Backlash Against Repression: Evidence from Refugees Fleeing the Former Soviet Bloc*

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Abstract

State repression durably impacts political behaviors in repressed populations, yet research has largely focused on individuals remaining in affected places. Seldom considered are behaviors of individuals who flee to other countries. We examine one such population, Jews exiting the Soviet Bloc, using a unique administrative dataset rarely available in the immigration context. Applying a within-family research design, we examine the impact of having lived longer in the Soviet Bloc on political behavior. In contrast with typical findings of state repression's demobilizing effects, we find that siblings who lived longer in the Soviet Union are significantly more likely to vote in elections. We also find a differentially greater tendency to affiliate with conservative political parties, which we attribute to backlash against communism. We consider alternative mechanisms including family dynamics and economics, and find supportive evidence for similar effects in Israel, one of the other major recipients of this refugee population.

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For those lucky enough to survive, living through episodes of mass repression by the state can have profound impacts on political behavior. A growing literature in political economy has begun to document this, providing evidence of contemporary political consequences for repression, deportation and famine under Stalin's Terror (Lupu and Peisakhin, 2017; Rozenas, Schutte and Zhukov, 2017; Zhukov and Talibova, 2018; Rozenas and Zhukov, 2019), German military occupation in Greece during World War II (WWII) (Fouka and Voth, 2023), the deportation and mass murder of Jews living under Soviet rule during the Holocaust (Acemoglu, Hassan and Robinson, 2011), the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia (Bühler and Madestam, 2023), and the internment of Japanese Americans in the United States (US) during WWII (Komisarchik, Sen and Velez, 2022). Broadly speaking, this research suggests that extreme, devastating state interventions in the lives of civilians have a demobilizing impact that may last for generations. Public trust, turnout, and other measures of political participation tend to be lower in the most severely affected places. Predictably, surviving victims of state violence and repression also harbor hostility toward the perpetrating regimes and pass these sentiments down to their descendants.

This vein of research has provided invaluable insight into the persistent effects of state violence and repression, but its focus has thus far centered largely on affected places and the people who remained in them after a particular episode of state repression drew to a close. Yet for millions across the globe, repression is a powerful impetus to leave—even if the risks associated with emigration are enormous. Members of targeted minority groups, in particular, may decide to flee in the face of systematic threats of violence or deprivation. For instance, almost 90% of the Jewish population under Soviet rule that had survived the Holodomor famine in Ukraine (1932-1933), arrest and execution under Stalin's Terror (1936-1938), imprisonment in gulags (1936-1953), and mass murder during the Holocaust (1933-1945) ultimately emigrated out of the Former Soviet Union (FSU)[1] after 1970 (Tolts, 2019). While an extensive body of research has suggested state repression imbues groups with deep, collective memories and affects the way members perceive one another, society, and the state (Dessí, 2008; Nunn and Wantchekon, 2011; Superti and Gidron, 2021; Bühler and Madestam, 2023; Fouka and Voth, 2023), researchers almost never get a chance to track the individuals who leave repressive states in order to evaluate state repression's diasporic

[1] Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan

political consequences.

In this paper, we use a novel data source to provide a first look at how living under a repressive, authoritarian communist regime affects political participation and party affiliation for immigrants who come to the US. We rely on records of refugees resettled in the US with help from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), a nonprofit organization that has provided humanitarian aid and assistance to refugees entering the US since 1881. HIAS was originally founded to help Jews fleeing discrimination and violence throughout Tsarist Russia. The clients they serve consist primarily (though not exclusively) of people leaving countries in the FSU. These countries—along with several other Soviet Bloc[2] states from which HIAS-assisted refugees fled to the US—were all under communist authoritarian rule throughout most of our observation period and all targeted the members of their Jewish populations with violence, imprisonment, and restrictions on education, employment, Communist Party membership, residence permits, worship, speech, and other aspects of civic life well into the 1990s. Our data, made available by the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS), consists of more than 600,000 records of immigrants resettled in the United States between the 1950s and 2016, making it one of the largest sources of information on immigrants ever used in studies of migration.

Crucially, this data set identifies individuals, family connections, dates of birth, countries of origin, and dates of emigration, which allows us to address the question of how living under a repressive authoritarian regime pre-migration affects individual immigrants' political lives in diaspora after they have resettled in a democratic regime where their personal and civil rights are generally protected. Access to information beyond individuals' self-reported immigration status is very rare. While governments often keep even more extensive data on immigrants than resettlement organizations do, these records are typically embargoed until long after these individuals are deceased. For example, the US National Archives only makes available comparable records in 100 years after an individual's birth[3]; these are provided in hard copy. Under such rigid information constraints, social scientists have seldom been able to trace the migration process in much detail.

We focus on children within the same refugee families, which allows us to hold fixed potential

[2]In addition to the 15 states that constituted the FSU this includes Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia

[3]https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/aliens

confounding that might arise from genetics, family structure, and the migration experience itself (e.g., Griliches (1979); Böhlmark (2008); Currie et al. (2010); Chetty and Hendren (2018). We merge our extensive data on refugees who emigrated as children to commercially available individual voter files to track the effects of coming of age under a repressive regime on voting (conditional on registration) and party identification after migration. In contrast to the pattern of demobilization documented in the literature surrounding the effects of state repression, we find that children who spend more time living under a repressive regime are, on average, more likely to participate in presidential and midterm elections and to register as Republicans in the US. Our findings hold within our simplest within-family design, as well as within variations on this design that examine the possibly confounding role of family structures and eldest sibling effects, variations that look cross-sectionally across families, and versions that look across different immigration cohorts affected by changing macroeconomic circumstances. Moreover, we also establish similar patterns within the same refugee population in a different national context (Israel) using data from a large multi-election survey.

Our research design focused on differences within families marks a notable advance for the literature, as it allows us to provide evidence that the political behaviors we observe among refugees after resettlement are likely to be a function of exposure to repression experienced prior to emigration rather than pre-immigration partisanship, the immigration experience, or the assimilation process in either the US or Israel. While a number of studies done on Eastern European immigrant populations in Europe, Canada, and Australia have pointed out their distinctively right-leaning partisan character and low levels of expressed public trust (Wüst, 2000, 2004; Strijbis, 2014; McAllister and Makkai, 1991; Bird, Saalfeld and Wüst, 2010), their findings are difficult to attribute to the effects of living under repressive regimes for two reasons. Like most surveys of immigrant populations, these surveys rely on mixed samples of people who emigrated as refugees fleeing repressive regimes and people who emigrated to, say, reunite with a spouse or to start a new job. Both types of immigrants may come from the same country in the same year, making it difficult to tell what the result of having been repressed by the state might be. Additionally, surveys of immigrant populations are snapshots of post-migration political attitudes and behavior, making it difficult to rule out the possibility that any patterns we observe in immigrant preferences or behaviors are themselves the factors that drove migration in the first place (Turcu and Urbatsch,

2022; Lim, 2022). Immigrants who support right-wing parties in their settlement country, for instance, may have also been disposed to right-wing parties before migration.

Our research design guards against the possibility of this type of selection by (1) focusing on children in immigrant families because children are not typically responsible for migration decisions and (2) comparing the "doses" of exposure each sibling would have received to the repressive regime they were born in, with the majority of other factors fixed. Consider, for example, a family from Moscow with two children, aged ten and five upon emigration to the US in 1992. At the moment of migration, these siblings will have gotten a five-year difference in the levels of direct and indirect exposure to the FSU, with most other features of life constant across children. On the US side, these children will have typically lived in the same household, attended the same schools (though not necessarily exactly at the same time), done many of the same activities, and shared in their parents' economic fortunes. Most importantly, by 2024, both siblings will have spent exactly the same 32 years living in the US, making it considerably more likely that differences in their political behavior result from different levels of exposure received pre-migration. We provide empirical support for this assumption in Appendices B and D. While our design does not let us identify exactly which features of living under a repressive regime produce the effects we observe, it does allow us to establish that the reason we observe these effects has more to do with socialization in immigrants' countries of origin rather than assimilation to their settlement country environments.

Our findings about political participation and political orientation speak to a persistent gap in the immigrant socialization literature, and are broadly relevant to a variety of other literatures on immigration, authoritarianism, and political behavior. We provide empirical evidence on the long-term effects of authoritarian regimes on individual political behaviors, contributing to the understanding of how different types of political systems influence citizens' political engagement and attitudes even after they leave those systems. We likewise add to the literature on political socialization by demonstrating the enduring impact of early political experiences and the role of personal and familial narratives in shaping political identity and behaviors in a new democratic context. Finally, this study underscores the importance of understanding the diverse backgrounds of participants in democratic societies, suggesting that experiences of repression may motivate higher levels of political engagement, which is critical for the vitality of democra-

cies. These results help allay the fears voiced in Handlin (1951) and, to some extent, resurfacing in more contemporary literature on immigration (see Just (2019) for an overview), where authors voice normative concerns that immigrants socialized in undemocratic states might either shun democratic participation or attempt to undermine democracy.

1 Jewish Refugees from the Former Soviet Bloc

Under mounting international pressure following World War II and subsequently the Six-Day war in 1967, the FSU began to allow limited Jewish emigration to Israel. The process of obtaining visas was initially cumbersome and arbitrary, and applicants often risked dismissal from their work assignments and retaliation by the government (Remennick, 2007). Still, approximately 160,000 Jews emigrated to Israel in this period. In 1973, the US passed the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which made permitting emigration a human rights issue and a condition for trade agreements between the US and FSU. The FSU responded by reversing its position and restricting Jewish emigration again, largely in response to Jackson-Vanik. These restrictions were lifted under Gorbachev beginning in 1986, when ethnic Germans were permitted to return to west Germany and Jews were allowed to go to Israel or the US.

Jews remaining in FSU countries during this period were still widely subject to official and unofficial discrimination, including: restrictions on university entry, employment, and Communist Party membership, along with a legacy of religious repression held over from earlier Soviet regimes that had banned religious practice and destroyed spaces for public worship (Altshuler, 1987). For instance, the requirement that Jews throughout the FSU register with Jewish "nationality" on passports, medical records, and library cards - established under Stalin's rule in 1932 - remained in full force until 1997 (Remennick, 2007). Ironically, the liberalization of free expression rules under Gorbachev's Perestroika heralded an increase in public anti-semitic demonstrations (Gitelman, 1991), all prompting subsequent waves of emigration out of the Soviet Union that would continue after the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991.

This exodus is a particularly remarkable one in its scale and near-completeness. Approximately 2.2 million Jews lived in the Soviet Union in 1970 – a population that fell to 1.5 million in 1989 and dwindled to just 248,000 by the beginning of 2019 (Tolts, 2019). Of the approximately

1.6 million Jews born in the FSU who now live elsewhere, an estimated 750,000 currently live in the US. This group constitutes approximately 10% of the American Jewish population, but looks profoundly different politically. As we'll discuss in the subsequent section, while the records we have obtained from HIAS go so far back as to include individuals born in the 1880s, the people we can confidently merge to contemporary voting records belong largely to waves of immigrants leaving after 1985.

Given how late explicit restrictions on Jewish participation in public and private life persisted in the FSU, nearly every HIAS-assisted refugee in our data will have been a survivor of some form of political repression. The intensity of repression these refugees might have experienced directly, however, likely varies with age. The oldest immigrants in our data are likely to have been survivors of both the mass murder of approximately 3 million Jews under Soviet rule during the Holocaust (Altshuler, 1987) and Stalin's cleansing campaigns that arrested and executed high-ranking Jewish Communist Party members as well as intellectual leaders and dissidents both before and after World War II (Martin, 1998; Remennick, 2007) while the youngest may have directly witnessed the anti-Semitic demonstrations of the 1990s, they would have been subject to less extreme forms of state repression such as legal restrictions on work and education. Still, it's likely that older refugees would have described memories of past atrocities to younger descendants, meaning that almost everyone in the data has some direct or indirect exposure to even the most extreme state repression documented in the 20^{th} century.

Most of the historical immigration patterns we address in this section apply to the FSU specifically, while the population in our data emigrated from the Soviet Bloc more broadly. We focus our historical discussion on the FSU because the vast majority of emigrants in our data emigrated out of this set of countries. It is worth pointing out, however, that the force we describe as the main driver of emigration out of the FSU - being targeted by the state for persecution on ethnic and religious grounds - was a similarly important driver of emigration across the Soviet Bloc despite differences in specific policy approaches and regime survival lengths. Many regimes in the Soviet Bloc (but outside the FSU) had very small surviving Jewish populations after the end of WWII, and generally did not restrict their immigration to Israel or other countries. Romania's government, for instance, did not oppose the mass migration of its surviving Jewish population to Israel beginning virtually with Israel's independence in 1948. Similarly, approximately one-

third of Hungary's Jewish population emigrated to Israel between 1945 and 1949 - and emigration would continue through the Hungarian communist party's collapse in 1989. Other regimes forcibly drove out their surviving Jewish populations. Poland's communist government forcibly expelled over 15,000 Jews in 1968. While emigration was not restricted everywhere, Jews fled countries throughout the Soviet Bloc en masse to escape significant episodes of ethnic targetting by their ruling regimes.

2 The Imprint of Repression

How might experiencing repression at the hands of a communist authoritarian state affect the political lives of survivors who emigrate to democracies? The extant literature suggests a "backlash effect" for victims who remain in affected areas; victims are more hostile to the perpetrating regime and persistently less likely to express loyalty unless the regime can credibly threaten them again (Rozenas and Zhukov, 2019). It's reasonable to suggest that this dynamic holds for surviving victims who emigrate since emigration itself is a powerful rejection of the ruling regime. Because emigration makes it exceedingly difficult for a repressive regime to credibly threaten those who leave, the backlash effect has straightforward predictions for what emigrants might do once they resettle in a democratic country: affiliate with parties they perceive to be most unlike the ruling regime that persecuted them in terms of ideology or character.

As we discuss below, that is a view consistent with other studies of immigrants fleeing repression under communist totalitarian regimes, press interviews with members of the refugee population fleeing formerly communist states throughout the Soviet Bloc, and our own data. The implications of this argument for post-migration political participation are less clear. Living through episodes of severe repression by the state may so destroy victims' sense of public trust that they come to fear engagement with any state, but it might also motivate survivors to participate more post-migration to fulfill pent up demand for political voice, cast votes against parties similar to oppresive ones in their birth countries, or a number of other possible psychological mechanisms beyond the scope of this study. We map out theoretical implications for both partisanship and participation in detail below.

2.1 Party Affiliation

In the post-World War II world, most of the regimes that have engaged in mass political repression have been communist authoritarian regimes (Davenport, 2007). Immigrants hailing from left-wing authoritarian regimes across continents, religions, races, and ethnicities have tended to affiliate with right-wing parties over left-wing parties – at least at much higher rates than immigrants coming from other regime types. Scholars working in the comparative literature have observed that this backlash against left-wing authoritarian governments is affective more than it is ideological. Pervasive public anti-communism in communist, authoritarian regimes is rooted in opposition to party control over civic, political, and economic life; disappointment at the deprivation and economic inefficiency introduced by central planning; and anger over violent repression at the hands of the state (Kuran, 1991; Darden and Grzymala-Busse, 2006; Just, 2019). Sentiments like these abound in popular press accounts from Eastern European-Jewish refugees to the US, who are heavily represented in our data. "They have experienced socialism and communism in a totalitarian regime," the director of Russian-Jewish Community Affairs at the American Jewish Committee explained to *The Atlantic*; "anything that remotely resembles that, they hate it, they despise it" (Khazan, 2016). Immigrants from the Soviet Bloc are not alone. Examples of similarly fervent anti-communism appear in studies of immigrants from China, Vietnam, and Cuba (Takaki, 1989; Girard, Grenier and Gladwin, 2012; Wong et al., 2011).

An abundance of descriptive survey evidence points to the possibility that reflexive rejection of communist authoritarian parties helps guide political orientation for immigrants fleeing these regimes. Many studies have documented the tendency for immigrants from left-wing authoritarian regimes to identify with right-wing parties in democratic countries - even when those parties are anti-immigrant (Spies et al., 2023). Studies have shown this is the case among Eastern European immigrants to Germany (Wüst, 2000, 2004), Switzerland (Strijbis, 2014), and Australia (McAllister and Makkai, 1991), as well as Romanian immigrants to Spain (Bird, Saalfeld and Wüst, 2010). Several studies have pointed out similar trends among Vietnamese and Cuban immigrants to the US (Cain, Kiewiet and Uhlaner, 1991; Hill and Moreno, 1996; Alvarez and Bedolla, 2003; Lien, Conway and Wong, 2004; Hajnal and Lee, 2006).

There is evidence for this in the US voting behavior of refugees from the Soviet Bloc as well.

Some of the most extensive existing surveys of the Russian-speaking Jewish immigrant population suggested that 60-70% would support Donald Trump in the 2016 general election (Khazan, 2016). In fact, Donald Trump ultimately won 84% of the Republican primary vote in Brooklyn's Brighton Beach neighborhood, historically an enclave for Russian-speaking immigrants (Bagri, 2016). This phenomenon is not limited to Donald Trump's candidacy. Russian-speaking Jewish immigrants reported casting predominantly Republican ballots in the 2004, 2008, and 2012 presidential elections (Bagri, 2016).

For immigrants from the Soviet Bloc, this is more likely to be evidence of a backlash effect against a persecuting regime than a case where immigrants are directly mapping pre-migration political ideologies to new political circumstances. Unlike refugees from Castro's Cuba, who were right-wing partisans prior to migration and largely retain right-of-center party affiliations after migration to the US (Portes and Mozo, 1985), Jews in the FSU were prominent supporters of a communist ruling state and were over-represented in the highest ranks of the Communist Party until Stalin's regime launched systematic cleansing campaigns of the Party's ranks and the country's intellectual centers to remove them (Martin, 1998; Slezkine, 2004; Remennick, 2007). While individual-level pre-migration surveys of this population are unavailable, qualitative and historical evidence suggests that it would be unreasonable to characterize this population as right-wing prior to migration.

2.2 Participation

How might people leaving authoritarian regimes without democratic institutions adjust to them post-migration? In contemporary authoritarian states, either as a result of limited exposure to democracy or due to messaging deployed by governments seeking to disparage democracy, residents might have limited trust in the public and skepticism of deliberative democratic institutions themselves. In fact, several surveys across western democracies have suggested that immigrants from authoritarian regimes are more likely to express skepticism of democracy or openness to other forms of government (McAllister and Makkai, 1991; Bilodeau, McAllister and Kanji, 2010; Bilodeau, 2014, 2016; Just, 2019). This certainly appears to be the case among immigrants from the Soviet Bloc, who report low levels of public trust and faith in institutions (DiFranceisco and Gitelman, 1984; Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer, 1998; Holmes, 1997). Immigrants

from Vietnam have also expressed high levels of distrust in the government relative to members of other Asian-American subgroups emigrating from less repressive regimes (Collet, 2000). Researchers have pointed out that political participation often does take place in some form under a left-wing authoritarian regime. However, in authoritarian regimes political participation is often compulsory and performative; citizens may be expected to join the governing party, attend rallies and political events, take part in political debates, or even cast ballots - all without any expectation of exerting real influence over government (DiFranceisco and Gitelman, 1984; Kuran, 1991).

Taken together, pre-migration distrust in public political institutions, aversion to engagement with the state after being forced to do it ceremonially, or outright oppression at the hands of the state might all suggest that authoritarian regimes politically demobilize their citizens (Just, 2019). That is likely to represent at least a portion of the direct effect that living under such regimes has on immigrants and non-immigrants alike. However, it remains important to account for the theoretical implications of both selection and socialization. It is possible that those who leave authoritarian regimes are precisely those people with the greatest desire to participate in the democratic process. Accordingly, immigrants who obtain citizenship in new countries may actually be more likely to participate in elections despite the disincentives to do this in their countries of origin.

It's similarly possible that, despite a learned reluctance to engage in politics in their countries of birth, immigrants might think of the US, Canada, Australia, Israel, or other mature democracies as places where political participation is fruitful and welcome any encouragement that they receive to obtain citizenship and engage in politics upon arrival. In other words, conditional on knowing that they might be settling in a democratic country, immigrants may adopt positive views of the democratic process. There is some evidence that this might be the case; Acemoglu et al. (2021) find that immigrants who spend longer periods in well-functioning democracy express support for democratic institutions. Similarly, scholars of migration to the US during the late 19^{th} and early 20^{th} centuries have pointed out that immigrants (including Eastern European immigrants) hailing from undemocratic regimes were often aggressively and successfully recruited into democratic party politics, particularly in large urban centers (Dahl, 1961).

These countervailing forces may help explain why empirical findings attempting to relate

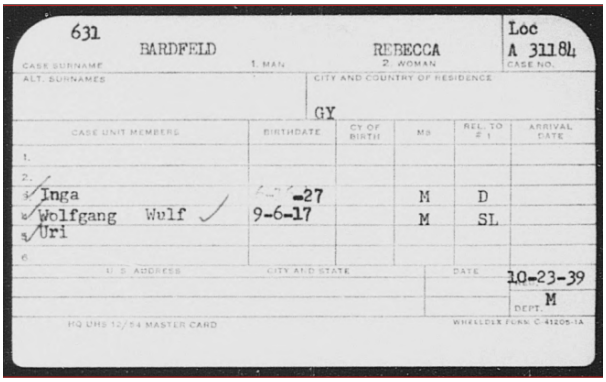
political participation to country of birth among immigrants to Western democracies are such a mixed bag. There appears to be no clear empirical relationship between turnout and country of origin for immigrants to Canada (White, 2017) or Australia (Bilodeau, McAllister and Kanji, 2010). Using surveys of first generation immigrants to the US spanning 1994-2000, Ramakrishnan (2005) finds that the relationship between coming of age in a repressive regime and turnout varies by ethnicity, changing signs from negative for white and non-Cuban LatinX immigrants to positive for Asian immigrants. Earlier studies of Cuban immigrants to the US have suggested higher rates of political participation relative to immigrants from other LatinX subgroups who were not fleeing repressive regimes (Portes and Mozo, 1985; Arvizu and Garcia, 1996).

We will show evidence that, for the population we study, longer periods of exposure to left-wing authoritarian regimes actually increase the likelihood of participation. It's worth pointing out one important caveat in the context of theoretical predictions. As we will discuss in Section 3, our data constrain us to look at people who turn out conditional on having registered to vote. We will not be able to address the question of whether or not living under authoritarian regimes makes people more or less likely to register to vote. The possibility that coming of age under authoritarianism is broadly demobilizing in the sense that smaller proportions of immigrants coming from authoritarian countries register relative to native-born people or other immigrants remains open for future research.

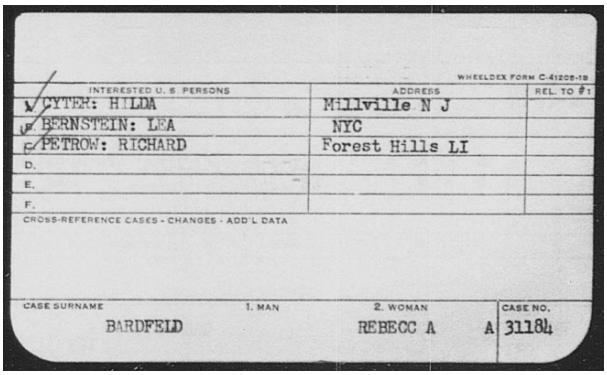
3 HIAS Data and Merge

3.1 HIAS

Our project leverages novel data from the HIAS administrative files, digitized through a collaboration with the AJHS. For clients who immigrated (roughly) from 1980-2016, the AJHS database provides information that includes first and last name, country of birth, arrival date, and case number. For clients who immigrated between (roughly) 1955 and 1980, the AJHS database contains information that is derived from an extensive hand-coding of an old paper card system. The AJHS data from before 1980 contain fields including last name, man's name, woman's name, country of origin, case number, and registration date. These fields are similar to what is available



(a) Front



(b) Back

Figure 1: An example card from the administrative files, 1955-1980. This sample record is publicly available via HIAS's weblog describing the digitization of the organization's records.

post-1980, but are subtly different. The AJHS also provides scanned copies of these index cards, making it possible to recode the originals and resolve ambiguities.

Figure 1 provides an example of what these cards look like. Other information visible on these cards include birth date, country of birth, marital status, relationship to the head of household, arrival date, arrival address, and the names of related cases and interested persons. To assemble our dataset, we began by acquiring these web-available records, and then contracted with a vendor to extend the manual coding of the scanned index card files to the remaining fields that were available on these cards, but not already coded by AJHS. In total, we amass over 600,000 such client records.

The AJHS's records always describe the names of clients and their case numbers. By definition, individuals with common case numbers are people who immigrate together. Inspection of these files reveals that a particular case number usually corresponds with a nuclear family, however it may include cousins, in-laws, or more distant relations. We eventually use shared case numbers to implement our within-family design, however before reaching that point we attempt to gather information about the subsequent political behavior of these individuals. In particular, we set about matching these sets of names to voter files.

Specifically, we merge the HIAS and AJHS refugee records to individual voter records made commercially available by L2. L2 curates records of approximately 208 million U.S. voters, providing a large list of covariates describing each voter, including: full name, registration status (active or inactive), birth date, age, race, gender, address, turnout history, and party affiliation.

Like all voter records, L2's data are limited to U.S. citizens that have, at some point in the past, registered to vote. Residents who have never registered to vote do not appear in voter files, so there is no way to obtain information on non-voters from these files or to strictly distinguish between people who have truly never voted and people who do not match to the files as a result of having been purged off voter rolls or mis-transcription.

Three important considerations about the underlying data merit mention in thinking about how to implement the name matching. First, the immigrants that HIAS helped come to the US often had idiosyncratic surnames as compared with American natives, particularly those largely Soviet-bloc immigrants that arrived post-1980. For example, Appendix Figure A.1 shows that almost 70% of surnames in our data are shared with fewer than 100 registered voters, whereas almost 90% of registered voters share a surname with more than 100 people. To reach an equal or better level of distinctiveness as one finds with these last names in the general voter population one would need to condition on birth year and birth month as well. Second, HIAS was not always perfectly reliable about filing out all available fields in their old index card system, however, they did often record birth-dates. For pre-1980, the matching exercise to voter files can take advantage of the fact birthdates are highly discriminating and surnames are fairly discriminating, while for post-1980 the matching exercise can take advantage of the fact that surnames for this group are particularly unique. Finally, while better matching might be possible with more data on individuals - especially birth dates for the post-1980 cohort - administrative fileswith sufficient detail can only become available to scholars when these individuals are older than 100, which is to say in 30 years for the oldest immigrants in our files.

We engage in a step-wise matching procedure for both the pre-1980 and post-1980 immigrants. For each of the post-1980 immigrants, we search through the voter files for individuals with active registration that have the same first and last name. If we find a unique match, we accept that match and remove it from the pool of immigrants we are attempting to match. With the new, smaller set of unmatched immigrants, we look for unique exact matches on first and last name, now including inactive registrations as well. Successfully matched names are removed from the pool. With the remaining unmatched immigrants, we again look through the entire voter file for individuals with the same last name and one character edit to the first name. Particularly with foreign names, minor transcription errors are fairly common. Any successful unique

matches are added to our dataset. At this point, we stop searching for more tenuous matches of the post-1980 cohort.

Our strategy for finding the pre-1980s immigrants proceeds similarly with a search for unique exact matches according to some restrictive set of criteria, removing successful finds from the pool, and then matching the leftovers against some less restrictive criteria. We iterate this process through more filters than in the case of the post-1980 group, because we have more relevant data. Full details on our step-wise procedures are available in Appendix A.

4 Empirical Strategy and Results

4.1 Sample Characteristics

The matching process we describe in Appendix A leaves us with individuals for whom crucial data, such as age at arrival, year of arrival, gender, current state of residence, and voting history, are available.[4] There are 114,895 such individuals, representing 28,504 families who came to the U.S. from the Soviet Bloc with at least one child.[5] 33,799 of these individuals arrived in the US as children, which we define as younger than 21 years old, and were at least 18 by the November 4, 2014 general election – the earliest election for which we have participation data. Figure 2 presents the number of individuals in our data set from each country who arrived as children. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) is the most common country of origin, representing all arrivals prior to the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991. Post-collapse Ukraine, Russia, Uzbekistan, and Belarus round out the top 5 countries of origin. One limitation this feature of the data imposes is that it makes extensive investigation of how living in specific countries affects post-migration political behavior unreliable, as very few children coming from any one country outside of the USSR, Ukraine, Russia, Uzbekistan, and Belarus appear in the data.

Panel A in Figure 3 shows the distribution of years of arrival for refugees who emigrated as children. The distribution is very similar for the whole sample. Although our earliest refugees

[4]For example, we work only with those individuals who are at least 18 years old and potentially eligible to vote in the US by the November 4, 2014 general election.

[5]We include immigrants who came from Soviet Bloc countries after the Soviet Bloc dissolved and the relevant communist regimes were toppled, so the sample includes people emigrating from Russia as well as the USSR, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (formerly part of Yugoslavia), etc.

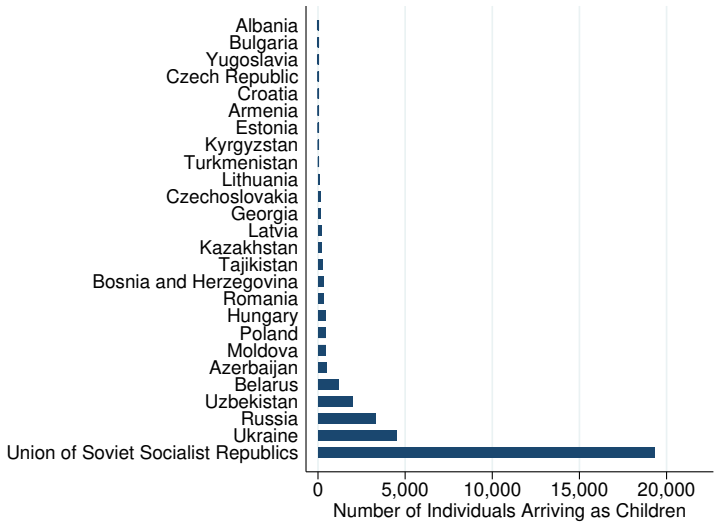


Figure 2: Countries of Origin

Note: Countries of origin, by number of people arriving as children (under age 21).

came to the US in 1938 and the latest in 2005, there are two main waves of migration. The first, in the 1960s and early 1970s, is largely (75%) from the Soviet bloc countries of Poland and Romania. The second wave is largely in the 1980s and 1990s, when refugees departed the FSU.

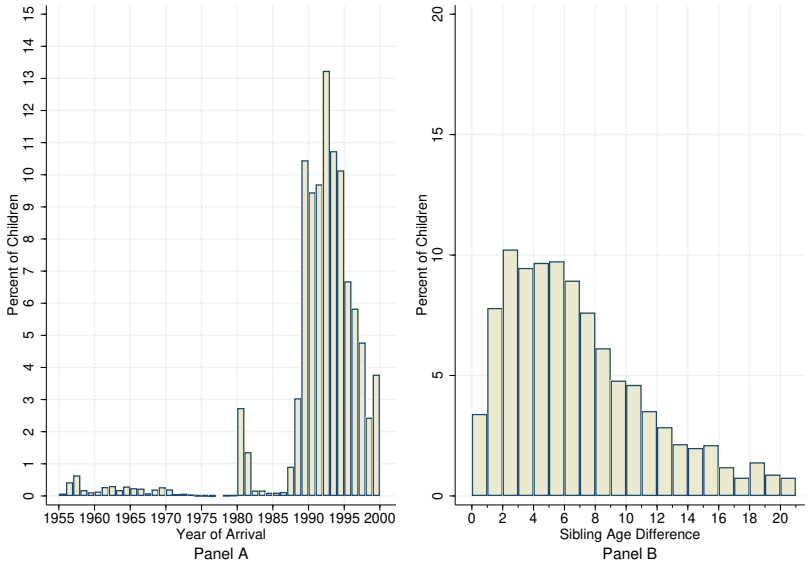


Figure 3: Descriptive Distributions

Note: Panel A shows the distribution of individuals arriving as children (under the age of 21), by year of arrival. Panel B shows the distribution of individuals who arrive as children and who have siblings, by the age gap between siblings.

Panel B in Figure 3 presents a distribution of the children with siblings in our data according to the age gap between the siblings. Most children in our data have siblings who are 10 years or fewer apart from them. The outliers, those with a greater than 10 year gap, are possibly cousins rather than brothers or sisters. Excluding these outliers from our analyses produces very similar results (see Table B.6 in the Appendix).

4.2 Voting Behavior

We are interested in understanding whether there is a relationship between age at arrival in the US and an individual's political engagement and preferences later in life. Numerous studies have shown a causal relationship between exposure to a particular environment, especially in childhood, and one's income, health, and education, among other outcomes (Chetty and Hendren, 2018). We use our data to understand whether environment shapes political preferences and behaviors. Since our voting pattern data are only available for those who are registered to vote, we are limited to studying only those who are civically engaged enough to register.

Panel A of Figure 4 shows the unconditional relationship between age at arrival and the probability of voting in the 2016 general election. The scatterplot reveals a quadratic relationship between age of arrival and probability of voting. The trend is clearly increasing with age for newborn arrivals up through early middle-age, flat for middle-aged arrivals through early retirement-age, and decreasing with age among those who arrive after 60 or 65. Overall the relationship between age of arrival is positive, with every additional year associated with a 0.18 percentage point increase in the probability of voting in 2016. The results show that up until middle age more years of life spent in the origin country is correlated with a higher probability of voting in US elections later in life. In a moment, we will examine whether this descriptive finding holds up under a more credible design that addresses the role of potentially omitted confounders.

Panel B presents the same relationship, but for the 2014 midterm election instead. Here, the same increasing and then decreasing pattern appears, but the upward slope in early age is stronger (and starts much lower) and the flattening of the relationship seems to start relatively later in middle-age, perhaps around 50 or 55. Every additional year of age at arrival is associated with a 0.47 percentage point increase in the probability of voting. The figure seems to suggest that environmental exposure might have a stronger influence in influencing turnout during the

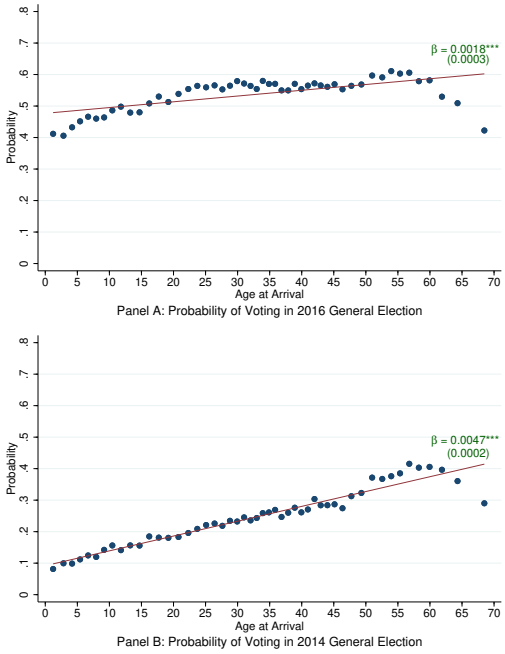


Figure 4: Probability of Voting by Age at Arrival

Note: Panel A shows the probability that an individual arriving at a particular age in the US votes in the 2016 general (presidential) election. Panel B shows the probability that an individual arriving at a particular age in the US votes in the 2014 general (midterm) election. In both Panels A and B, the specification includes no controls, no fixed effects, and no restrictions on age at arrival. Charts show binned scatter plots, with each circle an average over an equal number of data points. Errors are clustered at the level of the state in which an individual is registered to vote. Standard errors on the age at arrival variable are shown in parentheses.

less-salient midterm elections than the more-salient presidential elections. As one would expect, Figure 4 also shows that theprobability of voting in the 2014 midterm election is considerably lower than the probability of voting in the 2016 presidential election.

To see whether there is indeed a causal relationship between age at arrival and the probability of voting, we restrict our attention to childhood arrivals and estimate family fixed effects regressions of the following form:

$$y_{ij} = \alpha + \beta \textit{ArrivalAge}_{ij} + \theta \textit{Female}_{ij} + \boldsymbol{\omega}_{ij} + \boldsymbol{\phi}_j + \eta_{ij} \tag{1}$$

where y_{ij} is the outcome of child i in family j, $Female_{ij}$ is a dummy variable for the child's gender, $ArrivalAge_{ij}$ is the child's age at arrival in the US, ω_i is a fixed effect for the current state of residence, and ϕ_j is a family fixed effect that captures unobserved family characteristics that are common to all siblings in the same family.[6] η_{ij} denotes the error term. We do not explicitly control

[6]We use a linear term for *ArrivalAge* instead of a series of dummy variables because Panels A and B in Figure 4

for arrival year because year of arrival is almost universally uniform across family members for all families in our data.[7] We cluster standard errors at the state level in all model estimations.

This specification allows for a within family analysis that compares differences in the political behaviors and preferences of siblings. This approach addresses many of the most obvious concerns about confounding that we might have from Panels A and B in Figure 4, since siblings come from the same country of origin, share a similar upbringing, and in almost all cases share the exact same immigration experience. Controlling additionally for sibling differences in gender and year of arrival in the US, as well as for more recent influences that might come from the current state of residence, we zero in on the causal effect of environmental exposure on political behaviors and preferences.

In this specification it is not possible to additionally control for current age, because within a family variation in ages at arrival implies an equivalent variation in ages at all times that follow. We will later deploy several strategies to address current age as a potential confounder. Panels A and B of Figure 5 present a residualized binned scatter plot of the relationship between age at arrival and voting in 2016 and 2014, respectively.

The positive, mostly linear relationship we saw in Figure 4 is present here as well. The new slopes are 0.86 percentage points for the 2016 presidential election and 0.56 percentage points for the 2014 midterm election. With about 46% of our child sample voting in the 2016 election, every year of later arrival is equivalent to about a 1.9% increase in the probability of voting in a general presidential election.[8] In 2014, about 12.7% of the sample voted, translating our effect into a 4.4% increase in the probability of voting in a general midterm election. As with our unconditional look at the relationship between voting and time spent outside of the US, the sibling analysis demonstrates a larger effect of origin country exposure on midterm election turnout than on presidential election turnout.

Assessed in concert, the unconditional and conditional analyses provide strong evidence that the more time a Soviet Bloc refugee spent in the Soviet sphere, the more likely they would be

show a fairly linear unconditional relationship between voting and age at arrival for childhood arrivals

[7] There are four families in the data who arrive in waves such that groups of members have different arrival dates. We drop these families before estimating the results presented in this section, though including them does not substantively impact our results.

[8] According to a Pew analysis, 86.8% of registered voters cast a ballot in 2016, so turnout among refugees in our sample is lower than in the general population. Source: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/11/03/in-past-elections-u-s-trailed-most-developed-countries-in-voter-turnout/

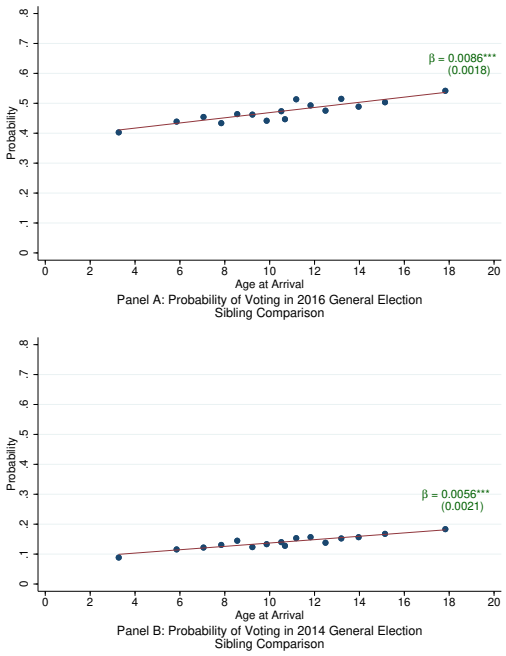


Figure 5: Probability of Voting by Age at Arrival, Sibling Comparison

Note: Panel A shows the probability that an individual arriving at a particular age in the US votes in the 2016 general (presidential) election. Panel B shows the probability that an individual arriving at a particular age in the US votes in the 2014 general (midterm) election. In both Panels A and B, the specification includes controls for gender and arrival year, as well as family and current state fixed effects. Charts show binned scatter plots, with each circle an average over an equal number of data points. Errors are clustered at the level of the state in which an individual is registered to vote. Standard errors on the age at arrival variable are shown in parentheses.

to vote once in the US. The fact that the effect is larger, in percentage terms, in midterm than in presidential elections lends credence to the appreciation hypothesis: more time spent in an authoritarian regime, without the freedom to participate in a democratic electoral process, leads to a greater appreciation for this freedom once in the US. The consistency of our findings across model specifications and a sample with a range of countries of origin suggests that our results are not driven by sibling, family, or sample-selection dynamics.

4.3 Party Affiliation

We examine the relationship between exposure to a repressive regime and post-migration party affiliation using the same approach as above, but now turning the outcome variable into a dummy variable for an individual's party registration. Figure 6 illustrates the unconditional relationship between age at arrival and party affiliation as measured in 2018 using our whole

sample. The figure reveals a similar rising-and-falling trend observed for age at arrival and voting, although the effects are visually more pronounced. As age at arrival increases there is a mostly linear decline in the probability of being registered as a Democrat (and a linear increase in the probability of being registered as a Republican) until about age 30. The probability plateaus until the mid 40s, when the probability of being registered as a Democrat starts rising again. There is no trend for registering as an independent with age of arrival until the beginning of middle-age, when increasing age appears to make non-partisan registration less likely.

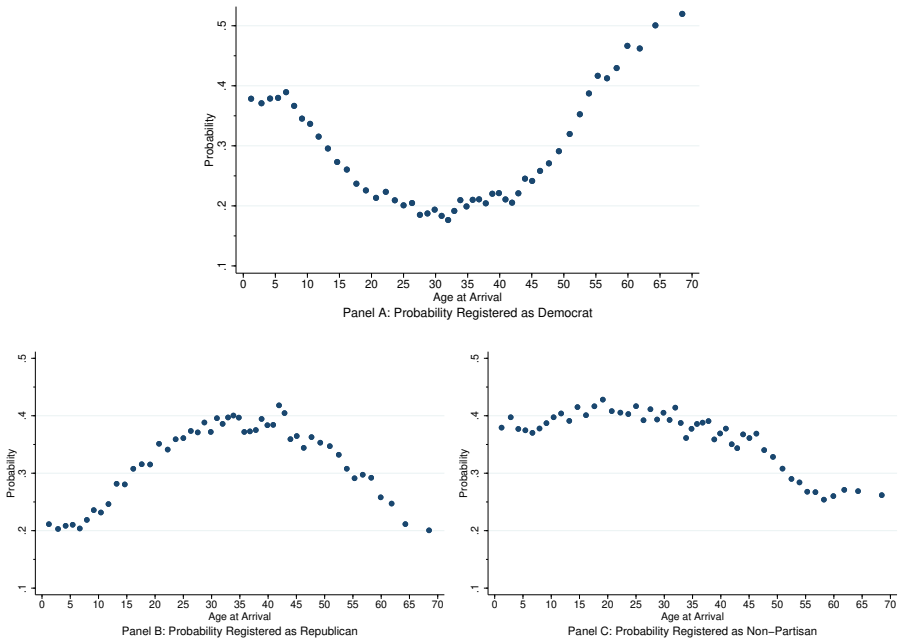


Figure 6: Probability of Party Registration by Age at Arrival

Note: Panel A shows the probability that an individual arriving at a particular age in the US is registered with the Democratic Party. Panel B shows the probability that an individual arriving at a particular age in the US is registered with the Republican Party, and Panel C shows the same for a Non-Partisan registration. Party registration is measured in 2018. The specification used here includes no controls, no family fixed effects, and no restriction on age at arrival. Charts show binned scatter plots, with each circle an average over an equal number of data points. Errors are clustered at the level of the state in which an individual is registered to vote. Standard errors on the age at arrival variable are shown in parentheses.

Since we define child arrivals as those arriving under the age of 21, we decide here, as with the voting analysis, to use the linear specification in (1) to do a sibling comparison for party affiliation. Panels A to C in Figure 7 reveal that every additional year spent in the country of origin decreases the probability of being registered as a Democrat by 0.64 percentage points or 2.0%, while increasing the probability of being registered as a Republican by 0.69 percentage

points or 2.7%. The probability of Non-Partisan registration here is flat across the range of ages of arrival, with a decline of -0.12 percentage points or about 0.3% for each additional year spent in the country of origin. Since the majority of the refugees in our sample flee not just authoritarian but also communist regimes, our results suggest that greater exposure to such regimes increases the probability that a refugee will gravitate towards the more conservative political party once in the destination country. The near-zero effect on Non-Partisan registration acts as a placebo result and further supports this hypothesis.

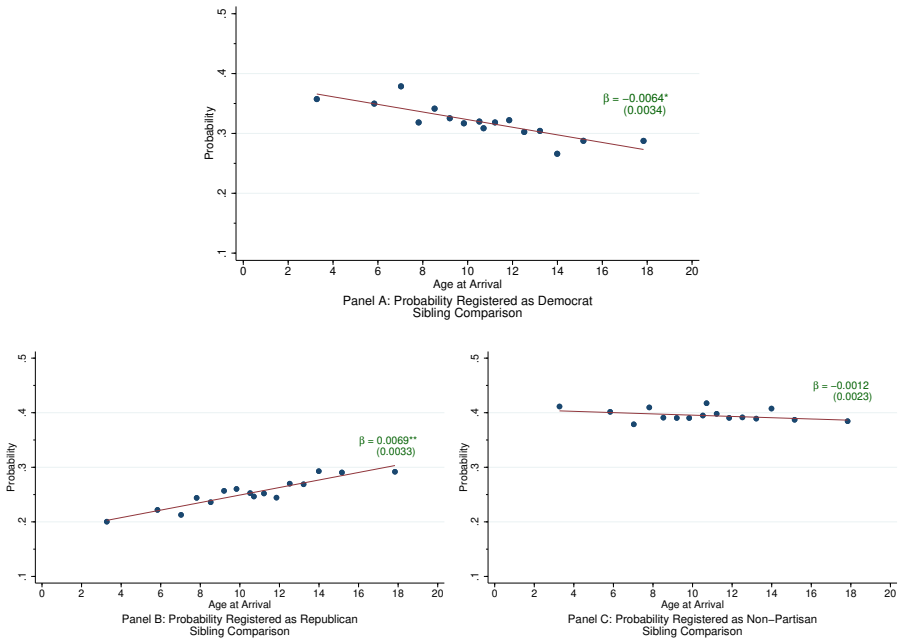


Figure 7: Probability of Party Registration by Age at Arrival, Sibling Comparison

Note: Panel A shows the probability that an individual arriving at a particular age in the US is registered with the Democratic Party. Panel B shows the probability that an individual arriving at a particular age in the US is registered with the Republican Party, and Panel C shows the same for a Non-Partisan or Independent registration. Party registration is measured in 2018. The specification includes controls for gender and arrival year, as well as family and current state fixed effects, so the relationships shown graphically here are residualized. Charts show binned scatter plots, with each circle an average over an equal number of data points. Errors are clustered at the level of the state in which an individual is registered to vote. Standard errors on the age at arrival variable are shown in parentheses.

5 Discussion

Both across and within families, age at arrival is associated with heightened tendency to participate in politics via voting and also to orient in a more conservative direction through

affiliation with the Republican party. These findings come in notable contrast to some scholarly expectations about the political behavior of those experiencing repression. That said, attributing these differences in behavior to differences in experiences of repression is not obvious and there are a number of potential alternative explanations to consider. While not intended to fully exhaust all possibilities, in the subsections that follow we examine the possible role of changing economic circumstances, family structure and eldest sibling effects, and the national context where these refugees settle.

5.1 Repression or Economic Collapse?

By the late 1980s, the Soviet economy was collapsing: Gross National Product (GNP) growth was negative, shortages of food and consumer products were rampant, trade suffered as firms across the globe refused to do business at artificially low prices fixed by the state (Shleifer and Vishny, 1991). Rapid and uneven privatization in the late 1980s and early 1990s led to skyrocketing prices, job losses, and salary freezes, perpetuating "the emergence of an economic crisis that threatened the welfare of the middle class" - to which the majority of the FSU's Jewish minority belonged (Litwin and Leshem, 2008). There is no question that concerns about economic prospects, alongside hardships imposed by decades of state targeting and ethnic repression, pushed Jews living throughout the Soviet Bloc to emigrate. There's similarly little question that refugees from the Soviet Bloc blame the ruling regime(s) for widespread financial and economic destruction and shaped their views of American politics (Berger, 2012).

Precise weights describing how much of our observed effects are attributable to targeting by the state versus backlash to economic mismanagement are impossible to recover, since most refugees in our sample emigrated in the late 1980s or later and experienced economic hardship and uncertainty along with state repression. We can, however, demonstrate that the effects we report are not exclusively the product of experiencing sudden economic hardship. We split our sample into refugees who emigrated prior to 1980, before the Soviet economic contraction was fully underway, and those who emigrated after 1980 and would have experienced the effects of both repression and economic freefall.

Section C shows that the effects we report in Section 4 manifest among pre-1980 refugees, as well as post-1980 refugees. While the pre-1980 regression coefficients fall short of conventional

levels of statistical significance because the FSU's restrictive pre-1980 emigration regime limited the number of people who could exit and consequently constrained our sample size for this period, they provide suggestive evidence, through comparable coefficients, that our conclusions would hold even if the economic crisis of the 1980s and 1990s did not hit the FSU. Before 1980, emigrants' choice of settlement country reflected religious and ideological motivations over economic ones: emigrants leaving the FSU in the 1970s were more than twice as likely to go to Israel than the US (Rosenberg, 2014). The fact that the effects we measure are comparable for this group of refugees to the effects we measure for those who leave when repression is coupled with economic crisis suggests that repression is the dominant mechanism behind the effects we document in this paper.

5.2 All in the Family?

We rely on family-fixed effects to identify the impact of living under an authoritarian regime. Because families with children tend to live together pre- and post-migration and make the move together, this allows us to hold the vast majority of socioeconomic, religious, traditional, biological, and migration-related confounders that might affect political outcomes fixed. Identification under a family fixed effect relies on the less explicit assumption that family organization, structure, and parenting are likewise relatively constant across children within the same family.

If parents treated elder children systematically differently than they treated younger children – and did this in a way that produced more political engagement and conservative-leaning political orientation in older children – we could not interpret our results as a function of each child's level of exposure to the political context prevailing in their country of birth. Instead, differences between younger and older children would result from differences in the treatment they received from parents rather than from reactions to spending more or less time under authoritarian regimes. One practical example of this that appears in the comparative and development economics literature is families who disproportionately rely on older children to work or contribute to the raising of younger children.

This particular scenario is unlikely to apply to our sample of refugees; data detailing demographic characteristics of the Jewish refugee population from the Soviet Bloc suggest that families were very small (averaging fewer than two children), making it unlikely that parents would be overextended enough at home to rely on older children to raise younger ones. Additionally,

most adults in surveys of this immigrant group reported having college or advanced degrees and expected their children to achieve similar or higher levels of education - indicating that parents preferred that their children study rather than earn an income while they were dependents (Chiswick, 1993; Simon, 1985).

Still, we test for evidence of the possibility that older children might have been treated differently explicitly in Appendix B. First, we replicate our main results on a restricted sample of just families with two children. This precludes the possibility of large families in which older children might necessarily have more responsibility for younger children because parents are overextended. This appears in Table B.4, and our results are consistent with Section 4. We also test for the converse of this situation. We restrict our sample to just families that have more than two children and drop the oldest child. This tests the possibility that the effects we report are simply the effects of being the oldest child made more engaged and conservative via the endowment of more general responsibility for family welfare. Our results remain unchanged in this specification too, represented in Table B.5, suggesting that this is more consistent with exposure than an "oldest child" effect since it is just as likely to appear in second oldest children relative to younger siblings.

Finally, we replicate our results on a sample of families with children relatively close in age. We do this because we expect relatively few differences in how parents might bring up children who are close in age and at similar stages of development at any given time. While some studies have suggested that parents are indeed likely to supervise older children more intensely than younger children (Averett, Argys and Rees, 2011), partially as a result of anxiety over the challenges of parenting for the first time and partially as a result of simply being younger and possessed of more energy when their first children are born, there is little evidence that parental supervision itself produces a systematically different outlook or behavior among children. The majority of empirical research into the relationships between birth order and psychological, sociological, or political outcomes has consistently found no systematic patterns connecting birth order to any of these (Ernst and Angst, 1983). Researchers examining the connection between birth order and ideology, policy views, and political engagement have pointed out that birth order is no more predictive of any of these than other covariates like age or gender (Urbatsch, 2014). Even if we think that persistent differences in relationships between parents and children of dif-

ferent ages exist on average, we can reduce the potential that this might confound our results by looking at families with children very close in age, because parents will not be meaningfully older or likely to be facing considerably different circumstances. We report these results in Table B.6, and they are also consistent with our main results in Section 4.

These results also imply that our effects are not just the effects of aging. In addition for controlling for age via arrival age and year in our main estimates, the fact that our effects persist in sibling groups where age differences are small makes it difficult to claim that a greater likelihood of registering as a Republican, for instance, is a function of aging alone. If we think the general effect of aging on political participation and registration works slowly (that is, there might be significant differences in party registration between, say, people in their 20s and people in their 40s but not people who are 28 and people who are 32), then this restriction makes it unlikely that we're capturing siblings in disparate age bins and thus different life stages with all of their associated political differences.

5.3 Over Here or Over There? Evidence from Immigrants to Israel

Like almost all existing studies of immigrants, we base our conclusions at least partly on post-migration data. Astute observers may point out that, especially in the American case where all immigrants who register to vote will have waited the requisite five years before obtaining citizenship and becoming eligible, there is plenty of time for assimilation into the US political climate in the years between when immigrant children arrive and when we observe their voter registration. Why, then, should we assume that the increased political engagement and propensity to identify as Republicans on the part of older children is the result of something that happens before migration rather than something that happens in the US?

This is a fundamentally important question, and there are two primary reasons we think the results we observe stem from pre-migration life under repressive regimes rather than post-migration assimilation or experience in the US. The first of these has to do with our research design. It's important to remember that the family fixed effect also accounts for much of the post-migration experience for children, meaning that the primary vehicles for the assimilation of children (e.g. schools, neighborhoods, social milieu) in the US are also fixed once families arrive.

Another story about how causal attribution to the US goes wrong is if both older and younger

siblings simply emulate otherwise prevalent differences in the US. If it were the case that native-born older siblings in the US were generally more politically engaged and politically conservative than their younger siblings, then the differences we observe could be purely due to political socialization in the US But studies of native-born children have suggested no such differences in the native-born US population (Urbatsch, 2014), and we do not see whether and why such differences would exist in other wealthy democracies.

We allude to the second most important reason we believe these effects are a function of pre-migration experiences in Section 2: though not causal, survey data describing immigrants from the FSU and other Soviet Bloc countries to democracies all over the globe consistently demonstrate the immigrants' propensity to identify with right-wing parties. This is more consistent with the possibility that immigrants carry the imprint of the Soviet Bloc with them than the alternative because they report similar behavior on surveys taken in very different developed democracies that have taken vastly different approaches to assimilating immigrants.

We go further by providing an analysis of survey data from Israel, where immigrants from the Soviet Bloc constitute approximately 15% of the country's 7.7 million inhabitants. Israel is a parliamentary democracy with party-list proportional representation; voters vote for parties they wish to see represented in the Knesset – the country's unicameral legislature. Using data from the Israel Polarization Panel Dataset (Gidron, Sheffer and Mor, 2022), we replicate our analysis of the relationship between age upon arrival to a democratic settlement country, political participation, and party affiliation to show that the results we present for immigrants from the FSU and other former Easter Bloc countries to the US also hold for immigrants from these countries to Israel.

The Israel Polarization Panel Dataset is a 10-wave panel survey designed to be representative of the Israeli electorate as of 2015. Sampling was conducted by a public opinion survey firm between 2019 and 2021. All respondents to the panel were asked about turnout in 2015, while smaller subsets were asked about turnout in subsequent elections held 2019-2021. This dataset includes observations collected from 2,542 respondents (where observations for core demographic characteristics relevant to our study purposes are complete), 495 of whom report being foreign-born and 290 of whom report having been born in the FSU or the broader Soviet Bloc. This panel does not include family identifiers, but it does contain information on residents' country of birth, immigration year, age, gender, turnout in various years between 2015 and 2021, and indicators of

support for the various political parties represented in the Knesset between 2019 and 2021. We use these survey data to run the most analogous specification to Equation 1 that the data allow, though this time including a term for arrival year in the absence of information on family units:

$$y_i = \alpha + \beta ArrivalAge_i + \theta Female_i + \kappa ArrivalYear_i + \boldsymbol{\omega}_i + \eta_i \tag{2}$$

where y_i represents a binary indicator for either turnout in a given year (we model turnout in 2015, 2019, 2020, and 2021 separately) or declared support for a right wing political party for respondent i depending on the specification. Arrival age, gender, and arrival year represent the corresponding self-reported fields for each individual respondent in the panel and $\boldsymbol{\omega}_i$ represents a dummy variable for region of residence[9] for each respondent. η_i represents the error term. The survey panel provides more socioeconomic information about respondents, but we limit ourselves to pre-migration controls to the extent possible in order to avoid inducing post-treatment bias (Acharya, Blackwell and Sen, 2016). We do not restrict this sample to people who immigrated as children in order to preserve power since only 230 respondents born in the Soviet Bloc were under 21 at the time they migrated, but doing this produces results consistent with those in Tables 1 and 2 since most people in this sample who emigrated from the Soviet Bloc came as children.

Table 1: Age at Arrival and Turnout

	Dependent variable:			
	Voted 2015	Voted 2019	Voted 2020	Voted 2021
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Age at Arrival	0.006***	0.002	0.002	0.0001
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Male	0.069	−0.051	−0.027	0.092
	(0.049)	(0.033)	(0.016)	(0.074)
Constant	0.945***	0.990***	0.993***	1.000***
	(0.077)	(0.054)	(0.006)	(0.004)
Immigration Year Dummy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region Dummy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	282	102	180	134
R^2	0.201	0.494	0.309	0.292
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 1 summarizes the relationship between age at arrival and turnout in a series of election years for immigrants from the Soviet Bloc to Israel. In each election year, outcomes are just binary indicator variables for whether respondents reported voting in that year. Bearing in mind the restrictions on power we face in this sample relative to our US data – especially for survey waves asking about elections after 2015 – these results are consistent with US data. Each additional year

[9]Jerusalem, Northern Israel, Haifa, Central Israel, Tel Aviv, Southern Israel, Judea and Samaria, or living outside of Israel

of exposure to the political repression in the Soviet Bloc (that is, arriving to Israel one year later) is associated with a slightly higher probability of turning out in each election year. In 2015, the 0.006 estimate is 0.7% of average turnout (77.5%).

Table 2: Age at Arrival and Party Affiliation

	Dependent variable:	
	Would Vote for Right Wing Party	Did Vote for Right Wing Party
	(1)	(2)
Age at Arrival	0.007***	0.008**
	(0.002)	(0.004)
Male	0.093**	0.102*
	(0.042)	(0.061)
Constant	0.969***	0.979***
	(0.060)	(0.065)
Immigration Year Dummy	✓	✓
Region Dummy	✓	✓
Observations	282	282
R^2	0.248	0.214
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Respondents in the Israel Polarization Panel were asked which party or parties they might support "if Knesset elections were held today" in waves 1 (2019), 2 (2019), and 8 (2021) of the study. Additionally, respondents were asked which party or parties they supported in the most recent Knesset elections relative to the panel month. Table 2 summarizes the relationship between age at arrival and a binary indicator for respondents who said they might or did support a right-wing party[10] in any wave of the survey.

Here, too, people who arrived from the Soviet Bloc at older ages are more likely to report supporting right-wing political parties. This is approximately a 1% effect for each additional year of exposure to the Soviet Bloc relative to overall support for right-wing parties in the sample. All specifications reported in Tables 1 and 2 are estimated using ordinary least squares regression; using logistic regressions that constrain outcome variables to be binary, as they are in our data, does not change our substantive conclusions (see Appendix D). Standard errors are cluster-robust, where clusters correspond to regions of residence. These results are unique to immigrants from the Soviet Bloc; Appendix D shows that immigrant respondents from countries outside of the Soviet Bloc who emigrated at older ages are significantly less likely to support right-wing parties. The fact that arriving later in life, after having had more extensive exposure to life under a repressive authoritarian government, manifests in higher levels of political engagement and

[10]We classify Habayit Hayehudi, Hazionut Hadatit, Kulanu, Tikvah Hadasha, Yahadut Hatorah, Yemina, Zehut, Israel Beitenu, Likud, and Shas as right-wing parties based on Hazan (2021), but our results replicate if we restrict this list just to people who reported supporting either just Likud - Israel's primary right-of-center party or Likud and Israel Beitenu (the latter party advocating for Russian speakers' interests in the country).

willingness to support right-of-center parties in Israel, as well as the US, makes it more difficult to interpret the main effects in this study as a function of something idiosyncratic to the US.

6 Conclusion

Approximately three million refugees have entered the US since the federal Refugee Resettlement Program was established in 1980, making it the largest refugee resettlement program in the world (Budiman, 2020). People seeking refuge from war, environmental or humanitarian crises, or states that targeted and oppressed them had been arriving in considerable numbers since long before the US established "refugees" as a legal category of immigrants in the wake of World War II. Almost by definition, this means that a significant proportion of both refugees and the larger immigrant population settling in the US came from countries without broad civil rights protections or participatory democratic institutions. In fact, approximately 65% of the 482,579 refugees resettled in the US between 2011 and 2022 came from countries Freedom House categorizes as "not free" in the sense that they do not preserve citizens' civil or political rights (Refugee Processing Center, 2022), and refugees from many of these countries were subjected to severe political repression before emigrating.

This group of Americans has enormous potential to impact US politics. Indeed, they already have. By recent estimates, 23.2 million of the people eligible to vote in the 2020 presidential election, or one-in-ten eligible voters, were naturalized immigrant citizens – a number that has more than doubled since 2000 (Budiman, Noe-Bustamante and Lopez, 2020). In 2020, 50.7% of foreign-born respondents to the US Current Population Survey who claimed to have voted in the 2020 general election listed countries of birth with Polity scores below 6, the cutoff the Center for Systemic Peace typically uses to indicate democracies (Flood et al., 2022; Marshall and Gurr, 2020).

While registration and turnout estimates specific to refugees are unavailable, we know that rates of naturalization for refugees and asylees have been high relative to other immigrant subgroups. For instance, 66% of refugee arrivals between 2000 and 2010 attained citizenship by 2015 (Mossaad et al., 2018). Once immigrants are naturalized, they become eligible to register and vote in federal and state elections and to donate to political campaigns.

Despite the size and significance of migrant populations, not just in the US but also in many national contexts, social scientists are only beginning to understand the way that their pre-migration experiences shape the political attitudes and behaviors they adopt upon settlement. Scholars of political socialization have long understood that the places in which we grow up, as well as the social, political, and economic contexts prevailing in them during our formative years, have an enormous effect on our levels of political engagement and our political affiliations. Going through formative experiences such as military conscription, state repression, unrest, or public prejudice can have lasting effects on political views for whole cohorts (Harvey, 1972; Sebert, Jennings and Niemi, 1974; Beck, 1977; Tedin, 1980; Lajevardi, 2020).

Our results, based on one of the largest samples of information on refugees to the US analyzed to date, shed considerable light on the way suffering targeted political repression affects those who go on to emigrate to democratic countries. Under the assumption that families generally stick together before, during, and after migration, we considerably expand on the extant literature by making it possible to identify the effect of an additional year spent under a repressive regime. Our findings about party affiliation in this population are broadly consistent with a growing survey literature on the political attitudes and behaviors of immigrants coming to democracies from various types of left-wing authoritarian regimes.

We recognize that, even in light of the research presented here, a vast amount of heterogeneity in the regimes that drive refugees out remains to be explored. These regimes subject their citizens to different cultures, educational systems, levels of repression and a host of other "treatments" before those citizens have a chance to emigrate. All of these elements can have deep and persistent effects on the political and social worldviews refugees take with them when they leave (Goldenberg and Saxe, 1996), and ascertaining which features of life under authoritarian regimes are the primary drivers of the political behaviors we can observe in immigrants' new homes is a fruitful prospect for future research.

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Appendices

A Matching HIAS/AJHS Client Files to the L2 Voter File

A.1 Process

Our matching procedure for both the pre-1980 and post-1980 immigrants proceeds in a stepwise fashion. For each of the post-1980 immigrants, we search through the voter files for individuals with active registration that have the same first and last name. If we find a unique match, we accept that match and remove it from the pool of immigrants we are attempting to match. With the new, smaller set of unmatched immigrants, we look for unique exact matches on first and last name, now including inactive registrations as well.[11] Successfully matched names are removed from the pool. With the remaining unmatched immigrants, we again look through the entire voter file for individuals with the same last name, but now allow for one character edit to the first name. Particularly with foreign names, minor transcription errors are fairly common. Any successful unique matches are added to our dataset. At this point, we stop searching for more tenuous matches of the post-1980 cohort. Table A.1 shows the number of matches we obtain at each stage. In total, we match 119,603 individuals, a success rate of around 26%.

Table A.1: Matching process post 1980.

Stage	Unique	Given Name	Surname	Voters	Clients	Matches
1	✓	Exact	Exact	Only Active	All Post 1980	100,763
2	✓	Exact	Exact	All	Stage 1 Misses	4,339
3	✓	One letter edit	Exact	All	Stage 2 Misses	14,501

Our strategy for finding pre-1980 immigrants proceeds similarly: we search for unique exact matches according to some restrictive set of criteria, remove successful finds from the pool, and then match the leftovers against some less restrictive criteria. We iterate this process through more filters than the post-1980 group, because we have more relevant data. In particular, the index cards more or less exactly record birth dates. Individuals are with some frequency recorded as having two names. Sometimes these two names appear to be first and middle, while other times it appears to be a more anglicized alternative (e.g. Dawid vs. David).

In such cases, it is hard to know which given name to search for in the voter file; if an index card describes an immigrant named Ben David, does one expect to find that person registered as Ben, David, or Ben David? Therefore, we consider the possible variations on the name that are contained in the cards. In particular, we apply our iterative procedure for searching for unique exact matches against the following pieces of information: (1) birth date, transcribed given name, transcribed surname; (2) birth year, given name, surname; (3) given name, surname, birthday,

[11] If we did not distinguish between active and inactive in this way, then no individual with multiple registrations, some active and others inactive, would end up being included in our sample.

birth month, birth year $\pm$ 1 or birth year $\pm$ 2; (4) surname, birthdate, plausible variations on the given name; (5) birth year, surname, variations on given; (6) surname, variations on given, birthday, birth month, and birth year ± 1 or ± 2; (7) birth date, surname, two character edits to the given name, (8) birth date, surname, two character edit to variations on the transcribed given name. Table A.2 describes how many matches each step generates. In total, we match 6,140 individuals, a success rate of around 5%. The much lower success rate is not surprising given the median age of a pre-1980 immigrant at present writing is 96.

Table A.2: Matching process pre-1980.

Stage	Unique	Given	Surname	Birth Day/Month	Birth Year	Voters	Clients	Matches
1	✓	Exact	Exact	Exact	Exact	All	Pre-1980	2,664
2	✓	Exact	Exact	.	Exact	All	Stage 1 Misses	1,360
3	✓	Exact	Exact	Day and Month	$\leq \pm 2$	All	Stage 2 Misses	127
4	✓	Variations	Exact	Exact	Exact	All	Stage 3 Misses	439
5	✓	Variations	Exact	.	Exact	All	Stage 4 Misses	258
6	✓	Variations	Exact	.	$\leq \pm 2$	All	Stage 5 Misses	36
7	✓	2 Edits to Exact	Exact	Exact	Exact	All	Stage 6 Misses	1,078
8	✓	2 Edits to Variations	Exact	Exact	Exact	All	Stage 7 Misses	178

A.1.1 Representativeness

One important question is whether and how focusing on individuals who match to a voter file differ from those in the larger client population. Table A.3 examines how the sample of matched immigrants differs from the sample of unmatched immigrants in the administrative file for the pre-1980 cohort. While similar analysis is desirable for the post-1980 population, we simply lack the necessary information to do this analysis. The table reveals that the interaction of marriage with naming conventions has a substantial impact on the sub-sample. There are fewer women in the matched sample than the administrative file. If an individual was separated at the time of immigration, they are relatively more likely to match. The fact that people known to be married are a smaller part of the matched sub-sample is initially curious, however it is important to recognize that someone who was already married sometime in the 1955-1980 time frame is likely relatively old by 2018, when we search for them in the voter files. The more likely a person is to be deceased, the less likely they are to appear in the voter file. Indeed, immigrants who are in families with children are relatively more common in the matched sample than in the initial administrative file, which again makes sense given aging dynamics. Finally, it seems that matching against another set of records has induced some selection on administrative data quality. 18% of the individuals in the administrative files have no gender indicated, whereas only 3% of the matched sample are missing gender in the HIAS file.

On the one hand, the difference between the matched and unmatched samples may lead to concerns about how representative the families we study are as compared with the typical family assisted by HIAS. We discuss external validity concerns at greater length in the manuscript, but it is worth noting here that the national origin of the typical HIAS immigrant changes drastically

Table A.3: Sample characteristics of the pre-1980 client population before and after matching

	Mean (Unmatched)	Mean (Matched)	Difference (Standardized)
Deceased	0.003	0.000	-0.079
Divorced	0.014	0.003	-0.113
Engaged	0.000	0.000	-0.005
Married	0.693	0.411	-0.593
Separated	0.258	0.584	0.701
Widowed	0.032	0.001	-0.240
Unknown Marital Status	0.379	0.390	0.023
Female	0.420	0.311	-0.228
Unknown Gender	0.179	0.032	-0.492
Family Size	3.433	4.118	0.467

over decades, so the representative immigrant family is a strained notion to begin with. Moreover, we find that our results are robust to these drastic changes in national origin of the client population.

On the other hand, the difference observed in the balance table may raise questions about match quality. It is difficult to directly test the proposition, but we do have some indirect tests we can do. For one, the administrative case files describe a small percentage of deceased individuals. Encouragingly, none of our immigrants known to be deceased prior to 1980 appear as active or inactive voters. Another indirect test is that voter files often include gender and so do the HIAS administrative files, but gender is not used in the matching procedure. In greater than 98% of the matched cases, these two genders are concordant. It would be surprising, given the possibility of transcription and intake errors in both files, if the number of matches was 100%.

A.2 How Distinctive Are Soviet Jewish Names?

Several important considerations about the underlying data merit mention in thinking about how to implement the name matching. First, the immigrants that HIAS helped come to the US often had idiosyncratic surnames as compared with American natives, particularly those largely FSU-born immigrants that arrived post-1980.

To take a concrete example, there are fewer Shteyngarts in the voter file than Steins, or even Steins born in 1972. While it is certainly possible that there are multiple individuals named Gary Shteyngart in the US, one or more registered and perhaps some not, it is also possible for individuals named Gary Stein to share the same birthday or other matching characteristics. Our analysis shows, however, that the vast majority of the in-sample surnames are shared by fewer than 100 voters, and as a result it does not surprise us that when we do have birth dates and surnames, the former does not actually do all that much to change which immigrants we are able to match to voter files and which we cannot. This leads to our second point about matching, which is that while HIAS was not always perfectly reliable about filing out all available fields in their old index card system, they did often record birth-dates using that system. Pre-1980, the matching exercise

to voter files can take advantage of the fact that birthdates are very frequently available. While it is of course the case that better matching might be possible with more data on individuals, especially birth dates for the post-1980 cohort, generally these data are exceedingly hard to find. The government's version of these administrative files will only become available to scholars when these individuals are older than 100, which is to say in 30 years for the oldest immigrants in our files.

Our matching approach for post-1980 immigrants relies explicitly upon the assumption that the surnames in this group are distinctive. While this is not necessarily true for all individuals in this client population, it is often true. In presenting our work, we have sometimes been asked how to consider how distinct these last names really are. Figure A.1 presents a thought experiment. We can think about how distinctive an registered voter's last name typically is by considering the number of other individuals sharing that name. As the figure shows, the typical voter shares a surname with a few thousand other voters in the US, it is rare for a voter to share a last name with only a few dozen others, and one in five has a surname such as "Johnson" shared by hundreds of thousands of other voters. If we consider the combination of surname and birth year, the distinctiveness of voters is several orders of magnitude higher. One in five voters will share a surname and birth year with roughly 1,000 other voters, while for the median voter the number of individuals sharing a last name and birth year could fit in a typical classroom. If we think about the combination of birth year, birth month and surname, the median registered voter would share this combination of traits with about 10 people. Only about 5% of registered voters share this trait with 1,000 others or more.

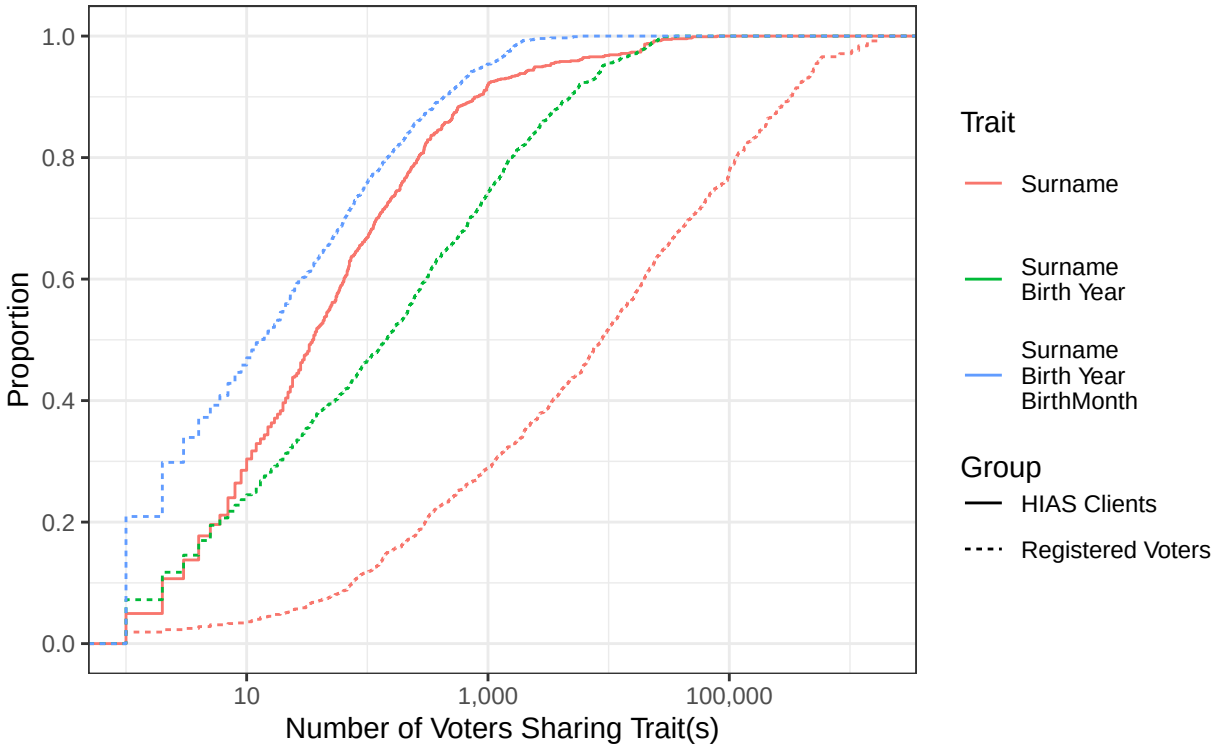
Calculating similar statistics for the last names found post 1980, we see that such surnames have a discriminating power that is close to the power of conditioning on last name, birth year, and birth month in the general population. 70% of these immigrant last names are possessed by 100 registered voters or fewer. This exercise provides some confidence that our matching approach, based additionally on first names and uniqueness constraints, is quite conservative in the sense that our matches are very likely true. At the same time, these statistics may give some indication why relaxing the uniqueness, first or last name constraints give us pause.

B Family Structure Robustness Checks

Table B.4 reports our main results from Section 4 on a sample of children from families with only two children. This restricted sample is one in which it is unlikely that oldest children bear disproportionate responsibility for tending to a large group of younger siblings. These findings are consistent with the results presented in the manuscript, which makes sense given that most families in this population of refugees had two or fewer children.

Table B.5 reports the effect of an additional year of exposure to a left-wing authoritarian regime on voting (conditional on registration) in 2014 and 2016 and party registration when we restrict our sample to families with three or more children and drop the oldest child in order to assess whether the main effects we report in Section 4 are just the effect of being the oldest child rather than the effects of prolonged exposure to these regimes. These results suggest that our effects are not restricted to oldest siblings. Since most families in our sample have two or

Figure A.1: Distinctiveness of Surnames in Sample v. Registered Voters



.

Table B.4: Focusing on Families with Only 2 Children

	(1) Voted in 2016?	(2) Voted in 2014?	(3) Registered Republican?	(4) Registered Independent?	(5) Registered Democrat?
Age at Arrival	0.00704***	0.00512***	0.00779**	-0.000979	-0.00764***
	(0.000988)	(0.000998)	(0.00227)	(0.00175)	(0.00196)
Constant	0.420	0.437*	-0.178	0.176	0.650***
	(0.333)	(0.199)	(0.172)	(0.141)	(0.174)
Observations	8389	8389	8471	8471	8471

Standard errors in parentheses. Standard errors are clustered at the state of residence level. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

fewer children we lose considerable power and most results in Table B.5 fall short of statistical significance at the 5% level, but they are consistent with the main results. Children who are older (but not the oldest in their families) are still more likely to turn out and significantly more likely to register as Republicans than younger siblings. Results in Tables B.5 and B.6 are calculated using families from countries of origin that are socialist dictatorships. Controls include gender, year of arrival, state of residence, and family fixed effects.

Table B.6 replicates our main results while restricting the sample to families in which age differences are relatively small: 5 years or fewer. This exercise should lower the likelihood that we are comparing cousins rather than siblings in the data. The fact that the results replicate in their direction and general magnitude is encouraging.

Table B.5: Results without Oldest Children

	(1) Voted in 2016?	(2) Voted in 2014?	(3) Registered Republican?	(4) Registered Independent?	(5) Registered Democrat?
Age at Arrival	0.0154**	0.0125***	0.00633	-0.00569	-0.00194
	(0.00540)	(0.00250)	(0.00386)	(.)	(0.00395)
Constant	-0.112	-0.117	-0.352	0.696	0.656*
	(0.381)	(0.0633)	(0.188)	(.)	(0.319)
Observations	1019	1019	1024	1024	1024

Standard errors in parentheses. Standard errors are clustered at the state of residence level. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table B.6: Restricting to Children with Age Difference <=5 Years

	(1) Voted in 2016?	(2) Voted in 2014?	(3) Registered Republican?	(4) Registered Independent?	(5) Registered Democrat?
Age at Arrival	0.0118*	0.00479	0.00203	0.00317	-0.00893***
	(0.00453)	(0.00290)	(0.00398)	(0.00417)	(0.00245)
Constant	0.385	0.416*	-0.146	0.127	0.683***
	(0.335)	(0.194)	(0.191)	(0.157)	(0.190)
Observations	5003	5003	5044	5044	5044

Standard errors in parentheses. Errors are clustered at the state of residence level. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

C Arrivals Pre and Post Economic Collapse

Table C.7: Results for Siblings Arriving Between 1960 and 1979

	(1) Voted in 2016?	(2) Voted in 2014?	(3) Registered Republican?	(4) Registered Independent?	(5) Registered Democrat?
Age at Arrival	0.0269	0.0209	0.0220	-0.00290	-0.0254
	(0.0237)	(0.0598)	(0.0231)	(0.0231)	(0.0256)
Constant	0.353	0.170	1.019**	-0.899*	1.318
	(0.282)	(0.549)	(0.330)	(0.375)	(0.823)
Observations	876	876	897	897	897

Standard errors in parentheses. Errors are clustered at the state of residence level. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table C.8: Results for Siblings Arriving Between 1980 and 1999

	(1) Voted in 2016?	(2) Voted in 2014?	(3) Registered Republican?	(4) Registered Independent?	(5) Registered Democrat?
Age at Arrival	0.00858***	0.00543*	0.00699	-0.00135	-0.00627
	(0.00189)	(0.00203)	(0.00354)	(0.00224)	(0.00344)
Constant	0.00841	-0.00520	0.0741	0.164	0.305
	(0.441)	(0.260)	(0.223)	(0.152)	(0.218)
Observations	31576	31576	31847	31847	31847

Standard errors in parentheses. Errors are clustered at the state of residence level. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

D Israel Survey Data

Tables D.9 and D.10 replicate the results reported in Tables 1 and 2 using logistic regression since all outcome variables are binary. These results are consistent with the results reported in the manuscript.

Table D.9: Age at Arrival and Turnout, Logistic Regression

	Dependent variable:			
	Voted 2015	Voted 2019	Voted 2020	Voted 2021
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Age at Arrival	0.035*	0.171	0.108	−0.639
	(0.019)	(0.211)	(0.075)	(0.660)
Male	0.449	−1.026	−0.329	31.690
	(0.335)	(1.737)	(0.852)	(52,739.650)
Constant	18.284	2.251	21.243	27.483
	(6,522.639)	(79,997.080)	(29,232.430)	(216,000.500)
Immigration Year Dummy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region Dummy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	282	217	181	134
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table D.10: Age at Arrival and Party Affiliation, Logistic Regression

	Dependent variable:	
	Would Vote for Right Wing Party	Did Vote for Right Wing Party
	(1)	(2)
Age at Arrival	0.036**	0.037**
	(0.017)	(0.016)
Male	0.486	0.513*
	(0.307)	(0.302)
Constant	17.414	17.446
	(3,956.180)	(3,956.180)
Immigration Year Dummy	✓	✓
Region Dummy	✓	✓
Observations	282	282
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The Israel survey panel does not contain enough immigrants from outside of the FSU or other Soviet Bloc countries who turned out in any year to reliably estimate the relationship between age at arrival and turnout, but Table 1 shows the relationship between age at arrival and willingness to support right-wing parties for immigrants from outside this region. Contrary to a positive and significant one for immigrants from the FSU and Soviet Bloc reported in Table 2, this relationship is negative for immigrants outside of this region. This provides suggestive evidence that living under the repressive communist governments of the FSU and Soviet Bloc had a unique effect on Jewish immigrants to Israel as well as the US. Much like in the US case, further analysis by country of origin is impossible here because survey respondents who immigrated from all

countries outside of the FSU or Soviet Bloc number fewer than 20 - and often fewer than 10 - per country.

Table D.11: Age at Arrival and Party Affiliation

	Dependent variable:	
	Would Vote for Right Wing Party	Did Vote for Right Wing Party
	(1)	(2)
Age at Arrival	-0.008^{**}	-0.004
	(0.003)	(0.004)
Male	-0.003	0.057
	(0.200)	(0.081)
Constant	1.000	0.000
Immigration Year Dummy	✓	✓
Region Dummy	✓	✓
Observations	150	150
R^2	0.479	0.550
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01