The Effects of Asylum Seekers on Political Outcomes*

Noémie Zurlinden† ⓡ Arnau Valladares-Esteban‡ ⓡ Charles Gottlieb§

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Abstract

We exploit the quasi-random allocation of asylum seekers across Swiss cantons and the high frequency of national referenda to identify the causal effect of immigration on political outcomes in receiving countries. We find that the arrival of asylum seekers causes voters to increase their support for right-wing and conservative policies. However, this effect is driven by episodes of unusually high inflows of asylum seekers. Moreover, we find that for votes on immigration and refugee policy, the arrival of more asylum seekers shifts voters towards policies endorsed by conservative and centre-right parties but not towards positions backed by the rightmost anti-immigration party. In contrast, the shift towards the rightmost stances is sizeable in votes related to the welfare state, international integration, and the rights of minorities.

Keywords— Immigration, Political preferences, Re-distribution, Quasi-random allocation.
JEL Codes— D72, F22, H80.

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†University of St. Gallen and Swiss Institute for International Economics and Applied Economic Research. Email: noemie.zurlinden@unisg.ch.

‡University of St. Gallen and Swiss Institute of Empirical Economic Research. Email: arnau.valladares@gmail.com.

§University of St. Gallen and Swiss Institute of Empirical Economic Research. Email: charles.gottlieb@unisg.ch.

1 Introduction

In the past decades the inflow of immigrants to European countries has notably increased. Among those arriving, people seeking refuge from wars and persecution have received special political and media attention. In several countries, the rise of immigration has coincided with the appearance and growth of right-wing-conservative parties with a clear anti-immigration agenda which often includes nativist and authoritarian traits.[1] The concurrence of these two phenomena raises the question of whether the arrival of immigrants leads voters to support anti-immigration platforms and/or shift their support towards more right-wing-conservative policies. We exploit the quasi-random allocation of more than 350,000 asylum seekers across Swiss cantons, the member states of Switzerland, and the outcomes of 181 nationwide referenda on well-defined policy questions from 1995 to 2015 to identify the causal effect of refugee migration on political outcomes in receiving countries.[2]

The identification of the causal effect of immigration on political outcomes is challenging. When immigrants decide where to live they might choose areas in which the local population has a specific set of political preferences, in particular towards newcomers.[3] Moreover, factors that drive the location decision of immigrants might also affect the policy preferences of locals.[4] Since 1990, the Swiss Asylum Law establishes that individuals who seek refugee status in Switzerland are distributed across the 26 cantons such that each canton is to host a share of the asylum seekers proportional to their local population. In practice, because cantons are unable to affect the relative number of asylum seekers they are to host or their characteristics, this policy generates a quasi-random allocation of asylum seekers across cantons. We provide evidence in support of the quasi-randomness of the policy and show that the allocation of asylum seekers cannot be explained by the demographic characteristics of cantons nor by canton fixed effects. We leverage this quasi-random allocation policy to tackle immigrant self-selection and estimate the causal effects of refugee migration on political outcomes.[5]

An essential part of the legislative process in Switzerland is the systematic organisation of referenda on well-defined policy questions. Swiss citizens vote on around nine constitutionally-binding referenda every year. We analyse how the arrival of asylum seekers affects referenda outcomes. The focus on referenda provides three unique advantages. First, unlike elections, referenda have a direct impact on legislation and policy making. In the Swiss case, the approval of a referendum implies the inclusion of the associated amendment in the constitution. Second, given that referenda take place frequently, we are able to assess how different intensities of the inflow of asylum seekers impact political outcomes. Essentially, we observe referenda outcomes both in times of high and low inflows of asylum seekers. Our results show that, on average, higher inflows of asylum seekers decrease the support for left-progressive options while increasing that of right-wing-conservative stances. In particular, the positions endorsed by the rightmost anti-immigration party are those that gain the most support due to increased refugee migration. However, the shift generated by refugee migration is almost solely driven by episodes of especially high inflows. That is, outside these episodes, refugee migration has negligible effects on political outcomes.

Thirdly, we use information on the content of the questions asked in referenda to analyse which topics are affected by the arrival of asylum seekers. We rely on the classification provided by the Année Politique Suisse (2019) to group referenda into policy topics that are targeted by anti-immigration parties.

[1] See Mudde (2007).

[2] Edin, Fredriksson, and Åslund (2003), Beaman (2011), and Fallah, Krafft, and Wahba (2019) study the effects of refugee migration on the labour market.

[3] Slotwinski and Stutzer (2019) show that Swiss regions that supported the ban of Minarets in 2009 subsequently received less immigrants.

[4] Several papers use the fact that immigrants tend to move to areas where previous immigrants settled to study the effects of immigration. See Card (2001).

[5] Couttenier, Preotu, Rohner, and Thoenig (2019) use the allocation of asylum seekers across Swiss cantons to study how the fact that asylum seekers are exposed to conflict impacts their propensity to perpetrate violent crimes. Hangartner and Schmid (2020) exploit the quasi-random allocation of asylum seekers to study how the language proficiency of asylum seekers regarding the local language of the hosting community determines individual economic outcomes.

We find that, for referenda on immigration and refugee laws, a higher inflow of asylum seekers drives voters to support the stances of the conservative centre party and the pro-market conservative party but not to favour the positions of the rightmost anti-immigration party. That is, more refugee migration leads to more support for tighter immigration policies albeit not for drastic options. Further, we analyse three topics that are both linked to immigration and pivotal in the nativist-versus-globalist debate: reforms of the welfare state (redistribution), international integration (including referenda related to the European Union), and the rights of minorities.[6] For referenda related to these three topics, a higher inflow of asylum seekers causes citizens to align their position with that of the rightmost party which generally advocates for less redistribution, opposes political integration with other countries (particularly supranational integration with the European Union), and tends to object to legal changes that might favour minorities, such as the legalisation of same-sex marriage.

A growing literature studies the effects of immigration on political outcomes. One strand of the literature studies the effect of immigration on electoral outcomes. Barone, D'Ignazio, de Blasio, and Naticchioni (2016) use a Bartik instrument on data for Italian municipalities to show that immigration causes voters to shift to parties that lean right-wing. Halla, Wagner, and Zweimüller (2017) analyse how immigration affects the support towards a far-right party in Austria. They find that higher immigration accounts for around a tenth of the regional variation of vote changes and suggest that voters worry about the negative effects of immigrants on the labour market prospects of natives and about compositional amenities. Dustmann, Piil Damm, and Vasiljeva (2018) use the Danish refugee-allocation policy to show that the presence of more refugees increases the election vote share for right-leaning and anti-immigration parties in all areas except the most urban ones. Edo, Giesing, Öztunc, and Poutvaara (2019) use panel data on French elections from 1988 to 2017 to show that more immigration increases the vote for far-right candidates while reducing that of far-left candidates, suggesting that voters support more anti-immigration measures and less redistribution. Tabellini (2019) finds that the European immigration to the U.S. between 1910 and 1930 generated hostile political reactions, like the election of more conservative legislators, higher support for anti-immigration regulation, and less redistribution.[7] Steinmayr (Forthcoming) finds that in Upper Austria voters that are exposed to refugees passing by their municipality increase their support for far-right parties. However, in municipalities in which there is sustained contact with asylum seekers, votes for the far right decrease.

In line with recent results in the literature, we find that refugee migration enhances the support for right-wing-conservative options in Swiss referenda. However, given that referenda take place several times a year, we are able to show that the effect is mainly driven by episodes of especially high inflows of asylum seekers. Our results suggest that an asylum policy able to tackle high-inflow episodes would reduce the political effects of refugee migration on receiving countries.

Many studies in the literature focus on anti-immigration far-right parties. However, often these parties do not play a central role in the legislative process.[8] In many countries, they are either not in government and/or they do not hold a decisive share of seats in Parliament. In contrast, we study referenda that are constitutionally binding and, thus, have higher stakes for policy-making and the legislative process. Moreover, while most studies implicitly assume that voters support these parties mainly because of their anti-immigration agenda, our results show that other concerns play a more important role.

Another strand of the literature studies the effect of immigration on political preferences. Card, Dustmann, and Preston (2012) find that, for Europeans, compositional concerns towards immigration are

[6] Mayda (2006) studies the determinants of attitudes towards immigration paying special attention at the labour market interaction between natives and immigrants. Facchini and Mayda (2009) argue that high-income voters oppose low-skill immigration due to the threat of increased taxes. Algan, Hémet, and Laitin (2016) show that ethnic diversity in public housing in France leads to social anomie.

[7] See also Hopkins (2010), Becker and Fetzer (2017), Bratti, Deiana, Havari, Mazzarella, and Meroni (2017), Harmon (2017), Brunner and Kuhn (2018), Chlestos and Roupakias (2020), Mayda, Peri, and Steingress (2018), Bordignon, Gamalerio, Slerca, and Turati (2019), Lonsky (2018), Colussi, Isphording, and Pestel (2019), Hennig (2019), Vertier and Viskanic (2019), and Ochsner and Roesel (2020).

[8] See Mudde (2013).

25 times more important than concerns over wages and taxes in explaining how individuals attitudes are shaped. Dahlberg, Edmark, and Lundqvist (2012) use the exogenous variation generated by the placement of refugees across Swedish municipalities to show that increased immigration reduces the support that survey respondents express for redistribution. Hangarter, Dinas, Marbach, Matakos, and Xefteris (2018) survey political attitudes and preferences in different Greek islands and exploit the distance from these islands to the Turkish coast as an instrument for the exposure to asylum seekers. They find that those exposed to the transit of asylum seekers become more hostile towards immigrants and they report higher support for restrictive asylum policies. Alesina, Miano, and Stantcheva (2018) use experimental methods to manipulate information on the salience and narratives about immigration issues and show that this leads to a reduction in the support for redistribution. While this strand of the literature relies on surveys, our analysis is based on binding referenda that have direct policy and law-making consequences. Our findings confirm that increased migration causes voters to take action in favour of less redistribution.[9]

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. In Section 2, we describe the Swiss institutional framework and the features that support our analysis. Section 3 provides a description of the data we use. In Section 4, we lay out the empirical strategy for our analysis. Section 5 provides empirical support to the claim that the asylum allocation policy is pseudo-random, as well as, the results of our analysis. Section 6 concludes.

2 Background

In this section, we provide an overview of the Swiss institutional framework. First, we summarise the relevant features of national referenda and how we interpret their outcomes for the purpose of our analysis. Second, we describe the Swiss political landscape, its main parties and their agenda in terms of the topics that are relevant to our analysis. Third, we put refugee migration in Switzerland in historical and international context. Finally, we outline the key features of the Swiss legal system that determine the spatial allocation of asylum seekers.

2.1 National Referenda

A key aspect of Switzerland's political system is its high degree of direct democracy which implies that nationwide referenda are systematically held. There are three different mechanisms that trigger a national referendum.[10] First, when Parliament approves an amendment to the constitution or approves the integration of Switzerland to an international organisation, a referendum is held to uphold or not the decision. Second, a law passed by Parliament can be contested by a citizen who collects 50,000 signatures from other citizens or by, at least, eight cantons. The subsequent referendum decides whether the contested law is integrated in the legal system or not. Finally, any Swiss citizen can initiate a vote to amend the Swiss constitution by collecting 100,000 signatures. Despite their different triggers, all referenda have the same format, they pose a yes or no question on a well-defined policy matter.[11] All Swiss citizens, who are at least 18 years old, can vote yes, no, blank, or not participate in the vote. Our analysis covers all referenda that took place between 1995 and 2015.

To locate the outcomes of referenda in the political space we use the voting suggestion of the five biggest parties in Switzerland. For each referenda, parties publicly announce their stance with respect

[9] Our results are also connected to the literature that studies how the support towards redistribution is related to cultural and social diversity. See Alesina and Giuliano (2011) and Stichnoth and Van der Straeten (2013).

[10] See Bühlmann, Nicolet, and Selb (2006) and Vatter (2016).

[11] The time between the trigger for a referendum and the date in which it is held is not legally defined. This time depends on different factors. One factor is the time it takes to collect the required signatures (for non-mandatory referenda). Other factors are the times each actor of the executive and legislative branches take to complete their role in the process. Hence, it is virtually impossible to time the holding of a specific referendum with the inflows of asylum seekers.

to the question. This suggestion can be to vote yes, to vote no, or to cast a blank vote.[12] In the next section, we overview the defining agenda items of the biggest parties in Switzerland in order to provide context to our analysis.

2.2 Political Parties in Switzerland

The five major parties in Switzerland are the Swiss People's Party (SVP), the Social Democratic Party (SP), the Liberals (FDP), the Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP), and the Green Party (GPS).[13] Since the early 1990s, the rightmost anti-immigration SVP has been the largest party in Parliament. The rise of the SVP as the largest party coincided with a shift in the defining points of their agenda. Before the 1990s, the SVP could be understood as a (protestant) Christian-democratic party led prominently by farmers. From the beginning of the 1990s, the party leadership moved towards urban businessmen while its agenda centred around stopping the integration of Switzerland into European institutions and opposing immigration. Historically, the SP is the most left-wing party among the biggest parties. Since the 1980s, the other large party on the left is the GPS. The GPS and the SP overlap in many agenda items related to social policy and redistribution while the GPS differentiates itself by centring their agenda around environmentalist policies. The FDP, for many decades the largest party in Swiss politics, has its agenda set around ideas of liberalism especially regarding economic polices. The CVP is a Christian-democratic party which favours social intervention in a market economy while promoting social conservative values. The SP and the GPS, and to a certain extent also the CVP, favour a strong welfare state, as opposed to the SVP and the FDP. The CVP and the FDP take on rather centre positions concerning the relationship with the European Union and immigration, being neither distinctly in favour nor against. Both the SP and the GPS have historically been favourable to closer ties with the EU and relatively open towards immigration.[14]

Naturally, the location of parties in the political space is reflected in their vote recommendations. Table 1 shows that the two left-wing progressive parties, the GPS and the SP, overlap in more than 90% of their vote recommendations. Relative to the other parties, the GPS is slightly more left-progressive than the SP. The GPS coincides less often with the other three parties than the SP does. For the centre and right-leaning parties, the CVP is the one closest to the centre while the SVP is that most to the right. The CVP and the FDP represent the middle ground of the political spectrum. Their vote recommendations overlap in more than 88% of the referenda. Finally, it is worth noting that there is a significant overlap in the recommendations of parties at the two ends of the political axes. The GPS and the SVP overlap in more than 18% of the votes.

[12] In some exceptional cases, parties do not provide a voting recommendation. For all the 181 referenda in our dataset, the SVP provided a recommendation for all votes. The CVP and the FDP did not give a recommendation for one vote, the GPS for seven, and the SP for nine. See fourth column of Table 3. In Section 5, we estimate the same specifications separately for each party. Those referenda for which there is no vote recommendation are excluded from the party-specific regressions.

[13] Since the federal election of 20 October 2019, the five major parties make up more than 85% of seats in the National Council, the chamber of Parliament that represents the popular vote. The other chamber is the Council of States, which represents the cantons. The Swiss Parliament is perfectly bicameral, i.e., all legislation requires approval by the two chambers.

[14] See Kriesi, Grande, Lachat, Dolezal, Bornschier, and Frey (2006), Ladner (2009), and Ruedin (2013).

Table 1: Party recommendations for referenda reflect the left-right and progressive-conservative relative positions of the parties.

	GPS	SP	CVP	FDP	SVP
GPS	100	92.53	47.70	40.80	18.97
SP	93.60	100	52.33	45.35	20.35
CVP	46.11	50.00	100	88.33	61.67
FDP	39.44	43.33	88.33	100	70.56
SVP	18.23	19.34	61.33	70.17	100

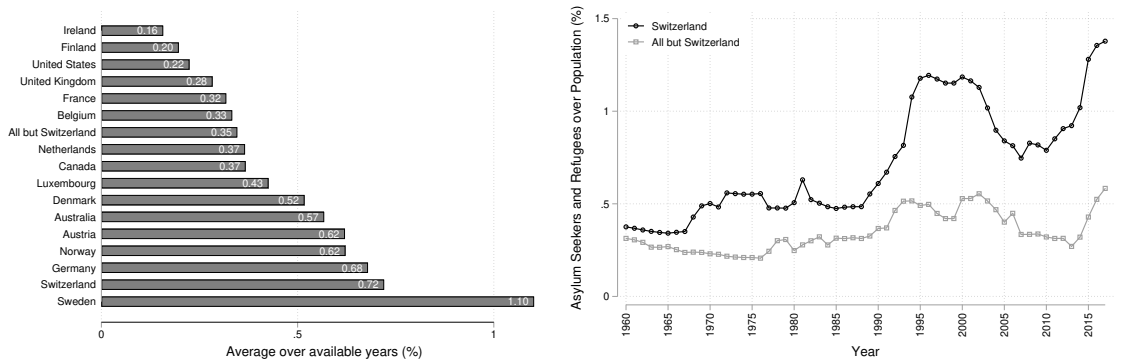
Notes: Each cell reflects the number of referenda in which the vote recommendation of the party in rows coincides with the vote recommendation of the party in columns, divided by the number of yes/no recommendations of the party in rows, expressed in percentage. By construction all diagonal cells are 100%. All referenda 1995-2015.

Given that the vote recommendations publicised by parties reflect their stance in the political spectrum, we use these recommendations to proxy the type of policy that voters support. For example, for a vote related to immigration policy, we interpret the votes aligned with the party recommendation of the SVP as votes that support policies aimed at drastically reduce immigration (or against a policy that seeks easing immigration). Conversely, we interpret the votes aligned with the party recommendation of the SP or the GPS as votes on the opposite side of the debate. Finally, votes in line with the party recommendation of the CVP or the FDP are interpreted as votes in favour of a moderate control on immigration.

2.3 Refugee Migration in Switzerland

Switzerland has historically been a large recipient of asylum seekers and refugees. In Figure 1, we display the stock of asylum seekers and refugees estimated by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) relative to population for all years available. Figure 1a offers a comparison between Western democracies regarding the proportion of asylum seekers and refugees hosted relative to their population. Only Sweden has received more asylum seekers and refugees than Switzerland. In Figure 1b, we plot the evolution of the share of asylum seekers and refugees over population for Switzerland and a weighted average of all other Western democracies. For all available years, Switzerland has hosted a higher share of asylum seekers and refugees than the average.

Figure 1: The magnitude of refugee migration in Switzerland is sizeable.



(a) Selected Western democracies.

(b) Switzerland vs. All others.

Notes: Share of asylum seekers and refugees over country's population. To compute *All but Switzerland*, for each year with available data, we sum all the asylum seekers and refugees in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States and we divide it by the sum of their populations. Data on asylum seekers and refugees is from the UNHCR. Data on population is from the World Bank.

Switzerland is not only a country with many refugees but also a country with high levels of immigration. According to the latest data available from the United Nations the share of foreign-born population in Switzerland in 2015 was 29%. That is the highest share in the world after the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. The corresponding share for Canada is 21%, 17.2% for Austria, 15.1% for the United States, and it is below 15% for the rest of Western European countries.[15] However, most of the non-refugee immigration into Switzerland comes from neighbouring countries which means that most immigration in Switzerland has a similar cultural and ethnolinguistic background to that of Swiss citizens. Specifically, in 2018, 66% of the non-Swiss residents were from EU28/EFTA countries, 17% from the rest of Europe, and the remaining 17% from the rest of the world. Germans, French, Italians, and Austrians, who all speak one of the four national official languages in Switzerland (German, French, Italian, and Romansh) make up 37% of all the non-Swiss population.[16]

In contrast, the refugee population in Switzerland is very different from the local population along many characteristics. In Table 2, we present the demographic characteristics of the population of asylum seekers in Switzerland from 1995 to 2015, the period of our analysis. The majority of asylum seekers are Muslim, from a non-European country, and only around 1% of them speak at least one of the four official languages of Switzerland. While asylum seekers and refugees are not the largest group among immigrants, they are clearly noticeable to voters due to the social and ethnic distance between the two groups.

2.4 The Asylum Process in Switzerland

In 1990, the legal framework that regulates the process of asylum in Switzerland underwent a major overhaul and defined a procedure that determines federal and cantonal responsibilities in the asylum procedure.[17] In particular, the new legal framework established a procedure to allocate across the 26

[15] See Pison (2019).

[16] See the report from the Federal Statistical Office (2019).

[17] Two pieces of legislation regulate the asylum procedure, the Asylum Act passed by Parliament, and the associated Asylum Decree approved by the Government which settles the execution procedures of the law. The proportional allocation system of asylum seekers across cantons was introduced as a revision of the Asylum Act of 1979 (Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation (1979)) and its companion Decree (Federal Council of the Swiss Confederation (1991)). A new Asylum Act and Decree were approved in 1998 and 1999 (Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation (1998) and Federal Council of the Swiss Confederation (1999)). However, the allocation system was maintained through the reform of the legislation.

cantons those individuals that seek refugee status in Switzerland. Each canton is to host a share of the asylum seekers proportional to their local population. That is, the aim of the distribution is that the proportion of asylum seekers hosted in each canton is the same. It is worth noting that the proportional allocation is an overarching goal of the system but not always a reality on the ground. In practice, temporal deviations occur. For limited periods of time, some cantons host more asylum seekers than they should while others host less. Importantly, cantons are unable to affect the number of asylum seekers they are to host or their demographic characteristics. In particular, during the period we consider, there was no attempt to facilitate the integration of asylum seekers into local communities using the demographic characteristics of asylum seekers.[18] In Section 5.1, we formally show that the inflow of asylum seekers, relative to cantonal population, is indeed independent from canton fixed effects and the evolution of the demographic composition of cantons overtime. That is, the deviations from proportional allocation are, in fact, temporal and not systematic.

In what follows, we describe the main features of the asylum procedure and highlight the aspects of the Swiss asylum legislation on which we base our analysis.[19] The Swiss asylum procedure consists of two different phases, a screening phase and an evaluation phase. The screening phase starts when an asylum seeker applies for asylum at the border or at an airport.[20] After the request, the asylum seeker is hosted in a Reception and Processing Centre (RPC) which are run by the Federal administration.[21] In the RPC, the identity of the asylum seeker is verified, and the credibility and legal validity of their request is assessed.[22] In particular, the personnel at the RPC assesses whether the request falls under the legal obligation of Switzerland given the international legal framework.[23] Based on interviews and a formal assessment of the asylum request, a first instance decision is made and the request is either deemed valid or not. If it is not valid, the asylum seeker is to be removed from the country, unless an appeal in front of the Federal Administrative Tribunal is made. In case of appeal, the asylum seeker may remain in Switzerland until its resolution. The screening phase is expected to last up to 90 days, unless there are extraordinary reasons to extend it.

Asylum seekers with a valid request or an accepted appeal enter the evaluation phase. The Federal agency in charge of the first phase assigns each asylum seeker to a canton in which to stay until the resolution of the asylum request or appeal. The Federal agency uses the above-mentioned allocation procedure to assign asylum seekers proportionally and pseudo-randomly to cantons. The assignment of asylum seekers follows an allocation key, established by Decree of the Swiss Government, which reflects the weight of each canton in terms of the total population of Switzerland and it is updated approximately once a year. The Federal agency describes the assignment of asylum seekers to cantons as "done electronically and at random".[24] Exceptions to this rule are warranted only to safeguard family unity, for asylum seekers with high care needs, and minors. These cases are uncommon and only occur in around 7% of cases in our sample. Once allocated to a canton, asylum seekers must reside in this canton, and cantons cannot appeal against the federal assignment of asylum seekers.

During the evaluation phase, the Federal agency studies and assesses the asylum request. This assessment can yield three outcomes. First, the asylum claim can be approved which implies that the asylum seeker is granted refugee status. In this case, the asylum seeker obtains a residence permit and

[18] Bansak, Ferwerda, Hainmueller, Dillon, Hangartner, Lawrence, and Weinstein (2018) study an intervention that aimed to maximise the chances of integration of asylum seekers in 2016, outside our sample period.

[19] A summary of the asylum process is in Appendix Figure 4.

[20] Until 2012, asylum requests could also be made at Swiss embassies abroad, but this was rather uncommon. This possibility was abolished in a revision of the Asylum Act in 2012.

[21] Throughout the time of our analysis the RPCs were located in Basel, Geneva, Chiasso, and Kreuzlingen.

[22] Over the last decades, the federal entity that is responsible for the screening phase has changed. In 1990 the Federal institution in charge of migration matters was the Federal Office for Refugees. In 1995, it became the Federal Office for Migration (FOM) and in 2015 the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM).

[23] Until 2008, the responsibility of a country with respect to an asylum claim was mainly determined by bilateral international agreements. Switzerland joined the Dublin Convention in 2008, which provided a unified legal framework for signatory countries to establish the obligations to respond to an asylum claim.

[24] Translated from German in Staatssekretariat für Migration (2015, Article F5).

may work and live in any canton of Switzerland. Individuals that are granted asylum are not included in our treatment measure as their location is not traced by the SEM nor it is exogenously determined. Second, if asylum is denied, the asylum seeker is to be removed from the country. The asylum seeker may appeal the decision to the Federal Administrative Tribunal, in this case, they remain in the assigned canton. Third, if asylum is denied the asylum seeker may be given temporary protection if a return to their country of origin is unsafe. In the latter case, the asylum seeker remains assigned to a canton. Our treatment measure is only composed of the inflows of asylum seekers that are randomly assigned to the cantons.

3 The Data

We combine data from three different sources to build our main dataset. We use administrative data from the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) to measure the inflow of asylum seekers to each canton. Both the voting outcomes for each referenda in each canton and the demographic variables for each canton are from the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO). We use the codification of the Année Politique Suisse (2019) to classify referenda in topics relevant to our analysis. The voting recommendation of each major party is also described in the Année Politique Suisse (2019). Our final dataset covers all nationwide referenda from 1995 to 2015 and contains data for each canton-referendum on the inflow of asylum seekers to the canton with respect to its population, the number of yes and no votes for each canton-referendum pair, the vote recommendations from the five major parties for each referendum, the broad political topics related to each referendum, and demographic information for each canton at the time of each referendum.

3.1 Asylum Population

The administrative dataset provided by the SEM contains information on the legal process of each asylum seeker admitted to Switzerland from 1995 to 2015. For each asylum seeker we observe their demographic characteristics, exhaustive information on their situation in the legal process of asylum, and the timing and location of their assignment to a canton. In Table 2 we report the main demographic characteristics of the asylum seekers. The average asylum seeker is a young single non-European Muslim man. At entry in Switzerland, the average age of the asylum seekers is 24.5. Around 30% of the asylum seekers are women. More than 60% declare to be Muslim, while only about 1% speak an official Swiss language as their first language. About 66% of the asylum seekers are from a Non-European country. Among the European asylum seekers, the vast majority is from the Western Balkans and arrived to Switzerland fleeing the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s.

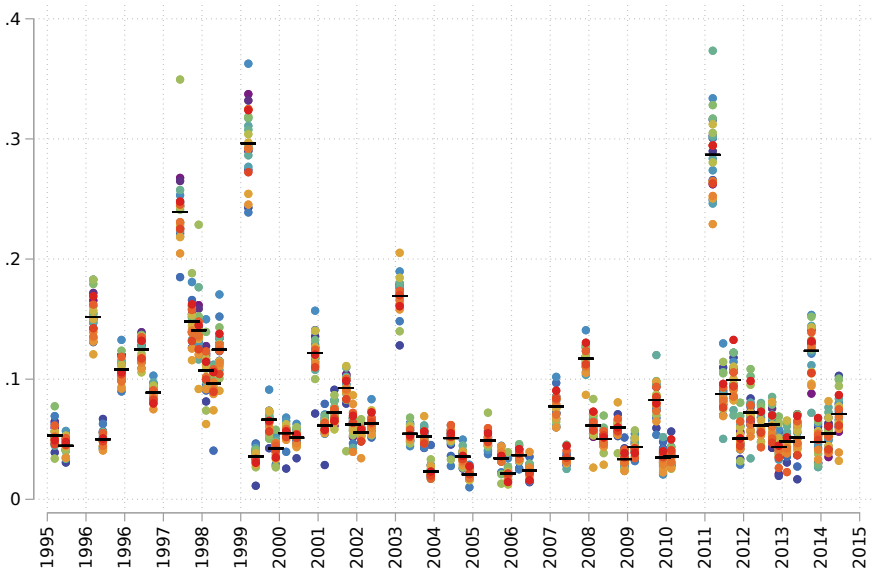
Table 2: Summary statistics describing demographic characteristics of the asylum seeker population.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Age at entry in Switzerland	24.54	11.64	344,599
Share married in %	26.00	43.86	370,589
Share Muslims in %	60.40	48.91	353,326
Share of Non-European in %	66.21	47.30	365,414
Share of women in %	29.38	45.55	374,277
Share from Western Balkans in %	27.73	44.77	367,108
Share speaks Swiss language in %	1.02	10.03	343,040

Notes: The same asylum seeker can be sequentially allocated to a different canton. The difference in the number of observations used to compute each statistic is due to different non-response rate across the different questions asked to the asylum seekers. The Western Balkan countries include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia.

The data on asylum seekers allows us to know at which stage of the process every asylum seeker is at a daily frequency. Drawing on the richness of the dataset, we compute our treatment variable as follows. For each date in which there is at least one referendum, we compute the inflow of asylum seekers allocated to each canton as the number of asylum seekers assigned to that canton from the last date in which at least one referendum was held until the current date. Note that each referendum takes place at the same date in all cantons and multiple referenda take place on the same date. Finally, we divide the inflow of asylum seekers by the population of the canton. In Figure 2, we plot the treatment variable as we use it in the analysis. As seen in the graph, the treatment variable presents both variation across dates and across cantons within the same date. The former is mainly driven by the nature of refugee migration. Asylum seekers tend to arrive to a host country in waves. The latter is a consequence of temporal idiosyncrasies in the allocation process of asylum seekers across cantons. For example, if by chance one canton is hosting a population of asylum seekers whose cases take longer than average to resolve, that canton receives lower inflows during that period in order to equalise the *long-run* proportion of asylum seekers across cantons. As we show in Section 5.1, these differences are not systematic.

Figure 2: Inflows of asylum seekers since last referenda over the population of the canton (in %).



Notes: Each dot is one canton. Each canton is represented by the same colour in all dates. The horizontal black ticks are the nationwide average of the treatment variable for each date.

3.2 Referenda

We use two sets of information for each referendum. First, we combine the referenda results in each canton with the nationwide party recommendations collected in the Année Politique Suisse (2019) database, to compute the share of votes aligned with each party recommendation for each combination of canton-referendum. That is, if a party recommends to vote yes (no) in a given referendum, we interpret the share of yes (no) votes in each canton as votes aligned with the position of the party. On average, at the canton level, the voting recommendations of parties in the centre-right conservative side of the political spectrum have broader support than those of the parties in the left-progressive side. As seen in Table 3, the cantonal average of votes aligned with the party recommendation of both the CVP and the FDP is above 60%. That of the SVP is nearly 58%, while those of the SP and the GPS are close to 50%. Note that these averages are not weighted by canton population. That is, the referenda results for less populated rural cantons which tend to vote right-wing and conservative have the same weight as more populated urban cantons which tend to vote left-wing and progressive.[25]

[25] All the estimates we present in Section 5.2 are weighted by the number of citizens in each canton.

Table 3: Summary statistics on voting outcomes.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Referenda with Yes/No recommendation	N
Participation rate in %	45.20	9.52	–	4,706
Canton votes aligned with SVP parole over yes/no votes in %	57.89	18.59	181	4,706
Canton votes aligned with FDP parole over yes/no votes in %	61.06	16.90	180	4,680
Canton votes aligned with CVP parole over yes/no votes in %	61.41	16.66	180	4,680
Canton votes aligned with SP parole over yes/no votes in %	50.88	20.08	172	4,472
Canton votes aligned with GPS parole over yes/no votes in %	49.10	20.15	174	4,524

Notes: Averages from canton-referendum observations.

Secondly, we use the classification by Année Politique Suisse (2019) to identify votes related to topics that are key in the political debate related to immigration. For each referendum, the Année Politique Suisse (2019) assigns each referenda to up to three labels among a list of 106. Based on these 106 labels, we build a set of labels associated to each of our topics of interest. We define four topics of interest: immigration and asylum policy, EU or international relations, welfare state, and fundamental rights, specially those of women, LGBT, and other minorities. In Appendix Section B, we provide the mapping between the labels from Année Politique Suisse (2019) and our topics. We further list all referenda included in each of our four topics.

3.3 Demographic composition of cantons

We measure the demographic characteristics of cantons using data from the FSO. We gather data on the age distribution, gender composition, citizenship status, usual language spoken, religion, and unemployment status of the population of each canton. The main summary statistics are presented in Table 4. The comparison between the 1995 averages and those of 2015 reveals well-known demographic trends. Namely, the ageing of the population, the increase in the share of foreigners which is reflected in both the proportion of non-Swiss and the share that does not speak the local language, and the decrease in religious followers. The demographic data available from the FSO is recorded at a yearly frequency and reflects the state of the population at the beginning of a natural year. We interpolate these observations to approximate the values of each variable at the dates in which referenda take place.

Table 4: Summary statistics describing demographic characteristics of cantons.

	1995		2015	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Share population 0-19 in %	23.24	2.63	19.10	1.32
Share population 20-39 in %	30.84	1.14	25.75	1.54
Share population 40-59 in %	25.68	1.77	29.90	1.06
Share population 60-79 in %	15.84	1.59	19.56	1.47
Share of women in %	50.79	0.96	50.19	0.89
Share of Non-Swiss in %	17.26	6.55	21.87	7.24
Share usually speaks most spoken language in %	82.85	9.26	73.88	8.89
Share Christians in %	89.61	8.02	72.22	11.88
Unemployment rate in %	3.67	1.87	2.75	1.28

Notes: Language and religion statistics refer to 1990. Averages from canton-year observations.

4 Empirical Strategy

To identify the causal effect of refugee migration on referenda outcomes, we regress the share of valid votes in canton c aligned with the recommendation of party p for referendum r, A^p_{cr}, on the (log) inflow of asylum seekers allocated to canton c since the last date in which there was a referendum, relative to the population of the canton, I_{ct}:

$$A^p_{cr} = \alpha^p_0 + \alpha^p_1 \ln(I_{ct}) + \pi^p X_{ct} + \phi^p_t + \theta^p_c + \epsilon^p_{cr}, \tag{1}$$

where X_{ct} are time-varying canton controls, ϕ^p_t are time controls, and θ^p_c are canton fixed effects.[26] We apply a log transformation on the treatment variable to facilitate the interpretation of the estimated coefficients. Our sample does not contain any non-positive observation of the treatment variable. Although we have quasi-random allocation of our treatment variable (I_{ct}) across cantons, we include time-dependent canton controls and canton fixed effects to improve the precision of our estimates.[27] The control variables include the share of the canton's population who speak a non-local language, population shares by age and gender, fraction of followers of non-Christian religions, and the unemployment rate. We estimate Equation 1 separately for each of the five parties. We apply a logarithmic transformation to the treatment variable (I_{ct}) so that the parameters of interest α^p_1 are to be interpreted as semi-elasticities. That is, a one-percent increase in the share of new asylum seekers over the canton population changes the share of votes aligned with the recommendation of party p by α^p_1.

To assess how different magnitudes of the inflow of asylum seekers to cantons affect voting, we regress

[26] Recall that more than one referendum (r) usually takes place on the same day (t). That is, most referenda in our dataset took place on the same date as other referenda in the dataset. Our specification is the analogous to the first differences setup commonly used in the literature (Dahlberg et al. (2012), Dustmann et al. (2018), and Edo et al. (2019) use a model in first differences). Because there are multiple referenda on the same day and each referendum cannot be arbitrary linked to the another referendum in previous date, it is not feasible to specify a first differences model.

[27] As detailed in each exhibit of results, we use year fixed effects as time controls.

our outcome variables A^p_{cr}, on quantiles of our treatment variable (I_{ct}). We denote these quantiles I^q_{ct}:

$$A^p_{cr} = \beta^p_0 + \sum_{q=1}^{Q} \beta^p_q I^q_{ct} + \pi^p X_{ct} + \phi^p_t + \theta^p_c + \upsilon^p_{cr}, \tag{2}$$

where X_{ct} are time-dependent canton controls, ϕ^p_t are time controls, and θ^p_c are canton fixed effects. By construction, each quantile contains an almost equal share of canton-date observations. β^p_1 reflects the effect of an increase in the inflow of asylum seekers on the share of votes aligned with the recommendation of party p in those canton-dates at the bottom of the treatment distribution (relative to the base category). Symmetrically, β^p_Q reflects the effect on those canton-dates in which the inflow of asylum seekers in exceptionally high.

Finally, we study the interaction of the treatment with those topics usually targeted by right-wing anti-immigration parties. As discussed in Section 3.2, we identify four topics of interest: immigration and refugee policy, the welfare state, EU and international relations, and the rights of minorities. For each of these four topics, we create a dummy variable which takes value 1 when a given referendum touches on a given topic. Then for each party, we estimate the following specification:

$$A^p_{cv} = \iota^p_0 + \iota^p_1 \ln(I_{ct}) + \iota^p_2 \text{topic}_v + \iota^p_3 \ln(I_{ct}) \times \text{topic}_v + \pi^p X_{ct} + \phi^p_t + \theta^p_c + \zeta^p_{cv}, \tag{3}$$

where topic_v is the dummy variable that ties each individual referendum to, at least, one of the four topics of interest. As before, X_{ct} are time-dependent canton controls, ϕ^p_t are time controls, and θ^p_c are canton fixed effects.

In all our specifications, we cluster the standard errors at the canton level, to account for potentially correlated shocks across cantons. Further, we follow Cameron, Gelbach, and Miller (2011) and Cameron and Miller (2015) to address the potential topics generated by the *small* number of clusters in our setup (26). We use the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws, to compute the p-values and confidence intervals throughout our analysis.

5 Empirical Analysis

5.1 Balancing Tests

We perform two types of tests to assess the quasi-random allocation of the inflows of asylum seekers across cantons. First, we regress the inflow of asylum seekers allocated to canton c since the last date in which there was a referendum, relative to the population of the canton, I_{cv} on canton fixed effects θ_c:

$$I_{ct} = \theta_c + \phi_t + e^p_{ct},$$

where ϕ_t are time controls. We test the joint significance of canton fixed effects to determine if these predict the inflows of asylum seekers. The aim of this is to uncover whether there is any time-invariant unobservable difference across cantons that explains the variation in the treatment variable. If this is the case, it is evidence against the randomness of the allocation.

The main limitation of the fixed-effects approach is that it restricts the test to time-invariant characteristics. That is, if the allocation of asylum seekers is correlated with other variables that evolve over time (such as the share of foreigners in the canton), the test based on canton fixed effects is uninformative of these time-variant patterns. This is of particular concern given the long time component of our data. To tackle these concerns, we also regress the treatment variable, I_{cv}, on a battery of canton demographic controls X_{ct}:

$$I_{ct} = \pi X_{ct} + \phi_t + u^p_{ct},$$

where ϕ_t are time controls. We include controls to track changes in the Swiss versus foreign composition

of the canton's population, the age and gender structure of the population, its religious diversity, and the local economy. In particular, the control variables include the share of the canton's population who speak a non-local language, population shares by age and gender, the fraction of followers of non-Christian religions, and the unemployment rate.[28]

Table 5 presents the outcomes of the two tests. The second and third columns display the relevant statistics of the fixed-effects method, while the fourth and fifth columns report the time-variant-controls approach. As a robustness check, we report the results of each test both by weighting the coefficients using the number of eligible voters on each canton (columns 3 and 5) and without weights (columns 2 and 4). Throughout our analysis, we use the number of eligible voters in each canton-date as a weight to compute the estimated coefficients as there is relevant heterogeneity across the population size of different cantons. For both methods, we do not reject the null hypothesis that the coefficients ($\hat{\theta}_c$ and $\hat{\pi}$) are jointly different from zero. That is, both tests support the claim that the allocation of the treatment across cantons is effectively pseudo-random.

Table 5: Evidence of quasi-random allocation across cantons.

Dependent variable	Inflows of asylum seekers since last vote as % of local population			
Explanatory variables	Canton fixed effects		Canton's demographics	
F-test joint significance	0.938	0.940	7.837	2.236
$Prob > F$	0.551	0.548	0.146	0.891
Adjusted R-squared	0.365	0.370	0.367	0.375
Weighted by eligible voters	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	1,638	1,638	1,638	1,638
Number of cantons	26	26	26	26

Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. P-values are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws. Year fixed effects as time controls. The standard errors in the fixed effects specifications are heteroskedasticity-robust, and clustered at the canton level in the canton demographics specifications.

5.2 Results

In Table 6, we present the outcomes of estimating Equation 1 for each party.[29] The estimated coefficients $\hat{\alpha}_1^p$ measure the average effect of a percentage change in the inflow of asylum seekers on the share of votes aligned with the recommendations of each party for the 181 referenda in our dataset. For the most left-progressive party, the GPS, a one-percent increase in the inflow of asylum seekers causes citizens to decrease their support for the party's recommendation at an average of 3.28 percentage points. On the contrary, for the most right-conservative party, the SVP, a one-percent increase in the inflow of asylum seekers causes voters to increase their alignment with the SVP recommendation by an average of 2.87 percentage points. Given that our outcome variables are based on yes and no votes, and that, as discussed in Section 2.2, recommendations overlap, the estimated coefficients $\hat{\alpha}_1^p$ are not to add up to zero. Further, we analyse the effect of the arrival of asylum seekers on participation. We use the same structure as in Equation 1 but with the cantonal participation rate on each referendum as the outcome variable.

The results in Table 6 show a clear pattern regarding the average effect of refugee migration on

[28] We cluster at the canton level and use wild bootstrap to compute significance when regressing the outcome on time-variant controls.

[29] In Appendix Section C, we reproduce all results presented in this section for different specifications. In particular, we show that the main results are robust to not including canton fixed effects and/or demographic controls, as well as, including fixed effects for the institutional mechanisms that triggered each referendum in our dataset. In Appendix Section D, we show that the our main results are robust to a wide range of variations in the definition of the treatment variable.

referenda outcomes. The stances of the two left-progressive parties, the GPS and the SP, receive less support because of refugee migration. Instead, the positions endorsed by the centre conservative CVP, the pro-market conservative FDP, and the rightmost anti-immigration party, the SVP, secure more votes due to refugee migration. In particular, the positions supported by the SVP are those which gain the most support due to increased asylum flows. All coefficients are precisely estimated (all p-values are 0). More refugee migration appears to slightly reduce participation. However, the coefficient is only different from zero with a less than 80% significance level. Importantly, the fact that an increase in the arrival of migrants does not change participation significantly suggests that the shift towards right-wing-conservative stances is not driven by a change in voter mobilisation.

Table 6: More asylum seekers increase the share of votes aligned with right-conservative stances and reduces the share aligned with left-progressive options.

Independent variable		Share of votes aligned with party recomendation				
	PART	GPS	SP	CVP	FDP	SVP
Inflows of asylum seekers since last vote as % of local population	-0.320	-3.277	-3.409	2.254	2.207	2.870
p-value	0.201	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.406	0.174	0.158	0.139	0.176	0.181
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706

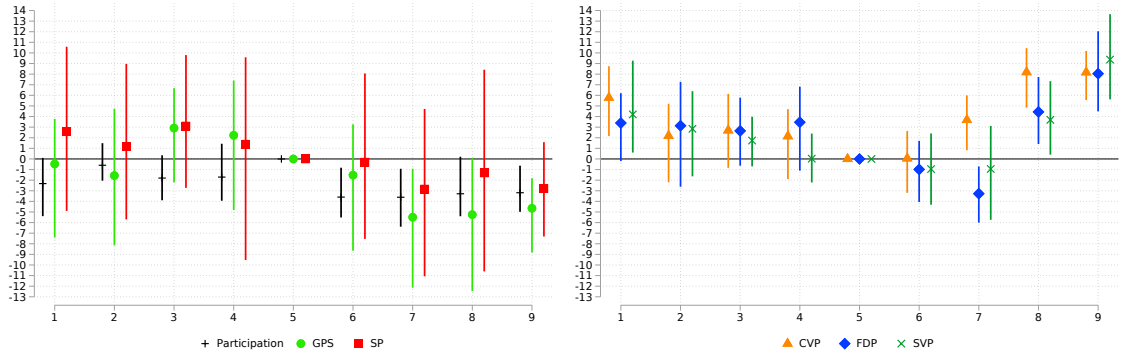
Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. P-values are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws. Year fixed effects as time controls. Canton fixed effects are included in all estimations. The demographic control variables include the share of canton population who speak a non-local language, population shares by age and gender, fraction of followers of non-Christian religions, and the unemployment rate. The difference in the number of observations across columns is given by the fact that in a few referenda, a given party does not put forward a yes/no recommendation.

One of the strengths of our setup is that we observe votes at a high temporal frequency. Our dataset covers 181 referenda and spans 21-year period (1995-2015). Usually, referenda take place three to four times a year and there are various referenda on the same date. This implies that we observe votes on periods with different intensities of asylum inflows.

In Figure 3, we present the coefficients of estimating Equation 2 for a 9-quantile partition of the treatment variable (I_{ct}). That is, we estimate the heterogeneous effect of the treatment based on the magnitude of the treatment. In Figure 3a, we present the results for the two left-wing progressive options, the GPS and the SP, as well as for participation. Figure 3b displays the estimates for the conservative centre party (CVP), the pro-market conservative FDP, and the rightmost anti-immigration party (the SVP). Recall that in the results in Table 6 indicate that the stances endorsed by the GPS and the SP lose support due to increased refugee migration while those of the CVP, FDP, and SVP gain. For both Figures 3a and 3b, we report the estimates associated with each quantile centred at the median. For the left-progressive options, the effect of the treatment mildly decreases with its magnitude. Although the differences are only statistically significant for the GPS. The effect on participation is also slightly decreasing on the magnitude of the treatment. Instead, for the right-conservative options, there is a distinct increasing pattern. Taken together with the average effects in Table 6, these patterns show that the shift of support towards right-conservative stances is driven by high-inflow episodes.[30]

[30]In Appendix Section E, we analyse how the effect of the treatment interacts with the demographic characteristics of cantons. We find little evidence of treatment heterogeneity with respect to the rural/urban divide, levels of foreign population in the canton, the share of religious followers, and the age structure of the population.

Figure 3: The shift of votes to right-conservative options is driven by episodes of unusually high inflows of asylum seekers.



(a) Participation rate and left-leaning parties.

(b) Right-leaning parties.

Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. Year fixed effects as time controls. Canton fixed effects are included in all estimations. The demographic control variables include the share of canton population who speak a non-local language, population shares by age and gender, fraction of followers of non-Christian religions, and the unemployment rate. The base category is the fifth quantile (the median) of a 9-quantile partition. The vertical lines are 99% confidence intervals. Confidence intervals are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws.

Another advantage of our setup is that we observe several referenda on the same topic. In Table 7, we present the coefficients of estimating Equation 3 on each of the four topics we define in Section 3.2. We run a different regression for each party-topic and we add a complementary category, that we label *Other*, with all referenda that are not included in either of the four topics.

In the first panel of Table 7 we analyse votes directly related to immigration and refugee laws and policies. For these votes, the effect of increased refugee migration is to shift voters towards the stances of the conservative centre party (CVP) and the pro-market conservative party (FDP). The left-progressive options (GPS and SP) lose support due to increased asylum inflows. The effect is also negative but with a p-value close to 0.3 for the rightmost anti-immigration party (SVP). Given the agenda of all parties, our results suggest that when immigration increases voters support more restrictive immigration policies. However, they do not favour the drastic measures proposed by the rightmost anti-immigration party nor the case for openness made by left-progressive parties.

For votes related to the European Union and international relations, we find that the stances of the rightmost anti-immigration party (SVP) are the ones which gain the most support due to increased asylum inflows. The opposition to integration into the European Union and the broader case against supranational integration is a defining item of the SVP's agenda. Our results indicate that higher inflows of asylum seekers lead voters to significantly increase their support towards these positions. Importantly, for these votes, the net effect is positive for all parties. That implies that the losses induced by the treatment in a given vote are smaller than the gains in other votes.

The support for the stances of the SVP is also sizeable in referenda about the welfare state. For these votes, we find that higher inflows of asylum seekers causes votes to decrease their support for the stances of all parties, except the SVP. Generally speaking, the SVP strongly opposes expansions of the welfare state. However, our results reveal that refugee migration does not lead voters to support the pro-market conservative party (FDP), which also tends to advocate for a smaller welfare state. The fundamental difference between the two parties stems from the consideration of which individuals have a legitimate claim to welfare support. While the FDP tends to advocate for a universalist approach based on individual economic indicators, the SVP tends to support transfers and programs that reinforce conservative values, especially those related to the family. As an example, the FDP supported a state-financed maternity leave while the SVP opposed it.

For referenda related to fundamental rights, especially those of women and minorities, increased

refugee migration shifts voters away from left-progressive stances and towards right-leaning conservative positions. We find that the increase in support for the SVP is twice as big as the increase for the CVP, the conservative centre party (the FDP tends to be more progressive than the CVP and the SVP). That is, higher inflows of asylum seekers cause voters to support intensively conservative positions for these votes.

Overall, our results show that the shift towards right-wing-conservative stances induced by increased refugee migration is especially sizeable for votes related to the topics that anti-immigration parties tend to target, with the exception of referenda directly related to immigration and refugee policy. Note that the effect of the treatment on *Other* referenda, is smaller than the average effect of Table 6.

Table 7: More asylum seekers cause voters to favour the positions of the rightmost anti-immigration party on topics related to integration with other countries, the welfare state, and minorities' rights but not on immigration and asylum policy.

Inflows of asylum seekers since last vote as % of local population interacted with:		Share of votes aligned with party recomendation				
	PART	GPS	SP	CVP	FDP	SVP
Immigration/Refugee Policy	1.005	-12.420	-15.002	5.422	2.314	-1.169
p-value	0.226	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.047	0.303
Adjusted R-squared	0.423	0.188	0.181	0.140	0.176	0.184
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
EU/International Relations	-0.506	1.206	2.206	5.975	5.704	10.811
p-value	0.426	0.043	0.016	0.000	0.001	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.414	0.177	0.162	0.155	0.181	0.187
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
Welfare State	0.365	-14.266	-14.337	-5.421	-1.796	7.711
p-value	0.220	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.166	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.407	0.186	0.168	0.151	0.182	0.187
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
Minorities' rights	0.484	-8.395	-6.954	2.397	2.013	4.522
p-value	0.083	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.013	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.407	0.177	0.159	0.139	0.176	0.182
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
Other	0.024	-1.016	-1.438	1.624	1.995	1.769
p-value	0.927	0.061	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.001
Adjusted R-squared	0.414	0.186	0.167	0.152	0.181	0.186
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706

Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. P-values are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws. Year fixed effects as time controls. Canton fixed effects are included in all estimations. The demographic control variables include the share of canton population who speak a non-local language, population shares by age and gender, fraction of followers of non-Christian religions, and the unemployment rate. The difference in the number of observations across columns is given by the fact that in a few referenda, a given party does not put forward a yes/no recommendation.

A possible mechanism to rationalise these results is through the lenses of in-group favouritism, defined as a preference which leads individuals to place higher weight on the well-being of other individuals that

are considered to be part of the same group relative to out-group individuals.[31] Through this view, an increase in the arrival of immigrants would strengthen the salience of in-group versus out-group differences, which in turn, would lead voters to support policies which favour, or are thought to favour, the members of the in-group. That is, under the lenses of in-group favouritism, the arrival of non-Swiss immigrants would lead Swiss voters to support stances that are considered to favour in-group members. For example, by reducing the intensity of cooperation with other countries or implementing tighter immigration controls. However, the arrival of asylum seekers also reduces the support for redistribution, which by and large occurs among Swiss citizens, and the expansion of the rights of minorities, which are also likely to be Swiss nationals. That is, our results suggest that the in-group/out-group favouritism might not only be triggered across nationality lines but also in terms of sub-groups within Swiss society.

6 Conclusions

We use a Swiss Asylum policy that assigned asylum seekers quasi-randomly to cantons to estimate the causal effect of inflows of asylum seekers on the results of nationwide referenda from 1995 to 2015. We find that the stances of the rightmost anti-immigration party are those that benefited most from refugee migration. However, the options endorsed by the conservative centre party and the pro-market conservative party also gain from refugee migration while those of left-wing progressive parties lose. Importantly, this shift towards more right-wing-conservative options is mainly driven by episodes of unusually high inflows of asylum seekers. Hence, our results suggest that a refugee policy able to tackle very high inflows can reduce the effect that refugee migration has on political outcomes in receiving countries.

In most countries the agenda of right-wing anti-immigration parties is not limited to opposing immigration. They often advocate for less political integration with other countries, a smaller role for the welfare state, and the preservation of traditional values. We use the questions in referenda to study which topics are most affected by refugee migration. Our findings show that for votes on immigration and asylum policy, the inflow of asylum seekers shift voters towards right-leaning and conservative stances but not towards the rightmost anti-immigration options. That is, voters support more restrictive polices but do not increase their support for the drastic policies endorsed by the anti-immigration party. Instead the shift towards the positions endorsed by the rightmost anti-immigration party is large for votes related to the welfare state, international integration, and the rights of minorities. Generally, this suggests that voters prefer less redistribution, oppose more integration with other countries, and are reluctant to extend the rights of minorities due to increased immigration.

Our results suggest that the mechanisms that drive voters to more right-wing-conservative stances due to refugee migration lie beyond the phenomenon of immigration itself. Voters appear to be more concerned about the economic, political, and societal changes that more integrated and globalised societies imply than the migration flows generated by these changes. At the same time, all our results can be rationalised by the idea that higher immigration enhances in-group favouritism, both along nationality lines and between sub-groups of Swiss society.

[31] See Tajfel and Turner (1985) and Akerlof and Kranton (2000).

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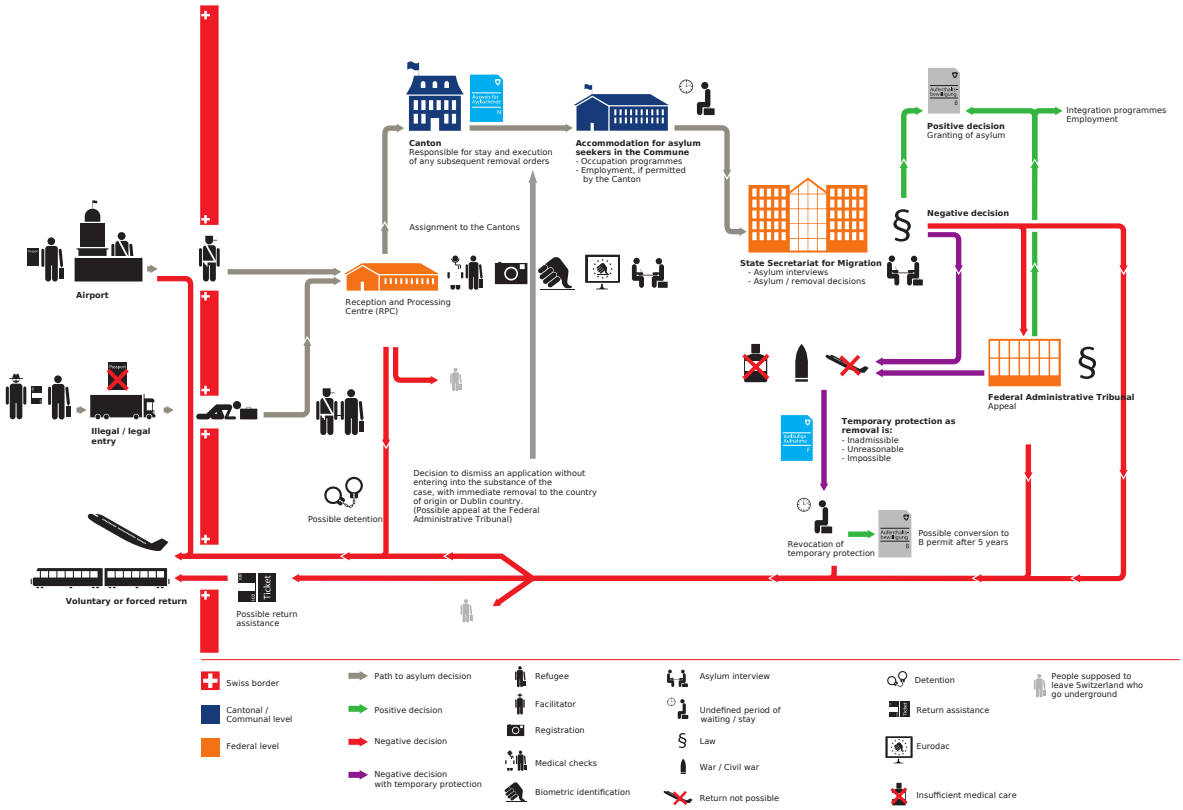
A Diagram of the Asylum Process

Figure 4: Diagram of the asylum process 1995-2015.



Source: Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (with slight modification).

B Classification of Referenda into Topics

In this section, we provide a comprehensive description of the procedure that we follow to classify referenda in the four broad topics that we use in our analysis. The starting point is the classification of the Année Politique Suisse (2019), which classifies each referendum using up to three labels among a list of 106. Using these 106 labels we create the four groups of labels that constitute our four topics:

- Immigration/Refugee Policy
  - Immigration policy
  - Refugees
- EU/International Relations
  - International law
  - Neutrality
  - Independence
  - International mediation
  - EFTA
  - EU
  - EEA
  - Other European institutions
  - UN
  - Other International institutions
  - International obligations
- Welfare State
  - Retirement insurance
  - Disability insurance
  - Pension system
  - Health and accidents insurance
  - Maternity leave
  - Unemployment insurance
  - Income compensation
  - Welfare
- Minorities' rights
  - Voting rights
  - Women's rights
  - Homosexuals
  - Fundamental rights
  - Reproductive medicine
  - Maternity leave

The above classification implies that the following referenda are included in each of the four topics we define (in brackets we provide the share of referenda that is included in each topic):

- Immigration and/or Refugee Policy (9.39%)
    1. 25/6/1995 (4240) - Federal law on acquisition of real estate by persons living abroad
    2. 1/12/1996 (4320) - Citizen's initiative "Against illegal immigration"
    3. 13/6/1999 (4540) - Asylum law
    4. 13/6/1999 (4550) - Federal decree on urgent measures in relation to asylum-seekers and foreigners
    5. 24/9/2000 (4670) - Citizen's initiative "For the regulation of immigration"
    6. 24/11/2002 (4910) - Citizen's initiative "Against the abuse of asylum law"
    7. 26/9/2004 (5100) - Federal decree on the proper conduct of naturalisation and easier naturalisation for young, second-generation foreigners
    8. 26/9/2004 (5110) - Federal decree on acquisition of citizenship rights by third-generation foreigners
    9. 5/6/2005 (5170) - Federal decree on the approval and implementation of the bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the EU on the Schengen and Dublin accords
    10. 24/9/2006 (5240) - Federal decree regarding foreigners
    11. 24/9/2006 (5250) - Amendment of the law on asylum
    12. 1/6/2008 (5320) - Citizen's initiative "For democratic naturalisations"
    13. 28/11/2010 (5521) - Citizen's initiative "For the expulsion of criminal foreigners" (expulsion initiative)
    14. 28/11/2010 (5522) - Federal Decree on the deporting of criminal foreigners (counter-proposal)
    15. 9/6/2013 (5710) - Urgent amendment of the law on asylum
    16. 9/2/2014 (5800) - Citizen's initiative "Against mass immigration"
    17. 30/11/2014 (5880) - Citizen's initiative "Halt overpopulation – Preserve the natural environment" (Ecopop)
- EU and/or International Relations (6.08%)
    1. 8/6/1997 (4340) - Citizen's initiative "Negotiations on joining the EU: let the people decide!"
    2. 21/5/2000 (4640) - Federal decree on approval of sectoral agreements between Switzerland and the EC and/or its member states, or Euratom
    3. 4/3/2001 (4740) - Citizen's initiative "Yes to Europe"
    4. 10/6/2001 (4770) - Federal law on army and military authorities (weapons)
    5. 10/6/2001 (4780) - Federal law on army and military authorities (training)
    6. 3/3/2002 (4850) - Citizen's initiative "For Switzerland's membership to the UN"
    7. 5/6/2005 (5170) - Federal decree on the approval and implementation of the bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the EU on the Schengen and Dublin accords
    8. 25/9/2005 (5190) - Federal decree on approval and implementation of the protocol on the extension of the agreement on the free movement of persons to the new EU member states between Switzerland and the EU and its member states, as well as approval of the revision of the accompanying measures on the free movement of persons
    9. 26/11/2006 (5260) - Federal Law on cooperation with the countries of Eastern Europe
    10. 8/2/2009 (5400) - Federal Decree approving the renewal of the agreement between Switzerland and the European Community and its member states on the free movement of persons, and the approval and implementation of the Protocol to extend the agreement on free movement to Bulgaria and Romania

11. 17/5/2009 (5420) - Federal government decision on the approval and execution of an exchange of notes between Switzerland and the European Community concerning the implementation of the regulation on biometric passports and travel documents (further development of the rights vested in Schengen)

- Welfare State (17.68%)

1. 25/6/1995 (4220) - Federal law on old age-, widows- and orphans insurance
2. 25/6/1995 (4230) - Citizen's initiative "To expand the old age-, widows-, orphans- and disability insurance"
3. 28/9/1997 (4370) - Federal decree on financing unemployment insurance
4. 27/9/1998 (4440) - Citizen's initiative "For the 10th revision of old age insurance without raising the retirement age"
5. 13/6/1999 (4570) - Federal law on disability insurance
6. 13/6/1999 (4580) - Federal law on insurance for motherhood
7. 26/11/2000 (4690) - Citizen's initiative "For a more flexible old age-, widows- and orphans insurance - against raising the retirement age for women"
8. 26/11/2000 (4700) - Citizen's initiative "For a flexible retirement age for men and women from 62 upwards"
9. 26/11/2000 (4720) - Citizen's initiative "For lower hospital costs"
10. 2/12/2001 (4810) - Citizen's initiative "For a guaranteed old age-, widows- and orphans insurance - impose a tax on energy, not work!"
11. 22/9/2002 (4891) - Citizen's initiative "Surplus gold reserves for the old age-, widows- and orphans insurance fund" (gold initiative)
12. 22/9/2002 (4892) - Counter-proposal to the gold initiative: Gold for pension funds, cantons and foundations
13. 24/11/2002 (4920) - Federal law on compulsory unemployment insurance and compensation for insolvency
14. 9/2/2003 (4940) - Federal law on adjusting canton's contributions to hospital costs
15. 18/5/2003 (4990) - Citizen's initiative "Healthcare must be affordable" (health initiative)
16. 16/5/2004 (5070) - Federal law on old age-, widows- and orphans insurance (11th revision)
17. 16/5/2004 (5080) - Federal decree on financing old age-, widows-, orphans- and disability insurance by raising the level of VAT
18. 26/9/2004 (5130) - Federal law on financial compensation for loss of earnings for those serving in the armed forces or performing the community service alternative, or in civil protection
19. 24/9/2006 (5230) - Citizen's initiative "Profits from the National Bank for the old age-, widows- and orphans insurance fund"
20. 11/3/2007 (5280) - Citizen's initiative "For a social united health insurance"
21. 17/6/2007 (5290) - Federal disability insurance law
22. 1/6/2008 (5340) - Article of the constitution "For quality and economic efficiency of health insurance" (counter-proposal to the citizen's initiative "For lower health insurance premiums within the basic insurance system")
23. 30/11/2008 (5360) - Citizen's initiative "For a flexible retiring age under the age-, widows- and orphans insurance"

24. 17/5/2009 (5410) - Article of the Constitution "For a future with alternative medicine" (counter-proposal to the Citizen's initiative "Yes to alternative medicine")
25. 27/9/2009 (5430) - Federal decree on the temporary supplementary financing of disability insurance through an increase in the value-added tax rate
26. 7/3/2010 (5500) - Federal law on the old age-, widows- and orphans occupational pension (minimal conversion rate)
27. 26/9/2010 (5510) - Revision of the law on unemployment insurance and compensation for insolvency
28. 17/6/2012 (5620) - Amendment of the federal law on the health insurance (Managed Care)
29. 9/2/2014 (5790) - Citizen's initiative "Abortion financing is a private matter – Discharge of the health insurance by cancellation of the costs of termination of pregnancy from the compulsory basic health insurance"
30. 18/5/2014 (5810) - Federal decree on medical care (counter-proposal to the withdrawn Citizens' initiative "Yes to family medicine")
31. 28/9/2014 (5860) - Citizen's initiative "For a public health insurance"
32. 14/6/2015 (5940) - Citizen's initiative "Tax inheritances of millions for our old age-, widows- and orphans insurance (Reform of inheritance tax)"

- Fundamental, Women's, LGBT's, and minorities' rights (9.94%)

1. 25/6/1995 (4220) - Federal law on old age-, widows and orphans insurance
2. 1/12/1996 (4330) - Federal law on labour in industry, trade, and commerce
3. 7/6/1998 (4410) - Citizen's initiative "Switzerland without police snooping"
4. 27/9/1998 (4440) - Citizen's initiative "For the 10th revision of old age-, widows- and orphans insurance without raising the retirement age"
5. 29/11/1998 (4480) - Federal law on labour in industry, trade and commerce
6. 13/6/1999 (4580) - Federal law on insurance for motherhood
7. 12/3/2000 (4610) - Citizen's initiative "For a fair representation of women in the Federal authorities (initiative of 3 March)"
8. 12/3/2000 (4620) - Citizen's initiative "For the protection of people against manipulations in reproductive technology (initiative for humane reproduction)"
9. 26/11/2000 (4690) - Citizen's initiative "For a more flexible old age-, widows- and orphans insurance - against raising the retirement age for women"
10. 26/11/2000 (4700) - Citizen's initiative "For a flexible retirement age for men and women from 62 upwards"
11. 2/6/2002 (4870) - Swiss criminal code (abortion)
12. 2/6/2002 (4880) - Citizen's initiative "For mother and child - protection of the unborn child and assistance for mothers in need"
13. 18/5/2003 (5000) - Citizen's initiative "Equal rights for the disabled"
14. 26/9/2004 (5130) - Federal law on financial compensation for loss of earnings for those serving in the armed forces or performing the community service alternative, or in civil protection
15. 28/11/2004 (5160) - Federal law on research on embryonic stem cells
16. 5/6/2005 (5180) - Federal law on the registration of partnerships of same-sex couples (partnership law)

17. 29/11/2009 (5470) - Citizen's initiative "Against the construction of minarets"
18. 14/6/2015 (5920) - Federal parliamentary decree on the amendment of constitutional provision regarding reproductive medicine and gene technology involving human beings

C Robustness of the Main Specifications

In this section, we present a series of robustness checks for the results in Section 5.2. In particular, we show that the patterns in Tables 6 and 7, as well as in Figure 3 are robust to not including canton fixed effects and demographic controls. Moreover, we show that the results are also robust to adding fixed effects for the different types of referenda discussed in Section 2.1. These are compulsory referenda, which take place when Parliament approves an amendment to the constitution or the integration of Switzerland in a supranational organism, optional referenda, which are triggered when a citizen collects signatures to contest a law passed by Parliament, and popular initiatives, when citizens collect signatures to vote on a constitutional amendment.[32]

C.1 Alternative Specifications for Table 6

Table 8: Table 6 without canton fixed effects nor demographic controls.

Independent variable	Share of votes aligned with party recomendation					
	PART	GPS	SP	CVP	FDP	SVP
Inflows of asylum seekers since last vote as % of local population	-0.302	-3.006	-2.750	2.373	2.312	2.808
p-value	0.354	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.235	0.137	0.121	0.135	0.174	0.157
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706

Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. P-values are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws. Year fixed effects as time controls. The difference in the number of observations across columns is given by the fact that in a few referenda, a given party does not put forward a yes/no recommendation.

Table 9: Table 6 without canton fixed effects.

Independent variable	Share of votes aligned with party recomendation					
	PART	GPS	SP	CVP	FDP	SVP
Inflows of asylum seekers since last vote as % of local population	0.081	-3.082	-2.824	2.531	2.451	2.884
p-value	0.681	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.301	0.167	0.152	0.136	0.176	0.176
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706

Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. P-values are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws. Year fixed effects as time controls. The demographic control variables include the share of canton population who speak a non-local language, population shares by age and gender, fraction of followers of non-Christian religions, and the unemployment rate. The difference in the number of observations across columns is given by the fact that in a few referenda, a given party does not put forward a yes/no recommendation.

[32] We also include a category for counterproposals to a popular initiative. These are proposals votes in which the Federal Government proposes an amendment to the constitution on the same issue that is raised by a popular initiative. These type of referenda represent the 6% of all the referenda in our sample.

Table 10: Table 6 without demographic controls.

Independent variable	Share of votes aligned with party recomendation					
	PART	GPS	SP	CVP	FDP	SVP
Inflows of asylum seekers since last vote as % of local population	-0.299	-2.972	-2.715	2.351	2.264	2.775
p-value	0.099	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.382	0.162	0.151	0.136	0.176	0.174
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706

Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. P-values are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws. Year fixed effects as time controls. Canton fixed effects are included in all estimations. The difference in the number of observations across columns is given by the fact that in a few referenda, a given party does not put forward a yes/no recommendation.

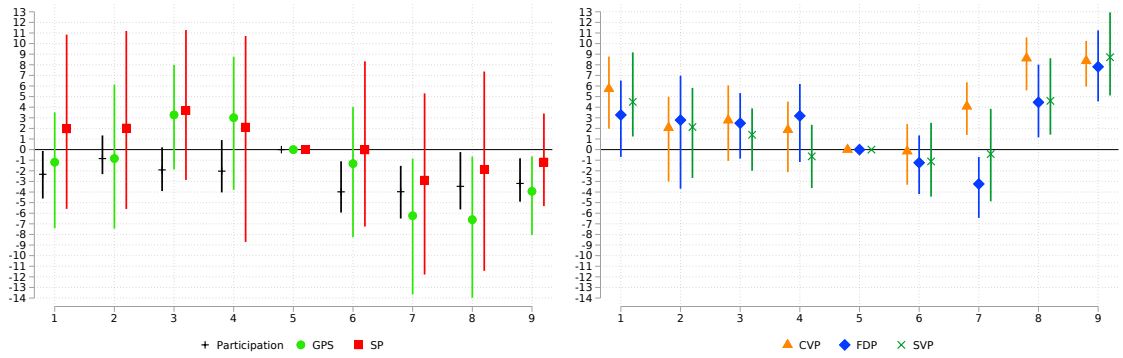
Table 11: Table 6 adding fixed effects for the type of referendum.

Independent variable	Share of votes aligned with party recomendation					
	PART	GPS	SP	CVP	FDP	SVP
Inflows of asylum seekers since last vote as % of local population	-0.193	-2.976	-3.331	1.280	0.943	1.586
p-value	0.385	0.000	0.000	0.008	0.044	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.446	0.248	0.257	0.222	0.259	0.243
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706

Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. P-values are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws. Year fixed effects as time controls. Canton fixed effects are included in all estimations. Fixed effects for the type of referendum (compulsory referendum, optional referendum, and popular initiative) are included in all estimations. The demographic control variables include the share of canton population who speak a non-local language, population shares by age and gender, fraction of followers of non-Christian religions, and the unemployment rate. The difference in the number of observations across columns is given by the fact that in a few referenda, a given party does not put forward a yes/no recommendation.

C.2 Alternative Specifications for Figure 3

Figure 5: Figure 3 without canton fixed effects nor demographic controls.

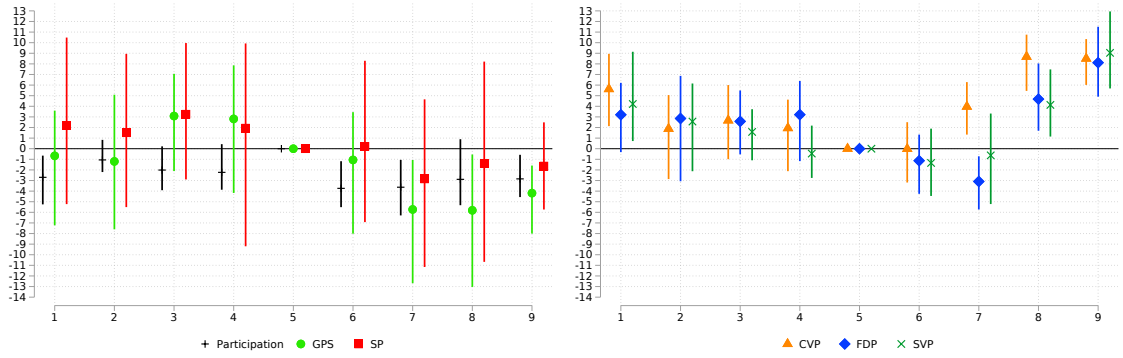


(a) Participation rate and left-leaning parties.

(b) Right-leaning parties.

Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. Year fixed effects as time controls. The base category is the fifth quantile (the median) of a 9-quantile partition. The vertical lines are 99% confidence intervals. Confidence intervals are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws.

Figure 6: Figure 3 without canton fixed effects.

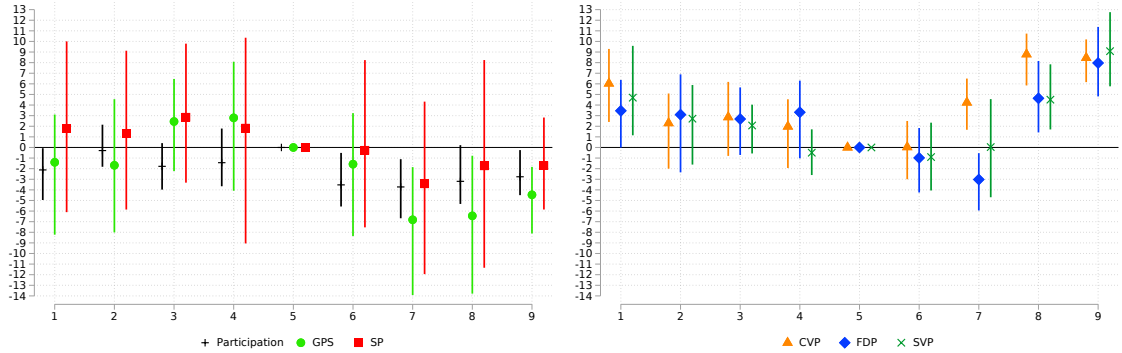


(a) Participation rate and left-leaning parties.

(b) Right-leaning parties.

Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. Year fixed effects as time controls. The demographic control variables include the share of canton population who speak a non-local language, population shares by age and gender, fraction of followers of non-Christian religions, and the unemployment rate. The base category is the fifth quantile (the median) of a 9-quantile partition. The vertical lines are 99% confidence intervals. Confidence intervals are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws.

Figure 7: Figure 3 without demographic controls.

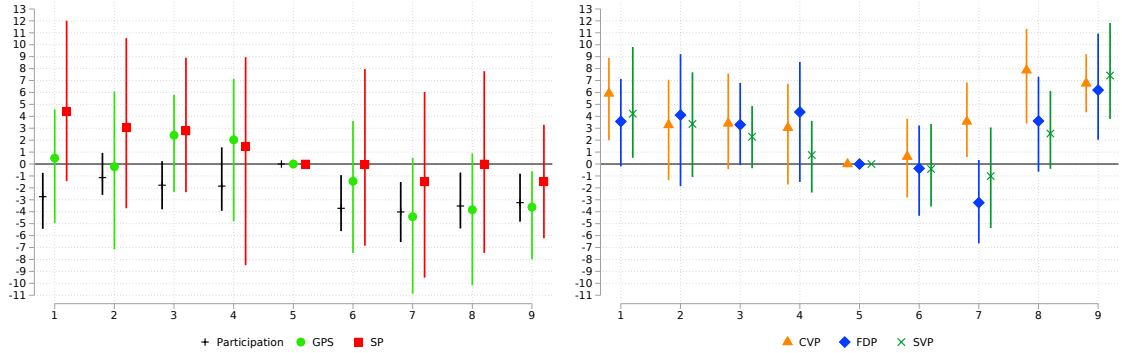


(a) Participation rate and left-leaning parties.

(b) Right-leaning parties.

Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. Year fixed effects as time controls. Canton fixed effects are included in all estimations. The base category is the fifth quantile (the median) of a 9-quantile partition. The vertical lines are 99% confidence intervals. Confidence intervals are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws.

Figure 8: Figure 3 adding fixed effects for the type of referendum.



(a) Participation rate and left-leaning parties.

(b) Right-leaning parties.

Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. Year fixed effects as time controls. Canton fixed effects are included in all estimations. Fixed effects for the type of referendum (compulsory referendum, optional referendum, and popular initiative) are included in all estimations. The demographic control variables include the share of canton population who speak a non-local language, population shares by age and gender, fraction of followers of non-Christian religions, and the unemployment rate. The base category is the fifth quantile (the median) of a 9-quantile partition. The vertical lines are 99% confidence intervals. Confidence intervals are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws.

C.3 Alternative Specifications for Table 7

Table 12: Table 7 without canton fixed effects nor demographic controls.

Inflows of asylum seekers since last vote as % of local population interacted with:		Share of votes aligned with party recomendation				
	PART	GPS	SP	CVP	FDP	SVP
Immigration/Refugee Policy	0.817	-12.586	-14.771	5.620	2.327	-0.960
p-value	0.315	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.063	0.360
Adjusted R-squared	0.252	0.151	0.145	0.135	0.173	0.160
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
EU/International Relations	-0.213	2.413	3.450	6.016	5.937	10.145
p-value	0.754	0.002	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.244	0.142	0.128	0.152	0.178	0.165
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
Welfare State	0.261	-14.668	-14.477	-5.163	-1.696	7.973
p-value	0.437	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.195	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.236	0.150	0.133	0.146	0.179	0.163
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
Minorities' rights	0.616	-7.464	-5.656	2.403	2.077	3.976
p-value	0.005	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.013	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.237	0.139	0.122	0.135	0.173	0.158
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
Other	0.059	-0.655	-0.749	1.631	2.068	1.630
p-value	0.870	0.271	0.174	0.000	0.000	0.002
Adjusted R-squared	0.244	0.150	0.131	0.149	0.179	0.163
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706

Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. P-values are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws. Year fixed effects as time controls. The difference in the number of observations across columns is given by the fact that in a few referenda, a given party does not put forward a yes/no recommendation.

Table 13: Table 7 without canton fixed effects.

Inflows of asylum seekers since last vote as % of local population interacted with:		Share of votes aligned with party recomendation				
	PART	GPS	SP	CVP	FDP	SVP
Immigration/Refugee Policy	1.416	-12.348	-14.573	5.862	2.517	-1.137
p-value	0.063	0.000	0.000	0.003	0.046	0.309
Adjusted R-squared	0.317	0.181	0.176	0.137	0.175	0.179
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
EU/International Relations	-0.105	1.813	3.076	6.098	5.890	10.543
p-value	0.865	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.309	0.171	0.158	0.153	0.180	0.183
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
Welfare State	0.616	-14.459	-14.256	-5.040	-1.609	7.821
p-value	0.071	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.202	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.302	0.180	0.163	0.148	0.181	0.182
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
Minorities' rights	0.952	-7.829	-5.998	2.571	2.210	4.282
p-value	0.003	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.006	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.303	0.170	0.153	0.136	0.176	0.177
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
Other	0.420	-0.783	-0.844	1.796	2.188	1.719
p-value	0.110	0.150	0.014	0.000	0.000	0.001
Adjusted R-squared	0.308	0.180	0.161	0.150	0.181	0.182
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706

Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. P-values are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws. Year fixed effects as time controls. The demographic control variables include the share of canton population who speak a non-local language, population shares by age and gender, fraction of followers of non-Christian religions, and the unemployment rate. The difference in the number of observations across columns is given by the fact that in a few referenda, a given party does not put forward a yes/no recommendation.

Table 14: Table 7 without demographic controls.

Inflows of asylum seekers since last vote as % of local population interacted with:		Share of votes aligned with party recomendation				
	PART	GPS	SP	CVP	FDP	SVP
Immigration/Refugee Policy	0.892	-12.582	-14.795	5.625	2.307	-0.962
p-value	0.244	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.053	0.403
Adjusted R-squared	0.399	0.177	0.176	0.137	0.176	0.177
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
EU/International Relations	-0.409	2.212	3.235	5.896	5.809	10.277
p-value	0.472	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.391	0.168	0.158	0.154	0.181	0.181
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
Welfare State	0.291	-14.617	-14.401	-5.210	-1.777	7.896
p-value	0.347	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.150	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.383	0.175	0.163	0.148	0.182	0.180
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
Minorities' rights	0.591	-7.470	-5.660	2.360	2.015	3.975
p-value	0.028	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.011	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.384	0.164	0.152	0.137	0.176	0.175
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
Other	0.074	-0.621	-0.709	1.609	2.018	1.587
p-value	0.700	0.294	0.117	0.000	0.000	0.002
Adjusted R-squared	0.391	0.176	0.161	0.151	0.182	0.180
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706

Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. P-values are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws. Year fixed effects as time controls. Canton fixed effects are included in all estimations. The difference in the number of observations across columns is given by the fact that in a few referenda, a given party does not put forward a yes/no recommendation.

Table 15: Table 7 adding fixed effects for the type of referendum.

Inflows of asylum seekers since last vote as % of local population interacted with:		Share of votes aligned with party recomendation				
	PART	GPS	SP	CVP	FDP	SVP
Immigration/Refugee Policy	0.149	-9.437	-11.479	8.095	4.046	-1.350
p-value	0.844	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.207
Adjusted R-squared	0.460	0.258	0.274	0.225	0.259	0.245
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
EU/International Relations	-1.747	6.456	7.325	3.481	2.832	7.529
p-value	0.034	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.016	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.453	0.252	0.265	0.226	0.259	0.244
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
Welfare State	0.052	-12.555	-12.009	-4.641	-2.245	6.731
p-value	0.855	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.066	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.448	0.257	0.264	0.228	0.260	0.245
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
Minorities' rights	0.270	-7.181	-5.841	1.755	1.365	3.780
p-value	0.343	0.000	0.000	0.004	0.056	0.000
Adjusted R-squared	0.446	0.250	0.263	0.222	0.259	0.244
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706
Other	0.284	-1.376	-2.148	0.611	0.811	0.691
p-value	0.229	0.001	0.000	0.074	0.007	0.185
Adjusted R-squared	0.452	0.254	0.260	0.225	0.259	0.244
N	4,706	4,524	4,472	4,680	4,680	4,706

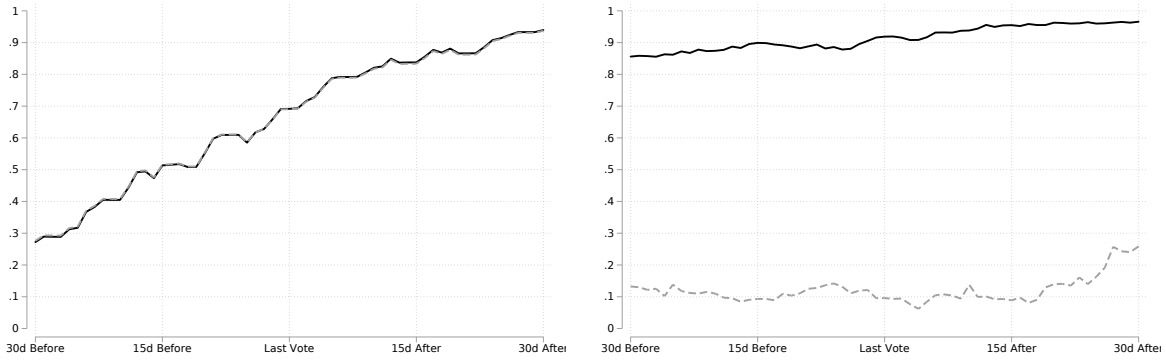
Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. P-values are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws. Year fixed effects as time controls. Canton fixed effects are included in all estimations. Fixed effects for the type of referendum (compulsory referendum, optional referendum, and popular initiative) are included in all estimations. The demographic control variables include the share of canton population who speak a non-local language, population shares by age and gender, fraction of followers of non-Christian religions, and the unemployment rate. The difference in the number of observations across columns is given by the fact that in a few referenda, a given party does not put forward a yes/no recommendation.

D Robustness of the Treatment Definition

In this section, we assess the robustness of the main results to changes in the definition of the treatment variable. Our treatment variable measures the inflow of asylum seekers allocated to each canton between two dates in which at least on referendum takes place. For example, if a referendum takes place on date D and the previous referendum took place on date C, we measure all asylum seekers that arrive to each canton between C and D. To examine the sensitivity of the results to the definition of the treatment variable we analyse a window of 30 days around C. That is, we construct 60 alternative treatment variables from $C_{+30} = C + 30$ days to $C-30 = D - 30$ days, in which we measure the number of asylum seekers allocated to each canton from C_k to D with $k = \{+30, \ldots, -30\}$.

In Figure 9, we plot the p-value of our two balancing test from Table 5 estimated using the 61 treatment variables we have available (60 alternatives plus the original). For both the test that relies on canton fixed effects (Figure 9a) and the test which uses canton demographic variables (Figure 9b), the balancing tests are successful. That is, for none of the 60 alternative definitions of the treatment variables, canton fixed effects or canton's demographics are able to predict the treatment.

Figure 9: The randomness of the treatment variable is robust to changes in the definition of the variable.



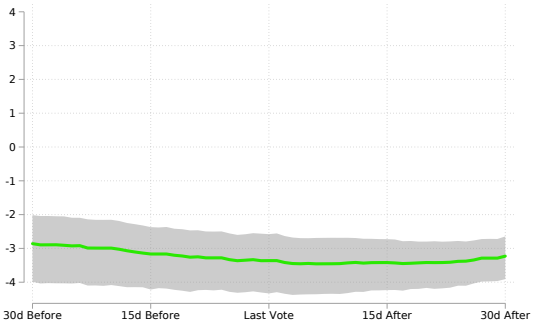
(a) Canton fixed effects.

(b) Canton's demographics.

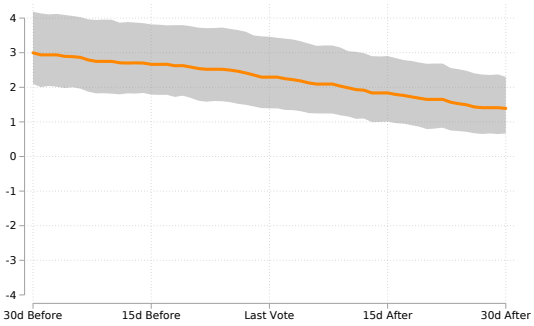
Notes: Each line is the p-value of the joint significance test. The black solid line corresponds to the specification which is weighted by Swiss population in each canton. The grey dashed line is the unweighted estimate. Standard errors are clustered by canton. P-values are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws. Year fixed effects as time controls. The standard errors in the fixed effects specifications are heteroskedasticity-robust, and clustered at the canton level in the canton demographics specifications.

In Figure 10, we show that the direction and the magnitude of the results in Table 6 are also robust to changes of the definition in the treatment variable. For the two left-progressive parties (Figures 10a and 10c), a higher inflow of asylum seekers reduces the support for their stances across all definitions of the treatment variable we use. Symmetrically, for the right-leaning conservative parties (Figures 10b, 10d, and 10f), more asylum seekers causes voters to increase their support towards their positions. Finally, the effect on participation is not significantly different from zero for most definitions of the treatment variable.

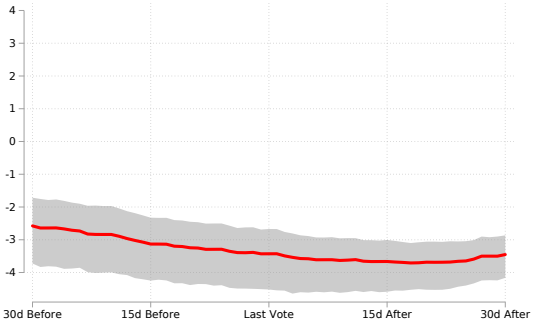
Figure 10: The average effect of asylum seekers on voting behaviour is robust to changes in the definition of the variable.



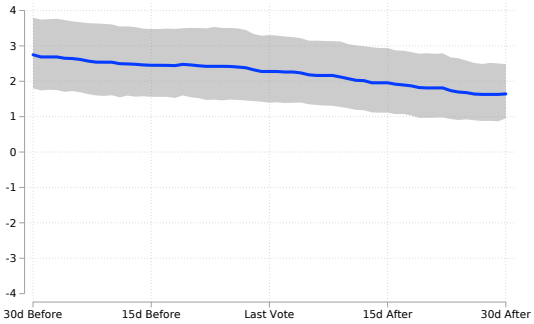
(a) GPS.



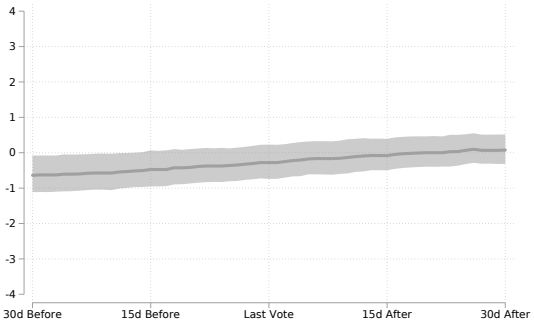
(b) CVP.



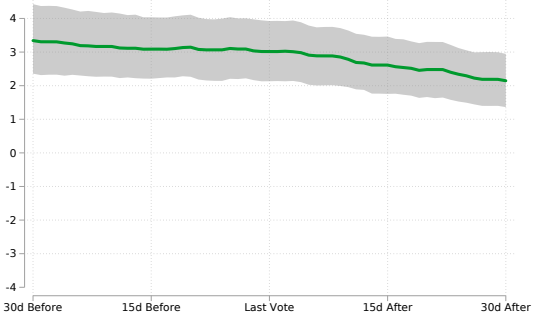
(c) SP.



(d) FDP.



(e) Participation.



(f) SVP.

Notes: The coloured lines are point estimates. The grey areas are 95% confidence intervals. Confidence intervals are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws. Year fixed effects as time controls. Canton fixed effects are included in all estimations. The demographic control variables include the share of canton population who speak a non-local language, population shares by age and gender, fraction of followers of non-Christian religions, and the unemployment rate.

E The Interaction between the Treatment and the Demographic Characteristics of Cantons

In this section, we analyse the heterogeneity of the effect that the inflows of asylum seekers cause along the demographic characteristics of cantons. We focus on four demographic dimensions. First we assess if the effects of the treatment are different between rural and urban cantons, using variation in population density. Second, we study if there are differences across cantons with distinct levels of foreign population. As the vast majority of non-Swiss residents are able to decide were to live, the share of foreigners in a given canton might be related to the local attitudes towards foreigners. Thirdly, given that a relevant political wedge between conservative and progressive cantons is present in the political debate, we look at how the share of people who follow a religion in a given canton interacts with the treatment as a higher share of religious followers tends to be associated with conservative preferences. Finally, we analyse if the different age structure of the cantons is associated with different effects of the treatment.

For each of these four variables, we run a variation of our main specification in Equation 1:

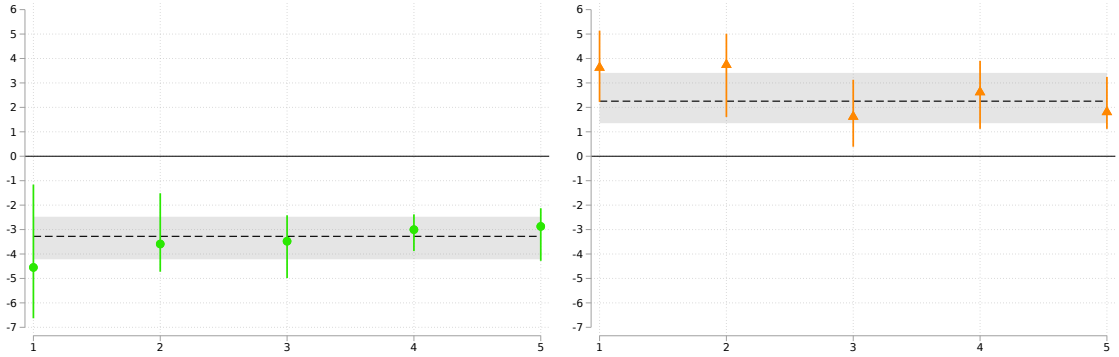
$$A^p_{cr} = \gamma^p_0 + \sum_{q=1}^{5} \gamma^p_q z^q_{ct} I_{ct} + \pi^p X_{ct} + \phi^p_t + \theta^p_c + \xi^p_{cr}, \tag{4}$$

where z^q_{ct} classifies each canton-date into quintiles of our variable of interest, X_{ct} are time-dependent canton controls, ϕ^p_t are time controls, and θ^p_c are canton fixed effects.

Figure 11 presents the results along quintiles of the population density distribution. Figure 12 focuses on the share of foreigners, Figure 13 on the share of religious followers, and Figure 14 on average age. Each figure plots the effect on each quintile of the distribution for each party. Moreover, in each panel, we include the estimates of the average effect of each party. Hence, by comparing the quintile estimates with the average effect, it is apparent whether a given demographic dimension presents heterogeneous effects with respect to the average. That is, if the treatment varies across a given variable the quintile estimates do not overlap with the average treatment, while an consistent overlap implies that there is no significant heterogeneity along that dimension.

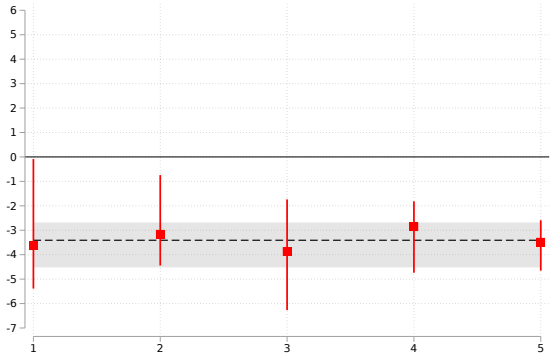
Generally, we find little evidence of heterogeneous effects along the dimensions we consider. The vast majority of the quintile estimates overlap with the confidence intervals of the average treatment.

Figure 11: The effect of asylum seekers on referenda outcomes along population density quintiles.

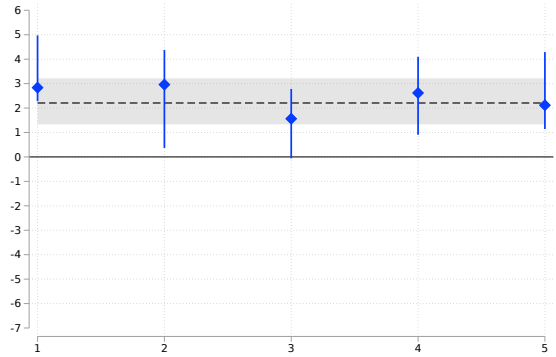


(a) GPS.

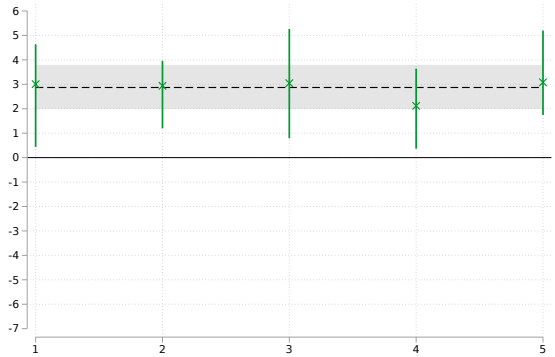
(b) CVP.



(c) SP.



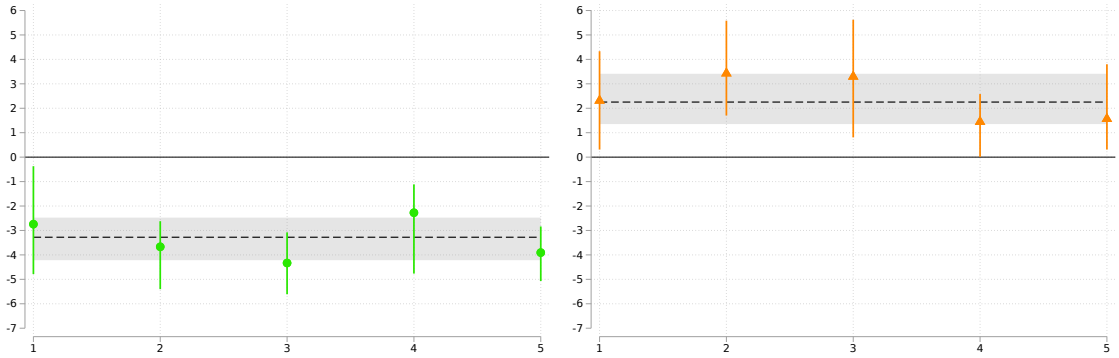
(d) FDP.



(e) SVP.

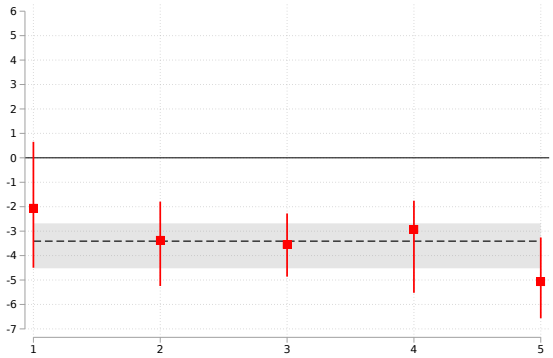
Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. Year fixed effects as time controls. Canton fixed effects are included in all estimations. The demographic control variables include the share of canton population who speak a non-local language, population shares by age and gender, fraction of followers of non-Christian religions, and the unemployment rate. The vertical lines are 95% confidence intervals. The black dashed line is the point estimate of the average effect. The grey area is the 95% confidence interval of the average effect. Confidence intervals are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws.

Figure 12: The effect of asylum seekers on referenda outcomes along quintiles of the share of foreigners in the population.

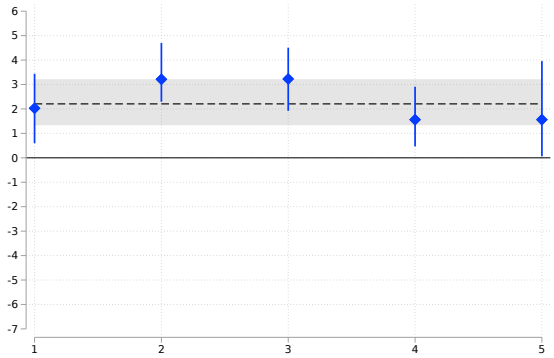


(a) GPS.

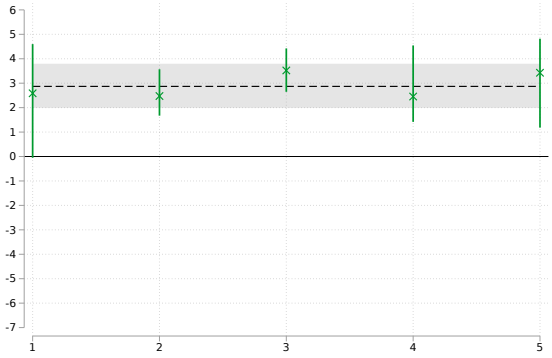
(b) CVP.



(c) SP.



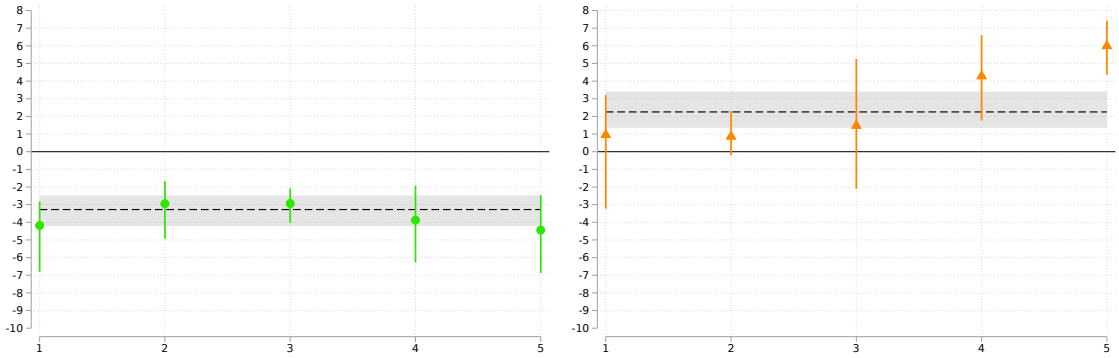
(d) FDP.



(e) SVP.

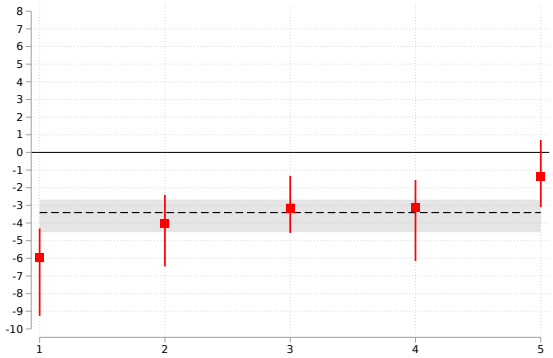
Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. Year fixed effects as time controls. Canton fixed effects are included in all estimations. The demographic control variables include the share of canton population who speak a non-local language, population shares by age and gender, fraction of followers of non-Christian religions, and the unemployment rate. The vertical lines are 95% confidence intervals. The black dashed line is the point estimate of the average effect. The grey area is the 95% confidence interval of the average effect. Confidence intervals are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws.

Figure 13: The effect of asylum seekers on referenda outcomes along quintiles of the share of religious followers in the population.

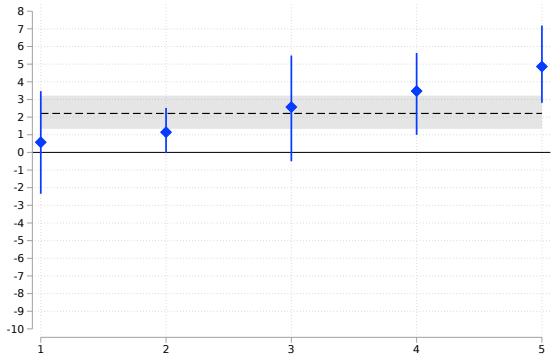


(a) GPS.

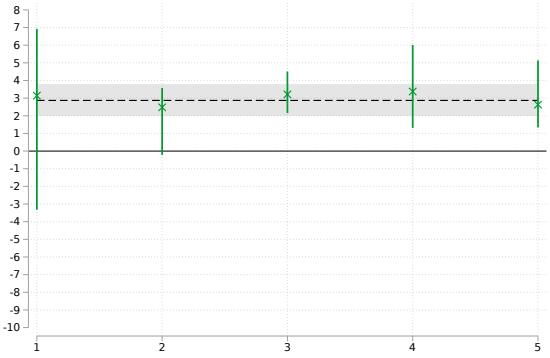
(b) CVP.



(c) SP.



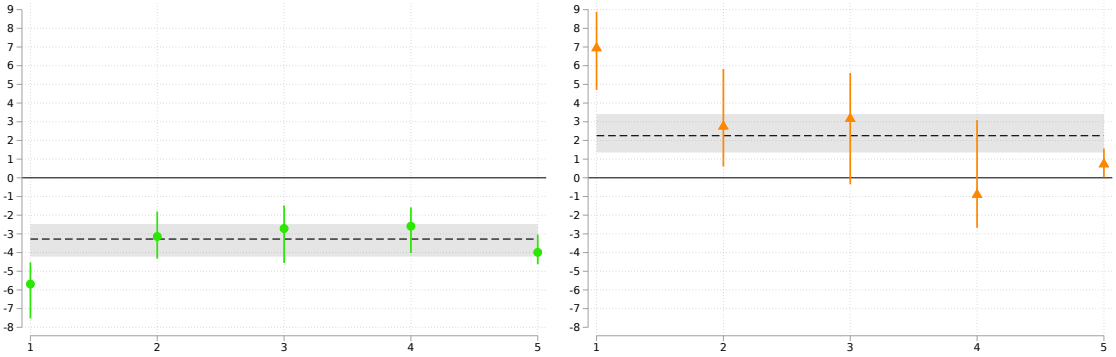
(d) FDP.



(e) SVP.

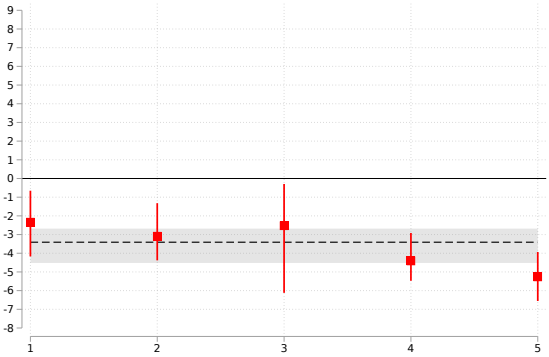
Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. Year fixed effects as time controls. Canton fixed effects are included in all estimations. The demographic control variables include the share of canton population who speak a non-local language, population shares by age and gender, fraction of followers of non-Christian religions, and the unemployment rate. The vertical lines are 95% confidence intervals. The black dashed line is the point estimate of the average effect. The grey area is the 95% confidence interval of the average effect. Confidence intervals are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws.

Figure 14: The effect of asylum seekers on referenda outcomes along quintiles of canton's average age.

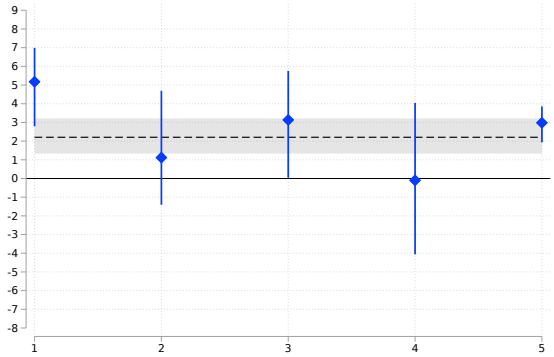


(a) GPS.

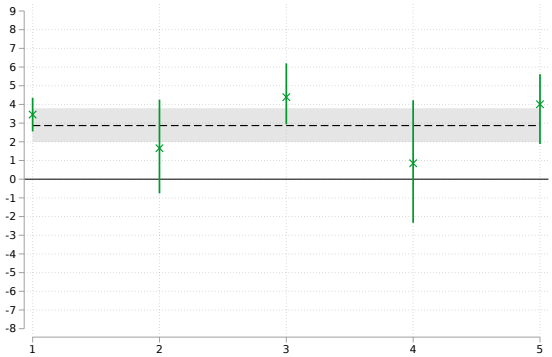
(b) CVP.



(c) SP.



(d) FDP.



(e) SVP.

Notes: Standard errors are clustered by canton. Year fixed effects as time controls. Canton fixed effects are included in all estimations. The demographic control variables include the share of canton population who speak a non-local language, population shares by age and gender, fraction of followers of non-Christian religions, and the unemployment rate. The vertical lines are 95% confidence intervals. The black dashed line is the point estimate of the average effect. The grey area is the 95% confidence interval of the average effect. Confidence intervals are computed using the wild bootstrap, with 10,001 draws.