with the homeland. Examining changes in migration patterns and remittance flows following CoR elections, we detect no significant effects.

A separate class of mechanisms concerns the broader political context. Anti-immigrant sentiment in the CoR might heighten immigrant identity and thereby increase CoO turnout. Using anti-immigration rhetoric in party manifestos and the anti-immigration stance of the winning party in the CoR as proxies, we find little support for this mechanism driving the observed turnout patterns. We then test for voter contagion, the idea that higher turnout in the CoR could encourage greater turnout among emigrants in CoO elections, and this is not substantiated by the data. Finally, we consider whether uncertainty about electoral outcomes, rather than salience, could drive turnout. Analyzing elections where candidates or parties are ideologically similar—thus minimizing uncertainty—we show that this mechanism does not account for our findings.

Our analysis is situated in and advances several interconnected bodies of literature: political interdependence, voter turnout, and migrant political behavior in a transnational perspective. The findings primarily contribute to the literature on political interdependence, which has largely focused on policy and norms diffusion among political elites (Acharya 2004; Elkink 2011; Gilardi and Wasserfallen 2019) and contagion effects (Malet 2022) where particular elections (i.e., Trump election) or rare political events (i.e., Brexit) impact the political attitudes of citizens in other countries. Our global dataset addresses two major shortcomings in this scholarship. For one, we move beyond studies that show how electoral events in one country affect the political *attitudes* of citizens residing in another country (Costa-Font and Ljunge

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2023; Malet and Walter 2024). Instead, we demonstrate that political interdependence also influences political *behavior*—turnout in our case. For another, we consider over 1,000 election events around the world as opposed to one specific election in relation to a few countries abroad (Delis, Matakos, and Xefteris 2020; Turnbull-Dugarte and Rama 2022). This broader perspective allows us to study the mechanisms that underpin political interdependence in a more generalizable manner. Our results underline that no national election is an isolated event: a democratic exercise in one country can have an effect on political participation elsewhere via migrant populations.

The paper builds on a large body of literature analyzing voter turnout (Blais 2006; Cancela and Geys 2016). First, we expand the scholarship on turnout and election timing. Studies of concurrent elections show that turnout increases when multilevel elections are held on the same day due to lower costs of voting, higher stakes, increased media attention and party mobilization (Lijphart 1997; Smith 2001; Dettrey and Schwindt-Bayer 2009; Fauvelle-Aymar and François 2015; Garmann 2017; Leininger, Rudolph, and Zittlau 2018; Cantoni, Gazzè, and Schafer 2021) with reduced information costs as a key mechanism (Aker, Collier, and Vicente 2017; Giné and Mansuri 2018; Grácio and Vicente 2021). In contrast, election frequency—multiple elections held in short succession—may both lower turnout due to voter fatigue (Schakel and Dandoy 2014; Kostelka et al. 2023), and increase turnout because of more mobilization and habit formation (Fujiwara, Meng, and Vogl 2016; Fukumoto and Horiuchi 2016; Sevi and Blais 2022; Kaplan, Saltiel, and Urzúa 2023). A frequent criticism in the election timing literature is endogeneity, as the factors explaining the timing and frequency of elections are also those related to voter turnout. Our paper addresses this concern and bridges these two sets of works by studying the different mechanisms in relation to *emigrant* turnout in a global context, instead of *domestic* voter turnout and case study designs. Leveraging the transnational setting allows us to exploit a distinct data structure in which elections in the CoO and CoR are scheduled independently. This institutional separation provides a plausibly exogenous source of variation in election timing—an empirical advantage not typically available in studies confined to national contexts.

Second, we contribute to turnout studies concerned with election salience (Andersen, Fiva, and Natvik 2014). Instead of pre-election factors, such as campaign mobilization and compulsory voting (Hoffman, León, and Lombardi 2017; Pons 2018; Bekkouche, Cagé, and Dewitte 2022), we demonstrate that electoral competition (Pons and Tricaud 2018; Cantoni and Pons 2022) and close election results (Bursztyn et al. 2024) not only increase the salience of elections but also shape the interdependence of national elections across different countries. Through the use of the transnational context where overlapping political arenas emerge, we identify how salient, close CoR election results influence CoO turnout—an important finding that has not been documented thus far.

Finally, we advance the fast-growing field of emigrant voting by providing new evidence on how exposure to residence country politics shapes political behavior directed toward the homeland. In doing so, we complement research on immigrant political participation in the country of *residence* (Goldsmith and Holzner 2015; Piccoli and Ruedin 2023), while shifting the focus to how migrants influence democratization

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in their countries of *origin*. Existing studies have identified factors correlated with emigrant turnout: the inclusiveness of CoO electoral policies (Lafleur and Chelius 2011; Wellman 2021), migrants' socio-economic and cultural ties abroad and to the homeland (Escobar, Arana, and McCann 2015; Gherghina and Tseng 2016; Peltoniemi, Nemčok, and Wass 2023), homeland language media (Leal, Lee, and McCann 2012), transnational campaigning (Burgess and Tyburski 2020), and the CoR's political context (Ciornei and Østergaard-Nielsen 2020). However, most of this work has largely relied on *one-to-many* designs employing either one CoO and many CoRs, or one CoR and many CoOs, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Our new global dataset enables a *many-to-many* design, allowing us to implement a more credible identification strategy and systematically explore variation across different mechanisms. Through our novel empirical approach, we address issues of endogeneity and causality faced by previous research. For example, while studies such as Dev, Poblete-Cazenave, and Toppeta (2024) examine how emigrant voting behavior in a single CoO is shaped by CoR turnout, our analysis leverages cross-national variation in election timing to identify a salience-driven boost to turnout and highlight broader patterns of political interdependence across borders, thus setting our contribution apart both in terms of mechanism and scale.

Viewed more broadly, our work adds to the scholarship on the transnational impact of migration on democratization. Past research has documented that return migration (Mercier 2016; Spilimbergo 2009) and remittances (Pfutze 2012; Barsbai et al. 2017; Manacorda, Ponticelli, and Tesei 2024) originating from more democratic countries contribute to the democratization of migrants' origin countries, with political re-socialization as a key mechanism (Acemoglu et al. 2025). However, studies on the electoral effects of emigrants focus on the political behavior of their family and friends within the countries of origin. By directly examining emigrant turnout and how it is influenced by residence country election dynamics, we offer a new mechanism through which emigrants underpin the potential democratizing impact of the emigrant vote.

In Section 2, we describe our data and provide summary statistics. Section 3 discusses the challenge of identifying CoR election effects on CoO turnout. In Section 4, we present our empirical results. We discuss our proposed mechanism and provide evidence to rule out alternative explanations in Sections 5 and 6. Finally, Section 7 concludes.

2. Data

This paper explores the impact of CoR elections on emigrant turnout in their CoO elections.[1] Therefore, the dependent variable of interest is the turnout of emigrant

1. Other studies may interchange CoO with the home country, and CoR with the host or destination country. To fix terminologies, we use homeland, origin country or CoO to refer to the country of origin and residence country or CoR to refer to the country of residence for the rest of the paper.

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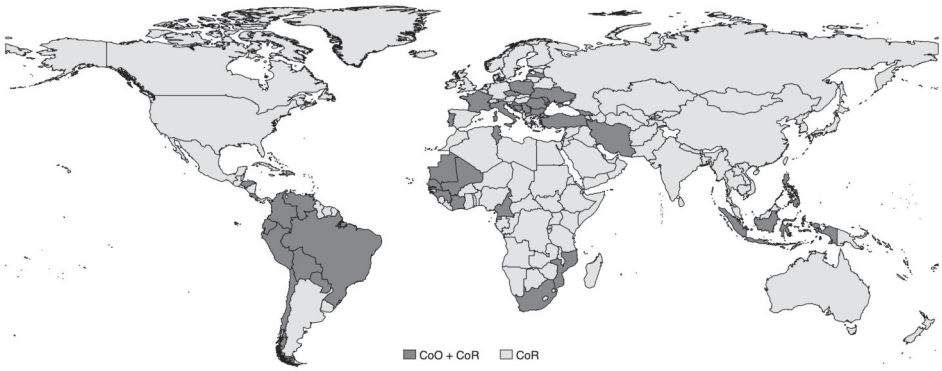


FIGURE 1. Dataset coverage. The darker shade indicates that the country is both a (migrant-sending) CoO and (migrant-receiving) CoR, while the lighter shade indicates that the country is listed as a CoR in a CoO election.

voters coming from CoO, disaggregated by CoR. The unit of analysis is the CoO–CoR pair-year. As is standard in the voter turnout literature, we define turnout as the percent of registered voters who actually voted. The main independent variable is the differential timing between the CoR election and the CoO election. We examine whether the CoO election happens before or after the CoR election, and by how long (in days). For example, we consider the turnout of Filipino (CoO) emigrants in Spain (CoR), and whether the Philippine election happens before or after the Spanish election.[2]

2.1. EVP Dataset

The EVP dataset is a novel and original dataset which measures emigrant voting behavior worldwide. As the first and most comprehensive dataset of its kind, EVP systematically captures the voting results of resident and non-resident citizens in national elections on a global level and disaggregates these results per CoR. The dataset covers 180 elections (legislative and presidential) in 43 CoOs in the world from 2000 to 2019, covering 217 CoRs across six continents. Figure 1 shows the global coverage of the dataset. The dataset includes a total of 10,605 observations at the required unit of analysis: CoO–CoR pair for each CoO election.

The key feature of EVP is that it provides information on both the CoO and CoR levels. This particularity enables researchers to systematically analyze the relationship between emigrant voting patterns, and CoO- and CoR-specific variables. The data contain official election results from the CoOs' electoral commissions. Specifically, the database includes the number of registered voters, actual voters, and total votes (valid

2. While it is possible for elections to be concurrent, this only happens for 40 observations in our dataset, and does not impact any of the subsequent results.

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TABLE 1. Summary statistics by *N*-Day window.

	15 days	30 days	60 days	90 days	120 days	150 days	180 days	360 days
Elections before	161	283	474	659	844	1,048	1,287	2,433
Elections after	129	241	448	647	851	1,063	1,297	2,431
Days before	7.22	14.48	26.89	40.14	54.72	70.61	88.12	172.96
Days after	9.64	16.34	29.27	43.38	58.35	73.79	90.26	171.88
CoO turnout before	53.79	54.02	53.94	54.19	55.29	55.47	55.54	56.48
CoO turnout after	60.62	60.53	59.62	58.43	56.84	56.6	56.73	56.87
CoR turnout	66.07	65.98	65.93	66.02	66.11	65.91	65.77	66

Note: Column titles indicate the number of days before and after the CoR election included in the particular window. The shortest is a 30-day window (i.e., 15 days before and after), while the longest is a 720-day window (i.e., 1 year before and after).

and invalid)—all disaggregated by CoR. As a constraint, we only collected data on the first round of elections when there are runoff elections or multiple rounds.

Countries included in the EVP dataset are those that have enfranchised their emigrants and implemented overseas elections. In addition, we require CoR-level data, which not all countries collect or provide. In Online Appendix A, we explain how we constructed the dataset, and present the elections that were included in the final EVP sample. Naturally, the resulting sample is a non-random selection: first, countries can enfranchise the non-resident citizens or not, and second, among countries that do, countries can collect and/or share the required data or not. In Table A.3, among countries that enfranchised emigrants, we compare those that were included in our sample with those that were excluded. We find that in general, variables are balanced across samples, except for immigration rate and GDP per capita, which are both higher in the excluded countries. Unsurprisingly, the Polity score is higher (i.e., more democratic) for countries included in the sample. To analyze underlying mechanisms of emigrant turnout, we incorporate other datasets from various sources. In Online Appendix B, we explain each dataset and the corresponding variables we use.

2.2. Summary Statistics

The final dataset is a product of merging EVP with other datasets, linking each CoO election with the closest CoR election that is held before or after. It contains CoOs from all regions except for North America and South Asia and almost all countries worldwide as CoRs.[3] There are 180 elections across 43 CoOs, and 1,267 elections across 185 CoRs for which we have election data, which combined yield 2,426 CoO–CoR pairs and 19,428 CoO–CoR-year observations.

Table 1 presents summary statistics of key variables for each chosen window. The first column, "15 days," shows that there are 161 CoO elections (or observations) 15 days before the CoR elections and 129 CoO elections 15 days after. The average number of days from the CoR election is 7.22 before and 9.64 after. Moreover, CoO

3. In Online Appendix C, we explain how we constructed our sample using various data sources.

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turnout is 60.62% after the CoR election, much higher than the CoO turnout before, which is 53.79%. The other columns can be read in the same way. With regard to sample size, initially, there are more observations to the left of the cutoff, but this difference eventually disappears. Figure E.1b visualizes the McCrary density test, and shows that there is no significant difference in the number of CoO elections or observations around the cutoff. The reverse is true for the average number of days: the figure is lower before, but slowly catches up as the window is expanded. Most importantly, CoO turnout follows a similar trend, consistent with our expectations. The difference in turnout between CoO elections occurring after versus before CoR elections is most pronounced in shorter time windows, but ultimately narrows as the window widens.[4] Finally, CoR turnout is fairly stable at 66%.

The rich combination of CoOs and CoRs in the dataset allows us to study emigrant turnout in many parts of the world, and not just in a particular region (i.e., Europe). Having a sufficient number of country pairs (N) and elections (T) permits the analysis of how political behavior is shaped by the interaction of factors in both CoOs and CoRs. In the following section, we outline our identification strategy and explain how our dataset is essential to employing such an empirical approach.

3. Empirical Framework

3.1. Identification Strategy

Estimating political interdependence—the impact of CoR elections on the turnout of emigrants in their CoO elections—poses an empirical challenge. Turnout in CoO elections is influenced by a host of factors that may also affect CoR elections. Existing literature highlights the role of campaign expenditures, electoral closeness, registration rules, concurrent elections, and electoral systems in shaping domestic turnout (Blais 2006; Cancela and Geys 2016). In a transnational setting, however, some of these mechanisms play a less significant role: emigrants may be less exposed to campaigns in the CoR, and mobilization efforts in CoO elections are more costly abroad.

A more central concern in this context is emigrant selection. Emigrants' choice of destination may be shaped by the political climate of the CoR, and their presence may in turn influence CoR elections when immigration is a salient issue (Dustmann, Vasiljeva, and Damm 2018; Rozo and Vargas 2021). Emigrant selection into certain residence countries can therefore lead to the concentration of emigrant types who may be more or less likely to vote (Bracco et al. 2018). This confounding effect renders establishing causality challenging.

4. Although CoO turnout before the election seems to increase as the window is widened, this trend is not statistically significant (see Table D.2). More importantly, most results in the paper focus on the first four columns, where the CoO turnout before does not change much.

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To address this, we leverage variation in electoral calendars. Ideally, one would randomly assign CoR election dates relative to CoO elections to ensure exogeneity. While this is not possible directly, the transnational context offers a quasi-experimental setting: many CoRs have irregular election intervals, and even those with fixed calendars may shift election dates for political or institutional reasons. Figure 2 illustrates the timing of CoO elections for two types of CoRs: Spain (which has a relatively irregular calendar) and the US (which has a regular 2- or 4-year interval). Here, we see that CoO elections in some years may come before a CoR election, but may come after in other years. While this is more visible in Spain (or countries with irregular intervals), this remains evident even in the US (or countries with regular intervals).[5] Thus, in general, whether a CoO election occurs before or after a CoR election (and how many days before or after) is deemed almost random. This identification strategy allows us to skirt around selection issues and compare similar CoO–CoR pairs.

For this to work, we require a significant number of CoR and CoO elections to produce rich enough variation to estimate causal relationships. Our dataset with its global coverage and transnational nature allows for this. We have 180 CoO elections and 1,267 CoR elections, with a total of 19,428 CoO–CoR election pairs. For example, for Filipino emigrants in Spain, we can measure the effect of Spanish legislative elections on emigrant turnout in Philippine elections. We do the same for all CoO–CoR pairs, and with the proposed identification strategy, compare turnout in CoO elections that come after ("treatment") with those that come before ("control") CoR elections.

Formally, we estimate the following empirical model:

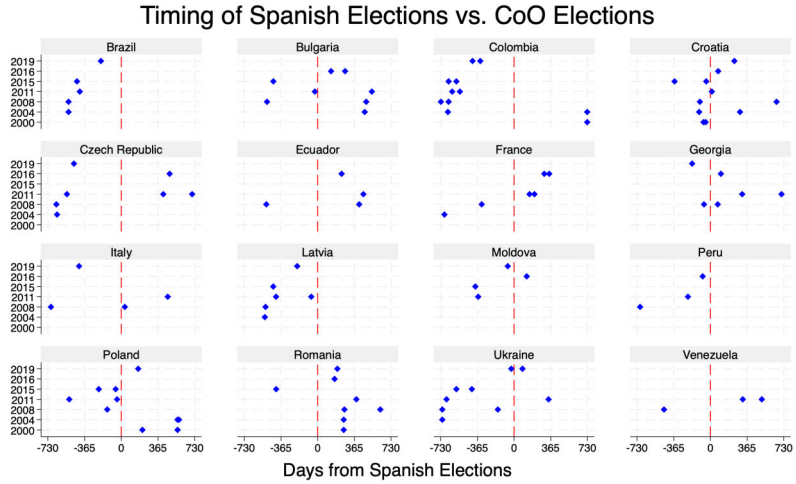
$$\begin{aligned} Turnout_{ort} &= \alpha + \beta_1 Post_{ort} + \varepsilon_{ort} \\ \forall\, Days_{ort} &\leq \{15, 30, 60, 90, 120, 150, 180, 360\}, \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

where $Turnout_{ort}$ is the turnout of emigrant voters residing in CoR r for the CoO o election closest to the CoR election at year t, $Post_{ort}$ is whether the CoO election happens after (1) or before (0) the CoR election at year t, and $Days_{ort}$ is the number of days to/from the closest CoR election (in absolute value). Robust standard errors are clustered at the level of the CoR.[6]

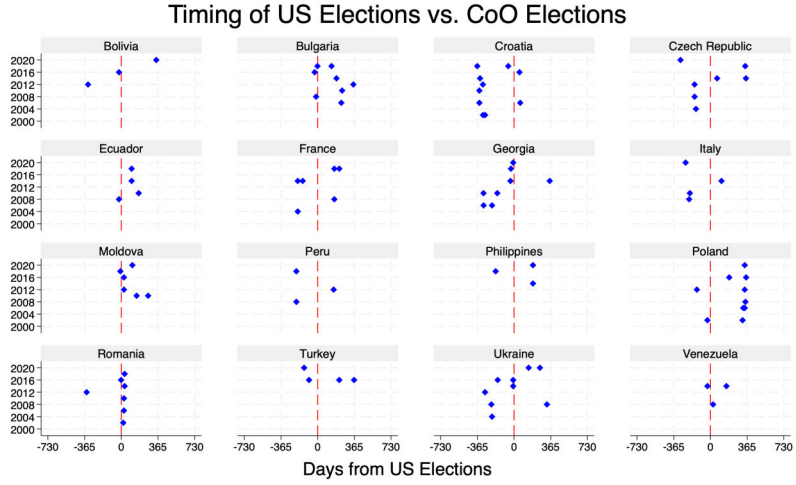
5. In our sample, 18 CoOs have irregular elections, 17 have regular elections, and 8 have both (e.g., when presidential elections are regular and legislative elections are irregular). For CoRs, the corresponding percentages are 45% (irregular), 38% (regular), and 17% (both). Taken together, 79% of our observations involve either an irregular CoO, an irregular CoR, or both, providing rich variation in election timing that underpins our identifying assumption.

6. This is our preferred method for clustering since we view the CoR election as the principal level of treatment that affects CoO turnout. Our research question, along with the transnational context, gives greater emphasis on the role that CoR politics plays and assigns less weight to CoO factors in driving emigrant turnout, especially when compared to domestic CoO turnout. Hence, the underlying assumption here is that the correlation of shocks is confined within the CoR, abstracting from the potential dependency in emigrant turnout due to CoO-specific factors. As a robustness exercise, we control for this dependency structure by using cluster-robust standard errors for dyadic data as suggested by Aronow, Samii, and Assenova (2015). All our results continue to be statistically significant, albeit with larger confidence intervals than those from our baseline specification. We report these in Online Appendix D.11.

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(a) Spanish Elections (irregular)



(b) US Elections (regular)

FIGURE 2. Electoral calendar. For each figure, the subplots represent a CoO whose emigrants reside in either Spain (Panel a) or the US (Panel b). The *x*-axis is the number of days to/from the CoR election, that is, Spanish or US elections. The red dashed line signifies the day of the CoR election. The *y*-axis represents the election year. Each blue diamond corresponds to a CoO election, positioned according to its timing relative to the CoR election. A positive (negative) value on the *x*-axis indicates that the CoO election occurred after (before) the CoR election.

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The main coefficient of interest is β_1, which measures the impact on CoO turnout when the CoO election takes place after the CoR election. For this specification, we limit our sample to observations within N-day windows. The smallest is a 30-day window, or 15 days before and 15 days after the CoR election, while the largest is a 720-day window, or one year before and one year after the CoR election. We present eight variations of N-day windows to see how our findings differ as a result of expanding the window and thus the sample.

Although parsimonious, this is our preferred specification because we are able to consider shorter windows and capture immediate effects of the CoR election. The trade-off, however, is the sample size which makes it difficult to include stringent (i.e., country-pair) fixed effects. While it would be ideal to incorporate these, the limited sample implies that for the 60-day window with 524 observations, 323 country pairs have only one observation each, which does not permit the inclusion of such dummies.

To address these concerns, we present two alternative strategies. First, we use the full sample and construct separate indicator variables for different time intervals that capture when the CoO election occurs relative to the CoR election.

$$\begin{aligned} Turnout_{ort} = \alpha &+ \beta_1 Post[1, 15]_{ort} + \beta_2 Post(15, 30]_{ort} \\ &+ ... + \beta_k Post(360, +\infty)_{ort} + \beta_{k+1} Pre[-30, -15)_{ort} \\ &+ ... + \beta_{2k-1} Pre(-\infty, -360)_{ort} + \gamma_o + \gamma_r + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{ort}, \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

where $Turnout_{ort}$ is defined as before, $Post[1, 15]_{ort}$ is an indicator equal to 1 if the CoO election occurs 1–15 days after the CoR election, $Post(15, 30]_{ort}$ equals 1 if the CoO election occurs 16–30 days after, and $Pre[-30, -15)_{ort}$ equals 1 if the CoO election occurs 16–30 days before the CoR election. All other *Post* and *Pre* indicators are defined analogously. The omitted (baseline) group consists of CoO elections that occur on or 1–15 days before the CoR election (i.e., $Pre[-15, 0]_{ort}$). We incorporate CoO γ_o, CoR γ_r, and year δ_t fixed effects. Robust standard errors are clustered at the level of the CoR.

Second, we use a RDD with CoO–CoR fixed effects and estimate the following regression:

$$\begin{aligned} Turnout_{ort} = \alpha + \beta Post_{ort} + f(Days_{ort}) + g(Post_{ort}, Days_{ort}) + \gamma_{or} + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{ort} \\ \forall \{o, r\}\ s.t.\ Days_{ort} \in [-h, h], \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

where variables are defined as before, and $f(\cdot)$ and $g(\cdot)$ are linear, quadratic or cubic functions of the running variable (i.e., number of days from the CoR election). We include individual γ_o, γ_r or pairwise γ_{or} country and year δ_t fixed effects. The optimal bandwidth value h is given by the bandwidth selection procedures used: Calonico, Cattaneo, and Titiunik (2014) and Imbens and Kalyanaraman (2012). Robust standard errors are clustered at the level of the CoR.

With our complementary identification strategies, we are better suited to address the endogeneity of migration flows, compared to existing papers in the migration literature. Moreover, by exploiting narrow windows, we are able to capture any time-sensitive effects that the CoR election may have on CoO turnout. Absent this approach,

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TABLE 2. Balance test using CoO & CoR variables.

	15 days	30 days	60 days	90 days	120 days	150 days	180 days	360 days
CoO Turnout in CoR (lagged)	−0.030	−0.013	0.005	0.005	0.017	0.014	0.007	0.005
CoO: Domestic Turnout in CoO	0.005	0.016	0.012	0.005	0.001	−0.006	−0.005	−0.004
CoO: Net Migration Rate	−0.309	−0.109	−0.285	−0.159	0.006	−0.038	−0.047	−0.006
CoR: Net Migration Rate	−1.940	1.381	0.712	0.349	0.651	0.557	0.392	−0.223
CoO: Employment Rate	1.885*	1.422**	1.419***	0.961**	0.573	0.372	0.098	−0.205
CoR: Employment Rate	−1.026	−1.173	−0.824	−0.574	−0.573	−0.278	−0.115	0.198
CoO: Polity Score	0.063	−0.164	0.181	0.114	0.201	0.063	0.098	−0.015
CoR: Polity Score	0.658	−0.083	−0.329	−0.421	−0.233	−0.258	−0.309	−0.080
CoO: Corruption Perception Index	−1.740	−1.083	0.135	−0.407	0.316	0.422	0.616	−0.047
CoR: Corruption Perception Index	−4.062	−3.543	−2.100	−0.491	0.872	0.014	0.412	1.349
CoO: GDP per capita	217.141	1479.419	−273.553	−445.153	−462.156	−588.836	−175.720	−203.870
CoR: GDP per capita	−4,257.453*	−3,652.991*	−2,064.871	−2,120.428*	−526.301	−620.162	−206.552	1,169.929*
CoO: Trade (% of GDP)	3.384	−2.039	−1.147	−2.504	−0.258	0.462	0.313	0.984
CoR: Trade (% of GDP)	−8.880*	0.422	−3.193	−1.415	1.015	1.242	1.697	1.491
CoO: Population (in Millions)	2.090	7.095	5.613*	4.178*	2.335	0.015	0.162	−1.128
CoR: Population (in Millions)	12.348	6.453	−2.315	0.681	−3.603	−1.741	−0.203	−1.304
CoO: Remittances (% of GDP)	−0.242	−0.821**	−0.251	−0.275	−0.207	−0.148	−0.171	0.068
CoR: Remittances (% of GDP)	0.982**	0.203	0.156	−0.119	−0.260	−0.148	−0.050	−0.216

Note: Figures are the difference between the mean value of the variable before and after the election. ***, **, and * denote statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively. The migration variables are from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The economic and demographic variables are from the World Bank. The Polity Score is from the Center for Systemic Peace. The electoral indices and the corruption perception index are from the Varieties of Democracy Dataset.

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we may be confounding the impact of the CoR's democracy level and political environment (which can potentially attract more politically active immigrants) on CoO turnout with the effect of the actual CoR election. Worse, overlooking the importance of timing may yield null results if a broad time frame is used, masking any significant effects that may arise in a short period of time.

3.2. Covariate Balance

To test the plausibility of the identifying assumption, we perform balance tests on key covariates, including lagged turnout among CoO emigrants in CoRs, domestic turnout in CoO, and various migration, economic, and political variables. We compare outcomes between CoO elections held before and after CoR elections. We replicate Table 1 but present instead the difference in variables before and after.[7] As shown in Table 2, most variables are statistically balanced across all election timing windows. Alternatively, in Online Appendix D.9, we present RD-type figures of select variables and show that they are relatively continuous around the cutoff (i.e., CoR election).

4. Empirical Results

4.1. Baseline Results

Table 3 reports coefficient estimates from equation (1). The dependent variable is the turnout of emigrants living in CoR *r* in their CoO *o* elections. Each column corresponds to the number of days before and after the CoR election that is included in the sample. The main result is that turnout in CoO elections increases when they are held after the CoR election. We find that CoO turnout is 4–7 pp higher when elections are held within 90 days after the CoR election. From a base of 56%–57%, this represents a substantial 7%–12% increase in turnout.[8] Unsurprisingly, we see that the coefficients decrease as the window is extended. This suggests that adding more observations far away from the cutoff adds "irrelevant" CoO elections which are less likely to be impacted by the CoR election.[9]

7. In particular, the difference is equal to the value of the variable before minus the value after the CoR election. Hence, negative numbers imply larger pre-election values.

8. The magnitude of our coefficient estimates is comparable to the effect of transnational party campaigning on emigrant turnout, which Burgess and Tyburski (2020) estimate at 4.52 pp. Research on domestic turnout shows that when another election is held within 90 days, turnout increases by approximately 0.2–0.3 pp, with the effect growing as the time between the two elections increases (Schakel and Dandoy 2014; Garmann 2017). Other turnout studies report a 0.3–2.5 pp increase following the introduction of broadband internet or an additional newspaper (Gentzkow, Shapiro, and Sinkinson 2011; Falck, Gold, and Heblich 2014).

9. An alternative explanation to the results is that expanding the windows changes the composition of the countries being included, which may have their own distinct patterns. In Online Appendix D.5, we test whether this is true by limiting the countries included in the sample. We find that the compositional effect, if any, has a negligible impact on the key results.

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TABLE 3. Turnout by N-day windows.

	15 days (1)	30 days (2)	60 days (3)	90 days (4)	120 days (5)	150 days (6)	180 days (7)	360 days (8)
Post-Election	0.0683*	0.0650**	0.0569***	0.0424**	0.0155	0.0113	0.0119	0.00394
	(0.0371)	(0.0285)	(0.0198)	(0.0175)	(0.0164)	(0.0146)	(0.0140)	(0.00906)
Dep Var Mean	0.568	0.57	0.567	0.563	0.561	0.56	0.561	0.567
R^2	0.0108	0.0102	0.00767	0.00423	0.00057	0.000307	0.000348	0.0000389
No. of CoO	30	31	35	35	36	36	37	39
No. of CoR	109	128	144	157	163	169	174	177
CoO Elections	95	110	126	128	131	132	137	142
CoR Elections	229	360	534	633	704	767	822	981
N	290	524	922	1,306	1,695	2,111	2,584	4,864

Note: Robust standard errors are clustered at the CoR level. The dependent variable is the emigrant turnout in CoO elections. The unit of observation is a CoO–CoR pair-year. Column titles indicate the number of days before and after the CoR election included in the particular window. ***, **, and * denote statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

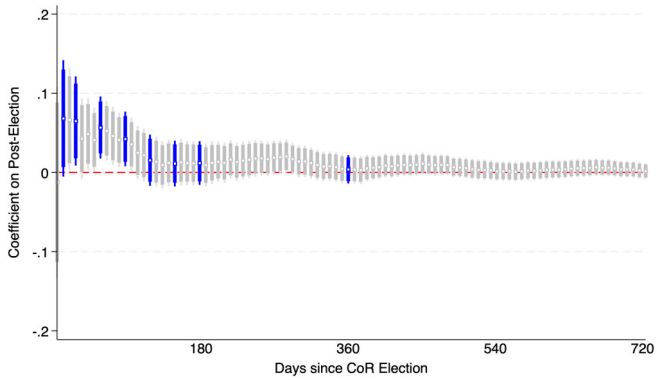


FIGURE 3. Turnout by weekly windows. The dependent variable is the emigrant turnout in CoO elections and the independent variable is the $Post_{ort}$ dummy which equals 1 if the CoO election takes place after the CoR election, and 0 otherwise. The horizontal axis ranges from 7 to 720 days after the CoR election. The square is the coefficient estimate, with the thick bar showing the 90% confidence interval and the thin bar showing the 95% confidence interval. The gray bars are the interval estimates for each week until the end of the 720-day window. The blue bars are the pre-selected windows in our results tables.

Figure 3 shows how our coefficient estimates on $Post_{ort}$ vary with the size of the window around the CoR election. For smaller window sizes, the estimates are relatively stable and statistically significant.[10] As expected, we can see a steady decline in the point estimates, with the significance vanishing past the 90-day mark. While

10. For the first week, the coefficient is not significant and noisy, which is expected given the very small sample size.

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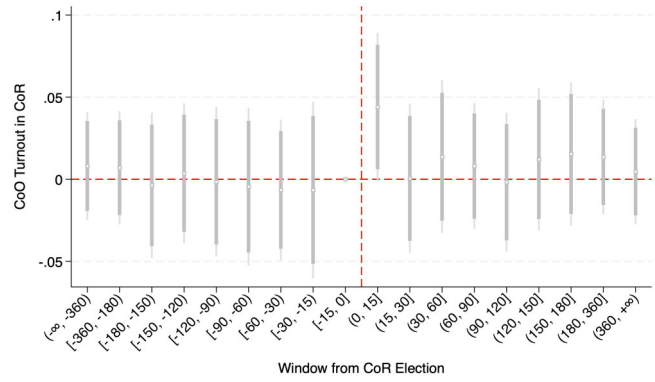


FIGURE 4. Turnout by intervals. The dependent variable is the emigrant turnout in CoO elections. The vertical red dashed line signifies the day of the CoR election. The horizontal axis shows the different intervals before (i.e., those with negative values to the left of the vertical line) to after (i.e., those with positive values to the right of the vertical line) the CoR election. The square is the coefficient estimate, with the thick bar showing the 90% confidence interval and the thin bar showing the 95% confidence interval.

Table 3 presented estimates using only select windows (blue bars), this exercise proves that for all other values within the first quarter of the election, our results continue to hold. This is consistent with our main result and supports the argument that CoR elections must occur within a reasonably short time frame to become salient enough to influence emigrant turnout.

To bolster this preliminary finding, we adopt an alternative strategy using the full sample and estimate equation 2, including both country and year fixed effects. As shown in Figure 4, the effects are concentrated in the (0, 15] interval—that is, within 15 days after the CoR election. The estimated effect of 4.3 pp falls within the range of our earlier results and remains statistically significant even after controlling for the full set of country and year fixed effects.

Importantly, we find no evidence of a pre-election trend in CoO turnout (i.e., $\forall \underline{t}, \bar{t}$: $\beta_{Pre[\underline{t},\bar{t})} = 0$). Turnout remains stable regardless of how far before the CoR election the CoO election takes place. In particular, the point estimates for the $[-60, -30)$ and $[-30, -15)$ intervals are negligible and statistically indistinguishable from zero. This, combined with previous results, suggests that the main mechanism for emigrant turnout originates *post*-election, and *not pre*-election, and this effect tapers off with the passing of time.

Finally, we use a RDD that incorporates country-pair (i.e., CoO–CoR) fixed effects and allows for more flexible pre- and post-election dynamics.[11] Using this approach allows us to compare the same CoO–CoR pairs across time, which addresses

11. Online Appendix E shows the typical RDD plot with a discontinuity around the cutoff and the McCrary density plot that shows no bunching of observations in either side of the cutoff.

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TABLE 4. Turnout using RDD.

	Bandwidth: CCT			Bandwidth: IK		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: CoO, CoR and Year Fixed Effects						
Post-Election	0.0152*	0.0190*	0.0217*	0.0182**	0.0258**	0.0274**
	(0.00798)	(0.0105)	(0.0131)	(0.00916)	(0.0125)	(0.0138)
Panel B: CoO–CoR Pair and Year Fixed Effects						
Post-Election	0.0195**	0.0220**	0.0223**	0.0207**	0.0237*	0.0232*
	(0.00776)	(0.00933)	(0.0113)	(0.00920)	(0.0127)	(0.0132)
Dep Var Mean	0.562	0.562	0.561	0.564	0.562	0.562
Function	Linear	Quadratic	Cubic	Linear	Quadratic	Cubic
Bandwidth	826	1,182	1,516	617	807	1,178
N	9,934	12,759	14,407	8,026	9,822	12,752

Note: Robust standard errors are clustered at the CoR level. The dependent variable is the emigrant turnout in CoO elections. The unit of observation is a CoO–CoR pair-year. Columns 1–3 use the Calonico, Cattaneo, and Titiunik (2014) selection method while columns 4–6 use the Imbens and Kalyanaraman (2012) selection method. The rows indicating function and bandwidth respectively show the particular functional form of the running variable used and the specific bandwidth value used. Panel A includes separate country fixed effects (CoO and CoR), while Panel B includes country-pair (CoO–CoR) fixed effects. Year fixed effects are included in all specifications. ***, ** and * denote statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

concerns regarding the heterogeneity of migrant groups within and across CoRs.[12] In Table 4, we find that turnout is 1.5–2.7 pp higher for CoO elections occurring after the CoR election. Although lower than our previous estimates, this suggests that our findings remain robust to different empirical specifications.[13] The smaller point estimates are consistent with the previous set of results, where widening the window introduces "nuisance" observations, thereby reducing the magnitude of the main effect. Before exploring the potential mechanisms underlying our findings, we discuss the robustness of our results in the following subsection.

4.2. Robustness Checks

In Online Appendix D, we conduct a series of robustness checks to validate our main findings. First, given that the identification strategy relies heavily on the timing

12. For example, Filipinos in Spain may not be directly comparable to Colombians in Spain. Likewise, Filipinos residing in Europe might be very different from Filipinos living in Asia. To account for these and other differences, the analysis uses pairwise fixed effects to compare the same migrant groups over time.

13. The trade-off between the two empirical designs lies in the sample size (or bandwidth selection) and the inclusion of fixed effects. The original event study specification uses a bandwidth of 15–60 days before and after, resulting in 290–922 observations. A narrower window like this provides a more precise test of the underlying mechanism. In contrast, the RDD employs a much broader bandwidth of 617–1,516 days, covering 8,026–14,407 observations, which makes it more suitable for including various types of fixed effects. Due to the inclusion of pairwise fixed effects, the RDD exploits within CoO–CoR variation over time, netting out any time-invariant differences between country pairs. In contrast, the event study captures variation both within and between CoO–CoR pairs. While differences in identifying variation may partly explain differences in precision or estimated magnitudes across the two designs, we present both approaches to offer a more comprehensive view of the relationship between CoR elections and emigrant turnout.

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assumption, we test its validity by adding time fixed effects (D.3) and comparing the regularity of CoO–CoR election calendars (D.4). Second, we examine the composition effect of new CoO–CoR pairs included as the election window widens (D.5), and evaluate sensitivity to initial sampling decisions (D.6). Third, we incorporate controls and country fixed effects (D.7), and conduct a leave-one-out analysis excluding CoOs or CoRs one at a time (D.8). In all cases, our results remain robust and statistically significant.

Finally, we perform additional checks to assess the plausibility of our identifying assumption. We first test for balance of various CoO and CoR characteristics (3.2 and D.9) and find that most variables are statistically similar across CoO elections before and after the CoR election.[14] We also conduct a placebo test using *planned* election dates instead of *actual* dates and find that results are absent among elections that were planned but ultimately did not occur or were postponed due to unforeseen circumstances (D.10). Taken as a whole, the stability of the results across these robustness checks and alternative empirical approaches supports the validity of our identification strategy.

5. Proposed Mechanism: Salience

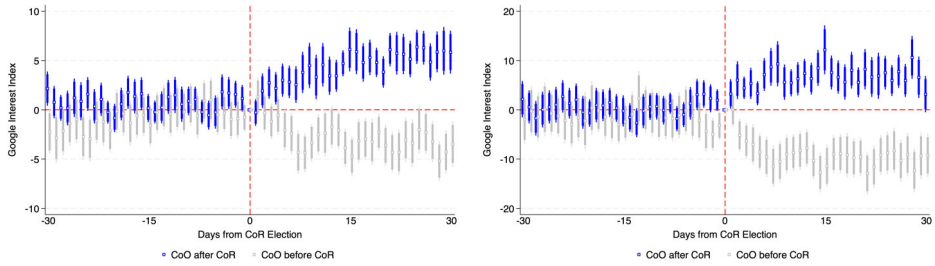
To document the central role of salience in establishing political interdependence, we present a series of complementary analyses examining when and how the salience of CoR elections influences emigrant turnout. We begin by providing direct evidence that CoR elections trigger increases in emigrants' political interest in the CoO election (5.1). We then turn to contexts where salience is expected to vary, drawing on existing literature. First, we test whether turnout effects differ between close and non-close CoR elections, given that close elections are generally more salient and attract greater media attention (5.2). Second, we compare national and local elections, noting that local elections are typically viewed as less salient and less likely to mobilize voters (5.3). Third, we assess whether the electoral format—specifically, one-round versus two-round elections—affects salience, since one-round elections tend to generate greater engagement than elections with runoffs (5.4). Finally, we examine settings where salience is likely diminished: countries with mail-in voting, where early voting schedules mean that emigrants often vote before the CoR election, effectively reducing its role as a focal, salient event (5.5). Together, these analyses provide cumulative evidence supporting salience as the key mechanism underlying political interdependence.

5.1. Election Results and Public Interest

Our main findings suggest that key mechanisms operate *after* the election. To provide evidence of how CoR elections influence emigrants' interest in homeland politics, we

14. For the variables exhibiting some imbalance, we include them as controls in Table D.9 and find that results are robust to the inclusion of these variables.

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(a) News Organizations (b) Electoral Commission

FIGURE 5. Google Trends "Interest over Time" Index. The dependent variable is the Google "Interest over Time" Index. The horizontal axis ranges from 30 days before to 30 days after the CoR election. The vertical red dashed line signifies the day of the CoR election. The square is the coefficient estimate, with the thick bar showing the corresponding 90% confidence interval and the thin bar showing the corresponding 95% confidence interval. The blue (gray) bars correspond to CoOs whose elections take place after (before) the CoR election.

scrape Google Trends data for searches of CoO-related keywords in all CoRs within a 60-day window around the CoR election. In particular, we examine how emigrants living in a CoR search for the following CoO-related keywords: (1) the electoral commission or organization in charge of holding elections in the CoO, and (2) the top news organizations in the CoO. Using the Philippines as an example of a CoO, we track searches for the following terms: (1) *Commission on Elections* as the main electoral commission, and (2) the following major news organizations: *Philippine Daily Inquirer, Manila Standard, Manila Bulletin, The Philippine Star and The Manila Times* in all CoRs where Philippine elections are held and where the data exists.[15] This is our proxy for emigrant interest in their homeland election. For this to work, we assume the following: (1) these searches are mostly done by CoO emigrants in the CoR and not by other CoR residents, and (2) searching for the CoO electoral commission and news organizations is reflective of interest in CoO elections. To defend the first assumption, we argue that CoR residents are unlikely to search for a CoO's electoral commission or news organizations, especially since most of these are in the local language.[16] Supporting the second assumption, we show empirical evidence in Figure F.1 that searches for both keywords increase around the CoO election day, suggesting that people indeed learn about the CoO election through these channels.

Given the richness of online data, we perform a day-by-day event study analysis to support our conjecture. Figure 5 plots the daily coefficient of the interest index, separately for CoO elections after (blue) and before (gray) the CoR election. Owing

15. The exact list of keywords scraped in Google Trends is available in Online Appendix F.

16. In Figure F.2, we replicate Figure 5 but limit the sample to country pairs that do not share a common language. Even when we constrain our sample, we still find identical patterns for both news organizations and electoral commissions, providing further evidence that emigrants, not locals, are the likely cause of these changes in Google Trends.

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to the empirical strategy, the same CoO election can come before a CoR election and after another CoR election. For example, the 2016 Philippine election (May) comes before the Bulgarian election (November), but after the Portuguese election (January). The idea behind separating these two groups is to echo our empirical strategy: CoO elections occurring after CoR elections are the treatment group, i.e., the CoR elections have a potential impact on the CoO elections, while CoO elections held before CoR elections are part of the control group.

Several observations can be gleaned from the figure. First, the pre-election period is fairly stable and similar for both groups—CoO elections before (gray) and after (blue) the CoR elections—implying parallel trends in interest. Second, the index diverges after the CoR election: interest increases among emigrants whose CoO election occurs after the CoR election, but declines for those whose CoO election occurs before.[17] Not only is the difference statistically significant, the magnitude is also sizeable. If the CoR election did not impact people's interest, we would expect both trends to move in the same direction.

We formalize these observations in Table 5.[18] Each column represents a specification with different sets of fixed effects. Time fixed effects include the day of the week, month and year of the actual date for both the CoO and CoR elections. While country fixed effects include CoO and CoR dummies (e.g., Philippines and Spain), election fixed effects are more specific and incorporate CoO election and CoR election indicators (e.g., 2016 and 2019 Philippine and Spanish elections). Finally, we include a specification that subsumes all the fixed effects.

For both dependent variables, the coefficient for the post-election period is negative: this indicates that for the control group (CoO elections before CoR elections), interest declines after the CoR election. This is consistent with the idea that general interest in politics decreases over time (Go 2026). Second, the coefficient for the treatment group (CoO elections after CoR elections) is negative, indicating lower pre-election interest compared to the control group. This reflects a level difference in baseline Google search intensity prior to the CoR election, rather than a difference in pre-trend slopes. Finally, the coefficient for the interaction is positive: after the CoR election, the interest among the treatment group diverges from the control group, with the former having a significantly higher level of interest than the latter.[19] Results

17. Apart from a general decline in interest over time, we also argue that the downward trend could be driven by a shift in emigrants' focus from the CoO election to the CoR election results, for emigrants whose CoO elections have already occurred. Hence, we see that CoR elections may have an asymmetric effect depending on the timing of the CoO elections: CoR elections can make CoO elections more salient if the latter has not yet occurred, while they can divert attention away from CoO elections once the latter has taken place.

18. In particular, we estimate the regression: $GII_{ort} = \alpha + \beta_1 Post_{ort} + \beta_2 CoOafterCoR_{ort} + \beta_3 Post \times CoOafterCoR_{ort} + FE + \varepsilon_{ort}$, where GII_{ort} is the Google "Interest over Time" Index for CoO news organizations or electoral commissions, $CoOafterCoR_{ort}$ is an indicator for whether the CoO election occurs after the CoR election and FE is a vector of fixed effects.

19. These results are consistent with the patterns shown in the figure, with the difference that the figure estimates the regressions separately for CoO elections occurring after and before CoR elections, with coefficients measured relative to *each group's* day before election ($t = -1$).

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TABLE 5. Google Trends.

	News organizations					Electoral commissions				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Post-Election	−2.236***	−2.037***	−2.236***	−2.236***	−2.189***	−7.103***	−6.838***	−7.103***	−7.103***	−6.777***
	(0.419)	(0.500)	(0.420)	(0.422)	(0.400)	(0.404)	(0.485)	(0.405)	(0.407)	(0.486)
CoO after CoR	−2.556*	−7.537***	−3.771***	−3.318***	−2.892***	−7.628***	−5.675***	−6.345***	−7.844***	−7.023***
	(1.521)	(1.894)	(1.094)	(0.694)	(0.702)	(1.055)	(1.058)	(0.689)	(0.712)	(0.709)
Post × CoO > CoR	6.054***	5.332***	6.054***	6.054***	5.188***	14.23***	12.67***	14.23***	14.23***	12.56***
	(0.507)	(0.499)	(0.508)	(0.510)	(0.474)	(0.539)	(0.612)	(0.540)	(0.542)	(0.614)
Dep Var Mean	45.1	45.1	45.1	45.1	45.1	12	12	12	12	12
FE	None	Time	Country	Election	All	None	Time	Country	Election	All
R^2	0.00606	0.401	0.513	0.675	0.719	0.0303	0.196	0.207	0.237	0.261
N	34,587	34,587	34,587	34,587	34,587	29,646	29,646	29,646	29,646	29,646

Note: Robust standard errors are clustered at the CoR level. The dependent variable is the Google "Interest over Time" Index for news organizations or electoral commissions. The interaction variable is an indicator for whether the CoO election occurs after the CoR election. The unit of observation is a CoO–CoR pair-year. The observations are within a 60-day window (i.e., 30 days before and after a CoR election). ***, **, and * denote statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

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TABLE 6. Turnout and close elections.

	15 days (1)	30 days (2)	60 days (3)	90 days (4)	120 days (5)	150 days (6)	180 days (7)	360 days (8)
Post-Election	−0.0130	0.0159	−0.00253	−0.00160	−0.0192	−0.0202	−0.0206	−0.0168
	(0.0589)	(0.0466)	(0.0364)	(0.0301)	(0.0292)	(0.0249)	(0.0232)	(0.0132)
Close Election (CoR)	−0.0275	−0.00496	−0.00930	0.000458	0.00601	0.00411	−0.00917	−0.0180
	(0.0497)	(0.0374)	(0.0326)	(0.0249)	(0.0236)	(0.0218)	(0.0198)	(0.0152)
Post × Close Election	0.142*	0.0878	0.0981**	0.0753*	0.0606	0.0568*	0.0597**	0.0396**
	(0.0770)	(0.0565)	(0.0457)	(0.0398)	(0.0367)	(0.0314)	(0.0282)	(0.0173)
Dep Var Mean	0.561	0.567	0.566	0.562	0.56	0.561	0.562	0.567
R^2	0.0242	0.0183	0.0159	0.0102	0.0057	0.00471	0.0035	0.00102
N	276	505	890	1,271	1,654	2,059	2,519	4,763

Note: Robust standard errors are clustered at the CoR level. The dependent variable is the emigrant turnout in CoO elections. The interaction variable is an indicator for whether the vote/seat share difference in the CoR election is below the median. The unit of observation is a CoO–CoR pair-year. Column titles indicate the number of days before and after the CoR election included in the particular window. ***, ** , and * denote statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

remain robust even with the inclusion of all fixed effects. Note that by including election fixed effects, the analysis can make comparisons of the same CoO election occurring before and after different CoR elections.

The results presented here align well with the story we previously put forward.[20] First, the Google pre-election interest trend broadly mirrors the flat EVP pre-election turnout pattern. Second, the post-election jump in turnout can be rationalized by the Google Trends surge in interest following the CoR election. Importantly, this uptick in interest is only true for the CoO elections that occur after, not before, the CoR election.

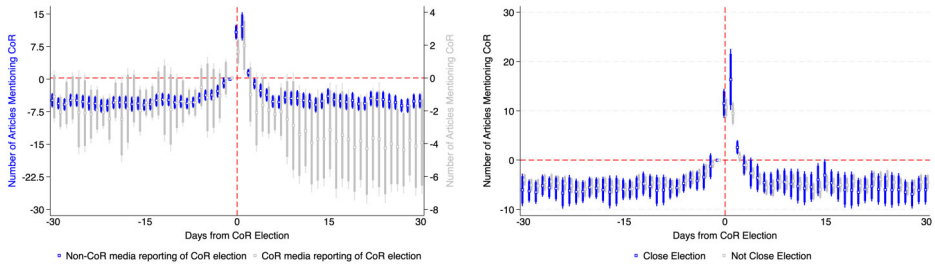
Taking stock of these observations, our initial findings using the EVP dataset highlight the disproportionate role of post-election factors in explaining the increase in turnout. The evidence above supports this, and points to CoR election results as the principal factor that indeed is most salient for emigrant voters.

5.2. Close Elections and Media Coverage

What particular feature of the election results is salient to emigrants? Consistent with existing literature, we focus on the closeness of the CoR election as a possible driver of turnout (Bursztyn et al. 2024). To measure this, we compute the difference in vote or seat shares between the largest and second largest party or candidate. We then construct an indicator for close elections where the vote or seat share difference is below the median. Table 6 provides empirical support for this assertion: close CoR elections have a significantly larger impact on CoO turnout, while less competitive

20. Note however the difference between the frequency of the data. The EVP data, while comprehensive, is not sufficient for doing a day-by-day analysis of election timing and turnout. For example, the 60-day window for EVP contains 524 observations, while the same window for Google Trends contains around 30,000 observations.

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(a) CoR & Non-CoR Media Coverage of CoR Election (b) Non-CoR Media Coverage for Close vs. Non-Close CoR Elections

FIGURE 6. Number of articles mentioning the CoR election. The dependent variable is the number of articles mentioning the CoR election. The horizontal axis ranges from 30 days before to 30 days after the CoR election. The vertical red dashed line signifies the day of the CoR election. The square is the coefficient estimate, with the thick bar showing the corresponding 90% confidence interval and the thin bar showing the corresponding 95% confidence interval. For Panel (a), the blue (gray) bars represent the number of articles about the CoR as reported by non-CoR (CoR) media. For Panel (b), the blue (gray) bars represent the number of articles reported by non-CoR media for CoR elections that are close (not close).

CoR elections do not have any impact on CoO turnout. Notably, no pre-trend exists for close elections, implying that campaigns leading up to close elections do not play a role in inducing turnout.

To further bolster the salience mechanism, we provide evidence that media coverage is greater for close elections than non-competitive elections. Using the GDELT Project dataset, we count the number of articles that are written about the CoR election within a 60-day window. For example, we count the number of articles that mention "Spain" or "Spanish" and "elections" in Spain-based and all other (i.e., non-Spain-based) media organizations, respectively.[21] In Figure 6 Panel (a), we show that CoR media coverage of the CoR election (gray bars) increases during and the day after the election, and then reverts back to pre-election levels immediately. For non-CoR media coverage of the CoR election (blue bars), we observe a more pronounced trend: reporting significantly jumps at the same time, with both the rise and drop being more extreme. This shows that there is a substantial supply side response to CoR elections by non-CoR media organizations, which we take as the news source of emigrants in the CoR.

Focusing on non-CoR media outlets, Panel (b) shows that media coverage is significantly greater for close CoR elections—specifically a day or two after the elections, which is when results are released.[22] Echoing Bursztyn et al. (2024), we

21. Online Appendix F contains the exact keywords we use for each country.

22. The difference between close and non-close elections for $t = 1, 2$ is statistically significant (p-value $= 0.032, 0.041$) when estimating a regression with interactions, instead of the subsample regressions, as was done in the figure.

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TABLE 7. Turnout and media coverage.

	Sample with missing observations				Missing replaced with zeroes			
	15 days (1)	30 days (2)	60 days (3)	90 days (4)	15 days (5)	30 days (6)	60 days (7)	90 days (8)
Post-Election	0.0255	−0.0212	0.0211	0.00811	0.0721*	0.0683**	0.0534**	0.0408**
	(0.0693)	(0.0504)	(0.0401)	(0.0340)	(0.0367)	(0.0289)	(0.0205)	(0.0180)
Media (CoO)	−0.513***	−0.111	−0.172**	−0.127	−0.489***	−0.0697	−0.155*	−0.117
	(0.0405)	(0.307)	(0.0869)	(0.0857)	(0.0247)	(0.302)	(0.0819)	(0.0858)
Post × Media	0.361**	0.0303	0.210	0.145	0.314**	−0.0592	0.177	0.112
	(0.161)	(0.340)	(0.142)	(0.139)	(0.152)	(0.333)	(0.135)	(0.138)
Dep Var Mean	0.564	0.569	0.567	0.556	0.568	0.57	0.567	0.563
R^2	0.0254	0.00414	0.00809	0.00314	0.0233	0.0125	0.0097	0.0052
N	111	194	329	460	290	524	922	1,306

Note: Robust standard errors are clustered at the CoR level. The dependent variable is the emigrant turnout in CoO elections. The interaction variable is an indicator for whether CoO media reported about the CoR election. The unit of observation is a CoO–CoR pair-year. Column titles indicate the number of days before and after the CoR election included in the particular window. ***, ** and * denote statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

find a similar response in reporting: media expands its coverage of close elections, significantly more than it does for non-competitive elections.

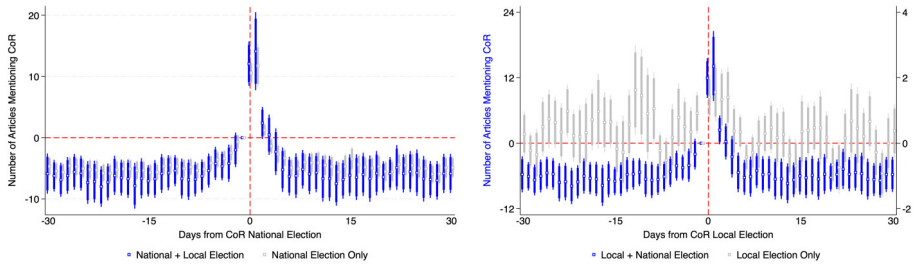
Using the same data, we test whether CoO media reporting on the CoR election can impact emigrant turnout in the CoO election.[23] Table 7 shows that emigrants turn out more when their CoO media reports on the CoR election, a result that is only true for CoO elections that follow CoR elections. However, this result is only evident for CoO elections held within 15 days after the CoR election, consistent with previous findings on the short-lived increase in media coverage. This evidence supports our conjecture that the salience of close CoR electoral results, further reinforced by extensive media coverage in the homeland, drives emigrants to turn out in their own elections.

5.3. Local Elections and Media Coverage

To reinforce evidence for the salience mechanism, we investigate whether lower-salience political events, such as local elections in the CoR, produce comparable effects on CoO turnout. The literature has long emphasized that national elections are more salient than local ones (e.g., Boyd 1989; Cantoni, Gazzè, and Schafer 2021; Kouba, Novák, and Strnad 2021), due to their broader implications and greater media coverage (Stockemer 2017; Hopkins 2018; Martin and McCrain 2019). To test this, we compare media coverage patterns around CoR national and local elections in Figure 7. Panel (a) shows that national elections, whether held alone (gray bars) or concurrently with local elections (blue bars), generate similarly high levels of media attention, suggesting that the addition of a local component does little to increase salience. In contrast,

23. Because of limited data, we use two samples: (1) one with missing observations due to lack of data on CoO media reporting on the CoR election, and (2) one where we replace missing observations with zeroes. This is an important factor to consider when interpreting these results.

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(a) Coverage of CoR National Elections (b) Coverage of CoR Local Elections

FIGURE 7. Media coverage by type of CoR election. The dependent variable is the number of articles mentioning the CoR election. In Panel (a), the reference date is that of the CoR national election while in Panel (b), it is the date of the CoR local election. The horizontal axis ranges from 30 days before to 30 days after the respective CoR election. The vertical red dashed line signifies the day of the CoR election. The square is the coefficient estimate, with the thick bar showing the corresponding 90% confidence interval and the thin bar showing the corresponding 95% confidence interval. In Panel (a), the blue bars show the number of articles covering national and local elections held concurrently, while the gray bars show articles only on the national elections. In Panel (b), the blue bars represent articles on concurrent national and local elections, while the gray bars show articles only on the local elections.

Panel (b) shows that local elections held without a concurrent national election (gray bars) receive markedly lower media coverage—often an order of magnitude smaller—highlighting their limited visibility. Only when local elections coincide with national contests (blue bars) do they attract substantial media attention, underscoring the inherently lower salience of local elections.

This distinction is echoed in Table 8, which shows that standalone CoR local elections have no significant effect on turnout in CoO elections (Panel A). In fact, the only notable effect appears when local elections are held concurrently with national elections (Panel B, column 3), consistent with the idea that it is the salience of the national component that drives cross-border electoral engagement. While some scholars have argued that local elections could be more meaningful for emigrants given their proximity to everyday concerns and the potential for stronger connections with local representatives (Bortun, Østergaard-Nielsen, and Coşciug 2025), our results align more closely with the broader literature that emphasizes the primacy of national-level events in mobilizing voter attention and action. These findings validate our interpretation that salience is the key mechanism through which CoR elections influence participation in CoO elections.

5.4. Election Rounds and Salience

We provide additional evidence by leveraging variation in CoR election rounds to test how different electoral formats shape political visibility and engagement.[24] One-

24. In the dataset, 16% of elections proceeded to a runoff. Presidential contests (e.g., Peru) were more likely to require a second round, with about 35% doing so, compared to only 7% of legislative elections (e.g., France).

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TABLE 8. Turnout and local elections.

	15 days (1)	30 days (2)	60 days (3)	90 days (4)	120 days (5)	150 days (6)	180 days (7)	360 days (8)
Panel A: Sample with Local Elections Only								
Post-Election	−0.00750	−0.0233	−0.0114	−0.00272	−0.00845	−0.0182	−0.0243	−0.0125
	(0.0532)	(0.0423)	(0.0305)	(0.0253)	(0.0245)	(0.0210)	(0.0189)	(0.0103)
Dep Var Mean	0.594	0.563	0.566	0.558	0.564	0.563	0.561	0.563
R^2	0.000138	0.00134	0.000321	0.0000179	0.00017	0.000797	0.00147	0.000375
N	179	292	528	677	827	1,079	1,336	2,622
Panel B: Sample with Concurrent Local and National Elections								
Post-Election	−0.00544	−0.0225	−0.00980	−0.00161	−0.00555	−0.0155	−0.0222	−0.0117
	(0.0530)	(0.0423)	(0.0304)	(0.0252)	(0.0245)	(0.0209)	(0.0188)	(0.0103)
Concurrent (CoR)	−0.140**	−0.0797*	−0.104***	−0.0497	−0.0345	−0.0329	−0.0355	−0.0497**
	(0.0569)	(0.0457)	(0.0390)	(0.0347)	(0.0340)	(0.0286)	(0.0251)	(0.0225)
Post × Concurrent	0.123	0.109	0.120**	0.0572	0.0261	0.0264	0.0354	0.0466*
	(0.0875)	(0.0758)	(0.0523)	(0.0487)	(0.0455)	(0.0350)	(0.0348)	(0.0265)
Dep Var Mean	0.572	0.555	0.556	0.554	0.558	0.558	0.557	0.557
R^2	0.0261	0.00848	0.0117	0.00274	0.00119	0.00122	0.00165	0.00227
N	236	402	685	890	1,095	1,406	1,760	3,421

Note: Robust standard errors are clustered at the CoR level. The dependent variable is the emigrant turnout in CoO elections. The interaction variable is an indicator for the concurrence of national and local elections in the CoR. The unit of observation is a CoO–CoR pair-year. Column titles indicate the number of days before and after the CoR election included in the particular window. ***, **, and * denote statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

round elections are more likely to generate clear political signals and concentrated public attention—core components of salience (Go 2026). They also tend to increase a subjective sense of political efficacy (Dettrey and Schwindt-Bayer 2009). In contrast, runoff elections unfold over multiple stages, potentially diluting media attention. This is consistent with Pons and Tricaud (2018), who show that voters are more expressive and invested in first rounds because a greater variety of choices is available, whereas second rounds often leave voters with fewer appealing options, reducing enthusiasm. Moreover, Passarelli and Bergman (2023) document that runoff elections tend to be less salient because outcomes are widely perceived as predetermined; in over 70% of presidential runoffs, the first-round winner also wins the second round.

Applying this logic to the transnational context, we compare turnout effects for first-round CoR elections that are either single-round elections or the first stage of a two-round contest. Importantly, the two-round elections in our data include not only presidential contests (e.g., Peru), but also legislative elections (e.g., France). Figure 8 shows that while both types of elections increase media coverage, one-round elections produce sharper and more concentrated peaks in reporting.[25] In contrast,

25. The difference between one-round elections and those with runoffs for $t = 0, 1, 2$ is statistically significant when estimating a regression with interactions, instead of the subsample regressions, as was done in the figure.

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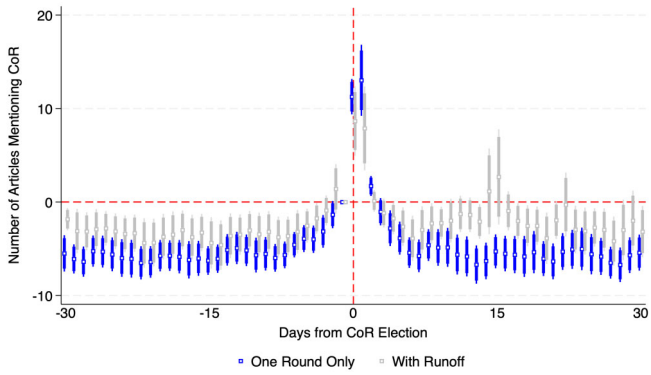


FIGURE 8. Media coverage by CoR election round. The dependent variable is the number of articles mentioning the CoR election. The horizontal axis ranges from 30 days before to 30 days after the CoR election. The vertical red dashed line signifies the day of the CoR election. The square is the coefficient estimate, with the thick bar showing the corresponding 90% confidence interval and the thin bar showing the corresponding 95% confidence interval. The blue (gray) bars represent the number of articles about CoR elections without runoffs (with runoffs).

TABLE 9. Turnout by CoR election round.

	15 days (1)	30 days (2)	60 days (3)	90 days (4)	120 days (5)	150 days (6)	180 days (7)	360 days (8)
Post-Election	−0.0306	−0.0468	−0.0322	−0.0205	−0.0597	−0.0495	−0.0196	0.000456
	(0.0954)	(0.0608)	(0.0457)	(0.0455)	(0.0447)	(0.0370)	(0.0333)	(0.0212)
One-round (CoR)	−0.103**	−0.100***	−0.0960**	−0.0650*	−0.0770**	−0.0691**	−0.0448*	−0.0259
	(0.0488)	(0.0357)	(0.0396)	(0.0349)	(0.0335)	(0.0289)	(0.0253)	(0.0187)
Post × One-round	0.125	0.140**	0.109**	0.0750	0.0887*	0.0719*	0.0377	0.00378
	(0.103)	(0.0705)	(0.0518)	(0.0505)	(0.0485)	(0.0402)	(0.0366)	(0.0224)
Dep Var Mean	0.568	0.57	0.567	0.563	0.561	0.56	0.561	0.567
R^2	0.0204	0.0202	0.0144	0.00699	0.00422	0.00327	0.00173	0.000864
N	290	524	922	1,306	1,695	2,111	2,584	4,864

Note: Robust standard errors are clustered at the CoR level. The dependent variable is the emigrant turnout in CoO elections. The interaction variable is an indicator for whether the CoR election had only one round. The unit of observation is a CoO–CoR pair-year. Column titles indicate the number of days before and after the CoR election included in the particular window. ***, **, and * denote statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

media coverage of runoff elections is more dispersed over time, with modest increases around days $t = 14, 15$, when most runoffs typically occur.

Table 9 further demonstrates that emigrant turnout in CoO elections is significantly higher when these elections follow one-round CoR elections, consistent with the idea that salient political events abroad can enhance emigrants' motivation to participate at home. Finally, Table 10 shows that one-round elections also trigger elevated Google search activity about CoO electoral institutions, suggesting greater information-seeking behavior. Together, these patterns lend further credibility to the

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TABLE 10. Google Trends by CoR election round.

	News organizations					Electoral commissions				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Post-Election	−0.00633	−0.875	−0.00633	−0.00633	−0.719	−2.251***	−2.659***	−2.251***	−2.251***	−2.766***
	(0.629)	(0.632)	(0.630)	(0.633)	(0.511)	(0.847)	(0.842)	(0.849)	(0.852)	(0.861)
One-round (CoR)	0.784	0.401	0.792	−2.099***	3.127***	−0.554	−0.353	−1.672	−0.495	−0.166
	(1.542)	(1.210)	(1.675)	(0.372)	(0.404)	(1.432)	(1.158)	(1.287)	(0.507)	(0.598)
Post × One-round	0.816	1.257**	0.816	0.816	1.244**	2.114**	2.041**	2.114**	2.114**	2.086**
	(0.710)	(0.579)	(0.712)	(0.714)	(0.565)	(1.017)	(0.835)	(1.019)	(1.023)	(0.865)
Dep Var Mean	45.1	45.1	45.1	45.1	45.1	12	12	12	12	12
FE	None	Time	Country	Election	All	None	Time	Country	Election	All
R^2	0.000884	0.391	0.507	0.669	0.715	0.000678	0.175	0.178	0.208	0.241
N	34,587	34,587	34,587	34,587	34,587	29,646	29,646	29,646	29,646	29,646

Note: Robust standard errors are clustered at the CoR level. The dependent variable is the Google "Interest over Time" Index for news organizations or electoral commissions. The interaction variable is an indicator for whether the CoR election had only one round. The unit of observation is a CoO–CoR pair-year. Column titles indicate the number of days before and after the CoR election included in the particular window. ***, **, and * denote statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

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TABLE 11. Turnout and voting by mail.

	15 days (1)	30 days (2)	60 days (3)	90 days (4)	120 days (5)	150 days (6)	180 days (7)	360 days (8)
Post-Election	0.121**	0.102***	0.0941***	0.0750***	0.0405**	0.0277*	0.0198	0.0161
	(0.0497)	(0.0348)	(0.0231)	(0.0189)	(0.0185)	(0.0159)	(0.0148)	(0.0105)
Mail (CoO)	−0.0864*	−0.103**	−0.130***	−0.145***	−0.169***	−0.160***	−0.162***	−0.154***
	(0.0505)	(0.0423)	(0.0372)	(0.0337)	(0.0304)	(0.0306)	(0.0284)	(0.0189)
Post × Mail	−0.159	−0.147**	−0.107**	−0.0716	−0.0160	−0.0157	0.00251	−0.0299
	(0.0976)	(0.0713)	(0.0532)	(0.0444)	(0.0381)	(0.0363)	(0.0331)	(0.0228)
Dep Var Mean	0.595	0.604	0.597	0.597	0.592	0.593	0.594	0.601
R^2	0.0569	0.052	0.0519	0.043	0.0327	0.0273	0.0247	0.0277
N	219	413	728	1,037	1,360	1,691	2,062	3,849

Note: Robust standard errors are clustered at the CoR level. The dependent variable is the emigrant turnout in CoO elections. The interaction variable is an indicator for whether the CoO permits voting exclusively by mail. The unit of observation is a CoO–CoR pair-year. Column titles indicate the number of days before and after the CoR election included in the particular window. ***, **, and * denote statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

interpretation that salience mediates the link between CoR political events and CoO electoral participation.

5.5. Voting by Mail

Emigrants can cast ballots in four ways: postal, online, proxy, and in-person voting, with the last being the most common. Countries vary widely in their approaches, with some offering only a single method and others allowing multiple options. A key concern for our analysis is the potential impact of mail-only voting systems, which undermine the timing assumption in our empirical strategy. In mail-only systems, emigrants are required to send their ballots well before the official election day—ranging from a few business days to several weeks in advance—depending on the voter's location, the efficiency of postal services, and deadlines set by the electoral commission. In such cases, the official CoO election date no longer accurately reflects when emigrants actually vote. If a CoR election occurs shortly before the CoO election, emigrants from mail-only countries may have already cast their ballots, making it impossible for the CoR election to become salient and influence emigrants' voting behavior. Consequently, we would expect the estimated effect of CoR elections on emigrant turnout to be attenuated in these cases.

Table 11 presents evidence consistent with this reasoning. The coefficient on the interaction indicates that CoO elections held after a CoR election but permitting only postal voting have lower emigrant turnout compared to those allowing same-day voting. This finding aligns with our proposed mechanism: CoR elections increase the salience of upcoming CoO elections, prompting emigrants to seek information about their homeland elections and ultimately raising emigrant turnout. For this mechanism to operate, the CoR election must precede the CoO election. However, in mail-only systems, this timing condition is no longer satisfied in practice, rendering subsequent CoR elections non-salient.

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One important caveat is that CoOs allowing only postal voting may differ systematically from those offering additional voting methods.[26] Nonetheless, a closer inspection of the *Post* × $Mail_{ort}$ interaction reveals a downward trend, suggesting that the dampening effect of mail-in voting on turnout becomes more pronounced when focusing on narrower time windows.

Overall, we have presented multiple pieces of evidence that cumulatively highlight salience as the key mechanism linking CoR elections to transnational turnout. While no single test can perfectly isolate the role of salience, the consistent patterns we observe—across the competitiveness of elections, media attention, election types, electoral rounds and voting modalities—paint a coherent picture: salient CoR elections increase emigrant turnout in the CoO. This reinforces our interpretation that political interdependence arises because high-salience political events abroad activate emigrant participation in homeland elections.

6. Alternative Explanations

In this section, we discuss alternative explanations that could account for our headline results. First, we consider mechanisms based on individual strategic behavior. Second, we examine explanations related to the political context.

6.1. Learning About Being Pivotal

The finding that close CoR elections have larger turnout effects is consistent with the idea that individuals learn from close elections that they could be pivotal in their own CoO election. To assess this mechanism, we conduct an additional analysis in Table G.1, introducing a triple-difference specification with the closeness of the CoO election. If learning about being pivotal were driving the results, we would expect the turnout effects of close CoR elections to be larger when the CoO election is also close.

Table G.1 shows that although the coefficient on *Post* × *Close Election* (*CoO*) is positive and sometimes statistically significant, the triple interaction term *Post* × *Close Election* (*CoR & CoO*) is statistically insignificant across all time windows. This indicates that the turnout effects associated with close CoR elections are not significantly stronger when the subsequent CoO election is also close.[27] Thus, while individuals may respond to the closeness of their own CoO elections, the turnout

26. Taking the coefficient on $Mail_{ot}$ at face value suggests that CoOs offering only postal voting tend to have lower baseline turnout.

27. Put differently, the positive coefficient on *Post* × *Close Election* (*CoO*) reflects increased turnout following close CoO elections that are preceded by *non-close* CoR elections. Moreover, the fact that the triple interaction term is negative and insignificant suggests that close CoR elections do not amplify the effect of CoO closeness—providing little support for the idea that closeness in CoR elections primes voters for their own pivotality in CoO elections.

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effects we document do not appear to be driven by learning about pivotality through exposure to close CoR elections.[28]

6.2. Habit Formation

Another potential mechanism behind the increase in CoO turnout is habit formation. In particular, previous acts of voting can raise the likelihood of voting in succeeding elections (Fujiwara, Meng, and Vogl 2016). Consistent with this strand in the literature, our results could be rationalized by individuals who have voted in the CoR election, have picked up the habit of voting, and therefore will also vote in the upcoming CoO election. However, existing laws only permit dual citizens of both countries to vote for national elections.[29] Given the lack of dual citizenship data, we proxy this by using citizenship and naturalization laws from CoOs and CoRs, and see whether both allow dual citizenship (Vink et al. 2023). In such cases, CoO–CoR pairs that grant dual citizenship should record higher turnout rates. Table G.2 confirms that turnout is not necessarily higher in CoO–CoR pairs that grant dual citizenship, providing suggestive evidence that habit formation is unlikely the principal driving force behind our results.[30]

6.3. Return Migration

The results could be rationalized by the idea that individuals dissatisfied with CoR election outcomes plan to return home, which increases their political participation and interest in origin country news, consistent with higher turnout and search activity. We test this possibility in Table G.3, using return migration and remittance flows as dependent variables. If this mechanism were driving the findings, we would expect an increase in migration back to the country of origin. Likewise, we would expect to see a decrease in remittance flows, as fewer emigrants would remain abroad to send money home. While the point estimates move in the expected direction, the results are not statistically significant, providing no strong support for this alternative explanation.

28. Our test captures the effect of close CoR elections increasing emigrants' responsiveness to electoral closeness at home. However, a remaining concern is that close CoR elections may also boost turnout by reminding emigrants of their potential pivotality, *regardless* of the competitiveness of the home-country election.

29. While some countries allow resident non-citizens to vote in local elections, to this day, only five countries grant this right in national elections (Pedroza 2019).

30. A competing mechanism that is somewhat consistent with this is attention. One could assume that voters allocate a finite attention budget to electoral politics. Dual citizens who have voted in the CoR elections have already used up this "budget" and are less likely to participate in the CoO elections ($Post \times Dual < 0$). On the other hand, voters with single citizenship continue to see an increase in turnout ($Post > 0$) as this is the only election they can participate in. While this seems plausible, we argue that this cannot fully explain our headline results for two reasons. First, the interaction term is not consistently statistically significant, albeit having the "right" sign. Second, based on 2011 dual citizenship statistics in the EU, the percentage of residents with dual citizenship ranges from 0.2% to 10.3% by country (Schachter 2015). Given these small proportions, it is unlikely that the attention mechanism drives our results.

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6.4. Immigrant Identity

A related mechanism is that elections where immigration becomes a central topic may heighten immigrants' awareness of their identity, especially in anti-immigration climates (Oskooii 2020). This increased salience may trigger "reactive transnationalism" (Portes and Rumbaut 2001), leading emigrants to refocus on their homeland, particularly through their participation in CoO elections. We test this mechanism in two ways. First, we examine whether our results vary in CoR elections where the winning party promoted anti-immigration views in its manifesto (Table G.4 Panel A), though data limitations reduce our sample size. Second, using V-Party data, we test whether effects vary when the winning party is anti-immigration (Table G.4 Panel B). In both cases, we find no significant relationship between the pervasiveness of anti-immigration sentiment and emigrant turnout.

6.5. Contagion Effect

While habit formation focuses on the act of voting across time, the contagion effect centers on voting behaviors across space and individuals. When voters are surrounded by others who have expressed voting intentions or have actually voted, this can lead them to turn out as well (Funk 2010; Dellavigna et al. 2016; Finan, Seira, and Simpser 2021). In the transnational scenario, the analog is that emigrants who observe CoR citizens turn out in large numbers might be encouraged to vote as well. We illustrate this formally in Table G.5 by testing whether turnout in CoO elections occurring after CoR elections is higher in CoRs with higher turnout. The results here, and in the previous section on media coverage, do not corroborate this mechanism, implying that higher CoR turnout is not a significant driver of increased CoO turnout.[31]

6.6. Uncertainty

An alternative interpretation for the effect of close CoR elections on emigrant turnout is that it is driven not by salience per se, but by uncertainty about the future political direction of the CoR. When competitors hold sharply opposing ideological positions (e.g., left vs. right), the outcome may signal significant and unpredictable shifts in policy, governance, or societal climate. Such uncertainty—especially if it raises concerns about potential instability or worsening conditions for immigrants—may lead emigrants to reassess their prospects in the CoR and re-engage with CoO politics. This could reflect considerations of return, an effort to assert political agency in a more familiar setting, or renewed interest in securing institutional and political support from the CoO.

31. To further clarify the distinction between salience and contagion, we argue that for contagion to have an effect, emigrant voters would need to be at some level connected to CoR voter networks (i.e., observe or interact with peers participating in CoR elections), which is a higher bar than simply reading about the CoR elections in their CoO newspapers.

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To test this, we use the V-Party dataset which codes candidates and parties across various characteristics (Lindberg et al. 2022).[32] Focusing on left–right ideology, we find no significant evidence supporting this mechanism. First, Table G.6 columns 1–4 show that the finding on close elections persists, even when considering the sample where the party ideology data exists. Limiting the sample to contenders sharing the same ideology yields the same result. This provides suggestive evidence that uncertainty does not play a significant role in explaining why close elections lead to increased turnout. That said, the outcome of the preceding CoR election (i.e., who won) matters less than the fact that the election occurred at all.

In this section, we explored plausible mechanisms that could underlie our main results.[33] The evidence we presented shows largely null findings, suggesting that these competing mechanisms unlikely drive our results. Considering all the evidence, we argue that the salience of CoR elections is the most likely driver of increased turnout, rather than the alternative mechanisms just discussed.[34]

7. Conclusion

Global trends toward increasing political interdependence suggest that social scientists need to re-evaluate the dynamics underpinning political events and their spillover effects on political behavior. The growth of international migration and emigrant enfranchisement in recent decades underscores this point further. Polities and state boundaries no longer align, calling for the study of how emigrant electoral behavior across borders amplifies political interdependence.

Nowadays, most states include resident non-citizens who are excluded from participating in national elections and non-resident citizens who can participate in the national elections of their homeland. This presents a core challenge for policymakers as they need to combine representative democracy with a highly mobile citizenry. Responding to this, more than three quarters of countries worldwide have granted voting rights to emigrants and in most cases, this has been implemented over the past two decades (Wellman, Allen, and Nyblade 2023).

32. Because the dataset only codes candidates and parties for legislative elections, we assigned their coding for presidential elections whenever applicable.

33. In the interest of space, we present other tests in Online Appendix G. We examine whether campaign activity or electoral issue congruence between the CoO and CoR could account for the observed effects. Then, we explore whether institutional quality, economic growth, and trade agreements help explain our results. Reassuringly, none of these provide a convincing alternative to our proposed mechanism.

34. We acknowledge that some variables used in this section may serve as imperfect proxies for the mechanisms under investigation. As such, null results should be interpreted with caution, as they may reflect imprecision rather than the absence of any underlying relationship. Nonetheless, while this section offers suggestive but indirect evidence against alternative explanations, the strongest support for our argument comes from the direct and robust evidence presented earlier, showing that close CoR election results significantly increase CoO turnout.

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A key question is whether emigrants also use their voting rights. This is relevant in light of the significant costs associated with organizing elections abroad. Low turnout can increase the average costs per elector abroad and is often discussed by legislators in debates about emigrant (dis-)enfranchisement (Ellis et al. 2007; Østergaard-Nielsen, Ciornei, and Lafleur 2019). Analyzing the factors contributing to emigrant turnout is thus central to debates over democratic inclusion and evolving processes of political interdependence.

The transnational context provides an ideal laboratory for studying political interdependence through the effect of CoR elections on emigrant turnout in their CoO elections. Exploiting this environment, we can consider the date of CoR elections independent from the date of CoO elections, and vice versa. Specifically, our identification strategy exploits timing differentials between CoO and CoR elections. There are two possibilities: CoO elections can be held before or after the CoR election. Whether a CoO election occurs before or after is argued to be quasi-random owing to the transnational setting. To implement this strategy, we construct the EVP dataset, the first global and thus far largest data source on emigrant turnout including 43 CoOs, with voting statistics for each CoR, and for national elections spanning 2000 to 2019.

In this paper, we provide the first causal evidence of the effect of a CoR election on emigrant turnout in their CoO election. We find that emigrant turnout in CoO elections held after a CoR election is 4–7 pp higher than those held before. This increase in turnout declines over time, and disappears at around 70 days after the CoR election. Our results are consistent with a model of salience where emigrants observe close CoR election results amplified by homeland media reporting, which taken together, drive them to vote in homeland elections. Alternative explanations related to individual strategic behavior such as learning about pivotality, past voting habits, and return migration are not borne out in our data. Similarly, our evidence rules out mechanisms tied to the CoR political context: anti-immigrant sentiment, voter contagion, and uncertainty.

Against the backdrop of a highly mobile and globalized world, analyzing turnout in transnational elections is critical for understanding the health of democracy across borders. Voter abstention abroad can decrease overall voter turnout, an indicator commonly used to measure the functioning of democracy (Kostelka 2017). Awareness of political interdependence through transnational electoral mobilization is highly relevant for governments and stakeholders aiming to address the persistent challenge of lower electoral participation among mobile citizens. Two key policy implications emerge from our findings.

First, electoral commissions in CoOs should strengthen their online engagement with emigrant voters, ensuring that clear, accessible, and timely voting information is available across digital platforms. Consulates and embassies, as official state representatives abroad, can play a crucial role in disseminating this information and maintaining electoral visibility among diaspora communities.

Second, governments could support the expansion of online media outlets targeting emigrants, helping to ensure that citizens abroad have consistent access to accurate and independent information about origin country political developments.

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Enhancing the digital presence of CoO news outlets would help sustain political salience among emigrants throughout the electoral cycle.

While our findings point to effective mechanisms for maintaining emigrant engagement, it is important to recognize the challenges that remain. Political parties often face high costs when campaigning overseas and tend to prioritize domestic voters, raising concerns that emigrants may lack direct exposure to electoral debates and become more vulnerable to uninformed or populist voting. However, our results suggest that emigrants compensate for the lack of direct campaign contact by actively seeking information through CoO media sources. This indicates that emigrant voters are capable of making informed decisions even in the absence of intensive direct mobilization. Moreover, previous research shows that emigrants are less likely to support populist candidates compared to domestic voters (Turcu and Urbatsch 2023). Future research should explore emigrant voting patterns further and investigate how emigrants use elections to transmit values between their residence and origin countries.

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Supplementary data

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