

WHY EMIGRATION IS COSTLY FOR INCUMBENTS: THE CASE OF EL SALVADOR

*Por qué la emigración es costosa para los gobernantes:
El caso de El Salvador*

*Por que a emigração é custosa para os governantes:
O caso de El Salvador*

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Abstract

El Salvador has the most popular president in Latin America, even as Salvadorans continue to migrate to the United States in high numbers. While emigration can serve as a safety valve that benefits incumbents, it also reflects a rejection of the status quo, producing a signal that negatively affects presidential popularity. This paper uses a survey of a nationally represented sample of Salvadorans with an embedded experiment. Respondents are primed on the number of apprehensions of Salvadorans attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexico border, which highlights the costly decision to leave El Salvador. The survey results show that emigration reduces presidential approval and generates pessimism about the status quo. Information about migrant apprehensions also negatively affects prospective outlooks over one's personal economy. The study underscores how emigration can negatively affect incumbents despite the long-term political and economic benefits emigration may bring.

Palabras clave:

*Migración;
opinión pública;
evaluación
presidencial; El
Salvador*

Resumen

Aunque El Salvador tiene al presidente más popular de América Latina, los salvadoreños continúan emigrando a los Estados Unidos. La emigración puede servir como válvula de seguridad que beneficie a los gobernantes. Sin embargo, como la emigración refleja un rechazo a la situación actual, también se produce una señal que afecta negativamente a la popularidad del ejecutivo. Este artículo utiliza una encuesta de una muestra representativa de salvadoreños a escala nacional con un experimento integrado. El tratamiento es el número de detenciones de salvadoreños que intentan cruzar la frontera entre Estados Unidos y México, que subraya la costosa decisión de abandonar El Salvador. Los resultados de la encuesta muestran que la emigración reduce la aprobación presidencial y genera pesimismo sobre la situación actual. La información sobre las detenciones de migrantes también afecta negativamente a las perspectivas futuras sobre la economía personal. El estudio subraya cómo la emigración puede afectar negativamente a los gobernantes a pesar de los beneficios políticos y económicos a largo plazo que la emigración pueda traer.

Palavras-chave:

*clivagens políticas;
migração; opinião
pública; avaliação
presidencial; El
Salvador*

Resumo

Embora El Salvador tenha o presidente mais popular da América Latina, os salvadoreños continuam emigrando para os Estados Unidos. A emigração pode servir como uma válvula de segurança que beneficie os governantes. No entanto, como a emigração reflete uma rejeição à situação atual, também se produz um sinal que afeta negativamente a popularidade do executivo. Este artigo utiliza uma pesquisa de uma amostra representativa de salvadoreños a nível nacional com um experimento integrado. O tratamento é o número de detenções de salvadoreños que tentam cruzar a fronteira entre os Estados Unidos e o México, que sublinha a decisão custosa de abandonar El Salvador. Os resultados da pesquisa mostram que a emigração reduz a aprovação presidencial e gera pessimismo sobre a situação atual. A informação sobre as detenções de migrantes também afeta negativamente as perspectivas futuras sobre a economia pessoal. O estudo sublinha como a emigração pode afetar negativamente os governantes, apesar dos benefícios políticos e econômicos a longo prazo que a emigração possa trazer.

1. INTRODUCCIÓN

Does emigration affect how citizens evaluate the incumbent? Emigration can act as a safety valve if citizens leaving the country would have been likely opposition members (Peters and Miller, 2022; Sellars, 2019). However, large-scale emigration can signal to observers remaining in the country that the incumbent government is not performing well (Hirschman, 1993; Pfaff and Kim, 2003). A challenge for scholars is identifying the direction of causation between emigration and public opinion, as well as other political factors that can drive both (Vargas-Ramos, 2018). Furthermore, the magnitude of emigration may go unnoticed since decisions to migrate are personal, and many would leave quietly despite a large-scale

exit (Hirschman, 1993). How would personal decisions to emigrate cause citizens to re-evaluate both the status quo and the incumbent?

El Salvador has the most popular president in Latin America even as Salvadorans continue to migrate to the United States in large numbers. Since entering office in 2019, Nayib Bukele has been the most popular president in Latin America, with approval ratings consistently over 80 % through his first term (Lagos, 2023; Picardo *et al.*, 2022). His popularity stems from reducing the homicide rate and his iron-fist approach to combat gangs, which has captured the attention of Latin Americans throughout the region (Girón, 2023; Linthicum, 2023). In doing so, he has also received criticism for concentrating power and weakening the country's already fragile democratic institutions (Meléndez-Sánchez, 2021; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, 2023). Despite Bukele's popularity, Salvadorans continue to emigrate in large numbers. El Salvador is one of the highest migrant-sending countries in Latin America and Salvadorans continue to make up a large proportion people detained at the U.S.- Mexico border (Ruiz Soto, 2022).

Under this backdrop, this paper will analyze whether emigration affects presidential approval among Salvadoran citizens. I argue that emigration will negatively update economic priors and outlooks for citizens, which leads to lower presidential approval. Exposure to information about high levels of emigration will lead respondents to change their evaluations of the status quo. If compatriots were willing to bear the costs of emigrating, then staying in El Salvador must be costlier. Thus, exposure to emigration reduces political and economic evaluations of the country. Emigration serves as a signaling mechanism about the status quo and can potentially lead to greater demands for accountability. Consequently, incumbents may lose support by failing to address issues that drive people out.

This study uses an original survey from a nationally representative sample in El Salvador with an embedded experiment to analyze how Salvadorans respond to information about emigration. Specifically, the survey treatment primes respondents about the number of Salvadorans apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border. A second treatment primes respondents about the number of Salvadoran minors apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border to test whether that has a stronger effect than general apprehensions. The use of migrant apprehensions as a treatment highlights the high costs and uncertainties from irregular emigration. Migrant apprehensions at border crossings tend to be more visible through media reports than other forms of migrant entry such as family reunification and other visa entries. The survey results show that information about migrant apprehensions negatively affects presidential approval and dampens economic prospects. The treatment effect is stronger among Salvadorans with negative economic perceptions and those with somewhat positive economic views.

While emigration can be a safety valve for incumbents, the information about emigration can undermine that potential effect. Exposure to costly emigration invokes that the status quo (or decision to stay) is costlier than leaving the country.

As the costs and barriers for emigration increase around the world, so may the visibility of people rejecting the status quo through exit. Incumbents of migrant-sending countries face a dilemma: they could allow emigration to ease political pressure but ensure that it is not visible to the public. While emigration results in long-term material benefits in the form of remittances and reducing pressure on the labor market, the immediate political effects can threaten the popularity of incumbents.

2. EMIGRATION AND EXECUTIVE APPROVAL

2.1. *Does Emigration Help or Hurt Incumbents?*

Emigration can benefit the incumbent through the safety valve effect. If emigration represents a rejection of the status quo, then those choosing to migrate are those who are dissatisfied with the incumbent government (Hirschman, 1972, 1993). Therefore, exit marks an absence and reduction of potential opposition members (Kapur, 2010; Goodman and Hiskey, 2008), which can reduce the likelihood of success for opposition groups (Bravo, 2009; Sellars, 2019; Pfaff and Kim, 2003; Peters and Miller, 2022). Governments can also allow emigration to ease pressure on the local labor market, which can help reduce future political opposition (Miller and Peters, 2020). It is unclear whether the absence mechanism affects public opinion because it is necessary for citizens to observe a mass exit (Hirschman, 1993; Pfaff and Kim, 2003). Also, the political self-selection of emigration is assumed, but distinguishing between economic and political motives are difficult to observe (Lundquist and Massey, 2005).

Although emigration reflects a rejection of incumbent performance, the long-term consequences can promote political stability and improve incumbent approval. The financial remittances that migrants send back home provide a significant amount of income for households in developing countries. This additional income sustains household economies and can lead recipients in the origin country to politically disengage, which benefits the incumbent (Goodman and Hiskey, 2008; Bravo, 2009; Germano, 2013). Remittances make households wealthier and recipients often perceive the national economy positively, and they will consequently misattribute credit to the incumbent (Ahmed, 2017; Tertytchnaya *et al.*, 2018).

However, there are several conditions where remittances threaten the incumbent. Remittance-receiving households will support opposition or political change under specific authoritarian regimes (Escribà-Folch *et al.*, 2022; Bearce and Park, 2019) and high levels of corruption or crime (Pfutze, 2012; Tyburski, 2014; Acevedo, 2023). Despite these empirical findings, these transnational linkages are formed long after emigration and hold their own respective mechanisms. These effects are confined to specific relationships that households have with family members abroad.

Emigration can threaten incumbent popularity through a signaling effect that reaches citizens remaining in the country. As emigration grows, the individual decisions to leave can represent a collective grievance against the status quo, and this association with emigration becomes public knowledge (Hirschman, 1993; Pfaff and Kim, 2003). Large flows of emigration can signal worsening conditions at the country level and lead onlookers to update their prior beliefs about the status quo and prospective expectations. As a result, opposition groups could mobilize the remaining citizens and demand political change (Karadja and Prawitz, 2019). This argument requires not only a large flow of emigration out of the country, but also that citizens are aware of their compatriots leaving. Therefore, the act of exit must be observable to the general public in order to produce the signaling mechanism.

In destination countries, migrants entering the country through ports of entry, such as border crossings, receive greater media and political attention even though that may not be the main mode of migrant entry. In the United States, political actors have used migrant entry at the southwest border with Mexico to promote border enforcement policies for their own political gain (Andreas, 2022). Public opinion is influenced by how the media reports undocumented migration at the U.S.-Mexico border (Madrigal, 2023). In Europe, observing migration flows near border crossings has hurt incumbents and benefited anti-immigrant parties (Gessler *et al.*, 2021; Pulejo, 2021; Steinmayr, 2021).

Meanwhile, the public opinion of out-migration from the origin country is not as commonly studied. Emigration affects public opinion in migrant-sending countries as it does in migrant-receiving ones. Kustov (2022) finds that Europeans have negative views of their compatriots leaving. In The Gambia, citizens may support emigration if it benefits their co-ethnics or if it improves their labor market situation (Jaiteh, 2022). For origin countries, observing large emigration outflows may also influence a change in political attitudes and behaviors. Onlookers can observe their fellow compatriots exiting the country in large groups, as Berliners did in 1989, and find themselves updating their priors about the status quo (Hirschman, 1993). Recently, Central American news media covered the migrant caravans of 2018 and 2019, which portrayed the risks associated with migrating through Mexico (Kenix and Lopez, 2021). If onlookers observe the high costs and risky methods of migration, would they change their perception of home-country politics just as those in destination countries receiving emigrants?

2.2. Costly Emigration and Updating Prior Beliefs?

The micro-economic model on migration decisions provides the framework to understand how emigration affects presidential approval. As discussed in Massey *et al.* (1993), the model incorporates factors specific to the destination and origin

countries. Equation 1 presents the cost-benefit calculation where $ER(0)$ represents the expected returns from migration departure time=0 and over a time horizon of t . Individuals will prefer to migrate if $ER(0)$ is positive, not migrate if it is negative, and be indifferent if it is zero. The parameters in the micro-economic model can help us understand how citizens react to the emigration decisions of their compatriots.

$$ER(0) = \int_0^n [P_1(t)P_2(t)Y_d(t) - P_3(t)Y_o(t)]e^{-rt} dt - C(0) \quad (1)$$

The first term ($P_1(t)P_2(t)Y_d(t)$) represents the economic benefits in the destination country weighed by policy and economic conditions. Expected earnings in the destination country (Y_d) are weighed by the probability of avoiding deportation (P_1) and the probability of employment (P_2). The second term represents the economic conditions in the origin country. The expected earnings in the origin country (Y_o) are weighed by the probability of employment there (P_3). These differences are summed over a time horizon (t) from 0 to n with a discount factor of r . The expected increase in earnings potential from migration is subtracted by the costs of migration $C(0)$ at the time of departure.

We will assume the origin country is a low-income country and the destination country is high-income. Therefore, earnings will be higher in the destination country: $Y_d(t) > Y_o(t)$. Economic conditions, such as probability of employment in the destination country and origin country can act as pull and push factors, respectively. To simplify the argument, let's assume that P_2 and P_3 are equal. Therefore, citizens are aware that wages are higher abroad.

Restrictive immigration policies in the destination country and high costs of emigration should undermine the economic benefits of migration and deter people from leaving. In the model, the earned wages in the destination country are also weighed by the probability of avoiding deportation (P_1). This parameter can vary in the sense that migrants who enter the country with legal documentation will have a high value of P_1 whereas unauthorized migrants have a lower value. Even for those migrants that face a higher risk of deportation due to legal status, the economic benefits in the destination country $P_1(t)P_2(t)Y_d(t)$ may still be larger than the economic benefits had they remained in origin country $P_3(t)Y_o(t)$.

The costs of migration, $C(0)$, could undermine the economic benefits of migration such that it becomes irrational to leave. Even if there are economic gains in spite of restrictive policies, the costs of migration can deter exit. Restrictive policies within the destination country can reduce P_1 are often coupled with policies that raises barriers to entry that increases the costs of migration $C(0)$. Migrating with formal documentation and permits likely bear bureaucratic and administrative costs. Irregular migration bears high costs of mobility along the journey and through border policies of the destination country. In sum, barriers to entry can undermine the potential economic gains in the destination country.

Yet, if citizens choose to migrate despite high uncertainties and costs to achieve economic gains, then the migration decision implies that local country conditions are worse than previously thought. Irregular migration is an example where individuals face greater probability of removal (P_1) and costs of mobility and entry ($C(0)$). The combination of high values for these parameters should deter citizens from leaving the country of origin. However, if they choose to migrate, then the model in Equation 1 suggests that origin-country economic conditions $P_3(t)Y_0(t)$ are actually worse. Thus, the migration decision remains rational because local country conditions are so bad that the expected returns from migration $ER(0)$ are positive.

When observed, remaining onlookers in the origin country will question their prior beliefs about local conditions. Citizens are well aware of the economic gains from migration in addition to costs and uncertainties. Prior research suggests that citizens in migrant-sending countries consider the costs and policies in potential destination countries (Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2014; Ferwerda and Gest, 2021). If the positive expected returns from costly emigration motivate exit, then the term representing origin-country conditions must be lower than previously thought such that $P_3'(t)Y_0'(t) < P_3(t)Y_0(t)$. Observing fellow compatriots take on this costly migration will lead onlookers to change their prior beliefs about the local economy.

The visibility of costly migration will negatively affect economic beliefs about the origin country. The emigration decision takes into account economic circumstances that can affect both retrospective and prospective views of the origin-country economy. Watching people bear the high costs of emigration implies that they have had a difficult economic situation and cannot stay any longer in their home country. Given that emigrants are considering the long-term economic benefits of the destination country, then they are likely considering the long-term economic losses of not moving as well. The decision to take on a costly exit means that the economy has not performed well and shows no sign of improvement. Therefore, costly emigration serves as a signal about the state of the economy, which will update one's retrospective and prospective economic evaluations.

H1a: Costly emigration will reduce retrospective economic evaluations.

H2b: Costly emigration will reduce prospective economic evaluations.

When citizens observe their compatriots leave, how do they connect emigration to evaluations of the incumbent government? Large-scale defection from the country signals that the status quo is worse than previously thought (Hirschman, 1972, 1993). Even though onlookers are not leaving the country, they may view the large-scale exit as a negative signal of the general situation of the origin-country. As onlookers update their priors about economy negatively, they may also negatively update their priors about the country in general. Thus, costly emigration should have a direct negative effect on the status quo and indirect effect through economic perceptions.

H2a: Costly emigration will reduce evaluations about the status quo.

H2b: Costly emigration will reduce evaluations about the status quo through economic evaluations.

Given the negative signals that emigration produces about the origin-country, observing a costly exit should negatively affect presidential approval. Whether it is through economic or non-economic factors, emigration signals poor incumbent performance. The economy is a major driver of presidential approval (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2008; Lewis-Beck and Ratto, 2013). Poor governance can also generate the push factors to emigrate, which should consequently affect incumbent approval (Hiskey *et al.*, 2014). Exposure to such information about costly exit will depress citizen views of the home country and the incumbent government for failing to prevent conditions that drive people to leave. Therefore, costly emigration should have a direct negative effect on presidential approval and indirect effect through economic perceptions.

H3a: Costly emigration will reduce incumbent approval.

H3b: Costly emigration will reduce incumbent approval through economic evaluations.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. El Salvador: Popular President and High Emigration

Nayib Bukele's popularity is the highest in El Salvador's postwar period and the highest among Latin American presidents. Bukele's ascendant political career began when he was mayor of Nuevo Cuscatlán in 2012, a suburb of the capital San Salvador. As mayor, he was part of the left-wing FMLN party, which had garnered electoral success at the municipal level since the transition to democracy, and eventually the FMLN won the presidency in 2009. Bukele became a popular mayor in the country's capital of San Salvador in 2015. As he made a run for president, he was expelled from the FMLN party, and then joined the right-wing party, GANA, which allowed him to run for president. In February 2019, he won the presidential election in the first round with 53 % of the vote, with ARENA coming in second with 32 % and the incumbent FMLN party at 14 %. Upon taking office, Bukele's party, *Nuevas Ideas*, has dominated Salvadoran politics.

Since entering the presidency, Bukele has weakened democratic institutions in El Salvador and moved the country in an authoritarian direction. He represents a break from the two-party system that polarized and dominated Salvadoran politics since the end of the civil war in 1992 (Pocasangre, 2021). Most of his predecessors

from both the left-wing FMLN and right-wing ARENA have been charged with corruption, and blamed for high crime and weak economic performance. These conditions allowed for Bukele's style of populism to take hold over the country and his popularity has allowed for his authoritarian behavior to go unchecked (Cruz, 2021; Meléndez-Sánchez, 2021; Araúz and Casullo, 2023). He has consolidated support from the military and the police, and used the armed forces to intimidate the legislature, which was controlled by the opposition during the first two years of his presidency. Bukele routinely attacks independent journalists and has reshaped the news media landscape (Kinosian, 2022). With a super-majority in the legislature, he has replaced the attorney general and judges with loyalists (Cruz, 2021). Recently, he has pushed through constitutional changes that reduce the size of the legislature and the number of municipalities, which further weakens opposition opportunities for elected positions. In 2023, he announced his bid to run for reelection, even though the Salvadoran constitution prohibits reelection.

Bukele is well known for his controversial policies for reducing gang violence and enacting a state of exception. Negotiations with gang leaders were responsible for a reduction in homicides earlier in his administration, which resembles with policies from previous Salvadoran presidents (Cruz, 2019, 2022). Following a spike in homicides in March 2022, Bukele instituted a state of exception that suspended civil liberties and due process that continues at the time of writing. While homicides declined, El Salvador now has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world with 2 % of its population in jail (Segura and Urbina, 2023). The country's national police and military have benefited from greater resources and discretion to arrest civilians under the state of exception. The support from civil society, the armed forces, and political elites has allowed Bukele's regime to become one of competitive authoritarianism (Guachalla *et al.*, 2021; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, 2023).

The economy remains a challenge for Bukele despite reducing homicides in El Salvador. Bukele garnered international attention when he embraced the cryptocurrency, Bitcoin, and adopted it as legal tender alongside the U.S. dollar. However, the Bitcoin policy was largely directed to a foreign audience and remains unpopular among Salvadorans (Rauda Zablah, 2022; Andrade, 2022). El Salvador has one of the lowest growth rates in Latin America since the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, El Salvador registered the lowest GDP growth in Central America, reported negative net foreign direct investment in 2022, and there are concerns over decreasing foreign reserves (Adler *et al.*, 2023; ECLAC, 2023; Pastran, 2023). The country faces pressure to meet debt obligations as the negotiations between the Bukele government and the International Monetary Fund face an impasse (Guzman, 2022; Campos, 2023). The Bukele administration recently blocked an IMF economic report on El Salvador from going public (Rauda Zablah, 2023a). The country continues to depend on migrant remittances, which has grown to 25 % of the GDP (IMF, 2022). Meanwhile, inflation has put pressure on Salvadoran households. A recent

survey found that nearly one-third of Salvadoran households reduced their food consumption due to rising prices (Benitez and Joma, 2023).

Nevertheless, Bukele remains extremely popular among Salvadorans. His approval ratings remain high even though Salvadorans were not well aware of the implications of the state of exception (Andrade, 2022). A recent study found that despite the constitutional ban on reelection, Bukele's plan to run for a second term has had no effect on his popularity (Picardo *et al.*, 2022). Figure 1 shows the presidential approval over time in El Salvador. With sustained approval ratings well over 80 %, Bukele's popularity is unprecedented. Mauricio Funes, the first president from FMLN, also enjoyed high approval ratings above 80 % during the early portion of his term in office. The following FMLN president, Sanchez Ceren, held the worst ratings of any president since the civil war. According to *Latinobarometro*, Bukele has the highest approval ratings of any Latin American president and his popularity rings throughout the region (Lagos, 2023; Linthicum, 2023). Bukele is likely to be very popular among the Salvadorans in the United States despite no systematic survey on the diaspora (Sesin and Flores, 2022).

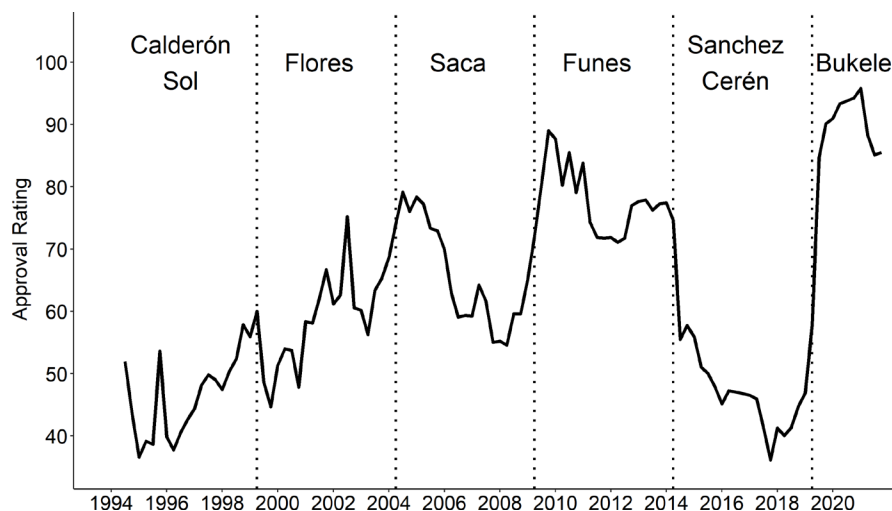
Despite enjoying high levels of presidential approval since Bukele started his presidency, El Salvador remains a major migrant-sending country. The country has a long history of migration with the first major wave occurring during the civil war of the 1980s where violence drove many to migrate to the United States (Menjívar, 2000). In spite of the 1992 peace treaty and transition to democracy, more Salvadorans continued to migrate to the United States in the 1990s and 2000s due to economic downturns and the rise of criminal violence (Flores-Yeffal and Pren, 2018). In 2021, Salvadorans surpassed Cubans to become the third largest Latino origin group in the United States, behind only to Puerto Ricans and Mexicans (Krogstad *et al.*, 2022). Figure 2 shows the rapid increases of the Salvadoran immigrant population in the United States. From 2008, more than 15 years since the end of the civil war, Salvadorans continued to migrate at high levels shown through the rapid increase of the immigrant population.

Several factors have driven Salvadorans to emigrate. Poor economic performance, violence, and climate change have driven Central Americans to flee their home countries and many have sought costly means of migrating by land through Mexico (Flores-Yeffal and Pren, 2018). Violence and public insecurity also drive Salvadorans to emigrate (Hiskey *et al.*, 2018; Clemens, 2021; Cutrona *et al.*, 2023). Low trust in political institutions and poor governance are found to be important indicators that increase intentions to emigrate from Central America (Hiskey *et al.*, 2014). The legacy of Cold War geopolitics and U.S. domestic politics has created barriers for Salvadorans to migrate to the United States. As a result, Salvadorans represent a relatively high number of immigrants who live in the United States without legal status (Abrego, 2017; Menjívar and Abrego, 2012; Stanley, 1987).

Just before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic, Salvadorans continued to make up large numbers of migrant detentions. Outside the dip in detentions due to the onset of the pandemic in 2020, Figure 2 shows Salvadoran detentions were rising and remained high as Bukele entered office. Economic motivations continue to drive Salvadorans to migrate, with a majority seeking doing so through irregular channels (Ruiz Soto *et al.*, 2021; Jordán, 2023; Díaz, 2023). Despite the drop in homicides from Bukele's policies, demands to emigrate remains high in El Salvador. Salvadoran news outlets have reported on the high numbers of Salvadorans detained at the U.S-Mexico border.¹

Comparing El Salvador with its Central American neighbors further illustrates the puzzle of high emigration and high presidential popularity. While Bukele enjoys high popularity, presidents in neighboring Honduras and Guatemala have approvals of less than 40 % since 2019 (Figure A.1). Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega holds an approval rating of 50 % though other sources estimate his approval to be much lower (Enríquez, 2023). While Salvadorans tend to make up fewer apprehensions at the U.S. southwest border, they are similar to Guatemalan rates when scaled by population (Figure A.2). Emigration from El Salvador may be higher than reported data suggests given the country's long history of emigration and strong migrant networks in the United States.

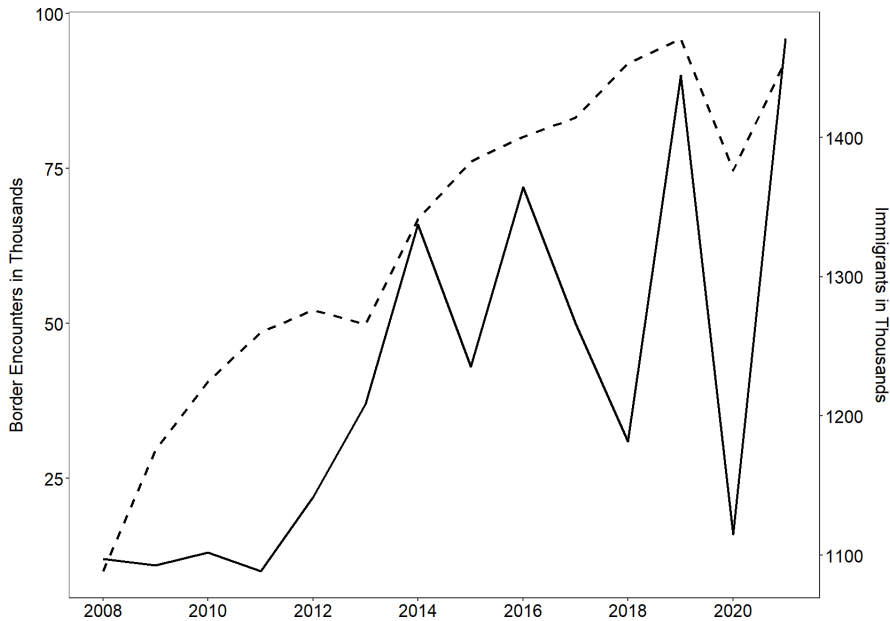
Figure 1. Post-War Presidential Approval in El Salvador (1994-2021)



Source: Executive Approval Database 3.0 (Carlin *et al.*, 2023).

1. Some examples include Portillo (2021), Beltrán (2022), and Muth (2023).

Figure 2. Salvadoran Emigration to the United States (2008-2021)



Note: The solid line represents encounters of Salvadoran citizens at the southern border of the United States (Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protections (CBP) via Ruiz Soto (2022)). The dashed line represents the Salvadoran immigrant population in the United States (Source: U.S. Census Bureau via Ruggles *et al.* (2023)).

3.2. Survey Experiment: Exposure to Migrant Apprehensions

I use an original survey of Salvadoran citizens conducted in August 2022. The survey includes questions about migration, remittances, current politics, and fiscal policy preferences.² In collaboration with El Centro de Estudios Ciudadanos in the Universidad Francisco Gavidia, we collected a nationally representative sample of 1200 Salvadorans. The survey was face-to-face with enumerators following COVID-19 protocols for the safety of both enumerator and respondents.³

The survey has an embedded experiment that primes respondents about recent increases in apprehensions of Salvadoran migrants along the U.S.-Mexico border. After answering basic demographic questions, respondents were randomly

2. Pre-analysis plan can be found here: <https://osf.io/p6u9s/>

3. The study was approved by the University of Denver IRB (1931981-1).

assigned to three experimental groups: control, general apprehensions, or apprehensions of minors.⁴ The treatments were about the number of Salvadorans apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border during the first six months of 2022.⁵ The control group was not given information about apprehensions. For those in the treatment groups, enumerators told respondents to keep the following information about apprehensions in mind as they answered the next set of questions. Enumerators read the following scripts to the respondents before continuing on to the survey questions (English translation below):

Treatment 1 (General Apprehensions): In the first six months of this year of 2022, almost 8,000 Salvadorans were detained PER MONTH crossing the border to enter the United States without documents. If it continues like this, these data will exceed the 2016 rate, which is the highest to date.

Treatment 2 (Apprehensions of Minors): In the first six months of this year of 2022, more than 1,300 Salvadoran minors were detained PER MONTH crossing the border to enter the United States without documents. If it continues like this, these data will exceed the 2016 rate, which is the highest to date.

The treatments emphasized that the number of apprehensions is on track to be the highest since 2016. The last part of the script is important because it allows respondents to consider the increase in emigration without priming them about the current president. Even though the number of apprehensions was high in 2019, Bukele entered office in June of that year. By telling respondents that detentions are at their highest since 2016, it references that migration was lower before Bukele started his presidency in 2019.

Following the treatment, respondents were asked a series of questions about migration, economic evaluations, and political evaluations. Respondents were asked about whether national problems drive the migration decision, and whether they believe that decision to emigrate is based on personal circumstances or national decisions.⁶ Afterwards, respondents were asked to retrospectively and prospectively evaluate their personal economic situation and the national economy.⁷ Following these questions about the economy, respondents were asked on a scale

4. The random assignment was conducted at the municipal level to ensure an equal number of respondents in each experimental group across randomly selected municipalities.

5. The apprehension numbers were acquired from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency where they update the data monthly. The data for the treatments were acquired on August 10, 2022 from the CPB Public Data Portal.

6. The treatments did not have a significant effect on the responses to these questions.

7. Responses are based on a 4-point scale: Worse, just as bad, just as good, better.

from zero to ten to evaluate the general situation of the country (status quo) and the performance of the current government (presidential).⁸

The treatments highlight the high uncertainty and costs of irregular migration from El Salvador. Migrant apprehensions at the border represent the extreme and visibly high values of $P_1(t)$ and $C(0)$ from Equation 1. Emigrants are deprived of the economic benefits of the destination country after having to bear high costs of movement. Providing information about the increasing number of Salvadorans apprehended at the border should signal to onlookers in the origin country that their fellow citizens leave El Salvador despite the high costs and uncertainties of migration. Therefore, according to the hypotheses, respondents will negatively update their economic and political evaluations when primed about the number of Salvadorans detained at the U.S.-Mexico border.

While apprehensions may not reflect all migration flows from El Salvador to the United States, it does provide a visible signal of exit that other forms do not. Regular forms of migration such as family reunification or work visas are not as visible as apprehensions. Irregular migrants can enter the United States undetected and thus will not appear in the apprehensions data. It is also possible the high number of apprehensions reflects increased enforcement. Salvadorans may be well aware of increased border enforcement through local news media and family members abroad. Nevertheless, apprehensions show that migrants are willing to bear the high costs of irregular migration from El Salvador in spite of greater border enforcement.

The addition of the minors treatment is meant to measure whether a specific demographic of those apprehended at the border has a stronger effect on respondents. The apprehension of minors will more likely affect a prospective forecast about El Salvador's economy, which can negatively affect incumbent approval. The 2014 child migration crisis, where the minors were predominantly Central American, caused a strong political reaction in U.S. politics (Madrigal, 2023). However, it is unclear whether this crisis affected Central American incumbents back then. Violence and economic hardship are major drivers of Central American minors migrating on their own (Canizales, 2023; Clemens, 2021). Figure 2 shows an increase in apprehensions in 2014 when many unaccompanied minors were crossing the border. During that same year, the incumbent party won the Salvadoran presidential election even though the winning candidate was generally unpopular. Priming respondents about the apprehensions of minors should have a stronger negative effect on economic and political attitudes as it signals that Salvadoran children do not have a positive future in the country.

8. Questions from the survey are in Appendix C.

Given El Salvador’s large diaspora, it is possible that the priming experiment does not convey novel information to respondents. Salvadorans could be subject to pre-treatment contexts that could bias and limit the inferences from this study (Gaines *et al.*, 2007; Druckman and Leeper, 2012). Subjects in the experimental conditions may already be exposed to information about El Salvador’s emigration, which could bias the experimental results. At the same time, Salvadorans may not be aware of actual figures of migrant apprehensions or relative changes of apprehensions, which could exacerbate the results. Furthermore, given the strong support for Bukele, it is possible that any negative information about El Salvador can produce a backlash among some respondents to favor the president even more. Nevertheless, the goal of the experiment is to isolate the direction of the effect of emigration to economic and political perceptions. Sub-group analysis based on transnational linkages could reveal whether potential pre-treatment contexts affect the survey experiment. The priming experiment presents information about increases in emigration under the context of decreasing violence and economic uncertainty. This should help isolate the economy as a major push factor for emigration.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Main Results

Table 1 presents the summary statistics by experimental group. The sample yields balance across demographic variables and the transnational linkages. Those in the minors treatment group shows a greater share of respondents having family in the United States and communication abroad relative to the control group. These imbalances do not affect the general findings of the paper. There are differences in economic and political perceptions, and the hypothesis tests in this section will show whether the treatment effects are statistically significant.

Table 1. Summary Statistics by Experimental Group

	Control		Apprehensions		Minors	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Political Variables						
Status Quo Evaluation	7.02	1.98	6.62	2.36	6.92	2.20
Presidential Evaluation	7.86	2.02	7.53	2.40	7.66	2.32
Self-Reported Ideology	5.97	1.97	5.99	2.18	5.94	2.08

(Left = 1; Right = 10)

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	Control		Apprehensions		Minors	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Demography						
Urban	0.64	0.48	0.64	0.48	0.64	0.48
Female	0.52	0.50	0.53	0.50	0.53	0.50
Age	43.51	16.11	45.01	16.89	43.63	16.50
Employed	0.55	0.50	0.54	0.50	0.62	0.49
Education						
Less than Secondary	0.45	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Secondary	0.35	0.48	0.34	0.47	0.31	0.46
More than Secondary	0.20	0.40	0.17	0.37	0.18	0.39
Monthly Income						
Less than \$350	0.56	0.50	0.56	0.50	0.58	0.49
\$351 to \$700	0.35	0.48	0.34	0.47	0.31	0.46
More than \$700	0.10	0.30	0.10	0.31	0.11	0.31
Migration						
Family in USA	0.66	0.47	0.64	0.48	0.70	0.46
Weekly Communication	0.30	0.46	0.28	0.45	0.42	0.49
Remittance Recipient	0.24	0.43	0.24	0.43	0.28	0.45
Intends to Migrate	0.28	0.45	0.25	0.43	0.26	0.44
Positive Economic Evaluations						
(1= Positive, 0 = Negative)						
Pocketbook - Retrospective	0.55	0.50	0.51	0.50	0.55	0.50
Pocketbook - Prospective	0.63	0.48	0.58	0.49	0.64	0.48
Sociotropic - Retrospective	0.50	0.50	0.45	0.50	0.48	0.50
Sociotropic - Prospective	0.53	0.50	0.51	0.50	0.56	0.50
Observations	403		396		401	

Source: Own elaboration.

I hypothesized that the emigration treatments should negatively affect economic evaluations. The decision to emigrate considers retrospective economic views as well as prospective views. Exposure to information about compatriots choosing to emigrate irregularly should negatively update their prior beliefs about recent economic performance and influence their economic forecast. Tables 2 and 3 present the pairwise comparisons between experimental groups for pocketbook and national economic evaluations, respectively.⁹ The general apprehensions treatment consistently has a negative effect on economic evaluations but is only statistically significant for prospective pocketbook views of the economy. This result suggests that migrant apprehensions cast doubt over the personal economic outlooks but do not update priors on retrospective views.

The minors apprehensions treatment did not yield significant differences from the control group. The minors treatment was significantly different from the general apprehensions treatment under personal and national prospective economic evaluations. These results suggest that information about minors emigrating irregularly do not affect economic perceptions for Salvadorans. One would expect that minors leaving El Salvador suggests a negative outlook for the economy but this was not the case in the survey experiment. However, these findings show that Salvadorans may not associate the emigration of minors to their personal or national economic perceptions.

Table 2. Pairwise Comparisons on Pocketbook Economic Perceptions

Dependent Variables:	Retrospective		Prospective	
	Difference	SE	Difference	SE
Apprehensions – Control	-0.0307	(0.0233)	-0.0675**	(0.0300)
Minors – Control	-0.0050	(0.0167)	0.0048	(0.0220)
Minors – Apprehensions	0.0257	(0.0184)	0.0723***	(0.0227)

Note: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Municipal-level clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Source: Own elaboration.

9. Regression results for pocketbook and national economic evaluations are in Tables A.2 and A.3, respectively.

Table 3. Pairwise Comparisons on National Economic Perceptions

Dependent Variables:	Retrospective		Prospective	
	Difference	SE	Difference	SE
Apprehensions – Control	-0.0300	(0.0263)	-0.0304	(0.0318)
Minors – Control	-0.0083	(0.0276)	0.0325	(0.0272)
Minors – Apprehensions	0.0217	(0.0250)	0.0628**	(0.0294)

Note: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Municipal-level clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Source: Own elaboration.

Information about Salvadoran apprehensions at the U.S.-Mexico border directly reduces status quo evaluations and presidential approval. Table 4 presents the pair-wise comparisons between experimental groups.¹⁰ The general apprehensions treatment negatively affects political evaluations, reducing status quo evaluation by 4 % and presidential evaluation by 3.3 %. Despite a smaller effect on presidential approval than on the status quo, the apprehensions treatment is statistically significant at the 95 % confidence level.¹¹ The results for the general apprehensions treatment are not sensitive to omitted variable bias (Figure A.3). Despite Bukele's popularity, high levels of costly emigration portrayed through migrant detentions negatively affects perceptions of his administration. This is a notable finding given that other studies show that the state of exception, threats to the legislature, and violation of the constitution's prohibition on reelection have not hurt his popularity (Andrade, 2022; Picardo *et al.*, 2022).

10. Regression results for political evaluation are in Table A.1.

11. The treatment effect is stronger under a saturated model that controls for demographic factors (Table A.1).

Table 4. Pairwise Comparisons on Political Perceptions

Dependent Variables:	Status Quo		Presidential	
	Difference	SE	Difference	SE
Apprehensions - Control	-0.3961***	(0.1308)	-0.3307**	(0.1364)
Minors - Control	-0.1026	(0.1281)	-0.2035	(0.1636)
Minors - Apprehensions	0.2936*	(0.2936)	0.1272	(0.1646)

Note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Municipal-level clustered standard errors in parentheses. *Source:* Own elaboration.

Surprisingly, the treatment about minors apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border did not yield significant results. Salvadorans respond to the general migrant population detained but are not influenced by news of minors in detention.¹² One reason for the lack of significant effects may be from the number of minors (1300) detained compared to the general population (8000). However, one would expect a stronger effect from exposure to information of minors detained than of the general population. Irregular migration of minors could signal worse prospective outlooks or demand more sympathy than from adult apprehensions. Another reason could be that Salvadorans do not blame the president for detentions of minors, and perhaps hold family members responsible. Respondents may vary in how they perceive the term minors, where they may think of young children or adolescents, which would make for a noisy treatment. As mentioned earlier, the emigration of minors may not update economic perceptions, therefore the incumbent would not be punished for their exit.

4.2. Treatment Effects Across Economic Views

Does the effect of emigration as a negative economic signal translate to presidential approval? The argument in this paper expects that emigration should negatively affect economic and political perceptions. The main results show that the apprehensions negatively affect one of the four economic perceptions: the prospective pocketbook evaluation. The treatment effect was half the size for the other three economic outcome variables and did not yield statistical significance. The apprehensions treatment was statistically significant for both political evaluations.

12. The detention of minors treatment only produced a significant effect under a saturated model with demographic controls and municipal-level fixed-effects.

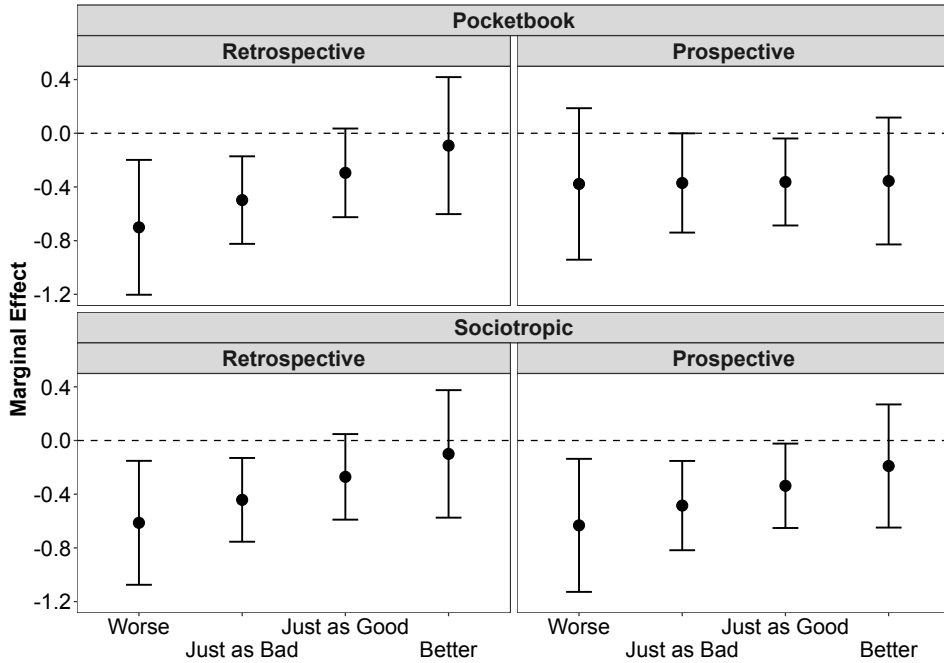
The results suggest a couple of implications. First, the treatment could vary according to economic perceptions. Those with negative economic beliefs may view migrant detentions as validating their grievances and leading them to further blame the incumbent. Second, the apprehensions treatment may affect presidential approval outside of economic considerations.

An interaction model could yield insight into whether the apprehensions treatment is consistent across economic perceptions. The apprehensions treatment could yield stronger negative effects among respondents who report negative economic perceptions (“Worse”, “Just as Bad”). In contrast, those with positive economic views (“Just as Good”, “Better”) may also update their priors about the incumbent but the treatment effect could be relatively smaller. The issue may be less salient among the economic optimists compared to the pessimists. For the regression, I interact the experimental treatments with the economic perception variables used in the earlier analysis.

According to the interaction results, the apprehensions treatment reduces presidential approval among those with negative views of the economy and those with somewhat positive views. Figure 3 presents the marginal effects of the apprehensions treatment on presidential approval across each of the four economic perceptions.¹³ Reflecting the results in Table 2, the apprehensions treatment has a similar negative effect across different levels of pocketbook prospective views. The apprehensions treatment effect is stronger among those who report “worse” or “just as bad” in the three other economic perception questions. In the main results (Table 4), the apprehensions treatment reduced presidential evaluations by 4 percent. The interaction effects show that the treatment effect reduces presidential approval by more than 4 percent among those with negative economic views. Presidential evaluation declines by more than 6 percent among the most pessimistic about the economy.

13. Full regression results in Table A.4.

Figure 3. Marginal Effects of the Apprehension Treatment on Presidential Evaluation by Economic Perception



Source: Author's own elaboration.

Information about apprehensions reduces presidential evaluation among those with somewhat positive views of the economy but has no effect among the most optimistic about the economy. Though the effect is smaller than those with negative economic views, the treatment effect among respondents who report their economic perceptions to be “just as good” is negative and statistically significant at the 95 % confidence level for prospective views and 90 % for retrospective views. Therefore, emigration does negatively affect presidential evaluations among those who have a mildly positive view of the economy. Notable is the significant effect from the interaction with prospective economic views. These results suggest that even though Salvadorans could have a positive prospective view of the economy, emigration may cast doubt into incumbent performance.

Meanwhile, the treatment effects are null for those with high optimism about the economy. The lack of an effect from the optimists can explain why the migration treatment had little effect on economic perceptions. The apprehensions treatment group reported more economic pessimism than the control group, but the share of respondents who report “better” economic views were similar between these two

groups (Table A.5). The lack of a treatment effect from these economic optimists resonates with the findings from Zechmeister and Zizumbo-Colunga (2013) where corruption does not affect presidential approval under positive economic contexts. They argue that "good economic times might dissuade individuals from punishing the executive for corruption but also to the fact that bad economic times might induce individuals to make a particularly strong connection between the two" (p. 1996). The interaction results from Figure 3 suggest a similar relationship. Optimistic Salvadorans may disconnect emigration from incumbent performance. However, economic pessimists punish the incumbent even more when primed with information about emigration. Notably, those with mildly positive economic views respond negatively to apprehensions and also reduce their presidential evaluations.

4.3. Alternative Explanations

Given El Salvador's large diaspora, it is possible that political attitudes could be moderated through transnational linkages. According to the survey, 25 % of respondents receive remittances and 33.5 % communicate at least once a week with family members abroad. Those with transnational linkages may receive information about migrant apprehensions from their family members in the United States given the wide coverage it gets in the North American news media. Therefore, contact with migrants abroad should weaken the effect of the survey treatment. However, communication has no independent or interaction effect with the treatments (Table B.2). Earlier research argues that remittances should increase presidential approval (Ahmed, 2017; Tertychnaya *et al.*, 2018), but remittance recipients do not differ from non-recipients in their status quo and presidential evaluations (Table B.3). Furthermore, the treatment effects were neither affected by the inclusion of remittances nor through their interaction effects. The apprehensions treatment remains robust to including these transnational factors.

Given that a substantial share of respondents intend to emigrate, it is possible that these intentions are driving the negative treatment effects. Those with aspirations to emigrate may have empathy with fellow compatriots who already made the decision to leave. Table 1 shows that at least one-fourth of respondents intend to migrate. The treatments do not affect whether a respondent is more or less likely to report intentions to leave. The apprehensions treatment remains consistent with the inclusion of this variable and the interaction is null (Table B.3).

It is possible that the treatment could be driven by those already opposing or holding less favorable views of Bukele. Learning of emigration may further reinforce their views of Bukele. The survey did not ask whether respondents had voted for Bukele in the 2019 election or supported his party, *Nuevas Ideas* in the legislative and municipal elections in February 2021. At the launch of the survey,

the state of exception, which resulted in suspension of civil liberties and mass arrests, was in place for five months. I chose not to ask about whether they had previously voted for Bukele over concerns of social desirability bias and safety. Surveys since Bukele's election shows that party identification and electoral performances among El Salvador's two largest and established parties (FMLN, ARENA) has collapsed since then (Pocasangre, 2021; Andrade, 2023; Martínez Osorio and García Velázquez, 2024). This collapse of the two-party system was evident when the left-wing FMLN and right-wing ARENA comprised of less than 20 % of the total vote in the 2021 legislative (Martínez Osorio and García Velázquez, 2024). The survey did feature a question on self-reported ideology on a scale from 1 (left) to 10 (right) where 60 % of the sample reported their ideology as a five or six (Table B.6). While more right-wing placement is associated with greater support for Bukele, there is no interaction effect between the treatments and ideology (Table B.5). The apprehensions treatment remains significant, which suggests that the emigration treatment reduces presidential evaluation across the ideological spectrum.

5. DISCUSSION

The survey experiment focuses on migrant apprehensions but emigration in general may depress presidential approval. Salvadorans have other means of migrating to the United States such as requesting asylum, work visas, and family reunification. Although the survey did not address these specific methods of migrating, respondents were asked about migration decisions in general. The first question asked respondents whether they agree or disagree that national problems influence the decision to emigrate. Sixty-two percent of respondents agreed that national factors affect the emigration decision. The experimental treatments had no effect on their responses (Table A.6). Table 5 shows that respondents who agree that national problems influence the emigration decision hold lower evaluations of the status quo and the president by 5.5 % and 6 %, respectively. This variable does not affect the experimental treatment effects and there were no interaction effects.

Political evaluations decline even more when respondents believe national conditions drive emigration decisions more than personal circumstances. The second survey question asks whether respondents think the decision to migrate is based on personal circumstances, national conditions, or both. The general apprehensions treatment has a negligible effect on the response and the minor treatment increased the likelihood that respondents attribute national conditions to emigration decisions (Table A.7). Table 5 shows that status quo and presidential approval are 14 % lower for those who feel that national conditions exclusively drive emigration compared to those who believe it is a personal decision. Those who believe both personal and national factors drive the emigration decision also show lower evaluations than those

who believe emigration is solely a personal matter. The treatment effects are unaffected when including the emigration decision variables and there were no interaction effects. Therefore, emigration in general may drive down presidential approval when considered at a national level. Future research will benefit from examining attitudes towards emigration in Latin America to see if citizens hold a bias against mobility in general or for certain people (Kustov, 2022; Jaiteh, 2022).

Table 5. Emigration Decisions and Perceptions on Political Evaluations

	Evaluation			
	Status Quo		President	
Intercept	7.507*** (0.303)	8.177*** (0.312)	8.485*** (0.262)	9.009*** (0.280)
Experimental Treatments:				
Apprehensions	-0.455*** (0.134)	-0.468*** (0.129)	-0.451*** (0.135)	-0.463*** (0.137)
Minors	-0.206 (0.155)	-0.188 (0.165)	-0.340** (0.173)	-0.326* (0.183)
National factors influence emigration:				
Agree or strongly agree	-0.556*** (0.135)		-0.605*** (0.157)	
Emigration decision based on...				
National Conditions		-1.441*** (0.263)		-1.486*** (0.221)
National and Personal		-0.977*** (0.173)		-0.865*** (0.144)
N	1,100	1,099	1,101	1,100
R ²	0.061	0.080	0.103	0.117

Note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Municipal-level clustered standard errors in parentheses. Municipal-level fixed effects are included in all models. All models control for socio-demographic variables.

“Personal only” is the reference category for emigration decision. See Tables A.6 and A.7 for full results.

Source: Author’s own elaboration.

Why does Bukele's popularity remain high in El Salvador despite the negative effects of emigration on presidential approval? His iron-fist approach to gangs plays a big part in his popularity despite corroborated reports of his negotiations with gang leaders (see Meléndez-Sánchez (2023)). In a survey evaluating Bukele's four years in office, Salvadorans credit his public security policies as his greatest achievement despite the suspension of civil liberties (Quintanilla *et al.*, 2023; Andrade, 2023). This high popularity could explain why the treatment effect for general apprehensions seems to be smaller when using presidential approval as the dependent variable compared to the status quo. Salvadorans seem to give Bukele latitude in government performance despite less enthusiastic views regarding the country's general situation.

Changes in El Salvador's media market and how information is disseminated can also explain consistent popularity. El Salvador has seen major changes in news and television media where state-sponsored outlets have dominated media markets at the expense of the country's traditional, privately-held outlets (Kinosian, 2022; Janetsky, 2023). Favorable content towards Bukele dominates social media through many platforms and has become a lucrative industry in itself (Paises and Olivares, 2023; Janetsky, 2023). Reports show that most social media content about the Salvadoran president praises his security policy or his embrace of cryptocurrencies; while the state of the economy remains among the least mentioned (Paises and Olivares, 2023; Rauda Zablah, 2023b; Girón, 2023). Social media content about Bukele not only dominates the media environment in El Salvador, but it is also widespread across the Salvadoran diaspora in the United States and throughout Latin America. The constant media attention over Bukele's popularity may in itself keep his popularity high (Buckley *et al.*, 2023).

Emigration has the potential to challenge Bukele's popularity, but the current informational landscape can obstruct that effect. While the independent effect of information regarding migrant apprehensions is 4 %, it is much larger among those who already view the country's economy negatively. Thus, a worsening Salvadoran economy can generate greater negative effects of emigration on presidential approval. Bukele blocking the IMF from releasing a report on the Salvadoran economy shows the need to control information (Rauda Zablah, 2023a). His influence in media resonates with authoritarian behaviors that seek to boost popularity by manipulating information about their performance (Guriev and Treisman, 2019). In the case of El Salvador, the incumbent has an incentive to promote security policy and obfuscate economic news. Just as a poor performing economy can punish an incumbent, the results from this paper show that incumbents also have a strategic incentive to reduce information regarding emigration.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper shows that even though emigration may have long-term economic and political benefits for incumbents, the immediate reaction to emigration can penalize incumbents. Through a survey experiment, I find that priming Salvadoran respondents with information on apprehensions of their co-nationals at the U.S. southwest border generates pessimism over their personal economic outlooks and depresses their evaluation of the status quo and presidential approval. The high uncertainties and costs of irregular migration leads citizens in El Salvador to update their economic and political beliefs. These results show that emigration has a direct and negative effect on presidential popularity.

Information about migrant apprehensions generally reduces presidential approval among Salvadorans, except for those with high economic optimism. The apprehensions treatment is strongest among Salvadorans with negative views of the economy. Those with somewhat positive views of the economy reduced their evaluation of the incumbent when given information about migrant apprehensions. However, across different measures of economic perceptions, those with high optimism were not moved by the treatment. This resonates with work on the effect of corruption on presidential approval conditional on economic performance (Zechmeister and Zizumbo-Colunga, 2013). The more pessimistic Salvadorans are about the economy, the larger the role emigration will have on domestic politics. Thus, the treatment effects teach us that a struggling economy and high emigration will both reinforce each other to the detriment of the incumbent.

Surprisingly, information about the apprehensions of minors at U.S.-Mexico border had no effect on economic or presidential evaluations. The costly decision for minors to exit should signal the lack of a long-term future in El Salvador. In other words, it should have dampened economic outlooks and lowered presidential approval. The null effect suggests that Salvadorans do not associate the migration of minors with economic or political conditions. This could perhaps explain the lack of a political backlash in Central America during the 2014 border crisis, when unaccompanied minors were detained at the U.S.-Mexico border. Understanding why there is no political backlash is outside the scope of this paper but could be an important point of departure for future research.

The findings highlight the implications that border security policies have on migrant-sending countries. The growth of border externalization policies raises the costs and uncertainties for migrants. For example, the United States has established cooperation with Mexico in preventing immigrants from arriving to the U.S.- Mexico border. This relationship has led Mexico to militarize their southern border with Guatemala. Deepening border externalization policies produces new opportunities for citizens in the sending country to learn of the costs and risks migrants take when leaving the country. Therefore, from the findings of this study,

border externalization policies will have a political effect on incumbents in sending countries. Thus, even though emigration has benefits in the long-term, incumbents will prefer that their citizens leave unnoticed.

Can current Salvadoran emigration curb democratic backsliding in El Salvador? This paper argues that emigration undermines presidential popularity, with the strongest effect observed when it is associated with poor economic perceptions. However, incumbents may emphasize other policy successes to deflect attention from the economy (Guriev and Treisman, 2019). Just as a poorly performing economy can punish an incumbent, the results from this paper suggest that incumbents also have a strategic incentive to reduce information regarding emigration.

The survey results show that emigration in general reduces presidential approval. Greater knowledge about emigration can have cascading effects that could weaken the incumbent and potentially support the opposition (Hirschman, 1993; Pfaff and Kim, 2003). However, this paper has only linked emigration and presidential approval through economic perceptions. Future research could examine how emigration influences prospects for democratic (in)stability. As the recent Nicaraguan and Venezuelan exodus demonstrates, emigration can signal democratic regime failure. Scholars would benefit from understanding the role emigration plays in processes of regime change and stagnation.

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A Appendix

Table A.1: Treatment Effects on Status Quo and Presidential Evaluations

	Status Quo Evaluation			Presidential Evaluation		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Intercept	7.020*** (0.081)	6.492*** (0.065)	6.741*** (0.344)	7.864*** (0.112)	7.172*** (0.082)	7.908*** (0.341)
Apprehensions	-0.396*** (0.129)	-0.420*** (0.130)	-0.445*** (0.137)	-0.331** (0.135)	-0.358*** (0.134)	-0.438*** (0.135)
Minors	-0.103 (0.126)	-0.115 (0.126)	-0.205 (0.155)	-0.204 (0.161)	-0.223 (0.162)	-0.340** (0.171)
Urban			-0.104 (0.197)			-0.317* (0.169)
Female			-0.187 (0.117)			-0.192* (0.110)
Age			0.045 (0.052)			0.023 (0.049)
Employed			-0.103 (0.120)			-0.051 (0.130)
Secondary Education			-0.285* (0.165)			-0.494*** (0.139)
Post Secondary Education			-0.468*** (0.139)			-0.996*** (0.192)
Income: 351 to 700			0.112 (0.157)			0.075 (0.130)
Income: 700 or more			0.140 (0.203)			0.201 (0.212)
N	1,198	1,198	1,104	1,199	1,199	1,105
R ²	0.006	0.036	0.046	0.004	0.055	0.087

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01
Municipal-level clustered standard errors in parentheses.
Municipal-level fixed effects in columns 2-3, and 5-6.
Age is divided by ten for ease of interpretation of the coefficients.
Reference level for education: Less than Secondary.
Reference level for income: Less than \$351.

Table A.2: Pocketbook Economic Evaluations

	Retrospective			Prospective		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Intercept	0.509*** (0.019)	0.405*** (0.011)	0.505*** (0.043)	0.603*** (0.025)	0.569*** (0.013)	0.697*** (0.054)
Apprehensions	-0.031 (0.023)	-0.033 (0.024)	-0.014 (0.026)	-0.067** (0.030)	-0.071** (0.030)	-0.053 (0.032)
Minors	-0.005 (0.017)	-0.007 (0.017)	-0.008 (0.020)	0.005 (0.022)	0.001 (0.022)	0.004 (0.025)
Urban			0.006 (0.027)			0.031 (0.024)
Female			-0.027 (0.023)			-0.027 (0.030)
Age			-0.030*** (0.007)			-0.036*** (0.008)
Employed			0.034* (0.020)			0.031 (0.026)
Secondary Education			-0.030 (0.026)			-0.034 (0.027)
Post Secondary Education			-0.031 (0.038)			-0.059** (0.030)
Income: \$351 to \$700			0.095*** (0.027)			0.066** (0.028)
Income: \$700 or more			0.174*** (0.043)			0.137*** (0.046)
N	1,191	1,191	1,101	1,097	1,097	1,018
R ²	0.001	0.033	0.081	0.007	0.059	0.095

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Municipal-level clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Municipal-level fixed effects in columns 2-3, and 5-6.

Age is divided by ten for ease of interpretation of the coefficients.

Reference level for education: Less than Secondary.

Reference level for income: Less than \$351.

Table A.3: Sociotropic Economic Evaluations

	Retrospective			Prospective		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Intercept	0.497*** (0.017)	0.492*** (0.016)	0.597*** (0.069)	0.545*** (0.018)	0.545*** (0.017)	0.715*** (0.069)
Apprehensions	-0.030 (0.026)	-0.036 (0.026)	-0.026 (0.027)	-0.030 (0.031)	-0.036 (0.032)	-0.043 (0.035)
Minors	-0.008 (0.027)	-0.015 (0.027)	-0.022 (0.030)	0.032 (0.027)	0.025 (0.028)	0.009 (0.031)
Urban			-0.024 (0.038)			0.037 (0.029)
Female			-0.060* (0.035)			-0.078*** (0.028)
Age			-0.004 (0.008)			-0.018** (0.009)
Employed			-0.017 (0.027)			0.009 (0.029)
Secondary Education			-0.029 (0.036)			-0.075** (0.033)
Post Secondary Education			-0.067 (0.045)			-0.123*** (0.038)
Income: \$351 to \$700			0.030 (0.027)			-0.037 (0.029)
Income: \$700 or more			0.075 (0.055)			0.034 (0.055)
N	1,150	1,150	1,065	1,092	1,092	1,016
R ²	0.001	0.032	0.042	0.004	0.048	0.071

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Municipal-level clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Municipal-level fixed effects in columns 2-3, and 5-6.

Age is divided by ten for ease of interpretation of the coefficients.

Reference level for education: Less than Secondary.

Reference level for income: Less than \$351.

Table A.4: Interactions between Treatment and Economic Evaluations on Presidential Evaluation

Economic Evaluation	Pocketbook		Sociotropic	
	Retrospective	Prospective	Retrospective	Prospective
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Intercept	6.970*** (0.331)	6.589*** (0.445)	7.030*** (0.349)	6.581*** (0.337)
Apprehensions	-0.701*** (0.202)	-0.378 (0.317)	-0.613** (0.254)	-0.632** (0.284)
Minors	-0.442* (0.261)	-0.423 (0.417)	-0.301 (0.292)	-0.814** (0.378)
Economic Evaluation	0.622*** (0.092)	0.665*** (0.124)	0.789*** (0.084)	0.749*** (0.087)
Apprehensions Interaction	0.203* (0.110)	0.007 (0.150)	0.171 (0.128)	0.147 (0.141)
Minors Interaction	0.075 (0.142)	0.063 (0.193)	-0.003 (0.116)	0.240 (0.157)
Urban	-0.330** (0.165)	-0.354* (0.198)	-0.275* (0.164)	-0.417** (0.176)
Female	-0.136 (0.114)	-0.215* (0.123)	-0.068 (0.115)	0.018 (0.109)
Age	0.091* (0.047)	0.089* (0.050)	0.017 (0.044)	0.057 (0.040)
Employed	-0.130 (0.131)	-0.203* (0.123)	-0.009 (0.134)	-0.096 (0.137)
Secondary Education	-0.930*** (0.197)	-0.860*** (0.186)	-0.865*** (0.194)	-0.771*** (0.195)
Post Secondary Education	-0.442*** (0.135)	-0.359** (0.146)	-0.487*** (0.158)	-0.351** (0.160)
Income: \$351 to \$700	0.124 (0.129)	0.106 (0.144)	0.001 (0.116)	-0.148 (0.115)
Income: \$700 or more	-0.054 (0.237)	-0.026 (0.250)	-0.038 (0.197)	0.024 (0.177)
N	1,101	1,018	1,065	1,016
R ²	0.201	0.206	0.289	0.292

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Municipal-level clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Municipal-level fixed effects included in all models.

Age is divided by ten for ease of interpretation of the coefficients.

Reference level for education: Less than Secondary.

Reference level for income: Less than \$351.

Table A.5: Economic Perceptions by Experimental Group

Economic Perception		View	Control	Apprehensions	Minors
Pocketbook	Retrospective	Worse	0.26	0.28	0.26
		Just as Bad	0.20	0.21	0.19
		Just as Good	0.31	0.30	0.33
		Better	0.23	0.21	0.22
Pocketbook	Prospective	Worse	0.21	0.26	0.19
		Just as Bad	0.16	0.15	0.17
		Just as Good	0.23	0.29	0.27
		Better	0.39	0.29	0.37
Sociotropic	Retrospective	Worse	0.29	0.33	0.33
		Just as Bad	0.21	0.22	0.20
		Just as Good	0.21	0.16	0.17
		Better	0.29	0.28	0.31
Sociotropic	Prospective	Worse	0.25	0.31	0.23
		Just as Bad	0.21	0.19	0.20
		Just as Good	0.17	0.17	0.16
		Better	0.36	0.34	0.40

Table A.6: National Problems Affecting Migration Perceptions

	Emigration Perception	Evaluations	
		Status Quo	Presidential
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Intercept	0.661*** (0.014)	7.507*** (0.303)	8.485*** (0.262)
Apprehensions	0.004 (0.027)	-0.455*** (0.134)	-0.451*** (0.135)
Minors	0.016 (0.028)	-0.206 (0.155)	-0.340* (0.173)
Emigration Perception		-0.556*** (0.135)	-0.605*** (0.157)
Urban		-0.106 (0.195)	-0.318* (0.164)
Female		-0.179 (0.119)	-0.184* (0.102)
Age		0.037 (0.052)	0.014 (0.048)
Employed		-0.092 (0.121)	-0.046 (0.126)
Secondary Education		-0.316* (0.166)	-0.523*** (0.140)
Post Secondary Education		-0.453*** (0.142)	-0.980*** (0.193)
Income: \$351 to \$700		0.115 (0.163)	0.081 (0.137)
Income: \$700 or more		0.150 (0.199)	0.212 (0.209)
N	1,194	1,100	1,101
R ²	0.035	0.061	0.103

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Municipal-level clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Municipal-level fixed effects included in all models.

Age is divided by ten for ease of interpretation of the coefficients.

Reference level for education: Less than Secondary.

Reference level for income: Less than \$351.

Table A.7: Emigration Decisions

	<u>Emigration Decision</u>		<u>Evaluations</u>	
	National Conditions	Personal Circumstances	National Evaluation	Presidential Approval
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Intercept	0.113** (0.013)	0.069*** (0.014)	8.177*** (0.312)	9.009*** (0.508)
Apprehensions	0.004** (0.026)	0.044 (0.028)	-0.468*** (0.129)	-0.463*** (0.160)
Minors	0.022** (0.027)	0.033 (0.027)	-0.188 (0.165)	-0.326** (0.160)
National Conditions			-1.441*** (0.263)	-1.486*** (0.242)
National and Personal			-0.977*** (0.173)	-0.865*** (0.187)
Urban			-0.177 (0.203)	-0.382** (0.158)
Female			-0.167 (0.121)	-0.177 (0.138)
Age			0.020 (0.048)	0.004 (0.045)
Employed			-0.121 (0.135)	-0.070 (0.145)
Secondary Education			-0.256 (0.171)	-0.471*** (0.163)
Post Secondary Education			-0.372*** (0.138)	-0.899*** (0.215)
Income: \$351 to \$700			0.102 (0.163)	0.055 (0.156)
Income: \$700 or more			0.244 (0.183)	0.271 (0.259)
N	1,193	1,193	1,099	1,100
R ²	0.036	0.050	0.080	0.117

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Municipal-level clustered standard errors in parentheses.

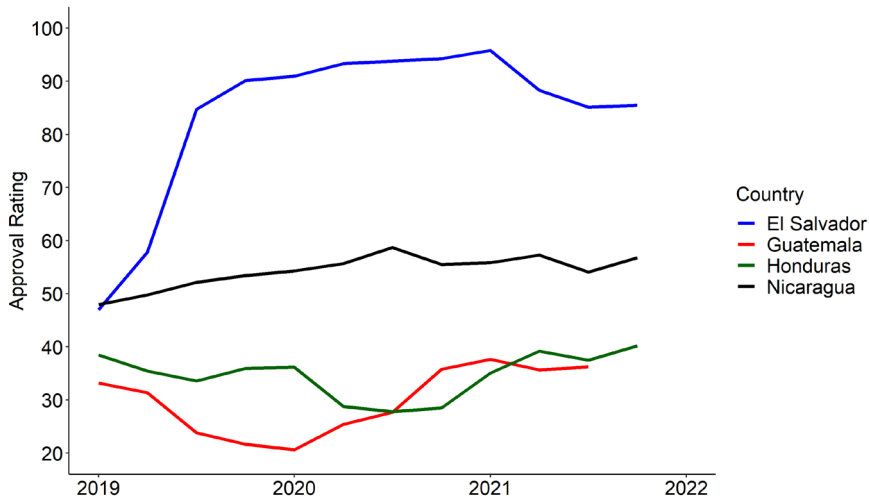
Municipal-level fixed effects included in all models.

Age is divided by ten for ease of interpretation of the coefficients.

Reference level for education: Less than Secondary.

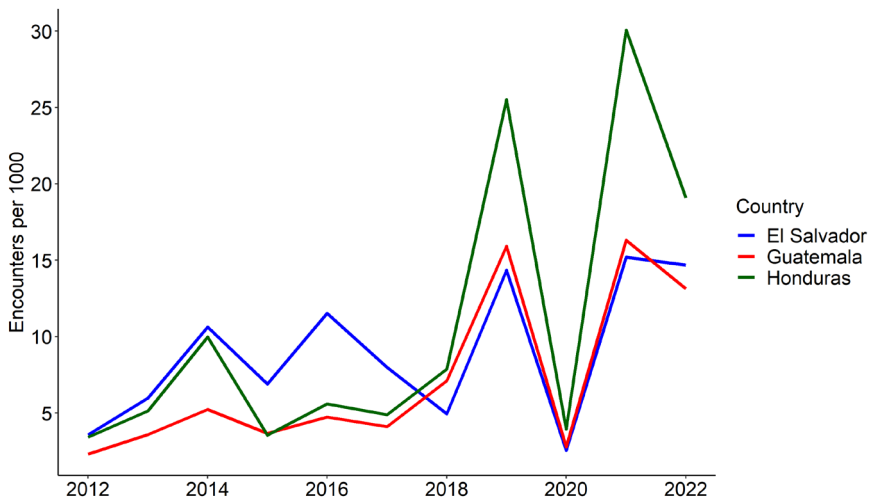
Reference level for income: Less than \$351.

Figure A.1: Executive Approval in Central America (2019-2022)



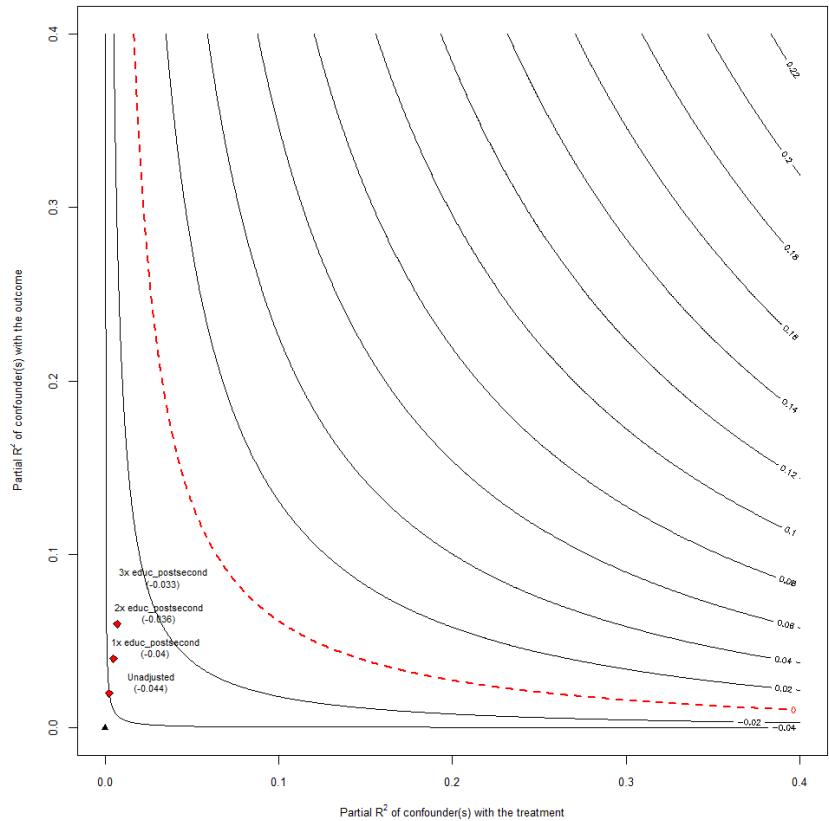
Source: Executive Approval Database 3.0 Carlin *et al.* (2023), Quarterly Data.

Figure A.2: Apprehensions per 1000 of the home country population



Source: Author's calculation using apprehensions data from Ruiz Soto *et al.* (2021) and population data from the World Bank.

Figure A.3: Sensitivity Analysis: Contours Plot



B Additional Analyses

Table B.1: Interaction between Treatments and Economic Evaluations on the Status Quo Evaluation

Economic Evaluation	Pocketbook		Sociotropic	
	Retrospective	Prospective	Retrospective	Prospective
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Intercept	6.110*** (0.316)	5.774*** (0.394)	6.073*** (0.313)	5.852*** (0.379)
Apprehensions	-0.990*** (0.279)	-0.982*** (0.277)	-0.725** (0.287)	-0.944*** (0.259)
Minors	-0.413* (0.226)	-0.398 (0.314)	-0.295 (0.263)	-0.782*** (0.293)
Economic Evaluation	0.577*** (0.107)	0.586*** (0.106)	0.788*** (0.087)	0.658*** (0.101)
Apprehensions Interaction	0.391** (0.154)	0.358** (0.146)	0.229 (0.141)	0.324** (0.130)
Minors Interaction	0.142 (0.129)	0.108 (0.146)	0.077 (0.112)	0.317** (0.133)
Urban	-0.119 (0.193)	-0.115 (0.217)	-0.038 (0.179)	-0.134 (0.185)
Female	-0.120 (0.116)	-0.179 (0.123)	-0.060 (0.109)	-0.003 (0.117)
Age	0.117** (0.047)	0.113** (0.054)	0.052 (0.044)	0.063 (0.046)
Employed	-0.177 (0.116)	-0.195 (0.126)	-0.049 (0.122)	-0.153 (0.133)
Secondary Education	-0.393*** (0.146)	-0.304** (0.140)	-0.317** (0.151)	-0.215 (0.167)
Post Secondary Education	-0.227 (0.155)	-0.156 (0.155)	-0.237 (0.169)	-0.151 (0.185)
Income: \$351 to \$700	0.111 (0.151)	0.058 (0.152)	-0.045 (0.124)	-0.172 (0.134)
Income: \$700 or more	-0.160 (0.250)	-0.212 (0.246)	-0.045 (0.222)	-0.109 (0.195)
N	1,100	1,018	1,064	1,015
R ²	0.187	0.192	0.286	0.268

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Municipal-level clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Municipal-level fixed effects included in all models.

Age is divided by ten for ease of interpretation of the coefficients.

Reference level for education: Less than Secondary.

Reference level for income: Less than \$351.

Table B.2: Treatment Effects and Weekly Communication Abroad

	Status Quo Evaluation		Presidential Evaluation	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Intercept	7.109*** (0.297)	7.109*** (0.298)	8.046*** (0.289)	8.037*** (0.289)
Apprehensions	-0.444*** (0.139)	-0.481*** (0.167)	-0.437*** (0.137)	-0.488*** (0.148)
Minors	-0.216 (0.158)	-0.129 (0.174)	-0.354** (0.173)	-0.193 (0.183)
Communication	0.103 (0.154)	0.158 (0.232)	0.126 (0.162)	0.254 (0.236)
Apprehensions × Communication		0.167 (0.312)		0.233 (0.267)
Minors × Communication		-0.271 (0.315)		-0.507 (0.343)
Urban	-0.114 (0.201)	-0.111 (0.201)	-0.329* (0.176)	-0.326* (0.174)
Female	-0.189 (0.119)	-0.192 (0.118)	-0.195* (0.112)	-0.198* (0.114)
Age	0.044 (0.052)	0.043 (0.052)	0.022 (0.050)	0.021 (0.049)
Employed	-0.104 (0.122)	-0.110 (0.123)	-0.053 (0.132)	-0.063 (0.134)
Secondary Education	-0.293* (0.166)	-0.308* (0.169)	-0.503*** (0.143)	-0.528*** (0.145)
Post Secondary Education	-0.468*** (0.141)	-0.473*** (0.141)	-0.996*** (0.195)	-1.005*** (0.198)
Income: \$351 to \$700	0.101 (0.157)	0.099 (0.158)	0.063 (0.130)	0.058 (0.129)
Income: \$700 or more	0.117 (0.215)	0.125 (0.216)	0.172 (0.215)	0.187 (0.220)
N	1,104	1,104	1,105	1,105
R ²	0.046	0.047	0.087	0.091

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Municipal-level clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Municipal-level fixed effects included.

Age is divided by ten for ease of interpretation of the coefficients.

Table B.3: Treatment Effects and Remittances

	Status Quo Evaluation		Presidential Evaluation	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Intercept	7.068*** (0.299)	7.060*** (0.298)	8.020*** (0.290)	8.051*** (0.280)
Apprehensions	-0.423*** (0.134)	-0.393** (0.179)	-0.424*** (0.132)	-0.495*** (0.165)
Minors	-0.240 (0.162)	-0.241 (0.208)	-0.372** (0.174)	-0.429** (0.218)
Remittances	0.151 (0.136)	0.191 (0.229)	-0.002 (0.161)	-0.175 (0.253)
Apprehensions × Remittances		-0.122 (0.400)		0.294 (0.423)
Minors × Remittances		-0.002 (0.369)		0.226 (0.372)
Urban	-0.112 (0.193)	-0.116 (0.191)	-0.313* (0.160)	-0.303* (0.159)
Female	-0.168 (0.125)	-0.167 (0.124)	-0.184 (0.113)	-0.189* (0.109)
Age	0.047 (0.052)	0.046 (0.052)	0.026 (0.049)	0.026 (0.049)
Employed	-0.068 (0.121)	-0.069 (0.122)	-0.023 (0.129)	-0.025 (0.131)
Secondary Education	-0.293* (0.166)	-0.291* (0.164)	-0.504*** (0.138)	-0.502*** (0.136)
Post Secondary Education	-0.453*** (0.139)	-0.454*** (0.137)	-0.996*** (0.191)	-0.992*** (0.189)
Income: \$351 to \$700	0.076 (0.153)	0.077 (0.152)	0.059 (0.124)	0.059 (0.125)
Income: \$700 or more	0.125 (0.204)	0.133 (0.202)	0.195 (0.214)	0.186 (0.216)
N	1,096	1,096	1,097	1,097
R ²	0.047	0.047	0.088	0.089

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Municipal-level clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Municipal-level fixed effects included.

Age is divided by ten for ease of interpretation of the coefficients.

Table B.4: Treatment Effects and Intent to Leave

	National Evaluation			Presidential Evaluation		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Intercept	0.716*** (0.011)	0.716*** (0.009)	0.734*** (0.031)	0.797*** (0.013)	0.776*** (0.011)	0.822*** (0.030)
Detentions	-0.038** (0.016)	-0.038** (0.017)	-0.038** (0.019)	-0.030** (0.014)	-0.031** (0.015)	-0.038** (0.016)
Detentions (Minors)	-0.010 (0.014)	-0.012 (0.015)	-0.022 (0.017)	-0.016 (0.017)	-0.019 (0.018)	-0.025 (0.020)
Intent to Leave	-0.052** (0.022)	-0.050** (0.022)	-0.043* (0.022)	-0.038* (0.021)	-0.032 (0.023)	-0.025 (0.023)
Apprehensions × Intent to Leave	-0.012 (0.035)	-0.022 (0.038)	-0.028 (0.039)	-0.013 (0.037)	-0.022 (0.037)	-0.021 (0.038)
Minors × Intent to Leave	0.005 (0.039)	0.007 (0.041)	0.013 (0.039)	-0.009 (0.041)	-0.005 (0.043)	-0.022 (0.040)
Urban			-0.011 (0.020)			-0.034** (0.017)
Female			-0.021* (0.012)			-0.020* (0.011)
Age			0.002 (0.005)			-0.0003 (0.005)
Employed			-0.010 (0.012)			-0.005 (0.013)
Secondary Education			-0.029* (0.017)			-0.051*** (0.014)
Post Secondary Education			-0.046*** (0.015)			-0.102*** (0.019)
Income: 351 to 700			0.010 (0.015)			0.008 (0.013)
Income: 700 or more			0.010 (0.021)			0.020 (0.022)
N	1,188	1,188	1,094	1,189	1,189	1,095
R ²	0.018	0.049	0.057	0.011	0.061	0.094

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Municipal-level clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Municipal-level fixed effects in columns 2-3, and 5-6.

Age is divided by ten for ease interpretation of the coefficients.

Table B.5: Treatment Effects and Ideology

	Status Quo Evaluation		Presidential Evaluation	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Intercept	6.112*** (0.390)	5.876*** (0.449)	6.868*** (0.333)	6.697*** (0.391)
Apprehensions	-0.480*** (0.137)	-0.118 (0.506)	-0.503*** (0.130)	-0.281 (0.422)
Minors	-0.237 (0.150)	0.068 (0.449)	-0.381** (0.165)	-0.111 (0.490)
Ideology	0.193*** (0.041)	0.232*** (0.057)	0.230*** (0.037)	0.259*** (0.045)
Apprehensions x Ideology		-0.061 (0.088)		-0.037 (0.070)
Minors x Ideology		-0.051 (0.076)		-0.045 (0.074)
Urban	-0.112 (0.200)	-0.113 (0.203)	-0.344** (0.171)	-0.344** (0.174)
Female	-0.221* (0.121)	-0.221* (0.122)	-0.225* (0.125)	-0.226* (0.125)
Age	0.012 (0.048)	0.012 (0.048)	-0.016 (0.046)	-0.017 (0.046)
Employed	-0.129 (0.129)	-0.125 (0.128)	-0.080 (0.134)	-0.078 (0.134)
Secondary Education	-0.225 (0.180)	-0.220 (0.177)	-0.448*** (0.148)	-0.446*** (0.147)
Post Secondary Education	-0.366** (0.146)	-0.370** (0.145)	-0.917*** (0.186)	-0.922*** (0.186)
Income: 351 to 700	0.107 (0.154)	0.107 (0.152)	0.095 (0.124)	0.096 (0.122)
Income: 700 or more	0.058 (0.187)	0.067 (0.193)	0.149 (0.197)	0.154 (0.199)
N	1,075	1,075	1,075	1,075
R ²	0.080	0.081	0.136	0.137

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Municipal-level clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Municipal-level fixed effects included.

Age is divided by ten for ease interpretation of the coefficients.

Table B.6: Distribution of Ideology by Experimental Group

Ideology	Control	Apprehensions	Minors
1	0.038	0.052	0.044
2	0.003	0.005	0.008
3	0.003	0.016	0.021
4	0.023	0.008	0.018
5	0.508	0.513	0.487
6	0.132	0.096	0.119
7	0.079	0.060	0.075
8	0.074	0.080	0.088
9	0.058	0.062	0.046
10	0.084	0.109	0.095

Table B.7: Treatment Effects and Education

	National Evaluation		Presidential Evaluation	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Intercept	0.674*** (0.034)	0.670*** (0.039)	0.791*** (0.034)	0.786*** (0.038)
Apprehensions	-0.045*** (0.014)	-0.057** (0.027)	-0.044*** (0.014)	-0.044** (0.022)
Minors	-0.020 (0.016)	0.009 (0.021)	-0.034** (0.017)	-0.018 (0.022)
Secondary Education	-0.029* (0.017)	-0.018 (0.025)	-0.049*** (0.014)	-0.037 (0.022)
Post Secondary Education	-0.047*** (0.014)	-0.039* (0.022)	-0.100*** (0.019)	-0.098*** (0.030)
Urban	-0.010 (0.020)	-0.012 (0.020)	-0.032* (0.017)	-0.032* (0.018)
Female	-0.019 (0.012)	-0.017 (0.012)	-0.019* (0.011)	-0.019 (0.011)
Age	0.005 (0.005)	0.005 (0.005)	0.002 (0.005)	0.003 (0.005)
Employed	-0.010 (0.012)	-0.012 (0.013)	-0.005 (0.013)	-0.006 (0.013)
Income: \$350 to \$700	0.011 (0.016)	0.013 (0.016)	0.008 (0.013)	0.009 (0.013)
Income: \$700 or more	0.014 (0.020)	0.017 (0.020)	0.020 (0.021)	0.024 (0.022)
Apprehensions × Secondary Ed		0.036 (0.036)		0.014 (0.029)
Minors × Secondary Ed		-0.073** (0.031)		-0.056* (0.033)
Apprehensions × Post-Secondary Ed		0.002 (0.043)		-0.025 (0.051)
Minors × Post-Secondary Ed		-0.030 (0.028)		0.013 (0.039)
N	1,104	1,104	1,105	1,105
R ²	0.046	0.054	0.087	0.092

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Municipal-level clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Municipal-level fixed effects included.

Age is divided by ten for ease of interpretation of the coefficients.

Table B.8: Treatment Effects and Income

	Status Quo Evaluation		Presidential Evaluation	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Intercept	0.665*** (0.035)	0.652*** (0.033)	0.782*** (0.036)	0.787*** (0.035)
Apprehensions	-0.045*** (0.014)	-0.027 (0.035)	-0.044*** (0.014)	-0.040 (0.028)
Minors	-0.021 (0.015)	0.007 (0.029)	-0.034** (0.017)	-0.055* (0.030)
Income	0.006 (0.005)	0.012** (0.006)	0.006 (0.005)	0.004 (0.007)
Urban	-0.011 (0.020)	-0.012 (0.020)	-0.032* (0.017)	-0.031* (0.017)
Female	-0.018 (0.012)	-0.018 (0.012)	-0.019* (0.011)	-0.019* (0.011)
Age	0.004 (0.005)	0.004 (0.005)	0.002 (0.005)	0.002 (0.005)
Employed	-0.011 (0.012)	-0.011 (0.012)	-0.006 (0.013)	-0.005 (0.013)
Secondary Education	-0.030* (0.017)	-0.029* (0.017)	-0.051*** (0.014)	-0.051*** (0.014)
Post Secondary Education	-0.051*** (0.014)	-0.051*** (0.014)	-0.102*** (0.019)	-0.102*** (0.019)
Apprehensions × Income		-0.007 (0.013)		-0.001 (0.011)
Minors × Income		-0.011 (0.009)		0.008 (0.010)
N	1,104	1,104	1,105	1,105
R ²	0.046	0.047	0.087	0.087

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Municipal-level clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Municipal-level fixed effects included.

Age is divided by ten for ease of interpretation of the coefficients.

Income is based on a 6-point scale

C Survey questions for focal variables

Migration Decision Questions

To what extent do you agree or disagree that there are national problems in El Salvador that influence the decision to emigrate?

Do you think that the decision to emigrate is due to personal circumstances, to the conditions of the country, or both?

Economic Evaluations

Personal Economic Evaluations

Retrospective

Do you consider that YOUR current economic situation is better, just as good, just as bad or worse than twelve months ago?

Prospective

Do you think that in 12 months YOUR economic situation will be better, just as good, just as bad or worse than it is now?

National Economic Evaluations

Retrospective

Do you consider that the NATIONAL economic situation is better, just as good, just as bad or worse than twelve months ago?

Prospective

Do you consider that within 12 months the NATIONAL economic situation will be better, just as good, just as bad or worse than now?

Political Evaluations

Status Quo Evaluation

On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is very bad and 10 is very good, how would you rate the general situation in the country right now?

Presidential Evaluation

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is very bad and 10 is very good, how would you rate the work being done by the current government?

WHY EMIGRATION IS COSTLY FOR INCUMBENTS: THE CASE OF EL SALVADOR

Jesse Acevedo

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