Expected Asylum Seekers and Far-Right Voting: Effects of a Dispersal Act

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Abstract

Far-right parties frequently mobilize anti-refugee sentiment during periods of high asylum migration. Prior work shows that exposure to transit routes and regional inflows tends to raise far-right support, whereas direct local contact with asylum seekers can dampen it. Yet much of the sharp rise in far-right voting around major refugee waves remains unexplained by actual inflows. I study a Dutch policy reform, the Dispersal Act, which obligated municipalities to host asylum seekers and thereby generated a sudden, plausibly exogenous increase in expected future local inflows. Comparing changes in far-right vote shares between not-yet and already hosting municipalities before the actual arrival of asylum seekers allows me to isolate the electoral effect of heightened expectations of future hosting. I find that affected municipalities experienced a substantial increase in far-right support following the Act's passage. The effect operates on both the extensive margin (whether municipalities expect to host) and the intensive margin (how many they expect to host): a one-percentage-point increase in allocated asylum-seeker share raises far-right vote shares by about 1.2 percentage points.

Keywords: Asylum Seekers, Far-right voting, Group threat, Migration
JEL codes: D72, F22, H75

1 Introduction

Across the globe, populist radical right political parties have gained traction. As countries and localities with far-right leaders fare worse economically, reduce the quality of bureaucracy and increase hate crimes (Funke, Schularick and Trebesch, 2023; Elsässer and Röth, 2025; Bellodi, Morelli and Vannoni, 2024; Romarri, 2022), understanding the determinants of far-right voting is

crucial. Prior research highlights the roles of austerity and declining local public services (Cremaschi et al., 2024; Fetzer, 2019), population decline (Dancygier et al., 2025), exposure to economic shocks (Cremaschi, Bariletto and De Vries, 2024; Rodrik, 2021), and shifting voter priorities (Danieli et al., 2022).[1] Many far-right parties campaign on staunch anti-migration platforms and capitalize on migration-related concerns among voters. Consequently, regional migration inflows tend to *increase* far-right support (Dustmann, Vasiljeva and Piil Damm, 2019; Halla, Wagner and Zweimüller, 2017; Edo et al., 2019). However, evidence on local exposure to refugees shows that such exposure can also *decrease* far-right voting (Achard et al., 2025; Steinmayr, 2021).

These seemingly contradictory findings are usually attributed to two opposing mechanisms: positive but highly localized contact effects (Allport, 1954) and negative group-threat effects (Blumer, 1958; Blalock et al., 1967). Perceived threat from a minority group depends not only on its current size but also on its expected future growth (Outten et al., 2012; Margalit and Solodoch, 2022). Hence, expectations about future migration flows can amplify group-threat reactions, particularly when positive mechanisms related to actual migrant arrival are absent.[2][3] In addition, expectations about future migration may have stronger electoral effects because they fall within the control of admission policy.

In this paper, I examine the largely overlooked role of expectations about future refugee arrivals in shaping far-right voting. I exploit a reform in the Netherlands that abruptly shifted expectations about the placement of asylum seeker centers (AZCs) in the near future.[4] Before the reform, municipalities could decide whether to host an AZC on a voluntary basis: 60,000 asylum seekers (0.34 percent of population) were accommodated in 119 of the country's 342 municipalities. After capacity shortages, the government introduced the Dispersal Act in 2023, which obliges municipalities to host AZCs. Required capacity is set by the Minister of Asylum and Migration every two years after consultation with the provinces, with population size and a socioeconomic index guiding these allocations.[5] If municipalities do not create sufficient capacity, the minister can overrule municipal councils and assign a location directly. The reform was very salient, at a time when asylum migration was on top of the political agenda. During the 2023 election it was also one of the most important topics to voters (SKON, 2024).

The Act sharply raised expectations that municipalities not yet hosting an AZC would soon be required to do so (the extensive margin) and changed expected future numbers of asylum seekers

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[1] Guriev and Papaioannou (2022) reviews the literature on the recent rise in populist voting, and Rodrik (2021) specifically discusses the role of globalization.

[2] Positive mechanisms may operate through local channels such as intergroup contact and belief updating, as well as through national-level channels such as media framing and perceptions of refugee deservingness.

[3] Although such expectations are rarely measured, a recent survey from the United Kingdom shows that expectations of rising migration are especially common among respondents who oppose migration (British Future, 2025). Moreover, many respondents believe that net migration is increasing even when it is actually declining.

[4] Ukrainian refugees that arrived since 2022 do not need to apply for asylum and are not hosted in AZCs.

[5] For an overview of refugee dispersal policies across countries, see Bartl and Lutz (2025). For work on the effects of dispersal from the perspective of refugees themselves, see e.g. (Martén, Hainmueller and Hangartner, 2019).

hosted across municipalities (the intensive margin). Because the November 2023 parliamentary elections occurred only six weeks after the law passed the parliament, it altered expectations about future hosting before any arrivals took place. The far-right vote share rose from 19 percent to 27 percent. Eight weeks after the election, the Act passed the senate. A new coalition that included the largest far-right party, the PVV, took office in summer 2024 and sought to repeal the Act but failed to do so. The coalition collapsed in 2025, triggering snap elections held on 29 October 2025. By the 2025 elections, only 44 municipalities (20 percent) of not yet hosting municipalities opened an AZC, which was driven by the uncertain future of the Act. During the 2025 election campaign, asylum migration was again among the most salient issues (Ipsos, 2025). Parties supporting the Act held a majority in pre-election polls and ultimately won a majority of votes.

To study the effect of expecting to host an AZC on the extensive margin, I compare changes in vote shares in parliamentary elections between municipalities who were not yet hosting refugees to those that were already hosting at the time the Dispersal Act passed the parliament in October 2023, conditional on baseline characteristics. Reassuringly, I find that up to and including the 2021 election, conditional trends in far-right voting in treated and control municipalities evolved in parallel. The legal obligation to open an AZC increased the municipal far-right vote share by 0.6 percentage points between the 2021 and 2025 elections. The largest share of the effect already arose between the 2021 and 2023 elections, and further increased slightly in the 2025 election after the law passed the senate and was likely to remain in place. The increase in far-right voting mostly accrued to the largest party, PVV, although other far-right parties also benefited. At the same time, the vote share for the largest center-right party, VVD, who initially supported the Dispersal Act but voted against it in parliament, strongly decreased. Turnout in affected municipalities increased by 0.2 percentage points, albeit insignificant.

The results of European and Provincial elections are consistent with my main results. The far-right vote share in affected municipalities increased with 0.5 percentage points between the May 2019 and May 2024 European elections, and did not increase between the March 2019 and March 2023 Provincial elections, showing that there was no effect shortly prior to submission of the Act to Parliament. Furthermore, my results are robust to alternative sets of control variables, including controlling for turnout and vote shares for far-right and other party blocks in the 2021 elections. A threat to identification is that 72 out of the 119 municipalities hosting in October 2023 started hosting after the 2021 election, which could bias OLS estimates due to the endogeneity of recent hosting decisions. To overcome this concern, I instrument not hosting during the 2023 elections with not hosting in 2021. I find that if anything OLS estimates underestimate the true effects: the IV estimate is 1.0 percentage points.

To disentangle extensive and intensive margin effects, I rely on the first municipal allocation of in total 96,000 beds published by the Minister in December 2024. This allocation was largely based on current hosting capacity, available housing, the socio-economic index, and exemptions based

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on logistics, hosting Ukrainian refugees and sufficient hosting by other municipalities within the same province. To examine the intensive margin, I calculate the difference between the capacity requirement and hosting capacity in October 2023, relative to population. I find that among already-hosting municipalities, a change in the number of future asylum seekers does not raise far-right voting. This also suggests that the extensive margin results are not driven by decreased far-right voting among already hosting municipalities, but rather by increased far-right voting among not (yet) hosting municipalities. Among not-yet hosting municipalities, the intensive margin does play a considerable role: a 1 percentage point expected increase in the local population share of asylum seekers increases far-right voting by 1.2 percentage points. This estimate is substantially larger than typical estimates of the effect of actual migration inflows on far-right voting. Cools, Finseraas and Rogeberg (2021) survey the literature and report an average effect of about 0.4 percentage points in response to a 1-percentage-point migration shock.

To examine how actual arrivals interact with heightened expectations, I study the 44 municipalities in which AZCs opened between 2023 and 2025. Although the decision to begin hosting may be endogenous to attitudes toward migration, this would likely bias estimates of treatment effects on far-right voting downward. Yet I find no evidence that far-right support has declined in these municipalities relative to those that did not begin hosting. Consistent with the literature (Achard et al., 2025), this suggests that the mitigating effect of positive contact with asylum seekers may operate only at a more local level. This suggests that prolonged periods of expecting the arrival of new minority groups may affect voting patterns that are not easily reversed.

I also provide a preliminary analysis of various mechanisms. Effects are weaker in municipalities with stronger presence of non-western immigrants, suggesting that past exposure to minorities could dampen expectation effects, in line with group threat theory. I also find that municipalities that expect to start hosting were more likely to host anti-asylum protests. In addition, provinces that expect more asylum seekers exhibit stronger search interest for information about AZCs. An important question is whether increased expectations only increased far-right voting for to get rid of the Dispersal Act, or whether it also changes attitudes towards migrants and migration policy. I plan to study this in the future using a longitudinal panel survey.

Literature   This paper connects to three bodies of work: economic research on the sociopolitical effects of migration, social-psychological and sociological studies of intergroup threat, and political-science research on how mainstream party accommodation on immigration policy influences support for the far right.

Sociopolitical effects of migration   This paper contributes to the economic literature on societal responses to migration, which can be broadly divided into research on the drivers of backlash

to migration and work examining the local political effects of immigration.[6]

The first finds by and large that cultural concerns are more important than economic concerns in explaining opposition to migration (Alesina and Tabellini, 2024; Card, Dustmann and Preston, 2012). (Alesina, Miano and Stantcheva, 2023) find that narratives and framing may play a stronger role than facts. This gives scope for a large role of the media, which has indeed been demonstrated by several recent studies (Manzoni et al., 2025; Benesch et al., 2019; Schneider-Strawczynski and Valette, 2025; Djourelova, 2023). A recent literature has tied opposition to migration to misperceptions about the size and composition of current migrants, although providing accurate information does little to change attitudes and policy preferences (Alesina, Miano and Stantcheva, 2023; Lutz and Bitschnau, 2023; Dylong and Uebelmesser, 2024; Guay et al., 2025; Lutz and Bitschnau, 2025). However, this literature has not studied expectations about future migration, which are rarely measured, but could impact attitudes as well as policy preferences as curbing future migration is within control of admission policy. I contribute to this literature by showing that expectations about future local inflows causally increase support for parties opposed to (asylum) migration.

The second concerns the effect of (irregular) transit, regional and local (refugee) migration on voting for anti-immigration, populist and/or far-right parties and candidates. Local exposure to disorderly irregular and transit migration has been shown to increase anti-immigrant and far-right voting (Gessler, Tóth and Wachs, 2021; Steinmayr, 2021; Dinas et al., 2019; Bhatiya and Kadam, 2025).

Cools, Finseraas and Rogeberg (2021) document that most studies of regional inflows find positive effects on far-right voting, but that these effects shrink to nearly zero once publication bias is taken into account. They also highlight substantial heterogeneity: effects tend to be stronger in rural areas (Dustmann, Vasiljeva and Piil Damm, 2019), among low-skilled voters (Moriconi, Peri and Turati, 2022; Mayda, Peri and Steingress, 2022; Edo et al., 2019), and in response to culturally more distant migrant groups (Harmon, 2018). A subset of this literature examines the (hyper)local effects of hosting asylum seekers and refugees on voting. Several studies using regional-level data find that hosting increases anti-immigrant and far-right support (Dustmann, Vasiljeva and Piil Damm, 2019; Campo, Giunti and Mendola, 2024; Rickardsson, 2025; Finseraas and Strøm, 2022). In contrast, recent work exploiting very small municipal units (below 5,000 inhabitants) or polling-station data mostly finds that hosting tends to reduce far-right voting close to asylum seeker centers (Vertier, Viskanic and Gamalerio, 2023; Steinmayr, 2021; Schneider-Strawczynski, 2021; Achard et al., 2025). The opposing regional and hyperlocal results underline the importance of the geographic scale at which effects are measured (Fremerey, Hörnig and Schaffner, 2024; Della Posta, 2013).

Two recent studies have examined the attitudinal and political effects of local asylum seeker hosting in the Netherlands in a difference-in-differences setting, comparing places where an AZC is opened to places where non is opened around the 2015 refugee crisis. Using an established panel

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[6]A more detailed discussion of this literature is provided in Appendix A.

survey, Achard et al. (2025) find that far-right support close to AZCs decreased. Bose, Marie and Stans (2025) study the effect on the polling station level, finding an increase in local far-right voting. In addition, both find that far-right support decreases with the length of exposure, hinting at the role of positive contact arising over time. Importantly, both studies find null effects of AZC opening on the municipality level. This aligns with the literature, as municipalities in the Netherlands are relatively large (on average 50,000 inhabitants). This paper contributes to this literature by showing that increased expectations may have larger effects on far-right voting than actual inflows.

To the best of my knowledge there is only one study in this literature that discusses the role of perceptions of future migrant arrivals driving voting patterns. Barilari et al. (2025) combine the origin-country distribution across Italy and nationwide variation in the origin country composition of boat arrivals close before local elections, while controlling for the current presence of refugees, finding large effects on protest and anti-immigrant voting. However, this design rests on strong assumptions: voters should be aware of the origin country composition of boat arrivals (the "shifts"), as well as the relative local prevalence by origin country (the "shares"). In contrast, I study a clear, salient reform that abruptly altered both the extensive and intensive margins of hosting across municipalities.

Perceived threat   Quantitative empirical studies of the attitudinal and political effects of migration have resorted to two theories rooted in the social psychology literature: positive inter-group contact, first discussed by Allport (1954), and negative group threat, introduced by Blumer (1958); Blalock et al. (1967).[7] Economists have mostly interpreted group threat through the lens of the (relative) size of a minority group in society (Cikara, Fouka and Tabellini, 2022; Alesina and Tabellini, 2024). The social psychology literature also has found support for the notion that rapid changes in the size of the outgroup may matter more than their levels in explaining perceived intergroup threat (Meuleman, Davidov and Billiet, 2009; Quillian, 1996; Margalit and Solodoch, 2022).

If majority group members are forward-looking, threat perceptions could also be driven by expectations about increasing minority group size through higher birth rates or future immigration. This has been experimentally examined by Outten et al. (2012), who show experimentally that information about demographic projections that predict a decline in the majority group trigger negative emotions towards the outgroup among members of the majority group. Similar projections have been shown to increase support for anti-immigration policies and strenghten political conservatism (Major, Blodorn and Major Blascovich, 2018; Craig and Richeson, 2014). These effects may be exacerbated by conspiracy theories that fuel the idea that demographic shifts are premeditated plans, e.g. the great replacement theory (Obaidi et al., 2022; Dennison and Kustov, 2025). This

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[7]According to contact theory, views of outgroups can improve through sustainable contact, which may be conditional on equal group status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation and authority support. According to group threat theory, negative views of outgroups stem from the perception that other groups threaten the advantages held by one's own group.

paper contributes to this literature by showing that exogenous changes in future expectations of outgroup size can affect an important downstream outcome in a real-world setting.

Accommodation on immigration policy   This paper also relates to the recent studies in political science that have examined mainstream parties' response to the rise of the populist far-right. Mainstream parties accommodate by shifting the party position (including on migration) towards the far-right if it becomes more prominent (Van Spanje, 2010; Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020). However, whether accommodation actually reduces far-right support is hotly debated (Krause, Cohen and Abou-Chadi, 2023; Hjorth and Larsen, 2022). This article contributes to this literature by showing that even when a mainstream center-right party, the liberal-conservative VVD, shifts towards a more anti-migration stance, it can still lose voters to the far-right if a formerly supported policy is implemented.

This paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 provides the institutional background on Dutch politics, the hosting of asylum seekers the Dispersal Act. Section 3 discusses the data and descriptives, Section 4 the empirical strategy used to identify the effect of changes in expectations about hosting asylum seekers in the future. Section 5 presents estimates of the effects of future hosting, Section 6 discusses the effects of actual hosting and Section 7 tests various mechanisms. Section 8 concludes.

2   Institutional Background

2.1   Dutch Politics

The Netherlands uses proportional representation in a single nationwide district to elect the 150 members of parliament (Dutch: Tweede Kamer) every four years. With no formal threshold beyond the share needed for one seat, the system encourages the entry of small and new parties and produces a persistently fragmented party landscape.[8] No party has secured an outright majority since World War II, making coalition governments unavoidable and often requiring lengthy negotiations.

The Dutch party system spans a wide ideological range. On the radical right, the Freedom Party (PVV) led by Geert Wilders emphasizes anti-immigration and Euroscepticism. The Forum for Democracy (FVD), founded in 2016, has shifted from conservative liberalism and Euroscepticism toward radical populism and conspiracy rhetoric. JA21, created in 2020 after a split from FVD, advocates restrictive migration policy and EU skepticism in a more institutional style, positioning itself as a moderate alternative within the radical-right bloc. The Farmer–Citizen Movement (BBB), which rose rapidly after 2019 by mobilizing agrarian and rural discontent, also opposes refugee migration, more strongly in 2025 than in 2023.

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[8]Voters select a candidate on a party list. Preference votes reorder candidates only if they receive at least 25 percent of the quota for one seat.

Among mainstream parties, the liberal-conservative VVD dominated politics under Mark Rutte from 2010 to 2023 with a platform of economic liberalism and pragmatic governance. The Christian Democrats (CDA) declined sharply in 2023 as support shifted to NSC, a party focused on institutional reform, social security, and more cautious migration policy. D66, a progressive liberal party, and the center-left Greens (GL) and Labour (PvdA), which merged their parliamentary groups in 2023, hold pro-migration positions. Further left, the Socialist Party (SP), the Animal Party (PvdD), and the Christian Union (CU) play smaller roles.

From 2010 to 2025, Dutch politics moved from prolonged stability under four VVD-led governments (2010–2023) to pronounced fragmentation and volatility. The Rutte IV coalition collapsed in July 2023 after disputes over family-reunification policy, which triggered the snap election held on 22 November 2023, which delivered a historic victory for PVV amid heightened concerns over migration and governance. All far-right parties together obtained a vote share of 27%. Coalition talks eventually produced a four-party government in July 2024 consisting of PVV, VVD, NSC, and BBB, led by an extra-partisan prime minister. The arrangement proved fragile: PVV withdrew on 3 June 2025 after demanding drastic changes to the asylum system, the cabinet became demissionary, and a snap election was scheduled for 29 October 2025, in which the nationwide far-right vote share remained rather stable.

2.2 Asylum seeker hosting

Asylum seekers in the Netherlands are housed in centralized reception centers (AZCs), which are financed and managed by the Central Organ of Asylum Housing (COA).[9] AZCs typically accommodate between 100 and 2,000 residents, though COA prefers larger centers for logistical efficiency. Once granted refugee status, individuals are assigned to a municipality, which is responsible for arranging individual housing.
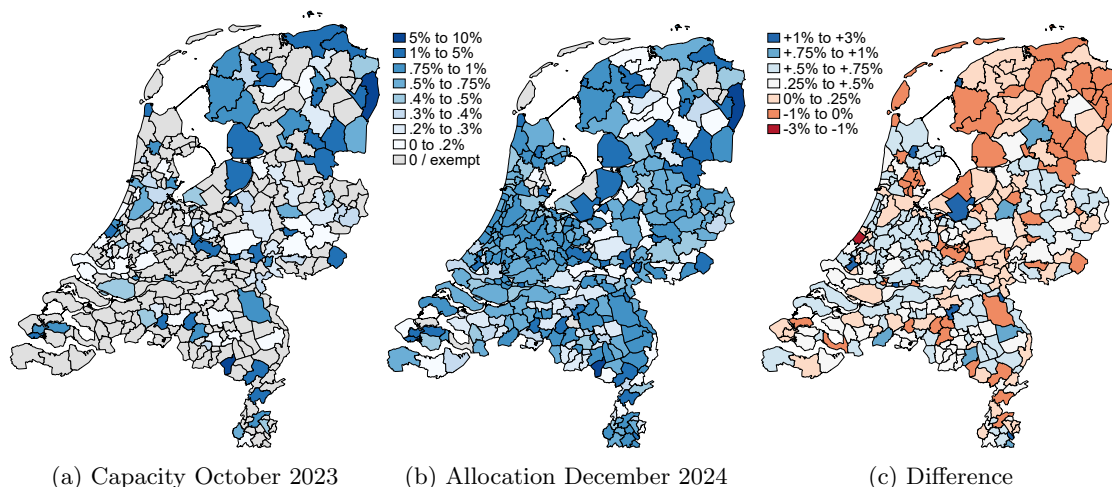
A shortage of AZC beds emerged in the years before 2023, driven by the closure of centers during to the Covid-19 pandemic, the subsequent post-pandemic increase in asylum applications (see Figure A6) and the limited outflow due to a lack of individual housing. To meet demand, COA opened numerous temporary facilities, including boats and hotels, which were more expensive than permanent centers (NOS, 2025b). Of the 72 municipalities opening AZCs between the March 2021 elections and October 2023, 78 percent did so on a temporary basis. Before 2023, municipalities could choose voluntarily whether to host an AZC.

Figure 1(a) shows the distribution of asylum seekers across municipalities in October 2023. About 60,000 asylum seeker (roughly 0.34 percent of the population) were housed across in 119 of the 342 municipalities, with higher concentrations in the northern and eastern regions. Figure

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[9]The more than 100,000 Ukrainian refugees who arrived after 2022 are not housed by COA. Because opposition to hosting Ukrainian refugees is considerably lower than for non-European asylum seekers, many municipalities voluntarily provided shelter.

[A2](#) also shows the distribution of asylum seekers at the time of the March 2021 and October 2025 elections.

Figure 1: Hosting capacity (October 2023), definite allocation (December 2024) and the difference, as a share of population

(a) Capacity October 2023　　　　(b) Allocation December 2024　　　　(c) Difference

Note: Data on hosting capacity originates from COA (2025) and the definite allocations originate from Faber-Van de Klashorst (2024).

2.3　The Dispersal Act

As the asylum hosting system came under strain, the Rutte IV government drafted the Dispersal Act (Dutch: Spreidingswet) on 28 March 2023 to mandate a more equitable distribution of asylum seekers across all municipalities. After the government had fallen in July 2023, the conservative-liberal VVD withdrew its support for the Act. Despite VVD's withdrawal, the parliament passed the Act on 10 October 2023 with backing from several opposition parties, six weeks before the snap election.[10] The law passed the senate on 23 January 2023 with support of the VVD faction, which was unexpected. Figure A1 summarizes the key events.

Under the Dispersal Act, municipal quota are determined in a two year cycle. First, the Minister of Asylum and Migration must determine the required nationwide number of AZC places needed and set a province-specific quota. In response, provinces and municipalities are expected to jointly propose an allocation of places across a province's municipalities. Based on these proposals the minister announces definitive municipal quota, which the municipalities need to implement within 6 months. If municipalities fail to comply, the Minister may override local authorities and designate

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[10]Public support for the Act hovered around 50 percent: approval was high among voters of left and center parties, strongly negative among far-right supporters, and mixed among center-right voters (EenVandaag, 2023).

a location directly. Municipalities can receive modest financial compensation for permanent hosting and in certain cases specified by the Act.

In early 2024, the government announced that 96,000 places would be needed and released indicative municipal allocations based on population size and a socio-economic index called SES-WOA (Tweede Kamer, 2023).

A new government formed in July 2024—including the VVD and PVV, pledged to abolish the Act. However, as the senate voted in favor and was not to be re-elected until 2027 and municipalities and local politicians generally supported the Act (VNG, 2025), repealing the law seemed infeasible and was executed by the new government. After reviewing provincial proposals, the Minister issued the final allocation in December 2024, shown in Figure 1(b). Although the definitive allocation was released more than a year after the 2023 election, residents of affected municipalities were likely informed how the hosting allocation would change under the Act beyond the indicative allocation from January 2024. Municipal hosting requirements were largely based on current hosting capacity, available housing, the socio-economic index, and exemptions based on logistics, hosting Ukrainian refugees and sufficient hosting by other municipalities within the same province (see Appendix B.1 for a discussion and analysis of these exemptions). Figure 1(c) shows the difference between the required capacity and the actual capacity in October 2023, relative to population. Municipalities were officially expected to meet their quotas by mid-2025.

After the introduction of the Act, more municipalities started hosting AZCs, but the process was slow and many municipalities postponed hosting decisions. By the 2025 elections, only 44 of the 222 previously non-hosting municipalities had opened an AZC. Uncertainty about the Act's future likely contributed, and the government did not seem willing to sanction disobeying municipalities. Municipalities that agreed to start hosting still needed to identify a specific location for the AZY and approve hosting plans through council votes. In many municipalities, councilors faced strong pressure—and in some cases threats—from local action groups to vote against new facilities (NOS, 2025c). With local elections scheduled for March 2026, electoral considerations likely heightened reluctance to comply.[11]

2.4   Salience of the Act

Figure A6 shows the number of monthly asylum applications and search interest for asylum seeker centers between 2008 and 2025. The number of monthly asylum applications peaked at about 10,000 in 2015, decreased considerably during the Covid-19 pandemic but rose considerably between 2021 and 2023 and decreased somewhat in 2024-2025. The search intensity for AZCs coincided

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[11]The literature documents that asylum seeker dispersal is not random. Ferwerda and Riaz (2025) show that regional governments tend to assign asylum seekers to municipalities governed by rival parties. Gamalerio and Negri (2023) find that hosting becomes less likely as local elections approach in Italy, consistent with electoral incentives affecting hosting decisions.

remarkably well with the number of asylum applications. However, the two lines strongly diverge in 2025, suggesting that the law did increase nationwide salience of asylum seeker hosting.

The Dispersal Act also retrieved a lot of media attention. Figure A7 shows online search interest for the Dispersal Act as well as AZCs in the 2023-2025 period. The search interest for the Dispersal Act peaked before it passed parliament, in December 2023 when centre-right VVD asked the demissionary government to not introduce the Act until there was a new government, when the votes were casted in the senate and the indicative distribution was published in January 2024 and when the newly formed coalition announced their intentions to repeal the Act, in the summer of 2024. At the same time, search interest for AZCs gradually increased over the 2023-2025 period, further increased in August 2025, after the rape and murder of a 17-year ol and strongly increased in September 2025, when many (violent) protests against the opening of proposed AZCs occurred (NOS, 2025a).

3 Data

I construct a dataset covering all 342 Dutch municipalities in 2025 (average population 50,000), using three main data sources.[12]

First, I use municipal-level election data from 2010 to 2025 from the Electoral Council (Kiesraad), which provides the number of eligible voters, total votes cast, and vote shares for all parties (Kiesraad, 2025). To compute the far-right vote share, I classify parties following PopuList (2023). The PopuList identifies FVD, PVV, BBB, and JA21 as populist, and all except BBB as far-right. BVNL, while not coded in the PopuList, is widely regarded as a far-right populist party that rose during the Covid-19 pandemic with strong conspiracy rhetoric, so I classify it as far-right.[13] Figure A3 shows the far-right vote share by municipality in the 2021, 2023 and 2025 elections, and Figure A4 shows the difference between the far-right vote share in 2021 and 2025.

Second, I compile data on AZC locations, whether they are temporary or permanent, and their maximum capacity from COA's public registry, collected in March 2021, October 2023, and October 2025, corresponding to national election months (COA, 2025). I supplement this with annual data from COA annual reports for 2010–2025. Third, I obtain data on municipal characteristics from Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 2025). These include economic, geographic and demographic factors. Data on educational attainment from CBS is missing for one municipality, the beautiful island of Schiermonnikoog, which only counted 1042 eligible voters in the 2025 election.

Table A1 shows descriptive statistics of the main sample, by hosting status in October 2023. Non-hosting municipalities are richer, have a higher share of inhabitants with immigrant back-

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[12]To ensure comparability over time, all statistics are aggregated to 2025 municipal boundaries, which reflect numerous mergers; in 2010 the Netherlands had 431 municipalities.

[13]I also classify Trots op Nederland (TON) and Code Oranje as far-right in the years in which they competed, although neither exceeded 1 percent of the vote.

ground, are more urban, and more left-wing.

4 Empirical Strategy

The main empirical strategy compares changes in far-right vote shares before and after the approval of the Dispersal Act between municipalities that did not host an AZC and those that already did in October 2023.[14] Because municipalities with and without existing AZCs differ systematically, the parallel-trends assumption is plausible only after conditioning on observable characteristics. I therefore estimate the following first-difference model:

$$\Delta FR_m^{25-21} = \alpha + \beta^{OLS}\text{Not hosting}_{m,2023} + \gamma X_m + \epsilon_m \tag{1}$$

Here, ΔFR_m^{25-21} denotes the change in the far-right vote share in municipality m between the 2021 and 2025 elections. Not hosting$_{m,2023}$ is an indicator for municipalities that did not host an AZC in October 2023. The coefficient β^{OLS} captures the effect of expecting to host asylum seekers in the near future, relative to already-hosting municipalities, which may expect to host fewer (but a nonzero number of) asylum seekers. Section 5.4 disentangles the extensive and intensive margin.

X_m includes geographic, demographic, and economic controls from CBS measured in 2022. Geographic controls capture five levels of urbanity, distances to four types of public services, and distance to Amsterdam. Demographic controls include population density; the shares of residents with Western and non-Western migration backgrounds; the share of recognized refugees; the share of women; six age-group shares; and the shares of residents with three levels of educational attainment. I also include the relative change in population and the change in the Western and non-Western migrant population shares between 2010 and 2021. Economic controls include median income and the share of residents aged 64 and below receiving welfare benefits. All variables are listed in Panel A of Table A1. I control for region (North, East, South, West) in the baseline specification and for province fixed effects in an alternative specification.[15] Some specifications additionally control for far-right vote share in 2021 to account for different pre-existing levels of far-right support. I also control for prior hosting history using indicators for hosting before the refugee crisis (2013), at its peak (mid-2016), and after the crisis (2018). To render results representative of the population of the Netherlands I weight municipalities with population in 2022.

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[14]An alternative way to study expectations would be to examine changes in voting (or voting intentions) between the announcement of individual AZC locations and their eventual opening. This approach faces two problems. First, the time between announcement and opening is usually short. Second, local reactions may influence how long the opening process takes, complicating causal inference. Moreover, such an approach captures the effect of a specific assigned location, which is conceptually different from a municipality-wide expectation that a center might be opened somewhere in the municipality.

[15]Although many controls are included, sufficient variation in treatment remains: after residualizing the controls, the population-weighted standard deviation of the "not hosting in 2023" indicator declines from 0.49 to 0.38.

4.1 Instrumental Variable analysis

Among the 119 municipalities hosting refugees at the time of the 2023 election, 72 had begun hosting only after the 2021 election. Estimates of β^{ols} from equation 1 may be biased in either direction. On the one hand, municipalities that recently started hosting may be positively selected from the initial non-hosting group and could thus exhibit lower underlying trends in far-right voting than all municipalities that did not host at the time of the 2021 election, biasing OLS estimates upward. In addition, if the arrival of asylum seekers increased positive contact, the OLS coefficient may be further upward biased. On the other hand, voters in hosting municipalities may have been dissatisfied with hosting, increasing far-right support and biasing OLS estimates downward. Moreover, 78% municipalities that began hosting between 2021 and 2023 did so under temporary arrangements and might have expected hosting to end soon. The Dispersal Act could therefore have raised expectations of future hosting also for this group, also generating a downward bias in the OLS estimate.

To address these concerns, I instrument hosting status in 2023 with hosting status in 2021. The first stage regresses an indicator for not hosting in October 2023 on an indicator for not hosting in 2021 and the full set of controls. The predicted values from Equation 2 replace the endogenous regressor in the second stage in Equation 3, allowing estimation of β^{IV}.

$$\text{Not hosting}_{m,2023} = \delta + \eta \text{Not hosting}_{m,2021} + \nu X_m + \epsilon_m \tag{2}$$

$$\Delta y_m^{25-21} = \alpha + \beta^{IV} \widehat{\text{Not hosting}}_{m,2023} + \gamma X_{m,2022} + \epsilon_m \tag{3}$$
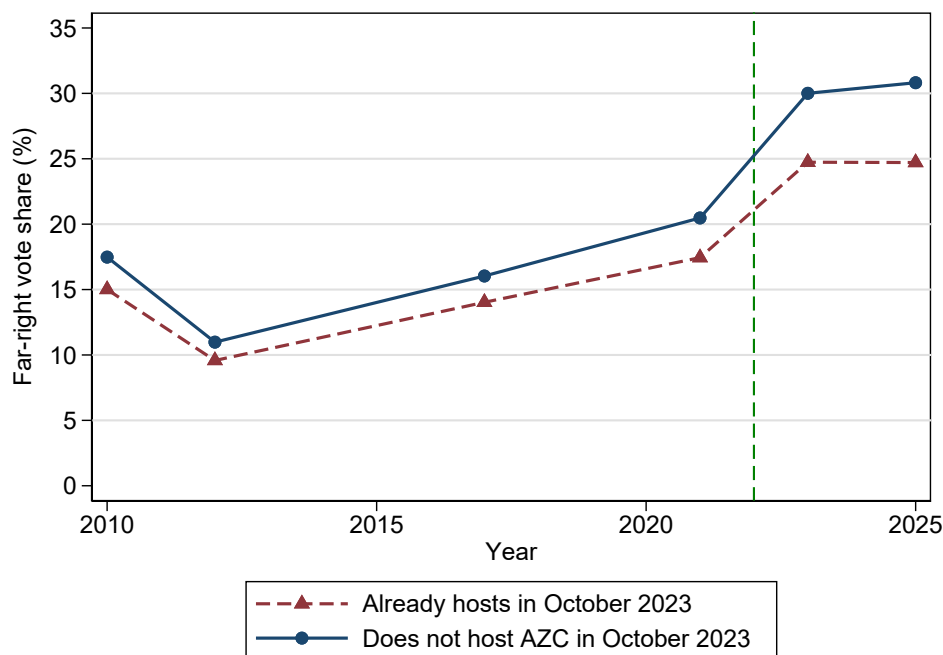
The key identification assumption is that hosting status before the 2021 election affects *changes* in far-right voting after 2021 only through its effect on hosting status just prior to the 2023 election. A potential concern is the presence of dynamic, time-varying effects of hosting on voting behavior. However, the evidence that municipal-level hosting effects are close to zero (Bose, Marie and Stans, 2025; Achard et al., 2025) suggests that large dynamic effects of prior hosting appear unlikely. In addition, 91 percent of municipalities hosting an AZC in March 2021 had already been hosting in 2017, suggesting limited adjustment over time. To further alleviate these concerns, I will also show that instrumenting using hosting arrangements before 2021 yields similar conclusions.

5 The impact of future hosting

Figure 2 plots population-weighted far-right vote shares in parliamentary elections from 2010 to 2025 for municipalities that hosted an AZC in October 2023 and those that did not. As expected, voluntarily hosting municipalities consistently exhibit lower levels of far-right voting. Between 2012

and 2021, non-hosting municipalities also display slightly stronger upward trends than hosting ones. Far-right support rose rapidly overall, and the gap between non-hosting and hosting municipalities widened from 3.0 percentage points in 2021 to 5.3 percentage points in 2023 and 6.1 percentage points in 2025. Figure A8 shows the trends separately for PVV and other far-right parties. In 2023, PVV support increased particularly sharply in non-hosting municipalities, from 2.1 to 5.1 percentage points. In 2025, PVV lost support, especially in municipalities not yet hosting, producing a 2.5-percentage-point gap between non-hosting and hosting areas. Although these patterns are suggestive of an effect of the Dispersal Act, the two groups differ on baseline characteristics and far-right support, underscoring the need for a conditional parallel trends assumption.

Figure 2: Far-right vote share, by hosting status (2010-2025)

Note: Far-right vote share in parliamentary elections, separately shown for municipalities that were hosting an AZC and those that were not in October 2023. The vertical line indicates the timing of the Dispersal Act. All observations are weighted by total municipal population in 2022.

Table 1 shows results of OLS regressions of expecting to newly host on the change in far-right voting between 2021 and 2023, while gradually including controls and fixed effects. After inclusion of controls, the effect size shrinks considerably, but is still statistically significant at a 1 percent level and economically meaningful. In my preferred specification in column 3, the effect of expecting to

have to start hosting versus already hosting is 0.6 percentage points.[16] Estimates remain of similar magnitude when including province fixed effects, controlling for the far-right vote share in 2021 and controlling for the history of hosting.

Table 1: The effect of newly expecting to host on far-right voting (2021-2025)
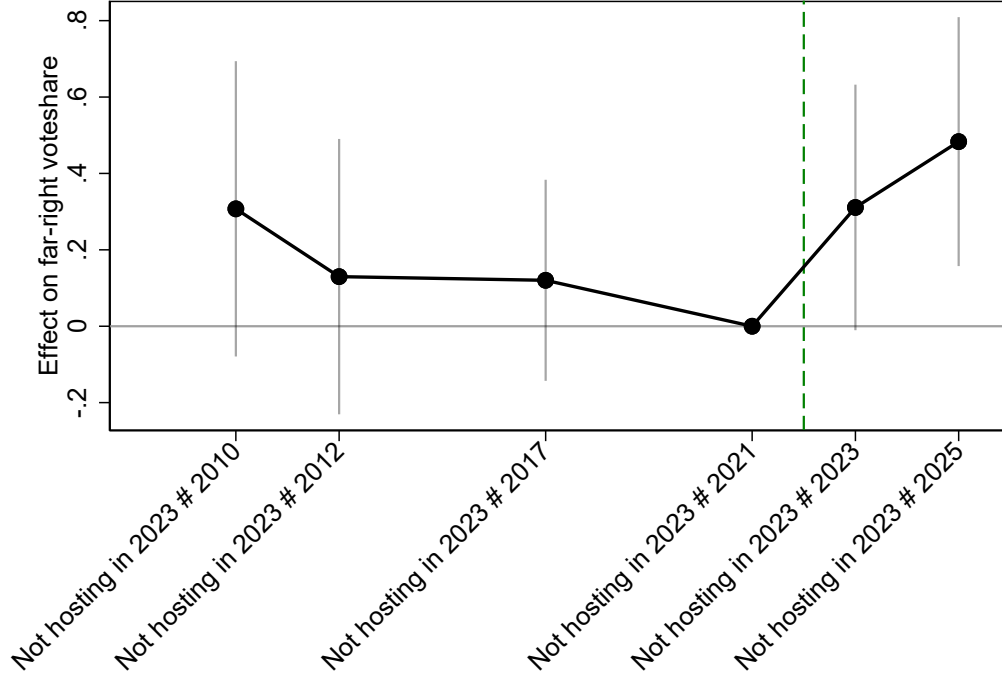
Outcome:	Change in far-right vote share 2021-2025 [$\times$ 100]					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Not hosting in 2023	3.068***	0.607***	0.597***	0.512***	0.589***	0.480***
	(0.564)	(0.160)	(0.155)	(0.146)	(0.154)	(0.166)
Observations	341	341	341	341	341	341
R^2	0.217	0.889	0.894	0.911	0.895	0.895
Mean dep. var.	8.524	8.524	8.524	8.524	8.524	8.524
Baseline controls		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region FE			✓		✓	✓
Province FE				✓		
Far-right vote share in 2021					✓	
Controls for prior AZC hosting						✓

Notes: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. This table shows results of OLS regressions of the change in far-right vote share between 2021 and 2025 on a binary indicator for not hosting an AZC in October 2023. Column 1 includes no controls, column 2 introduced all demographic, geographic and economic controls discussed in section 4, column 3 introduces region fixed effects (North, East, South, West), column 4 instead uses province fixed effects, column 5 includes a control for far-right vote share in 2021 and column 6 three binary indicators for hosting before the refugee crisis (beginning 2013), at the peak of the refugee crisis (mid 2016) and after the refugee crisis (2018). Data on voting originates from the Kiesraad (Kiesraad, 2025), data on AZCs over time originates from COA (COA, 2025), and data on municipal background characteristics originates from Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 2025). Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.

To assess the plausibility of the conditional parallel trends assumption in the four elections between 2010 and 2021 and to study how the effects unfold in the 2023 and 2025 elections in Figure 3. I stack the data across those six elections, include municipality and election fixed effects and interact independent variables with elections, using the 2021 election as the reference period. To account for differential effects in far-right voting driven by the effect of past hosting as well as differential expectation effects, I also include prior hosting controls as in Column 6 of Table 1. Until 2021, far-right voting did not grow more quickly in municipalities that were not hosting an AZCin October 2023; if anything, these municipalities show slightly declining trends once controls are accounted for. If the parallel-trends assumption is violated, the bias therefore works against finding a positive effect, implying that the estimated impact is likely a lower bound. Between 2021 and 2023, far-right support rose sharply in municipalities expecting to host more asylum seekers. Between 2023 and 2025, far-right vote shares did not revert but instead increased slightly further. This pattern is consistent with political context: at the time of the 2023 election, the fate of the Act was uncertain, whereas by the 2025 election it appeared likely to remain in force.

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[16]Figure A9 shows a scatterplot of the residualized outcome on the residualized treatment based on column 3 of Table 1.

Figure 3: The effect of newly expecting to host an AZC after October 2023 on far-right voting over time

In Table 2 I show that results from European and provincial elections between 2011 and 2024 are consistent with the national-election findings. The 2024 European elections occurred after the Dispersal Act had passed the Senate, though coalition negotiations were still ongoing and some uncertainty remained about how the incoming government would handle the Act. I estimate that in municipalities not hosting in October 2024 the far-right vote share increased by an additional 0.45 percentage points between the 2019 and 2024 European elections. This also helps to rule out concerns that the main results in Table 1 are driven by unusual dynamics tied to the 2021 national election, which was held during the Covid-19 pandemic. The March 2023 provincial elections took place 14 days before the Dispersal Act was submitted to parliament, and the proposal was not salient at that time (see Figure A7). Consistent with this, not hosting an AZC in 2023 did not

increase far-right vote shares between the 2019 and 2023 provincial elections. This is consistent with the interpretation that effects emerge only later in 2023, once the Act had passed the parliament and its implications for future hosting became clear.

Table 2: The effect of newly expecting to host on voting in European (2009-2024) and Provincial (2011-March 2023) elections

Outcome:	Change in far-right vote share 2021-2025 [$\times$ 100]					
	European elections			Provincial elections		
	2019-2024	2014-2019	2009-2014	2019-2023	2015-2019	2011-2015
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Not hosting in 2023	0.451**	-0.151	0.105	-0.109	-0.091	-0.105
	(0.181)	(0.134)	(0.170)	(0.221)	(0.217)	(0.135)
Observations	341	341	341	341	341	341
R^2	0.863	0.808	0.703	0.692	0.794	0.670
Mean dep. var.	6.168	0.904	-3.428	-7.022	9.612	-0.634

Notes: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. This table shows results of OLS regressions of the change in far-right vote shares between subsequent European (columns 1-3) and Provincial (columns 4-6) elections as the independent variable. The 14 March 2023 Provincial elections took place before the Dispersal Act was submitted to parliament on 28 March 2023. For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 6. 95 percent confidence intervals are shown, based on heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors.
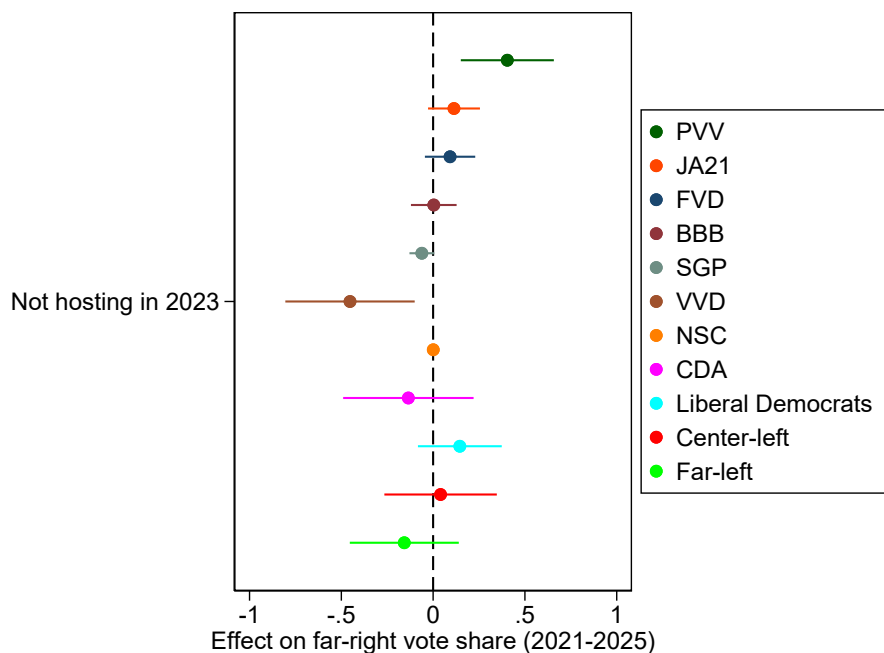
5.1   Voting patterns by party

Previous sections showed that far-right parties benefited from heightened expectations of hosting refugees. This section examines which parties lost support and how voting patterns shifted between different far-right parties. Left-wing and liberal-democratic parties, as well as the traditional Christian-democratic CDA, supported the Act in both the 2023 and 2025 campaigns. All far-right parties, along with the farmer-populist BBB and the Christian-fundamentalist SGP, opposed it. The conservative-liberal VVD also opposed the Act in both elections, despite having introduced it. NSC, which opposed the Act in 2023, moderated its position in 2025 by arguing it should be repealed only once inflows allowed.

Figure 4 plots OLS coefficients of municipal-level regression of changes in party and party-block vote shares between 2021 and 2025. The results suggest that PVV gained the most (0.40 percentage points), while the other far-right parties also gained modestly, though not significantly. The SGP lost votes in municipalities not hosting in October 2023 despite its anti-asylum stance; given its small overall vote share, this likely reflects strategic voting toward larger far-right parties. The largest losses occurred for the conservative-liberal VVD, even though it opposed the Act by the time it was voted upon in parliament. These patterns indicate that center-right parties adopting tougher positions on asylum migration may lose votes to more hardline competitors. Vote shares

for centrist and left-wing parties that supported the Act show no notable shifts.

Figure A10 reports results separately for the 2021–2023 and 2023–2025 elections. The major shifts in PVV and VVD vote shares occurred in 2023. Although not significant at the 5 percent level, FVD gained and BBB lost support between 2021 and 2023, consistent with a shift from more moderate to more extreme parties. Between 2023 and 2025, BBB performed better in affected municipalities, in line with its stronger anti-asylum stance in 2025. JA21, running a more economically right-wing platform, also saw higher gains in affected municipalities in 2025. NSC entered the political arena in 2023 but failed to win a seat in 2025, which explains the large standard errors. Even so, the estimates indicate that municipalities expecting to host more asylum seekers supported NSC more strongly in 2023, when it opposed the Act more staunchly .

Figure 4: Effect on changes in vote shares by party (block)

Note: Coefficient plot of regression estimates of Equation 1 on the coefficient of not hosting in October 2023. The independent variable is always the change in party-(block) vote share between the 2021 and 2025 elections. For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 3. 95 percent confidence intervals are shown, based on heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors.

Beyond shifts between parties, the expectation of hosting may have mobilized far-right voters, or increased blank and invalid voting as a form of protest. Table A3 shows a small and insignificant rise in turnout (0.2 percentage points) and a very small, marginally significant increase in invalid

votes (0.025 percentage points). Figure A11 presents dynamic estimates for turnout, and blank and invalid voting across parliamentary elections. I find no pre-2021 trends in any of these outcomes.

5.2 Robustness

I assess robustness to alternative, reasonable choices for specifying the regression models. Table 1 already shows that, once baseline characteristics are included, adding prior far-right vote shares or province fixed effects has little impact on the estimates. Columns 1–6 of Table A4 decompose the role of the different sets of controls. The large change between columns 1 and 2 of Table 1 is primarily driven by demographic and geographic controls, reflecting that municipalities not hosting in October 2023 were less urban and had lower educational attainment—both factors associated with stronger increases in far-right voting.

Column 7 of Table A4 shows that results remain similar without population weights, alleviating concerns that the estimates are driven by a few large cities. Column 8 adds controls for turnout and the 2021 vote shares of all major party blocs; the effect decreases only slightly, indicating that differential electoral potential is not driving the results. Effectively controlling for past far-right voting in 2021 requires overlap. Figure A4 suggests limited overlap in the tails of this variable (see Figure A5). Hence, column 9 excludes municipalities with 2021 far-right vote shares below 15 or above 30 percent. The estimated effect remains qualitatively similar.

21 municipalities that were not hosting in 2023 were exempted from hosting in the December 2024 definitive allocation for plausibly exogenous reasons that were known in October 2023 (see Appendix B.1 for a discussion). Far-right voting should therefore not have increased in these municipalities. Figure A2 confirms this: changes in far-right vote shares among exempt municipalities closely match those in municipalities that were already hosting.

Table A5 shows that clustering at the NUTS-3 level or within 25–50 km radii does not materially affect precision, reassuring that results are not driven by a few geographically proximate municipalities. Figure A12 further reports the distribution of estimates when randomly assigning 222 municipalities to treatment and 119 to control; none of the 999 placebo estimates exceed the magnitude of the preferred estimate in column 3 of Table 1.

5.3 Instrumental variables

Because recent hosting decisions may bias the OLS estimates, I instrument not hosting in October 2023 with not hosting in March 2021. Table 3 reports the main OLS estimate from column 3 of Table 1 alongside the reduced form, first stage, and 2SLS results discussed in Section 4. Column 2 shows that the reduced-form estimate is smaller than the OLS estimate but is positive and statistically significant. Column 3 shows a strong first stage: all but one municipality hosting in 2021 was still hosting in 2023.

The IV estimate in column 4 is slightly larger than the corresponding OLS estimate in column 1: far-right vote share increases by 0.97 percentage points in municipalities that must start hosting. The results suggest that if anything the OLS estimates are downward biased. However, IV results are less precise and we therefore focus in subsequent sections on OLS results.[17]

To understand the origin of the IV-OLS gap, I use the decomposition proposed by Ishimaru (2024).The IV-OLS gap is 0.37 pp, which can be decomposed in different covariate weights, which renders IV estimate to be 0.45 pp (se: 0.21) *higher* than OLS estimates, and different marginal effects, which lead IV estimate to be 0.83 pp (se: 0.33) *lower* than OLS estimates. This shows that the stronger IV effect is not driven by identifying a LATE among a sample with larger effect sizes, but rather by different marginal effects due to endogeneity bias.

Table 3: The effect of newly expecting to host on far-right voting (IV)

Outcome:	Change in far-right vote share 2021-2025 [$\times$ 100]			
	(1) OLS	(2) Reduced Form	(3) First stage	(4) Second stage
Not hosting in 2021		0.376** (0.164)	0.388*** (0.064)	
Not hosting in 2023	0.597*** (0.155)			0.970** (0.409)
Observations	341	341	341	341
R-squared	0.89	0.89	0.48	0.89
Mean dep. var.	8.52	8.52	0.41	8.52
First stage F-statistic				36.85

Notes: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. This table shows regression estimates of the OLS (Equation 1), reduced form, first stage (Equation 2) and second stage (Equation 3) of the IV model. The independent variable is the change in vote share for far-right parties between 2021 and 2025 and the treatment (instrument) is whether a municipality is not hosting an AZC in October 2023 (March 2021) election. For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 3. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.

5.4 Separating the extensive and intensive margin

The Dispersal Act raised expectations of hosting among not-yet-hosting municipalities on both the extensive margin (whether an AZC would be opened) and the intensive margin (the number of asylum seekers relative to population). At the same time, it could have lowered intensive-margin expectations in some already-hosting municipalities, especially those hosting more in October 2023 than required by the December 2024 quota. To examine this, I estimate varieties of the following model:

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[17]Table A6 shows estimates using instruments that are based on AZC locations earlier in time. Using not hosting in 2017, 2012 or 2010 as an instrument, the point estimates remain similar, but precision decreases further.

$$\Delta FR_m^{25-21} = \alpha + \beta_1 E(\Delta AS)_m + \beta_2 \text{Not hosting}_{m,2023}$$
$$+ \left(\beta_3 E(\Delta AS)_m \times \text{Not hosting}_{m,2023}\right) + \gamma X_m + \epsilon_m \quad (4)$$

$E(\Delta AS)_m$ denotes the intensive-margin change in hosting obligations relative to the status quo. It is computed as the difference between the definitive December 2024 allocation and the October 2023 hosting capacity, scaled by population:

$$E(\Delta AS)_m = \frac{(allocation_m^{Dec24} - capacity_m^{Oct23})}{100 \times population_{m,2022}} \quad (5)$$

In some specifications, instead of using $E(\Delta AS)_m$ as a continuous measure, I discretize it to separately examine increases and decreases in hosting requirements relative to the status quo.

Panel A of Table 4 includes indicators for four bins of expected changes in the population share of hosted asylum seekers: a reduction greater than 0.25 percentage points, a change between –0.25 and 0.25 percentage points, an increase between 0.25 and 0.5 percentage points, and an increase above 0.5 percentage points. The "small changes" category serves as the reference group, as these municipalities are arguably least affected by the Act. Relative to this group, municipalities expecting an increase of more than 0.5 percentage points exhibit a rise of about 0.7 percentage points in far-right voting. Those expecting an increase of 0.25–0.5 percentage points experience an effect roughly half as large. Although statistically insignificant, the eight already-hosting municipalities expecting substantial decreases under the Act show slightly lower far-right support. Once the extensive margin is controlled for in column 2, intensive-margin effects weaken somewhat but remain positive, suggesting that both margins shape the far-right voting response. Panel B shows results using the continuous measure of the intensive margin, which yields similar results.

When there is already an AZC in a municipality, it is unlikely that a change in required capacity will lead to an AZC being opened or closed, as most hosting municipalities have only one AZC (only larger cities typically host more than 1 AZC) and capacity is up- or downsized when needed. Hence, most changes in the intensive margin among already-hosting municipalities mostly affect people who already live close to existing municipalities. This is fundamentally different to those from not yet hosting municipalities, who may expect an AZC being opened anywhere in the municipality. To examine this asymmetry between already and not yet hosting municipalities, I interact the measure of the intensive margin with not hosting in October 2023 in Column 3 of Panel B.

For municipalities already hosting, the intensive margin has no detectable effect: the coefficient is small and insignificant. This shows that additional hosting indeed reduced the backlash when asylum seekers are already present, consistent with prior findings of positive local contact effects (Achard et al., 2025; Steinmayr, 2021). Among not-yet-hosting municipalities, larger expected

increases in hosting are associated with markedly higher far-right voting. The estimates in columns 3 and 4 indicate that a 1-percentage-point expected increase in hosted asylum seekers (from a baseline of zero) raises far-right vote share by about 1.2 percentage points. These estimates are large relative to the effects of actual inflows documented in Cools, Finseraas and Rogeberg (2021), who find uncorrected average effects of roughly 0.4 percentage points per 1-percentage-point inflow, and near zero after adjusting for publication bias.

Figure A8 shows that controlling for changes in actual hosting capacity between 2023 and 2025 leaves these results essentially unchanged. Figure A7 separates effects by election. Extensive-margin effects are strongest before the 2023 election, while intensive-margin effects are strongest in the 2025 election, consistent with incomplete information about future hosting requirements in 2023. There is some evidence of a negative effect for municipalities expecting to host less in 2025, though this concerns only eight municipalities with together fewer than 400,000 inhabitants.

The absence of intensive-margin effects among already-hosting municipalities also indicates that the increase in far-right support documented in Table 1 is only driven by not-yet-hosting municipalities. Hence, the introduction of the Dispersal Act increased aggregate far-right voting. In addition, the substantial media attention surrounding the Act heightened the salience of asylum migration more broadly, which may have further contributed to the success of the far-right in the whole of Netherlands..

5.5 Spillovers

The expectation of hosting an AZC may extend beyond municipal boundaries, particularly in a densely populated country like the Netherlands. Several newly planned AZCs are located deliberately near municipal borders (AD, 2025; Amstelveens Nieuwsblad, 2025; Noordhollands Dagblad, 2025; RTV Rijnmond, 2025). This could lead the effects to spill over into adjacent municipalities. Table 5 reports the spillover estimates: the coefficients are positive but small and statistically insignificant. Including province fixed effects barely changes the results, indicating that the estimated spillover effects are not driven by differential trends across regions.

5.6 Heterogeneity

Table 6 reports interactions between not hosting in October 2023 and municipal characteristics, as well as turnout and vote shares in 2021. Neither the absence of prior hosting experience (which applies to 85 percent of non-hosting municipalities) nor the local share of non-Western residents seems to moderate the effect. After controlling for interactions of not hosting in October in 2023 and electoral outcomes in 2021 (Column 3), the interaction with the non-Western share becomes negative and significant at the 10 percent level. This is in line with prior work that has shown that prior exposure to a particular outgroup or immigration can dampen the backlash to migration (Bose,

Table 4: The effect of extensive and intensive margin changes in hosting expectations on far-right voting

Outcome:	Change in far-right vote share 2021-2025 [$\times$ 100]			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Bins				
Difference between -.25 and +.25 pp	ref.	ref.		
Decrease more than .25 pp	-0.527 (0.467)	-0.404 (0.465)		
Increase between .25 and .5 pp	0.323 (0.199)	0.275 (0.196)		
Increase more than .5 pp	0.695*** (0.226)	0.492* (0.269)		
Not hosting in 2023		0.406** (0.194)		
Observations	341	341		
R^2	0.895	0.897		
Mean dep. var.	8.524	8.524		
Panel B: Continuous				
$E(\Delta AS)$	0.618** (0.301)	0.314 (0.328)	-0.306 (0.347)	-0.307 (0.347)
Not hosting in 2023		0.505*** (0.186)	0.162 (0.268)	0.154 (0.298)
$E(\Delta AS) \times$ Not hosting in 2023			1.211** (0.579)	1.223** (0.610)
Exempted municipalities				0.035 (0.523)
Observations	341	341	341	341
R^2	0.892	0.895	0.897	0.897
Mean dep. var.	8.524	8.524	8.524	8.524

Notes: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. This table shows results of OLS regressions of the change in far-right vote share between 2021 and 2025 on measures of the difference between the allocation published in December 2024 (Faber-Van de Klashorst, 2024) and the hosting capacity in October 2023, per 100 inhabitants. Panel A categorizes municipalities on four bins: those expecting to have to host considerably less (more than 0.25 percentage points less, 8 municipalities), those that expect to host a more or less similar amount as before (between 0.25 percentage points less and 0.25 percentage points more, 132 municipalities), those that expect to host somewhat more (between 0.25 percentage points and 0.50 percentage points more, 75 municipalities), and those that expect to host somewhat more (more than 0.50 percentage points more, 126 municipalities). Panel B introduces the difference between allocation and hosting in October 2023 as a continuous measure. Column 2 and 4 introduce a binary indicator for not hosting an AZC in October 2023, capturing the extensive margin. Column 5 introduces the interaction between the continuous measure and the binary indicator for not hosting an AZC in October 2023. For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 3. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.

Marie and Stans, 2025; Bursztyn et al., 2024; Lang and Schneider, 2024). Effects are somewhat larger in more urban municipalities, although the interaction is not statistically significant; A

Table 5: Spatial spillovers

Outcome:	Change in far-right vote share 2021-2025 [× 100]			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Not hosting in 2023	0.635***	0.499***	0.636***	0.571***
	(0.176)	(0.145)	(0.176)	(0.139)
Share of non-hosting neighbors (std.)	0.121	0.114		
	(0.097)	(0.087)		
Share of non-hosting in 25 km (std.)			0.135	0.170
			(0.104)	(0.105)
Observations	341	341	341	341
R^2	0.895	0.912	0.896	0.911
Province FE		✓		✓

Notes: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. This table shows results of OLS regressions of the change in far-right vote share between 2021 and 2025 on a binary indicator for not hosting an AZC in October 2023, as well as different measures of treatment among neighboring or nearby municipalities. Columns 1 and 2 include the unweighted share of neighboring municipalities that are not hosting, as well as an additional control for the number of contiguous municipalities. Columns 3 and 4 include the share of municipalities within 25, as well as an additional control for the number of municipalities within 25 kilometers. Columns 2 and 4 additionally include province fixed effects. For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 3. Standard errors clustered on the NUTS-3 level are shown in parentheses.

possible explanation is that expected proximity to an anticipated AZC is smaller in more urban areas.

Column 2 interacts treatment with standardized turnout and vote shares in 2021, using liberal-democratic parties as the omitted category. Prior turnout and vote shares strongly predict effect size: municipalities with lower turnout and stronger far-left support exhibit larger effects. These areas may have lower institutional trust and may be more sensitive to mandated allocations. In addition, the effects are larger in places with a larger base of center-right voters. This aligns with Section 5.1, which showed losses for center-right and (though insignificantly) far-left parties, and a modest increase in turnout. I also find stronger effects in municipalities with lower prior far-right voting, where stigmatization may have previously dampened voting for the far-right.

6 What happens when asylum seeker centers are opened?

Previous studies do not find municipal-level effects of AZC hosting on far-right voting between 2012 and 2017 (Achard et al., 2025; Bose, Marie and Stans, 2025). They do, however, document more positive attitudes in the neighborhood of AZCs after longer hosting spells, indicating a gradual positive-contact effect.

To test whether these null results extend to more recent periods and how the Act interacted with the effects of hosting, I examine how voting patterns changed in municipalities that opened an AZC between 2021 and 2023 (before the Dispersal Act) and between 2023 and 2025 (after the Act). Between 2021 and 2023, 72 municipalities began hosting an AZC (and one stopped). Because

Table 6: Heterogeneous effects by municipal characteristics and prior voting patterns

Outcome:	Change in far-right vote share (2021-2025)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Not hosting in 2023	0.560 (0.378)	0.803*** (0.178)	0.223 (0.351)
Did not host refugees since 2010	0.074 (0.268)		0.157 (0.237)
Not hosting in 2023 × Share non-western (std.)	0.451 (0.302)		-0.790* (0.448)
Not hosting in 2023 × Urban	0.344 (0.399)		0.432 (0.362)
Not hosting in 2023 × Median income (std.)	-0.002 (0.167)		0.457 (0.323)
Not hosting in 2023 × Turnout (2021, std.)		-0.745** (0.373)	-1.114** (0.450)
Not hosting in 2023 × Far-right vote share (2021, std.)		-0.797** (0.332)	-0.737** (0.357)
Not hosting in 2023 × Center-right vote share (2021, std.)		0.402 (0.494)	0.625 (0.555)
Not hosting in 2023 × Center-left vote share (2021, std.)		-0.172 (0.210)	0.062 (0.286)
Not hosting in 2023 × Far-left vote share (2021, std.)		0.619 (0.559)	1.078* (0.645)
Observations	341	341	341
R^2	0.897	0.920	0.922

Notes: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. This table shows results from OLS regressions of the change in far-right vote share between 2021 and 2025 on a binary indicator for not hosting an AZC in October 2023, interacted with municipal characteristics. *Did not host refugees since 2010* takes value 1 if a municipality has not hosted an AZC at an point between 2010 and October 2023 (which is a subset of not hosting in October 2023). *Urban* takes value 1 for large urban centers and very urban municipalities according to Statistics Netherlands, and 0 otherwise. Interacted factors are standardized for ease of interpretation. All models control for levels of the shown interacted variables. (std.) indicates that the variable is standardized. For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 3. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.

this occurred before the Act, hosting was voluntary and not preceded by a prolonged period of expectation. Between 2023 and 2025, 44 municipalities opened an AZC (and 5 stopped), fewer than 20 percent of all municipalities not hosting in October 2023. In these municipalities, voters first faced a period of heightened expectations that an AZC could be located anywhere, followed only later by the selection of a specific site and its eventual opening. This contrasts the 2012-2017 period, when AZCs were typically announced shortly before opening (Bose, Marie and Stans, 2025).

Table 7 regresses changes in far-right vote share on indicators for not hosting in 2021 and for newly hosting between 2021–2023 or 2023–2025. Columns 1 and 2 report results for the change in far-right voting between subsequent elections; column 3 reports results for 2021–2025. The combined effect in each period is obtained by adding the coefficient in the first row to the coefficient in either the second or third row.

Consistent with the main results in Table 1, municipalities that did not host in 2021 and did not start hosting experienced a large and significant increase of 0.6 percentage points in far-right support. Municipalities that began hosting between 2021 and 2023 show slightly higher far-right voting trends compared to already-hosting municipalities but considerably lower than municipalities that did not start hosting. This is consistent with earlier findings of negligible municipal-level hosting effects and the absence of positive expectation effects before the Act passed the Parliament.

Municipalities that began hosting after 2023, however, already exhibited a rise in far-right voting between 2021 and 2023— even larger than in municipalities that never started hosting. Yet after hosting began, far-right support did not decline relative to municipalities that still did not host. This suggests that, at the municipal level, positive intergroup contact is insufficient to reverse the effects of a prolonged period of heightened expectations.

Table 7: The effect of changes in hosting expectations and actual hosting.

Outcome:	Change in far-right vote share [$\times$ 100]		
	2021-2023 (1)	2023-2025 (2)	2021-2025 (3)
Not hosting in 2021	0.562**	0.047	0.609***
	(0.249)	(0.212)	(0.208)
Started hosting between 2021 and 2023	-0.237	-0.208	-0.445**
	(0.178)	(0.147)	(0.177)
Started hosting between 2023 and 2025	0.316	0.076	0.392
	(0.212)	(0.198)	(0.256)
Observations	341	341	341
R^2	0.859	0.661	0.896
Mean dep. var.	8.208	0.317	8.524

Notes: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. This table shows results of OLS regressions of the change in far-right vote share on a binary indicator for not hosting an AZC in 2021, as well two indicators, one that takes value 1 if a municipality started hosting an AZC between March 2021 and October 2023, and one if a municipality started hosting an AZC between October 2023 and October 2025. 72 municipalities started hosting between March 2021 and October 2023, 44 between October 2023 and October 2025. For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 3. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.

7 Mechanisms

Several channels could explain the rise in far-right voting in response to being allocated to host an AZC. First, the expectation of hosting may generate anger or fear, prompting protest activity and increasing demand for information about AZCs. I examine protest responses in Section 7.1 and information-seeking in Section 7.2. In addition, section 5.6 showed that effect sizes are larger in municipalities with limited prior contact with non-Western migrants, suggesting that contact with minorities limits concerns driven by a perceived group threat. Second, voting may be strategic: residents may have supported far-right parties to push for repeal of the Act. A later version of the paper will study these two channels using longitudinal panel data (LISS panel). This enables me to study the first channel by examining effects on attitudes towards minorities, fears (including crime concerns), and policy preferences. The second channel can be studied by examining migration attitudes, political trust, political engagement, and voting (intentions). The latter can also shed more light on voter movements between parties.

Third, far-right parties may adjust their campaign resources in response to the Act. Party strategies and action groups may amplify the backlash by politicizing the issue and targeting municipalities most affected (Hopkins, 2010). In future work, I will examine municipal-level advertising expenditures by far-right parties in the 2021 and 2023 elections.

7.1 Protests

After the Dispersal Act was introduced, protests against (new) AZCs increased, especially in the run-up to the 2025 election. Journalists from the TV program Nieuwsuur documented 48 anti-asylum protests in 2025 (NOS, 2025a), and hosting plans were adjusted in response. Table 8 examines how the obligation to host affected protest incidence and how protests interacted with voting responses. Prior work shows that protests can influence voting and far-right activity (Madestam et al., 2013; Sabet, Liebald and Friebel, 2025).

Column 1 indicates that protests were somewhat more likely in affected municipalities: those subject to the Act were 7 percentage points more likely to experience protest. Column 2 shows that far-right vote increases were only slightly larger in municipalities with protests. Column 3 shows similar patterns regardless of whether hosting plans were modified or not. Since protests are most likely where opposition is strongest, this pattern is unsurprising. The presence of sizable effects even in municipalities without protests suggests that local protest activity does not account for most of the overall voting response.

Table 8: The effect of newly expecting to host on anti-asylum protests and the moderating effects on protests

Outcome:	Anti-asylum protest	Change in far-right vote share (2021-2025)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Not hosting in 2023	0.067	0.435**	0.432**
	(0.048)	(0.174)	(0.175)
Not hosting in 2023 × Protest		0.290	
		(0.215)	
Not hosting in 2023 × Protest, unchanged hosting plans			0.346
			(0.264)
Not hosting in 2023 × Protest, changed hosting plans			0.212
			(0.325)
Observations	341	341	341
R^2	0.108	0.790	0.790
Mean dep. var.	0.141	8.524	8.524

Notes: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. This table shows results from OLS regressions of the occurrence of an anti-asylum protest (column 1) on a binary indicator for not hosting an AZC in October 2023, and the change in far-right vote share between 2021 and 2025 on a binary indicator for not hosting an AZC in October 2023, interacted with the occurrence of a protest (column 2) and the occurrence of a protest that did and did not change plans to open or expand an AZC according to NOS (2025a) (column 3). For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 3.
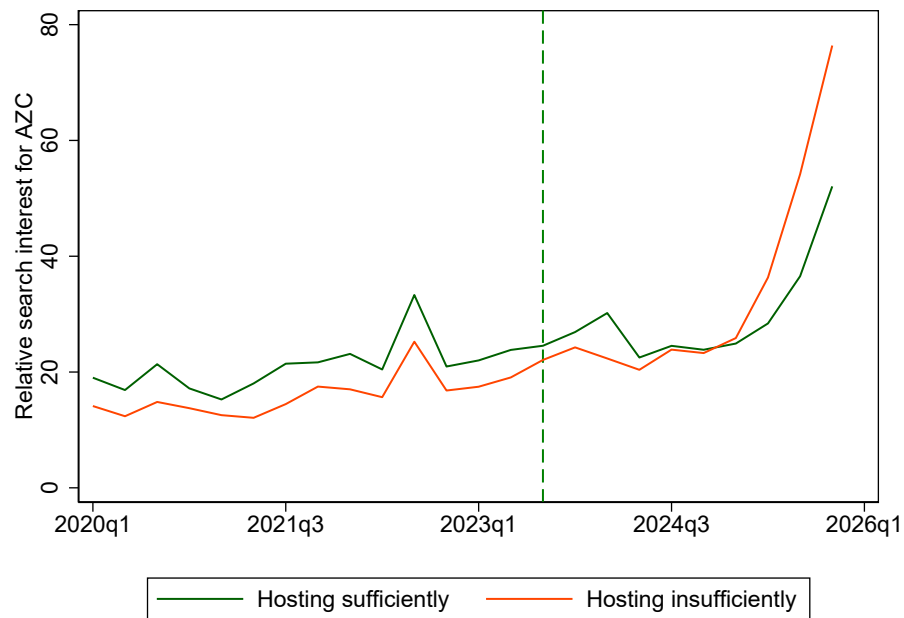
7.2 Demand for information

The salience and framing of migration in the media can shape attitudes toward migrants and migration policy (Schneider-Strawczynski and Valette, 2025; Djourelova, 2023). These effects may be amplified when reforms increase demand for migration-related information. To examine whether expectations of hosting more asylum seekers raise news demand, I study search interest in AZC-related information. I use Google Trends, which provides comparable measures of topic-specific search intensity over time and across regions. In the Netherlands, Google Trends is reliably available only at the provincial level. However, this aligns well with the institutional setting: the Dispersal Act allocated hosting obligations through the provinces (Section 2), increasing expectations strongly in the nine provinces that were hosting less asylum seekers in October 2023 than the national average in comparison to the three sufficiently hosting provinces.

Figure 5 plots Google Trends indices for provinces hosting sufficiently and insufficiently between 2020 and 2025. Before the Act, search interest was slightly higher in sufficiently hosting provinces. After the Act's introduction, insufficiently hosting provinces overtook them, with search activity surging in the run-up to the 2025 election—especially in provinces allocated larger increases in hosting.

Table 9 presents difference-in-differences estimates using both linear and multiplicative (Poisson) specifications for the post-2020 period. Both show substantial increases in search activity, with the

Poisson Equation indicating an increase of roughly 41 percent. These findings show an interesting contrast to the findings of Freddi (2021), who studies Sweden during the 2015 refugee crisis and finds that demand for asylum-related news decreases in municipalities hosting more asylum seekers. Together, the results suggest a broader mechanism beyond interpersonal contact: when asylum seekers are physically present, information needs fall; when asylum seekers are absent but expected to arrive, information demand rises. Because news coverage may disproportionately emphasize problems or risks related to asylum seeker hosting, heightened search activity in expectation of future arrivals could amplify concerns about their potential consequences.

Figure 5: Search interest for AZCs in sufficiently vs. insufficiently hosting provinces in October 2023

Note: Population-weighted Google Trends index between January 2020 and November 2025 for sufficiently hosting provinces and insufficiently hosting provinces, aggregated on a quarterly level. The dashed vertical line indicates the month in which the Dispersal Act was passed (2023Q4).

Table 9: The effect of insufficiently hosting on online search for AZCs

Outcome:	Google Trends Index for AZC	
	OLS (1)	PPML (2)
Province hosts insufficiently $\times$ post	7.058** (2.585)	0.343*** (0.086)
Observations	852	852
R-squared	0.80	
Wild Cluster Bootstrap p-value	0.026	0.020

8 Conclusion

This paper shows that the sudden introduction of a dispersal policy can generate electoral backlash in localities that do not host asylum seekers (yet). Expectations alone matter: beliefs about future extensive and intensive-margin arrivals increase far-right voting in the absence of actual inflows. This challenges the view that local migration is secondary to media salience and framing in shaping far-right support (Schneider-Strawczynski and Valette, 2025; Couttenier et al., 2024; Keita, Renault and Valette, 2024; Djourelova, 2023; Alesina, Miano and Stantcheva, 2023). A future version of this paper will study the mechanisms more directly by examining changes in attitudes, policy preferences and intergroup contact in longitudinal election surveys using the same research design.

A key limitation of my study is the absence of direct measures of expectations, which would have enabled me to directly quantify the role of expectations. However, given the high salience of the reform, it is plausible that voters held reasonably accurate beliefs about current hosting patterns and announced allocation requirements, at least on the extensive margin. The intense politicization surrounding the reform may also have amplified voting responses, which could have contributed to the large effects.

Expectations about nation- or Europe-wide inflows may have a similar impact as local inflows, for three reasons. First, nationwide flows are predictive of local inflows. Second, voters can expect to be affected by migration even if migrants arrive to other regions through other channels. Third, voters may oppose migration if they believe other people living in the same country are negatively affected (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014). This channel is consistent with macro-level evidence that far-right support surged early in the 2015 European refugee crisis, before large numbers of arrivals materialized in North- and Western Europe (Steinmayr, 2021). Expectations are likely

influenced by media salience, including coverage of migration pressures in origin countries (e.g. climate or conflict shocks) and in transit routes (e.g. the Mediterranean and the Darién Gap). My findings also suggest the reverse channel: heightened expectations about inflows may raise demand for information.

Understanding how expectations about future migration are formed and how they shape opposition requires systematic measurement. A rare example is British Future (2025), who document large misperceptions about recent migration trends in the UK: despite net migration falling from above 1 percent of the population to roughly 0.5 percent, most respondents believed it had increased. This could provide an interesting avenue for future research. Recent studies experimentally reducing misperceptions about the size of minority groups have failed to considerably impact attitudes or policy preferences, which has been attributed to small-number biases (Guay et al., 2025; Lutz and Bitschnau, 2025). Combined with my results, this indicates that providing accurate information about changes in migration flows may be a fruitful area of future research.

The study also offers guidance for future work on the local effects of migration. In particular, researchers interested in the effects of local inflows should consider expectation dynamics. In typical local-inflow designs, expectations in treated and control units may evolve in a non-parallel manner. For example, if nationwide expectations are rising, comparing newly hosting regions with those not yet hosting could bias estimates if the latter expect to receive asylum seekers soon.

Policy makers deciding on immigration and integration policies need to ensure that proposed policies do not fuel nativist backlash, which could facilitate democratic backsliding (Kustov, 2025; Pevnick, 2024). The legal authority to disperse asylum seekers has clear benefits: it enables stable small-scale housing that facilitates social and linguistic integration (Damen, Dagevos and Huijnk, 2022; Khalil and Tjaden, 2025), reduces reliance on costly temporary shelters, can direct asylum seekers to regions where integration is faster (Bansak et al., 2018), and can prevent overcrowded reception centers from being politicized. Dispersal may also reduce fears of uncontrolled arrivals in any single region. Yet its introduction can temporarily raise expectations of local hosting, increasing backlash. I find that once regions are hosting, increased expectations do not increase opposition to migration. This suggests that introducing dispersal policies (during times of low asylum migration) may mitigate the backlash once the need for asylum seeker hosting starts increasing.

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A Literature

Although early economic research focused on the labour-market and fiscal effects of migration, opposition to immigration is better explained by concerns about deteriorating the cultural composition of amenities (Card, Dustmann and Preston, 2012). A broad literature now shows that cultural concerns, rather than economic ones, dominate natives' opposition to immigration (Alesina and Tabellini, 2024). These attitudes translate into meaningful political behaviour: migration can reduce support for redistribution (Alesina, Miano and Stantcheva, 2023), heighten crime fears (Ajzenman, Dominguez and Undurraga, 2023), and trigger native out-migration (Boje-Kovacs et al., 2024). Beliefs and narratives often matter more than observable consequences (Alesina, Miano and Stantcheva, 2023). Many studies document large misperceptions about migrant numbers and characteristics (Alesina, Miano and Stantcheva, 2023; Lutz and Bitschnau, 2023), while correcting these misperceptions tends to have limited policy effects (Dylong and Uebelmesser, 2024; Alesina, Miano and Stantcheva, 2023), likely because they stem from guessing errors or systematic cognitive biases (Guay et al., 2025; Lutz and Bitschnau, 2025).

A second strand of work examines how different forms of exposure to migration shape attitudes, policy preferences, and far-right voting. Three types of exposure dominate: media, transit, and local residential exposure. Media salience and framing of migration increase concern and polarize attitudes (Manzoni et al., 2025; Benesch et al., 2019; Schneider-Strawczynski and Valette, 2025; Djourelova, 2023), although proximity to refugees may reduce demand for migration-related news (Freddi, 2021) and temper anti-immigrant rhetoric (Peracchi, 2025). Exposure to irregular or transit migration generally increases anti-immigrant sentiment and far-right support (Gessler, Tóth and Wachs, 2021; Steinmayr, 2021; Dinas et al., 2019), and irregular arrivals may further harden attitudes, such as in the UK case of boat landings (Bhatiya and Kadam, 2025).

The literature on regional inflows, summarised by Cools, Finseraas and Rogeberg (2021), finds on average small positive effects of migrant inflows on far-right voting that largely vanish once correcting for publication bias. Effects vary strongly: they are larger in rural areas (Dustmann, Vasiljeva and Piil Damm, 2019), among low-skilled natives (Moriconi, Peri and Turati, 2022; Mayda, Peri and Steingress, 2022; Edo et al., 2019), and when migrants are culturally distant (Harmon, 2018). Even culturally similar arrivals can provoke anti-foreigner mobilisation (Rozo and Vargas, 2021; Alrababah et al., 2024).

Directly related is the literature on local asylum seeker and refugee hosting. Regional-level studies often find that refugee reception increases far-right voting (Dustmann, Vasiljeva and Piil Damm, 2019; Campo, Giunti and Mendola, 2024; Rickardsson, 2025; Finseraas and Strøm, 2022). In contrast, recent work using smaller geographic units (municipalities under 5,000 inhabitants or polling-station data) documents negative effects on far-right support, consistent with the contact hypothesis (Vertier, Viskanic and Gamalerio, 2023; Steinmayr, 2021; Schneider-Strawczynski, 2021;

Achard et al., 2025; Fremerey, Hörnig and Schaffner, 2024; Schmidt, Jacobsen and Iglauer, 2024). One of the papers most closely related to this work is Finseraas and Strøm (2022), who consider the consequences of a reform in Norway in 2013, where municipalities who previously did not host were asked to start host recognized refugees. They find that municipalities that are now asked to host refugees. However, they do not consider a policy that requires municipalities to provide shelter, consider the dispersal of recognized refugees and focus on actual refugee arrival, rather than expectations. They find evidence of political polarization.

These opposing results underscore the importance of geographic scale (Della Posta, 2013). In the Netherlands, municipalities are relatively large (around 50,000 residents), complicating the detection of very local contact effects. Studies of Dutch AZC openings around the 2015 refugee crisis find mixed patterns: Achard et al. (2025) observe reduced far-right voting only in neighbourhoods immediately surrounding AZCs, while Bose, Marie and Stans (2025) show that the political salience of AZCs peaks in the months before opening and is strongest shortly after. In line with this, Tolsma, Lameris and Savelkoul (2021) find that support for the far right increases strongly when a large number of refugees arrived and that the opening of an AZC in the neighborhood slightly increased far-right support further.

To date, only one study directly considers expectations about future arrivals rather than actual refugee presence. Barilari et al. (2025) calculate the expected exposure to refugee migration in the near future using a shift-share-like measure: they interact the origin-specific number of immigrants across Italy by the origin-specific number of refugees arriving by boat soon before the elections, and aggregate across origins. They then use this exposure to predict changes in voting in municipal elections between two subsequent elections, finding that perceived migration increases anti-immigrant, protests and far-right populist vote shares. However, their approach requires voters to observe both the national composition of new arrivals ("shifts") and the local distribution of existing refugees by origin ("shares"), a demanding assumption. (Adema, 2025).

B Additional results

B.1 Exempted municipalities

In December 2024, the minister communicated an updated list of municipal-level hosting allocations to be fulfilled by July 1, 2025 (Faber-Van de Klashorst, 2024). This list contained 23 municipalities that were exempt of hosting. The communication also contained (non-mutually exclusive) reasons why a municipality was exempted: because the provincial target was already reached (8 municipalities), because they made a deal with another municipality (9, including the 5 islands), because a municipality already hosted many Ukrainian refugees (5), and 3 residual municipalities without a stated reason. For municipalities in the first three categories it is plausible that inhabitants already
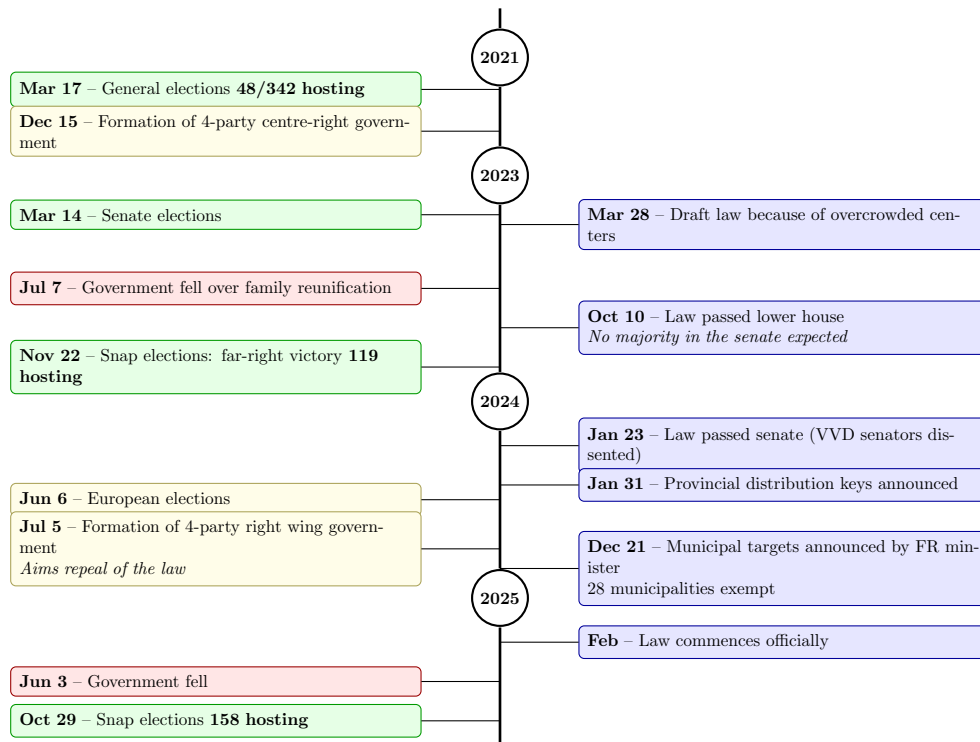
anticipated that they did not need to host.

First, as the allocations are assigned in a two-step process, non-hosting municipalities in provinces that are already hosting sufficiently did not need to supply more beds. Figure 1c) shows the difference between the total allocation and the total hosting level on the municipal level: three provinces already hosted more asylum seekers in 2023 than required under the allocation of the Dispersal Act: Drenthe, Flevoland and Groningen. Second, several municipalities signed agreements with others municipalities in the same province to exchange hosting asylum seekers for other favors. Third, many municipalities were exempted as they were already hosting Ukrainian refugees since 2022 (Kuiper and van Uffelen, 2022). Subsequently, several municipalities did not offer housing to the provincial negotiations (, 2025; Brabants Dagblad, n.d.). In addition, some of the municipalities hosting Ukrainians were able to strike deals with other municipalities that were hosting less Ukrainians but more asylum seekers (Nieuwsblad Schaapskooi, 2025).

As municipalities belonging to these three groups may have been aware that they likely were exempt of the consequences of the Act, expectations about the future arrival of an AZC would be muted in those municipalities. Figure A2 shows results of regressions including an interaction of the indicator for not hosting in October 2023 with a binary indicator for the 20 exempted municipalities. The results suggest that changes in far-right voting between 2021 and 2023 in exempted municipalities was close to that of other not-yet hosting municipalities. However, after the announcement of the exemptions, exempted municipalities saw less far-right voting in the 2025 elections relative to non-exempted municipalities.
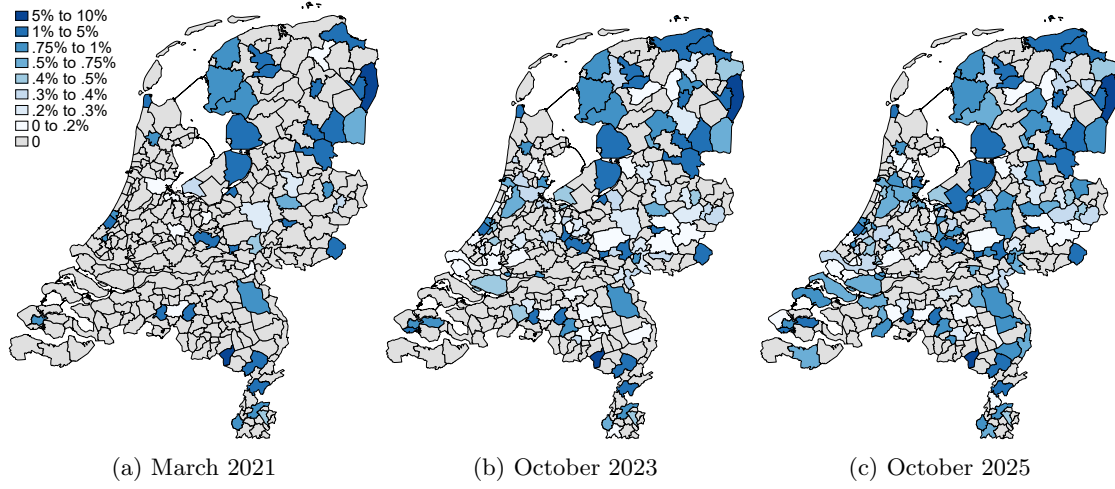
To directly test the role of the presence of Ukrainian refugees, I also interact the indicator for not hosting in October 2023 by the local population share of Ukrainian refugees in October 2023 in column 4. I find a small but negative interaction effect: a 1 percentage point share of Ukrainians reduces the impact by 0.3 percentage points. However, this may not only capture the effect on reduced expectations, but could also be driven by the effect of hosting Ukrainian refugees, who were regarded more positively than other asylum seekers.
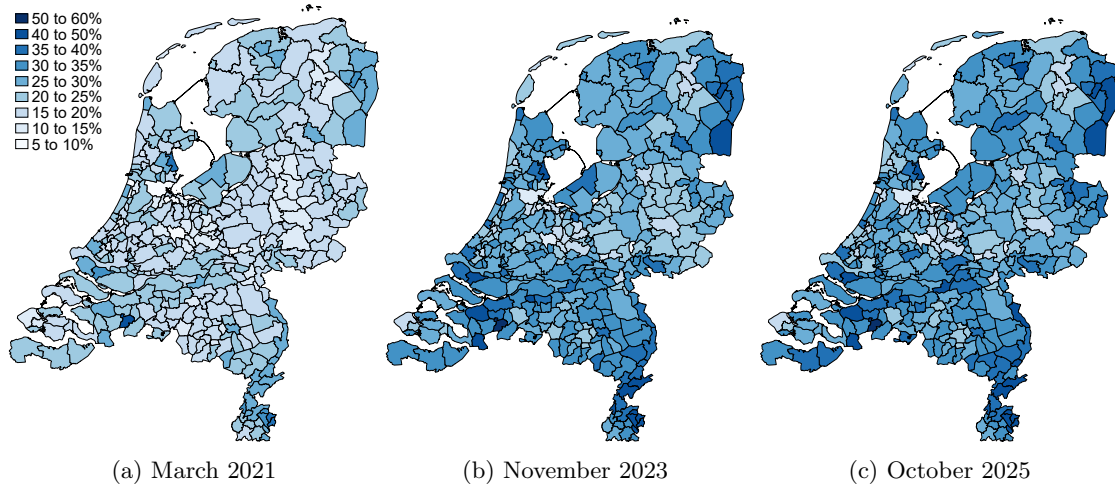
Figure A1: Timeline of relevant events 2021–2025

2021

Mar 17 – General elections **48/342 hosting**

Dec 15 – Formation of 4-party centre-right government

2023

Mar 14 – Senate elections

Mar 28 – Draft law because of overcrowded centers

Jul 7 – Government fell over family reunification

Oct 10 – Law passed lower house
No majority in the senate expected

Nov 22 – Snap elections: far-right victory **119 hosting**

2024

Jan 23 – Law passed senate (VVD senators dissented)

Jan 31 – Provincial distribution keys announced

Jun 6 – European elections

Jul 5 – Formation of 4-party right wing government
Aims repeal of the law

Dec 21 – Municipal targets announced by FR minister
28 municipalities exempt

2025

Feb – Law commences officially

Jun 3 – Government fell

Oct 29 – Snap elections **158 hosting**

C Figures and Tables

Figure A2: Municipal (AZC) capacity relative to population
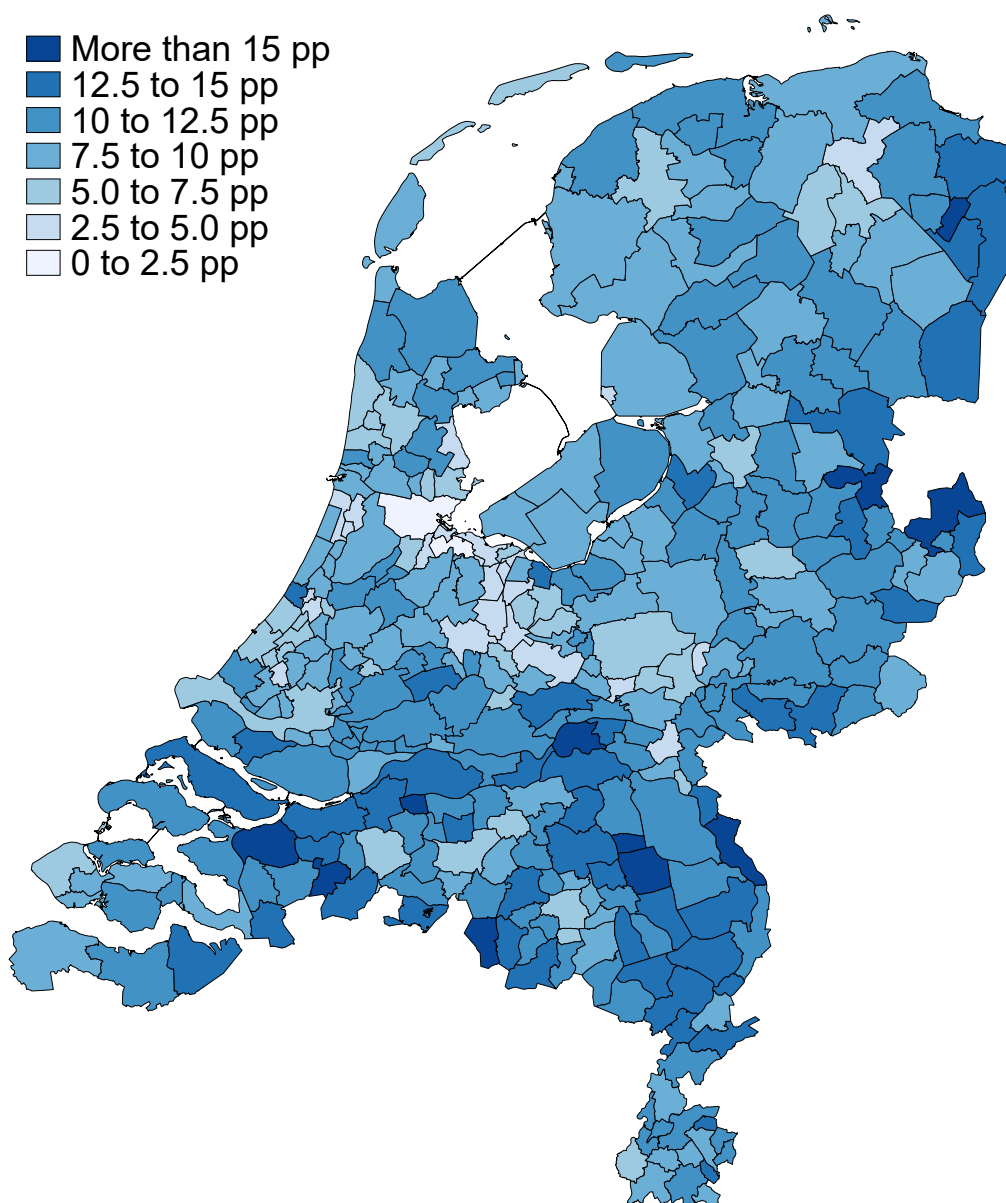

(a) March 2021   (b) October 2023   (c) October 2025

Note: Data on the capacity of AZCs originate from COA (2025). Data on population in 2022 originate from CBS (2025).

Figure A3: Far-right vote shares by municipality

(a) March 2021   (b) November 2023   (c) October 2025

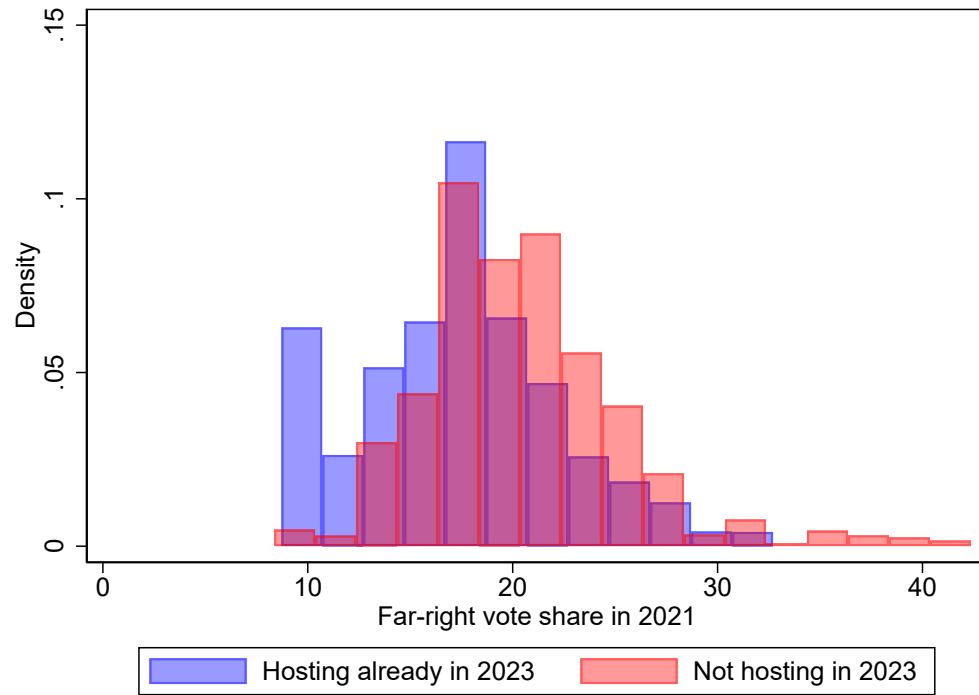*Note:* Data on municipal election results originate from Kiesraad (2025).

Figure A4: Change in far-right vote share between 2021 and 2025.

Legend:
- More than 15 pp
- 12.5 to 15 pp
- 10 to 12.5 pp
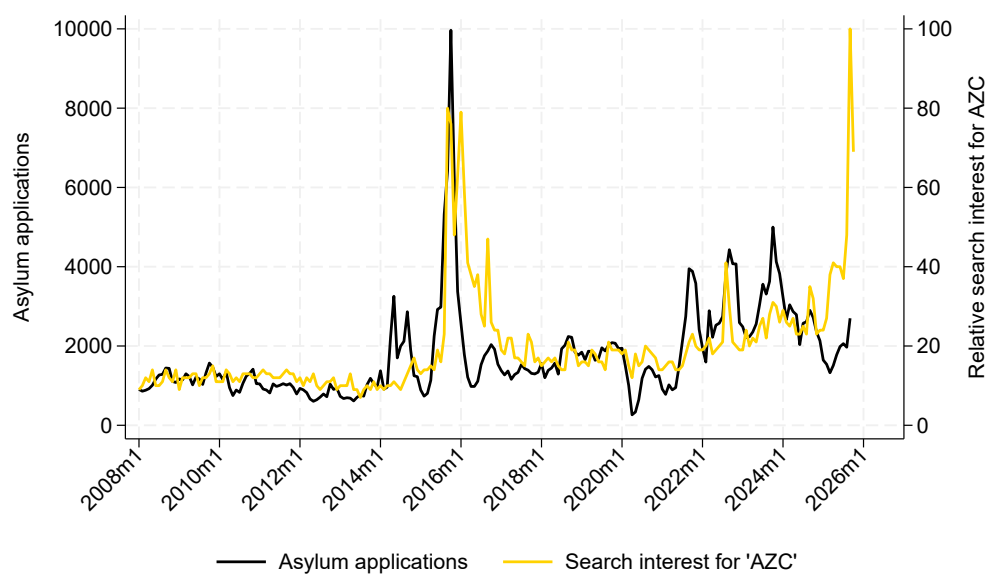- 7.5 to 10 pp
- 5.0 to 7.5 pp
- 2.5 to 5.0 pp
- 0 to 2.5 pp

Note: Data on municipal election results originate from Kiesraad (2025). The far-right vote share increased in all munici-
palities.

Figure A5: Histogram of population-weighted far-right vote share in 2021, by hosting status in October 2023
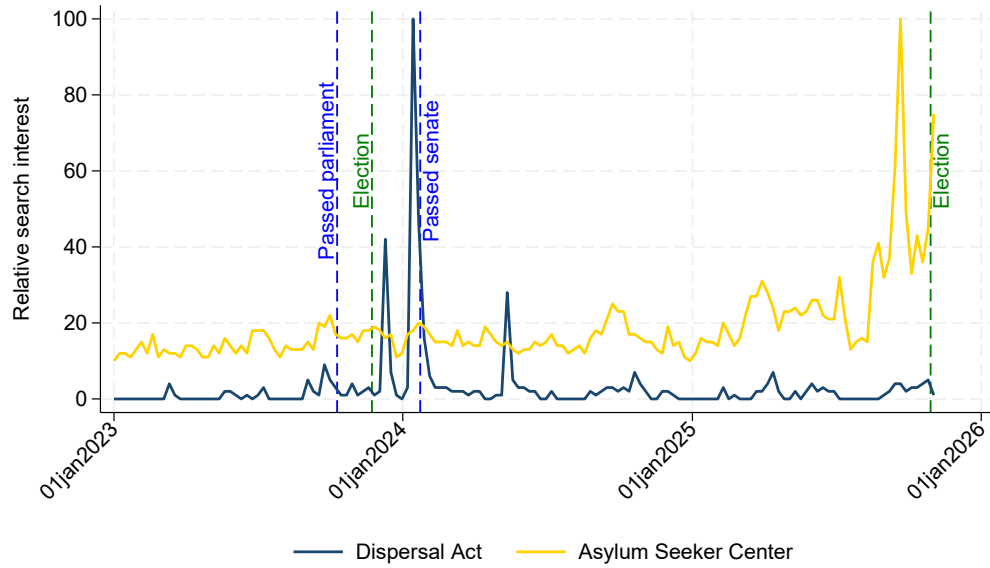

Note: Data on municipal election results originate from Kiesraad (2025) and data on hosting from COA (2025).

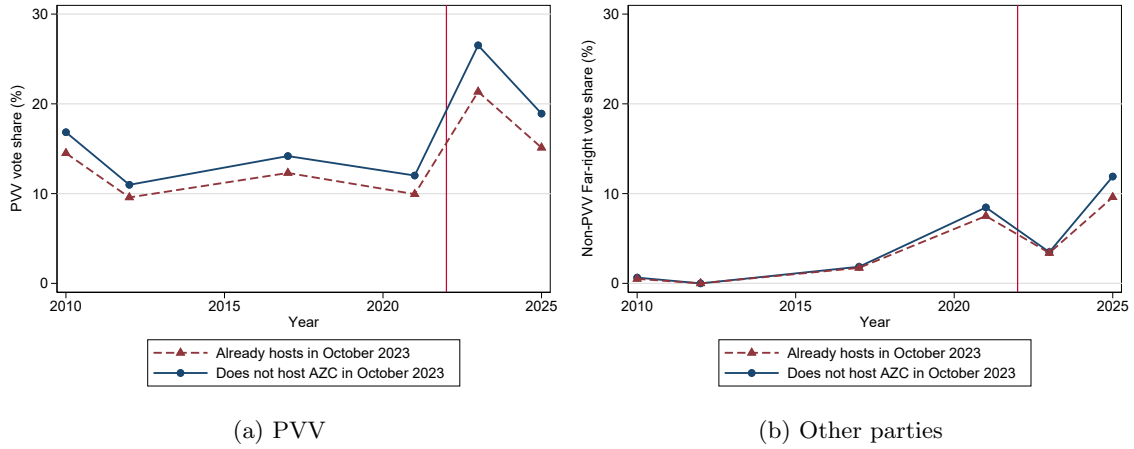Figure A6: Monthly asylum applications and salience of AZCs

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Figure A7: Online search interest for the Dispersal Act and Asylum Seeker Centers

Figure A8: Municipal vote share for PVV and other far-right parties over time, by hosting status

(a) PVV

(b) Other parties

Figure A9: Residual-residual plot of main OLS estimates

Note: Scatterplot with linear trendline of the residualized change in far-right vote share between 2021 and 2025 on the residualized dummy for not hosting in October 2023. For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 3.

Figure A10: Effect of changes in vote shares by party (block) for subsequent election pairs

(a) PVV

(b) Other parties

Note: Coefficient plot of regression estimates of Equations 1 with different party vote shares as outcomes, for the 2021-2023 and the 2023-2025 elections. The independent variable is always the change in party-(block) vote share multiplied by 100 between the 2021 and 2025 elections. For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 3. 95 percent confidence intervals are shown, based on heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors.

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Figure A11: The effect of newly expecting to host on turnout over time

Note: Coefficient plot of regression estimates of a stacked version of equation 1 for the 2010-2025 elections. The independent variable is the turnout, and share of blank votes or invalid votes in the respective election. I interact the indicator for not hosting in October 2023 with each election year, omitting the interaction with 2021 as the reference period. I also interact all control variables with indicators for each election and include election and municipality fixed effects. For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 6. 95 percent confidence intervals are shown, based on standard errors clustered on the municipality level. $N = 341 \times 6 = 2,046$.

Figure A12: Simulation-based placebo estimates

Note: Distribution of effect sizes when estimating Equation 1. N = 999 times with a placebo dummy. The placebo dummy is set at random to 1 for 222 observations (the number of actually not hosting municipalities in October 2023), and to 0 for all other observations. The independent variable is the change in far-right vote share multiplied by 100 between 2021 and 2025. For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 3. The dashed vertical line indicates the effect size of the actual treatment assignment. No estimates are more extreme than the actual treatment effect.

Table A1: Differences in characteristics between municipalities that are hosting and non-hosting in October 2023

	Hosting in 2023	Not hosting in October 2023	Difference
Panel A: control variables			
Not urban	0.03	0.12	0.088***
Little urban	0.13	0.32	0.189***
Somewhat urban	0.10	0.25	0.147***
Very urban	0.34	0.24	-0.106
Large urban center	0.39	0.07	-0.318***
Average distance to GP	0.99	1.20	0.210***
Average distance to high school	2.76	4.36	1.597***
Average distance to main road	1.99	1.68	-0.309***
Average distance to train network	4.15	6.92	2.771***
Distance to Amsterdam	71.60	78.97	7.368
Population density	1937.34	799.77	-1,137.576***
Population change (2011-2021)	0.06	0.04	-0.021**
Western migrant population share	0.12	0.09	-0.027***
Non-western migrant population share	0.18	0.09	-0.095***
Change in non-western migrant population share (2010-2022)	0.03	0.03	-0.004
Change in western migrant population share (2010-2022)	0.02	0.01	-0.008**
Share recognized refugee	0.02	0.02	-0.006***
Share female	0.50	0.50	-0.001
Share aged 0-14	15.41	15.71	0.299
Share aged 15-24	13.05	11.37	-1.678***
Share aged 25-44	27.03	22.55	-4.480***
Share aged 45-64	26.91	28.37	1.462**
Share aged 65-80	14.42	16.67	2.254***
Share with lower secondary education	16.38	19.05	2.677***
Share with upper secondary education	39.58	43.89	4.309***
Share with tertiary education	35.00	28.68	-6.316***
Median income	30.88	33.07	2.192***
Share of population till 64 on benefits	0.15	0.13	-0.023***
Panel B: turnout and vote shares in 2021			
Turnout in 2021	77.70	80.21	2.509***
Far-right vote share in 2021	17.44	20.47	3.033***
Center-right vote share in 2021	28.99	38.57	9.581***
Liberal Dem vote share in 2021	19.81	14.48	-5.323***
Center-left vote share in 2021	15.95	12.49	-3.461***
Far-left vote share in 2021	15.15	10.75	-4.405***
N	119	222	

Notes: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. This table shows the level of baseline control variables (Panel A) and voting in 2021 (Panel B), for municipalities hosting an AZC in 2023 and those that are not. Th third column computes the difference and associated p-value. All observations are weighted with municipal population in 2022. Far-left parties include SP, PVDD, BIJ1. Center-left parties include PVDA, GroenLinks, ChristenUnie. Liberal Democratic parties include D66 and VOLT. Center-right parties include VVD, CDA, BBB, NSC, and SGP. Far-right parties include PVV, FVD, JA21 and BVNL.

Table A2: The effect on exempted municipalities

Outcome:	Change in far-right vote share [$\times$ 100]			
	2021-2023	2023-2025	2021-2025	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Not hosting in 2023	0.447***	0.183	0.630***	0.777**
	(0.156)	(0.130)	(0.160)	(0.341)
Not hosting in 2023 $\times$ Exempted	-0.034	-0.393	-0.427	
	(0.409)	(0.302)	(0.483)	
Not hosting in 2023 $\times$ Ukrainians p.c.				-0.310
				(0.505)
Observations	341	341	341	341
R^2	0.857	0.660	0.895	0.895
Mean dep. var.	8.208	0.317	8.524	8.524

Notes: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. This table shows results of OLS regressions of the change in far-right vote share on a binary indicator for not hosting an AZC in October 2023, interacted with a binary indicator that takes value 1 for 21 municipalities who were not hosting in October 2023 and were exempted in the December 2024 allocation because of one of the three reasons mentioned in the text (columns 1-3) and the number of Ukrainians hosted per 100 inhabitants in October 2023 from CBS (2025) (column 4). For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 3. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.

Table A3: The effect newly expecting to host on turnout and protest votes (2021-2025)

Outcome:	Turnout (1)	Share of blank votes (2)	Share of invalid votes
Not hosting in 2023	-0.265	-0.000	0.000*
	(0.893)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Observations	341	341	341
R^2	0.418	0.418	0.160
Mean dep. var.	21.706	0.002	0.000

Notes: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Coefficient plot of regression estimates of Equations 1 with turnout, share of blank and invalid voted as outcomes. For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 3. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.

Table A4: The effect of newly expecting to host (2021-2025), using alternative specifications

Outcome:	Change in far-right vote share 2021-2025 [× 100]								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Not hosting in 2023	0.603***	1.092***	2.302***	0.659***	0.538***	1.129***	0.489***	0.470***	0.462***
	(0.175)	(0.261)	(0.373)	(0.161)	(0.171)	(0.263)	(0.164)	(0.146)	(0.160)
Observations	341	341	341	341	341	341	341	341	283
R^2	0.868	0.639	0.417	0.885	0.875	0.641	0.789	0.911	0.847
Mean dep. var.	8.524	8.524	8.524	8.524	8.524	8.524	8.524	8.524	9.507
Demographic controls	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Geographic controls		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Economic controls			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Population weights	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Party block vote shares and turnout (2021)							✓		
Omitting municipalities with low and high prior far-right vote shares								✓	

Notes: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. This table shows results from OLS regressions of the change in far-right vote share multiplied by 100 between 2021 and 2025 on a binary indicator for not hosting an AZC in October 2023, for different specification and sample choices. Columns 1-6 include all combinations of demographic, geographic and economic control variables. Column 7 shows results without population weights, column 8 controls for turnout and vote shares of the far-right, centre-right, centre-left, far-left and liberal democrat voting blocks during the 2021 election. Columns 9 omits all municipalities with a far-right vote share lower than 15 and more than 30 percentage points. For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 3. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.

Table A5: The effect of newly expecting to host (2021-2025), using alternative choices of the variance-covariance matrix

Outcome:	Change in far-right vote share 2021-2025 [× 100]			
	OLS			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Not hosting in 2023	0.597***	0.597***	0.597***	0.597***
	(0.155)	(0.165)	(0.168)	(0.137)
Observations	341	341	341	341
R^2	0.894	0.894	0.894	0.894
Mean dep. var.	8.524	8.524	8.524	8.524

Notes: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. This table shows results from OLS and IV regressions of the change in far-right vote share between 2021 and 2025 on a binary indicator for not hosting an AZC in October 2023, for different choices of the variance-covariance matrix. Columns 1 and 5 show results using standard errors clustered at the municipality, columns 2 and 6 using standard errors clustered at the NUTS-3 region level, columns 3 and 7 (4 and 8) implement spatial standard errors by allowing for arbitrary correlations in a 25 km (50 km) radius. The latter is implemented using the ACREG command in Stata (Colella et al., 2023). For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 3.

Table A6: Instrumental Variables estimates based on past AZC hosting

Outcome:	Change in far-right vote share 2021-2025 [× 100]			
IV: not hosting in ...	2021	2017	2012	2010
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Not hosting in 2023	0.970**	1.159**	0.645	1.040
	(0.409)	(0.575)	(0.625)	(0.674)
Observations	341	341	341	341
R-squared	0.89	0.89	0.89	0.89
Mean dep. var.	8.52	8.52	8.52	8.52
First stage F-statistic	36.85	18.12	16.09	16.58

Notes: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. IV estimates using instruments based on AZC hosting in 2021, 2017, 2012 and 2010. The independent variable is the change in vote share for far-right parties between 2021 and 2025 and the treatment is whether a municipality is not hosting an AZC in October 2023 election. The instrument in 2021 is a binary indicator for those not yet hosting in March 2021, in 2017/2012/2010 on January 1. For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 3. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.

Table A7: The effect of extensive and intensive margin changes in expectations on far-right voting

Outcome:	Change in far-right vote share [× 100]					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: 2021-2023						
Difference between -.25 and +.25 pp	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)				
Decrease more than .25 pp	0.034 (0.430)	0.150 (0.431)				
Increase between .25 and .5 pp	0.180 (0.193)	0.135 (0.192)				
Increase more than .5 pp	0.402** (0.203)	0.211 (0.229)				
Not hosting in 2023		0.381** (0.175)		0.425** (0.173)	0.286 (0.222)	0.253 (0.242)
Intensive			0.320 (0.241)	0.064 (0.259)	-0.189 (0.356)	-0.192 (0.357)
Intensive × Not hosting in 2023					0.493 (0.473)	0.546 (0.491)
Exempted municipalities						0.147 (0.439)
Observations	341	341	341	341	341	341
R^2	0.855	0.857	0.854	0.857	0.857	0.857
Mean dep. var.	8.208	8.208	8.208	8.208	8.208	8.208
Panel B: 2023-2025						
Difference between -.25 and +.25 pp	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)				
Decrease more than .25 pp	-0.561** (0.274)	-0.554** (0.275)				
Increase between .25 and .5 pp	0.143 (0.166)	0.140 (0.167)				
Increase more than .5 pp	0.293* (0.159)	0.280 (0.186)				
Not hosting in 2023		0.025 (0.149)		0.079 (0.138)	-0.124 (0.202)	-0.099 (0.234)
Intensive			0.298* (0.178)	0.251 (0.196)	-0.117 (0.219)	-0.114 (0.220)
Intensive × Not hosting in 2023					0.717* (0.422)	0.677 (0.457)
Exempted municipalities						-0.112 (0.346)
Observations	341	341	341	341	341	341
R^2	0.664	0.664	0.660	0.660	0.663	0.663
Mean dep. var.	0.317	0.317	0.317	0.317	0.317	0.317

Notes: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. This table shows results of OLS regressions of the change in far-right vote share between 2021 and 2023 (Panel A) and between 2023 and 2025 (Panel B) on measures of the difference between the allocation published in December 2024 (Faber-Van de Klashorst, 2024) and the hosting capacity in October 2023, per 100 inhabitants. See notes to Table 4 for the definitions of the regressors. For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 3. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.

Table A8: The effect of extensive and intensive margin changes in expectations on far-right voting

Outcome:	Change in far-right vote share [$\times$ 100]							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Panel A: 2021-2023								
Intensive	0.618** (0.301)	0.693** (0.348)	0.314 (0.328)	0.377 (0.375)	-0.306 (0.347)	-0.169 (0.413)	-0.307 (0.347)	-0.170 (0.413)
Not hosting in 2023			0.505*** (0.186)	0.500*** (0.187)	0.162 (0.268)	0.142 (0.268)	0.154 (0.298)	0.130 (0.299)
Δ capacity$_{23-25}$		-0.233 (0.388)		-0.183 (0.363)		-0.537 (0.557)		-0.538 (0.559)
Intensive $\times$ Not hosting in 2023					1.211** (0.579)	1.136* (0.630)	1.223** (0.610)	1.156* (0.662)
Δ capacity$_{23-25}$ $\times$ Not hosting in 2023						0.398 (0.720)		0.394 (0.723)
Exempted municipalities							0.035 (0.523)	0.053 (0.524)
Observations	341	341	341	341	341	341	341	341
R^2	0.892	0.892	0.895	0.895	0.897	0.897	0.897	0.897
Mean dep. var.	8.524	8.524	8.524	8.524	8.524	8.524	8.524	8.524

Notes: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. This table shows results of OLS regressions of the change in far-right vote share between 2021 and 2025 on measures of the difference between the allocation published in December 2024 (Faber-Van de Klashorst, 2024) and the hosting capacity in October 2023 ,per 100 inhabitants. Odd columns show the results of Panel B of Table 4, whereas even columns additionally control for the difference between hosting capacity in October 2025 in October 2023 as a continuous variableand its interaction with not hosting in October 2023. See notes to Panel B of Table 4 for the definitions of the other regressors. For details on the data, see notes to Table 1. For details on the control variables, see notes to Table 1 describing column 3. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.