

# Betraying the Heartland

Asylum Seeker Immigration Policy and the British Labour Party, 2001-2010

Paul D. Kenny<sup>1</sup> and Charles Miller<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Coral Bell School of Asia-Pacific Affairs, Australian National University, paul.kenny@anu.edu.au

<sup>2</sup>School of Politics and International Relations, Australian National University,

charles.miller@anu.edu.au

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## Abstract

How are politically costly policies – such as those on asylum seeker immigration – implemented, and what effect does this have on ruling parties’ support? We investigate these questions by focusing on the effect of a British Labour Party policy that dispersed asylum seekers arriving after 2000 away from councils in London and the southeast to local authorities in other parts of the country. We find that Labour’s vote share fell sharply in response to asylum seeker inflows at the local authority level. Additionally, we find that the fall in support was higher in “heartland” or core electorates than in swing electorates. We develop a novel “betrayal” mechanism to account for this counter-intuitive result, theorizing that the negative impact of costs on party support will be larger in core electorates, as voters additionally punish the party for betraying their interests in favor of voters in swing electorates.

# 1 Introduction

In 1997, the British Labour Party returned to power after nearly two decades in opposition. Labour won an impressive 43.2 percent of the vote and netted 63.4 percent of the seats in Westminster. These shares dropped only slightly in 2001 to 40.7 percent and 62.5 percent respectively. However, its vote and seat share fell markedly in 2005, before it lost power to the Conservative Party in 2010. In tandem with this overall decline was an even sharper drop in the party's vote share its electoral "heartland" – the former industrial areas of the Midlands and northeast of England. Contrary to narratives focusing on Labour's economic policy shift away from the interests of its working class base (Fielding, 2017; Gest, 2016; Drinkwater and Jennings, 2017), this paper demonstrates that a major cause of the decline in Labour's support over the 2000s, and in particular, of its decline in its former heartland, was public disapproval of the party's handling of asylum seeker immigration. The decline and realignment of Labour's electoral support over the 2000s is of substantial intrinsic interest, but this case also speaks to a problem of central concern in political behavior: how are politically costly policies – such as those on asylum seeker immigration – implemented, and what effect does this have on ruling parties' support (Dixit and Londregan, 1996; Cox and McCubbins, 1986; Lindbeck and Weibull, 1987)?

Public opinion on immigration has yielded some contrasting results. In particular, research has shown that native attitudes towards immigration depend not only on respondents' age, education, and employment status, but also on the characteristics of immigrants themselves (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014; Kaufmann, 2018; Dancygier and Donnelly, 2013). We argue that several features of asylum seeker inflows – many of which are due to government policy – mean that they incur a particularly steep political cost.<sup>1</sup> Asylum seekers are barred

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<sup>1</sup>Refugees and asylum seekers are related but distinct legal categories. A refugee is any person who is outside of the country of his or her nationality and is unable or unwilling to return for fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, nationality or political affiliation;

by policy from participation in the labor market and rely almost exclusively on government housing and welfare while their claims are being processed. Moreover, in addition to usually being from groups that are linguistically and ethnically distant (Smith and Dempsey, 1983; Dustmann and Preston, 2007), asylum seekers are geographically concentrated and segregated into urban public or low-cost private housing at the local level (Sales, 2002). The length of time that applications take to be assessed, the placement of asylum seekers within the country, and the proportion of claims that are approved are all within the government's purview. The United Kingdom, like many countries in Western Europe, experienced a surge in applications for asylum in the mid-1990s. Even though the uptick in asylum applications began under the Conservative government of John Major, inflows grew even more strongly under the Blair Labour government, peaking at over 84,000 in 2002 (Consterdine and Hampshire, 2014). We first theorize that higher inflows of asylum seekers should decrease support for Labour as the party of government presiding over the increase.

Additionally, this paper theorizes that the impact of asylum seeker inflows on Labour's support was paradoxically felt most strongly in the party's electoral core or heartland. The Labour government was well aware of the potential political costs of asylum seeker immigration (Maughan, 2010). In fact, as one Labour MP put it, "Tony Blair was obsessed by immigration, particularly about illegal immigration and abuse of the asylum system" (Watt and Wintour, 2015). The majority of asylum seekers to arrive in the 1990s took up residency in London and the southeast of England while their claims were being assessed. The Labour government passed the Immigration and Asylum Act in 1999 in order to ameliorate the political costs of increased overall asylum seeker inflows by dispersing immigrants away

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an asylum seeker is a person who claims to be at risk of persecution but has not yet been determined to be a refugee. While refugees are brought to destination countries with UN, national government, and NGO assistance, asylum seekers arrive in destination countries on their own.

from marginal seats in London and the southeast to regional centers, mostly in the former heavy industry and coal mining regions of the country, where Labour had larger vote shares. Although the party’s heartland is generally more socioeconomically deprived, working class, and less diverse, we argue that these economic and demographic characteristics per se are not what drove its especially hostile reaction to asylum seeker inflows. We posit instead that core and swing electorates react differently to asylum seeker dispersals, with the former being particularly sensitive to bearing additional “costs” due to their perceived loyalty to the party. The effect, we theorize, was to *exacerbate* the negative impact of asylum seeker immigration on the party’s vote share, with core electorates reacting strongly against this perceived “betrayal”.

In this case, the “treatment” of interest – asylum seeker dispersal – is applied at the local authority level. We thus focus on explaining variation in aggregate support for Labour in local authority elections over time. Our main empirical strategy is a difference-in-differences model, which controls for unobserved variation between local authorities and over time. We find that an increase in the number of asylum seekers dispersed to a local authority is associated with a large decline in the vote share of the Labour Party. Results are robust to a range of model specifications and sensitivity tests. Interacting changes in asylum seeker dispersals with fixed local authority characteristics, we further show that the negative changes to Labour’s vote share were most pronounced in the party’s former electoral strongholds (measured by the party’s average vote share in the 1990s). That is, not only were asylum seekers disproportionately dispersed to the heartland but the marginal effect of asylum seeker dispersals on the Labour vote share was also greater in these electorates. Notably, we find little evidence that the effect of asylum seeker inflows on Labour’s vote share is conditional on local authority demographic or economic characteristics.

Additionally, we analyze individual attitudes and voter preferences from the British Election Study. Although we do not have direct evidence on the quality and quantity of native-immigrant contact at the individual level, we do have the data to show that disap-

proval of the Labour government’s handling of asylum seeker immigration is the most important explanation for defection from Labour in the early 2000s irrespective of respondent class or ethnicity. Along with the absence of an interaction between dispersal and economic characteristics at the aggregate level, this evidence indicates that the decline in Labour’s support over the 2000s was less a revolt of the white working class per se than a geographic realignment of the party’s support away from its older industrial heartland in the north towards more highly educated and middle class marginal electorates in the south in response to the locally differential impact of asylum seeker inflows.

This paper makes several contributions. First, we add to the debate on the logic and impact of subnationally targeted government policy. Previous research on its effects has tended to focus on the allocation of additional “goods” (e.g., public sector jobs) (Albertus, 2013; Cox, 2009; Stokes, 2005) or less commonly on the retrenchment of existing benefits (e.g., school or hospital closures, changes to welfare programs) (Lindbom, 2014; Schumacher et al., 2013). We show that the imposition of “bads” or costs may have different effects to the non-allocation of benefits (Groothuis and Miller, 1994; Davis and Bali, 2008; Ferwerda et al., 2017).<sup>2</sup> Building on the well-established logic of loss-aversion in psychology (Tversky and Kahneman, 1991), we argue that voters should be more sensitive to losses than to foregone gains. Additionally, however, we posit that core electorates will react more strongly to the imposition of costs than swing electorates, punishing parties that take their loyalty for granted. Although applied to the particular case of asylum seeker inflows in this paper, the proposed “betrayal” mechanism could be evident across a wide range of policy domains.

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<sup>2</sup>It should be clear that the use of the terms “bads” and “costs” to capture the effect of asylum seekers is not intended pejoratively. Nor are “costs” meant in the purely economic sense of housing and welfare payments. Rather “costs” refer simply to the widely observed empirical fact that asylum seeker inflows are viewed negatively by native, or resident, populations.

Second, we contribute specifically to research on the political effects of immigration. A large and growing body of work examines the effect of immigration on support for the far right (Stockemer, 2015; Stockemer and Lamontagne, 2014; McLaren, 2003; Otto and Steinhardt, 2014; Halla, Wagner, and Zweimüller, 2017; Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010; Harmon, 2018; Dinas, Matakos, Xefteris, and Hangartner, 2019). Thus far, however, there has been little work that explicitly theorizes and tests the effect of immigration on mainstream parties (Dustmann et al., 2018). This is of particular concern in places like Britain, where the majoritarian electoral system means that extremist party support is likely to significantly understate the political impact of immigration. The desertion of mainstream parties is a process worthy of study in its own right, in addition to being a possible precursor of far right or populist party support (Kenny, 2017; Evans and Chzhen, 2013).

## **2 Background: The Labour Party’s Asylum Seeker Dispersal Program**

Asylum seekers represent a significant (minority) category of immigrant to the United Kingdom. The number of asylum applications has grown dramatically since the late 1980s. There were just 5,000 applications for asylum in 1988, but this figure rose to over 15,000 in 1989, 30,000 in 1990, and eventually peaked at 84,132 in 2002 (excluding dependents) (Dancygier, 2007). In 2015, there were 277,000 non-EU immigrants to the United Kingdom, 32,414 of whom were asylum seekers. Only a minority of asylum seekers are ultimately granted permission to stay; the rest are repatriated.

The Labour Party introduced the asylum seeker dispersal program under Section 95 of the Immigration Act (1999). The policy was put into operation in April 2000 under the control of the Home Office’s newly formed National Asylum Support Service (NASS), and the first asylum seekers were dispersed in 2001. Overall, of the 473 local authorities that existed in England and Wales between 2001 and 2015, 138 had some asylum seekers provided

with accommodation by NASS.<sup>3</sup> Dispersal was far from uniform. The cities of Birmingham (15,380), Liverpool (11,728), Leeds (10,781), Manchester (9,946), and Newcastle (8,490) were the most common destinations.<sup>4</sup> 69 percent of all local authorities took fewer than ten asylum seekers (Lyons and Duncan, 2017).

From an analytical perspective, this program has a particularly useful design in that asylum seekers had no choice where they would be located except in instances of family reunification (which were a fraction of total asylum seekers and which we exclude from the analysis). Unlike many observational studies of the political effects of immigration, the location decision is thus independent of the preferences of immigrants themselves (but see Hangartner et al., 2019; Dustmann et al., 2018). The dispersal program therefore operates as a policy shock, exposing some local authorities to the “treatment” of asylum seeker dispersal, while leaving others “untreated”.

However, dispersal itself was not fully randomized. Previous research has argued that dispersal was driven primarily by the availability of temporary accommodation or “bedspaces”, which were typically found in more economically disadvantaged areas (Hynes, 2006). In addition, poorer local authorities were motivated to participate in the program as a way to attract central funds (Burnett, 2011). As a result, asylum seekers came to be concentrated in relatively deprived areas of the United Kingdom (Anie et al., 2005; Phillimore and Goodson, 2006; Lyons and Duncan, 2017). This was especially the case in the early years of the program. In 2001, 80 percent of dispersals went to so-called “multiply deprived”

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<sup>3</sup>We exclude Scotland because of the combination of its substantially different political landscape and the concentration of all Scotland-bound asylum seekers in the single city of Glasgow, which make identification of a causal effect problematic.

<sup>4</sup>These figures are for flows of asylum seekers dispersed, not for stocks of asylum seekers resident at any one time in a given local authority.

areas, while in 2004, 70 percent were still going to such areas.<sup>5</sup> We find that local authorities receiving asylum seekers tended to have higher unemployment, higher levels of violent crime, and to be more ethnically diverse (c.f. Stewart, 2011) (see Table 1).

We also find that recipient local authorities had a higher average Labour Party vote in local authority elections during the 1990s, i.e., before dispersals began, than those not receiving asylum seekers (see Table 1). Local authorities could themselves opt out of the dispersal program. In fact, most Conservative Party controlled local authorities refused to accept any asylum seekers. For this reason, we focus on the period of the dispersal program in which Labour was in control nationally, from 2001 to 2010. During this period, the national Labour leadership was essentially faced with the problem of how to allocate asylum seekers among the local authorities that it controlled. From 2010 onwards, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition and Conservative governments appear to have continued to direct asylum seekers toward the largely Labour-controlled local authorities that had received asylum seekers during the 2000s (Lyons and Duncan, 2017).<sup>6</sup>

**Table 1:** Summary Statistics by Council Recipient Status

	Recipient	Non-recipient	T Test (Diff)	P Value (Diff)
Unemployment Rate	0.063	0.051	8.875	0.00
Violent Crime PC	0.044	0.031	14.791	0.00
White UK PC 2001	0.857	0.925	-11.597	0.00
Mean Labour Share 1990s	0.481	0.342	23.411	0.00

<sup>5</sup>The Multiple Deprivation Index is a qualitative measure of socioeconomic deprivation composed of seven indicators: income, employment, health and disability, education and training, housing and services, crime, and living environment.

<sup>6</sup>As of 2016, 34,936 asylum seekers live in areas with Labour-led councils compared with 1,680 in Conservative-led local authorities.



### 3 Theoretical Considerations

First, we argue that asylum seeker inflows are a “cost” imposed on recipient localities, which should locally reduce support for the governing party (Ferwerda et al., 2017). Research across a wide variety of national contexts shows that migrant inflows are unpopular among a non-negligible proportion of the population at least in the short-term (Hopkins, 2010; Kaufmann, 2018; Semyonov et al., 2006; Hjerm, 2007; McLaren, 2003; Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010; Dinas et al., 2019; Dustmann et al., 2018). We thus first theorize that asylum seeker inflows should cause a reduction in support for the governing Labour Party, which was the party responsible for introducing the dispersal program. We theorize that these effects should be felt across class and occupational groups, but remain largely agnostic on the psychological process at work, i.e., whether anti-asylum seeker sentiment is driven by perceptions of labor market competition, welfare competition, ethnocentrism, or some other factor (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014). Although some studies have found working class individuals to express more nativist views than those of other occupational groups (Evans and Tilley, 2017), these results are confounded by the problem of social desirability bias in survey research on race and ethnicity (Banaji and Greenwald, 2016). Rather, following Enos (2017) and Hopkins (2010), we argue that the political geography of immigration matters in its own right because of how it affects contact between natives and immigrants.

Even though a substantial body of research suggests that as contact between groups increases, anti-outsider sentiment should fall (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2008, 2006; McLaren, 2003), the quality of that contact is critically important (Clayton et al., 2019). Contact between natives (of all classes) and asylum seekers is limited by linguistic and cultural distance and the geographic segregation of asylum seekers. We hypothesize that the visibility of asylum seekers as an ethnically distant group (Smith and Dempsey, 1983; Dustmann and Preston, 2007), along with their geographical concentration and segregation into urban public or low-cost private housing at the local level (Sales, 2002), is likely to exacerbate native con-

cerns over immigration, irrespective of a locality’s demographic or economic characteristics. Both because of their geographic isolation and segregation, and because of their exclusion from the labor market, from natives’ perspective, asylum seekers are perceived to display little enthusiasm for integration, which in turn increases anti-immigrant sentiment (Rudolph and Wagner, 2019; Sniderman et al., 2004; Kenny and Lockwood-Kenny, 2011; Hangartner et al., 2019). In short, the presence of a different group in close proximity but with which there is little cross-group engagement is sufficient to cause strong out-group sentiments and in turn, political disaffection if not also extremism (Allport, 1954; Blumer, 1958; Enos, 2017). Moreover, the extensive state controls over asylum seekers – from where they are dispersed to the length of time it takes their claims to be assessed – are likely to accentuate the attribution of responsibility for asylum seeker inflows to the government compared to other categories of immigrant.

Second, we further theorize that the effect of this cost, i.e., of asylum seeker dispersals, should be exacerbated in Labour’s traditional electoral strongholds or “heartland”. We take seriously and test the possibility that the socioeconomic or demographic (i.e., ethnic and religious) characteristics of these localities could be behind the political response to asylum seeker immigration. However, our logic depends instead on the fact that these were electorates in which the Labour Party held dominant shares of the vote. Existing research on voter targeting mostly focuses on the provision of benefits, often in the form of club goods or pork barrel spending (Albertus, 2013; Cox, 2009; Stokes, 2005). However, the allocation of “bads” or costs is likely to evince different dynamics. This is because electorates may be more sensitive to the imposition of a “loss” (e.g., an incineration plant) than the failure to obtain a benefit (e.g., a new hospital) (Tversky and Kahneman, 1991). We add to this the proposition that core electorates will react more strongly to the imposition of costs than swing electorates as costs in the former may be perceived as a “betrayal”. We theorize that voters in core electorates perceive being punished for their prior loyalty to the party of government. Thus, while both core and swing electorates should respond to the dispersal of asylum seekers

by defecting from Labour (either to another party, or by abstaining), the betrayal mechanism will exacerbate this shift in core electorates. In a sense, voters in core electorates receive two “treatments”, which lower their vote for the Labor Party: asylum seeker inflows to their electorate *and* the betrayal of their electorate to those of swing electorates.

## 4 Empirical Strategy

Determining the causal effect of immigration policy on political behavior poses methodological challenges. Most importantly, internal migration paths may be endogenous to the politics of subnational areas (Dustmann and Preston, 2001), i.e., immigrants self-select into communities in which coethnics exist and in which they may be more likely to be accepted. This could in turn lead to a significant underestimation of the impact of immigration on political behavior. To deal with the endogeneity bias introduced by immigrant self-selection into localities where they may be most favorably accepted, a number of recent papers have instrumented for immigration flows with prior immigrant stocks (Halla et al., 2017; Otto and Steinhardt, 2014) or with the availability of low-cost housing (Harmon, 2018; Steinmayr, 2016, 2017). However, there remain two problems with this approach. First, because the instruments used are static, the problem of confounding due to omitted time-varying variables persists; second, it is impossible to exclude alternative pathways through which instruments such as the availability of social housing would plausibly be related to electoral outcomes.

Thus far, only Dustmann et al. (2018) in the case of Denmark utilizes the quasi-random variation in the timing of refugee allocation to municipalities by the central government to estimate the causal effect of immigration on voting behavior. The British case allows us to adopt a similar approach. Asylum seeker dispersal is independent of the preferences of migrants, which removes one source of endogeneity bias. However, as we noted above, there are important underlying differences between the local authorities receiving asylum seekers and those not receiving them.

To deal with this, our primary empirical strategy is a difference-in-differences model. This model calculates the effect of a treatment on an outcome by comparing the average change over time in the outcome variable for the treatment group with that of the control group. The main model takes the form:

$$y_{it} = \alpha + \delta_{dd} \text{Dispersed } PC_{it} + \sum_{k=\text{Allerdale}}^{\text{York}} \gamma_k \text{Authority}_{ki} + \sum_{j=2001}^{2010} \kappa_j \text{Year}_{jt} + \beta x_{it} + \epsilon_{it}$$

Where *Dispersed PC* is asylum seekers in dispersed accomodation as a proportion of the working age population;  $y_{it}$  is Labour’s vote share in local authority  $i$  in year  $t$ ;  $\gamma_k$  and  $\kappa_j$  are the coefficients on local authority and year dummies respectively;  $x_{it}$  is a vector of controls comprising lagged unemployment and lagged violent crime per capita; and the quantity of interest is the causal effect of dispersals on the vote share of the Labour Party  $\delta_{dd}$ .

Our difference-in-differences model allows us to control for any potential confounders which are invariant within local authorities over time or which might result from time specific shocks at the national level. For instance, the local authority fixed effects allow us to rule out the possibility that our results are driven by the fact that asylum seekers tended to go to authorities with a prior history of deindustrialization and social deprivation, while the year fixed effects rule out the possibility that our results could be affected by a decline in the Labour government’s popularity following the Iraq War or the global financial crisis.

Our strategy does rely, however, on the assumption that asylum seeker dispersals are uncorrelated with time and location specific shocks which may also have affected Labour’s vote share. Even though the dispersal program removed the choice of location from the asylum seekers themselves, the Home Office retained some discretion in where it would disperse asylum seekers, while local authorities could opt out of the program, leading to the possibility that local area- and year-specific shocks could have impacted both dispersal and voting behavior. Two possible time-varying conditions within local authorities stand out. First, both

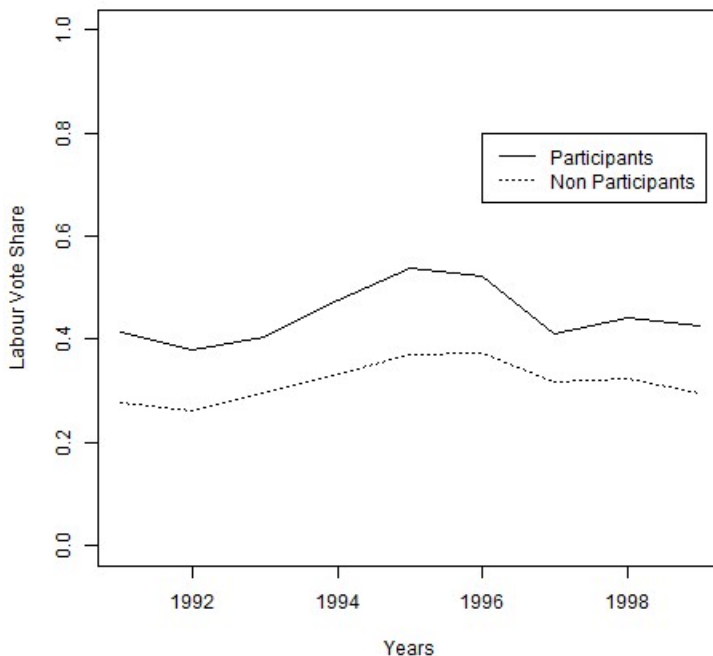
local authorities' decisions to participate in the dispersal program and vote choice could be affected by local economic conditions, such as a localized increase in unemployment. Second, asylum seeker dispersal could be correlated with anti-immigrant violence and harassment as well as with support for a party perceived to be soft on law and order issues.

To address these concerns we adopt three approaches. First, in our main models we include time-varying location-specific controls for unemployment and violent crime. Second, in our Sensitivity Analysis section, to deal the possibility that there are omitted local authority specific time-varying confounders, we run additional models in which we interact a linear time trend and location dummies (Angrist and Pischke, 2015). Third, in the same section, following Oster (2017), we run additional sensitivity analyses to estimate the magnitude that an omitted confounding variable would have to take on to undermine the results.

In addition, the validity of the difference-in-differences strategy depends on the assumption that there is no difference in *trends* in the outcome of interest between treated and untreated units. This assumption can be tested only with reference to pre-treatment trends. As Table 1 shows, the pre-2000 Labour vote share has a significant and positive association with whether a local authority later received asylum seekers. That is, asylum seekers are disproportionately sent to Labour supporting electorates. However, while the baseline of Labour support differs, as Figure 1 illustrates, Section 95 participating local authorities were subject to the same trend in Labour vote share prior to the program as non-participating local authorities. There is thus no reason to believe that Labour's support would have declined to a greater degree in those areas receiving asylum seekers in the absence of dispersals.

Last, our results could still be biased upwards if it was the case that the national Labour Party government either a.) believed that asylum seekers would boost the Labour vote and so sent them to places where the Labour vote would have been weaker even absent asylum seekers, or b) believed asylum seekers would harm the Labour vote and deliberately sent them to local authorities so as to reduce Labour's vote share. We argue that both of

**Figure 1:** Pre-treatment trends in Labour vote share by recipient status



these scenarios are implausible. In addition to statements revealing concerns about the political costs of immigration made by Tony Blair, David Blunkett, and others in the Labour leadership (Watt and Wintour, 2015; Maughan, 2010), two further pieces of evidence suggest that Labour’s national and local leadership believed that asylum seekers might reduce Labour’s vote and so avoided sending them to places where they might generate the largest electoral opposition or threaten Labour’s local electoral control. First, the Home Office under the national Labour government, responded to requests from local police forces to suspend dispersals to local authorities where the anti-asylum seeker backlash was strongest (Casciani, 2004).<sup>7</sup> Second, to test this claim more formally, following Dustmann and Preston (2007), we examine whether electoral outcomes in any election year affect asylum seeker allocation to a particular local authority. To this end, we regress Labour’s vote share on the 1 to 5 year leads of the asylum seeker variable (that is, using the asylum seekers per capita which

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<sup>7</sup>Some 2,000 racist attacks, verbal harassment, and physical assaults against asylum seekers had been reported to the Home Office by 2002 (Burnett, 2011; Anie et al., 2005).

a local authority would receive 1 to 5 years in the future as regressors). Table A1 in the Appendix shows there is no evidence that the councils which were to receive asylum seekers were trending away from Labour before the program began relative to councils which did not receive asylum seekers. Consequently any selection bias due to the strategic placement of asylum seekers by the national and local authorities will push our coefficients towards zero.

## 5 Data

The main dependent variable is the vote share of the Labour Party (*Labour share*) in local authority elections. We focus on elections for local authorities for largely practical reasons. First, local authorities, rather than national parliamentary constituencies, are the geographical units to which assylum seekers are dispersed. The two sets of boundaries do not match up precisely, rendering an attempt to estimate the effect of dispersals on parliamentary constituency results problematic. We can say, however, that the subnational distributions of Labour’s vote share in local and national elections correspond closely. Second, local authority elections are more frequent than national ones, increasing the number of unique observations by administrative unit. This is of particular importance given that we focus on yearly flows of asylum seekers rather than stocks (as most asylum seekers are denied refugee status).

For the independent variable, we collected data from the United Kingdom Home Office on the dispersal of asylum seekers from 2001 to 2010. We use the number of asylum seekers dispersed per annum as a proportion of the adult population in local authority as our main independent variable (*Asylum PC*). The majority of asylum seekers whose applications are approved continue to live in the location to which they were originally dispersed (Stewart, 2011). However, because a majority of asylum applications are denied and because some approved asylum seekers do move away, the number of asylum seekers dispersed in a given year is preferable to the total number of asylum seekers claiming support in a local authority (Bell et al., 2012). In other words, we use a flow measure rather than a stock measure of

asylum seekers. In our main models, the dispersal measurement is proportional to the local population size. We use the estimate of the population at the local authority level from the Labour Force Survey rather than population statistics from the 2001 census, as the latter do not sufficiently incorporate the substantial population movements that occur between census periods.

We include controls for a number of location-specific time-varying conditions that may have been associated with dispersal. First, we use the level of unemployment (proportional to the working age population), lagged by one year, as a measure of deprivation at the local authority level (*Unemployment*). Second, we use the level of violent crime lagged by one year (*Violent Crime*), as a proxy for violence involving resettled asylum seekers.<sup>8</sup> Note again that the use of local authority fixed effects means that we do not need to control for variables such as “multiple deprivation” (see fn. 5) that vary between local authorities but that are slow-moving or static within local authorities. We address the possibility of heterogeneous treatment effects, in which the effect of asylum seeker immigration would be conditional on local authority sociodemographic characteristics in section 9.

Summary statistics are shown in Table A2 of Appendix A and source information for all variables is given in Appendix C.

## 6 Main Results

As shown in Table 2, *Asylum PC* has a large negative effect on the *Labour share* (1). The effect is statistically significant at the 1 percent level. Standard errors are clustered by local authority. Model 2 controls for *Unemployment* and *Violent Crime*. *Unemployment*

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<sup>8</sup>Data on hate crimes, which include religiously- or ethnically-motivated violence or abuse, are collected in United Kingdom; however, these data are only available from 2011/12 and are aggregated to the 44 Police Force Areas (PFAs), making them unsuitable for our purposes.



**Table 2:** Main vote share models

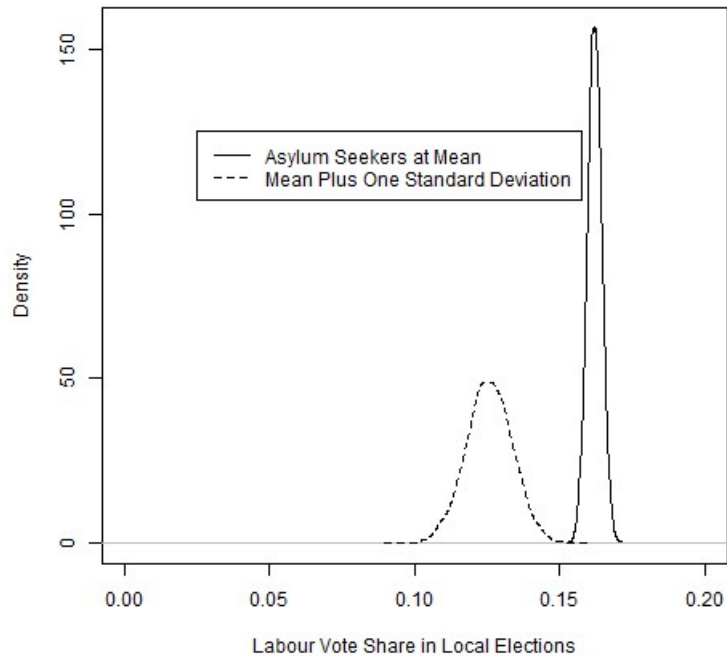
	(1)	(2)
Asylum PC	-30.753 (6.210)***	-43.987 (7.043)***
Unemployment PC		0.220 (0.119)
Crime PC		-0.388 (0.079)***
LA Dummies	Yes	Yes
Year Dummies	Yes	Yes
N	2,122	1,343
$r^2$	0.91	0.923

Robust clustered standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$

is *positively* associated with *Labour share*, but the coefficient is not statistically significant at conventional levels. Violent crime is negative and statistically significant, implying that Labour's vote share fell in local authorities suffering from higher rates of violent crime. The effect of *Asylum PC* continues to have a negative effect on the *Labour share*.

As illustrated in Figure 2 (based on model 2 of Table 2), we find that a one standard deviation increase in the dispersal of asylum seekers per capita is associated with a decline in Labour's vote share of approximately four percentage points. The impact, in short, is quite substantial.

**Figure 2:** Marginal Effects of Asylum Seeker Dispersal on Labour Vote Share



## 7 Robustness Checks

All main models use dispersed asylum seekers as a proportion of the local population. Results do not change when we use raw numbers of asylum seekers (see table A3 in Appendix A).

To rule out the possibility that our results are driven by a time trend in the Labour vote, we ran alternative specifications with first a linear and then a quadratic time trend instead of year dummies and found our results to be unchanged (see Table A4 in Appendix A).

Additionally, we run models in which we only use local authorities in years in which Labour was in control of the council (see Table A5 in Appendix A). We found our results to be unchanged.

To deal with the possibility that difference-in-differences methods systematically under-reject the null hypothesis, we implemented a revised version of the Bertrand et al. (2004) suggested check, repeatedly generating ‘placebo’ asylum seekers at random and regressing

the Labour vote share on them. In 1,000 simulated regressions we found that the null was rejected less than 5 percent of the time, allowing us to rule out the possibility that our chosen approach was insufficiently conservative (see Appendix B).

More substantively, it could be posited that it is immigration from Central and Eastern Europe following the enlargement of the EU in 2004, rather than asylum seeker immigration, that is driving down the Labour vote share. In fact, to the extent that previous research has examined the role of immigration in the decline of Labour’s support, the focus has been on the post-2004 increase in immigration from Central and Eastern Europe (Evans and Chzhen, 2013). To investigate this possibility, we also gathered data on EU-8 immigration using applications for National Insurance numbers by foreign nationals.<sup>9</sup> We find no evidence of an effect of EU-8 immigration on Labour’s vote share with or without controls for unemployment and violent crime (see models 1 and 2 in Table A6 in Appendix A). However, it would be incorrect to necessarily conclude from this that EU-8 immigration had no effect on Labour’s support. EU-8 immigration, like immigration in general, in addition to having some historical path dependency (Card, 2007), is characterized by immigrant self-selection into those localities where their prospects for economic and social integration are likely to be highest. Its impact may be real but undetectable. The point to stress, however, that concurrent EU-8 immigration is not behind the association between asylum seeker immigration and declines in the Labour vote share. EU-8 immigration is negatively correlated with asylum seeker dispersal. Dispersal remains robust to the inclusion of EU-8 immigration as an additional control variable (model 3 in Table A6).

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<sup>9</sup>The EU-8 refers to Malta, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Hungary, while the EU-10 includes Hungary and Romania. EU-8 member citizens gained full rights to live and work in the UK from 2004, but Hungarian and Romanian nationals faced extended restrictions until 2014.

## 8 Sensitivity Tests

Although the inclusion of control variables for unemployment and crime should mitigate concerns of omitted variable bias, we cannot rule out the possibility of confounders which vary both by time and local authority. However, we have two additional answers to this issue.

**Table 3:** Vote share models including a local authority time trend

	(1)	(2)
Asylum PC	-34.834 (5.469)***	-38.471 (7.216)***
Unemployment PC		-0.050 (0.142)
Crime PC		-0.186 (0.098)
LA Dummies	Yes	Yes
Year Dummies	No	No
LA Specific Time Trend	Yes	Yes
N	2,122	1,343
$r^2$	0.952	0.962

Robust clustered standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$

First, to test the sensitivity of our results to the assumption that they are driven by some omitted local authority time-varying factor (e.g., an increase in anti-immigrant sentiment in specific local authorities over time), following the approach of Angrist and Pischke (2015) we re-ran the above models with a local authority-specific time trend added in, as shown in Table 3. We found our results to be practically unchanged with respect to the *Labour share*, without (1) and with (2) controls. The correlation between *Violent crime* and the *Labour share* is no longer statistically significant at conventional levels.

Second, we followed Emily Oster’s recommended sensitivity analysis procedure (Oster, 2017). This procedure calculates how strong the degree of bias from an omitted confounder would have to be in order to overturn a significant finding based on two parameters – the

degree of selection on unobservables ( $\delta$ ) and the difference in the r squared between the fully controlled regression and the simulated regression also including the unobservables ( $rmax$ ). If  $\delta$  is assumed equal to 1, so that selection on observables is equal to selection on unobservables and  $rmax$  is 1.3 times the r squared on the fully controlled regression, then the causal status of the finding may be considered robust by Oster’s criterion. Since our difference-in-differences model explained so much of the variation in Labour support (r squared of 0.92), setting  $rmax$  to 1.3 times this number would result in an impossible r squared of greater than 1. This in itself suggests that there is very little room for any unobserved confounders to affect a model which already has such strong explanatory power. To probe the sensitivity of our findings further, we instead set  $rmax$  to 1 and probed the sensitivity of our results to different values of  $\delta$ . We found that  $\delta$  would need to be -1.35 – that is, that the degree of selection on unobservables would need to be more than 35 percent greater than the degree of selection on the observed controls (including the year and authority fixed effects) and that it would need to move the coefficients in the opposite direction to the observed controls, in order to overturn our results. As our model explains so much of the variance in Labour’s vote share, the requisite value of  $\delta$  would increase rapidly for values of  $rmax$  less than 1. A value of  $rmax$  of 0.95 would imply that selection on unobservables would need to be more than three times more important than selection on unobservables in order to overturn our result.

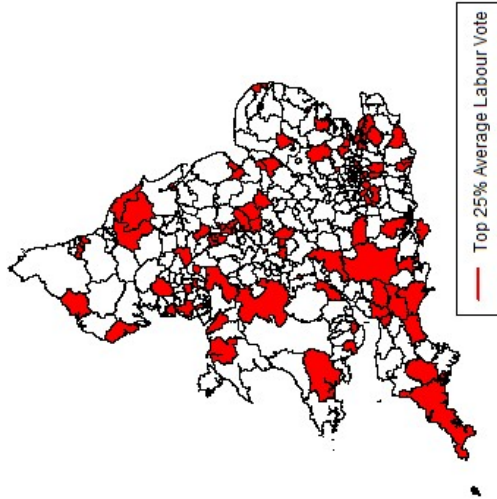
## 9 Heterogeneous Treatment Effects: Betraying the Labour Heartland

The use of local authority fixed effects in our analysis indicates that asylum seeker dispersal has a negative effect on support for the Labour Party irrespective of the underlying socio-economic or ethnic characteristics of a given locality. However, to explain Labour’s decline in its former political heartland, we also hypothesized that the marginal effect of asylum seeker inflows will be different across electorates. A common narrative in the British case is that the

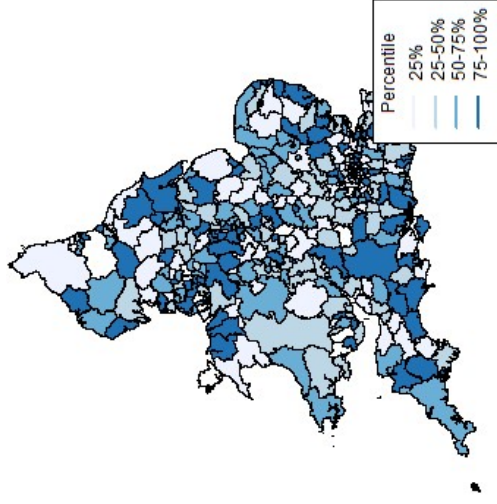
political difficulties associated with asylum seeker immigration were due to asylum seekers being located in predominantly white working class areas. We thus first test whether there is an *interaction* effect between local authority socioeconomic and demographic characteristics and the influx of asylum seekers on political behavior. Our alternative hypothesis is that it is not the overall level of deprivation or ethnic diversity of a recipient locality that matters but how the Labour Party’s prior levels of electoral support were distributed.

Figure 3 illustrates what we call Labour’s heartland, or its core local authority electorates in the 1990s. The highlighted local authorities are the ones in the upper quartile of Labour’s average vote share for the decade. These core electorates have deep roots; they are located primarily in Britain’s historical coal and heavy industrial regions. Figure 4 shows where the largest swings in vote share away from the Labour Party between the 1990s and 2010s occurred. Table 4 shows how heartland and non-heartland local authorities compare. Heartland local authorities tend to be more working class, have higher levels of unemployment, and to be whiter, but with a higher Muslim share of the population, than non-heartland local authorities (the construction of these local authority variables is described below). Table 5 presents the results of a regression of the magnitude of the negative swing in Labour’s vote share on (1) Labour’s mean vote share in a local authority across all council elections in the 1990s and (2) on a dummy variable for whether a local authority fell in the heartland (i.e., the upper quartile of Labour’s mean vote share in the 1990s). Both measures are strongly correlated with a negative shift in Labour’s vote share, even controlling for local authority ethnicity and socioeconomic deprivation. Although others have utilized survey data to document the realignment of Labour’s support from the (white) working class to the middle class at the individual level over this period (Evans and Tilley, 2017), we show that this realignment also had a spatial dimension observable at the electorate level.

In estimating the conditioning effects of prior local authority characteristics on the relationship between the pre-program Labour vote share and asylum seekers, we follow the



**Figure 3:** Upper Quartile Labour Vote, 1990s



**Figure 4:** Swing from Labour, 1990s-2010s

**Table 4:** Summary Statistics by Labour Heartland Status

	Heartland	Non-heartland	T Test (Diff)	P Value (Diff)
Unemployment Rate	0.065	0.048	10.970	0.000
Violent Crime PC	0.043	0.032	12.325	0.000
White UK PC 2001	0.919	0.915	-1.442	0.000
Working Class PC 2001	0.454	0.382	35.579	0.000
Ethnic Fragmentation 2001	0.140	0.153	-2.378	0.018
Muslim PC 2001	2.088	1.729	2.728	0.006
Asylum Seekers	158.540	77.577	6.328	0.000

**Table 5:** Vote Swing from Labour, 1990s-2010

	(1)	(2)
Labour Share 1990s	0.928*** (0.048)	
Heartland		0.133*** (0.012)
Deprivation	0.005 (0.005)	0.027*** (0.005)
% White UK 2001 Census	-0.019 (0.099)	0.080 (0.118)
Constant	-0.216** (0.086)	0.054 (0.101)
Observations	522	522
R <sup>2</sup>	0.495	0.291
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.492	0.287
Residual Std. Error (df = 518)	0.095	0.113
F Statistic (df = 3; 518)	168.975***	71.002***

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



method of Dustmann et al. (2018). Since prior local authority characteristics would be collinear with local authority fixed effects, we omit them and instead interact prior characteristics with differences in asylum seeker inflows. Specifically we estimate an equation of the form:

$$\Delta LabourShare_{it} = \beta_1 \Delta AsylumPC_{it} + \beta_2 \Delta AsylumPC_{it} \times Context_i + Year$$

Where  $\Delta LabourShare_{it}$  is the difference between the Labour vote in year  $t$  and its vote in the last year in which local elections were held in authority  $i$ ,  $\Delta AsylumPC_{it}$  is the difference in the proportion/number of asylum seekers between year  $t$  and the levels in the last year in which local elections were held in authority  $i$ ,  $Context_i$  refers to a specified demographic, economic, or political characteristic of all local authorities, and  $Year$  is a dummy variable for year.

For our fixed local authority data, first, we take the working class share of the local authority population from the 2001 census, classifying categories 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 of the Standard Occupational Classification as working class. These occupational categories include skilled trades, personal service occupations, sales and customer service, process, plant and machine operatives, and those in elementary occupations such as restaurant service staff. Second, we use the measure of local authority *Deprivation* from Norman (2017), which gives estimates of the Townsend Deprivation Index (Townsend et al., 1988). The index is calculated from unemployment as a percentage of the working age population, non-home ownership as a percentage of all households, no access to a car as a percentage of all households, and household overcrowding. Third, we include the percentage of the local authority’s population identifying as ‘White British’ in the 2001 census (*White UK % 2001*). Fourth, we constructed an index of ethnic fragmentation, which is calculated as the probability that two randomly selected individuals from a given local authority will belong to different ethnic groups as defined in the UK 2001 Census *Ethnic Fragmentation 2001* (Greenberg, 1956). Fifth, we include the

Muslim share of the local authority population from the 2001 census (*Muslims 2001*). Last, we use the average Labour vote share across local authority elections in the 1990s.

We find little evidence that the negative effect of asylum seeker dispersal on Labour's support is conditional on local authority socioeconomic or demographic characteristics *per se*. As shown in Table 6, the interactions with the working class proportion of a local authority population (1), its socioeconomic deprivation (2), the proportion of the population that is white UK (4), and the level of ethnic fractionalization (5) are all insignificant. The coefficient on the interaction between asylum seeker dispersals and the 2001 Muslim share of a local authority population (5) is positive and statistically significant, implying that the negative impact on Labour's vote share due to asylum seeker inflows is mitigated in local authorities with higher Muslim share of the population. This may be explained by the fact that a significant proportion of asylum seekers during this period came from Muslim majority countries. Higher native Muslim numbers may have mitigated the problems of immigrant isolation. Beyond this, however, there is little evidence to indicate that the socioeconomic or demographic profile of a recipient area has an impact on the political effects of asylum seeker inflows.

More significantly, from a theoretical perspective, is the finding in model 6 of Table 6 that the negative effect of asylum seeker inflows on the Labour vote share is exacerbated in local authorities where the party's average vote share was highest in the 1990s. The interaction term between asylum seeker per capita inflows and Labour's pre-program average vote share in the 1990s is large, negative, and statistically significant. Consistent with our hypothesis, this result provides strong evidence that asylum seeker dispersals had a greater marginal effect on Labour's political support in "core" than in "swing" electorates.

**Table 6: Heterogenous Treatment Effects**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
$\Delta$ Asylum PC	-8.299 (38.537)	-47.045 (5.619)***	-85.571 (15.833)***	31.032 (54.512)	-63.259 (12.584)***	104.355 (33.841)***
$\Delta$ Asylum PC $\times$ Working Class PC	-84.902 (84.865)					
$\Delta$ Asylum PC $\times$ Deprivation		0.105 (3.951)				
$\Delta$ Asylum PC $\times$ White UK PC			-91.297 (63.439)			
$\Delta$ Asylum PC $\times$ Ethnic Fragmentation				64.012 (42.639)		
$\Delta$ Asylum PC $\times$ Muslim PC					2.562 (1.233)**	
$\Delta$ Asylum PC $\times$ Pre Labour Share						-289.240 (65.771)***
1-8 Year Dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	1,777	1,770	1,214	1,299	1,326	1,779
$r^2$	0.403	0.405	0.454	0.435	0.432	0.423

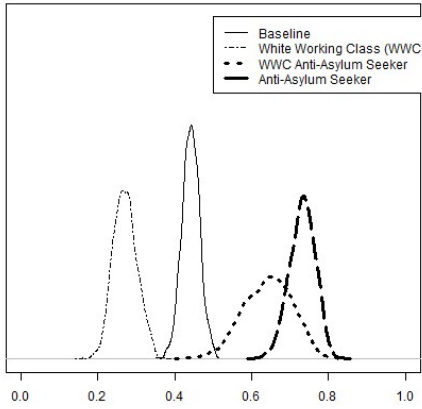
Robust clustered standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\* p<0.01; \*\* p<0.05

## 10 Individual Evidence

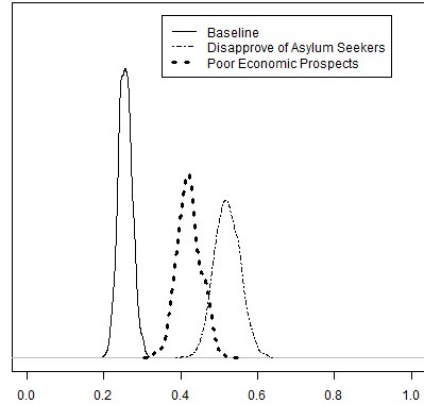
**Table 7:** Individual Evidence: Switching from the Labour Party, 2001-2005

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Switching from Labour	
	(1)	(2)
White Working Class	-0.762*** (0.120)	-0.676*** (0.092)
Disapprove of asylum seeker policy	1.241*** (0.152)	1.396*** (0.082)
White Working Class × Disapprove of asylum seeker policy	0.349 (0.179)	
Prospective Economic Evaluation		-0.790*** (0.084)
Constant	-0.233** (0.092)	0.046 (0.090)
Observations	3,116	3,116
Log Likelihood	-1,961.814	-1,918.356
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,931.627	3,844.711
Robust standard errors clustered by panel ID in parentheses	**p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

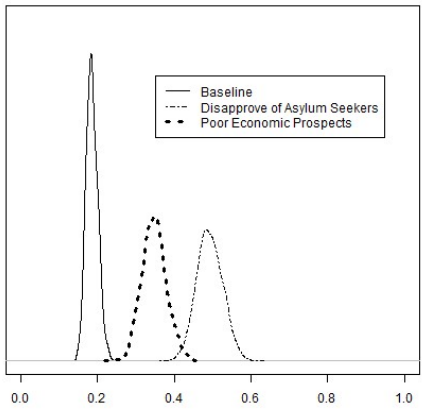
To explain the fall in Labour’s support, and its particular decline in its former heartland, our main models use variables aggregated to the local authority level. We next present the results from an analysis of survey data to probe some of the individual dynamics at work. Specifically, we draw on the responses of 3,116 2001 Labour voters in the 2005-2009 BES 6 Wave Internet Panel Study. Table 7 presents the results of logistic regressions in which the outcome is defection from Labour (i.e., voting for Labour in 2001 but not in 2005 – the period of highest asylum seeker inflows).



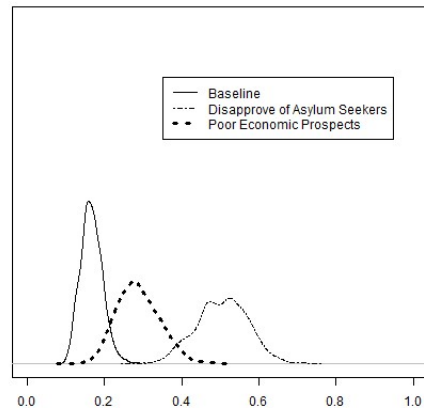
**Figure 5:** Predicted probability of switching from Labour



**Figure 6:** Predicted probability of WWC switching from Labour



**Figure 7:** Predicted probability of WC switching from Labour



**Figure 8:** Predicted probability of manual WC switching from Labour

We find that disapproval of the Labour government’s handling of asylum seeker immigration is the strongest predictor of whether voters switch from Labour to another party or to abstention between 2001 and 2005 across respondent socioeconomic and ethnic groups. Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that the effect of asylum seeker disapproval on support for Labour is confined to the white working class (WWC). White working class respondents were in fact overall less likely to defect from the Labour Party than members of other economic and ethnic groups (models 1 and 2). In fact, as we illustrate in Figures 5-9, disapproval of asylum seeker policy has a greater impact on the predicted probability of switching from the Labour Party between 2001 and 2005 than economic concerns for all groups, not just the white working class.

## 11 Conclusion

Exploiting a British policy intervention that dispersed asylum seekers to local authorities across England and Wales, this paper provides a novel analysis of the effects of a change in asylum seeker immigration policy on support for the Labour Party during the 2000s. It finds that asylum seeker inflows, in spite of their modest numbers compared to overall immigration flows, decreased the Labour Party’s vote share over the decade. Although the precise outlines of this dispersal policy are unique to the United Kingdom, both the methodological approach and the substantive findings should have implications beyond this case.

First, we show that the subnational allocation of the costs of an unpopular policy – namely asylum seeker dispersal – has a measurable impact on governing party support and that this impact may be paradoxically most strongly felt in a party’s electoral heartland. While previous research on the social effects of asylum seeker dispersal argued that its impact was exacerbated by, if not caused by, the dispersal of asylum seekers to poorer or more diverse localities (Hynes, 2006), we find little evidence that this is the case. The effect of asylum seeker immigration on support for the Labour Party at the electorate level

is not conditional on the local socioeconomic context, nor is it conditional at the individual level on social class or ethnicity. We show instead that core and swing electorates respond differently to asylum seeker inflows. The dynamics of “betrayal” appear to exacerbate the negative effects of unpopular policies among core electorates. The dispersal of asylum seekers and refugees poses a challenge for many governments, especially, but not only in Western Europe. In countries where public opinion favors lower levels of immigration, the dispersal of new immigrants is likely to carry a political cost for any administration. Our analysis shows that mainstream incumbents face the challenge of allocating costs across “safe” and “swing” electorates. Although the latter may make sense in light of research on the effects of the targeting of club goods or pork barrel towards swing electorates, the imposition of costs appears to follow a distinct logic, in which core electorates may balk at bearing additional costs because of their perceived loyalty.

Second, this paper is the first to specifically theorize the relationship between immigration and mainstream party support. The effects of immigration on support for parties of the far right have been studied extensively. Comparably detailed analyses of how immigration affects mainstream parties are much fewer. Even the most sophisticated of these (Dustmann et al., 2018) does not provide a specific theory for why and how immigration affects mainstream party support. This is of particular consequence in Britain, where the country’s majoritarian electoral system means that extremist party support is likely to significantly understate the political impact of immigration. Before disaffected mainstream party supporters turn to a minority, anti-immigrant party such as the British National Party (BNP), they are likely to abstain altogether. Indeed, Evans and Chzhen (2013) find that many United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) supporters in 2010 came to the party from Labour through this indirect route. Some of these same voters have since migrated to the anti-immigrant and pro-Brexit fringes of the Conservative Party. This paper advances our understanding of the causes of defection from mainstream parties such as the British Labour Party.

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## Appendix A Additional Tables and Figures

Table A1: Labour Vote Share and Future Asylum Dispersal

	1	2	3	4	5
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
One Year Lead	-.601 (4.063)				
Two Year Lead		-8.250 (5.323)			
Three Year Lead			-13.586 (11.404)		
Four Year Lead				-6.973 (5.728)	
Five Year Lead					1.369 (3.563)
LA Dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	953	1036	1049	2073	1071
$r^2$	.934	.869	.868	.919	.949

Robust clustered standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\* p<0.01; \*\* p<0.05

Table A2: Summary Statistics for Key Variables

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Labour Vote Share	4,857	0.317	0.175	0.000	0.856
Asylum Seekers	1,733	104,785	264,728	0	3,210
Population	4,114	64,621.980	51,824.590	3,658	609,719
Unemployment Rate	3,712	0.050	0.030	0.000	0.281
Asylum Seekers Per Capita	1,720	0.001	0.002	0.000	0.017
% White UK	944	1.692	0.287	0.412	2.500
Crime Per Capita	1,628	0.178	0.093	0.023	0.705
Violent Crime Per Capita	1,628	0.035	0.017	0.005	0.132
Ethnic Fragmentation (2001 Census)	4,240	0.149	0.136	0.024	0.845
% White UK (2001 Census)	4,240	0.916	0.092	0.292	0.988
% Muslim (2001 Census)	4,348	1.817	3.314	0.040	36.400



Table A3: Using raw numbers of asylum seekers

	Controls	No Controls
	(1)	(2)
Asylum Seekers	-0.00008 (.00002)***	-0.0001 (.00002)***
Unemployment PC		0.260 (0.121)**
Crime PC		-0.413 (0.080)***
LA Dummies	Yes	Yes
Year Dummies	Yes	Yes
N	2,141	1,353
$r^2$	0.908	0.921

Robust clustered standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$

Table A4: Linear and Quadratic Time Trends

	No Controls	Controls	No Controls	Controls
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Asylum PC	-49.101 (5.785)***	-58.945 (6.533)***	-41.013 (6.022)***	-32.794 (6.450)***
Unemployment PC		.355 (.134)***		.321 (.120)***
Crime PC		.095 (0.058)		-.285 (.070)***
LA Dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Linear Time Trend	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Quadratic Time Trend	No	No	Yes	Yes
N	2122	1343	2122	1343
$r^2$	.855	.873	.861	.913

Robust clustered standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$

Table A5: Labour in Power Nationally and Locally

	No Controls	Controls
	(1)	(2)
Asylum PC	-35.013 (12.749)***	-45.785 (19.228)**
Unemployment PC		.534 (.875)
Crime PC		-.297 (.184)
LA Dummies	Yes	Yes
Year Dummies	Yes	Yes
N	274	173
$r^2$	0.884	0.875

Robust clustered standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$

Table A6: EU-8 Immigration and the Labour Vote Share

	(1)	(1)	(3)
Asylum PC			-23.688 (2.575)***
EU-8 immigrants PC	0.855 (0.974)	0.874 (1.340)	0.018 (1.527)
Unemployment PC		0.325 (0.131)**	0.138 (0.124)
Crime PC		-1.00e-05 (3.76e-06)***	-7.71e-06 (3.75e-06)**
LA Dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	1,518	1,268	1,119
$r^2$	0.914	0.910	0.930

Robust clustered standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$

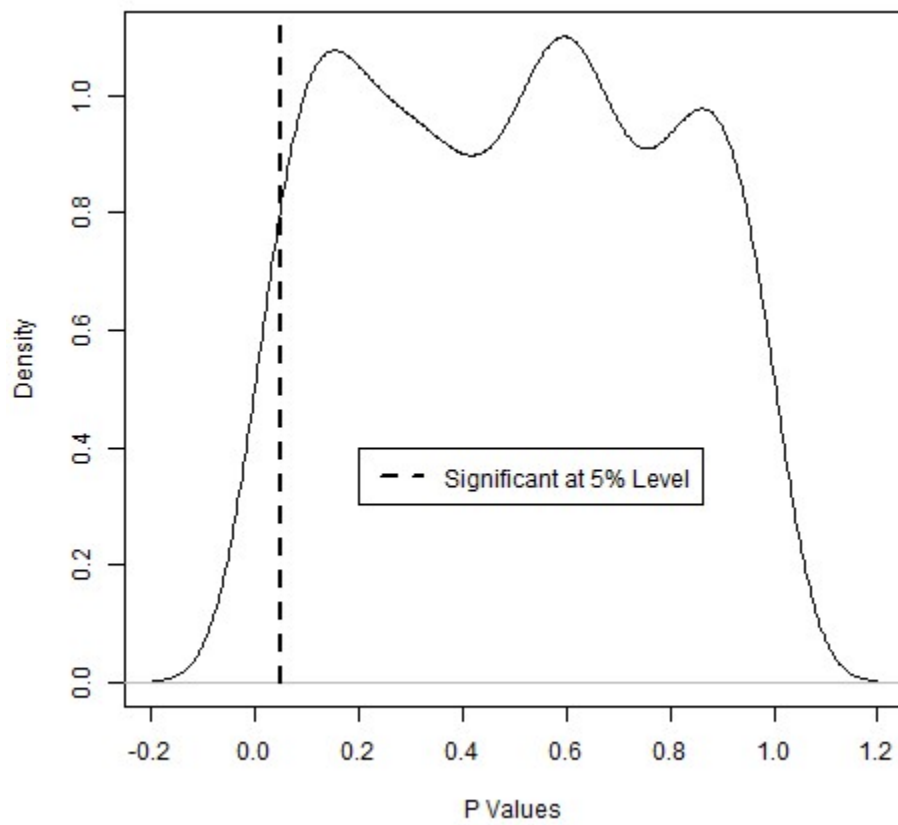
## Appendix B Placebo Regressions

The p values for the placebo regressions are described and plotted below. Assuming our chosen difference in differences strategy to be a sufficiently conservative estimation strategy, the distribution of simulated p values should look approximately uniformly distributed over the interval (0,1), with no more than 5% of p values falling below the .05 level. As can be seen below, this is exactly what we observe.

Table B1

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Placebo P Values.	1,000	0.497	0.292	0.001	1.000

Figure B1: Distribution of P Values for Placebo Regressions



## Appendix C Data Sources

- English local authorities <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/records-and-resources/local-authorities-in-england>
- Welsh local authorities <http://gov.wales/topics/localgovernment/unitary-authorities/?lang=en>
- Asylum data from December 2003 onwards <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-april-to-june-2015/asylumdata--tables>
- Asylum data from 2000 to Q4 2003 - Home Office Information Request (Annex E IR 35866)
- Elections pre 2004 - UK Data Archive - SN 5319: British Local Elections Database 1889-2003
- Elections post 2004 (inclusive) - Local Elections Archive Project <http://www.andrewteale.me.uk/leap/>
- Unemployment data – from March 2005 onwards -<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk>; from 1993 onwards - UK Data Archive SNs 3512, 3516, 3520, 3824, 3722, 4059, 4063, 4521, 4522, 4652, 4654, 5384 (Quarterly Labour Force Survey)
- Crime Data - from 2002 - Office of National Statistics "Notifiable Offenses recorded by the police" <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk>
- 2001 Census Data on Ethnicity, Religion, and Occupation from the Office of National Statistics <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk>
- Multiple Deprivation data from Paul Norman. Area characteristics: Great Britain 1971 to 2011, 2017. Mendeley Data v1 <https://data.mendeley.com/datasets/389scndjy/1>