Do Local Economic Benefits of Asylum Seekers Lead to More Support for Local Refugee Intake?

Short title: Asylum Seekers and Local Politics

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Abstract

I explore the link between local socio-economic gains from refugee acceptance and subsequent support for refugee immigration. I leverage unique Finnish panel data about politicians' policy preferences and their electoral success. Using a difference-in-differences design, I find that across the political spectrum, politicians in areas with the highest rates of asylum seekers per capita – that is, poorer rural areas – become more willing to take refugees after managing a reception center for asylum seekers. This is in contrast to the national level negative narrative on refuge intake. This favorable change in position in highly affected areas is most likely due to the depopulation these areas suffer from. Receiving asylum seekers makes rural communities think of refugee intake as a solution to their socio-economic problems. These results have policy implications and offer lessons for rethinking the role of local economic context in immigration attitudes.

Keywords: Asylum seekers, elite stances, immigration policies, local economics, rural–urban divide

Supplementary material for this article is available in the appendix in the online edition.

Replication files are available in the JOP Dataverse (`https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/jop`). The empirical analysis has been successfully replicated by the JOP replication analyst.

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1 Introduction

There is a consensus in the literature of the political economy of immigration that immigration and refugee shocks tend to lead to an increased anti-immigration vote (Dinas et al. 2019; Halla et al. 2017; Otto and Steinhardt 2014; Dustmann et al. 2018). This reaction is either explained by cultural aversion to immigrants (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Margalit 2019; Alesina and Tabellini 2022) or by competition for public goods (Halla et al. 2017; Dahlberg et al. 2012; Otto and Steinhardt 2014).

However, the idea that immigrants and natives would compete for the same welfare state amenities stems from the assumption that locals and newcomers are engaged in a zero-sum game where someone is bound to get less as the population increases. But what if the locality suffers from structural depopulation (Hedlund and Lundholm 2015), and thus local services are under threat? This would be the case in sparsely populated areas where instead of children competing for places in school classes, the local school is in danger of being shut down due to underusage of the service (Lehtonen 2021). A similar fate would await the local health clinic. The lack of residents in the municipality also means not having enough residents to pay taxes and fulfill key roles in the local labor market.

A growing literature is indeed beginning to demonstrate that economic evaluations do shape perceptions of immigration and asylum seekers both in local public opinion (Liao et al. 2020) and among the local political elite (Shaffer et al. 2020). Where immigrants and refugees are perceived and believed to contribute positively to the local economy they are also viewed in a more positive light. But we don't know if this economically-informed view eventually materializes into electoral choices and ultimately, local policies. Existing work has thus far failed to isolate and identify the potentially positive local economic effects of immigration and refugee inflows in an electoral setting because of various confounders and research design weaknesses, often stemming from an inability to capture micro-level data.

Using a causal identification strategy leveraging unique panel data on local politicians' pre-election pledges combined with their electoral success as well as municipality-specific socio-economic measures, I argue that, when the socio-economic benefits of refugees are clear enough, the arrival of asylum seekers *increases* support for opting in to refugee integration schemes.

I leverage the 2015 refugee crisis in Finland[1] to show how preferences towards state backed refugee integration schemes changed at the local level in Finland between 2012 and 2017. Due to Finland's candidate-centered electoral system, it is possible to track the evolution of individual politicians' policy pledges over time and match them with their electoral success.[2]

As the unexpected refugee crisis unfolded, the country saw some municipalities suddenly and without their consent receive asylum-seekers while some otherwise similar municipalities did not. Crucially, Finnish municipalities are autonomous and exercise vast powers in financing and designing their public services. Even more importantly, Finland has vast rural areas where municipalities struggle to run their public services due to population shortages, and where new inhabitants would mean much needed local tax-payers and users of public services that are in danger of being shut down. Moreover, the central government pays for all the expenses associated with the reception centers and asylum seekers, therefore not causing any additional costs for the municipality. Thus, Finland is a crucial case where the sudden arrival of asylum seekers should make locals understand their positive economic benefits because refugee arrivals should translate into clear and much needed local economic benefits.

Results show that the arrival of asylum seekers in 2015 to these economically struggling rural areas led to a significant increase in support for taking refugees according to the refugee integration scheme across the political spectrum, including the otherwise anti-immigration populist radical right party. This is ultimately reflected in the composition of the newly elected municipal councils. Councils in rural areas suffering from population losses turn out to be more than a standard deviation more supportive of refugee intake in the municipality and these municipalities also later volunteer to take refugees. This is in contrast to trends in wealthier ur-

[1]Of all European countries affected by the refugee crisis, Finland witnessed the largest rise in applications compared to the previous year (+822%) and received the 4th highest number of asylum seekers per capita (Eurostat). Much like other medium-sized countries in Europe, Finland has not been a destination country for immigrants historically, but has now begun to face quite rapid demographic changes.

[2]Unfortunately due to lack of pre 2012 data about politicians's refugee stances this analysis is only a DiD with two time points, but I compensate for the lack of pre-trends with a wealth of robustness checks.

ban areas that are less reliant on immigration to maintain their services.

The contribution of this paper is twofold. Firstly, no study of immigration attitudes to date has managed to unite the two sides of policy making, elite proposals and electoral rewards for them, under one identification strategy.[3] Currently, all research regarding responses to refugee arrivals and immigration[4] is limited to capturing public attitudes either in the form of votes or surveys, which only have an indirect impact on legislation – after all, policy decisions are mediated by elected officials.

Secondly, the existing literature has demonstrated that the local context to which immigrants and refugees are received matters and explains some of the perceived heterogeneity in reactions (Dancygier 2010; Steinmayr 2021). In contrast to previous research designs, I leverage micro-level data about candidates (supply side) and match these with the demand side (electoral success) and with micro-level socio-economic data (context). Asylum seekers arrive in sometimes vastly different contexts, so that any study using cross-sectional data would be marred by confounding variables due to inherent differences between regions.

The results presented in the paper question the widely held assumption that economic benefits of immigration go unnoticed and that refugee arrivals always lead to anti-immigration sentiment and legislation. While rural areas are more anti-refugee at the baseline level, this is reversed when they have concrete experience of asylum seekers making a positive contribution to the local socio-economic situation, lending empirical evidence to sociotropic theories for explaining immigration attitudes. In other words, the results give credence to the idea that if immigrants and refugees bring money to the local areas, the reception will be more favorable. Finally, these results have policy implications: they open a way to investigating the receptiveness of rural areas suffering from population losses to refugee accommodation.

[3]Matakos, Savolainen, and Tukiainen (2020) combine elite proposals and citizen opinions in the same study using a very similar setting and the same data, but the outcome of the paper is preferences for redistribution.

[4]Refugee immigration is a sub-type of immigration that differs from voluntary immigration in many features. Refugee immigration is more regulated by international conventions and is more connected to public subsidies than voluntary immigration. I look at support for long-term local integration of refugee immigrants.

2 Immigration and the local context: theoretical expectations

The sudden increase of asylum seekers acts as an exogenous shock that is likely to exercise pressure on candidates. Theories of spatial party competition in multi-party systems would expect candidates and parties to scope out their policy shifts in response to other parties and according to their comparative advantage on the electoral market (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009). However, at the candidate level, a number of factors might intervene, such as a candidate's personal track record, a candidate appealing to a niche group rather than the electorate at large, and district-specific characteristics. Moreover, looser party discipline, which is the case in Finland, means that there may be quite substantial intra-party variation across candidates and different regions. Consequently, rather than looking at how parties respond to asylum seeker arrivals, it is more beneficial to examine the candidates themselves and their personal electoral support.

At present, we have very limited knowledge on candidate-level attitudes to refugees and immigration. Shaffer et al. 2020 demonstrate with a conjoint experiment that in the US local elected officials have favorable attitudes to refugee intake in general, especially if the refugees bring economic assets with them and have good language skills. However, these preferences are expressed preferences of the elite and we don't know how candidates campaign regarding the issue and whether the electorate lends support for such positive policy stances. So far we know that if the elite opposes immigration, public opposition also increases (Jones and Martin 2017) and that legislators respond with anti-immigration policies to growing opposition to immigration amongst the public (Ford et al. 2015). Jensen (2020) shows that refugee arrivals increased the number of working-class candidates in Denmark, presumably because refugee arrivals mobilize those whose jobs face competition by the new arrivals. Thus, if anything, immigration shocks would increase the number of anti-immigration candidates and legislation, which does not reinforce the thesis of a pro-refugee elected official. In other words, elites might be aware of the positive sociotropic effects of immigration, but current research does not detect it in electoral campaigns. Gamalerio and Negri (2021) provide a possible answer as to why this

is observed: the authors show with survey data that on average, mayors in Italy are aware of fiscal grants for hosting refugees and also think that immigration would be beneficial for the local economy, but refrain from refugee accommodation because they fear public backlash and personal electoral losses. In short, while the elites may know that immigration is good for the local economy, the electorate will not.

Indeed, citizen-level studies show very strong negative sentiments around the issue of immigration. Immigration and refugee inflows have boosted the vote share of parties with anti-immigration platforms and reduced support for immigration (Dinas et al. 2019; Hangartner et al. 2019; Harmon 2018; Halla et al. 2017; Barone et al. 2016; Otto and Steinhardt 2014). In the economics literature, the proposed mechanism is that immigration creates increased competition for welfare state amenities, such as school classes and healthcare. Immigration is thus also linked to decreased support for the welfare state and redistribution (Matakos, Savolainen, and Tukiainen 2020; Dahlberg et al. 2012; Lindqvist and Östling 2013). In short, the more diverse the society is, the less redistribution makes sense to natives because there is an increased demand, financing the services seems harder, and the willingness to do it drops as the cultural distance between local residents grows. In other words, conflict theory, increased competition for finite goods, seems to explain at least parts of the anti-immigration vote.

Some deviations from this pattern pose a challenge to this narrative. Steinmayr (2021) and Vertier et al. (2022) find that refugee arrivals lead to a *decrease* in far-right voting in refugee hosting localities. In both cases the authors explain this by contact theory – actually coming into contact with refugees will reverse this otherwise universal negative reaction. The contact theory has gained support from other authors too: Andersson and Dehdari (2021) show that when natives have immigrants as colleagues they are less likely to vote for anti-immigration parties and Barone et al. (2016) and Dustmann et al. (2018) propose that cities enable more meaningful interactions between natives and immigrants, enabling contact theory to work. There is thus quite compelling evidence that contact attenuates negative reactions.

In addition to contact, I propose that small localities have a different economic context form large cities and there is simply less competition for welfare amenities due to a smaller population size. Moreover, in many parts of Western Europe, some rural municipalities are suffering from a

lack of users for these services and this lack of usage puts the municipalities' welfare services at risk. In other words, not only is there no competition for these services, but new people might actually increase usage and thus justify their existence. If this is the case, we might at least to some extent falsely attribute positive reactions to increased contact, whereas it might be the reverse of the conflict theory, that is, new population actually helps to *maintain* public services.

On a related note, some research is showing that economic effects, measured as local economic gains and expenses, might explain regional variation in support for immigration also at the citizen level. Baerg et al. (2018) suggest that undocumented immigration triggers opposition mainly among voters from wealthy areas who would have to bear the costs for the social security of immigrants. Liao et al. (2020) find that positive local economic shocks generated by Chinese investment produce positive sentiments towards Chinese people.

This latter acknowledgement of *local* economic benefits of immigration is an interesting contrast to the studies that show how citizens are unresponsive to information about immigration. While several studies have shown that immigration boosts the receiving areas' economy in several ways, such as improving local international trade (Parsons and Vézina 2018), pushing the local workers to more productive jobs (Foged and Peri 2016), and spending locally (Bodvarsson et al. 2008), these positive effects seem to do little to change the natives' overall overwhelmingly negative evaluations of immigrants. While the literature offers *measured* local economic benefits of immigration, with the exception of Liao et al. (2020), the respondents' *evaluations* tend to come from more macro levels than the reported economic benefits. Being able to link the economically affected areas to the level of policy preferences might shed more light on this debate.

Moreover, these economic benefits are needed more in some places and less in others. If a municipality is wealthy enough on its own without any external shocks, any possible positive economic benefits of immigration are likely to go unnoticed. On the other hand, if a deprived area receives an external immigration shock and this results in economic benefits, these communities should in theory react more positively to these shocks, or at least be more aware of them. However, existing research is very unanimous about rural areas being systematically more opposed to immigration and refugees (Maxwell 2019; Cramer 2016; Rodden 2019; Dustmann et al. 2018). Existing literature on rural–urban differences in immigration attitudes argue that

more conservative people self-select to live in rural areas, whereas in addition to having more liberal residents, cities also benefit economically more from cheap labor (Harmon 2018; Barone et al. 2016). But what happens if a rural area's economy would also benefit from immigration? Will that have an effect on the more conservative baseline outlooks?

In contrast to previous literature, I argue that labels such as "rural" and "urban" might correlate with larger socio-economic contexts. Instead of population size or the type of the locality, the question we should be asking is "Do the natives connect refugee flows with local and lived gains or expenses?" This can be tested in this case with the following related hypotheses:

H1: In areas with structural problems in maintaining public services people will react positively to asylum seekers.

H2: In areas without structural problems in maintaining public services people will react negatively to asylum seekers.

3 The 2015 refugee crisis and the Finnish political context

The Finnish case is ideal both for establishing the local economic effects of housing asylum seekers and for measuring its policy implications. Finnish municipalities are autonomous entities that decide on their budgets and have powers to set and collect their own taxes. While the constitution requires municipalities to provide core social and welfare services such as education, social housing, and health care, municipalities themselves decide how to implement and fund these services. The wealthier the municipality is, the less it relies on taxing its residents and the easier it is for it to fulfill the services dictated by the constitution. If a municipality is struggling to fund these basic services, the state has the power to force a municipal merger, in which a struggling municipality is required to join a wealthier neighboring municipality. Research (Harjunen et al. 2021b) has shown that these mergers harm the smaller merger partner and thus it is in the struggling municipality's interest to try to avoid such a merger.

In addition to funding these services, municipalities also need a sufficient amount of users for these public services, as municipalities are entitled to state aid to fund needed welfare amenities that it otherwise would not be able to fund: the more children residing in a given municipality,

the less likely it is that the local school gets shut down, even if the municipality is not able to bear the costs of it (Lehtonen 2021).[5]

In terms of measurement, Finland has high-quality data about politicians' policy preferences over time that can be matched with their personal vote shares. In addition, 2015 acted as a clear external shock to the Finnish system. That year, the country saw a steep rise in applications for asylum: the previous average of 3,000–4,000 asylum seekers per year increased to 32,476, most of them arriving between September and December. Moreover, the municipalities received vastly different numbers of asylum seekers and some none at all. This enables me to establish a plausible counterfactual about how this external shock affected policy stances.

In August and September 2015, asylum seekers reached Finland mostly via Sweden and entered the country in Lapland on foot near the border town of Tornio. The state reacted by establishing a distribution center in Tornio where the arrivals were registered and then distributed the asylum seekers in order of registration[6] across Finland based on wherever reception centers had free space. Reception centers were established at short notice in any municipality that had available housing, and neither the politicians or the local population had scope to intervene in this decision (even though in many places citizens protested actively).[7]

As in other Western European countries, the question around immigration and refugee intake is a burning political question that has been a topic of polarization in Finnish politics. Since 2015 the anti-immigration Finns' Party has been the second largest party in the Finnish

[5]Also Harjunen et al. (2021a) provide evidence that school closures hurt the locality in many ways and that local politicians tried to avoid having to do them in their own neighborhoods.

[6]There are no discernible patterns in which types of asylum seekers were sent to each location, because the purpose of the process was to find free places for each arriving asylum seeker as quickly as possible to make way for the newcomers.

[7]However, this does not mean that the distribution was as good as random, as the reception center opening was conditional on available housing and training facilities, to which end I deploy a within-difference measure rather than a between-difference measure. If the building was owned by the municipality, the municipal council had to approve the usage of the building, but this was a minority of the cases. For ruling out potential self-selection because of this, see Table F3 in Appendix F.

Parliament. As a counterweight, the Green League has championed immigration intake and has equally made important electoral gains, becoming the fifth largest party in Finnish politics.[8] Traditionally, immigration has been very tightly regulated in Finland, and only since the 1990s have refugee quotas been gradually eased. To this day the share of foreigners do not surpass 6% of the total population. Public approval of immigration rose gradually alongside the growing number of foreigners, but the somewhat more accepting atmosphere took another dip in 2016 in the wake of the refugee crisis, when 75% of Finnish people thought that Finland, along with the European Union, should tighten immigration rules (Kurronen 2021). The 2015 refugee crisis was widely publicized in the national media with a largely alarmist undertone which highlighted issues of decreasing public safety and high expenses in connection with refugee acceptance (Pyrhönen and Wahlbeck 2018).

A survey run at the height of the refugee crisis in August 2015 showed that while an overwhelming majority of citizens accepted the establishment of new reception centers, the respondents were concerned about the generous subsidies the asylum seekers received and feared that they would never pay taxes and fail to integrate into society (see Tables A3 and A4 in Appendix A). Rural respondents were systematically more skeptical of asylum seekers than urban respondents (see Tables A5 and A6 in Appendix A). Accordingly, politicians' baseline refugee stances in 2012 were less welcoming towards refugees in rural areas than in urban areas.[9]

The application process is handled by the Immigration Office, and the national government bears all the expenses. Asylum seekers are free to move in the area, to study and, three months after filing for asylum[10], to work. At the end of the process, the applicant is either returned to

[8]The three traditionally large parties in Finland, the liberal-right National Coalition, the Social Democrats and the agrarian Center Party have internally divided views on immigration.

[9]On a scale from 1 (Strongly agree) to 4 (Strongly disagree), the politicians' mean response to the statement *My municipality should receive refugees that have been granted asylum in Finland* was 2.84 in urban areas and 2.53 in rural areas, with statistically significant difference between the groups. However, there are no ceiling effects, as there is still more than one standard deviation's room for pro-refugee shifts in urban areas for both public opinion and politician's issue stances.

[10]Six if the applicant does not have a passport.

the country of origin or granted asylum. Once granted asylum, refugees have two options: if they feel capable of starting an independent life on their own, they are free to move anywhere in Finland. Alternatively, they are offered to take part in a state-subsidized integration scheme organized by a given municipality that has agreed to take refugees.[11] It is up to municipal councils to decide whether to accept refugees in line with this program. Thus the principal dependent variable, whether or not a municipality should take refugees under this scheme, is one of tangible policy outcomes. By casting votes for candidates of a certain stance, the electorate gets a chance to influence the municipality's refugee intake for the next council's tenure. In fact, the Finnish state has had problems in accommodating refugees because it cannot force any municipality to do so. Volunteering for the integration scheme is a decision that a municipality takes with full autonomy, while the management of a reception center for asylum seekers is a national matter beyond the municipality's scope of control.[12]

4 Data and methodology

Compared to aggregate-level data and national election results, municipality-specific data make it possible to tease out intra-party variations in policy responses to asylum seeker arrivals. As open-list systems have looser party discipline (Carey and Shugart 1995), what candidates propose and how they get rewarded varies by electoral context (Hyytinen et al. 2018; Matakos, Savolainen, Troumpounis, et al. 2018). Looking at local candidates opinions provides a direct measure of the evolution of refugee policy stances at the micro level. Whether candidates modify their stances due to personal convictions or to please voters, what matters for actual policies are the pre-election policy pledges and the materialized policy outcomes.[13] Moreover, policy pledges can be treated as expressed preferences with consequences because politicians

[11]For more information on the scheme see: `https://kotouttaminen.fi/en/online-manual-on-refugee-reception` (visited on 05/13/2021).

[12]For further information on the Finnish political system, see Appendix B.

[13]I remain agnostic about the reasons behind the candidates' answers, but treat them as a manifestation of the constituency's political climate.

make them with the hope of harnessing enough votes to be elected to office.[14]

The candidate-level data on policy pledges are generated by the popular Finnish Voting Advice Application (VAA) system[15] In a candidate-centered system, candidates from the same party may differ greatly. Therefore, the VAA system allows candidates to fill in pre-structured online surveys to announce their support or opposition for a set of proposed policies. Voters can then fill in the same survey, and a pre-set algorithm calculates their best match. It is in the candidates' interest to fill in the questionnaire as accurately as possible to attract the maximum number of the type of voters they are targeting. Candidates view this platform as a chance to announce their opinions and they answer the questions carefully. VAAs not only give candidates a chance to maximize their votes, but also serve as a pledge for how they would *personally* vote in the council once elected – meaning they can be held later accountable for how they answer.

The primary outcome variable of this study is the potential change in candidates' responses to the question *My municipality should receive refugees that have been granted asylum in Finland.*[16] This question is indeed optimal for capturing support for immigration, as the lowest overall agreement is found among the openly anti-immigration Finns' Party and highest among

[14]The asylum seekers who arrived in the summer of 2015 were excluded from the April 2017 municipal elections, hence their presence did not influence the outcome.

[15]VAAs are widely used in Finland, see Appendix B. Wagner and Ruusuvirta (2012) show that 15 % of the VAA users claim that they had no favorite candidate and followed the application's recommendation. Filling in a VAA is not compulsory but candidates who do perform better. There is no discernible difference between the respondents' profile and the response rates between areas that received asylum seekers and areas that did not. For VAAs in political science in the Finnish context, see Matakos, Savolainen, Troumpounis, et al. (2018).

[16]Both in English and in Finnish, this question can be interpreted as either "my municipality should in, my opinion, take in refugees" or "my municipality should, by law, be required to take in refugees". However, as the answers range from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" candidates should, and in practice do, understand that this is a normative statement that they either agree or disagree with, in line with all the other normative statements in the survey. Other questions include, for example, "Elderly people should have a free place in a care home", "We should prioritize jobs over environmental values", and "Privatizing the healthcare system brings savings and efficiency to the municipality".

the openly pro-immigration Green Party.[17]

This question was asked both in 2012 and 2017 in the largest nationwide VAA run by the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE ($N = 16{,}740$ in 2017 and $N = 19{,}330$ in 2012). I examine the change in responses to this question from the same candidates between 2012 and 2017 as a function of their constituency having hosted asylum seekers in 2015. Due to the majority of candidates only running once, the number of candidates who ran twice and filled in the questionnaire both times is 5,763. After subtracting the candidates in areas with existing reception centers, this leaves 4,310 relevant responses. The data are also matched with the electoral results both in 2012 and 2017, and municipality-specific demographic and economic information, obtained from Statistics Finland.

These data are matched with the candidate's exposure to asylum seekers in 2015–2016. In addition to a sheer receiving/non-receiving treatment definition, I also assess the impact of asylum seekers in each context with a continuous treatment measure by dividing the total number of places in a newly established reception center by the total number of inhabitants in the municipality (asylum seekers are not included in the official statistics).

The maximum capacity is used to measure treatment intensity[18], as no information is available about the number of asylum seekers in each municipality at the given time points. Standard practice in 2015 was that pre-existing centers were filled first, after which new ones were opened and filled to the maximum right away. Maximum capacity is thus a realistic measure of treatment intensity. To measure the intensity of asylum seeker arrivals as accurately as possible, I also count the number of days during which the reception center was operational.[19]

[17]For descriptive statistics on the distribution of the outcome variable, see Tables A1 and A2 in Appendix A.

[18]For simplification purposes, this will always be referred to as "asylum seekers per capita", although realistically it means "beds in reception center per capita".

[19]The mean capacity of reception centers is 180 persons and the median is 150, with a standard deviation of 155. The largest capacity is 825 and the smallest is 11, whereas the variation in treatment intensity is between 0 and 8.7. There is not enough variation in the capacity of reception centers to justify such variation in asylum seekers per capita. Rather, the treatment intensity reflects differences in population. For independent variation of the

Existing pre-treatment levels of asylum seekers and changes in these numbers can be expected to trigger differing reactions to first-time exposure to asylum seekers (Kaufmann 2017). I therefore exclude all the municipalities that had asylum seekers' reception centers in place prior to 2015 ("pre-treated" municipalities). Of the 295 municipalities in mainland Finland (the autonomous Åland Islands excluded), 87 opened new reception centers and 22 already had a reception center in place. This leaves a control group of 186 municipalities that received no asylum seekers. The share of asylum seekers per capita varies between 0 and 8.7% of the municipal population.[20] As can be seen in Figure A2 in Appendix A, the distribution is positively skewed. To make sure that the results are not driven by outliers, I also use the natural logarithm of the treatment variable as a robustness check.

The only prerequisite for treatment was available housing. This has implications for the research design, as urban areas are more likely to be able to offer housing. Moreover, if the municipalities have self-selected to receive asylum seekers, the estimates will be biased. To alleviate concerns that municipalities would have volunteered to house asylum seekers and that any change in policies would thus be endogenous with the treatment, I analyze the results of a survey run by the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE in September 2015 that asked incumbent mayors and chairmen of municipal councils about the prospects of establishing a reception center in their municipality. At the time, the existing reception centers were filling up quickly and the Immigration Office was beginning to look for new options. Of all respondents, 50% replied that they would welcome a reception center, 35% were unsure of their stance and 15% said they would oppose it. 31% of favorable municipalities ended up getting a reception center in the course of 2015–2016 and 30% of those that rejected the idea still saw one open in their municipality. The small difference between the realized outcome for the willing and unwilling municipalities reduces concerns of self-selection into the treatment.[21]

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population size, population change, urban density, capacity, and treatment intensity, see Tables A9 and A10 in Appendix A.

[20]For a map of how differently municipalities were affected, see map A1 in Appendix A.

[21]The full results of this survey as well as detailed information about the circumstances of treatment allocation are available from the author.

Most of the established reception centers, 67 out of a total of 92, were opened in partnership with private landlords such as hotels and private hospitals that made use of the opportunity to rent out their facilities. In this way, the Immigration Office was independent of the municipal council and avoided the process of getting municipal approval for the centers. However, in 25 municipalities, the Immigration Office used municipality-owned premises, which required the municipalities' consent. To address the possible self-selection of the 25 municipalities where the premises were municipally owned, I conduct further tests in Table F3 in Appendix F and show that the estimates hold across different treatment definitions.

4.1 Empirical strategy

I begin by estimating the general net effect of the intensity of exposure to asylum seekers on support for future refugee intake. Once I have established the net effect, I will turn to interacting this treatment variable with socio-economic features of the municipality that can be theorized to explain heterogenous treatment effects.

To examine the net effect of receiving asylum seekers on policy pledges and electoral fortunes, one would need to be able to rule out all confounding factors. Moreover, the allocation of asylum seekers to municipalities is not a random process: to house asylum seekers, the municipality needs to have available housing.

To overcome these problems, I utilize a difference-in-differences strategy that measures the internal change within treated and non-treated units and then subtracts the change between these units to establish the average treatment effect of the treated (ATT). I first calculate how local politicians' VAA responses changed between 2012 and 2017 in areas that received asylum seekers and contrast this with how politicians' responses changed in areas that did not (counterfactual). The quantity of interest is the ATT, and it is estimated by the following setup:

$$(1) \qquad \alpha = \{E[Y_{i2017}|D_i = 1] - E[Y_{i2012}|D_i = 1] - E[Y_{i2017}|D_i = 0] - E[Y_{i2012}|D_i = 0]\}$$

where D_i is a treatment variable that equals 1 when municipality i housed asylum seekers in 2015 and is 0 if the municipality did not. To estimate α at the candidate level, I use the

standard fixed effects regression:

$$Y_{jit} = \delta_t + \lambda_j + \alpha \, \text{Treatment}_{it} + X_{it}\beta + \varepsilon_{jit} \tag{2}$$

where Y_{jit} is the stance of candidate j in municipality i in time t, δ_t is a year-specific fixed effect, λ_j is a candidate-specific fixed effect, Treatment_{it} is the continuous treatment variable that switches on when the municipality received asylum seekers, $X_{it}\beta$ is a vector of time-varying covariates and ε_{jit} denotes the error term. The ATT is given by α. I cluster standard errors at the municipality level because that is the level that the treatment is assigned.

Having candidate-level fixed effects means in-built party and municipality fixed effects, as I only match candidates that ran in the same municipality for the same party at both time points. In practice, this means that any possible time-invariant personal confounding factors are controlled for, as well as any time-invariant municipality-specific characteristics.

However, some municipality-specific attributes might change over time, such as the share of foreigners and graduates or the level of urban density. To make sure that these time-varying features do not drive the results, I add time-varying and demographic control variables.[22] These controls are: the level of urban density (measured as the share of buildings fewer than 200 meters apart)[23], the share of foreigners, population in- and outflows, the share of Swedish speakers[24] as well as the share of people with higher education. All these controls are used to account for changing economic or demographic conditions driving the results rather than the treatment. These controls also address the fact that urban areas were more likely to receive asylum seekers than less urban areas. To avoid the "bad controls" problem (Angrist and Pischke

[22]About balance between treated and non-treated units, see see separate subsection in Appendix A. A DiD design relies on the parallel trends assumption, not unit balance. Importantly, however, balance tests rule out that municipalities were treated *because* of their baseline economic differences.

[23]Due to vast uninhibited areas belonging to municipalities this measure is more accurate than the usual population density measure that divides population by square meters.

[24]This figure is included because Swedish-speaking areas differ in many observable and non-observable characteristics from Finnish-speaking areas.

2009), I do not include any controls that could themselves be affected by the treatment. These are economic attributes that I will later use as outcomes because the intervention might affect the economic performance of the municipality directly.

The above model is conditioned on officials running for office twice. However, deciding to either quit or join the race in 2017 could be a treatment effect in itself. To check whether compositional effects at the party level differ from individual effects, I relax the candidate fixed effects to extend the study beyond those candidates who ran twice and include all candidates who answered the refugee question at either time point. Equation C1 in Appendix C has more information about this model. Preferences for refugee intake might not only be affected by how intense the presence of asylum seekers was, but also by how long they stayed in the constituency, in line with the contact theory (Steinmayr 2021). I include a test for this mechanism in Appendix C with Equation C2.

I finally inspect what types of policies get elected. First, I do this by running Equation C1 after subsetting it to elected candidates in either 2012 or 2017 to see how the stances of winning candidates evolved in each municipality as a function of receiving asylum seekers. Second, I calculate the councils' overall stances on refugees before and after the intervention. Finally, I am also able to inspect revealed preferences by inspecting which municipalities opted-in to the post 2017 refugee integration scheme by agreeing to host people with refugee status.

The key assumption behind the DiD design is that in the absence of the treatment (suddenly housing asylum seekers in 2015), the treated and non-treated municipalities would show similar trends in electoral behavior. As demonstrated in Figure A3 in Appendix A, the trends are parallel for party-level electoral outcomes in treated and non-treated municipalities between 2000 and 2012, the last municipal elections before 2015.[25] Although the levels are different for some parties, due to treated areas being more urban, the trends are the same. Especially noteworthy are the overlapping lines for the anti-immigration Finns' party (formerly known as True Finns) between treated and non-treated areas. This enables me to rule out that municipalities were treated or not treated because of their support for an anti-immigration

[25]This cut-off point was chosen because it best allows a comparison of different parties, as there have been many changes in the Finnish political landscape throughout the 20th century.

party. To check the parallel trends also for the continuous treatment variable, in Appendix A I interact the continuous treatment variable with year dummies: the results do not suggest pre-existing trends.

The main dependent variable, the candidate's refugee stance, was not asked in any election before 2012. To check parallel trends in this case, I run a placebo regression by regressing the dependent variable from 2012 on the continuous treatment variable. The resulting coefficient is statistically insignificant ($p = 0.45$), which makes pre-existing differences in trends unlikely. Moreover, I can use a question that has been asked since 2008, *We should prioritize jobs over environmental values*, to check for parallel trends between treated and non treated areas from 2008 onwards.[26] Figure A5 in Appendix A shows that the trends are parallel between 2008 and 2012. I also show that the time-variant municipality-level economic and demographic characteristics from 2000 up until the treatment show no differences in trends between treated and non-treated municipalities (see Figure A4 in Appendix A).[27]

5 Results

I start by estimating Equation 2 presented above: A fixed-effect regression of candidates' policy stances on the presence of asylum seekers in the municipality. I do this in the following ways: first using a binary received/did not receive asylum seekers treatment definition (model 1), the continuous measure of asylum seekers/capita with and without covariates (models 2–3), using the logged continuous measure with and without covariates for robustness (models 4–5), and finally checking what a higher treatment intensity means by regressing the outcome on above-median treatment intensity for only the treated sample (model 6). The outcome is the agreement with the National Broadcasting Company's question *My municipality should receive refugees that have been granted asylum in Finland.* Table 1 summarizes the results.

[26]This question will also serve as a placebo item to rule out that receiving asylum seekers would have had an effect on non-related survey items, too.

[27]A potential violation of the research design is the stable unit treatment value assumption (SUTVA). To address this, I conduct a robustness check in Table F5 in Appendix F.

Table 1: The candidate's answer to the question "My municipality should receive refugees that have been granted asylum in Finland" between 2012–2017, 1 (strongly disagree) – 4 (strongly agree).

Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Refugee exposure	-0.004	0.051**	0.047**	0.103**	0.094**	0.118*
	(0.033)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.054)
Candidate fixed effect	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Election fixed effect	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
N	4,310	4,310	4,310	4,310	4,310	2,078
Clusters	273	273	273	273	273	80

Note: Models 1–6 present OLS fixed effects regressions with clustered standard errors in parentheses. Model 1: Binary treatment definition, received/non-received. Model 2: Continuous treatment definition: asylum seekers per capita Model 3: Model 2 with covariates. Model 4: Logged asylum seekers per capita. Model 5: Model 4 with covariates Model 6: Treated municipalities only, regressing refugee stances on having above-median share (0/1) of asylum seekers per capita. Pre-treated municipalities excluded in all models.
* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

While a simple binary received/not-received analysis does not shed any light on the formation of refugee preferences, we can see that on average, the candidates move by 0.048 on the 1–4 scale with every 1% increase in the share of asylum seekers in the population to a *more favorable change of opinion on refugee intake*. These results mean that the larger the share of asylum seekers among the local population, the more positively candidates begin to see refugee acceptance in the municipality. Model 3 confirms that time-varying covariates do not affect the causal estimates. To make sure that outliers – municipalities with an unusually high share of refugees per capita – do not drive these results, I take the natural logarithm of the share of asylum seekers in a constituency and check if the results are affected both with and without covariates. The coefficients remain positive and highly significant (models 4–5). The no-effects for the binary treatment variable can be explained by the finding that it is not the sheer fact of housing asylum seekers that matters, but the question of how intense the treatment was, that is, rather than the extensive margin, it is the intensive margin that explains any possible reactions. Model 6 confirms this by narrowing the sample only to treated observations and regressing the refugee stance on a binary variable of being or not being treated above the median intensity of asylum seekers per capita in the locality. The resulting coefficient shows that receiving above the median number of asylum seekers per capita is indeed what explains the positive reaction, not just receiving them.

The results for treatment intensity are average treatment effects for each 1% increase in the share of asylum seekers. By turning the coefficients into percentages of the scale, the estimate means a 1% pro-refugee shift with every 1% increase in asylum seekers per capita. This is in line with research with a comparable design of Dinas et al. (2019), who find a 0.6 percentage point effect in vote share for each 1% increase in asylum seekers per capita. The median of asylum seekers per capita in a municipality is also 1%, so we can read the average treatment effect as the average reaction to asylum seekers at the median treatment intensity.

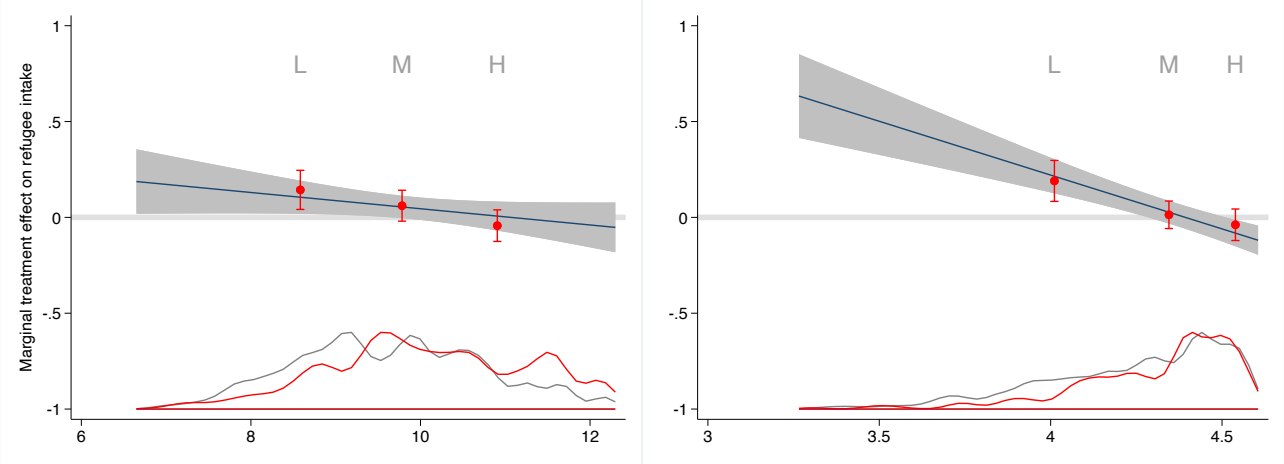
5.1 Municipality type as an explanation for intensity effects

As the variation in the size of reception centers is not big, the results are rather explained by the variation in the size of the municipality. The result that a higher share of asylum seekers per capita leads to an increase in pro-refugee sentiments is surprising seeing that previous literature has shown that *small* municipalities (which the authors take for less urban places) react *negatively* to refugees (Dustmann et al. 2018; Barone et al. 2016). However, *smallness* does not automatically equal *ruralness* – a small population size can mean either a rural village or a highly urbanized suburb in an urban cluster. Using the sheer population size as a proxy for ruralness will ignore that small municipalities might differ in many ways between each other, for example they might rely on different types of industries and have different economic challenges: a commuter suburb to a bigger city is not facing similar structural challenges as a village relying on primary production. I thus perform an explicit test for what is driving these results: a smaller population size or being a more rural community.

To test the effect population size has on refugee stances, I interact housing asylum seekers with the logged population of the municipality.[28] Following Hainmueller, Mummolo, et al. (2019), I investigate the interaction effects across the scales of the moderators by using pre-

[28]I use several interaction models to investigate what best accounts for the average treatment effect of treatment intensity. However, interaction models should be interpreted with more caution than non-interaction models because the interaction term might be correlated with non-observable confounders.

Binned estimations for population size and urban density as moderators



(a) Logged population size as moderator **(b)** Logged urban density as moderator

Figure 1: Predicted marginal effects using pre-specified bins for lower, medium and higher levels of the moderators for receiving a reception center on refugee intake for candidates, shaded areas denoting 95% confidence intervals. The distributions on the x axis show the distribution of treated units in red and non-treated units in grey.

determined local bins.[29] All these interactions include candidate and year fixed effects. Figure 1a suggests that a decrease in population size leads to a more welcoming refugee stance after housing asylum seekers, but the estimates are null for most of the spectrum. In this case the population size interaction is not a powerful enough explanation for the strong effect of the share of asylum seekers per capita. To test if the results are better explained by the urban density of the municipality, I take the logged urban density measure of the share of buildings less than 200 meters apart in the municipality. Indeed, I get substantial differences in causal effects when interacting the treatment with urban density, but these estimates differ from what the previous literature on the rural–urban divide would suggest: the less urban a municipality is, the higher the pro-refugee shift among future policy-makers.

The predicted marginal effect for the least dense areas is about 0.5 on the scale of 1–4, over 1/2 a standard deviation, meaning a 12.5% pro-refugee shift, which then gradually changes to a slight anti-refugee shift in more urban municipalities. The average share of refugees per capita in municipalities officially defined as rural is 2.5% and the median is 2%. This means that the

[29]For estimations using non-parametric locally linear kernel regressions see Figures D1 in Appendix D.

the coefficient in Table 1, i.e., the effect of a 1% increase in asylum seekers in a municipality on the candidates' refugee stance (−0.051), is roughly half of the average treatment effect of housing asylum seekers in a rural community. These results also show that there is no universal response to housing asylum seekers, but that the effects differ across the scale of urban density. The results in Table 1 are explained by the arrivals of asylum seekers in more rural than urban communities, rather than just smaller communities.

5.2 Municipality economics as an explanation for intensity effects

The reason for this result that differs from the previous literature might be that when not measured as smallness in population, but sparsity in houses, rural areas turn out to have their own reasons to support local refugee intake. As obvious in descriptive statistics in Table A8 in Appendix A, rural municipalities are suffering from population loss and related economic hardships. This is a problem when the municipalities are supposed to be financially independent. If poorer municipalities are trying to remain independent and functioning amidst economic distress, then realizing the socio-economic benefits of refugee intake would explain pro-refugee shifts in rural municipalities.

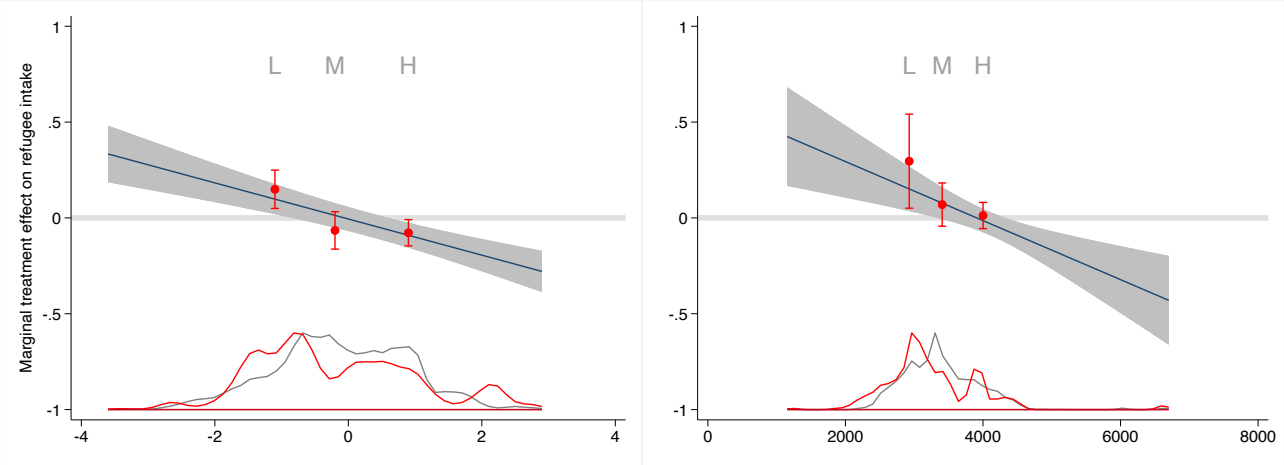
In Finnish municipal economics, the first and foremost form of income in municipalities is the autonomously set and collected tax income, which is paid by the inhabitants. The more populous the municipality, the more it adds up to. Therefore, the more a municipality is losing from its population, the more threatened current and future tax incomes are. It would therefore make sense that a municipality suffering from population shortages and low levels of tax income would realize that future refugee intake would bring new inhabitants and tax payers to the municipality.

I test this logic by interacting receiving asylum seekers with population in- and outflows and municipal tax incomes. Figure 2 shows that the more population a municipality is losing, the greater the willingness of politicians to take in refugees as a result of housing asylum seekers. Tax revenues show almost identical results: the smaller a municipality's tax revenue, the more favorably politicians see future refugee intake as a result of receiving asylum seekers.[30]

[30]The correlation between these two variables is just 0.4, so they are not identical variables,

Population loss and strained financial circumstances induce refugee-friendly thinking in the receiving municipalities. However, this effect declines steadily as the municipality gets wealthier and more populated.[31]

Binned estimations for population change and tax income as moderators



(a) Population change (%) size as moderator **(b)** Tax income (euros per person) as a moderator.

Figure 2: Predicted marginal effects using pre-specified bins for lower, medium and higher levels of the moderators for receiving a reception center on refugee intake for candidates, shaded areas denoting 95% confidence intervals. The distributions on the x axis show the distribution of treated units in red and non-treated units in grey. These variables are not logged due to a normal distribution.

I reinforce these results by running similar interactions to related features that describe and predict population loss: the logged dependency ratio of the municipality and the logged share of children under 15 in the municipality.[32] Figure D2 in Appendix D shows that these variables reinforce this narrative.

I compare the interactions with variables that purely describe the finances of the municipality, namely the amount of debt per person. This feature is not so much dependent on the pop-

although they show very similar results. Nor does urbanity automatically correlate with tax revenues and population change: the correlation for the former is 0.6 and for the latter is 0.5.

[31]For the same interactions using kernel regressions, see Figure D1 in Appendix D.

[32]For all variables that have a non-normal distribution and show important outliers (population size, share of children, urban density and dependency ratio) I use the log. The variables measured per person (municipal tax income) and percentages (population change) are normally distributed.

Table 2: Frequencies of key words in favor of refugee intake (stance "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" in the municipality by municipality type and treatment status, in percentages). $N = 5547$

Type of municipality	Population	Duty and Help	Jobs	Experience
Rural, treated	12.9	21.0	14.8	3.3
Rural, non-treated	8.8	18.6	14.0	1.9
Non-rural, treated	5.6	29.8	12.7	1.8
Non-rural, non-treated	5.5	29.9	11.8	1.8

ulation size of the municipality as on the management decisions of the municipality: a rich and growing municipality can have a lot of debt if it has made recent investments, and thus this figure has less to do with structural problems. Figure D3 in Appendix D shows that this financial variable does not have explanatory power in responses to asylum seeker arrivals. Rather than fiscal issues in the municipality, what seems to attract policy makers to increased refugee intake in the future is a dismal sociodemographic outlook in the municipality. Politicians' open-ended answers to the relevant VAA question confirm that getting new inhabitants to the municipality is an argument. Table 2 sums up the key arguments for taking in refugees by population size and treatment status.[33]

The clearest difference between municipalities that received asylum seekers is that the word "population" is mentioned in 12.9% of the answers in rural treated municipalities, but only in 5.5% of the answers in urban treated municipalities. In contrast, 29.8% of the answers in urban host municipalities mention words related to duty or obligation to help others while only 21.0% do so in rural affected municipalities. This mechanism is illustrated by open-ended survey responses in favor of refugee intake from a rural municipality (Saarijärvi) and an urban municipality (Espoo), both having housed asylum seekers: *We would get new inhabitants to Saarijärvi from among people who have received asylum and their integration would bring new jobs to the municipality.* Versus: *Espoo is a wealthy municipality, we can afford to help those in need.* The experience of housing asylum seekers translates into a boost in population in rural municipalities, whereas in larger ones it is associated with more abstract ideas of the moral duty to help others.

[33]Appendix G provides information about coding these words.

Taken together, all these results confirm both hypotheses 1 and 2: the more (less) structural problems in the municipality, the more (less) welcoming they become towards refugees after managing a reception center. However, none of the explanatory socio-economic factors provide as strong an explanation for the positive reactions as urban density. There is thus something about ruralness that explains in itself the positive reactions that cannot be captured by economic variables. This could mean that some element of contact theory is at play. However, I explicitly test the role of contact in the way of previous literature (Steinmayr 2021; Dustmann et al. 2018), namely by the sheer smallness of the municipality and the duration of the interaction, and find no effects. For smallness, I subset the data to small but densely populated municipalities and small and sparsely populated ones. The results of this analysis confirm that population size does not drive pro-refugee stances but rather low population density (see Table D1 in Appendix D). For the duration coefficient, I test this with specification Equation C2 (see Appendix C), which interacts the share of asylum seekers in a municipality with the log of the days during which it hosted them. This analysis confirms that the duration of asylum seekers' stay does not account for any variation in treatment response (for results, see Table D2 in Appendix D).

However, although sheer smallness of the locality and the prolonged duration of interaction do not explain the results at hand, it might be possible that the nature of human interaction is different in rural areas than in more densely populated areas. These data cannot test this possible explanation, but instead I claim that in addition to possible contact related experiences, rural areas also have economic reasons to support refugee intake.

6 Additional analyses: Compositional effects, party-level differences, electoral returns, and economic effects

Staying in the race or dropping out in 2017 might be a treatment effect per se, so I estimate the effect that housing asylum seekers has on the composition of party lists by relaxing the candidate fixed effect and substituting it with a municipality fixed-effect. The estimate is even stronger in this case: as the proportion of housed asylum seekers grows in a constituency, parties propose more refugee-friendly new candidates to replace those who have quit the race (results

in Table E1 in Appendix E). The causal estimates achieved at the candidate level thus reflect a wider treatment effect on party lists.

The ATT of 0.048 on the 1–4 scale raises the question whether the effect is constrained by ceiling and floor effects. Descriptive statistics in Tables A1 and A2 in Appendix A show that there is less room for pro-refugee movement for the already pro-refugee Greens, Left Alliance and the liberal Swedish People's Party. Thus, it is more likely that this ATT comes from parties with lower levels of initial refugee acceptance. To this end, I aggregate the stances per party to see how candidates from each party react to receiving asylum seekers. Table E2 in Appendix E summarizes the results per party. The results confirm that it is indeed the more traditionally anti-immigration and value conservative parties, including the overall anti-immigration Finns' Party, that show a bigger positive shift as a result of the more intensive treatment. Importantly, no party shows an anti-refugee shift, which shows that one of the treatment effects is a decrease in polarization.[34]

Did these refugee stances hinder election? I empirically check this by running Equation C1 (see Appendix C) only for the subsample of candidates who won a seat in the municipal council in 2012 and 2017. The resulting coefficient (in Table E3 in Appendix E) shows that in receiving areas the stances of elected candidates get more pro refugee as the share of asylum seekers per capita increases in the municipality. I interact these results with the moderators of interest (population size, urban density, population change, tax income, share of children under 15, and dependency ratio) and the results in Figure E1 in Appendix E replicate the trends in the previous section: In affected municipalities with socio-economic hardships the candidates did not only change their stances to be more pro-refugee, but they also tended to win seats in the council with these stances.

The remaining question is to what extent refugee acceptance was indeed beneficial for the economy. I check this with a difference-in-differences analysis with economic performance as

[34]The already more anti-refugee values give more room for a pro-refugee shift, but at the national level there was a marked anti-refugee shift among the candidates of the Finns' Party (see Tables A1 and A2 in Appendix A). However, smaller sample sizes make this subgroup analysis merely suggestive.

the outcome. Table E4 in Appendix E summarizes the economic indicators of municipalities. One variable stands out: the annual contribution margin – the amount of money per person a municipality has left at the end of the calendar year after fulfilling its duties dictated by the constitution – increases by 70 euros per person on average in municipalities that housed asylum seekers. Tax inflows are not affected on average, but with a significant intensity–duration interaction effect, tax income is boosted only in those cases where the share of asylum seekers per capita was high and lasted longer. This reinforces the argument that rural municipalities benefited most from housing asylum seekers. As seen in Figure E2 in Appendix E, in the short run and on average, the economic gains of accommodating asylum seekers, however, come from public transfers. These public transfers, in turn, are more likely to be appreciated and visible in struggling municipalities.

6.1 Policy implications

In rural receiving areas the councils' overall refugee stance shifted by over half a standard deviation in a more accommodating position, from 2.6 to 3.10. These effects translated into actual decisions: housing asylum seekers in 2015 led to an increased likelihood to voluntarily take in refugees. In the period after 2015, 74% of treated municipalities opted in to the refugee integration scheme, whereas only 44% of non-treated municipalities did so. When considering only rural municipalities, this difference is even more pronounced: 81% of treated rural municipalities volunteered to take in refugees, whereas 37% of non-treated rural municipalities did so. These outcomes show that my dependent variable is not merely about expressed preferences, but also correctly identifies subsequent actions among policy makers. Engaging in a multi-year integration project is not cheap talk from the politicians, therefore the expressed stances correctly reflect later policy actions. Crucially, my sample excludes municipalities with previous experience of asylum seekers' accommodation, and thus a higher existing stock of immigrants. Thus the results show that municipalities that previously refrained from refugee integration began to opt in to it due to positive experiences of it.

These shifts mean that although baseline levels of refugee intake in rural areas were much behind urban areas in 2012 among politicians, by 2017 the mean refugee stance in treated rural

areas was 3.1. In comparison, in treated urban areas it was 3.1. This means equal support for refugee intake. If we compare this to non-receiving rural areas with an average stance of 2.7 in 2017 (or to non-receiving urban areas with the average stance of 3.0) we can draw the conclusion that receiving asylum seekers brought rural support up to urban support levels and thus in treated areas we can no longer perceive a relevant rural–urban divide post-2015. Thus the findings do not only discuss *trends*, but have also relevance concerning *absolute values* of welcoming refugees.

6.2 Robustness and ruling out alternative mechanisms

In Appendix F I conclude a series of robustness checks to make sure that the estimates hold under various different scenarios. I first rule out that the results are driven by rationalization bias by interacting the treatment with incumbent status, because the incumbents could be defending their tenure in the municipal council. Likewise, challengers might challenging the status quo, and therefore I interact challenger status with the treatment. (Tables F1 and F2). All in all the results seem to have little to do with electoral status. I then move on to rule out self-selection in various ways: first by showing that pre-existing levels of willingness to host refugees were not higher in receiving rural areas with population shortage than in non-receiving rural areas without population shortage. All results point to a learning experience, rather than to a reinforcement of favorable opinions. I then also check whether the results differ among units that were treated irrespective of their will and units that had an option to opt out due to the nature of the used premises (Table F3) and find no changes to the estimates.

I then move on to perform placebo regressions with outcomes that cannot be theorized to show treatment effects (behavioral norms at school and environmental values) and find null results (Table F6). I also deploy jackknifing to check that the estimate is not driven by single influential observations (Table F4). I also rule out spillover effects (SUTVA assumption) by including a test for adjacent municipalities (Table F5). Finally, I replicate the above study with another VAA dataset by the largest Finnish daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat*. Using their question *If the state offers the establishment of a reception center for asylum seekers in my municipality, the offer has to be accepted*, I find that all parties, with the exception of those

that already had a strong pro-refugee stance, shift towards a more reception-friendly position as the share of asylum seekers per capita increases in their municipality (Table F7).[35]

7 Concluding discussion

The primary contribution of this work has been to shed light on the role of the local socio-economic context in the formation of local policy preferences regarding refugee intake. It was achieved by examining how the novel experience of housing asylum seekers changed politicians' minds on the matter and how this translated into policies with voter support, going against the negative national level narrative. In so doing, it has also addressed the established division between rural and urban areas in attitudes to immigration. In areas where refugee intake brings tangible benefits to the local economy – that is, rural areas suffering from population losses – municipal councils take a pro refugee turn. In contrast, politicians in more populated and thus wealthier areas react negatively. These results also reveal heterogeneous responses to the arrival of asylum seekers and how the rural–urban division is assessed in political science.

Currently, the literature considers rural areas inherently hostile to immigration, because less liberal people self-select to live there. My results add an additional dimension by showing that in rural areas, the political elite can begin to think about taking in refugees as an opportunity rather than just a humanitarian duty and has the electorate's blessing for it. The pragmatic question of local economics is less prone to polarization than humanitarian reasoning. Thus, in rural areas, the pro-refugee shift cuts across all political parties and the ideological aspect of the debate is trumped by economic considerations, at least on the political right.

The data used in this article stem from politicians' interest in being elected to municipal councils and thus reflect the electoral market in times of increased and heated political debate about immigration. The results thus bring nuance to the theory of politicized spaces, according to which areas undergoing demographic change due to immigration react negatively to it when it is framed as a problem at the national level (Hopkins 2010). While the framing was alarmist

[35]This data set has only career politicians running for parliamentary elections in it. As party discipline is higher in parliamentary elections, this is a conservative test.

in the media at the time and the negative feelings at the national level were obvious in opinion polls (Kurronen 2021), these results tell a different story: In addition to the much discussed voter backlash, positive reactions do exist, especially in rural communities whose economy is in need of positive external shocks. The role of population size has been acknowledged as a reason for heterogeneous reactions, but this paper is the first to shed light on how community characteristics and policy preferences interact and lead to receptiveness to refugees, even in contexts where prior knowledge would suggest otherwise and where the receptiveness to refugees was previously lower. On the other hand, in wealthier communities cultural reasons may be more important than economic ones and this could explain their different reactions to asylum seekers. These findings echo the conclusions of Dancygier (2010), who demonstrated that local socio-economic conditions play a major role in the success of immigrant integration.

This case study of Finland has used the country's electoral institutions to establish causal identification and to provide accurate measures of policy preferences on immigration. In so doing, however, it poses questions of external validity. While the scope conditions of *measuring* these effects are only met by a candidate-centered system of proportional representation with loose party discipline[36], the data generated by VAAs, and the autonomous status of municipalities, this does not mean that the *dynamics* could not be more universal. Enthusiasm for refugees in rural areas has surfaced as anecdotal stories in the media in other places, among them Ireland[37], Austria[38], Germany[39], and Scotland[40], but until now it has been difficult to establish mechanisms and causality around this phenomenon. Rather than electoral institutions, or even municipal autonomy, the scope conditions for the proposed mechanism are population shortage as well as public transfers accompanying refugees. The crucial scope condition is that the receiving municipality would not have to bear the expenses of the reception center, but the

[36]However, even in majoritarian systems there can be intra-party variation among candidates, based on the local characteristics of a given geographic region (Clark and Bennie 2018).

[37]`https://tinyurl.com/4fd5z42v` (visited on 06/20/2020).

[38]`https://tinyurl.com/bdvuccv7` (visited on 06/20/2020).

[39]`https://tinyurl.com/bfz2nyrh` (visited on 06/20/2020).

[40]`https://tinyurl.com/25buaj42` (visited on 06/20/2020).

state would pay for all the expenses surrounding the activity, including the use of local public services so that the activity would not come with expenses, but would on the contrary, bring public money to the local level in the form of increased spending. In addition to Finland, such a system is in place to varying degrees in at least Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.[41]

However, some questions remain that only future research can address. First, the essential question is how long-lived these reactions are. Kustov et al. (2021) have shown that while exogenous shocks might affect people's immigration attitudes in the short term, these changes are short-lived and people's immigration attitudes remain rather stable after the impressionable years. This is especially relevant in this case because refugees and immigrants are known to gravitate towards big cities with larger shares of existing immigrants stocks. Regrettably the data does not allow to explore long-term opinions, but further research could explicitly investigate what happens to these affected rural municipalities, their residents, and to the refugees placed in these municipalities in the long run.

Another unsolved issue is the order of causality, namely whether pro-refugee sentiments stem from the electorate, to which the elite merely adjusts, or whether the elite persuades the latter to change their minds. As the data underlying the present paper are the result of interactions between the elite and the electorate, it is not possible to tease out the separation between the two. We must also bear in mind that the outcome of the paper measures support for acceptance for refugees who will partake in a managed integration program, so it cannot be directly interpreted as support for all types of refugees and immigration.

It is also important to remember that positive reactions in rural areas might stem from some element of contact theory, although it cannot be captured with smallness of the locality or the duration of the stay of the asylum seekers. It might be that rural areas see higher and more substantive levels of intergroup interaction, but that must be left for future studies to investigate. Instead, this work suggests that sociotropic evaluations of refugees and asylum seekers work

[41]For an overview of benefits offered in 2015 by different European countries, see `https://tinyurl.com/2p97vsu6` (visited on 12/20/2020).

well when measuring the impact of asylum seeker arrivals on local policy making. I conclude by turning to the example of Denmark, where a mayor from the anti-immigration Danish People's party made headlines by stating that his municipality would welcome refugees with open arms[42], while elsewhere the same party was campaigning to send refugees back.[43] The crucial difference explaining these deviating stances amongst members of the same party is population shortage: The mayor who welcomed refugees presided over a distant island suffering from population loss. Meanwhile, in Denmark's 6th largest city, his own party was campaigning to send asylum seekers back to Syria and Iraq. As there are many areas undergoing population loss in Europe, exploring the receptiveness of these places to refugees would be interesting. This would also help policy makers in determining how to distribute refugees across receiving countries.

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[42] `https://tinyurl.com/3kv39evb` (visited on 08/20/2019).

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Biographical statement

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ONLINE APPENDIX

Appendices to "Do Local Economic Benefits of Asylum Seekers Lead to More Support for Local Refugee Intake?"

Contents

A Descriptive statistics

Tables A1 and A2 show how the responses to the outcome variable of interest were distributed in the 2012 and 2017 elections and breaks them down by party. The three mainstream parties (Social Democrats/SDP, National Coalition/KOK and the Center/KESK) all mostly display moderate stances of 2 and 3, with the Social Democrats leaning toward the pro-refugee stance and the center-right parties Center and National Coalition slightly against. The smaller parties are more polarized: The Left Alliance (VAS), the Greens (VIHR), The Swedish People's Party (SFP), and the Christian Democrats (KD) all are heavily skewed towards the pro-refugee stance, whereas candidates from the Finns' Party (PS) are heavily skewed against. In 2017, all parties became more pro-refugee while maintaining their respective positions with respect to each other. A major exception to this was the Finns' Party, which became more opposed to taking in refugees in 2017 than in 2012. The standard deviation of the refugee intake question is 0.9.

Table A1: Descriptive statistics of the candidate's answer to the question "My municipality should receive refugees that have been granted asylum in Finland" in 2012, scale 1 (strongly disagree) – 4 (strongly agree), by party in percentages, smallest parties excluded

Party	SDP Soc.dem	KOK Lib.Right	KESK Agr.Center	VAS Left	VIHR Green	SFP Swedish-Lib.	KD Christian	PS Finns'	All Parties
(1) in percents	4.09	6.25	7.71	2.78	0.29	1.54	2.03	32.95	7.87
(2) in percents	18.30	27.08	33.28	11.30	3.67	10.94	16.45	39.07	23.13
(3) in percents	48.71	49.58	46.07	37.04	33.68	42.21	55.03	23.17	42.94
(4) in percents	28.89	17.09	12.94	48.88	62.36	45.30	26.50	4.81	26.06
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Standard Deviation	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.78	0.58	0.73	0.71	0.87	0.89
Mean	3.02	2.77	2.64	3.32	3.58	3.31	3.06	2.00	2.87
N	3,229	4,173	4,033	1,655	1,743	777	985	1,994	19,330

Table A2: Descriptive statistics of the candidate's answer to the question "My municipality should receive refugees that have been granted asylum in Finland" in 2017, scale 1 (strongly disagree) – 4 (strongly agree), by party in percentages, smallest parties excluded

Party	SDP Soc.dem	KOK Lib.Right	KESK Agr.Center	VAS Left	VIHR Green	SFP Swedish-Lib.	KD Christian	PS Finns'	All Parties
(1) in percents	2.82	4.60	5.47	1.75	0.92	1.22	1.94	53.30	7.96
(2) in percents	10.95	17.34	22.20	6.43	1.74	3.12	10.56	32.16	14.80
(3) in percents	46.41	51.64	50.97	28.86	23.48	25.07	51.29	11.96	39.90
(4) in percents	39.82	26.42	21.36	62.96	73.86	70.60	36.21	2.58	37.34
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Standard Deviation	0.75	0.79	0.80	0.69	0.55	0.60	0.71	0.79	0.91
Mean	3.23	3.00	2.88	3.53	3.70	3.65	3.22	1.64	3.07
N	2,730	3,172	3,563	1,601	1,840	738	928	1,396	16,740

The overall positive shift resonates with a rather refugee-friendly public opinion in 2015. Tables A3 and A4 sum up the results of an opinion survey fielded in August 2015, at the height of the refugee crisis in Europe, when Finland was beginning to anticipate refugee arrivals. According to the survey results, an overwhelming majority of Finnish citizens supported the establishment of reception centers and did not find the Muslim religion of the asylum seekers

problematic. However, the respondents were concerned about asylum seekers being overwhelmingly young men, never paying taxes or integrating into the society, and found the benefits that they received too generous. However, after the arrival of asylum seekers, public opinion turned less favorable, with 36% of respondents replying in January 2016 that their sense of security had decreased after the arrival of asylum seekers.[44]

Table A3: Finnish Attitudes to Immigration: Iltalehti Survey by Taloustutkimus. Finnish Social Science Data Archive. Data collected in August 2015. $N = 1{,}005$.

Answer (percentages)	Yes	No	Can't say	Total
Approve of reception centers?	64.6	29.6	5.9	100
Should Finland take more Christians?	17.2	76.9	5.9	100

Table A4: Finnish Attitudes to Immigration: Iltalehti Survey by Taloustutkimus. Finnish Social Science Data Archive. Data collected in August 2015. $N = 1{,}005$.

Answer (percentages)	1	2	3	4	Don't know	Total
Finland should do more	17.5	39.5	23.1	14.3	5.6	100
Not in need of protection	15.6	27.2	32.9	17.0	7.3	100
Benefits too generous	35.2	29.3	17.5	9.4	8.7	100
Young men problematic	26.4	31.5	19.8	12.8	9.5	100
Muslims problematic	13.4	26.9	32.5	14.8	12.3	100
Never taxes problematic	31.1	35.2	7.0	20.2	6.5	100
More crime problematic	26.5	46.2	9.4	13.5	4.5	100
Dark skin problematic	5.5	11.0	67.9	10.3	5.3	100
Too well to do problematic	12.2	27.2	28.0	24.3	8.4	100
No integration problematic	21.6	48.2	12.1	14.1	4.0	100

Note: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = somewhat agree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = strongly disagree/false statement.

[44] `https://suomenkuvalehti.fi/jutut/kotimaa/joka-neljas-suomalainen-kannattaa-katupartioita` (visited on 08/28/2019).

Table A5: Finnish Attitudes to Immigration: Iltalehti Survey by Taloustutkimus. Finnish Social Science Data Archive. Answers divided into urban and rural respondents. Data collected in August 2015. $N = 1{,}005$.

Answer (percentages)	Yes	No	Can't say	N (100%)
Approve of reception centers Rural	58.7	36.6	4.7	172
Approve of reception centers Urban	65.8	28.0	6.0	833
Finland take more Christians Rural	20.9	70.0	9.3	172
Finland take more Christians Urban	16.4	78.4	5.1	833

No statistically significant difference in means ($p < 0.05$)

Table A6: Finnish Attitudes to Immigration: Iltalehti Survey by Taloustutkimus. Finnish Social Science Data Archive. Answers divided into urban and rural respondents.Data collected in August 2015. $N = 1{,}005$.

Answer (percentages)	1	2	3	4	Don't know	N (100%)
Finland should do more, rural*	16.3	36.0	20.9	17.0	9.0	172
Finland should do more, urban*	17.8	40.2	23.6	13.7	4.8	833
Not in need of protection, rural*	19.2	30.8	30.8	14.0	5.2	172
Not in need of protection, urban*	14.9	26.4	33.4	17.6	7.7	833
Benefits too generous, rural*	41.0	33.0	16.9	5.2	4.7	172
Benefits too generous, urban*	34.1	28.6	17.6	16.2	9.5	833
Young men problematic, rural	30.8	29.7	19.2	11.0	9.3	172
Young men problematic, urban	25.5	31.9	19.9	13.2	9.5	833
Muslims problematic, rural	16.9	26.2	32.0	8.7	16.3	172
Muslims problematic, urban	12.7	27.0	32.7	16.1	11.5	833
Never taxes problematic, rural*	39.5	37.2	5.2	13.4	4.6	172
Never taxes problematic, urban*	29.4	34.8	7.3	21.6	6.8	833
More crime problematic, rural	33.2	44.2	8.1	9.3	5.2	172
More crime problematic, urban	25.1	46.6	9.6	14.4	4.3	833
Dark skin problematic, rural	7.0	14.0	63.4	9.3	6.4	172
Dark skin problematic, urban	5.2	10.4	68.8	10.6	5.0	833
Too well to do problematic, rural	16.3	32.0	22.7	18.0	11.0	172
Too well to do problematic, urban	11.4	26.2	29.1	25.6	7.8	833
No integration problematic, rural	22.7	53.5	9.3	8.7	5.8	172
No integration problematic, urban	21.4	47.1	12.7	15.2	3.6	833

Note: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = somewhat agree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = strongly disagree/false statement.

Note:
* Statistically significant difference in means ($p < 0.05$)

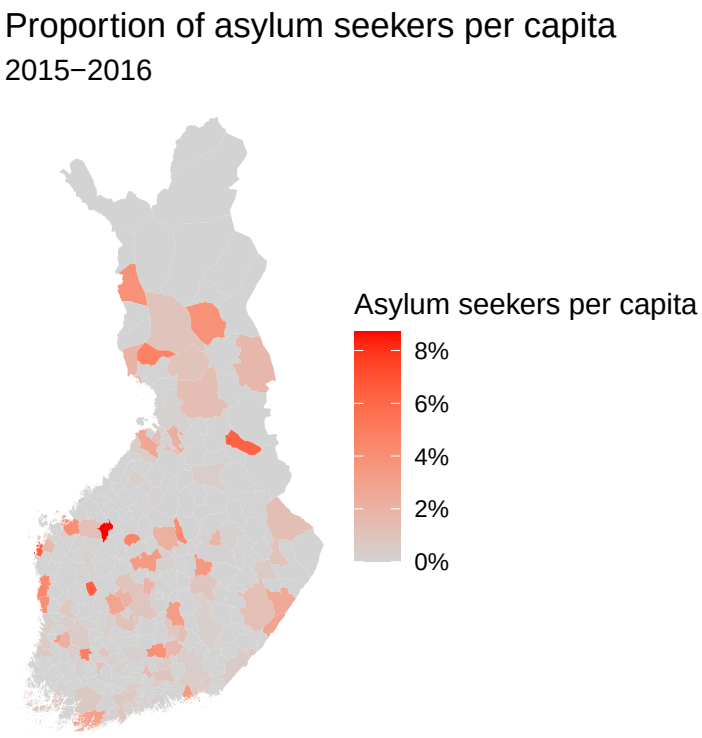


Figure A1: Share of asylum seekers per capita in all Finnish municipalities in the year 2015. Darker shades of green imply a higher share of asylum seekers.

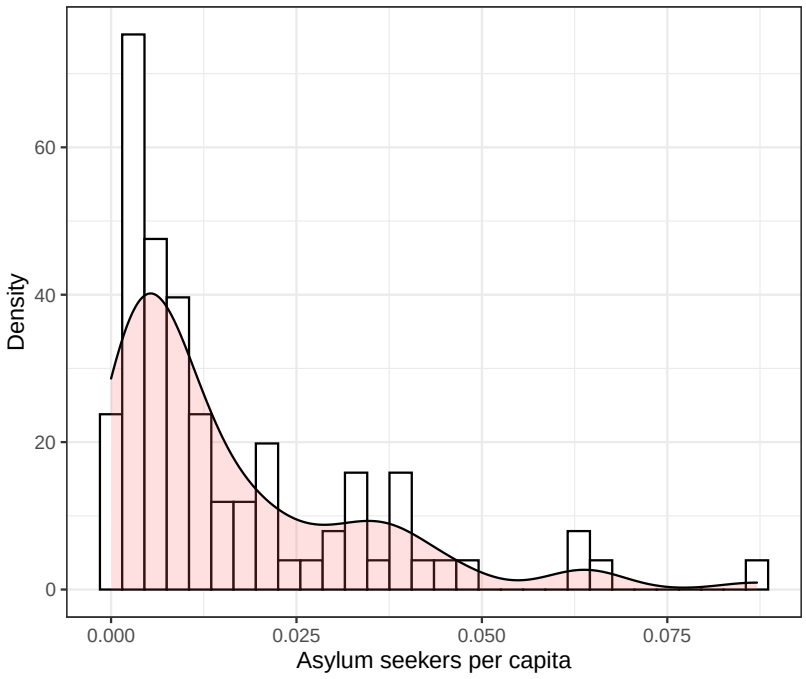


Figure A2: Distribution of the treatment variable, defined as the share of asylum seekers per capita in the municipality, non-treated municipalities excluded.

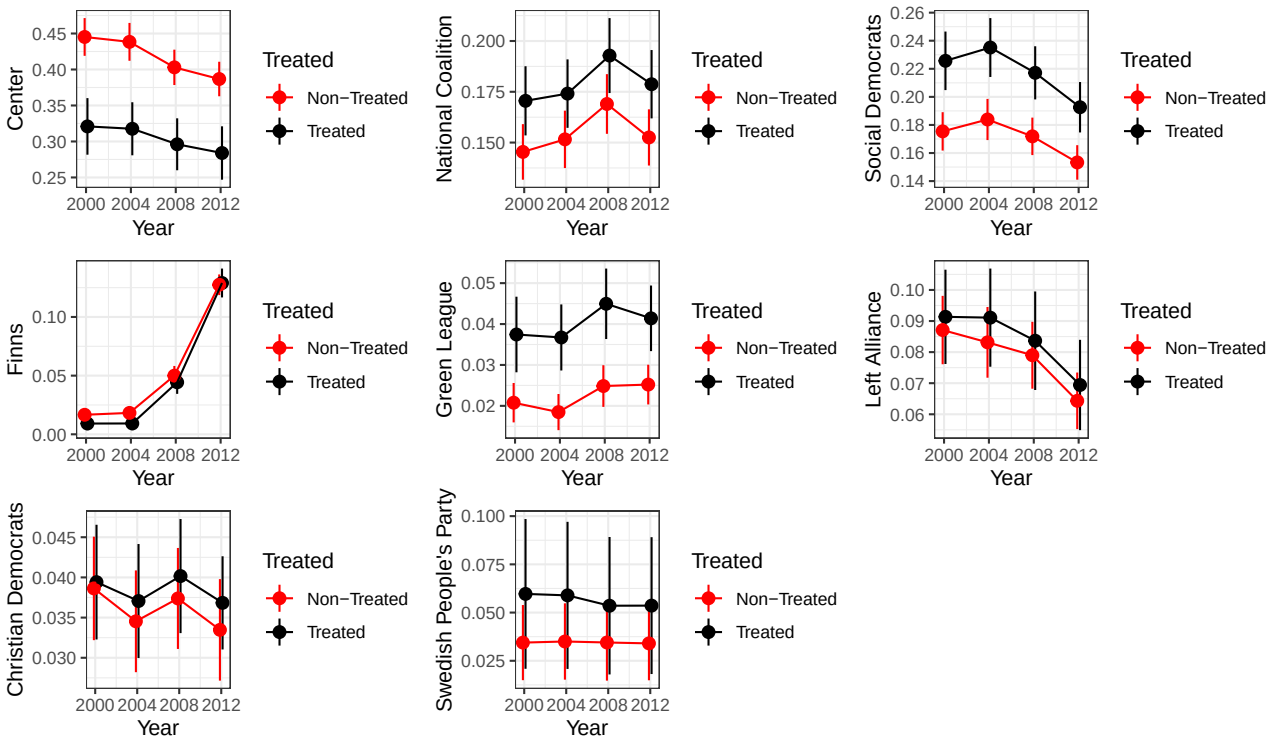


Figure A3: Mean vote share (in percentages) in municipal elections for each party represented in parliament between 2000 and 2012 for treated and non-treated municipalities with 95% confidence intervals.

Table A7: Results for interacting the continuous treatment (the share of asylum seekers in 2015) with previous municipal elections between 2000 and 2012. Outcome measured as the share of total votes cast (0–1).

Model	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	SDP	KOK	KESK	PS	VAS	VIHR	KD	FSP
	Soc.Dem	Lib.Right	Agr.Center	Finns'	Left	Greens	Christian	Swedish-Lib.
Refugees × 2004	0.002	−0.001	0.000	−0.001	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)
Refugees × 2008	0.004*	−0.002	0.004	−0.003	0.002	0.000	0.001	−0.001
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(−0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Refugees × 2012	0.002	−0.002	0.006*	−0.001	0.003*	−0.001	0.000	−0.001
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(-0.003)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Party fixed effect	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Election fixed effect	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
N	1,365	1,365	1,365	1,365	1,365	1,365	1,365	1,365
Clusters	273	273	273	273	273	273	273	273

Note: Models 1–8 present OLS regression with clustered standard errors in parentheses. Model 1: Social Democrats. Model 2: National Coalition. Model 3: Center Party. Model 4: Finns' Party. Model 5: Left Alliance. Model 6: Green League. Model 7: Christian Democrats. Model 8: Swedish People's Party.
* $p < 0.05$

The table above demonstrates that there is no systematic pre-trend in the relationship

between electoral outcomes and the continuous treatment measure of asylum seekers per capita. Even if there are statistically significant relationships, the coefficients are practically zero (less than 0.01 meaning a 1% increase in the cote share) and non-systematic.

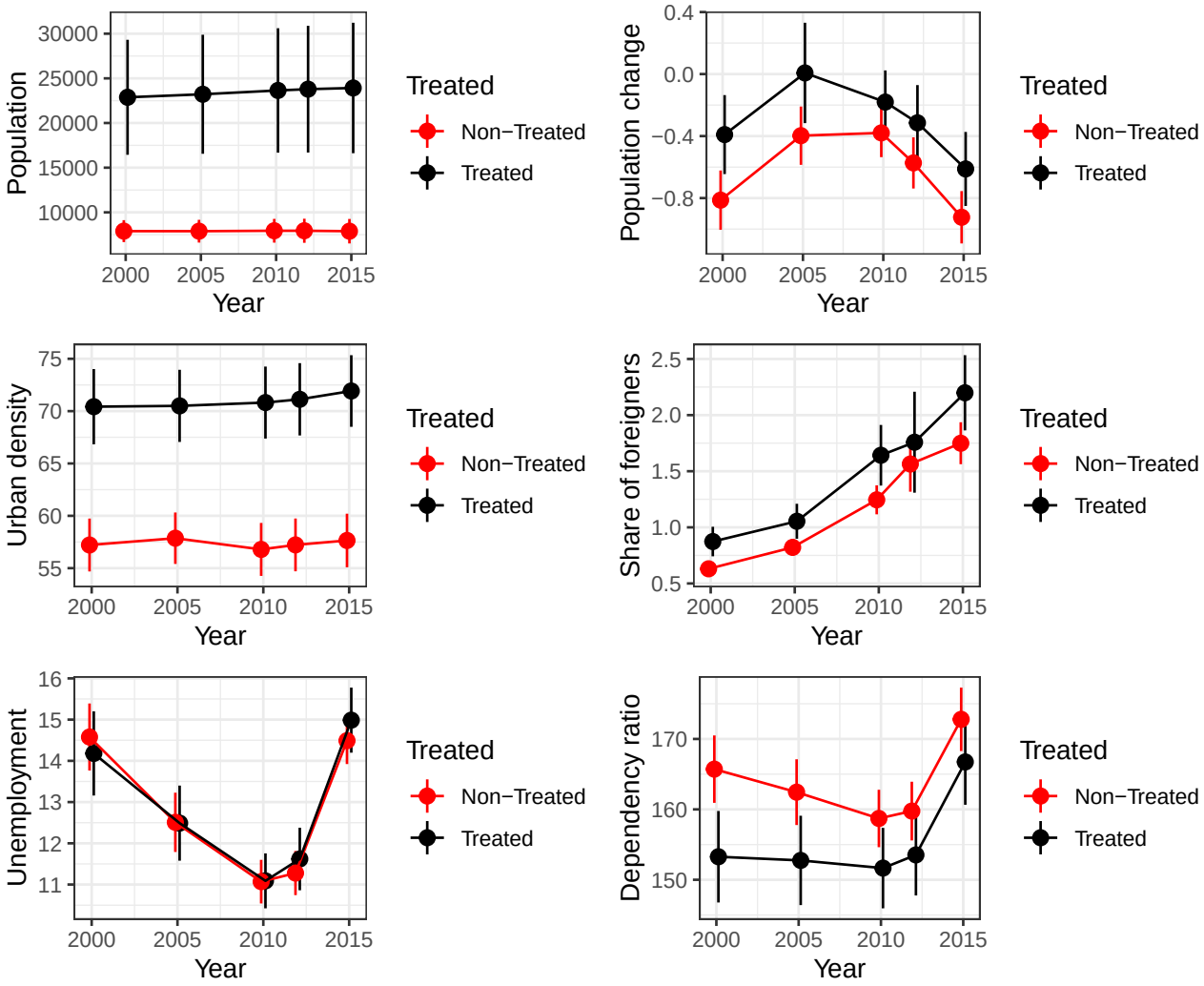


Figure A4: Mean population size (in persons), change in population, urban density, share of foreigners, unemployment rate (in percentages) and dependency ratio (in euros) between years 2000 and 2015 for treated and non-treated municipalities. Vertical lines denote 95% confidence intervals.

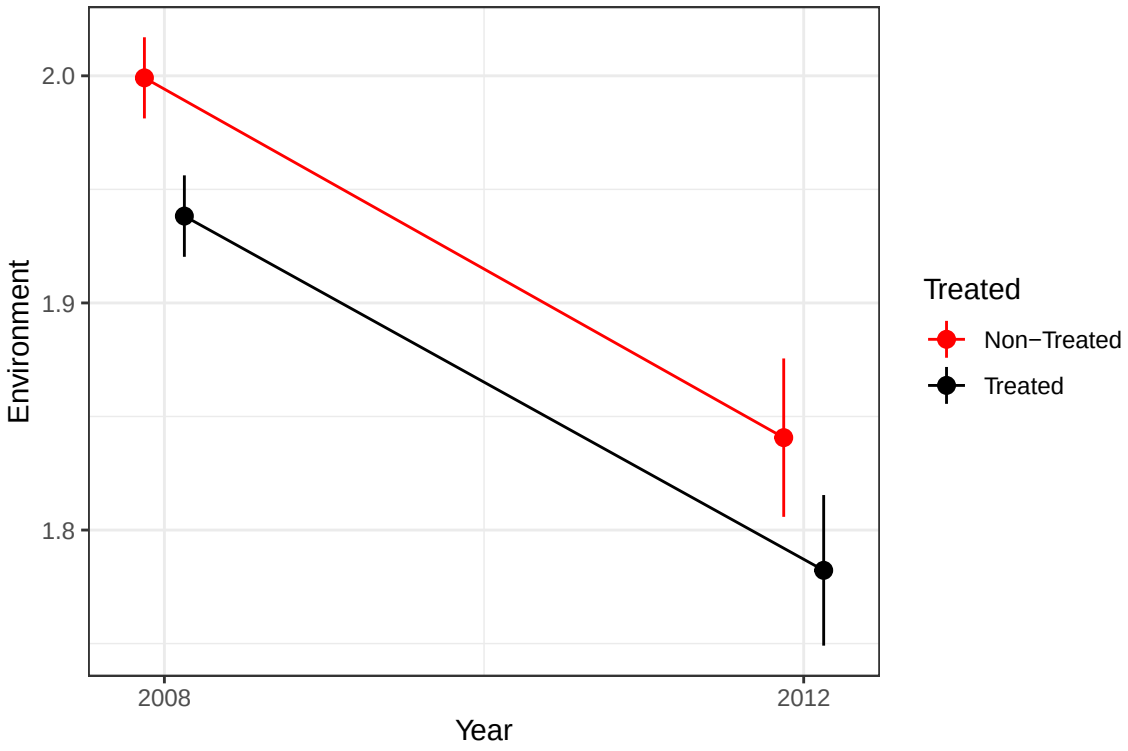


Figure A5: Mean responses in agreement with the statement "We should prioritize jobs over environmental values", between years 2008 and 2012 for treated and non-treated municipalities. Vertical lines denote 95% confidence intervals.1 strongly disagree – 4 strongly agree.

Table A8: Mean economic features of rural and non-rural municipalities, year 2015, N =273.

	Non-rural	Rural
Household income, median, euros	34,107	30,171
Unemployment, mean, %	13.7	15.6
Dependency ratio, mean, euros	156.6	185.3
Population change, mean, %	−0.31	−1.3

Table A9: Independent variations of key elements.

	Population	Pop. change	Urban density	Treatment intensity	Capacity
Mean	18,502	−0.8	63.3	1.6	189
Median	6,682	−0.8	60.8	1.0	150
Minimum	761	−4.6	0.0	0.0	11
Maximum	628,208	2.0	100.0	8.7	825
Standard deviation	48,322	1.2	19.0	0.02	167

Note: The mean, median, minimum and maximum values for all 295 Finnish municipalities for population size (number of persons in the municipality), the change in population (percentage of population the municipality has either gained or lost overall at the end of the calendar year), urban density (the percentage of houses in the municipality less than 200 meters apart), treatment intensity (the share accommodation capacity of the total population of the municipality), and capacity of reception centers measured as the number of beds in the reception center. The year used is 2015 as the numbers of that year reflect the values during the height of the refugee crisis.

Table A10: Independent variations of key elements.

	Population	Pop. change	Urban density	Treatment intensity	Capacity
Mean	12,763	−0.8	62.0	1.6	181
Median	6,110	−0.8	59.7	1.0	150
Minimum	761	−4.6	0.0	0.0	11
Maximum	214,605	2.0	100.0	8.7	825
Standard deviation	21,599	1.2	18.6	1.8	155

Note: The mean, median, minimum and maximum values key elements for those 273 Finnish municipalities that did not have a reception center before 2015, the final sample of municipalities used throughout the paper. Population size (number of persons in the municipality), the change in population (percentage of population the municipality has either gained or lost overall at the end of the calendar year), urban density (the percentage of houses in the municipality less than 200 meters apart), treatment intensity (the share accommodation capacity of the total population of the municipality), and capacity of reception centers measured as the number of beds in the reception center. The year used is 2015 as the numbers of that year reflect the values during the height of the refugee crisis.

A.1 Balance

Although a DiD design does not require balance between treated and non-treated units, balance tests in Figure A6 show very similar characteristics between treated and non-treated units. Overall, more urban, and thus more populated and slightly more educated and international municipalities ended up housing asylum seekers, but these differences are not likely to be systematic, but rather stem from available housing correlating with urban density. When subsetting the units to rural and urban municipalities, the units show perfect balance, with the exception of rural receiving areas being still more urban and urban receiving areas suffering from slightly higher unemployment. Although none of these features surpasses more than half a standard deviation, I will control for these time-variant covariates and also use them as out-

comes. Most importantly, the annual contribution margin, the amount of money a municipality can spend on its inhabitants after meeting its responsibilities dictated by law, is perfectly balanced, showing that municipalities were not treated due to their economic performance.

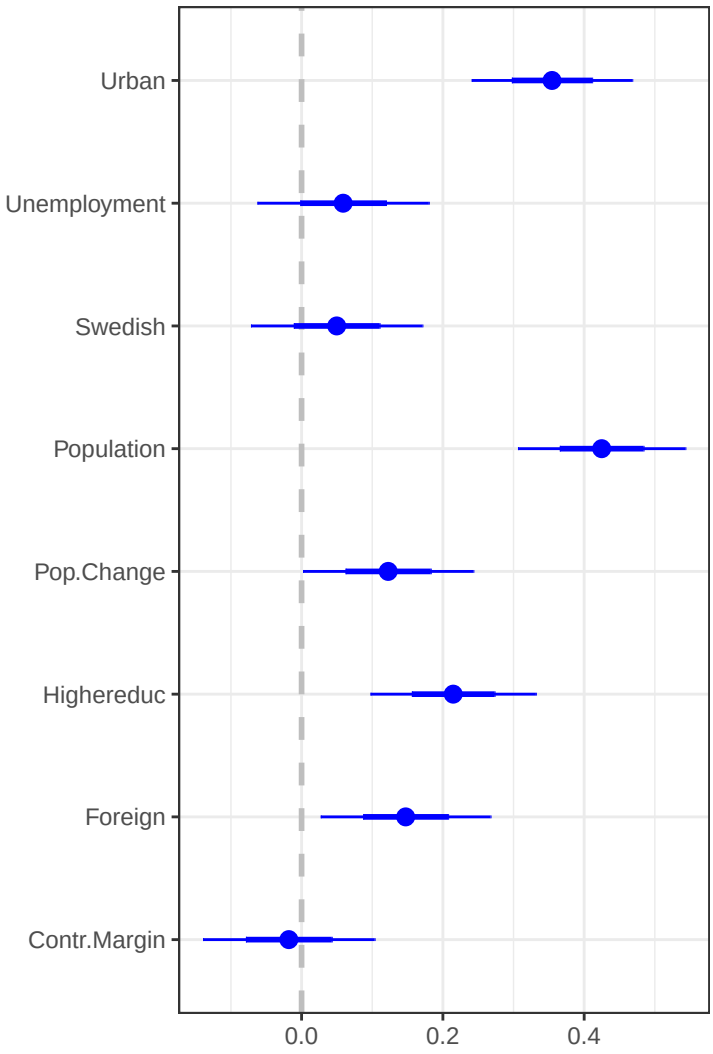
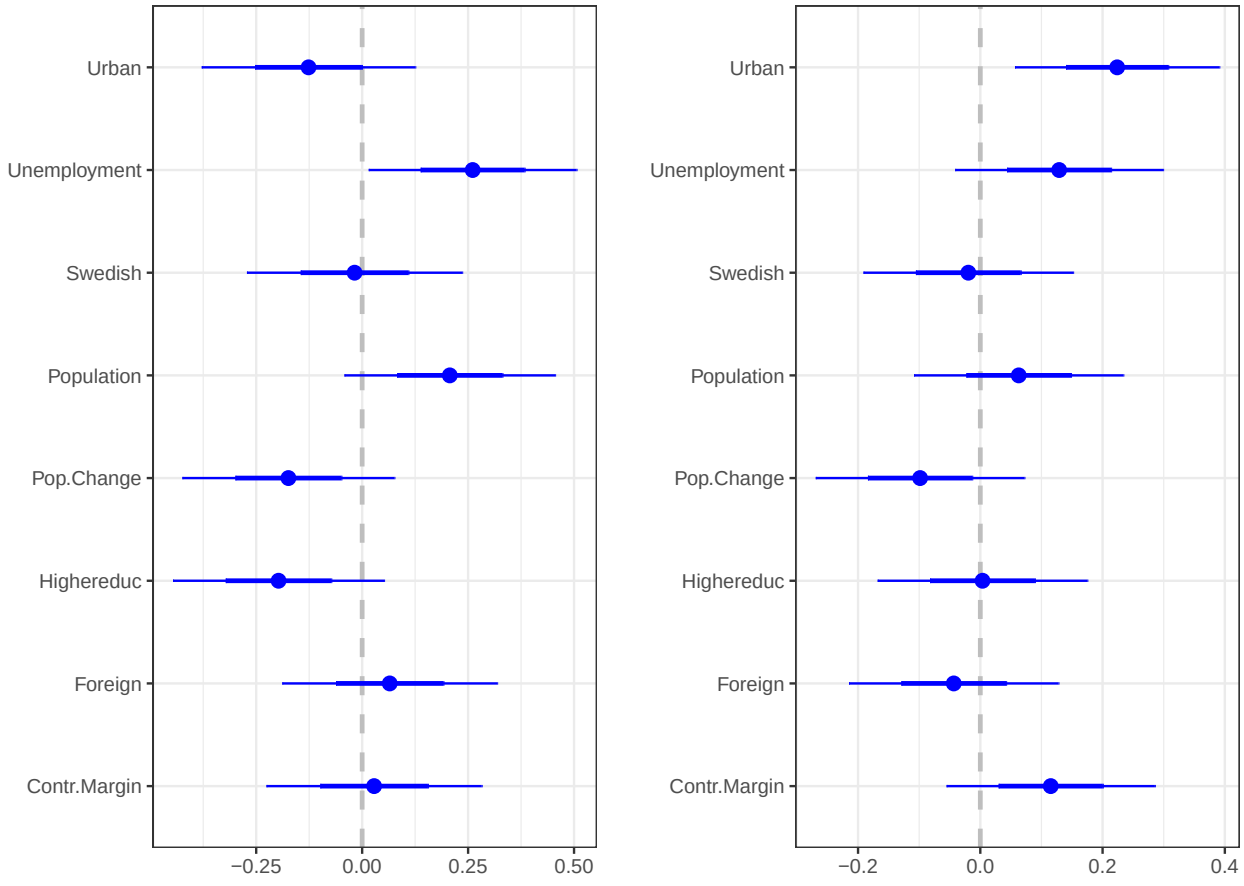


Figure A6: The relationship between receiving asylum seekers in 2015 and different municipality-level covariates.



(a) Urban municipalities

(b) Rural municipalities

Figure A7: Standardized coefficients plotted for OLS regressions testing the relationship between being treated in 2015 and municipality specific covariates. Thicker lines portray 95% confidence intervals and thinner lines the 90% confidence intervals.

B Finnish elections and elite opinions

In both national and municipal elections, Finland has an open list with compulsory candidate selection from one party. This means that voters must choose one party, but within the party list there are several candidates to choose from. Thus, in the Finnish system, the candidates of one party not only compete against those of other parties but also amongst themselves. The application of the d'Hondt divisor means that the success of individual candidates within each party depends entirely on the number of votes they get.

In Finland, municipal elections take place every four years.[45] Each municipality is one constituency. Municipal councils are the main seat of power in Finnish municipal decision-making, and they have extensive influence on the provision of welfare. An important factor in understanding Finnish politics is that smaller and rural municipalities (defined by Statistics Finland as municipalities under 15,000 inhabitants and having an urban density less than 60%) have trouble providing the basic services they are tasked to deliver by law and oftentimes run a deficit.[46] To address this situation, the state has pursued a comprehensive policy of municipal mergers, causing the number of municipalities to fall from 452 in 2000 to 311 by 2018. Rural municipalities are thus often preoccupied with their autonomy and economics.[47] Table A8 provides data concerning the economic performance of rural vs. urban municipalities.

B.1 Information on the usage of Voting Advice Applications in Finland

According to the latest research about the usage of voting advice applications (Borg 2019), 79% of respondents in a representative survey stated that they had used a VAA in the 2018 presidential election or in previous elections. Most of the users are younger voters (18–30 years: 89% and 31–40 years: 85%) with age steadily diminishing their usage (41–50 years: 83%, 51–60 years: 76% and 60 years up: 69%). The single biggest user group are students (89%), but VAAs are used evenly across all occupational groups, including unemployed people and pensioners. While usage is higher among those who voted (82%), non-voters also reported using them (57%). Women and men are equally likely to use VAAs.

B.2 Information regarding who fills in VAAs

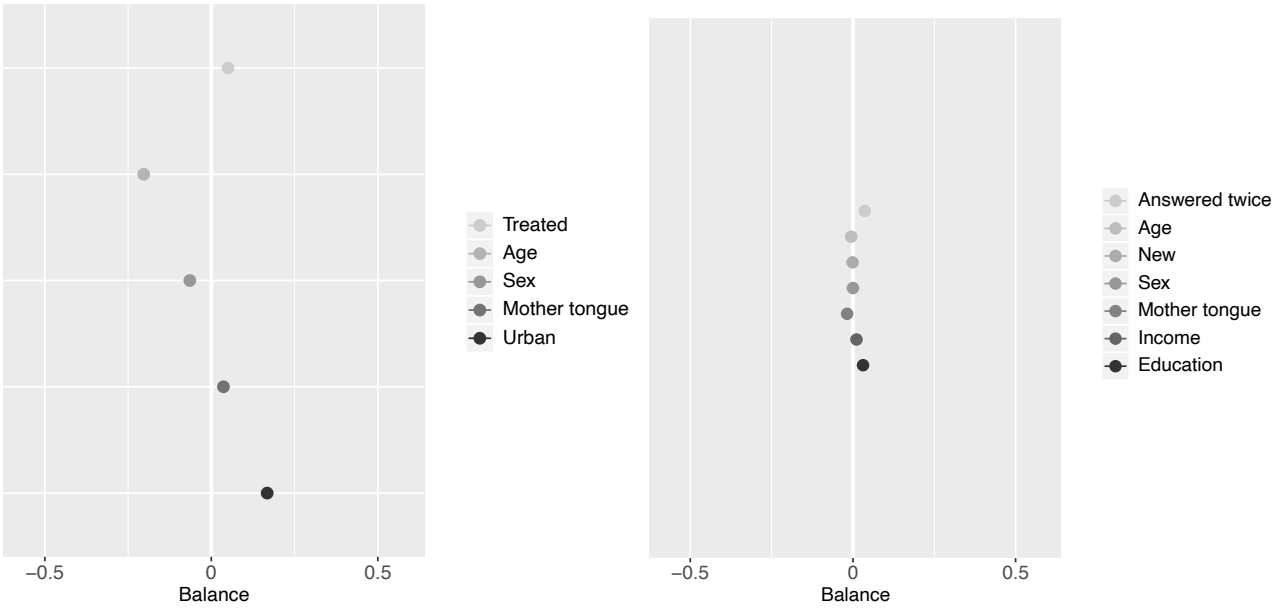
For candidates, filling in a VAA is not compulsory, but those who do tend to do better at the polls, and hence are often more motivated and serious about their ambitions. 95% of all votes cast in the 2019 parliamentary elections were cast for candidates who responded to a VAA. Response rates are somewhat higher in urban areas, as the anonymity of larger communities makes face-to-face campaigning harder than in smaller communities. Accordingly, as the treated areas were more likely to be urban, they have a slightly higher response rate. In smaller electoral

[45]The election that should have taken place in October 2016 was moved to April 2017 in an attempt to create a new cycle that would allow for more time between different elections.

[46]For example, in 2012, 57 municipalities under 15,000 inhabitants (26% of all municipalities of that size) ran a deficit, while only 3 of those over 15,000 inhabitants (4% of that size) did.

[47]The Center Party, as the former Agrarian Party, is the foremost defender of rural areas and lists maintaining the livability of rural areas as one of its chief goals in its manifesto. The Finns' Party, although chiefly associated with its anti-immigration stance, also has a rural legacy as a continuation of the Finnish Rural Party.

districts there is less need to attract unknown voters as personal connections play a more important role. Female, younger and Finnish-speaking candidates are more likely to fill in the the survey, but all demographic groups are represented among the respondents. Importantly for my design, the response rate between treated and non-treated units was balanced in 2017. If anything, Swedish speakers and more educated candidates were more likely to fill in VAAs in treated areas, and candidates in treated areas were slightly more likely to fill in a VAA twice, but these differences were so small that they do not pose a threat for inference.



(a) Candidate balance, filled in VAA **(b)** Candidate balance, treated/non-treated

Figure B1: Coefficients plotted for OLS regression testing the differences between: **1.** candidates that answer and do not answer the VAA; and **2.** difference between candidates that are treated or not-treated in 2015.

C Additional specifications

C.1 Relaxing the candidate fixed effect

Relaxing the candidate fixed effect allows me to extend the estimation of the treatment effect beyond those candidates that ran in both elections and assess all the 30,070 candidates that answered the question at either time point. This allows me to account for compositional differences, that is, which types of candidates stop running and join the race in 2017 as a result of the treatment. In this model, I relax the candidate fixed effect but include a municipality-specific fixed effect instead. This can be expressed by the following equation:

$$Y_{it} = \delta_t + \lambda_i + \alpha \, \text{Treatment}_{it} + X_{it}\beta + \varepsilon_{it} \tag{C1}$$

Where λ_i is a municipality-specific fixed effect and δ_t is a year-specific fixed effect. The outcome Y_{it} is the average change of stance between all the candidates that ran in either time point in treated municipalities between 2012 and 2017 compared to the average change of stance of all the candidates in non-treated municipalities between the same period.

When inspecting what types of stances get elected to the council, I use this specification but subset the data to include only candidates who won a seat in the municipal council either in 2012 or 2917.

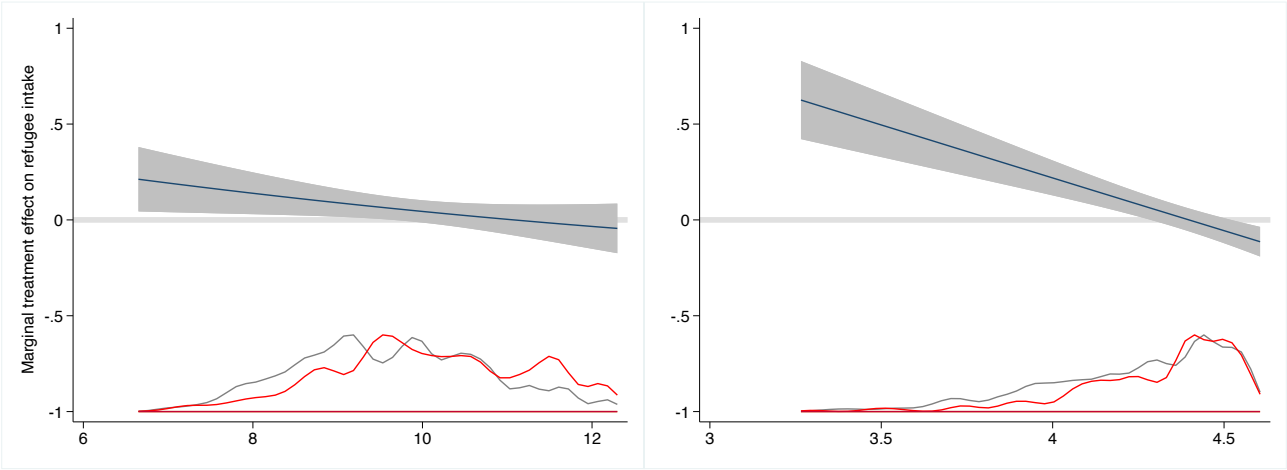
C.2 Testing the duration effect

Preferences for refugee intake might not only be affected by how intense the presence of asylum seekers was, but also by how long they stayed in the constituency (Steinmayr 2021). To test this, I take the log of days during which the municipality had a reception center at the time of the 2017 election and interact this with the share of asylum seekers in the municipality. This is expressed by the following equation:

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{jit} = \delta_t + \lambda_j + \beta_1 \text{Treatment}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{TreatmentLogtime}_{it} \\ + \beta_3 \text{TreatmentLogtime}_{it} \times \text{Treatment}_{it} + X_{it}\beta + \varepsilon_{jit} \end{aligned} \tag{C2}$$

where Y_{jit} is the stance of candidate j in municipality i in time t, δ_t is a year-specific fixed effect, λ_j is a candidate-specific fixed effect, Treatment_{it} is the reception center's capacity divided by the population size, $\text{TreatmentLogtime}_{it}$ is the log of days during which the municipality had a reception center before the 2017 election, β_3 is the interaction of treatment and time, $X_{it}\beta$ is a vector of time-varying covariates (controls) and ε_{jit} denotes the error term.

D Results

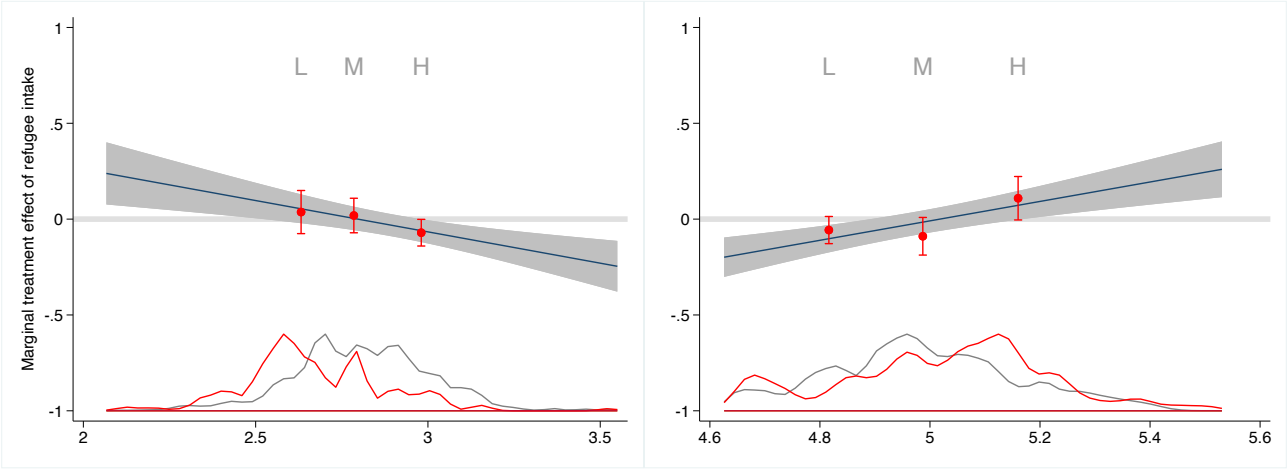


(a) Logged population size as moderator

(b) Logged urban density as moderator

Figure D1: Predicted marginal effects using non-parametric locally linear regressions based on Gaussian kernels for receiving a reception center (1/0) on refugee intake for candidates, shaded areas denoting 95% confidence intervals. The distributions on the x axis show the distribution of treated units in red and non-treated units in grey.

Share of children under 15 and dependency ratio as moderators



(a) Moderator: logged share of people under 15 years

(b) Moderator: logged dependency ratio (number of dependents compared with the total population aged 15–64)

Figure D2: Predicted marginal effects using pre-specified bins for lower, medium and higher levels of the moderators for receiving a reception center on refugee intake for candidates, shaded areas denoting 95% confidence intervals. The distributions on the x axis show the distribution of treated units in red and non-treated units in grey.

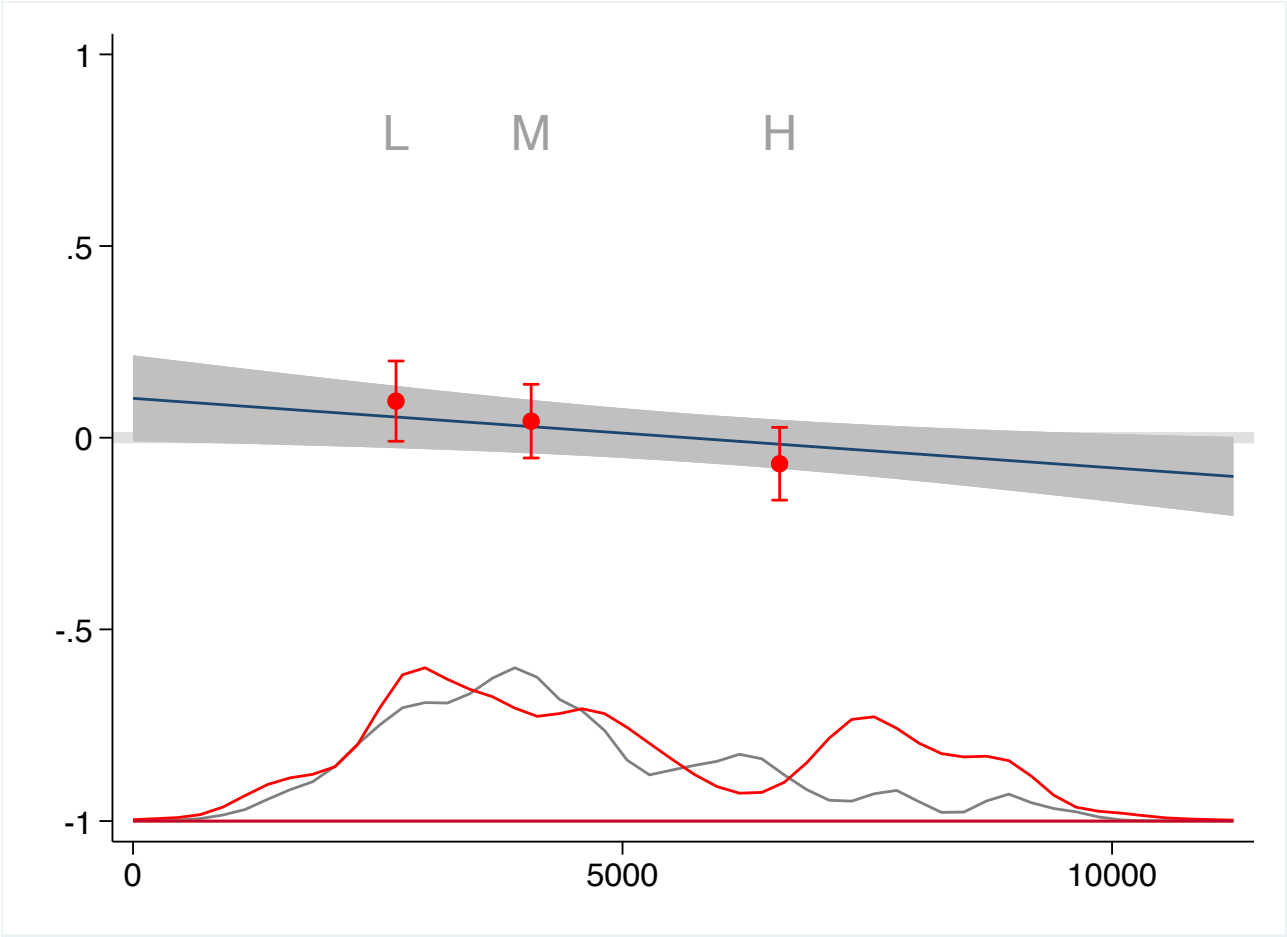


Figure D3: Predicted marginal effects using pre-specified bins for lower, medium and higher levels of the municipality debt (euros per person) for receiving a reception center on refugee intake for candidates, shaded areas denoting 95% confidence intervals. The distributions on the x axis show the distribution of treated units in red and non-treated units in grey.

Table D1: Shift on the candidate's answer to the question "My municipality should receive refugees that have been granted asylum in Finland" between 2012–2017, 1 (strongly disagree) – 4 (strongly agree), for municipalities under 15,000 inhabitants, urban vs. rural units, binary treatment definition.

Model	1	2
	Urban	Rural
Exposure to refugees	0.054	0.375*
	(0.078)	(0.163)
Candidate fixed effects	yes	yes
Election fixed effects	yes	yes
N	527	154
Clusters	39	35

Note: Models 1 and 2 present OLS regression with clustered standard errors in parentheses. Model 1: urban density above 70%. Model 2: urban density below 40%.
* $p < 0.05$

Table D2: The candidate's answer to the question "My municipality should receive refugees that have been granted asylum in Finland" between 2012–2017, 1 (strongly disagree) – 4 (strongly agree).

Model	(1)	(2)
	Share of asylum seekers × time	Share of asylum seekers × time with covariates
Effect on refugee stance	0.002	−0.001
	(0.015)	(0.015)
Candidate fixed effect	yes	yes
Election fixed effect	yes	yes
N	4,310	4,310
Clusters	273	273

Note: Models 1–2 present OLS fixed effects regressions with clustered standard errors in parentheses. Model 1: Interaction of asylum seekers per capita with the log of the days. Model 2: model 1 with covariates.

E Additional analysis

Table E1: The candidate's answer to the question "My municipality should receive refugees that have been granted asylum in Finland" between 2012–2017, 1 (strongly disagree) – 4 (strongly agree).

Model	1	2	3
	Overall	Ran once	Ran twice
Exposure's effect on refugee stance	0.058*	0.054*	0.051*
	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.014)
Candidate FE	no	no	yes
Municipality FE	yes	yes	yes
Election FE	yes	yes	yes
N	27,354	18,734	4,310
Clusters	273	273	273

Note: Models 1–3 present OLS regression with clustered standard errors in parentheses. Model 1: continuous estimate for all candidates without candidates fixed effects (just municipality fixed effects). Model 2: continuous treatment for those candidates that ran at either election but not twice. Model 3: continuous treatment for those candidates that ran twice. Pre-treated municipalities excluded form all models.
* $p = 0.000$

Table E2: Candidates' answer by party to the question "My municipality should receive refugees that have been granted asylum in Finland" between 2012–2017, 1 (strongly disagree) – 4 (strongly agree).

Model	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	SDP	KOK	KESK	PS	VAS	VIHR	KD	FSP
	Soc. Dem	Lib.Right	Agr.Center	Finns'	Left	Greens	Christian	Swedish-Lib.
Refugee exposure	0.073*	0.000	0.059*	0.107*	−0.003	0.019	0.156*	−0.036
	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.026)	(0.036)	(0.024)	(0.046)	(0.075)	(0.034)
Candidate fixed effect	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Election fixed effect	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
N	747	927	1,117	383	370	328	166	187
Clusters	250	252	267	242	196	184	201	39

Note: Models 1–8 present OLS regression with clustered standard errors in parentheses. Model 1: Social Democrats. Model 2: National Coalition. Model 3: Center Party. Model 4: Finns' Party. Model 5: Left Alliance. Model 6: Green League. Model 7: Christian Democrats. Model 8: Swedish People's Party.
* $p < 0.05$

Table E3: Results for fixed effects regressions for the winning candidates' refugee stances per municipality on the share of asylum seekers in the municipality, years 2012–2017.

	Refugee stance	
Model	(1)	(2)
Refugee exposure	0.038*	0.038*
	(0.017)	(0.017)
Election FE	yes	yes
Municipality FE	yes	yes
Covariates	no	yes
(N)	(9,928)	(9,928)
Clusters	(273)	(273)

Note: Models 1–2 present OLS regression with clustered standard errors in parentheses. Model 1: Continuous treatment: asylum seekers per capita. Model 2: Continuous treatment model with covariates.
* $p < 0.05$

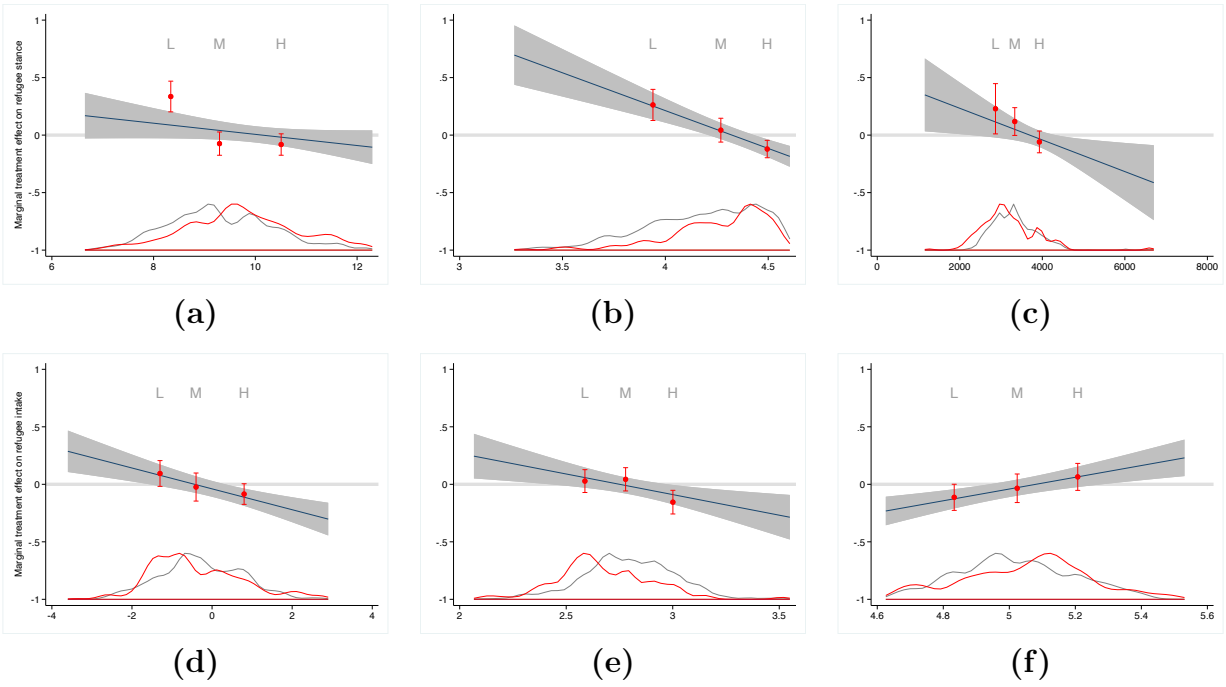
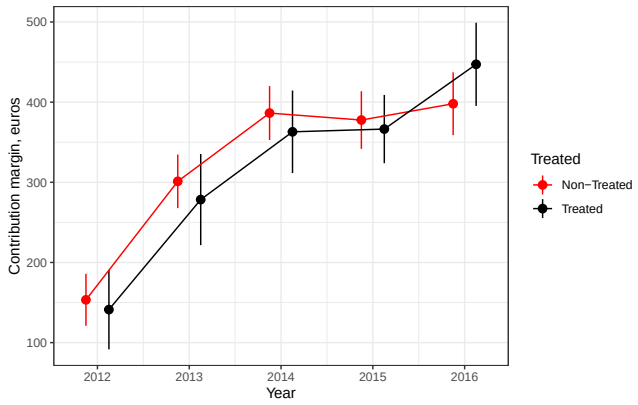


Figure E1: The predicted marginal effects of receiving asylum seekers on refugee stances among elected candidates interacted with a) the logged population size, b) logged population density c) municipality tax incomes (euros per person), d) population change of the municipality (in percentages), e) the share of inhabitants under 15 years of age in the municipality (in percentages), and f) the logged dependency ratio of the municipality (the number of non working adults per working people).

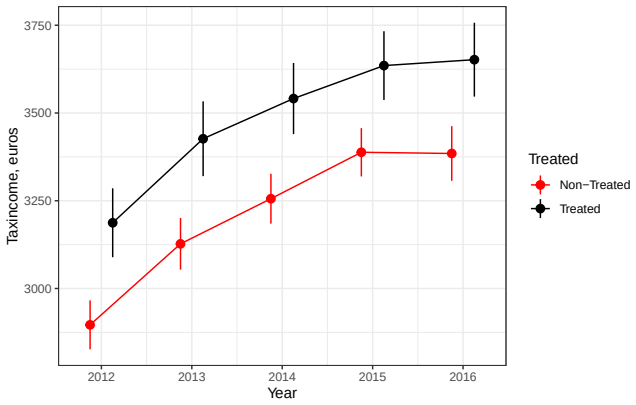
Table E4: Treatment effect on the municipalities' economic indicators for all municipalities by binary and continuous treatment indicator, clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Municipality tax revenue	Contribution margin	Service sector	Unemployment
Effect of presence of asylum seekers, average	−13.38	66.60*	0.356	0.214
	(13.35)	(25.80)	(0.219)	(0.151)
N	1,365	1,365	1,365	1,365
Effect of presence of asylum seekers, per capita	−7.59	19.43	0.151	0.061
	(4.96)	(12.61)	(0.093)	(0.085)
N	1,365	1,365	1,365	1,365
Per capita × time interaction	20.82*	28.43	0.112	0.029
	(7.84)	(15.83)	(0.239)	(0.216)
N	1,176	1,176	1,176	1,176
Municipality fixed effects	yes	yes	yes	yes
Year fixed effects	yes	yes	yes	yes
Clusters	273	273	273	273

Note: Models 1–4 present OLS regressions with clustered standard errors in parentheses. Model 1: Tax revenue, euros per person. Model 2: Annual contribution margin, euros per person. Model 3: Jobs in the service sector, percentage. Model 4: Unemployment percentage.
* $p < 0.01$



(a) Annual contribution margin, euros



(b) Tax income, euros

Figure E2: Mean contribution margins and tax incomes (in euros per person) in municipalities between 2012 and 2016 for treated and non-treated municipalities, with 95% confidence intervals.

F Robustness

Incumbents who served on municipal councils when the asylum seekers arrived might feel the need to agree with refugee intake because it could look as if they had authorized the opening of a reception center. If this is the case, the results are driven by rationalization bias. As incumbents also tend to get more votes, this might also explain the higher vote share for pro-refugee candidates. To check this, I interact treatment with having a seat in the municipal council at the time of the 2017 election.[48] On a related note, challengers might have their own reasons for formulating their stances. I test these in Tables F1 and F2 and find no relationship between the treatment effect and electoral status.

Table F1: Shift on the candidate's answer to the question "My municipality should receive refugees that have been granted asylum in Finland" between 2012–2017, incumbency as an explanatory variable, 1 (strongly disagree) – 4 (strongly agree).

Model	1	2
	Treat. × incumb.	Gen. incumb.
Stance on refugees	−0.004	0.091*
	(0.252)	(0.023)
Candidate FE	yes	yes
Election FE	yes	yes
N	4,310	4,310
Clusters	273	273

Note: Models 1–2 present fixed effect OLS regression with clustered standard errors in parentheses. Model 1: incumbency interaction with treatment as asylum seekers per capita. Model 2: incumbency without treatment interaction.
* $p < 0.01$

If incumbents seemingly bear the responsibility for hosting asylum seekers in the municipality, they might opt to challenge the status quo. Alternatively, challengers who are close to getting a seat on the council might find it expedient to adapt to the new refugee-friendly political climate in the municipality. I test for the effect of being a challenger or a loser by applying Equation 2 (see main text) to those candidates who ran again in 2017 and were on the waiting list to be councilor between 2012–2017 (challengers) or lost in 2012 (losers).[49] None of the models show that electoral competition would explain the formation of issue stances – the effect is similar for all candidates, including the Finns. However, being a loser in 2012 leads to a stronger overall anti-refugee stance at the national level – additional proof of the dampening effect of the treatment on anti-immigration attitudes.

[48] In Finland, the council takes joint responsibility for majority decisions.

[49] As this topic is particularly challenging for the Finns' Party, I also subset the data to include only that party, but without any results – analysis available on demand.

Table F2: Shift on the candidate's answer to the question "My municipality should receive refugees that have been granted asylum in Finland" between 2012–2017, electoral position as an explanatory variable, 1 (strongly disagree) – 4 (strongly agree).

Model	1	2	3	4
	Treat. × challenger.	Gen. challenger	Treat. × loser	Gen. loser
Exposure to refugees	−0.002	0.011	0.006	−0.135*
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.042)	(0.025)
Candidate FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Election FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
N	4,310	4,310	4,310	4,310
Clusters	273	273	273	273

Note: Models 1–4 present fixed effect OLS regression with clustered standard errors in parentheses. Model 1: spare interaction with treatment as asylum seekers per capita. Model 2: : being spare without treatment interaction. Model 3: losing in 2012 interaction with treatment. Model 4: losing in 2012 without treatment interaction
* $p = 0.000$

Rural municipalities faced with steeply declining population levels may have been more refugee-friendly to start with and that the treatment effect thus only reinforces pre-held values. In 2012, the mean refugee stance was 2.52 in rural municipalities that received asylum seekers and 2.57 in non-receiving municipalities, with no statistical difference between the two means. Moreover, in rural units with shrinking populations that received asylum seekers the mean refugee stance was 2.55 in 2012. For rural units with growing populations that did not receive asylum seekers, the same number is 2.56. Thus I can safely establish that rural municipalities that ended up housing asylum seekers and suffered from population losses were no more refugee-friendly than rural units that did not suffer from population losses and did not house asylum seekers. Rural areas also showed higher initial levels of scepticism towards asylum seekers. All results point to a learning experience, rather than to a reinforcement of favorable opinions.

As mentioned in the research design section, not all municipalities were treated randomly only due to available housing: in 25 cases, the municipalities had to cooperate on some level, although this was frequently not at all a result of favorable public opinion on receiving asylum seekers. However, to rule out any possible self-selection to the treatment, I subset the data to include only those municipalities that received asylum seekers irrespective of their will and those that received asylum seekers with administrative consent. Table F3 shows that the results hold. It was not the circumstances of the establishment of the reception center that mattered, but the sheer fact of housing them in a given setting. Administrative nods merely reflect the overall more positive attitude of incumbents.

Table F3: Shift on the candidate's answer to the question "My municipality should receive refugees that have been granted asylum in Finland" between 2012–2017, 1 (strongly disagree) – 4 (strongly agree), for municipalities that received asylum seekers without a need for consent (private housing) and municipalities that agreed to receiving asylum seekers (public housing).

Model	1	2
	Public	Private
Stance on refugees	0.071*	0.036*
	(0.020)	(0.017)
Candidate FE	yes	yes
Election FE	yes	yes
N	3,736	4,902
Clusters	228	270

Note: Models 1 and 2 present OLS regression with clustered standard errors in parentheses.
* $p < 0.05$

Table F4: The candidate's answer to the question "My municipality should receive refugees that have been granted asylum in Finland" between 2012–2017, 1 (strongly disagree) – 4 (strongly agree).

Model	(1)	(2)
Refugee exposure	0.051*	0.048*
	(0.014)	(0.015)
Candidate fixed effect	yes	yes
Election fixed effect	yes	yes
N	4,310	4,310
Clusters	273	273

Note: Models 1–2 present jackknifing tests for the OLS fixed effects regressions with clustered standard errors in parentheses. Each municipality left out once from the regression and then running the analysis 273 times. The coefficient is the mean of these 273 separate regression with 272 municipalities. Model 1: Continuous treatment definition: asylum seekers per capita. Model 2: Model 1 with covariates. Pre-treated municipalities excluded in all models.
* $p < 0.01$

F.1 Addressing the stable unit treatment value assumption

Following Clarke (2017), I create two groups of treatment: municipalities that received asylum seekers and municipalities that didn't but bordered one that did and thus would have noticed their presence in the adjacent municipality. If the adjacent municipality already had a reception center, I discount if it did not receive more asylum seekers in 2015 than it previously housed, but I do include it if it received more asylum seekers than its previous capacity allowed. I do this because some municipalities received help with the emergency accommodation of asylum seekers from neighboring municipalities, meaning these adjacent municipalities may have been treated in a spillover sense. While this is not the same as being treated in the administrative sense, as these adjacent municipalities did not share the same administrative burdens and

benefits as the treated municipalities, it tests how possible awareness of asylum seekers nearby could have affected a politician's opinion. As I cannot run this analysis with the asylum seekers per capita approach, I subset the data to cover only rural communities under 15,000 inhabitants and compare the results for municipalities that received asylum seekers and their adjacent neighbors. This method controls for spillover treatment effects that come from being next to a municipality that received asylum seekers. As asylum seekers were able to move around, it is likely that some level of contact happened with those hosted by the neighboring municipality. Table F5 alleviates concerns about possible spillover effects: when regressing the shift of opinion on refugees on being quasi-treated versus not being treated at all, I don't find similar effects to being treated: the coefficient is small and non-significant. This also contributes to ruling out contact as an explanatory factor.

A further violation of SUTVA might be that the refugee crisis dominated the media reports and that non-treated municipalities were therefore also treated in this non-material sense. However, if the treatment had an effect on how politicians and voters behaved in other municipalities, this would contaminate the results of the control group and thus only make the estimate more conservative. In addition, receiving a reception center is specific to the municipality in terms of administrative responsibility, so the only way spillover might have had any effect is through contact and media impressions, factors that are less relevant for my study than the actual administrative experience and the municipality-specific returns to hosting a reception center.

Table F5: Shift on the candidate's answer to the question "My municipality should receive refugees that have been granted asylum in Finland" between 2012–2017, 1 (strongly disagree) – 4 (strongly agree), for municipalities under 15,000 inhabitants, treated vs. quasi treated units.

Model	1	2
	Treated	Quasi-treated
Stance on refugees	0.118*	−0.037
	(0.055)	(0.064)
Candidate FE	yes	yes
Election FE	yes	yes
N	11,938	8,921
Clusters	210	167

Note: Models 1 and 2 present OLS regression with clustered standard errors in parentheses. Model 1: population size below 15,000, treated. Model 2: population size below 15,000, quasi-treated units.
* $p < 0.05$

F.2 Placebo regressions and replication

As a robustness check I also perform placebo regressions with the outcomes among the VAA questions that cannot be hypothesized to show treatment effects. These are *Schools should have stricter rules* and *Jobs should be prioritized over protecting the environment*. The first question was asked between 2015 and 2017 while the latter was also asked in 2008, thus extending the pre-treatment period. Neither of the estimates come out as substantive and significant. The coefficient for the continuous treatment measure on the school related questions is 0.043 with standard error of 0.07 and the results for the environmental regressions are summed up below.

Table F6: The candidate's answer to the question "Jobs should be prioritized over protecting the environment" between 2008–2012, 1 (strongly disagree) – 4 (strongly agree).

Model	1	2
	Binary	Continuous
Exposure's effect	0.020	0.014
	(0.034)	(0.020)
Candidate FE	yes	yes
Municipality FE	yes	yes
Election FE	yes	yes
N	1,318	1,318
Clusters	273	273

I finally replicate the analysis on another dataset measuring candidates' support for establishing reception centers in their municipality by using the question *If the state offers the establishment of a reception center for asylum seekers in my municipality, the offer has to be accepted* of the daily newspaper Helsingin Sanomat and find similar effects, irrespective of the markedly smaller sample size consisting of parliamentary candidates (who also have higher party discipline than municipal candidates). The inclusion of only parliamentary candidates comes from the fact that the question was only asked in the 2015 national election VAA but it was repeatedly asked in the 2017 municipal election VAA.

Table F7: Shift on the candidate's answer to the question "If the state offers the establishment of a reception center for asylum seekers in my municipality, the offer has to be accepted" between 2015–2017, scale 1 (Fully opposed)–5(Fully supportive).

Model	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	All	KOK	SDP	KESK	PS	VIHR	VAS	SFP	KD
Exposure's effect	0.206**	0.396**	0.264	0.320**	0.102*	−0.028	−0.117	−0.064	0.200
on refugee stance	(0.049)	(0.175)	(0.194)	(0.135)	(0.052)	(0.057)	(0.163)	(0.130)	(0.130)
Candidate FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Election FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
N	439	67	64	47	54	67	51	10	44
Clusters	124	45	41	40	42	45	37	8	35

Note: Models 1–9 present OLS regression with clustered standard errors in parentheses. Model 1: all parties. Model 2: Social Democrats. Model 3: National Coalition. Model 4: Center Party. Model 5: Finns' party. Model 6: Green League. Model 7: Left Alliance. Model 8: Swedish People's Party. Model 9: Christian Democrats.
$^{**}p < 0.05$ $^{*}p < 0.05$

G Additional information

G.1 Information regarding coding text analysis

The analysis of the open-ended survey questions was carried out in the following way using the 2017 VAA answers:

To be able to compare the responses, I have only kept candidates that a) have filled in the VAA item concerning refugees (*My municipality should receive refugees that have been granted asylum in Finland*) in 2017 b) have supported refugee intake c) have left a comment elaborating why they support refugee intake. All this was to ensure that the candidates would be as comparable across categories as possible. This resulted in an N of $5,547$.

The open-ended comments on the refugee related VAA item were first tokenized and the occurence of each word in the dataset led to it being recorded as a possible word in the database. Next, each word was assigned to one of the following pre-determined categories: "population", "duty and help", "jobs" and "experience". If a word did not fit in one of these categories, it was classified as "other" and it was dropped from the analysis. The categories consisted of the following words and their related forms: Population: "väki", "väestö", "asukas" and "befolkning". Help and duty: "ansvar", "hjälpa", "auttaa", "vastuu", "velvoite", "velvollisuus". Experience: "kokemus", "erfarenhet", Job: "työ", "job".

A column in the dataset identified one of the pre-determined categories: population, duty and help, jobs, and experience. If the candidate' answer contained at least one word in one of the identified categories, this column got the value of 1, if not, the value was zero. Next, I added up the unique occurrences of each category in the answers in the four following groups: rural and treated, rural and non treated, non-rural and treated and non-rural and non treated and divided this sum by the total number of candidates in each category to get the percentage of candidates that evoked a certain theme in each group.

"Rural" was defined according to the official definition of Statistics Finland: if both its rural density was less than 60 and its population was less than $15,000$. This is the definition that is used across the paper[50].

The overall direction of the results (rural areas raising population more than urban areas and urban areas raising the issue of humanitarian duty more than rural areas) remains the same irrespective of what way the data are classified and compared. If anything, the current classification mode is a conservative estimate of the times the issues were raised, because there are other instances where candidates talk about demographic problems without using the word "population": for example when they use the terms "elderly demographics" or "increase the share of youth". However, in order to avoid false positives, these terms are not counted as population, making the text analysis a lower bound estimate of the politicians's open ended answers.

G.2 Information regarding the allocation of reception centers

In what follows, I only discuss the circumstances of the treatment in municipalities without any previous experience of asylum seeker activities, because these 22 pre-treated units are always dropped from the analysis.

To further meet housing pressure, the Immigration Office requested 25 premises that were municipally owned. In this the Finnish Minister of Interior requested the municipality to comply

[50]The nomenclature of territorial units for statistics, NUTS, used by the European Union is not usable for the purposes of this analysis because the smallest NUTS region 3 is not small enough the distinguish between most Finnish municipalities.

with the assigned housing responsibilities in exceptional circumstances by having a simple procedure of accepting the reception center as a matter of procedure by the municipal board – some municipalities were so divided about this issue, that the council wanted to vote about it. In one case, Kaustinen, the municipality managed to intervene this way, in the other cases the municipality complied with either a bureaucratic procedure by the municipal board or after divided voting procedures in the council where the vote was tight.[51] The Immigration Office identified only one municipality, Tampere, that was actively volunteering to take asylum seekers. However, to minimize the chance of self-selection corrupting my estimates, I have identified 15 cases, where the process was smooth and straightforward as potentially self-selective and drop them from the analysis together with the one municipality that opted out. None of these procedures affects the results. Furthermore, I check whether receiving asylum seekers through private or public housing makes a difference in robustness checks and establish that the results are similar.

The municipalities that were treated without asking for the municipality's consent were: Akaa, Asikkala, Eurajoki, Forssa, Haapajävi, Hamina, Hanko, Harjavalta, Hartola, Heinola, Huittinen, Hyvinkää, Iisalmi, Ilomantsi, Inkoo, Joutsa, Jyväskylä, Jämijärvi, Jämsä, Kangasala, Kankaanpää, Kauhava, Kempele, Keuruu, Kihniö, Kirkkonummi, Kitee, Kokemäki, Kolari, Kontiolahti, Kuusamo, Lahti, Laitila, Lappajärvi, Lieksa, Maalahti, Merikarvia, Muhos, Nurmijärvi, Orimattila, Oulu, Parainen, Parikkala, Pertunmaa, Raahe, Raasepori, Ranua, Rauma, Rovaniemi, Ruokolahti, Saarijärvi, Salo, Sastamala, Savonlinna, Seinäjoki, Siilinjärvi, Sipoo, Siuntio, Suonenjoki, Vantaa, Vihti, Viitasaari, Ylivieska, Ylöjärvi, and Äänekoski.

The municipalities that said yes to receiving a reception center through the municipal board agreeing to the state's request on a quick procedure: Jyväskylä (Second center), Kangasala, Keitele, Kemijärvi, Kuopio, Loimaa, Mikkeli, Orivesi, Pieksämäki, Pori, Porvoo, Pukkila, Pälkäne, Ruovesi, Tampere, and Tervola.

The municipalities where the matter was taken to the city council to vote and where the outcome was positive after debate with opposition: Hämeenkyrö, Kyyjärvi, Liminka, Petäjävesi, and Tornio.

The municipalities where the matter was taken to the city council to vote and where the outcome was negative: Kaustinen.

The municipalities where the matter was taken to the city council to vote and where the outcome was positive with little or no opposition: Hyrynsalmi, Inkoo (second center), and Korsnäs.

A special case is Espoo, that saw the establishment of four big private reception centers, but which falls into to the category of "pre-treated" because the Finnish Lutheran Church had been administering a reception center for under-age asylum-seekers pre-2015. Technically this makes Espoo pre-treated but in practice the scale of the operation changes so dramatically that it could be also listed as privately treated. In the regression models I have dropped Espoo to make the estimates more conservative, but in the text analysis I have kept it to increase the N.

[51] In one case, Petäjävesi, the council required three rounds of votes until the municipality decided to offer only one of the two premises requested by the state. In some cases the compliance depended on one vote, thus making compliance as-if-random.

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