

The Electoral Effects of State-Sponsored Homophobia

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

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Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Department of Social Sciences

Chair of Comparative Political Behavior

DYNAMICS Research Training group

Motivation

Motivation



Russia set to expand
anti-LGBTQ law

Motivation



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anti-LGBTQ law

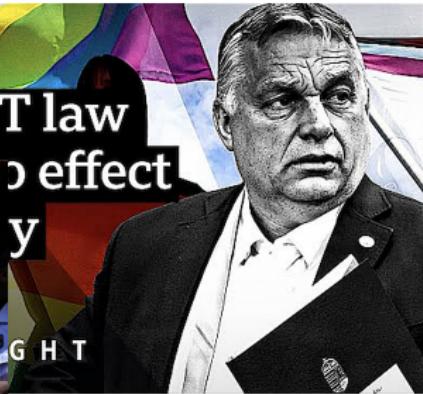


Motivation



Russia set to expand
anti-LGBTQ law

Anti-LGBT law
set to effect
in Russia



Motivation

Legislation targeting LGBTQ rights nearly tripled between 2022-2023

Number of anti-LGBTQ bills introduced in state legislatures each session.



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

Overview

Do strategies of political homophobia translate into electoral gains?

Case: Adoption of anti-LGBTQ resolutions in many Polish municipalities prior to the 2019 parliamentary elections

Data: Activist Map “Atlas of Hate” & National Electoral Commission

Design: Synthetic Difference-in-Differences

Results: In areas with anti-LGBTQ resolutions, PiS gained more votes, opposition struggled to mobilize, and turnout was generally lower.

Contribution: First systematic test that causally identifies the electoral consequences of state-sponsored homophobia

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

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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)

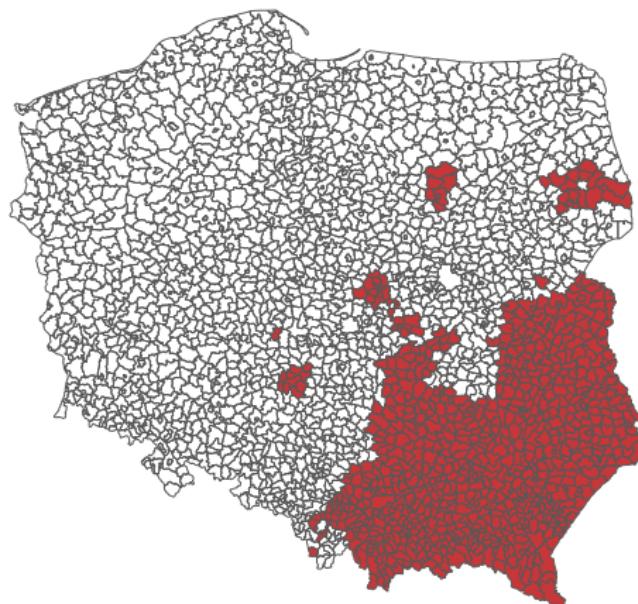
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We consider a municipality treated if either its local council or a superior subnational unit passed any anti-LGBTQ+ resolution

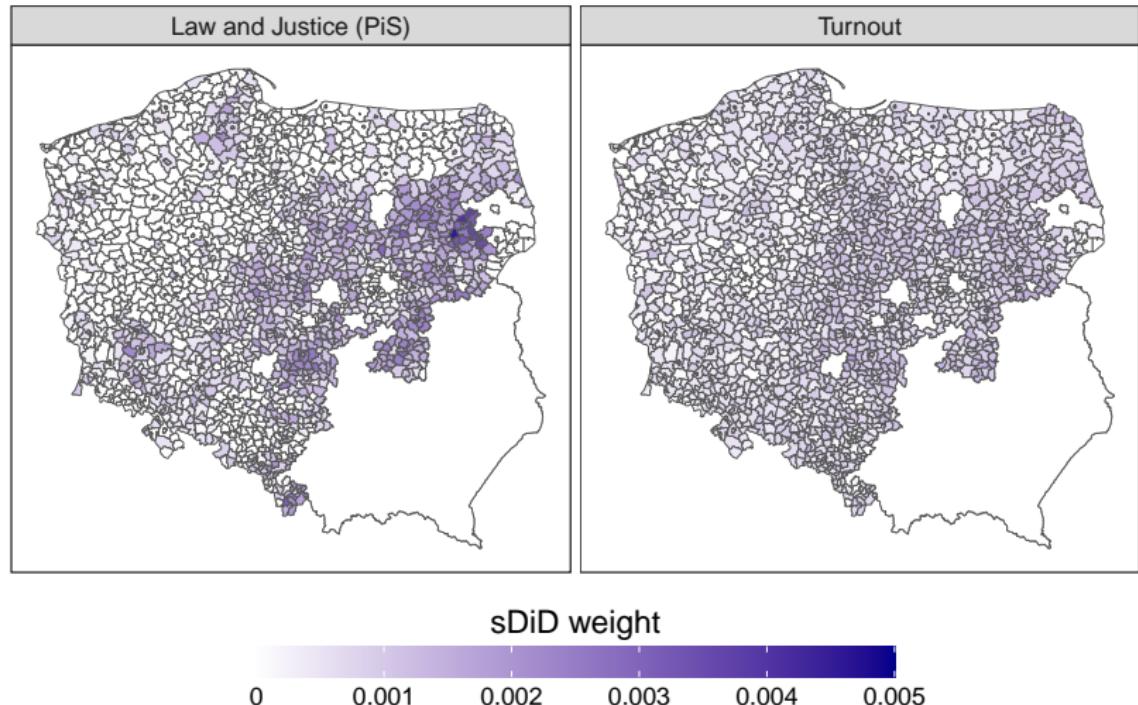
Geographic Treatment Distribution



No resolution Anti-LGBTQ+ resolution

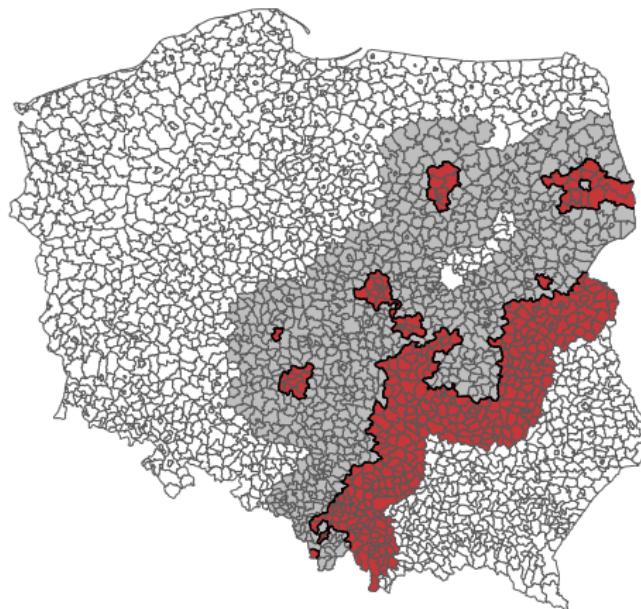
Observed non-parallel trends

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



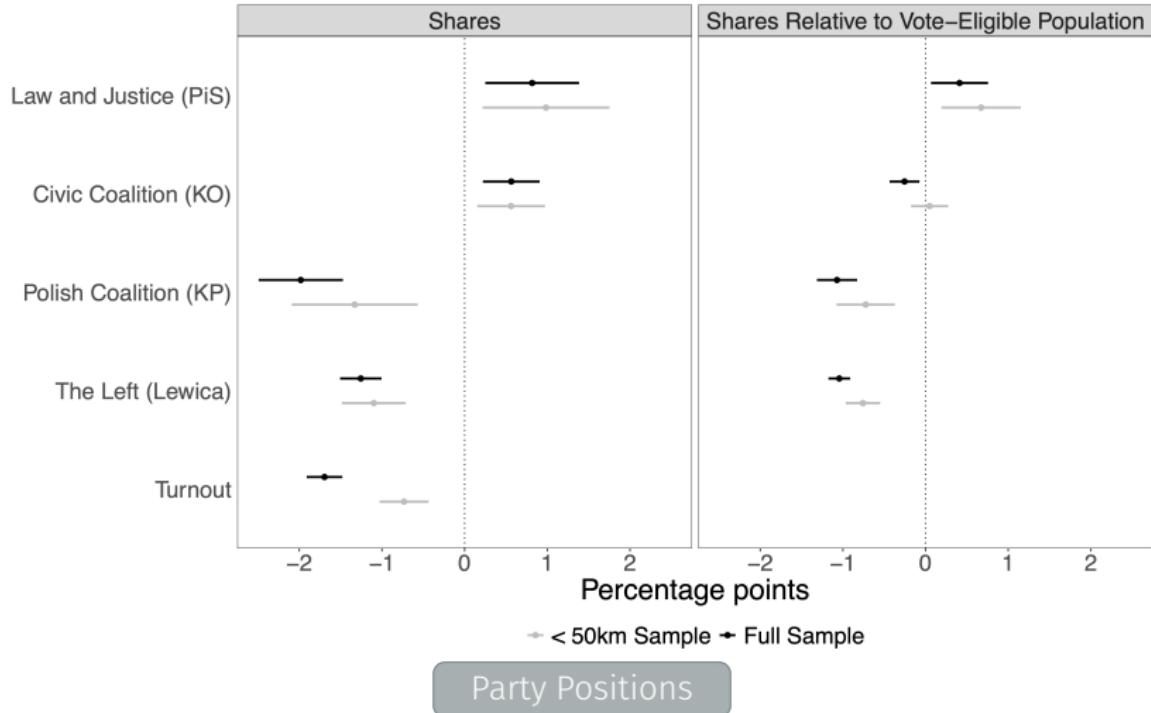
Synthetic parallel trends

Strategy II: sDiD <50 km cut-off sample

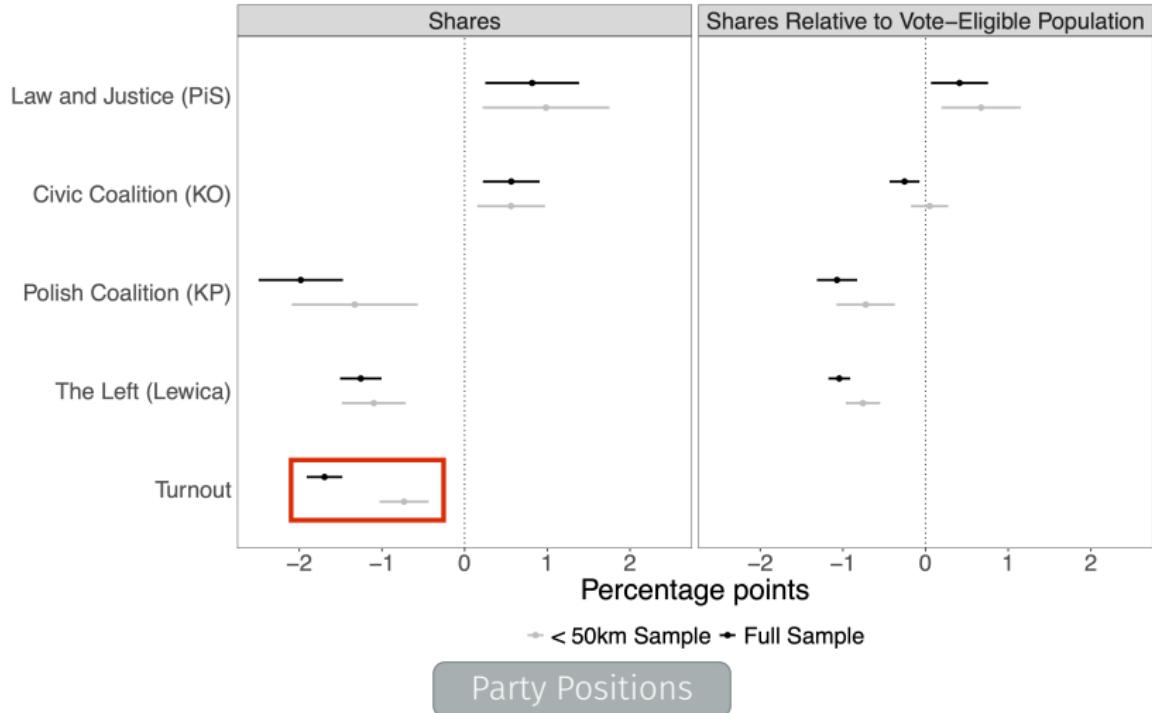


- No resolution, < 50 km from the boundary
- Anti-LGBTQ resolution, < 50 km from the boundary
- Beyond 50 km from the boundary

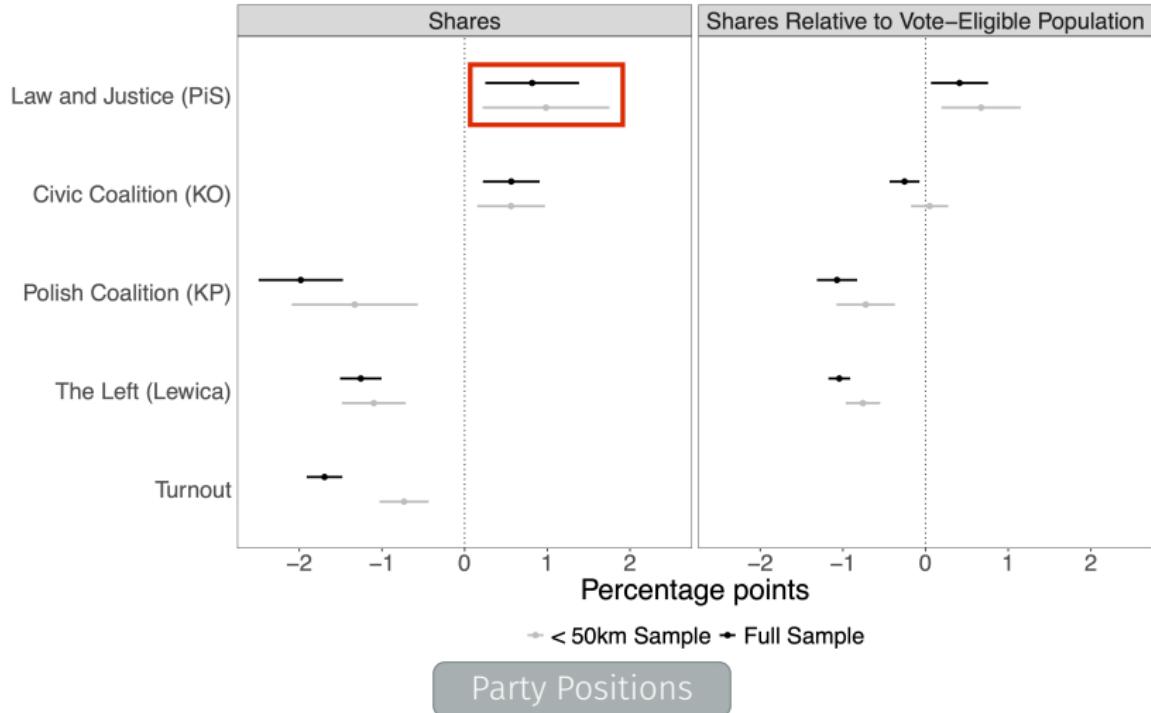
Results



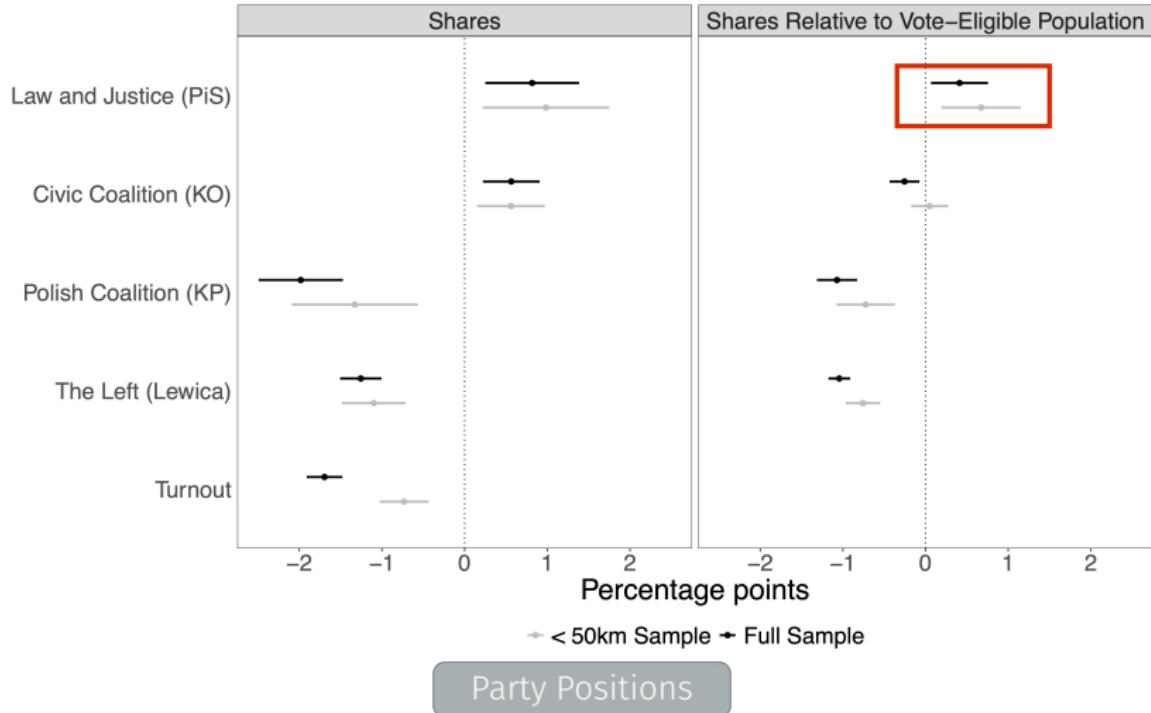
Results



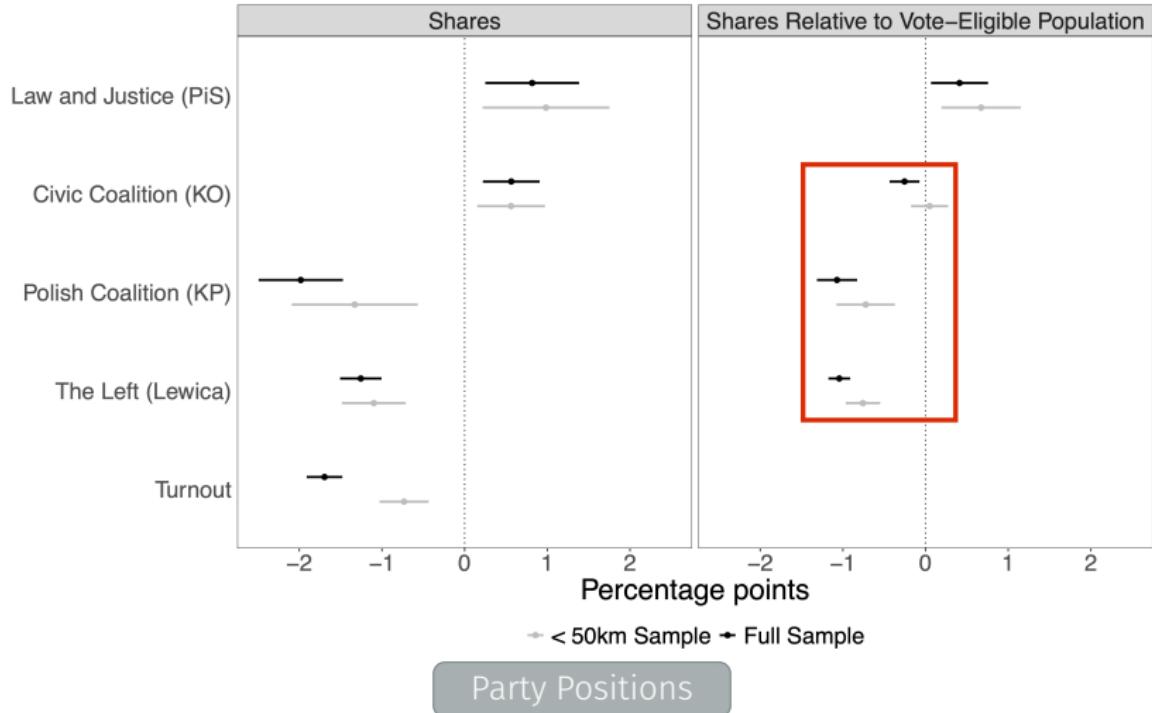
Results



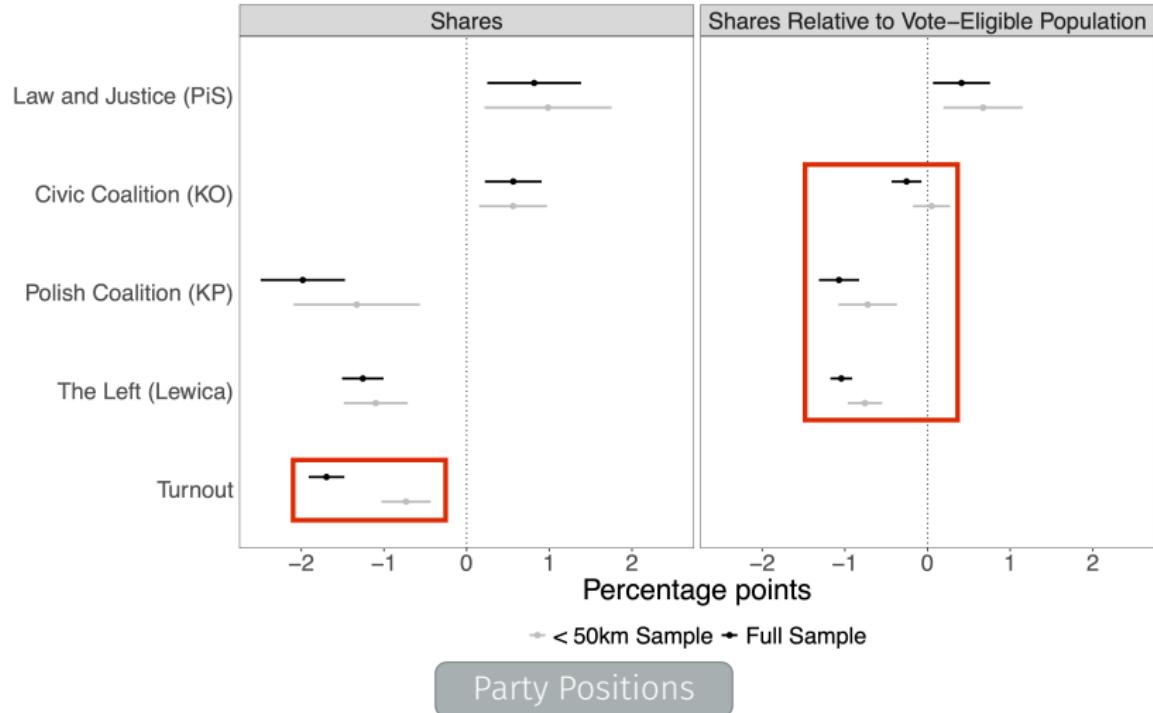
Results



Results



Results



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 never treated 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!

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 @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)

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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

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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

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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)
- First to causally identify electoral effects of anti-LGBTQ+ laws

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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)

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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)

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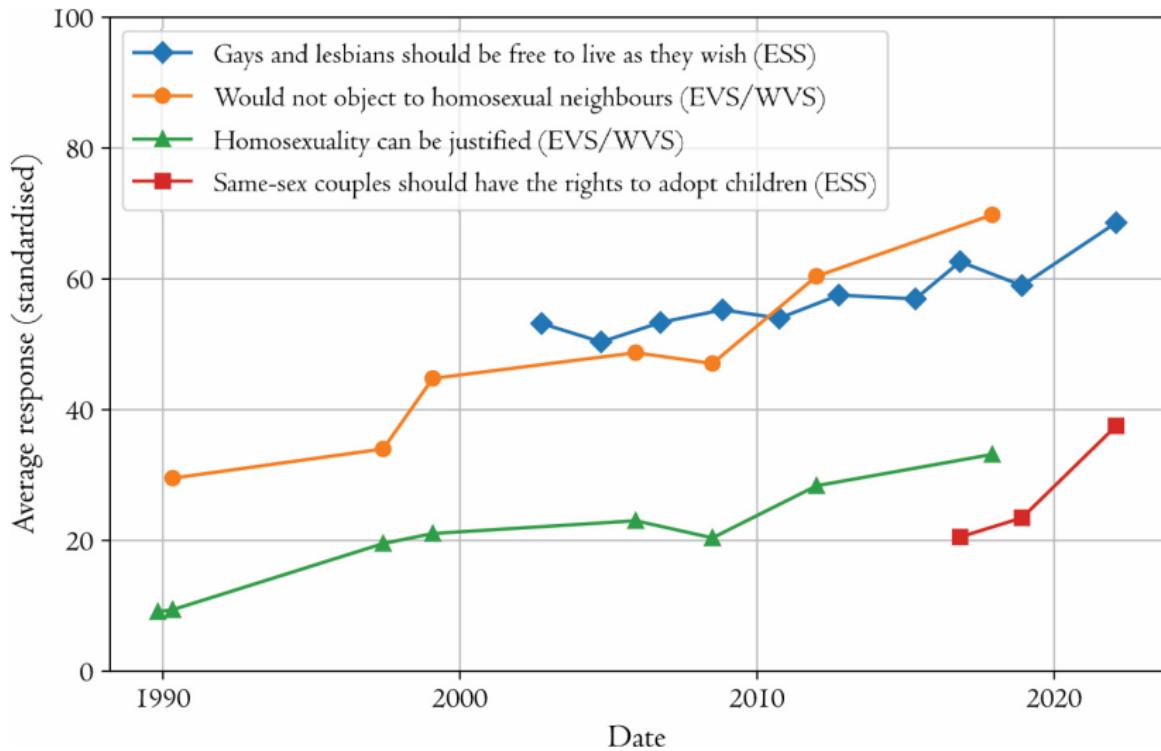
Case Selection

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

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Attitudes towards Homosexuality



Source: Bogatyrev and Bogusz (2024)

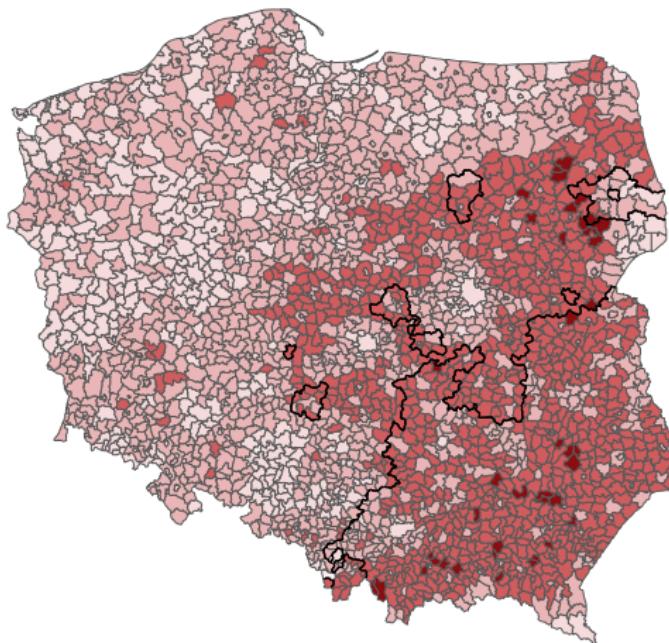
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Parliamentary Election 2019: Party Positions

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)

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Parliamentary Election 2019: PiS Vote Share



PiS vote share (%)

- 0–20
- 20–40
- 40–60
- 60–80
- 80+

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

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Two Types of Documents

Stanowisko ar 1/2019 Rady Powiatu w Świdnicy z dnia 26 marca 2019 r.
w sprawie powstrzymania ideologii „LGBT” przez wspólnoty
samorządowe.

W związku z wywołaną przez niektórych polityków wejściem ideologicznym Rada Powiatu w Świdnicy, przejmując deklarację „Powiat Świdnicki walny of ideologi LGBT”, Radykaliści dający do rewolucji kulturowej w Polsce atakują wolność słowa, nieśmiałość dzieci, autorytet rodzin i szkoly oraz swobody przedsiębiorstwa. Dlatego konieczne będzie naszej wspólnoty samorządowej!

Powiat Świdnicki walny of ideologi „LGBT”

Dla dobra życia, rodzin i wolności deklarujemy, że nasz, który reprezentujemy – zgodnie z naszą wiadomością kulturę życia społecznego – nie będzie ignorować w pytaniu ofer życia Polaków. Nie damy mazaczków sobie wyróżnianiem problemów i istotnych kwestiów, które niszczą za sobą ideologię „LGBT”.

1. Nie zgadzamy się na sprzeciw z prosem instalowania funkcjonariuszy politycznej pełnomocni w szkołach (szw. latarników). Dylemat strugli prawa do wychowania dzieci zgadzając z poszanowaniem rodzin?

2. Zrobiśmy wszystko, aby szkół nie miały wstępu grecyckiego zainteresowania wezwanie sekularyzacji polskich świąt w myśl tzw. standardek Światowej Organizacji Zdrowia (WHO). Dylemat określi uczniów, dając o to, aby rodzice z pomocą wychowanków mogli odwoływać się przekazem im piętnaście minut!

3. Nie powalimy wyseleń administracyjnych przyjaźń na rzecz stosowania pełnomocni politycznej (obszaru zwanej strefką po prostu konopopozycją) w wybranych **zawodach**. Dylemat określi min. noszyciel i przedsiębiorców przed naruszeniem niezgodnych z prawem kryteriów działania np. w pracy wychowawczej, przy doborze pracowników, czy konkursach!

Deklarowany, że Powiat Świdnicki w realizacji swoich publicznych zadań, będzie wtem tradycji narodowej i państwowej, pamiętać o 105 latach od Chodu Polski, 100 latach od odzyskania Niepodległości Polski i 29 latach od odzyskania Samorządności Polaków i Polonów.

Przewodniczący
Rady Powiatu w Świdnicy

Andrzej Matka

Decyzja
z dnia 11 kwietnia 2018 r.
Zatwierdzony przez

UCHWAŁA NR X / 19
RADY MIEJSKIEJ W LAWE

z dnia 24 czerwca 2019 r.

w sprawie uchwalenia wetołu założenia Głównej Izby Miasta Ławy

Na podstawie art. 20a, pkt. 9 ustawy z dnia 8 marca 1990 r. o samorządzie gminnym (Dz. U. z 2018 r. poz. 506.) Rada Miejska w Ławie uchwala, co następuje:

§ 1. Pełnomocnik ma się z Raportem o stanie Głównej Miejskiej Izby za 2018 rok i przeprowadzeniem nad nim debaty, utworzyć się

§ 2. Uchwałę rochodzi w życie z dniem podjęcia.

Przewodniczący Rady Miejskiej
w Ławie

Michał Motek

B U R M I S T R Z
MIASTKA ŁAWY

Michał Motek

Sprawozdanie wstępne
formalno-prawne
Radosław PIANKI
Pełnomocnik
M. ABCOM-485-487-679-040-03982C - Przed

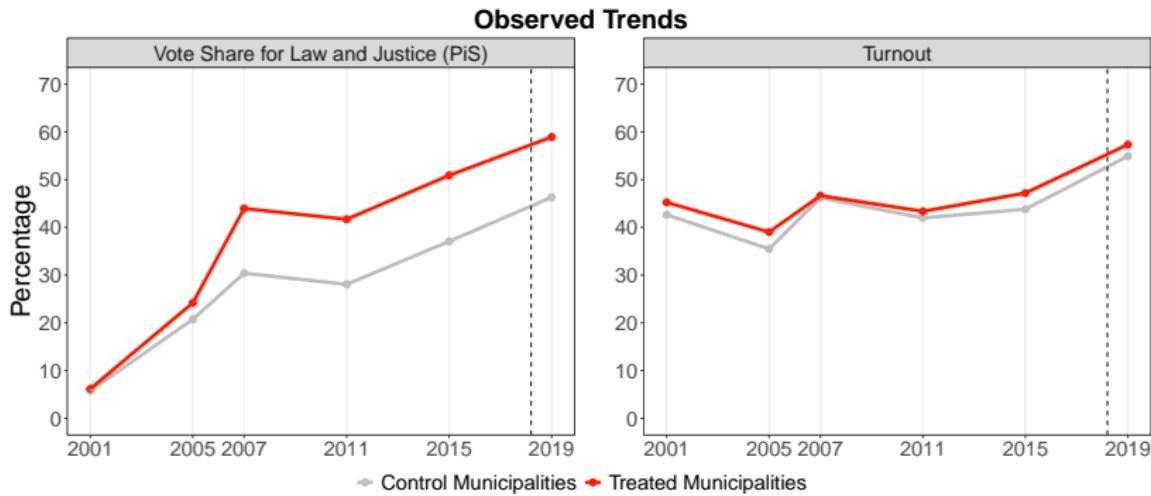
Strona 1 z 1

(a) “Resolution against LGBT ideology”

(b) “Local Government Charter of The Rights of The Family”

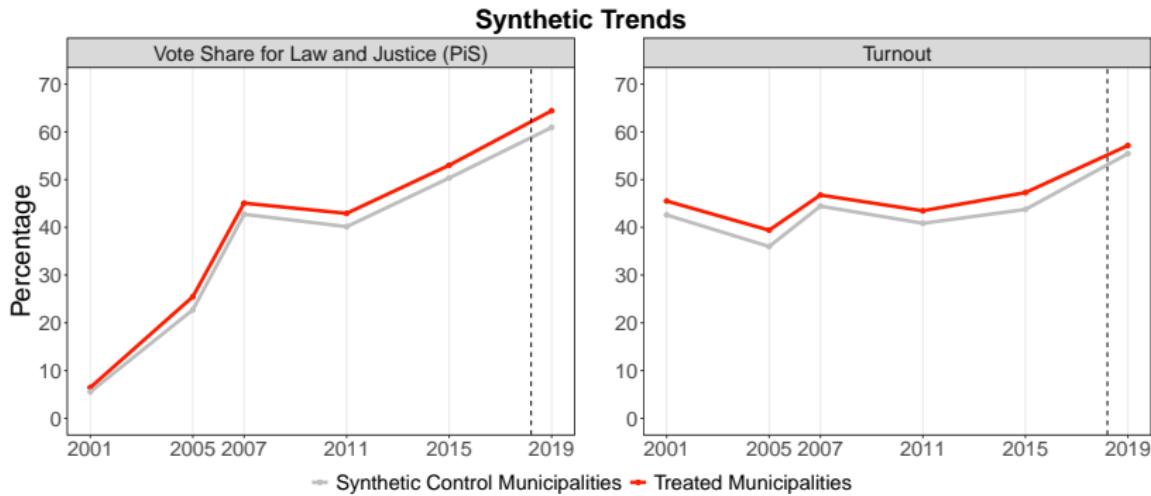
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Observed Outcome Trends



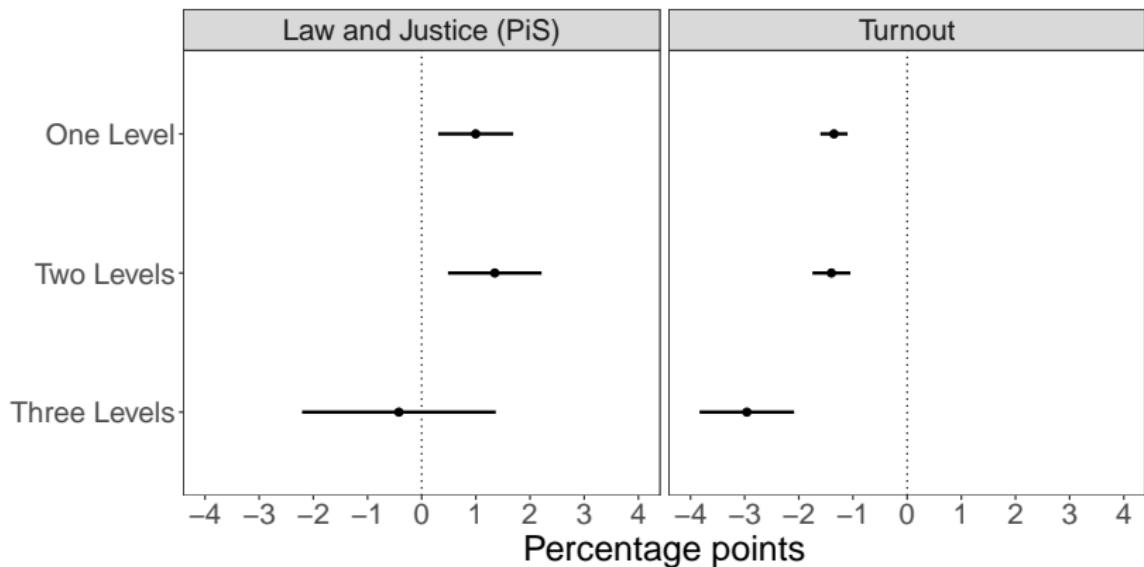
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Synthetic Outcome Trends



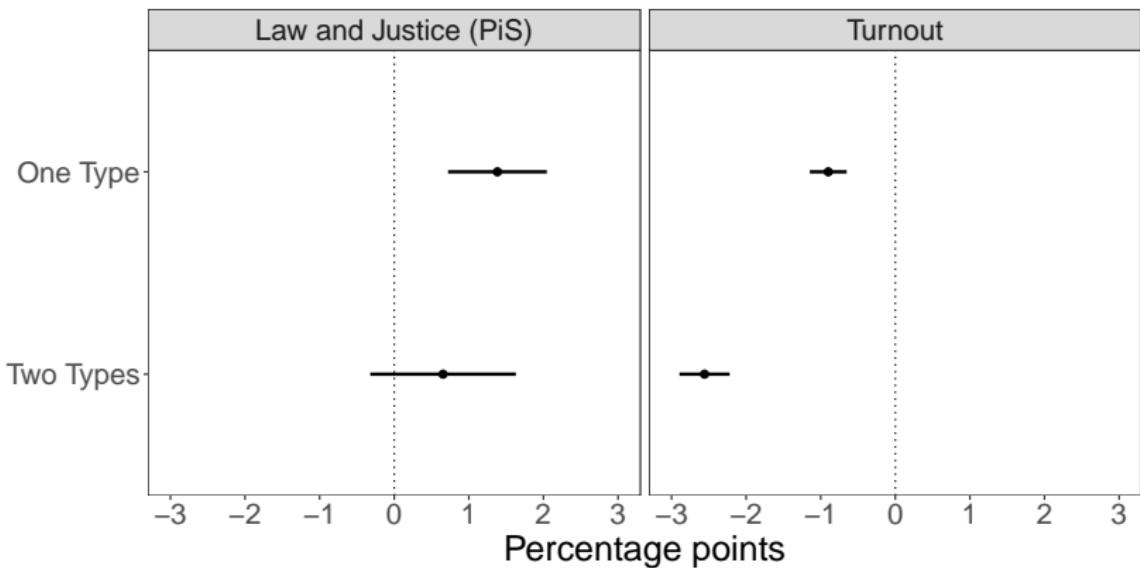
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Treatment Intensity: Multiple Government Levels



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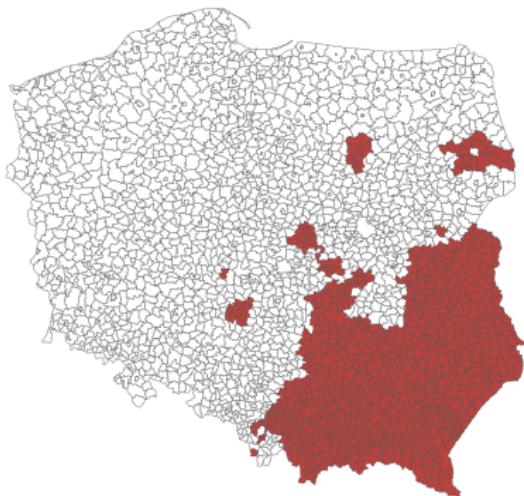
Treatment Intensity: Multiple Bill Types



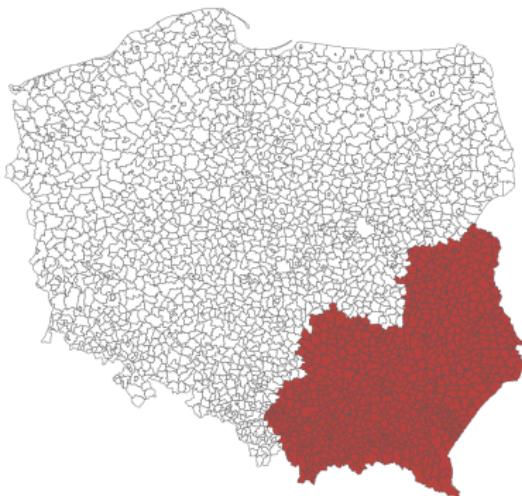
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Distribution by Government Level

Any Level



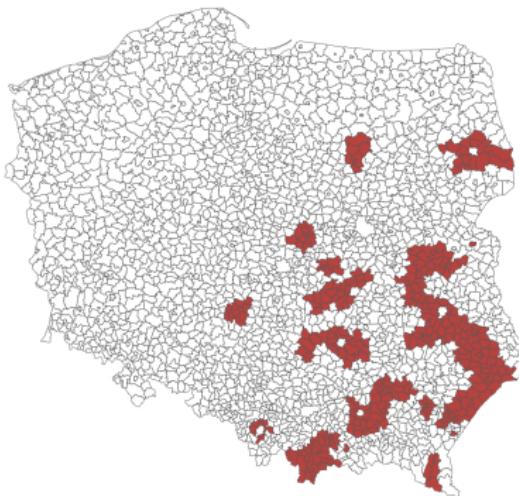
Only Province Level



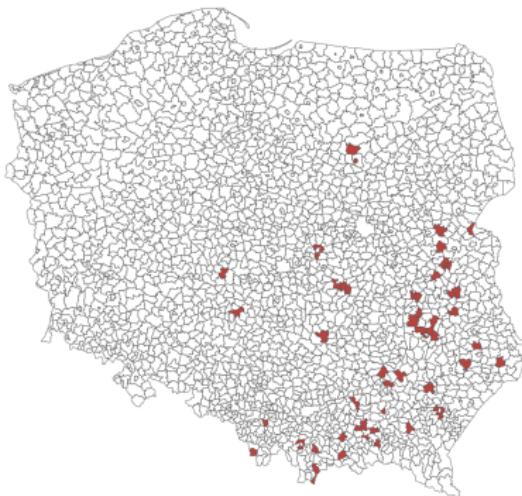
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Distribution by Government Level

Only County Level



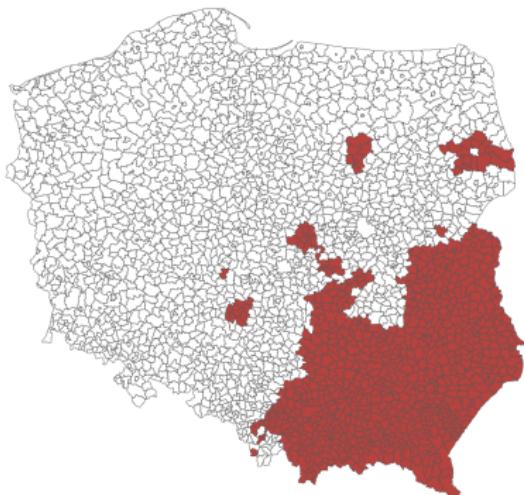
Only Municipality Level



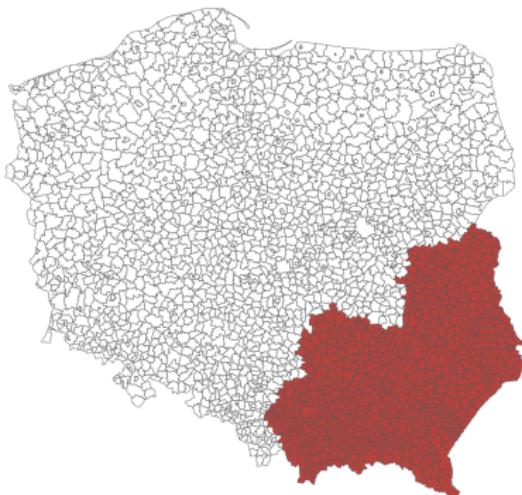
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Distribution by Government Level

Any Level



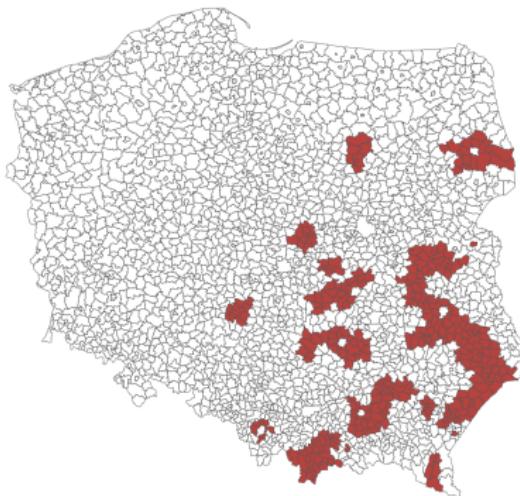
Only Province Level



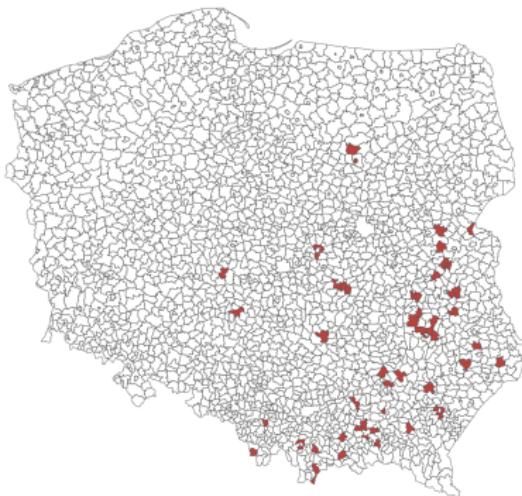
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Distribution by Government Level

Only County Level

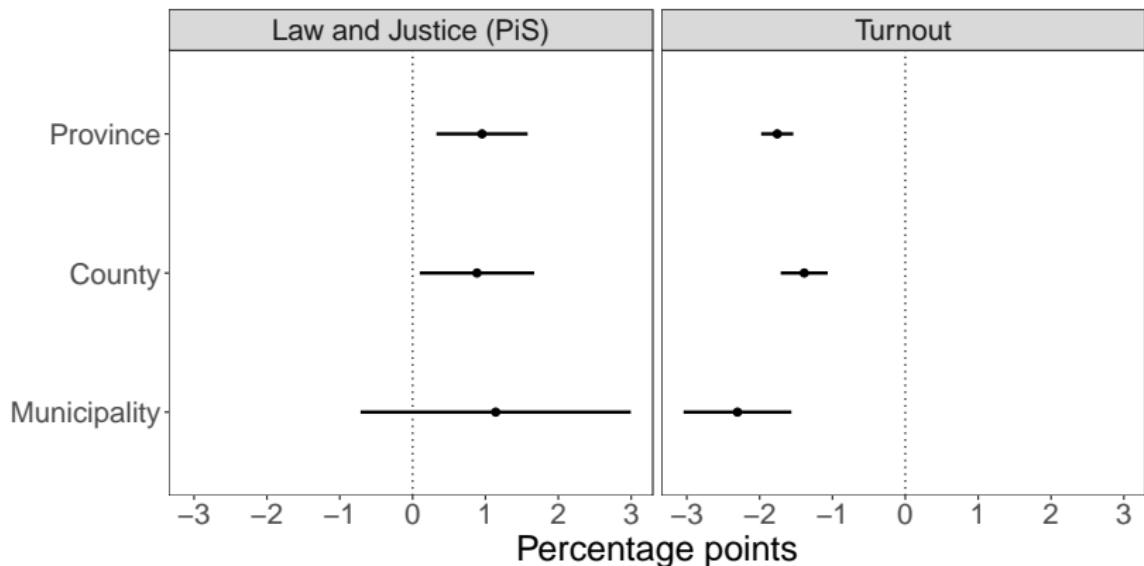


Only Municipality Level



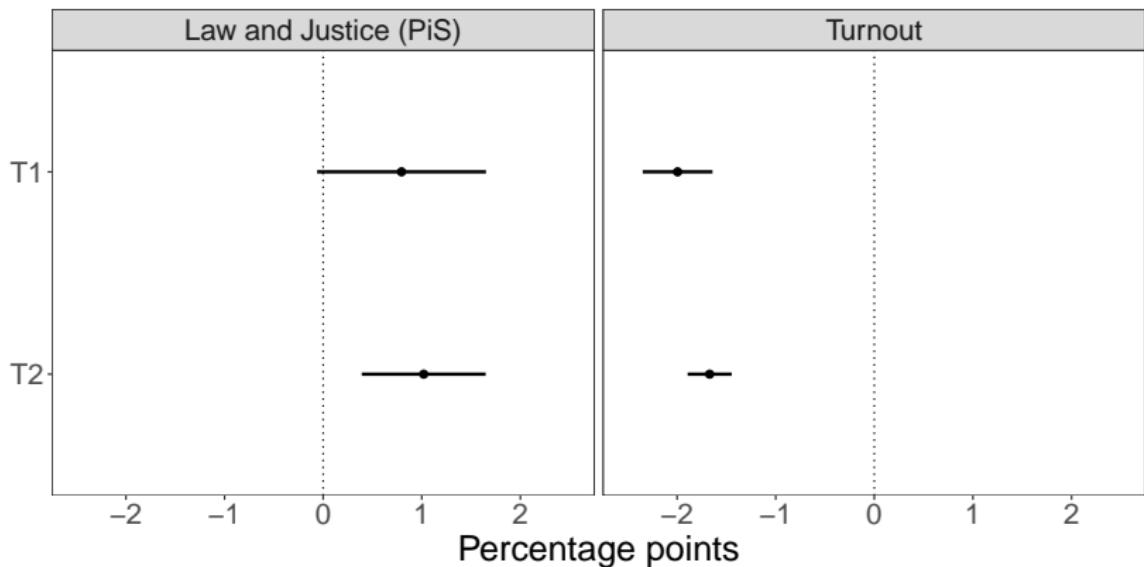
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Treatment Definition: Province vs. County vs. Municipality



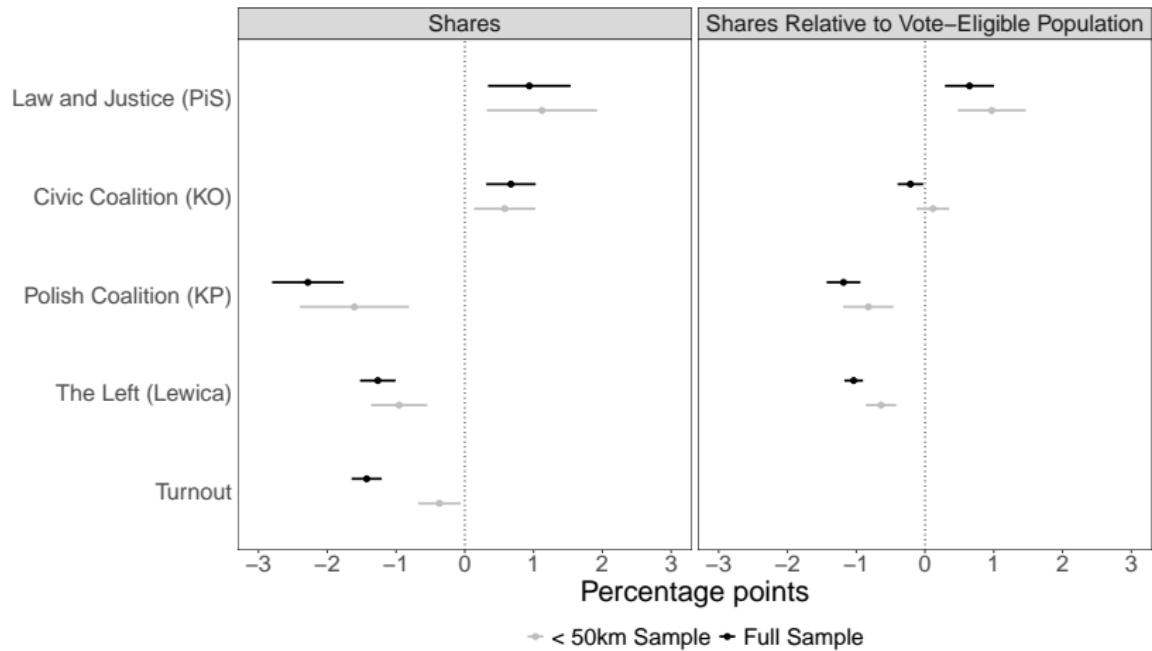
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Treatment Definition: Charter (T1) vs. Resolution (T2)



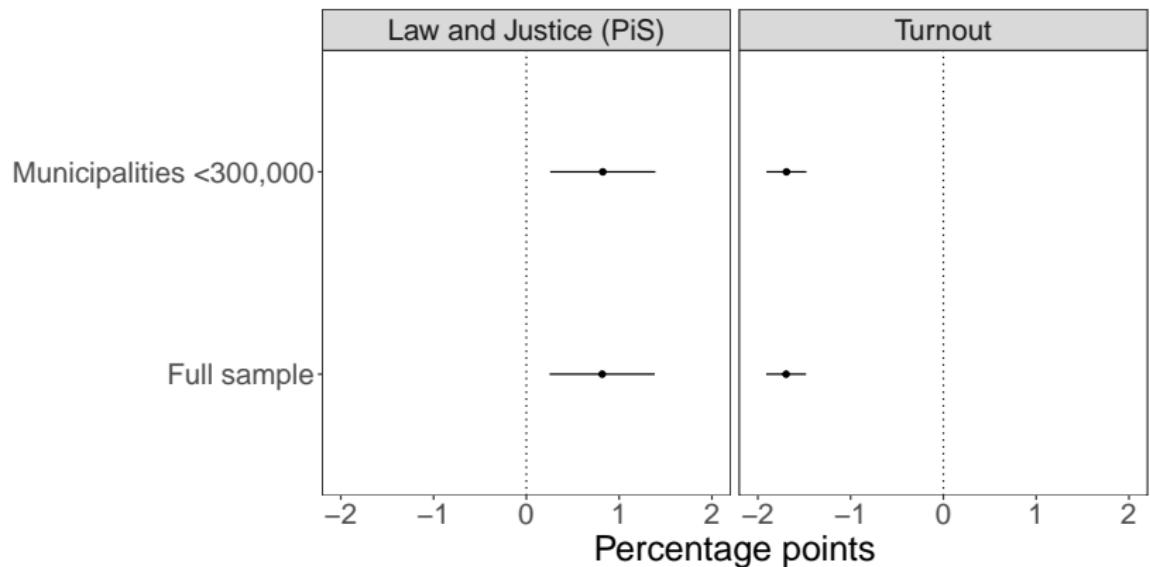
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Other: Never treated Donor Pool



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Other: Municipalities < 300,000



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Other: Alternative Estimators

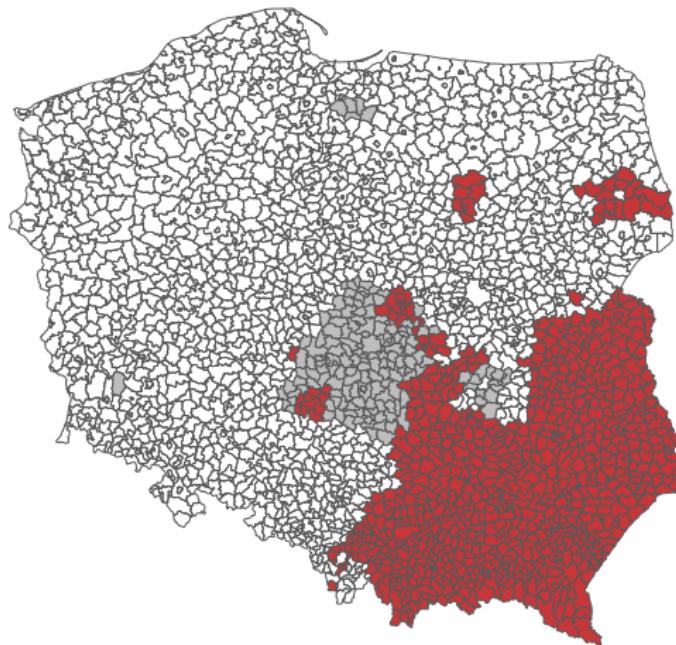
Table 1: Estimated effects of anti-LGBTQ resolutions on PiS vote share and turnout in treated municipalities in the 2019 parliamentary election by estimator.

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

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

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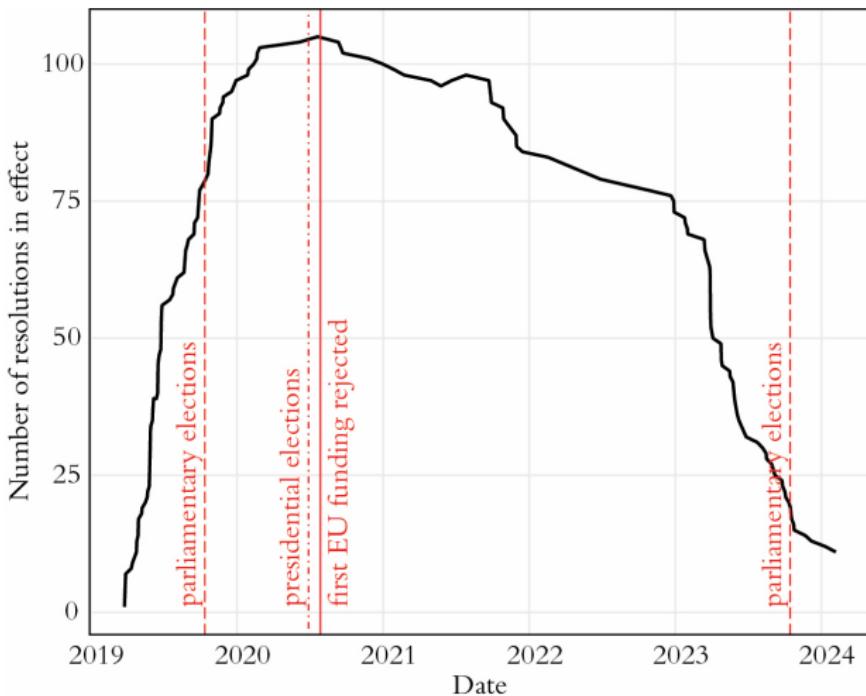
Anti-LGBTQ+ Resolutions by Wave



- No resolution
- Anti-LGBTQ+ resolution before 2019 parl. election
- Anti-LGBTQ+ resolution after 2019 parl. election

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Treatment after 2019



Source: Bogatyrev and Bogusz (2024)

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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

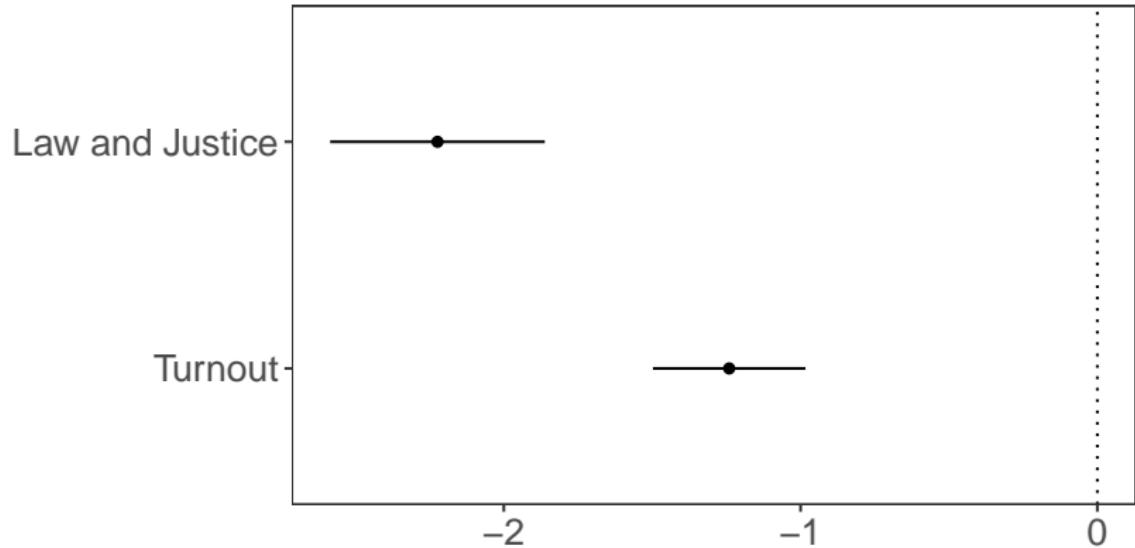


Dutch town ends ties with Polish twin declared 'gay-free zone'

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

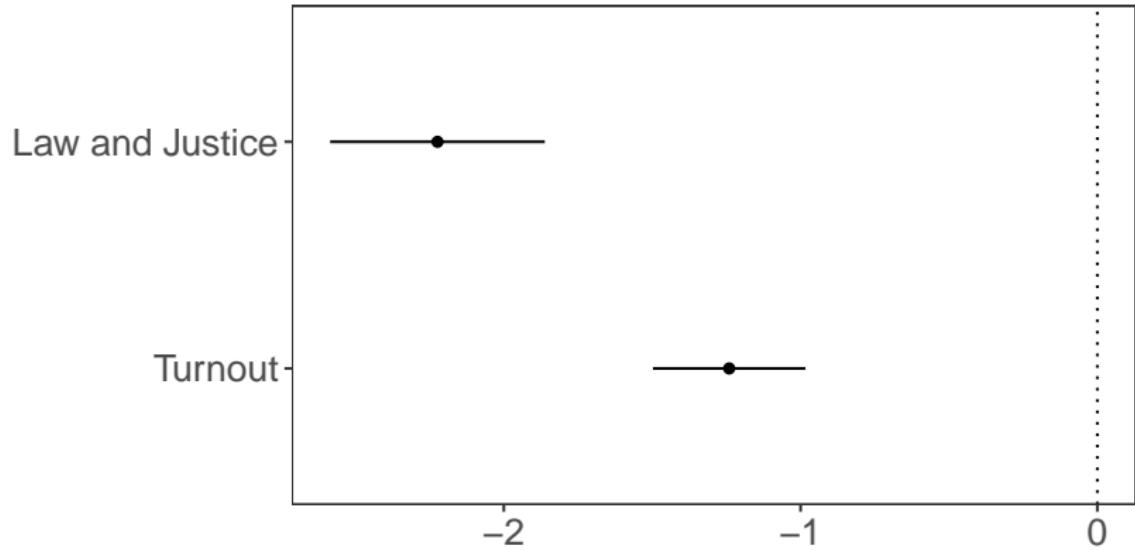
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Presidential Election 2020



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Presidential Election 2020



BUT: elections not necessarily comparable!

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Potential Mechanism

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

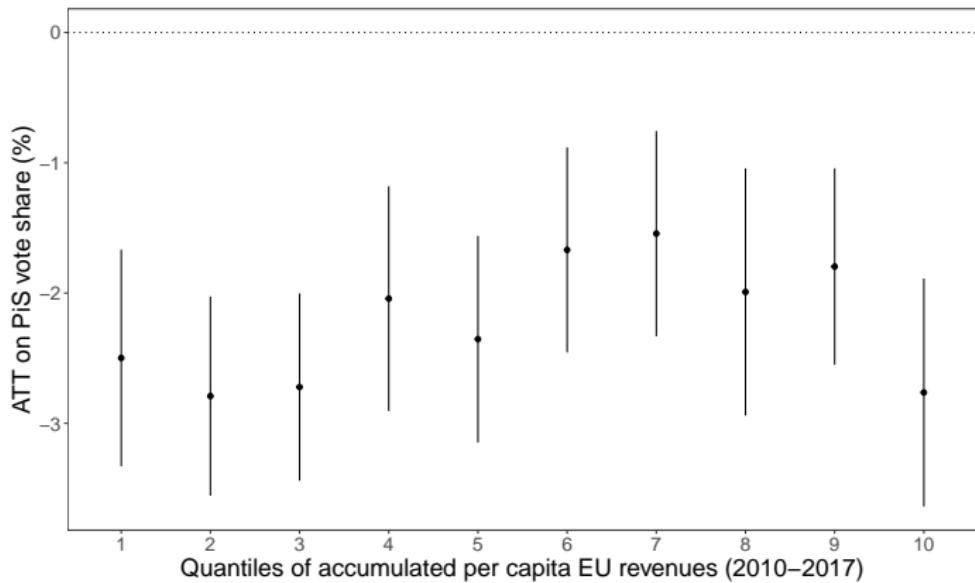
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- Backlash effect driven by regions most dependent on EU funds?

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!



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

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