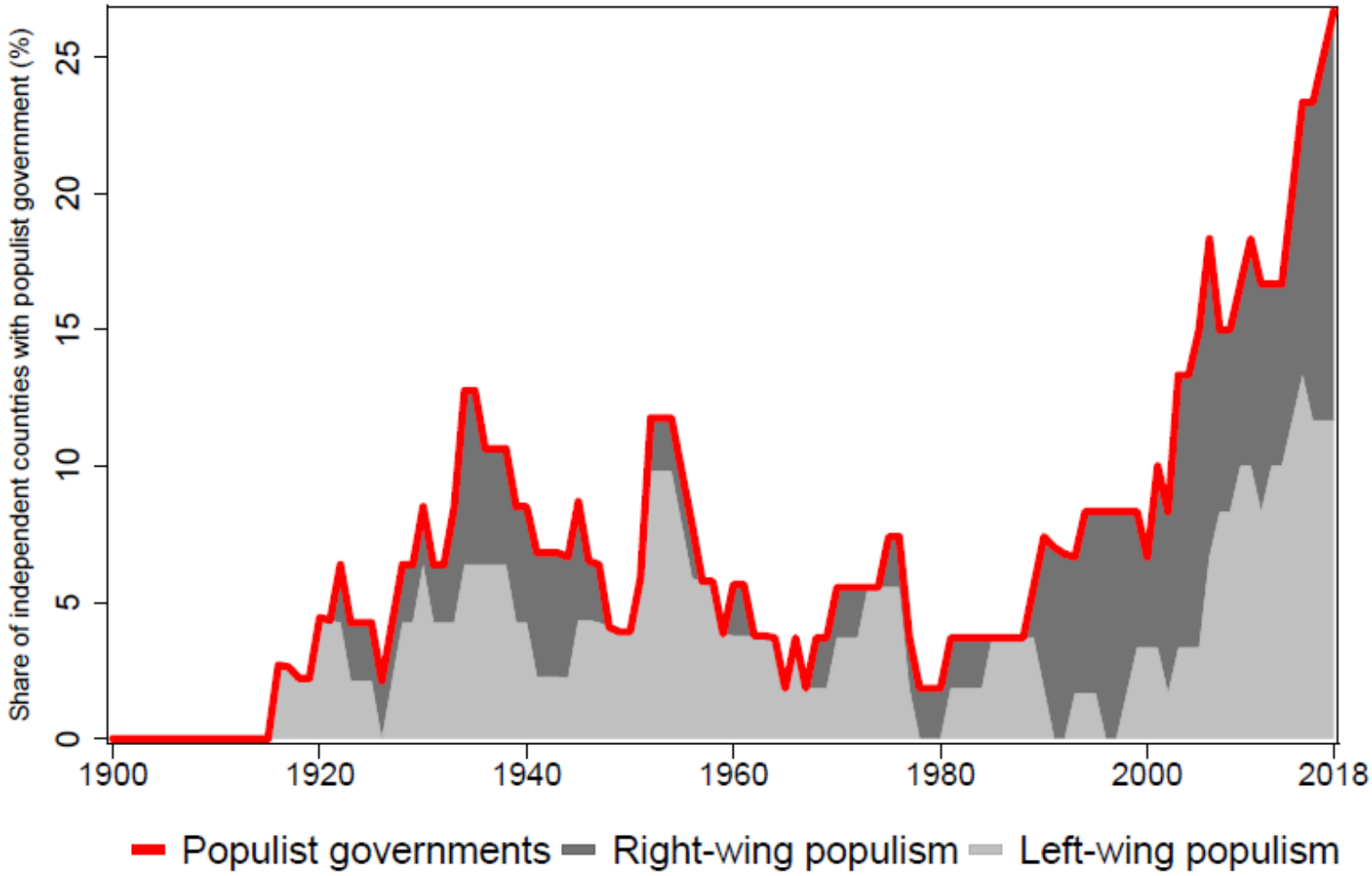
Pro-Social Backlash: The Effect of Far-Right Success on Voluntary Welfare Provision

Massimo Pulejo
University of Milan and CLEAN

"L'Europa che Vorremmo"
Bocconi University
Milan, May 17, 2024

Increasing Success of Populists



Source: Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022

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- Weak evidence of backlash to far-right success, limited to opinions (Bischof and Wagner, 2019; Fahey et al., 2022; Dennison and Kustov, 2023)

But Could There be More?

The New York Times

Lawyers Mobilize at Nation's Airports After Trump's Order

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▸ What Parties Are Far Right? ▸ Where Does Far Right Run?

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▸ What Is "Social Welfare"?

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Non-parametric optimal bandwidth w/ robust, bias-corrected SEs.
(Calonico et al., 2014)

▸ Descriptive Statistics ▸ List of Control Variables ▸ Identification Checks

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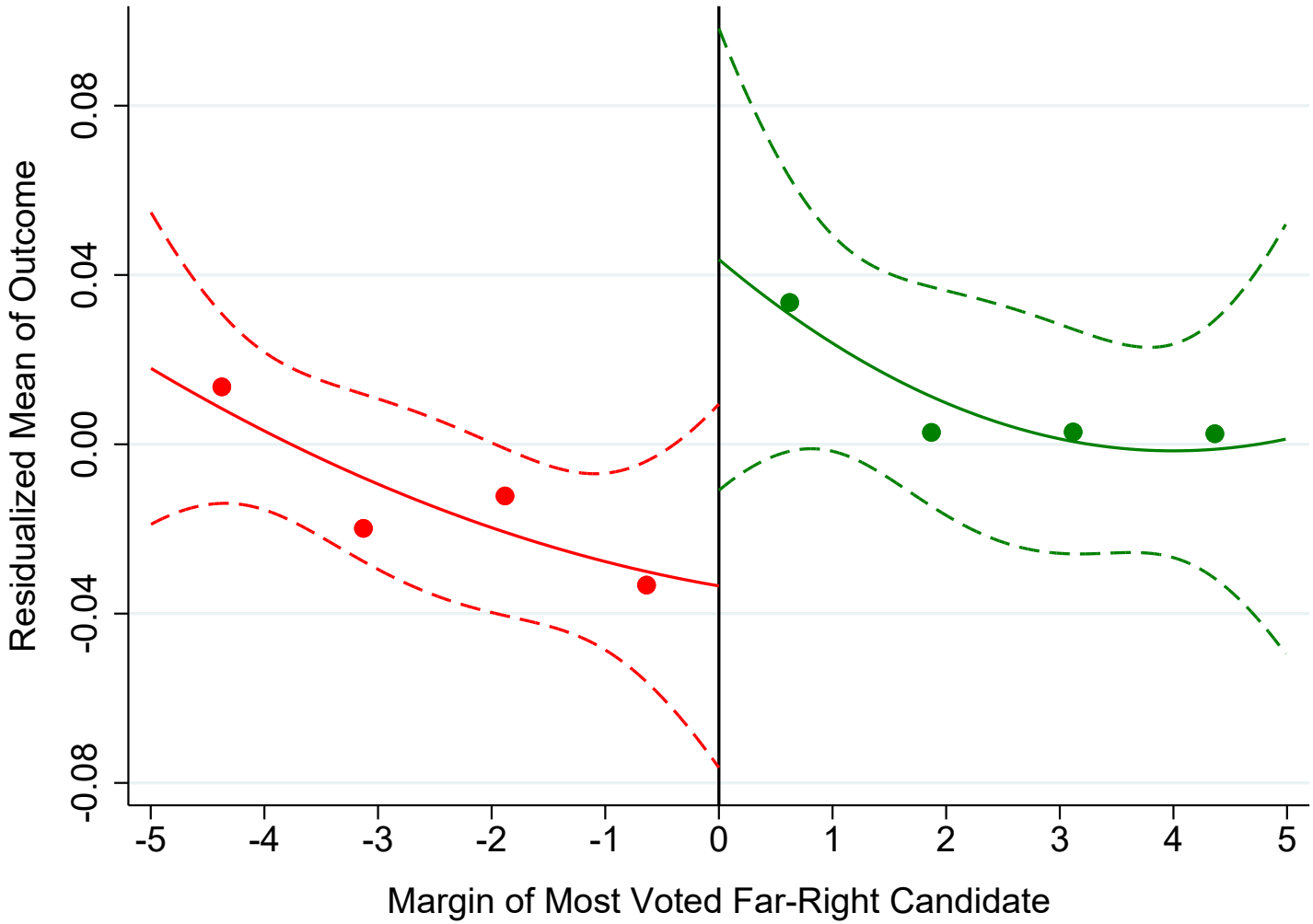

11.4% Growth in Volunteering Associations

DV: ΔOdV x 1,000 inhabitants in municipality *i* over term *t*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Far-Right Victory	.063*** (.017)	.066*** (.018)	.061*** (.020)	.074*** (.022)	.067*** (.023)	.074*** (.025)
Mean OdV Stock	.58	.58	.54	.56	.57	.55
Polynomial	1st	1st	2nd	2nd	3rd	3rd
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bandwidth	11.49	11.62	19.74	16.10	26.99	21.93
Effective N	876	858	1,436	1,155	1,849	1,505
N Left	477	466	822	649	1,090	865
N Right	399	392	614	506	759	640

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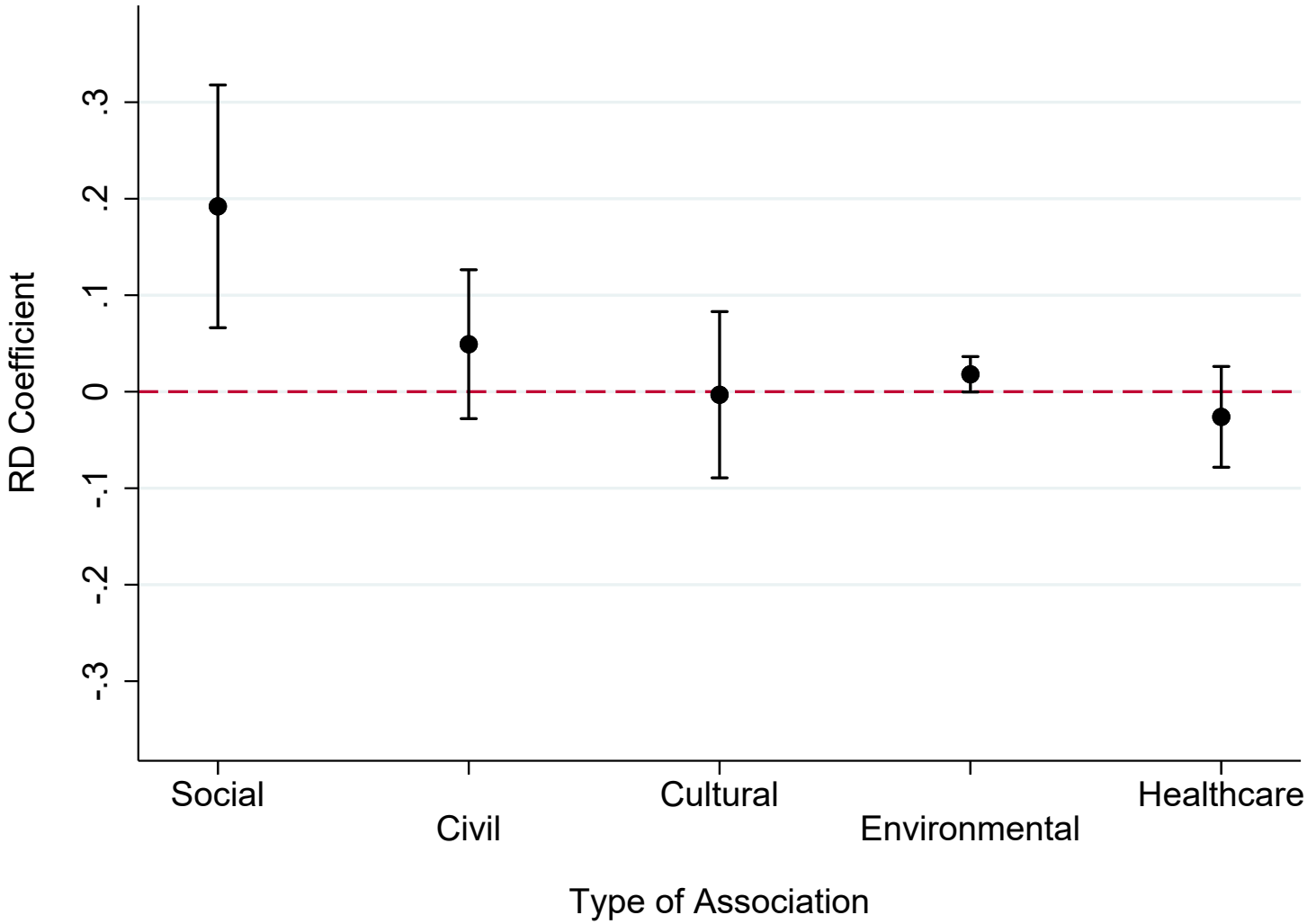

▸ Table for Social Welfare OdV

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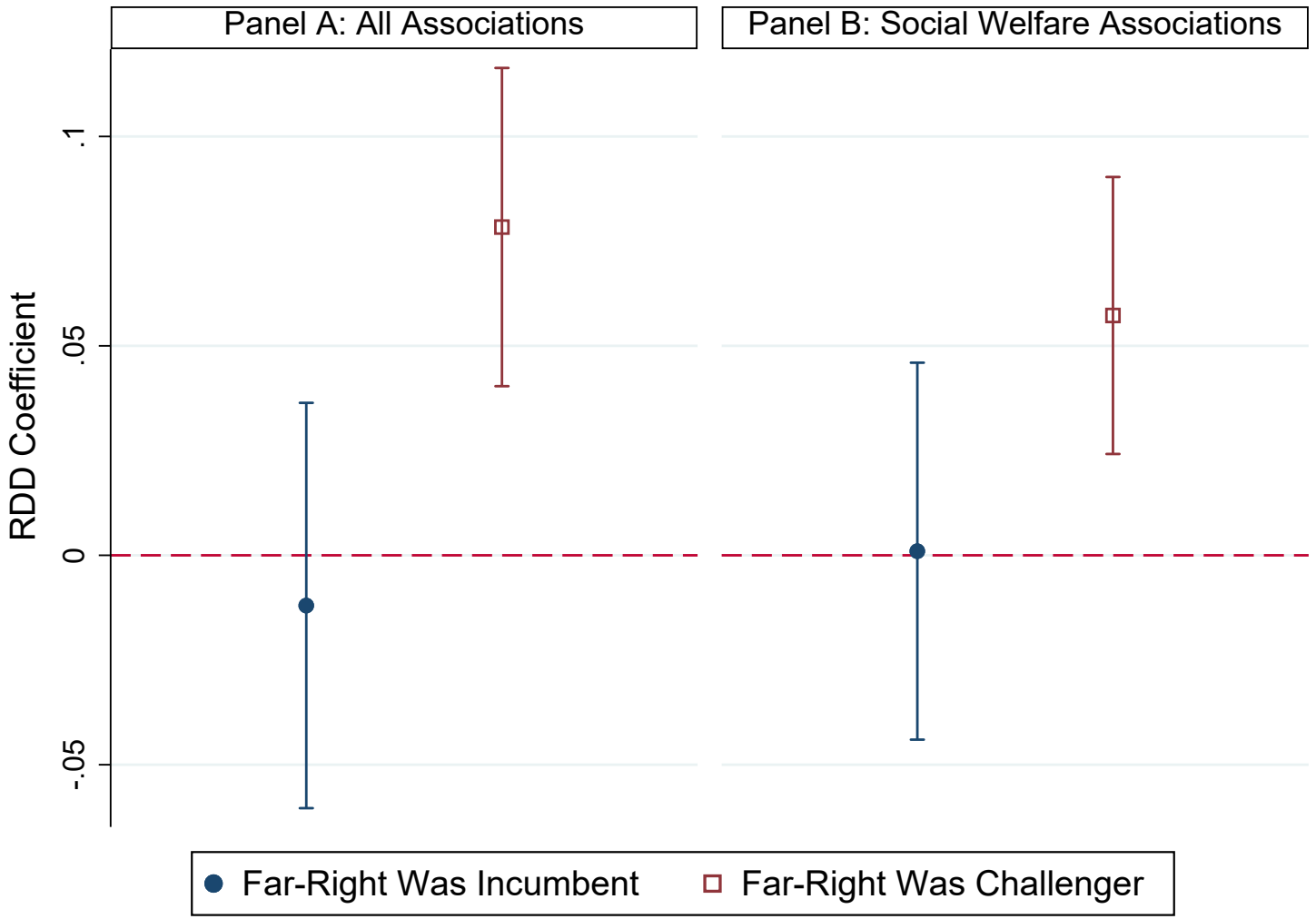

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▸ Descriptive Statistics ▸ Post-Treatment Bias?

Left-Leaning Individuals Behind Aggregate Effect

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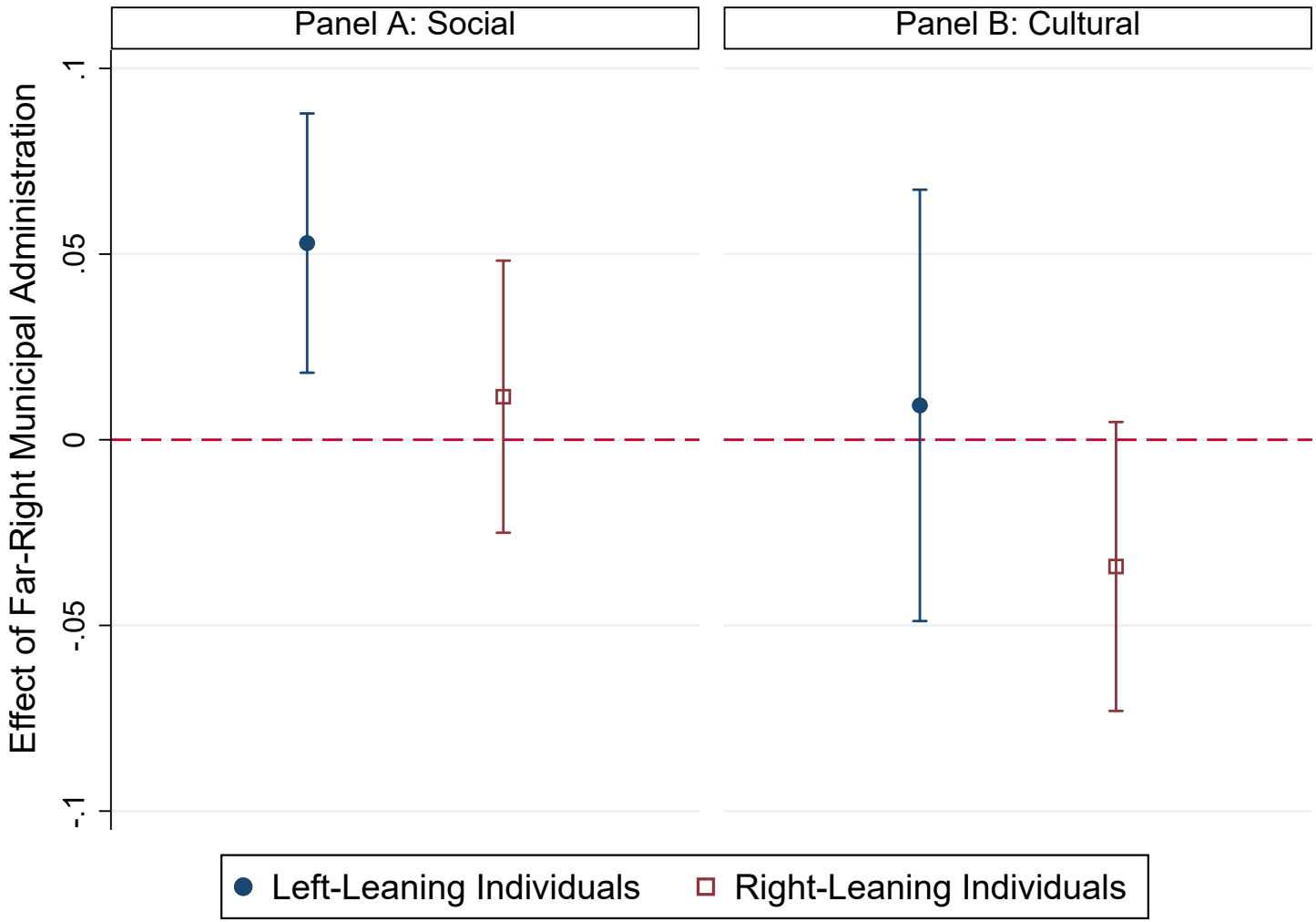

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- Future research should use panel surveys to track link b/w attitudinal and behavioral reactions.

Thank You!

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Robustness Checks and Alternative Explanations

Large battery of tests, with reassuring results:

1. No Effects for Other Parties ▸ Go
2. Placebo w/ Lagged Outcome ▸ Go
3. Placebo w/ Irrelevant Cutoffs ▸ Go
4. Alternative Bandwidths ▸ Go
5. Outcomes in Percentage Change ▸ Go
6. Not Byproduct of Political Mobilization ▸ Go

Countermobilization in the US (1)

The New York Times

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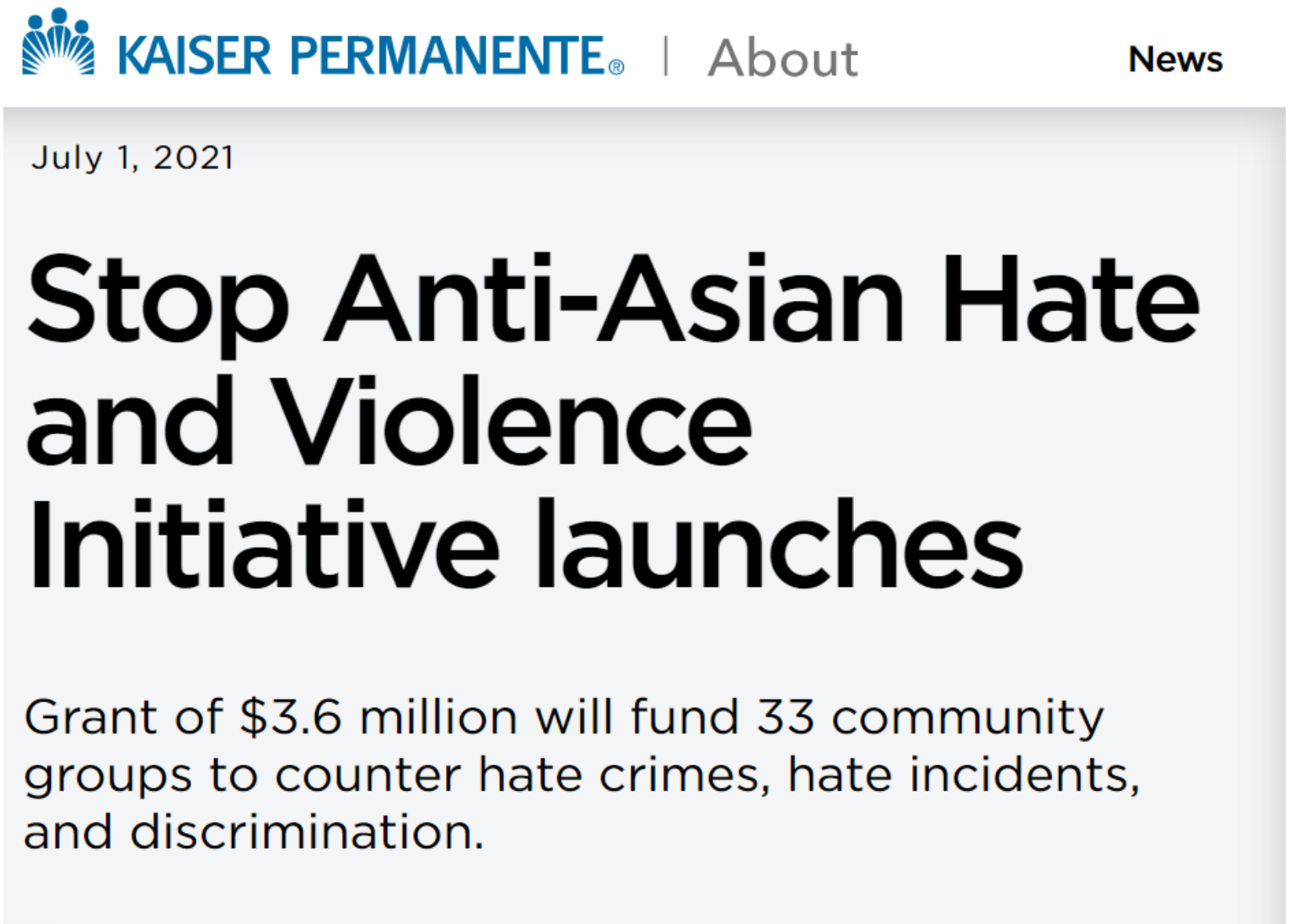
Back

Countermobilization in the US (2)



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July 1, 2021

Stop Anti-Asian Hate and Violence Initiative launches

Grant of $3.6 million will fund 33 community groups to counter hate crimes, hate incidents, and discrimination.

Countermobilization in Hungary

FRANCE 24

HUNGARY

Volunteers defy Hungarian govt to welcome migrants

Countermobilization in Poland

Polish volunteers helping refugees struggle against government's hostility and public indifference

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JL

Jacek Lepiarz, Deutsche Welle
2022.09.23 17:30

List of Far-Right Parties

Alleanza Nazionale
Alternativa Sociale Mussolini
Azione Sociale Mussolini
Casapound Italia
Fiamma Tricolore
Forza Nuova
Fratelli d'Italia
La Destra
Lega Nord
Lega Salvini Premier
Movimento Sociale Tricolore
Movimento Sociale Italiano - Destra Nazionale
Noi Con Salvini

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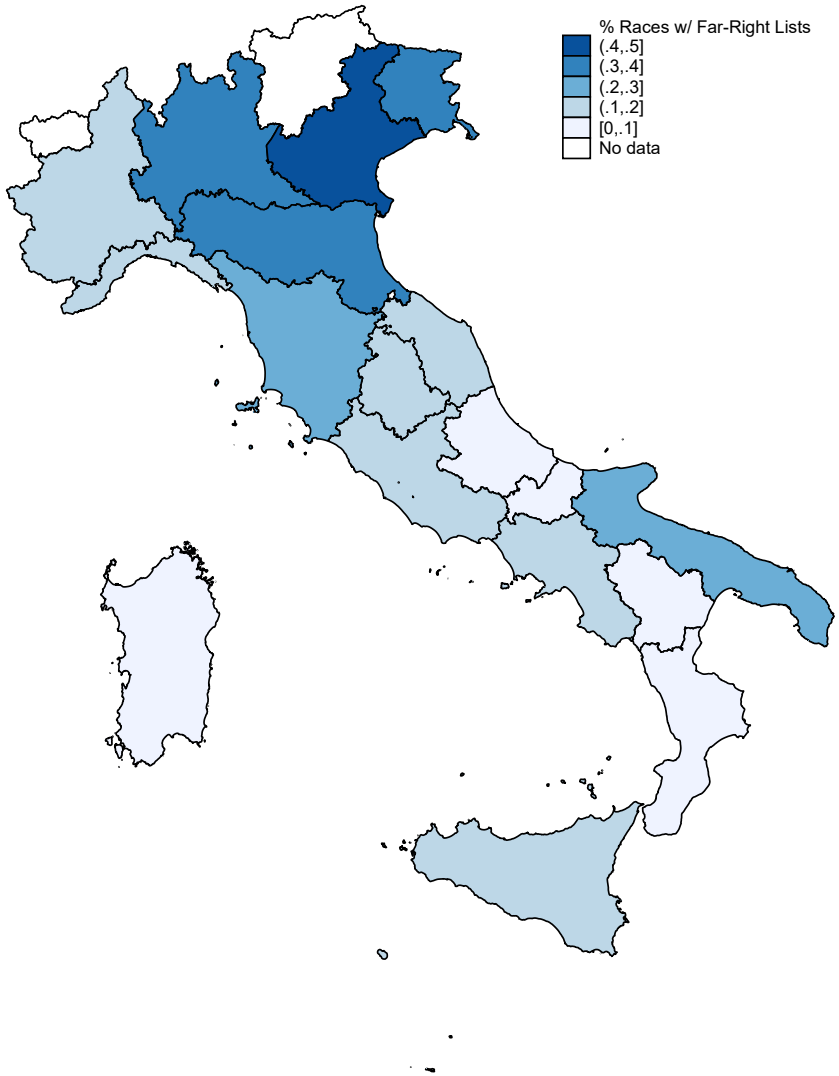
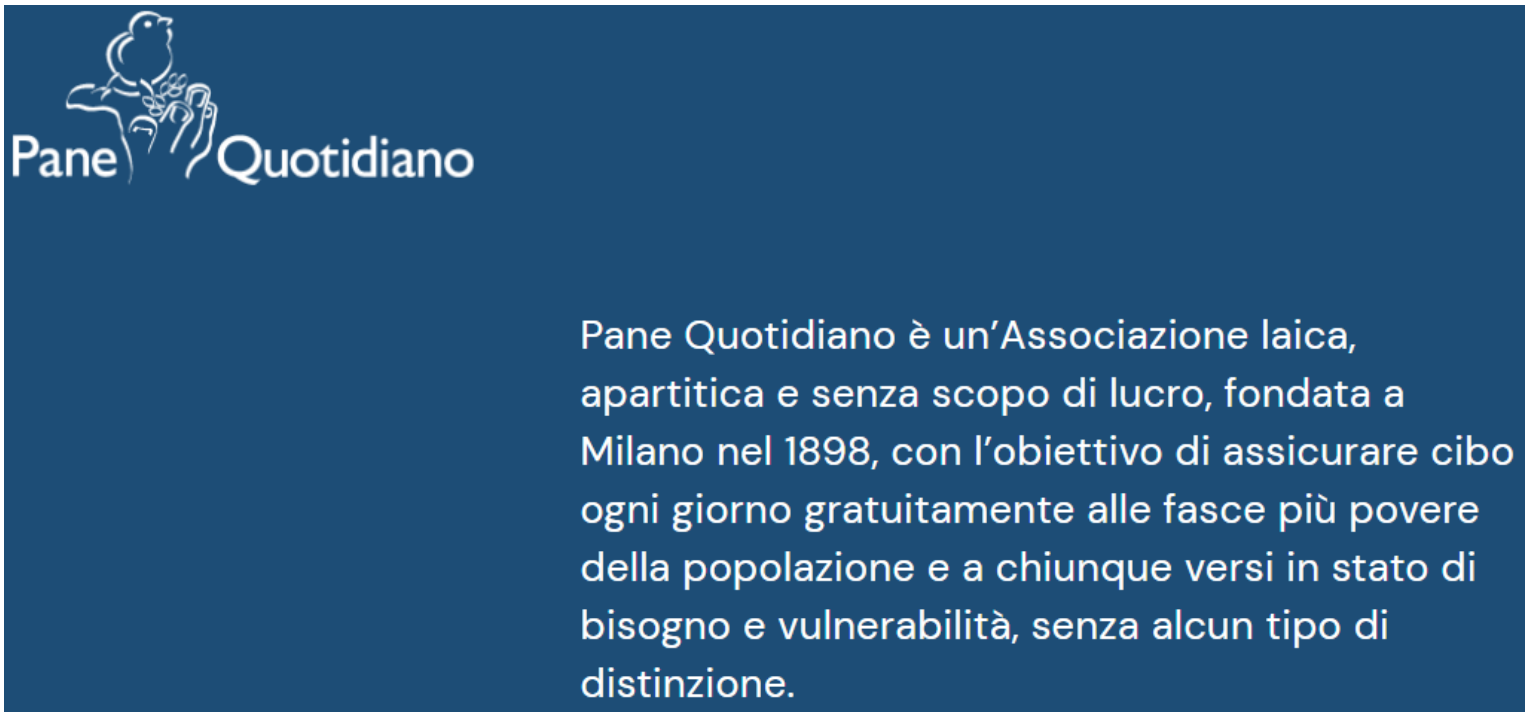
Geography of Far-Right Presence



What Does "Social Welfare" Mean?



Back

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ASSOCIAZIONE ARCOBALENO

HOME CHI SIAMO COSA FACCI

Corso di italiano per migranti adulti

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▸ Back

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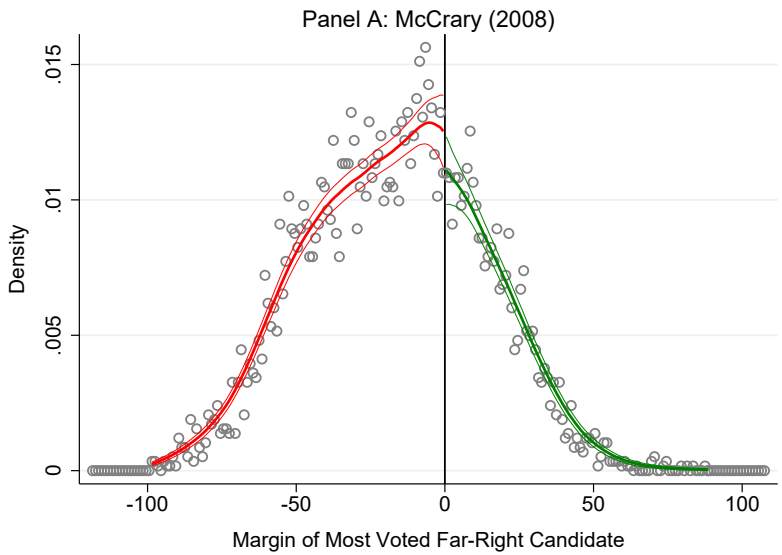

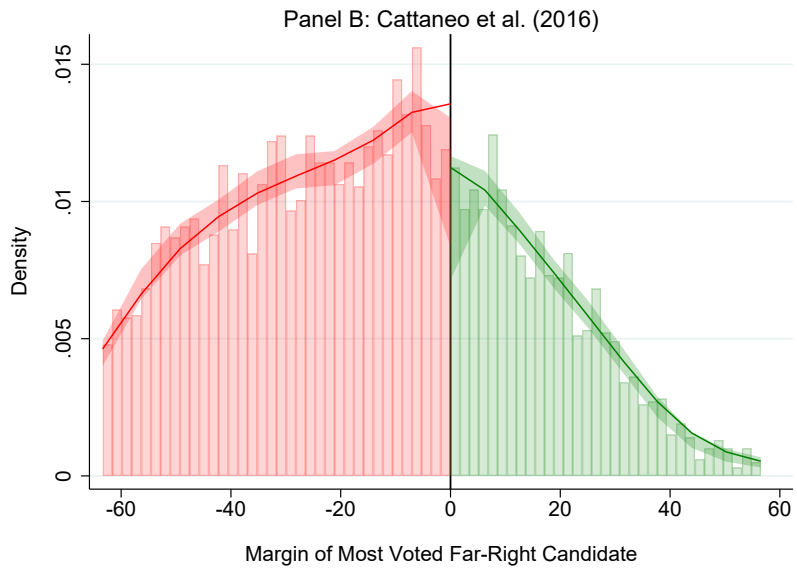

▸ Back

Balance Checks

Dependent Variable	*Log of Surface*	*Log of Longitude*	*Log of Latitude*	*Log of Elevation*	*Province Capital*
Far-Right Victory	.013 (.068)	-.000 (.002)	.000 (.000)	-.034 (.091)	.013 (.021)
Dependent Variable	*Log Distance Capital*	*Log of Population*	*Log Foreign 100 Inhab.*	*Had SPRAR*	*Opened SPRAR*
Far-Right Victory	.021 (.043)	.013 (.093)	-.015 (.032)	-.017 (.033)	-.020 (.037)
Dependent Variable	*Average Age*	*% High School*	*Unempl. Rate*	*Youth Unemprate*	*% Agriculture*
Far-Right Victory	.725*** (.208)	.004 (.005)	-.001 (.002)	.001 (.005)	-.006 (.004)
Dependent Variable	*% Industry*	*Incumbent Age*	*Incumbent Male*	*Incumbent Education*	*Incumbent Local*
Far-Right Victory	-.002 (.008)	1.919 (1.243)	-.020 (.036)	.015 (.230)	-.070 (.060)
Dependent Variable	*Incumbent NatParty*	*Incumbent AlignNat*	*Incumbent AlignReg*	*Incumbent Far Right*	*Incumbent Left*
Far-Right Victory	-.027 (.008)	-.021 (1.243)	-.008 (.036)	-.044 (.230)	-.017 (.045)
Dependent Variable	*Council Size*	*Board Size*	*Runoff System*	*Turnout Rate*	*% Center Right*
Far-Right Victory	.462 (.551)	.161 (.154)	.098** (.045)	-.001 (.003)	-.005 (.006)

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Test: Use other politicians' characteristics at t as outcome of the RDD, trying to spot possible imbalances.

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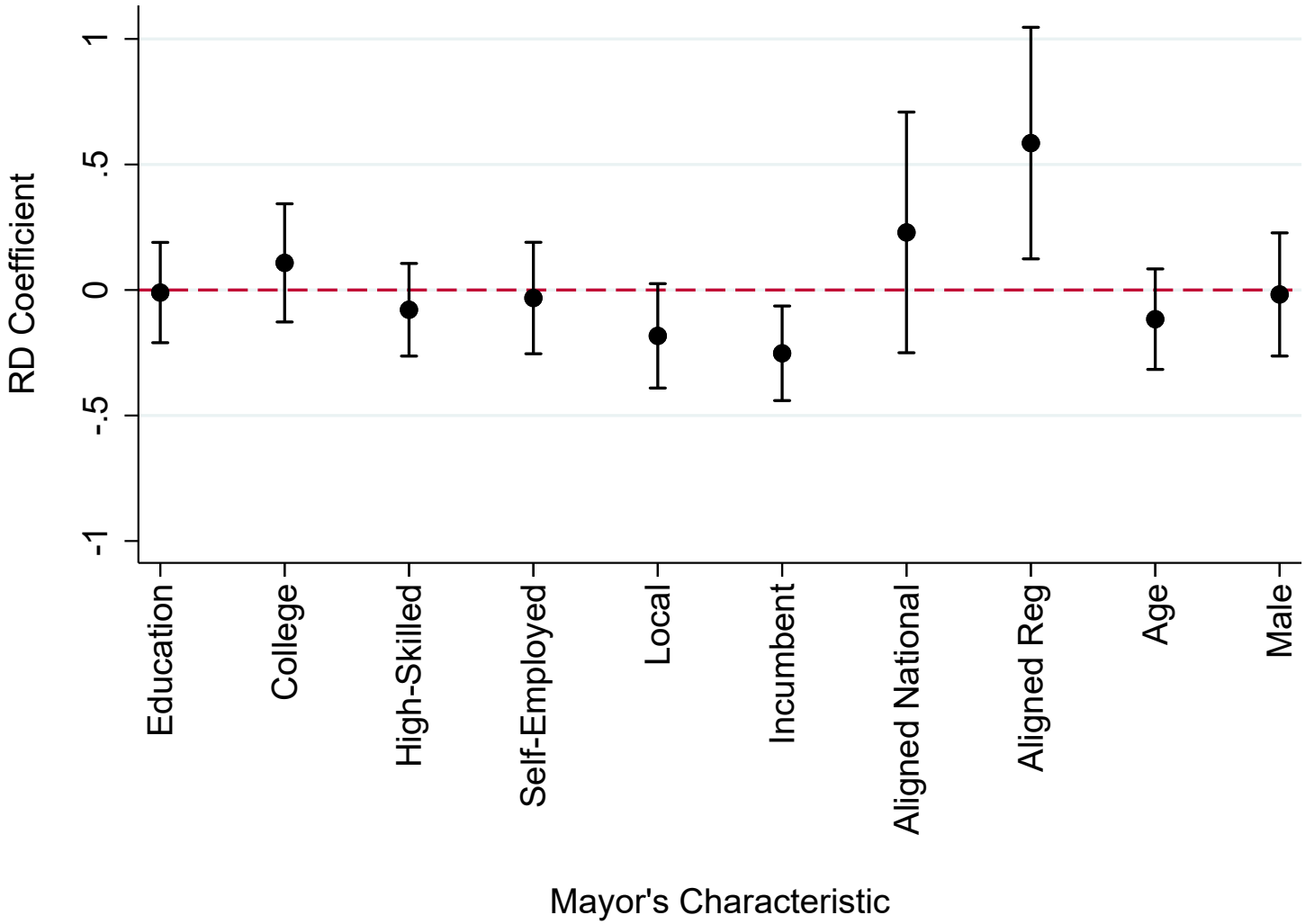

Irrelevance of Politician's Characteristics in Close Races

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Test: Compare performance of far-right candidates to performance of other candidates in races *predicted to be exogenously close*.

Open-Seat Elections are More Competitive

DV: Margin of victory of mayor in municipality i at election t.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Incumbent Has Term Limit	-.054*** (.004)	-.053*** (.004)	-.054*** (.004)	-.054*** (.004)	-.057*** (.005)	-.056*** (.005)
Observations	12,399	12,110	12,384	12,095	12,131	11,839
Municipality FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election-Year FEs	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Region x Year FEs	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Province x Year FEs	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Far Right not Doing Better in Open-Seat Elections

DV: Vote share of top far-right candidate in municipality i at election t.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Incumbent Has Term Limit	-.000 (.008)	-.002 (.008)	-.000 (.008)	-.002 (.008)	.000 (.008)	-.002 (.008)
Observations	11,391	11,190	11,389	11,188	11,383	11,222
Municipality FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election-Year FES	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Region x Year FEs	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Province x Year FEs	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

▸ Results for Far Right Winning ▸ Back

Open-Seat Elections and Far-Right Victories

DV: Far-right candidate winning in municipality i at election t.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Incumbent Has Term Limit	.010 (.021)	.006 (.021)	.010 (.021)	.006 (.021)	.010 (.022)	.005 (.022)
Observations	11,391	11,190	11,389	11,188	11,383	11,222
Municipality FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election-Year FES	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Region x Year FEs	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Province x Year FEs	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

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Absence of Compensating Differentials

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4.b **Absence of Compensating Differentials:**
No other characteristic ensuring that candidates supported by the far right end up in a close race is affecting the net growth of OdV in a municipality.

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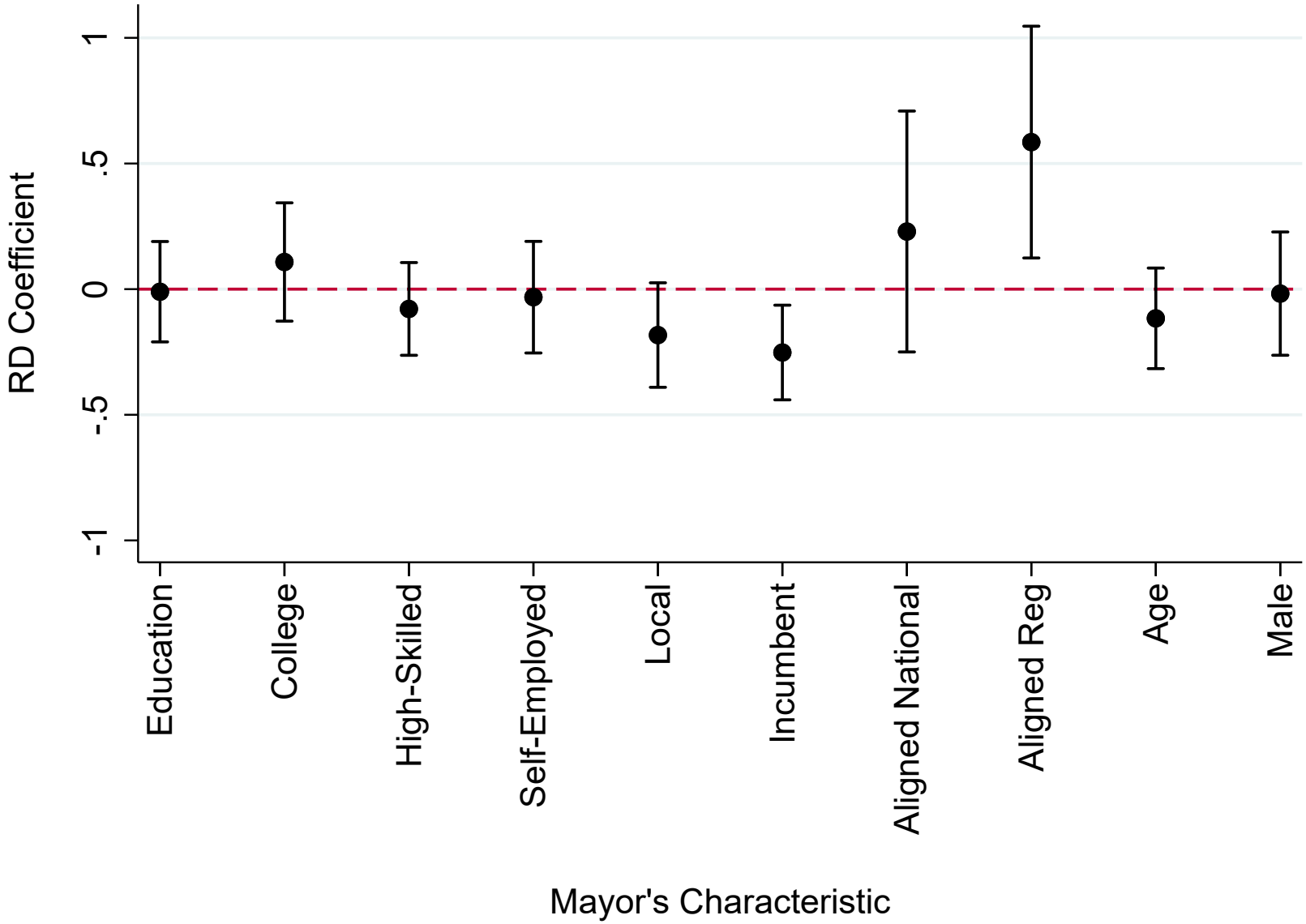
No other characteristic ensuring that candidates supported by the far right end up in a close race is affecting the net growth of OdV in a municipality.

Test: For imbalanced characteristics, check that they do not affect the outcome(s) of interest.

There Were a Few Imbalances...



...But They Do Not Affect OdV

DV: ΔOdV x 1,000 inhab. in municipality i over term t

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Incumbent's Victory	.017 (.028)	.024 (.030)	.021 (.028)	.016 (.030)	.018 (.029)	.002 (.031)
Polyn. Order	First	First	Second	Second	Third	Third
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Bandwidth	21.88	16.60	21.45	22.32	29.36	28.82
Effective N	4,520	3,477	4,463	4,415	5,517	5,244
N Left	1,240	1,011	1,234	1,191	1,369	1,297
N Right	3,280	2,466	3,229	3,224	4,148	3,947

...But They Do Not Affect OdV

DV: ΔOdV x 1,000 inhab. in municipality *i* over term *t*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Aligned Candidate Victory	.018 (.025)	.015 (.028)	.008 (.033)	.013 (.034)	.000 (.038)	.017 (.040)
Polyn. Order	First	First	Second	Second	Third	Third
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Bandwidth	23.91	17.75	30.65	23.61	37.26	27.64
Effective N	1,966	1,501	2,386	1,880	2,742	2143
N Left	1,108	831	1,385	1,058	1,627	1,231
N Right	858	670	1,001	822	1,115	912

Notes: Alignment with coalition holding national executive power.

...But They Do Not Affect OdV

DV: Change in OdV x 1,000 inhab. in municipality *i* over term *t*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Aligned Candidate Victory	.036 (.035)	.028 (.035)	.029 (.039)	.024 (.041)	.019 (.046)	.021 (.047)
Polyn. Order	First	First	Second	Second	Third	Third
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bandwidth	19.94	16.12	34.35	25.33	42.82	33.44
Effective N	1,293	1,071	1,926	1,523	2,189	1,871
N Left	708	576	1,090	844	1,255	1,058
N Right	585	495	836	679	934	813

Notes: Alignment with coalition holding regional executive power.

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Controlling for Incumbency and Alignment - All Associations

DV: ΔOdV x 1,000 inhab. in municipality *i* over term *t*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Far-Right Victory	.081*** (.018)	.065*** (.017)	.074*** (.021)	.073*** (.021)	.075*** (.023)	.091*** (.026)
Polyn. Order	First	First	Second	Second	Third	Third
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bandwidth	12.13	13.16	17.43	17.17	26.91	19.35
Effective N	910	961	1267	1220	1791	1350
N Left	498	532	720	690	1060	768
N Right	412	429	547	530	731	582

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Controlling for Incumbency and Alignment - Social Welfare Associations

DV: ΔSocial welfare OdV x 1,000 inhab. in municipality *i* over term *t*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Far-Right Victory	.059*** (.016)	.055*** (.016)	.067*** (.019)	.069*** (.019)	.064*** (.020)	.081*** (.024)
Polyn. Order	First	First	Second	Second	Third	Third
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bandwidth	13.91	12.98	18.89	16.47	28.37	19.16
Effective N	1,030	949	1,353	1,166	1,858	1,341
N Left	572	524	770	655	1,108	764
N Right	458	425	583	511	750	577

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Why This Outcome?

$\Delta Y_{i,t}$: Change in volunteering associations x 1,000 inhabitants in municipality i over term after election t.

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Why This Outcome?

$\Delta Y_{i,t}$: Change in volunteering associations x 1,000 inhabitants in municipality i over term after election t.

- One of several possible measures of countermobilization.

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- One of several possible measures of countermobilization.
- Captures the **extensive margin** of local volunteering.

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Why This Outcome?

$\Delta Y_{i,t}$: Change in volunteering associations x 1,000 inhabitants in municipality i over term after election t.

- One of several possible measures of countermobilization.
- Captures the **extensive margin** of local volunteering.
- Crucial, as it represents a particularly **costly and permanent** type of mobilization.

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Summary Statistics

	Whole Sample		*Effective Sample*	
Variable	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Volunteering Associations	10.85	28.93	13.31	36.03
Social Welfare Associations	6.53	17.71	8.60	24.51
Far-Right Administration	.26	.44	.45	.50
Far-Right Margin	-19.55	29.45	-9.25	7.29
Surface (km^2)	43.31	66.86	37.71	60.79
Provincial Capital	.07	.25	.07	.26
North	.75	.43	.85	.36
Center	.10	.30	.06	.24
South	.15	.36	.09	.28
Population	21,429	64,446	23,803	80,479
% Foreign Residents	4.92	7.25	5.77	4.26
Average Age	42.75	3.33	42.36	2.61
Unemployment Rate	8.24	7.09	7.32	5.60
% Employed Agriculture	5.01	5.42	3.87	3.98

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List of Control Variables

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List of Control Variables

- **Municipality Controls:** Log of longitude, latitude, and elevation; indicator for provincial capital, log of distance from regional capital, log of population and of surface in squared kms, log number of foreign residents per 100 inhabitants, average age, % people with secondary education, unemployment rate, % people employed in agriculture, size of the municipal council, size of the municipal executive, turnout and share of the center-right coalition in the most recent general election, and an indicator for whether a runoff was held to elect the mayor.

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List of Control Variables

- **Municipality Controls:** Log of longitude, latitude, and elevation; indicator for provincial capital, log of distance from regional capital, log of population and of surface in squared kms, log number of foreign residents per 100 inhabitants, average age, % people with secondary education, unemployment rate, % people employed in agriculture, size of the municipal council, size of the municipal executive, turnout and share of the center-right coalition in the most recent general election, and an indicator for whether a runoff was held to elect the mayor.
- **Previous Mayor Controls:** Age, gender, and level of education.

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Far-Right Victories and Social Welfare Associations

DV: ΔSocial welfare OdV x 1,000 inhab. in municipality *i* over term *t*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Far-Right Victory	.046*** (.015)	.046*** (.015)	.054*** (.018)	.059*** (.019)	.054*** (.020)	.071*** (.023)
Polyn. Order	First	First	Second	Second	Third	Third
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Effective N	928	933	1,327	1,242	1,895	1,396
Bandwidth	12.10	12.61	17.95	17.21	27.85	19.83
N Left	508	511	754	705	1121	798
N Right	420	422	573	537	774	598

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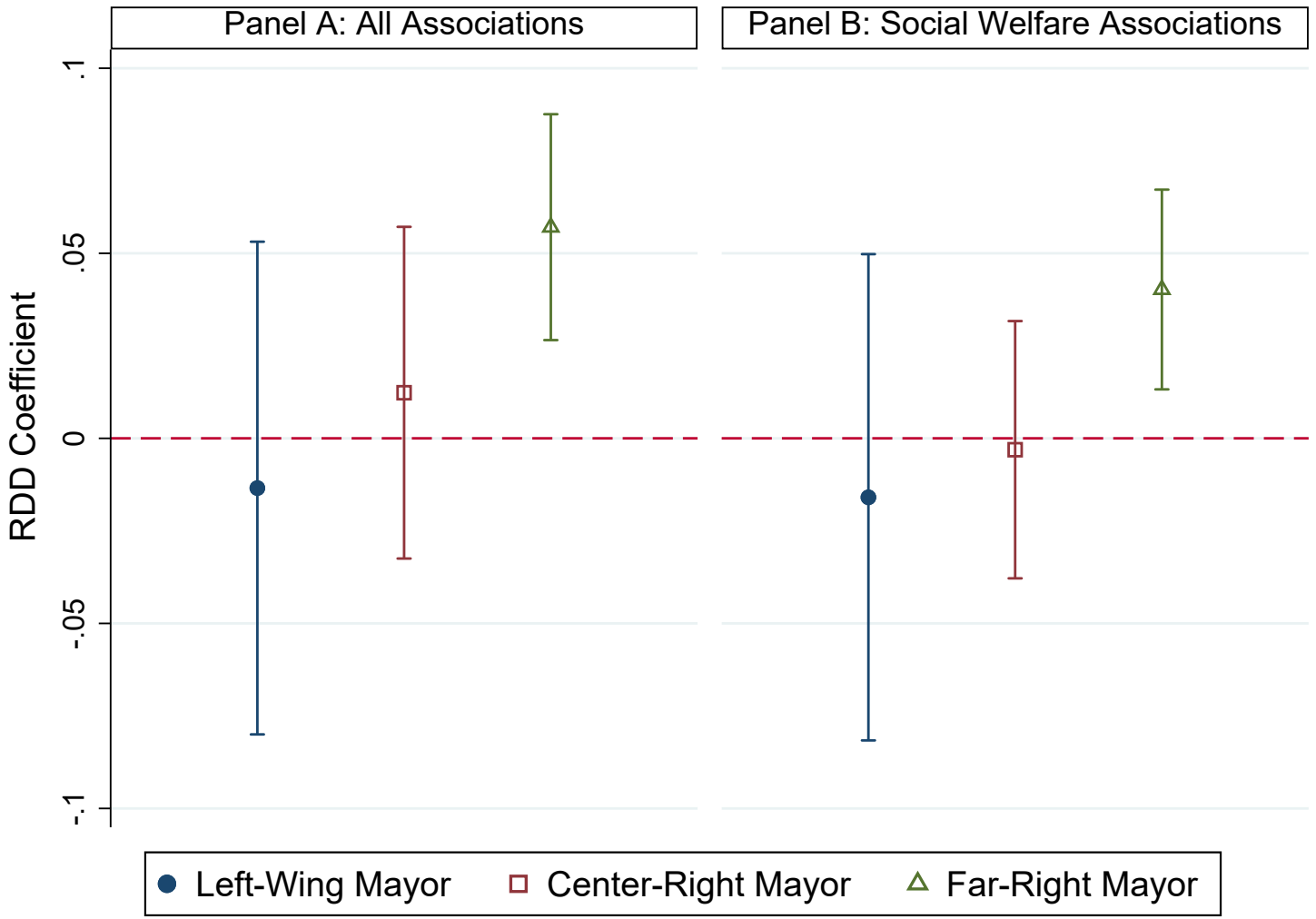
Effect Is Specific to Far-Right Victories



Placebo w/ Lagged Outcome - All Associations

DV: ΔOdV x 1,000 inhab. in municipality i over term $t-1$

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Far-Right Victory	-.018 (.021)	.006 (.022)	.012 (.025)	.050* (.028)	.036 (.030)	.036 (.032)
Polynomial	1st	1st	2nd	2nd	3rd	3rd
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bandwidth	16.03	14.22	20.02	15.90	23.71	14.49
Effective N	697	631	848	685	979	642
N Left	409	365	500	400	592	371
N Right	288	266	348	285	387	271

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Placebo w/ Lagged Outcome - Social Welfare

DV: ΔSocial welfare OdV x 1,000 inhab. in municipality *i* over term t-1

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Far-Right Victory	.015 (.018)	.019 (.018)	.019 (.021)	.021 (.020)	.021 (.022)	.004 (.025)
Polynomial	1st	1st	2nd	2nd	3rd	3rd
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bandwidth	15.29	15.27	23.00	21.17	32.11	13.68
Effective N	677	667	954	876	1,241	608
N Left	398	390	572	519	793	352
N Right	279	277	382	357	448	256

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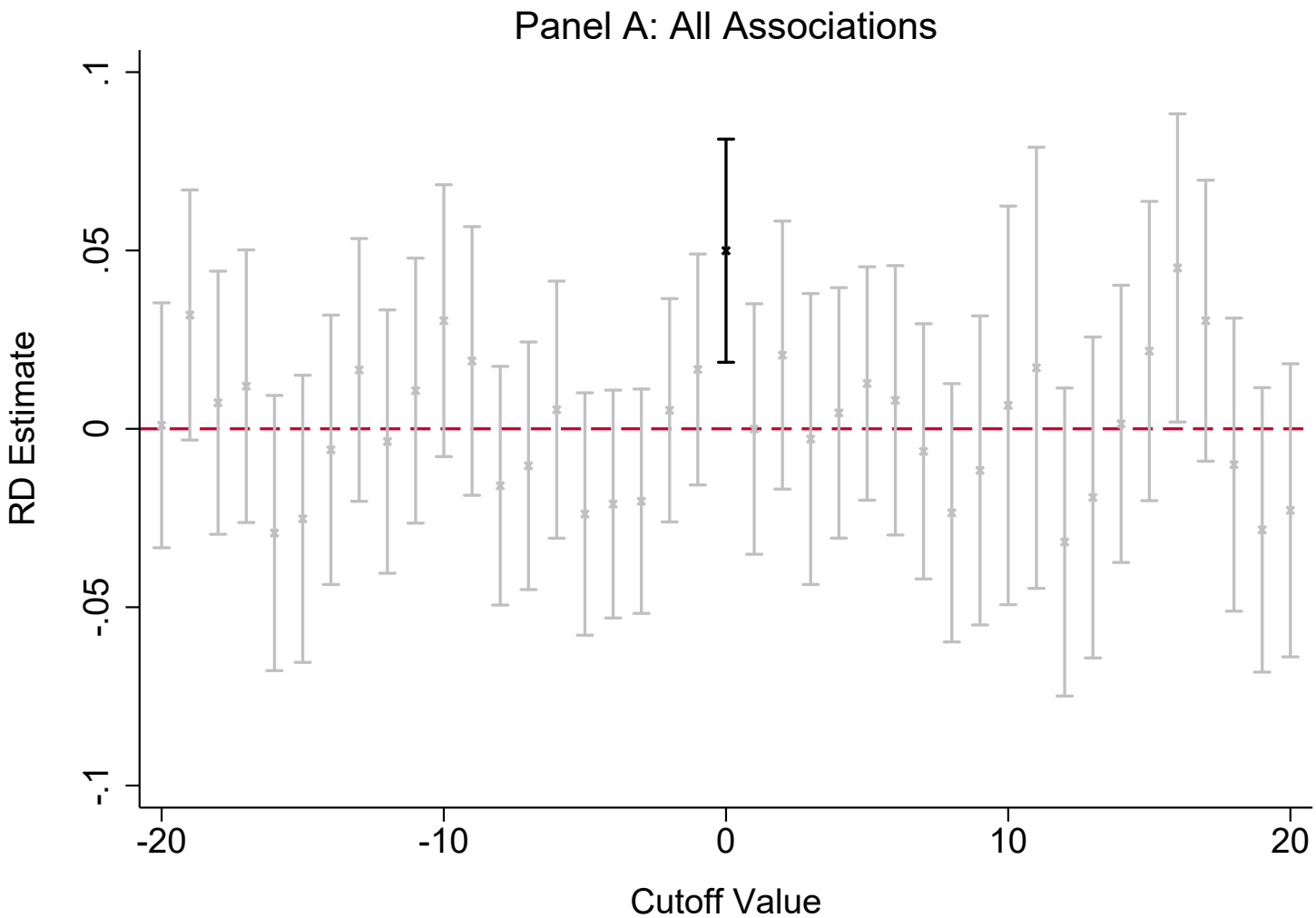
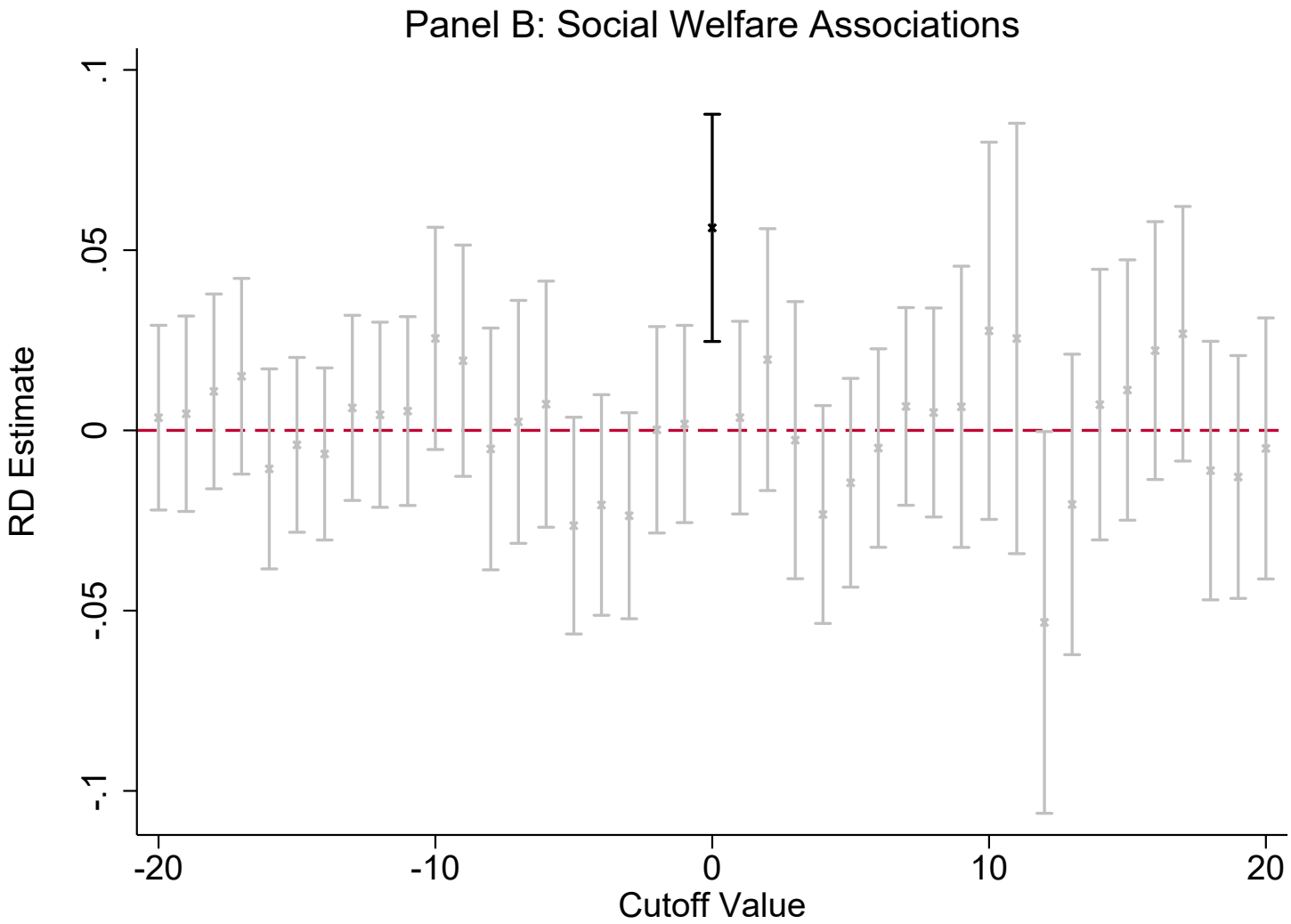
Placebo w/ Irrelevant Cutoffs



Placebo w/ Irrelevant Cutoffs



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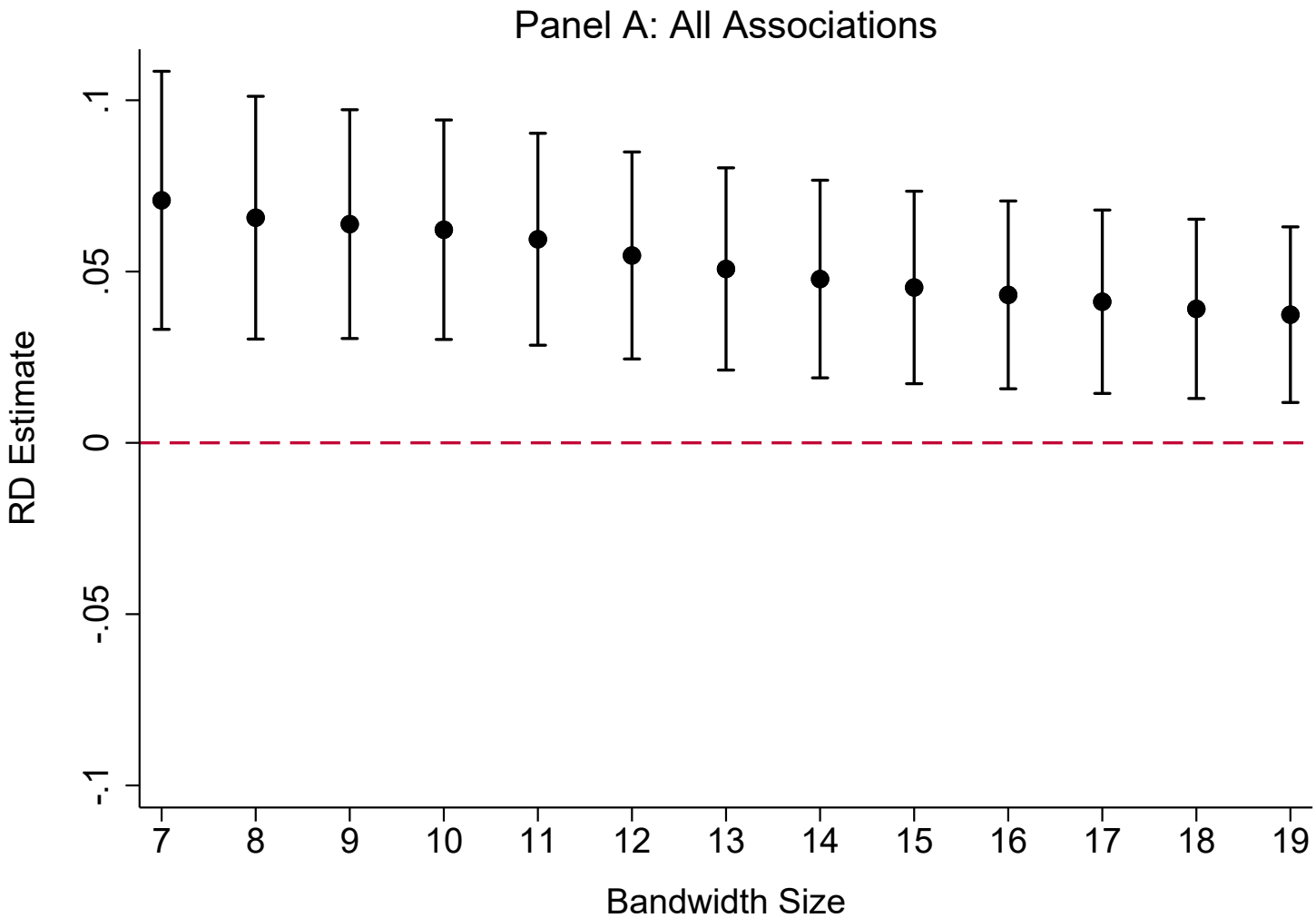
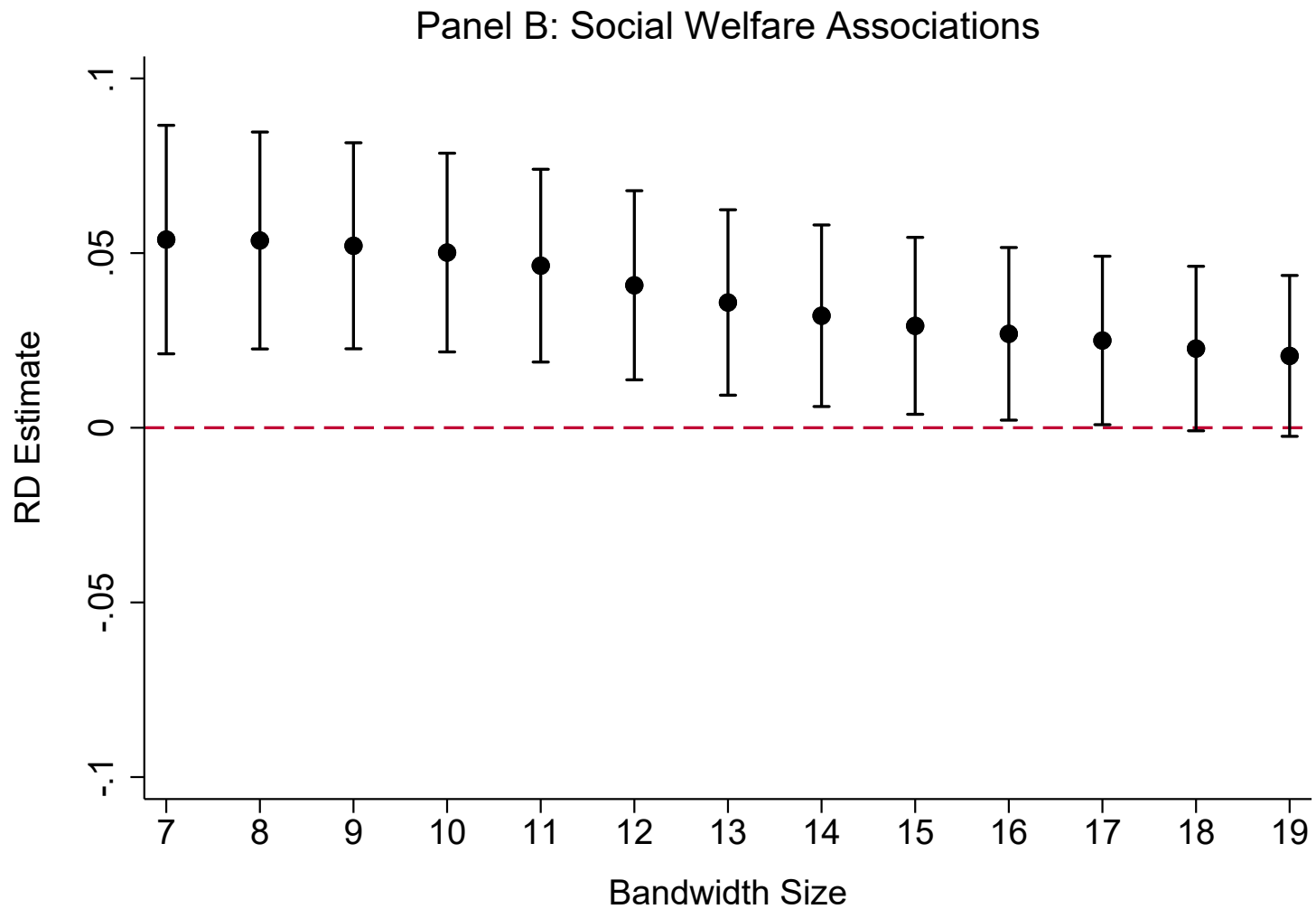
Alternative Bandwidths - All Associations



Alternative Bandwidths - Social Welfare Associations



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Percentage Change - All Associations

DV: ΔOdV x 1,000 inhab. in municipality i over term t

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Far-Right Victory	.135*** (.044)	.180*** (.049)	.156*** (.057)	.165*** (.056)	.158** (.062)	.169** (.071)
Polyn. Order	First	First	Second	Second	Third	Third
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bandwidth	14.85	12.12	17.94	19.43	26.03	16.57
Effective N	1,034	822	1,222	1,266	1,646	1,090
N Left	577	444	688	716	957	609
N Right	457	378	534	550	689	481

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Percentage Change - Social Welfare Associations

DV: ΔSocial welfare OdV x 1,000 inhab. in municipality *i* over term *t*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Far-Right Victory	.156*** (.050)	.194*** (.051)	.169*** (.058)	.223*** (.067)	.165*** (.062)	.193** (.077)
Polyn. Order	First	First	Second	Second	Third	Third
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bandwidth	12.10	10.21	18.18	10.78	27.95	12.60
Effective N	806	673	1,161	706	1,636	812
N Left	433	356	641	375	934	435
N Right	373	317	520	331	702	377

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Alternative Explanations

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Associations could be a way to co-ordinate political response.

(Urvoy, 2020)

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However, at the following election:

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However, at the following election:

1. No increase in lists competing Go

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(Urvoy, 2020)

However, at the following election:

1. No increase in lists competing Go
2. No increase in left-wing lists competing Go

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Alternative Explanations

Associations could be a way to co-ordinate political response.

(Urvoy, 2020)

However, at the following election:

1. No increase in lists competing Go
2. No increase in left-wing lists competing Go
3. No increase in turnout Go

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Associations could be a way to co-ordinate political response.
(Urvoy, 2020)

However, at the following election:

1. No increase in lists competing Go
2. No increase in left-wing lists competing Go
3. No increase in turnout Go
4. No increase in left-wing vote share Go

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No Increase in N. Lists Competing

DV: ΔLists competing in municipality i b/w t and $t+1$

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Far-Right Victory	.231 (.196)	.035 (.200)	.124 (.239)	.001 (.223)	.165 (.247)	-.451 (.313)
Polynomial	1st	1st	2nd	2nd	3rd	3rd
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bandwidth	14.87	13.91	20.07	23.13	31.88	17.87
Effective N	1,518	1,363	1,955	2,103	2,819	1,712
N Left	851	754	1,099	1,193	1,664	960
N Right	667	609	856	910	1,155	752

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No Increase in N. Left-Wing Lists Competing

DV: ΔLeft-wing lists competing in municipality i b/w t and $t+1$

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Far-Right Victory	.045 (.077)	-.017 (.084)	.002 (.100)	-.063 (.109)	.006 (.105)	-.044 (.117)
Polyn. Order	First	First	Second	Second	Third	Third
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bandwidth	17.33	14.91	20.61	17.47	31.35	26.59
Effective N	1734	1462	1993	1675	2784	2341
N Left	970	820	1124	938	1636	1359
N Right	764	642	869	737	1148	982

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No Increase in Turnout

DV: ΔTurnout in municipality i b/w t and $t+1$

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Far-Right Victory	-.002 (.004)	.004 (.005)	.003 (.006)	.003 (.005)	.003 (.006)	.006 (.007)
Polyn. Order	First	First	Second	Second	Third	Third
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bandwidth	19.89	11.75	19.45	24.21	29.24	19.95
Effective N	1,910	1,155	1,874	2,139	2,600	1,842
N Left	1,072	633	1,053	1,225	1,512	1,035
N Right	838	522	821	914	1,088	807

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No Increase in Vote Share of Left-Wing Candidates

DV: ΔVote share of left-wing lists in municipality i b/w t and $t+1$

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Far-Right Victory	-1.137 (1.632)	-1.177 (1.818)	-1.539 (2.045)	-.950 (2.139)	-1.330 (2.473)	-.821 (2.493)
Polyn. Order	First	First	Second	Second	Third	Third
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bandwidth	17.37	13.49	23.06	20.92	28.39	28.09
Effective N	1,736	1,326	2,191	1,940	2,579	2,450
N Left	972	734	1,241	1,096	1,496	1,427
N Right	764	592	950	844	1,083	1,023

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Summary Statistics, ITANES Data

Variable	Mean	SD
Volunteers in Social Welfare	.07	.25
Left-Leaning	.54	.50
Pro-Immigration	.42	.49
Has High-School Diploma	.45	.50
Male	.50	.50
Married	.59	.49
Age	49.60	17.32

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Far-Right Mildly Affecting Attitudes

	Immigration Attitudes			*Political Attitudes*		
	Polarized	Strong Favor	Strong Against	Polarized	Strong Left	Strong Right
Far-Right Victory	-.021 (.028)	-.002 (.022)	.014 (.020)	.030 (.034)	.049* (.027)	-.019 (.023)
Municipality FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Respond. Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municip. Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	8,800	8,800	8,800	8,573	8,573	8,573

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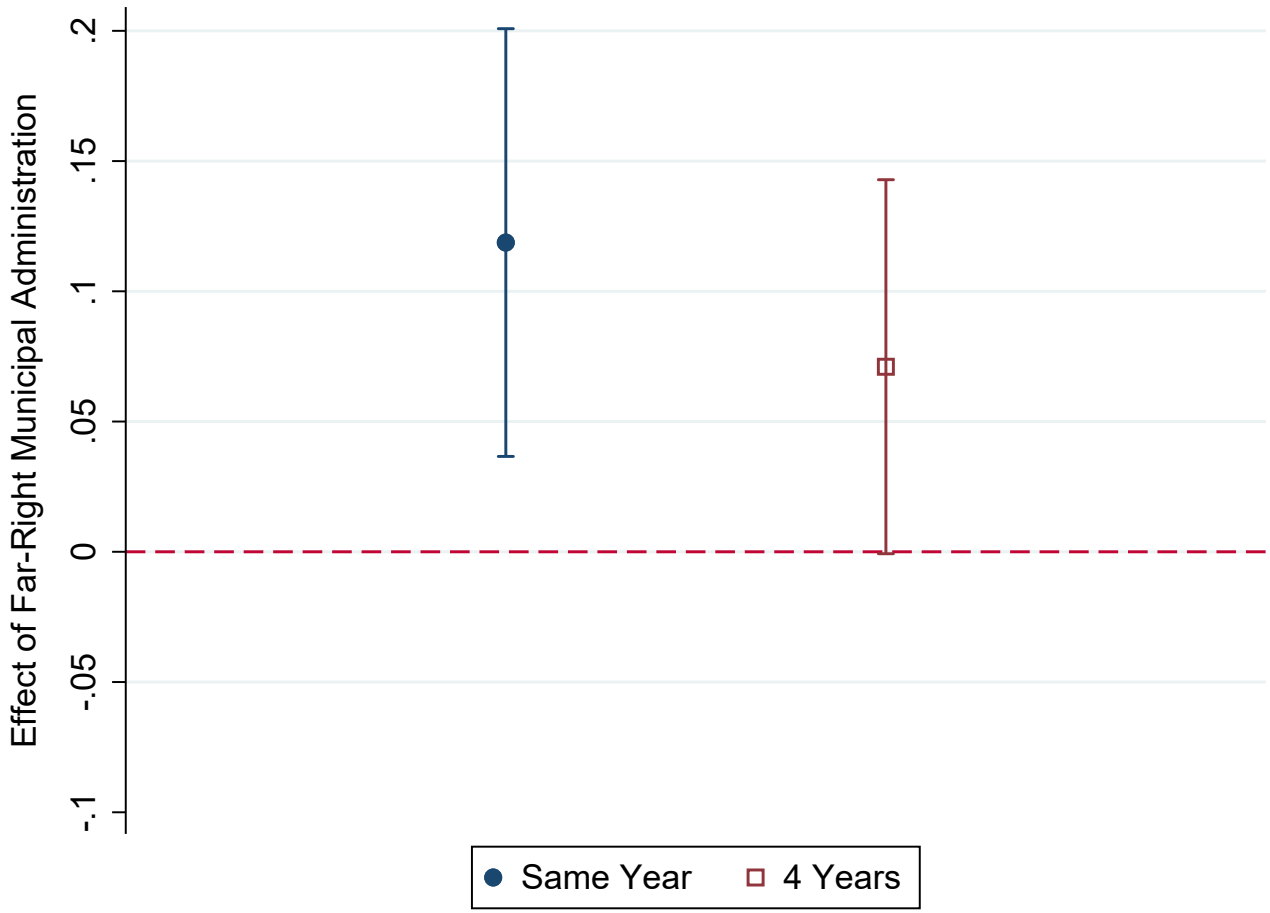
Effect Still Strong After 4 Years



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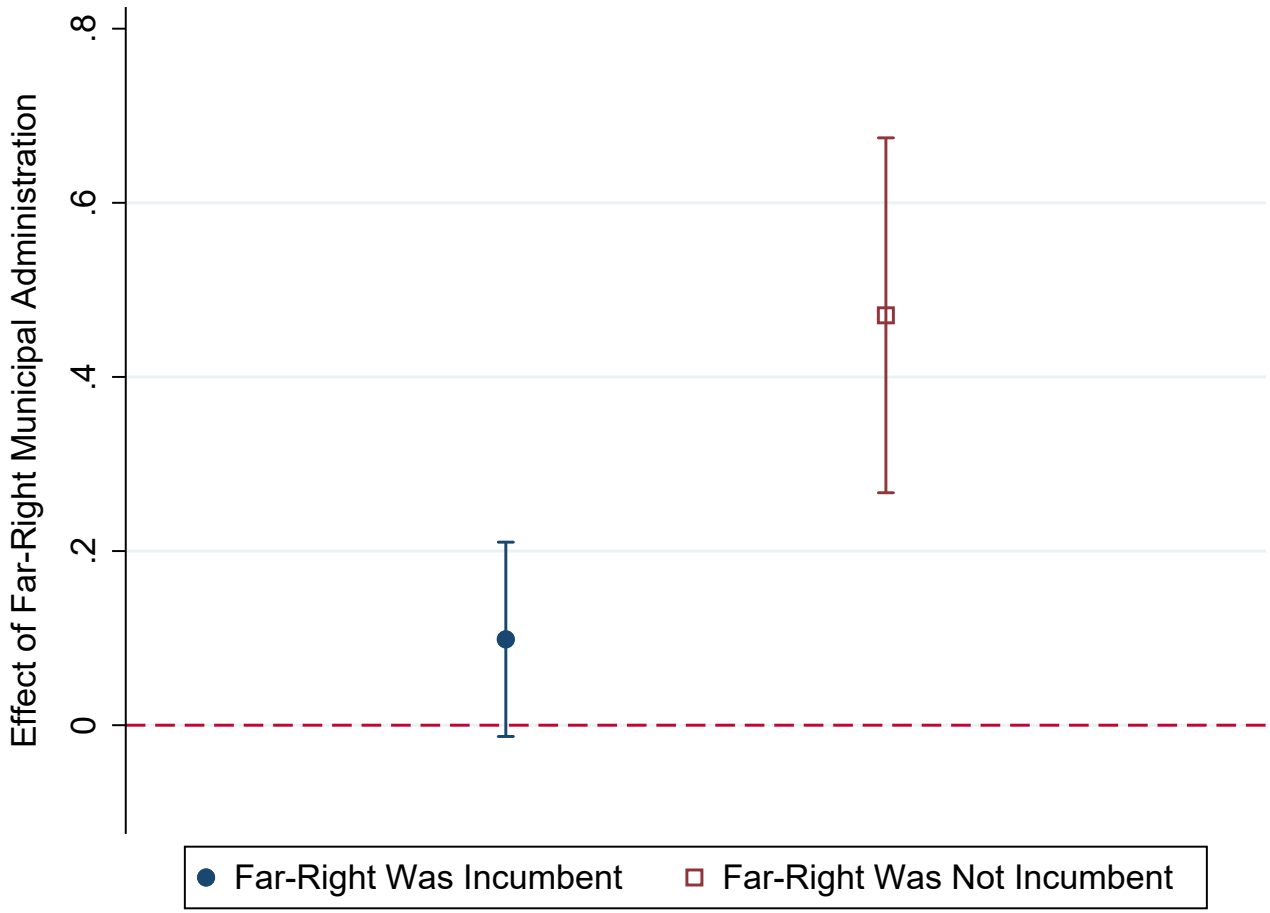
Again, Stronger When Far-Right Was Challenger



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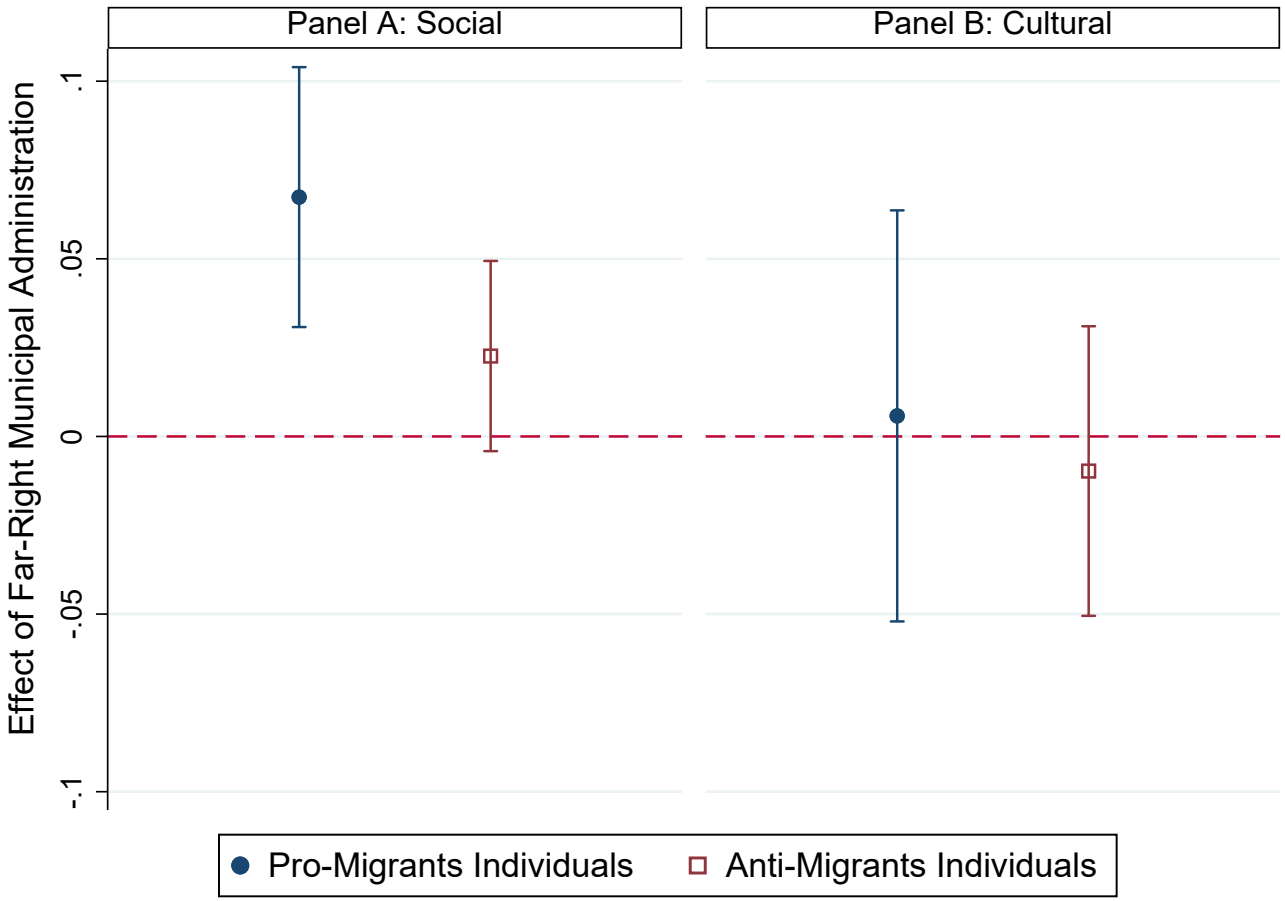
Same Results by Immigration Attitudes



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Is This Actually a Local Thing?

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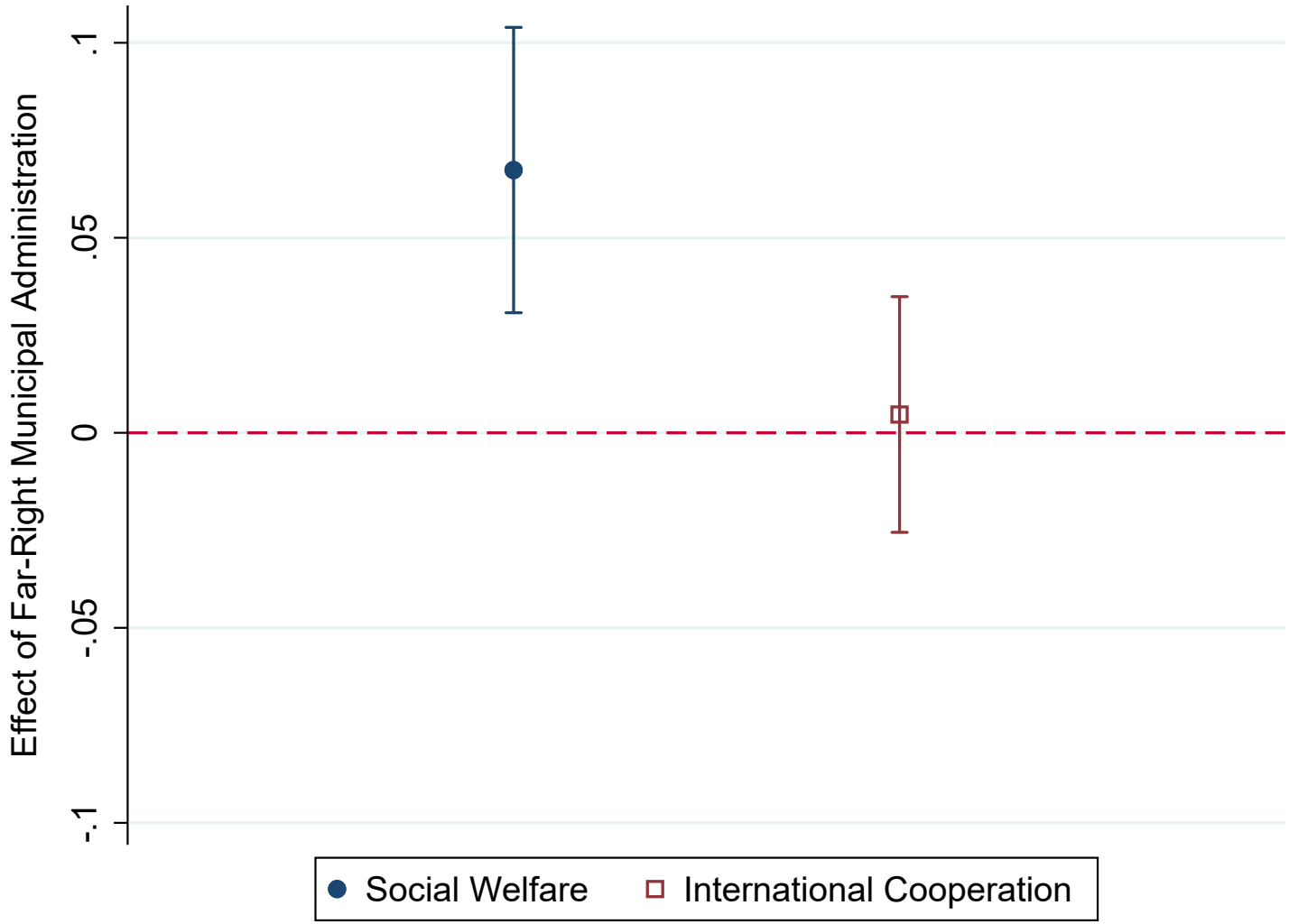
Is This Actually a Local Thing?