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They win, I leave: the impact of the Northern League party on  
foreign internal migration

**Egidio Farina**

University of Sussex

[e.farina@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:e.farina@sussex.ac.uk)

**Abstract:** This paper studies how electoral outcomes can shape individuals' migration decisions. Using the Italian mayoral elections data from 2001 to 2014, I study how foreign citizens' internal migration with a regular residency permit in North-Italy can be affected by the election of a mayor affiliated to the Northern League (Lega Nord) party, a far-right political movement characterized by a strong federalist, populist and anti-immigration ideology. In order to deal with the endogeneity of Northern League to city characteristics, a sharp regression discontinuity is used. Overall the results show that a mayor affiliated to the Northern League party causes an increase in the foreign out-migration rate one year after the election.

**JEL classification:** R23, D72

**Key words:** Northern League mayor, partisanship, close elections, regression discontinuity, migration

# 1 Introduction

On March 1<sup>st</sup> 2016, soon after the crushing victory in 7 States obtained in the first Super Tuesday by Donald Trump against his Republican rivals, the number of Google searches in the US for advice on how to leave the country and move to neighbouring Canada skyrocketed<sup>1</sup> (Appendix A, Figure A.1). Quite curiously, a few months later, immediately after the referendum results on Brexit that took place on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, Google trends data showed a spike in interest among Britons on how to move on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean<sup>2</sup> (Appendix A, Figure A.2).

These simple anecdotes pose an important question that this paper seeks to address: do electoral outcomes affect migration decisions, leading people to relocate to a different place when an electoral result or a politician dividing the public consensus obtains an unexpected victory?

A growing body of research conducted in psychology has tried to indirectly analyse this issue, studying how non-economic push or pull factors can affect migration's decisions. Rosenbaum (1986) develops the *repulsion hypothesis*, according to which the sentiment of repulsion by the dominance of dissimilar individuals exacerbates people's intention to migrate. Motyl (2014) and Motyl et al. (2014) theorise the *ideological migration* hypothesis, according to which "people with certain racial identities, personalities and ideologies may feel like their needs are not being met in one residence, so they could choose to change residences to better satisfy these needs" (pp. 1).

To shed light on how elections can affect migration decisions, I use a data set relative to the mayoral elections in Italy to study the impact of a candidate affiliated to the Northern League (NL from hereafter) party, a far-right political movement known for its racist and xenophobic attitudes and characterised by a strong federalist, populist and anti-immigration ideology, on foreign internal migration.

Contrary to the seminal works by Hotelling (1929) and Downs (1957), according to which the type of policies implemented by a politician merely reflect the preferences of the median voter, a recent array of studies has largely shown that politicians' preferences play a crucial

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2016/03/02/how-to-move-to-canada-searches-up-1000-after-trump-super-tuesday/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cbc.ca/news/trending/uk-eu-brexit-vote-move-to-canada-1.3651308>

role in determining the set of economic and political measures adopted (Besley and Coate, 1997; Levitt, 1996); in this case, if politicians' preferences differ by partisanship, the adoption by a NL mayor of specific policies or behaviours that favour Italian citizens over foreign citizens might push foreign born residents to relocate to a city where an officer affiliated to a different political party or a civic list is in charge or recently elected .

In order to overcome possible sources of endogeneity related to the election of a Northern League mayor, the identification strategy relies on a sharp regression discontinuity design (RDD), analysing the mayoral elections in the Italian cities between 2001 and 2014 involving the races decided by a narrow margin of victory, where the mayor or the second-place candidate are affiliated to the Northern League party.

My main findings show that the election of a Northern League mayor causes an increase in foreign out-migration rate in the year following the electoral race. On the contrary, foreign in-migration and net-migration rates do not seem to be influenced.

Different are the causes that could drive these results. In this paper, I speculate that one possible reason leading foreign citizens to migrate is given by a decreased perception of integration towards non-Italian residents, testified by a reduction in the number of Italian citizenships acquisitions in the cities ruled by a NL mayor.

In this paper, it is my intention to establish a causal nexus between the election of a politician and foreign migration. The economic literature has mostly focused on the direction of causality addressing how electoral or political outcomes are influenced by migration: Pfutze (2012) finds that international migration in Mexico improves the quality of local democratic institutions in Mexico. Chauvet and Mercier (2014) find that return migrants in Mali have a positive effect on participation and electoral competitiveness. Otto and Steinhardt (2014) and Barone et al. (2016) show that immigration causes an increase in votes for xenophobic and anti-immigrants coalitions in Germany and Italy, respectively; Dustmann et al. (2016) estimate the causal effect of refugee migration on voting outcomes in parliamentary and municipal elections in Denmark, finding a positive effect on anti-immigration parties and centre-right in non-urban places; on the contrary, a negative effect is detected if the elections take place in urban municipalities. Becker and Fetzer (2016) focus their analysis on the UK, showing that places with a large numbers of migrants from Eastern Europe were characterised by an increase in the vote shares for the UK Independence Party (UKIP) in elections to the European Parliament, used as an indicator for the anti-European sentiment after 2004.

To the best of my knowledge, this represents the first study addressing a causal relationship between the election of a mayor affiliated to a party standing for its racist positions<sup>3</sup> and foreign internal migration.

The article is organised as follows: Section 2 summarizes the different literatures to which this paper is linked; Section 3 offers an overview on the Northern League party and foreign migration in Italy; Section 4 describes the data used throughout the paper and provides some descriptive statistics; Section 5 explains the methodology and the econometric model adopted; Section 6 shows the main results; in Section 7 I perform some robustness checks while in Section 7 I show that Northern League mayors might reduce the perception of integration, decreasing the number of Italian citizenships' acquisitions. Section 8, finally, concludes.

## 2 Literature

This paper contributes to different literatures: firstly, several studies in the economic literature have studied how politicians' partisanship impact on different economic and social outcomes. Lee (2007), exploiting data relative to the elections to the US House of Representative (1946-1998), presents a strong evidence that an incumbent Democrat is more likely to win the subsequent elections. Ferreira and Gyourko (2009) show that in American large cities there exists no significant relation between the party of the mayors and the size of city government, the allocation of public spending and crime rates. Meyersson (2014) finds that Turkish cities exposed to an Islamic party are characterised by a higher female secular high school education.

Secondly, this paper is also linked to that branch of research in political economy studying how different aspects of a politician's identity can affect political and economic outcomes. Dal Bó et al. (2009) find that American legislators in power for longer are more likely to have relatives entering Congress in the future. Other studies have focused on the gender of local officials rather than the party to which they belong. Beaman et al. (2009) and Beaman et al. (2012) show that exposure to a female politician reduces gender stereotypes and influences adolescent girls' career aspirations and educational attainment; Clots-Figueras (2011) studies the impact of female political representation in India on public goods, policy and expenditure. Gagliarducci and Paserman (2012) show that the probability of early termination of the

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<sup>3</sup> A sentence passed by a judge in Italy on 13th January 2017 established that defining the Northern League party as racist is not a defamatory statement but a political criticism. (<http://www.unita.tv/focus/salvini-kyenge-calderoli-lega/>).

legislature is higher in the Italian municipalities led by female mayors. Clots-Figueras (2012) finds that female politicians increase the probability of an individual attaining primary education in urban areas; Ferreira and Gyourko (2014) replicate their first work focusing on the gender of US mayors without finding any significant difference between cities ruled by women or men. Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras (2014) show that a 10 percentage point increase in women's representation in state legislatures in India results in a 2.1 percentage point reduction in neonatal mortality. Finally, economists have recently begun to analyse how the religious identity of a politician can affect human capital accumulation: Bhalotra et al. (2013) find that increasing the political representation of Muslims has a positive effect on health and education outcomes in the district where the legislator is elected.

Hopkins and McCabe (2012) show that close African-American victories in American large cities do not induce many policy changes with few exceptions: black mayors reduce cities' share of employees at the police department by 2.9 percentage points, while, for police pay, the authors find a 3.6 percentage point decline in police pay as a share of total pay. Vogl (2014) studies the nature of municipal multi-racial elections that occurred in the US from 1965 to 2010. Farina (2017) finds that the number of motor vehicles stolen increases considerably the year after the election of an African-American mayor. On a broader political level, Washington (2006) finds that black candidates running for Senate and gubernatorial elections increase voter turnout in the US.

## **3 Background**

### **3.1 The Northern League Party**

The Northern League party (Lega Nord) was established in 1991 by Umberto Bossi as a partnership of pre-existing regional parties of northern and central Italy<sup>4</sup>. The party's political agenda promotes the conversion of Italy into a federal state and the secession of the North, letting the Northern regions, called by party members *Padania*, keep more tax revenues collected under a regime of fiscal federalism.

The Northern League party endorses a socially conservative position on issues such as abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriage; on the contrary, it adopts a strong position against crime, for which the party has advocated the promotion of citizens' defence groups, and illegal

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<sup>4</sup> The most important ones are: Lega Lombarda, Liga Veneta, Piemonte Autonomista, Unione Ligure, Lega Emiliano-Romagnola and Alleanza Toscana.

immigration, especially from Muslim countries.

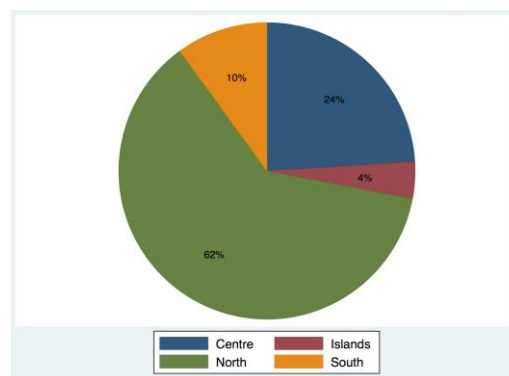
Officially the NL party favours immigration from non-Muslim countries to protect the “Christian identity” of Italy and Europe; *de facto* it nurtures a solid resentment against non-Muslim populations too, especially against Central-Eastern European immigrants<sup>5</sup>. In 2002 the Northern League, together with other Italian parties, was denounced by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) for the extreme use of racist and xenophobic propaganda<sup>6</sup>. In 2006 the ECRI reported an intensification of the use of racist and xenophobic political talks both at the local and at the national level.

Since 2012, the party has undergone a restructuring of its political leadership with the election of Roberto Maroni as the new secretary of the party; from December 2013, Maroni was succeeded by Matteo Salvini. Despite the changes to the leadership, the episodes of racisms didn’t stop: for example, in 2013 the first Italian black minister, Cécile Kyenge, was compared to an orang-utan by a Northern-League Senator<sup>7</sup>, provoking the indignation of the public opinion.

### 3.2 Foreign Population in Italy

The data collected by the Italian Institute of Statistics in the last 15 years document a steady increase in foreign population legally residing in Italy. In 2002 foreign residents represented the 2.7% of the total population; 13 years later, in 2015, the share of foreign residents increased to 8.3%, partially due to the enlargement on 1 January 2007 of the European Union with the inclusion of Romania and Bulgaria.

**Figure 1: Distribution of foreign population in Italy - 2012**



<sup>5</sup> For example, in 2007 the Northern League was strongly against the inclusion of Romania and Bulgaria to the Schengen area.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Italy/ITA-CbC-II-2002-004-ITA.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/10178616/Italys-first-black-minister-compared-to-orang-utan-by-Northern-League-senator.html>

Concerning the spatial distribution of foreign born citizens in Italy, immigration has differently affected Italian regions. As documented by Bettin and Cella (2014), “the Southern regions represent for many migrants the gateway to Italy and the first step towards the Northern and Central regions” (p. 54). Southern Italy is characterized mostly by illegal migration while legal migrants cluster in the Northern cities, where there is a higher labour demand and better services. The data collected by the Italian National Institute of Statistics relative to the year 2012 (see Figure 1) indicate that 86% of foreigners is concentrated in the North (62%) and in the Centre (24%), while only 14% of migrants live in the South (10%) and in the Islands (4%).

## 4 Data

The migration data are taken from the survey *Migration and calculation of foreign resident population and structure by citizenship*, conducted on a yearly basis since 2001 by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT). Foreign resident population is represented by individuals without Italian citizenship but who register in the Italian municipality where they normally reside. It is calculated for each municipality on December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year that follows the population Census, adjusting the foreign population in each municipality with the foreign population inflows and outflows recorded during each calendar year. The registration represents for foreign born citizens the first prerequisite to obtain the Italian citizenship and gives access to a set of public services, such as access to school, public health provision and social benefits.

The data allow to identify for each municipality, the number of non-Italian people having their usual residence, the number of Italian citizenships acquisitions, the number of foreign born migrants moving to a municipality from abroad or from other Italian cities as well as the number of foreign residents who relocate abroad or to a different city.

**Figure 2: Italian Regions – Election Data**



The migration data relative to the whole population and, indirectly, the Italian population is provided by the “*Migration and calculation of yearly resident population*”, collected by the Italian National Institute of Statistics. The data provide information on the number of live births, deaths, internal and international migration flows in the Italian municipalities, and the number of resident population by sex at the end of the year.

The Election Historical Archive, made available by the Italian Ministry of Interior, provides the results relative to the Popular and Constitutional Referenda (from 1946), the European Parliament election (from 1979) as well as the general (from 1948), regional (from 1970), provincial (from 2004) and municipal elections (from 1993) occurred in Italy up to 2014.

I complement this dataset with the Census of Local and Regional Administrators, containing information on the observable characteristics such as party affiliation, education, age and gender of the elected mayor, the losing mayoral candidates, the members of the executive committee, and the members of the council.

In order to link the election outcomes to the migration flows of non-Italian residents I drop all the elections occurred from 1993 to 1999. Given the local dimension of the Northern League party, I exclude all the municipalities from the Central and the Southern regions, focusing on the cities and towns belonging to Piedmont, Lombardia, Liguria, Veneto and Emilia-Romagna (Figure 2).

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics – Election Data**

# Elections	9886
# NL elections	431
# NL vs Civic List	363
# NL vs Centre-Right	32
# NL vs Centre-Left	20
# NL vs Other	16
# NL Mayors	204
Average NL Elections/city	1.32
# Cities - NL election sample	321

Note. Author’s calculations.

Table 1 presents some descriptive statistics relative to the election sample. Overall 431 out of 9886 elections involved the participation of a NL mayor or runner-up in 321 cities; in 363 races a NL candidate run against a contender affiliated to a civic list while in the remaining mayoral designations a NL politician was confronting either a centre-right candidate (32 times) or a centre-left candidate (20 times). In 204 cases, a NL candidate won an electoral contest.

Finally, I also include a list of city observable characteristics such as the number of



inhabitants, the number of foreign born citizens living in a city, geographic indicators such as the altitude and the area of a municipality expressed in km<sup>2</sup>, the number of firms in each municipality in 2012 and the municipal yearly income per capita expressed in 2010 euros.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Regions – Municipal and Mayoral Characteristics**

	NL Elections (1)	Other Elections (2)	p-value (3)
Tot Pop.	9276.85	6554.20	[0.071]
Foreign Pop.	772.45	513.60	[0.102]
Italian Pop.	8504.4	6040.6	[0.071]
Income pc in 2010€	20487.45	20558.02	[0.679]
Firms in 2012	1657.16	949.12	[0.078]
Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	19.62	25.52	[0.000]
Altitude	240.29	291.13	[0.000]
Mayor gender	0.870	0.847	[0.197]
Mayor age	48.70	50.02	[0.010]
Mayor incumbent	0.223	0.228	[0.829]
Mayor education	0.329	0.362	[0.159]

Note. Each entry represents the average of the specified variable. Column (1) presents the average for the NL election sample. Column (2) reports descriptive statistics for the remaining elections. Column (3) reports the p-value relative to the test for equality of means in the two samples.

To assess the external validity of this study, in Table 2 I compare the municipal and mayoral characteristics of the elections involving the participation of a Northern League candidate against those elections where a NL politician does not run for the mayoral office.

On average NL elections take place in slightly smaller but more populous cities with a higher number of firms; the number of foreign citizens and the income per capita expressed in 2010 euros are not statistically different when we compare the elections involving a Northern League candidate against the remaining contests. Passing to the mayoral characteristics, the NL election sample is characterized by younger mayors; the other individual observable characteristics do not vary across the two elections samples.

## 5 Empirical Strategy

The election of a mayor affiliated to the Northern League party is likely to be determined by municipal local attributes that are unobserved by the econometrician and that will bias the estimates on migration outcomes. To deal with this endogeneity issue, I convey my analysis on close elections, comparing cities where a NL candidate barely won an election with cities where NL contenders barely lost: for elections decided by a narrow margin, which aspirant will

win is likely to be determined by pure chance.

The identification strategy, as anticipated in section 1, is based on a sharp regression discontinuity design (RDD)<sup>8</sup>. Specifically, I adopt the nonparametric estimator developed by Calonico, Cattaneo and Titiunik (2014), referred from now on as CCT, which proposes a solution to the asymptotic bias associated to the construction of the optimal bandwidth constructing robust confidence intervals for the regression discontinuity design.

In order to evaluate how the election of a mayor affiliated to the Northern League party can affect migration, I restrict the sample to municipalities in the interval  $MV_{m,t} \in [-h, +h]$  and estimate the following model:

$$migration_{m,t+1} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 NL_{m,t} + \beta_2 MV_{m,t} + u_{m,t+1} \quad (1)$$

where the dependent variable  $migration_{m,t+1}$  represents three possible outcomes: the number of foreign in-migrants per 1000 inhabitants, the number of foreign out-migrants per 1000 inhabitants and the net migration rate, defined as the difference between the first two variables, expressed per 1000 residents for municipality  $m$  in the year following the mayoral election.  $NL_{m,t}$ , the treatment indicator, is a dummy variable taking value 1 if the candidate affiliated to the Northern League wins the election and 0 otherwise; the running variable,  $MV_{m,t}$ , is the margin of victory, defined as the difference between the Northern League candidate's votes and the opponent's votes divided by the sum of votes of all the candidates running for the mayoral elections.

To precisely estimate the effect of the Northern League partisanship, I exclude all the elections where a NL candidate took part to a coalition of two or more parties or civic lists. If on the one hand this reduces my sample size considerably, on the other I am able to isolate the "NL effect" from the role that other parties could play on foreigners' decision to migrate<sup>9</sup>.

Provided that the rating variable is measured prior to the start of treatment, the cut-off point is determined independently of the rating variable and assignment to treatment is entirely based on the candidate ratings and the cut-off point, for our identification strategy to be internally valid we need to test whether the probability of winning a close election is the same for the candidates, regardless of their partisanship.

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<sup>8</sup> See Imbens and Lemieux (2008), Van der Klaauw (2008) or Lee and Lemieux (2010) for a comprehensive survey on RDD.

<sup>9</sup> For example, the presence of moderate or centre-wing parties in a coalition with the Northern League could influence foreign citizens' decision to migrate and opt for not leaving and/or moving to the city where the coalition was elected if they think the other parties in the coalition will be able to mitigate or put under control Northern League's racist pressure.

Following McCrary (2008), I estimate possible discontinuities in the distribution of the forcing variable: the presence of a statistically significant discontinuity in the margin of victory around the cut-off would suggest that the rating variable has been subject to manipulation. Figure B.1 in Appendix B presents the distribution of the margin of victory of a Northern League candidate against a mayor or runner-up associated to a different party, civic list or coalition; the null hypothesis of no discontinuity is not rejected (the estimated log difference is equal to -0.307 and the standard error is equal to 0.22), allowing to conclude that the election of a mayor affiliated to the Northern League decided by a narrow margin of victory can be considered as good as random.

Provided that the election of a mayor affiliated to the Northern League party can be considered as good as random, the internal validity of the RDD might still be threatened by the distribution of the baseline covariates if they don't vary smoothly at the threshold. Table 3 reports the RD estimates of model (1) using as dependent variables the municipal and mayoral characteristics.

**Table 3: Discontinuity in the covariates**

	$\beta$ (se)	$N$	$h$
<b>Foreign Pop.</b>	-79.69 (252.54)	175	0.142
<b>Italian Pop.</b>	-2772.8 (2386.8)	169	0.135
<b>Ln(Income 2010€)</b>	0.026 (0.058)	190	0.163
<b>Ln(Num firms 2012)</b>	- 0.544 (0.374)	183	0.151
<b>Surf (km<sup>2</sup>)</b>	1.848 (5.69)	191	0.162
<b>City Altitude</b>	66.06 (60.19)	205	0.179
<b>Mayor gender</b>	-0.159 (0.143)	190	0.159
<b>Mayor age</b>	-4.418 (3.09)	204	0.177
<b>Mayor educ.</b>	-0.079 (0.15)	227	0.200
<b>Mayor incumb.</b>	0.048 (0.06)	203	0.176

Note: Significance at the 10% level is represented by \*, at the 5% level by \*\*, and at the 1% level by \*\*\*. Each entry reports the RD coefficients and std. errors relative to the election of a NL mayor using the method developed by Calonico et al. (2014). Standard errors are clustered at the municipal level.

Cities where a Northern League mayor won a close election do not seem to be systematically different from those cities where a NL candidate barely lost the race for the mayoral office. In Appendix C, I check if the results presented in Table 3 are sensitive to the choice of the specific bandwidth computed by CCT. Halving (Table C.1) or doubling the bandwidth (Table C.2) leaves our main conclusions unchanged, i.e. municipal and mayoral characteristics are not discontinuous around the threshold.

## 6 Results

### 6.1 Foreign Internal Migration

Figure D.1 in Appendix D offers a graphical inspection of the impact of a NL mayor on migration, where different measures of foreign migration are plotted against the rating variable, i.e. the margin of victory of a candidate affiliated to the NL party competing in a mayoral election against a politician of a different party or civic list. In the top-panel we observe a mild jump, pointing at an increase in the in-migration of foreigners per 1000 inhabitants in response to the election of a mayor affiliated to the Northern League party. The discontinuity seems to be stronger when we look at the foreign out-migration rate (centre-panel) while in the bottom panel we do not find a strong effect on the net-migration rate, defined as the difference between the in-migration and the out-migration rate.

**Table. 4: The impact of NL mayors on foreign internal migration per 1000 inhabitants**

	In-Migr. rate (1)	In-Migr. rate (2)	Out-Migr. rate (3)	Out-Migr. rate (4)	Net-Migr. rate (5)	Net-Migr. rate (6)
NL mayor	1.015 (2.108)	1.141 (2.240)	3.460*** (1.205)	4.228*** (1.230)	-0.940 (1.787)	-2.203 (1.980)
<i>N</i>	250	247	158	155	263	260
mean dep. var.	6.503	6.503	6.270	6.270	0.233	0.233
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
<i>h</i>	0.219	0.219	0.125	0.125	0.241	0.241

Note: Significance at the 10% level is represented by \*, at the 5% level by \*\*, and at the 1% level by \*\*\*. Each entry reports the RD coefficients and std. errors relative to the election of a NL mayor using the method developed by Calonico et al. (2014). Controls include city, mayoral characteristics, year and region fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the municipal level.

In order to establish whether these discontinuities are statistically significant, Table 4 presents the estimates relative to the election of a candidate running for the mayoral office with the Northern League party on the three measures of migration presented above, occurred one year

after the electoral race<sup>10</sup>. The RD estimate in column (1) shows that the impact of the election of a mayor affiliated to the Northern League party on the foreign in-migration rate is positive but not statistically significant at any conventional level. The inclusion of controls at the municipal and mayoral level, as well as year and region fixed effects, increases slightly the coefficient, while it remains statistically not significant (column (2)).

On the contrary, the coefficient relative to the foreign out-migration rate is positive and statistically significant at the 1% level, regardless of the specification adopted. The result in column (3) shows that one year after the close election of a Northern League mayor, 3.4 foreign citizens per 1000 inhabitants relocate to a different city. The effect is quite substantial, since its size represents the 55% of the yearly average of the foreign out-migrants per 1000 inhabitants. The addition of controls increases slightly the coefficient (4.2), which remains significant at the 1% level.

Finally, in column (5) and (6) I look at the foreign net-migration rate: regardless of the specification adopted the impact of a mayor affiliated to the Northern League party has no effect on the difference between the in-migration rate and the out-migration rate.

## 6.2 Foreign International Migration

To get a better understanding of how foreign citizens shape their migration decisions in response to the election of a Northern League candidate, in Table 5 I re-estimate model (1) by looking at the impact of a NL mayor on foreign international migration.

**Table 5: The impact of NL mayors on foreign international migration per 1000 inhabitants**

	In-Migr. rate (1)	In-Migr. rate (2)	Out-Migr. rate (3)	Out-Migr. rate (4)	Net-Migr. rate (5)	Net-Migr. rate (6)
NL mayor	1.109 (1.495)	1.513 (1.314)	0.268 (0.344)	-0.035 (0.315)	0.599 (1.311)	1.504 (1.148)
<i>N</i>	210	207	198	196	236	232
mean dep. var.	6.729	6.729	0.812	0.812	5.916	5.916
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
<i>h</i>	0.184	0.184	0.172	0.172	0.206	0.206

Note: Significance at the 10% level is represented by \*, at the 5% level by \*\*, and at the 1% level by \*\*\*. Each entry reports the RD coefficients and std. errors relative to the election of a NL mayor using the method developed by Calonico et al. (2014). Controls include city, mayoral characteristics, year and region fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the municipal level.

<sup>10</sup> The majority of municipal elections in Italy take part in May/June. In this case, estimating the impact of NL mayors on migration in the year in which the election takes place would include measurement error, since we would link the victory of a NL mayor to the migration flows occurred prior to the electoral race.

The election of a NL politician does not have any effect on foreign international in-migration in the year after the electoral contest. Passing to the out-migration indicators, column (3) and (4) confirm the results discussed in Table 4, according to which foreign citizens relocate to different cities without leaving the country. Likewise, the results presented in the last two columns corroborate the absence of any statistically significant effect on the foreign international net-migration indicators.

### 6.3 Falsification test - Italian Citizens Internal Migration

In this section, as a falsification test, I explore whether Italian citizens' decision to migrate can be influenced by the election of a far-right political party. If the Italian citizens' decision to migrate were affected by the election of a Northern League candidate we should conclude that features other than the strong anti-immigration, racist and xenophobic stance adopted by the Northern League party are playing a role in determining foreign born citizens' choice to migrate<sup>11</sup>.

**Table 6: The Impact of NL mayors on migration - Italian citizens per 1000 inhabitants**

	In-Migr. rate (1)	In-Migr. rate (2)	Out-Migr. rate (3)	Out-Migr. rate (4)	Net-Migr. rate (5)	Net-Migr. rate (6)
NL mayor	-5.839 (3.632)	-2.051 (3.535)	-1.135 (2.066)	2.889 (2.053)	-4.853* (2.870)	- 2.698 (2.617)
<i>N</i>	220	218	228	225	196	193
mean dep. var.	25.711	25.711	22.833	22.833	2.878	2.878
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
<i>h</i>	0.193	0.193	0.201	0.201	0.167	0.167

Note: Significance at the 10% level is represented by \*, at the 5% level by \*\*, and at the 1% level by \*\*\*. Each entry reports the RD coefficients and std. errors relative to the election of a NL mayor using the method developed by Calonico et al. (2014). Controls include city, mayoral characteristics, year and region fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the municipal level.

In table 6, I present evidence of the election of a NL mayor on Italian residents' migration responses. In column (1) and column (2) we can see that Italian citizens are less attracted by the election of a NL mayor one year after the close electoral contest; the coefficient, however, is not statistically significant. Passing to the out-migration variables, from column (3) we can

<sup>11</sup> Considering that in 1990s the Northern League rhetoric was strongly against the South, a possible effect on Italians' out-migration could be explained by Southern Italian citizens relocating to a different city in response to the election of a NL mayor. However, this is unlikely to occur since, starting from the 2000s, the Northern League has adopted a new strategy, changing its communication strategy and seeking direct or indirectly votes also in the Southern regions.

see that Italians do not relocate to a different city in response to the election of a NL mayor; the inclusion of controls does not change our conclusions. Finally, the coefficient on Italians' net-migration is statistically significant at the 10% level (column (5)) even though this result is not robust to the inclusion of municipal and mayoral characteristics as well as year and region fixed effects, as shown in column (6).

## 6.4 Neighbouring cities

The data on migration collected by the Italian Institute of Statistics do not allow to identify the city of origin or the city of destination of foreign born and Italian migrants. Nonetheless, in this section I re-estimate model (1) focusing on the number of foreign in-migrants per 1000 inhabitants in the cities where the mayor is affiliated to a different party, civic list or coalition, that boarder with a municipality where a NL mayor was elected one year before with a narrow margin of victory.

**Table 7: RD estimates - in-migration per 1000 residents - neighbouring cities**

	In-Migration	In-Migration
	(1)	(2)
NL mayor	-0.893 (0.66)	0.290 (0.69)
<i>N</i>	1230	1184
<i>Controls</i>	No	Yes
<i>h</i>	0.167	0.167

Note: Significance at the 10% level is represented by \*, at the 5% level by \*\*, and at the 1% level by \*\*\*. Each entry reports the RD coefficients and std. errors relative to the election of a NL mayor using the method developed by Calonico et al. (2014). Controls include city, mayoral characteristics, year and region fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the municipal level.

From Table 7 it is possible to see that cities neighbouring with a municipality where a NL mayor was elected one year before do not attract more foreign citizens. In column (1) the coefficient is negative, denoting a decrease in the number of foreign in-migrants per 1000 inhabitants, but not statistically significant at any conventional level. In column (2) the inclusion of controls, year and region fixed effects reduces the coefficient's size in absolute value; also in this case the effect is not statistically significant.

These results indicate that foreign citizens do not base their decisions to migrate in response to the election of a mayor affiliated to the Northern League party according to the proximity to

the cities they were living in before the electoral race.

## 7 Discussion

The results analysed in Section 5 confirm the existence of a strong and statistically significant impact on the number of foreign born citizens moving to a different municipality in response to the election of a NL mayor decided by a narrow margin of victory.

There may be several motivations explaining why a Northern League mayor causes an increase in foreign born emigration; in this chapter I adduce reinforcing evidence in favour of the idea that NL mayors adopt discriminatory actions against non-Italian citizens by looking at the number of Italian citizenships acquired by foreign born residents who are entitled to obtain the Italian nationality.

According to the Law of 5 February 1992 n. 91, and the implementing regulation, Decree of the President Republic 12 October 1993 n. 572, Italian citizenship can be attributed in different cases: automatically (principle of *jus sanguinis*), through marriage (after 2 years of legal residence in Italy, or 3 years abroad<sup>12</sup>) or through naturalisation (if a foreign born person has been legally resident in Italy for at least ten years<sup>13</sup> provided that she does not have a criminal record and has sufficient financial resources).

Foreign born citizens awarded with the Italian citizenship are required to swear allegiance to the Constitution and laws of the Republic in front of the mayor of the municipality where the foreign applicant legally resides; despite its purely symbolic function, if the oath of allegiance does not take place within six months of notification of the award decree, the decree will have no validity and the person must reapply for citizenship by producing again all the documentation.

Notwithstanding the absence of any test on the Italian language or culture, as required in other Countries, several mayors affiliated to the Northern League party in the past hit the headlines for having refused to confer the citizenship to foreign born applicants who were not able to swear the oath of allegiance in Italian<sup>14</sup>, leading the Italian Ministry of the Interior

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<sup>12</sup> In presence of children, the time requirement will be halved; Italian citizenship acquisition is granted automatically to foreign women marriage can occur automatically if they married an Italian citizen before 27 April 1983

<sup>13</sup> This requirement is reduced to 3 years for descendants of Italian citizen grandparents and for foreigners born in Italy, 4 years for nationals of EU member states, 5 years for refugees and 7 for those adopted as children by in Italian citizen.

<sup>14</sup> See for example the following link: <http://www.firstpost.com/world/your-italian-isnt-good-enough-mayor-denies-indian-woman-citizenship-2131785.html>



Angelino Alfano to claim the unconstitutionality of these actions during his Question Time on the 10th February 2016<sup>15</sup>.

In Table 8, I report the RD estimates relative to the impact of a NL mayor on the number of Italian citizenships granted per 1000 foreign citizens one year after the election. As we can see, the coefficient is negative and statistically significant at the 10% level; the inclusion of controls at municipal<sup>16</sup> and mayoral level, region and year fixed effects increases the magnitude of the coefficient in absolute value: the close election of a NL mayor decreases the number of Italian citizenships acquisitions by 14.451 per 1000 foreign born residents living in a municipality, one year after the electoral competition.

**Table 8: RD estimates - number of Italian citizenship acquisitions per 1000 foreign residents**

	Italian Citizenship Rate (1)	Italian Citizenship rate (2)
NL mayor	-11.677* (6.82)	-14.451** (5.99)
<i>N</i>	203	201
mean dep. var.	17.799	17.799
Controls	No	Yes
<i>h</i>	0.176	0.176

Note: Significance at the 10% level is represented by \*, at the 5% level by \*\*, and at the 1% level by \*\*\*. Each entry reports the RD coefficients and std. errors relative to the election of a NL mayor using the method developed by Calonico et al. (2014). Controls include city, mayoral characteristics, year and region fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the municipal level.

Unfortunately, the data do not allow to establish how many applications were denied; likewise, I cannot exclude that a reduction in the citizenships acquisitions could be explained by a decrease in foreign citizens' demand for Italian nationality status. Nonetheless, this simple exercise corroborates the idea of an decreased perception of social inclusion towards foreign born citizens, which could represent one of the possible reasons pushing foreign born residents to relocate to a different city in response to the election of a mayor affiliated to the Northern League party.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/alfano-question-time-sindaco-non-puo-rigettare-procedimento-cittadinanza>.

<sup>16</sup> In this case I include also foreign in-migration and out-migration to the set of controls.

## 8 Robustness

### 8.1 Increasing the data points

The results presented in Section 5 confirm that foreign born citizens living in Italy decide to relocate to a different city in response to the election of a Northern League candidate elected by a narrow margin of victory; on the contrary, the impact on foreign in-migrants is not statistically significant at any conventional level. In what follows, I run a series of tests aimed at establishing the robustness of my findings.

As a first robustness check, I increase the data points by looking at migration flows of foreign born citizens in the first two years after a close mayoral election involving the participation of a NL candidate.

**Table 9: The Impact of NL mayors on migration - foreign citizens per 1000 inhabitants**

	<b>In-Migr. rate (1)</b>	<b>In-Migr. rate (2)</b>	<b>Out-Migr. rate (3)</b>	<b>Out-Migr. rate (4)</b>	<b>Net-Migr. rate (5)</b>	<b>Net-Migr rate (6)</b>
NL mayor	1.009 (2.12)	1.153 (2.24)	3.469*** (1.20)	4.255*** (1.23)	-1.017 (1.82)	-2.218 (1.99)
<i>N</i>	496	490	312	306	524	516
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
<i>h</i>	0.218	0.218	0.124	0.124	0.234	0.234

Note: Significance at the 10% level is represented by \*, at the 5% level by \*\*, and at the 1% level by \*\*\*. Each entry reports the RD coefficients and std. errors relative to the election of a NL mayor using the method developed by Calonico et al. (2014). Controls include city, mayoral characteristics, year and region fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the municipal level.

In Table 9, Column (1) and column (2) confirm that the impact of the election of a Northern League mayor on the number of foreign in-migrants is not statistically significant. Passing to the out-migration indicators, the results presented in column (3) and column (4) confirm the existence of a strong impact on the number of foreign out-migrants per 1000 inhabitants in the 2 years after the close election of a Northern League candidate. The inclusion of controls, year and region fixed effects in column (4) increases the coefficient from 3.469 to 4.255 foreign born citizens per 1,000 inhabitants moving to a different city; the effect, also in this case, remains significant at the 1% level. The size of the coefficients relative to the out-migration variables is similar to the impacts presented in Table 4, demonstrating that the decision to migrate to a different city is stronger in the first year after the close election of a Northern League mayor.

Finally, in the last two columns, we observe a decrease on the foreign net migration rates in

response to the election of a NL mayor. Also, in this case, the effect is not statistically significant at any conventional level.

## 8.2 Breakthrough elections

In this section I explore whether the impact of the election of a Northern League mayor on foreign migration is stronger when a Northern League candidate is elected for the first time in an Italian municipality.

Table 10 below reports the estimates relative to the breakthrough elections using the same bandwidth computed by Calonico et al. (2014), to facilitate the comparability with the results presented in Table 4. As we can see in the first two columns, the impact on foreign in-migration is not statistically significant, as already discussed in section 5. Passing to the foreign out-migration indicators, we find a positive and statistically significant effect (5% s.l.) one year after the close election for the first time of a Northern League candidate. From column (3) the magnitude of the coefficient is similar to the estimates obtained using all the observations within the optimal-bandwidth; however, unlike the previous case, the inclusion of controls, year and region fixed effects, reduces slightly the size of the coefficient, which remains significant at the 5% level. Finally, no significant effect is detected when we analyse foreign net-migration.

**Table 10: The Impact of NL mayors on migration - foreign citizens per 1000 inhabitants**

	<b>In-Migr. rate (1)</b>	<b>In-Migr. rate (2)</b>	<b>Out-Migr. rate (3)</b>	<b>Out-Migr. rate (4)</b>	<b>Net-Migr. rate (5)</b>	<b>Net-Migr. rate (6)</b>
NL mayor	-0.784 (3.93)	-0.155 (3.71)	3.939** (1.82)	3.790** (1.57)	-2.008 (3.24)	-2.950 (3.132)
<i>N</i>	189	186	115	114	198	195
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
<i>h</i>	0.219	0.219	0.125	0.125	0.241	0.241

Note: Significance at the 10% level is represented by \*, at the 5% level by \*\*, and at the 1% level by \*\*\*. Each entry reports the RD coefficients and std. errors relative to the election of a NL mayor using the method developed by Calonico et al. (2014). Controls include city and mayoral characteristics. Standard errors are clustered at the municipal level.

## 8.3 Parametric estimator

The results presented in Section 5 are based on a nonparametric estimator. In what follows, to determine whether my results are sensitive to the use of different estimators, I exploit a parametric procedure, which is implemented retaining all the elections in the sample where a

Northern League candidate competes against a nominee affiliated to a different party or civic list, and absorbing the variation coming from the observations far away from the threshold imposing a polynomial specification of the running variable.

$$migration_{m,t+1} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 NL_{m,t} + \beta_2 MV_{m,t} + \beta_3 MV_{m,t}^2 + \beta_4 MV_{m,t}^3 + \beta_5 MV_{m,t} NL_{m,t} + \beta_6 MV_{m,t}^2 NL_{m,t} + \beta_7 MV_{m,t}^3 NL_{m,t} + u_{m,t+1} \quad (2)$$

In Table 11, for each migration indicator I present the estimates relative to the election of a Northern League mayor using a cubic polynomial term allowing for different slopes on both sides of the cut-off, as indicated by model (2).

The proper order of the polynomial regression is still open to debate in the RD literature; in this case, I follow Porter (2003), according to which odd polynomial orders present better econometric properties.

**Table 11: The Impact of NL mayors on migration - foreign citizens per 1000 inhabitants**

	In-Migr. rate (1)	In-Migr. rate (2)	Out-Migr. rate (3)	Out-Migr. rate (4)	Net-Migr. rate (5)	Net-Migr. rate (6)
NL mayor	1.385 (1.62)	1.398 (1.51)	1.703* (0.93)	1.742** (0.83)	-0.318 (1.49)	-0.344 (1.52)
<i>N</i>	431	425	431	425	431	425
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
<i>Polyn. Spec.</i>	Flex. Cubic	Flex. Cubic	Flex. Cubic	Flex. Cubic	Flex. Cubic	Flex. Cubic

Note: Significance at the 10% level is represented by \*, at the 5% level by \*\*, and at the 1% level by \*\*\*. Each entry reports the RD coefficients and std. errors relative to the election of a NL mayor using a parametric estimator. Controls include city and mayoral characteristics. Standard errors are clustered at the municipal level.

The absence of a statistically significant effect on the foreign in-migration indicator (columns (1) and (2)) estimated using a parametric estimator confirms the results obtained using the CCT nonparametric method. Passing to foreign out-migration, we can see that the election of a NL mayor causes an increase of 1.7 foreign born citizens moving to a different city one year after the electoral race per 1000 inhabitants; the effect is statistically significant at the 10% level. The inclusion of controls does not affect the size of the coefficient, now significant at the 5% level (columns (3) and (4)). Compared to Table 4, the adoption of a parametric estimator approximately halves the size of the coefficients relative to the out-migration indicator.

Finally, the last two columns in Table 11 confirm the absence of a statistically significant result relative to the net-migration variable.

## 9 Conclusions

This study shows how migration responds to the partisanship of a newly elected politician, by looking at the election of a Northern League mayor against a candidate affiliated to a civic list or to a different political party or coalition. Exploiting a nonparametric regression discontinuity design, I am able to isolate the endogeneity of the election of a NL mayor at city level, by focusing on closely contested electoral races only.

Overall, I find that foreign born citizens relocate in response to the election of a mayor affiliated to the Northern League party; on the contrary, the effect on the number of in-migrants per 1000 residents is negative but not statistically significant at any conventional level.

The second part of this work provides an assessment of one of the possible motives that might explain why foreign migration is positively affected by the election of a NL mayor, by focusing on discriminatory behaviours adopted by NL officers. As shown in section 7, a decrease in the perception of social integration towards foreign born citizens, indirectly documented by a decrease in the number of the Italian citizenships' acquisitions might explain why foreigners decide to relocate after a Northern League mayor is elected against a candidate affiliated to a civic list or to a different party.

In order to establish whether such findings are robust, I increase the number of data points, I look at the breakthrough elections and I adopt a parametric estimator: in all cases foreign out-migration increases in response to the election of a NL mayor.

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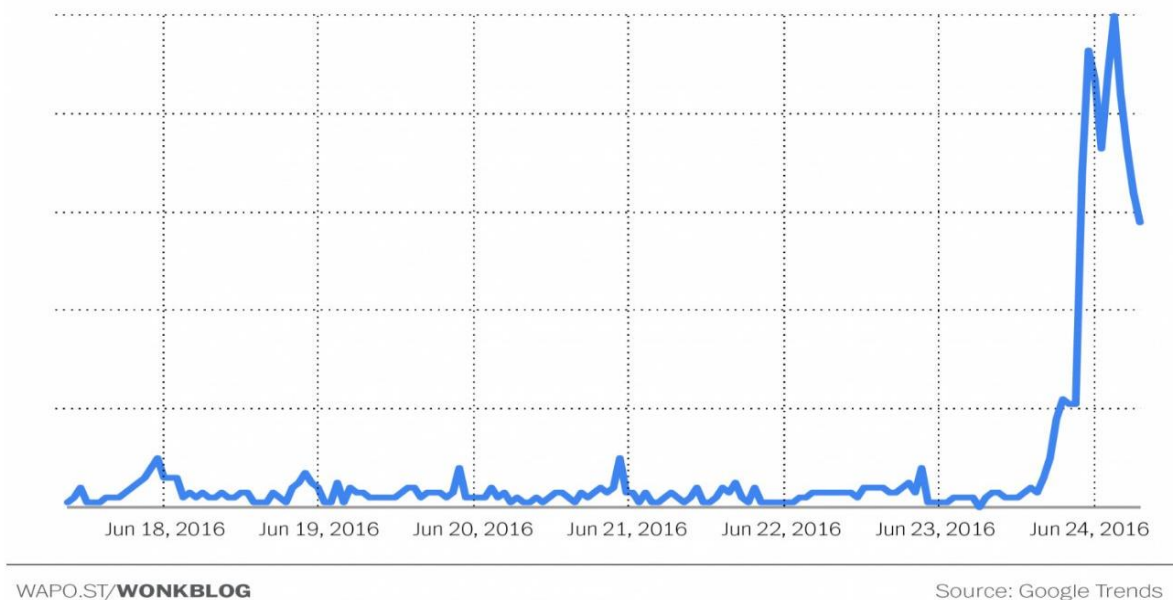


## Appendix A

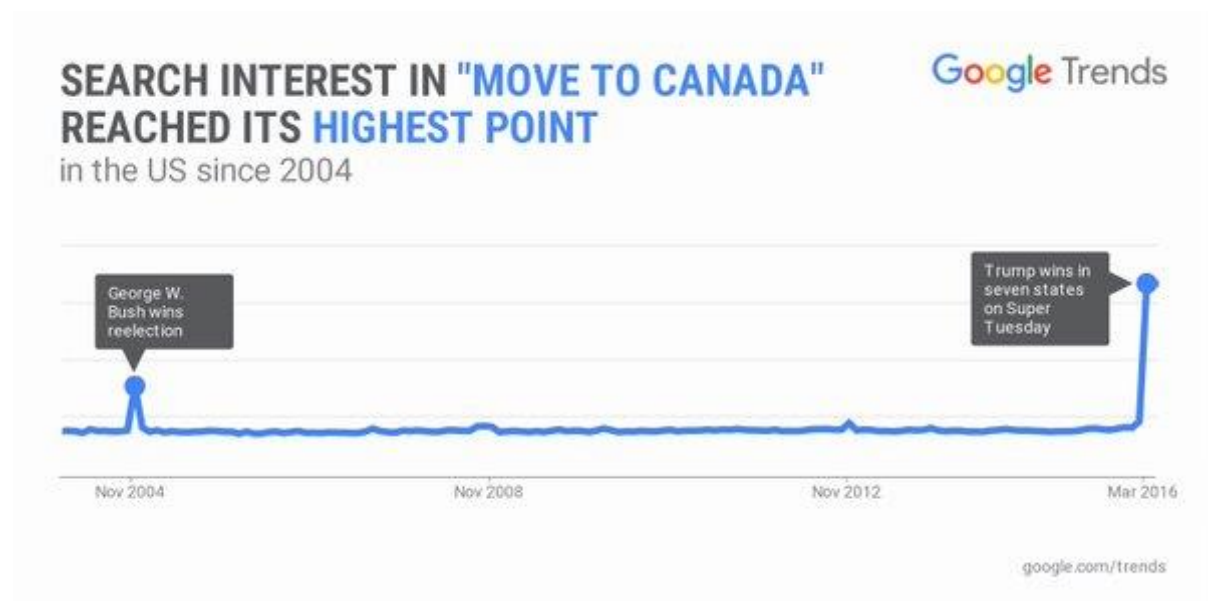
**Fig. A.1: Google Searches in USA: Moving to Canada - Super Tuesday**

### Searching for an exit from Brexit

Google search interest in the U.K. for "move to Canada"

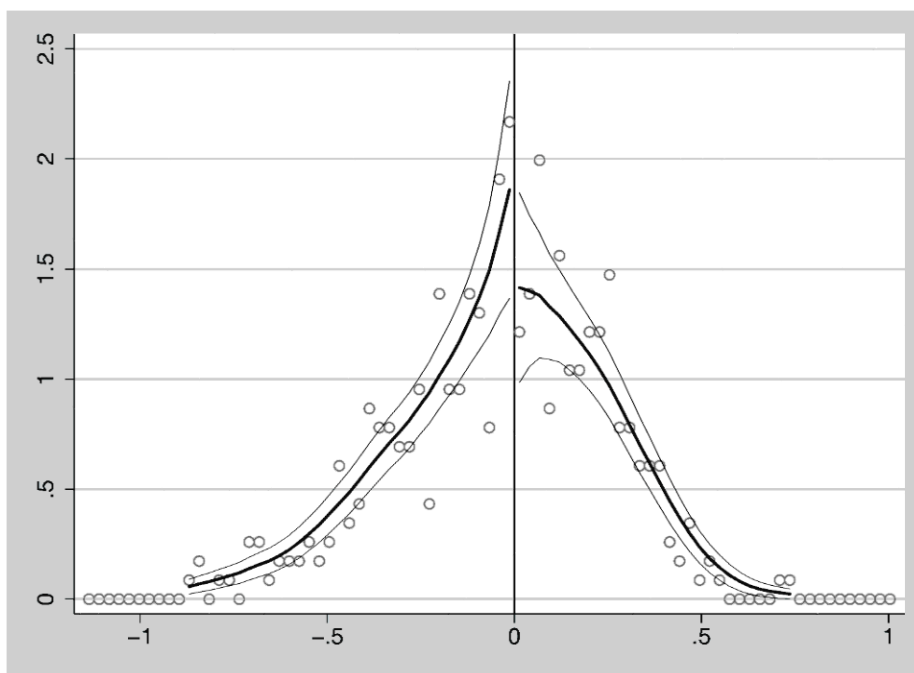


**Fig. A.2: Google Searches in UK: Moving to Canada - Brexit**



## Appendix B

Figure B.1: Continuity of the running variable



## Appendix C

**Table C.1: Discontinuity in the covariates - Halving CCT bandwidth**

	$\beta$ (se)	$N$	$h$
<b>Foreign Pop.</b>	-115.28 (325.42)	98	0.071
<b>Italian Pop.</b>	-6447 (4005.5)	91	0.068
<b>Ln(Income 2010€)</b>	-0.016 (0.074)	108	0.083
<b>Ln(Num firms 2012)</b>	-0.689 (0.589)	104	0.075
<b>Surf (km<sup>2</sup>)</b>	4.496 (8.82)	108	0.081
<b>City Altitude</b>	92.55 (86.26)	117	0.089
<b>Mayor gender</b>	-0.175 (0.23)	112	0.079
<b>Mayor age</b>	-5.886 (5.09)	116	0.088
<b>Mayor educ.</b>	0.133 (0.26)	128	0.100
<b>Mayor incumb.</b>	0.221 (0.16)	116	0.088

Note: Significance at the 10% level is represented by \*, at the 5% level by \*\*, and at the 1% level by \*\*\*. Each entry reports the RD coefficients and std. errors relative to the election of a NL mayor using the method developed by Calonico et al. (2014). Standard errors are clustered at the municipal level.

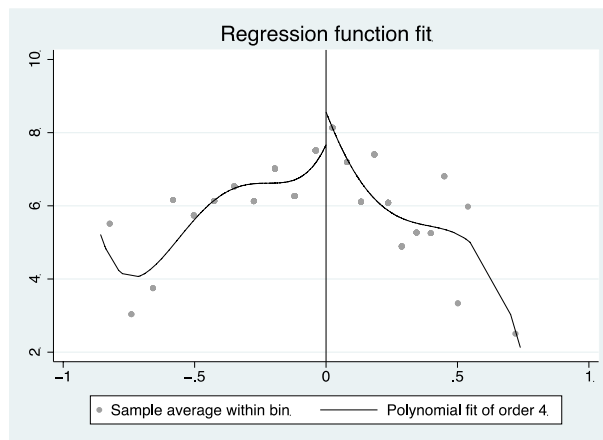
**Table C.2: Discontinuity in the covariates - Doubling CCT bandwidth**

	$\beta$ (se)	$N$	$h$
<b>Foreign Pop.</b>	-36.071 (241.74)	303	0.284
<b>Italian Pop.</b>	-3175.8 (2355.2)	293	0.27
<b>Ln(Income 2010€)</b>	0.033 (0.053)	327	0.332
<b>Ln(Num firms 2012)</b>	-0.397 (0.341)	313	0.302
<b>Surf (km<sup>2</sup>)</b>	1.696 (5.191)	324	0.324
<b>City Altitude</b>	55.378 (53.71)	346	0.358
<b>Mayor gender</b>	-0.119 (0.12)	323	0.318
<b>Mayor age</b>	-3.671 (2.76)	343	0.354
<b>Mayor educ.</b>	-0.094 (0.13)	371	0.400
<b>Mayor incumb.</b>	0.031 (0.06)	343	0.354

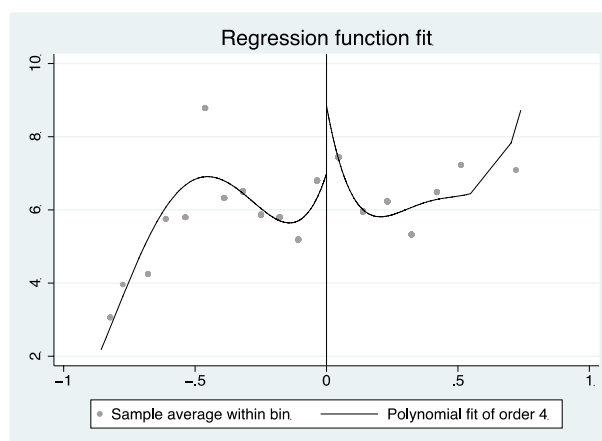
Note: Significance at the 10% level is represented by \*, at the 5% level by \*\*, and at the 1% level by \*\*\*. Each entry reports the RD coefficients and std. errors relative to the election of a NL mayor using the method developed by Calonico et al. (2014). Standard errors are clustered at the municipal level.

## Appendix D

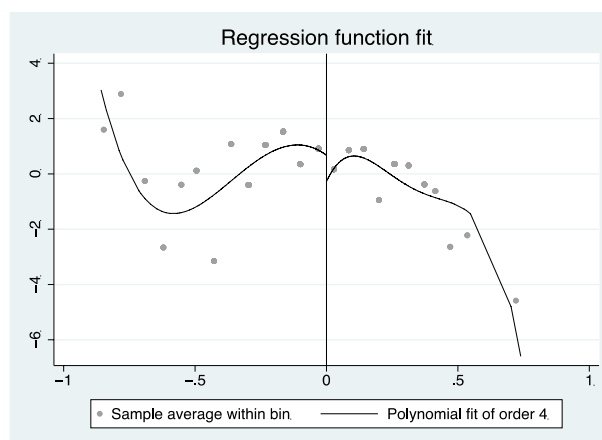
**Fig. D.1: The impact of a NL mayor foreign migration**



**(a) Foreign in-migration rate**



**(b) Foreign out-migration rate**



**(c) Foreign net-migration rate**