

The background of the slide features a stylized illustration. At the bottom, there is a city skyline with various buildings, including some with domes and minarets, rendered in a light red/orange line-art style. Above the skyline, numerous stylized human figures in various colors (blue, orange, green, purple) are depicted in dynamic, dancing or jumping poses, suggesting a sense of celebration or movement. The overall theme is one of global diversity and human activity.

# Bringing Autocracy Home? How Migration to Autocracies Shapes Migrants' Support for Democracy

Nikhar Gaikwad <sup>1</sup>   Kolby Hanson <sup>2</sup>   Aliz Tóth <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Columbia University

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Wesleyan University

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor, London School of Economics

IPES Annual Meeting 2024

# Migration and Democracy Preferences

**Strong link between outmigration and preferences for democracy** (Barsbai et al. 2017, Bastiaens & Tirone 2019, Beine & Sekkat 2013, Docquier et al. 2016, Escribà-Folch et al. 2015, Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow 2010, Careja & Emmenegger 2012)

# Migration and Democracy Preferences

**Strong link between outmigration and preferences for democracy** (Barsbai et al. 2017, Bastiaens & Tirone 2019, Beine & Sekkat 2013, Docquier et al. 2016, Escribà-Folch et al. 2015, Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow 2010, Careja & Emmenegger 2012)

**But we are missing part of the picture:**

**Table 1:** Migration Studies by Setting and Primary Focus

<i>Origin Country</i>	<i>Destination Country</i>	
	Democracy	Mixed or Non-Democracy
Democracy	34 (27%)	<b>2 (2%)</b>
Mixed or Non-Democracy	77 (61%)	14 (11%)

*Note:* We have examined every migration-related publication in the top five publications between 2014-2024.

# Migration and Democracy Preferences

Why is this a problem?

1. Large and growing population moving to autocracies.

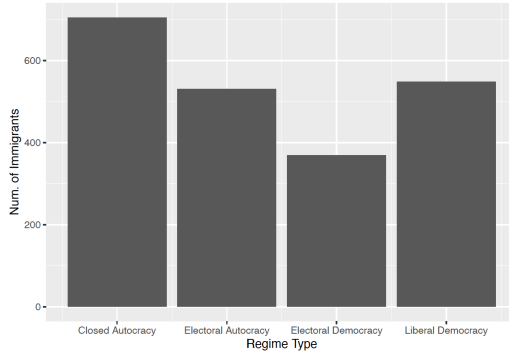


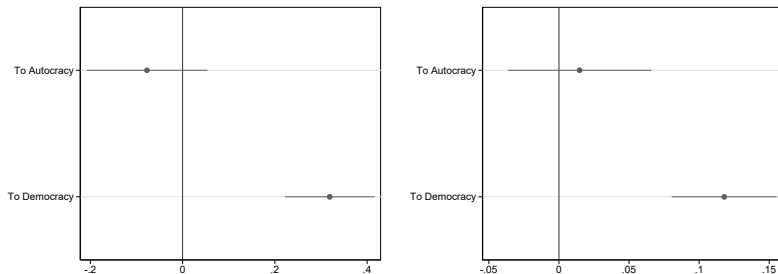
Figure 1: Immigrants from Asia (World Values Survey)

# Migration and Democracy Preferences

Why is this a problem?

**2. The effect of migration to autocracies may look very different:**

Migrant respondents agreeing that democracy is important & good



*Source: World Values Survey*

# Migration and Democracy Preferences

**Why is this a problem?**

**3. It is not clear what drives migration's effect on democratic preferences:**

- Migration often takes place from *less* to *more* developed and democratic countries.
- Migrants' preference for democracy may stem from liking a) democratic institutions; b) higher levels of economic development.

# Theory

We focus on migration from *more* democratic *less* developed to *less* democratic *more* developed countries.

# Theory

We focus on migration from *more* democratic *less* developed to *less* democratic *more* developed countries.

Conceptualizing democratic support:

- Intrinsic preference for democracy (above and beyond economic benefits)
- Trust in democratic institutions
- Political participation



# Theory

We focus on migration from *more* democratic *less* developed to *less* democratic *more* developed countries.

Conceptualizing democratic support:

- Intrinsic preference for democracy (above and beyond economic benefits)
- Trust in democratic institutions
- Political participation

Table 2: Summary of Predictions for Effect of Migration to Autocracy

<i>Basis of Democratic Support</i>	Support for Democracy		
	Democracy Preference	Trust in Govt	Participation
Instrumental / Economic	—	—	—
Intrinsic / Political	+	+	?

# Research Design: Setting

## Mizoram, North-east India



## Context

### Background

- Mizoram, small NE state with high geographic barriers to employment
- Population ~ 1 million
- GDP per capita is around USD 1,600
- High unemployment rates
- Largest employer: government
- Yet 92% literacy
- Language: Mizo, English widely spoken
- Predominantly Scheduled Tribe (ST)
- Lack local job opportunities; face discrimination in mainland India

# Experimental Interventions

## Stage 1: Skills Training

### Hospitality sector skills training program

- Classroom Training
  - Food safety
  - Communication, etiquette, cultural sensitivity
  - Kitchen & food production
  - Food & beverage service
  - Coffee & bar
  - Housekeeping (guest rooms, kitchen, public areas)
  - Grooming & hygiene
  - Interview preparation
- Job Exposure Training
  - Practical 2 week training in local Aizawl hotels and restaurants



# Experimental Interventions

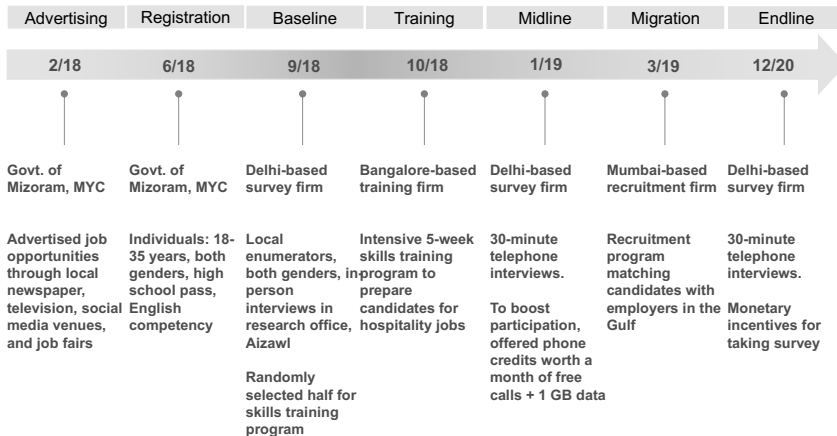
## Stage 2: Recruitment Program

### Interviews with GCC hospitality sector firms

- Interviews with employers
  - CVs
  - Mock interviews
  - Certificates
  - Match with employer interviews
  - Guide through visa, migration processes
- Employers
  - Costa Coffee
  - Chili's, Papa Johns, La Brioche
  - Emirates Airways
  - Al Abraaj
  - Mandarin Oriental



# Study Structure and Timeline



# Ethical Considerations

Labor migration poses risks

Goal: minimize risks; ensure benefits flowed to migrants and communities (Teele 2014, Humphreys 2015)

Government of Mizoram and local NGOs have sought to promote overseas Gulf recruitment to tackle endemic unemployment

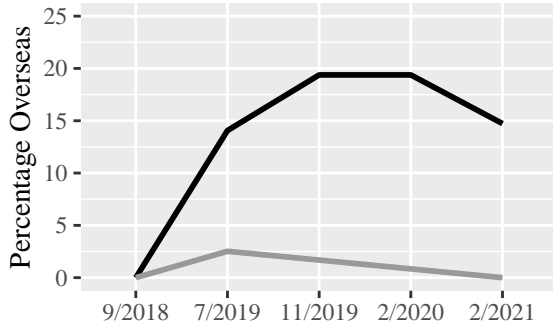
- Builds on prior government attempts to promote GCC employment
- Researchers helping evaluate efficacy of program
- Build blueprint for ethical and safe labor migration in region

Partners, employers, sector of employment carefully vetted

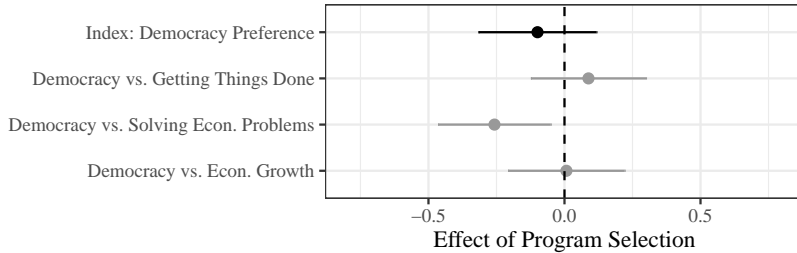
- Focus on hospitality sector; lucrative pay; reputable jobs

Subjects connected with government and non-governmental support systems; provided extensive information on rights and recourses

## Results: Migration Outcomes

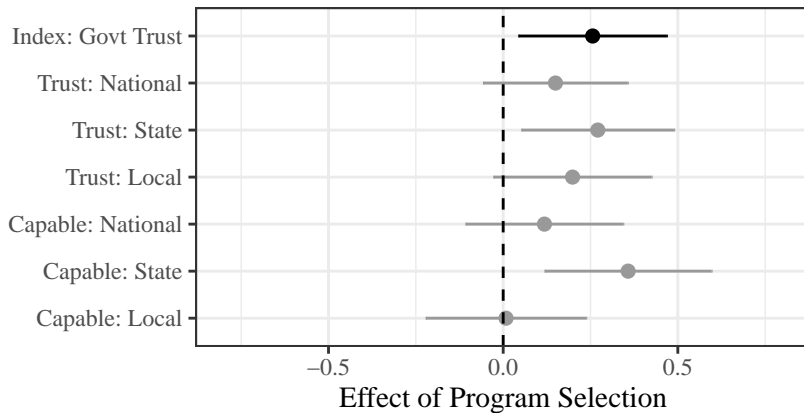


# Views on Democracy

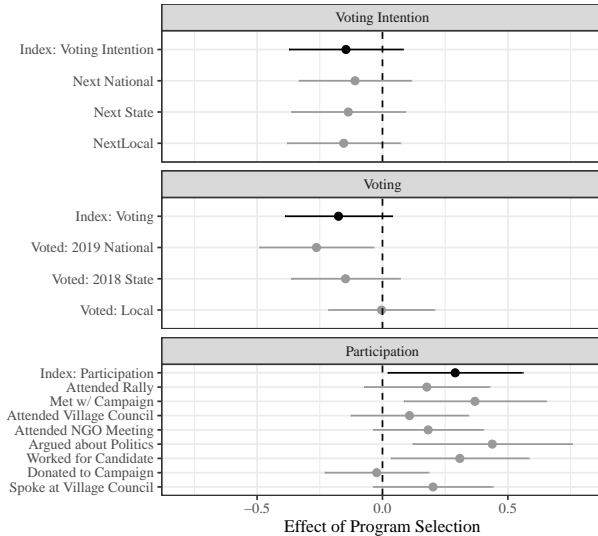




# Trust in Democratic Institutions



# Political Participation



## Key Takeaways

- We do not find evidence that migration to autocracies lowers preference for democracy. In fact, migrants to the Gulf come away more supportive of democracy.
- Migrants value the political benefits of democracy, not just higher levels of development.
- Former migrants may act as pro-democracy leaders in their home communities even when they lived in less democratic countries.
- Migration may reduce formal participation in the short run, policies reducing the costs of voting from abroad could be really effective to bridge this gap.

# Thank you for listening! Questions?

[nikhar.gaikwad@Columbia.edu](mailto:nikhar.gaikwad@Columbia.edu)

[krhanson@wesleyan.edu](mailto:krhanson@wesleyan.edu)

[a.toth1@lse.ac.uk](mailto:a.toth1@lse.ac.uk)



# Empirical Strategy

## **Intention to Treat Framework**

- Effect of program selection on post-migration attitudes and behaviors.

## **Main Outcomes are Z-Score Indexes**

- 2-6 survey questions measuring each outcome

## **Control for baseline measures for pre-treatment outcomes**

- Robustness: Also include demographic covariates

## **P-values estimated using randomization inference**

- Robustness: Use OLS standard errors instead

**One-sided hypotheses tests (hypothesis directions pre-registered), except when noted**

## Survey and Analysis

	<i><b>Endline</b></i>
Response Rate: Treatment Group	65.8%
Response Rate: Control Group	60.7%
Difference in Response Rate	5.1%
P-Value: Two-Sample T-Test	.296
P-Value: RI-based Test	.268

### **Notes on Attrition:**

- Not significantly affected by treatment.
- Had no effect on balance of treatment groups.
- Not predicted by any pre-treatment covariates or by program attendance.

Balance Tests

Predictors of Response

## Ethnographic Interviews w/Migrants

*I prefer democracy because I think the citizens should have the power to elect their leaders.*

Respondent #320

*The government in Qatar does a better job because they give lots of benefits to their citizens and lots of free food and rations.*

Respondent #80

*I like it generally because it is safe, wherever we go it is safe, and maybe it is because alcohol is banned and we don't find any drunkards on the street*

Respondent #40

*There is no catcalling and eve-teasing, especially for women, so I feel safe and secure here.*

Respondent #59

*I would prefer living in a country where the government takes better care of its citizens even if they are not elected leaders.*

Respondent #44

# Balance Tests

	Baseline	Midline	Endline
Age	-0.008 (0.009)	-0.005 (0.011)	-0.006 (0.011)
Male	0.005 (0.053)	0.016 (0.062)	-0.041 (0.067)
Education	0.028 (0.033)	0.008 (0.038)	0.060 (0.041)
Employed	0.035 (0.109)	-0.116 (0.128)	-0.116 (0.145)
Scheduled Tribe	-0.044 (0.123)	-0.057 (0.162)	-0.095 (0.166)
Married	0.131 (0.202)	0.147 (0.310)	0.266 (0.314)
English Ability	0.002 (0.026)	-0.015 (0.030)	-0.006 (0.032)
Economic Status	-0.025 (0.040)	0.031 (0.050)	0.051 (0.052)
Economic Confidence	-0.013 (0.039)	0.023 (0.045)	0.008 (0.052)
Economic Attitudes	-0.016 (0.025)	-0.018 (0.029)	0.017 (0.030)
Observations	384	286	244
F-Stat P-Value	.990	.993	.912
F-Stat P-Value (RI)	.944	.980	.851



# Predictors of Response Rate

## Midline

Demographics	✓	✓	✓
Pre-Treat Outcomes		✓	✓
Treat x Demographics			✓
Treat x Outcomes			✓
Observations	389	384	384
F-Stat P-Value	.252	.399	.417

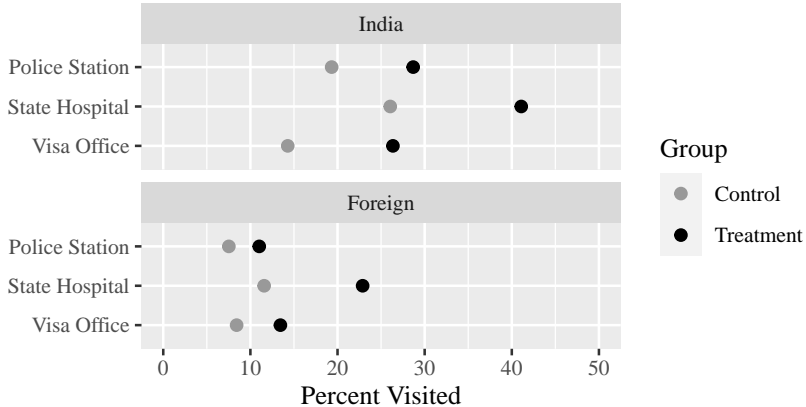
## Endline

Demographics	✓	✓	✓
Pre-Treat Outcomes		✓	✓
Treat x Demographics			✓
Treat x Outcomes			✓
Observations	389	384	384
F-Stat P-Value	.314	.461	.220

# Migration Progress

	<i>Treatment</i>	<i>Control</i>
Did not apply for a job abroad	48%	64%
Applied, but did not receive an offer	18%	27%
Received an offer, but did not accept	7%	4%
Accepted a job, but did not receive a visa	2%	3%
Received a visa, but did not move	1%	0%
Moved abroad	23%	2%

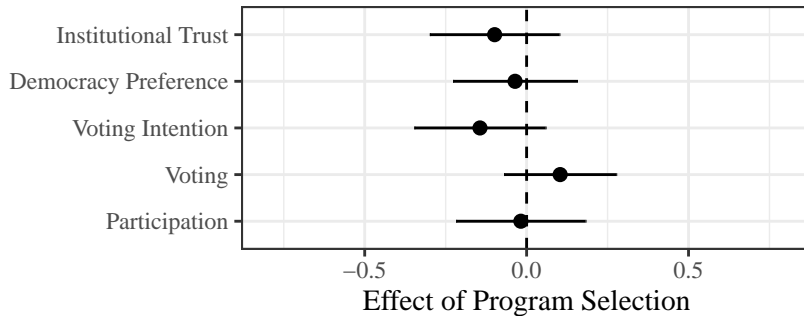
# Exposure to Government Institutions



Trust to Institutions

Migration

## Results: Household Members



- Barsbai, T., Rapoport, H., Steinmayr, A. & Trebesch, C. (2017), 'The effect of labor migration on the diffusion of democracy: Evidence from a former soviet republic', *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* **9**(3), 36–69.
- Bastiaens, I. & Tirone, D. C. (2019), 'Remittances and varieties of democratization in developing countries', *Democratization* **26**(7), 1132–1153.
- Beine, M. & Sekkat, K. (2013), 'Skilled migration and the transfer of institutional norms', *IZA Journal of Migration* **2**, 1–19.
- Careja, R. & Emmenegger, P. (2012), 'Making democratic citizens: The effects of migration experience on political attitudes in central and eastern europe', *Comparative Political Studies* **45**(7), 875–902.
- Docquier, F., Lodigiani, E., Rapoport, H. & Schiff, M. (2016), 'Emigration and democracy', *Journal of Development Economics* **120**, 209–223.
- Escribà-Folch, A., Meseguer, C. & Wright, J. (2015), 'Remittances and democratization', *International Studies Quarterly* **59**(3), 571–586.
- Pérez-Armendáriz, C. & Crow, D. (2010), 'Do migrants remit democracy? international migration, political beliefs, and behavior in mexico', *Comparative political studies* **43**(1), 119–148.