

Competing for Loyalists?

How Party Positioning Affects Populist Radical Right Voting^{*}

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Abstract

As populist radical right parties muster increasing support in many democracies, an important question is how mainstream parties can recapture their voters. Focusing on Germany, we present original panel evidence that voters supporting the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) – the country’s largest populist radical right party – resemble partisan loyalists with entrenched anti-establishment views, seemingly beyond recapture by mainstream parties. Yet this loyalty does not only reflect anti-establishment voting, but also gridlocked party-issue positioning. Despite descriptive evidence of strong party loyalty, experimental evidence reveals that many AfD voters change allegiances when mainstream parties accommodate their preferences. However, for most parties this repositioning is extremely costly. While mainstream parties can attract populist radical right voters via restrictive immigration policies, they alienate their own voters in doing so. Examining position shifts across issue dimensions, parties and voter groups, our research demonstrates that absent significant changes in issue preferences or salience the status quo is an equilibrium.

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1 Introduction

Populist radical right (PRR) parties have become a potent force in many democracies. As their vote shares have risen, so have fears about the spread of nationalism, nativism, and even democratic breakdown (Berman, 2019; Foa and Mounk, 2017). In light of these worries, a central question that has occupied public debate and scholars alike is whether and how mainstream parties can recapture voters who have cast their lot with the PRR (Carter, 2013; Meguid, 2008).

An answer requires, first and foremost, an assessment of the motivations of PRR voters: are they protest voters so dissatisfied with the political establishment that they are beyond recapture by the mainstream, or are they mainly driven by issue preferences, selecting the party that best represents their positions on salient issues (cf., Golder, 2016; van der Brug et al., 2000)? Yet equally important is an understanding of non-PRR voters. A key concern of mainstream parties is how their existing electorates will react to moves aimed at peeling away voters from the PRR.

If PRR voters remain loyal to their parties because they do not trust mainstream parties, irrespective of party repositioning, the latter have little incentive to engage in potentially costly positional moves. Indeed, whereas early work on the PRR's rise suggests frequent vote switching, recent research indicates that PRR voters are no more volatile than other voters (Voogd and Dassonneville, 2020), and some may indeed be quite loyal partisans (Bornschieer, 2010; Marks et al., 2020). However, if a sizable share of voters would willingly desert the PRR for mainstream alternatives that adjust their platforms, the next critical question is whether mainstream party voters will greet such adjustments with defections of their own.

If so, even a PRR electorate that consists mainly of floating issue voters may not prompt mainstream parties to change course.

An appraisal of the endurance of the PRR voter base thus requires studying the dynamic interactions of a range of voter groups and parties with differing issue preferences and positions across the political space. This paper undertakes such a study. To assess the linkage between party and issue preferences, we conducted a four-wave panel survey in which we observed the voting intentions and political preferences of German citizens over a 15-month period. We asked detailed questions about party choice, policy preferences, issue priorities, and party rankings on these issues. Second, and crucially, to test whether voters would actually desert the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) if established parties co-opted its position on salient issues, these parties have actually to move, and voters need to be aware of these moves. However, established parties rarely make dramatic shifts away from the status quo (Dalton and McAllister, 2015; de Vries and Hobolt, 2020; Ferland and Dassonneville, 2019; Hooghe and Marks, 2018), and even when they accommodate radical right issue preferences, it is unclear whether voters monitor such moves closely (Adams et al., 2011). We therefore draw on the rich descriptive data that we gathered in waves 1 through 3 to construct counterfactual scenarios in wave 4, designed to gauge how voters make trade-offs across issues and parties. Our experiment varies parties' positions on priority issues, as well as other theoretically-important attributes separating protest from issue voters. It examines directly whether established parties can recapture AfD voters *and* repel or retain their own voters by accommodating these voters' issue preferences across policy dimensions.

Based on this multi-pronged design, we arrive at two main conclusions: First, although AfD voters are extremely dissatisfied with the political system and remarkably stable in

their partisan support, many are better characterized as frustrated issue voters than anti-establishment voters. Their support for the AfD remains stable because other parties fail to meet their preferences on their most prioritized issue – immigration – not because they mistrust the political system altogether. Once we introduce the important counterfactual scenario in which other parties do adopt more restrictive immigration positions, up to half of the AfD’s electorate leaves the party for more established alternatives.¹ These effects are substantively significant: for example, the far-left Die Linke could propel itself to the forefront of the opposition by capturing just 10% of AfD voters. Thus, much of what appears as radical right partisan loyalty is not caused by entrenched anti-establishment views, but is an “illusion” produced by stable party positioning on immigration.

Second, although we find that established parties that advocate more severe immigration restrictions can pull voters from the AfD, we also demonstrate that doing so is a losing strategy, for these gains are outweighed by defections from their more immigrant-friendly electorates. Our analysis thus explains why mainstream parties do not simply absorb PRR voters by accommodating their preferences: The partisan gridlock on immigration reflects an electoral equilibrium, in which mainstream voters bind their parties to more liberal immigration policies than AfD supporters prefer (cf. Arzheimer, 2013). Moreover, we find that mainstream parties do have more flexibility in accommodating the economic preferences of AfD voters, but that this strategy has somewhat uncertain payoffs, underscoring the salience of immigration for these voters and the stability of the ensuing equilibrium.

Our study advances existing research in several ways. Though a large body of work on which we build examines the motivations of PRR voters (see Section 2), a recent review concludes that the “study of the dynamic interaction between radical right and all other

parties in postindustrial party systems is still at the beginning” (Kitschelt, 2018, 186). We conduct such an analysis, focusing on how voters respond to these positional interactions and the electoral payoffs that different parties can expect as a result. In so doing, we not only vary parties’ immigration-related positions, but also their stances on the economic dimension. This approach reveals that radical right and far left voters share some common ground (cf., Lefkofridi et al., 2014) and that accommodating right-wing immigration positions could lead to net gains among the Linke. But our results also indicate that such moves are quite risky for the Linke (and unattractive for other parties), which in turn points to the stability of the status quo. Our research thus provides further insights on the durability of electoral (re)alignments in postindustrial democracies characterized by two-dimensional competition. Existing work convincingly shows how shifting societal cleavages have paved the way for fragmented party systems (Bornschieer, 2018; Hooghe and Marks, 2018; Häusermann and Kriesi, 2015). We demonstrate similar divisions but also foreground the importance of electoral strategy – and its limits – in translating societal cleavages into radical right success.

Furthermore, in jointly examining demand and supply in this way, we shed new light on the long-running question about whether radical right voters are issue voters who cast ballots based on policy preferences or protest voters disaffected from the political establishment. Theoretically, we observe that while these voter types have distinct microfoundations, they may be empirically inseparable when mainstream parties do not compete with PRR parties on the issues most salient to their voters. That is, when mainstream parties are not responsive to radical right voters’ core demands, issue voters can be observationally indistinguishable from anti-establishment voters. Our research design illuminates that in the absence of counterfactual policy environments this equivalence gives rise to an illusion of

radical right partisan loyalty, which in turn, can lead to potentially flawed inferences about these voters lacking allegiance to the existing democratic system. Our theoretical framework and empirical evidence allow us to demonstrate why this conclusion can be misleading when established parties are out of step with public opinion from constituencies that are not their own.

2 Voter Motivations and Party Choice

The central goal of this paper is to examine how parties' positional moves affect the size and stability of the PRR vote. Our main focus relates to motives of PRR voters, building on literature that distinguishes between protest and issue voting. Given our interest in party interactions and electoral payoffs across the political spectrum, we also discuss non-PRR voters, highlighting research that investigates whether partisan attachments are sufficiently weak to cause such voters to fluidly seek out parties that best meet their issue preferences.

2.1 Populist Radical Right Voters

Following the literature (Golder, 2016; Mudde, 2010), we use the term “radical right” to describe a party family combining three ingredients. First, radical right parties are populist, calling for political power to be transferred from parties and politicians to “the people.” Second, they are nationalist, defining the people in terms of rigidly drawn national (and oftentimes ethnic) boundaries. Lastly, they are authoritarian, calling for the root-and-branch reform of the established political order around traditional morality, strong leaders, and society's “natural” hierarchies.

A voluminous literature addresses the question of why voters support PRR parties. Much

of this work has focused on the developments that have driven up “demand” for these parties,²ranging from rising immigration, to associated cultural and economic threats, to the pressures wrought by globalization (Europeanization) and austerity and accompanying shifts in groups’ social status and nationalist leanings (Dancygier, 2010; Gidron and Hall, 2017; Hooijer, 2017; Golder, 2016; Halikiopoulou et al., 2012; Hobolt and Tilley, 2016; Lancaster, 2020; Vasilopoulou, 2018).

Complementing these demand-oriented works, our study also examines the supply side, focusing on the choices of mainstream parties that either nourish or starve PRR parties of support (e.g., Art, 2011; Bustikova, 2014; Givens, 2005; Kitschelt, 2007). In particular, this paper addresses how vote-seeking parties should respond *programmatically* to the rise of the radical right, that is, the types of policy stances they should adopt, without necessarily modifying the rules of the game (Carter, 2013; Meguid, 2008). We outline two general views on this dilemma below.

Frustrated Issue Publics Can established parties capture radical right voters by moving closer to their preferred issue positions? This strategy depends on the *frustrated issue publics* view, which assumes that radical right voters are predominantly pragmatic and issue-motivated — that is, their goal is to achieve key policy outcomes (van der Brug et al., 2000). Unlike prototypical issue voters, however, radical right voters are “frustrated” by their perception that established parties will not accommodate their issue preferences. This perception generates antipathy for the political establishment and feeds into the populist accusation that established parties are out of touch with and unaccountable to “the people” (Mudde, 2010).

This model yields several key predictions. First, radical right voters’ populist sentiments are secondary to their issue preferences; although they may appear resentful and mistrusting of the political establishment, they would readily defect to mainstream parties if the latter accommodated their issue preferences. Indeed, established parties should be even more attractive to radical right voters (as issue voters), since the former possess greater legislative capacity, experience, and probability of holding office (Carter, 2013; Meguid, 2008). Thus, in the frustrated issue publics view, the populist attitudes and partisan loyalties of radical right voters are fickle and “skin-deep” – once established parties change their issue positions, radical right voters should readily follow. Second, if PRR voters are issue-motivated, they should punish their party for taking more centrist positions on core issues (cf. Tavits, 2007), rather than “following the leader” by adopting its views (Lenz, 2013).

Anti-establishment Voting In the *anti-establishment voting* view, PRR voters are distinguished foremost by their overriding distrust of political institutions and established parties (Rooduijn et al., 2016). They are instead more likely put their faith in “the people” – even to the point of labeling ordinary people as good and politicians as evil (e.g., Akkerman et al., 2014). Anti-establishment voters are thus cynical about the willingness and capacity of established parties to address their grievances. Consequentially, they are likely to view policy shifts by the latter as “cheap talk,” greatly undermining the effectiveness of issue competition (cf. Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel, 2018).

The anti-establishment voting view yields radically different predictions from the frustrated issue publics view. Most importantly, while mainstream parties can integrate frustrated issue publics by accommodating their preferences, anti-establishment voters are fun-

damentally averse to supporting established parties. The roots of this rigidity lie in factors that are inherently difficult for established parties to emulate or overcome, such as political cynicism and distrust (Foa and Mounk, 2017); the charismatic authority of radical right politicians (Lubbers et al., 2002); and blame for socio-economic developments, which have eroded the status of radical right voter bases (Gidron and Hall, 2017).

Lastly, anti-establishment voters also differ from issue voters in the relative weight that they place on political experience. Given their political cynicism, these voters are more likely to cast pure protest ballots against incumbent parties (Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel, 2018). In contrast, issue publics do not share this intrinsic aversion to incumbency, and may value it to the extent that it enhances politicians' ability to achieve desired outcomes.

We should point out that though we use the distinction between frustrated issue publics and anti-establishment voters to structure our theoretical framework, empirically we expect the PRR electorate to consist of a mixture of these two ideal types. Furthermore, it is conceivable that frustrated issue voters eventually turn into anti-establishment voters; disappointment with established parties' failure to move closer to their issue preferences can undermine trust in the political system as a whole (cf. Voogd and Dassonneville, 2020). Although we are unable to test these (likely long-term) developments, we find no evidence that such a dynamic unfolded in the 15 months during which our panel was fielded.³

By contrast, the fact that PRR parties have increasingly become part of the governing establishment may suggest that their supporters are largely issue-motivated. Empirically, populist party voters vary in their degree of anti-elite sentiment (Rooduijn, 2018), and voters of more established populist parties are less likely to hold these attitudes than are supporters of less established ones (Krause and Wagner, 2019). These findings are consistent with

the results we present below: The AfD represents a rising party that is not part of the establishment, and the vast majority of its supporters express little trust in the political system and its leaders (see also Steiner and Landwehr, 2018). But, as we elaborate below, these sentiments do not allow us to conclude that anti-establishment views predominantly structure their vote choices. Rather, they prompt us to investigate whether these voters are nonetheless responsive to mainstream parties that align with their issue preferences.

2.2 Other Voters

In systems where radical right parties are relative newcomers, their voters have, by definition, broken with existing parties, and an important question underlying the above discussion is whether this shift presents a permanent realignment or a more temporary dealignment based on issue fit. In light of the increased party system fragmentation of recent decades, similar questions pertain to non-PRR voters. While our main interest lies in examining whether mainstream parties can recapture radical right voters by accommodating these voters' issue preferences, a key strategic consideration these parties face is the electoral response of their own voters.

This concern is especially relevant as ties between voters and parties in postindustrial democracies have loosened over time and electoral volatility has risen as a result. Though voters generally stay within the same ideological bloc, party attachments to mainstream parties have become less durable as linkages between voters' socio-demographic and class backgrounds and their party choices have shifted. There is debate about whether these changes amount to a transition to a new political cleavage structure or signal a continued process of less structured dealignment.⁴ But for the purposes of our paper the relevant

implication relates to the now widely shared assumption that voters are responsive to party positioning on issues that go beyond the left-right economic dimension – such as immigration and globalization. We therefore have also to examine what mainstream parties lose by changing their positions on these salient issues.

3 The Problem of Observational Equivalence

Our discussion thus far highlights the critical role of changes in party positioning in helping us understand the drivers of voters’ electoral choices. It is only when parties change their stance on salient issues that we can assess the extent to which issue fit determines partisan attachments. This presents scholars with a challenge: In the short term, parties rarely shift positions in significant ways (de Vries and Hobolt, 2020; Ferland and Dassonneville, 2019; Hooghe and Marks, 2018). When shifts do occur within an election cycle they do not always represent the clear break that PRR voters are looking for or are even able to observe (cf., Kitschelt, 2018). To be sure, mainstream parties have over time accommodated aspects of the radical right’s program (Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020; Meguid, 2008; Spoon and Klüver, 2020), and over the last five decades West European center-left and center-right parties have adopted more negative stances on immigration in particular (Dancygier and Margalit, 2020). Moreover, in rare cases, abrupt policy shifts do take place, as, for example, when the Danish Social Democrats made a hard right turn on immigration in the late 2010s.⁵ However, as with other issues (cf., Dalton and McAllister, 2015), positional changes on immigration tend to be gradual and voters update slowly (Kitschelt, 2018). Examining how party positioning affects voter behavior thus generally requires scholars to cover several election cycles in which a number of factors (e.g., the salience of issues “owned” by the PRR, positioning of

other parties on a range of issue dimensions, party leaderships, political scandals, contextual factors, and so on) also vary, making it difficult to isolate the effect of party positioning on vote choice and the underlying nature of party attachments.

Accordingly, while studies that cover longer time periods can leverage positional shifts but face changing environments and associated measurement challenges, those focusing on the short-term evade time-varying confounds but often cannot exploit positional change. This lack of change in turn makes it difficult to accurately assess voter motivations. Concretely, in approaching the question of whether PRR voters are better described as frustrated issue publics or anti-establishment voters, we argue that, despite their different micro-foundations, these views may be observationally equivalent. For example, when frustrated issue voters perceive established parties to be unresponsive on core issues, they may well agree with anti-establishment statements like “Mainstream parties do not care about what the public thinks.” Conversely, anti-establishment voters might simply adopt the issue positions endorsed by leaders or parties that they already identify with (Lenz, 2013). Unfortunately, many kinds of data — in particular, cross-sectional data that do not contain perceptible shifts in party positioning — are unable to distinguish between these two causal sequences. When parties do not visibly change their positions on core issues, neither anti-establishment nor frustrated issue voters change their party preferences; the two models are observationally equivalent.

Instead, what distinguishes the two models empirically is the hypothesis that, if established parties do move closer to their preferred issue positions, frustrated issue voters will transfer their votes, whereas anti-establishment voters will continue to support a PRR party. This logic is summarized in Table 1. It is only under party repositioning that we are able

	Established parties move closer to radical right voters on salient issues	
	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>
Anti-establishment Voting	Stable, non-strategic radical right voting	Stable, non-strategic radical right voting
Frustrated Issue Voting	Stable, non-strategic radical right voting	Willing to vote for established parties

Table 1: Observational Equivalence of Anti-establishment and Frustrated Issue Voters.

to distinguish the two views (right column). When established parties adopt more accommodative stances, the empirical implications of the two models diverge, with frustrated issue voters moving back into the fold of established parties.

This empirical divergence frames our core research questions: By changing the positions taken by political parties on priority issues, can we also induce radical right voters to alter their party preference? And do established parties that accommodate PRR positions stand to lose more of their own voters than they gain? These questions not only speak to a longstanding debate about voter types and party attachments; they have also preoccupied centrist parties trying to formulate optimal electoral strategies against niche party challengers in Germany and beyond (Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020; Bale, 2008; Cohen, 2018; de Vries and Hobolt, 2020; Meguid, 2008; Pardos-Prado, 2015; Spoon and Klüver, 2020).

4 Descriptive Evidence: Preferences and Vote Intentions

4.1 The Rise of the AfD and the German Case

We situate our analysis in Germany, a case that was once notable for the weakness of its radical right politics, but which has recently become emblematic of the immigration controversies and populist, anti-establishment movements roiling Europe (Hager and Veit, 2019; Mader and Schoen, 2019). After a four-year grand coalition between the center-right CDU/CSU and center-left SPD and a twelve-year reign by Angela Merkel, voters in Germany expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the political dominance of the established parties, a development on which the AfD capitalized.⁶ Furthermore, the inflow of refugees preceding the 2017 Bundestag elections propelled the topic to the forefront of the political agenda.

This settings reflects trends throughout Western Europe, where immigration levels are high, and mainstream parties have been offering increasingly similar stances on this issue (Dancygier and Margalit, 2020), providing an opening for challenger parties. Moreover, though Merkel's run as chancellor is particularly long, dissatisfaction with political elites runs high across Europe (Mudde, 2010). Learning about voter behavior in the German case could therefore shed light on developments elsewhere. At the same time, Germany does represent a somewhat unique case: Its shameful Nazi past is part of the reason why a nationally successful radical right party has only emerged in more recent years. However, the typical AfD voter in our sample also resembles radical right voters in other West European countries in that AfD voters are more likely to be male, to have low levels of education, and

to perceive themselves as occupying a low rung on the social status hierarchy (Coffé 2018, Gidron and Hall 2017, Mayer 2002; see Appendix D for details). Additionally, as we show below, AfD voters do not shy away from supporting candidates endorsing violence against refugees, suggesting that Germany’s history does not place considerable constraints on the extremism of radical right voters in the 21st century. Indeed, a slight majority of *all* Germans (53%) – and 80% of AfD voters – think that it’s time that Germans put their history with national socialism behind them (“Schlusstrich ziehen”) (Staas, 2020). Finally, the German case is particularly relevant in addressing the “window of ownership opportunity” (Meguid, 2008) – the time when established parties still have the chance to co-opt the issue that a challenger party politicizes. Our study may consequently be less well suited to apply to settings where a radical right party has had a long and successful presence and is considered the “owner” of issues and sentiments that are salient among its voters.

Returning to the political situation in Germany in the months preceding the election, party-issue positioning was quite stable, giving rise to the problem of observational equivalence discussed earlier. To verify this stability, we used newspapers and party manifestos to document the positions of Germany’s leading political parties on prominent policy questions connected to immigration and whether there should be an upper limit (“Obergrenze”) on the number of refugees allowed annually into Germany. We recorded party positions from mid-2015 to early 2018, bracketing the endpoints of our survey and beginning just before the sharp uptick in refugee inflows. These positions are shown on a quarterly basis in Table 2.⁷

The question of an upper limit became increasingly salient in the lead up to the elections. Germany had received by far the most refugees of any European country, and while Merkel’s liberal stance was initially greeted with support, views soon hardened (Mader and

	2015			2016				2017				2018
	Jun.	Sep.	Dec.	Mar.	Jun.	Sep.	Dec.	Mar.	Jun.	Sep.	Dec.	Feb.
CDU												
CSU												
FDP												
SPD												
Greens												
Die Linke												
AfD												

	No clear statement		Against upper limit
	For nonzero upper limit		For complete stop

Table 2: Timeline of Party Positions on the Refugee Cap.

Schoen, 2019). Though the government pursued measures that curbed the inflow (e.g., reclassifying sending countries as “safe”; an agreement with Turkey to host refugees) and in some instances sharpened its rhetoric (especially the CSU), established parties did not shift positions on the upper limit (as shown in Table 2; similar trends hold for deportations and family reunification, two other salient issues we analyzed). Internal party disagreements made it difficult to change course on the fundamental issue of the upper limit. Accordingly, AfD supporters in our panel gave these parties very low ratings on immigration throughout the survey period.

These circumstances provided an opening for the AfD. Founded in 2013 on a platform opposing the Eurozone, the party quickly pivoted to immigration, winning 12.6 percent in the 2017 elections. It became the largest opposition party and the only one to endorse a complete halt to new refugees.

4.2 Observational Evidence of AfD Voter Loyalty

To examine attitudes and vote intentions, we drew on our 15-month, four-wave online panel survey of German respondents, which we carried out from September 2016 to December 2017. The target sample size for each wave of our survey was approximately $N = 3,000$. Respondents were sampled to be nationally representative on age, gender, and state. As is frequently the case with online panels, our sample is somewhat more educated than the population at large. To ensure that our results are not driven by the composition of our sample, we replicate the analyses below using weights that adjust the sample in terms of age, gender, and education (see Appendix C.1 for details). To our knowledge, our survey is unique in its breadth and longitudinal structure: There is no other panel study of German citizens that elicits voters' views of the political establishment vis-à-vis a PRR alternative; their self-selected issue priorities and associated preferences; their assessment of how parties rank on these self-selected issues; and how these issues in turn influence their vote choices in both an observational and experimental setting. Thus, our study is uniquely positioned to evaluate the individual-level stability and effects of these variables.

However, we also note that our approach is not designed to illuminate long-term processes relating to structural changes in the economy and society (e.g., Bornschier, 2018), or to varying organizational or ideological features of radical right parties (Art, 2011; Kitschelt, 2007). Rather, we examine party support during a time of high immigration salience, established party convergence on this contentious issue, and mistrust of political elites.

We begin by assessing the individual-level stability of AfD support using self-reported vote intention.⁸ We define AfD voters as all respondents who cast a party or a candidate ballot

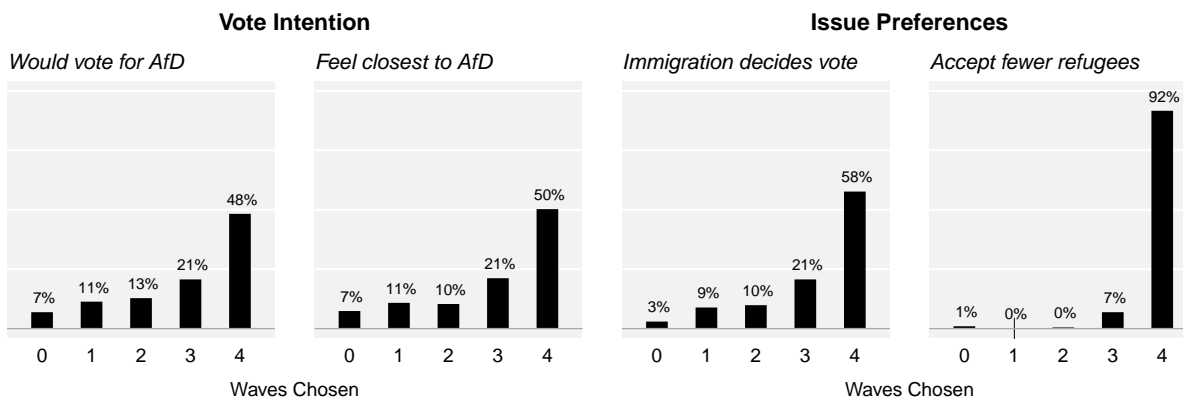


Figure 1: Persistence of Vote Intention and Issue Preferences Among AfD Voters Over Time. This figure illustrates the proportion of AfD voters who, in a given number of waves (0-4), plan to vote for the AfD; feel closest to the AfD; say that immigration decides their vote; and call for accepting fewer refugees.

for the AfD during the 2017 Bundestag election (none of our results change significantly if we restrict the definitions to either party-ballots or candidate-ballots only). We then compute the percentage of AfD voters who reported an intention to vote for the AfD in each wave (for question wordings of this and other items, see Appendix A.2). Figure 1 shows that 69% of eventual AfD voters expressed a vote intention for the AfD in at least 3 out of 4 waves. Notably, this is a much higher incidence of persistence than what we observe among other voters (CDU = 49%, SPD = 34%, Die Linke = 51%, Greens = 46%, and FDP = 34%), pointing to the relative volatility of non-PRR voters and perhaps hinting at their sensitivity to positional moves. A similarly high number of AfD voters (71%) stated that the AfD was the party they felt closest to in at least three waves. Again this value is higher than those for other established parties (CDU = 50%, SPD = 54%, Die Linke = 67%, Greens = 63%, and FDP = 33%).

AfD voters also exhibit extremely stable issue priorities and preferences. The remaining panels of Figure 1 plot the proportion of respondents who prioritize immigration and pre-

fer a reduced refugee intake. The vast majority of AfD supporters persistently state that immigration determines their vote choice, and that Germany must accept fewer refugees.

Our survey also reveals that AfD voters hold extremely negative perceptions of mainstream parties and politicians. We examined three survey items asking respondents whether they think (1) that “the AfD is for those who no longer feel at home in the politically established parties”; (2) that politicians care not at all, very little, somewhat, quite a lot, or a lot “about what people like [them] think”; and (3) whether they have no, little, some, or complete “trust in political parties.” Figure 2 shows that AfD voters almost universally hold anti-establishment attitudes. Across items and waves, roughly 90% of AfD voters hold the anti-establishment position, relative to about a quarter to 60% of non-AfD voters. This gap persists even when comparing AfD voters to supporters of another non-centrist party, Die Linke. Its supporters do not hold above-average anti-establishment views. (Notably, among non-AfD voters we observe a reduction of anti-establishment views over time, perhaps a function of parties’ campaign efforts ahead of the election.) In Germany as elsewhere, radical right voters hold dismal views of the political establishment (Rooduijn et al., 2016; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel, 2018).

These pessimistic assessments could prompt voters to cast ballots for anti-establishment parties, even if their candidates do not have a chance of winning. A brief look at ticket-splitting supports this conclusion at first glance. In Germany’s mixed electoral system voters cast two votes, one for a candidate who is elected in single-member districts by plurality, and one for the party who is allocated seats according to proportional representation. Because voters have a stronger incentive to redirect their first vote to a less favored but more competitive candidate, the large centrist parties have historically captured a larger share of

the first vote, while smaller parties have fared better in the second vote. However, when we examine 2017 vote shares at the district level, we find that the the AfD candidate vote share nearly perfectly predicts the AfD party vote share ($r = .995$), suggesting that even in districts where AfD candidates have little chance of winning, they receive support from voters who cast their party vote for the AfD. To avoid ecological bias, we also examine ticket splitting in our survey and find similar patterns. Conditional on giving her party vote to the AfD, the probability that a voter also votes for the AfD candidate is 80%. In contrast, Die Linke party voters only support the Linke candidate 66% of the time, and FDP/Green party voters support the FDP/Green candidate less than half of the time. AfD voters are thus most willing to “waste” their votes on noncompetitive candidates, a characteristic that has been used to describe expressive, anti-establishment PRR voters. The next section discusses why this inference may be misleading.

5 Experimental Evidence of Voter Disloyalty

We have shown that AfD voters have persistent vote intentions; that they hold dismal views of established political parties; and that they appear inattentive to strategic voting incentives. These attributes are consistent with the hypothesis that radical right supporters are anti-establishment voters. Yet, for reasons discussed in Section 3, they are also consistent with frustrated issue voting. To disentangle these views, we need to test whether AfD voters would alter their support for the party if other parties *counterfactually* adopted positions similar to those of the AfD.

Indeed, how to best respond to the rise of the AfD is a question that is dividing political parties in Germany. While there is a cross-party consensus that the AfD’s electoral appeal

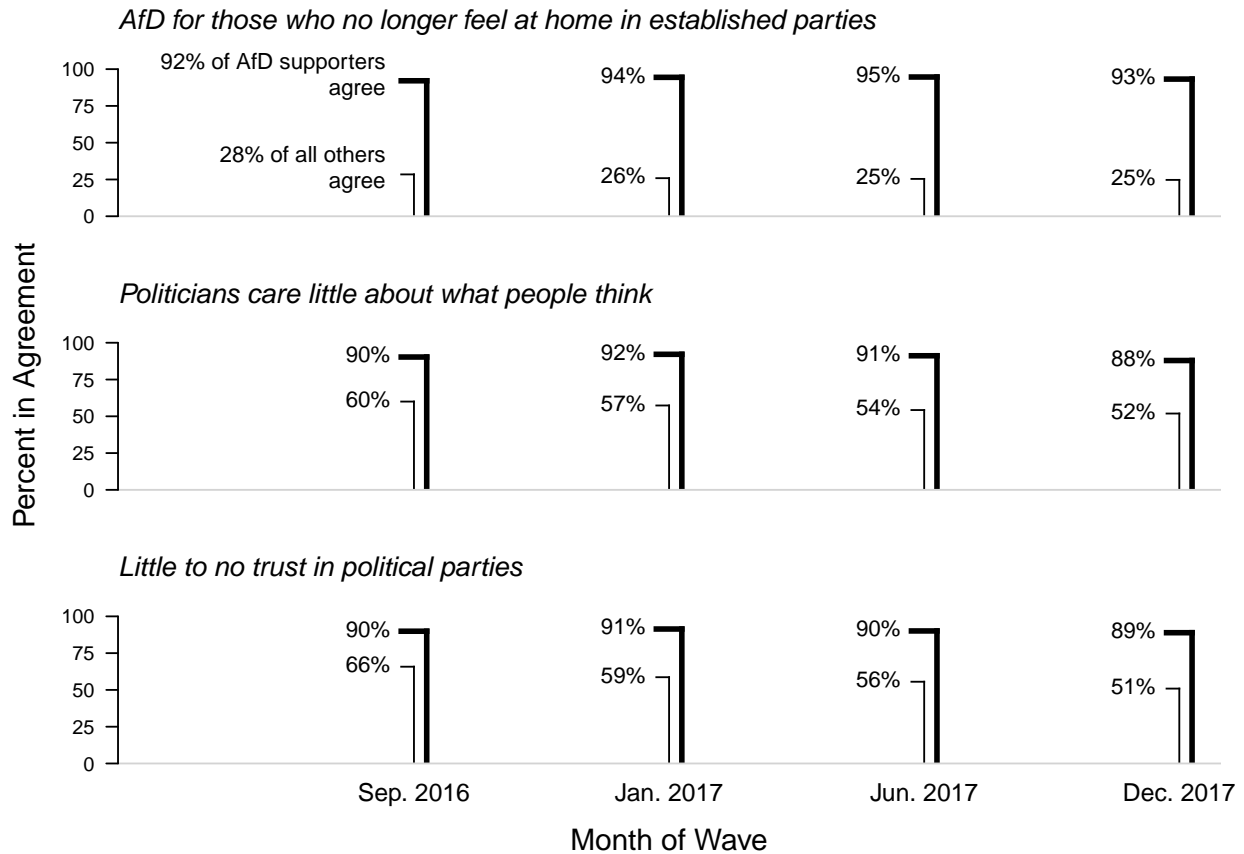


Figure 2: Prevalence of Anti-establishment Views Among AfD Supporters.

must be curbed, there is considerable disagreement about how to achieve this goal. Within the CDU, for instance, some strongly oppose a move to the right on immigration, “because for every voter that you win back with AfD-light-slogans, you lose two in the middle.”⁹ Other CDU politicians argue instead that stricter refugee policies would bring AfD voters back into the fold without alienating core supporters.¹⁰ The CSU bet on this scenario when it adopted harsh anti-immigrant rhetoric in the run-up to the 2018 Bavarian election, though its poor electoral performance suggests that this was not a winning formula. Similar debates are splitting Die Linke, with some in the party’s leadership blaming its liberal refugee stance for its weak showing in the eastern states, and others highlighting the need to more strongly

emphasize economic inequality and redistribution.¹¹

To test whether established parties can capture radical right voters by changing their policy positions, we designed a conjoint experiment (Hainmueller et al., 2014), which presented our respondents with hypothetical candidate profiles. Our experiment is uniquely able to adjudicate the two main views because it allows us to observe the behavior of AfD voters in the counterfactual setting where mainstream parties shift issue positions. If AfD voters move, it provides some evidence that AfD voters are, at least in part, frustrated issue voters. If they don't, it supports the notion that they are anti-establishment voters.

We leveraged conjoint analysis to combine policy positions and candidate characteristics that our panel indicated were important to AfD voters, allowing for richer candidate profiles and substantively meaningful choice tasks. Still, we acknowledge that some respondents might not have considered policy shifts that we assign to candidates as credible (cf., Fernandez-Vazquez, 2020). We therefore only select candidate-policy pairings that would be realistic given the current state of German politics (see below).¹² Moreover, we vary positions of candidates, not parties, as the stated policy preferences of German legislators can deviate from the party line (Zittel and Nyhuis, 2018).

5.1 Experimental Design and Methodology

Harnessing the panel structure of our study, we analyzed waves 1-3 to identify the issues most salient to voters. We presented respondents with a list of 14 issues (in randomized order) and asked them to select the 3 issues that would be most important in deciding their vote choice. While 80% of AfD voters prioritized immigration (along with linked issues of terrorism and crime (cf., Fitzgerald et al., 2012)), about 30% selected pensions – a proportion

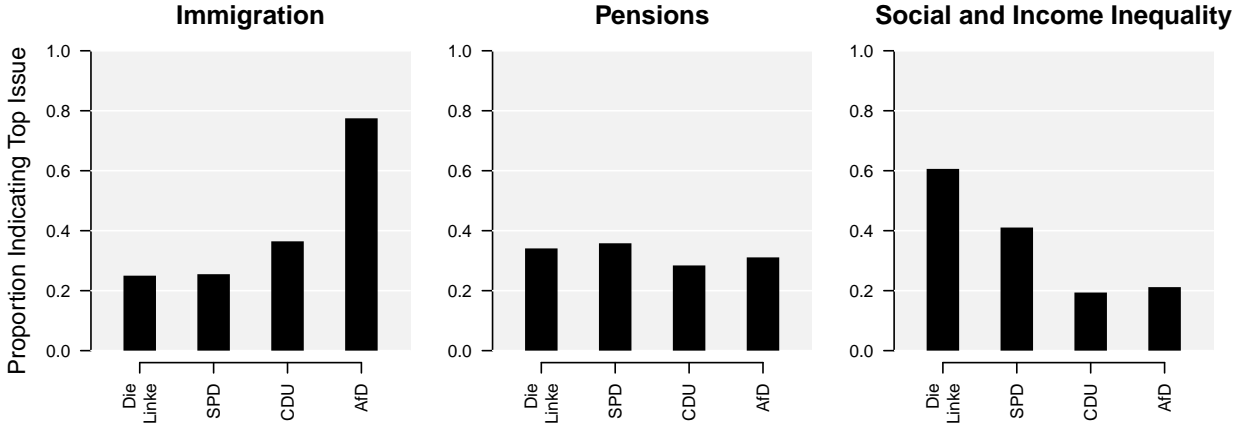


Figure 3: Issue Priorities across Voters. We plot the proportion of voters stating that immigration, pensions, or inequality are one of three issues determining their vote.

rivaling that among other voters – while about 20% selected social and income inequality (see Figure 3).¹³

Reflecting these three priorities, we composed profiles of candidates holding distinct positions on immigration, pensions, and taxation. Given its centrality to the AfD’s platform and salience among AfD supporters, our core attribute of interest is the proposed refugee policy. According to the frustrated issue voting view, AfD voters should be less likely to support the AfD if either the AfD adopts a less restrictive refugee policy or if another party proposes a more restrictive one. Alternatively, if AfD voters more closely resemble anti-establishment voters, variation in proposed refugee policies should have little effect. Turning to non-AfD voters, sizable shares also listed immigration as a top issue. This salience, combined with comparatively feeble partisan attachments, points to the electoral risks of these position shifts. Since the upper limit was among the most publicly discussed policy positions, we varied candidates stances on the number of refugees that should be allowed to enter Germany (no upper limit; 500,000; 200,000; or complete stop).¹⁴

We also examine whether especially extreme proposals related to the treatment of refugees drive some voters away from the AfD. To do so, we varied whether candidates approved of border police being permitted to shoot refugees who entered Germany unlawfully. In January 2016, then AfD leader Frauke Petry advocated this radical policy in order to restore “law and order” at the border.¹⁵

Lastly, respondents’ self-selected issue priorities underline that electoral competition revolves around at least two dimensions, comprising immigration and economic policies. Prior research has argued that mainstream party convergence on economic issues has provided a key entry point for PRR parties and that social democratic parties’ moves to the center caused vote losses to the PRR (cf., Arzheimer, 2013; Kitschelt, 2018). We therefore designed our survey to assess whether PRR parties can broaden their appeal – and non-PRR parties can gain PRR voters – by changing their positions on economic policies. Interestingly, many AfD voters either disagree with their party’s position on economic issues or view it as relatively incompetent; when asked how well the AfD represented their views on pensions, on average AfD voters rated it quite poorly (42 out of 100). To capture the causal impact of the pension issue, we varied whether a candidate had given “much” or “no thought” to the sustainability of pensions. We chose this neutral language because pension sustainability tends to be a valence issue, and it is a subject that the AfD had not focused on. The attribute is therefore meant to signal competence and attention rather than postulate a specific position. Additionally, since AfD voters gave the AfD low scores on the issue of social and income inequality (43 out of 100), we included an attribute indicating that a candidate would advocate raising, lowering, or maintaining the top tax rate.

To further differentiate the issue and anti-establishment voting views, we composed three

additional attributes: incumbency status, the candidate’s stated reason for running, and his projected competitiveness. If the issue voting view is correct, incumbency would have a positive effect, since it would signal greater legislative capability and ability to implement policy (Meguid, 2008). Conversely, anti-establishment voters should punish incumbency, especially among non-AfD candidates. Along similar lines, issue voters should be more likely to reward candidates for trying to influence policy, while anti-establishment voters should be more likely to reward candidates who run for office to give “ordinary citizens” a voice.

Finally, we include a candidates’ electoral competitiveness. While our observational data suggest that competitiveness had little to no effect on the probability that an AfD supporter chose the AfD candidate in the 2017 election, if the issue voting view is correct, this effect should vary depending on whether other candidates also propose restrictive immigration policies. Conversely, anti-establishment voters should always vote for the AfD, regardless of the projected win probability. Thus, we are chiefly interested in the interaction of this variable with the proposed immigration policies.

Each respondent was asked to complete five choice tasks. For each choice task (i.e., selecting the preferred candidate and rating each candidate on a scale of 1-7), respondents were shown four experimentally-varied candidate profiles, from the following parties: Die Linke, SPD, CDU, and AfD (see Appendix B for conjoint script and other details). We did not include the Greens or the FDP (or the option of non-voting), to avoid excessive complexity in the choice tasks that can undermine the quality of responses. Moreover, since AfD voters are too far removed ideologically from the Greens, switching support between these two parties is rather implausible. Finally, since male politicians significantly outnumber

female politicians in the AfD and in Germany as a whole, we restrict the analysis to male candidates.

5.2 Evidence for Issue Voting

We begin by showing that support for the AfD is highly responsive to party-issue positioning. To estimate the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) of AfD candidate attributes (Hainmueller et al., 2014), we focus on respondents who indicated that they had voted for the AfD party or candidate in the 2017 election. The AMCE is a quantity of theoretical interest, as we are interested in the causal effects on the probabilities of choosing AfD candidates (Bansak et al., 2020).¹⁶ The number of unique AfD voters in this conjoint analysis is 414 (about 14% of respondents in this experiment; the total number of unique respondents is 3,019). Each of the 414 respondents is presented with 5 different candidate profiles, yielding a sample size (respondent-candidate profile pairs) of 2,070. We fit a linear regression model of the binary outcome variable, *Vote for the hypothetical AfD candidate*, on sets of indicator variables measuring the levels of the AfD candidate attributes. Hainmueller et al. (2014) show that the estimated coefficients of this regression model correspond to the causal effects of each attribute on the probability that a given AfD voter selects the hypothetical AfD candidate. The results are shown in Figure 4, along with 95% confidence intervals with standard errors clustered at the respondent-level. Levels shaded in gray are excluded because they might produce unrealistic profiles (see Appendix B for details).

Figure 4 shows that AfD voters are responsive to the AfD’s issue positioning. In particular, positions on the refugee issue predominantly and significantly shape support for the AfD. Among AfD voters, the causal effect of the AfD candidate adopting a moderately less

AfD Candidate Attributes

Experience

Baseline: Never served

Served once

Served more than once

Reason for running

Baseline: Serve his party

Participate in policymaking

Politics ignores citizens

Chance of winning

Baseline: Could possibly win

Unlikely to win

Refugee policy

Baseline: Complete stop

Allow 200,000

Allow 500,000

No upper limit

Border policy

Baseline: Not permissible to use guns

Permissible to use guns

Pension policy

Baseline: Not paid much attention

Paid much attention

Tax policy

Decrease tax on rich

Baseline: Maintain tax on rich

Increase tax on rich

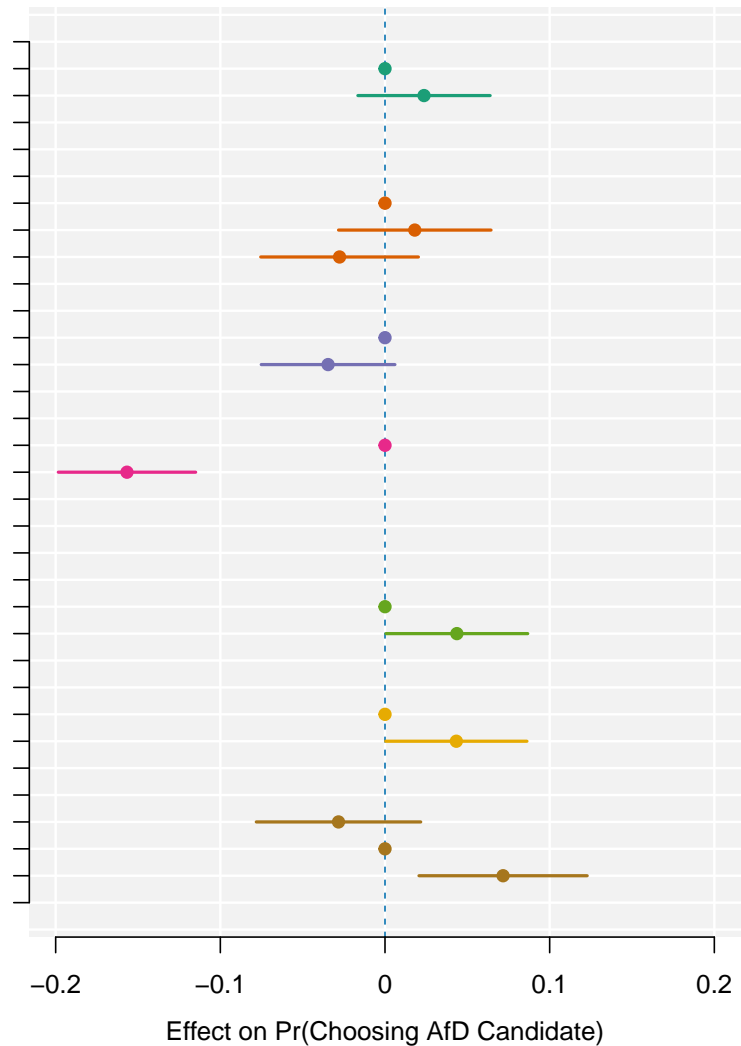


Figure 4: Causal Effects of AfD Candidate Attributes on AfD Vote Choice Among AfD Voters. Here, we plot the AMCEs of hypothetical AfD candidates' attributes on the probability that they are chosen by AfD voters. We find that the refugee policy predominates, with AfD voters being around 15 points less likely to choose an AfD candidate that does not propose a ban. We removed implausible attribute levels, denoted by gray italicized labels.

restrictive stance on immigration is to reduce support for the hypothetical AfD candidate by more than 15 percentage points. AfD voters are also sensitive to the severity of the proposed border security policy: they are about 5 percentage points *more* likely to support the AfD candidate when he condones gun violence targeted at refugees. Violent extremism appears not to repel AfD voters; it solidifies their support.

Focusing on *Experience* and *Reason for running*, neither attribute reveals substantively or statistically meaningful effects. If anything, each provides evidence *against* the anti-establishment voting account. AfD voters do not intrinsically value newcomers who state they run for office because “politics too often ignores ordinary citizens” over candidates who focus on policymaking. At the same time, AfD voters do not seem to value a candidate’s competitiveness; the chance-of-winning attribute is insignificant. This result appears consistent with anti-establishment voting: frustration with established parties leads voters to “waste their votes” on losing candidates. Yet from the perspective of issue voters, there should be little reason to support competitive candidates if these candidates are far removed from the voter’s preferred policy position.

On its own, the chance-of-winning attribute is thus difficult to interpret, and we therefore investigate its effect in two scenarios: the status quo, in which no other party proposes a ban on refugees, and the counterfactual, in which at least one party does.¹⁷ In Figure 5, we show the causal effects of AfD candidate attributes on AfD vote choice among AfD voters, subset by these two scenarios. In the status quo condition, AfD voters are indeed willing to support candidates with little chance of winning: the causal effect of the chance-of-winning attribute is insignificant and small. But in the counterfactual scenario in which another party does propose a ban, AfD voters are nearly 10 percentage points *less* likely to support a noncompetitive AfD candidate. Outside the status quo, AfD voters divert their support to non-AfD candidates who will actually be in a position to implement their desired policies. By implication, absent counterfactual party positioning, observing that PRR voters “waste” their votes should not be interpreted as a sign of expressive, anti-establishment voting.

Turning to other policy positions, we also find suggestive evidence that AfD voters are

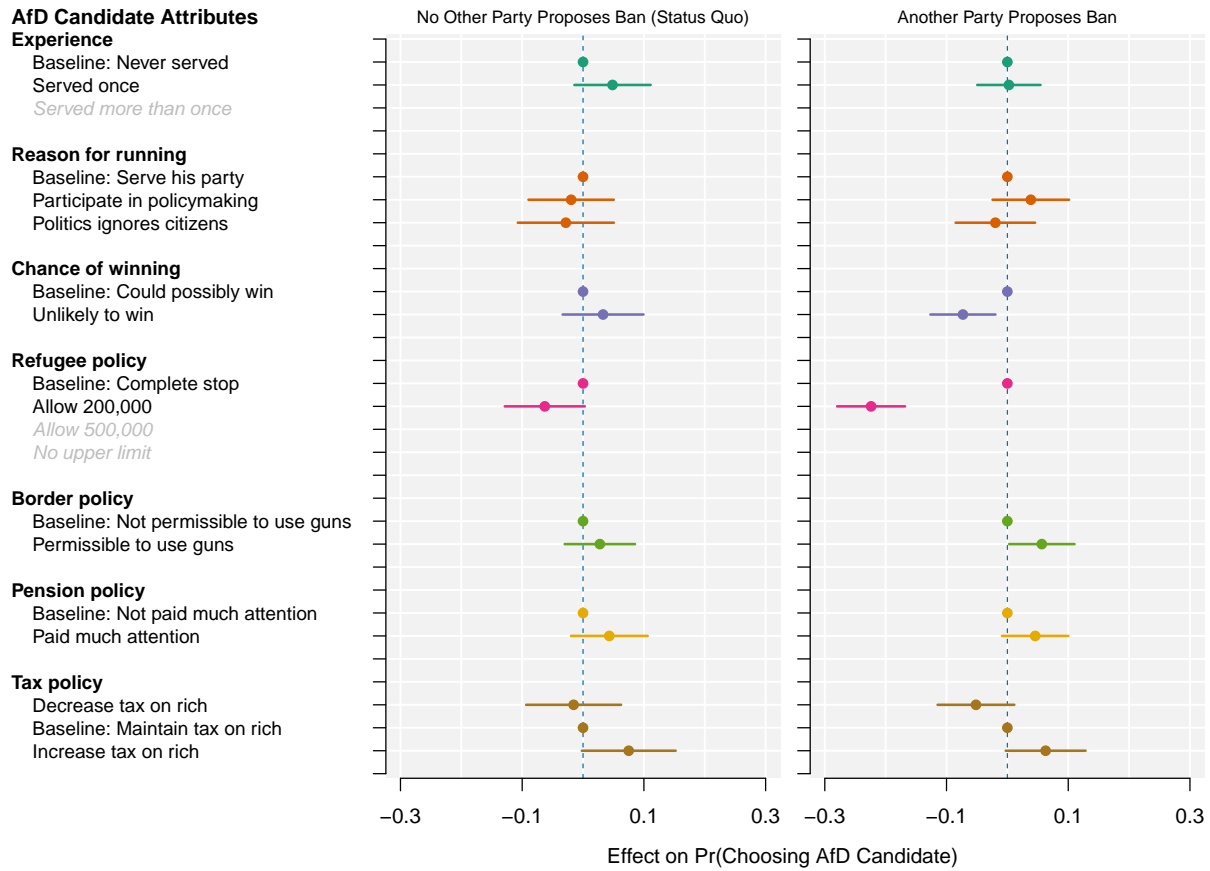


Figure 5: Causal Effects of AfD Candidate Attributes on AfD Vote Choice Among AfD Voters, Interacted With Status Quo. For AfD voters, the refugee policies proposed by other parties strongly moderate strategic voting and the effect of the AfD’s proposed refugee policy. Only when another party proposes a ban do the *Chance of winning* and *Refugee policy* attributes have a statistically significant effect on the probability that AfD voters choose AfD candidate.

potentially swayed by the candidates’ proposed pension and tax policies. AfD voters are significantly more likely to prefer candidates who are attentive to pensions and who propose increasing taxes on the rich, reflecting a broader European trend whereby many radical right party supporters are in fact economic leftists (Harteveld, 2016). These findings confirm the logic of the AfD’s actual drift to the left on pensions, taxation, and social welfare.

The findings on the tax and border policies allow us to rule out an alternative explanation, which is that AfD voters withdraw support from AfD candidates who propose less restrictive

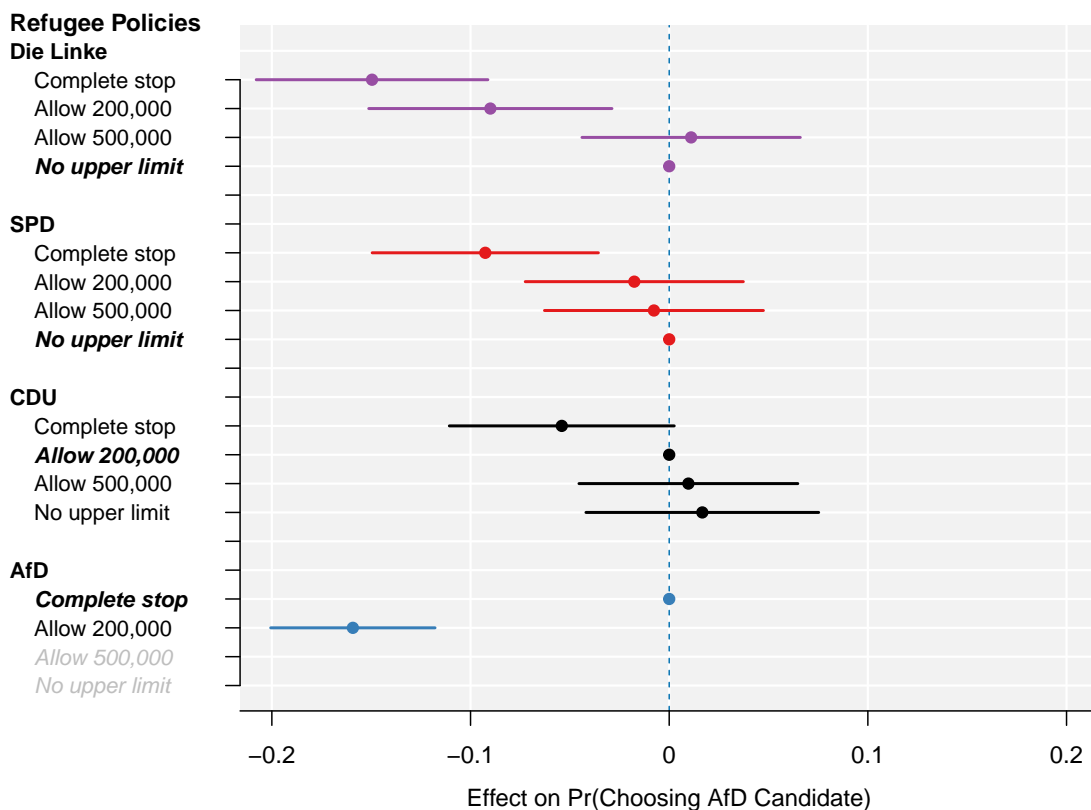


Figure 6: Causal Effects of Refugee Issue Positioning on AfD Vote Choice Among AfD Voters. This figure shows that AfD voters are between 5 and 15 points less likely to select the AfD candidate when other candidates propose stricter refugee policies. The baseline policies for each party are set to their status quo policies, denoted by bold italicized labels, while restricted policies are denoted by gray italicized labels.

refugee policies as punishment for deviating from the party program (rather than because of their issue preferences). If this mechanism were in effect, we should not find that AfD voters are sensitive to AfD candidates' aggressive position on gun usage or liberal position on taxes, neither of which reflected the party line at the time.

Although the causal effects of the other policy dimensions are substantively meaningful, ranging from 5 to 10 percentage points, positions on refugee policy clearly predominate. In particular, AfD voters heavily punish the AfD for adopting less restrictive immigration policies. The next crucial question is whether AfD voters respond to policy positions of other,

established parties. Can AfD voters be persuaded to move to established parties when those parties accommodate their issue preferences on refugee policy? We answer this question in Figure 6, where we regress the same binary outcome variable, *Vote for the hypothetical AfD candidate*, on sets of indicator variables measuring positions on the upper limit adopted by hypothetical candidates from the established parties.

In Figure 6, we set the baseline for each party so that it approximates its real-world policy position. We also represent the causal effect of refugee policy positioning of the AfD as a reference. Figure 6 shows that the mainstream parties can dramatically reduce the AfD's vote share by adopting more restrictive positions on immigration. Controlling for the AfD's position on refugees, accommodative parties can reduce the share of AfD voters who support the AfD by between 5 and 15 percentage points, with effects being largest for parties on the left. Importantly, the Linke candidate can capture AfD voters even when he does not advocate the most restrictive position.

Although the average impact of refugee policy positions is large, there might be important heterogeneity. In particular, effects could be moderated by voters' trust in political parties. If voters are opposed to the establishment and genuinely distrustful of established parties rather than expressing dissatisfaction simply because those parties don't meet their issue preferences, then they should not be swayed by changes in issue positions. Yet we found surprisingly little variation in the magnitude of the effects of refugee policy positions by political trust: in Appendix C.3, we show that AfD voters who express no trust in parties are as willing to switch their vote to these parties when they appeal to them on the basis of issues. This evidence further casts doubt on the independent importance of anti-establishment views in explaining voting behavior.¹⁸

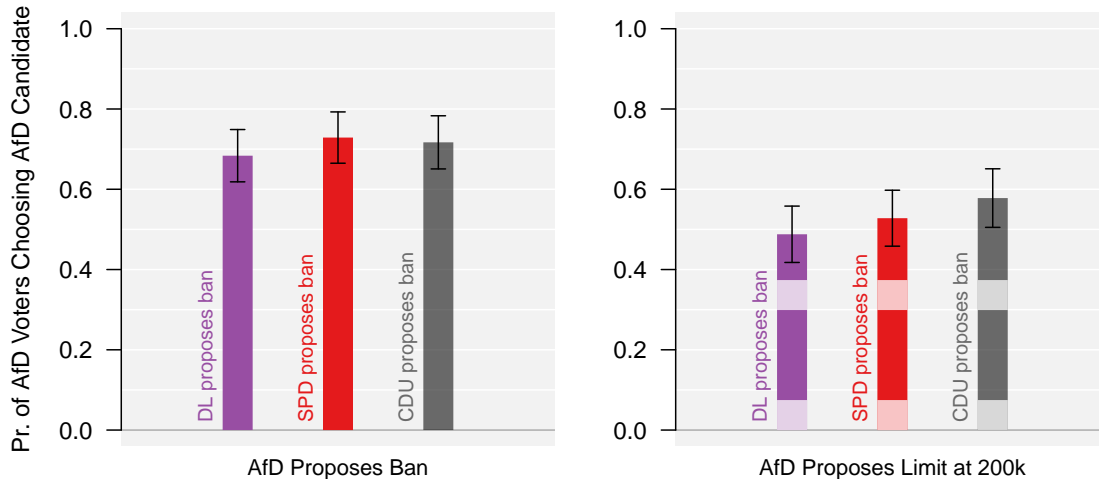


Figure 7: Interactions Between Proposed Refugee Policies. This figure illustrates the interaction between the AfD’s proposed refugee policy and the policies proposed by other candidates. For example, when the AfD candidate proposes an annual cap of 200,000 while Die Linke candidate proposes a ban, fewer than half of AfD voters choose the AfD candidate.

Instead, underscoring the importance of adopting an interactive approach, we find that the effect of other parties’ refugee policies varies most strongly in interaction with the AfD’s own position on the refugee issue. As Figure 7, which displays support levels,¹⁹ shows, when the AfD candidate proposes a less restrictive refugee policy – an upper limit of 200,000 – he can lose more than half of his voters to a candidate that proposes a complete ban. To be clear, this configuration is not a realistic scenario, but we include it here to demonstrate that positioning on the refugee issue outweighs allegiance to the AfD among many AfD voters. By contrast, when the AfD remains at the most extreme position and another party proposes a ban, it loses about 30% of its voters. The dampening of this effect suggests that the AfD enjoys greater credibility in this domain – even during this early “window of ownership opportunity” – so long as it remains fixed at the most restrictive position (Meguid, 2008; Kitschelt, 2007). This finding highlights the need to replicate our analysis in future years: if established parties lose credibility over time by failing to meet PRR voters’ issue preferences,

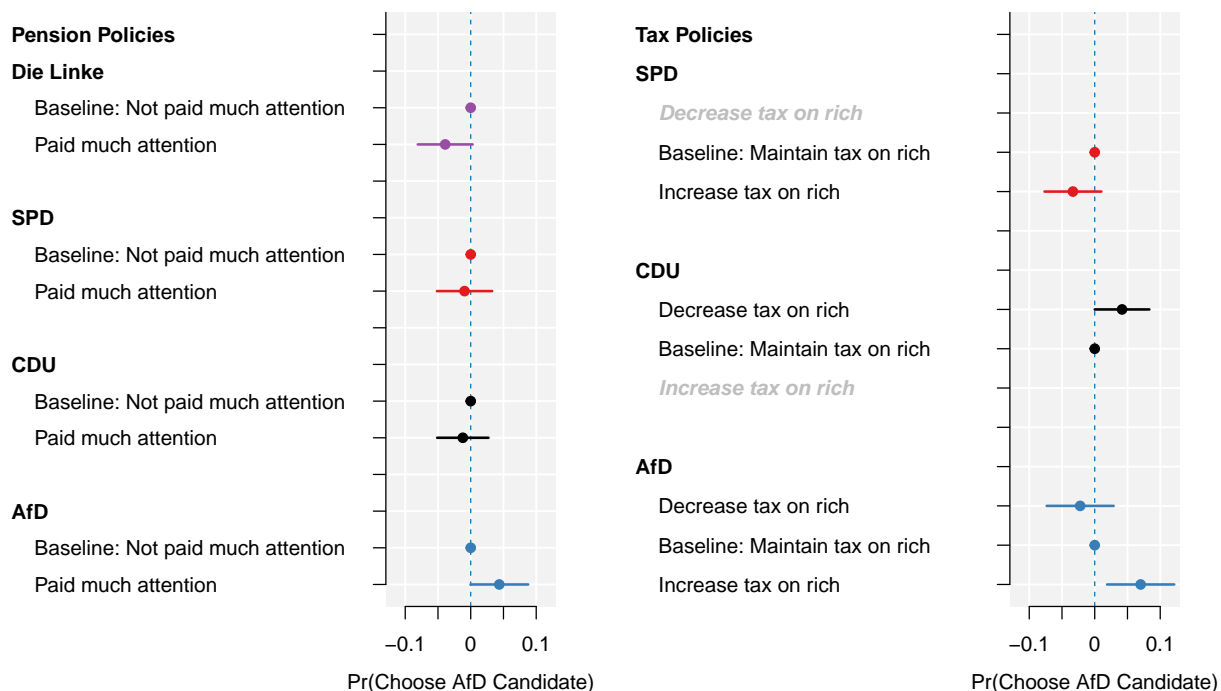


Figure 8: Causal Effects of Economic Issue Positioning on AfD Vote Choice Among AfD Voters. Restricted policies are denoted by gray italicized labels. To ensure realistic profiles, we do not vary tax positions of Die Linke.

their ability to persuade these voters might also decline while party attachment to the PRR potentially intensifies (Golder, 2016).

Finally, though the AfD gains support by becoming more attentive to pensions and embracing higher tax rates, it is less clear whether other parties can reduce the AfD’s vote share by altering positions in these two domains. Figure 8 shows that the Linke may cut the share of AfD voters by about 4% when signaling increased competence on pensions, and the SPD could potentially bring about similar reductions by advocating taxes on the rich, but these effects are only weakly statistically significant. When the CDU candidate proposes *decreased* taxes, the AfD gains close to 5%. Interestingly, we also find that highlighting attention to pensions and proposing higher taxes raise support for established parties among

their own supporters (see Appendix E).²⁰ On the whole, then, moves on the economic dimension present an uncertain path towards recapturing AfD voters, at least during a time when immigration is highly salient. But leftward moves and signals of economic competence *can* be incentive-compatible for established parties. This finding stands in stark contrast to moves on immigration, as we show next.

5.3 Why Parties and Voters Remain Stable

Thus far, we have shown that a considerable share of AfD voters are sensitive to issue positioning on immigration and open to capture by mainstream parties. Why, then, do the latter not simply absorb the AfD's constituency by co-opting its anti-immigrant platform?

We show here that, in fact, established parties have strong incentives not to accommodate AfD voters' preferences, as they can lose their own supporters by proposing harsher refugee policies. In Figure 9, for each party, we estimate the effects of refugee policy positions on parties' own supporters. In particular, we regress the binary outcome variable, *Vote for the hypothetical candidate from Party X*, on sets of indicator variables measuring the refugee policy positions of hypothetical candidates from **Party X** where **Party X** is one of Die Linke, the SPD, or the CDU.²¹

Figure 9, which presents the estimated causal effects of the refugee policy positions for each of these regressions, shows that the three established parties each stand to lose a large proportion of their own voters by becoming more restrictive on immigration, which, in the case of the SPD and CDU, more than offsets their gains from AfD voters. On average, proposing a ban leads to a loss of around 10% of each party's constituency. Post-multiplying this estimate by 2017 vote shares implies a loss of around 3%, 2.5%, and 0.8% of all voters for

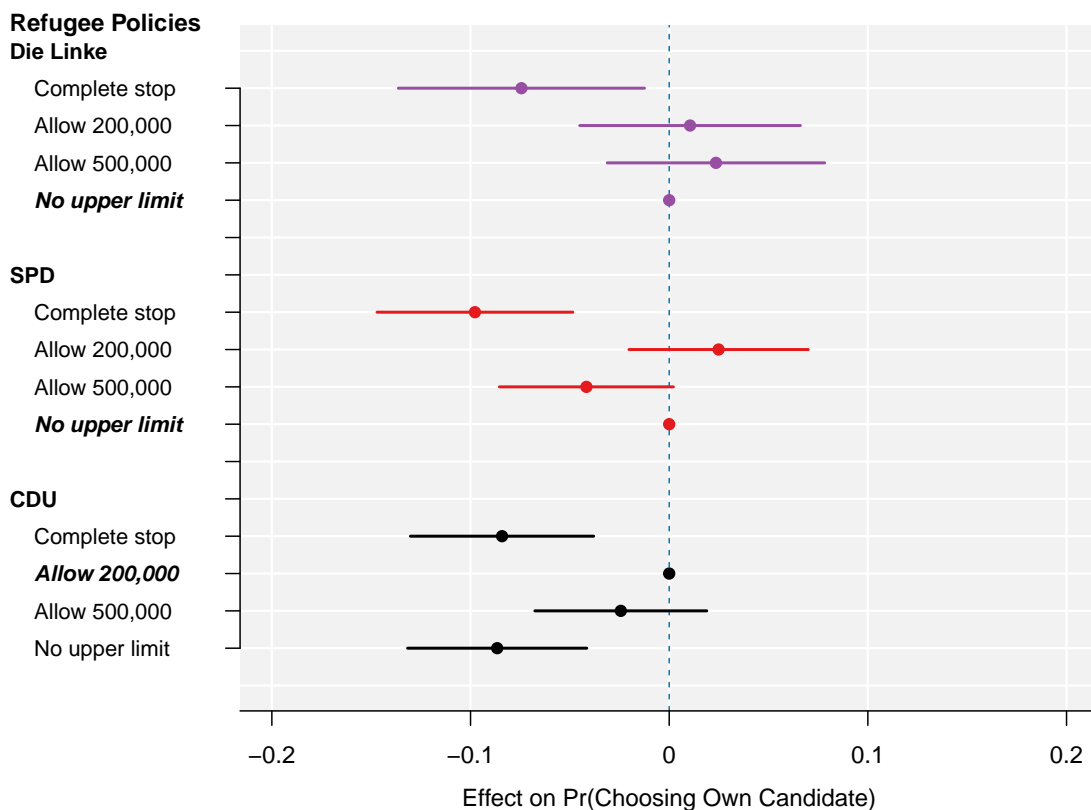


Figure 9: Causal Effects of Refugee Issue Positions on Vote Choice by Own Supporters. This figure plots the AMCE of each party’s refugee policies on their own supporters. The reference policy is set to each party’s status quo policy. For example, when the SPD candidate proposes a ban, SPD voters are 10 percentage points less likely to support him, *relative* to the SPD’s status quo position of no upper limit. As the figure shows, the ban is unpopular among supporters of the established parties and outweighs the potential influx of AfD voters for the SPD and CDU, though not the Left Party.

the CDU, SPD, and Die Linke, respectively, relative to absolute gains of around 1.3% from the AfD.²² Proposing a ban is thus potentially incentive-compatible – if highly risky – only for Die Linke. Combined with our earlier results, our findings suggest that accommodation is most relevant to Die Linke, which has in fact begun to split internally over the refugee issue (Oltermann, 2018).

5.4 Discussion of Findings

To summarize, in Section 4, we showed that AfD voters have numerous characteristics that are consistent with anti-establishment voting. Not only is support for the AfD highly stable, AfD voters feel profoundly alienated from established parties, and do not redirect their votes to them – even when strategically incentivized to do so. Our descriptive findings are consistent with the proposition that PRR voters would never vote for mainstream parties, even if the latter reconfigured their positions on salient issues.

Yet our experimental evidence reveals that a large fraction of AfD voters – in some scenarios, up to half – *are* willing to vote for established parties that accommodate their issue preferences. Furthermore, once AfD voters have the option of choosing between multiple parties that meet their preferences, they vote strategically, and are more likely to support stronger candidates.

To be sure, all experiments are subject to concerns of external validity. Conjoint experiments are especially susceptible, as they vary many attributes and present numerous counterfactual scenarios (Abramson et al., 2019; de la Cuesta et al., 2020). Encouragingly, we find strong alignment between our descriptive and experimental results. Consistent with our panel survey evidence, we find that AfD voters have intense directional preferences on refugees, which strongly determine their vote choice. Consistent with our analysis of vote returns, we experimentally recover a precise null effect of strategic voting incentives when other parties do not accommodate these preferences. Lastly, because we examine voters across the political spectrum, we can demonstrate experimentally that the status quo is an electoral equilibrium: no established party has a clear incentive to change position on im-

migration, while leftward shifts on the economic dimension have uncertain electoral returns. Though we cannot directly test the credibility of such moves nor the persistence of their electoral effects outside of the experimental setting, our results do explain why long-term policy stasis, itself a product of electoral dynamics, contributes to the success of the AfD.

6 Conclusion

A central question in the study of the populist radical right is whether its voters are forming loyal partisan identities, binding them to their parties irrespective of the choices of other parties, or whether mainstream parties can undercut the PRR by co-opting its issue positions.

Focusing on Germany, our findings suggest that the rise of the AfD – and the loyalty it appears to command – do not simply reflect a growing disenchantment with the political order, but instead emerge from an electoral equilibrium that prevents established parties from accommodating AfD voters’ issue preferences.

Our findings have nuanced implications for forecasting the stability of radical right support and the configuration of the political system as a whole. On the one hand, we show that support for the AfD rests precariously on party positioning on immigration: If an established party were incentivized to adopt more restrictive immigration policies, it could greatly undermine the AfD (Carter, 2013; Meguid, 2008). On the other hand, we also illuminate the electoral incentives that inhibit party repositioning on immigration. In this sense, the liberal preferences of more educated and cosmopolitan voters act as a powerful lever shaping radical right support (cf. Blinder et al., 2013), especially since our panel evidence shows – and our experiment backs up – that these voters are quite fickle in their partisan support. In all likelihood, views on immigration will continue to be polarized and structured by social

divisions in status and education, making it difficult for mainstream parties to integrate radical right voters into their electoral coalitions. In the absence of shifting issue priorities or preferences, support for radical right parties could indeed be stable, even without strong partisan loyalties.

To further explore the role of partisan identities, our study should be replicated in countries where PRR parties have had a longer presence and appear to command loyal support (e.g., France). It is possible that, in these cases, voters stick with PRR parties because they have developed deeper partisan attachments than the AfD has been able to foster in its short life span (cf. Voogd and Dassonneville, 2020). While our findings caution against this inference absent additional evidence on voter preferences and party positioning, it is one that future work should address by leveraging variation in how established, centrist parties position themselves on salient issues.

Encouragingly, we find that AfD voters hold multidimensional preferences, making it possible to potentially undercut the AfD by lowering the salience of immigration (cf. Arzheimer, 2009) and accommodating their voters' preferences on the economic dimension. Importantly, unlike positioning on immigration, these shifts are largely compatible with the electoral incentives faced by mainstream parties. At the same time, our results also suggest that if radical right parties continue to drift leftwards on economic issues and build competence in this area, this strategy may well lose its bite. Future research should thus delve more deeply into how changing the salience and positions of different types of economic policies and associated competencies can reshuffle voter support.

Finally, although many AfD voters change partisan allegiances based on issue fit, we also find that nearly half never do. Interestingly, anti-establishment attitudes do not explain this

loyalty. Rather, being male and especially disapproving of refugees best predict this unwavering support (see Appendix D). On the one hand, this finding might bode well for democratic stability. Indeed, most of our analyses demonstrate that opposition to the political order has little independent explanatory power. On the other hand, that anti-establishment views do not cause AfD support suggests that radical right parties won't lose the backing of their core electorate when and if these parties become part of the political establishment, so long as they remain fiercely xenophobic. By implication, the erosion of democratic norms that can accompany the rise of radical right parties could reflect a troubling political bargain: even when xenophobic voters are not drawn in by the anti-democratic impulses of radical right parties, future research should examine whether they are willing to accept a weakening of democratic norms if they are promised closed borders in return.

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Supplemental Material Supplemental Material for this article is available online at the CPS website [insert].

Notes

¹We find that the AfD's own position on immigration moderates this effect, suggesting that the party enjoys a first-mover advantage (Kitschelt, 2007; Meguid, 2008), a point we discuss in Section 5.

²Additionally, scholars have examined individual-level attributes (e.g., Lubbers et al., 2002; Ivarsson, 2008; Rydgren, 2008; Mayer, 2013). We present AfD voters' individual traits in Appendix D.

³For example, we find no over-time increase in anti-establishment views among voters who in wave 1 agreed that established parties do not listen to voters' concerns about refugees (see Appendix Table D.3.1). On the reinforcing relationship between political discontent and anti-establishment voting see also Rooduijn et al. (2016).

⁴For recent contributions to this extensive literature, see, e.g., Dassonneville (2018), de Vries and Hobolt (2020) and Hooghe and Marks (2018).

⁵Leading up to the 2018 election, Sweden's Social Democrats also proposed harsher immigration policies.

⁶The AfD's 2017 manifesto denounces the "omnipotence" of the "political oligarchy," represented by the

major parties and calls for power to be returned to the people (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, 8).

⁷We searched German-language newspapers for statements relating to the Obergrenze by leading party figures, covering 15 newspapers and manifestos.

⁸While vote intention for PRR parties may be biased due to social desirability, polls accurately forecast the AfD's 2017 vote share. Similarly, we do not find strong evidence of underreporting in our panel, wherein reported vote intention generally aligned with actual election results (see Appendix F).

⁹"Ruprecht Polenz: 'Hört auf, immer nur über Flüchtlinge zu reden!'" November 5, 2017. *Die Zeit*.

¹⁰"Tillich: 'Leute wollen, dass Deutschland Deutschland bleibt.'" September 30, 2017, *Berliner Morgenpost*.

¹¹"Konflikt bei der Linken: Wagenknecht will neue Flüchtlingspolitik ihrer Partei", October 20, 2017, Spiegel Online, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/sahra-wagenknecht-linken-fraktionschefin-will-neue-fluechtlingspolitik-a-1173852.html>

¹²Note also that if some respondents do not find these policy shifts credible, this would lower evidence of issue-based party-switching, making our results a conservative, lower-bound estimate of the prevalence of frustrated issue voters among the AfD's electorate.

¹³ Figure 3 shows results from Wave 3; results are similar for all other waves.

¹⁴Though a complete halt would be a dramatic policy shift for the SPD, the party did agree to a drastic tightening of asylum laws in 1992, requiring a constitutional change. More recently, the party has been split on how to best control inflows (see Haselberger and Monath, 2018).

¹⁵See Zeit Online, "AfD will Flüchtlinge notfalls mit Waffengewalt stoppen." January 30, 2016 (<https://www.zeit.de/politik/01/frauke-petry-afd-grenzschutz-auf-fluechtlinge-schiessen>). So that our conjoint analysis can generalize more easily outside Germany we did not choose an extremist stance related to Germany's Nazi past.

¹⁶While there is a debate about the AMCE's interpretability when preferences vary in direction and intensity (for arguments against/in favor, see Abramson et al. (2019)/Bansak et al. (2020), respectively), our panel evidence demonstrates that AfD voters hold near-uniform preferences on the refugee issue, in both direction and intensity. Our substantive conclusions are thus robust to this concern.

¹⁷Note that this analysis of counterfactual scenarios shows the importance of explicitly considering profile

distributions in conjoint analysis (de la Cuesta et al., 2020).

¹⁸See also Neuner and Wratil (2020) on the weak effects of anti-elite priorities among German voters.

¹⁹Because the difference in the AMCE can depend on the reference category (Leeper et al., 2020), in this analysis we report and compare the support *level* for the AfD candidate proposing a refugee ban vs. a less restrictive policy.

²⁰Note that CDU candidates never propose raising taxes, but CDU voters penalize CDU candidates who propose decreased taxes.

²¹In this conjoint analysis, the number of unique voters for each party are 482, 760, and 756 for Die Linke, the SPD, and the CDU, respectively. Because each respondent evaluates five choice tasks, the sample sizes (respondent-candidate profile pairs) of those three parties are 2, 410, 3, 800, and 3, 780, respectively.

²²In Appendix D.3 we show the average treatment effects for all voting respondents of moving to a ban (Table D.3.2). Relative to their most popular policy, all non-AfD candidates lose between 2% to 5% of voting respondents by proposing a ban.

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Online Appendix:

Competing for Loyalists?

How Party Positioning Affects Populist Radical Right Voting

Comparative Political Studies

Winston Chou

Rafaela Dancygier

Naoki Egami

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A Panel Survey Data

A.1 Survey Administration

The Respondi panel covers the online, 18+ German population. Our initial sample (wave 1) was sampled from Respondi’s panel to be nationally representative on age, gender, and state. Respondi’s quality standards, along with further details on their sampling methodology, are reported below:

Membership and participation are voluntary and follow a double opt-in registration process. The panel is actively and centrally managed by a professional panel team. In order to ensure a high standard of quality, the panel undergoes a continuous quality control process using a thorough scoring and controlling system. Since we recruit via our own opinion platforms and the telephone, the focus is on intrinsic motivation thus preventing sample bias due to “professional” respondents. A guaranteed panel response rate of 60% within the first seven days serves as proof of this high standard of quality (Respondi, “Quality Standards”).

Our panel survey design was archived in the Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP) repository (#20170321AA). As the project evolved, we introduced the conjoint experiment in Wave 4 to gain additional leverage on our research questions. Please note, however, that the conjoint experiment in this paper was not pre-registered.

Our panel survey consisted of 4 waves, with the first wave consisting of 3435 respondents. We added fresh samples in each wave, both to avoid panel conditioning and to maintain the per-wave sample size at close to 3000. We also embedded a simple attention check every wave and analyze only observations that passed this check. Our 15-month panel lasted from September 2016 to December 2017, bracketing the German federal election in September 2017. In each wave, we retained about 70% of respondents from each previous wave. Around 44% of respondents participated in all four waves.

Wave	Date	Sample Size	Fresh Sample	Sample Size (Analyze)
Wave 1	09/05/2016 – 09/23/2016	3435	–	3419
Wave 2	01/04/2017 – 01/17/2017	2907	10.3 %	2883
Wave 3	06/19/2017 – 06/30/2017	3538	38.7 %	3274
Wave 4	12/07/2017 – 12/22/2017	3083	23.1 %	3019

Table A.1.1: Sampling Design.

	Until Wave 1	Until Wave 2	Until Wave 3	Until Wave 4
From Wave 1	100	75.9	58.0	44.2
From Wave 2	–	100	74.6	56.3
From Wave 3	–	–	100	67.0
From Wave 4	–	–	–	100

Table A.1.2: Attrition Rate.

A.2 Survey Question Wording

- “Vote intention if elections on Sunday”

If the federal elections were held this Sunday, which party would you vote for? Please answer this question even if you are not entitled to vote. This information is very important for the scientific analysis of our study. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will remain anonymous.

1. CDU/CSU (Christlich Demokratische Union/ Christlich Soziale Union)
2. SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)
3. Die Linke
4. Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen
5. FDP (Freie Demokratische Partei Deutschlands)
6. AfD (Alternative für Deutschland)
7. Piraten Partei
8. NPD (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands)
9. FW (Freie Wähler)
10. Tierschutzpartei
11. ÖDP (Ökologisch-Demokratische Partei)
12. Republikaner
13. Other [write in]
14. I would not vote
15. Don't know
16. No answer

- “Closeness to parties”

There are many political parties in Germany. How close do you feel to the following parties? Use a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means that you do not at all feel close to a party, and 100 means that you feel very close to the party. (Note: “no answer” was an option for each slider)

1. CDU (Christlich Demokratische Union) (slider 0-100)
2. CSU (Christlich Soziale Union) (slider 0-100)
3. SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands) (slider 0-100)
4. AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) (slider 0-100)
5. Die Linke (slider 0-100)
6. Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen (slider 0-100)
7. FDP (Freie Demokratische Partei Deutschlands) (slider 0-100)
8. NPD (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands) (slider 0-100)
9. Republikaner (slider 0-100)

- “Established parties listening to concerns about refugees”

And do you think that the established parties are listening to the German publics’ concerns in relation to the inflow of refugees? When it comes to the inflow of refugees, established parties:

1. Listen carefully
2. Listen somewhat
3. Don’t tend to listen
4. Don’t listen at all

to the concerns of German citizens.

- “Party best able to handle refugee crisis”

Germany has been receiving large numbers of refugees. What party do you think is best able to handle the refugee issue?

1. CDU/CSU (Christlich Demokratische Union / Christlich Soziale Union)
2. SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)
3. Die Linke
4. Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen
5. FDP (Freie Demokratische Partei Deutschlands)
6. AfD (Alternative für Deutschland)
7. NPD (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands)
8. Republikaner
9. No party
10. Other party [write in]
11. Don’t know

- “The AfD is an alternative for all those who no longer feel at home in the politically established parties”
 1. Agree completely
 2. Agree somewhat
 3. Disagree somewhat
 4. Disagree completely

- “How much would you say that politicians care what people like you think?”
 1. Not at all
 2. Very little
 3. Some
 4. Quite a lot
 5. A lot

- “Please tell me how much you personally trust each of the institutions listed below.”
I trust political parties:
 1. completely
 2. somewhat
 3. not very much
 4. not at all

- “Issue deciding vote choice”

Germany is facing a set of different issues, and political parties deal with these issues in different ways. Which of these issues are most important when it comes to deciding which party to vote for during the general election? Please list three issues (Note that the order of issues was randomized across respondents and waves).

- Immigration
- Education
- Pensions
- Health and health insurance
- Crime
- Unemployment
- Environment, climate and energy
- Terrorism
- Rising prices, rising cost of living, inflation
- Economic situation

- Construction of housing
- Gender equality
- Foreign policy
- Income inequality/social equality
- Other [write in]
- Don't know

- “Issue allocation for vote choice” for three issues picked.

And how important is each issue when it comes to deciding your vote choice? If you had a total of ten points to allocate across the issues that you just selected, how would you allocate the points? The more points you allocate to an issue, the more important the issue is to you.

- “Issue fit” for three issues picked.

And how well do you think the following parties represent your views on these issues? Use a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means that the party does not represent your views at all on an issue and 100 means the party represents your views very well.

- CDU/CSU (Christlich Demokratische Union/Christlich Soziale Union)
- SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)
- AfD (Alternative für Deutschland)
- Die Linke
- Bündnis 90/Die Grünen
- FDP (Freie Demokratische Partei Deutschlands)

- “Attitude toward refugee policies”

Now we will ask you a few additional questions about refugees in Germany, a topic on which there are many different opinions. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? “The number of refugees should be reduced.”

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Disagree strongly

B Design of Conjoint Experiment

B.1 Experimental Design

Our conjoint experiment prompt was worded as follows

Here are four hypothetical candidates for the Bundestag. Please choose the candidate you would be most likely to vote for if the election was held next Sunday. Also, rank each candidate overall on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 meaning you strongly disapprove of the candidate and 7 meaning you strongly approve of the candidate. Please note that the candidates are similar except for the attributes below.

Each respondent saw five screens. Four profiles with eight attributes were shown on each screen. The first attribute, Party, was fixed on all screens as Die Linke, SPD, CDU, and AfD, both to avoid confusion and to allow each respondent to choose an option from one of these four parties on every screen. Among the remaining 7 attributes, the first three rows (Experience, Reason for running, and Chance of winning) were shown in the same order. However, levels in each factor are randomized. The order and levels of the four remaining rows were randomized. In order to maintain realistic profiles, we imposed randomized restrictions; for example, AfD candidates could not have previously served for several terms in the Bundestag and could not propose to accept all or 500,000 refugees per year, as this would not produce a plausible profile. Complete details on our randomization restrictions are reported in the following table.

Factor	Levels	Note
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) In Bundestag for the first time (2) Previously served one term in Bundestag (3) Previously served for several terms in Bundestag 	Do not assign to AfD
Reason for running	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Because politics too often ignores ordinary citizens (2) To continue to serve his party (3) To participate in policymaking 	
Chance of winning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) This candidate is expected to win the support of many voters and could possibly enter the Bundestag (2) This candidate is expected to win the support of few voters and will probably not enter the Bundestag. 	Half of the screens should show this attribute for one candidate and the other half should show this attribute for two candidates. A maximum of two candidates should have this attribute for any screen.
Refugee policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) There must be a complete stop to the arrival of refugees (2) There should be an annual upper limit of 200,000 (3) There should be an annual upper limit of 500,000 (4) There should not be a limit to the number of refugees 	Do not assign to AfD Do not assign to AfD
Border policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The German border police should be allowed to use gun violence against refugees who come to Germany illegally (2) The German border police should not be allowed to use gun violence against refugees who come to Germany illegally 	Do not assign to SPD
Pension Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Has paid much attention to the question of how to sustainably secure pensions and the pension level (2) Has not paid much attention to the question of how to sustainably secure pensions and the pension level 	
Tax Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The top tax rate for the rich must increase (2) The top tax rate for the rich should stay the same (3) The top tax rate for the rich should be decreased 	Do not assign to CDU Do not assign to Die Linke Do not assign to Die Linke and SPD

Table B: Factors and Levels with Randomization Restrictions.

B.2 Example


Politische Langzeitstudie

13%

Partei	Die Linke	SPD	CDU	AFD
Wie lange im Bundestag	TODO	TODO	TODO	TODO
Persönlicher Anlass für das Kandidieren	TODO	TODO	TODO	TODO
Wahlprognose	TODO	TODO	TODO	TODO
Position: Rente	TODO	TODO	TODO	TODO
Position: Soziale Gerechtigkeit	TODO	TODO	TODO	TODO
Position: Aufnahme von Flüchtlingen	TODO	TODO	TODO	TODO
Position: Grenzpolitik	TODO	TODO	TODO	TODO

Ich würde am ehesten für diesen Kandidaten stimmen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meine Bewertung dieses Kandidaten (1= lehne ab, 7= befürworte)	<input type="text" value="--Bitte Auswählen--"/> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; width: 150px;"> --Bitte Auswählen-- 1 = lehne ab 2 3 4 5 6 7 = befürworte </div>	<input type="text" value="--Bitte Auswählen--"/>	<input type="text" value="--Bitte Auswählen--"/>	<input type="text" value="--Bitte Auswählen--"/>

Figure B: Conjoint Experimental Design

C Robustness Checks

C.1 Survey Weights

We estimated sampling weights to adjust for the difference between the data used in the conjoint analysis and a nationally representative sample. The weights adjust the sample to the demographic distributions of Germany as derived from the European Social Survey (Round 8, released on 30th of May 2018, weighted by its sampling weights) in terms of gender, age and education. In particular, we use entropy balancing²³ to compute sampling weights that make the weighted sample marginals close to the population marginals for the three variables (gender, age, and education). Then, we computed the difference between our main results reported in the paper and the results from weighted samples. The results are substantively similar for all main results reported in Figures 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9 without using these weights.

Difference between Unweighted and Weighted Results:
Average Marginal Component Effects Among AfD Voters

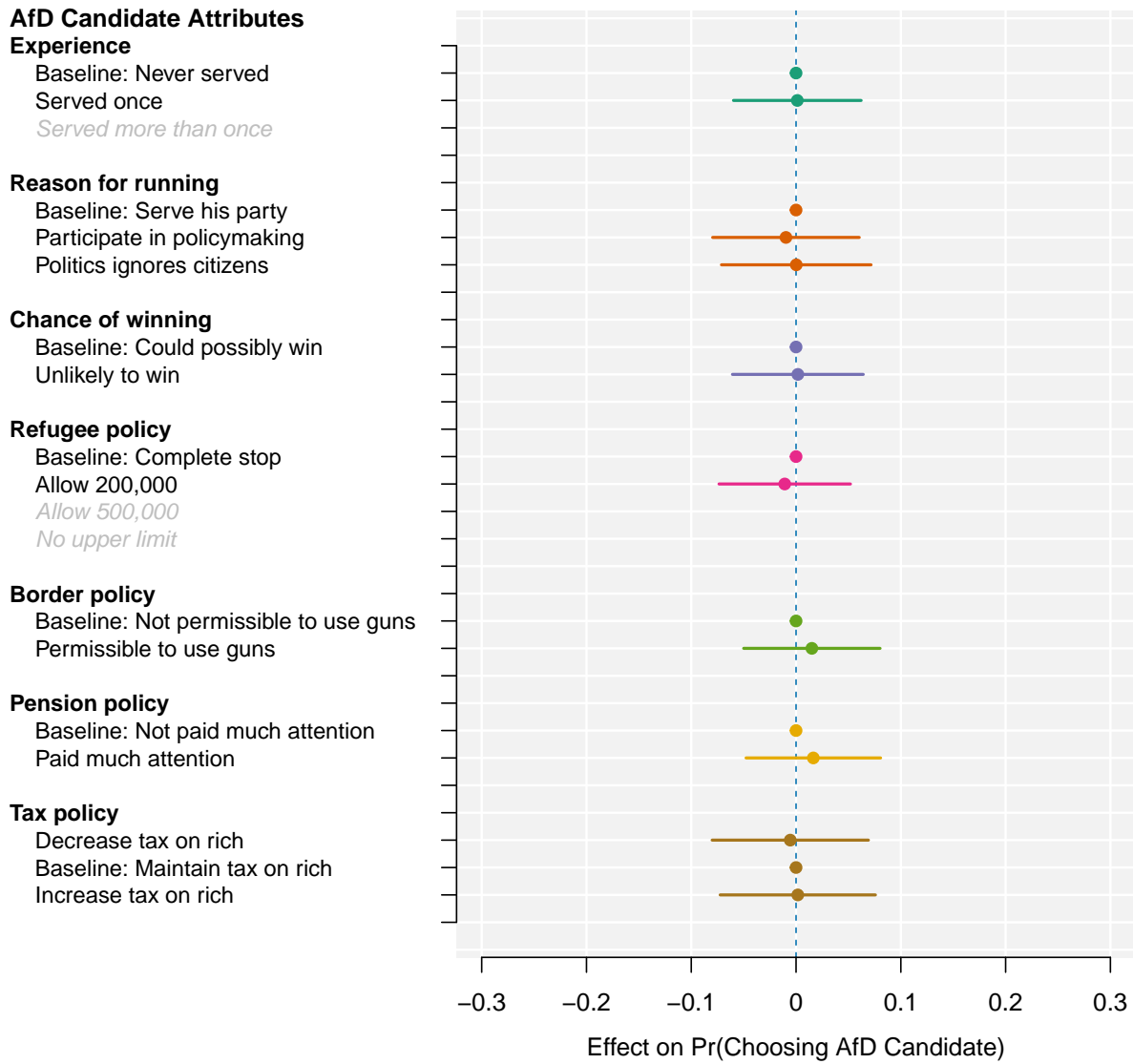


Figure C.1.1: Difference Between Weighted and Unweighted Results for Figure 4.

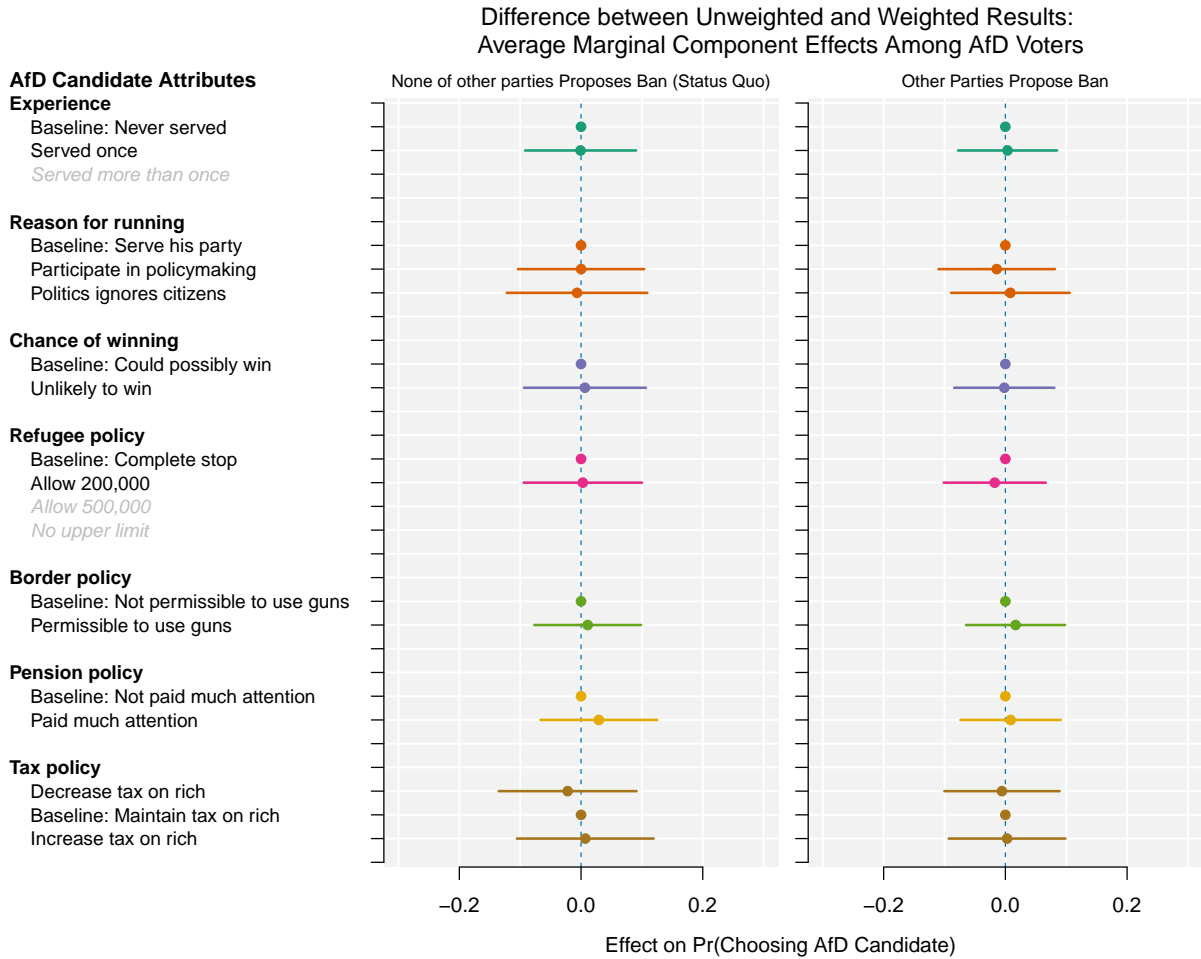


Figure C.1.2: Difference Between Weighted and Unweighted Results for Figure 5.

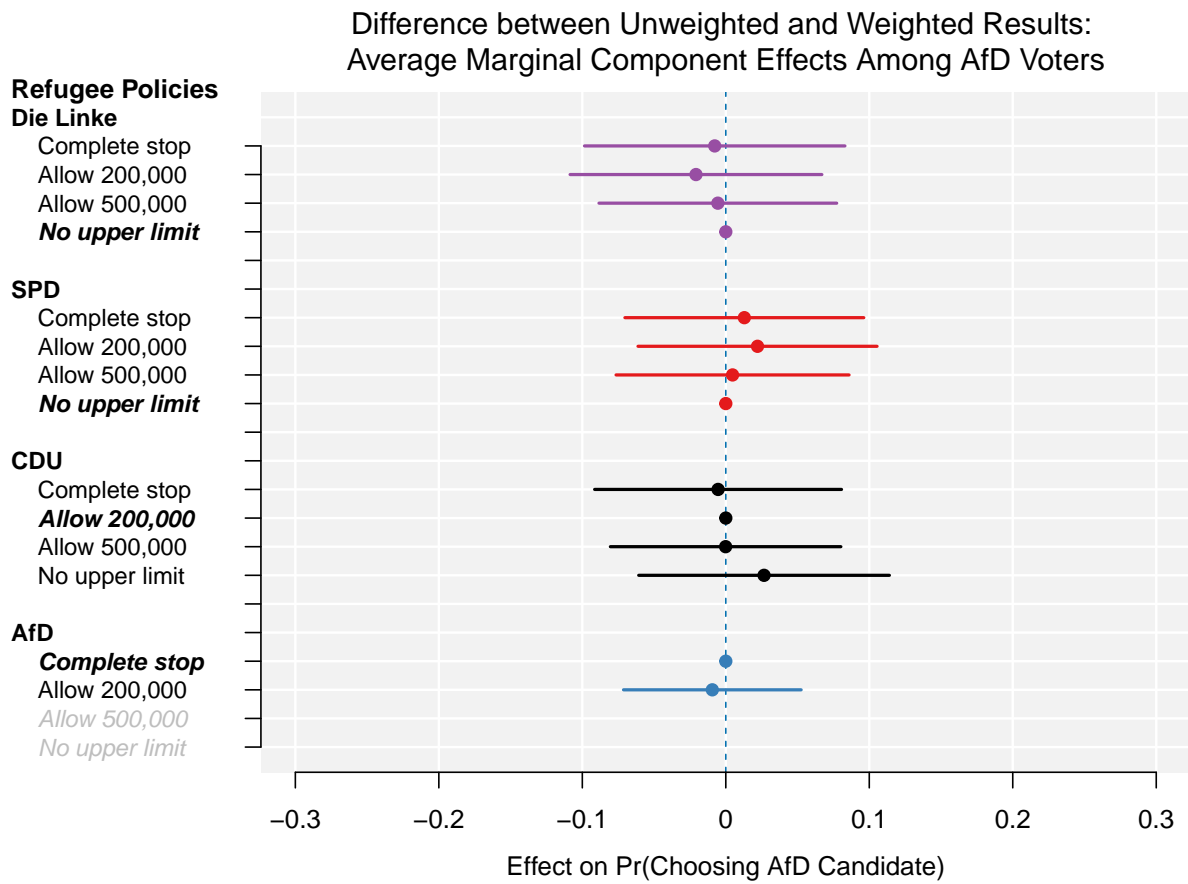


Figure C.1.3: Difference Between Weighted and Unweighted Results for Figure 6.

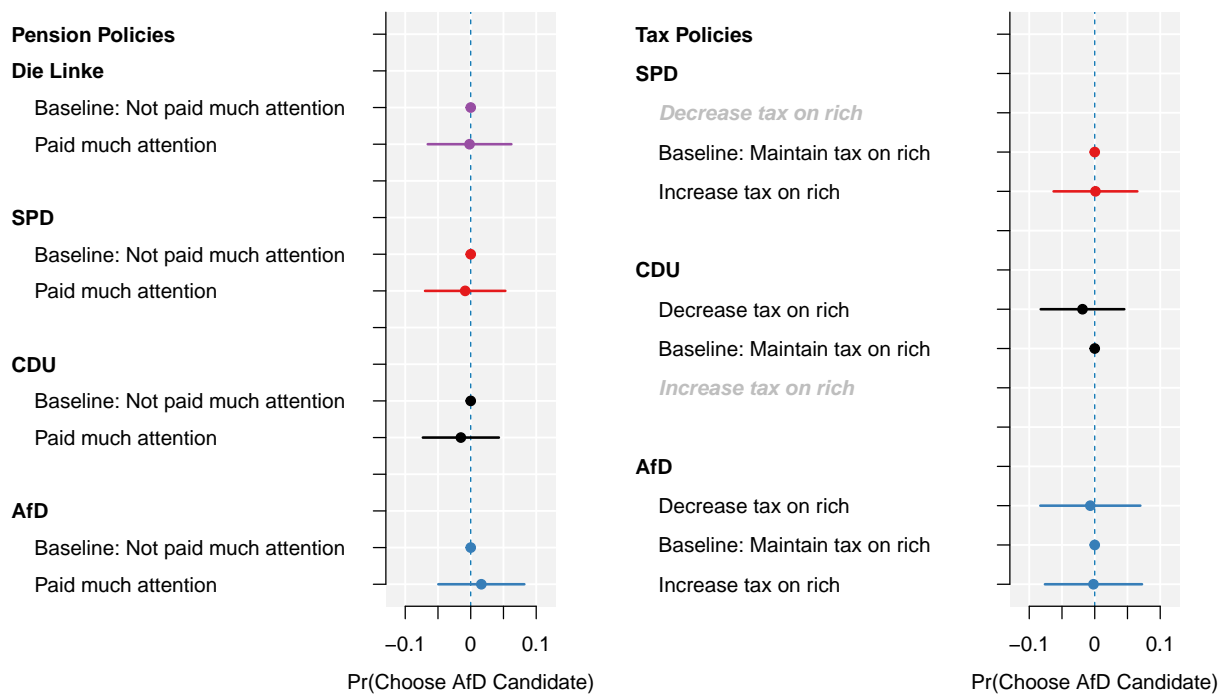


Figure C.1.4: Difference Between Weighted and Unweighted Results for Figure 8.

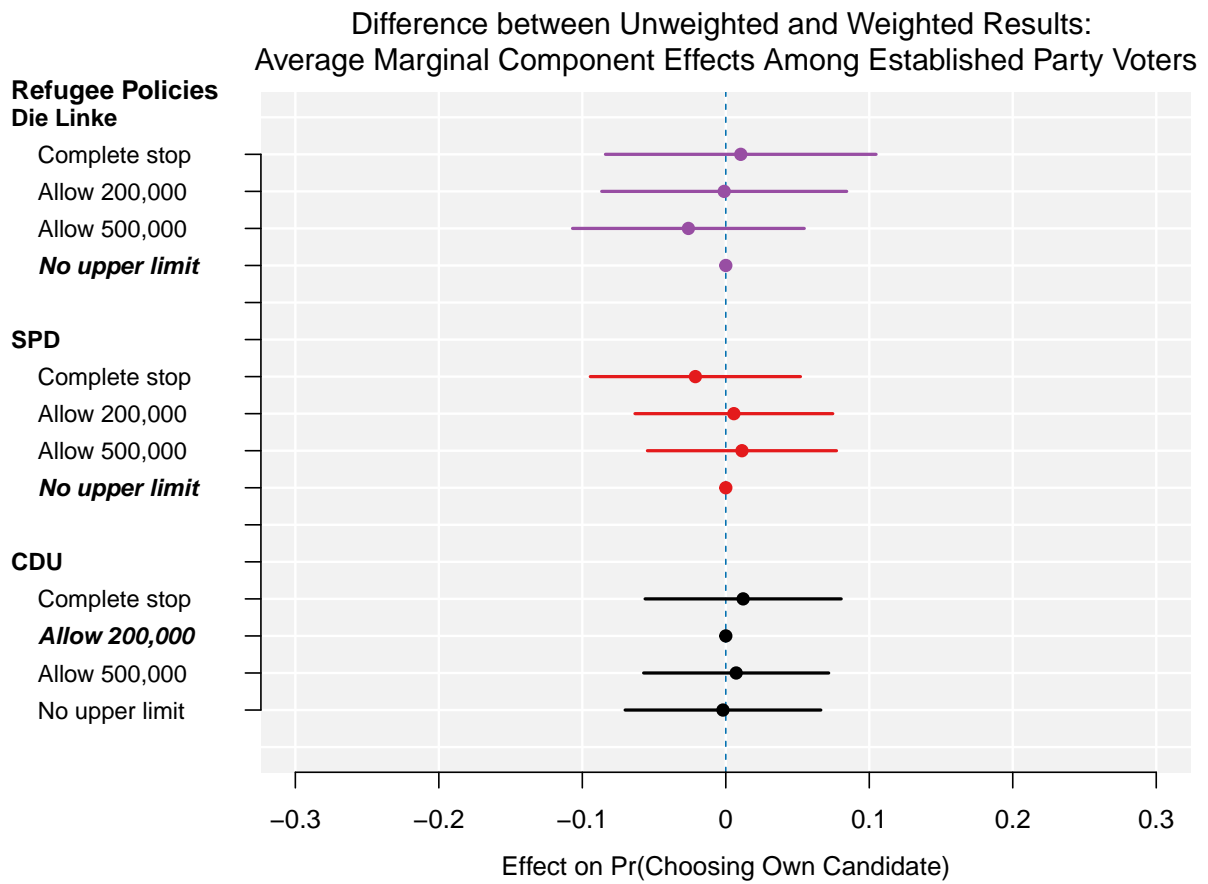


Figure C.1.5: Difference Between Weighted and Unweighted Results for Figure 9.

C.2 Scale as Dependent Variable

The following analyses correspond to Figures 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9, though with the dependent variable as a candidate's rating on the 1-7 scale, rather than the probability that he is chosen. We find similar results when using this dependent variable. See figure captions for details.

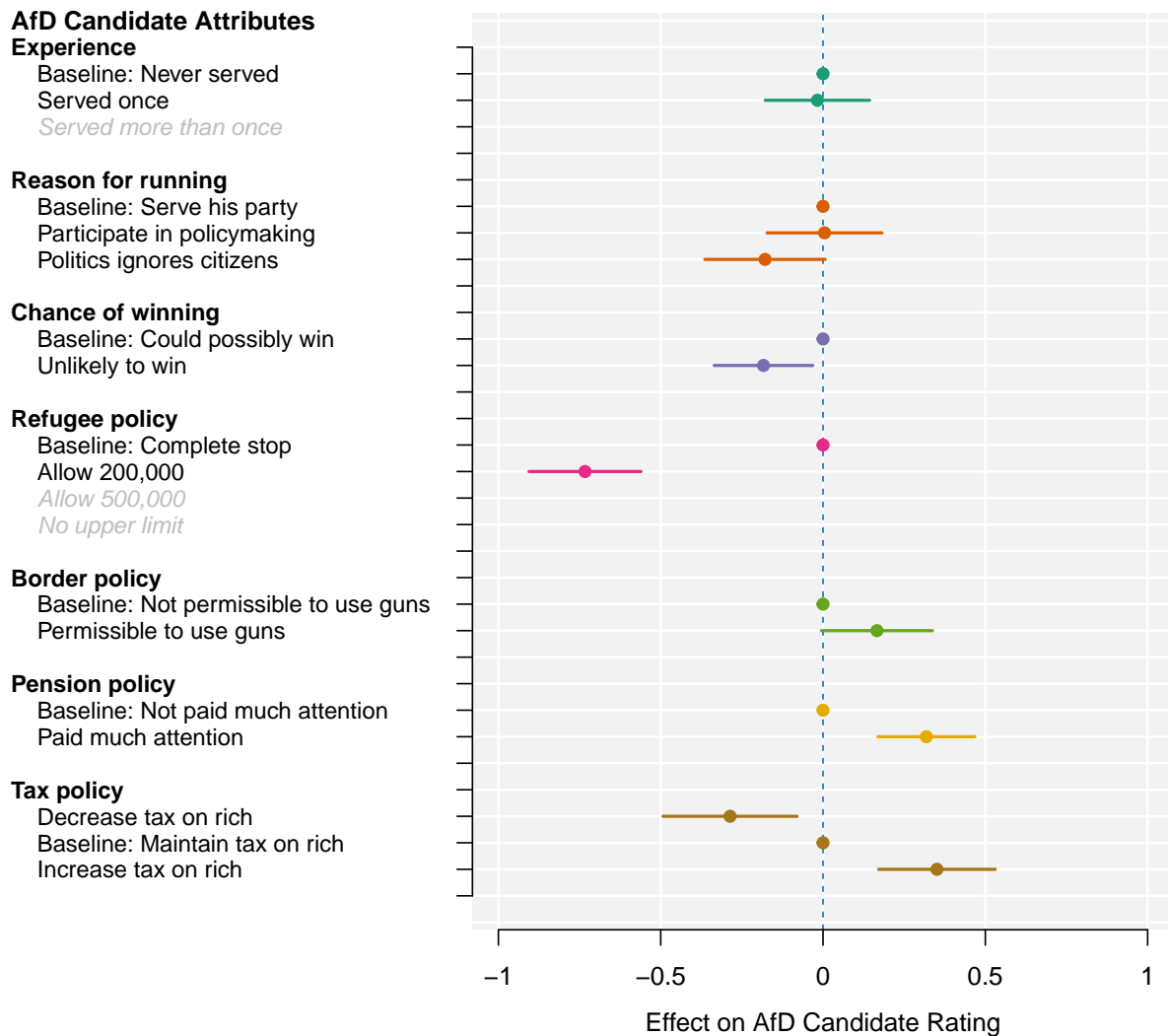


Figure C.2.1: Causal Effects of AfD Candidate Attributes on AfD Candidate Rating Among AfD Voters. This figure replicates Figure 4. The results are substantively identical when using the scale as the dependent variable. Again, the refugee policy has the largest effect; the proposed tax policy also has a large effect.

AfD Candidate Attributes

Experience

- Baseline: Never served
- Served once
- Served more than once*

Reason for running

- Baseline: Serve his party
- Participate in policymaking
- Politics ignores citizens

Chance of winning

- Baseline: Could possibly win
- Unlikely to win

Refugee policy

- Baseline: Complete stop
- Allow 200,000
- Allow 500,000*
- No upper limit*

Border policy

- Baseline: Not permissible to use guns
- Permissible to use guns

Pension policy

- Baseline: Not paid much attention
- Paid much attention

Tax policy

- Decrease tax on rich
- Baseline: Maintain tax on rich
- Increase tax on rich

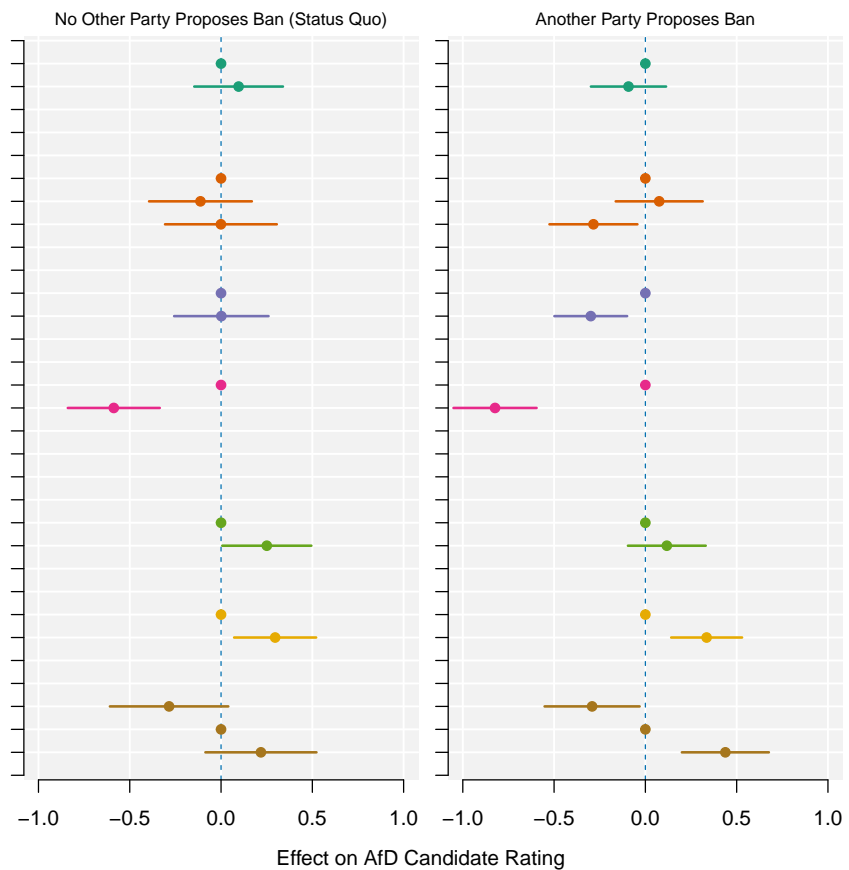


Figure C.2.2: Causal Effects of AfD Candidate Attributes on AfD Candidate Rating Among AfD Voters, Interacted With Status Quo. This figure reproduces Figure 5. We find similar interactions between the Status Quo variable, on the one hand, and the chance of winning and proposed refugee policy attributes, on the other hand.

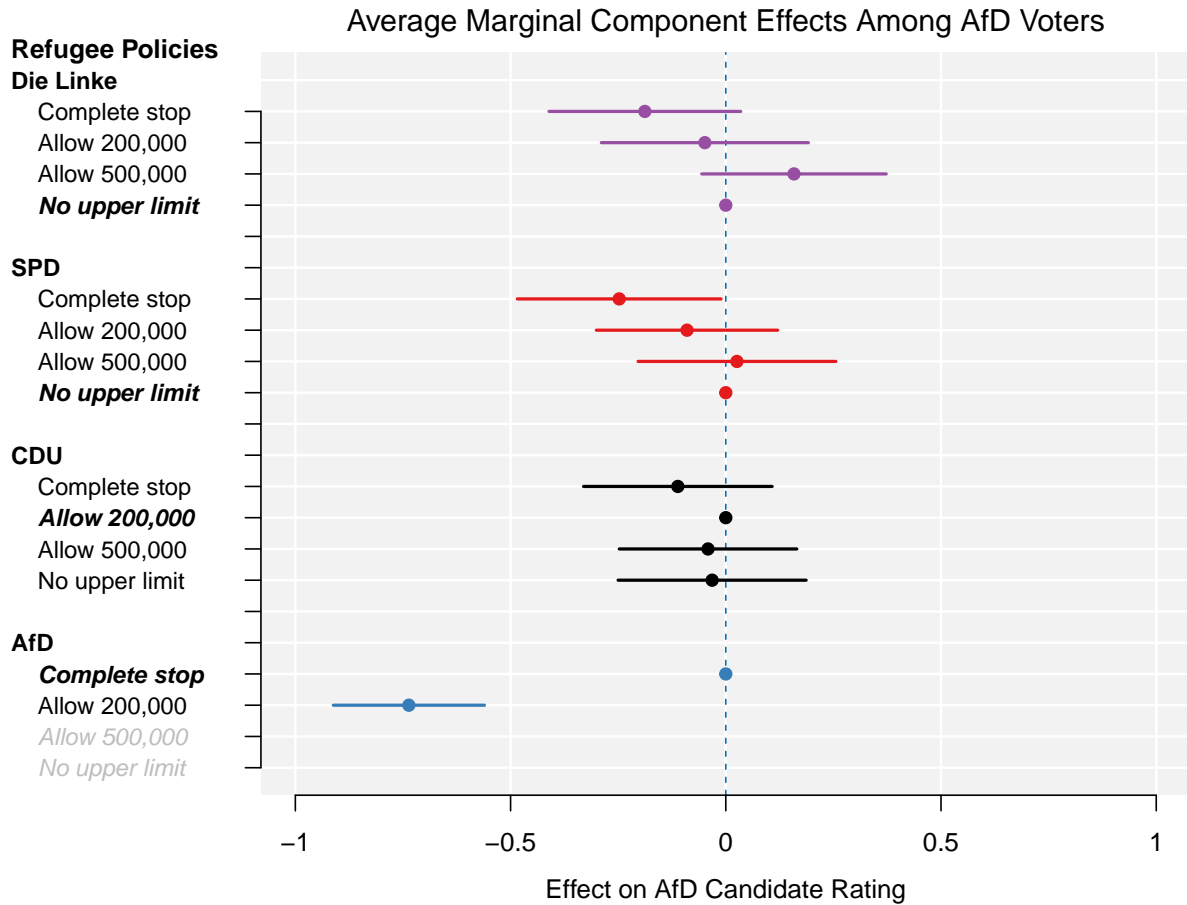


Figure C.2.3: Causal Effects of Refugee Issue Positioning on AfD Candidate Rating Among AfD Voters. This figure replicates Figure 6. We find that, while the AfD refugee policy has a large effect on the AfD candidate rating, the other candidates' positions do not have a similarly large effect. This contrasts with Figure 6, where the dependent variable was the choice probability (which is zero-sum).

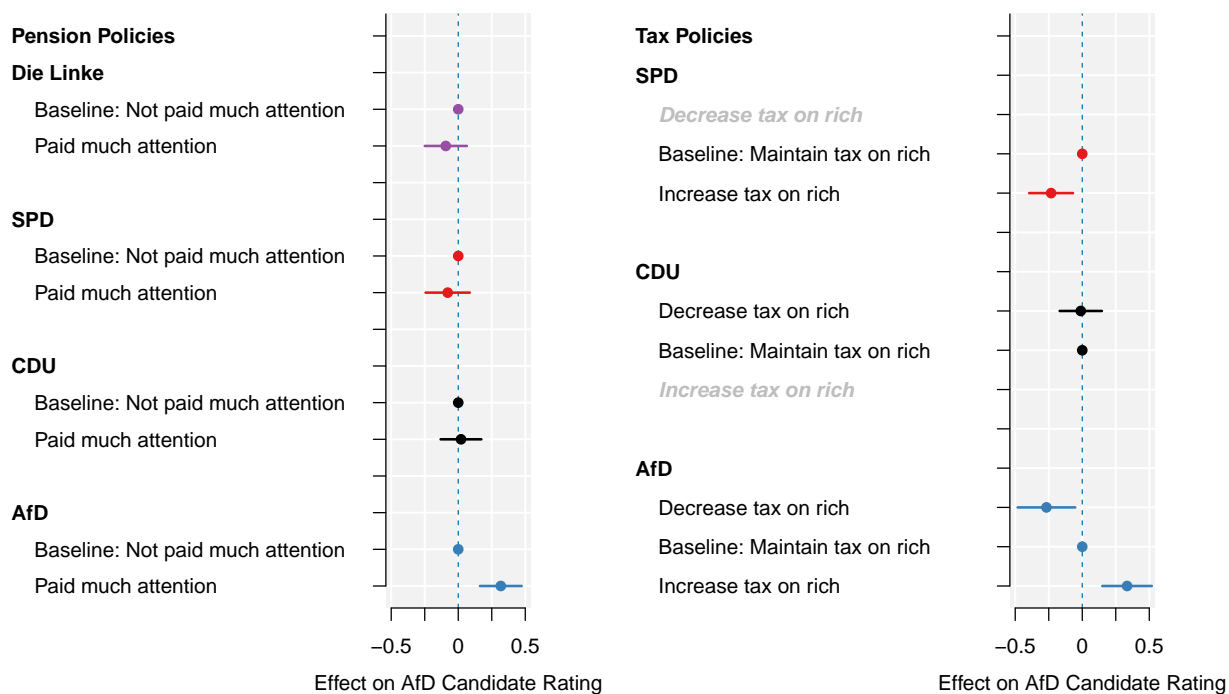


Figure C.2.4: Causal Effects of Economic Issue Positioning on AfD Vote Choice Among AfD Voters. This figure replicates Figure 8. Restricted policies are denoted by gray italicized labels. To ensure realistic profiles, we do not vary tax positions of Die Linke.

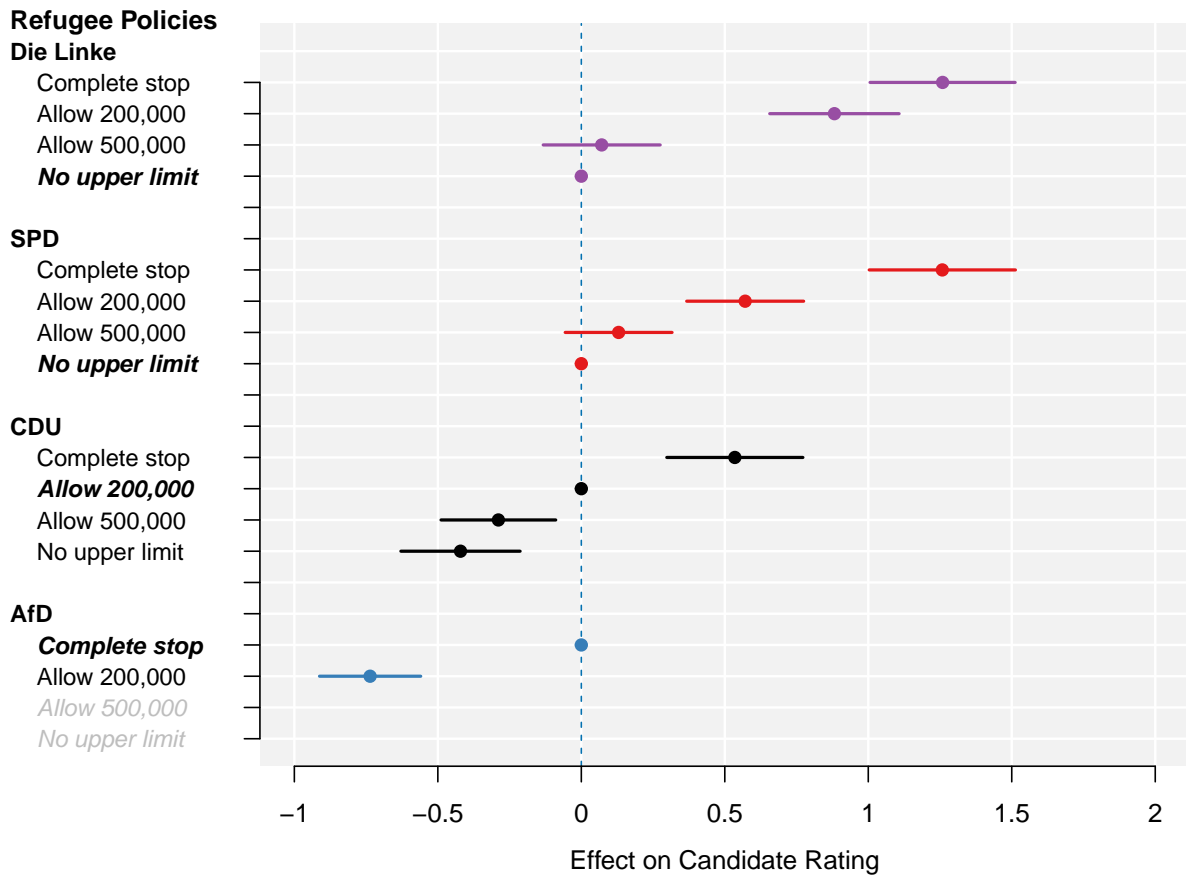


Figure C.2.5: Causal Effects of Refugee Issue Positioning on Candidate Ratings Among AfD Voters. This figure shows the effect of refugee issue positions on candidate ratings among AfD voters. Each coefficient quartet corresponds to one of four models having the candidate rating (Die Linke, SPD, CDU, and AfD) as the dependent variable and the refugee policy positions as the independent variables. We find that proposing a ban results in a large, significant increase in the average candidate rating from AfD voters.

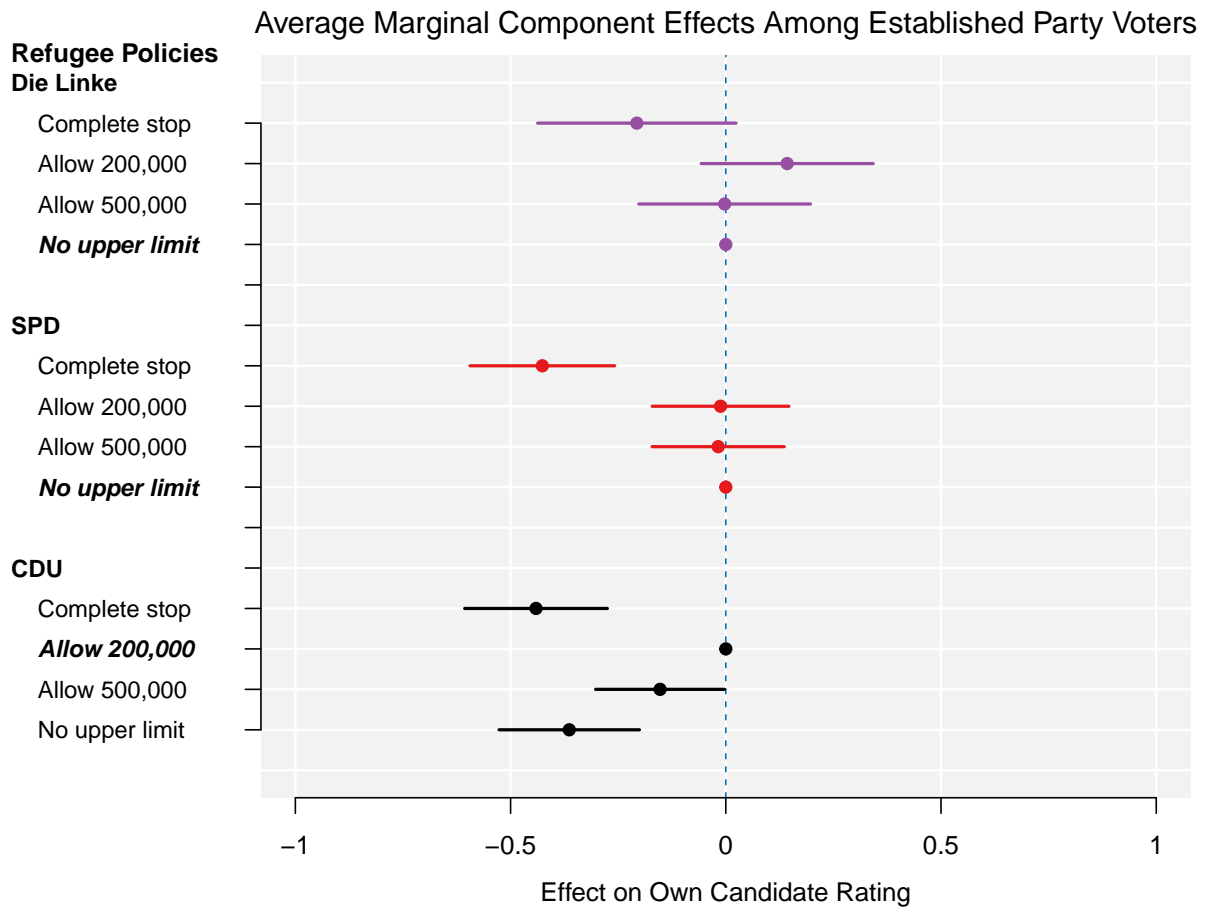


Figure C.2.6: Causal Effects of Refugee Policies on Ratings From Own Voters. This figure reproduces Figure 9. Again, here we show that parties are penalized by their own voters for proposing a refugee ban.

C.3 Heterogeneous Effect Analyses

In Figure 6, the average impact of refugee policies is large, but could also mask important treatment heterogeneity. In particular, a relevant source of heterogeneity is the degree of voters' trust in political parties. If AfD supporters are anti-establishment voters and genuinely distrustful of established parties, rather than expressing dissatisfaction simply because those parties don't meet their issue preferences, they should not be swayed by changes in issue positions. Yet, we found surprisingly little variation in the magnitude of the effects of refugee policy positions by political trust. In Figure C.3.1, we show that AfD voters who express "no trust in parties" or think that "politicians don't care about people like me" are as willing to switch their vote to these parties when they appeal to them on the basis of issues.

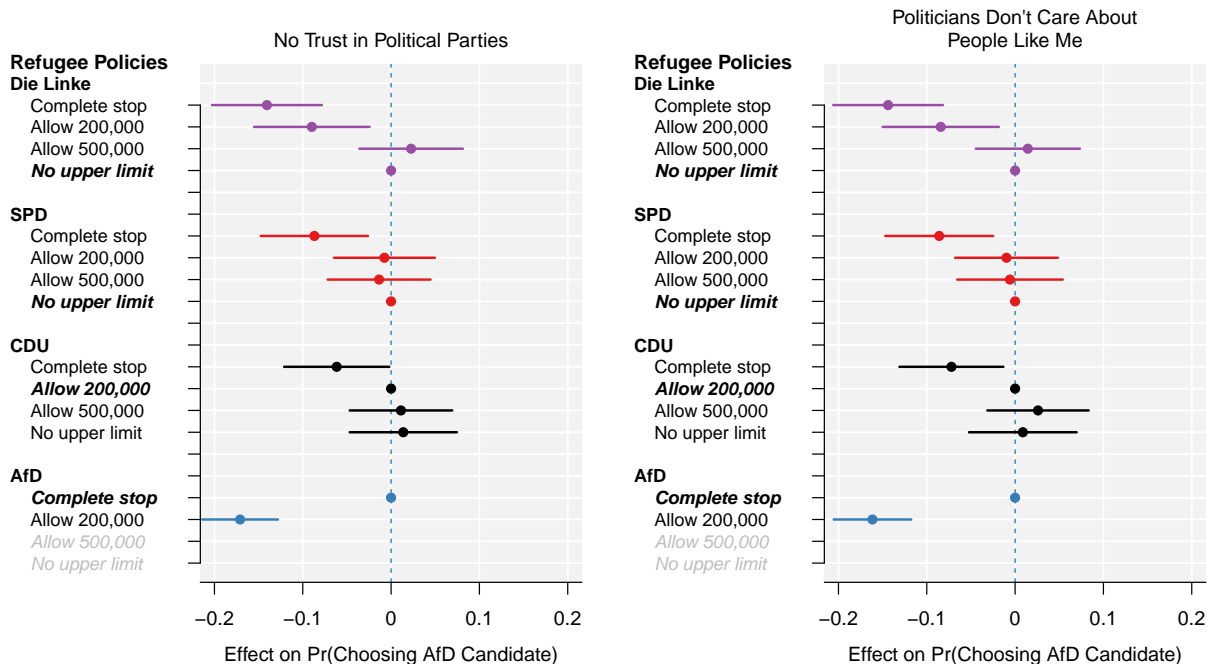


Figure C.3.1: Subsetting by “No trust in political parties” and “Politicians don’t care about people like me.”

D Characteristics of AfD and Other Voters

D.1 Demographic and Ideological Predictors of AfD Voting

As previous research has shown, radical right voters in Europe tend to be disproportionately male and less educated. Using logistic regression, we find similarly that being female and years of education are negatively correlated with AfD support in Germany (See Column 1 of Table D.1.1). We further find that AfD supporters are younger and more likely to be from East Germany. We do not find evidence of a correlation with income, although this variable has a relatively high proportion of missingness (9.70%). Conversely, self-rated socioeconomic status, which has less missingness, has a negative bivariate relationship with AfD support and a curvilinear relationship, consistent with the argument of Gidron and Hall (2017), although the squared term is not statistically significant. Lastly, workers are more likely to support the AfD relative to white-collar employees.

We also examined the ideological predictors of AfD voting, focusing on three areas in particular: affective attitudes towards the AfD, attitudes towards other parties in Germany and politics in general, and lastly views about refugees. Each of these areas are measured by four, two, and ten items, shown below. Because the questions in these batteries are highly intercorrelated, we constructed a summary scale from the first principal component of the AfD and refugee attitudes.²⁴ We entered the refugee scale along with the demographic predictors in the multivariate probit model in Column 2 of Table D.1.1, then the political attitudes in Column 3, and lastly all variables together in Column 4.

Unsurprisingly, we find that AfD voters hold significantly more negative views of refugees than non-AfD voters. While the relationship between the refugee scale and AfD voting is no longer significant after we account for political attitudes (Column 4), the two scales are highly correlated with each other ($\rho = 0.75$), meaning that AfD voters' positive views towards their party are closely related to their opinions of refugees. Lastly, we find that individuals who mistrust political parties in Germany are also significantly more likely to vote for the AfD.

Statements About the AfD

- The AfD is not distancing itself sufficiently from extremist radical right positions.
- I think it's a good thing that the AfD wants to limit the inflow of refugees and migrants to a larger extent than other parties.
- The AfD is an alternative for all those who no longer feel at home in the politically established parties.
- The AfD is the only party that is willing to openly discuss the integration problems of Muslims.

Attitudes Towards Politics

- How much would you say that politicians care what people like you think?

- Please tell me how much you personally trust political parties.

Views About Refugees

- Refugees are integrating well into Germany.
- Refugees who live in Germany permanently should be entitled to German citizenship.
- The number of refugees should be reduced.
- More is being done for refugees than for native Germans.
- Refugees should be willing to give up much of their culture of origin and instead adopt German culture.
- Refugees are good for the German economy.
- Refugees increase crime.
- The inflow of refugees increases the risk of terrorism.
- The inflow of male refugees makes it more difficult for native men to find female partners.
- The inflow of young male refugees makes it more difficult for young native men to find apprenticeships and jobs.

	Voted for AfD Candidate or Party			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Age (logged)	0.439** (0.183)	0.065 (0.228)	-0.245 (0.295)	-0.254 (0.295)
Female	-0.166 (0.110)	-0.215 (0.132)	0.057 (0.168)	0.051 (0.168)
East German	0.340** (0.144)	0.410** (0.173)	0.400* (0.233)	0.413* (0.233)
Years of Education	-0.070*** (0.016)	-0.035* (0.018)	-0.041* (0.023)	-0.041* (0.023)
Socioeconomic Status	-0.300** (0.152)	0.129 (0.180)	0.438** (0.217)	0.446** (0.217)
Socioeconomic Status ²	0.018 (0.014)	-0.014 (0.017)	-0.040** (0.020)	-0.041** (0.020)
Retired	-0.281* (0.166)	-0.104 (0.196)	0.060 (0.251)	0.064 (0.251)
Unemployed	0.140 (0.305)	0.271 (0.376)	1.036** (0.471)	1.029** (0.471)
Unskilled Worker	0.493** (0.226)	0.165 (0.280)	0.281 (0.327)	0.267 (0.328)
Skilled Worker	0.347* (0.188)	0.093 (0.225)	0.275 (0.281)	0.271 (0.281)
Refugee Scale		0.974*** (0.049)		0.070 (0.071)
AfD Statements Scale			1.844*** (0.099)	1.791*** (0.111)
Politicians Care			-0.087 (0.123)	-0.073 (0.124)
Trust in Political Parties			0.595*** (0.123)	0.574*** (0.125)
Constant	-1.324 (0.839)	-2.850*** (1.031)	-5.695*** (1.421)	-5.672*** (1.422)
N	2,772	2,772	2,772	2,772
Log Likelihood	-1,137.630	-778.256	-495.280	-494.785
AIC	2,297.259	1,580.512	1,018.560	1,019.570

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Table D.1.1: Logistic Regression Model of AfD Voting.

D.2 “Always-AfD” and “Never-AfD” Voters

This section examines the “Always-AfD” (“Never-AfD”) voters in our sample – the respondents who voted for the AfD in the 2017 September elections and who chose the hypothetical AfD candidate in all five (zero) screens. For these voters, the estimated effects of all seven attributes for all four hypothetical candidates is zero; that is, there is no configuration of attributes that dissuades these voters from choosing the AfD candidate.

Logistic regression models predicting Always- and Never-AfD voting are shown in Tables D.2.1 and D.2.2, respectively. We find that the strongest demographic predictor of being an Always-AfD voter, relative to an AfD voter that occasionally chooses a different candidate, is being male. Turning to the attitudinal measures, we find that Always-AfD voters hold more anti-refugee attitudes and pro-party attitudes than even other AfD voters. Interestingly, we do not find much evidence that anti-establishment attitudes are predictive of Always-AfD voting once refugee opinions and attitudes towards the party are taken into account. Our results suggest that Always-AfD voting may be driven more by positive affect towards the party and extreme xenophobic preferences rather than by anti-establishment voting per se.

Turning to the model of Never-AfD voting in Table D.2.2, we find that, aside from assessments of the AfD itself, views about refugees are the only significant predictor of “Never-AfD’ers.” Indeed, among respondents with warmer-than-average values on the refugee scale, more than 90% are Never-AfD’ers, compared to about half of those with cooler-than-average values. We conclude that, when Germans have positive views about refugees, it is very unlikely that they will ever consider voting for AfD candidates, irrespective of these candidates’ positions on other issues.

	DV: 1 if Respondent Chooses AfD in All 5 Screens			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Age (logged)	0.332 (0.383)	0.143 (0.400)	0.109 (0.400)	0.089 (0.410)
Female	-0.500** (0.214)	-0.541** (0.220)	-0.404* (0.223)	-0.429* (0.226)
East German	-0.287 (0.281)	-0.203 (0.289)	-0.345 (0.291)	-0.269 (0.294)
Years of Education	0.015 (0.029)	0.018 (0.029)	-0.001 (0.030)	0.006 (0.030)
Socioeconomic Status	-0.449 (0.274)	-0.295 (0.286)	-0.297 (0.285)	-0.262 (0.292)
Socioeconomic Status ²	0.046* (0.026)	0.032 (0.027)	0.031 (0.027)	0.029 (0.027)
Retired	-0.104 (0.318)	0.037 (0.326)	-0.017 (0.327)	0.047 (0.330)
Unemployed	-0.976 (0.671)	-0.830 (0.688)	-0.738 (0.686)	-0.660 (0.690)
Unskilled Worker	0.329 (0.403)	0.381 (0.422)	0.466 (0.422)	0.460 (0.430)
Skilled Worker	0.166 (0.341)	0.263 (0.354)	0.191 (0.355)	0.246 (0.361)
Refugee Scale		0.444*** (0.099)		0.286** (0.112)
AfD Statements Scale			0.914*** (0.191)	0.683*** (0.211)
Politicians Care				0.102 (0.173)
Trust in Political Parties				0.036 (0.175)
Constant	-0.795 (1.685)	-1.673 (1.766)	-2.542 (1.809)	-3.081 (1.963)
N	417	417	417	417
Log Likelihood	-266.993	-255.522	-252.930	-249.489
AIC	555.987	535.044	529.860	528.979

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Table D.2.1: Logistic Regression Model of “Always-AfD” Voting.

	DV: 1 if Respondent Chooses AfD on 0 Screens			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Age (logged)	0.374 (0.574)	0.676 (0.587)	0.631 (0.594)	0.723 (0.605)
Female	0.031 (0.318)	0.118 (0.325)	-0.101 (0.327)	-0.017 (0.337)
East German	-0.286 (0.440)	-0.437 (0.454)	-0.327 (0.456)	-0.413 (0.461)
Years of Education	0.012 (0.043)	0.007 (0.046)	0.029 (0.045)	0.026 (0.047)
Socioeconomic Status	0.599 (0.496)	0.433 (0.484)	0.473 (0.505)	0.454 (0.503)
Socioeconomic Status ²	-0.054 (0.046)	-0.040 (0.046)	-0.044 (0.048)	-0.043 (0.048)
Retired	-0.278 (0.500)	-0.437 (0.511)	-0.389 (0.519)	-0.435 (0.519)
Unemployed	0.674 (0.703)	0.390 (0.751)	0.446 (0.724)	0.422 (0.741)
Unskilled Worker	0.623 (0.517)	0.559 (0.530)	0.511 (0.536)	0.517 (0.546)
Skilled Worker	-0.661 (0.642)	-0.727 (0.645)	-0.723 (0.652)	-0.701 (0.656)
Refugee Scale		-0.393*** (0.117)		-0.233* (0.136)
AfD Statements Scale			-0.779*** (0.189)	-0.632*** (0.217)
Politicians Care				-0.173 (0.262)
Trust in Political Parties				-0.027 (0.259)
Constant	-5.098* (2.683)	-4.853* (2.679)	-3.989 (2.706)	-3.741 (2.869)
N	417	417	417	417
Log Likelihood	-145.655	-140.048	-137.387	-135.871
AIC	313.311	304.096	298.773	301.742

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Table D.2.2: Logistic Regression Model of “Never-AfD” Voting.

D.3 Additional Analyses

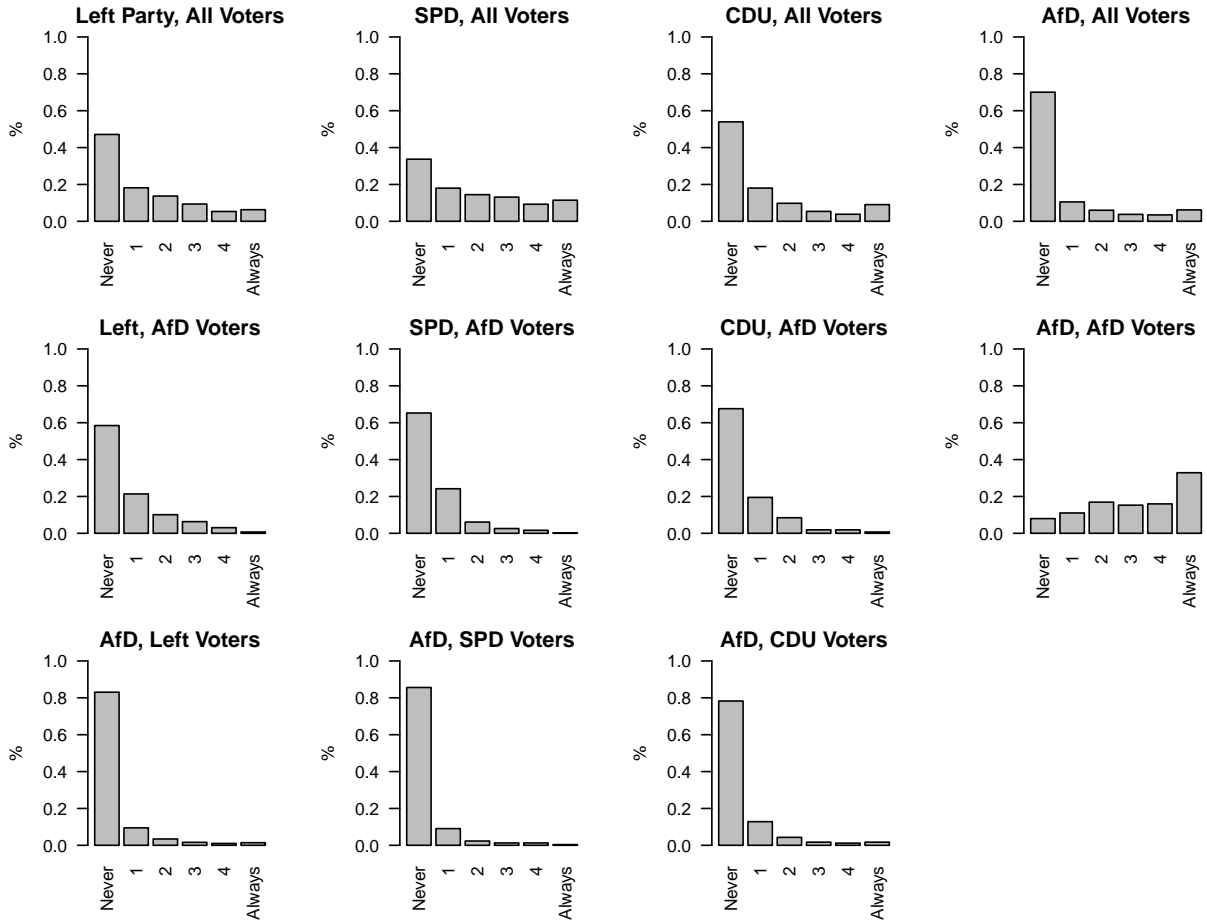


Figure D.3.1: Conjoint Choice Frequencies by Party Label and Vote.

	AfD Only Alternative		Politicians Don't Care		Little Trust in Parties	
	Est.	SE.	Est.	SE.	Est.	SE.
Sep. 2016	49.83	0.06	82.15	0.04	86.10	0.04
Jan. 2017	48.93	0.06	81.47	0.04	80.56	0.04
Jun. 2017	47.23	0.06	78.53	0.05	77.74	0.05
Dec. 2017	48.36	0.06	78.19	0.05	74.69	0.05

Table D.3.1: Change in Attitudes Among Respondents Who Say Parties Aren't Listening on Refugees. This table shows the proportion of respondents who hold anti-establishment attitudes among those who said that parties do not tend to listen or do not listen at all on the refugee issue in Wave 1 of our survey in Sep. 2016. In general, the proportion who hold the anti-establishment view decreases over time.

	Party Label			
	Die Linke	SPD	CDU	AfD
<i>Baseline: Complete ban on refugees</i>				
Allow 200k	0.031*** (0.011)	0.054*** (0.013)	0.020* (0.011)	-0.003 (0.007)
Allow 500k	0.019 (0.012)	0.023* (0.013)	0.024** (0.011)	
Allow all	-0.004 (0.012)	0.011 (0.013)	-0.003 (0.011)	
Constant	0.231*** (0.009)	0.341*** (0.011)	0.220*** (0.009)	0.166*** (0.007)
N	15,095	15,095	15,095	15,095

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Table D.3.2: Voter-Average Treatment Effects of Refugee Policies (OLS). By showing the average treatment effect of refugee policies among all voting respondents, this table demonstrates that the prospective gains from proposing a refugee ban are outweighed by the losses, particularly when compared to upper limits of 200,000 or 500,000. Because the target population consists of all voters, we incorporate survey weights.

E Effects of Changes in Pensions and Taxes on Own Supporters

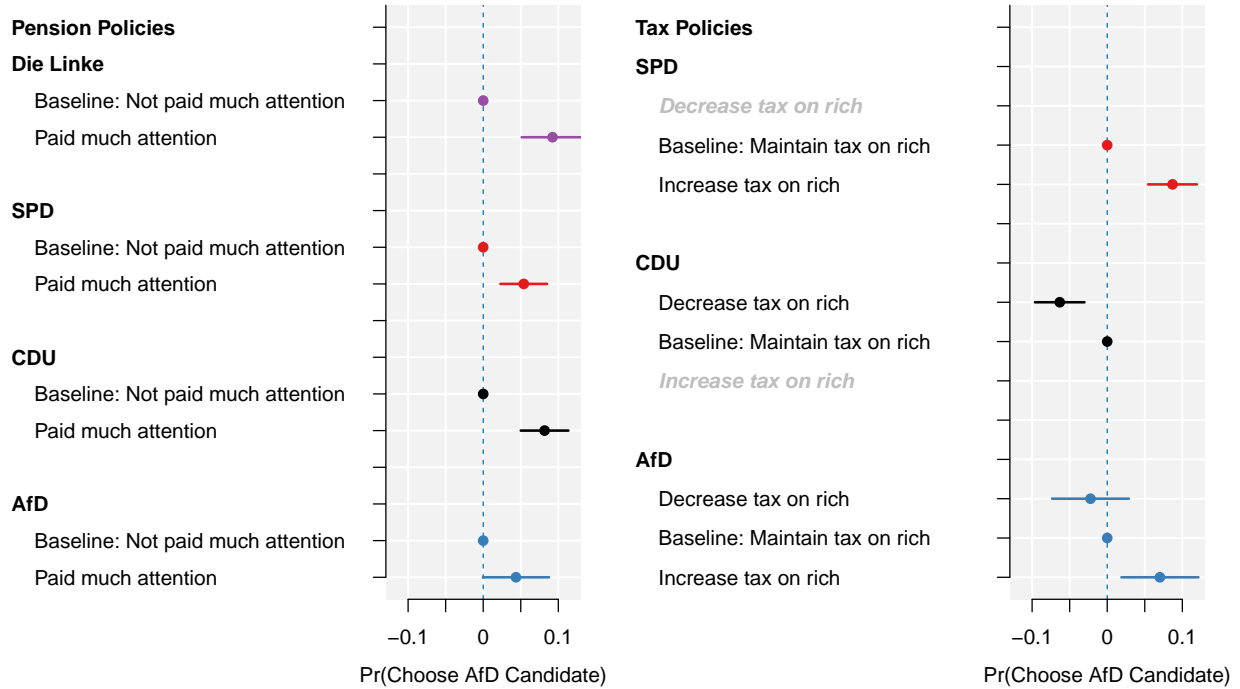


Figure E.1: Causal Effects of Economic Positions on Vote Choice by Own Supporters. This figure plots the AMCE of each party's pension/taxation policies on their own supporters. The reference policy is set to each party's status quo policy. For example, when the SPD candidate proposes increased taxation on the rich, SPD voters are about 8 percentage points more likely to support him, relative to the SPD's status quo position of maintaining taxes on the rich.

F Evidence of Underreporting of AfD Support

We do not find compelling evidence that AfD supporters strongly underreported their vote intention in our survey: In fact, at the national level, self-reported AfD vote intention in the fourth panel wave (which contained our conjoint experiment) was 0.3% points higher than the actual election result of 12.7% (Figure F.1). At the state level, we find evidence of underreporting in just two of 16 states (Brandenburg and Saxony-Anhalt), where self-reported vote intention in Wave 4 was significantly lower than the state-level election result (Figure F.2). Respondents from these states represent 6% (184 / 3083) of our Wave 4 sample.

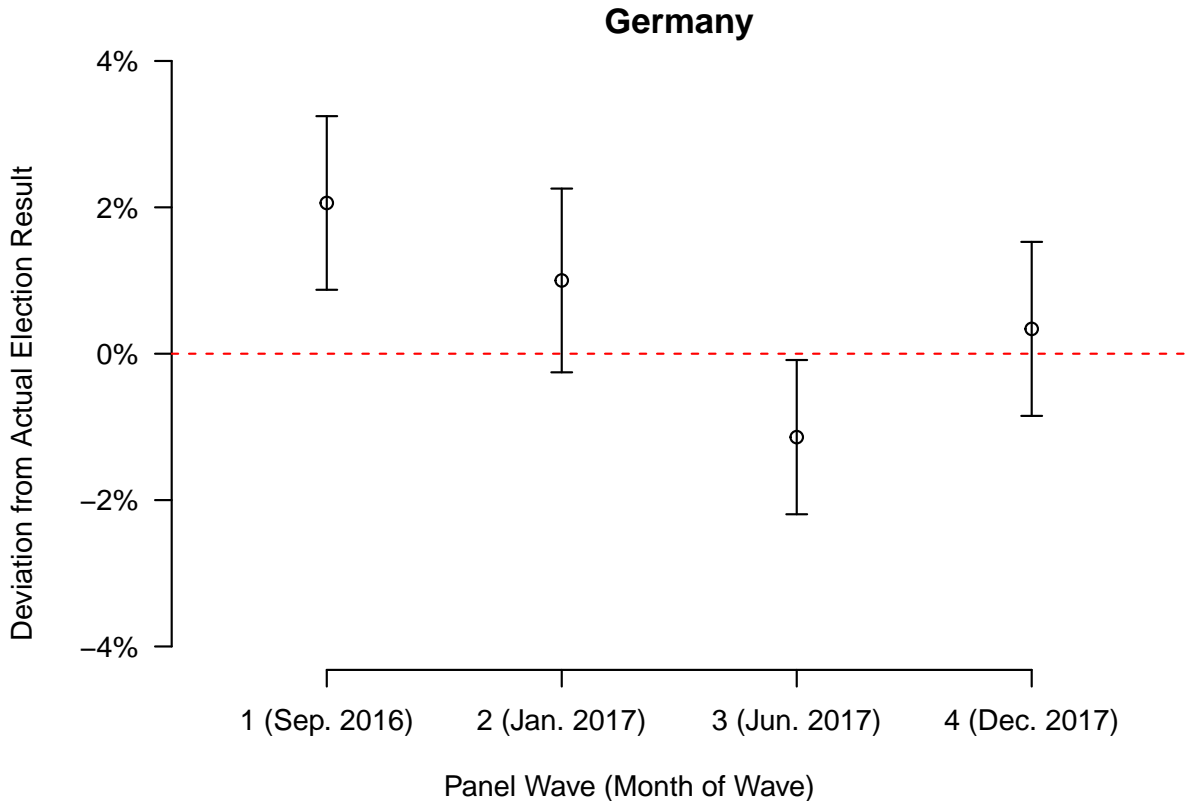


Figure F.1: No Evidence of Underreporting of National AfD Support. This figure plots the difference between the actual AfD vote share in the 2017 German parliamentary elections (12.7%) and self-reported intention to vote for the AfD in each wave of our panel. In Wave 4, containing our conjoint experiment, there was no significant difference between AfD vote intention and the actual AfD vote share.

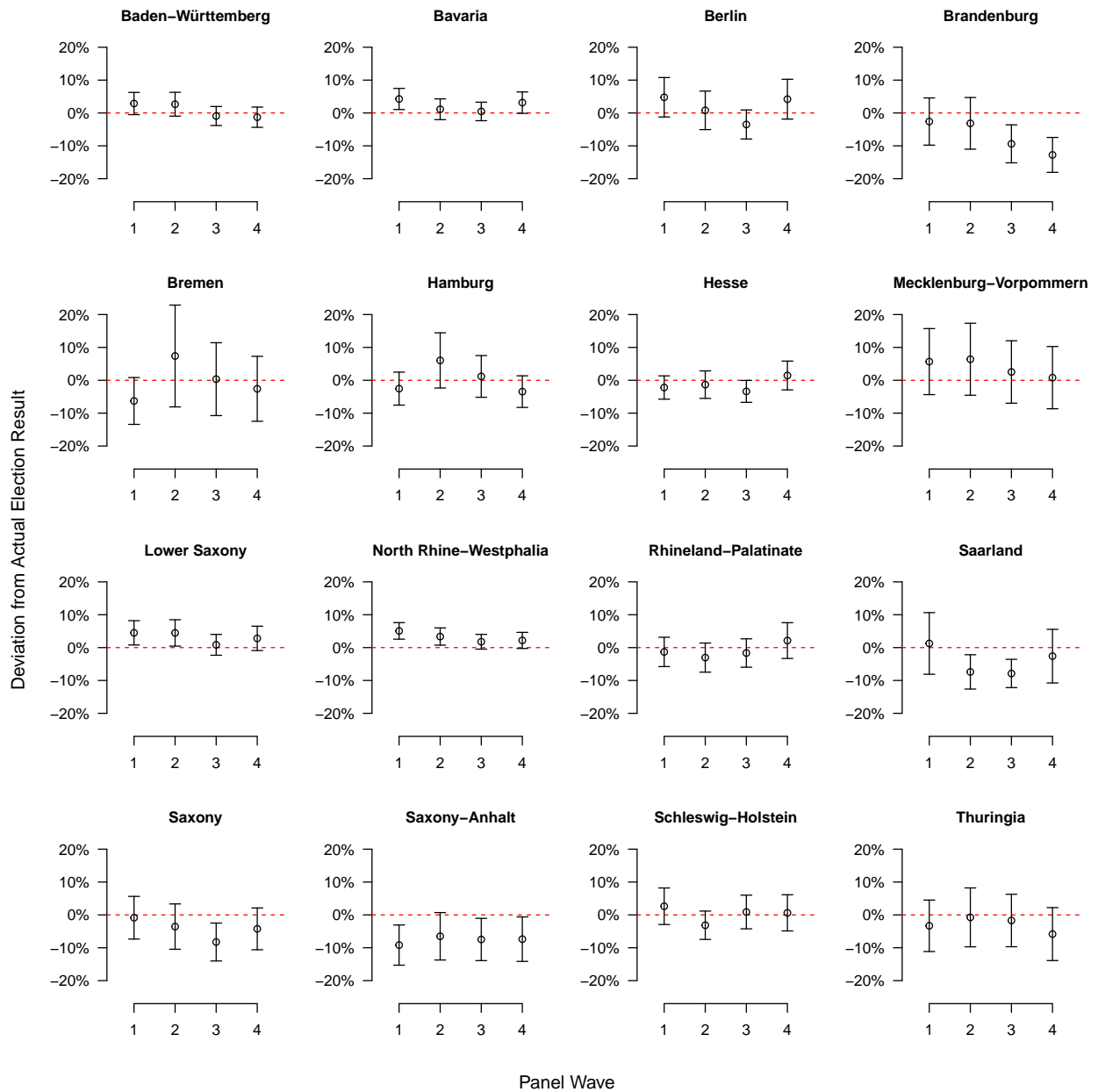


Figure F.2: State-by-State Evidence of Underreporting of AfD Support. This figure reproduces Figure F.1 across each of Germany’s 16 states. There is no significant difference between the state-level election result and self-reported AfD vote intention in 14 of 16 states. We do find evidence of underreporting in two states, Brandenburg and Saxony-Anhalt, where vote intention was significantly lower than the actual election result.