

The Impact of the Far Right on Mainstream Politics: Evidence from the Front National

Anthony Edo, Thomas Renault & Jérôme Valette

Highlights

- Right-wing candidates respond to local far-right success by increasing the salience of immigration in their manifestos.
- They adopt more negative positions on immigration and increasingly link it to issues such as crime and the welfare state.
- Left-wing candidates do not shift their ideological position on immigration in response to far-right electoral gains.
- The strategic adjustments by right-wing candidates help mitigate electoral losses to far-right competitors.



Abstract

How does the electoral success of a far-right political force shape the strategies and policy platforms of mainstream candidates? We answer this question by exploiting the political shock of the creation of the Front National, an antiimmigration party, in 1972 and its sudden electoral breakthrough in the 1980s. Through a comprehensive textual analysis of candidate manifestos in French parliamentary elections from 1968 to 1997, we find that right-wing candidates respond to local far-right success, measured as voting shares, by amplifying the salience of immigration in their manifestos. They also adopt more negative positions on immigration and increasingly associate it with issues such as crime and the welfare state. In contrast, the ideological positions of left-wing candidates do not shift in response to far-right electoral gains. We finally show that the strategic adjustments of right-wing candidates help mitigate electoral losses to far-right competitors.

Keywords

Political Economy, Anti-immigrant Parties, Electoral competition, Party Platform, Immigration.

JEL

F22, P16, D72.

Working Paper



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CEPII Working Paper
Contributing to research in international
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EDITORIAL DIRECTOR:
ANTOINE BOUËT

VISUAL DESIGN AND PRODUCTION:
LAURE BOIVIN

ISSN 2970-491X

December 2025

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RESEARCH AND EXPERTISE
ON THE WORLD ECONOMY



The Impact of the Far Right on Mainstream Politics: Evidence from the *Front National**

Anthony Edo,[†] Thomas Renault,[‡] & Jérôme Valette[§]

I Introduction

Far-right parties have recently achieved greater electoral success across Europe and beyond, reshaping political landscapes at the national level (Gurieff and Papaioannou, 2022). Examples include the *Rassemblement National* in France, *AfD* in Germany, and both the *Lega* and *Fratelli d'Italia* in Italy, among others. This rise has often disrupted the traditional political order in countries historically characterized by competition between dominant mainstream parties. A common feature of these nationalist parties is the centrality of immigration in their discourse, where immigrants are portrayed as a threat to economic stability, national security, and cultural identity (Alesina and Tabellini, 2024). Although the increasing salience of immigration has yielded electoral gains for far-right candidates (Edo et al., 2020), little is known about whether, how, and why mainstream party candidates adjusted their policy positions, particularly on immigration, in response to increasing competition from the far right.

This paper provides causal evidence on how the local success of the far right (measured as voting shares) affects both the policy positions of mainstream candidates (measured in their political manifestos) and the strategic electoral incentives underlying these adjustments. We exploit the political shock caused by the 1972 creation of the far-right party *Front National* (hereafter FN) in France, the predecessor of the *Rassemblement National*, and its sudden electoral

*We thank Cevat Aksoy, Daniel Auer, Apurav Bhatiya, Francesco Campo, Jérôme Gonnot, Giovanni Peri, Hillel Rapoport, Sarah Schneider-Strawczynski, Jan Stuhler, and Farid Toubal for their insightful comments and valuable feedback. We also thank participants at the CEMIR Migration Workshop in Munich, Health, Healthcare and Wellbeing of the Elderly and Migrants Workshop at the University of Padova and in various seminars, including at AMSE (Marseille), CES (Paris), CEPII (Paris), CERDI (Clermont-Ferrand), GATE (Saint-Etienne), UCL (Lille). We thank Yanis Bekhti for excellent research assistance and Nicolas Sauger for providing us with data on electoral outcomes.

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breakthrough in the 1980s. Following World War II, the French political landscape was indeed dominated by the two major mainstream right- and left-wing orientations, with far-right forces significantly marginalized. The emergence of the FN marked a turning point, as far-right vote shares in parliamentary elections rose sharply from less than 1% in 1981 to 15% in 1997 (Azéma and Winock, 1993; Gautier, 2017). Since the FN's rise was uneven across the territory, this political shock generates time-varying cross-district variation in exposure to far-right success, which we exploit to test whether increases in local far-right vote shares influence the platforms of mainstream candidates. While our case study offers a historical episode to assess the effect of far-right emergence on mainstream politics, it also sheds light on ongoing political dynamics in many Western democracies, where mainstream established political orientations are increasingly challenged by the rise of far-right and anti-immigrant parties (Abou-Chadi et al., 2022a).¹

Local shifts in public opinion and voter preferences may simultaneously influence both far-right electoral support and mainstream candidates' platforms (Abou-Chadi, 2016; Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020), challenging the identification of how a far-right breakthrough changes mainstream candidates' incentives to adjust. To address this concern, we introduce an identification strategy that combines district-level panel variation across successive elections with a shift-share-type instrument.² Specifically, we exploit the spatial distribution of Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour's (JLTV) vote in the 1965 presidential election to isolate supply-driven local variation in far-right voting shares in subsequent parliamentary elections. JLTV was a far-right politician best known for his strong opposition to Gaullism and Algerian independence, notably remaining silent on immigration issues. With the support of his campaign director, Jean-Marie Le Pen (the founder of the FN), JLTV's electoral campaign played an important role in securing the far right's initial electoral foothold and expanding its presence across France during the 1980s. The exclusion restriction, which requires the local distribution of votes obtained by JLTV to be uncorrelated with manifestos' content after 1968, conditional on fixed effects and observable socio-economic characteristics, is assessed through a series of pre-trend tests.

We measure candidate policy platforms through a comprehensive text analysis of approximately 18,000 manifestos from first-round parliamentary candidates between 1968 and 1997, in

¹Examples include the rise of the AfD in Germany, which has challenged the traditional dominance of centrist parties such as the CDU/CSU and SPD, and the recent electoral breakthrough of Nigel Farage's Reform UK, which appears to have influenced the 2025 anti-immigration reforms introduced by the Labour government.

²In settings where the far right has already gained electoral ground, an alternative approach is a regression-discontinuity design that uses close-election margins as exogenous variation in far-right representation in parliament (Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020) or in access to the second round, following (Di Tella et al., 2025). By design, this strategy cannot be implemented when far-right gains are too limited for their candidates to reach the second round or win parliamentary seats, yet still large enough to intensify electoral competition and shift mainstream candidates' policy positions.

204 reconstituted, time-invariant electoral districts. We focus on this period to exploit the sharp and substantial rise of a far-right party and to investigate its impact on mainstream politics.³ We use recent advances in natural language processing to measure the salience and framing of immigration in each manifesto, including whether immigration is presented in a positive or negative light, and how it is associated with other topics.

Our results show that an increase in local support for far-right parties raises the salience of immigration in the manifestos of right-wing candidates only. Specifically, our baseline estimate implies that a one percentage point increase in the vote share for far-right parties in a given district raises the share of immigration-related words in right-wing candidate manifestos by 0.05 percentage points, or about 17% relative to the average share of 0.3% within this political orientation. Yet, we find no effect on those of mainstream left-wing candidates. This asymmetric impact by political orientation aligns with preliminary evidence that the rise of anti-immigration parties is more detrimental to the right, likely due to its closer ideological proximity to the far right than the left (Adams and Somer-Topcu, 2009; Wagner and Meyer, 2017). As a result, right-wing candidates have stronger incentives to align their positions with the far right, adjusting their immigration discourse to avoid losing votes.

We corroborate these results by applying the identification strategy of (Autor et al., 2013; Dustmann et al., 2017). We use first-difference estimates at the district level to examine the impact of the “FN shock” (i.e., the sharp electoral gains of the FN in the 1980s) on changes in mainstream parties’ immigration policy positions. We find that post-1980 local changes in far-right voting increase the immigration rhetoric in right-wing manifestos, with no effect for left-wing candidates. More importantly, our event-study regressions show that the instrumented “FN shock” is not correlated with earlier shifts in immigration policy positions. This lack of correlation indicates that this political shock occurred in districts for reasons unrelated to candidates’ stances on immigration, providing additional support for the validity of our empirical strategy.

Investigations into the nature of adjustments among mainstream right-wing candidates yield three additional key findings. First, right-wing candidates’ response to the rise of the far right is limited to immigration issues and does not extend to other policy areas. This underscores the centrality of immigration in the competition for conservative votes, which appears to revolve mainly around this issue. Second, rather than countering far-right positions on immigration, right-wing candidates increasingly adopt similarly negative stances, signaling convergence

³We do not exploit more recent data because systematic candidate manifestos are not available in the French electoral archives after 1997. Also, the year 1997 marked a peak in votes for the Front National, which was followed by a decline in its electoral support until a resurgence in 2012.

rather than opposition. Third, their manifestos often link immigration to concerns about crime and pressure on the welfare state.⁴ In sum, our findings indicate that rising support for far-right parties pushes mainstream right-wing candidates to move closer to far-right positions on their defining issue.

Finally, to evaluate the electoral consequences of these policy shifts among mainstream right-wing candidates, we also conduct a district-year level analysis, using interaction terms between far-right voting and proxies for right-wing candidates' adjustments on immigration issues averaged at the party level. We find that the negative impact of far-right voting on electoral support for the mainstream right is mitigated when right-wing candidates increase the salience of immigration in their platforms, adopt more restrictive positions on the issue, and link immigration to concerns about crime. These results offer a rational explanation for the strategic behavior of vote-maximizing mainstream right-wing candidates, who shift their ideological positions to retain conservative voters and limit electoral losses to far-right competitors.⁵ No comparable effects are observed for left-wing candidates, which sheds light on the puzzle raised by [Alesina and Tabellini \(2024\)](#) as to why anti-immigration rhetoric has become a salient feature of right-wing, rather than left-wing, parties.

The influence of the electoral success of the far right on the right-wing political shift, which we highlight in this paper, was not without policy effects. It allowed anti-immigration parties "to influence policy output in their political systems without entering government" ([Van Spanje, 2010](#), p. 563). Indeed, in the French context, the tendency of right-wing politicians to focus more on immigration in the public sphere was crystallized by the famous stance of the right-wing Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, who declared in June 1993 that France should aim for "zero immigration". This rhetoric, closely aligned with the far-right agenda, reflected in the 1993 "*Loi Pasqua*", which aimed to restrict access to citizenship, limit family reunification, and implement harsher measures against illegal immigration.⁶

This paper contributes to the literature on the political economy of immigration ([Alesina and Tabellini, 2024](#)), which mainly focuses on the demand side, specifically, the impact of immigra-

⁴This finding is consistent with evidence that European citizens who hold negative attitudes toward immigration tend to associate it with these two dimensions ([Dustmann and Preston, 2007](#); [Semyonov et al., 2008](#); [Barrera-Rodríguez et al., 2024](#)).

⁵This aligns with ([Meguid, 2005](#); [Krause et al., 2023](#)), who explain that policy convergence (i.e., accommodation strategies) by mainstream parties to draw voters away from an emerging competitor can yield electoral benefits. More generally, our results add to the mixed evidence on whether moving to the far right by adopting a more immigration-skeptical stance constitutes an efficient electoral strategy for mainstream parties ([Spoon and Klüver, 2020](#); [Abou-Chadi et al., 2022b](#); [Hjorth and Larsen, 2022](#); [Turnbull-Dugarte et al., 2025](#))

⁶[Appendix D8](#) reports that voting data on immigration laws do not allow us to identify the impact of far-right success on mainstream elected deputies' voting behavior. Indeed, very few roll-call votes on relevant bills are publicly available over our period of analysis, and strong party discipline produces virtually no variation across deputies from the same political orientation.

tion on native attitudes and voting behavior. However, a critical yet often overlooked question concerns the determinants of the supply side, namely, how and why candidates and parties shape their platforms around immigration. A few notable exceptions have studied the impact of immigration on political platforms, measuring immigration rhetoric through the textual analysis of political speeches (Bhatiya, 2024; Shamsi, 2024), the ideological orientation of campaign donors (Dreher et al., 2020), and the salience and framing of immigration in national party manifestos (Docquier et al., 2024). Our paper contributes to these studies by leveraging the French political context to examine how local electoral competition, triggered by the rise of a far-right party, shapes political discourse.⁷

Using candidate-level manifestos is a key feature of our analysis, as they reveal how candidates tailor messages to local voters and allow for fine-grained analysis of ideological variation within parties and districts. Unlike national party manifestos or parliamentary speeches, they include both winners and losers, capturing the full range of policy positions during electoral competition. Our approach also yields a more precise and comprehensive measure of issue salience on topics such as immigration and insecurity than donor data. By linking district-level electoral outcomes to candidate-level manifesto content, our empirical analysis exploits a level of granularity rarely used in previous research. Closer to our analysis in terms of period (1962–1974) and context (France), Cefalà (2023) uses similar political manifesto data and finds that the repatriation of French citizens from Algeria increased the salience of repatriate-related issues in far-right platforms. Our analysis differs in two main respects. First, we estimate the impact of immigrant inflows (rather than changes in the size of the French electorate) on the immigration policy positions of mainstream parties over the 1968–1997 period. Second, and more importantly, we study how and why mainstream candidates adjust their political discourse in response to the emergence of the far right.

This paper also contributes to the political economy literature on electoral competition and strategies. To attract electoral support, political candidates and parties can adopt various strategies, including adjusting their policy platforms to better align with voters' preferences (Di Tella et al., 2025).⁸ In the classic two-party setting, the median voter theory predicts that mainstream

⁷We also contribute to the literature on the political consequences of immigration by systematically estimating the causal impact of the local share of immigrants on the salience of immigration in mainstream candidates' manifestos. Following Card (2001), we address the non-random allocation of immigrants using a shift-share instrument based on their origin-specific historical distribution across electoral districts in 1954. While the average impact of immigration does not affect the immigration-related content of mainstream party manifestos, we show that this response depends on the skill composition of the immigrant population. Specifically, an increase in the share of low-educated immigrants in a given district leads to a higher share of immigration-related words in right-wing candidates' manifestos.

⁸Candidates and parties may also choose whether to contest elections or withdraw from races (Anagol and Fujiwara, 2016; Pons and Tricaud, 2018), implement voter contact strategies (Gerber and Green, 2000; Pons, 2018;

parties converge in their policy positions, as proximity to the median voter maximizes electoral support (Hotelling, 1929; Downs, 1957a). However, this prediction is called into question when a third political force enters the scene (Palfrey, 1984; Grofman, 2004).⁹ By exploiting the rise in electoral competition triggered by the emergence of a third far-right party into a political landscape previously dominated by two mainstream parties, our empirical setting provides insight into how their ideological positions may adjust in this context.

Relying on cross-country variation and national party manifestos from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) or expert surveys, several studies provide suggestive evidence of party contagion, i.e., that mainstream parties adjust their ideological positions in response to rising electoral competition from rival parties (see, e.g., Adams and Somer-Topcu, 2009; Van Spanje, 2010; Han, 2015; Abou-Chadi, 2016). Abou-Chadi and Krause (2020) is the first causal evidence on party contagion, exploiting a regression discontinuity design in a panel of 23 European countries (1980–2014) to estimate the effect of radical right parliamentary representation on the multiculturalism positions of right-wing parties. They find that radical right entry into parliament leads mainstream parties to adopt more culturally protectionist stances. The second causal study is Tähtinen (2025), who exploits close elections across Finnish municipalities to identify exogenous variation in the Finns Party's parliamentary representation. Using candidate-level data from a voting advice application to estimate ideological positions, Tähtinen (2025) finds that increases in the Finns Party's national seat share induce mainstream candidates to converge ideologically on the liberal–conservative dimension (covering issues such as environmentalism, minority rights, traditional values, immigration, and EU integration). She also finds that the average ideological distance on this dimension between the Finns Party and other parties in the municipality is unaffected by the party's parliamentary gains. We make three main contributions relative to these two studies. First, we exploit a distinct empirical strategy and political context combining detailed analysis of individual candidates' manifestos with within-district variations in a single-country setting. Second, we estimate the effect of far-right vote shares, rather than parliamentary entry, to examine how mainstream parties adjust their positions in response to the far right's electoral threat. Third, we focus on shifts in policy positions across a wide range of specific topics, including immigration (a core far-right issue distinct from multiculturalism or the broader liberal–conservative dimension), and examine the electoral consequences of these strategic adjustments.

Baysan, 2022), or organize fundraising campaigns (Cagé and Dewitte, 2021; Bouton et al., 2022; Cagé et al., 2024).

⁹The standard median voter theorem also assumes voters choose the candidate closest to their preferences on a one-dimensional policy scale. While several studies examine convergence in multi-dimensional spaces (Grofman, 2004), our case study is more consistent with a one-dimensional framework as the FN centers its rhetoric mostly on immigration. This also aligns with our finding that convergence by mainstream right-wing parties toward far-right positions is limited to this specific topic.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section II describes the data on parliamentary elections, political manifestos, and French censuses. Section III provides preliminary evidence on the rise of the far right in France and its electoral competition with mainstream parties. Section IV outlines the empirical and identification strategies. Section V presents the main results on how the rise in far-right voting and immigration influence the policy positions of mainstream parties. Section VI offers a detailed analysis of the nature of policy adjustments among right-wing candidates, and Section VII studies how these shifts affect their electoral outcomes. Section VIII concludes.

II Institutional Context and Data

This paper combines three datasets: French parliamentary election results, policy positions from candidate manifestos, and socio-demographic data from French censuses. Due to the limited availability of manifestos and censuses, our baseline sample spans five elections (1968, 1978, 1981, 1993, and 1997) and covers the main political orientations (Far Left, Left, Right, Far Right) across 204 electoral districts. Section A outlines the parliamentary election process in France. Sections B and C describe the data sources and cleaning procedures for electoral results and manifestos, respectively. Section D presents the census data.

A French Parliamentary Elections

Our analysis focuses on the first round of French parliamentary elections. Elected representatives, known as deputies, sit in the National Assembly, one of France's two parliamentary chambers, alongside the Senate. They are responsible for legislating, overseeing government actions, and evaluating public policies. Parliamentary elections are organized every five years, unless the President dissolves the National Assembly earlier.¹⁰

France uses a two-round system for parliamentary elections where multiple candidates compete for a single seat in a constituency (hereafter referred to as an electoral district, or *circonscription* in French) within a specific department. To be elected in the first round, a candidate must secure over 50% of the votes and at least 25% of registered voters. Otherwise, a second round is held one week later in 82.5% of the elections in our sample period. Only the top two candidates, along with those who obtained a percentage of votes equivalent to a

¹⁰Since the Fifth Republic began in 1958, the National Assembly has been dissolved in 1962, 1968, 1981, 1988, 1997, and 2024. Appendix-Table B1 lists all French parliamentary elections from 1881 to 2024, and shows that voter turnout ranged from 65% to 80% during our period of analysis (1968-1997).

threshold of registered voters, may proceed to the second round.¹¹ The candidate with the most votes wins.¹²

We focus on first-round elections as they are characterized by more intense electoral competition with multiple candidates.¹³ This ensures that candidates' policy positions and platforms are highly salient and more likely to reflect their political ideologies. In contrast, [Le Pennec \(2023\)](#) shows that candidates who reach the run-off face a markedly different strategic environment (fewer competitors and a broader electorate), leading them to shift from a partisan policy platform to more neutral, non-policy topics (such as personal accomplishments and local ties) to attract new voters. As a result, second-round dynamics are less informative about candidates' underlying political ideologies and less suited to identifying how mainstream policy positions respond to increased electoral competition from far-right challengers.

B Electoral Data and Vote Shares

Our electoral data comes from the “*Livrets Blancs*”, which record election results for each constituency, including voter turnout, votes for each candidate, and candidates' political labels, as defined by the Ministry of the Interior based on self-reported party affiliations.¹⁴ We exclude overseas constituencies from our analysis and focus on Metropolitan France.

We build on [Piketty and Cagé \(2023\)](#) to classify political labels into left (left and center-left) and right (right and center-right) political orientations. Following [Pons and Tricaud \(2018\)](#), we further extract far-left and far-right candidates from these two groups to create two additional categories. As a result, we obtain five political orientations (as detailed in Appendix-Table A1): Far-Left (10.8% of all candidates between 1968 and 1997), Left (40.4%), Right (30.3%), Far-Right (9.8%), and a residual category “Other” for unclassified candidates (8.7%).

The number of constituencies remained stable at 465 from 1958 until a major redistricting reform in 1986, which expanded it to 577. We thus relied on detailed geographical information about redistricting to recreate 204 broader electoral districts consistently tracked over time.¹⁵ We define the share of votes as follows:

$$VS_{de}^p = \frac{votes_{de}^p}{\sum_p votes_{de}^p}, \quad (1)$$

¹¹This threshold was 10% of the total number of registered voters in 1968, and 12.5% since 1976.

¹²An exception is the 1986 election, which used proportional representation at the departmental level instead of the absolute majority rule, and is therefore excluded from the analysis.

¹³Over the 1968–1997 period, the average number of candidates per election was 7.1

¹⁴The digitized data on electoral outcomes were provided by Nicolas Sauger.

¹⁵Our harmonization procedure is detailed in [Appendix A2](#).

where $votes_{de}^p$ represents the total number of votes received by candidates from political orientation $p \in \{\text{Other, Far-Left, Left, Right, Far-Right}\}$ in district d during election-year e . The denominator is the total number of valid votes (excluding blank and erroneous votes) in a given district and election.¹⁶

C Political Manifestos and the Salience of Immigration

In France, political manifestos are official documents outlining each candidate's ideas and programs. As underlined by [Le Pennec \(2023\)](#), they are regulated in terms of format and content, and are mailed by the administration to all registered voters before each election round.¹⁷ We obtain the political manifestos for first-round parliamentary elections of 23,832 candidates, elected or not, from the French Electoral Archives of the Centre for Political Research at Sciences Po (hereafter CEVIPOF) between 1958 and 1993 ([Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016](#)). We complement this initial source with an almost complete set of 5,536 manifestos from the 1997 parliamentary election, collected manually from the French National Archives, to capture the far right's strong electoral performance that year.¹⁸

To match manifestos with electoral outcomes, we use a fuzzy merge based on candidates' names and surnames within each district-election. Of the candidates, 10.2% had no match with the manifestos database, because no manifesto was available for those candidates, 79.3% had a perfect match (exact name and surname), and 10.5% were matched imperfectly, with an average Jaro-Winkler similarity of 0.88 between names and surnames across both datasets.¹⁹

The main analysis includes 18,293 political manifestos from the five elections covered between 1968 and 1997. This unique and comprehensive dataset, covering 89.7% of candidates within these years, is our primary source of information for the empirical analysis of candidates' political platforms. We then apply classical natural language processing methods detailed in [Appendix B5](#), and rely on a simple text analysis based on lexicons to define the share

¹⁶Appendix-Figures [A5](#) and [A6](#) depict the average distribution and changes in vote shares across political orientations and electoral districts between 1968 and 1997.

¹⁷Figure [B4](#) provides an example of manifestos that focus extensively on immigration in the 1993 election.

¹⁸The share of votes for far-right parties during the first round of parliamentary elections increased from 13% in 1993 to 15% in 1997, before declining to around 12% in 2002 and dropping below 5% in 2007. Moreover, political manifestos for non-elected candidates are no longer available after 1997 ([Appendix B1](#)).

¹⁹Figure [B5](#) shows the representativeness of our manifesto corpus for each election. Table [B2](#) reports a regression on the probability of having a manifesto recorded in our database, showing that candidates without a recorded manifesto are more likely to be female, minor candidates (measured by vote shares in the first round), and to run in older elections. Mainstream left and right affiliations also increase the likelihood of having a manifesto recorded in the data.

of immigration-related words in each political manifesto as follows:

$$SW_{ide} = \frac{words_{ide}^{imm}}{words_{ide}}, \quad (2)$$

where $words_{ide}^{imm}$ is the total number of immigration-related words in candidate i 's manifesto in district d during election-year e , and $words_{ide}$ is the total number of words in that manifesto.²⁰ SW_{ide} captures the salience of immigration in each manifesto and serves as our main dependent variable.

D Censuses and Demographic and Economic Controls

To assess how the electoral success of the far right influences mainstream candidates' immigration rhetoric, we control for immigration levels and other key local characteristics to mitigate potential omitted variable bias (Han, 2015; Abou-Chadi, 2016).

We exploit the French censuses collected by INSEE in 1962, 1968, 1975, 1982, 1990, and 1999 to identify immigrants in the voting-age population (18+). The 1962 and 1999 census extracts are a random sample of 5% of the French population, while the other post-1962 censuses cover 25%. These high sampling rates allow us to precisely estimate the local number of immigrants, minimizing sampling error (Aydemir and Borjas, 2011). To match the censuses with the electoral districts, we aggregate census data at the electoral district level, assigning municipalities to the 204 reconstructed electoral districts as detailed in Appendix A2. Each electoral year is then connected to the closest available census.

An immigrant is defined as a person born outside France who is either a noncitizen or a naturalized citizen.²¹ We define the immigrant share as follows:

$$IS_{de} = \frac{imm_{de}}{pop_{d,1962}} \quad (3)$$

where imm_{de} is the total number of immigrants aged 18 and older in the district d in the closest census to election-year e , and $pop_{d,1962}$ is the district's adult population in 1962. We fix the denominator to the 1962 population to isolate the variation only due to immigration, and to prevent our estimated effects from being contaminated by potentially endogenous population growth over time (Moriconi et al., 2022; Orefice and Peri, 2024; Mahajan, 2024).

²⁰ Appendix B3 details the list of words used to compute SW_{ide} . We group these immigration-related words into three clusters based on common topics – Immigration, Immigration Policy, and a final category mostly capturing words related to refugees and undocumented immigration – for sub-sample analysis.

²¹ Our 1999 census extract lacks information on nationality at birth, so the immigrant population in 1999 is defined as those born outside of France.

Finally, we compute several control variables to capture the demographic and socio-economic structure of the French electorate, which could simultaneously influence local socio-economic conditions and political outcomes. Specifically, our demographic variables, also fixed to the 1962 adult population, include the share of individuals aged 65+ and the share of low-educated individuals.²² As socio-economic controls, we include the unemployment rate measured relative to the 1962 working-age population, along with the number of blue-collar workers and the size of manufacturing employment, both normalized by total employment in 1962.

III The Rise of the Far Right and Competition with Mainstream Parties

This section provides historical context on the creation of the *Front National* (Section A), its breakthrough in French politics (Section B), as well as suggestive evidence on how it affected vote shares for mainstream political parties. Finally, we provide descriptive statistics on the evolution of the salience of immigration in mainstream candidates' manifestos (Section C).

A The Origins of the *Front National*

After reaching its peak with the Vichy regime and Nazi collaboration during World War II, the far right became marginal in French politics. Before the FN's creation in October 1972, far-right parties featured few candidates in parliamentary elections except the "*Poujadisme*" movement in 1956, and members of the "*Alliance pour les Libertés et le Progrès*" in 1967. These attempts resulted in relatively poor electoral outcomes at the national level, and from 1945 to 1970, the far right was in a period of crisis, characterized by numerous divisions and a highly disorganized landscape (Gautier, 2017). The founding of the FN by Jean-Marie Le Pen marked the first significant postwar success in establishing a lasting far-right political force in France.²³

Jean-Marie Le Pen founded the FN as a nationalist-right alternative to both mainstream parties and the Marxist left (Dubois, 2021). Immigration was absent from his platform, including his 1974 presidential manifesto, though he occasionally warned French citizens of its risks to employment, security, and health (Gautier, 2017). Immigration only became central in the 1978 parliamentary elections, when the FN adopted an explicitly and unambiguously anti-immigrant stance, coining the slogan: "1 million unemployed = 1 million too many immigrants! France and

²²This group includes individuals with no formal education or only a primary school certificate (CEP). Between 1968 and 1999, 53.8% of French adults had low educational attainment.

²³Figure A1 in the appendix reports a significant increase in far-right candidates from 1978 onwards.

the French come first!”. Thereafter, immigration, alongside security, consistently remained a major topic in FN’s agenda (Cuminal et al., 1998; Gautier, 2017).²⁴

B The *Front National* Breakthrough

In less than 20 years, the FN made a significant breakthrough in the French political landscape. From having virtually no influence in the 1970s, the FN emerged as a significant political force by the mid-1980s. After limited but notable gains in the 1982–83 cantonal and municipal elections, the FN gained national visibility in the 1984 European Parliament elections, receiving 10.95% of the vote, securing 10 seats, and becoming a significant political force in France. The results of the 1986 parliamentary elections further underscored this rise by allowing the FN to win 35 seats in the National Assembly, confirming its status as a new force in French politics.

Panel A of Figure 1 depicts this unprecedented breakthrough in our sample of analysis. The aggregated share of votes for far-right candidates in parliamentary elections surged from less than 1% in the 1970s to 9.9% in 1988, reaching a peak of 15.3% in 1997.²⁵ Given this rise, it is unsurprising that Jean-Marie Le Pen became the first far-right candidate in the Fifth Republic to reach the second round of the 2002 presidential election, winning 16.9% of the first-round vote (around 11 million voters). However, these early electoral successes were followed by a decline in support for far-right parties, with the share of votes falling to less than 5% in the 2007 parliamentary elections.²⁶

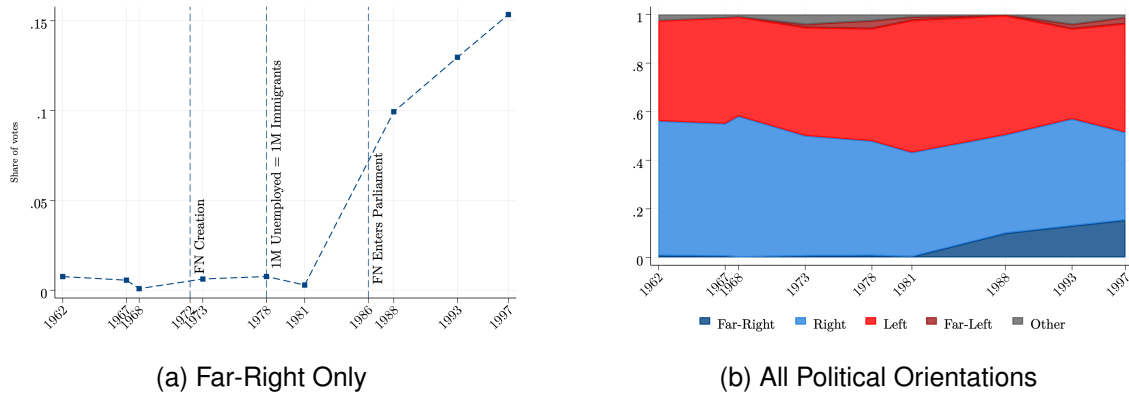
Before the electoral successes of the FN, Panel B of Figure 1 shows that French politics was dominated by a bipartite structure, with two main political orientations: the left and the

²⁴Word clouds in Figure B10 illustrate this shift, providing a visual representation of the most frequently used words in far-right candidates’ political manifestos relative to other political orientations. Notably, the term immigrants becomes really salient in 1978 and gained prominence in 1981, 1988, 1993, and 1997. The FN’s emphasis on insecurity, a central theme in its agenda (Cuminal et al., 1998), intensified as terms such as “delinquency” and “insecurity” became especially salient in the 1993 and 1997 manifestos.

²⁵This increase is only due to the electoral success of FN candidates. After winning barely 1% of the vote in the 1981 elections, the FN achieved the best result in its history in the 1997 parliamentary elections, with 3.8 million votes and 14.9% of the votes cast. The rise of FN during the 1980s can be attributed to several factors. A slowdown in economic growth following the oil shocks in the 1970s and the rise in unemployment (Rosanvallon, 2020, p. 86). The election of François Mitterrand in 1981, the appointment of four Communist ministers in Pierre Mauroy’s government, and broader political shifts during the decade appear to have intensified opposition among right-wing voters (Mayer, 2018) and, more generally, fueled protest voting against the political establishment (Mayer and Perrineau, 1992; Rosanvallon, 2020). The increasing exposure of Jean-Marie Le Pen in the media during the 1980s may also have played a role (Noiriel, 2019, p. 720). In this regard, Muis and Immerzeel (2017, p. 914) note that “the French FN made its electoral breakthrough in 1984 only after Jean-Marie Le Pen was given access to state television”.

²⁶After this decline, the far right rebounded in the 2012 parliamentary elections, securing nearly 15% of the votes in the first round. This upward trajectory peaked in the 2017 and 2022 presidential elections, where Marine Le Pen (Jean-Marie Le Pen’s daughter) reached the second round with 21.30% and 23.15% of the votes, respectively. In the 2024 parliamentary elections, the *Rassemblement National* (formerly *Front National*) emerged as the leading party, securing a historic high of more than 30% of the votes.

Figure 1: The French Political Landscape over the 1962-1997 period



Notes: Panels A and B report the share of votes in the first round of parliamentary elections in France between 1962 and 1997 for different political orientations. Each voting share is defined as the total number of votes for a given political orientation divided by the total number of valid votes.

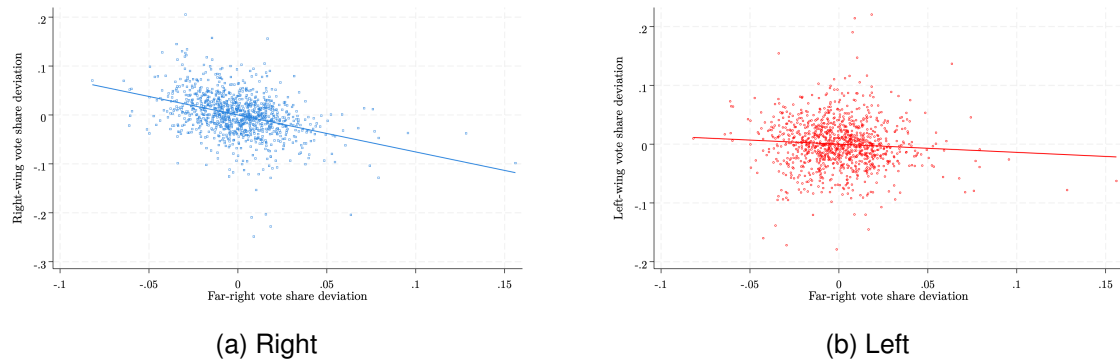
Sources: Author's elaboration on French electoral data from 1962 to 1997.

right. The 1980s and 1990s marked a visible turning point, during which the far right made a significant breakthrough. The visual evidence suggests that this rise came at the expense of right-wing candidates, as their vote share dropped from 49.5% in 1973 to 36.2% in 1997. In contrast, the share of votes for left-wing parties remained constant (from 44.6% in 1973 to 44.7% in 1997). This pattern suggests that the electoral competition between the FN and the right is stronger than between the FN and the left, consistent with [Abou-Chadi et al. \(2022a, p. 5\)](#), who, using a panel of Western European countries, show that “centre-right parties have lost increasing shares of voters to radical right parties over the past 50 years.” This greater competition between right-wing and far-right parties can be explained by the smaller ideological distance separating right-wing and far-right parties compared to left-wing and far-right parties ([Adams and Somer-Topcu, 2009](#); [Wagner and Meyer, 2017](#)).

To support this interpretation, Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between the share of votes for far-right parties and the share of votes for right-wing parties (2a) or left-wing parties (2b) over the 1968-1997 period.²⁷ Figure 2a shows a strong negative correlation between far-right and right-wing vote shares (the regression coefficient is -0.75, with a standard error of 0.09), whereas Figure 2b shows a weak and insignificant correlation at conventional levels between the far right and the left (the coefficient and standard error are -0.14 and 0.10, respectively). This result highlights an asymmetric electoral competition between the far right and mainstream

²⁷In both panels, the unit of observation is the deviation from the mean vote share, after removing any year-specific effects common to all districts in a given election-year, computed for each district-election cell. These deviations are obtained by extracting the residuals from a regression of the vote share for a given political orientation on district fixed effects, demographic, and economic control variables.

Figure 2: Electoral Competition with the Far Right



Notes: The unit of observation is a district-election cell over the 1968–1997 period. We correlate the deviation in far-right vote shares with that in right and left vote shares. These deviations are residuals obtained from regressions of vote shares on control variables defined in Section D, as well as district and election-year fixed effects.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, and French censuses.

parties, showing that the rise of the far right has led to the erosion of the vote shares of right-wing candidates, while suggesting that the left remained in a relative state of electoral insulation from far-right competition.²⁸ As a result, mainstream candidates should respond differently to the rising success of the far right, with right-wing parties expected to react and adjust their policy positions more strongly than their left-wing counterparts.

C Salience of Immigration in the Manifestos of Mainstream Candidates

As the far right gains support by capitalizing on anti-immigration sentiment, mainstream candidates may shift their positions to attract or retain votes from conservative and nationalist segments of the electorate.

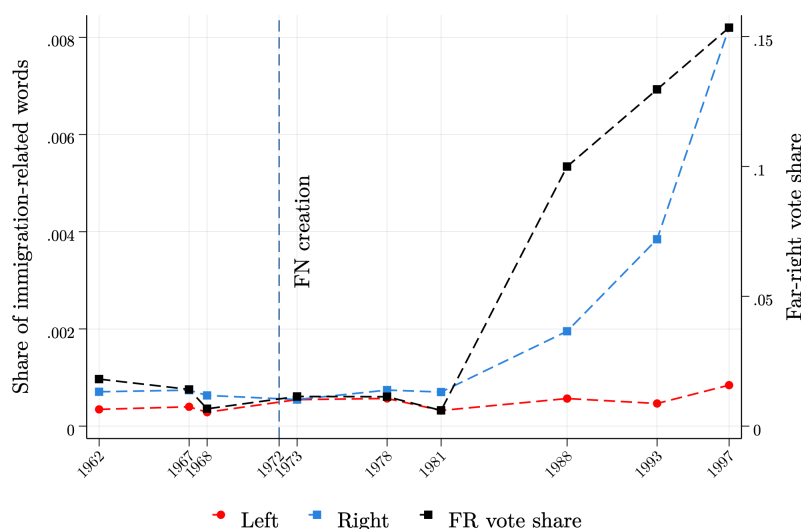
Figure 3 provides a preliminary look at the raw correlation between the rise in far-right vote shares and the evolution of the average share of immigration-related words in the manifestos of right and left candidates.²⁹ Although the immigration topic is not completely absent in left-wing candidates' manifestos, it remains fairly constant from 1962 to 1997. On the contrary, one can observe a strong positive correlation between the aggregated far-right vote share and the

²⁸The same correlation is depicted in Figure 2 for the far left equal -0.03 and is not statistically significant (p-value=0.313). The increasing competition on the right-hand side of the political spectrum for right-wing candidates is also illustrated in Figures A3 and A4 in the appendix, which provide raw correlations between right-wing candidates' vote shares and those of left and far-right candidates. Specifically, Figure A4 documents a shift in political competition, with declining contestation between the mainstream left and right and increasing competition between the mainstream right and the far right.

²⁹The average salience of immigration in our sample of analysis stands at 0.4%, with a standard deviation of 0.9%, a 95th percentile of 3.0%, and a maximum of 8.3%. This maximum corresponds to extreme cases with far-right candidates focusing exclusively on immigration, such as the case illustrated in Appendix-Figure B4.

salience of immigration in right-wing manifestos that increased from less than 0.1% in 1981 to 0.8% by 1997.

Figure 3: Salience of Immigration in Left and Right Manifestos



Notes: The figure reports, for mainstream political orientations (left and right), the average share of immigration-related words in the total number of words (left-axis), as well as the far-right aggregated vote share at the national level.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on French electoral data from 1962 to 1997, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#) and National Archives for the year 1997.

This striking asymmetry in the evolution of mainstream candidates' rhetoric on immigration is consistent with the increased electoral competition between the right and the far right, without any similar effect for the left. Plausibly to mitigate electoral losses to far-right competitors, right-wing candidates seem to adjust their immigration policy positions to align with those of the far right ([Schain, 2002](#); [Han, 2015](#); [Van Spanje, 2010](#)).

This interpretation is supported by the stability of immigration salience in right-wing manifestos prior to 1981. Indeed, given that the period before 1981 was marked by major economic and political shocks, as well as national reform on immigration, one could have expected an increase in the salience of immigration in right-wing candidates' manifestos already in the 1978 and 1981 parliamentary elections.³⁰ Despite these national trends and the growing prominence of immigration in the French public debate by the mid-1970s, the salience of immigration remained low in local right-wing candidates' manifestos for parliamentary elections. The stability

³⁰Following the 1973 oil shock and the election of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in 1974, Prime Minister Jacques Chirac suspended labor immigration in response to rising unemployment. This was followed by additional restrictive measures, including the 1977 return-migration program, which offered financial incentives for voluntary repatriation, and the 1980 Bonnet Law, which tightened entry conditions and expanded the grounds for deportation.

observed before 1981, followed by the sharp increase thereafter, suggests that local right-wing candidates remained unresponsive to national shifts in immigration salience until local competition with the far right intensified and materialized in their own electoral districts.

The remainder of the paper presents a formal empirical analysis to assess the extent to which the correlations depicted in Figure 3 reflect a causal relationship between far-right electoral success and right-wing candidates' adjustments in their rhetoric on immigration, as well as the mechanisms underlying this response.

IV Empirical Strategy

Our main empirical strategy estimates the impact of the local electoral success of the far right on the policy positions of candidates from mainstream political forces regarding immigration. Section A details our benchmark econometric equation, while Section B describes our IV strategy. Specifically, our instrument exploits the key 1965 campaign of the far-right candidate, Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour, which, as Section C shows, generated plausibly exogenous variation in the subsequent local success of the far right. Specifically, we emphasize that immigration played no role in JLTV's campaign, and provide extensive evidence that our empirical estimates are not driven by pre-existing local variation in the salience of immigration in mainstream candidates' manifestos.

A Benchmark Equation

Using variables defined in Section II, we estimate the following econometric equation:

$$SW_{ide}^p = \beta_1 VS_{de}^{FR} + \beta_2 IS_{de} + \delta' \mathbf{X}_{de} + \gamma_d + \gamma_e + \varepsilon_{ide}. \quad (4)$$

SW_{ide}^p captures the share of immigration-related words in candidate i 's manifesto from political orientation p in electoral district d in election-year e . To ease interpretation, it is standardized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. VS_{de}^{FR} is the share of votes of far-right candidates in a given district d in election-year e .³¹ ε_{ide} is the error term.

Estimating the impact of the electoral success of the far right on the immigration rhetoric

³¹ Manifestos are mailed by the administration to all registered voters roughly two weeks before the election. Vote shares are thus observed after the manifestos have been written. Ideally, we would correlate manifesto content with the anticipated success of far-right candidates before the votes are cast. Since such a measure is unobservable, we use the vote shares realized in the election as a proxy for the intensity of competition with the far right during the campaign. Arguably, this measure better captures the contemporaneous competitive pressure faced by mainstream candidates compared to vote shares in the last election, usually five years earlier.

of mainstream political candidates requires neutralizing the direct impact of immigration, which can affect both variables simultaneously. Equation 4 thus includes IS_{de} the share of immigrants, as defined in Section D.³² We also include X_{de} , a vector of time-varying demographic and economic controls at the district level. As discussed in Section D, X_{de} includes the share of individuals aged 65+, the share of low-skilled individuals, the unemployment rate, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. γ_d and γ_t stand for district and election-year fixed effects, respectively. While γ_d absorbs time-invariant district characteristics that may simultaneously influence political orientation agendas and far-right vote shares, γ_t accounts for time-varying confounders at the country level. Standard errors are clustered at the district level to account for within-district correlation in candidate manifestos.

This empirical strategy isolates the impact of local dynamics by controlling for the national influence of party elites, who may press for tougher positions on immigration across the board. If changes in the salience of immigration in manifestos were largely uniform and driven by party leadership rather than local conditions, our estimates may understate the overall effect of far-right electoral success on policy positions. Instead, our analysis exploits variation across candidates within the mainstream left or right orientations.³³

Despite the inclusion of our control variables, the OLS estimates of β_1 are likely to be biased because of the endogeneity of VS_{de}^{FR} . Indeed, the electoral foothold and success of the far right are unlikely to be randomly distributed across districts. A first source of endogeneity may arise from reverse causality since the salience of immigration in candidate manifestos could directly influence the electoral support for far-right parties (Meguid, 2005). For instance, far-right candidates may be less active and able to mobilize voters in districts where mainstream candidates already place strong emphasis on immigration, thereby generating a downward bias in our OLS estimates.

A second source of endogeneity may be due to an omitted variable bias, which may arise if an unobserved local shock affects both far-right vote shares and the salience of immigration in the manifestos of mainstream candidates, potentially driving the observed relationship. On the one hand, OLS estimates of β_1 may be upward biased if shifts in public opinion or voter

³²Following a large tradition in the migration literature, we address the endogeneity of the immigration variable, mostly due to the non-random allocation of immigrants across districts, by using a shift-share-type IV strategy. Our instrument is based on historical settlement patterns among immigrants in 1954 (i.e., 14 years before the starting year in our sample). The predicted number of immigrants in a given district-year is obtained by multiplying the 1954 spatial distribution of immigrants of each nationality group by the total number of immigrants from that group in subsequent years. Appendix C3 provides detailed explanations of the construction of the instrument as well as additional tests to support the exclusion restriction imposed by the IV strategy.

³³Consistent with the growing salience of immigration within the right, within-party (across-party) variation accounted for 95.7% (4.3%) of the total variability in 1968 but only 53.0% (47.0%) in 1997, when focusing on left and right mainstream candidates only.

preferences against immigrants in a given district simultaneously increase far-right voting and prompt mainstream parties to adjust their policy positions on immigration issues in that district (Dahlström and Sundell, 2012; Abou-Chadi, 2016; Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020). On the other hand, OLS estimates of β_1 may be downward biased if unobserved district-specific shocks, such as the adoption of new technologies, robotization, or an increase in imported goods, all of which can lead to job displacement, simultaneously boost far-right voting and push mainstream candidates to focus more on these economic issues, thereby mechanically reducing the share of immigration-related words in their policy platforms.³⁴

B Identification Strategy

To estimate the causal impact of far-right voting on mainstream candidates' agenda, we employ an IV strategy inspired by the literature on shift-share instruments (Goldsmith-Pinkham et al., 2020; Borusyak et al., 2022). Specifically, we leverage the key 1965 presidential campaign of JLTv who, with Jean-Marie Le Pen as his campaign director, played a crucial role in establishing organizational structures and electoral footholds that facilitated the emergence and territorial deployment of the FN. Our instrument combines historical support for JLTv, measured by the spatial distribution of votes in 1965, with the time-varying conservative electorate over the analysis period to predict far-right voting in post-1965 parliamentary elections. While this section outlines the construction of the instrument, Section C shows that the exclusion restriction imposed by our IV strategy is unlikely to be violated.

B.1 Tixier-Vignancour's Emergence and the Local Implantation of the Far Right

Tixier-Vignancour, a French lawyer and far-right politician, announced his candidacy for the December 1965 presidential election in April 1964 and named Jean-Marie Le Pen as his campaign director.³⁵ Without taking any specific stance on immigration, the campaign mobilized far-right supporters, including former Vichy collaborators, staunch nationalists, and opponents of decolonization, by focusing on opposition to Gaullism and Algerian independence (Gautier,

³⁴This echoes the media literature on news pressure showing that the presence of significant topics may displace news attention, consequently limiting the time available for covering other subjects (Eisensee and Strömberg, 2007; Durante and Zhuravskaya, 2018; Djourelava and Durante, 2022).

³⁵JLTv had been active on the far right long before running for president in 1965. He voted in 1940 to grant full powers to Marshal Pétain, head of the Vichy regime that collaborated with Nazi Germany during World War II, and served under this regime between 1940 and 1941 as Deputy Secretary General for Information (in charge of propaganda). In May 1954, he founded the "Rassemblement National Français" to unite the far right for the 1956 parliamentary elections, with its political manifesto proclaiming: "Notre credo, c'est la patrie" – i.e., "Our creed is our country". As an ardent defender of French Algeria, he also joined the "Front National pour l'Algérie Française" ("National Front for French Algeria") in 1960, of which Le Pen was secretary-general.

2017). Despite 5.2% of the votes cast (1.3 million votes), the highest electoral score for a far-right candidate in an election since World War II, JLTV remained far behind the frontrunner, de Gaulle (44.65% of the votes).

This disappointing result led to a break with Le Pen in 1966 and marginalized JLTV in French political life. Still, this campaign played a key role in establishing a durable network of local militant structures, including campaign committees and activist mobilization, and logistical infrastructure, that laid the groundwork for future far-right candidates to build upon (Bernard, 2014). In 1972, Jean-Marie Le Pen capitalized on these foundations by establishing the *Front National*. As shown in Table 1, the electoral bases cultivated during JLTV's campaign proved advantageous for Le Pen, enabling the FN to secure significant support in the same electoral districts in subsequent elections.³⁶ The table reports the correlation between JLTV's registered vote share in 1965 and the change in the far-right vote share between 1968 and 1997 (Columns 1-2) and between 1981 and 1997 (Columns 3-4) at the district level. It confirms that the local electoral performance of JLTV is a positive and significant predictor of the local success of the far right in the political landscape after the 1970's.³⁷ Columns 5-6 show that absence of significant correlation between JLTV's 1965 vote share and changes in the far-right vote share between the November parliamentary elections of 1958 and 1962. These findings indicate that the relationship between JLTV's electoral support and the FN's subsequent success is not driven by pre-existing trends, and reinforce the argument that JLTV's electoral success helps explain the FN's local emergence.

B.2 Instrumental Variable

To build our instrument, we aggregate municipal-level electoral data from the 1965 presidential election, as collected by Piketty and Cagé (2023), to the district level. We then compute the spatial distribution of votes for JLTV as follows:

$$VS_d^{Tixier} = \frac{votes_d^{Tixier}}{\sum_d votes_d^{Tixier}}, \quad (5)$$

where $votes_d^{Tixier}$ is the number of votes received by JLTV in a given district d in 1965, and the denominator is the national number of votes cast for that candidate. It captures the time-invariant local exposure to the national rise in conservative-leaning voters. To predict the size of the far-right electorate in a given district in subsequent years, we combine these initial shares

³⁶Figure C1 depicts the electoral support for Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour in the 1965 presidential election.

³⁷Figure C2 in the appendix shows the scatter plots corresponding to the regressions in Columns 1 (Panel A) and 3 (Panel B).

Table 1: Impact of Tixier-Vignancour's Vote Share on the Subsequent Electoral Success of the Far Right

	Dependent : $\Delta V S_d^{FR}$					
	1968-1997	1968-1997	1981-1997	1981-1997	1958-1962	1958-1962
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
$V S_d^{Tixier}$	0.424*** (0.115)	0.753*** (0.102)	0.388*** (0.113)	0.735*** (0.096)	-0.087 (0.070)	-0.121 (0.091)
Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Nb. Observations	204	204	204	204	204	204

Notes: The unit of observation is a district. Each column estimates the impact of the 1965 share of votes for JLTV among registered voters on the change in the share of votes for the far right between 1968 and 1997 in Columns 1-2, between 1981 and 1997 in Columns 3-4, and between 1958 and 1962 in Columns 5-6. Columns 2, 4, and 6 include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. Standard errors (in parentheses) are heteroscedasticity robust. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, 10% significance levels.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

with the time-varying total number of votes cast by the conservative electorate (right and far-right candidates) in parliamentary elections held over the 1968-1997 period, as follows:

$$\widehat{votes_{de}^{FR}} = V S_d^{Tixier} \times \sum_d votes_{de}^{Cons.}, \quad (6)$$

where $\sum_d votes_{de}^{Cons.}$ is the total number of votes secured by the right and the far-right political orientations in each election. We group these two political forces because far-right and right-wing parties tend to compete for the same conservative electorate in the political arena, as shown in Section B. $\widehat{votes_{de}^{FR}}$ thus predicts the number of votes for the far right across districts for each election-year. Our shift-share-type instrument variable is therefore defined as:

$$\widehat{V S_{de}^{FR}} = \frac{\widehat{votes_{de}^{FR}}}{registered_d^{62}}, \quad (7)$$

where $registered_d^{62}$ is the 1962 number of registered voters. Using the number of registered voters instead of the actual number of votes aims to minimize the potential endogeneity of the electorate's size to local economic and political conditions.

Our instrument predicts varying far-right electoral scores across districts for each election. Its strength is reported in Appendix-Table C1, which presents the first-stage regression results when the far-right vote share is instrumented alone or combined with the immigration share. In both cases, we find a positive and significant relationship between our instrument and the

endogenous regressor. All econometric tables in Section V systematically include statistics to assess the strength of the instruments, namely the Kleibergen-Paap F-test (KP-F) and the Sanderson-Windmeijer (SW) test when more than one variable is instrumented. These tests confirm that our instrument has significant power in predicting far-right vote shares.

C Threats to Identification

The exclusion restriction implies that JLTV's electoral performance across districts in 1965 has to be uncorrelated with the ideological position of mainstream candidates on immigration, conditional on fixed effects and control variables.³⁸ Although untestable, this section presents several tests supporting the plausibility of the exclusion restriction. Taken together, the evidence suggests that our specification should capture the causal impact of the rise of the far right on the policy shifts of mainstream candidates.

The Absence of Immigration in JLTV's Campaign. One reason JLTV's electoral performance in 1965 is very unlikely to be attributed to a persistent anti-immigrant ideology, which could otherwise explain correlations with local attitudes toward immigrants in subsequent years, is that his campaign did not address immigration. Indeed, far-right movements such as Poujadism and Tixier-Vignancour's campaign did not frame their political stance in terms of foreigners versus nationals, a dimension that became central to political debate only with Jean-Marie Le Pen in the late 1970s. Thus, if JLTV was a vocal critic of Algerian independence and advocated the protection of French repatriates, his campaign did not focus on anti-immigrant rhetoric (Gautier, 2017, pp. 99–101).³⁹

To support this historical argument, and as a preliminary validity test, we regress VS_d^{Tixier} on the local share of immigration-related words in right- and left-wing manifestos from the 1962 and 1968 parliamentary elections (see Appendix-Tables C2 and C3). We find no correlation

³⁸Formally, our instrument ensures an as-good-as-random distribution of far-right vote shares, allowing for a causal interpretation of our estimates, if and only if VS_d^{Tixier} , the local voting shares for JLTV, is orthogonal to ε_{ide} in Equation 4, the unobserved determinants of the salience of immigration in manifestos. This echoes recent developments in the literature on shift-share instruments showing that their validity holds if either the historical local shares or the aggregate shifts are exogenous (Goldsmith-Pinkham et al., 2020; Borusyak et al., 2022, 2025). The validity of our instrument here relies on the exogeneity of the local voting shares for JLTV, VS_d^{Tixier} , instead of its shift component (i.e., the national shift in conservative votes).

³⁹As a matter of fact, his presidential manifesto did not include any immigration-related terms as reported in Figure C3 in the appendix. Instead, his candidacy was largely defined by strong opposition to Général de Gaulle, a strong liberal stance, advocating for free enterprise and opposing government interventionism, and a focus on preserving French identity by fighting communism. Specifically, JLTV believed that accelerating European integration was essential for strengthening the Atlantic Alliance and ensuring peace, viewing it as a strategy to combat the spread of communism, an approach that ran counter to the nationalist, sovereignty-focused stance typically associated with the far right.

between VS_d^{Tixier} and the salience of immigration in mainstream manifestos.⁴⁰

In sum, our IV estimates of the far-right success on mainstream policy positions on immigration are unlikely to be confounded by local changes in attitudes toward immigrants. To further address concerns about potential bias from persistent xenophobic sentiment, Appendix-Table C9 shows that our main results are robust to controlling for district-specific linear time trends proportional to the share of active Nazi collaborators in the 1945 population from Cagé et al. (2023), and the 2020 share of streets honoring WWII resisters, following Bellodi et al. (2024). These measures aim to proxy for persistent xenophobic attitudes that could influence both far-right support and the salience of immigration in mainstream candidates' manifestos.

The Algerian Repatriates. Another identification issue could arise from the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of French citizens from Algeria following the Évian Accords on March 18, 1962 (Edo, 2020). This large inflow has been shown to contribute to the far-right's electoral success (Remigereau, 2024; Cefalà, 2023) in subsequent years and may have been correlated with unobserved factors influencing the salience of immigration in mainstream candidates' manifestos. Tables C7 and C8 in the appendix suggest that this historical event is highly unlikely to violate our identifying assumption. Indeed, the local share of repatriates does not affect the variation in the share of immigration-related words in the manifestos of right- and left-wing candidates, respectively, either between 1958 and November 1962 or between 1958 and 1978.⁴¹ In addition Appendix-Table C9 shows that our main conclusions remain unchanged when controlling for a linear-time trend by repatriate shares in our benchmark specification.

The Absence of Pre-Existing Local Trends. As standard with shift-share-type instruments, any serial correlation in the local factors determining initial shares would violate the exclusion restriction. This means that our instrument would be invalid if factors driving JLTV's 1965 performance, such as anti-immigrant sentiment, persisted and later shaped mainstream candidates' rhetoric.

Tables C4 and C5 test the existence of such pre-existing trends, and show that changes in the predicted far-right vote share over the 1968-1997 period are not correlated with pre-existing local trends (from 1962 to 1968) in the share of immigration-related words in left- and right-wing candidate manifestos. The lack of statistically significant coefficients supports the absence of

⁴⁰ Appendix Tables C2 and C3 also show that there is no correlation between VS_d^{Tixier} and the local share of crime-related words, while VS_d^{Tixier} is positively correlated with the share of words related to repatriates from Algeria. This latter finding confirms that an important dimension of JLTV's campaign concerned the repatriates from Algeria. It also shows that the insignificant estimated coefficients reported in Tables C2 and C3 do not depend on the national-level prevalence of these word shares in 1962 or 1968 (0.34% for crime, 0.061% for immigration, and 0.062% for repatriates in 1962 for instance).

⁴¹ Yet, in line with Cefalà (2023) we find that the share of repatriates is significantly positively associated with the share of words related to repatriates for all mainstream candidates.

persistent regional trends influencing the salience of immigration in mainstream candidates' manifestos.

In addition, we implement in Section B, an alternative estimation strategy, à la Autor et al. (2013); Dustmann et al. (2017), that relies on first-difference estimates to further assess the absence of pre-existing trends. We leverage the sudden rise of the far right in the 1980s and conduct falsification tests showing that the sharp increase in far-right voting after 1981 is uncorrelated with prior changes in mainstream parties' immigration policy positions. In a reduced form equation, we also show that local voting shares for JLTV, VS_d^{Tixier} , are strongly positively correlated with the increasing salience of immigration rhetoric in mainstream right-wing candidate manifestos after 1981, with no such correlation before that date.

The absence of local pre-existing trends supports a causal interpretation of our results, suggesting that the observed policy shift among right-wing candidates after 1981 was driven by changing political conditions and the rising electoral competition from the far right. This interpretation is reinforced by major economic and political events that occurred before 1981, which may have influenced immigration rhetoric. The oil shocks of 1973 and 1979, for instance, worsened labor market conditions and led the French government to suspend foreign labor recruitment in July 1974. Such developments could plausibly have prompted a policy reaction from mainstream right-wing candidates during 1968–1981. However, our results indicate that it was only in the 1980s, following the rise of the far right, that these candidates began to increase the salience of immigration in their manifestos.

Finally, contemporaneous shocks could also threaten identification only if they were correlated with the 1965 distribution of votes for JLTV. Immigration waves after 1981 are a natural candidate for such a threat. For instance, an increase in the relative size of immigrant populations in certain districts may have induced mainstream right-wing candidates to shift their discourse on immigration, while being simultaneously correlated with VS_d^{Tixier} through the activation of pre-existing anti-immigrant sentiments. However, three considerations suggest that this immigration-based channel is unlikely to bias our estimates. First, as shown earlier, JLTV's platform did not focus on immigration. Second, the share of immigrants in France remained stable between 1975 and 1990, at around 7.5 percent. Third, our specifications explicitly control for changes in immigration pressure at the district level.

V Main Empirical Results

This section investigates how mainstream political candidates adjust their rhetorical stance on immigration in response to the electoral success of far-right parties using individual-level

estimates in Section A. Section B adopts an alternative empirical strategy with a first-differences approach that compares districts with varying exposure to far-right growth after 1981, in the spirit of Autor et al. (2013) and Dustmann et al. (2017). A key advantage of this approach is to provide additional evidence that our results are not driven by pre-existing local trends.

A Manifesto Adjustments of Mainstream Candidates to Far-Right Competition

Table 2 reports the OLS and IV estimated impact of far-right electoral scores on the salience of immigration in the political manifestos of mainstream party candidates. We estimate Equation 4 separately for right-wing candidates (Panel A) and left-wing candidates (Panel B). Columns 1 and 4 only include district and time fixed effects, while the other columns add the immigration variable and other controls discussed in Section A.

Consider the results for right-wing candidates. The OLS coefficients in Columns 1–3 on VS_{de}^{FR} are positive and significant at the 1% level, indicating a strong association between far-right electoral scores and the emphasis on immigration in right-wing candidate manifestos. Columns 4–6 address the endogeneity of VS_{de}^{FR} using our instrument from Equation 7.⁴² The IV coefficients double in magnitude, indicating that an increase in far-right voting leads right-wing candidates to adjust their rhetoric by amplifying the salience of immigration in their manifestos.⁴³ Our preferred specification in Column 6 implies that a one percentage point increase in the share of votes for far-right parties in a district raises the share of immigration-related words by 5.1 standard deviations (or by $0.01 \times 5.1 = 0.05$ percentage point).

In contrast, Panel B shows that the OLS and IV coefficients on VS_{de}^{FR} are insignificant and small, suggesting far-right voting does not shape mainstream left candidates' stance on immigration. Table 2 thus reveals a significant asymmetry between the mainstream parties of candidates, consistent with previous evidence in Section III. Since the far-right's rise mainly harms right-wing electoral scores, right-wing candidates are incentivized to adjust their stance on immigration, while left-wing parties remain largely unaffected.⁴⁴

Table 2 also shows that a change in the immigrant share in a given district does not affect

⁴²The F-test of the excluded instrument from the first-stage IV regressions ranges from 15 to 40, which ensures that our shift-share instrument is a relevant predictor of the endogenous variable. These values are also larger than the lower bound of 10 suggested by the literature on weak instruments (Stock et al., 2002; Andrews et al., 2019), indicating that our IV estimates should not suffer from a weak instrument problem.

⁴³Appendix-Table D2 reinforces our results by showing that electoral scores of the mainstream left do not lead to any adjustments in right-wing candidates' manifestos.

⁴⁴This interpretation is consistent with Akkerman (2015, p. 55): "Following the logic of Downsian spatial competition, the pressure to co-opt policy stances of the electoral competitor should be weighing on the mainstream right, because the appeal of radical right parties is most tempting for voters on the right side of the political spectrum." Another possible interpretation is that leftist parties are generally less responsive than right-wing parties to political and economic changes, as they are "historically more ideological than other parties" (Adams et al., 2009, p. 615).

Table 2: The Impact of Far-Right Electoral Scores on the Saliency of Immigration in Mainstream Candidates' Manifestos

	OLS estimates			2SLS estimates		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Right						
VS_{de}^{FR}	2.093*** (0.361)	2.332*** (0.381)	2.318*** (0.386)	4.690** (2.102)	4.863** (2.203)	5.069** (1.967)
IS_{de}			0.071 (0.415)			0.223 (0.570)
Nb. Observations	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141
KP F-test				40.882	35.758	14.580
SW F-test FR				40.882		48.083
SW F-test immig.					35.758	118.816
Panel B: Left						
VS_{de}^{FR}	-0.006 (0.100)	-0.020 (0.112)	-0.006 (0.111)	-0.381 (0.381)	-0.401 (0.400)	-0.397 (0.347)
IS_{de}			-0.070 (0.079)			0.005 (0.141)
Nb. Observations	7,723	7,723	7,723	7,723	7,723	7,723
KP F-test				40.411	47.689	15.796
SW F-test FR				40.411		54.052
SW F-test immig.					47.689	65.466
Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Notes: The dependent variable is the share of immigration-related words relative to the total number of words in a given manifesto. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. The main regressor of interest is the share of votes for the far right. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance levels, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

the political discourse on immigration among mainstream candidates in that district. To interpret this insignificant relationship, Appendix-Table D3 reproduces the IV estimates from Column 6, excluding VS_{de}^{FR} . It turns out that the estimated coefficient on the immigration share becomes

positive and significant at the 10% level. This indicates that immigration amplifies the immigration rhetoric of right-wing candidates, but only through a rise in far-right political support. In addition, Table D3, goes beyond the average impact of immigration by decomposing the adult immigrant population by skills. This decomposition shows that the insignificant estimated coefficients on overall immigration stem from a negative (though insignificant) estimated coefficient on the share of highly educated immigrants and a significantly positive coefficient on the share of low-educated immigrants.⁴⁵ It suggests that right-wing candidates' political response to a rise in the relative number of immigrants depends on their educational background. In contrast, none of the estimated effects for left-wing candidates are significant, indicating that mainstream left parties do not adjust their policy positions on immigration in response to immigration.

In sum, far-right success elicits different responses from mainstream parties, shaping their discourse on immigration. Only right-wing candidates adjust their stance, confirming that far-right parties mainly threaten mainstream right parties by drawing away their voters.⁴⁶

B Alternative Strategy and Falsification Tests

Although our main analysis covers the period from 1968 to 1997, Figure 3 shows that the FN did not achieve electoral success until the late 1980s. In this section, we exploit this delayed success to implement an alternative empirical strategy that treats all elections through 1981 as a pre-treatment period, when the FN's vote share was negligible and had no discernible effect on French political outcomes.

Following Autor et al. (2013) and Dustmann et al. (2017), we implement a first-difference approach to estimate the relationship between the initial 1981-1988 shock in far-right voting across districts and shifts in mainstream parties' policy positions in each election relative to 1981. This requires shifting to the district level, as most candidates change between elections and do not always run in every contest, preventing us from tracking variation in the same candidate's positions over time before and after the "FN shock". Specifically, we estimate the

⁴⁵The high-education group consists of individuals who obtained a diploma equivalent to the French exam granting access to high school, while the rest fall into the low-education category. During the period 1968–1999, 70.4% of immigrants were classified as low-educated.

⁴⁶Appendix D4 conducts a series of robustness checks to ensure the validity of our findings. Specifically, our results remain unchanged when using *i*) an alternative dependent variable that captures the likelihood of mentioning immigration in political manifestos; *ii*) a leave-one-out version of our shift-share-type instruments to address potential mechanical correlations; *iii*) an alternative definition of the immigration variable based on citizenship; *iv*) alternative sub-lexicons based either on terms referring to (im)migrants only or on keywords related to immigration policy; *v*) a sub-sample of electoral districts unaffected by the redistricting and controlling for voter turnout; *vi*) an alternative clustering strategy for estimating standard errors; and *vii*) a district-level analysis where we aggregate the dependent variable at the district level.

following equation for each election-year e separately:

$$\Delta SW_d^{p,e-81} = \gamma_1 \Delta V S_d^{FR,88-81} + \gamma_2 \Delta I S_d^{e-81} + \gamma_3 \Delta X_d^{e-81} + \mu_d^{p,e-81}, \quad (8)$$

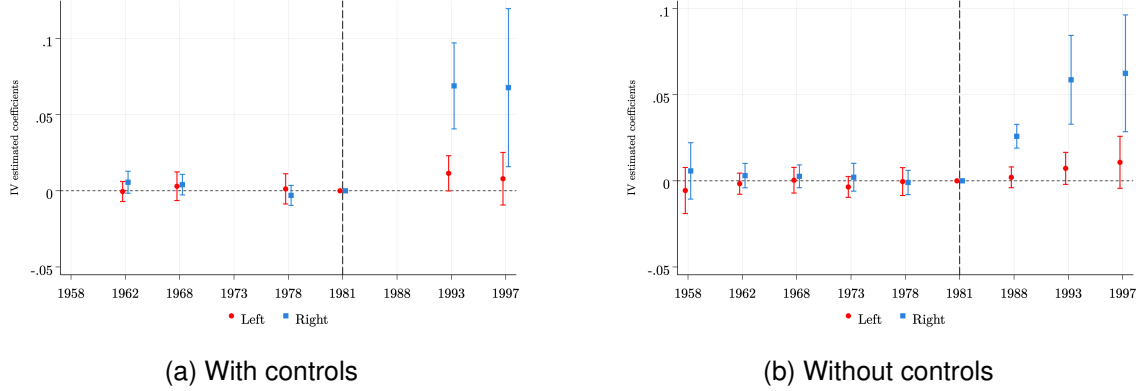
where, $\Delta SW_d^{p,e-81} = (words_{de}^{imm,p} - words_{d81}^{imm,p}) / words_{d81}^p$ denotes the change in the number of immigration-related words in the manifestos of political orientation p in district d between 1981 and election e , standardized by the number of words from that same political orientation in that district in 1981. $\Delta V S_d^{FR,88-81}$ denotes the change in far-right votes in district d between the 1981 and 1988 elections, standardized by the number of registered voters in that district in 1981. Consistently, the instrument becomes the 1981-1988 change in the predicted number of far-right votes, $\widehat{votes}_{d,1988}^{FR} - \widehat{votes}_{d,1981}^{FR}$ (as defined in Equation 6), normalized by the number of registered voters in the district in 1981. $\Delta I S_d^{e-81}$ denotes the change in the number of adult immigrants between 1981 and election year e , divided by the district's adult population in 1981. Similarly, we construct our demographic and socio-economic controls using the same population groups as in Section D, and taking the change between 1981 and election year e in the size of the relevant group (individuals aged 65 and older, low-educated individuals, unemployed persons, blue-collar workers, and manufacturing employment), normalized by the corresponding population in 1981.

The results of estimating γ_1 from Equation 8, separately for each election-year and political orientation, are reported in Figure 4a. The estimates without controls in Figure 4b aim at maximizing the number of elections during the pre-treatment period ($e < 1981$), which serve as falsification tests for the presence of pre-existing local trends. The absence of significant effects and near-zero coefficients in the pre-treatment period supports the validity of our research design and confirms that the initial rise in far-right voting between 1981 and 1988 is not correlated with prior changes in mainstream parties' policy positions on immigration. This indicates that our results do not reflect a long-run underlying confounder driving both the rise in far-right voting and the increasing salience of immigration in right-wing candidate manifestos, and that our post-1981 IV estimates capture the period-specific effects of the initial "FN shock".⁴⁷

The post-1981 estimates confirm our previous results and show that the districts more exposed to this shock experienced a more rapid increase in the salience of immigration in right-

⁴⁷One potential concern is that the lack of significance in our pre-1981 estimates reflects the limited variations in the salience of immigration-related terms in mainstream manifestos before 1981 (Figure 3). Appendix-Table C6 shows, however, that the data provide sufficient variability to detect significant effects. Specifically, when regressing the change in far-right vote share between 1981 and 1988 ($\Delta V S_d^{FR,88-81}$) on the change in the salience of immigration in right-wing manifestos before 1981 ($\Delta SW_d^{R,78-81}$), using OLS (not IV), the coefficients are negative and significant at the 5% level, both with and without controls. The negative coefficients are consistent with districts where right-wing candidates placed greater emphasis on immigration before 1981 subsequently experiencing lower gains in far-right vote share, in line with the downward bias expected in our OLS estimates.

Figure 4: Impact of the “FN shock” on Past, Present and Future Changes in the Saliency of Immigration in Mainstream Candidates’ Manifestos



Notes: We report coefficient estimates from year-specific regressions across districts based on Equation 8. The dependent variable is the local change in immigration-related words in mainstream left or right candidate manifestos between 1981 and election-year e , standardized by the local number of words from that political orientation in 1981. The main regressor of interest is the change in far-right votes between 1981 and 1988, expressed as a share of registered voters in 1981. We instrument this variable using the predicted local change in far-right voting defined in Section . The demographic and socio-economic controls in Panel B include changes in the share of immigrants, the share of individuals aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of employment in manufacturing between election-year e and 1981. All 95% confidence intervals are based on heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors.

Sources: Authors’ elaboration on data from French electoral data in 1981 and 1988, French censuses, Gaultier-Voituriez (2016), and National Archives for the year 1997.

wing manifestos, with no significant effect for left-wing manifestos.⁴⁸

To further support our findings, Appendix-Figure C6 reports the results of a quasi-reduced-form specification, which uses the historical vote share for JLTV (VS_d^{Tixier} , i.e., the exogenous component used to construct the shift-share-type instrument in our benchmark analysis) as the main regressor. With or without controls from the 1962 French census, including the local share of repatriates, the pre-1981 coefficients confirm the absence of pre-existing trends. Consistent with our previous results, the post-1981 coefficients are significantly positive for mainstream right-wing candidates but remain insignificant for those on the left.

⁴⁸We replicate this analysis by considering alternative treatments for right-wing candidates, such as changes in the far-right voting share between 1981–1988 and 1981–1997. These additional results, reported in Appendix-Table C11, lead to similar conclusions, namely a contagion effect of the right on immigration saliency after 1981, with no evidence of pre-trends in the falsification tests.

VI The Nature of the Adjustment to the Far Right

The previous results show that right-wing candidates increase the salience of immigration in their manifestos in response to a rise in local support for the far right. This section investigates the nature of the policy position adjustments among these candidates. Section A shows that right-wing candidates align their immigration rhetoric with the main topics and tone used by the far right. Section B shows that this adjustment mainly occurs through immigration rather than reflecting a broader convergence across all topics.

A The Impact of the Far Right on the Ideological Position of Right-wing candidates on Immigration

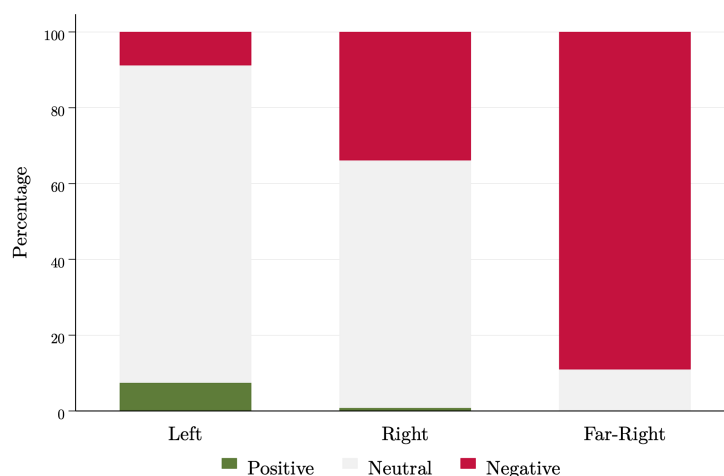
Building on the spatial theory of party competition (Downs, 1957b), which suggests that parties competing for the same electorate either converge or diverge in their policy positions (Meguid, 2005), we extend our text analysis to understand how right-wing candidates adjust their immigration narrative. Specifically, we investigate whether they align with or counter the far right's framing of immigration in terms of sentiment and topics.

We leverage recent advancements in artificial intelligence applied to natural language processing. Specifically, we use an advanced language model (GPT 4o-mini) to assess the main sentiment of immigration-related sentences, distinguishing between negative, neutral, and positive rhetoric, which we average at the manifesto level.⁴⁹ Figure 5a presents this decomposition for left, right, and far-right candidates over the 1968-1997 period. The framing is almost always negative for the far right, which consistently portrays immigration in a negative light. While the mainstream left consistently adopts a neutral framing, the mainstream right almost invariably frames immigration negatively when departing from a neutral stance. Based on these empirical observations and the absence of positive discourses on immigration, we create a new dependent variable, $Sentiment_{ide}$, as a dummy variable equal to one if a given candidate i in district d during election-year e discusses immigration negatively, and zero otherwise.

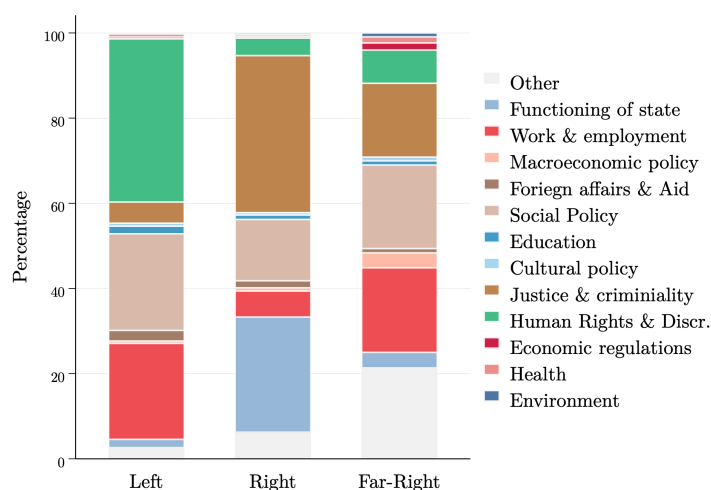
Table 3 reports the results of estimating Equation 4 using $Sentiment_{ide}$ as the dependent variable, following the same structure as our baseline Table 2. The OLS and IV estimated coefficients are positive and significant, indicating that a rise in electoral support for far-right parties leads right-wing candidates to adopt more negative stances on immigration. The IV

⁴⁹Our detailed procedure is described in Appendix B5. Neutral statements on immigration may refer to cases where candidates announce a series of reforms without specifying their exact content, such as: “*I will do everything in my power to carry your voices in every domain: security, employment, education, immigration, defense, environment, ...*”; or to statements that do not reflect any clear political orientation, such as: “*I will introduce an immigration reform adapted to the economic situation.*”

Figure 5: Sentiments and Topics Associated with Immigration-Sentences



(a) Sentiments



(b) Topics

Notes: Figures 5a and 5b focus on the immigration-related manifestos of left, right, and far-right candidates over the 1968–1997 period. Figure 5a provides the distribution of their sentiments according to whether they are on average positively, negatively related to immigration, or considered neutral. Figure 5b reports the distribution of the immigration-related statements associated with a given topic. The list of topics is taken from Grossman (2019), and their definitions are provided in Appendix B5. Sentiments and topics are identified independently for each immigration-related sentence in manifestos, then aggregated first at the manifesto level and finally at the party level.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on Gaultier-Voituriez (2016) and National Archives for the year 1997.

estimate in Column 6 implies that an increase in the share of votes for the far right by one percentage point in a given district causes a 3.7 percentage point increase in the likelihood that

Table 3: The Impact of Far-Right Electoral Scores on the Framing of Immigration in Right-Wing Candidates' Manifestos

	OLS estimates			2SLS estimates		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
VS_{de}^{FR}	1.014*** (0.232)	0.997*** (0.274)	0.983*** (0.275)	3.970** (1.668)	4.070** (1.694)	3.734** (1.546)
IS_{de}			0.071 (0.228)			-0.365 (0.416)
Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Nb. Observations	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141
KP F-test				40.882	35.758	14.580
SW F-test FR				40.882		48.083
SW F-test immig.					35.758	118.816

Notes: The dependent variable is a dummy variable that captures the likelihood of talking negatively about immigration in right-wing candidates' manifestos. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. The main regressor of interest is the share of votes for the far right. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance level, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, Gaultier-Voituriez (2016), and National Archives for the year 1997.

a right-wing candidate portrays immigration negatively in their manifesto in that district.⁵⁰

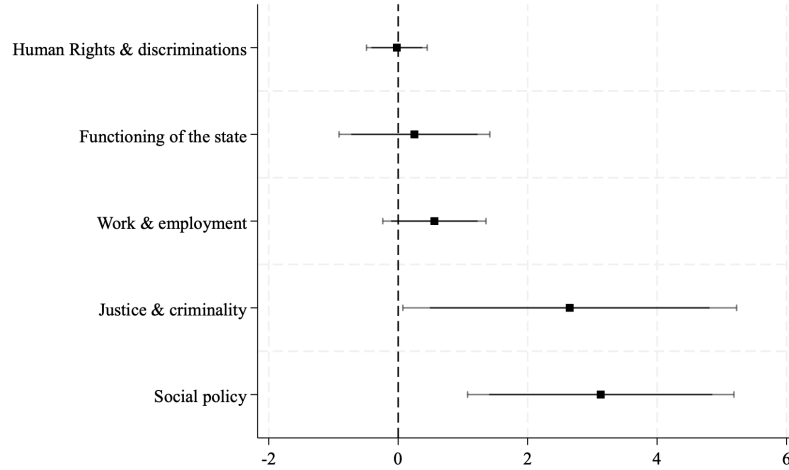
Thus, our findings suggest that the previously observed increase in the salience of immigration in response to the rise in far-right voting reflects right-wing candidates shifting their discourse on immigration closer to that of the far right, rather than presenting an alternative narrative. In addition, Table 3 shows that the estimated coefficients on the immigration variable are always insignificant. This result implies that the relative number of immigrants in a given district does not affect the framing of right-wing candidates in their manifestos and discourses.

Figure 5b identifies the main topics for each immigration-related sentence in all available manifestos. Again, we ask ChatGPT to assign each immigration-related statement to one or several topics within a list of 13 non-immigration major topics detected in party manifestos for parliamentary elections in France, as outlined by Grossman (2019).⁵¹ Then, for each political

⁵⁰This effect remains significant at conventional levels even when controlling for whether the candidate discusses immigration in their manifesto in Table D7 in the appendix

⁵¹The 13 topics are the following: Justice & Criminality, Health, Macroeconomic Policy, Environment, Education, Social Policy, Human Rights & Discrimination, Work & Employment, Foreign Affairs & Aid, Functioning of the State, Economic Regulations, and Cultural Policy. A detailed description of their definition and our procedure can be found

Figure 6: IV Impact of Far-Right Electoral Scores on Right-wing Candidate's Manifestos: Topics within the Immigration Subject



Notes: The dependent variable is a dummy variable that captures the likelihood of talking about immigration in association with a given subject (listed on the y-axis) in right-wing candidates' manifestos. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. The main regressor of interest is the share of votes for the far right. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. Confidence intervals are provided at the 95% and 90% levels.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

orientation, we count the number of times immigration-related statements are associated with each topic. Figure 5b reports the share of these associations relative to the total number of topic-immigration links. It shows that topics such as "Human Rights and Discrimination" are disproportionately used by mainstream left candidates when discussing immigration in their manifestos, while right-wing and far-right candidates are more likely to use "Justice and Criminality" in connection with immigration. Topics related to the labor market ("Work and Employment"), the regulation of the economy ("Economic Regulations"), or the welfare state ("Social Policy") are also frequently linked to immigration across almost all political orientations. We retain these top five topics, which account for at least 10% of all immigration-related topics in our sample, and create five candidate-specific variables, $Topic_{ide}$ for a given candidate i in district d during election-year e . $Topic_{ide}$ captures the likelihood that a given candidate i refers to a given topic when discussing immigration, and zero otherwise.

Figure 6 presents the estimated coefficients on our main variable VS_{de}^{FR} from five sepa-

in Appendix B5.

rate IV regressions (based on Equation 4), each using one of the five main topics covered in immigration-related sentences with the dependent variable equal to one if the candidate mentions the topic in association with immigration and zero otherwise. While the first three IV estimates at the top of Figure 6 are insignificant, the last two are positive and significant at the 5% level. These results show that rising far-right support in a district increases the likelihood that right-wing candidates associate immigration with crime and social policy. This aligns with common far-right narratives portraying immigrants as contributors to crime and as a strain on the welfare system. It also reflects native concerns about immigration, often linked to criminality and public finances (Dustmann and Preston, 2007; Alesina et al., 2022; Barrera-Rodríguez et al., 2024; Marie and Pinotti, 2024).

Taken together, our results indicate that increasing electoral support for far-right parties prompts right-wing candidates to emphasize immigration more, framing it negatively, specifically in association with crime and the welfare state.

B Is the Scope of Adjustment Limited to Immigration?

As a first step, we follow Di Tella et al. (2025) to investigate how far-right voting influences the overall convergence between right-wing and far-right candidate manifestos. Table 4 thus replicates our baseline Table 2 using an alternative dependent variable: the overall ideological proximity of each right-wing candidate's manifesto to the far right (standardized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one). This measure captures the semantic similarity between words used in right-wing and far-right manifestos, as detailed in Appendix B5. Higher values indicate greater alignment with far-right rhetoric.

Our results show that as the far right gains electoral power, the ideological proximity between right-wing and far-right discourse increases.⁵² While this finding reinforces earlier evidence of right-wing candidates adapting to the FN's rise, it remains unclear whether this shift is confined to immigration or extends to other issues.

To investigate this question, we analyze the full set of right-wing candidate manifestos, predicting the likelihood that a manifesto addresses one of the 14 topics shown in Figure B19, including immigration, plus a residual category (not shown). We use a machine-learning-based topic classification model trained on the French Agenda Project data to assign probabilities to sentences based on their vector representations.

To measure the probability that a sentence addresses a given topic, we employ two distinct approaches. We use a traditional Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency (TF-

⁵²Table 4 also indicates that this convergence is unrelated to the local share of immigrants.

Table 4: Far-Right Electoral Success and Ideological Convergence between Right and Far-Right Candidates' Manifestos

	OLS estimates			2SLS estimates		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
VS_{de}^{FR}	1.857*** (0.374)	2.307*** (0.401)	2.252*** (0.392)	2.370* (1.276)	2.864** (1.392)	3.004** (1.252)
IS_{de}			0.302 (0.256)			0.131 (0.422)
Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Nb. Observations	5,471	5,471	5,471	5,471	5,471	5,471
KP F-test				36.518	31.273	11.678
SW F-test FR				36.518		41.678
SW F-test immig.					31.273	114.826

Notes: The dependent variable is a measure of ideological proximity of right-wing candidates' manifestos to the far right following [Di Tella et al. \(2025\)](#), as detailed in [Appendix B5](#). This variable is standardized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. The main regressor of interest is the share of votes for the far right. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance level, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

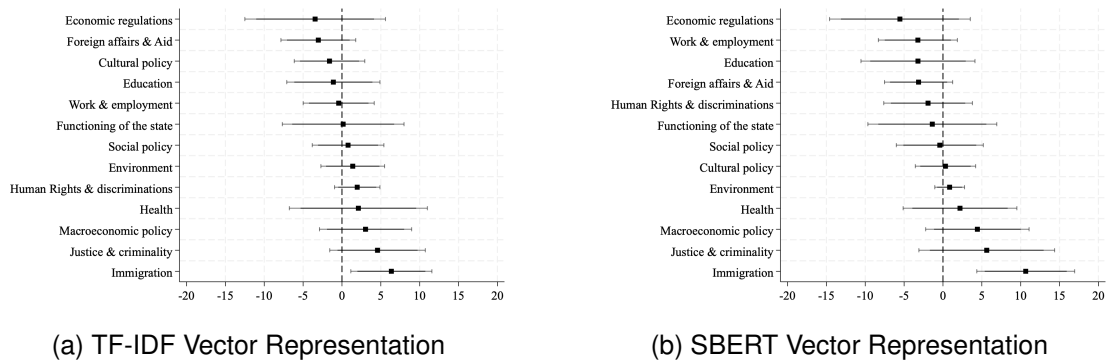
IDF) transformation, as well as a more advanced embedding-based method, Sentence-BERT (SBERT).⁵³

Figure 7 presents the estimated impact of the share of votes for the far right on each of the 13 topics identified in right-wing candidate manifestos, using the TF-IDF method in Figure 7a and the SBERT approach in Figure 7b. The dependent variables are standardized to ease comparison across estimates. We use the same set of regressors as in Equation 4. All estimated coefficients are insignificant, except for immigration. This result shows that an increase in the share of far-right vote shares raises only the salience of immigration in right-wing candidates' manifestos, while other topics remain largely unaffected by increasing competition with

⁵³Using either TF-IDF or SBERT approaches, the immigration topic probability is strongly correlated with our benchmark share of immigration-related words across the full sample of political manifestos (0.8 for TF-IDF and 0.6 for SBERT). Additionally, [Appendix-Figure B16](#) uses the SBERT approach and shows that far-right candidates are more likely to discuss immigration in their manifestos. [Figure B16](#) also shows that immigration received relatively little attention from right-wing candidates' agendas before 1981, but gained salience as the far right rose. This trend mirrors our earlier empirical facts based on the share of immigration-related words in manifestos, suggesting that this alternative measure yields qualitatively similar insights to our benchmark text analysis.

the far right.⁵⁴

Figure 7: The Impact of Far-Right Electoral Scores on Right-Wing Manifesto Topics



Notes: The figures plot the estimated coefficient on the share of votes for the far right on the probability that a right-wing candidate's manifesto discusses a specific topic listed on the y-axis. To build these probabilities, Figure 7a applies a traditional Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency (TF-IDF) transformation to manifestos, while Figure 7b uses a more advanced embedding-based method, Sentence-BERT (SBERT). All dependent variables on the y-axis are standardized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. The main regressor of interest is the share of votes for the far right. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. Confidence intervals are provided at the 95% and 90% levels.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, Gaultier-Voituriez (2016), and National Archives for the year 1997.

In sum, our results show that right-wing candidates adjust their discourse in response to rising political support for far-right parties, mostly emphasizing immigration. As a result, the ideological convergence between right-wing and far-right candidates observed in Table 4 is an issue-specific reaction rather than a broader ideological shift or a realignment of other key right-wing policy areas toward far-right positions. To further illustrate that immigration is a key driver of the electoral competition between right-wing and far-right parties, we provide evidence in Appendix D6 that an increase in the salience of immigration in a given district, driven by actual immigrant inflows, acts as a catalyst for shifts in voting behavior, moving support from right-wing to far-right parties. Immigration is therefore as a key factor in understanding the political

⁵⁴The estimated coefficient for Justice & Criminality (although not statistically significant at conventional levels) suggests that the likelihood of right-wing candidates emphasizing the theme of justice and criminality in their manifestos may also increase in response to a rise in far-right voting. Appendix-Table D8 thus replicates our baseline Table 2, replacing the dependent variable with the crime-related share of words in right-wing manifestos instead of the share of immigration-related words. Although the estimated coefficients on far-right voting are significantly positive, they remain small compared to our previous findings on immigration-related words. While these results align with the far right's focus on insecurity, additional results in Appendix D5 indicate that this response mainly reflects the association between immigration and criminality, rather than an independent focus on crime and insecurity.

realignment on the right, both right and far-right candidates competing for a similar conservative electorate sensitive to the issue of immigration.

VII The Electoral Rationale Behind the Adjustment of Mainstream Right-Wing Candidates

The results so far have shown that right-wing candidates respond to increased competition from the far right by increasing the salience of immigration in their manifestos and systematically adopting a negative stance on this issue. This accommodation strategy is rational if shifting rhetoric helps retain conservative voters from defecting to the far right (Spoon and Klüver, 2020; Hjorth and Larsen, 2022; Meguid, 2005). However, it may backfire if, by adopting more anti-immigration positions, the right inadvertently pushes this electorate toward the party perceived as most committed to the issue (Dahlström and Sundell, 2012; Krause et al., 2023; Turnbull-Dugarte et al., 2025).

To empirically test the associated gains or loss of such a policy shift among right-wing candidates, we augment our previous Equation 8 by interacting the electoral scores of the far right in the previous organized election VS_{de-1}^{FR} with the average share of immigration-related words in right-wing manifestos in a given election SW_{de}^R . This interaction term allows us to assess how the impact of far-right voting varies depending on the extent of adjustments made by right-wing candidates. Our econometric equation becomes:

$$VS_{de}^R = \gamma_1 VS_{de-1}^{FR} + \gamma_2 SW_{de}^R + \gamma_3 VS_{de-1}^{FR} \times SW_{de}^R + \gamma_4 IS_{de} + \delta' X_{de} + \gamma_d + \gamma_e + \mu_{de}. \quad (9)$$

Given that SW_{de}^R is standardized with a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one, γ_1 captures the local impact of the far-right vote share in the previous election on voting for the mainstream right. Since an increase in far-right voting has been shown to come at the expense of right-wing electoral scores, γ_1 is expected to be negative. Then, γ_3 measures the differential impact of VS_{de-1}^{FR} on VS_{de}^R for a one standard deviation increase in the average share of immigration-related words in right-wing candidate manifestos (SW_{de}^R). A positive γ_3 would indicate that increasing the salience of immigration in their policy discourse helps right-wing candidates mitigate voter losses to the far right. In contrast, $\gamma_3 = 0$ would suggest that this political strategy has no effect, while $\gamma_3 < 0$ would imply that adopting far-right rhetoric exacerbates electoral losses.⁵⁵

⁵⁵It is worth mentioning that due to the endogenous nature of the adjustment among right-wing candidates, we do not claim that our interpretation behind the estimates of Equation 9 is causal. Nonetheless, it provides suggestive

Table 5: The Electoral Payoffs of Right-Wing Candidates' Adjustments to the Far Right

	Salience		Framing		Topic
	OLS	2SLS	2SLS	2SLS	2SLS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
VS_{de-1}^{FR}	-0.544*** (0.108)	-0.950 (0.782)	-1.329** (0.655)	-5.244** (2.374)	-3.113** (1.334)
SW_{de}	-0.044*** (0.016)	-0.340** (0.135)	-0.436** (0.194)		
$SW_{de} \times VS_{de-1}^{FR}$	0.288** (0.141)	3.595** (1.594)	4.731** (2.185)		
$Sentiment_{de}$				-0.330** (0.140)	
$Sentiment_{de} \times VS_{de-1}^{FR}$				5.169** (2.221)	
$Topic_{de}^{Crime}$					-0.244** (0.103)
$Topic_{de}^{Crime} \times VS_{de-1}^{FR}$					2.974** (1.267)
IS_{de}			-0.192 (0.355)	-0.496 (0.453)	-0.258 (0.286)
Nb. Observations	1,017	1,017	1,017	1,017	1,017
KP F-test		2.352	2.337	1.559	1.714
SW F-test FR		5.160	11.442	5.639	15.930
SW F-test inter.		4.802	7.248	5.897	11.359
SW F-test immig.			52.446	26.631	36.319

Notes: The unit of observation is a district-election-year cell. The dependent variable is the share of votes for right-wing parties. The main regressors of interest are the share of votes for the far right in the previous election, along with its interactions with three alternative variables capturing right-wing parties' adjustments on immigration. Our baseline variable SW_{de} in Columns 1-3 is the average share of immigration-related words in right-wing candidates' manifestos. The variable $Sentiment_{de}$ in Column 4 captures the likelihood that at least one right-wing candidate portrays immigration negatively. The variable $Topic_{de}^{Crime}$ in Column 5 captures the likelihood that at least one right-wing candidate associates immigration with crime issues in its manifesto. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance level, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Table 5 reports the OLS and IV coefficients estimated from Equation 9. First, it confirms that an increase in far-right vote shares is associated with significant vote losses for right-wing

evidence of the potential electoral payoffs associated with aligning rhetoric with that of the far right.

candidates. For the right-wing candidate with an average level of immigration salience in his manifesto, the IV estimate of γ_1 in Column 3 implies that a one percentage point increase in far-right vote shares in a district where reduces the average share of votes for right-wing candidates in that district by 1.33 percentage points. Moreover, the estimated coefficient of the interaction term γ_3 is positive and significant, indicating that this negative effect is mitigated when right-wing candidates increase the salience of immigration in their manifestos.⁵⁶

To gauge the importance of the dampening effect of adjustment on vote loss for right-wing candidates, Figure 8a depicts the marginal impact of an increase in far-right voting in the previous election, based on Column 3, for different values of SW_{de}^R . Each plotted coefficient is obtained as:

$$\frac{\partial V_{de}^R}{\partial V_{de-1}^{FR}} = \hat{\gamma}_1 + \hat{\gamma}_3 \times SW_{de}^R, \quad (10)$$

where SW_{de}^R represents the corresponding values of the four thresholds defining the quintiles of the SW_{de}^R distribution. Figure 8a shows that the negative estimated impact of a rise in far-right voting on the electoral support of right-wing parties diminishes as the salience of immigration in right-wing candidate manifestos increases. These results confirm the strategic rationale behind right-wing candidates' adjustments. Emphasizing immigration helps mitigate vote losses as the far right gains traction and emerges as a significant electoral force.⁵⁷

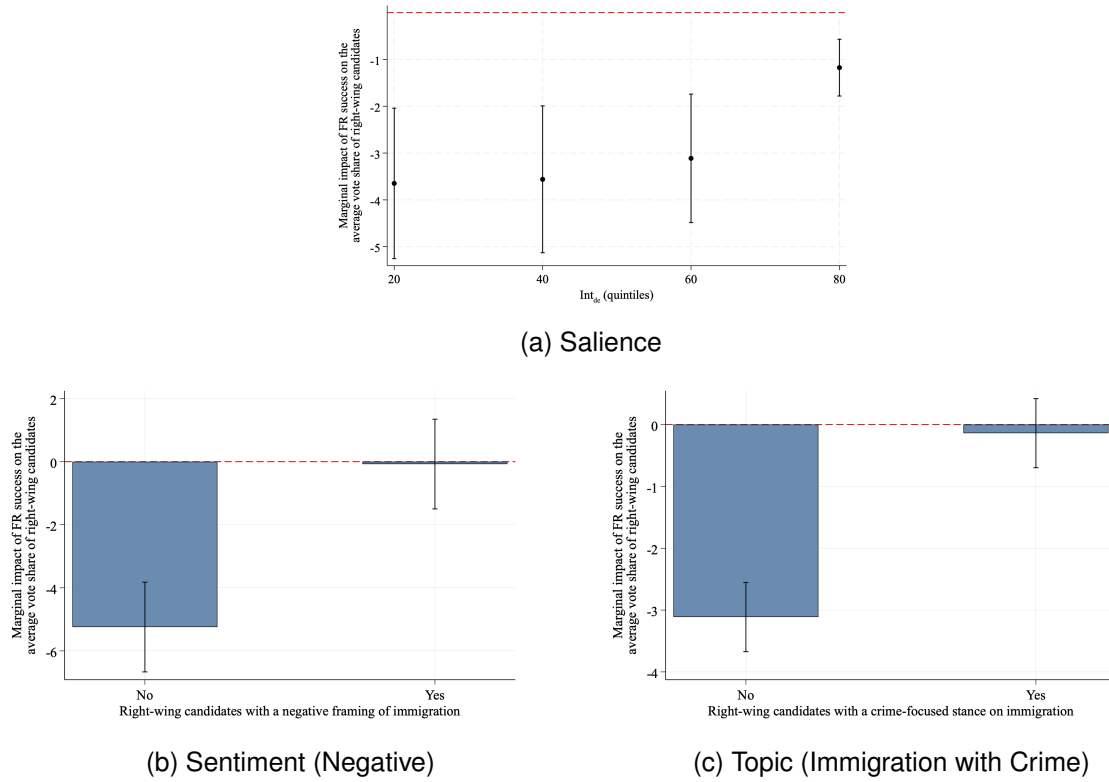
In Columns 4-5 in Table 5, we replicate the regression from Column 3 using alternative measures of right-wing manifesto adjustments at the district level. Specifically, we take advantage of the previously defined $Sentiment_{ide}$ and $Topic_{ide}^{Crime}$ variables, which capture the likelihood that a given right-wing candidate portrays immigration negatively or associates it with crime issues, respectively. We first compute the average value of these variables for right-wing candidates in a given district-election cell. Then, to facilitate interpretation, we transform them into binary indicators equal to one if the value is positive and zero otherwise. Thus, $Sentiment_{de}$ in Column 4 captures the likelihood that at least one right-wing candidate portrays immigration negatively, while $Topic_{de}^{Crime}$ in Column 5 captures the likelihood that at least one right-wing candidate associates immigration with crime in their manifesto.

By design, the estimated coefficients on V_{de-1}^{FR} in Columns 4-5 capture the marginal impact of an increase in far-right votes in the previous election on the vote shares of right-wing candi-

⁵⁶The negative and significant coefficient γ_2 for SW_{de}^R suggests that increasing the salience of immigration among right-wing candidates (in an extreme scenario where far-right parties have zero electoral support) reduces their vote shares. This may indicate that when far-right ideological positions lack support, emphasizing immigration is electorally costly, as it may be perceived as a distraction from more salient local issues.

⁵⁷This result is robust to various specifications and definitions of the main variables as reported in Table D12 in the appendix.

Figure 8: Heterogeneous Effects of Far-Right Success on Mainstream Right-Wing Voting



Notes: Figure 8a plots the marginal impact of an increase in far-right voting in the previous election, evaluated at the quintile values of the SW_{de}^R distribution as detailed in Equation 10. Figure 8b plots the marginal impact of an increase in far-right voting in the previous election for right-wing candidates, depending on whether they adopt a negative framing of immigration. Figure 8c plots the marginal impact of an increase in far-right voting in the previous election for right-wing candidates, depending on whether they adopt a justice- and crime-based rhetoric on immigration. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Confidence intervals are provided at the 95% and 90% levels.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, Gaultier-Voituriez (2016), and National Archives for the year 1997.

dates when $Sentiment_{de} = 0$ or $Topic_{de}^{Crime} = 0$. In contrast, $\gamma_1 + \gamma_3$ for these columns captures the marginal impact for right-wing candidates who shift their immigration rhetoric closer to that of the far right. The positive and statistically significant coefficient on the interaction terms further supports the hypothesis of an electoral payoff to right-wing adjustment. This appears strikingly in Figures 8b and 8c, where adopting a negative stance on immigration offsets the adverse effect of far-right voting on electoral support for right-wing parties.

VIII Conclusions

This paper leverages the political shock created by the creation of the *Front National* in 1972 and its sudden electoral success in the 1980s to study the impact of the rise of the far right on mainstream politics. Specifically, we study how mainstream candidates adjusted their policy positions in response to increased electoral competition from far-right parties and assess the electoral consequences of these shifts.

We estimate the impact of far-right voting on the salience and framing of immigration issues in the manifestos of mainstream candidates in the first round of parliamentary elections across French electoral districts between 1968 and 1997. An important identification concern in our econometric framework is that our estimated effects may reflect a spurious correlation driven by changes in public opinion and voter preferences. To isolate the supply-driven changes of far-right voting, we exploit the 1965 presidential campaign of the far-right candidate Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour, which played a crucial role in establishing electoral footholds for the far right in the aftermath of World War II. We construct a shift-share-type instrument based on the distribution of JLTV's vote share across electoral districts, allowing us to generate a plausible exogenous prediction of far-right voting in subsequent parliamentary elections.

We provide new causal evidence that the far right's electoral success triggered different reactions from mainstream parties, with varying strategies depending on their proximity to the far right on the political spectrum. Regarding right-wing candidates, we find that they are more likely to align their rhetoric with anti-immigration stances. Not only did right-wing candidates increase the salience of immigration in their manifestos, but they also toughened their stance on immigration by adopting negative rhetoric and associating it with crime and social concerns. Finally, we show that this strategy among right-wing candidates was limited to immigration issues and helped them retain conservative voters while preventing defections to the far right. As a result, the FN played a key role in making immigration a salient issue across the entire right-wing political spectrum in France.

In contrast, we find that the policy positions of mainstream left candidates are not affected by local changes in far-right voting. The asymmetric response from right- and left-wing candidates aligns with our findings that the electoral success of the far right mostly increased electoral competition on the right side of the political spectrum, leading to a significant decline in the electoral support for right-wing parties. Taken together, our results indicate that right- and far-right parties compete for a similar electorate, which can be mobilized around the topic of immigration.

Further research is needed to assess the extent to which our results generalize to contexts

where the far right is already well established. While the initial electoral threat from a far-right breakthrough may be mitigated by policy adjustments from mainstream candidates, such strategies risk backfiring over time by legitimizing the far-right agenda (Meguid, 2005; Muis and Immerzeel, 2017; Krause et al., 2023). By normalizing far-right discourse and signaling that tougher stances on immigration are necessary, right-wing parties may ultimately reinforce the far right and strengthen its electoral support. As the far right has become a major force in national and local elections across many Western countries, it is crucial to understand the dynamic impact of such policy adjustments on the electoral success of mainstream parties.

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The Impact of the Far Right on Mainstream Politics: Evidence from the *Front National*

Online Appendix.

Appendix A	Electoral Data	2
Appendix A1	Data and Sources	2
Appendix A2	Tracking Electoral Districts over Time	3
Appendix A3	Raw Correlations	5
Appendix B	Political Manifestos	8
Appendix B1	Data and Sources	8
Appendix B2	Representativeness of the Manifesto Corpus	12
Appendix B3	Lexicons	14
Appendix B4	Word Clouds	14
Appendix B5	Measures of Immigration Rhetoric in Manifestos	20
Appendix C	Identification Strategy	30
Appendix C1	Far-right Success and the Instrument	30
C1.1	Instrument's Strength	30
C1.2	Pre-Trend Analysis	34
Appendix C2	Repatriates from Algeria	39
Appendix C3	Immigration and the Shift-share Instrument	40
Appendix C4	Alternative Strategy and Reduced-form Analysis	43
Appendix D	Additional Results	45
Appendix D1	Descriptive Statistics	45
Appendix D2	Controlling for Mainstream Left	46
Appendix D3	Focusing on High- and Low-Educated Immigration	47
Appendix D4	Robustness Checks	48
Appendix D5	Focusing on Justice & Criminality	54
Appendix D6	The Impact of Immigration on Electoral Outcomes	57
Appendix D7	The Electoral Rationale Behind the Adjustment of Mainstream Right-Wing Candidates	64
Appendix D8	Analysis of immigration laws passed by Parliament between 1968 and 1997	64

Appendix A Electoral Data

Appendix A1 Data and Sources

Sources. Electoral data come from the “*Livrets Blancs*”, which record election results for each constituency, including voter turnout, votes for each candidate, and candidates’ political labels, as defined by the Ministry of the Interior based on self-reported political orientation. They have been digitized and provided to us by Nicolas Sauger.

From political labels to political orientations. Table A1 reports how we assign each political label (called “nuances” by the French Ministry of Interior) to broader political orientations: Far Left, Left, Right, Far Right, and Other. We first build on [Piketty and Cagé \(2023\)](#) to assign all political labels from 1962 to 1997 to Left (Left and Center-Left) and Right (Right and Center-Right) political orientations. Then, following the classification of [Pons and Tricaud \(2018\)](#), we extract far-left and far-right candidates from these broad groups to create two additional categories.

Table A1: From Political Labels to Political Orientations

Year	Far-Left	Left	Right	Far-Right	Other
1962	DIV EXG	PC, PSU, RAD SOC, SFIO	MODERES, MRP, MRP VEME, CNI, UNR, IND VEME, DIV GAUL	POUJAD, DIV EXD	RAD CENT, NON CL
1967	EXG	PSU, SOC FED GAUCHE, PC, APP PC	REP IND, CENTRE DEM, MODERES, RALLIE, UNR, DIV GAUL	ALL RE- PUB, DIV EXD	REGIONAL, RAD DROITE
1968	EXG	RADSOC-REPIND, PCF, RADSOC, SOCFEDGAU, PSU, APPPCF-PCF	CENTREDEM-CPDM, MOD- ERES, MODERES-CPDM, MODERES-RADSOC, REPINDUDR, REPIND- DIVGAUL, MODERES- REPIND, REPINDUDR-UNR, UNR, REPIND, DIVGAUL- UNR, DIVGAUL, CPDM	DIVEXD, ALLREPU	MVTREFORM, NONCLASSE, REGIONAL, RADDROITE, CENTRE- DEM, RAD- DROITE/REPIND, TECKDEMO
1973	LO, LCR, OCI	DVG, PSUGSD, PSU, PCF, MRGUGSD	DREFO, CDPURP, RI, UDR, DVD, URP, CDP, UDRURP, DIVGAUL, RIURP	EXD	RADREF
1978	EXG	DVG, PS, PCF	UDF, DVD, RPR	EXD	ECO
1981	EXG	PS, DVG, PCF	DVD, UDF, RPR	EXD	ECO
1988	EXG	COM, SOC, MAJ, RDG, ECO	DVD, UDF, RPR	EXD, FRN	REG
1993	EXG	COM, VEC, SOC, RDG, GEC, MAJ	UDF, RPR, DVD	EXD, FRN	DIV, REG
1997	EXG	ECO, SOC, DVG, COM, PRS	RPR, DVD, UDF	FRN, EXD	DIV

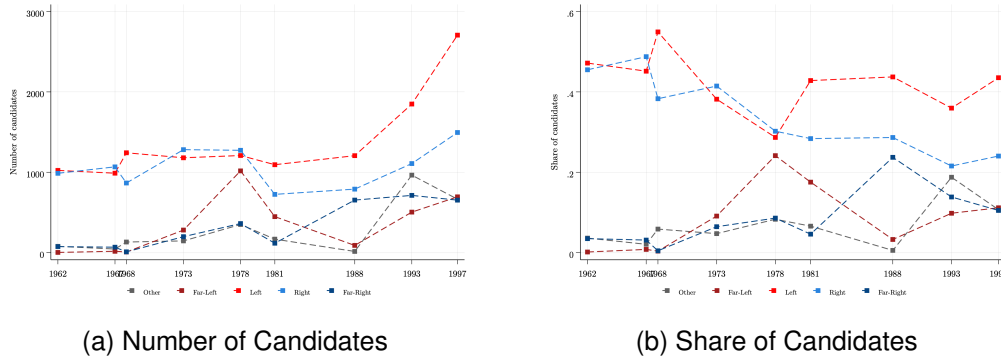
Sources: Authors’ elaboration on French Electoral Archives ([Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016](#)), [Piketty and Cagé \(2023\)](#), and [Pons and Tricaud \(2018\)](#).

Matching electoral and census data. A key challenge in our empirical analysis is the merging of census information with electoral data across districts. While respondents’ districts are not included in the census data, they do provide the municipality of residence for each individual. Using the correspondence tables provided by the Ministry of the Interior, we assign each municipality to its 1986 district and apply the same aggregation as described in [Appendix A2](#) below. The assignment of municipalities to the 1986 districts also requires tracking municipalities over time (some of them

have been merged, split, or absorbed). We thus use a correspondence table listing all municipalities that have existed between 1962 and 1999 to be able to follow them over time.

Number and shares of candidates across political orientations.

Figure A1: Number and Shares of Candidates by Political Orientation



Notes: These graphs report the total number (Panel a) and the share (Panel b) of candidates in parliamentary elections from each political orientation between 1962 and 1997.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data on French Electoral Archives ([Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016](#)).

Appendix A2 Tracking Electoral Districts over Time

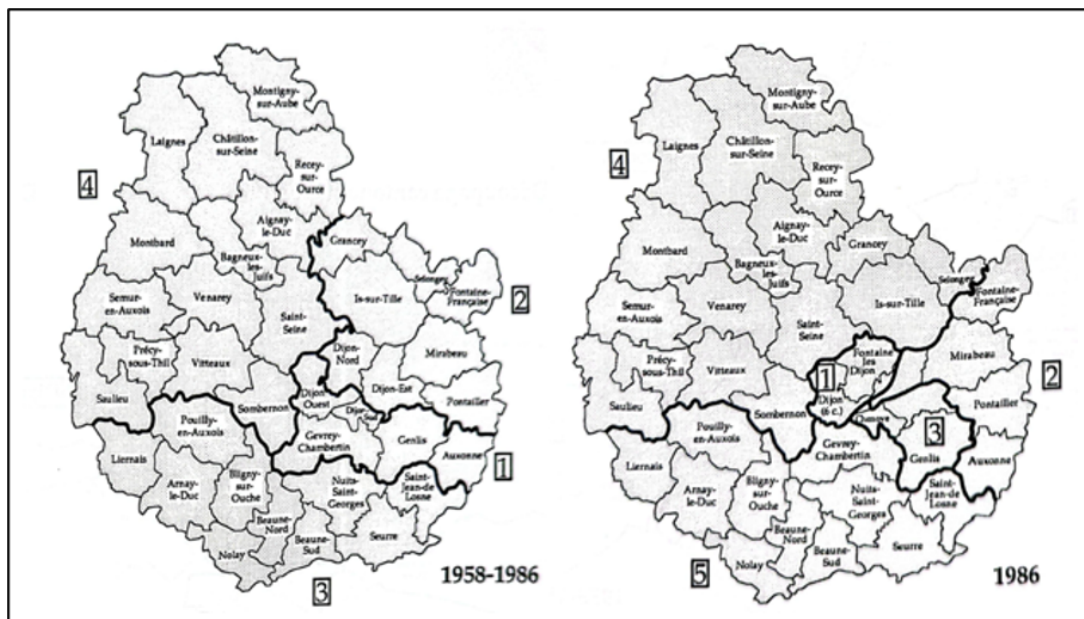
Metropolitan France is administratively divided into several regions, which are further subdivided into departments. To ensure territorial representation in Parliament, the electoral code divides departments into, at least, two electoral districts (*“circonscriptions”*), corresponding to the number of deputies sitting in the National Assembly. The number of seats was initially 465 in 1958 and increased to 577 in 1986. Each constituency elects a single candidate. The electoral districts are divided into counties (*“cantons”*), grouping a set of municipalities.

Our analysis requires tracking electoral districts over time, whose boundaries vary following the 1986 redistricting. Based on [Gaudillère \(1995\)](#), we first identify electoral districts that were not affected by the redistricting, which we leave unchanged. Then, we re-aggregate the other electoral districts to maximize the number of districts traceable over time, while minimizing the errors of assigning counties to different electoral districts. Indeed, the aggregation of counties to recreate constant electoral districts over time generates a residual number of wrongly assigned counties. Although our reaggregation procedure minimizes such errors, they cannot be entirely avoided. For this reason, we present additional results showing that our findings are robust to the exclusion of electoral districts with misidentified counties.

The French department of *“Côte-d’Or”*, depicted in [Figure A2](#), is a representative example of our methodology and the residual errors it can generate. Between 1958

and 1986, this department was divided into four electoral districts numbered 1 to 4. The 1986 electoral redistricting created a fifth electoral district and also modified the layout of the existing electoral districts' borders. Based on the previously described allocation rule, we reaggregate the electoral districts 1, 2, and 4 from 1958 to create a new large electoral district. All other counties are merged to create a second electoral district, which mostly corresponds to district 3 from 1958. This reaggregation into two larger electoral districts generates an assignment error for the county of "*Gevrey-Chambertin*", which is wrongly associated with the second newly generated electoral district, even though it belonged to the first district of 1958, which is part of the first newly generated district. All other counties are correctly assigned and it is important to note that there is no other alternative division possible that would lead to the creation of two (or more) electoral districts and that would further reduce the number of wrongly assigned counties. By following this methodology for each of the 90 departments, we obtain a final division of the territory into 204 electoral districts. 50% of them contains no wrongly assigned cantons, while 22% have one, 12% have two, and 16% have three.

Figure A2: 1986 Redistricting in Côte d'Or

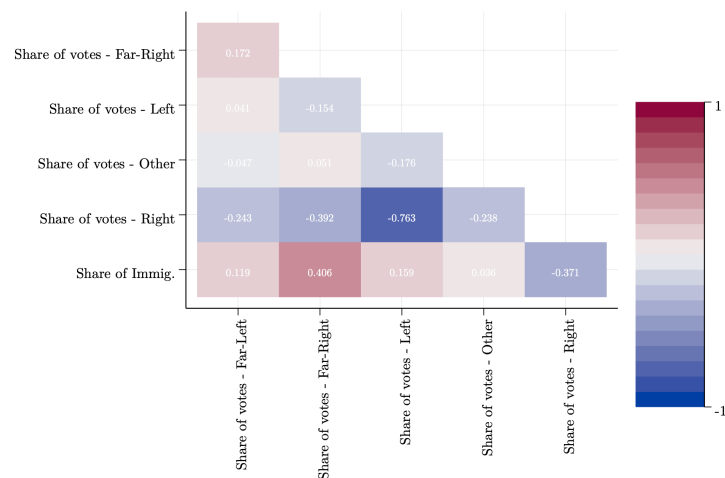


Notes: These two maps show changes in canton borders in the "Côte-d'Or" department following the 1986 redistricting.

Sources: Authors' elaborations on [Gaudillère \(1995\)](#).

Appendix A3 Raw Correlations

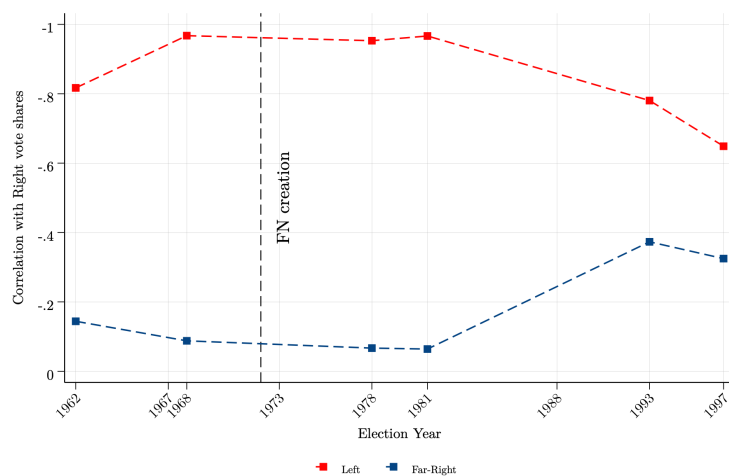
Figure A3: Cross Correlations



Notes: This figure reports cross-correlations between vote shares by political orientation and immigrant shares at the district-year level, 1962–1997.

Sources: Author's elaboration on French electoral data from 1962 to 1997.

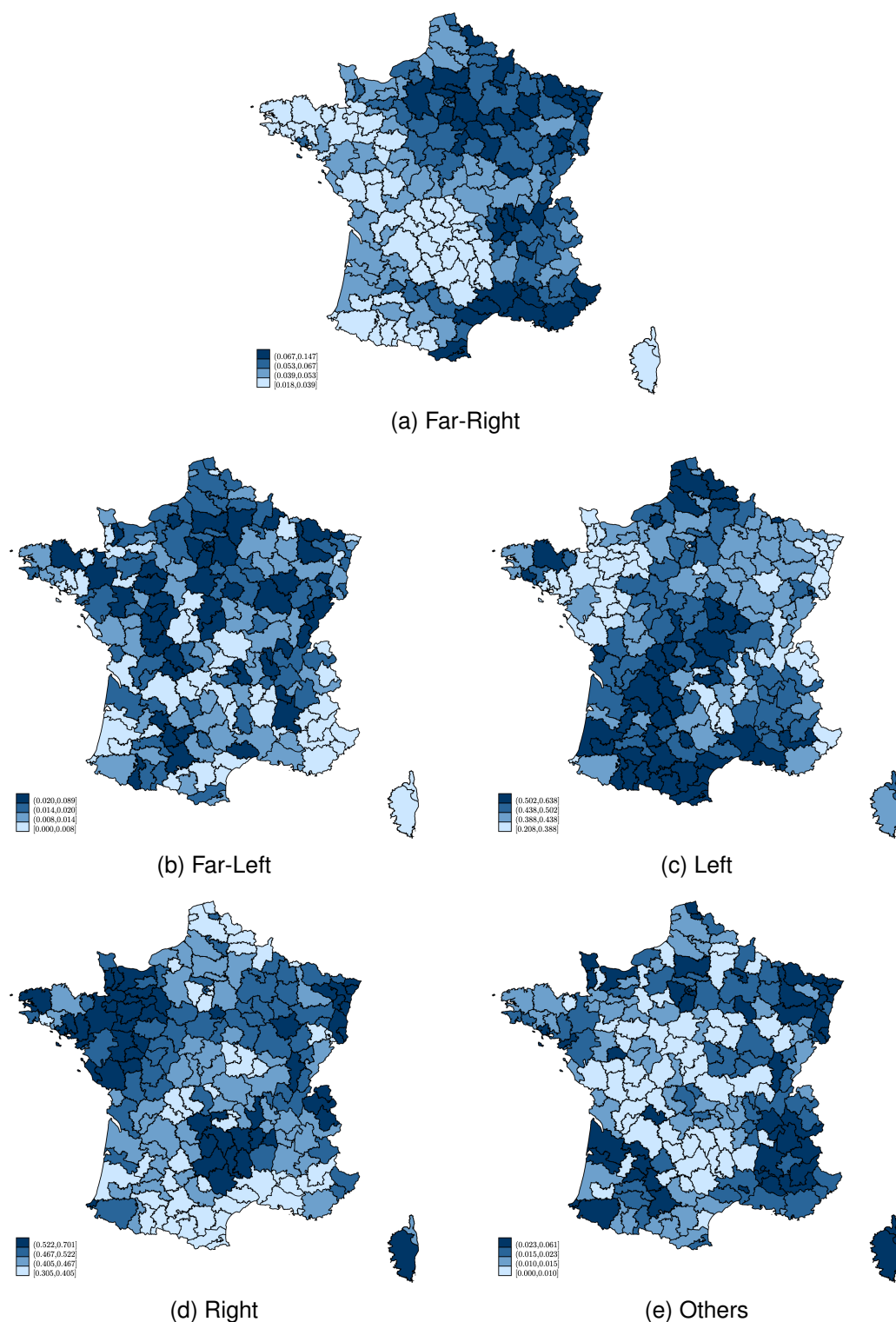
Figure A4: Vote Shares Correlation with Right Candidates



Notes: This figure reports the district-year correlation between the shares of votes of right-wing candidates and their two main competitors, the left and the far right.

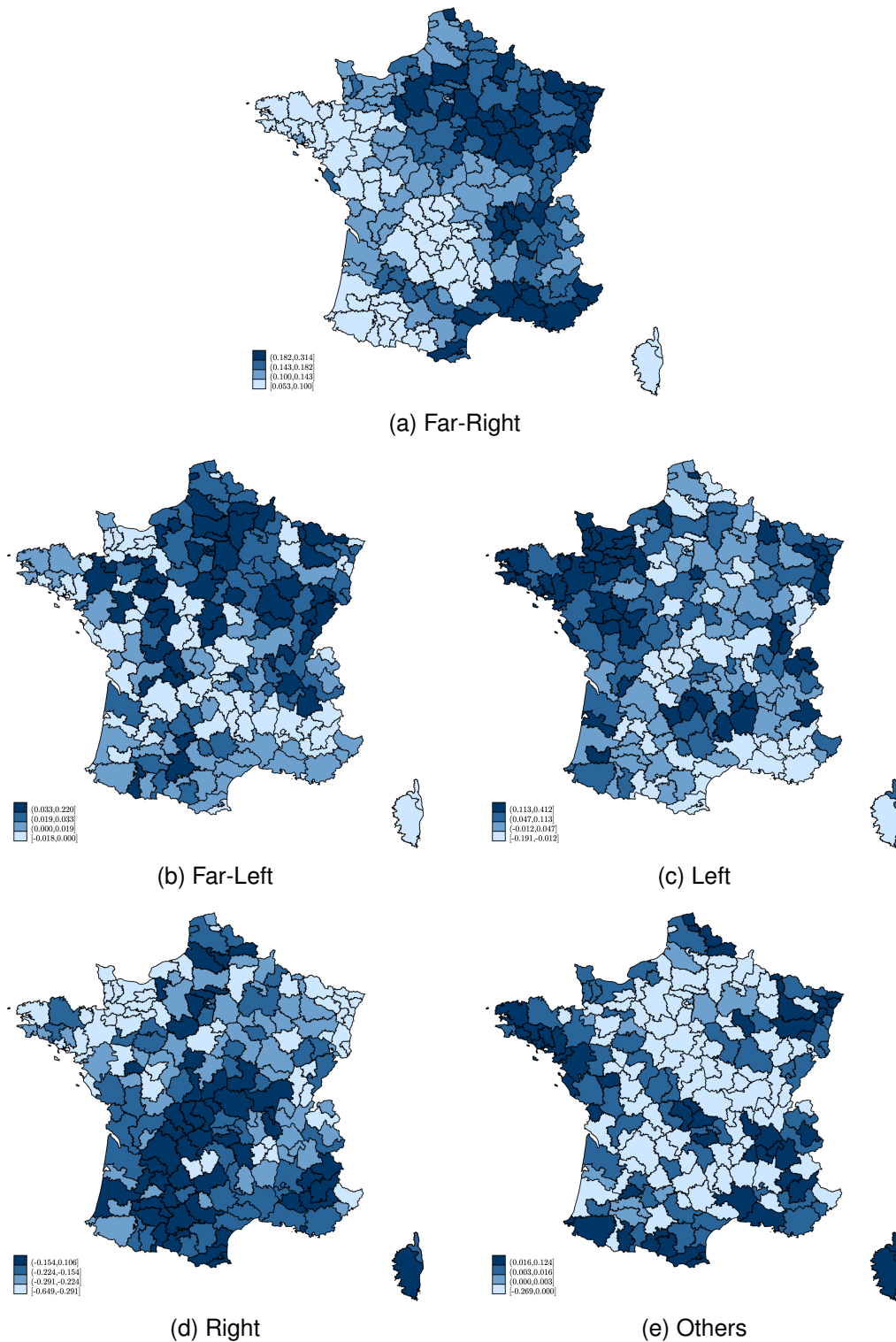
Sources: Authors' elaboration on French electoral data from 1962 to 1997.

Figure A5: Political Orientations Across Districts: Average Vote Shares, 1968–1997



Notes: These maps report the average share of valid votes for each political orientation by electoral districts between 1968 and 1997. The share of votes is the number of valid votes for each political orientation divided by the total number of valid votes (excluding blank and erroneous votes).
Sources: Author's elaboration on French electoral data from 1968 to 1997.

Figure A6: Changes in Vote Shares Across Districts between 1968 and 1997



Notes: These maps report the changes in the share of votes for each political orientation within each electoral district. Changes are computed as the difference in vote shares between 1997 and 1968. The share of valid votes is the number of votes for each political orientation divided by the total number of valid votes (excluding blank and erroneous votes).

Sources: Author's elaboration on French electoral data from 1968 to 1997.

Appendix B Political Manifestos

Appendix B1 Data and Sources

Data on candidate manifestos are obtained from the French Electoral Archives of the Centre for Political Research at Sciences Po (hereafter CEVIPOF), which provide a comprehensive record of all candidates' political manifestos, regardless of whether they were elected or not, between 1958 and 1993 (Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016). We have complemented this first source of information with manifestos for the 1997 election that we collected manually from the French national archives. This unique and comprehensive database of political manifestos, covering both elected and non-elected candidates, serves as the primary source for our empirical analysis of candidates'

Table B1: Manifesto Data Availability in Parliamentary Elections

Election Year	Barodet's Commission Elected candidates	Archives Electoral All candidates	Web-Scrapping All candidates	National Archives All candidates	Turnout %
3rd Republic:					
1881	X				70.6
1885	X				70.4
1889	X				76.6
1893	X				71.1
1898	X				75.2
1902	X				76.1
1906	X				77.7
1910	X				75.9
1914	X				74.6
1919	X				70.2
1924	X				80.5
1928	X				81.9
1932	X				81.6
1936	X				84.5
4th Republic:					
1945					77.8
1946					81.8
1951	X				80.1
1956	X				82.8
5th Republic:					
1958	X	X			77.1
1962	X	X			68.7
1967	X	X			80.9
1968	X	X			80.0
1973	X	X			81.2
1978	X	X			82.8
1981	X	X			70.7
1986	X	X			78.5
1988	X	X			65.7
1993	X	X			68.9
1997	X			X	67.9
2002	X				64.4
2007	X				60.4
2012	X				57.2
2017	X		X		48.7
2022	X		X		47.5
2024	X		X		66.7

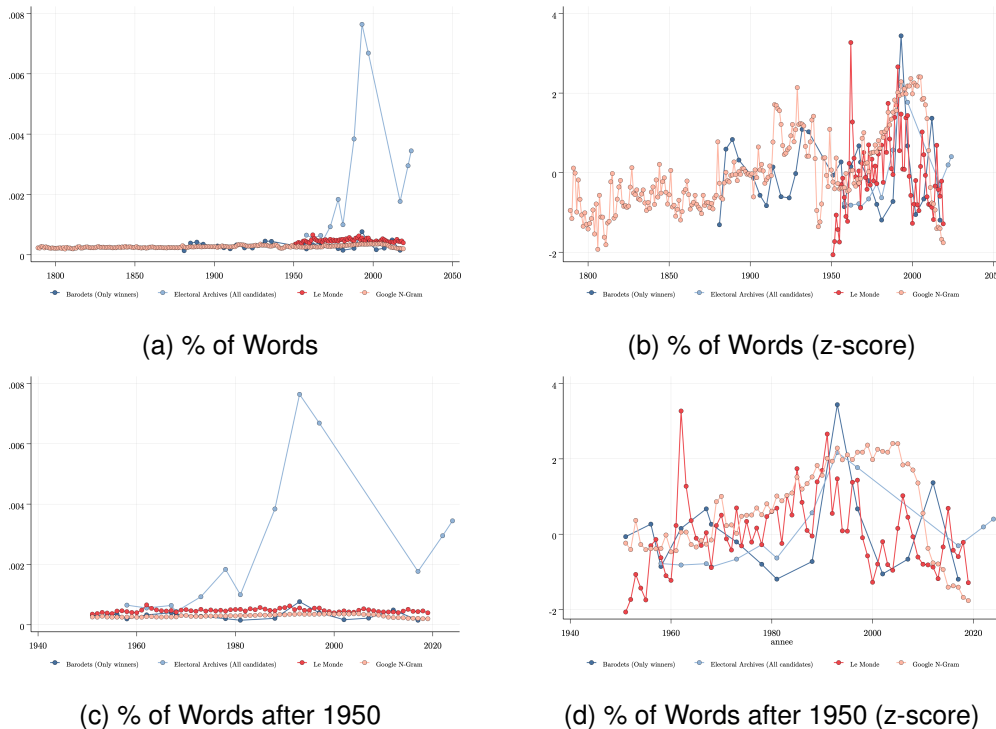
Note: This table reports the availability of manifestos in the first round of parliamentary elections in France from 1881 to 2024.
Sources: Authors' elaboration on data on French Electoral Archives (Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016).

political platforms. Moreover, data from Barodet's commission provide political manifestos for each elected candidate since 1881. Table B1 provides details on manifesto data availability.

Figures B1 and B3 provide additional descriptive statistics on the share of immigration-related words in alternative sources, namely Google NGram Viewer, starting in 1789 and the “Le Monde” newspaper starting in 1951. We observe a historical rise in immigration-related keywords, which began to increase after 1950, marking the start of our sample period, and then declined by the end of our analysis period in 2000.

The data from Barodet's commission allows for providing additional descriptive and suggestive evidence for a longer period. Indeed, on February 7, 1882, the French Chamber of Deputies passed a proposal by Deputy D. Barodet to establish a collection of programs and election commitments solely for elected deputies to be accountable for their electoral promises. Leveraging the archives of the National Assembly, we obtained all political manifestos for elected deputies from the Barodet's commission. This collection includes manifestos for 31 elections held between 1881 and 2017. As election manifestos were made compulsory to be provided online, data for the year 2022 and 2024 was also obtained from the Ministry of Interior.

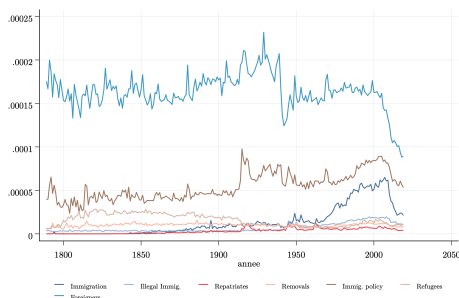
Figure B1: Salience of Immigration Over Time using Alternatives Sources



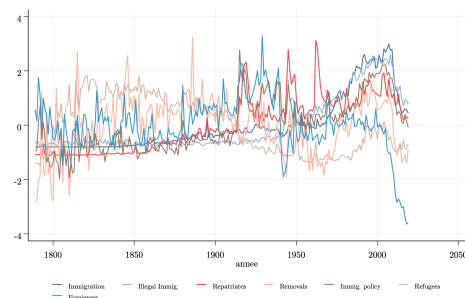
Notes: This figure reports the evolution of the salience of immigration-related keywords in various sources. Manifestos from the Barodet Commission are reported from 1881 to 2017. Data from Google N-Grams are available from 1789 to 2019. Manifestos from the French Electoral Archives (Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016) are available from 1958 to 1997. Data from newspaper articles published in “Le Monde” are available from 1952 to 2019. The list of keywords is available in Appendix B3

Sources: Authors' elaboration on Barodet Commission, Google N-Gram, “Le Monde”, French Electoral Archives (Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016), and (Azoulay and de Courson, 2021).

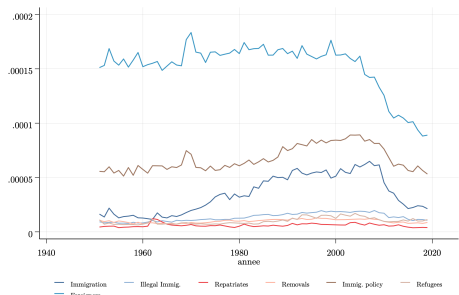
Figure B3: Google N-Gram



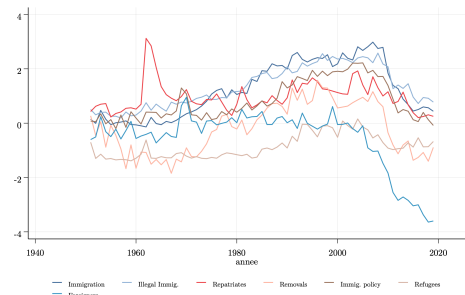
(a) % of Words



(b) % of Words (z-score)



(c) % of Words after 1950

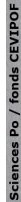


(d) % of Words after 1950 (z-score)

Notes: This figure reports the evolution of the salience of immigration-related keywords in Google N-Grams data available from 1789 to 2019. The list of keywords is available in [Appendix B3](#).

Sources: Authors' elaboration on Google N-Gram.

二二



Sources: French Electoral Archives ([Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016](#)).

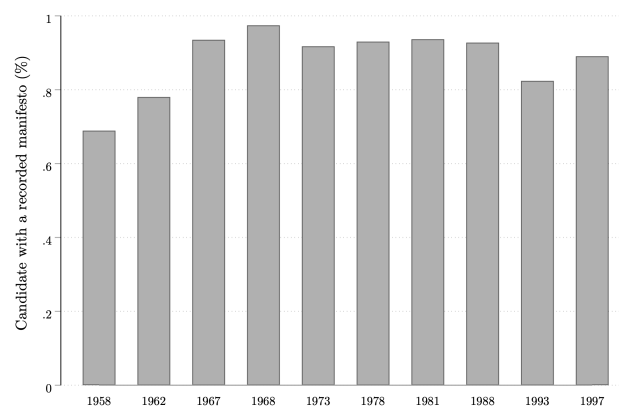


100% - 100% (100%)

Appendix B2 Representativeness of the Manifesto Corpus

To match manifestos with electoral outcomes, we use a fuzzy merge based on candidates' names and surnames within each district-election. Figure B5 shows the representativeness of our manifesto corpus for each election. Table B2, reports a regression on the probability of having a manifesto recorded in our database, showing that candidates without a recorded manifesto are more likely to be female, minor candidates (measured by vote shares in the first round), and to run in older elections. Mainstream Left and Right affiliations also increase the likelihood of having a manifesto recorded in the data.

Figure B5: Representativeness of the Manifestos in [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#) (first-round manifestos)



Notes: This figure reports the share of individual manifestos available in [\(Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016\)](#) relative to the total number of candidates for parliamentary elections in France between 1958 and 1997.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data on French Electoral Archives ([Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016](#)).

Table B2: Representativeness of the Manifestos in [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#)

	(1)
Share of votes	0.100*** (0.013)
Far-Left	0.126*** (0.009)
Far-Right	0.160*** (0.011)
Left	0.230*** (0.008)
Right	0.172*** (0.009)
Election Year 1962	0.048** (0.021)
Election Year 1967	0.201*** (0.021)
Election Year 1968	0.245*** (0.022)
Election Year 1973	0.246*** (0.022)
Election Year 1978	0.312*** (0.021)
Election Year 1981	0.240*** (0.021)
Election Year 1988	0.206*** (0.022)
Election Year 1993	0.220*** (0.022)
Election Year 1997	0.309*** (0.024)
Male	0.084*** (0.006)
Nb. candidates (1round)	-0.014*** (0.002)
Turnout	0.033** (0.017)
Nb. Observations	33,414
Adjusted R^2	0.136

Notes: This table reports the characteristics associated with missing manifestos in [\(Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016\)](#). The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the candidate has a manifesto recorded in [\(Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016\)](#) and zero otherwise. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level.
Sources: Authors' elaboration on data on French Electoral Archives [\(Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016\)](#).

Appendix B3 Lexicons

We report below the words included in the different lexicons used in the paper. To capture the salience of immigration in political manifestos, we include the following immigration-related terms:

- **All:** immigration, immigré, immigrée, immigrés, immigrées, immigrants, expulser, expulsion, expulsions, expulses, expulse, carte séjour, frontières, frontière, code nationalité, nationalité française, regroupement familial, préférence nationale, sans papier, sans papiers, clandestin, clandestine, clandestins, clandestines, clandestinement, réfugié, réfugiés, réfugiée, réfugiées, asile, étranger, étrangers, étrangère, étrangères.

To provide additional empirical tests, we classify these terms into three categories:

- **Immigration:** immigration, immigré, immigrée, immigrés, immigrées, immigrants.
- **Immigration policy:** expulser, expulsion, expulsions, expulses, expulse, carte séjour, frontières, frontière, code nationalité, nationalité française, regroupement familial, préférence nationale.
- **Other categories:** sans papier, sans papiers, clandestin, clandestine, clandestins, clandestines, clandestinement, réfugié, réfugiés, réfugiée, réfugiées, asile, étranger, étrangers, étrangère, étrangères.

We provide empirical tests using the share of words related to repatriates from Algeria. These words include: rapatriés, rapatriement, rapatrié, rapatriée, rapatrier.

Appendix B4 Word Clouds

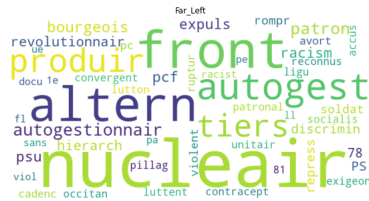
Following [Le Pennec \(2023\)](#), we compute an ideological score for each word in the manifestos of the political orientation p by using the following formula :

$$WordScore_w^p = \frac{P_w^p}{P_w^p + P_w^O} - \frac{P_w^O}{P_w^p + P_w^O}, \quad (1)$$

where P_w^p is the normalized frequency of word w in the aggregate of manifestos from political orientation p and P_w^O is the normalized frequency of word w in the aggregate of manifestos from all the other groups (excluding p). *WordScore* thus ranges from -1 (when a word is never used by candidates from political orientation p , and only used by candidates from O) to 1 (when a word is only used by candidates from p and never by other candidates). We first report for each political orientation its average, and then for each political orientation-year, the 50 words with the highest word scores for a given political orientation. It is worth noting that we stem all words to decrease the number of unique words in the text and make the relative frequency count more

accurate and meaningful. We also remove all stems that appear less than 50 times in all manifestos.

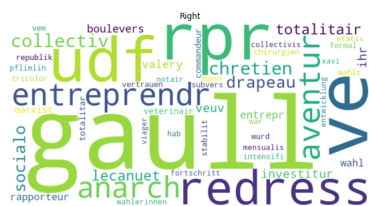
Figure B6: Average Relative Word Frequency (1958-1997) Compared to Other Political Orientations



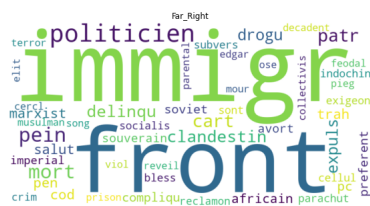
(a) Far-Left



(b) Left



(c) Right

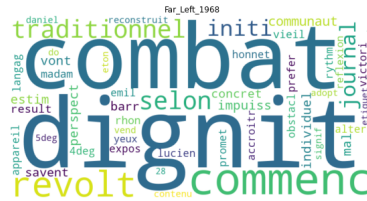


(d) Far-Right

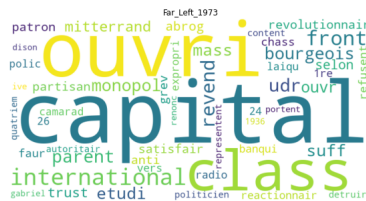
Notes: For each word w and each political orientation p , we calculate a word score based on the relative frequency of this word in the manifestos of one political orientation compared to its use in all the manifestos of the other groups (as in Equation 1). We present the 50 stemmed words with the highest word score. The size of the keywords is proportional to their word score.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on French Electoral Archives (Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016).

Figure B7: Far-Left Word Frequency Relative to Other Political Orientations
(Excluding Far-Right)



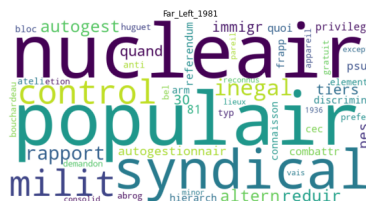
(a) 1968



(b) 1973



(c) 1978



(d) 1981



(e) 1988



(f) 1993

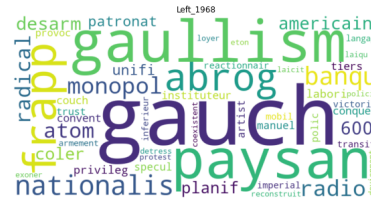


(g) 1997

Notes: This figure reports, for the Far-Left across elections, the 50 stemmed words with the highest word score as defined in Equation 1, excluding far-right from the manifesto corpus.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on French Electoral Archives (Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016).

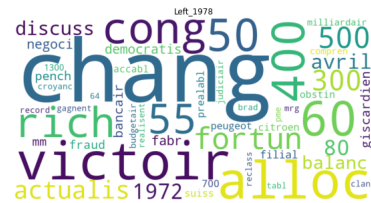
Figure B8: Left Word Frequency Relative to Other Political Orientations (Excluding Far-Right)



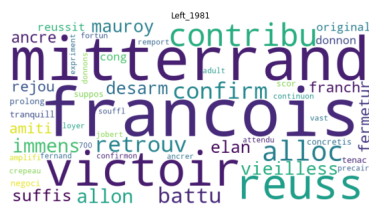
(a) 1968



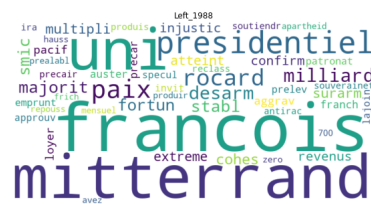
(b) 1973



(c) 1978



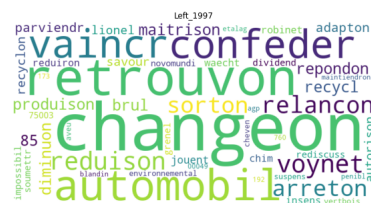
(d) 1981



(e) 1988



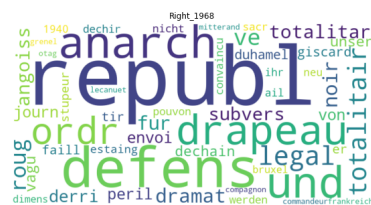
(f) 1993



(g) 1997

Notes: This figure reports, for the Left across elections, the 50 stemmed words with the highest word score as defined in Equation 1, excluding far-right from the manifesto corpus. Sources: Authors' elaboration on French Electoral Archives (Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016).

Figure B9: Right Word Frequency Relative to Other Political Orientations (Excluding Far-Right)



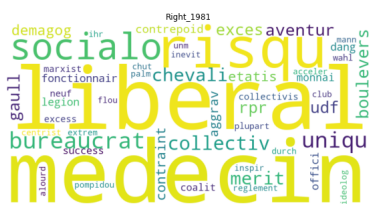
(a) 1968



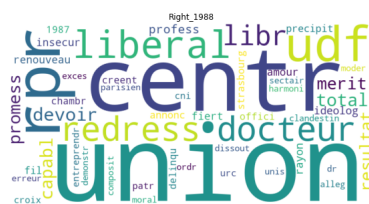
(b) 1973



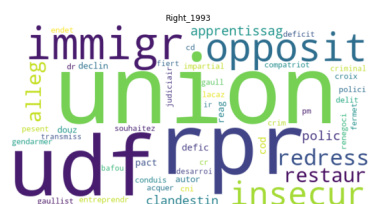
(c) 1978



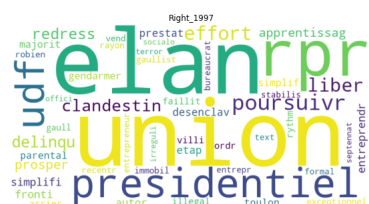
(d) 1981



(e) 1988



(f) 1993

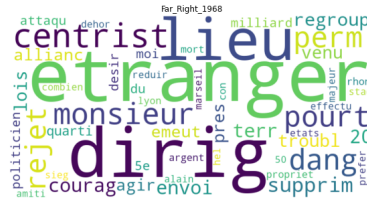


(g) 1997

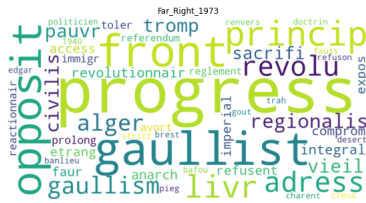
Notes: This figure reports, for the Right across elections, the 50 stemmed words with the highest word score as defined in Equation 1, excluding far-right from the manifesto corpus.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on French Electoral Archives ([Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016](#)).

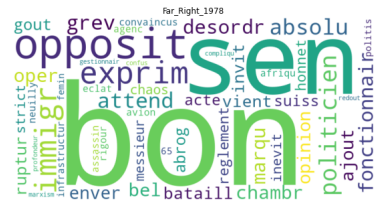
Figure B10: Far-Right Word Frequency Relative to Other Political Orientations



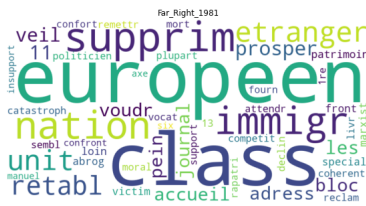
(a) 1968



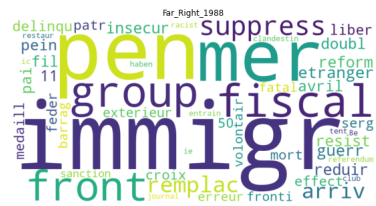
(b) 1973



(c) 1978



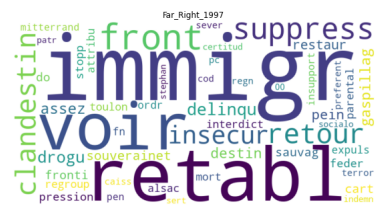
(d) 1981



(e) 1988



(f) 1993



(g) 1997

Notes: This figure reports, for the Far Right across elections, the 50 stemmed words with the highest word score as defined in Equation 1.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on French Electoral Archives ([Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016](#)).

Appendix B5 Measures of Immigration Rhetoric in Manifestos

This section describes the main measures used to capture the salience and framing of immigration in candidates' manifestos. We use ABBY Fine Reader 15's optical character recognition to extract the text from each manifesto and remove non-French sentences. Some manifestos are in both French and German, particularly in regions like Alsace and Moselle, near the German border, at the beginning of our sample. To filter out non-French sentences and avoid bias from foreign languages, we use the `langid` package for sentence-level language detection, which also automatically removes badly scanned sections of manifestos. Overall, we eliminate 6.4% of all sentences. Then, we apply classical natural language processing methods such as removing stopwords, numbers, and punctuation, and replacing accented words with unaccented ones. We extract unigrams and bigrams (i.e. words) for each document, and restrict the vocabulary to words used in at least 0.05% and at most 80% documents as in Di Tella et al. (2025). We begin with a simple text analysis based on lexicons (word lists) to compute $words_i^{imm}$, the total number of immigration-related words in the manifesto of candidate i . The words used in our analysis are listed in Appendix B3.

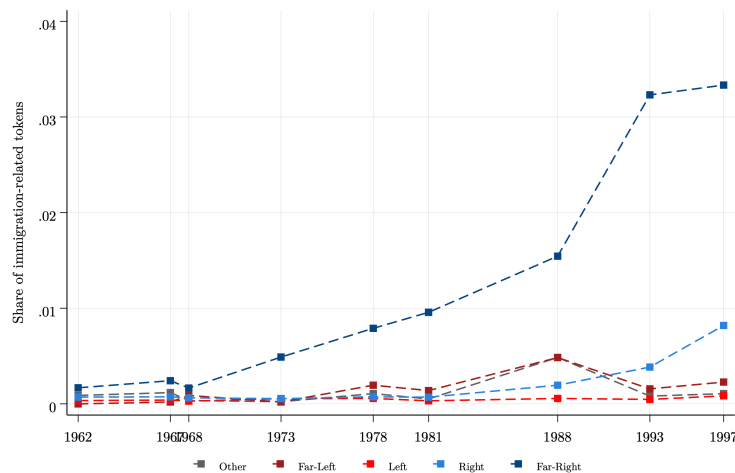
Share of immigration-related words. The average number of immigration-related words in manifestos within our sample of analysis stands at 0.4%, with a standard deviation of 0.9%, and a maximum of 8.3%. Figure B11 plots this measure for political orientations across elections. One can observe a sharp increase in the share of immigration-related words in far-right candidate manifestos after the creation of the *Front National* in 1972 and a takeoff for the right starting after 1981. Figure B12 reports that these variations are almost entirely driven by words related to immigration (immigration, immigrant, etc.) and immigration policy (borders, French nationality, family reunification, national preference, naturalization, etc.). This measure is chosen as a benchmark indicator of political platforms on immigration for its simplicity in calculation and ease of interpretation.

Likelihood of Immigration Keyword in Manifesto. We define the likelihood that a given candidate's manifesto i includes at least one immigration keyword as follows:

$$LW_i = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } words_i^{imm} > 0 \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

Note that 32.2 % of manifestos contain at least one immigration keyword between 1968 and 1997, with substantial heterogeneity across political parties. As reported in Figure B13, 93.7% of far-right candidate manifestos are related to immigration, while this number stands at 43.9%, 16.7%, 35.0%, and 25.0% for the far-left, the left, the right, and others, respectively.

Figure B11: Salience of Immigration in Manifestos



Notes: This figure reports, for each political orientation, the average share of immigration-related words in the total number of words.

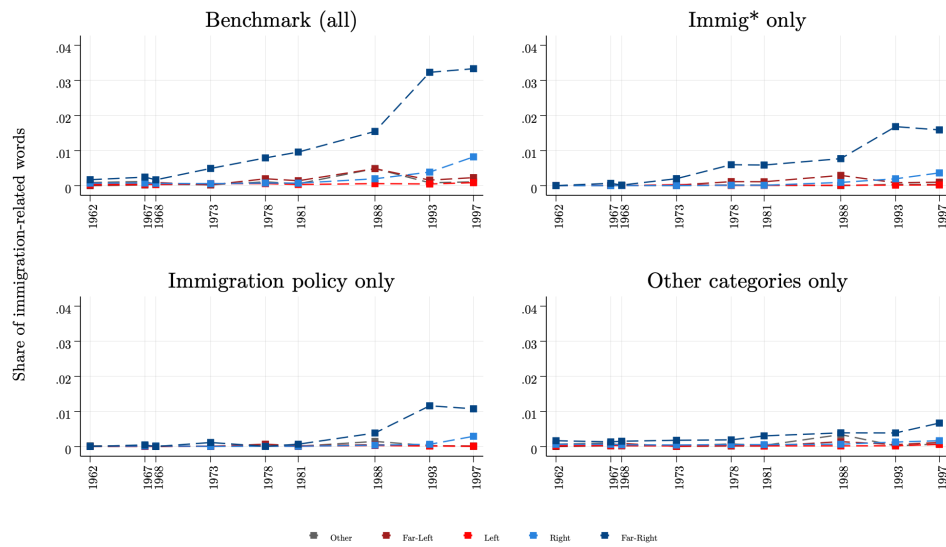
Sources: Authors' elaboration on [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

French Agenda Project. We use data from the French Agenda Project to identify topics, including immigration, discussed in each manifesto ([Grossman, 2019](#)). To do so, we quantify the relative importance of different topics in candidates' manifestos by implementing a supervised machine learning model trained on the manifestos issued by national parties and the topic classification proposed by [Grossman \(2019\)](#). The French Agenda Project database contains a total of 18,503 sentences manually classified into 27 topics. Given the low number of sentences for some topics, we create an "Other topic" category by combining the following topics together: "Autres, Risques et catastrophes naturels et météorologiques, Incendies et accidents, Eglises et religion, Sports, Domaine public et gestion de leau, Politique locale et régionale, Espace, Science, Technologie et communication, Transport, Commerce extérieur, Défense, Agriculture, pêche et sylviculture, Politiques urbaines et territoriales - Logement".

We end up with a total of 14 topics:

1. Immigration ("Immigration"): Covers all aspects related to immigration, including immigrant labor, entry and residence, refugees and asylum seekers, access to nationality, irregular immigration, and deportations.
2. Justice & criminality ("Justice et criminalité"): Addresses issues related to the judicial system, crime, penal policies, law enforcement, prisons, and judicial reforms.
3. Health ("Santé"): Covers public health policies, healthcare services, medical research, infectious and chronic diseases, and health security issues.
4. Macroeconomic policy ("Politique macroéconomique"): Includes topics related to overall budgetary policies, such as public spending, taxation, national debt,

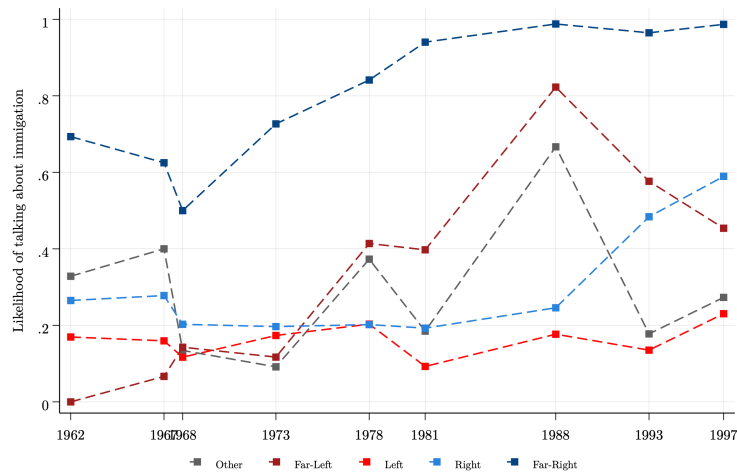
Figure B12: Share of Immigration-related Words in Manifestos



Notes: This figure reports, for all lexicons, the evolution of the salience of immigration in the manifestos of each political orientation. The list of keywords is available in [Appendix B3](#).

Sources: Authors' elaboration on French Electoral Archives ([Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016](#)).

Figure B13: Likelihood of Immigration-related Content in Manifestos



Notes: This figure reports, for each political orientation between 1962 and 1997, the average share of manifestos with at least one immigration-related keyword.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on French Electoral Archives ([Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016](#)), and National Archives for the year 1997.

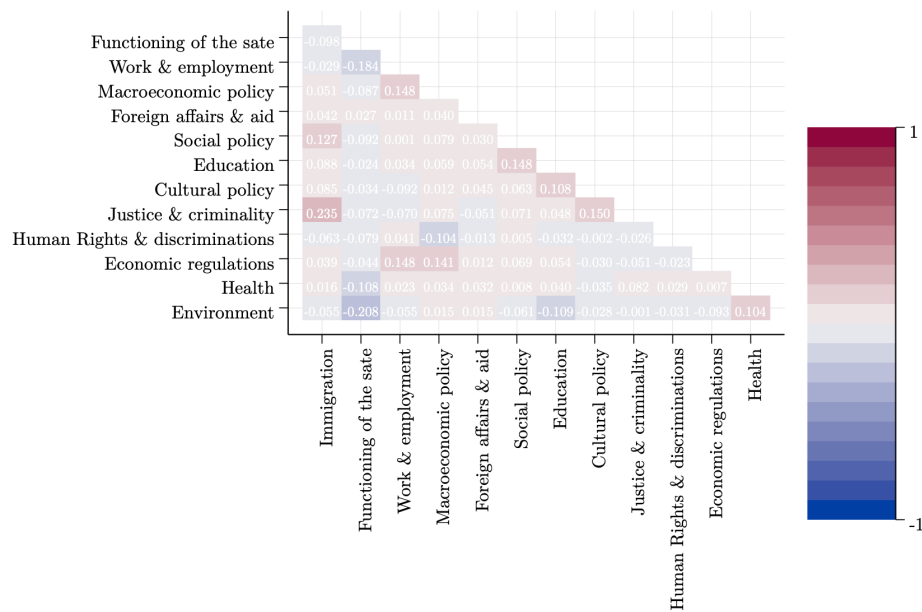
and budget deficits.

5. Environment ("Environnement"): Covers environmental issues such as air and water pollution, biodiversity protection, conservation policies, and sustainable development initiatives.
6. Education ("Education"): Concerns all aspects of education, from primary to higher education, including educational policies, and system reforms.

7. Social policy (“Politique sociale”): Includes issues related to social protection, pensions, welfare, family policies, and social services.
8. Human rights & discrimination (“Droits de l’Homme, libertés publiques et discriminations”): Covers topics related to human rights, civil liberties, discrimination, gender equality, and minority rights.
9. Work & employment (“Travail et emploi”): Covers general economic issues, including unemployment, inflation, economic growth, as well as labor market policies and employment statistics.
10. Foreign affairs and aid (“Affaires internationales et aide extérieure”): Addresses international relations, foreign policy, international organizations, development aid, and international treaties.
11. Functioning of the state (“Fonctionnement de l’état”): Concerns issues related to government organization and functioning, administrative reforms, decentralization, and relations between different levels of government.
12. Economic regulations (“Régulations économiques”): Covers policies and regulations governing economic activity, including business regulations, competition, pricing, consumer protection in economic contexts, as well as market and industry oversight.
13. Cultural policy (“Politique culturelle”): Covers topics related to culture, arts, cultural heritage, cultural policies, and cultural institutions.
14. Others (“Autres”)

Then, we use two approaches to convert each sentence into a word vector representation: a traditional Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency (TF-IDF) transformation and a more advanced embedding-based method employing Sentence-BERT (SBERT). For the TF-IDF method, we consider both unigrams and bigrams and remove words with a very low frequency (lower than 0.05%). For the preferred SBERT approach, we employ the all-MiniLM-L6-v2 model, which was trained on an extensive dataset comprising over 1 billion sentence pairs and is particularly suitable for multilingual text analysis (as our texts are in French). Then, we feed the vector representation into a machine learning classifier (Naive Bayes and Logistic Regression) to predict each topic’s likelihood of being addressed in a given training sentence. Then, we use this model to classify all sentences (out-of-sample) from all candidates’ manifestos. For each sentence, we obtain a classification indicating which of the 14 topics it belongs to. Finally, we aggregate sentence classifications at the manifesto level to obtain a score per candidate and round. Figure B14 reports the correlations

Figure B14: Topic Cross-Correlations (SBERT approach)



Notes: This graph reports the within-manifesto correlation between all topics identified in the French Agenda Project.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on [Grossman \(2019\)](#), [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#) and National Archives for the year 1997.

across topics at the manifesto level. The strongest correlation is between the topics of “immigration” and “justice & criminality” (0.235).

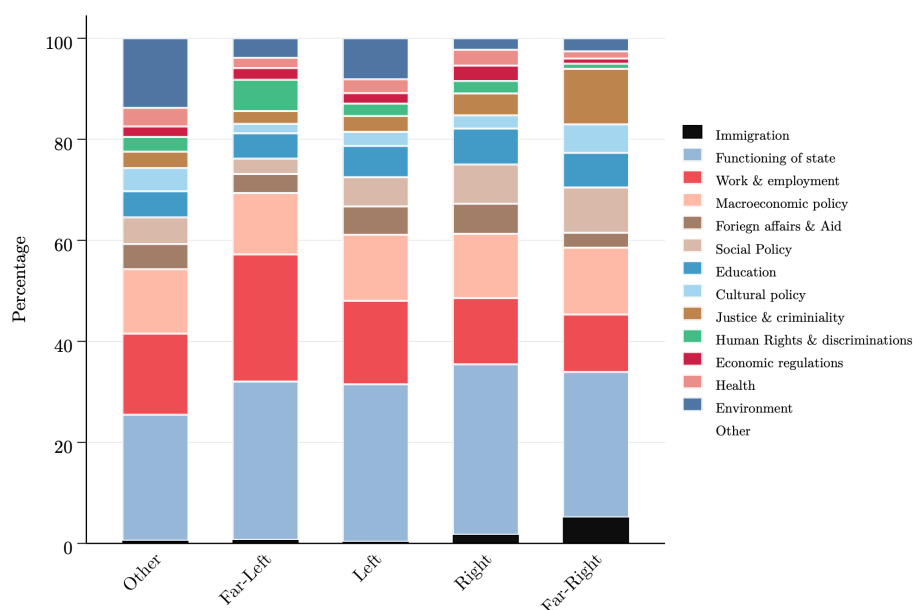
Using either TF-IDF or SBERT approaches, the immigration topic probability is strongly correlated with the benchmark share of immigration-related words in a manifesto (0.777 for TF-IDF and 0.625 for SBERT). Figure B15 presents the average share of sentences devoted to each topic in the political manifestos of the different political orientations using the SBERT approach. The evolution of sentences belonging to the immigration topic by political orientation is reported in Figure B16. Again, it illustrates a significant increase for the far right after the creation of the FN.

Sentiment scores. We take advantage of one of the latest models proposed by ChatGPT (GPT 4o-mini) to analyze the framing of immigration-related sentences in manifestos. For each sentence identified as addressing immigration (i.e., containing at least one keyword from our benchmark lexicon), we ask ChatGPT to classify it as mostly neutral, mostly positive, or mostly negative toward immigration, with the temperature set to 0.2. The prompt we use is as follows:

Excerpt from a text: + “sentence” + What opinion does the author express about immigration? Answer with a single word from: positive, neutral, negative

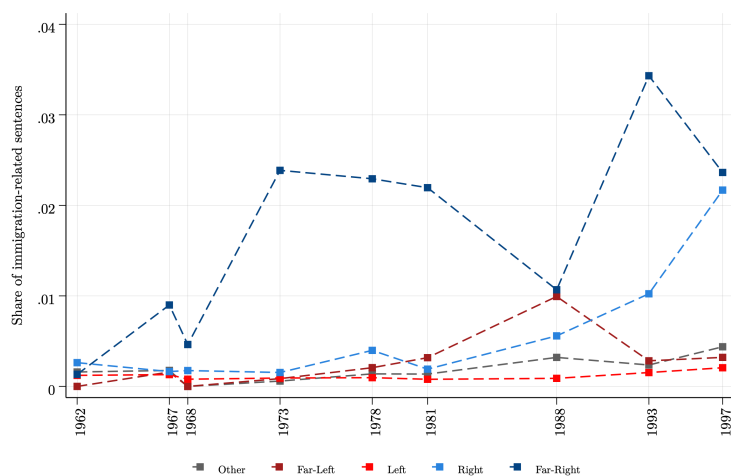
Figure B17 depicts the average framing adopted by each political orientation when discussing immigration over our period of analysis. The framing is almost always negative for the far right, which consistently portrays immigration in a negative light.

Figure B15: % of Topic-specific Sentences (SBERT approach)



Notes: This figure reports the topics associated with the manifestos of each political orientation.
Sources: Authors' elaboration on [Grossman \(2019\)](#), [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#) and National Archives for the year 1997.

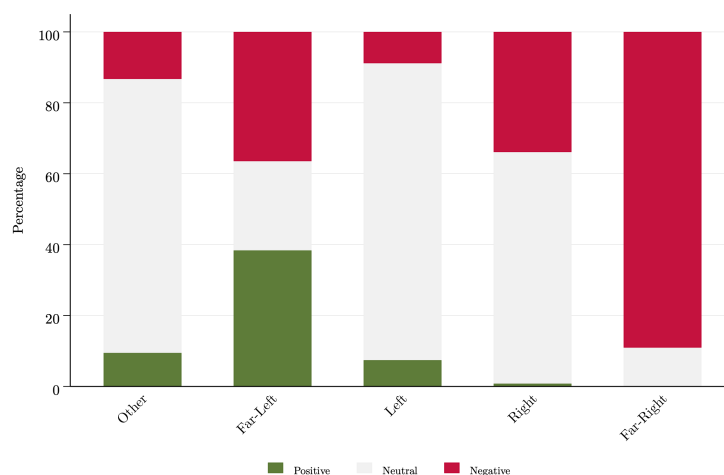
Figure B16: % of Immigration-related Sentences (SBERT approach)



Notes: This figure reports the average share of immigration-related sentences in the manifestos of each political orientation between 1962 and 1997.
Sources: Authors' elaboration on [Grossman \(2019\)](#), [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#) and National Archives for the year 1997.

Additionally, while the mainstream left consistently adopts a neutral framing, the mainstream right almost always frames immigration negatively when departing from a neutral stance. Based on these empirical observations, we define $Sentiment_{ide}$ as a dummy variable equal to one if a given candidate i in district d during election year e discusses immigration negatively, and zero otherwise. Figure B18 shows that the right increasingly adopted the far-right negative framing after 1981, following the rising

Figure B17: Framing of the Immigration Topic when Discussing Immigration

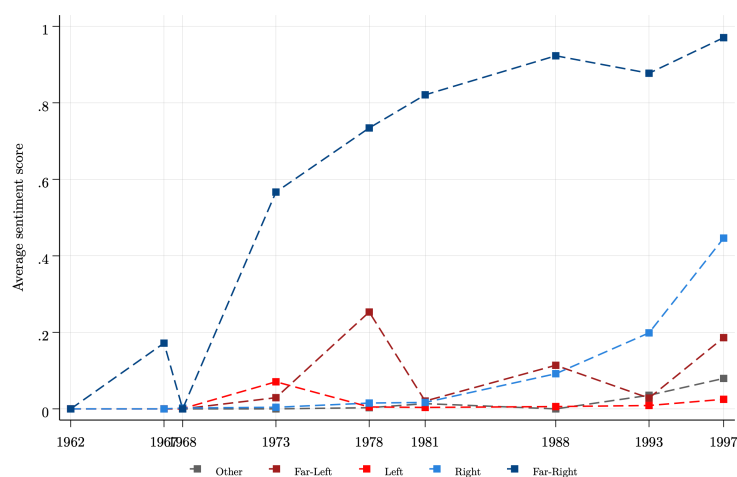


Notes: This figure reports the average framing of immigration of each political orientation when discussing immigration.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on [Grossman \(2019\)](#), [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#) and National Archives for the year 1997.

success of the far right across several constituencies.

Figure B18: Sentiment Scores : Likelihood of Discussing Negatively about Immigration



Notes: This figure reports the average sentiment scores on immigration of each political orientation.

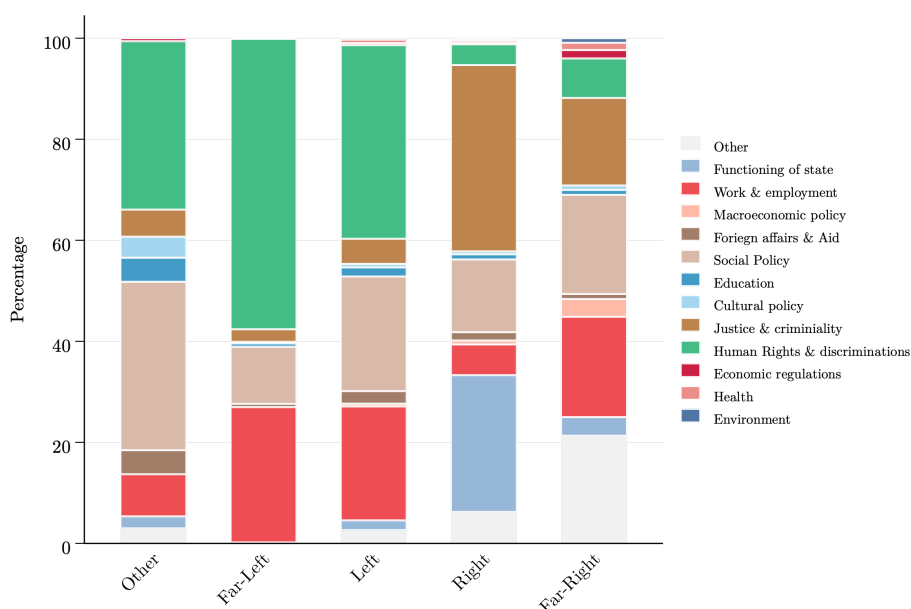
Sources: Authors' elaboration on [Grossman \(2019\)](#), [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#) and National Archives for the year 1997.

Subjects within the immigration topic. We take advantage of one of the latest models proposed by ChatGPT (GPT 4o-mini) to analyze the subjects related to immigration in manifestos. For each manifesto identified as addressing immigration (i.e., containing at least one keyword from our benchmark lexicon), we ask ChatGPT to classify it under one or several subjects from the previously defined list in the French Agenda Project, with the temperature set to 0.2. The prompt we use is as follows:

Excerpt from a text: + “sentence” + Is one or more of the following themes mentioned in the text about immigration? Please choose only options from: [None of these themes, Functioning of the State, Work and employment, Macroeconomic policy, Foreign affairs and aid, Social policy, Education, Cultural policy, Justice & criminality, Human rights and discrimination, Economic regulations, Health, Environment]

Figure B19 depicts the average topics mentioned by each political orientation when discussing immigration over our period of analysis. Certain topics, such as “human rights and discrimination”, are disproportionately employed by the Left and Far-Left, while others, such as “justice & criminality”, are more likely to be used by the Right and Far-Right. Topics related to “work and employment”, as well as “social policy”, are also frequently associated with immigration across almost all political orientations.

Figure B19: Topics within the Immigration Subject



Notes: This figure reports the topics associated with immigration when a manifesto talks about immigration.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on [Grossman \(2019\)](#), [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#) and National Archives for the year 1997.

Word frequency. We define for each political orientation a time-varying measure of ideological proximity to far-right manifestos following [Di Tella et al. \(2025\)](#).¹ We adapt the methodology to our context defining, for each word, its relative distance to the far

¹These authors classify each candidate on a left-right axis by assigning a score to each word depending on how often a word is used by Democrats vs Republicans in the United States. A limitation of such an approach is the use of templates by certain parties in different elections. For instance, all the candidates of François de Villiers' political orientation used the same template during the 1997 election, resulting in almost identical manifestos. To mitigate the influence of template-based manifestos, we first identify the templates by calculating the cosine similarity matrix of the manifestos for each political orientation/year and retaining only one manifesto in the case of a template (applying a maximum cosine similarity threshold of 0.80 after stemming and removal of stopwords).

right as follows:²

$$FRS_w = \frac{Freq_w^{FN}}{Freq_w^{FN} + Freq_w^{All-FN}} - \frac{Freq_w^{All-FN}}{Freq_w^{FN} + Freq_w^{All-FN}}, \quad (3)$$

where $Freq_w^p$ is the average frequency of word w among documents from political orientation p , ranging from 1 for words used exclusively in manifestos from the far right to -1 for words used exclusively in manifestos from other parties. Table B3 reports the 25 unigrams with the highest scores, primarily used in manifestos from the Far Right. As expected, this includes keywords directly related to immigration and crime.

Table B3: Word Scores

fn	trahison	gabeg	pseudo	criminel
0.898	0.879	0.874	0.866	0.863
sejour	refugi	assassin	penal	crim
0.862	0.862	0.857	0.846	0.837
poujad	front	coupabl	aberr	brav
0.836	0.831	0.821	0.820	0.820
decadent	vallon	sahar	maroc	incompetent
0.811	0.810	0.802	0.799	0.798
socialis	immigr	revent	alien	
0.795	0.790	0.787	0.785	

This Table reports the 25 unigrams with the highest scores, primarily used in manifestos from the Far Right. As expected, this includes keywords directly related to immigration and crime.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data on French Electoral Archives (Gaultier-Voituriez, 2016), and National Archives for the year 1997.

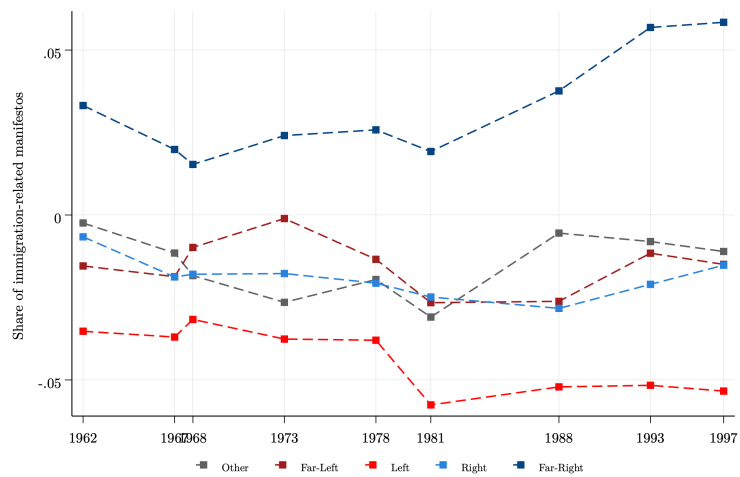
Then, we define the ideological score of a given manifesto WF_i as its weighted average of FRS_w , where the weights are the share of each word in the total number of words of the manifesto $sh_{w,i}$ such as:

$$WF_i = \sum_w FRS_w \times sh_{w,i}. \quad (4)$$

This indicator captures the semantic similarity between words used in a given manifesto and words used by the far right over the entire period and is depicted in Figure B20.

²In this approach, we stem all words to their root form (e.g., *immigration* and *immigrées* become *immigr*). Stemming standardizes the different variations of a word into a single form, enhancing the accuracy and significance of frequency counts. This process reduces the number of unique words, thereby decreasing dimensionality, simplifying the analysis, and lowering computational complexity, which in turn increases the efficiency of algorithms.

Figure B20: Word Frequency Scores



Notes: This figure reports the proximity of each political orientation to the average far-right rhetoric over time.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on [Grossman \(2019\)](#), [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#) and National Archives for the year 1997.

Appendix C Identification Strategy

Appendix C1 Far-right Success and the Instrument

This section provides additional evidence on the strength and exogeneity of our instrument, which predicts variation in far-right electoral scores across districts in each election based on the 1965 spatial distribution of votes for Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour.

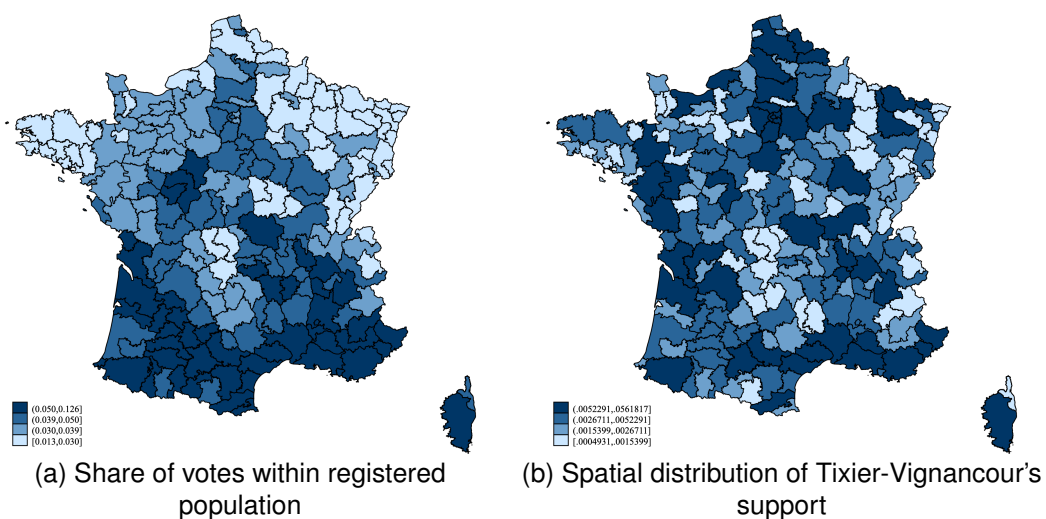
C1.1 Instrument's Strength

Figure C1 depicts the electoral support for Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour in the 1965 presidential election. Figure C1a shows the share of votes for JLTV among registered voters in each district. Figure C1b displays the spatial distribution of votes, that is, the share of the total number of votes cast for Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour in a given district relative to the total number of votes at the national level.

Figure C2 reports the correlation between Tixier-Vignancour's share of votes in 1965 and the change in the far-right vote share between 1968 and 1997 (Panel A) and between 1981 and 1997 (Panel B) at the district level. It confirms that Tixier-Vignancour's electoral performance is a positive and significant predictor of the emergence of the far right in the French political landscape after the 1970's.

Figure C1 presents the first-stage regression results when the far-right vote share is instrumented alone or combined with the immigration share. In both cases, one can see a positive and significant relationship between our instrument and the endogenous regressor.

Figure C1: Tixier-Vignancour's support in 1965



Notes: Figure C1a shows the share of votes for JLTV among registered voters in each district. Figure C1b displays the spatial distribution of votes, that is, the share of the total number of votes cast for Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour in a given district relative to the total number of votes at the national level.

Sources: Author's elaboration on French electoral data from 1968 to 1997.

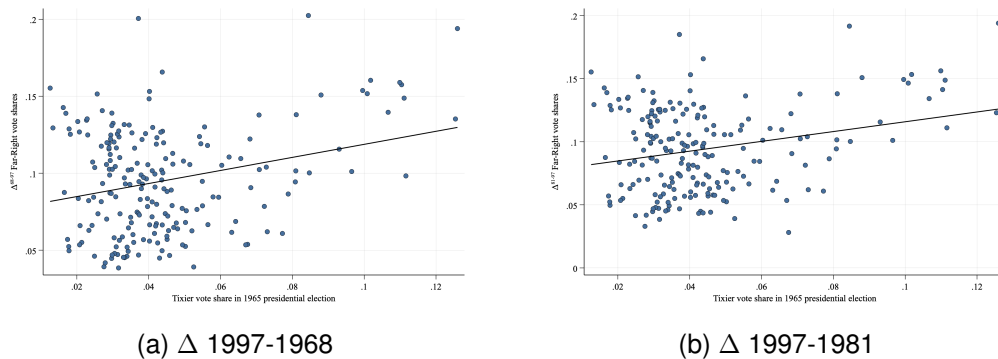
Table C1: First-stage Estimates

	(1) VS_{de}^{FR}	(2) IS_{de}	(3) VS_{de}^{FR}	(4) IS_{de}
Nb. Endogenous var.:	1	1	2	
$\widehat{VS_{de}^{FR}}$	0.153*** (0.026)		0.150*** (0.025)	-0.158*** (0.029)
$\widehat{IS_{de}}$		1.078*** (0.145)	0.210 (0.134)	1.086*** (0.144)
Nb. Observations	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141

Notes: The dependent variable is the share of votes for the far right in Columns 1 and 3. The dependent variable is the share of immigrants in Columns 2 and 4. All estimates include electoral district and election-year fixed effects. We control for the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance levels, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

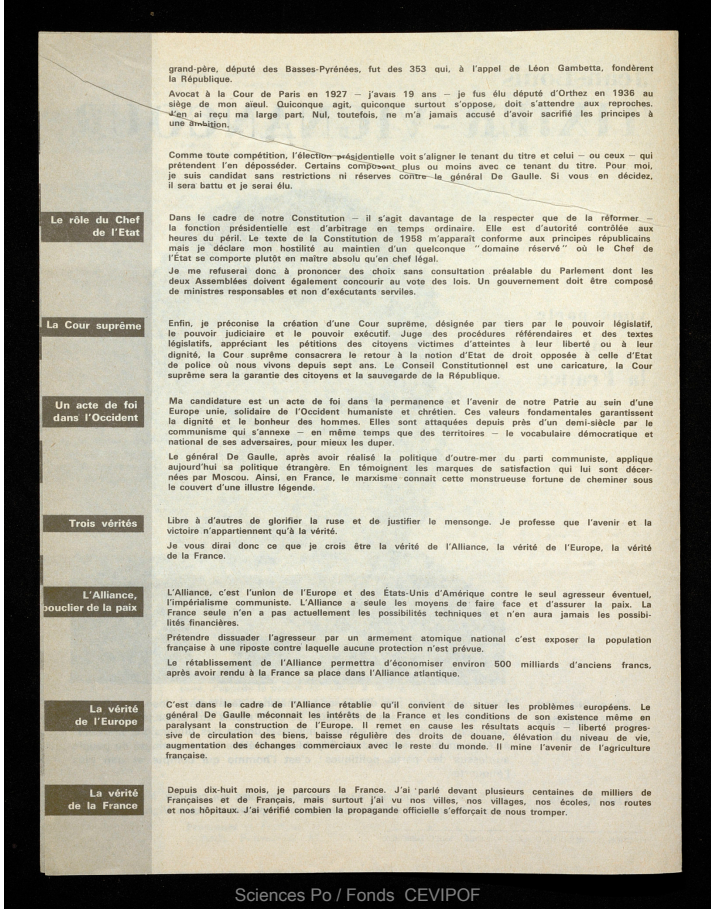
Figure C2: Tixier-Vignancour's Vote Shares and Changes in Far-Right Vote Shares



Notes: The unit of observation is a district. This Figure reports the scatter plots corresponding to the regressions in columns 1 (Panel A) and 3 (Panel B) in the main draft.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

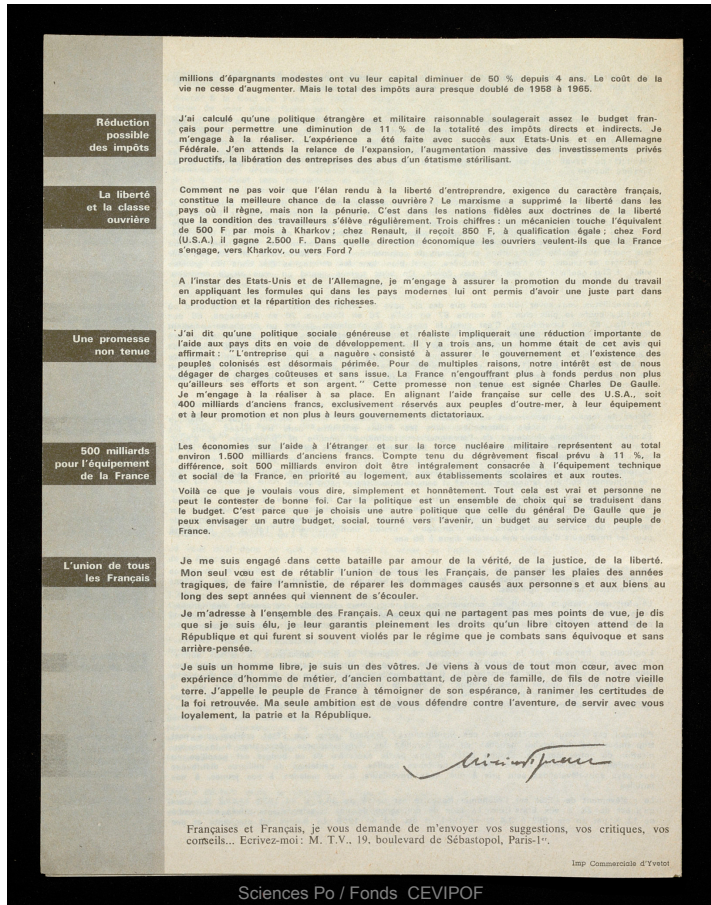
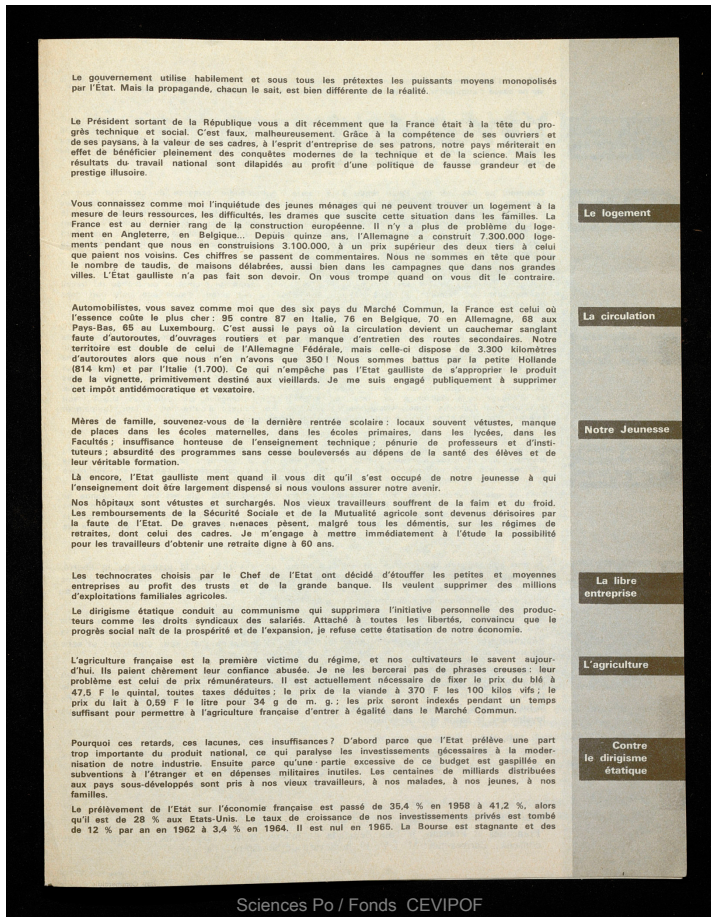
Figure C3: Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour's Presidential Manifesto (1965)



Notes: Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour's political manifesto for the 1965 presidential elections.

Sources: French Electoral Archives, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#).

Figure C4: Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour's Presidential Manifesto (1965) (cont'd)



Notes: Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour's political manifesto for the 1965 presidential elections.

Sources: French Electoral Archives, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#).

C1.2 Pre-Trend Analysis

We now provide evidence on the plausibility of the exclusion restriction of our instrument, namely that local factors driving Tixier-Vignancour's 1965 electoral performance, such as anti-immigrant sentiments, did not persist and later influence right-wing rhetoric on immigration. In the following tables, the number of observations used in our regressions varies depending on the availability of manifestos across elections and political orientations.

Table C2: Pre-Trends in Tixier-Vignancour's Vote Shares using 1962 manifestos

	Dependent : VS_d^{Tixier}					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
SW_d^L	0.502 (0.726)	0.445 (0.658)			0.511 (0.883)	-0.038 (0.682)
$SW_d^{L,Repat.}$		2.636 (2.082)				2.868 (2.974)
$SW_d^{L,Crime}$		-0.185 (0.162)				-0.085 (0.196)
SW_d^R			0.589 (0.436)	0.479 (0.449)	0.561 (0.443)	0.255 (0.599)
$SW_d^{R,Repat.}$				1.516*** (0.571)		1.333** (0.513)
$SW_d^{R,Crime}$				-0.045 (0.078)		-0.019 (0.080)
Nb. Observations	203	203	176	176	176	176

Notes: The unit of observation is a district. The dependent variable is the JLTV's voting shares in 1965, VS_d^{Tixier} , used to build our instrument. The main regressors of interest are the local average shares of words related to immigration (rows 1 and 4), Algerian repatriates (rows 2 and 5) and crime (rows 3 and 6) in right- and left-wing manifestos from the 1962 parliamentary election. Standard errors (in parentheses) are heteroscedasticity robust. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance level, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Table C3: Pre-Trends in Tixier-Vignancour's Vote Shares using 1968 manifestos

	Dependent : VS_d^{Tixier}					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
SW_d^L	-0.095 (0.712)	0.048 (0.692)			-0.103 (0.715)	-0.405 (0.660)
$SW_d^{L,Repat.}$		1.203 (0.764)				-0.457 (0.663)
$SW_d^{L,Crime}$		-0.206 (0.187)				-0.112 (0.188)
SW_d^R			0.218 (0.338)	0.017 (0.333)	0.219 (0.339)	0.034 (0.339)
$SW_d^{R,Repat.}$				2.035*** (0.699)		2.139*** (0.754)
$SW_d^{R,Crime}$				-0.044 (0.090)		-0.040 (0.090)
Nb. Observations	202	202	202	202	202	202

Notes: The unit of observation is a district. The dependent variable is the JLTV's voting shares in 1965, VS_d^{Tixier} , used to build our instrument. The main regressors of interest are the local average shares of words related to immigration (rows 1 and 4), Algerian repatriates (rows 2 and 5) and crime (rows 3 and 6) in right- and left-wing manifestos from the 1968 parliamentary election. Standard errors (in parentheses) are heteroscedasticity robust. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance level, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Table C4: Pre-Trends in Changes in Immigration Rhetoric among Right-Wing Candidates (1962–1997)

	Dependent : $\Delta^{62-68} SW_d$					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
$\Delta^{68-97} \widehat{VS}_d^{FR}$	-0.008 (0.016)	0.001 (0.017)				
$\Delta^{68-97} \widehat{IS}_d$		-0.000 (0.003)				
$\Delta^{68-81} \widehat{VS}_d^{FR}$			-0.000 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.001)		
$\Delta^{68-81} \widehat{IS}_d$				-0.003 (0.005)		
$\Delta^{81-97} \widehat{VS}_d^{FR}$					0.001 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)
$\Delta^{81-97} \widehat{IS}_d$						-0.000 (0.006)
Δ^{68-97} Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Δ^{68-81} Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Δ^{81-97} Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Nb. Observations	175	175	175	175	175	175

Notes: The unit of observation is a district. The dependent variable is the change in the share of immigration-related words in right-wing candidate manifestos between 1962 and 1968. The main regressors are changes in the predicted far-right vote share and/or the predicted immigrant shares from 1968 to 1997 in rows 1 and 2, from 1968 to 1981 in rows 3 and 4, and from 1981 to 1997 in rows 5 and 6. Columns 2, 4, and 6 include the change in the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment between the corresponding years. Standard errors (in parentheses) are heteroscedasticity robust. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, 10% significance levels.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, Gaultier-Voituriez (2016), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Table C5: Pre-Trends in Changes in Immigration Rhetoric among Left-Wing Candidates (1962–1997)

	Dependent : $\Delta^{62-68} SW_d$					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
$\Delta^{68-97} \widehat{VS}_d^{FR}$	-0.007 (0.019)	-0.013 (0.018)				
$\Delta^{68-97} \widehat{IS}_d$		0.001 (0.002)				
$\Delta^{68-81} \widehat{VS}_d^{FR}$			-0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)		
$\Delta^{68-81} \widehat{IS}_d$				-0.000 (0.004)		
$\Delta^{81-97} \widehat{VS}_d^{FR}$					0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)
$\Delta^{81-97} \widehat{IS}_d$						0.000 (0.006)
Δ^{68-97} Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Δ^{68-81} Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Δ^{81-97} Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Nb. Observations	201	201	201	201	201	201

Notes: The unit of observation is a district. The dependent variable is the change in the share of immigration-related words in left-wing candidate manifestos between 1962 and 1968. The main regressors are changes in the predicted far-right vote share and/or the predicted immigrant shares from 1968 to 1997 in rows 1 and 2, from 1968 to 1981 in rows 3 and 4, and from 1981 to 1997 in rows 5 and 6. Columns 2, 4, and 6 include the change in the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment between the corresponding years. Standard errors (in parentheses) are heteroscedasticity robust. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, 10% significance levels.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, Gaultier-Voituriez (2016), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Table C6: OLS Estimates of the Rise in Far-Right Voting on the Past Saliency of Immigration in Right-Wing Manifestos

	Dependent : $\Delta^{78-81}SW_d$	
	(1)	(2)
$\Delta^{81-88}VS_d^{FR}$	-0.007** (0.004)	-0.006** (0.003)
Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	Yes
Nb. Observations	204	204

Notes: The unit of observation is a district. The dependent variable is the local change in immigration-related words in mainstream right candidate manifestos between 1978 and 1981. The main regressor of interest is the local change in the number of votes for the far right between 1981 and 1988, expressed as a share of registered voters in 1981. The demographic and socio-economic controls include changes in the share of immigrants, the share of individuals aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of employment in manufacturing between election-year e and 1981. Standard errors (in parentheses) are heteroscedasticity robust. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance level, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Appendix C2 Repatriates from Algeria

Tables C7 and C8 show that the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of French citizens from Algeria following the Évian Accords on March 18, 1962, is unlikely to violate our identifying assumption. Indeed, while we find that the share of repatriates is significantly positively associated with the share of words related to repatriates for mainstream right and left candidates, it does not affect the variation in the average share of immigration-related words in the manifestos of right- and left-wing candidates, respectively, either between 1958 and November 1962 or between 1958 and 1978. Thus, this large inflow is unlikely to be correlated with unobserved factors influencing the salience of immigration in mainstream candidates' manifestos.

Table C7: Salience of Repatriates in Right-Wing Manifestos

	Dependent : $\Delta SW_d^{Repat.}$				Dependent : ΔSW_d			
	1958-1962	1958-1978	1958-1962	1958-1978	1958-1962	1958-1978	1958-1962	1958-1978
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
<i>Repatriates_{d,62}</i>	41.346*** (7.255)	24.645*** (6.768)	46.345*** (8.725)	28.379*** (7.237)	2.854* (1.662)	1.785 (1.254)	0.858 (2.198)	1.182 (1.513)
Dem. & Eco. Controls 62	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Nb. Observations	157	182	157	182	157	182	157	182

Notes: The unit of observation is a district. Each column estimates the impact of the share of repatriates in 1962 on changes in the salience of repatriates in right-wing manifestos from Columns 1 to 4, and on changes in the salience of immigration in right-wing manifestos from Columns 5 to 8. Columns 1, 3, 5, and 7 focus on changes between 1958 and 1962. Columns 2, 4, 6, and 8 focus on changes between 1958 and 1978. Columns 3, 4, 7, and 8 include the 1962 share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. Standard errors (in parentheses) are heteroscedasticity robust. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, 10% significance levels.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, Gauthier-Voituriez (2016), and National Archives for the year

Table C8: Salience of Repatriates in Left-Wing Manifestos

	Dependent : $\Delta SW_d^{Repat.}$				Dependent : ΔSW_d			
	1958-1962	1958-1978	1958-1962	1958-1978	1958-1962	1958-1978	1958-1962	1958-1978
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
<i>Repatriates_{d,62}</i>	21.301*** (5.978)	24.625*** (6.954)	23.490*** (6.395)	22.053*** (8.394)	-0.642 (5.871)	5.015 (8.489)	-1.312 (6.892)	5.252 (9.573)
Dem. & Eco. Controls 62	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Nb. Observations	183	184	183	184	183	184	183	184

Notes: The unit of observation is a district. Each column estimates the impact of the share of repatriates in 1962 on changes in the salience of Algerian repatriates in left-wing manifestos from columns 1 to 4, and on changes in the salience of immigration in left-wing manifestos from columns 5 to 8. Columns 1, 3, 5, and 7 focus on changes between 1958 and 1962. Columns 2, 4, 6, and 8 focus on changes between 1958 and 1978. Columns 3, 4, 7, and 8 include the 1962 share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. Standard errors (in parentheses) are heteroscedasticity robust. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, 10% significance levels.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, Gauthier-Voituriez (2016), and National Archives for the year

Table C9: The Impact of Far-Right Electoral Scores on the Saliency of Immigration in
Mainstream Candidates' Manifestos
Additional controls

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
VS_{de}^{FR}	5.069** (1.967)	5.070** (1.971)	4.805** (1.912)	4.911*** (1.800)	4.626*** (1.756)
IS_{de}	0.223 (0.570)	0.222 (0.552)	0.041 (0.639)	0.127 (0.875)	-0.152 (0.988)
Share of repatriates \times Time trend		-0.003 (0.469)			-0.075 (0.478)
Share of resistant-named streets \times Time trend			0.275** (0.134)		0.283* (0.170)
Share Nazi collaborators \times Time trend				0.183 (0.997)	0.332 (1.029)
Dem. & Eco. Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nb. Observations	5,141	5,141	5,141	4,971	4,971
KP F-test	14.580	17.109	12.563	16.872	14.100
SW F-test FR	48.083	65.269	48.195	52.573	66.811
SW F-test immig.	118.816	128.793	105.546	107.989	80.517

Notes: The dependent variable is the share of immigration-related words relative to the total number of words in a given manifesto. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. The main regressor of interest is the share of votes for the far right. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. We also control for district-specific linear time trends proportional to the 1962 share of repatriates, the share of active Nazi collaborators in the 1945 population from [Cagé et al. \(2023\)](#), and the 2020 share of streets honoring WWII resistants. The number of observations decreases when we include the share of active Nazi collaborators, as data for Alsace-Lorraine are missing. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance levels, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Appendix C3 Immigration and the Shift-share Instrument

The instrument for the share of immigrants is based on historical settlement patterns among immigrants and has been used extensively in the migration literature. Indeed, the settlement decision of new migrants is partly determined by earlier migrants' presence, mainly through network externalities. Past migrants may, for instance, provide new migrants with information on labor or housing markets.

The 1962 French census provides information on the department of residence for each individual in January 1954. To build our instrument, we thus exploit this information and use the 1954 spatial distribution of immigrants from a given nationality to predict the sorting of immigrants in subsequent periods.³ The predicted number of immigrants in a given district d at time t is thus obtained by multiplying in each year the 1954 spatial distribution of immigrants of each nationality group by the total number of immigrants from that group in subsequent years, as follows:

$$\hat{M}_{d,t} = \sum_n \frac{imm_{d,1954}^n}{imm_{1954}^n} \cdot imm_t^n, \quad (5)$$

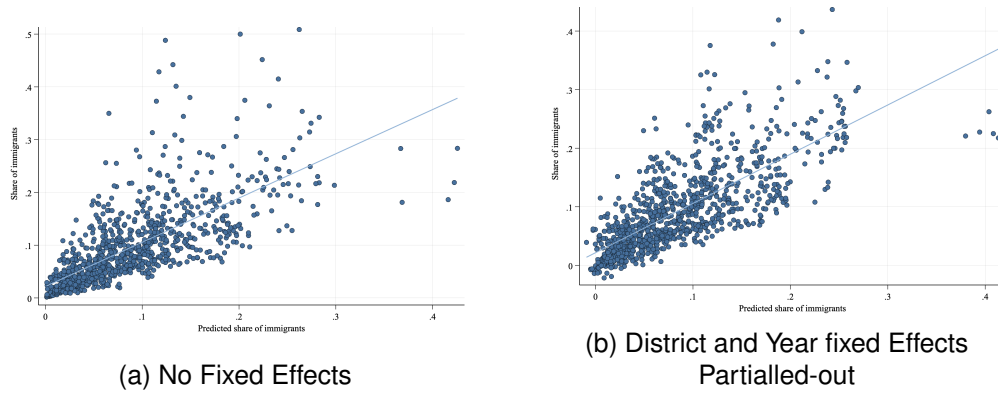
³We use 11 nationality groups: Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, other Western European, Eastern European, Algerian, Moroccan, Tunisian, other African, Turkish, and the rest of the world.

where imm_t^n gives the number of immigrants of nationality n in year t , and $imm_t^n = \sum_d imm_{d,t}^n$. Our instrument is computed as follows:

$$\hat{m}_{d,t} = \frac{\hat{M}_{d,t}}{P_{d,1962}}, \quad (6)$$

where $P_{d,1962}$ is the adult population in a given district in 1962. As shown in Figure C5, our instrument is strongly correlated with our endogenous immigration variable across districts over the 1968-1999 period.

Figure C5: Correlation between the Shift-share Instrument and the Share of Immigrants



Notes: These figures report the correlation between the share of immigrants and their predicted values using the shift-share instrument.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on French census.

Table C10: Pre-Trends in Far-Right Vote Shares

	Dependent : $\Delta^{62-68} V S_d^{FR}$					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
$\Delta^{68-97} \widehat{IS}_d$	0.040 (0.054)			0.048 (0.058)		
$\Delta^{68-81} \widehat{IS}_d$		0.042 (0.073)			0.060 (0.084)	
$\Delta^{81-97} \widehat{IS}_d$			0.073 (0.091)			0.058 (0.087)
Δ^{68-97} Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Δ^{68-81} Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Δ^{81-97} Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Nb. Observations	204	204	204	204	204	204

Notes: The unit of observation is a district. The dependent variable is the change in the share of votes for far-right candidate manifestos between 1962 and 1968. The main regressors are changes in the predicted immigration shares from 1968 to 1997 in rows 1, from 1968 to 1981 in rows 2, and from 1981 to 1997 in row 3. Columns 4, 5, and 6 include the change in the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment between the corresponding years. Standard errors (in parentheses) are heteroscedasticity robust. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, 10% significance levels.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, Gaultier-Voituriez (2016), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Our instrument should predict different levels of immigration in a given district at different points in time for reasons uncorrelated with the unobserved component of the outcome variable of interest. Regarding our voting analysis, it would be invalid if, for instance, the initial distribution of immigrants is correlated with persistent local factors that influence future anti-immigration votes. Although the exclusion restriction imposed by the IV strategy is not testable, Table C10 follows [Dustmann et al. \(2017\)](#); [Borjas and Edo \(2026\)](#) by checking for pre-trends. More specifically, we investigate whether the pre-regional changes in the share of votes for the far right between 1962 and 1968 are correlated with the predicted regional changes of the share of immigrants (i.e. $\hat{m}_d - \hat{m}_{d,t-1}$) between 1968 and 1997, between 1968 and 1981, as well as between 1981 and 1997. All estimated coefficients are not statistically significant, implying no correlation between the pre-regional political outcomes and the subsequent predicted share of immigrants. This result supports the validity of our instrument as it indicates a lack of persistent regional trends affecting the share of votes for the far right.

Appendix C4 Alternative Strategy and Reduced-form Analysis

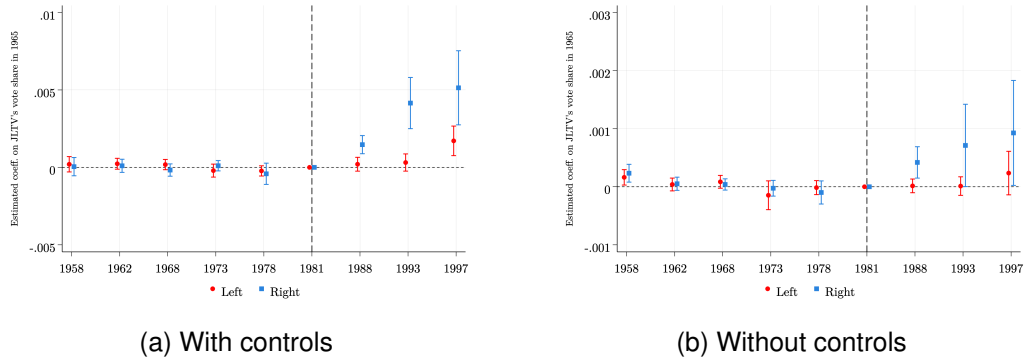
Table C11: IV Estimates of the Rise in Far-Right Voting on the Salience of Immigration in Right-Wing Manifestos

	Dependent : ΔSW_d				
	Benchmark estimates			Falsification tests	
	1981-1988	1981-1993	1981-1997	1968-1981	1978-1981
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
$\Delta^{81-88} VS_d^{FR}$	0.026*** (0.004)	0.069*** (0.014)	0.068* (0.026)	-0.003 (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)
Nb. Observations	200	204	203	204	202
KP F-test	58.137	116.776	77.156	57.016	64.916
$\Delta^{81-93} VS_d^{FR}$		0.051*** (0.014)	0.047* (0.021)	-0.002 (0.003)	0.003 (0.002)
Nb. Observations		204	203	204	202
KP F-test		131.566	53.803	66.067	119.534
$\Delta^{81-97} VS_d^{FR}$			0.062** (0.023)	-0.003 (0.004)	0.004 (0.003)
Nb. Observations			203	204	202
KP F-test			42.512	29.971	36.136

Notes: The unit of observation is a district. The dependent variable is the local change in immigration-related words in mainstream right candidate manifestos between 1981 and 1988 in Column 1, 1981 and 1993 in Column 2, and 1981 and 1997 in Column 3, standardized by the local number of words from that political orientation in 1981. The main regressor of interest is the local change in the number of votes for the far right between 1981 and 1988 in row 1, 1981 and 1993 in row 2, and 1981 and 1997 in row 3, expressed as a share of registered voters in 1981. The demographic and socio-economic controls include changes in the share of immigrants, the share of individuals aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of employment in manufacturing between election-year e and 1981. Standard errors (in parentheses) are heteroscedasticity robust. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance level, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, Gaultier-Voituriez (2016), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Figure C6: Reduced-Form Analysis: JLTV Votes and Immigration Salience in Mainstream Manifestos



Notes: We report coefficient estimates from year-specific regressions across districts based on Equation (8). The dependent variable is the local change in immigration-related words in mainstream left and right candidate manifestos between 1981 and election-year e , standardized by the local number of words from that political orientation in 1981. The main regressor of interest is the JLTV's voting shares in 1965, VS_d^{Tixer} , used to build our instrument. Demographic and socio-economic controls in Panel A are constructed from the 1962 French census. These include the share of immigrants, the share of individuals aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of employment in manufacturing. All 95% confidence intervals are based on heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data in 1981 and 1988, French censuses, Gaultier-Voituriez (2016), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Appendix D Additional Results

This appendix includes tables and figures referenced but not directly presented in the main manuscript.

Appendix D1 Descriptive Statistics

Table D1: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Rhetoric:				
SW	0.004	0.009	0.000	0.083
SW (standardized)	0.000	1.000	-0.420	8.564
LW	0.330	0.470	0.000	1.000
AP (standardized)	-0.000	1.000	-0.331	10.355
WF (standardized)	-0.000	1.000	-6.418	3.289
Sentiment	0.152	0.359	0.000	1.000
Share of votes:				
VS_{de}^{FR}	0.084	0.079	0.000	0.379
VS_{de}^R	0.437	0.103	0.178	0.927
VS_{de}^L	0.434	0.092	0.073	0.797
VS_{de}^{FL}	0.022	0.018	0.000	0.258
VS_{de}^O	0.023	0.024	0.000	0.269
Share of immigrants:				
IS_{de}	0.142	0.103	0.002	0.509
IS_{de}^{LS}	0.091	0.058	0.001	0.262
IS_{de}^{HS}	0.052	0.059	0.000	0.299
Controls:				
Unemployment rate	0.079	0.052	0.003	0.293
Share of industry	0.287	0.126	0.026	0.692
Share of blue collar workers	0.712	0.229	0.209	1.539
Share of 65+	0.260	0.078	0.125	0.690
Share of low-skilled	0.620	0.184	0.152	1.098

Notes: This table provides descriptive statistics on the main variables used in the empirical analysis.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Appendix D2 Controlling for Mainstream Left

Table D2: The Impact of Far-Right Electoral Scores on the Saliency of Immigration in Right-wing Candidates' Manifestos Controlling for Left Success

	OLS estimates			2SLS estimates		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
VS_{de}^{FR}	2.216*** (0.364)	2.386*** (0.382)	2.371*** (0.389)	5.462** (2.620)	5.263** (2.465)	5.405** (2.128)
VS_{de}^L	0.213 (0.195)	0.153 (0.195)	0.157 (0.193)	0.943 (0.636)	0.523 (0.375)	0.551 (0.336)
IS_{de}			0.083 (0.415)			0.131 (0.574)
Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Nb. Observations	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141
KP F-test				27.780	30.647	13.781
SW F-test FR				27.780		43.149
SW F-test immig.					30.647	115.583

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The dependent variable is the share of immigration-related words relative to the total number of words in right-wing candidates' manifestos. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. The main regressor of interest is the share of votes for the far right. Control variables include the share of votes for the left, the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance levels, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Appendix D3 Focusing on High- and Low-Educated Immigration

Table D3: The Impact of High- and Low-Educated immigration on the Salience of Immigration in Right-wing Candidates' Manifestos

	(1) OLS	(2) 2SLS	(3) OLS	(4) 2SLS
IS_{de}	0.324 (0.438)	1.246* (0.688)		
IS_{de}^{HS}			-0.710 (0.538)	-1.424 (1.152)
IS_{de}^{LS}			2.242*** (0.836)	5.520** (2.703)
VS_{de}^{FR}			2.353*** (0.386)	6.083** (2.481)
Dem. & Eco. Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nb. Observations	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141
KP F-test		55.473		6.120
SW F-test FR				39.123
SW F-test immig.		55.473		
SW F-test immig. LS				31.680
SW F-test immig. HS				49.289

Notes: The dependent variable is the share of immigration-related words relative to the total number of words in a given manifesto. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. Our main regressors of interest are the share of immigrants (columns 1-2) and the shares of high- and low-educated immigrants (columns 3-4). Columns 3-4 also include the share of votes for the far right in the regression. Control variables include the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance levels, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Appendix D4 Robustness Checks

We test the robustness of the impact of a rise in the far-right vote shares on right-wing candidates' manifestos with a battery of additional tests.

Alternative dependent variable. Table D4 shows that our results are robust to using a dummy variable as the dependent variable, capturing the likelihood that a given candidate discusses immigration in its political manifesto (i.e., mentions at least one immigration-related word). Our main coefficient of interest remains positive and significant at the one percent level.

Table D4: The Impact of Far-Right Electoral Scores on the Likelihood to Discuss Immigration in Right-wing Candidates' Manifestos

	OLS estimates			2SLS estimates		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
V_{de}^{FR}	1.653*** (0.250)	2.246*** (0.255)	2.220*** (0.265)	3.554** (1.589)	3.586** (1.669)	4.003*** (1.473)
IS_{de}			0.134 (0.202)			0.452 (0.446)
Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Nb. Observations	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141
KP F-test				40.882	35.758	14.580
SW F-test FR				40.882		48.083
SW F-test immig.					35.758	118.816

Notes: The dependent variable is the likelihood that a right-wing political manifesto mentions an immigration-related word. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. The main regressor of interest is the share of valid votes for the far right. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance levels, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, Gaultier-Voituriez (2016), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Leave-one-out shift shares. We test the robustness of our results using a leave-one-out version of the shift-share instruments for both immigration and far-right success. This approach removes, from the total stock of immigrants or votes, those associated with each electoral district-year observation. By doing so, we mitigate any mechanical correlation that could arise from the construction of the instrument (Borusyak et al., 2025). Our results, reported in Table D5, remain virtually unchanged when this adjustment is applied to the construction of the instrument.

Alternative definitions of the immigration share. We show that our results are robust to alternative definitions of the immigration variable. In particular, using the actual immigrant share, defined as the number of immigrants over the current adult population (rather than fixing the denominator at its 1962 level), yields similar estimates.

Table D5: The Impact of Far-Right Electoral Scores on the Saliency of Immigration in Right-wing Candidates' Manifestos using Leave-One-Out Shift-Shares

	(1) 2SLS	(2) 2SLS	(3) 2SLS
VS_{de}^{FR}	5.254** (2.554)	5.104** (2.358)	5.204** (2.059)
IS_{de}			0.103 (0.610)
Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	Yes	Yes
Nb. Observations	5,141	5,141	5,141
KP F-test	22.610	29.774	12.879
SW F-test FR	22.610		42.529
SW F-test immig.		29.774	104.780

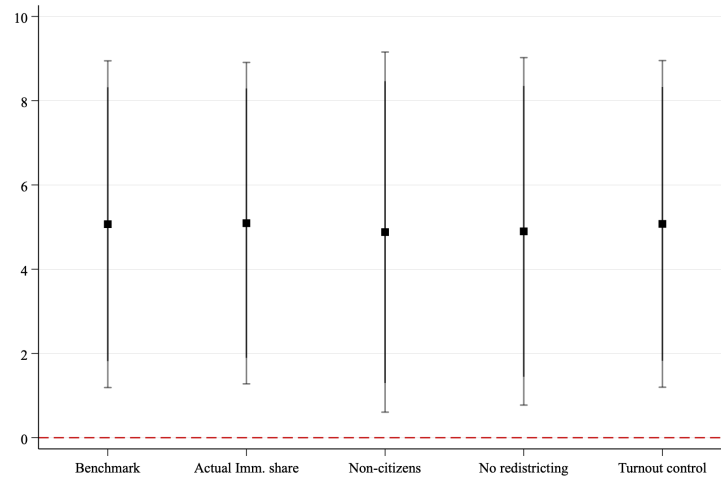
Notes: The dependent variable is the share of immigration-related words relative to the total number of words in a given manifesto. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. The main regressor of interest is the share of valid votes for the far right. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance levels, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Likewise, defining immigrants as non-French citizens, following [Edo et al. \(2019\)](#), also produces comparable results; in this case, we retain the baseline denominator but re-define the immigrant group based on citizenship. This definition thus excludes naturalized immigrants from the immigrant group, thereby removing their direct contribution to electoral changes ([Mayda et al., 2022](#)), since citizenship is directly linked to voting rights and naturalized immigrants are eligible to vote. This approach thus isolates the impact of immigration that operates exclusively through citizens' votes. However, it also excludes a substantial share of the immigrant population, who may still influence electoral outcomes—directly through voting and indirectly through public opinion and economic contributions. Figure D1 reports that our two alternative definitions does not affect our main results.

Alternative lexicons. We investigate whether specific words within the main lexicon drive our results. To do so, we define three sub-lexicons. The first includes only keywords beginning with the lemma *immigr-*, the second focuses on terms associated with immigration policies (e.g., removals, borders, citizenship, family reuni-

Figure D1: The Impact of Far-Right Electoral Scores on the Saliency of Immigration in Right-wing Candidates' Manifestos under Alternative Specifications



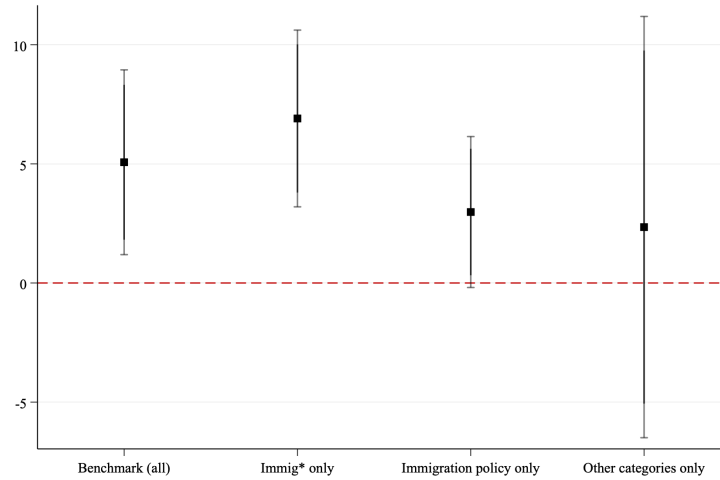
Notes: This figure reports the effect of far-right success estimated from Equation (4) in the main manuscript under alternative specifications. The dependent variable is the share of immigration-related words relative to the total number of words in a given manifesto. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. The main regressor of interest is the share of votes for the far right. The main control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. The first estimate relies on our benchmark specification. While Specification 2 uses the current population (instead of the 1962 population) as the denominator to compute local immigrant shares, Specification 3 redefines immigrants as non-naturalized French citizens. Specification 4 restricts the sample to electoral districts unaffected by redistricting, and Specification 5 adds controls for voter turnout. Standard errors are clustered at the electoral district level. Confidence intervals are presented at the 95% and 90% levels.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

fication), and the third consists solely of synonyms for immigrants (e.g., foreigners, refugees, asylum seekers). These lexicons are detailed in [Appendix B3](#), and [Figure B12](#) provides descriptive evidence of the saliency associated with each sub-lexicon. [Figure D2](#) shows that our effect is primarily driven by an increase in the saliency of immigration-related words within the first lexicon and, to a lesser extent, by keywords related to immigration policies. However, we find no increase in the saliency of words associated with other categories of foreigners.

Redistricting. As detailed in [Appendix A2](#), our period of analysis includes a significant redistricting of electoral districts in 1986 ([Gaudillère, 1995](#)). Consequently, our data cleaning procedure involved reconstructing electoral districts to ensure their borders remain consistent over time. This process requires certain assumptions and leads to the inconsistent allocation of a small number of counties, despite efforts to minimize errors. This inconsistency could be an issue if the redistricting was politically motivated, as suggested by [Gaudillère \(1995\)](#). To mitigate potential biases, we replicated our analysis on a sub-sample of electoral districts unaffected by the redistricting. Although this reduced the number of observations by 50%, [Figure D1](#) shows

Figure D2: The Impact of Far-Right Electoral Scores on the Saliency of Immigration in Right-wing Candidates' Manifestos under Alternative Lexicons



Notes: This figure reports the effect of far-right success estimated from Equation (4) in the main manuscript under alternative definitions of the dependent variable. The benchmark dependent variable is the share of immigration-related words relative to the total number of words in a given manifesto. The three additional dependent variables are constructed based on the three different lexicons reported in [Appendix B3](#). All dependent variables are standardized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. The main regressor of interest is the share of votes for the far right. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the electoral district level. Confidence intervals are presented at the 95% and 90% levels.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

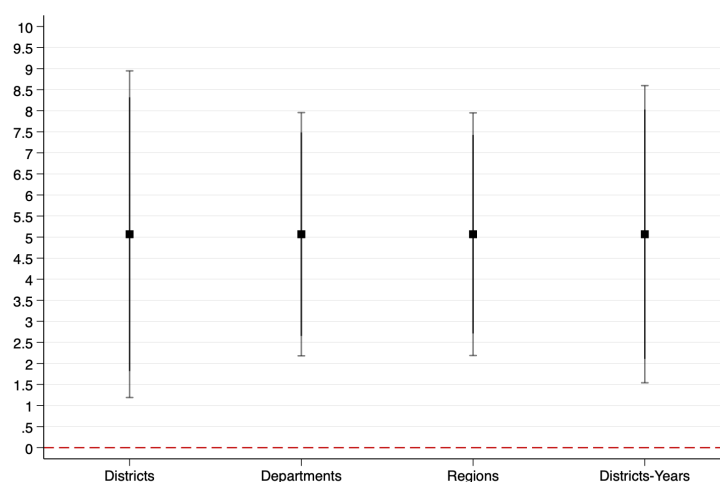
that our main results are robust to this change.

Turnout. The electoral success of the far right is defined as the ratio between the votes received by candidates affiliated with this political orientation relative to the total number of valid votes (excluding blank and erroneous votes). This approach does not account for changes in the size of the electorate and voter turnout. Thus, we provide evidence in [Figure D1](#) that our conclusions are robust to controlling for the electoral turnout in the main estimates.

Alternative clustering. Standard errors in the benchmark estimates were clustered at the electoral district level, i.e., the level of the treatment. We provide evidence that the significance of the main coefficients of interest is unaltered when using the more conservative approach of clustering standard errors at more aggregated levels ([Cameron and Miller, 2015](#)). [Figure D3](#) shows that our main result remains robust when clustering standard errors at the departmental level. It is worth noting that the total number of departments is 90, which exceeds the rule-of-thumb minimum of 50 clusters usually recommended for reliable inference ([Cameron and Miller, 2015](#); [MacKinnon and Webb, 2017](#)). Also, we show that our results are robust to cluster

standard errors at the region (13) or district-year (1020) levels.

Figure D3: The Impact of Far-Right Electoral Scores on the Saliency of Immigration in Right-wing Candidates' Manifestos using Alternative Clustering



Notes: This figure reports the effect of far-right success estimated from Equation (4) in the main manuscript using alternative clustering. The dependent variable is the share of immigration-related words relative to the total number of words in a given manifesto. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. The main regressor of interest is the share of votes for the far right. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. While Specification 1 clusters standard errors at the electoral district level (as in our baseline empirical model), the remaining specifications cluster them at the departmental, regional, and district-year levels. Confidence intervals are presented at the 95% and 90% levels.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

District Level Regressions. Table [D6](#) replicates our baseline results from Table 2, constructing the dependent variable as the average share of immigration-related words at the district level.

The Impact of the Far Right on the Ideological Position of Right-wing Candidates on Immigration. Table [D7](#) replicates our baseline results on the ideological position of right-wing candidates on immigration when controlling for whether the candidate discusses immigration in their manifesto.

Table D6: The Impact of Far-Right Electoral Scores on the Saliency of Immigration in Right-wing Candidates' Manifestos at the District-Level

	OLS estimates			2SLS estimates		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
VS_{de}^{FR}	1.589*** (0.309)	1.591*** (0.326)	1.560*** (0.343)	3.356** (1.532)	3.552** (1.731)	3.531** (1.515)
IS_{de}			0.146 (0.339)			-0.060 (1.053)
Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Nb. Observations	1,017	1,017	1,017	1,017	1,017	1,017
KP F-test				42.968	45.668	22.081
SW F-test FR				42.968		46.634
SW F-test immig.					45.668	42.674

Notes: The level of observation is a district-year election. The dependent variable is the share of immigration-related words relative to the total number of words in a given manifesto. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. The main regressor of interest is the share of votes for the far right. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance levels, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, Gauthier-Voituriez (2016), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Table D7: The Impact of Far-Right Electoral Scores on the Framing of Immigration in Right-Wing Candidates' Manifestos Controlling for immigration mentioned

	OLS estimates			2SLS estimates		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
VS_{de}^{FR}	0.417* (0.216)	0.182 (0.256)	0.177 (0.253)	2.727** (1.300)	2.818** (1.314)	2.322* (1.212)
IS_{de}			0.022 (0.185)			-0.525 (0.357)
Ext_{de}	0.361*** (0.012)	0.363*** (0.011)	0.363*** (0.011)	0.350*** (0.013)	0.349*** (0.013)	0.353*** (0.013)
Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Nb. Observations	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141
KP F-test				39.948	34.860	14.126
SW F-test FR				39.948		46.803
SW F-test immig.					34.860	120.169

Notes: The dependent variable is a dummy variable that captures the likelihood of talking negatively about immigration in right-wing candidates' manifestos. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. The main regressor of interest is the share of votes for the far right. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance level, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, Gauthier-Voituriez (2016), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Appendix D5 Focusing on Justice & Criminality

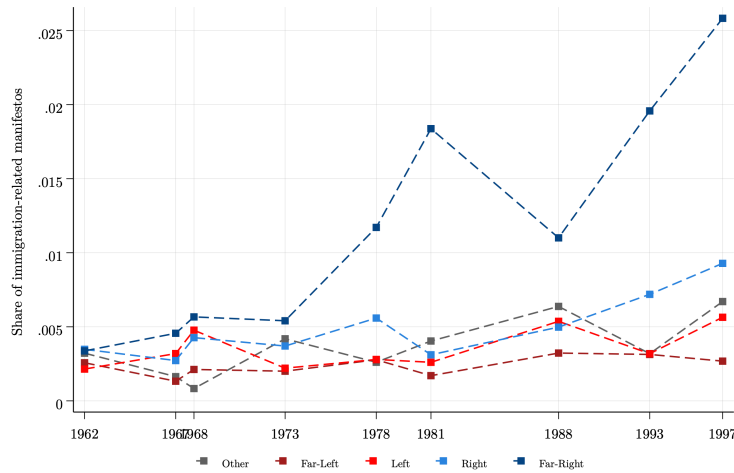
This appendix focuses on the topic of justice and criminality. Indeed, the main results of the paper indicate that right-wing candidates respond to the rise of the FN by increasing the salience of immigration in their manifestos, while also linking immigration to justice and criminality. Additionally, our analysis of alternative topics that could be affected by rising competition with the far right suggests that justice and crime may also play an important role in this process.

We create an alternative lexicons that contain only keyword related to criminality and justice. This includes keywords such as: criminalite, criminel, criminels, criminelle, criminelles, criminellement, infraction, repression, delinquance, delinquant, delinquants, delinquante, delinquantes, delits, securite, securitaire, insecurite, ordre public, violent, violents, violente, violentes, violence, justice, peine, peines, police, policiers, prison, prisonniers, prisonnieres, tribunal, tribunaux, terrorisme, terroristes, trafic, trafiquants, recidiviste. Then we define the share of crime-related words in each political manifesto as follows:

$$SW_i^{Crime} = \frac{words_i^{crime}}{words_i}, \quad (7)$$

where $words_{ide}^{crime}$ is the total number of crime-related words from the aforementioned lexicon in candidate i 's manifesto in district d during election-year e , and $words_{ide}$ is the total number of words in that manifesto.

Figure D4: Salience of Justice & Criminality in Manifestos



Notes: This figure reports, for each political orientation, the average share of justice and crime-related words in the total number of words between 1962 and 1997.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Figure D4 reports the evolution of the share of crime-related words across political orientations. While the justice and crime topic strongly characterizes the far right throughout the analysis period, its prevalence steadily increases following the

Table D8: The Impact of Far-Right Electoral Scores on the Saliency of Justice & Criminality in Right-wing Candidates' Manifestos

	OLS estimates			2SLS estimates		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
VS_{de}^{FR}	0.025*** (0.004)	0.025*** (0.005)	0.025*** (0.005)	0.081*** (0.021)	0.084*** (0.021)	0.078*** (0.018)
IS_{de}			-0.001 (0.004)			-0.006 (0.006)
Dem. & Eco. Controls	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Nb. Observations	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141	5,141
KP F-test				40.882	35.758	14.580
SW F-test FR				40.882		48.083
SW F-test immig.					35.758	118.816

Notes: The dependent variable is the share of justice and crime-related words relative to the total number of words in a given manifesto. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. The main regressor of interest is the share of valid votes for the far right. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance levels, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, Gauthier-Voituriez (2016), and National Archives for the year 1997.

creation of the FN. Moreover, towards the end of the period, a catch-up effect appears to emerge among right-wing candidates, mirroring the pattern observed for the immigration theme.

Then, Table D8 replicates our benchmark analysis using SW_{ide}^{Crime} as the dependent variable. To ensure comparability with our main specification, we standardize it. The results show that the coefficient of interest is positive and significant, indicating that increasing local competition with the far right is associated with a higher probability of right-wing candidates mentioning justice and criminality in their manifestos. However, the coefficient is considerably smaller than that estimated for the immigration topic in our benchmark analysis, suggesting that this effect is of second-order importance.

A legitimate question is whether the justice and crime theme is only driven by its association with immigration or whether it also emerges independently. To investigate this question, we first isolate in Table D9 manifestos that mention the crime theme without any keywords associated with immigration. Despite a loss in observations, one can see that the exclusion of manifestos mentioning immigration turns the coefficient for SW_t^{Crime} insignificant. This suggests that the previous association between far-right vote share and the saliency of crime in right-wing candidates' manifestos was driven by an increase in the theme of justice and criminality only in association with the immigration topic. To provide evidence that the insignificance of the coefficient does not stem from the reduction in the number of observations, Column 2 sets the share of crime-related words to zero in manifestos where immigration is mentioned.

Table D9: Understanding the Impact of Far-Right Electoral Scores on the Salience of Justice & Criminality in Right-wing Candidates' Manifestos

	(1) 2SLS $SW = 0$	(2) 2SLS $SW^{Crime} = 0$ if $SW \neq 0$
V_{de}^{FR}	0.057 (0.041)	0.001 (0.017)
IS_{de}	-0.001 (0.009)	-0.005 (0.004)
Nb. Observations	3,291	5,141
KP F-test	7.925	14.580
SW F-test FR	16.296	48.083
SW F-test immig.	25.195	118.816

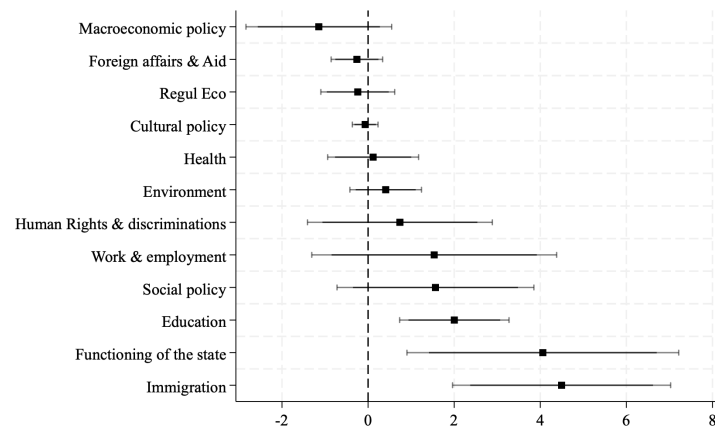
Notes: The dependent variable is the share of justice and crime-related words relative to the total number of words in a given manifesto. Column 1 excludes manifestos for which the share of immigration-related words is zero, while Column 2 sets the share of crime-related words to zero if a manifesto does not contain any crime-related words, or discusses both crime and immigration. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. The main regressor of interest is the share of valid votes for the far right. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance levels, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

This implies that the variable $SW_i^{Crime} = 0$ if a manifesto does not contain any crime-related words, or discusses both crime and immigration. Once again, the coefficient of interest is not significant, suggesting that crime has no explanatory power independent of immigration when immigration-linked crime references are switched off.

To validate this conclusion, we replicate the topic-level analysis already conducted on the immigration theme (Figure 5 in the main manuscript) within the crime and justice theme, as shown in Figure D5. The estimated results show that rising far-right support in a given district mainly increases the likelihood that right-wing candidates associate crime and justice with immigration. These findings confirm that the rise in electoral competition with the far right operates mainly through an increase in the salience of immigration in right-wing candidates' manifestos. Moreover, they further confirm that a rise in far-right voting leads to a stronger incentive among right-wing candidates to portray immigration negatively by associating it with crime concerns.

Figure D5: IV Impact of Far-Right Electoral Scores on Right-wing Candidate's Manifestos: Topics within the Justice & Criminality Subject



Notes: The dependent variable is a dummy variable that captures the likelihood of talking about justice and crime in association with a given subject (listed on the y-axis) in right-wing candidates' manifestos. Right-hand side variables vary at the district-election-year level. The main regressor of interest is the share of votes for the far right. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. Confidence intervals are provided at the 95% and 90% levels.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, [Gaultier-Voituriez \(2016\)](#), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Appendix D6 The Impact of Immigration on Electoral Outcomes

Our previous findings indicate that right-wing candidates adjust their manifestos in response to the electoral success of far-right parties by increasing their focus on immigration and adopting more negative stances on this issue. This adjustment seems to be consistent with the growing electoral threat posed by rivals with strong anti-immigrant platforms, and implies that right-wing and far-right candidates may compete for the same electorate that can be mobilized around immigration issues.

To further illustrate that immigration is a key driver of the electoral competition between right-wing and far-right parties, this section shows that an increase in the salience of immigration in a given district, driven by actual immigrant inflows, acts as a catalyst for shifts in voting behavior, moving support from right-wing to far-right parties.

Appendix-Figure [D7](#) provides a preliminary look at the correlation between the changes in the share of votes for the far right (Panel A), the right (Panel B), the left (Panel C) and the far-left (Panel D) and the change in the share of immigrants in the 1962 adult population across districts between 1968 and 1997. It reveals a positive relationship between changes in far-right vote share and immigrant share.⁴ In

⁴This positive association is consistent with Appendix-Figure [D6](#), which shows a close correspondence between the share of far-right voting and the share of immigrants across districts during the period of analysis, as well as between the changes in these shares from 1968 to 1997.

contrast, Figure D7b shows a significantly negative relationship for right-wing vote shares. Meanwhile, Figures D7d and D7c show no correlation between the change in immigrant share and the electoral support for left-wing and far-left parties, respectively. These correlations suggest that a rise in the salience of immigration, driven by higher immigrant shares, boosts far-right voting at the expense of traditional right-wing parties

The remainder of the section tests the robustness of these correlations by estimating the following econometric equation at the district-election-year level:

$$VS_{de}^p = \alpha IS_{de} + \delta' \mathbf{X}_{de} + \gamma_d + \gamma_e + \mu_{de}, \quad (8)$$

where VS_{de}^p is the vote share for political orientation p in district d during election-year e , and IS_{de} denotes the immigrant share, as defined in Equation 3, respectively. We use the same controls and fixed effects as in Equation 4, and cluster our standard errors at the district level. μ_{de} is the error term. Finally, we account for the endogeneity of the immigration variable due to the non-random allocation of immigrants across electoral districts by using the shift-share instrument detailed in Appendix C3.

Table D10 estimates the main coefficient of interest α . The first two columns focus on far-right voting, and show that a rise in the share of immigrants in a given district has a positive impact on the share of votes for the far right in that district.⁵ Consistent with right and far-right candidates competing for the same pool of voters, we find a perfectly symmetric negative coefficient for the right in Column 3, where a one percentage point increase in IS_{de} is associated with a 0.53 percentage point decline in the share of votes for right-wing parties. In contrast, the IV estimated impact of immigration on the vote share for left and far-left parties is not statistically significant and smaller in absolute terms compared to Columns 2-3.⁶

To confirm that there is a transfer from right votes to the far right, we re-estimate Column 3 in Table D10 by including the vote shares for the other parties in the last elections as control variables. These results are reported in Table D11 in the appendix. As expected, we find that a rise in the electoral support for the left and the far right, the two parties adjacent to the right on the political spectrum, decreases the share of votes for right parties. However, the inclusion of far-right vote shares, compared to other parties, completely absorbs the significance of the negative impact of immigration on right-wing political support. This result indicates that the negative im-

⁵In line with Edo and Giesing (2020); Guriev and Papaioannou (2022), the IV estimated coefficient in Column 2 is stronger than the OLS coefficient in Column 1. Indeed, immigrants tend to settle in prosperous and tolerant areas, where attitudes toward them are most positive, thereby generating a downward bias in the OLS estimate reported in Column 1.

⁶We show that the results from Table D10 are robust to various alternative specifications as reported in Figure D8 in the appendix. Notably, our conclusions remain virtually unchanged when using alternative definitions of immigrant shares, excluding controls, restricting the sample to electoral districts unaffected by redistricting, controlling for voter turnout, and measuring vote shares relative to the registered population.

Table D10: The Impact of Immigration on Electoral Outcomes

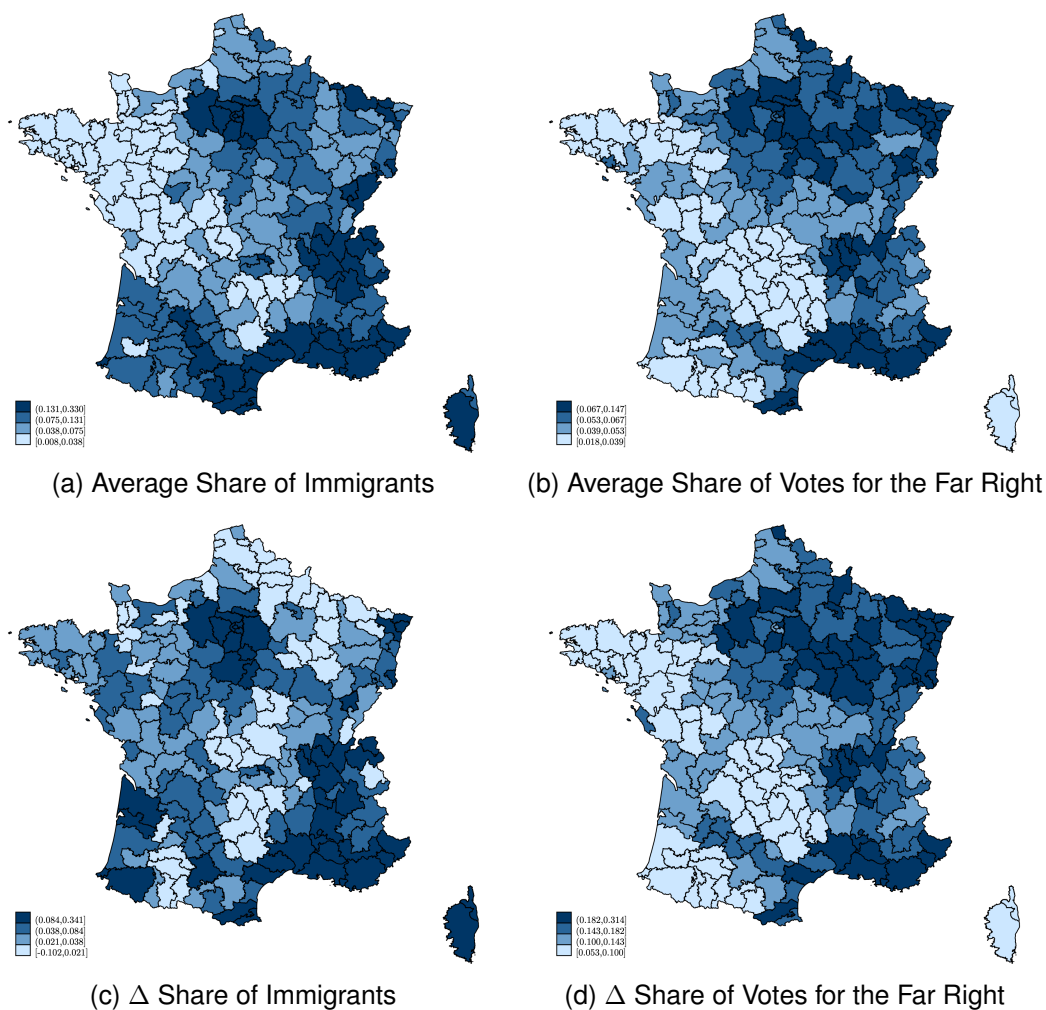
	Far-Right		Right	Left	Far-Left
	OLS	2SLS	2SLS	2SLS	2SLS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
IS_{de}	0.252*** (0.051)	0.536*** (0.163)	-0.527** (0.244)	0.166 (0.254)	-0.042 (0.052)
Nb. Observations	1,020	1,020	1,020	1,020	1,020
KP F-test		37.234	37.234	37.234	37.234

Notes: The unit of observation is a district-election-year cell and all regressions have 1,020 observations (204 departments over 5 election-years). The dependent variable is the share of votes for a given political orientation. The main regressor of interest is the share of immigrants. Control variables include the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance level, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, and French censuses.

pact of immigration on right-wing voting only occurs through the rise in the electoral support for far-right parties. It therefore confirms that immigration boosts votes for the far right at the expense of right-wing parties, and underscores immigration as a key factor in understanding the political realignment on the right, both competing for a similar conservative electorate sensitive to the issue of immigration.

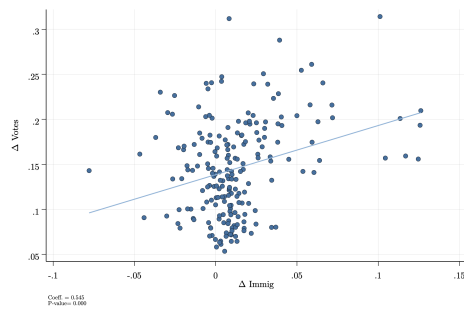
Figure D6: Immigration and Far-Right Success over the 1968-1997 period



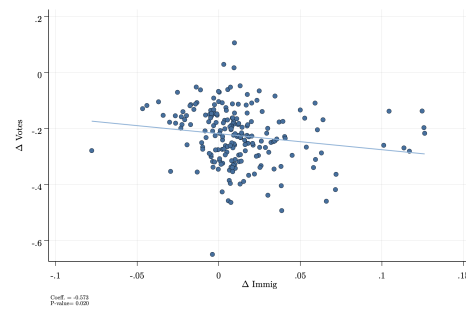
Notes: The first two maps report the average share of immigrants and the average share of valid votes for the far right across electoral districts over the 1968-1999 period. The last two maps display local changes (Δ) in immigrant and voting shares between 1968 and 1999 (for immigration) or 1997 (for voting).

Sources: Authors' elaboration on French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, and French censuses.

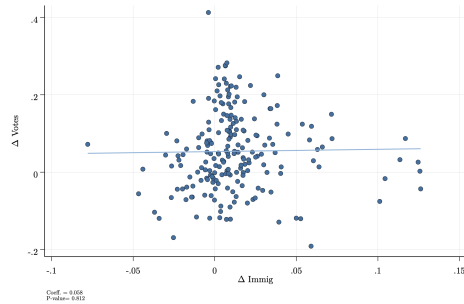
Figure D7: Relationship between Immigration and Voting



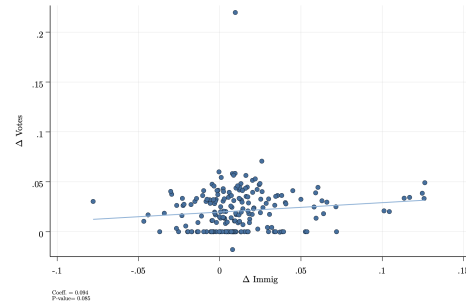
(a) Δ Share of Votes for the Far Right



(b) Δ Share of Votes for the Right



(c) Δ Share of Votes for the Left



(d) Δ Share of Votes for the Far-Left

Notes: The unit of observation is a district-election-year cell. The figures plot the change in the share of votes for a given political orientation between 1968 and 1997 against the change in the share of immigrants in the adult population between 1968 and 1999 against.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, and French censuses.

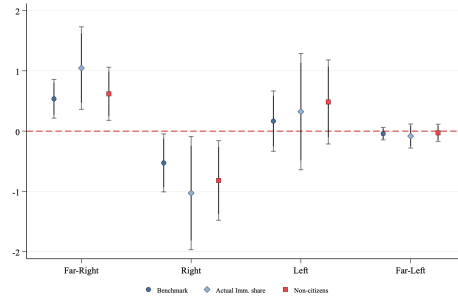
Table D11: Where Have the Votes for the Mainstream Right Gone?

	(1) 2SLS	(2) 2SLS	(3) 2SLS	(4) 2SLS	(5) 2SLS
IS_{de}	-0.527** (0.244)	-0.229 (0.261)	-0.689*** (0.243)	-0.531** (0.246)	-0.365 (0.246)
VS_{de-1}^{FR}		-0.507*** (0.116)			-0.562*** (0.095)
VS_{et-1}^L			-0.422*** (0.049)		-0.439*** (0.050)
VS_{de-1}^{FL}				0.340** (0.163)	-0.080 (0.139)
Nb. Observations	1,020	1,020	1,020	1,020	1,020
KP F-test	37.234	34.801	37.261	37.276	34.877

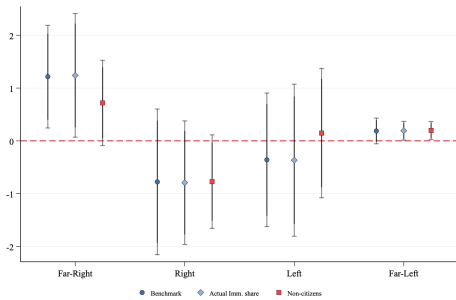
Notes: The unit of observation is a district-election-year cell. The dependent variable is the share of valid votes for the mainstream right political orientation. We progressively include, as additional regressors, the vote shares for the far right, the left, and the far left. Control variables include the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance levels, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, and French censuses.

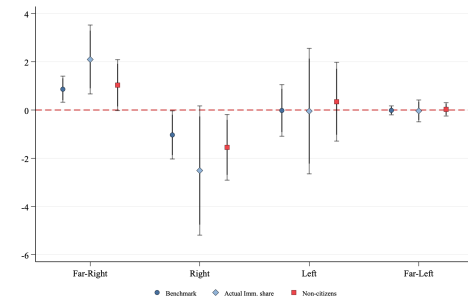
Figure D8: The IV Impact of Immigration on Electoral Outcomes using Alternative Specifications



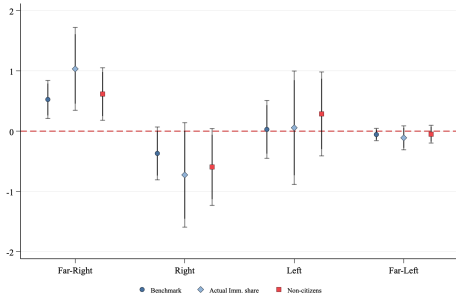
(a) Baseline Specification



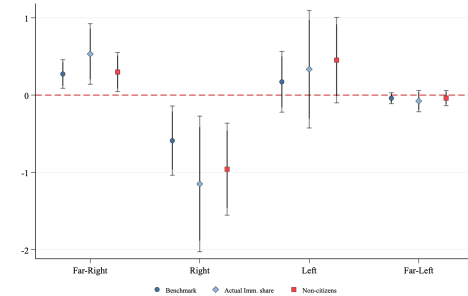
(b) No Controls



(c) Districts not Affected by Redistricting



(d) Controlling for Turnout



(e) Share of Votes within Registered Voters

Notes: The unit of observation is a district-election-year cell. The dependent variable is the share of votes for a given political orientation. The main regressor of interest is the share of immigrants. Control variables include the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of the unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Each panel reports the IV estimated impact of immigration on voting using three definitions of the immigration variable. In addition to our benchmark definition, we use the current adult population (instead of the 1962 population) as the denominator to compute actual immigrant shares. We also redefine immigrants as non-naturalized French citizens to compute the share of non-citizens. Panel a uses our baseline empirical model. Panel b excludes all control variables. Panel c restricts the sample to electoral districts unaffected by redistricting. Panel d adds controls for voter turnout, while Panel e defines the dependent variable as the share of votes over the registered population. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance level, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, and French censuses.

Appendix D7 The Electoral Rationale Behind the Adjustment of Mainstream Right-Wing Candidates

Table D12: The Electoral Payoffs of Right-Wing Candidates' Adjustments to the Far Right using Alternative Specifications

	(1) Benchmark	(2) Actual Imm. share	(3) Non-citizens	(4) No redistricting	(5) Turnout control	(6) Registered
V_{de-1}^{FR}	-1.329** (0.655)	-1.367** (0.675)	-0.977 (0.776)	-1.207** (0.497)	-1.238* (0.655)	-1.359** (0.632)
SW_{de}	-0.436** (0.194)	-0.448** (0.212)	-0.324** (0.137)	-0.374*** (0.132)	-0.420** (0.189)	-0.404** (0.189)
$SW_{de} \times V_{de-1}^{FR}$	4.731** (2.185)	4.867** (2.376)	3.496** (1.614)	3.966*** (1.430)	4.549** (2.127)	4.485** (2.142)
IS_{de}	-0.192 (0.355)			-0.105 (0.422)	-0.147 (0.351)	-0.229 (0.313)
Nb. Observations	1,017	1,017	1,017	504	1,017	1,017
KP F-test	2.337	2.157	1.594	4.320	2.124	2.337
SW F-test FR	11.442	11.400	5.120	32.127	10.237	11.442
SW F-test Inter.	7.248	6.603	4.857	17.895	6.551	7.248
SW F-test immig.	52.446	40.181	12.743	31.209	48.850	52.446

Notes: The unit of observation is a district-election-year cell. The dependent variable is the share of votes for right-wing parties. The main regressors of interest are the share of votes for the far right in the previous election and its interaction with SW_{de} the average share of immigration-related words in right-wing candidates' manifestos. Control variables include the share of immigrants, the share of persons aged 65 and older, the share of low-educated individuals, the share of unemployed persons, the share of blue-collar workers, and the share of manufacturing employment. All regressions include district and election-year fixed effects. Column 1 reports estimates from the benchmark specification. While Column 2 uses the current population (instead of the 1962 population) as the denominator to compute local immigrant shares, Column 3 redefines immigrants as non-naturalized French citizens. Column 4 restricts the sample to electoral districts unaffected by redistricting. Column 5 adds controls for voter turnout. Column 6 defines the dependent variable as the share of votes over the registered population. Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the electoral district level. ***, **, * denote statistical significance from zero at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significance level, respectively.

Sources: Authors' elaboration on data from French electoral data from 1968 to 1997, French censuses, Gauthier-Voituriez (2016), and National Archives for the year 1997.

Appendix D8 Analysis of immigration laws passed by Parliament between 1968 and 1997

Based on Le Monde's compilation of migration-related laws passed by the French Parliament,⁷ we identified those falling within our period of analysis (1968–1997) as reported in Table D13.

For each law, we used the National Assembly archives to determine whether a public roll-call vote had been held. Under French parliamentary rules, deputies may request a public vote for any bill. When such a vote occurs, the archives record the full list of members voting for, against, or abstaining. By contrast, for laws adopted without a public roll call, typically through a show of hands, it is impossible to reconstruct the distribution of votes across parliamentary groups. Of the 21 laws identified, only seven were subject to a public roll-call vote.

For each law with a roll-call vote, we computed, for every parliamentary group, the share of its members voting in favor of the bill. With the exception of "Non-affiliated" deputies, who do not belong to any party, we observe very strong party discipline. When a group supports (or opposes) a law, nearly all its members vote accordingly.

⁷See https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2024/10/14/une-nouvelle-loi-sur-l-immigration-qui-s-ajoutera-a-6218454_4355771.html accessed on November, 11, 2025.

We also find a clear partisan divide, with left- and right-wing parties almost systematically casting opposing votes on migration-related legislation.

Overall, this analysis provides little support for the possibility to investigate the impact of the far-right's rise on the electoral voting behavior of left- and right-wing elected deputies over our period of analysis.

Table D13: Immigration laws (1968-1997)

Name	Date of enactment	Public vote	Date of public vote	Voters	Votes cast	For	Against	Ratio For/ Group Total							
								Socialiste Left	RPR Right	UDF Right	Communiste Far Left	Non-affiliated Others	FN Far right	UDC Right	REPLIB Right
Law reforming the nationality code	January 9, 1973	No													
Law on irregular workers	July 10, 1976	No													
Bonnet Law on illegal immigration	January 10, 1980	No													
Defferre Law on immigration	October 29, 1981	No													
Law on nationality	December 9, 1983	Yes	November 24, 1983	391	391	333	58	0.99	1.00	0.97	1.00	1.00			
Law on naturalization by marriage	May 7, 1984	Yes	April 24, 1984	487	487	487	0	0.99	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00			
Defferre Law on foreigners	July 17, 1984	No													
Pasqua Law on foreigners	September 9, 1986	Yes	August 7, 1986	561	528	286	242	0.00	0.97	0.99	0.00	0.89	0.00		
Joxe Law on foreigners	August 2, 1989	Yes	July 4, 1989	575	548	278	270	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.53		0.00	
Joxe 2 Law on foreigners	January 10, 1990	No													
Law on irregular foreigners	December 31, 1991	No													
Schengen Law	February 26, 1992	Yes	January 21, 1992	529	528	277	251	0.97	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.45		0.03	
Quilès Law	July 6, 1992	No													
Méhaignerie Law on nationality	July 22, 1993	Yes	June 24, 1993	572	571	482	89	0.00	0.99	1.00	0.00	0.00			0.43
Pasqua Law on identity checks	August 10, 1993	Yes	June 10, 1993	563	562	89	473	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.96	0.00			0.43
Pasqua Law on foreigners	August 24, 1993	No													
Pasqua Law on immigration	December 30, 1993	No													
Law on foreigners	December 27, 1994	No													
Toubon Law on terrorism	July 22, 1996	No													
Law against illegal work	March 11, 1997	No													
Debré Law on immigration	April 24, 1997	No													

Notes: This table lists all migration-related laws passed by the French Parliament between 1968 and 1997. It provides for each parliamentary group, the share of its members voting in favor of the bill.
Sources: Authors' elaboration on National Assembly Archives.

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