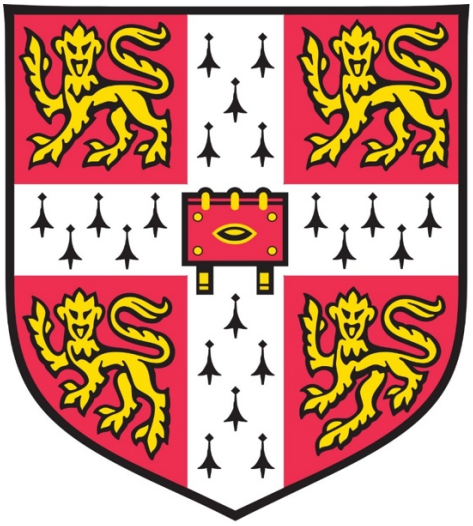
# LITHUANIAN EMIGRANTS AND HOME–COUNTRY ELECTIONS 2014–2016



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This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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# Declaration

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

# Abstract

**Monika Maminskaitė**

## LITHUANIAN EMIGRANTS AND HOME–COUNTRY ELECTIONS 2014–2016

Whilst a growing, even if still relatively scarce, body of empirical political science literature has been addressing the increasingly important topic of voting from abroad, studies of external voters from Central and Eastern European countries of origin lag behind considerably. The highly relevant case of Lithuania has to date not been studied altogether. This dissertation addresses this overlooked research topic using original survey and interview data. The topic is approached through three research questions: Which Lithuanian emigrants are aware of and interested in home–country politics? Which Lithuanian emigrants vote and which abstain from home–country elections, and why? How do Lithuanian emigrants make their political choices?

This thesis helps us start painting a clearer picture of the external Lithuanian electorate. Among other findings, it suggests Lithuanian emigrants to be most interested in and aware of home–country politics if they intend to return there one day, notwithstanding how long they have been residing abroad. Possible reasons for this finding are offered. Interest, in turn, is suggested by the quantitative data to be, overall, a better predictor of participating in home–country elections than knowledge. There is also evidence for effects of voting costs, political trust and perceived efficacy. In accordance with the Michigan school, emigrants appear to be making at least some of their political choices ideologically, whereas socio–economic factors underscored by the Columbia school are of a lesser bearing at individual level, even if at macro level Lithuanian external voters' choices tend to correspond to the 'high socio–economic status' internal electorate. Support for rational choice theory of voting is also discussed.

In addition to offering the first–ever account of the Lithuanian case, this thesis contributes to the global scholarship on emigrant voting. Its findings are discussed within a broader context of micro– and macro–level research on external voting, and within growing work on transnational political engagement and inherent 'resocialisation' and 'complementarity' perspectives.

# Acknowledgments

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I wish to thank the Lithuanian CEC and Mr Mindaugas Skačkauskas (Office of the *Seimas*) for helpful consultations on specificities on Lithuanian external voting, as well as national electoral commissions and International Organization for Migration offices for information on other countries. I would also like to extend my thanks to the research paticipants whose time allowed me to gather a significant body of research data.

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved grandmother who would have surely been the happiest to see it done.

# Table of contents


TABLE OF CONTENTS ..... IV

LIST OF FIGURES ..... VII

LIST OF TABLES ..... VIII

LISTS OF ABBREVIATIONS ..... X

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION ..... 1

1.1 RELEVANCE OF THE TOPIC ..... 1
1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE ..... 4
1.2.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 1. WHICH LITHUANIAN EMIGRANTS ARE AWARE OF AND INTERESTED IN HOME–COUNTRY POLITICS? ..... 4
1.2.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 2. WHICH LITHUANIAN EMIGRANTS VOTE AND WHICH ABSTAIN FROM HOME–COUNTRY ELECTIONS, AND WHY? ..... 4
1.2.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 3. HOW DO LITHUANIAN EMIGRANTS MAKE THEIR POLITICAL CHOICES? ..... 5
1.3 THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL VALUE OF THE RESEARCH ..... 5
1.4 LITHUANIA AS A UNIT OF ANALYSIS ..... 7
1.4.1 EMIGRANT TYPES AND DEFINITIONS ..... 10
1.4.2 LITHUANIAN EMIGRATION HISTORY ..... 12
1.4.3 CURRENT EMIGRATION NUMBERS ..... 20
1.4.4 LITHUANIAN EMIGRATION POLICY ..... 25
1.5 TIMEFRAME ..... 32
1.6 BOUNDARIES OF THE STUDY ..... 33
1.7 ORGANISATION OF THESIS ..... 33

CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY ..... 34

2.1 METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS ..... 34
2.2 METHODOLOGICAL PROCESS AND MULTI METHODS ..... 38
2.3 NON–RANDOM SURVEY SAMPLING ..... 43
2.4 SURVEY DATA ..... 45
2.5 COMPOSITE INDICES ..... 46
2.5.1 AWARENESS INDEX ..... 49
2.5.2 INTEREST INDEX ..... 56
2.6 INTERVIEWS ..... 60
2.6.1 FIELDWORK DETAILS ..... 60
2.6.2 SEMI–STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS ..... 62
2.6.3 INTERVIEW STRUCTURE ..... 63
2.7 POSITIONALITY ..... 65

CHAPTER 3. HOME–COUNTRY POLITICAL AWARENESS AND INTEREST OF LITHUANIAN EMIGRANTS ..... 67

**3.1 INTRODUCTION ..... 67**
3.1.1 POLITICAL INTEREST ..... 68
3.1.2 POLITICAL AWARENESS ..... 72
3.1.3 INFORMATION SOURCES ..... 74
3.1.4 OTHER VARIABLES ..... 76
**3.2 DATA ..... 77**
3.2.1 RESPONSE VARIABLES ..... 77
3.2.2 EXPLANATORY VARIABLES ..... 81
3.2.3 CONTROL VARIABLES ..... 83
**3.3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ..... 87**
3.3.1 INFORMATION SOURCES ..... 87
3.3.2 TIME SPENT ABROAD ..... 90
3.3.3 INTENTION TO RETURN ..... 97
3.3.4 GENDER, AGE AND EDUCATION ..... 98
3.3.5 CONTROL VARIABLES ..... 99
3.3.6 ADDITIONAL QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS ..... 101
**3.4 SUMMARY ..... 103**

**CHAPTER 4. WHO VOTES AND WHO ABSTAINS? MOTIVATIONS AND OBSTACLES IN LITHUANIAN EMIGRANT VOTING ..... 104**

**4.1 INTRODUCTION ..... 104**
4.1.1 ELECTORAL PROCESS IN LITHUANIA AND EXTERNAL VOTING ..... 104
4.1.2 INTEREST AND KNOWLEDGE ..... 108
4.1.3 INCONVENIENCE ..... 110
4.1.4 SOCIO–DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ..... 115
4.1.5 MIGRATION CIRCUMSTANCES ..... 121
4.1.6 TRUST AND EFFICACY ..... 122
4.1.7 OTHER VARIABLES ..... 123
**4.2 DATA ..... 125**
4.2.1 LITHUANIAN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL VOTING RATES ..... 125
4.2.2 PRIMARY DATA ..... 133
**4.3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ..... 135**
4.3.1 INTEREST ..... 137
4.3.2 KNOWLEDGE ..... 140
4.3.3 INCONVENIENCE ..... 148
4.3.4 SOCIO–DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS ..... 153
4.3.5 MIGRATION CIRCUMSTANCES ..... 154
4.3.6 TRUST AND EFFICACY ..... 154
**4.4 SUMMARY ..... 159**

**CHAPTER 5. LITHUANIAN EMIGRANTS' POLITICAL CHOICES ..... 161**

**5.1 INTRODUCTION ..... 161**
5.1.1 SOCIOLOGICAL MODEL ..... 161
5.1.2 PSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL ..... 165
5.1.3 RATIONAL CHOICE MODEL ..... 167
5.1.4 OTHER VARIABLES ..... 169
**5.2 OFFICIAL ELECTORAL DATA ..... 170**
**5.3 PRIMARY DATA: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ..... 183**

5.3.1 SOCIO–DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES (SOCIOLOGICAL MODEL) ..... 189
5.3.2 PARTISANSHIP (PSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL) ..... 189
5.3.3 ISSUE VOTING (RATIONAL CHOICE MODEL) ..... 192
5.3.4 SUMMARY ..... 199

**CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION ..... 200**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... 205**

**APPENDICES ..... 315**

**APPENDIX 1. QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS ..... 315**
**APPENDIX 2. CATEGORISATION OF LITHUANIAN PARTIES ..... 316**

## List of figures

Figure 1. Emigration from Lithuania 2006–2018. Calculated from data of Statistics Lithuania.....21
Figure 2. Distribution of awareness index scores.....55
Figure 3. Distribution of interest index scores.....60
Figure 4. Distribution of respondents' age.....83
Figure 5. Distribution of respondents' self–placement on left–right scale.....86
Figure 6. Male and female turnout (percentage) by age groups in *Seimas* election 2016 (first round), all voters.....116
Figure 7. Male and female turnout (percentage) by age groups in *Seimas* election 2016 (second round), all voters.....117
Figure 8. Absolute turnout within the national territory and abroad in *Seimas* elections.....128
Figure 9. Absolute turnout within the national territory and abroad in Presidential elections.....129
Figure 10. Male and female turnout (percentage) by age groups in *Seimas* 2016 election, internal voters.....130
Figure 11. Male and female turnout (percentage) by age groups in *Seimas* election 2016, external voters.....131
Figure 12. Male and female absolute turnout by age groups in *Seimas* election 2016, internal voters.....132
Figure 13. Male and female absolute turnout by age groups in *Seimas* 2016 election, external voters.....132
Figure 14. Change of intention among prospective voters after Liberal scandal.....175
Figure 15. Change of intention among prospective voters after Liberal scandal, by age.....176
Figure 16. Intended political choices of initial LRLS supporters who changed their mind due to Liberal scandal.....177
Figure 17. Categorised multi–member district votes in *Seimas* elections, internal voters.....182
Figure 18. Categorised multi–member district votes in *Seimas* elections, external voters.....182

## List of tables

Table 1. Calculation of estimated ratios of total emigration and total population, and of citizen emigration and citizen population, year 2015 ..... 8
Table 2. Estimated ratios of total emigration and total population, and of citizen emigration and citizen population, years 2013–2017 ..... 9
Table 3. Number of certificates of proof of studying abroad in the EU provided to NHIF ..... 22
Table 4. Percentage of correct answers for Presidential election Round 1 day and month, for Presidential election Round 2 day and month, and for EP election day and month ..... 78
Table 5. Distribution of respondents' time spent abroad ..... 82
Table 6. Distribution of respondents' intention to return to Lithuania ..... 82
Table 7. Number of respondents (absolute numbers and percentages) using different information sources to follow Presidential and EP election campaigns ..... 88
Table 8. Linear regression results. Response variable: awareness index score. ..... 91
Table 9. Linear regression results. Response variable: interest index score ..... 92
Table 10. Deadlines for registering to vote in Seimas election 2016 by post. ..... 107
Table 11.Internal and external voter turnout in Lithuanian elections ..... 127
Table 12. Respondents' participation in Presidential election 2014 ..... 133
Table 13. Respondents' participation in Lithuanian EP election 2014 ..... 133
Table 14. Binary logistic regression results. Response variable: voting in Lithuanian Presidential election 2014 ..... 136
Table 15. Binary logistic regression results. Response variable: voting for Lithuanian candidates in EP election 2014 ..... 137
Table 16. Emigrant vote distribution in Seimas election 2016, first round, multi–member district .. 171
Table 17. Emigrant vote distribution in Seimas election 2016, first round, single–member district. 172
Table 18. Emigrant vote distribution in Seimas election 2016, second round ..... 173
Table 19. Emigrant vote distribution in EP election 2014 ..... 178
Table 20. Emigrant vote distribution in Presidential election 2014, first round ..... 180
Table 21. Emigrant vote distribution in Presidential election 2014, second round ..... 181
Table 22. Emigrants' (overall and surveyed) votes in Presidential election 2014, first round ..... 184
Table 23. Emigrants' (overall and surveyed) votes in Presidential election 2014, second round ..... 184
Table 24. Emigrants' (overall and surveyed) votes in EP election 2014 ..... 185
Table 25. Binary logistic regression results. Response variable: voting for Grybauskaitė in Presidential election 2014 (first round) ..... 187

Table 26. Binary logistic regression results. Response variable: voting for TS–LKD in EP election 2014 ..... 188

# Lists of abbreviations

## Abbreviations of key political parties

| Abbreviation | Party name | Translation |
|---|---|---|
| APKK | Antikorupcinė N. Puteikio ir K. Krivicko koalicija | Anti–corruption coalition of N. Puteikis and K. Krivickas |
| DK | Partija „Drąsos kelias“ | Party ‘Way of Courage’ |
| DP | Darbo partija | Labour Party |
| LCP | Lietuvos centro partija | Lithuanian Centre Party |
| LDDP | Lietuvos demokratinė darbo partija | Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party |
| LiCS | Liberalų ir centro sąjunga | Liberal and Centre Union |
| LKP | Lietuvos komunistų partija | Lithuanian Communist Party |
| LLP | Lietuvos liaudies partija | Lithuanian Laypeople’s Party |
| LLRA | Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija –Krikščioniškų šeimų sąjunga | Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania – Union of Christian families |
| LLRA–LRS (VTB) | Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija – Lietuvos rusų sąjunga (Valdemaro Tomaševskio blokas) | Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania – Lithuanian Russian Union (Valdemar Tomaševski Unit) |
| LLS | Lietuvos laisvės sąjunga (liberalai) | Lithuanian Freedom Union (Liberals) |
| LRLS | Lietuvos Respublikos liberalų sąjūdis | Liberal Movement of Republic of Lithuania |
| LRS | Lietuvos rusų sąjunga | Lithuanian Russian Union |
| LS | Lietuvos sąrašas | Lithuania’s List |
| LSDP | Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija | Social Democratic Party of Lithuania |
| LTS | Lietuvių tautininkų ir respublikonų sąjunga | The Lithuanian Nationalist and Republican Union |
| LVŽS | Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga | Lithuanian Peasants’ and Greens’ Union |
| LŽP | Lietuvos žaliųjų partija | Lithuanian Greens’ Party |
| LŽPa | Lietuvos žmonių partija | Lithuanian People's Party |
| TS[1] | Tėvynės sąjunga | Homeland Union |
| TS–LKD | Tėvynės sąjunga – Lietuvos krikščionys demokratai | Homeland Union – Christian Democrats of Lithuania |
| TT | Partija „Tvarka ir teisingumas“ | Party ‘Order and Justice’ |
| TPP | Tautos prisikėlimo partija | Party of Nation’s Resurrection |
| UDL | A.Brazausko ir A.Paulausko koalicija „Už darbą Lietuvai“ | A. Brazauskas and A. Paulauskas’ coalition ‘For Work for Lithuania’ |

[1]Often also referred to simply as ‘Conservatives’ (the same is true for TS–LKD).

**Other abbreviations**

| | |
|---|---|
| CEE | Central and Eastern Europe |
| DPs | Displaced Persons |
| EP | European Parliament |
| EU | European Union |
| GLL | Global Lithuanian Leaders |
| HDI | Human Development Index |
| ICPSR | Inter–university Consortium for Political and Social Research |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| IOMVO | International Organization for Migration Vilnius Office |
| JRC | Joint Research Centre |
| MMD | Multi–member district |
| MP | Member of Parliament |
| PR | Public relations |
| URM | Užsienio reikalų ministerija (Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) |
| WLC | World Lithuanian Community |
| WW1 | First World War |
| WW2 | Second World War |

# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Relevance of the topic

In 2004 a key wave of European Union expansion took place, which included eight countries from the post–communist bloc, namely the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. This was followed by the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 – these two countries were not able to join the EU in 2004, but their accession is understood by the European Commission as part of the same fifth enlargement wave (Breuss 2009; see also Landaburu 2002, Summa 2008). Subject to varying transition periods, the citizens of these new EU member states gradually became eligible to work and study within the EU borders under conditions comparable to those of the nationals of their chosen destination countries, which have traditionally been the economically strong countries in the Western part of the Union (Dustmann & Frattini 2012; Hawkins 2017).

The 2008–2012 global recession and its lingering aftereffects greatly facilitated the process of East–to–West migration within the European Union (Koehler et al. 2010; Kahanec & Zimmermann 2016). While Western economies were by no means spared the negative effects of the crisis (in fact, they were among the first to be affected, the crisis then spreading towards the East), post–communist Eastern European[2] countries were eventually hit especially hard – for example, the Baltic States experienced a GDP decrease from 15–17% in Estonia and Lithuania to almost 25% in Latvia in 2009 (Dudzińska 2013; Kattel & Raudla 2013). The Western economies being stronger to begin with, many East Europeans who lost their jobs were keener to work for minimal or next–to–minimal wage in Western Europe than in the East where a minimal wage often brings the worker on the verge of severe material deprivation (Eurostat 2017).

As a result of the rapidly increasing level of labour force mobility across national borders and the long economic crisis, employment (as well as higher education) patterns in the European Union have been in a state of flux. This certainly has had an effect on the job market in the EU member states: with

[2]The three Baltic States are often classified as Northern Europe as opposed to Eastern Europe in order to highlight the historical and cultural ties with its sea neighbours Norway, Denmark and Sweden, as well as political and religious distance from its Eastern neighbours, first and foremost Russia (e.g. United Nations 2019a). This dissertation, however, uses a simple East–and–West European Union division, therefore classifying the Baltic States as East European countries due to their relative geographical location. At the same time, it acknowledges and makes use of the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) concept, CEE encompassing the European countries which were part of the former communist bloc.

some of the countries 'sending'[3] and others 'receiving' workflow, their available workforce, salary levels and governmental regulations likely differ from what they would be without migration (Kahanec & Zimmermann 2010; Kasnauskienė & Budvytytė 2013). Workplaces are by no means the only sphere affected by migration flows: on the contrary, intra–EU mobility raises various questions about its broader sociological, legal and political implications. A large number of political consequences relate to the countries of *immigration*. For example, it is of importance for the receiving countries to reflect on the desired level of political representation of the immigrant working force. More specifically, it ought to be considered whether the nationals of other EU member states should be allowed and/or encouraged to take part in national elections of their country of residence as voters or even as candidates, by either joining traditional parties or forming their own. Another important political consequence may be the change in political preferences in a given country, where the new residents bring their own political beliefs and where old residents' opinions might be swayed from the status quo (often towards conservative or populist parties – Greven 2016; Inglehart & Norris 2016) as a result of immigration flows.

On the other hand, similar political consequences exist for the *emigration* countries, even if, partly due to the fact that these consequences arise from the *absence* of previously present national residents as opposed to the *presence* of previously absent foreign workforce, they tend to be noticed and discussed less. In the context of voting, just like one should take into account a new group of potential voters in the receiving country, it is important to realise that the same people also represent a potential loss of voters in the home country if they stop participating in its elections, whether or not they 'make up' for it by taking part in the elections in the country of residence.[4] Furthermore, just like in the case of receiving countries, there is a possibility of a change in political preferences in sending countries if people who emigrate are non–random in terms of their political opinions and then take these attitudes abroad without returning to act upon them in the home country, or alter their home–country political preferences when abroad. A change in political preferences may also occur in the sending country if the remaining citizens decide to punish their government for the emigration flows.

Whilst the political consequences of migration can manifest themselves in a variety of situations, the critical setting for them to become evident is in elections. It is typically at election time when political

[3]Throughout this thesis, countries of emigration are interchangeably referred to as 'sending' or 'home' countries as well as 'countries of origin', and countries of immigration – as 'receiving', 'host' and 'destination' countries as well as 'countries of residence'.

[4]This also holds for taking an active part in local elections by running as candidates, although admittedly this potential effect is even more difficult to observe.

opinions and the presence or absence of political participation count the most. Do emigrants still vote in home country elections? Why do they fail to cast their votes, or why do they still vote? How do the voters vote? Regrettably, relatively little is known about the effects migration has had on the voting patterns of European electorates, and particularly in the sending countries. This thesis aims to shed light on this emerging research topic. Focusing on Lithuania which joined the EU in 2004, the key question guiding this research is – how do emigrants from Lithuania relate to the elections in the home country? More specifically, this thesis focuses on the voting behaviour and political preferences of emigrants, *en route* also investigating their home–country political interest and knowledge.

The present research makes multiple contributions to the literature on external voting as well as general voting behaviour. One of the contributions is empirical, as this thesis presents the first large–scale quantitative dataset of its kind, collecting and analysing survey data on the Lithuanian emigrant electorate, and supplementing it with qualitative interview data for further insights. More generally, this research contributes to the relatively scarce literature on emigrants, firstly investigating Lithuanian emigrants' connection to the homeland by examining their home–country political knowledge[5] and interest,[6] as well as the means of sustaining this connection. The empirical findings endorse the importance of the internet among Lithuanian emigrants and give insight into factors associated with higher levels of awareness and interest, above all education and intention to return to the home country. Secondly, this thesis contributes to our knowledge of external (non)voting, exploring reasons behind abroad–based Lithuanians' decisions whether to vote, which turn out to encompass interest and awareness, as well as voting costs, political trust, and political efficacy. The present work also adds to the understanding of emigrant political choices, underlining the importance of ideology among the external Lithuanian electorate, and showing that emigrants can care both about issues important to them as emigrants and to general citizens. The theoretical and practical value of this research will be discussed in more detail after introducing the specific research questions.

This dissertation shows that Lithuanian external voters' choices tend to correspond to those of what one could refer to as the 'high socio–economic status' internal electorate. This is especially intriguing given that the external voters' choices themselves are not well explained in socio–democratic terms – instead, there is evidence of the importance of ideology among emigrant voters.

[5]Also interchangeably referred to as 'pollical awareness' in this work. Lack of knowledge is also referred to as 'ignorance'.

[6]Lack of interest is interchangeably referred to as 'apathy' in this work.

## 1.2 Research questions and their importance

The beginning of this chapter introduced the topic guiding this thesis – Lithuanian emigrants' relationship with the elections in the home country – and explained why addressing it is important and timely. The present section clarifies the three specific research questions that this dissertation has set to answer in order to give a good insight into the research topic.

### 1.2.1 Research question 1. Which Lithuanian emigrants are aware of and interested in home–country politics?

Before addressing other questions on emigrants' political sentiments and voting behaviour, this thesis examines their awareness of and interest in home–country politics, and particularly the characteristics associated with higher interest and awareness levels among Lithuanians residing abroad. The concepts of electoral interest and awareness are then utilised throughout the rest of the thesis to help answer the subsequent research questions.

It is important to note that awareness and interest are different, although related, aspects of emigrants' relationship with the home country's politics. While Chapter 3 explains these concepts in more detail, it is already helpful to note that, for example, one abroad–residing individual may be aware of an election taking place in the home country but express little or no interest in following or taking part in it. Another might be unaware of an upcoming election, but express interest in it when informed.

### 1.2.2 Research question 2. Which Lithuanian emigrants vote and which abstain from home–country elections, and why?

The effect that emigration from Lithuania has on its elections will be conditional on the extent to which emigrants take part in such elections in the first place, making external turnout an important subject to investigate in the context of this thesis. This dissertation adds particular value to the existing literature by giving unprecedented insight into what influences the likelihood of voting, or abstaining, while residing abroad. Is it influenced by socio–demographic characteristics? Have emigrant absentees lost touch with their home country and are no longer (or possibly have never been) interested in Lithuanian elections? Or is it perhaps lack of adequate information from Lithuania's side that prevents emigrants from having sufficient awareness about the election and related procedures to take part? Alternatively, are non–voters sufficiently aware and interested, mere procedural difficulties preventing them from executing their right to vote? This thesis explores these and other possibilities using original empirical data.

### 1.2.3 Research question 3. How do Lithuanian emigrants make their political choices?

Finally, this dissertation examines political choices[7] of Lithuanians abroad. Given that the thesis focuses on political effects of emigration for the home country, the political choices of interest are those relating to Lithuania's political 'supply' rather than that of the host countries. These two kinds of political preferences may correspond (for instance, a supporter of a conservative party in Lithuania may also support a conservative party in the UK) but in other instances they may differ (the same person may decide that in the context of the UK a liberal party is more acceptable to them).

## 1.3 Theoretical and practical value of the research

The theoretical and practical value of addressing the influence of emigration on elections is best understood if the contributions are divided into three segments: value to empirical political science literature, value to normative political debates and value to practical politics.

If we examine empirical political science literature on the topic of voting in a migration context (e.g. Ramakrishnan & Espenshade 2001; Jones–Correa 2001; Hayduk 2004; Henderson 2005; Teney et al. 2010; Bevelander & Pendakur 2011; André et al. 2014; Voicu & Comşa 2014), it can be readily noticed that most of the literature focuses on host countries and often deals with regions outside of the EU. Bueker (2005), for instance, examines the American context and rightfully argues voting to be, in certain ways, a superior indicator of political incorporation into the host country in comparison with naturalisation. There is also evidence to suggest that immigration affects the (re)distribution of the vote amongst the parties in the receiving countries. To illustrate, Strijbis (2014) demonstrates that, at least in Switzerland, not only does voting behaviour of immigrants differ from that of natives, but the electoral choices also depend on particular migration circumstances. Research by Cebolla–Boado and Jiménez–Buedo (2011) suggests that an increase in voter support for conservatives and a corresponding decrease in support for socialists can be partly explained by ethnic composition alterations in Madrid neighbourhoods. Golder (2003) examines the region of Western Europe and shows that levels of unemployment and immigration appear to matter for votes of extreme–right populist parties but not so much for extreme–right neofascistic parties. And there are many more such studies. By contrast, home–country literature on migrants and elections has been relatively scarce. This will become apparent in literature reviews of the empirical chapters. However, some things can be underlined upfront. First, the body of research on external voting is growing, but studies of European home countries (Ognibene & Paulis 2021), and especially those of the CEE region, lag

[7]Also referred to intercheangeably as 'electoral choices'.

considerably behind the works examining other regions. Second, until now, the research questions addressed in this thesis have not been examined together in a single piece of work concentrating on one country, and a more sporadic approach combining different home– and host–countries allows for less room to examine each country in depth and may also cloud the extent to which specific findings could be generalised beyond the chosen case(s). Third, due to difficulties inherent to collecting micro–level data, individual–level focus is often not given the attention it deserves.

Empirical insights generated during the course of this study can also contribute to normative discussions on external voting. It is important to understand that even in the normative discussions, arguments are often made, and conclusions are thereby often drawn, on the basis of real–life examples, alongside possible alternative theoretical scenarios. To illustrate, an author examining whether external voting is fair is likely to discuss (theoretical) alternatives of presence or absence of external voting relying on examples of how external voting, or lack of it, has (un)fairly affected certain groups of individuals in given parts of the world (see, e.g., Bauböck (2005, 2009, 2017); other works that could benefit from empirical research in this way include Kull's (2008), Owen's (2011) and Arrighi and Bauböck's (2017) accounts on migrant voting rights). Gaining insight into the effect that emigration from Lithuania is having on elections in the home country can therefore add to the normative arguments on whether, in which circumstances, or subject to which conditions, external voting should be allowed as well as whose interests such voting would serve best.

Aside from the contribution to empirical political literature and normative political debates, the examination of the chosen topic also adds value to practical politics, above all, but not exclusively, in Lithuania. In light of the large emigration wave that this county has been facing since EU accession, a better understanding of the role that the loss of resident citizens may have on elections in Lithuania has become increasingly important. To date, emigrant sentiments towards the home country and its politicians have remained a largely anecdotal theme, as have the reasons of emigrant absenteeism and home–country awareness and interest among Lithuanians residing abroad. This thesis aims to rectify this by providing first steps towards a more systematic understanding of Lithuanian emigrants' electoral behaviour. This understanding, in turn, will provide valuable information to the politicians of Lithuania and will also inform governments of countries that may face comparable migration flows now or in the future.

For politicians, getting to know their voters and those voters' political preferences is a critical task in order to increase their chances to win elections. Relying on the classical strategy of tailoring

candidates' political position to the preferences of the so–called 'median voter' (Downs 1957) we might assume that a relatively unfamiliar group of abroad–based eligible voters would require politicians to move away (even if slightly) from the traditionally more or less known 'local' median voter. This would necessitate additional calculations and assumptions about citizens living outside of Lithuania, especially but not exclusively if voting from abroad becomes significantly more accessible (e.g. by providing dual citizenship or the possibility of online voting) in the future and the numbers of voters abroad rise. By analysing political awareness and interest and voting behaviour of Lithuanian emigrants, this thesis helps to shed light onto this segment of the electorate, which can help politicians in designing effective external campaigns.

## 1.4 Lithuania as a unit of analysis

This study has selected Lithuania as a unit of analysis which 'ships' potential voters from the East to, most commonly, the West. The justification for this selection is that political sentiments and voting behaviour of the abroad–residing population are likely to be considerably more noticeable and important in those EU countries that have large relative emigration. Table 1 helps to understand why Lithuania is the most appropriate unit of analysis for the present study. This table demonstrates total emigration from individual EU countries and emigration of citizens in particular. Alongside, it shows the total population in the given country as well as citizen population. Lastly, it presents two ratios[8] calculated from these figures: a ratio between total emigration and total population and a ratio between citizen emigration and citizen population. As can be seen from this table, the two ratios often differ. If we simply examine how large a proportion of people leave a given country ('total' ratio) we see that Luxembourg, Cyprus and Malta are the countries with largest relative emigration with respective ratios of 2.2%, 2% and 1.6%, Lithuania coming close with 1.5%. However, once we take a further step and examine the proportion of people whose passport allows them to vote in the country they are leaving ('citizen' ratio), we see that the first three of the aforementioned countries have noticeably smaller ratios of 0.7%, 0.1% and 0.3%. In other words, many people who are leaving these countries are those who do not hold their passports and thus would not have been allowed to vote in most elections in the given country even if they had stayed there. For the purposes of this dissertation, it is the ratio which takes into account the eligibility of voting – i.e. the citizen ratio – which is of central interest, and the country with the highest citizen ratio is Lithuania (1.3%), the rest of the countries' ratios not exceeding 1% and the majority being between 0.1% and 0.4%. Table 2 demonstrates the

[8]The term 'ratio' is used in this section to allow for easier reading, even though the proportion is expressed in terms of percentages.

corresponding ratios of the EU countries for the years 2013 to 2017, which confirms that the citizen ratio of Lithuania stands out consistently throughout the years.

| | 2015 total emigration | 2015 citizen emigration | 2015 total population | 2015 citizen population | Total emigration ratio | Citizen emigration ratio |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Austria | 56,689 | 15,150 | 8,700,471 | 7,560,735 | 0.7% | 0.2% |
| Belgium | 89,794 | 29,949 | 11,311,117 | 10,038,366 | 0.8% | 0.3% |
| Bulgaria | 29,470 | 24,487 | 7,153,784 | 7,088,162 | 0.4% | 0.3% |
| Croatia | 29,651 | 28,268 | 4,190,669 | 4,153,990 | 0.7% | 0.7% |
| Cyprus | 17,183 | 1,025 | 848,319 | 703,720 | 2.0% | 0.1% |
| Czech Rep. | 25,684 | 6,803 | 10,553,843 | 10,096,520 | 0.2% | 0.1% |
| Denmark | 44,625 | 14,020 | 5,707,251 | 5,284,759 | 0.8% | 0.3% |
| Estonia | 13,003 | 8,957 | 1,315,944 | 1,118,333 | 1.0% | 0.8% |
| Finland | 16,305 | 9,628 | 5,487,308 | 5,268,505 | 0.3% | 0.2% |
| France | 323,847 | 272,031 | 66,638,391 | 62,275,106 | 0.5% | 0.4% |
| Germany | 347,162 | 106,682 | 82,175,684 | 74,635,910 | 0.4% | 0.1% |
| Greece | 109,351 | 55,977 | 10,783,748 | 9,961,779 | 1.0% | 0.6% |
| Hungary | 43,225 | 32,852 | 9,830,485 | 9,684,758 | 0.4% | 0.3% |
| Ireland | 67,160 | 38,489 | 4,726,286 | 4,194,090 | 1.4% | 0.9% |
| Italy | 146,955 | 102,259 | 60,665,551 | 55,651,114 | 0.2% | 0.2% |
| Latvia | 20,119 | 16,579 | 1,968,957 | 1,670,524 | 1.0% | 1.0% |
| Lithuania | 44,533 | 36,976 | 2,888,558 | 2,866,088 | 1.5% | 1.3% |
| Luxembourg | 12,644 | 2,199 | 576,249 | 317,57 | 2.2% | 0.7% |
| Malta | 7,095 | 1,140 | 450,415 | 412,592 | 1.6% | 0.3% |
| Netherlands | 112,330 | 58,369 | 16,979,120 | 16,205,832 | 0.7% | 0.4% |
| Poland | 258,837 | 169,375 | 37,967,209 | 37,858,930 | 0.7% | 0.4% |
| Portugal | 40,377 | 39,847 | 10,341,330 | 9,946,135 | 0.4% | 0.4% |
| Romania | 194,718 | 186,129 | 19,760,585 | 19,671,814 | 1.0% | 0.9% |
| Slovakia | 3,870 | 3,835 | 5,426,252 | 5,364,486 | 0.1% | 0.1% |
| Slovenia | 14,913 | 8,654 | 2,064,188 | 1,962,656 | 0.7% | 0.4% |
| Spain | 343,875 | 94,645 | 46,440,099 | 41,985,745 | 0.7% | 0.2% |
| Sweden | 55,830 | 24,497 | 9,851,017 | 9,119,802 | 0.6% | 0.3% |
| UK | 299,183 | 123,746 | 65,379,044 | 59,959,852 | 0.5% | 0.2% |

Table 1. Calculation of estimated ratios of total emigration and total population, and of citizen emigration and citizen population, year 2015 . Calculated from Eurostat's data. NB: the figures, due to data availability issues, also include people under 18

| | 2013 | | 2014 | | 2015 | | 2016 | | 2017 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total ratio | Citizen ratio | Total ratio | Citizen ratio | Total ratio | Citizen ratio | Total ratio | Citizen ratio | Total ratio | Citizen ratio |
| Austria | 0.6% | 0.2% | 0.6% | 0.2% | 0.7% | 0.2% | 0.7% | 0.2% | 0.8% | 0.2% |
| Belgium | 0.9% | 0.3% | 0.8% | 0.3% | 0.8% | 0.3% | 0.8% | 0.3% | 0.8% | 0.3% |
| Bulgaria | 0.3% | 0.2% | 0.4% | 0.3% | 0.4% | 0.3% | 0.4% | 0.4% | 0.4% | 0.4% |
| Croatia | 0.4% | 0.3% | 0.5% | 0.5% | 0.7% | 0.7% | 0.9% | 0.8% | 1.1% | 1.1% |
| Cyprus | 2.9% | 0.5% | 2.8% | 0.2% | 2.0% | 0.1% | 1.8% | 0.3% | 1.8% | 0.2% |
| Czech Rep. | 0.2% | 0.1% | 0.3% | 0.1% | 0.2% | 0.1% | 0.4% | 0.1% | 0.3% | 0.1% |
| Denmark | 0.8% | 0.3% | 0.8% | 0.2% | 0.8% | 0.3% | 0.9% | 0.3% | 1.0% | 0.3% |
| Estonia | 0.5% | 0.6% | 0.4% | 0.3% | 1.0% | 0.8% | 1.0% | 0.8% | 0.9% | 0.7% |
| Finland | 0.3% | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.2% |
| France | 0.4% | 0.3% | 0.5% | 0.4% | 0.5% | 0.4% | 0.5% | 0.4% | 0.5% | 0.4% |
| Germany | 0.3% | 0.1% | 0.4% | 0.1% | 0.4% | 0.1% | 0.6% | 0.3% | 0.7% | 0.3% |
| Greece | 1.1% | 0.6% | 1.0% | 0.5% | 1.0% | 0.6% | 1.0% | 0.5% | 1.0% | 0.5% |
| Hungary | 0.4% | 0.2% | 0.4% | 0.3% | 0.4% | 0.3% | 0.4% | 0.3% | 0.4% | 0.3% |
| Ireland | 1.7% | 1.1% | 1.5% | 0.9% | 1.4% | 0.9% | 1.3% | 0.7% | 1.3% | 0.8% |
| Italy | 0.2% | 0.1% | 0.2% | 0.1% | 0.2% | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.2% |
| Latvia | 1.1% | 1.1% | 1.0% | 0.8% | 1.0% | 1.0% | 1.0% | 1.0% | 0.9% | 0.9% |
| Lithuania | 1.3% | 1.2% | 1.2% | 1.1% | 1.5% | 1.3% | 1.7% | 1.6% | 1.7% | 1.6% |
| Luxembourg | 2.0% | 0.6% | 2.1% | 0.3% | 2.2% | 0.7% | 2.3% | 0.7% | 2.3% | 0.7% |
| Malta | 1.1% | 0.3% | 1.2% | 0.3% | 1.6% | 0.3% | 1.8% | 0.2% | 1.5% | 0.3% |
| Netherlands | 0.7% | 0.4% | 0.7% | 0.3% | 0.7% | 0.4% | 0.7% | 0.3% | 0.6% | 0.3% |
| Poland | 0.7% | 0.6% | 0.7% | 0.5% | 0.7% | 0.4% | 0.6% | 0.5% | 0.6% | 0.5% |
| Portugal | 0.5% | 0.5% | 0.5% | 0.5% | 0.4% | 0.4% | 0.4% | 0.4% | 0.3% | 0.3% |
| Romania | 0.8% | 0.8% | 0.9% | 0.9% | 1.0% | 0.9% | 1.1% | 1.1% | 1.2% | 1.1% |
| Slovakia | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.1% |
| Slovenia | 0.7% | 0.4% | 0.7% | 0.4% | 0.7% | 0.4% | 0.8% | 0.5% | 0.8% | 0.5% |
| Spain | 1.1% | 0.2% | 0.9% | 0.2% | 0.7% | 0.2% | 0.7% | 0.2% | 0.8% | 0.2% |
| Sweden | 0.5% | 0.3% | 0.5% | 0.3% | 0.6% | 0.3% | 0.5% | 0.2% | 0.5% | 0.2% |
| UK | 0.5% | 0.2% | 0.5% | 0.2% | 0.5% | 0.2% | 0.5% | 0.2% | 0.5% | 0.2% |

Table 2. Estimated ratios of total emigration and total population, and of citizen emigration and citizen population, years 2013–2017. Calculated from Eurostat's data

While this introduction has so far concentrated on the significance of relative citizen emigration to help understand the pertinence of Lithuania to the study, it also worthwhile to discuss the emigration from Lithuania in a more general sense. To do so, we shall first introduce the types of emigrants, highlighting relevant definitions (1.4.1). Then, we briefly discuss Lithuanian emigration history (1.4.2), current (i.e. post–soviet) absolute emigrantion numbers (1.4.3) and Lithuanian emigration policies (1.4.4).

### 1.4.1 Emigrant types and definitions

Whilst research definitions of emigration and emigrants vary (IOM 2021), emigrants are generally understood as individuals living permanently, or for a longer period of time, outside of their country of origin. For definition purposes it is common to set a minimal length of actual stay abroad – typically a year, although a six months' term is also used in both Lithuanian and general literature (e.g. Barcevičius & Žvalionytė 2012; Barret & Mosca 2013). However, the official Lithuanian statistical institute – i.e. Statistics Lithuania – views **an emigrant as 'a person who moves to another country *with an intention*[9] of settling in the new place of residence permanently or for at least 12 months'** (Statistics Lithuania 2017). It thereby focuses on one's intentions at the time of leaving the home country rather than the actual outcome. This definition encompasses **individuals who moved from Lithuania to other European Union countries or Schengen zone countries, i.e. EU free movers**. This definition of emigrants by the national Lithuanian statistical institute is also the one employed by the present thesis.[10]

A closely related concept is that of a '**Lithuanian (residing) abroad'** that Statistics Lithuania equates to **'a permanent resident in a foreign country who has citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania and/or was born in Lithuania, and/or is of Lithuanian ethnicity, and/or whose first language is Lithuanian'** (Statistics Lithuania 2014c). Per most recent available figures, there are 619,600 such individuals, which constitutes 16.9% of the total number of Lithuanians (Statistics Lithuania 2014b). If one adds **individuals 'of Lithuanian origin', which includes also those who have known Lithuanian ancestor(s),** the estimate increases to 1.3 million (URM 2021b).

It should be noted that the data on Lithuanians abroad collected by Statistics Lithuania (2014b) relies on host countries' censuses which do not have consistent methodology to arrive at the estimation of Lithuanians in the given country: post–communist countries tend to record 'ethnicity', for instance, whilst Western countries typically record 'country of birth' or 'country of origin' instead (Statistics Lithuania 2021, pers. comm, 4 November). Moreover, although the corresponding definitions employed by Statistics Lithuania are not identical, for practical purposes it is common to use the estimates of Lithuanians residing abroad provided by Statistics Lithuania as reflecting the numbers of Lithuanian emigrants, or even of 'diaspora' (e.g. Gudelis & Klimavičiūtė 2020; Vilčinskienė 2020). The

[9]Emphasis added; author's translations (approved by Statistics Lithuania) here and below.

[10]Yet, it should be noted that when describing *historical* emigration, the thesis follows traditional historians' understanding of four–wave Lithuanian emigration, although it does not perfectly match the present definition of Lithuanian Statistics, as the third–wave leavers were refugees who typically did not intend to stay abroad for a prolonged period of time.

present work maintains a more conservative view of the term **'diaspora'** as applicable only to cases where **political reasons prevent a large ethnic group from coming back to the homeland** (Østergaard–Nielsen 2003a), but, in line with the existing literature, it does use terms 'emigrants', 'émigré' and 'Lithuanians (residing) abroad' interchangeably. It also employs Statistics Lithuania's (2014b) estimates of Lithuanians abroad to shed light on the state of Lithuanian emigration in Section 1.4.3.

In contrast to the much larger number (619,600) of estimated abroad–residing Lithuanians, there are approximately 257,000 '**Lithuanian citizens' abroad** (ibid.). This refers to **Lithuanians residing outside Lithuania who have its passports**. It can hence be seen that the majority of individuals who are considered Lithuanians in their destination countries (in terms of their ethnic background, country of birth/origin, etc.) do not have Lithuanian citizenship, and thereby have no right to participate in Lithuanian elections.

Losing Lithuanian citizenship is increasingly common (especially given Brexit), rising from 767 cases in 2016 to 1,268 in 2020 (IOMVO 2021). This is closely related to the fact that a Lithuanian cannot be a **dual national** – that is, to **hold a Lithuanian citizenship and that of another country** – unless a) they left Lithuania before regaining independence in 1990 or b) Lithuanian citizenship is awarded as a second one by special circumstances, usually for merit to Lithuania. **Children of Lithuanian parents abroad – i.e. second–generation emigrants** – who are given host country's passport must choose between Lithuanian citizenship and that of the destination country by turning 21. Second–generation emigrants hence may or may not be Lithuanian citizens after that age. Given that each year approximately 3,600 of children born abroad are registered with the Civil Registry Division of Vilnius alone (Vilnius Civil Registry Office 2021, pers. comm, 8 November) and that total number of Lithuanian children born abroad has been over 25,000 for the last ten years (Statistics Lithuania 2021), giving up Lithuanian nationality at 21 will likely become increasingly common provided that the legislation remains the same. Those second–generation emigrants who will instead retain Lithuanian citizenship and hence will be allowed to vote (providing the legislation stays idem) are likely to differ in their relationship with homeland politics from their parents (see Scotto 2012 on a case of Italy; Tsuda 2012). This can become an important subject for studies in the more distant future provided that numbers of abroad–born adult Lithuanian citizens living outside Lithuania grow.

Some individuals who left Lithuania to live abroad may consider themselves not as **ethnic** Lithuanians, but as ethnic Russians, Poles, etc., meaning that they **have a different cultural/linguistic background.** That said, Lithuania is relatively ethnically homogeneous, especially for the Baltic context: 87.0% of

residents are Lithuanians, compared to only 68.8% of Estonians in Estonia and 61.8% of Latvians in Latvia (Zvidrins & Berzins 2017). Ethnic composition of emigrants is not known (Statistics Lithuania 2014a; Statistics Lithuania 2021, pers. comm, 20 December). Moreover, due to historical reasons, unlike in Estonia and Latvia, the vast majority of ethnic minority individuals have Lithuanian citizenship (Mežs et al. 1994; Best 2013; Muiznieks et al. 2013). As also underlined by Jastramskis (2021), ethnic cleavages in Lithuania are not of primary importance in electoral behaviour. This study hence does not emphasise the ethnicity aspect, although it would certainly be relevant for the other two Baltic states.

Given that the present study concentrates on Lithuanian voting from abroad, and therefore seeks enfranchised participants, the key inclusion criteria for its empirical part are residence abroad (not restricting destination countries (in line with, e.g., Mieriņa 2019; Pötzschke & Weiß 2021)) at the time of a given election, and Lithuanian citizenship. Non–citizens are excluded as they are not enfranchised in the first place. As multiple citizenship in Lithuania is possible only under exceptional circumstances, this implies that those who obtained their host countries' passports, including some second–generation emigrants, are effectively excluded from the study.

### 1.4.2 Lithuanian emigration history

Whilst summarising the lengthy history of Lithuanian emigration briefly is a challenging endeavour, providing a brief overview of past emigration is useful as it can enrich the discussion on how emigrants may relate to home–country elections and political system more generally. Although Lithuanians certainly emigrated earlier as well – note, for example, a flight of radical Lithuanian Protestants (Aryons) in the 17th century – *systematic* Lithuanian emigration is traditionally understood to have begun in the late 19th century. Even though migration periodisation is not entirely uniform in historians' works (see Tumėnas 2008), a particularly helpful way to comprehend Lithuanian emigration is to divide it into four key waves (see Eidintas 1993, 2005; Dapkutė 2012a, 2012b; Gečienė & Kanopkaitė 2015): 1) economic migration of late 19th to pre–war 20th century ('*grynoriai*'[11]) from Lithuanian provinces of the Russian Empire; 2) a smaller emigration wave between 1918 and 1940 from independent Lithuania (at times understood as part of wave one – Čiubrinskas 2005; Bučinskytė 2006); 3) political refugees leaving the country at the end of WW2 ('*dipukai*'[12]); and 4) modern migration from independent Lithuania. This classification is especially useful in how it highlights that

[11]From the term 'greenhors', referring to emigrants' inexperience in their destination country.

[12]From the term 'discplaced persons' (DPs) used in camps in post–WW2 Europe.

once the systematic emigration began, it was interrupted only by external reasons such as world wars, soviet restrictions and the Iron Curtain.

The first emigration wave was associated with the freedoms gained after serfdom abolishment in Russian Empire in 1861. Poor harvests of 1867 and 1868, followed by famine, greatly facilitated emigration flows. Regarding migration destinations, the first wave initially saw many Lithuanians going to other provinces of the Russian empire due to relatively weak industrial development and labour surplus in their homeland. Yet towards the end of the 19th century there was a notable general growth of emigration to the USA from the CEE region and Lithuanian movement was no exception (Tumėnas 2008). In the 1880s the USA became the dominant destination, and Great Britain and Canada constituted other noteworthy Lithuanian emigrant choices. Whilst there certainly were other reasons why Lithuanians left home – including avoiding military obligations and wars more generally, dissatisfaction with russification, persecutions for distributing Lithuanian press[13] or for participating in national revolts – most were simply looking for better economic conditions.

Accurately estimating emigration numbers is not only a present–day challenge as will be explained in the next section, but also a historical one. Regarding the transatlantic migration, it was not until 1899 when the US immigration offices started to record Lithuanian nationality, and available approximates of Lithuanians in the USA before that vary considerably. Račkauskas (1915) claimed around 55,000 Lithuanians to have arrived to the USA by 1900; Michelson (1961) reported a conflicting account that 275,000 Lithuanians belonged to various organisations in America in 1899; and Milukas (1938) stated that no more than 100,000 Lithuanians arrived to the USA in the 19th century. Between 1899 and 1914, the Bureau of Immigration of the United States of America recorded 252,594 Lithuanian arrivals: although demographics were not recorded meticulously, around 170,700 of them were men and 81,900 women; most were young and nearly half were illiterate; and those with a profession constituted an absolute minority (Račkauskas 1915). Although post–1899 records certainly enhance our understanding of emigration scale, there are reasons to believe that considerable numbers of individuals who would normally be classified as Lithuanians by present–day historians continued not to be accounted for.[14] The total of Lithuanians who arrived in the USA between 1868 and 1914 remains estimated rather imprecisely from approximately 300,000 to 500,000**;** meanwhile Great Britain and

[13]Banned in the Russian Empire from 1865 to 1904.

[14]Some were classified as Poles or Russians by the Bureau workers out of habitude; those who left due to political reasons were often hesitant to reveal their origin as they feared possible persecutions; and some simply reported themselves as Poles because they shared religious affliance with them, or as Russians since they had been living in the Russian Empire (Tumėnas 2008). It was indeed common for the 19th century CEE emigrants to have more profound local–geographical than national identities before coming to the USA, which often changed whilst in emigration (Dapkutė 2009).

Canada are estimated to have received 12,000 and 4,000 of Lithuanian emigrants respectively (Dapkutė 2012a; Misiūnas 2016). As for the Russian Empire, between 1897 and 1914, 74,000 Lithuanians are approximated to have left to other provinces of the Empire (Truska 1961); overall, more than 300,000 Lithuanians lived in different provinces of the Russian Empire at the turn of the century, the most popular locations being St. Petersburg, Riga, Liepaja and Odessa (Truska 1961; Vaitiekūnas 2006; Dapkutė 2012a).

Notwithstanding the challenges to precisely account for historical emigration numbers, the overall approximated figures, even the most conservative, are nonetheless large for a small nation, and higher estimates in fact amount to around a quarter of residents leaving Lithuanian provinces before WW1 (Vaitiekūnas 2006). Around 90% of emigrants of the first wave were agricultural workers and peasants, and the rest were mostly artisans, tradesmen and workers (Kasperavičiūtė 2006). Emigration affected both demography and economy, and started to concern the society and particularly those involved in the Lithuanian national revival (Dapkutė 2020), especially given that return migration was not particularly large. Available figures are rather sporadic but, for instance, return migration from the USA between 1908 and 1913 was around 16% (Liekis 2005). Somewhat paradoxically, however, emigrants who establlished themselves in superior economies (particularly the most popular destination USA) during the first emigration wave, often ended up even more able and/or willing to attend to national matters. The Lithuanian émigré national movement in America was fostered by emigrants' freedom from the Tsarist regime, increased educational and literacy levels, and exposure to Western values. Anti–nationalist Tsarist measures, such as the press ban and closures of monasteries and churches, naturally highlighted the national question even more. Yet another factor was related to nature of Lithuanian emigrant life itself. During the first emigration wave, Lithuanians, typically undertaking menial jobs like coal mining, and speaking no to little English, initially tended to go to the same regions of America, such as New England, Pennsylvania, Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago, where they founded large collonies and established around 500 parishes and associations by the end of the 19th century (Misiūnas 2016). Primarily the associations centred on beneficence, but eventually all kinds of associatins sprung up, covering music, theater, lifestyle, economics and politics. Certain examples of Lithuanian national self–expression in the USA – above all cultural – in fact preceded those in Lithuanian provinces.[15] These Lithuanian 'hubs' therefore provided ideal conditions for fostering one's national identity.

[15]For example, the first Lithuanian newspaper started running in 1879 in America and in 1883 in Lithuania; the first Lithuanian play in the USA was performed ten years earlier than one in Lithuania.

The importance of first–wave emigrants for homeland *politics* in particular reached its climax in between the first two waves when Lithuania was establishing its independence. During the decisive years of independence struggles (1917–1922), the relatively large diaspora in the United States actually became an important advantage for Lithuania. In many parts of the USA there were already sufficiently many Lithuanians for their votes to become a tangible political prize. Norkus (2014) rightfully observes the importance of the Lithuanian political demonstrations in the USA. A particularly noteworthy historical moment was when American Lithuanians' Council and Lithuanian National Council co–organised a General *Seimas* of American Lithuanians which took place in New York on March 13–15 1918 with over 1,200 representatives from nearly all Lithuanian organisations. It formed an Executive Committee to coordinate demostrations for restoration and recognition of independent Lithuania, and sent out a letter to President Wilson asking him to mediate in ensuring that Lithuanian state is recognised *de jure* and allowed to take part in Paris Peace Conference. Later on, a million signatures collected to demand *de jure* recognition of independent Lithuanian contributed to President Harding's signing of the corresponding bill in 1922. Financial support was also remarkable even if we set remittances (which are estimated to have amounted to nearly three million dollars yearly) aside, with Lithuanian organisations in the USA collecting over a million dollars to fund a public relations' campaign to support Lithuania's statehood recognition; approximately 1,9 million dollars were also raised as a loan to Lithuania in freedom bonds, and in addition to that separate funds were set up to support different aspects of Lithuanian development such as farming and education (Skirius 2018). Other notable initiatives of Lithuanian Americans at that time were information bureaus in Washington and New York which undertook PR campaigns, and the initiative of men who had served in the U.S. Army to organise themselves into units to fight in Lithuania (ibid).

Although we can clearly see that Lithuanian organisations formed by first–wave Lithuanians in the USA were by no means apathetic to Lithuania's fate, it is worth noting that, although politically active, the émigré organisations were also competitive which often prevented them from acting in unison. In the late 19th century, three broad movements among Lithuanians in the USA could already be identified (Liekis 2005): a) Lithuanians belonging to catholic organisations; b) Lithuanians belonging to socialist and free–thinker organisations; c) Lithuanians for whom nationality was the most important issue, who can be divided further into nationalist liberals, nationalists, and nationalist socialists, all of whom also tended to gather into separate organisations. A helpful illustration of their competitiveness is the struggles underlying the early attempts to establish a single organisation of Lithuanians in the USA: the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Association in America was established in 1886 due to a concern that Unification of all Lithuanians in America founded earlier that year was insufficiently religious. Even the

General *Seimas* was ignored by certain socialist political organisations of Lithuanians in the USA as they were unfavourable of the initiating American Lithuanians' Council as a representative organ, and the meeting itself was interrupted due to a disagreement on importance of religion (see Mulevičius 1918). What is more, emigrant organisations were not always in accord with Lithuanian authorities: the first American Lithuanian Congress (1936) in fact adopted a resolution condemming the violence of president Smetona's authoritarian regime (Aleksandravičius 2013). All in all, as Lithuanian emigrants were generally politically active during the early stage of emigration history, but political organisations did not act in unison even in the most important matters, if a similar predisposition prevails in the current generations then one could assume modern emigrants to be generally keen to participate in homeland politics but their political opinions not to amount to a single 'emigrant voice'.

Although this space–limited review does not let us go into great detail, it is noteworthy that the American Lithuanian community was, similarly to the post–WW1 situation, generally active throughout the fight for Lithuania's independence during the first soviet occupation (1940–1941), the nazi occupation (1941–1944), and the second soviet occupation (1944–1990). Above all, American Lithuanians' Council, together with the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania, sought the restoration of Lithuania's independence. Informal efforts, such as Lithuanian radio shows 'Voice of America' and correspondence of relatives and friends, should not be forgotten either. Berlin also constituted a critical site where around a thousand of high–skilled professionals founded the Lithuanian Activist Front (1940), the goal of which was to liberate Lithuania and re–establish its independence (Truska 2007), and the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania also operated in Germany for a while. Once again, efforts to direct all activities towards Lithuanian liberation were nonetheless often precluded by competitiveness and duplicated activities by different organisations (Rupšienė 2000; Skirius 2013). It is also important to acknowledge that Lithuanian communists in the USA, whilst constituting a minority in the Lithuanian community, supported both the Soviet Union and the Lithuanian SSR (Laukaitytė 2020); naturally, they conflicted extensively with the *dipukai*, to whom this review will come back shortly.

Let us now consider the second emigration wave that took place between the re–establishment of independence in 1918 and WW2. During that time, part of the abovementioned émigré populations came back to Lithuania although precise numbers are unknown (see Kasperavičiūtė 2011) and it is worth noting that they often did not manage to fit in or failed financially and went back abroad (Tumėnas 2008). Certain Lithuanian laws such as land ownership and real estate acquisition laws as well as currency instability played a role in this too (Aleksandravičius 2013), and historical accounts

also signal importance of unfavourable socio–psychological climate (Skirius 2018). Emigrants living in democratic systems themselves were also mostly dissatisfied with a military coup that took place in Lithuania in 1926, even if the government did try to win them over (Skirius 2016). All of this could have negatively affected the sentiments that emigrants had towards Lithuania, potentially discouraging them (and possibly their descendants) from participating in Lithuanian affairs, including political ones, further. However, studies of this subject are lacking.

All in all, during the second wave over 100,000 Lithuanians are estimated to have left their homeland (Dapkutė 2012a). Due to immigrant quotas established in the USA in 1921, those leaving during the second wave chose Canada and South America (particularly Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay) as their destinations most often, some hoping to eventually reach the USA from there. During this period, numerous for–profit emigration bureaus were established in Lithuania; and whilst having a middleman when going to live in another continent was certainly appealing to lay Lithuanians, aspects of their practice were in fact illegal and some outright deceived those looking for a better life abroad (Kazlauskaitė 2010). One may reason that such bitter experiences could again discourage some emigrants of this wave and their descendants from attending to homeland affairs. While there are no specific studies on this matter, emigrants in South America have indeed been traditionally rather inactive in Lithuanian political affairs and elections. At the same time, whilst being politically engaged in *host* country's politics does not guarantee an interest in home country's politics (as discussed later in the thesis, the former can be hypothesised to *interfere* with the latter), it is nonetheless worth noting that second–wave Lithuanian emigrants were at that time active in the context of destination–countries' politics, especially in Brazil. Unlike left–wing–minded Polish and Russian immigrants, Lithuanian ones were publishing covert political newspapers, and among political deportees of the Vargas period (1930–1945) there were relatively many (7.8%) Lithuanian immigrants (Godliauskas Zen 2010).

In contrast to the previous two waves, few of those fleeing Lithuania after WW2 had a plan, initially residing in German Displaced Persons' (DPs') camps (approximately 60,000 individuals – Dapkutė 2012a). In 1948–1950 *dipukai* left the camps mostly for the USA (~30,000), but also Canada (~4,000), Australia (~5,000), Venezuela (~5,000), Great Britain (~3,000), and ~7,550 stayed in Germany (Eidintas 1993). This wave was also special in that it encompassed the intelligentsia which feared soviet oppressions, the majority of post–WW2 emigrants being well educated (Tumėnas 2008). At this time, the USA Lithuanian community again played an important role. Specifically, members of the community lobbied against deportation of refugees from the DP camps to the Soviet Union where

they would have faced ill faith, organised charity events, and (especially Joint American Lithuanian Foundation) made considerable efforts for Lithuanian *dipukai* to be allowed to move to the United States. The large share of the intelligentsia that had to flee their homeland to avoid soviet repressions, many of whom stayed abroad for a long time, can be expected to have remained loyal to, and interested in, Lithuania and to have passed this interest down the generations even if they ended up staying abroad. This reasoning is indeed supported by the literature (Ūsaitė 2012) and is also reflected in *dipukai*' enthusiasm in coming back to work in Vytautas Magnum University that was newly re-established in 1989 after its closure by the soviet government in 1950 (Gečienė & Kanopkaitė 2015).

Given that they are leaving the country voluntarily, the same reasoning may not apply to many of those who left Lithuania during the most recent emigration wave in post–soviet times (since 1990). Lithuanians already abroad were once again active in the post–soviet period. When the Act of Restoration of the Lithuanian Nation of 11 March 1990 was proclaimed, Lithuanian community in the USA prompted the government to recognise Lithuania's independence by organising petitions, conferences and support groups such as the Lithuanian Hotline, SOS – Americans for Lithuania's Freedom, Lithuanian Information Center in New York. All of this most certainly contributed to the formal recognition of Lithuania's independence on 2 September 1991. Other successful efforts of Lithuanians in the USA include lobbying Senate and House of Representatives members to join the Baltic Caucus supporting the Baltic States, and contribution to a 'Baltic Charter' which set out a framework for cooperation between the USA and the Baltic States in the domains of security and political and economic relations. Tremendous monetary help from Lithuanian Americans' groups[16] during the economic blockade in the 1990 is also worth recognition, as is Lithuanian American legal experts' help with the country's legal system and new constitution in 1992–1996. Experts from other fields – above all education,[17] science and culture[18] also contributed to the development of the newly independent country, and charity organisations were of enormous help as well (Skirius 2021). Whilst help of the USA–based Lithuanians was most noticeable due to the sizes of the diaspora communities at that time, support was also provided elsewhere (see Bagdonavičienė 2009), including Canadian (Janauskas 2021), German (Dapkutė 2021) and British and Australian communities of Lithuanians abroad (Eidintas 2021).

[16]Aid to Lithuania, Lithuanian Children's Hope, Lithuanian Mercy Lift, Lithuanan Partisans' Welfare Fund, etc.

[17]A particularly successful programme was A.P.P.L.E (American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education).

[18]E.g. World Lithuanian research and culture symposiuns; The Royal Palace Restoration Foundation.

After the regime change, potential for emigration was enormous due to collapse of Soviet–Union–level factories and other factors (see Eidintas 2021). Initially, Lithuanians still went to the USA with up to 250,000 of *tarybukai* – post–soviet Lithuanian emigrants – arriving to the USA by 2004 (Aleksandravičius 2013). The EU accession placed European destinations among the top ones alongside the USA, including the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Spain, Norway, Sweden (ibid). From 1990 to 2020 the number of inhabinants in Lithuania went down by 899,500, which constituted approximately 24% of residents; to natural population change (births vs. deaths) is attributable a loss of 189,500 inhabinants, and to emigration – that of 710,000 (Eidintas 2021). The current state of Lithuanian emigration is discussed in more detail in the next section. For the time being, it should be acknowledged that the experiences of emigrants of the current wave can differ considerably between them. Nowadays, their socio–economic backgrounds are not limited to a specific profile like during the third wave, and some leavers may not even consider themselves as emigrants given that they visit home very often and/or have plans to return soon. With an upsurge in foreign language skills, it is also increasingly common to form one's social networks based on shared interests or work/study environments rather than nationality (see Celiešiūtė 2012). Regarding emigration reasons, whilst the push– and pull–factors of this last wave of Lithuanian emigration relate mostly to the economy (Rudžinskienė & Paulauskaitė 2014; Solnyškinienė & Adamonienė 2017) and economy *perception* (Navickė & Lazutka 2016), it is also important to acknowledge that socio–psychological factors contribute to the current wave of Lithuanian emigration too (Vilmorus 2018b).

Whilst without dedicated research an element of speculation remains, the four waves can certainly be reasoned to relate to current home–country affairs differently: descendants of the patriotic *dipukai*, for instance, can be expected to be more willing to engage into community projects back home than descendants of emigrants to South America which were often deceived when leaving their homeland. The context of voting is more straightforward: most of the first– and second–wave emigrants' descendants living abroad simply do not have Lithuanian citizenship anymore, preventing them from voting. For the present thesis of upmost relevance is the newest wave – the one empirically examined in the study. It is important to underline that neither economic nor socio–psychological factors of migration lead to a straightforward interpretation how fourth–wave emigrants should relate to home–country politics and elections. On the one hand, leaving the homeland due to such reasons may lead to bitterness towards the home country and subsequent willingness to distance oneself from its politics. On the other hand, it can also lead to a desire to be politically active so that one can contribute to positive changes back home. The increased migration to European countries (discussed in more detail in the next section) also means that nowadays many emigrants are physically closer to their homeland, which may or may not imply higher political engagement. All of this signals that

empirical research is needed to gain insight into mechanisms through which emigrants relate to home–country politics and elections.

### 1.4.3 Current emigration numbers

Since the year before independence was gained, Lithuania has lost a significant number of residents: similarly to Eidintas' (2021) estimate provided in the previous section, United Nations (2019b) reports a decrease of nearly a million residents from 3.7 million in 1989 to 2.8 million in 2019. Lithuanian sources report a comparable decrease of 883,000 residents between 1990 and 2019 (International Organization for Migration Vilnius Office (IOMVO) 2019). IOMVO attributes the largest part (707,000) of this loss to emigration rather than natural causes. It has been recently established that in the last 10 years alone Lithuania lost 7.6% of residents (Statistics Lithuania 2022). It is also worth noting that whilst return migration certainly exists (see Eidintas 2021), *im*migrants to Lithuania also often constitute people who are not Lithuanians, Ukrainians comprising nearly half as many incomers as Lithuanians even before the war in Ukraine (IOMVO 2019).

It is important to acknowledge that migration–related data is approximate, as can be seen in, for example, the rather imprecise IOMVO's figure and existence of different alternative measures. For instance, there are 610,223 Lithuanians abroad estimated by the United Nations (2019c), and 458,681 by URM (2021a.) Moreover, empirical observations suggest that in the recent past Lithuanian emigration was indeed miscalculated in the official statistical figures. Figure 1 demonstrates yearly emigration from Lithuania between 2006 and 2018 as reported by Statistics Lithuania 2019a.

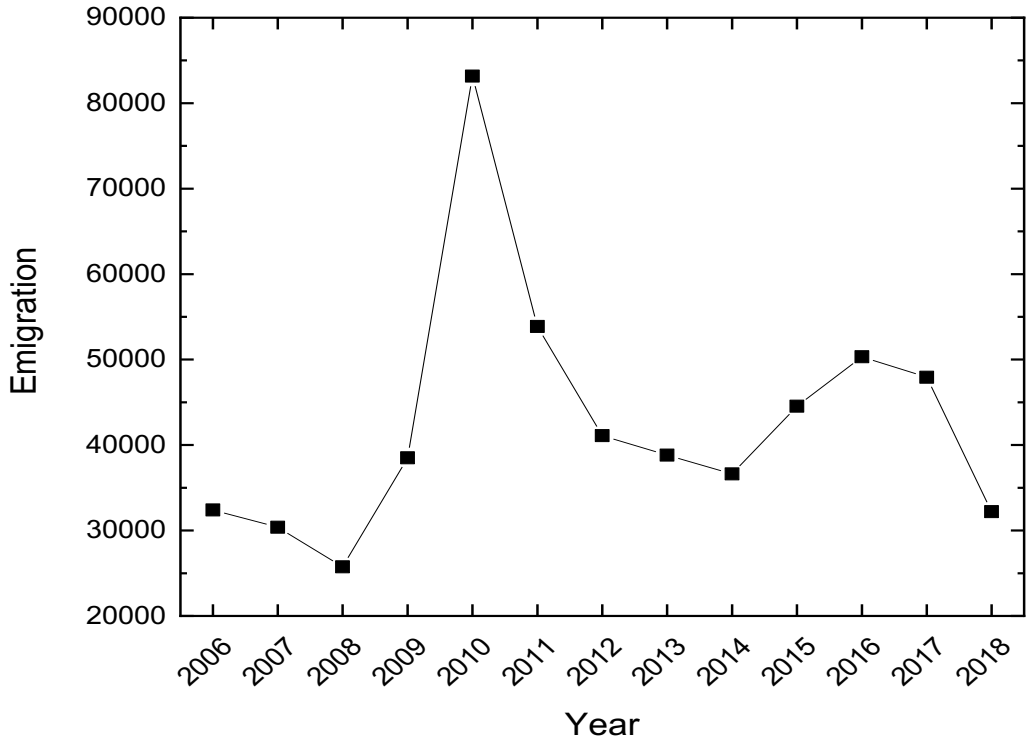



Figure 1. Emigration from Lithuania 2006–2018. Calculated from data of Statistics Lithuania

It can be readily noticed that reported emigration increased sharply in 2010. However, this is mostly due to the monthly compulsory health insurance tax introduced in 2009 (Lithuanian Labour Exchange 2016) which encouraged emigrants to report their residence abroad officially. Official declarations of living abroad allowed emigrants to avoid paying this tax, which is obligatory for Lithuanian citizens who do not work in Lithuania or do not study within the EU, with an exception for those who officially declare their residency being out of Lithuania. This reveals that until 2010 emigration figures were significantly underestimated. The problem is not unique to Lithuania: Lafleur (2008) reports that Italian and Belgian emigrants often fail to declare their leave in the home country, although they sometimes (but by no means always) declare their arrival in the host country. Lithuanian emigrants are also under no obligation to declare their arrival at embassies and consulates.

Remarkably, at present those studying abroad in the EU are still exempted from paying the compulsory health insurance tax without having to officially declare their leave, as they are provided with a student's status comparable to that of local students, and consequently with state–financed health insurance, by a different governmental body, namely the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF). Table 3 shows the number of certificates presented to the NHIF as a proof of studying in an EU

country (notably, these figures only cover EU–based students) other than Lithuania. Interestingly, in the past the Fund's guidelines and the media in fact discouraged prospective EU students from declaring their leave (Delfi 2011a). The numbers of EU–based students are by no means trivial: comparing 2017 Statistics Lithuania's emigration data and 2016/2017 school–year certificates of studying abroad in the EU, the latter constitutes over 10% of the former. While the NHIF does not provide the data of destination countries, there has been an attempt to estimate the number of students specifically in the United Kingdom, and the estimate of this country alone for 2012 was 5,000 (Skuodis 2012), suggesting that the majority of the students are likely to be living in the UK. While the accuracy of officially collected emigration data is limited, this does not make the above–discussed ratios unusable for the present purpose. In fact, the suggestions that Lithuanian official statistics likely underestimate the number of people who currently live abroad implies that in the Lithuanian ratios the numerators – i.e. emigration figures – and the resulting ratios are most likely conservative. As a result, in reality the ratios may be even larger than the estimated one, which reinforces the usefulness of selecting Lithuania as the unit of analysis for the study. However, a possibility that data might be flawed in other countries as well should also be acknowledged.

| 2012/2013 | 2013/2014 | 2014/2015 | 2015/2016 | 2016/2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5,368 | 5,422 | 5,252 | 5,307 | 5,199 |

Table 3. Number of certificates of proof of studying abroad in the EU provided to NHIF. Data provided by email (NHIF 2017, pers. comm., 19 October)

Having in mind the national emigration data flaws, it is useful to rely on additional data sources, especially those that make use of host countries' data, to give insight into the current state of Lithuanian population abroad. Although it should be noted that those measurements are not without flaws either, they can still be meaningfully employed to estimate how big a share of the émigré resides in different countries (see Hutcheson & Arrighi 2015).

In contrast to the explicit choice of the home country, the destination countries were not limited in this study (comparably to, e.g., Pötzschke & Weiß 2021). In fact, there seem to be Lithuanian emigrants in every country of the world (IOMVO 2019). However, to illustrate the most relevant destination countries, we will here briefly discuss the available data on Lithuanians in main destinations using a number of statistical sources (national statistical office Statistics Lithuania;[19] URM; OECD; IOMVO; United Nations; destination countries' sources; other sources). It should be born

[19]Including but not limited to a comparison–enabling source of emigrant estimations from destination–country censuses (Statistics Lithuania 2014b).

in mind that exact figures of Lithuanian emigrants in various destinations differ from source to source due to methodological issues, difficulties in collecting reliable data, and the time of data collection. For instance, Statistics Lithuania's (2014b) source of emigrant estimations from destination–country censuses enables comparisons and is hence used both in recent literature (Gudelis & Klimavičiūtė 2020) and the present section. However, this data was obtained using 2005–2014 censuses and thereby some of it is likely outdated (an update is not available to date). It is still a superior source to individual censuses themselves as it has attempted to increase comparability wherever possible. Nonetheless, due to its shortcomings it is supplemented with additional newer sources. When taken together, the different sources provide useful insights into Lithuanian emigrant population.

One might wish to focus the review on the distribution of Lithuanian citizens abroad (e.g. 257,000 of such individuals estimated by Statistics Lithuania 2014b) rather than that of all Lithuanians residing abroad (the 619,600 figure provided by the same source) since the focus of the present study is on those Lithuanians who do have citizenship. However, the available data on citizens is much more sporadic, and only one source (URM 2021a) attempts to compare numbers of Lithuanian citizens in different destination countries. As we shall see below, its estimates also often differ considerably from other sources even when there is no big time gap. It would also be inaccurate to assume all Lithuanians and Lithuanian citizens to be distributed abroad proportionally, not least due to varying stakes and difficulties in obtaining citizenship of the country of residence. This section hence reviews the data on Lithuanians residing abroad, providing citizen numbers alongside where available and underlining the cases where the disproportion is especially large.

During the post–EU–accession period, the main destination country of Lithuanian emigrants traditionally was the United Kingdom, with around half of the migrants choosing this country (IOMVO 2019; Statistics Lithuania 2019b). This held until 2018, when the figure dropped to 37%, mostly due to Brexit (Statistics Lithuania 2019b), and fell down to 26% in 2020 (IOMVO 2021). Statistics Lithuania (2014b) approximated the total of 123,000 Lithuanians in the United Kingdom. World Population Review (2020) estimates 118,000 Lithuania–born residents in England, 2,000 in Wales, 8,000 in Scotland, and 8,000 in Northern Ireland in 2019–2020. Estimates of Lithuanian citizens are larger, constituting 152,000, 2,000, 9,000 and 14,000 in the respective regions. This signals that at least in the UK, second–generation emigrants with Lithuanian citizenship, discussed in Section 1.4.1, are beginning to constitute a notable share of the Lithuanian emigrant population. Notably, in 2020, Lithuanians constituted the third most populous minority in Northern Ireland, whether by country of birth (11,000) or by citizenship (12,000) (Office for National Statistics 2021). The United Nations (2020) provide the largest figure, reporting the Lithuanian migrant stock in the UK in 2020 to amount to

190,342. The most recent available estimate of Lithuania–born individuals in the UK is 145,000, 131,000 of them holding Lithuanian citizenship (Office for National Statistics 2021). However, URM (2021a) estimates as many as 152,000 Lithuanian citizens in the UK.

The UK is by no means the only prevalent destination. Among other popular countries is Germany with estimated 43,370–58,730 Lithuanians (Statistics Lithuania 2014b; Statista 2021; United Nations 2020). URM (2021a) provides a relatively large number of Lithuanian citizens alone (57,990). In another popular destination – Ireland – the census revealed Lithuanian citizens to constitute over 36,500 residents, making it the third most numerous minority after Polish and British; residents *born* in Lithuania amount to more than 33,300 (Central Statistics Office 2021). Similarly, Statistics Lithuania (2014b) estimated 39,700 Lithuanians In Ireland. URM's (2021a) recent measure again provides a higher estimate of 45,119 citizens.

Norway is also an important destination, residents born in Lithuania constituting the third most populous minority (after Poland–born and Sweden–born) and estimated to be 40,000–48,584 in 2019–2020 (OECD 2021; Statistics Norway 2021). This is a notable increase from the figure estimated in 2014 – 23,540 (Statistics Lithuania 2014b), and URM (2021a) estimates as many as 47,304 Lithuanian citizens.

In Spain, there are 12,390–16,492 estimated Lithuanians (ibid; Statistics Spain 2021; United Nations 2020), in Sweden – 8,670–15,917 (Statistics Lithuania 2014b; Statistics Sweden 2021), and in Denmark – 6,800–15,225 (Statistics Lithuania 2014b; Statistics Denmark 2021). URM (2021a) estimates 27,911, 15,498 and 14,768 Lithuanian citizens in the three countries respectively.

In Poland, due to historical reasons, there are approximately 61,960 people considered Lithuanians (Statistics Lithuania 2014b) but comparatively very few – 2,366–8,000 – Lithuanian citizens (URM (2021a; Statistics Poland 2013). For Latvia, the estimates of Lithuanians range between 27,750 and 34,700, but, again, there are only 5,134–8,300 Lithuanian citizens (Statistics Lithuania 2014b; URM 2021a; URM 2020b).

Approximately 82% of Lithuanians abroad have been reported to reside in Europe, 13.7% in North America and 4.3% elsewhere (Statistics Lithuania 2014b). The more recent United Nations' (2019c)

estimates approximate an even larger share (nearly 90%[20]) of Lithuanian emigrant stock to reside in Europe. Beyond Europe, there are also considerable numbers of Lithuanians in the USA (35,940–632,169 depending on the methodology applied (Statistics Lithuania 2014b; United States Census 2019)), Canada (48,950–59,285 (Statistics Lithuania 2014b; Statistics Canada 2016a)), and Russia (31,400–85,500 (Federal State Statistics Service 2010; Statistics Lithuania 2014b)), all of which have attracted over 5% of the Lithuanians abroad (Statistics Lithuania 2014b).

However, in these destinations the majority of Lithuanians do not have the citizenship anymore. There are only 1,785 Lithuanian citizens in Canada as per its most recent available data (Statistics Canada 2016b) and even fewer – 1,060 – as per URM 2021a. Likewise there are merely 2,571–3,673 Lithuanian citizens in Russia (Federal State Statistics Service 2010; URM 2021a), and 32,826 (URM 2021a) in the USA.

It is also worth noting certain key demographic characteristics of emigrants abroad as reported by Statistics Lithuania (2014b). Overall, there are more Lithuanian women abroad than men, Norway being the only exception, with a total estimate of 340,900 female Lithuanians abroad and 278,7000 males. Emigrants are generally young: 71.4% of Lithuanians abroad on which data was obtained belonged to 15–64 age group, 18.2% were older and 10.4% younger.[21] 31.7% had higher education, and 7.3% had not finished school. Only 28.1% were unqualified workers.

### 1.4.4 Lithuanian emigration policy

Given that different states adopt different policies towards their emigrants (e. g. Boccagni 2014; Tsourapas 2015; Lee 2017; Koinova & Tsourapas 2018; Mahieu 2019; Lafleur & Vintila 2020), it is useful for the context of this thesis to also briefly discuss Lithuanian emigration policy. During the first emigration wave, the state of Lithuania did not exist and in the Russian Empire most of emigration happened illegally as legal options were often extremely difficult, time–consuming and expensive (Lohr 2012). Once independence was reinstated in 1918, creating formal emigration policies to manage the second emigration wave was not a priority for the state, the consolidation of its security

[20]Whilst, in order to allow us to gain a good first insight into Lithuanian emigrants and elections, this dissertation did not limit the host countries in the empirical part of this study, the resultant sample was very close to this estimate. The next chapter explains the sample selection and the sample itself in more detail.

[21]IOMVO's (2021) data also shows that disproportional numbers of young people are leaving the country until this day: in 2020, 30.4% of emigrants were 25–34 years old (the corresponding share in residents of Lithuania being more than twice as low –13.3%), and 25.7% were 15–24 (corresponding share of 10.2%).

and political independence being at the centre of attention instead. At the same time, as explained in the previous section, the newly independent Lithuania received enormous financial and political support from emigrants, particularly USA residents. Notably, even in challenging economic and political environment, Lithuanian government strived to support its emigrants too: endeavouring to reduce their assimilation abroad, it fully or partly funded Lithuanian schools and libraries and their upkeeping. This was particularly the case in destinations where emigrants were overall less well–off, above all South America. Whilst the governmental attitude towards emigration was largely negative throughout the second wave, it was viewed as inevitable and restrictions were not imposed (Kasperavičiūtė 2011). Although explicit emigration strategy was not conceived during the second emigration wave, at one point colonisation ideas were considered so as to make emigration less chaotic and reap some economic benefits; yet lack of finances, immigration quotas, and increasingly tense political situation contributed to their fadeaway. During the third, sporadic, post–WW2 wave there were naturally no emigration policies, although, as noted earlier, Lithuanian emigrants from previous waves played an important role during this period. Throughout the break between the third and fourth waves, emigration (from the Soviet Union) was forbidden with rare exceptions.

Considering key formal official documentation, organisations and events, it was not until 1922 when the first Emigration Law was introduced in Lithuania, an improved version being adopted in 1929. With the two Laws the government began to control emigration processes. Nonetheless, the Laws were not oriented towards establishing a migration strategy. Instead, they attempted to establish some control over emigration bureaus and ensure better travel conditions for emigrants. Society for Supporting Lithuanians Abroad, founded in 1932, began to play an important role in expanding relations with the diaspora and taking care of new emigrants in foreign countries. The Society had goals to establish a unified organisation of Lithuanians all over the world, support Lithuanian schools and libraries, religious affairs and the press. It was financially supported by Lithuanian government but was also funded by donations and lotteries. The Society was the principal organiser of the first World Lithuanian Congress in Kaunas, Lithuania, held in 1935. During the Congress the World Lithuanians' Union was created, yet it did not succeed in commencing its work until WW2, and the war broke off most of the further initiatives. After WW2, the idea of this organisation was taken over and developed by the World Lithuanian Community (WLC) which adopted its Constitution and elected its first board in New York in 1958.

Since the independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Lithuania has had over thirty years to establish its diaspora policies, yet given that these processes are not straightforward (see Laczko & Klekowski

von Koppenfels 2002) the process is ongoing. There were a number of temporary policy initiatives in the first two decades of independence (e.g. Culture and Education Programme of Lithuanian Communities Abroad, Lithuanian Diaspora's Return and Integration Programme, Programme of Return of Political Prisoners and Deportees and their Families), detailed examination of which is alas beyond the scope of this review,[22] but which show that Lithuania certainly cared both about the wellbeing of its citizens abroad and the possibility to bring them back to the homeland.

In 1997, the former Department of Regional Issues, established in 1994, was transformed into a Department of National Minorities and Émigré. In 2010 this Department was eliminated (until its reinstatement as a Department of National Minorities in 2015), its functions being passed on to several ministries. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Užsienio reikalų ministerija*, i.e. URM) took over the issues relating to Lithuanians abroad, establishing a Department of Lithuanians Abroad, restructured and renamed 'Department of Global Lithuania' in 2021. Its key tasks include maintaining and strengthening relations with Lithuanian communities, supporting Lithuanian organisations abroad, and increasing emigrants' involvement with Lithuania. URM also superivises diplomatic missions and consular offices which, among other duties, are tasked to strengthen relations between Lithuanians residing in the given host country and Lithuania.

The central modern legal document that guarantees the right to emigrate and re–emigrate remains the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (1992) which allows restriction of those rights only by law if that is necessary for state security, protection of human health or administration of justice. Although space limitations prevent us from discussing them in great detail, it is nonetheless worth mentioning certain other documents. The historical Law on Emigration of the Republic of Lithuania (1991) is notable for its strictness. This law was in force between 1992 and 2000. Under this law, prospective emigrants had to submit an application to the Ministry of the Interior, and the application could have been refused on several grounds, including not being able to guarantee fulfilment of any unsettled financial obligations, outstanding military obligations, and knowledge of any state secrets. The last point relates to the fact that during the early years of the validity of this Law many family members left along with retreating soviet army. Given that this Law contradicted the principles of free movement and free departure from one's country enshrined in EU acquis and international conventions, it was eventually retracted.

[22]An interested reader is referred to Bagdonavičienė (2012).

Long–term Strategy for the Development of Lithuanian Economy Until 2015 (2001),[23] State Long–term Development Strategy 2002,[24] National Sustainable Development Strategy 2003[25] and National Lisbon Strategy Implementation Programme 2005–2008[26] reveal that during the period of rapid economic growth (2002–2008) migration was primarily understood as limiting local economic potential. A Strategy to Regulate Economic Migration[27] (adopted in 2007, updated in 2010) aimed to mitigate negative emigration effects and maintain sufficient labour force but had difficulties reaching its goals (Public Policy and Management Institute 2008; Žibas & Lekavičiūtė 2017). It is also important to note that while some researchers focus on the parts of this document that express emigration–related *concerns* (Budginaitė 2012; Gudelis & Klimavičiūtė 2016), it would be mistaking to overlook that the Strategy also explicitly acknowledged emigration–related *opportunities*, thereby constituting an initial step towards conceiving an émigré engagement strategy. This notwithstanding, making use of emigrants for the development of Lithuania was not made a priority until a subsequent adoption of 'Global Lithuania' programme (2012–2021)[28] to be discussed shortly. Migration Policy Guidelines of Lithuania[29] (2014; most recently updated in 2020) acknowledge both negative and positive effects of emigration, and reflect difficulties with redeeming the country's emigrants even after the recession. Among the key objectives set out in the Guidelines are to strengthen return migration and gradually weaken the mass emigration process, partly by ensuring a labour–force–friendly labour market development policy. A contemporary legal document that should also be mentioned is the Law on Transferring Persons to the Republic of Lithuania (2019) which allows reimbursement of relocation costs and provision of other state support to Lithuanians living in countries affected by crises.

Let us now move to 'Global Lithuania' which was a major strategic programme in Lithuanian emigration policy history. Although shrinking population size is a concern acknowledged by the government and often underlined by the press (Gudelis & Klimavičiūtė 2015), with the 'Global Lithuania' programme Lithuania explicitly recognised potential in its emigrants – similarly to Israel and

[23]See https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.168537?jfwid=.

[24] See https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.193888.

[25] See https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.217644/WPqyZkDuCy.

[26]See https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.266311?jfwid=-fxdp84oj.

[27] See https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.296517.

[28]Detailed examinations of a separate but, naturally, closely related programme 'Global Lithuania 2022–2030' which started recently are left for future work. However, the endeavour to achieve continuation of its policies by the URM should be commended.

[29]See https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/fdd7ab00899c11e39d2dc0b0e08d5f21/asr.

Ireland. This programme, the goal of which was encouraging Lithuanians to contribute to state's development and worldwide recognition no matter where they live, had two key directions. The first one was fostering relations with high–achieving professionals residing outside the country (URM 2021b). The second one was strengthening Lithuanian communities and organisations abroad (ibid.). 'Global Lithuania' was coordinated by URM, yet twenty more state institutions, including but not limited to ministries, took part in its execution in the last year of the programme. Recognition that no single institution can cover all areas relevant to Lithuanian émigré indeed constituted an important strength of 'Global Lithuania'.

Whilst an all-inclusive examination of 'Global Lithuania' is beyond the scope of this short policy review,[30] we shall outline key activities undertaken under the scope of the programme. Among other measures, the programme supported (financially and/or otherwise) Lithuanian education abroad, cooperation between Lithuanian scientists living in Lithuania and elsewhere, re–emigration, special television programmes, initiatives to foster Lithuanian traditions abroad, project financing tenders, youth events, management of emigrants' archives, and dissemination of healthcare information pertinent to Lithuanians abroad (URM 2020a). Together with a public agency (owned by the Ministry of Economy and Innovation) 'Invest Lithuania' it coordinated a young professionals' paid internship programme 'Create Lithuania'. The programme was created exclusively for those from foreign universities, but it grew to include graduates from local higher education institutions as long as they have international work and/or study experience. This illustrates a difficulty in engaging Lithuanians abroad via programmes targeted exclusively at them since this positive discrimination may not be viewed in a positive light by the locals. This is likely related to viewing emigrants as already living a better life than those who chose to stay in Lithuania which also contributes to the relatively low social protection of Lithuanian citizens abroad (Gudelis & Klimavičiūtė 2020). At the same time, certain scholarships at Lithuanian universities for the émigré do operate successfully, particularly Vytautas Magnus University's Scholarship for Foreigners with Lithuanian Roots and of Lithuanian Origin.

Participating in the programme 'Create Lithuania', individuals with experience abroad (typically studies) work in Lithuanian public sector for a year.[31] Notably, as many as 80% of the internship participants stayed in Lithuania afterwards each year (Eidintas 2021). 'Global Lithuania' also financed another significant initiative – IOM infocentre 'I choose Lithuania', acting as a 'single window' for

[30]See Gudelis and Klimavičiūtė (2016) for an earlier evaluation of the programme.

[31]'Invest Lithuania' also runs a talent attraction programme 'Work in Lithuania'. However, it is not targeted specifically to Lithuanians.

getting answers related to coming (back) to live in Lithuania. Another notable funded project was 'Global regions' seeking to integrate emigrants into the life of their former municipality – regrettably, it has had limited initial success, municipalities being rather reluctant to take part (Vilčiniskienė 2020).

The very broad scope of 'Global Lithuania' could be seen as backfiring, however, especially considering that assigned finances were quite limited each year.[32] Indeed, whilst OECD has praised the content of Lithuanian diaspora programmes their funding is considered a significant shortcoming (Eidintas 2021). Furthermore, quite naturally, the various measures of 'Global Lithuania' were not equally successful: whilst it was commended for educational and cultural developments, for example, the programme has been rightfully criticised for not sufficiently advancing simplification of emigrant voting (Gudelis & Klimavičiūtė 2016). It also does not address all the areas relevant to Lithuanians abroad: above all, it does not cover social protection (Gudelis & Klimavičiūtė 2020). Another disadvantage is that some emigrant communities were not content with a degree of subordinance that the programme imposed between them and Lithuanian government, and there was also a problem that 'Global Lithuania' in fact reached less than half of the émigré (Eidintas 2021).

URM is also a partner of 'Global Lithuanian Leaders' (GLL) NGO which, among other activities, runs a project 'GLL Advisors for Business' that, similarly to another public agency owned by the Ministry of Economy and Innovation – Enterprise Lithuania – provides an opportunity for growing Lithuanian companies to obtain advice from abroad–residing specialists. GLL organises yearly awards for distinguished Lithuanians worldwide as well. Also noteworthy are regular thematic events connecting local and abroad–based Lithuanians: World Lithuanian Economic Forum, World Lithuanian Symposium on Arts and Sciences, World Lithuanian Song Festival, World Lithuanian Sports Games. Whilst a volunteer professional mentoring programme for Lithuanians all over the world – 'Lithuanian Big Brother' – is also worth recognition, it is important to note that it does not receive state funding.

A recent important initiative and the associated documents are Demography, Migration and Integration Policy Strategy 2018–2030[33] and ensuing Lithuanian Migration Policy Guidelines[34] which set the Government Office to coordinate the policy of emigration reduction and re–emigration promotion. The Strategy's overall goal is ensuring a positive population change and a proportionate

[32]In 2020, the total sum of appropriations used for the programme implementation was 4.3 million euros (URM 2020a).

[33]See https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/2a093814fc8411e89b04a534c5aaf5ce.

[34] See https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/fdd7ab00899c11e39d2dc0b0e08d5f21/asr.

population age structure. Achieving migration flows that are congruent with state's needs constitutes one of its sub–goals. To reach it, the Strategy aims to expand consulting services and create more attractive employment conditions for re–emigrants as well as environment favourable to their children's and foreign spouses' integration. It also intends to strengthen social security and improve general psychological climate in Lithuania. Informing the society about different migration experiences, supporting projects that cultivate patriorism, and supporting and expanding 'I choose Lithuania' also form part of the foreseen measures. An examplary measure that is already underway is the Employment Service's project 'To Lithuania, perhaps?' which dissiminates information about Lithuanian labour market and employers to Lithuanians abroad. Overall, however, the very large scope of the Strategy (as many as 70 planned measures), low funding for migration flow sub–goal[35] and lack of clarity how exactly the measures are to be implemented constitute important downsides. The drawbacks of the Strategy were criticised even by certain members of the governing coalition (Valstietis 2015; LSDP 2017). Furthermore, even with these guidelines, Lithuania has been put under criticism by migration experts for not having a precise strategy how to increase return migration and for insufficient cooperation between central government and municipalities (IOMVO 2020). Indeed, it can only be recommended for municipalities to participate in the implementation of any provisions as they are not technically accountable to the government.

It is also important to acknowledge (the presently active) commissions in Lithuanian state institutions that provide emigrant representatives with institutional provisions to participate in Lithuanian political life. The first one – Commission of the *Seimas* of the Republic of Lithuania and the World Lithuanian Community – in 2007 replaced a Commission of the *Seimas* and the Lithuanian Community of the United States which had been working from 1995. This Commission, consisting of Parliament Members and World Lithuanian Community representatives, aims to incorporate world Lithuanians into parliamentary decision–making procedures and encourage mutual consultations. It meets twice a year. World Lithuanian Community representation, which has been working in Vilnius since 1992, closely cooperates with this Commission. The second active commission – Lithuanian Émigré Affairs Coordination Commission[36] – was formed in 2009. Its key objectives are to ensure the dialogue between the Government and Lithuanian emigrant organisations, and to consider and submit proposals to the Government regarding Lithuanian émigré policy and Lithuanian émigré policy strategy implementation action plan. The Commission consists of senior members of the Government,

[35]Whilst overal planned budget for 2021 was 7.8 million Euros, only 0.1% is allocated to the migration flow sub–goal (Estep 2019).

[36]See https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.27A843F7BD38/IJeeOREDuP.

including the Prime Minister and the Government Chancellor; an Association of Municipalities' representative; WLC representatives, including the board chairperson and a representative of the WLC representation in Vilnius; and a World Lithuanians' Youth Union representative. It meets at least twice a year.

Overall, it can be said that Lithuania makes significant efforts to reach, support, and make use of Lithuanians abroad. Yet, as is also apparent in this review, independent Lithuania's emigration policy field has been characterised by frequent institutional changes, broad scopes of emigration–related programmes and relatively low funding, although its attempts at conceiving long–term strategies are in principle commendable. Given that nowadays the vast majority of transnational communication takes place online, as acknowledged by Gudelis and Klimavičiūtė (2016) as well, it is also concerning that the government is not making an effort to connect its émigré via a single online system.[37] Whilst URM–administered Facebook webpage 'Globali Lietuva – Global Lithuania' and Global Lithuanian Leaders' initiative to connect mid– to senior–level professionals online[38] are both worthy initiatives, neither of them substitutes an interactive online network for all Lithuanians abroad to connect in. This is important given that 'Global Lithuania', as well as World Lithuanian Community, in fact fail to reach most emigrants (Eidintas 2021). Those emigrants who are bypassed by both in–person and online Lithuanian communication, with a possible exception of those who have strong personal connections with Lithuanians back home, can be expected to be unlikely to engage with Lithuanian affairs, including home–country politics and voting.

## 1.5 Timeframe

In order to examine its research questions empirically, the thesis focuses on three different types of elections, namely the Lithuanian Presidential Election and the Lithuanian European Parliament election which took place in May 2014, as well as the Lithuanian Parliament (*Seimas*) election which took place in October 2016. Each of these elections was the most recent of its kind (or even *upcoming* as far as pre–election survey explained in the next chapter is concerned) when the data on the given election was collected.

[37]Although it is worth noting that since 2018 GDPR may make certain steps of the process more difficult as it would not be possible to merge existing databases.

[38]https://lithuanianleaders.org.

## 1.6 Boundaries of the study

Given the scarcity of similar studies, research conducted for this dissertation is in many ways explorative, aiming to give insight into a topic that for a long time has lacked the attention it deserves. Yet, the study operates within specific boundaries. In particular, this work essentially concentrates on the European Union era, and hence does not focus on emigrants (or effectively on their descendants) who left Lithuania long before its accession, for example at the end of the Second World War. This is mainly because the thesis aims to engage with relatively recent emigrants who made a conscious decision to reside outside of Lithuania due to their economic, professional and/or social circumstances or personal reasons, which reflects the state of flux in which the European Union citizens currently find themselves. Descendants of the 'old' emigrants also typically no longer fit the study's criterion of having Lithuanian citizenship and being eligible to vote. Emigrants who left Lithuania between its restoration of independence in 1990 and the EU accession were not, in principle, judged as unfit for the study as long as they had not lost their citizenship. However, in that period relatively few Lithuanians migrated legally, and many of them declared their migration in the post–accession period. Such people were not excluded from the study, but in practice these cases were scarce.

## 1.7 Organisation of thesis

The rest of this dissertation is organised as follows. The next chapter thoroughly explains the methodology employed in this thesis. Chapter 3 addresses the first research question, examining home–country political awareness and interest of Lithuanian emigrants. Chapter 4 covers the second question, exploring the reasons behind (non)voting among Lithuanians abroad. Chapter 5 investigates political choices of Lithuanian emigrants, thereby addressing the third question of this dissertation. Chapter 6 provides a conclusion.

# Chapter 2. Methodology

The previous chapter introduced the topic and the underlying research sub–questions addressed in this thesis. This chapter explains the methods that were employed to address the questions of this study. First, it discusses methodological challenges and possible solutions linked to the topic examined in this thesis. Then, it explains the methodological strategy employed in this dissertation, namely usage of multi methods, as well as the process that led the author to first develop statistical surveys and later conduct qualitative interviews. Particular attention is paid to explaining the use of non–random survey sampling and the usage of composite indices**.** This chapter also explains the data gathered for this thesis by each of the two utilised methods – surveys and qualitative interviews.

## 2.1 Methodological challenges and possible solutions

Methodological difficulty appears to be among the principal reasons why the topic of external voting remains understudied. Works on emigrant voting which do not require empirical research – particularly normative enquiries into whether and/or under what circumstances such voting should be allowed – are, in fact, widespread (e.g. Bauböck 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2015, 2017; Bauböck et al. 2019; López–Guerra 2005; Barry 2006; Rubio–Marin 2006; Goodin 2007; Kull 2008; Beckman 2009; Owen 2009, 2011; Honohan 2011; Näsström 2011; Fauvelle–Aymar 2012; Ottonelli & Torresi 2014; Sager 2014; Arrighi & Bauböck 2017). This signals that the topic of external voting is of interest to the scientific community despite the relative scarcity of empirical studies.

Why exactly is it problematic to engage with this topic empirically, as opposed to normatively? Although this is not the case for all migration–oriented studies (migration as a more general field receiving substantial 'qualitative' attention in sociology, anthropology and geography), researchers in the fields relating particularly to voting abroad strongly lean towards quantitative approaches and especially surveying (Facchini et al. 2008; Karaman 2009; Maxwell 2010a; Burean 2011, 2018; Ignacio 2013; Burgess 2014; Burean & Popp 2015; Escobar et al. 2015; Ahmadov & Sasse 2014, 2016a; 2016b; Chaudhary 2018; Guarnizo et al. 2019). Usage of alternative methods, by contrast, is quite rare and limited only to certain related topics (see Batista & Vicente 2011; Lafleur 2013; Paarlberg 2019). Yet, it is difficult to obtain reliable quantitative data on emigrants' political behaviour and attitudes, a problem which is geographically widespread (Careja & Emmenegger 2012; Ahmadov & Sasse 2016a; Kostelka 2016). Notably, the shortage of reliable data applies not only to direct records on emigrant voting and electoral behaviour in a broader sense, but also to more general statistics on emigration itself. The latter issue likely discourages some researchers from addressing the former (see Ahmadov

& Sasse 2016a). Observations of scholars in the field that '*migrants are a group notoriously difficult to capture in surveys*' (Careja & Emmenegger 2012, p. 4), that '*available statistics on migration […] are notoriously incomplete and uneven*' (Burgess 2014, p. 14), that '*reliable statistics from sending countries are unavailable*' (Kostelka 2016, p. 6) and even that '*there is not, and in all likelihood there will never be, a statistically representative survey of transnational communities*' (Sana & Conway 2013, p. 486) signal that data gathering makes quantitative enquiries into the topic, including surveys, markedly challenging.

The eagerness to utilise surveys to address emigrant voting and related topics is certainly understandable in the context of, for instance, Duch and Stevenson's (2008) comprehensive overview of the advantages of survey methodology; there are also other sound works advocating the method across the social sciences (e.g. Roberts 2002; Nardi 2018). The data gathered by surveys is most useful when random sampling – the gold standard for survey research (Lavrakas 2008) – is employed to select the participants, as it can then be reliably generalised to the corresponding population. Regrettably, unless the home or the host country has a list of all migrants who leave the former for the latter, no reliable sampling frame from which to randomly choose participants representative of that population can be employed (Johnson & Malekinejad 2014; Mines et al. 2014). Sana and Conway (2013, p. 486) argue that as migrants diffuse from a fixed home country into a variety of locations abroad, '*proper random statistical sampling becomes, from a practical point of view, either impossible or prohibitively expensive*', noting that that even long–running in–person surveys such as the Mexican Migration Project, Latin American Migration Project, China International Migration Project or Polish Migration Project are not truly statistically representative.[39] An alternative source of data – censuses, which can also be understood as 'universal' surveys within the territory in question – typically give little insight into migration beyond basic socio–economic measures, and the success of including emigration questions into census rounds has been limited in the ability to capture data on all emigrants, rather than only of those who left recently and/or still have relatives in the home country (Woodrow–Lafield 2013). Scarcity of reliable statistics on migration also means that in many contexts relatively little is known about the characteristics of leavers, which could otherwise aid in post–survey adjustments. This can discourage researchers from employing the survey method to address this particular topic, and thereby – at least some of them – from addressing the topic altogether. Indeed, why bother analysing and especially collecting survey data (which can be a highly effort– and time–consuming procedure) if generalisation beyond the sample is going to be limited?

[39]It is worth noting that due to lack of strict structure these studies could be argued to be closer to structured interviewing than a survey, with an exception of the Polish study, yet the authors discuss them in a survey framework.

However, it is in fact not only rational but actually desirable to overcome such reluctance at this phase of emigrant voting research. At early stages of research on a particular topic, unless the subject matter is intrinsically theoretical, it is important to gather as much data as possible – of course, striving for the highest possible quality at the same time. More specifically, given the limited amount of relevant literature on the topic examined in this study, it is important, even if that requires less desirable methodological choices such as convenience sampling, to get initial insight into the external Lithuanian electorate, test key hypotheses with the available data, and then identify which findings merit more attention from the scientific community and how to explore them further most fruitfully. Scientific studies do not operate in isolation, hence even if firm conclusions cannot be reached by a single survey–based study that possibly did not engage into random sampling from a suitable sampling frame, a piece of research that gathers first–hand data can and should feed further research, thereby contributing to the scientific enquiry on the subject. In the context of this thesis, possible discovered relationships between explanatory variables (e.g. socio–demographics, length of stay abroad, intention to return) and response variables (e.g. being well–informed about home country politics, (non)voting in a given election, or voting for, say, Lithuanian Conservatives) are expected to encourage further, more directed enquiries which can then use other methods (or, if new possibilities arise to obtain suitable sampling frames, also survey methods) to further probe into those relationships that have been identified as potentially important. They can also be tested in the context of other populations where superior sampling frames are available.[40]

Different ways to address the problem of non–random emigrant sampling have been employed by other authors examining emigrant political behaviour or attitudes and utilising survey methods. Careja and Emmenegger (2012), for example, inspect only *return* emigrants' democratic attitudes, although this certainly does not give a good insight into emigrants who still live outside of the (selected CEE) home countries, and the same is the case with Mexican government–sponsored surveys of returning emigrants (Sana & Conway 2013). Similarly, Lafleur and Sánchez–Domínguez's (2015) focus on Bolivian emigrants who register to vote from abroad tells us little about those who do not register, or those living beyond the examined host cities Buenos Aires, São Paulo, New York and Madrid. Other researchers make use of multistage cluster sampling: Ahmadov and Sasse's (2016a) study of Ukrainian emigrants' home–country political engagement involves three stages of sampling (destination country –> polling station –> emigrant). However, by choosing host country non–randomly and focusing only

[40]This is most realistic in 'one home–, one host–country' type of studies investigating small countries, if people who leave the former for the latter are understood as a population.

on emigrants who did make it to the polling station they are unable to exclude the possibility of bias. Chaudhary (2018) bypasses the immigrant/emigrant juxtaposition in his study and examines home–country voting among people of various, mostly non–European, countries of origin[41] who reside in non–native European countries; although the resulting sample is highly varied, it is not representative of any specific population. Admittedly, there are also studies where random sampling is treated without the thoughtfulness that it deserves. For example, Escobar et al. (2015), studying expected electoral participation, simply present their survey distribution to Colombians approaching various consulates as 'random'. Yet other quantitative works (Burgess 2014; Burgess & Tyburski 2020; Ciornei & Østergaard–Nielsen 2020) study migrants at macro– rather than micro–level and rely above all on United Nations' migrant stock data to estimate the number of potential voters abroad.

The above–discussed studies also demonstrate that researchers are employing not only first–hand surveys (Lafleur 2013; Lafleur & Sánchez–Domínguez 2015; Ahmadov & Sasse 2016a, 2016b) but also large–scale international and/or longitudinal surveys such as Eurobarometer or Localmultidem (Careja & Emmenegger 2012; Chaudhary 2018) to examine emigrant communities. The disadvantage of such readily–available surveys is that the secondary researcher has no influence on the gathered data. Yet, the otherwise attractive possibility for researchers to freely use such 'pre–made', even if limited, surveys is one reason why little data in the field is being collected by online survey methods. While another reason – a degree of scepticism towards online surveys (Ignacio 2013) – should not be ignored, such surveys should not be underestimated either, especially as in–person surveying has its own disadvantages for examining emigrant political interest and/or engagement. The key drawback of face–to–face surveying in first–hand data collection for studying such topics is that it typically only allows encountering people who are at least somewhat politically engaged since potential participants are easiest to survey at polling stations or in other similarly biased contexts. By contrast, online surveys may bias the sample in other ways, most obviously towards people who are 'e–literate' and have access to a computer and the internet, but in the context of emigration the internet can be used to reach out to both politically active and inactive emigrants (although actual survey completion, which may also be contingent on political interest, is of course not guaranteed). Moreover, the fit of this method also depends on how the data is used: for the reason of possible bias Ignacio (2013) criticises online data collection for studying emigrant communities but does make an exception for studies that do not aim to generalise across an entire population. In Lithuania, online surveys of emigrants are in fact used regularly, even if not by the academic community. In particular, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs routinely employs local public opinion and market research companies to survey Lithuanian

[41]Including Morocco, Egypt, Turkey, Kosovo, Bangladesh, India, the Philippines, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Peru and Ecuador.

emigrants on their values, interests and behaviours. These surveys are undertaken online and snowball sampling is used for participant enrolment. To illustrate, in a typical 2018 Vilmorus survey (2018a), participants were recruited on Facebook and via Lithuanian institutions abroad. The only quotas used were host regions, with 70% of respondents being from Europe and 30% from elsewhere.

Researchers who focus their efforts on quantifying emigrant data may also overlook the potential of alternative ways to address the topic, such as qualitative interviewing, which allows for capturing insights into an issue from the perspective of participants. During a qualitative interview, participants' opinions, experiences, feelings and emotions can be captured in a considerably greater depth than in surveys, and they can be much more empowered. Another advantage of qualitative interviews is their flexibility. For instance, if the participant is not willing to share their views on a particular sub–topic (e.g. their political preferences), it is relatively easy for the researcher to address this issue during the interview process. They can do so by explaining thoroughly why the given questions are being asked and how they relate to the interview topic; alternatively, they can come back to the sensitive questions when the interviewee is more at ease, or exclude those questions altogether. This benefit is especially evident when compared to online surveys where the participant fills them in at a distance from the researcher. Online survey design allows for the inclusion of some of these measures, however a researcher who is interacting with a participant can be more sensitive to a particular respondent, appear more honest, establish deeper trust, and thereby potentially be much more convincing. The same flexibility also allows for addressing previously unconceptualised issues: compared to surveys, there is more room in qualitative interviews for unexpected information to arise. While survey data can certainly go against our predefined hypotheses, interviews have much more power to introduce data not considered beforehand at all.

## 2.2 Methodological process and multi methods

Empirical work used in this dissertation was conducted during the period of six years (2014–2019), and the process was as follows. An initial literature review, with a focus on methodology, was undertaken during the earliest stages of the PhD. It revealed that, in spite of difficulties and limitations described in Section 2.1, surveys were nonetheless being fruitfully employed both in policy and academic scholarship on migrants (e.g. Schoorl et al. 2000; Vilmorus; Parrado et al. 2005), including pioneering works on emigrant voting research (Marcelli & Cornelius 2005; Lafleur 2013).[42] Together

[42]Indeed, it later turned out that survey methods were chosen by other researchers in the field as well (e.g. Ahmadov & Sasse 2014, 2016a, 2016b; Schlenker et al. 2017; Goldberg & Lanz 2021; Mügge et al. 2021).

with the fact that surveys constitute a particularly suitable method for answering the research questions of this study (described in more detail below), this led to the choice to begin the empirical research with quantitative surveys. Given that there was no available survey addressing the issues of interest to this thesis to a sufficient extent, original surveys were designed by the author. As the PhD began shortly before the 2014 Presidential and European Parliament elections, it was decided to design and employ the surveys in their context.

During the period of data collection and analysis, another important election – 2016 *Seimas* election – took place. Given that this type of election had not been addressed in the study by then, a decision was made to incorporate it into the dissertation. Since qualitative interviews constitute another suitable perspective for the study's research questions (see more below), it was decided to approach this election from an interview perspective. This resulted in **emergent multi methods design** (see Creswell & Plano Clark 2017), which means that that two different research methods were employed to address the same overall research question and the design arose during the course of the conduct of the study. The design is **sequential non–dependent**, meaning that the data obtained with the two methods was not collected at the same time, and that analysis of the first method (survey) did not influence the design of the second component (qualitative interview) (Schoonenboom & Johnson 2017; see also Johnson et al. 2007). As is common, the **integration** of the two methods took part at the point of results analysis (Morse & Niehaus 2009). Lastly, towards the end of the PhD,[43] an additional first–hand data source was collected, namely an elite interview with one of the most successful Lithuanian politicians among external voters, which is used as complementary material in one section of the thesis (5.3.3.1) only.

The two chosen research methods – surveys and interviews – are combined in the study to address one overarching goal: to provide the first insights into Lithuanian emigrants' relations with the home–country elections. In doing so, they complement each other in the following ways.[44] First, combining the methods provides **triangulation** (Flick 2017), that is, the ability to monitor whether quantitative and qualitative research components yield convergent results (Schoonenboom & Johnson 2017). This is especially useful when the research questions have not been previously addressed as in that case it is more difficult to monitor for possible biases by comparing the findings with existing literature. Second, combining methods in this study also allows for '*enhan[cing] or build[ing] upon*

[43]On 9 January 2019.

[44]Multipurpose studies are possible and relatively common – see Greene et al (1989), Bryman (2006).

*quantitative/qualitative findings*' (Bryman 2006, p. 107) which is also referred to as **complementarity** (Greene 2007). Triangulation and complementarity apply to all three research questions, as will be seen in the empirical chapters.

Overall, the empirical work in this study is in line with the approach that different methods ought to complement each other and contribute their different strengths to answering research questions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004; Creswell & Plano Clark 2017). Overall strengths of surveys in the context of the present study include ability to test a large number of emigrants and ensure their anonymity, good comparability of data, and ability to test for multiple effects simultaneously. Qualitative interviews, on the other hand, provide emigrants with a voice, have built–in flexibility, and can provide very rich data, including data not theorised a–priori. All these advantages are important for studying relatively new topics.

Let us briefly discuss why it is surveys and interviews in particular that are employed to answer each of the research questions of this study. Surveys and qualitative interviews help answer the individual questions in closely related but nuancedly different ways. Research question 1 – *Which Lithuanian emigrants are aware of and interested in home–country politics?* – is particularly suitable to be examined with surveys, as, having tested a large number of Lithuanians abroad, they can demonstrate[45] which characteristics are *statistically* associated with awareness and interest. At the same time, qualitative interviewing also provides a fruitful approach to this question, as it has potential to reveal mechanisms why/how high or low awareness/interest comes to being within an individual. Research question 2 – *Which Lithuanian emigrants vote and which abstain from home–country elections, and why?* – lends itself to a similar methodological approach. Surveying is a potentially very revealing method in the context of this question, as it can provide us with an understanding which individuals are most *likely* to vote from abroad. Qualitative interviews are particularly relevant to the second part of the question and provide emigrants with an opportunity to voice reasons behind the decision (not) to vote as they perceive them. Research question 3 – *How do Lithuanian emigrants make their political choices?* – is suitable to be examined with surveys because this can help us identify the statistically most relevant micro–level factors for voting for a certain party or politician. Qualitative interviews have potential to enable us to see the mechanism behind the choice. The way the two methods are combined to address the three research questions also illustrates the value of mixing highlighted by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009): with such a research

[45]Subject to sampling limitations discussed in section 2.3.

design, we can seek confirmation (surveys) and exploration (interviews) in the same study. Allowing to deeply probe into individual–level influences (which, by definition, cannot be equally well assessed with macro–level data), each of these methods is potent to give an enhanced insight into Lithuanian emigrants' voting behaviour. However, the combined methodology, relying on strengths of two different methods, provides more reliable stepping stones in a previously understudied area.

During the survey development process, relevant available survey questionnaires (above all Vilmorus surveys) were consulted. Both general and voting–centred works on emigration, as well as non–emigration literature relating to any of the research questions, were employed to provide a theoretical backbone for the surveys and help choose the survey questions that would allow to best address the research questions. Since some of the survey questions were susceptible to hindsight bias, it was decided to run not only a post–election survey (more common in electoral research), but also a pre–election one (see more in Section 2.4). Survey questionnaires were reviewed by research supervisor. A pilot survey was run with 16 participants to identify possible design flaws and monitor whether there was any need to change questions (see Fink 2003; Saunders 2007).[46]

Survey administration employed river sampling (see Mercel et a. 2017) and went as follows. An invitation to take part in the pre–election survey was posted in 302 emigration–related Facebook groups, 190 emigration–related Facebook pages and sent to 63 relevant Facebook accounts.[47] This specific recruitment approach has been employed in other studies (Pötzschke & Weiß 2021), and Facebook use more generally is also increasingly widespread for (non–random) surveying purposes (Brickman Bhutta 2012; Kosinski et al. 2015; Kühne & Zindel 2020), including surveying migrants (Carlini et al. 2015; McAleese et al. 2016; Pötzschke & Braun 2017). For example, a 2019 post–EP–election survey conducted among several European expatriate groups also used Facebook as its main tool for participant recruitment (European Parliament 2020). In the present work, in order to diversify the sample as much as possible, Facebook networks to which the survey was sent were varied as much as feasible, including also niche groups such as mechanics', sportsmen's or mothers' groups. Most, however, were location–centred e.g. 'Lithuanians in East of England'. The study was also advertised on the author's personal account. To help control for positionality (see more in Section 2.7), in approximately one fifth of the cases the study was advertised from an alternative account 'Election Study', although this did not seem to alter participation. Facebook aside, several online forums

[46]No such need arose.

[47]This comprised of commercial profiles that chose to have a Facebook account instead of a page.

(anglija.lt, draugas.lt, lietuvis.no, londoniete.com) were also used to disseminate the survey, as was URM's contact list of Lithuanian representations abroad.[48] For the post–election survey, emails provided by the respondents in the first round were used to contact them. To gather additional respondents for the post–election survey, the original dissemination process was used one more time, with an updated invitation.[49] The key criteria for participation were residence abroad during the 2014 Presidential and EP elections and a Lithuanian passport. This was monitored again in the first 'screen-out' question of the survey. Given that multiple citizenship in Lithuania is possible only under exceptional circumstances, this implies that those who obtained their host countries' passports were effectively excluded from the study. This applies also to the interview recruitment (see Section 2.6.1).

As people who are interested in the subject matter are more likely to volunteer for research, those *not* interested in politics were explicitly encouraged to take part in the study too. The first page of the website dedicated to the surveys that were conducted during the course of this research encouraged prospective participants '*to fill in the survey whether or not [they saw themselves] as interested in politics*', both in English and Lithuanian. This was in addition to the effort to reach diverse networks during survey dissemination. Naturally, however, most responsive networks consisted of individuals generally sympathetic towards research and/or home–country politics – such as university groups – whereas reaching out to blue–collar workers' networks, which could be expected to be more sceptical towards home–country issues, tended to yield fewer participants. As a result, as will also be seen in the empirical chapters, whilst the final sample likely includes considerably more non–voters and individuals not interested in home–country affairs than would have been the case if no dedicated effort had been put into engaging them, it still consists predominantly of voters and of interested emigrants (see also Brehm 1993). The recruitment process has also naturally yielded a sample of emigrants who are comfortable with using the internet and, in many cases, social media. However, this is nowadays true for the vast majority of Lithuanian emigrants, who are typically young (IOMVO 2021).

Relating to the discussion above, in contrast to a potential alternative of surveying people face–to–face at polling stations (Lafleur & Sánchez–Domínguez 2015; Ahmadov & Sasse 2016a), in addition to allowing for a more varied geographical sample the present survey: 1) helped to reach those emigrants who fail to turn in the ballot and examine the underlying reasons for their absenteeism; and 2) allowed

[48]Available https://urm.lt/default/lt/embasycontact.

[49]One minor change was that some (specifically three) groups/pages were taken down by that time and could not be approached again.

to undertake longer surveys (needed to thoroughly address the three sub–questions of this thesis) as the respondents were able to fill them in at the convenience of their own home and at a suitable time, as opposed to having to respond to the questions outside and unprepared. Respondents were given a choice whether to fill in the surveys in English or in Lithuanian which is a noteworthy advantage of the study (Kissau & Hunger 2008; Mieriņa 2019) and were able to switch between the two languages any time.

## 2.3 Non–random survey sampling

The rapid spread of the internet has brought about a possibility to survey people online. Such surveys have a number of considerable advantages, including relatively low execution costs and human resource needs, as well as high speed, and potentially higher quality data compared to other self–administered surveys (Rhodes et al. 2003; Kaplowitz et al. 2004; Roberts 2006; Couper et al. 2007; Malhotra 2008; Couper & Mille 2008; Frippiat et al. 2010; Dutwin & Buskirk 2017; Mercer et al. 2017; Shaver et al. 2019). On the downside, partly because not absolutely everyone uses the internet (Sterrett et al. 2017), partly because of lack of clear sampling frames (e.g. Mieriņa 2019), and partly because of self–selection of respondents (Askitas & Zimmermann 2015; Cornesse et al. 2020), online surveying typically implies **non–random survey sampling**[50] (Couper 2000; Bethlehem 2010; Frippiat et al. 2010). Whilst exceptions to this rule exist, they are limited to very specific settings in which reliable sampling frames are available, i.e. well–defined finite populations (Smith 1983) that are accessible via the web (Schonlau et al. 2009).

Non–random surveys are limited in that this kind of sampling does not allow for statistical inference (King 1998; Casella & Berger 2002; Bethlehem 2011). In other words, the results obtained from the sample are not generalisable to the population (Kyburg 1974; Gailmard 2014; Simons et al. 2017). For the present study this means that even if there was a finite list of Lithuanian emigrants (i.e. a reliable sampling frame – see Mines & Schenker 2014; Reichel & Morales 2017), the mode of sampling employed would not allow us to claim that the results apply to all of those emigrants (i.e. the Lithuanian emigrant population). In statistical terms, we cannot make inference beyond our sample (Copas & Li 1997; Lohr 2021). Whilst post–surveying techniques, such as propensity score weighting and sample matching, exist to help address the non–random sampling issue, empirical success of them is highly mixed (Dutwin & Buskirk 2017; Mercer et al. 2017). Poststratification weights are also

[50]In random sampling, the likelihood of selection of each individual is known and the same for every individual of the population in question.

common in attempts to rectify non–random samples, but are only useful if overall characteristics of the population are known (Bethlehem 2010; Frippiat et al. 2010) and are actually misleading if there are members of the population who have no chance to be selected to participate in the survey (Zhao 2021).

Whilst random sampling is certainly desirable (see Miller 2017) and would prevent the above–described generalisation limitation, in practice non–random sampling is widespread in, and beyond, social science survey research (Cuddeback et al. 2004; Miller & Sønderlund 2010; Dutwin & Buskirk 2017; Gomez et al. 2019; Zhao 2021). Notably, the quality (in terms of external validity) of non–random samples can be high (e.g. Koch & Emrey 2001; Schillewaert & Meulemeester 2005; Ansolabehere & Shaffner 2014). Evidence that differences between individuals with and without internet access are declining with time (Sterrett et al. 2017) is also in favour of recent online non–random surveys.

Even more importantly, non–random surveys can be particularly valuable for specific scientific goals, including surveying hard–to–reach target groups (Kalogeraki 2012; Dewaele et al. 2014) which encompass migrants (Agadjanian & Zotova 2012; Semaan & DiNenno 2014; Johnson & Malekinejad 2014; Reichel & Morales 2017). To illustrate, migrant surveys that were non–random and/or executed online have provided insight into different aspects of Irish, Latvian and German emigration (McAleese et al. 2016; Mieriņa 2019; Pötzschke & Weiß 2021) and have also already fruitfully addressed external voting (e.g. McIlwaine & Bermudez 2015; Gherghina & Tseng 2016; Finn 2020; Mügge et al. 2021; Pujiatin 2021). Importantly, non–random web survey sampling allows to recruit potentially nearly limitless numbers of respondents from all over the globe, which would be very costly with other methods (Kalogeraki 2012; Mieriņa 2019). This is particularly relevant to emigration research where desired respondents are often geographically dispersed (Pötzschke & Weiß 2021). Larger samples, in turn, increase statistical power (Zaller 2002) which can otherwise be insufficiently high to detect effects even when they are present (Mieriņa 2019; Pötzschke & Weiß 2021).

Lastly, in absence of an adequate sampling frame – which is typically the case in emigration research (e.g. Sana & Conway 2013) – sampling randomly is simply not possible (Johnson & Malekinejad 2014; Lune & Berg 2017; Mieriņa 2019). Given that science is moved forward not only by generalisation but also by research providing indicative data (Section 2.1; Andrews et al. 2003; Kalogeraki 2012), non–random surveys do have their place in the scientific process. Particularly for migration research, they

constitute a '*useful addition to migration scholar's methodological toolbox*' (Pötzschke & Weiß 2021, p. 27). Given all this, it is natural that the thesis has chosen this tool for gathering its quantitative data.

## 2.4 Survey data

Between 17 April 2014 and 25 May 2014, a 'pre–election' survey was conducted. This survey is referred to as such because it was launched when two important elections – the Lithuanian Presidential election and the European Parliament election – were approaching. The Presidential election took place on 11 May 2014 (first round) and 25 May 2014 (second round). The EP election was held together with this second round on 25 May 2014. The survey was slightly altered once the first round of the Presidential election took place, and discontinued once the second round (and the EP election) took place. Specific alternations are described in the rest of the thesis where applicable.
There were 553 respondents who qualified (i.e. they confirmed they were Lithuanian citizens (passport–holders) residing abroad) and started the pre–election survey. Although some dropped out at various points (530 reached the very end) as is common for online surveys (Hoerger 2010), this was more frequent towards the end of the survey. Due to a relatively large number of respondents who started the survey, there were typically sufficient respondents to run models even after listwise deletions that took place when the variables needed for a specific model were chosen. Exceptions will be addressed throughout the thesis where applicable. The survey covered a wide range of questions, above all concentrating on respondents' interest in and awareness of Lithuanian politics, allowing for an exploration of the relationship between these issues and emigrant characteristics.

Between 23 October 2014 and 11 November 2015, 513 qualified respondents started a 'post–election' survey; 492 respondents reached the end. 364 of the post–election survey respondents had also filled in the pre–election survey (they gave an email address to be contacted again for further research) – their responses in the two surveys were matched, and they were given a slightly shorter version of this survey than others as some data had already been collected in their case. They constituted 362 of the 'finishers'. The survey also covered a wide range of questions, above all targeting (non)voting as well as political choices.

Respondents who took part in the surveys were aged from 18 to 74, median age being 25, which could be related both to lower usage of internet among the older people and higher emigration rates among

the young (Solnyškinienė & Adamonienė 2017; IOMVO 2021 ). 30%[51] were male and 70% were female – indeed, women have been reported to be more willing to participate in online surveys in general (Lefever et al. 2007; Smith 2008). In line with McIlwaine and Bermudez's (2015) experience, respondents were generally quite well educated – 41% had a postgraduate degree and 32% had an undergraduate degree. 40% reported full–time non–manual work to be their main activity, and further 28% reported that they mainly study. This suggests that the respondents of the surveys conducted for this thesis provides us with more information about emigrants who have skilled jobs and are well educated and less about those who have menial or no jobs and are poorly educated. This is, however, of a lesser concern in the context of European emigration (see Fargues 2017; Turcu & Urbatsch 2021). Moreover, 28% of respondents were earning between 1,000 and 2,000 Euros NET per month, 20% – more than that. 61% were living in big cities abroad, and 63% had been living in cities while residing in Lithuania. Roughly the same proportion of respondents described themselves as single (34%), living with a partner (31%) and married (31%). 26% had children. There being little reliable data on emigrants leaving Lithuania, it was decided, unlike in some other studies in the field (Kahanec & Tosun 2009), not to employ data weighting as this method is much less valuable when there are no 'ideal' weights known (see also Mercer et al. 2017; Section 2.3). However, the demographic data was included in all of the statistical models which makes it possible to monitor the extent to which particular characteristics of the respondents may be influencing the key variables examined in this thesis.

Unlike in cases such as Bolivia (Lafleur & Sánchez–Domínguez 2015), Lithuania in principle allows its citizens to vote from all over the world (Senior Electoral Commission (SEC) 2020), and this survey (as well as interviews) was open to Lithuanian emigrants residing anywhere. In practice, however, the majority of respondents (38%) were residing in the United Kingdom, and 92% were based in Europe, which is very close to recent United Nations' (2019c) estimates of Lithuanian emigrant stock in different regions.

## 2.5 Composite indices

*Composite (i.e. aggregate) indices* are measurements which operationalise a phenomenon in a quantitative way and represent an aggregate of data, whereas *items*, *indicators* or *variables* are their most basic elements (Helbling 2013). An important pre–requisite for index construction of a concept is its multidimensionality. Use of indices has long been common in certain areas of science: above all different branches of psychology (note *psychometrics*) (e.g. Shakow & Jellinek 1965; Lazarsfeld 1966;

[51]Here and below the percentages refer to the proportion of respondents who did give an answer to the question, i.e. valid responses. Whilst answer refusals did happen, refusal levels were low.

Snyder & DeBono 1985; Mullen 1986; Hessing et al. 1988; Jacobson et al. 1990; Eppright et al. 1998; Blascovich 2000; Troxel et al. 2003; Verplanken & Orbell 2003; Casas et al. 2013; Soler et al. 2014), but also education (e.g. Kuh 1981; Kabók et al. 2013; OECD 2020), medicine (Spitzer et al. 1981; Kirshner & Guyatt 1985; Jones et al. 2009; Mumcu et al. 2009), business and economics (Jun & Joo 1993; Koo et al. 2000; Zhang et al. 2020), environment (Hung Lau 2011; Huang et al. 2015; Wirehn et al. 2015; Rey–Valette et al. 2019), tourism (Mendola & Volo 2017) – and this list is by no means exhaustive.

While political scientists and policymakers use indices more sporadically[52] than, for instance, personality psychologists, they have also employed indices to measure broad concepts in empirical works. These include indices measuring macro–level concepts, including social development (Svedberg 2000; Bandura & del Campo 2006; Foa & Tanner 2012), good governance (Erkkilä & Piironen 2015), corruption (Donchev & Ujhelyi 2014), political legitimacy (Weatherford 1992), readiness for e–government (Ayanso et al. 2011) and integration, immigration and citizenship policies (Helbling 2013; Goodman 2015; Helbling & Michalowski 2017). The most well–known macro–level composite index is the Human Development Index (HDI) (United Nations 2022).

There are also indices measuring micro–level concepts, such as political participation (Huckfeldt 1979; Pan & Kosicki 1997; Kim et al. 1999; McLeod et al. 1999; Eveland & Scheufele 2000; Bimber 2001; Mutz 2002; Moy et al. 2004; Scheufele et al. 2004, Ahmadov & Sasse 2014; Ivaldi et al. 2017), political efficacy (Bimber 2001; McCluskey et al. 2004; Nisbet & Scheufele 2004), political discussion or conversation (Kim et al. 1999; Kwak et al. 2005), voting power (Shapley & Shubik 1954; Colomer 1996; Gambarelli & Stach 2009; Kong & Peters 2021), European identification (Royuela 2020), media use (McLeod et al. 1999; Moy et al. 2004; Scheufele et al. 2004; Cao & Brewer 2008) and others (see Hollander 1996; McCluskey et al. 2004; Mutz 2002; Nisbet & Scheufele 2004; Scheufele et al. 2004). Notably, both of the micro–level concepts that are addressed via indices in the present study – political knowledge and political interest – have also been operationalised with indices before (Delli Carpini & Keeter 1993; McLeod et al. 1999; Nisbet & Scheufele 2004; Scheufele et al. 2004; Kwak et al. 2005; Eveland & Dylko 2007; Cao & Brewer 2008).

A noteworthy drawback of index usage is that they impose a risk of oversimplifying the underlying phenomena or concept. Usage of indices is not without other challenges either – including those related to concept definition, indicator choice, and decisions on data aggregation (Donchev & Ujhelyi

[52]Naturally, because there are relatively few political studies utilising indices, and because many relevant issues are interdisciplinary in nature (Greco et al. 2019), the present work is also informed by index usage in other fields of study.

2014; Erkkilä & Piironen 2015)**.** Even addressing each of these issues with care, different researchers at times arrive at indices that are only weakly related to each other (Straffin 1983; Helbling 2013). On the one hand, this signals that there is no such thing as a 'perfect' index; on the other hand, this strongly encourages explicit and shared documentation on decisions made during the index building, as is done in the present thesis (see also Erkkilä & Piironen 2015; Greco et al. 2019). It has also been demonstrated that some indices can be more appropriate than others *for a given context* rather than in general (Spitzer et al 1981; Straffin 1983; Gambarelli & Stach 2009). As will be seen below, certain decisions on the index construction employed in the present thesis were made with the particular Lithuanian emigrant context in mind.

Employing indices involves substantially more complex procedures compared to use of single–item measures (Ebert & Welsch 2004; Hansen 2012). That given, abundance of indices in social science research more generally, and usage of indices to address political knowledge and interest more specifically, indicates that they add considerable value to empirical research projects. Indices are particularly useful if one is to address abstract concepts (Hansen 2012; DeVellis & Thorpe 2021) or '*useful artificial constructs'* (Bland & Altman 2002, p. 606), as they help transform such complex qualities into comparable quantities (Booysen 2002; Foa & Tanner 2012; Hansen 2012). And, for abstract concepts – such as interest and knowledge – indices are generally superior to single–item measures since multiple indicators of the same underlying concept are likely to be more accurate and reliable than any single indicator (Regin 2008). Indices are also parsimonious and often more applicable (Dylko 2014). Other advantages of indices include ease of interpretation, ability to present large volumes of data while reducing visual and cogntitive workload, and thereby possibility to communicate it to different audiences (see Saltelli 2007; OECD & JRC 2008; Greco et al. 2019).

To illustrate some advantages and disadvantages of awareness/interest index usage in external voting context, it is worth to briefly reflect on the case of Schlenker et al. (2017) who chose to assess Swiss emigrants' home–country political awareness by a single–item measure, namely their knowledge of the Swiss Minister of Finance only. On the upside, this measure makes for a straightforward statistical analyses and interpretation. On the downside, it does not account for any other possible indicator of awareness (even knowledge of other ministers), and hence the authors arrive at a categorical '*either or*' assessment of knowledge bypassing the multidimensionality of the concept. As for interest, however, this research team uses an index combining two items: self–reported interest in Swiss national politics, and self–reported interest in Swiss local/cantonal politics. It is worthwhile to compare this methodology with that of Mügge et al. (2021) who employ a single–indicator measure of home–country interest among Turkish emigrants – they ask straightforwardly to what extent the

respondent is interested. Markedly, both of these measurements suffer from a disadvantage of self–assessment subjectivity. As is clear from these examples, this issue can surface even when indices are used, depending on the chosen items. But, unlike when using a single–item measure, it is relatively straightforward to avoid the problem during the design stage.

Let us briefly consider the essence of the problem with self–assessment of interest. Although it is not uncommon to encounter it in the literature (e.g. Marien et al. 2010; Coffé & Bolzendahl 2010; Immerzeel et al. 2015), partly because it is employed by large scale surveys such as the International Social Survey Programme (2019), a single–item measure of political interest that is obtained by asking respondents directly whether they are interested in politics has been rightfully criticised for being '*loaded with social desirability bias*' (Galais et al. 2014, p. 3). Indeed, people may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed to straightforwardly state that they are not interested in politics. If respondents see political interest as a social norm they may overreport their interest accordingly: indeed, this appears to be true for potentially related behaviour – voting (e.g. Blais et al. 2004). Although the effect of social desirability bias is likely to be reduced when surveys are self–administered online (Holbrook & Krosnick 2010), other problems are also inherent to relying on self–reported interest: some respondents may fail to remember the instances signalling their interest, and some may have entirely different evaluations of what should be regarded as 'interest' than others. Another source of noise in this measure is that what politics means is left for the respondents to define themselves (Prior 2010). These considerations provide additional support for the use of the aggregate measure to evaluate respondents' interest in Lithuanian politics.

The present study itself utilises two composite measures – an index of political awareness[53] and an index of political interest. They will now be discussed in turn.

### 2.5.1 Awareness index

In the present study, political awareness refers to **electoral awareness, i.e. knowledge of elections and election procedures** (cf. Waldinger & Soehl 2013). The decision to focus on electoral awareness was made because in the light of the topic of the present study – emigrants and home–country elections – it is of central interest to gain insight particularly into respondents' awareness of elections back home. This is especially important for the empirical Chapter 4 where the awareness index constitutes an independent variable explaining electoral behaviour. Among other things, this chapter

[53]As a reminder, this thesis uses terms 'awareness' and 'knowledge' interchangeably.

investigates the extent to which (non)voting can be explained by the degree to which a given emigrant is informed about the elections. This, in turn, requires a measure tapping specifically electoral awareness.

Focus on electoral awareness also implies that pre-existing indices addressing political knowledge would not have served the purposes of the present study well due to lack of concept homogeneity (Goertz 2009). For instance, Delli Carpini and Keeter's (1990) recommended index which was adopted in further studies (e.g. Eveland & Dylko 2007) excludes knowledge on elections from index items altogether, hence following their recommendation would clearly not be suitable for a study focusing on electoral awareness.[54] Indices such as those of Nisbet and Scheufele (2004), Kwak et al. (2005), Cao and Brewer (2008), McLeold et al. (2010) and Shani (2012) use various items to measure the underlying concept of political knowledge, ranging from knowledge of international conflicts to names of local politicians, but the items typically do not tap into electoral knowledge either.

More generally, however, it is most meaningful to consult composite measures that are closest to the underlying concept that the present index aims to measure. A previous empirical study on emigrant electoral participation by Waldinger and Soehl (2013) employed closely related measures of knowledge of elections and election procedures. In this work, six items arising from six different survey questions were grouped into two theoretically–driven dimensions that were utilised as dependent variables. The employed items were appropriate for the context of the particular election around which the measure was centred, namely the 2006 Mexican Presidential election, which was the first election in which Mexican emigrants could vote. On the downside, some of the employed items may not transition equally well into contexts of considerably longer external voting traditions, including Lithuania (see Table 11). Anyhow, a number of Walteringer and Soehl's items can inform the present study even if they are not adopted analogously: the instances where they were adapted to the current context are acknowledged in the ensuing discussion of index items.

Overall, lack of concept homogeneity and contextual specificities did not allow for an inclusion of any pre–existing index as a whole. Therefore, a new index was created relying on item–level theoretical considerations and incorporating relevant items from existing literature where appropriate. Indeed,

[54]It should be acknowledged that the authors' index arose from National Election Study's questions, and Its idea was to suggest how to make the best out of readily available data rather than to propose a theory–driven index.

involving theoretical arguments in the process of index construction is a requirement for proper index building (Dylko 2010).

### ITEMS

The index was composed of 16 items evaluating respondents' knowledge of elections and election procedures. The first six items assessed knowledge of election dates – similarly to Waldinger and Soehl (2013). Nevertheless, whilst these authors examined knowledge of election year and month, theoretical considerations suggested for it to be more suitable in the present study to assess awareness of more specific dates, namely month and day when the given elections took place. One reason for this decision was that Lithuanian emigrants were surveyed closer to the elections than Mexican ones (under two months[55] vs. five months) hence more precise questions were expected to differentiate respondents better. The second motive was the longer history of emigrant voting which can lead to higher emigrant electoral knowledge overall, again requiring more precise measures to differentiate respondents. Therefore the six items were as follows: 1) knowledge of Presidential election first round's month; 2) its day; 3) knowledge of Presidential election second round's month; 4) its day; 5) knowledge of EP election's month 6) its day. This core knowledge on the elections in question was judged as most important which was also reflected in item weight choices (see below).

The next six items assessed knowledge of possibilities to vote in the examined elections from abroad. In the case of Waldinger and Soehl (2013) it was sensible to evaluate knowledge of whether it was possible for emigrants to vote in the election altogether as this was a new provision. By contrast, in the context of Lithuania, where it has been possible to vote from abroad since the early days of independence, it is more theoretically justified to examine knowledge of external voting possibilities in more detail. Specifically, awareness of *how* it is possible to vote from abroad was assessed in the present study. The six items were as follows: 1) knowledge that it was possible to vote in diplomatic institutions in the Presidential election; 2) knowledge that it was possible to vote in diplomatic institutions in the Lithuanian EP election; 3) knowledge that it was possible to vote in the Presidential election by post; 4) knowledge that it was possible to vote in the Lithuanian EP election by post; 5) knowledge that it was not possible to vote in the Presidential election online; 6) knowledge that it was not possible to vote in the Lithuanian EP election online.

[55]See section 2.4 for details.

Existing empirical research has also included in composite measures knowledge of ways in which elections are organised, focusing on external voting in particular (Waldinger & Soehl 2013). The present index items also incorporated measures of procedural knowledge. Specifically, the last four index items were as follows: 1) knowledge that to register as a candidate in Presidential election an individual has to collect a certain number of voters' signatures; 2) knowledge that those signatures could be collected online as well as on paper; 3) knowledge that to register as a candidate list in Lithuanian EP election that list has to collect a certain number of voters' signatures; 4) knowledge that those signatures could also be collected online as well as on paper. The questions relating to the rules of electronic support for candidates in elections were particularly topical for Lithuanian context as 2014 was the first year when supporting candidates online was possible. This was of particular relevance to emigrants as due to the distance they typically cannot support candidates by signing in person. This notwithstanding, these items were all relatively difficult. That is not problematic for index building: on the contrary, variation of item difficulty is a desirable quality for an index (Elff 2009). However, since knowledge assessed by these items was indeed very specific, they were judged as considerably less important than the rest of the items. This is reflected in their relatively low weights.

## WEIGHTS

### General considerations

The weight assigned to an indicator reflects its relative importance or contribution to the index (Greco et al. 2019). Proper index weighting is an issue that has been under scrutiny of scientific community for a long time (e.g. Phillips 1943; Burt 1950; Guilford 1954). Up to this day, across disciplines, most appropriate weights for components of individual indices – even those that are already extensively used in practice – often remain a matter of a discussion (Hamdan & Rock 1999; Chowdhury & Squire 2006; Nguefack–Tsague et al. 2011; Turner et al. 2012). This signals that there is typically no single ideal choice in weighting composite index items (see also Drechsler 1973). Yet it by no means implies that weighting can be done carelessly: on the contrary, the choices need to be carefully reflected on, and explicitly documented (Anand & Sen 1997; Dobbie & Dail 2013).

Such thoughtful reflection is most often lacking in equal component weighting. Whilst very popular, this most basic approach to indicator weighting has been questioned from theoretical, practical and empirical standpoints (e.g. Kelly 1991; Gordon 1995; Ayanso et al. 2011; Nguefack–Tsague et al. 2011). In the context of HDI and Centre for Global Development and Foreign Policy's Commitment to Development Index (CDI), Chowdhury and Squire (2006, p. 762) even refer to equal weighting as

'universally[56] *considered to be wrong'*. Instead of choosing to assign equal weights to index items without explicit justification, one should rely on theory and/or a–priori conceptual rationale during this process (see ul Haq 1995; Goertz 2009), which may or may not lead to equal weights of the aggregate index items. Importantly, appropriateness of not only indices themselves, but also their particular weighting, can be sensitive to cultural context (Drechsler 1973; Koo et al. 2000; Booysen 2002). This also indicates that it is important to support assigned weights – even if they are all equal – by theoretical considerations (Booysen 2002; Goertz 2009; see also DeVellis & Thorpe 2021).

As a result, in the present study, awareness and interest index items are weighted relying on theoretical and conceptual considerations, consulting related literature subject to availability. In Schederecker's et al. (2019) classification system, this approach falls under the following categories: *normative*[57] *weighting* as a broader category and *theory–based weighting* as its subcategory. The key advantage of this approach identified by the authors is taking into account theory and literature which may not be given sufficient recognition when choosing weights using statistical techniques. At the same time, we should acknowledge its limitations, namely that normative approaches are essentially subjective, and that within the literature available to consult (which may not necessarily be broad in the first place) not all works may be of desirable quality (Schederecker et al. 2019). However, it should be noted that elements of subjectivity also emerge in certain empirical techniques, namely principal component analysis, factor analysis, regression analysis and capacity of information (Ray 2008).

The weighting process of the present study takes into account the Lithuanian context, and furthermore aligns with the view that it is desirable to keep indices fairly simple (Booysen 2002).

**Awareness index weights**

When introducing awareness index items, this thesis elucidated that the group of items assessing knowledge of electoral dates was considered most important for our index of electoral knowledge, whereas the group of items assessing knowledge of electoral rules was considered least important for the index**.** In line with the rationale outlined in 'General considerations' above, these decisions were made as a result of theoretical considerations and previous empirical research.

[56]My emphasis.

[57]As opposed to empirical weighting. The normative weigting category also conincides with Dobbie and Dail's (2013) 'expert opinion' cateogory and Ray's (2008) 'subjective, intuitive' category. Schederecker's et al. (2019) categorisation is the most thorough and is hence preferred in the present review.

More specifically, in the awareness index employed in this study, questions on election dates are weighted most heavily because knowing an election date is a crucial piece of knowledge, which enables participation. Yet, existing empirical research signals that considerable numbers of emigrants may not be aware of election dates (Suro & Escobar 2006, cited in Lafleur 2013). In the Lithuanian emigrant context, knowing the election day is very important also because, unlike in many other countries, it coincides with the deadline to send out postal votes (Maminskaitė 2022). By contrast, questions on electoral rules are weighted least heavily. Whilst this group of questions certainly has its place in the electoral awareness index as explained above, due to their specificity their relative importance for the index is considered to be lowest of all. Respondents are given more points for the electoral date questions than for 'true or false' questions (the other two question groups) also because the former, while asking for a 'best guess', are less likely to be got right by chance, while the latter have a 50% probability of being correctly answered in a case of a guess.[58]

Having established that the relative importance of index groups is uneven, the next step is defining the specific weights. As underlined by Booysen (2002), there is no universal principle for deciding on the numerical ratio of the weights of items (or item groups) when one is deemed more important than the other. Given that existing literature and theoretical considerations provide indications which items should be weighted heavier, but not by how much, the present study chose to apply the same ratio (1.5) between the most important item group versus the two groups of lesser importance (i.e. the 'true or false' questions), and between the second most important item group versus the least important one. Put simply, the most important group (weighting 60 points in total) weighed 1.5–times more than the other two together (40 total points), and the second one (24 points) also weighted 1.5–times more than the third (16 points). Hence, as is quite common in index research (see Ray 2008), the present index was comprised of 100 points, using linear (i.e. additive) aggregation (see Drechsler 1973; Kwak et al. 2005; Goertz 2009; Dobbie & Dail 2013). Whilst an element of subjectivity remains in such an assignment, formulating a rationale for specific weights in absence of precedents in the field is superior to treating all index items as equal when literature and theoretical considerations suggest otherwise.

The weights were divided between items within item groups as follows. Election date questions together provided 60 potential points. 10 points were given to the respondent if they stated the

[58]It does not appear that the answers were being blindly guessed or looked up at a time of filling in the survey, because some of the comparable questions on EP election, with which people are generally less familiar (a 'second–order' election), received noticeably fewer correct responses than respective Presidential election questions.

correct month of the first round of the Presidential election, and further 10 points were given if they got the day right. Comparably, 10 points were given to those who stated the correct month of the second round of the Presidential election, and further 10 points were given for the correct day. Likewise, 10 points were scored by those giving the correct month of the EP election, and an additional 10 points by those giving the correct day. The rest of the questions comprising the index were the 10 'true or false' questions, and each correct answer scored four awareness points for a respondent. As a reminder, there were 6 questions on external voting possibilities and 4 questions on electoral rules, and the two corresponding item groups respectively yielded 24 and 16 potential points.

Theoretically, the minimal possible index score could have been 0, and the maximum possible score could have been 100. In practice, the lowest score was 16 (obtained by three respondents), and the maximum score was 100 (obtained by 57 respondents). The score distribution was therefore positively skewed with a mean score of 73.98, but there was a fair range of different scores across the spectrum (S.D.=22.67), as illustrated Figure 2.

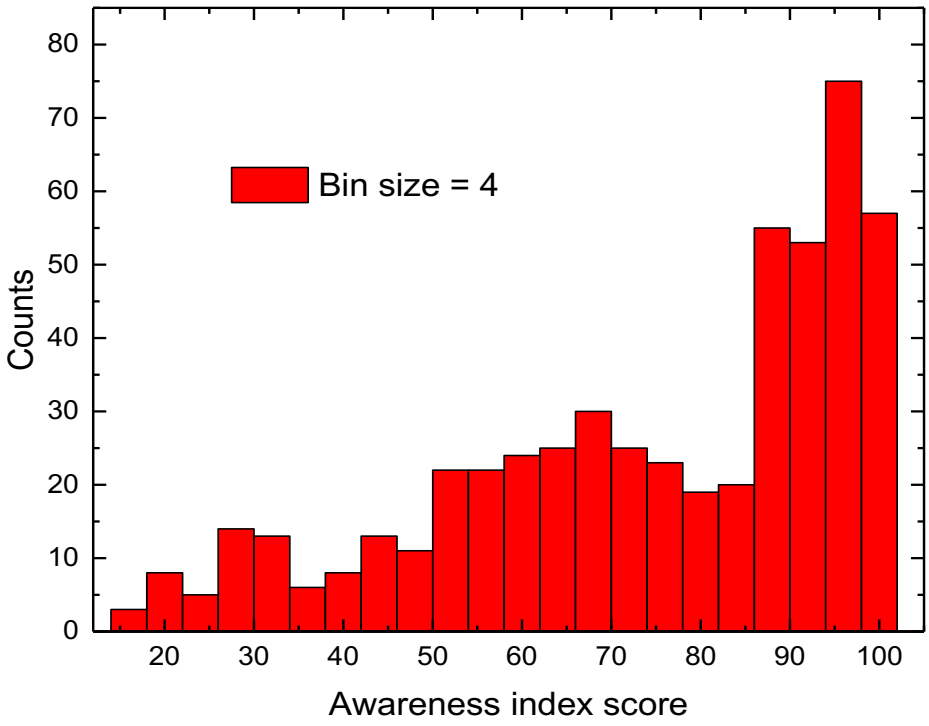



Figure 2. Distribution of awareness index scores

### 2.5.2 Interest index

Just as in the case of awareness index, and for corresponding reasons which will not be reiterated here due to space restrictions, in the present study interest refers particularly to *electoral* interest. This notwithstanding (and bearing in mind the limitations of self–reported measures of interest discussed earlier), it is worth highlighting that scores of the interest index employed in this study were in fact strongly associated with respondents' self–assessment of how interested they were in home–country politics.[59] The used self–assessment measure is comparable to those used in, among others, studies of Glenn and Grimes (1968), Prior (2010) as well as British Household Panel Survey (in Prior 2010) and Eurobarometer 2014. Furthermore, the electoral index aligns with the view that interest measures ought to encompass behavioural measures,[60] defining electoral interest as a **predisposition favourable toward learning about and engaging in elections** (cf. Lawrason 2017).

Again in parallel to the awareness index, earlier indices targeting political interest were able to guide the index building in the present study, but not to be analogously adopted since the target concepts (interest in elections vs. general political interest) were not homogenous (Goertz 2009) and/or the index would not have been a good fit for Lithuanian–emigrant context. For instance, Weaver (1991) constructed political interest index of general[61] population from two items: interest in Presidential campaign and concern over the campaign's outcome. Indeed, interest in elections is at times equated to campaign interest (Prior 2018). However, although the present study also sees campaign following as a very important indicator (see discussion on item weighting below), in the case of Lithuanian emigrants focusing exclusively on electoral campaigning would have been insufficient. This is because emigrants live in a different environment from their compatriots back home – an environment where campaign–related media is not as readily available. Whilst nonetheless following such media certainly suggests interest in elections as explained below, it would be erroneous to overlook other – behavioural – ways which demonstrate electoral interest among emigrants (see discussion on index items). In another study, Lawrason (2017) utilised an original 40–item political interest index in an educational setting. Whilst certain principles of her work were adopted during the process of interest

[59]Over three quarters of respondents self–reported to be interested in Lithuanian politics (238 (44.9%) reported to be quite interested and 178 (33.6%) very interested). 29 (5.5%) were not at all interested, and the rest did not know. ANOVA's Post–Hoc tests revealed that all of the answer groups significantly differed from each other in terms of interest index in the expected direction. That is, compared to the 'very interested' individuals, the 'quite interested' ones received lower interest index scores (mean difference=17.8, $p<0.001$), the 'hardly' interested ones received even lower scores (mean difference=31.1, $p<0.001$), and the 'not at all interested' participants – even lower ones (mean difference=49.0, $p<0.001$).

[60]Rather than (solely) attitudinal questions (see Lawrason 2017).

[61]As opposed to emigrant.

index building in the present study, this index did not tap electoral interest. Indices of political interest have been used in American National Election Study and its pilot study too, yet neither of them focused particularly on electoral interest. Whilst it is not the objective of this space–restricted section to cover all previous attempts at measuring interest in a composite manner, these cases illustrate the problems the study would have run into if adapting pre–existing indices. A new composite index was therefore created.

### ITEMS

The interest index was composed of 12 items assessing respondents' interest in home–country elections. In line with Lawrason's (2017) work, the battery of items of the present study comprised behavioural measures. The first four items assessed the extent to which they followed campaigns of 2014 Presidential and European Parliament elections in Lithuania. These items are in line with works that underscore the importance of campaign interest, some of which even equate it to electoral interest (Atkin et al. 1976; Liu & Eveland 2005; Prior 2018). Specifically, the four items were as follows: 1) how closely they followed Presidential election campaign; 2) how closely they followed Lithuanian EP election campaign; 3) the number of means[62] by which they followed Presidential election campaign; 4) the number of means by which they followed Lithuanian EP campaign. The combination of the former two items and the latter two items is superior to choosing any one of the two item groups as it allowed taking into account both the intensity and breath of campaign following.

The next two behavioural items addressed their voting history. In non–compulsory voting contexts, prior voting experience[63] indicates that, at least at some point, the person saw supporting one party

[62]In particular, respondents who reported to have followed a given campaign were further asked what means they used to do so, choosing one or more from the following:

- Lithuanian newspapers/magazines (hard copies)
- Non–Lithuanian newspapers/magazines (hard copies)
- Lithuanian newspapers/magazines (online versions)
- Non–Lithuanian newspapers/magazines (online versions)
- Lithuanian TV (on a TV set or online)
- Non–Lithuanian TV (on a TV set or online)
- Lithuanian radio (on a radio device or online)
- Non–Lithuanian radio (on a radio device or online)
- Lithuanian webpages (other than online versions of newspapers/magazines)
- Non–Lithuanian webpages (other than online versions of newspapers/magazines)
- Discussions with friends and/or relatives
- Other (to be specified)

[63]While, as mentioned above, turnout reporting is also subject to social desirability bias, question wording was carefully chosen so as to put the respondents at ease no matter what their behaviour had been, when the two questions relating to voting history were asked:

- In any election, many people vote, but others do not – for a variety of reasons. Please tell us whether you voted in the LAST Lithuanian Presidential election (i.e. not the one being held this year). *Yes/No/Don't remember*

or politician over others by casting their vote to be worth the effort. This constitutes a sign of interest in politics, although it should be acknowledged that (non)voting reasons may extend beyond pure interest, which is examined in more detail in Chapter 4. Moreover, even though a change in the level of interest may occur between a past election and surveying, this risk is lower if the most recent election is examined. The two items hence were: 1) whether the respondent had voted in the 2009 Presidential election; and 2) whether they had voted in the 2009 Lithuanian EP election.

Following a similar logic to monitoring respondents' past voting behaviour, two further indicators of electoral interest measured respondents' meaning to vote in upcoming elections, specifically 1) whether the respondent expressed an intention to vote in the 2014 Presidential election; and 2) whether they expressed an intention to vote in the 2014 Lithuanian EP election. Further two index items assessed whether respondents 1) had registered to vote in the upcoming Presidential election, and 2) had registered to vote for Lithuanian candidates in the upcoming European Parliament election, as the index holds that more interested people would not merely intend to vote, but also take a further step and be registered as voters from abroad (see also Lafleur & Calderón Chelius 2011).

The final two items assessed whether the individual cared about politics sufficiently to participate in the pre–electoral stage of an election; that is, whether they supported any of the candidates during the period when they were collecting signatures in order to officially be registered as candidates. The items assessed 1) whether the respondent signed for any of the candidates for the 2014 Presidential election; and 2) whether they signed for any of the candidates for the 2014 Lithuanian EP election.

### WEIGHTS

In parallel to awareness index, weighting of interest index items was undertaken under the principles covered in 'General considerations' above. Again as in the case of awareness index, interest index was comprised of 100 points and linear aggregation was used to arrive at the final score (Drechsler 1973; Ray 2008; Dobbie & Dail 2013). In line with the scholarship highlighting the importance of campaign following (Atkin et al. 1976; Liu & Eveland 2005; Prior 2018), the present study saw it as a very important indicator of electoral interest, as it clearly and very directly shows curiosity about elections in the home country. Given that no precise guidance was available in the literature regarding the relative weights it was decided to give close to one third of these scores – 30 – for the different aspects of electoral campaign following. These 30 points were distributed as follows. For stating that they had

- And did you vote in the LAST European Parliament election? *Yes, for Lithuanian candidates/Yes, for non–Lithuanian candidates/No/Don't remember*

been following the Presidential electoral campaign closely a respondent was given nine points, and for stating they had been following it a little they received half of this score, i.e. 4.5 points. Further nine points were given for claiming having 'followed closely' the EP election campaign, or 4.5 points for having 'followed a little'. As respondents were asked to choose the means by which they followed the Presidential electoral campaign and by which they followed the EP electoral campaign with a choice of 12 options for each election, they were given 0.5 point for each of these means used for any of the two elections. Thus, a respondent who had used all of the 12 means to follow both campaigns would have scored 12 additional points.

Respondents who had voted in the Presidential election in 2009 were given five points, and those who had voted for Lithuanian candidates in the 2009 EP election were also given five. These items were weighted less in comparison to questions described below, because it was judged that current intentions and behaviours should constitute a better reflection of current interest compared to past behaviours. Respondents who expressed an intention to vote in the upcoming Presidential election were given further 10 points, as were those who expressed an intention to vote in the upcoming EP election. Additional 10 points were given to those who had already registered to vote in the Presidential election,[64] and also 10 for those who had done so for the EP election.[65] Those who had supported a Presidential candidate in the pre–election stage also gained 10 points, as did those who had supported an EP electoral list in the pre–election stage.

As in the case of awareness index, theoretically the minimal possible index score was 0, and the maximum possible score was 100. However, it was not expected that (m)any of the respondents would reach the theoretical maximum, as it would mean that, among other things, the person followed both electoral campaigns via each of the possible means, which would normally only happen among extremely motivated people, such as political science professionals. In practice (see Figure 3) the lowest score was zero (61 respondent) and the highest was 97.5 (one respondent). The mean score was 37.45 (S.D.=25.72).

[64]Having already voted was counted as 'registration' for the purpose of the index only.

[65]While it is true that the closer the election, the more likely the person is to be already registered, it was decided to treat respondents equally in this regard by giving the same number of points no matter when they were filling the survey in: as long as they registered, they received additional points.

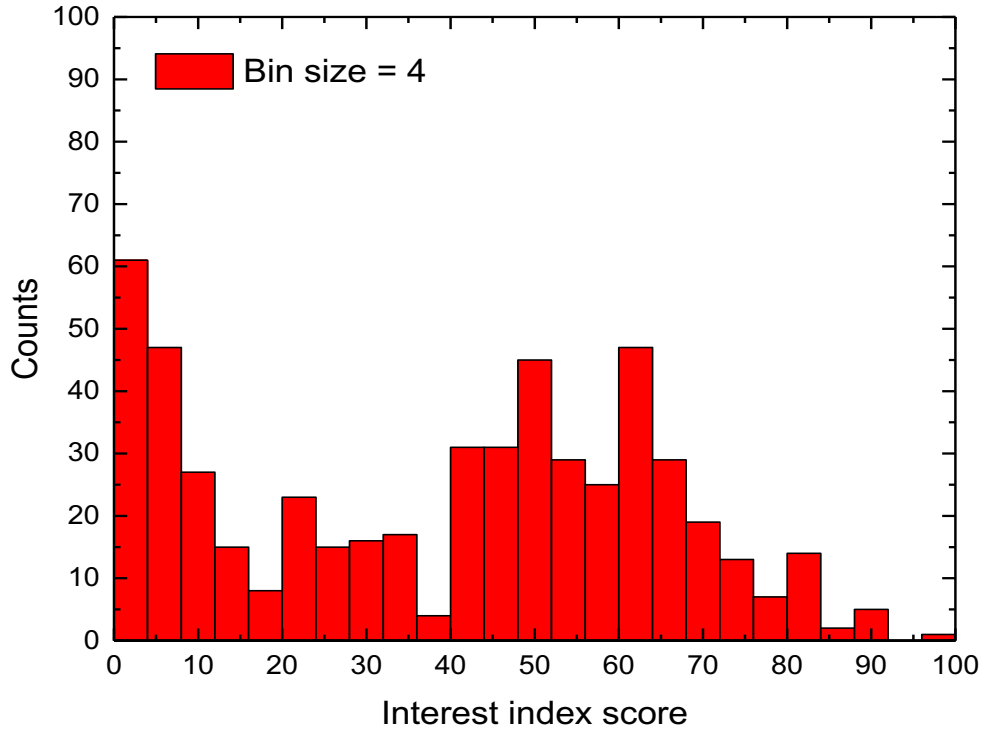



Figure 3. Distribution of interest index scores

## 2.6 Interviews

### 2.6.1 Fieldwork details

In addition to the surveys, between 2017 and 2019 the author conducted 30 semi–structured interviews[66] with Lithuanian emigrants. The interviewees were recruited online, approaching identical networks as during the survey respondents' recruitment. The same Facebook groups and pages as in the quantitative part of the study were employed to disseminate information about the research, and the same forums and URM contacts were utilised to approach potential participants. A difficulty that the qualitative fieldwork ran into was that, being approached repeatedly regarding the same project, some of the Facebook groups/pages were more reluctant to approve the advertisement; however the absolute majority did so with an additional request/explanation was sent to administrators.

[66]It is well known to qualitative researchers that there is no single answer as to what number of interviews a scientist should strive for, and that it can be more important to reach 'saturation', which refers to finding no substantially new information by adding additional cases, than to reach a certain number of qualitative interviews (Marshall 1996). Whilst Guest et al. (2006) have suggested that saturation may be reached as early as after 12 interviews (see also Boddy 2016), it is common practice to undertake more. Lee et al. (2002) argue that fewer participants are needed for the qualitative interviews for the same effect if it is not the only method used in the study – the other method, if quantitative, typically has a larger sample size (Creswell & Plano Clark 2018).

Approaching the Facebook network was in the end the most fruitful: all except for one of the interviewed emigrants saw the study advertised on Facebook. Even though qualitative methods do not seek generalisation, this constitutes another minor difficulty: the fact that nearly all of the interviewees were Facebook users leaves a possibility that more interviews with non–users could have provided additional insights before saturation. At the same time it should be noted that emigrants do tend to use social media (Reips & Buffardi 2012; Mieriņa 2019) hence employing the majority of them using the most popular social network is natural. In addition, research employing participants even *exclusively* on social media to reach emigrants has also considerably contributed to emigration research (see European Parliament 2020; Pötzschke & Weiß 2021).

The key criteria for the interviewees were residence abroad during the 2016 *Seimas* election and a Lithuanian passport. None of the respondents were known to the author beforehand. Additional purposive selection criteria (Ritchie & Lewis 2003) were utilised in the process of participant recruitment. Equal numbers of voters and non–voters in the 2016 Lithuanian *Seimas* election,[67] and of males and females, were interviewed, and it was also sought to include interviewees of different age groups, destination countries, occupations, education levels and time spent abroad. Selected interviewees' age ranged from 19 to 59. Most resided in Europe, but there also were participants from the United States and China. Appendix 1 provides more information on individual interviews.

The interviews were conducted via Skype (see Nehls et al. 2015; Lo Iacono et al. 2016). Prospective interviewees were asked whether they would prefer a voice–only call or a video call, and in all cases except for one the former option was chosen. In line with Gu's (2013) recommendations, the interviews were conducted and transcribed in Lithuanian and relevant parts were translated into English by the author. Throughout the interview, simple language was used wherever possible, and effort was made to put the participants at ease by reacting sympathetically to their thoughts and answers. As explained in more detail in the next section, the interviews were semi–structured which served the purpose of the study best, as they provide general structure for an interview, at the same time allowing the interviewee to influence the question order and interview content as long as they stay on (or come back to) the topic (Leech 2002).

[67]Throughout the thesis, when interviewees are addressed as 'voters' versus 'non–voters' or 'absentees', this refers to their participation in the 2016 *Seimas* election.

### 2.6.2 Semi–structured interviews

Interviewing is a dominant qualitative research method since it is an effective way to solicit and document, in their own words, '*an individual's or group's perspectives, feelings, opinions, values, attitudes, and beliefs about their personal experiences and social world*' (Saldana 2011, p. 32), and is also highly versatile (Galletta & Cross 2013). In the present study, interviews allowed for a deep probing into the research topic, thereby giving good insights (Adams 2015) into emigrants' attitudes and behaviours in the context of home–country elections.

Semi–structured (i.e. semi–directed) interviews, rather than unstructured or structured ones, were the most appropriate mode of conversation with the interviewees. The merits of semi–structured interviews are recognised widely: in fact, this approach is so widespread in social research (Edwards & Holland 2013; Brinkmann 2014, 2017; Packer 2018) that it is treated as synonymous to 'qualitative interviews' by some authors (Mason 2002; Warren 2002). In comparison to unstructured interviews, the advantage of semi–structured approach is that the interviewer can lead the discourse towards the aspects of the topic deemed to be (most) relevant for the research project (Brinkmann 2014, 2017). This was important for the present study due to pre–defined research questions (see Mason 2002). Another benefit of semi–structured interviews over unstructured ones is that the semi–structured ones can make the data more comparable (Flick 2007). Compared to structured interviews, advantages of semi–structured ones are greater flexibility and adaptation to whichever angles of the question an interviewee may see as important (Brinkmann 2014, 2017), as well as the ability to bring up unexpected relevant issues, thereby providing emigrants with a voice (see Livingstone 2010; Roulston & Choi 2018) in this new research topic.

Whilst space limitations do not allow for extensive comparisons of semi–structured interviewing with other qualitative methods that could be used to address the topic of this thesis – such as focus group interviews or participant observation (see Williamson 2013; Schenker et al. 2014; Zavella 2014) – it is worth noting a few key points. First, alternative qualitative methods are not deemed unsuitable for the topic addressed in this dissertation. On the contrary, their strengths could indeed generate additional insights. For instance, focus groups may add value in investigating the complex behaviour and motivations (Morgan & Krueger 1993) in the context of emigrant political participation, and participant observation in relevant events (Gillespie & Michelson 2011; Mackellar 2013) might provide good insight into Lithuanian parties' and politicians' efforts to engage with the émigré. Hence studies that are not as limited in scope are encouraged to put these methods to the test. However, care should be taken when deciding whether it would be acceptable (and – especially in participant observation

case – possible) to apply those methods online or whether they are to be undertaken offline (see Musante & DeWalt 2010; Murgado–Armenteros et al. 2012; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk 2015; Abrams & Gaiser 2017). The latter case would require a considerably larger budget. Second, while other methods can provide useful insights into the *topic*, together with quantitative surveying, qualitative interviewing was deemed to be particularly suitable for answering the specific research *questions*, as explained in Section 2.2.

### 2.6.3 Interview structure

The typical interview structure was as follows. First, interview participants were asked a series of demographic questions, which also served the purpose of an ice–breaker. Subsequently, it was double–checked whether – and how – the interviewee had voted in the 2016 *Seimas* election. If they had, it was enquired whether or not that was their first time voting from abroad. If they had not, it was asked if they had done so before. All the interviewees were also asked whether they used to vote while living in Lithuania.

The voters were directly asked what had motivated them to vote, and also asked about their motives from a slightly different perspective, enquiring what they would say to someone also living abroad who claimed that there is no point in voting. In a similar vein, non–voters were asked why, in their own view, they had not been motivated to vote and what they would say to a fellow emigrant claiming that it is important to vote from abroad. There were also questions relating to all interviewees' interest in the election. First, the interviewees were directly asked whether they saw themselves as interested in the election, and it was also enquired more specifically whether they had followed the electoral campaign and the election itself.

To monitor the extent to which absenteeism may be related to lack of knowledge, non–voters were also asked whether they knew that they could vote from abroad and how to do so, as well as whether they had known all this in time to cast the vote, had they wanted to. All interview participants were questioned whether they felt that there was more, less, or the same amount of information on voting from abroad around the 2016 election in particular. Non–voters were also asked whether or not they had an intention to vote in the *Seimas* election 2016 at any point, aiming to monitor whether they had changed their mind during the process as a result of some inconvenience or of ignorance. Similarly, it was checked if voters had experienced any inconvenience during the process. They were asked straightforwardly whether some part of the voting process had been challenging, and it was also inquired whether they or their acquaintances trying to vote from abroad had encountered any

problems or difficulties – in case of a positive response, they were encouraged to share the stories in detail.

Furthermore, the interview participants were asked if they were satisfied with the results of the election, and what they were most pleased with and/or most bothered about. Questions whether there were any parties in Lithuanian political arena that the interviewees particularly liked and/or disliked followed. It was also directly enquired what party they had voted for in the 2016 *Seimas* election (voting participants) or what party they would have voted for if they had voted (absentees). Moreover, making use of a Lithuanian MP's Anušauskas' comment made on *Seimas* election day – this Conservative MP claimed that a notable share of his party's supporters resides abroad – they were also asked if they thought that he was right or wrong to think that a lot of emigrants support the Conservatives (i.e. TS–LKD), or whether they felt there were other parties favoured by emigrants over others. If they did, it was asked why emigrants preferred those parties, in the interviewee's understanding.

In order to elicit as many thoughts from the participants as possible, those who had not commented on these issues beforehand were also asked to share their views on other aspects of emigrant voting, particularly whether they felt that it was fair for emigrants to vote in Lithuanian elections; whether it was important to them that their offspring are allowed to vote in the future; what could be done to encourage more emigrants to vote; how they felt about the idea of online voting; whether they had voted in any election in their country of residence; why they had emigrated. Having been explicitly asked to concentrate on the 2016 *Seimas* election and the beginning of the interview, those who were interviewed after 2019 Presidential and European Parliament elections took place were asked towards the end whether anything they had said about the 2016 election was different with regard to the 2019 Presidential and EP elections. At the end of the interview all participants were asked if they had anything else to share on the topic of voting from abroad.

All interviews were transcribed by the author, and the data analysis was undertaken by hand: the data was coded manually, and no analysis software was utilised. A mix of deductive and inductive approaches was employed: whilst hypothesis testing was mostly undertaken using quantitative data, in some cases (especially in Chapters 4 and 5 where relevant quantitative data was not always available) qualitative data was also used to monitor whether emigrants' discourses are in line with certain hypotheses. At the same time, the interviews were examined for emergence of previously

untheorised themes. This was done in order to not miss relevant themes that previous literature may have not led us to identify as important – i.e. to make '*room for the unanticipated*' (Becker 1996, p. 7).

## 2.7 Positionality

At this point we shall briefly discuss **positionality**, i.e. the stance or positioning of the researcher in relation to the social and political context of the study (Coghlan & Brydon–Miller 2014). In the present work, it is possible that the author's position as a female Lithuanian researcher from the University of Cambridge affected the collected data in several ways.

Studying in the United Kingdom, the author was likely perceived as one of the emigrants herself. Generally, an **insider status**[68] is seen as positive and even preferable, especially in qualitative research (Mullings 1999). It helps understand cultural references and facilitates access to participants. So does shared linguistic background, which allowed the author to include participants not fluent in English into the study without the use of translators. This constitutes a notable advantage of the study (see Chiswick et al. 2004; Inhetveen 2012; Mieriņa 2019).

On the other hand, in migration research there is a risk that the shared emigrant status may highlight other differences between the researcher and participants, especially in a qualitative setting (Ganga & Scott 2006). Reflecting on the interviews, gender differences are not considered to have made substantial influence although they could do so with more personal research topics (Malyutina 2014). By contrast, studying at a well–known university that can be perceived as an elite one may have distanced the researcher from emigrants with lower socio–economic status and made them more reluctant to participate in the study and/or open up in the interview. At the same time, however, a study carried out at the University of Cambridge may have appeared as carrying significant weight and providing a good opportunity to get one's voice heard, thereby encouraging participation. In practice it was more difficult to secure both survey responses and interviews from blue–collar workers, and they remained underrepresented, even if not severely, in the study. However, the positionality effect, if any, is hard to separate from other reasons for which it is difficult to sample emigrants with lower socio–economic status, such as lower interest in politics, possible bitterness towards the homeland, or fewer hours spent at the convenience of one's computer.

[68] In the present research it refers to shared migrant backgound, culture, nationality.

During survey dissemination, as noted in Section 2.2, an attempt was made to control positionality by also creating an impersonal 'Election Study' Facebook profile and disseminating the invitation via this profile in about one fifth of the cases. However, this did not seem to alter the engagement.

# Chapter 3. Home–country political awareness and interest of Lithuanian emigrants

## 3.1 Introduction

As explained in the introductory chapter, academic literature has tended to focus more on migrant political incorporation in the host countries than on political engagement in their home countries. Whilst all of the research questions addressed in this thesis are relatively new in the literature, there are particularly few works directly relating to the topic of emigrants' interest in, and awareness of, their home countries' elections or politics more generally. Given that, on their own, these works do not provide sufficient insight into the questions examined in this chapter, it is useful to supplement them with more general academic literature on interest in, and awareness of, politics. As was explained in Chapter 2, the present study focuses on electoral awareness, understood as knowledge of elections and election procedures, and on electoral interest, understood as a predisposition favourable toward learning about and engaging in elections. As also clarified in the same chapter, whilst political science studies addressing knowledge or interest choose varying focuses and definitions,[69] focus on elections best serves the purposes of the present thesis. It is hence important to bear in mind that, comparing with the present study, more general literature often addresses closely related but not necessarily entirely homogeneous concepts. This notwithstanding, given that the concepts are related from theoretical and/or empirical standpoints (Chapter 2; Prior 2018), general works can nonetheless provide a valuable context for the more specific study of emigrants. The rest of this introduction provides a concise overview of works on origins of political awareness

[69]In fact, studies that not merely utilise concepts of political awareness and interest but also provide precise definitions which they employ are, regrettably, scarce. This, as well as the fact that existing definitions can be somewhat conflicting (leaving aside explicit decision to focus on a particular aspect of interest/knowledge such as that of elections), may contribute to misunderstandings in the field. Zaller (1992, p. 21), for example, defines political awareness as '*the extent to which an individual pays attention to politics and understands what he or she has encountered*'. Goren (2012, p. 509) views political awareness as an '*involvement that is indicated by factual information about government that has gotten into people's minds*'. However, paying attention to politics as well as involvement can also be interpreted as signs of political *interest,* which this thesis and a number of other studies understand as a different concept. This latter view understands political awareness more purely as knowledge about political events (including elections and campaigns), political figures (parties and politicians) and/or key policy issues (Mondak 1995; Batle 1997, 2000; Classen 2001; Tolbert 2003; Schipper & Woo 2017).

Definitions of political interest are also far from unanimous. Prior and Bougher (2018, p. 826) see *duration* as an important aspect of interest, and, relying on socio–psychological research (Hidi & Renninger 2006), define political interest as '*relatively enduring predisposition to reengage with political content over time*'. Lupia and Philpot (2005, p. 1122) insightfully draw attention to the aspect of *order* of competing subjects of interest, defining political interest as '*citizen's willingness to pay attention to political phenomena at the possible expense of other topics*' – such an interpretation is more in line with the view of this thesis which understands interest as able to appear, disappear and reappear over time.

and interest in the general political science literature (overall and Lithuanian), integrating available studies on emigrants in particular.

### 3.1.1 Political interest

It is universally recognised that not everyone is equally interested in politics. Yet, in spite of the wide use of political interest as an explanatory factor for an array of political behaviours (e.g. Verba et al. 1995; Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996; Leighley & Vedlitz 1999), understanding of what influences political interest remained limited for a long time, only fairly recent efforts shedding more light on the concept itself and its possible causes. Studies of Prior and colleagues (Prior 2018; Prior & Bougher 2018) indicate that the formation of political interest is complex, and that individuals' political interest tends to be stable once formed, whereas van Deth (2014) has found it to be only moderately stable. Political interest is also likely closely related to intrinsic value, i. e. the enjoyment one gets from engaging with politics (Levy & Akiva 2019). Among the factors behind (lack of) political interest suggested by Prior (2018) are age (in terms of stage of life of an individual), parental influence early in life (also endorsed by Neundorf et al. (2013) and examined from a perspective of discord by Fitzgerald and Curtis (2012)), personality (particularly the openness trait from the Big Five personality theory) and cognitive skills (likely stemming from education).

Works of Prior and colleagues are valuable in their effort to disentangle causal mechanisms behind the rise of political interest. Nonetheless, other empirical studies, typically addressing demographic characteristics, can also inform the present thesis even if they are not necessarily able to make causal claims. First, political interest is often found to be higher among older people (Lazarsfeld et al. 1948; Bereslon et al. 1954; Glenn & Grimes; 1968; Bennet 1986; Verba et al. 1995; Bennett & Rademacher 1997; Putnam 2000; Zukin et al. 2006; Howe 2010; Holt et al. 2013; Neundorf et al. 2013) at least until after middle age (Butler & Stokes 1974; Bartle 2000; Henn et al. 2005; Soleri–Martí 2015; Stockemer & Rocher 2017). Second, existing literature suggests that women are generally less politically interested (Lazarsfeld et al. 1948; Bereslon et al. 1954; Glenn & Grimes 1968; Bennet 1986; Bennett & Bennett 1989; Inglehart & Norris 2003; Burns 2007; Kittilson & Schwindt–Bayer 2012; Neundorf et al. 2013; Fraile & Gómez 2017a; Carreras 2018; Fraile & Sánchez–Vítores 2019; Sánchez–Vítores 2019), yet there is also a body of counter–evidence suggesting that women's interest may be underreported (Berelsone et al. 1954; Hooghe & Stolle 2004; Banwart 2007; Coffé 2013; Ferrín et al. 2020). Third, higher levels of education have also been connected to higher political interest (Bennett 1986; Nie et al. 1996; Emler & Frazer 1999; Siedler 2007, 2010; Lewis–Beck et al. 2008; Campante & Chor 2012; Neundorf et al. 2013). Whilst age, gender and education are typically considered to be the most

important socio–demographic contributes to political interest (van Deth 2014), other socio–demographic characteristics are also often included in statistical models. Lithuanian research, while relatively scarce on the subject, has reported a link between gender and political interest among Lithuanians, men being more interested at various age points (Ališauskienė 2000; Gedutienė et al. 2011; Baltijos tyrimai 2013). Younger Lithuanians appear to be considerably less interested in politics than older ones (Ališauskienė 2000; Rugevičius et al. 2011; Ramonaitė 2014a; Tuzaitė et al. 2016; Diržinskaitė 2018). Finally, a link between education and political interest has also been reported in Lithuania (Ališauskienė 2000).

Such a link has also been identified in the emigration context: Lafleur and Calderón Chelius (2011) found that Mexican emigrants' interest in home–country politics was related to their education level. Likewise, studying interest and (perceived) knowledge together, Morales and Pilati (2014) showed a positive effect of education (but not of age or gender) among Ecuadorian emigrants Barcelona, Madrid and Milan. By contrast, Schlenker et al. (2017) reported a significant effect of gender and age (men and older emigrants being more interested) – but not education – on home–country political interest among the Swiss in France, Germany, Italy and the USA.

Regarding the level of interest itself, de la Garza & DeSipio (1998) reported low interest in Mexican politics among Mexican Americans. Likewise, Boccagni (2011) found even *voting* Ecuadorian emigrants not to be particularly interested in homeland politics (see more on the relationship between interest and voting in Chapter 4). Nevertheless, more generally, current evidence does not suggest that the more one is physically attached to the home country the deeper one's interest in its politics. In Waldinger and Duquette–Rury's (2016) empirical study (see also Waldinger et al. 2012), home–country visits did not significantly increase the likelihood of paying attention to home country's politics. Relatedly, in Schlenker et al.'s (2017) work, USA–based Swiss emigrants were actually more likely to identify with Switzerland compared to those living in its neighbouring countries. Indeed, Waldinger and Duquette–Rury have advocated that an encounter with an alien environment actually increases the salience of homeland national identity, indicating a possibility that some people might in fact become more interested in (and/or aware of) politics of their homeland after their leave. Ahmadov and Sasse (2016b) proposed that interest in home–country affairs may be encouraged by an inclination to familiarise children with their country of origin, or to introduce it to foreign friends. Furthermore, it has been reasoned that external voting rights themselves can activate home–country political interest (Gamlen 2008). Schlenker et al. (2017) also reported dual nationality not to decrease home–country political interest among Swiss emigrants, in comparison to owning only a home–

country passport, although it did decrease awareness. Electoral participation in the host country increased the average of both (ibid.) (see also Section 3.1.4).

In addition, existing literature (Bauböck 2007a; Owen 2011) has highlighted that emigrants have certain obligations towards the home countries, for example legal, military or monetary. Such obligatory commitments demonstrate how emigrants' interests can be affected by political decisions taken in their home countries. Lithuanian emigrants are no exception to these obligations, as military service and taxes (above all the compulsory health insurance tax discussed earlier in the thesis) can be applicable to certain emigrants. While scholars such as Bauböck (2007) claim that home–country obligations are insufficient for the attainment of political rights, this certainly does not mean that these links with the homeland are insufficient for political interest to arise.

Considering specific **migration circumstances** likely to be associated with interest in home–country politics (and, as will be seen below – awareness), an interdisciplinary body of literature suggests that **time spent abroad** may matter. Generally speaking, analyses of socio–cultural integration (see Gijsberts & Dagevos 2007) propose that spending a long time abroad can be expected to make immigrants more likely to embed themselves in the culture of their host country – often to an extent of them feeling a sense of belonging, and sometimes of treating this new country as 'home' (although there is also some counter–evidence (White et al. 2008)). Notably, this reasoning does not have to be seen as necessarily opposing the above–discussed work of Waldinger and Duquette–Rury (2016). As Waldinger (2017, p. 8) summarises, '*paradoxically, the encounter with a foreign environment and treatment as unwanted foreigners often deepens, rather than weakens, identification with the nation left behind*'. However, this does not imply that the effect necessarily lasts for a lengthy period of time. This reasoning is also consistent with classical sociological models of immigrant integration: race relation cycle models (Park 1936, 1950; Bogardus 1930; Taft 1957, 1961) see migrants as moving towards their absorption into the host society with time (see also de la Garza & DeSipio 1998; Fitzgerald 2006; Ahmadov & Sasse 2016a; Prior 2018). Even if sometimes criticised for their simplicity, and although more recent research suggests that it would be an overestimation to claim that immigrants give up on their 'native' culture entirely (Levitt 2003; Gsir & Mescoli 2015; Waldinger & Duquette–Rury 2016), these works continue to influence social sciences to this day. What is more, as it is often in governments' interest to prefer 'light' to 'full' multiculturalism in their countries (Martiniello 2003), integrative behaviours also become externally encouraged,[70] thereby adding to

[70]Although see Klarenbeek and Weide (2019).

immigrants' motivation to adopt parts of the new culture (Ehrkamp 2005; Snel et al. 2006) and possibly become less interested in and aware of homeland–related matters.

There may also be a difference between integration experiences in the USA and Europe, as the latter viewed emigrants as temporary work agents for a significant amount of time (e.g. post–WW2 Guest Worker Schemes), however this is of lesser relevance to the EU internal migration. In any case, the link between the (expected) cultural integration and political participation is not clear–cut: for instance, voting rights are often not given to migrants in the destination country until certain conditions are met (Munro 2008), and it remains unclear whether that makes these people more likely to vote in the home country (as the only means to express their political opinions) or less likely to do so (as they 'lose' the habit to vote) (see Chapter 4 for a detailed examination of external voting). However, it is reasonable to expect that while most emigrants do not cut the ties with the home country altogether, the **length of time spent in emigration, whether or not via increased integration into the host country, may make them less likely to follow home country's political affairs**. Indeed, studies of emigrants from Mexico and Ecuador have demonstrated that home–country political interest (as well as active engagement in Mexican politics) decreases over time; not surprisingly, it does so even more in the second generation (Waldinger & Soehl 2013; Morales & Pilati 2014; Waldinger 2015).

In addition to length of time abroad, it is also important to consider the possible effect of **intention to return** to the home country. Return migration is, generally speaking, a rather problematic topic in the field of migration research, mainly because of a lack of a unanimous definition: it is not straightforward to decide for how long an individual has to stay abroad, and for how long he or she has to return to the home country afterwards, in order to be classified as a return migrant. For instance, King (2000, p. 8) defines return migration as '*the process whereby people return to their country or place of origin after a significant period in another country or region*', which does not specify how long a time should be considered as 'significant', whether emigrants have to stay in the 'home' country permanently afterwards, and how to monitor this movement. This difficulty did not prevent social scientists from investigating motivations underlying return migration. However, high–quality research is not widespread, especially with regard to East European migration. A welcome exemption is Parutis' (2014) qualitative study of Polish and Lithuanian emigrants which, by showing the importance of psychological and social factors, challenges the view that East–to–West migration is above all economic and essentially temporary (Dustmann 1997) as well as the mainstream view of politicians that it is primarily economic motives preventing Polish and Lithuanian emigrants from returning.

Admittedly, not only do we see that motivation to return to the home country is far from clear–cut, but it also remains ambiguous how motivation translates into action in the context of return migration. Cassarino's (2004) conceptual framework highlights that without preparedness and resource mobilisation an emigrant remains not ready to return even if motivation is present, which is also consistent with classical psychological theories of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975) and planned behaviour (Ajzen 1985). Importantly, however, in the context of this thesis, motivation – or willingness – to return becomes a valuable source of information itself. Even if motivation to return does not lead to action, the willingness to do so can mean that such emigrants behave and feel differently abroad in comparison to non–motivated ones. In particular, **seeing one's country of origin as a prospective 'new' home for the future is likely to elicit significantly more attentiveness and care towards that country**. Indeed, in Waldinger and Duquette–Rury's (2016) study, Latino emigrants who were uncertain about their future plans were significantly less likely to report having a lot of interest in home–country politics compared to those who were planning to return from the USA. Given that abroad–based Lithuanians who keep in touch with the homeland are open to the possibility to return to Lithuania – 78% of those who volunteered for Global Lithuania's survey (Vilmorus 2018a) answered so, 16% providing a time estimate – effect of this variable is particularly important to examine in the Lithuanian context.

### 3.1.2 Political awareness

Let us now turn to political awareness, the study of which has a long history (Campbell et al. 1960). Moreover, not only has it been depicted as generally low by scholars, but it appears to be unevenly distributed among citizens worldwide (Fraile & Fortin–Rittberger 2020). Indeed, in general political science works which investigate corelates of political knowledge, one recurrently encounters the same socio–demographic variables as in the case of political interest, namely gender, age and education. With regard to gender, although there appears to be no difference in general intelligence between genders (Halpern & LaMay 2000), a solid body of literature has suggested that women tend to be less politically aware (Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996, 2000; McAllister 1998; Kenski & Jamieson 2000, Burns et al. 2001; Frazer & Macdonald 2003; Sanbonmatsu 2003; Mondak & Anderson 2004; Grönlund & Milner 2006; Lizotte & Sidman 2009; Wolak & McDevitt 2011; Kittilson & Schwindt–Bayer 2012; Fraile 2014; Carreras 2018; Dassonneville & McAllister 2018) and that the effect is robust with different kinds of awareness questions (e.g. Verba et al. 1997; Barabas et al. 2014; Fraile & Gomez 2017b). It has also been proposed that, in terms of increased political awareness, men benefit more from education than women (Dow 2009). In parallel to interest, however, lower political knowledge levels among women have also been argued to be overstated (Mondak & Anderson 2004; McGlone et al.

2006; Banwart 2007; Stolle & Gidengil 2010; Dolan 2011; Fraile 2014; Fortin–Rittberger 2016; Jerit & Barabas 2017; Pereira 2019; Fraile & Fortin–Rittberger 2020). Education is also extensively documented to be associated with political knowledge (Tichenor et al. 1970; Lambert et al. 1988; Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996; Jackson 1995; Verba et al. 1995; Nie et al. 1996; Gordon & Segura 1997; McAllister 1998; Kwak 1999; Galston 2001; Grönlund & Milner 2006; Karp 2006; Lewis–Beck et al. 2008; Fraile 2013; Barabas et al. 2014; Campbell & Niemi 2016; Rasmussen 2016; Clark 2017; Ihme & Tausendpfund 2018; Robinson 2020). Interestingly, one analysis has proposed that while the effect of education on electoral participation has been increasing since the 1980s, its effect on political knowledge has actually been stable throughout the years (Burden 2009). Older people – at least to the point of post–middle age – also appear to be more knowledgeable about politics (Bennett 1996; McAllister 1998; Aidt 2000; Pattie et al. 2004; Grönlund & Milner 2006). Whilst it should be acknowledged that most of these works do not appeal to causality and that other socio–demographic variables are often also accounted for in quantitative analyses, the trio of gender, education and age again constitute the main socio–demographic correlates.

Whilst political awareness in the Lithuanian population has not been vigorously studied, Mažylytė's (2015) study of political sophistication (the author employs this term to jointly describe political awareness and interest) reported only 11.6% of Lithuanians to be highly politically sophisticated and twice as many – 24% – to be politically unsophisticated. In Lithuania, political awareness has been shown to be strongly associated with party attachment (i.e. a psychological rather than utilitarian relationship with a preferred party) (Ramonaitė 2014b).

In the context of increased emigration rates after the EU accession, a question arises to what extent leaving Lithuania is a further obstacle to being interested in and aware of its politics. Notably, in Jastramskis' (2018b) study, LVŽS and TT electorate demonstrated significantly lower political awareness compared to others – there are fewer such voters among emigrants, as will be seen in Chapter 5, suggesting that abroad–based voters might also on average be more aware. This is sensible, given that those not politically aware can be expected to be absentees while residing abroad, as voting from abroad may require more knowledge and keenness as will be discussed in the next chapter. Indeed, in the emigration context, Suro and Escobar (2006, cited in Lafleur 2013) identified high levels of ignorance among U.S.–based Mexicans regarding politics back home, only 45% of survey respondents being aware of an upcoming Presidential election. Regarding the above discussed socio–demographic correlates with political awareness, in work by Schlenker et al. (2017) Swiss emigrants'

home–country political knowledge was not well predicted by education, but men and older emigrants were on average more knowledgeable.

Following the same reasoning as in the case of political interest, it is also possible that even if an encounter with a foreign environment increases the salience of homeland national identity (Waldinger & Duquette–Rury 2016), the effect may not last for a long time. And, again in parallel with home–country interest, it can be reasoned that intention to return may have an effect on home–country political knowledge.

To sum up, the available literature points to three key sociodemographic correlates of home–country political knowledge and interest: gender, education and age. In addition, existing literature also signals certain migration circumstances, namely time spent abroad and intention to return, to also have an effect on homeland political interest and awareness. This chapter hence **hypothesises that older Lithuanians and Lithuanians with more education have higher levels of home–country political interest and awareness**. If a gender effect is to be found, it is **expected males to be more knowledgeable and/or interested**. Moreover, it is **hypothesised that those staying abroad for longer have lower home–country political interest and awareness, and that those who plan to return have higher home–country political interest and awareness**.

### 3.1.3 Information sources

*En route* to examining what may lie behind emigrants' interest in and awareness of home–country politics, it is also important to discuss *how* they get informed about the relevant issues. The means that people employ to gather relevant information about politics is a topic that has roots – even if outside the framework of migration – in the early years of political science research. Downs (1957), in the context of postulating his classical model of why individuals differ in terms of their attentiveness to politics, reasoned that the total amount of political information received by an individual depends on three factors. The first factor is the time that the individual can spend to assimilate political information. The second factor is the kind of contextual knowledge possessed by the individual. The final factor is the homogeneity between the selection principles behind the information and the individual's own selection principles: simply put, whether the way in which the information was actually selected is similar to how the individual would do it themselves. Since being very well informed about political issues is generally overly costly for an average citizen, so–called 'transferable' costs, such as gathering, analysing and evaluating political information, are often passed to others. By contrast, costs such as learning this information and comparing it to one's own position (e.g.

behaviour, attitudes, values) cannot be transferred. Political awareness of voters then varies depending on how much they can reduce the different information costs. It appears plausible that, in comparison with the internal electorate, those residing abroad find it more challenging to have the otherwise 'transferable' costs covered by others. That is, not only do they have to undertake the usual learning and comparison aspects of the self–informing process themselves, but, being abroad from the (majority of) peers that could help them with the information gathering, analysis and evaluation, they would normally face larger costs in these stages as well (although a possibility of cost reduction by emigrant communities for emigrants who are engaged with such communities should also be acknowledged). Personal contacts, which at least some emigrants are likely to lose abroad, appeared to be particularly important in the old days (Lazarsfeld 1944; Lazarsfeld et al. 1948). Even nowadays, however, evidence continues to suggest that people's social circle – and especially the political attitude of the one person with whom political discussions are exchanged most – helps explain voting (Levine 2005; Ramonaitė & Žiliukaitė 2014). In fact, empirical research has shown that Lithuanians' social circles appear to centre around party lines, dominated either by TS–LKD and LRLS supporters, or by DP and TT supporters (Ramonaitė 2014c). Remarkably, the exact relationship with the 'first contact' with whom politics is discussed and whose position helps explain voting behaviour does not appear to be important – it can be a spouse, a friend, a neighbour, etc. (for instance, in Petronytė–Urbonavičienė's (2014) qualitative study, a 57 year old Lithuanian woman reported to be actively discussing politics and politicians with her elderly mother)), and non–emigrant Lithuanians have much wider options of whom to select as this contact for in–person communication.

Nevertheless, in the context of the modern technology age, where a large proportion of information – *factual* information as well as other individuals' *opinions* on a subject – can be accessed online, it is reasonable to expect that emigrants may nonetheless try to reduce unnecessary costs, and choose information sources for which being abroad is not a disadvantage. Considering Lithuanian emigrants in particular, the importance of impersonal sources of knowledge is supported by Nevinskaitė's (2014a) observation that, in general Lithuanian electoral campaigning, direct contact with candidates constitutes only approximately 5%, which contrasts with usual Western figures of around 25%. This suggests that Lithuanian emigrants may differ from home–country–based Lithuanians less than Western European emigrants would differ from their compatriots living in the home country during the campaigning stage, as for Lithuanians there is little personal contact in either case.

Nevinskaitė also found that Lithuanians based in the home country primarily used television (on TV sets or online) to follow electoral campaigning, this being the first source of information for over a

half of respondents in two different surveys. By contrast, social media was used by only 1.5% of all respondents, leading the author to suggest that it was not being utilised to its full potential – at least at that time. This may prompt one to reason that Lithuanians abroad who are not watching Lithuanian television online are likely behind electoral news. However, media analyses (Nevinskaitė 2014b) have also revealed that most attention to the 2012 *Seimas* election was actually given by large internet news portals' webpages, namely delfi.lt, 15min.lt, as well as balsas.lt. This suggests that emigrants who solely rely on websites may actually be missing out on rather little, and in fact can be more interested than their home–based compatriots as they choose to follow Lithuanian content over/in addition to host–country content (see also Lupia & Philpot 2005). Finally, Vilmorus' data (2021) also signals internet to be the most important source of gathering information on Lithuania while abroad, Lithuanian social media constituting the most important source for 44% of survey respondents; and internet as a whole has been reported to be used to follow information on Lithuania by 90% of online survey participants (Vilmorus 2012).

In order to advance this discussion further, it is important to trace down what sources of information abroad–based Lithuanians use to raise their awareness of homeland politics in particular. Given that the internet is most easily accessible information source abroad, this thesis **hypothesises that Lithuanian emigrants are likely to rely on the internet as their primary source of information on political issues back home.**

### 3.1.4 Other variables

Before engaging in empirical analyses, it is useful to acknowledge several other variables that are potentially relevant for emigrant political interest and awareness even if untested in this chapter. First, as has been mentioned, having a citizenship of both home and host countries was found to be a significant negative predictor of home–country political awareness but not interest among Swiss emigrants (Schlenker et al. 2017) – although not, for instance, in Morales and Pilatis' (2014) work on Ecuadorians. With the single–case study of Lithuania it is not possible to test for an effect of dual citizenship, though in a comparative study it could provide a useful case of a state where multiple citizenship is provided only under very specific circumstances (explained in Section 1.4.1) rather than habitually. This is also the case for a related but not analogous factor – electoral participation in the host country, which has previously been identified as increasing average knowledge of and interest in home–country politics among Swiss emigrants (Schlender et al. 2017). As non–citizens are generally not allowed to vote and given the lack of dual nationality provision, Lithuanian emigrant citizens are not the best population to examine this either. Another potentially relevant factor is emigrants'

networks examined by Ahmadov and Sasse (2016b). This was not tested in the present work statistically, nor did it emerge as a predominant theme qualitatively. There is also some evidence for a more specific relationship between involvement in emigrant associations and home–country interest and awareness (Morales & Pilati 2014), even if its direction could be questioned. This was not explicitly tested in the present study, but related work is acknowledged in the context of a relevant finding in Section 3.3.5. Possibly relatedly, trust in one's compatriots (which may correlate to that in institutions) was also suggested to be relevant by Morales and Pilatis' (2014) analyses, yet it was not a prevalent theme in the interview data and could not be tested quantitatively. It could also be reasoned that political efficacy – qualitatively tested in the next chapter – can have relevance in the context of interest and awareness as well, given that as a control variable is was significant in Morales and Pilati (2014). In the context of this chapter's question, reasons for leaving the homeland are likely more significant in non–democratic countries (ibid.), but can also be relevant in European migration (see also Section 1.4.2).

## 3.2 Data

As explained in the methodology chapter, Chapter 3 uses both survey and interview data to investigate Lithuanian emigrants' home–country political awareness and interest. The former source of data demonstrates which of the variables hypothesised to be important in the introduction of this chapter are statistically associated with political awareness and interest in the sample of survey respondents. The interview data is used to provide further insights as well as possible explanations for some unexpected quantitative findings. Respondents who filled in the pre–election survey are utilised for the purposes of this chapter, as it is the pre–election survey where their interest in and awareness of Lithuanian politics was examined. As is customary, statistical models also include control variables.

### 3.2.1 Response variables

Response variables in the statistical analyses of the present chapter are indices of political awareness[71] and political interest explained in detail in Chapter 2. Answers to survey questions corresponding to the index items, as well as certain additional relevant considerations, are presented and discussed below.

[71]As a reminder, this thesis uses terms 'awareness' and 'knowledge' interchangeably.

## Knowledge

### Electoral date knowledge questions

Due to increasing levels of information when an election approaches, it may become easier to answer date knowledge questions when the election day is near and even more so after it has passed. Preparatory analyses did suggest that respondents filling in the survey in May were significantly more likely to answer these questions correctly, but it was also true that these late replies were far from unanimously correct – even among participants responding after the first Presidential election round. Seeing the wide range of answers, the usage of these questions was judged as appropriate for assessing part of the respondents' Lithuanian political awareness for all of the participants, no matter when they answered these questions. Table 4 presents percentages of correct answers[72] for Presidential election Round 1 day and month, for Presidential election Round 2 day and month, and for European Parliament election day and month. The three different groups represent respondents who filled in the survey in April, in May before the first Presidential election round, and in May after the first Presidential election round.

| | R1D | R1M | R2D | R2M | EPD | EPM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **April** | 48.4 | 84.5 | 45.1 | 61.5 | 46.5 | 75.6 |
| **May1** | 69.2 | 92.5 | 56.4 | 75.2 | 58.7 | 83.5 |
| **May2** | 61.3 | 93.5 | 70.4 | 91.9 | 69.0 | 89.2 |

Table 4. Percentage of correct answers for Presidential election Round 1 day and month, for Presidential election Round 2 day and month, and for EP election day and month

Overall, for the first round of the Presidential election, out of the respondents who reached the question, 37 persons (7.0%) failed to provide a day, suggesting that they felt uninformed to even make a guess.[73] 308 respondents (58.3%) rightly guessed the day to be the 11th, but there was a wide variety of incorrect guesses: in fact, every possible day was chosen by at least one respondent with an exception of the 31st. Only one person did not guess the month, and nearly 9 in 10 (475, or 89.8%) correctly answered the month to be May. While participants provided highly varied responses, no one guessed November or December.

[72]Correct = Total - incorrect - missing.

[73]Although it is impossible to rule out other explanations for skipping the question, such as disliking the question itself, tiredness or technical issues, the drop–out rate was unusually high for the 'guess the date' questions and these respondents tended to come back to filling in the survey immediately afterwards.

Guess of the day of round two of the Presidential election saw 42 (7.9%) respondents dropping out of this specific question, 301 (56.8%) correctly guessing the day to be 25th, and every single possible day being chosen by at least one respondent. As for the month of this second round, one person did not answer, no one guessed February, March, April or December, and three quarters (400, or 75.6%) rightly guessed May. June and July were popular responses too, together receiving 105 responses (19.8%).

A comparable 'day' question of the Lithuanian European Parliament election saw 45 (8.5%) respondents dropping out and 307 (57.9%) answering '25th' correctly. Again, each possible day was chosen by at least one person. For the month, only March and December were not chosen by anyone, and only one person did not answer. 436 (82.4%) correctly answered 'May', and further 42 (7.9%) thought that the election would happen in June.

**Electoral rules questions**

The question on the rule of registration as a Presidential election candidate was rightly answered to be true by as many as 507 respondents (95.7%) and false by 23 (4.3%). By contrast, respondents had much more difficulty to guess the same about the rule of registering as a candidate list in the European Parliament election: more people wrongly guessed the relevant statement to be false (312, or 58.9%) than rightly guessed it to be true (218, or 41.1%).

Regarding the questions on the means of signature collection, for the Presidential election 425 (80.2%) participants correctly responded 'True' and 105 (19.8%) responded 'False'. The same question about the Lithuanian EP election was correctly answered 'True' by 381 (71.9%) of the respondents and 'False' by 150 (28.1%).

**External voting possibilities questions**

When asked if they could vote in diplomatic institutions such as embassies or consular institutions, nearly all respondents (515, or 97.2%) correctly answered 'True' for Presidential election, only 15 (2.8%) getting it wrong. When asked the same about the European Parliament election, 497 (93.8%) rightly answered 'True' and 33 (6.2%) incorrectly chose 'False'. As for whether they could vote by post, in the Presidential election question, 466 respondents (87.9%) correctly answered 'True' and 64 (12.1%) incorrectly answered 'False'. In the European Parliament case, these numbers were

respectively 452 (85.3%) and 78 (14.7%). When asked whether they could vote online in the Presidential election, 387 participants (73.0%) correctly claimed this to be false, but over a quarter (143, or 27.0%) were mistaken. The numbers were very similar when the respondents were asked the same about the European Parliament: 389 (73.4%) and 141 (26.6%) respectively.

**Interest**

**Campaign following**

Respondents paid closer attention to Presidential campaigning than to EP campaigning. The former had been followed by 377 (71.2%) respondents, out of whom 66 (12.5%) had followed it closely and 311 (58.7%) a little. This campaign had not been followed at all by 153 (28.8%) of the respondents. The EP campaign had been followed by considerably fewer respondents, specifically 195 (36.8%), out of whom 23 (4.3%) had been following it closely and 172 (32.5%) a little. 335 respondents (63.2%) were non–followers of the EP campaign.

**2009 elections**

Out of the respondents who answered the relevant question, 309 (58.3%) claimed to have voted in the 2009 Presidential election and 204 (38.5%) said that they had not done so. 17 (3.2%) claimed to not remember this information. For the 2009 European Parliament election, there were 231 (43.6%) self–reported voters for Lithuanian candidates, 11 (2.1%) self–reported voters for non–Lithuanian candidates, 219 (41.4%) self–reported non–voters and 69 (13%) respondents who claimed to not remember. Respondents who had failed to vote were asked to elaborate on the reasons in an open–ended question. Out of the non–voters, 47 and 38 could not have voted in the 2009 Presidential and EP elections because of their young age, which is a very reasonable figure compared to similar studies (Jastramskis 2018b). When they were excluded from further analyses, leaving 157 (29.6%) and 181 (34.2%) cases of 'true' absenteeism respectively, results of the awareness and interest index modelling were substantially the same as with the 'full' sample including all of the non–voters. This larger original sample was therefore used in the final analysis.

**Voting intentions and pre–electoral stage behaviour**

Regarding the Presidential election, 316 (59.6%) respondents declared an intention to vote, and 122 (23.0%) declared no intention to vote, 60 (11.3%) being unsure. Virtually the same share of

respondents (302, or 57.0%) intended to vote in the Lithuanian EP election, and 153 (28.7%) expressed no such intention, 76 (14.3%) being unsure.[74]

Together, considering the Presidential election, there were 376 respondents open to the possibility of voting. Out of them, 293 (77.9%) had registered and 83 (22.1%) had not registered to vote. There were 378 people who either intended to vote in the EP election or were unsure, and there was also one respondent who did not answer the registration question. 292 (77.2%) had registered by the time of being surveyed, and 86 (22.8%) had not. Respondents' intentions and behaviour were thus similar for the two types of elections, with over three quarters of respondents who did *not* plan not to vote actually taking the key step towards casting the vote.

Notably, nearly a quarter of respondents (125, or 23.6%) reported to have signed for a candidate of their choice for the Presidential election, which appears to be a relatively high number. By contrast, such support for Lithuanian European Parliament electoral lists was much less widespread but still non–negligible, with 38 (7.2%) respondents having done so.

### 3.2.2 Explanatory variables

In order to statistically test the awareness– and interest–related hypotheses outlined earlier in the chapter, answers to certain survey questions were employed as explanatory variables in regression modelling. This subsection introduces those questions, response coding and the distribution of answers.

Respondents' **time spent abroad** was addressed using the following question: 'In total, how long have you been residing outside the Republic of Lithuania?'.[75] Table 5 shows the distribution of responses, grouped in a way providing a similar number of respondents in each category.[76]

[74]As the survey continued after the first round of the Presidential election, respondents had a possibility to specify that they had already voted. 32 (6.0%) individuals made use of this option. This answer choice was not applicable to the EP election, as the pre–election survey was discontinued once this election took place.

[75]Note that the question was formulated in such a way so as to reveal the total time of residence abroad, not only in the most recent country of residence. This being a self–reported answer, respondents had to remember the time they had spent abroad themselves as well as to decide how to treat any breaks from living abroad, providing us with their perceived length of time spent abroad. For the purposes of this thesis, this was not judged as disadvantageous, enabling respondents to take into account their returns to Lithuania *if* they perceived them as significant.

[76]Different variable coding (including but not limited to a dichotomous variable 'staying abroad for at least 5 years' used in the subsequent chapters) did not change the result: the effect of time remained non–significant. The more detailed version of the variable was utilised in this chapter since here the variable relates to one of the principal hypotheses, whilst in the other chapters it becomes more contextual.

| Time abroad | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Under 3 years | 127 | 23.9 |
| 3 – 4 years | 149 | 28.1 |
| 5 – 8 years | 150 | 28.3 |
| 9 years or more | 105 | 19.8 |
| Total | 530 | 100 |

Table 5. Distribution of respondents' time spent abroad

For the statistical analyses employed in this chapter, this variable was transformed into three dummy variables. The dummy variable '3–4 years' is equal to 1 if the respondent stayed abroad for 3 to 4 years and 0 otherwise. The dummy variable '5–8 years' is equal to 1 if the respondent stayed abroad for 5 to 8 years and 0 otherwise. The dummy variable '9 years or more' is equal to 1 if the respondent stayed abroad for at least 9 years and 0 otherwise. Staying abroad for under 3 years therefore constitutes a reference category.

In the survey respondents were directly asked '*Do you **intend to return** to Lithuania?*'. For the purpose of the analyses, 'Do not know' and 'No' groups were merged together.[77] Table 6 shows the distribution of responses. In the analyses below, 'Intention to return' is therefore a binary variable describing whether the respondent expressed an intention to return to Lithuania, those having expressed such an intention coded as 1 and those not indenting to return or being not sure coded as 0.

| Intention to return | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 195 | 36.9 |
| No or do not know | 335 | 63.1 |
| Total | 530 | 100 |

Table 6. Distribution of respondents' intention to return to Lithuania

Survey respondents were asked the following question: '*What is the highest level of **education** you have attained*?' For the analyses responses were merged into two categories providing sufficient number of respondents in each group, namely those with (405 respondents; 76.4%) and without a university degree (125 respondents; 23.6%). In the statistical models below, 'University degree' is hence a binary variable, those not holding a university degree coded as 0 and those holding such a degree coded as 1.

[77]While it was considered to examine those not being sure and those claiming they would not return as separate categories and employ respective dummy variable coding, a binary variable was deemed superior due to quite low absolute (in spite of very reasonable relative) numbers of respondents claiming they would not return in the EP election analyses (particularly in subsequent chapters).

Among the respondents used in the present analysis, 381 (71.9%) were females and 149 (28.1%) males. In the models below, 'Gender' is a binary variable, men coded as 0 and women as 1.

Figure 4 depicts the age distribution of respondents. The youngest respondent out of the 530 was 18 years old, the oldest 74 years old. Median age was 25, mean age was 29.73, and standard deviation was 8.36. In the regression analyses, 'Age' is a continuous variable measured in years.[78]

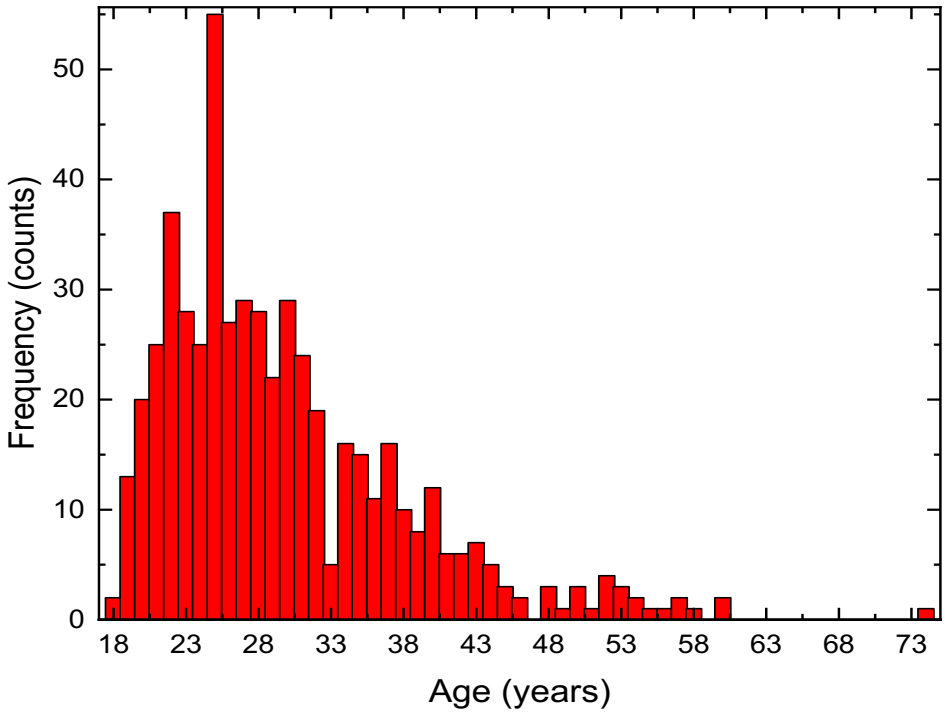



Figure 4. Distribution of respondents' age

### 3.2.3 Control variables

As is customary, control variables in the analysis are mostly variables of socio–demographic nature, namely occupation, income, type of place of residence in the home and host countries, and (a non–socio–demographic variable) political position.

Respondents' main activity, called 'occupation' for simplicity, is divided into four categories: manual work (68; 12.8%), non–manual work (226; 42.6%), studying (143; 27.0%) and neither working nor

[78]Given that some of the discussed literature implies a possibility of an inversed–U relationship, it was also tested whether adding a quadratic term would result in a significant effect, but no such effect was found and the simpler model was therefore chosen (same for the rest of empirical chapters).

studying (74; 14.0%). 19 respondents (3.6%) did not disclose their main activity. In the statistical models of this chapter, there are four occupation–related dummy variables. The dummy variable 'Manual work' is equal to 1 if the respondent reported manual work to be their principal activity, and is equal to 0 if they reported otherwise (non–manual work, studying, neither working nor studying or undisclosed). The dummy variable 'Studying' is equal to 1 if the respondent reported studying work to be their principal activity, and equal to 0 if they reported otherwise. The dummy variable 'Neither working nor studying' is equal to 1 if the respondent reported to neither work nor study, and equal to 0 otherwise. The dummy variable 'Undisclosed' is equal to 1 if the respondent skipped the question and 0 otherwise. Non–manual work therefore constitutes a reference category.

Respondents' personal income is classified into four categories: no personal income (59; 11.1%); monthly income under 1,000 EUR (215; 40.6%); 1,000–1,999 EUR (139; 26.2%); 2,000+ EUR (84; 15.8%). For the sake of simplicity, the last three categories of income are referred to as 'low', 'medium' and 'high' in the modelling, although this does depend on the standard of living in the country of residence. 33 respondents (6.2%) did not disclose their income. In the analyses of this chapter, personal income is represented by four dummy variables, 'High income' (2,000 EUR or more) serving as a reference category. 'Medium income' is equal to 1 if the respondent reported their personal income to be 1,000–1,999 EUR and 0 otherwise. 'Low income' is equal to 1 if the respondent reported their personal income to be under 1,000 EUR and 0 otherwise. 'No income' is equal to 1 if the respondent reported not to receive personal income and 0 otherwise. 'Undisclosed income' is equal to 1 if the respondent skipped this question and 0 otherwise.

323 respondents (60.9%) resided in cities abroad. Given the small number (23; 4.3%) of those who lived in a rural area or a village, in the analyses they were merged with those living in small or middle–sized towns (184; 34.7%). 'Lives in a city abroad' is therefore a binary variable with those living in towns, villages or rural areas coded as 0 and those living in cities as 1. 337 (58.9%) of the respondents had resided in cities while living in Lithuania, and those living in rural area or village (42; 7.9%) were also merged with those living in small or middle–sized towns (151; 28.5%). 'Lived in a city in Lithuania' is hence a binary variable, respondents having lived in towns, villages or rural areas coded as 0 and those having lived in cities as 1.

Another variable that is related to socio–demographics without being one itself is political position, often assed by self–placement on a left–right scale that aims to reflect individual's value system. Value systems are best understood as shortcuts that people use to interpret whether certain policies should

appeal to them. The left–right dimension – a 'super–issue' which brings together a variety of issues (Inglehart & Klingemann 1976) – appeals not only to researchers but also to lay people, with up to 90% of individuals able to place themselves on such a scale (Fuchs & Klingeman 1990). Lithuanians' ability to do so has been unstable: interestingly, more people were able to place themselves on such a scale in the early days of indepence rather than later (Ramonaitė 2003, 2007; Jastramskis 2018c), possibly because they eventually became perplexed by where Lithuanian parties themselves fall on the left–right scale. In a 2012 *Seimas* post–election survey, nearly 37% of respondents did not locate themselves on the scale, and a further third placed themselves in the middle (Ramonaitė & Žiliukaitė 2014), although they did not seem to have a difficulty to locate political parties on the same scale. Left–right dimension sceptics note that it is not clear what exactly lies behind left–right self–placement and that certain (groups of) parties (including Christian democrats, liberals, green parties) can be classified as left or right depending on the context (Castles & Mair 1984; Ramonaitė & Žiliukaitė 2014). It is possible, however, that emigration experience, especially in the case of emigration to old Western democracies, shapes the perception of this scale, likely bringing it closer to the Western understanding.

Political position is therefore assessed by respondents' self–placement on a 10–point Likert scale in which 1 corresponded to 'Left' and 10 corresponded to 'Right': in the models below, this variable is treated as continuous. Survey respondents did not demonstrate a difficulty to place themselves on the scale, although quite a lot of respondents located themselves on the middle. Self–placement scores on the left–right scale ranged from 1 to 10 with mean of 5.65 and standard deviation of 2.10 – the distribution of the scores of the 530 respondents is depicted by Figure 5.

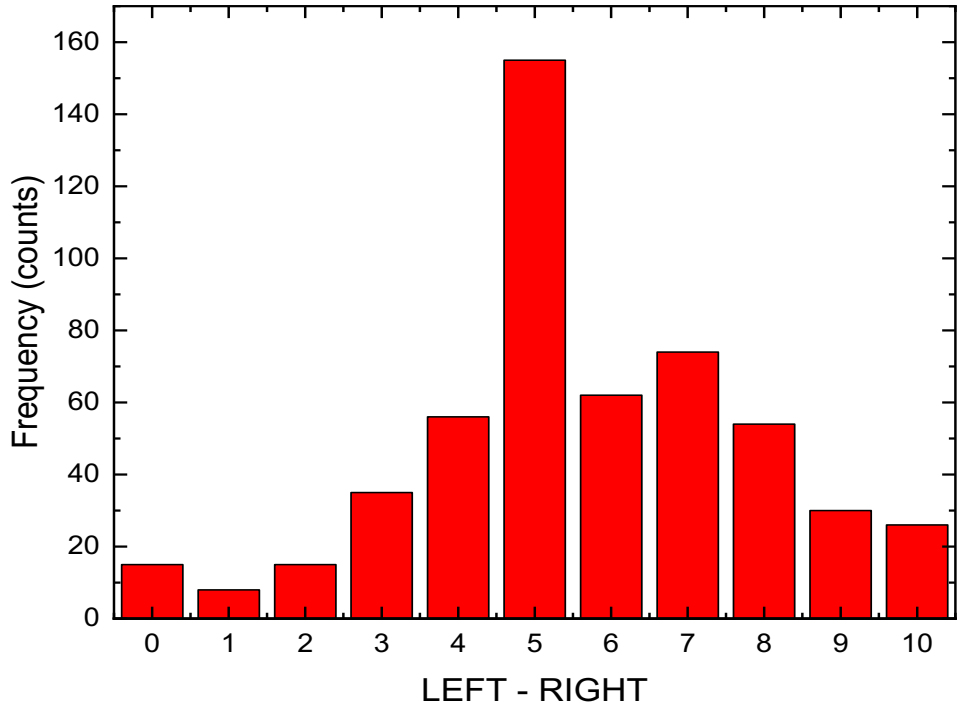



Figure 5. Distribution of respondents' self–placement on left–right scale

The explanatory variables are included into the models in blocks as follows. Variables of socio–demographic nature, namely gender, age, occupation, income, type of place of residence in the home and host countries are included first, as is university degree. Given that political position is not strictly speaking a socio–demographic variable, it is included into the regression as a separate second block. The final block consists of the variables relating to migration circumstances, namely respondents' length of stay abroad and intention to return. The above–described awareness index and interest index scores are the response variables in the analyses. Since the effects of all the variables included in this analysis are of substantive interest, they are included in the modelling throughout the analysis instead of being removed in the case of non–significance. Therefore, in the sections below (as well as in upcoming chapters), the coefficients from the final models, which include all the explanatory variables, are referred to unless stated otherwise. Regarding qualitative data, in the analysis, interview data is used in the context of those variables where relevant data did emerge in the discourses.

## 3.3 Results and discussion

### 3.3.1 Information sources

Table 7 demonstrates that, among the respondents, online versions of Lithuanian newspapers and magazines are the most commonly chosen information source for following the election campaigns, half (49.9%) of them using this source for the Presidential campaign and virtually a quarter (23.4%) for the EP campaign. Lithuanian webpages (other than online versions of newspapers/magazines) constitute the second most popular source of information, with 36.5% and 21.8% users for the two elections respectively. Therefore, the two most popular means of electoral campaign following are exclusively internet–centred resources. **The data therefore supports the hypothesis that Lithuanian emigrants are likely to rely on the internet as their primary source of information on political issues back home**. It is also worth noting that the first two sources are closely followed by discussions with friends and/or relatives (34.8% and 14.1% Presidential and EP campaign followers) and Lithuanian TV (on a TV set or online) (33.7% and 14.0% respective followers) which could have in principle reflected either online or offline activities. Effectively, however, whilst usage of these sources is not interpreted as straightforward support for the hypothesis, it is very likely that these popular information sources encompassed significant internet usage as well, as watching Lithuanian television outside Lithuania can in practice only be done via the internet, and the majority of the conversations with peers when residing out of Lithuania are also likely to take place online due to relatively low costs of such communication (although we cannot rule out a possibility that some of the respondents may be have been communicating with them in person or, say, via a telephone). Further support for the hypothesis is provided by an examination of the reasons behind 'other' responses in the survey question on sources used to follow electoral campaigning (8.7% and 2.5% for Presidential and EP campaigns respectively). It reveals that respondents predominantly used this response option to express usage of social media, which evidently is an internet–based source of information.

| | Presidential election campaign | | EP election campaign | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Lithuanian newspapers/magazines (hard copies)** | 33 | 6.2% | 23 | 4.3% |
| **Non–Lithuanian newspapers/magazines (hard copies)** | 15 | 2.8% | 7 | 1.3% |
| **Lithuanian newspapers/magazines (online versions)** | 266 | 49.9% | 124 | 23.4% |
| **Non–Lithuanian newspapers/magazines (online versions)** | 24 | 4.5% | 19 | 3.6% |
| **Lithuanian TV (on a TV set or online)** | 178 | 33.7% | 74 | 14.0% |
| **Non–Lithuanian TV (on a TV set or online)** | 12 | 2.3% | 13 | 2.5% |
| **Lithuanian radio (on a radio device or online)** | 24 | 4.5% | 16 | 3.0% |
| **Non–Lithuanian radio (on a radio device or online)** | 6 | 1.1% | 3 | 0.6% |
| **Lithuanian webpages (other than online versions of newspapers/magazines)** | 194 | 36.5% | 116 | 21.8% |
| **Non–Lithuanian webpages (other than online versions of newspapers/magazines)** | 32 | 6.0% | 15 | 2.8% |
| **Discussions with friends and/or relatives** | 185 | 34.8% | 75 | 14.1% |
| **Other** | 46 | 8.7% | 13 | 2.5% |

Table 7. Number of respondents (absolute numbers and percentages) using different information sources to follow Presidential and EP election campaigns. 530 respondents in total (NB: more than one answer choice was permitted)

Qualitative interviews provide additional insight into the ways of accessing Lithuanian political information from abroad. Supporting the survey data, in line with the hypothesis of internet being the primary source of information among Lithuanian emigrants, obtaining information on Lithuanian political issues was closely intertwined with the theme of the internet. This was clearly audible also in other discourses (including a 43–year–old[79] female from Scotland, a 20–year–old man from England, a 29–year–old male from Germany), but a particularly good illustration is provided by a 41–year–old female doctor residing in Sweden for four years who affirmed internet to be a critical source of information for these purposes. This emigrant had voted in the 2016 *Seimas* election, but admitted

[79]Interviewees' age and time spent abroad refer to those at the time of interviewing.

that she may have forgotten to even seek the relevant information that allowed her to take care of the procedures in time, had it not been for Facebook:

> *Regarding the possibility to vote by post – there was a need to actively seek this information… I was not aware of this [possibility] until someone posted in a Facebook group that you can vote that way […] Perhaps I would have searched for this information myself, but, to tell you the truth, I don't think so… I would probably have forgotten.*

Also yielding a finding that could not have been identified using the survey data alone, very much in line with the concept of transferable costs discussed in Section 3.1.3, this interviewee demonstrated the mechanism how, using the internet (particularly social media), emigrants can reduce their effort by receiving political information pre–digested by those who have not emigrated but can be similar to them in other characteristics:

> *Social networks have solved many inconveniences: there, you can choose the informants who speak the language understandable to you, and you can choose activists of any age, coming from a variety of backgrounds, and this really makes things easier because you receive pre–digested information*

> *If you sit down and [attempt to] analyse a political programme [laughs] or start listening to every babbling politician who is talking some sort of nonsense… Who has time for that? I know nothing in political sciences, history, finance, economics, nothing at all; so [thanks to social networks] you get a clear pre–digested product and can then form your own attitude.*

Markedly, this last quote demonstrates that the final political choice is perceived to belong to the prospective voter herself: this is also in line with the notion that Downs' transferable costs occur at the information gathering phase, whereas making actual use of this information constitutes a non–transferable cost.

A similar experience was shared by a voter with a considerably different socio–demographic profile. A 19–year–old male voter from the small Lithuanian town who had resided in the UK for under a year at the time of 2016 *Seimas* election, studying and working as a waiter, relied nearly exclusively on the internet to gather relevant information. Also in accordance with the concept of transferable costs, the interviewee believed that by following certain public figures he gained sufficient information about the election:

*Since I follow, in my opinion, fairly objective people on social media, including [public figures] Andrius Tapinas, Edmundas Jakilaitis as well as certain politicians, I feel that I received enough information on the election helping to form an objective view*

This interviewee also gave a lot of credit to a recently created YouTube television channel 'Laisvės TV':[80] he felt that around the 2016 *Seimas* election there might have been more information than before because certain public personalities, such as a 'Laisvės TV' host Andrius Tapinas, have now '*partly created the interest in politics among the youth, made it more mainstream, more 'cool', and possibly provided an environment for other people to express themselves more publicly because they understood that their opinion can be of interest to others*'. During the interview, this voter also demonstrated that some emigrants can be very introspective and conscious about their usage of information sources. He explicitly reported having used social media to gather factual information and opinions, Lithuanian webpages to deepen his understanding of the issues that had caught his attention on social media, and discussions with friends (most often online) to reflect on them even deeper.

Another intriguing – and unexpected beforehand – point on internet–based information sources emerging from the interviewing was that emigrants can use internet to access even more content than those residing in Lithuania. It turned out that a 44–year–old male living in the UK for five years, a kitchen assembler, did not vote, yet followed the electoral campaign because '*Lithuania is always interesting*' and did so via 'Emigrant TV' – a commercial web television package available to Lithuanians abroad. He affirmed that in this way he could even see Russian channels banned in Lithuania, as well as certain additional channels in English.

### 3.3.2 Time spent abroad

Having inspected the data on the information sources, we shall now proceed to testing the hypotheses centring on political interest and awareness. Table 8 and Table 9 (also referred to in the following subsections) present the linear regression results run with awareness and interest index scores as response variables. As is conventional, effects are considered to be statistically significant if a significance level of 5% is reached, however the tables distinguish between significance levels more precisely.

[80] 'Freedom TV', internet–based television run by a public figure Andrius Tapinas was launched on 11 September 2016.

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Unstandardized beta (t-value) | Unstandardized beta (t-value) | Unstandardized beta (t-value) |
| Constant | 68.823*** (11.414) | 61.192*** (9.128) | 76.004*** (10.221) |
| SOCIO–DEMOGRAPHICS | | | |
| Gender (ref – Male) | 0.826 (0.377) | 1.836 (0.829) | 3.885 (1.753) |
| Age | -0.018 (-0.133) | -0.023 (-0.167) | -0.023 (-0.158) |
| Occupation (ref – Non–manual work) | | | |
| Manual work | -0.9170** (-2.640) | -8.131* (-2.337) | -7.779* (-2.257) |
| Studying | 3.330 (1.122) | 3.951 (1.134) | 2.089 (0.705) |
| Neither working nor studying | 3.372 (0.998) | 3.369 (1.003) | 4.205 (1.264) |
| Undisclosed occupation | 5.067 (0.628) | 4.254 (0.530) | 4.326 (0.548) |
| Income (ref – High income) | | | |
| Medium income | -1.355 (-0.413) | -0.942 (-0.228) | -1.904 (-0.588) |
| Low income | -0.545 (-0.172) | -0.346 (-0.110) | -1.823 (-0.584) |
| No income | -6.067 (-1.363) | -5.556 (-1.254) | -7.548 (-1.728) |
| Undisclosed income | -6.794 (-1.029) | -5.264 (-0.798) | -6.420 (-0.989) |
| Lives in a city abroad | -0.184 (-0.089) | 0.221 (0.107) | 0.483 (0.238) |
| Lived in a city in Lithuania | 2.061 (0.990) | 1.520 (0.730) | 1.438 (0.699) |
| University degree | 6.825** (2.719) | 6.804** (2.725) | 7.392** (2.696) |
| POLITICAL POSITION | | | |
| Left–right scale | | 1.158* (2.547) | 0.134* (2.534) |
| MIGRATION CIRCUMSTANCES | | | |
| Time abroad (ref – Under 3 years) | | | |
| 3–4 years | | | 0.212 (0.077) |
| 5–8 years | | | -1.874 (-0.652) |
| 9 years or more | | | -3.050 (-0.903) |
| Intention to return | | | 9.501*** (4.513) |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.038 | 0.049 | 0.084 |

Table 8. Linear regression results. Response variable: awareness index score. ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05.

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Unstandardized beta (t-value) | Unstandardized beta (t-value) | Unstandardized beta (t-value) |
| Constant | 28.860*** (4.364) | 17.984* (2.456) | 39.492*** (4.970) |
| SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS | | | |
| Gender (ref – Male) | -7.025** (-2.924) | -5.585* (-2.309) | -2.446 (-1.033) |
| Age | 0.359* (2.386) | 0.352* (2.366) | 0.421** (2.719) |
| Occupation (ref – Nonmanual work) | | | |
| Manual work | -12.490** (-3.279) | -11.009** (-2.898) | -10.558** (-2.866) |
| Studying | 10.123** (3.110) | 11.009** (3.403) | 8.171* (2.582) |
| Neither working nor studying | -0.387 (-0.104) | -0.391 (-0.107) | 0.854 (0.240) |
| Undisclosed occupation | 1.760 (0.199) | 0.601 (0.069) | 0.646 (0.076) |
| Income (ref – High income) | | | |
| Medium income | -5.598 (-1.555) | -5.010 (-1.403) | -6.522 (-1.885) |
| Low income | -5.623 (-1.620) | -5.339 (-1.553) | -7.450* (-2.233) |
| No income | -10.710* (-2.194) | -9.982* (-2.062) | -12.900** (-2.763) |
| Undisclosed income | -6.437 (-0.889) | -4.255 (-0.591) | -5.876 (0.847) |
| Lives in a city abroad | 3.583 (1.582) | 4.160 (1.849) | 4.591* (2.123) |
| Lived in a city in Lithuania | 0.276 (0.121) | -0.495 (-0.218) | -0.561 (-0.225) |
| University degree | 7.698** (2.796) | 7.668** (2.812) | 8.417** (3.164) |
| POLITICAL POSITION | | | |
| Left–right scale | | 1.650** (3.325) | 1.637** (3.424) |
| MIGRATION CIRCUMSTANCES | | | |
| Time abroad (ref – Under 3 years) | | | |
| 3–4 years | | | 1.743 (0.597) |
| 5–8 years | | | -2.856 (-0.929) |
| 9 years or more | | | -3.744 (-1.037) |
| Intention to return | | | 14.251*** (6.335) |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.098 | 0.115 | 0.185 |

Table 9. Linear regression results. Response variable: interest index score. ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05.

As can be observed in the tables above, the **hypotheses that Lithuanians staying abroad for longer have lower home–country political interest and awareness are not supported**, none of the relevant dummy variables being statistically significantly different from the baselines (here and below: controlling for the effect of other variables included in the given model). Differently put, contrary to the expectations, the survey data provides no evidence that as time spent living abroad increases, Lithuanians become less likely to have knowledge about home–country political affairs ('reduced awareness') and less likely to be interested in Lithuanian politics in the first place ('reduced interest').

Given that, as explained in Chapter 2, the sample is not statistically representative, it is not possible to claim at this point that this (or any) finding extrapolates to the whole emigrant population. It should be also born in mind that there were very few respondents in this study residing abroad for more than

20 years and that the effect may therefore be different for those staying abroad for decades.[81] Yet, if additional studies provide further evidence that Lithuanian emigrants' home–country political interest and awareness is not related to time spent living outside Lithuania, this finding will prove particularly useful in policy making. Specifically, this result suggests that if someone moved out of Lithuania years ago, their awareness and interest can be just as high (or low) as someone's who has left quite recently – which constitutes positive news for Lithuanian politicians. If the number of years spent abroad does not significantly decrease emigrants' awareness of and especially interest in Lithuanian politics, this suggests that, with some effort, Lithuania should be able to reach out to its citizens who left the country years ago with a reasonable chance of regaining their interest in the country's affairs. Considering the newly created constituency for Lithuanians residing abroad for 2020 *Seimas* election – further discussed later in the dissertation – in case of doubts whether the 'long–lost' citizens can become sufficiently engaged into Lithuanian politics to make use of the newly provided opportunity to choose their own parliament member, it would be important to utilise the information that the citizens who have been away for longer are unlikely to differ in this respect from the more recent emigrants. Again, provided that having a statistically representative sample was not possible in the present study, it would be worthwhile for policy makers to give further weight to this finding by conducting additional studies focusing specifically on the relationship between time spent abroad and Lithuanian political interest and awareness.

The same guidance applies regarding the following policy implication. The finding on lack of importance of time spent abroad is also valuable in the context of the mandatory referendum on amending Article 12 of the Constitution that defines the acquisition of citizenship, which took place together with the first round of the 2019 Presidential election. A positive outcome of this referendum would have allowed Lithuanian emigrants to preserve their Lithuanian citizenship in a case of an acquisition of new ones in selected countries – presently the former would need to be renounced. With increasing numbers of people building their lives abroad, some of them very keen to keep their formal ties to Lithuania but also feeling disadvantaged in their place of residence without a destination–country passport, formalising their relationship with Lithuania in a way that is acceptable to both emigrants and home–country–based Lithuanians has become a significant issue for the country. Provision of dual nationality has in fact become one of the three key 'Ideas for Lithuania' that have been formulated in the context of the 100 years' anniversary of the country's independence in

[81]However, given that the post–EU–accession migration wave started 15 years ago, it is reasonable to assume that such individuals constitute a relatively small share of Lithuanian citizens' emigrant population.

2018 (Delfi 2018a), which constituted a significant milestone for emigrants. Yet, while the referendum did take place with 52.6% turnout (more than 50% is needed), in spite of 73.9% of valid votes cast being 'YES' this constituted only 37.7% of those having a voting right (more than 50% is needed too). Those residing abroad (52,083 votes cast) predominately voted 'YES' (97.9% of valid votes). Given that the solution to the problem was not provided by the referendum, the issue will inevitably need to be addressed in the future, whether that means coming to terms with the shrinking electoral population or designing alternative arrangements for how to allow emigrants to preserve their Lithuanian passport. The study's findings suggest that time must not necessarily be detrimental to emigrants' interest in Lithuanian affairs, and that as long as other circumstances remain comparable over the years, (re)gaining emigrants' interest in home country affairs should be feasible.

Whilst the lack of an effect of time spent abroad identified in the statistical analysis is interesting in its own right, the literature led the present study to reason that time spent abroad would lower both interest and awareness of Lithuanian politics. Results of the regression modelling were, however, conflicting**,** adding to the body of literature which signals that the orthodox sociological models of immigrant integration may be overly simplistic and/or have become outdated. But why exactly was no effect found in the regression analysis? Qualitative interview material allows us to take a further step and examine this discrepancy. Indeed, it suggests several reasons why the survey may not have identified a significant effect of time on awareness and/or interest. It does so by demonstrating ways in which time spent abroad may not only discourage but – in certain cases – *encourage* home country political awareness/interest, which could then interfere with the possibility to detect a relationship between the variables examined in this study. Specifically, the interview data reveals the following potential influences that may counter a possible effect of time spent away from home: **changes in perceived competency, ability to follow current affairs, and keenness to do so**.

First, **s**ome of the interviewees reasoned that time had in fact brought about some changes making them ***more keen*** to follow Lithuanian politics. A 27–year–old male UK–based logistics manager who had been living abroad for eight years, explained that although he had failed to cast a vote he was actually following the most recent election, and expressed a belief that spending time abroad leads to increased general appreciation of Lithuania:

> *Everyone should try out the bitter life in emigration to understand how good it is to live in Lithuania, to realise how much worse some other people live, to start appreciating the home country more*

As a result of the newly discovered appreciation of the homeland, he was now keener to devote time and energy to Lithuanian affairs.

Indeed, for some emigrants, foreign experiences accumulated over time may create a different psychological relationship with the home country, making them feel better about it and therefore keener to follow the politics of the country of origin. Some may witness their Lithuanian identity crystallising in the context of a foreign environment, again encouraging a deeper interest in home–country issues. This – illustrated also by the 41–year–old female doctor from Sweden living abroad for four years and unsure whether she would return – is in line with the above–discussed notion by Waldinger and Duquette–Rury (2016) of an increase of homeland national identity in alien environments:

> *What is more, you realise fully that you are not a Swede, you differentiate yourself from them and thereby you recognise your Lithuanian identity better when you are in emigration for a longer period of time*

Relatedly, certain achievements abroad that come with time, such as establishing a satisfying career, may also encourage some to inspect their path to success, possibly their roots and become keen to, in a way, 'give back' to the home country by beginning to show a (renewed) interest in its politics and related affairs (cf. Morawska 2004; Guarnizo et al. 2019).

At the same time, the aforementioned logistics manager had also begun to feel ***more competent*** in the political sphere than before leaving the country, also maintaining that he can now contribute something valuable:

> *Now, having gathered this experience, I want to bring about some fresh air into Lithuania too, to share my experience with compatriots*

Noteworthily, the 'fresh air' leitmotif, and the broader ambition to bring something new to the homeland was also audible in Scotto's (2012) qualitative study of Italians in London. Such an ambition was also bold when the 41–year–old female from Sweden reasoned that spending time out of homeland can make emigrants more interested in home–country affairs via increased perceived competence:

*Experiences abroad change a person, they help to get rid of that passive attitude that nothing depends on you, and hence I was showing interest [in the most recent election]*

*When I moved abroad, I started seeing many things in my home country better as an outsider… I was therefore very keen on casting my vote and actively sought information on how to do so*

Another Sweden–based interviewee (a 33–year–old woman), residing abroad for 11 years and not planning to return any time soon, also conversed along the lines of increased competency due to an 'outsider's' look. Being a Lithuanian but living and immersing oneself in an informational field elsewhere apparently yields a different standing both from Lithuanians based in Lithuania and from foreigners.

*I sometimes think that while being abroad it may be possible to look in a more critical way, or form a different perspective, into what is going on in Lithuanian politics… Seeing Lithuanian politics, how Lithuania as a country is viewed by other countries… Regarding Sweden, [2016 Seimas] election was frequently reviewed by its media, [so you could see] how it is seen by the Swedish media, how the elections are portrayed.*

Relatedly, spending time abroad may also mean that instead of getting lost in small details and petty arguments of the political arena, some emigrants may in fact find it easier to identify, and adhere to, key issues that they understand as worthy of their attention. An example specified in the interview data was the country not being ruled by ethnic minorities (concern was expressed by the abovementioned 27–year–old man: *'[While living abroad, I] noticed that a lot of votes are gathered by Polish and Russian parties, and understood that if we, Lithuanians, do not vote our country will be ruled by foreigners'*). However, such key priorities can be different for different individuals (Chapter 5 addresses issue voting in more detail).

Coming back to the older interviewee from Sweden, she believed that at least some of her compatriots abroad shared her experience, proposing also that that it is possible for Lithuanians abroad to become, with time, **more able** to follow Lithuanian political affairs as they have taken care of their living conditions:

*Two thirds of Lithuanians abroad don't care the slightest, and the remaining third actually become bigger patriots, that happened to me too. Such people start caring about Lithuania*

*more than while living there, simply because the living conditions become so much better, letting one care about non–primary needs.*

Certainly, such a possibility is in line with Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation and the pyramid of needs' hierarchy which states that only after more basic needs of a person are taken care of they will attend to more complex ones. Although individual circumstances differ, generally speaking, some of the needs that Lithuanian emigrants are taking care of by moving to Western countries are likely to be physiological (if the individual lives in poverty in Lithuania) or safety needs (feeling more financially secure or, for example, less at risk of LGBT bullying). By contrast, care towards one's home–country from abroad could be interpreted as a social need (feeling that one still belongs to the home country whilst living in an alien one), a self–esteem need (feeling good about oneself for not forgetting one's roots) or a self–actualisation need (using one's experience abroad and other qualities to the advantage of the home country). By improving their own life abroad some emigrants thereby can get a step closer to caring about their homeland.

### 3.3.3 Intention to return

Among the surveyed emigrants, in comparison to those 'not knowing' whether they will return or not intending to return to Lithuania, those who do intend to return are significantly more aware of and significantly more interested in Lithuanian politics**,** as indicated by their awareness and interest index scores (Table 8 and Table 9). The average awareness index score of those intending to return is 9.501 points higher than that of others, and the average interest index score is 14.251 points higher. Quantitative data therefore **supports the hypothesis that Lithuanians abroad who intend to return to Lithuania have higher home–country political interest and awareness**.

Taken together, the two findings on the effects of migration circumstances provide initial evidence that not the time spent in emigration, but rather the intention to *return* from emigration, may be central to explaining Lithuanian political awareness and interest among the abroad–based citizens. In addition to being wary of non–representativeness**,** one should, of course, also be careful when speculating about causality: it remains possible that it was not the intention to return that encouraged interest and awareness among the respondents, but instead a confounding factor was causing all three, resulting in spurious relationships. An example of such a potential confounding variable could be general patriotism, which might encourage both intention to return and political interest/awareness. However, patriotism itself is not a straightforward concept, almost certainly a multi–faceted one: in fact, one might reason that interest in and awareness of home country politics

examined in this chapter might *constitute* part of patriotism. In any case, at least within the limits of the study's sample, the results demonstrate that those interested in how well an individual would respond to measures requiring political interest or awareness – e.g. Lithuanian politicians or activists lobbying for simplified electoral procedures abroad or dual nationality – face a higher chance that a given emigrant would be responsive to such measures if they have an intention to return to Lithuania.

What makes intention to return variable particularly interesting is that, by its nature, it represents *willingness*, or a mere *idea* of a person that at some point they will be residing in Lithuania again. The Lithuanian population was shrinking due to emigration being larger than return migration for a long time, and it is reasonable to assume that some of the individuals who do not plan to spend all of their lives abroad will end up building a new permanent life there in spite of their current sentiments. Yet, a belief that this will not happen can alone be powerful enough to be associated with higher interest in and awareness of home country affairs, as signaled by the survey data.

### 3.3.4 Gender, age and education

In the regression analyses presented in Table 8 and Table 9, no effect of gender remains statistically significant throughout the three models. With regard to age, being older is statistically significantly associated with higher levels of interest **in line with the corresponding hypothesis**, but not with higher levels of awareness, hence **not supporting that hypothesis**. Controlling for the other variables, each additional year of age is associated with an average interest index score increase by 0.421 point. Lastly**,** the **hypothesis that a higher level of education is associated with higher awareness of and interest in Lithuanian politics is supported** by the data. All else being equal, those with a university degree on average have significantly higher scores on awareness and interest indices in the final models. Controlling for the other variables, respondents with a university degree have on average a 7.392 points higher awareness index score and an 8.417 points higher interest index score compared to those without one.

Subject to sampling limitations, survey data hence suggests emigrants' age to help explain interest in Lithuanian politics but not awareness: it appears that older emigrants may want to know more about home–country politics than younger ones but they do not actually know more. The above–discussed literature mostly addresses the relationship of age and political interest and awareness separately, and the findings of the present study suggest that we should indeed not equate the two relationships. The different age effects may be due to older emigrants possibly being less e–literate. Alternatively, one could interpret the age factor in the light of evidence that older Lithuanians tend to be more

patriotic (Žiliukaitė 2007) which could lead to increased *willingness* to follow the home–country's affairs that may not necessarily result in actual knowledge. However, low e–literacy and the highlighted levels of patriotism are more likely to be observed among Lithuanians older than the majority of those surveyed in this study, therefore these effects would be best explored further with non–emigrant Lithuanian data which is typically sufficiently rich across age groups (e.g. Ramonaitė 2014a).

By contrast, education of emigrants who took part in the survey helps explain both interest in and awareness of Lithuanian politics. It is worth to first of all note that individuals holding a university degree constituted the largest survey respondent category, which itself demonstrates that those sufficiently interested in political issues to undertake surveys relating to the topic tend to be educated at a high level, even considering the efforts to also engage those not interested in politics described in Chapter 2. While highly educated people caring more about politics is in line with our expectations, it remains important to discuss the exact possible reasons why reaching a higher level of education is associated with higher interest in and awareness of home–country politics. First of all, opting in for, and succeeding in, additional years of mostly theory–driven schooling may suggest that such individuals are generally more perceptive and attentive, as well as keener on theoretical reflections and on seeing a 'bigger picture' – all of this may encourage individuals to follow politics in their home country. Alternatively, one could argue that many of those with university degrees are more likely to have fulfilling employment abroad and therefore hold less of a grudge towards Lithuanian politicians, making them less likely to ignore Lithuanian politics altogether (although occupation as such was controlled for).

### 3.3.5 Control variables

Considering the control variables income and places of residence on the one hand and awareness on the other, no effects are statistically significant. As for occupation, in the final model, respondents whose main activity is manual work are significantly less aware of Lithuanian politics compared to those engaged in non–manual work.

Respondents whose main activity is manual work are also less interested in Lithuanian politics compared to those working non–manual jobs, the effect remaining significant throughout the three models as well. Moreover, respondents whose main activity is studying are significantly more interested in Lithuanian politics than those working non–manual jobs. This once again signals the importance of education, but there is no difference in actual political awareness between the two

groups: while the surveyed students are keener to know more, they do not actually know more. Notably, this should not be attributed to age differences, as age is controlled for in the models – and as discussed in the previous section, older respondents are in fact more interested in home–country politics than the younger ones but do not know more. It is possible that those in the process of formal studying may be more open to new knowledge beyond the information which reaches them in formal education institutions in comparison to those whose main activity is work. Nonetheless, this openness may not necessarily translate into actual knowledge, as suggested by the models. However, also in the light of the non–representative nature of the survey, this asks for further consideration in future research.

There are other statistically significant effects of control variables on interest index scores. First, income has explanatory power only on interest index: respondents with low income are significantly less interested in Lithuanian politics than those with high income, those with no personal income being even less interested. It is thought–provoking to observe that the effect is significant even when controlling for respondents' main activity: it appears that no matter how one earns the money, those earning little (or none) are less likely to show much interest in home–country politics in comparison with high–earners, although this does not translate into lower average knowledge. The finding is, of course, subject to the limits of self–selected sample. It could be reasoned that those who left the home country and still earn relatively little may have done particularly poorly at home, and therefore have a sceptical attitude towards Lithuanian affairs while living abroad. While those earning no or relatively little money might also include a noticeable share of students, the effect was independent of type of main activity. Finally, living in a city abroad has a significant positive effect on the interest index.

Self–placement on a left–right scale is significantly associated with both indices, although the size of the effects (especially that on awareness) is small. In the final model, a one–point increase in left–right self–placement score is associated with an average 0.134 points increase in awareness index scores. Regarding the interest index, the comparable average increase for one–point increase in self–placement on left–right scale is 1.637 points. One explanation why leaning towards the right might be associated with higher awareness of and interest in Lithuanian politics is that in Lithuania, preferring the main right–wing party TS–LKD can be associated with general patriotism, while preference for left–wing socialist parties can be associated with nostalgia for soviet times (Ramonaitė 2014c). More patriotic people may be more willing to follow home–country political affairs and gain more of the relevant knowledge. Alternatively, this finding can be related to Lithuanian political parties'

distribution, where those parties that are most often seen as populist also tend to be left–leaning (Ramonaitė 2014e). Given the evidence that populism relies most heavily on emotions (see Rico et al. 2017) rather than reason, it is indeed possible that Lithuanian emigrants who consider themselves to be on the right of the political continuum are also those who know more, and want to know more, about the politics of the home country. Alternatively, also due to the possible negative association of the left with populism, people who are better informed of Lithuanian affairs may, whether consciously or unconsciously, avoid to picture themselves as left–leaning.

As a whole, many of the examined socio–demographic variables (age, education, occupation, income, type of place of residence) mattered for differences in interest levels, whilst only education and occupation mattered for awareness. It hence appears that Lithuanian emigrants' political interest is easier (though by no means straightforward) to explain in socio–demographic terms than awareness. Possibly, then, subject to the sampling limitations, interest can be interpreted as a relatively more 'internal' characteristic, and whether one actually gets themselves informed as being more 'external'.

### 3.3.6 Additional qualitative insights

Moving beyond the variables accounted for in the survey data, three additional suggestions how and why political interest may (fail to) arise were provided by the qualitative interview materials. First, speaking also to works that examine emigrant participation from a macro–level perspective, qualitative data suggested that electoral interest can be affected by electoral rules. In the context of elections examined in this thesis, emigrants' political interest may have been diminished by electoral system pooling them to an unusual and unfamiliar district (see Section 4.1.1 for details). A 37–year–old PR consultant from Belgium, and a 44–year–old female Poland resident, stay–at–home mother and part–time consultant, similarly reasoned:

> *Since, when you live abroad, you can only vote for that district – it is called 'Naujamiesčio' I believe – then it is, so to say, not [my preferred] district… I do not belong to the same district [when voting from Lithuania], so it is always difficult to vote [from abroad] for the single member district where I need to pick people with whom I really have a lesser connection.*

> *I believe there is a project now that it could become possible for [emigrants] to have their own candidate in Seimas [...] If that happened, it would be very nice, [this would provide] an even [stronger] motivation [to vote]: to have your own representative in Seimas who would*

*represent not some random district to which you belonged when leaving or whichever way that voting happens,*[82] *but who will be your representative… I think that would be the biggest motivation, because in that case I imagine that the voter would feel more audible and having a bigger influence.*

In this context – even if the focus of the present thesis is on the three elections introduced in Section 2.2 – it is commendable that a subsequent *Seimas* election introduced a dedicated district for Lithuanians residing abroad thereby providing direct representation, although following other countries' approaches of allocating emigrants to a district where they last lived (as in Spain, the UK), or to a district of their choice (Belgian approach), could have constituted viable alternatives.[83]

Second, interview data showed that interest in Lithuanian politics can evanescence due to an 'out of sight, out of mind' effect. A*s* a 43–year–old female Scotland resident, small business owner, explained:

*Somehow when I moved out of Lithuania, I simply totally disconnected from all [Lithuanian] life, I started to be interested in local politics here more, so, those questions [of Lithuanian politics] dropped out of my interest zone*

Fortunately for policy makers who may be concerned about low political interest among emigrants, it appears that interest in homeland politics can disappear and reappear over time. Emigrant organisations, for example, have a power to raise or foster that interest by bringing the home country to one's attention, which speaks to several other works in the field (Portes et al. 2008; Bermudez 2010; Morales & Pilati 2014):

*And then when I got involved in the activities of the local Lithuanian community, then the whole question of Lithuania and care towards it returned*
[ibid.]

Third, in relation to 'All–Affected Principle' (e.g. Bauböck 2009; Angell & Huseby 2020), interview data proposed that interest can fail to arise due to emigrants not feeling (sufficiently) affected by Lithuanian politics, as illustrated by a 29–year–old resident of China working in advertising:

[82]It is worth noting that the interviewee was misinformed about the allocation of voting district.

[83]Not judging these decisions in any respect other than that of emigrants' interest.

*Generally speaking I am not interested in the political situation, perhaps I am not concerned partly because I cannot see what would be relevant to me, to my situation*

## 3.4 Summary

To briefly recapitulate the chapter, it first of all inspected the ways which the research participants used to inform themselves about homeland politics. As expected, internet usage was central, qualitative interview material also demonstrating how it helped reduce transferable costs. Afterwards, the chapter employed the combination of original survey and interview data to examine the possible influences on Lithuanian emigrants' political interest and awareness. Bearing in mind the specificities of the sample, the following findings are to be accentuated. As predicted, a statistically significant effect of intending to return back home was identified in the survey data. By contrast, contrary to the expectations, no negative effect of years spent abroad was found. Qualitative data supplemented this finding by proposing several reasons why a Lithuanian abroad may actually become more interested in and/or aware of home–country politics with time, thereby suggesting that the relationship between years abroad and interest/awareness may be not a negative linear one. In general, political interest was better explained by socio–demographic variables than political awareness, but it is worth noting that education was important for both. This also held for self–placement on a left–right scale. Certain additional factors which can contribute to (lack of) political interest when abroad were also suggested by the qualitative data.

# Chapter 4. Who votes and who abstains? Motivations and obstacles in Lithuanian emigrant voting

## 4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 advanced our understanding of which Lithuanians residing abroad are likely to be aware of and interested in politics of their home country. As part of getting a better portrait of well–informed and highly–interested Lithuanians residing abroad, it introduced awareness and interest indices. This chapter employs these two indices alongside other relevant material in taking a further step – helping to explain Lithuanian emigrant voter participation and absenteeism. Relying on quantitative and qualitative analyses, it investigates individual–level factors that are most strongly related to the decision whether or not to vote from abroad.

The rest of this introduction is organised as follows. First, to equip the reader with a fundamental understanding of Lithuanian context, the electoral process in Lithuania (concentrating mostly on the most complex elections, i.e. those of the *Seimas*) and Lithuanian external voting procedures are explained. Then, the introduction provides a summary of research on electoral (non)participation in the general political science literature (overall and Lithuanian where possible), integrating studies concentrating specifically on available works on emigrants. Based on these works, hypotheses are formulated.

### 4.1.1 Electoral process in Lithuania and external voting

Under the Constitution of Lithuania, the Parliament (or the *Seimas*) consists of 141 Members who are elected for a four–year term on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage. The election system is mixed, combining single–member districts (SMDs) (majoritarian element) and a multi–member district (MMD) (proportional element). For the purposes of organisation and execution of elections, the territory of Lithuania is divided into 71 SMDs. The division takes into account the number of inhabitants in each constituency, the partition of the territory of the country into SMDs during previous elections to the *Seimas*, and the administrative–territorial division of Lithuania. If, in the first round, an absolute majority of votes is not obtained by any of the candidates in a given district, the two candidates with the most votes compete in the second round and the one with the majority of votes then gains the seat. An MMD, i.e. a nation–wide district in which all citizens of the Republic of Lithuania are eligible to vote cast their votes, is formed as well, and 70 Members of *Seimas* are elected

here applying a proportional representation rule, party–based lists and the Hare quota (Jastramskis 2019). Unlike in countries such as Spain and the UK where emigrant votes are added to their most recent district of residence in the home country, or Belgium where emigrants can choose the voting district, the Parliament election law of Republic of Lithuania (2020) stated that abroad–based citizens are to be added to the electoral roll of the SMD in which the Republic of Lithuania's *Seimas* itself is settled. In practice, this was the Constituency number one (*Naujamiesčio*). Only for the *Seimas* election 2020 this was amended to allow for a separate emigrant district.

In a *Seimas* election, lists for voters abroad are formed in the following way (SEC 2016a). A potential voter fills in a Voter Registration Request in an electronic system of voters abroad of the Senior Election Commission (SEC). Those who are unable to fill in the request using this system can do so by arriving in person at the nearest diplomatic representation, or alternatively by post, other electronic means, or by telephone. The Voting Commission members of representations abroad connect to the electronic system, submit the data of the Voter Registration Request and verify whether the number of the document confirming citizenship that is specified in the voting request matches the number of the personal identity document saved in the electronic system of voters abroad of the SEC. Individuals who have filled in the request are included into the preliminary voters' list which is formed by the representations and confirmed by the SEC. The rules governing Presidential and European Parliament elections' electoral rolls of voting from abroad are essentially the same but there is no need to allocate voters from abroad to a specific constituency as SMDs do not come into play. A potential voter needs to repeat the registration for each election, including those Lithuanians who live abroad permanently and were included into electoral rolls of abroad–based voters for previous elections. However, there is no need to repeat the registration process for the second round of the same election, when applicable.

When it comes to casting the ballot, an abroad–residing Lithuanian has three different ways of doing so. Firstly, it is possible to return to the national territory and vote like a regular voter, but this clearly incurs high costs in terms of both money and time, unless the person plans to visit the home country anyway. This option is hence typically excluded from the definition of *external* voting. The present study agrees with this view, defining external voting in line with Ellis et al. (2007, p. 67) as '*provisions and procedures which enable some or all electors of a country who are temporarily or permanently outside the country to exercise their voting rights from outside the territory of the country*'. One of the two options for a Lithuanian to cast a vote *externally* is casting the ballot in person in a designated polling station abroad, which is generally the most widespread procedure of external voting (Honohan

2011) with an advantage of high level of transparency (Lisi et al. 2014). Secondly, unlike when voting within the national territory, external votes can be cast by post, whereby abroad–residing citizens receive electoral materials at the address of their choice, cast their vote at home, and mail it back to the diplomatic representation. This saves both time and travel money for the voter, and also allows to take as much time as needed when making the choice and consult supplementary materials easily during this process. In the case of Lithuanian voting, a prepaid stamped envelope is typically included into the package of voting materials. While these options are currently the only ones available for an abroad–based Lithuanian citizen, there are additional possibilities used in some other countries. The first is voting by proxy, where another person casts the ballot in the national territory on behalf of the abroad–residing citizen. This option, which is practiced, for instance, in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, is not presently being discussed by Lithuanian authorities. By contrast, yet another voting possibility – voting via telecommunication technologies – is recurrently discussed within the Lithuanian political arena, particularly online (internet) voting implemented in another Baltic State Estonia rather than fax voting which falls under the same category.

For a prospective voter to be placed on the electoral roll, the above–described registration process needs to be completed within a certain timeframe. Specific deadlines vary depending on the voter's country of residence. Lithuanian citizens who wanted to vote abroad in the Parliamentary election of 9th of October 2016 were able to register in the electronic system of voters abroad from 11th of May 2016. The end dates for registration to vote by post are shown in Table 10. By contrast, those wishing to vote in person in an embassy or a consular post[84] rather than by post were able to register before the end of the voting on the election day (that is, 9th of October 2016, 8 p.m. Lithuanian time (i.e. 6 p.m. GMT)). Naturally, it was then the voter's responsibility to make it to the voting poll which was open between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. GMT. Notably, although prior registration was encouraged for in–person voting abroad (which is indeed sensible considering, for instance, the experience of Tokyo polling station during the 2019 Indonesian Parliamentary and Presidential elections (see Pujiatin 2021)), Lithuanian citizens were also allowed to vote without prior registration by coming to a voting point with their passport or national identity card. Early voting was also organized in the same voting locations abroad. For example, in the UK, early voting took place at the embassy of Lithuania in London on the 6th and 7th of October 2016 between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. local time. There was no special registration procedure for early voting, and those willing to vote were able to simply come in with their identity document.

[84]In the elections examined in this thesis, in addition to voting in embassies and general consulates, it was also possible to cast a vote in World Lithuanian Center in Lemont (USA) and an Honorary Consulate General of the Republic of Lithuania in Toronto, Canada.

| Countries/regions | Last day for registration to vote by post in 9th of October 2016 Parliamentary election |
|---|---|
| South and Central American countries | 24th of September 2016 |
| African and Middle East countries | 25th of September 2016 |
| Russian Federation, Moldova, Georgia | 25th of September 2016 |
| China, Cambodia, India | 25th of September 2016 |
| Japan, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea | 25th of September 2016 |
| Armenia, Kazakhstan | 27th of September 2016 |
| Spain | 27th of September 2016 |
| Azerbaijan, Ukraine | 29th of September 2016 |
| France, Canada | 29th of September 2016 |
| Belarus | 30th of September 2016 |
| Greece, Italy | 1st of October 2016 |
| Finland, Hungary, Norway, Poland, Israel, Belgium, Denmark, Austria, Ireland | 2nd of October 2016 |
| United Kingdom, Sweden | 3rd of October 2016 |
| USA, Turkey, Romania, Netherlands, Latvia, Estonia | 4th of October 2016 |
| Czech Republic, Switzerland, Germany | 5th of October 2016 |

Table 10. Deadlines for registering to vote in *Seimas* election 2016 by post. SEC data

Similarly, Lithuanian citizens who wanted to vote abroad in the Presidential election which took place on the 11th and 25th of May 2014 and/or the European Parliament election on the 25th of May 2014 were able to register with the electronic system from the 1st of February 2014, and the deadlines (in terms of the number of days remaining between the registration end date and the election) were comparable to those in the 2016 Parliamentary election. Specifically, citizens wishing to vote by post from the United Kingdom were able to do so up to five days before the day of election, and those wishing to vote from most other European countries had time until between ten and six days before the day of election. Notably, the dates of end of registrations were selected by embassies and consular posts themselves, taking into account the perceived effectiveness of postal services in a given country. Therefore, in countries or regions where postal service was perceived to function inefficiently (Central and South America, Russia, Africa, Southeast Asia) the registration deadline was 16 days before the election.

### 4.1.2 Interest and knowledge

Voting being compulsory in very few democracies, citizens – comprising enfranchised emigrants[85] – are typically free to decide whether or not to cast a ballot in a given election. Generally speaking, emigrants, including Lithuanian ones, tend not to vote in home–country elections (Collard 2013; Smith 2014, Hutcheson & Arrighi 2015; McIlwaine & Bermudez 2015; Mencütek 2015; Gudelis & Klimavičiūtė 2016; Kostelka 2016; Merelo 2017; Belchior et al. 2018; Burgess & Tyburski 2020; Sevi et al. 2020; Mügge et al. 2021; Salamońska et al. 2021), and some vote only occasionally (Szulecki et al. 2021). Voter participation is a significant political science topic and has been studied extensively (see Campbell et al. 1954, 1960; Lewis–Beck et al. 2008) – concentrating both on macro–level (e.g. Powell 1986; Jackman 1987) and, as in the present thesis, on micro–level factors. Yet, although what lies behind a decision (not) to vote has perplexed political scientists for a long time (Downs 1957; Riker & Odershook 1968), to date researchers have not arrived at a single model of turnout (see Merlo & Palfrey 2018; Herrmann et al. 2019; Levine & Mattozzi 2020).

That said, certain factors regularly recur in the literature as correlates with electoral participation. First, there is a range of macro–level predictors (for an overview see Geys 2006; Cancela & Geys 2016; Stockemer 2017). Second – aligning with the focus of this thesis – a number of individual–level variables reoccur in the literature. One of them is **political interest**, lack of which is often reported as one of the greatest contributors to voter absenteeism (Lazarsfeld et al. 1948; Olsen 1972; Ragsdale & Rusk 1993; Brady et al. 1995; Verba et al. 1995; Blais 2000; Plane & Gershtenson 2004; Lutz & Marsh 2007; Hadjar & Beck 2010; Blais & Labbe–St–Vincent 2011; Smets & van Ham 2013; Weinschenk & Dawes 2017; see also Blais et al. 2014), although it is also important to acknowledge that voter turnout is not *analogous* to interest (see Glenn & Grimes 1968; Lafleur 2013; Szulecki et al. 2021). The importance of interest for turnout applies not only to national, but also to European–level elections (Schmitt & Mannheimer 1991;[86] Shapovalov 2019; Schmitt et al. 2020; Nonnemacher 2021).

Lithuanian literature indicates that, as a whole, Lithuanians interested in politics do participate in elections more often (see Žiliukaitė 2014a, 2014b; Jastramskis 2018c). In line with global scholarship (e.g. Finkel & Opp 1991; Heath 2007), results of a representative post–election survey conducted after the 2012 *Seimas* election suggested that respondents who felt close to some party were three times

[85]In fact, Belgium and Brazil are the only countries in the world that attempt to enforce external voting, but as it is voting as such, but not registration, that is mandatory, emigrants who do not register are in practice exempted from this enforcement (Bauböck 2009).

[86]See Chapter 3 on habit of voting.

as likely to participate in the election, and that a dislike of a specific party also increased the likelihood of voting (Žiliukaitė 2014a) – both feeling close to a party and particularly disliking one signal lack of apathy towards politics. Moreover, if, as Chapter 3 does, one views the *habit* of voting as a sign of interest, a further connection with interest suggested by the 2012 representative nation–wide survey is that Lithuanians who had voted in a previous election were three times more likely to also vote in 2012.

Considering external voting, research on apathy is naturally scarcer, yet there are a number of works that can inform the present study. Collard (2013), for instance, has reviewed research which acknowledges so–called 'politico–cultural distance' as a central influence in discouraging French expatriates from having a say in elections in France, and the effect of this concept, related to our concept of indifference, was fairly robust. Escobar et al. (2015) identified a significant relationship between home–country political interest and *intention* to vote externally. Waldinger and Duquette–Rury (2016) noted that at least a minimal concern for homeland politics needs to be present for political engagement among Ukrainian emigrants. Lafleur and Calderón Chelius (2011) underlined the importance of interest in a study of Mexican emigrants, but noted that the former does not automatically imply the latter. Mexican emigrant survey research (Waldinger & Lim (2009, cited in Lafleur 2013) also reported a habit effect in political participation, as did Merelo (2017). Lack of interest was also frequently reported among Colombian absentees from London and Madrid, although likely was not a decisive factor (McIlwaine & Bermudez 2015). Its importance in Latin America has also recently been underscored by Finn (2021). Interest was also identified as an important correlate of external voting among Finnish emigrants (Peltoniemi 2016, 2018b; Nemčok & Peltoniemi 2021). Moreover, it was a highly significant predictor of Ireland–based emigrants' participation in Polish parliamentary elections (Salamońska et al. 2021). Last but not least, it is one of the three Lithuanian external (non)voting determinants proposed by Gudelis and Klimavičiūtė (2016).

Another variable whose correlation with voting is extensively documented in empirical research (Palfrey & Poole 1987; Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996; Blondel et al. 1997; Wattenberg et al. 2000; Sanders 2001; Lassen 2005; Larcinese 2007a; WonderCon & Jones–White 2011) as well as theoretical models (e.g. Matsusaka 1995; Feddersen & Pesendorfer 1996; see also Milner 2002; Degan & Merlo 2011) is **political knowledge**. Although different researchers operationalise the term varyingly, there is a general consensus in the literature that higher levels of knowledge are related to a higher likelihood of participation – whether via providing the necessary understanding how and where to vote (Reynolds 2009), via easing voting by enabling people to make an informed choice and participate

more effectively (Verba et al. 1995; Fortin–Rittberger 2016), or via some other mechanism (e.g. Charles & Stephens Jr 2013). Knowledge appears essential both for national and European elections (Stockemer & Blais 2019). In Lithuania, Jastramskis (2018b) also reported electoral absentees to be the least politically aware.

In the context of emigrant voting, lack of knowledge was the second Lithuanian external (non)voting cause suggested by Gudelis and Klimavičiūtė (2016). More generally, Hutcheson and Arrighi (2015) consider voters abroad to be not only less affected by elections but also less informed. Empirically, there is some evidence that knowledge about elections and candidates can matter for Polish emigrants when deciding whether to vote or not (Salamońska et al. 2021). Ignorance among potential external voters from Ecuador is also hinted in studies of Boccagni (2011) and Boccagni and Ramírez (2013). In Peltoniemi's (2018b) research, knowledge of political situation back home ranked highly among the reasons of absenteeism reported by Finnish emigrants themselves, and was a significant quantitative predictor of electoral participation. Knowledge of voting procedures in particular was underscored in an empirical study of Mexican emigrants by Waldinger and Soehl (2013), and insinuated in McIlwaine and Bermudez's (2015) work. Post–electoral study of migrant voting in EP elections 2019 (European Parliament 2020) reported that 14% of participants from selected home countries[87] who voted in their homeland stated that they lacked information which would help them vote. This was one of the most frequently cited problems.

Studying educated Indonesian voters abroad, however, Pujiatin (2021) reported more complaints with electoral procedures than with information, which is what this chapter will now turn to.

### 4.1.3 Inconvenience

The third variable that needs to be considered in relation to emigrant electoral participation is **(in)convenience**. In general political science research, among the central concepts in the body of literature on turnout are *voting costs* and *voting benefits*, stemming from rational choice theory (Downs 1957). Most of the traditional literature tends to model voter turnout as an outcome of an expected cost–benefit analysis and there is an overall agreement that voting is a low–cost and low–benefit activity for the majority of the general population (Riker & Ordeshook 1968; Palfrey & Rosenthal 1985; Aldrich 1993; Feddersen 2004; Highton 2004; Lohmann 2008; Leighley & Nagler 2013). A reasonable proportion of eligible voters worldwide does cast a vote, also for reasons other than the ones just outlined — these have been suggested to include willingness to show support

[87] Romania, Portugal, Poland, the Netherlands, Hungary, Croatia, Italy, France, Spain, Greece, Germany and Bulgaria.

for democracy, a sense of duty and fear of judgement or of potential remorse (Riker & Odershook 1968; Knack 1992; Ferejohn & Fiorina 1974; Uhlaner 1989; Aldrich 1993; Blais 2000; Bufacchi 2001; Fowler & Kam 2007; Jankowski 2007; Gerber 2016). Still, in the context of cost–benefit analysis, absenteeism does not appear utterly surprising. Highton (2004) specifies that, voting being a low–benefit activity, even small voting costs may push potential voters away from casting the ballot, and that slight changes in the costs of voting might therefore have notable effects on turnout rates.

Indeed, such costs – i.e. the inconveniences involved in the process of ballot reaching the box – have been shown to affect turnout considerably in different parts of the world. The range of potential voting–related inconveniences is wide: even the weather can affect turnout by modifying the cost of voting (e.g. Fujiwara et al. 2016). However, some are more prominent than others. First, inconvenience is frequently expressed in terms of distance to the booth (Karp & Banducci 2000; Gimpel & Schuknecht 2003; Dyck & Gimpel 2005; Haspel & Knotts 2005; Brady & Mcnulty 2011; Bhatti 2012). In addition to distance, booths' opening hours were shown to have an effect on (non)voting as well (Garmann 2017; Potrafke & Roesel 2018). Another vigorously researched factor that has been demonstrated to influence turnout via reduced costs is availability of (sometimes pre–paid) postal voting (Hamilton 1988; Southwell 2004, 2010; Luechinger et al. 2007; Rallings & Thrasher 2007; Hodler et al. 2015; Schelker & Schneiter 2017) or other convenience voting means (see Gronke et al. 2008; Goodman & Stokes 2020). Legal, institutional and other procedural constraints are, naturally, influential too (King 1994; Barreto et al. 2009; Preller 2012). A negative impact of registration requirements in particular has received strong empirical support (Ansolabehere & Konisky 2006; Geys 2006; Neiheisel & Burden 2012; Burden et al. 2014; Nickerson 2015, Bhatt et al. 2020; see also Brians & Carter 1999; Highton 2004). Registration deadlines matter as well (Vonnahme 2012; Street 2015; Braconnier et al. 2017). The fact that effect of these costs is not universal within groups also indicates that, whilst some researchers may perceive many of the voting costs as aggregate–level inconveniences, there is a degree of subjectivity in voting costs (Galicki 2018). Inconvenience hence remains a relevant variable even in studies with an individual–level focus.

Importantly, while voting benefits for emigrants may not differ much from the general population (e.g. potential satisfaction with the success of preferred politicians, showing support to democracy, and avoiding the negative feelings as outlined above), their voting costs are likely to be noticeably larger (Kostelka 2016; Szulecki et al. 2021). Indeed, those residing abroad can be especially vulnerable to voting costs due to factors such as registration difficulties or inability to vote by specific means such as by post or in–person in an embassy. Importantly, Highton (2004) also notes that the turnout of

different voter groups may be affected by voting cost changes differently. Research has actually identified that procedural inconveniences can disadvantage minorities (Barreto et al. 2009; Hajnal et al. 2017). This can potentially also be true for emigrant versus non–emigrant populations, with external voters reacting to reductions of voting costs, such as provision of the possibility to vote online or the establishment of more polling stations, more profoundly due to a larger relative cost reduction (see also Boccagni & Ramírez 2013).

In support of this reasoning, Squire et al. (1987) demonstrated internal American migration, and the following need to re–register for voting, to be related to absenteeism. Furthermore, in line with the general political science literature, Finnish emigrant research (Peltoniemi 2016, 2018b; see also Nemčok & Peltoniemi 2021) suggested distance to the voting booth to affect emigrants' decision to vote or abstain in the homeland. An increase of polling stations also correlates with external voting in several countries at aggregate level (Burean 2011). At a macro level, a sizeable increase in Italian external voting,[88] and a moderate increase in the case of Sweden were identified too (Battiston & Mascitelli 2008; Peltoniemi 2018b). This is, of course, foreseeable: the more restraining the voting arrangements, the less probable it is that external votes will be cast (Bauböck 2007b; see also Ciornei and Østergaard–Nielsen 2015). In the context of Turkish external turnout, Burgess and Tyburski (2020) noted the importance of transportation to the polls, Mügge et al. (2021) underlined a negative effect of voting by appointment, and Mencütek (2015) reported criticisms of external voting procedures more generally. In European Parliament's (2020) post–EP–election study, considerably more surveyed expatriates (53% vs. 15%) reported voting difficulties if voting in home– rather than host–country election. Those voting in the homeland election reported above all large distance to the polling station, but also registration problems (e.g. Hungarians, Poles), the need for registration itself (e.g. Germans), inability for polling stations to accommodate all voters (specifically in the case of Romania), and non–availability of convenience voting means (above all Poles).

Considering specifically convenience voting means, Hamer (2017) has noted a strong decline in New Zealand external voting at the time of difficulty to access fax machines, and an even steeper rise of voting from abroad upon provision of online voting. Similarly, postal voting provision has been demonstrated to encourage external Portuguese voting (Belchior et al. 2018), and Hutcheson and Arrighi's (2015) account of institutional limitations of external voting across the EU again signals a positive effect of voting online. There is also macro–level evidence that voting being more convenient

[88]Although in this case a dedicated constituency was introduced simultaneously, which is likely responsible for part of the effect.

(e.g. e–voting, postal voting) contributes to turnout and can modify the significance of other predictors (Belchior et al. 2018; Ciornei & Østergaard–Nielsen 2020). Facilitating voting abroad has also be shown to increase voter satisfaction, and thereby probable retention (Smith 2014). Germann's (2021) analyses of Swiss data suggested e–voting to be an effective way to increase emigrant voting, but not a 'magic bullet' (see also Herrnson et al. 2015). Indeed, convenience voting means are not entirely cost–free: Lafleur and Calderón Chelius (2011), for example, underscore Mexican's associations' dissatisfaction with both monetary and non–monetary costs of postal voting. Lastly, in line with general political science literature, Lafleur and Calderón Chelius (2011), Lafleur (2013), McIlwaine and Bermudez (2015) and Finn (2021) identified registration requirements as possible external voting interferences.[89] The latter study also signaled inconveniences related to a possible need to skip work on the election day. In the Lithuanian emigration context, Gudelis and Klimavičiūtė (2016) reasoned that lack of access to voting likely constitutes the third factor behind low external turnout.

In agreement with the above–mentioned works it appears that the first electoral step – registering voters abroad – can already impose inconveniences in translating voting intentions to votes particularly among Lithuanian emigrants even when such intentions are present. As explained in Section 4.1.1, in Lithuanian elections examined in this dissertation, registration to vote from abroad was active rather than passive. It could have been undertaken online (following a dedicated weblink or via email) as well as by phone, by post or in person. However, a variety of means to actively register before a given election does not imply that the process is necessarily easy. In this context it is important to note that, for instance, within the US, every citizen needs to actively register to vote for each election and therefore the concept of active voter registration is generally familiar to everyone. This sharply contrasts with the environment familiar to Lithuanian voters (and those in the CEE more broadly – see Kostelka 2016) where a citizen generally does not need to make an effort to ensure that his or her name is included on the relevant electoral roll, with the exception of those who want to vote from abroad by post (although those who want to vote in person are also encouraged to register). It is possible that for Lithuanians who are used to passive registration this additional inconvenience may constitute a 'deal breaker'.

[89]While it acknowledges the importance of external difficulties for voting from abroad, the present work does not intend to be generalisable to cases where external voting is not permitted or is prevented by major constraints discussed by Chaudhary and Moss (2019).

In this context it is pertinent to also underline the evidence suggesting that people's interest in an election rises as the election approaches. As early as in 1967, Kelley et al. examined differences in voter registration in various US cities and reported a decrease of registration levels reaching 15 percentage points for the places with a registration deadline of over three months before an election. Three months is a much longer period of time than the gap between the registration deadline and the election faced by Lithuanian emigrants. However, subsequent research has also more generally suggested that '*whatever the costs associated with registration, people will be more interested and therefore more likely to deal with them closer to election day'* (Highton 2004, p. 508). It is possible that for emigrants who are used to hassle–free last–minute voting back home, even a week from an election may prove too far to meet the registration deadline as their interest may surge even later.

Those emigrants who do get on the electoral roll then need to actually cast their vote, and this stage may also witness a loss of potential votes due to inconvenience. Lafleur and Sánchez–Domínguez (2015) reported that 73% of registered Bolivians had cast a vote in polling stations abroad on Presidential election day in 2009, which shows that over a quarter did not do so. For an average Lithuanian voter abroad, the voting process, including the registration, the trip (if voting at a booth) or obtaining the ballot (if voting by post) typically takes more time and effort than for an average voter based in Lithuania. In the case of in–person voting, unless the emigrant happens to live close to the diplomatic representation where voting takes place, the monetary cost of the trip is also normally larger abroad. Although it could be argued that the purchasing power of an average emigrant is also larger than that of home–based Lithuanians, this is not the case for all emigrants. Notably, in the case of Lithuanian elections examined in this thesis, the available polling stations were nearly exclusively embassies and consulates, while countries such as Peru accommodate their external voters by establishing additional polling stations in cities with highly concentrated emigrant communities (Lafleur 2013) – the former strategy means higher average distance to the booth. What is more, as described in Section 4.1.1, for Europe–based Lithuanians the deadline of voting registration falls relatively close to the election itself, not exceeding ten days in the majority of European countries for all three elections covered by this dissertation. Although from the perspective of voters it is desirable to leave the registration deadline as late as possible in order for them to gather both information and motivation to participate, a week or ten days leaves very little time for organisational procedures that need to take place between voters' registration and actual voting. For a postal vote to count as valid, it needs to be posted to the diplomatic representation no later than on the day of the election. Before that, the representation needs to prepare the package of electoral materials, send it out to the voter, and, most importantly, it needs to reach the voter by post. As has been pointed out (Lafleur 2013;

Nemčok & Peltoniemi 2021), this requires reliable post services in the host country of the voter. A possibility therefore remains that some external voters who leave registering until late may not receive their documents in time in spite of requesting them within the required timeframe.

To sum up the last three sections, a large body of literature on both general and emigrant voting suggests that interest, knowledge and (in)convenience are likely to play a role in Lithuanian emigrant (non)voting. Relying on this scholarship, the present chapter **hypothesises that home–country political interest and knowledge increase voting among Lithuanian emigrants, and that inconvenience lowers it.**

### 4.1.4 Socio–demographic factors

We shall now move on to consider socio–democratic variables behind emigrant (non)voting. The first such factor which has been researched for a long time is **gender** (Verba et al. 1978). Historically, likely due to late enfranchisement (Franklin 2004), men voted at higher rates than women (Tingsten 1937; Almond & Verba 1963; Verba & Nie 1972; Schlozman et al. 1994). Eventually, however, in many democracies this gap became minimised or absent, if not reversed (Bennett & Bennett 1991; Norris 1991, 2002, Conway et al. 1997; Verba et al. 1997; Inglehart & Norris 2000, 2003; Childs 2004; Gallego 2007; Lewis–Beck et al. 2008; Coffé & Bolzendahl 2010; Marien et al. 2010; Smets & van Ham 2013; Carreras & Castañeda–Angarita 2014; Alexander & Coffé 2018; Beauregard 2018; Carreras 2018), although there also were exceptions (e.g. Abramowitz 2009; Stadelmann–Steffen & Koller 2014). Nonetheless, several studies suggested that women still vote less than men in second–order elections (Söderlund et al. 2011; Blais & Kostelka 2015; Kostelka & Gidengil 2019; Dassonneville & Kostelka 2021). There is also some evidence that the gender effect may be more pronounced in younger democracies, including post–communist ones (Desposato & Norrander 2009; Smith 2009). In the most recent Lithuanian election examined in this study, women were slightly more likely to vote within each age group up to the age of 65, as demonstrated by Figure 6 and Figure 7. It is worth noting that in Lithuania women were enfranchised earlier than in many other countries (in 1918).

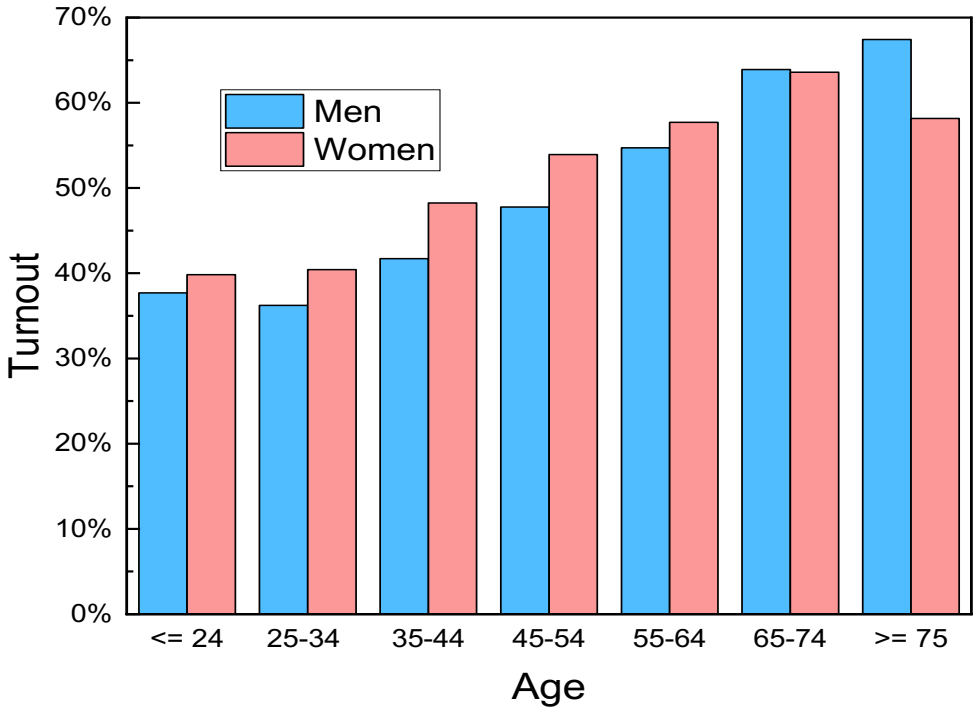



Figure 6. Male and female turnout (percentage) by age groups in *Seimas* election 2016 (first round), all voters. Calculated from SEC data

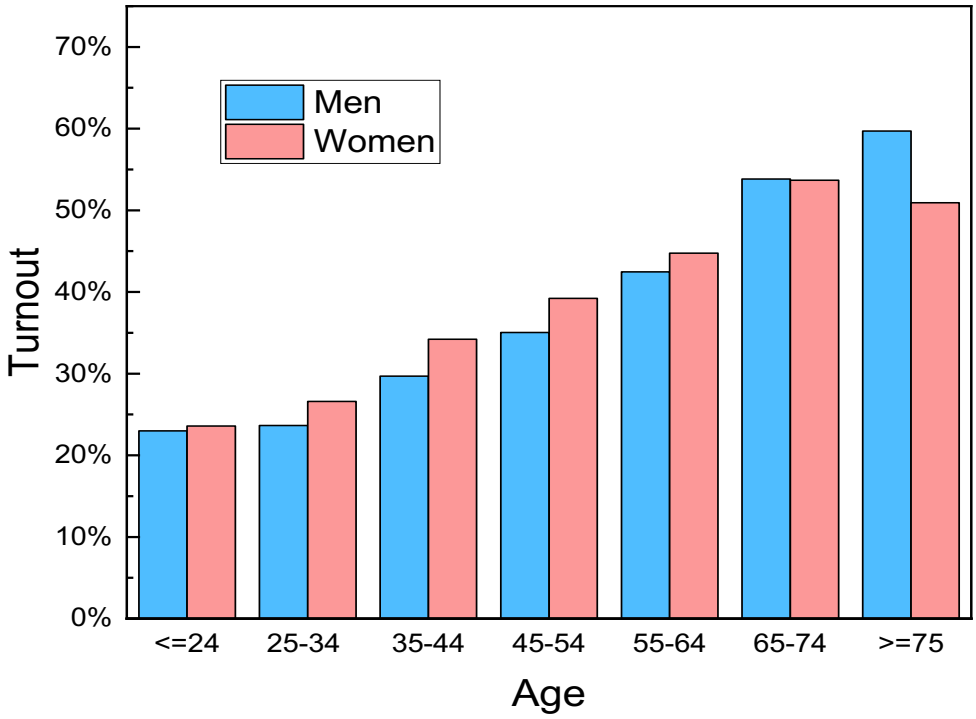



Figure 7. Male and female turnout (percentage) by age groups in *Seimas* election 2016 (second round), all voters. Calculated from SEC data

In the emigration context, Jones–Correa (1998) has argued that Latin American men should more often lean towards homeland politics than women, which was supported by Goldring's (2001) empirical study of Mexicans in the USA. Voting back home was also significantly more common among males in Waldinger's (2008) examination of USA–based Latino emigrants. It was also more frequent among male Turks in the Netherlands (Mügge et al 2021) and male Poles in the UK (Ahmadov & Sasse 2016b). Guarnizo et al. (2003) also found that male Dominicans, Salvadorans and Colombians residing in four U.S. cities were more likely to participate in transnational activities than females. Swiss emigrants in France, Germany, Italy and the USA demonstrated this pattern in the study of Schlenker et al. (2017) too. Gender was also significant in predicting Latin American emigrant participation in sociocultural transnational activities (Itzigsohn & Saucedo 2002). Yet, no effect of gender was observed in Finnish external voting data by Peltoniemi (2016, 2018b), nor in Romanian data by Gherghina and Tseng (2016). The same held for Polish data in the research of Salamońska et al. (2021) and Chaudhary's (2018) study of 12 migrant groups in seven European cities. Ahmadov and Sasse (2016a) reported an effect of gender using a non–conventional significance level of 10%.

In the general political science research, another common correlate of (non)voting is **age**. A considerable body of international literature addressed the difference between older and younger shares of electorate, young people typically abstaining more often (Wolfinger & Rosenstone 1980; Teixera 1992; Delli Carpini 2000; Kimberlee 2002; Plutzer 2002; Franklin 2004; Franklin et al. 2004; Esser & De Vreese 2007; Hadjar & Beck 2010; Henn & Ford 2012). This effect applies to voting both at national and at European level (Stockemer & Blais 2019). In fact, young people's absenteeism is often seen as one of the key reasons of declining turnout in general populations (Dostie–Goulet 2009). Part of the general Western literature suggested age to affect voting in an inversed–U–shaped form (Glenn & Grimes 1968; Wolfinger & Rosenstone 1980; Highton & Wolfinger 2001), participation peaking possibly due to a concurrent peak of interest and perceived competence in politics as well as adherence to social norms (Campbell et al. 1960; Glenn & Grimes 1968; Goerres 2007). As for Lithuanian voters, however, evidence indicates that the older one is, the more likely he or she is to vote (Gedutienė et al. 2011; Žiliukaitė 2014a),[90] as is also visible in Figure 6 and Figure 7 above.[91]

Considering specifically external voting, in Polish emigrant research older individuals were more likely to vote back home (Salamońska et al. 2021). Effect of age was also significant in Chaudhary's (2018) work, Morales and Pilati's (2014) study, and Gherghina's and Tseng's (2016) research. Young people's tendency not to vote abroad can also be observed in studies by Schlenker et al. (2017), Finn (2020) and Mügge et al. (2021). Ahmadov and Sasse (2016b) also report a significant effect. In Guarnizo's et al. (2003) and Peltoniemi's (2016, 2018b) investigations, the effect was non–linear. There were also quantitative studies of emigrant transnational participation where no significant effect of age was identified (e.g. Itzigsohn & Saucedo 2002 (socio–cultural activities), Ahmadov & Sasse 2016a). Interestingly, in a macro–level analysis of Turkish emigrants, Sevi et al. (2020) found an effect in the opposite direction of average age of migrants in different communities abroad.

Although the exact causal mechanism is still under question (Persson 2015; Willeck & Mendelberg 2022), **education** has also been thoroughly studied as an explanatory factor in electoral research (Smets & Van Ham 2013). General political science works have demonstrated a robust connection between education and electoral participation (Lipset 1960; Almond & Verba 1963; Wolfinger &

[90]Exceptions do occur: for instance, younger Lithuanian citizens were more likely to cast a vote in 2012 *Seimas* election.

[91]It should also be noted that differences in voter turnout in different age groups can be related to different experiences and different other social characteristics of certain generations rather than to ageing as such (Henn et al. 2002; Blais et al. 2004; Dalton 2008). Ramonaitė's (2006a) and Žiliukaitė's (2008) quantitative and qualitative research suggested that younger individuals' (non)voting is more often related to expected utility, and those of older generations – to commitment and traditional values as well as patriotism, which are much stronger among inter–war and WW2 generations than the later ones (Žiliukaitė 2007).

Rosenstone 1980; Verba & Nie 1987; Verba et al. 1995; Nie et al. 1996; van Egmond et al. 1998; Gallego 2010; Hadjar & Beck 2010; Tarrow 2011; Schlozman et al. 2012; Persson 2015). Notably, there is some evidence that the effect of education is even stronger in post–communist societies (Smith 2009). Considering Lithuanian citizens in particular, university–degree holders have been reported as more likely to vote (Žiliukaitė 2014a; see also Jastramskis 2018b).

Regarding abroad–based electorates, in Guarnizo's et al. (2003) study emigrants' education increased the likelihood of transnational activities, and in Ahmadov & Sasse's (2016a; see also Burgess 2014) research college–level education had an effect on how many homeland political activities they were engaged in. Relationship between education and external voting has been detected among Romanian emigrants (Gherghina & Tseng 2016) and Mexican ones (see Lafleur & Calderón Chelius 2011; Leal et al. 2012). In a study of Mügge et al. (2021) highly educated Turks were also most likely to vote from abroad, and the same was true for Swiss emigrants (Schlenker et al. 2017). Chaudhary's (2018) work, too, suggested a higher likelihood of voting back home among educated emigrants from different countries of origin. Education was a significant predictor of Latin American emigrant participation in socio–cultural transnational activities as well (Itzigsohn & Saucedo 2002). In contrast, Peltoniemi's (2018a, 2018b) findings on education of Finns abroad and voting in the homeland have been inconsistent. Ahmadov and Sasse (2016b) and Salamońska et al. (2021) found no effect among Poles in the UK and Ireland respectively.

**Income** is another powerful predictor of (non)voting in general electoral literature (Smets & van Hamm 2013) which has been demonstrated to increase the likelihood of voting in the USA (Wolfinger & Rosenstone 1980; Filer et a. 1993; Rosenstone & Hansen 1993; Verba et al. 1995; Nevitte et al. 2009; Schlozman et al. 2012; Leighley & Nagler 2013; Avery 2015; Matsubayashi & Sakaiya 2018) and beyond (Verba et al. 1978; Mueller & Stratmann 2003; Anderson & Beramendi 2008; Gallego 2015; Kasara & Suryanarayan 2015; Matsubayashi & Sakaiya 2018). As for external voting, income level was a strong predictor of ballot solicitation among Mexicans abroad (Leal et al. 2012), although it had no significant effect in Waldinger's (2008) study – and in Escobar's (2015) work it was explained away by migration circumstances. Schlenker et al. (2017) do report a significant positive effect of higher income.

Early on, political science suggested that urban electorate (those coming from **cities rather than smaller establishments**) votes more often (e.g. Lipset 1960), although numerous exceptions have surfaced since then (Kavanagh et al. 2004; Turovsky & Korneeva 2018; Durkan 2021). The urban/rural cleavage is historically relevant for Lithuania too (Lopata 1998), although the disagreement typically

occurs in the form of voting preferences (Kowalski 2019) which is a focus of the next chapter. Size of place of residence in home countries received some attention in external voting studies as well. Specifically, Ahmadov and Sasse (2016a) investigated whether coming from the capital makes Ukranians more engaged back home, but a significant effect was not found. However, it was detected among Poles in the UK in another study of these researchers (Ahmadov & Sasse 2016b). Salamońska et al. (2021) reported that Poles residing in countryside or small towns as opposed to Dublin were less likely to vote in the homeland. Likely relating to locations of polling stations, post–electoral study of migrant voting in EP elections 2019 (European Parliament 2020) reported more of the surveyed emigrants who had voted in home– rather than host–country election to have resided in cities.

**Type of main activity**, effect of which exists even when controlling for education and income (van Egmond et al. 1998), remains another relevant variable in electoral studies (Martikainen et al. 2005; Caínzo & Voces 2010; Lahtinen et al. 2017).[92] In Ahmadov's and Sasse's (2016a) study, being unemployed mattered for electoral participation back in Ukraine. Unemployed Salvadorians were also significantly less likely to engage in sociocultural transnational participation than labourers (Itzigsohn & Saucedo 2002). In comparison with white–collar workers, blue–collar Poles in the UK had lower electoral engagement with Poland (Ahmadov & Sasse 2016b). As emigrant research does not tell us much about all the categories of this variable employed in the present study, it will empirically be explored without predetermined hypotheses.

Finally, considering a variable that is technically not a socio–demographic one but is suitable to be discussed among them – namely **political position** – general political science research is inconclusive. There is some evidence that non–voters are on average more left–leaning than voters (Bechtel et al. 2016; Bol & Giani 2019; Dassonneville et al. 2021). However, there is also counter–evidence (e.g. Fisher 2007; Ferwerda 2014), and effects are typically small in any case. This variable is not habitually researched in external turnout studies and takes a role of a control variable in the present one.

In summary, general political science research and external voting research suggest a number of potential socio–demographic covariates of Lithuanian external voting. Relying on these works, this chapter **hypothesises that older Lithuanians, better educated Lithuanians, those earning more, and men are more likely to vote in the homeland**. The chapter also puts forward **a hypothesis that those**

[92]Technically, these studies use main activity measures to assess social class. The present study includes 'studying' as a separate activity category, hence deeming it more accurate to call the measure main activity (or, in quantitative models, 'occupation' for the sake of simplicity).

**residing in cities in the host country, and those having resided in cities back in Lithuania, vote back home more often**.

### 4.1.5 Migration circumstances

We shall now consider key factors that are relevant exclusively to migrant (non)voting. The first one is **time** that emigrants have spent out of their homeland. This variable is, unsurprisingly, also addressed in host–country political participation studies, although research on its importance has not been conclusive (e.g. de Rooij 2012; Voicu & Comşa 2014; Spies et al. 2020) (see also Chapter 6). With regard to home countries, Waldinger's (2008; see also Waldinger 2015) study of Latin Americans in the USA found that the probability of external voting decreased with time. This is consistent with Morales and Pilati's (2014) findings on Ecuadorians in European cities. The effect was also identified among Ukrainian electorate spread across 15 host countries (Ahmadov & Sasse 2016a) and Polish emigrants in the UK (Ahmadov & Sasse 2016b). Chaudhary (2018) also reported length of stay abroad (in Europe) to be negatively associated with the likelihood of having participated in the last election of numerous home countries. Gherghina and Tseng (2016) found the same effect of time on having participated in any election back home among Romanians residing in France, Germany, Italy and Spain. Peltoniemi (2016, 2018b) observed an effect in the same direction studying Finns abroad. There was some evidence of a non–linear effect in Finn's (2020) work, though one should be wary of the categorisation of respondents by this author. At a macro level, areas with higher percentage of recent emigrants showed more inclination to vote in Leal et al.'s (2012) study of Mexicans in the USA. By contrast, Escobar (2015) and Salamońska et al. (2021) failed to find a significant effect of time, and Guarnizo et al. (2003) in fact found an opposite effect of years abroad on emigrant transborder political activities. Indeed, it is possible that at least some emigrants actually increase their political participation back home with time (Fitzgerald 2006). Itzigsohn and Saucedo's (2002) data also indicated that more time in the host country may lead to an increased likelihood of socio–cultural transnational participation.

The second factor relevant exclusively to migrant electoral participation is **intention to return** to the country of origin. So far, the empirical evidence for significance of this variable is not abundant, but a number of scholars saw a theoretical basis for its examination. Finn's (2020) research signaled the importance of plans to leave the host country for homeland elections. Ahmadov and Sasse (2016b) reported more homeland electoral activities among UK–based Poles expecting to return. Whether their *families* expected them to return also increased the likelihood of transnational activities in Guarnizo's et al. (2003) study. However, in work of Salamońska et al. (2021) future plans did not affect

the likelihood of voting back in Poland. This was also the case in Gherghina and Tseng's (2016) study. Lastly, Escobar et al. (2015) failed to detect a significant relationship between wishing to return to Columbia and intention to vote externally as well.

Taking the relevant works into account, this chapter puts forward two hypotheses. First, **time spent abroad is hypothesised to decrease the likelihood of voting back home in Lithuania**. Second**, intention to return is hypothesised to increase the likelihood of voting in Lithuania**.

### 4.1.6 Trust and efficacy

In addition to the already described factors, two other elements can be expected to play a role in Lithuanian emigrant (non)voting. The first one is **institutional trust,** at times also referred to as political trust[93] or trust in government (Miller & Listhaug 1990; Mishler & Rose 2001; Dahlberg & Linde 2018). Trust '*reflects evaluations of whether or not political authorities and institutions are performing in accordance with the normative expectations held by the public'* (Miller & Listhaug 1990, p. 358) and has been linked to voter absenteeism in the general electoral literature (Bélanger & Nadeau 2005; Grönlund & Milner 2006; Grönlund & Setälä 2007; Hadjar & Beck 2010; Bélanger 2017). In post–communist countries, including Lithuania, political trust is generally rather low (Howard 2002; Kostadinova 2009; Mishler & Rose 2001; Nardis 2015; Park 2015). There is evidence that trust constitutes a significant voting prerequisite in Lithuanian elections as well (Žiliukaitė 2014a; see also Jastramskis 2018b).

Evidence suggests that homeland political trust does not necessarily remain stable in emigration (Vento 2021). Interestingly, whilst scholars like Gudelis and Klimavičiūtė (2016) evaluate Lithuanian emigrants' political trust as low, in empirical work self–selected emigrants in fact reported higher political trust than their self–selected compatriots in Lithuania (Markšaitytė et al. 2017). Migration literature also suggests trust to be an important factor in political participation in one's *host* country (de Rooij 2012; Salamońska et al. 2021). Regarding home countries, there is considerable evidence that lack of trust plays a role in Columbian emigrant non–voting (Guarnizo & Diaz 1999; Guarnizo & Chaudhary 2014; McIlwaine & Bermudez 2015; Chaudhary 2018) and that of other Latin American countries more generally (Boccagni 2011; Boccagni et al. 2015; Finn 2021; see also Lafleur & Calderón Chelius 2011). By contrast, Salamońska et al. did not find a significant effect among Poles in Ireland for home–country turnout. It has also been shown that different kind of trust – that in postal voting –

[93]Others, however operationalise 'political trust' differently: see, e.g., Mügge et al. (2021).

can play a role in voting decisions abroad (Nemčok & Peltoniemi 2021). Focusing on trust in home countries' institutions in particular, the effect may in fact not be straightforward to assess quantitatively. This is because distrusting migrants may decide to boycott elections, but alternatively they may be especially keen to contribute to changes back home whenever possible (Lafleur & Calderón Chelius 2011; see also Fennema & Tillie 1999), especially if witnessing a better situation in the host country. This is, however, of a lesser concern in qualitative investigations.

The second of these factors is **political efficacy.** Efficacy refers to the *'conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce the outcomes*' (Bandura 1977, p. 193), political scientists often distinguishing *political* efficacy as the '*feeling that political and social change is possible and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change*' (Campbell et al. 1954, p. 187; see also Niemi et al. 1991). Indeed, we may expect that individuals who think that their actions do lead to consequences notwithstanding possible external disruptions are the ones believing that they can actually make an electoral difference. Literature suggests that in non–migrant populations it is related to (non)voting both at country– and EU–level, as well as other forms of political participation (Campbell et al. 1960; Finkel 1985, 1987; Hadjar & Beck 2010; Shapovalov 2019).

In emigration context, financially successful return migrants from Eastern Europe have a deeper sense of political efficacy (Careja & Emmeneger 2012). Regarding voting when abroad, however, Salamońska et al. (2021) found a significant effect of efficacy on electoral participation in Ireland but not in Poland among Ireland–based Poles. In Morales and Pilaiti's (2014) work, electoral political transnationalism was not well predicted by political efficacy. This notwithstanding, Boccagni and Ramírez's (2013) qualitative data signals that a belief that their vote influences the country's future can be prevalent among a considerable share of Ecuadorean external voters.

In the light of the existing research, the present work **hypothesises that higher levels of political trust and efficacy positively influence Lithuanian emigrants' turnout**.

### 4.1.7 Other variables

In parallel with the previous chapter, the present section takes note of other key variables that have been signaled by empirical works to also be relevant, even though they are not tested in the present study. First, it is worth noting that the variables discussed in this regard in Chapter 3 may in principle also be relevant in the present one even if the evidence is inconsistent (e.g. Schlenker et al. 2017, Ahmadov & Sasse 2016b on dual citizenship and voting in the host country). Next, given the focus of

this thesis on individuals, many of presently untested variables are macro–level factors (a micro– and macro– level division is common also in general electoral studies (Silverman 1991) even though it is in principle possible to test both). In line with Belchior et al. (2018), it is helpful to classify those macro–level variables into socio–economic, political, and institutional contextual factors. Socio–economic background of the country of residence (ibid.; Firdmuc & Doyle 2004; Ahmadov & Sasse 2016a) as well as remittance levels (Ciornei & Østergaard–Nielsen 2020) have been suggested to be particularly relevant. As for political factors, the level of democracy in the host country has been argued to be most important (Fidrmuc & Doyle 2004; Belchior et al. 2018; Ciornei & Østergaard–Nielsen 2020). Home–country political characteristics also seem relevant (see Morales & Pilati 2014; Moss 2020). As for institutional variables, Belchior et al. (2018) have demonstrated importance of voting methods in particular. While the present study does address this factor by revealing an influence of a *perceived* inability to vote by post at the individual level, as a study of a single country it is unable to engage into state–level comparisons. In further work it would indeed be worthwhile to monitor this effect systematically by comparing Lithuania with (preferably) a CEE country that offers fewer ways to vote (e.g. the Czech Republic) and one that offers even more ways to vote (especially e–voting, which is available in Estonia, another Baltic State). Similarly, a comparative and/or longitudinal approach would be more suitable for evaluating a possible effect of the manner in which external votes are incorporated into the electoral system (see Collyer 2014; Section 3.3.5) and of compulsory voting for internal voters back home (Berg & Tamagno 2006).

Another potentially relevant factor is émigré engagement policies in the sending country (Escobar 2007; Lyons & Mandaville 2010; Boccagni 2014; Morales & Pilati 2014; Caudhary 2018; see also Itzigsohn & Villacrés 2008; Collyer 2014). In the present work, Lithuanian emigration policy and certain implications were discussed in the introductory chapter, but, again, a case study is not suited to provide a comparative perspective. Relatedly, party engagement with the electorates abroad may also play its part (see Gamlen 2015; Lafleur & Sánchez–Domínguez's 2015; Burgess 2018; Østergaard–Nielsen & Ciornei 2019a; Burgess & Tyburski 2020; Kernalegenn et al. 2021; Umpierrez de Reguero & Dandoy 2021; van Haute & Kernalegenn 2021). Influence of this was not tested at the micro level, and the overall low engagement of Lithuanian parties and politicians abroad would not allow one to fruitfully employ, for example, one's place of residence to account for this as a proxy. In line with Chapter 3 and certain studies (Ahmadov & Sasse 2016a; Schlenker et al. (2017; see also Morales & Pilati 2014, Bloemraad et al. 2022), one may also expect membership in associations (either emigrant or any) as well as emigrant networks more generally to be related to voting from abroad. Finally, it is also possible that some emigrants vote not to influence political results but due to factors like

nostalgia and mere opportunity to gather together (Boccagni, 2011, 2014; Boccagni & Ramírez, 2013), or perceived legitimacy of external voting (Szulecki et al. 2021).

It should also more generally be noted that the present work does not engage with variables related to the host countries. In order to preserve sufficient statistical power to make all of the comparisons that it did address, the study did not divide respondents in terms of their destinations. Equally importantly with the first motive, it needs be underscored that one's destination may in principle be used as a proxy for a wide range of factors (including the already discussed ones, but also emigrant networks, available consular services, discrimination, and many more). Strong theoretical background and/or more specific proxies than a country itself would be needed to interpret destination effects meaningfully, also reflecting on possible factors underlying the choice of destination country itself, and the associated different post–migration experiences.

## 4.2 Data

### 4.2.1 Lithuanian internal and external voting rates

Before moving on to testing the above–introduced hypotheses with first–hand data, it is useful to discuss the extent to which Lithuanians abroad have been participating in home–country elections in comparison to their home–based compatriots. A comparison of 'internal' (i.e. those residing and voting within the national territory) and external Lithuanian voting rates is not straightforward. As has already been discussed, accurate lists of Lithuanian emigrants do not exist, implying that there is also no clear understanding of how many eligible voters are present abroad. SEC goes around this issue by understanding voters who register themselves as intending to vote from abroad in a given election as 'eligible voters' and subsequently calculating external turnout from this figure. This, unsurprisingly, results in unstable turnout rates that can be much higher than home–based voters' turnout rates, as those emigrants who actively register already demonstrate keenness to take part and tend to do so. At the same time, those who do not register are not interpreted as 'eligible voters' although, in principle, they are eligible to vote from abroad and some even do so by turning up to a voting station without registration. Monitoring turnout rates in this manner can nonetheless be useful: for instance, it can enlighten the existence of external problems preventing those willing to vote from abroad from doing so, and this approach was in fact used in the study of Belchior et al. (2018). A comparison of internal and external voter turnout expressed in percentages is provided in Table 11 that covers elections in which Lithuanians were able to vote externally between establishing indepence from the

Soviet Union[94] and 2016[95] – the year the last election examined by this thesis took place. From the table it can first of all be seen that, subject to recording registered voters as eligible external voters, external turnout is indeed often higher than internal turnout, although exceptions certainly happened in the early days of independence, possibly due to limited experience in organisation of external voting process.

[94]Not including the Supreme Council–Restorative *Seimas* election (1990).

[95]Due to data limitations regarding second rounds of *Seimas* elections, only data on the most recent election is portrayed in this table.

| Election date | Election type | Home ('internal') | | | Abroad ('external') | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Eligible voters | Turnout | Percentage | Eligible voters | Turnout | Percentage |
| 25th of October 1992 | Election to the Seimas | 2,547,452 | 1,917,073 | 75.3 | 2,500* | 2,000* | 80.0 |
| 14th of February 1993 | Presidential Election | 2,560,466 | 2,012,420 | 78.6 | 7,550 | 6,595 | 87.3 |
| 20th of October 1996 | Election to the Seimas | 2,588,029 | 1,370,703 | 53.0 | 9,501 | 3,970 | 41.8 |
| 21st of December 1997 | Presidential Election | 2,612,528 | 1,869,757 | 71.6 | 11,784 | 5,391 | 45.8 |
| 4th of January 1998 | Presidential Election (round two) | 2,618,964 | 1,932,352 | 73.8 | 11,717 | 5,434 | 46.4 |
| 8th of October 2000 | Election to the Seimas | 2,614,782 | 1,534,120 | 58.7 | 11,539 | 5,623 | 48.7 |
| 22nd of December 2002 | Presidential Election | 2,709,608 | 1,459,124 | 53.9 | 10,000* | 7,412 | 74.1 |
| 5th of January 2003 | Presidential Election (round two) | 2,717,805 | 1,429,361 | 52.6 | 10,000* | 6,961 | 69.6 |
| 13th of June 2004 | Election to the EP | 2,638,429 | 1,273,849 | 48.3 | 15,882 | 10,201 | 64.2 |
| 13th of June 2004 | Presidential Election | 2,638,443 | 1,274,053 | 48.3 | 16,866 | 11,014 | 65.3 |
| 27th of June 2004 | Presidential Election (round two) | 2,641,967 | 1,383,533 | 52.4 | 17,244 | 11,570 | 67.1 |
| 10th of October 2004 | Election to the Seimas | 2,649,216 | 1,219,340 | 46.0 | 16,980 | 9,313 | 54.9 |
| 12th of October 2008 | Election to the Seimas | 2,679,841 | 1,299,620 | 48.5 | 16,249 | 10,345 | 63.7 |
| 17th of May 2009 | Presidential Election | 2,671,731 | 1,378,037 | 51.6 | 19,872 | 15,241 | 76.7 |
| 7th of June 2009 | Election to the EP | 2,676,515 | 554,602 | 20.7 | 15,882 | 10,201 | 64.2 |
| 14th of October 2012 | Election to the Seimas | 2,571,410 | 1,356,953 | 52.8 | 17,008 | 13,061 | 76.8 |
| 11th of May 2014 | Presidential Election | 2,537,591 | 1,320,425 | 52.0 | 15,744 | 13,241 | 84.1 |
| 25th of May 2014 | Presidential Election (round two) | 2,540,494 | 1,197,450 | 47.1 | 18,904 | 14,924 | 79.0 |
| 25th of May 2014 | Election to the EP | 2,540,140 | 1,197,380 | 47.1 | 17,815 | 13,902 | 78.0 |
| 9th of October 2016 | Election to the Seimas | 2,476,423 | 1,257,026 | 50.8 | 19,207 | 16,401 | 85.4 |
| 23rd of October 2016 | Election to the Seimas (round two) | 2,385,742 | 904,323 | 37.9 | 19,401 | 12,096 | 62.4 |

Table 11. Internal and external voter turnout in Lithuanian elections. Calculated from SEC data. * – only approximate figure available

Due to the inherent instability of calculating external turnout in percentage terms, in many contexts it becomes more meaningful to observe *absolute* turnout. Monitoring turnout this way helps us understand the growing importance of Lithuanian voters abroad. Figure 8 demonstrates how absolute external voting rates have been increasing for *Seimas* elections since regaining independence, while participation within the national territory has decreased.[96] A comparable trend for Presidential elections is shown by Figure 9.

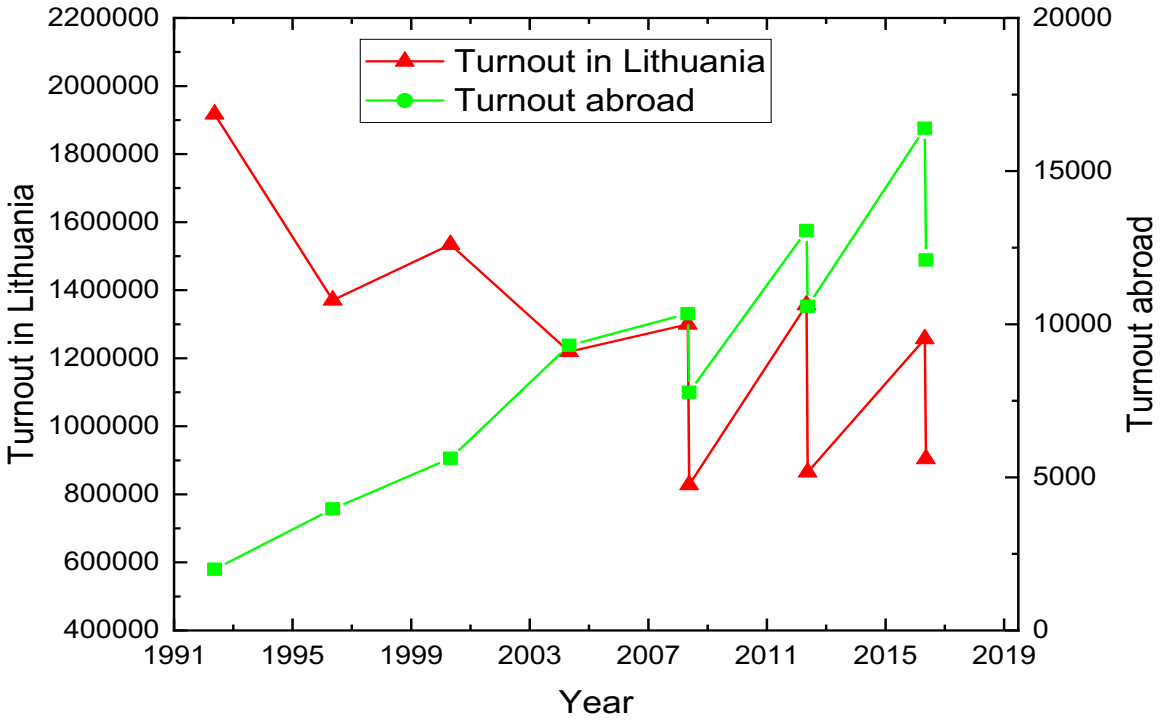



Figure 8. Absolute turnout within the national territory and abroad in *Seimas* elections. Calculated from SEC data

[96]It is worth noting that the graphs also include available data on the second round of applicable elections, thereby resulting in two data points that are very similar in time but quite different in terms of turnout. It is not uncommon for two rounds of an election to attract considerably different number of voters: this depends on various factors, including perceived closeness of the election.

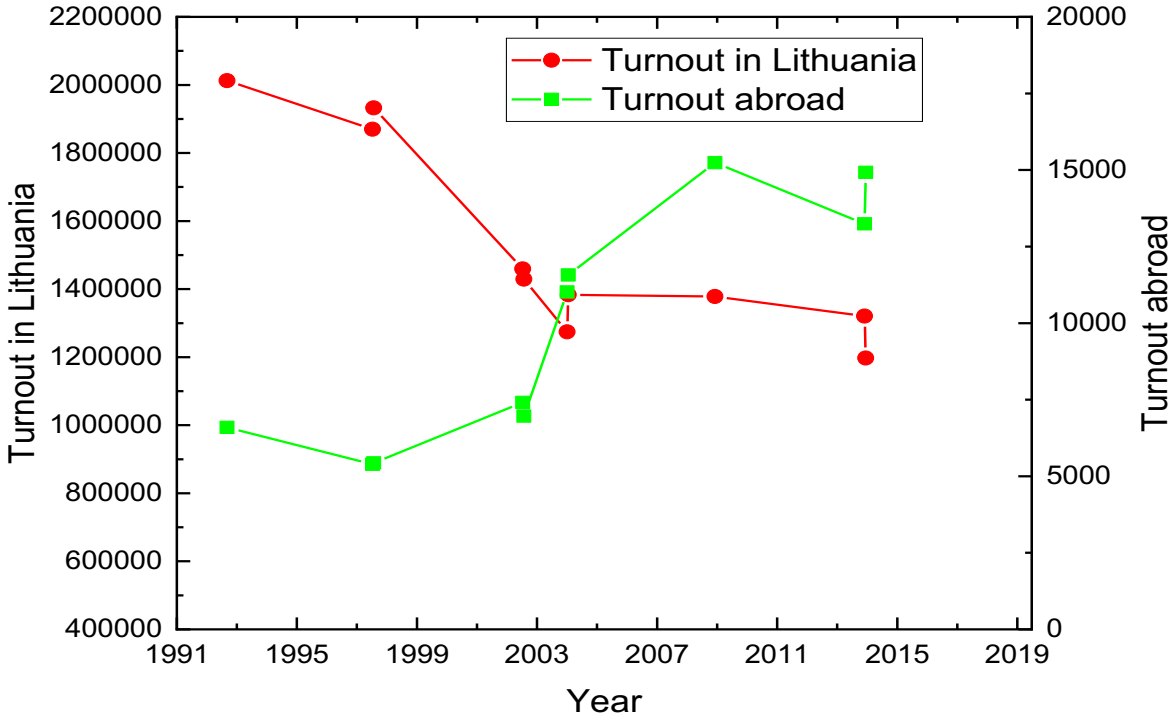



Figure 9. Absolute turnout within the national territory and abroad in Presidential elections. Calculated from SEC data

A noteworthy observation is the increase in external participation after the EU accession in 2004 which evidently relates to the increased rates of emigration discussed in Chapter 1. Notably, the 2004 Presidential election's first round coincided with the first–ever Lithuanian EP election, the international nature of which may have encouraged those already abroad at the election time to participate in both elections. However, decreased reluctance to reveal one's migrant status once Lithuania was an EU member likely also played a role. Indeed, the fact that external turnout rates did not differ much in the two Presidential election rounds (it was in fact higher in the second one, and the first–round turnout was in turn higher than the EP election turnout) suggests that emigrants' increased turnout rate in this Presidential election did not occur merely because they were filling in an EP ballot at the same time. Independently, the second round of the 2004 Presidential election was not particularly interest–provoking, as a close call was not forecasted (although it did happen in the end), again supporting the indication that emigrants were interested in this election not only because of it coinciding with the unprecedent opportunity to elect Lithuanian EP members. At the same time, the external voter turnout nonetheless remaining rather small constitutes a notable observation. As can also be seen in Table 11, during the timeframe examined in this study it was the first round of the

*Seimas* election 2016 which witnessed a peak in emigrant voting, yet the turnout was 16,401 voters only. Although this thesis does not focus on subsequent elections, it is of interest to indicate that the 2019 Presidential election witnessed a much higher external voter turnout, which was 52,812. Whilst this high rate was likely due to the election coinciding with a referendum on dual nationality, it is notable that the second round also saw a relatively high turnout of 44,142 external voters.

Whilst SEC does not collect information about many socio–demographic and related characteristics of (non)voters, it does provide information on age and gender. As Figure 10 demonstrates, considering the internal voters, up to age of 65 women voted in *Seimas* election 2016 more often than men. Between the age of 65 and 74 male and female voter ratios were virtually the same, and in the oldest age group it was the males who voted more often. Subject to the above–described issues with measuring emigrant turnout in percentages, external voters generally demonstrate a more balanced turnout of men and women, as can be seen in Figure 11.

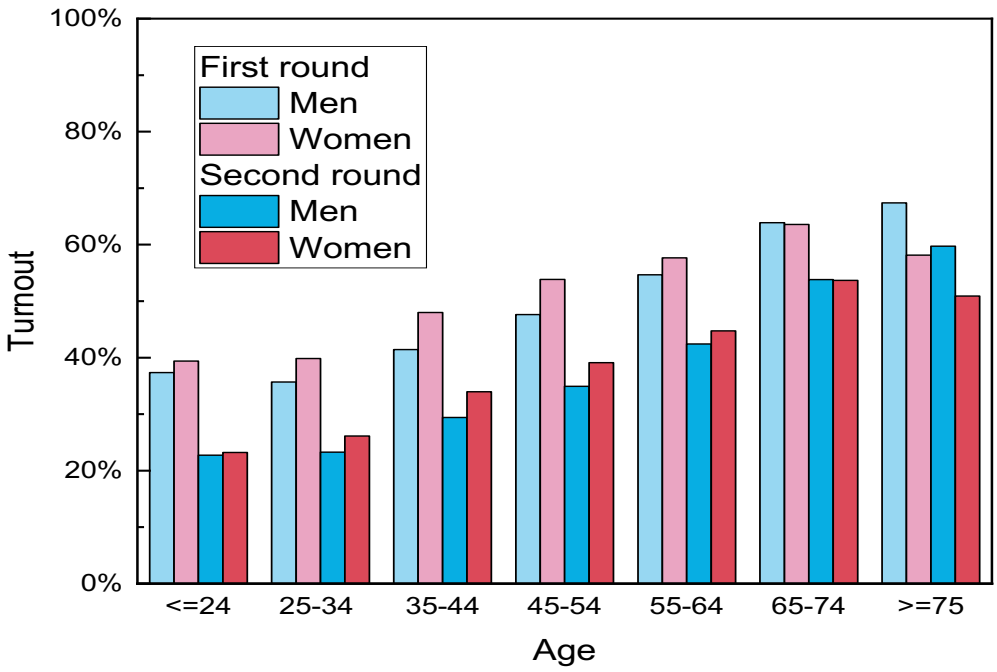



Figure 10. Male and female turnout (percentage) by age groups in *Seimas* 2016 election, internal voters. SEC data used

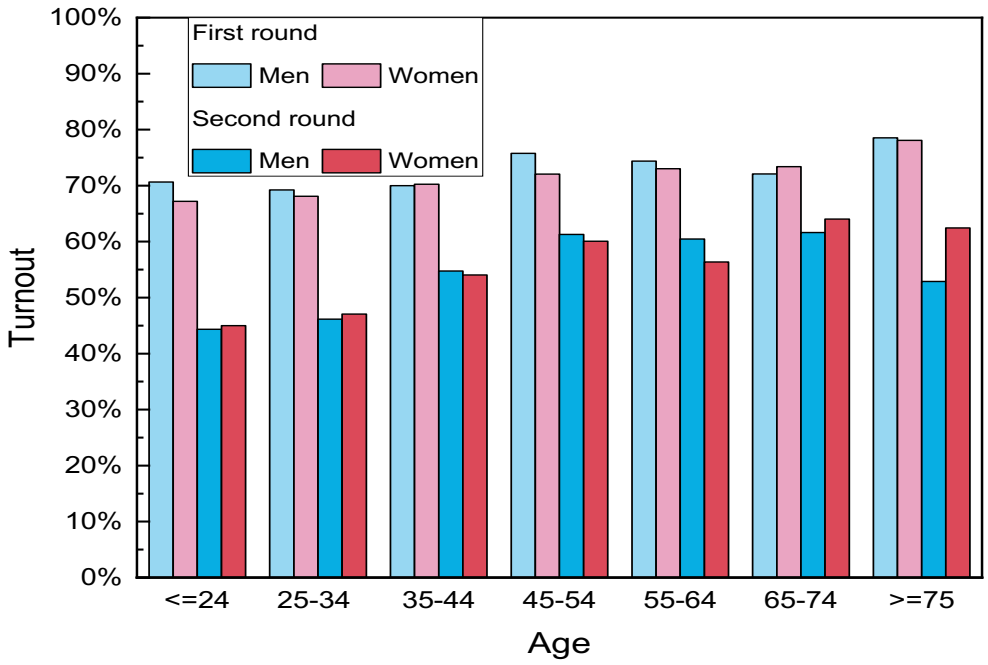



Figure 11. Male and female turnout (percentage) by age groups in *Seimas* election 2016, external voters. SEC data used

Looking at absolute numbers, the differences between internal male and female voters (see Figure 12) are comparable to those expressed in terms of percentages among the younger age groups, and the higher female turnout is even more pronounced in absolute terms above the age of 45, remaining true also in the 65+ age groups which is at least partly explained by higher female life expectancy in Lithuania (Eurostat 2019). Finally, as Figure 13 reveals, voting emigrants are predominantly young people, mostly concentrated in the 25–34 age group, with more women voting than men.

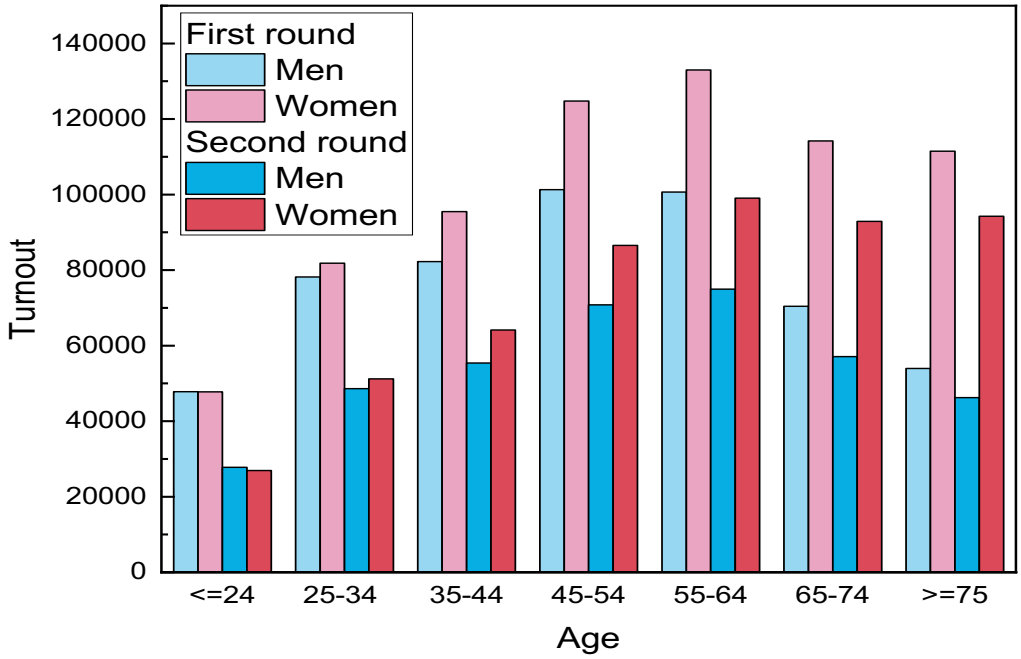



Figure 12. Male and female absolute turnout by age groups in *Seimas* election 2016, internal voters. SEC data used

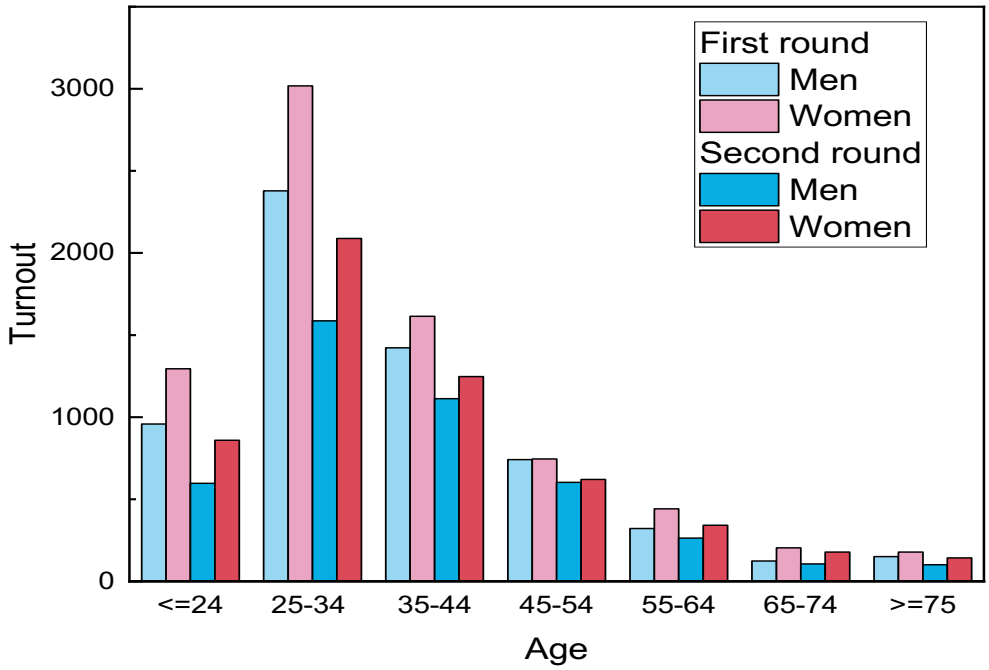



Figure 13. Male and female absolute turnout by age groups in *Seimas* 2016 election, external voters. SEC data used

### 4.2.2 Primary data

While observation of turnout rates provides us with information about external voting trends, it is unable to tell us much about the characteristics of individuals who are likely to cast their vote from abroad or to abstain. In order to gain better insight into the profiles of voters and non–voters using the survey data, two binary logistic regressions were run, the first one examining external voter participation in the 2014 Presidential election and the second one – external voter participation in the 2014 Lithuanian EP election. The *Seimas* election 2016 did not figure in the quantitative analyses since, as explained in Chapter 2, it was examined later and separately from the other two elections studied in this thesis using a qualitative approach, and was at the centre of attention in the interviews.

#### 4.2.2.1 Response variables

The response variable utilised in the first analysis is whether the respondent participated or abstained in the 2014 Presidential election. The response variable utilised in the second analysis is whether the respondent participated or not in the 2014 Lithuanian European Parliament election. In the post–election survey which was the one used for the purposes of this chapter, respondents were straightforwardly asked whether they had cast a vote in the Presidential and European Parliament elections. For the Presidential election, voters had to specify whether they had voted in the first round, in the second round, or both. Table 12 and Table 13 show the response options, original coding and distribution of answers of the respondents that were included in the analyses below after listwise deletion was applied.

| | **Frequency** | **Percent** |
|---|---|---|
| Voted in both rounds | 193 | 54.67 |
| Voted in the first round only | 27 | 7.65 |
| Voted in the second round only | 16 | 4.53 |
| Did not vote | 117 | 33.14 |
| Total | 353 | 100 |

Table 12. Respondents' participation in Presidential election 2014

| | **Frequency** | **Percent** |
|---|---|---|
| Voted | 83 | 69.16 |
| Did not vote | 37 | 30.83 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |

Table 13. Respondents' participation in Lithuanian EP election 2014

After careful consideration and preparatory analyses, respondents who had voted in at least one round of the Presidential election were treated as 'voters' for the purposes of the quantitative

analysis. Several reasons influenced this decision. First, it was reasoned that in order to answer the key question guiding the quantitative analysis – that is, what characteristics are associated with choosing to vote rather than to abstain (i.e. rather to ignore the given election altogether), 'one round' voters should be separated from non–voters so as not to obscure the picture of 'real' non–voters by attributing characteristics of voters to them. Second, preparatory qualitative analyses of available self–specified non–voting reasons underlying the 'one round' voters and the 'true' non–voters which were obtained as open–ended answers to a survey question, gave additional reason not to treat these two groups as equivalent. Specifically, those who missed one round were giving more specific reasons (e.g. not receiving the voting documents in time) than 'true' non–voters which tended to address, more generally, lack of information or inconvenient means of voting, in their answers. Finally, the Presidential election regression analysis, results of which are reported below, was in fact run three times: excluding the 43 'partial' non–voters altogether, merging them with voters and merging them with non–voters. Results of the first two analyses were very similar, suggesting that the 'partial' non–voters shared a lot of characteristics with voters. By contrast, the third version of the analysis yielded a considerably different output from the first two, suggesting that, in this instance, cases with different characteristics were added to the initial 'purer' sample. Taking all this into consideration, the two acceptable options were judged to be either a 'pure' comparison between 'true' voters and 'true' non–voters, or a merge between 'partial' non–voters and voters. The second option was preferred as it also helped increase the sample size.

#### 4.2.2.2 Explanatory variables

Explanatory variables are entered the model in blocks in the following order: socio–demographic characteristics, political position, migration circumstances and indices representing emigrant awareness and interest. These variables are now explained in turn.[97]

'Gender' is a binary variable, men coded as 0 and women as 1. 'Age' is a continuous variable measured in years. 'University degree' is a binary variable, those not holding a university degree coded as 0 and holders as 1. Occupation is included into the model by creating two dummy variables. The dummy variable 'Non–manual job' is equal to 1 if the respondent reported non–manual work to be their principal activity, and is equal to 0 if they reported otherwise (no work, manual work or studying). The dummy variable 'Studying' is equal to 1 if the respondent reported studying to be their principal activity, and is equal to 0 if they reported otherwise (no work, manual work or non–manual work). No work and manual work answer options together constitute a reference category. These respondents

[97]Although distributions of explanatory variables are not provided in the present chapter, it is worth noting that percentage distributions of the original variables were comparable to those of Chapter 3.

are merged together in this analysis due to rather low number of cases in these categories separately for the EP election (17 not working respondents and 12 manual work respondents): both of them are likely mostly comprised of individuals of lower socio–economic status.[98] 'Income over 1,000 EUR' is a binary variable with those with personal income of no more than 1,000 Euros coded as 0 and those with higher income as 1. 'Lives in a city abroad' is a binary variable with those living in towns, villages or rural areas coded as 0 and those living in cities as 1. Likewise, 'Lived in a city in Lithuania' is a binary variable with those having lived in towns, villages or rural areas coded as 0 and those having lived in cities as 1.

Political position is assessed by a variable treated as continuous, namely respondent's self–placement on a 10–point Likert scale (i.e. Left–right scale), in which 1 corresponds to 'Left' and 10 corresponds to 'Right'. 'At least five years abroad' is a binary variable, with those having spent under five years abroad coded as 0 and those having spent more as 1. 'Intention to return' is also a binary variable, respondents claiming that they would not return or not being sure coded as 0 and those expressing a clear intention to return as 1. Awareness and interest are measured by two variables treated as continuous – i.e. the awareness and interest indices built in the previous chapter.

As explained in the methodology chapter, Chapter 4 uses not only survey data but also qualitative interview material. The former data source demonstrates which of the variables theorised to be important in the introduction of this chapter are associated with increased *likelihood* to vote from abroad. The latter contributes in the following ways. First, it is used to examine the hypotheses for which quantitative data is not available. Where such data is available, it provides a source for triangulation and allows to probe into (non)voting decision mechanism within an individual, thereby providing certain additional insights.

## 4.3 Results and discussion

Results of the two regression analyses are presented in Table 14 and Table 15. Referring to these two tables, the following sections examine, one by one, statistical significance of available variables linked to the hypotheses raised earlier in this chapter. Where applicable, qualitative material is integrated to provide additional insights. Hypotheses for which quantitative data is not available are evaluated with qualitative data only.

[98]These categories are likely mostly comprised of individuals working lower–skilled jobs or unable to find a job altogether. Admittedly, in theory the reference category may have also included someone who, for example, once held a good job but was now raising kids or taking care of an ill relative, but such cases were assumed to be unlikely.

| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Constant ß (SE)** | -2.445 (0.708)** | | -2.311 (0.791)** | | -2.296 (0.801)** | | -4.568 (1.063)*** | |
| | **ß (S.E.)** | **Exp(ß)** | **ß (S.E.)** | **Exp(ß)** | **ß (S.E.)** | **Exp(ß)** | **ß (S.E.)** | **Exp(ß)** |
| **SOCIO–DEMOGRAPHICS** | | | | | | | | |
| **Gender (ref – Male)** | -0.281 (0.272) | 0.755 | -0.304 (0.279) | 0.738 | -0.268 (0.284) | 0.765 | -0.321 (0.306) | 0.726 |
| **Age** | 0.016 (0.016) | 1.016 | 0.015 (0.016) | 1.016 | 0.018 (0.017) | 1.019 | 0.012 (0.019) | 1.012 |
| **University degree** | 0.716* (0.341) | 2.047 | 0.772* (0.342) | 2.059 | 0.710* (0.343) | 2.035 | 0.424 (0.377) | 1.528 |
| **Occupation (ref – Manual or no work)** | | | | | | | | |
| **Non–manual work** | 0.287 (0.322) | 1.332 | 0.299 (0.323) | 1.348 | 0.312 (0.326 | 1.366 | 0.311 (0.360) | 1.365 |
| **Studying** | 0.691 (0.377) | 1.997 | 0.692 (0.377) | 1.998 | 0.658 (0.381) | 1.932 | 0.581 (0.418) | 1.787 |
| **Income over 1,000 EUR** | -0.027 (0.264) | 0.974 | 0.021 (0.264) | 0.979 | -0.020 (0.265) | 0.980 | -0.165 (0.288) | 0.848 |
| **Lives in a city abroad** | -0.232 (0.254) | 0.739 | -0.234 (0.255) | 0.785 | -0.241 (0.256) | 0.786 | -0.336 (0.273) | 0.715 |
| **Lived in a city in Lithuania** | 0.748** (0.280) | 2.113 | 0.760** (0.282) | 2.138 | 0.766** (0.283) | 2.152 | 0.797** (0.299) | 2.220 |
| **POLITICAL POSITION** | | | | | | | | |
| **Left–right scale** | | | -0.022 (0.057) | 0.979 | -0.020 (0.057) | 0.980 | -0.080 (0.062) | 0.924 |
| **MIGRATION CIRCUMSTANCES** | | | | | | | | |
| **At least five years abroad** | | | | | -0.153 (0.272) | 0.858 | -0.002 (0.293) | 0.998 |
| **Intention to return** | | | | | -0.094 (0.261) | 0.910 | 0.352 (0.287) | 1.422 |
| **AWARENESS AND INTEREST** | | | | | | | | |
| **Awareness index** | | | | | | | 0.021** (0.008) | 1.022 |
| **Interest index** | | | | | | | 0.025*** (0.007) | 1.026 |
| **NAGELKERKE $R^2$** | 0.075 | | 0.075 | | 0.077 | | 0.233 | |

Table 14. Binary logistic regression results. Response variable: voting in Lithuanian Presidential election 2014. ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Constant ß (SE)** | -0.455 (1.128) | | -2.334 (1.423) | | -1.066 (1.541) | | -4.836 (2.476) | |
| | **ß (S.E.)** | **Exp(ß)** | **ß (S.E.)** | **Exp(ß)** | **ß (S.E.)** | **Exp(ß)** | **ß (S.E.)** | **Exp(ß)** |
| **SOCIO–DEMOGRAPHICS** | | | | | | | | |
| **Gender (ref – Male)** | -1.243* (0.610) | 0.289 | -0.999 (0.639) | 0.368 | -1.018 (0.669) | 0.361 | -0.457 (0.845) | 0.633 |
| **Age** | 0.009 (0.029) | 1.009 | 0.015 (0.029) | 1.015 | 0.006 (0.032) | 1.006 | -0.046 (0.041) | 0.955 |
| **University degree** | 0.912 (0.605) | 2.490 | 1.021 (0.628) | 2.776 | 0.956 (0.647) | 2.601 | -0.432 (0.918) | 0.655 |
| **Occupation (ref – Manual or no work)** | | | | | | | | |
| **Non–manual work** | 0.829 (0.528) | 2.291 | 0.680 (0.542) | 1.973 | 0.743 (0.567) | 2.101 | 0.704 (0.769) | 2.022 |
| **Studying** | 1.113 (0.640) | 3.043 | 1.060 (0.661) | 2.888 | 0.817 (0.695) | 2.263 | 0.543 (0.901) | 1.721 |
| **Income over 1,000 EUR** | -0.630 (0.503) | 0.533 | -0.543 (0.517) | 0.581 | -0.543 (0.541) | 0.586 | -0.020 (0.711) | 0.980 |
| **Lives in a city abroad** | 0.980* (0.436) | 2.655 | 1.228** (0.467) | 3.414 | 1.185* (0.483) | 3.270 | 1.260* (0.620) | 3.525 |
| **Lived in a city in Lithuania** | 0.452 (0.505) | 1.571 | 0.424 (0.517) | 1.528 | 0.678 (0.557) | 1.971 | 0.888 (0.679) | 2.429 |
| **POLITICAL POSITION** | | | | | | | | |
| **Left–right scale** | | | 0.258* (0.113) | 1.294 | 0.227* (0.115) | 1.255 | 0.292 (0.154) | 1.339 |
| **MIGRATION CIRCUMSTANCES** | | | | | | | | |
| **At least five years abroad** | | | | | 0.362 | 1.436 (0.536) | 0.961 (0.722) | 2.615 |
| **Intention to return** | | | | | -1.495 | 0.224* (0.620) | -1.331 (0.802) | 0.264 |
| **AWARENESS AND INTEREST** | | | | | | | | |
| **Awareness index** | | | | | | | 0.032 (0.018) | 1.032 |
| **Interest index** | | | | | | | 0.063*** (0.016) | 1.065 |
| **NAGELKERKE $R^2$** | 0.199 | | 0.254 | | 0.318 | | 0.612 | |

Table 15. Binary logistic regression results. Response variable: voting for Lithuanian candidates in EP election 2014. ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

### 4.3.1 Interest

As can be seen in the tables above, the interest index is highly statistically significantly associated with external voter participation in both Presidential and European Parliament elections. The final models show that, controlling for the other included variables, a one–point increase on the interest index

multiplies the odds of voting in the Presidential election by 1.026 (i.e. increases them by 2.6%) and in the European Parliament election – by 1.065 (i.e. increases them by 6.5%).

Statistical analyses hence show that interest in the home country politics, as measured by the interest index created in the previous chapter, is indeed associated with voter participation among the surveyed emigrants. The results suggest that this effect is robust in the sense that it is not attributable to fundamental socio–demographic characteristics of migrants, nor to key migration circumstances, nor to their political position. The fact that the effect of interest applies to both elections is noteworthy given that the effects of other variables, in particular socio–demographic ones (of former or current place of residence, education, gender, and additionally political position), are not only often less stable (with exception of places of residence), but also apply to one of the two elections only. As discussed in more detail below, the latter also holds for awareness. The interest hypothesis is therefore strongly supported by the quantitative data.

Analysis of qualitative data supports this survey finding by demonstrating importance of interest in interviews with Lithuanians who were keen to vote.[99] In particular, conversations with them reveal that at least some of those willing to vote differentiate themselves from non–voters specifically in terms of interest. This cleavage, for instance, was delineated by a 43–year–old female small business owner from Scotland:

> *[Among the Lithuanian emigrants] there are people who are political, and there are those who are apolitical; those who are political do not need to be convinced [to vote]'; those who are apolitical, were also apolitical in Lithuania, and only in cases when it directly affects their families or property or something like this it becomes possible to reason with them, otherwise they very often say that politics does not interest them and then they accept no further arguments*

She further explained differences between the political and apolitical people:

> *If people left Lithuania for some positive reasons, perhaps they got a good job, then everything is fine, with those people you can converse about politicians, about politics, about the future and about voting – you can talk to them about everything. If people left after bankruptcy, after*

[99]In particular, the relevant discourses came from voters and one person who, in spite of making considerable effort, was not able to register.

*a divorce, after some unfortunate things, then they completely [emphasises] do not want to know anything related to Lithuania… So there are two such camps here.*

A 44–year–old female stay–at–home mother and a part–time consultant residing in Poland believed that abroad–based voters are characterised by especially high levels of interest related to an additional effort needed to preserve one's Lithuanian identity, and also perceived there to be two kinds of emigrants:

*Voting people are keen, voting people are interested. When I meet the other voters – it is the same faces everywhere, they make an effort to take part also in meetings in the embassy, with the president, or with other guests, or even if some random school choir comes, they also gather with their kids early Saturday or Sunday morning, even if their kid is tired, since fostering your Lithuanian identity while living abroad is much more complex, not as straightforward and there are fewer means to do so.*

*Every person decides whether they are Lithuanian, whether they are still [emphasises] Lithuanian, or whether they do not want to have anything in common with Lithuania anymore. I have encountered people who were raised in Lithuania, but after they have moved away they do not want to know anything about Lithuania anymore, so to those people you can say whatever you want about voting, they are not interested. […] A person who has left Lithuania and does not want anything [emphasises] to do with it, they will get a citizenship of another country and will automatically lose the right to vote. I think it is fair [for emigrants to vote in Lithuanian elections] because those who care are the ones who vote.*

Interest in politics as an important cleavage separating voters from non–voters is also well illustrated by respective discourses of a 41–year–old doctor from Sweden and a 59–year–old babysitter from the USA. They separated two kinds of emigrants as well, the apathetic ones abstaining from voting altogether:

*Those who vote, who are patriotic, those support the Conservatives, and those who do not care – those do not vote for any party; I do not think that someone who does not care would suddenly go and vote for [LVŽS]… If they do not care they will not vote at all.*

*[Absentees] are apathetic. I am not apathetic. It is very difficult to say something to such people: if their parents did not educate them, then I don't think that other people can do that.*

A 29–year–old male anesthesiologist from Germany further suggested that a division between interested and not interested external electorate not only is *presently* relevant for (non)voting, but that not a lot can be done to change this, at least in a short term. He underlined that while politicians' visits, for example, may deepen one's interest in home–country affairs, this would likely bypass the people who are wholly apathetic and therefore have little effect on voting rates:

*I would quite like it if some [Lithuanian] politicians came here, led some discussions or something… But then again, I would only go because I am interested and my electoral participation would not change because of that, I would vote like I used to, people that come to meetings with politicians are the ones that vote anyway… I think it wouldn't change much.*

Among the interviewed emigrants, non–voters themselves did not express a comparable cleavage between them and the voters, presumably because they did not feel it to be relevant to dwell on why others vote, as opposed to the voters who chose to reflect on the fact that few emigrants join them in voting.

As for non–voters themselves, intriguingly, the theme of interest was hardly ever singled out altogether. As will be seen in the next section, it typically came together with the theme of knowledge, and oftentimes was implicit rather than explicitly spelt out.

### 4.3.2 Knowledge

In contrast to interest, the awareness index is statistically significantly associated with external voter participation in the Presidential election only. The final model indicates that, all things being equal, a one–point increase on the awareness index multiplies the odds of voting in the Presidential election by 1.022 (i.e. increases them by 2.2%). The knowledge hypothesis is hence partially supported.

Interpreting the findings together with the interest index, it can be said that, at least among the examined voters, participating in the second–order (Marsh 1998; Söderlund et al. 2011) European Parliament election back home is not about the level of knowledge possessed by the individual – instead, they need to be sufficiently interested in order to do so. This finding is also in accordance with general self–declared absenteeism reasons in the EP election identified by Eurobarometer 2014 which

revealed only 4% of all non–voters to have abstained in 2014 European Parliament election because of lack of information. Among Lithuanian absentees, this share was merely 1%.

It is also possible that the lack of explanatory power of the awareness index is related to the intrinsically international nature of European Parliament elections. Given that, unlike in the Presidential election case, the information about the EP election is provided also by European host countries, awareness index may have been a worse predictor of the external voting behaviour in this election for Europe–based respondents who constituted the majority. It is possible that even if the information about the election is gathered abroad and slightly differs from that available in Lithuania – obviously, the candidates and specific procedures discussed abroad would differ from those discussed in Lithuania – the awareness of the election *in general* may encourage one to vote in the EP election, and some migrants may still prefer to vote 'back home'.

Since the knowledge hypothesis was only partially supported by quantitative data, it is advantageous to turn to qualitative materials to inspect whether they support the importance of knowledge on (non)voting. It ought to be remembered that qualitative interviews were centred on *Seimas* elections, hence they could not reveal any possible differences between election types on the one hand and importance of knowledge on the other hand. Nonetheless, interview materials are able to give additional insight to the importance of knowledge more generally.

Interestingly, some of the interviewees did not talk about their own ignorance, and even specified that they personally felt well informed, but addressed **lack of knowledge of *other* potential voters**. For instance, a 28–year–old male student from the UK argued that while he himself received sufficient information and therefore did vote, this was likely not the case for everyone as '*political parties sometimes just promote themselves as some sort of a product, but people don't truly know much, there is a lack of information [on voting]'*. Similarly, a 24–year–old man from the UK the working in finance had voted before and therefore '*knew the processes',* but was concerned that other people may miss the election date:

> *I roughly know what is taking place when, but not everyone is following the news as closely, and I for sure know some people who might not even know when the election period starts and ends, and this could be one of the [reasons] why fewer people vote than possible*

Indeed, a 19–year–old male voter from the UK, a student and a waiter, felt that it was actually possible for him to miss an election '*because it may not occur to you [early enough] that you are in fact abroad and need to vote earlier [than home–based compatriots], [considering] all that postage*';

> *Knowing the precise dates without talking to relatives of friends would be quite difficult, even to get to know when one needs to register to vote by post – perhaps this is possible, say, on the page of the SEC, but again, one needs to know this*

> *Sometimes one just needs to be aware of the dates when you need to register so that you are not late, it can be important to follow these things, to read the news so that you do not simply miss the period while you can still register*

However, a particularly illustrative first–hand account where lack of awareness outright prevented one from casting a vote was related not to **lack of knowledge** of election dates (as would have been expected by interviewees above), but that **of voting methods**. This case was a 40–year–old male school–educated non–voting production supervisor from the UK who, at the time of the interview, was not aware that he could have voted by post and expressed this option as a desirable one alongside internet voting:

> *To spend four hours in the car in order to mark the ballot and then take four hours to get back… Only an online option is acceptable, or possibly [voting] by post or something, but I really will not go the embassy to vote, there is no logic in this.*

> *I would not say there wasn't any [intention to vote], there was, but as I have just said, the whole consideration did its job, you have been to London, know the traffic, and when I needed to get passports for the children, it was a big problem to get to the embassy*

After being explained the postal voting option and asked whether such information had not reached him before, the participant affirmed:

> *No. If there was a possibility to vote by post, I would happily take part and express my opinion about the candidates. I am neither an impartial nor an apathetic voter.*

Had he had this information he would '*categorically*' have voted and claimed that he would now vote next time.

The interview data also complements the survey data by drawing attention to the **importance of procedural knowledge inherent to the final stage of postal voting**, particularly the knowledge by when such votes need to be cast. Factually, as long a postal ballot is stamped by post no later than on the day of election and reaches the representation no later than five days after the election day, it constitutes a valid vote – for this reason, the election day results are considered provisional. Naturally, depending on post collection rules of where the given Lithuanian emigrant lives and the specific time when voters post the letter, they may or may not be successful in getting the required stamp, and mailing it in person on a Sunday may also be problematic depending on one's place of residence. Yet, as long as the ballot is received at least a couple of days before the election, one will most likely be able to cast it in accordance with the rules.

This notwithstanding, an important theme that emerged in the interview data was misconceptions about these procedures. Let us consider, for instance, the discourse of a 29–year–old Luxembourg–based finance sector worker who had not voted herself but shared a concern of other Luxembourg–based Lithuanians who tried to vote but received the ballots close to the election:

> *[They] said that the ballots came from Brussels late and they didn't think that their votes would count. These are the Lithuanians in Luxembourg. There are Lithuanians living in Belgium, perhaps for them the situation is different, and there are people who work in Luxembourg but live in Germany, in my understanding the ballots came in Germany in good time […]*

A 48–year–old female wedding planner, residing in Italy for 24 years, commented on a similar experience of Italy–based Lithuanians who, as a result of lack of procedural knowledge, experienced high, and preventable, voting costs (a subject of the next section) by undertaking quite drastic measures trying to ensure that their votes would be counted:

> *I can tell you more why I haven't been voting in recent years: I live quite far from Rome […] In Italy the main issue was that a large majority of voters did not receive their ballots… If you are in Rome, all is great – you stop by at the embassy […] It was a very large problem [and some thought that] it perhaps happens on purpose, if the ballots are late by three weeks, and on the last day some girls took a train, having collected more voters' ballots even though they should*

*not do so, ballots sealed in envelopes… They were delivering the ballots to Rome by train… Because if people had sent them from Florence to Rome they would certainly not have arrived in time.*

A 29–year–old non–voter working in advertising in China also believed that ballots need to reach the embassy by the election day:

*I ordered [the ballot], it reached me, and there was little time left to send it back. It was necessary to send it one specific evening, but on that evening my priorities changed, and voting moved down [as a priority], and I missed that day and felt that by post it would not reach the embassy anymore unless I used some sort of express delivery, perhaps I was too late to organise the ballot being sent to me and […] I did not make it in time […].*

A 27–year–old male UK–based logistics manager constituted another relevant case:

*I wanted to get [the ballot] sent. But when I thought that I should do so, I calculated that even if I got it sent to me I would no longer send it back in time.*

Notably, such misperceptions are not unreasonable: in Latvia, for example, postal votes need to be received before the polling stations are closed on the election day, and in the Slovak Republic – before the election day.

As insinuated in the previous section, in the interviews, apathy and ignorance also regularly came together in influencing decisions not to vote. In other words, '**do not know and do not care'** attitude seemed responsible for absenteeism in a number of non–voting cases. For instance, the 29–year–old resident of China explained in detail how a lack of interest interplayed with a lack of awareness in preventing him from voting, lack of awareness at least partly arising *from* lack of interest:

*As someone who completely does not follow political events in Lithuania, I do not even know when those elections are held […] To tell you the truth, I do not know either when the previous one took place or when the upcoming one will be held.*

*Generally speaking I am not interested in the political situation, perhaps I am not concerned partly because I cannot see what would be relevant to me, to my situation. Also when voting I would like at least to feel conscious of how and for what I am voting for, and for that, I feel, one needs to truly dedicate quite a lot of time on a regular basis, to deepen one's understanding. I cannot [vote] for sure if I don't feel competent to decide. I did not dedicate time for that.*

For those much closer to homeland physically, the connection prevailed too. One relevant case was that of a 22–year–old male absentee, school–educated warehouse worker from the UK. He claimed to have followed pre–election campaigns on Lithuanian television, yet did not know how he could have voted and, in fact, had several misconceptions about voting possibilities. Above all, this emigrant believed it was possible to vote online and that Lithuanian online banking system access would be needed to cast the ballot. The interviewee spontaneously connected his lack of knowledge with lack of interest:

*I knew that it was possible to vote, but not how. I mean, I was not interested, if it was of interest to me – perhaps I would have inspected the issue. You need to have Lithuanian online banking or something, I don't remember, but, in short, if you only have a passport you cannot do anything. So probably I do not know, I didn't inspect this, to be honest*

An older emigrant with otherwise a very similar profile (44–year–old male from the UK) echoed:

*I have no idea [about elections], perhaps it was possible online, but I somehow was not really interested… I do not remember now, perhaps it was not possible yet? Perhaps in the upcoming election? I don't remember precisely – I knew that I would not vote [laughs].*

An additional illustrative standpoint is offered by a 32–year–old vocationally–trained woman from the UK, a nail technician, who voted during her temporary stay in Lithuania but did not vote when abroad. She felt that while abroad she receives less political information partly because she is '*busier with [he]r own affairs and all that [political information] is [then] not as relevant and important*', attributing her l absenteeism to her own '*negligence*'. The interplay between lack of knowledge and insufficient interest in voting was clear in her self–observation:

*I never inspected [the voting options] thoroughly, I mean the details of how to do so, but I know the fact [that I can vote], and I know that if I wanted to, I would find that information –*

*call the embassy, search online… Maybe I'm getting a little less information now as when I am here I am more soaked into my own routine and it is not as relevant and important.*

Interestingly, in some cases, contrasting sharply with that of the aforementioned previous non–voter who obtained knowledge about the postal voting opportunity during the interview and was content that he would not be able to vote, **increased knowledge did not lead to increased willingess to vote.** A 21–year–old male non–voter from the UK, studying and working in catering, assumed that '*the only option [to vote] was probably to go to London*', but afterwards admitted: *'I am not even sure whether there was an option [to vote] by post, somehow I was not too bothered and simply did not vote'*. In spite of acknowledging that he did not explore the voting options due to lack of motivation from his side (i.e. apathy towards voting), when informed of the options the participant still claimed:

*It seems to me that the main reason [for not voting] was probably the technical implementation of voting. I live in Norwich after all, it is two hours away from London by train, to reach the embassy, and by post the voting also seemed complicated, hence I simply opted to stay aside…*

Another telling example was a case of a 35–year–old female absentee stay–at–home mother from Scotland who outright blamed lack of information for her absenteeism: *'[The reason was] simply the lack of information, how to vote and how to do so from abroad'*;

*There was not enough information… In fact there was no information being spread… No one was providing it… The elections that we do follow are local, Parliamentary elections, or what is going on in this country, but Lithuanian elections… The embassy, either the embassy or Lithuanian communities should be engaged with this issue, but no one is showing initiative.*

As some others, this non–voter was also unaware of the possibility of postal voting up to the point of the interview. However, even after being informed that vote by mail was possible she was still not keen to participate, claiming that *'such an option would be [popular among] only the biggest enthusiasts, but in the case of postage costs being paid this would truly be a motivating factor'*. Hence, the interviewee claimed lack of information to be responsible for her absenteeism, but even after obtaining information of how to vote and the (little) costs associated with voting, she did not express a change of attitude towards the possibility of voting, suggesting also that a considerable degree of apathy was in fact at play.

It is also noteworthy that (linking also to the next section), not knowing about the convenience voting methods, these emigrants perceive voting harder than it actually is, and it appears that some continue to claim/believe so even after receiving relevant information. What can be the mechanism behind it? It is possible that people who remain loyal to the idea of external voting being difficult even after being informed that it is easier than they had previously thought experience cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) – the participants may have felt a degree of embarrassment not knowing the voting options, for example, and preferred to stick to a belief that external voting must have been hard or otherwise they would have voted. Alternatively, however, it is also possible that presenting voting as overly difficult simply serves a role of an excuse, which once again relates to the possibility of psychological biases (the already discussed social desirability bias or actor–observer/attribution (Jones & Nisbett 1971)) being at play.

However, not everyone felt a need to highlight lack of information and underplay lack of interest. Self–apathy towards voting was even verbalised as 'laziness' by one interviewee. A 22–year–old unemployed female from the UK stated that she had missed elections before due to lack of information, yet also admitted that there was lack of effort form her side:

> *It was possible [for me to vote before], but back then I didn't know how to do this; this year there was more advertising that one should vote, how to register, how to do everything, therefore I noticed [this information], because <u>three or four years ago… I did not find the information… I was lazy</u>*

It is, however, possible that she felt it easier to put blame on her lack of effort because she was referring to her past behaviours: in the most recent elections she had in fact voted, this possibly acting as a mitigation of what could have otherwise turned into a social desirability bias.

As this section has provided several distinct contributions to the question of importance of knowledge for (non)voting, it is worth recapitulating it briefly. To begin with, the interviews have demonstrated concrete ways how lack of knowledge can lead to emigrant non–voting. First, the failure to obtain information on convenience voting methods can directly prevent some willing–to–vote emigrants from doing so. Second, so can lack of knowledge of a deadline for mailing back one's ballot. Clearly, interview data cannot inform us whether the issues are widespread, but it can, and does, indicate that

such problems occur among Lithuanian emigrants. Moreover, qualitative materials have signaled that some emigrants' lack of knowledge and lack of interest is concurrent, and demonstrated that obtaining relevant knowledge does not necessarily mean that they will participate. The findings suggest that effect of knowledge on (non)voting is nuanced and can indeed by difficult to capture with quantitative data.

### 4.3.3 Inconvenience[100]

The inconvenience hypothesis centred on the role of external difficulties in discouraging emigrants from casting their votes as a result of relatively high voting costs. Notably, this hypothesis was not tested statistically – it was the qualitative analysis which was the principal source of insight into the influence of inconvenience on absenteeism. Indeed, the interview materials shed considerable light on the kinds of difficulties potential voters might be running into. However, it is first of all important to note that a number of interviewees with considerably varying profiles found voting abroad process to be particularly convenient. A 28–year–old student from the Netherlands was satisfied with the postal voting process and said that she '*would encourage others to vote simply considering that […] it does not require a lot of effort […]*'. The 29–year–old anesthesiologist from Germany believed that '[*postal voting] is a much better way to vote, you can inspect the ballot much more, there is much less stress than [at a polling station*]'. The 59–year–old babysitter from the United States had her expectations about the postal voting speed exceeded: *'I was surprised that the letters […] came so soon*.' At the same time, a 24–year–old female student from Denmark was impressed with the speed and simplicity of the in–person voting process: "*It lasts about […] five minutes*'.

Nevertheless, we should not assume voting procedures to be seen as convenient by *all* potential voters. Further qualitative data analyses revealed additional voting costs experienced by some Lithuanians who reside abroad. They can be divided into those incurred during the registration process and those incurred afterwards. The two stages are now discussed in turn.

[100]Material of this section is also used heavily in a peer–reviewed article 'Real and perceived voting costs: Lithuanian emigrants' discourses on external voting difficulty' (Maminskaitė 2022).

Registration stage

In line with what has been reasoned in the introduction of this chapter, some interviewees experienced voting inconveniences as early as during the registration stage. A 41–year–old PR consultant residing in Belgium, for instance, was strongly dissatisfied with the registration forms:

> *[Registration form completion] is very inconvenient. I remember taking maybe an hour to find that form, to find how to open it, because it was really complex and inconvenient […] That form was hidden, it took time to find it. […] Everyone had issues with that form, but after you get yourself informed, you share [your experience] with others so that they can fill it in easier… There were quite a few people who struggled with it a little.*

In a similar vein, the 22–year–old non–working woman from the UK indicated that whilst it was easy for her to vote from abroad, some others experienced registration difficulties:

> *One friend of mine attempted to vote, but she did not manage to register herself on the relevant website, so I had to register her myself… I have no idea why she did not succeed.*

A 41–year–old man working in a construction sector in Finland also recalled similar problems in his friends' circle:

> *It happened that someone did not succeed in registering, they tried to register to vote at the embassy but they were not registered in the end, so they needed to repeat their registration*

In the cases above, the additional voting cost brought about by the registration problems was the extra time needed to successfully register (either by oneself with external help). By contrast, considering actual voting *prevention* by registration difficulties, we may reflect on a case of the 43–year–old small business owner from Scotland. Having obtained a new passport after marriage, the interviewee was unrecognised by the registration system: '*I tried to register with my foreign surname […] and the system would not recognise me at all*'. She demonstrated considerable effort to rectify the situation but the problem did not get solved in time: '*Eventually I wrote two [emphasises] messages to [the helpline] so that they would give me access, and we did not concert by the election time*'. When asked to clarify whether she did not receive an answer or whether the employees in charge were simply unable to help in time, this interviewee confirmed that she did not get any answer, and added that she then contacted the embassy to address this issue and was advised to reach out to the very

same helpline. It should be acknowledged, however, that this non–voter left rather little time for such issues to be sorted out: '*To be honest, it was two [emphasises] weeks before [the election] when I thought that I should vote after all […] So perhaps there was insufficient time […]*'.

Although one could argue that the interviewee might have attempted to turn up to vote in person with her passport without prior registration, there was no guarantee for her to be admitted even after putting the effort in. Notably, these kinds of bureaucratic problems can be demotivating to some when it comes to deciding whether to vote again in the future (cf. Smith 2014). The interviewee did not express much negativity herself, spontaneously mostly describing factual information. She also noted that other Lithuanians around her appeared to have voted without any problems, and did not depreciate external voting system as a whole. However, when explicitly asked how she felt in this situation, the emigrant acknowledged her disappointment that the efforts led to no avail:

> *Of course I was annoyed! Because when you actually get ready to vote, and you more or less inspect what is going on [in Lithuanian politics] and then I think, oops, I cannot do even that….*

Importantly, this interviewee had previously voted in the circumstances where no obstacles prevented her from doing it, in particular in all applicable elections and referendums in Scotland. As the interviewee herself put it, she '*expresses [her] political will wherever [she] can'*, which signals that she would have most likely gone through the voting process until the end if the surname issue had not prevented her from doing so.

However, it would be erroneous to perceive the staff in charge of helping with external voting registration problems as altogether unhelpful. The 41–year–old doctor from Sweden reported that some people, herself included, could not open the registration link; however, when she emailed the support, she received a prompt reply that everything had been taken care of:

> *There was something wrong with that link… The link to registration somehow did not work for me, but I wrote to the contacts provided there and it got fixed […] I had a go late at night, the link would not open, I wrote an email and received a reply the same day, saying that they had worked on the issue and that everything was sorted out.*

Post–registration stage

The earlier presumption of this chapter that the relatively few voting stations incur high in–person voting costs for Lithuanian emigrants was reiterated in the discourse of the 44–year–old stay–at–home mother and part–time consultant living in Poland. Also in line with a–priori reasoning, she argued that voting from abroad can be more effort–consuming than in Lithuania, although it is worth noting that she considered in–person voting in particular:

> *It is not like in Lithuania where the district is around the corner, no, here sometimes you need to come from another city. I luckily live in Warsaw, but when I talk to people from Great Britain for instance, there you need to put an effort to reach the [polling station].*

Relating also to the below–discussed issue of efficacy, sometimes even small additional voting costs can deter people from voting if they do not see their vote as important (Highton 2004). This was the case for the 24–year–old man working in finance sector who was changing his place of residence and believed that his preferred political party would perform well in any case:

> *Somehow I had a strong belief that particularly the party which I support, it would do great anyhow. And simply […] I thought that perhaps I would abstain this time and everything would end well anyway… All that logistical aspect, to reach the place, the embassy and so on… As I was changing jobs, I simply had to move to London – it was just inconvenient both to receive that voting ballot by post and to go in person.*

Overall, however, this interviewee believed that non–voting could more often be attributed to some personal circumstances giving rise to relatively high voting costs rather than systematic external difficulties:

> *I don't think that there are some big problems, inconveniences [with external voting system]. Simply you never know what kind of [personal] matters people are dealing with and hence fail to vote, but I have not heard about any systematic problems or disadvantages.*

The 29–year–old Luxembourg–based finance sector voter also stressed that difficulties are most likely to arise at a personal rather than systematic level: '*It is more often due to personal circumstances'*. She did not have a permanent address at the time of election either which made it less convenient to vote and contributed to her absenteeism:

*I was moving at that time, I had a temporary place of residence and I couldn't really register to be able to vote, to be sent [the ballot]… And Lithuanian representation is only in Brussels, and to go to Brussels, it's quite some distance.*

A 32–year–old non–voting male engineer from the UK claimed that, for voting in person, some emigrants '*have no time or have longer working hours than the [booths] are open for'*, confirming the importance of this factor recently suggested by Finn (2021). Indeed, although a similar problem may be applicable to voters based in Lithuania who work on Sundays (the standard election day for Lithuania), they find themselves in an easier situation compared with emigrants as they can vote in an advance voting organised a few days before the election. In the largest cities, even multiple polling stations operate on the advance voting day(s), and their opening hours are typically long. Whilst early voting is also organised abroad, the opportunity to vote is normally limited to the same polling station as during regular voting as well as shorter hours. Admittedly, unlike home–based voters, Lithuanian emigrant voters have the postal voting option. However, postal voting needs to be organised more in advance in many destination countries. Early voting hence makes participation easier for those working shifts, for example, who may be informed that they will be working on the election day close to the election itself. High *monetary* costs for external in–person voters who would normally work on the election day were also addressed by the 44–year–old male kitchen assembler from the UK: '[…] *all emigrants are busy here and work very hard, and a working day's loss brings a noticeable [financial] loss'*. Monetary cost of in–person voting was also scolded by the 41–year–old doctor from Sweden who underlined that it can be '*cheaper to fly to Lithuania than to reach Stockholm [from Gothenburg] by train'*.

Whilst registration–related difficulties were the focus of the preceding section, it is worth underscoring that that registration issues can impose certain challenges for the post–registration period as well. This is particularly evident among emigrants who are willing to vote but do not receive electoral materials in time and then need to vote in person – which can incur significantly larger voting costs if they still wish to do so. Indeed, a 37–year–old PR consultant from Belgium shared a related experience of her compatriots abroad:

*I know other Lithuanians here who wanted to vote by post, but not everyone was able to do so – some did not receive the ballot, some received it too late. Those people were given an*

*opportunity to come to the embassy nonetheless, although they may have not actually come during those selected days, […] perhaps they had to travel on those dates…*

A 28–year–old male student voter living in the UK commented on similar experiences of those who registered to vote rather late:

*The only problems were that some people received [the ballots] later, after the election date… […] And some others registered but did not receive those letters at all… Specifically those who registered later.*

To underscore, in contrast to the *misperceptions* about postal voting discussed in the previous section, if the ballot itself does not arrive by the election day, the only means to cast the vote remains voting in person which can yield high unplanned time and monetary costs, thereby discouraging participation.

In sum, the **hypothesis that inconveniences decrease the likelihood to vote receives support from qualitative data,** both at registration stage and afterwards.

#### 4.3.4 Socio–demographic characteristics

Socio–demographic characteristics are not consistently significant in explaining voter participation. For the Presidential election, having a university degree is a statistically significant predictor in the first three models. However, the effect becomes noticeably smaller and loses its statistical significance once awareness and interest are taken into account. Interestingly, having lived in a Lithuanian city remains a statistically significant explanatory variable for voting in the Presidential election throughout the four models: in the final one, controlling for the other variables of the model, the odds of voting in this election for those who lived in a Lithuanian city are 2.220 times the odds for those who lived in smaller settlements (i.e. the odds for the former are 122% higher).

As for the European Parliament election, university degree is not a significant predictor of voting. This is true even in the first model consisting solely of socio–demographic characteristics. However, in this first model, unlike in the Presidential election case, gender is statistically significant. Yet, the effect loses significance once political position is taken into account. The effect of political position, in turn, is significant only until awareness and interest are accounted for in the final model. Intention to return, introduced in the third model, is also initially statistically significant, but loses significance when

awareness and interest indices are introduced. In the case of European Parliament election, not the size of the settlement in Lithuania helps explain turnout but rather the size of the settlement in the current country of residence. Controlling for all the other variables included in the final model, the odds of voting in the European Parliament election for those living abroad in a city are 3.525 times the odds for those living in smaller establishments (i.e. the odds for the former are 252.5% higher).

In short, the data gives **support only for the hypothesis that size of place of residence is related to (non)voting, and the effect appears to be different for different election types**.

### 4.3.5 Migration circumstances

Time spent abroad is not significant in the statistical analyses. Intention to return is only significant until awareness and interest are included into the model. The **hypotheses of importance of these factors are therefore not supported**.

### 4.3.6 Trust and efficacy

The hypotheses that trust and political efficacy influence external voting were examined with qualitative data only. Regarding the first of the two factors, in some interviews, reluctance to vote was indeed clearly linked with **distrust towards politicians and institutions**. In the interview with the 40–year–old male non–voter production supervisor from the UK, lack of trust was a highlighted component of why he did not vote:

> *I don't know, I don't quite trust, nor believe in, politics anymore, because I am highly disappointed with what is going on in Lithuanian politics and I am not even sure who could replace [the current government]*

Likewise, the 44–year–old male non–voting kitchen assembler from the UK underlined:

> *You simply cannot choose a candidate for yourself… there's no one you can trust*

The 21–year–old student and catering worker from the UK was also generally sceptical about Lithuanian government and saw emigrants' low turnout as a product of this. When enquired what could possibly be done to increase emigrant voting, he argued:

*I think that trust needs to rise, not even regarding some politicians' or parties' ideas, but regarding government bodies themselves, because while people feel that our bureaucratic mechanism goes one step forward and two steps backwards, people, I believe, will always remain apathetic in [electoral context]*

Trust also arose in the discourse of a 40–year–old male non–voting locksmith from Ireland:

*It would be best for [politicians] to do more and talk less, this is the most important thing, to show that they are doing at least something so that they can be trusted and elected by people*

The 28–year–old student from the UK agreed with the other interviewees who declared the importance of (dis)trust, but, remarkably, put only part of the blame for this on politicians themselves:

*[For more emigrants to vote] Lithuanian parliament and the government should have a greater degree of trust, but this depends not only on politics, but also on the media, as the media often decreases trust on purpose*

Importantly, the qualitative data of the present study also suggested that lack of trust in Lithuanian institutions formed **under circumstances not directly relating to external voting** can spill over to this domain too. For some interviewees, difficulties experienced with Lithuanian authorities abroad in different circumstances resulted in low trust in institutions responsible for the voting process. A 38–year–old voting male accountant from Norway explained his distrust in the embassy organising the voting:

*If you call [the embassy] to ask for some favour […] they do their job very negligently, the work is most often such as if to get rid of you as soon as possible… Or that saying of theirs, 'you know, go to Lithuania, it will be faster for you there', they don't care the slightest if you have a possibility to go or not […] I needed to get a child's passport done in three months [but] I had to fly to Lithuania because, see, they cannot manage in three months, because of the Christmas period, the post is sent out once a month, and during Christmas no one will take a look […] There is only one official there who does his job carelessly.*

The 40–year–old male non–voting production supervisor from the UK shared a comparable experience:

> *Even now I would not truly comprehend where to seek information [on voting], because I had a rather disappointing experience with the Lithuanian embassy in London, when we went [there on a Lithuanian bank holiday]. Even upon making a call to Lithuania, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, no one was able to give any information whatsoever, wait if you wish, do want you want, you are not interesting to us. Therefore it is of no interest to me to try to seek something via the embassy or something, except when it is absolutely necessary.*

While these experiences by no means guarantee difficulties with external voting, they may lower the trust that the process will be smooth and pleasant. And, indeed, human errors in the external voting procedures were identified to have hindered the process in certain cases. Before the 2016 *Seimas* election, a share of external voters who wanted to vote from Italy received ballots that had not been properly stamped by the SEC (LRT 2016). This situation was not handled in unison by the authorities, the embassy encouraging the affected voters to contact them for new ballots and the SEC stating that these ballots were to be exceptionally recognised as valid. The confusion could have decreased the potential voters' confidence that their votes would actually count, as well as trust in institutions organising the election and potentially institutional trust in a more general sense. While it could be argued that this would only apply to potential voters vigilant enough to notice such details on the ballot, once such a situation reaches the media (as it did) more emigrants and even non–emigrant voters may become concerned. On the other hand, it is worth noting that both the media attention and the potential effect were likely smaller than if this had affected the more numerous UK–based voters, for example.

Let us now move on to **political efficacy.** A good example of its relevance to absenteeism is the 22–year–old non–voting male warehouse worker from the UK who did not seem to have a sense of political efficacy altogether, sharing corresponding beliefs throughout the interview (*'I probably think that nothing will change, that this vote of mine will not give anything, that is probably why [I do not vote]; 'I do not see any prospects of voting' […] I do not see a point, do not see a case for voting*). Similarly, a 22–year–old male non–voting student from Denmark also demonstrated signs of lack of efficacy (*'I would not say that […] those people who do vote make some big difference'*).

Interestingly, other relevant discourses demonstrated that it is possible for one to be affected by the perceived inefficacy even when consciously understanding its relativity. The 21–year–old male non–voting UK–based student worker stated himself that concentrating on what can be interpreted as lack

of efficacy may be used as a self–justification mechanism ('*Perhaps it is my willingness to justify myself, that I am only one person and what can this vote of mine influence*'). Similarly, the 44–year–old male non–voter from London, after having stated that his '*sole vote won't change a thing*', later on admitted the following:

> *It is just my opinion that a sole voice of mine will not change anything, perhaps everyone thinks this way, and if everyone did vote here perhaps they would influence something*

Having thus far addressed **non–voters'** relationship with perceived efficacy, it is important to note that in **voters' interviews**, the theme of efficacy was also present. First, it is worthwhile to acknowledge that this material demonstrated that the concepts of trust and perceived efficacy can be linked. A 28–year–old voting female student in the Netherlands intertwined the two:

> *There is little belief that things can change and a very common position is that everyone [in the government] is a thief and everybody is the same*

Contrasting with this rather negative view, the 41–year–old Sweden–based doctor was more optimistic and actually attributed a possible increase in a sense of political efficacy to emigration itself:

> *Experience abroad, it changes you, it helps to get rid of this passive attitude that nothing depends on me… If my voice can change something then I would like to do so.*

Curiously, the 38–year–old voting accountant from Norway who also justified his voting in efficacy–related terms, expressed a connected belief that external voters can make better electoral decisions:

> *We are Lithuanian citizens, it does not matter that we live abroad, it would really be desirable for life in Lithuania to get better and thereby we wish to take part in that political life, because if we don't vote – home–based Lithuanians will decide, and I don't know, some say that it is the inferior part of Lithuanians that has emigrated but from seeing electoral results – God knows what to make of this*

Some efficacy–centred interview material also signaled that there can be times when one's vote may appear to the person as particularly valuable. The 33–year–old female analyst from Sweden saw voting as a possibility to make changes, and underlined the following:

*It is a highly personal matter [whether to vote], but in Lithuania, we still need changes, so there is a possibility [for a potential voter] to change, or not to change, something, perhaps your close ones, your friends still live there, so that vote is still worth giving*

*2016 appeared to be a dramatic year in the world, so I wished to give a vote for positive candidates who believe in a positive Lithuania and influence positive changes, simply to make use of the possibility to vote and express my opinion*

There were more voters' discourses signalling the importance of perceived efficacy for voting. The 43–year–old woman from Scotland stated that '*if we do not vote nothing will ever get sorted out*' and *'if we do nothing from abroad, then everything will continue to collapse there'*. The 22–year–old female interviewee from the UK noted that '*so many do not vote; if everyone did vote, the results would be totally different… or at least somewhat different. Everyone's vote is important and meaningful*'. Indeed, the 19–year–old male from the UK believed that '*the power is in numbers*: *having in mind how many Lithuanians are currently living abroad, perhaps it is only a few percent [of votes], but still, those few percent can make a lot of difference*'. However, particularly illustrative of a strong effect that efficacy can have on one's decision to cast a vote were the cases of the 44–year–old stay–at–home mother and a part–time consultant from Poland, and the 59–year–old babysitter from the USA. The former asserted:

*It is my right, it depends on me, therefore I vote, I don't want someone to decide for me*

*I am choosing people who represent me, who represent my [emphasises] interests and I do not want anybody else, I want to have what I like, not what just [happens], not just go with the flow, someone else deciding for me*

The latter echoed this view, and also commented on what could be interpreted as absence of efficacy among non–voters:

*I cannot imagine myself being apathetic, someone else deciding [election results] for me. Well I understand that I possibly do not determine [the result] […], but I cannot imagine it any other way – that someone [else] would be deciding, without me…*

*There are many people who do not bring themselves to vote even in Lithuania, those who are completely apolitical, not civic [...] they expect something from the skies, manna from heaven or something, but they don't take part in the state's life at all, they try not to pay taxes, not to vote…*

As a final note, it is thought–provoking to observe the case of the 29–year–old female finance sector worker from Luxembourg who declared that she actually had left Lithuania partly due to what can be interpreted as low levels of perceived efficacy among the people there:

*I was really annoyed with the negativity, with people being very negative in Lithuania, and without even trying they say that everything is very bad, and they will be the first to explain that everything is so bad and nothing can be done, and make an impression that you can merely exist [in Lithuania], but it is certainly a matter of attitude*

In sum, **hypotheses that higher levels of political trust and efficacy positively influence Lithuanian emigrants' turnout have received considerable support** from the qualitative data.

## 4.4 Summary

To briefly recapitulate this chapter, most of the examined socio–demographic variables did not turn out to be good explanations for (non)voting behaviour in the survey data, with an exception of size of place of residence in home and host countries (the former for voting in the Presidential election, and the latter for the EP election). Political position and migration circumstances (time spent abroad and intention to return) were not significant predictors of (non)voting either. By contrast, home–country political interest and awareness constituted statistically significant explanatory variables in the regression analyses (the former for both examined elections, and the latter for Presidential election only). All findings should be interpreted bearing in mind the self–selection of the sample.

Qualitative interview material provided a means of testing the hypotheses for which survey data had not been collected, namely those of inconvenience, political trust and political efficacy. While interviews do not allow us to make claims about the extent to which the effects are prevalent, they did suggest that all the three factors can be relevant for Lithuanian electorate abroad, the first one having an effect both during registration and after registration. The interview data also enhanced the analyses of the variables that were tested in the survey too. Among other findings, it demonstrated

a perceived interest–centred cleavage between voters and absentees among a number of voting interviewees. It also called attention to the significance of knowledge regarding a specific external voting rule, namely the deadline to send votes by post, as well as awareness of this convenience voting means in the first place. However, as was also demonstrated empirically, raising awareness on this way of voting does not immediately lead to willingess to vote. In addition, qualitative data drew attention to cooccurrences of lack of knowledge and lack of interest more generally.

# Chapter 5. Lithuanian emigrants' political choices

## 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided us with insight into what lies behind Lithuanian emigrant (non)voting. The present chapter probes into Lithuanian emigrants' relationship with homeland elections even deeper by examining what lies behind the decision to support a specific party or candidate. Employing first–hand survey and interview data, it examines micro–level factors' ability to explain political choices among the research participants. As background to this, it makes use of official electoral data to compare all emigrant voters' preferences with those of their home–based compatriots.

The rest of this chapter is organised as follows. First, an introduction provides a summary of general political science works (including available Lithuanian ones) on why people choose to vote one way or another. When doing so, it concentrates on the well–established sociological, psychosocial and rational models of voter behaviour. These three key theories have also been the focus of two other noteworthy studies in the field, namely of Lafleur and Sánchez–Domínguez's (2015) work on Bolivian emigrant voting behaviour, and of Goldberg & Lanz's (2021) research on Swiss emigrants. These and other available studies focusing on external voters' choices are reviewed alongside general political science works. Based on these bodies of literature, hypotheses are formulated. Official electoral data is then used to explore and interpret overall emigrants' political choices. This is followed by hypotheses testing using first–hand survey data and qualitative interview data.

### 5.1.1 Sociological model

Alongside the studies on turnout examined in the previous chapter, voters' political choices – i. e. decisions which party or politician to support in a given election – have been vigorously studied by political scientists. Most of the potential influences on voters' choices can be attributed to one of the three key classical theoretical paradigms (Harrop & Miller 1987). The first of these approaches is sociological, also known as the **Columbia school**. This paradigm stems from work of Lazarsfeld and colleagues (1944; see also Berelson et al. 1954) and concentrates on effects of social factors. In the early days, the key factors were social class, area of residence, and religion (Lazarsfeld et al. 1944). In this approach, early development of political preferences via one's family is underscored (Glass et al. 1986), and voters' preferences are expected to be generally stable (Lipset & Rokkan 1967).

Ability to predict individuals' voting with their main social characteristics gained support in early and in some later works (e.g. Lipset 1960; Alford 1967; Knutsen 2004a, 2004b; Thomassen 2005).

However, the extent to which the importance of social factors – above all social class – has retained significance remains a matter of scholarly debate (Evans 2000; Clark & Lipset 2001; Kasara & Suryanarayan 2020). In any case, in Western Europe the Columbia school has been at least as influential as the Michigan school which we will discuss shortly (Lipset 1960; Holtz–Bacha 2004; Thomassen 2005; Oesch 2008; van der Eijk & Franklin 2009; Elff & Rossteutscher 2011; Rennwald 2014; Rennwald & Evans 2014; Heath 2015; Mckenzie 2017; Angelucci & Vittori 2021), although one should also acknowledge studies suggesting the deterioration of demographic characteristics' explanatory power on voters' choices (see Thomassen 2005; Bélanger & Meguid 2008).

Before applying the sociological model developed in the context of advanced Western democracies to the CEE region, one should first note that the history of the West has been more favourable to class voting. Actually, Mainwaring and Zoco (2007) attribute the higher party system stability in Western democracies particularly to the fact that the parties there developed more natural relationships with certain social classes. This is because they arose from those classes during the times when their differences were most acute and eventually the electorates became accustomed to them, forming stronger, historical, bonds which were then passed from one generation to the other. In this case, voting can truly be understood as an expression of voters' social identity, which may not be mirrored equally well in post–communist democracies (Manin 1997; Ramonaitė 2014b). This notwithstanding, the breakdown of communism naturally raised an interest into the applicability of the sociological approach in new democracies as well, with particular attentiveness being dedicated to social class. Yet, conclusions regarding its importance have been inconsistent (Kitschelt 1992; Evans & Whitefield 1993; Szelenyi et al. 1996; Domański 2000; Evans 2000, 2006; Gijsberts & Nieuwbeerta 2000; Ost 2000; Thomassen 2005; van der Brug et al. 2008; Jasiewicz 2009; Mykhnenko 2009; van der Eijk & Franklin 2009; Letki 2013; Bértoa 2014; Ramonaitė 2014c).

In Lithuania, available evidence suggests that class as such is a weak predictor of voting behaviour (Morkevičius & Norkus 2012; Norkus 2014; Ramonaitė 2014c). Other socio–demographic cleavages have had inconsistent explanatory power on voters' decisions throughout the years of independence (Krupavičius 1998; Degutis 2001; Ramonaitė 2007; Mačiūnas 2009; Ramonaitė 2014b, 2014e). In the context of the most recent election examined in this thesis – the 2016 *Seimas* election – Ramonaitė (2018a), relying on a multi–level stratified proportional sample of 1,500 survey respondents, identified the following socio–demographic effects. First, factors that are broadly understood to reflect one's socio–economic status (cf. Ahmadov & Sasse 2014) – education, occupation, income and size of place of residence – helped explain certain party choices. In particular, living in a town or a city rather than the countryside positively affected the likelihood of voting for LSDP and TT rather than of voting for

LVŽS. Income positively, although weakly, correlated with the support for the TS–LKD and the LRLS, and negatively with the support for LLRA and TT. Blue–collar workers were less likely to vote for TS–LKD and LRLS. Higher education decreased the likelihood of support for the LLRA, the TT and the DP. Regarding other socio–demographic characteristics, age – which over the years of independence has been one of the more important predictors – correlated positively with the support for the LVŽS as well as LSDP. Gender did not have an effect on political choices. Ethnic minorities were less likely to vote for TS–LKD, and, unsurprisingly, more likely to vote for LLRA (a Polish party). In an older comparable piece of work, the same author identified older age, higher education and living in cities to be good predictors of voting for TS–LKD (Ramonaitė's 2014b). In the most recent applicable study, Jastramskis (2020) identified a role of age, education, size of place of residence and ethnicity in choosing whom to vote for in the 2019 Presidential election, but the effects were rather unstable.

A number of external voting studies show that it is not uncommon for emigrants to vote differently from their compatriots back home (Lawson 2003; Boccagni & Ramírez 2013; Fidrmuc & Doyle 2004; Collard 2013; Burean & Popp 2015; Lafleur & Sánchez–Domínguez 2015; Burean 2018; Østergaard–Nielsen & Ciornei 2019a; Rosca 2019; Battiston & Luconi 2020; Goldberg & Lanz 2021; Turcu & Urbatsch 2020a, 2021, 2022). In certain occasions, their votes were actually decisive (e.g. in Croatia (Kasapović 2012), Italy (Battiston & Mascitelli 2008; Turcu & Urbatsch 2021), Turkey (Mencütek 2015; Akçapar & Aksel 2017), Romania (Burean 2018), Moldova (Rosca 2019)), although it should also be acknowledged that external votes can also influence homeland politics beyond direct electoral outcomes (Boccagni et al. 2015). Recent empirical work of Turcu and Urbatsch (2020a, 2022b, 2021, 2022) examined aggregated emigrant preferences, including those from European home countries. Their analyses indicate overall lower support to populist parties and the far left, and higher relative support to green parties, among external voters; tendencies to favour incumbents are also signalled in their data. Seeking explanations why external voters' choices repeatedly differ from those 'at home', external voting literature quite naturally turned attention to the socio–demographic composition of abroad–residing electorates, and more specifically raised questions about socio–demographic effects on voters' preferences, yielding the following outcomes. First, whilst reliable data on emigrant socio–demographic compositions is very scarce, it does not appear that emigrant populations are random samples of those at home (Goldberg & Lanz 2021). Second, there is evidence that non–migrants and emigrants with similar socio–demographic backgrounds make comparable political choices (Lafleur & Sánchez–Domínguez 2015; Ahmadov & Sasse 2016b), although Swiss external voting research suggests that voting behaviour differences cannot be fully explained by socio–demographic composition (Goldberg & Lanz 2021). Overall, Lafleur and Sánchez–Domínguez (2015) and Goldberg and Lanz (2021), studying Bolivian and Swiss emigrants respectively, find the

socio–demographic model to be a promising approach for explaining external voters' choices. More generally, Battiston and Luconi's (2020) macro–level study suggests socio–demographic variables to be at play in Italian emigrants' political choices.

Apart from this overall support for the Columbia school, external voting research has given certain insights into the effects of individual socio–demographic variables on voters' choices. Education, income and lower religiosity helped explain why (before provisions to vote from abroad) Mexicans in the USA preferred centre–right National Action Party's leader Fox (Lawson 2003). Burean (2018) found age and education effects on supporting an independent Presidential candidate Macovei to apply for Romanian non–migrants and emigrants alike. Ahmadov & Sasse (2014) found an effect of occupation on the likelihood of voting Tymoshenko in the 2010 Presidential election among Ukrainians abroad, white–collar workers being more likely to support her than blue–collar workers. However, effects of gender, age and education were not significant. In the same study, they reported no stable effect of education on the likelihood of voting Komorowski among Poles abroad, and no effect of occupation, gender and age in this instance. In Goldberg and Lanz's (2021) study of Swiss emigrants, social class operationalised in terms of occupation played a significant role in party choice; and it was in fact more important for emigrants.

One may naturally wonder whether the effects discussed above depend on the sending country. Given that large–scale comparative micro–level studies are not available, it is valuable to consider a case where different data sources have been employed in several studies on the same home country, namely Turkey. Relying on macro–level data, Sevi et al. (2020) find an effect of age and income on voting for a nationalist MHP party among Turks abroad. Studying specifically Turks in the Netherlands and relying on survey data, Mügge et al. (2021) argue that socio–economic background and social class largely account for their preference for a conservative candidate Erdoğan back home. However, drawing on a number of secondary sources, Arkilic's (2021) study contributes to this scholarship by suggesting that in the Turkish case socio–demographic variables by themselves may not be sufficient for explaining voting behaviour, discrimination in the host country constituting an important factor as well. Taken together, these findings resonate well with Luce's (1959; in Antwi 2018) early notion that socio–demographic factors should be accounted for whenever possible in voting behaviour models even when testing for other influences.

In support of this view and taking the available literature into account, this chapter does not raise a specific hypothesis for each socio–demographic variable, and instead **hypothesises, more generally, that, when examining whom Lithuanian emigrant voters vote for, there will be some effects of**

**socio–demographic variables**. This includes the variables that are frequently associated with class, namely education, income, occupation, size of place of residence in Lithuania and/or size of place of residence in the host country, but also gender and age.

### 5.1.2 Psychosocial model

Inseparable from the prominent work of Campbell and colleagues (1960) – *The American Voter* – another influential model of voting behaviour is the psychosocial model, also known as the **Michigan school.** Relying on surveys conducted during US presidential elections in 1948, 1952 and 1956, this approach emphasised party identification – or *partisanship* – as a crucial part of its framework. Specifically, the authors defined partisanship as a continuing psychological affinity and attachment one has towards a certain political party (Campbell et al. 1960). In the psychosocial framework, it plays an important role in a so–called *funnel of causality* – a model of the process of voter's choice. In this model, partisanship itself is heavily influenced by measures that we are familiar with from the Columbia school, such as social class or religion. Then, partisanship provides the potential voter with a filter through which to process information, and, consequently, evaluate parties and politicians, leading to an electoral choice. Voters even tend to select information which favours those parties or politicians that they already prefer (McCombs 1972). Partisanship typically develops in the early stages of political socialisation (Dinas 2017), frequently corresponds to that of one's parents (Hutchings & Jefferson 2018), and does not necessarily imply party membership, nor voting for that party without exceptions (Antunes 2010).

The Michigan school, and above all the importance of partisanship, received considerable support throughout the years in the USA and beyond (Lamare 1984; Bartels 2000; Sanders 2003; Shun Chiu et al. 2010). Interestingly, in the CEE region, communism appears to have also produced a degree of *negative* partisanship, i. e. identification of a party one would never vote for (Rose & Mishler 1998). In general, however, contrasting with the well–developed Western democracies, in CEE parties' ideological profiles can be rather confusing (Lewis, 2000; Innes 2002; Lewis & Mansfeldov 2006; Sikk 2012). This can make it difficult to apply classic categorisations such as von Beyme's (1985) or Ennser's (2012) typologies (Saarts 2011). In relation to this, Ramonaitė and Jastramskis (2014a) concluded that Lithuanian party names rarely reveal information about actual values of the party. Remarkably, an analysis of a party members' survey found only three current ideologically 'clean' Lithuanian (sub)parties, namely Social Democrats (LSDP), Liberals (LRLS) and Christian Democrats (LKD) (Ramonaitė & Jastramskis 2014c). This can make it difficult for Lithuanian electorate to identify with

a party (Ramonaitė 2014a), potentially encouraging them to focus on personalities instead (see Kavaliauskaitė 2014b, 2014c). This likely constitutes one of the reasons why in Lithuania many citizens do not have stable political preferences (Ramonaitė & Jastramskis 2014b), nor do they often join political parties (Jastramskis 2018d).

One may expect making sense of the available parties to be especially difficult for laypeople who do not live in the country anymore, thereby possibly making partisanship–based voting challenging. On the other hand, provided that partisanship typically forms early in life (Dinas 2017), it is possible that emigrants simply take their pre–existent political identification abroad and vote accordingly (although recent work of Ognibene and Paulis (2021) suggests a hybrid interplay). Indeed, Ahmadov and Sasse's (2016b) interviewed Poles tended not to have changed their political views since arriving to the UK. More generally, as early as in 2003 Lawson reasoned that regardless of their demographic profile, emigrants may have different social and political attitudes from their compatriots back home. Turcu and Urbatsch's (2021, 2022) recent work supports this view, demonstrating disproportional reluctance among the European emigrants to vote for far–left parties when such a choice is available back home, same holding for populist parties. However, supporting the reasoning that has been outlined above, Lafleur and Sánchez–Domínguez's (2015) qualitative work suggested difficulties for Bolivian external electorate to interpret parties in terms of the left–to–right continuum, and, indeed, their quantitative data yielded mixed results on ideology. Remarkably, in Burean and Popp's (2015) work on Romania, left–to–right self–placement did not predict emigrants' electoral preferences, but it did predict those of non–migrants, being in line with the consideration that emigrants may find it more difficult to understand parties (and/or themselves) in terms of traditional left–to–right scale. In her published study on the same country, however, Burean (2018) demonstrated a significant association between a centre–right ideological profile and supporting Christian–Liberal Alliance presidential candidate Iohannis among both emigrants and non–migrants. Meanwhile, Goldberg and Lanz (2021) provided statistical evidence that Swiss emigrants rely on partisanship less than their compatriots back home.

The effect of political identification on emigrant voters' choices has been tested less than that of socio–demographic measures and that the results are largely mixed. The present chapter adds to this body of literature and raises a 'partisanship' **hypothesis that Lithuanian emigrants with a right–wing ideological profile are more likely to vote for a right–wing political party TS–LKD.** Intriguingly, recent research suggests that in Lithuania, formally independent Presidential candidates are frequently supported by electorates of different parties, an effect that has been called 'partisans in disguise' (Jastramskis 2021). In line with the long–standing support for her from TS–LKD party (ibid.), this

chapter hence **hypothesises that emigrants with a right–wing ideological profile are also more likely to vote for the Presidential candidate Grybauskaitė**.

### 5.1.3 Rational choice model

The third major approach to electoral choices covered in this chapter is the **rational choice model**. Within this framework, voters are generally understood as rational economic agents driven by self–interest and engaging into conscious cost–and–benefit analyses; as a result, they support parties or politicians most advantageous for them at the time (Downs 1957; see also Riker & Odershook 1968, Stratmann 1974). Although the theory has been subject to some criticisms (e. g. Green & Shapiro 1994), it has nevertheless become highly influential (Abell 2000), a certain part of its appeal stemming from its interdisciplinarity and wide applicability (Becker 1976). It is also fundamentally flexible: over time, the overarching model has accommodated, for example, psychological distress (Fiorina 1976), cultural context (Ben–Bassat & Dahan 2012), and even altruism (Edlin et al. 2007)). It is also applicable to comparative politics (Norman 2000).

Within the framework of the rational choice theory one can find **issue ownership voting**, i.e. political choices that are made based on one's preferences on specific problem(s) (cf. Goldberg & Lanz 2021). Carmines and Stimson (1980) argued that within the Downsian framework should be positioned the so–called 'hard–issue' voting, where the vote is a result of conscious cost–and–benefit considerations, as opposed to 'soft–issue' voting which is nearly automatic. According to the theory of issue voting, candidates strive to obtain votes by putting emphasis on issues where they are *perceived* (Walgrave et al. 2012) as reputable and competent (Budge & Farlie 1983; Žiliukaitė 2014c), and then receive votes on the basis of issues that voters see them as 'owing'. This is in line with how perceived competence of parties influences political choices more generally (Nadeau et al. 2001; Bellucci 2006). These issues are often 'valence' problems – i.e. the ones that are generally agreed upon to be important to solve – rather than 'position' problems – i.e. the ones that are contested (Aardal & van Wijnen 2005; Green & Hobolt 2008). Examples of historical issue ownership include the British Labour Party traditionally being perceived as owner of healthcare and education, British Conservatives – owner of taxes, crime and defense, American Democratic Party – owner of welfare, civil rights and education, and American Republican Party – owner of foreign affairs, national defense and crime (Budge & Farlie, 1983; Petrocik 1996; Bélanger & Meguid 2008). Issue ownership is relatively stable, but changes of owners are not impossible (Blomqvist & Green–Pedersen 2004; Walgrave & De Svertas 2007) . Issue–ownership–based voting has been increasingly successful in explaining voting behaviour of general electorates at both national and European levels (Repass 1971; Budge & Farlie 1983;

Petrocik 1996; Petrocik et al. 2003; Freire 2004; Bélanger & Meguid 2008; Green & Hobolt 2008; de Vries 2010; de Vries et al. 2011; Lachat 2011; Walgrave & Tresch 2012; Abou–Chadi & Helbling 2018; Carrieri & Angelucci 2022).

Considering that ideological stances of Lithuanian politicians, and those of CEE countries more generally, are far from clear–cut and that political parties are overall more fluid in this part of Europe (Jungerstam–Mulders 2006; Saarts 2011; Powell & Tucker 2014; Ramonaitė 2014e), it could be expected that issue–ownership–centred voting, as opposed to ideological voting, would be even more prevalent among Lithuanians than Western Europeans. Indeed, relating to the previous section, while we should acknowledge existing evidence that party identification and stability of electoral results may be decreasing in Western democracies too (Kuhn 2009; Van der Meer et al. 2015; Chiaramonte & Emanuele 2017; Dejaeghere & Dassonneville 2017), they nonetheless appear to be even less stable in CEE (Tavits 2008; Saarts 2011; Ramonaitė 2014e). On the other hand, in multiparty systems it can be more difficult to identify the issue owner (Bélanger & Meguid 2008).

In the external voting literature, rational voting has so far indeed been tested in terms of whether those abroad vote taking into account selected issues. It is important to underscore that those issues might be significant to those voters *as emigrants*, and/or as *general citizens*. It is also possible for emigrant voters to reflect on issues in the eyes of *those residing back home* (Lafleur & Sánchez–Domínguez 2015) and vote accordingly. This is important considering that parties and politicians may be unable and/or unwilling to underscore issues relevant only to a small portion of the electorate (ibid; Mencütek 2015). Indeed, Lafleur and Sánchez–Domínguez tested the extent to which an 'interest–driven voter model' applies to Bolivian external voters. The authors argued that this model does not appear to account well for the electoral behaviour of Bolivians abroad because of extremely limited electoral campaigning outside Bolivia, making it difficult for the voters to familiarise themselves with parties' stances on different issues important to those in emigration. In another study, Burean (2018) accounted for a number of issues relevant to Romanian political scene in her quantitative analyses of emigrant and non–emigrant political preferences. She found that viewing the state as more important than the church, and being in favour of market economy (controlling for left–right self–placement), constituted significant predictors of preferring the Christian–Liberal Alliance candidate Iohannis among both emigrants and non–migrants. For choosing the independent candidate Macovei, issues were even more important: being pro–market was also a significant predictor, and the same held for favouring public sector reduction, supporting LGBT rights, and being against introduction of religion to schools. These results support the view that emigrants may engage

in issue voting not only around issues centred around those abroad in particular. Notably, in both of the models significance of the effect of being an emigrant disappeared once political position and issues were taken into account. Unlike the present study and some other research (Lafleur & Sánchez–Domínguez 2015), Goldberg and Lanz (2021) reason that emigrants ought to concentrate on issues directly relevant to them. Yet, their data actually addressed issues at a *home country* level, but the effect was in any case insignificant.

Relying on the previous research and taking a step further, this chapter tests **a hypothesis that Lithuanian emigrants consider both emigration–centred and general home–country issues when making political choices**.

Apart from the three major models examined in the present chapter, the analysis here also accounts for migration circumstances (time spent abroad (Lawson 2003; Lafleur & Sánchez–Domínguez's 2015) and intention to return (Ahmadov & Sasse 2014; Burean 2018) and interest and awareness in home–country politics. They take a role of control variables in this chapter.

### 5.1.4 Other variables

While this chapter tests most important variables, it should be acknowledged that some potentially relevant ones could not be addressed. At a micro level, this could be argued to include ethnicity and religion, though in the context of Lithuania they are likely considerably less important than in some other studies where these variables were considered (e.g. Lafleur and Sánchez–Domínguez 2015; Goldberg & Lanz 2021). Potentially relevant variables also include ties with the homeland (Ahmadov & Sasse 2014; Lafleur & Sánchez–Domínguez 2015), place of residence (Rosca 2019), and – applicable to the CEE in particular – evaluation of soviet times (Jastramskis 2021). Although trust and political efficacy are less significant in this chapter than in the previous one, it could be beneficial to at least control for their effects in the statistical analyses (see Lawson 2003; Bélanger & Nadeau 2005; Mügge et al. 2021). Without a doubt, including variables exploring issue voting in a quantiative manner would constitute another valuable improvement. At the aggregate level, the present analysis does not address historical connections between parties and emigrants (see, e.g., Paarlberg 2020), political campaigning (Jakobson et al. 2020) and parties' behaviour abroad more generally (Borz 2020; Kernalegenn & van Haute 2020a; van Haute & Tudi Kernalegenn 2021).

## 5.2 Official electoral data

Before addressing the hypotheses formulated in the previous sections, it is first of all important to examine official data on Lithuanian emigrant voting – in the following section, it will also be compared and contrasted with the survey data gathered for this thesis. For Lithuanian emigrants, the official data is available on the website of the SEC. Table 16, Table 17 and Table 18 demonstrate the distribution of emigrant votes in the first and second rounds of the most recent election examined by this study – the 2016 *Seimas* election. The three tables list parties and candidates from those that were supported by emigrants the most to those that were supported the least. They also indicate the shares of internal voters who supported a given party or individual.

| Party/coalition | Emigrant votes | | | % of total valid ballots cast abroad | % of valid internal votes | Mandates gained |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | In person | By post | Total | | | |
| TS–LKD | 3,361 | 4,157 | 7,518 | 46.7 | 21.7 | 31 |
| LRLS | 1,534 | 2,056 | 3,590 | 22.3 | 9.1 | 14 |
| LVŽS | 587 | 762 | 1,349 | 8.4 | 21.5 | 54[101] |
| LSDP | 473 | 446 | 919 | 5.7 | 14.4 | 17 |
| LŽPa | 149 | 304 | 453 | 2.8 | 1.0 | 0 |
| LŽP | 170 | 267 | 437 | 2.7 | 2.0 | 1 |
| APKK | 162 | 271 | 433 | 2.7 | 6.1 | 0 |
| LLS | 224 | 202 | 426 | 2.6 | 2.1 | 0 |
| LS | 146 | 262 | 408 | 2.5 | 1.7 | 1 |
| TT | 115 | 124 | 239 | 1.5 | 5.3 | 8 |
| DP | 123 | 73 | 196 | 1.2 | 4.7 | 2 |
| LLRA | 64 | 46 | 110 | 0.7 | 5.5 | 8 |
| DK | 13 | 12 | 25 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0 |
| Total | 7,121 | 8,982 | 16,103 | | | |

Table 16. Emigrant vote distribution in *Seimas* election 2016, first round, multi–member district. Calculated from SEC data

[101]+2 independent candidates who associated themselves with this party.

| Candidate (party/coalition) | Emigrant votes | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | In person | By post | Total | % of total valid ballots cast abroad | % of valid internal votes |
| Žygimantas Pavilionis (TS–LKD) | 3,282 | 4,432 | 7,714 | 47.6 | 44.4 |
| Virgilijus Alekna (LRLS) | 1,462 | 1,705 | 3,167 | 19.6 | 19.3 |
| Dovilė Šakalienė (LVŽS) | 621 | 884 | 1,505 | 9.3 | 7.8 |
| Faustas Latėnas (LSDP) | 393 | 340 | 733 | 4.5 | 6.5 |
| Laurynas Okockis (LŽP) | 229 | 317 | 546 | 3.4 | 3.0 |
| Petras Nausėda (LLS) | 270 | 212 | 482 | 3.0 | 3.3 |
| Jūratė Zabielaitė (LRLS) | 182 | 267 | 449 | 2.8 | 3.0 |
| Elona Švipienė (LLP) | 148 | 299 | 447 | 2.8 | 2.0 |
| Alvydas Medalinskas (LCP) | 180 | 254 | 434 | 2.7 | 2.7 |
| Ieva Kačinskaitė–Urbonienė (DP) | 122 | 110 | 232 | 1.4 | 2.3 |
| Daiva Urbonavičiūtė (TT) | 97 | 107 | 204 | 1.3 | 1.6 |
| Arūnas Eigirdas (TS–LKD) | 64 | 62 | 126 | 0.8 | 0.8 |
| Artur Liudkovski (LLRA) | 67 | 43 | 110 | 0.7 | 3.0 |
| Einaras Vildė (DK) | 16 | 24 | 40 | 0.3 | 0.3 |
| Total | 7,133 | 9,056 | 16,189 | | |

Table 17. Emigrant vote distribution in *Seimas* election 2016, first round, single–member district. Calculated from SEC data

| Candidate (party/coalition) | Emigrant votes | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | In person | By post | Total | % of total valid ballots cast abroad | % of valid internal votes |
| Žygimantas Pavilionis (TS–LKD) | 2,483 | 5,908 | 8,391 | 72.6 | 68.0 |
| Virgilijus Alekna (LRLS) | 1,462 | 1,705 | 3,167 | 27.4 | 32.0 |
| Total | 3,945 | 7,613 | 11,558 | | |

Table 18. Emigrant vote distribution in *Seimas* election 2016, second round. Calculated from SEC data

The official electoral data allows for precise comparisons between general voter preferences and emigrant voter preferences. In terms of individual politicians, emigrants' preference for Žygimantas Pavilionis is apparent, and he was the most successful 'at home' as well. This is true for both rounds. In terms of parties, the order of preferences was different, with close to half (46.7%) of emigrant voters preferring TS–LKD, over one fifth (22.3%) the LRLS, leaving LVŽS in the third place with 8.4% of voter support. By contrast, while internally TS–LKD were supported the most, they only gathered one fifth of the votes (21.7%), and LVŽS secured the second place with a very similar vote share (21.5%). LSDP came third (14.4%). The rest of the parties and coalitions were much less popular both back home and abroad.

Variations in the top–3 choices suggest that the differences may have partially arisen from poorer access to information and electoral campaigning in the emigrant voter population. Specifically, the lower support for LVŽS may be partly due to emigrants not witnessing the extensive campaigning of the party prior to the election. Certain subtle influences, some on the verge of illegality, might have affected the part of the electorate that was residing in Lithuania much more than external voters. In 2018, SEC recognised that in the TV–series '*Naisių vasara'*, running since 2009 and funded by LVŽS leader Ramūnas Karbauskis' company '*Agrokoncernas*', there were episodes of hidden political campaigning (BNS 2019) including during the critical (as judged by the SEC) period of 18 months before the election. While some emigrants do watch Lithuanian TV (as has been shown in Chapter 3), a commitment to continuously follow a Lithuanian TV–series depicting daily life of a Lithuanian village where Karbauskis used to reside is probably more common among the Lithuania–based electorate. Furthermore, Jastramskis (2018b) has noted the importance of examining opinion leaders' possible influence on (especially first–time) voters. Indeed, during the electoral campaign the agronomist leader of LVŽS Ramūnas Karbauskis, 15th richest person in Lithuania, was extensively officially supported by a very popular businessman, 18th richest person in Lithuania and a mayor of Kaunas –

the second largest Lithuanian city – Visvaldas Matijošaitis. Matijošaitis, above all due to substantial investments into Kaunas infrastructure, was at that time among the most favourably regarded politicians since having gained the office in spite of being a rather controversial figure due to his questionable business relations and possible tax avoidance (LRytas 2018; 15min 2015). As Matijošaitis is a representative of a municipality and was especially well regarded by Kaunas residents but also looked upon elsewhere in Lithuania as an example of effective mayorship, it is most likely that home–country voters were apt to rely on his opinion, although the possible influence on emigrant voters via the opinion of friends and relatives at home cannot be discarded.[102]

It could be reasoned that the higher position of LRLS among the abroad–based electorate may also have an information aspect to it, given that general support to previously relatively highly regarded Liberals dropped dramatically half a year prior to the election due to a corruption scandal involving their leader Eligijus Masiulis who was accused of having accepted a large bribe from one of the key Lithuanian businesses (Delfi 2016a). While it is worth noting that certain other parties, including TS–LKD and DP, had been subject to certain reputational threats too (Petronytė–Urbonavičienė 2014), LRLS certainly suffered the most serious reputational damage. A survey carried out in Lithuania once the scandal took place (Delfi 2016b), in spite of being voluntary and internet–based and therefore limited in terms of representativeness, gives some indication that Karbauskis' party may indeed have gained a certain number of votes that would have otherwise gone to LRLS. Out of 985 respondents, as Figure 14 shows, 58% had not intended to vote for LRLS before the scandal, 22% had intended to vote for them and had not changed their opinion and 12% had intended to vote for LRLS but at the moment of the survey thought that they would not do so, although it is worth noting that among the youngest participants (aged 18 to 24) the share of LRLS supporters not changing their mind was as high as 34% (see Figure 15).

[102]It may appear appealing to interpret the differences in LVŽS success from a more ideological perspective: perhaps those building their lives abroad may not want to associate themselves with a traditionally agrarian Lithuanian party. However, LVŽS would not have secured its victory without a large number of (internal) city–based voters, and its electorate has been shown not to be unique in terms of their values or voters' socio–demographic characteristics, the party presenting itself as novel arguably being its strongest selling point (Ramonaitė 2018b).

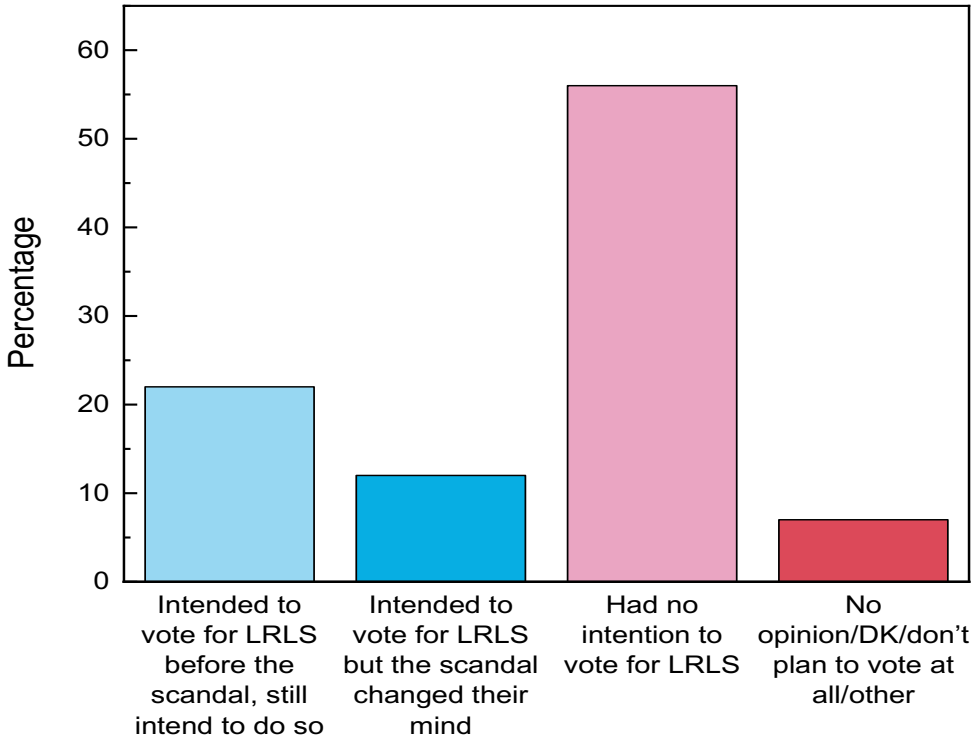



Figure 14. Change of intention among prospective voters after Liberal scandal, overall. Adapted from Delfi 2016b

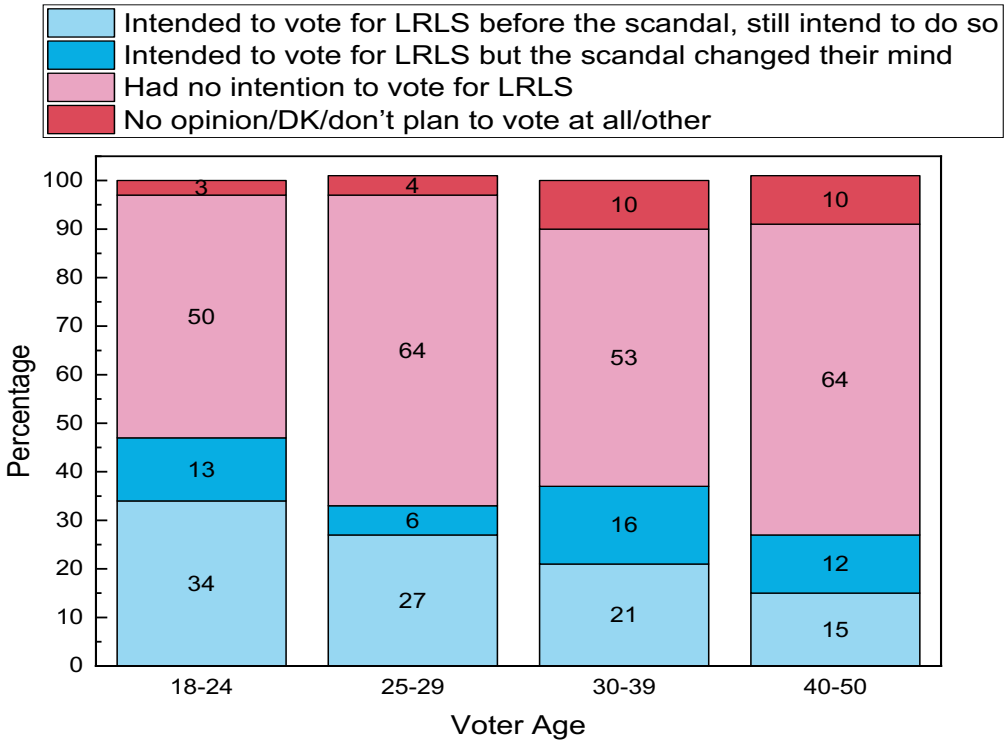



Figure 15. Change of intention among prospective voters after Liberal scandal, by age. Adapted from Delfi 2016b

Figure 16 demonstrates that concerning those who felt that they would no longer support LRLS, most votes could be expected to be gained by LVŽS (20%) as well as TS–LKD (19%) and DP (16%). Seeing that LVŽS is likely to have gained a notable share of votes of those informed of the Liberal scandal, witnessing emigrants to nonetheless prefer LRLS to LVŽS suggests a possibility that external voters may not have been equally well informed of it. Initial expert opinions forecasting TS–LKD to be the winners in the context of LRLS scandal as the two parties traditionally compete for some of the same electorate (Delfi 2016b), LVŽS relative success was likely due to this party's ability to position itself as a 'new' party (cf. Petronytė–Urbonavičienė 2014; Ramonaitė 2018b) which is to be dissociated from the misbehaviour of the more traditional political arena. Interestingly, LRLS gaining more votes in SMDs than in the MMD in the 2016 *Seimas* election can also be interpreted as the scandal affecting the party's overall reputation, but not necessarily that of individual members (see also Kavaliauskaitė 2014a). It has also been more broadly reasoned that the party's potential as an opposition and a quite centrist party was evened out by its leaders' Masiulis' corruption scandal (Jastramskis 2018b).

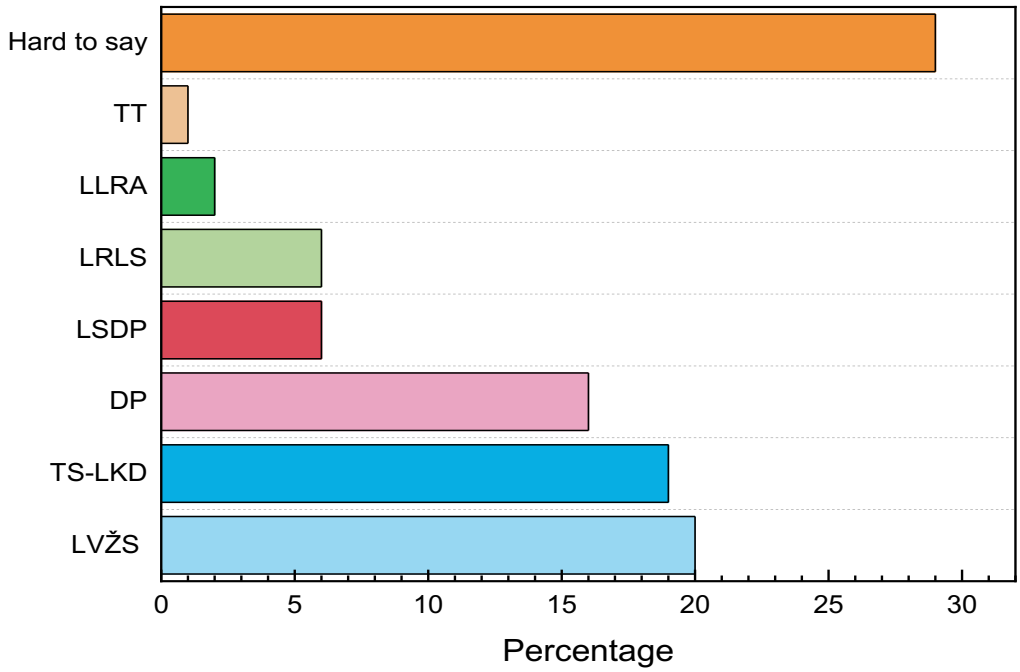



Figure 16. Intended political choices of initial LRLS supporters who changed their mind due to Liberal scandal. Adapted from Delfi 2016b

It is, however, unlikely that the information aspect is responsible for all of the unevenness in the two voter distributions. It is possible that emigrants may not have noticed LVŽS because of lack of electoral campaigning abroad (indeed there is no evidence of their external campaigning, although in their general campaign they highlighted the extent of emigration as illustrative of problems of the country (SEC 2016b)). However, as Table 19 demonstrates, emigrants also supported LRLS nearly twice as much as the internal voting population (30.4% vs 16.6%) in the 2014 European Parliament election which took place two years before the Liberal scandal, signalling that the external voting population prefers this party not simply because of informational differences.

| Party/ coalition | Emigrant votes | | | % of total valid ballots cast abroad | % of valid internal votes | Mandates gained | Elected candidates |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | In person | By post | Total | | | | |
| TS–LKD | 1,653 | 2,833 | 4,486 | 32.9 | 17.4 | 2 | Gabrielius Lansbergis, Algirdas Saudargas |
| LRLS | 1,598 | 2,549 | 4,147 | 30.4 | 16.6 | 2 | Petras Auštrevičius, Antanas Guoga |
| LSDP | 635 | 1,023 | 1,658 | 12.1 | 17.3 | 2 | Zigmantas Balčytis, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė |
| TT | 294 | 483 | 777 | 5.7 | 14.3 | 2 | Valentinas Mazuronis, Rolandas Paksas |
| LVŽS | 251 | 400 | 651 | 4.8 | 6.6 | 1 | Ramūnas Karbauskis |
| DP | 201 | 285 | 486 | 3.6 | 12.8 | 1 | Viktor Uspaskich |
| LŽP | 156 | 319 | 475 | 3.5 | 3.6 | 0 | N/A |
| LTS | 131 | 256 | 387 | 2.8 | 2.0 | 0 | N/A |
| LiCS | 152 | 178 | 330 | 2.4 | 1.5 | 0 | N/A |
| LLRA–LRS (VTB) | 134 | 122 | 256 | 1.9 | 8.1 | 1 | Valdemar Tomaševski |
| Total | 5,205 | 8,448 | 13,653 | | | | |

Table 19. Emigrant vote distribution in EP election 2014. Calculated from SEC data

Table 19 also shows that there was a very similar discrepancy between emigrant and 'home' voter support for TS–LKD, which was the first choice among both sets of voters, leaving the LRLS second

(although the lead was small in both cases). The third choice was also the same 'at home' and abroad but was supported slightly less by the external voters – LSDP gained 17.3% of the internal vote and 12.1% of the external vote. A notable difference between the two populations is the lower support of emigrants for the parties that are traditionally seen as populist – TT and DP (their overall popularity declined only in the 2016 election). Given that LVŽS also has many elements of a populist party (Jonutis 2019), the apparent avoidance of populism among the emigrant voters offers a further possible explanation of why the electoral preferences differed in 2016, emigrants preferring LRLS to LVŽS. Lithuanian external voters' aversion to populist parties is interesting in itself (and in line with the recently reported more general trend (Turcu & Urbatsch 2022)). Given that in Lithuania votes for populist parties can be interpreted as a form of protest voting (Jastramskis 2014a), it is likely that the potential populist supporters residing abroad choose an even easier protest option – non–voting – instead. It is also possible that, since large numbers of Lithuanian emigrants reside in the Western countries with better established democracies and lower degrees of populism (Blokker 2005), they are learning to avoid such parties and choose more traditional options instead. Although populism, especially right–wing, has increased in the West in the recent years as well (Berlet & Lyons 2018; Halikiopoulou 2018; Virchow 2019), societies in countries with relatively late economic development such as Lithuania are generally more prone to populism (Szczerbiak & Hanley 2006; Hanley et al. 2008). Moreover, Eastern European media can often be less critical of populist parties than the Western media (Norocel & Szabó 2019). Hence living in the West can make one more sceptical towards such parties even if their presence is rising in the host country. At the same time, successful entrance of populist parties into the political scene is often associated with effective electoral campaigns (Aldridge 2003; Lederer et al. 2005; Schmuck & Matthes 2015). Thereby, the limited campaign exposure in the Lithuanian context can further reduce emigrants' likelihood of voting for populist parties, although it is also possible that social media partly compensates for this (see Engesser et al. 2017).

One may also reason that parties that are present as namesakes (i.e. sharing (part) of the name) in the country of residence, such as Liberals, Conservatives and Social Democrats, might perform better in the election. However the (populist) Lithuanian Labour Party (DP), whose namesake is a popular party in the UK where many Lithuanians reside, was actually avoided by emigrant voters in 2014 (as well as in 2016 when it was overall less popular). The fact that Lithuanian emigrant voters are differentiating between the more popular and less popular liberal parties of the home–county political scene (Liberal Movement (LRLS) vs. Liberal and Centre Union (LiCS) and Lithuanian Freedom Union (Liberals) (LLS)) in the same way as the general voting population also suggests that they do not blindly choose namesake parties.

The 2014 Presidential election (Table 20 and Table 21 depict first and second rounds respectively) revealed overwhelming emigrant voter support for the incumbent winner Dalia Grybauskaitė. In the first round, under half (45.9%) of the internal voting population chose Grybauskaitė, emigrant support for the incumbent nearing three quarters at 72.4%. In the second round, an even larger share – 82.6% – of external voters chose Grybauskaitė, whereas internal support was far from overwhelming at 59.1%. Interestingly, the other candidate who made it to the second round – Zigmantas Balčytis (LSDP) – was not the runner–up among emigrants in the first round, independent candidate Naglis Puteikis coming second and Artūras Zuokas (LiCS) also getting more votes.

A notable fact about the second round of this Presidential election is that it was held together with the European Parliament election. It has been discussed that the relatively high attendance in the EP election can be attributed to its co–occurrence with this first–order election (LZinios 2018). It could therefore be reasonable to expect the EP voters' choices to be biased towards political preferences of Grybauskaitė's supporters. However, Grybauskaitė has not belonged to a political party since Lithuania regained independence, and although the party that traditionally expressed their support towards her – TS–LKD – did score the highest percentage of votes, their lead was actually minimal. This was true for both the internal and the external vote.

| Candidate | Emigrant votes | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | In person | By post | Total | % of total valid ballots cast abroad | % of valid internal votes |
| Dalia Grybauskaitė | 3,920 | 5,624 | 9,544 | 72.4 | 45.9 |
| Naglis Puteikis | 361 | 572 | 933 | 7.1 | 9.3 |
| Artūras Zuokas | 424 | 467 | 891 | 6.8 | 5.2 |
| Zigmantas Balčytis | 383 | 407 | 790 | 6.0 | 13.6 |
| Artūras Paulauskas | 297 | 321 | 618 | 4.7 | 12.0 |
| Valdemar Tomaševski | 124 | 87 | 211 | 1.6 | 8.2 |
| Bronis Ropė | 83 | 106 | 189 | 1.4 | 4.1 |
| Total | 5,592 | 7,584 | 13,176 | | |

Table 20. Emigrant vote distribution in Presidential election 2014, first round. Calculated from SEC data

| Candidate | Emigrant votes | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | In person | By post | Total | % of total valid ballots cast abroad | % of valid internal votes |
| Dalia Grybauskaitė | 4,383 | 7,754 | 12,137 | 82.6 | 59.1 |
| Zigmantas Balčytis | 1,097 | 1,467 | 2,564 | 17.4 | 40.9 |
| Total | 5,480 | 9,221 | 14,701 | | |

Table 21. Emigrant vote distribution in Presidential election 2014, second round. Calculated from SEC data

While the focus of this thesis is on recent Lithuanian elections, inspecting emigrant party choices from a historical perspective can provide a better contextual understanding. Figure 17 and Figure 18 respectively portray internal and external MMD votes in Lithuanian *Seimas* elections between 1992 and 2016 (subject to data availability). As discussed earlier in this chapter, the Lithuanian party system is very unstable and is also characterised by frequent party name changes and their splits and mergers (in fact, only one party – LSDP – has not changed its name since 1992, and yet there were other important changes within this party as it has split into two) making it challenging to monitor and interpret success of individual parties throughout the years. The figures thereby provide a simplified picture of internal and external MMD votes, Lithuanian parties being grouped into different clusters. Party allocation into the groups is provided in Appendix 2. The parties were grouped into established parties leaning towards left–wing ideology, established parties leaning towards liberal ideology, established parties leaning towards right–wing ideology, parties representing ethnic minorities, and other parties. In the light of the complexity of the Lithuanian party history and system as well as the difficulties of ideological mapping of Lithuanian parties, there is no uncontested way to classify them (see, for instance, right–left index of Comparative Manifesto Project and ParlGov dataset utilised by Østergaard–Nielsen et al. 2019). However, the present classification can take into account party mergers (e.g. the merger of TS and LKD) and separate the relatively well–established parties from those that entered the political scene only for a brief period of time.[103]

[103]While some may choose to classify (part of) such parties as 'populist', as a result of the presence of populist features in many other CEE parties (Stanley 2017) this thesis did not utilise such a category.

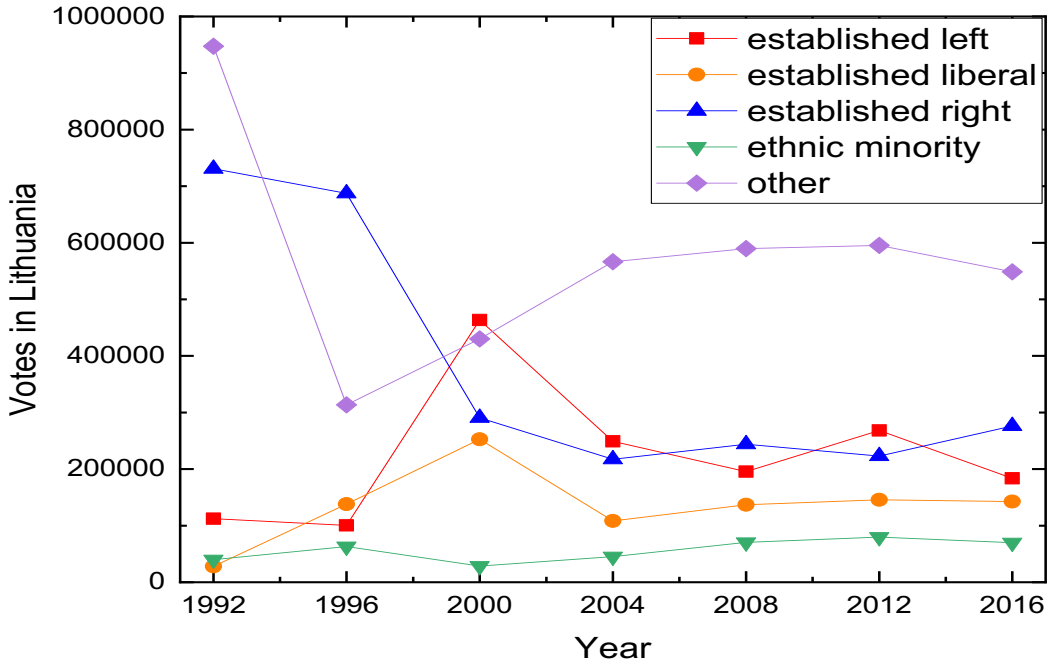



Figure 17. Categorised multi–member district votes in *Seimas* elections, internal voters

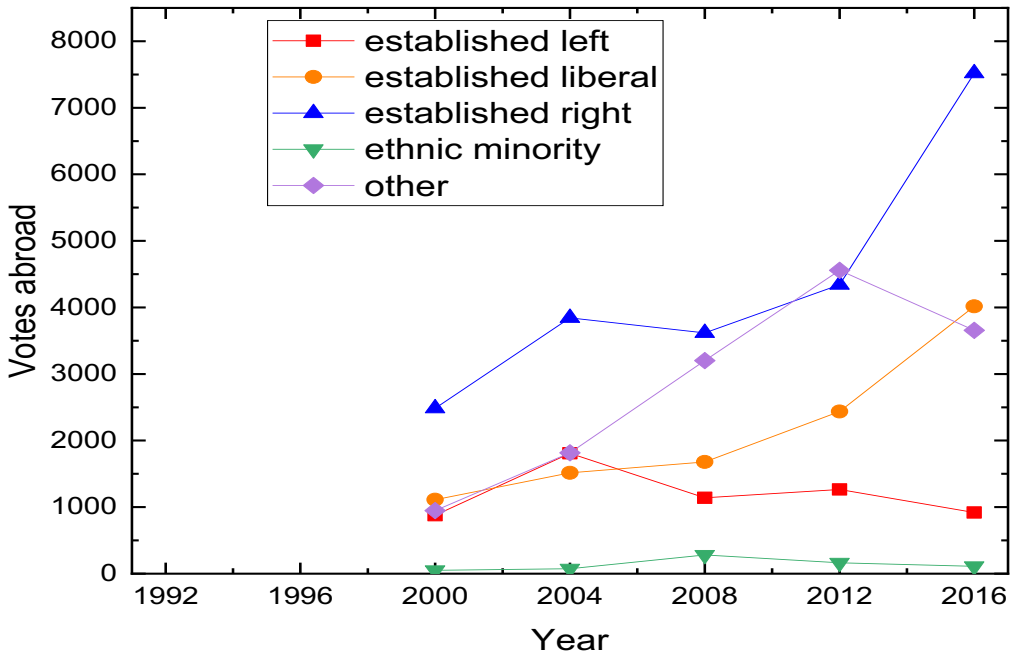



Figure 18. Categorised multi–member district votes in *Seimas* elections, external voters

This simplified version of Lithuanian internal and external voters' voting history reveals that Lithuanians residing abroad have been generally less keen to vote for non–established parties than their compatriots back home, which may again be related to following home–country political news less, or to getting used to host country's political scene where traditional parties may be valued more. Emigrants have been voting especially rarely for ethnic minority parties, presumably because there are few, in absolute numbers, ethnic minority members abroad, and those who are abroad may be less likely to follow Lithuanian politics and vote there in the first place. Instead, voting emigrants appear to favour established right–leaning parties: their popularity among external voters has disproportionally increased with time.

Lithuanian political scientists have been somewhat reluctant to inspect the socio–economic status of citizens, possibly due to negative connotations which class bears from the soviet times (Ramonaitė 2014d). Yet, the Lithuanian literature (Ramonaitė 2014b, 2018a) lets one conclude that those with more education, living in cities, holding more prestigious jobs and earning more – in other words, individuals who could be interpreted as of high socio–economic profile, or belonging to a higher class – are more likely to support the right–wing party TS–LKD. As can be seen from this section, those Lithuanians abroad who do vote are making comparable right–wing choices presently as well as historically. The extent to which this can be attributed to external voters' socio–demographic characteristics remains to be tested in the next section of this chapter.

### 5.3 Primary data: results and discussion

Two out of the three elections examined in this study – the 2014 Presidential election and 2014 Lithuanian European Parliament election – were covered by the post–election survey utilised in this chapter. Voters were straightforwardly asked to disclose their voting choice, being reminded of the confidentiality of this information.

Official electorate data discussed in the previous section is not only valuable for describing political choices of emigrants who do vote, but also acts as a useful benchmark against which to compare related quantitative data collected specifically for this thesis. In particular, it allows to monitor how representative the surveyed emigrant voters are of the general emigrant voter population in terms of their political choices. As can be seen from Table 22 and Table 23, emigrant voters who answered relevant survey questions were indeed very similar to the population of emigrant voters in terms of their preferred candidates in both rounds of the Presidential election. It is worth noting that the first–round runner up of the surveyed emigrants in fact corresponded with that of *internal* electorate

discussed above, but the differences in vote shares between overall and surveyed emigrants were small.

| Candidate | Overall emigrant votes | | Surveyed emigrant votes | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Percentage | Total | Percentage |
| Dalia Grybauskaitė | 9,544 | 72.4 | 235 | 75.1 |
| Naglis Puteikis | 933 | 7.1 | 15 | 4.8 |
| Artūras Zuokas | 891 | 6.8 | 18 | 5.8 |
| Zigmantas Balčytis | 790 | 6.0 | 26 | 8.3 |
| Artūras Paulauskas | 618 | 4.7 | 12 | 3.8 |
| Valdemar Tomaševski | 211 | 1.6 | 1 | 0.3 |
| Bronis Ropė | 189 | 1.4 | 6 | 1.9 |
| Total | 13,176 | 100 | 313 | 100 |

Table 22. Emigrants' (overall and surveyed) votes in Presidential election 2014, first round

| Candidate | Overall emigrant votes | | Surveyed emigrant votes | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Percentage | Total | Percentage |
| Dalia Grybauskaitė | 12,137 | 82.6 | 256 | 85.0 |
| Zigmantas Balčytis | 2,564 | 17.4 | 45 | 15.0 |
| Total | 14,701 | 100 | 301 | 100 |

Table 23. Emigrants' (overall and surveyed) votes in Presidential election 2014, second round

By contrast, as far as votes in the 2014 European Parliament election are concerned, the surveyed emigrant voters differed from the voting emigrant population, as can be seen in Table 24. Interestingly, the most commonly chosen party in the general emigrant voter population – TS–LKD – received a very similar vote share among the surveyed. Yet it was not the most favoured party among the surveyed voters, more than half of them preferring LRLS. The third party of preference was the same in both cases – LSDP (12.1% and 7.5% of supporters in voting population and among the surveyed respectively). Hardly any of the surveyed emigrants voted for populist/non–traditional parties (although it is worth noting that vote *shares* were quite small in the population too), demonstrating that it was mostly the supporters of the more established parties who decided to fill in the survey. This is likely to be related to the issue of protest voting, as populist and new parties are the ones that tend to gather the 'protest' votes of the voters generally unhappy with politics and politicians (Jastramskis 2018b). It seems plausible that people who are displeased with the political situation and want to protest in their voting choices might also be unwilling to answer a traditional political survey like the present one since they may feel hostile towards the topic.

| Party/coalition | Overall emigrant voters' choices | | Surveyed emigrant voters' choices | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Percentage | Total | Percentage |
| TS–LKD | 4,486 | 32.9 | 71 | 33.2 |
| LRLS | 4,147 | 30.4 | 112 | 52.3 |
| LSPD | 1,658 | 12.1 | 16 | 7.5 |
| TT | 777 | 5.7 | 4 | 1.9 |
| LVŽS | 651 | 4.8 | 0 | 0 |
| DP | 486 | 3.6 | 0 | 0 |
| LŽP | 475 | 3.5 | 7 | 3.3 |
| LTS | 387 | 2.8 | 1 | 0.5 |
| LiCS | 330 | 2.4 | 1 | 0.5 |
| LLRA–LRS (VTB) | 256 | 1.9 | 2 | 0.9 |
| Total | 13,653 | 100 | 214 | 100 |

Table 24. Emigrants' (overall and surveyed) votes in Lithuanian EP election 2014

Whilst surveying the emigrants did not have the explicit purpose to mimic the voter population in terms of the electoral choices, it is worthwhile to note that the respondents represented well the overall emigrant choice in the Presidential election that is seen as the more important one by the electorate, i.e. a first–order election (Söderlund et al. 2011).

Profiles of voting emigrants who responded to relevant survey questions were examined to monitor which characteristics are significantly associated with voters' choices. In particular, the explanatory power of socio–demographic variables and left–right self–placement (as well as of migration circumstances and awareness and interest indices) was investigated in binary logistic regressions. Answers to questions which candidate/party the respondents voted for were utilised to create response variables. For the Presidential election, it was decided to examine its first round and to analyse the likelihood of voting for the incumbent winner Dalia Grybauskaitė rather than any other candidate. This round and this specific comparison were chosen in order to have a dichotomous response variable with a relatively large number of cases in each of its categories. For the EP election, the likelihood of choosing the most favoured party of the emigrant voter population – TS–LKD – was examined.[104]

Explanatory variables, which were described in detail in the previous chapter,[105] are included into the models in the following order: socio–demographic characteristics, political position, migration

[104]In preparatory analyses, the likelihood of voting for the most favoured party of the survey respondents – LRLS – was also examined (the regression modelling being comparable to that of voting for the TS–LKD), yet no significant effects with one exception (the effect of gender becoming significant in the final model only in spite of being in included from Model 1 onwards) were found. Therefore the final analysis concentrated on voting for TS–LKD rather than other parties.

[105]It was also separately checked whether the country of residence – expressed in terms of whether the respondent resided in the UK, elsewhere in Europe, or away from Europe, had any effect on the odds of voting for Grybauskaitė in the first round,

circumstances and indices representing emigrant awareness and interest. The latter two blocks of variables represent the two groups of control variables.

Results of the two regression analyses are presented in Table 25 and Table 26. Referring to these two tables, the following sections examine the statistical significance of available variables linked to the hypotheses raised earlier in this chapter. Where applicable, qualitative material is integrated to provide additional insights. The issue voting hypothesis for which quantitative data was not available is evaluated with qualitative data only.

or for Conservatives in the EP election, but there was no evidence of this. Similar preparatory analyses were also applied for questions covered in previous chapters with the same results.

| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Constant ß (SE)** | 4.440* (1.881) | | 1.877 (2.108) | | 2.734 (2.542) | | 1.943 (3.579) | |
| | **ß (S.E.)** | **Exp(ß)** | **ß (S.E.)** | **Exp(ß)** | **ß (S.E.)** | **Exp(ß)** | **ß (S.E.)** | **Exp(ß)** |
| **SOCIO–DEMOGRAPHICS** | | | | | | | | |
| **Gender (ref – Male)** | 0.611 (0.707) | 1.843 | 0.965 (0.757) | 2.624 | 1.189 (0.808) | 3.285 | 1.254 (0.825) | 3.503 |
| **Age** | -0.095* (0.044) | 0.909 | -0.079 (0.046) | 0.924 | -0.057 (0.049) | 0.945 | -0.058 (0.050) | 0.944 |
| **University degree** | 0.407 (0.994) | 1.503 | 0.324 (1.064) | 1.383 | 0.112 (1.130) | 1.119 | 0.087 (1.148) | 1.091 |
| **Occupation (ref – Manual or no work)** | | | | | | | | |
| **Non–manual work** | 0.314 (0.938) | 1.368 | 0.339 (0.911) | 1.403 | -0.025 (0.943) | 0.975 | -0.022 (0.968) | 0.979 |
| **Studying** | -0.106 (1.144) | 0.900 | -0.098 (1.266) | 0.906 | 0.235 (1.243) | 1.265 | 0.194 (1.249) | 1.214 |
| **Income over 1,000 EUR** | -1.409 (0.959) | 0.244 | -1.515 (0.957) | 0.220 | -1.706 (0.961) | 0.182 | -1.693 (0.967) | 0.184 |
| **Lives in a city abroad** | 0.474 (0.663) | 1.606 | 0.033 (0.730) | 1.034 | 0.094 (0.760) | 1.099 | 0.121 (0.762) | 1.129 |
| **Lived in a city in Lithuania** | -1.209 (0.885) | 0.299 | -1.597 (0.962) | 0.202 | -2.124 (1.090) | 0.120 | -2.158 (1.127) | 0.116 |
| **POLITICAL POSITION** | | | | | | | | |
| **Left–right scale** | | | 0.386* (0.156) | 1.470 | 0.409* (0.167) | 1.505 | 0.408* (0.168) | 1.504 |
| **MIGRATION CIRCUMSTANCES** | | | | | | | | |
| **At least five years abroad** | | | | | -1.110 (0.831) | 0.329 | -1.126 (0.841) | 0.324 |
| **Intention to return** | | | | | -0.574 (0.713) | 0.563 | -0.463 (0.766) | 0.630 |
| **AWARENESS AND INTEREST** | | | | | | | | |
| **Awareness index** | | | | | | | 0.003 (0.023) | 1.003 |
| **Interest index** | | | | | | | 0.008 (0.019) | 1.008 |
| **NAGELKERKE $R^2$** | 0.307 | | 0.397 | | 0.426 | | 0.428 | |

Table 25. Binary logistic regression results. Response variable: voting for Grybauskaitė in Presidential election 2014 (first round). ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Constant ß (SE)** | -2.380 (1.482) | | -5.260 (1.975) | | -4.347 (2.249) | | -3.236 (2.882) | |
| | **ß (S.E.)** | **Exp(ß)** | **ß (S.E.)** | **Exp(ß)** | **ß (S.E.)** | **Exp(ß)** | **ß (S.E.)** | **Exp(ß)** |
| **SOCIO–DEMOGRAPHICS** | | | | | | | | |
| **Gender (ref – Male)** | -0.034 (0.598) | 0.967 | 0.481 (0.666) | 1.618 | 0.608 (0.698) | 1.837 | 0.534 (0.710) | 1.706 |
| **Age** | 0.066 (0.045) | 1.068 | 0.067 (0.048) | 1.069 | 0.054 (0.052) | 1.055 | 0.052 (0.053) | 1.053 |
| **University degree** | -0.994 (0.792) | 0.370 | -1.138 (0.841) | 0.321 | -1.227 (0.875) | 0.293 | -1.151 (0.888) | 0.316 |
| **Occupation (ref – Manual or no work)** | | | | | | | | |
| **Non–manual work** | 0.401 (0.747) | 1.493 | 0.567 (0.827) | 1.763 | 0.532 (0.865) | 1.702 | 0.560 (0.894) | 1.751 |
| **Studying** | 0.409 (0.910) | 1.505 | 0.833 (0.967) | 2.300 | 0.858 (0.996) | 2.358 | 1.007 (1.019) | 2.738 |
| **Income over 1,000 EUR** | 0.210 (0.639) | 1.233 | 0.435 (0.700) | 1.544 | 0.546 (0.711) | 1.727 | 0.514 (0.720) | 1.671 |
| **Lives in a city abroad** | 0.229 (0.586) | 1.257 | -0.261 (0.653) | 0.770 | -0.382 (0.698) | 0.682 | -0.411 (0.711) | 0.663 |
| **Lived in a city in Lithuania** | 0.081 (0.820) | 1.085 | 0.067 (0.864) | 1.070 | 0.532 (0.892) | 1.072 | 0.088 (0.887) | 1.092 |
| **POLITICAL POSITION** | | | | | | | | |
| **Left–right scale** | | | 0.411 (0.156)** | 1.508 | 0.428** (0.164) | 1.535 | 0.445** (0.168) | 1.561 |
| **MIGRATION CIRCUMSTANCES** | | | | | | | | |
| **At least five years abroad** | | | | | 0.447 (0.709) | 1.563 | 0.443 (0.714) | 1.558 |
| **Intention to return** | | | | | -0.543 (0.618) | 0.581 | -0.539 (0.621) | 0.583 |
| **AWARENESS AND INTEREST** | | | | | | | | |
| **Awareness index** | | | | | | | -0.010 (0.020) | 0.990 |
| **Interest index** | | | | | | | -0.006 (0.018) | 0.994 |
| **NAGELKERKE $R^2$** | 0.132 | | 0.255 | | 0.272 | | 0.278 | |

Table 26. Binary logistic regression results. Response variable: voting for TS–LKD in EP election 2014. ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

### 5.3.1 Socio–demographic variables (sociological model)

Model 1 of Table 25 shows the effects of socio–demographic variables on the likelihood of voting for Grybauskaitė rather than other candidates in the first round of the Presidential election. It can be readily noticed that there are no statistically significant effects with the exception of age (younger people being more likely to vote for Grybauskaitė) – however, its effect disappears once political position is taken into account in Model 2.

Similarly, socio–demographic variables are not statistically significantly associated with the likelihood of externally voting for TS–LKD in the EP election (see Model 1 of Table 26).

The quantitative survey data therefore provides only **very limited support for the hypotheses related to the influence of social–demographic characteristics on external voters' choices**.

### 5.3.2 Partisanship (psychosocial model)

**The Michigan school and the ensuing partisanship hypothesis receive much stronger support**, with higher scores of self–classification on the left–right scale being associated with a higher likelihood of voting for TS–LKD and Grybauskaitė. In the final model of voting for Grybauskaitė, left–right self–placement is the only statistically significant explanatory variable. All other things being equal, a one–point increase on the left–right scale multiplies the odds of voting for Grybauskaitė rather than other candidates by 1.504 (i.e. increases them by 50.4%). As in the case of the Presidential election, political position is a statistically significant predictor in the model of voting for TS–LKD. In the final model, controlling for the other included variables, a one–point increase on the left–right scale multiplies the odds of voting for TS–LKD by 1.561 (i.e. increases them by 56.1%).

TS–LKD itself receives one of the highest scores on the left–right continuum in international assessments (Comparative Manifesto Project 2022, pers. comm, 23 April; ParlGov 2022) and constitutes the main right–wing political party in Lithuania (Jastramskis 2019, 2021). In congruence, the survey data shows that respondents selecting high left–right scale scores for themselves tend to vote for TS–LKD. Quantitative data hence indicates that Lithuanian emigrants are not as perplexed about party ideology as one may assume consulting the works discussed in Section 5.1.2. Intriguingly, however, qualitative data provides evidence contradicting this interpretation. Specifically, in some of the interviewees' discourses confusion and dissatisfaction with ideology–related features of

Lithuanian political arena, and resulting difficulties in making ideology–based choices, were indeed audible.

Firstly, it should be born in mind that party splits, mergers and frequent entrance of new parties into the political scene (see Sikk 2012) bring about recurrent new party *names* as well. In relation to this, a 29–year–old female finance sector worker from Luxembourg commented that '*regarding the party names, it is very difficult to remember them now […] – some may have changed*'. A 42–year–old non–voting woman from Spain echoed this, explaining that '*it is difficult [for her] to tell [which Lithuanian parties she dislikes], there really are parties that don't appeal [to her], but they change the names so often that [she finds] it hard to specify them now*'.

Importantly, however, the discourse of a 32–year–old engineer living in the UK signaled that the problem to differentiate parties is not merely an issue of inconsistent names, but also of inconsistent ideologies, as would be expected by the authors researching non–migrant Lithuanian voting, and voting in CEE more generally (e.g. Innes 2002; Sikk 2012; Ramonaitė 2014a; Ramonaitė & Jastramskis 2014a):

> *With the whole Lithuanian voting system, the biggest problem is that there are many parties, which change their vision continuously, and that vision is not clear, hence when you vote for some [party] it is unclear for what end result you are voting*

Dissatisfaction with how ideology that exists only of the surface can make it difficult for prospective voters make electoral decisions was also expressed by a 22–year–old unemployed woman residing in the UK. She was especially concerned about incongruence between party names and their ideologies, the issue noted by Ramonaitė and Jastramskis (2014a) too:

> *I am annoyed that [that there is] the Green Union of the whole European Union, the Green Party, but [the Lithuanian LVŽS, which also has a word 'green' in their name] simply took that name and are lobbying in favour of 'green' way of thinking, but that is not true! They are lying even by their name, they do not belong to the European Green party, they do not actually have that ideology…*

In accordance with the literature which maintains that Western party ideology legacy may not have translated very well to other countries including Lithuania (Innes 2002; Sikk 2012; Ramonaitė 2020), a

33–year–old female analyst from Sweden also claimed that interpreting specifically Lithuanian parties in terms of ideology is difficult:

> *Comparing with elections in other countries, in Lithuania everyone is quite the same, in favour of the same things, and quite populistic – I don't see a big difference between left and right there*

On a similar note, a 38–year–old male accountant from Norway also underscored that Lithuanian parties may not even adhere to their official programmes:

> *In Lithuania, unfortunately, political parties are of such [low] level of culture and self–esteem that they mostly don't follow their own programmes, and I hence don't see much point to follow debates, programmes*

Whilst interviews cannot tell us how widespread the lack of understanding of party ideologies actually is, they do attest that this issue exists in the emigrant community. How can we interpret this qualitative finding in the context of the survey outcomes? To do so, it is worth acknowledging that, for Lithuanian scale, TS–LKD has a lengthy history and is generally highly recognisable (see Laurinavičius & Sirutavičius 2008; Jastramskis 2017). Although there have been mergers and name alterations in this party too, it remains a well–established organisation with fairly stable – at least for the Lithuanian context – ideology, underscoring liberal Conservatism, pro–Europeanness and all–encompassing independence from Russia. Jastramskis (2017) actually distinguishes this party as one of the two[106] whose endurance keeps the Lithuanian party system from being classified as 'underdeveloped' (Sanchez 2009). It is therefore plausible that its ideological position is recognised even among an emigrant electorate which is confused about newer and/or minor parties.

Indeed, this line of reasoning is supported by other interviewees who found no difficulty remembering relevant details about TS–LKD when discussing perceived wrongdoings of this party, and connecting the past version of this party with the present one. A 44–year–old male kitchen assembler residing in London saw TS–LKD party as '*the worst of the worst'*. The interviewee particularly despised the Conservative Prime Minister of that time, Andrius Kubilius, for '*lowering wages, pensions and promising to return everything without having done so till this day […], lowering [Lithuania's] purchasing power and impoverishing the country substantially*'. A 21–year–old male student and

[106]The second one being LSDP.

worker from the UK believed that TS–LKD is generally disliked by Lithuanian emigrants because '*after Kubilius' government great waves of emigration occurred'*.

Even if not plentiful, these discourses show that the 2008 economic recession and the strict measures aimed at combating the crisis undertaken by the Conservative government of that time (see, e.g., Davulis 2012) may affect emigrants' attitude towards TS–LKD – at least this is how some of the interviewed emigrants felt. And, in the context of emigrants' ability to understand parties' ideology, these interviews are in line with the presumption that TS–LDK suffers less from possible misunderstandings (even if this may backfire a in a sense that the party can find it more difficult to distance itself from the strict measures it once exercised). Hence it may be assumed – even if not established – that the survey outcome is not misleading on the specific comparison that was undertaken.

The finding that Grybauskaitė tended to be supported by the right–minded emigrants in the survey extends the evidence that at least in Lithuania, seemingly independent Presidential candidates tend to be supported by different party electorates (Jastramskis 2021) by showing that the surveyed emigrants were no exception to this rule. By the same token, given that Jastramkis' study assessed general self–reported support for the relevant politicians at midterm, the present analysis also provides hitherto unavailable evidence for an actual voting choice.

### 5.3.3 Issue voting (rational choice model)

Whilst quantitative data is regrettably not available for testing the issue voting hypothesis, we are able to evaluate which issues, if any, may be of importance to potential voters residing abroad using the interview data. Indeed, even though the interviewees were not prompted to talk about issues as such, different issues did appear in the discourses. **As hypothesised, the interviewees raised several issues oriented to emigrants themselves**. Likely without realising it herself, a 43–year–old female doctor from Scotland provided advice for Lithuanian parties to compete for ownership of issues central to emigrants, particularly a specific issue of dual citizenship and a vaguer 'wellbeing abroad' issue:

> *If whichever party were to say [emphasises] that it would provide us with dual citizenship or take care of our wellbeing abroad, then perhaps more people would become interested in voting*

It can be seen that, in the emigrant's words, this would encourage external participation as such, but one can also infer that the party which would take ownership of dual citizenship and wellbeing abroad issues would have strong potential to become a preferred party. Dual citizenship issue was also prevalent in other interviewees' discourses:

> *[To encourage external voting] politicians could attract people somehow, to show that they care, for instance regarding dual nationality Norway managed, without making a big deal out of this question, to simply allow dual nationality*
> [38–year–old male from Norway]

> *I believe that [external voting may be encouraged by] touching themes relevant to emigrants more, such as dual nationality, re–emigration, deeper relations with emigrants… These could be the ways to raise interest […] If there was at least one or a few such parties, [emigrants] would then want to vote for them.*
> [33–year–old female from Sweden]

Secondly, a (then not yet available) separate voting district was also an important issue to a 44–year–old stay–at–home–mother and part–time consultant residing in Poland, and a 37–year–old consultant from Brussels, who both saw it as one of the ways how to make external voting more attractive ('*[Now I ] need to pick people with whom I really have a lesser connection'; 'I believe there is a project now that it could become possible for [emigrants] to have their own candidate in Seimas [...] If that happened, it would be very nice*' – see Section 3.3.5 for full excerpts).

Another prominent issue centring on emigrants which appeared in the examined discourses was that of land ownership. A 35–year–old stay–at–home–mother residing in the UK saw the issue of land ownership rights as one of the critical ones to be addressed by parties intending to please the emigrant electorate:

> *Each person really looks after their own interests, and for instance those parties that are now supporting land reform, that it could be sold to foreigners – if [abroad–based] people find that some political party wants to lobby for something like that, then they will show support, since, for example, a lot of people who have left own land in the village, or summer houses…*

A 59–year–old female babysitter from the USA echoed:

*Their initiatives, such as the referendum against the permission for foreigners to buy land let's say, wasn't it initiated by Karbauskis and later he bought lots of land himself*

It is worth noting that, although, having Lithuanian citizenship themselves, emigrant voters would not be considered as foreigners under this law, such a law could directly affect, for instance, their partners, children, or those emigrants around them who chose to obtain the host–country's citizenship and thereby lost Lithuanian citizenship.

**On the other hand, in line with the hypothesis too, interviewed emigrants also brought up issues that affect all Lithuanians** as opposed to only those in emigration. The 59–year–old interviewee from the USA highlighted '*all those shale gas issues'*, hence being concerned about energy sources. The 38–year–old male voter from Norway expressed his concern about GDP growth, indicating that he may be choosing his preferred parties having in mind economic issues as well. The 33–year–old woman from Sweden drew attention to a variety of issues of this kind:

*First of all, there is lack of Western democracy principles, of securing human rights, same–sex marriage – this is one of the most important arguments. Afterwards there is the orientation towards business, economy, towards the Western world rather than towards Russia or oligarch relations…*

Concerning already present issue ownerships, however, there was little material in the interviews to signal that there might be some, and the mentioned ones were not emigration–specific. In particular, a 19–year–old student worker from the UK reasoned:

*[Emigrants] to whom economic development is more important favoured the Conservatives I believe, and those who were thinking about social rights, about society's reforms, voted for the Liberals in my opinion*

Looking through the lens of issue ownership, this voter hence believed Conservatives to own economic issues, and Liberals – vaguer social rights/society transformation issues.

#### 5.3.3.1 Politician's reflections

As the final empirical contribution of this chapter, this section explores reflections on ideological and issue voting by a former ambassador of Lithuania to the United States and Mexico, presently a Member of *Seimas*, Žygimantas Pavilionis. Pavilionis is a particularly interesting figure in this context

due to his strong (positive) views on the issue of dual citizenship which, as the previous section suggested, is of high importance to Lithuanians, especially those residing abroad for a long time. In addition, as discussed in Section 5.2, in he was strongly supported in the 2016 *Seimas* election by the external electorate.

Regarding dual citizenship, not only does Pavilionis discuss it frequently, but he also takes a very active role in these discussions. A telling example of Pavilionis' standpoint on the issue is his participation in a debate on dual citizenship is an event 'Picnic of Freedom 2018' ('*Laisvės piknikas 2018*') – an annual event organised by a Lithuanian public figure, writer and TV host Andrius Tapinas for lay people to meet politicians in discussions organised around various key issues of relevance for the country. There, Pavilionis was speaking very highly of U.S.–based Lithuanians and their contribution to the prosperity of Lithuania. He also made a strong statement that political figures of the older generation are actually afraid of the possibility of emigrants coming back to the home country, thereby juxtaposing himself from those 'other' politicians who are allegedly distancing themselves from emigrants.

In the light of such discourses, one may reason that Pavilionis was attempting to own the dual citizenship issue for the upcoming 2019 Presidential election, which is exceptionally addressed in this section, and there are additional reasons to deem so. Indeed, Pavilionis, by independently making a statement of intention to participate in the election as early as in April 2018, without first being officially chosen as a potential candidate within TS–LKD, demonstrated that that he did not see the party – and possibly its integral ideology discussed in Section 5.3.2 – as the primary means of entry to the desired role.[107] In spite of being a long–term member of TS–LKD (in fact, this politician has never changed political party, which is rather uncommon in Lithuania), Pavilionis was not putting emphasis on his or his party's ideological profile and values, even though, as seen in Section 5.2, TS–LKD traditionally receives a notable share of emigrant votes and therefore can be reasonably interpreted as being seen in a positive light by external voters. Whether on purpose or intuitively, he seems to have placed obtaining ownership of the dual citizenship issue high on his list of pre–electoral priorities (for empirical evidence of such a strategy elsewhere see, e.g., Petrocik et al. 2003; Hayes 2005; Bélanger & Meguid 2008; cf. Damore 2004). Evidence for this[108] was hence further sought using the data from a face–to–face interview carried out with Žygimantas Pavilionis.

[107]It ought to be noted that Pavilionis ultimately decided not to take part in the election, possibly due to emergence of other strong candidates.

[108]The extent to which he may have been doing so consciously was also monitored (given that he is a political science graduate, familiarity with the concept was a possibility).

Interview questions were posed carefully and in a certain order so as not to prompt Pavilionis to explain his behaviour in terms of issue ownership but to also provide an opportunity to do so if he deemed this to be relevant. Interestingly, however, his discourse did not signal that this politician was consciously attempting to own issues of possible importance to emigrants, nor that he believed in the first place that emigrants are markedly different from the general Lithuanian electorate in terms of issues most important to them:

> *[Key issue for emigrants] is, I think, the same [as for non–emigrants] – poverty, because they already are victims of that poverty, they made a decision to leave Lithuania, most of them protesting against this situation in Lithuania, so I don't think they would have some special issues*

Pavilionis also made a distinction between emigrants with and without *earned* income, and believed that those abroad – especially voters – typically do not support parties leaning towards the left (indeed, aversion to *far* left parties, as well as populist parties, among emigrants has recently been demonstrated empirically by Turcu and Urbatsch (2021, 2022)):

> *[Lithuanians] who support themselves while abroad typically do not vote for populists, for left–wing populists,*[109] *because this is simply against their, let's say, political or economic culture. [Lithuanians abroad] are more liberally [thinking], they are mostly people with centre–right mindset… At least those who vote, as I think that the left perhaps would manage to reach that non–voting [emphasises] part which is disappointed in general.*

The issue seen as most important for emigrants by Pavilionis – poverty – was not in fact a prominent theme in emigrant discourses, possibly due to the self–selection of the sample. The interviewed emigrants' discourses did not differentiate between issues important to different kinds of emigrants. It may nonetheless be reasoned that for poorer emigrants, or for those emigrants who were poor in Lithuania, reduction of poverty may constitute an important issue, although such people may be less likely to express their views to researchers. On the other hand, once they move up the social mobility ladder abroad it is possible for them to still care about the level of poverty in Lithuania, but it also becomes possible that, having achieved a higher standard of living, they start paying attention to issues that were of no or lesser relevance before, such as issues of dual citizenship or land ownership.

[109]It is worth noting that Pavilionis is likely to be looking down on left–wing parties as ideological competitors of his own party.

Coming back to the issue of dual citizenship, it was also one that Pavilionis mentioned in his discourse, albeit in passing and in the context of turnout rates rather than of emigrants' political preferences:

> *Now that the referendum on retaining citizenship is approaching, maybe that will be an argument for slightly higher [external] voting rates [in 2019 Presidential election]*

In congruence with the emigrant interview data discussed earlier, he also argued re–emigration strategy to be a significant issue:

> *In [our] state there has not yet been created – well it has been created but there is no implementation of it – a strategy of getting [emigrants] back, an absorption strategy: in more experienced diaspora states, there is politics of return*

More generally, however, Pavilionis appeared to be a believer of the increasing importance of Lithuanian parties, hoping for an upcoming crystallisation of the Lithuanian party system and thereby having faith in ideological voting:

> *I think it is important [for emigrants which party a Presidential candidate belongs to]. Those parties are now mature enough, they have grown up, even though personalities still make a big difference sometimes, but parties are also becoming more and more important, because parties, at least a few I think, at least a couple, become more and more established in [Lithuanian] society.*

Pavilionis also more specifically saw securing emigrants' votes as a competition taking place at a party level. Without mentioning issue ownership explicitly, he saw LSDP as a party that has potential to win emigrant votes by targeting what can be interpreted as issues of economy or of poverty. This was evident when he was asked whether he found a separate emigrant voting district (not yet existent at that time) a good idea (notably, his rather strong identification with TS–LKD was also apparent in this part of his discourse):

> *I think that would be worth it, even a few [districts], because then the parties would start fighting for those votes, would become much more active in communicating with Lithuanians abroad… Because now it is mostly my [emphasises] party, perhaps because it is most oriented towards the West, and the West is where the biggest mass of our Lithuanians abroad is*

*located, we [emphasises] really keep those ties consistently… Well there are individual cases, such as the Liberals, formerly they used to get [external] votes, DP, in some places all those purple people,*[110] *but for example the leftists could be said to be consistently inactive, while they could be active, knowing that many of those people left because of economic reasons, so if they were smarter they might try to lure that electorate.*

Whilst Pavilionis' interview should by no means be interpreted as reflecting the view of all politicians, it does provide an insight into a possible relationship of statesmen with external ideological versus external issue voting. Contradicting a–priori interpretations of Pavilionis consciously attempting to appeal to emigrant electorate by targeting certain issues, in the interview this politician did not present himself as someone particularly able and/or keen to represent any 'external' issues. His discourse is better understood as reflecting an understanding of voting from abroad as an interplay between ideological and issue voting.

Markedly, Pavilionis' interpretation of issue ownership saw certain issues as 'naturally' belonging to given parties. Above all, ownership of issues related to economics being interpreted as a niche for social democrats overlooks the possibility for other parties, including Pavilionis' party TS–LKD itself, to claim ownership for these and other issues – especially in the light of the emigrant discourse interpreting TS–LKD as being related to economy.[111] Therefore while parties and politicians have agency to decide how much emphasis to place on their ideology or issue ownership when trying to appeal to voters, Pavilionis' example signals that parties' representatives may not view issues as something they can realistically claim if this does not 'naturally' adhere to their ideology.

Let us concisely recapitulate the outcomes relating to **issue voting**. Whilst testing the issue voting hypothesis with quantitative data was unfortunately not possible, qualitative data provides valuable initial insights into issue voting. By showing that at least some emigrants form political opinions having in mind issues that relate either to themselves as emigrants (dual nationality, ability to buy land in Lithuania, relations of the state with emigrants, separate constituency), or to all Lithuanian citizens (including economy, energy sources, LGBT rights, orientation towards the West), **the data supports**

[110]Referring to 'Drąsos kelias' whose symbolic colour is purple.

[111]Although one should also acknowledge a possibility that economy and poverty issues (and the potential to own them) might differ, economy being related more to long–term development, and poverty reduction relating more to benefits and other individual–oriented measures, we may still reason that ownership of these issues is more fluid than assumed by Pavilionis.

**the formulated hypothesis, and thereby the rational choice model**. Whilst relevant discourses were not plentiful and generalisations should not be made hastily, it does appear that Lithuanian emigrants do not immediately forget issues relevant to those still residing in the homeland. This also resonates with the finding of Jastramskis (2018d) that different subgroups of the (internal) Lithuanian electorate (those with and without a stable party preference and even non–voters) see the same problems (in his study: emigration, prices and income in particular) as most important. Future studies would significantly add to the present finding by not only gathering quantitative data, but also testing whether the effect depends on the intention to come back to Lithuania. It would also be valuable to tap into poorer, lesser–educated and/or blue–collar emigrants which could provide further insight into possible importance of issue of poverty for the emigrant community raised in the elite interview with Žygimantas Pavilionis.

### 5.3.4 Summary

To briefly recapitulate Chapter 5, examining Lithuanian emigrants' political choices, it assessed the suitability of three major models that have been used to explain electoral behaviour among both general and, increasingly, emigrant electorates. Having made use of secondary macro–level data and primary quantitative and qualitative data, it yielded the following findings. First, among the emigrants examined in this study, the sociological model does not constitute a useful predictor of voting behaviour at the micro level, even if the macro–level data does signal that emigrants tend to vote similarly to those home–based voters who have high socio–economic status. Second, subject to methodological constraints, it appears that emigrant voters may have difficulties making sense of continuous changes within the Lithuanian political scene. Yet, this does not seem to affect predictive power of one's ideological profile for voting for a long–standing right–wing party TS–LKD. This gives credit to the importance of psychosocial model's concept of partisanship. Last, in spite of a limitation of inability to test this model quantitatively, the rational choice model is given credit by the qualitative data, simultaneously indicating that Lithuanian emigrants can form political opinions bearing in mind both emigration–centred and other, general issues. They include above all dual nationality, but also a (now granted) separate single member district, re–emigration, land ownership, economy, energy sources, LGBT rights, and others. A supplementary elite interview also suggests relevance of poverty as an issue.

# Chapter 6. Conclusion

In our modern, increasingly interconnected world, millions of citizens live, work and/or study outside of their home countries – currently an estimated three percent of the world population (Peltoniemi 2018; Kernalegenn et al. 2021). In the political sphere, this has resulted in a need to address the fact that considerable numbers of citizens are abroad at election time in many home countries. Since 1989, the number of states with dedicated voting arrangements for citizens abroad has gone up from 31 to 149 (Kernalegenn & van Haute 2020b; Kernalegenn et al. 2021). These trends have, naturally, encouraged political science scholarship to approach the issue of external voting. Early scholarship addressed mainly normative and legal aspects of voting abroad (Nohlen & Grotz 2000; Bauböck 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009; López–Guerra 2005; Barry 2006; Rubio–Marin 2006; Spiro 2006; Goodin 2007; Kull 2008; Beckman 2009; Mascitelli & Battiston 2009; Owen 2009). A number of other works sought to explain the establishment of external voting rights itself (Tager 2006; Lafleur 2011, 2015; Collyer 2014; Caramani & Grotz 2015; Turcu & Urbatsch 2015; Østergaard–Nielsen et al. 2019). Increasingly, however, research has started to acknowledge the importance of analysing actual effects of these enfranchisements. How many abroad–based citizens vote when allowed to do so? Why do they choose (not) to vote? Do they vote similarly to their compatriots back home, and why? Some have chosen to address these and related questions at the macro level (e.g. Fidrmuc & Doyle 2004; Kostelka 2016; Hamer 2017; Belchior et al. 2018; Rosca 2019; Burgess & Tyburski 2020; Battiston & Luconi 2020; Ciornei & Østergaard–Nielsen 2020; Ognibene & Paulis 2021; Turcu & Urbatsch 2021). Other studies have probed into them (also) at the individual level in spite of challenges inherent to gathering such data (e.g. Lafleur & Calderón Chelius 2011; Waldinger & Soehl 2013; Ahmadov & Sasse 2014, 2016a, 2016b; Lafleur & Sánchez–Domínguez 2015; Gherghina & Tseng 2016; Peltoniemi 2016, 2018a, 2018b; Chaudhary 2018; Finn 2020; Mügge et al. 2021; Salamońska et al. 2021; Szulecki et al. 2021). This dissertation joins the latter body of literature through a study of the hitherto overlooked, yet highly relevant, case of Lithuania. Relying mostly on a body of original quantitative and qualitative individual–level data, the dissertation constitutes the first analysis of Lithuanian emigrants' voting behaviour. In spite of generalisation limitations which should be taken into account when considering the findings in a broader context, it provides insights into their home–country political interest and awareness, reasons of (non)voting, and political choices.

To provide a brief recapitulation of the main outcomes, in Chapter 3, among other findings, the research indicated that at least those emigrants who are comfortable using the internet rely on this source heavily when seeking political information about Lithuania – likely more than their home–

based compatriots – which helps reduce the transferable costs of gaining political knowledge (Downs 1957). Moreover, Lithuanian emigrants were suggested to be most interested in and aware of home–country politics if they intend to return there one day, whilst, interestingly, no evidence was found in the quantitative analyses for the importance of how long they had been staying abroad. Qualitative work showed that some emigrants may in fact feel more able, keen and/or competent to follow home–country politics after spending time outside their homeland, and suggested several additional contributors to (lack of) interest. Certain socio–demographic predictors were also shown to be important.

Chapter 4 demonstrated that actual external participation rates in Lithuanian elections have been rather low, and the chapter explored possible reasons behind choosing (not) to participate in Lithuanian elections from abroad. The interest and awareness indices introduced in Chapter 3 were used as explanatory variables in Chapter 4. The former index turned out to be a significant predictor of voting in both Presidential and European Parliament elections 2014: higher interest, as measured by the index, was associated with a higher likelihood of participation. Higher awareness was associated with a higher likelihood of voting in the Presidential election but made no difference for the EP election. Another difference between the elections emerged in the context of place of residence: having lived in a city in Lithuania was associated with a higher likelihood of voting in the Presidential election, and living in a city abroad – with a higher likelihood of voting in the Lithuanian EP election. There was support in the qualitative work for effects on (non)voting of inconvenience, trust and efficacy. Interview data also echoed the importance of interest, and provided several additional unforeseen findings relating to the importance of knowledge.

Examination of external Lithuanian voting trends in Chapter 5 revealed that emigrant voters have mostly been favouring traditional conservative parties. Inspecting what lies behind the electoral preferences, the thesis demonstrated limited explanatory power of socio–demographic characteristics regarding emigrants' preferred parties and politicians. Lithuanian emigrant voters appear to be choosing at least some parties and politicians ideologically, signalling that not all Lithuanian parties' ideologies are as confusing for the electorate as pictured by the existing literature and some qualitative interviews. There was also some support in the qualitative data for relevance of both migrants–centred and more general issues to voters' preferences.

In addition to being the first–ever account of the Lithuanian case, this thesis also contributes to the global scholarship on external voting. The first key way in which it does so is by substantially adding

to the growing body of literature which suggests the pertinence of researching individual–level factors in external voting. The second contribution is to the broader transnational political engagement debate. These contributions are now discussed in turn.

First, this dissertation contributes to the scholarship indicating the importance of individual–level factors in emigrant voting behaviour. Not testing macro–level variables itself, the study is obviously unable to compare the relative importance of the two kinds of factors. Nor does it argue that macro–level factors are irrelevant. Yet, in the light of the increasing body of literature addressing external voting on the aggregate–level only, it is important to underscore that some of the effects invite an explanation at the individual level. To illustrate, as explained in section 5.2, macro–level data on Lithuanian emigrant voters' decisions suggests that they make comparable choices to those home–based Lithuanians who can be described as being of high socio–economic status, or in high social class. This could lead one to believe that electoral behaviour of external voters may, too, have socio–demographic explanations and support the Columbia school. Yet, the micro–level data collected for this thesis suggests socio–demographic factors not to be good predictors of choosing the party preferred by emigrants and provides support for Michigan school and its concept of partisanship instead. This demonstrates the value of collecting and analysing (also) individual–level data whenever feasible.

Second, the thesis contributes to the broader discussion on transnational political engagement and dual loyalties. A significant body of literature (see Levitt 2003; Guarnizo et al. 2003; Østergaard–Nielsen 2003a, 2003b; Smith 2007; Itzigsohn & Villacrés 2008; Waldinger 2008, 2017; Lyons & Mandaville 2010; Tsuda 2012; Waldinger & Soehl 2013; Boccagni 2014; Morales & Pilati 2014; Waldinger & Duquette–Rury 2016; Chaudhary 2018) which merges immigrant and emigrant political engagement has examined transnational political (and related) behaviour[112] and provided two competing accounts. Chaudhary (2018) calls them 'resocialisation' and 'complementarity'. The former perspective suggests that migrants' experiences abroad eventually weaken home–country ties and the likelihood of voting there. The latter would expect that homeland electoral participation can actually be encouraged by newly discovered motivation to participate in politics after relocating abroad and potentially witnessing a more effective political scene and/or successful integration – eventually forming what can be called a 'dual loyalty' (Tsuda 2012; Waldinger & Soehl 2013; Waldinger 2015). The results of empirical works are, however, highly mixed. Some studies give more credit to the former line of reasoning (Itzigsohn & Saucedo 2002; Koopmans et al. 2005; Waldinger 2008, 2015;

[112]Which, obviously, includes, but is not limited to voting – see Østergaard–Nielsen 2003b.

Itzigsohn 2009; Soehl & Waldinger 2012; Morales & Pilati 2014; Ahmadov & Sasse 2016a), others support the latter (Portes et al. 2002; Guarnizo et al. 2003, 2019; Levitt & Schiller 2004; Pilati & Herman 2020; Chaudhary & Guarnizo 2016), and some provide evidence for both (Scotto 2012, Schlenker et al. 2017; Chaudhary 2018).

In the context of this scholarship, two findings of the present study are particularly important. First, it found no quantitative evidence that the length of time spent abroad matters for Lithuanians' home–country political interest or awareness. Alongside this, qualitative interviews gave indications that some emigrants may in fact feel more able, keen and/or competent to follow home–country politics after spending time abroad. This further suggests that the relationship between time in emigration and Lithuanian political interest/awareness is not a linear negative one. Second, the thesis found no evidence for an effect of time spent abroad on the likelihood of voting (nor on the voters' choices). Together, these findings go against the position that life abroad weakens home–country ties and voting prospects back home, and instead gives credit to the view that experiences abroad may be neutral towards, or have a positive effect on, political engagement in sending countries. It is also worth drawing attention to the fact that in the aforementioned study of Chaudhary (2018) the support for the resocialisation hypothesis came specifically from the finding that time spent in the host country decreased the likelihood of voting back home (support for complementarity coming from the increased likelihood of voting in home country if also voting in the host country). The present work offers a contrasting outcome regarding the time effect, thereby providing even more support to the complementarity perspective. An important caveat here, however, is not only the more general issue of non–representativeness of the study, but also that it encompassed very few people staying abroad for over 20 years, the majority of participants residing abroad for under ten years. Whilst this is predictable in the context this dissertation which includes only Lithuanian citizens and which addresses a country that saw a large emigration wave after 2004 (EU accession), it should be born in mind when making broader generalisations. A more general implication of these findings is that they are supportive of a 'non–zero–sum' rather than 'zero sum' interpretations of contemporary migrant political behaviour (see Tsuda 2012).

In addition to these contributions, it is worthy to highlight selected additional findings that may not have equally broad implications but can still apply beyond the Lithuanian case. First, it is of interest for the scholarship examining external voting from the perspective of the rational choice theory, and particularly the issue voting, that the interviewed Lithuanians attached significance both to issues pertinent to the émigré community, and to those relevant to the home–based compatriots. This

contributes to the literature suggesting that the rational choice model can and should account for interests which are social rather than strictly selfish among general (Edlin et al. 2007) and external (Lafleur & Sánchez–Domínguez 2015; Burean 2018) voters. In emigrant voters' case, this refers to taking into account, when making their political choices, issues beyond those relevant to them in emigration. A further outcome to be underscored is the applicability, and good explanatory power, of Michigan school's concept of partisanship among a sample of emigrants from a CEE country, which contributes to research suggesting that it is a variable that should not be overlooked in post–soviet world. Yet another significant finding to be noted by both scholars and policy makers is that emigrants can experience high voting costs both during the registration stage (which is applicable in the examined home country Lithuania only to external voters) and afterwards. Second, lack of knowledge of the available external voting methods themselves (especially those not accessible to internal voters), and of specific rules relating to these methods (e.g. the exact deadline to mail postal votes), can increase voting costs unnecessarily or simply lead to nonvoting. This is relevant above all to the countries that currently provide more ways to vote for external than for home–based electorate or plan to do so in the future, as well as those where registration is applicable to external voters only.

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# Appendices

**Appendix 1. Qualitative interviews**

| Date | Voter? | Gender | Age | Host country | Years abroad |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 06/03/2017 | Yes | M | 28 | UK | 4 |
| 11/03/2017 | Yes | F | 22 | UK | 3 |
| 14/03/2017 | No | F | 43 | UK (Scotland) | 8 |
| 16/03/2017 | No | F | 35 | UK (Scotland) | 5 |
| 18/03/2017 | Yes | M | 19 | UK | 1 |
| 14/06/2017 | Yes | F | 41 | Sweden | 4 |
| 20/08/2017 | No | M | 40 | Ireland | 14 |
| 02/09/2017 | No | M | 44 | UK | 5 |
| 01/10/2017 | No | M | 22 | Denmark | 3 |
| 01/10/2017 | No | M | 24 | UK | 5 |
| 02/10/2017 | No | M | 22 | UK | 3 |
| 06/10/2017 | No | M | 29 | China | 6 |
| 16/10/2017 | No | M | 27 | UK | 8 |
| 23/11/2017 | Yes | F | 32 | UK | 10 |
| 25/11/2017 | No | M | 40 | UK | 8 |
| 04/12/2017 | No | M | 32 | UK | 11 |
| 22/01/2018 | No | M | 21 | UK | 2.5 |
| 22/04/2019 | Yes | F | 24 | Denmark | 3 |
| 24/04/2019 | Yes | F | 24 | Netherlands | 5 |
| 24/04/2019 | Yes | F | 59 | USA | 3 |
| 01/05/2019 | Yes | F | 33 | Sweden | 11 |
| 06/08/2019 | Yes | F | 41 | Belgium | 7 |
| 06/08/2019 | Yes | F | 37 | Belgium | 8 |
| 26/08/2019 | Yes | F | 44 | Poland | 6 |
| 01/09/2019 | Yes | M | 29 | Germany | 4 |
| 24/10/2019 | No | F | 29 | Luxembourg | 6 |
| 19/11/2019 | Yes | M | 38 | Norway | 6 |
| 22/11/2019 | No | F | 42 | Spain | 10 |
| 27/11/2019 | Yes | M | 41 | Finland | 11 |
| 30/11/2019 | No | F | 48 | Italy | 24 |

**Appendix 2. Categorisation of Lithuanian parties**

| Catetory | Parties/coalitions |
|---|---|
| Established right | TS-LKD, Krikščionių partija, Lietuvos krikščionys demokratai, Krikščionių konservatorių socialinė sąjunga, Lietuvių tautininkų sąjunga, Tautinė partija Lietuvos kelias, Tėvynės sąjunga (Lietuvos konservatoriai), Lietuvos krikščionių demokratų partija, Krikščionių demokratų sąjunga, Jaunosios Lietuvos, naujųjų tautininkų ir politinių kalinių sąjunga, Nuosaikiųjų konservatorių sąjunga, Lietuvių tautininkų ir Lietuvos demokratų partijos koalicija, Lietuvos politinių kalinių ir tremtinių sąjunga, Sąjūdžio koalicija, Lietuvos Krikščionių demokratų partijos, Lietuvos politinių kalinių ir tremtinių sąjungos ir Lietuvos demokratų partijos jungtinis sąrašas, Krikščionių demokratų ir „Jaunosios Lietuvos“ sąjungų susivienijimas „Už vieningą Lietuvą“, Lietuvių tautininkų sąjungos (Lietuvių tautininkų sąjunga, Nepriklausomybės partija) sąrašas |
| Established liberal | LRLS, Lietuvos laisvės sąjunga (liberalai), Liberalų ir centro sąjunga, Lietuvos liberalų sąjunga |
| Established left | LSDP, Socialistinis liaudies frontas, Lietuvos socialdemokratų sąjunga, A. Brazausko socialdemokratinė koalicija, Lietuvos socialistų partija |
| Ethnic minority | LLRA, LLRA–LRS (VTB), Lietuvos rusų sąjunga, Lietuvos lenkų sąjunga |
| Other | LVŽS, TT, DP, DK, Tautos prisikėlimo partija, Koalicija Darbo partija + jaunimas, Rolando Pakso koalicija „Už tvarką ir teisingumą“, UDL, Lietuvos liaudies partija, Lietuvos žaliųjų partija, Antikorupcinė N. Puteikio ir K. Krivicko koalicija (Lietuvos centro partija, Lietuvos pensininkų partija), Politinė partija „Lietuvos sąrašas“, S. Buškevičiaus ir Tautininkų koalicija „Prieš korupciją ir skurdą“ (Partija „Jaunoji Lietuva“, Tautininkų sąjunga), Politinė partija „Sąjunga Taip“, Nacionalinis susivienijimas „Už Lietuvą Lietuvoje“ (Lietuvos centro partijos, Lietuvos socialdemokratų sąjungos, Tautininkų sąjungos ir Tautos vienybės sąjungos koalicija), Demokratinė darbo ir vienybės partija, Partija „Jaunoji Lietuva“, Respublikonų partija, Lietuvos žmonių partija, Naujoji sąjunga (socialliberalai), Lietuvos centro partija, Tautos vienybės sąjunga, Nacionalinė centro partija, Kovotojų už Lietuvą sąjunga, Lietuvos centro sąjunga, Lietuvos valstiečių partija, Lietuvos liaudies sąjunga „Už teisingą Lietuvą“, Lietuvos demokratinė darbo partija, Naujosios demokratijos partija, Lietuvos piliečių aljansas, Lietuvos ūkio partija, Lietuvos laisvės lyga, Lietuvos socialinio teisingumo sąjunga, Tautos pažangos partija, Lietuvos gyvenimo logikos partija, Lietuvos centro judėjimas, Lietuvos Respublikos tautos pažangos judėjimas, Lietuvos nuosaikiųjų judėjimas, Visuomeninis politinis judėjimas už socialinį teisingumą, Visuomeninis politinis judėjimas Lietuvos laisvės sąjunga, Lietuvos judėjimas „Černobylis“, Lietuvos Sandrauga, Lietuvos patriotų sąjunga |