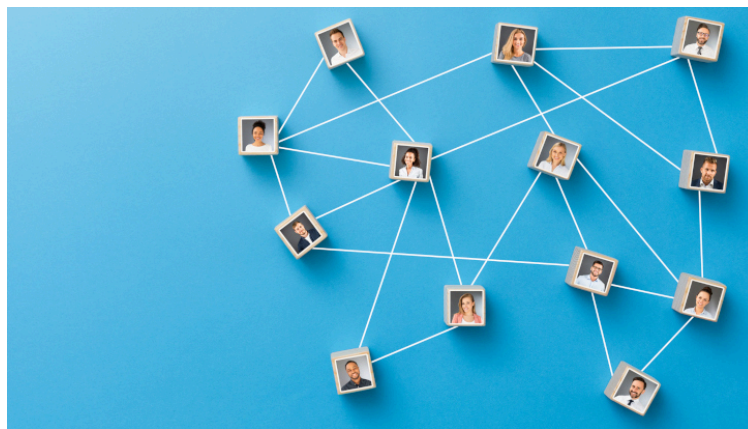


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Networks abroad and culture: being connected conditions values



In today's globalized world, migrations have become a central element in understanding our societies. A study carried out by researchers in the Department of Applied Economics at the UAB has revealed that people from a country who are in contact with emigrants have differences in opinions and culture compared to those who are not.

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In the past few decades, the world has seen an extraordinary rise in the number of people outside their home country. By 2020, international migrants numbered around 280 million, which is more than three times the figure recorded in 1960.

International migration does not just affect the countries where people move, but also has a lasting impact on the places these people left behind. Migrants often send money home, providing vital support for their families and contributing to the economic development of their countries of origin. But financial support is only part of the story. Many also send back ideas, skills, and experiences gained abroad, sharing new ways of thinking and working with their communities.

These exchanges are powerful forces that shape how values, attitudes, and practices spread across borders. In our paper, we look more closely at one specific aspect of this process:

how does having a friend or relative living in another country influence the cultural stance of individuals in the country of origin?

To answer this, we draw on the *Gallup World Polls*, a unique survey spanning the 2009-2012 period, offering a representative sample of 700,000 individual observations in 2,256 within-country regions, covering 98% of the world's non-institutionalized population. The paper shows that around 31% of the individuals in the world have a reliable connection abroad. These connections are distributed across different countries: 69% live in high-income OECD countries, with the US hosting the largest share at 20%. These numbers reveal that globalization, in the form of having a connection abroad, is already a feature of one third of the world population.

We then compare people who are “connected” to people emigrated abroad with others in the same region who are not “connected”, examining differences in cultural views and attitudes across three relevant cultural traits: pro-social behavior, religiosity, and gender-egalitarian views.

We find that connected individuals exhibit a distinct cultural stance compared to their peers in the same region: they demonstrate heightened pro-social behavior, increased religiosity and a greater alignment with gender-egalitarian views. Therefore, having a connection abroad is a relevant identity marker, comparable to having college education. Nonetheless, the size of the effect depends on both individual and country specific characteristics.

Our study shows with individual data at global level that globalization in the form of having peers and friends abroad is a relevant marker of our own values and preferences. Nonetheless, the implications are cultural trait specific, supporting the intuition that each cultural value has its own drivers and determinants.





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