The Electoral Effects of State-Sponsored Homophobia

with: Konstantin Bogatyrev, Tarik Abou-Chadi, Heike Klüver & Lukas Stoetzer

---

Violeta Haas
violeta.haas@hu-berlin.de

25th September 2024

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Department of Social Sciences
Chair of Comparative Political Behavior
DYNAMICS Research Training group

Motivation

Motivation

Motivation

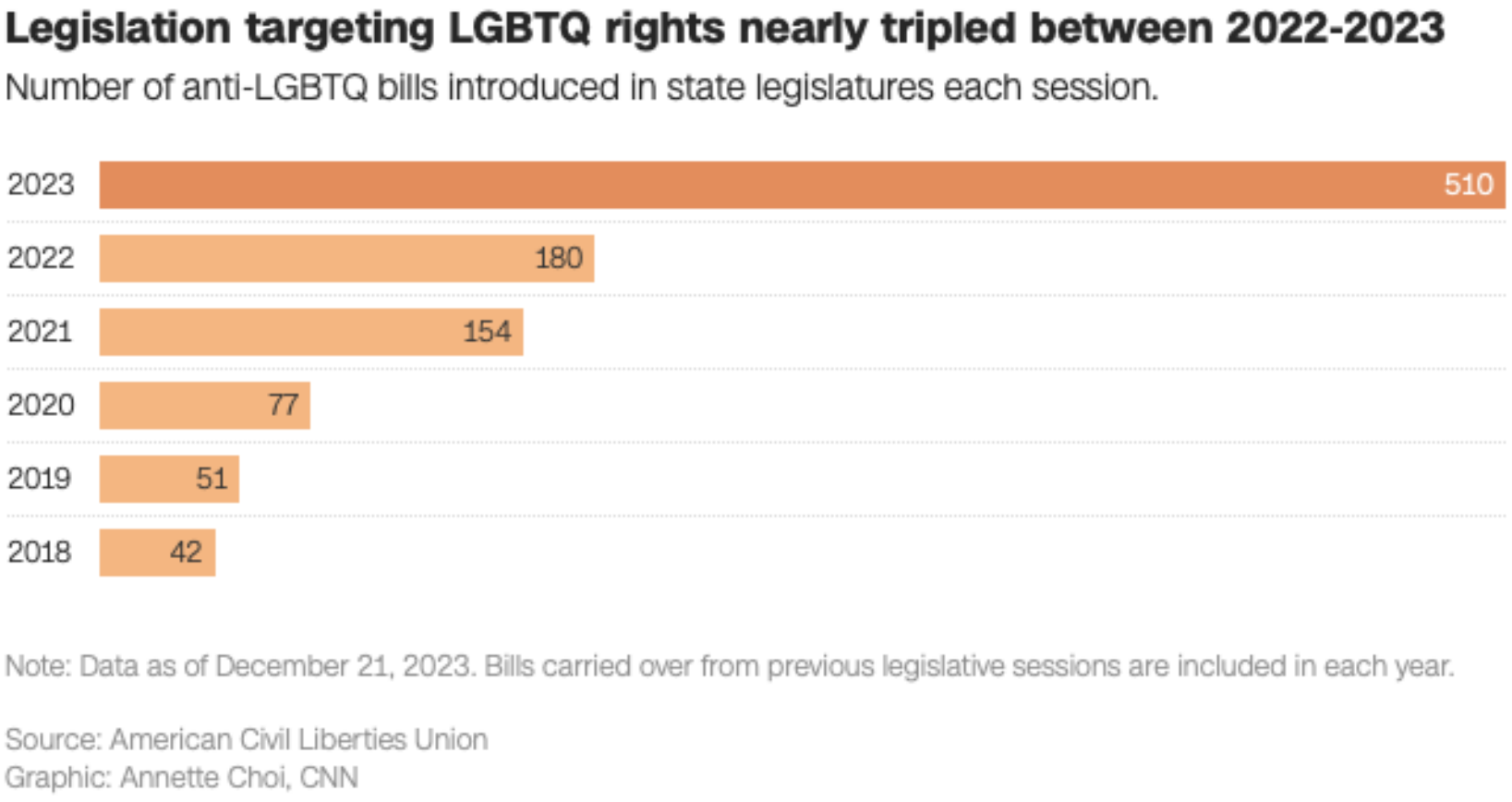
DW
Russia set to expar
anti-LGBTQ law

Anti-LGBT law
comes into effect
in Hungary
BBC
NEWS NIGHT

Motivation

DW
Russia set to expar
anti-LGBTQ law
Anti-LGBT law
o effect
y
G H T
EFF
BEING GAY IS NOT THE CRIME, HOMOPHOBI IS THE TRUE CRIME
EFF
PRESIDENT MUSEVENI; DO NOT SIGN THE ANTI-HOMOSEXUALITY BILL!
EFF
UGANDA KILL THE BILL NOT THE GAYS EQUALITY!

Motivation


Legislation targeting LGBTQ rights nearly tripled between 2022-2023
Number of anti-LGBTQ bills introduced in state legislatures each session.
2023
510
2022
180
2021
154
2020
77
2019
51
2018
42
Note: Data as of December 21, 2023. Bills carried over from previous legislative sessions are included in each year.
Source: American Civil Liberties Union
Graphic: Annette Choi, CNN

Do Strategies of Political Homophobia Translate into Electoral Gains?

Theoretical Considerations

Persuasion & (De)mobilization

+ Appeal to undecided conservative voters

- Repel more culturally moderate and progressive voters

+ Mobilize norm-conforming voters and demobilize opposing voters

Priming

+/- Increasing the salience of LGBTQ+ rights and its importance

Mechanism

Case: “LGBT-free” Zones in Poland

Source: Bartosz Staszewski; CBC Radio, Feb 10, 2020.

Case Selection

Timeline of Events

2019/03 — First anti-LGBTQ+ bill passes

→ 741 municipalities declared ‘LGBT-free’ zones

2019/10 — Parliamentary election 2019

→ 164 municipalities declared ‘LGBT-free’ zones

→ close to all ‘LGBT-free’ zones retracted

2023/10 — Parliamentary election 2023

Treatment after 2019

Timeline of Events

2019/03 — First anti-LGBTQ+ bill passes

→ 741 municipalities declared ‘LGBT-free’ zones

2019/10 — Parliamentary election 2019

→ 164 municipalities declared ‘LGBT-free’ zones

→ close to all ‘LGBT-free’ zones retracted

2023/10 — Parliamentary election 2023

Treatment after 2019

Treatment Definition

Treatment:

- Introduction of anti-LGBTQ+ resolution prior to 2019 election
  - Two types of bills (i.e., “Charter of the Rights of the Family,” “Resolution against LGBT ideology”)
  - Administrative level (i.e., provinces, counties, municipalities)
- Source: Interactive map “Atlas of Hate” created by activists (Pajak and Gawron 2020)

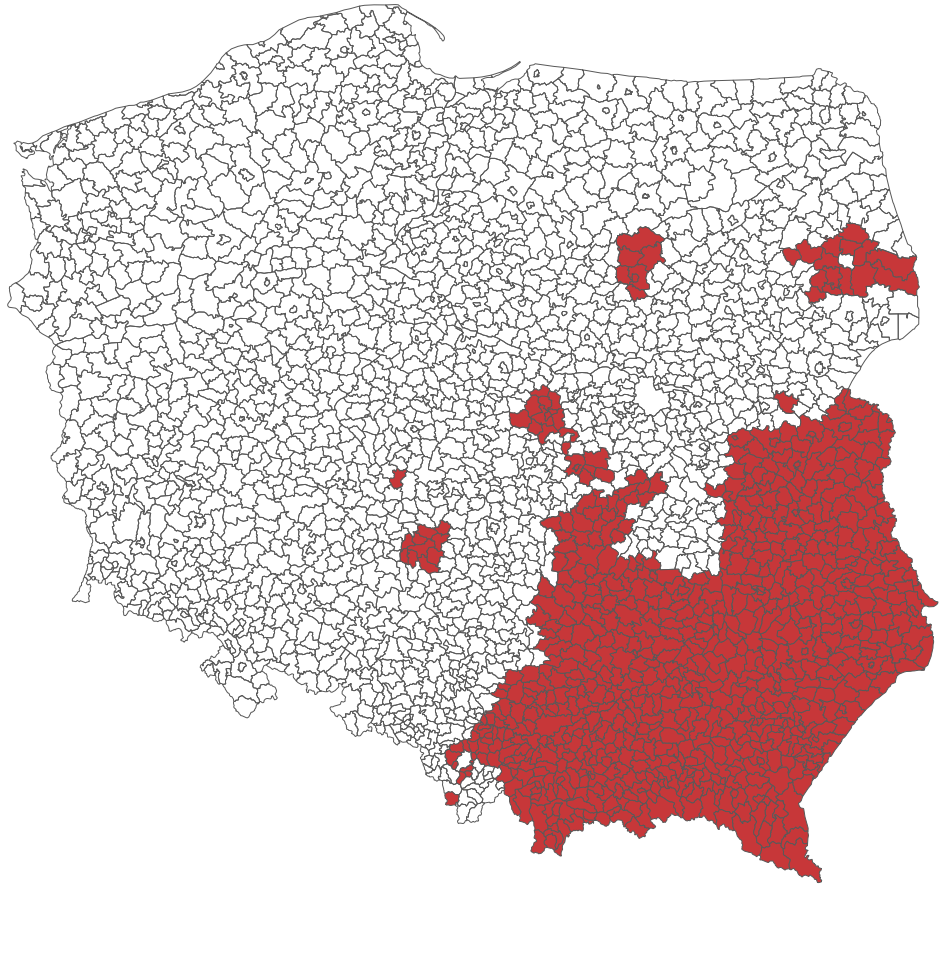
Treatment Definition

Treatment:

- Introduction of anti-LGBTQ+ resolution prior to 2019 election
  - Two types of bills (i.e., "Charter of the Rights of the Family," "Resolution against LGBT ideology")
  - Administrative level (i.e., provinces, counties, municipalities)
- Source: Interactive map "Atlas of Hate" created by activists (Pajak and Gawron 2020)

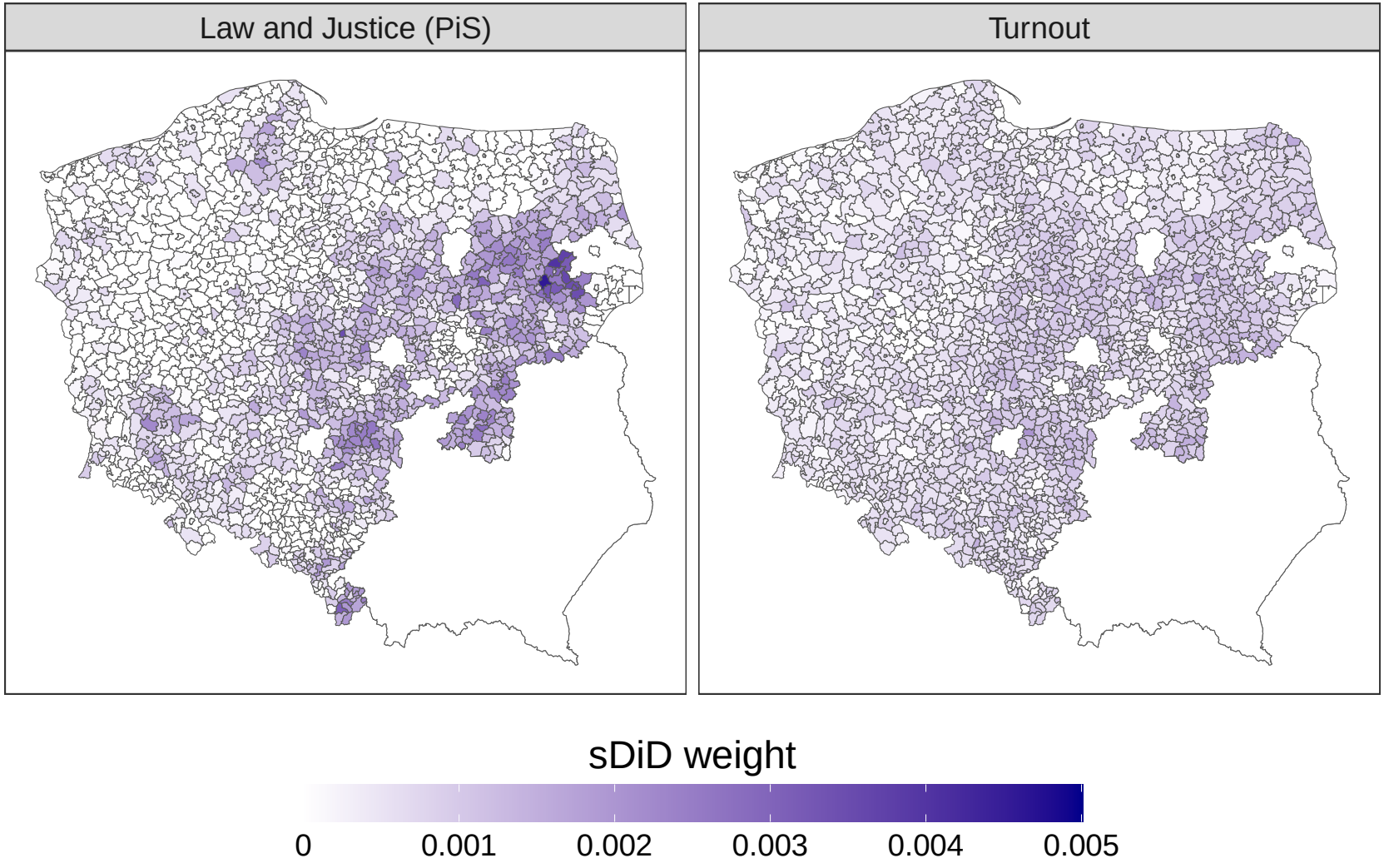
We consider a municipality treated if either its local council or a superior subnational unit passed any anti-LGBTQ+ resolution

Geographic Treatment Distribution



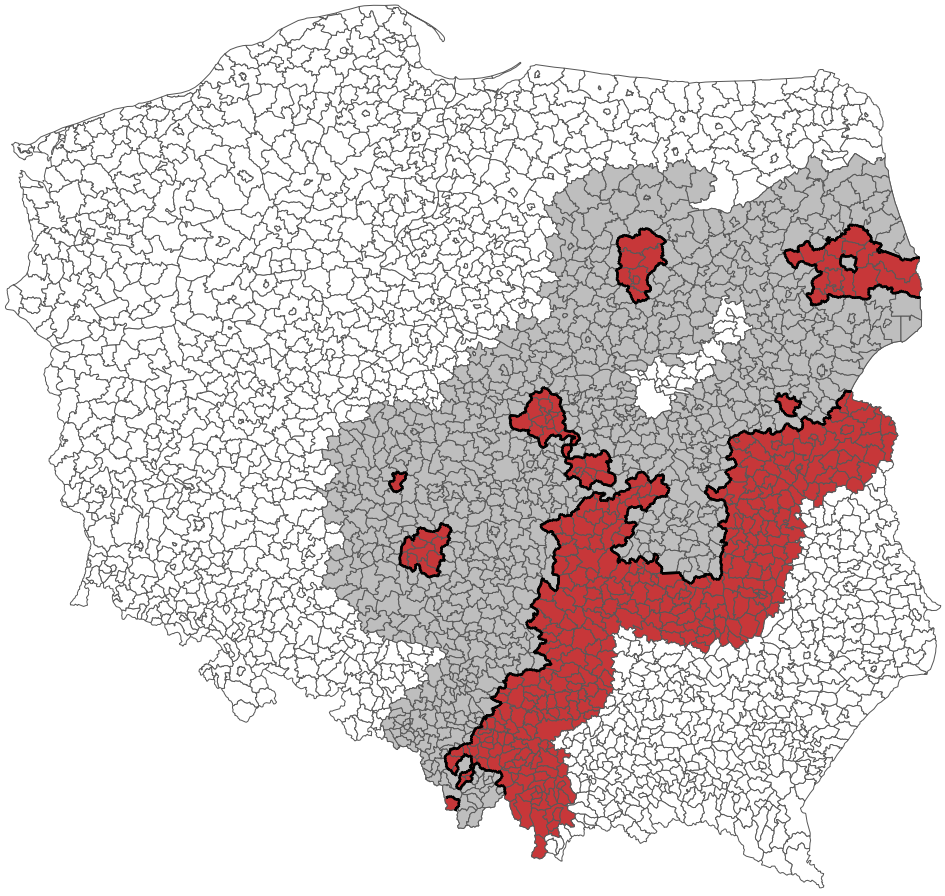
Observed non-parallel trends

Strategy I: Synthetic Difference-in-differences (sDiD)



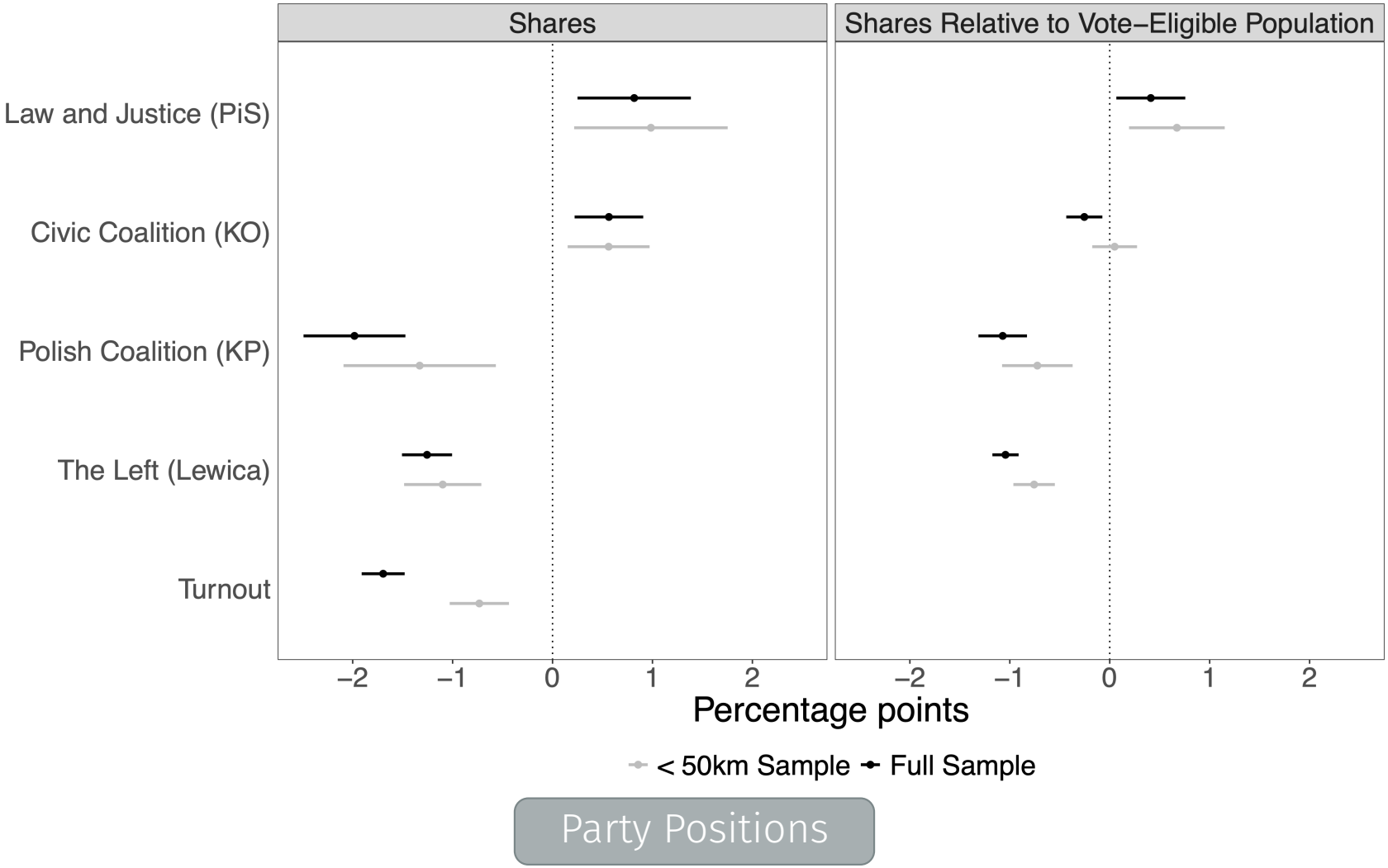
Synthetic parallel trends

Strategy II: sDiD <50 km cut-off sample



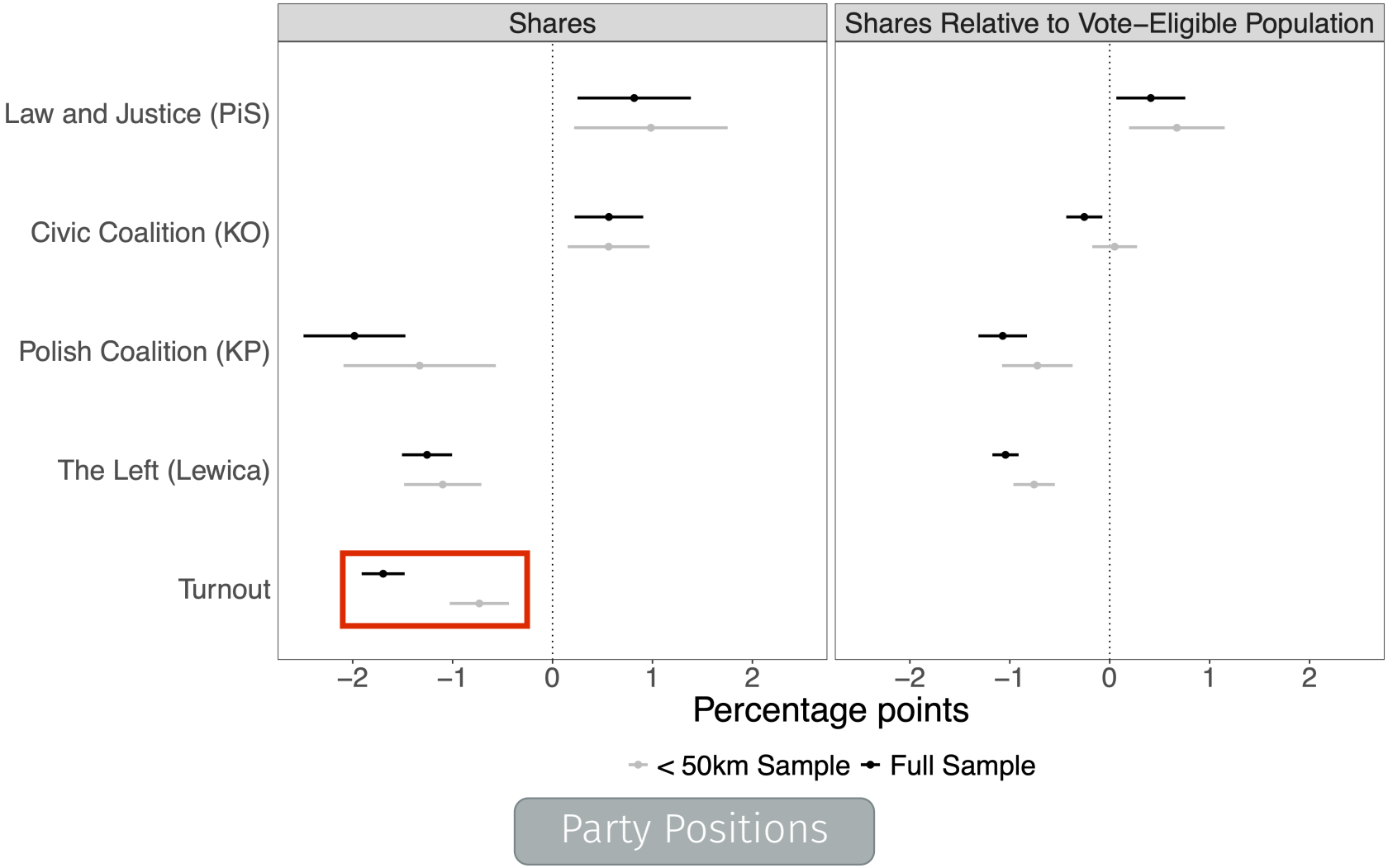
No resolution, < 50 km from the boundary
Anti−LGBTQ resolution, < 50 km from the boundary
Beyond 50 km from the boundary

Results



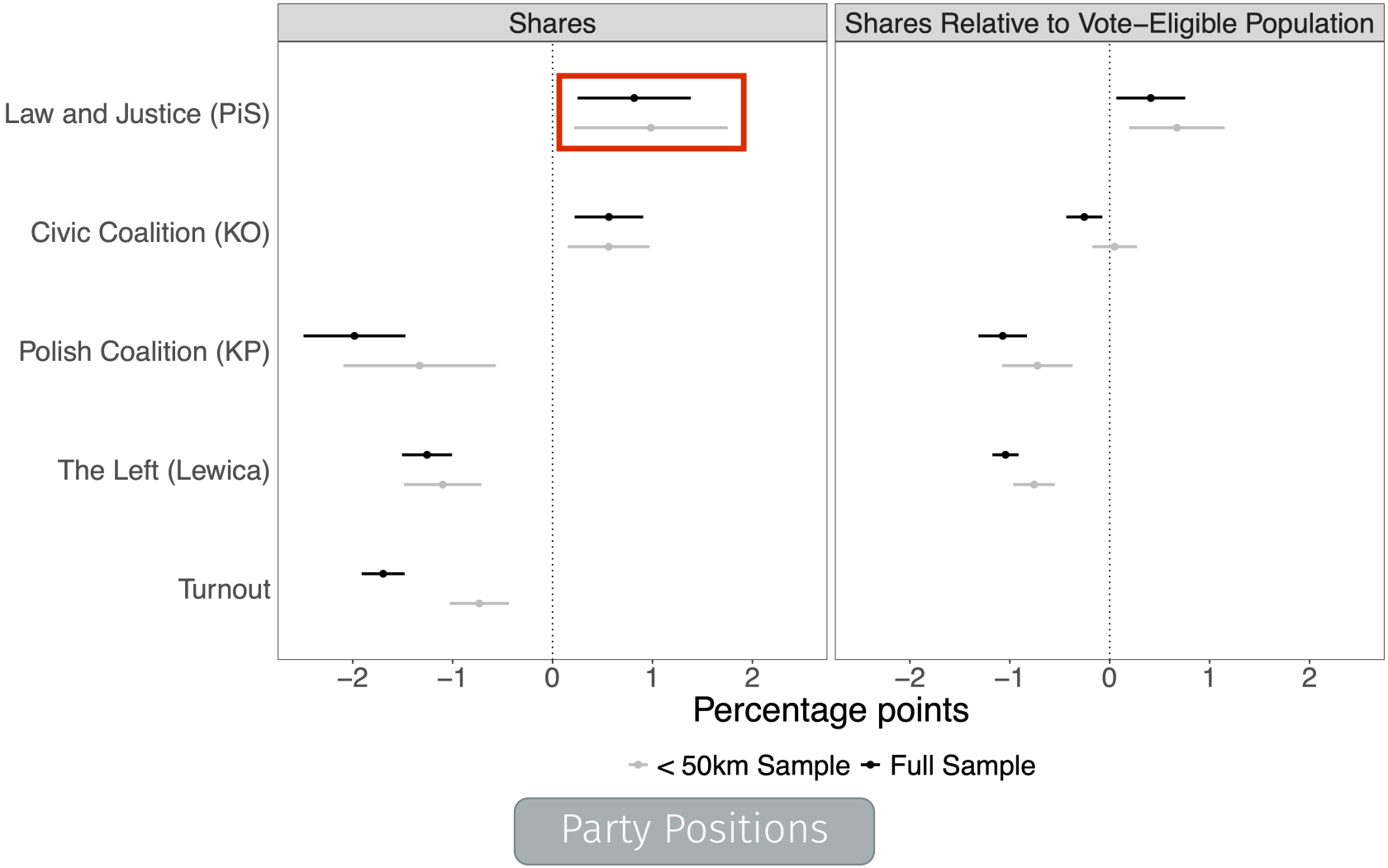
Party Positions

Results



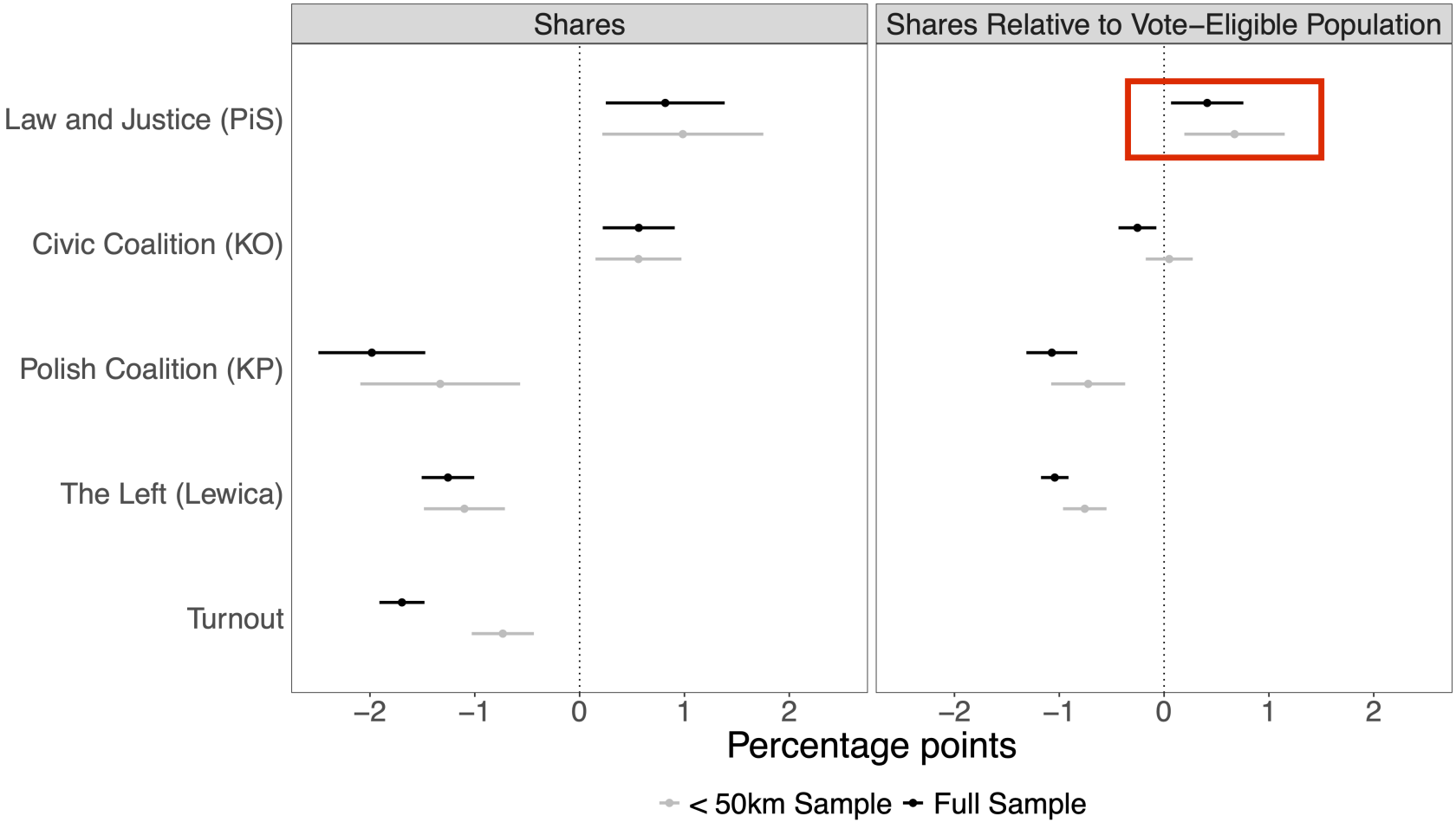
Party Positions

Results



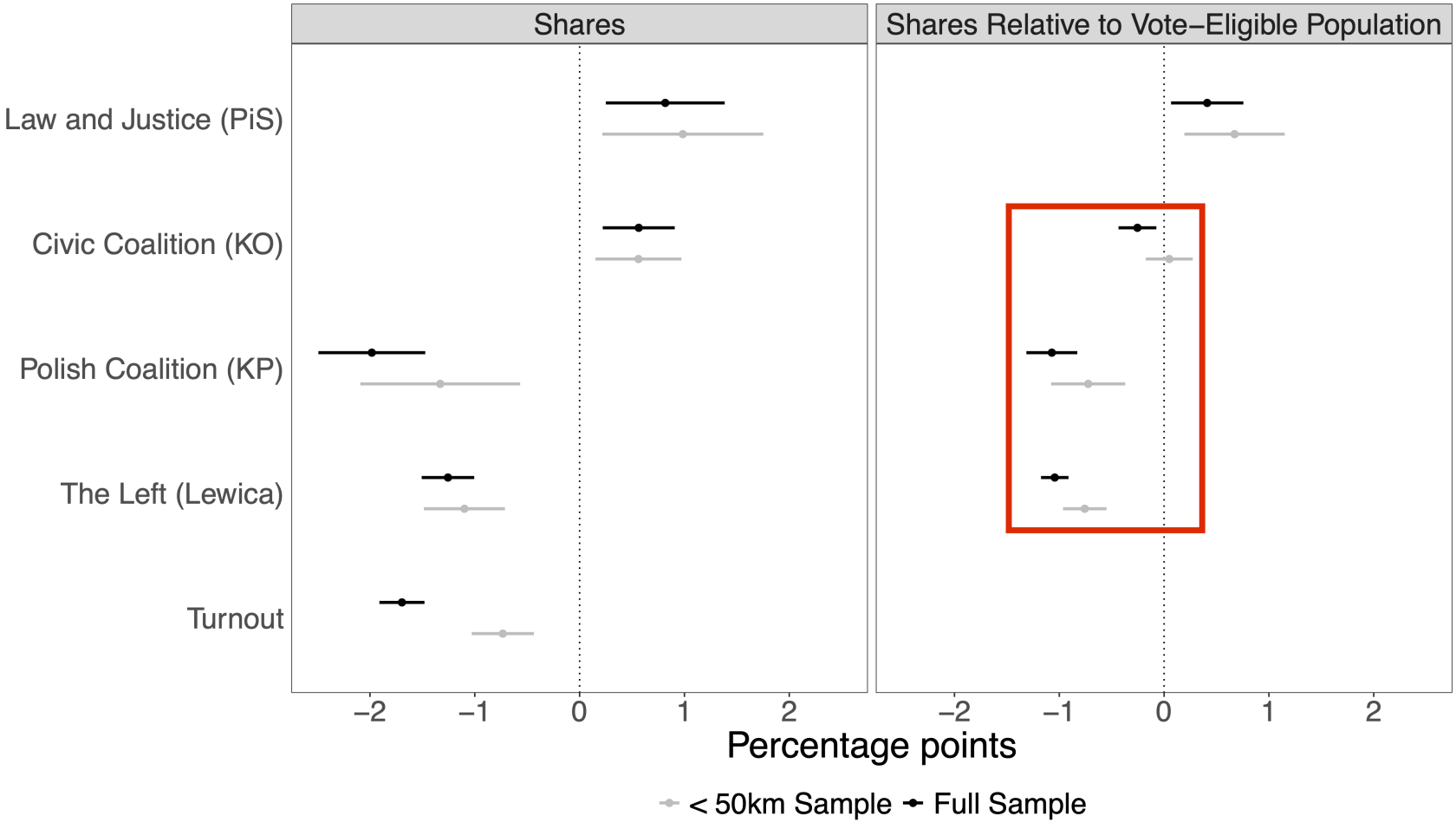
Party Positions

Results



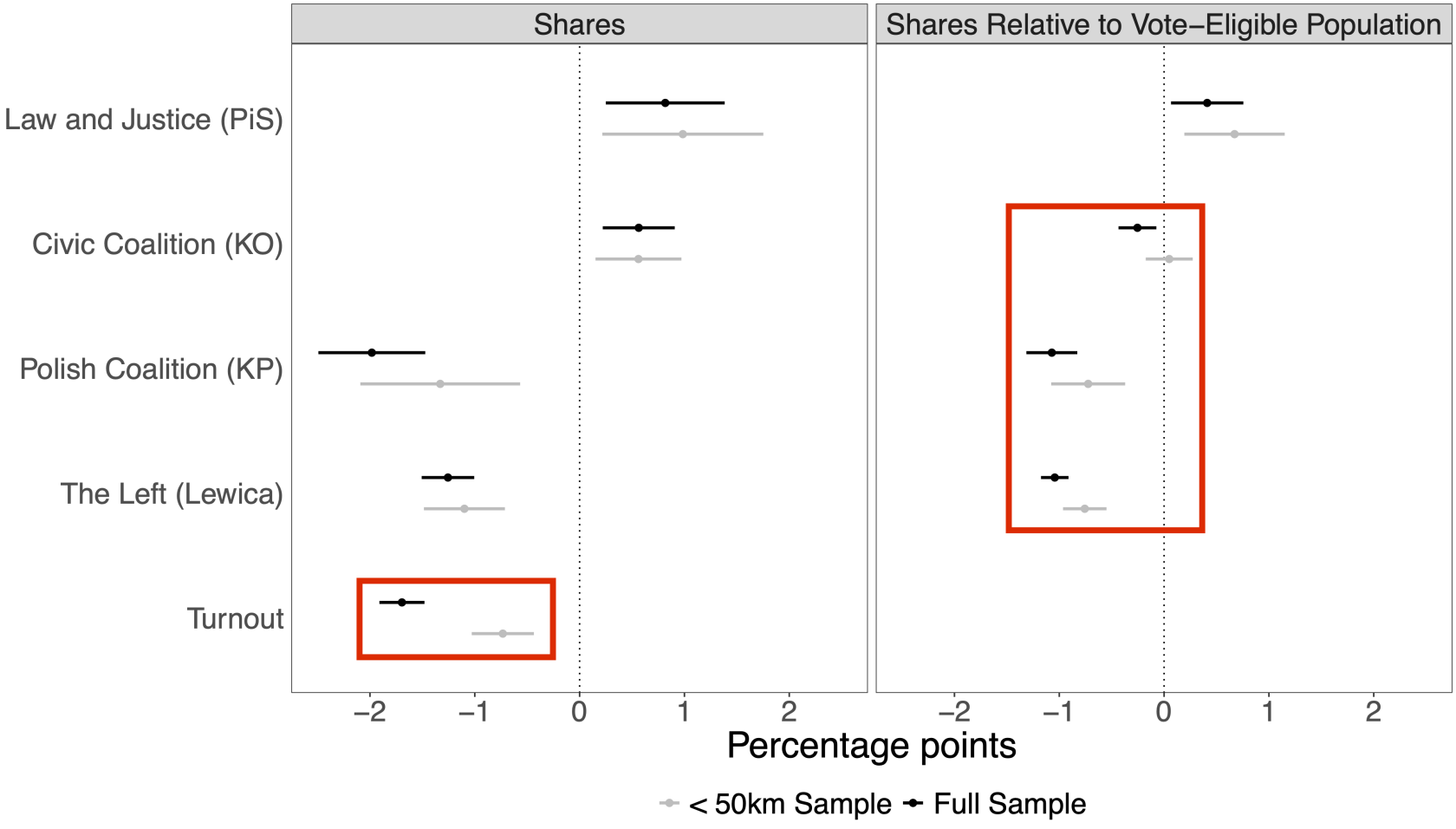
Party Positions

Results



Party Positions

Results



Party Positions

Robustness Checks

Treatment Intensity:

- Exposure on multiple government levels
- Exposure to both bill-types

Alternative Treatment Definition:

- Separate analysis by bill-type
- Separate analysis by government level

Other Checks:

- Alternative estimators (DiD,MC)
- Excluding municipalities with population $>$ 300,000
- sDiD with nevertreated donor pool

Conclusion

Anti-gender and anti-LGBTQ strategies seem to work electorally

Implications

- If political homophobia remains electorally advantageous despite growing public acceptance, we can expect more of it
- Bad news not only for the groups most adversely affected by these policies but also for democratic support
- Even more concerning as we find an effect for a “soft law”

Thank You!

📬 violeta.haas@hu-berlin.de
🌐 violeta-haas.github.io
𝕏 @HaasVioleta

Appendix

Definition: Political Homophobia

Strategic use of anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric, policies, and actions by political actors and states to achieve political goals

→ Often relies on "crisis talk," creating insecurities among the public by framing LGBTQ+ individuals as threats to traditional values like family, nation, religion, and culture.

(Bosia and Weiss 2013)

back

Previous Literature & Gap

Progressive Change and Attitude Shifts

- ME legislation or pride events influence attitudes toward LGBTQ+
  (e.g., Abou-Chadi & Finnigan, 2019; Ayoub et al., 2021; Flores & Barclay, 2016)
- But elite-led progressive change can also lead to backlash
  (e.g., Ayoub 2016)
- And stated progressive LGBTQ+ attitudes might be instrumental
  (Turnbull-Dugarte & Ortega, 2023)

back

Previous Literature & Gap

Progressive Change and Attitude Shifts

- ME legislation or pride events influence attitudes toward LGBTQ+
  (e.g., Abou-Chadi & Finnigan, 2019; Ayoub et al., 2021; Flores & Barclay, 2016)
- But elite-led progressive change can also lead to backlash
  (e.g., Ayoub 2016)
- And stated progressive LGBTQ+ attitudes might be instrumental
  (Turnbull-Dugarte & Ortega, 2023)

Electoral Effects of Anti-LGBTQ+ Measures

- Mixed findings for anti-ME ballot measures in the US
  (Camp, 2008; Campbell & Monson, 2008; Donovan et al., 2008; Garretson, 2014; Hillygus & Shields, 2005; Lewis, 2005; Smith et al., 2006)

back

Previous Literature & Gap

Progressive Change and Attitude Shifts

- ME legislation or pride events influence attitudes toward LGBTQ+
  (e.g., Abou-Chadi & Finnigan, 2019; Ayoub et al., 2021; Flores & Barclay, 2016)
- But elite-led progressive change can also lead to backlash
  (e.g., Ayoub 2016)
- And stated progressive LGBTQ+ attitudes might be instrumental
  (Turnbull-Dugarte & Ortega, 2023)

Electoral Effects of Anti-LGBTQ+ Measures

- Mixed findings for anti-ME ballot measures in the US
  (Camp, 2008; Campbell & Monson, 2008; Donovan et al., 2008; Garretson, 2014; Hillygus & Shields, 2005; Lewis, 2005; Smith et al., 2006)

$\rightarrow$ First to causally identify electoral effects of anti-LGBTQ+ laws

back

Efficacy Mechanism

Political efficacy derives from an individual's sense of community:

(Anderson, 2010)

One's feelings of...

(1) membership
(2) influence
(3) fulfillment of values (as defined in one's community)
(4) shared emotional connection within one's group

→ Norms regarding family life, fertility, reproduction, and sexuality are central to an individual's sense of community and efficacy

(Greil et al., 2010; Monga et al., 2004)

back

Efficacy Mechanism

Alignment between state-promoted norms of sexuality and personal attitudes increases felt political efficacy and participatory behavior

(Ayoub & Page, 2020)

- Local governments' political homophobia can legitimize homophobia in the region
- Affects feelings of social conformity and efficacy among heteronormative citizens
- Positive and reciprocal relationship between political efficacy—both internal and external—and voting

  (Finkel, 1987; Lane, 1959; Niemi et al., 1991; Shingles, 1981)

back

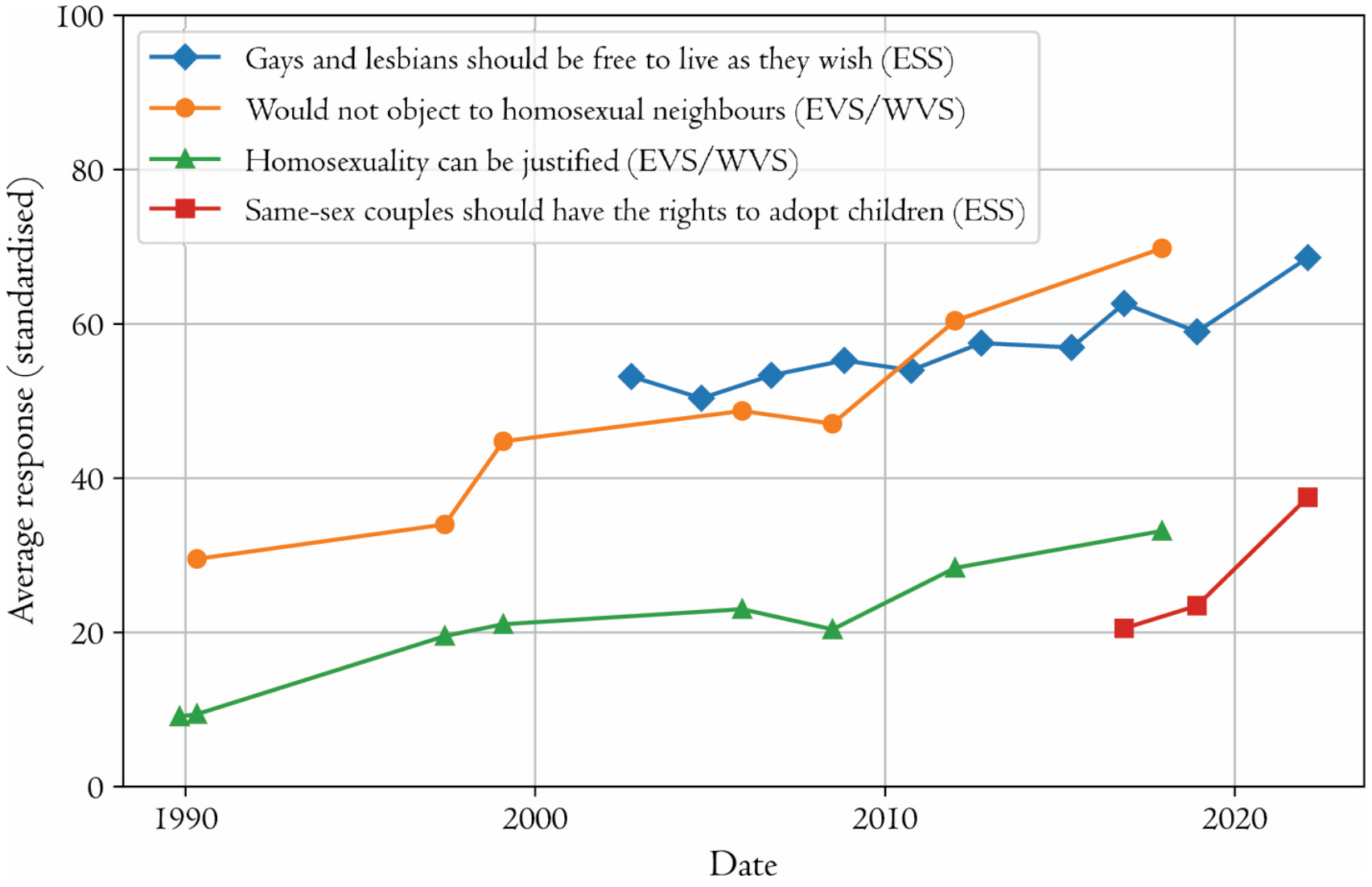
Case Selection

Poland is a good case to study political homophobia:

1. Rare subnational variation in anti-LGBTQ+ policies
   - → Mitigates concerns about unobserved confounders
   - → Allows comparisons between similar regions within the same country
2. High resemblance and synchronous adoption of resolutions
   - → Uniform treatment avoids conflating very different anti-LGBTQ+ policies
3. PiS's clear association with lobbying and implementing resolutions
   - → Unambiguous responsibility attribution for subsequent vote decisions

back

Attitudes towards Homosexuality



Source: Bogatyrev and Bogusz (2024)

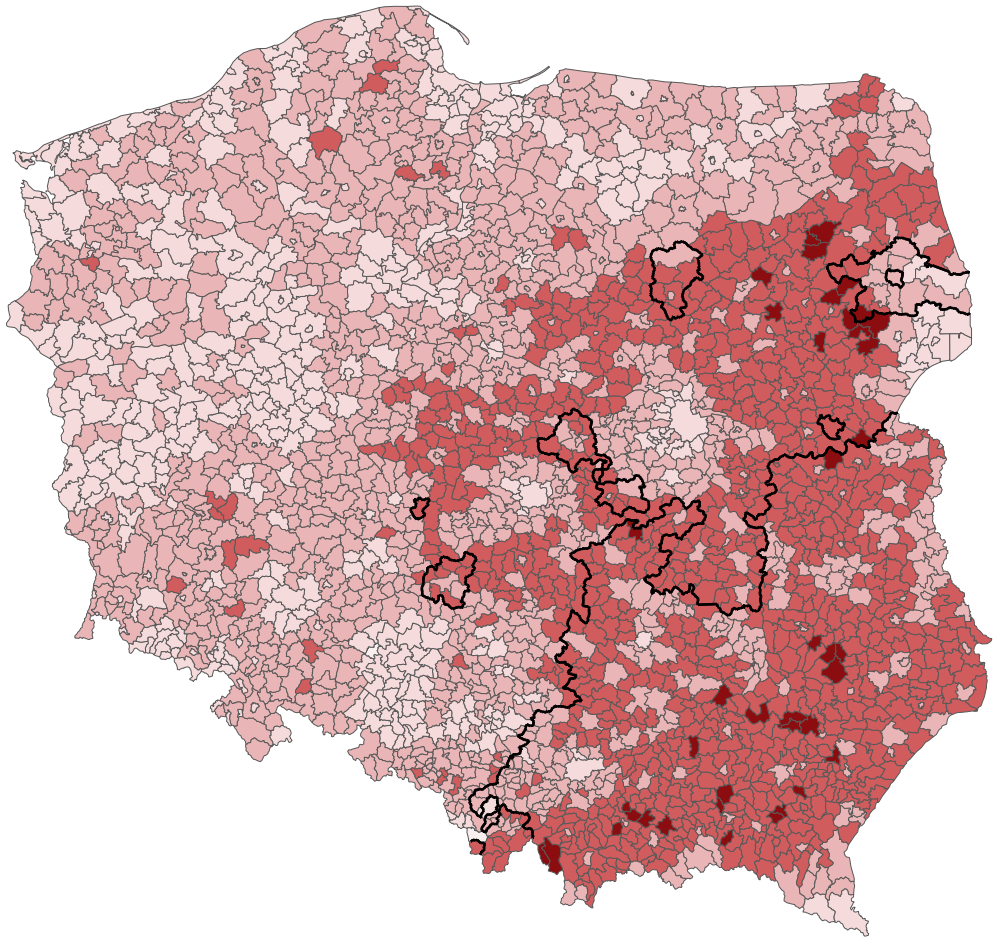
back

Parliamentary Election 2019: Party Positions

Party / Alliance	Ideology	CHES 2019 Social Lifestyle (0-10)	V-Party 2019 LGBT Equality (0-4)
Law and Justice (PiS)	radical right	8.7 (strongly opposed)	0.4 (strongly opposed)
Civic Coalition (KO)	centrist-liberal	4.1 (moderate)	2.5 (moderate)
Polish Coalition (KP)	centrist-conservative	6.9 (opposed)	1.4 (opposed)
The Left (Lewica)	left	1.4 (strongly in favor)	3.0 (in favor)
Confederation	extreme right	9.7 (strongly opposed)	0.4 (strongly opposed)

back

Parliamentary Election 2019: PiS Vote Share



back

Parliamentary Election 2019: PiS Anti-LGBTQ Campaign

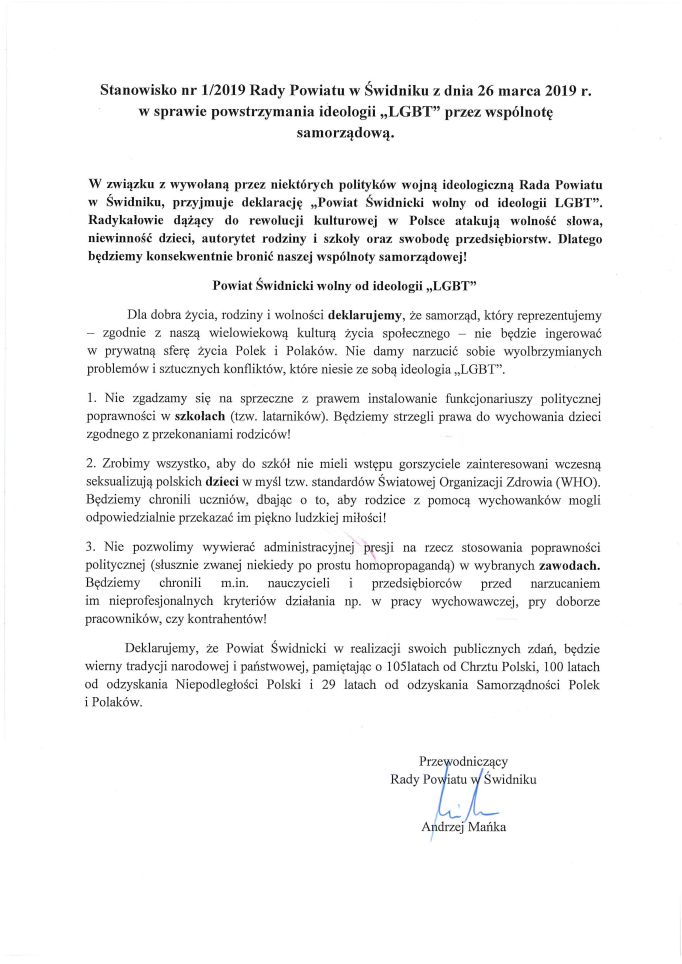
Stanisław Karczewski
@StKarczewski

Prezes #PiS J. #Kaczyński w #Rzeszów: Mówimy „Nie!" atakowi na dzieci. Nie damy się zastraszyć. Będziemy bronić polskie rodziny. #KonwencjaPiS #PolskaSercemEuropy #NowaPiątkaPiS

♡ 692 6:53 AM - Mar 10, 2019

back

Two Types of Documents



Stanowisko nr 1/2019 Rady Powiatu w Świdniku z dnia 26 marca 2019 r. w sprawie powstrzymania ideologii „LGBT" przez wspólnotę samorządową.

W związku z wywołaną przez niektórych polityków wojną ideologiczną Rada Powiatu w Świdniku, przyjmuje deklarację „Powiat Świdnicki wolny od ideologii LGBT". Radykałowie dążący do rewolucji kulturowej w Polsce atakują wolność słowa, niewinność dzieci, autorytet rodziny i szkoły oraz swobodę przedsiębiorstw. Dlatego będziemy konsekwentnie bronić naszej wspólnoty samorządowej!

Powiat Świdnicki wolny od ideologii „LGBT"

Dla dobra życia, rodziny i wolności **deklarujemy**, że samorząd, który reprezentujemy – zgodnie z naszą wielowiekową kulturą życia społecznego – nie będzie ingerować w prywatną sferę życia Polek i Polaków. Nie damy narzucić sobie wyolbrzymianych problemów i sztucznych konfliktów, które niesie ze sobą ideologia „LGBT".

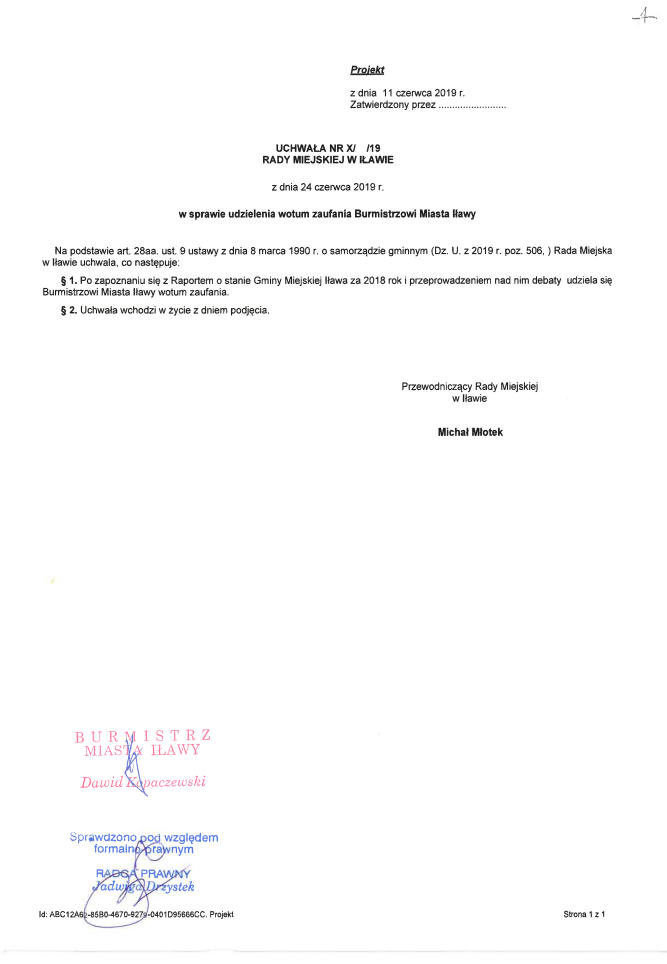
1. Nie zgadzamy się na sprzeczne z prawem instalowanie funkcjonariuszy politycznej poprawności w **szkołach** (tzw. latarników). Będziemy strzegli prawa do wychowania dzieci zgodnego z przekonaniami rodziców!

2. Zrobimy wszystko, aby do szkół nie mieli wstępu gorszyciele zainteresowani wczesną seksualizują polskich **dzieci** w myśl tzw. standardów Światowej Organizacji Zdrowia (WHO). Będziemy chronili uczniów, dbając o to, aby rodzice z pomocą wychowanków mogli odpowiedzialnie przekazać im piękno ludzkiej miłości!

3. Nie pozwolimy wywierać administracyjnej presji na rzecz stosowania poprawności politycznej (słusznie zwanej niekiedy po prostu homopropagandą) w wybranych **zawodach.** Będziemy chronili m.in. nauczycieli i przedsiębiorców przed narzucaniem im nieprofesjonalnych kryteriów działania np. w pracy wychowawczej, pry doborze pracowników, czy kontrahentów!

Deklarujemy, że Powiat Świdnicki w realizacji swoich publicznych zdań, będzie wierny tradycji narodowej i państwowej, pamiętając o 105latach od Chrztu Polski, 100 latach od odzyskania Niepodległości Polski i 29 latach od odzyskania Samorządności Polek i Polaków.

Przewodniczący
Rady Powiatu w Świdniku
Andrzej Mańka



Projekt

z dnia 11 czerwca 2019 r.
Zatwierdzony przez .....

UCHWAŁA NR X/ /19
RADY MIEJSKIEJ W IŁAWIE

z dnia 24 czerwca 2019 r.

w sprawie udzielenia wotum zaufania Burmistrzowi Miasta Iławy

Na podstawie art. 28aa. ust. 9 ustawy z dnia 8 marca 1990 r. o samorządzie gminnym (Dz. U. z 2019 r. poz. 506.) Rada Miejska w Iławie uchwala, co następuje:

§ 1. Po zapoznaniu się z Raportem o stanie Gminy Miejskiej Iława za 2018 rok i przeprowadzeniem nad nim debaty udziela się Burmistrzowi Miasta Iławy wotum zaufania.

§ 2. Uchwała wchodzi w życie z dniem podjęcia.

Przewodniczący Rady Miejskiej
w Iławie

Michał Młotek

BURMISTRZ
MIASTA IŁAWY
Dawid Kopaczewski

Sprawdzono pod względem
formalno-prawnym
RADCA PRAWNY
Jadwiga Urzystek

Id: ABC12A6-85B0-4670-927-0401D95666CC. Projekt

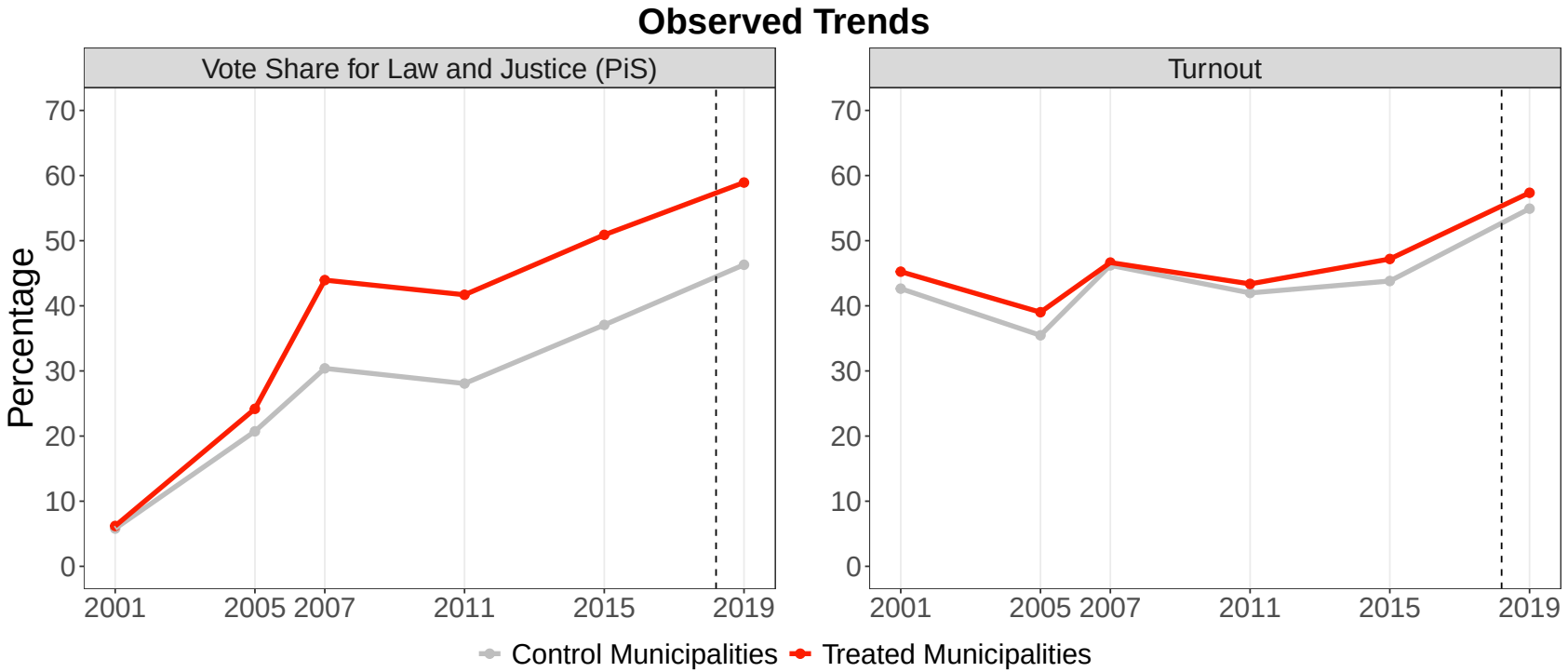
Strona 1 z 1

(a) "Resolution against LGBT ideology"

(b) "Local Government Charter of The Rights of The Family"

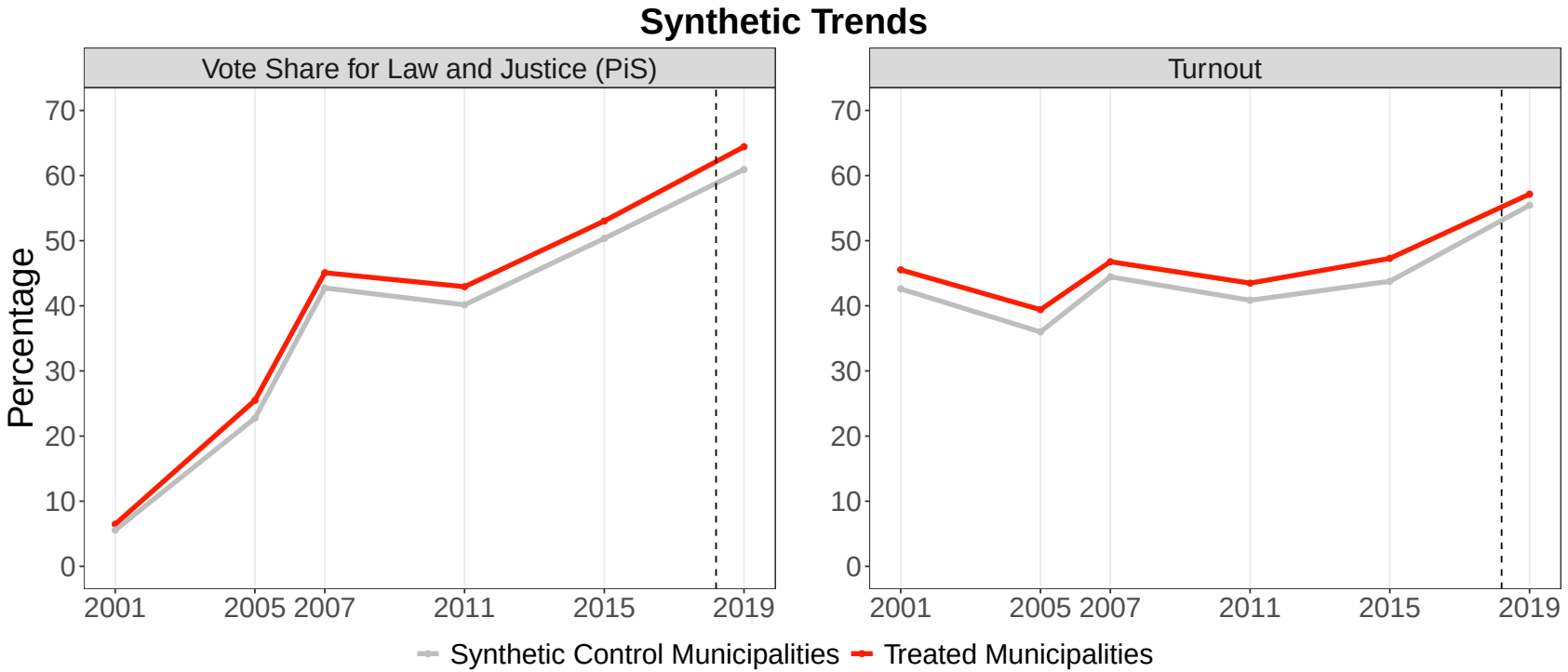
back

Observed Outcome Trends



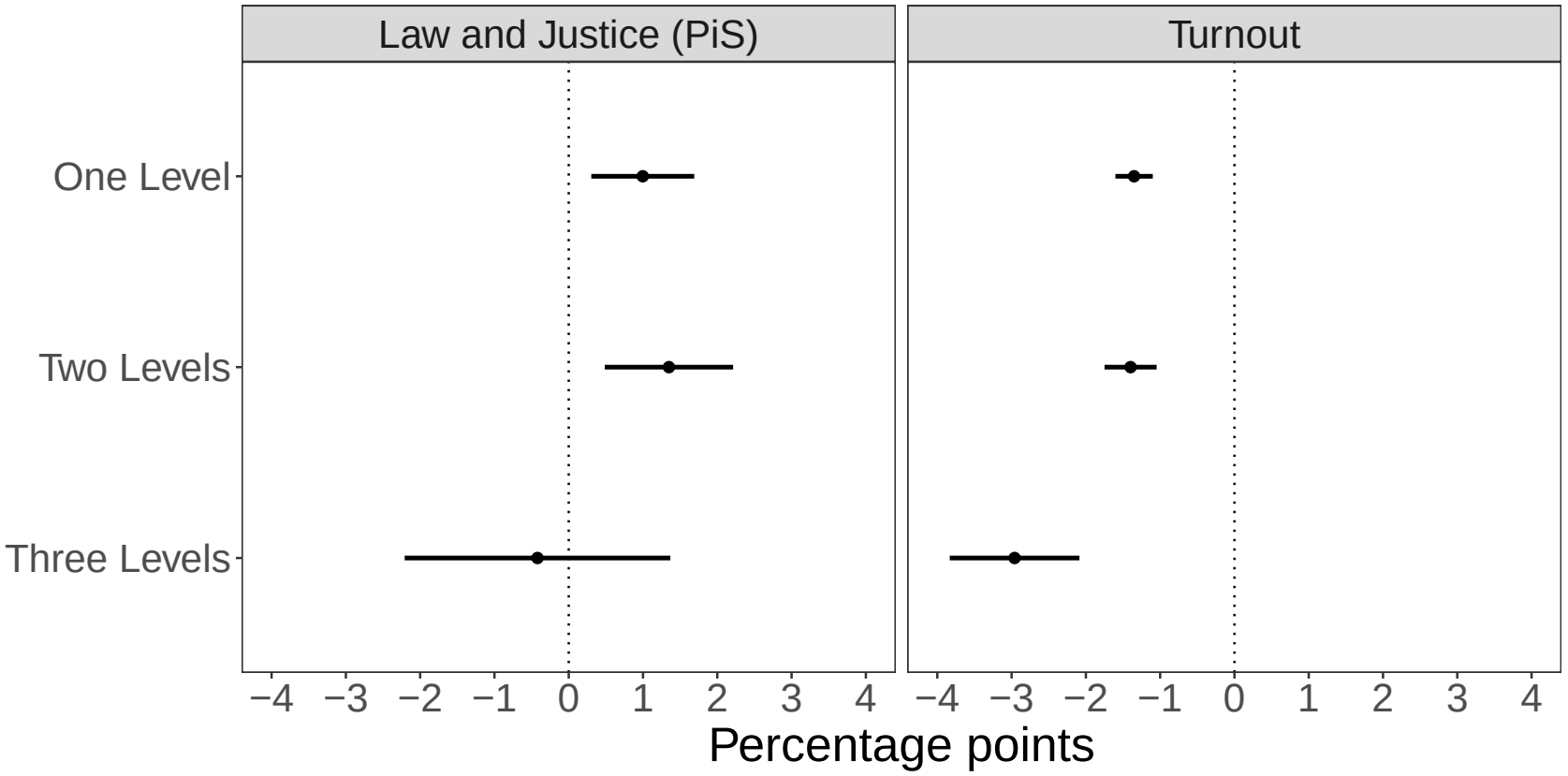
back

Synthetic Outcome Trends



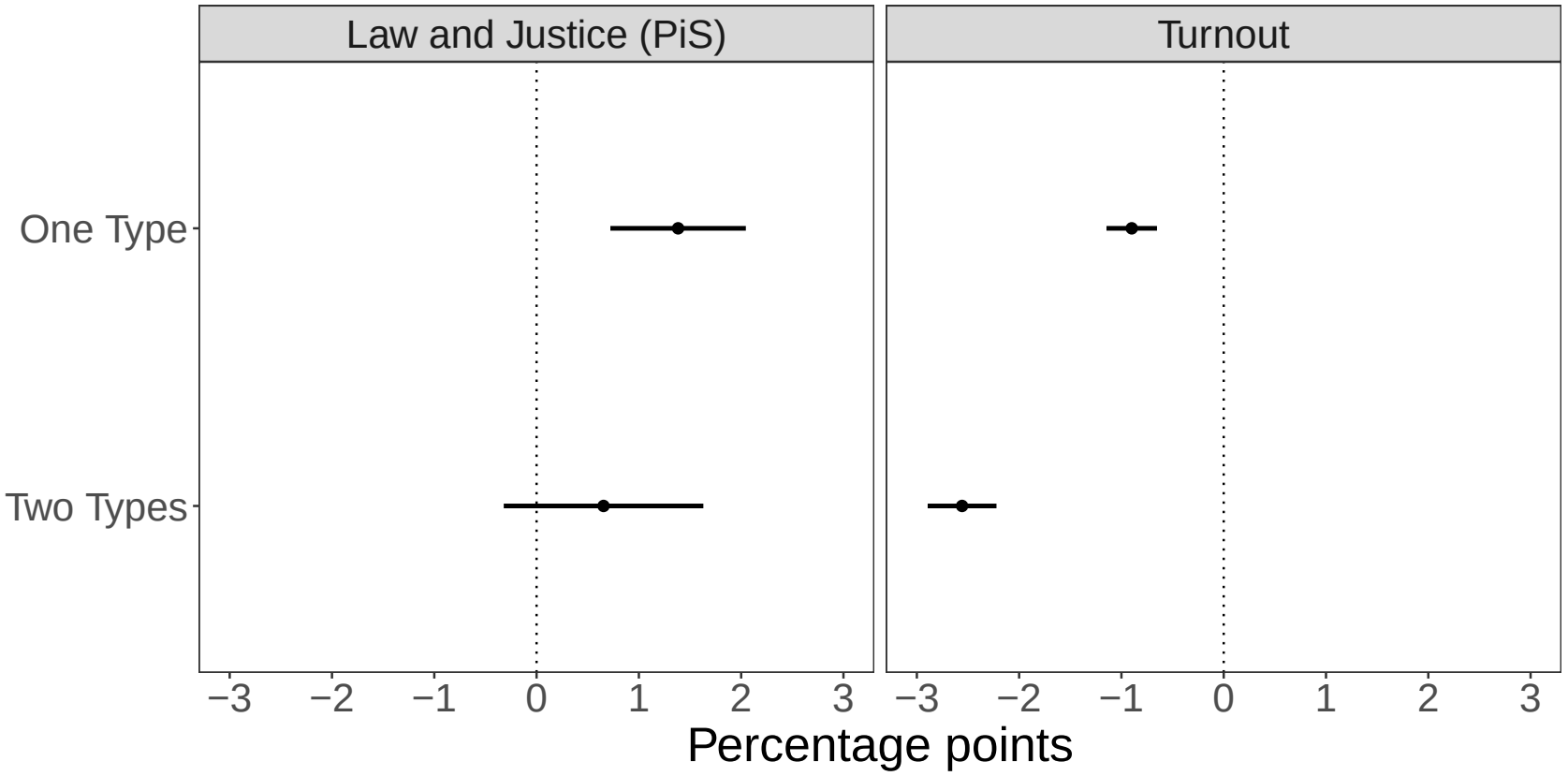
back

Treatment Intensity: Multiple Government Levels



back

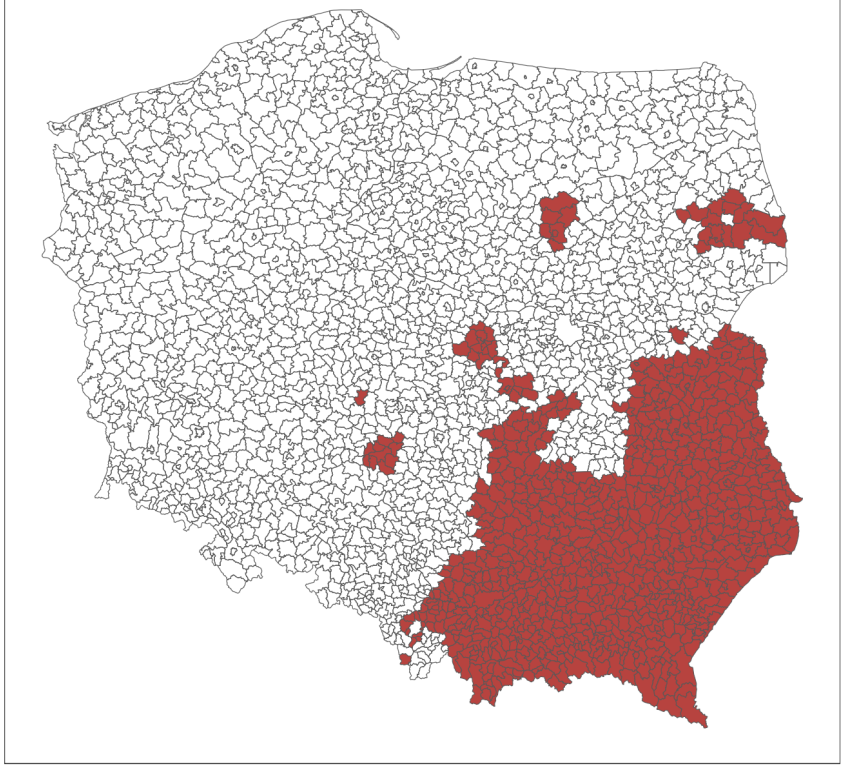
Treatment Intensity: Multiple Bill Types



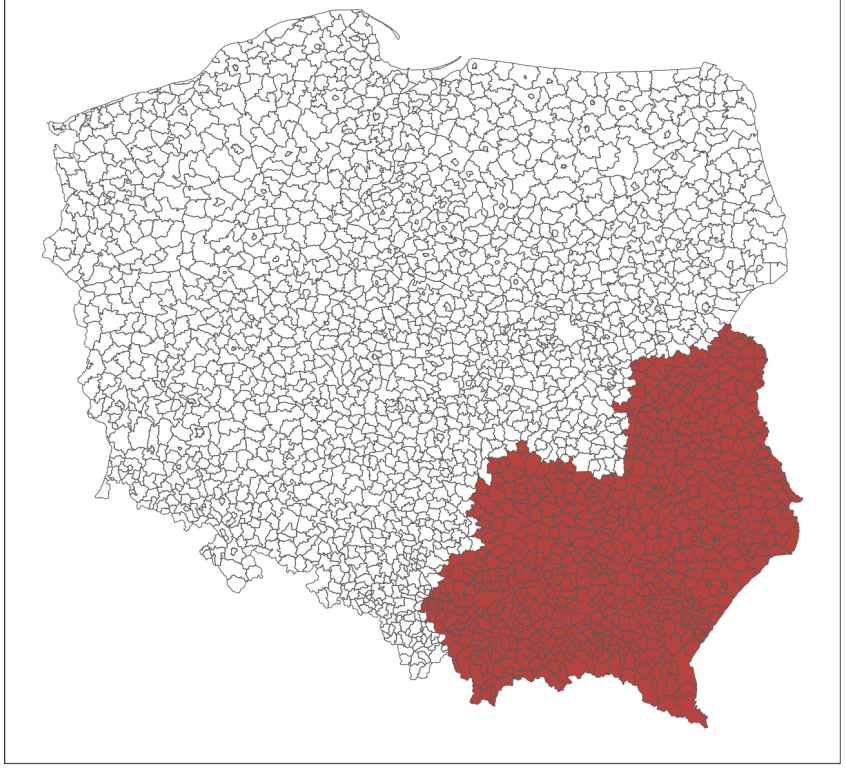
back

Distribution by Government Level

Any Level



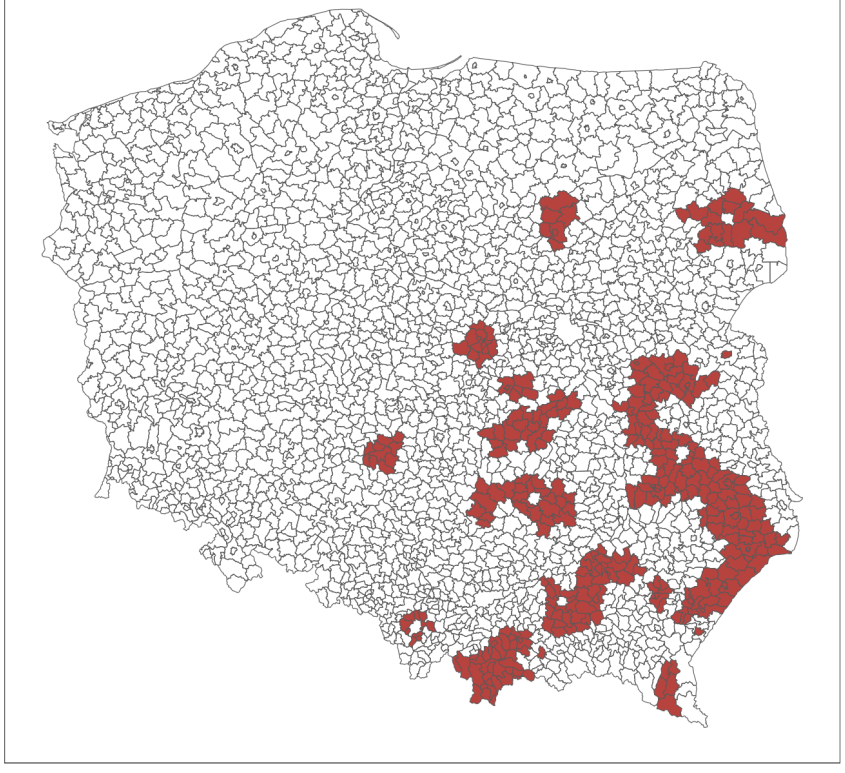
Only Province Level



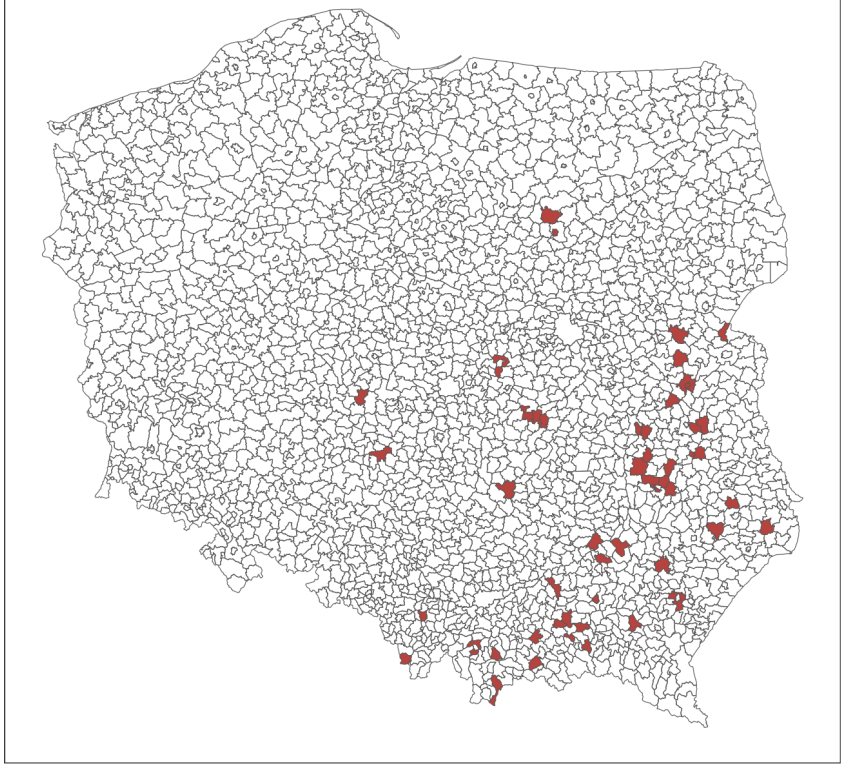
back

Distribution by Government Level

Only County Level



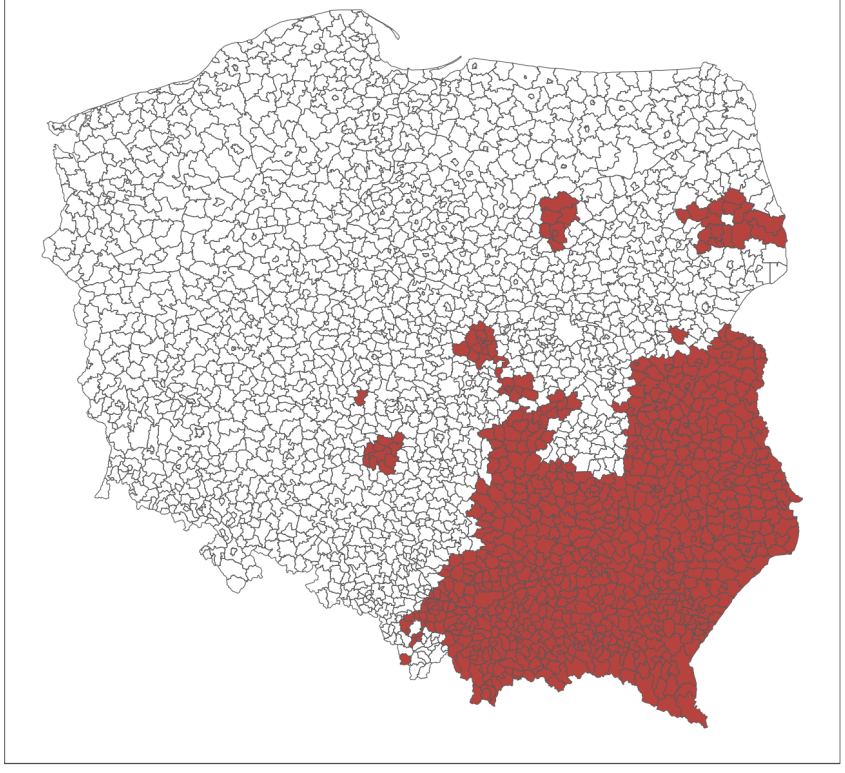
Only Municipalitiy Level



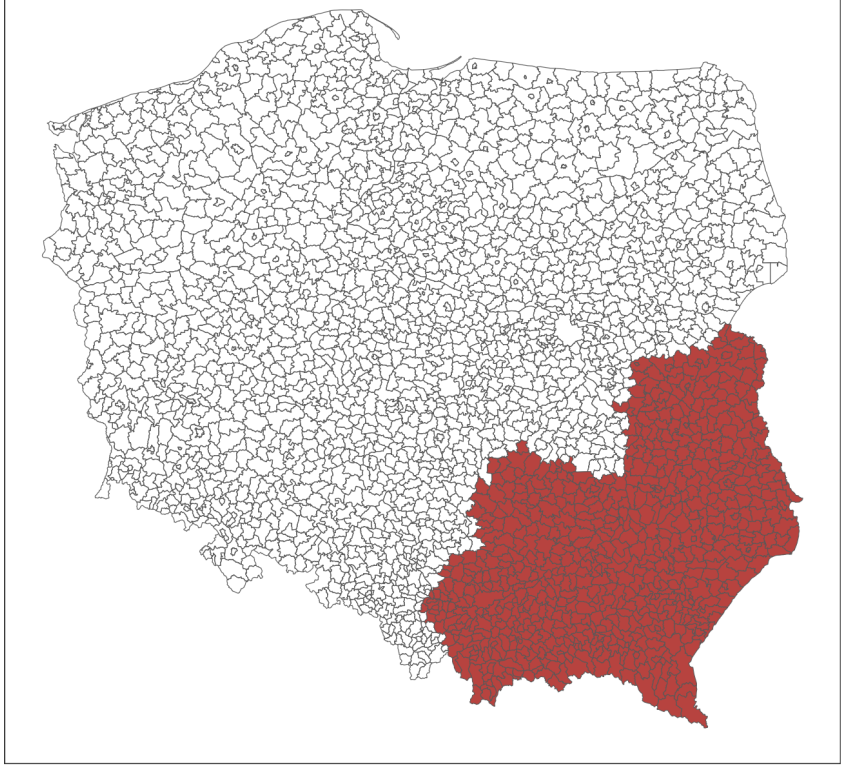
back

Distribution by Government Level

Any Level



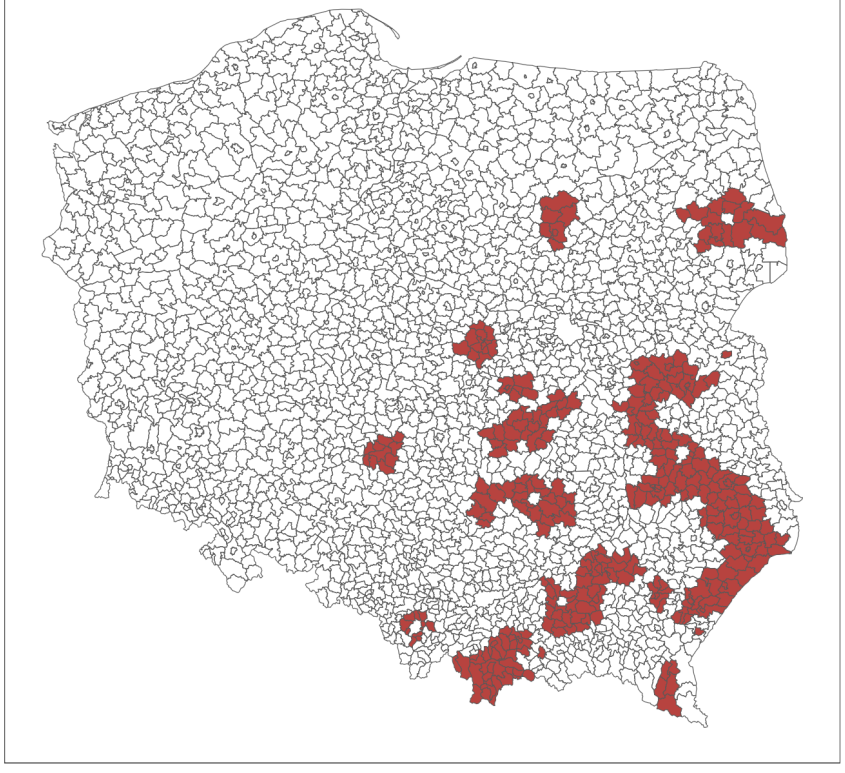
Only Province Level



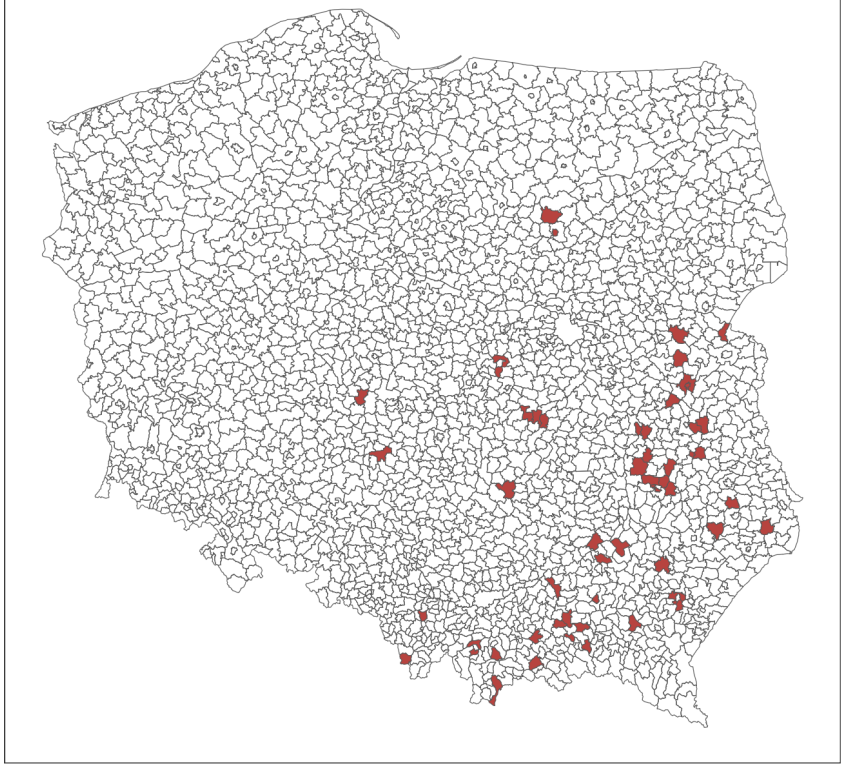
back

Distribution by Government Level

Only County Level

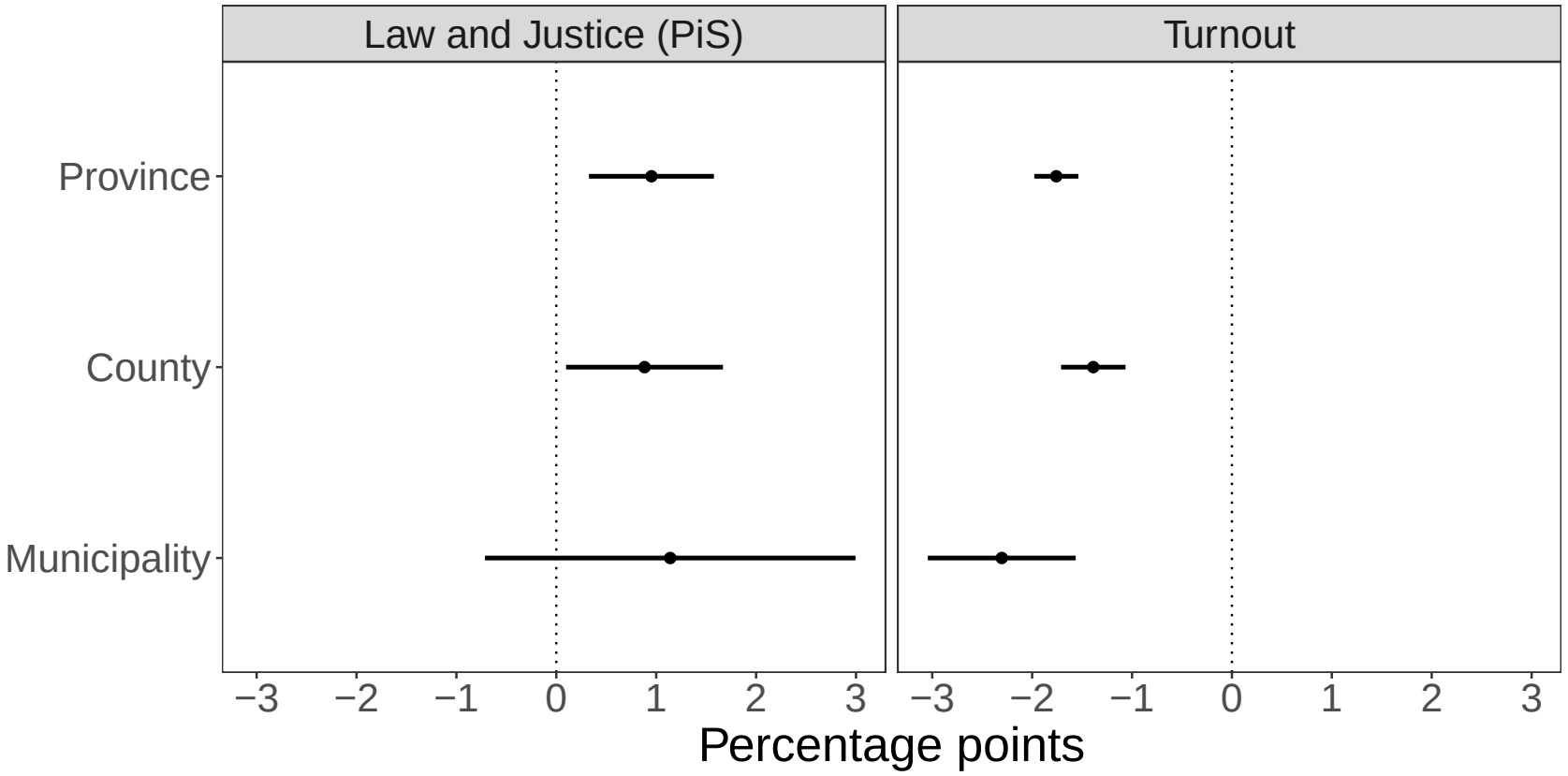


Only Municipalitiy Level



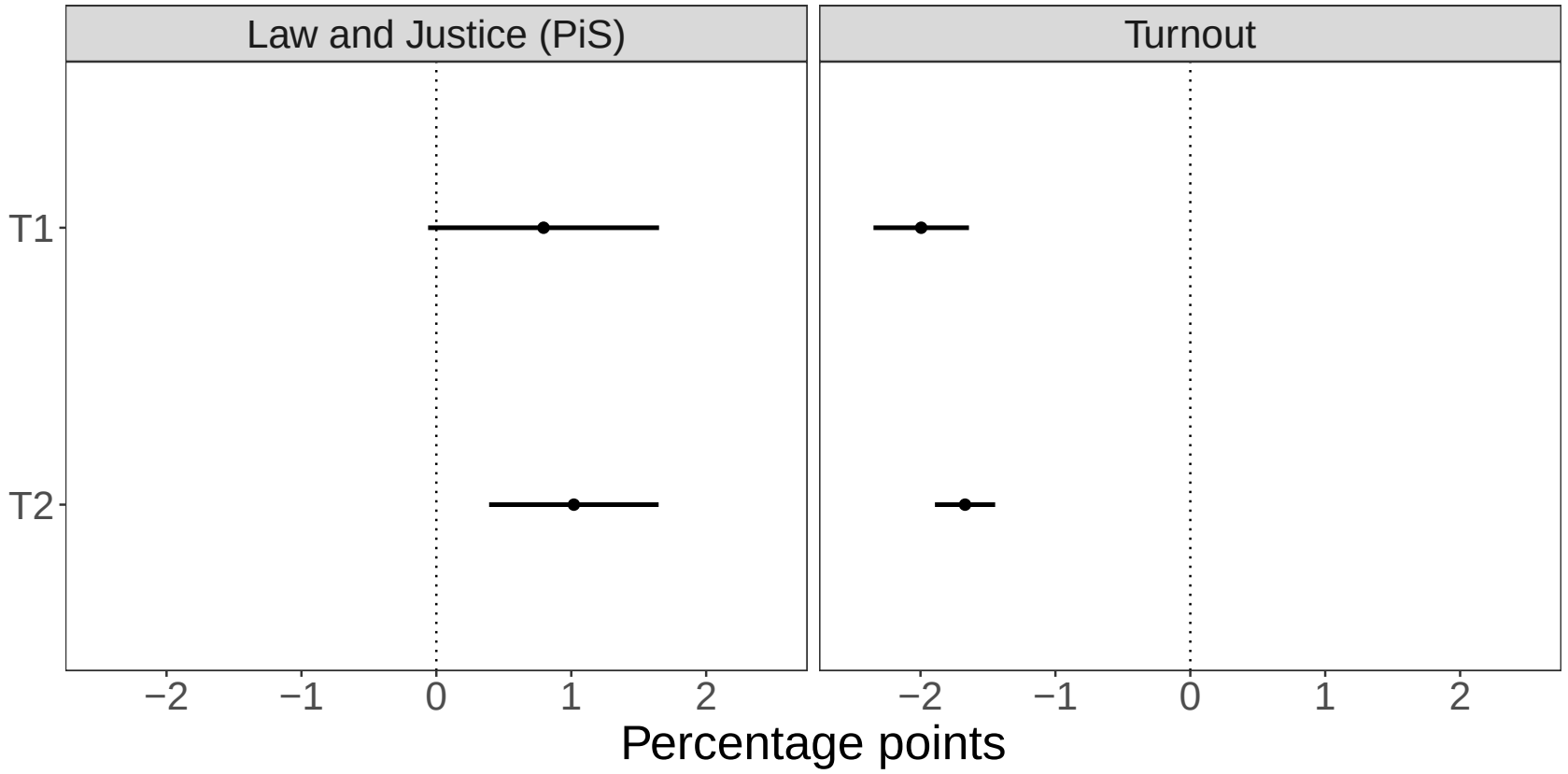
back

Treatment Definition: Province vs. County vs. Municipality



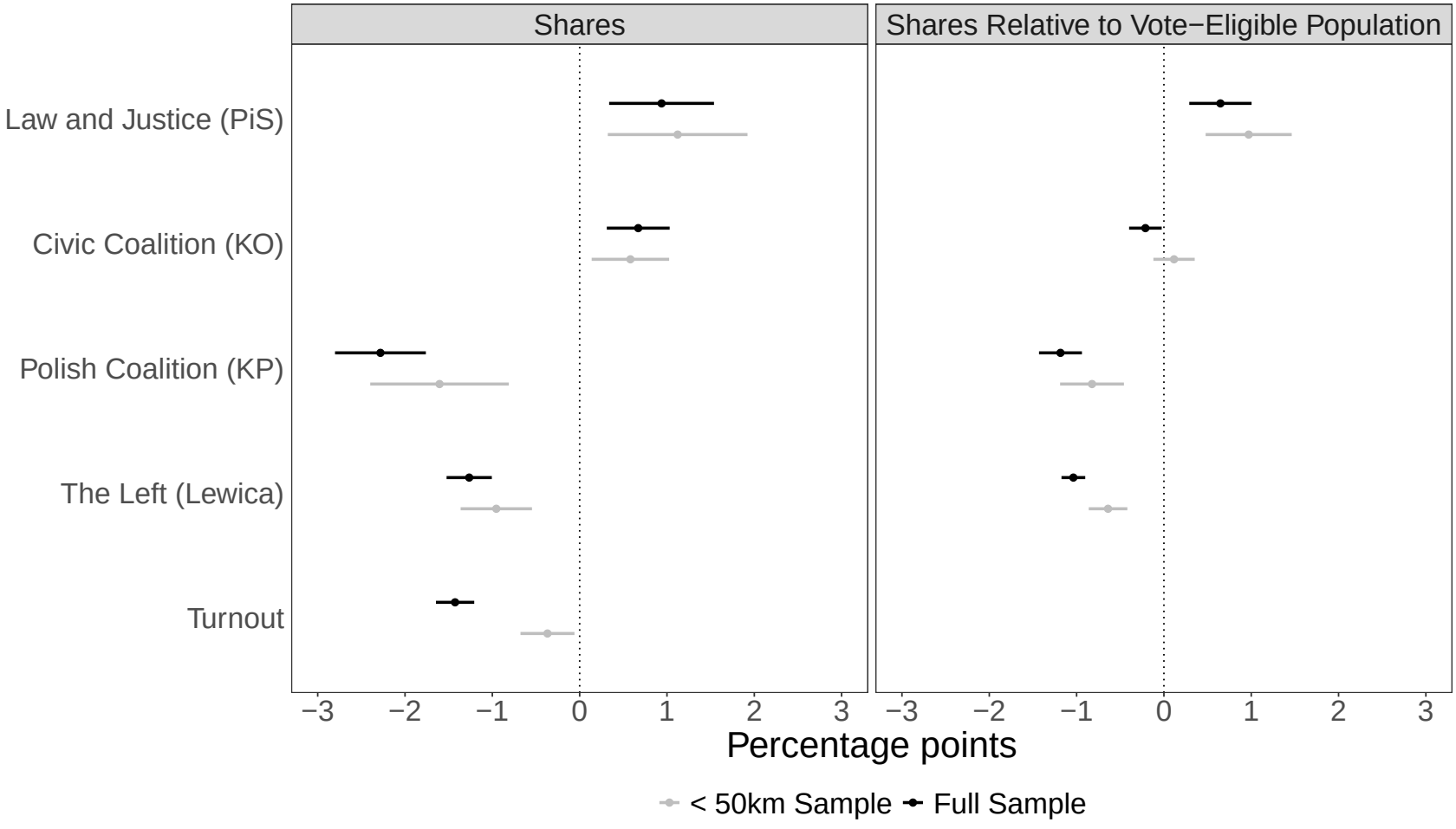
back

Treatment Definition: Charter (T1) vs. Resolution (T2)



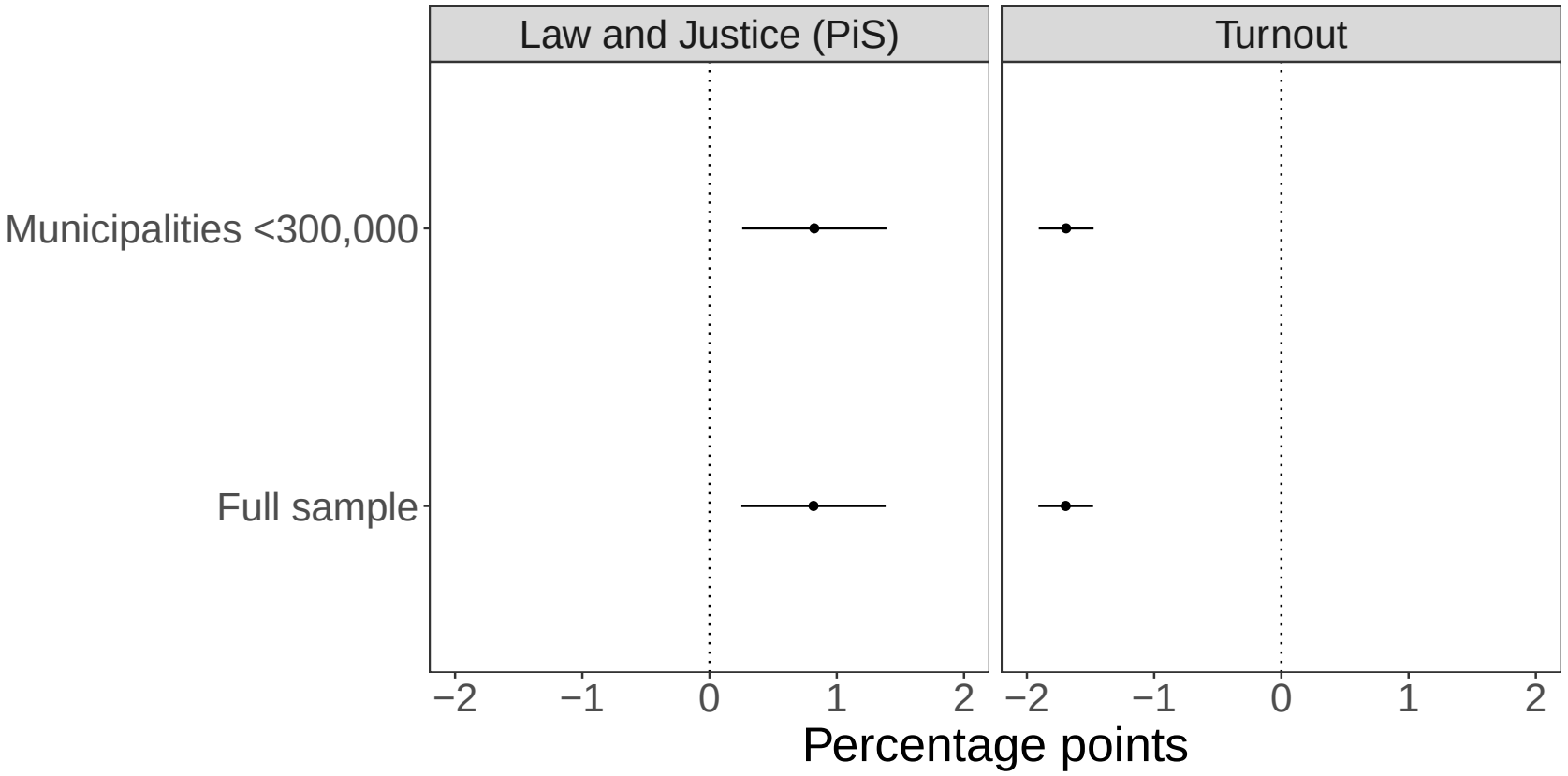
back

Other: Nevertreated Donor Pool



back

Other: Municipalities $<$ 300,000



back

Other: Alternative Estimators

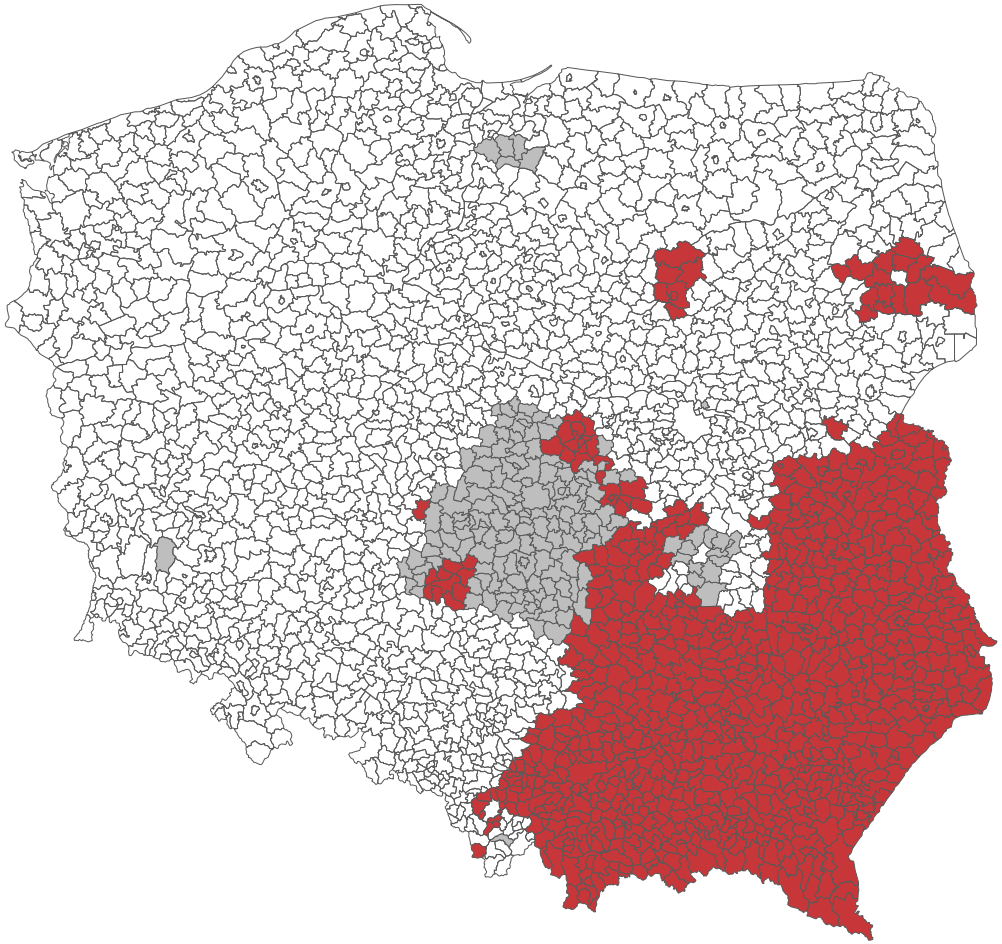
Table 1: Estimated effects of anti-LGBTQ resolutions on PiS vote share and turnout in treated municipalities in the 2019 parliamentary election by estimator.

	DiD	MC	sDiD
Law and Justice (PiS)	5.98	2.18	0.82
	(0.42)	(0.28)	(0.24)
Turnout	-1.09	-1.29	-1.69
	(0.14)	(0.1)	(0.09)
N	14,856	14,856	14,856

Note: Standard errors (in parentheses) were estimated using the "placebo method."

back

Anti-LGBTQ+ Resolutions by Wave



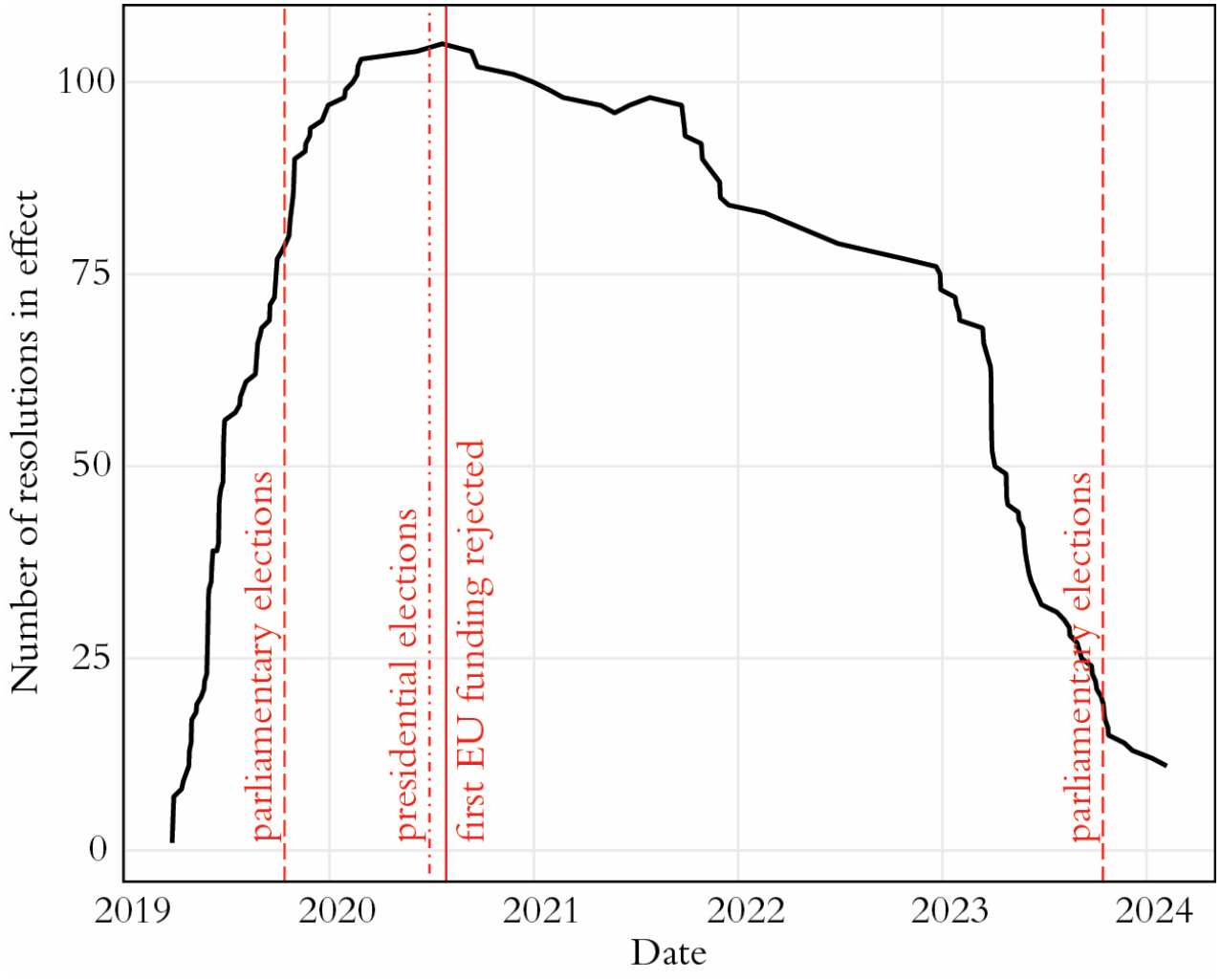
No resolution

Anti−LGBTQ+ resolution before 2019 parl. election

Anti−LGBTQ+ resolution after 2019 parl. election

back

Treatment after 2019



Source: Bogatyrev and Bogusz (2024)

back

Treatment after 2019

EU blocks funding for six towns that declared themselves ‘LGBT-Free Zones’

By James Frater and Lianne Kolirin, CNN

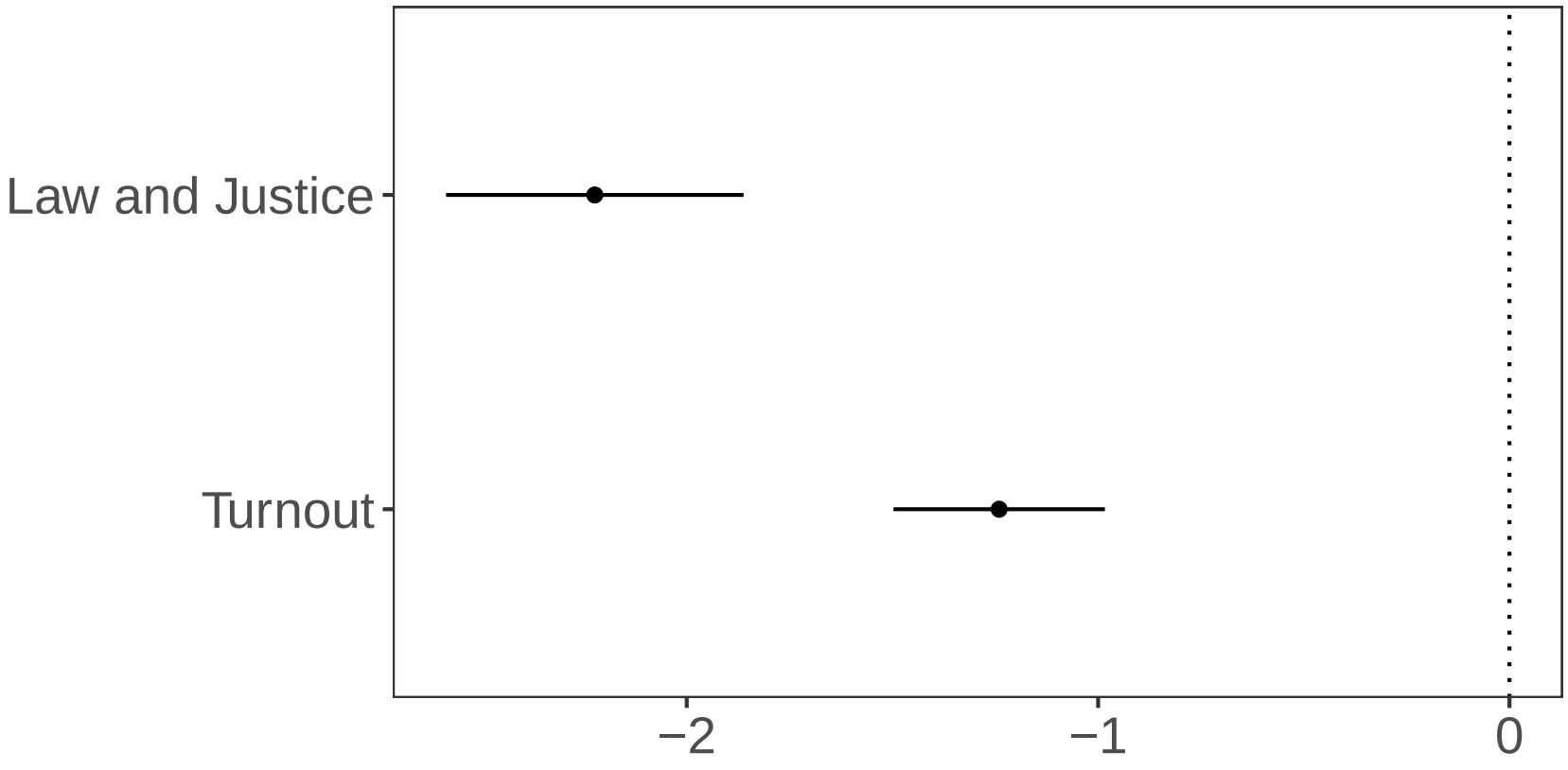
Published 7:49 AM EDT, Fri July 31, 2020

Dutch town ends ties with Polish twin declared 'gay-free zone'

Nieuwegein council votes to end links to Puławy, which has vowed to discourage tolerance

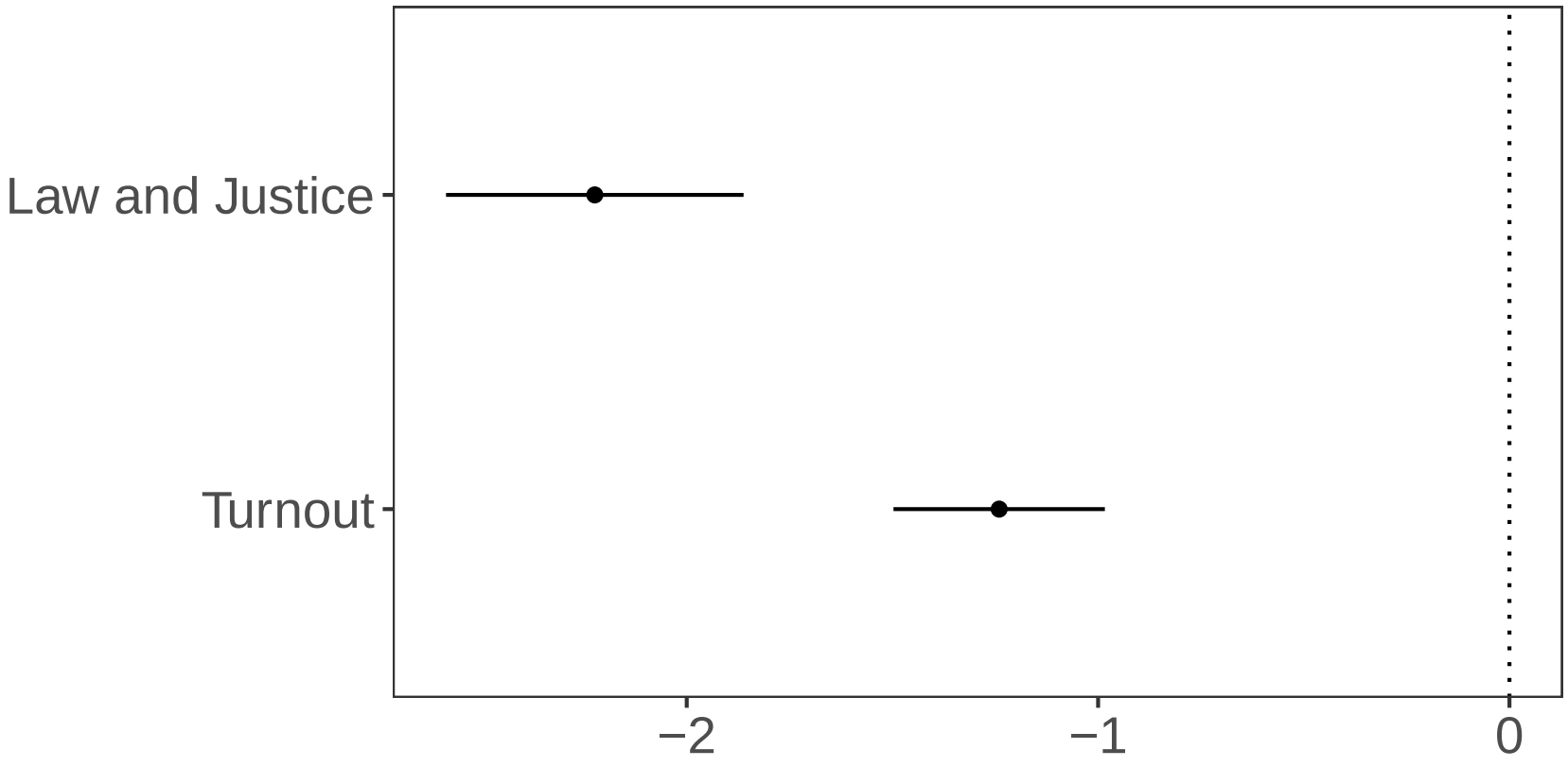
back

Presidential Election 2020



back

Presidential Election 2020



BUT: elections not necessarily comparable!

back

Potential Mechanism

→ Economically-oriented voters punishing PiS for a potential loss of EU funding over a symbolic policy?

back

Potential Mechanism

→ Economically-oriented voters punishing PiS for a potential loss of EU funding over a symbolic policy?

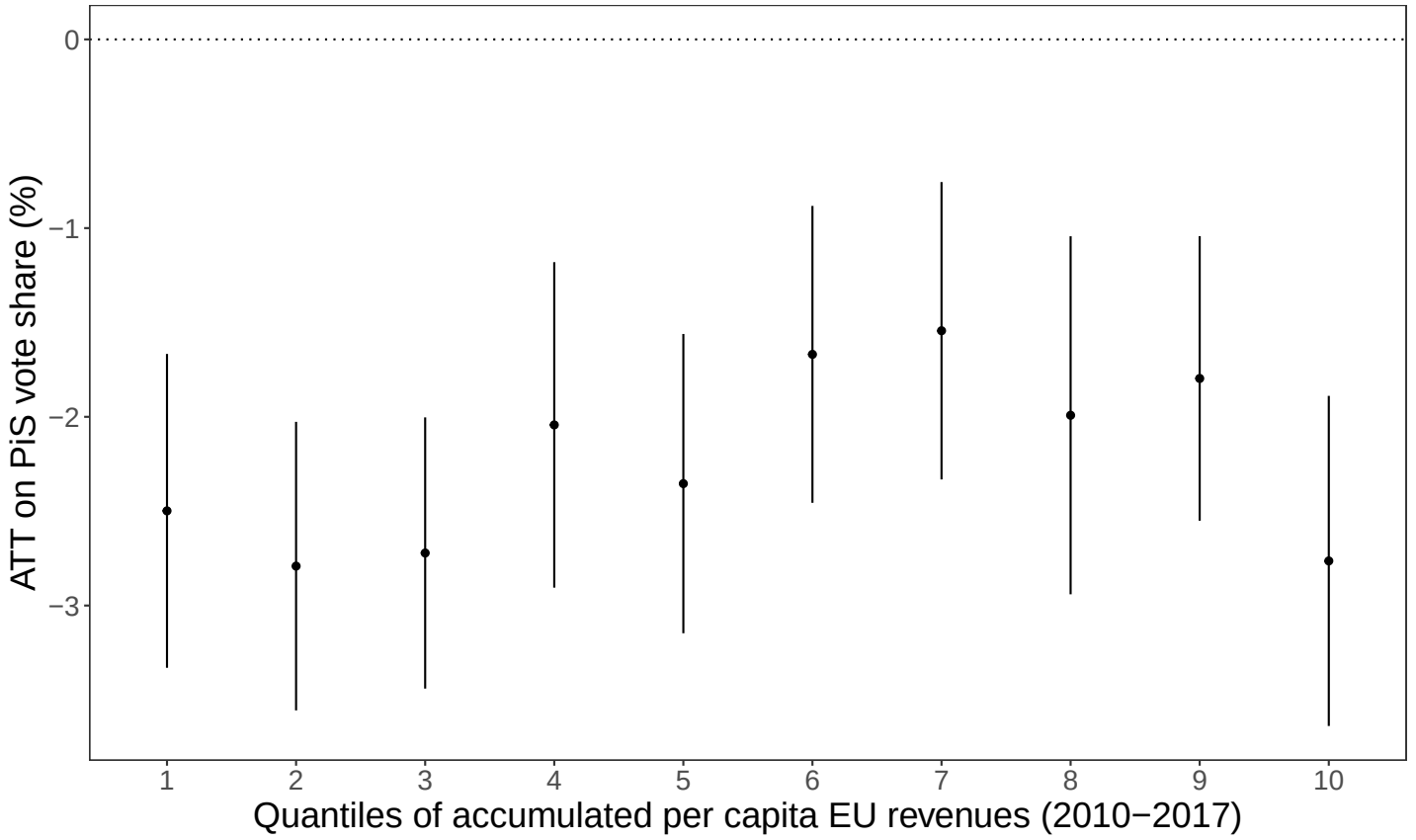
→ Backlash effect driven by regions most dependent on EU funds?

back

Potential Mechanism

→ Economically-oriented voters punishing PiS for a potential loss of EU funding over a symbolic policy?

→ Backlash effect driven by regions most dependent on EU funds? **No!**



back

Alternative Explanations

Other explanations for backlash in 2020

- Switch in campaigning
- Differences in issue voting by election type
- Countermobilization-lag
- International blaming and shaming

back

Synthetic Difference-in-Differences (sDiD)

Combines attractive features of SC and DiD (Arkhangelsky et al., 2021):

- Re-weights and matches pre-exposure trends to weaken parallel trend assumption
  1. Unit weights defining a **synthetic control unit** using pre-treatment data
  2. Estimates time weights defining a **synthetic pre-treatment period** using control data
  3. Invariant to additive unit-level shifts, and allows for valid large-panel inference, like DiD
  4. Applies a **DiD estimator** to the resulting synthetic 2 x 2 panel

back