# What are you voting for? Refugee reception centres and voting at the 2016 Italian constitutional referendum*

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**Abstract**

We provide a novel empirical evidence on the impact of geographical proximity to refugee centres (SPRAR—Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) on voting behavior in Italy. We focus on the 2016 Italian referendum regarding the Constitutional reform (i.e. the Renzi-Boschi reform). The reform was promoted and written down by the governing party (Democratic Party) with the declared aim of improving the governability and stability of the country. Despite not strictly being a political vote, as in the Brexit case, the referendum was viewed as a vote in favour or against the Prime Minister by both the majority and opposition parties. Using Italian municipality data and an instrumental variable (IV) strategy, we find that proximity to SPRAR centres affected voting behavior. In particular, it increases the rate of referendum turnout and the share of anti-government voting. This is consistent with the main opposition parties to have exploited anti-immigration sentiments to influence people's voting on issues not related with migration.

**Key words**: refugees, voting, referendum, voting.
**JEL codes**: P16, R23, O15

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# 1 Introduction

Over recent years, an unprecedented number of individuals seeking refuge from war and political persecution have migrated to Northern Europe, with 1.3 million refugees seeking asylum in EU countries in 2015 alone (Eurostat). Recently, refugees and migrants arriving by sea to Italy are now the main problem faced by the Italian government and the European Union.

Yet recent events have caused considerable concern among centrist politicians, who fear they may play into the hands of populist parties. Populism is on the rise across Europe. In many European countries, including Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, and Switzerland, right-wing populist parties led or are currently leading governments. Even in countries in which right-wing populists have not won elections, groups such as the French Front National, Britain's UKIP, Italian Lega Nord and Germany's Alternative für Deutschland enjoy an unprecedented popularity.[1] The populist surge is partly a response to the apparent incapacity of the established parties to manage two key contemporary issues: the migrants' and refugees' crisis and the loss of countries' sovereignty related with participation to the Euro area. Not surprisingly, migration narratives played a central role in the recent populists' success in the Brexit referendum in the UK and Trump's victory in the last US elections. Several scholars focus on the effects of the share of migrants on voting far-right or even centre-right —and in general anti-immigration— parties in both local and national elections (see the literature review in Section 2).

Differently from them, this paper provides a novel empirical evidence on the impact of geographical proximity to refugee centres (SPRAR—Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) on voting behavior in Italy. At the time of this writing, an unprecedented inflow of refugees into Europe is occurring and it is still less clear and almost unexplored their impact on the voting behaviour. Moreover, to the best of our knowledge, no studies analyse whether proximity to refugees centres play a role in shaping the votes related to anti-government feelings mounting in the public opinion.

The recent December 2016 Italian referendum gives us an ideal setting for testing this hypothesis. According to the proponents, the reform was aimed both at increasing the governability of the country and at reducing the costs of politics through a change of Italy's constitutional law. However, owing to the Prime Minster (PM) Matteo Renzi's initial attempt to personalize the vote, the referendum was also interpreted as a political vote and as a verdict on Mr. Renzi's action. Mr Renzi's initial strong popularity dropped substantially since he took office in 2014 as a young,

[1] See for instance the recent contributions by Halla et al. (2017) and Steinmayr (2016).

energetic, centre-left reformist, with Italians growing disenchantment with the slow pace of economic progress, and anxiety about the migration crisis which has brought more than 170,000 people to the country's southern shores in 2016 — a record annual figure. In fact, according to the polls more than 60% of Italians declared to have interpreted the vote as a "Yes" or "No" to Renzi's government actions rather than to the articulated change of the Constitution. Moreover, the whole referendum campaign was characterized by accusation from the opposition parties (including the right-wing parties and the 5-Star Movement, M5S[2] hereafter) claiming that the government was not able to deal with emergencies, among which the refugees' crisis was surely a salient one. Indeed, Italy is one of the countries that bear the burden of the refugees' emergency as many of them arrive through the popular and dangerous Central Mediterranean route, departing from the Libyan or Tunisian coast. About 180,000 migrants were stopped in 2016 and of these 120,000 requested international protection. These events have increased the concerns among the leaders of the center-left wing parties in Europe who fear losing their power as extreme parties gain votes and consensus. Refugees' recent crisis and controlled migration were warhorses of the Brexit campaign in the UK and Donald Trump's win in the US election.

In order to study the impact of immigrant settlements on electoral outcomes, some recent papers in the literature have used arguably random allocation of refugees exposure (Dustmann et al., 2016) to geographical areas, and related voting outcomes with the size of the presence of refugees in those locations. In this paper, we take a different approach and look at whether micro-level exposure to *refugee centres* has an effect on Italian municipalities' voting outcomes in the last Constitutional referendum, focusing on SPRAR centres proximity.

These centres play an important role in terms of refugees' management and integration while they have been in the eye of the storm both in each political and media debate especially in the past two years. After receiving first aid and medication, newly arrived immigrants that request international protection remain in the SPRAR until a final decision is made. They are offered board and food, but also language courses, legal advice, training, and many other forms of support to promote their integration in the communities. The SPRAR system was established in 2002 to better coordinate the reception system in Italy although it had a low capacity compared to the past few years. From 2012 there has been a constant increase in the number of places made available for the refugees. Given the institutional features of the process leading to opening refugee centres in the about 8,000 Italian municipalities — by which we expect new centres to be increasingly opened

[2] *Movimento 5 Stelle* manifesto is available here *http* : *//www.meetupeuropa.eu/programma/english/*.

in municipalities politically supporting the government — we try to address potential endogeneity issues in two ways. First, we focus on the *distance from the closest SPRAR centre*, allowing for centres to have an effect also in the non-hosting municipalities. For the latter, proximity to refugee centres can be considered as an externality on which they have no control. Second, we address any residual endogeneity concern by using an instrumental variables (IVs) strategy in which the distance from the closest SPRAR in 2016 is instrumented with distance in 2007, when the saliency of the refugee crisis was much lower and accordingly SPRARs' location presumably more exogenous. In support of the instrument validity, we present some placebos providing evidence that distance from SPRAR in 2007 is unrelated to municipalities' prevailing political past orientation.

Estimates from our baseline model controlling for province (i.e. NUTS-3) fixed effects show that moving 1 km away from a municipality that hosts a SPRAR increases the share of people who do not vote (i.e. "exit" strategy) by 0.02 percentage points, and decreases the share of people voting "No" (i.e. not supporting the government) by 0.05 percentage points. This means that for municipalities located at the average distance from the closest SPRAR (19 km) the effect in terms of share of not voting is 0.38 percentage points and the effect on the share of voting "No" is 0.95 percentage points. These results are robust to including a long set of municipality controls which may confound the relationship between proximity to SPRAR centres and voting outcomes, to excluding municipalities hosting SPRARs and addressing endogeneity concerns using IVs.

This paper is organised as follows. A brief review of the literature on migrants, refugees and voting is reported in the next section. Section 3 provides a description of the Italian 2016 referendum and the features of the refugees' reception system. The empirical strategy is described in Section 4. The data used in the empirical analysis are briefly desribed in Section 5. Section 6 and 7 comment on the main results and on the effects' heterogeneity, respectively. Section 8 concludes.

## 2 Literature

The literature on immigration and its impact on voting behaviour is relatively recent, but it is rapidly growing and now it covers a few European countries.[3] Previous studies can be divided into those investigating the impact of legal migrants and those exploring the effect of refugees. Starting from the former, the main problem when estimating the impact of immigrants on natives' voting decisions, is that immigrants do not choose randomly to which country migrate, and, once

[3]We focus in this section on the European evidence. For some evidence on the U.S. see, for instance, (Mayda et al., 2016).

in a country, they do not settle randomly across cities. They may for example decide to settle in municipalities where the local population is more tolerant towards immigration, and this may be associated with the political party supported by the citizens. To solve this issue, most papers rely on IVs and an instrument à la Card (2001) based on the idea of immigrant *enclaves*, in fact "typical" migrants tend indeed to follow past migrants' choices, when locating in the host country. This is consistent with co-nationals providing useful information and help to find both accommodation and work. Studies for both southern and continental Europe using this identification strategy generally find positive effects of the stock of migrants on support for anti-immigration parties. Mendez and Cutillas (2014) focuses on Spanish national election in the 1996-2011 period, and find that while immigration per se has no impact on voting behaviour, a larger share of African immigrants increases votes for anti-migration coalitions. Similarly, Barone et al. (2016) use Italian municipality level data on three national elections (2001, 2006 and 2008) to estimate the impact of immigration on the increase in votes for the center-right coalition. They find sizeable effects: one percentage point increase in the share of immigrants in a municipality implies a 0.86 percentage point increase in the share of voting for the center-right coalition. Evidence of a positive effect of the presence of migrants on voting for the right is not limited to Mediterranean countries but is also found for continental Europe. Halla et al. (2017) investigate the effect of immigration on the votes for the Freedom party of Austria (FPÖ), exploiting a pooled sample of six national elections at the municipality levels (from 1979 to 2002). They find that a one percentage point (p.p., hereafter) increase in the share of immigrants in a municipality increases by 0.35 p.p. the votes for FPÖ. Similarly, Otto and Steinhardt (2014) study the effect of immigration flows on voting behaviour in both federal state and national elections, in districts of the city of Hamburg, considering the 1987-1998 period. According to their results, a larger share of immigrants increases the share of extreme right-wing parties. A different identification strategy is adopted by Harmon (2017), which uses the historical stock of high-rises in an IV strategy, exploiting the idea that these buildings are more likely to be used as rental houses. Focusing on the Danish elections between 1981 and 2001, he finds that a one p.p. increase in the share of immigrants increases the percentage of anti-immigrant nationalist seats on the municipal board by between 0.9 and 1.5 p.p.

Recent papers have started to look into the impact of refugees. For many reasons, the effects of legal migrants vis à vis refugees or asylum seekers differ.[4] In addition to concerns related with housing prices and the labour market, which may be common to both categories of migrants,

[4]See Dustmann et al. (2016) who describe the different issues related to the refugee migrations. They also contrast economic and refugee migrants and discuss the trade-offs between long-term asylum and temporary protection

refugees are often blamed by anti-immigration groups of absorbing public resources that might have been otherwise spent on citizens. Gerdes and Wadensjö (2008) investigate how the influx of refugees has affected votes for the main political parties at the municipality level in Denmark, covering the period between 1989 and 2001, that includes four local government elections and four general elections. They use municipalities fixed effects, and find that the shares of refugees are positively associated with voting for the two main anti-immigration parties. Dustmann et al. (2016), take advantage of a Danish policy that quasi-randomly allocated refugees across 275 municipalities in Denmark over a 13-year period (1986 - 1998) to estimate the impact of refugee allocation on voting outcomes. They find that in all municipalities, except the very big ones, a one percentage point increase in the refugee share of the municipal population between electoral cycles increases the vote share for anti-immigration parties by 1.23 and 1.98 percentage points in parliamentary and municipal elections, respectively.

The literature on the current refugees' crisis is rather scant as this is a quite recent phenomenon. Steinmayr (2016) use the local and state elections in an Austrian state in September 2015 to test whether micro exposure to recent refugees changed the electoral support for the far-right Freedom Party of Austria (FPFPÖ) in the period 2009-2015. To account for the endogeneity problem in the placement of refugees in the communities the author uses information on pre-existing group accommodations such as homes for the elderly, disabled and students. The main finding is that contacts with the refugees *decreases* the share of votes for the FPA party, suggesting that the local population becomes less against the inflow of new refugees, if refugees are already present in a community. Gehrsitz and Ungerer (2017) analyze the German case and exploit exogenous variation in the number of refugees per county within and across states. In particular due to the overwhelming volume of refugees' inflows after 2014, state authorities allocated immigrants to counties that had some kind of accommodation facilities to spare, for example recently abandoned military barracks, or sports halls that could be transformed into collective accommodations, or recently closed hotels. As refugees are legally obliged to reside in their assigned accommodations until a decision has been made on their asylum claim, they claim that allocation of immigrants to given counties can be seen as a natural experiment. Their paper shows that refugees' allocation is uncorrelated with economic and social county characteristics. They find no effect on voting and native employment, and small effect on crime (in particular on drug offences and fare-dodging.)

Quite interestingly, while the literature on legal migrants consistently points to a positive effect of the local presence of migrants on voting for anti-immigration parties, results of the literature on

refugees are more mixed. While the two papers using identification based on the type of buildings tend to find no or even a negative effect on voting for the right-wing (Gehrsitz and Ungerer, 2017; Steinmayr, 2016), the one using a presumably random allocation policy of refugees reports findings much more in line with the literature on legal migrants (Dustmann et al., 2016). In the light of this variety of results, it is important to contribute further studies on the impact of the presence of refugees and asylum seekers on local voting behaviour.

# 3 Institutional background

## 3.1 The Italian 2016 referendum

On Sunday $4^{th}$ December 2016, a very important constitutional referendum was held in Italy. The voters not only determined the referendum result but also the political future of Prime Minister (PM) Matteo Renzi, leader of the center-left Democratic Party.

Voters were asked whether to approve a reform of the constitutional law that changes the composition of the Italian Parliament as well as the division of powers between the State, the regions, and smaller administrative entities, namely the municipalities.[5] In particular, the contents of the reform concern: the elimination of bicameralism; the reduction in the number of parlamentaries; the reduction of operating costs of the institutions, the suppression of the National Council for Economics and Labour (CNEL) and the revision of Title V of Part II of the Constitution.[6]

The parliamentary iter of the reform started in March 2014, proposed by Mr. Renzi and Ms. Boschi, the Minister for Constitutional Reforms and Relations with Parliament with responsibility for the implementation of the government program. Then, it was finally approved by the Parliament in April 2016. Just after, a group of deputies from the opposition parties asked to have a confirmatory referendum with a popular vote (as it happened for the Brexit).[7] PM Renzi has

[5]The Italian Parliament is a perfectly symmetric bicameral system composed by a lower house (the Chamber of Deputies) and an upper house (the Senate of the Republic) with the following characteristics: (i) the two houses are elected simultaneously and for the same five-year term; (ii) the Government must have each house's approval, and is accountable to both of them. (iii) All legislative acts must be passed in the same text by both houses: whenever a bill is amended by either house, it must be sent to the other one in a potentially endless process known as the *navetta parlamentare* (parliamentary shuttle).

[6]The last part (Title V) deals with the distribution of power between the central Government and regions. Indeed, following another reform implemented in 2001, the legislative matters are grouped into three categories: matters dealt by the central government, matters dealt by the regions, and matters dealt by both the central government and the regions ("Competenze concorrenti"). This last group creates lots of misunderstand on who (the regions of the central government) should have the decision and legislative powers on a series of topics. The 2016 reform would have eliminated this mixed group, bringing more power in the hands of the central government and explicitly lists what matters should be legislated by the regions and which by the government, but basically reducing the autonomy power of the regions.

[7]As promised in the election manifesto, Cameron, the PM of the United Kingdom from 2010 to 2016, set a date

intially made an attempt to personalize the referendum, turning it almost into a (hopefully in his view) plebiscite on his person and tying the fate of his government to the "Yes" victory. Renzi's idea was to try to build an independent source of legitimacy directly from the people because his government was not the result of an election.[8] During the election campaign, Mr. Renzi has described the reform as a battle between "nostalgia and the future, between those who want to change nothing and those who are looking ahead." In this way, the PM linked the result of the referendum to his political destiny, explicitly declaring that if the "No" would win he would have resigned from his appointment.

Initially the polls reported the majority of the population in favour of the reforms, but with time this share decreased and more citizens started to criticize it. Some observers interpreted the decline in popularity of the reform with that of Renzi's government. A survey by the Italian research institute Demopolis conducted in September, reported that more than 40% of the sample declared to have interpreted the vote as a "Yes" or "No" to Renzi's government actions rather than to the proposed reform. This proportion grew to almost 60% at the time of the referendum (Demopolis and Cise polls). The same polls highlighted that the 61% of the population had a negative opinion on the government, while the opinion regarding the actual contents of the reform was positive. This suggests that the vote was against the Government rather than the actual content of the reform. Even a minority of the Democratic Party, not fully supporting the PM, lined up explicitly against the reform, as a way to get rid of Mr. Renzi's leadership.

The "Yes" camp was primarily led by Mr. Renzi and most of his backers in the Democratic Party, although there have been some defections from the more leftist currents of the party. The "No" was supported basically by all opposition parties including the far right, the right, the 5 Stars Movement and part of the far left. In spite of being very different, they were joined by the common aspiration to put an end to Renzi's government.

A formal argument made by the opposition relate to the fact that the changes would have abolished the delicate balance of power that was designed after the WWII by people who had witnessed the rise of fascism. In reality, Renzi's political opponents both on the far left and right were aligned against the constitutional reforms, in large part also because they wanted to force his resignation. Among these, the most vocal critic was the M5S, led by Mr. Beppe Grillo, who was

for a referendum on whether the UK should remain a member of the European Union, and announced that he would be campaigning for Britain to remain within a "reformed EU". In the referendum, held on 23 June 2016, the British electorate voted by 52% to 48% in favour of leaving the European Union, an act known as Brexit.

[8]On February 14, the President of the Italian Republic, Napolitano accepted Mr. Letta's resignation from the office of Prime Minister and Mr. Renzi formally received the task of forming a new government on February 17 .

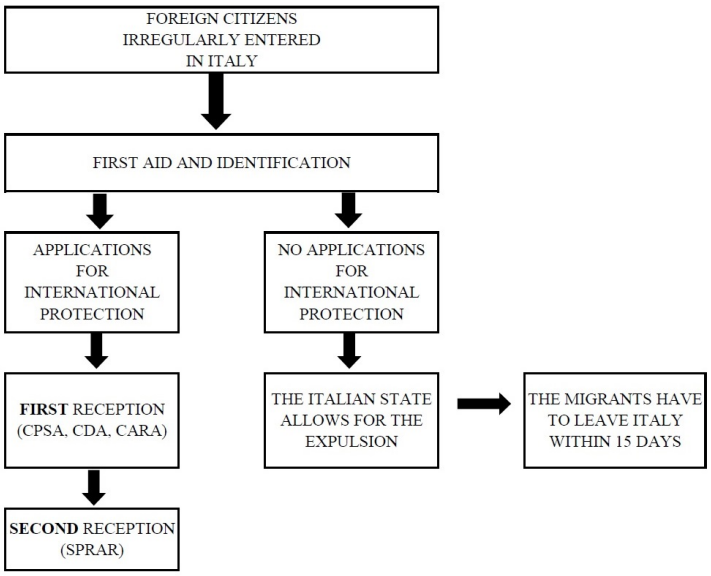
essentially arguing for the parliamentary structure to stay as it was. The opposion's motivation involved a general skepticism with respect to the EU and its institutions, which has strongly increased since the Brexit referendum in the UK. For instance, the Lega Nord party stressed the EU inadequacy to deal with the immigration emergency and the sharp increase in refugee flows. According to Salvini, the Lega Nord leader, the "No" vote would also be a "No" against the rules and the regulations of Europe, which, in his words, have been disastrous for Italy adding EU austerity measures to a recessing Italian economy. Mr. Salvini has long attempted to model the Lega Nord on France's Front National, led by Marine Le Pen, with an emphasis on border controls, protectionism and an "Italians first" philosophy. It was clear from the high voter turnout – 68% of eligible voters cast ballots on Sunday – that Italians were indeed sending a message to the political establishment in Rome. Indeed if we compare the turnout of the 2016 referendum to ones of the 2001 and 2006 (the other two referendums dealing with a reform of the constitution) and to the turnout of the latest political elections (2013, 2008 and 2006), we see that the 2016 referendum turnout (65%) is much closer to the turnouts of the political elections (72% in 2013) than to the ones of the former two referendums (respectively 34% and 52%). This evidence gives some hints on the fact that the voters did not trust anymore on Renzi's political project. In fact, Italy is facing a number of big issues that were not technically on the ballot: a migration crisis in which the country felt abandoned by Europe; an unresolved banking crisis; high unemployment and a debt load of 132% of GDP. On December $4^{th}$, 65.47% of the entitled population voted, of which 40.41% voted "Yes" and 58.42% voted "No".

### 3.2 The refugee reception system in Italy

Italy has a comprehensive legal framework dealing with asylum request pathways and mechanisms for border management and identification. Figure 1 sketches the process which starts once a foreign citizens irregularly enter in Italy. Legislative Decree (LD) 142/2015 articulates the reception system in phases, distinguishing between the "first" and "second" receptions. According to LD 142/2015, the former receptions carry out the necessary operations to define the legal position of the foreigner concerned. During the process of distinguishing between migrants who have the right to apply for asylum and international protection and those who do not, it is also guaranteed in the temporary facilities, specifically set up by the Prefect (i.e. the legal representative of the Government in the province). Indeed, accommodation in temporary reception structures is limited to the time strictly necessary for the transfer of the applicant in the second reception centres. The law does not specify

any time limit for the stay of asylum seekers in these centres, and only provides that applicants stay "as long as necessary" to complete procedures related to their identification, or for the "time strictly necessary" to be transferred to SPRAR structures. The "second" reception is provided under the System for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR), which targets migrants who have applied for asylum and international protection and helps them to integrate in the hosting country.

Figure 1: The Italian reception system




For migrants reaching Italy by boat and detected in the Mediterranean Sea, the first contact once on land is with the *Centers of first aid reception* (CPSA), which provide first medical assistance and assess whether the migrant has the right to ask for asylum or international protection. In Italy there are four centers located in Lampedusa, Pozzallo (Sicily region), Elmas (Sardinia region) and Otranto (Apulia region). Similarly, the *Centers of reception* (CDA), provide first assistance to migrants identified in the country and who have not been rescued by boat. In both centres migrants receive first assistance only for the limited time needed to identify them and assess whether they have the right to stay in the country. Anyone over the age of 18, without a work-permit, family connection, or history of political persecution, is dubbed an "irregular migrant".

Individuals classified as irregular migrants are placed in detention centers until an expulsion order comes through. These centers, called *Centers of expulsion*, reserved to irregular migrants who do not request asylum and international protection or do not have the right to request it. In Italy

there are five such centres located in the cities of Torino, Roma, Bari, Trapani and Caltanissetta.

Refugee status is granted only to those migrants who can prove they risked persecution or death in their country. In theory, EU law requires asylum-seekers to seek asylum in whichever country they first land.

The "second" reception system is reserved to those who have applied for asylum and international protection and have to wait until a final decision is made. The SPRAR is a system aimed at protecting asylum seekers and refugees in Italy and was created in 2002 as a joint action of the Ministry of Interior, the national association of the Italian municipalities (ANCI) and the UNHCR aiming at creating a first national programme for asylum seekers, supported by shared responsibility of local and central public entities. Each SPRAR centre implements projects aimed at integrating the asylum seekers. The projects not only offer room and board, but also support asylum seekers by providing them assistance in terms of psychological support, legal advice, language or job training programmes to ensure integration in the host country. The SPRAR hosted 3,000 individuals in 2003 and more than 25,000 in 2015. As for 2016, the numbers of projects is 652, managed by more than 400 local entities located in more than 1000 municipalities and hosting 26,000 individuals.

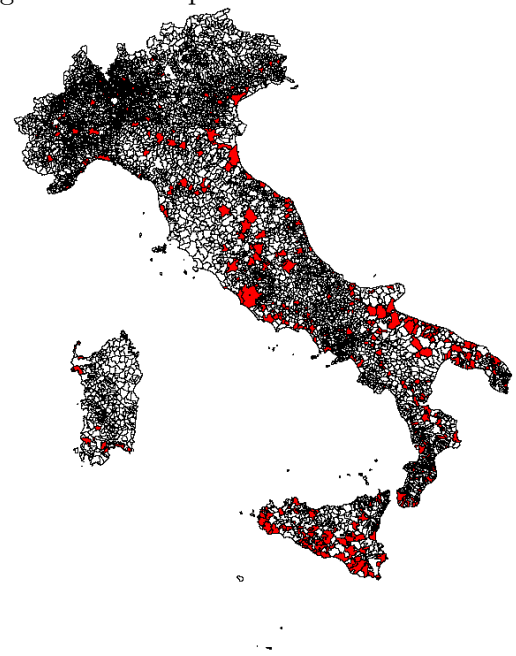
### 3.2.1 The SPRAR system

The Protection System for Asylum and Refuge Seekers, the so-called "second reception", is established by the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Ministry of Interior and operated by Anci (the National Association of Italian Municipalities). Figure 2 provides the exact location of at least a SPRAR in each Italian municipality.

Applicants who have filed a request for asylum and have no means of subsistence (determined by the welfare check's annual amount) are brought into the system of second level reception centres. Besides food and shelter, centres must provide services such as linguistic and cultural mediation, Italian language courses, vocational training and guidance and legal assistance so as to facilitate integration. The SPRAR system is a network of local entities (generally in the municipalities) mostly funded by the national fund for asylum policies (Fondo Nazionale per le politiche e i servizi dell'asilo — FNPSA).[9] Every couple of years the Italian Ministry of Interior opens a call to assign a given number of slots and it establishes the eligibility criteria. The interested municipalities apply to the call in partnership with third-sector organisations (e.g., Non Governmental Organizations NGO), which provide most of the required services.

[9]Since 2016 the system is also funded by the European Fund for Asylum Migration and Integration (AMIF).

Figure 2: Municipalities with SPRAR centres



These services must meet the standards set up in the SPRAR guidance document dealing with all aspects of integrations.[10] Thus, at the time of the application the local entities have to present a specific project, including information on the number of slots they wish to have (a maximum number of slots is set by the Government based on the resident population), the type of building where the migrants will be located, the type of services that will be offered within the following areas: first assistance; cultural and linguistic mediation; assistance to the access of the services in the local community; training and education; job searching; housing searching; social integration; legal integration and assistance; psychological assistance.

The amount of money requested for each area should be also specified. The projects are evaluated by the ministry and can be classified as eligible, and thus are financed, or non eligible.[11] The projects can be targeted to "ordinary beneficiaries" or to "vulnerable beneficiaries", to which an additional special psychological support should be provided (unaccompanied minors, disable or people with difficulties, single parents, and victims of torture).

[10] http://www.sprar.it/guide-normative/manuali-operativi-sprar

[11] It may happen that some projects are classified as eligible but are not financed due to lack of resources, and can be financed at a later stage if new funding becomes available.

# 4 Empirical Strategy

## 4.1 Fixed effects model

Our baseline model aims at explaining the impact of refugees' proximity, measured by the distance to the closest SPRAR centre in kilometres, on voting outcomes in the last constitutional referendum. As discussed previously, this referendum was interpreted as a vote in favour or against the government in power run by Mr. Renzi. Our estimated equation is:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{ij} + \beta_2^\top \mathbf{X}_{ij} + \delta_j + u_{ij} \tag{1}$$

where $Y_{ij}$ is the share of no-turnout / yes / no and invalid votes in municipality $i$ in province $j$. More in detail, we use four different specifications for $Y_{ij}$: i) number of non-voters calculated as the ratio between the difference of eligible population and number of voters over the eligible population; ii) the total number of "Yes" votes over the eligibles, iii) the total number of "No" votes over the eligibles; and iv) the total number of "invalid" votes over the eligible (to vote) population defined as the sum of blank, invalid and contested votes. $D_{ij}$ is the distance in kilometres between municipality $i$ to the closest SPRAR centre, and takes value 0 in municipalities where the SPRARs are located.

Our parameter of interest is $\beta_1$, the expected change in $Y_{ij}$ due to the proximity to SPRAR centres of municipality $i$, everything else being equal. The mechanism that we have in mind is linked to the physical and media exposure of voters to asylum seekers and refugees. During their daily life, voters residing or working close to refugee reception centres may perceive more the costs than the benefits related to asylum and refugee reception policies, or they may be more sensitive to anti-migration biased medias or political campaigns. Being migration a very sensitive topic for many Italian natives, this exposure might increase their negative perception about migrants, and thus vote against the Government, which has the responsibility of managing the ongoing refugee crisis.

The association between voting behaviour and proximity to refugee center may be driven by different confounding factors. $X_{ij}$ contains a large set of controls at the municipality level to alleviate any possible concern. First, geographical characteristics (total surface, urban degree, indicators for being in a mountain area, hydrological situation and different indicators of seismicity) that capture the territorial characteristics. Second, total population and income per capita are considered to capture difference in the size and in the wealth at community level that may simultaneously affect both the migration flows and political preferences. Then, the educational levels are included as a good predictor of political attidutes. Third, the share of third country nationals at the municipality

level are used to control for legal migrant attitudes within city. Last, we consider the pre-trend voting both including the shares of votes for the different political parties in the 2006 national elections and shares of votes for the Christian Democracy party and turnout in the 1992 elections to also capture the historical trend in votes. We only use the share of votes for the "Camera" because the eligible population is the same as in the Referendum while it is not the case for the other branch of the Italian parliament, namely the "Senato", where the voters need to be more than 25 years old. For coherence, we also account for the share of votes in the referendum 2011, a repeal of the law that allowed to entrust the private sector in the management and furniture of the local public services. Province fixed effects ($\delta_j$) account for other unobservable characteristics over and above the long set of controls $X_{ij}$ that are time-invariant. Doing so, our baseline model exploits residual within-province variation. Standard errors are clustered at the province level. We show the descriptive statistics for the set of controls in Table B.1 in the Appendix.[12]

We focus on the effect of proximity to SPRARs on voting behaviour of municipality $j$, which might or might not have a SPRAR. The identification assumption in these OLS estimates is that the rich set of municipality-level controls included in the regressions capture all unobservable factors which might simultaneously affect SPRARs' locations and voting behaviour. However, as explained in Section 3, municipalities can participate in calls for public tenders and they need to fulfill some eligibility criteria such as provision of housing, job search services and courses aimed at improving integration, in order to open a SPRAR centre. Thus, unobserved factors (e.g., characteristics of the mayor in office and the lobbying process between the local authorities and the central government) not fully controlled by our covariates may jointly affect the decision to open a SPRAR or not in a given municipality and voting behaviour in the same municipality. To address this self-selectivity concern, in addition to the estimates in the full sample, we also report OLS estimates based on the sample of municipalities not currently hosting a SPRAR. The results show that this is not a relevant issue.

In our setting, the main identification assumption is that the presence of a SPRAR centre in another municipality is uncorrelated with unobserved determinants of voting in municipality $i$: if the mayor of another municipality decides to open a SPRAR in his/her municipality, this has a spillover on municipality $i$ and citizens living in municipalities $i$ cannot do much about it, neither at the time of application (via protests), nor later on (e.g., voting against that mayor in the next elections). Nevertheless, we cannot exclude the possibility that there might be other unobserved

[12]We also include fixed effect at the labour market areas to capture residual heterogeneity related to the economic structure at the local level.

factors that determine the allocation of SPRAR in municipalities together with voting behaviour in a different location. To account for these issues we rely on also rely on IVs that provide similar evidence.

### 4.2 Instrumental variables

Our fixed effect models, especially when estimated in the samples of municipalities not hosting a SPRAR, should account for potentially unobservable variables affecting SPRARs proximity and voting. However, a concern with this identification strategy is that the location of SPRARs close to (even if not in) municipality $i$ may be endogenous with respect to the political orientation prevailing in the same municipality. The placement of a SPRAR in a municipality may not only depend on its political orientation, but also on neighbouring municipalities' political orientation depending on the size of the exposure to SPRAR centres and whether or not there is clustering in terms of attitudes and/or unobserved characteristics that determine voting. Unfortunately, as in the case of the Britain Brexit case, it is unrealistic to find a similar referendum in the past that is characterised by similar features that can provide a fixed effect estimates at the municipality levels.[13]

The issue can be easily understood by noticing that the distance to SPRARs at time $t$ can be expressed as the sum between the distance from an initial stock of SPRARs, evaluated back in time, and the variation in the distance from SPRARs between the initial period and the current period, mainly determined by the *opening* (*closing*) or new (old) SPRARs, that is

$$S_t = S_n + (S_t - S_n) = S_n + \Delta_{t,n} S. \tag{2}$$

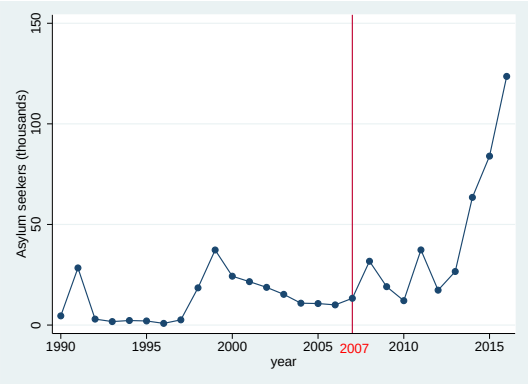
If the initial distance from SPRARs or the change in the distance is correlated with a municipality's prevailing political orientation, we have an endogeneity problem, that is $Cov(S_t, u_t) \neq 0$, creating bias in the OLS estimates. In particular, it might not be surprising to observe new SPRARs opened in left-wing voting municipalities, and to vote 'yes' in the 2016 referendum on a reform promoted by the Democratic Party. Even if we focus on municipalities not hosting SPRARs, there may still be concerns that communities closer to those hosting SPRARs may have unobserved features making them more likely to vote left-wing (i.e. in favour of the Government).

To address the endogeneity issue, we use an IV strategy and employ 2SLS. A natural candidate for instrumenting $D_{ij}$ in equation (1) – the distance in km from municipality $i$ to the closest SPRAR

[13] Differently, a sequence of national elections provide the suitable setting to use this identification strategy as inSteinmayr (2016).

in 2016 – is the distance to the closest SPRAR measured in 2007, several years before the onset of the so called European refugee crisis and the large inflows of refugees in Italy (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Trend of asylum seekers in Italy: 1990-2016




Our first-stage regression is:

$$D_{ij} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 Z_{ij} + \alpha_2^{\top} \mathbf{X}_{ij} + \gamma_j + \epsilon_{ij} \tag{3}$$

where: $Z_{ij}$ is our instrument, the distance in km between municipality $i$ and the closest SPRAR in 2007; $X_{ij}$ includes the same control variables used in equation (1), and $\gamma_j$ are again province fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the province level. $Z_{ij}$ is a valid instrument if it satisfies two requirements: it must be relevant (correlated with the endogenous variable) and exogenous (uncorrelated with the error term in the main equation).

We expect the refugee crisis to be less salient and debated in the media in 2007 compared to 2016, and the mayors' and municipalities' opponency to opening such centres much weaker. Further, SPRARs centres in 2007 were opened with agreements between different central and local governments to those in place in 2016. Also for this reason, the issue of endogeneity with respect to voting in 2016 could be attenuated. To make the exogeneity assumption even more credible, we control for the results of the 2013 political elections, which addresses the issue of the strong persistence in voting behaviour over time (e.g., even if the mayor was not the same in 2007 and 2016, s/he might belong to the same party). Evidence on the exogeneity of the instrument is reported in Table 9 where voting behaviour in 2001 is regressed on distance to SPRAR in 2007. If the latter was endogenous, in the sense that municipalities with a specific political orientation in 2001 were more/less likely to open SPRARs, we should observe a strongly significant association of voting

outcomes in 2001 with distance from SPRAR in 2007. The placebo test in Section 6.3 confirms the independence. Concerning the relevance of the instrument, Figure **??** provides a graphical representation of the first stage. Clearly the location in 2007 is correlated to location in 2016, and thus we can expect that distance to the closest SPRAR in 2007 to be correlated to distance in 2016. To sum up, the proximity to a SPRAR in 2007 is positively associated with the future proximity bearing in mind that the inflow of refugees increases in the last years. This creates the need to open new refugee centres to accommodate new arrivals. Indeed, this reduces the average distance to SPRAR in 2016. In Section 6 we discuss the features of this instrument through descriptive statistics based on the first stage. We then estimate equation (1) via 2SLS.[14]

# 5 Data Sources

To study the relationship between proximity to SPRAR centres and voting behaviour in the 2016 Italian referendum we combine different data sources.

First, we collect data on the distribution of the SPRAR centres and related projects across Italian municipalities on November 2016 (one month before the referendum day). This allow us to identify the municipality that hosts at least one SPRAR centre. Data on SPRAR are publicly available and can be downloaded from the official website of SPRAR.[15] We use of historical data on SPRAR location in our empirical strategy Section 4.2. Our variable of interest is the distance from the closest municipality with a SPRAR, and we compute it using data on the latitude and the longitude of the centroid of each municipality provided by ISTAT.

Second, we exploit and put together other sources of data maintained by ISTAT with information on about 8,000 municipalities. Besides geographical information (e.g., total surface, urban degree, indicators for being in a mountain area, etc), we use data on the total resident population (total and by age group). These data refer to the year 2016. In addition, we include the share of individuals in each municipality by the highest level of qualification obtained (e.g from elementary school license to university degree), information which is taken from the 2011 census. To account for the presence of immigrants in each municipality we use information on the number of foreign born residents and their nationality for the year 2015 (ISTAT). Note that this information refers to migrants who reside legally in Italy and are present in the municipality registers. In particular we consider the share of registered immigrants coming from extra-EU countries.[16] Controlling for the

[14] Figure A.5 and A.6 in Appendix provide the maps that graphically show the phenomenon across municipalities.
[15] See http://www.sprar.it/progetti-territoriali
[16] We estimate two additional regressions: first, we consider the share of registered immigrants coming from those

presence of registered immigrants is important as this variable may have a direct effect on people's voting behaviour (see Barone et al., 2016). To proxy for the wealth of each municipality we use data on the declared income for the year 2014. The political flag of the municipalities is collected using the data from Ministry of Interior. To do so, we consider the results of the 2013 national election, including the shares of votes for the right-wings parties, for the centrist parties, for the left wings parties and for other parties, which mainly include the recently created *Movimento 5 stelle*. In addition, we also control for the shares of votes to the Christian Democracy party in the 1992 election, and the turnout at the same election.

### 5.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 1 presents the distribution of the distance from the closest SPRAR, in the four Italian macro-regions. As expected municipalities in the South are on average more exposed to the presence of a SPRAR, and municipalities located in the North-East are less exposed. In particular, the $50^{th}$ percentile of the distance in the North East corresponds almost to the $75^{th}$ percentile in the South.

Table 1: Distance, descriptive statistics by region

| | Italy | North-West | North-East | Centre | South |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| $25^{th}$ | 9.20 | 9.90 | 11.95 | 9.36 | 7.15 |
| $50^{th}$ | 15.12 | 15.79 | 19.42 | 15.31 | 12.48 |
| Mean | 20.01 | 18.11 | 28.82 | 18.45 | 17.82 |
| $75^{th}$ | 25.19 | 24.83 | 36.81 | 24.44 | 20.36 |

Notes: Presented are descriptive statistics for the distance in km to the closest SPRAR in 2016, excluding the municipalities who have a SPRAR. The average in the all sample is 18.82 km.

Our analysis focuses on the proximity to a SPRAR and the voting behaviour in the Italian referendum. Some descriptive maps help to better understand some features at the municipality level. The maps A.1 displays a positive association between the shares aged 30-65 and the "No" votes which is mirrored by the "Yes" voter. Reasons for the population to be against the Government are multiple and the analysis on voting behaviours show that the "No" prevails in the Southern part of the country, characterized by worse economic conditions. In addition, there is evidence that in the first 100 municipalities with higher unemployment rate, more than 65% of the population voted no, while in the 100 municipalities with lower unemployment rate, almost 60% of the population voted "Yes". Similarly, if we consider big cities, results show higher proportion of "Yes" in the historical centres, and higher proportion of no in the suburbs, and at the same time it

countries where the majority of asylum seekers come from (Nigeria, Pakistan, Gambia, Senegal, Bangladesh, Mali, Ukraine and Afghanistan), as asylum seekers coming from those countries account for the 75% of the total asylum requests; second, we consider the share of registered migrants coming from Africa. Results are robust to these two alternatives specifications.

seems that lower socio-economic conditions and poverty was associated with higher proportion of no. The "No" also prevails among the very young voters, especially the ones aged between 25 and 34, which, according to DEMOS data, voted no in the 70% of the cases: interestingly, this is the age range affected by dramatically high unemployment rates and very unstable working careers.

The immigration issue could have played a role in increasing the anti government feelings. Migrations has been a hot topic in Italy in the past three years: the massive arrivals of immigrants in the Southern costs and the powerlessness of the politicians in stopping or at least regulating this phenomenon has raise many concerns and discontent in some part of the Italian population. Renzi's government is left wing and compared to the former government has weaken the anti-migrations policies, and some members of the opposition have claim that this led to more and more migrants getting to Italy. In addition, the public opinion has gradually moved towards being more and more against immigrations, with many episodes of citizens protesting against the placement of immigrants in their municipalities with the opening of SPRAR. Surprisingly enough, the raw in Figure A.2 shows a negative correlation between the share of non-EU migrants and the anti-government votes. The more the municipalities have a high share of legal migrants, the less voters voted for "No".

Finally, the maps A.4 and A.3 show the correlation between the share of center-right and center-left voters and anti-government votes in the referendum, respectively. As we said, the "No" front was mainly composed of parties that used migration as a battle against the government, in particular Lega Nord, which blamed Mr. Renzi for unsuccessfully negotiating with his European counterparts the redistribution of migrant across Europe and that Italy was left alone by the rest of the countries. Also the media highlight how the Government has been powerless in front of the other European leaders in sharing the responsibility of receiving those migrants. In addition, parties in the oppositions contested the high economic costs of hosting migrants, and have made campaigns on the fact the public money is spent for immigrants rather than for Italian citizens, leading to a populism feeling of hates towards immigrants. As shown by Genovese et al. (2016) people close to migrants in reception centers are less supportive of migration, especially if living in small municipalities. The leader of the Lega Nord, namely Mr. Salvini, mentions the reduction of power in the local administrations as a link to a possible reduction in decision power of the mayors regarding the migration issue, claiming that " *And with the referendum wanted by Mr. Renzi, who intends to further centralize the management of immigration in the hands of the government, they want to silence the many mayors and brave citizens who protest and fight the invasion to protect*

*their communities*".[17]

# 6 Results

Section 6.1 reports our baseline results of proximity to SPRAR and voting behaviour controlling for observables at the municipality level and province FEs. We then check whether our results are robust to some counfounding factors. Finally, in Section 6.3, we provide IV estimation strategy to address any endogeneity concern related to our main results.

## 6.1 Baseline results

We first show the results for the four considered outcomes, stemming from OLS regression and including only the controls at the municipality level (odds columns); and then we show the same results including province fixed effects (even columns).[18] In the regression the outcome variables are expressed in shares, ranging between 0 and 1, and the distance, which was measured in km, is divided by 100.

Table 2: Voting behaviour and distance to SPRAR, 2016: baseline results

| Share of: | No Turnout | | Yes | | No | | Invalid | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| Distance | 0.0214** | 0.0200*** | 0.0294** | 0.0061 | -0.0506*** | -0.0258** | -0.0002 | -0.0004 |
| | (0.0107) | (0.0059) | (0.0138) | (0.0091) | (0.0182) | (0.0106) | (0.0005) | (0.0005) |
| Observations | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 |
| R-squared | 0.8283 | 0.5453 | 0.6797 | 0.3429 | 0.5620 | 0.3828 | 0.1927 | 0.1238 |
| Geography | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Population | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Local GDP | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| National elections | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Province FE | | X | | X | | X | | X |
| Cluster provinces | 109 | 109 | 109 | 109 | 109 | 109 | 109 | 109 |

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the province level. * p<.10 ** p<.05 *** p<.01.

The estimated coefficient in column (1) suggests a positive (and statistically significant) effect of the closeness to a SPRAR centre on the share of the population who do not show up ("No turnout"). Said in other words, the closer to SPRAR a municipality is, the lower the voting turnout. More precisely, increasing the distance from a municipality that hosts a SPRAR by one km increases the number of individuals who do not vote by 0.02 p.p.. This is consistent with voters being more prone to let their voices be heard by the government by attending the election, the closer they are to a SPRAR. Given that the medium distance to a SPRAR was around 19 km in 2016, at the sample

[17] Matteo Salvini on Facebook, November 24.

[18] We include all the controls discussed in Section **??**. Results reporting the coefficients of the control variables are available from the authors upon request.

mean this corresponds to 0.38 p.p. more individuals not showing up in the referendum, compared to municipalities with SPRARs.

Consistently with our first result, we also find a negative effect of the distance on the share of people voting "No", i.e. the closer the SPRAR the higher the share of anti-government votes. The municipality at the average distance from SPRARs tend to have 1.05 p.p. less individuals voting "No" in the referendum, compared to municipalities which have a SPRAR (zero distance). Finally, we do not find any significant relationship both for the share of "Yes" and for "Invalid votes".

In the even columns, we introduce province fixed effects. The estimated coefficient of the proximity to a SPRAR on the share of "No turnout" slightly falls (0.0311) while remaining highly statistically significant. Conversely, the effect associated with the share of "No" votes drops by almost one half, the estimate is, however, more precise (significant at 1% level). No significant effect is found on the shares of "Yes" and "Invalid" votes.

This first set of results suggest that being closer to a SPRAR makes more people going to vote, and to vote against the Government in power.

### 6.2 Robustness checks

Our identification strategy in the previous section relies on the assumption that unobserved political orientation does not affect the location of the SPRAR in a particular municipality. In this section, we carry out some robustness checks. First, we provide empirical evidence that the results are not driven by the zero distance, namely the municipalities that host the SPRAR (441). Dropping these municipalities should also lessen endogeneity concerns, since for the municipalities not hosting SPRARs, proximity can be roughly interpreted as an externality. The results, shown in Table 3 are identical to the baseline ones.

Table 3: Voting behaviour and distance to SPRARs, 2016: Only municipalities without SPRARs

| Share of: | No Turnout | | Yes | | No | | Invalid | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| Distance | 0.0228** | 0.0186*** | 0.0280* | 0.0053 | -0.0507*** | -0.0237** | -0.0001 | -0.0001 |
| | (0.0108) | (0.0065) | (0.0145) | (0.0100) | (0.0185) | (0.0117) | (0.0005) | (0.0005) |
| Observations | 7,326 | 7,326 | 7,326 | 7,326 | 7,326 | 7,326 | 7,326 | 7,326 |
| R-squared | 0.8246 | 0.5496 | 0.6718 | 0.3451 | 0.5630 | 0.3833 | 0.1871 | 0.1197 |
| Geography | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Population | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Local GDP | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| National elections | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Province FE | | X | | X | | X | | X |
| Cluster provinces | 109 | 109 | 109 | 109 | 109 | 109 | 109 | 109 |

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the province level. * p<.10 ** p<.05 *** p<.01.

Second, we investigate whether our results are driven by economic factors that are not captured

by the inclusion of the local GDP or education, or province fixed effects. Unemployment rate, for instance, is not available at the municipality level. In order to do so, we include local labor market (LLM) fixed effects to take into account potential unobserved heterogeneity at the local level. We consider almost 600 LLMs that are characterized by the fact that (1) their boundaries are crossed by few journeys to work (i.e. they are relatively self-contained) and (2) a relatively high level of intra-market movement results from the LLMs being as integrated as possible. Table 4 shows almost no difference with respect to the main empirical evidence, and the magnitude of the coefficients is actually bigger in the two significant regressions, shares of "No" and shares of no turnout.

Table 4: Voting behaviour and distance to SPRARs, 2016: LLM-FEs results

| Share of: | No Turnout | Yes | No | invalid |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| Distance | 0.0191** | 0.0116 | -0.0297*** | -0.0010 |
| | (0.0076) | (0.0089) | (0.0091) | (0.0008) |
| Observations | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 |
| R-squared | 0.4901 | 0.3278 | 0.3502 | 0.0958 |
| Geography | X | X | X | X |
| Population | X | X | X | X |
| Local GDP | X | X | X | X |
| National elections | X | X | X | X |
| LLM FE | X | X | X | X |
| Cluster LLM | 683 | 683 | 683 | 683 |

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the province level. * p<.10 ** p<.05 *** p<.01.

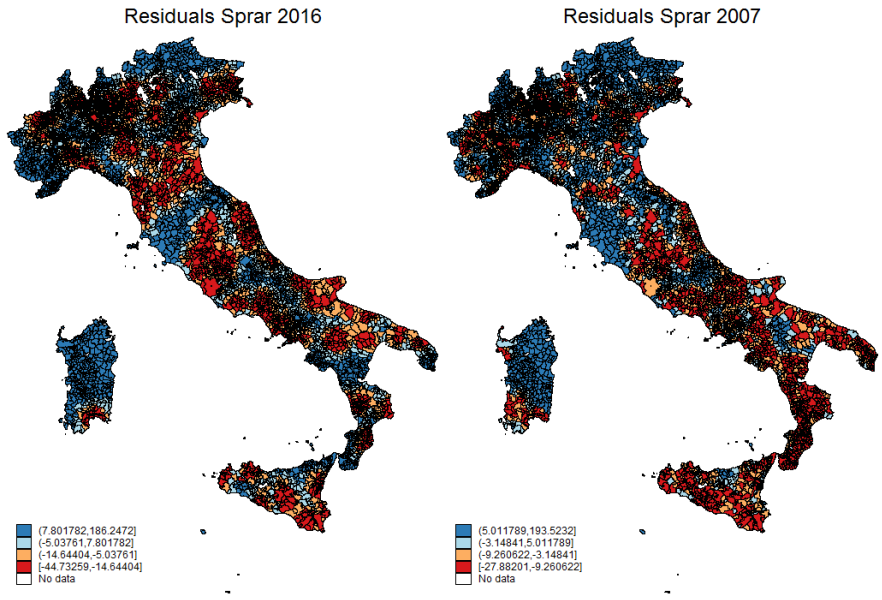
This set of results are in line with the main evidence shown in Table 2 so it seems difficult to believe that the identification is driven by both the presence of the few municipalities hosting a SPRAR and the local labour market conditions.

### 6.3 2SLS results

Before discussing the IV results in detail, Figure 4 provides a general picture of the variability of the distance to a SPRAR between 2016 and 2007 that we exploit for the identification.

This map describes the impact of these phenomena using warmer (colder) colours for relatively smaller (larger) distances. Later, we deepen this initial finding conditioning on a rich set of time-varying covariates. This preliminary descriptive analysis shows a positive correlation between these two variables and the evidence suggests that the closer to a refugee center is a municipality in 2007, the closer is in 2016. Then, Figure 5 sketches the estimation strategy. On the one hand, the left picture reveals the substantial predictive power of our instrument. On the other hand, the right picture plots the reduced form regression of the proximity to SPRAR in 2007 on the share of "No"

Figure 4: Distance to SPRAR, 2016 and 2007: maps on the residual variability




votes. The results suggest that there is indeed a reduced form effect of closeness to SPRAR in the past and voting behaviour in the Referendum in 2016.

Figure 5: Voting Behaviour and Distance to SPRAR, 2016 and 2007: 2SLS results

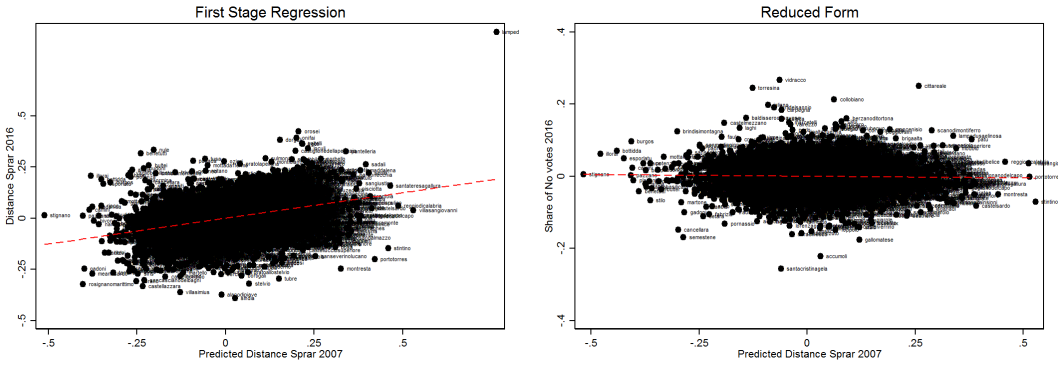



Table 5 shows the results from the first-stage regression. We use four different specifications: one in which we include province fixed effects and one in which we include fixed effects at the level of the LLM. For each specification we exclude and include the set of controls at municipality level.

The results show a strong and positive correlation between distance from the closest SPRAR in 2007 and in 2016. A one kilometer increase in distance to the closest SPRAR in 2007 increases distance to the closest SPRAR in 2016 by 0.35 km. Consistently with the openings of several new

Table 5: First stage results

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Distance 2007 | 0.3404*** | 0.2950*** | 0.4630*** | 0.4150*** |
| | (0.0565) | (0.0544) | (0.0723) | (0.0736) |
| Observations | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 |
| R-squared | 0.7609 | 0.789 | 0.914 | 0.926 |
| Geography | | X | | X |
| Population | | X | | X |
| Local GDP | | X | | X |
| National elections | | X | | X |
| Province FE | X | X | | |
| LLM FE | | | X | X |

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the province level. * p<.10 ** p<.05 *** p<.01.

SPRARs between 2007 and 2016, the coefficient is less than one. Compared to the studies that use the shift-share instrument our first stage is particularly strong. The estimates are quite stable using both specifications. The $F-$statistic on the excluded instrument is about 28 and is always above the threshold of 10.[19]

As it is shown in Figure 5, Table 6 demonstrates the direct effect of our instrument on the share of votes. It is worth noting that this effect is very similar to the one in Table 2.

Table 6: Referendum results and Distance to SPRAR 2007: reduced form estimates

| | No turnout | | Center-Right votes | | Center-Left votes | | invalid | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Share of: | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| Distance 2007 | 0.0179*** | 0.0210** | 0.0006 | -0.0007 | -0.0186** | -0.0200** | 0.0001 | -0.0003 |
| | (0.0056) | (0.0082) | (0.0056) | (0.0092) | (0.0074) | (0.0089) | (0.0004) | (0.0009) |
| Observations | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 |
| R-squared | 0.8736 | 0.8943 | 0.7918 | 0.8326 | 0.6933 | 0.7548 | 0.2238 | 0.2678 |
| Geography | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Population | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Local GDP | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| National elections | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Province FE | X | | X | | X | | X | |
| LLM FE | | X | | X | | X | | X |

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the province and LLM level. * p<.10 ** p<.05 *** p<.01.

Table 7 shows our second-stage estimates. We find that a one kilometer increase in the distance from the closest SPRAR increases voting turnout by 0.06 p.p. and decreases by the same amount the share of "No" votes. As in the baseline fixed effect model results are robust to either using province fixed effects and LLM fixed effects, and the estimated coefficients change very little. Compared to the baseline results the 2SLS coefficients are twice as large. Two possible interpretations can be given to this difference.

On the one hand, as we explained earlier in the paper, we expect SPRARs being opened in municipalities supporting the Government. This would produce a positive bias in the (negative)

[19]The results appear even stronger than the ones in Table 5 in the case we implement the model in log-log.

Table 7: Referendum results and Distance to SPRAR, 2016: 2SLS estimates

| | No turnout | | Center-Right votes | | Center-Left votes | | invalid | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Share of: | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| Distance | 0.0607*** | 0.0506** | 0.0020 | -0.0016 | -0.0629** | -0.0482** | 0.0002 | -0.0008 |
| | (0.0211) | (0.0229) | (0.0188) | (0.0212) | (0.0256) | (0.0211) | (0.0013) | (0.0020) |
| Observations | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 |
| R-squared | 0.8717 | 0.8938 | 0.7918 | 0.8326 | 0.6911 | 0.7548 | 0.2237 | 0.2679 |
| Geography | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Population | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Local GDP | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| National elections | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Province FE | X | | X | | X | | X | |
| F-stat excluded instrument | 29.39 | 31.78 | 29.39 | 31.78 | 29.39 | 31.78 | 29.39 | 31.78 |
| LLM FE | | X | | X | | X | | X |

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the province and LLM level. * p<.10 ** p<.05 *** p<.01.

effect of distance from SPRARs on the votes against the Government ("No" vote). Although this bias should be lower in the estimates excluding the municipalities hosting SPRARs, we do not find such evidence when comparing the OLS baseline estimates in Table 2 and those in Table 3. The same happens when limiting the 2SLS estimation to the municipalities without SPRARs in Table 3, which turn out to be very similar to the 2SLS estimates in the full sample.

On the other hand, the difference is due to the fact that the treatment has heterogeneous effects and we are capturing a local average treatment affect (LATE), that is, we are identifying the average effect of the distance to the closest SPRAR among the group of compliant municipalities (that is municipalities whose treatment changes with the instrument). This translates into saying that an increase in the number of SPRAR over time may have increased the closeness to SPRAR centres for a particular sub-group of municipalities. For this reason we extend our IV analysis and provide descriptive evidence on the compliant sub-population, to learn as much as possible about our instrument. In our case the compliant sub-population associated to the instrument is composed by municipalities whose distance to the closest SPRAR in 2016 is completely determined by distance in 2007 (the instrument). Although it is not possible to list the compliers from observed data, we can learn something about their characteristics by exploiting the Bayes theorem in the case where both the endogenous variable and the instrument are binary.[20] Therefore, we recode our endogenous variable (distance from the closest SPRAR in 2016) and our instrument (distance from the closest SPRAR in 2007) as a dummy taking value 1 if this distance is lower than the mean.[21] We characterize the sub-population of compliers according to the following set of pre-treatment binary variables: an indicator that takes value 1 if the total population is above the mean in the

[20] See Angrist (2004) and Angrist and Pischke (2009) for the methodology.

[21] The results using the mode are pretty much the same.

sample, an indicator that takes value 1 if the declared total income in the municipality is above the mean, and an indicator that takes value 1 if the share of graduates is above the mean.

The analysis for a sample of 7782 municipalities is shown in Table 8, where we report the unconditional mean of the pre-treatment dummy $X$, the conditional mean for the compliers sub-population and the relative likelihood that a complier has $X = 1$ (respect to the whole sample). With respect to the whole sample compliers with distance to SPRAR 2007 being lower than the mean are 5.3% more likely to have an income above the mean, 2.5 % more likely to have a share of high educated people above the mean, and 96 % more likely to have a population above the mean. From these results we have a flavour that compliars are municipalities with characterised by poor socio-economic conditions, for which the effect of proximity to SPRAR on voting behaviour is magnified.

Table 8: Compliers characterisation

| Exogenous variable (X) | N | $Pr(X=1)$ | $Pr(X=1\|\text{compliers})$ | $\frac{Pr(X=1\|\text{compliers})}{Pr(X=1)}$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| sh_edu00 | 7782 | 0.418 | 0.316 | 0.757 |
| rural | 7782 | 0.114 | 0.061 | 0.535 |
| r_extra_eu | 7782 | 0.400 | 0.473 | 1.182 |
| r_all_africa | 7782 | 0.357 | 0.350 | 0.980 |
| r_immigrant | 7782 | 0.438 | 0.532 | 1.214 |
| below_mean_income | 7782 | 0.794 | 0.722 | 0.910 |

Notes: The variables (X) are binary variables which take value 1 for the value being higher than the mean. They should be interpreted in negative terms (low educated, rural, with high percentage of immigrants, etc. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the province and LLM level. * p<.10 ** p<.05 *** p<.01.

Table 9 presents a falsification test to strengthen the argument that the exclusion restriction is credible. Precisely, we redo the main analysis using the first election before 2007 as the main outcomes and we test whether there is any correlation with our measure (instrument) on the proximity to SPRAR at the municipality level. Then, we define four: the share of votes for center-left, center-right party, the share of individuals over the eligible population that do not show up and finally the share of invalid votes. As this election took place before the large inflow of refugees that determine the location of a SPRAR, we would expect to see no effect of the presence of refugees on these earlier election. Under the assumption that these two elections follow similar political trends, this can be seen as a test for the exogeneity of the instrument up. Indeed, for the national election in 2001, we find no significant effects, coefficients are even positive.

# 7 Investigating the channels: Effects' heterogeneity

In this section, we throw light on the potential mechanisms at the heart of the effect of proximity to refugee reception centres on voting. Extant literature using individual-level data has already

Table 9: Voting Behaviour and Distance to SPRAR, 2007: Instrument exogeneity

| National Election 2001 | No turnout | | Center-Right votes | | Center-Left votes | | invalid | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Share of: | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| Distance 2007 | 0.0001 | 0.0161* | -0.0034 | -0.0152 | -0.0029 | -0.0064 | 0.0062 | 0.0055 |
| | (0.0106) | (0.0083) | (0.0108) | (0.0095) | (0.0117) | (0.0119) | (0.0051) | (0.0037) |
| Observations | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 | 7,760 |
| R-squared | 0.4123 | 0.4623 | 0.4081 | 0.4484 | 0.5058 | 0.5845 | 0.1529 | 0.1931 |
| Geography | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Population | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Local GDP | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| National elections | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Cluster LLM | 683 | | 683 | | 683 | | 683 | |
| Cluster FE | | 109 | | 109 | | 109 | | 109 |

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the province and LLM level. * p<.10 ** p<.05 *** p<.01.

investigated factors that contribute to shaping natives' opinions on migrants.

When discussing about the potential mechanisms, previous studies on migrants and refugees report quite consistent results. Concerns related with cultural diversity (mainly religious diversity), competition in the labour market (proxied by education) and competition for public services (mainly schools, proxied by 0-14 population) are found to significantly mediate the impact of legal migrants on voting for centre-right coalitions in Italy by Barone et al. (2016). Quite interestingly, the authors do not find criminal concerns to be important. Similar factors appear to mediate the effect of legal migrants on voting for the far right in the study by Halla et al. (2017) for Austria. The effect on voting is larger in high-unemployment municipalities and where there is a high overlap between the labour market skills of natives and migrants. Interestingly, communities with a highly educated population are more likely to vote for the far right. The authors maintain that although high educated individuals are less exposed to the competition of migrants in the labour market, they are more concerned with the provision of compositional amenities. Consistently with this explanation, they find the effect to be stronger in communities that have a higher migrant children to native children ratio, and some suggestive evidence that high immigration municipalities enjoy less provision of day-care for children up to three and after school child care. As for refugees, in their study for the city of Hamburg, Otto and Steinhardt (2014) find labour market concerns to be much less important, presumably because refugees are subject to working restrictions, compared to those related to the burden for the welfare system and non-economic concerns related to compositional amenities. In addition to welfare-related concerns (proxied by the share of welfare-dependent migrants), Dustmann et al. (2016) in their study for Denmark find the presence of refugees to have stronger effects on anti-immigration votes in wealthier areas, coherently with the self-interest hypothesis, in municipalities which higher incidence of crime and violent crime, and in municipalities with a higher presence of immigrants. The last result is at odds with the 'contact theory' and the

findings in Steinmayr (2016) and more in line with a 'saturation' effect. By contrast, the effect is lower in communities with a higher share of church tax payers, which is interpreted by the authors as a proxy of altruistic attitudes.

Unfortunately, there does not exist any opinion survey which can be matched to municipality (or even province) level data on citizens' opinions about migration in Italy. For this reason, we investigate the potential channels of the effect we found in the previous sections resorting to a different empirical strategy. In particular, we investigate potential heterogeneity in the effect of proximity to SPRARs by dividing Italian municipalities into quartiles according to their values in 2016 (or as close as possible to 2016 depending on data availability) of some potential *mediating factors* in the relation between closeness with refugee centres and voting in the referendum.[22] We consider six potential mediating variables stressed in the literature: (i) unemployment; (ii) crime; (iii) education; (iv) housing prices; (v) the existing stock of legal migrants (contact vs saturation hypothesis, to test this hypothesis try with all non-EU migrants and migrants for main refugees' origin countries); (vi) social capital (as proxies of 'altruism'; (vii) political orientation in previous elections. After having allocated each Italian municipality to a quartile by the values of the six mentioned variables, we report 2SLS on each quartile and compare the effects' magnitudes. Larger effects for municipalities falling in high quartiles for a factor could be interpreted as that specific factor explaining natives' concerns about the presence of refugees close to where they either live or work.[23] It must kept in mind though that voting behavior is affected by voters' perceptions. In this regard, the strategy we propose to highlight the main causal pathways is based on the assumption that voters' negative opinions about migrants are stronger where municipalities' negative attributes (e.g., unemployment, crime, etc.) are more pervasive.[24]

[22] Being *mediating factors* they are endogenous by definition, and we do not need to lag them. The idea is that where these underline factors are more important, the 2SLS effects of proximity to SPRAR should turn out to be of larger magnitude.

[23] A similar strategy is followed by Halla et al. (2017). Barone et al. (2016) and Dustmann et al. (2016) use instead interaction terms, whose effects are, however, harder to identify using IV if the interacted and baseline effects are strongly correlated.

[24] However, nothing excludes in principle that natives may vote for anti-immigration parties also in low-unemployment municipalities, for instance, because they believe that refugees negatively affect natives' employment.

# 8 Conclusions

International refugees crisis has pointed out the state of emergency in Europe. The United Nations (2016) report 244 million international migrants worldwide (76 million in Europe) in 2015, up from 173 million (56 million in Europe) in 2000, with the largest increase in high-income countries. The policy-maker should manage this issue considering that the current influx of refugees into Europe is not realistic to stop soon. Especially after the Britain Brexit, it becomes crucial to understand what are the political consequences of increased refugees exposure and how does it affect voting behaviour?

Political belief narrates that anti-establishment attitude attract voters by appealing to anti-immigration sentiments of the voting native population. Yet, it is also possible that more contact with immigrants could foster better understanding and ultimately a more positive attitude of voters as we show in the heterogeneous effects. While existing empirical studies often show a positive correlation between legal immigration and votes for extreme right parties, empirical studies establishing a causal chain is rather scant at most.

This paper provides new evidence of exposure to recent refugee waves on voting behavior of Italian citizens. We have investigated how proximity to reception centers hosting asylum seekers influences the vote on a Referendum held in Italy in 2016. Although the referendum deal with the approval of a Constitutional reform, the vote has been interpreted as an approval or not to the Government in power led by the Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, head of the left center party *Partito Democratico*. Renzi himself linked the success or failure of the referendum to his political destiny, explicitly declaring that if the no would have won he would have resigned from being the Prime minister. Thus citizens used this vote to express their opinion about the government and we interpret the no votes as anti-government votes. We find that in municipalities located closer to SPRAR reception centers, the shares of no votes and turnout increase. So being located in proximity of a reception center causes more people going to vote and more anti-government votes. Our results are robust to a series of robustness check. We also rely on the instrumental variable approach to address the potential endogeneity between SPRAR location and voting behavior and we find consistent results.

The magnitude of the results suggests that being located 4 km far away from a SPRAR center (the $10^{th}$ percentile of the distance from each municipality to the closest SPRAR reception center) compared to being 36 km far away (the $90^{th}$ percentile), lead to an average of 16 more people voting no in a municipality of 2000 eligible voters (the median) and an average of 41 more people voting

no in a municipality of 5000 eligible voters (the mean).

Migration is currently a highly debated topic, and many opposition parties are exploiting the current refugees' crisis which changed the perception about immigrants, increase the fear and the anti-migration sentiment in the Italian population. The refugees' crisis has been used to increase the malcontent towards the government in place accused to have implemented too mild policies and not being able to stop the arrivals of so many immigrants. In our paper we find evidence that proximity to local communities hosting refugees in the SPRAR centers, actually contributes to an increase of the anti-government feeling, even if to date no true evidence exists on the negative consequences of hosting refugees, on natives' life.

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# Appendix A: Figure

Figure A.1: Voting Behaviour and Share of Aged 30-65

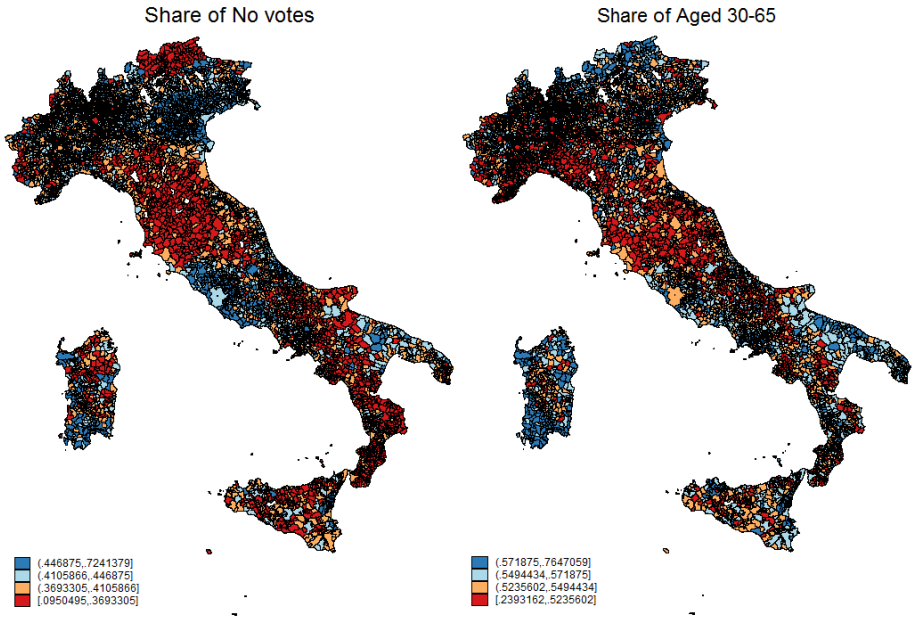



Figure A.2: Voting Behaviour and Share of No-Eu Migrants

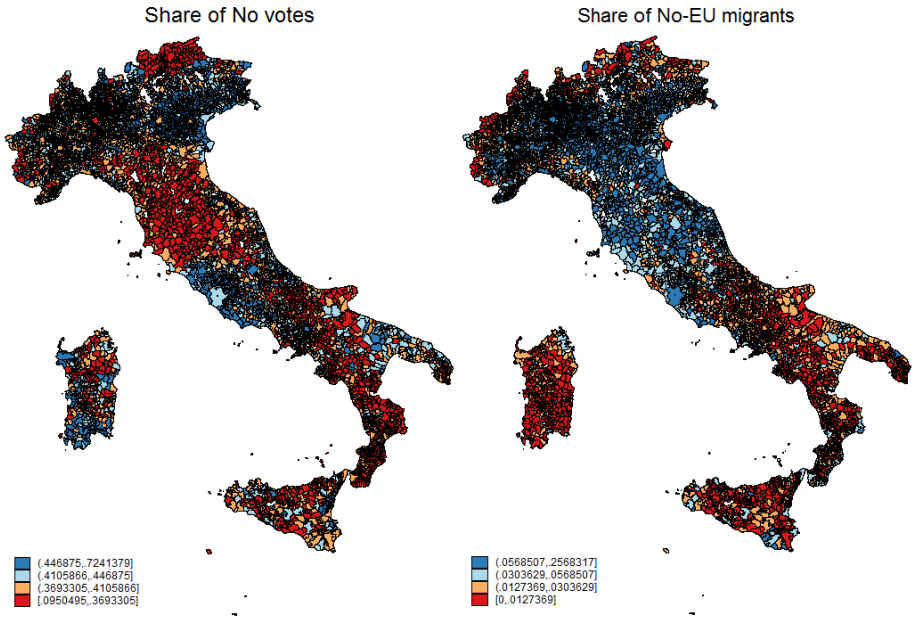


Figure A.3: Voting Behaviour and Center-Left Votes 2006

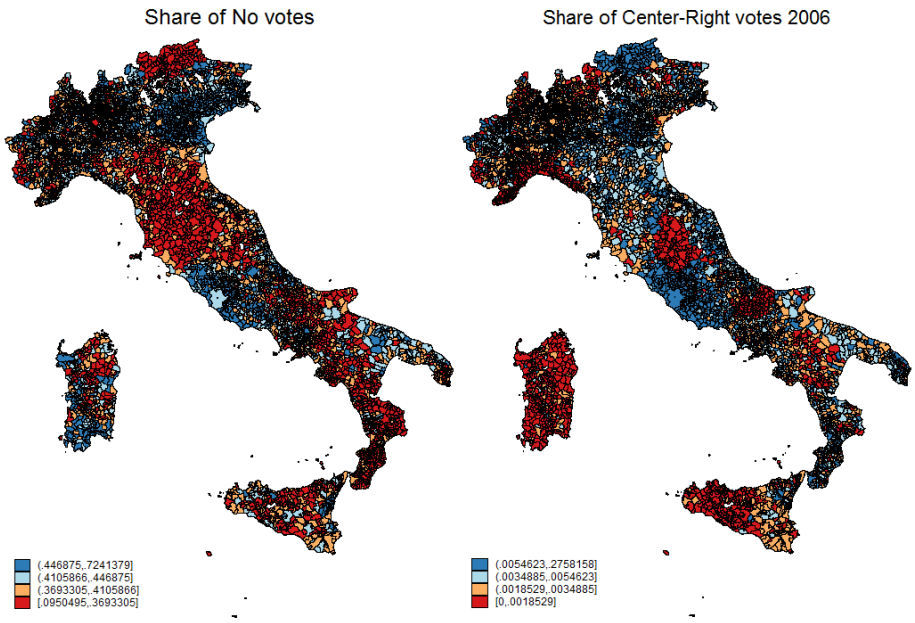



Figure A.4: Voting Behaviour and Share of Center-Right Votes 2006

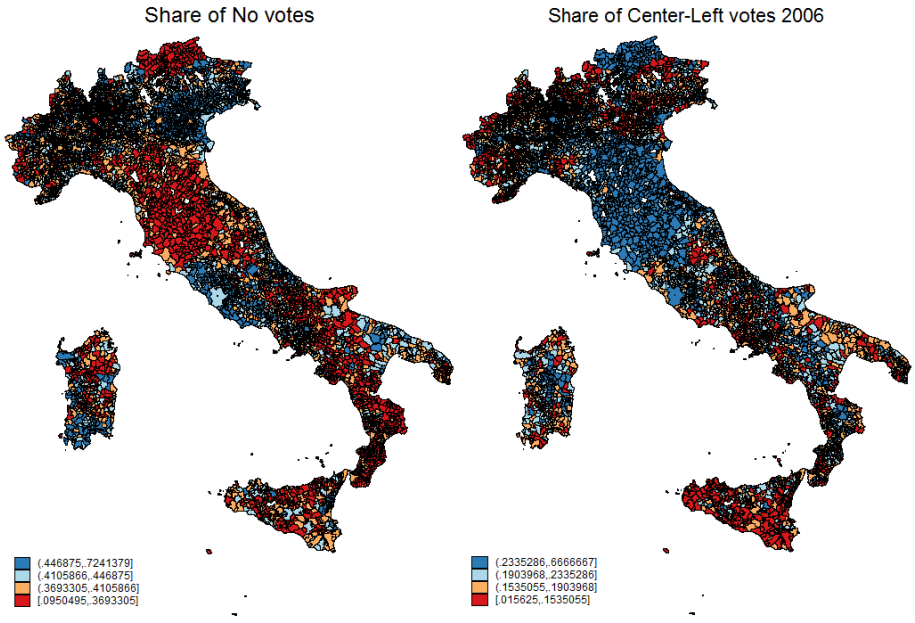


Figure A.5: Distance to SPRAR, 2016 and 2007: maps of the first stage

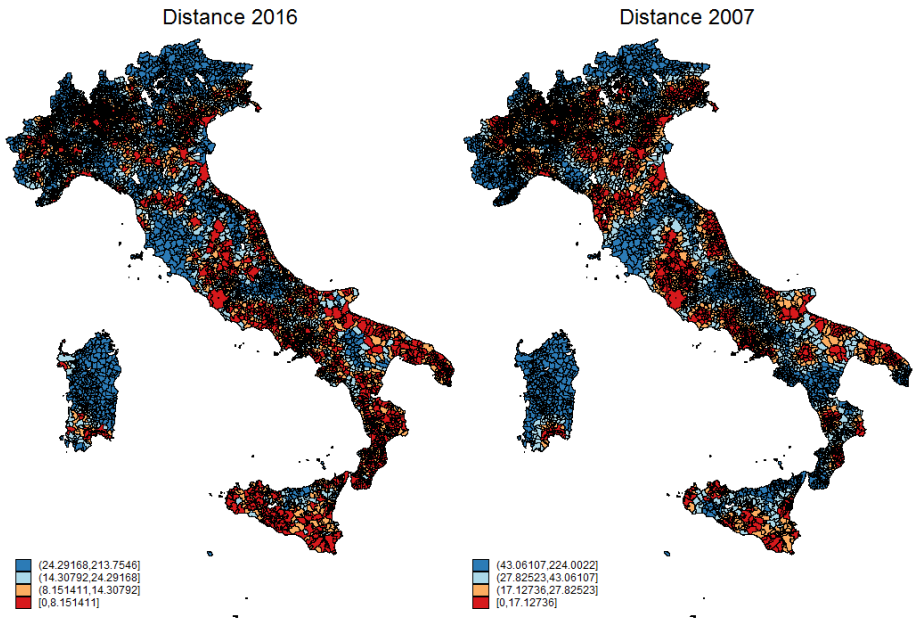
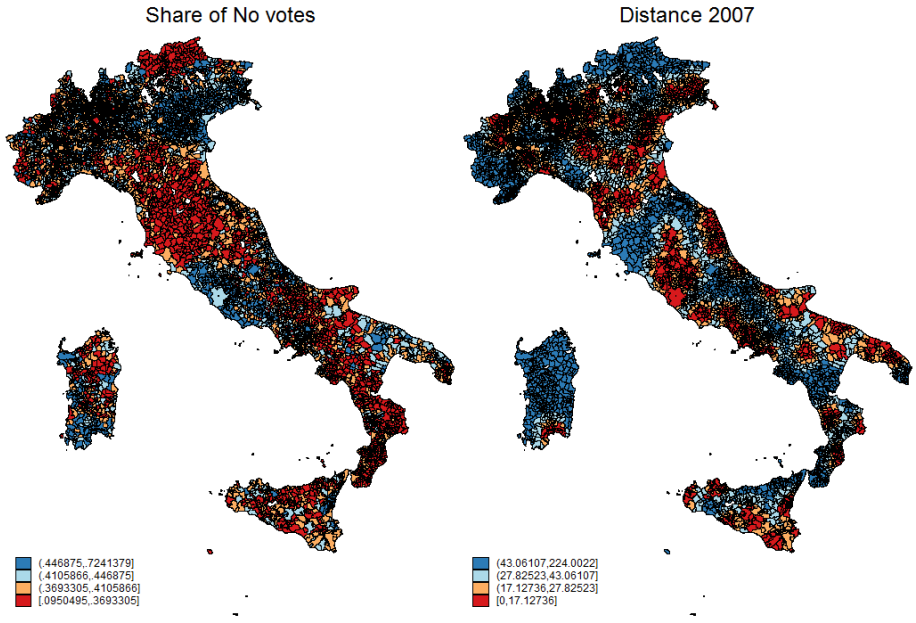



Figure A.6: Voting Behaviour and Distance to SPRAR, 2007: maps of the reduced form



# Appendix B: Tables B

Table B.1: Descriptive of control variables

| | Mean | St. dev. |
|---|---|---|
| Municipality's surface | 37.267 | 50.178 |
| Altimetry: inland mountain | 0.291 | 0.454 |
| Altimetry: coastal mountain | 0.015 | 0.121 |
| Altimetry: inland hill | 0.325 | 0.468 |
| Altimetry: coastal hill | 0.101 | 0.301 |
| Altimetry: plain | 0.268 | 0.443 |
| Urbanization degree: low | 0.502 | 0.500 |
| Urbanization degree: medium | 0.384 | 0.486 |
| Urbanization degree: high | 0.114 | 0.318 |
| Seismicity: high | 0.090 | 0.286 |
| Seismicity: medium - high | 0.277 | 0.448 |
| Seismicity: medium - low | 0.351 | 0.477 |
| Seismicity: low | 0.283 | 0.450 |
| Municipality located in the mountain: no | 0.492 | 0.500 |
| Municipality located in the mountain: partially | 0.082 | 0.275 |
| Municipality located in the mountain: yes | 0.426 | 0.494 |
| Presence of wastewater treatment: no | 0.133 | 0.340 |
| Presence of wastewater treatment: partially | 0.475 | 0.499 |
| Presence of wastewater treatment: yes | 0.392 | 0.488 |
| Share of population aged 30-65 | 0.547 | 0.040 |
| Share of population aged more than 65 | 0.253 | 0.054 |
| Share of foreign population aged 30-65 | 0.039 | 0.023 |
| Share of foreign population aged more than 65 | 0.003 | 0.004 |
| Population | 6542.185 | 36352.265 |
| Share of illiterates, no title | 0.079 | 0.026 |
| Shares of population with primary education | 0.235 | 0.048 |
| Shares of population with lower secondary education | 0.313 | 0.042 |
| Shares of population with upper secondary education | 0.283 | 0.047 |
| Share of population with post secondary non tertiary education | 0.003 | 0.002 |
| Shares of population with tertiary education | 0.074 | 0.028 |
| Municipality average (log) income | 17.190 | 1.388 |
| Share of yes votes to first question - referendum 2011 | 0.530 | 0.074 |
| Share of yes votes to second question - referendum 2011 | 0.534 | 0.074 |
| Share of yes votes to third question - referendum 2011 | 0.524 | 0.074 |
| Share of yes votes to forth question - referendum 2011 | 0.524 | 0.074 |
| Share of no votes to first question - referendum 2011 | 0.025 | 0.013 |
| Share of no votes to second question - referendum 2011 | 0.023 | 0.012 |
| Share of no votes to third question - referendum 2011 | 0.033 | 0.016 |
| Share of no votes to forth question - referendum 2011 | 0.031 | 0.013 |
| Share invalid votes to first question - referendum 2011 | 0.018 | 0.011 |
| Share invalid votes to second question - referendum 2011 | 0.015 | 0.009 |
| Share invalid votes to third question - referendum 2011 | 0.015 | 0.009 |
| Share invalid votes to forth question - referendum 2011 | 0.019 | 0.012 |
| Share of population not voting to first question - referendum 2011 | 0.434 | 0.074 |
| Share of population not voting to second question - referendum 2011 | 0.434 | 0.074 |
| Share of population not voting to third question - referendum 2011 | 0.435 | 0.074 |
| Share of population not voting to forth question - referendum 2011 | 0.435 | 0.074 |
| Share of invalid votes - 1992 election | 0.050 | 0.017 |
| Share of population not voting - 1992 election | 0.142 | 0.098 |
| Share of votes to the Christian Democracy party - 1992 elections | 0.429 | 0.113 |
| Share of votes to left parties - 2006 national election | 0.386 | 0.103 |
| Share of votes to other parties - 2006 national election | 0.423 | 0.112 |
| Share of population not voting - 2006 national election | 0.160 | 0.058 |
| Share of invalid votes - 2006 national election | 0.031 | 0.012 |
| Shares of resident extra-EU migrant in the municipality | 0.039 | 0.034 |
| Number of observations | 7,760 | |

Table B.2: Voting behaviour and distance to SPRARs, 2016: Heterogeneity

| Variables | No turnout | | | | No | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| Quartile | $< 25$ | $25-50$ | $50-75$ | $> 75$ | $> 25$ | $25-50$ | $50-75$ | $> 75$ |
| Panel A: Density | | | | | | | | |
| Distance | 0.0884** | 0.0618** | 0.0307 | 0.0886** | -0.0673 | -0.0895*** | -0.0168 | -0.1513** |
| | (0.0391) | (0.0245) | (0.0234) | (0.0425) | (0.0461) | (0.0286) | (0.0228) | (0.0713) |
| Observations | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,941 | 1,939 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,941 | 1,939 |
| F-stat excluded instrument | 15.473 | 31.738 | 10.181 | 16.265 | 15.473 | 31.738 | 10.181 | 16.265 |
| Panel B: Left Votes National Election | | | | | | | | |
| Distance | 0.0622** | 0.0453 | 0.0591 | 0.0744* | -0.0462** | -0.0253 | -0.0943* | -0.0879* |
| | (0.0268) | (0.0448) | (0.0429) | (0.0389) | (0.0213) | (0.0480) | (0.0557) | (0.0469) |
| Observations | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 |
| F-stat excluded instrument | 18.093 | 12.205 | 15.304 | 9.168 | 18.093 | 12.205 | 15.304 | 9.168 |
| Panel C: Pre school | | | | | | | | |
| Distance | 0.0607** | 0.1746** | 0.0475 | 0.0620*** | -0.0638* | -0.2963** | -0.0394 | -0.0409 |
| | (0.0264) | (0.0869) | (0.0334) | (0.0215) | (0.0363) | (0.1327) | (0.0269) | (0.0276) |
| Observations | 3,421 | 459 | 1,941 | 1,939 | 3,421 | 459 | 1,941 | 1,939 |
| F-stat excluded instrument | 15.496 | 7.017 | 10.083 | 41.147 | 15.496 | 7.017 | 10.083 | 41.147 |
| Panel D: Elementary school | | | | | | | | |
| Distance | 0.0601** | 0.0327 | 0.0719** | 0.0510** | -0.0607** | -0.0820 | -0.0571 | -0.0326 |
| | (0.0235) | (0.0387) | (0.0320) | (0.0241) | (0.0295) | (0.0591) | (0.0353) | (0.0316) |
| Observations | 2,022 | 1,887 | 1,911 | 1,940 | 2,022 | 1,887 | 1,911 | 1,940 |
| F-stat excluded instrument | 17.216 | 4.951 | 36.661 | 34.567 | 17.216 | 4.951 | 36.661 | 34.567 |
| Panel E: Middle school | | | | | | | | |
| Distance | 0.0619*** | 0.4168 | 0.0281 | 0.0303 | -0.0544 | -0.7231 | -0.0378 | -0.0495* |
| | (0.0232) | (0.3368) | (0.0285) | (0.0213) | (0.0335) | (0.5839) | (0.0295) | (0.0276) |
| Observations | 3,274 | 607 | 1,939 | 1,940 | 3,274 | 607 | 1,939 | 1,940 |
| F-stat excluded instrument | 23.554 | 0.977 | 11.361 | 34.311 | 23.554 | 0.977 | 11.361 | 34.311 |
| Panel F: High edu | | | | | | | | |
| Distance | 0.0369 | 0.0958** | 0.0603** | 0.0759*** | -0.0372 | -0.0981* | -0.0561 | -0.1107*** |
| | (0.0338) | (0.0487) | (0.0300) | (0.0223) | (0.0325) | (0.0506) | (0.0475) | (0.0325) |
| Observations | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 |
| F-stat excluded instrument | 8.226 | 15.35 | 23.59 | 32.85 | 8.226 | 15.35 | 23.59 | 32.85 |
| Panel G: Share of migrants (TCN) | | | | | | | | |
| Distance | 0.1128* | 0.0485* | 0.0471** | 0.0594** | -0.1450* | -0.0341 | -0.0551** | -0.0843** |
| | (0.0603) | (0.0258) | (0.0225) | (0.0263) | (0.0758) | (0.0277) | (0.0273) | (0.0356) |
| Observations | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 |
| F-stat excluded instrument | 5.874 | 18.05 | 33.33 | 25.34 | 5.874 | 18.05 | 33.33 | 25.34 |
| Panel H: Share of migrants (Africa) | | | | | | | | |
| Distance | 0.1340** | 0.0390 | 0.0257 | 0.0795*** | -0.1145** | -0.0929* | -0.0191 | -0.0979*** |
| | (0.0573) | (0.0275) | (0.0245) | (0.0258) | (0.0474) | (0.0496) | (0.0201) | (0.0331) |
| Observations | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 |
| F-stat excluded instrument | 9.629 | 23.83 | 21.95 | 21.43 | 9.629 | 23.83 | 21.95 | 21.43 |
| Panel I: Share of migrants (asylum) | | | | | | | | |
| Distance | 0.1340** | 0.0390 | 0.0257 | 0.0795*** | -0.1145** | -0.0929* | -0.0191 | -0.0979*** |
| | (0.0573) | (0.0275) | (0.0245) | (0.0258) | (0.0474) | (0.0496) | (0.0201) | (0.0331) |
| Observations | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 | 1,940 |
| F-stat excluded instrument | 9.629 | 23.83 | 21.95 | 21.43 | 9.629 | 23.83 | 21.95 | 21.43 |
| Panel L: Share of population doing voluntary work | | | | | | | | |
| Distance | 0.0559 | 0.0368 | 0.0846** | 0.0422** | -0.0126 | -0.0451 | -0.1300*** | -0.0597** |
| | (0.0620) | (0.0295) | (0.0339) | (0.0178) | (0.0776) | (0.0303) | (0.0478) | (0.0274) |
| Observations | 1,892 | 1,894 | 1,889 | 1,895 | 1,892 | 1,894 | 1,889 | 1,895 |
| F-stat excluded instrument | 22.45 | 10.50 | 20.66 | 30.01 | 22.45 | 10.50 | 20.66 | 30.01 |
| Panel M: Share of population unemployed- province level | | | | | | | | |
| Distance | 0.0554** | 0.0661** | 0.0664 | 0.0388 | -0.0639** | -0.0856** | -0.0148 | -0.0820 |
| | (0.0222) | (0.0281) | (0.0588) | (0.0442) | (0.0265) | (0.0350) | (0.0538) | (0.0676) |
| Observations | 2,504 | 1,587 | 2,035 | 1,634 | 2,504 | 1,587 | 2,035 | 1,634 |
| F-stat excluded instrument | 19.65 | 16.01 | 7.221 | 4.581 | 19.65 | 16.01 | 7.221 | 4.581 |
| Panel N: Crime rate - province level | | | | | | | | |
| Distance | 0.0527 | 0.1297** | 0.0442** | 0.0232 | -0.0445 | -0.1494*** | -0.0620*** | 0.0184 |
| | (0.0424) | (0.0581) | (0.0211) | (0.0245) | (0.0405) | (0.0577) | (0.0241) | (0.0309) |
| Observations | 2,027 | 2,001 | 2,026 | 1,609 | 2,027 | 2,001 | 2,026 | 1,609 |
| F-stat excluded instrument | 8.236 | 3.590 | 37.62 | 54.68 | 8.236 | 3.590 | 37.62 | 54.68 |
| Panel O: Expenditure in social | | | | | | | | |
| Distance | 0.0721* | 0.0428 | 0.0915*** | 0.0276 | -0.0950 | -0.0343 | -0.0889** | 0.0112 |
| | (0.0431) | (0.0306) | (0.0309) | (0.0298) | (0.0587) | (0.0342) | (0.0383) | (0.0487) |
| Observations | 1,802 | 1,862 | 1,880 | 1,877 | 1,802 | 1,862 | 1,880 | 1,877 |
| F-stat excluded instrument | 15.11 | 16.66 | 22.60 | 7.517 | 15.11 | 16.66 | 22.60 | 7.517 |
| Panel P: Expenditure in education | | | | | | | | |
| Distance | 0.0395 | 0.0897** | 0.0367 | 0.0445** | -0.0126 | -0.0962* | -0.0810** | -0.0786** |
| | (0.0324) | (0.0446) | (0.0265) | (0.0202) | (0.0302) | (0.0498) | (0.0362) | (0.0362) |
| Observations | 1,800 | 1,878 | 1,874 | 1,869 | 1,800 | 1,878 | 1,874 | 1,869 |
| F-stat excluded instrument | 9.057 | 13.10 | 23.19 | 20.86 | 9.057 | 13.10 | 23.19 | 20.86 |
| Panel Q: Expenditure in police | | | | | | | | |
| Distance | 0.0435 | 0.0261 | 0.0843** | 0.1180** | -0.0313 | -0.0332 | -0.0907** | -0.0861 |
| | (0.0285) | (0.0236) | (0.0403) | (0.0549) | (0.0423) | (0.0251) | (0.0422) | (0.0781) |
| Observations | 1,788 | 1,876 | 1,878 | 1,879 | 1,788 | 1,876 | 1,878 | 1,879 |
| F-stat excluded instrument | 19.47 | 14.12 | 18.75 | 11.46 | 19.47 | 14.12 | 18.75 | 11.46 |

Notes: Density is population over the size in sq. km; The share of Left votes represent the center-left coalition which includes the Democratic Left, the Margherita, the Italian Communists, the Sunflower, the Sardinian Independentist, the European Republic and the Green; the variables of schooling are computed as the ratio of the number of foreign students over the total. the estimates for the shares of no turnout and no votes by quartile of the following variables: share of individuals with at least upper lower secondary education; shares of migrants from third countries; share of migrants from Africa; share of population engaged in voluntary work; share of population unemployed (measured at the province level); crime rate measured as the number of robberies and thefts (measured at the province level). Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the province level. * p<.10 ** p<.05 *** p<.01.