Toxic Elections:
Elections and Attitudes toward Immigration in Europe

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Abstract

Recent elections across the west have highlighted the potential of elections to polarize individual preferences on divisive issues. Exploiting as-if random assignment in individual interview dates for the European Social Survey, we examine how proximity to elections affects individual policy preferences on immigration. We find that attitudes toward immigration become more polarized, and on average more negative, closer to elections. We examine the mechanisms through which this occurs, specifically testing the influence of racial othering, issue salience, and party platforms, and find that party preferences appear to play an important role. We examine the influence of elections on other issue areas, and find that elections appear to be particularly polarizing on individual attitudes toward marginalized groups. Overall, these results suggest that even within the Western context, elections can have negative externalities, and that party rhetoric plays an important role in the formation of individual attitudes and opinions.

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1 Introduction

Traditionally, democratic elections are viewed as society-strengthening institutions. They can encourage citizen investment in the government, strengthen civil society, and lead to an increase in pluralistic values and discourse (Dahl, 1973). Discussions of the negative effects of electoral competition are primarily in the context of ethnic democracies, fragile democracies, or post-conflict countries (Eifert, Miguel and Posner, 2010; Brancati and Snyder, 2013). Yet while elections are an essential part of a functioning democracy, recent elections in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and Italy have made clear that elections can be divisive even in historically strong democratic societies.

This divisiveness can occur within a range of issues, however, we focus on understanding the influence of elections on the increasingly politicized topic of immigration (Rueda, 2005; Häusermann, Picot and Geering, 2013; Beramendi et al., 2015; Garand, Xu and Davis, 2017). Greater opposition to immigration not only makes it more difficult for politicians to work together to create sustainable solutions, but can also lead to outbursts of violence among disaffected voters, as seen with recent protests in Germany, Denmark, and Sweden, among others.

In this paper, we examine how elections influence attitudes toward immigration during European elections conducted between 2000 and 2015. Using as-if random assignment in individual interview dates for the European Social Survey, we use the proximity of interviews to elections across 27 European countries to test whether increased proximity to elections influences preferences regarding immigration. The as-if random assignment of interview dates allows us to assess how elections might influence individual attitudes toward immigration over time. Note that by design we are not testing for long-term effects of elections on attitudes toward immigration, but rather how attitudes vary with changing distance to elections over time.

We find that closer to elections, individuals hold more polarized– or extreme negative or

positive– views on immigration, with an overall negative effect on individual attitudes toward immigration. Proximity to elections encourages more negative views both before and after the election has occurred, with a surprisingly stronger effect after the election. These results are robust to various model specifications.

To better understand why this might be the case, we test three primary mechanisms. First, as has been argued in developing contexts, we examine whether elections lead to racial othering; second, whether elections simply increase the salience of certain issues, creating the illusion that individuals hold more extreme views; and finally, whether party elite messaging leads to a shift in preferences toward party lines. Our methodology does not allow us to horserace or conclusively rule out any of these explanations, rather, we examine whether each provides independent explanatory power.

Using data from the European Social Survey, the Manifesto Project, and Google Trends, we find surprisingly limited support for either the salience or the racial othering explanation in the case of immigration. Party rhetoric, however, embodied by party manifestos, is strongly correlated with the strength of the effect of proximity to elections on individual attitudes toward immigration. This finding is robust to non-linear examinations of the interaction term as discussed in Hainmueller, Mummolo and Xu (2018). This mechanism of party rhetoric is also consistent with our analysis that individuals are more likely to exhibit polarized views on immigration, since not all parties embrace anti-immigrant rhetoric and others might even encourage pro-immigrant rhetoric among their supporters.

We test the uniqueness of immigration as an issue through comparison to four other salient electoral concerns: the welfare state, the environment, support for the EU, and LGBT rights. We find evidence that elections encourage more positive attitudes toward the European Union, inequality, science and environmental issues, and LGBT rights. We also find effects of polarization on questions of welfare and LGBT rights. These broader findings suggest that elections might have a uniquely polarizing effect on issues that concern the rights of the

marginalized– whether immigrants, LGBTQ, or low-income individuals.

This work fits into a growing literature on the role of political institutions in influencing attitudes toward immigration. Traditionally, literature on attitudes toward immigration has focused on the differential roles of economic concerns, with explanations rooted in political economy, or culture, with explanations rooted in political psychology (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014). Increasingly, however, scholars are noting the need to analyze the influence of political institutions, such as elections (Dancygier, 2010; Dancygier et al., 2015).

This paper makes three unique contributions. First, we add to this growing literature on the effect of institutions on attitudes toward immigration. Second, we merge findings on the influence of elections in developing contexts with those from Europe. Finally, we highlight the potential of shifting rhetoric by political parties to minimize the potentially negative ramifications of elections.

2   Theoretical Background

Scholars note that in Europe's political climate, anti-globalization and anti-immigration issues have become important sources of electoral cleavage (Odmalm, 2011). This is part of a broader trend toward electoral dealignment, with a decrease in the salience of traditional cleavage issues such as class (Rueda, 2005; Häusermann, Picot and Geering, 2013). Alongside immigration, the "new politics" that have arisen emphasize nationalism, identity politics, and welfare state reform (Beramendi et al., 2015; Garand, Xu and Davis, 2017).

As both a cause and an effect of its growing importance within the electoral sphere, anti-immigration appeals are often seen as especially effective in mobilizing constituents and voters along identity lines. Extreme immigration positions are especially tempting for small parties, who want to distinguish themselves from larger mainstream parties who embrace more moderate stances toward immigration (De Sio and Weber, 2014; Abou-Chadi and Orlowski, 2016). Scholars have also found that the presence of anti-immigration parties has

a 'contagion effect', helping move other political parties to adopt more anti-immigration stances (Spanje, 2010).

Yet despite the increasing centrality of immigration to party ideologies, the effects of elections on attitudes towards immigration are not yet well understood. While there is significant work focused on understanding the role of cultural and economic concerns on attitudes toward immigration (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014), work on the influence of political institutions on attitudes toward immigration remains limited. Through analyzing the short-term effects of elections on immigration, we reinforce the argument that political institutions can be an important third source of influence.

In examining to what extent political institutions have an impact on attitudes towards immigration, scholars have noted that citizens in countries with more restrictive immigration policies are more likely to support immigration. In contrast, immigrants are more likely to assimilate when immigration policies are less restrictive (Hainmueller, Hangartner and Pietrantuono, 2017). Other scholars have examined the impact of political inclusion and political power of immigrants on electoral politics (Dancygier, 2010; Dancygier et al., 2015).

In the literature on established democracies, elections are typically associated with their positive effects such as increased civic engagement (Skocpol and Fiorina, 2004; Tolbert, McNeal and Smith, 2003). Yet in new democracies, scholars have argued that elections can often have negative or polarizing effects, and impending elections have been shown to increase ethnic salience and conflict (Eifert, Miguel and Posner, 2010). Other work notes that elections can lead to instability in post-conflict settings where the rule of law is weak (Brancati and Snyder, 2013). However, these effects are generally studied in ethnic democracies, fragile democracies, or post-conflict countries.

Yet shifting electoral cleavages that emphasize identity-based issues, combined with growing party polarization, the rise of populist parties, and provocative political campaigns are all potential sources of adverse electoral effects within the European context. Our work does

not attempt to compare the influence of elections to other economic, cultural, or institutional theories. Rather, we argue that elections are one important and often overlooked influence on individual attitudes toward immigration.

This leads to two primary hypotheses: first, that elections can contribute to polarized attitudes toward immigration, and second, given the negative rhetoric towards immigration since 2000, elections will have on balance a negative effect on attitudes toward immigration.

2.1 Mechanisms

We highlight three potential mechanisms through which this relationship between elections and attitudes toward immigration might function– racial othering, issue salience, and party platforms.[1]

First, it is possible that electoral competition leads to racial othering, which results in individuals holding more negative views toward immigrant groups. This is a similar mechanism to that found in the work by Eifert, Miguel and Posner (2010) on the influence of elections in Africa on attitudes toward other ethnicities. They argue that identity is a powerful tool for voter mobilization, and thus elections have a particularly salient effect on attitudes toward other ethnicities. If this is the case within the European context, we would expect to see that elections would have a greater effect on attitudes toward immigration by individuals who are more racially or ethnically distinct.

A second potential mechanism is that elections simply increase the salience of issues that are being debated during the electoral process. This increase in salience creates the illusion that individuals hold stronger beliefs on a given topic, when in actuality individuals

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[1] These mechanisms are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive. We examine these three mechanisms of racial othering, issue salience, and party platforms because of both their plausibility and their presence in the literature surrounding the topic.

are simply thinking more about the issues and thus less likely to give a neutral response (Edwards et al., 1995). If this is the case, we would expect that elections where immigration is a more salient issue, either in the political or social sphere, would have a larger influence on individual attitudes than elections where immigration is a less salient issue.

A final potential mechanism is that party elite messaging about immigration leads to a shift in individual preferences toward party platforms. This mechanism is in line with work by Jones and Martin (2017), who argue that elite cues helped shaped opinion on immigration in the 2010 US elections. Specifically, they find that elite cues are most influential on support for immigration restriction in places that have experienced large immigrant inflows.

Elite cues on immigration are much more prevalent during political campaigns. Lenz (2009) highlights the role of political parties' rhetoric in shaping individual political positions. He argues that when individuals hear a message from an elite source with which they align themselves, they will often shift their views to correspond with the views of that source. Thus, if populist right-wing political parties in Europe are engaging in anti-immigration rhetoric around elections, individuals who are drawn to agree with that party, even for other, possibly economic, reasons, may then adjust their views on immigration to line up with that of the party (Sniderman et al., 2004).[2] This effect is compounded by the fact that people are most knowledgeable about party platforms immediately after elections and also better able to match their preferences to parties during this time (Andersen, Tilley and Heath, 2005). If this is the case, we would expect that on balance individuals would express more negative attitudes toward immigration when political parties are embracing more anti-immigrant party platforms.

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[2] See also Pérez (2015), who notes that when immigrants are exposed to xenophobic rhetoric, they are more likely to identify with their in-group.

3 Data

In order to test our hypotheses, we use data from seven rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS), between 2002 and 2015. These data contain detailed individual-level information, including consistent survey items that measure perceptions of different types of immigration for 27 European countries.[3]

Our outcome variable, attitudes towards immigration, captures the level of support for immigration to one's own country and is developed using multiple questions on the ESS about immigration. These questions ask whether the survey respondent's country should allow immigrants of either the same race or ethnic group, a different race or ethnic group, or poor countries outside Europe. Respondents can then state whether they want many, some, few, or none. The exact questions, their means, and their standard deviations are listed in the online appendix in Table A.1.

We aggregated these three questions using principal components analysis (PCA), a dimension reduction method that views the different metrics as varying dimensions of the same underlying principal, in this case attitudes towards immigration.[4] As indicated by Figure A.2, 79.8% of the variation in the three different instruments can be explained by a single underlying dimension, and as expected all questions are positively correlated with each other.

The second principal component explains most of the remaining variation. As seen in the variation on the y-axis of Figure A.2 in the online appendix, the second principal component

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[3] We exclude from our analysis non-natives, since we expect that attitude formation towards immigration follows a different process for this group (Mayda, 2006). However, our results are robust to the inclusion of non-natives.

[4] Principal components analysis takes a single attribute, like attitudes towards immigration, that is measured by a number of variables, and then combines these variables into latent underlying dimensions.

separates the questions based on the race of the immigrants, with individuals of the same race seen as different from those of different races or non-European origin, a plausible alternate source of variation on how individuals feel about immigration to their country.

The country listed as the most positive toward immigrants via this metric during the entire survey period is Sweden, and the lowest is Greece. The complete list of countries and their values on the principal component can be found in Figure A.3 in the online appendix. These are qualitatively plausible outcomes, indicating that our principal components analysis is returning expected results. We also use an alternate outcome variable that is the mean of an individual's responses to this question to ensure that our findings are not overly dependent on the principal component specification.

Yet our goal is not just to examine whether individuals are more anti-immigrant, but also whether or not we see greater polarization, or movement toward extreme positive or negative attitudes. In this case, this would mean a movement toward more individuals stating they want "many" or "no" immigrants. To measure this, we take the absolute value of our first principal component of attitudes toward immigration, which is centered on zero. Higher values of this metric indicate more extreme stances toward immigration– either positive or negative– and lower values indicate more moderate stances.

In order to identify the effect of exposure to elections on attitudes towards immigration, we utilized the information in the ESS about an individual's interview year, month, and day. Though countries were surveyed by the ESS in waves, usually lasting around six months, individual interview dates were arguably as-if random within that frame. We exploit this exogenous variation to analyze the effect of the proximity of elections on individual attitudes toward immigration.

To create our proximity measure, we merged the ESS data with data on all elections held in Europe between 1998 and 2020, taken from the European Election database.[5] The

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[5] This data is available for download at `http://www.electionguide.org/elections/`
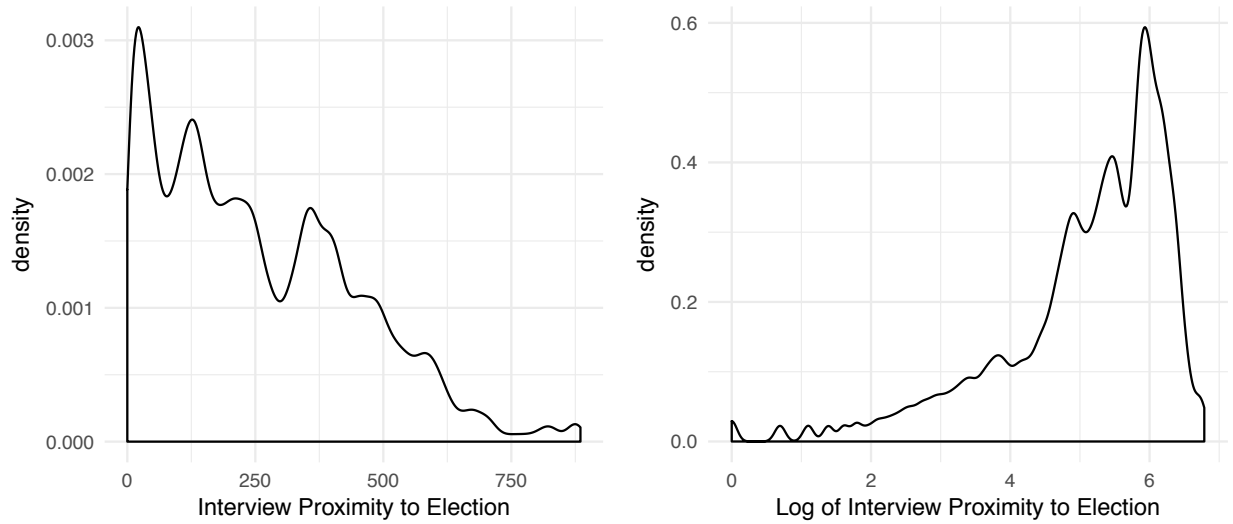
Figure 1: **Distribution of Distance to Elections**: The left panel shows the distribution of our proximity to elections measure. The right panel shows the logged measure.

elections and dates by country can be found in Figure A.4 in the online appendix. We defined proximity to elections as the number of days between a persons' interview date and the nearest election.[6] We also created a logged measure, since we would expect that there would be a much larger difference in the importance of an election that was, for example, one versus sixty days away as opposed to three hundred versus three hundred sixty days.

In Figure 1, we present the distribution of our distance to elections measure. As noted in the figure, most respondents were surveyed between 100 and 500 days to elections (between log(4) and log(6) for our logged measure).[7] We present the density of distance to elections for each country-round in Online Appendix Figure A.5. Countries show variation on the distance to elections both within and across rounds.

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[6] This symmetric analysis reflects our underlying expectation that elections could influence individual attitudes both during the campaign period and after the election occurs.

[7] See Figure A.5 for the distribution of our distance to elections measure for each country and round. As indicated by the figure, not every country was surveyed in each round.
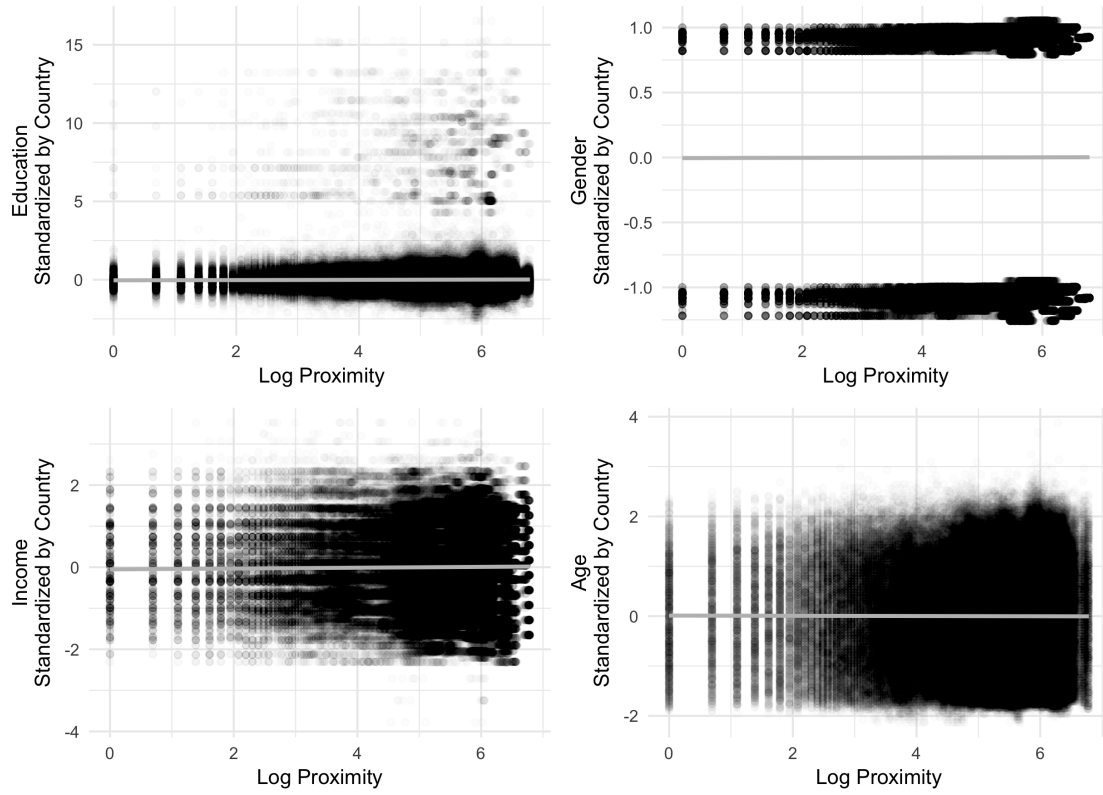
Figure 2: **Distribution of Covariates by Distance to Elections Within Countries**: Balance between logged distance to elections (x-axis) and important covariates: education, gender, age, and income (y-axis). Covariates are standardized per country.

One concern with our research design is that individual survey dates may not be truly random, for example, if the ESS is more likely to sample different populations closer to elections. According to the ESS website, sampling is "selected by strict random probability methods" within each country-round, helping allay these potential concerns.[8]

In order to empirically assess this possibility, in Figure 2 we assess to what extent our distance to elections measure is balanced according to individual's years of education, age, gender, and income - important predictors of attitudes towards immigration (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014). As indicated by the horizontal flat lines, the figure suggests that there is no relationship between one's proximity to elections and important covariates within each country, suggesting quasi-random variation in our distance to elections measure at the individual level.

At the same time, we are unable to rule out the possibility that the variation in our distance to elections measure is not random across different countries and rounds. This could be the case if countries are more likely to conduct elections when there is a surge of anti-immigrant sentiment. While there appears to be balance within countries, the variation across rounds within a country may be different than variation within each individual country-round. We correct for this in two ways. First, through the inclusion of country-level controls including GDP growth, migration, and inequality. Second, as elaborated in more detail in our empirical strategy, through including designs that look at variation solely within a given country and round, during which we are more certain of the as-if random assignment of interview dates at the individual level.

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[8] For more details, see `http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/methodology/ess_methodology/sampling.html`

3.1   Mechanisms Data

We use three different data sources to examine our mechanisms of racial othering, salience, and party platforms.

If elections encourage anti-immigration attitudes because they encourage racial othering, we would expect that elections would have a greater effect on attitudes toward immigration of individuals of a different ethnicity. We test this through examining the second principal component of attitudes toward immigration, which measures how the survey respondent perceives immigration of individuals of the same versus different race or ethnicity, as seen on the y-axis in Figure A.2.[9]

If elections simply increase the salience of immigration as an issue, and it is this that leads to more polarized attitudes, then we would expect that elections where immigration is more salient would have greater polarization than those where it is less salient. To measure the salience of immigration at a given election, we use data from Google Trends. Trends have been used in other political science studies as a valuable source for measuring issue salience among the public (Mellon, 2013; Stephens-Davidowitz, 2017).

To examine this mechanism, we look at how often people googled the term "immigration" in the native language of their country in the period surrounding the election relative to other time periods within their country, and use this as the metric of salience during a given election. One concern about this metric is that Google searches for immigration are primarily by individuals seeking information on the process of immigration, for instance. Appendix Figure A.7 alleviates this concern by showing that in the United Kingdom, Google searches for

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[9] It is plausible that survey respondents are mobilized by identity politics and simply see all immigrants as culturally distinct, without distinguishing between those of a different race and ethnicity. Our metric does not test this possibility, which is why we examine specifically racial othering rather than the influence of identity more generally.

immigration follow the same temporal pattern as searches for illegal immigration, immigrant, and immigrant rape. While not perfect, we argue that trends do allow us to analyze issue salience across countries in a relatively comparable manner.

Finally, if elections increase the polarization of immigration because individuals cleave to the elite rhetoric of party platforms, we would expect that elections that have more anti-immigrant rhetoric within party platforms would also have a stronger negative affect on attitudes toward immigration. To measure this, we use the Manifesto Project's nationalist sentiment metric, which primarily measures anti-immigrant rhetoric in all party platforms.[10]

As an example, the following appeal found in the 2015 UK Conservative Party manifesto is coded as nationalist sentiment:"Our plan to control immigration will put you, your family and the British people first. We will reduce the number of people coming to our country with tough new welfare conditions and robust enforcement (31)".[11] Figure A.6 shows the level of nationalist rhetoric aggregated at the country level for all elections.

These data sources allow us not only to test whether or not elections influence individual attitudes toward immigration, but also examine the potential mechanisms through which this relationship might occur.

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[10] Available for download at: `https://manifestoproject.wzb.eu/`. Specifically, they measure "the share of quasi-sentences in the respective category calculated as a fraction of the overall number of allocated codes per document." Nationalist sentiment includes "favorable mentions of the manifesto country's nation, history, and general appeals. May include support for established national ideas; general appeals to pride of citizenship; appeals to patriotism; appeals to nationalism; and suspension of some freedoms in order to protect the state against subversion."

[11] Available for download at: `https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/manifesto2015/ConservativeManifesto2015.pdf`

4 Empirical Strategy

To estimate the effect that elections have on attitudes towards immigration, we use a panel with country-specific time trends that exploits temporal and spatial variation in elections.[12]

We propose the following model:

$$\text{Att}_{i,j,t} = \alpha_j + \beta \text{elections}_{i,j,t} + Z_{i,j,t} \cdot \Phi + \gamma_j * \delta_r + \varepsilon_{i,j,t}$$

where the outcome variable $Att_{i,j,t}$ refers to an individual's i attitude towards immigration in country j on day t. The main explanatory variable $elections_{i,j,t}$ is our individual distance to elections measure in country j on day t. We also include $Z_{i,j,t}$, a set of important covariates such as years of education and gender at the individual level. The model also includes $\gamma_j * \delta_r$, country-specific time trends to control for common factors that change over survey rounds for each country.

We also run models using the country-level covariates of GDP, inequality, far right party share, and migration. To estimate uncertainty, we use a nested bootstrap, with rounds within countries, though our model is also robust to the use of clustered standard errors at the country-round level, as reported in Table A.5 in the Online Appendix. Our results are also robust to an alternate specification using country and round fixed effects as seen in Table A.4 in the Online Appendix. We report results for all respondents as well as only those surveyed only within 365 days of election, to ensure our results are not being driven by variation very far from elections, which would go against our theoretical expectations.

To test our three potential mechanisms, we use extensions of this model. To examine the influence of identity, we run the same model with the second principal component, measuring attitudes toward immigrants of different ethnic groups, as the outcome variable. To measure

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[12] As seen in Figure A.3, our outcome variable has a generally linear increase over time. Our results are robust to the use of squared and cubic country-specific time trends.

the influence of racial othering, we interact google trends data with our treatment of election proximity, as well as using it as a control variable within the regression. To analyze the importance of party platforms, we interact the manifesto project metric of nationalist, which is primarily immigration-related, rhetoric with our outcome variable of electoral proximity. We analyze these interactions not only using the traditional regression framework, but also using flexible estimation strategies that allow for non-linearity as suggested in Hainmueller, Mummolo and Xu (2018) in order to avoid reporting highly model-dependent results.

5 Results

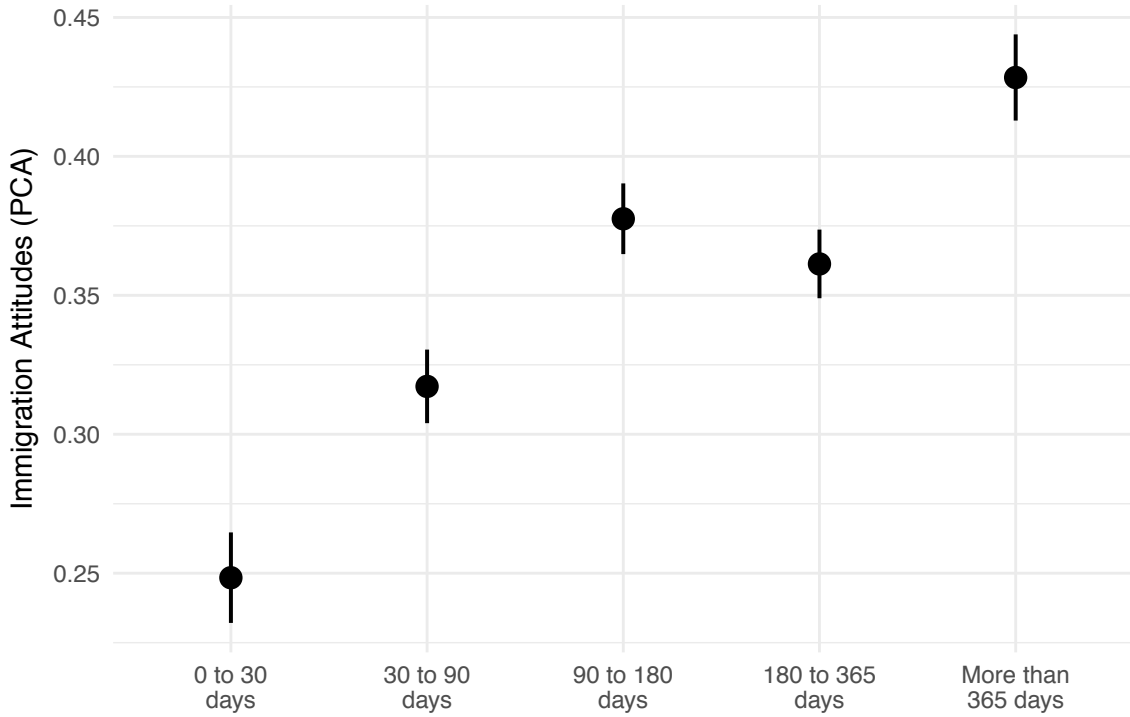Figure 3: **Impact of Elections on Attitudes Toward Immigration**. This figure shows that attitudes toward immigration increase nearly monotonically with distance from elections. The x-axis shows distance from elections, and the y-axis attitudes toward immigration, with higher values on the y-axis indicating more positive attitudes toward immigration. Vertical bars indicate 95% confidence intervals from nested bootstrap.

We find that proximity to elections encourages more polarized attitudes toward immigration, with an overall effect of encouraging more negative attitudes toward immigration. We also find that party rhetoric appears to play an important role in driving this result.

Figure 3 and Table 1 present the results of our primary model. We find that individuals are more likely to hold more favorable views of immigration further from elections. In particular, the results suggest that a one standard deviation increase in distance to elections is comparable to the effect of three additional years of education, a factor generally seen as an important predictor of attitudes toward immigration. This supports our hypothesis that proximity to elections has an overall negative impact on attitudes towards immigration. The result is consistent across different specifications, including different methods of estimating uncertainty as well as the use of a logged measure.

We also examine whether individual attitudes become more polarized closer to elections, or whether the effect is purely negative, through examining the absolute value of our metric as the outcome variable. As indicated in Table 2, people's attitudes toward immigration do indeed become more polarized closer to elections, with individuals adopting both more highly positive as well as more negative attitudes.

To better understand our findings, we also examine the influence of elections on attitudes measured pre- and post-elections. As seen in Figure 4, we find that both before and after elections, greater distance to elections encourages more positive attitudes toward immigration. As might be expected, we see a much more significant difference between 0 to 30 and 30 to 60 days pre-election as opposed to post-election. Yet somewhat surprisingly, the effect pre-election is slightly weaker than the effect post-election. This is consistent with findings within electoral studies that argue that individuals are most politically informed immediately after, not immediately before, elections (Andersen, Tilley and Heath, 2005). This highlights the fact that the influence of elections can linger even after they have occurred.

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	Dependent Variable: Attitudes towards Immigration			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Distance to Elections	0.0003 (0.0003, 0.0004)		0.0001 (0.0001, 0.0001)	
Log Distance to Elections		0.034 (0.028, 0.041)		0.023 (0.018, 0.029)
Age	−0.013 (−0.014, −0.013)	−0.013 (−0.013, −0.013)	−0.013 (−0.013, −0.013)	−0.013 (−0.013, −0.013)
Years of Education	0.014 (0.013, 0.015)	0.014 (0.013, 0.015)	0.014 (0.014, 0.015)	0.014 (0.014, 0.015)
Female	−0.008 (−0.021, 0.004)	−0.008 (−0.021, 0.004)	−0.004 (−0.014, 0.006)	−0.004 (−0.014, 0.006)
Constant	0.384 (0.355, 0.412)	0.272 (0.235, 0.314)	0.359 (0.338, 0.384)	0.270 (0.240, 0.304)
Country-Specific Time Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	196,125	196,125	276,947	276,947
Adjusted R^2	0.119	0.119	0.125	0.125

Table 1: **Impact of Elections on Attitudes Towards Immigration:** The dependent variable is the first principal component of attitudes toward immigration. 95% confidence intervals based on standard errors calculated using a nested bootstrap for surveys rounds within countries (500 iterations). Higher values correspond to more positive attitudes toward immigration. Columns (1) and (2) include only individuals surveyed within 365 days of elections; columns (3) and (4) include the full sample.
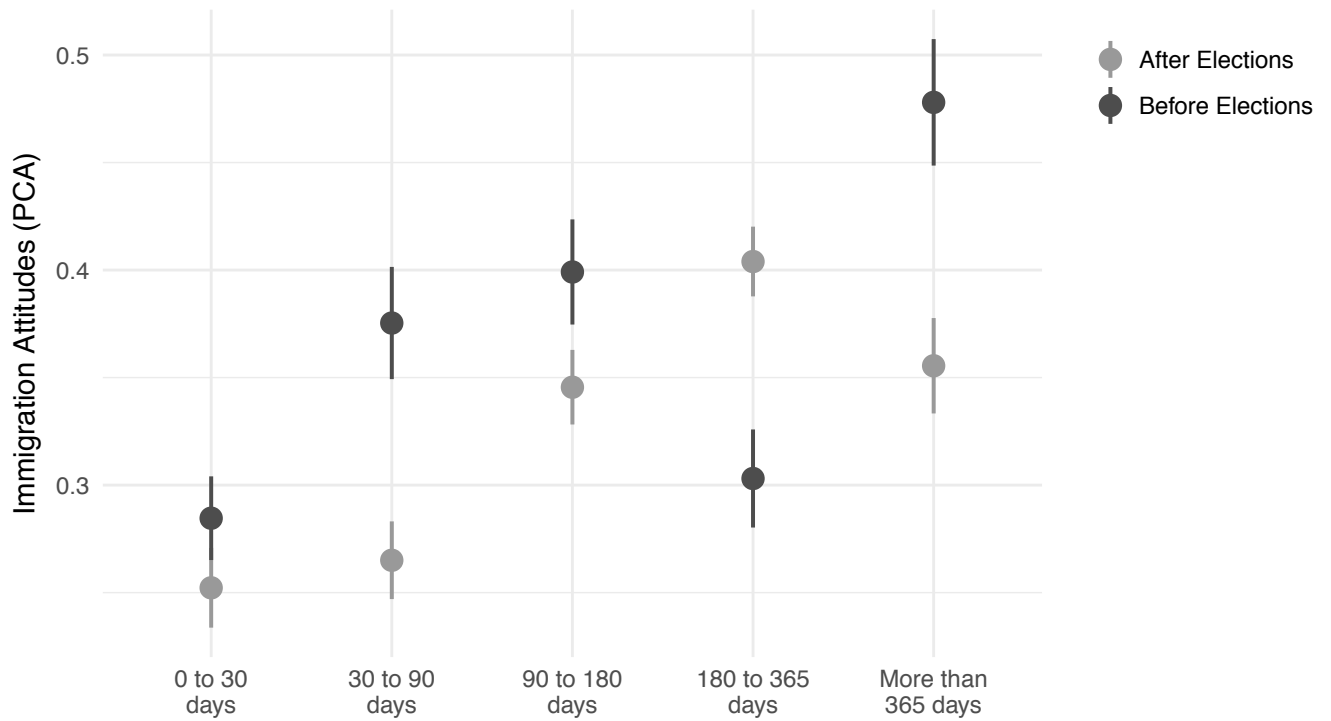
Figure 4: **Attitudes towards Immigration Before and After Elections:** The effect on survey respondents interviewed before versus after elections. The dependent variable is the first principal component of attitudes toward immigration. 95% confidence intervals based on standard errors calculated using a nested bootstrap for surveys rounds within countries (500 iterations). Higher values correspond to more positive attitudes toward immigration.

	Dependent Variable: Polarization of Attitudes towards Immigration
	(1)
Log Distance to Elections	−0.005
	(−0.009, −0.001)
Constant	1.241
	(1.217, 1.263)
Country-Specific Time Trends	Yes
Observations	196,125
Adjusted R^2	0.027

Table 2: **Polarizing Effect of Elections on Attitudes towards Immigration**: The dependent variable is the absolute value of the first principal component of attitudes toward immigration. 95% confidence intervals based on standard errors calculated using a nested bootstrap for surveys rounds within countries (500 iterations).

5.1 Robustness Checks

These results are robust to different measurement choices, as well as placebo testing. Results hold when we measure our dependent variable using the mean of our three immigration questions instead of the principal component metric, as seen in the Online Appendix Table A.2. Our results are also robust to a variety of alternate specifications, including the addition of country level controls (Online Appendix Table A.3), country and round fixed effects (Online Appendix Table A.4), and standard errors clustered at the country-round level (Online Appendix Table A.5).

We also run a placebo test where we create random new elections between 2000-2017 and then re-run our analysis, assigning each individual a 'fake' election date. Using the same empirical specifications, we find that proximity to these pretend elections does not predict attitudes towards immigration, as seen in the Online Appendix Table A.6.

5.2   Mechanisms

We do not find support for the mechanisms of racial othering and issue salience. However, we do find evidence suggesting that party rhetoric plays a role in shifting attitudes toward immigration closer to elections.

First, as seen in Table 3, we do not find support for the mechanism of racial othering. Individuals do not become more discriminatory toward immigrants of different races or cultures, as measured by the second principal component of attitudes toward immigration, as elections approach. In specifications (2), (3), and (4) in Table 3 we see null effects; in specifications (1) proximity to elections actually leads to comparatively more positive attitudes toward immigrants of other races and ethnicities.

Second, we also do not find support for the mechanism of issue salience. We find that the salience of immigration during a given election, measured by Google Trends of the term "immigration" in the period surrounding elections, does not affect attitudes toward immigration. Table 4 shows that the interaction between Google Trends and distance to elections does not turn up statistically or substantively significant results.[13]

Finally, we examine whether proximity to elections where parties embrace more nationalist rhetoric have a greater effect on attitudes toward immigration. Using data from the Manifesto project, we find that the interaction term between nationalist rhetoric, which primarily includes anti-immigration rhetoric, and distance to elections is significant in the expected direction. As seen in Table 5, respondents surveyed close to elections where parties

[13] We also examine whether people are more likely to Google the word immigration closer to elections as seen in the online appendix in Table A.7. There is a slight positive correlation, however, the result is not statistically significant. We also examine whether Google Trends are correlated with elite-level nationalist rhetoric, and find no statistically significant relationship.

| | Dependent Variable: Attitudes towards Immigration of other Ethnicities | | | |
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Distance to Elections	−0.0002 (−0.0003, −0.00002)		0.00001 (−0.00004, 0.0001)	
Logged Distance to Elections		−0.012 (−0.025, 0.002)		−0.005 (−0.014, 0.006)
Constant	2.160 (2.108, 2.209)	2.192 (2.109, 2.262)	2.107 (2.068, 2.148)	2.134 (2.075, 2.192)
Country-Specific Time Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	196,125	196,125	276,947	276,947
Adjusted R^2	0.027	0.027	0.025	0.025

Table 3: **Impact of Elections on Attitudes toward non-Coethnic Immigration**: The dependent variable is the second principal component of our immigration measure, and examines how individuals feel towards immigration of individuals of different racial or ethnic origins. 95% confidence intervals based on standard errors calculated using a nested bootstrap for surveys rounds within countries (500 iterations). Columns (1) and (2) include only individuals surveyed within 365 days of elections; columns (3) and (4) include the full sample. Individual controls of education, gender, and age are included but not reported in results. Higher values correspond to more positive attitudes toward immigration.

	Dependent Variable: Attitudes towards Immigration			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Log Distance to Elections	0.032 (0.024, 0.042)		0.026 (0.020, 0.034)	
Immigration Rhetoric (Google Trends)	0.001 (-0.0003, 0.003)	0.003 (0.002, 0.004)		
Nationalism			-0.535 (-0.640, -0.422)	-0.272 (-0.309, -0.232)
Log Distance to Elections*Rhetoric	0.0001 (-0.0002, 0.0004)			
Log Distance to Elections*Nationalism			0.087 (0.067, 0.111)	
Constant	0.232 (0.183, 0.287)	0.300 (0.266, 0.337)	0.324 (0.285, 0.370)	0.429 (0.404, 0.459)
Country-Specific Time Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	196,125	196,125	189,749	189,749
Adjusted R^2	0.119	0.119	0.118	0.118

Table 4: **Salience and Attitudes toward Immigration**: The dependent variable is the first principal component of attitudes toward immigration. 95% confidence intervals based on standard errors calculated using a nested bootstrap for surveys rounds within countries (500 iterations). Higher values correspond to more positive attitudes toward immigration. Results reported include only individuals surveyed within 365 days of election; full sample returns similar results. Smaller sample sizes in columns (3) and (4) are due to manifesto data being unavailable for certain country-elections. Subsetting of our sample to include only those country-elections that we have manifesto data for does not change the results.
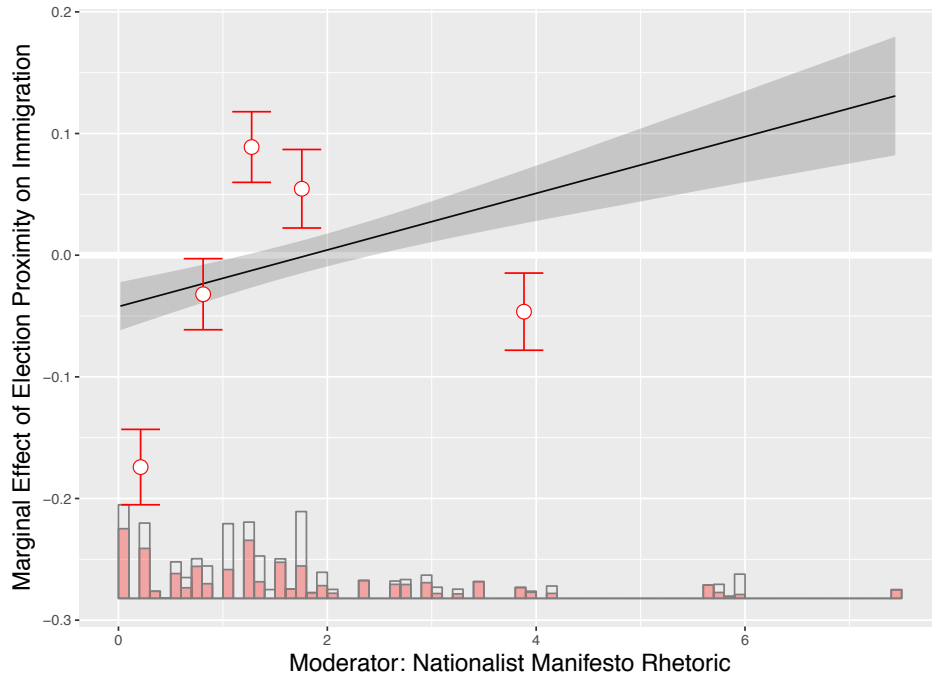
Figure 5: **Impact of Elections on Attitudes Towards Immigration, by Nationalist Rhetoric**: Plot generated using the interflex package, including country and round fixed effects.

use more anti-immigration rhetoric are more likely to have more negative attitudes toward immigration than those surveyed during elections with less anti-immigration rhetoric. In fact, it appears that much of our result is being driven by the elections where there is strong anti-immigration rhetoric, as it is only the interaction term that remains significant in this model. These results are robust to the inclusion of country-level controls.

We further probe how this varies over different levels of elite rhetoric in Figure 5.[14] There is a positive linear relationship between election proximity and nationalist manifesto rhetoric (indicated by the positively sloping line). When we bin countries by the level of nationalist rhetoric in party manifestos (indicated by the points with confidence interval bars), we see that the relationship is not completely linear. It is sharply increasing over the first three

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[14] Plot developed using R's interflex package, by Jens Hainmueller, Jonathan Mummolo and Yiqing Xu.

bins, stays similar for the fourth bin, and decreases slightly for the fifth bin. This indicates that extremely high levels of anti-immigrant rhetoric might have a more complex effect, perhaps driven by a backlash against overly divisive nationalist or anti-immigrant rhetoric by extremist parties.

While further work should be done to provide causally-identified tests of these different mechanisms, we argue that our results provide reasonable indication that proximity to elections is more likely to produce more negative attitudes toward immigration in places where party platforms contain nationalist and anti-immigrant messages. In contrast, places with low levels of nationalist party rhetoric do not exhibit more negative attitudes towards immigration. At the same time, the figure suggests a waning effect of nationalism, in places where nationalist rhetoric is the highest. These results hold even when controlling for overall immigration salience, proxied by Google Trends, indicating that party positioning matters even beyond overall salience of a topic.

5.3 External Validity

One lingering question is whether there is something unique about immigration that lends itself to being particularly influenced by elections. To answer this question, we briefly examine whether other electorally salient topics are also sensitive to elections.

In Tables A.8 through A.11 found in the online appendix, we examine to what extent elections affect attitudes on a range of other topics. Using our main specification, we analyze whether people farther from elections are more likely to express support for welfare, science and the environment, the EU, and LGBT rights.

We find that elections lead to more positive attitudes towards policies that combat inequality, the EU, science and environmental issues, and LGBT rights. When we examine how proximity to elections influences *polarization* on these issues, as reported in Tables A.12 and A.13, we find that proximity to elections is associated with more polarized attitudes on

	Dependent variable: Attitudes toward Immigration	
	(1)	(2)
Distance to Elections	0.007	−0.019
	(−0.003, 0.017)	(−0.029, −0.008)
Nationalism Party Platform		−0.094
		(−0.120, −0.068)
Immigration Trends	−0.002	−0.001
	(−0.003, −0.0003)	(−0.002, −0.0004)
Distance to Elections*		0.016
Nationalism Party Platform		(0.011, 0.020)
Distance to Elections*	0.00002	
Immigration Trends	(−0.0003, 0.0003)	
Age	−0.013	−0.013
	(−0.014, −0.013)	(−0.014, −0.013)
Education	0.013	0.013
	(0.012, 0.014)	(0.012, 0.014)
Female	−0.013	−0.013
	(−0.026, −0.0005)	(−0.026, 0.0002)
Constant	−0.167	−0.047
	(−0.330, −0.004)	(−0.210, 0.116)
Country Level Time Trends	Yes	Yes
Country Control Variables	Yes	Yes
Observations	191,192	186,489
R^2	0.153	0.151
Adjusted R^2	0.153	0.151
Residual Std. Error	1.416 (df = 191150)	1.420 (df = 186446)
F Statistic	840.887 (df = 41; 191150)	788.220 (df = 42; 186446)

Table 5: **Party Rhetoric and Attitudes toward Immigration**: The dependent variable is the first principal component of attitudes toward immigration. 95% confidence intervals based on standard errors calculated using a nested bootstrap for surveys rounds within countries (500 iterations). Control level control variables for GDP, net migration, and inequality are included but not reported in results. Results reported include only individuals surveyed within 365 days of election; full sample returns similar results.

both inequality and LGBT issues. We find a clear null effect for polarization on the issue of support for the EU. Depending on the specification, we also find a potential decrease in polarization on the issue of science and the environment.

Among the topics analyzed, those associated with attitudes toward marginalized groups– support for LGBT rights, welfare, and our primary focus of immigration– appear to be most likely to be polarized by elections. Surprisingly, support for the EU consistently shows a null effect for polarization, and individuals appear to be primarily more supportive of science and the environment as elections approach.

Future work must be done to better understand how and why elections influence different issues, yet our research indicates that topics associated with marginalized groups are more likely to be influenced by distance to elections.

6   Conclusions

In this paper, we seek to understand whether and why elections influence attitudes toward immigration. We find that elections encourage more polarized attitudes toward immigration, with an overall negative effect. Testing three different mechanisms– racial othering, issue salience, and party platforms– we find support for the hypothesis that individuals shift their preferences to better line up with party platforms.

Social scientists have long lauded the positive role of elections, which undoubtedly play a vital part in the functioning of a healthy democracy (Skocpol and Fiorina, 2004; Tolbert, McNeal and Smith, 2003). However, as recent divisive elections have shown, they can have detrimental effects even in the strongest of democratic societies.

This research merges work from developing democracies, where elections are often understood to have potentially divisive effects, with that on elections in Western contexts, where they are often seen as an unmitigated boon. Beyond this, we add to the growing literature on the impact of political institutions on attitudes toward immigration, through an exam-

ination of one of the most central of democratic institutions. Specifically, we highlight the importance of political parties in influencing attitudes surrounding elections. As far right parties gain vote share across Europe, our findings indicate that we could continue to see an increase in the polarizing influence of elections on attitudes toward marginalized groups.

These results highlight the need to find ways to mitigate these negative effects– not necessarily because elections have a long-term impact on individual attitudes toward marginalized groups, but rather because the divisive rhetoric embraced during electoral periods can have other negative externalities with effects lasting long after the polls close. More encouragingly, however, our work does suggest that more reasoned party rhetoric can lead to a mellowing of polarization on divisive topics such as immigration.

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A   Online Supporting Information
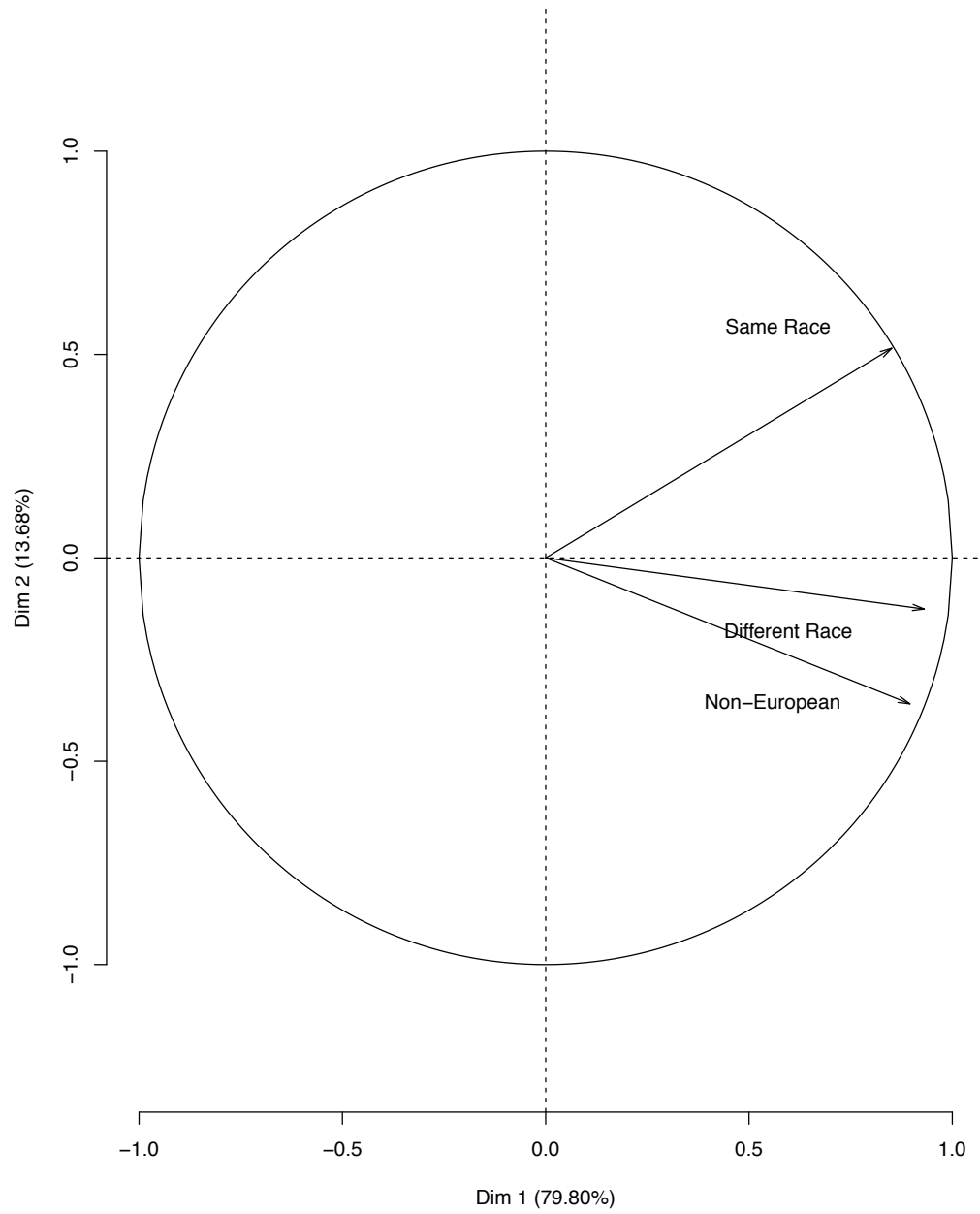
Figure A.1: **PCA Dimensions Plot**: Plot of first and second dimensions of the principal components of immigration questions on the European Social Survey.
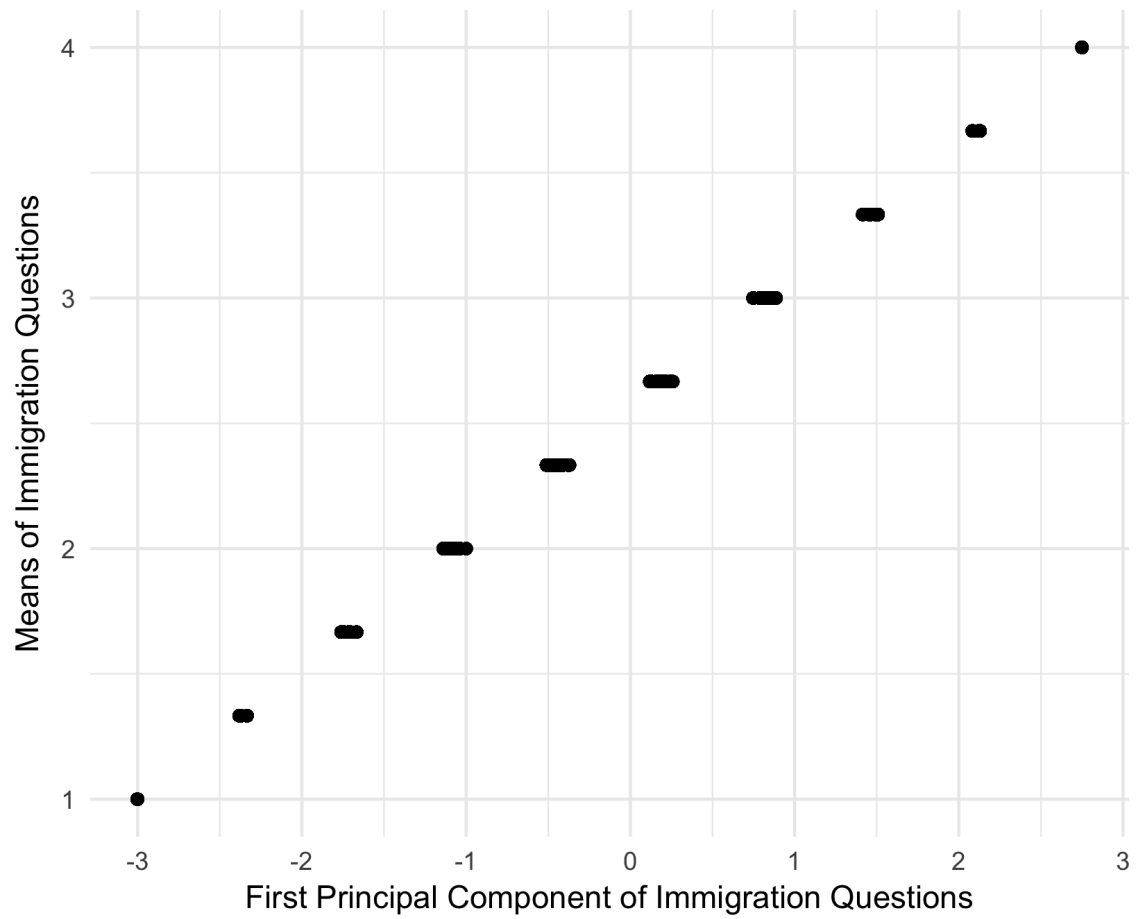
Figure A.2: **First Principal Component versus Means**: Plot of first principal component versus the means of questions included in the first principal component. The very clearly linear nature indicates that the principal component explains the majority of the variation in these questions.
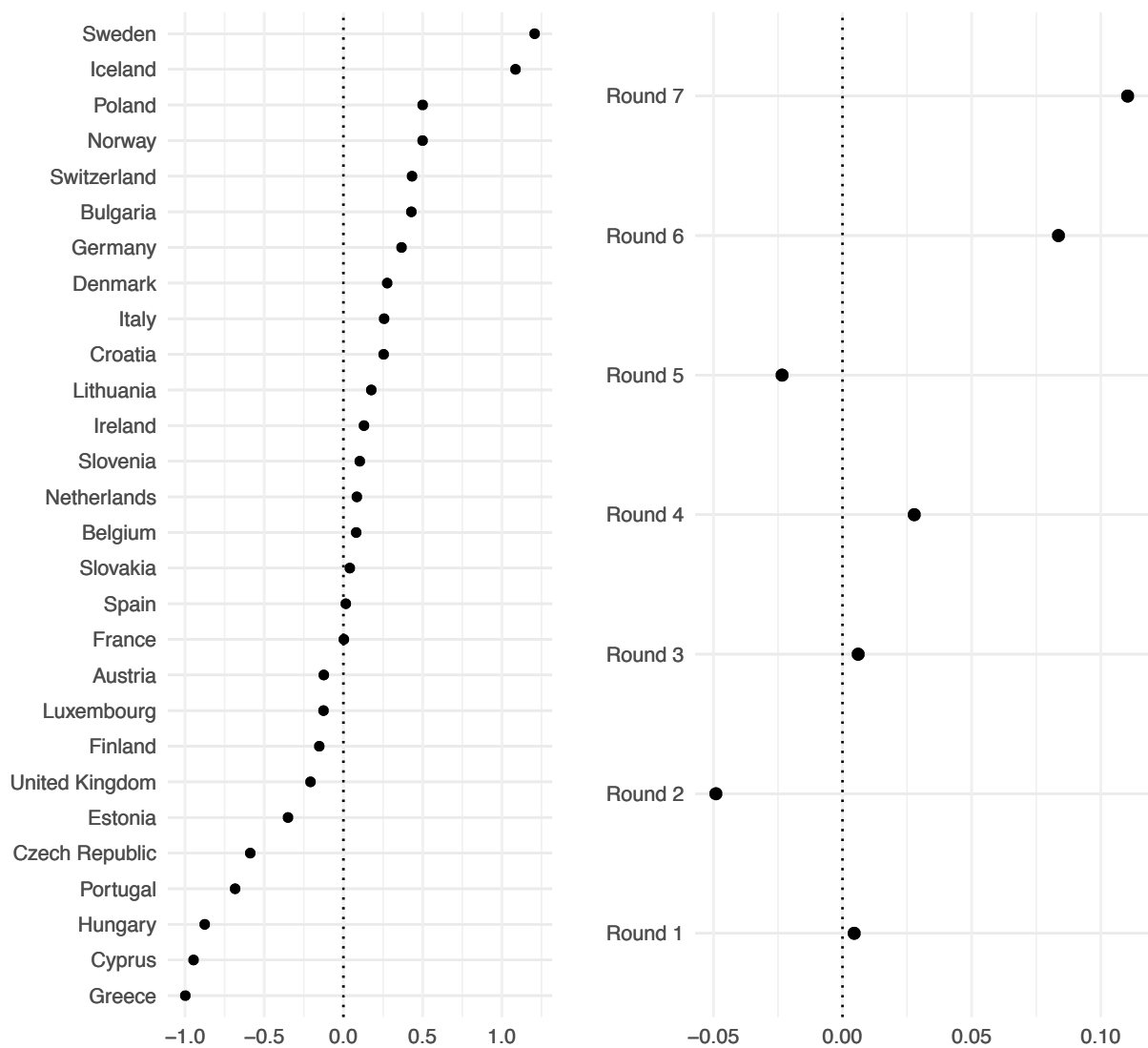
Figure A.3: **Attitudes Towards Immigration (PCA), by Country and ESS Round**: Listing of countries and rounds by their attitudes toward immigration. Higher values indicate more positive attitudes toward immigration. Sweden exhibited the most positive attitudes toward immigration over all rounds, and Greece the most negative. Over time, attitudes toward immigration have become largely more positive, with slight setbacks in Round 2 and Round 5 of the ESS.

Figure A.4: **Elections Included by Country**: Dates of elections used to calculate distance to election metric, listed by country.
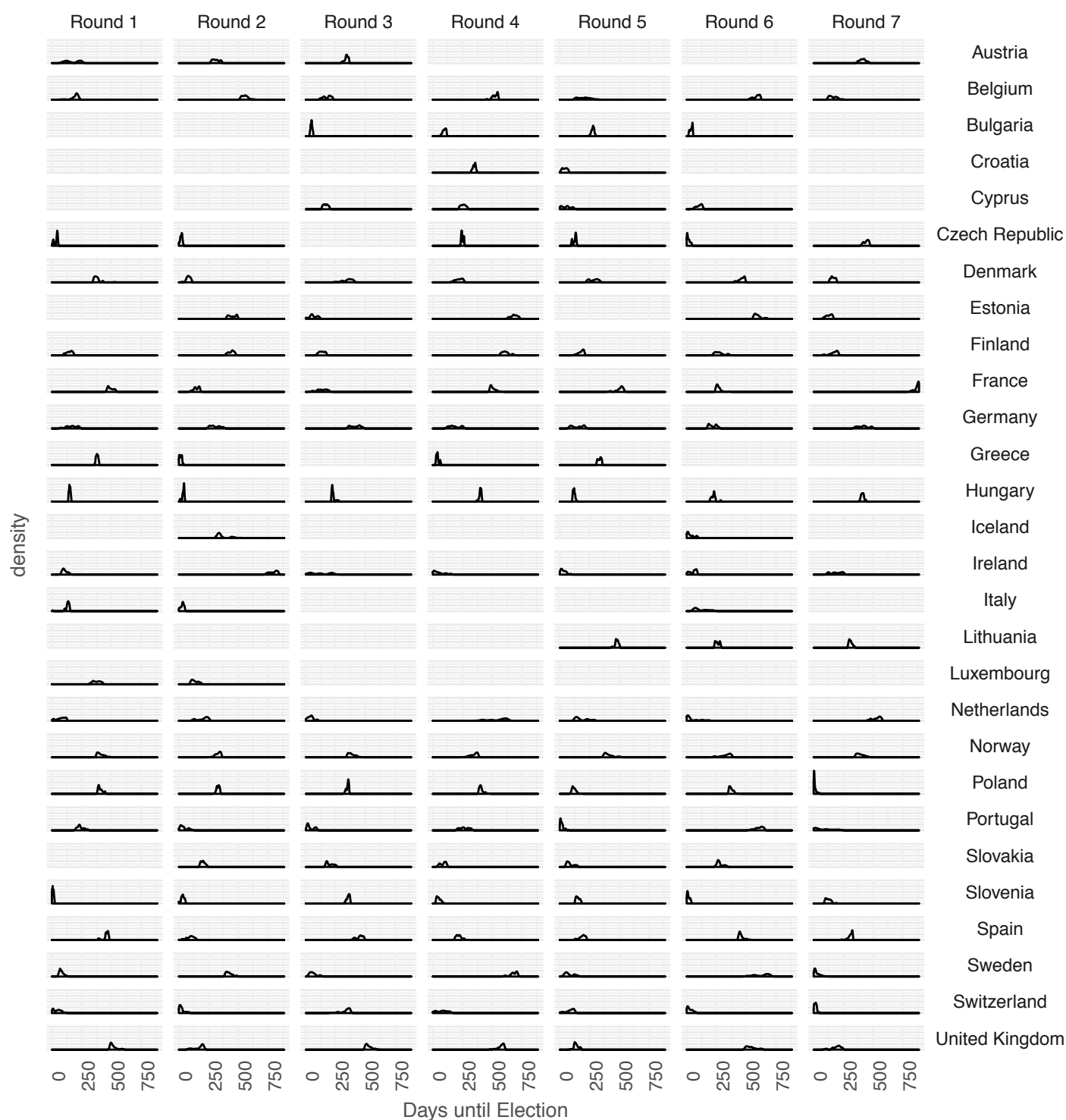
Figure A.5: **Distribution of Proximity to Elections, by Country and Round**: Density of proximity to elections by country round.
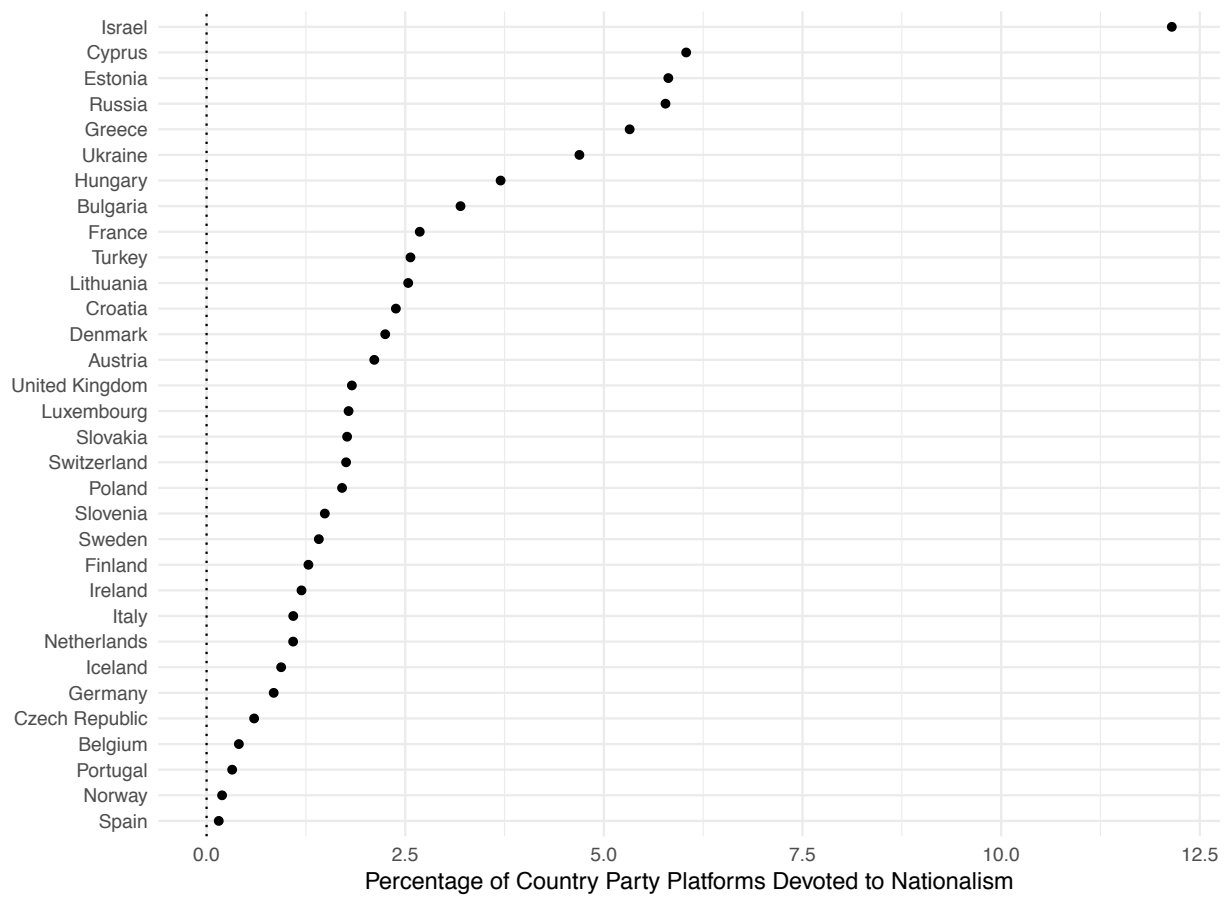
Figure A.6: **Nationalist Rhetoric by Country**: Percentage of party platforms devoted to nationalist rhetoric, which includes anti-immigrant rhetoric.
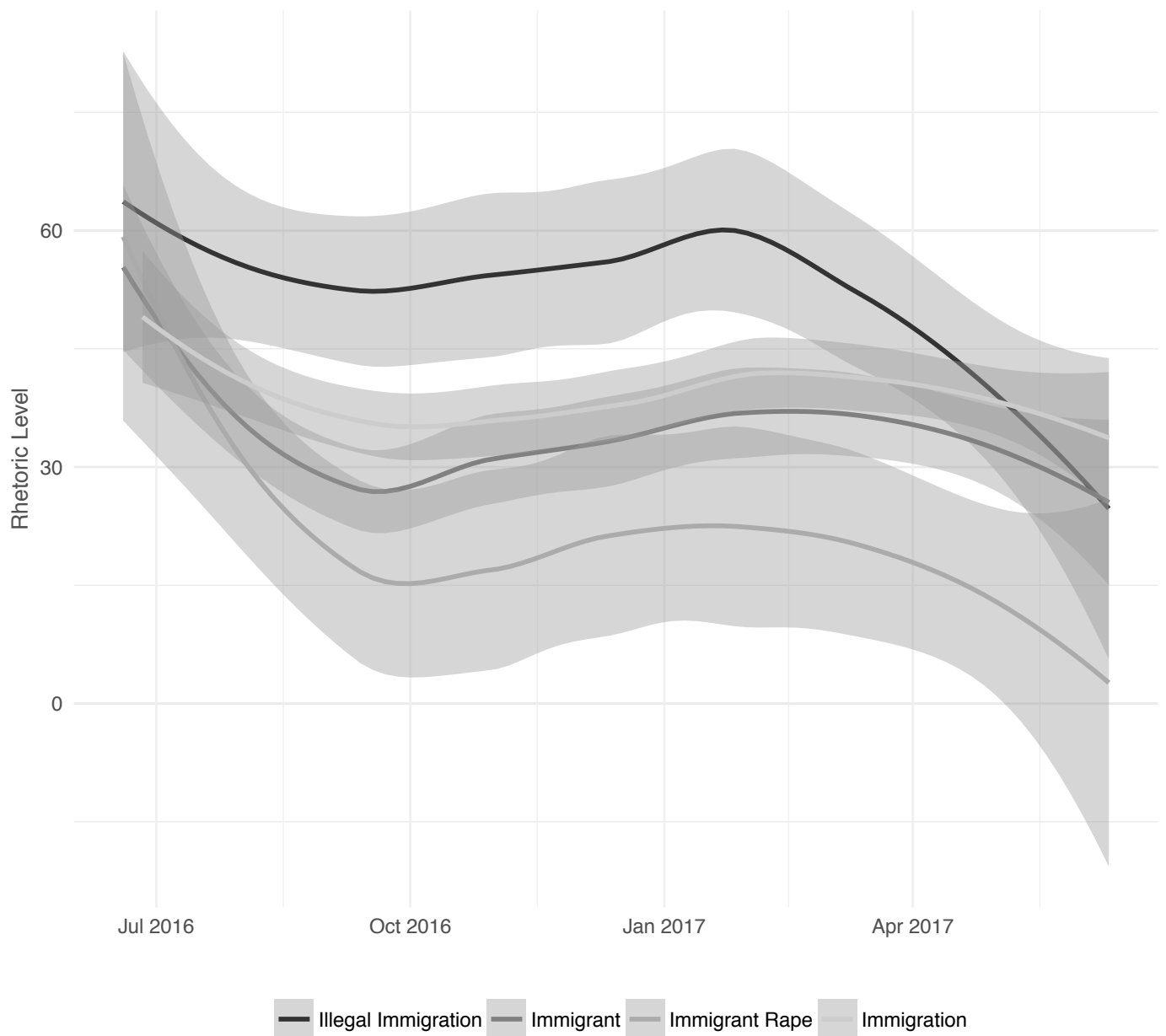
Figure A.7: **Google Trends Data for Immigration and Related Terms**: Correlation between search density for the term immigrant, used in the analysis, to other terms corresponding to specifically negative views of immigration. The over-time variation in these terms is nearly identical, indicating that immigration is not picking up on primarily positive inquiries about immigration or immigrants.

Question	Answer Range	Mean	SD
Now, using this card, to what extent do you think [country] should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most [country] people to come and live here ?	Allow many/some/few/none	2.43	0.9
How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most [country] people?	Allow many/some/few/none	2.51	0.89
How about people from the poorer countries outside Europe?	Allow many/some/few/none	2.79	0.86

Table A.1: **European Social Survey Questions on Immigration included in Principal Components Analysis**: Precise listing of ESS questions included in principal components analysis.

	Dependent variable:			
	Mean Attitudes towards Immigration			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Distance to Elections	0.0002 (0.0001, 0.0002)		0.0001 (0.00005, 0.0001)	
Logged Distance to Elections		0.018 (0.014, 0.021)		0.012 (0.010, 0.015)
Age	−0.007 (−0.007, −0.007)	−0.007 (−0.007, −0.007)	−0.007 (−0.007, −0.007)	−0.007 (−0.007, −0.007)
Years of Education	0.007 (0.006, 0.007)	0.007 (0.006, 0.007)	0.007 (0.007, 0.008)	0.007 (0.007, 0.008)
Female	−0.005 (−0.011, 0.002)	−0.005 (−0.011, 0.002)	−0.003 (−0.008, 0.003)	−0.003 (−0.007, 0.003)
Constant	2.769 (2.755, 2.784)	2.712 (2.692, 2.734)	2.756 (2.745, 2.768)	2.709 (2.693, 2.726)
Country-Specific Time Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	196,125	196,125	276,947	276,947
Adjusted R^2	0.116	0.116	0.121	0.122

Table A.2: **Impact of Elections on Immigration Attitudes (Alternative Measure)**: Outcome variable is mean of individual responses to questions included in the principal component measure of attitudes toward immigration. Results are consistent using this measure. 95% confidence intervals based on standard errors calculated using a nested bootstrap for surveys rounds within countries (500 iterations). Columns (1) and (2) include only individuals surveyed within 365 days of elections; columns (3) and (4) include the full sample. Higher values correspond to more positive attitudes toward immigration

	Dependent variable:	
	Attitudes toward Immigration	
	(1)	(2)
Distance to Elections		0.0003
		(0.0002, 0.0004)
Logged Distance to Elections	0.025	
	(0.016, 0.033)	
Age	−0.013	−0.013
	(−0.013, −0.013)	(−0.013, −0.013)
Years of Education	0.013	0.013
	(0.012, 0.014)	(0.012, 0.014)
Female	−0.017	−0.017
	(−0.033, −0.002)	(−0.033, −0.002)
Country GDP	0.00002	0.00002
	(0.00001, 0.00002)	(0.00001, 0.00002)
Country Net Migration	0.00000	0.00000
	(0.00000, 0.00000)	(0.00000, 0.00000)
GINI	−0.033	−0.033
	(−0.037, −0.029)	(−0.037, −0.028)
Constant	0.803	0.868
	(0.671, 0.934)	(0.740, 0.996)
Country-Specific Time Trends	Yes	Yes
Observations	134,463	134,463
R^2	0.145	0.145
Adjusted R^2	0.144	0.144
Residual Std. Error (df = 134427)	1.436	1.436
F Statistic (df = 35; 134427)	649.278	649.420

Table A.3: **Results with Country Level Controls**: Main results including a variety of controls at the country level. 95% confidence intervals based on standard errors calculated using a nested bootstrap for surveys rounds within countries (500 iterations). Results reported are for individuals surveyed within 365 days of election, robust to full sample. Higher values correspond to more positive attitudes toward immigration. Results are robust to the inclusion of these controls.

		Dependent variable:		
		Attitudes towards Immigration		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Distance to Elections	0.00003 (0.00001, 0.0001)		0.00004 (0.00001, 0.0001)	
Logged Distance to Elections		0.008 (0.003, 0.01)		0.003 (0.001, 0.005)
Age	−0.012 (−0.012, −0.011)	−0.012 (−0.012, −0.011)	−0.012 (−0.012, −0.012)	−0.012 (−0.012, −0.012)
Years of Education	0.013 (0.011, 0.013)	0.013 (0.011, 0.013)	0.013 (0.01, 0.013)	0.013 (0.012, 0.014)
Female	0.011 (−0.001, 0.020)	0.011 (−0.001, 0.020)	0.012 (0.012, 0.012)	0.013 (0.005, 0.023)
Constant	0.239 (0.194, 0.290)	0.204 (0.157, 0.264)	0.225 (0.192, 0.254)	0.215 (0.171, 0.274)
Country & Round FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	196,125	196,125	276,947	276,947
R^2	0.117	0.117	0.126	0.126
Adjusted R^2	0.117	0.117	0.126	0.126
Residual Std. Error	1.455 (df = 218305)	1.455 (df = 218305)	1.446 (df = 308503)	1.446 (df = 308503)
F Statistic	707.793 (df = 41; 218305)	707.918 (df = 41; 218305)	1,086.427 (df = 41; 308503)	1,086.297 (df = 41; 308503)

Table A.4: **Results using Country and Round Fixed Effects:** Results using country, round, and country and round fixed effects on the first principal component of attitudes toward immigration. 95% confidence intervals based on standard errors calculated using a nested bootstrap for surveys rounds within countries (500 iterations). Columns (1) and (2) include only individuals surveyed within 365 days of elections; columns (3) and (4) include the full sample. Higher values correspond to more positive attitudes toward immigration. Results are robust to these alternate specifications.

		Dependent variable:		
		Attitudes Toward Immigration		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Distance to Elections	0.0003** (0.0001, 0.001)		0.0003** (0.00003, 0.001)	
Logged Distance to Elections		0.062*** (0.031, 0.092)		0.054*** (0.029, 0.080)
Age	−0.010*** (−0.012, −0.007)	−0.012*** (−0.014, −0.010)	−0.010*** (−0.012, −0.008)	−0.012*** (−0.014, −0.010)
Years of Education	0.018*** (0.012, 0.023)	0.015*** (0.010, 0.019)	0.019*** (0.014, 0.024)	0.016*** (0.011, 0.021)
Female	0.041 (−0.014, 0.096)	0.012 (−0.039, 0.063)	0.037 (−0.020, 0.094)	0.011 (−0.045, 0.066)
Observations	196,125	196,125	276,947	276,947
R^2	0.116	0.119	0.122	0.124
Adjusted R^2	0.116	0.119	0.121	0.124
Residual Std. Error	1.450 (df = 200463)	1.448 (df = 200463)	1.435 (df = 276914)	1.433 (df = 276914)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.5: **Results using Clustered Standard Errors:** Results using country-round clustered standard errors, reporting 95% confidence intervals. Columns (1) and (2) include only individuals surveyed within 365 days of elections; columns (3) and (4) include the full sample. Higher values correspond to more positive attitudes toward immigration. Results are robust to this alternate specification.

	Dependent variable:	
	Attitudes toward Immigration	
	(1)	(2)
Logged Distance to Elections	−0.004	−0.003
	(−0.009, 0.001)	(−0.011, 0.005)
Age	−0.009	−0.011
	(−0.009, −0.009)	(−0.011, −0.011)
Education	0.020	0.017
	(0.019, 0.021)	(0.016, 0.018)
Female	0.020	0.019
	(0.008, 0.033)	(0.004, 0.034)
Income	0.072	0.056
	(0.070, 0.075)	(0.053, 0.059)
Country GDP		0.00001
		(0.00001, 0.00001)
Country Migration		0.00000
		(0.00000, 0.00000)
Country Gini		0.031
		(0.024, 0.038)
Constant	−0.171	−1.405
	(−0.209, −0.134)	(−1.602, −1.207)
Country & Round FE	No	Yes
Observations	229,940	140,654
R^2	0.049	0.166
Adjusted R^2	0.049	0.166
Residual Std. Error	1.494 (df = 229934)	1.392 (df = 140616)
F Statistic	2,349.217 (df = 5; 229934)	757.114 (df = 37; 140616)

Table A.6: **Placebo Tests**: Test based on the creation of randomly generated new elections between 2000-2012 and then re-run our analysis, assigning each individual a 'fake' election date. Using the same empirical specifications, we find that proximity to these pretend elections does not predict attitudes towards immigration, as seen in Table A.6.

	Dependent variable:	
	Immigration Google Trends	
	(1)	(2)
Election Period	1.204	
	$(-3.132,\ 5.540)$	
Nationalist Rhetoric		-0.672
		$(-2.720,\ 1.375)$
Constant	22.537	25.227
	$(21.960,\ 23.114)$	$(18.538,\ 31.915)$
Observations	5,024	86
Adjusted R^2	-0.0001	-0.007

Table A.7: **Impact of Elections on Immigration Google Trends**: We find no correlation between elections and upswings in the salience of immigration as an issue as measured by Google Trends. Outcome variable is prevalence of the term "immigration" in a given month. In column (1) dependent variable is whether or not there was an election during that period. Column (2) looks only at months where there was an election to see if nationalist rhetoric by parties is correlated with more individuals googling "immigration."

	Dependent variable:			
	Attitudes towards the EU			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Distance to Elections	−0.0002 (−0.0003, −0.0002)		−0.0001 (−0.0001, −0.0001)	
Logged Distance to Elections		−0.022 (−0.026, −0.018)		−0.015 (−0.018, −0.011)
Age	0.004 (0.004, 0.004)	0.004 (0.004, 0.004)	0.004 (0.004, 0.004)	0.004 (0.004, 0.004)
Years of Education	−0.006 (−0.006, −0.005)	−0.006 (−0.006, −0.005)	−0.006 (−0.006, −0.005)	−0.006 (−0.006, −0.005)
Female	0.130 (0.121, 0.138)	0.130 (0.121, 0.138)	0.133 (0.125, 0.140)	0.133 (0.125, 0.140)
Constant	3.631 (3.613, 3.647)	3.697 (3.672, 3.722)	3.616 (3.602, 3.631)	3.670 (3.649, 3.691)
Country-Specific Time Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	129,379	129,379	190,751	190,751
R^2	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.073
Adjusted R^2	0.072	0.072	0.073	0.073
Residual Std. Error	2.538 (df = 129288)	2.538 (df = 129288)	2.527 (df = 190635)	2.527 (df = 190635)
F Statistic	112.493 (df = 90; 129288)	112.515 (df = 90; 129288)	131.197 (df = 115; 190635)	131.200 (df = 115; 190635)

Table A.8: **The Effect of Elections on Support for the European Union**: 95% confidence intervals based on standard errors calculated using a nested bootstrap for surveys rounds within countries (500 iterations). Columns (1) and (2) include only individuals surveyed within 365 days of elections; columns (3) and (4) include the full sample.

	Dependent variable:			
	Attitudes towards LGBT			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Distance to Elections	−0.0002 (−0.0003, −0.0002)		−0.0001 (−0.0001, −0.0001)	
Logged Distance to Elections		−0.022 (−0.026, −0.018)		−0.015 (−0.018, −0.011)
Age	0.004 (0.004, 0.004)	0.004 (0.004, 0.004)	0.004 (0.004, 0.004)	0.004 (0.004, 0.004)
Years of Education	−0.006 (−0.006, −0.005)	−0.006 (−0.006, −0.005)	−0.006 (−0.006, −0.005)	−0.006 (−0.006, −0.005)
Female	0.130 (0.121, 0.138)	0.130 (0.121, 0.138)	0.133 (0.125, 0.140)	0.133 (0.125, 0.140)
Constant	3.631 (3.613, 3.647)	3.697 (3.672, 3.722)	3.616 (3.602, 3.631)	3.670 (3.649, 3.691)
Country-Specific Time Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	198,561	198,561	280,330	280,330
R^2	0.206	0.206	0.206	0.206
Adjusted R^2	0.206	0.206	0.205	0.205
Residual Std. Error	1.049 (df = 198433)	1.049 (df = 198433)	1.037 (df = 280170)	1.037 (df = 280170)
F Statistic	405.548 (df = 127; 198433)	405.559 (df = 127; 198433)	456.858 (df = 159; 280170)	456.862 (df = 159; 280170)

Table A.9: **The Effect of Elections on Attitudes toward LGBT Individuals**: 95% confidence intervals based on standard errors calculated using a nested bootstrap for surveys rounds within countries (500 iterations). Individuals are, on average, more supportive of LGBT rights closer to elections. Columns (1) and (2) include only individuals surveyed within 365 days of elections; columns (3) and (4) include the full sample.

		Dependent variable:		
		Attitudes towards Science		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Distance to Elections	−0.0002 (−0.0003, −0.0002)		−0.0001 (−0.0001, −0.0001)	
Logged Distance to Elections		−0.022 (−0.026, −0.018)		−0.015 (−0.018, −0.011)
Age	0.004 (0.004, 0.004)	0.004 (0.004, 0.004)	0.004 (0.004, 0.004)	0.004 (0.004, 0.004)
Years of Education	−0.006 (−0.006, −0.005)	−0.006 (−0.006, −0.005)	−0.006 (−0.006, −0.005)	−0.006 (−0.006, −0.005)
Female	0.130 (0.121, 0.138)	0.130 (0.121, 0.138)	0.133 (0.125, 0.140)	0.133 (0.125, 0.140)
Constant	3.631 (3.613, 3.647)	3.697 (3.672, 3.722)	3.616 (3.602, 3.631)	3.670 (3.649, 3.691)
Country-Specific Time Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	144,295	144,295	197,467	197,467
R^2	0.177	0.177	0.165	0.165
Adjusted R^2	0.176	0.176	0.164	0.164
Residual Std. Error	0.975 (df = 144200)	0.976 (df = 144200)	0.967 (df = 197351)	0.967 (df = 197351)
F Statistic	329.171 (df = 94; 144200)	329.053 (df = 94; 144200)	339.029 (df = 115; 197351)	338.943 (df = 115; 197351)

Table A.10: **The Effect of Elections on Attitudes Toward Science**: 95% confidence intervals based on standard errors calculated using a nested bootstrap for surveys rounds within countries (500 iterations). Individuals are more supportive of science and environmental issues closer to elections. Columns (1) and (2) include only individuals surveyed within 365 days of elections; columns (3) and (4) include the full sample.

	Dependent variable:			
	Attitudes towards Inequality			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Distance to Elections	−0.0002 (−0.0003, −0.0002)		−0.0001 (−0.0001, −0.0001)	
Logged Distance to Elections		−0.022 (−0.026, −0.018)		−0.015 (−0.018, −0.011)
Age	0.004 (0.004, 0.004)	0.004 (0.004, 0.004)	0.004 (0.004, 0.004)	0.004 (0.004, 0.004)
Years of Education	−0.006 (−0.006, −0.005)	−0.006 (−0.006, −0.005)	−0.006 (−0.006, −0.005)	−0.006 (−0.006, −0.005)
Female	0.130 (0.121, 0.138)	0.130 (0.121, 0.138)	0.133 (0.125, 0.140)	0.133 (0.125, 0.140)
Constant	3.631 (3.613, 3.647)	3.697 (3.672, 3.722)	3.616 (3.602, 3.631)	3.670 (3.649, 3.691)
Country-Specific Time Trends	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	202,744	202,744	285,472	285,472
R^2	0.109	0.109	0.107	0.107
Adjusted R^2	0.108	0.108	0.107	0.107
Residual Std. Error	0.980 (df = 202616)	0.980 (df = 202616)	0.981 (df = 285312)	0.981 (df = 285312)
F Statistic	195.228 (df = 127; 202616)	195.247 (df = 127; 202616)	216.073 (df = 159; 285312)	216.088 (df = 159; 285312)

Table A.11: **The Effect of Elections on Preferences for Redistribution and Attitudes toward Inequality**: 95% confidence intervals based on standard errors calculated using a nested bootstrap for surveys rounds within countries (500 iterations). Individuals are, on average, more supportive of redistribution closer to elections. Columns (1) and (2) include only individuals surveyed within 365 days of elections; columns (3) and (4) include the full sample.

	Dependent variable:			
	LGBT	Science and Environment	Support for EU	Welfare and Inequality
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Distance to Elections	−0.0001 (−0.0001, −0.00005)	0.00003 (0.00000, 0.0001)	0.00001 (−0.00003, 0.00005)	−0.0001 (−0.0001, −0.00005)
Age	−0.003 (−0.003, −0.003)	−0.00001 (−0.0002, 0.0002)	0.005 (0.004, 0.005)	0.003 (0.003, 0.003)
Years of Education	0.002 (0.002, 0.002)	−0.001 (−0.001, −0.001)	0.002 (0.001, 0.003)	−0.002 (−0.002, −0.001)
Female	0.082 (0.077, 0.087)	−0.058 (−0.065, −0.050)	−0.256 (−0.270, −0.242)	0.017 (0.013, 0.022)
Constant	1.240 (1.230, 1.250)	2.294 (2.277, 2.311)	1.984 (1.953, 2.015)	1.038 (1.029, 1.047)
Observations	311,648	235,597	209,823	320,829
R^2	0.060	0.128	0.030	0.055
Adjusted R^2	0.060	0.128	0.030	0.054
Residual Std. Error	0.673 (df = 311611)	0.979 (df = 235560)	1.633 (df = 209786)	0.643 (df = 320792)
F Statistic	553.322 (df = 36; 311611)	959.346 (df = 36; 235560)	182.866 (df = 36; 209786)	513.672 (df = 36; 320792)

Table A.12: **Alternate Issue Polarization:** Effect of distance to elections on individual polarization on potentially political issues with 95% confidence intervals. Polarization is measured by centering the outcome variable on zero and taking the absolute value of the measure. Columns (1) and (2) include only individuals surveyed within 365 days of elections; columns (3) and (4) include the full sample.

	Dependent variable:			
	LGBT	Science and Environment	Support for EU	Welfare and Inequality
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Distance to Elections	−0.002	0.010	0.002	−0.010
	(−0.005, −0.0001)	(0.006, 0.014)	(−0.004, 0.009)	(−0.012, −0.007)
Age	−0.003	−0.00000	0.005	0.003
	(−0.003, −0.003)	(−0.0002, 0.0002)	(0.004, 0.005)	(0.003, 0.003)
Years of Education	0.002	−0.001	0.002	−0.002
	(0.002, 0.002)	(−0.001, −0.001)	(0.001, 0.003)	(−0.002, −0.001)
Female	0.082	−0.057	−0.256	0.017
	(0.077, 0.087)	(−0.065, −0.050)	(−0.270, −0.242)	(0.013, 0.022)
Constant	1.238	2.252	1.974	1.071
	(1.223, 1.252)	(2.227, 2.277)	(1.929, 2.020)	(1.058, 1.085)
Observations	311,648	235,597	209,823	320,829
R^2	0.060	0.128	0.030	0.054
Adjusted R^2	0.060	0.128	0.030	0.054
Residual Std. Error	0.673 (df = 311611)	0.979 (df = 235560)	1.633 (df = 209786)	0.643 (df = 320792)
F Statistic	551.304 (df = 36; 311611)	959.928 (df = 36; 235560)	182.874 (df = 36; 209786)	513.468 (df = 36; 320792)

Table A.13: **Alternate Issue Polarization using Logged Distance:** Effect of distance to elections on individual polarization on potentially political issues, reporting the effect of the log of distance and 95% confidence intervals. Polarization is measured by centering the outcome variable on zero and taking the absolute value of the measure. Columns (1) and (2) include only individuals surveyed within 365 days of elections; columns (3) and (4) include the full sample.