

Distance as a cost of cross-border voting

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Globalisation and European integration have led to increased mobility, and a growing number of countries have enfranchised their emigrant citizens. However, the political participation of Nordic emigrants has hitherto been a scantily investigated issue. This article examines which factors influence the voting likelihood of emigrants; does distance influence as a cost of cross-border voting, and how does time lived abroad influences emigrants' decision to vote in the parliamentary elections, both in homeland and in the country of residence. The statistical analyses are based on data collected from 1,067 Finnish emigrants in 2014. The results suggest that distance to the nearest polling station plays a significant role in the emigrant voting decision. Furthermore, we find that emigrants' probability to vote in the homeland elections decline with time, whereas the probability to vote in the country of residence increases. This study provides a new understanding of voter behaviour in globalised world, and the findings of this article can be used to develop targeted interventions aimed at ameliorating transnational political participation.

Keywords: Cross-border voting, distance as a cost of voting, emigrant voting, turnout, transnational electoral participation, Finland

Introduction

Globalisation and the free movement of persons in the Schengen area have caused significant changes to emigration in Europe since the Second World War. The political terrain has become less restricted to the state. Political communities have extended beyond state boundaries, and people's increased mobility across national borders has highlighted questions about migration and national belonging. As previous research has discussed (see e.g. Bauböck 2003; Collyer 2013; Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Szanton 1992; Staeheli et al., 2002), migrants tend to maintain their ties to home even when their countries of origin are geographically distant. As nation states and nationalism seem to persist despite the internationalisation of capital and transnationalism of populations, the question of nationalism and cross-border political participation as well as the status of emigrants in terms of citizenship and civil rights (such as political eligibility in both sending and receiving countries) has become gradually challenging.

As André, Dronkers and Need (2014) have suggested, the electoral participation of migrants is an important issue in Europe for two different reasons. Firstly, migrants tend to vote less than natives do in national elections and secondly, migrants are a growing segment of the population in Europe, thus challenging the democratic legitimacy. Furthermore, as Apaydin (2016) has stated, existing studies on voting fo-

cus exclusively on domestic dynamics and assume that voter turnout is primarily influenced by individual experiences in one's native context. However, increased cross-border mobility and supranational political engagement have added a new layer of complexity to individual experiences.

With more citizens living and working outside of their home country for several years of their lives and new technologies making it ever easier for emigrants to participate in the homeland politics, the topic of emigrant voting is highly relevant and yet often omitted from electoral analyses (Gamlen 2015). As the topic is understudied in academic literature, there is a need for empirical studies on emigrant turnout. Collyer (2013) noted that the lack of data has been a reason why electoral geography has paid little attention to emigrant voting. The political participation of Nordic emigrants has often been omitted from both political studies as well as migration research. There have been only a small number of studies that have explored emigrants' political participation (e.g. Peltoniemi 2015; Solevid 2016). This article starts to address the gap in the literature, by shedding light on the question of the transnational political participation of Finnish emigrants. As Bengtsson and Wass have pointed out (2010), Finland constitutes an interesting case from both the geographical and the institutional perspective. Geographically and culturally, Finland is a Nordic country. However, institutionally, Finland differs from Scandinavian countries with an electoral system that combines the use of a proportional formula as well as multi-member districts with a strong degree of candidate-centeredness.

External voting was first implemented in Finland in 1958, and the statistical data of emigrant turnout has been collected since the 1970s. In the 2015 Finnish parliamentary elections, 5.4 percent of eligible voters (242,096 persons) resided abroad. Finland uses personal voting as a method of voting

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from abroad. A vote is cast in a designated polling place (e.g. embassy) in advance (early voting). No registration is needed, but the distance to the nearest polling station may be significant. Turnout in Finnish parliamentary elections is traditionally average by European standards, unlike the other Nordic countries, where turnout is relatively high. In the parliamentary elections from 1995 to 2015, the average turnout was 69.2 percent, and amongst Finnish emigrants 8.4 percent (Peltoniemi 2015; Statistics Finland 2015). Previous research (see e.g. Bhatti 2012; Brady & McNulty 2011; Dyck & Gimpel 2005; Gimpel & Schuknecht 2003; Haspel & Knotts 2005) has been rather unanimous about the fact that distance is a cost of voting, and that distance as a cost strongly affects the choice to vote. Greater distance from home to the polling station significantly increases the probability of choosing not to vote. Furthermore, voters who live further away have higher travel costs and voting becomes more time consuming, thus increasing the costs of voting. Moreover, as Ahmadov and Sasse (2016) have pointed out, a shorter duration of stay and more diaspora links are associated with significantly higher electoral engagement, whereas assimilation in the host country predicts lower transnational engagement. Does this apply also to Finnish emigrant voters? Can the idea of distance and time (duration of stay) as a cost of voting be generalised also to emigrant voters who, presumably, live further away from a polling station than homeland voters do?

From this perspective, we have formulated the two main research questions: 1) Which factors influence emigrant voting likelihood and does distance have a significant influence as a cost of cross-border voting, and 2) How does time lived abroad influence, respectively, electoral turnout in Finnish parliamentary elections, and in the parliamentary elections in the country of residence. The analyses are based on data compiled with a survey questionnaire from a random sample of 3,600 Finnish citizens residing abroad (n=1,067).

This article proceeds as follows. In the next section the previous theoretical and empirical literature on distance as a cost of voting will be discussed. The third section will present the research design and the empirical analysis will take place in the fourth section. This will be followed by the conclusions. As the electoral behaviour of (especially Nordic) emigrants is not so frequently studied, this article contributes as a base for future studies. Furthermore, the findings of this study can be used to develop targeted interventions aimed at advancing Finnish electoral system.

Distance as a cost of voting

As Braun and Gratschew (2007) have noted, external voting is permitted in 115 countries in the world, but there are often specific restrictions on this entitlement. For instance, voting rights for emigrants can be attached to conditions of the former residence, and other legal, technical, operational and administrative barriers may also be used to restrict the ability to vote from abroad.

Next, we will approach the question of emigrant voting from the perspective of calculus of voting and, particularly,

from the viewpoint of distance as a cost of voting. There are diverse methods available for citizens to participate, and elections and voting are perhaps the most fundamental to the democratic society. The decision that voters make between voting and not voting, the calculus of voting, is often presented by rational choice theory:

$$C < pB + D$$

A person will vote if the costs of voting (C) are outweighed by the probability (p) of the collective benefits of voting (such as having a desired candidate win, B) and the positive sense of the fulfilment of their civic duty (D). Accordingly, rational choice theory suggests political participation is an act where individuals sacrifice the costs of transportation and time for the public good. Reforms that are meant to improve turnout usually aim at reducing costs rather than increasing benefits, as it is known that lowering the costs of voting increases voter participation. Therefore, more convenient forms of voting should be associated with higher turnout. Moreover, if the probability of collective benefits or collective benefits themselves were considered trivial, a small increase of costs of voting (such as longer distance to the polls) would significantly reduce turnout. Therefore, it is suggested that costs associated with distance do indeed influence a person's likelihood of voting (Bhatti 2012; Blais 2000; Downs 1957; Gimpel & Schuknecht 2003; Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller & Toffey 2008; Haspel & Knotts 2005; Karp & Banducci 2000; Riker & Ordeshook 1968).

Distance as a cost of voting has previously been studied rather comprehensively. The costs of travelling to reach a traditional polling station are, in fact, associated with non-voting. Distance as a cost strongly affects the choice to vote and thus more voters could be mobilised by reducing the travel costs associated with voting. A greater distance from home to the polling station significantly increases the probability of casting an absentee vote (Bhatti 2012; Brady & McNulty 2011; Dyck & Gimpel 2005; Gimpel & Schuknecht 2003; Haspel & Knotts 2005).

Personal voting requires voters to go to a polling place physically, and this creates the dual constraint of distance and time. Some voters choose their method after they first decide to vote, but there are voters who can be mobilised by easy voting (convenience voting). Absentee voting has been argued to rise significantly with distance. As the probability to vote increases when the polling station is located closer, absentee voting steadily rises as the distance to the polling station increases. It is evident that distance has a great impact on the method used to cast a ballot, particularly with postal voting (Dyck & Gimpel 2005).

However, Niemi (1976) has claimed, quite the contrary, voting is relatively costless in the sense of opportunity costs. According to Niemi, many people regard voting as no costlier than many other kinds of intermittent activities they undertake. Correspondingly, Burden et al. (2014) has suggested that convenient voting, namely early voting, actually decreases the turnout by several percentage points. While

this may be true among domestic electorate, the costs of voting for overseas voters are often exceptionally high leaving turnout respectively low. Therefore, we may argue that the skewness of emigrant participation should not be seen commensurate with that of participation of the domestic electorate.

The rational voting model argues that the choice to vote is a simple cost-benefit calculation for voters. Non-voting is caused largely by social-psychological factors such as low efficacy, lack of motivation and cynicism. Although the social-psychological factors may be the major hindrance, if the polling stations were more accessible, it would motivate some of the voters from marginal interest to vote when realising that there are no bothersome obstacles in their way. By reducing the cost of voting, such as distance, the benefits would not need to be increased in order to increase a person's likelihood of voting. Thus, the inconvenience caused by distance sets a significant theoretical challenge for participation and turnout. It is suggested that even though decreasing the burden of travel costs would not necessarily promote a large increase in turnout, this issue is still much easier to resolve than the problems with motivation and efficacy, as institutions are more convenient and easy to change than attitudes (Bhatti 2012; Dyck & Gimpel 2005; Gimpel & Schuknecht 2003).

Distance is not the only cost for migrant voters. In addition to geographic proximity, the length of residence in the country of residence is also considered influential in cross-border political participation: the longer migrants stay in the country of residence, the stronger the trend towards assimilation will be. A shorter perceived or actual duration of stay has been associated with significantly higher electoral and community engagement, whereas assimilation to the country of residence predicts lower transnational engagement (Ahmadov & Sasse 2016; Bolzman 2011; van Bochove 2012).

Is rational choice theory indeed the best approach for external voting? Perhaps not. However, keeping in mind that previous research has been rather unanimous regarding the fact that distance is a cost of voting, and that distance as a cost strongly affects the choice to vote. A greater distance from home to the polling station significantly increases the probability of choosing not to vote. Furthermore, we can agree that voters who live further away have higher travel costs, and voting is more time consuming than for the voters who live closer thus increasing the costs of voting. Consequently, it likely creates an imbalance between voters living close and voters living further away in regard to the decision to vote. By reducing the costs of voting, for instance by adopting convenient voting methods such as postal voting, voter facilitation instruments are expected not only to increase overall participation, but also the sociodemographic representativeness of the electorate, thus reducing different sorts of bias in turnout. However, as facilitation instruments benefit all voters alike, and since habitual voters have a higher amount of resources, attempts to make voting more convenient may in fact decrease the socioeconomic representativeness of the electorate, contrary to the original aim (Berinsky, Burns & Traugott 2001; Berinsky 2005; Bhatti

2012; Brady & McNulty 2011; Dyck & Gimpel 2005; Gimpel & Schuknecht 2003; Haspel & Knotts 2005; Karp & Banducci 2000; Peltoniemi 2015; Tokaji & Colker 2007).

Following these arguments, we therefore hypothesise the following:

H₁ Finnish emigrants' probability to vote in Finnish parliamentary elections decline with time spent in the destination country.

H₂ Finnish emigrants' probability to vote in country of residence parliamentary elections increase with time spent in the destination country.

H₃ Finnish emigrants' distance to the closest polling station influences voting likelihood in Finnish elections.

Research design

Although the first four European nationalities to settle permanently in the present United States were the English, the Dutch, the Swedes and the Finns, Finnish immigration to North America did not begin in earnest until 1864 (Koivukangas 2003). During the last century, approximately one million Finns immigrated, first to North America, and later in the 1960s and 1970s to Sweden. Since the 1980s, emigration from Finland has been more Europe-centred.

The data used in this paper was collected during autumn 2014 by the author¹. A random sample of 3,600 Finnish emigrants who are entitled to vote was drawn from the Population Register Center of Finland, and it included Finnish citizens currently living in Sweden, Germany, Great Britain, Spain, Canada and United States. These countries were selected because of their relatively large number of Finnish citizens as residents. An invitation letter was sent to the selected individuals and data was collected with an online survey questionnaire. Out of the 3,600 letters sent, 1,067 persons answered the questionnaire, and thus, the response rate was 29.6 percent.

Young adults (age group 18-35) were slightly underrepresented, as the response rate was 16.3 % (in the sample 25.4 %) and the age group of 45-74 was respectively slightly overrepresented (proportion of 58.1 %, in the sample 47.9 %). The proportion of female respondents was 67 %, but this is due to the fact that women have been more actively emigrating from Finland than men (Söderling 2002). For example, in the parliamentary elections of 2011, the total number of eligible emigrant Finns was 227,844, and out of them 60 % were women and 40 % men. Therefore, also in the sample the proportion of women was high at 62 %. The low number of respondents among the Finnish emigrants residing in Sweden was somewhat surprising (response rate 22.2 %). The highest response rate was among those residing in Germany, 39.5 %. In other countries, the response rate was rather similar (Great Britain 30.8 %, USA 30.3 %, Canada 27.7 %, and Spain 26 %). However, it is probable that the respondents are more interested in Finland as well as politics in Finland than

¹ The data collection was funded by People's Cultural Foundation; Finnish Ministry of Justice's Unit for Democracy, Language Affairs and Fundamental Rights; Institute of Migration (the Kaarle Hjalmar Lehtinen Fund); and Tampereen Suomalainen Klubi.

emigrants on average are. Therefore, non-response bias may occur in the sample.

The countries of residence under examination in this study all have different regulations regarding immigrant voting. EU citizens who live in another EU member state are eligible to vote or stand as a candidate in local and European elections². However, all countries in this study require citizenship for voting in other elections, such as parliamentary elections. For Great Britain, eligibility requires British, Irish or Commonwealth citizenship as well as minimum 18 years of age, residency (or living abroad but having to have registered to vote in UK in the last 15 years), and not being legally excluded from voting. In Germany, Spain and Sweden eligible voters are citizens with minimum age of 18. In United States Federal elections voter must be at least 18-years-old and a citizen who meets the state's residency requirements and is registered as a voter. In Canada, voting rights are granted for Canadian citizens with minimum age of 18 and who are on the voters' list. Thus, for an emigrant to vote in the parliamentary elections in the country of residence, citizenship is a requirement in each country studied here.

The analysis consists of three parts. First, we observed emigrants' transnational voting decision, and cross-tabled voting in Finnish parliamentary elections and country of residence's parliamentary elections with the time lived abroad.

Next, we examined which factors influence Finnish emigrants' probability to vote in Finland's elections (home-land elections). The first part of the analysis is descriptive. The purpose of the frequencies is to display which are the main reasons emigrants consider as a hindrance to voting in Finnish elections. The respondents were asked to choose the three most important reasons for non-voting in Finland's elections and to place them in order of importance. The third part of the analysis was completed by using binary logistic regression, as the dependent variable (turnout) can only have two values (1=voted; 0=did not vote). In order to better understand the different factors that influence voting decision in Finnish elections and in elections in the country of residence, we did two separate regressions.

In the first regression (see Table 1), the dependent variable, turnout, was measured with the question: 'During the time that you have lived abroad, have you voted in Finland's parliamentary elections during the past 10 years?' The response options were: 'I voted', 'I didn't vote', and 'I wasn't entitled to vote'. Less than eight percent of the respondents responded that they were not entitled to vote. This group included for instance persons who had come of age (born between 1993 and 1996), or had obtained Finnish citizenship between the previous parliamentary elections (2011) and the date of the research (2014). Respondents who were not entitled to vote were excluded from the analysis. In the second regression (see Table 2), the dependent variable, turnout, was measured by the question: 'Have you voted in the elections of your current country of residence during the past 10 years?' The response options were: 'Yes', 'No', and 'Elections have not been held in my country of residence during the past 10 years'. Only respondents who chose 'Yes' or 'No' were included in the analysis (n=946). The indepen-

dent variables used in the regressions (gender; age; marital status; educational level; political knowledge; interest in politics; associational participation) were chosen in accordance to those traditionally considered to influence turnout (see e.g. Martikainen, Martikainen & Wass 2005) with the additional ones that were expected to have influence among emigrants (distance to the polling station, country of residence; time lived abroad). The data and other variables used in this analysis are better described in the Appendix Tables 1 and 2.

Finnish emigrants' voting decision

First, we observed Finnish emigrants' transnational voting decision, and cross-tabled voting in Finnish parliamentary elections and country of residence's parliamentary elections with the time lived abroad. As shown in Figure 1, voting in Finnish elections peaks 6-10 years after moving abroad, when approximately half of emigrants vote, but after 10 years abroad, the interest to vote in Finnish elections starts to decline. Voting in the parliamentary elections of the country of residence seems to increase gradually as time lived abroad increases. After 20 years abroad, emigrants more probably vote in country of residence's elections rather than in Finnish elections. The curvilinear relationship due to low turnout among those who have lived less than 5 years abroad is rather peculiar. Perhaps emigrants do not consider missing the first few Finnish elections that serious, so that it would overcome the costs of voting, and this consideration changes after time. Another possibility could be age: young people are less likely to vote than older people, and we can assume that emigration is more common among young people than older people. Unfortunately, the data used in this study cannot provide answers for this question, therefore we may only make assumptions until further study is conducted on this issue.

Nonetheless, 20 years appears to be a turning point in transnational political participation. This is not a surprising result, however, as it seems that this occurs rather early, it could possibly be explained with lifespan psychology. In general, it seems to be evident that time lived abroad has a rather clear influence on voting in both countries.

As shown in Figure 2, two reasons were thought to have a particularly strong impact for the non-voting decision in Finland's elections. More than a third of the respondents (34.5 %) considered the physical distance from the polling station to be the most important reason for non-voting. The lack of knowledge about the current political situation was the most important reason for nearly a fifth (18.7 %) of the respondents. Also, a lack of motivation, (such as: 'I didn't think voting would benefit me' and 'I just couldn't be bothered to vote') was an important reason too but, it seems that lack of possibility was the overriding reason for choosing not to vote.

² In addition, Sweden allows Norwegian citizens, as well as citizens of other countries who reside in Sweden for a minimum three years to vote in regional elections.

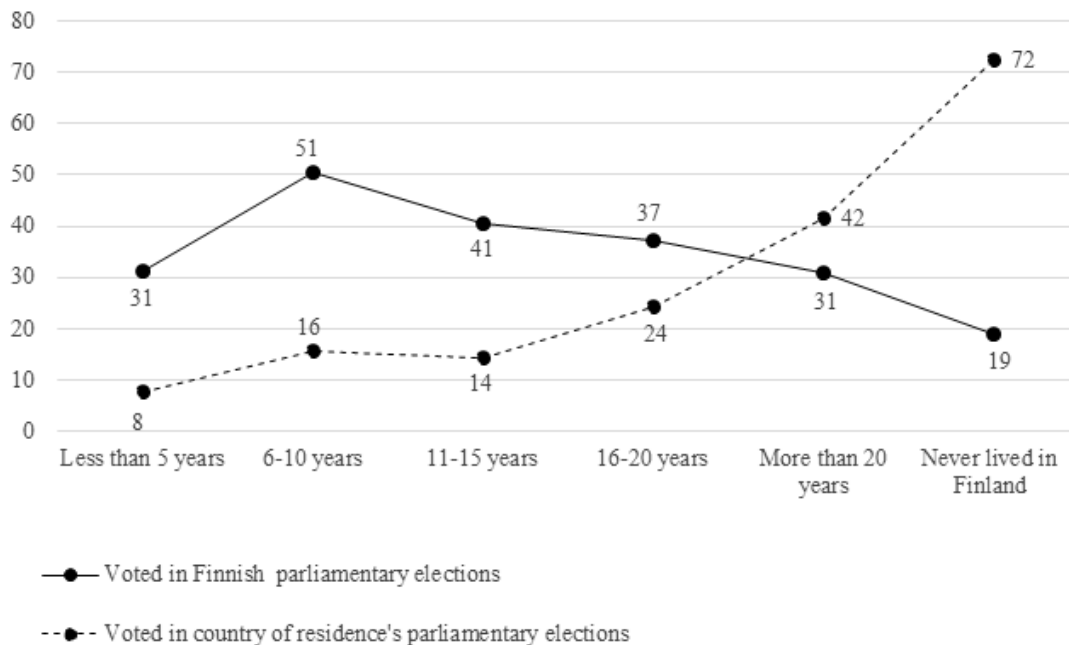


Figure 1. Voting in Finnish parliamentary elections and country of residence's parliamentary elections cross-tabled with the time lived abroad (%)

As shown in the logistic regression model results in Table 1, emigrants who are more interested in politics in Finland were also more likely to vote in Finnish parliamentary elections. The odds to vote increase nearly 12 times for emigrants who are very interested in politics in Finland (OR=11.74), five times for emigrants who are fairly interested (OR=4.90), and twofold for emigrants who are not very interested (OR=2.45), compared to emigrants who are not interested at all. However, it is hardly surprising that the level of political interest correlates with the decision to vote. On the contrary, political interest has been studied to be more closely connected to turnout in less salient second-order elections, which homeland elections often are to emigrants (Söderlund, Wass & Blais 2011).

As can be expected, the distance to the nearest polling station also has a notable significance on the voting decision among Finnish emigrants. Emigrants who live within a 20 kilometre radius of the polling station are more than seven times more probable to vote (OR=7.39) than emigrants who are more than 200 kilometres away. Emigrants who live within 21-50 kilometres are still three times more likely to vote (OR=3.09), and emigrants who live within 51-200 kilometres are twice as likely to vote (OR=2.05) in comparison to those who live more than 200 kilometres away from a polling station.

Other factors that have a statistically significant impact on turnout among Finnish emigrants are age (50-59 years OR=0.44; 70< years OR=5.19), political knowledge (OR=5.56) and the length of time lived abroad. Interestingly, emigrants who have lived less than five years abroad

are least likely to vote in Finnish parliamentary elections: for instance, emigrants who have lived 6-10 years abroad are three times more likely to vote (OR=3.13) than emigrants who have lived less than five years abroad. After that, the probability to vote starts to decline gradually (11-15 years OR=2.72; 16-20 years OR=2.42; 20< years OR=2.51). However, if 'time lived abroad 6-10 years' would be the reference category, the only statistically significant category would be 'less than five years abroad' (OR=0.33). Thus, it seems that the large difference is between 'less than five years' and other categories, while the differences are not statistically significant between the other categories of voters. Moreover, gender, marital status, education level, active participation in organisational activities, or current country of residence do not have a significant effect on the probability to vote. However, this is not surprising, as Wass et al. (2015) have argued, the impact of age and education are in fact weaker among voters with a migration background.

As political rights are increasingly extended to citizens who are permanently resident outside of their country of citizenship, the voting of non-resident citizens in national elections can be understood as the norm. In fact, emigrant voting is permitted by more than 80 percent of all nation states (Collyer 2013). However, as Braun and Gratschew (2007) have stated, while the constitutions of many countries guarantee the right to vote, in reality external voters are often disenfranchised due to the lack of procedures enabling them to vote. This appears to be the reason behind the low level of turnout among Finnish emigrants as well: Costs of voting (especially distance) and inconvenient voting methods ap-

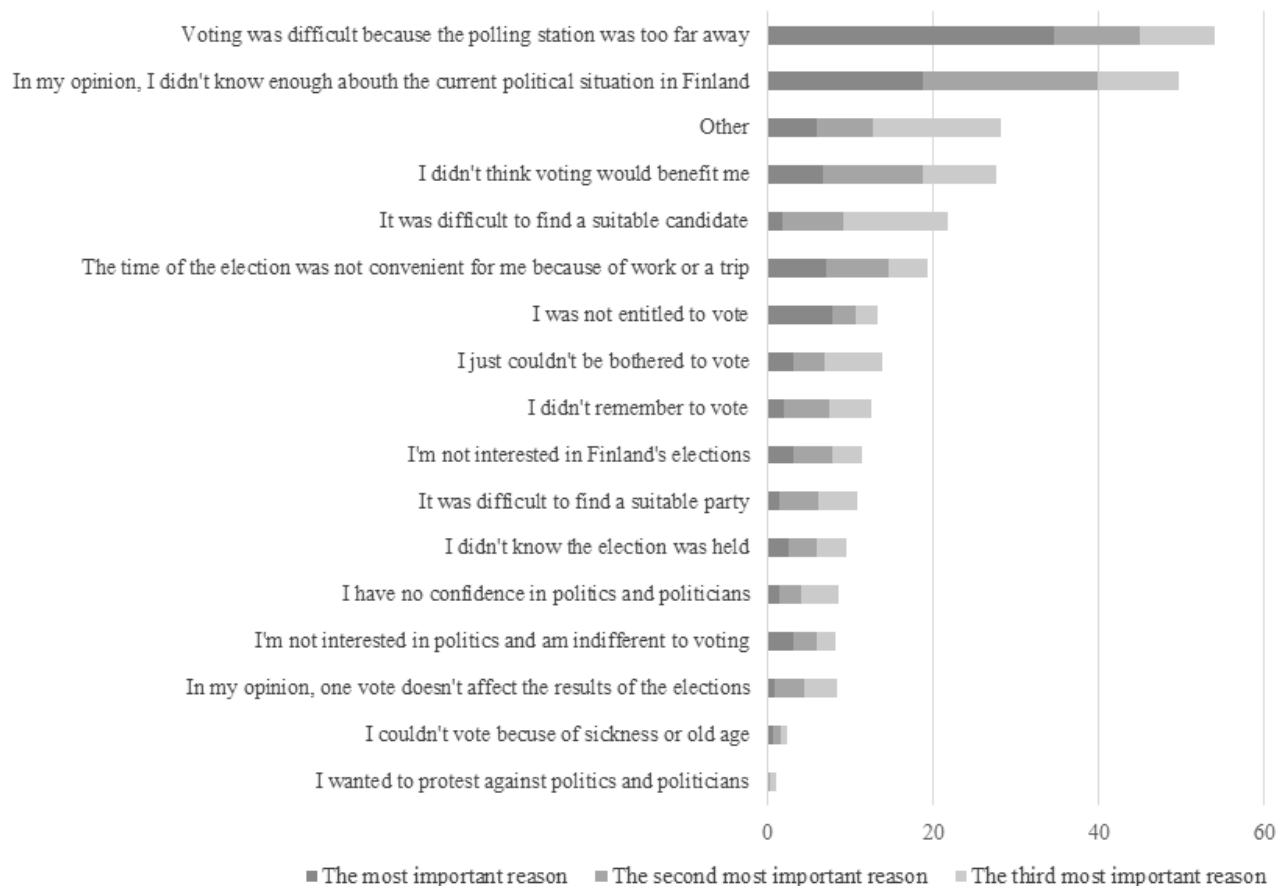


Figure 2. The three most important reasons for non-voting in Finland's elections among emigrants (n=831) (%)

pears to induce non-voting among Finnish emigrants. As distance and polling techniques can, at least theoretically, be altered administratively, these findings can be used to develop targeted interventions aimed at increasing the turnout among emigrant voters.

Voting in parliamentary elections in the country of residence

As previously stated, the likelihood of voting in homeland elections seems to decline with time. This raises the question of what happens to the likelihood of voting in the country of residence, and which factors influence emigrant voting likelihood in the country of residence? As most of the countries do not grant voting rights to foreign residents, the first generation of migrants would be deprived of any opportunity for democratic participation unless they can vote in their country of origin (Bauböck 2003; 2005). This seems to be an issue also for Finnish emigrants, considering that all countries of residence under investigation in this study require citizenship for voting in their parliamentary elections. This also explains the result that voting in the elections of their country of residence seem to become more probable as

the time lived abroad increases (20 < years abroad OR=3,14; never lived in Finland OR=11,51).

The probability to vote in the parliamentary elections in the country of residence is higher among those emigrants, who have higher education (polytechnic school or university OR=2,06), and who are very interested in the politics in the country of residence (OR=3,85). Instead, respondents who were very interested in politics in Finland were less likely to vote in the country of residence (OR=0,380). Furthermore, the current country of residence seems to be a rather significant factor influencing the likelihood of voting in that country. For example, respondents living in Canada are three times more likely to vote in their country of residence than respondents living in Sweden (OR=3,11), whereas respondents living in other European countries were less likely to vote in their residing country compared to respondents living in Sweden (Germany OR=0,35; Great Britain OR=0,31; Spain OR=0,16).

This could be due to the fact that these countries have received Finnish emigrants at different times. During the last century, approximately one million Finns immigrated, first to North America, and later in the 1960s and 1970s to Sweden. Since the 1980s, emigration from Finland has been more

Table 1

*Finnish emigrants' probability to vote in Finnish elections (logistic regression analysis, *** $p < 0,001$, ** $p < 0,01$, * $p < 0,05$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0,405$)*

	Odds ratio	95 % confidence interval
<i>Gender^a</i>		
Female	0,893	[0,629-1,267]
<i>Age^b</i>		
30-39	1,145	[0,651-2,014]
40-49	0,589	[0,342-1,012]
50-59	0,439**	[0,249-0,775]
60-69	0,812	[0,487-1,354]
70-	5,190*	[1,364-19,752]
<i>Marital status^c</i>		
Married, registered partnership or living as married	0,992	[0,607-1,621]
Divorced, separated, or widowed	1,050	[0,535-2,063]
<i>Highest level of education^d</i>		
Secondary education	0,965	[0,458-2,033]
Higher education	1,320	[0,679-2,566]
<i>Level of political knowledge</i>	5,559***	[3,722-8,301]
<i>Interest in politics in Finland^e</i>		
Very interested	11,744***	[4,956-27,830]
Fairly interested	4,900***	[2,365-10,153]
Not very interested	2,448*	[1,201-4,988]
<i>Active participation in an association or a group</i>	1,031	[0,672-1,580]
<i>Distance to the nearest polling station^f</i>		
Less than 20 km	7,391***	[4,330-12,615]
21-50 km	3,086***	[1,701-5,598]
51-200 km	2,047*	[1,168-3,587]
<i>Current country of residence^g</i>		
Germany	1,407	[0,790-2,505]
Great Britain	0,810	[0,438-1,498]
Spain	0,924	[0,497-1,719]
Canada	0,609	[0,321-1,154]
USA	0,712	0,381-1,333]
<i>Time lived abroad^h</i>		
6-10 years	3,128**	[1,516-6,455]
11-15 years	2,724**	[1,347-5,506]
16-20 years	2,422*	[1,149-5,106]
More than 20 years	2,505**	[1,330-4,717]
Never lived in Finland	2,200	[0,986-4,910]

Dependent variable Voted/didn't vote in country of residence's parliamentary elections

^aReference category Male

^bReference category 18-29

^cReference category Single

^dReference category Basic education

^eReference category Not at all interested

^fReference category More than 200 km

^gReference category Sweden

^hReference category Less than 5 years

Table 2

*Finnish emigrants' probability to vote in country of residence elections (logistic regression analysis, *** $p < 0,001$, ** $p < 0,01$, * $p < 0,05$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0,409$)*

	Odds ratio	95 % confidence interval
<i>Gender^a</i>		
Female	1,016	[0,712-1,450]
<i>Age^b</i>		
30-39	1,573	[0,855-2,897]
40-49	1,383	[0,803-2,382]
50-59	1,238	[0,712-2,152]
60-69	1,053	[0,619-1,791]
70-	2,467	[0,744-8,186]
<i>Marital status^c</i>		
Married, registered partnership or living as married	1,053	[0,639-1,735]
Divorced, separated or widowed	0,905	[0,464-1,768]
<i>Highest level of education^d</i>		
Vocational school, gymnasium or abitur	1,539	[0,741-3,197]
Polytechnic school or university	2,064*	[1,069-3,986]
<i>Interested in politics in Finland^e</i>		
Very interested	0,380*	[0,169-0,857]
Fairly interested	0,643	[0,340-1,217]
Not very interested	0,748	[0,409-1,368]
<i>Interested in politics in country of residence^f</i>		
Very interested	3,853**	[1,578-9,404]
Fairly interested	1,529	[0,661-3,538]
Not very interested	0,672	[0,279-1,617]
<i>Active participation in an association or a group</i>	1,334	[0,883-2,016]
<i>Distance to the polling station (Finland's election)^g</i>		
Less than 20 km	1,193	[0,746-1,906]
21-50 km	1,250	[0,738-2,117]
51-200 km	1,002	[0,617-1,628]
<i>Current country of residence^h</i>		
Germany	0,345***	[0,195-0,611]
Great Britain	0,313***	[0,168-0,581]
Spain	0,155***	[0,071-0,336]
Canada	3,114***	[1,718-5,643]
USA	0,899	[0,507-1,597]
<i>Time lived abroadⁱ</i>		
6-10 years	0,836	[0,326-2,146]
11-15 years	0,908	[0,363-2,273]
16-20 years	1,558	[0,629-3,861]
More than 20 years	3,136**	[1,464-6,718]
Never lived in Finland	11,513***	[4,859-27,280]

Dependent variable Voted/didn't vote in country of residence's parliamentary elections

^aReference category Male

^bReference category 18-29

^cReference category Single

^dReference category Still at school, elementary school or comprehensive school

^eReference category Not at all interested

^fReference category Not interested at all

^gReference category More than 200 km

^hReference category Sweden

ⁱReference category Less than 5 years

Europe-centred. Thus, it is probable that the respondents have lived for different lengths of time in their country of residence. Furthermore, these countries have received Finnish emigrants during different phases of globalisation and European integration, which could possibly have some influence on the integration processes as well.

Conclusions

With ever more citizens living and working outside of their home country for several years of their lives, the topic of emigrant voting behaviour is highly relevant and at the same time often omitted from electoral analyses. Low turnout is a potentially serious problem, because when the number of voters is small, the policy outcomes may not be representative and might cause conflicts and raise questions regarding the legitimacy of the political system. From the viewpoint of individuals, the essential mechanisms of representative democracy do not materialise in the best possible way among the (marginalised) lesser voting groups. If an individual does not perceive that the viewpoints of their own group have been taken into consideration, it can further reduce their willingness to participate in the upcoming elections.

The purpose of this article was to shed light on the question of the transnational political participation of Finnish emigrants. The main research questions asked in this study were: 1) Which factors influence emigrant voting likelihood and does distance have a significant influence as a cost of cross-border voting, and 2) How does time lived abroad influence, respectively, electoral turnout in Finnish parliamentary elections, and in the parliamentary elections in the country of residence. The analyses were based on a data compiled with a survey questionnaire from a random sample of 3,600 Finnish citizens residing abroad ($n=1,067$). The empirical results can be summarised in the following two points:

1. Hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2 were both confirmed. It is evident that the time lived abroad has a rather clear influence on voting in both Finnish parliamentary elections and the country of residence parliamentary elections. Voting in Finnish elections peaks 6-10 years after emigration, but after 10 years abroad, voting in Finnish elections starts to decline. Voting in the country of residence seems to gradually increase with the time lived abroad, and after 20 years abroad emigrants more probably vote in their country of residence rather than in Finnish elections. Thus, 20 years abroad seems to be a turning point in transnational political participation. However, the first regression does not straightforwardly support this finding, whereas the second regression supports this finding. Finnish emigrants' probability to vote in country of residence elections become more probable as the time lived abroad increases (20 < years abroad OR = 3,14; never lived in Finland OR = 11,51).

2. The distance to the nearest polling station plays a significant role in the decision of Finnish emigrants to vote. Emigrants who live within a 20-kilometre radius of the polling station are more than seven times more probable to vote than emigrants who live more than 200 kilometres away from the polling station. Thus, hypothesis 3 was confirmed. However,

there are also other factors that influence the voting decision of emigrants. The level of political knowledge correlates with the decision to vote, as well as age, interest in politics in Finland and the length of time lived abroad. However, gender, marital status, education level or current country of residence did not have a significant effect on the probability to vote.

The results are significant in at least two major respects. Firstly, they show that emigrant voting in homeland elections does indeed decrease with time, while voting in country of residence's elections increases. This is not a surprising result, considering that previous research (Ahmadov & Sasse 2016) has shown a linkage between the duration of stay in the country of residence and electoral engagement. Nevertheless, it seems that the turning point occurs rather soon, after only 20 years abroad. Considering that, for instance, Finnish emigrants may keep their Finnish citizenship with electoral rights up to third generation (grandparents originally from Finland), second and even third generation emigrants' right to have dual electoral rights could be challenged. However, this is in line with the previous normative discussion of emigrant voting rights (see e.g. Bauböck 2003; 2005; Rubio-Marín 2006). Secondly, the findings of this study cast light on the influencing factors behind emigrant voting in homeland elections, and offer a more comprehensive understanding of transnational political participation.

Migration, migrant-homeland relations and transnational political participation has previously been studied from the viewpoint of migration from countries that are perhaps less developed, less democratic and have lower living standards to countries that may be more developed, more democratic and have higher living standards; migration from developing South to developed North. The reasons for migration are arguably different for the emigrants from welfare countries (such as Nordic countries) than for emigrants from some other countries (see e.g. Breunig, Cao & Luedtke 2012; Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen 2015; Solevid 2016). Moreover, migrants from countries with more political and socio-economic opportunities have a higher propensity to vote (André et al. 2014). Therefore, the generalisation of these results is problematic. These findings should not be straightforwardly generalised or extrapolated to all migrants, seeing that the case of Finnish emigrants is somewhat different outside of its own group. However, as the electoral behaviour of emigrants is not so frequently studied, this article forms a base for future studies. Furthermore, the findings of this study can be used to develop targeted interventions aimed at advancing the Finnish electoral system, and, for instance, in the process of adopting postal voting for emigrants.

In conclusion, it is evident that more research is needed to better understand emigrant voting behaviour and the implementation of convenience voting methods. As short-term migration (non-permanent migration, such as migration for studies, work or retirement) increases, the means of political participation must be re-evaluated, and the political community should be seen to extend beyond the territorial limits of the state. Although migration is numerically limited at present, there are reasons to expect its growth in the future

(Portes 2001), and therefore the questions of the decision making of the territorial nation state as well as overseas political participation is not only topical, but also in need of further investigation.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. The respondents and the sample drawn from the Population Register of Finland

	Respondents (n=1,067)	Sample (n=3,600)
Current country of residence		
Sweden	133 (12.5 %)	600 (16.7 %)
Germany	237 (22.1 %)	600 (16.7 %)
Great Britain	185 (17.3 %)	600 (16.7 %)
Spain	156 (14.6 %)	600 (16.7 %)
Canada	166 (15.5 %)	600 (16.7 %)
United States of America	182 (17.1 %)	600 (16.7 %)
Other	8 (0.7 %)	0 (0 %)
Missing	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)
Total	1,067 (100 %)	3,600 (100 %)
Age group		
18-24	41 (3.8 %)	332 (9.2 %)
25-34	131 (12.3 %)	582 (16.2 %)
35-44	214 (20.1 %)	704 (19.6 %)
45-54	188 (17.6 %)	543 (15.1 %)
55-64	229 (21.5 %)	550 (15.3 %)
65-74	203 (19.0 %)	629 (17.5 %)
75-84	43 (4.0 %)	228 (6.3 %)
85-94	3 (0.3 %)	30 (0.8 %)
Missing	15 (1.4 %)	2 (0.1 %)
Total	1,067 (100 %)	3,600 (100 %)
Sex		
Female	715 (67.0 %)	2232 (62.0 %)
Male	336 (31.5 %)	1368 (38.0 %)
Missing	16 (1.5 %)	0 (0 %)
Total	1,067 (100 %)	3,600 (100 %)

Table 2. Question wordings main variables

<i>Dependent variables</i>	<i>Question wordings</i>	<i>Answer options</i>
Gender	Are you?	Male; Female
Age	Year of birth?	
Marital status	Are you currently...	Single; Married; Registered partnership; Living as married; Divorced or separated; Widowed; Other
Highest level of education	What is your highest level of education or degree?	Still at school (comprehensive school, high school, vocational school, etc.); Elementary school (folke schoole, kansakoulu); Comprehensive school; Vocational school; Gymnasium or abitur; Polytechnic school; University; Licentiate or doctor
Level of political knowledge	If you did not vote in Finland's elections, which were the most important reasons? <i>Recoded: Lack of political knowledge was one of the main reasons I chose not to vote in Finland's elections</i>	In my opinion, I didn't know enough about the current political situation in Finland <i>Recoded: Yes; No</i>
Interested in politics in Finland	How interested would you say you personally are in politics in Finland?	Very interested; Fairly interested; Not very interested; Not at all interested; Can't choose
Interested in politics in country of residence	How interested would you say you personally are in politics in your country of residence?	Very interested; Fairly interested; Not very interested; Not at all interested; Can't choose
Active participation in an association or a group	People sometimes belong to different kind of groups or associations. For each type of group, please indicate whether you belong and participate or not: Political party; Trade union, business, or professional association; Church or other religious association; Sports, leisure or cultural group; Finland Society; Another voluntary association	Belong, actively participate; Belong, don't participate; Used to belong but not anymore; Never belonged; Can't choose
Distance to the nearest polling station	What is the distance from where you live to the nearest polling station where you can vote in Finnish elections?	Less than 10 km; 11-20 km; 21-30 km; 31-40 km; 41-50 km; 51-60 km; 61-70 km; 71-80 km; 81-90 km; 91-100 km; 101-200 km; 201-300 km; 301-400 km; 401-500 km; 501-600 km; 601-700 km; 701-800 km; 801-900 km; 901-1000 km; More than 1000 km
Current country of residence	What is your current country of residence?	Sweden; Germany; Great Britain; Spain; Canada; USA; Other
Time lived abroad	How long have you lived abroad (in a country other than Finland)	Less than 5 years; 6-10 years; 11-15 years; 16-20 years; More than 20 years; I have never lived in Finland; I have moved back to Finland