

# Missing Links in Migrant Enfranchisement Studies

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**This is the final accepted version of the Introduction to a JEMS Special Issue. Please cite as:**

Umpierrez de Reguero, Sebastián, Victoria Finn, & Johanna Peltoniemi (2023). Missing Links in Migrant Enfranchisement Studies. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Online first.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2023.2182709>

## Abstract

We identify four main strands of the migrant enfranchisement literature since 2010 and outline its main (debated) concepts. We pinpoint missing links among the strands, such as a tendency for scholars to study the electoral rights of foreign residents (immigrants) separate from nationals abroad (emigrants). Other missing links lie with actors and processes along the migrant enfranchisement legal path, with more studies focused on enacting or implementing rights versus fewer on why rights stagnate or fail to pass. Another missing link is geographic, favoring South-North over South-South enfranchisement. Despite an overall acceptance of transnational belonging and multi-territorial political participation, research agendas remain disparate across migration studies, political science, sociology, international relations, and other social sciences and humanities. Missing links are missed opportunities to merge disciplinary findings and find (causal) mechanisms to explain migrant enfranchisement. When analyzing the four strands, we suggest researchers apply an immigrant-emigrant lens to include origin and residence countries and rights of both emigrants and immigrants. Each article in this Special Issue nuances one of the strands, combines them, or applies the immigrant-emigrant lens. The issue expands the geographic coverage of current studies and offers innovative comparative analyses of Africa, Europe, and Latin America.

## Key words

migrant enfranchisement; voting rights; transnationalism; Latin America; Africa

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## Introduction

Who can vote? More often, states allow migrants to vote. Migrant enfranchisement—or the process of granting voting rights to migrants in origin and/or residence countries—has become a widespread phenomenon worldwide (GLOBALCIT, 2019; Wellman, Allen, & Nyblade, 2022; see Map 1). Yet migrant voters with rights on paper do not always have the chance to vote in practice. Societies and governments debate and reconsider who should have the right to vote. Some may lose the right to vote from one government administration to the next. Those who gain rights may not have tried to claim them or may not know they hold voting rights. These everyday scenarios of migrant enfranchisement expose the political, legal, and financial nuances involved in incorporating migrants into political communities.

Migrant voting continues to emerge time and again as a salient topic in societies, for states, and in academia. Increased and diversified migration flows worldwide go hand-in-hand with decisions about incorporating migrants into local and national political communities (Arrighi & Bauböck, 2017; Arrighi & Lafleur, 2019; Pedroza, 2019; Schmid, Piccoli, & Arrighi, 2019). This context has triggered scholarly interest in examining closely the processes and stages of migrant enfranchisement (Earnest, 2008; Kayran & Erdilmen, 2020; Lafleur, 2011, 2015; Michel & Blatter, 2021; Palop-García & Pedroza, 2019; Rhodes & Harutyunyan, 2010).

Researchers across disciplines are drawn to the non-linear and sometimes complex processes of granting and withholding voting rights for immigrants (“non-citizen residents” or “foreign residents”) in the residence country and emigrants (“non-resident citizens” or “nationals abroad”) for origin-country elections. The literature on migrant enfranchisement since 2010 tends to theorize the normative reasons for granting or withholding migrant voting rights (e.g., Bauböck, 2015), or focuses on the effects of such rights, e.g., migrant voter turnout (e.g., Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020) or transnational state- or party-led outreach (e.g., Burgess, 2018).

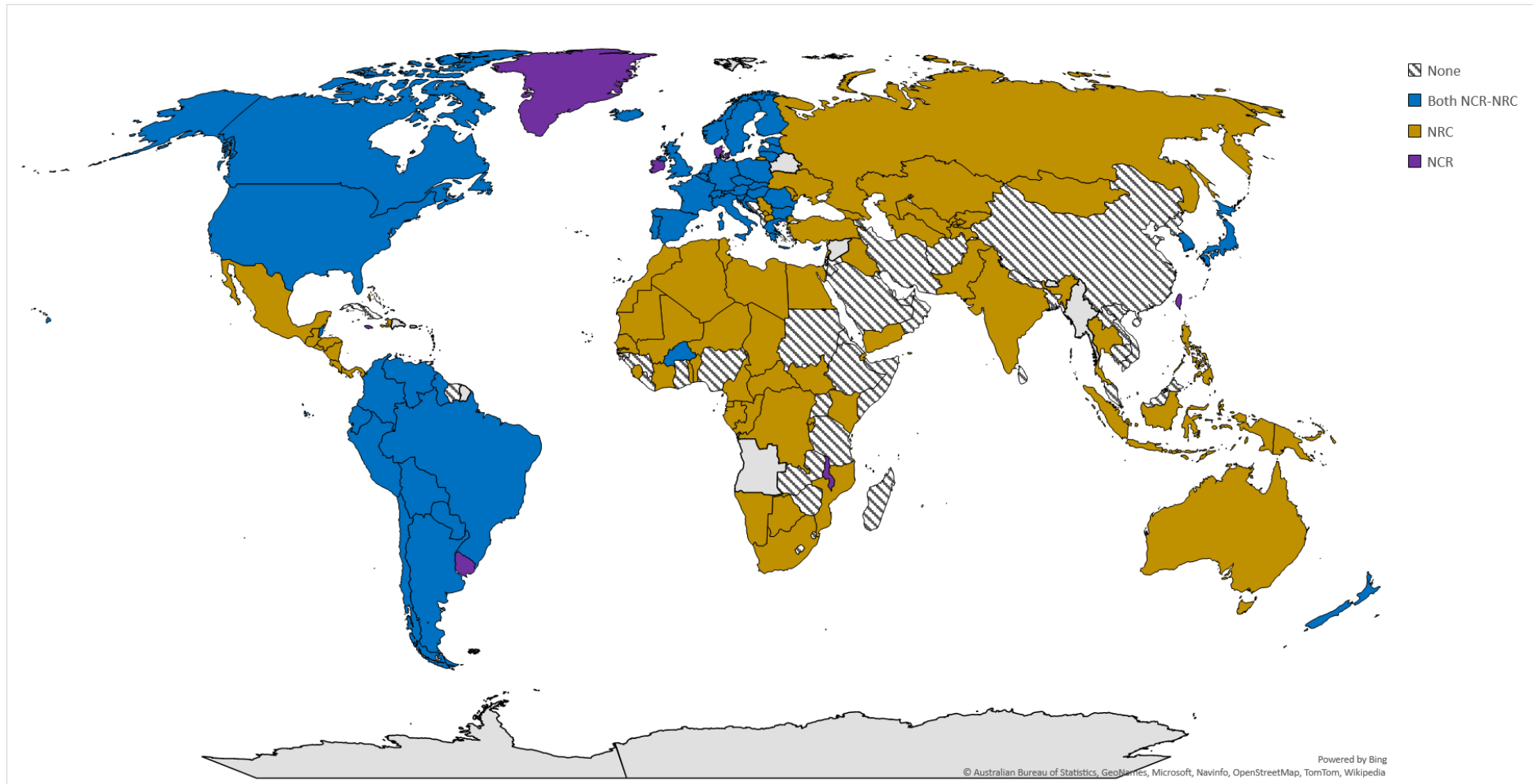
Within existing studies, scholars overall accept the concepts of transnational belonging and the empirical possibility of multi-territorial political participation; however, missing links exist. There are gaps in identifying the causal dynamics and hidden actors within migrant enfranchisement processes, as well as typically separating the research areas of immigrant versus external voting rights. South-South migrant rights remain understudied, given their prevalence across the globe and consequential dynamics of varied democratic experiences. These missing links provide an opportunity for migrant enfranchisement studies to widen its geographic focus, look beyond typical state actors, combine

immigrant and emigrant enfranchisement into the same studies, as well as conduct comparative analyses to find configurative mechanisms. Addressing these areas would enhance knowledge of how and why migrants gain or lose voting rights in the contemporary world, beyond democracies and in selected countries or regions.

To account for both sides of the international migration coin, we propose that it can be useful in many studies for researchers to combine some of these missing links through using an *immigrant-emigrant lens*. By this we mean that in studies at the state level, such a lens would entail examining enfranchisement in both origin and residence countries and at the individual level, analyzing the rights of both emigrants and immigrants. We recognize the inherent transnational duality that makes every international migrant simultaneously an emigrant and immigrant (Pedroza, Palop-García, & Chang, forthcoming) and we attempt to lead by example by taking a more global view of migrant enfranchisement.

Situated at the intersection of migration studies and core comparative political studies, we enrich existing knowledge by detailing state-level processes of historic and contemporary *de jure* (on paper) and *de facto* (in practice) migrant enfranchisement in new country case studies. This Special Issue covers, for example, Chile, Malawi, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Zimbabwe, offering either country-specific insights (Finn, this issue; Wellman, this issue) or comparative scenarios (Altman, Huertas, & Sánchez, this issue; Umpierrez de Reguero, this issue) of different approaches to (not) granting and implementing migrant voting rights. A further methodological contribution focuses on subnational Switzerland to capture “invisible” immigrants in enfranchisement processes (Wegschaidt, this issue). Two of the analyses take the immigrant-emigrant lens by examining both immigrant and emigrant voting rights (Finn, this issue) or by considering enfranchisement effects between the origin and residence country (Superti, this issue). Overall, the issue adds knowledge to the reasons for migrant enfranchisement, migrants’ agency in the process, and the different incentives that states and political parties face in less developed or less democratic countries when deciding to grant rights or engage with migrants as political actors.

Map 1 Migrant Enfranchisement Around the World, 2021



*Notes:* NCR is non-citizen residents (i.e., non-naturalized foreign residents) and NRC is non-resident citizens (nationals abroad); see Section 1 for a more detailed discussion on these terms.

*Source:* Umpierrez de Reguero, Wegschäider, and Bauböck (forthcoming).

## I. Main Concepts in Migrant Enfranchisement Studies

Scholars employ many seemingly synonymous terms in the migrant enfranchisement literature (see Umpierrez de Reguero & Peltoniemi, 2023). However, different language can cause terminological confusion, as they may not capture fully the intended meaning, imply something else, or overlap with other terms. In this section, our intention is to review such language and to explain which concepts we opt to use purposefully to capture how migrant enfranchisement unfolds in the contemporary world.

We use “origin country” and “residence country” instead of sending/receiving, home/host, and destination countries. First, “sending” and “receiving” countries are unfitting in a practical sense because most countries act as both; linguistically or psychologically, they seem to parallel notions of push and pull factors as basic reasons for international migration and “receiving” comes across normatively as a welcoming place, e.g., with arms wide open. Second, we choose not to use “destination country”, given diverse migratory trajectories mean that scholars cannot assume permanent migration. Migrants often engage in, for example, circular, seasonal, stepwise, and return migration (e.g., Constant, 2020). Third, we avoid “home” and “host” countries. In the case of the former, belongingness and notions of “home” change over time (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2006); from individuals’ viewpoints, feeling at home can entail both countries, the residence country, or somewhere else. For the same reasons, we do not use “homeland”. In the case of the latter, the idea that a country acts as a “host” implies temporary immigration and fails to reflect the reality that many immigrants do not feel welcomed by the “host” country or by people within it.

At the individual level, we use “migrant” to capture one person as simultaneously an immigrant and emigrant. It is not only more efficient (and aesthetically pleasing) than using “im/emigrant”, but it is also clearer; a slash can serve to abbreviate the two words but could also indicate “or” rather than the appropriate “and”. Migrant enfranchisement thus refers to the processes of granting voting rights to both immigrants and emigrants. When referring to only immigrants or emigrants, scholars should use the terms separately. “Immigrant” tends to highlight the territorial aspect and focuses on the residence country; nationality dominates in the case of “emigrant”, focusing on the origin country. For instance, a migrant voter indicates an individual as a non-resident voter who may participate in origin-country elections from abroad *and* who may participate as a foreign resident voter in residence-country elections.

Once naturalized, or having adopted the resident country's nationality, "immigrants" or "foreign residents" become nationals, dual nationals, or hold multiple nationalities, i.e., they are no longer legally "foreigners"—albeit in some countries the law refers to "naturalized foreigners" and they may have a different set of rights compared to those born into the nationality (Acosta, 2018; Pedroza & Palop-García, 2017). Many scholars, especially in the European Union (EU) apply the term "noncitizen residents" (NCR) and "nonresident citizens" (NRC), using "citizen" as synonymous with "national" throughout the EU (GLOBALCIT, 2020).

We recognize that naturalization is not necessarily prolific around the world and that in certain contexts, the categories of "citizens" and "nationals" are not interchangeable. For instance, across Latin America they are two distinct legal and constitutional terms (Acosta, 2018; Pedroza & Palop-García, 2017). Other Global South countries cannot distinguish nationals from foreigners or determine if documents proving identity and nationality are real and were legally obtained (Sadiq, 2009). Immigrants who participate in politics and society are exercising citizenship. For instance, people with a questioned nationality in India may use their voting identification card as their main document of national belonging (Dubochet, 2022). Others may participate without holding the residence country's nationality—what Pedroza (2019) captures as "citizenship beyond nationality" when analyzing Germany's and Portugal's debates on immigrant voting rights. Immigrants who gain political rights without holding the residence country's nationality have been referred to as "denizens" for decades (e.g., Altman, 2022; Hammar, 1990; Pedroza, 2013a).

Lastly, scholars have referred to voting from abroad as external voting, overseas votes, out-of-country voting, nonresident citizen voting (NRC), emigrant voting, and diaspora voting. "Diaspora" is a popular term, given for instance the research lines of diaspora governance and diaspora politics (e.g., Adamson, 2019; Délano & Mylonas, 2019; Gamlen, 2014; Tsourapas, 2020). However, while having been conceptualized in many ways, a diaspora could refer to a group sharing certain characteristics; when the commonality is belonging to, for instance, a particular culture or religion, not all those within the overarching diaspora would hold voting rights, and when they do, it is not necessarily for the same country. When the commonality is nationality, the diaspora would include not only emigrants but also indefinitely their descendants; perhaps, in this case, the term "diaspora voting" fits. For the many other states that restrict descendants from having external voting rights (despite holding the nationality of their antecedents' origin countries), the term "emigrant voting" would be more appropriate, since voters abroad comprise only first-generation emigrants who moved from their origin countries. The remaining terms of "voting from abroad", "external voting",

“overseas voting”, and “out-of-country voting” seem suitable for all cases when voters cast ballots across international borders.

### ***De Jure and De Facto Migrant Enfranchisement and Voting***

In this article, we build from the foundational literature on emigrant enfranchisement highlighted in Fliess and Østergaard-Nielsen (2021), particularly Palop-García and Pedroza’s (2019) contribution recognizing the three steps to legally enfranchise emigrants: states must enact, regulate, and apply voting rights. For instance, a state passes a constitutional law to outline the *possibility* of offering voting rights, then enacts electoral laws to regulate them, and finally implements them (i.e., migrants vote in an election). The three steps capture not only *emigrant* voting rights but also *immigrant* voting rights.

While the steps appear ordered, migrant enfranchisement can be non-linear since there are episodes of stagnation and rights reversal, which is when a state strips migrants of their previous suffrage rights (as outlined in, e.g., Brand, 2006; Hayduk, 2006; Wellman, 2021). Relevant literature outlines that there is no guarantee a country will finish the enfranchisement processes but there is room for unpacking the subtle reasons of why this is. For instance, for *de jure* migrant enfranchisement studies, it is illustrative to analyze deviant cases for emigrant voting (Umpierrez de Reguero, this issue) and for *de facto* migrant enfranchisement, to explain why some countries have implemented inclusive multilevel voting rights for immigrants (Altman et al., this issue; Finn, this issue). Given both top-down versus bottom-up processes, we expand on the reasons for migrant enfranchisement and highlight the roles of various political actors within the processes. Wegschaider (this issue) focuses on immigrants’ role in gaining voting rights, even though scholars methodologically face difficulties in *finding* immigrants within data sources. From the top-down, granting rights does not fall generally to “the state”. Instead, Wellman (this issue) highlights not the incumbent government or leader *per se* but other (non-elected) political elites responsible for certain immigrant enfranchisement processes.

The first two steps of enacting and regulating rights fall under *de jure* migrant enfranchisement whereas the third step of implementation makes a country reach *de facto* migrant enfranchisement. Having the legal right to vote but not being able to vote is what Wellman and Whitaker (2021) refer to as being disenfranchised in practice. Having migrant voting rights but being blocked from registering or voting is what Finn (2021) highlights as abstention versus prevention (i.e., two distinct outcomes when migrant voter turnout=0). States, political parties, and other actors can implement various institutional or infrastructure changes to migrant voter registration and turnout, e.g., concerning the ease of registration, voting modality, rules of political campaigning, or number and

location of polling stations (Burgess, 2018, 2020; Calderón Chelius, 2003; Dandoy & Kernalegenn, 2021; Finn & Besserer Rayas, 2022; Hutcheson & Arrighi, 2015; Lafleur, 2013; McCann, Leal, Navarre, & Cornelius, 2021; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Van Haute & Kernalegenn, 2020). Such changes aim to encourage or discourage migrants' electoral participation.

Other related rights must also be in place for migrant political participation to occur. Citizenship laws in both origin and residence country matter since these combined define individuals' access to rights (Vink & van der Baaren, 2022). For emigrants, such laws outline how to maintain nationality and its connected rights while abroad and for immigrants, requirements to naturalize and then gain additional political rights. Peltoniemi, Ciornei and Himmelroos (2022) have argued that whereas the first step of external voting comprises the legal right to participate, both representativeness in the legislative process and convenience voting methods are essential factors when evaluating political inclusion and the success of enfranchisement. Not just choosing who to elect (i.e., voting rights) but also being elected (candidacy rights) is another parallel set of rights with mixed application to migrants (Schmid et al., 2019; Wegschaider, Umpierrez de Reguero, & Bauböck, 2022).

While holding voting rights, another body of literature examines how political parties try to mobilize these new voters (e.g., Burgess, 2020; Kernalegenn & Van Haute, 2020; Umpierrez de Reguero & Dandoy, 2021). Speaking to holding political rights more generally, prior studies have determined that people develop transnational belonging and simultaneously participate in two polities (Bilgili, 2014; Erdal & Oeppen, 2013; Finn, 2020; Glick Schiller, Basch, & Szanton Blanc, 1995; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Tsuda, 2012). And beyond voting, migrants undertake other forms of political participation; while we focus on electoral rights, migrants may participate more often or intensely in other types of political engagement.

Within the literature, we see continued assumptions about its processes and normative views for countries in the 'North' versus the 'South'. Migration politics and policy can indeed play out differently in Global South scenarios (Adamson & Tsourapas, 2020) but we cannot assume in which ways they differ in their causes or effects. New country case studies and comparative analyses shed light on the similarities and specific differences of migration policymaking and implementation in geographic regions with varying histories and current contexts. Different approaches and outcomes cannot be reduced to state capacity to manage migration or migrants. Instead, context matters, such as the level of democracy (Koinova & Tsourapas, 2018; Liu, 2020; Natter, 2021; Tsourapas, 2021), the legal framework in place (for South America, see Acosta, 2018), and normative multilevel viewpoints



(Geddes, Vera Espinoza, Hadj Abdou, & Brumat, 2019; Triandafyllidou, 2018), which all play considerable roles in how countries interact with migrants.

In the following sections, we outline existing studies that have enabled us to identify four main strands in the relevant literature. We review overlaps and gaps by highlighting the contributions of the studies in this issue, and we pinpoint what remains for future research agendas.

## **II. Main Strands in Migrant Enfranchisement Studies**

When surveying the existing migrant enfranchisement literature, we identified and conceptualized four diverse strands, as shown in Table 1. The first strand focuses on political theories and normative debates on why states should grant or withhold migrant voting rights (Bauböck, 2015; Beckman, 2007; López-Guerra, 2005; Owen, 2010). The second examines the legal enactment, regulation, implementation, or a combination of these for emigrant enfranchisement (Palop-García & Pedroza, 2019; Pedroza, 2019; Reidy, 2021; Turcu & Urbatsch, 2015; Wellman et al., 2022) and rights reversal (Brand, 2006; Hayduk, 2006; Wellman, 2021). The third strand entails exploring the (in)formal channels of sociopolitical activism, covering transnational social movements (Tarrow, 2005), unconventional forms of political participation (McCann & Jones-Correa, 2020; Vintila & Martiniello, 2021), the activities of political parties abroad (Paarlberg, 2017; Rashkova, 2020; Van Haute & Kernalegenn, 2020), and the role of migrant civic associations in enfranchisement (Lafleur, 2013; Portes & Fernández-Kelly, 2015). Finally, the fourth analyzes various political, institutional, and socioeconomic aspects of granting political rights to migrants; this includes explaining migrant voter turnout at the aggregate level (Burgess & Tyburski, 2020; Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020; Szulecki, Erdal, & Stanley, 2023) or individual level (Chaudhary, 2018; Finn, 2020; Guarnizo, Chaudhary, & Sørensen, 2019; McCann, Escobar, & Arana, 2019; McIlwaine & Bermudez, 2015; Mügge, Kranendonk, Vermeulen, & Aydemir, 2021; Peltoniemi, 2018; Szulecki et al., 2021). This line stems especially from migration studies and empirical political science research that builds on, and adds nuance to, seminal voter turnout studies (e.g., Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960/1980; e.g., Jackman, 1987; Powell Jr., 1986; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). These tend to define and test specific factors that affect only migrant voters, e.g., age at migration, intention to stay, and years since migration.

**Table 1** Conceptualizing the Migrant Enfranchisement Literature

Strand	Normative	Legal	Political Activities & Mobilization	Political Behavior
Short Description	Who should and should not be in the demos	Who is legally in the demos (and who is excluded)	What/who instigates various kinds of participation	Who votes and does not vote
Actors & Level	State, regulation (e.g., executive, lawmakers, public attitudes)	State, regulation (e.g., constitutional & electoral laws)	Individuals, groups (e.g., migrant organizations, political parties)	Individual, aggregate
Timing	Pre-, during, post-enfranchisement (e.g., propose, debate, change normative views)	Pre-, during, post-enfranchisement (e.g., enact, pass, implement, reverse rights)	Pre-, during, post-enfranchisement (e.g., social movements, claims-making, campaigns)	Post-enfranchisement (e.g., vote, abstain, change behavior)
<b>Applying an Immigrant-Emigrant Lens</b>				
Possible research questions	In which ways do states and lawmakers change their normative views of migrants over time? How do changing norms (national/ regional/ global) affect migrant suffrage? How does public opinion influence migrant suffrage, on paper and in practice?	How has the demos expanded and contracted for migrants? What are the effects of this inclusion or exclusion? Which migrant groups do states and laws target, and why?	In what ways do political parties change their campaigns to target migrants? In what ways do organizations support emigrants and immigrants in similar or different ways?	As emigrants and immigrants, do the same individuals vote for the same reasons over time in both the origin and residence countries? Why do they change their behavior?

Within studies, these four migrant enfranchisement strands tend to be separate, despite relevant overlaps. How normative perspectives (strand 1) develop over time means that states change their views regarding who should, and who should not, be part of the demos. This is evidenced in debating proposals for including or excluding certain groups. Such actions will culminate in enacting and passing voting rights, as well as in modifying and reversing constitutional laws (strand 2, legal). The legal bounds signal to organizations and political parties which migrants to support, inform, and campaign to (i.e., strand 3). Our Special Issue involves these three strands rather than the fourth since political behavior, such as voter turnout, comes only post-enfranchisement. All can be analyzed in both Global North and South countries, occur in (non)democracy, and change over time, highlighting historic to contemporary differences.

While evaluating any of the areas of migrant enfranchisement, researchers can apply an immigrant-emigrant lens by combining immigrant and emigrant rights or combining origin and residence country processes of enfranchisement. As we propose in the last row of Table 1, such a lens opens various new research questions, exposing unexplored areas within the migrant enfranchisement literature. Given the conceptualizations of the strands, we also want to specifically highlight areas that offer further within- or between-case comparative research on migrant enfranchisement, so we undertake a brief state of the art in the next subsection.

### ***State of the Art***

This analysis is meant particularly for non-experts and scholars new to the migrant enfranchisement literature. Aiming to reinforce the idea of missing links within the evolution of this literature, we follow a similar approach to that of Ferris and colleagues (2019) by conducting a Google Scholar search of peer-reviewed articles from 2010 to 2022 on migrant enfranchisement. We used the filters *migrant electoral rights*, *migrant enfranchisement*, *external voting rights*, *foreign resident voting rights*, *diaspora voting rights*, and *noncitizen voting rights*.

From more than 300 entries with these filters, we selected full-length original articles (thus excluded books, book reviews, chapters, research notes, working papers) and discarded analyses of parallel topics (e.g., migrant political participation, electoral mobilization, and other types of political engagement). After reading the titles and abstracts to ensure migrant enfranchisement is either the main topic or largely covered by pertinent contributions, we selected 84 articles (listed in Table A1 in the Appendix). The articles are published in English in international journals and have been cited at least once (by 31 December 2022; exempting publications from 2020 to 2022). The final articles

include normative contributions and empirical studies containing mixed-method, qualitative, and quantitative analyses. Our sample allows us to show descriptively what has been explored and what has not in regard to migrant enfranchisement as a dependent or independent variable.

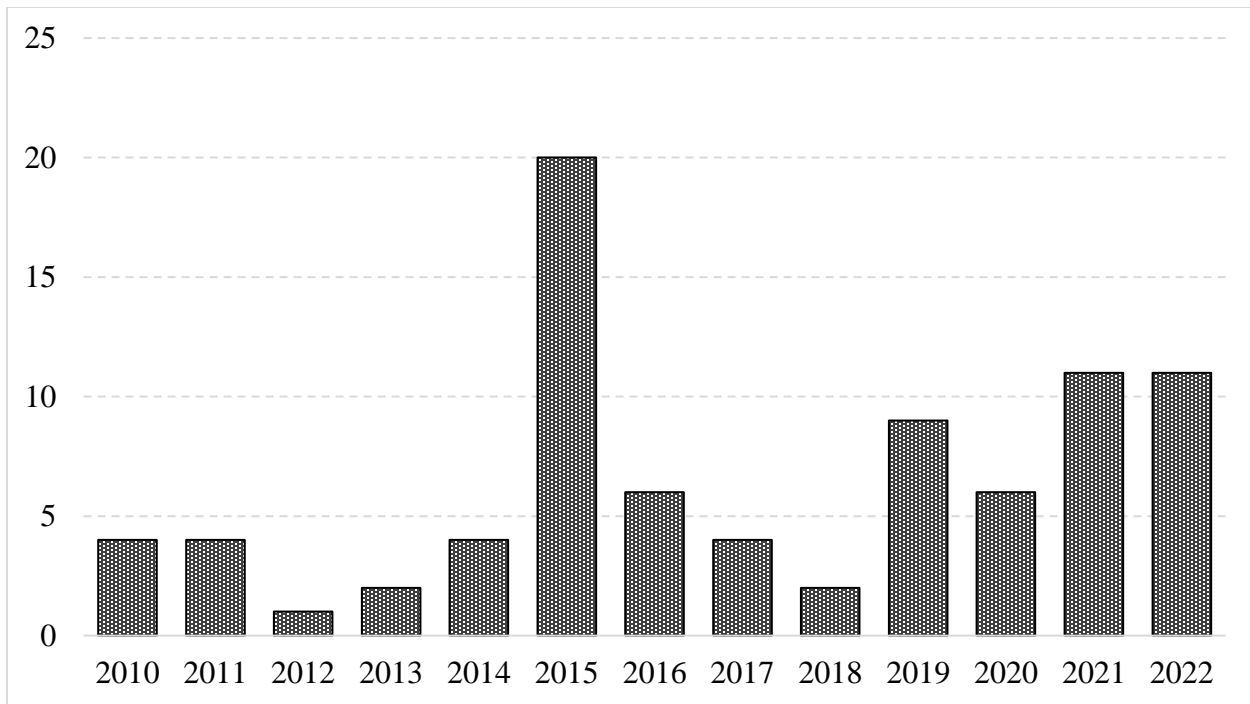
A variety of journals and disciplines have published studies on migrant enfranchisement and there is a growing number of publications on the topic; however, the separate research agendas highlight missing links among the studies and room for future research. Among the 84 articles, the journals that published the most are *Citizenship Studies*, *Comparative Migration Studies*, *Democratization*, *International Migration*, *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, and *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (see Table A2 in the Appendix). Both *Democratization* and *Journal of International Migration and Integration* published special issues on migrant enfranchisement; whereas the dossier in the former (see Caramani & Grotz, 2015) considers both units of analysis—emigrant and immigrant enfranchisement—the special issue in the latter focuses only on external voting rights in advanced democracies (e.g., Justwan, 2015; Triandafyllidou, 2015).

The various subject areas and categories of the 49 identified journals lie within the social sciences, fitting into at least two classifications (see Table A2 in the Appendix). While about 14% of the observations of migrant enfranchisement literature appear in migration studies journals and almost 17% in area studies, more common still is within politics and international relations (around 23%) and sociology and political science journals (about 35%).

The state of the art also shows temporal variation (see Figure 1). Since two important sets of contributions were published in 2015 as special issues on migrant enfranchisement, almost 24% of the observations correspond to that year. Before 2014, the mean was three articles per year, tripling over the 2014–2020 period, except in 2017–2018. While overall scientific publications have also increased, within our sample, we see migrant enfranchisement as a salient research topic that has shown considerable growth stemming from various disciplinary backgrounds and methodologies.

The migrant enfranchisement publications are roughly balanced between non-resident nationals (about 43%) and foreign residents (about 45%). Of these, 10 articles consider both sides of the coin: three are normative (Bauböck, 2015; Bender, 2021; Owen, 2011), another is a special issue introduction in *Democratization* (Caramani & Grotz, 2015), three systematized aggregated-level comparative analyses (Altman, 2022; Arrighi & Bauböck, 2017; Schmid et al., 2019), and the last three analyze attitudes toward migrant enfranchisement using a large-scale survey in 26 countries (Blatter, Michel, & Schmid, 2022; Michel & Blatter, 2021; Piccoli & Ruedin, 2022).

**Figure 1** Migrant Enfranchisement Articles, Sampled by Publication Year (N=84)



Without counting the normative contributions (e.g., Angell & Huseby, 2017; Bauböck, 2015; Fabbrini, 2011; Häggrot, 2022; Lenard, 2015; Pogonyi, 2014; Schrauwen, 2013), 53,6% of the other peer-reviewed articles depict cross-country variation. The sampled articles covering a global scope—between 166 and 210 autonomous territories—address emigrant enfranchisement (Collyer, 2014a; Nyblade, Wellman, & Allen, 2022; Rhodes & Harutyunyan, 2010; Turcu & Urbatsch, 2015; Umpierrez de Reguero, Yener-Roderburg, & Cartagena, 2021; Wellman et al., 2022). This tendency matches the greater expansion of emigrant voting rights compared to those of immigrants (tackled in, e.g., Arrighi & Bauböck, 2017; Arrighi & Lafleur, 2019; Barker & McMillan, 2014; Pedroza, 2019). Nonetheless, some large-N analyses cover immigrant enfranchisement (Earnest, 2015a, 2015b; Kayran & Erdilmen, 2020; Koopmans & Michalowski, 2016), but they tend to analyze advanced democracies, skewing the geographical coverage toward the ‘Global North’.

Considering the cross-national state-of-the-art, we find that *comparative* research on *emigrant* enfranchisement leans toward the ‘Global South’, especially Latin America (Erlingsson & Tuman, 2017; Escobar, 2015; Palop-García & Pedroza, 2019), Africa and the Middle East (Brand, 2010; Hartmann, 2015; Wellman, 2021), or articles including multiple regions (Collyer, 2014b; Lafleur, 2015). There are nonetheless contributions involving European cases (Hutcheson & Arrighi, 2015; Maminskaitė, 2022; Østergaard-Nielsen, Ciornei, & Lafleur, 2019). Scholars and practitioners tend to

use (Western) Europe as the main locus to explore *immigrant* enfranchisement, occasionally including particular countries in other regions such as North America or Oceania (Earnest, 2008; Kayran & Erdilmen, 2020; Koopmans & Michalowski, 2016; Pedroza, 2019).

Comparative small-N analyses (two to four country cases) within the 84 surveyed articles are about even between enfranchisement of emigrants (e.g., Lafleur, 2011; Margheritis, 2017; Pallister, 2020) and immigrants (Cianetti, 2014; Eisenberg, 2014; Goenaga, 2019; Modolo, 2011; Piccoli, 2021; Rodríguez, 2010; Seidle, 2015). The same geographical bias—i.e., ‘Global South’ for emigrant versus ‘Global North’ for immigrant—also appears in these comparative case studies.

Around a third of the articles are single case studies: 26 out of 71 (excluding the normative contributions). Of these, three quarters slant to the ‘Global North’ since 18 out of the 26 cases cover foreign residents’ rights in European or North American countries (e.g., Ericsson, 2020; Ferbrache, 2019; Finck, 2015; Hayduk, 2015; Jacobs, 1999; Pedroza, 2013b; Siemiatycki, 2014; Triandafyllidou, 2015). The remaining 11 cover particular cases, either because of the uniqueness of the country case (Collard, 2019; Himmelroos & Peltoniemi, 2021; Mosler & Pedroza, 2016; Reidy, 2021) or because enfranchisement occurred in relatively new democracies, such as Croatia and Portugal (Kasapović, 2012; Lisi, Belchior, Abrantes, & Azevedo, 2015). Only 12 country cases lie within the ‘Global South’; of those, only scholars discuss immigrants’ electoral rights in Costa Rica and India (Gupta, 2019; Pedroza, 2020), whereas the rest analyze emigrant enfranchisement (Jaulin, 2016; Şahin-Mencütek & Erdoğan, 2016; Wellman, 2021; Wellman & Whitaker, 2021).

Between comparative and case study research on migrant enfranchisement, almost 55% of the articles in our sample employ qualitative methods, while 37% use descriptive and inferential statistics. The other 8% combine regression-based and small-N analyses (Palop-García & Pedroza, 2017, 2019; Rhodes & Harutyunyan, 2010; Turcu & Urbatsch, 2020; Umpierrez de Reguero et al., 2021; Wellman, 2021). While the unique country cases mainly apply qualitative methods to approach migrant enfranchisement empirically, a few have quantitative aggregate- and individual-level analyses (Ferwerda, Finseraas, & Bergh, 2020; Fox, Johnston, & Manley, 2016). A similar trend holds in the comparative studies sampled. Most large-N analyses use statistics, but only select comparative contributions complement them with a qualitative perspective (Brand, 2010; Hartmann, 2015; Lafleur, 2015; Turcu, 2018).

### III. Filling in Missing Links in Migrant Enfranchisement Studies

The burgeoning literature on migrant enfranchisement since 2010 nonetheless reveals missing links that merit the attention of readers of this journal, particularly: a) linking the motives for historic and contemporary migrant enfranchisement processes; b) analyzing actors and processes of enfranchisement in non-democracies and less developed countries, as compared to advanced democracies in the north; c) establishing causal and configurative mechanisms to explain enfranchisement across cases and regions; and d) for some research questions, linking emigrant and immigrant enfranchisement into the same study. When aiming to combine the two sides of the same coin, as we suggest in Table 1, researchers can apply an immigrant-emigrant lens.

The six articles in this Special Issue fill some of these missing links by applying innovative research methods, offering theoretical perspectives, and using empirics from unique datasets. Most of the articles focus on the politics and policies in African and Latin American countries and with South-South migration, complemented by an analysis of the Swiss case and another on Latin Americans in the United States.

Tackling the link between historic and contemporary motives within migrant enfranchisement processes, Finn (this issue) portrays a normative path dependence of who belongs as migrant voters in Chile, applying our suggested immigrant-emigrant lens since she explains the process of enfranchisement for both groups. The comparative historical analysis dates to the early 1900s; it juxtaposes actors and processes in democracy versus non-democracy within the same country, showing surprising rights survival through shifting ideologies and political regime types. She finds that inclusive laws are not reserved for democracies, but democracy encourages the durability of rights for *de facto* migrant enfranchisement.

Studying actors and processes of enfranchisement in new cases complicates typical findings from ‘Global North’ studies in stable wealthy countries. Wellman (this issue) analyzes how parties may navigate poverty, legal precarity, and political violence through examining the transnational operations of the Zimbabwean opposition party to mobilize emigrant supporters in South Africa during the 2000s. Drawing on a variety of empirical sources and merging research on transnational party mobilization with distributive politics and clientelism, she explores the challenges and opportunities facing political parties to engage supporters in both origin and residence countries. The analysis shows how assistance with refugee status became a patronage good, distributed to party members in exchange for their participation and electoral support. As Wellman points out, the position of

Zimbabweans in South Africa illuminates how the line between forced and voluntary migration is not only difficult to delineate (also see, e.g., Hamlin, 2021), but it has increasingly dire consequences for populations who do not fit precisely within the legal determinations of mass refugee movements. This returns to larger normative questions of who should be in the demos (for refugee voting rights, see Bender, 2021); it also highlights differences in who exactly states include within “migrant” enfranchisement and voting, as well as how political parties attempt to mobilize them in unstable situations.

Starting with the growing global trend of migrant enfranchisement, another contribution uses innovative research methods spanning historic and contemporary processes to classify and explore deviant cases. As we reviewed in Section I, migrants may legally belong to the demos, but cannot vote when the country remains with *de jure* rather than *de facto* enfranchisement. Umpierrez de Reguero (this issue) categorizes 170 countries as typical (fast-track and slow-paced) and deviant (stagnant, interrupted and outlier) cases then reviews the legal background of emigrant enfranchisement in the stagnant case of Nicaragua. He examines a set of hypotheses relating to economic reasons, global norms, democratization, and political competition, reporting the role of political actors and instrumental factors as possible bona fide explanations for external voting rights. He highlights variation between countries in enfranchisement steps, specifically why they grant but do not implement migrant voting rights. Cases of non-enfranchisement are critical for scholars to explain migrant enfranchisement holistically across time and space.

Another comparative study establishes configurative mechanisms by focusing on the most inclusive countries with *de facto* immigrant enfranchisement. Worldwide, just five countries extend universal voting rights to all *immigrants* for national elections: Chile, Ecuador, Malawi, New Zealand, and Uruguay. Altman, Huertas, and Sánchez (this issue) study the conditions behind such inclusive immigrant enfranchisement in all five countries and find two descriptive paths to configure existing cases. First, enfranchisement occurs within unitary states with pre-existing local voting rights for foreign residents and settler trajectories that were not undergoing a liberalization process. Second, enfranchisement can also occur within unitary states that were undergoing a liberalization process and that recognize nationality by *ius soli*.

Besides top-down migrant enfranchisement spearheaded by states and key political actors, the Special Issue also engages with migrants’ agency in the process. Previous studies tend to credit *emigrants* on their active roles in efforts trying to gain external voting rights, whereas the role of *immigrants* fighting for the same rights as foreign residents is regularly ignored or dismissed (with



exceptions, see Sontag, Herzog, & Lässer, 2022). Such low visibility presents a methodological challenge to study enfranchisement, since the administrative paper trail may be insufficient to unearth immigrant activism; however, scholars can overcome some of the invisibility by changing their methodological choices. Wegschaider (this issue) demonstrates how this can be done by examining the immigrant enfranchisement processes in the two Swiss cantons of Geneva and Zurich. She finds that immigrants are not only involved in the process but may very well be critical actors in certain contexts. Given such results, future studies could additionally analyze state reactions and the efficiency of outcomes of immigrant versus emigrant efforts to gain additional political rights.

Finally, the last article takes an immigrant-emigrant lens and asks, how does being enfranchised as an emigrant (for the origin country) affect political interest and partisanship as an immigrant (in the residence country)? Superti (this issue) notes that access to the origin-country ballot carries both a symbolic and informational value: individuals gain “political dignity”, transforming them from passive subjects to political actors. Supporting evidence involves origin-country political campaigns and “get out the vote” efforts trying to mobilize them as political actors. Such political empowerment in the origin country can spill over into their attitudes toward the residence country. Superti thus demonstrates one way to link the two sides of international migration by recognizing that emigrants are immigrants and thus origin country events can affect residence country outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

The topic of migrant enfranchisement has attracted increasing scholarly attention from various disciplines since at least 2010. We defined its four main strands (normative, legal, political activities and mobilization, and political behavior), discussed using seemingly synonymous concepts purposefully, and pinpointed some missing links within migrant enfranchisement studies. We also conceptualized how to apply an immigrant-emigrant lens into studies by including origin and residence countries or both emigrant and immigrant rights. Each article in this Special Issue nuances one of the strands, combines them, or applies the immigrant-emigrant lens. The issue expands the geographic coverage of current studies and offers innovative comparative analyses of Africa, Europe, and Latin America.

Future research questions taking an immigrant-emigrant lens (see Table 1) can ask, how do changing norms (national/regional/global) affect migrant suffrage? How does public opinion influence migrant suffrage, on paper and in practice? In what ways do political parties change their campaigns to target migrants? In what ways do organizations support emigrants and immigrants in

similar or different ways? How have immigrant enfranchisement processes affected, or not, the same countries' debates and outcomes of emigrant enfranchisement? After establishing causal mechanisms, it is worth asking, what explains why other countries with similar conditions have either not enfranchised immigrants, or enfranchise only *some* immigrants?

Based on the observed problems and challenges within migrant enfranchisement studies, and the findings of the following six articles, the field can be moved forward by merging disciplinary findings, continuing to deepen knowledge of causal chains, and tracking the role and impact of unexpected or hidden actors. Future research can also combine processes in the origin and residence countries and distinguish between *de jure* versus *de facto* migrant enfranchisement, including uneven rural-urban accessibility. It should also include cases of non-enfranchisement to explain why states withhold voting rights from certain migrant groups, and how it evolves over time and context. Research must also expand geographic and temporal coverage to include historic and non-democratic cases of migrant enfranchisement, such as through times of crises, shifting ideologies, and political violence, as well as enfranchisement before migrant voting became politicized. These more global and comparative approaches can challenge and confirm processes in the 'Global North' of how migrants gain and lose electoral rights.

## **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to all the authors of this volume for your patience and dedication to this research line. Thank you to Paul Statham and Nik Ostrand for creating an accessible and helpful publishing process. We are grateful for collaborative work and discussions that arose during the ECPR General Conferences in 2019–2020, various panels on transnational political mobilization at the IMISCOE Annual Conferences in 2020–2021, including a migrant enfranchisement workshop endorsed by the Migration, Citizenship and Political Participation (MIGCITPOL) Standing Committee, as well as the ECPR Joint Sessions workshop “Diaspora Mobilization and Homeland Politics” in 2021, endorsed by the ECPR Standing Group on Migration and Ethnicity. We thank Jelena Džankić for comments and Rainer Bauböck and Maarten Vink for inviting us to present this research at the December 2021 workshop on (dis)enfranchising migrants.

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## Appendix

Table A1 Sample of Migrant Enfranchisement Articles, Titles and Authors, 2010–2022 (N=84)

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Wellman, E. I., Allen, N. W., & Nyblade, B. (2022). The extraterritorial voting rights and restrictions dataset (1950–2020). <i>Comparative Political Studies</i> , 00104140221115169.

Table A2 Sample of Migrant Enfranchisement Articles, Journals, 2010–2022 (N=84)

Name of Journal	Number of Articles	Subject Area and Social Sciences Category												
		Migration Studies	Sociology & Political Science	Politics & International Relations	Area Studies	Geography, Planning, & Development	Law	Cultural Studies	Demography	Anthropology	Social Sciences (miscellaneous)	Philosophy	Humanities (miscellaneous)	Economics and Econometrics
African Affairs	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Afrique Contemporaine	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
American Political Science Review	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
British Journal of Political Science	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Citizenship Studies	4	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comparative Migration Studies	3	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Comparative Political Studies	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comparative Politics	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contemporary Politics	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Democratization	10	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Diaspora Studies	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
East European Politics and Societies	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ethnic and Racial Studies	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Ethnopolitic	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
European Constitutional Law Review	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
European Journal of Political Research	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
European Law Journal	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

European Political Science	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
European Political Science Review	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Frontiers in Political Science	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Global Networks	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Immigrants & Minorities	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
International Migration	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
International Political Science Review	3	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Journal of International Migration and Integration	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Latin American Policy	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Latin American Politics and Society	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Migraciones Internacionales	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Migration Studies	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Policy Studies	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Political Geography	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Political Research Quarterly	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Regional & Federal Studies	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Scandinavian Political Studies	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South European Society and Politics	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Journal of Politics	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Political Quarterly	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
International Journal of Sociology	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
UNSW Law Journal	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Journal of Comparative Economics	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Asian Ethnicity	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Commonwealth & Comparative Politics	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

International Journal of Constitutional Law	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
International & Comparative Law Quarterly	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Moral Philosophy and Politics	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0

*Source:* Authors' own elaboration, based on SCImago Institutions Rankings 2022.