Populism as a Reaction to Local Disruption: Evidence from European Municipalities

Jeremy Ferwerda

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Abstract

Although recent literature has identified a set of demographic characteristics that predispose voters to support populist parties, it has encountered difficulties when explaining spatial variation in populist support. This paper argues that demographic disruptions to local communities play an important role in mobilizing populist party identification. Citizens with aversion to rapid change are likely to self-select into peripheral areas. Yet in the wake of free-movement agreements and shifts in local labor demand, formerly isolated communities are experiencing unprecedented levels of immigration. These tangible changes to local conditions validate populist narratives and generate representational gaps that weaken ties to mainstream parties. To test the argument, I draw on municipal-level data from eight European countries, and field a four-wave panel survey of small German municipalities during the refugee crisis. The results demonstrate that support for populist parties is elevated in formerly homogeneous localities affected by policy-induced demographic change.

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Western democracies are in the midst of a populist moment. Although the surge in electoral support for populist parties and candidates is unprecedented, the precipitating factors are not novel. Mainstream parties, and in particular those of the center left, have long struggled to provide cohesive platforms that simultaneously appeal to and expand their base. These problems have been magnified by international agreements and organizations that have constrained the scope for flexible policy-making (Hooghe and Marks, 2017; Guiso et al., 2017). In turn, perceived stasis and inability to respond to pressing concerns has opened up opportunities for political entrepreneurs to exploit emerging wedge issues and supply the public with challenges to the status quo (Mueller, 2016).

Yet the current pattern of electoral results suggests that the populist moment is more than stochastic variation around politics as normal. An emerging consensus argues that demand for populism has been fueled by economic and cultural concerns held by electorates within post-industrial societies. According to this argument, fears of status reversal or being left behind have fueled reactionary responses by socio-demographic groups who have increasingly been pushed to the economic margins of society. Although these accounts astutely diagnose the reactionary tendencies that motivate populist support, they remain incomplete. Most importantly, while these perspectives are able to predict which socio-demographic groups will be swayed by populist appeals, they are unable to persuasively explain temporal and spatial variation in populist support.

This paper seeks to reincorporate spatial context by arguing that disruptions to local communities play an important role in mobilizing populist party identification. While structural changes in the nature of work and the level of ethnic diversity have been gradual at the national level, these changes are often abrupt and discontinuous within localities. These disruptions, which take the form of visible shocks such as factory closures or the rapid diversification of neighborhoods, hold the potential to validate populist narratives and provide voters with tangible signals of changing national conditions. In turn, the lack of control exercised by local voters over these events can amplify feelings of disassociation from mainstream parties and reinforce the appeals of populist party challengers.

This perspective implies that partisan identification with populist parties should be elevated in communities undergoing rapid economic and demographic change. In the European setting, recent research has provided causal support for the first claim, documenting how exogenous shocks related to globalization and austerity have increased electoral support for populist parties and issues within

affected communities (Colantone and Stanig, 2018*a*,*b*; Fetzer, 2019). To date, however, the evidence supporting a relationship between demographic disruption and support for populist parties remains conflicted, largely due to issues of spatial aggregation and the challenge of identifying the causal effect of demographic change.

This paper seeks to identify the electoral consequences of local demographic disruption by focusing on instances in which formerly isolated communities are exposed to sharp increases in immigration flows. To establish the external validity of the argument, the analysis first draws on a novel panel dataset spanning municipal-level immigration and electoral data across eight Western European countries. Analyzing the consequences of cumulative immigrant flows to isolated communities, this analysis demonstrates that while diverse communities are largely non-responsive to immigrant arrivals, support for populist parties is sharply elevated in formerly homogeneous municipalities experiencing rapid demographic change.

Second, to identify the causal relationship between local disruption and populist support, this paper draws on an original four-wave panel study fielded in small German municipalities during the Syrian refugee crisis. In order to manage the large number of asylum claims, the German government engaged in a multi-tiered distribution scheme that allocated varying numbers of asylum seekers to formerly isolated municipalities across the country. Leveraging this exogenous variation, the analysis demonstrates that citizens living in small towns that were selected by higher-level governments to house large numbers of asylum seekers display sharp increases in populist party identification over the course of the panel. The changes in party identification subsequently translated into a 4.7% percentage point increase in reported support for populist parties within the 2017 federal elections.

The survey data suggest that the main mechanism driving populist support within affected communities relates to dissociation from mainstream parties, rather than from a perceived increase in economic insecurity. Although working class voters were marginally more likely to switch from mainstream to populist parties, the citizens with the highest probability of adopting populist party identification were located at the fringes of the ideological distribution prior to the refugee crisis. Coupled with the fact that respondents' attitudes towards immigration, nationalism, and redistribution remain highly stable over the course of the panel, this suggests that local disruption did not alter deep-seated political orientations, but rather severed the representative link between constituents and

mainstream parties.

The finding that local demographic disruption plays an important role in mobilizing populist party identification adds nuance to existing accounts. The literature has extensively debated whether voters' anxiety is driven by personal experience or by sociotropic concerns at the national level. While evidence has increasingly suggested that the latter predominates, these findings should not imply a wholesale rejection of the explanatory power of personal context. Sociotropic and group-level concerns are not formed in a vacuum. Rather, they are anchored in daily experience – which goes beyond personal economic status, narrowly construed, to encompass a broader set of cues received from neighbors, social networks, and communities (McNamara, 2017). Understanding how shifts in these local signals validate or reinforce populist claims is central to explaining spatial and temporal variation in the populist moment.

Local Disruption and Populism

Demand-side explanations of populism have centered on the emergence of a common set of anxieties related to economic insecurity and diversity (Mudde, 2007; Ivarsflaten, 2008). While initial accounts were preoccupied with determining the rank order of these concerns, recent accounts have persuasively recast populism as group- or class-based phenomenon driven by a sense of disassociation and powerlessness (McNamara, 2017; Berger, 2017), cultural backlash (Bustikova, 2014; Inglehart and Norris, 2017; Norris and Inglehart, 2019), and declining status (Gest, Reny and Mayer, 2017). Ethnographic and theoretical accounts alike have identified working-class white voters as a core populist demographic – and in particular, rural voters with lower educations or perceived social status (Cramer, 2016; Hochschild, 2016; Gest, 2016). These groups closely align with the expected losers to globalization and trade (Rodrik, 2017; Berger, 2017), as well as those that stand to lose social status in an increasingly cosmopolitan and urban society (Gidron and Hall, 2017).

Although a reactionary tendency among groups who are at risk of being 'left behind' has strong face validity, support for populist parties is far from a universal phenomenon. Populist vote shares often vary across national territories in a manner orthogonal to local demographic composition. While this spatial variation should provide leverage in explaining the contemporary rise of the populist parties, it has been largely subsumed in recent accounts, where the small sample sizes available in surveys typically imply that the geographic dimension is ignored or highly aggregated.

This paper builds upon extant approaches, but argues that the confluence of demographic proclivity and slow-moving societal change is insufficient to explain the current populist moment. In contexts with established mainstream parties, partisan identification is likely to be relatively resilient, and gradual shifts in demand-side conditions may thus be insufficient to trigger dramatic shifts in partisan identification. Rather, change is more plausibly linked to changes in lived experience which activate latent sentiment and lead voters to redirect their support from mainstream to challenger parties. Specifically, this paper argues that voters are likely to shift their political allegiance following local disruption; that is, in response to tangible changes to voters' residential contexts that validate populist narratives and diminish the perceived connection between citizens and their national representatives. In other words, local disruption can act as a triggering condition that mobilizes populist party identification among 'at-risk' socio-economic groups.

In the United States, several lines of work have demonstrated that political radicalization is closely connected to local economic and employment shocks stemming from international trade (Autor et al., 2016). Recent work has suggested that these patterns are present in Europe as well, albeit to a lesser degree (Guiso et al., 2017; Colantone and Stanig, 2018*a*). For instance, Colantone and Stanig (2018*b*) find that a one standard deviation in exogeneous trade exposure is associated with a 1.7% increase in Brexit support, sufficient to flip the referenda outcome in several districts. Other research has documented elevated effect sizes when examining the consequences of disruption to local service provision caused by EU rulings (Cavaille and Ferwerda, 2018) or austerity policy (Fetzer, 2019).

Despite the salience of economic shocks, arguably the most prominent disruption in the European setting has been demographic. In particular, the accession of Eastern European countries to the European Union and the expansion of refugee and asylum programs has led to sharp and asymmetric increases in immigrant flows. The defining characteristic of this trend is that it has not been limited to urban areas. Flexible work permits and a demand for low-wage labor within declining rural communities have transformed traditional patterns of immigrant settlement. In the United Kingdom, Polish immigrants settled disproportionately in rural and semi-urban areas — communities that had hitherto been unexposed to rapid demographic change (Scott and Brindley, 2012; Becker, Fetzer et al., 2016). In Italy and Spain, the entry of nearly one million Romanians seeking low-wage labor between 2004 and 2010 transformed even highly isolated rural communities. For instance, the mountain village of Portomingalvo in Spain

counted 165 inhabitants in 2004: by 2008 the population had nearly doubled, with 45.5% of residents holding Romanian citizenship.

Local demographic disruption can be expected to influence partisan attitudes via two pathways. First, and most directly, rapid increases in immigrant settlement may trigger a sense of competition over scarce resources such as employment, benefits, and political power (Quillian, 1995; Hopkins, 2010; Dancygier, 2010). Local competition is linked to the distributional consequences of immigration policy: while immigration policy is national in scope and seeks diffuse benefits, impacts are concentrated within specific localities (Freeman, 1995). These impacts are particularly pronounced within the European Union, where binding directives (2003/109/E) provide permanent residents with relatively unrestricted access to social rights, housing, and employment markets within member states. This implies that increases in immigrant settlement are often associated with the perceived overcrowding of locally provided in-kind benefits such as school places, public housing, or healthcare. These shocks can generate generate significant backlash against governing parties, especially if immigrant settlement occurs within the wider context of austerity measures (Cavaille and Ferwerda, 2018).

Yet the effects of demographic transformation are not only material in nature. Given the costs associated with acquiring accurate information, the communities in which individuals operate provide a powerful set of cues that can inform broader cultural and sociotropic concerns (Wong, 2007; Hopkins, 2010; Enos, 2014). While common in national-level discourse, diversification and globalization may become tangible only when new languages and faces are encountered within a formerly homogeneous or isolated community. Upon encountering rapid change within familiar contexts, individuals are also likely to overestimate the pace of changes in other communities or in the nation as a whole, generating a disproportionate sociotropic response. This response is exacerbated by contemporary demographic trends, in which an ongoing urban transition within developed economies has led to the disproportionate outmigration of young and cosmopolitan voters to urban environments (Maxwell, 2019). Voters that opt to remain in isolated areas —– or deliberately select into these settings —– may be more averse to rapid changes in local conditions and more likely to express such opposition politically. For these voters, demographic disruption is likely to serve as an activating condition in validating populist narratives and engendering a sense of disassociation between citizens and mainstream parties.

Populist parties are well positioned to fill this representational gap. First, their political platforms

are predicated upon the claim that the political elite has been non-responsive to the concerns of ordinary citizens (Mudde, 2007; Mueller, 2016; Golder, 2016). Second, even if local disruption does not influence core political attitudes, it is likely to increase the relative salience of issues over which populist parties typically exert ownership. In particular, populist parties tend to emphasize policy proposals that promise to halt or reverse rapid changes in local conditions — via ameliorating the inflow of immigrants and asylum seekers (populist right), or by addressing resource competition through basic income schemes and service guarantees (populist left).[1] Finally, although populist parties position themselves as challengers to the status quo on wedge issues, supply-side factors often entail that populist parties are closely aligned with the edge of mainstream parties' ideological distributions (Rooduijn and Akkerman, 2017). In a context where mainstream parties lose legitimacy following local disruption, this ideological overlap reduces the potential for cognitive dissonance and can facilitate defection among weakly attached voters.

Emphasizing the importance of demographic disruption in shaping demand for populist parties stands counter to recent accounts which dismiss the relationship between immigrant settlement and populist support as inconclusive (Golder, 2016; Stockemer, 2016). While correlating immigration flows to political attitudes has indeed become a cottage industry, dismissing the conclusions as mere noise overlooks the considerable heterogeneity in the quality of evidence. In the European context, many of the studies which conclude that immigrant settlement has no effect on populist attitudes or voteshare are conducted at extremely high levels of aggregation – such as nations or statistical regions – in which individual exposure to immigrants remains opaque and the possibility of ecological bias cannot be ruled out (Rydgren, 2008). Perhaps most importantly, the lion's share of analyses examine static differences in immigrant *levels* rather than changes over time (Hopkins, 2010; Newman and Velez, 2014).[2] Yet gradual shifts in local conditions may be imperceptible and should not be expected to trigger meaningful increases in populist support. Rather, defection from mainstream to populist parties should be concentrated within communities that experience substantial disruption from baseline conditions. In particular, the impacts

[1]Given that the proximate cause of local disruption is related to immigration, the expectation is that parties of the populist right will be the primary beneficiaries of citizen backlash. However, anti-immigrant sentiment is not a necessary precondition; left-wing voters who are dissatisfied with the quality of representation are also expected to defect to populist left-wing parties who offer to correct representational deficits and address increases in economic insecurity.

[2]Recent studies which correct for these problems have identified clear correlations between immigrant settlement and political attitudes (Kaufmann, 2014; Schmidt-Catran and Spies, 2016; Becker, Fetzer et al., 2016; Halla, Wagner and Zweimüller, 2017; Harmon, 2017).

are likely to be greater in rural (McNamara, 2017) or formerly homogeneous communities (Green, Strolovitch and Wong, 1998; Newman, 2013), where residents have – indirectly or directly – selected into settings unaccustomed to rapid demographic change.

Cross-National Evidence

To evaluate the external validity of the argument, the analysis initially focuses on a cross-national comparison of populist support at the municipal level in Western Europe. The dataset covers municipal-level immigration flows across eight countries: Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.[3] The outcome of interest is support for populist parties , regardless of left-right orientation, across the two most recent parliamentary elections (excluding 2019 contests); subsequent results are robust to examining left- and right-wing populist parties individually.[4]

Rather than examining how changes in the percentage of foreign nationals within each municipality affect voteshare, the subsequent analysis operationalizes demographic disruption as a sharp increase in the total number of immigrant arrivals, relative to the existing level of diversity, over a multi-year period. Given that data on immigration flows is unaffected by citizenship acquisition or natural demographic change, this approach proxies the degree of visible demographic 'churn', i.e., the increased likelihood of encountering new neighbors, languages, and faces within one's daily experience. Given that the precise threshold at which inflows will generate disruption is unclear, the analysis models support for the populist right as a flexible interaction of existing diversity with the volume of immigrant flows using a generalized additive model (GAM). This semi-parametric approach does not impose a linear functional form on the relationship between inflows and extant diversity, and obviates the need to implement arbitrary cutoffs for either measure.

The specification is as follows:

[3]The selection of countries is driven by the availability of municipal-level registry data on immigrant flows. Municipalities with incomplete data were removed using list-wise deletion. Municipal counts: 98 (Denmark), 314 (Finland), 20605 (France), 8101 (Italy), 403 (Netherlands), 8114 (Spain), 288 (Sweden), 2327 (Switzerland).

[4]The analysis focuses on large populist parties competitive within parliamentary elections. Note that left-wing populist parties are not active at the national level within all states included in the analysis. Parties included: Danish People's Party (DK), True Finns (FIN), Front National (FR) , Lega Nord/5-Star Movement (ITA), Party for Freedom/Socialist Party (NED), Ciudadanos/Podemos/Izquierda Unida (ESP), Sweden Democrats/Left Party (SWE), Swiss People's Party (CH).

$$Flows_{i,t} = \frac{\sum_{n=b}^{t} Flows_{iq}}{Population_{ib}}$$

$$\Delta VoteShare_{it} = s(PctForeign_{ib}, Flows_{it}) + \theta X_i + \epsilon_{it}$$

where *VoteShare* indicates the (demeaned) change in vote share for populist parties.[5], t refers to the year of the most recent election, b refers to the year at the beginning of the observation window, *PctForeign* refers to the share of foreign nationals at the start of the period, *Flows* refers to the total number of immigrant flows over the observation window, scaled by the original municipal population, and X is a vector of controls including the municipal population (logged) and change in the municipal unemployment rate.

Figure 2 (next page) displays the results of this analysis, using a five-year time window.[6] Darker colors on the heat map indicate increased support for populist right-wing parties in the most recent national election, relative to other municipalities within the national sample. Consistent with the disruption hypothesis, the largest increases in support are visible within isolated municipalities previously shielded from demographic change (left-hand side of plot). Upon receiving large flows of migrants (upper-left of each plot), these municipalities consistently display elevated support for populist parties in national elections. In contrast, municipalities with high levels of baseline diversity (right-hand side of plot) are markedly less responsive to changes in immigrant flows.

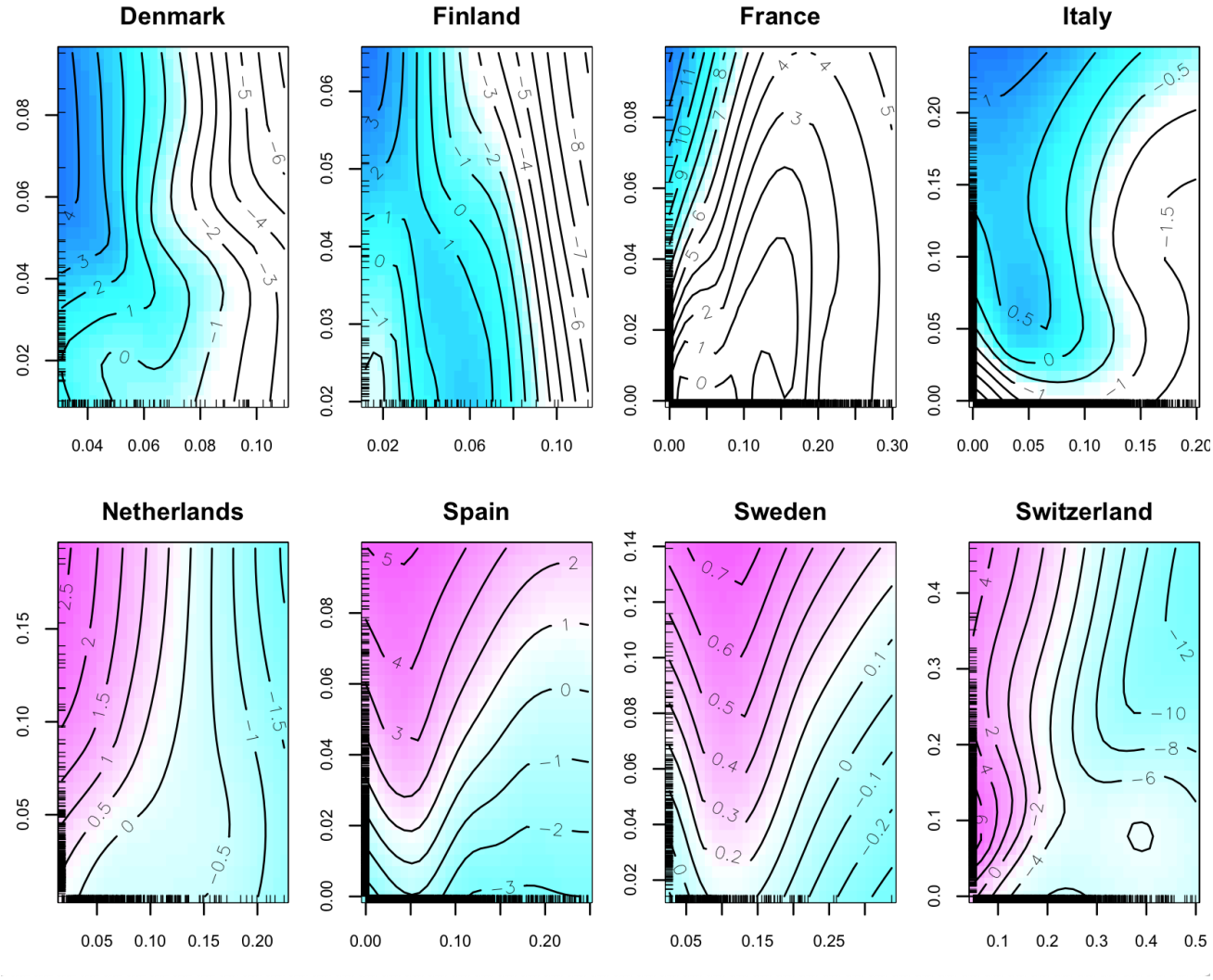
Appendix Figure A1 reports an alternate specification that examines the marginal effect of immigrant inflow on populist vote share, conditional on local diversity. This approach yields similar results: the marginal effect is positive in areas with low prior exposure to immigration and negative in areas with higher exposure. Effect sizes are sizable: for instance, in Denmark the results suggest that in the least diverse municipalities, a 1 percentage point increase in immigrant inflow relative to population size is associated with a 1.2% increase in populist voteshare. These patterns are consistent with the argument that demographic disruption plays an important role in mobilizing increased populist support within the European context. Moreover, they underscore that different political processes are at play across

[5]Demeaning permits accurate comparisons of patterns of electoral support across countries. In France, the analysis focuses on presidential elections due to the staggered timing of the election process. In all other included countries, the dependent variable consists of legislative election outcomes. 2019 elections are excluded given that immigration data is unavailable for this year.

[6]The results are robust to using a three or four-year window.

diverse and non-diverse municipalities. Without accounting for this heterogeneity in prior exposure to immigration, estimates of the effect of immigration on populist voteshare are likely to be substantively insignificant.

Figure 1: Support for Populist Parties, by Existing Diversity and 5-year Immigrant Inflow



Note: The dependent variable is the demeaned change in populist voteshare, at the municipal level, across the two most recent national elections (excluding 2019). Shaded regions represent municipalities with elevated support for populist parties, while contour lines indicate changes in coefficients. The vertical axis plots the total number of immigrant inflows over the previous five years, scaled by population five years prior. The horizontal axis plots the existing level of diversity in a municipality five years prior. Increases in the upper-left hand region of the plot are consistent with the local disruption hypothesis.

These results suggest that demographic disruption plays an important role in activating populist support within formerly isolated communities. However, these results should nevertheless be viewed as correlational rather than causal. Although the increase in immigrant settlement observed in these countries can be directly traced to the expiry of labor market restrictions on new EU members and a sharp increase in humanitarian migration, the spatial patterns are not exogenous: immigrants and natives alike may sort across municipalities according to their level of comfort with local diversity. Moreover, the aggregate nature of these data provides limited insight into the mechanism driving increased support for populist parties. Accordingly, to demonstrate the internal validity of the disruption hypothesis and to shed light on underlying mechanisms, the next section leverages a panel survey implemented in a setting where citizens in small municipalities have been exposed to exogenous demographic change.

Local Disruption and Populism in Germany

On September 4th 2015, at the height of the Syrian refugee crisis, Angela Merkel announced that German authorities would no longer prevent asylum seekers from entering German territory. While the political logic of this decision has been widely debated (Streeck, 2016), the consequences have been clear. Between September 2015 and July 2017, Germany recorded more than 1,047,000 asylum claims – nearly nine times the amount processed by neighboring France.

The refugee crisis introduced a series of demographic shocks to formerly isolated communities. Asylum seekers arriving in Germany were not concentrated within a single region, but rather distributed proportionally across state and local governments. Specifically, asylum seekers were allocated to the 16 states on the basis of a previously negotiated federal distribution key — the Königsteiner Schlüssel — which is adjusted yearly on the basis of GDP and population figures. Upon being allocated to a federal state, state-level distribution keys subsequently distributed asylum seekers to counties (n=401), which were responsible for the final allocation to municipalities. While political negotiations at the local level implied that the final number of allocated asylum seekers deviated from the distribution key at the margins, localities were largely unable to opt out of hosting their assigned quota of asylum seekers (see Appendix Figure A2).

This proportional distribution scheme implied that nearly every community in Germany was exposed to an influx of foreign nationals. This exposure was not transitory, but rather entailed long-term

demographic impacts for municipalities: as of August 2016, asylum seekers were legally required to remain in the municipality to which they were allocated.[7] Nevertheless, the timing and scale of the shock varied substantially across communities. First, the volume of arrivals within each municipality varied depending on the combination of federal an state-level distribution keys. As a result of this system, neighboring municipalities located within different counties or states could expect to receive divergent levels of arrivals.

Second, holding proportional allocations constant, there was extensive spatial variation in the temporary housing of refugees while final asylum decisions were being processed. Given the large volume of arrivals, asylum seekers were not directly distributed to municipalities, but rather housed within large-scale reception and housing facilities. These facilities were established by federal, state, and county-level governments throughout the crisis, with decisions made primarily on the basis of geographic centrality and building vacancy. Local housing and reception facilities were typically located within public buildings, such as convention centers or sports facilities, as well as in temporary shelters built within vacant buildings (factories, convention halls) or on municipal land. Upon arrival, asylum seekers were required to remain at these locations until their claims were processed and they were ready to be housed within their final destination municipality. While this process was designed to last for a maximum of three months, in practice the volume of applications frequently led to long-term stays within these accommodations. As a result, localities that were initially designated by higher-level governments to house reception and emergency facilities maintained disproportionately large populations of asylum seekers throughout the crisis.

Although expanding flows of refugees and asylum seekers to European countries imply that the German case is not an isolated event, the placement of asylum seekers within local communities nevertheless represents a bundled treatment with a variety of economic as well as demographic impacts.[8]

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[7] Bundesgesetzblatt Jahrgang 2016 Teil 1 Nr. 39

[8] The distribution of asylum seekers also introduced significant disruptions to infrastructure and local services. Although some some municipalities already possessed the vacant housing necessary to provide for refugees, the dearth of housing in other contexts implied that refugee accommodation frequently consisted of schools or public administration buildings that had to be vacated by local authorities and quickly converted for residency. Staffing shortages implied that local authorities were heavily reliant on volunteerism and unable to handle ordinary administrative requests from citizens. In particular, schools and day-care facilities faced a sudden shortage of slots and experienced teachers. Finally, before the federal government agreed to bear the lion's share of the costs, resettlement was associated with substantial overspending on the part of cash-strapped localities.

The subsequent analysis is thus best viewed as an upper bound on the relationship between immigration-induced local disruption and populist sentiment, albeit within a national case where support for populist parties has historically been limited by informal norms against radicalism.

Sample and Design

This paper leverages variation in local exposure to the refugee crisis to estimate how citizens respond to policy-induced demographic change. The analysis draws on the results of an original four-wave panel survey conducted in small German towns during the allocation process. The initial wave, consisting of 6,132 respondents, was completed in March 2016. A second and third wave with the same respondents was fielded in December 2016 and July 2017, and a final wave was fielded in April 2018, yielding a final sample size of 2,933 respondents. As seen in Appendix Table A1, panel attrition was not strongly correlated with spatial or sociodemographic characteristics.

The panel was deliberately targeted to German citizens residing in municipalities with less than 35,000 inhabitants (median size: 13,350). [9] Focusing on semi-urban and rural areas permits an assessment of attitudinal and political change among the subpopulation which experienced the greatest relative demographic shock. Moreover, within the context of tiered distribution scheme, the majority of respondents within small towns had not yet experienced the assignment of asylum seekers to their municipalities at the start of the panel.

Respondents provided their postal code, which was subsequently validated via Google Maps geo-location in the respondent's browser.[10] Using these postal codes, it was possible to estimate each respondents' local exposure via two metrics. First, each respondent's postal code was linked to federal data on the total number of individuals with temporary resident permits granted on humanitarian grounds (i.e., processed claims) residing within the county at the close of each year. These estimates are conservative given that they exclude cases which have been rejected or granted subsidiary protection.

[9] Sample recruited by Respondi, Inc. and fielded using Qualtrics. Quotas were used to match national socio-demographics with respect to gender and age within the municipal population cutoffs, but were not otherwise adjusted.

[10] Browser geolocation was obtained via integration with Google Maps API. The geographic coverage of postal codes varies with population density. Larger cities have several postal codes, while smaller cities may be covered by one postal code or share a postal code with a neighboring municipality. Browser geo-location enabled the exact location to be determined (+-200m) for the majority of respondents. This location was used in combination with the postal code to select the appropriate municipality of the respondent.

Second, at a more granular level, postal codes were matched with the verified locations of refugee reception and housing facilities with >50 beds. While no central government register of these locations is available, facilities were manually geocoded after collecting street addresses from local governments and service providers on a county-by-county basis. Locations were further cross-validated with survey questions which asked respondents to indicate the street address of the nearest refugee housing or reception facility. As of the final wave in April 2018, 53% of panel respondents resided within a postal code containing a large-scale facility.

Given that allocations and the locations of reception facilities were a function of previously negotiated distribution keys and the decisions of higher-level governments, respectively, citizens within affected municipalities exercised limited agency over the degree of local exposure.[11] This implies that at the respondent level, it is possible to credibly identify the causal relationship between local disruption and support for populist parties by tracking how citizens' political attitudes and party identification vary as a function of the intensity of local disruption.

Table 1 reports the p-values from a balance test which assess differences in background characteristics between respondents living in communities with different levels of local exposure to the refugee crisis. Two measures are assessed: the number of asylum seekers who arrived between Wave 1 and Wave 4 as a proportion of the existing population (Arrivals)[12], and a binary indicator measuring whether a refugee reception or housing facility was established in the respondent's postal code (Reception Facility). The results of this test suggest that respondent characteristics are balanced at the .05 level, with the exception of household income for the Arrivals measure, and fully balanced for the Reception Facility measure. The former imbalance likely results from the inclusion of local GDP within distribution keys, while the latter balance reflects the fact that a respondent's precise residential location relative to appropriate facilities at the time of the crisis is plausibly arbitrary. Most importantly, however, no differences across either measure are observed with respect to respondent's reported ideology or prior support for populist parties.

Given that all municipalities within Germany eventually received asylum seekers, demographic

[11] Note, however, that local opposition to asylum seekers may have played a role at the margins by reducing the chance that the municipality was selected to house a distribution center.

[12] Final numbers of arrivals are not available on a municipality by municipality basis across Germany. As a result, these estimates rely on county-level allocations and conservatively assume an equal distribution in proportion to municipal population. Similar results are obtained when binning arrivals

Table 1: Differences in Respondent Characteristics, by Measure of Local Exposure

	Arrivals	Reception Facility
Gender	0.86	0.34
Birth Year	0.80	0.29
Income Level	0.03	0.89
Benefit Recipiency	0.41	0.50
University Education	0.09	0.26
Left-Right Self Placement	0.75	0.45
2013 Populist Party Support	0.51	0.36

Estimates indicate p-values obtained when regressing the exposure measure on respondent's background characteristics (provided in Wave 1).

exposure within this context is in terms of degree rather than in kind, leading to conservative estimates. To proxy how the strength of these shocks varied across respondents, the subsequent analysis focuses on the relative placement of refugee housing and reception facilities across small municipalities. Communities selected to house refugees experienced a disproportionate volume of asylum seeker arrivals and concentrated exposure to the crisis. In comparison to the allocations data, this metric also provides a more granular indicator of respondents' local exposure. The concentration of asylum seekers within these locations over the course of the crisis provides arguably a more tangible signal of local disruption than the marginal effect of additional flows, which may be subject to threshold effects. Nevertheless, the appendix demonstrates that subsequent results are robust to using asylum seeker arrivals as the main indicator of local disruption.

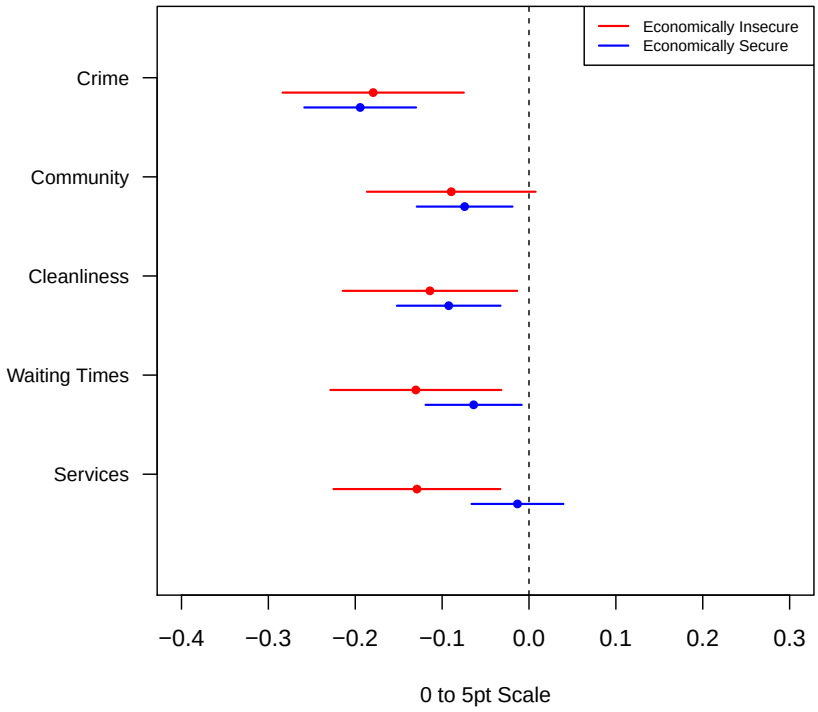
Perceived Local Impact

To test the validity of the reception facility measure, Figure 2 evaluates whether respondents within municipalities selected to house refugees throughout the crisis indicated that their daily experiences were affected by the refugee inflow, relative to respondents in locations without such facilities. Citizens living within communities selected to host large-scale accommodations reported declining conditions across a range of factors, including local levels of crime, community spirit, cleanliness of roads and public facilities, waiting times at municipal offices, and the quality of municipal services. The plot also subsets respondents according to their perceived level of economic security at the start of the panel.[13] While

[13] In wave 1, respondents were asked whether the economic situation of their household would worsen, stay the same, or improve over the next 12 months.

economically secure respondents were concerned with broad sociotropic impacts, those with less stable economic situations were likely to reference concerns over service provision and waiting times. Together, these findings suggest that the placement of these facilities was plausibly associated with perceived local disruption.

Figure 2: Perceived Impact of Refugee Reception Center on Local Conditions



Point estimates refer to the difference in reported changes between respondents living in postal codes with large-scale refugee facilities, relative to respondents living in postal codes without such facilities. Negative coefficients indicate worsening conditions.

Political Attitudes and Party ID in Affected Municipalities

To what extent did local disruption influence citizens' attitudes and political behavior? If the perspective advanced in this paper holds, we should expect to observe weakened attachment to mainstream parties within strongly affected municipalities, along with a corresponding rise in populist party identification. To evaluate this hypothesis, the analysis implements a design which compares changes in attitudes over the course of the panel, as a function of the degree of local disruption:

$$\Delta Y_{i,W4-W1} = \alpha + \beta Exposure_i + \gamma State_i + \theta X_i + \epsilon_i$$

in which the dependent variable is the change in citizens' attitudes over the lifetime of the panel (standardized on a 0 to 1 scale), *Exposure* indicates that a refugee reception center was placed in the respondents' community after the first survey wave, and X is a vector of covariates that controls for compositional differences, including employment status, education, age, income level, and public benefit recipiency. *State* is a variable referencing the respondent's state of residence; the inclusion of this term controls for differences in supply-side factors such as party organization and representation across regional governments, as well as whether the respondent resides in former East or West Germany.[14]

The assumption needed to establish a causal relationship between *Exposure* and Y is that respondents would have followed parallel political trends in the absence of the decision of higher-level governments to place the refugee facility. Although the limited set of pre-treatment periods implies that this assumption cannot be verified empirically, the observed balance with respect to political affiliation between individuals in each condition (right-hand columns of Table 1), suggest that this assumption is reasonable.

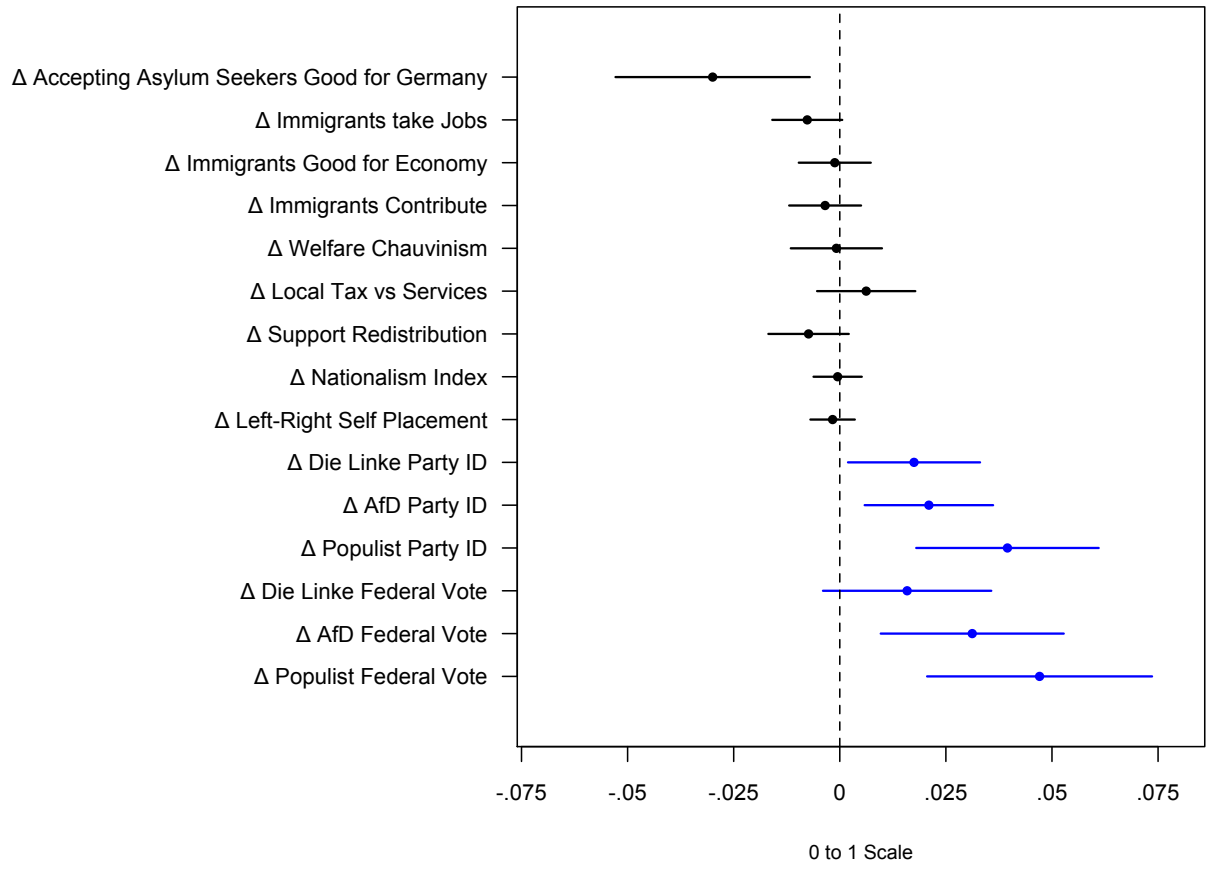
Figure 3 displays point estimates from the main specification. Over the course of the panel, support for the decision to accept asylum seekers declined more rapidly for citizens living in municipalities selected as sites for refugee reception facilities, relative to citizens living in other localities.[15] However, a range of other political attitudes, including ideological self-placement, support for redistribution, and attitudes towards immigrants more generally, are highly stable over the course of the panel. A similar pattern is visible when examining alternate independent variables that measure the volume of refugee flows to each municipality (Appendix Table A2) or a change in county-level diversity (Appendix Figure A3). The relative immobility of generalized political attitudes is consistent with research suggesting that abstract political preferences – including attitudes towards immigration – are stable over the lifecourse and relatively resilient to economic shocks (O'Grady, 2017; Maxwell, 2019; Kustov, Laaker and Reller, 2019).

Although core political attitudes remained stable throughout the panel, a significant shift in populist party identification and voting behavior is nevertheless visible among citizens in affected

[14]The inclusion of compositional variables controls for remaining imbalance in Exposure. However, similar results are obtained when using a fully differenced fixed effects specification with only time-varying controls.

[15]The specific question asked: In retrospect, was the decision to admit a large number of asylum seekers to Germany a good or a bad one? Please indicate your thoughts on a scale of 1-10 in which 1 indicates that the effects have been extremely negative and 10 indicates the effects have been extremely positive.

Figure 3: Effect of Exposure on Political Attitudes and Identification



Coefficients indicate the difference between Wave 1 and Wave 4 for respondents within affected postal codes, relative to respondents with less local exposure to the refugee crisis. Lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Change in federal vote refers to the difference in party choice in the 2013 elections (reported in Wave 1) and the 2017 elections (reported in Wave 4).

municipalities. Within municipalities assigned a reception facility, for instance, respondents were 3.9% more likely to indicate that they had changed their party identification to a populist party: either the AfD (populist right-wing) and Die Linke (populist left-wing). The results also indicate that 4.7% of voters within affected municipalities who did not vote for a populist party in the 2013 elections reported doing so in the 2017 elections. Although the comparatively higher effect size for the federal election measure relative to party identification suggests that some of the votes for populist parties in 2017 were protest votes (in which voters retain their main party identification), the difference in effect size is also influenced by turnout: a higher proportion of individuals who identified with a mainstream parties abstained from the 2017 federal elections.

Notably, although local disruption had the most extensive effect on support for an anti-immigrant populist party (AfD), it also boosted support – to a more limited extent – for a populist left wing party (Die Linke). This pattern may initially be surprising given that Die Linke's political platform is favorable towards immigrants and asylum seekers. However, anti-immigrant sentiment is not a necessary condition for a shift in partisan identification over the course of the panel. Rather, these findings are consistent with a process in which voters defect from mainstream to populist parties due to a sense of powerlessness, leading to weakened attachment from voters across the ideological spectrum. Supply-side factors are also likely at play: despite adopting a political stance favoring asylum policies, Die Link's political rhetoric during the crisis was highly critical of the policies adopted by the CDU/SPD grand coalition. Specifically, Die Linke highlighted the significant resource burdens which were being placed on local communities, and demanded that the federal government compensate localities in order to preserve the quality of services for existing residents. For ideologically left-wing voters discontented with the SPD's handling of the refugee crisis, Die Linke served as a viable alternative.

Heterogeneous Effects across Sociodemographic Groups

The results presented thus far demonstrate that local disruption serves as an activating condition. While shocks to localities did not alter core political attitudes, the panel survey suggests that disruption nevertheless generated discontent with national politicians and parties. Moreover, voters within disrupted localities shifted their political party identification from mainstream to populist parties at elevated rates. Although these findings are consistent with the hypothesis that local disruption plays an important role in mobilizing populist party identification, the mechanism driving these patterns remains unclear. Accordingly, this section evaluates two potential pathways through which local disruption shapes political behavior.

The first pathway relates to heightened economic insecurity, which extant literature has identified as a key factor that explains variation in populist support. Within the German context, individuals who already felt marginalized or insecure at the beginning of the panel may view local disruption as a threat to their future interests — in the form of income, employment, or social status.[16] Faced with

[16] Status concerns may be broad ranging. For instance, in a recent working paper, Dancygier et al. (2019) argue that demographic change triggers perceptions of threat among single individuals seeking partners.

diminishing future prospects, these individuals may shift their support to populist parties and endorse policy platforms that seek to return to the status quo or restrict new arrivals from accessing the welfare state or labor markets. The empirical prediction from this pathway is that citizens who were most economically insecure prior to the refugee crisis will be the most likely to switch their party identification following exposure to local demographic change.

The second pathway relates to the credibility of mainstream parties. It begins with the assumption that party identification is relatively stable, and voters will tend to support mainstream parties even when their personal situation is precarious or uncertain. However, among affected citizens, dramatic changes to local environments and lived experiences may generate the perception that politicians are no longer representing local constituents, opening the window for a shift in partisan identification. If this pathway is active, we should expect that individuals who are most ideologically aligned with populist parties prior to the shock will be most likely to switch their identification from mainstream to populist parties.

To evaluate these hypotheses, the upper panel of Figure 4 (next page) reports the results of a linear probability model which assesses electoral support for populist parties as a function of background characteristics measured in the first survey wave. The binary dependent variable indicates whether citizens reported voting for the AfD or Die Linke, respectively, in the 2017 Federal Elections, after voting for a mainstream party in the 2013 Federal elections.[17] All regressions are fit on the subset of respondents living within municipalities with a refugee reception facility; similar results are obtained when examining municipalities that received allocations above the national median.

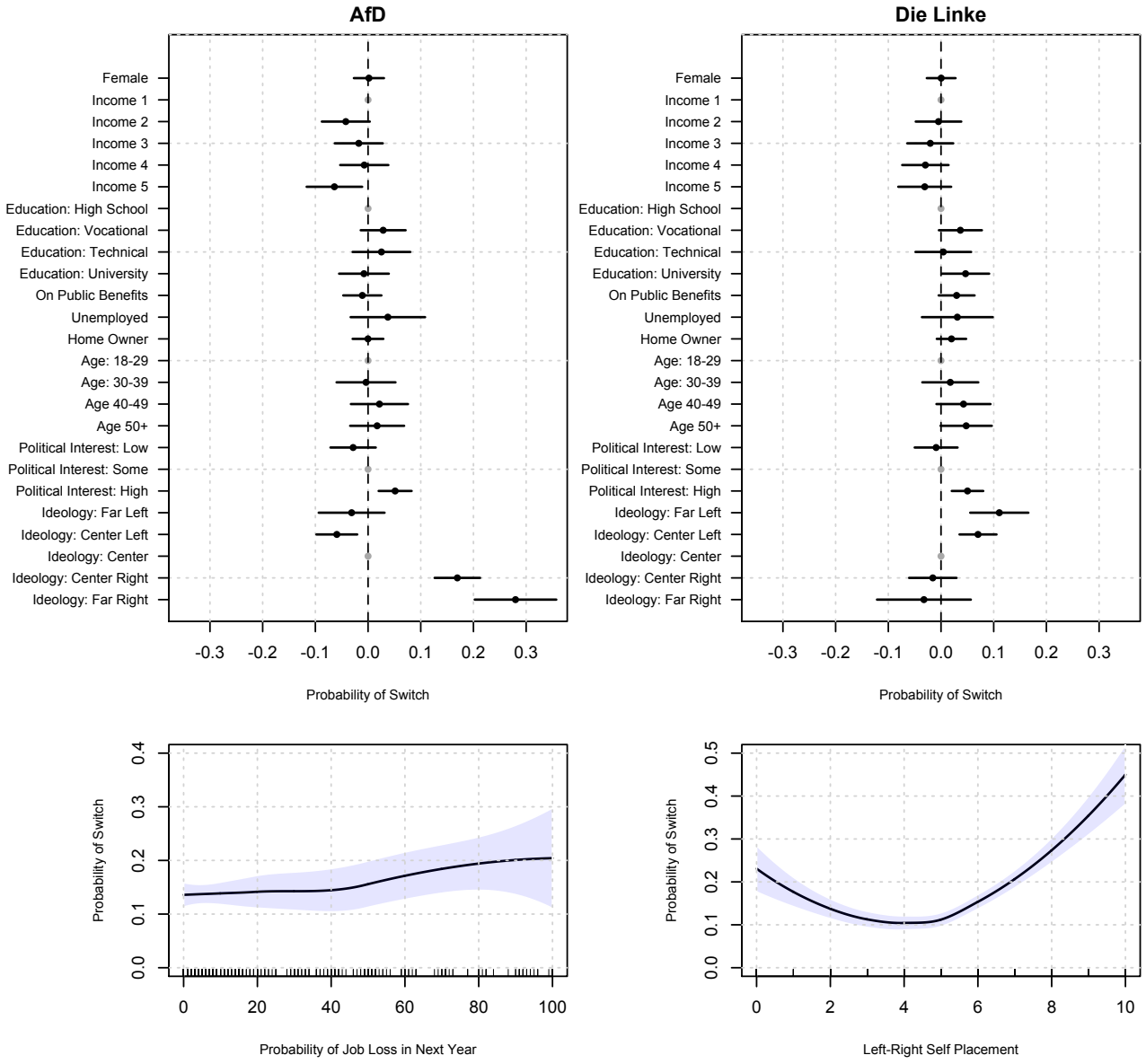
The results provide mild support for the insecurity hypothesis. Individuals with high incomes were were unlikely to support the AfD and Die Linke in the 2017 Federal Elections, while the unemployed and older respondents (aged 40+) display elevated support. However, point estimates for these characteristics remain relatively small and are often statistically insignificant. In contrast, the strongest predictors for party selection relate to voter's reported level of political interest and their ideological position at the beginning of the panel.[18] The model estimates suggest that voters who identified as very right wing (9

[17]Mainstream parties: CDU, CSU, SPD, FDP, Greens. Similar results are obtained when examining changes in party identification between Wave 1 (March 2016) and Wave 4 (April 2018).

[18]Ideological position refers to the respondent's reported left-right orientation, on a 10pt scale in Wave 1. The scale was recoded into 2 point increments: extreme left refers to scores 0 and 1, and extreme right to scores 9 and 10.

or 10 on a 10 pt scale) in the first survey wave were 28% more likely to subsequently shift their party identification to the AfD, relative to centrist voters, while those who identified as right wing (7 or 8) were 16.9% likely to shift their voting behavior. Similarly, those reporting left-wing ideology at the beginning of the panel were approximately 11.1% (very left), and 7.0% (left) more likely than centrist voters to support Die Linke.

Figure 4: Determinants of Switching from a Mainstream to a Populist Party



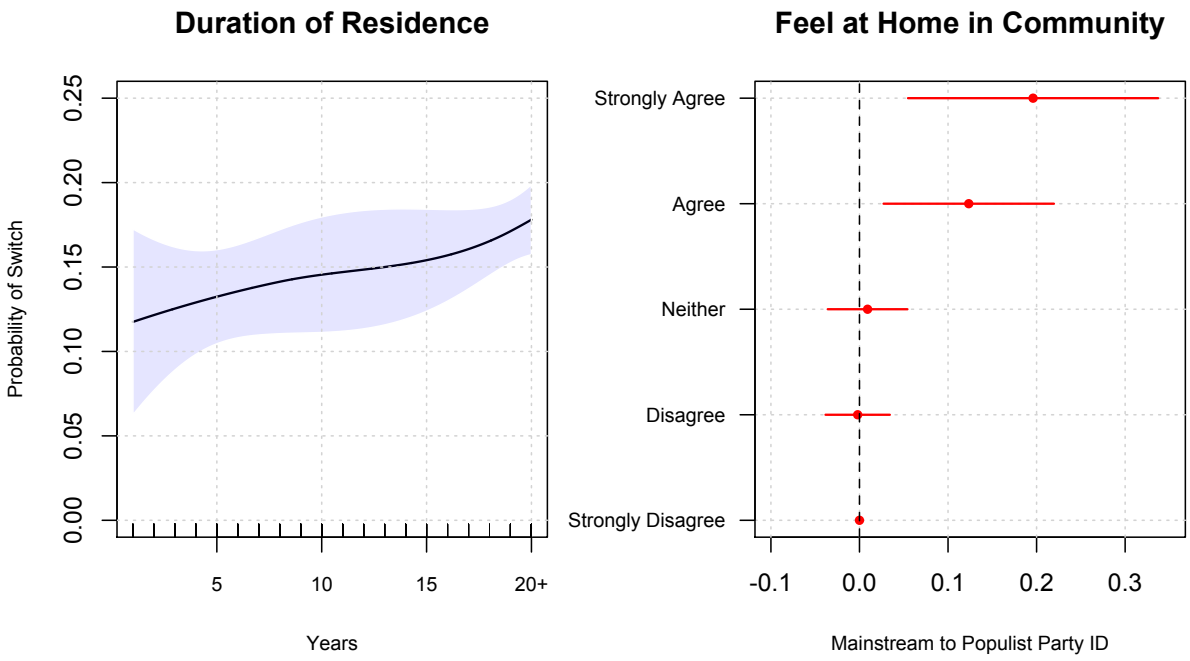
Fit within the subset of municipalities with refugee reception facilities. State-level fixed effects not shown. *Upper Panel*: Points indicate predicted probabilities from a regression model, with 95% confidence intervals. Gray dots represent reference categories for non-binary categorical variables. *Lower Panel*: Local linear fit, with 95% confidence intervals.

The lower panels of Figure 4 provide additional evidence in support of a pathway driven primarily by the declining credibility of mainstream parties. One potential objection to the categorical measures for economic insecurity tested in the previous election is that insecurity is additive. To account for this possibility, the lower left-hand panel of Figure 4 displays the non-parametric relationship between perceived economic security (operationalized as the self-reported probability of losing a job in the next year) and the decision to switch from a mainstream to a populist party in 2017. Although self-reported insecurity in the first wave is correlated with defection, as expected by extant theory, the observed relationship is fairly weak; the marginal effect of moving from 0% chance of job loss to 100% job loss increases the probability of defection by approximately 7%. Similar results are obtained when assessing individuals' reported happiness with their household income, as well as self-reported economic insecurity at the household level. In contrast, the lower right hand panel plots the non-parametric relationship between reported left-right ideological score and support for populist parties; the U-shaped distribution suggests that voters at the fringes of the ideological distribution had a high probability of defecting from mainstream parties following demographic change, albeit with the tendency more pronounced among right-wing voters.

If individuals are reacting primarily to the perceived disruption of their communities rather than economic shocks, we should expect this response to be heightened among long-term residents with greater attachment to their community. Examining the subset of municipalities with refugee reception facilities, the left-hand panel of Figure 5 reports the likelihood of identifying with the AfD and Die Linke as a function of the number of years a respondent has lived within their municipality. The tendency to support populist parties increases linearly with length of residence, suggesting that opposition is anchored among established citizens familiar with local conditions prior to the demographic shock. Similarly, the right-hand panel evaluates support for the AfD and Die Linke, respectively, as a function of the degree to which respondents feel “at home" in their municipality, conditional on socioeconomic covariates. Consistent with the hypothesis, individuals with greater degrees of attachment are significantly more likely to switch party identification following local disruption.

Although the observed shift in partisan identification, holding ideology constant, is consistent with a causal process fueled by dissatisfaction with elected representatives, the evidence in favor of this mechanism remains indirect. Accordingly, the fourth wave of the panel included a variety of questions

Figure 5: Community Attachment and Change in Partisan Identification



Estimated probability of switching party identification to the AfD or Die Linke, over the course of the panel, as a function of stated length of residence and attachment to home community.

probing respondents' subjective levels of satisfaction with representation, democracy, and populist party platforms. First, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that "the federal government does not take the needs and problems of local communities into account when determining immigration policy." Second, respondents were asked to report their satisfaction with the way democracy works in Germany. Finally, respondents were asked to report their attitudes towards populist parties and Merkel's leadership using feeling thermometers. Although the absence of these variables in the first wave of the study prohibits a longitudinal examination, we should still expect to observe different baseline levels of attitudes as a function of exposure to local disruption.

The upper half of Table 2 (next page) displays the relationship between these attitudinal variables and the location of refugee housing and reception facilities. Model A includes all individual-level controls used within the main specification, while Model B adds controls for reported left-right orientation and federal turnout. The results suggest that the decision of higher level governments to locate facilities within these municipalities lowered levels of confidence that the federal government was representing

local community needs. Due to ceiling effects present in the fourth wave of the panel, these effects are small, but remain statistically significant (-.04 on a 1 point scale, $p < .05$). In contrast, no significant difference is observed with respect to satisfaction with democracy more generally, consistent with evidence that populist party supporters in Germany are not motivated by anti-democratic sentiment (Chou et al., 2018). With respect to partisan affect, respondents within affected municipalities provided lower ratings for Merkel's leadership (-.07 on a 1 point scale, $p < .1$), but assigned higher subjective ratings to populist parties, regardless of the respondent's political orientation (Model B). To evaluate the extent to which these attitudes are correlated with the decision to support populist parties, the lower half of Table narrows the sample to the subset of affected municipalities, and regresses the attitudinal measures on a binary indicator indicating new voters for populist parties. Consistent with the perspective advanced in this paper, the results suggest that concerns surrounding the quality of representation at the national level are closely related to the decision to switch support from mainstream to populist parties.

Table 2: Differences in Political Attitudes

	A	B
Exposure on Attitudes		
Representational Quality	-0.04	-0.03
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Satisfaction with Democracy	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Merkel Approval	-0.07	-0.07
	(0.04)	(0.01)
AfD Affect	0.05	0.05
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Die Linke Affect	0.03	0.03
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Attitudes on Δ in Populist Support | Exposure		
Representational Quality	-0.45	-0.46
	(0.05)	(0.05)
Satisfaction with Democracy	-0.39	-0.38
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Merkel Approval	-0.19	-0.19
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Socio-demographic Controls	Y	Y
Political Controls	-	Y

Robust standard errors in parentheses. All variables have been rescaled to a 0-1 scale.

Discussion

Recent accounts have highlighted an emerging disparity in post-industrial democracies, in which economic and social vitality is increasingly limited to urban areas while rural locations face stagnation, stasis, and decline. Yet casting rural areas as subject to a status quo overlooks the deep economic and social changes that have buffeted communities in an era of globalization and transnational agreements. In addition to facing outsourcing of employment and industrial production (Autor et al., 2016; Rodrik, 2017), formerly isolated communities have experienced rapid demographic change and sustained increases in local diversity as immigrants seek low-wage employment and a lower cost of living (Lichter, 2012).

Leveraging cross-national data on immigrant flows as well as survey data from a prominent case, this paper has demonstrated that these local demographic disruptions have concrete political consequences. Demographic shocks driven by increased migratory flows are associated with clear increases in populist party identification within areas that previously were unexposed to demographic change. Moreover, these shifts in attachments do not appear to be ephemeral, but are rather associated with increased vote share for populist parties within national elections. These findings provide several contributions to the expanding literature on populism. While recent literature has convincingly highlighted the explanatory power of broad socio-economic and cultural factors, the findings of this paper indicate that spatial variation in immigrant settlement remains important in explaining the scale and pace of radical parties' success in the European setting. While sharp increases in local diversity may not shift core political attitudes, the results suggest that disruption plays an important role in activating populist party identification among at-risk socio-demographic groups.

The survey evidence from Germany permits an assessment of the mechanism driving this political response. The results suggest that while demographic disruption may introduce economic concerns related to resource competition, economic insecurity plays a limited role in predicting which citizens will embrace populist party identification. While the effect of economic security is in the direction hypothesized by extant literature, effect sizes remain relatively small. In contrast, the results suggest that voters at the fringes of the ideological distribution are likely to defect from mainstream parties following demographic disruption. As expected by a mechanism rooted in mainstream party credibility, anti-immigrant parties are not the sole beneficiaries of this phenomenon – rather individuals with left-wing sentiment are also likely to embrace left-wing populist parties such as Die Linke. Coupled with

the finding that the tendency to switch partisan identification is concentrated among long-term residents with attachment to their community, these patterns are consistent with a causal process that activates voters to support sanction-driven “challenger parties" in response to perceived representational failures (Hobolt and Tilley, 2016; Berger, 2017).

Although these findings should be broadly applicable to the contemporary European context, several caveats apply. First, it is important to note that while the results indicate that demographic disruption can activate populist party support, they should not be interpreted as indicating that demographic change is the only factor fueling the current populist moment. Rather, demographic disruption is best viewed as a complementary factor that explains why support for populism is consolidated more rapidly in some localities than in others. While the consequences of demographic change documented within this paper exceed the estimates of the effect of globalization trade shocks in Brexit and Europe (Colantone and Stanig, 2018*a*,*b*), they are weaker than the effects of austerity policies in Britain documented by Fetzer (2019). In practice, spatial shocks related to economic and demographic disruption are likely to coincide — particularly because evidence suggest that immigration flows are increasingly concentrated to areas hollowed out by deindustrialization (Lichter, 2012). Future research could fruitfully explore the manner in which these forms of local disruption interact.

Second, although the implementation of a panel survey in Germany provides an opportunity to evaluate the consequences of exogenous disruptions to local communities, the scale of the refugee crisis implies that the findings may represent a potential upper bound on the relationship between disruption and populist party support. Yet while effect sizes should be extrapolated to other contexts with caution, several factors suggest that Germany does not represent a singular case. In terms of volume and time horizon, the flow of migrants observed in the German case arguably parallels the influx to countries such as United Kingdom, Spain, and Italy following EU expansion. Moreover, a similar asylum process is mirrored, albeit on a smaller scale, in a wide range of states across northern Europe, and holds the potential to account for an increasing share of migrant flows in the near future. Finally, while the German case may be viewed as a most likely case of demographic disruption, it is also emblematic of a political context where populist parties face high barriers to success in the form of high electoral thresholds or informal norms against fringe parties. Within this context, relatively small changes in voteshare may play a consequential role in legitimating electoral support for populist parties.

These findings also have several broader implications. First, they contribute to a growing literature that suggests that voters' behavior is influenced by local residential context. In an era of the nationalization of media and political discourse, the presence of local signals continues to play an important role in shaping the manner in which voters mediate between opposing political narratives. Second, these results suggest that the recent surge in European populism may be closely linked to the expansion of the free movement regime, which has exposed formerly homogeneous localities to unprecedented demographic change. Finally, these findings reinforce the perspective that the current populist moment can be viewed as a problem of representation (Berger, 2017). In a parallel fashion to the oft-cited representation gap between national polities and the European Union, the disconnect between local communities and national policymakers on immigration policy holds the potential to fuel further democratic discontent.

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Appendix

Figure A1: Marginal Effect of Immigration Influx on Populist Voteshare

Using the approach recommended by Hainmueller, Mummolo and Xu (2019), this figure displays the marginal effect of the 5-year immigrant inflow on the change in populist voteshare, as a function of the level of diversity at the start of the period. Estimates are generated using a kernel-smoothing approach, with bootstrapped confidence intervals. The results are consistent with Figure 1 in text, and suggest that immigrant inflow increases populist voteshare within municipalities with low diversity at the beginning of the period.

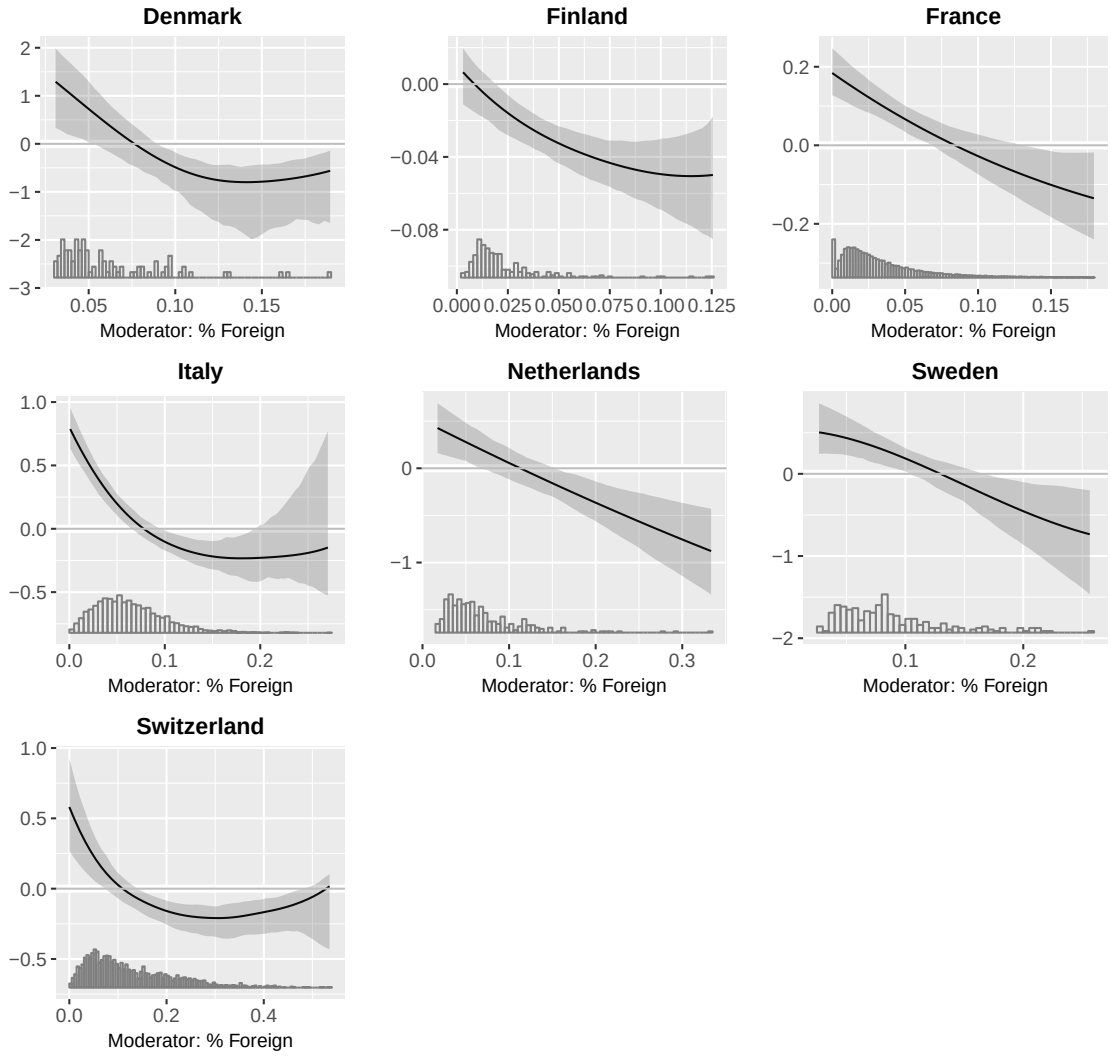
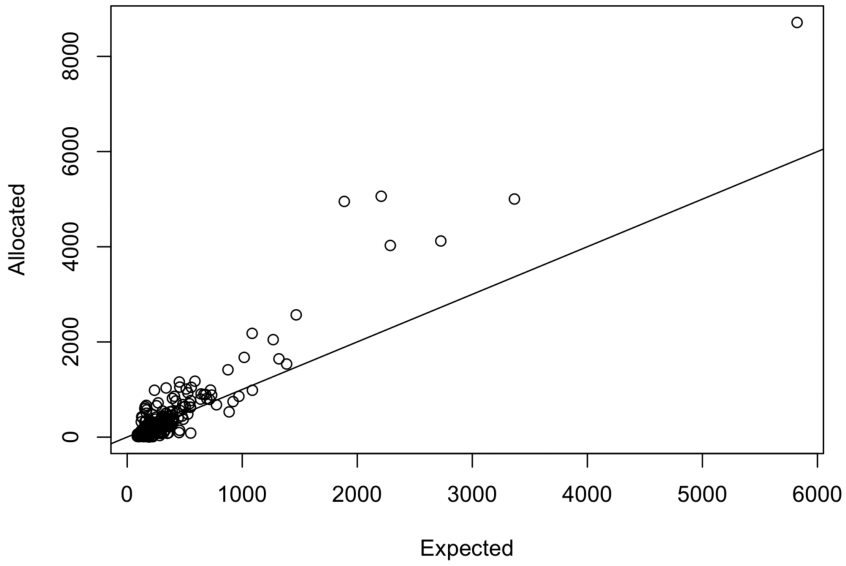


Table A1: Sample characteristics, by wave

	Wave 1	Wave 4
Respondents	6,132	2,933
Female	51%	48%
Age	45.84	49.79
Income (10 pt)	5.11	5.21
Estimated Chance of Job Loss	17%	17%
Active in Labor Market	63%	63%
Left-right Self-Placement (10 pt)	5.64	5.65
Political Interest (5 pt)	2.70	2.62
Voted in 2013	84%	88%

Figure A2: Comparison Between Allocation Keys and Arrival Numbers (NRW)



Data from North-Rhine Westphalia, July 2017. Displays the relationship between the number of asylum seekers who were expected in each municipality (expected), and the number who actually arrived (allocated)

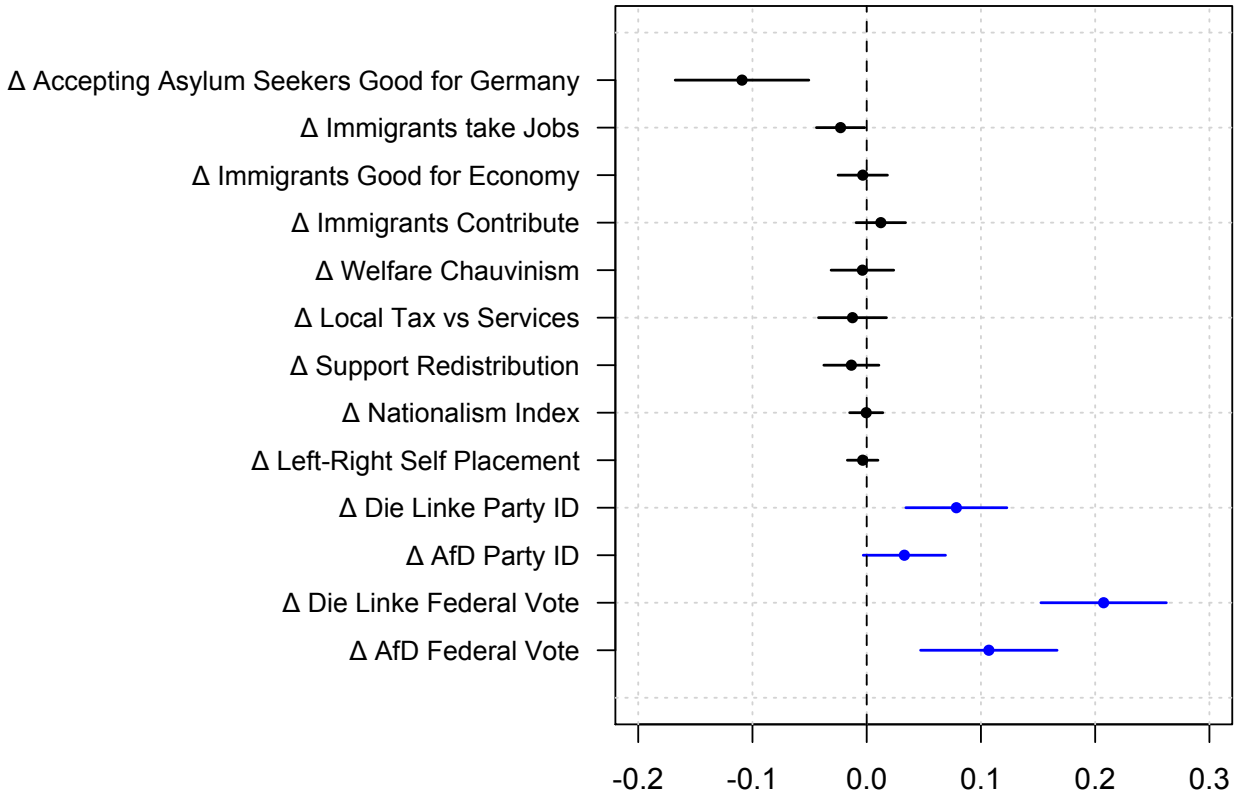
The following table displays regression coefficients for the relationship between the estimated number of asylum seekers allocated to the respondents' municipality and changes in political attitudes across survey waves. The independent variable measures the change in allocated asylum seekers between January 2016 and January 2018, at the kreis level, scaled by the municipal population. To assist interpretability and to avoid a linear functional form assumption, this variable was binned into four equally sized bins. The estimates that follow present the difference between the upper and lower quartiles. The specification includes socio-demographic controls. Results parallel those presented in Figure 3, with the exception of Die Linke federal vote share, which is insignificant in the allocation-based model.

Table A2: Effect of Elevated Allocations on Attitudes

Δ Populist Federal Vote	0.023
	(0.009)
Δ AfD Federal Vote	0.021
	(0.008)
Δ Linke Federal Vote	0.002
	(0.006)
Δ Populist Party ID	0.034
	(0.011)
Δ AfD Party ID	0.016
	(0.006)
Δ Die Linke Party ID	0.025
	(0.009)
Δ Left-Right Self Placement	-0.002
	(0.004)
Δ Nationalism Index	0.001
	(0.004)
Δ Support Redistribution	-0.006
	(0.007)
Δ Local Tax vs Services	-0.013
	(0.009)
Δ Welfare Chauvinism	0.001
	(0.009)
Δ Immigrants Contribute	0.003
	(0.007)
Δ Immigrants Good for Economy	0.001
	(0.007)
Δ Immigrants Take Jobs	-0.012
	(0.007)

The following figure estimates the effect of increased diversity at the county level. the change of shift in the proportion of foreigners within a county,Rather than estimating the number of asylum seekers, this approach relies on foreigner registry data, which may include individuals with unprocessed claims as well as non-humanitarian arrivals. The independent variable is constructed as the change in foreign population between January 2018 and January 2015, scaled by the number of foreigners present in January 2015. A 1-unit shift on this scale indicates that the foreign population has doubled. The higher relative support visible for Die Linke is a function of the party's strength in East Germany, where proportional increases in diversity were highest following the crisis. The specification includes socio-demographic controls.

Figure A3: Effect as Function of Increase in County-level Diversity



Question wording: Outcome Variables

Federal Vote
Talking to people about the most recent federal elections, we have found that a lot of people didn't manage to vote. How about you – did you vote in the most recent election?

(Conditional) And which party did you vote for in the 2017 federal election?

Party ID
Is there a political party you feel close to at the moment? If so, which party?

Left-right self-placement
In politics people often talk of "left" and "right". On this scale from 0 (left) to 10 (right), where would you classify your own political views?

Support for redistribution
Some people feel that government should make much greater efforts to make people's incomes more equal. Other people feel that government should be much less concerned about how equal people's incomes are. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

Government should try to make incomes equal (0)
..
Government should be less concerned about equal incomes (10)

Immigrants contribute to society
A lot of people who come to live in Germany work and pay taxes. They also use health and welfare services. On balance, do you think people who come receive more than they contribute, or contribute more than they receive?

Receive more than they contribute
...
10 Contribute more than they receive

Immigrants good for economy
Would you say it is generally bad or good for Germany's economy that people come to live here from other countries?

Immigrants take jobs
Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: immigrants take jobs away from people who were born in Germany

Welfare Chauvinism
Thinking of people coming to live in Germany from other countries, when do you think they should obtain the same rights to social benefits and services as citizens already living here?

Immediately on arrival
After living in Germany for a year, whether or not they have worked
Only after they have worked and paid taxes for at least a year
Only after they have worked and paid taxes for many years
Non-citizens should never receive the same rights to social benefits as citizens

Local Tax vs Services

If you could decide what to do with the way your municipality spends its money, what would you prefer?

Lower taxes, lower service
Same tax, same service
Higher taxes, more services
Don't Know

Nationalism index
How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

I would rather be a citizen of Germany than of any other country in the world.

Generally speaking Germany is a better country than most other countries.

Germany should follow its own interests, even if this leads to conflicts with other nations

Germany's government should just try to take care of the wellbeing of the United Kingdom's citizens and not get involved with other nations

Accepting Asylum Seeker Good for Germany
In retrospect, was the decision to admit a large number of asylum seekers to Germany a good or a bad one? Please indicate your thoughts on a scale of 1-10 in which 1 indicates that the effects have been extremely negative and 10 indicates the effects have been extremely positive.

Local concerns
Think about life in your municipality over the last year. Which of the following best describes how things have changed?

Cleanliness of streets and public parks
Waiting times at municipal offices
Crime
Quality of public services
Friendliness and Community

Much worse
Somewhat worse
Remained about the same
Somewhat better
Much better

Representational Quality
Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: The federal government does not take the needs and problems of local communities into account when determining immigration policy.

Merkel Approval
Do you approve or disapprove of the job Angela Merkel is doing as Chancellor?

AfD/Die Linke Affect
We would like to know your feelings towards the Alternative für Deutschland (Die Linke) party using something we call the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50° and 100° mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the party. Ratings between 0° and 50° mean that you don't feel favorable toward the party and that you don't care too much for them. You would rate the party at the 50° mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward them.