

Why Do Most Who Consider Emigrating Never Do So?: How Subjective Dimensions of Migrant Selectivity in Mental Health, Political Identity, and Traumatic Experiences of Historical Events Raise the Hazard and Speed of Emigration

Abstract

Why do only a minority of people discontent with political changes who say they want to emigrate actually do so?. I assess migrant selectivity using Cox Proportional Hazard, logistic regression models, and linear duration models, with data I collected from 3,784 Hong Kong residents who considered emigrating and have not emigrated to other locations, as well as data from Hong Kong emigrants before they emigrated. A statistically significantly higher proportion of emigrants (non-emigrants) cited political (economic) reasons as being the main factor triggering them to leave than non-emigrants (emigrants). Participants who emigrated had a higher risk of emigrating and emigrated more quickly if they were married, female, college-educated, ideologically pan-democrat (relative to ideologically pro-establishment/neutral), had higher self-rated physical health, had lower self-rated mental health, had a strong sense of belonging, and were very concerned about the current political situation in Hong Kong. Ideologically localist or self-determinist participants (relative to pro-establishment participants) had higher odds of thinking about emigrating, but not actually emigrating. I show that those who emigrated were more or less likely than those who did not to mention five historical events as the three that most traumatized/triggered them to think about emigrating. In contrast, those who did not emigrate were significantly more likely to mention three other specific events. This paper advances previous migrant selectivity research by demonstrating how the risk of emigration and the speed of emigration are associated not only with objective traits but also with subjective traits—self-rated mental health, sense of belonging, concern about politics, political identity/ideology, and selective traumatic memory of historic events.

Introduction

A long-standing research program examines how migrants differ from non-migrants—migrant selectivity. Migration requires both the aspiration to migrate and the ability to do so (Carling 2002; Carling and Schewel 2018). Consequently, those who migrate are doubly selected: individuals who consider migrating are distinct from those who do not, and those who migrate are distinct from those who think about migrating but never actually do. Most researchers of migrant selectivity compare how the traits of migrants in the migrant-destination

country differ from the corresponding traits within the entire migrant-origin population (Feliciano 2008; Feliciano 2005; Kapur and McHale 2005; Borjas and Bratsberg 1996; Hatton and Williamson 2005). Table 1 lists different groups that such a study might compare, with respect to 1) the aspiration to migrate and 2) the ability to migrate. Past research has typically compared individuals in the top two quadrants with everyone in the bottom two quadrants. Some designs examine how migrants differ from those with no intention to migrate to the society of destination (Berlinschi and Harutyunyan 2019; Cebolla-Boado and Soysal 2018).

However, only 15% of the world’s population –and only 8% of East Asians—want to emigrate (Gallup, 2018). Even in the world’s most highly populated migrant-origin countries, such as China, India, Pakistan, and Indonesia, emigrants account for less than 1% of the population (IOM 2022). A more relevant and precise reference group for such research—and one that would be of more practical interest both to governments and civilians in migrant-origin and migrant-destination societies—would be potential emigrants (bottom right quadrant), or those who expressed a desire to emigrate but did not.

Table 1: Analytical Tables of Reference Groups For Selectivity Studies

	Does Not Aspire To Emigrate	Aspires To Emigrate
Emigrate	involuntarily mobile (expelled/trafficked/enslaved)	voluntary immigrants (authorized and unauthorized migrants)
Not Emigrate	acquiescent or voluntarily immobile (disinterested in migrating)	involuntarily immobile (denied/deterred from migrating)

Surveying potential emigrants is a challenge in most societies because they are a small proportion of the population. Scholars have long disagreed about the extent to which intentions to migrate predict migration and the best way to measure intention (Constant & Massey, 1992; Siu-Lan, 2002; Van Dalen & Henkens, 2013). Furthermore, empirical and theoretical research on migrant selectivity has focused on labor migration and economic motivations to migrate, while also considering that political violence and change often motivate people to migrate.

Hong Kong provides an ideal case study for this question: Almost 15% of individuals who identify as Hong Kongers reside outside Hong Kong (IOM 2022), indicating that many have international connections that would facilitate emigration. Furthermore, since February 2019 due to events of political unrest, private and public property damage, police brutality, repression of public demonstration, criminalization of speech and press, and evidence of a rapidly autocratizing government and laws, more people have emigrated from Hong Kong than any time on record, making it an ideal case for studying selectivity of emigrants within populations that has experienced major political push factors: Hong Kong Institute of Asia Pacific Studies (2021) surveys in September 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024 found that 37-43% of Hong Kongers “wanted to emigrate” and 15-16% had “prepared to emigrate”. Yet the Hong Kong Government (2022-2019) reported that Hong Kong’s population did not change between August 2019 and July 2020, fell by only 1.2% between August 2020 and July 2021, and 1.6% between August 2021 and July 2022, and increased by 0.4% between August 2021 and July 2022 (HKSAR Government 2019-2022). This raises a quantitative puzzle: Although the decreases in recent years were the largest population drop since 1961, when record-keeping began, why have so many of those who said they wanted to emigrate or had plans to emigrate still not emigrated, many months and even years later?

This paper contributes to selectivity research in four ways. First, earlier studies primarily focused on how the objective traits of migrants and non-migrants differ, particularly in terms of formal education, physical health, and labor market outcomes. Another important task is to distinguish how various subjective dimensions of emigrants differ from those of potential emigrants, such as mental health, sense of belonging, political ideology, and memories of historical and political events that most motivate potential emigrants to emigrate. Second,

previous research has primarily focused on this phenomenon from the perspective of migrant-destination societies rather than migrant-origin societies, and those that have focused on selectivity in migrant-origin contexts tend to compare migrants to those who have not migrated (Guveli et al. 2017; Zuccotti, Ganzeboom, and Guveli 2017). Third, systematic research on this phenomenon in migrant-origin societies has focused on labor or economic migrants (Massey et al. 1990; Van Dalen and Henkens 2007, 2013) rather than politically selective migrants in the context of rapid, sudden socio-political changes at the scale that Hong Kong has recently experienced. Finally, much of the selectivity research has relied on data from individuals who have already emigrated, making it unclear whether the differences are due to selectivity or changes resulting from migration (Feliciano 2020).

In contrast to these previous studies, this paper will assess the differences in a) conventionally studied traits and new demographic traits like mental health, b) subjective attitudes, and c) motivating-historical events of a) emigrants and b) potential emigrants with respect to when they 1) consider emigrating and 2) emigrated from Hong Kong in a context of rapid, sudden social changes. I do so by comparing data about both potential emigrants in Hong Kong to data about emigrants from Hong Kong before they emigrated. Comparing data about emigrants before they immigrated to data about potential emigrants enables us to more precisely measure migrant selectivity and understand how strongly associated emigration is with ideological and subjective orientations, individual traits, and memories of traumatic experiences of historical events that are associated with emigration within the population of potential migrants “at risk” of doing so. In sum, I analyze the case of Hong Kong as a case of how among those who considered emigrating in populations that undergo a major political change, how the risk of an individual emigrating and how quickly they emigrate is associated with 1) their

demographic traits, 2) measures of their socio-economic status, 3) measures of their social ties, 4) their political attitudes/ideologies, and 5) what events most motivated them emigrate.

Specific Research Context

Since the mid-20th century, Hong Kong has had periodic waves of circular migration due to “uncertainty” about the city’s future. First, worries and fears about ontological security in Hong Kong’s extremely competitive, dynamic, and laissez-faire capitalist economy, as well as postcolonial anxieties about the city’s identity and struggles over its political autonomy, have periodically led to waves of mass exodus. We observed this as early as Shatin’s “vegetable revolution” of 1958-1961, when immigrant farmers from mainland China migrated to Hong Kong and introduced more economically productive rice-terracing techniques than those practiced by the less efficient native-born vegetable farmers who migrated abroad to London (Watson 1972). When violent riots later spread into Hong Kong due to mainland China’s Cultural Revolution in 1966-1967, many emigrated out of fear that communist rioters would succeed in overthrowing the British colonial government by force. Many emigrated again after the PRC government crushed the June 1989 protests, which demanded that the one-party-dominated government democratize. Finally, many migrated during the years leading up to Britain’s 1997 handover of Hong Kong to China, fearing that Hong Kong would soon lose its autonomy from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and become like another mainland city (Siu-Lun 2001).

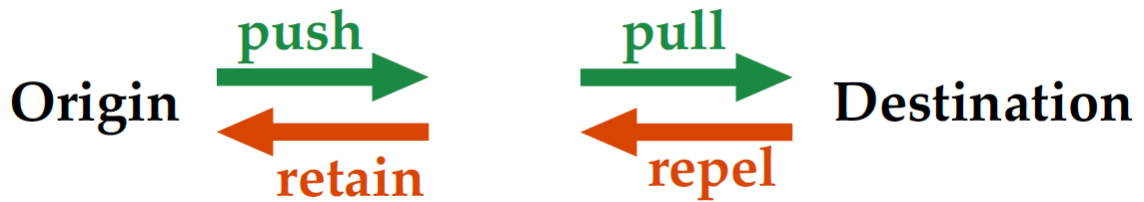
Conventional “push-pull” models that seek to explain emigration only incorporate push factors in the migrant origin society (e.g., war/civil unrest, restrictions on political freedom, economic recession) and the pull factors in the migrant destination society (e.g., higher wages, more political freedom, personal space/ work-life balance) that motivate potential emigrants to

migrate. Prior scholars have offered evidence that this model is limited in not explaining why so many do not migrate and remain “ambivalently immobile”. For example, after Britain handed Hong Kong to China, many expected an imminent rise in anomie, corruption, divorce, murder, and suicide. Instead, low-income locals became more optimistic about the future as affluent emigrants vacated jobs, creating new opportunities for them and for advancement (Siu-Lun 2001). This is an example of a “retain” factor in the origin society that selectively discouraged low-income residents from emigrating abroad, as they would forgo opportunities of upward mobility in the society of origin. My recently published work (Thomas 2025) highlights relevant factors, such as work promotions, family opposition, aging parents, mortgage challenges, and excellent infrastructure, that discourage many from migrating abroad. In addition, prior scholars have emphasized how, since emigrants also encountered exclusion, resentment, and violence abroad, and host societies often did not recognize or value their credentials, many emigrants eventually returned from abroad (Skeldon and Wang 2016; Wong and Salaff 1998; Thomas 2024). We can understand these as what I conceptualize as “repel factors” (e.g., ethno-racial-religious discrimination, credentialing barriers, cultural alienation, language barrier, lack of occupational mobility, poor transportation infrastructure) in the destination society that make it less attractive to a prospective immigrant. Together, these retain and repel factors comprise countervailing forces that offset the push and pull factors, leading many to become “ambivalently immobile” within a Push-Retain-Pull-Repel Model, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Some attribute the recent increase in emigration to specific socio-political events that occurred between 2019 and 2021 (Fong 2021). These likely rapidly transformed the rationales for migration among emigrants and potential emigrants. Furthermore, these two groups may

differ from each other in terms of characteristics, subjective attitudes, ideologies, and the events they

Figure 1: The Push-Retain-Pull-Repel Model



	Origin	Destination
Pro-Mobility Forces	Push factors: war/political conflict, restrictions on political freedom, economic recession, climate change	Pull factors: higher wages, more political freedom, personal space/work-life balance, career opportunities
Anti-Mobility Forces	Retain factors: work promotions, aging parents, mortgage/challenges in selling property, professional and social ties, cultural capital and language ability	Repel factors: ethnic/racial/religious discrimination, credentialing barriers, cultural alienation, language barrier, occupational immobility, visa restrictions

found most traumatizing. In earlier periods, Hong Kong emigrants were younger, earned more, and were better educated than those who did not emigrate. This reflected how foreign countries typically prefer to admit immigrants with higher socioeconomic status (SES) (state-level selectivity) and how those who aspire to migrate differ from those who do not (individual-level selectivity) (Skeldon 1990).

My research in mainland China shows how these two types of selectivity are often intertwined in paradoxical ways: Governments often design their visa policies in ways that favor issuing visas to applicants with specific indicators of higher SES and social ties in their country of origin that would, paradoxically, make them less interested in migrating. Such indicators comprise what I have defined elsewhere as “immobility-mobility capital” (Thomas,

forthcoming). Such capital can include property ownership, occupational prestige, connections with local family and friends, and the status one has gained in their current job. Such capital is more valuable in a migrant's society of origin than abroad, as is the case with educational credentials and local language fluency (Salaff and Greve 2003; Wong and Salaff 1998). As individuals accumulate such capital throughout the course of life, they increase their legal opportunities to go abroad, but also become less likely to go overseas because this hard-earned capital ties them to their society of residence—a tension I define as the “immobility-mobility paradox”.

This tension helps account for what Carling and Schewel (2018) identify as “adaptive preferences” toward emigration, explaining how potential migrants often do not migrate because they increasingly prioritize local ties over uncertain prospects overseas. This focus on less-researched, negative cases of might-have-been migrants answers a call by migration scholars to go beyond conceptualizing “aspiration [to migrate] as a form of agency and ability as a matter of structural constraints and opportunities” (Carling and Schewel 2018, 985). Even members of a highly mobile population like those in Hong Kong do not necessarily migrate when new opportunities (e.g., British Nationals Overseas (BNO) visas) arise, because discriminatory laws and the relatively lower value of their capital abroad would lead them to give up too much. Even the recent rapid and sudden changes in Hong Kong, which many find undesirable, have still not prompted many to emigrate. Studying how individual and societal factors drive emigration in Hong Kong differently for emigrants and potential emigrants will deepen our understanding of why many individuals still do not migrate in important cases of other societies undergoing rapid social changes.

Hypotheses

I consider four outcomes. The first outcome is the odds of someone emigrating among those in the population who have considered emigrating (estimated using a logistic regression model). The second outcome is the hazard of someone thinking about emigrating since February 2019, when the Hong Kong government proposed a bill that would allow them to extradite criminal suspects to mainland China to stand trial there, which evoked mass protests and later government repression of those protests (estimated with a Cox proportional hazards survival model). The third outcome is the hazard of someone emigrating since the month they first considered emigrating (estimated using a Cox proportional hazards survival model). The fourth model only pertains to those who emigrated. This is the number of months between when an individual first considered emigrating and when they actually emigrated, within my sample of those who emigrated.

I hypothesize that among those who considered emigrating, the emigrants before they emigrate will (relative to those who have not emigrated) have 1) higher socio-economic status, 2) have stronger ties to people outside of Hong Kong, 3) have weaker ties to people who reside in Hong Kong, and 4) be more discontent in their attitude toward China and Hong Kong's government. Furthermore, we observe that those who emigrated were significantly more likely than those who had not emigrated to mention a specific political event during 2019-2023 as one of the three that most motivated them to emigrate. I also observe that the hazard of emigrating since February 2019, as well as since they first emigrated, will be stronger with the above traits. Finally, I hypothesize that among those who emigrated, those who possess all the above characteristics will have a shorter period between when they considered emigrating and when they actually emigrated. I remain hypothetically agnostic on which historical events were more traumatizing and triggering for those who emigrated than those who have not yet emigrated or

affected the speed of emigrating, but simply survey both populations about those that are most well-known during 2019-2024

Survey Data Collected

I first asked participants if they currently resided in Hong Kong so I could distinguish between emigrants and non-emigrants. Based on their answer, I collect data on the month and year participants first considered migrating, and if they did, the month and year when they first emigrated. Although a minority of individuals may have temporarily gone abroad to study with the intention of returning, a CUHK survey conducted in 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 found that around 84.9% specifically stated that some type of recent socio-political change in Hong Kong was a push factor. Social-psychological research suggests that when humans are confronted with sudden adverse or negative experiences, news, or life challenges, they often enter a state of psychological denial or avoidance of such facts rather than immediately confronting and reacting to them (Billings and Moos, 1984; Folkman et al., 1986a). Therefore, many Hong Kong residents may not have believed earlier changes in HK would affect their daily lives as much as they later did, or optimistically thought they could prevent the undesirable changes or adapt easily.

Due to my specific interest in which historical events of 2019 to 2021 most impactfully intersected with individual biographies and how they did so in the context of when they thought of emigrating and when they did so, I also asked participants which three specific events (of many listed) most motivated them to emigrate. I presented a comprehensive list of historical events and allowed participants to select three that most motivated them to emigrate (complete timeline in Appendix A1). I suspected that there might be significant differences in the events they mentioned, depending on whether some events were more psychologically or traumatically triggering for their decision to emigrate.

Below, I outline the literature that pertains to specific groups of variables, justifying their inclusion, and then describe the variables that my model selects. The first group is the socio-demographic variables. Generally, research suggests that younger people are more likely to emigrate than older people (Van Dalen & Hankens, 2007), although the evidence on the association between sex/gender and migration is ambiguous. The British National Overseas (BNO) visa program enables individuals born in Hong Kong when it was still a British colony to have an opportunity to immigrate legally. This especially opened many opportunities for working-class Hong Kongers. Those who have resided in Hong Kong before 1996 are eligible for a BNO visa, or those with a foreign passport can more easily immigrate to other countries, and therefore would be more inclined to do so. In fact, acquiring a foreign citizenship/passport is a reason that some pilot interviewees mention for going abroad. Scholars have found that among those with intentions to migrate, those who actually emigrated were physically healthier (Van Dalen & Henkens, 2013). Many participants in a 300+ participant pilot study strongly encouraged me also to assess participants' mental health, and several interviewees reported experiencing severe post-traumatic stress during the 2019 to 2021 violence and political repression toward the social movement.

For this reason, I decided to include 12 relevant socio-demographic variables. In parentheses below, I include signs to indicate the direction of the association I expect for the likelihood of migration. For the hazard rate and the duration variables, I would expect the opposite signs. So, for example, the negative sign (-) next to age below designates how I would hypothesize that younger individuals are significantly more likely to emigrate, but also the older they are, the greater the number of months between the month February 2019/the month they considered emigrating, and the month they emigrated. For traits about individuals, I have data

on given participant's 1) age (-), 2) whether they were male (+), 3) whether they were born in Hong Kong (-), 4) whether they are eligible for a British National Overseas (BNO) visa (+), 5) how many generations their family has lived in Hong Kong (+), 6) they are a permanent resident of HK (+), 7) a self-score of their physical health (0 to 10) (+), 8) a self-score of their mental health (0 to 10) (+), 9) whether they had been abroad in the previous 5 years (+), 10) whether they have a passport of an OECD country, 11) what percentage of the 2019 protests they participated in (+), and 12) how many times the police arrested them for protesting (+).

Regarding indicators of socio-economic status (SES), scholars have demonstrated that the propensity to migrate increases and decreases as income or salary rises (Massey et al. 1999). SES status also has a subjective dimension, as scholars have demonstrated that immigrants often compare their SES not to people in the country of destination, but rather with respect to those in their society of origin (Massey et al. 1999). This is particularly relevant for Hong Kongers who have taken jobs abroad with considerably lower earnings than they would have received in Hong Kong, as employers abroad often do not recognize their credentials. Therefore, I ask if participants are (were) satisfied with the salary they earn (earned) in Hong Kong to assess their own perception of their SES there. Property is a standard measure of wealth in Hong Kong. Scarce affordable housing is also a significant reason Hong Kongers emigrate (HKIAPS 2021), so as a measure of real estate wealth, I ask participants whether they 1) rent public housing, 2) rent private housing, 3) live in public housing of their parents and contribute to rent, 4) live in public housing of their parents and contribute to rent, 5) own public housing, and 6) own private housing. The higher an individual's education, the more likely they are to emigrate and the more likely they are to have legal opportunities to emigrate (Kapur and McHale, 2005). Those with tertiary education are also stratified in the labor market by whether they went to a selective

university (Waters 2008), so I ask whether participants attended a foreign university or the three most selective HK universities (HKU, CUHK, HKUST). SES inequality also exists between those who studied different disciplines (Torche 2011), so I will note their subject of study. Occupation is an important symbolic indicator of SES, so I collect data on occupation to calculate the participant's and their parents' "occupational prestige score" (Ganzeboom, De Graaf, and Treiman 1992). Finally, pilot interviews suggest that another sign of SES is the geographic scope of travel experience, so I include variables for whether they have traveled to a 1) OECD country and 2) outside of Asia. Some pilot interviewees have reported concerns about how, in their preferred country of destination, they will be less able to afford domestic helpers to care for their pets and children. I also asked how many domestic helpers they employ. I logged the income variables due to their non-normal distributions.

Based on the above, to capture different aspects of socio-economic status, my survey collected data on a participant's 1) individual monthly income (+), 2) household monthly income (+), 3) whether they are satisfied with their income (-), 4) whether they own or rent public or private housing in Hong Kong (proxy for real estate wealth) (-), 5) their years of formal education (+), 6) a score of their and their occupational prestige based on (Ganzeboom and Treiman's occupational prestige score index) (+), 7) whether they studied a science, technology, engineering or mathematics discipline (+), 8) whether they worked in the government (-), 9) their parents' years of education (+), 10) their parents' occupational prestige (+), 11) whether someone else paid for their migration (+), and 12) whether they employ/employed a domestic helper (-).

With respect to social ties, research frequently shows that single individuals are more likely to migrate than those who are married (Massey et al. 1999). Those with close family or friends in

the destination country are more likely to emigrate (Wong and Salaff 1998). However, many potential emigrants have elderly parents or non-adult children in Hong Kong who depend upon them for in-person care. In East Asia, many children learn from school, media, and significant others that they should be loyal and obedient to their parents due to a tradition known as filial piety (Hu and Scott 2016), although this is slowly changing. Many parents also sacrifice a great deal for their children to have a better life and education than they did, and therefore may migrate (Choi and Peng 2016). Older parents may be more opposed to an only child going abroad than those with siblings, due to a desire for care (Ho, 2010). Therefore, ties to retired parents, minor children, and a lack of siblings may make one less inclined to emigrate. Concern about aging parents can serve an important retain factor.

Additionally, the longer a person has worked at their job, the more attached and embedded they are within existing social ties at their workplace. Therefore, they are more reluctant to move. Consequently, I include a measure of the number of years they have worked at their current job. Thus, to measure social ties, I account for whether an individual is 1) married (+), 2) has a retired and aging parent (-), 3) has a child who is a minor (+), 4) has somebody who can support their parents after they leave (+), 5) how much their parent supports them migrating (0 to 10) (+), 6) how much their friends support them in migrating (0 to 10) (+), and 7) how many generations their family has lived in Hong Kong (+).

I also collected data on various cultural, identity-related, and political ideology-related variables. Although inhabitants were evenly divided in 1998 about whether they identify as Hong Konger or Chinese, more of those identifying only as “Hong Konger” said they might emigrate than those identifying as “Chinese” (Siu-Lun 2001). First-generation immigrants to Hong Kong identified more as “Chinese.” The proportion of those emigrating from Hong Kong but born in

China has been low and declined in earlier decades (Skeldon 1990). I also ask whether participants speak English fluently, since if they do, they may be more comfortable emigrating abroad because they can communicate more easily with non-Cantonese-speaking people. I include an optional question for the participant to report what percentage of public protests in 2019 onward they had participated in, and another optional question about whether the police had arrested them for protesting. The reason I include these politically sensitive questions—despite repeated discouragement from some survey administration firms in Hong Kong—is that those who have may have more reason to leave Hong Kong “under duress” due to fears of imprisonment, and since a criminal record can make it challenging to obtain a job. We may observe variability in how many who considered emigrating ultimately emigrated due to differences in how much they perceived the political change as a threat to their safety and freedom, which can be measured through these subjective variables. Finally, various scholars, such as Fong (2021), have emphasized the relative importance of political, economic, and social factors in motivating emigration. Therefore, to capture various aspects of their identity and ideology, I ask whether 1) the strength in their intention to migrate (+), 2) how soon they plan to emigrate (+), 3) the strength in their they identify more mainland Chinese (-) than as Hong Konger or another ethnicity (-), 4) How concerned they are about politics (+), 5) their confidence toward the China’s government (-), 6) their confidence toward Hong Kong’s government (-), 7) their confidence toward Britain’s government (+), 7) how satisfied they are with the economic developments in Hong Kong during the past five years, and 8) how relatively important a) political factors, b) economic factors, and c) social factors were in motivating them to emigrate.

Methods of Data Collection

I distributed both a recruitment script and flyers to anyone who had once considered emigrating from Hong Kong to the lists of survey participants of three large survey firms—Public Opinion Research Institute, Dynata, and Social Policy Research, which Hong Kong scholars sample from ideologically complementary populations. This enabled me to distribute my script to many participants for a fee. I also shared my survey with Hong Kong affiliated student organizations around the world, schools and pastors of Cantonese congregations at all churches near all Metropolitan Transportation Rail stations in Hong Kong and all churches with Cantonese congregations in various cities with large Hong Kong populations in Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand, Singapore, Taiwan, and the United States, leaders of community organizations in Hong Kong and various cities with large Hong Kong populations in Australia, Britain, Canada, Germany, South Korea, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, Taiwan, and the US, and Hong Kong affiliated community centers and restaurants that are popular amongst Hong Kongers in the above countries. The total number of survey participants was 4,585, which, to my knowledge, is one of the largest surveys of Hong Kongers ever conducted.

My recruitment script asks them if they would be willing to participate in an anonymous and confidential online survey accessible on both computers and phones that the research ethics committee at Corvinus University of Budapest has approved. For completing the survey, participants received \$5 USD. I did not collect any names or other personally identifying information, except for contact information such as emails and phone numbers, from the 10 percent of participants who agreed to participate in in-depth oral history interviews (for compensation of \$10/hour). Such interviews enabled interviewers to obtain more narrative-based historical data on how their emigration intentions and actions evolved over time, qualitative data

of which I draw upon here to substantiate my quantitative results. I will analyze this data more deeply in other papers and the remaining chapters of a book manuscript, due to the lack of space.

I anticipate that non-response is greater for individuals who have not yet emigrated than for those who have, due to the fact that they, their family, and their friends are more vulnerable to potential retaliation. To address item-level response, I employ the Midas Touch method with 40 rounds of random imputations using the multiple imputation with changed equation (mice) package in R to handle item-level missing data due to non-response.

Methods For Analyzing the Data:

I have four different types of regression models from which I report results. The first is a logistic regression model that estimates the odds that an individual in the population of Hong Kongers who considered emigrating has emigrated. The second is a Cox proportional hazards survival model that estimates the hazard rate of an individual considering emigration since February 2019, when the Hong Kong government first proposed the extradition bill amendment. The third is a Cox proportional hazards survival model that estimates the hazard rate that an individual emigrated since the month and year they first considered emigrating. The Cox Proportional Hazards Survival Model provides more conservative results than the logistic regression because my data is not cross sectional and Cox better accounts for left censoring and right censoring by taking the time variable as the number of months between the month they considered emigrating and the month they emigrated (for emigrants) or the month of the survey (for those who had not emigrated).¹ I test the viability of the proportional hazards assumption with the `cox.zph` command from the survival package. These tests yielded a mean p-value from the global test that is well above 0.05 overall for all models (and nearly all their constituent

¹ I tested for the proportional hazards assumption with a chi square test and found no serious violation of it.

variables) that I tested, except one that I estimated for the number of months from February 2019 until they emigrated, and which I conservatively exclude the results and discussion from the text, as I am less confident of their viability. The non-significant p-value is statistical evidence that my models do not violate the assumption that the hazard of emigrating or thinking of emigrating for those who emigrated is proportional to that for those who did not emigrate, across all variables. Finally, to purely measure the speed with which Hong Kongers emigrate, I run an Ordinary Least Squares regression on the number of months between the month the Hong Kongers in the dataset who emigrated first considered emigrating and the month they emigrated. I do not apply population weights from the Hong Kong Census to adjust for individual-level non-response because the sample is not representative of general Hong Konger population, no registry or census data is available for all Hong Kongers who considered emigrating, and those with a propensity to emigrate tend to differ in many ways from the general population.

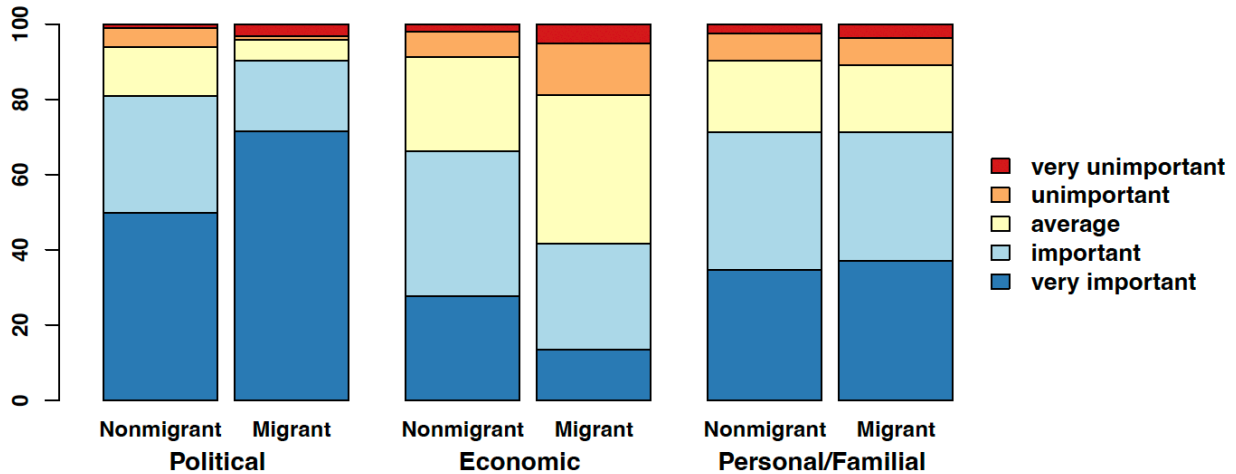
Results

Descriptive Results

Descriptive statistics for my sample are presented in Table A1 of the appendix. Roughly 20% of survey participants had emigrated, and 80% had only considered emigrating but had not yet done so at the time of the survey. Figure 2 shows the relative importance of different factors. As one can clearly see, political factors are most important (4.6 on a scale of 0 to 5), followed by personal/familial factors (4) and economic factors (3.6). However, we also observe some statistically significant differences between emigrants and non-emigrants. Compared to non-emigrants, emigrants considered political factors to be more important and economic factors less important in their decision to emigrate from Hong Kong (both $p < 0.001$ for a t-test and chi-square test of difference). In contrast, personal/familial factors are of roughly the same

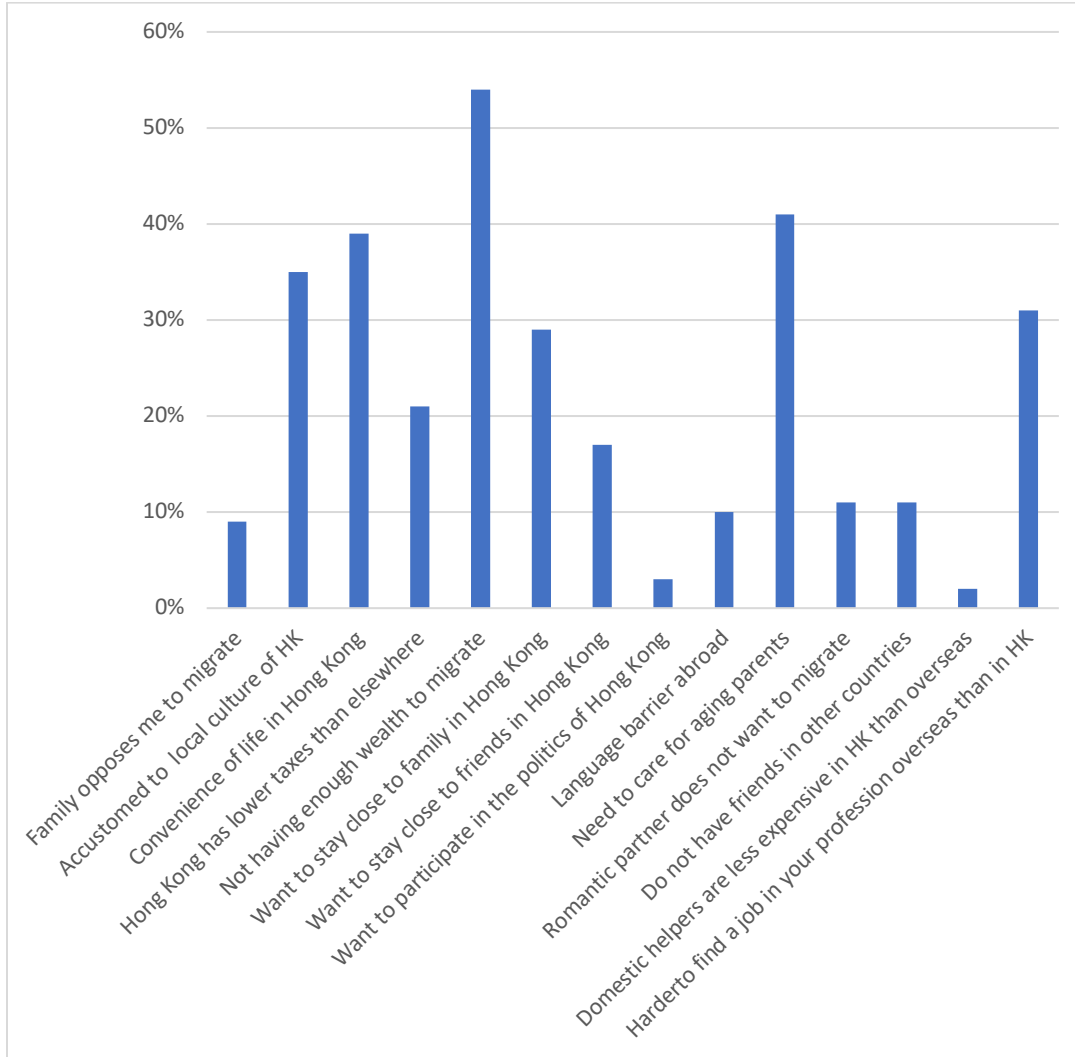
importance for both groups and not significantly different. (p=0.9 for a t-test and chi-square test of difference)

Figure 2: Relative Importance of Different Factors In Motivating One To Emigrate



To bolster support for the Push-Retain-Pull-Repel model and better understand the reasons why more Hong Kongers have not emigrated since 2019, Figure 3 presents a histogram of the percentage of potential migrant participants who cited different reasons for not migrating when asked. The most common reason given for not migrating is a lack of financial resources (55%), followed by the need to care for aging parents (42%), the convenience of life in Hong Kong (38%), being accustomed to the local culture of Hong Kong (35%), partner does not want to emigrate (11%), and a desire to stay close to family/friends in Hong Kong (20%/16%), all of which can be understood as retention factors. Repel factors include the fact that it is harder to find a job in one’s chosen career abroad than in Hong Kong (31%, likely due to credentialing barriers), the language barrier abroad (10%), the higher taxes abroad compared to Hong Kong (21%), and not having friends abroad (11%).

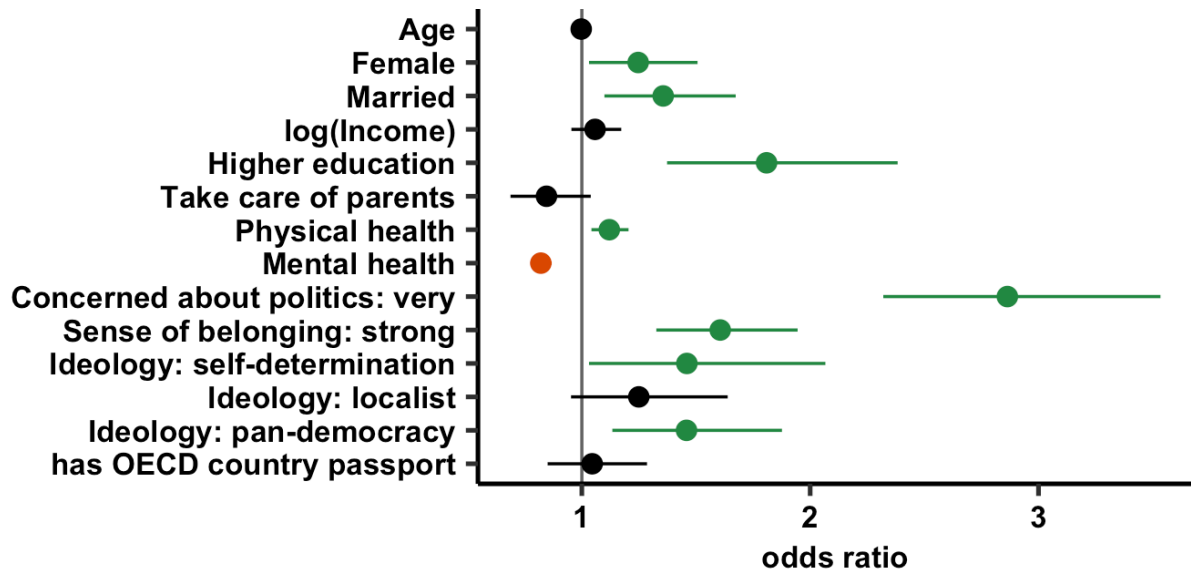
Figure 3: Reasons Given For Why Potential Immigrants Have Not Yet Emigrated From Hong Kong



Regression Results

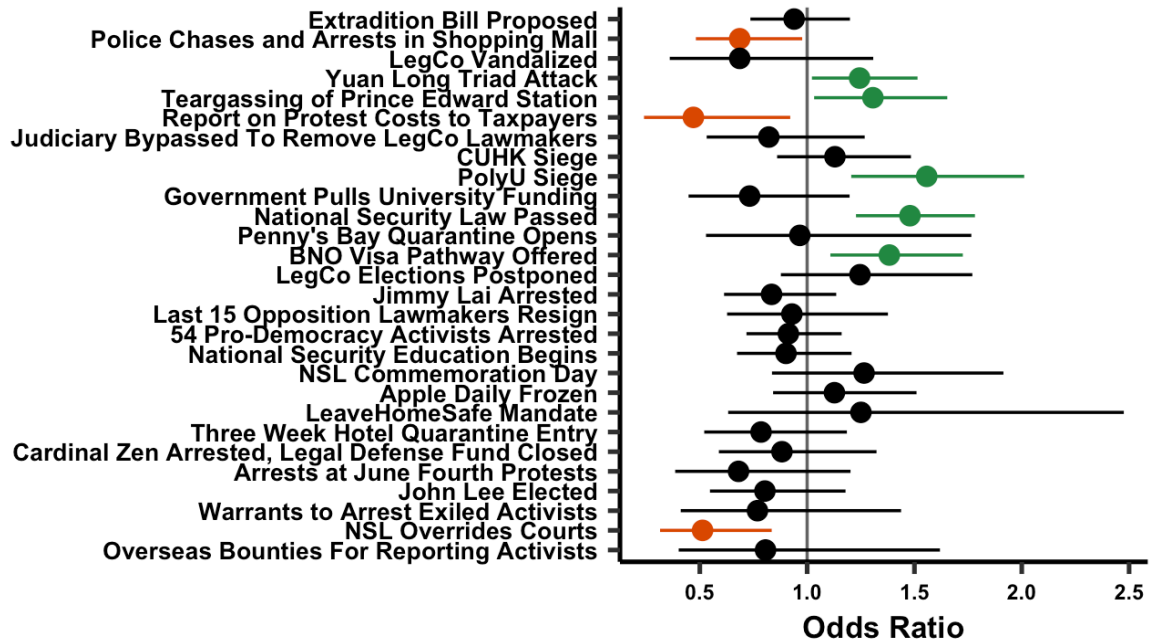
The regression coefficients, confidence intervals, and p-values for all variables in all models are presented in Tables A2 and A3. Figure 4 plots the coefficients from the logistic regression of whether a potential migrant emigrated, using individual-level variables. The logistic regression models of what most significantly and positively predicted a higher likelihood of emigrating revealed that those participants were female (OR=1.27, p=0.0134), married (OR=1.3, p= 0.012), college-educated (OR=1.77, p<0.001), relatively more physically healthy (OR=1.118, p<0.01), very concerned about politics (OR=2.77, p<0.001)), had a strong sense of

Figure 4: Estimates From a Logistic Regression of the Odds That a Hong Konger Who Considered Emigrating Emigrates on Individual-Level Traits (N=3784)



belonging (OR=1.594, $p<0.001$), was healthier (OR=1.15, $p<0.001$), and was ideologically pan-democrat (OR=1.425, $p<0.001$) compared to those who were not. The worse a potential emigrant's mental health (OR=0.819, $p<0.001$), the more likely they were to emigrate. Traits such as their age, income, physical health, whether they had lacked someone else to care for their aging parents, and possession of an OECD passport were not statistically significant in their association with the odds of emigrating.

Figure 5: Logistic Regression Model of Odds of Emigrating on Whether Participant Mentioned One of Three Events as Those That Most Triggered Them To Emigrate (N=3,784)



In another logistic model, I regress whether participants mentioned a specific event as one of the three that most triggered them to emigrate (coefficients plotted in Figure 5), I found that

emigrants were only significantly more likely than non-emigrants to mention five events as one of the three that most motivated them to emigrate: 1) the attack by armed gangs against protestors on July 21st, 2019 at Yuen Long station during which police arrived late and did not vigorously intervening (Odds Ratio (OR)=1.25, $p < 0.0233$) 2) the police teargassing protestors inside Prince Edward station on July 21st, 2019 (OR= 1.2790, $p < 0.039$), 3) the siege at Polytechnic University on November 18th, 2019 (OR= 1.58, $p < 0.001$), 4) China's Central Government on June 30th, 2020 passing National Security Law (NSL) against separatism, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign powers with penalties up to life imprisonment (OR=1.47, $p < 0.001$), and 5) the British government announcing on July 22nd, 2020 that Hong Kong citizens born before July 1, 1997, can apply for British Nationals Overseas passport and settle in the UK (OR=1.4, $p < 0.001$). Except for the powerful pull factor of the BNO visa offer,

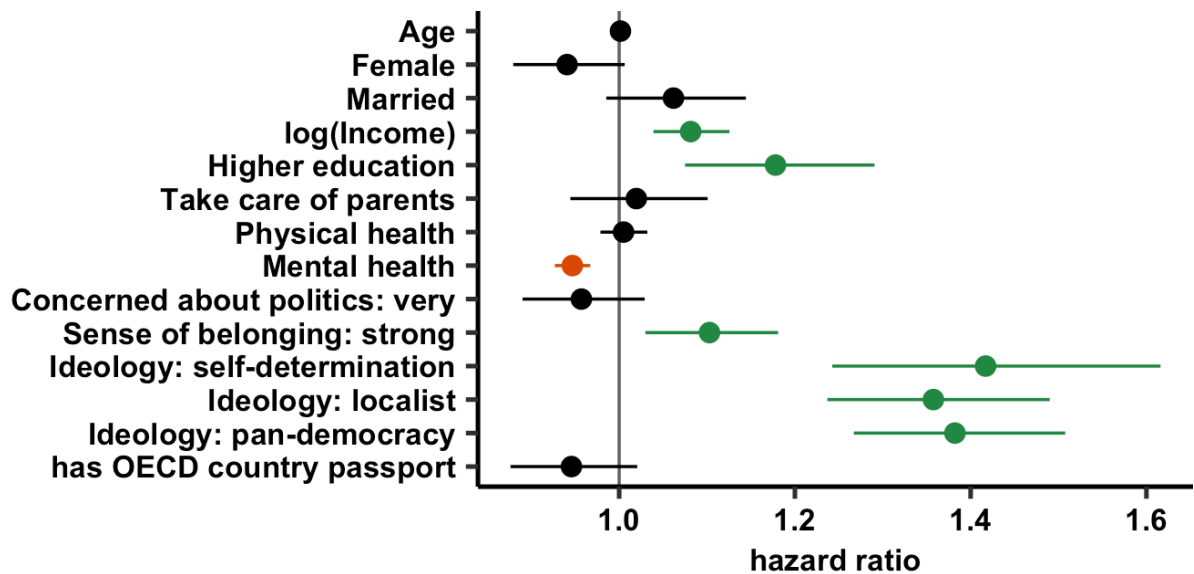
oral life history interview participants have repeatedly described these historical events as so shocking that they significantly altered their sense of safety and made them feel less secure about continuing to live in Hong Kong. Note that what all these events have in common is that they were all instances in which the government or police engaged in activities that aimed to repress assembly or speech that was critical of the government of Hong Kong or China.

In contrast, I found that those who had not yet emigrated were significantly more likely to than emigrants to mention a different type of events as one of the three that reduced the odds of them to consider emigrating: 1) the “running battles” on June 14th, 2019 in shopping malls in which non-protestors found themselves caught up in the violence and brutality of police officers chasing and arresting protestors (OR=0.7. $p=0.04$), 2) the government reporting on November 7th, 2019 that vandalism and property destruction by Hong Kong protestors with fires, petrol bombs, and pavement brick removal had damaged 91% of all MTR stations and would cost taxpayers \$10.5 million HKD dollars in property maintenance costs. (OR=0.54, $p<0.0494$), and 3) the Hong Kong government on August 8th, 2023 ordering the judiciary to refrain from intervening in national security matters (OR=0.877, $p<0.001$), These events instead reflected the general level of instability and violence between the government and the protestors. Therefore, such Hong Kongers may have been less inclined to emigrate from Hong Kong once they later saw that the government would prevail in repressing the protests and the turmoil caused by the conflict between protesters and the government. Such participants likely were less concerned about political repression but what they perceived as the chaos that resulted from protestor-government conflicts.

I then run a Cox proportional hazards survival model on my data, which estimates the hazard rate of a potential migrant emigrating from February 2019 until the month they

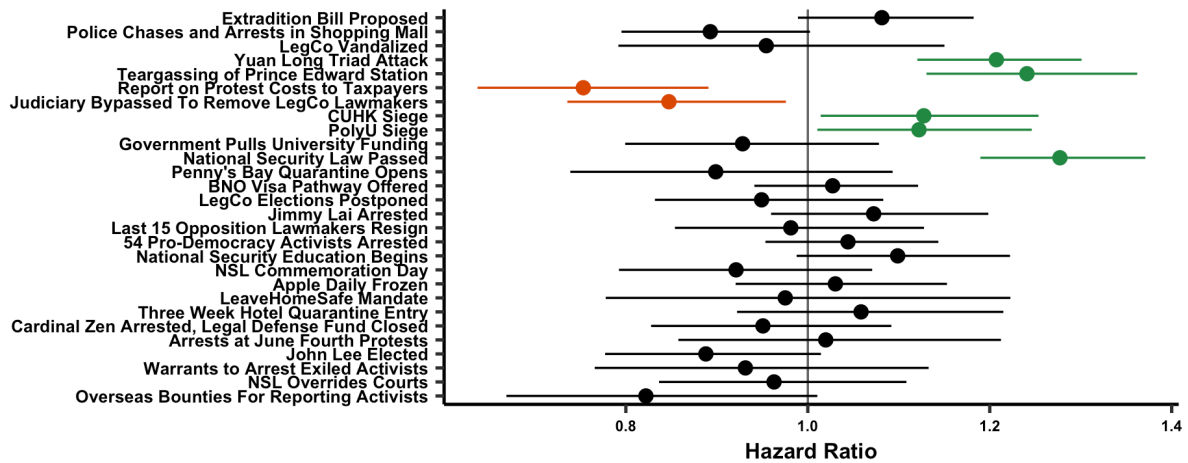
considered emigrating, by regressing this on individual traits. Coefficient plots for this and the following Cox Model are in Figure 5. Potential emigrants who had a higher income per capita (OR=1.07, $p<0.001$), had attended college (OR=1.16, $p<0.001$), had a strong sense of belonging (OR=1.11, $p=0.004$), or were (relative to those who identified pro-establishment or moderate/neutral) ideologically self-determinist (OR=1.42, $p<0.001$), localist (OR=1.36, $p<0.001$), or pan-democratic (OR=1.38, $p<0.001$) were more at risk to think about emigrating than those who lacked these traits. The poorer the mental health of a participant, the more at risk they were to consider emigrating (OR=0.95, $p<0.001$). Unlike the risk factors that disposed one to emigrate, those who were married, needed someone to care for their parents, had better physical health, or possessed a passport from an OECD country were no more likely to consider emigrating.

Figure 6: Cox Proportional Hazards Survival Model of Hazard Ratios of months from February 2019 To When Potential Emigrants Considered Emigrating, Regressed On Individual Traits (N=3,784)



A participant who mentioned one of the five distinct events as one of the three that increased the risk of them considering emigration was significantly associated with the hazard rate of emigration after February 2019. These five events were 1) the attack of protestors on July 21st, 2019 by armed gangs at Yuan Long station in which the police arrived later and did not quickly intervene (HR=1.26, p<0.0233), 2) the police teargassing Prince Edward station on August 31st, 2019 (HR=1.2344,, p<0.001), 3) the siege of the Chinese University of Hong Kong on the November 12th, 2019 (HR=1.116, p=0.041), 4) the siege of Polytechnic University of Hong Kong on November 18th, 2019 (HR=

Figure 7: Cox Proportional Hazards Survival Model of Hazard Ratios of months from February 2019, On Mention of Specific Events as Most Triggering (N=3,784)



1.12, p<0.03, and 5) the Central Government passed the National Security Law (NSL) against separatism, subversion, terrorism, and collusion with foreign powers with penalties up to life imprisonment on June 30th, 2020 (HR=1.284, p<0.001). Unlike in the logistic regression model, the British National Overseas visa offer did not significantly increase the risk of Hong Kongers considering emigration, as it actually spurred people to emigrate. Again, the events that triggered

thoughts of emigrating were all instances of the government restricting and repressing the freedom of people to assemble, protest, or exercise their freedom of speech.

A participant considering emigration who mentioned one of the two distinct events as one of the three that increased the risk of emigration was significantly associated with the hazard rate of emigration after February 2019. These two events were 1) the police arresting and charged six pan-democratic lawmakers on May 11th, 2019 (HR=0.84, p=0.021) and 2) the November 7th, 2019 report by the government that vandalism and property destruction by Hong Kong protestors with fires, petrol bombs, and pavement brick removal had damaged 91% of all MTR stations and would cost taxpayers \$10.5 million HKD dollars to repair (HR=0.75, p<0.001). Unlike the logistic regression model, potential emigrants who mentioned the Hong Kong government ordering the judiciary to refrain from intervening in national security matters were not associated with the risk of considering emigration. Yet, like in the logistic regression models, these all relate to a general concern about the collapse of a stable political order in society.

Figure 8 presents the results from a second Cox model, which estimates the hazard rate based on the number of months between when a survey participant considered emigrating and when they actually emigrated (or took the survey if they did not emigrate). Similar to the logistic regression model, a potential emigrant is at higher risk of emigrating if they are female (HR=1.23, p=0.012), married (HR=1.25, p=0.006), college educated (HR=1.525, p<0.001), physically healthy (HR=1.2, p<0.01), very concerned about politics rather than not or only a little concerned (HR=2.59, p<0.001), had a strong sense of belonging to Hong Kong (HR=1.51, p<0.001), or were ideologically pan-democrat (HR=1.26, p=0.04). As before, for every point an individual higher a participant evaluated their mental health in Hong Kong, they were at 16% higher risk of emigrating (HR=1.16, p<0.001). Likely due to the way the Cox survival model

more rigorously accounts for the fact that those who have not yet emigrated might still emigrate later than the logistic regression model, this Cox model estimates that those who are ideologically self-determinist or localist are not at significantly higher risk of emigrating from Hong Kong—in contrast to the Cox model predicting the hazard of them thinking about emigrating, for which embracing all three oppositional ideologies were statistically significant.

The hazard that a participant who thought about emigrating before later emigrated increased if they mentioned as one of the top three events that most triggered them to emigrate (in descending orders of magnitude) 1) the Central Government on June 30th, 2020 passing National Security Law (NSL) against separatism, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign powers with penalties up to life imprisonment (HR=1.28, p<0.001), 2) criminal gangs attacking protestors at Yuen Long and police officers arriving late and not intervening on July 21st, 2019 (HR=1.24, p<0.001), 3) the police tear

Figure 8: Hazard Ratios From Cox Proportional Hazards Survival Models of Number of Months from When They Thought of Emigrating Until When They Emigrated or Took the Survey On Individual Traits (N=3,784)

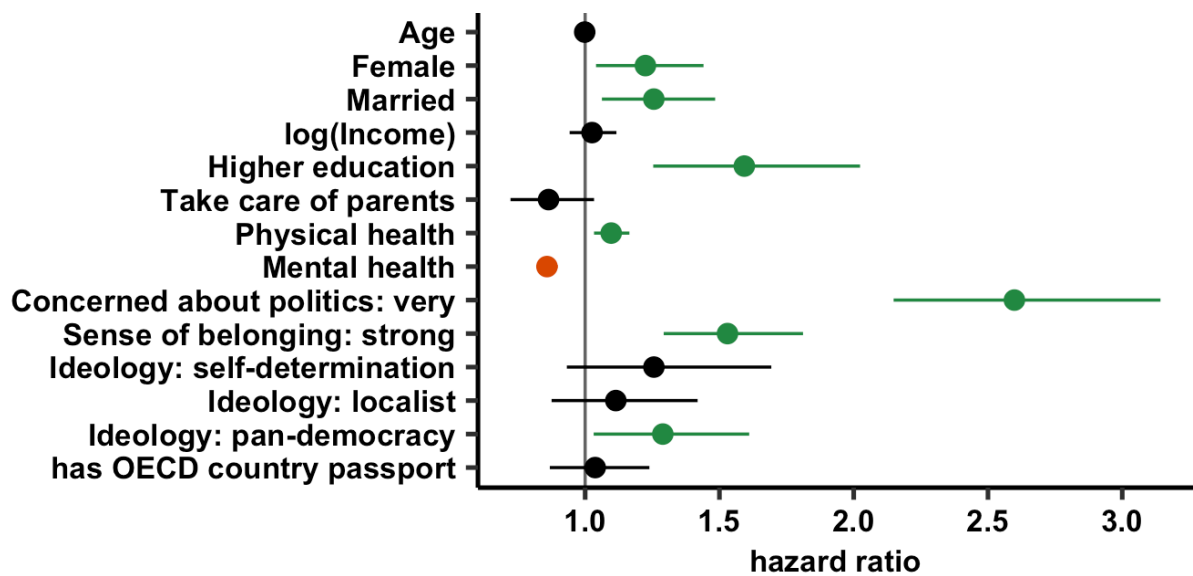
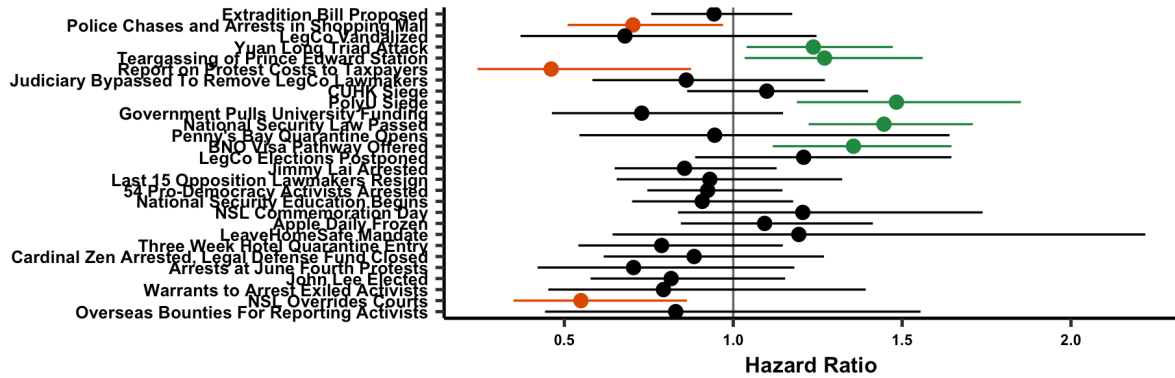


Figure 9: Hazard Ratios From Cox Proportional Hazards Survival Models of Number of Months from When They Thought of Emigrating Until When They Emigrated or Took the Survey On Whether They Mentioned Historical Events (N=3,784)

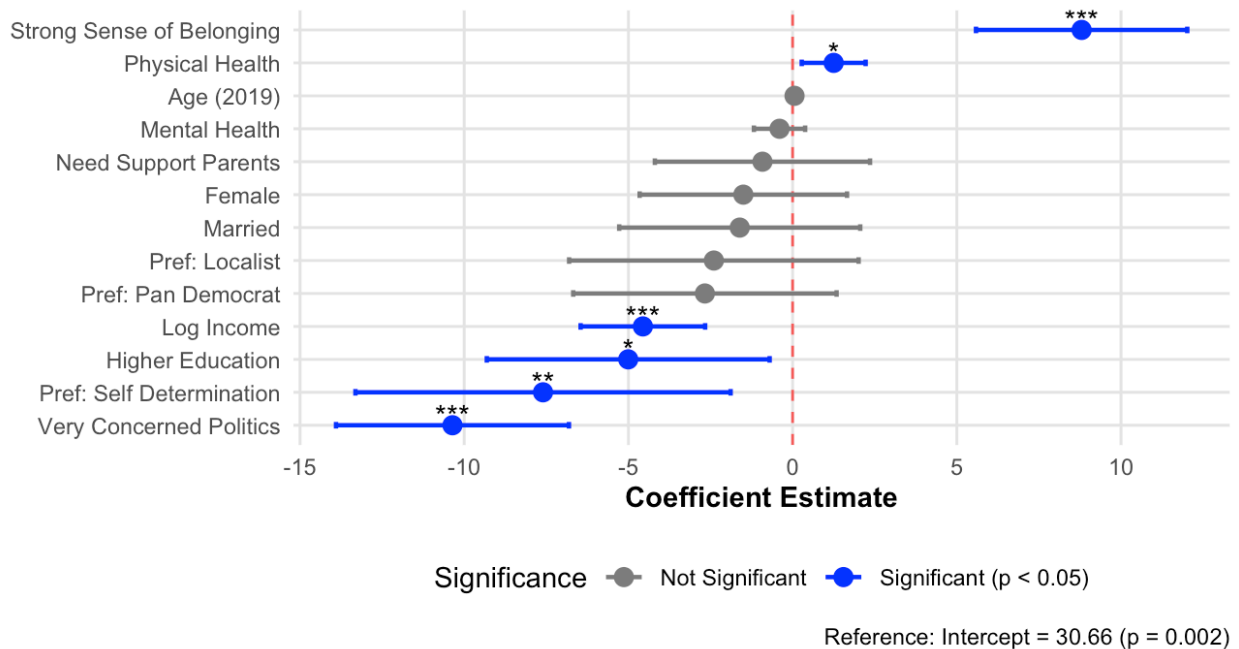


gassing of Prince Edward station on August 31st, 2019 (HR=1.205, p<0.001), 4) the siege of the Chinese University of Hong Kong on November 12th, 2019 (HR=1.12,, p=0.035), and 5) the siege of the Polytechnic University of Hong Kong on November 18th, 2019 (HR=1.12, p=0.023), Although the passing of the NSL was the latest turning point in limiting the amount of dissent, oral life history interview data I collected from follow-up interviews suggest that many have traumatic memories of these events, which happened sequentially compounded over time to lead growing numbers to consider emigrating. Again, all these historical events were dramatic displays of how determined the Hong Kong government was to repress those who protested or criticized it or China’s government.

In contrast, the historical events that significantly reduced the hazard a Hong Konger emigrated after considering to do so were (in descending orders of magnitude) were 1) shoppers becoming caught up in “running battles” as police chased protestors in malls on June 14th, 2019 (HR=1.11, p=0.045), 2) the government reporting on November 7th, 2019 that vandalism and property destruction by Hong Kong protestors with fires, petrol bombs, and pavement brick removal had damaged 91% of all MTR stations and would cost taxpayers \$10.5 million HKD

dollars in property maintenance costs. (HR=0.76, p=0.001), and 3) police arresting and charging six pan-democratic lawmakers for fighting in the Legislative Council on May 11th, 2019 (HR=0.83, p=0.015). All these events notably happened in 2019 and were distinct from those that raised the hazard of Hong Kongers considering emigration insofar as they may have induced Hong Kongers to view the protests in a more costly and disorderly manner.

Figure 10: Duration (OLS) Linear Regression Model of Number of Months Between Thought of Emigrating and Emigrated On Individual Traits (N=3,942)



Finally, I run my duration models, which only regress the number of months that passed between when an emigrant considered emigrating and when they actually emigrated on various predictors to assess purely the speed with which they emigrate. Among the statistically significant predictors, I find migrants emigrated 4.5 months more rapidly on average for each additional logged unit of income, 5 months more quickly on average for each year of education they had, and 1.2 months more slowly for each additional point of self-rated physical health.

Migrants also emigrated 10 months more rapidly if they were very concerned about politics than if they were not concerned or only somewhat concerned. Those who had a strong sense of belonging had emigrated 8.8 months more slowly on average than those with a weak or moderate sense of belonging. Finally, those emigrants who were ideologically self-determinist migrated 7.5 months more rapidly than those who were pro-establishment or moderate in political ideologically. Notably, those who were ideologically localist or pan-democrat emigrated 2.4 and 2.6 months more rapidly than those who were moderate, but this difference was not statistically significant. Being female, married, older, and having better mental health was not significantly associated with how soon after migrants thought of emigrating they emigrated.

Figure 11: Duration (OLS) Linear Regression Model of Number of Months Between Thought of Emigrating to Emigrated On Mention of Specific Historical Events as Most Traumatizing/Triggering of Thoughts to Emigrate (N=3,942)

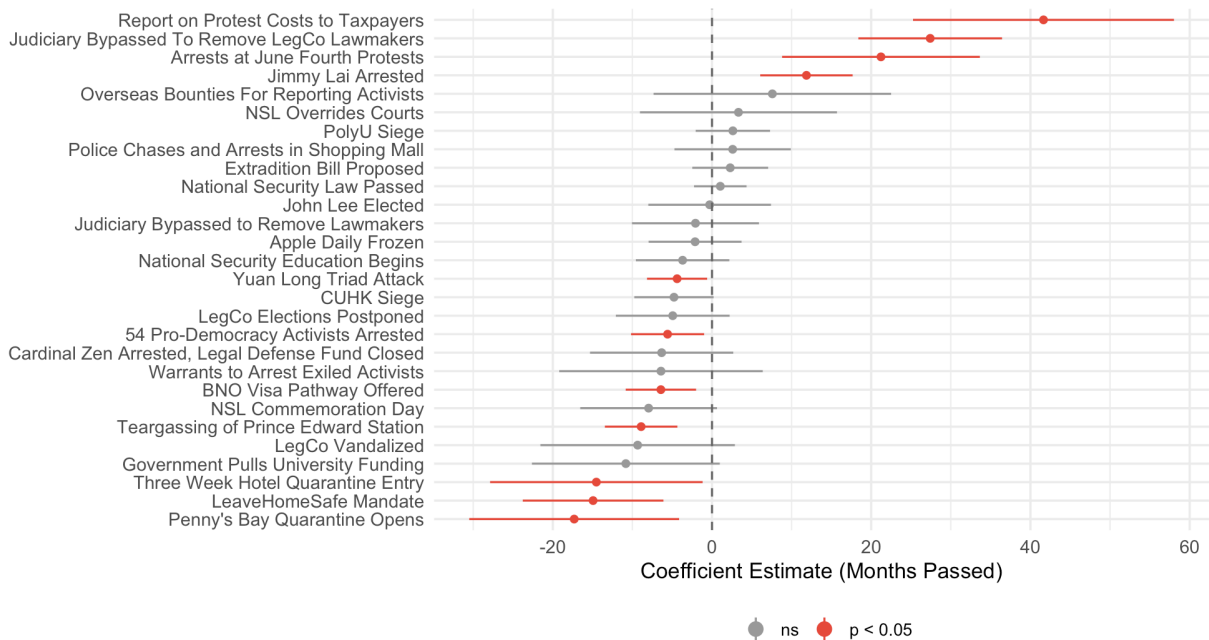


Figure 11 shows how migrants emigrated more rapidly if they mentioned as one of the three historical events that was most traumatizing and triggering events for them to emigrate 1) the

opening and forced quarantining of people at Penny's Bay Quarantine (-17 weeks more rapidly on average), 2) requiring residents to show on the "Leave Home Safe" application that they had a vaccination for COVID before they could enter indoor spaces (14.9 weeks more rapidly) 3) the government requiring those entering Hong Kong to pay to quarantine in a hotel for three weeks (14.5 weeks more rapidly). Thus, for participants in general, it was not specifically the events related to the repression of the political opposition that most accelerated the emigration of those who emigrated, but rather the heavy-handed approach of the Hong Kong government, which, for both politically conscious and non-politically conscious migrants, made it urgent that they leave. Other events more related to the contentious politics that sped up how quickly migrants emigrated include 1) the tear-gassing of Prince Edward station (8.9 months more rapidly), 2) announcement of the BNO visa by Britain (6.4 months more rapidly), 3) arrest of the 54 activist opposition politicians (5.5 months more quickly), and 4) the attacks by triads of protestors at Yuen Long station (4.3 months more rapidly). Those who took significantly longer than average to emigrate tended to mention as most traumatizing and triggering 1) when the government issued a report that vandalism to public and private property would cost taxpayers \$10.5 million HKD dollars in property maintenance costs (41.6 weeks more slowly), 2) when the government first began arresting and charging lawmakers in legislative council (27.4 weeks more slowly), 3) when police began to arrest Hong Kong residents for attending the June 4th vigil in honor of those protest movement crushed by China's government on June 4th, 1989 (21.2 weeks more slowly), and 4) the arrest of Jimmy Lai (11.86 weeks more slowly). We thus see how what historical events that most emotionally and psychologically impacted seems to be associated with the speed with which emigrants from Hong Kong have emigrated, with some events accelerating the departure far more than others, a subject we explore in more depth in our oral history

interviews to understand why some events (introduction of bio medical controls, the Prince Edward teargassing, the Yuen Long attacks) may have been experienced as far more threatening than others (reports of how much it would cost taxpayers to repair the city due to the protestor-government conflict or the arrest of politicians.)

Discussion

Based on a more rigorous design to measure migrant selectivity and a broader range of parameters than previous analyses of migrant selectivity, my results reveal evidence of correlates for why more people who have considered emigrating from Hong Kong have not emigrated, even after several years or decades have passed since Hong Kong underwent substantial political repression. Within the large sample of Hong Kongers who considered emigrating, I found that only a minority of Hong Kongers who have emigrated since 2019 were, as prior scholars of selectivity found, more likely to have higher education and be physically healthy than the much larger population of those who have considered emigrating but have not yet done so. Although many indicated that financial resources were the major constraint, the descriptive data suggest that political factors were much more strongly motivating for Hong Kongers to emigrate than economic factors, especially for those who ultimately emigrated. Likely due to this, although the higher one's income, the more a Hongkonger is at a significantly higher risk of considering emigration, ultimately, I found no evidence that, within the population of Hongkongers who considered emigrating, those who emigrated had significantly higher incomes than those who did not. My results suggest that the population of individuals who consider emigrating but never do tends to value economic factors more than political factors compared to those who have actually emigrated. Women and married Hong Kongers were not at any greater risk of considering emigration since 2019 than men and single people; however, once they had considered

emigrating, they were at a significantly higher risk of emigrating and tended to do so more rapidly. Through qualitative oral history interviews, we learned from parents that many feared that China's government would indoctrinate their children through its new curriculum in National Security Education, which aims to instill loyalty and patriotism toward the Chinese government in young students. Given the greater coordination difficulties of a married couple to migrate together than a single person, data from oral history interviews suggests that married potential emigrants may be more likely to emigrate than single emigrants because they wish that their current child or their future children not be indoctrinated under Hong Kong's new national security education curriculum. This push factor likely explains why married people had higher odds of emigrating, even though this challenges the previous discovery of most migration research in more politically stable contexts, which suggests that non-married individuals are more likely to emigrate than married individuals. Although much research on transnational migration and some of the interviewees in my pilot study strongly indicated that Hong Kongers with an OECD country passport would be less likely to emigrate, I failed to reject the null hypothesis that this was significantly associated with their risk of emigration.

Although my prior research in mainland China (Thomas 2025), responses by participants about why they have not yet emigrated,, and many Hong Kongers in interviews have all suggested that filial piety and a desire to be around to take care of one's aging parents is an important reason why many do not emigrate abroad, I found that not having someone available to take care of one's parents was negatively but not significantly associated with the hazard of a potential migrant emigrating. Corroborating decades of research about how emigrants are healthier than those they leave behind (Riosmena et al. 2013, Ro & Fleischer 2014), I found that

among those who considered emigrating, those who are more physically healthy have a higher risk of emigrating.

Yet arguably the most novel and surprising findings of this study relate to how those who emigrate are selectively distinct from those who consider emigrating about a range of psychological dimensions and their subjective experience in 2019. First, the poorer the mental health of a Hong Konger who has considered emigrating, the more at risk they are of emigrating. In the context of 2019, this likely suggests that the more traumatized a Hong Konger was by the dramatic events, all else equal, the greater the hazard and speed with which they emigrated. This suggests that those with better mental health may be able to psychologically cope with the changes and not impulsively emigrate. This leads to a pessimistic implication that many of those most traumatized by the events of 2019 and subsequent years are less likely to emigrate than they were beforehand, and therefore are unlikely to escape the source of their distress. Furthermore, among emigrants, the better the mental health of a given participant, the fewer the number of months between when they first considered emigrating and when they emigrated, suggesting that the migrant selectivity based on an individual's mental health may be an important subject of analysis behind future research about both the risk and speed of emigration.

The most powerful subjective parameter, however, for how much at risk they are of emigrating once they have considered emigrating, is whether a Hong Konger is very concerned about politics (rather than only slightly concerned or not concerned at all), which raises their risk of emigrating by 57% (HR=1.57). In contrast, being very concerned about politics did not significantly raise the hazard that they consider emigrating, suggesting that this is probably the one subjective trait that most distinguishes those who emigrate and those who do not within the population of those who consider emigrating.

At first glance, the most puzzling result is that those who had a strong sense of belonging to “Hong Kong” were at a significantly greater risk of emigrating than those who had no such sense of belonging. Yet after multiple in-depth oral life history interviews, I came to understand that this was because when asked this question, many were not thinking about the Hong Kong that was to be part of China in the future, and which many did not recognize as Hong Kong at all, but instead the Hong Kong of the past that many Hong Kongers nostalgically were attached to. So strong was this sense of belonging to the Hong Kong of the past that those who felt it may have found it too psychologically painful to remain in Hong Kong and witness it change and adapt. This fondness for what Hong Kong was and corresponding aversion to what it was becoming likely to further made those who considered emigrating more motivated to actually migrate than those who considered emigrating but were not so attached to Hong Kong in the past and were more psychologically open and even optimistic about what it would become as it further integrated itself as part of China.

Finally, the results about the attitudes and political ideology point to an evident phenomenon of ideological selectivity in out-migration and therefore an international case of what American political scientists conceptualize as “political sorting” (Martin and Webster 2020) but operating at the global level: Basically, those who emigrate have significantly more antipathetic sentiments toward China’s government than those who merely say they have considered emigrating, increasing the overall legitimacy of China’s government in the Hong Kong population, all else equal. My first Cox model demonstrated that a variety of potential emigrants with ideologies opposed to China’s government were at a much greater risk of considering emigration than those who are ideologically neutral/moderate when it comes to politics, or pro-establishment (favorable toward the Chinese Communist Party). This included 1) “pan-democrats” (who

believe that Hong Kong should have a pan-democratic government that allows all political parties and candidates to run for office even if some are critical of China's government), 2) self-determinists (e.g., those who believe Hong Kong should be able to determine its own affairs independently of China as the city-state of Singapore does, regardless of the resulting political system), and 3) "localists" (those who believe that local Hong Kong government should prioritize care of its own people over that of mainland Chinese and other foreigners in its pursuit to integrate more with mainland China). However, within the population of Hong Kongers who have considered emigrating, only those who are ideologically pan-democratic were at greater risk of emigrating. Based on the oral life history interviews I have conducted thus far, I gather that this was likely because they are willing to migrate to a more democratic society than self-determinists and localists, as they would feel more suitable than adapting to an autocratizing polity. In contrast, despite being deeply discontented, localists and (to a lesser extent) self-determinists do not perceive foreign societies as attractive ways to fulfill their goals of preserving Hong Kong culture and being a part of a polity that they believe would represent them well. As pan-democrats emigrate at a higher rate than Hong Kongers with other political ideologies and increasing numbers of mainland Chinese immigrate into the city, this has demographically transformed Hong Kong into a population that overall—even if many desire to go abroad—has a larger proportion who are less ideologically pan-democratic and more supportive of China's central government, bolstering Chinese Communist Party's overall political legitimacy in Hong Kong.

Finally, I have introduced a new approach to studying the selectivity of historical memory by examining Hong Kongers who emigrated and those who only considered emigration as an option. I found that they differ from each other in terms of which of the many turbulent events

from 2019 to 2023 most motivated them to emigrate. The event that most strongly drove Hong Kongers who considered emigrating actually to do so, but did not have the same impact on those who only considered emigrating, was the passing of the National Security Law in 2020. Britain's offer of the BNO visa also strongly increased the hazard that those who considered emigrating finally did so, and may have served either as a way for pan-democrats to migrate to a more democratic polity or provide a new opportunity for economically-driven migrants to migrate to Britain who, due to financial constraints, never had a chance to do so previously. The British National Overseas (BNO) visa developed by Britain's Johnson administration was a highly effective policy and pull factor behind a massive transfer of Hong Kongers to Britain. Although Britain clearly benefited from an influx of financial, human, and social capital brought in by Hong Kongers, one of the reasons why the flow was so large was that this flow comprised not merely refugees motivated to migrate for political reasons but also many working-class economic Hong Kongers who under a previous more restrictive policy never had viewed migrating to Britain as even a possibility. Since only Hong Kongers who resided in Hong Kong for any year before Britain returned Hong Kong to China are eligible, the BNO policy has effectively removed a large chunk of the British Hong Kong-era society from Hong Kong, so that a larger proportion of the population now has no memory of the post-British Hong Kong era.

In contrast, the three events that non-emigrants mentioned far more often than emigrants as what most triggered them to emigrate also provide clues as to why, over time, their desire to emigrate declined. The chaotic pursuits Hong Kongers observed in shopping malls, the physical fights that broke out between opposing politicians in the Legislative Council, and calculations of the enormous cost to taxpayers due to the damage to public property alone (not to mention private property) all seemed to reduce their desire of many potential emigrants to emigrate, as the

government managed to address these issues as it repressed conflict within civil society through by repressing protestors with the police and restricting freedom of speech and press in civil society.

Of course, many other events were widely mentioned by survey participants—like the government freezing of Apple Daily’s funds and arresting Jimmy Lai, the postponement of the legislative council elections, and the imposition of a three week hotel quarantine for anyone entering Hong Kong from abroad—many even frequently mentioned, yet unlike the above mentioned events we do not observe such a great inequality in whether emigrants and potential emigrants considered such events to be the most consequential in their decision to emigrate.

Conclusion

At the theoretical level, this study offers three contributions to the study of migrant selectivity and the explanatory models of international migration, The first contribution is a more rigorous study of migrant selectivity than previous studies in that in politically tumultuous context the survey design systematically compared data from emigrants before they emigrated to those still in Hong Kong who have considered emigrating instead of non-emigrants in an origin country to immigrants in a destination country. This is a more precise comparison in two ways than many other earlier studies of selectivity in politically tumultuous contexts. First, this study draws on data about migrants before they emigrated, rather than the refugees in societies of destination who have undoubtedly already changed since the time they departed their society of origin. This is likely more of interest to many, including both migrant-destination and migrant-origin societies and governments, as the migrant-destination government is likely to be interested in the types of people joining their society, and the migrant-origin government is likely interested in the kinds of people leaving them. Second, unlike prior scholars, my reference population is not

the entire population in the society of origin—most of whom have no interest in emigrating—but instead only those who have considered emigrating and are therefore most “at risk” of emigrating. Regardless of whether politicians, policymakers, or inhabitants in the society of origin and destination wish to reduce or increase migration flows between their society, all such stakeholders are no doubt more interested in how the risk of migration and the speed at which it happens are associated with demographic traits, subjective attitudes, and experiences to historical events in this specific subpopulation since it has the highest propensity to emigrate.

My second contribution is that I offered further evidence that we should refine and extend the classical push-pull explanatory model of migration—which mainly explains why people emigrate—to a Push-Retain-Pull-Repel Model that better explains why most who say they want to emigrate never do so and account for how even in a context like 2019-2023 Hong Kong in which you have strong political push factors driving people to emigrate, most people nonetheless never do so. I have presented evidence of several countervailing factors that help us understand why most who consider emigrating never do so—even in a context where an exogenous legal-political shock prompts many to leave. Favorable visa policies are emerging in several destination societies, such as the United Kingdom and Canada.

Finally, whereas typical studies of selectivity focus only on selectivity in terms of demographic and socioeconomic traits of labor or economic immigrants, this study also takes into account that most Hong Kongers have emigrated for political reasons and evidence of two additional novel types of selectivity: 1) selectivity related to culture, identity, mental health, political awareness/consciousness, political ideology, and sense of one’s belonging to “Hong Kong”, and 2) selectivity of whether survey participants shortlisted specific political events as the three most traumatizing and triggering in their decision migrate among many that happened

in a long, dramatic, and episodic sequence of events during 2019 to 2024. The comparative analysis of differences in the historical memory of what emigrants and non-emigrants found most traumatizing and triggering what happened in Hong Kong during 2019-2023 illuminates differences in how those Hong Kongers who emigrated and those who have considered emigrating but have not yet done so subjectively experienced the process of autocratization and political repression. Those who emigrated report experiencing these events as far more traumatic and harmful to their mental health, which many have elaborated about in qualitative detail during our in-depth oral life history interviews through recounting post-traumatic stress, panic attacks, nightmares, and flashbacks about what they experienced.

The remainder of the book will draw more on oral history life interviews to contextualize how a diverse sample of Hong Kongers reflect on their experiences with the autocratization of Hong Kong's government and why, in the end, they decided to emigrate or remain. Although the significant coefficients in this chapter reveal what is happening at the level of the entire population of Hong Kongers at risk of emigrating, the narratives Hong Kongers dared to share with us help us more deeply understand how the experience of each unique person is not as clean and definitive as my coefficient plots suggest. Their gripping stories elaborate on how their experiences of these historical events would forever form their political consciousness, ideology, identity, and beliefs about the Hong Kong government and government in general, regardless of whether they remained or settled in a very different and distant polity. The way Hong Konger emigrants reflexively assess the impact of Hong Kong's political evolution on their mental health, political awareness, and conflicted relation with their city of birth should yield many insights for demographers of health, historians of migration, social psychologists, and public

health scholars of other societies that have suffered through sudden macro-level political changes outside their subjects' locus of control.

One important set of non-obvious methodological limitations of this study was that 1) I collected much of the sample that I analyzed here as a Research Assistant Professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong's Sociology Department during the first half of the study; 2) the Research Grant Council of Hong Kong (ostensibly independent of the government's political interests, but plenty of anecdotal evidence has suggested otherwise) funded the research; and 3) the CUHK's Survey and Behavioral Research Ethics committee approved of the data collection during the first half of the study. For ethical and professional reasons, I could not conceal any of this information from my research participants, even if no other university had approved the study, and the CUHK coat of arms even appeared on the university's online Qualtrics survey platform consent form. My Hong Kong-born emigrant postdoctoral research associate in Germany suggested to me that this, however, may have been reassuring to some survey participants, as some of our oral history interviewees expressed astonishment that CUHK would even approve such a study. This may have made people feel safer about participating. Yet I also encountered many wary and frightened expressions while spending three months recruiting emigrants in over 30 cities across Australia, Britain, Canada, Taiwan, and the United States through representatives in the Hong Kong community. I could emphasize my positionality as a US citizen and outsider to the whole conflict. Yet some expressed reasonable concerns that even if I was sincerely engaged in an academic study in a well-meaning way, they feared that the government would somehow acquire my data and use it to repress further those critical of Hong Kong and China's government. Given that Chinese Communist Party in Beijing designed Hong Kong's National Security Law to apply and be enforceable not only against those in Hong Kong

but also anybody abroad and the fact that many Hong Kongers still have family members living in Hong Kong who are more vulnerable to the police harassing them, I could understand why many may have been 1) reluctant to participate in the study and 2) careful about whether and how they answered specific questions in the study. Due to the potential sources of response/cooperation bias, I do not claim that this is a representative probability sample of the Hong Kong population.

However, I have since left and disaffiliated from CUHK to become a faculty member at Corvinus University of Budapest, which politically resides in a polity that occupies a middle ground between China-based universities and Western universities. Once my university's research ethics committee approved the research project, we decided that, for the best outcome of the research, we would remove all mention of CUHK, given its potential to impact survey response rates and answers negatively. I have found that I am confronting less terror and suspicion in the eyes of potential participants with my new affiliation, so hopefully this will facilitate recruiting additional emigrant participants as I continue to sample additional participants in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, and European countries, as I have far fewer emigrants than the many non-emigrants who have already answered my survey.

Conclusion

This chapter examines the factors that distinguish emigrants from non-emigrants in terms of the odds and speed with which they consider emigrating and actually emigrate, thereby contributing to the academic literature on migrant selectivity, the political economy of migration, and refugee studies. The novel subjective parameters of how emigrants are doubly selected in terms mental health, political ideology, nostalgic attachment to place, political consciousness and selective historical memory are all relevant to public debates around belonging, identity, and

home-making processes. Such results will enable both emigrants, potential emigrants, and governments of both Hong Kong and various destination societies who welcome Hong Kong immigrants and refugees better understand how the minority who have left on Hong Kong (and more generally other autocratizing societies) are very different than the much larger number who only said they would but instead remain and have decided adapt to a changed political system. This can enable both to understand how the composition and inequality of Hong Kong and other societies that rapidly become less democratic and politically free change with emigration. Both governments and non-government entities in migrant-origin and migrant-destination societies can gain much more accurate estimates of a policy change's long-term impact than they would have if they had assumed that all those who think of emigrating do so. This is an also important case of a more general phenomenon of fulfilled and unfulfilled aspirations of emigrating that occur in other societies after sudden and rapid controversial changes in governments and policies that move politics in a direction that many find politically undesirable, like the electoral victory of Trump, Brexit in the UK, and the Taliban's defeat of the US military and retaking control of Afghanistan's government. Ultimately, future research about Hong Kong can hopefully help yield other significant demographic discoveries about such population changes due to politically driven mass migrations that are not obvious from anecdotal observations. This can help us refine more rigorous tests of how even in an autocratizing society undergoing political turmoils emigrants are a selective minority within a much larger population of those who consider emigrating but never do so

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Appendix

Table A1: List of Events Participants Could Choose As Three That Most Them to Consider

Emigrating:

Event	Date
Former Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam introduces amendments to extradition laws that would allow criminal suspects to be sent to mainland China for trial.	April 3rd, 2019
Shoppers caught in “running battles” as police chase protestors in malls.	June 14th, 2019
Protestors vandalized LegCo and defaced government emblem.	July 21st, 2019
At Yuen Long MTR station, suspected triad members attacked civilians on streets, police arrive late and do nothing.	July 21st, 2019
Police in Prince Edward Station tear gas trains filled with protesters.	August 31st, 2019
Government reported that vandalism and property destruction by Hong Kong protestors with fires, petrol bombs, and pavement brick removal had damaged 91% of all MTR stations and would cost taxpayers \$10.5 million HKD dollars in property maintenance costs.	November 7th, 2019
Police arrested and charged six pan-democratic lawmakers for May 11th scuffle.	November 9th, 2019
Riot police stormed into Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) firing tear gas, injuring student protestors; other universities cancelled classes.	November 12th, 2019
Mass arrests in “Siege of Polytechnic University” significantly reduce the number of protestors.	November 18th, 2019
The government pulls HK\$1.4 billion in funding from PolyU, CUHK, HKU.	November 27th, 2019
Central Government passed National Security Law (NSL) against separatism, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign powers with penalties up to life imprisonment.	June 30th, 2020
Penny's Bay quarantine center opens to quarantine covid-infected people.	July 16th, 2020
British government announced that Hong Kong citizens born before July 1, 1997, can apply for British Nationals Overseas passport, can settle in UK.	July 22nd, 2020
Hong Kong disqualified 12 opposition candidates for Legislative Council and postponed legislative council elections by one year.	July 31st, 2020
Arrest of independent newspaper Apple Daily owner Jimmy Lai.	August 10th, 2020

Canada adopts 'life boat scheme' to make it easier for migrants and refugees to come from Hong Kong.	September 1st, 2020
Central government bypassed Hong Kong courts and issues decision to remove four opposition lawmakers.	November 11th, 2020
Remaining 15 opposition lawmakers resign.	November 11th, 2020
HK Government arrested 54 pro-democracy opposition activists, lawmakers and lawyers, and blocks website HK Chronicles under NSL.	January 6th, 2021
Hong Kong Government requires schools to implement National Security Education regulations.	February 5th, 2021
National Security Education Day held day of activities to teach citizens about the importance of national security.	April 15th, 2021
Apple Daily shuts down due to frozen assets.	June 23rd, 2021
Hong Kong government begins to require anyone entering Hong Kong to undergo quarantine at a hotel for 21 days.	August 21st, 2021
The Hong Kong government required Hong Kongers to use the Leave Home Safe App to enter government and commercial buildings, compelling many to prove they have been vaccinated.	November 24th, 2021
Hong Kong Department of Public Security arrested Cardinal Joseph Zen and four others for alleged 'collusion with foreign forces' after they closed a fund used to provide legal and financial assistance to 2019 protestors.	May 11th, 2022
Police cordoned off an area of a shopping street near Victoria Park where in previous years pro-democracy activists would gather to promote the vigil, arresting 6 protestors between the ages of 19 and 80.	June 4th, 2022
John Lee took office as Hong Kong's new Chief Executive.	July 1st, 2022
Hong Kong government issued arrest warrants and HK\$1 million (US\$128,000) bounties on eight exiled democracy activists and former legislators.	July 7th, 2023
After a court decision to dismiss a ban on distributing a protest song, the Hong Kong government said the judiciary should refrain from intervening in national security matters.	August 13th, 2023
Hong Kong police offered million-dollar bounties for information leading to the arrest of five overseas-based activists · one a US citizen.	December 14th, 2023

Table A2: Descriptive Statistics

A. Continuous Variables

	mean	sd	min	max
age	39.4186122	12.9562394	0	81
months planning to migrate	3.05074488	1.77729423	0	5

political satisfaction	1.91498664	2.36851746	0	8
economic satisfaction	2.55151239	2.19808329	0	8
trust in China government	0.33	0.72	0	3
trust in HK government	0.307	0.66	0	3
trust in English government	1.54	0.68	0	3
age of youngest child (- to 18)	7.43017128	5.02243471	0	18
age of oldest parent	54.0769231	33.6274013	0	118
years at current job	8.44807761	8.86545629	0	64
family supports migration	0.67088905	0.24943827	0	1
friends support migration	0.75471834	0.19945687	0	1
abs social support hk	4.58394649	8.01096447	0	10
abs social support migrate	2.34672021	4.728426	0	10
spouse age	44.1825095	16.1911573	3	67
spouse job year	11.8528817	10.7322239	0	25
family members outside HK	1.70633117	2.666375	0	10
Years of education	16.1541913	2.26750322	0	24
household income/month	58468.7387	35883.0689	1500	120000
individual income/month	36801.928	28419.5701	1500	120000
difficulty obtaining visa	4.90465872	2.72953828	0	10
parent education	10.9124525	3.92027849	0	24
spouse education	15.3020237	2.77719206	0	24
physical health	7.08786686	1.7911271	0	10
mental health	6.46062567	2.28014096	0	10
years lived in HK	36.3952759	13.9094515	0	100
relative support in HK v. abroad	2.2337836	6.40612487	-46	100
# of months until migration	44.0310881	63.5953397	0	557
# of times arrested	0.285	0.19	0	2

B. Binary Variables

	Yes (%)
now reside in HK	78.66
planned migration	87.23
pan democratic ideology	24.34
localist ideology	17.16
self determinist ideology	6.79
pro-establishment ideology	1.4
has child under 18	20.3
has retired parent	86.26
parents supported migration	66.71
married	46.66

satisfied w/ salary	60.12
other paid for migration	28.04
identify more as HKer than Chinese	89.92
speaks English	70
spent at least past 5 years abroad	17.21
has OECD countries passport	24.13
born in OECD countries	1.27
spouse has OECD passport	0.12
BNO eligible	66.66
male	47.67
born in HK	70.36
Have HK permanent residence	98.84
studied at STEM subject	8.52
born in non OECD country	98.73
lam extradition bill	15.25
police chase and arrest protestors in mall	8.97
protestors vandalize Legco	3.61
721 triad gangsters attack civilians, police do not intervene	29.53
831 prince Edward	16.5
Report of Cost of Damage to Infrastructure	3.96
opposition lawmakers arrested	6.18
CUHK siege	12.1
Poly U siege	11.41
uni fundings pulled	4.79
PRC NSL passed	36.03
quarantine center opened	2.61
BNO visa	12.38
Legco dq elections postponed	7.26
jimmy lai arrested	10.37
bypass court to remove opposition	6.78
last 15 oppositional lawmakers resign	2.41
54 activists arrested under NSL	14.98
National Security Education implemented	10.99
day to celebrate NSL	5.42

Apple Daily froze/closes	9.31
21d quarantine imposed	1.97
leave home save app required	4.88
612 fund to help imprisoned closed	7.46
2022 64 democratic polipolitiicanscicians arrested arrest	4.59
John Lee elected as new chief executive	6.58
bounty placed on exiled activists	4.25
national security over court overseas activist bounty	3.7

C. Categorical

Variables

employed in sector	public sector	private sector	self-employed	govt dept
	15.89	40.18	10.86	6.14
wealth in real estate	rent public housing	rent private housing	rent public housing with parents	rent private housing with parents
	12%	6%	7%	14%
	own with parents public housing	own with parents private housing	own public housing	own private housing
	8%	18%	9%	27%

Table A3: Logistic Regression Model of Having Emigrated on Individual Traits (N=3,760)

Variable	Estimate	Odds Ratio	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
(Intercept)	-3.231165	0.0394	8.48e-10***	(0.002, 0.077)
Age in 2019	-0.001696	0.998	0.726457	(0.991, 1.007)
female	0.245599	1.278	0.009913**	(1.060, 1.538)
married	0.285150	1.330	0.007045**	(1.070, 1.654)
log_income	0.041063	1.042	0.415090	(0.941, 1.155)
College educated	0.572919	1.773	3.50e-05***	(1.331, 2.361)
need_to_support_parents	-0.221983	0.801	0.027373*	(0.657, 0.976)
physical_health	0.111672	1.118	0.000304***	(1.051, 1.189)
mental_health	-0.203728	0.816	< 2e-16***	(0.778, 0.856)
very_concerned_politics	1.020063	2.773	< 2e-16***	(2.256, 3.401)
sense_of_belonging_strong	0.466654	1.594	1.35e-06***	(1.311, 1.940)
pref_self_determination	0.336477	1.400	0.054579.	(0.994, 1.972)
pref_localist	0.198092	1.219	0.147129	(0.931, 1.594)
pref_pan_democrat	0.354269	1.425	0.005153**	(1.109, 1.830)
Has OECD_countries_passport	0.037579	1.038	0.717581	(0.844, 1.275)

Notes: p < 0.05 ‘*’, p < 0.01 ‘**’, p < 0.001 ‘***’

Table A4: Cox Proportional Hazard Survival Model of Individual Traits On Hazard to Think of Emigrating From February 2019 (N=3,760)

Variable	Estimate	Hazard Ratio	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
age2019	0.0016501	1.0016515	0.32208	(0.9984, 1.0049)
gender	-0.0574052	0.9442114	0.09182	(0.8833, 1.0094)
married	0.0590557	1.0608343	0.11672	(0.9854, 1.1421)
log_inc	0.0782015	1.0813406	4.35e-05***	(1.0415, 1.1227)
highered	0.1872870	1.2059734	2.59e-05***	(1.1052, 1.3159)
need_support_parents	0.0217835	1.0220225	0.53888	(0.9534, 1.0956)
physical_health_num	-0.0003706	0.9996295	0.97438	(0.9773, 1.0225)
mental_health_num	-0.0525412	0.9488152	1.43e-08***	(0.9317, 0.9662)
very_concerns_politics	-0.0445180	0.9564584	0.22371	(0.8903, 1.0276)

sense_of_belonging_strong	0.0958032	1.1005424	0.00551 **	(1.0286, 1.1776)
pref_self_determination	0.3476763	1.4157739	1.63e-07 ***	(1.2430, 1.6125)
pref_localist	0.3129521	1.3674560	2.23e-11 ***	(1.2477, 1.4988)
pref_pan_democrat	0.3234214	1.3818476	1.21e-13 ***	(1.2686, 1.5052)
oecd_countries_passport	-0.0589857	0.9427203	0.12158	(0.8749, 1.0158)

Notes: p < 0.05 '*', p < 0.01 '**', p < 0.001 '***'

Table A5: Cox Proportional Hazard Survival Model of Individual Traits On Hazard of a Potential Emigrant Emigrating From the Month They Considered Emigrating

Variable	Estimate	Hazard Ratio	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
age.thought.mig	-0.001602	0.998399	0.110188	(0.9964, 1.0004)
gender	0.220789	1.247060	0.006935 **	(1.0624, 1.4638)
married	0.219001	1.244833	0.009324 **	(1.0554, 1.4683)
log_inc	0.013361	1.013450	0.748677	(0.9339, 1.0998)
highered	0.434731	1.544548	0.000336 ***	(1.2179, 1.9588)
need_support_parents	-0.193272	0.824258	0.026395 *	(0.6950, 0.9776)
physical_health_num	0.092125	1.096501	0.000404 ***	(1.0419, 1.1539)
mental_health_num	-0.159671	0.852424	2.63e-15 ***	(0.8193, 0.8868)
very_concerns_politics	0.924496	2.520597	< 2e-16 ***	(2.0900, 3.0400)
sense_of_belonging_strong	0.417985	1.518897	9.09e-07 ***	(1.2855, 1.7947)
pref_self_determination	0.188574	1.207527	0.208210	(0.9002, 1.6197)
pref_localist	0.079401	1.082638	0.513846	(0.8530, 1.3741)
pref_pan_democrat	0.235164	1.265116	0.035513 *	(1.0161, 1.5752)
oecd_countries_passport	-0.0589857	0.9427203	0.12158	(0.8749, 1.0158)

Notes: p < 0.05 '*', p < 0.01 '**', p < 0.001 '***'

A6:

A5: Logistic Regression Model of the Odds That a Potential Emigrant Emigrated on Whether a Historical Event Was One of the Three Most Triggering (n= 3757)

Variable	Estimate	Odds Ratio	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
(Intercept)	-1.8501	0.1572	< 2e-16 ***	(0.1345, 0.1837)
lam_extradition_bill	-0.0626	0.9394	0.6161	(0.7379, 1.1963)
mall_arrest	-0.3772	0.6858	0.0367 *	(0.4776, 0.9856)
legco_vandalized	-0.3770	0.6859	0.2523	(0.3590, 1.3107)
triad_attack	0.2186	1.2443	0.0293 *	(1.0220, 1.5147)
prince_edward	0.2673	1.3066	0.0260 *	(1.0326, 1.6534)
taxpayer_expense_of_damage	-0.7549	0.4701	0.0279 *	(0.2400, 0.9210)
lawmaker_arrested_charged	-0.1969	0.8214	0.3746	(0.5367, 1.2571)
cuhk_siege	0.1218	1.1295	0.3815	(0.8596, 1.4842)
poly_siege	0.4429	1.5571	0.0007 ***	(1.2010, 2.0173)
uni_fundings_pulled	-0.3119	0.7320	0.2144	(0.4480, 1.1956)
PRC_nsl_pass	0.3914	1.4791	3.85e-05 ***	(1.2244, 1.7861)
pennys_bay_quarantine_open	-0.0347	0.9659	0.9102	(0.5267, 1.7719)
bno_visa	0.3242	1.3831	0.0041 **	(1.1064, 1.7297)
legco_dq_elections_postponed	0.2201	1.2460	0.2189	(0.8772, 1.7700)
jimmy_lai_arrested	-0.1812	0.8345	0.2496	(0.6121, 1.1382)
bypass_court_remove_lawmakers	-0.0737	0.9289	0.7133	(0.6258, 1.3792)
nsl_54_activists_hk_chronicles	-0.0915	0.9125	0.4561	(0.7167, 1.1620)
nsl_school_implement	-0.1037	0.9015	0.4863	(0.6732, 1.2076)
nsl_day	0.2353	1.2652	0.2656	(0.8369, 1.9133)
apple_daily_frozen	0.1197	1.1272	0.4224	(0.8410, 1.5110)
entrance_quarantine	0.2237	1.2506	0.5207	(0.6319, 2.4748)
leave_home_save_app_mandate	-0.2417	0.7856	0.2498	(0.5199, 1.1868)
fund_closed_arrested	-0.1249	0.8827	0.5458	(0.5839, 1.3335)
june_fourth_arrests	-0.3852	0.6802	0.1848	(0.3857, 1.1992)
john_lee_elected	-0.2191	0.8032	0.2632	(0.5463, 1.1808)
exiled_activists_bounty	-0.2632	0.7686	0.4101	(0.4087, 1.4455)
national_security_over_court	-0.6679	0.5126	0.0073 **	(0.3137, 0.8374)
overseas_activist_bounty	-0.2156	0.8061	0.5446	(0.4026, 1.6150)

Notes: p < 0.05 ‘’, p < 0.01 ‘’, p < 0.001 ‘’

A5: Cox Proportional Hazards Survival Model of Number of Months From When Movement Against Extradition Bill Started (February 2019) Until First Thought of Emigrating On Whether They Mentioned a Historical Event As One of the Three Most Triggering (n= 3757)

Cox Proportional Hazards Model Results

Variable	Estimate	Hazard Ratio	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
lam_extradition_bill	0.0783	1.0814	0.0855 .	(0.99, 1.18)
mall_arrest	-0.1134	0.8928	0.0550 .	(0.80, 1.00)
legco_vandalized	-0.0468	0.9543	0.6237	(0.79, 1.15)
triad_attack	0.1884	1.2073	7.7e-07 ***	(1.12, 1.30)
prince_edward	0.2158	1.2409	5.7e-06 ***	(1.13, 1.36)
taxpayer_expense_of_damage	-0.2834	0.7532	0.00093 ***	(0.64, 0.89)
lawmaker_arrested_charged	-0.1657	0.8473	0.0216 *	(0.74, 0.98)
cuhk_siege	0.1200	1.1275	0.0265 *	(1.01, 1.25)
poly_siege	0.1153	1.1222	0.0311 *	(1.01, 1.25)
uni_fundings_pulled	-0.0744	0.9283	0.3303	(0.80, 1.08)
PRC_nsl_pass	0.2446	1.2771	1.4e-11 ***	(1.19, 1.37)
pennys_bay_quarantine_open	-0.1067	0.8988	0.2856	(0.74, 1.09)
bno_visa	0.0269	1.0273	0.5463	(0.94, 1.12)
legco_dq_elections_postponed	-0.0521	0.9492	0.4384	(0.83, 1.08)
jimmy_lai_arrested	0.0699	1.0724	0.2177	(0.96, 1.20)
bypass_court_remove_lawmakers	-0.0189	0.9813	0.7904	(0.85, 1.13)
nsl_54_activists_hk_chronicles	0.0432	1.0442	0.3514	(0.95, 1.14)
nsl_school_implement	0.0942	1.0988	0.0831 .	(0.99, 1.22)
nsl_day	-0.0822	0.9211	0.2849	(0.79, 1.07)
apple_daily_frozen	0.0299	1.0303	0.6029	(0.92, 1.15)
entrance_quarantine	-0.0251	0.9752	0.8279	(0.78, 1.22)
leave_home_save_app_mandate	0.0569	1.0585	0.4187	(0.92, 1.22)
fund_closed_arrested	-0.0506	0.9507	0.4740	(0.83, 1.09)
june_fourth_arrests	0.0195	1.0197	0.8248	(0.86, 1.21)
john_lee_elected	-0.1189	0.8879	0.0803 .	(0.78, 1.01)
exiled_activists_bounty	-0.0711	0.9314	0.4769	(0.77, 1.13)
national_security_over_court	-0.0378	0.9629	0.5985	(0.84, 1.11)

Variable	Estimate	Hazard Ratio	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
overseas_activist_bounty	-0.1960	0.8220	0.0628 .	(0.67, 1.01)

Notes: p < 0.05 ‘*’, p < 0.01 ‘**’, p < 0.001 ‘***’

A6: Cox Proportional Hazards Survival Model of Number of Months From When First Thought of Emigrating Until Emigrated On Whether They Mentioned a Historical Event As One of the Three Most Triggering (n= 3757)

Variable	Estimate	Hazard Ratio	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
lam_extradition_bill	-0.0585	0.9431	0.6013	(0.76, 1.17)
mall_arrest	-0.3522	0.7031	0.0319 *	(0.51, 0.97)
legco_vandalized	-0.3868	0.6792	0.2119	(0.37, 1.25)
triad_attack	0.2128	1.2371	0.0167 *	(1.04, 1.47)
prince_edward	0.2393	1.2704	0.0229 *	(1.03, 1.56)
taxpayer_expense_of_damage	-0.7744	0.4610	0.0179 *	(0.24, 0.88)
lawmaker_arrested_charged	-0.1498	0.8609	0.4515	(0.58, 1.27)
cuhk_siege	0.0946	1.0992	0.4424	(0.86, 1.40)
poly_siege	0.3942	1.4832	0.0005 ***	(1.19, 1.85)
uni_fundings_pulled	-0.3161	0.7290	0.1722	(0.46, 1.15)
PRC_nsl_pass	0.3689	1.4461	1.6e-05 ***	(1.22, 1.71)
pennys_bay_quarantine_open	-0.0566	0.9450	0.8407	(0.54, 1.64)
bno_visa	0.3045	1.3560	0.0021 **	(1.12, 1.65)
legco_dq_elections_postponed	0.1894	1.2085	0.2297	(0.89, 1.65)
jimmy_lai_arrested	-0.1557	0.8558	0.2702	(0.65, 1.13)
bypass_court_remove_lawmakers	-0.0718	0.9307	0.6888	(0.65, 1.32)
nsl_54_activists_hk_chronicles	-0.0787	0.9243	0.4724	(0.75, 1.15)
nsl_school_implement	-0.0964	0.9081	0.4670	(0.70, 1.18)
nsl_day	0.1872	1.2059	0.3158	(0.84, 1.74)
apple_daily_frozen	0.0888	1.0929	0.4985	(0.85, 1.41)
entrance_quarantine	0.1775	1.1942	0.5747	(0.64, 2.22)
leave_home_save_app_mandate	-0.2383	0.7880	0.2135	(0.54, 1.15)
fund_closed_arrested	-0.1231	0.8842	0.5040	(0.62, 1.27)
june_fourth_arrests	-0.3498	0.7048	0.1841	(0.42, 1.18)
john_lee_elected	-0.2031	0.8162	0.2500	(0.58, 1.15)
exiled_activists_bounty	-0.2314	0.7934	0.4199	(0.45, 1.39)

Variable	Estimate	Hazard Ratio	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
national_security_over_court	-0.5993	0.5492	0.0094 **	(0.35, 0.86)
overseas_activist_bounty	-0.1868	0.8296	0.5600	(0.44, 1.55)

Notes: p < 0.05 ‘*’, p < 0.01 ‘**’, p < 0.001 ‘***’

A6: Ordinary Least Squares Linear Regression Model of Number of Months Between First Thought of Emigrating and Emigration on Individual Traits (n= 3757)

Variable	Estimate	Std.Error	t value	Pr(> t)	Signif.
(Intercept)	48.16780	5.51633	8.732	< 2e-16	***
age2019	0.12324	0.05368	2.296	0.021693	*
gender	-0.89730	1.05853	-0.848	0.396621	
married	-1.89866	1.19845	-1.584	0.113149	
log_inc	-5.90347	0.54461	-10.840	< 2e-16	***
highered	-10.33669	1.34867	-7.664	1.88e-14	***
need_support_parents	-4.09095	1.10647	-3.697	0.000218	***
physical_health_num	1.10615	0.34920	3.168	0.001539	**
mental_health_num	0.97013	0.27652	3.508	0.000452	***
very_concerns_politics	-4.75226	1.14959	-4.134	3.58e-05	***
sense_of_belonging_strong	3.12034	1.06472	2.931	0.003386	**
pref_self_determination	-11.73090	2.05622	-5.705	1.18e-08	***
pref_localist	-6.58980	1.44996	-4.545	5.53e-06	***
pref_pan_democrat	-6.99346	1.32509	-5.278	1.32e-07	***

A7: Duration (Ordinary Least Squares Linear Regression) Model of Number of Months Between First Thought of Emigrating and Emigration on Mentioning Specific Events (n=3,757)

Variable	Estimate	Std.Error	t value	Pr(> t)	Signif.
(Intercept)	-8.23650	0.73570	-11.195	< 2e-16	***
lam_extradition_bill	-0.76870	1.37020	-0.561	0.574808	
mall_arrest	7.28420	1.82400	3.993	6.53e-05	***
legco_vandalized	1.50510	3.06740	0.491	0.623652	
triad_attack	-0.39260	1.15130	-0.341	0.733105	
prince_edward	-8.34720	1.42550	-5.856	4.83e-09	***
taxpayer_expense_of_damage	146.20850	2.62940	55.604	< 2e-16	***
lawmaker_arrested_charged	49.42200	2.26990	21.773	< 2e-16	***
cuhk_siege	-8.10220	1.59440	-5.082	3.78e-07	***
poly_siege	1.50710	1.58470	0.951	0.341606	
uni_fundings_pulled	-17.55280	2.31310	-7.588	3.38e-14	***
PRC_nsl_pass	-4.23600	1.03640	-4.087	4.38e-05	***
pennys_bay_quarantine_open	-29.37310	2.94070	-9.988	< 2e-16	***
bno_visa	-3.06320	1.37540	-2.227	0.025947	*
legco_dq_elections_postponed	-7.44300	2.00440	-3.713	0.000205	***
jimmy_lai_arrested	12.40370	1.74180	7.121	1.11e-12	***
bypass_court_remove_lawmakers	-2.04170	2.11450	-0.966	0.334258	
nsl_54_activists_hk_chronicles	-1.92030	1.37040	-1.401	0.161155	
nsl_school_implement	-9.82950	1.62490	-6.049	1.48e-09	***
nsl_day	-1.40000	2.32720	-0.602	0.547466	
apple_daily_frozen	-5.99450	1.72790	-3.469	0.000523	***
entrance_quarantine	-38.19290	3.33340	-11.458	< 2e-16	***
leave_home_save_app_mandate	-10.61480	2.12460	-4.996	5.90e-07	***
fund_closed_arrested	-11.07070	2.19150	-5.052	4.42e-07	***
june_fourth_arrests	7.52310	2.67360	2.814	0.004901	**

Variable	Estimate	Std.Error	t value	Pr(> t)	Signif.
john_lee_elected	-0.07750	2.03440	-0.038	0.969613	
exiled_activists_bounty	-1.57360	3.00840	-0.523	0.600923	
national_security_over_court	5.73780	2.31920	2.474	0.013370	*
overseas_activist_bounty	5.55440	3.36590	1.650	0.098919	