



Political parties and participation: migrants' subjective knowledge about their representatives

Sergiu Gherghina

To cite this article: Sergiu Gherghina (29 Jan 2025): Political parties and participation: migrants' subjective knowledge about their representatives, *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, DOI: [10.1080/13572334.2025.2457909](https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2025.2457909)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2025.2457909>



© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 29 Jan 2025.



Submit your article to this journal 



Article views: 408



View related articles 



View Crossmark data 

Political parties and participation: migrants' subjective knowledge about their representatives

Sergiu Gherghina 

Department of Politics, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK

ABSTRACT

People's knowledge about their representatives is important because it informs about the quality of democracy and can predict future political behaviours. In spite of this, we know little about why migrants (do not) know who their representatives are. This article seeks to address this gap in the literature and explains the migrants' subjective knowledge about parliamentarians. The study uses individual data from an original survey conducted in June-July 2022 among 1,058 Romanian migrants. The strongest predictors for knowledge are linked to political parties and participation, while the transnational ties and the intention to return have no effects.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 9 September 2024; Accepted 18 January 2025

KEYWORDS Migrants; Knowledge; MPs; Country of origin; Political parties

Introduction

Legislatures are crucial political institutions of contemporary representative democracies. They lie at the core of the decision-making process, inform government decisions, and ensure the representation of citizens. The latter has received extensive attention in the literature, especially in terms of the relationship between citizens and representatives (Campbell & Lovenduski, 2015; Esaiasson, 2000; Giger et al., 2020). One component of this relationship is the extent to which people know their representatives, which appears to be quite limited. In the mid-2000s, less than half of the voters in a candidate-centred electoral system were able to name correctly their Members of Parliament (MPs), with roughly 10% fewer than one decade earlier (Lusoli et al., 2005). In spite of these trends, we do not know why some people know their representatives and others do not. Earlier works focused on what drives citizens' knowledge about legislatures (Baker et al., 1996), but have overlooked

CONTACT Sergiu Gherghina  sergiulor@yahoo.com

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

the issue of MPs' recognition. In particular, migrants' knowledge about their representatives has rarely been investigated and this is important since they are external voters for the elections organised in their countries of origin.

To address this gap in the literature, this article aims to explain why some migrants know who their representatives are, while others do not. This study looks at the subjective knowledge of parliamentarians in which migrants reported themselves whether they know the names of their representatives as opposed to objective knowledge in which the migrants could be asked to name their representatives. The focus on knowledge of MPs is relevant for both theoretical and empirical reasons. At a theoretical level, the representation expands beyond the country's borders and covers the voters abroad. Earlier research shows how parliamentarians refer to emigrants and seek to represent their interests (Gherghina et al., 2022). Political parties establish organizations for their voters abroad (Kernalegenn & van Haute, 2020) and the parliamentarians are the faces of the relationships they seek to establish with emigrants. Migrants vote extensively in their country of origin (Finn, 2020; Paarlberg, 2017), which means that they seek representation. Empirically, the migrants' knowledge about the MPs informs about the quality of democracy in their country of origin and can predict their future political behaviours. In general, the quality of democratic politics is lower when voters are ignorant about parliamentarians. Political accountability is higher when people have information about who represents them (Strom et al., 2003). If the public has limited information about politics, then it is less alert to its interests and more exposed to politicians' manipulation (Luskin, 1990). In particular, migrants' knowledge about their representatives could flag belonging to the polity in the country of residence, albeit extra-territorial, and provide hints about their future political action. Information facilitates political participation and helps people to link their values to political actions and opinions (Highton, 2009). The migrants who know about MPs may formulate demands and voice their expectations towards their representatives. High levels of knowledge reduce the threat of manipulation and thus the migrants' votes can be perceived as legitimate although they live outside the country.

The article focuses on the group of Romanian migrants as the least likely case where MP recognition can occur. Although there are special seats for the diaspora in the Romanian Parliament, these migrants are unlikely to know their MPs for several reasons: the use of a party-centred system that lowers the possibility of MPs to establish strong personal ties with voters, the location of these voters far away from the political centre that lowers name recognition, the limited partisan loyalty of the Romanian population, and the limited turnout of Romanian migrants in their country of origin's legislative elections. An analysis of the Romanian migrants is relevant for two further reasons. On the one hand, there were several institutional

reforms intended to facilitate the vote among the Romanian migrants in the last decade such as the use of postal ballot that can be used exclusively by the Romanians abroad, higher numbers of polling stations and more days devoted to voting. On the other hand, there were several instances in which the migrants' votes influenced the election outcomes in Romania (Gherghina, 2015; Soare & Tufiș, 2023). The political elites or supporters of the parties and candidates that were disadvantaged in some of these instances formulated critiques against the migrant voters and lamented about their potential manipulation. This study tests the explanatory power of three sets of variables inspired by earlier research about the ability, opportunity and motivation to develop subjective knowledge adapted to migration: (1) ties with the country of origin and return intention, (2) political interest and political efficacy and (3) contact with political parties and partisanship. It controls for three socio-demographic characteristics: age, education and gender. The analysis uses individual data from an original survey conducted in June-July 2022 among 1,058 migrants living in 31 countries. Approximately 80% of the respondents come from the six countries that are the favourite destinations of Romanian migrants (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States).

The next section reviews the literature and formulates several testable hypotheses. The third section provides information about the case selection, data collection and data analysis. Next, the article presents the main findings of our analysis and interprets the results. It concludes with a brief section that outlines the key findings.

Theory and hypotheses

The MPs develop contacts with their constituents between elections through a series of activities such as public meetings, the organization of events or attendance at social events. When constituencies are small, the MPs can get involved in community projects, take care of local businesses, or act as important social actors (Chiru, 2018; Costa et al., 2012). These processes are unlikely to occur when the constituencies are large, the voters live far from their representatives – as is the case with migrants – and the communities are diverse as it is the case with the diaspora. In the absence of regular and frequent contacts between politicians and migrants, this theoretical approach cannot be used to build expectations. Instead, since knowledge of MPs is a specific form of political information, the analytical framework builds on previous research about knowledge that refers to ability, opportunity and motivation. Political knowledge is 'the range of factual information about politics that is stored in the long-term memory' (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996, p. 10). The opportunity is usually a by-product of positioning within the social structure and exposure to information (Baker et al., 1996). In the case of migrants, the positioning and

exposure are possible through closer ties with the country of origin. The motivation to learn can be embedded in existing interest or belief that things can be changed, or in the political mobilization strategies used by political actors (Figure 1). This is the first study covering the subjective knowledge of emigrants about parliamentarians in their home country. As such, there is no literature referring explicitly to migrants on which the causal mechanisms can be built. Instead, these are derived from the more general literature about how citizens develop knowledge.

The first category of explanations refers to the anchoring of migrants' identities in the country of origin. These migrants, in comparison to those with transnational identities or those with strong identities in the country of residence, are likely to know more of their political representatives. There are two complementary causal mechanisms that can explain this propensity to higher knowledge. On the one hand, strong ties with the country of origin can reflect their sense of belonging and a degree of engagement in that community. These ties reside in emotional components such as the existence of an idyllic image of the country, nostalgia for stories, experiences and memories from places of birth or childhood, and social networks with friends, family or acquaintances (Erdal & Ezzati, 2015; Wessendorf, 2007). People keep strong ties with the country of origin due to a sense of belonging that they maintain, 'a desire to remain a member of the 'home' community by maintaining relationships with family members or friends' (Duval, 2004, p. 62). This sense of belonging determines migrants to pay attention to the social, political, cultural and economic realities in their country of origin. In its turn, the priority of affairs from the country of origin can be conducive to specific political knowledge. It is rational for migrants to invest time and resources in understanding how politics in their country of origin works as long as they have a sense of belonging to that society. This is similar to the positive effect on

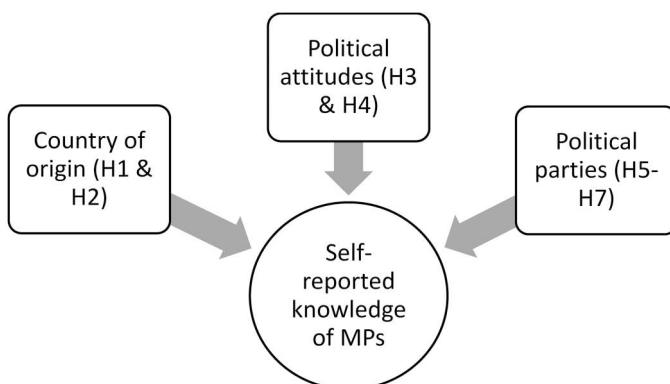


Figure 1. Overview of the analytical framework.

turnout among those migrants who live in countries that have strong political links with their country of origin (Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020). The existence of an identity grounded in the country of origin makes migrants engage in its politics (Mügge et al., 2021).

As high levels of identification and belonging go together with high levels of political participation (Peltoniemi, 2018), ties with the country of origin may be associated with a higher level of specific political knowledge. In the case of Romanian migrants, this expectation is rooted in earlier findings according to which there was extensive communication between them and their friends and relatives in the country of origin in the attempt to influence voting preferences (Grad et al., 2020). The content of communication is often enriched by political knowledge, which is a reason to expect the latter to be higher among those migrants who maintain ties with their friends and relatives in Romania.

On the other hand, the strong ties are sometimes accompanied by efforts to create an appropriate setting for a potential future return (Vlase & Voicu, 2018; Waddell & Fontenla, 2015). The intention to return signals the desire of migrants to be part of the community in their country of origin. This makes them directly interested in political representation, and keeps the costs for political learning low and the benefits high. In terms of costs, compared to those migrants who plan to spend more time in their country of residence, those who wish to return do not experience political resocialization, which is learning in a new context (Finn, 2020). Even if political learning was null prior to migration, these migrants will still find it easier to get politically socialised in a political system in which they grew or in which they are anchored. In terms of benefits, political knowledge can ensure faster (re)integration in the society of origin. In line with these arguments, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

H1: Migrants with strong ties to their country of origin are likely to know their MPs.

H2: Migrants who wish to return to their country of origin are likely to know their MPs.

The next category of potential determinants includes two political attitudes and one political behaviour widely considered to influence knowledge: political interest, internal efficacy and political participation. First, people's willingness to pay attention to politics is one of the standard individual-level predictors of political knowledge (Iyengar et al., 2010). Political interest is mainly defined in cognitive terms that relate to the process of accumulating knowledge. For example, Dostie-Goulet (2009, p. 406) considers political interest 'the extent to which politics is attractive to someone'. Those with an interest in politics are motivated to seek for information or engage in discussions about politics, which results in higher levels of political knowledge

(Amnå & Ekman, 2014; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Political interest is a prerequisite to develop resources and competences, i.e. knowledge, that could serve as a further step for political action.

Second, individuals who feel able to influence political decisions are more motivated to develop their knowledge. Internal efficacy is built on citizens' perceptions of themselves as politically competent, able to exercise control over their functioning and environment, and sufficiently powerful to achieve the objective (Campbell et al., 1960; Caprara et al., 2009). The cognitive dimension of internal efficacy explains the relation to political knowledge: 'the judgments people hold about their capacity to be effective in the realm of politics are critical to make them inclined to devote time and effort to stay informed' (Caprara et al., 2009, p. 1004). Some general information is required to have the perception of self-efficacy, but specific knowledge such as the ability to identify the political representatives is fostered by this perception. When people feel they can make a difference, they are motivated to learn more about the political environment. Moreover, politics can rarely be influenced by isolated individuals and it is instead the result of groups or communities seeking to exercise power. Individuals with higher levels of internal efficacy are likely to interact with other individuals hoping that their abilities to achieve the objective, i.e. influencing politics, will be achieved. Such interactions are fruitful arenas for political discussions, which could enhance specific knowledge.

Third, the conventional wisdom is that political knowledge often translates into political participation: when people know and understand how politics function, they may be more willing to engage, have the ability to make a reasonable choice, and perceive greater utility in participating (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001; Milbrath, 1965). There is also consensus that the type of information required to participate can be placed into two categories: knowledge about the political actors (ideologies, policies) and procedural knowledge about institutions – how they work and what are the rules of the game (Grönlund & Milner, 2006; Johann, 2012). However, there are specific forms of knowledge, such as the name of representatives in a closed-list PR system in which the names of candidates rarely matter for vote choices, which can be determined by political participation rather than the other way around. Elections can serve as a means for political socialization in which people are exposed to campaigns, engage in discussions about elections, pay attention to campaign news (Meirick & Wackman, 2004) or simply see the names or candidates on the ballot. The persons who vote think – even at a superficial level – about the competitors, which is reflected both in how having voted increases the likelihood of possessing political information (Grönlund & Milner, 2006) and in the higher rates of political knowledge for citizens from countries with compulsory voting (Birch, 2009). Moreover, people who vote are likely to inform themselves

about the winners, which can result in higher knowledge of the representatives.

H3: Migrants with a high interest in the politics of their country of origin are likely to know their MPs.

H4: Migrants with a high level of internal political efficacy are likely to know their MPs.

H5: Migrants who voted in the legislative elections are likely to know their MPs.

The parties abroad use several avenues to reach out the potential voters. One of these avenues was the involvement in socio-cultural activities, which are organised very often in collaboration with non-political associations or groups (Fliess, 2021). Other activities include the provision of assistance, help, support or services related to migrants' integration into the country of residence (Gherghina & Soare, 2023; Tazzioli, 2024). During election campaigns, political parties seek to mobilize migrants through various forms of contact such as knocking on doors, inviting them to events, making a phone call or via e-mail or social media (Kernalegenn & van Haute, 2020). These forms are also opportunities for people to increase their levels of political knowledge. In general, the interaction between voters and parties increases the use of political information by expanding people's political networks and by encouraging individuals to discuss politics more often. Some of those people who are persuaded by the content of messages conveyed during party contacts could try to mobilize voters themselves (McClurg, 2004). Party contacts are direct means of communication with the electorate that facilitate the frequent presentation of political information. This process ensures voter turnout mobilization but also access to the party's political ideas (Fisher et al., 2016; Johann et al., 2018).

Political parties and their candidates from the country of origin campaign abroad to mobilize the emigrant vote (Fliess, 2021; Kernalegenn & van Haute, 2020). In this process, the communication used for electoral persuasion can also boost the knowledge of their audiences. More specifically, when political parties campaign abroad, they are a reflection of the country of origin's national electoral scene (Burgess, 2020; Gherghina & Soare, 2023; Østergaard-Nielsen & Ciornei, 2019). It is likely that the migrants who are exposed to these messages could also learn more about who their representatives are.

Partisanship, defined as individuals' affective orientation towards a political party (Campbell et al., 1960), carries emotional and cognitive loading. The emotional component is the attachment between voters and their preferred party, while the cognitive component provides information shortcuts and simplifies the choices for voters (Brader & Tucker, 2012). Partisanship

has an influence on information acquisition and processing, acting as a perceptual screen. Partisans misperceive real-life conditions, including interpretations of politically relevant factual information, and see the world in a way that is consistent with their political beliefs (Gaines et al., 2007; Nyhan & Reifler, 2010). The perceptual screen means that people are motivated to confirm positive information or prior beliefs about their party and disconfirm information that sheds unfavourable light on their party or incongruent information (Bullock et al., 2015; Taber & Lodge, 2006). On topics with relevance for the preferred party, the individuals exhibit selective learning and process information in a way that preserves the partisan attachments (Jerit & Barabas, 2012; Jerit & Zhao, 2020). Selective learning can result in higher knowledge for partisans about issues of relevance to the party compared to non-partisan individuals (Tranter, 2007). Partisans can be more politically knowledgeable than non-partisans also because they proactively seek information that they can share on social media either to persuade or to denigrate opponents (Hasell & Weeks, 2016). Following these arguments, I expect that:

H6: Migrants who interact often with parties from the country of origin are likely to know their MPs.

H7: Migrants who feel close to parties from the country of origin are likely to know their MPs.

In addition to these main effects, the analysis controls for the potential explanatory power of length of stay in the country of residence, use of media from the country of origin and three usual socio-demographic characteristics (age, education and gender). The length of stay could influence the knowledge of MPs in two ways. On the one hand, migrants who are for a longer time in a country could pay more attention to those who represent them in the country of origin. On the other hand, longer stay in the country of residence could lower the knowledge of migrants' representatives in their country of origin due to integration priorities. Media is the main source of information for many people and thus media use could influence the perceived level of knowledge. Age can function for political information in a similar way to how it works for political interest: it can increase with age (Grönlund, 2007). Education is a proxy for the cognitive ability of a person which has a positive effect on political awareness and information through the exposure of individuals to classes, readings and informal discussions with other people with high levels of information (Baker et al., 1996; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). There is extensive literature about gender differences in political information and political knowledge (Campbell et al., 1960; Dow, 2009; Verba et al., 1997), which can be reflected also in the sample used for this study.¹

Research design

To test the hypotheses, the analysis uses original data from a survey conducted in June-July 2022 among first-generation migrants from Romania. The Romanian migrants were selected as the subject of study for four reasons that make it the least likely case to identify knowledge of MPs. First, Romania uses a proportional representation system with blocked lists for its legislative elections that are party-centred. This does not allow casting preferences to distinct candidates or the development of a close relationship with an MP like in candidate-centred systems (Bengtsson & Wass, 2011). Thus, the individual reputation of MPs and their personal vote-earning attributes (Shugart et al., 2005) matter less. Second, these voters are located far away from the political centre and there is the lower likelihood of establishing close ties with the MPs (Bengtsson & Wass, 2011). This distance makes also it unlikely for migrants to pay attention to the parliamentary activity in their country of origin, which may determine the MPs' name recognition by voters (François & Navarro, 2020). Third, there is a limited partisan attachment among the Romanian electorate. The electoral volatility has been high for several decades and remained high also in the 2020 legislative elections covered by this study. Fourth, although the Romanian diaspora is one of the largest in the world relative to the country's population (Dospinescu & Russo, 2018; International Organization for Migration, 2020) and can vote in the country of origin's legislative elections – either in person at polling stations in the country of residence or through postal ballot – the turnout is very low. For example, approximately 265,000 people from the diaspora voted in the 2020 legislative elections (Rezultate vot, 2022) from more than four million Romanians in the diaspora with residence (see below).²

The dataset includes 1,058 migrants who have Romanian IDs, and thus the right to vote in the elections of their country of origin. These respondents were selected based on a maximum variation sampling. The latter is a purposive sampling technique used to increase the variation on several key variables for research (Emmel, 2013). The maximum variation sampling used for this survey aimed to maximize the variation in terms of migrants' age, education, gender, area in which they lived prior to migration, country of residence, and length of stay in the country of residence. Some of these variables are not used in this article and their variation is not reported. There are only estimates about the number of Romanian migrants, without any official statistics about their number or profile. As such, the characteristics of the entire population of Romanian migrants are unknown and, as such, a probability representative sample cannot be drawn. Non-probability sampling is often used to study populations where formal access to complete lists of members is not possible. The findings cannot be generalised to a broader

population since they are not representative (Emmel, 2013; Schreier, 2018). The findings presented in this article are confined to our respondents, but the insights are nevertheless valuable for a segment of the population – which is internally diverse – that cannot be studied otherwise.

Appendix 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the variables included in the analysis. To provide an illustration of this variation, the age of respondents is distributed as follows: 18–30 years (13%), 31–40 years (24%), 41–50 years (34%), 51–60 years (22%) and over 60 years (7%). The high concentration of respondents in the three group categories between 30 and 60 years old matches the three large waves of Romanian migration (Gherghina & Basarabă, 2024). The average age of respondents – the survey includes the year of birth – is 40 years old, which is very close to the average age of Romanians abroad getting residence, which is 38 years old (G4Media.ro, 2021). The respondents come from 31 countries, out of which roughly 80% of those who filled in the online survey live in one of the six countries that are preferred destinations by Romanian migrants. The remaining 20% live in countries around the world as far as Australia, South Africa, Taiwan or the United Arab Emirates, but most live in European countries and Canada.

The respondents were neither pre-selected nor part of a pool of available individuals. The survey was conducted online and was distributed through messages on Facebook groups or discussion forums of Romanians living abroad, and by e-mails sent to representatives of Romanian associations and organizations. The use of social media to collect data has several advantages such as the examination of people's attitudes and behaviours in a setting that is part of their everyday lives or the possibility to reach groups that are often under-represented in traditional research (Moreno et al., 2013). The disadvantages of online data collection refer mainly to the access of respondents to devices and the Internet, survey fraud, and the absence of an interviewer to explain unclear issues (Sue & Ritter, 2012). The latter can lead to lower response rates in online surveys compared to traditional surveys (Pedersen & Nielsen, 2016). To compensate for the absence of an interviewer, there was a pilot study one week prior to the fielding of the survey. The pilot included two procedures. First, the survey was sent to 50 respondents from a previous survey on migrants to check response rates and if specific questions triggered their decision to quit the survey. Second, random cognitive testing was used to see whether questions made sense to respondents who were contacted via e-mail. The pilot survey revealed no particular problems. To increase the number of responses, several reminders were sent. The article includes the total number of complete answers received to the questionnaire. Approximately 1,300 respondents started the survey and roughly one-quarter of them skipped too many questions to provide meaningful insights about their opinions; these were removed from the final sample.

The dependent variable of this study is self-reported knowledge of MPs from the country of origin, and it is measured through the answers to the question ‘To what extent do you know a Romanian MP elected in 2020 for the diaspora seats?’. The available answers are ‘I do not know any’ (coded 1), ‘I heard the name of one MP, but I do not remember it now’ (coded 2) and ‘I know the name of one MP elected in diaspora’. While name recognition may be a very specific question, it is appropriate to measure knowledge about who the representatives are. The names are a main sign of MPs’ recognition. The specificity of the question informed the choice of self-reported instead of objective knowledge among migrants. It was unlikely that respondents could nominate who their MPs are in a country that uses closed-list PR for the election of representatives; in majoritarian systems, name recognition is greater.

The ties to the country of origin (H1) are operationalised through the following question: ‘How often do you stay in contact (visits, meetings, phone, online chat etc.) with friends and acquaintances living in Romania?’. The available answers are coded ascendingly between ‘very little’ (1) and ‘very much’ (5). The survey included alternative measures for the ties to the country of origin such as the frequency of going to Romania in the last five years or the number of Romanians in the respondents’ social networks in the country of residence. I tested the effects of these variables on knowledge of MPs and the results are very similar to the variable included in the analysis. The measurement of the remaining variables is straightforward (Appendix 2).

The empirical analysis includes bivariate and multivariate relationships. The latter takes the form of ordered logistic regression due to the measurement of the dependent variable. The statistical models are reported for the entire sample of respondents. I also ran models with country dummies to account for variation according to the country of residence (Appendix 3). These models do not find statistically significant effects on the country of residence. In addition, I ran t-tests between the levels of MP knowledge in the countries of residence and the results indicate that the means are not statistically different. All these indicate that the migrants’ country of residence does not influence the level of their subjective knowledge and thus the article discusses the simpler models without country dummies. There were theoretical reasons to expect the correlation between several independent variables, e.g. political interest and internal efficacy. The tests for multicollinearity indicate no highly correlated predictors: the highest value is 0.39 and the VIF values are lower than 1.24 for every estimate.

Analysis and results

This section starts with an overview of the Romanian electoral and party system to provide the background information that can contextualize the

analysis. The Romanian legislative elections use a proportional representation with blocked lists and a differentiated threshold for political parties (5%) and alliances (8–10% depending on the number of parties). In 2020, five political parties gained parliamentary seats. The social democrats (Social Democratic Party, Partidul Social Democrat), the Liberals (National Liberal Party, *Partidul Național Liberal*) and the Party of ethnic Hungarians (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, *Uniunea Maghiara din România*) are established parties, they alternate in government or form coalition agreements together as it is also the case since September 2021 until now. The party of the ethnic Hungarians plays a pivotal role in many coalitions in spite of its relatively small share of seats (6-7%).

The other two parties are newly created: Save Romania Union (*Uniunea Salvării României*) was established in 2015 and runs on a pro-European and inclusive platform (pro-sexual minorities), while the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (*Alianța pentru Uniunea Românilor*) was formed in 2019 and has a radical-right approach. Apart from these, there are a couple of other political parties that had electoral support close to the electoral threshold: the People's Movement Party formed as a splinter from another party that merged with the liberals in 2014 and the PRO Romania was a splinter from the social democrats. Roughly 90% of the votes in the diaspora went in 2020 to Save Romania Union, National Liberal Party and Alliance for the Unity of Romanians (Code for Romania, 2021) and the parliamentarians for the diaspora seats belong to these parties. Traditionally, the Romanians abroad do not vote for the social democrats.

The Romanian Parliament includes two Chambers with similar functions but different number of members: the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. According to the electoral law, the representation quota is 73,000 for one deputy and 168,000 for one Senator. The diaspora was allocated 2008 special seats in the Romanian Parliament. Voting in the national legislative elections takes place in constituencies that coincide with the territorial-administrative divisions (county), with one exception – the diaspora. There are 43 constituencies that match the 41 counties with a population between 220,000 and 950,000 people, the capital city that is counted separately due to its population (more than two times the largest county) and the diaspora that counts as one constituency. Diaspora receives four seats for the Chamber of Deputies and two seats for the Senate, which means that its size is calculated to be around 350,000 people. The real number is considerably higher. Official statistics show that more than four million Romanians living in Italy, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom got their residence status (G4Media.ro, 2021). Taking into consideration that there are many more countries of destination for the Romanian migrants and that not all the migrants get residence status, the under-representation of the Romanian diaspora is easily observable.

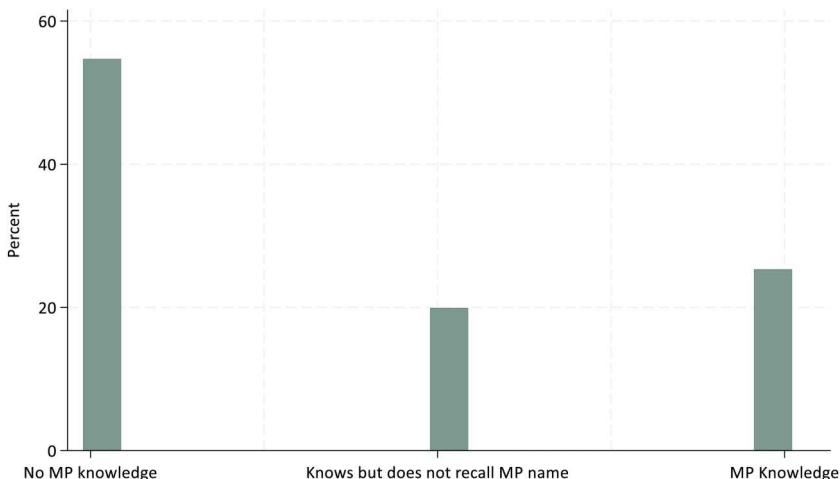


Figure 2. The knowledge of MPs among the Romanian migrants.

Figure 2 includes the distribution of knowledge of MPs based on the survey results. The three categories show variation in the degree of knowledge: 55% of the respondents do not know any of the six MPs, 20% claim that they know one but do not recall their names, while 25% self-reported knowledge about one MP for diaspora. The relatively low percentage in the category with knowledge of MPs is not surprising given the characteristics of the Romanian electoral system and of the diaspora explained in the previous section. The distribution indicates the existence of variation to be explained.

The correlation coefficients in Table 1 indicate empirical support for all the hypothesised relationships. There is a medium to strong correlation with all the variables reflecting political attitudes and issues related to political participation and parties. The value of the correlation coefficients for both variables about the ties to country of origin is considerably lower. Nevertheless, all correlations are statistically significant. Among the controls, the variable about media in the country of origin correlates moderately and indicates that higher use is associated with higher knowledge. The other controls correlate weakly with the knowledge of MPs and only education is statistically significant. It indicates that there is a weak tendency of highly educated respondents to know the MPs more compared to poorly educated respondents. I ran two ordinal regression models: one that includes only the main effects and another that includes also the controls. The fit of the two models (pseudo R^2) is similar for both models, which means that the control variables do not bring much-added value. The value of the reported coefficients is also similar for the two models.

Table 1. Bivariate and multivariate statistical analysis.

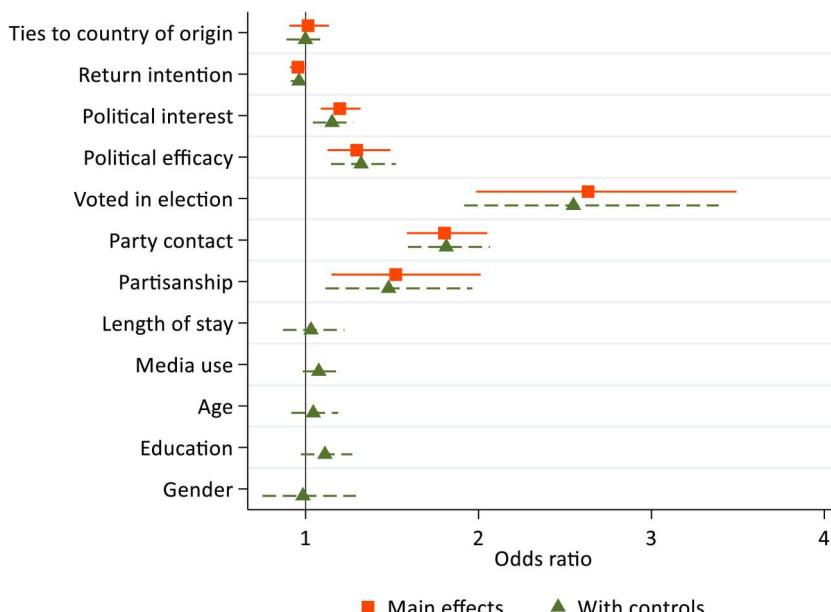
Variables	Correlation coefficients	Regression coefficients	
		Main effects	With controls
Ties to country of origin	0.09**	1.01	0.99
Return intention	0.07**	0.96	0.96
Political interest	0.38**	1.20**	1.53**
Political efficacy	0.37**	1.30**	1.32**
Voted in election	0.38**	2.63**	2.55**
Party contact	0.49**	1.80**	1.81**
Partisanship	0.32**	1.52**	1.48**
Length of stay	-0.01		1.03
Media use (country of origin)	0.24**		1.08
Age	0.05		1.04
Education	0.06*		1.11
Gender	0.04		0.98
N		1057	1057
Pseudo R ²		0.20	0.20
Log likelihood		-853.50	-849.09

Notes: Reported correlation coefficients are non-parametric. Reported regression coefficients are odds-ratios.

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

The effects of the independent and control variables are depicted visually in [Figure 3](#). The regression analysis finds no support for the first two hypotheses. The respondents with strong ties to the country of origin (H1) are as likely as those with weak ties to know the MPs. Similarly, the respondents

**Figure 3.** The Effects on knowledge of MPs.

who intend to return in the following two years (H2) are as likely as those who have no intention to know the MPs. The absence of effects for these two variables leads to the conclusion that the knowledge of MPs is rooted neither in the transnational links nor in the potential prospects to return to the country.

There is moderate empirical support for the hypotheses about political attitudes. Consistent with previous research that reveals the interplay between interest, efficacy and knowledge (Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020; Mügge et al., 2021), the respondents with a higher interest in politics (H3) and those who feel they can influence the political decisions in their country of origin (H4) are more likely to know the MPs. These respondents follow politics, are more informed and this contributes to a greater level of knowledge.

These political attitudes are only a partial explanation for knowledge because the strongest effects are produced by the variables related to political participation and parties. Those migrants who voted in the 2020 elections (H5) are considerably more likely to know the names of an MP, which is intuitive since they should remember who they voted for. In line with the previous arguments about the presence of political parties in diaspora and their campaigning strategies (Burgess, 2020; Gherghina & Soare, 2023; Kernalegenn & van Haute, 2020), the results indicate that migrants who have a frequent contact with the Romanian political parties abroad (H6) are more likely to know an MP compared to those people who lack such a contact. We also find that partisanship matters, but to a somewhat lesser degree: those who feel close to a party are more likely to know a parliamentarian compared to those with no partisan attachment. This evidence confirms that partisan attachments foster knowledge among migrants through selective learning, proactive information seeking or socialization strategies (Hasell & Weeks, 2016; Jerit & Zhao, 2020; Tranter, 2007). This interpretation is strengthened by the correlation coefficient between interest in politics and party contact, which is positive but not very large (0.29).

None of the controls influences the self-reported knowledge of MPs. Transnationalism is one possible explanation for which the length of stay has no effect: the surveyed migrants may know their MPs because many maintain connections to Romania. These connections could make them pay attention to politics and to the idea of representation irrespective of the time spent in their country of residence.

Discussion and conclusion

This article aimed to identify the determinants of political knowledge about MPs among migrants. The analysis of individual-level data provides three findings that help advance and add nuance to the existing research on

migrants' behaviour and the development of political knowledge among non-resident citizens. First, the ties to the country of origin and the intention to return have no effect on migrants' self-reported knowledge about representatives. This result illustrates that the cognitive processes related to politics in the country of origin do not follow the patterns observed for political behaviour. That body of research indicates greater participation in the politics of the country of origin among those migrants who maintain ties with the society from which they left (Finn, 2020; Mügge et al., 2021; Peltoniemi, 2018).

The absence of such a causal mechanism for political knowledge may have two potential explanations. On the supply side, the Romanian MPs are equally visible – at relatively low levels according to the distributions in [Figure 1](#) and Appendix 1 – to all the migrants. MPs' presence is observed, their messages reach all the migrants to a similar extent irrespective of their ties to the country of origin or willingness to return and may contribute to comparable levels of political knowledge. On the demand side, the Romanian migrants may understand the process of representation in a broad sense rather than limited to their country of origin. The existence of special seats for the diaspora may mean that the MPs who occupy them are responsible for the Romanians living abroad irrespective of their future destinations. In our survey this potential explanation finds evidence in a question that was not used for this article: there is a weak positive correlation between the importance of being represented in the country of origin politics and ties to the country of origin (0.08) or intentions to return (0.16). These similar attitudes across groups of migrants show a broad understanding of representation.

Second, political interest and efficacy which are often associated with political knowledge within the broader electorate, are valid explanations for migrants to some extent. This confirmation of earlier evidence (Caprara et al., 2009; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996) reveals that migrants have similar approaches towards political knowledge with the rest of the citizenry. The migrants' transnational profile and the specific possibility to vote in the two worlds to which they belong (Finn, 2020; Gherghina & Basarabă, 2024) could be important reasons for which their political interest, sense of efficacy and knowledge are aligned.

Third, contrary to previous evidence that the individual-level linkage between citizens and legislators occurs on the background of weaker political parties (Rahat & Kenig, 2018), this article illustrates that political participation and parties play a crucial role in establishing this individual linkage. In the case of the Romanian migrants, the strongest predictors for political knowledge are related to the interaction with political parties: frequency of contact, voter mobilization, and partisanship. The political knowledge of migrants is the result of socialization with the political process and is

rooted in the interactions with political parties; this interaction is often initiated by political parties rather than by migrants (Fliess, 2021; Kernalegenn & van Haute, 2020). Overall, these findings show that political parties play an important role in the process of accumulation of knowledge among migrants. Their activities, beyond the usual mobilization during campaign times and beyond the ideological appeal to segments of the electorate, result in migrants' knowledge about who represents them. Such effects are observable for all the migrants rather than being confined to partisans.

Fourth, the lack of effect for control variables has some meaning attached to it. In essence, the socio-demographics do not mediate the grounding of political knowledge in the interaction between people and political parties. For example, research from more than three decades ago explains that there is no evidence that media can teach specific information or increase political knowledge (Neuman, 1986). There is a similar conclusion for the Romanian migrants: those who use media from their country of origin on a regular basis are as informed as those who do not use it at all. Younger migrants are as knowledgeable as the elderly, which can have negative implications for political representation since the overall level of knowledge is quite limited (Figure 2).

The implications of this analysis go beyond the case study covered here. It makes two main contributions to the broader literature. At the individual level, it shows that migrants do not acquire specific political knowledge as a means to stay in contact with their country of origin or to prepare for their return. Instead, their knowledge about MPs appears to be part of a complex system together with voting, interactions with political parties and partisanship. The knowledgeable migrants are oriented towards politics in a deeper way beyond self-reported interest and feelings of efficacy. Knowing who represents those gives sense to their engagement in their country of origin, irrespective of their country or residence or socio-demographic profiles. At the institutional level, the study illustrates how political parties fulfil more functions for migrants than explained in the literature. The usual function of parties in the diaspora is related to voting mobilization (Kernalegenn & van Haute, 2020) but these results indicate their crucial role in understanding politics. While the targeting of migrants through contact and mobilization strategies has result from their voting preferences, the positive side effects include an increase in specific political knowledge. Since the latter is not mediated by socio-demographic characteristics, it means that active political parties could generate higher knowledge among migrants. Since knowledge forms the basis for political participation, the actions of political parties contribute directly to an informed decision from the electorate and to a higher quality of representation.

These are at least three possible ways in which this study could serve as a point of departure for future analyses. One of these could unpack the causal

relationship between political parties and migrants to identify the extent to which supply or demand factors can play a role in the variation of political knowledge. A qualitative analysis could be a fruitful direction for research, with semi-structured interviews or focus groups unveiling how political knowledge occurs. The interviews could include items that were not covered in this study. For example, they could uncover if the distance to the polling station during election days or the limited information about postal voting may be potential sources of knowledge about the MPs. A second direction for future research could aim to explain the relationship between knowledge and voting behaviour. This could focus on the identification of voting patterns among the more knowledgeable migrants and the extent to which they support established or newly created parties. A third avenue for further research could seek to understand the importance of migrants' social and economic characteristics for knowledge. The survey used in this article included very few items about the socio-economic status because most respondents refused to answer such questions during the pilot survey. The final version of the survey included only two items – respondents' occupation and household size – and none of these correlates with knowledge about the MP. Nevertheless, the socio-economic characteristics could be a relevant explanation that deserves close investigation next to some of the variables tested in this article.

Notes

1. Apart from these variables the analysis controlled for other factors that could have had an effect on the knowledge of MPs such as perceived usefulness of political parties from the country of origin, or trust in the parliament from the country of origin. None of these had neither large nor statistically significant effects on the level of knowledge and are not reported in the article to keep the models parsimonious.
2. The real number of Romanian migrants are considerably higher because a) not all the migrants registered their residency and b) the numbers come from four countries. The share of people with the right to vote is high because many are labour migrants, with relatively few children and teenagers.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

Sergiu Gherghina is an Associate Professor in Comparative Politics at the Department of Politics, University of Glasgow. His research interests lie in party politics, legislative and voting behaviour, democratization, and the use of direct democracy.



ORCID

Sergiu Gherghina <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6627-5598>

References

- Amnå, E., & Ekman, J. (2014). Standby citizens: Diverse faces of political passivity. *European Political Science Review*, 6(2), 261–281. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S175577391300009X>
- Baker, J. R., Bennett, L. L. M., Bennett, S. E., & Flickinger, R. S. (1996). ‘Citizens’ knowledge and perceptions of legislatures in Canada, Britain and the United States’. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 2(2), 44–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13572339608420471>
- Bengtsson, Å., & Wass, H. (2011). The representative roles of MPs: A citizen perspective. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 34(2), 143–167. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9477.2011.00267.x>
- Birch, S. (2009). *Full participation: A comparative study of compulsory voting*. United Nations University Press.
- Brader, T., & Tucker, J. A. (2012). Following the party’s lead: Party cues, policy opinion, and the power of partisanship in three multiparty systems. *Comparative Politics*, 44(4), 403–420. <https://doi.org/10.5129/001041512801283004>
- Bullock, J. G., Gerber, A. S., Hill, S. J., & Huber, G. A. (2015). Partisan bias in factual beliefs about politics. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 10(4), 519–578.
- Burgess, K. (2020). *Courting migrants: How states make diasporas and diasporas make states*. Oxford University Press.
- Campbell, A., Converse, P., Miller, W., & Stokes, D. (1960). *The American voter*. Wiley.
- Campbell, R., & Lovenduski, J. (2015). What should MPs Do? Public and parliamentarians’ views compared. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 68(4), 690–708. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsu020>
- Caprara, G. V., Vecchione, M., Capanna, C., & Mebane, M. (2009). Perceived political self-efficacy: Theory, assessment, and applications. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 39(6), 1002–1020. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.604>
- Chiru, M. (2018). The electoral value of constituency-oriented parliamentary questions in Hungary and Romania. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 71(4), 950–969. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsx050>
- Ciornei, I., & Østergaard-Nielsen, E. (2020). Transnational turnout. Determinants of emigrant voting in home country elections. *Political Geography*, 78, 1–10.
- Costa, O., Lefébure, P., Rozenberg, O., Schnatterer, T., & Kerrouche, E. (2012). Far away, So close: Parliament and citizens in France. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 18(3–4), 294–313. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2012.706046>
- Delli Carpini, M. X., & Keeter, S. (1996). *What Americans know about politics and why it matters*. Yale University Press.
- Dospinescu, A., & Russo, G. (2018). *Romania: Systematic Country Diagnostic*. World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/210481530907970911/pdf/128064-SCD-PUBLIC-P160439-RomaniaSCDBackgroundNoteMigration.pdf>
- Dostie-Goulet, E. (2009). Social networks and the development of political interest. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 12(4), 405–421. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676260902866512>

- Dow, J. K. (2009). Gender differences in political knowledge: Distinguishing characteristics-based and returns-based differences. *Political Behavior*, 31(1), 117–136. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-008-9059-8>
- Duval, D. T. (2004). Linking return visits and return migration among commonwealth eastern Caribbean migrants in Toronto. *Global Networks*, 4(1), 51–67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2004.00080.x>
- Emmel, N. (2013). *Sampling and choosing cases in qualitative research: A realist approach*. Sage Publications.
- Erdal, M. B., & Ezzati, R. (2015). “where are you from” or “when did you come”? temporal dimensions in migrants’ reflections about settlement and return. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38(7), 1202–1217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2014.971041>
- Esaiasson, P. (2000). How members of parliament define their task. In P. Esaiasson, & K. Heidar (Eds.), *Beyond westminster and congress: The nordic experience* (pp. 51–82). Ohio State University Press.
- Finn, V. (2020). Migrant voting: Here, there, in both countries, or nowhere. *Citizenship Studies*, 24(6), 730–750. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2020.1745154>
- Fisher, J., Fieldhouse, E., Johnston, R., Pattie, C., & Cutts, D. (2016). Is all campaigning equally positive? The impact of district level campaigning on voter turnout at the 2010 British general election. *Party Politics*, 22(2), 215–226. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068815605672>
- Fliess, N. (2021). Campaigning across continents: How Latin American parties link up with migrant associations abroad. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 9(20), 1–19.
- François, A., & Navarro, J. (2020). ‘Voters’ knowledge of their representatives: The direct and conditioned effects of parliamentary work’. *Swiss Political Science Review*, 26(1), 96–124. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12390>
- G4Media.ro. (2021). Statistica românilor stabiliți în alte state (The Statistics of Romanians Living in Other Countries). 14 August. <https://www.g4media.ro/4-milioane-de-romani-rezidenti-in-italia-marea-britanie-spania-si-germania-statistica-romanilor-stabiliți-in-alte-state.html>
- Gaines, B. J., Kuklinski, J. H., Quirk, P. J., Peyton, B., & Verkuilen, J. (2007). Same facts, different interpretations: Partisan motivation and opinion on Iraq. *The Journal of Politics*, 69(4), 957–974. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2007.00601.x>
- Gherghina, S. (2015). The Romanian presidential election, November 2014. *Electoral Studies*, 38, 109–114. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2015.01.008>
- Gherghina, S., & Basarabă, A. (2024). Migrants’ voter turnout in the home country elections: Non-integration or political anchor? *Politics and Governance*, 12, 1–15. <https://www.cogitatiopress.com/politicsandgovernance/article/view/7396>
- Gherghina, S., & Soare, S. (2023). Vote-Seeking Among Non-resident citizens: How Romanian parties form organisations abroad. *Representation*, 59(1), 423–439. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2020.1815077>
- Gherghina, S., Tap, P., & Soare, S. (2022). More than voters: Parliamentary debates about emigrants in a new democracy. *Ethnicities*, 22(3), 487–506. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687968211046309>
- Giger, N., Klüver, H., & Witko, C. (2020). Electoral vulnerability, party affiliation, and dyadic constituency responsiveness in U.S. Legislatures. *American Politics Research*, 48(4), 484–491.
- Grad, M., Gherghina, S., & Ivan, A. (2020). Migrants and their families in the home country: A bi-directional influence on voting behaviour. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 20(3), 393–410. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2020.1791452>

- Grönlund, K. (2007). Knowing and Not knowing: The internet and political information. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 30(3), 397–418. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9477.2007.00186.x>
- Grönlund, K., & Milner, H. (2006). The determinants of political knowledge in comparative perspective. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 29(4), 386–406. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9477.2006.00157.x>
- Hasell, A., & Weeks, B. E. (2016). Partisan provocation: The role of partisan news Use and emotional responses in political information sharing in social media. *Human Communication Research*, 42(4), 641–661. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hcre.12092>
- Highton, B. (2009). Revisiting the relationship between educational attainment and political sophistication. *The Journal of Politics*, 71(4), 1564–1576. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381609990077>
- International Organization for Migration. (2020). *World migration report 2020*. United Nations.
- Iyengar, S., Curran, J., Lund, A. B., Salovaara-Moring, I., Hahn, K. S., & Coen, S. (2010). ‘Cross-national versus individual-level differences in political information: A media systems perspective’. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties*, 20(3), 291–309. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2010.490707>
- Jerit, J., & Barabas, J. (2012). Partisan perceptual bias and the information environment. *The Journal of Politics*, 74(3), 672–684. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381612000187>
- Jerit, J., & Zhao, Y. (2020). Political misinformation. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 23(1), 77–94. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-050718-032814>
- Johann, D. (2012). Specific political knowledge and citizens’ participation: Evidence from Germany. *Acta Politica*, 47(1), 42–66. <https://doi.org/10.1057/ap.2011.20>
- Johann, D., von Königslöw, K. K., Kritzinger, S., & Thomas, K. (2018). Intra-Campaign changes in voting preferences: The impact of media and party communication. *Political Communication*, 35(2), 261–286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2017.1339222>
- Kernalegenn, T., & van Haute, E. (2020). *Political parties abroad: A New arena for party politics*. Routledge.
- Lau, R. R., & Redlawsk, D. P. (2001). Advantages and disadvantages of cognitive heuristics in political decision making. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45(4), 951–971. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2669334>
- Luskin, R. C. (1990). Explaining political sophistication. *Political Behavior*, 12(4), 331–361. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00992793>
- Lusoli, W., Ward, S., & Gibson, R. (2005). (Re)connecting politics? Parliament, the public and the internet. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 59(1), 24–42. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsj010>
- McClurg, S. D. (2004). Indirect mobilization. The social consequences of party contacts in an election campaign. *American Politics Research*, 32(4), 406–443. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X03260581>
- Meirick, P. C., & Wackman, D. B. (2004). Kids voting and political knowledge: Narrowing gaps, informing votes. *Social Science Quarterly*, 85(5), 1161–1177. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0038-4941.2004.00269.x>
- Milbrath, L. W. (1965). *Political participation: How and Why Do people Get involved in politics?* Rand McNally College Publishing Company.
- Moreno, M. A., Goniu, N., Moreno, P. S., & Diekema, D. (2013). ‘Ethics of social media research: Common concerns and practical considerations’. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 16(9), 708–713. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2012.0334>

- Mügge, L., Kranendonk, M., Vermeulen, F., & Aydemir, N. (2021). Migrant votes "here" and "there": transnational electoral behavior of Turks in The Netherlands. *Migration Studies*, 9(3), 400–422. <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnz034>
- Neuman, W. R. (1986). *The paradox of mass politics, knowledge and opinion in the American electorate*. Harvard University Press.
- Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2010). When corrections fail: The persistence of political misperceptions. *Political Behavior*, 32(2), 303–330. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-010-9112-2>
- Østergaard-Nielsen, E., & Ciornei, I. (2019). Political parties and the transnational mobilisation of the emigrant vote. *West European Politics*, 42(2019), 618–644. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2018.1528105>
- Paarlberg, M. A. (2017). Transnational militancy: Diaspora influence over electoral activity in Latin America. *Comparative Politics*, 49(4), 541–562. <https://doi.org/10.5129/001041517821273053>
- Pedersen, M. J., & Nielsen, C. V. (2016). Improving survey response rates in online panels. *Social Science Computer Review*, 34(2), 229–243. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439314563916>
- Peltoniemi, J. (2018). Transnational political engagement and emigrant voting. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 26(4), 392–410. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2018.1515727>
- Rahat, G., & Kenig, O. (2018). *From party politics to personalized politics? Party change and political personalization in democracies*. Oxford University Press.
- Rezultate vot. (2022). *Rezultate vot (Voting results)*, Code for Romania. <https://rezultatevot.ro/elections/112/results>
- Romania, C. f. (2021). Website Rezultate Vot (Website Vote Results). <https://rezultatevot.ro/elections/112/results>
- Schreier, M. (2018). Sampling and generalization. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection* (pp. 84–98). Sage Publications.
- Shugart, M. S., Valdini, M. E., & Suominen, K. (2005). Looking for locals: Voter information demands and personal vote-earning attributes of legislators under proportional representation. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(2), 437–449.
- Soare, S., & Tufiș, C. D. (2023). Saved by the diaspora? The case of the alliance for the union of Romanians. *European Political Science*, 22(1), 101–118. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-022-00408-3>
- Strom, K., Müller, W. C., & Bergman, T. (2003). *Delegation and accountability in parliamentary democracies*. Oxford University Press.
- Sue, V. M., & Ritter, L. A. (2012). *Conducting online surveys*. Sage Publications.
- Taber, C. S., & Lodge, M. (2006). Motivated skepticism in the evaluation of political beliefs. *American Journal of Political Science*, 50(3), 755–769. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2006.00214.x>
- Tazzioli, M. (2024). Migration and the racialised politics of desire. *Politics* (Online first). <https://doi.org/10.1177/02633957241263744>
- Tranter, B. (2007). Political knowledge and its partisan consequences. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 42(1), 73–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10361140601158559>
- Verba, S., Burns, N., & Schlozman, K. L. (1997). Knowing and caring about politics: Gender and political engagement. *The Journal of Politics*, 59(4), 1051–1072. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2998592>
- Vlase, I., & Voicu, B. (2018). *Gender, family, and adaptation of migrants in Europe. A life course perspective*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Waddell, B. J., & Fontenla, M. (2015). The Mexican dream? The effect of return migrants on hometown development. *The Social Science Journal*, 52(3), 386–395. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2015.02.003>

Wessendorf, S. (2007). “Roots migrants”: transnationalism and “return” among second-generation Italians in Switzerland. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 33(7), 1083–1102. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830701541614>

Appendix 1. Descriptive statistics of the variables included in the analysis

Variables	Mean	Std. dev.	Min.	Max.
Self-reported knowledge of MPs	1.71	0.85	1	3
Ties to country of origin	3.42	1.21	1	5
Return intention	2.03	2.75	1	10
Political interest	3.67	1.69	1	6
Political efficacy	1.80	1.09	1	5
Voter turnout	0.52	0.50	0	1
Party contact	1.69	1.30	1	5
Partisanship	0.40	0.49	0	1
Length of stay	4.65	0.79	1	6
Media use (country of origin)	4.49	1.76	1	6
Age	2.84	1.10	1	5
Education	3.27	1.02	1	5
Gender	1.47	0.49	1	2

Appendix 2. Variable measurement codebook

Variables	Questions	Measurement
Self-reported knowledge of MPs	To what extent do you know a Romanian MP elected in 2020 for the diaspora seats?	1 = I do not know any 2 = I heard the name of one MP but I do not remember it now 3 = I know the name of one MP elected in diaspora
Ties to country of origin	How often do you stay in contact (visits, meetings, phone, online chat etc.) cu with friends and acquaintances living in Romania?	1 = very little 5 = very much
Return intention	On a scale from 0 (not at all) and 10 (very high), how do you estimate the likelihood to return to Romania and live there in the next two years?	0 = not at all 10 = very high
Political interest	How interested are you in general in Romanian politics?	1 = not at all 6 = very much
Political efficacy	To what extent do you feel that you can influence the political decisions in Romania?	1 = very little 5 = very much
Voter turnout	Do you feel close to a political party in Romania?	0 = no 1 = yes
Interaction with political parties	Did you vote in the 2020 legislative elections in Romania?	0 = no 1 = yes
Partisanship		1 = never 6 = on a weekly basis

(Continued)

Continued.

Variables	Questions	Measurement
	How often did you have in the last year contact with the organization of Romanian political parties in the country of residence?	
Length of stay	For how long do you live in this country? (total period, not continuous)	1 = less than 6 months 6 = more than 5 years
Media use	How often do you the frequency use the media in Romania (TV, radio, newspapers – including those online) for information?	1 = never 6 = daily or almost daily
Age	How old are you?	1 = 18–30 years old 2 = 31–40 years old 3 = 41–50 years old 4 = 51–60 years old 5 = over 60 years old
Education	What is the highest degree completed in education?	1 = primary or secondary school 5 = post-graduate studies
Gender	What is your gender?	1 = women 2 = men

Appendix 3. The ordinal logistic regression model with country dummies

Variables	Odds ratios
Ties to country of origin	0.99
Return intention	0.95
Political interest	1.43**
Political efficacy	1.32**
Voted in election	2.47**
Party contact	1.79**
Partisanship	1.45**
Length of stay	1.02
Media use (country of origin)	1.07
Age	1.01
Education	1.18*
Gender	1.06
France	0.74
Germany	0.78
Italy	0.74
Spain	0.84
United Kingdom	0.79
United States	0.78
Other countries	0.83
N	1,057
Pseudo R ²	0.20
Log likelihood	-840.15

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.