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Abstract: *We investigate the influence of anti-immigrant parties on foreigners' location choices in Italy. Considering municipal elections from 2000 to 2018, we create a database that includes a scientific-based classification on the anti-/pro-immigration axis of all Italian political parties based on experts' opinions. Via the adoption of a regression discontinuity design, we find that the election of a mayor supported by an anti-immigrant coalition significantly affect immigrants' location choices only when considering the most recent years. This finding does not appear to be driven by the enactment of policies against immigrants but by an 'inhospitality effect', which got stronger over time due to the exacerbation of political propaganda at the national and local level.*

Keywords: immigration; political parties; regression discontinuity design

1. Introduction

In recent decades, immigration has become a central issue in many developed countries. This topic permeates social sciences' debate, and it has been studied from many perspectives. Considering the economic standpoint, experts broadly agree: the political backlash against immigration is not economically rational because immigrants provide a clear benefit to destination countries (Portes, 2019; Tabellini, 2020). From a political viewpoint, the manipulation of this topic characterised the dialectic of many political leaders worldwide, influencing local and global scenarios. In the western world, an increasing number of parties — mainly from the right-wing political spectrum — accuse immigrants of all kinds of negative events, from the surge of native-born unemployment to cultural change and criminal activities. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, some parties

such as Austria's Freedom Party (*FPÖ*) and Italy's League (*Lega*) even maintained that immigrants were to blame (Economist, 2021).

Many scholars have studied the electorate's reaction to the presence of immigrants in a given area. Gerdes and Wadensjö (2010), Mendez and Cutillas (2014), and Otto and Steinhardt (2014) find a positive relationship between immigrant shares and support for anti-immigration parties (henceforth, AI) in Denmark, Spain, and Germany, respectively. Several other papers followed with similar conclusions for the UK (Becker and Fetzer, 2017), Austria (Halla et al., 2017), Greece (Vasilakis, 2018; Dinas et al., 2019), the US (Mayda et al., 2018) and France (Edo et al., 2019). However, the presence of immigrants could also reduce voting for AI parties, in line with Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis (see Steinmayr, 2016; Dustmann et al., 2019). Considering Italy, Barone et al. (2016) show that immigration causes an increase in votes for the centre-right coalition, while Bordignon et al. (2020) find a U-shaped relationship between the vote share of AI parties and the share of immigrants. Much less research has been devoted to investigating the complementary research question on the influence of AI parties on foreigners' location choices. Indeed, AI parties may influence immigrants flows by implementing local policies which favour the native-born population (for instance, by reducing the budget for social expenditure) and/or may create a social climate hostile to immigrants (see Tomberg et al., 2021). A notable exception is the seminal paper by Bracco et al. (2018), who adopted a regression discontinuity design (RDD) to show that the election of a mayor supported by the League[1] discourages foreigners from moving into the municipality in Northern Italy. In our study, we answer the more comprehensive question on the effect of all AI political parties and coalitions on foreign resident population inflows and outflows at the municipality level. Considering municipal elections from 2000 to 2018, we create a database that includes a scientific-based classification on the anti-/pro-immigration axis of the most relevant Italian political parties based on specialists' opinions and estimations. In particular, we mainly consider the *Chapel Hill Expert Survey* (*CHES*), where experts are asked every few years to assign scores to the ideological position of many European national parties. This is a crucial novelty of our paper as it warrants against the potential distortions due to an arbitrary choice of a single AI party and it allows analysing the whole Italian territory. We then apply the non-parametric robust bias-corrected RDD

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[1] The League, founded in 1989 as the Northern League (*Lega Nord*), changed its name in 2017. In the rest of the paper, we will call this party with the most recent name the League.

estimator with covariate adjustment (Calonico et al., 2019). The adoption of this recent non-parametric estimator allows us to estimate the causal impact of AI parties on legal foreigners' behaviour with a considerably higher degree of internal validity than previous literature.

Our findings demonstrate that the election of a mayor supported by an AI coalition substantially impact immigrants' location decisions only when we consider the most recent years. Indeed, only for municipal elections from 2014 onwards. we find a sizable and statistically significant reduction in immigrants' inflows, especially those coming from other Italian municipalities. The latter result does not seem to be due to the implementation of local policies that directly favour the native-born population but rather to foreigners' perception of a less hospitable environment engendered by the success of an AI coalition.

2. Background

2.1 The Italian electoral setting

As of 2020, the 7,904 Italian municipalities represent the lowest level of government. Local governments, composed by the mayor (*Sindaco*), the executive office, and the legislative body (i.e. the city council), manage relevant public services with a direct impact on citizens' well-being, such as general administrative organisation, public interests' services organisation, and social services planning and implementation.[2] Therefore, the electorate deeply cares about elections at the local level, as demonstrated by a generally high voter turnout (71% of eligible voters turned out in the 2018 municipal elections). Since 1993, the mayor is directly elected under plurality rule, with a single round for municipalities below 15,000 inhabitants and a runoff system for municipalities with more than 15,000 inhabitants (Bordignon et al., 2016). More precisely, in small municipalities, each party (or coalition) presents a single candidate for mayor and a list of nominees for the city council. The candidate who collects the largest number of votes becomes mayor. Conversely, each candidate can be supported by more than one list in municipalities with at least 15,000 inhabitants. If a candidate gets more than 50% of the votes in the first round, he/she is

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[2] The main services and duties of municipal governments include: general administrative and financial organisation, public interest's services organisation (e.g., public transport), civil protection and disaster relief function, urban planning, local registry offices, electoral and statistical services, social services planning and implementation, school building design, waste collection system, local police administration, and land registry.

elected. Otherwise, the two most voted candidates run against each other in a second round. Municipal elections are held every five years and at most two back-to-back offices are allowed.[3],[4]

Two words can be used to describe the Italian political landscape: complexity and heterogeneity. Ignazi (2018) groups Italian parties in four categories from the Second World War until 2018, characterised by different ideological perspectives, organisational evolutions, strategic choices and relationships with other political forces, according to the historical period in which they operate. Considering the chameleon-like characteristics of the Italian political scene, we make use of the *CHES* classification to determine which are the AI parties in Italy. This classification is based on the opinion of several political scientists and takes into account changes in party positions on the anti-/pro-immigration axis as it is updated every few years (we assign the nearest-in-time score to each party). It provides a zero-to-ten parties' score, where zero indicates an extremely pro-immigration (henceforth, PI) party, and ten an extremely AI party. In the robustness section, we will use alternative sources and definitions to determine which parties should be considered AI. Appendix A provides a complete overview of the parties' classification adopted in this study.

2.2 Immigrants in Italy

Italy is experiencing a profound paradox in its relationship with the immigrant component of its population: the economic acceptance of immigrants collides with the political rhetoric of increased hostility and apparent closure. As shown in Figure B1 in Appendix B, the Italian social fabric is increasingly multi-ethnic, with 5.1 million immigrants legally residing in Italy in 2018, corresponding to 8.4% of the total population. The foreign component has slowed the Italian 'demographic winter': the natural balance (births - deaths) is positive among foreigners, negative among Italians. Considering the economic viewpoint, immigrants have gained a central role in the Italian economy: in 2018, 2.5 million were employed (more than

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[3] Three in municipalities of up to 3,000 inhabitants.

[4] Typically, a local government's term of office lasts for five years. In some cases, it may end prematurely, leading to new elections held on the first available date. There might be several reasons for a shorter duration of the local government, such as political contrasts in the majority or criminal infiltration in the administration, governed by the text of local authorities (Legislative Decree, August 18, 2000, no. 267; https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:decreto.legislativo:2000-08-18;267!vig=).
Considering the years from 2010 to 2019, 11.4% of elections have had a subsequent dissolution of the city council. In most cases, the cause of dissolution is an internal conflict within the political majority.

10% of total employment), and 1 in 10 companies was led by immigrants (Unioncamere, 2020). A report by the Fondazione Leone Moressa (2020) shows that foreign employees produced 9.5% of the GDP in 2018, with very little impact on public spending, considering a positive balance of €500 million.

Nevertheless, the economic situation clashes with the political sphere. Some political leaders generate consensus based on the creation of sufficient social cohesion. The latter presupposes the inclusion of an 'other' in the political narrative, personified, in this case, by foreigners. This story has ancient roots, and the media component plays a key role: Colombo and Sciortino (2004) identify the construction of immigration as a major event and its politicisation from 1982; Sniderman et al. (2000) show how, since the mid-1990s, at least three Italian political parties – National Alliance (*Alleanza Nazionale*), the League and Come on Italy (*Forza Italia*) – bid for public support by campaigning against new immigrant arrivals. In more recent years, the so-called migration crisis, which affected Europe and Italy in particular,[5] has allowed AI parties to leverage this issue (see Hutter and Kriesi, 2021). Immigration has been particularly salient and polarised in the latest Italian campaigns. Dennison and Geddes (2021) demonstrate that the increased politicisation of 'irregular' arrivals into Italy changed migration from a relatively 'quiet' policy issue to one of 'loud' politics, meaning that it was highly salient to the public. The contrast between economic integration and demographic input versus political propaganda persists to this day in most developed countries.

3. Data and method

3.1 Data

We collected data on almost all municipal elections in Italy from the historical electoral archive of the Ministry of the Interior.[6] For each election from 2000 to 2018, we have access to several covariates, including the number of votes collected by every party or coalition

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[5] See UNHCR operational portal – refugee situation
(https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205)

[6] There are 5 Italian Regions with special status (Aosta Valley, Trentino-South Tyrol, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Sicily, Sardinia) that have particular forms and conditions of autonomy. This also applies to the management of electoral data, except for Sardinia. For this reason, the historical electoral archive of the Ministry of the Interior includes no municipal elections information about Aosta Valley, Trentino-South Tyrol, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and partial coverage of local elections in Sicily (up to 2004). However, we managed to collect all the election data for Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

and the total amount of votes received by each mayoral candidate. Exploiting the CHES 0-to-10 scale used for the classification of each party, we construct a dummy variable reflecting parties' AI position. In particular, in the main analysis, we consider as AI those political parties having an AI score between 8 and 10. Due to the arbitrariness of this procedure, we create various specifications of this dummy variable, incorporating different ranges of parties' scores.[7] AI parties are mostly right-wing populist parties. For instance, in 2014, the League had an AI score of 9.50, while Brothers of Italy (*Fratelli d'Italia*) an AI score of 8.75. The use of a scientific-based classification is more general than singling out a specific AI party, and it warrants against the potential distortions due to an arbitrary choice of a single AI party (e.g., we drop the few elections in which two AI coalitions face each other's).

If several parties support a mayoral candidate, he/she may be endorsed by parties with a different political orientation on immigration. For this reason, we must specify that the causal effect investigated, without further specification, might include local governments that do not necessarily identify themselves entirely with a particular political hue but rather are sponsored by a party with a particular orientation. To overcome this issue, in Section 4.3.1, we will run regressions that take into account the percentage of AI parties' votes to the total number of votes of the coalition supporting a candidate as well as at the party to whom the mayoral candidate belongs. In this way, it is possible to know the political weight of a given orientation on immigration for every local government. In light of our research question, we will consider only elections in which the candidate supported by an AI coalition won or ranked second. Besides, we exclude those few elections in which the winning and the runner-up candidates were both supported by a coalition having at least a party with an AI score ≥ 7. Out of the 25,269 elections present in our database, 2,669 elections meet the above criteria (1,652 municipalities).[8] Figure B2 in Appendix B displays the geographical distribution of the municipalities present in our database and analysed in the main analysis. As expected, most municipalities are located in Northern Italy; however, the

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[7] An important role in the Italian local elections is played by the so-called Local lists (*Liste Civiche*). These lists do not have a precise political orientation but can be defined as ad hoc parties that pursue and represent local goals and wishes. Many candidates, mainly in small cities or villages, are supported by a *Lista Civica*. In our parties' classification, we consider candidates supported only by Local lists as migration neutral due to the impossibility to classify them properly.

[8] The League is by far the most recurrent AI party in our sample. It ran in 82.5% of the elections considered (2,202 out of 2,669 elections).

analysis will also include many municipalities from Central and Southern Italy, especially those located in Lazio, Tuscany and Puglia.

We collect and process a variety of information from different sources. First, to measure resident foreigners' inflows and outflows for each municipality, we draw on information about foreigners' registrations and cancellations, using data from 2002 to 2019 freely available from the Italian National Statistical Institute (Istat). Following Bracco et al. (2018), to evaluate the effect of AI local governments on foreigners' inflows and outflows, we construct the following three dependent variables, which provide the net flows (a), the outflows (b) and the inflows (c) of legal immigrants as a percentage of the resident population in the pre-election year:

(a) $\dfrac{Newly\ registered\ foreigners_{i,t} - Cancelled\ foreigners_{i,t}}{Resident\ population_{i,T-1}} * 100$

(b) $\dfrac{Cancelled\ foreigners_{i,t}}{Resident\ population_{i,T-1}} * 100$

(c) $\dfrac{Newly\ registered\ foreigners_{i,t}}{Resident\ population_{i,T-1}} * 100$

where T is the year of elections in the ith municipality, and t = T; T+1; T+2; T+3; T+4. Such definition of the dependent variables requires setting up the database at a municipality-year level. This means that our causal effect of interest is the average annual effect of electing a mayor supported by an AI coalition on immigration flows across the electoral cycle.

An RDD takes advantage of the fact that the probability of becoming a mayor changes discontinuously at a certain cut-off point of the assignment variable. In our case, we follow Lee (2008) and define the forcing variable as the majority margin for the coalition receiving the most votes with respect to the runner-up coalition on the first round or on the second round (in the case of municipalities with >15,000 inhabitants in which none of the candidates received >50% votes in the first round). The AI coalition wins the election when the variable 'AI party vote share margin of victory' crosses the 0 threshold, and loses the election otherwise.

In the empirical analysis, we include several pre-electoral covariates. First, we control for the population as city size might affect migration flows. We also add a rural-urban dummy (see Maxxwell (2019) on the importance of the urban-rural divide over immigration) and the share of legal immigrants. Controlling for the latter variable is important as past immigrant settlements are good predictors for future migration flows (Bartel, 1989). Lastly, to account for the municipalities' economic situation and labour market's conditions, we include the average income per capita and the workplace employment rate. Appendix B provides a more accurate description of how we build the final sample. Table B1 includes a detailed description of all the variables and their source, and Table B2 reports the descriptive statistics separately for all 25,269 elections in our database and the 2,669 elections considered in the main analysis.

3.2 Empirical strategy

Through electoral selection, political parties/coalitions may select mayoral candidates on the basis of the specific electoral setting and the quality of the local politicians. This generally means that elected mayors have, on average, greater ability than their competitors. Failing to control for these differences can lead to biased estimates of the causal effect of interest. To overcome this problem and the potential for reversal causality, we use a regression discontinuity design (RDD) that focuses on elections decided by a narrow margin of victory. Indeed, the RDD has an intuitive appeal in analysing local elections as candidates who win and lose close elections are expected to be comparable on average. This comparability depends on assuming that parties and candidates do not have complete control over the vote share they receive. Thus, their victory can be considered almost random in close elections: the bare winners and losers of a local election are likely comparable on average in all their observable and unobservable characteristics. Therefore, by comparing the post-election immigrants' location decisions, we identify the causal effect of winning AI coalitions on immigrants' location choices.

We apply the RDD to a panel of Italian municipal elections from 2000 to 2018. The key feature of an RDD is the existence of a forcing variable for each election in the sample, which sharply determines the mayor. In our case, the forcing variable is the 'AI party vote share margin of victory' described in Section 3.1. The parameter of interest is the local average treatment effect (LATE) that reflects the impact of AI parties on immigrants' location choices

in close elections. In such a setting, identification, estimation, and inference proceed by comparing immigrants' location decisions in municipalities with a candidate supported by one or more AI parties which won by a close margin (treatment group), taking the municipalities where the same kind of candidate lost by a close margin as the comparison group.

This study employs the non-parametric robust bias-corrected estimator with covariate adjustment proposed by Calonico et al. (2019). Hyytinen et al. (2018) show that bias-corrected RDD estimates that apply robust inference approximate experimental estimates in the context of close elections. Besides, this approach does not rely on parametric assumptions, and it offers a good compromise between flexibility and simplicity in the approximation of the unknown regression function (Cattaneo et al., 2020a). The bandwidths for each non-parametric local linear regression are selected using the mean squared error (MSE)-optimal bandwidth selector[9] and are conducted via triangular kernel weights. This implies that only observations within the bandwidth receive a positive weight in the estimation, with a larger weight to closer elections. Besides, the inclusion of covariates in the RDD analysis brings substantial efficiency gains relative to the unadjusted RDD estimator, leading to shorter confidence intervals for the RDD treatment effect (Cattaneo et al., 2020a). In particular, we control for the pre-election values of the variables described in Section 3.1, i.e. resident population, income per capita, workplace employment rate, share of legal immigrants and a dummy urban area. We also include year and regional fixed effects, which account for unobserved heterogeneity across territories and over time. Even if we are in an RDD setting, the addition of year and regional fixed effects is relevant as our analysis spans over a relatively long period, covering territories with different political and migration histories. Besides, fixed effects allow taking into account the potential heterogeneity of electoral selection across geographic areas and over time. All the regressions will be estimated with errors clustered at the municipality level.

The breadth of our database provides enough power to test our research hypotheses, with over 800 elections in which the AI coalition lost or won by a small vote margin (obtaining between 45% and 55% of the votes).

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[9] By using a data-driven bandwidth selection, we obtain different bandwidths for each analysis. In the robustness section, we show that our main findings are generally robust to bandwidth selection methods, kernel weight function choices, the local polynomial order, and the exclusion of covariates.

3.3 Descriptive evidence and validity of the RDD assumptions

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis by whether the AI coalition won the contested municipal election. As shown in columns (1) and (2), municipalities with a winning candidate supported by an AI coalition tend to be smaller, and more likely to be urban and located in Northern Italy. Besides, the losing non-AI candidate is less likely to be male. Conversely, they are very similar to municipalities in which the AI coalition lost, concerning income per capita, workplace employment rate, the share of legal immigrants, the share of the elderly population and the average house price per square meter.

The RDD provides a natural framework to check whether some confounding factors are driving some spurious correlations. It suffices to run RDD regressions with regional and year fixed effects but no covariates, using as dependent variables those factors that the researcher suspects might be driving the results. If no effect is detected, then that variable can be considered controlled for in the RDD exercise. In column (3), we examine whether the observed baseline covariates are locally balanced on either side of the cut-off in the spirit of the RDD framework. These tests validate the assumption that the assignment of the treatment near the cut-off is approximately randomised as we find no evidence of statistically significant pre-treatment differences around the cut-off point between winning and non-winning AI coalitions.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

In an electoral context, the RDD framework relies on the fact that candidates cannot manipulate the electoral outcome. Indeed, if mayoral candidates can steer the voting behaviour about the cut-point systematically, then 'treatment' is no longer as-if random and, consequently, the estimated effects could be biased. Although many studies have already demonstrated the lack of significant manipulation in Italian municipal elections (Bracco et al., 2015; Gamalerio, 2020), we investigate the smoothness of the forcing variable around the threshold when at least an AI party makes up the winning or the runner-up coalitions. If mayoral candidates do not have precise control over the forcing variable around the cut-off point, the density distribution of the forcing variable should not exhibit any sharp change around that point. Figure C1 in Appendix C plots the density of elections using the robust

test of Cattaneo et al. (2020b). The evidence in Figure C1 is reassuring as there is no sign of discontinuity at the threshold. Besides, the p-value (0.67) indicates that, as expected, there is no statistical evidence of sorting, i.e. that mayoral candidates are not able to manipulate the electoral outcome.

4. Results

We start this section by discussing the main results of the graphical and the empirical analysis. Second, we report the results of several robustness analyses and the estimates of a few additional analyses. Then, we investigate the mechanisms that explain the impact of AI majorities on foreigners' flows.

4.1 Main estimates

This section presents our main findings. As usual in the RDD context, we start with a graphical display of the estimates. Figure 1 shows the effect of the winning AI coalition on legal immigrants' location decisions.[10] Each grey hollow diamond is the average value of dependent variables binned at 0.005 margin of vote intervals. Candidates on the left side of the plots are those supported by an AI coalition that lost the election, while those on the right side won. The discontinuity at the cut-point (0) is the estimated effect of having a mayor supported by an AI coalition on net immigrant flows (Panel A), immigrant outflows (Panel B) and immigrant inflows (Panel C). These figures suggest that the victory of an AI coalition is associated with a small decrease in net immigrant flows, driven mainly by a reduction in inflows. However, although each outcome variable displays smaller values in the case of a winning AI coalition, none of the graphs displays a clear jump at the threshold. Therefore, we need to employ the rigorous RDD approach presented in Section 3.2 to assess the statistical significance of these gaps.

Hence, we corroborate the graphical analysis by running the non-parametric RDD. The estimation results are reported in Table 2. Columns (1)–(3) report the impact on net immigrant flows, immigrant outflows and immigrant inflows, respectively. Panel A reports the baseline specification where we cover the whole time-period and the whole Italian territory. The estimates show a reduction in net immigrant flows in municipalities with a

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[10] Thanks to recent developments in the *rdplot* package, the plots reported in Figure 1 control for the variables and fixed effects described in Section 3.

ruling AI coalition, driven by a decrease in inflows, which is partially compensated by fewer outflows. However, as in the graphical analysis, the magnitude of the impact is small. Besides, despite the large sample size, all estimates are not statistically different from 0.

We then report the analysis in which we split the sample between municipalities with less than 15,000 inhabitants (Panel B) and more than 15,000 inhabitants (Panel C) as interactions between the native-born population and immigrants may differ in small and large municipalities (see Barone et al., 2016). For instance, immigrants in large municipalities might be better tolerated by the native population for historical or cultural reasons. However, the estimates reported in Panels B and C change only marginally with respect to those of Panel A and remain not statistically significant.

We also split the analysis by geographical area (Panels D and E) to investigate potential heterogeneity across territories. Heterogenous effects might be due, for example, to the presence of immigrants, which is more concentrated in the North of Italy and also to the League party — the most successful AI party — which is deeply rooted in the same area. We find that estimates for Northern municipalities are basically identical to those reported in the baseline specification, while estimates for the Centre-South are even closer to 0.

Lastly, we split the estimates by time period (Panels F, G and H). The rationale is that the political debate on immigration changed over time, which might have affected the behaviour of elected mayors and the response of immigrants. Interestingly, we find that all the estimates are close to 0 for the periods 2000-2008 and 2009-2013, while effects turn more sizable for 2014-2018. Besides, the estimate of -0.170 percentage points concerning immigrant inflows is statistically significant at the 5% level. This is a relevant reduction as it corresponds to 0.198 of the standard deviation of the dependent variable. This result suggests that the negative relations between AI mayors and immigrants got stronger over time. Given the relevance of this finding, we will provide an in-depth analysis of its robustness and the mechanisms behind it in the following sections.[11]

INSERT FIGURE 1 AND TABLE 2 HERE

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[11] Visual evidence on the 2014-2018 analysis is reported in Figure C2 in Appendix C.

4.2 Robustness and sensitivity checks

In this subsection, we describe the results of a series of robustness and sensitivity checks. All estimates are reported in Table 3. This table contains five blocks of results in a vertical dimension, numbered (I)-(V). The first three columns report the estimates on net immigrant flows, immigrant outflows and immigrant inflows for the whole time period, while the last three columns present the estimates for the same dependent variables but limited to elections held from 2014 to 2018.

One concern with our empirical analysis regards the way we define an AI coalition. Therefore, in block (I), we report the estimates when using six alternative definitions of AI coalition. We begin by restricting the sample to those elections in which the AI party/parties received at least 50% of the votes of the coalition it/they belong(s) to or in which the mayoral candidate is directly affiliated to an AI party. Furthermore, in light of the strong linkage between AI parties and far-right parties, we use far-right as an alternative definition to identify AI coalitions. In particular, we consider as far-right a party with a score on the left-right axis between 8 and 10 in the CHES classification (see Table A1.7 in Appendix A).[12] Besides, we use the *Manifesto Project* as an alternative classification to classify political parties (see Volkens et al., 2020). The *Manifesto project* allows gauging party preferences regarding specific policies by analysing the content and space devoted to certain topics within electoral manifestos. We consider as AI, parties that enforce or encourage cultural integration and homogeneity in society (see Table A1.5 in Appendix A). Lastly, we use two alternative criteria for defining an AI party: a party having a CHES score on the anti-/pro-immigration axis between 7 and 10 (looser definition) or between 9 and 10 (stricter definition). Overall, these estimates confirm our findings. Concerning the period 2000-2018, all estimates on immigrant inflows are negative. The magnitude gets larger when considering mayoral candidates directly belonging to an AI party, while it gets smaller when considering the looser definition of an AI party. However, in none of these tests, the estimates turn statistically significant. Looking at the 2014-2018 period, we observe a decrease in immigrant inflows, which is statistically significant at the 10 or 5% levels in all

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[12] In this robustness check we consider as AI, the few neo-fascist parties New Force (Forza Nuova) and CasaPound, which are not considered in the CHES classification. "*New Force and CasaPound justify their opposition to immigration with their idea of an organic nation/society/community, referring either to a biological idea of race or to a homogeneous cultural/ideological identity*" (Campani, 2016, pag. 43).

instances. The magnitude of this effect gets larger when considering only elections in which the AI party received at least 50% of the coalition's votes or when considering mayoral candidates directly belonging to an AI party.

Block (II) reports three sensitivity checks on the RDD specification. We check whether our results depend on the bandwidth selection by using as optimal-bandwidth selector the coverage error rate (CER) instead of the MSE. We then check the sensitivity of our estimates to the kernel function by using the Epanechnikov kernel instead of the triangular kernel. Lastly, we check whether our results appear to be sensitive to the order of the local polynomial by repeating the analysis with the local quadratic regression. All estimates turn out to be very close to those reported in the baseline specifications, even though the ones obtained with the local squared regression are smaller in magnitude and turn out to be statistically insignificant when analysing immigrant inflows for the 2014-2018 period.

In an RDD context, it is customary to present the estimates without control variables.[13] At the same time, controlling for relevant pre-treatment covariates can affect the extent of the estimates. Thus, in block III, we provide the no-covariate estimates and the estimates when adding two extra control variables: the share of the elderly population and the average house price per square meter. The latter variable takes into account that immigrants tend to locate in areas with low real estate costs (Dimou et al., 2020). While additional covariates do not modify the estimates, removing all control covariates increases the standard errors, making the estimates for the 2014-2018 period not statistically significant. However, the point estimates are even more sizable in absolute value than those reported in Table 2.

In block (IV), we carry out two falsification tests using different values of the forcing variable to construct two arbitrary discontinuity thresholds not related to becoming mayor. In particular, we move the threshold 20 percentage points on each side of the threshold. This way, we simulate that the threshold for becoming a mayor for an AI candidate becomes 40% or 60%. As these are 'artificial' discontinuities, we should not expect to see any effect of these 'fake' treatments on the dependent variables, given that the actual treatment status does not change. Indeed, all six estimated coefficients are never statistically significant, strengthening the validity of our empirical approach.

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[13] In an RDD, control variables should play a secondary role, and potential discontinuities should emerge even in the no-covariate RDD specification.

Lastly, we carry out three additional robustness checks in block V. First, we run a non-parametric RDD regression weighted by population size. This test leads to negative estimates, which are in no case statistically significant. The smaller size of the immigrant inflows coefficient for the period 2014-2018 suggests that the reduction of immigrant inflows in recent years is driven mainly by small municipalities. Second, as it takes time to relocate, we remove from the analysis the election year. After such removal, we get a more sizable reduction in migration inflows for 2014-2018, which suggests that immigrants react to the local government's change after some time. To further investigate the timing of immigrants' reaction, Figure C3 in Appendix C displays the estimates split by the number of years after the election (for elections held from 2014 to 2018). Figure C3 demonstrates that it takes at least two years to see a statistically significant change in immigrants' location choices. Third, we remove municipalities from the sample after they have been hit by an earthquake. Indeed, the disruption caused by a natural disaster might affect migration flows for reasons different from the election of a new mayor. The estimated coefficients are in line with the main estimates.

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

Most of the tests carried out in Section 4.2 support our main findings. There seems to be a generally negative impact of AI coalitions on immigrant outflows which is never statistically significant for the whole period under analysis but which turns statistically significant over the last few years in most specifications.

Our estimates differ from those of Bracco et al. (2018), especially considering that their observation period ends in 2014. It is then important to investigate why we find less significant effects of AI coalitions on immigrants' location choices. In Appendix D, we investigate what drives such differences. We find that the main reason behind different estimates was our use of a non-parametric robust bias-corrected RDD estimator with covariate adjustment rather than the parametric RDD used by Bracco et al. (2018). Unlike the parametric RDD estimator, the estimator used in our paper leads to unbiased estimates (Hyytinen et al., 2018; Cattaneo et al., 2020a) and larger standard errors. The fact that our estimates are based on the most up-to-date non-parametric RDD estimator and are relatively

stable across many robustness and sensitivity checks, lends credibility to the internal validity of our findings.

4.3 Additional findings

4.3.1 Further analyses on the linkage between AI coalitions and immigrants' location choices

This subsection examines different heterogeneity margins to understand better the relationship between narrow AI coalition victories and post-election immigration flows. All estimates are reported in Table 4.

First, we limit the sample to those municipalities with the outgoing mayor not supported by an AI coalition. It is reasonable to assume that municipalities that experience a sharp change in their position on immigration might engender a larger effect on foreigners' location choices. Nevertheless, even in this case, we find an impact on migration flows negligible and not statistically different from 0 as reported in Panel A. We then replicate the same analysis on the 2014-2018 elections. The estimates presented in Panel B show a statistically significant decrease in immigrant outflows at the 10% level and immigrant inflows at the 5% level. These estimates are larger in magnitude than those presented in Table 2, but they are based on a much smaller number of observations.

We then consider only elections in which a PI coalition challenges the AI coalition. We consider a coalition to be PI if it includes at least one party having a score between 0 and 2 on the anti-/pro-immigration axis of the CHES classification (see Table A1.3 in Appendix A). PI parties are usually left-wing parties such as Left Ecology and Freedom and the Italian Communist Party. The estimates reported in Panel C are not statistically significant and turn even positive for the immigration inflows coefficient.

Lastly, we invert the focus of the analysis by considering winning PI coalitions as treated. The estimates reported in Panel D are not statistically significant and display negative coefficients contrary to our expectations. This counter-intuitive result is likely due to the little political weight of PI parties. Furthermore, immigration is not central to their political agenda, as it is for AI parties. Note that the last two analyses have not been replicated for 2014-2018 due to the lack of enough observations.

INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

4.3.2 Splitting the estimates by foreigners' destination/origin and by citizenship

Municipal-level data on resident foreigners' inflows and outflows can be split into the following subcategories: new foreigners registered from other municipalities or abroad, and 'other registrations'; cancelled foreigners that relocated to other municipalities or went abroad, and 'other cancellations'.[14] We use these categories to build as many variables as the disaggregation level of the original data taken from Istat, using the same type of formula described in Section 3.1. Estimates are reported in Table 5.

We find that none of the coefficients is statistically significant when considering the whole period, while we get statistically significant estimates for the inflows from other municipalities (5% level) and the category 'other registrations' (1% level). While it is difficult to interpret the item 'other registrations', as we cannot disentangle which aspect matters, the statistically significant estimate for immigrant inflows from other municipalities suggests that foreigners living in Italy might be more informed about changes in local governments and take location decisions accordingly. On the other hand, legal immigrants coming from abroad appear less reactive to the arrival of an AI local government.

INSERT TABLE 5 HERE

Even though the narrative on migration has been instrumentalised as a hazy problem of the 'outsiders' (see Section 2.2), it is possible to identify a political and media overkill on subjects from specific countries, which was exacerbated by the migration crisis started in 2014. For this reason, we also collect from Istat data on immigrants' citizenship for every municipality from 2003 to 2019.[15] We aggregated nationalities according to different macro-areas (Africa, North America, South and Central America, Asia, EU-15, EU-12, and other European countries) to test whether targeted political rhetoric (and possibly targeted local policies)

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[14] The item 'other registrations' includes newborns and those enrolled for reappearance or other reasons due to registry adjustments. Similarly, 'other cancellations' consists of those cancelled due to ordinary or census-related unavailability, to death, to the expiration of the residence permit and the acquisition of Italian citizenship. Foreigners can acquire Italian citizenship by marriage/civil partnership, by residence in Italy (for at least three years), by descent, or by maternal or paternal recognition.

[15] This data reports the yearly number of individuals by citizenship for each municipality. A critical limitation of this data is that it does not distinguish between inflows and outflows of foreigners.

push away some specific groups of foreigners from territories governed by an AI coalition. Estimates are reported in Table 6 for the whole period and the elections from 2014 to 2018.

The estimates suggest a reduction in foreigners' presence for both time spans considered, which is, however, not statistically significant. The reduction is sizable for immigrants from the EU-12 (Central and Eastern European countries), especially when considering the whole period (estimate statistically significant at the 10% level). On the other hand, the location choices of legal immigrants from Africa seem to be unaffected by the political alignment of the local government.

INSERT TABLE 6 HERE

4.4 Potential mechanisms

This section explores possible mechanisms through which a winning AI coalition can affect foreigners' location decisions. First, we investigate the role played by local policies, and then we consider the potential repercussions of increased hostility of the native-born population on foreigners' location choices. Looking in-depth at these potential mechanisms will shed light on why legal immigrants moved less in 'hostile' municipalities starting from the 2014 elections and not earlier.

4.4.1 Public spending, social inclusion and integration

Public social spending is often used for propaganda purposes to highlight the precise orientation of certain parties' policies. AI politicians often remark their willingness to use these funds in favour of the native population. For instance, in 2020, Brothers of Italy submitted a motion named 'council flats first to the Italians', in the municipality of Ladispoli (near Rome), to prioritise the assignment of council flats to Italian rather than foreign families. Also in Ferrara, a municipality ruled by the League, in 2020 the mayor stated that social housing must no longer be considered a service dedicated almost exclusively to immigrant families but a service available to everyone.

Local policymakers can make choices that have a profound impact on citizens. Government ideology influences public expenditure, and left-wing and right-wing governments usually emphasise different budget positions (Bove et al., 2019). Although AI local governments might 'discourage' the location of immigrants in the municipality in several ways, social

expenditure is one of the most relevant. Therefore, we investigate the actual influence exerted by a mayor supported by an AI coalition on local migration policies, analysing whether AI propaganda has an effective deployment on social expenditure and, consequently, on the location or relocation of immigrants. To examine this potential causal channel, we draw on municipality data from Istat on social expenditure from 2013 to 2018. Specifically, we collect information about public social spending for various population groups,[16] including expenditure for immigrants. Table 7 displays the estimates on the impact of AI local government on social expenditure. Overall, it does not emerge any statistically significant difference between AI coalitions and their competitors on the amount of budget devoted to the main categories of social expenditure, including the expenditure for immigrants. This finding is coherent with the descriptive evidence reported by Ferwerda (2021), who shows that the relationship between the share of the foreign population and social expenditure in Italian municipalities does not depend on left- or right-wing party affiliation.[17] This means that local AI politicians, contrarily to what they promise during election campaigns, do not reduce public social spending once elected, not even that allocated to immigrants.[18]

INSERT TABLE 7 HERE

Over the last few years, there was an increase in the share of resources allocated to the support and social inclusion of immigrants (ISTAT, 2020). This share reached 4.8% of the total in 2017 (€348 million). Part of these funds accrues to the 'Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees' (SPRAR), which allow municipalities and other local authorities to

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[16] Total and per capita expenditure items in the dataset: elderly people (65 years and over); addictions; disabled; families with children at risk; immigrants and Roma; multiple care; poverty; adult and homelessness; total expenditure. In 2017, the expenditure of municipalities on social services, net of the contribution of users and the National Health Service, amounted to approximately €7.23 billion, corresponding to 0.41% of the national GDP. The expenditure from which an average inhabitant benefits in a year is €119 at the national level, with vast territorial differences. Social expenditure in the South is much lower than in the rest of Italy: €58 compared to values exceeding €115 per year in all the other regions, peaking in the North-East at €172.

[17] Similarly, Le Maux et al. (2020) find that once each French Department's socioeconomic characteristics are controlled for, differences in social expenditures disappear between left- and right-wing local governments. Conversely, Tyrberg and Dahlström (2018) find a negative correlation between AI parties' representation in Sweden and the aid offered to vulnerable European Union/European Economic Area citizens.

[18] These estimates concern the years 2013-2018, which coincide with the period in which the AI propaganda got stronger. It is then unlikely to imagine the emergence of significant differences between AI and non-AI coalitions in local social expenditure over 2000-2012.

implement integrated reception projects, as residential care facilities, through national and EU funding. SPRARs are the second step of the Italian reception system and are identified as a measure oriented towards integrating asylum seekers in a given territory.[19] Hence, the role of SPRARs foreshadows the possibility of local administrations to develop policies for the inclusion of asylum seekers and, possibly, of legal foreigners. As our study focuses on the impact of an AI local government on legal immigrants' location choices, we are not directly interested in the behaviour of asylum seekers. However, the presence of many asylum seekers in certain localities might bias our main estimates via their influence on local political outcomes.[20] Reassuringly, the adoption of the RDD strategy warrants against this threat as the number of asylum seekers at the threshold is expected to be approximately the same between treated and untreated municipalities. A more relevant threat to the validity of our estimates is represented by the potential impact of asylum seekers on local policies, social climate and legal immigrants' location decisions. We test if this is the case by collecting data on the location and new openings of SPRAR centres in Italian municipalities from 2003 to 2018. We consider a municipality to host a SPRAR if, in at least one of the years from T to T+4, there was a SPRAR in its territory. We then repeat the main analysis only on those municipalities without a SPRAR. Estimates are reported in Table E1 in Appendix E for the whole period and the 2014-2018 period. The coefficients are very close to those reported in Table 2. However, the reduction in immigrant inflows for the period 2014-2018 period turns out to be statistically significant at the 10 instead of at the 5% level (p-value: 0.052). This appears to be due to the increase in standard errors (reduction in the number of observations) rather than a lowered impact.[21]

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[19] First reception is carried out in collective centres where newly arrived migrants are identified and can start the asylum application procedure. After an initial assessment, migrants who apply for asylum are transferred to the first reception centres, where they are held for the time necessary to find a solution in the second reception. The latter is represented by the SPRAR centres. With the recent refugee crisis, the Italian migrant reception system proved insufficient to meet the reception needs of all the asylum seekers. This is why in 2014, the Italian Home Office introduced the CAS (Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria - Extraordinary Reception Centres), a private enterprise system funded by the central government and managed by Italian Prefectures (Campo et al., 2021). Although CAS were initially conceived as temporary facilities, they have hosted a large share of asylum seekers over the last few years (for more details, see Campo et al., 2021). In 2016, CAS were already present in over 2,000 municipalities (Bratti et al., 2020).

[20] On this matter, the empirical evidence is mixed. For instance, Gamalerio et al. (2020) show that Italian municipalities that opened a SPRAR experienced a 7-percentage point decrease in votes for extreme right-wing parties; conversely, Bellucci et al. (2019), Bratti et al. (2020), and Campo et al. (2021) find a positive effect of the share of asylum seekers on support for right-wing AI parties.

[21] It is possible that AI coalitions might hinder the opening of a CAS after municipal elections and this could bias our estimates. Although accurate data on the annual number of asylum seekers in each municipality is

4.4.2 Hostile social climate

Levi et al. (2020) suggest that immigrants could avoid areas with AI sentiments and locate where they could more easily integrate. Two recent analyses on Switzerland reinforce this idea: Rudert et al. (2017) find that immigrants' need for belonging is less satisfied where citizens voted more restrictively, while Slotwinski and Stutzer (2019) find a steep decrease in the probability of foreigners moving to a municipality which revealed AI attitudes via a national referendum.

In Italy, the political instrumentalisation of the 'foreign issue', which has intensified over the last few years, has led to the development of a generally inhospitable climate that may have affected the foreign population's flows in Italian municipalities. For instance, the League depicts immigrants, even legal ones, as competing with Italians for access to schools, health care, and pensions (Passarelli and Tuorto, 2012).

Considering 19 European countries, Italy registered the most sizable swing from 2006 to 2016 to more unfavourable opinions on perceptions of the presence of immigrants from the viewpoint of the host country (see Figure E1 in Appendix E). Negative attitudes towards immigration make integration harder and tend to be associated with worse social inclusion. A similar trend can be observed for the share of natives who see immigration as one of the two biggest issues facing their country (see Figure E2 in Appendix E). Besides, the number of Italian citizens who think immigrants represent a problem for employment and a threat to local culture has increased in recent years (see Table E2 in Appendix E). This result is in line with Dixon et al. (2018), who show that, in 2018, only 18% of Italians believe that immigration has had a positive impact on Italy, while 57% believe it has had a negative impact. These views are rather homogeneous across the Italian peninsula, with relatively little regional differences. Concerning hate crimes, an increase in racist incidents can be observed, with a peak in 2014 (see Table E3 in Appendix E). This result is confirmed at the local level by Romarri (2020), who finds that the appointment of far-right mayors in Italy increases the probability of hate crimes against immigrants.

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hard to collect (for more details, see Campo et al., 2021), we use the dummy variable on the presence of a CAS (as of November 2016) provided by Bratti et al. (2020), to test whether municipalities with a winning AI coalition are less likely to host a CAS than other municipalities. To this end, we use this dummy as the dependent variable for the RDD considering only elections held between 2011 and 2015. Reassuringly, we find a no statistically significant difference (p-value = 0.94).

The increase of natives' inhospitality goes hand in hand with the focus on the migration issue by AI political parties, reflecting the tightening of political propaganda against immigration at the national and local level. Since 2013, more space has been devoted by AI parties on their election posters to the enforcement or encouragement of cultural integration (see Volkens et al., 2020), highlighting multiculturalism as a negative phenomenon. Furthermore, as suggested by Romarri (2020), the election of an AI mayor might quickly change social norms with native-born more inclined to express views or taking actions that were previously stigmatized.

The propaganda of AI parties and the consequent climate of general mistrust towards immigrants have contributed to the development of an 'inhospitality effect', which has been reinforced over time and may have affected the choice of the foreign population to settle in a given territory.

5. Conclusion

Causal inference in the case of immigration and attitudinal outcomes is complex because selection and sorting into and out of diverse regions cannot be ruled out in most cases (Edo et al., 2020). We carefully address endogeneity issues via the non-parametric robust bias-corrected RDD estimator with covariate adjustment to estimate the causal impact of AI parties on foreigners' location choices. According to a scientific-based classification, we consider as AI, parties with political programmes and using political rhetoric based essentially on an AI approach. In general, we find that immigrants' responsiveness to the arrival of a mayor supported by an AI coalition increased over time, leading to a sizable and statistically significant decrease in immigrant inflows from other Italian municipalities since 2014. On the other hand, the election of an AI mayor does not greatly affect the location decisions of foreigners already resident in the municipality. We find solid evidence that the reduction in immigrant inflows is not driven by a meaningful change in local policies that penalise immigrants but by an increasing perceived inhospitality towards immigrants in municipalities governed by an AI coalition.

Our findings support the idea that propaganda, even when it does not go hand in hand with the implementation of specific AI local policies, has the power of influencing immigrants' behaviour. Besides, the reduction in immigrant inflows gets more sizable over time and stays statistically significant even four years after the elections. Such results suggest that

inhospitable municipalities are likely to pay a significant economic and demographic price in the long run. This vicious mechanism might deepen economic inequalities among municipalities and, in turn, further reinforce AI sentiments. The potential presence of this 'ripple effect' is worth investigating in future research.

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Figures

Figure 1 – Immigrants' location choices around the threshold: RDD plots

Panel A – Net immigrant flows
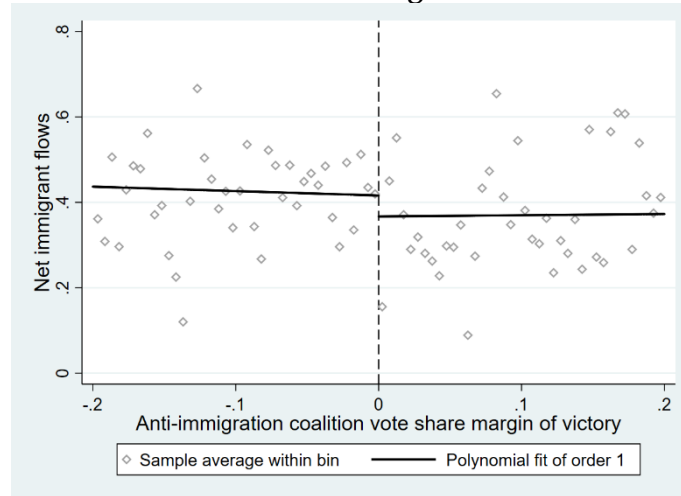
Panel B – Immigrant outflows
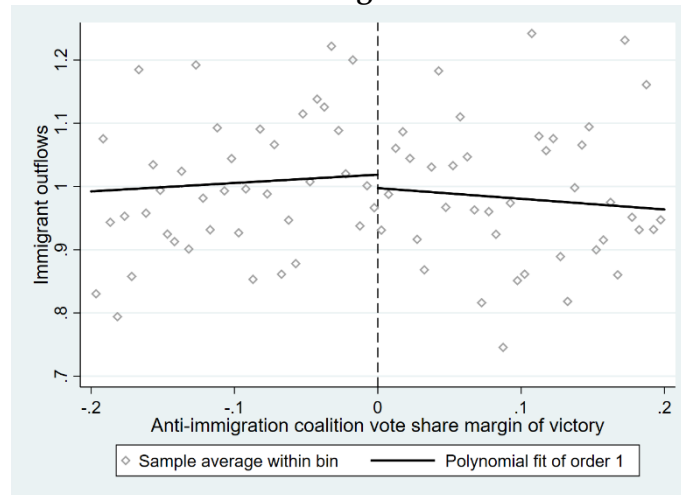
Panel C – Immigrant inflows
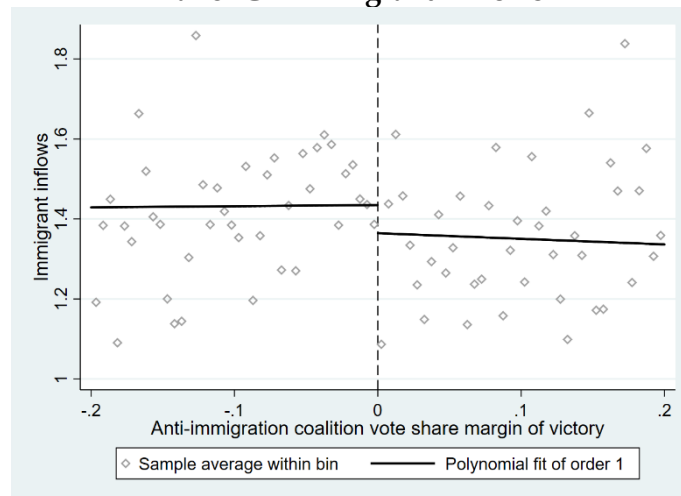
Notes: Each figure is constructed using the Stata command *rdplot* with 40 bins on each side of the cut-off (bin=0.005) and a local linear fit estimated using a triangular kernel. The control variables included are population, income per capita, workplace employment rate, the share of legal immigrants, dummy urban area regional dummies, and election-year dummies.

Tables

Table 1 – Descriptive statistics and pre-treatment differences

Variable	Average values in the whole sample		Differences at the threshold
	Non-AI coalition	AI coalition	
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Population	27,387.14	24,358.98	*Coeff. (SE)* -1,629.3 (6,543.6) *Bandwidth* 0.145 *N ⁻/⁺* 604/509
Income per capita in €	18,900.85	18,924.00	*Coeff. (SE)* -300.29 (368.03) *Bandwidth* 0.153 *N ⁻/⁺* 629/530
Workplace employment rate	48.68%	49.53%	*Coeff. (SE)* 2.84 (2.32) *Bandwidth* 0.197 *N ⁻/⁺* 773/652
Share of legal immigrants	7.29%	7.48%	*Coeff. (SE)* -0.50 (0.49) *Bandwidth* 0.193 *N ⁻/⁺* 763/635
Share of urban municipalities	79.97%	82.62%	*Coeff. (SE)* -0.90 (5.24) *Bandwidth* 0.177 *N ⁻/⁺* 711/595
Share of Northern municipalities	79.51%	83.49%	*Coeff. (SE)* -1.92 (4.80) *Bandwidth* 0.199 *N ⁻/⁺* 779/661
Average house price per square meter in €	1,422.33	1,365.58	*Coeff. (SE)* 21.83 (70.41) *Bandwidth* 0.140 *N ⁻/⁺* 447/389
Share of elderly population	20.20%	19.62%	*Coeff. (SE)* 0.62 (0.40) *Bandwidth* 0.218 *N ⁻/⁺* 826/716
Turnout	71.88%	71.84%	*Coeff. (SE)* -0.96 (1.16) *Bandwidth* 0.191 *N ⁻/⁺* 758/633
Share of male AI candidates	86.14%	86.79%	*Coeff. (SE)* -2.65 (5.70) *Bandwidth* 0.177 *N ⁻/⁺* 617/527
Share of male non-AI candidates	83.78%	80.73%	*Coeff. (SE)* 3.12 (5.44) *Bandwidth* 0.174 *N ⁻/⁺* 611/523
N	1,518	1,151	

Notes: Column (3) reports non-parametric robust bias-corrected estimates (Calonico et al., 2019). The bandwidths for each non-parametric local linear regression are selected using the optimal data-driven method as per Calonico et al. (2019). N^- and N^+ denote the number of cases within the bandwidth below and above the threshold, respectively. All estimates (except for the share of Northern municipalities) include the following control variables: regional dummies and yearly dummies. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

Table 2 – Main estimates

	Net immigrant flows (1)	Immigrant outflows (2)	Immigrant inflows (3)
Panel A – Elections held from 2000 to 2018			
Coeff.	-0.051	-0.024	-0.071
SE	0.042	0.033	0.055
N^-/N^+	3804/3256	3582/3085	3730/3180
Panel B – Elections held from 2000 to 2018 in small municipalities (<15,000 inhabitants)			
Coeff.	-0.044	-0.006	-0.047
SE	0.062	0.044	0.085
N^-/N^+	2128/1918	1974/1646	2103/1793
Panel C – Elections held from 2000 to 2018 in medium-sized and large municipalities (≥15,000 inhabitants)			
Coeff.	-0.036	0.014	-0.025
SE	0.050	0.038	0.057
N^-/N^+	1298/1058	1410/1121	1308/1058
Panel D – Elections held from 2000 to 2018 in Northern Italy			
Coeff.	-0.053	-0.025	-0.073
SE	0.047	0.036	0.063
N^-/N^+	3209/2734	3090/2637	3105/2642
Panel E – Elections held from 2000 to 2018 in Central and Southern Italy			
Coeff.	0.014	-0.021	0.004
SE	0.061	0.047	0.077
N^-/N^+	487/394	387/334	477/394
Panel F – Elections held from 2000 to 2008			
Coeff.	-0.044	-0.001	-0.037
SE	0.088	0.062	0.126
N^-/N^+	999/900	965/840	985/850
Panel G – Elections held from 2009 to 2013			
Coeff.	-0.005	-0.013	-0.017
SE	0.061	0.035	0.064
N^-/N^+	1779/1377	2143/1702	1856/1451
Panel H – Elections held from 2014 to 2018			
Coeff.	-0.066	-0.077	-0.170**
SE	0.064	0.072	0.080
N^-/N^+	506/457	587/560	543/499

Notes: All non-parametric estimates are robust bias-corrected. The bandwidths for each non-parametric local linear regression are selected using the optimal data-driven method as per Calonico et al. (2019). N− and N+ denote the number of municipality-year cases within the bandwidth below and above the threshold, respectively. The control variables included are population, income per capita, workplace employment rate, the share of legal immigrants, dummy urban area regional dummies, and election-year dummies. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

Table 3. Robustness and sensitivity checks

Type of sensitivity/robustness check	Elections held from 2000 to 2018			Elections held from 2014 to 2018		
	Net immigrant flows	Immigrant outflows	Immigrant inflows	Net immigrant flows	Immigrant outflows	Immigrant inflows
(I) Alternative definition of AI coalition						
- AI parties with at least 50% of votes	-0.045 (0.066)	0.008 (0.042)	-0.042 (0.077)	-0.136 (0.099)	-0.186 (0.123)	-0.306** (0.138)
- Candidate from an AI party	-0.034 (0.061)	-0.042 (0.042)	-0.086 (0.073)	-0.028 (0.077)	-0.147 (0.093)	-0.211** (0.104)
- Far-right party	-0.006 (0.058)	-0.015 (0.039)	-0.023 (0.073)	-0.072 (0.07)	-0.069 (0.083)	-0.164* (0.090)
-						
- Manifesto definition of AI coalition	-0.002 (0.042)	-0.008 (0.028)	-0.009 (0.052)	-0.056 (0.059)	-0.108 (0.070)	-0.134* (0.076)
- AI score between 7 and 10	-0.020 (0.043)	-0.010 (0.030)	-0.031 (0.055)	-0.036 (0.060)	-0.083 (0.071)	-0.126* (0.077)
- AI score between 9 and 10	-0.050 (0.045)	-0.020 (0.036)	-0.070 (0.053)	-0.067 (0.070)	-0.074 (0.082)	-0.167* (0.091)
(II) RDD features						
- Alternative bandwidth selector (CER)	-0.035 (0.046)	-0.034 (0.035)	-0.066 (0.060)	-0.048 (0.063)	-0.109 (0.077)	-0.178** (0.080)
- Alternative kernel (Epanechnikov)	-0.060 (0.040)	-0.021 (0.033)	-0.073 (0.054)	-0.077 (0.066)	-0.067 (0.073)	-0.169** (0.085)
- Squared functional form	0.005 (0.060)	-0.037 (0.040)	-0.044 (0.072)	0.038 (0.075)	-0.099 (0.091)	-0.124 (0.089)
(III) Control variables						
- No control variables	-0.054 (0.048)	-0.078 (0.064)	-0.129 (0.091)	-0.053 (0.072)	-0.083 (0.173)	-0.185 (0.161)
- Additional control variables	-0.045 (0.047)	-0.018 (0.034)	-0.078 (0.055)	-0.074 (0.063)	-0.064 (0.075)	-0.156** (0.080)
(IV) Placebo thresholds						
- 20 percentage points to the left	-0.066 (0.054)	0.041 (0.035)	-0.036 (0.061)	-0.117 (0.083)	0.047 (0.081)	-0.040 (0.092)
- 20 percentage points to the right	-0.027 (0.063)	0.008 (0.039)	-0.023 (0.063)	-0.011 (0.101)	0.079 (0.091)	0.078 (0.084)
(V) Others						
- Weighted RDD (population)	-0.049 (0.053)	0.020 (0.051)	-0.039 (0.080)	-0.061 (0.058)	0.024 (0.062)	-0.072 (0.059)
- No t0	-0.026 (0.048)	-0.033 (0.033)	-0.068 (0.060)	-0.119 (0.071)	-0.069 (0.077)	-0.208** (0.081)
- No earthquake municipalities	-0.048 (0.044)	-0.019 (0.032)	-0.067 (0.056)	-0.072 (0.063)	-0.085 (0.074)	-0.176** (0.080)

Notes: Clustered standard errors are reported in parentheses. In the weighted regressions, we dropped the six Italian municipalities with over 500,000 inhabitants to avoid that they would skew the estimates. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

Table 4 – Additional estimates concerning AI parties

	Net immigrant flows (1)	Immigrant outflows (2)	Immigrant inflows (3)
Panel A – Focus only on municipalities whose previous local government was not made up by AI parties (Elections held from 2000 to 2018)			
Coeff.	0.001	-0.008	-0.006
SE	0.053	0.039	0.062
N^-/N^+	2011/1743	2033/1765	1899/1648
Panel B – Focus only on municipalities whose previous local government was not made up by AI parties (Elections held from 2014 to 2018)			
Coeff.	-0.056	-0.183*	-0.236**
SE	0.073	0.102	0.107
N^-/N^+	258/279	237/244	234/226
Panel C – Only AI coalition Vs. PI coalitions (Elections held from 2000 to 2018)			
Coeff.	0.058	-0.034	0.037
SE	0.074	0.041	0.084
N^-/N^+	534/395	586/451	563/427
Panel D – PI coalition (Elections held from 2000 to 2018)			
Coeff.	-0.026	-0.009	-0.065
SE	0.055	0.045	0.067
N^-/N^+	1130/1329	1437/1741	1073/1284

Notes: See notes of Table 2. ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$, *$p<0.1$.

Table 5 – Splitting the main estimates by origin or destination of immigrants

	Outflows from other municipalities	Outflows from abroad	Other outflows	Inflows from other municipalities	Inflows from abroad	Other inflows
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A - Elections held from 2000 to 2018						
Coeff.	0.001	-0.012	-0.016	-0.047	-0.020	0.001
SE	0.027	0.008	0.020	0.035	0.026	0.016
N^-/N^+	3459/2872	2763/2311	3779/3230	3164/2600	3371/2797	3582/3062
Panel B - Elections held from 2014 to 2018						
Coeff.	-0.035	0.011	0.004	-0.089**	-0.031	-0.051***
SE	0.044	0.016	0.037	0.041	0.057	0.017
N^-/N^+	559/506	501/454	523/482	563/515	521/478	488/435

Notes: See notes of Table 2. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

Table 6 – Splitting the main estimates by citizenship

	Africa	North America	South and Central America	Asia	EU-15 countries	EU-12 countries	Other European countries	All countries
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Panel A - Elections held from 2000 to 2018								
Coeff.	0.032	0.001	-0.038	0.125	-0.019	-0.265*	0.086	-0.056
SE	0.161	0.006	0.065	0.170	0.047	0.147	0.186	0.141
N^-/N^+	3191/2667	3593/3061	2601/2211	3781/3282	2896/2425	3551/3013	2664/2259	3578/3036
Panel B - Elections held from 2014 to 2018								
Coeff.	0.007	0.008	-0.076	-0.441	-0.022	-0.151	0.543	-0.151
SE	0.277	0.019	0.165	0.401	0.059	0.351	0.369	0.190
N^-/N^+	588/549	579/536	497/444	588/546	597/572	505/451	532/493	483/437

Notes: See notes of Table 2. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

Table 7 – Estimates on the social expenditure per beneficiary (years from 2013 to 2018)

	Immigrants and Roma	Elderly people	Addiction	Disabled	Families with children at risk	Multi-user	Poverty
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Average expenditure per capita (€)							
	43.71	85.53	1.88	4,487.75	149.19	8.34	12.44
RDD estimates							
Coeff.	11.22	11.63	0.17	537.82	15.80	1.73	3.14
SE	13.64	11.36	0.23	420.06	18.42	1.93	2.67
N^-/N^+	502/402	636/561	593/518	477/380	477/380	508/421	472/380

Notes: Per capita values are the ratio between expenditure and the reference population for each user area: for the 'family and minors' area, the number of family members with at least one minor; for the disabled area, disabled people under the age of 65; for the 'elderly' area, the population aged 65 or over; for the 'immigrants and Roma' area, the number of resident foreigners; for the 'adult poverty and hardship' area, the population aged between 18 and 64; for the 'multi-user' area and the total social expenditure, it is made up of the resident population. Concerning the RDD estimates, see notes of Table 2.

Appendix A – Parties' classification

To better understand the Italian political landscape and our classifications, Tables A1.1 and A1.2 provide an overview of the major political parties, giving information about parties' names (both in Italian and in English) and parties' categories from World War II until now. Next, we present our anti-/pro-immigration and left-right axis classifications. Specifically, in Table A1.3 we present the original classification carried out by CHES on the anti-/pro-immigration axis, Table A1.4 provides the party classification used in our study based on the anti-/pro-immigration CHES classification, and Table A1.5 presents the party classification on immigration based on the Manifesto project. Subsequently, Table A1.6 shows the party classification based on the left-right axis of the CHES classification. Lastly, we present our party classification based on the left-right axis of the CHES classification in Table A1.7.

At the end of this appendix, we provide some notes describing and explaining some of the changes made in the classification compared to the original CHES classification.

Table A1.1 - Italian parties' abbreviations

Party ID	Party name (Italian)	Party name (English)
AN	Alleanza Nazionale	National Alliance
AP	Alternativa Popolare	Popular Alternative
CCD; UDC	Centro Cristiano Democratico; Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e dei Democratici di Centro	Christian Democratic Centre; Union of Christian and Centre Democrats
CD	Centro Democratico	Democratic Centre
CDU	Cristiani Democratici Uniti	United Christian Democrats
DE	La Destra	The Right
DEM; DL	Democratici; Democrazia è Libertà – La Margherita	Democrats; Daisy – Democracy is Freedom
DS; PDS	Democratici di Sinistra; Partito dei Democratici di Sinistra	Democrats of the Left; Democrats of the Left Party
FI; PDL	Forza Italia; Popolo della Libertà	Come on Italy; The People of Freedom
FdV; Verdi	Federazione dei Verdi; Verdi	Federation of Greens; Greens
FDI	Fratelli d'Italia	Brothers of Italy
IdV	Italia dei Valori	Italy of Values
LB	Lista Bonino	Bonino's List
LeU	Liberi e Uguali	Free and Equal
LN	Lega Nord (successivamente, Lega)	The Northern League (then the League)
M5S	Movimento 5 Stelle	Five Stars Movement
MRE	Movimento Repubblicani Europei	European Republican Movement
MS	Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore	Social Movement Tricolour Flame
MpA	Movimento per le Autonomie	Movement for Autonomies
NCD	Nuovo Centro Destra	New Centre-Right
NPSI	Nuovo Partito Socialista Italiano	New Italian Socialist Party
PD	Partito Democratico	Democratic Party
PP	Partito dei Pensionati	Pensioners' Party
PPI	Partito Popolare Italiano	Italians' People Party
PRI	Partito Repubblicano Italiano	Italian Republican Party
PSDI; SDI	Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano; Socialisti Democratici Italiani	Italian Democratic Socialist Party; Italian Socialists Democrats
PSI	Partito Socialista Italiano	Italian Socialist Party
PDCI	Partito dei Comunisti Italiani	Italian Communist Party
+Europa	+Europa	More Europe
PdUP	Partito Comunista per l'Unità Proletaria	Party of Proletarian Unity for Communism
PSDA	Partito Sardo d'Azione	Sardinian Action Party
RAD	Radicali	Radicals
RC	Rifondazione Comunista	Newly Founded Communists
RI	Rinnovamento Italiano	Italian Renewal
SC	Scelta Civica	Civic Choice
SD	Sinistra Democratica	Democratic Left
SEG	Patto Segni	Segni Pact
SEL; SL	Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà; Sinistra e Libertà	Left Ecology Freedom; Left Freedom
SI	Sinistra Italiana	Italian left
SVP	Südtiroler Volkspartei	South Tyrolean People's Party
UD; CU	Unione Democratica	Democratic Union
UDEUR	Popolari-UDEUR	Popular-Democrats Union for Europe
VdA	Vallée d'Aoste	Aosta Valley

Table A1.2 - Italian Parties' categories from World War II until now

Category	Description	Major parties
Virtually disappeared historical parties	Political parties with a strong cultural and ideological background that are now almost disappeared	● Italian Socialist Party (PSI) ● Italian Republican Party (PRI) ● Italian Democratic Socialist Party (PSDI) ● Italian Liberal Party (PLI)
Resilient historical parties	Surviving historical parties that changed, often more times, during their life	● Christian Democrats (DC) ● Italian Communist Party (PCI) ● Italian Social Movement (MSI; then National Alliance) ● Italian Radicals (RAD)
New parties	Parties born from the 90s	● Greens (Verdi) ● The Northern League, then the League (LN) ● Communist Refoundation Party (RC) ● Come on Italy (FI) ● Democratic Party (PD) ● The People of Freedom (PDL)
The newest	A party without pre-existing roots, with innovative goals	● Five Star Movement (M5S)

Source: Ignazi (2018).

Table A1.3 - Party classification based on the anti-/pro-immigration axis of the CHES classification

0-10 scale
0: pro-immigration; 10: against immigration

Party ID	2006	2010	2014	2017
AN	7.00	6.87		
AP				4.20
CCD; UDC	5.83	4.87	4.67	4.92
CD			3.50	3.78
DEM; DL	3.17			
DS; PDS	3.00			
FI; PDL	6.67	8.25	7.75	7.00
FdV; Verdi	1.83	1.14		
FDI			8.75	9.67
IdV		3.83		
LN	8.17	9.87	9.50	9.87
M5S			4.25	6.43
MRE	6.25			
NCD			7.50	
NPSI	6.25			
PD		3.00	3.25	3.67
PSDI;SDI	3.50			
PSI		2.80		
PDCI	2.00	1.40		
RAD	2.40			
RC	2.00	0.62	1.00	
SC			5.00	
SD		1.30		
SEL;SL		1.28	1.25	
SI				0.73
UDEUR	5.40			

Table A1.4 – Party classification used in the study based on the anti-/pro-immigration axis
of the CHES classification

0-10 scale
0: pro-immigration; 10: against immigration

| Party ID | Year of municipality elections | | | |
	2000 - 2007	2008 - 2011	2012 - 2015	2016 - 2018
AN	7.00	6.87		
AP				4.20
CCD; UDC	5.83	4.87	4.67	4.92
CD			3.50	3.78
DEM; DL	3.17			
DS; PDS	3.00			
FI; PDL	6.67	**8.25**	7.75	7.00
FdV; Verdi	1.83	1.14	1.14	1.14
FDI			**8.75**	**9.67**
IdV		3.83	3.83	3.83
LN	**8.17**	**9.87**	**9.50**	**9.87**
M5S			4.25	6.43
MRE	6.25	6.25		
NCD			7.50	7.50
NPSI	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25
PD		3.00	3.25	3.67
PSDI;SDI	3.50			
PSI	2.80	2.80		
PDCI	2.00	1.40	1.40	1.40
RAD	2.40			
RC	2.00	0.62	1.00	1.00
SC			5.00	5.00
SD		1.30		
SEL;SL		1.28	1.25	
SI				0.73
UDEUR	5.40	5.40	5.40	5.40

Notes: Parties with an AI score ≥8 in bold.

Table A1.5 – Party classification based on the Manifesto Project

Pro-immigration	Against immigration
Parties' manifestos with favourable mentions of cultural diversity and cultural plurality within domestic societies.	Parties' manifestos with the enforcement or encouragement of cultural integration and appeals for cultural homogeneity in society
DEM;DL	AN
DS	FDI
LeU	FI
PD	LN
PDCI	NCD
+Europa	NPSI
The Olive tree	
The Sunflower	
UDC	

Table A1.6 - Party classification based on the left-right axis of the CHES classification

0-10 scale
0: far-left; 10: far-right

Party ID	1999	2002	2006	2010	2014	2017
AN	8.17	7.79	8.00	7.33		
AP						5.25
CCD; UDC	6.00	5.86	5.86	5.30	5.20	5.29
CD					Centre	4.62
CDU	6.30	6.00				
DEM; DL	4.30	3.92	4.00			
DS; PDS	3.00	3.14	2.71			
FI; PDL	8.83	6.93	7.14	7.50	6.70	6.53
FdV; Verdi	3.83		2.29	1.75		
FDI					7.86	8.40
IdV		Centre	4.83	4.00		
LB	4.60					
LN	7.00	7.71	8.71	8.50	8.85	8.27
M5S					4.67	5.20
MRE			4.33			
MS	9.70					
MpA				6.28		
NCD					6.14	
NPSI			5.43			
PD				3.22	3.60	3.80
PP			5.75			
PPI	4.83	4.42				
PRI	Centre					
PSDI; SDI	4.50		3.86			
PSI				4.14		
PDCI			0.86	0.80		
PdUP	2.16					
PSDA	4.20					
RAD			3.83			
RC	0.60	1.93	1.29	0.55	0.28	
RI	4.83	5.23				
SC					5.40	
SD				2.14		
SEG	6.00					
SEL;SL				1.60	1.28	
SI						1.36
SVP	5.80		Centre	5.70	Centre	
UD; CU	Centre					
UDEUR		5.57	Centre			
VdA					4.83	

Table A1.7 – Party classification used in the study based on the left-right axis of the CHES classification

0-10 scale
0: far-left; 10: far-right

Party ID	2000	2001 – 2003	2004 – 2007	2008 – 2011	2012 – 2015	2016 - 2018
AN	8.17	7.79	8.00	7.33		
AP						5.25
CCD; UDC	6.00	5.86	5.86	5.30	5.20	5.29
CD					5.00	4.62
CDU	6.30	6.00				
DE				9.27	9.27	9.27
DEM; DL	4.30	3.92	4.00			
DS; PDS	3.00	3.14	2.71			
FI; PDL	7.68	6.93	7.14	7.50	6.70	6.53
FdV; Verdi	1.59	1.59	2.29	1.75	1.75	1.75
FDI					7.86	8.40
IdV		5.00	4.83	4.00	4.00	4.00
LB	4.60					
LN	7.00	7.71	8.71	8.50	8.85	8.27
MRE	4.33	4.33	4.33	4.33		
MS	9.70	9.70	9.70	9.70	9.70	9.70
NCD					6.14	6.14
NPSI	5.43	5.43	5.43	5.43	5.43	5.43
PD				3.22	3.60	3.80
PPI	4.83	4.42				
PRI	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
PSDI; SDI	4.50	4.18	3.86			
PSI	4.14	4.14	4.14	4.14		
PDCI			0.86	0.80		
RC	0.60	0.60	0.67	0.55	0.28	
RI	4.83	5.23				
SC					5.40	5.40
SD				2.14		
SEL;SL				1.60	1.28	
SI						1.36
UD; CU	5.00					
UDEUR	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

Notes: DE has been classified by Curini and Iacus (2008). We omitted from the left-right classification the following parties: M5S, MpA, PP, PdUP, PSDA, RAD, SEG, SVP and VdA. The reason for such omissions is that these parties are ambiguously classified or cannot be categorised with certainty on the left-right axis, due to their characteristics.

Notes on the CHES classification on the left-right axis

Changes from the CHES classification:

- FI; PDL: The 1999 *CHES* score classifies this party almost as an extremist party. Ideologically, this classification places FI more to the right than AN, but this has never been the case. Ignazi (2018) states that the average FI voter is more on the right than the centre-right, especially in those years, but he does not question that AN is more 'extremist' than FI. Ignazi (2018) also shows how FI voters rank themselves with a value of 7.4. For these reasons, we decided to align the score with that provided by Curini and Iacus (2008) for the year 2001.

- FdV; Verdi: we use the score of 1.59 for 2001 provided by Curini and Iacus (2008).

- PSDI; SDI: For the years 2001-2003, we compute the average between 1999 and 2006 CHES values.

- RC: Newly founded communists were born in 1991 as the radical wing of the Communists. We use the score of 0.60 for 2001 provided by Curini and Iacus (2008).

- UDEUR: As suggested by Ignazi (2018), a centrist placement seems the most appropriate.

Other parties or coalitions included:

- L'ULIVO (The Olive-tree coalition) was made up by parties with centrist or left-wing positions. We computed its score as the average CHES score of its members (PPI, until 2002; Verdi; PRI, 2000 only; Ri, until 2002; UDEUR; PCI; MRE, from 2001; DS; SDI; Daisy, from 2002)

- L'UNIONE (The Union coalition). We computed the CHES score of L'UNIONE as the average CHES score of its members (DS; Daisy; RC; PCI; IdV; SDI; Verdi; UDEUR; MRE)

- IL GIRASOLE (The Sunflower coalition): We computed the CHES score of IL GIRASOLE as the average CHES score of its members (SDI; Verdi)

- CASA DELLE LIBERTÀ (House of Freedom, coalition): We computed the CHES score of CASA DELLE LIBERTÀ as the average CHES score of its members (FI; AN; LN; CCD; CDU; PRI; NPSI; MS, from 2006; DE, from 2007)

- Far-right parties not included in CHES classification: CASAPOUND; FASCISMO e LIBERTÀ (Fascism and Freedom); FORZA NUOVA (New Force)

Sample description

Our initial sample is made up of the 25,269 municipal elections held in Italy between 2000 and 2018. The only missing elections are those held in Aosta Valley, Trentino-South Tyrol, and Sicily (from 2005 to 2018). In the main analysis, we consider only the elections in which a mayor supported by an AI coalition won or ranked second. Besides, we exclude from the sample those few elections in which the winning and the runner-up candidates were both supported by a coalition having at least a party with an AI score ≥7. Thus, out of the 25,269 elections present in our database, 2,669 elections meet the above criteria. These elections concern 1,652 municipalities and are located primarily in Northern Italy (see Figure B2).

The empirical analysis is carried out on the basis of a database organised at the municipality-year level. As data on newly registered and cancelled foreigners are available from 2002 to 2019, this means that for some elections, we cannot consider all years from T to T+4:

-       for elections held in 2000, we consider the post-election observations relative to 2002 (T+2), 2003 (T+3) and 2004 (T+4).

-       for elections held in 2001, we consider the post-election observations relative to 2002 (T+1), 2003 (T+2), 2004 (T+3) and 2005 (T+4).

-     for elections held between 2002 and 2015, we consider all post-election observations.

-       for elections held in 2016, we consider the post-election observations relative to 2016 (T), 2017 (T+1), 2018 (T+2), and 2019 (T+3).

-       for elections held in 2017, we consider the post-election observations relative to 2017 (T), 2018 (T+1), and 2019 (T+2).

-       for elections held in 2018, we consider the post-election observations relative to 2018 (T) and 2019 (T+1).

This is made possible by the availability of all pre-treatment covariates since 1999 (see Table B1).[22]
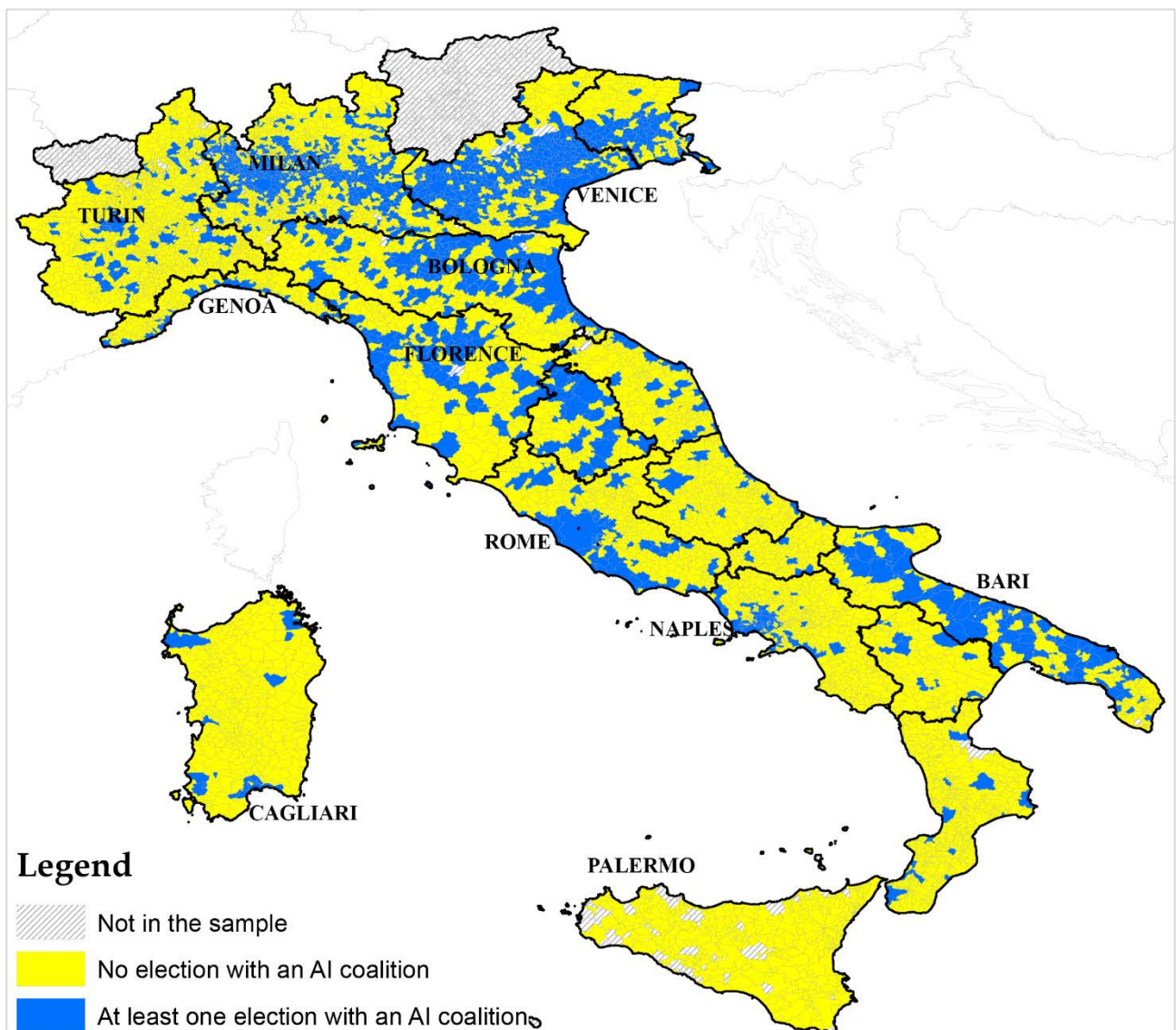
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[22] The only exception is the income per capita, which is available from 2000. To overcome this issue, we used the income per capita in 2000 to proxy the income per capita in 1999.

Figure B1 – Evolution of the foreign resident population in Italy
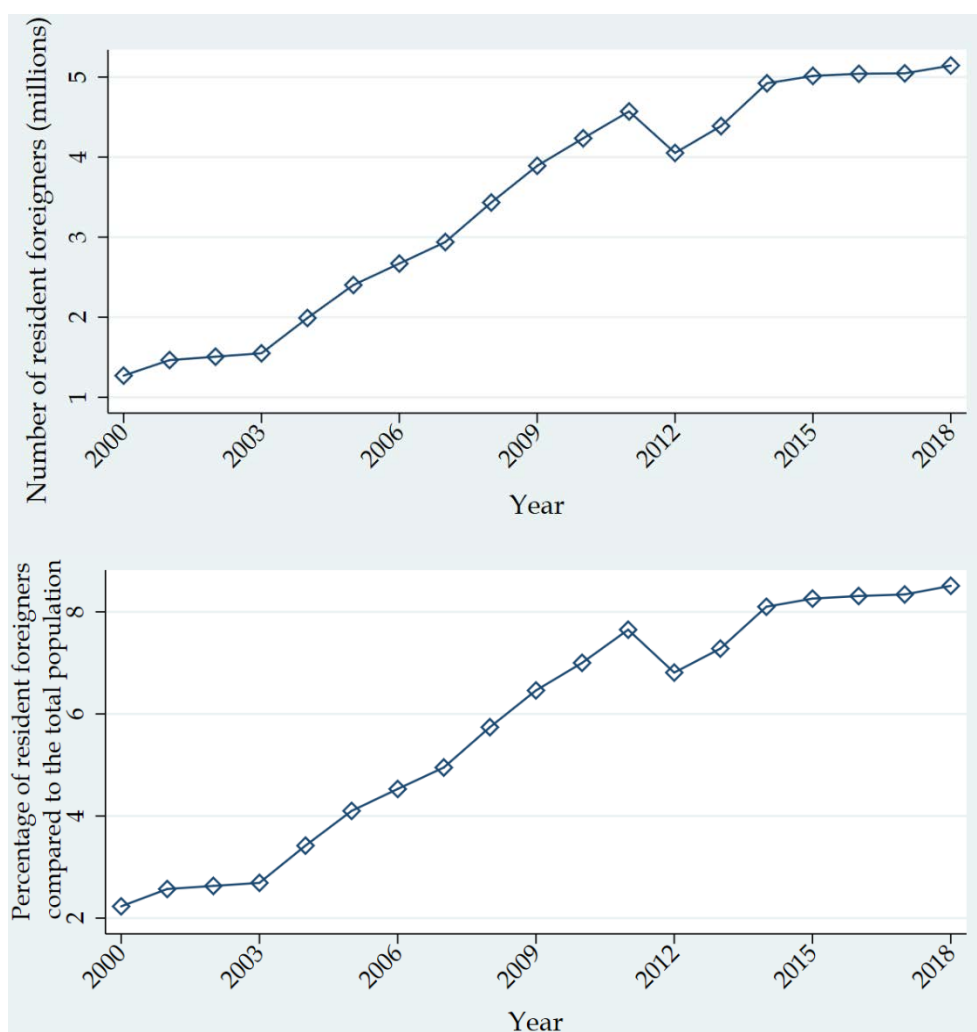
Figure B2 – Municipalities in the sample

Note: Sicilian municipalities are considered only for elections up to 2004. Our sample includes 7,480 municipalities (94.6% of the total). 1,652 of these municipalities are analysed in the main analysis as they had at least an election between 2000 and 2018 in which the AI coalition ranked first or second

Table B1 – Definition of the variables included in the analysis

Variable name	Definition	Time period	Source
Newly registered foreigners	Foreigners' inflows as a percentage of the resident population in the pre-election year	2002 – 2019	Istat - http://demo.istat.it/index_e.html
Cancelled foreigners	Foreigners' outflows as a percentage of the resident population in the pre-election year	2002 – 2019	Istat - http://demo.istat.it/index_e.html
Electoral outcomes	Number of votes collected by every party or coalition and the total amount of votes received by each mayoral candidate	2000-2018	The historical electoral archive of the Ministry of the Interior
Turnout	Turnout at municipal elections	2000-2018	The historical electoral archive of the Ministry of the Interior
Party affiliation	The personal characteristics and party affiliation of local politicians.	2000-2018	Database on local administrators provided by the Italian Ministry of Domestic Affairs
Share of foreign population	Foreigners / population		Istat
Population	Resident population	1999 – 2019	Istat
Workplace employment rate	Number of people working in the municipality / Resident population	1999 – 2019	Istat
Income per capita	The amount of money earned per person	2000 – 2018	Ministry of Economy and Finance
Dummy urban	Equal to 1 in case the municipality is considered as an 'urban pole of attraction' or an 'intermunicipal pole of attraction' or an 'outlying municipality'	2011	Istat - National Strategy for the Italian internal areas
Average house price per square meter	Average house price per square meter (centre, semi-centre and outskirt)	2003-2018	The real estate market observatory of the Italian Tax Office
Share of elderly population	Number of 65+ individuals divided by resident population	1999 – 2019	Istat

Table B2 – Descriptive statistics

| Variable name	Whole sample (25,672 elections)				Final sample (2,669 elections)			
	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Net immigrant flows	0.297	0.779	-25.610	20.122	0.400	0.642	-4.708	8.995
Immigrant outflows	0.733	0.766	0.000	26.829	0.969	0.657	0.000	6.981
Immigrant inflows	1.030	0.950	0.000	21.341	1.369	0.857	0.000	9.877
Turnout	73.69%	10.70%	3.97%	100%	72.09%	10.51%	32.54%	99.89%
Share of foreign population	4.91%	4.13%	0%	31.72%	7.36%	4.21%	0.00%	28.31%
Population	7735	44820	34	2872021	25476	100799	58	2638842
Workplace employment rate	34.76%	23.84%	0.56%	418.34%	49.20%	20.77%	5%	237%
Income per capita (€)	15447	4098	5334	51497	18848	3280	7682	38168
Dummy urban	50.10%	50.00%	0%	100%	80.92%	39.29%	0.00%	100.00%
Average house price per square meter (€)	1019	584	220	11850	1404	661	460	8075
Share of elderly population	22.63%	6.10%	4.62%	66.38%	19.85%	4.05%	7.18%	42.54%
Number of elections			25,269				2,669	
Number of municipalities			7,485				1,652	
Number of municipality-year obs.			116,569				12,259	

Figure C1 – Manipulation testing plot
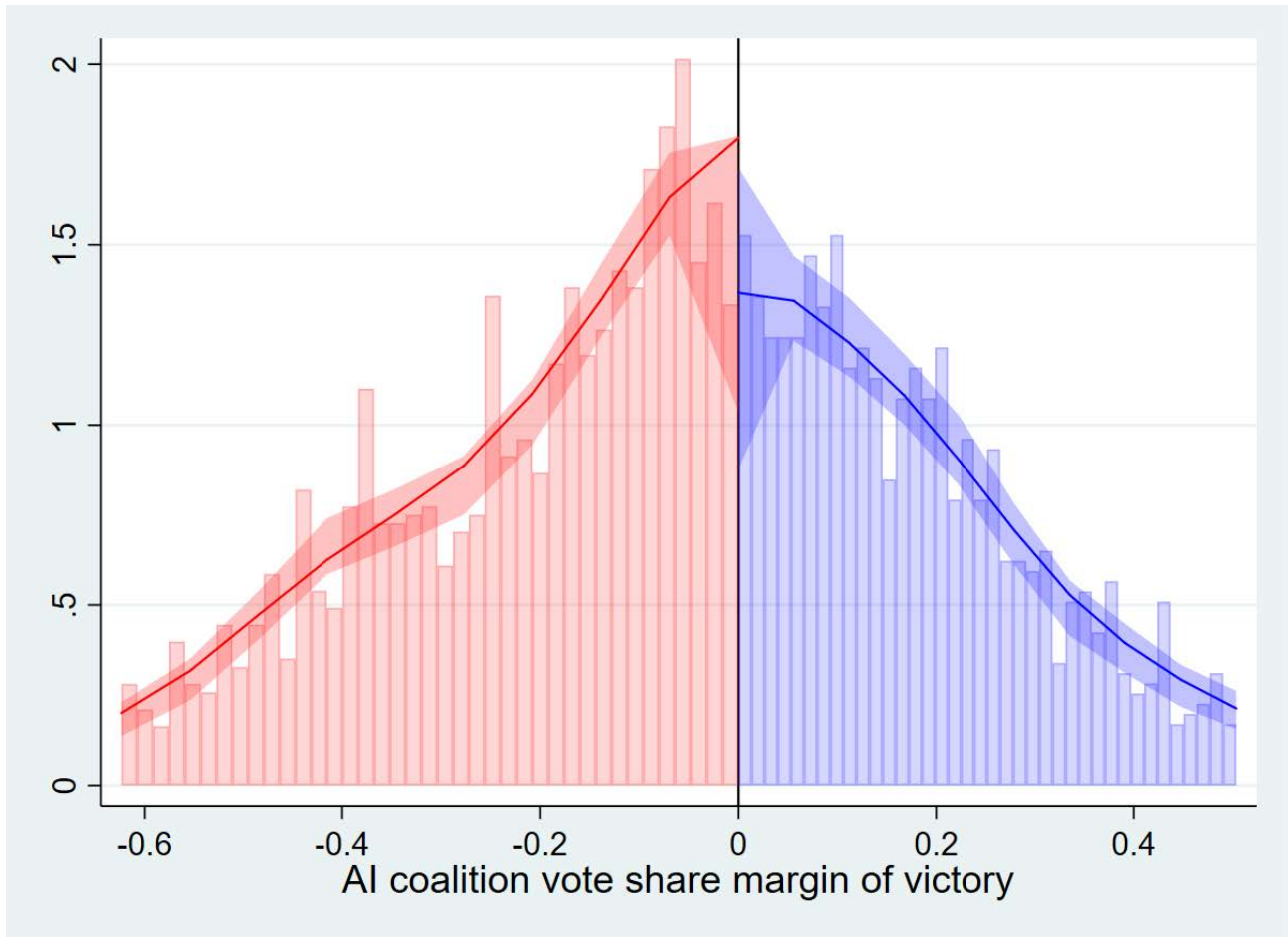
Notes: The test considers the 2,669 elections examined in the main analysis.

Figure C2 – Immigrants' location choices around the threshold: RDD plots (Elections held from 2014 to 2018)

Panel A – Net immigrant flows

Panel B – Immigrant outflows

Panel C – Immigrant inflows
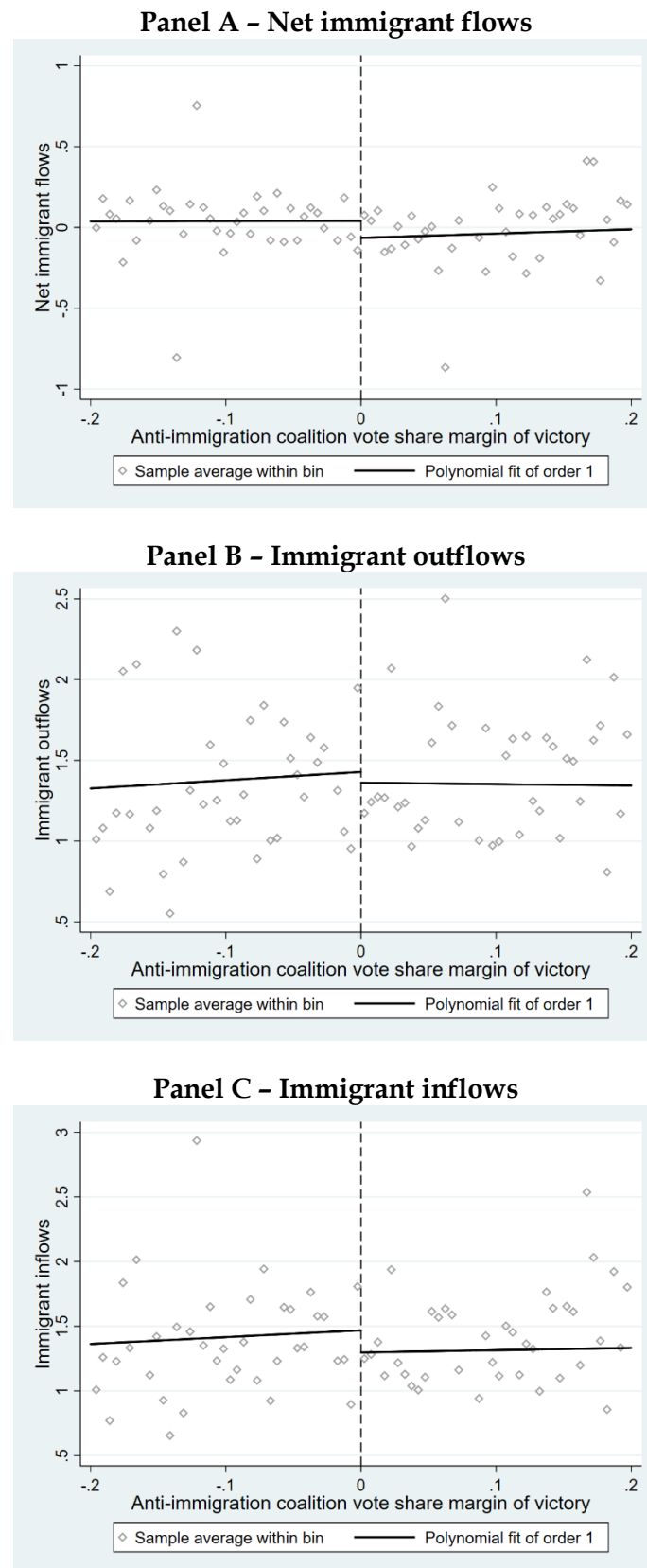
Notes: See notes of Figure 1.

Figure C3 – Splitting the immigrant inflows estimates by the number of years after the election (Elections held from 2014 to 2018)
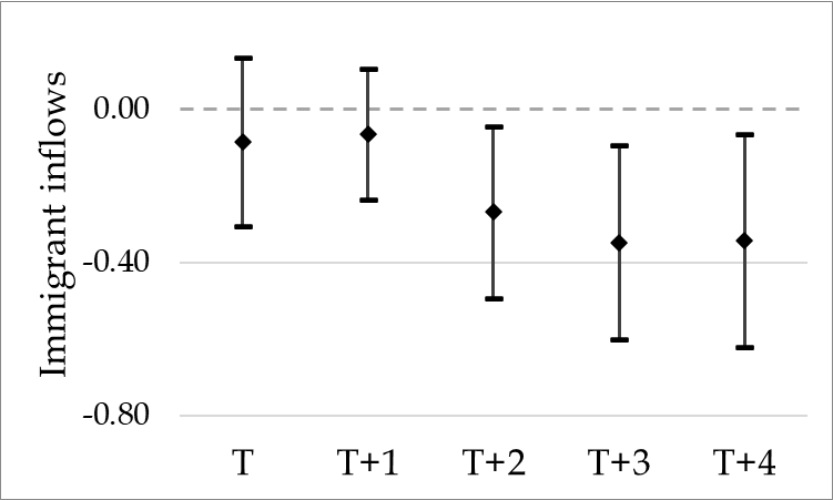
Notes: For each year, the point estimate and the 95% confidence intervals are displayed.

Appendix D - Comparison of our estimates with those of Bracco et al. (2018)

This Appendix investigates what drives the differences between our estimates and those provided by Bracco et al. (2018). The main differences between these two studies concern: i) the definition of AI coalition; ii) the time-period considered; iii) the territorial coverage; iv) the specification of the RDD estimator; and v) the set of control variables. We test which of these differences matter the most in explaining the different findings by running several additional regressions reported in Table D1. To make the comparison easier, Panel A of Table D1 reports the main estimates of Bracco et al. (2018), which are based on a parametric RDD specification with a linear polynomial order of the forcing variable, which is allowed to differ on the two sides of the cut-off and there are no bandwidth limitations, while Panel B displays our main estimates[23] We then reduce the sample to the same years of Bracco et al. (2018) (Panel C), and we further restrict the analysis to Northern municipalities, considering the League as the only AI party (Panel D). The latter analysis is then repeated with a parametric RDD specification with a linear polynomial order of the forcing variable with no bandwidth restriction (Panel E) and with the Calonico et al. (2017) bandwidth restriction (Panel G), and with a quadratic polynomial order of the forcing variable (Panel F).

Overall, we obtain point estimates similar to those of Bracco et al. (2018). The only exception is when we use the quadratic polynomial order of the forcing variable, which leads to more sizable and statistically significant estimates. However, the larger coefficients are likely biased, as none of the RDD graphs reported in Figure 1 and Figure C2 in Appendix C displays a non-linear relationship between the forcing variable and the dependent variables. Therefore, the main difference between our estimates and those of Bracco et al. (2018) is mainly due to their use of the parametric RDD, which is based on stronger assumptions than the non-parametric robust bias-corrected RDD estimator with covariate adjustment (Calonico et al., 2019) used in our paper. This is why we get coefficients closer to zero and larger standard errors which make our estimates for the 2002-2014 period non-statistically

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[23] Bracco et al. (2018) provide several model specifications of the parametric RDD. For instance, the authors report estimates based on the quadratic polynomial order of the forcing variable or those limited to a bandwidth selected using the Imbens and Kalyanaraman (2012) and the Calonico et al. (2014) optimal bandwidth selectors. In general, they tend to get more sizable coefficients when using the quadratic polynomial order of the forcing variable and less or no statistically significant estimates when limiting the bandwidth to the observations closest to the threshold.

significant but more reliable. As stated by Cattaneo et al. (2020a, pag. 41): "*Since the RDD point estimator is defined at a boundary point, global polynomial methods can lead to unreliable RDD point estimators, and thus the conclusions from a global parametric RDD analysis can be highly misleading. For these reasons, we recommend against using global polynomial methods for formal RDD analysis.*"

Table D1 – Estimates on for comparison with Bracco et al. (2018)

	Net immigrant flows (1)	Immigrant outflows (2)	Immigrant inflows (3)
Panel A – Bracco et al.' main estimates (2018) - (Elections held from 2002 to 2014)			
Coeff.	−0.070***	−0.008	−0.078**
SE	0.024	0.025	0.037
N	13816	13816	13816
Panel B – Our main estimates reported in Table 2 - (Elections held from 2000 to 2018)			
Coeff.	-0.051	-0.024	-0.071
SE	0.042	0.033	0.055
N^-/N^+	3804/3256	3582/3085	3730/3180
Panel C – Estimates limited to the elections held from 2002 to 2014			
Coeff.	-0.053	-0.026	-0.080
SE	0.053	0.036	0.068
N^-/N^+	3021/2490	3117/2633	2968/2449
Panel D – Estimates limited to the elections held from 2002 to 2014 and to Northern municipalities (only the League)			
Coeff.	-0.034	-0.044	-0.064
SE	0.060	0.044	0.084
N^-/N^+	2164/1965	2075/1832	2043/1814
Panel E – As in Panel D but using a parametric RDD with a linear polynomial order of the forcing variable and no bandwidth restriction			
Coeff.	-0.036	-0.026	-0.063*
SE	0.028	0.021	0.036
N^-/N^+	4124/3416	4124/3416	4124/3416
Panel F – As in Panel D but using a parametric RDD with a quadratic polynomial order of the forcing variable and no bandwidth restriction			
Coeff.	-0.050	-0.078**	-0.128**
SE	0.036	0.030	0.048
N^-/N^+	4124/3416	4124/3416	4124/3416
Panel G – As in Panel D but using a parametric RDD with a linear polynomial order of the forcing variable and the Calonico et al. (2014) bandwidth			
Coeff.	-0.066	-0.046	-0.099*
SE	0.044	0.031	0.058
N^-/N^+	2194/2022	2094/1883	2072/1865

Notes: See notes of Table 2. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

Appendix E

## Figure E1 - How host-country perceptions of the presence of immigrants have evolved

Mean scores on a scale from 0 to 10 for question: "Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?", 2006 and 2016.
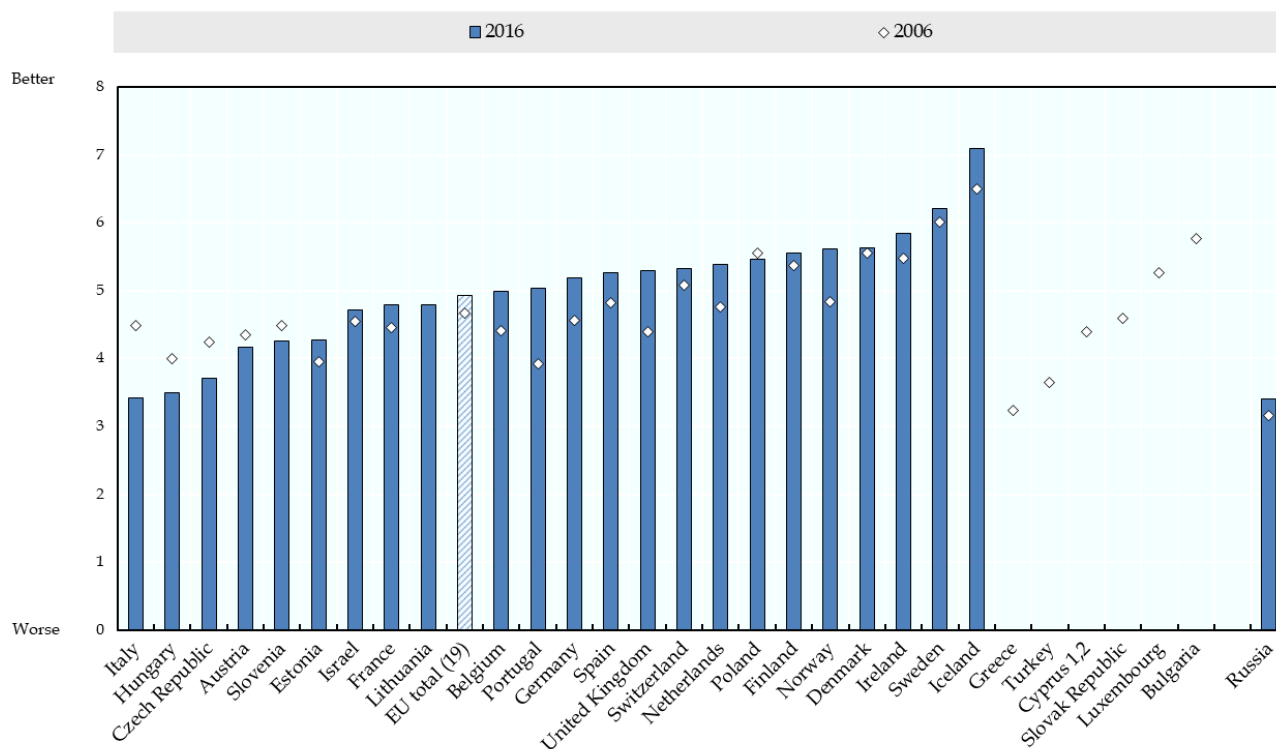
Source: OECD (2018).

Notes on this graph released by the authors: EU total (19) excludes Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Latvia, Luxembourg, Romania and the Slovak Republic. Answers yield scores on a scale from 0 to 10, from which mean scores are calculated.

Figure E2: Italian citizens who see immigration as one of the two most important issues facing their country, Autumn 2009–2018 (%)
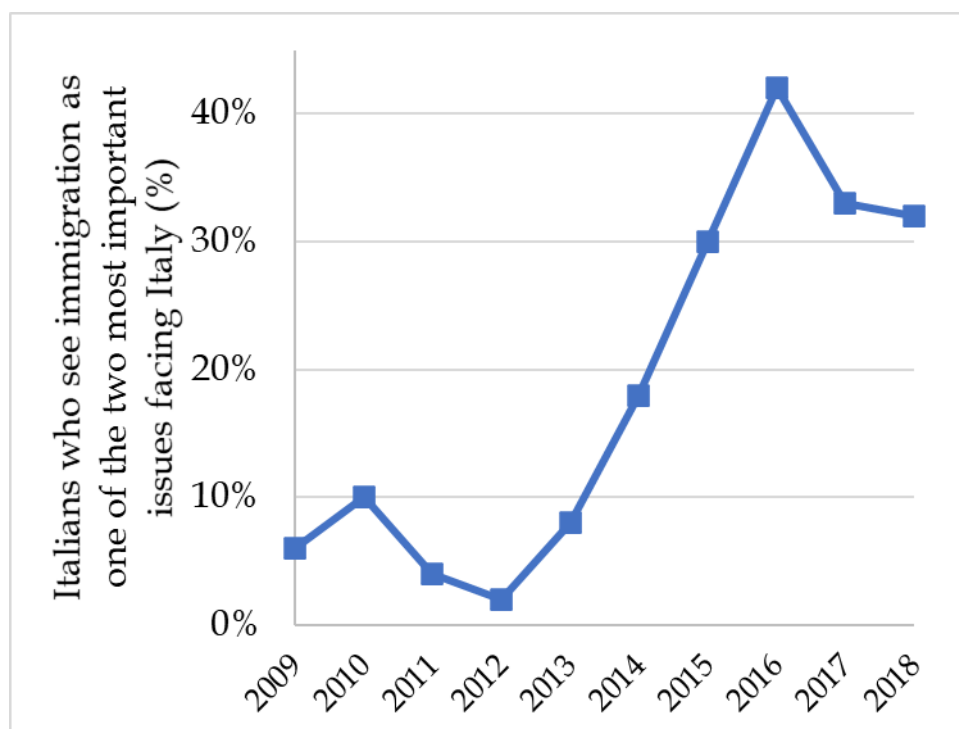
Source: Standard Eurobarometers 72, 74, 76, 78, 80, 82, 84, 86, 88, and 90 (autumn 2009–2018).

Table E1 – Replication of the estimates without municipalities hosting a SPRAR

	Net immigrant flows (1)	Immigrant outflows (2)	Immigrant inflows (3)
Panel A – Elections held from 2000 to 2018			
Coeff.	−0.048	−0.021	−0.063
SE	0.045	0.034	0.059
N	3310/2948	3222/2737	3263/2785
Panel B – Elections held from 2014 to 2018			
Coeff.	-0.061	-0.078	-0.165*
SE	0.066	0.078	0.085
N^-/N^+	466/438	539/519	503/481

Notes: See notes of Table 2. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

Table E2 - Share of Italians who thinks that immigrants are a problem for employment and a threat to local culture

	2001	2006	2008	2011	2018
Immigrants are a problem for employment	*very much*: 14.5%	*very much*: 21.5%	*very much*: 19.1%	*very much*: 18.9%	*8 to 10*: 35.3% *9 to 10*: 26.1%
Immigrants are a threat to local culture	*very much*: 18.7%	*very much*: 21.3%	*very much*: 17.5%	*very much*: 16.0%	*8 to 10*: 30.1% *9 to 10*: 23.2%

Source: Italian National Election Studies (ITANES) survey on voters' behaviour in 2001, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2018.

Notes:

Questions in surveys from 2001 to 2011:

- Employment: Are immigrants a threat to Italians' employment? (Answers: not at all; a little; fairly much; very much)
- Culture: Are immigrants a threat to our culture? (Answers: not at all; a little; fairly much; very much)

Questions in 2018 survey:

- Employment: Are immigrants good or bad for the Italian economy? (Answers: 0 to 10 scale. 0: Very good; 10: very bad)
- Culture: Are immigrants a threat or an enrichment for Italian culture? (Answers: 0 to 10 scale. 0: a big enrichment; 10: a big threat)

Similar surveys were conducted also in 2013 and 2016 but they do not contain comparable questions.

Table E3 - Racism in Italy. Number of episodes documented on verbal violence, physical violence and damages against properties or things. Years from 2008 to 2019.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Verbal violence	28	135	139	309	362	735	1,286	612	419	423	405	378
Physical violence	71	132	64	87	73	75	47	43	28	48	132	83
Damages against properties or things	11	19	6	14	9	4	10	18	15	25	29	9
Discrimination	39	107	116	140	66	79	74	64	62	78	78	81

Source: Lunaria (2020)