

From Low-Cost Flights to the Ballot Box: How Eastern European Migration Shaped Far-Right Voting in London

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We examine patterns of migration and far-right voting in London following the eastern enlargement of the European Union in 2004 and 2007. To address immigrant sorting, we draw on transport and geography scholarship about migration to develop an instrumental variable approach. Our data set combines ward-level election and census information with georeferenced data on preexisting bus stops providing access to low-cost flight connections with the new European Union states. We estimate a large positive effect of Eastern European migration on changes in support for anti-immigrant parties between the 2004 and 2012 London Assembly elections. Our analysis suggests that concerns about affordable housing were a channel through which this migration affected support for the populist right but not the main fascist party. Our study highlights the utility of distinguishing different migrants and far-right parties, contributes evidence from Britain on how migration affects local elections, and offers a methodological alternative to the shift-share instrument.

The eastern enlargement of the European Union (EU) in 2004 and 2007 brought unprecedented access to the UK for citizens of 10 Central and Eastern European countries. The likely population flows resulting from this development were difficult to predict. One major study commissioned by the UK government considered the country “not a very popular migration destination” and estimated an annual net inflow of between 5,000 and 13,000 from these EU accession countries in the years up to 2010 (Dustmann et al. 2003, 57). Instead, official statistics show actual numbers averaged more than 100,000.¹ Unlike most of its counterparts elsewhere in the EU, the British government did little to restrict these flows. This period thus saw a radical change in migration into the United Kingdom more generally and its capital city in particular.

In this article, we examine how this migration affected support for far-right parties and draw out implications for the study of the electoral effects of migration. By focusing specif-

ically on migrants from the accession countries, this setting also helps with understanding how EU policies deliberately designed to promote cross-national mobility affected relations between its peoples. London provides a unique laboratory, due to the scale and diversity of migration into the city and the availability of highly granular electoral and census data. Expanding the existing empirical tool kit, we address the problem of migrant sorting with a novel instrumental variable (IV) strategy that recognizes the dominance of a particular transport mode, low-cost flights, with a distinct infrastructure for this specific migrant group. This allows us to estimate a large positive effect of Eastern European migration on changes in support for far-right parties in London elections between 2004 and 2012. In addition, we investigate the channels that might drive this result and find that housing costs condition the electoral response to migration for the populist right.

Our work contributes a nuanced analysis that distinguishes different categories of migrants. In doing so, we complement

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1. Central and Eastern European residents from the 2004 accession countries increased from an estimated 167,000 in 2004 to 1,323,000 in 2018, while those from Bulgaria and Romania increased from 42,000 in 2007 to 495,000 in 2018 (Vargas-Silva and Fernandez-Reino 2018, 4).

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and extend work by Dancygier (2010) on earlier waves of migration from former colonies to Britain and its capital city, contrasting different political consequences associated with West Indian and South Asian immigration. We focus on Britain's second major wave of postwar migration. In studying its electoral consequences, we draw on the work of transport and geography scholars who have noted the "hypermobile" nature of this migration, characterized by a far higher degree of connectivity between the country of birth and the host country of migrants than in preceding population movements (Burrell 2011; Pooley 2017). Previous migrants typically faced various (logistic, legal, political, affordability, etc.) constraints to frequent travel back to their countries of birth. In recent decades, however, the liberalization of transportation markets in some parts of the world has transformed the availability and affordability of cross-national travel (Akgüç, Beblavý, and Simonelli 2018; Dobruszkes 2009). This insight underpins our empirical strategy, but our focus is also important in substantive terms. Prior research highlights that different categories of migration can affect political attitudes and voting outcomes in distinct ways (e.g., Colantone and Stanig 2018; Dancygier 2010; Ford 2011). The category we examine is especially important where policy makers actively promote economic integration and cross-national mobility.

Our analysis also differentiates far-right parties. While we estimate effects of similar magnitude for the two parties we examine, a nuanced analysis of the supply side turns out to be important for the channels that drive the electoral response. Using a split sample strategy that exploits variation in initial conditions across wards, we study both economic and cultural threat channels. Among the major grievances emphasized in the political campaigns of far-right parties is the lack of affordable housing. We find that wards with lower initial housing costs show higher support for one of two far-right parties in response to migration. Housing costs condition the electoral response to migration for the populist right but not for the main fascist party. This lends further support to claims by scholars who have emphasized the importance of distinguishing different categories of far-right parties (see Golder 2003, 443). The far-right vote is not homogeneous, and different parties use different mechanisms to attract support. In the United Kingdom, economic stress induced by the abolition of housing-related benefits has been identified as a significant factor explaining subsequent support for exit from the EU (Fetzer 2019). Our analysis chimes with this in suggesting concerns about housing costs as a key driver of support for the populist right in this period.

We contribute to a growing literature on the electoral impact of migration that attempts to address threats to valid inference (e.g., Barone et al. 2016; Calderon, Fouka, and Tabellini

2019; Dinas et al. 2019; Dustmann, Vasiljeva, and Piil Damm 2019). Subnational units are more comparable than countries, which helps to mitigate concerns about omitted variable bias (Golder 2016). Our analysis adds evidence from Britain to the literature on the effects of local-level migration on support for far-right parties in local or national elections (Cools, Finseraas, and Rogeberg 2021), but with a novel methodological approach. With rare exceptions (e.g., Dustmann et al. 2019) the location decisions of migrants are not (as-if) random. In attempts to address the problem of immigrant sorting, many scholars rely on IVs including the shift-share instrument (e.g., Edo et al. 2019; Halla, Wagner, and Zweimüller 2017; Mayda, Peri, and Steingress 2018). The latter exploits an initial distribution of migrants to project the flow of new migrants across geographic units, based on the idea that location decisions are influenced by preexisting networks. Jaeger, Ruist, and Stuhler (2018) note the heavy reliance on this approach and caution that when the shift-share instrument is correlated with ongoing responses to previous immigration shocks, estimates may not identify the short-run causal effect (see also Goldsmith-Pinkham, Sorkin, and Swift 2020).

We offer an alternative empirical strategy. Where migrants maintain regular links with their home countries, their location decisions partly reflect ease of access to relevant travel infrastructure (Burrell 2011; Dobruszkes 2009). Our study shows that the distribution of migrants from the new EU member states across London is linked to the location of preexisting infrastructure that provides access to the principal means of travel to and from their home countries, especially low-cost airlines. We combine 2001 and 2011 census data on the inflow of migrants into London with information on the location of preexisting bus stops serving the two dominant airports for cheap flights to and from Central and Eastern Europe. Passenger survey data confirm the importance of this mode of travel to the relevant airports. We also confirm empirically that these bus stops are associated with changes in the population of migrants from this region but not other migrants. Using proximity to these bus stops as an instrument for ward-level increases in the population from these countries, we uncover a large positive effect on changes in support for far-right anti-immigrant parties between the 2004 and 2012 London elections. Our approach provides an alternative strategy when data limitations hamper the deployment of the shift-share instrument and as a robustness check.

We proceed as follows: the following section provides background on EU enlargement and the subsequent increase in migration with a focus on London, the empirical setting for our study. We then motivate our empirical approach, explain the construction of our IV, and set out the data and specification. The results section presents our core

estimates of the impact of migration from the new EU members states on support for far-right parties. We also summarize a range of robustness checks and probe underlying channels. The conclusion draws together the main findings and implications.

EU ENLARGEMENT AND MIGRATION IN LONDON

Our study exploits significant spatial heterogeneity in the changing composition of London's population as a result of the eastern enlargement of the EU. In the first decade of the millennium, 10 Central and Eastern European member states joined the EU. The EU8 comprising the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined in 2004, followed by Bulgaria and Romania, or the EU2, in 2007.² This offers a unique context to examine the electoral effects of migration caused by the UK government's decision not to impose transitional work restrictions on workers from EU8 countries. Most other EU governments feared that a large influx of migrants would put pressure on labor markets and implemented a phasing-in period of up to seven years for the free movement of workers from the accession countries. In 2004, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Sweden were the only countries that did not impose any restrictions and allowed unfettered access to their labor market from day 1 (Becker and Fetzer 2016). With its significantly fewer restrictions compared to countries such as Germany or Austria, many Eastern European migrants chose to come to the United Kingdom (Kone 2018).³

London reflects Britain's postwar history of migration in the composition of its population unlike any other part of the country (Judah 2016). EU enlargement contributed to a substantial inflow of migrants to the capital, with census data showing over a quarter of a million residents from the EU8+2 countries added between 2001 and 2011. London thus offers an ideal laboratory for studying the electoral implications of postenlargement migration. Because of its large number of foreign-born residents, we can obtain highly disaggregated population data by country of birth without running into statistical disclosure problems, which arise when individuals are

identifiable from census data. This is crucial for our study design, as it allows us to probe electoral responses to specific migrants with empirical strategies that require the most granular data on country of birth, as we set out in the following section. Figure 1 shows that the share of migrants from the accession countries increased almost everywhere in London between the 2001 and 2011 census rounds, but with significant variation across electoral wards. We discuss the data in more detail below.

This development offered fertile ground for far-right parties to tap into real or perceived grievances associated with immigration (Campbell 1965; Dancygier 2010; Golder 2003; Ivarsflaten 2008). In addition to fears related to increased competition for jobs, these parties amplified welfare concerns by claiming that migrants put pressure on housing and local services and extract welfare benefits (Becker and Fetzer 2016; Clarke, Goodwin, and Whiteley 2017).⁴ In the run-up to the 2016 referendum on leaving the EU, one infamous campaign poster claimed the United Kingdom was at a "breaking point." It showed a long queue of dark-skinned migrants and demanded: "We must break free of the EU and take back control of our borders." A popular portrait of the capital city during this period portrays it as teeming with migrants, many unable to speak English, sleeping rough or in overcrowded housing and working for cut-throat wages (Judah 2016). Far-right parties campaigned on policies to prioritize natives over migrants. In their 2012 London electoral campaign, the UK Independence Party (UKIP) promised "more jobs for Londoners by saying 'No' to open-door immigration" and prioritizing Londoners "over migrants and asylum seekers" for jobs and housing. The fascist British National Party (BNP) demanded that "British people must be housed first" and "British jobs for British workers."⁵ Our analysis probes to what extent these messages are related to voting patterns.

The unique electoral system used in London Assembly elections is a second factor that motivates our focus on the capital. We analyze local elections as opposed to national ones because they allow us to carry out a highly spatially disaggregated analysis of voting patterns at the ward level. In Britain, national election results are announced at the borough or constituency level, which are far larger geographic areas.⁶ The granularity of

2. Official UK statistics label these groups of new member states as the "EU8" and "EU2" respectively and we collectively refer to them as the "new EU" or "EU8+2" countries.

3. Although Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU three years after the EU8, this matters little for our study. We analyze the impact of migration as captured in the 2001 and 2011 census rounds, which span both accession dates. Although EU2 nationals, unlike their EU8 counterparts, were subject to interim work restrictions until the end of 2013, census data show a sharp increase in London residents born in Bulgaria (+24,200, or 802%) and Romania (+41,800, or 1,371%) between 2001 and 2011. These growth rates are the sixth and second highest of all immigrant groups, which is also reflected in EU2 air passenger traffic during this period (see fig. B4).

4. Contrary to such perceptions, European migrants in fact make a positive net fiscal contribution to the UK exchequer, unlike natives (Dustmann and Frattini 2014).

5. Appendix A displays the 2012 campaign leaflets of these parties.

6. Our analysis focuses on 620 wards across 32 local authorities, while for general elections London had 74 parliamentary constituencies from 1997 until 2010 (when the number was reduced to 73). The total population of wards ranged between 4,692 and 17,257 in 2001 and between 5,110 and 23,084 in 2011. In contrast, parliamentary constituencies in

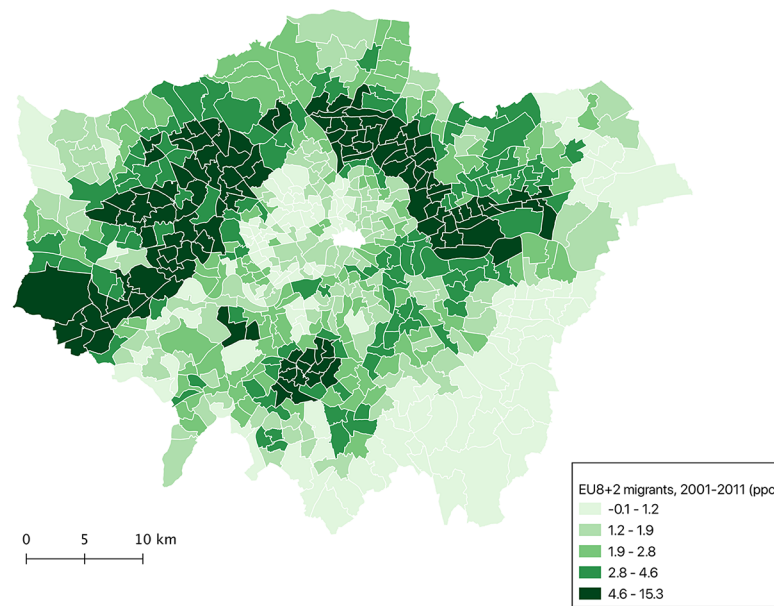


Figure 1. Change in EU8+2 migrants, 2001–11

our ward-level study also stands out in comparison to prior work, which uses data at the level of municipalities (Barone et al. 2016; Dinas et al. 2019; Dustmann et al. 2019; Steinmayr 2021), counties (Calderon et al. 2019; Mayda et al. 2018), regions (Edo et al. 2019), or congressional constituencies (Mayda, Peri, and Steingress 2016). Our setup thus allows us to analyze the impact of migration and the underlying channels that drive the results at the neighborhood level.

Greater London Authority elections are held every four years, and voters simultaneously choose the mayor of London, 14 constituency assembly members, and 11 London-wide assembly members. Elections to the London Assembly are unusual among local governments in the United Kingdom in that they use an “additional member system” combining “first-past-the-post” as well as closed list proportional representation.⁷ We focus on the London-wide assembly elections for several reasons.⁸ This is the only context in

which we can capture the purest form of support for far-right parties. Votes cast for the London-wide party list are least likely to be distorted by strategic considerations that play a role in other settings, notably the first-past-the-post electoral system used for parliamentary and some other local elections in Britain. Moreover, this is the only ballot choice for which voters are asked to vote for a party, not a candidate, meaning that party affiliation will be the primary heuristic used by most voters. Finally, the ballot is unique to the whole of London; hence, there is no need to account for candidate effects, ballot order effects, or whether a party has fielded a candidate. Next, we explain in more detail how these elements feed into the empirical strategy.

EMPIRICAL STRATEGY

In exploiting the geographic distribution of migrants, we face the problem of endogeneity of settlement choices. To overcome this issue, many papers use a shift-share instrument, which interacts national inflows by country of origin with an initial geographic distribution of immigrants. This is an attractive solution where previous migration shocks are unlikely to be correlated with ongoing responses (Jaeger et al. 2018). However, constructing a shift-share instrument is not always possible. In our case, we can use data from either the 1991 or the 2001 census to re-create the original (preenlargement) stock of migrants from new EU member states. The 1991 census data capture the distribution of migrants before the granting of freedom of movement and residence rights to nationals of EU

2010 had total populations between 81,831 and 136,111 (London Parliamentary Constituency Profiles 2010, London Datastore, <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/london-parliamentary-constituency-profiles>).

7. The D’Hondt method is used to allocate London-wide seats from party lists. A party receives seats when this method yields a number that is greater than its constituency seats, using its party list to allocate any extra seats.

8. We also analyzed the results from the Constituency London Assembly elections and found similar patterns of support. A variety of administrative and empirical issues (e.g., the BNP did not put forward any candidates in 2004 and only ran in six out of the 14 constituencies in 2012; UKIP ran under a different name in 2012) make these findings less useful, and we do not present them here.

countries in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992.⁹ However, most countries that joined the EU in 2004 did not exist as independent states when the 1991 census was designed.¹⁰ While the 2001 census contains reliable disaggregated country of birth data, we worry that the distribution it captures is not exogenous, as migration patterns may have started to shift in anticipation of the EU's eastern enlargement.

To address identification challenges, we seek inspiration from the transportation and geography literature. The role of transportation infrastructure is a recognized but neglected element in the literature on migration and mobility (Pooley 2017). Studies of different urban contexts find that location decisions are linked to access to public transport, on which new migrants especially tend to rely more than established residents (Chatman and Klein 2009; Perez, Dragicevic, and Gaudreau 2019; Tsang and Rohr 2011), and that some migrants value access to airports (Maslova and King 2020). Below, we examine the link between transportation and migration with high cross-national mobility. We then set out how we use insights from this literature in order to address empirical challenges in our study of the electoral consequences of migration.

The period around the start of the millennium was characterized in many industrialized countries by increased competition in aviation markets. The entry of low-cost operators, containing operating costs and offering more basic “no-frills” services than traditional airlines, made air travel affordable on a wide scale not seen before. In 1993, the US Department of Transportation described this as the “Southwest Effect” with reference to the airline’s expansion. In Europe, too, low-cost or “budget” airlines grew rapidly during this period. Liberalization from 1992 allowed EU airlines with an operating license to serve the entire EU market without commercial restrictions. Low-cost carriers took advantage of this development and increased their seat share from less than 2% in the early 1990s to more than 40% by 2010, exceeding that of “legacy carriers”—those with established routes before liberalization—thereafter. In 2016, Ryanair, the EU’s first low-cost carrier, became Europe’s largest airline by passengers carried (Akgüç et al. 2018). During this period, low-cost carriers were a powerful force behind an expansion and diversification of flight net-

works on west-east routes with the new member states. Especially the Irish carrier Ryanair and Hungarian airline WizzAir aggressively increased their provision of flights on west-east routes and commenced a range of new services (Dobruszkes 2009; Jankiewicz and Huderek-Glapska 2016).

Policy assessments of the consequences of low-cost travel in Europe have focused on economic aspects and benefits in terms of mobility. The European Parliament has noted impacts on established airlines and airports, competition, and regional development (Macário et al. 2007). Low-cost air travel can increase tourism and business-related travel, and it boosts the mobility of labor and students by lowering the cost of migration. Following the initial migration of an individual, affordable travel facilitates visits to and from friends and relatives, or “VFR” travel in industry jargon. A leading EU think tank concludes that low-cost carriers “play a vital role in bringing Europe closer together by fostering mobility and making air travel affordable to a wider public” (Akgüç et al. 2018, 44).

This unprecedented level of connectivity is a crucial new element that characterizes this period of European integration. In sharp contrast, earlier migration from Central and Eastern Europe to the west was typically final and much more constrained (Ignatowicz 2011, 35). Traditional airlines were too expensive and alternative modes of transport—coach, ferry, or rail—too cumbersome to enable large volumes of migration with high levels of mobility (Akgüç et al. 2018). When the EU’s eastern enlargement removed restrictive work and travel rules, low-cost carriers fueled and shaped this new wave of migration. Citizens from the new EU member states could travel to and work in the old ones with far greater ease than at any point in the past. Moreover, access to regular and affordable journeys back home allowed them to maintain family and social ties and lowered the perceived risk of migration. According to Ignatowicz (2011, 43), this also had significant emotional value, since mobility is “not only about the actual physical movement but also about a feeling of being in a privileged position to go home at any time.” Burrell (2011, 1023) sums up: “Ryanair flights define this new migration.”

This literature provides the underpinnings of our empirical approach. The insight we develop is that the distribution of highly mobile migrants is likely to be systematically linked to their access to low-cost travel infrastructure that connects them—both physically and emotionally—with their home countries. This allows us to link the location decisions of this category of migrants to specific preexisting access points to low-cost air travel to and from Central and Eastern Europe in our empirical context. If empirically confirmed, this link offers a strategy to overcome bias due to immigrant sorting and to assess the causal effect of migration on electoral support for far-right parties in such settings.

9. The Treaty of Maastricht created the EU and took effect in November 1993. It established, among others, the freedom of movement of persons. This refers to freedom of settlement, freedom to access employment and to work, and freedom to provide services in another EU member state.

10. In 1991, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania became independent from the USSR, and Slovenia declared independence from Yugoslavia. In 1993, Czechoslovakia dissolved into two independent states, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

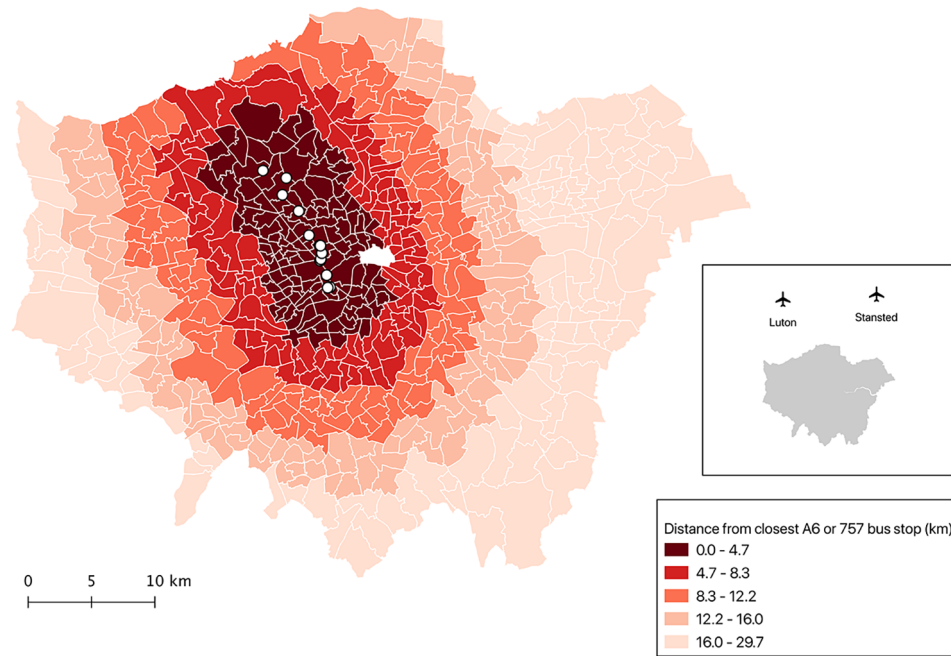


Figure 2. Proximity to bus stops instrument

Accordingly, we instrument the distribution of new EU migrants across the London wards between 2001 and 2011 using distance from the nearest relevant travel hub:

$$z_w = \min(|\text{Centroid}_w - \text{BusStop}_i|), \quad (1)$$

where the instrument z_w captures the distance, in kilometers, from each ward w to the nearest preexisting stop i for bus 757 (connecting central London to Luton, the base of WizzAir) or A6 (for Stansted, the base of Ryanair). As we explain in detail in appendix C, these two operators dominated bus transport to the respective airports, and their buses traveled along the same main route north through London. We only consider stops established before May 2004. We use each ward’s geometric center Centroid_w to calculate the distance to all of these preexisting 757 and A6 bus stops. For each ward, we then keep the shortest distance. This is illustrated and summarized in figure 2, where the bus stop locations are indicated on the map as white dots. The darker the shading of a ward, the closer its centroid is to the nearest of these bus stops. The inset map shows the location of Luton and Stansted airports, both to the north of London. Flights to and from the capital are also available at several other airports that are omitted here, including Heathrow in the west and Gatwick in the south, the two main airports in the country during this period, as well as London City and Southend in the east. However, as we show in appendix B, only Luton and Stansted saw a sharp and sustained rise in passenger traffic with the EU8+2 countries over this period, as WizzAir and Ryanair came to dominate these specific

routes and acted as main conduits for migration from the region (see also Burrell 2011; Dobruszkes 2009).

We focus on these specific bus stops, as opposed to access points to other modes of transport, for several reasons. Luton and Stansted airports are not connected to London’s underground network, unlike the capital’s largest airport Heathrow, thus ruling out this mode of transport. Moreover, access to the underground network is likely to affect the location decisions of recent migrants more widely, which implies a violation of the exclusion restriction. We know that public transport is disproportionately important for recent migrants in particular, as they are less likely to have a car (e.g., Ignatowicz 2011, 36; Tsang and Rohr 2011).¹¹ For those without a car, taking a train or taxi could be alternatives, but both of these are significantly more expensive than a bus.¹² This makes the bus a likely choice for budget-conscious travelers. Statistics from this period confirm that sizable proportions of travelers used the bus to get to both

11. Census 2011 table DC4203EW from the Office for National Statistics shows tenure by car or van availability by ethnic group (<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/dc4203ew>). In London, merely 28% of those classified as English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, or British lived in households without a car or van, while the equivalent figure for “other white” (such as European migrants from the EU8+2 countries) was 43%.

12. The price of train journeys between London and Luton or Stansted listed in travel guides from 2004 that we consulted (see app. C) was up to twice the cost of a bus. The listed price of a one-way transfer on a London taxi, or “black cab,” was up to 11 times the price for a bus. Private hire vehicles or minicabs can be somewhat cheaper than a black cab.

Luton and Stansted airports.¹³ Overall, these are strong reasons to focus on this mode of transport to the two airports specifically for EU8+2 migrants who came to the capital during these years.

The validity of our instrument rests on the key assumption that the evolution of far-right political success was not affected by the existence of these travel nodes, except for their effect through the proportion of immigrants who decide to settle in their proximity for easy access to means of travel to their home countries. In our case, the establishment of this specific transport infrastructure precedes the eastern enlargement of the EU. To verify the location of individual bus stops at the time of enlargement, we obtained official confirmation from the responsible government body, Transport for London, of the preexisting stops on the main routes of the two dominant operators.¹⁴ In the case of the 757 to Luton, this line was established before the end of the Cold War, in the wake of the 1980 Transport Act deregulating coach services. Bus services to the redeveloped Stansted airport were in place following the opening of a new terminal building in 1991. At this time, much of the context for this article—the EU, the Greater London Assembly, several of the later accession countries, and liberalized air travel—did not even exist.

While the decisions of some airlines to expand their routes between London and Central and Eastern Europe responded to demand, our identification strategy requires that their choice of airport base in London was exogenous to the processes we study. Indeed, low-cost carriers chose their airport bases before any large-scale migration movements from the region to London. Ryanair moved its base from Gatwick to Stansted in 1991 already, at a time when the outcomes of the transformation process in Central and Eastern Europe were highly uncertain and more than a decade before the accession to the EU of new member states emerging from this process. WizzAir commenced flights to and from Luton in May 2004, coinciding

with their accession. The airline had also considered Stansted as a base. Importantly, these were not the only feasible airports for low-cost carriers, as London had a total of six international airports. Had these airlines chosen different airports as their bases, we contend, subsequent migrant settlement patterns across London would likely look different, too. Given the timing of the different decisions involved, it seems highly implausible that these companies chose their London base with reference to some anticipated spatial distribution of Central and Eastern European migrants across the capital or how far-right parties might perform across different wards.

The exclusion restriction would be violated if these travel nodes affected the location decisions of other migrant categories. This is unlikely. On average, migrants from Western Europe constitute the wealthiest population segment in the United Kingdom (Dustmann and Frattini 2014), which makes them less reliant on low-cost transportation. Those among this group who prefer low-cost flights have options that are more geographically dispersed. For instance, another major low-cost airline, EasyJet, services a dense network of Western European destinations from its largest base, Gatwick, which is south of the capital. In addition, convenient access to several Western European countries exists via several other modes of transport, including a high-speed rail service, the Eurostar, or by car using the Channel Tunnel opened in 1994.¹⁵ Non-EU migrants have longer travel distances to their countries of birth, which makes travel to these destinations less convenient and more expensive. As a result, they are less likely to travel home as frequently as those from the EU. This, in turn, makes it unlikely that the location decisions of non-European migrants are influenced by the proximity or accessibility of any particular international travel nodes. While these are strong reasons to believe that the relevance of our instrument is specific to EU8+2 migrants, we also confirm this empirically in the results section.

Casual inspection of figures 1 and 2 also suggests that our instrument is relevant. Overall, the northern half of the capital was both better connected to Luton and Stansted airports, via the bus stops on the main coach routes to these airports, and it contains many more wards with substantial postenlargement migrant inflows than the south. It is striking that the southeast of London is furthest from access to the key travel nodes we identify and, at the same time, is the part of the capital that received the fewest migrants from the region between 2001 and 2011. In the results section, we formally assess the relevance of our instrument.

13. The UK Civil Aviation Authority carries out an Annual Passenger Survey. Between 2004 and 2006, the reported shares of departing passengers who traveled to the airport by bus/coach increased from 24.1% to 29.8% for Luton and from 11.4% to 16.3% for Stansted. From 2007, the reported categories are different. See table 9, “Modes of Transport Used at the [. . .] Survey Airports,” <https://www.caa.co.uk/data-and-analysis/uk-aviation-market/consumer-research/departing-passenger-survey/survey-reports/> (accessed January 27, 2021).

14. Coach companies need permission to operate any bus routes within London. Transport for London is the governing body that authorizes these requests. As we document in app. C, we confirm the dominant preexisting bus routes and operators against sources including travel guides and official documents from the period. Smaller operators such as EasyBus or Terravision varied over time and often traveled along the same or similar routes.

15. Eurostar alone transported 100 million passengers between 1994 and 2009. See <https://www.eurostar.com/uk-en/about-eurostar/our-company/our-history> (accessed January 24, 2021).

DATA AND SPECIFICATION

This section provides an overview of our data, with full details in appendix D. The dependent variables are the percentage point changes in support for UKIP and the BNP between 2004 and 2012. While the BNP is a fascist party and UKIP held more populist right-wing positions, both strongly opposed immigration. We focus on 2004 and 2012 because these elections are temporally closest to relevant census years, 2001 and 2011. We also include supplementary results looking at changes between the 2004 and 2008 elections. There were minimal boundary changes in this period, so that our results are directly comparable without any adjustments or imputation. Although London mayoral and assembly elections were held in 2000, when these institutions were established, this was followed by major boundary changes. Moreover, ward-level results were not collected until 2004.

Importantly, the 2004 elections took place only one month after the EU's enlargement. As a result, the number of migrants from the new EU member states who would have had time to settle in London is likely to be negligible. Therefore, we use the 2004 election results as the baseline for pre-enlargement political support. If the inflow of migrants in the first few weeks following the 2004 eastern enlargement was already sizable enough to leave an impression on the local population, and to affect their voting behavior, our results may understate the electoral response.

The main independent variable is the percentage point change in residents born in any of the EU8+2 member states who settled in each of the 620 London wards in our data set, shown in figure 1. To calculate this, we commissioned the UK Office for National Statistics to produce ward-level census data for 2001 on the country of birth of all residents, consistent with information from the 2011 census.¹⁶ A positive number indicates an increase in migrant residents from EU8+2 countries. The values range from -0.06 percentage points (in Hacton, Havering, which is the only ward with a negative trend as the EU8+2 share dropped from 0.86% in 2001 to 0.8% in 2011) to $+15.28$ percentage points (in Grove Green, Waltham Forest, where it jumped from 0.51% in 2001 to 15.79% in 2011).

We account for several potentially confounding socioeconomic and demographic factors that might be correlated with both changes in voting patterns and the composition of the population. The first category encompasses changes

in the median household income and unemployment over the period, as well as median house prices in 2001. The latter variable is important for modeling patterns of migration, as affordability of housing is a key driver of residential choice. The second category includes the percentage changes in the retired and student populations. We also account for the percentage point change in all other foreign-born residents (excluding those born in EU8+2 countries), with the native population as the omitted reference category.

Our two-stage least squares specification is as follows:

$$\Delta \text{NewEU}_{w,2001-11} = \alpha_{1b} + \beta Z_w + \gamma_1 C_w + \Delta \varepsilon_{1w}, \quad (2)$$

$$\Delta \text{Votes}_{p,w,2004-12} = \alpha_{2b} + \rho_{2\text{SLS}} \Delta \widehat{\text{NewEU}}_{w,2001-11} + \gamma_2 C_w + \Delta \varepsilon_{2w}, \quad (3)$$

where β in equation (2) captures the first-stage effect of our IV Z_w on the percentage point change in immigrants from EU8+2 countries in ward w between 2001 and 2011, while accounting for ward-level covariates C and borough fixed effects α_b . The fitted values $\Delta \widehat{\text{NewEU}}_{w,2001-11}$ enter the second stage as specified in equation (3), where the outcome is the percentage point change in votes cast for party p , either UKIP or the BNP, between the 2004 and 2012 elections. Numerical subscripts indicate the first- or second-stage estimates where the same variables are entered.

RESULTS

Our main findings for both outcomes are presented in table 1. Columns 1 and 2 report baseline ordinary least squares (OLS) results, with t -statistics based on robust standard errors in parentheses.¹⁷ The coefficients on our variable of interest suggest no relationship in the case of UKIP and at best a substantively small and statistically weak relationship for the BNP. A 1 percentage point increase in the share of migrants from the new EU member states is associated with a .01 percentage point increase in the share of votes cast for UKIP and an equivalent of .05 for the BNP. These results give us a baseline against which to evaluate our empirical approach.¹⁸

16. Such high-quality and granular census data may not be available for parts of the country with fewer migrants, due to statistical disclosure controls. Disclosive risks may result in some disaggregated data not being available or require techniques such as the swapping of records to safeguard personal information. This approach is targeted at households with unusual characteristics in small areas, such as wards.

17. The number of London Assembly constituencies (14) or London boroughs (32) is smaller than recommended for clustered standard errors (Angrist and Pischke 2008; Cameron and Miller 2015). Our coefficients of interest in cols. 5 and 6 of table 1 are also significant at the 5% level or higher with ordinary standard errors or when clustering at either the constituency or the borough level.

18. In our setting we cannot assess parallel trends or run a placebo regression using electoral outcomes for the preperiod, since no ward-level results were retained from the first elections to the London Assembly in 2000.

Table 1. Migration from New EU Member States and Far-Right Support in London-Wide Party List Assembly Elections

	OLS		First Stage		Placebo First Stage		2SLS		Reduced Form	
	UKIP (1)	BNP (2)	Δ New EU (3)	Δ All Other Foreign Born (4)	UKIP (5)	BNP (6)	UKIP (7)	BNP (8)		
Δ New EU residents (pp)	.01 (.28)	.05 (1.50)		-.12 (-1.81)	.69*** (3.54)	.63*** (3.68)				
Δ All other foreign-born residents (pp)	-.14*** (-5.09)	-.12*** (-4.03)	-.07 (-1.67)		-.09* (-2.09)	-.07 (-1.79)	-.13*** (-4.91)	-.11*** (-4.03)		
Δ Unemployed residents (pc)	-.120*** (-3.51)	-.118*** (-3.80)	.92* (2.23)	2.80*** (5.11)	-1.45*** (-3.52)	-1.40*** (-3.83)	-.82* (-2.43)	-.82** (-2.67)		
Δ Retired residents (pc)	3.38*** (5.58)	2.12*** (3.78)	-1.64 (-1.87)	-1.57 (-1.15)	4.59*** (5.41)	3.15*** (3.93)	3.46*** (5.85)	2.11*** (3.86)		
Δ Student residents (pc)	-.58* (-2.01)	-.89*** (-3.70)	-.08 (-0.35)	3.29*** (7.92)	-.57 (-1.77)	-.87*** (-3.29)	-.62* (-2.13)	-.92*** (-3.78)		
Δ Median household income (£000s)	.07 (1.74)	-.02 (-.57)	-.10 (-1.33)	-.05 (-.65)	.16* (2.27)	.06 (.90)	.09* (2.52)	-.01 (-.15)		
Median house price in 2001 (£000s)	.01*** (3.35)	.01*** (3.82)	-.01*** (-4.52)	-.00 (-.74)	.01*** (4.08)	.01*** (4.56)	.00* (2.18)	.00* (2.36)		
Distance from closest A6/757 bus stop (km)			-.20*** (-5.50)	.05 (1.06)			-.14*** (-4.50)	-.13*** (-4.48)		
Observations	620	620	620	620	620	620	620	620	620	620
Borough fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
F-test on excluded instrument			30.2	1.12						
R ²	.74	.70	.61	.64	.52	.50	.75	.71		

Note. The dependent variable for cols. 1, 5, and 7 is the percentage point change (Δ pp) in votes cast for the UK Independence Party (UKIP) between 2004 and 2012. Columns 2, 6, and 8 have as their outcome the percentage point change in votes cast for the British National Party (BNP) between 2004 and 2012. The outcome variable in col. 3 is the percentage point change in residents from new EU member states between 2001 and 2011, while the outcome variable for col. 4 is the percentage point change in all other foreign-born residents during the same time period. Columns 1 and 2 estimate ordinary least squares (OLS) results. Column 3 estimates eq. (2), while col. 4 is a placebo first stage, where we estimate the role this travel infrastructure plays on the settlement patterns of other, non-EU8+2, migrants. Columns 5 and 6 estimate eq. (3). Columns 7 and 8 show the reduced form for the bus stop instrument. All models include borough fixed effects and robust standard errors. All Δ in the control variables refer to the change between 2001 and 2011, apart from Δ Median household income, which refers to the period 2001/2002–2012/2013 (closest available estimates). 2SLS = two-stage least squares; *t*-statistics are in parentheses.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

The first-stage results in column 3 of table 1 allow us to assess the strength of our instrument. The instrument is a significant predictor of the change in new EU residents. The first-stage *F*-test on the omitted instrument comfortably exceeds the conventional cutoff value of 10, indicating that our instrument provides sufficient exogenous variation. In other words, our bus stop instrument and the spatial distribution of the accession-induced migration shock are sufficiently correlated for the instrument to be relevant.

We also carry out a placebo first-stage regression, where we use the change in other foreign-born residents as the dependent variable and control for the change of EU8+2 residents. These results are presented in column 4 of table 1. As we argue above, other migrant groups are not obviously dependent on the specific transportation infrastructure that underpins our identification strategy. Indeed, the results confirm that our instrument is unrelated to the change in non-EU8+2 migrants across wards. This provides additional support for our claim that the bus stops in figure 2 are likely to affect the location decisions of EU8+2 migrants, in particular, but not those of other foreign-born residents where the country of birth is further away or conveniently accessible via a wider range of travel options.

Columns 5 and 6 in table 1 implement our IV approach. The second-stage point estimates of .69 (for UKIP's vote share) and .63 (for the BNP's) are positive and statistically significant at all conventional thresholds. In relative terms, the IV estimates are much larger than their OLS baselines, increasing twelvefold for the BNP and almost seventyfold for UKIP. These increases in coefficient size relative to the OLS results underscore the importance of modeling the location choices of migrants. The OLS estimates suffer from substantial bias due to immigrant sorting that masks the true effect of migration on support for far-right parties. Our instrument addresses this bias by identifying a channel that functions independently of the electoral dynamics we examine. Translated into the absolute number of votes, a 1 percentage point increase in EU8+2 migrants in a ward generated about 28 additional votes for UKIP and 19 for the BNP (table G.1). These are sizable impacts given that in 2012 these parties averaged 124 and 59 votes, respectively (table D.3).

To round off our results, columns 7 and 8 in table 1 present reduced-form regressions for both outcome variables. A statistically insignificant coefficient on our instrument in these regressions would result in no significant effect in our IV regressions, which is not the case. Conversely, a significant coefficient would be a particular concern if it coincided with no result in the first stage, indicating a violation of the exclusion restriction that our instrument works only through its effect on the location decisions of EU8+2 migrants. In our case, the

coefficient on the instrument is statistically significant in both the first-stage and reduced-form regressions.

Robustness and supplementary analysis

To supplement our core results, we assessed changes in far-right support between the 2004 and 2008 elections. Lacking more granular data, we obtained 2008 population estimates for each of the 32 boroughs from the Office for National Statistics and then used 2001 census data to approximate a distribution of EU8+2, other foreign, and native-born across wards in each borough. In other words, we assume 2008 borough-level totals are distributed across wards as they were in 2001. The results in table G.2 show a much larger effect for UKIP, while the estimate for the BNP is smaller and has a negative sign. The combined effect for the two parties ($1.56 - .49 = 1.07$) is 20% smaller than in table 1 ($.69 + .63 = 1.32$). While the data used here are less precise than in our core analysis, we conclude that EU8+2 migration consistently boosts overall far-right support in this period, with some substitution between the parties across elections.

We assessed our empirical strategy against alternative approaches in related literature. Appendix E provides a detailed discussion of these results. We use, in turn, initial distributions of EU8+2 migrants in 1991 or 2001 and versions of the shift-share instrument exploiting this information (table E.3). As the 1991 census does not contain precise data on EU8+2 migration, we develop an imputation strategy. The resulting instruments are somewhat weaker, perhaps due to these data limitations. In contrast, instruments using the 2001 initial shares are strong. In addition, we use an alternative transportation-related instrument. Analogous to our bus stop instrument, we calculated each ward's distance to the nearest of three train stations with direct connections to Luton (King's Cross/St. Pancras) or Stansted (Tottenham Hale and Liverpool Street). Finally, we combine our preferred bus stop variable and either 1991 or 2001 initial shares as instruments (table E.4). As it turns out, for each party we analyze, the IV estimates obtained with any of seven alternative instruments or their combinations with our bus stop instrument are very similar to our core results.

Further, we explore the sensitivity of our results to variations in control variables in table G.3. First, we drop all controls. In this specification, our instrument is too weak. A more complete model of residential choice includes the affordability of housing. When we add median house prices in 2001, our instrument becomes highly relevant. We then introduce, in turn, borough fixed effects, demographic controls, and economic controls. This reduces the size of the coefficients of interest but does not affect the pattern of results. In a final specification, we also add the 2001 initial share of EU8+2 residents to our main model. All of these alternatives yield positive and statistically significant estimates on our variables

of interest. Our results are robust, and our main specification produces conservative estimates.¹⁹

Channels

One potential complication is the possibility that EU8+2 migrants themselves directly influenced the outcome of these elections, as citizens from one EU country enjoy voting rights at the local level in other EU countries. We checked the extent to which EU8+2 nationals were registered to vote, by matching ward-level data on electors by nationality that we requested from the electoral services managers of all 32 London boroughs to census data we commissioned from the Office for National Statistics on the country of birth of the population of voting age (18 years or above).²⁰ We used this to approximate EU8+2 registration rates across 216 wards from the 11 boroughs that supplied data, yielding an average of 62.1% (for further details, see app. F). A sizable share of EU8+2 migrants did register to vote.

How plausible is it that these migrants themselves voted for the BNP or UKIP? Although we cannot directly verify their participation in elections, we find no significant effect of EU8+2 migration on overall turnout (table G.4). To explore the composition of far-right party support, we turn to survey data. In 2016, wave 8 of the internet panel of the British Election Study 2014–23 (Fieldhouse et al. 2020) included the question: “Which party or independent candidate will you vote for to be your Assembly-wide member?” Out of 2,798 respondents, 282 indicated UKIP. Of these 282, merely five had another EU country’s citizenship, four were commonwealth citizens, and two declared another non-British citizenship. The EU category includes EU8+2 nationals but also respondents from the 15 member states of the EU before 2004. While results for the BNP are not available from this study, it is even less plausible that immigrants would vote for this ultranationalist party (John et al. 2006). We conclude that the electoral response we document is driven by the voting behavior of the UK-born population.

This provides a basis to explore the channels through which this migration wave triggered far-right support among natives. The London election campaigns of UKIP and the BNP em-

phasized two perceived economic threats: competition for jobs and for housing. In our study, the unit of analysis is too small for a closed labor market, as most Londoners work in a ward different from the one they live in. It may therefore be difficult to detect this channel in our data. In terms of pressure on housing, this is likely to be keenly felt in the immediate neighborhood. Furthermore, this channel is recognized in the literature as a factor in the rise of anti-immigrant parties (e.g., Cavaillé and Ferwerda 2023; Hooijer 2021). Work by Dancygier (2010) on West Indian and South Asian migration in Britain, including case studies of two London boroughs, highlights the role of competition for public housing as a trigger for conflict and providing fertile ground for far-right fascist parties in the second half of the previous century. Since then, while the importance of public housing controlled by local authorities has declined substantially, pressures on the affordability of housing have been linked to support for newer brands of far-right populist parties and their causes, especially UKIP and its campaign for Brexit (Fetzer 2019). Moreover, Adler and Ansell (2020) find that house prices are negatively associated with support for Brexit in the 2016 referendum, which they link to white working class communities losing out from housing market gains and anxieties about decline.

In addition, perceived cultural threat is an alternative channel that these and other far-right parties routinely exploit. The latter could be particularly relevant in this case, as significant language barriers impede sustained and meaningful contact with natives.²¹ Allport (1954) proposed the intergroup contact theory as the mediating factor between out-group presence and attitude formation toward the other group. More recently, Steinmayr (2021) finds consistent evidence that far-right party support in Austria decreases with sustained interaction with refugees but increases with brief exposure.

To examine underlying mechanisms in more detail, following Edo et al. (2019) and Halla et al. (2017), we adopt a split sample strategy that exploits variation in initial conditions across wards. If we wanted to run models with interaction terms instead, this would require finding a separate instrument that is both relevant and plausibly only affects the outcome via its effect on the relevant interaction. Using data for 2001, we distinguish wards at or below the median, and those above it, in terms of house prices (as a proxy for overall housing costs) and unemployment rates.²² Our expectation is that those living in

19. We considered controlling for changes in cultural diversity and relative deprivation. While our results hold when we include relevant measures, we are worried about posttreatment bias and do not report the findings. Furthermore, while we use the percentage change in unemployed, retired, and inactive students, the results are robust to using percentage point changes instead.

20. Census 2011 Commissioned Table CT0796 (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/adhocs/008388ct07962011censuscountryofbirthdetailedwardsinlondon>). There is a mismatch in the underlying definitions. However, few of these migrants were likely to have acquired British citizenship at this point. The latter would bias our estimates of registration ratios downward.

21. Data from the 2011 census show that 21.1% of the new EU migrants living in the United Kingdom say they “cannot speak English well” or “cannot speak English.” In comparison, only 3.9% of old EU migrants report this. The only groups with worse language acquisition are Bangladeshi (30.2%), Pakistani (22.9%), and Chinese nationals (22.5%).

22. Housing costs are also linked to the quality of local services, especially schools.

Table 2. Exploring Channels with Split Sample Regressions Using Initial Unemployment, House Prices, and Contact with EU8+2

	Unemployment			House Prices		Contact	
	Main Results	Below Median	Above Median	Below Median	Above Median	Below Median	Above Median
UKIP:							
Δ New EU residents (pp)	.69*** (3.54)	.55* (2.56)	1.24 (1.76)	.58*** (3.77)	.18 (.87)	.68* (2.56)	1.14 (1.04)
BNP:							
Δ New EU residents (pp)	.63*** (3.68)	.60** (3.04)	.84 (1.39)	.43** (3.07)	.40* (2.34)	.70** (2.90)	.74 (1.04)
Observations	620	310	310	308	312	311	309
F-test on excluded instrument	30.2	26.06	3.8	41.06	11.3	25.34	1.07
Borough fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Control variables	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note. Two-stage least squares estimates with *t*-statistics (in parentheses) based on robust standard errors. Further details are in the note of table 1, and app. D provides sources for the variables used to create the split samples.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

areas where housing is relatively cheap would be more vulnerable to rising costs and fears of decline, and perceived job competition is likely greater where unemployment is high. In addition, we probe a potential link to contact theory. Using our detailed census data on country of birth, we calculate the initial number of EU8+2 residents in each ward. Our assumption is that a subsequent influx of migrants from these countries will stand out more in areas where residents are less likely to have had prior contact with migrants from these countries, thus triggering a stronger electoral response.

Results are reported in table 2. Our IV is weak in some subsamples, which means we cannot make meaningful comparisons relating to initial levels of unemployment or diversity. We do, however, get a clear result related to housing. Here, the effect on UKIP support is three times larger in wards where initial house prices are low, but there is no difference in support for the BNP.²³ Consistent with the patterns reported by Adler and Ansell (2020) for the “leave” vote in the 2016 Brexit referendum, housing seems to have played a similar role in the electoral success of UKIP. This is also consistent with findings by Fetzer (2019), who demonstrates that austerity measures that cut housing-related benefits boosted electoral support for UKIP and led to the success of the leave campaign. While

Fetzer shows large post-2004 UKIP gains in coastal regions, Wales, and some industrial areas of the Midlands, our more granular analysis below the local authority level reveals that the same warning signs existed in metropolitan areas as well. The fact that this mechanism is not linked to support for the BNP suggests that in this period, support for the party seems to be driven more strongly by other channels, possibly concerns about national or cultural identity.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

To examine the electoral consequences of migration, we draw on two separate strands of research: a growing political economy literature on the electoral impact of migration at the local level and the transport and human geography literature related to migration. Our empirical work exploits substantial heterogeneity of changes in the composition of residents across 620 wards in London following the EU’s eastern enlargement in 2004 and 2007. The enlargement brought a policy shift by disabling legal barriers to migration from the region and coincided with a boom in the low-cost aviation industry that ensured regular and affordable flight connections. We show that travel infrastructure is linked to the location decisions of these specific migrants, which allows us to study how this migration flow affected support for far-right parties. We estimate that a 1 percentage point increase in the share of migrants from the EU’s eastern accession countries increased the vote shares of the two major anti-immigrant far-right parties, UKIP and the BNP, in London Assembly

23. Using the same data source, we calculate that actual increases in housing costs over the following decade are very close to the overall sample mean of 85% in both subgroups. However, an increase might be more keenly felt by those dependent on affordable housing.

elections by about two-thirds of this amount. This is very close to the average effect calculated in a recent meta-analysis of studies investigating other Western European countries, which did however highlight substantial heterogeneity in estimates (Cools et al. 2021).

Our work has several implications for the study of the electoral effects of migration. First, prior studies of the political effects of migration look at migrants in general (e.g., Barone et al. 2016), specific subcategories such as refugees (e.g., Dinas et al. 2019; Dustmann et al. 2019; Gessler, Tóth, and Wachs 2022), or migrants distinguished by education or skill level (e.g., Edo et al. 2019; Halla et al. 2017; Mayda et al. 2018). Yet migrants are very heterogeneous, including in terms of post-migration travel to their country of birth. Complementing and extending prior work on different migrant communities in Britain (Dancygier 2010), we are the first to study the electoral effects of “hypermobile” migration, which is particularly relevant in settings where policy makers promote economic integration. While we exploit this for our empirical strategy, the distinction between highly mobile and less mobile migrants deserves further exploration. For instance, given that mobility may affect pressures to assimilate (Ignatowicz 2011, 43), future work should assess the integration trajectories of more and less mobile migrants and observe how these patterns influence opportunities for sustained contact with the native population.

We also reveal important nuances in how migration affects support for different types of far-right parties. While both populist as well as fascist far-right parties benefit from migration, they do so for different reasons. In our case, UKIP strongly benefits in areas that rely on affordable housing, which is not an important channel for the BNP at least in this period. This is consistent with work by other scholars on the determinants of support for far-right populism in Britain around this period (Adler and Ansell 2020; Fetzer 2019). Our analysis suggests that warning signs about the political consequences of cuts to housing-related benefits analyzed by Fetzer (2019) were already present in 2012, the year before the implementation of these measures. This also implies that effective strategies to counter far-right support need to recognize distinct channels through which subsets of voters might be attracted to different types of far-right parties.

In addition, our approach expands the methodological tool kit for the study of the consequences of migration, which thus far has relied heavily on versions of the shift-share instrument in attempts to tackle endogeneity of settlement choices among new migrants. Overreliance on this strategy is a growing concern among migration scholars (Jaeger et al. 2018). Alternatives are also needed when data constraints preclude or limit the usefulness of this approach. Our article provides such an alternative. Drawing on a hitherto separate literature on trans-

port and human geography, we develop an IV based on the proximity to travel hubs that are of specific importance to the migrant group we study. This offers a potential solution to researchers who face similar data constraints, and it can serve as a robustness check for studies that primarily rely on the traditional shift-share approach.

We see significant potential to deploy our approach across a wider range of settings to analyze the electoral consequences of migration. One of the distinguishing features of the wave of migration into the United Kingdom we study is that it resulted in settlement patterns that are more geographically spread out than previous waves (Kone 2018). This may well be linked to the evolution of flight networks across the United Kingdom during this period, and similar relationships may hold in other countries where low-cost travel boosted international mobility. Moreover, the flip side of the phenomenon we examine is emigration, which affects the demographic composition of communities that are left behind. Recent scholarship exploits geographic heterogeneity in emigration to analyze its electoral consequences (Anelli and Peri 2017). In this area, too, future work could deploy empirical strategies based on preexisting transportation links.

Our analysis also suggests policy implications. In the EU, policy debates relating to the liberalization of travel markets and increased mobility have highlighted economic benefits, with claims of low-cost airlines “bringing Europe closer together” (Akgüç et al. 2018). Our work highlights a political dark side of mobility that pulls in the polar opposite direction. In drawing lessons from Brexit for the prospects of European integration, and economic integration elsewhere, discussions of cross-national mobility should look beyond economic benefits. Policy makers who promote mobility must also pay attention to its potential political consequences and consider how they might be mitigated, for instance, through targeted programs ensuring affordable housing for natives in areas with a high influx of migrants or by proactively managing settlement patterns.

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