

How framing impacts attitudes about electoral rights for non-resident citizens

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Abstract

Widespread adoption of policies granting electoral rights to citizens living abroad has spurred vivid scholarly debates regarding the drivers and consequences of extra-territorial enfranchisement. But, little is known about the views of resident citizens in origin countries on the matter. We address this research gap and investigate how resident citizens' attitudes to external voting rights are affected by different arguments usually salient in homeland political debates. The study draws on an original survey experiment conducted across five countries (Belgium, Finland, Poland, Portugal and Ireland) with different external voting regulations. Our results show that utilitarian arguments on the costs and benefits of extra-territorial enfranchisement are persuasively shaping public support for the voting rights of nationals living abroad. They further suggest that resident citizens in origin countries that already grant extensive political rights to non-resident nationals are more receptive to moral arguments of democratic inclusion regarding the recognition of such entitlements.

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INTRODUCTION

Scholars have thoroughly debated the appropriateness of the recognition of electoral rights for non-resident citizens. This debate has, from a normative standpoint, largely revolved around principles of democratic inclusion (Bauböck, 2018; Goodin, 2007; Miller, 2009) and the criteria that ought to be used for enfranchising nationals living abroad. While citizenship has long been seen as a principle for granting electoral rights as a constitutional entitlement, some theorists have instead claimed that such rights should not be granted to non-resident citizens, as they would receive undue influence over political decisions that do not concern or affect them (Cohen, 1971; Dahl, 1989; López-Guerra, 2005). Another central argument to the debate on electoral rights for non-resident citizens concern the (often important) role of diasporic communities has on their homeland's economic welfare. As such, extra-territorial enfranchisement has sometimes been seen as a means to stimulate emigrants' connections with their origin countries by fostering their (current or future) engagement in the homeland's economic or political life (Gamlen, 2008).

Despite a lively scholarly debate on these issues, little is known about the attitudes of resident citizens towards the political empowerment of their fellow citizens living abroad (see Himmelroos & Peltoniemi, 2021; Hultin Rosenberg & Wejryd, 2022; Michel & Blatter, 2021). Not only are the resident citizens a group whose rights and interests should be considered in this matter, researcher have also argued that political legitimacy has an empirical dimension (Tyler, 2006). This suggests that political legitimacy cannot merely rely on independent criteria for legitimacy but should also hinge on citizens' beliefs and perceptions of the political system. In other words, how resident citizens view the electoral rights of non-resident citizens should not be overlooked.

This article aims to address this research gap. By combining insights from the emigrant voting literature with the broader scholarship on public attitudes to policy issues, we propose a new approach focused on the study of attitudes towards the franchise of citizens living abroad. Drawing on original data based on an experimental design with survey vignettes, we examine what type of arguments resident citizens find the most convincing in this debate. We primarily focus on three types of arguments (moral, utilitarian and policy-oriented) that are commonly used in understanding the persuasiveness of certain frames for shaping citizens' opinions towards specific policies (Sunstein, 2005; Tetlock, 2003).

As discussed in the Introduction to this Special Issue, the legislative and practical arrangements for non-resident citizens' enfranchisement in homeland national elections still vary greatly across countries. While some countries provide wide-ranging electoral rights, others still limit or do not recognize voting rights for non-resident citizens (e.g. Caramani & Grotz, 2015). We take these differences in the electoral context into account by conducting the same survey experiment in five strategically selected European countries (Belgium, Finland, Poland, Portugal and Ireland). These countries have distinctively different legislation on electoral rights for non-resident citizens in general elections, which additionally allows us to isolate the potential effect of existing policies on societal attitudes across different contextual settings.

Our findings indicate that utilitarian arguments relating to non-resident citizens' connection to their homeland are more effective in shaping public preferences than moral justifications about who is entitled to political rights. We also find that respondents in countries that currently grant extensive electoral rights to their citizens abroad are more influenced by the presentation of different arguments (both utilitarian and moral), compared to respondents in countries with more limited or no external franchise. Overall, our research finds that resident citizens are supportive of granting voting rights to nationals living abroad. This finding aligns with the limited existing work in this area (Michel & Blatter, 2021) and applies for all five countries under study, despite their significantly different regimes for extra-territorial enfranchisement.

ARGUMENTS ABOUT THE ELECTORAL RIGHTS OF NON-RESIDENT CITIZENS, THEIR FRAMING AND CONTEXT

The scholarly and political debates around the enfranchisement of non-resident citizens have put forward a number of different and sometimes conflicting arguments (Bauböck, 2018; Honohan, 2011; López-Guerra, 2005; Owen, 2009). The breadth of these arguments is exemplified in a comprehensive study by Østergaard-Nielsen et al. (2019), where they use a combination of inductive and deductive approaches to identify frames that parties apply when debating electoral rights for non-resident citizens.

For the purpose of this study, we will focus only on a few types of arguments (or frames) that, in earlier research, have been shown to be potent for persuading people more generally. Moral arguments are considered particularly effective as they tap into people's emotions and their sense of right and wrong (Sunstein, 2005). They have a strong motivational component because they involve 'oughts' or 'shoulds' that are closely connected to people's sense of themselves as fundamentally decent and good people (Skitka & Mullen, 2002, p. 36). In other words, moral arguments present a message that the respondents, unless it goes against their moral convictions, inherently want to adhere to. It is a suggestion for how you should react, rather than mere information on why you may want to react in a certain way. Moral arguments are often based on principles such as justice, fairness and human dignity (Tetlock, 2003), values that are invoked when debating who should have the right to be included in the 'demos'. Østergaard-Nielsen et al. (2019) classify these types of arguments as 'demos related frames', i.e. frames that focus on principles defining who has the right to be included in a political community. These frames are inspired by Dahl's principle of full inclusion (Dahl, 1970), also labelled as the all-affected principle, stating that all those affected by a decision should have a part in making it (Dahl, 1970). As such, this argument is commonly used against the enfranchisement of non-resident citizens and to support the recognition of voting rights to all (including foreign) residents of a country (see, e.g., Blatter et al., 2016; López-Guerra, 2014).

Yet, Marietta (2008) argues that citizens do not only reason about a political issue in absolutist terms, involving unwavering stances around moral convictions. They also apply consequentialist reasoning involving cost-benefit analysis. This type of utilitarian argument appeals to people's rationality and self-interest, thus being based on the idea that decisions should be made after a careful assessment of the costs and benefits of different options (Sunstein, 2000). Østergaard-Nielsen et al. (2019) have examined how utilitarian frames are used in assessing political parties' stances on emigrant voting rights from a cost-benefit approach. They emphasized that, from homeland's perspective, the benefits from supporting extra-territorial enfranchisement might derive from emigrants' remittances and investments in origin countries, while the costs are primarily related to implementing and upholding voting rights for non-resident citizens. Granting external voting rights has also been argued to stimulate the network of citizens living abroad, which can be activated for political or economic interests (Gamlen, 2008; Turcu & Urbatsch, 2014). Utilitarian arguments can thus be potent tools of persuasion, although the literature suggests that they may not be as effective as moral arguments (Skitka & Mullen, 2002; Tetlock, 2003). Hence, we hypothesize that:

H1. Moral arguments will be the most convincing to resident citizens presented with different arguments about the enfranchisement of nationals abroad.

While the type of arguments matters for shaping people's views, the way in which they are presented or framed also matters (Iyengar, 1991; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981; Zaller, 1992). People often hold ambivalent opinions on political and social issues (Hochschild, 1981) and their position on such issues can be influenced by how the issue is presented (Zaller, 1992).

Moral and utilitarian arguments can be framed both in favour and against the recognition of electoral rights for non-resident citizens. The tasks of defining who is affected by political decisions and how the cost-benefit calculation regarding non-residents' enfranchisement should be made are complex. Bauböck (2007) and Owen (2009)

for example denounce the argument that citizens abroad are not affected by decisions taken in the homeland. It is not uncommon for emigrants to have relatives in origin countries, own property there, and perhaps plan on returning after having spent time abroad. Such connections increase their likelihood of being affected by the political decision-making in the homeland, thus making them relevant stakeholders despite living abroad. Additionally, citizens abroad remain subjected to homeland policies on nationality and related constitutional matters (Honohan, 2011; Owen, 2009). Hence, the way in which the arguments regarding their political rights are framed seem particularly important.

Moreover, arguments seldom exist in a vacuum, and discussions regarding non-resident citizens' enfranchisement are likely to involve both moral and utilitarian arguments. Some research suggests that people are more likely to be persuaded by multiple coherent arguments that engage them at a deeper level than by a single argument (Chaiken, 1980; Harkins & Petty, 1981). The effectiveness of multiple arguments depends on their quality and relevance. If arguments are incoherent, they can weaken the overall case being presented. Additionally, multiple arguments can overwhelm the audience, by making it more difficult to follow the main point (Harkins & Petty, 1981). That said, we hypothesize that:

H2. Respondents receiving a combination of both moral and utilitarian arguments going in the same direction are more likely to be persuaded about the enfranchisement of non-resident citizens than those receiving mixed messages.

Moreover, the discussion around the franchise of non-resident citizens is not merely theoretical but remains embedded in specific contextual settings characterized by significant differences in how countries regulate voting from abroad. As mentioned, existing evidence shows that while some countries grant expansive electoral rights and make it easier for non-resident citizens to vote from abroad, others extend very limited or no external electoral rights (Lafleur, 2013, 2015). These existing variations in the design and implementation of extra-territorial enfranchisement may also influence resident citizens' views in different ways.

On the one side, such effects may derive from processes of policy learning and emulation of specific practices across countries. Political science research has found a distinct diffusion tendency in democratization processes and the corresponding propensities of rights spreading have also been identified in the field of external voting. For instance, studies showed that when a country introduces external franchise in homeland elections, this increases the chance that a neighbouring state will introduce similar legislation (Escobar, 2007; Turcu & Urbatsch, 2014). A policy learning frame may thus become particularly important as an explicit reference to the practices in other countries, pointing towards a certain standard that can be used either for or against franchise extension (Østergaard-Nielsen et al., 2019). Yet, while policy learning can be an effective way of persuading people, it is not always sufficient to make a convincing case, as other factors (values, emotions, social norms) may also play a role in shaping people's attitudes about policy issues. In fact, the effectiveness of policy learning arguments is enhanced when used in conjunction with other persuasive strategies, such as moral and utilitarian arguments (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000; Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996). Drawing on this, we hypothesize that,

H3a. Policy learning information is less persuasive than moral or utilitarian arguments for shaping resident citizens' attitudes on external enfranchisement.

H3b. Policy learning information is persuasive in conjunction with moral and/or utilitarian arguments.

On the other hand, research has shown that political institutions, public policies or social norms operating in certain contexts often impact citizens' attitudes (Ferrari, 2006; Svallfors, 2007). Individuals' views on what is fair or just are likely to be influenced by the existing institutional and political context in which they are embedded.

Consequently, how effective different frames may be on shaping citizens' attitudes could also depend on the peculiarities of national contexts, especially since people tend to be more attentive to issues that directly affect them (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Zaller, 1992). As such, arguments on extra-territorial enfranchisement may have more sway over people living in countries that have already put forward more inclusive policies towards external citizens' participation in homeland politics, while remaining purely hypothetical in countries with limited or no electoral rights for non-resident citizens. Thus, we hypothesize that,

H4. Arguments (moral and utilitarian) about extra-territorial enfranchisement have more persuasive power in countries that provide their non-resident citizens with more extensive electoral rights.

FIVE COUNTRIES WITH DISTINCTIVELY DIFFERENT RIGHTS FOR NON-RESIDENT CITIZENS (NATIONAL ELECTIONS)

Table 1 positions the five countries included in our study (Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Poland and Portugal – in bold in this table) in the broader context of the current 27 EU Member States and the electoral rights they extend to citizens abroad. It indicates that the selected countries respond to five different clusters of external enfranchisement regulations across the EU, ranking from the most inclusive group of states granting wide electoral rights and special political representation for non-resident citizens (cluster 1) to the least inclusive one (cluster 5) characterized by no or very limited electoral rights for citizens living abroad.

Portugal

Portugal is a country with one of the highest emigration rates in the EU. It is also one of the first European countries to extend voting rights to emigrants and to further expand such electoral entitlements over time. Currently, Portuguese citizens living abroad are entitled to vote and stand for national presidential and parliamentary elections in Portugal. An automatic voter registration procedure was introduced in 2018, leading to a significant increase in the number of enfranchised non-resident Portuguese from 300,000 to more than 1.5 million (compared to around 10 million

TABLE 1 Five groups of electoral rights of non-resident citizens in national elections in EU27.

	Group characteristic	Electoral rights for voters	Countries
1	Wide electoral rights and special political representation	Eligible to vote, eligible for candidacy, convenience voting ^a , special representation	Croatia ^b , France, Italy and Portugal
2	Wide electoral rights but no special political representation	Eligible to vote, eligible for candidacy, convenience voting	Austria, Estonia, Finland , Hungary, Latvia, Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden
3	Narrow electoral rights, only voting, no candidacy	Eligible to vote, convenience voting	Belgium , Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Slovakia
4	Narrow electoral rights, no convenience voting	Eligible to vote and/or for candidacy	Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland and Romania
5	No electoral rights	No electoral rights, very limited, or they are not implemented	Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Ireland and Malta

^aConvenience voting here means postal voting or Internet voting.

^bNo convenience voting.

registered voters living in Portugal). Citizens abroad also benefit from special representation in Portugal, with a constituency of their own which elects four out of 230 MPs. In parliamentary elections, non-resident citizens can vote in person at polling stations abroad or via postal voting. Adaption of online voting for citizens living abroad has been widely discussed and is receiving increasing support among political parties but has not yet been adopted.

Finland

Approximately 5% of the Finnish citizens eligible to vote reside outside of the country. According to Finnish legislation Finnish citizens are eligible to vote in national elections (parliamentary, presidential, referendums), and to stand as candidates, regardless of their place of residence. As voter registration in Finland is automatic, no action is needed prior to voting. Non-resident Finns can cast their vote in person both in the polling stations abroad and in Finland, and since 2019, it is also possible to vote via post. The issue of voting rights for non-resident Finns has not been a widely debated matter, although the Finnish Expatriate Parliament (a civil society organization) regularly raises the issue of district distribution.

Belgium

By 2020, slightly more than 480,000 Belgian citizens were registered at consulates abroad, accounting for less than 5% of Belgium's total population (Vintila et al., 2021). Belgians residing abroad on a permanent basis are entitled to vote in Belgian federal elections, but they cannot stand as candidates. Their right to active suffrage for these elections was first granted in 1998 and further regulated in early 2000s to facilitate the procedure for voting from abroad (Vintila et al., 2021). To be able to vote in Belgian elections, non-resident citizens must submit a one-off registration at consular authorities is required. Once registered, they must comply with the compulsory voting system and can choose between several voting modalities: in-country voting, personal voting at diplomatic missions, postal or proxy voting.

Poland

According to the latest estimation prepared by the Central Statistical Office (CSO, 2020) there are 2.2 million Poles staying temporarily abroad for more than 3 months (it represents 6% of Poland's total population). The vast majority (1.9 million) are residents in European countries. Polish citizens living abroad are entitled to vote in national elections (parliamentary, presidential, referendums), and to run as candidates. To vote, non-resident citizens must register in advance on the register of voters abroad. This can be done online, by phone, e-mail or in person at a consulate. It is possible to vote from abroad in person at polling stations established abroad by Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For some time (2011–2018) it was also possible to cast a postal vote, but this option was eliminated in 2018. While there is little public discussion on the general matter of external voting rights, the issue turnout of Poles living abroad receives some media attention after each election.

Ireland

Ireland has a long history of emigration and there are over 3 million Irish passport holders resident outside the Republic of Ireland which has a population of just over 5 million people. Despite this large non-resident population, the Republic of Ireland grants extremely limited political rights to non-resident citizens. Members of the defence

forces and certain civil servants posted abroad are entitled to postal votes at all elections and referendums. Citizens living abroad for up to 18 months are entitled to return to Ireland to cast a ballot (at their own cost). But there is no franchise right for ordinary non-resident citizens to cast votes from outside the state. There is an active campaign by diaspora groups to promote non-resident citizen enfranchisement and a commitment from all major parties to support this at presidential elections. But enacting this change requires a constitutional referendum which makes it subject to an uncertain electoral process. And the issue is not a high priority for the government and resident citizens.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This section describes the survey (vignette) experiment used to examine attitudes to electoral rights, the data collection and the statistical analysis deployed.

The survey experiment(s)

Survey experiments make it possible to administer randomized treatments to large and diverse population samples. They can be used for causal inference in the same way as other experiments, while retaining the external validity associated with representative samples used in survey research (Mutz, 2011, 8–20). A common approach when conducting survey experiments is the use of vignettes, i.e. short descriptions of situations or persons. These vignettes are shown to respondents to elicit their judgement about these scenarios (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010). Different vignettes are shown to respondents depending on the treatment they have been randomly allocated to. Vignettes also allow us to describe practices or hypothetical situations that are not well-known to the public. The latter is particularly important for our study as the electoral rights of non-resident citizens are unlikely to be very familiar to most of our respondents, who may never have lived abroad.

For this study, we conducted not one, but five survey experiments using vignettes. Specifically, we repeated the same experiment in the five selected countries (Portugal, Finland, Belgium, Poland and Ireland) which apply different policies when it comes to enfranchising their citizens abroad. Our survey experiment(s) were conducted from December 2021 to January 2022. The experimental design was built into surveys distributed via Qualtrics and used online samples provided via Qualtrics.

Respondents were asked to form judgements about vignettes (scenarios) related to external electoral rights. The vignette begins with a description of how the parliament of the country the respondents are living in is working on legislation that would make it easier to participate in parliamentary elections from abroad and what this would entail. In the descriptions below, Country A is replaced by the name of the country where the survey was conducted and each version was presented in the national language(s) of the country in question.

The vignette:

We would like you to consider this scenario:

The Country A parliament is working on legislation that would make it easier for Country A citizens living abroad to participate in Country A parliamentary elections.

The proposed legislation would provide all Country A citizens living abroad with comprehensive electoral rights. Country A citizens living abroad would have the right to vote and stand as candidate in Country A parliamentary elections. They would also be provided with the possibility to vote via mail.

While all respondents saw this general description, the experimental treatments varied the information respondents received regarding extending external electoral rights to non-resident citizens. The three treatments consisted of one piece of information (1=policy learning) and two arguments (2=moral argument and 3=utilitarian argument). The information (policy learning) was framed as neutral or positive and the two arguments were framed as positive or negative.

Treatments in the vignette:

1A. 'It is fairly common to provide citizens living abroad with comprehensive electoral rights, this is currently the case in 13 EU countries.'

1B. 'Some countries extend comprehensive electoral rights, others very limited or no electoral rights to their citizens living abroad.'

'Two prominent arguments discussed by the policy makers in the preparation of this legislation has been that:'

2A. 'The right to participate in elections is an essential democratic right and all Country A citizens should have this right, even if they live abroad.'

2B. 'Country A citizens living abroad should not have the right to participate in elections, since political decisions made in Country A have limited impact on their lives.'

3A. 'Providing Country A citizens living abroad with electoral rights helps sustain their connection with Ireland and will keep them engaged in the economic and social life of the country.'

3B. 'Country A citizens living abroad are not fully engaged in the economic and social life of Ireland and should therefore not have the right to participate in Country A elections.'

Our survey experiment consisted of $2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8$ vignettes and each respondent was presented with one vignette. Respondents were randomly assigned into 8 sub-groups, one for each combination of treatments. For the survey, we recruited approximately 135 respondents per deck, or a total of 1080 respondents in the 8 decks, for each country. A power analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) indicated that a sample of this size would be able to detect small to medium effects ($d=0.4$) with 90% power using ANOVA with main effects and interactions with alpha at 0.05. Data from online panels generally have some issues when it comes to representativeness. This is also the case for our data. Using quotas, we targeted a sample that was representative by age, gender and education. However, in all cases except for Finland, we had to lower the target for respondents with lower educational levels, while for Portugal, we also had some issues filling the quotas for older respondents.

Methodological approach

For the vignette experiment, the study uses factorial analysis of variance (factorial ANOVA) techniques. We examine the main effects associated with each of the three factors (Moral, utilitarian and political) as well as interaction effects for the relationship between them. To ensure that we consider respondents who actually read the vignettes, we only include those who spent more than 1 min answering the short survey (including the vignettes) and who passed an attention check item¹ included in the survey immediately after the outcome variables.

Variables

The treatment variables are based on the vignettes described. Treatment 1A and 1B refer to the *policy learning* perspective and we expect that learning about what kind of electoral rights countries generally extend to their citizens abroad may influence whether respondents support external voting rights or not. We used one positively framed treatment (1A) coded as 1 and one neutrally framed treatment (1B) coded as 0. The reason this treatment includes a neutral rather than a negative counter-option, unlike the following two arguments, is that this treatment is simply about presenting a fact about enfranchisement policies in other EU countries.

Treatments 2A and 2B refer to the *moral argument* in our experiment which relates to the all-affected principle. We expect that the positively framed argument (2A, coded 1) which does not limit enfranchisement to residence in a county will generate more positive views on external voting rights. In the negatively framed counter argument (2B, coded 0) stating that citizens abroad are not affected by political decisions taken in the homeland we expect the opposite outcome.

Treatments 3A and 3B refer to the utilitarian argument, which represents the cost-benefit claims related to extending extra-territorial voting rights. We expect that a framing that emphasizes the benefits (3A, coded 1) will generate more positive views on external enfranchisement than one which suggests no real benefits from homeland's perspective (3B, coded 0).

The outcome variables focus on the respondents' views on voting rights for citizens living abroad. The wording of the variable which was measured on a 7-point Likert scale was the following:

Do you think it is a good or bad thing that Country A citizens living abroad would have the right to vote in Country A parliamentary elections?

Scale 1-7, 1=very bad, 4=neither good nor bad, 7= very good

RESULTS

We begin the analysis by examining the mean scores and standard deviations for the outcome measure in all five countries, to understand any variations in resident citizens' attitudes across countries counting with different extra-territorial voting regulations. The scores in Table 2 indicate that external voting rights are viewed remarkably similarly by the citizens in four of the five countries analysed. Portugal slightly deviates from this pattern, with a one-point higher average score. The above-mentioned difficulties in filling the age quotas in Portugal may

TABLE 2 Mean scores (and standard deviations) for outcome measure in each country.

Country	Portugal (n = 796)	Finland (n = 909)	Belgium (n = 792)	Poland (n = 698)	Ireland (n = 846)
Political rights for non-resident citizens	Wide electoral rights and special political representation	Wide electoral rights, no special political representation	Narrow electoral rights, only voting, no candidacy	Narrow electoral rights, no convenience voting	No electoral rights
'Citizens abroad should have the right to vote' 7-point scale	5.87 (1.38)	4.97 (1.61)	4.62 (1.80)	4.83 (1.97)	4.97 (1.89)

partially explain this difference. Another factor could be that Portugal provides the widest electoral rights to their external citizens.

It is also worth noting that the mean scores, despite some cross-country differences, are fairly high (mean scores for the individual treatments for each country can be found in Appendix S1). On a scale from 1 to 7, scores between 4.62 and 5.87 indicate that external voting rights are viewed more positively than negatively by resident citizens, which is in line with findings from Michel and Blatter (2021). While the vignette may have had some impact on the preferences reported here, it should be remembered that these averages include all variations of the treatments. In other words, some received a vignette with a more positive outlook on external voting rights, while others were presented with a more restrictive view. Hence, it should be safe to say despite quite different external voting legislations, the resident population in all countries has a positive view of extra-territorial enfranchisement.

Focusing on how different arguments affect views on external voting rights, we examine the relationship between our treatment variables and the outcome measure using a three-way ANOVA (Table 3). The results show significant differences in mean scores for the all-affected principle argument in both Portugal [$F(1, 708) = 5.37, p < 0.05$] and Finland [$F(1, 797) = 14.04, p < 0.000$].

The statistical analysis suggests that respondents in the two countries of our study with widest external electoral rights are most affected by the *moral* frame. Resident Portuguese and Finnish citizens view external voting rights significantly more positively if such rights are framed as essential democratic entitlements rather than in terms of something that citizens abroad should not have since they are largely unaffected by political decisions taken in their country of origin. To illustrate what the significant differences entail for the all-affected principle-argument in both cases, Figure 1 shows the marginal means for this variable in both models. The predictive margins are about 0.2 points higher on the 7-point scale for respondents from Portugal and about 0.4 points higher for respondents from Finland depending on which moral frame they received.

Furthermore, the results from the three-way ANOVA show that there are significant differences in mean scores for the *utilitarian* frame in all countries except for Ireland. These findings suggest that respondents in Portugal [$F(1, 708) = 6.87, p < 0.01$], Finland [$F(1, 797) = 11.06, p < 0.001$], Belgium [$F(1, 704) = 4.85, p < 0.05$] and Poland [$F(1, 614) = 4.71, p < 0.05$] view external voting rights significantly more positively if voting rights are framed in terms of it being important for citizens abroad to stay connected to the origin country than if it is framed in terms of a weakened connection as a result of living abroad.

To illustrate what the significant differences entail for the *utilitarian* frame argument for these four countries Figure 2 shows the predictive margins for this variable. The predictive margins are about 0.3 points higher on the 7-point scale for respondents from Portugal and Belgium and 0.4 points for respondents from Finland and Poland. The differences are rather modest, but the difference in framing does have an impact on how external voting rights are viewed.

It is also worth noting that the treatment variable used to measure the impact of *policy learning* on the respondents' views on external voting rights is not statistically significant in any of the models. The same is true for the interaction between the (2) moral frame and the (3) utilitarian frame variables, thus indicating that even if resident citizens are presented by policymakers with these two arguments aligned, they are not likely to change their views on external voting rights.

However, combining policy information with the moral or utilitarian frames produces statistically significant effects in Belgium and Ireland. In both countries, the utilitarian frame involving the cost-benefit outlook of the global diaspora combined with the policy learning frame on the presence of similar policies in other EU countries is statistically significant and for Belgium, the combination of the policy learning with the moral frames is also statistically significant. From Figure 3 we can see that both the presence and the lack of policy-relevant information have a moderating effect in the two countries. For Belgium, the cost-benefit arguments related to the utilitarian frame were effective among those that received policy-relevant information (policy learning = 1), while not among those who did not receive this message. However, for Ireland, the opposite was

TABLE 3 Main effects and interactions for outcome measure in each country, three-way ANOVA.

	Portugal			Finland			Belgium			Poland			Ireland		
	(n = 708)			(n = 797)			(n = 704)			(n = 614)			(n = 746)		
	F	p		F	p		F	p		F	p		F	p	
Model	2.40	0.020		4.01	0.000		2.36	0.022		1.82	0.082		1.83	0.078	
1. Policy learning (PL)	0.82	0.366		0.08	0.780		0.75	0.387		2.29	0.131		1.11	0.292	
2. Moral argument (MA)	5.15	0.024		13.84	0.000		1.13	0.288		0.69	0.405		0.30	0.586	
3. Utilitarian argument (UA)	6.86	0.009		10.69	0.001		4.98	0.027		5.14	0.024		2.10	0.147	
4. PL × MA	0.54	0.463		1.24	0.265		4.88	0.026		1.16	0.282		2.55	0.111	
5. PL × UA	0.14	0.708		0.11	0.744		4.59	0.032		1.35	0.245		6.05	0.014	
6. MA × UA	0.46	0.498		1.32	0.251		0.01	0.929		0.16	0.691		0.53	0.468	
7. PL × MA × UA	2.85	0.092		0.64	0.424		0.00	0.957		2.52	0.113		0.02	0.879	
	Partial SS	MS		Partial SS	MS		Partial SS	MS		Partial SS	MS		Partial SS	MS	
Residual	1296.23	1.85		2015.08	2.55		2229.97	3.20		2328.33	3.84		2601.22	3.52	
Total	1327.31	1.87		2086.72	2.62		2283	3.24		2377.15	3.88		2646.45	3.55	

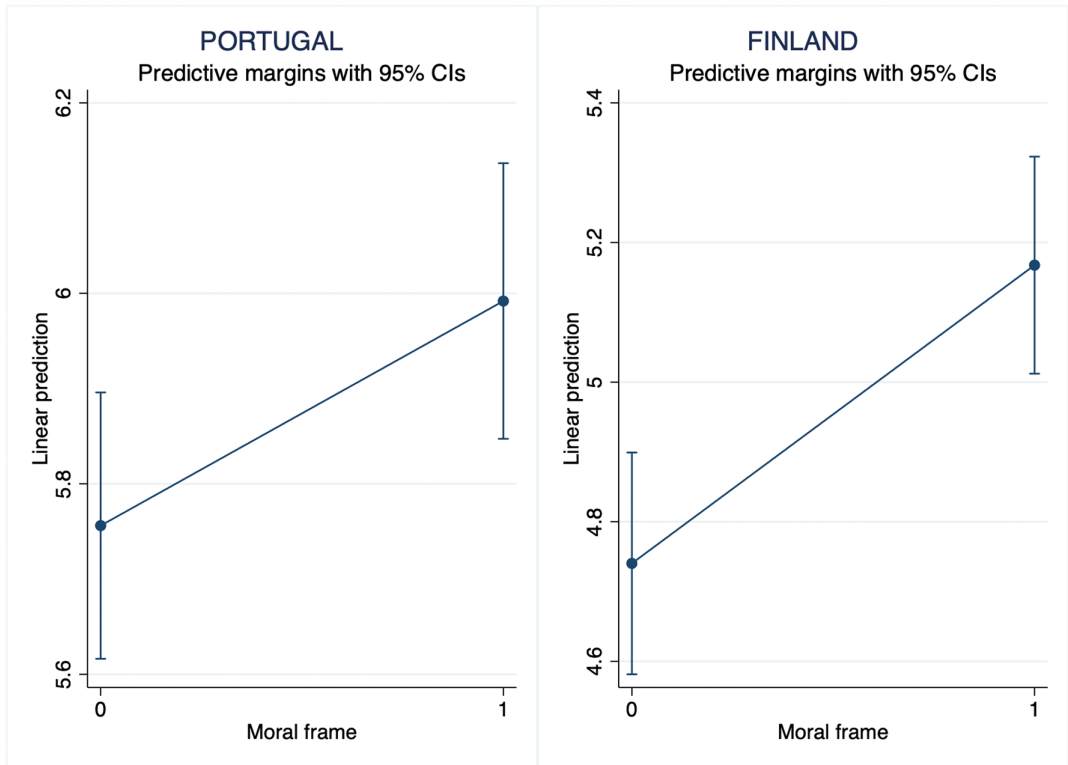


FIGURE 1 Impact of moral framing on views about external voting rights; the figure includes the countries where a significant relationship was recorded.

true. A significant difference was found among those not receiving the policy-relevant information (policy learning = 1).

Looking at the combined results for the different countries we find that respondents from Portugal and Finland, countries that provide rather extensive extra-territorial voting rights, were most likely to respond to the arguments provided in the experiment. Respondents from these two countries view external voting rights significantly differently depending on how the arguments were framed in relation to both the moral and the utilitarian claims. However, as we include the interactions between policy learning and the arguments, we find some significant effects even for the Irish respondents. The differences between the countries are less systematic than we had expected, but the results do indicate that treatments had a more noticeable impact in countries (Portugal, Finland and Belgium) that provide more extensive electoral rights to their non-resident citizens, compared to those that are more restrictive (Poland, Ireland). See [Table 4](#) for an overview of the significant findings from the survey experiment.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to contribute to the currently limited research on attitudes towards electoral rights for non-resident citizens. Drawing on the results of an original survey experiment using vignettes, we examined what resident citizens think about granting voting rights to nationals living abroad, and how these preferences are affected by different frames or arguments frequently occurring in debates on this topic. Our study was conducted in a strategic selection of five European countries (Belgium, Finland, Poland, Portugal and Ireland) with extensively different legislation when it comes to electoral rights for non-resident citizens.

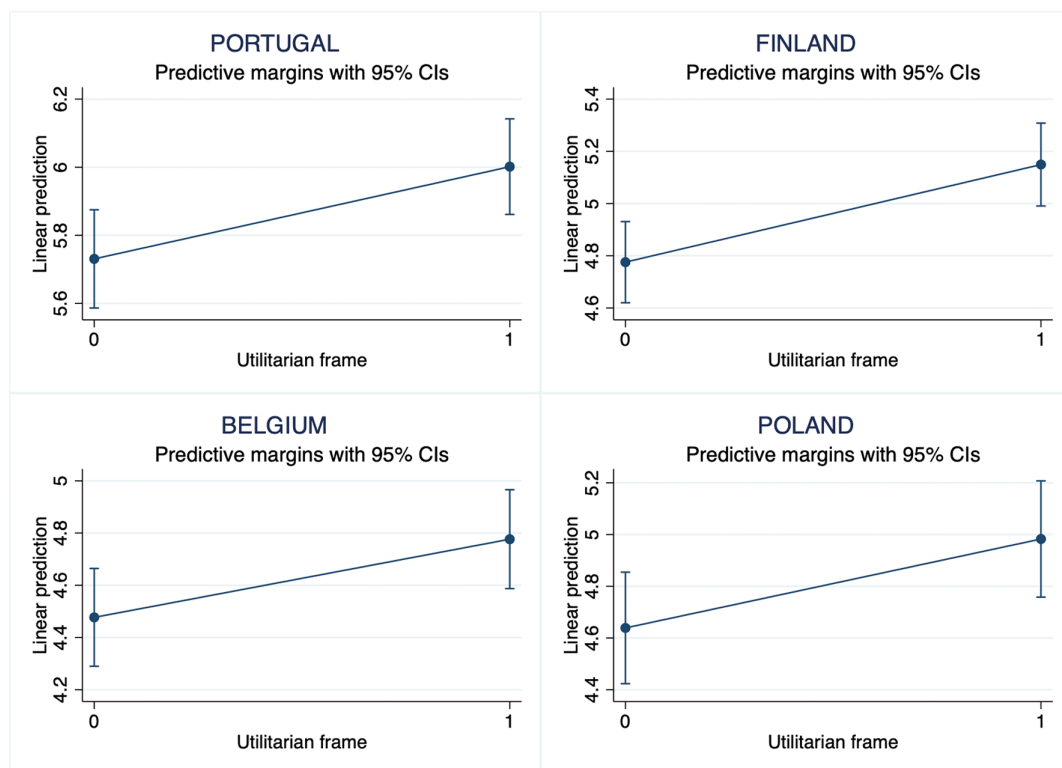


FIGURE 2 Impact of utilitarian framing on views about external voting rights; the figure includes the countries where a significant relationship was recorded.

While our research design was not outlined to directly compare attitudes across countries, our findings suggest positive and rather similar views on external enfranchisement among the resident citizens in the five countries. Such support for the voting rights of those living abroad is in line with a recent study by Michel and Blatter (2021), who found positive attitudes towards the inclusion of non-resident citizens in the national electorate in a majority of the 26 European countries included in their study.

According to our first hypothesis, moral arguments such as the all-affected principles should be the most persuasive. While we find that the framing of this argument makes a difference in two of our cases it cannot be deemed to be the most persuasive. Instead, our findings show that utilitarian arguments are the ones most likely to change resident citizens' views regarding external voting rights, as observed in four out of the five cases. The only country where this argument does not have an impact is Ireland. While these findings are very interesting by themselves, they also mean that we do not find support for our first hypothesis. There are a few potential reasons why the moral arguments were relatively ineffective. First, not all moral arguments are the same. It could simply be that moral arguments around political rights are less effective than moral arguments related to, for example, religious conviction. Considering the recent evidence of democratic erosion in established democracies, the relative ineffectiveness of moral arguments around democratic rights should perhaps not be that surprising. Second, it may simply be the case that non-resident citizens is something most people are quite unfamiliar with and hence it becomes difficult to attach moral sentiment to the political rights of this group.

We also find no evidence of their existing an interaction between the framing of the moral and the utilitarian (cost-benefit) arguments, meaning that we find no support for our second hypothesis either. Interestingly, we do find partial support for hypothesis 3B, which suggests that policy learning in conjunction with moral and utilitarian arguments can be persuasive. Respondents from Belgium and Ireland find this combination of policy information

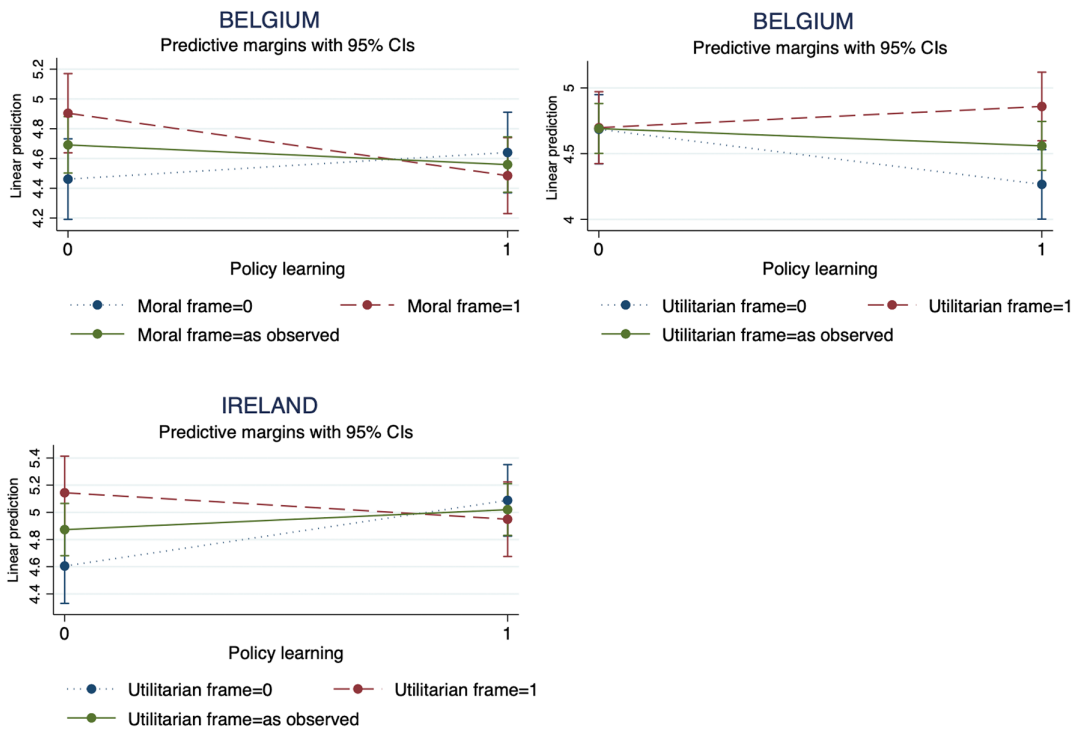


FIGURE 3 The effect of the utilitarian and the moral frames on views about external voting rights depending on the presence of policy information (include only countries where a significant relationship was recorded).

TABLE 4 Overview of the findings.

Treatment variable(s)	Countries where $p < 0.05$	# $p < 0.05$
Policy learning (PL)		0
#Moral argument (MA)	Portugal and Finland	2
#Utilitarian argument (UA)	Portugal, Finland, Belgium and Poland	4
MA \times UA		0
#PL \times MA/UA	Belgium and Ireland	2 (3)

and moral or utilitarian arguments persuasive, according to our results. The policy-learning statement did, however, not by itself have an effect on the expressed attitudes in any of the countries. This finding is in line with hypothesis 3a, which suggested that policy information by itself would not be persuasive.

According to our fourth and last hypothesis, we expected information and arguments about the electoral rights of non-resident citizens to be the most persuasive in countries that grant more extensive external franchise. The main effects in our analysis suggest that the two contradictory arguments relating to the moral and the utilitarian frame, were the more persuasive to respondents in countries that currently grant extensive electoral rights to external citizens, compared to respondents in countries with less wide, or non-existent electoral rights. However, when we consider the interaction effects between policy learning and moral or utilitarian arguments, the story becomes a bit more complicated, as these are found to a greater degree in the countries that grant more limited rights to their external citizens. Hence, we should probably file this under partial support for the hypothesis.

What are the main lessons from this study? Our findings suggest that the connection resident citizens perceive that the non-resident citizens have with the country of origin play an important role for how electoral rights for non-resident citizens are viewed. The results seem to suggest that citizens' views on electoral rights for non-resident

citizens are based more on cost-benefit considerations rather than long-term values. While this finding is not very positive for the introduction voting rights to nationals living abroad, it also highlights the importance of effective communication strategies, in particular public awareness campaigns that can inform residents about the positive impact of involving non-resident citizens. This could help shape public opinion in favour of more inclusive policies. However, the evidence presented here, and our interpretation of it, must be considered in the light of some caveats.

Our findings suggest that the effects of the some of the arguments seem to be quite context dependent. While the attitudes towards electoral rights for non-resident citizens are quite similar in the countries included in our study, the arguments that the respondents in the different countries find persuasive on the issue often differ. The first, and most important, is to examine the impact of institutional and macrolevel factors in explaining differences across countries. We urge scholars to investigate this aspect through a more systematic comparative analysis. While our focus was on institutional differences between the included countries, it may well be that the size of diaspora plays a more important role for how resident citizens view external electoral rights.

Furthermore, additional work is needed to establish the extent to which citizens' attitudes towards non-resident electoral rights change over time. In conclusion, supplementing our quantitative findings with qualitative research can enhance the depth of our analysis. This qualitative exploration would delve into the origins of variations among countries and respondents, shedding light on the nuanced factors influencing opinions. Additionally, it would underscore the pivotal role played by elites and media discourse in shaping the perspectives of the national electorate regarding non-residents' preferences for electoral rights. The electoral rights of non-resident citizens represent an issue that may be quite elusive to many resident citizens and thus it becomes important for practitioners and policymakers to be able to explain why the issue is important and how it may affect the resident citizens of a particular country.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

None of the authors have a conflict of interest to disclose.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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ENDNOTE

¹“In the scenario above, it was suggested that Country A citizens living abroad should be provided with comprehensive electoral rights. One of the following rights was NOT mentioned in the scenario, which one?”

- Country A citizens living abroad having the right to stand as candidates in Country A parliamentary elections.
- Country A citizens living abroad being able to vote via the Internet. (Correct answer)
- Country A citizens living abroad being able to vote via mail.

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