Speech targeting and constituency representation in open-list electoral systems

Eduardo Alemán [a,*], Pablo Valdivieso Kastner [b], Sebastián Vallejo Vera [c]

[a] *(University of Houston), United States*
[b] *(University of Oxford), United Kingdom*
[c] *(University of Western Ontario), Canada*

A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

This study investigates the localistic behavior of legislators elected under open-list proportional representation (OLPR), focusing on the impacts of district magnitude, intra-party competition, electorate size, and the presence of a national tier. We examine the Ecuadorian case, where institutional reformers implemented a national tier to offset the parochial tendencies of lower-tier provincial legislators yet retained OLPR for both tiers. Our study, which analyzes a 12-year dataset of congressional speeches, challenges the expectation that national-tier members are less localistic than their provincial counterparts and shows that electoral incentives drive legislators' geographical focus. Contrary to conventional expectations, we find no evidence that increased intra-party competition is associated with more localistic behavior. However, there is consistent support for the hypothesis that smaller electoral constituencies amplify localistic behavior.

1. Introduction

Institutional designers have paid considerable attention to the details of electoral systems, recognizing their profound effect on the behavior of legislators and the representation of voters. Countries adopting mixed-member systems, dubbed by Bowler and Farrell (2006) as "the darling of early 21st-century electoral engineers," typically sought to incorporate personalized and partisan incentives within a single legislative chamber, balancing their effects. Scholars have probed whether combining two different rules into a mixed system leads to distinct behaviors among representatives depending on their tier of origin (Jun and Hix 2010; Sieberer 2010; Shugart and Wattenberg, 2003; Stoffel 2014). Two-tier systems, however, come in many flavors, not always matching the classical mixed-system.

In line with international trends, Ecuadorian institutional reformers adopted a two-tier system that combined several provincial districts with a single national one. This reform sought to encourage politicians to build national reputations and advocate for national interests in a country characterized by strong local politics, partisan bailiwicks, and a weak and volatile party system. Some years earlier, reformers in neighboring Colombia had implemented a single national district for Senate elections with a similar intent. Influenced by previous rules and

voters' wishes, as expressed in a 1997 referendum, Ecuadorian reformers in 2009 chose open-list proportional representation (OLPR) as the electoral rule in both tiers, deviating from the classical format of the mixed-member system. However, by choosing OLPR for the national tier, they generated incentives that made their objectives challenging to achieve, as was the case in Colombia when reformers there established a preferential voting system for the national district (Crisp and Ingall 2002; Pachón and Shugart 2010).

In this article, we harness data from Ecuador to investigate the localistic behavior of legislators elected under preferential voting systems. We explain why the reformers' intentions were unlikely to materialize and demonstrate that, contrary to their expectations, national-tier legislators were not less prone to localistic behaviors than their provincial-tier counterparts. We also scrutinize the geographic focus of legislators' localistic activities, an essential facet of representation under OLPR that has not received sufficient attention. Our findings reveal that electoral incentives, particularly individual electoral performance in different localities, shape legislators' spatial priorities.

The analysis also allows us to evaluate rival expectations regarding localistic tendencies in OLPR systems. On one side, multiple studies on the personal vote, building on the foundational work of Carey and Shugart (1995), propose that increases in district magnitudes in OLPR

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intensify localistic inclinations. Some scholars, however, argue that rather than district magnitude, the critical determinant is the ratio between the number of copartisan candidates and the number of seats the party expects to win in the district (Crisp et al. 2007). Both expectations stem from the idea that legislators' behavior is driven by their need to set themselves apart amid a larger pool of copartisan competitors. Conaghan (1994) and Tromborg and Schwindt-Bayer (2022) argue that increases in DM dilute credit-claiming opportunities, thereby reducing localistic pressures. Additionally, Grofman (2005) contends that in candidate-centered rules, legislators' localistic behavior is driven by the size of their electoral constituency (i.e., the number of votes they receive, as in Fenno, 1978), the smaller the size of such constituency, the stronger the push towards localism.

Past research has explored the relationship between electoral incentives and legislators' personal vote-seeking behavior by examining variables such as floor votes (Hix 2004), bill initiation (Crisp et al., 2004), parliamentary questions (Alemán, Micozzi and Ramírez. 2018; Martin 2011), the time legislators spend in their districts (André and Depauw 2014; Ingall and Crisp 2001), the localness attributes of candidates (André, Wauters and Pilet 2012; Shugart, Valdini and Suominen 2005), and responsiveness to constituents' emails (Bol et al., 2021). Our study contributes to this literature by assessing how electoral incentives affect the localistic targeting of legislative speeches.

Our study's contributions to the electoral literature are two-fold. Firstly, the analysis expands our understanding of representational behavior under OLPR systems by examining rival explanations for legislators' localistic efforts. While many studies have considered district magnitude, often with conflicting results, few have analyzed it alongside other electoral features, especially the size of the legislator's electoral constituency.[1] Our findings highlight that while smaller electoral constituencies amplify localistic behavior, an increase in intra-party competition does not. We also show that the geographical allocation of votes drives the spatial distribution of localist behavior. Secondly, we contribute to research on the effect of different electoral tiers by comparing localistic tendencies in a setting where legislators in both tiers are chosen by identical rules. The results show that under similar candidate-centered rules, imposing a national tier does not reduce legislators' localistic incentives.

The rest of this article is divided into six parts. The next one discusses how electoral rules affect incentives for localistic behavior and delineates our hypotheses. The third part of the article summarizes the relevant traits of the Ecuadorian electoral system, while the fourth presents our speech data. We use natural language processing techniques to analyze the content of legislative speeches delivered by members of the Ecuadorian Congress over 18 years, focusing on measuring legislators' efforts to target electoral constituencies. The fifth part discusses our variables and models, and the sixth presents the results of our analysis. This is followed by a concluding section that summarizes our findings.

2. Electoral incentives and legislative behavior: targeting constituents

Electoral studies have underscored a fundamental distinction between proportional representation systems: the incentives to build personal reputations (Carey and Shugart 1995; Grofman 2005; Zittel 2017). As Shugart et al. (2005: 437) observe, "Where voters vote on the basis of the personal distinctiveness of politicians, candidates for elective office often seek to advertise the ways in which they serve local interests." According to the personal vote literature, cultivating a personalized support base leads politicians to emphasize a local focus in their

representation (Zittel 2017). The personalizing effects derived from electoral rules "promote representation targeted at the local level" (Crisp et al., 2004: 830). In contrast, where party reputations carry more weight with voters, political parties and collective appeals dominate representation, and legislative candidates primarily view themselves as party representatives (Shugart et al. 2005; Zittel 2017).

In a seminal article, Carey and Shugart (1995) introduced a multidimensional index to evaluate candidates' incentives to cultivate a personal as opposed to a partisan vote. Under electoral systems where voters can only choose parties, there exists a stronger incentive to cast a partisan vote than in countries where voters select individuals. In electoral contexts permitting voters to express a preference among candidates, members of the same party list face what Cox and Theis (1998:271) termed a "product differentiation problem."

A core proposition in Carey and Shugart's (1995) article, which garnered significant scholarly attention, is that district magnitude (DM) affects the value of personal reputations differently depending on ballot type. Under closed-list systems, which prevent voters from indicating a preference for individual candidates, increases in DM lower incentives to cultivate a personal reputation. In contrast, under open-list systems permitting preferential votes, a rise in DM bolsters the value of personal reputations. The rationale stems from the inherent pressures of intra-party competition. As the number of copartisans on the list grows, the imperative to differentiate oneself intensifies. Shugart (2008: 47) suggests that under OLPR, increases in DM increase the number of competing copartisans, resulting in a higher "premium on emphasizing connections with groups of constituents."

Building on Carey and Shugart's (1995) emphasis on intra-party competition, Crisp et al. (2007) argued that, in some list systems, the number of copartisans on a list might not align with the district's magnitude, rendering DM an inaccurate a proxy for copartisan crowdedness. As an alternative, they propose a ratio (C:P) where the numerator is the count of copartisan candidates, and the denominator is the number of seats the party anticipates winning.[2] They use the seats gained by the party in the district in previous elections as a proxy for the expected number of seats, but some researchers analyzing countries with ephemeral party lists, such as Selb and Lutz (2015) in their study of Switzerland, resort to the actual number of seats won by the list, presuming that candidates expectations' are correct on average.

In a more recent article, Crisp et al. (2021) developed a new indicator of intra-party competition to account for the possibility that nominated copartisans differ in their viability. If there are significant variations in the strength of copartisans in the list, the C:P ratio may inflate intra-party competitiveness (André et al., 2016). Crisp et al. (2021) propose adjusting the C:P ratio by multiplying it by a new ratio, E:P, calculated by dividing the effective number of copartisan in the list (E) by the number of seats the party anticipates winning in the district (P). The value of E is the weighted number of copartisan candidates the party runs in the district. It is calculated as in Laakso and Taagepera (1979) but using as weights the share of their party's vote each candidate received in the district (Crisp et al., 2021).

The expectation that under OLPR rules, increases in DM increase intra-party competition, leading to more personal vote-seeking, has been challenged. Contrary to the intra-party differentiation argument, Lancaster (1986) argued that high DM dilutes credit-claiming opportunities, reducing incentives for localistic behavior, while low DM makes it easier for voters to identify who is responsible for providing particularistic benefits, incentivizing such behavior. The "clarity" model advanced by Lancaster (1986) and, more recently, by Tromborg and Schwindt-Bayer (2022) implies that increases in DM should reduce rather than increase localistic pressures. Similarly, André, Freire, and Papp (2014) argued that increases in DM might not amplify personal

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[1] Exceptions include André, Depauw and Deschouwer (2014) and André and Depauw (2014), although the measure they utilize differ from the one originally proposed by Grofman (2005).

[2] The distinction between C and DM, however, is moot in countries such as Ecuador, Spain, and Portugal, where lists present as many candidates as DM.

vote incentives because as the number of competitors grows, it becomes more challenging for voters to familiarize themselves with each candidate's record and legislators' efforts to communicate personal reputations become more costly.

In addition, the strength of party labels and electoral volatility may affect the impact of DM in OLPR. Personalized incentives are likely more intense in countries with weak party labels than in those with strong ones (Primo and Snyder 2010; Zittel 2017). Furthermore, uncertainty surrounding the party's electoral performance may lead candidates to adopt a personal vote-seeking strategy regardless of copartisan crowdedness (Däubler and Muineacháin 2024). Thus, in places like Ecuador, where party labels are weak and electoral volatility is high, decreases in the number of competing copartisans may not significantly weaken personal vote-seeking incentives.

Empirical examinations of the effect of DM in multimember electoral systems that allow intra-party competition have yielded mixed results. Some findings align with Carey and Shugart's (1995) original expectation. For instance, Crisp et al. (2004) studied bill initiation across six presidential countries and found that under electoral rules introducing personalizing effects, increases in DM made legislators more inclined to initiate bills targeted to their reelection constituency. André and Depauw (2014) analyzed surveys of MPs in 15 countries, measuring the time they spent in their districts, and found that increases in both DM and the C:P ratio were associated with more localistic behavior. Shugart et al. (2005) examined the connection between electoral rules and personal vote-earning attributes in six Western European countries and found that the probability that a legislator will exhibit localness traits increased with DM when lists were open.

Other studies, however, failed to find this hypothesized association. For instance, Farrell and Scully (2010) analyzed surveys of members of the European Parliament elected under different rules and found that increases in DM under preferential voting rules did not result in increased constituency-focused attention. Pilet et al. (2012) examined surveys of MPs in three European countries and also failed to find the hypothesized effect of DM when voters could choose between candidates from the same party. Martin's (2011) analysis of parliamentary questions in Ireland failed to establish the anticipated correlation between DM and localistic behavior, and Däubler and Muineacháin's (2024) analysis of campaign leaflets in the same country did not find the hypothesized effect of the C:P ratio on personal vote-seeking strategies. Tromborg and Schwindt-Bayer (2022) examined surveys of legislators in Latin America and Western Europe and found that increases in DM reduced legislators' pork-provision priorities, consistent with Lancaster's (1986) clarity of responsibility proposition.

In this article, we seek to contribute to this research endeavor by examining how electoral rules affect the localist behavior of legislators under Ecuador's OLPR. Our initial hypothesis addresses the classic expectation regarding intra-party competition under open lists, and the empirical portion of our research examines the three alternative operationalizations of intra-party competition previously discussed: DM, C:P ratio, and C:P × E:P.

H1. Increases in intra-party competition increase the localistic behavior of legislators.

Our interest also gravitates toward understanding the implications of a separate national district. As previously noted, Ecuador's higher tier spanned the entire country, while the lower tier comprised several provincial districts. Lijphart (1994:32) once elucidated the primary rationale for having dual-tier districting: combining the closer voter-representative linkage offered by smaller districts with the minority representation and enhanced proportionality of the larger district. Aside from greater proportionality and minority inclusion, the intent behind incorporating nationally elected legislators in Ecuador was to offset the parochialism of provincial legislators in a nation characterized by the territorial fragmentation of political parties. Some authors have argued that national legislators served to balance out the

narrow regional focus of provincial legislators (Freidenberg and Pachano 2016). Nevertheless, during the 1980s and 1990s, no single party achieved a nationwide presence (Collins 2006: 79–80), and electoral competition continued to revolve primarily around provincial and local dimensions (Polga-Hecimovich 2014). Then, in 1998, a constitutional reform eliminated the national district.

When institutional engineers reintroduced a national district for the 2009 elections, they set the DM at 15, lower than that of the largest provincial district, which had a DM of 17. The most striking innovation, however, was the choice of open lists, which was antithetical to the national focus they presumably wanted to foster. A similar mismatch between goals and electoral incentives occurred in Colombia when constitutional reformers in 1991 instituted a single nationwide district for elections to the Senate. Colombian reformers thought that instituting a national district would reduce incentives to focus on parochial matters and increase programmatic national concerns, but put in place a personalized electoral system where Senators competed against members of their same party and could be elected with relatively few votes (Pachón and Shugart 2010). Crisp and Ingall (2002) posited that the ensuing environment gave Colombian Senators strong motives to nurture personal reputations, hindering programmatic behavior and fostering parochial representation. Reformers in Ecuador, like their Colombian counterparts, implemented an electoral system unlikely to achieve the objective of reducing localism.

Ecuador's system, unlike Colombia's, combined national and provincial legislators in the same chamber, providing a direct opportunity to compare their tendencies towards localism. On average, national legislators tend to run for office with more copartisans than provincial legislators, which, in line with the first hypothesis, could potentially intensify their localistic inclinations. However, their average vote share exceeds that of provincial legislators, and this may mitigate those same tendencies (see third hypothesis). The key question is whether being elected in a national district reduces localistic behavior after controlling for intra-party competition and electoral constituency size.

The engineers of Ecuador's institutions intended for the second tier to foster a national focus and counterbalance the parochial leanings of provincial legislators, ultimately strengthening the national standing of political parties. Nevertheless, we contend that this expectation is unlikely to hold. Unlike their provincial counterparts, national deputies can benefit electorally from targeting constituents across the entire country. Appeals could focus on the country as a whole or underscore the legislator's party. However, due to the inherent diversity and regional fragmentation of Ecuador, the advantages of establishing electoral strongholds, and the personalized nature of OLPR, it is unlikely that national legislators would abandon localistic appeals.

Competing in a nationwide district comprising distinct territories with a history of longstanding geographic cleavages is more likely to exacerbate the need for legislators to build individual reputations through targeted geographic appeals, which runs contrary to the institutional designers' original expectations. This candidate-centered rule not only made localism an optimal strategy for career-oriented legislators but also for vote-seeking party leaders. Party leaders had few incentives to penalize individual legislators for localistic behaviors or replace them with candidates shunning such an approach. Thus, OLPR at the national level made localism an individual rational strategy unlikely to be challenged and possibly encouraged by party leaders, all of which counters the original intent of the constitutional reform establishing the national district. This idea forms the basis for the second hypothesis.

H2. Election to the national district does not diminish legislators' localistic behavior.

Different from the arguments emphasizing intra-party competition and national and provincial tiers is the proposition that localistic behavior stems from the size of the electoral constituency. The argument linking electoral constituency size (*e*) to legislators' localistic behavior was advanced by Grofman (1999, 2005). Grofman posited that in

candidate-centered systems, *e* equals the number of votes received by a candidate, a proposition derived from Fenno's (1978:10) classic work on legislators' home styles. According to this view, as the electoral constituency size shrinks, parochial incentives intensify (Shugart 2005:49). In other words, appeals narrow as the number of voters a legislator needs to connect with diminishes (André et al. 2012).

While Grofman (1999) does not elaborate on why localism diminishes as the size of the electoral constituency size increases, other research has shed light on this connection. One line of argument is that larger voting constituencies lessen the attention legislators can provide to individual voters (Abramowitz 1988:387; Eder et al. 2015; Frederick 2008; Jewell 1970: 471), while smaller ones facilitate direct legislator-voter interactions (Bowen 2022; Dahl and Tufte 1973; Ellickson and Whistler 2001; Veenedaal and Corbett 2020). The underlying idea is that a narrow niche of voters makes focused appeals more viable for politicians (Cox 1990). Moreover, the homogeneity often found in smaller constituencies aids in identifying specific interests, enhancing the potential benefits of customizing representational activities (Bowen 2022; Dahl and Tufte 1973). Our next hypothesis captures the expected link between the size of a legislator's voting constituency and localism.

H3. Legislators receiving greater numbers of votes exhibit less localistic behavior.

Aside from the tendency to engage in localistic behavior, OLPR allows different strategies for allocating such activities. Few studies have examined the spatial distribution of localistic efforts. An exception is the previously mentioned work by Crisp and Ingall (2002), who investigated bill targeting in Colombia and found that Senators with concentrated constituencies were more likely than those with dispersed bases of electoral support to initiate geographically targeted bills. Also related to our study is Ames' (1995) seminal article on electoral strategies under Brazil's OLPR, where he posited that Brazilian deputies seek secure bailiwicks within their districts. He found that deputies tended to target particularistic amendments to those municipalities where they had a better electoral performance.

A strategy in line with constitutional reformers' objective of fostering broad, country-wide appeals among national legislators would involve a close correspondence between localistic behavior and the electoral weight of the country's different regions. However, this approach is likely suboptimal for most electorally-minded legislators. We expect the geographic targeting of localistic speeches to reflect more than just the potential electorate of the country's regions. More precisely, we posit that the targeting of localistic behavior by national and provincial legislators is driven by electoral performance – measured by the votes received above (or below) the electoral weight of the respective province (or canton for provincial legislators). This observation forms our fourth and last hypothesis:

H4. Legislators' electoral overperformance is positively associated with the geographic focus of their localistic behavior.

3. The Ecuadorian electoral system

Ecuador has experienced numerous electoral reforms (Gómez Vidal, Analía and Vallejo Vera, Sebastián, 2021; Ortiz 2020). When it democratized in 1979, the electoral rule was closed-list PR. However, dissatisfaction with the closed list system led to its rejection in a popular referendum in 1997, when 52% of the valid votes supported its replacement with an open list system. This change was later formalized

in a constitutional reform and implemented for the first time in the elections of 1998. At that time, institutional designers and social actors believed that closed lists had contributed to an inaccessible and unrepresentative party system (Verdesoto 2005; Polga-Hecimovich, 2022).[3]

In 1979, Ecuador established a two-tier system, with a share of legislators elected at the local (provincial) level and another elected in a single national district. Institutional reformers intended for the national district to introduce a national base of representation to complement provincial interests and limit the influence of the weightier provinces (Freidenberg and Alcántara Sáez 2001). The two-tier system was eliminated after two elections, then replaced and eliminated three other times until it was instituted without interruptions, starting with the legislative elections of 2009. In previous iterations, legislators in the national tier competed under closed-list PR rules, but between 2009 and 2020, national legislators competed under open list. The two-tier system put in place in 2009 combined 24 provincial districts with district magnitudes varying between 2 and 17, with one national district electing 15 legislators.[4]

In short, between 2003 and 2021, the period under study in this article, all Ecuadorian legislators were elected under OLPR rules. In the first term (2003–2006), there was only one local tier of legislators, but in the other three terms (2009–2013; 2013–2017; 2017–2021), there were two tiers, with both types of legislators elected under the same open-list rules.[5]

There is consensus among Ecuadorian specialists that introducing open lists encouraged personalized politics, weakening already feeble partisan organizations (Conaghan 1994; Freidenberg and Pachano 2016, Ortiz 2020: 420). Ecuador also has a long history of regional differences in partisan support and was identified by Jones and Mainwaring (2003) as having the least nationalized party system in the Americas. Scholars contended that eliminating national legislators in the late 1990s (then elected under closed lists) further exacerbated localistic incentives (Freidenberg and Pachano 2016). Yet, when they were reintroduced in 2009, institutional reformers made them compete in open lists. Some of the advocates of this reform (Asamblea Constituyente, 2008) thought that a national district would help parties build national reputations, but they ultimately acquiesced to the mandate of voters, as expressed in the 1997 referendum, and selected open lists for their election. This choice meant that the deck was stacked in favor of personal rather than partisan reputations.

In addition to having a party system with low institutionalization and weak party labels, the country has been characterized by high levels of party fragmentation and electoral volatility.[6] A ban on immediate reelection, in place until 1994, further strained parties, which quickly ran out of experienced leaders and militants to fill the electoral lists. Its elimination was thought to help professionalize the legislature and strengthen parties. The first cohort of legislators analyzed in this article arrived under no term limits, but this provision was changed in 2008 when a two-term limit restriction was imposed. However, such restrictions were eliminated by a constitutional reform passed in 2015. Then, in 2018, voters approved a constitutional referendum reestablishing the two-term limit. The overwhelming majority of legislators

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[3] Since 2002, votes for candidates belonging to the same electoral lists started to be pooled to determine the allocation of seats per list and preference votes were used to allocate seats among candidates within lists. No such pooling was exercised in the previous election with open lists.

[4] In 2008, two districts were added, and the size of the chamber was increased from 100 to 137. In, 2013 the DM of three provinces was decreased (creating sub-districts with a maximum magnitude of 5).

[5] During the period studied, the vote for national legislators ranged between 271 thousand and 3.4 million votes; the vote for provincial legislators ranged between 3 thousand and 461 thousand votes.

[6] For instance, two-thirds of the parties that won seats in the first decade after the return of democracy in 1979 had already disappeared by 2007.

during the period analyzed in this study entered their term in office without an institutional restriction forbidding their reelection. In the empirical section, we control for reelection eligibility.

4. Speech data and local targeting

Evaluating our hypotheses requires a measure of localistic behavior. The literature on representation and the personal vote has used different proxies for such a concept. In this study, we utilize legislative speeches to identify constituency-targeted activities.

In Ecuador, speeches delivered on the floor of the legislature provide legislators with an opportunity to showcase their local connections. Floor speeches targeted to local constituencies offer position-taking and credit-claiming potential, as Crisp et al. (2004) noted for the case of targetable bills. We analyze the content of speeches and identify localistic behavior, specifically by searching for geographical references to legislators' constituencies. This approach is in line with studies such as Martin (2011), Bailer (2011), and Russo (2011), which examined the content of parliamentary questions to identify a local focus. It also aligns with the methodologies of Alemán et al. (2018) and Gamm and Kousser (2010), who used geographical references to legislator's electoral districts as indicators of localistic targeting.

To construct our measure, we scrutinize transcripts from four congressional terms of the Ecuadorian Congress spanning from 2003 to 2021.[7] Before 2009, roll-call voting and attendance were noted verbally rather than electronically, often using less than 20 words long (e.g., "My vote is in favor …"). Consequently, we excluded any speech under 20 words and those associated with specific words related to their vote or attendance (i.e., "*mi voto* […] or "*presente* […]). None of these speeches contain mentions of locations or parties.[8]

Despite various reforms over the last 30 years,[9] procedural rules in the Ecuadorian Congress have largely stayed the same. The President of Congress, elected from the majority or largest party, moderates debates. While there are no restrictions on participating in debates apart from time limits, the chamber's President may prolong debates across multiple sessions if needed or shorten them if speeches become repetitive, ensuring representation from all parties. All legislators can request floor time to deliver a 10-min speech. Committee chairs have an additional 5 min per speech, as they are often required to describe the aspects of the bill being debated.[10] When a question is asked (and answered by the chamber's President), we concatenate a speech that would otherwise be counted as two. The dataset includes 28,692 speeches and 476 legislators across four sessions.

We identify as localistic behavior a legislator mentioning a location or province within her district in a speech. To create our locations dictionary, we use two sources. First, we use the name of the province. Most provinces' names do not have a second meaning or refer to another geographical landmark. When they do, the geographical landmark is within that province (e.g., the province Cotopaxi is named after the volcano Cotopaxi, located in that province). The second source is the name of the cities (*cantones*) within a given province. In our data, the names of cities seldom overlap. When they do, we take a conservative approach and eliminate the entry from our dictionary. We are also interested in partisan emphasis in the legislator' speeches and compare it to their localistic tendencies. To this end, we include legislators'

mentions of their own party. After building our locations dictionary, we sifted through the speech data to identify related mentions in each speech and used this information to create our dependent variables.

References to a geographical location in a legislator's district are often related to local policy issues affecting that area or its constituents.[11] For example, in 2017, Rina Campain, the representative from Esmeraldas, mentioned her province and specific landmarks while advocating for her bill to designate Esmeraldas as a Cultural and Touristic Patrimony:

> "*Esmeraldas was founded in 1847, a multiethnic, pluricultural, and diverse territory. Its cantons, Esmeraldas, Atacames, Muisne, Quininde, Eloy Alfaro, and San Lorenzo, possess natural and cultural wealth. Esmeraldas is an economic engine […] and an ecological reserve. […] Paradoxically, it is also one of the poorest provinces in the country. […] This is why it is important for the Assembly to recognize Esmeraldas by supporting this bill that declares it a Cultural and Touristic Patrimony*."

Similarly, in 2012, Fernando Aguirre, the representative for Azuay, delivered a speech urging the government to declare a state of emergency in his province to address a climate-related crisis:

> "*I will work with my colleagues to urge the Secretary of Risk Management to prioritize an assessment of Cuenca [Azuay's capital], especially the Mistiyacu and Tamuga hills and the Tahual region. […] What Cuenca needs is the construction of a viaduct to neutralize the geological faults in that region of the Azuayan canton.*"

When legislators mentioned geographical locations in their speeches, they overwhelmingly focused on areas within their districts. However, Pichincha and Guayas were frequently mentioned, as they are home to the country's capital and commercial center, respectively. Fig. A1 in the Appendix provides evidence of this pattern.

5. Variables and models

In evaluating the previously outlined hypotheses, the unit of analysis across all models is the legislator in a congressional term, resulting in 476 observations. The main dependent variable is the aggregate number of speeches delivered in a congressional term where a legislator mentions a geographical location in her district. We construct two additional dependent variables: one measures the number of speeches in a congressional term where a legislator mentions her own party, and the other is the difference between the first and second measures. The former gauges a legislator's partisan emphasis, while the latter captures the relative influence of the district relative to the party. We estimate negative binomial models for the first two dependent variables and OLS for the last one. In addition, the analysis incorporates dummies for congressional terms and robust standard errors.

Our main independent variables capturing intra-party competition are district magnitude (DM), the ratio of list candidates to expected seats (C:P),[12] and that ratio multiplied by the ratio of effective candidates to expected seats (C:P × E:P). We use the log of the total number of votes the legislator receives to measure the size of the member's electoral constituency. Additionally, we incorporate a variable indicating whether the legislator was elected in the national tier.

In separate models, we investigate the effect of electoral performance on the spatial dispersion of legislators' localistic efforts. To measure overperformance for the national tier legislators, we subtract the share

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[7] We remove speeches from the individual presiding the debate -usually the President of Congress.

[8] Maintaining these speeches do not change any of the results. Verbal roll call vote and attendance was stopped in 2009, when both procedures became electronically registered.

[9] See Vallejo Vera and Gómez Vidal (2022).

[10] During debates, if another member mentions a legislator by name, he or she can ask the President for a 5-min reply. Many 10-min speeches include procedural questions.

[11] After the devastating 2016 earthquake, the provinces of Manabí and Esmeraldas, which were hit the hardest, were also frequently mentioned.

[12] The ratio of list candidates to expected seats is a measure of intra-party competition calculated by dividing district magnitude (since every list presents a number of candidates equal to DM) over the number of seats won by the party in that district, as in Selb and Lutz (2015). The higher the value, the more intra-party competition (Crisp, Jensen and Shomer 2007).

of votes received by a national legislator i in province j in election k from the share of votes in dispute in province j in election k. For example, if a national legislator obtained 21% of her total number of votes from Pichincha, and Pichincha accounts for 18% of the total votes in dispute (at the national level), then the value of overperformance votes for that legislator in Pichincha would equal 3. We do this procedure for all national legislators in each province. We follow a similar procedure for provincial tier legislators, focusing on cantons instead of provinces. To measure overperformance, we subtract the share of votes received by a provincial legislator i in canton j in election k from the share of votes in dispute in canton j in election k. In these models, the dependent variable is the number of speeches mentioning province (canton) i by national (provincial) legislator j in session k. Because we have multiple observations per legislator per congressional term in these models, we cluster standard errors at the legislator level.

In addition, we include several controls. First, we control for electoral vulnerability using an index calculated by dividing the order in which the legislator was elected on the party's list by the number of seats the party won in the district, as in André et al. (2015), district. Higher values represent greater vulnerability. Intra-party vulnerability is thought to encourage legislators' efforts towards their constituencies (Ames 1995; André et al. 2015; Jewell 1970). Second, we control for sex with a dummy variable that equals 1 for women and 0 otherwise. Previous works on legislative speech have advanced contradictory expectations regarding the participation of women, with some hypothesizing lower participation vis-à-vis men (Bäck et al. 2014) and others expecting comparatively more effort in the face of adversity (Pearson and Dancey 2011). Third, we control for tenure effects with a dummy variable that equals 1 if a legislator is in her first term in the chamber and 0 otherwise. It seeks to capture whether localistic tendencies change with higher tenure. Fourth, we capture potential negative effects from term limits with a dummy variable indicating whether the legislators can compete in the next election.

Additionally, we include two other variables identifying district characteristics. One measures district remoteness with a continuous variable measuring the distance between the legislator's district and the country's capital (logged kilometers). Several studies have shown that members from more peripheral districts are more likely to engage in constituency-focused behavior (Alemán and Micozzi 2022; Brouard et al., 2013; Heitshusen et al. 2005; Hlynsdóttir and Önnudóttir 2018; Martin 2011). The other captures district rurality using the percentage of the rural population in the district according to data from the national census. Previous works have argued that legislators representing more rural districts tend to engage in more localistic behavior (Tromborg and Schwindt-Bayer 2019). Finally, we control for a legislator's degree of floor participation, operationalized as the number of speeches delivered in a session. We present descriptive statistics in Table 1.

6. Results

We present the results in Table 2.[13] Variables appear listed in the first column, with the corresponding coefficients to their right and standard errors in parentheses. The first three negative binomial models differ only in terms of the variable measuring intra-party competition.[14] In the

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[13] In table S.3 in the Appendix, we provide a robustness test by running the same models with an alternative DV: the *percentage* of speeches delivered in a congressional term where a legislator mentions a geographical location in her district. The main results remain unchanged.

[14] While intra-party competition variables are highly correlated, the correlation between the legislators' Total Votes (log) and intra-party competition measures is relatively low. For example, the correlation between Total Votes (log) and C:P × E:P is 0.15. The bottom rows of Table 2 show the number of observations and the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC). In the analysis, we divided the C:P × E:P Ratio by 10.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of main variables of interest.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Mentions of Own District	476	14	18	0	132
Mentions of Own Party	476	4.2	12	0	132
Mentions of Own District – Own Party	476	10	15	−102	117
District Magnitude	476	6.6	4.9	2	18
C:P Ratio	476	3.2	3	1	18
C:P × E:P Ratio	476	1.4	3.6	0.083	32
Total Votes (log)	476	11	1.4	7.5	15
Vulnerability	476	0.76	0.43	0.067	4
Reelection Eligible	476	0.86	0.35	0	1
Distance to Capital (log)	476	5.1	2	0	7.1
Total Number of Speeches	476	58	90	0	745
Percent Rural Population	476	0.41	0.17	0.15	0.74
Tier	476				
1. Provincial	433	91%			
2. National	43	9%			
Gender	476				
Men	319	67%			
Women	157	33%			

fourth, the dependent variable is the number of speeches mentioning a legislator's party. The fifth is an OLS, where the dependent variable is the number of speeches mentioning a locality in the legislator's district minus the number of speeches mentioning a legislator's party.

Contradicting expectations of a positive association between DM and localistic behavior, Model 1 finds no association between locally targeted speeches and DM. Moreover, the alternative variables measuring intra-party competition, included in Models 2 and 3, also lack statistical significance and continue to have the opposite sign. Additionally, levels of intra-party competition do not appear to affect references to the legislator's party (Model 4) or mentions of geographical locations in the district relative to the party. In short, we find no support for H1.

Regarding the behavior of national legislators, we find that, contrary to the expectations of Ecuadorian institutional designers, they are more likely to engage in localistic behavior than provincial legislators. The coefficient associated with national legislators is positive and statistically significant in all models measuring localistic behavior. For instance, the predicted number of locally targeted speeches for a national legislator is 31, compared to 11 for a provincial legislator, as shown in Fig. 1 (estimated from Model 3). These results are consistent with H2, which did not expect national legislators to exhibit less localistic behavior than provincial ones.

Additionally, we find consistent support for the third hypothesis. As the number of votes a legislator receives increases, localistic behavior decreases. Similarly, Model 5 shows that as the number of votes increases, so does the number of speeches targeting one's districts in relation to one's party. In Fig. 2, we plot the predicted number of locally targeted speeches for the complete range of total votes (logged) based on results from Model 3. The red line shows the point predictions, and the shaded area around it reflects the 95% confidence interval. These results, which are robust to different model specifications, substantiate the third hypothesis, which expects localistic behavior to increase as the size of the legislator's electoral constituency decreases.

The control variables also shed light on the determinants of localistic behavior. For example, consistent with previous findings from the legislative politics literature, greater distance to the capital is positively related to localistic behavior (and negatively related to mentions of party). This finding suggests that Ecuadorian legislators from districts further away from the political center have particular incentives that lead them to engage more frequently in localistic behavior, as shown in other countries of Latin America and Europe (Alemán and Micozzi 2022; Brouard et al., 2013; Hlynsdóttir and Önnudóttir 2018; Martin 2011). Also, we find that increases in the rural share of the district's population tend to be associated with more localistic behavior, consistent with

Table 2

Determinants of localistic behavior of Ecuadorian legislators, 2003–2021.

	(1) Own District	(2) Own District	(3) Own District	(4) Own Party	(5) Own District – Own Party
District Magnitude	−0.010				
	(0.015)				
C:P Ratio		−0.015			
		(0.017)			
C:P × E:P Ratio			−0.019	−0.012	−0.350
			(0.013)	(0.029)	(0.388)
Total Votes (log)	−0.177***	−0.197***	−0.201***	0.055	−1.832**
	(0.057)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.090)	(0.866)
National Legislator	1.001***	1.018***	1.055***	0.553	11.659***
	(0.184)	(0.179)	(0.182)	(0.377)	(3.249)
Woman	−0.035	−0.045	−0.038	−0.106	−1.046
	(0.084)	(0.083)	(0.084)	(0.156)	(0.947)
Distance to Cap. (log)	0.085***	0.083***	0.082***	−0.047	1.310***
	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.035)	(0.340)
Rural Population (%)	0.638**	0.656**	0.625**	1.003*	5.108
	(0.297)	(0.275)	(0.273)	(0.545)	(5.074)
Vulnerability	−0.171	−0.143	−0.139	−0.502**	0.548
	(0.154)	(0.164)	(0.156)	(0.242)	(1.027)
Reelection Eligible	0.046	0.041	0.028	−0.232	1.823
	(0.104)	(0.104)	(0.104)	(0.200)	(1.161)
First-Time Legislator	−0.126	−0.138*	−0.136*	−0.259	−1.828
	(0.082)	(0.083)	(0.082)	(0.167)	(1.440)
Total Speeches	0.010***	0.010***	0.010***	0.014***	0.072***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.023)
Constant	2.666***	2.839***	2.883***	−0.310	12.499
	(0.712)	(0.692)	(0.692)	(1.267)	(11.392)
N	476	476	476	476	476
AIC	3208.8	3208.3	3207.1	1819.0	3834.0
Congressional Term Dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: * p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01. Heteroskedastic robust standard errors are in parentheses.
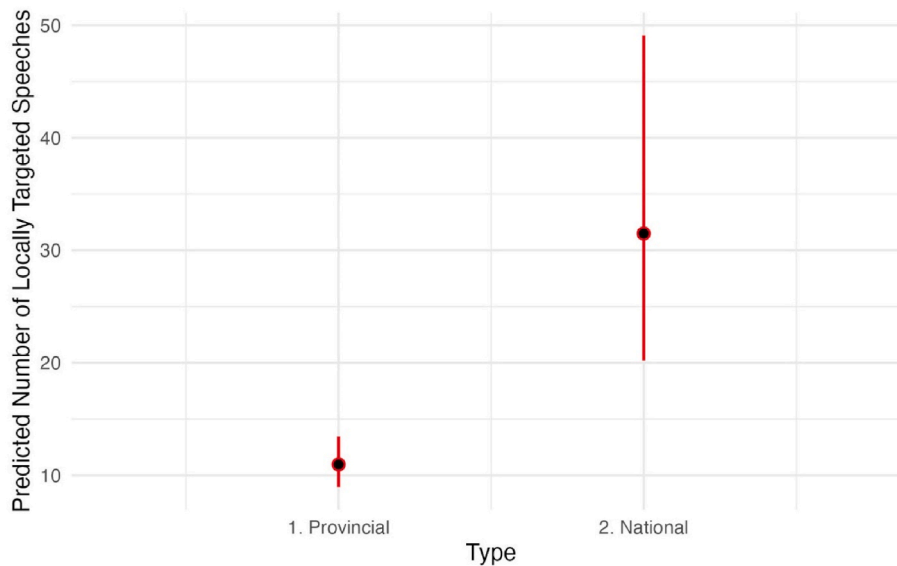

Fig. 1. National tier and localistic behavior.

Tromborg and Schwindt-Bayer's (2019) argument.

Finally, we address our expectation that the spatial distribution of localistic speeches is positively associated with legislators' electoral performance (H4). Model 6 in Table 3 evaluates this expectation for national legislators, while models 7 and 8 do the same for provincial legislators. Our key explanatory variable is electoral overperformance: the votes obtained by national (provincial) legislator j in province (canton) i above the electoral weight of that province (canton).

The results are consistent with our last hypothesis: legislators' electoral performance is a significant predictor of speech-targeting activities. The coefficient for electoral overperformance is positive and

statistically significant in all models. For example, a national legislator who obtained no excess votes in a particular province will mention localities associated with that area half as often as a legislator who overperformed by six percentage points.

Consider the behavior of Congresswoman Lourdes Tibán from Pachakutik, a party with a stronghold in the Andean region. Tibán was a provincial legislator in Cotopaxi province between 2009 and 2013. She was then reelected as a national legislator. In Fig. 3, we map the percentage of mentions of each province during both of her tenures as provincial (left map) and national legislator (right map). The map shows that Congresswoman Tiban targeted the same province most frequently
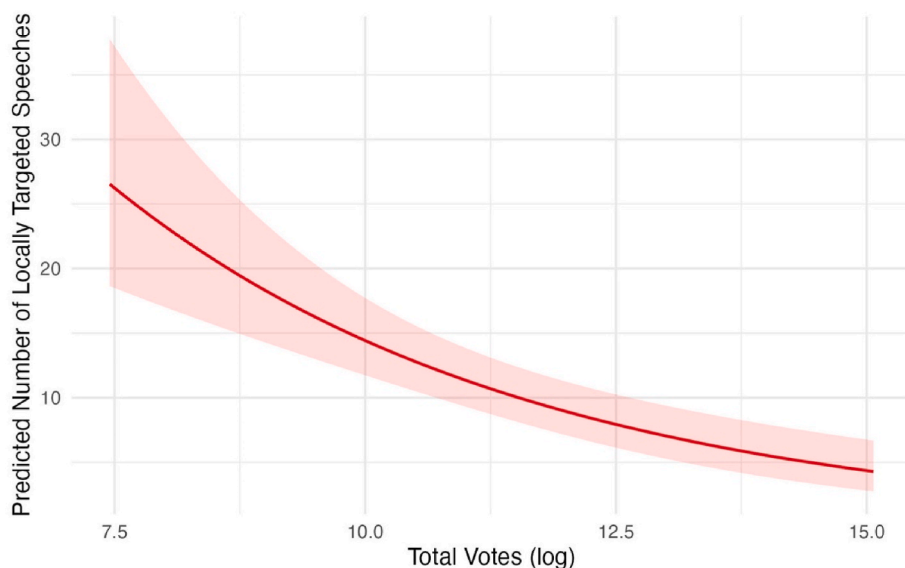
Fig. 2. Constituency size and localistic behavior.

Table 3
Spatial distribution of localistic efforts and electoral overperformance.

	National Tier	Provincial Tier	
	(6) Mentions of Province	(7) Mentions of Canton I	(8) Mentions of Canton II
Electoral Overperformance	0.032** (0.013)	2.698*** (0.708)	2.531** (1.286)
District Magnitude		−0.087*** (0.026)	−0.091*** (0.020)
Total Votes (log)	0.294** (0.123)	−0.082 (0.138)	−0.224*** (0.086)
C:P	0.031 (0.035)	0.044 (0.041)	0.045 (0.044)
Woman	0.111 (0.205)	−0.190* (0.102)	−0.146 (0.141)
Distance to Capital		−0.094*** (0.027)	−0.051 (0.035)
Rural Population (%)		0.028 (0.6701)	0.389 (0.473)
Relative Position	0.319 (1.225)	0.452 (0.372)	0.202 (0.457)
Vulnerability	0.0215 (0.417)	0.011 (0.387)	−0.098 (0.261)
Reelection Eligible	0.255 (0.234)	0.050 (0.148)	0.090 (0.182)
First-Time Legislator	−0.464*** (0.167)	−0.148 (0.108)	−0.135 (0.134)
Total Speeches	0.019*** (0.003)	0.006*** (0.001)	0.006*** (0.001)
Constant	−5.127** (2.129)	0.418 (1.535)	2.113* (1.085)
Num.Obs.	1032	3881	3881
AIC	2875.0	6556.0	7362.9
Congressional Term Dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: * p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01. Robust standard errors clustered at the individual level in.
Parentheses. For the national tier, we include mentions of provinces but not cantons. For the provincial tier models, Model 7 does not count any mentions of a canton with the same name as the province; in Model 8, we count all mentions of cantons regardless of whether they share the province's name.

in both periods. If anything, her local focus intensified, with mentions of Cotopaxi rising from 21% to 28% in her speeches. As a candidate for the national tier, the votes she received in Cotopaxi were 6.16 percentage points above the electoral weight of the province, more than in any other province.

Models 7 and 8, which focus on provincial legislators, provide similar results, indicating that electoral overperformance in a canton increases the likelihood that a provincial-tier legislator will target it. For example, in a canton where the legislator obtained a share of votes that exceeded the canton's electoral weight by ten percentage points, the predicted number of localistic mentions is twice as large as in a canton where the legislators obtained a share of votes ten percentage points below that canton's electoral weight. The results presented in Table 3 are consistent with Ames's (1995) finding from Brazil, showing that deputies are more likely to target their particularistic amendments to those parts of the state where they performed better electorally.

7. Concluding remarks

This article has analyzed the localistic behavior of legislators elected under OLPR rules, a topic that has generated significant attention in the electoral and partisan literature. While there is consensus that OLPR systems are more likely to foster the personal vote than closed-list PR systems, there is no such consensus regarding the consequences of different arrangements within personalized voting systems. As noted at the beginning of this article, there are different perspectives regarding the consequences of increasing district magnitude under OLPR, how to better capture the pressures of intra-party competition, and whether the size of a legislator's voting constituency is a more significant driver of incentives for localistic behavior than intra-party competition.

In our empirical analysis, we found no support for the classic hypothesis that increases in intra-party competition are associated with more localistic behavior. Neither DM nor the C:P ratio nor the C:P × E:P indicator affected localism as previously hypothesized. Given the alternative argument that low DM fosters localistic appeals, as advance by authors such as Lancaster (1986) and Tromborg and Schwindt-Bayer (2022), it is possible that our null findings reflect net effects where the two tendencies cancel each other out. However, we found consistent support for the hypothesis that localism is negatively associated with the size of a legislator's electoral constituency. A smaller electoral constituency tends to increase parochial behavior.

The Ecuadorian case also allowed us to examine two-tier incentives under the same electoral rules. Aside from proportionality and minority inclusion, national districts (at least when demanding a separate vote) are supposed to disincentivize parochial incentives and redirect
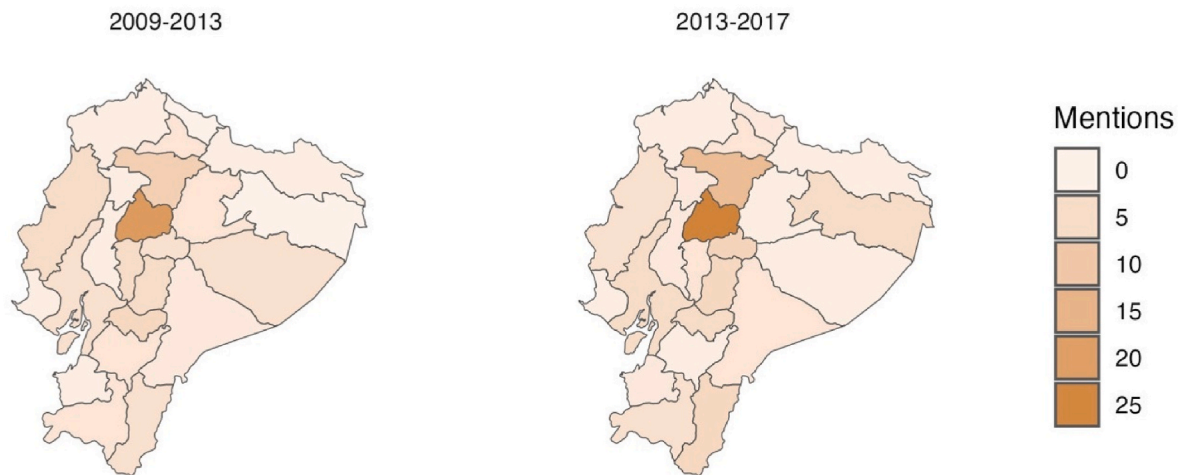
2009-2013

2013-2017

Fig. 3. Mentions of each province by Congresswoman Tibán.
Note: Darker shades represent a higher percentage of speeches mentioning a given province. Galápagos not shown.

attention to national issues. That was the presumed goal of institutional designers in Ecuador (and Colombia), who intended to counterbalance the parochial behavior of provincial legislators and territorially fractionalized parties. However, we argued that instituting a national district elected under the same OLPR rules as the lower-tier districts was unlikely to reduce legislators' localism. The analysis confirmed our expectation and showed that, for the most part, legislators elected in the national tier did not engage in less localistic behavior than legislators elected in the lower (provincial) tier.

Lastly, we focused on the spatial distribution of national legislators' localistic efforts. While it makes sense for legislators to direct attention to areas with greater electoral weight overall, we argued that individual electoral performance was also crucial to deciding where to target localistic efforts. Our analysis showed that legislators are vote-chasers, targeting areas of the country where they overperformed electorally.

In conclusion, our analysis advances scholarly understanding of localism under OLPR, complements previous studies focused on preferential voting systems and the personal vote, and sheds light on the legislators' representational strategies. It also contributes to the growing literature using legislative speech to uncover patterns of constituent representation.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Eduardo Alemán: Writing – original draft. **Pablo Valdivieso Kastner:** Writing – original draft. **Sebastián Vallejo Vera:** Writing – original draft.

Declaration of competing interest

None for all authors of this manuscript.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2024.102865.

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