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# Digging Up Trenches: Populism, Selective Mobility, and the Political Polarization of Italian Municipalities*

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**Abstract**

We study the effect of local exposure to populism on net population movements by citizenship status, gender, age and education level in the context of Italian municipalities. We present two research designs to estimate the causal effect of populist attitudes and politics. Initially, we use a combination of collective memory and trigger variables as an instrument for the variation in populist vote shares across national elections. Subsequently, we apply a regression discontinuity design to estimate the effect of electing a populist mayor on population movements. We establish three converging findings. First, the exposure to both populist attitudes and policies, as manifested by the vote share of populist parties in national election or the close-election of a new populist mayor, reduces the attractiveness of municipalities, leading to larger population outflows. Second, the effect is particularly pronounced among young, female, and highly educated natives, who tend to relocate across Italian municipalities rather than internationally. Third, we do not find any effect on the foreign population. Our results highlight a foot-voting mechanism that may contribute to a political polarization in Italian municipalities.

Keywords: Migration, Human Capital, Populism, Italian Politics
JEL codes: D72, F22, F52, J61.

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# 1 Introduction

Economic insecurity, growing inequality, corruption, and cultural threats are widely recognized as drivers of discontent and distrust towards democratic institutions (Algan et al., 2017, Guiso et al., 2023, Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022). This erosion of voters' trust in traditional tools of representative democracy leads to a shift in demand towards simpler policy commitments often associated with populist parties (Morelli et al., 2021). Populists leverage these sentiments by framing their rhetoric around the idea that the people have the moral authority to decide on policies, as opposed to the corrupt elite (Mudde, 2004). Populist policies, however, are not a panacea, and a growing body of literature indicates that the election of populist governments has detrimental consequences for the economy and for the quality of bureaucracy at both national and local levels (Bellodi et al., 2024, Funke et al., 2023).

When dissatisfied voters realize they are not better off under populist rule, one would expect the populist government to be voted out in the next elections. However, defeating populist incumbents might be harder if their main opponents choose to migrate. Existing literature has shown that the quality of institutions influences people's mobility choices (Ariu et al., 2016). Moreover, population movements and their characteristics, including their skill content, have also been identified as key determinants of the rise of populism (Docquier et al., 2022, Moriconi et al., 2022). Therefore, populist leaders and parties may actively contribute to the creation of echo chambers, as the departure of more voters expressing discontent with populist parties can lead to an environment where these parties face less opposition. Such vicious circle dynamics, if present, can be even further exacerbated if those responding to the presence of populism hold specific characteristics, such as a forward-looking perspective or a higher level of education. Populist leaders in office can affect the composition of the population, potentially heightening the risk of increased cultural polarization and spatial disparities in political preferences and economic performance.

In this paper, we provide causal evidence on the initial phase of the populist vicious cycle by examining the impact of both populist attitudes and policies on people' choices to relocate, within the context of Italian municipalities. Although populist parties and leaders have been a consistent feature of Italian politics (D'Alimonte, 2019), their rise in popularity became more pronounced following the 2007-09 financial crisis. In the 2018 general elections, two populist parties – the Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S) and Lega (previously the Lega Nord) – obtained a combined majority of votes and parliamentary seats, and formed a government. The M5S is an internet-based movement that made commitments to economic protection policies like citizenship income and thrived on distrust in representative democracy, while the Lega is a former regionalist party that has transitioned from advocating for secession of northern Italy to appealing to nationalism and the defense of Italian sovereignty – commitment to identity-protection policies. Nationalism, anti-establishment stances and simplistic policy commitments are distinctive characteristics of populist parties, and Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy) is now thriving because of the failure of the economic

policy commitments of Lega and M5S, and the greater credibility of the identity-protection commitments that their opposition role during the Draghi government granted them (see Galasso et al. (2023) for empirical evidence of this dynamic of populism in Italy). While migration out of a country has very high costs, our conjecture is that, at the municipal level, there can easily be an incentive to escape from a jurisdiction of a new populist mayor, since the economic policy commitments have shown to be detrimental and the identity-protection commitments are hard to digest for the most progressive segments of the local population.

To test this hypothesis, we conduct an analysis of Italian elections and migration flows spanning the past two decades. Our study involves linking data on the movement of foreigners and natives, the latter with specific skills and characteristics, to data on political preferences expressed in both national and municipal elections across all Italian municipalities. By examining two types of election results, we are able to compare the impact of two different mechanisms behind the local exposure to populism: attitudes and politics.

The results of national elections are less likely to directly affect local policies, due to the difficulties to implement municipal-specific policies directly from the central government, but are good proxy of local values and attitudes, which can lead to the legitimization of radical and xenophobic behaviors (Albornoz et al., 2021, Bracco et al., 2022, Bursztyn et al., 2020, Romarri, 2020). On the other hand, municipal election results can directly impact local policies and the well-being of voters, with populist mayors shown to have altered policy making, deteriorated the quality of bureaucracy (Bellodi et al., 2024), and created an uncomfortable environment for immigrants to settle and integrate (Bracco et al., 2018, Cerqua and Zampollo, 2023).

To causally identify the effect of populist attitudes and politics on mobility, we utilize two methods to generate well-defined local average treatment effects. First, we utilize an instrumental variable approach that instruments variations in populist votes with a combination of collective memory and trigger variables (Cantoni et al., 2021, Fouka and Voth, 2022). We posit that the 2007-09 financial crisis led to dissatisfaction and distrust in democratic institutions, which is less likely to translate into a surge of populism in municipalities where there is latent aversion toward radical and extreme parties. We proxy the latter using municipality-level data on victims of fascist persecutions during World War II. The instrument works well in the national election context (where electoral lists are identical across municipalities), passes parallel pre-trend tests, and accurately predicts the variation in populist vote shares. Second, by leveraging the close-election of populist mayors, and comparing municipalities with similar support for populism – hence holding constant pre-election preferences for populism and attitudes – we examine whether local exposure to populist policymakers influences the location choices of both natives and foreign born with a close-election regression discontinuity design (RDD).

We find that populist success reduces the attractiveness of municipalities in both national election and municipal elections. Support for populism reduces net inflows of natives in general, and net inflows of young, female, and highly educated natives in particular. Moreover, this effect is mainly on internal mobility flows (i.e., across Italian municipalities),

and not on international flows. The effect is mostly driven by larger population outflows. We find no evidence of a repulsion effect in the foreign population, after accounting for their age, gender and origin-specific composition.

Concerning the mechanisms, our empirical approach leverages two different identification strategies to unveil the contribution of two different but complementary mechanisms: the exposure to local populist attitudes and populist policies. By exploiting the within-municipality variation over time in support for populist parties during national elections, we explore the changes in local attitudes proxied by votes, rather the implementation of national policies which are captured by the various region (or province) by year fixed effects. In our preferred specification, a 10 percentage-points increase in the vote share for populists would lead to a decrease, on average, of net flows of natives around 130 individuals. We provide suggestive evidence that the effect of populist attitudes does not manifest through a radicalization of views, as indicated by readership of partisan newspapers. Instead, it erodes perspectives regarding the future of the Italian economy among non-populist voters. This outcome may be attributed to the short-sighted political agenda recognized within populist approaches, which dampens expectations for a positive future outlook (Guiso et al., 2017).

We further investigate the impact of local policies by comparing municipalities that elected a populist mayor with those that did not, with a small marginal difference in terms of votes. Consequently, these municipalities are expected to exhibit similarity in terms of pre-election local attitudes and other conditions, while those electing a populist mayor experience the implementation of distinct local policies and a likely trivialization of populist discourses. Our primary findings demonstrate that, in comparison to similar municipalities, the election of a populist mayor is associated with an annual decrease in net native inflows, ranging between 35 to 50 individuals. Importantly, we ascertain that this effect is driven by "new-entrant" populist mayors, aligning with the notion that the effects are attributable to the policies enacted by the newly elected mayor. Moreover, this impact is more pronounced and statistically significant among college-educated Italian citizens.

With this paper, we contribute to the existing literature on the relationship between institutional quality and selective migration. Previous studies have explored the impact of migration flows on voting patterns – a recent review of existing studies is provided in Guriev and Papaioannou (2022) – and evidenced that the political support for populist parties decreases with the average education level of immigrants (Docquier et al., 2022, Edo et al., 2019, Moriconi et al., 2019, 2022). However, very few studies have investigated the reverse direction and analyzed how mobility responds to radical or extreme voting. Employing RDD methods, Schmutz and Verdugo (2023) demonstrate that the election of a left-wing mayor, as opposed to a right-wing one, increases immigration flows in French municipalities, primarily due to increased investments in public housing. Bracco et al. (2018) show that the election of a Lega Nord mayor discourages immigrants from moving into Northern Italian municipalities, specifically small municipalities with a low-skilled population. However, Cerqua and Zampollo (2023) find less evidence of this effect on the total immigrant population, showing that these results hold only after the 2014 refugee crisis,

when immigration was a salient topic. In this study, we extend this research by examining the mobility responses of individuals with different skill levels, citizenship statuses, and origins. We uncover a mechanism of foot voting that may contribute to the "snowball" effect of populism in Italy, highlighting the need for concrete measures to restore faith in mainstream parties.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes our data sources and provides some stylized facts. Our empirical model and identification strategies are explained in Section 3. Section 4 presents our results and discusses their implications. Section 5 concludes.

# 2 Data and Stylized Facts

In this section we present our measures and data sources, as well as offering crucial stylized facts concerning our primary variables of interest. We utilize information on the vote shares of populist parties in both national and municipal elections, and supplement it with data on population migration among municipalities, categorized by citizenship status, gender, age and education level. Our sample covers all Italian municipalities, all municipal elections held between 2002 and 2020, and all national elections held between 2006 and 2018.

**Identification of Populist Parties** – Populism is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses a variety of trends and ideologies. Populist leaders espouse *anti-establishment* views, which stem from the belief that the common people possess superior ethical and moral values in comparison to the ruling elite (Mudde, 2004, Taggart, 2000). Additionally, populism is characterized by a *strong commitment to protecting* the people from both internal and external threats. These threats include corrupt and self-serving elites as well as supranational institutions, multinationals, and immigrant workers (Guiso et al., 2017, Rodrik, 2018).

To identify populist parties, we use the *PopuList* data set, described in Rooduijn et al. (2019), which provides a comprehensive list of populist, far right, far left, and Eurosceptic parties that have participated in national elections in 31 developed countries from 1989 to 2020. This classification was established through a collaborative effort among academics, experts, and journalists, and has been validated by more than 80 scholars. The database includes parties that have won at least one seat or at least 2% of the votes in an election.

For instance, the dataset identifies five populist parties that participated in national elections in 2006, including Liga Fronte Veneto, Lega Nord, Lega Nord Valle D'Aosta, Forza Italia, and Lega Sud. Similarly, four populist parties were identified in 2008, including Lega Nord, Il Popolo delle Libertà, Lega Sud, and Lega Veneta Repubblica, while in 2013, five populist parties participated in the elections, including Il Popolo delle Libertà, Fratelli D'Italia, Lega Nord, Lega Veneta Repubblica, and Movimento 5 Stelle. Finally, four populist parties were identified in 2018, including Lega, Movimento 5 Stelle, Forza Italia, and Fratelli d'Italia.

In the Appendix, we also consider an alternative, time-varying continuous measure and classification of populism based on Docquier et al. (2022). This measures takes into account the varying levels of anti-establishment and commitment-to-protect views reflected in party manifestos, which may result in some parties holding a substantial extent of populism in certain election years but not in others. By relying on both the continuous measure and the time-varying classification, we show that our results are robust to the various definition and classification of populism.

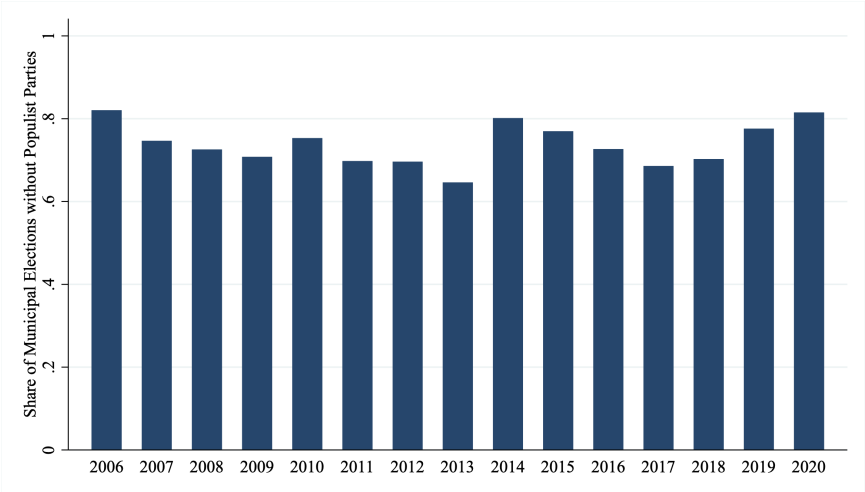
Examining municipal elections presents a more intricate scenario. To tackle this, we collected information from the Historical Electoral Archive of the Ministry of the Interior on all municipal elections, mayoral candidates, and their party affiliations. We classify mayoral candidates as populist based on the political party-lists associated with the candidate. In cases where the local party name does not match the name of a national party, we adopt the methodology proposed by Bellodi et al. (2024) and assign it to the nearest national party based on the similarity of names.

Figure 1 provides a comparison of the average number and share of populist parties in municipalities across different types of election and years. Since municipal elections do not always coincide with national elections, we computed the moving averages by including data from two years before and two years after each national election year. Panel (a) indicates that the majority of municipal elections did not have any populist parties, with the share of such elections ranging between 70 and 80% across different years. The total number of national parties remained relatively stable over time (Panel (b)). However, the average share of populist parties over the total available for each municipality varied across national elections, ranging from 12% of the total parties in 2006 national elections, to over 20% in 2013 and 2018 (Panel (c)). The share of populist parties in municipal elections has consistently remained below 10%, but it has shown a gradual increase over time.

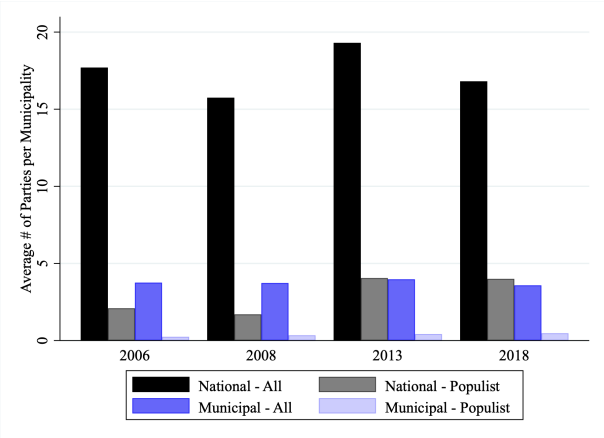
**Populists' vote shares** – The Italian Ministry of Interior provides comprehensive data on the vote shares of all political parties participating in elections. Figure 2 illustrates the vote shares of all parties classified as populist in Italian elections. The left panel of the figure indicates a steady increase in the vote shares of populist parties across four national elections, rising from 28% in 2006 to 65% in 2018. Conversely, the trend across municipal elections is less pronounced, as demonstrated in the right panel. Populism experienced an upsurge following the financial crisis of 2008-11 and the refugee crisis of 2015. The gradual rise of Movimento 5 Stelle after the financial crisis is also depicted in the figure.

Focusing on national elections, Figure 3 depicts the disparities in the total vote shares of populist parties across different municipalities and election years. While populism is primarily observed in Northern Italy (Piemonte, Val D'Aosta, Lombardia), there are significant variations over time and across municipalities in the North, and support for populist parties is gaining traction in certain municipalities in Southern Italy. As an example, in the 2018 elections, approximately 51% and 53% of voters in the northern cities of Milan and Turin, respectively, voted for populist parties. In contrast, in southern cities like Naples

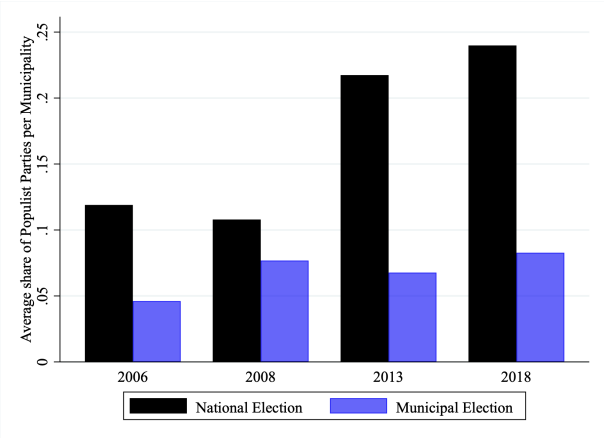
Figure 1: Prevalence of Populism Across Election Types and Years




(a) Share of Municipal Elections Without Populist Candidates




(b) Total Number of Parties



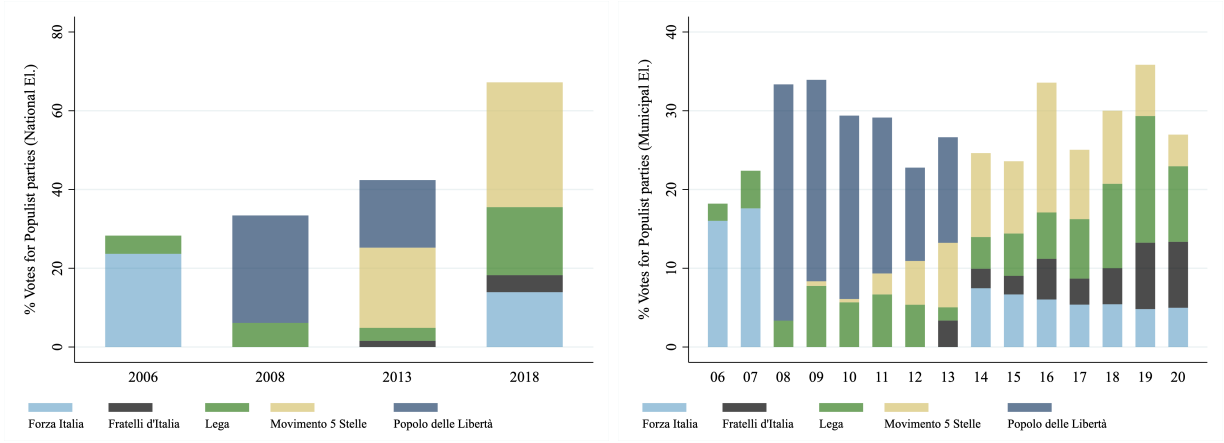

(c) Share of Populist Parties

Source: Authors' elaboration based on PopuList definition and electoral data from the Italian Ministry of Interior. Panel (a) plots the share of municipal elections with no populist parties. Panel (b) shows the average number of parties and populist parties by election-year for national and municipal elections. Panel (c) shows the average share of populist parties by election-year for national and municipal elections. Since municipal elections are not necessarily the same year of national elections, we compute the moving averages including 2 years before and 2 years after each national election year.

and Palermo, approximately 70% and 71% of voters chose populist parties. It is worth noting that, on average, the vote share for populist parties in national elections has remained relatively consistent across municipalities of different sizes. Specifically, in municipalities with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants, the vote share for populist parties has hovered around 47%, while in cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, it has been around 44%.

Figure 4 displays the spatial distribution of vote shares for populist parties in municipal elections. To account for the potential mismatch in election timing, we calculate the moving averages of municipal election results by including 2 years before and 2 years after each national election year. The distribution of votes for populist parties is heterogeneous across

Figure 2: Vote Shares of Populist Parties in Italian Elections 2006-2020




(a) National Elections

(b) Municipal Elections

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from the Italian Ministry of Interior and PopuList (Rooduijn et al., 2019) party definition.

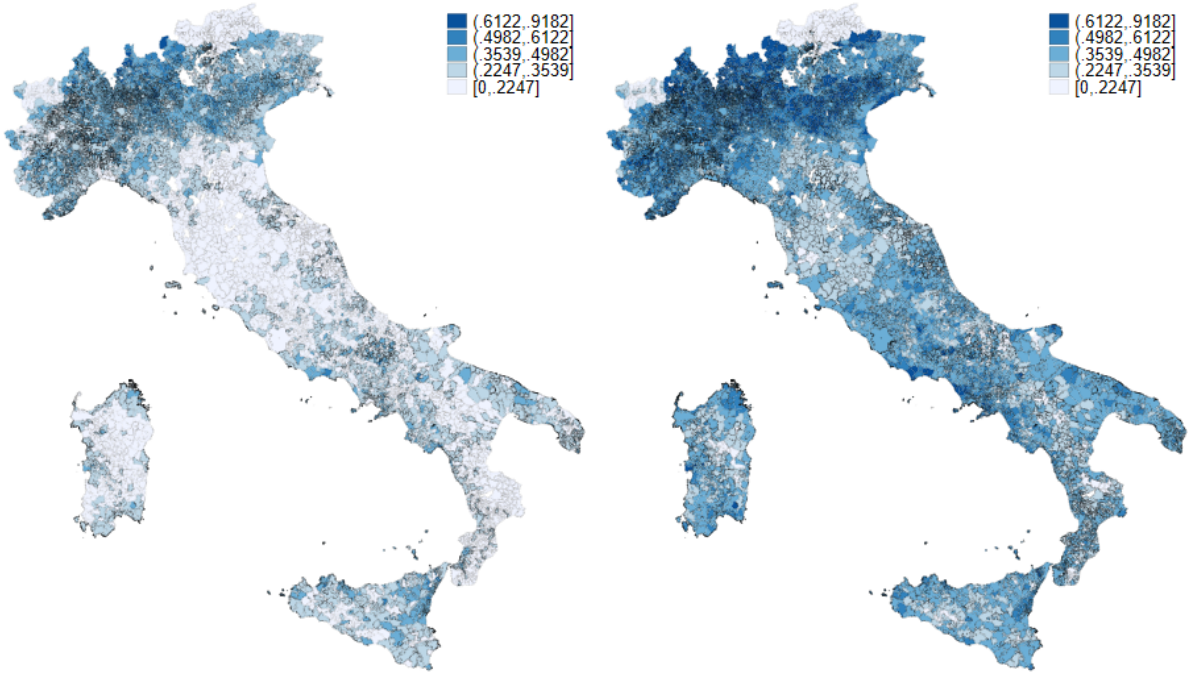
regions, although it is more sparse due to the lower presence of populist parties participating at the municipal level. In particular, increases have been observed in Lombardia and Veneto. Moreover, the figure provides clarity on the availability of data for municipal elections. It is worth noting that all the regions with a special status (i.e., Friuli Venezia Giulia, Sicily, Trentino-Alto Adige, and Valle d'Aosta) have special rules for municipal elections, and as such, the data for these regions are not available in the harmonized repository provided by the Ministry of Interior, with the exception of Sardinia.

In Appendix A, we discuss the correlation between the vote shares of populist parties in municipal and national elections around the years 2006, 2008, 2013, and 2018. For municipal election results, we use the same moving averages as in Figure 4. The correlation is positive and significant when only municipalities with a populist candidate are included in the sample. It is smaller when we include municipalities without populist candidate, representing between 70 and 80% of our sample.

**Population Movements** – Our study focuses on analyzing the cross-municipality migration of incumbent residents and the location choices of newcomers. To investigate these factors, we utilize data from two different sources provided by the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT).

The first data source we rely on is the *Demographic Balance* (referred to as BDem). This database is publicly available and captures changes in the demographic structure of all Italian municipalities. It includes information such as the annual population size, the number of deaths and newborns, the number of newly registered residents from other Italian municipalities or abroad, and the number of individuals who have relocated either to other municipalities or abroad. These details are also categorized by gender and citizenship. For this reason, in the paper we define interchangeably citizens as natives and non-citizens as

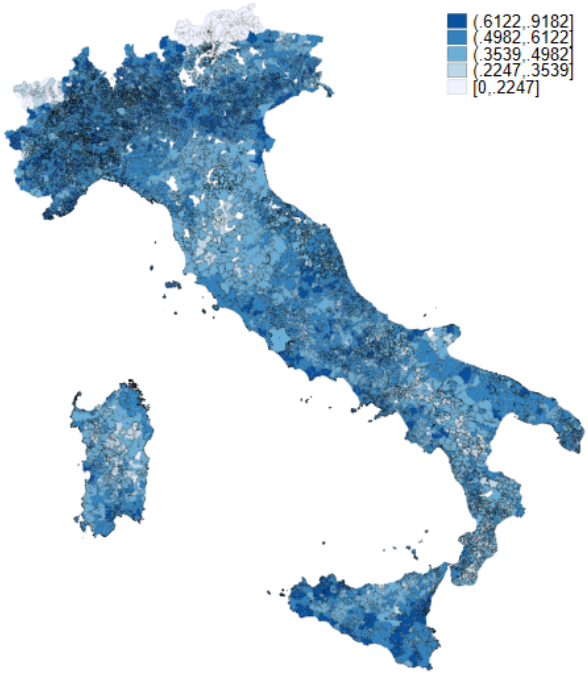
Figure 3: Spatial Distribution of Vote Shares of Populist Parties in National Elections



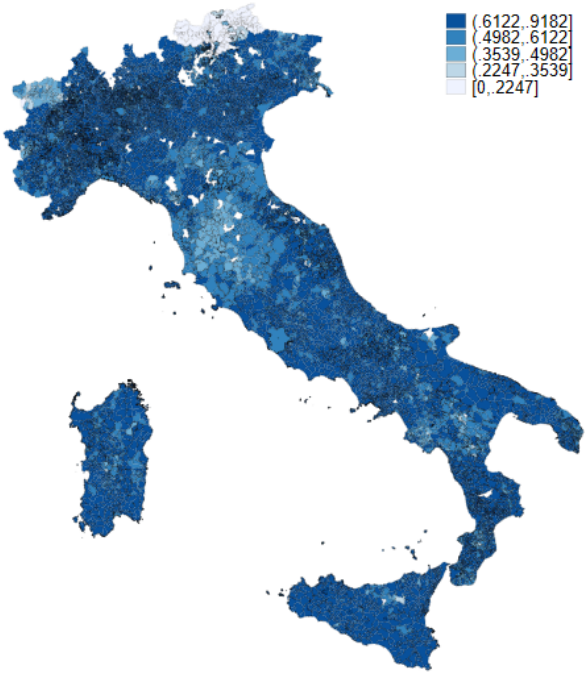

(a) 2006




(b) 2008



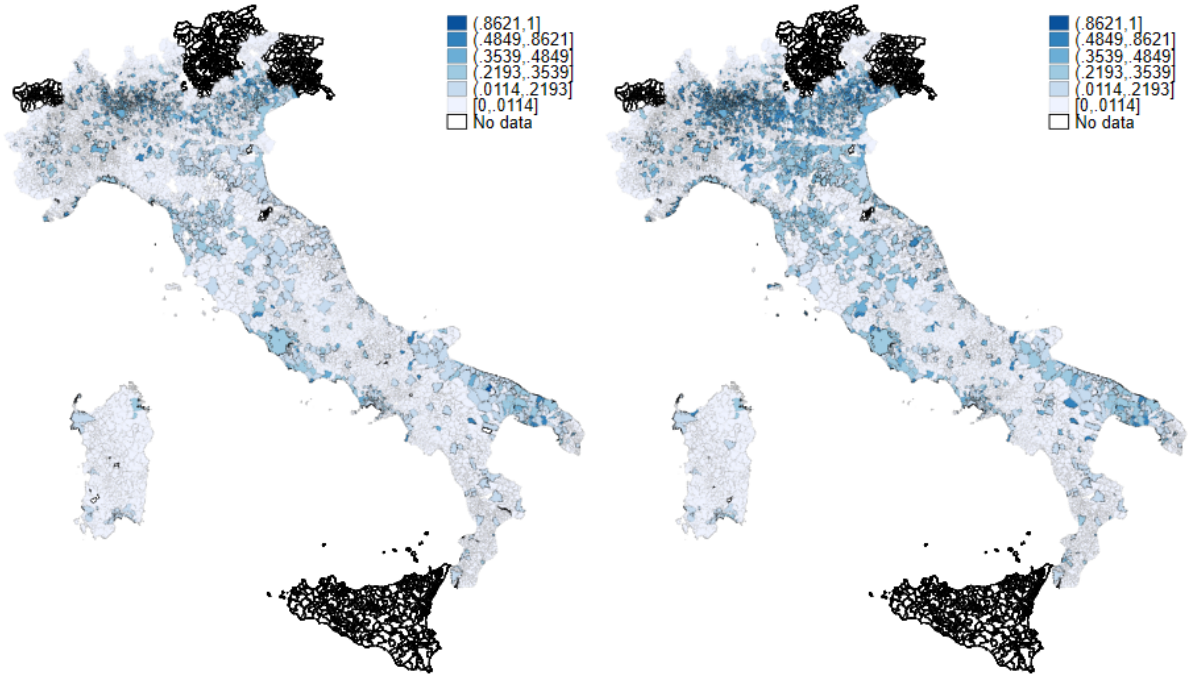

(c) 2013




(d) 2018

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from the Italian Ministry of Interior.

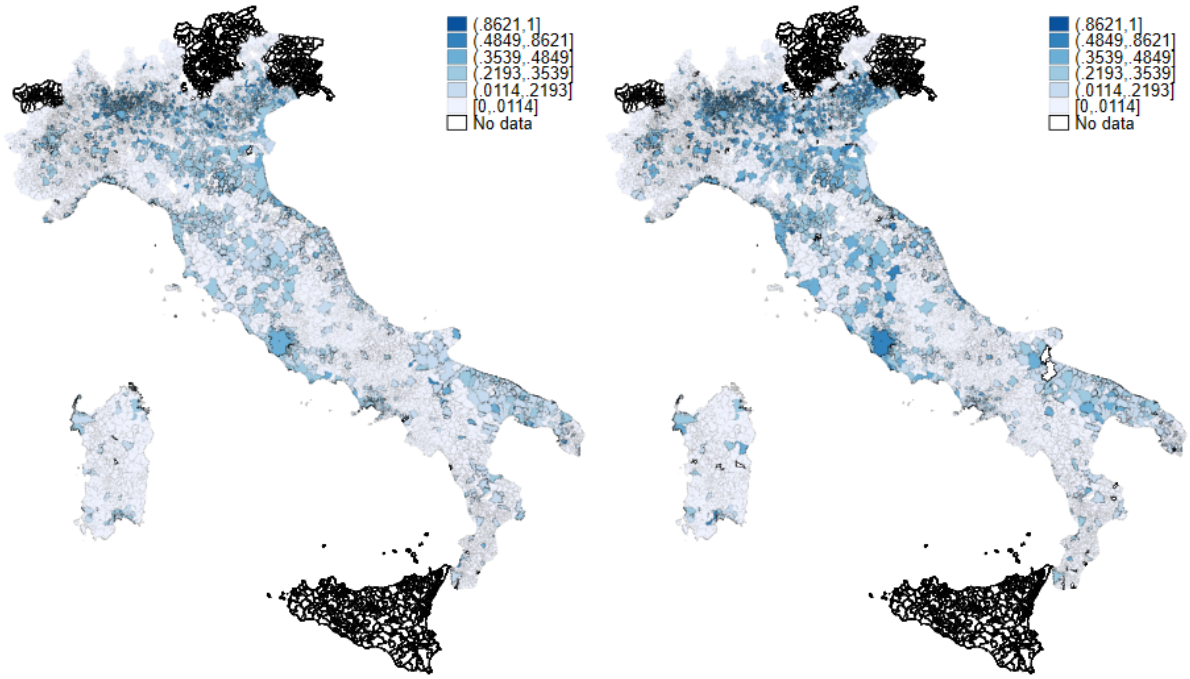
Figure 4: Spatial Distribution of Vote shares of Populist Parties in Municipal Elections




(a) 2006




(b) 2008




(c) 2013




(d) 2018

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from the Italian Ministry of Interior. Given that municipal elections do not align chronologically with national elections, we calculate moving averages by encompassing a window of 2 years prior to and 2 years after each national election year. The definition of populist parties is time-invariant.

foreigners, due to the tight Italian citizenship law (Tintori, 2018). Using the BDem data, we construct measures that capture both internal mobility (between Italian municipalities) and international mobility of residents for the entire population of Italian municipalities.

Second, we were granted access to exclusive data collected by the *Elementary Data Analysis Laboratory* (henceforth, ADELE). The administrative information comes from the annual survey "Registrations and cancellations to the registry for transfer of residence" (ISCAN), conducted by ISTAT. Registrations represent individuals who relocated to a municipality from other municipalities or other countries, while cancellations refer to those who moved away (to another municipality or abroad). Using the ADELE data, we construct extensive matrices of bilateral mobility flows between Italian municipalities for the years 2000-2019. We leverage the demographic characteristics of the respondents, a key aspect of the ADELE database, to create disaggregated matrices by origin (natives vs. foreign-born), age, and, when feasible (only for recent years), by education level (college graduates and the less educated).[1] Following recent developments in existing literature, we anticipate that distinct groups of internal movers will react differently to the exposure to populism. Therefore, we aim to investigate how these various aspects uniquely influence internal movements in Italy following an increase in populism at the local level.

The two data sources we employ provide comparable information on people's mobility across Italian municipalities, albeit with minor discrepancies potentially arising from variations in reporting timing to the ISTAT offices. To ensure data consistency, we have opted to exclude municipalities from our sample if there is a substantial disparity in resident mobility between the two sources. Specifically, any municipality exhibiting a difference in citizen mobility between BDem and ADELE exceeding 3% of the municipality's population is omitted from our analysis. This exclusion criterion results in a total of 524 municipalities being removed from the sample, which only accounts for 6.2% of the entire population of municipalities.

Table B-2 presents descriptive statistics for the municipalities that have been excluded from our analysis. These municipalities are characterized by their small size, with an average population of approximately 1,366 residents. However, it is important to highlight that the correlation between BDem and ADELE, as shown in Figures B-3 and B-4 in the Appendix, is consistently high and close to unity during election years for both native and immigrant flows. This indicates a strong agreement between the two data sources in terms of measuring people's mobility. Therefore, we can confidently assert that both BDem and ADELE provide reliable measures of mobility. For the purpose of replication, our main results and figures will be presented using BDem data, as it is publicly available.

In our empirical analysis, we use the net inflows of people as a proxy for the attractiveness of a municipality. To calculate this variable, we take the net inflow of people and normalize it by the population size of the municipality in the year 2006. This approach has

[1]The ADELE dataset provides validated information on skill dimensions since 2012, exclusively for Italian citizens. Hence, our estimations can only include data on the education dimension from 2012 onwards, limited to Italian individuals.

been used in previous studies that examine the effect of electoral outcomes on immigrant mobility (Bracco et al., 2018, Schmutz and Verdugo, 2023). However, we extend these studies by computing the net inflow of people for different groups $g \in G$, based on their citizenship status (Italians vs. foreigners), gender (male vs. female), age groups (0-17, 18-37, 38-57, 58+), education levels (college graduates vs. less educated individuals), and continent of origin (for foreigners only).[2] Our dependent variables are denoted by $\text{Net Flow}^{g}_{m,r,t}$ for municipality $m \in M$ in region $r \in R$ at year $t$, and are defined as follows:

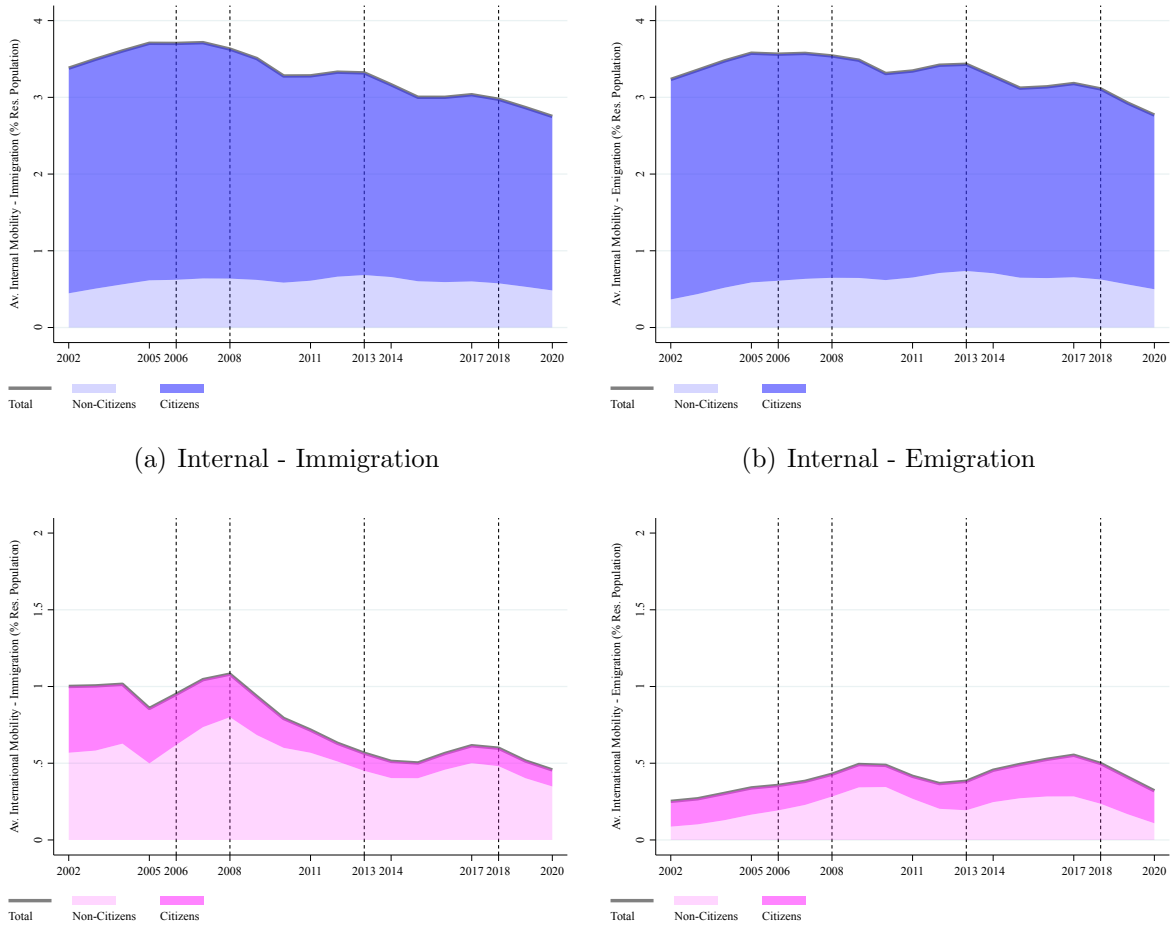
$$\text{Net Flow}^{g}_{m,r,t} = \frac{(\text{New Registrations})^{g}_{m,r,t} - (\text{Cancellations})^{g}_{m,r,t}}{(\text{Population})^{g}_{2006}}. \tag{1}$$

To link them with election years, we first sum the flows over the election year $t$ and the subsequent year $t+1$. We also consider variants of this measure, aggregating net inflows over the full period of office.

Figure 5 illustrates the changes in internal and international movements of people over time, utilizing a moving average that includes one year before and after each recorded year. The vertical lines represent national election years, while it is important to note that municipal elections are held throughout the years. These figures highlight two primary stylized facts. Firstly, internal mobility (i.e., movement of people within Italian municipalities) is at least three times greater than international mobility (i.e., movement of people between Italian municipalities and foreign countries). Additionally, international and internal mobility follow distinct trajectories and are characterized by different demographic compositions. Mobility across Italian municipalities (both in terms of inflows and outflows) has been declining since 2006, primarily driven by Italian citizens. On the other hand, international mobility exhibits a more ambiguous trend and is primarily influenced by foreigners.

[2]The normalization by population size is group-specific for age and education, while is on the total population for the other groups.

Figure 5: Evolution of Internal and International Mobility




(a) Internal - Immigration

(b) Internal - Emigration

(c) International - Immigration

(d) International - Emigration

Notes: Authors' elaboration based on data from the ISTAT. The figures show moving averages including one year before and one year after each date of newly registered individuals and cancelled individuals over the resident population in 2006. The vertical lines indicate the four national elections in our sample.

# 3 Empirical model

We test whether the local exposure to populism in national and municipal election influences the size and structure of net population flows. Our general specification can be expressed as:

$$\text{Net Flow}^{g}_{m,r,t} = \alpha^{g} + \beta^{g}\text{Exposure}_{m,r,t} + \gamma^{g}\mathbf{X}_{m,r,t} + \theta^{g}_{m} + \eta^{g}_{r,t} + \epsilon^{g}_{m,r,t}, \tag{2}$$

where $\text{Net Flow}^{g}_{m,r,t}$ is the net population inflow of type-$g$ individuals in municipality $m$ of region $r$ at year $t$, $\text{Exposure}_{m,r,t}$ is the local exposure to populism in municipality $m$, $\mathbf{X}_{m,r,t}$ is a set of control variables (potentially acting as bad controls and used in robustness regressions only), $\theta^{g}_{m}$ is a municipality fixed effect, $\eta^{g}_{r,t}$ is a region-by-year fixed effect capturing region-specific (i.e., NUTS 2) time trends, and $\epsilon^{g}_{m,r,t}$ is the error term. This specification is particularly demanding as it seeks to exploit the within-municipality variations across elections to estimate the impact of $\text{Exposure}_{m,r,t}$ on the attractiveness of municipalities.

All estimates can be tailored to a specific population group $g$.

To proxy local exposure to populism, we use electoral results from both national and municipal elections. While the results of national elections may not directly affect local policies, they are likely to reflect personal values and attitudes towards traditional parties. Hence, we test whether the vote share of populist parties in national elections, denoted by $\text{Exposure}^{N}_{m,r,t}$ and observed in years $t \in \{2006, 2008, 2013, 2018\}$, has an impact on the attractiveness of municipalities. In contrast, municipal election results impact local policies, as evidenced in Bellodi et al. (2024) and Bracco et al. (2018), and a trivialization of populist discourses and behaviors, carrying direct implications for the well-being of the resident population. Therefore, we also examine whether the election of a populist mayor in a given municipality, denoted by the dummy variable $\text{Exposure}^{M}_{m,r,t}$ and observed along the years 2002 to 2020, influences the location choices of type-$g$ individuals.

**Identification Strategy.** – Estimating Eq. (2) with ordinary least squares (OLS) would give us the partial correlation between human mobility and populist votes. However, the lack of clear exogenous variation in the share of votes for populists undermines any direct causal interpretation of our estimates. This is first due to reverse causation problems, as other studies have shown that the education level, origin and mobility choices of residents have a direct effect on the local support for populist parties (Anelli and Peri, 2017, Docquier et al., 2022, Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022). In addition, despite including a large number of fixed effects in the regression, our estimates may suffer from omitted variable bias. These concerns are likely to invalidate any causal interpretation of Eq. (2).

As a first attempt to address endogeneity concerns in our analysis, we use an instrumental variable approach. Specifically, we use a combination of collective memory and trigger variables to instrument variations in the vote share of populist parties. Our method builds on several studies that show how major past events can have a lasting impact on the present under specific circumstances (Cantoni et al., 2021, Ochsner and Roesel, 2017, Rozenas and Zhukov, 2019). This implies that collective memory and political legacies can influence current behavior (Acemoglu et al., 2022, Simpser et al., 2018, Tur-Prats and Valencia Caicedo, 2020, Voigtländer and Voth, 2012). For instance, Cantoni et al. (2021) found that variations in the vote shares for AfD across municipalities in the 2017 German federal election are correlated with support for the Nazi party in 1933. Similarly, Fouka and Voth (2022) show that regional disparities in backlash against Germany after the Greek debt crisis of 2009 are linked to the number of victims from massacres perpetrated by German troops during World War II. These analyses suggest that institutionalized collective memory can amplify the effects of contemporary political conflict between nations.

The 2007-09 financial crisis has contributed to dissatisfaction and mistrust in democratic institutions, and constituted the watershed of the shift toward populism. This crisis has had a profound impact on both the demand for and supply of populism (see Guiso et al., 2022). This impact may have resulted in an upsurge of populism across all Italian municipalities, albeit to a lesser extent in those with preexisting aversion to radical parties. To proxy for

this aversion, we use municipality-level data on the number of victims of fascist persecutions during World War II. Our instrumental variable approach involves a first-stage regression, given by:

$$\text{Exposure}_{m,r,t} = \lambda + \delta \text{Victims}_{m,r} \times \mathbf{1}_{t>2008} + \rho \mathbf{X}_{m,r,t} + \pi_m + \mu_{r,t} + \zeta_{m,r,t}, \tag{3}$$

where $\text{Victims}_{m,r}$ is the ratio of the number of victims of persecution by Nazis and fascists in the years 1943-45 to the population (weighted by the number of violent events), and $\mathbf{1}_{t>2008}$ is a dummy variable equal to one in the post-2008 period. Municipality and region-year fixed effects, denoted by $\pi_m$ and $\mu_{r,t}$ respectively, are included in the regression to control for time-invariant and time-varying unobserved factors – encompassing the direct impact of both aversion to radical parties and the crisis. The error term, $\zeta_{m,r,t}$, captures unexplained variations in $\text{Exposure}_{m,r,t}$.

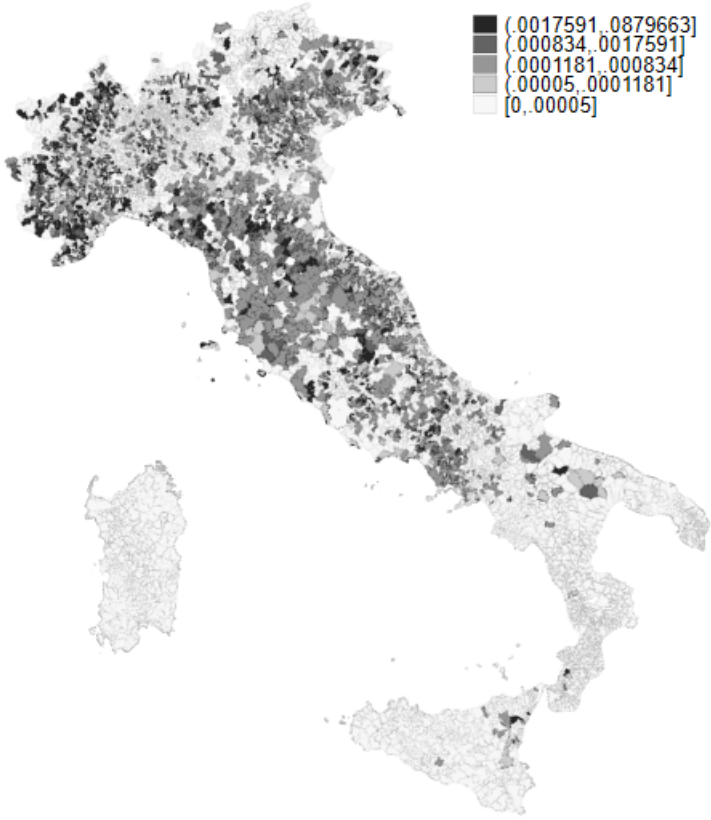
The data on the victims of fascist aggression comes from the "Atlas of Nazi and Fascist Massacres" (ANPI-INSMLI, 2021). The Atlas provides a census of all episodes of Nazi-fascist violence on Italian soil from July 1943 to May 1945, documenting over 5,500 incidents of Nazi-fascist aggression that claimed 23,000 victims, and detailing the time and place of each incident. Gagliarducci et al. (2020) rely on the same data to explore the effect of BBC radio diffusion on Italian resistance during WWII. The data set also provides information on the nature of the victims and the underlying reasons or forms of violence. In particular, the Atlas categorises victims as civilians or partisans and facilitates the identification of those affected by Nazi-fascist aggression related to either partisan or public resistance, such as reprisals, roundups, punitive expeditions, territorial control and desertification.

Being formed by a time-invariant geographical component and a time-varying shock, our instrumental variable approach exhibits notable similarities to the shift-share instrumental variables (Borusyak et al., 2022, Goldsmith-Pinkham et al., 2020). These similarities offer advantages in terms of both the identifying assumption and the desired exogenous variation we seek to utilize in our instrumental variable (IV) setting. Firstly, our identifying assumption hinges on the exogeneity of the shares, indicating that the victim ratio is independent of current socioeconomic conditions in municipalities and does not account for outcome variations prior to the economic crisis. This exogeneity of the share, as demonstrated by Goldsmith-Pinkham et al. (2020), serves as a sufficient condition for the instrument's validity. In the subsequent section, we present empirical results that validate this assumption. Secondly, the exogenous variation we exploit is primarily driven by municipalities impacted by Nazi and fascist persecution. Consequently, the local exogenous variation is solely derived from municipalities affected by these persecutions.

Figure 6 illustrates the distribution of victims of fascist persecutions during the period of 1943-45, which was computed based on the atlas of Nazi-fascist massacres in Italy. This atlas contains a comprehensive list of all the killings, massacres, and mass murders of Italian civilians committed in Italy during World War II, with over 5,300 such episodes and a total death toll exceeding 22,000 civilians, predominantly comprising children, women, and the elderly. The majority of these atrocities occurred in the North-Western and Central regions

of Italy (above Campania), displaying significant heterogeneity across municipalities. These variations serve as the foundation of the instrumental variable approach we utilize.

Figure 6: Share of Victims of Fascist Persecutions Per Capita and Per Event (1943-45)




Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from the Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. The figure plot the share of victims by event divided by the local population in 1951.

**First-Stage Regressions.** – Table 1 presents the results of our first-stage regressions for the national election results. In Col. (1), we provide the baseline linear specification depicted in Eq. (3), which is estimated using the full sample of municipalities and election years. The top panel of the table excludes (bad) control variables that may be affected by populism, while the bottom panel includes the unemployment rate and the average level of income per resident. Our instrument is a robust predictor of the variation in populism between the pre- and post-crisis period, regardless of whether we include controls or not.

In Cols. (2-3), we exclude municipalities where the vote share of populist parties is zero (approximately 3,000 observations) or where we cannot identify any victims of fascist attacks (approximately 21,000 observations), respectively. The latter variant increases the size of our estimates. Finally, in Cols. (4-5), we introduce non-linear specifications using the log transformation of the dependent variable: the results are qualitatively similar to the baseline specifications.

Table 2 examines the impact of our collective memory variable on the variation in vote

Table 1: First-Stage Results (National Election)

| | Votes Share | | | Transformed Votes Share | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) Baseline | (2) No Votes for Populist | (3) No Victims of Fascist | (4) Logarithm Transf. | (5) Asinh Transf. |
| Panel (a) - No Controls | | | | | |
| Victims$_{m,r} \times \mathbf{1}_{t>2008}$ | –1.469*** | –1.373*** | –1.747*** | –4.580*** | –1.378*** |
| | (0.346) | (0.382) | (0.331) | (0.969) | (0.314) |
| Observations | 29344 | 26550 | 8432 | 29344 | 29344 |
| Municipalities | 7336 | 7336 | 2108 | 7336 | 7336 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.931 | 0.938 | 0.950 | 0.926 | 0.932 |
| Panel (b) - With Controls | | | | | |
| Victims$_{m,r} \times \mathbf{1}_{t>2008}$ | –1.425*** | –1.319*** | –1.690*** | –4.737*** | –1.346*** |
| | (0.343) | (0.375) | (0.324) | (0.980) | (0.312) |
| Unempl. Rate | 0.311*** | 0.350*** | 0.246** | 0.500*** | 0.266*** |
| | (0.057) | (0.059) | (0.097) | (0.187) | (0.053) |
| Income | –0.011** | –0.012** | –0.014* | 0.093*** | –0.007* |
| | (0.005) | (0.005) | (0.007) | (0.016) | (0.004) |
| Observations | 29344 | 26550 | 8432 | 29344 | 29344 |
| Municipalities | 7336 | 7336 | 2108 | 7336 | 7336 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.932 | 0.938 | 0.950 | 0.926 | 0.932 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

shares of populist parties across national election pairs, rather than pooling all election years together. Our findings indicate that the instrument is particularly influential in explaining the variation between the election years of 2008 and 2013 (i.e., pre-post financial crisis), as well as the variation between 2008 and 2018, and the first and last national elections. It has no significant impact on the variations observed before the financial crisis (i.e. from 2006 to 2008) or after (i.e. from 2013 to 2018).

The intuition behind our IV approach is that historical events can persist over time in form of collective memory and remembrance. Although the exploration of the precise mechanisms responsible for the construction and evolution of such memories lies beyond the scope of this paper, we do offer suggestive evidence regarding one avenue through which such memory is established: the naming of streets and public spaces. To elaborate further, we check the correlation between the share of victims and the share of streets named in commemoration of the victims of Nazi and fascist massacres. The data and results are presented in Appendix C. Figure C-5 illustrates a notable positive and statistically significant correlation between the historical occurrence of a massacre and the contemporary prevalence of streets dedicated to commemorating these events. This finding suggests that the act of naming streets may have played a role in fostering and sustaining the collective memory associated with these events.

Our identification strategy is akin to a Bartik or shift-share approach that combines

Table 2: First-Stage Results: Election-by-Election Differences

| | One Diff. | | | Two Diff. | | Three Diff. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) 2006-2008 | (2) 2008-2013 | (3) 2013-2018 | (4) 2006-2013 | (5) 2008-2018 | (6) 2006-2018 |
| Panel A - Votes Populist | | | | | | |
| $\text{Victims}_{m,r}$ | 0.399 | –0.988** | –0.533 | –0.589 | –1.526*** | –1.125** |
| | (0.243) | (0.384) | (0.391) | (0.359) | (0.497) | (0.453) |
| Observations | 7336 | 7336 | 7336 | 7336 | 7336 | 7336 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.394 | 0.540 | 0.430 | 0.573 | 0.598 | 0.635 |

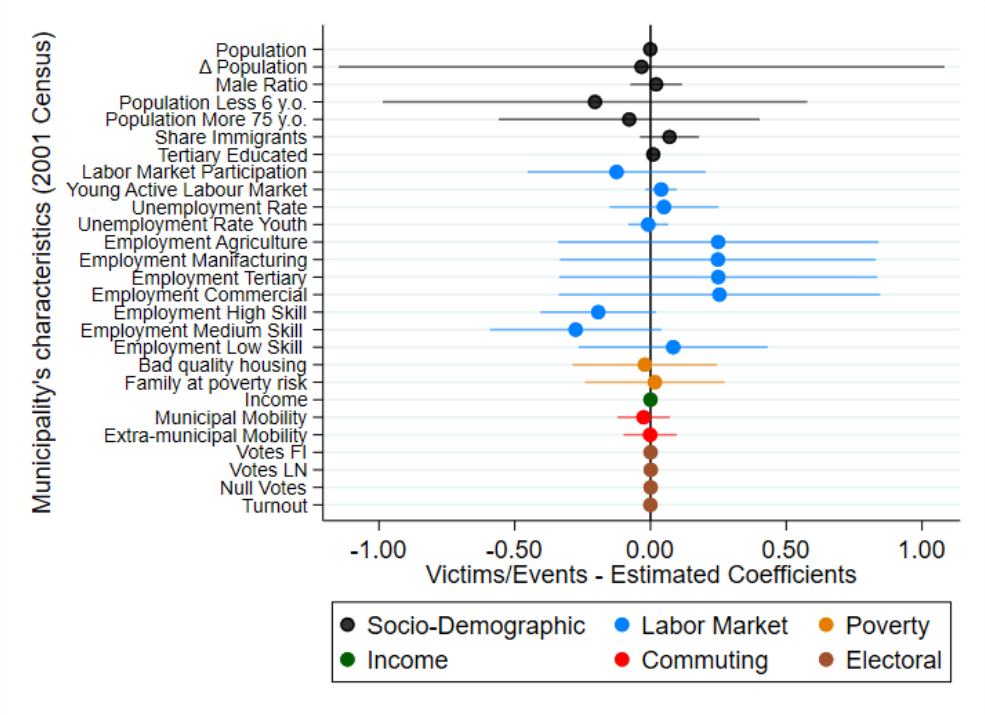
Notes: authors' calculation on Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

differential aversion towards populism (the "share" component) with a common shock that potentially affects the demand for populism in all municipalities (the "shift" component). One major concern is that the share component (i.e. the number of victims of Nazi and fascist attacks during World War II) may influence the level of our dependent variable before the shock or through channels other than those implied by the financial crisis. To address this concern and validate our research design, we follow Goldsmith-Pinkham et al. (2020) and perform two empirical tests to reassure the plausibility of our identifying assumption.

First, in Figure 7, we examine the relationship between various municipality-level characteristics obtained from the Italian census of 2001 and the share of victims of Nazi and fascist massacres. We present the main estimates along with their 95% confidence intervals. None of these partial correlations exhibit significant deviations from zero, indicating that the cross-sectional variation employed to construct our instrumental variable (IV) is unrelated to other sociodemographic, economic, and electoral outcomes across different municipalities. Additionally, the R-squared of these regressions, as shown in Table C-2 in the Appendix, are small, suggesting a weak correlation between municipal characteristics at the beginning of our analysis period and the "share component" of our instrument (Goldsmith-Pinkham et al., 2020). This reassuring outcome implies that our exogenous variation source across municipalities is not correlated with other factors that could predict changes in voting outcomes.

The absence of correlation with a diverse range of municipal characteristics at the start of our analysis period aligns with our identifying assumption based on the exogeneity of victim distribution. However, it is important to note that this condition is not essential for the validity of our identification strategy. What matters most is that the share of victims of Nazi and fascist attacks, when considered independently, does not serve as a predictor of changes in population movements. To further explore this aspect, we conduct a second series of tests summarized in Figure 8. These tests involve regressing the yearly and between-election variations of our main dependent variable, namely the net inflows of Italians or foreigners from other municipalities or abroad ($\text{Net Flow}^{g}_{m,r,t}$), for each year

Figure 7: Relationship Between Victims$_{m,r}$ and Municipalities Characteristics in 2001



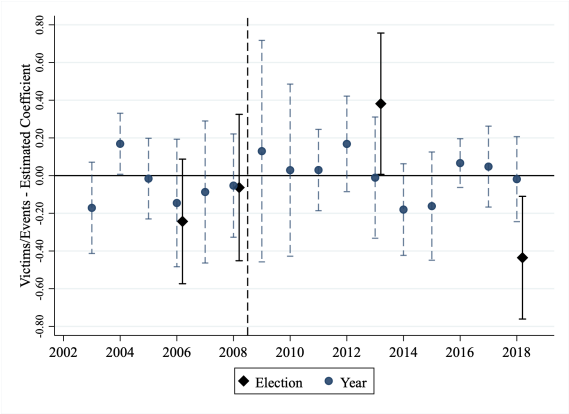

Notes: authors' calculation on Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres, and data from the 2001 Italian Census. The figure reports the estimated coefficients and the 95% confidence interval from a linear regression, having the share of victims/events adjusted by the population as dependent variable. Robust standard errors clustered at regional level, and regional fixed effects are included. Detailed regression results are available in Appendix C.

from 2002 to 2018, on the share of victims of Nazi and fascist massacres.[3] The results generally indicate minimal and statistically insignificant correlations prior to the financial crisis. These findings provide additional support for the parallel pretrend hypothesis that underpins our identifying assumption. In sum, our instrument works well in the national election context, where electoral lists remain uniform across municipalities, and has passed parallel pretrend tests while accurately anticipating changes in populist vote shares.

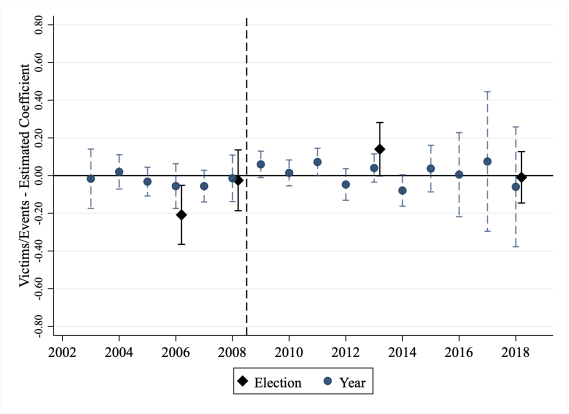
In Table 3, we test whether the instrument is equally effective in the municipal election context, where electoral lists differ among municipalities, and populist candidates/mayors are identified in a minority of municipalities only (i.e. 20 to 30%). In Cols. (1-2), we find that the instrument is a weaker predictor of the municipal vote shares of populist parties, and of the probability of having a populist mayor. While it is a better predictor of the likelihood of having no votes for populist candidates, as shown in Cols. (3-4), the instrument is still not strong enough. Consequently, we require an alternate approach to deal with endogeneity in the municipal election context.

[3]For the between-election variation for the election in 2006, we compute it as the difference in the net flows between 2006 and 2002.

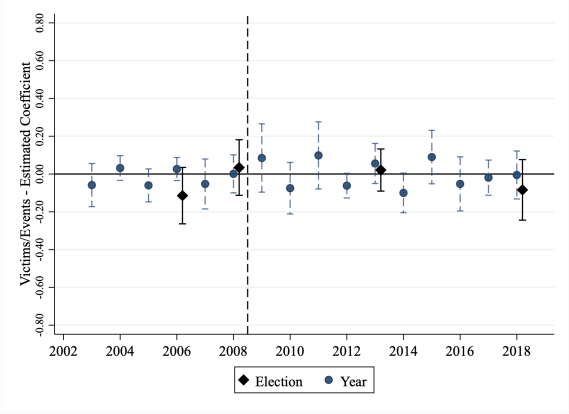
Figure 8: Parallel Pretrends Tests (Dependent = Net Flow$^{g}_{m,r,t}$)



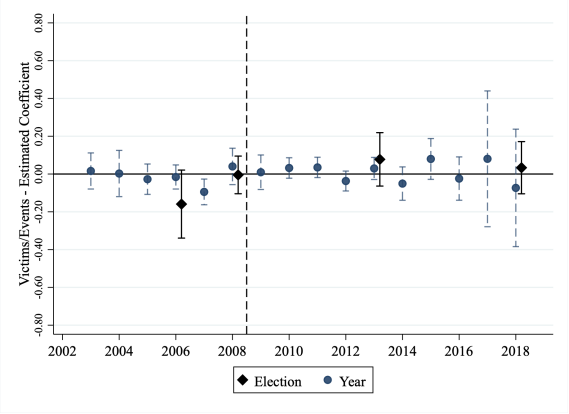

(a) Internal Mobility - Total Pop.



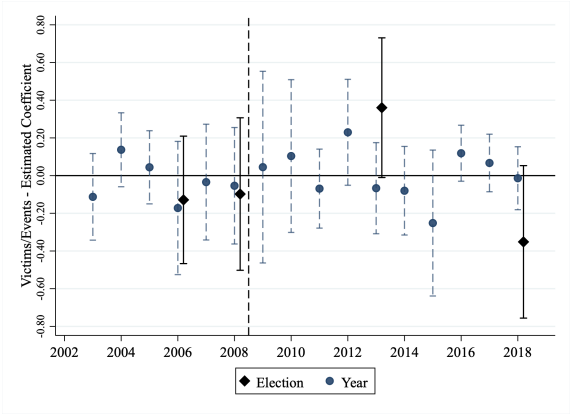

(b) International Mobility - Total Pop.



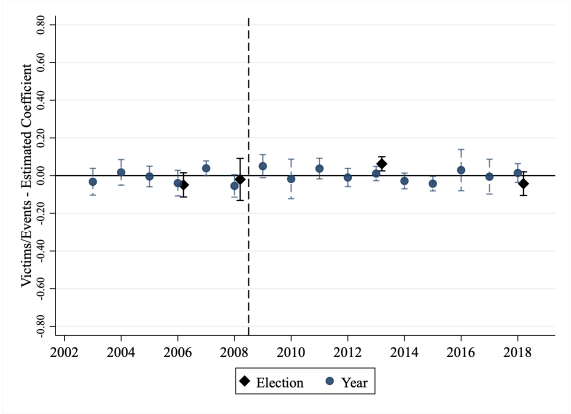

(c) Internal Mobility - Non-Citizens




(d) International Mobility - Non-Citizens




(e) Internal Mobility - Citizens




(f) International Mobility - Citizens

Note: the figures report the partial correlation between the share of victims over events and the yearly or election variation of the internal and international mobility of the total, citizens and non-citizens population. Estimated coefficient and confidence interval at 95% level are reported. The regressions includes regional fixed effects, and error terms are clustered at regional level.

Table 3: First-Stage Results (Municipal Election)

| | Votes for Populist | | Not Voting for Populist | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) Without Controls | (2) With Controls | (3) Without Controls | (4) With Controls |
| Victims$_{m,r} \times \mathbf{1}_{t>2008}$ | –0.622* | –0.612* | 1.878* | 1.851* |
| | (0.363) | (0.360) | (0.973) | (0.969) |
| Unempl. Rate | | 0.001 | | –0.006* |
| | | (0.001) | | (0.003) |
| Income | | –0.000 | | –0.000 |
| | | (0.000) | | (0.000) |
| Observations | 21352 | 21351 | 21352 | 21351 |
| Municipalities | 6910 | 6910 | 6910 | 6910 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.616 | 0.616 | 0.614 | 0.614 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses.The dependent variable is the share of votes for populist parties (col. 1 and 2) and a dummy equal to one if there were no populist parties running for the municipal election (Cols. 3 and 4). Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

**RDD Approach.** – As the IV approach is less effective in the municipal elections context, we follow the approach of other studies (Bellodi et al., 2024, Bordignon and Colussi, 2020, Bracco et al., 2018, Casarico et al., 2021, Gagliarducci and Nannicini, 2013, Romarri, 2020), and use a close-election regression discontinuity design (RDD) to estimate the local average treatment effect of winning candidates' characteristics on post-election population movements. The identifying strategy relies on the fact that municipalities where populist candidates win the elections by very thin margins can be, in expectation, comparable to municipalities where the populist candidate barely lost.

To define the impact of a populist candidate winning a municipal election against one or more non-populist candidates, we start by considering the set of municipalities $P$ where this contest occurs. In each municipality $m \in P$, we calculate the margin of victory of the populist candidate, denoted by $\delta_m$, which is obtained by subtracting the vote share of the most voted non-populist candidate from the vote share of the populist candidate. We can then define the effect that a populist mayor has on the attractiveness of a municipality as:

$$\tau \equiv \lim_{\varepsilon \downarrow x} \mathbf{E}\left[\text{Net Flow}^{g}_{m,r,t} | \delta_m = \varepsilon\right] - \lim_{\varepsilon \uparrow x} \mathbf{E}\left[\text{Net Flow}^{g}_{m,r,t} | \delta_m = -\varepsilon\right], \tag{4}$$

which corresponds to the local average treatment effect (LATE) of electing a populist candidate right at the cutoff (Cattaneo et al., 2019a).

The RDD estimator used in this study aims to recover the combined effect of electing populist candidates, rather than just their populist attributes. This is an essential clarification since populists may differ from non-populists in other characteristics that could also contribute to close electoral outcomes (Marshall, 2022). To estimate the impact of electing a populist mayor, we adopt a continuity-based framework and employ non-parametric local polynomial methods for estimation and inference. We fit local weighted least squares

(WLS) models, where weights are based on the triangular kernel function, which takes into account the distance of unit $m$ from the cutoff $x$ and the mean-squared-error-minimizing bandwidth $h$. Units closer to the cutoff are given larger weights, while those outside the optimal bandwidth receive a weight of zero. This results in estimation being performed on a restricted sample of units where the margin of victory, $\delta_m$, falls within the interval $[-h, h]$. To determine the optimal bandwidth, we use an automatic bandwidth selector proposed by Calonico et al. (2022) that aims to minimize the mean-squared-error of the local polynomial RDD point estimator. Mayoral elections are held in the spring or in the fall, hence we subset the data to the year after the elections up until the year before the following elections. The estimates are therefore the average yearly effect of electing a populist mayor from the year after the elections until the end of the mayoral term.

In Appendix G we present standard falsification tests in support of the continuity assumptions of the RD estimator. In support of the continuity of density assumption, we document the absence of sorting at the cutoff with density tests aimed at detecting whether there is a proportional number of elections where populist candidates barely won or lost (Figure G-1). Additionally, we show that there are no discontinuities at the cutoff for a battery of pre-determined covariates to lend support to the continuity of potential outcomes assumption (see Figure G-2). In Figure G-3 we show that there are no effects at alternative placebo margins of victory. We also show that the estimates are overall robust to alternative bandwidth selections (Figure G-4).

# 4 Results

In this section, we provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of local populist attitudes on selective mobility, focusing on the results of the second-stage regressions for the national election analysis (Section 4.1). Next, we examine the influence of local politics and living conditions, as indicated by the outcomes of the municipal elections (Section 4.2). By organizing our presentation in this manner, we aim to provide a clear and structured discussion of our findings and highlight the broader implications of our results.

## 4.1 Local Attitudes and Selective Mobility (National Elections)

We posit that individuals' voting behavior in national elections reflects their personal values, attitudes, or trust in traditional political parties. We estimate the impact of these populist attitudes on patterns of population movement.

**IV Regressions.** – Table 4 and Table D-1 present the results of our regression analysis. Both tables follow the same structure. Panel (a) at the top presents a parsimonious regression without controls, while Panel (b) at the bottom adds controls for unemployment rate and average income level. The left part of each table reports OLS regression results,

while the right panel uses an instrumental variable approach to estimate the causal effect of populist attitudes on net migration flows.

Table 4: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes

| | OLS | | | 2SLS | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) Total | (2) Non-Citizens | (3) Citizens | (4) Total | (5) Non-Citizens | (6) Citizens |
| Panel (a) - No Controls | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.025*** | –0.001 | –0.024*** | –0.210* | –0.029 | –0.181** |
| | (0.003) | (0.001) | (0.003) | (0.108) | (0.060) | (0.072) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | 18.316 | 18.316 | 18.316 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.270 | 0.094 | 0.275 | –0.237 | –0.037 | –0.212 |
| Panel (b) - With Controls | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.025*** | –0.001 | –0.024*** | –0.221* | –0.031 | –0.190** |
| | (0.003) | (0.001) | (0.003) | (0.115) | (0.062) | (0.077) |
| Unempl. Rate | 0.010 | 0.003 | 0.007 | 0.071* | 0.012 | 0.059** |
| | (0.014) | (0.005) | (0.013) | (0.040) | (0.020) | (0.029) |
| Income | –0.003* | –0.001 | –0.003* | –0.006** | –0.001 | –0.005** |
| | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.003) | (0.001) | (0.002) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | 17.551 | 17.551 | 17.551 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.270 | 0.094 | 0.275 | –0.265 | –0.042 | –0.237 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

Table 4 focuses on the effect of populist attitudes on net migration flows across national municipalities (i.e. internal flows). OLS regressions show a negative and highly significant association between populist attitudes and the net inflow of internal migrants. This negative association is obtained for the total population and Italian nationals, but statistically insignificant for foreigners. The instrumental variable approach reveals a stronger effect, which can be explained by a correction of an upward bias of the inflows or a downward bias of the outflows.[4] Concerning the magnitude, a 10 percentage-point increase in the vote share for populist parties leading to a 1.8 percentage-point decrease in net inflows of citizens. Taking into account the average population size of the municipality available in Table B-1, it would result in a net flow of 130 individuals, on average. Controlling for local economic conditions hardly affects the results. Hence, the populism effect does not seem to be driven by short-term changes in local economic conditions, as a limited number of individuals are employed in their own municipality of residence.

[4] Anticipating the results presented in Figure 10, our identification strategy mainly correct the downward bias of the outflows.

In Table D-1 in Appendix, we conduct similar regressions but focus on the net inflows of international movers. While the association between populist attitudes and the net inflow of foreign nationals is slightly negative and weakly significant, the instrumental variable approach fails to identify a causal relationship between these variables. These results do not suggest any strong relationship between voting outcomes and international mobility.

We validate our findings through a series of robustness checks presented in the Appendix D. Firstly, in Appendix D.1, we demonstrate the robustness of our results by using alternative classifications of populist parties, highlighting that our effects are not driven by the inclusion of *Popolo delle Libertà* among populist parties, and are consistent after focusing just on the *Movimento 5 Stelle*, or relying on a time-varying definition of populist parties from Docquier et al. (2022).

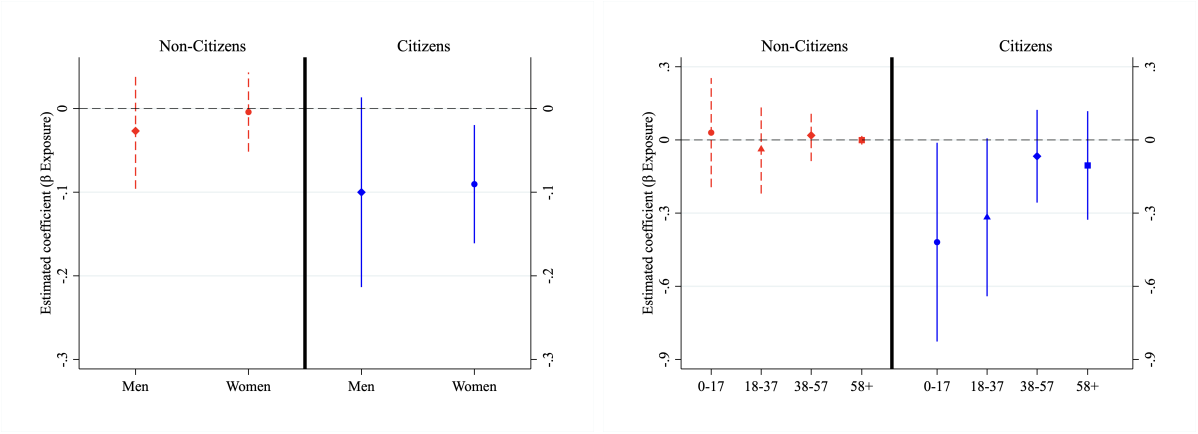
Secondly, Appendix D.2 presents results regarding net internal mobility flows, considering either an extended time frame or the years preceding the electoral results. Interestingly, the effect remains qualitatively consistent and becomes quantitatively stronger when we consider this extended period, indicating that natives' mobility choices may require some time to materialize. However, it is important to interpret these results cautiously due to the limited time span between our national electoral events. Furthermore, our IV approach does not reveal any statistically significant relationship between exposure to populism and net flows before the elections. This suggests that our results are not influenced by pre-planned migration choices, confirming the validity of our identification strategy in harnessing a genuine source of exogenous variation.

In Appendix D.3, we show that our results remain highly robust when excluding some election-years or NUTS 1 macro regions from the sample, or relying on alternative migration data sources. Moreover, results are robust after including province (i.e., NUTS 3) by year fixed effects, reinforcing the intuition that the effect is more likely to be driven by the attitudes of the local population and captured by their voting preferences rather than policies implemented by the national legislator at regional or provincial level (Albornoz et al., 2021).

In Appendix D.4 we control for turnout, as potential mediating variable. Voters can express their preferences through voting, or showing dissatisfaction by showing political apathy. Our results show that political apathy has similar effects on natives voters mobility as populist vote: lower turnout is associated with a lower level of attractiveness of municipalities for natives. This results are consistent with the intuition that both populist votes and political apathy are proxy of people's discontent within a democracy. However, the impact of turnout on net flows is deemed insignificant at the 5% threshold.

Lastly, we conducted an analysis to examine potential heterogeneity in our results, considering both individual and municipality characteristics. Detailed results are available in Appendix E. Figure 9 presents the 2SLS estimates illustrating the impact of populism on the internal mobility of foreigners and natives, categorized by gender (Panel (a)) and age (Panel (b)). Panel (a) reveals a precisely estimated repulsive effect of populism among Italian women. Furthermore, Panel (b) indicates that the repulsive effect is more pronounced

Figure 9: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes - Heterogeneity (Gender and Age)




(a) Gender (b) Age

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from BDem, ADELE and Electoral Data (Eligendo). The figures report 2SLS coefficient estimates for $\beta^g$ on Non-Citizens (left panels, represented by dashed red lines) and Citizens (right panels, represented by solid blue lines). In Figure (a), diamond and dot symbols represent men and women, respectively, as dependent variables. In Figure (b), dot, triangle, diamond, and square symbols correspond to age groups 0-17, 18-37, 38-57, and 57+ as dependent variables, respectively. 90% confidence intervals are reported. Regression results are reported in Tables E-1 and E-2 in the Appendix.

among young individuals (i.e., those aged below 37), potentially including households with children, as the most responsive group of movers includes individuals aged below 17. These findings suggest that the negative impact is stronger within groups particularly concerned about future opportunities for themselves and their children. Table E-3 reveals that the absence of an effect on the internal mobility of foreigners persists even when distinguishing immigrants based on their continent of origin. Tables E-5 and E-6 shows that the repulsive effect of populist attitudes is unrelated to municipality population size or the share of immigrants in the population.

Finally, we provide suggestive evidence of the relationship between the skill-specific response of natives to support of populism.[5] Table E-4 shows that the size of the estimated relationship for college-educated natives is almost three times higher than for less educated natives, although the estimation is imprecise.

**Mechanisms** – We thus find that exposure to populist attitudes impacts the attractiveness of municipalities for Italian citizens, and mainly for young and female citizens. To strengthen our interpretation, we perform three additional sets of regressions.

First, to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of populist votes on municipality attractiveness and their influence on the mobility decisions of potential newcomers, we

[5]Due to the availability of education-specific data only from 2012, our IV approach relying on post-2008 financial crisis variation cannot be adopted. Hence, the presented results rely on the estimation of a first-difference model, which should not be interpreted with causal meaning.

conduct a decomposition analysis of our net flow measure. This analysis allows us to examine whether the reduced attractiveness resulting from populist votes has a significant effect on *inflows* by decreasing them or if it prompts residents of municipalities to relocate, leading to an increase in *outflows*. Figure 10 illustrates the 2SLS estimates of the effects of populist votes on the inflows and outflows of migrants and natives, revealing a noteworthy positive effect of populist votes on Italian outflows.[6] The impact on inflows is negative and five times smaller, albeit not significantly different from zero. This suggests that the influence of populism on the decision to depart from a municipality and the subsequent choice of settlement location is asymmetric. Our results consistently align with previous findings, as we find no statistically significant effects among immigrants, further supporting the interpretation that the reduced attractiveness resulting from populist votes serves as a push factor for the mobility choices of native residents. This finding corresponds to the idea that Italian residents respond to changes in attitudes or behaviors within their own municipality, as reflected by the voting preferences of their fellow residents.

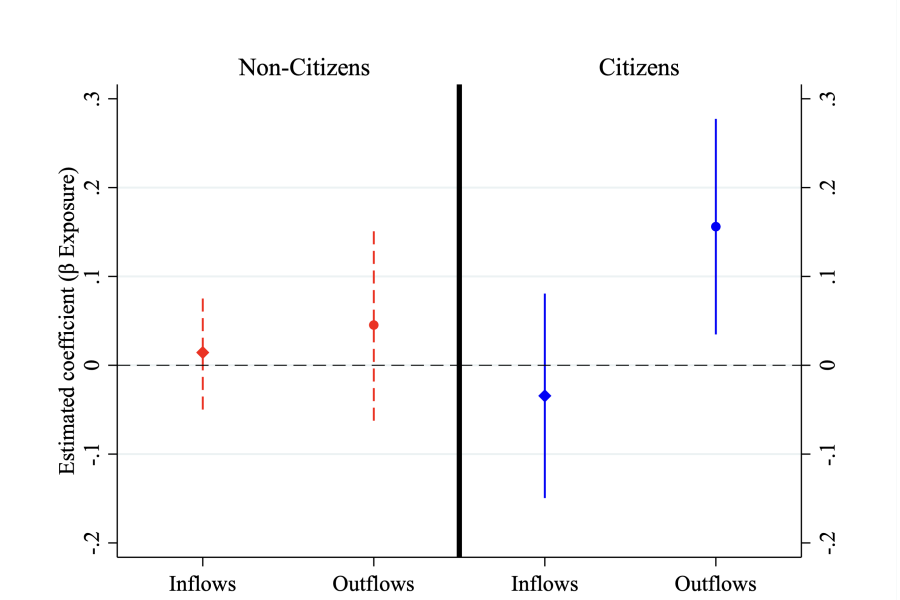
Second, we also examine the correlation between populist vote shares and *partisan newspaper readership*. In Italy, newspapers are known to play a significant role in determining electoral outcomes and voter preferences (Drago et al., 2014, Durante and Knight, 2012). Additionally, the media has a vital role in shaping and polarizing individual attitudes and beliefs (Keita et al., 2021, Schneider-Strawczynski and Valette, 2021). If an increase in populist votes is associated with a more widespread partisan readership, it could exacerbate extreme attitudes, leading to a more polarized and less attractive municipality for both potential internal migrants and stayers.

To analyze the correlation, we utilize data from the *Accertamenti Diffusione Stampa* (ADS) Association, which provides yearly data on the average daily diffusion of newspapers. This measurement is calculated as the total copies sold, plus subscriptions minus the returned copies. Editorial groups rely on ADS measurements to have independent, reliable, and certified measures of the diffusion of their products such as newspapers and magazines. We collect province-level (NUTS 3) data from 2005 to 2020, which is the most detailed geographical unit available.

We collect such data to construct a measure of relative diffusion of both traditional and populist-leaning newspapers. For populist-leaning newspapers, we include *il Fatto Quotidiano*, *il Giornale*, *Libero*, and *La Verità*. These newspapers are aligned with different political parties: *il Fatto Quotidiano*, created in 2010, is more in favor of the *Movimento 5 Stelle*, while *il Giornale* and *Libero* are right-wing leaning newspapers. Concerning traditional newspapers, we consider *il Corriere della sera*, *la Repubblica*, *la Stampa*, and *Avvenire*. We

[6]For detailed results, please refer to Table F-1 in the Appendix, which presents the detailed regression results in three panels: total population (Panel (a)), foreign population (Panel (b)), and Italian population (Panel (c)). All regressions include a comprehensive set of municipal-level controls and fixed effects, as outlined in Eq. (2). The findings indicate that populist votes do not significantly impact the extensive margin of internal mobility, suggesting no effect on new inflow or outflow events (Cols. (1-2)). However, a positive effect on the outflow of Italians, both in terms of variation of levels and logarithms, is observed.

Figure 10: Internal Mobility and Populism Vote
Decomposing the Flows




Source: Authors' elaboration based on Electoral Data (Eligendo) and the Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. The figure presents 2SLS coefficient estimates for $\beta^g$ on Non-Citizens (left panel, indicated by dashed red lines) and Citizens (right panel, indicated by solid blue lines). In the figure, diamond and dot symbols represent Inflows and Outflows, respectively, as the dependent variables. 90% confidence intervals are reported. Detailed results available in Table F-1 in the Appendix

then compute for each province $p$ and newspaper $n$ the sum of the diffusion over the election year $t$ and the subsequent year $t+1$. We then construct the ratio of the sum of the populist-leaning newspapers to the sum of the traditional newspapers for each province and election year. This allows us to measure the relative diffusion of populist-leaning newspapers in a given province and year, compared to traditional newspapers:

$$\text{Ratio News}_{n,p,t} = \frac{\text{Diff}_{n,p,t}}{\text{Diff}_{X,p,t}} \tag{5}$$

where $\text{Diff}_{X,p,t}$ is the diffusion of all the traditional newspapers included in the vector $X \in \{Corriere, Repubblica, Stampa, Avvenire\}$.

Table 5 presents the results of our analysis, where we regress the ratios of populist news diffusion on populist votes at the province level, using municipality population as weights. The OLS results indicate that there is a positive correlation between the diffusion of populist news and the prevalence of populist votes. However, we cannot claim that this result establishes a causal relationship between the two variables. Indeed, the 2SLS estimates show that the estimated effect is negative and not statistically different from zero (Cols. (4-6)). These results minimize the potential explanatory role of the rise of partisan readership as mechanism to explain Italians' mobility choice in response to the

Table 5: Populism Vote and Partisan Newspaper Readership

| | OLS | | | 2SLS | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) Fatto Quotidiano | (2) Giornale & Libero | (3) Populist Leaning | (4) Fatto Quotidiano | (5) Giornale & Libero | (6) Populist Leaning |
| Populist Votes | 0.270 | 1.427** | 1.734** | –1.333 | –2.470 | –2.389 |
| | (0.174) | (0.671) | (0.757) | (1.073) | (3.164) | (3.293) |
| Observations | 414 | 414 | 414 | 414 | 414 | 414 |
| Provinces | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | 10.282 | 10.282 | 10.282 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.768 | 0.594 | 0.611 | –0.796 | –0.486 | –0.450 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Electoral Data (Eligendo), Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres, and ADS data. Robust standard errors clustered at the province level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

rise of populist votes.

Third, we investigate whether national election outcomes are associated with *individuals' expectations about the future*. Populist parties and politicians typically focus on short-term issues to attract voters, neglecting longer-term priorities like education and the environment (Guiso et al., 2017). This may contribute to citizens developing negative views about the future of the economy, particularly if they perceive populist bureaucrats as more likely to implement sub-optimal policies (Sasso and Morelli, 2021). Citizens perceiving these aspects related to the rise of support of populism can develop then more gloomy views towards the future of the economy. Such expectations could encourage internal mobility as a way to cope with the anticipated challenges.

To examine the relationship between populist votes and natives' expectations for the future, we utilize data from the *Italian National Election Studies* (ITANES), which provides post-election surveys on voters' attitudes. The ITANES survey includes information on the respondents' municipality of residence for the years 2006, 2008, and 2013. In order to explore the potential connection between populist votes and individuals' expectations for the future, we construct binary variables that capture respondents' positive and negative views regarding the country's past and future economic prospects.[7] Subsequently, we construct a dummy variables that capture respondents leaning towards pessimistic views of the future, taking into account their current stance towards the economy. To capture the switch towards new pessimistic views, we define a dummy variable denoted ad $\Delta V^{f}_{i,m,r,t}$ (for individual $i$ from municipality $m$ at year $t$), which takes the value of one when a respon-

[7]To construct the variable on the current views of the economy, we utilize the question: "According to you, over the past year, has the economic situation in Italy improved very much, fairly improved, remained the same, become worse, or much worse?". To gauge the views towards the future of the economy, ITANES asks: "Looking ahead 3-5 years, do you believe the economic situation in Italy will improve very much, fairly improve, remain the same, become worse, or much worse?". Positive views indicate an expectation of improvement in the current or future economy, while negative views are associated with perceiving a deterioration in the economic outlook.

dent has negative views towards the future of the economy but expresses positive views towards the past economic status, and zero otherwise. We then estimate the partial correlation between exposure to populism (measured by the vote share of populist parties) at the municipal level ($m$) in a specific region ($r$) during an election year ($t$) and individuals' attitudes towards the future:

$$\Delta V^{f}_{i,m,r,t} = \alpha + \beta \text{Exposure}_{m,r,t} + \Lambda \mathbf{X_{i,m,r,t}} + \theta_m + \eta_{r,t} + \epsilon_{i,m,r,t}, \tag{6}$$

where $\text{Exposure}_{m,r,t}$ represents the local exposure to populism in municipality $m$ at year $t$, $\mathbf{X}_{i,m,r,t}$ denotes a set of individual control variables, $\theta_m$ is a municipality fixed effect, $\eta_{r,t}$ is a region-by-year fixed effect capturing region-specific time trends, and $\epsilon^{g}_{i,m,r,t}$ is the error term. The set of individual controls encompasses age, education level, employment status and, in certain specification, views towards the past economy. This specification parallels that of Eq. (2), but it is estimated using individual-level observations, as opposed to municipality-level data.

Due to the limited number of municipalities (1,393) and respondents (12,155) available from ITANES, we are unable to use our instrumental variable approach. Therefore partial correlations are estimated with OLS. However, it is important to note that the outcome is computed at as variation within individuals, while the populist vote is calculated at the municipal level, and the survey is conducted three months after the electoral event. These factors mitigate the potential endogeneity bias that could arise from reverse causation. Additionally, Eq. (6) controls for both municipal and region-year fixed effects, thereby accounting for time-invariant specific characteristics of municipalities and regional-specific time trends.

Table 6 provides the estimated partial correlations between votes for populist parties at the municipal level and individuals' new pessimistic attitudes towards the future of the Italian economy. Cols. (1) and (2) demonstrate that a populist vote is associated with an increased likelihood of adopting a pessimistic outlook, although is effect is not precisely estimated. These results remain robust even after controlling for additional factors such as individual characteristics and views towards the past economy (denoted by 'Positive Past Views' and 'Negative Past Views'). However, these results may mask substantial heterogeneity stemming from individuals' political preferences and their perception of the electoral outcome.

To address this concern, we conduct a sub-sample analysis based on the reported party voted for. Col. (3) reveals a negative correlation between pessimistic views towards the future of the Italian economy and populist votes at the municipal level among the sub-sample of individuals who voted for populist parties. Although this result lacks precision, it holds intuitive significance: a positive electoral outcome for the preferred political party does not undermine expectations regarding the future. Conversely, non-populist voters are more prone to adopting new pessimistic attitudes towards the future. Col. (4) presents the estimated partial correlation between populist votes and pessimistic views towards the future among the sub-sample of non-populist voters. This result exhibits both substantive

Table 6: Populism and Individual Expectations for the Future

| | New Pessimistic Views ($\Delta V^f_{i,m,r,t}$) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) No Controls | (2) With Controls | (3) Pop. Voters | (4) Non-Pop. Voters | (5) Not Declared |
| Populist Votes | 0.083 | 0.091 | –0.064 | 0.362** | 0.087 |
| | (0.081) | (0.062) | (0.098) | (0.159) | (0.077) |
| Positive Past Views | | 0.272*** | 0.259*** | 0.285*** | 0.265*** |
| | | (0.019) | (0.069) | (0.051) | (0.027) |
| Negative Past Views | | –0.003** | –0.002 | 0.004 | –0.004** |
| | | (0.001) | (0.005) | (0.004) | (0.002) |
| Education | | –0.007** | –0.015** | –0.013* | –0.005 |
| | | (0.003) | (0.006) | (0.008) | (0.003) |
| Age | | –0.000 | –0.000 | –0.000 | 0.000 |
| | | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) |
| Employment | | 0.002 | –0.002 | –0.002 | 0.003 |
| | | (0.003) | (0.006) | (0.006) | (0.003) |
| Observations | 12155 | 12155 | 1352 | 1827 | 7838 |
| Municipalities | 1393 | 1393 | 289 | 369 | 1029 |
| R2 | 0.108 | 0.342 | 0.512 | 0.454 | 0.339 |
| Adjusted R2 | –0.013 | 0.253 | 0.344 | 0.287 | 0.232 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Electoral Data (Eligendo), Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres, and Italian National Election Studies (ITANES) data. Robust standard errors clustered at the municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

magnitude and statistical precision at the 5% significance level. Similar patterns are observed for individuals who do not disclose their voting preferences, although the coefficient is not statistically different from zero in Col. (5).

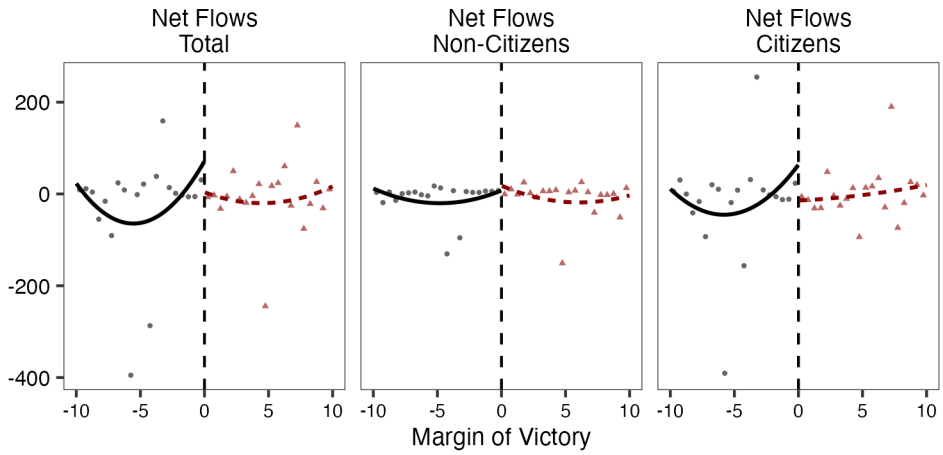
The findings suggest that an increased percentage of votes for populist parties correlates with heightened pessimism about the future, particularly noticeable among those not aligned with the populist agenda (Gillitzer and Prasad, 2018). Consequently, these non-populist voters may contemplate internal migration as a potential strategy to seek better opportunities and improve their future prospects, both for themselves and their children.

## 4.2 Local Politics and Selective Mobility (Municipal Elections)

We now examine the impact of electing a populist mayor on the net inflow (immigration minus emigration) of different population groups, using the RDD setting described earlier. By exploiting the close-election of a populist mayor, and comparing the results with a control group of municipalities with a similar support for populist candidate but without electing him or her, our empirical design aims to unveil the effect of having a populist mayor in power accounting for the similar pre-election, attitudes and preferences of the local population. Hence, any effect could be then pin down to tangible changes in policies and living environment resulting from the tenure of a populist mayor. The literature indeed has shown that the election of populist candidates has been found to influence local policies

and the well-being of voters by affecting the quality of local bureaucracy (Bellodi et al., 2024). Moreover, election of right-wing (populist) mayors affected the environment for immigrants to settle and integrate (Bracco et al., 2018, Cerqua and Zampollo, 2023). To illustrate the discontinuities at the cutoff, Figure 11 presents binned averages of the internal mobility net flows based on the margin of victory of the populist candidate. Focusing on differences at the cutoff, there appears to be no significant discontinuity for foreigners, while natives are characterized by a distinctive jump at the cutoff in terms of internal net mobility.

Figure 11: Internal Mobility and Populist Mayor
RD Plots - Binned Outcome Averages Near the Cutoff




Notes: Binned averages of the outcomes in close electoral races with second-order polynomial fit using control and treated units separately. Scatter points are averaged over 0.5% margin of victory.

Table 7 presents the results on the net internal mobility flows of the RD analysis using data from the Bilancio Demografico, which offers a broader time range (2002-2020) and allows for differentiation between natives and migrants. The results align with the main findings from the National Elections analysis. Municipalities with a populist mayor tend to be less attractive, as indicated by the negative and precisely estimated effects on net inflows, especially among natives. Interestingly, there is a positive effect observed for non-citizens, but the 90% confidence intervals largely encompass zero. On average, the election of a populist mayor leads to a decrease in net flows by 20-40 individuals, primarily driven by natives, resulting in a reduction of net flows by 40-50 individuals. While these figures represent relatively small flows, they constitute approximately 7% of the average population that either leaves or relocates to a new municipality in the sample where a populist candidate wins or loses by a margin of 10% (which corresponds to roughly 580 individuals).

Appendix G presents additional results to deepen the understanding of the impact of electing a populist mayor on the municipality's attractiveness. Table G-1 examines whether the election of a populist mayor affects international mobility, meaning the net flows of individuals coming to and leaving from abroad. In line with previous findings, we do not observe any statistically significant effect on international mobility for both citizens and

Table 7: Internal Mobility and Populist Mayor

| | **Internal Mobility (Net Flow)** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| | Total | | Non-Citizens | | Citizens | |
| *Estimate* | −19.59 | −47.55*** | 7.28 | 4.53 | −51.15*** | −39.80*** |
| *Robust SE* | (15.11) | (16.44) | (4.91) | (3.85) | (12.50) | (14.36) |
| *Bandwidth (h)* | 11.01 | 22.20 | 23.47 | 12.13 | 8.19 | 15.05 |
| *Obs. Used* | 5,105 | 8,128 | 10,109 | 4,714 | 3,728 | 5,767 |
| *Covariates* | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Bellodi et al. (2024) data. RD estimates constructed using local polynomial estimators with triangular kernel. Robust 95% confidence interval constructed using bias-correction with robust standard errors, $h$ is the MSE-optimal bandwidth. Analysis implemented with the `rdrobust`package in R (Calonico et al., 2015). Covariates included: population (at election year), year-election dummies, and mayor's characteristics (gender, university degree, white-collar job).

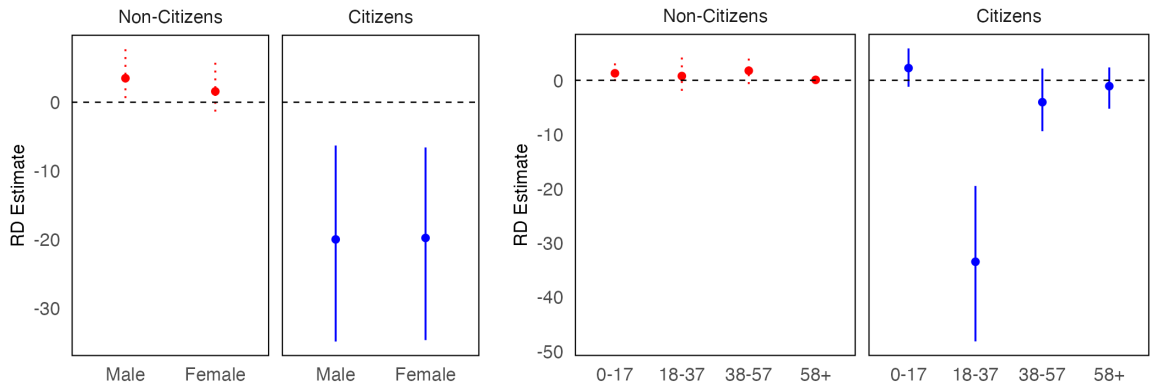
non-citizens. Moreover, to strengthen the credibility of our findings, Table G-2 shows the absence of statistically significant effects on the net internal flows of citizens before the election of the populist mayor. This outcome aims to alleviate concerns related to any potential impact driven by pre-planned mobility choices. Figures G-5 displays our main results after removing one populist party at the time. The results appear rather stable, suggesting that our main estimated effect is not driven by one specific populist party. Finally, because local polynomial estimators use a limited number of observations near the cutoff, we perform power analysis (Stommes et al., 2023). Table G-3 indicates that our analysis has sufficient statistical power to estimate treatment effects similar in magnitude to those we observed for outcomes where a non-zero effect was detected.

Our primary interpretation of the estimated effect centers around the changes in local policies and the living environment brought about by the tenure of an elected populist mayor. We anticipate that this effect would be diminished or less pronounced if the elected populist mayor is the incumbent, as he or she might have already initiated certain political changes during their prior mandate. To substantiate this assumption, we split the sample of elected populist mayors into two groups: those where the winning mayor was the incumbent and those where the mayor is newly elected. Table G-4 in the Appendix illustrates that when using the election of an incumbent populist mayor as the treatment, the estimated effect on net inflows appears positive and it is not statistically different from zero. This finding support our hypothesis, indicating that municipalities electing a new populist mayor, which can implement a novel set of policies, are the ones experiencing a decline in attractiveness for the native population.

To explore potential variations in natives' responses to the election of a populist mayor based on their characteristics, Appendix H and Figure 12 present a heterogeneity analysis by gender and age groups. Panel (a) of Figure 12 demonstrates no substantial differences between gender groups: the election of a populist mayor negatively affects the attractiveness of the municipality for both male and female natives, while no significant effect is observed

for foreigners. By focusing on different age groups, Panel (b) shows that the mobility choices of natives between 18 and 37 years old are likely to be affected, confirming the results on exposure to populism attitudes in the National Election setting.

Figure 12: Internal Mobility and Populist Mayor Heterogeneity (Gender and Age)




(a) Gender (b) Age

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, ADELE, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Bellodi et al. (2024) data. RD estimates constructed using local polynomial estimators with triangular kernel. Robust 95% confidence interval constructed using bias-correction with robust standard errors, $h$ is the MSE-optimal bandwidth. Analysis implemented with the `rdrobust`package in R (Calonico et al., 2015). Covariates included: population (at election year), year-election dummies, and mayor's characteristics (gender, university degree, white-collar job). The figures report RD coefficient estimates for Non-Citizens (left panels, represented by dashed red lines) and Citizens (right panels, represented by solid blue lines). Detailed regression results are available in Tables H-1 and H-2 in the Appendix.

Finally, relying on the ADELE data, we explore the potential heterogeneity of the effects among natives by education level. Due to data availability, our analysis focuses solely on the internal mobility of natives during the period 2012-2020, splitting them between college graduates movers and non-college graduates movers. Table 8 displays results without covariates in odd columns and with covariates in even columns. Cols. (1) and (2) present results for college-educated natives, while Cols. (3) and (4) focus on less educated ones. Our findings unveil a significant disparity based on educational levels: municipalities' reduced attractiveness notably impacts college-educated natives' mobility, while it shows no statistically significant effect on less educated individuals. On average, the presence of a populist mayor is associated with a net outflow of 35 to 50 college-educated natives annually. Conversely, although not statistically significant, there appears to be a tendency towards a positive association between the election of a populist mayor and the net migration of individuals with lower educational attainment. Despite potential concerns regarding the statistical power of the results for college-educated natives, the power analysis available in Table G-3 in the Appendix indicates that our study possesses sufficient power to identify effects of the described magnitude. Since education is a driver of both economic growth

and better democratic institutions (Murtin and Wacziarg, 2014), the net outflow of college educated migrants has direct implications on both the distribution of political preferences and economic disparities across Italian municipalities, with a likely increase in economic and political polarization between municipalities over time.

Table 8: Skill-Specific Internal Mobility and Populist Mayor

| | **Internal Mobility (Citizens)** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| | College Graduates | | Less Educated | |
| *Estimate* | $-48.80^{***}$ | $-34.76^{**}$ | 14.22 | 7.08 |
| *Robust SE* | (10.35) | (12.22) | (14.64) | (15.65) |
| *Bandwidth (h)* | 14.04 | 17.89 | 16.82 | 20.11 |
| *Obs. Used* | 2,539 | 2,831 | 2,939 | 3,136 |
| *Covariates* | No | Yes | No | Yes |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, ADELE, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Bellodi et al. (2024) data. RD estimates constructed using local polynomial estimators with triangular kernel. Robust 95% confidence interval constructed using bias-correction with robust standard errors, $h$ is the MSE-optimal bandwidth. Analysis implemented with the `rdrobust`package in R (Calonico et al., 2015). Covariates included: population (at election year), year-election dummies, and mayor's characteristics (gender, university degree, white-collar job).

# 5 Conclusion

While the causes of the rise of populism are relatively well known, there is still much to understand about its consequences for growth and well-being. This study focuses specifically on Italy, a country where populist parties have gained traction since the last financial crisis. We examine whether the local exposure to populist attitudes and politics, following several rounds of national and municipal elections, has influenced the attractiveness of municipalities. Moreover, we explore how mobility responses to populism vary with citizenship status, gender, age and education level. To estimate the local average treatment effects and their causal impact on people's movements, we employ two approaches: an instrumental approach for the national election analysis, and a regression discontinuity design for municipal elections. Remarkably, our findings consistently indicate that exposure to populist attitudes and politics diminishes the attractiveness of municipalities, leading to significant population outflows. This effect is particularly pronounced among natives, that are more likely to move to other municipalities rather than relocating abroad. The results are heterogeneous across natives, with young and highly educated ones more likely to be affected. Moreover, suggestive evidence shows that exposure to populism attitudes dampens expectations of non-populist voters. Consequently, populism can contributes to the formation of echo chambers by lowering the average education level of voters as well as diversity of political preferences and stances. Hence, such foot-voting mechanism triggered by these dynamics potentially sets off a "snowball" effect of populism in vulnerable municipalities

and leads to a polarization of political preferences.

Our findings are in line with those emphasizing the economic drawbacks of populism. Cross-country comparisons reveal that populist episodes have been found to undermine macroeconomic performance (Funke et al., 2023). Cross-municipality comparisons show that populism deteriorates the quality of local bureaucracy in Italy (Bellodi et al., 2024). Bellodi et al. (2023) show how the negative consequences extend to illiberal reforms and a weakening of democratic checks and balances. In this context, the vicious cycle of populism identified in our study suggests that a populist backlash is likely to result in spatial disparities in political preferences, institutional quality and economic performance.

Breaking populist trends is a challenging task due to the self-reinforcing mechanisms at play. Several solutions have been proposed to address this problem, including standing up to populist leaders using modern communication tools, fact-checking, and employing social media strategies to reduce social polarization (Galasso et al., 2022, Henry et al., 2022). While these options are relevant, they have not proven sufficient thus far, as they often result in further contentious political debates. A key challenge lies in demonstrating that anti-nationalistic policies and long-term thinking are viable alternatives not only for addressing global issues like climate change, terrorism, wars, and pandemics, but also for alleviating the main concerns of ordinary people, such as economic insecurity and rising inequalities.

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# Digging Up Trenches: Populism, Selective Mobility and the Political Polarization of Italian Municipalities

Luca Bellodi, Frédéric Docquier, Stefano Iandolo, Massimo Morelli, and Riccardo Turati

**Appendix – For Online Publication**

## A National vs. Municipal Election Results

### A.1 Correlation in Vote Shares

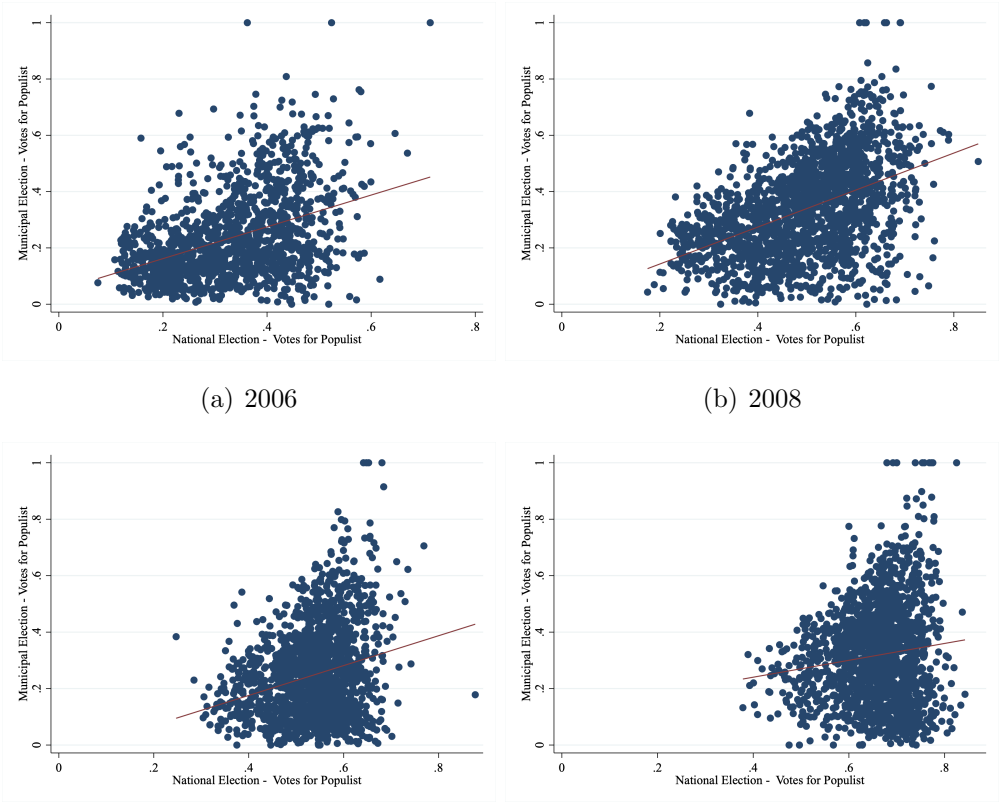
The correlation between the vote shares of populist parties in municipal and national elections around the years 2006, 2008, 2013, and 2018 is illustrated in Figure A-1.

To account for the potential mismatch in election timing, we calculate the moving averages by including 2 years before and 2 years after each national election year. It is important to note that only municipalities with a populist candidate are included in the sample, and the definition of populist parties remains unchanged over time. Despite these caveats, the correlation between the two vote shares is consistently positive.

### A.2 Correlation With Victims of Nazi and Fascist Massacres

In Figure A-2, we show the correlation between the share of victims of persecutions by Nazis/fascists and the vote shares of populist in the national and municipal elections in the post-2008 period.

Figure A-1: Correlation Between Municipal and National Elections: Time-invariant Definition of Populist Parties




(a) 2006

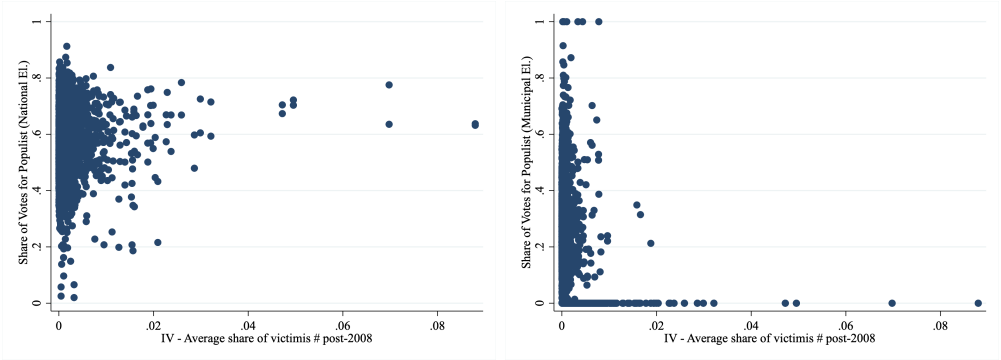
(b) 2008

(c) 2013

(d) 2018

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from the Italian Ministry of Interior. The Figure shows the election-year specific correlation between the share of votes for populist parties at national elections (x-axis) and the share of votes for populist parties at municipal elections (y-axis). Since municipal elections are not necessarily the same year of national elections, we compute the moving averages including 2 years before and 2 years after each national election year. Municipalities that do not vote for any populist party are excluded from the sample. The definition of populist parties is time-invariant.

Figure A-2: Correlation Between the Vote Share of Populist Parties and the Share of Victims by Nazis and Fascists




(a) National Elections (b) Municipal Elections

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from the Italian Ministry of Interior. The figure shows the correlation between the share of votes for populist and the average share of victims in the post 2008 period for national elections (a) and municipal elections (b).

# B Population Flows: Descriptives and Correlations

Table B-1 provides summary statistics for our sample of municipalities across the four national elections. Panel (a) presents information on municipality characteristics, including the vote share for populists, population size, average taxable income, unemployment rate, and the share of victims of Nazi and fascist persecutions. The average vote share of populist parties across municipalities and elections is 0.47. Additionally, the average population size of Italian municipalities in our sample is approximately 7,400 residents. In Panel (b), we present the net migration flows for the total population, migrants, and natives, along with the breakdown by gender, derived from the *Bilancio Demografico* (BDem). Panel (c) displays similar aggregated information and the breakdown by age group, extracted from *ADELE*.

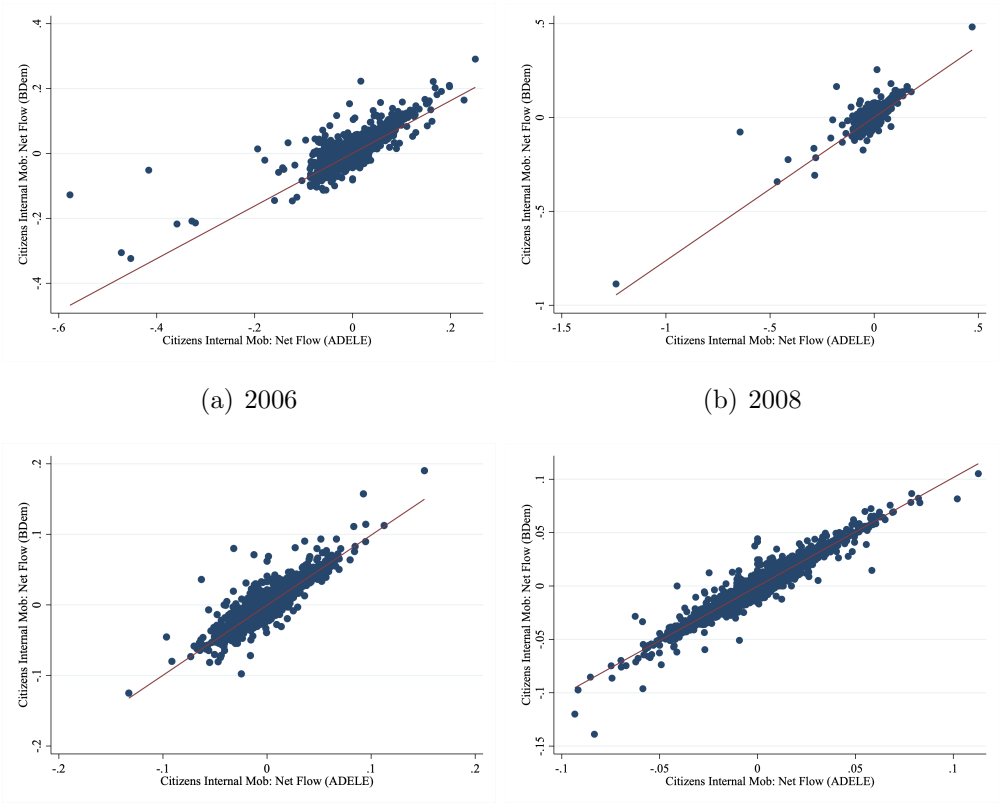
Figures B-3 and B-4 display the correlation between the measures of net flows derived from the Bdem and ADELE data. The correlations across national elections are consistently positive and robust, both for Italians and foreigners. However, in some small municipalities, discrepancies emerge between the two data sources. To address this issue, we exclude municipalities where a notable discrepancy in net flows (exceeding 3% of the resident population) exists between the two databases. Table B-2 provides an overview of the characteristics of the excluded municipalities.

Table B-1: Summary Statistics: National Elections

| Variable | Obs. | Mean | S.D. | Min. | Max. | Pc(25) | Pc(50) | Pc(75) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Panel (a) - Municipal Characteristics** | | | | | | | | |
| Share of Votes for Populist (PopuLIST) | 31440 | 0.477 | 0.172 | 0.008 | 0.918 | 0.354 | 0.498 | 0.612 |
| Share of Votes for Populist (Docquier et al., 2022) | 31440 | 0.235 | 0.200 | 0.000 | 0.862 | 0.033 | 0.223 | 0.399 |
| Share of Votes for M5S | 31440 | 0.069 | 0.131 | 0.000 | 0.700 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Share of Votes for Lega/BoI | 31440 | 0.094 | 0.118 | 0.000 | 0.664 | 0.000 | 0.038 | 0.166 |
| Share of Votes for Populist (PopuLIST, no PDL) | 31440 | 0.341 | 0.223 | 0.000 | 0.918 | 0.185 | 0.315 | 0.495 |
| Exposure to Populism (Docquier et al., 2022) | 31440 | 0.005 | 0.017 | -0.047 | 0.099 | -0.009 | 0.005 | 0.018 |
| Unemployment Rate | 31440 | 0.087 | 0.052 | 0.014 | 0.379 | 0.046 | 0.076 | 0.113 |
| Total Population (2006, January) | 31416 | 7390 | 40075 | 36 | 2570000 | 1078 | 24850 | 6050 |
| Average Taxable Income | 31440 | 1.495 | 0.456 | 0.215 | 6.178 | 1.191 | 1.506 | 1.822 |
| Share of Victims (per hundreds inhab.) | 31440 | 0.020 | 0.152 | 0.000 | 8.797 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| **Panel (b) - Bilancio Demografico** | | | | | | | | |
| Total Internal Mob, All, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | -0.000 | 0.024 | -1.067 | 0.429 | -0.011 | -0.002 | 0.009 |
| Total Internat. Mob, All, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | 0.007 | 0.011 | -0.335 | 0.208 | 0.001 | 0.005 | 0.012 |
| Citizens Internal Mob, All, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | 0.000 | 0.021 | -0.887 | 0.482 | -0.010 | -0.001 | 0.008 |
| Citizens Internat. Mob, All, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | 0.000 | 0.007 | -0.343 | 0.222 | -0.002 | 0.000 | 0.002 |
| Citizens Internal Mob, Male, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | 0.001 | 0.012 | -0.454 | 0.257 | -0.005 | -0.000 | 0.005 |
| Citizens Internal Mob, Female, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | -0.000 | 0.012 | -0.433 | 0.225 | -0.006 | -0.001 | 0.004 |
| Non-Citizens Internal Mob, All, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | -0.001 | 0.008 | -0.181 | 0.099 | -0.003 | 0.000 | 0.003 |
| Non-Citizens Internat. Mob, All, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | 0.007 | 0.009 | -0.073 | 0.175 | 0.002 | 0.005 | 0.010 |
| Non-Citizens Internal Mob, Male, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | -0.000 | 0.005 | -0.128 | 0.088 | -0.002 | 0.000 | 0.002 |
| Non-Citizens Internal Mob, Female, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | -0.000 | 0.004 | -0.097 | 0.067 | -0.002 | 0.000 | 0.002 |
| **Panel (c) - ADELE** | | | | | | | | |
| Citizens Internal Mob, All, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | 0.000 | 0.022 | -1.239 | 0.470 | -0.009 | -0.001 | 0.008 |
| Citizens Internal Mob, 0-17, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | -0.000 | 0.005 | -0.235 | 0.098 | -0.002 | 0.000 | 0.002 |
| Citizens Internal Mob, 18-37, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | -0.001 | 0.011 | -0.496 | 0.166 | -0.005 | -0.001 | 0.003 |
| Citizens Internal Mob, 38-57, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | 0.001 | 0.007 | -0.353 | 0.154 | -0.002 | 0.000 | 0.003 |
| Citizens Internal Mob, 58+, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | 0.000 | 0.006 | -0.155 | 0.122 | -0.002 | 0.000 | 0.002 |
| Non-Citizens Internal Mob, All, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | -0.001 | 0.007 | -0.294 | 0.092 | -0.003 | -0.000 | 0.002 |
| Non-Citizens Internal Mob, 0-17, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | -0.000 | 0.002 | -0.111 | 0.030 | -0.001 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Non-Citizens Internal Mob, 18-37, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | -0.000 | 0.004 | -0.197 | 0.059 | -0.001 | 0.000 | 0.001 |
| Non-Citizens Internal Mob, 38-57, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | -0.000 | 0.002 | -0.063 | 0.040 | -0.001 | 0.000 | 0.001 |
| Non-Citizens Internal Mob, 58+, Net flow (t & t+1) | 31416 | -0.000 | 0.001 | -0.019 | 0.025 | -0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Electoral Data (Eligendo), Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres, Bilancio Demografico and ADELE.

Figure B-3: Correlation Between BDem and ADELE data:
Italians' Internal Mobility (Net Flows)




(a) 2006

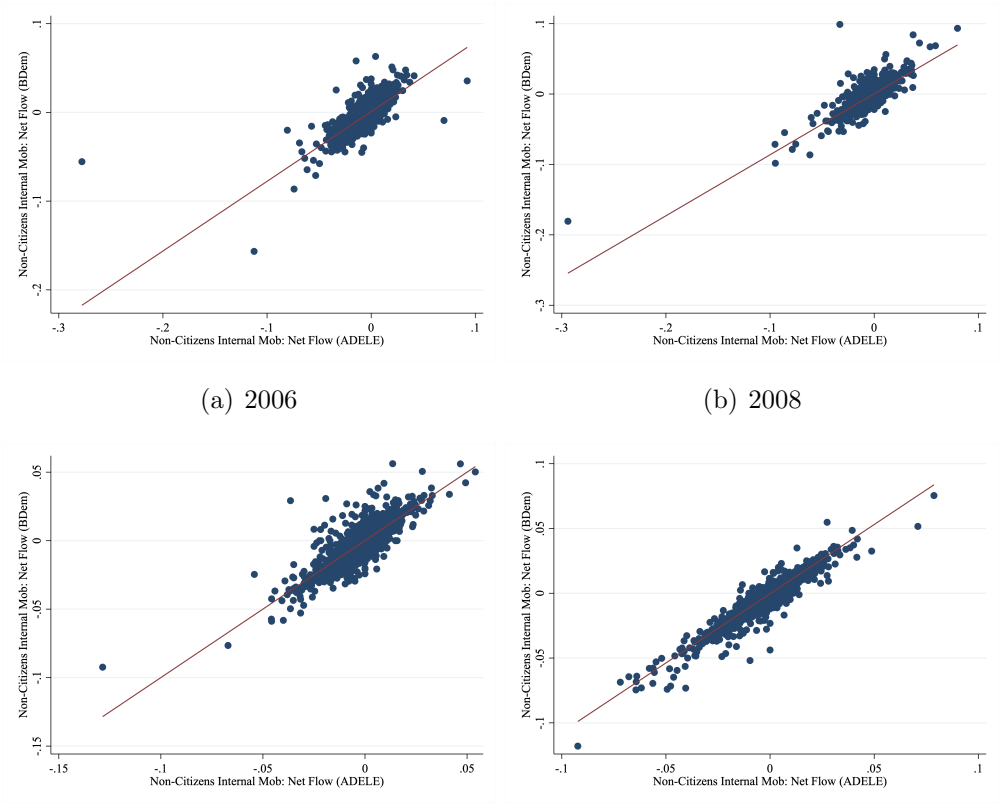
(b) 2008

(c) 2013

(d) 2018

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from Bilancio Demografico (BDem) and ADELE. The figures plots the election-year specific correlation between the internal net flows of Italian citizens computed with ADELE data (x-axis) and BDem data (y-axis)

Figure B-4: Correlation Between BDem and ADELE data:
Foreigners' Internal Mobility (Net Flows)




(a) 2006

(b) 2008

(c) 2013

(d) 2018

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from Bilancio Demografico (BDem) and ADELE. The figures plots the election-year specific correlation between the internal net flows of non-Italian citizens computed with ADELE data (x-axis) and BDem data (y-axis)

Table B-2: Summary Statistics: National Elections
(Sub-Sample of Excluded Municipalities)

| Variable | Obs. | Mean | S.D. | Min. | Max. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Panel (a) - Municipal Characteristics** | | | | | |
| Share of Votes for Populist (PopuLIST, time-invariant) | 2096 | 0.496 | 0.173 | 0.025 | 0.918 |
| Share of Votes for Populist (Docquier et al., 2022) | 2096 | 0.238 | 0.203 | 0.000 | 0.862 |
| Share of Votes for M5S | 2096 | 0.061 | 0.117 | 0.000 | 0.596 |
| Share of Votes for Lega/FdI | 2096 | 0.107 | 0.123 | 0.000 | 0.664 |
| Share of Votes for Populist (PopuLIST, no PDL) | 2096 | 0.354 | 0.222 | 0.000 | 0.918 |
| Exposure to Populism (Docquier et al., 2022) | 2096 | 0.007 | 0.017 | -0.045 | 0.099 |
| Unemployment Rate | 2096 | 0.077 | 0.044 | 0.014 | 0.379 |
| Total Population (2006, January) | 2096 | 1366 | 2378 | 36 | 21398 |
| Average Taxable Income | 2096 | 1.476 | 0.442 | 0.287 | 2.970 |
| Share of Victims (per hundreds inhab.) | 2096 | 0.029 | 0.253 | 0.000 | 6.977 |
| **Panel (b) - Bilancio Demografico** | | | | | |
| Total Internal Mob, All, Net flow (t & t+1) | 2096 | 0.001 | 0.053 | -1.067 | 0.429 |
| Total Internat. Mob, All, Net flow (t & t+1) | 2096 | 0.010 | 0.020 | -0.124 | 0.208 |
| Citizens Internal Mob, All, Net flow (t & t+1) | 2096 | 0.002 | 0.048 | -0.887 | 0.482 |
| Non-Citizens Internat. Mob, All, Net flow (t & t+1) | 2096 | 0.007 | 0.014 | -0.073 | 0.175 |
| Non-Citizens Internal Mob, All, Net flow (t & t+1) | 2096 | -0.001 | 0.016 | -0.181 | 0.099 |
| Citizens Internat. Mob, All, Net flow (t & t+1) | 2096 | 0.003 | 0.015 | -0.162 | 0.222 |
| **PANEL (c) - ADELE** | | | | | |
| Citizens Internal Mob, All, Net flow (t & t+1) | 2096 | -0.008 | 0.057 | -1.239 | 0.470 |
| Non-Citizens Internal Mob, All, Net flow (t & t+1) | 2096 | -0.004 | 0.016 | -0.294 | 0.092 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Electoral Data (Eligendo), Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres, Bilancio Demografico and ADELE.

# C IV Approach: Descriptives and Pretrend Tests

Table C-1 examines the correlation between the distribution of Nazi and fascist victims during the period of 1943-45 and a range of historical factors available from Acemoglu et al. (2022) across municipalities. In Panel (a), we investigate the partial correlations with historical political preferences. Both the number and share of victims per event display a negative relationship with the vote share for fascists in the 1924 elections. Panel (b) reveals that the number and share of victims are linked to deportations and fascist persecution during the period of 1920-1922. However, it is important to note that these partial correlations are not precisely estimated once adjusted for municipality size (Col. (3)).

Table C-1: Correlation With Historical Events

| | Total Victims | Share of victims per event | Share of victims per event (Adj.) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) |
| Panel (a) - Historical Political Preferences | | | |
| Socialist Vote Share 1924 | 3.442* | –0.314 | –0.042* |
| | (1.762) | (0.444) | (0.025) |
| Fascist Vote Share 1924 | –3.066*** | –0.604** | –0.001 |
| | (1.049) | (0.286) | (0.017) |
| Socialist share in 1913 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Observations | 4637 | 4637 | 4637 |
| Municipalities | 4637 | 4637 | 4637 |
| R2 | 0.078 | 0.074 | 0.047 |
| Panel (b) - Episodes of Violence | | | |
| Deportations | 4.423*** | 0.912*** | –0.002 |
| | (1.339) | (0.314) | (0.009) |
| Fascist violence in 1920-2 | 3.078** | 0.551 | –0.001 |
| | (1.320) | (0.361) | (0.016) |
| Socialist share in 1913 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Observations | 4637 | 4637 | 4637 |
| Municipalities | 4637 | 4637 | 4637 |
| R2 | 0.078 | 0.076 | 0.046 |

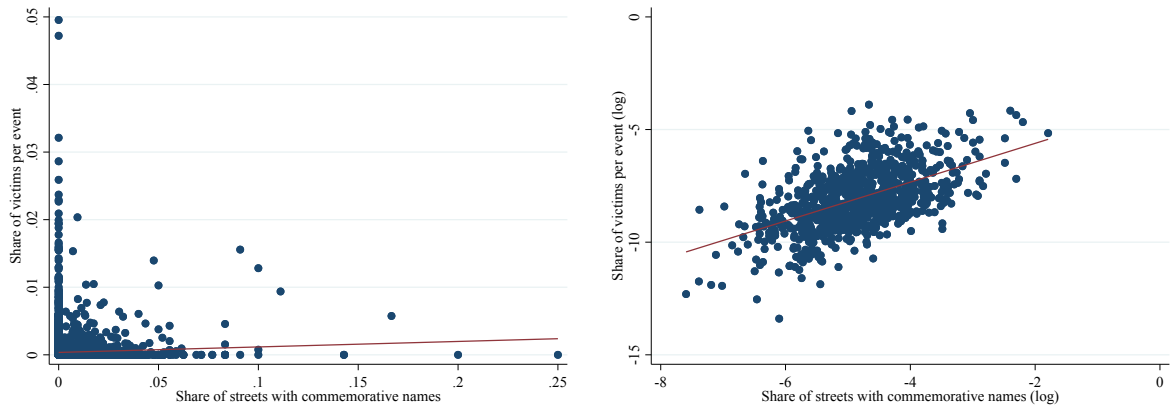
Notes: authors' calculation on Electoral Data (Eligendo), Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres, and data from Acemoglu et al. (2022). Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

To offer suggestive evidence of the potential persistence of Nazi and fascist persecution in municipal memory and tradition, we examine the correlation between the share of victims and the share of streets in the municipality named after massacres perpetrated by and victims of the Nazis and Fascists. Our rationale is based on the assumption that municipalities directly affected by fascist violence are more inclined to commemorate the memory of these victims by dedicating streets or squares in their name. This act of commemoration contributes to the enduring remembrance of these events across generations.

We establish this suggestive correlation by collecting data on street and square names for all Italian municipalities. Utilizing information from *OpenStreetMap*, we compile a dataset comprising 1,234,671 distinct street-municipality observations. To identify streets named

after fascist massacres and their victims, we adopt a hybrid approach, combining artificial intelligence (AI) and human judgment. Initially, we present the entire list of street names to ChatGPT 4.0 Plus and instruct the AI with the query: "Extract all names from this file related to massacres, victims, or assassinations by the Nazis and/or Fascists on Italian soil up until the 1950s." After three iterations of this inquiry, we isolate 166 street names. Subsequently, we filter this list to retain only those associated with the pre-1950s period, resulting in 123 names of streets and squares commemorating Nazi and fascist victims. Examples include streets named after the "*Strage di Marzabotto*" (Marzabotto massacre) and the "*Martiri della Libertà*" (Martyrs of freedom).

Figure C-5: Correlation Between Victims from Nazi and Fascist Attacks, and Streets With Commemorative Names




(a) Levels

(b) Log

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from the Atlas of Nazi and OpenStreetMap. The figures plots the correlation between the streets with commemorative names computed as the share of the total streets in a municipality (x-axis), and the number of victims per event (y-axis).

Subsequently, we apply this list to our complete dataset of street-municipality observations, identifying 4,141 instances. Finally, for each municipality, we calculate the proportion of streets named after Nazi and fascist persecution relative to the total number of available streets. Figure C-5 illustrates the suggestive correlation between the proportion of commemorative streets and the proportion of victims, both in level and logarithmic terms. The correlation in levels is weakly positive. However, when we consider the distribution of the variable and exclude municipalities lacking commemorative streets or victims, the correlation in logarithmic terms becomes more significant and positive. These findings suggest that the collective memory of these events may still be present, as indicated by the existence of streets commemorating them.

Table C-2 presents a comprehensive set of estimates as illustrated in Figure 8, showing the partial correlation between the share of victims per event (adjusted by population) and various municipality characteristics extracted from the 2001 census and the results of the 2001 elections. The odd columns exclude region fixed effects, while the even columns

include region fixed effects. Interestingly, the distribution of victims during the 1943-45 period does not exhibit any significant relationship with the 2001 demographic characteristics of municipalities, including gender composition, population size and education, labor market characteristics, poverty outcomes, average taxable income, commuting patterns, and electoral results.

Table C-2: Relationship With Victims/Events and Municipality Characteristics (From the 2001 Italian Census)

| | With Aosta | | Without Aosta | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) No FE | (2) With FE | (3) No FE | (4) With FE |
| Population | −0.001 | −0.001* | −0.001 | −0.001* |
| | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) |
| Δ Population | 0.081 | −0.237 | 0.126 | −0.033 |
| | (0.508) | (0.487) | (0.467) | (0.531) |
| Male Ratio | 0.058 | 0.025 | 0.051 | 0.021 |
| | (0.048) | (0.042) | (0.047) | (0.045) |
| Population Less 6 y.o. | −0.457 | 0.034 | −0.450 | −0.204 |
| | (0.522) | (0.360) | (0.462) | (0.372) |
| Population More 75 y.o. | 0.322 | −0.039 | 0.275 | −0.078 |
| | (0.240) | (0.207) | (0.229) | (0.229) |
| Share Immigrants | 0.073 | 0.076 | 0.072 | 0.070 |
| | (0.056) | (0.053) | (0.057) | (0.052) |
| Tertiary Educated | 0.011 | 0.014 | 0.011 | 0.010 |
| | (0.014) | (0.012) | (0.014) | (0.012) |
| Labor Market Participation | −0.009 | −0.142 | −0.088 | −0.125 |
| | (0.171) | (0.153) | (0.150) | (0.156) |
| Young Active Labour Market | 0.035 | 0.038 | 0.040 | 0.039 |
| | (0.032) | (0.028) | (0.032) | (0.028) |
| Unemployment Rate | −0.105 | 0.084 | −0.095 | 0.050 |
| | (0.123) | (0.105) | (0.128) | (0.095) |
| Unemployment Rate Youth | 0.014 | −0.006 | 0.006 | −0.008 |
| | (0.030) | (0.035) | (0.029) | (0.035) |
| Employment Agriculture | 0.419 | 0.423 | 0.265 | 0.249 |
| | (0.345) | (0.338) | (0.298) | (0.281) |
| Employment Manifacturing | 0.422 | 0.425 | 0.269 | 0.248 |
| | (0.341) | (0.335) | (0.293) | (0.277) |
| Employment Tertiary | 0.418 | 0.424 | 0.264 | 0.249 |
| | (0.344) | (0.336) | (0.295) | (0.279) |
| Employment Commercial | 0.436 | 0.438 | 0.275 | 0.254 |
| | (0.350) | (0.344) | (0.299) | (0.282) |
| Employment High Skill Professions | −0.198 | −0.160 | −0.196 | −0.192* |
| | (0.122) | (0.105) | (0.122) | (0.101) |
| Employment Medium Skill Professions | −0.243 | −0.232 | −0.254 | −0.275* |
| | (0.154) | (0.146) | (0.149) | (0.150) |
| Employment Low Skill Professions | 0.027 | 0.145 | 0.019 | 0.084 |
| | (0.165) | (0.165) | (0.159) | (0.166) |
| Bad quality housing | −0.088 | −0.057 | −0.042 | −0.021 |
| | (0.111) | (0.130) | (0.091) | (0.127) |
| Family at poverty risk | 0.160 | −0.061 | 0.086 | 0.016 |
| | (0.222) | (0.138) | (0.205) | (0.122) |
| Income | 0.000 | −0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) |
| Municipal Mobility | −0.037 | −0.027 | −0.034 | −0.026 |
| | (0.050) | (0.055) | (0.050) | (0.046) |
| Extra-municipal Mobility | 0.021 | −0.007 | 0.023 | −0.001 |
| | (0.037) | (0.046) | (0.038) | (0.047) |
| Votes FI | | | 0.001** | 0.000 |
| | | | (0.000) | (0.000) |
| Votes Lega | | | −0.001 | 0.001 |
| | | | (0.001) | (0.001) |
| Null Votes | | | 0.000 | 0.001 |
| | | | (0.001) | (0.001) |
| Turnout | | | 0.000 | −0.000 |
| | | | (0.000) | (0.001) |
| Municipalities | 7323 | 7323 | 7255 | 7255 |
| Regions | 20 | 20 | 19 | 19 |
| R2 | 0.023 | 0.043 | 0.024 | 0.039 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.020 | 0.037 | 0.020 | 0.033 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres, and data from the 2001 Italian Census. Robust standard errors clustered at regional level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

# D National Elections: Robustness checks

### D.0.1 Additional Results: International Mobility

Table D-1: International Mobility and Populism Votes

| | OLS | | | 2SLS | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) Total | (2) Non-Citizens | (3) Citizens | (4) Total | (5) Non-Citizens | (6) Citizens |
| Panel (a) - No Controls | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.002 | –0.002** | 0.001 | –0.035 | –0.034 | –0.001 |
| | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.044) | (0.043) | (0.015) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | 18.316 | 18.316 | 18.316 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.389 | 0.343 | 0.279 | –0.039 | –0.052 | –0.003 |
| Panel (b) - With Controls | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.002 | –0.002** | 0.001 | –0.036 | –0.034 | –0.003 |
| | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.046) | (0.045) | (0.016) |
| Unempl. Rate | 0.004 | 0.008 | –0.005 | 0.014 | 0.018 | –0.004 |
| | (0.008) | (0.006) | (0.005) | (0.017) | (0.015) | (0.007) |
| Income | –0.000 | 0.001* | –0.001** | –0.000 | 0.001 | –0.001** |
| | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | 17.551 | 17.551 | 17.551 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.389 | 0.343 | 0.279 | –0.042 | –0.050 | –0.003 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

## D.1 Robustness to Party Classification

Table D-2 lists parties identified as populist according to the *PopuList* classification described in Rooduijn et al. (2019) and used in our empirical model, and to the time-varying classification described in Docquier et al. (2022).

Table D-2: Parties Identified as Populist Based on two Classifications

| Election-Year | PopuList | Docquier et al. (2022) |
|---|---|---|
| **2006** | Liga Fronte Veneto | Alleanza Nazionale |
| | Lega Nord | Forza Italia |
| | Lega Nord Valle D'Aosta | Lega Nord |
| | Forza Italia | Unione di Centro |
| | Lega Sud | Nuovo Partito Socialista Italiano |
| **2008** | Lega Nord | Lega Nord |
| | Il Popolo delle Libertà | |
| | Lega Sud | |
| | Lega Veneta Repubblica | |
| **2013** | Il Popolo delle Libertà | Rivoluzione Civile |
| | Fratelli D'Italia | Unione di Centro |
| | Lega Nord | Lavoro e Libertà |
| | Lega Veneta Repubblica | |
| | Movimento 5 Stelle | |
| **2018** | Lega | Movimento 5 Stelle |
| | Movimento 5 Stelle | Fratelli d'Italia |
| | Forza Italia | |
| | Fratelli d'Italia | |

*Note:* The Table shows the classification used for populist parties: our benchmark classification (Rooduijn et al., 2019), and the alternative Docquier et al. (2022) classification

In Table D-3, we first remove Il Popolo delle Libertà (Cols. (1-2)) from the list of populist parties, and then we focus on the votes for the two mostly known populist parties: Movimento 5 Stelle (Cols. (3-4)), and the Lega Nord (Cols. (5-6)). The results on the mobility of natives (Panel (c)) are confirmed once removing Berlusconi's party from the pool of populists, or once focusing only on Movimento 5 Stelle. Results associated to the Lega votes are similar in terms of direction, although less precisely estimated due to a weak first stage in the 2SLS estimates.

In Table D-4, we adopt an alternative classification of populist parties, reying on the parsimonious definition of populist parties described in Docquier et al. (2022). It relies on existing literature and associates populism with two primary features. Firstly, populist parties exhibit *anti-establishment views*, based on the notion that the people possess higher ethical and moral values than the ruling class (Mudde, 2004, Taggart, 2000). Secondly, populism entails a strong *commitment to protecting* the people from external or alien threats (Guiso et al., 2017, Rodrik, 2018). Docquier et al. (2022) collect multiple proxies for these two features from the Manifesto Project Database (MPD), and apply two stages of dimensionality reduction to combine them. They obtain a standardized (i.e., zero-mean) and continuous populism score for every party-election pair. They demonstrate that their score is an excellent predictor of the likelihood of being identified as a populist party in other studies (e.g., Grzymala-Busse and McFaul, 2020, Guiso et al., 2023, Rooduijn et al., 2019, Swank, 2018, Van Kessel, 2015). They classify parties with a populist score exceeding one standard deviation as populist, a threshold that maximizes the partial correlation with existing databases.

By employing this time-varying classification to the national election context, we can identify the Italian parties classified as populist. In 2006, we identify five parties as populist (Alleanza Nazionale, Lega Nord, Unione di Centro, Forza Italia, and Nuovo Partito Socialista Italiano); in 2008, only the Lega Nord is identified as populist; in 2013, three parties are classified as populist (Rivoluzione Civile, Unione di Centro, and Lavoro e Libertà); and in 2018, two parties are classified as populist (Fratelli d'Italia, and Movimento 5 Stelle). It is noteworthy that some parties appear as populist in certain election years and not in others, a phenomenon attributed to changes in the salience of anti-establishment and commitment-to-protect views reflected in their manifesto. In our robustness checks, we will consider alternative and time-invariant definitions of populist parties, such as the *PopuList* classification described in Rooduijn et al. (2019).

Table D-3: Robustness Check: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes When Using Alternative Populist Definition (Results by Party)

| | No PDL | | M5S Votes | | Lega Nord Votes | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) OLS Net Flows | (2) 2SLS Net Flows | (3) OLS Net Flows | (4) 2SLS Net Flows | (5) OLS Net Flows | (6) 2SLS Net Flows |
| Panel (a) - Total | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes (no PDL) | –0.020*** | –0.239* | | | | |
| | (0.003) | (0.134) | | | | |
| M5S Votes | | | –0.032*** | –0.504* | | |
| | | | (0.004) | (0.276) | | |
| Lega Votes | | | | | –0.012*** | –0.469 |
| | | | | | (0.004) | (0.293) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | 13.159 | | 19.190 | | 2.279 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.269 | –0.428 | 0.270 | –0.806 | 0.267 | –0.760 |
| Panel (b) - Non-Citizens | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes (no PDL) | –0.001 | –0.033 | | | | |
| | (0.001) | (0.068) | | | | |
| M5S Votes | | | 0.002 | –0.070 | | |
| | | | (0.001) | (0.139) | | |
| Lega Votes | | | | | –0.004* | –0.066 |
| | | | | | (0.002) | (0.121) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | 13.159 | | 19.190 | | 2.279 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.094 | –0.063 | 0.094 | –0.125 | 0.094 | –0.090 |
| Panel (c) - Citizens | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes (no PDL) | –0.019*** | –0.206** | | | | |
| | (0.002) | (0.091) | | | | |
| M5S Votes | | | –0.035*** | –0.433** | | |
| | | | (0.003) | (0.205) | | |
| Lega Votes | | | | | –0.008** | –0.404 |
| | | | | | (0.004) | (0.258) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | 13.159 | | 19.190 | | 2.279 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.275 | –0.385 | 0.276 | –0.715 | 0.272 | –0.709 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

Table D-4: Robustness Check: Internal mobility and Populism Votes When Using Alternative Populist Definition From Docquier et al. (2022)

| | Time Varying Def. | | Populism Score | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) OLS | (2) 2SLS | (3) OLS | (4) 2SLS |
| Panel (a) - Total | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.008*** | –0.118** | | |
| | (0.002) | (0.055) | | |
| Exposure to Populism | | | –0.118*** | –1.203** |
| | | | (0.023) | (0.574) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | 25.943 | | 19.145 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.267 | –0.170 | 0.268 | –0.156 |
| Panel (b) - Non-Citizens | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.000 | –0.017 | | |
| | (0.001) | (0.032) | | |
| Exposure to Populism | | | –0.006 | –0.168 |
| | | | (0.010) | (0.325) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | 25.943 | | 19.145 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.094 | –0.026 | 0.094 | –0.025 |
| Panel (c) - Citizens | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.007*** | –0.102** | | |
| | (0.002) | (0.041) | | |
| Exposure to Populism | | | –0.112*** | –1.034** |
| | | | (0.020) | (0.419) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | 25.943 | | 19.145 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.272 | –0.153 | 0.273 | –0.141 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

## D.2 Robustness to Alternative Time Structures of Net Flows

Our primary variable of interest is constructed by aggregating flows between the election year $t$ and the subsequent year $t+1$. The results are presented in Tables D-5 and D-6, which show the cumulative flows up to $t+2$ and $t+3$, respectively. It is important to note the potential measurement issue stemming from the timing of our national elections, in particular due to the closeness of the first two electoral events (2006 and 2008). Therefore, the presented results provide a cautious intuition of the effect of electoral outcomes on mobility choices over a more extended period. Compared to the baseline results on internal mobility presented in Table 4, the results are qualitatively similar and quantitatively bigger. Specifically, municipalities experiencing a surge in populism become less appealing to natives. Furthermore, the increase in the coefficient's magnitude indicates that this effect strengthens over time, aligning with the idea that mobility choices require some time to transition from planning to realization.

To investigate the potential role of planned mobility choices in our context, Tables D-7 and D-8 explore the impact of populist votes on cumulative net flows computed during the election year $t$ and the preceding year $t-1$, as well as on net flows computed exclusively in the year $t-1$. If our results were driven by previously planned mobility choices rather than the (exogenous) variations in electoral outcomes identified through our strategy, we would expect to find statistically significant effects between electoral outcomes and pre-election net flows. While the OLS results in Cols. (1) to (3) demonstrate a negative and statistically significant partial correlation between populist votes and net mobility flows before elections, the 2SLS results in Cols. (4) to (6) indicate no statistically significant relationship between populist votes and pre-election net mobility flows. These results bolster the validity of our identification strategy, mitigating concerns related to pre-existing trends.

Table D-5: Robustness Check: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes With Net flows Computed Over t and t+2

| | OLS | | | 2SLS | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) Total | (2) Non-Citizens | (3) Citizens | (4) Total | (5) Non-Citizens | (6) Citizens |
| Panel (a) - No Controls | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.033*** | –0.001 | –0.031*** | –0.294** | –0.072 | –0.222** |
| | (0.004) | (0.001) | (0.004) | (0.141) | (0.091) | (0.100) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | 18.316 | 18.316 | 18.316 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.346 | 0.173 | 0.355 | –0.310 | –0.167 | –0.202 |
| Panel (b) - With Controls | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.033*** | –0.001 | –0.032*** | –0.310** | –0.075 | –0.235** |
| | (0.004) | (0.001) | (0.004) | (0.150) | (0.095) | (0.105) |
| Unempl. Rate | 0.010 | 0.009 | 0.001 | 0.096* | 0.032 | 0.064 |
| | (0.019) | (0.007) | (0.018) | (0.053) | (0.031) | (0.039) |
| Income | –0.005** | –0.000 | –0.005** | –0.008** | –0.001 | –0.007*** |
| | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.003) | (0.001) | (0.003) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | 17.551 | 17.551 | 17.551 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.346 | 0.173 | 0.355 | –0.348 | –0.180 | –0.229 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

Table D-6: Robustness Check: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes With Net Flows Computed Over t and t+3

| | OLS | | | 2SLS | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) Total | (2) Non-Citizens | (3) Citizens | (4) Total | (5) Non-Citizens | (6) Citizens |
| Panel (a) - No Controls | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.036*** | –0.002 | –0.034*** | –0.383** | –0.081 | –0.302** |
| | (0.005) | (0.002) | (0.004) | (0.157) | (0.082) | (0.126) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | 18.316 | 18.316 | 18.316 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.398 | 0.222 | 0.406 | –0.436 | –0.173 | –0.317 |
| Panel (b) - With Controls | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.036*** | –0.002 | –0.034*** | –0.404** | –0.084 | –0.320** |
| | (0.005) | (0.002) | (0.004) | (0.169) | (0.085) | (0.135) |
| Unempl. Rate | 0.005 | 0.012 | –0.007 | 0.119* | 0.037 | 0.082* |
| | (0.023) | (0.008) | (0.021) | (0.061) | (0.028) | (0.050) |
| Income | –0.006** | 0.000 | –0.007*** | –0.011*** | –0.001 | –0.010*** |
| | (0.003) | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.004) | (0.001) | (0.003) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | 17.551 | 17.551 | 17.551 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.398 | 0.222 | 0.406 | –0.487 | –0.183 | –0.359 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

Table D-7: Robustness Check: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes With Net Flows Computed Over t-1 and t

| | OLS | | | 2SLS | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) Total | (2) Non-Citizens | (3) Citizens | (4) Total | (5) Non-Citizens | (6) Citizens |
| Panel (a) - No Controls | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.026*** | –0.004*** | –0.022*** | –0.164 | –0.043 | –0.121 |
| | (0.003) | (0.001) | (0.003) | (0.143) | (0.060) | (0.115) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | 18.316 | 18.316 | 18.316 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.294 | 0.114 | 0.297 | –0.119 | –0.067 | –0.076 |
| Panel (b) - With Controls | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.026*** | –0.004*** | –0.022*** | –0.171 | –0.045 | –0.125 |
| | (0.003) | (0.001) | (0.003) | (0.147) | (0.063) | (0.118) |
| Unempl. Rate | –0.003 | 0.001 | –0.004 | 0.042 | 0.014 | 0.028 |
| | (0.015) | (0.005) | (0.014) | (0.048) | (0.021) | (0.039) |
| Income | –0.002 | –0.001 | –0.001 | –0.003 | –0.001 | –0.002 |
| | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.003) | (0.001) | (0.002) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | 17.551 | 17.551 | 17.551 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.294 | 0.114 | 0.297 | –0.131 | –0.074 | –0.083 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

Table D-8: Robustness Check: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes With Net Flows in the Year Before National Elections

| | OLS | | | 2SLS | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) Total | (2) Non-Citizens | (3) Citizens | (4) Total | (5) Non-Citizens | (6) Citizens |
| Panel (a) - No Controls | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.010*** | –0.003*** | –0.007*** | –0.041 | –0.007 | –0.034 |
| | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.112) | (0.020) | (0.111) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | 18.316 | 18.316 | 18.316 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.200 | 0.067 | 0.199 | –0.015 | –0.004 | –0.014 |
| Panel (b) - With Controls | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.010*** | –0.003*** | –0.007*** | –0.042 | –0.007 | –0.035 |
| | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.114) | (0.021) | (0.113) |
| Unempl. Rate | –0.010 | –0.003 | –0.007 | –0.000 | –0.001 | 0.001 |
| | (0.010) | (0.003) | (0.009) | (0.036) | (0.007) | (0.036) |
| Income | –0.000 | –0.000 | –0.000 | –0.001 | –0.000 | –0.001 |
| | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.001) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | 17.551 | 17.551 | 17.551 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.200 | 0.067 | 0.198 | –0.016 | –0.004 | –0.015 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

## D.3 Other Robustness Checks

Table D-9: Robustness Check: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes When Controling for Province-Specific Time-trend

| | OLS | | | 2SLS | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) Total | (2) Non-Citizens | (3) Citizens | (4) Total | (5) Non-Citizens | (6) Citizens |
| Populist Votes | –0.024*** | –0.001 | –0.024*** | –0.288* | –0.033 | –0.255** |
| | (0.003) | (0.001) | (0.003) | (0.173) | (0.089) | (0.115) |
| Unempl. Rate | 0.009 | 0.004 | 0.005 | 0.024 | 0.005 | 0.018 |
| | (0.016) | (0.006) | (0.014) | (0.025) | (0.008) | (0.021) |
| Income | –0.003 | –0.000 | –0.002 | –0.004 | –0.001 | –0.003 |
| | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.002) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | 9.767 | 9.767 | 9.767 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.274 | 0.096 | 0.278 | –0.406 | –0.053 | –0.388 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

Table D-10: Robustness Check: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes When Removing Elections Years From the Sample

| | OLS | | | | 2SLS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) No 2006 Net Flows | (2) No 2008 Net Flows | (3) No 2013 Net Flows | (4) No 2018 Net Flows | (5) No 2006 Net Flows | (6) No 2008 Net Flows | (7) No 2013 Net Flows | (8) No 2018 Net Flows |
| Panel (a) - Total | | | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.016*** | –0.032*** | –0.021*** | –0.034*** | –0.197* | –0.264 | –0.129 | –0.338 |
| | (0.003) | (0.004) | (0.003) | (0.004) | (0.112) | (0.177) | (0.111) | (0.218) |
| Observations | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | | 25.202 | 8.353 | 12.983 | 13.181 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.228 | 0.211 | 0.311 | 0.306 | –0.274 | –0.382 | –0.082 | –0.494 |
| Panel (b) - Non-Citizens | | | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.001 | –0.003** | 0.001 | –0.002* | –0.028 | –0.034 | –0.007 | –0.063 |
| | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.057) | (0.086) | (0.070) | (0.070) |
| Observations | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | | 25.202 | 8.353 | 12.983 | 13.181 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.066 | 0.083 | 0.127 | 0.096 | –0.035 | –0.046 | –0.006 | –0.144 |
| Panel (c) - Citizens | | | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.015*** | –0.029*** | –0.022*** | –0.032*** | –0.169* | –0.230* | –0.122 | –0.275 |
| | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.004) | (0.092) | (0.132) | (0.082) | (0.169) |
| Observations | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 | 21990 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | | 25.202 | 8.353 | 12.983 | 13.181 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.236 | 0.210 | 0.310 | 0.318 | –0.254 | –0.359 | –0.086 | –0.387 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

Table D-11: Robustness Check: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes When Removing NUTS1 Macro-regions From the Sample

| | OLS | | | | | 2SLS | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) No N1 Center | (2) No N1 North-West | (3) No N1 North-East | (4) No N1 South | (5) No N1 Islands | (6) No N1 Center | (7) No N1 North-West | (8) No N1 North-East | (9) No N1 South | (10) No N1 Islands |
| Panel (a) - Total | | | | | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.025*** | –0.018*** | –0.023*** | –0.033*** | –0.029*** | –0.207* | –0.167 | –0.208* | –0.298* | –0.224* |
| | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.004) | (0.003) | (0.108) | (0.137) | (0.117) | (0.155) | (0.118) |
| Observations | 25800 | 18624 | 23976 | 22512 | 26368 | 25800 | 18624 | 23976 | 22512 | 26368 |
| Municipalities | 6450 | 4656 | 5994 | 5628 | 6592 | 6450 | 4656 | 5994 | 5628 | 6592 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | | | 22.515 | 6.692 | 17.719 | 7.739 | 16.990 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.272 | 0.328 | 0.265 | 0.234 | 0.262 | –0.236 | –0.265 | –0.240 | –0.354 | –0.226 |
| Panel (b) - Non-Citizens | | | | | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.002* | –0.000 | –0.000 | –0.003 | –0.002 | –0.023 | 0.009 | –0.019 | –0.086 | –0.031 |
| | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.058) | (0.077) | (0.063) | (0.072) | (0.063) |
| Observations | 25800 | 18624 | 23976 | 22512 | 26368 | 25800 | 18624 | 23976 | 22512 | 26368 |
| Municipalities | 6450 | 4656 | 5994 | 5628 | 6592 | 6450 | 4656 | 5994 | 5628 | 6592 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | | | 22.515 | 6.692 | 17.719 | 7.739 | 16.990 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.088 | 0.133 | 0.076 | 0.096 | 0.096 | –0.022 | –0.011 | –0.020 | –0.219 | –0.035 |
| Panel (c) - Citizens | | | | | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.023*** | –0.018*** | –0.023*** | –0.030*** | –0.027*** | –0.184** | –0.176** | –0.189** | –0.211* | –0.193** |
| | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.004) | (0.003) | (0.072) | (0.081) | (0.079) | (0.118) | (0.079) |
| Observations | 25800 | 18624 | 23976 | 22512 | 26368 | 25800 | 18624 | 23976 | 22512 | 26368 |
| Municipalities | 6450 | 4656 | 5994 | 5628 | 6592 | 6450 | 4656 | 5994 | 5628 | 6592 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | | | 22.515 | 6.692 | 17.719 | 7.739 | 16.990 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.279 | 0.331 | 0.272 | 0.236 | 0.265 | –0.230 | –0.362 | –0.237 | –0.207 | –0.203 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

Table D-12: Robustness Check: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes When Using Alternative Data on Internal Flows

| | OLS | | | 2SLS | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) Total | (2) Non-Citizens | (3) Citizens | (4) Total | (5) Non-Citizens | (6) Citizens |
| Panel (a) - No Controls | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.023*** | –0.002** | –0.021*** | –0.182* | –0.005 | –0.177** |
| | (0.003) | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.106) | (0.041) | (0.089) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | 18.316 | 18.316 | 18.316 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.307 | 0.120 | 0.316 | –0.210 | –0.003 | –0.248 |
| Panel (b) - With Controls | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.023*** | –0.002** | –0.021*** | –0.193* | –0.006 | –0.187* |
| | (0.003) | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.114) | (0.042) | (0.096) |
| Unempl. Rate | 0.001 | –0.001 | 0.002 | 0.054 | 0.000 | 0.053 |
| | (0.013) | (0.004) | (0.012) | (0.039) | (0.014) | (0.034) |
| Income | –0.004* | –0.001 | –0.003* | –0.006** | –0.001 | –0.005** |
| | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.003) | (0.001) | (0.002) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | 17.551 | 17.551 | 17.551 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.308 | 0.120 | 0.316 | –0.237 | –0.004 | –0.278 |

Notes: authors' calculation on ADELE, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

## D.4 Internal Mobility, Populism Votes and Turnout

Table D-13: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes When Adding an Interaction With Voters' Abstention (1 - Turnout)

| | OLS | | 2SLS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) Non-Citizens | (2) Citizens | (3) Non-Citizens | (4) Citizens |
| Panel (a) - No Controls | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.000 | –0.043*** | –0.027 | –0.187*** |
| | (0.002) | (0.004) | (0.062) | (0.069) |
| Populist Votes × (1-Turnout) | –0.003 | 0.080*** | –0.024 | 0.061 |
| | (0.005) | (0.013) | (0.098) | (0.211) |
| (1-Turnout) | 0.006** | –0.035*** | 0.013 | –0.040 |
| | (0.003) | (0.007) | (0.044) | (0.091) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | 9.024 | 9.024 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.094 | 0.277 | –0.049 | –0.186 |
| Panel (b) - With Controls | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.000 | –0.043*** | –0.030 | –0.195*** |
| | (0.002) | (0.004) | (0.065) | (0.075) |
| Populist Votes × (1-Turnout) | –0.004 | 0.078*** | –0.025 | 0.056 |
| | (0.005) | (0.013) | (0.099) | (0.214) |
| (1-Turnout) | 0.006** | –0.034*** | 0.013 | –0.038 |
| | (0.003) | (0.007) | (0.044) | (0.092) |
| Unempl. Rate | 0.003 | 0.006 | 0.014 | 0.054 |
| | (0.005) | (0.013) | (0.023) | (0.041) |
| Income | –0.001 | –0.002 | –0.001 | –0.004 |
| | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.004) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | 8.351 | 8.351 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.094 | 0.277 | –0.057 | –0.210 |

Notes: authors' calculation on ADELE, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at the municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

# E National Elections: Heterogeneity Analysis

In this section, we present the results of the heterogeneous effect of the variation in votes for populist parties during national elections on the variation in net flows of immigrants and natives, focusing exclusively on internal mobility.

Table E-1 displays the gender-specific results. The negative effect on natives is precisely estimated among women. While the effect on men is directionally similar and of comparable magnitude, it lacks precise estimation. Consistent with previous findings, we do not observe any discernible effect on the net mobility of migrants.

Results on age-specific net flows are provided in Table E-2. On average, the results for the foreign-born population are not statistically different from zero. In the lower panel, we present findings for the native population. The magnitude of the coefficient is inversely related to the age group: young cohorts are more likely to react to votes for populists.

To investigate whether support for populists has heterogeneous effects across foreign-born characteristics, Table E-3 presents results focusing on broad birthplace-specific groups, including Europe, Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Oceania. Our analysis does not reveal any origin-specific responses in the internal mobility of foreign-born individuals.

We also explore the relationship between support for populism at national elections and education-specific net flows. As outlined in the data section, information regarding education-specific categories (i.e., non-college and college-educated) is only available for native individuals starting from the year 2012. Consequently, our instrumental variable (IV) approach, which relies on the variation generated by the 2008 financial crisis, cannot be applied in this context. Nevertheless, we can provide suggestive evidence of the relationship by estimating the skill-specific mobility response of natives to support for populism in national elections using the following first-difference model:

$$\Delta\text{Net Flow}^{s}_{m,r} = \alpha^{s} + \beta^{s}\Delta\text{Exposure}_{m,r} + \gamma^{s}\Delta\mathbf{X}_{m,r} + \zeta_{r} + \Delta\epsilon^{s}_{m,r}. \tag{E-1}$$

The outcome variable, $\Delta\text{Net Flow}^{s}_{m,r}$, represents the variation between 2018 and 2013 of the net cumulative flow of natives with education $s \in (Not\ Tertiary, Tertiary)$, divided by the education-specific population in 2011. Our variable of interest, $\Delta\text{Exposure}_{m,r}$, measures the variation in votes for populists between 2018 and 2013. By estimating the skill-specific coefficient $\beta^{s}$ using ordinary least squares (OLS), we can derive a cross-municipality measure of partial correlation while accounting for unobserved heterogeneity at the municipality level. The estimated results are presented in Table E-4, both with and without municipality-specific controls. Although not statistically significant, the magnitude of the coefficient associated with highly educated natives is approximately three times the size of the one computed for less educated natives.

Table E-5 explores another dimension of heterogeneity, namely the population size of the municipality. This dimension has been highlighted as relevant when examining the effect of immigration on electoral outcomes in Italy (Barone et al., 2016). OLS results suggest that the negative effect on the net mobility of natives appears to diminish with the increasing

size of the municipality. However, these results are not corroborated in a 2SLS setting.

Similarly, Table E-6 explores the role played by the pre-existing immigrant population size at the municipal level. One might intuitively expect that the response of foreigners to the upsurge of populism could vary depending on the size of their community within the municipality. We investigate this potential heterogeneity by introducing an interaction between the share of populist votes and the percentage of migrants based on the 2001 census. OLS results suggest that the response in terms of mobility choices of foreigners to populism exposure is indeed influenced by the size of the immigrant population. However, these findings are not confirmed when we exploit the variation induced by our IV approach.

Table E-1: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes: Gender-Specific Results

| | OLS | | | | 2SLS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) Non-Citizens Men | (2) Non-Citizens Women | (3) Citizens Men | (4) Citizens Women | (5) Non-Citizens Men | (6) Non-Citizens Women | (7) Citizens Men | (8) Citizens Women |
| Panel (a) - No Controls | | | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.000 | –0.001 | –0.012*** | –0.012*** | –0.027 | –0.002 | –0.097 | –0.085** |
| | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.041) | (0.028) | (0.066) | (0.042) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | | 18.316 | 18.316 | 18.316 | 18.316 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.082 | 0.056 | 0.207 | 0.242 | –0.086 | –0.003 | –0.186 | –0.144 |
| Panel (b) - With Controls | | | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.000 | –0.001 | –0.012*** | –0.012*** | –0.027 | –0.004 | –0.100 | –0.090** |
| | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.042) | (0.029) | (0.069) | (0.043) |
| Unempl. Rate | –0.000 | 0.003 | 0.003 | 0.004 | 0.008 | 0.004 | 0.031 | 0.028* |
| | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.008) | (0.007) | (0.014) | (0.009) | (0.024) | (0.016) |
| Income | 0.001 | –0.001** | –0.000 | –0.002** | 0.000 | –0.001* | –0.002 | –0.003*** |
| | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | | 17.551 | 17.551 | 17.551 | 17.551 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.082 | 0.056 | 0.207 | 0.242 | –0.086 | –0.004 | –0.201 | –0.166 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

Table E-2: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes: Age-Specific Results

| | OLS | | | | 2SLS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) Age 0-17 | (2) Age 18-37 | (3) Age 38-57 | (4) Age 58+ | (5) Age 0-17 | (6) Age 18-37 | (7) Age 38-57 | (8) Age 58+ |
| Panel (a) - Non-Citizens | | | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.007** | –0.004 | –0.001 | –0.000 | 0.030 | –0.038 | 0.019 | –0.001 |
| | (0.003) | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.000) | (0.136) | (0.111) | (0.064) | (0.011) |
| Unempl. Rate | 0.002 | –0.018 | 0.005 | 0.003 | –0.010 | –0.008 | –0.002 | 0.003 |
| | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.005) | (0.002) | (0.043) | (0.036) | (0.020) | (0.004) |
| Income | –0.000 | 0.001 | –0.002** | 0.000 | –0.000 | 0.000 | –0.001 | 0.000 |
| | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.000) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.000) |
| Observations | 29316 | 29316 | 29316 | 29316 | 29316 | 29316 | 29316 | 29316 |
| Municipalities | 7329 | 7329 | 7329 | 7329 | 7329 | 7329 | 7329 | 7329 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | | 17.450 | 17.450 | 17.450 | 17.450 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.023 | 0.083 | 0.055 | –0.017 | –0.012 | –0.014 | –0.017 | –0.003 |
| Panel (b) - Citizens | | | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.025*** | –0.040*** | –0.021*** | –0.004* | –0.419* | –0.317 | –0.067 | –0.105 |
| | (0.006) | (0.005) | (0.003) | (0.002) | (0.248) | (0.197) | (0.116) | (0.135) |
| Unempl. Rate | 0.002 | 0.005 | 0.007 | –0.002 | 0.125 | 0.092 | 0.022 | 0.029 |
| | (0.025) | (0.024) | (0.016) | (0.011) | (0.084) | (0.067) | (0.038) | (0.044) |
| Income | –0.004 | –0.011*** | –0.001 | 0.001 | –0.009* | –0.014*** | –0.002 | –0.000 |
| | (0.004) | (0.004) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.005) | (0.004) | (0.002) | (0.002) |
| Observations | 29316 | 29316 | 29316 | 29316 | 29316 | 29316 | 29316 | 29316 |
| Municipalities | 7329 | 7329 | 7329 | 7329 | 7329 | 7329 | 7329 | 7329 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | | 17.450 | 17.450 | 17.450 | 17.450 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.057 | 0.300 | 0.161 | 0.327 | –0.293 | –0.179 | –0.013 | –0.126 |

Notes: authors' calculation on ADELE, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

Table E-3: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes: Origin-Specific Results

| | OLS | | | | | 2SLS | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | EUR | AFR | ASI | AME | OCE | EUR | AFR | ASI | AME | OCE |
| Panel (a) - No Controls | | | | | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | 0.0001 | –0.0007 | –0.0002 | –0.0000 | –0.0000 | 0.0008 | 0.0087 | 0.0142 | –0.0089 | –0.0000 |
| | (0.0006) | (0.0006) | (0.0003) | (0.0002) | (0.0000) | (0.0289) | (0.0332) | (0.0159) | (0.0058) | (0.0003) |
| Observations | 29268 | 29268 | 29268 | 29268 | 29268 | 29268 | 29268 | 29268 | 29268 | 29268 |
| Municipalities | 7318 | 7318 | 7318 | 7318 | 7318 | 7318 | 7318 | 7318 | 7318 | 7318 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | | | 13.740 | 13.740 | 13.740 | 13.740 | 13.740 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.070 | 0.049 | 0.041 | –0.012 | 0.001 | –0.003 | –0.021 | –0.120 | –0.151 | –0.003 |
| Panel (b) - With Controls | | | | | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | 0.0001 | –0.0007 | –0.0002 | –0.0000 | –0.0000 | 0.0005 | 0.0089 | 0.0145 | –0.0092 | –0.0000 |
| | (0.0006) | (0.0006) | (0.0003) | (0.0002) | (0.0000) | (0.0295) | (0.0338) | (0.0162) | (0.0061) | (0.0003) |
| Unempl. Rate | 0.0008 | 0.0012 | –0.0008 | 0.0002 | –0.0001 | 0.0006 | –0.0018 | –0.0054 | 0.0031 | –0.0001 |
| | (0.0025) | (0.0025) | (0.0014) | (0.0006) | (0.0001) | (0.0095) | (0.0109) | (0.0052) | (0.0020) | (0.0001) |
| Income | –0.0004 | 0.0001 | –0.0001 | –0.0002 | –0.0000 | –0.0004 | 0.0002 | 0.0001 | –0.0003* | –0.0000 |
| | (0.0004) | (0.0003) | (0.0002) | (0.0001) | (0.0000) | (0.0005) | (0.0005) | (0.0003) | (0.0001) | (0.0000) |
| Observations | 29268 | 29268 | 29268 | 29268 | 29268 | 29268 | 29268 | 29268 | 29268 | 29268 |
| Municipalities | 7318 | 7318 | 7318 | 7318 | 7318 | 7318 | 7318 | 7318 | 7318 | 7318 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | | | | 13.058 | 13.058 | 13.058 | 13.058 | 13.058 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.070 | 0.049 | 0.041 | –0.012 | 0.001 | –0.003 | –0.022 | –0.124 | –0.161 | –0.003 |

Notes: authors' calculation on ADELE, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

Table E-4: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes: Education-Specific Results

| | Δ Not Tertiary Educated | | Δ Tertiary Educated | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) No Controls | (2) With Controls | (3) No Controls | (4) With Controls |
| Δ Populist Votes | –0.004 | –0.004 | –0.016 | –0.015 |
| | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.021) | (0.021) |
| Δ Unempl. Rate | | 0.010 | | 0.369** |
| | | (0.026) | | (0.166) |
| Δ Income | | –0.004 | | –0.023 |
| | | (0.003) | | (0.017) |
| Observations | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| Region F.E. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.006 | 0.007 | 0.006 | 0.007 |

Notes: authors' calculation on ADELE and Electoral Data (Eligendo). Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

Table E-5: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes When Adding an Interaction with Municipality Size

| | OLS | | 2SLS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) Non-Citizens | (2) Citizens | (3) Non-Citizens | (4) Citizens |
| Panel (a) - No Controls | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.001 | –0.024*** | –0.039 | –0.230** |
| | (0.001) | (0.003) | (0.072) | (0.096) |
| Populist Votes × Population | 0.001** | 0.005** | 0.018 | 0.087 |
| | (0.000) | (0.002) | (0.021) | (0.055) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | 4.142 | 4.142 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.094 | 0.275 | –0.089 | –0.475 |
| Panel (b) - With Controls | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.001 | –0.024*** | –0.040 | –0.235** |
| | (0.001) | (0.003) | (0.073) | (0.099) |
| Populist Votes × Population | 0.001** | 0.005** | 0.017 | 0.085 |
| | (0.000) | (0.002) | (0.020) | (0.054) |
| Unempl. Rate | 0.003 | 0.007 | 0.013 | 0.065* |
| | (0.005) | (0.013) | (0.022) | (0.034) |
| Income | –0.000 | –0.003 | –0.000 | –0.002 |
| | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.002) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | 4.249 | 4.249 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.094 | 0.275 | –0.091 | –0.484 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

Table E-6: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes When Adding an Interaction With the Pre-Election Share of Foreign Residents

| | OLS | | 2SLS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) Non-Citizens | (2) Citizens | (3) Non-Citizens | (4) Citizens |
| Panel (a) - No Controls | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.003*** | –0.024*** | –0.017 | –0.194** |
| | (0.001) | (0.003) | (0.056) | (0.083) |
| Populist Votes × $\text{Foreigners}_{2001}$ | 0.016*** | –0.000 | 0.042 | –0.045 |
| | (0.003) | (0.006) | (0.034) | (0.044) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | 6.098 | 6.098 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.096 | 0.275 | –0.013 | –0.268 |
| Panel (b) - With Controls | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.003*** | –0.024*** | –0.018 | –0.206** |
| | (0.001) | (0.003) | (0.058) | (0.091) |
| Populist Votes × $\text{Foreigners}_{2001}$ | 0.016*** | –0.001 | 0.042 | –0.050 |
| | (0.003) | (0.006) | (0.034) | (0.047) |
| Unempl. Rate | 0.004 | 0.007 | 0.010 | 0.061* |
| | (0.005) | (0.013) | (0.019) | (0.032) |
| Income | –0.000 | –0.003* | –0.000 | –0.006** |
| | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.003) |
| Observations | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 | 29320 |
| Municipalities | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | | | 5.762 | 5.762 |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.096 | 0.275 | –0.013 | –0.308 |

Notes: authors' calculation on ADELE, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

# F National Elections: Mechanisms

Table F-1: Internal Mobility and Populism Votes: Decomposing the Flows

| | Extensive | | Variation | | Logs | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) 2SLS Inflows | (2) 2SLS Outflows | (3) 2SLS Inflows | (4) 2SLS Outflows | (5) 2SLS Inflows | (6) 2SLS Outflows |
| Panel (a) - Total | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | 0.125 | 0.020 | –0.020 | 0.201* | 0.496 | 2.357 |
| | (0.158) | (0.022) | (0.095) | (0.121) | (1.350) | (1.517) |
| Observations | 29344 | 29344 | 29320 | 29320 | 29316 | 29319 |
| Municipalities | 7336 | 7336 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | 17.297 | 17.297 | 17.551 | 17.551 | 17.084 | 17.611 |
| Adjusted R2 | –0.220 | –0.029 | 0.002 | –0.461 | –0.025 | –0.297 |
| Panel (b) - Non-Citizens | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | –0.520 | –0.361 | 0.014 | 0.045 | 0.706 | 3.895 |
| | (0.822) | (0.585) | (0.039) | (0.065) | (2.558) | (4.731) |
| Observations | 29344 | 29344 | 29320 | 29320 | 28545 | 28607 |
| Municipalities | 7336 | 7336 | 7330 | 7330 | 7277 | 7279 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | 17.297 | 17.297 | 17.551 | 17.551 | 10.792 | 12.604 |
| Adjusted R2 | –0.032 | –0.015 | –0.016 | –0.112 | –0.008 | –0.138 |
| Panel (c) - Citizens | | | | | | |
| Populist Votes | 0.205 | 0.020 | –0.034 | 0.156** | 0.089 | 2.401** |
| | (0.188) | (0.022) | (0.070) | (0.074) | (1.384) | (1.157) |
| Observations | 29344 | 29344 | 29320 | 29320 | 29315 | 29319 |
| Municipalities | 7336 | 7336 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 | 7330 |
| K-P rk Wald F-stat | 17.297 | 17.297 | 17.551 | 17.551 | 17.569 | 17.611 |
| Adjusted R2 | –0.493 | –0.029 | –0.001 | –0.391 | –0.004 | –0.288 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Electoral Data (Eligendo), Atlas of Nazi and fascist massacres. Robust standard errors clustered at the municipal level are reported in parentheses. Significance levels: *: 10% **: 5% ***: 1%

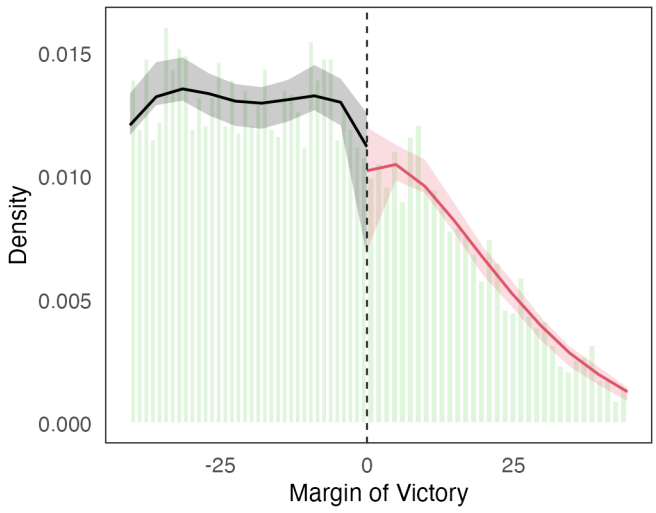
# G Municipal Elections: Robustness checks

## G.1 Tests on the Validity of RD Design

In this section we report falsification tests to support the validity of the main identifying assumption — the continuity at the cutoff in terms of density and potential outcomes - underpinning our regression discontinuity design. Figure G-1 shows the absence of a substantial density discontinuity at the cutoff. This empirical observation suggests an absence of substantial shifts in density, which, if present, might indicate a potential sorting of electoral outcomes on either side of the threshold. Moreover, Figure G-2 presents evidence supporting continuity at the cutoff across diverse potential outcomes. These outcomes encompass elected mayor's characteristics, including educational background, age, gender, prior occupational experience, alongside municipality-specific attributes such as surface area, population, employee and the councilors count operating within the municipality.

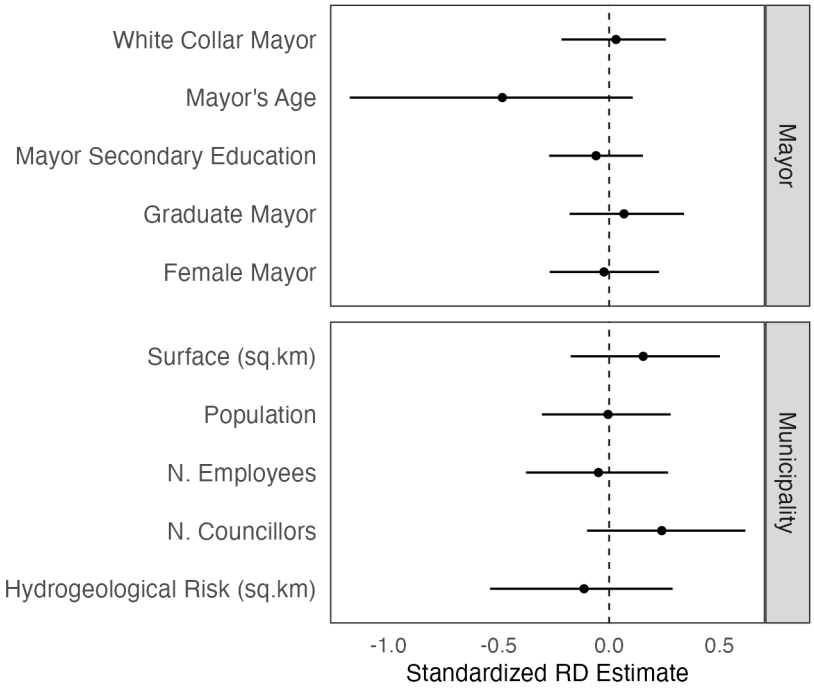
To strengthen the validity of our results, we conducted a series of additional tests. First, Figure G-3 presents estimates across alternative placebo cutoff points. Among the 30 alternative placebo cutoffs examined, the majority do not yield statistically significant results. Notable exceptions emerge in two cases, although the simultaneous discontinuity is not observed between different outcomes at the same placebo cut-off. Secondly, Figure G-4 displays the main RD estimates across a range of alternative bandwidths, in comparison to the optimal bandwidth suggested by Calonico et al. (2022). Generally, both the estimated effects and result precision are consistent across the different bandwidths. However, we note a lack of statistically significant results with overly stringent bandwidths, which can be attributed to the reduction in the number of observations in the sample.

Figure G-1: RD: Density Test



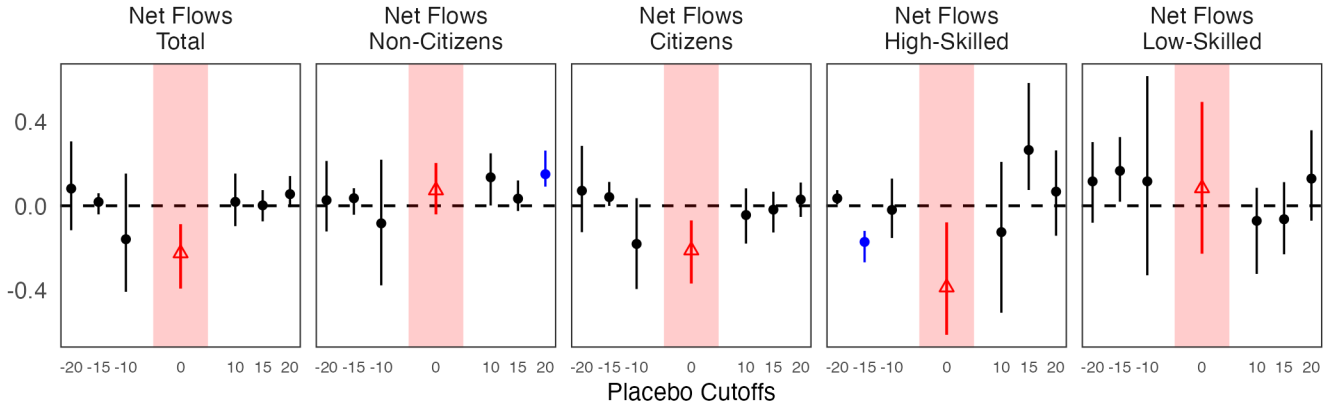

*Notes:* Manipulation test using the local polynomial density estimator proposed by Cattaneo et al. (2020). Histogram estimates of the running variable computed with default values in R; local polynomial density estimate (solid dark and red) and robust bias corrected confidence intervals (shaded dark and red) computed using `rddensity` package in R.

Figure G-2: RD: Balance Test



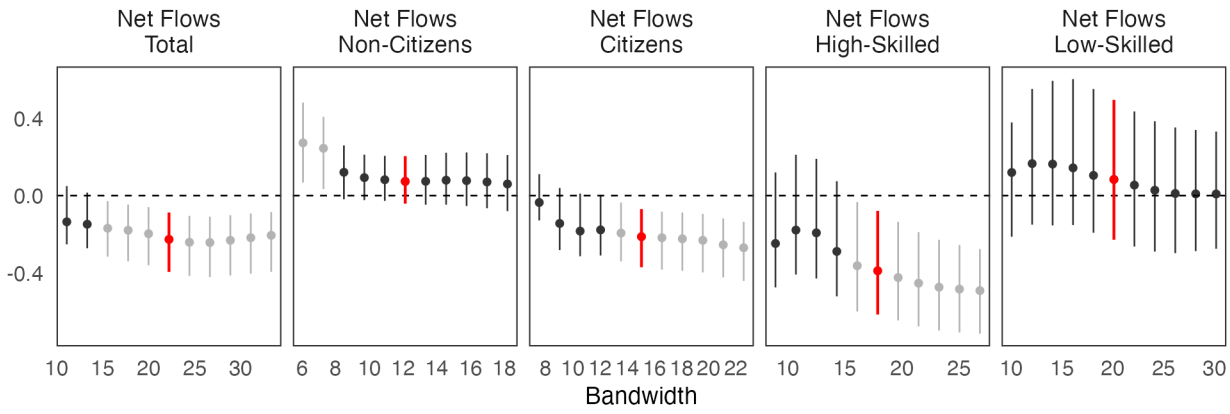

*Notes:* Standardized RD estimates with 95% robust confidence intervals of the effect of electing a populist mayor on pre-treatment covariates at mayor- and municipality-level. Unit of analysis is municipality-election year for covariates do not change within the government term. Estimates constructed using local polynomial estimators with triangular kernel and CER-optimal bandwidth (as suggested by Cattaneo et al., 2019a, Ch. 5). No covariates included.

Figure G-3: Internal Mobility and Populist Mayor: RD Estimates With Placebo Cutoffs




*Notes:* RD estimates with 95% robust CI of the effect of electing a populist mayor with placebo cutoffs. Red coefficients at true cutoff (margin of victory = 0). Blue coefficients when p.value after multiple testing adjustment is smaller than 0.05. Multiple-testing adjustment performed separately for each outcome variable with Bonferroni procedure to control for the false discovery rate. RD estimates constructed separately on control unit when placebo cutoff $< 0$, and on treated unit when placebo cutoff $> 0$. Placebo cutoffs very close to 0 (i.e., 1%, 2%) omitted due to small sample size. Estimation performed using local polynomial estimators with triangular kernel and MSE-optimal bandwidth. Confidence interval constructed using bias-correction with cluster robust standard errors at municipality level. Same covariates as in main analysis.

Figure G-4: Internal Mobility and Populist Mayor: RD Estimates With Alternative Bandwidths




*Notes:* Standardized RD estimates with 95% robust CI of the effect of electing a populist mayor with alternative bandwidths. Red coefficients estimated with MSE-optimal bandwidth and grey coefficients statistically significant at 95% level. Alternative bandwidths selected automatically ranging from .5 to 1.5 times the MSE-optimal bandwidth at interval of .1 (i.e., $h \times j$, where $j = 0.5, 0.6, 0.7, ..., 1.5$). Estimates constructed using local polynomial estimators with triangular kernel. Robust p-values and confidence interval constructed using bias-correction standard errors. Same covariates included in main analysis.

## G.2 Additional Results: International Mobility

Table G-1 displays the Regression Discontinuity (RD) estimates concerning net international migration flows, encompassing both citizens and non-citizens. The findings indicate a negative impact, albeit lacking statistical significance, associated with the election of a populist mayor on these net international flows. This result aligns with those identified within national elections. Therefore, the election of a populist mayor does not yield a discernibly precise effect on the attractiveness of municipalities in terms of international movers.

Table G-1: International Mobility and Populist Mayor

| | **International Mobility (Net Flow)** | |
|---|---|---|
| | Non-Citizens | Citizens |
| *Estimate* | −12.58 | −0.27 |
| *Robust SE* | (11.15) | (2.04) |
| *Bandwidth (h)* | 7.71 | 8.73 |
| *Obs. Used* | 2,905 | 3,364 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and election data. RD estimates constructed using local polynomial estimators with triangular kernel. Robust 95% confidence interval constructed using bias-correction with robust standard errors, $h$ is the MSE-optimal bandwidth. Analysis implemented with the `rdrobust` package in R (Calonico et al., 2015). Covariates included: population (at election year), year-election dummies, and mayor's characteristics (gender, university degree, white-collar job).

## G.3 Additional Robustness Tests

In this section we provide a series of additional robustness checks and results related to our main estimated effects.

Table G-2 displays the results using the net flows from the year preceding the election of the populist mayor as the outcome. The estimated effects are not statistically different from zero. Additionally, Figure G-5 shows the stability of our results after removing one specific populist party at a time. Consequently, our estimates are not contingent upon a single populist party but seem to be indicative of populists in general.

Table G-2: Internal Mobility and Populist Mayor: Results With Lagged Outcomes

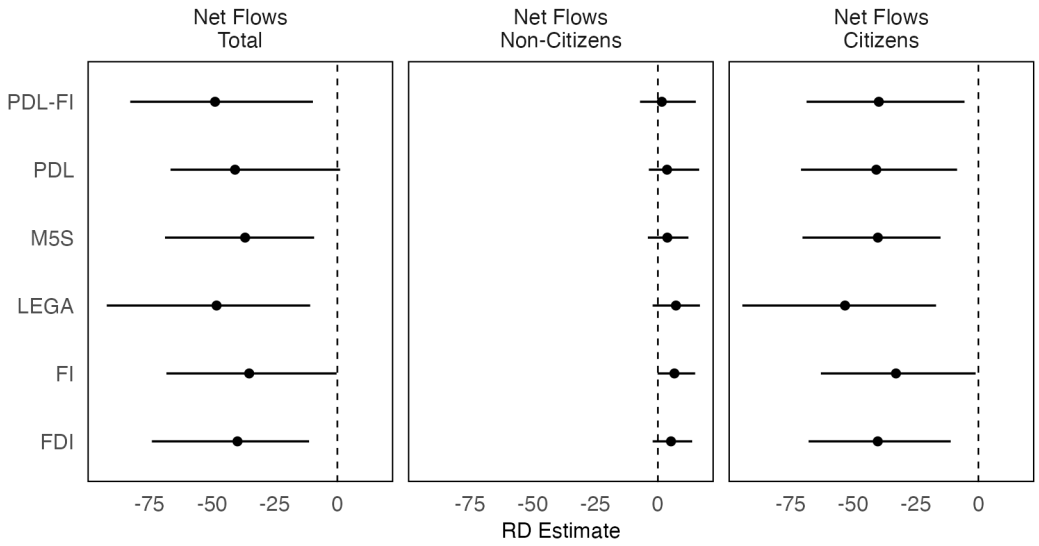
| | **Net Flow Year Before Election** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Outcomes | Net Flow Total | Net Flow Non-Citizens | Net Flow Citizens |
| Estimate | −35.65 | 0.48 | −36.86 |
| Robust SE | (39.00) | (7.29) | (36.05) |
| Bandwidth (h) | 16.74 | 14.01 | 17.60 |
| Obs. Used | 1,841 | 1,581 | 1,934 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and election data. RD estimates constructed using local polynomial estimators with triangular kernel. Robust 95% confidence interval constructed using bias-correction with robust standard errors, $h$ is the MSE-optimal bandwidth. Analysis implemented with the `rdrobust` package in R (Calonico et al., 2015). Covariates included: population (at election year), year-election dummies, and mayor's characteristics (gender, university degree, white-collar job).

Table G-3 shows the power analysis associated with our main results with the method implemented in the `rdpower` package (Cattaneo et al., 2019b). We estimate the power of a two-tailed test at the 5% significance level. We use the default settings of the package and investigate power with respect to an effect size equal to the one estimated whose confidence intervals do not include zero (e.g., total net flows, net flows natives, and net flows high-skilled natives). Table G-3 below reports the statistical power to detect such effects, which approximate the conventional 0.8 threshold for two of our three outcomes for which we detect an effect greater than 0. Hence, these results confirm that our setting provide enough statistical power to find the estimated effects.

Finally, Table G-4 offers additional insights into the factors influencing the effect of the populist mayor. Table G-4 separates the results between incumbent populist mayors and cases where a populist mayor is newly elected. Although not statistically significant, the estimates related to re-electing a populist mayor show a direction opposite to our main effects. This implies that the effects are likely driven by the election of a new populist mayor, potentially introducing a different set of policies.

Figure G-5: Internal Mobility and Populist Mayor: Estimates After Excluding Populist Parties




*Notes:* RD estimates with 95% robust CI of the effect of electing a populist mayor sequentially coding populist parties as non populist. On the vertical axis we report the party omitted when coding the candidates as populist. Estimates constructed using local polynomial estimators with triangular kernel. Robust confidence interval constructed using bias-correction standard errors. Covariates included: population (at election year), year-election dummies, and mayor's characteristics (gender, university degree, white-collar job).

Table G-3: Internal Mobility and Populist Mayor: Power Analysis

| | **No Covariates** | | **With Covariates** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Outcome | Target Effect (RD Estimate) | Power | Target Effect (RD Estimate) | Power |
| Net Flow Total | -19.59 | 0.25 | -47.55 | 0.82 |
| Net Flow Citizens | -51.15 | 0.98 | -39.80 | 0.79 |
| Net Flow High-Skilled | -48.80 | 1.00 | -34.76 | 0.81 |

*Notes*: Statistical power achieved by an effect size equal to effects reported in Table 7. Analysis implemented with `rdpower` package in R. Calculation performed with same estimation and covariates. Covariates included: population (at election year), year-election dummies, and mayor's characteristics (gender, university degree, white-collar job).

Table G-4: Internal Mobility and Populist Mayor: Incumbent vs. New-Entrant Mayor

| | **Incumbent Mayor** | | | **New Entrant Mayor** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Outcomes | Net Flow Total | Net Flow Non-Citizens | Net Flow Citizens | Net Flow Total | Net Flow Non-Citizens | Net Flow Citizens |
| Estimate | 7.07 | 0.64 | 14.74 | −39.24* | 6.58 | −36.33 |
| Robust SE | (13.27) | (5.08) | (11.33) | (18.55) | (4.30) | (18.46) |
| Bandwidth (h) | 13.77 | 11.86 | 18.31 | 15.44 | 9.13 | 12.82 |
| Obs. Used | 1,069 | 924 | 1,456 | 4,667 | 2,919 | 4,013 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and election data. RD estimates constructed using local polynomial estimators with triangular kernel. Robust 95% confidence interval constructed using bias-correction with robust standard errors, $h$ is the MSE-optimal bandwidth. Analysis implemented with the `rdrobust` package in R (Calonico et al., 2015). Covariates included: population (at election year), year-election dummies, and mayor's characteristics (gender, university degree, white-collar job).

# H Municipal Elections: Heterogeneity Analysis

This section presents the heterogeneity results concerning the impact of electing a populist mayor on various types of net internal flows.

Table H-1 presents the results by gender. The election of a populist mayor shows no significant effect on the net flows of foreigners, while it exhibits a negative and significant effect on the net flows of natives. However, we do not observe any substantial differences across gender groups.

Additionally, Table H-2 displays the results by different age groups. Consistent with the findings on National Elections, the effect of electing a populist mayor is notably strong and statistically significant among natives aged between 18 and 37 years old. This particular group is already more inclined towards internal mobility, and the election of a populist mayor could potentially serve as an additional factor influencing citizens' mobility choices.

Table H-1: Internal Mobility and Populist Mayor: Gender-Specific Results

| | **Internal Mobility (Net Flow)** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Non-Citizens** | | **Citizens** | |
| *Gender* | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| *Estimate* | 3.50* | 1.58 | −20.02*** | −19.81*** |
| *Robust SE* | (2.01) | (2.03) | (7.30) | (7.17) |
| *Bandwidth (h)* | 11.00 | 13.63 | 15.12 | 15.04 |
| *Obs. Used* | 4,308 | 5,284 | 5,787 | 5,767 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and election data. RD estimates constructed using local polynomial estimators with triangular kernel. Robust 95% confidence interval constructed using bias-correction with robust standard errors, $h$ is the MSE-optimal bandwidth. Analysis implemented with the `rdrobust` package in R (Calonico et al., 2015). Covariates included: population (at election year), year-election dummies, and mayor's characteristics (gender, university degree, white-collar job).

Table H-2: Internal Mobility and Populist Mayor: Age-Specific Results

| | **Internal Mobility (Net Flow)** | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Non-Citizens** | | | | **Citizens** | | | |
| *Age Group* | 0-17 | 18-37 | 38-57 | 58+ | 0-17 | 18-37 | 38-57 | 58+ |
| *Estimate* | 1.29 | 0.78 | 1.77 | 0.08 | 2.25 | −33.50*** | −4.04 | −1.08 |
| *Robust SE* | (0.92) | (1.76) | (1.25) | (0.25) | (1.81) | (7.32) | (2.95) | (1.94) |
| *Bandwidth (h)* | 11.94 | 14.72 | 11.44 | 14.97 | 13.65 | 11.01 | 13.41 | 13.60 |
| *Obs. Used* | 4,142 | 5,089 | 3,966 | 5,136 | 4,740 | 3,862 | 4,669 | 4,732 |

Notes: authors' calculation on Bilancio Demografico, Electoral Data (Eligendo) and election data. RD estimates constructed using local polynomial estimators with triangular kernel. Robust 95% confidence interval constructed using bias-correction with robust standard errors, $h$ is the MSE-optimal bandwidth. Analysis implemented with the `rdrobust` package in R (Calonico et al., 2015). Covariates included: population (at election year), year-election dummies, and mayor's characteristics (gender, university degree, white-collar job).