

Party Identification, Local Context, and Australian Attitudes toward Immigration and Asylum Policy

Timothy B. Gravelle

School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne

tim.gravelle@unimelb.edu.au

Abstract

The acceptance of newcomers as either immigrants or asylum seekers has been a recurring issue in Australian politics. Both the size of Australia's intake of economic migrants and the resettlement of asylum seekers held offshore have been contentious political issues. Research in other immigrant-receiving countries has identified numerous factors shaping attitudes toward immigration and asylum policy. These include political factors (such as party identification) and local demographic context – both immigrant concentration and change in immigrant concentration over time. Still, few studies of Australia have considered the effects of genuinely local demographic context, or how local context moderates the effects of political factors on attitudes toward immigration and asylum policy. Drawing on survey data from the Australian Election Study (2010–2016) and local-level census data, this paper advances an explanation of Australians' attitudes toward immigration and asylum policy centring on the roles of party identification, local demographic context, and their interaction.

Key words

Public opinion; Australia; migration policy; contextual analysis

Acknowledgements

This paper was prepared for the 2018 annual conferences of the American Association for Public Opinion Research in Denver, Colorado, the International Political Science Association in Brisbane, Queensland, and the Australian Society for Quantitative Political Science in Canberra, Australian Capital Territory. Thanks are due to Miranda Pierre for her very capable research assistance, whose work was supported by the Policy Lab, University of Melbourne. Thanks for helpful suggestions are also due to Andrea Carson of La Trobe University, and Carol Gravelle of Mount Saint Vincent University

1. Introduction

The political salience of immigration has risen across the western world in recent years. Governments in Europe and North America have been forced by waves of asylum seekers fleeing conflict zones to enact policy responses while also responding to the rise of nativist sentiment among their electorates. At the same time, western democracies are aging and continue to have low birth rates. Continued economic growth therefore depends on the incorporation of newcomers into western labour markets, though these economic migrants still provoke anxieties and perceptions of economic threat among the native-born population, as well as feelings of cultural threat.

Though geographically removed from most other western democracies, Australia has not been isolated from these global trends. Like the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada, Australia is among the top 10 countries globally for net immigration. Owing to its smaller population base, though, Australia's rate of net migration is nearly three times that of the US or UK. This has clear political implications. Since the 1990s and 2000s, immigration policy and asylum policy have been politically charged issues in Australian politics. This period coincides with a shift in the main sources of Australia's immigrant intake from the UK, Ireland, and continental Europe to neighbouring countries in the Asia-Pacific (Markus, Jupp, and McDonald 2009). The arrival of asylum seekers – whether the Vietnamese “boat people” in the 1970s and 1980s, through the “Tampa Crisis” in 2001 involving Afghan asylum seekers bound for Australia, to the present day where Australia continues to detain asylum seekers offshore on Nauru and thus beyond the reach of Australian law – is a recurring issue in Australian politics (Birrell 2013; Carson, Dufresne, and Martin 2016). Australia's current right-of-centre Liberal-National Coalition government has also made a public display of its changes to immigration policy in restricting access to or eliminating certain categories of work visas. The politics of migration in Australia is thus marked by many of the same features as the western democracies of the northern hemisphere, but with inward migration as an even more pronounced demographic trend. These dynamics mean that the Australian case has importance well beyond its own borders. It is therefore important to ask – *what factors shape native-born Australians' willingness to accept more (or fewer) immigrants or asylum seekers?*

In pursuing an answer, I draw on data from the Australian Election Study (2010–2016) to advance an explanation focused on: (1) political party identification, (2) local demographic context (specifically, the *size* of the local immigrant population, and *change* over time in the size of the immigrant population), and (3) the interaction of party identification with local demographic context. I thus aim to expand our knowledge of immigration and asylum policy attitudes in the Australian case, which have been less extensively studied than the North American and European cases (but see Bilodeau and Fadol 2011; Birrell 2013; Carson, Dufresne, and Martin 2016; Martinez i Coma and Smith 2018). I also endeavour to show that the *resolution* of one's measures of local demographic context is consequential: previous research on Australia finding that higher levels of immigrant concentration are associated with more restrictionist immigration attitudes (i.e., Bilodeau and Fadol 2011; Martinez i Coma and Smith 2018) are due to the large geographic areas used. When finer-grained, truly local geographic areas are used, one finds the opposite: higher levels of immigrant

concentration are associated with *less* (not more) restrictionist attitudes. In the same light, I endeavour to contribute to the study of the public acceptance of asylum seekers, which in comparison to mass public attitudes toward legal immigration has been less thoroughly studied (Bansak, Hainmueller, and Hangartner 2017; Ferwerda, Flynn, and Horiuchi 2017; Gravelle 2018b; Ivarsflaten 2005).

The article is structured as follows. First, I review the existing research literature on public attitudes toward immigration and asylum policy, taking account of findings from Australia and other western democracies, in order to ground my hypotheses relating to the effects of party identification, local demographic context, and (importantly) their interactions. I then describe the data from the Australian Election Study and my methods, including the appending of local-level census data, and regression modelling. Next, I present the results of my regression analyses and discuss their substantive implications. I conclude by reflecting on avenues for future research.

2. Public Attitudes toward Immigration and Asylum Policy: Theory and Hypotheses

Empirical social scientists have long been interested in why individuals express openness toward integrating “outsiders” into the body politic or would seek to exclude them. Indeed, there is now a large and varied social science literature examining why citizens in western democracies (including Australia) hold either open or restrictionist attitudes toward immigration. I choose here to focus on the effects of party identification, local demographic context (specifically immigrant concentration and change in immigrant concentration), and the interactions between party identification and these two aspects of local context. Other factors are included as covariates. I advance one set of hypotheses for both immigration and asylum policy attitudes. This is motivated by research highlighting that media coverage of immigration issues uses asylum seekers and refugees as a dominant frame (Blinder and Allen 2016; Lawlor 2015a, 2015b). Asylum seekers are also central in public conceptions of immigrants (Blinder 2015).

The link between political party identification and policy attitudes is an established finding in political behaviour. Party identification has long been understood as a psychological attachment to a particular political group with a strong basis in family socialisation (Campbell et al. 1960). Party identification also serves as a type of social identity: one’s party is one’s (political) in-group (Weisberg and Greene 2003). At the same time, mass publics often have little knowledge of (or cognitive engagement with) the specifics of political issues or public policy (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Nevertheless, members of the public are able to provide opinion statements on policy issues when they are elicited – e.g., in surveys. An influential explanation for this dynamic is Zaller’s (1992) elite cue theory, which posits that the mass public uses a heuristic (or cognitive shortcut) by following cues from political elites (including elected politicians and other prominent figures) transmitted via the media. That is, individuals draw on messages from partisan political elites in forming their policy attitudes. On this view, members of the mass public need not have detailed knowledge of immigration or asylum policy (or any policy area) to express policy attitudes; “they need

only be able to recognize which elites share their predispositions and take cues from them” (Zaller 1992, 328). Partisan cleavages in mass public opinion thus tend to reflect partisan cleavages in elite opinion (Zaller 1992).

This dynamic is evident in public attitudes toward immigration policy. A consistent cross-national finding is that individuals who identify with right-of-centre parties are more likely to express restrictionist attitudes (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Hawley 2011; McLaren 2003). This finding has also been confirmed by studies of the Australian case (Bilodeau and Fadol 2011; Goot and Watson 2010; Martinez i Coma and Smith 2018). As migration policy issues have become increasingly politicised in Australia in the past 20 years, Australian voters have become more responsive to cues from party elites on such issues (Carson, Dufresne, and Martin 2016; McAllister 2003; Mughan and Paxton 2006). Immigration and asylum issues in Australia were previously marked by bipartisanship at the elite level and framed in humanitarian terms. They thus exhibited little partisan polarisation at the level of the mass public (McAllister 1993). More recently, elite cues on immigration and asylum policy have been prominent in Australian electoral politics.

The right-of-centre Liberal Party (and its traditional coalition partner, the National Party) has framed immigration as a border security matter, and campaigned under Liberal leaders Tony Abbot (2010 and 2013) and Malcolm Turnbull (2016) on “stopping the boats” and “turning back the boats.” The Liberal-National Coalition are also the originators of the “Pacific Solution” of offshore detention of asylum seekers under the John Howard government (1996–2007), a policy that continues to the present (Birrell 2013). The centre-left Australian Labor Party,¹ under the leadership of Julia Gillard (2010), Kevin Rudd (2013), and Bill Shorten (2016) advocated for immigration policies that provided for orderly immigration, and that balanced security and humanitarian concerns. Labor Party leaders advocated targeting people smugglers while also acknowledging the plight of asylum seekers, but notably stopping short of committing to an end to the offshore detention of asylum seekers. The leftist Australian Greens under the leadership of Bob Brown (2010), Christine Milne (2013), and Richard Di Natale (2016) were consistently vocal advocates for asylum seekers’ rights, and called for an end to Australia’s system of offshore detention. They have also proposed more open immigration policies with greater emphasis on family reunification. Research by Carson and colleagues (2016) using data collected during the 2013 Australian federal election confirms that Coalition supporters hold the most negative attitudes toward asylum seekers, Greens supporters the most positive, and Labor supporters leaning in a positive direction, but less strongly. Given the recent Australian partisan environment and the expectation that Australians will be responsive to party cues on immigration and asylum policy, the party identification hypothesis can be expressed as follows.

H₁: Labor and Greens identifiers will tend to express less restrictionist immigration (asylum) policy attitudes than Liberal-National Coalition identifiers.

It is also worth considering the possibility that the relationship between party identification and migration policy attitudes is reversed. Some recent studies of the American

1. The standard spelling of the name of the Australian Labor Party omits the “u” in “Labor.”

case (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015) argue that American whites' anxieties over Latino immigration have resulted in an increase in identification with the Republican Party. Similarly, in the British case, Kaufmann (2017) finds that anti-immigrant sentiment is predictive of decreased support for the Labour Party and increased support for the nativist UK Independence Party (UKIP). This formulation is arguably not the most plausible account of the Australian case. Specifically, there is no evidence in Australia of the kind of racial and partisan sorting in the US discussed by Abrajano and Hajnal; this is likely due to Australian migration policy's longstanding focus on skill-based migration. Also, as a broad right-of-centre coalition, the Liberal-National Coalition is not a single-issue, anti-immigrant party. Further, the total vote share of the nativist One Nation has historically been very small. The more reasonable theoretical expectation – in line with elite cue theory – is that Australians' party identification shapes their immigration and asylum policy attitudes rather than vice versa.

Another line of research has examined how local demographic context shapes immigration policy attitudes. Inspired by classic studies of race relations in the US (e.g., Key 1949), studies examining the effects of local context (typically the size of either the immigrant or ethnic minority population in one's milieu) have produced mixed results. Research on North America and Europe has typically found that higher immigrant or minority concentrations are associated with more open immigration attitudes (Gravelle 2018b; Hood and Morris 1997; Kaufmann 2017; McLaren 2003). One potential mechanism linking immigrant concentration (as well as increasing immigrant concentration) in one's milieu is intergroup contact. According to intergroup contact theory, contact between members of different racial, ethnic, or social groups may lead to positive out-group perceptions. Such an outcome requires not just contact, but also close acquaintance, equal status, and common goals (Allport 1954). Applied to immigration attitudes, research motivated by intergroup contact theory has found that close interpersonal contact decreases restrictionist immigration attitudes (Berg 2009; McLaren 2003) even though some research has questioned whether demographic context serves as a proxy for contact (Gravelle 2016).

By contrast, existing research on Australia has found that higher proportions of immigrants (when measured at the level of lower-house federal electoral divisions) are associated with more restrictionist attitudes (Bilodeau and Fadol 2011; Martinez i Coma and Smith 2018). Immigrant-dense suburbs in the Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane areas have also been found to have more restrictionist immigration attitudes than the national average (Markus 2014; Markus, Jupp, and McDonald 2009). These results align with intergroup competition theory, which posits that increased intergroup contact leads to heightened perceptions of competition for resources, and thereby heightened perceptions of group threat and more negative outgroup attitudes (Blalock 1966). Other social processes aside from contact are also implicated in local immigrant concentration that may provoke more restrictionist attitudes. These include passive exposure to minority languages, which may trigger perceptions of cultural threat (Enos 2014; Hopkins, Tran, and Williamson 2014), as well as the content of local media, which may emphasise immigration-related topics in areas

with high concentrations of immigrants – though the empirical evidence is equivocal (Branton and Dunaway 2009; Lawlor 2015a, 2015b).

Given these competing theoretical predictions and varied empirical findings on the direction of the relationship between local demographic context and immigration attitudes, it is important to highlight that existing studies of the Australian case using very broad measures of local demographic context – such as electoral districts or entire metropolitan areas – fail to resolve the issue of the effect of genuinely *local* immigrant concentration on immigration and asylum policy attitudes. Research on western democracies (the US and Europe) finds different dynamics operating at different levels (or aggregations): more local measures of minority or immigrant concentration yield positive effects on outgroup attitudes while more aggregated measure yield negative effects (Baybeck 2008; Kaufmann and Harris 2015; Weber 2015). This variation in the direction of the relationship at different geographic scales is well-known to geographers as the modifiable areal unit problem (MAUP). In conducting a meta-analysis of studies on the relationship between immigrant or ethnic context and immigration attitudes, Kaufmann and Goodwin (2018) find a nonlinear relationship between areal unit size and immigration attitudes: immigrant or ethnic concentration is associated with more restrictionist attitudes when areal units are very small areas or very large ones; neighbourhood-level areal units of immigrant or ethnic concentration are associated with less restrictionist attitudes. Accordingly, I rely on the cross-national literature outside Australia to advance the following hypothesis relating to the effect of local, neighbourhood-level immigrant context.

H₂: With larger local immigrant populations, the expression of restrictionist immigration (asylum) policy attitudes tends to decrease.

Still other recent studies have claimed that established immigrant populations may not provoke restrictionist attitudes, and indeed high immigrant numbers may dampen them, but *rising* immigrant numbers in one's milieu provokes restrictionist sentiment: demographic change in native-born populations' neighbourhoods triggers a sense of threat to their political and economic standing and thus leads to restrictionist immigration attitudes. Studies of American and British immigration attitudes using change-based (as opposed to size-based) measures of outgroups have confirmed that local-level demographic change increases restrictionist attitudes (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015; Hopkins 2010; Kaufmann 2017; Newman and Velez 2014). It is important to consider these studies in the light of recent Australian media commentary about rising immigrant numbers in parts of Sydney and Melbourne, and the policy challenges of integrating large numbers of new immigrants (Salt 2018). Still, previous studies of Australian immigration policy attitudes have not examined this dynamic. The immigrant change hypothesis can thus be expressed as follows.

H₃: With local immigrant populations growing in size over time, the expression of restrictionist immigration (asylum) policy attitudes tends to increase.

It again worth considering the directionality of the relationship between local demographic context and immigration attitudes. A plausible alternative mechanism posits that individuals might select their places of residence (and thereby their demographic

contexts) on the basis of their racial and immigration attitudes – in effect, the reverse of the hypotheses advanced above. Tests of self-selection have not, however, been borne out empirically in other country cases. In the American case, Ha (2008) and Oliver and Wong (2003) find no evidence that racial and ethnic prejudice among whites is predictive of their local demographic contexts. Using panel data to study immigration attitudes (and thus avoiding issues with endogeneity), Hopkins (2010), Kaufmann and Harris (2015), and Kaufmann (2017) similarly conclude that local demographic context is predictive of immigration attitudes, and not the reverse. The direction of causality is thus credibly assumed to flow from local demographic context to immigration and asylum policy attitudes.

In addition to these baseline expectations for the effects of party identification and local immigrant concentration, both in terms of levels and changes, these variables may also interact in more complex ways with different segments of the Australian electorate reacting differently to particular local demographic contexts. Previous research on Australian immigration attitudes (e.g., Bilodeau and Fadol 2011; Martinez i Coma and Smith 2018). have not tested such moderated relationships. By contrast, studies of American immigration attitudes have found that large local Hispanic populations and growing local Hispanic populations both contribute to greater polarisation in immigration attitudes between Republicans (who become more restrictionist) and Democrats (who become less so) (Gravelle 2016). Hawley (2011) finds that Republicans are consistent in their support of more restrictionist immigration policies irrespective of immigrant population size, but Democrats become less restrictionist as local immigrant concentration increases. A theoretical explanation for these findings is proposed by Johnston, Newman, and Velez (2015): different political segments of society respond in different ways to local demographic context, since as a general psychological phenomenon, those on the political right are more averse to uncertainty, and those on political left are more accepting of uncertainty. Those on the political left and right thus respond differently to changes in their local environment, with those on the left more likely to accept (or even embrace) change and those on the right more likely to avoid uncertainty and react defensively (cf. Hibbing, Smith, and Alford 2014). This research motivates expectations for heterogeneous effects of local-level immigrant concentration, specifically that larger (and growing) local-level immigrant populations result in greater partisan polarisation on immigration and asylum policy issues. These expectations can be expressed in the following two hypotheses.

H4: The effect of party identification on restrictionist immigration (asylum) policy attitudes is larger when local immigrant populations are larger.

H5: The effect of party identification on restrictionist immigration (asylum) policy attitudes is larger when the rate of change in the size of the local immigrant population is higher.

Other areas of research have emphasised the role of sociodemographic factors such as age, sex, and education. In broad terms, these studies have found that men, older people, and those with secondary education or less are more likely to hold restrictionist attitudes toward immigration and asylum policy (Bilodeau and Fadol 2011; Goot and Watson 2010; Markus, Jupp, and McDonald 2009). Overlapping (in part) with party identification, left–right ideology has also been shown to shape immigration and asylum policy attitudes (Bilodeau

and Fadol 2011; Chandler and Tsai 2001; Gravelle 2018b). Yet other studies identify effects of economic threat on attitudes toward immigration and asylum policy, pointing to perceived competition for (often lower-skilled) jobs, and the costs of social welfare for newcomers as provoking restrictionist attitudes (Mayda 2006; Scheve and Slaughter 2001). Others emphasise instead symbolic (or cultural) threat on attitudes toward immigration and asylum policy, where immigrants are viewed as having a pernicious effect on the national culture (Breton 2015; Ostfeld 2017). Still other research finds that perceptions of both economic and symbolic/cultural threat contribute to individuals' immigration and asylum policy attitudes (Chandler and Tsai 2001; Gravelle 2018b; Harell et al. 2012). Immigrant concentration is of course only one aspect of context, and previous research has also found that economic dimensions of local context (or even national context viewed across time) shape immigration policy attitudes. Specifically, lower median household income and higher unemployment rates are associated with more restrictionist attitudes (Hopkins 2010; Newman and Velez 2014; Wilkes, Guppy, and Farris 2008). Contextual measures of income and employment may also be partly confounded with measures of immigrant concentration: in the Australian case, immigrants settle where the jobs are. Given these previous findings, sociodemographic variables, left-right ideological self-placement, measures of perceptions of economic and cultural threat, and measures of economic context are included as covariates.

3. Data and Method

To test these theoretical expectations, I draw on data from the Australian Election Study (AES) from 2010 ($n = 2,214$), 2013 ($n = 3,955$), and 2016 ($n = 2,818$). The restricted versions of the AES datasets (containing respondent postcodes) were obtained from the Australian Data Archive. The AES is conducted as a post-election survey of the Australian voting-age population. A mail survey is the main data collection method for the AES, though respondents to the 2013 and 2016 waves could optionally complete the survey online. Samples for the AES are drawn from the Australian Electoral Roll maintained by the Australian Electoral Commission listing all Australian citizens registered to vote. The 2016 AES included a supplementary postal address sample from the Geocoded National Address File maintained by the Public Sector Mapping Authority. The 2010 AES also included a web survey component, but because completed web surveys could not be linked to residential postcodes, these data are excluded from the analysis. The adjusted response rates for the AES mail surveys reported in the study technical documentation are: 42.5% in 2010, 32.4% in 2013, and 22.5% in 2016. I also limit my analyses to the subsamples of native-born Australians of Australian or European ancestry. This aligns with the traditional (if gradually fading) conception of Australian society as predominantly British in origin while also including the Australian-born offspring of post-World War II European immigrants (mainly from southern Europe) and Australians of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestry (Markus, Jupp, and McDonald 2009). This also aligns with practices in the study of immigration and outgroup attitudes in other settler societies which focus their analyses on the predominant racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups: e.g., the non-Hispanic white population in the US (Gravelle 2016; Newman and Velez 2014), and the European-descendent, English- and French-speaking majorities in Canada (Gravelle 2018a). This practice has also been recently endorsed

as best practice for the study of immigration attitudes in western societies (Kaufmann and Goodwin 2018). These subsetting procedures reduce the sample size for analysis to 5,979.

The key survey item measuring immigration policy attitudes asks: “Do you think the number of immigrants allowed into Australia nowadays should be reduced or increased?” Response categories for this five-point survey item range from “Increased a lot” to “Decreased a lot” with a “Remain about the same as it is” as the midpoint. This question parallels those asked in other election surveys, such as the American National Election Study and the Canadian Election Study. The item capturing attitudes toward asylum policy, however, is uniquely Australian and reflects Australia’s geography, asking respondents whether they agree or disagree that “All boats carrying asylum seekers should be turned back.” Overall, Australians’ immigration and asylum policy attitudes exhibit a restrictionist orientation, with a plurality favouring a reduction in the number of immigrants allowed into Australia (46.8 percent), and agreeing that boats carrying asylum seekers should be turned back (49.6 percent). Far fewer support increasing the number of immigrants (20.9 percent) or disagree with turning back boats (31.9 percent) (see Tables 1 and 2). These results are broadly in line with other survey results obtained from the 1990s through the 2010s. (Birrell 2013; Goot and Watson 2011; Markus 2014; Markus, Jupp, and McDonald 2009; Simon and Sikich 2007).

The AES surveys include a consistent measure of party identification, asking: “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as Liberal, Labor, National or what?”. This allows for the coding of supporters of the Liberal-National Coalition, Labor, Greens, and a residual category for supporters of other minor parties or having no party identification.

The AES surveys contain measures of the perceived effects of immigrants on Australia that are serviceable measures of perceived economic threat and cultural threat. The AES surveys include two items capturing perceived economic threat: “Immigrants take jobs away from people who are born in Australia” and “Immigrants are generally good for Australia’s economy” (reverse coded). These two items are averaged to produce a composite measure of the perceived negative economic effect of immigrants (standardised Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.70$). A

Table 1: Australian Immigration Policy Attitudes (2010–2016)

Do you think the number of immigrants allowed into Australia nowadays should be reduced or increased?

Year	2010 (%)	2013 (%)	2016 (%)	Total (%)
Reduced a lot	29.7	22.8	25.5	25.3
Reduced a little	27.1	20.7	18.7	21.5
Remain about the same as it is	31.0	32.9	30.5	31.7
Increased a little	9.5	16.5	15.7	14.6
Increased a lot	2.2	6.1	9.4	6.2
n =	1,386	2,706	1,887	5,979

Table 2: Australian Asylum Policy Attitudes (2010–2016)

*Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement?
All boats carrying asylum seekers should be turned back?*

Year	2010 (%)	2013 (%)	2016 (%)	Total (%)
Strongly agree	32.6	29.1	27.7	29.5
Agree	22.1	18.8	20.8	20.2
Neither agree nor disagree	18.3	16.2	19.2	17.6
Disagree	16.2	18.3	17.4	17.5
Strongly disagree	10.5	16.5	14.0	14.3
n =	1,386	2,706	1,887	5,979

single item from the AES relates to cultural threat, or rather its inverse, in asking “Immigrants make Australia more open to new ideas and cultures.” These are included as covariates in the regression models.

Measuring the local immigrant population size and change in immigrant population size, even with respondent postcodes in-hand, is an exercise in “data wrangling.” Respondent postcodes were joined to the corresponding Statistical Areas Level 2 (SA2) 2016 census geographies using the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Postcode to SA2 2016 Correspondence File, and then joined to ABS SA2 Time Series Profile population data for 2006 and 2016.² It is worth highlighting both the recency of the census data (Australia conducts its census every five years), as well as its very high rate of coverage and low rate of non-response. This two-step join avoids known issues with discrepancies between Australia Post postcode boundaries and ABS postal areas (Jones et al. 2003). It also ensures that the population figures use consistent areas over time: the ABS produces time series tables for the decade 2006–2016 for this purpose, and SA2 regions are the smallest such areas (notably, federal electoral divisions change over time due to redistricting, called redistribution in Australia). SA2 regions capture areas with an average population of approximately 10,000, and ranging between approximately 3,000 and 25,000. There are more than 2,200 SA2 areas covering all of Australia. For many postcodes and SA2 regions, there is a one-for-one match, especially in densely populated urban areas. Where multiple SA2 regions map to a given postcode, local-area contextual measures are calculated as a weighted average of the SA2 population figures using the postcode-to-SA2 percentages for each postcode provided in the Correspondence File. These procedures – using respondent postcodes as the main indicator of respondents’ locations but linking to census data at the SA2 level – allow for a measure of respondents’ local demographic context that is much finer-grained and more stable over time than the federal electoral district measures relied on in other studies of Australian immigration attitudes (Bilodeau and Fadol 2011; Martinez i Coma and Smith 2018). Lastly, I

2. <http://www.abs.gov.au>.

log-transform these measures of local demographic context, reflecting the expectation that they exert a diminishing effect on attitudes with increasing values (Gravelle 2016, 2018b).

It is clear that immigrants are a prominent aspect of many Australians' local context, though this varies widely: the mean immigrant population size at the local level is 22.3 percent, with a minimum observed value of 2.9 percent (in rural Coonamble, New South Wales) and a maximum of 73.7 percent (in Melbourne, Victoria). Similarly, measures of change in the immigrant population vary widely: the mean is 3.0 percentage points, with a minimum observed value of -5.6 percentage points (in O'Sullivan Beach, South Australia) and a maximum of 38.1 percentage points (in Crace and Mitchell, Australian Capital Territory).

Because listwise deletion of missing survey data (due to item nonresponse) can bias model parameters, I use multiple imputation (MI) procedures to impute missing survey responses (Allison 2001; Little and Rubin 2002), creating 10 multiply-imputed datasets. Owing to the ordered categorical nature of the immigration policy and asylum policy questions, I fit ordinal logit models to the multiply-imputed data; this models the probabilities of lower-ordered response categories as cumulative over the probabilities of a higher-ordered response (Fox 2008). I also fit the ordinal logit models using procedures that account for the complex sample designs and weighting of the AES data. These model results are then combined using procedures advanced by Rubin (1987) to produce the final reported parameter estimates.

4. Results: Australians' Immigration Policy Attitudes

The regression models provide a number of notable results (see Table 3).³ Looking first at Australians' immigration policy attitudes, several of the covariates have significant effects. The coefficients for the years 2013 and 2016 are negative and significant, indicating that immigration attitudes in these years were less restrictionist than in 2010, when asylum seekers and border protection were important election campaign issues. Also, older Australians are more likely to favour a reduction in the number of immigrants coming to Australia, while those with a university degree are more likely to favour an increase. These

3. It is important to acknowledge that the model results indicate that the proportional odds assumption (i.e., that one set of model parameters describes the relationship between the independent variables and the ordered dependent variable) does not hold. For Model 1.1, the proportional odds chi-square test is 175.78, d.f. = 66, $p < 0.001$; for Model 2.1, it is 305.59, d.f. = 66, $p < 0.001$. Still, numerous discussions of the ordinal logit model have noted that this test has limited practical utility: it is too liberal, with high type I error rates, and often indicates a violation of the proportional odds assumption when the sample size is large, or there are several model parameters (both apply here). Further, a proportional odds model may still be preferable for reasons of parsimony and ease of interpretation when violations of the proportional odds assumption are modest (Agresti 2010; Allison 2012; O'Connell 2011). Binary logit models fit using alternative dichotomisations of the ordered dependent variables also reveal that key model results are not substantively different. Based on this tenuous evidence of violations of the proportional odds assumption and a desire to advance a simple explanation of the results, I maintain that proportional-odds ordinal logit models are appropriate for these data.

Table 3: Explaining Australian Attitudes toward Immigration (Ordinal Logit)

	Model 1.1		Model 1.2		Model 1.3	
	b	(SE)	b	(SE)	b	(SE)
Intercept 5	-0.99	(0.09)***	-0.99	(0.09)***	-0.99	(0.09)***
Intercept 4	0.56	(0.10)***	0.56	(0.10)***	0.55	(0.10)***
Intercept 3	2.87	(0.11)***	2.87	(0.11)***	2.86	(0.10)***
Intercept 2	4.79	(0.13)***	4.79	(0.13)***	4.79	(0.13)***
Year (Ref = 2010)						
2013	-0.57	(0.08)***	-0.56	(0.08)***	-0.56	(0.08)***
2016	-0.51	(0.08)***	-0.50	(0.08)***	-0.51	(0.08)***
Sex: Male	-0.06	(0.06)	-0.06	(0.06)	-0.06	(0.06)
Age (years logged)	0.60	(0.09)***	0.60	(0.09)***	0.60	(0.09)***
University Degree	-0.37	(0.07)***	-0.38	(0.07)***	-0.38	(0.07)***
State (Ref = New South Wales)						
Victoria	0.01	(0.08)	0.02	(0.08)	0.01	(0.08)
Queensland	-0.14	(0.08)	-0.13	(0.08)	-0.13	(0.08)
South Australia	-0.28	(0.10)**	-0.28	(0.10)**	-0.28	(0.10)*
Western Australia	-0.12	(0.12)	-0.12	(0.12)	-0.12	(0.12)
Tasmania	-0.44	(0.15)**	-0.46	(0.16)**	-0.44	(0.16)*
Northern Territory	-0.49	(0.35)	-0.47	(0.35)	-0.48	(0.35)
Australian Capital Territory	-0.07	(0.21)	-0.05	(0.21)	-0.07	(0.21)
Party Identification (Ref = Coalition)						
Labor	-0.18	(0.07)*	-0.18	(0.07)*	-0.18	(0.07)***
Greens	-0.52	(0.14)***	-0.54	(0.15)***	-0.52	(0.14)***
Other Party/No Party	-0.02	(0.09)	-0.02	(0.09)	-0.02	(0.09)
Ideology (Left–Right)	0.59	(0.17)***	0.58	(0.17)***	0.59	(0.17)***
Immigrants Have Negative Economic Effect	6.39	(0.20)***	6.38	(0.20)***	6.38	(0.20)***
Immigrants Make Australia More Open	-1.92	(0.17)***	-1.92	(0.17)***	-1.92	(0.17)***
Median Household Income (\$000) (SA 2016) (logged)	-0.37	(0.18)*	-0.40	(0.18)*	-0.38	(0.18)*
Unemployment % (SA 2016)	-0.01	(0.02)	-0.01	(0.02)	-0.01	(0.02)
Immigrant Pop. % (SA2, 2016) (logged)	-0.17	(0.08)*	-0.01	(0.10)	-0.17	(0.08)*
Immigrant Pop. % Point Change (SA2, 2006–2016) (logged)	0.53	(0.16)**	0.53	(0.16)**	0.69	(0.23)**
Labor × Immigrant Pop. %			-0.31	(0.11)**		
Greens × Immigrant Pop. %			-0.03	(0.24)		
Other Party/No Party × Immigrant Pop. %			-0.21	(0.15)		
Labor × Immigrant Pop. % Point Change					-0.39	(0.28)
Greens × Immigrant Pop. % Point Change					-0.34	(0.50)
Other/No Party × Immigrant Pop. % Point Change					0.07	(0.37)
N	5,979		5,979		5,979	
Model χ^2	4,164.33		4,174.62		4,167.87	
d.f.	22		25		25	
Likelihood ratio χ^2			10.29*		3.54	
Nagelkerke pseudo- R^2	0.52		0.53		0.53	

results align with existing research on immigration policy attitudes in Australia (Bilodeau and Fadol 2011; Martinez i Coma and Smith 2018), as well as research on the US (Gravelle 2016; Hawley 2011), Canada (Bilodeau, Turgeon, and Karakoç 2012; Gravelle 2018b), and Europe (Sides and Citrin 2007). In terms of regional variation, the regression results indicate that there is greater acceptance of increased numbers of immigrants in South Australia and Tasmania – the two least-populous states. This implies that after controlling for other factors, there are no substantive differences in the attitudes of residents of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, and Western Australia, the most populous states that also attract the majority of immigrants to Australia. There is also some evidence of an effect of local economic context: higher local-area median household income is associated with less restrictionist attitudes, while local unemployment has no effect.

The results also indicate that ideology and perceptions of group threat play important roles in shaping Australians' immigration attitudes. Right-wing ideological identification is associated with favouring reductions in the number of immigrants, as are heightened perceptions of economic threat (both labour market competition and increased fiscal burden). By contrast, beliefs that immigrants make Australia more open (effectively the inverse of cultural threat) lead to favouring increases in the number of immigrants. These results are largely expected, and are congruent with results from other western immigrant-receiving countries showing that both types of group threat shape attitudes toward immigration (Gravelle 2018b; Harell et al. 2012). Interestingly, however, the absolute values of the coefficients for the measure of economic threat are substantively larger than those for the (reversed) measure of cultural threat. This provides a contrast with research on American and European immigration attitudes which finds that cultural threat is pre-eminent (Chandler and Tsai 2001; McLaren 2003); it is consistent, however, with research on attitudes in Canada which assigns greater importance to perceptions of economic threat (Gravelle 2018b).

In addition to the (unsurprising) effects of ideology and group threat, there are still significant effects of party identification on Australians' immigration policy attitudes. The results from Model 1.1 confirm that Labor identifiers and Greens identifiers are (in turn) significantly less likely to say that immigration ought to be reduced (compared to Coalition identifiers). To express these model results plainly, we can calculate predicted probabilities of wanting immigration reduced (either a little or a lot) and set all independent variables to their means or reference categories while systematically varying party identification. Here, this entails constructing the profiles of three hypothetical 46-year-old women without a university degree, residing in New South Wales in the year 2010, ideologically centrist, who differ only in their party identification. Based on these profiles, a Coalition identifier has a predicted probability of wanting to reduce immigration of 0.64, a Labor identifier has a predicted probability of 0.59, and a Greens identifier has a predicted probability of 0.51. These results thus confirm the party identification hypothesis (H_1).

Turning to the effect of the local immigrant population size on immigration attitudes, the results from Model 1.1 again indicate a significant negative relationship, implying that as immigrant concentration at the local level increases, support for restrictionist immigration

policies decreases. This offers support for the immigrant population size hypothesis (H₂). Further, this result strongly supports the expectation of a “positive contact” effect as opposed to a threat effect of local-level immigration concentration given areal units of the size of Australian SA2s and postcodes (mean total population for the AES subset used here is 13,854) obtained in a meta-analysis of studies examining the effect of ethnic or immigrant concentration on immigration attitudes (Kaufmann and Goodwin 2018).

Still, Model 1.1 captures only the unconditional effect of local immigrant context; it does not include an interaction between immigrant concentration and party identification, which is added in Model 1.2. The party identification × immigrant population size interaction is statistically significant, as indicated by the chi-square test of nested models. The lower-order term for the immigrant percentage is insignificant (and effectively zero), indicating that immigrant concentration has no effect among Coalition identifiers. By contrast, the higher-order Labor × immigrant population size coefficient is negative and significant, indicating that local immigrant concentration has a greater (negative) effect among Labor identifiers compared to Coalition identifiers. The Greens × immigrant population size coefficient is not significant and little different from zero. Thus, the effect of immigrant population percentage at the local level only holds among part of the Australian electorate – namely Labor identifiers. Probing of the interaction indicates that Labor identifiers are significantly different from Coalition identifiers when the local immigrant population is 17.2 percent or greater; Labor identifiers are also significantly different from Greens identifiers when the foreign-born concentration is 26.3 percent or less.

To explicate these patterns of models results, it is again useful to translate the results into predicted probabilities and depict them graphically (see Figure 1), this time manipulating party identification and foreign-born concentration. For Coalition identifiers, the predicted probability of wanting reduced immigration when the local immigrant percentage is 10 percent is 0.64; it is again 0.64 when immigrant percentage is 30 percent; it is little different at 0.63 when immigrant percentage is 50 percent. For Labor identifiers, the predicted probability of wanting reduced immigration when the local immigrant percentage is 10 percent is 0.64 (no different from Coalition identifiers); it is 0.56 when the immigrant percentage is 30 percent; it is 0.52 when the immigrant percentage is 50 percent. In the case of Greens identifiers, the predicted probability of wanting reduced immigration when the local immigrant percentage is 10 percent is 0.51; it is little changed at 0.50 when the local immigrant percentage is 30 percent; it is 0.49 when the local immigrant percentage is 50 percent. Thus, the effects of local immigrant concentration are negligible among Coalition and Greens identifiers: they are consistently more (or less) restrictionist in their attitudes, respectively. By contrast, the immigration policy attitudes of Labor identifiers are evidently shaped by local demographic context. At low levels of local immigrant concentration, Labor supporters are indistinguishable from Coalition supporters; but when immigrant concentration is high, Labor supporters are indistinguishable from Greens supporters. Overall, these results support the immigrant population size moderation hypothesis (H₄).

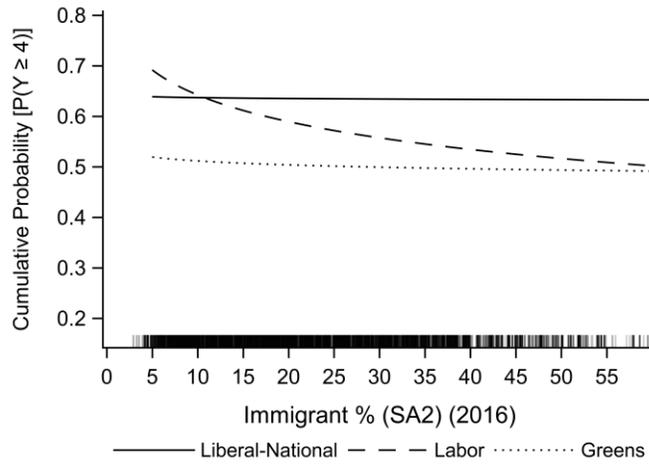


Figure 1: Effect Plot, Immigration Policy Attitudes and Local Immigrant Concentration

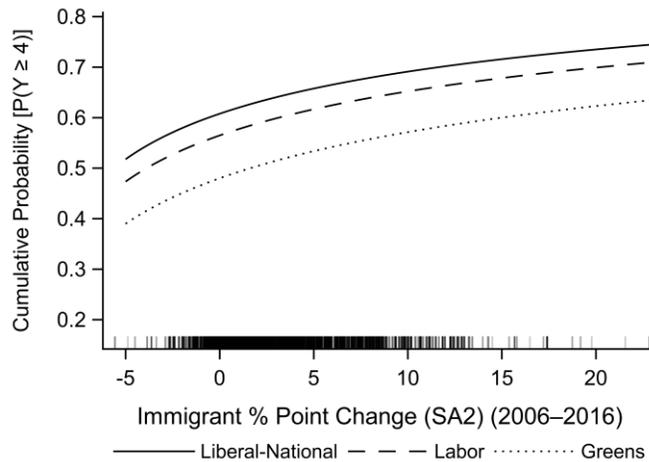


Figure 2: Effect Plot, Immigration Policy Attitudes and Change in Local Immigrant Concentration

The results from Model 1.1 also indicate a significant and positive effect for the logged percentage point change in the local foreign-born population between 2006 and 2016. With increasing immigrant concentration over time, Australians become more restrictionist in their attitudes. Results from Model 1.3 show no interaction between party identification and over-time change in foreign-born concentration. Thus, the evidence points to a consistent (additive) effect of change in foreign-born concentration across the Australian electorate, supporting the immigrant population change hypothesis (H_3) but failing to confirm any moderation of party identification by change in immigrant population (H_5). These different patterns – reduced restrictionism with higher immigrant concentration but heightened restrictionism with increasing immigrant concentration over time – is congruent with research focusing on the US and Canada (Gravelle 2018b; Newman and Velez 2014) as well as a recent meta-analysis which finds a positive association between local-level ethnic change and perceptions of threat (Kaufmann and Goodwin 2018).

Translating the regression results into predicted probabilities is again helpful. A Coalition identifier experiencing zero change in immigrant population between 2006 and 2016 has a predicted probability of wanting reduced immigration of 0.61; a 10 percentage point increase in immigrant population raises the predicted probability to 0.69; a 20 percentage point increase raises the predicted probability to 0.73. By comparison, a Labor identifier experiencing zero change in immigrant population has a predicted probability of wanting reduced immigration of 0.56; a 10 percentage point increase in immigrant population raises the predicted probability to 0.65; a 20 percentage point increase raises the predicted probability to 0.70. A Greens identifier experiencing zero change in immigrant population has a predicted probability of wanting reduced immigration of 0.48; a 10 percentage point increase raises the predicted probability to 0.57; a 20 percentage point increase raises the predicted probability to 0.62 (see Figure 2).

5. Results: Australians' Asylum Policy Attitudes

Shifting focus from immigration policy to the acceptance of asylum seekers, similar patterns emerge from the regression analysis (see Table 4). Several of the covariates again have significant effects. The coefficient for the year 2013 is negative and significant, indicating that attitudes toward the acceptance of asylum seekers during the 2013 election were less restrictionist than in 2010; there are no significant differences between 2010 and 2016. Similarly, older Australians are more likely to agree with turning back boats of asylum seekers, as are males, while those with a university degree are more likely to disagree with turning back boats. These results broadly align with research on the acceptance of asylum seekers in Canada and Europe (Gravelle 2018b; Ivarsflaten 2005). Regional variation in attitudes toward asylum seekers is quite muted, with only residents of Tasmania (the least populous state, but also the most geographically distant from landing sites of boats of asylum seekers) expressing more accepting attitudes toward asylum seekers, all else being equal. The results show inconsistent effects of local economic context: median household income is significant at conventional levels only in Model 2.2; local unemployment has no effect.

As with immigration policy attitudes, ideology and perceptions of group threat are important in shaping Australians' attitudes toward turning back boats. Identifying with the right ideologically is positively associated with the rejection of asylum seekers, as are heightened perceptions of economic threat, while beliefs that immigrants make Australia more open is negatively associated. As common-sense as these results are, it is noteworthy that perceptions of economic threat exert a substantively larger effect on attitudes toward accepting asylum seekers than cultural threat, whereas the opposite is found in Canada (Gravelle 2018b).

In addition to the effects of ideology and group threat, Australians' attitudes toward the acceptance or rejection of asylum seekers also bear the imprint of party identification. As in the case of immigration attitudes, the results from Model 2.1 show that Labor identifiers and Greens identifiers are (in turn) significantly less likely to say that boats of asylum seekers ought to be turned back (compared to Coalition identifiers). We can again calculate the predicted probabilities for agreeing (either strongly or somewhat) with turning back boats of

Table 4: Explaining Australian Attitudes toward Asylum Seekers (Ordinal Logit)

	Model 2.1		Model 2.2		Model 2.3	
	b	(SE)	b	(SE)	b	(SE)
Intercept 5	-0.66	(0.09)***	-0.67	(0.09)***	-0.66	(0.09)***
Intercept 4	0.61	(0.09)***	0.60	(0.09)***	0.61	(0.09)***
Intercept 3	1.76	(0.09)***	1.76	(0.09)***	1.76	(0.09)***
Intercept 2	3.35	(0.10)***	3.35	(0.10)***	3.35	(0.10)***
Year (Ref = 2010)						
2013	-0.19	(0.07)*	-0.19	(0.07)**	-0.19	(0.07)*
2016	0.03	(0.08)	0.04	(0.08)	0.03	(0.08)
Sex: Male	0.27	(0.06)***	0.26	(0.06)***	0.27	(0.06)***
Age (years logged)	0.56	(0.09)***	0.56	(0.09)***	0.56	(0.09)***
University Degree	-0.54	(0.07)***	-0.54	(0.07)***	-0.54	(0.07)***
State (Ref = New South Wales)						
Victoria	-0.14	(0.08)	-0.13	(0.08)	-0.14	(0.08)
Queensland	-0.13	(0.09)	-0.13	(0.09)	-0.13	(0.09)
South Australia	-0.16	(0.11)	-0.16	(0.11)	-0.16	(0.11)
Western Australia	-0.04	(0.11)	-0.04	(0.12)	-0.04	(0.11)
Tasmania	-0.37	(0.16)*	-0.41	(0.16)*	-0.37	(0.16)*
Northern Territory	0.06	(0.38)	0.07	(0.38)	0.06	(0.38)
Australian Capital Territory	-0.17	(0.20)	-0.14	(0.20)	-0.17	(0.20)
Party Identification (Ref = Coalition)						
Labor	-0.82	(0.07)***	-0.82	(0.07)***	-0.82	(0.07)***
Greens	-1.43	(0.14)***	-1.44	(0.14)***	-1.43	(0.14)***
Other Party/No Party	-0.55	(0.09)***	-0.55	(0.09)***	-0.55	(0.09)***
Ideology (Left–Right)	1.31	(0.16)***	1.30	(0.16)***	1.31	(0.16)***
Immigrants Have Negative Economic Effect	4.65	(0.19)***	4.64	(0.19)***	4.65	(0.19)***
Immigrants Make Australia More Open	-1.71	(0.17)***	-1.71	(0.17)***	-1.71	(0.17)***
Median Household Income (\$000) (SA 2016) (logged)	-0.31	(0.18)	-0.35	(0.18)*	-0.31	(0.18)
Unemployment % (SA 2016)	0.03	(0.02)	0.03	(0.02)	0.03	(0.02)
Immigrant Pop. % (SA2, 2016) (logged)	-0.11	(0.08)	0.07	(0.10)	-0.11	(0.08)
Immigrant Pop. % Point Change (SA2, 2006–2016) (logged)	0.32	(0.16)*	0.33	(0.16)*	0.31	(0.22)
Labor × Immigrant Pop. %			-0.37	(0.11)***		
Greens × Immigrant Pop. %			-0.15	(0.23)		
Other Party/No Party × Immigrant Pop. %			-0.20	(0.15)		
Labor × Immigrant Pop. % Point Change					0.00	(0.28)
Greens × Immigrant Pop. % Point Change					0.07	(0.45)
Other/No Party × Immigrant Pop. % Point Change					0.02	(0.35)
N	5,979		5,979		5,979	
Model χ^2	3,667.33		3,681.00		3,667.30	
d.f.	22		25		25	
Likelihood ratio χ^2			13.67**		0.00	
Nagelkerke pseudo- R^2	0.48		0.48		0.48	

asylum seekers for the same profiles of three hypothetical 46-year-old women who do not have a university degree, reside in New South Wales, in the year 2010, are centrist ideologically, and who differ only in their party identification. Doing so makes clear that party identification exerts a substantively larger effect on attitudes toward accepting asylum seekers than on immigration policy. To illustrate, a Coalition identifier has a predicted probability of agreeing with turning back the boats of 0.65, a Labor identifier has a predicted probability of 0.45, and a Greens identifier has a predicted probability of 0.31. These results offer clear evidence in support of the party identification hypothesis (H₁).

While the coefficient for the local-area immigrant percentage in Model 2.1 is negatively signed and thus in the theoretically expected direction, it is not statistically significant. This fails to confirm the immigrant population size hypothesis (H₂). Still it is important to note that Model 2.1 only specifies an additive (unconditional) effect of immigrant concentration. The interaction between immigrant population size and party identification is added in Model 2.2. The interaction is again statistically significant, as indicated by the chi-square test of nested models. The lower-order term for the immigrant population percentage is effectively zero, indicating no effect among Coalition identifiers. The higher-order Labor × immigrant population percentage coefficient is negative and significant, indicating that local immigrant concentration has a greater (negative) effect among Labor identifiers compared to Coalition identifiers (where again there is no effect). The Greens × foreign born percentage is negatively signed but not statistically significant. The results thus fit the same pattern as with immigration attitudes: they indicate that the effect of local immigrant concentration on attitudes toward the acceptance or rejection of asylum seekers only holds among Labor identifiers. This again offers support for the immigration population size moderation hypothesis (H₄). Probing of the interaction indicates that Labor identifiers are significantly different from Coalition identifiers when the immigrant concentration is 4.9 percent or more; Labor identifiers are also significantly different from Greens identifiers when the immigrant concentration is 46.2 percent or less.

It is again helpful to depict these results graphically (see Figure 3). For Coalition identifiers, the predicted probability of wanting to turn back the boats when the local immigrant population size is 10 percent is 0.63; it is 0.65 when the immigrant population size is 30 percent; it is 0.66 when the immigrant population size is 50 percent. For Labor identifiers, the predicted probability of wanting to turn back the boats when the local immigrant population size is 10 percent is 0.49; it is 0.41 when the immigrant population size is 30 percent; it is 0.38 when the immigrant population size is 50 percent. For Greens identifiers, the predicted probability of wanting to turn back the boats when the local immigrant population size is 10 percent is 0.31; it is 0.30 when the immigrant population size is 30 percent; it is 0.29 when the immigrant population size is 50 percent. Once more, then, the effects of local immigrant concentration are found to be negligible among Coalition and Greens identifiers: they are fixedly restrictionist or open in their attitudes toward asylum seekers, respectively. Labor identifiers' attitudes toward accepting asylum seekers are again shown to be affected by local demographic context. At low levels of immigrant concentration, Labor identifiers are similar to Coalition identifiers, but when immigrant concentration is

high, Labor identifiers come to resemble more closely Greens identifiers. These results again support the immigrant population size moderation hypothesis (H₄).

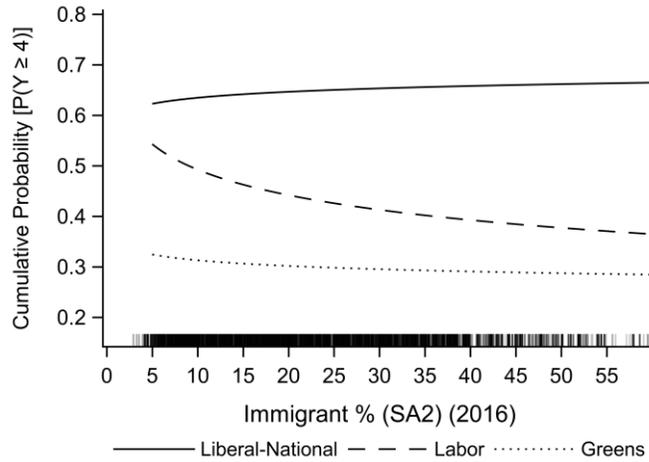


Figure 3: Effect Plot, Asylum Policy Attitudes and Local Immigrant Concentration

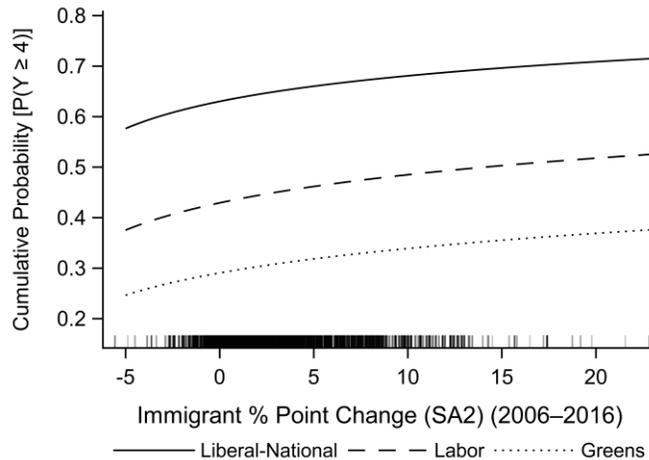


Figure 4: Effect Plot, Asylum Policy Attitudes and Change in Local Immigrant Concentration

The results from Model 2.1 also yield another significant and positive effect for the logged percentage point change in the local immigrant population between 2006 and 2016. With increasing immigrant concentration over time, Australians become more likely to agree with turning back boats of asylum seekers. Results from Model 2.3 show no interaction between party identification and over-time in immigrant population change, indicating a constant effect of change in immigrant concentration across the Australian electorate, again supporting the group size change hypothesis (H₃) but failing to support the moderation hypothesis (H₅). The findings of more open attitudes toward asylum seekers with higher

immigrant concentration – though only among Labor supporters – alongside more restrictionist attitudes with increasing immigrant concentration over time for all segments of the Australian electorate parallel the findings above relating to Australians’ immigration policy attitudes.

Translating the regression results into predicted probabilities is again helpful. A Coalition identifier experiencing zero change in their local immigrant population between 2006 and 2016 has a predicted probability of agreeing with turning back the boats of 0.63; a 10 percentage point increase in immigrant population raises the predicted probability to 0.68; a 20 percentage point increase in immigrant population raises the predicted probability to 0.71. A Labor identifier experiencing zero change in their local immigrant population has a predicted probability of agreeing with turning back the boats of 0.43; a 10 percentage point increase in immigrant population raises the predicted probability to 0.48; a 20 percentage point increase in immigrant population raises the predicted probability to 0.52. A Greens identifier experiencing zero change in their local immigrant population has a predicted probability of agreeing with turning back the boats of 0.29; a 10 percentage point increase in immigrant population raises the predicted probability to 0.34; a 20 percentage point increase in immigrant population raises the predicted probability to 0.37 (see Figure 4).

6. Conclusion

This article asked at its outset how the Australian public comes to hold alternatively open or restrictionist migration policy attitudes. In exploring Australians’ attitudes toward levels of immigration and desired policy response to asylum seekers, the article took advantage of the spatially referenced data available from the Australian Election Study conducted in 2010, 2013, and 2016 to test a number of prevailing hypotheses from the cross-national and Australian research literatures on public attitudes toward immigration and asylum policy. The results confirm that Australians’ immigration and asylum policy attitudes bear the imprint of party identification, with Coalition identifiers being the most restrictionist, and Labor and Greens supporters progressively less restrictionist in their attitudes. These effects persist even when controlling for a range of sociodemographic factors, political ideology, and more proximate beliefs about economic and cultural threats posed by immigrants.

Just as party identification shapes Australians’ migration policy attitudes, so too does neighbourhood-level demographic context, but in complex ways. The size of the local immigrant population exerts a negative effect on restrictionist attitudes toward immigration and asylum policy, but only among supporters of the Australian Labor Party, and not among supporters of the Liberal-National Coalition or the Australian Greens. Both Coalition and Greens supporters appear “immune” to the effects of local immigrant population size, and remain consistently restrictionist or open in their migration policy attitudes, respectively. This interactive relationship between politics and place has notable similarities with the American case (Gravelle 2016; Hawley 2011). It is also important to reiterate that this negative (moderated) relationship is in the opposite direction of that found in previous research using larger-area, less granular measures of demographic context (Bilodeau and Fadol 2011;

Martinez i Coma and Smith 2018). The scale at which one measures local demographic context is therefore critically important, since its resolution has direct bearing on the results one obtains (Kaufmann and Goodwin 2018; Pottie-Sherman and Wilkes 2017).

The size of the local immigrant population, however, is distinct from *change* in its size over time. Unlike the interactive effect of immigrant population size at work among Labor identifiers in producing more open attitudes, the effect of change in immigration population size is additive, at work among Coalition, Labor, and Greens identifiers alike, and produces more restrictionist immigration and asylum policy attitudes. In this respect, the dynamics in Australian public attitudes parallel those found in other country contexts (Kaufmann 2017; Kaufmann and Goodwin 2018; Newman and Velez 2014).

While I have presented results from the first study (to my knowledge) of Australian attitudes toward immigration and asylum policy to use truly local measures of immigrant concentration, these analyses of the Australian Election Study data do not exhaust the topic. It is important to highlight the limitations of “static” measures of local context (such as those used here and in previous research) that may not map onto the spaces individuals actually inhabit – for example, in commuting between home and work – and the contexts they pass through. More individualized and “dynamic” measures of local context are at a relatively early stage of development (see Moore and Reeves 2018), and should in due course be integrated into applied research. There is also scope for studies of more specific policy attitudes than the data available from the Australian Election Study allow. For example, a valuable future contribution to the literature could study Australians’ support for onshore asylum seeker resettlement versus the continuation of offshore detention, and how political factors, local demographic context, and perceptions of group threat combine to shape individual preferences. Also, the category of “immigrant” is of course not monolithic, and it remains to be seen how Australians respond to differences in national origins, cultural and linguistic similarity, and racialized physical characteristics in judging the admissibility of potential immigrants (Harell et al. 2012; Ostfeld 2017). Future research along these lines promises to deepen our understanding of the dynamics of Australian public opinion toward immigration and asylum policy while also offering important lessons for immigrant-receiving countries more broadly.

References

- Abrajano, Marisa, and Zoltan Hajnal. 2015. *White Backlash: Immigration, Race, and American Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Agresti, Alan. 2010. *Analysis of Ordinal Categorical Data*. 2nd ed. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Allison, Paul D. 2001. *Missing Data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- — —. 2012. *Logistic Regression Using SAS: Theory and Application*. 2nd ed. Cary, NC: SAS Institute Inc.
- Allport, Gordon W. 1954. *The Nature of Prejudice*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Bansak, Kirk, Jens Hainmueller, and Dominik Hangartner. 2017. "Europeans Support a Proportional Allocation of Asylum Seekers." *Nature Human Behaviour* 1(7): 0133.
- Baybeck, Brady. 2008. "Sorting Out the Competing Effects of Racial Context." *Journal of Politics* 68(2): 386–96.
- Berg, Justin Allen. 2009. "White Public Opinion toward Undocumented Immigrants: Threat and Interpersonal Environment." *Sociological Perspectives* 52(1): 39–58.
- Bilodeau, Antoine, and Nada Fadol. 2011. "The Roots of Contemporary Attitudes toward Immigration in Australia: Contextual and Individual-Level Influences." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34(6): 1088–1109.
- Bilodeau, Antoine, Luc Turgeon, and Ekrem Karakoç. 2012. "Small Worlds of Diversity: Views toward Immigration and Racial Minorities in Canadian Provinces." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 45(3): 579–605.
- Birrell, Bob. 2013. "Media Effects and Immigration Policy in Australia." In *Immigration and Public Opinion in Liberal Democracies*, eds. Gary P. Freeman, Randall Hansen, and David L. Leal. London: Routledge, 254–70.
- Blalock, Hubert M. 1966. *Toward a Theory of Minority Group Relations*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Blinder, Scott. 2015. "Imagined Immigration: The Impact of Different Meanings of 'Immigrants' in Public Opinion and Policy Debates in Britain." *Political Studies* 63(1): 80–100.
- Blinder, Scott, and William L. Allen. 2016. "Constructing Immigrants: Portrayals of Migrant Groups in British National Newspapers, 2010–2012." *International Migration Review* 50(1): 3–40.
- Branton, Regina P., and Johanna Dunaway. 2009. "Slanted Newspaper Coverage of Immigration: The Importance of Economics and Geography." *Policy Studies Journal* 37(2): 257–73.
- Breton, Charles. 2015. "Making National Identity Salient: Impact on Attitudes toward Immigration and Multiculturalism." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 48(2): 357–81.
- Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Carson, Andrea, Yannick Dufresne, and Aaron Martin. 2016. "Wedge Politics: Mapping Voter Attitudes to Asylum Seekers Using Large-Scale Data During the Australian 2013 Federal Election Campaign." *Policy and Internet* 8(4): 478–98.

- Chandler, Charles R., and Yung-mei Tsai. 2001. "Social Factors Influencing Immigration Attitudes: An Analysis of Data from the General Social Survey." *Social Science Journal* 38(2): 177–88.
- Delli Carpini, Michael X., and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Enos, Ryan D. 2014. "Causal Effect of Intergroup Contact on Exclusionary Attitudes." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111(10): 3699–3704.
- Ferwerda, Jeremy, D.J. Flynn, and Yusaku Horiuchi. 2017. "Explaining Opposition to Refugee Resettlement: The Role of NIMBYism and Perceived Threats." *Science Advances* 3: e1700812.
- Fox, John. 2008. *Applied Regression Analysis and Generalized Linear Models*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Goot, Murray, and Ian Watson. 2010. "Nativism as Citizenship: Immigration, Economic Hardship and the Politics of the Right." In *From Migrant to Citizen: Testing Language, Testing Culture*, eds. Christina Slade and Martina Möllering. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 217–35.
- — —. 2011. *Population, Immigration and Asylum Seekers: Patterns in Australian Public Opinion*. Canberra: Department of Parliamentary Services, Parliament of Australia.
- Gravelle, Timothy B. 2016. "Party Identification, Contact, Contexts, and Public Attitudes toward Illegal Immigration." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 80(1): 1–25.
- — —. 2018a. "Friends, Neighbours, Townspeople and Parties: Explaining Canadian Attitudes toward Muslims." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 51(3): 643–64.
- — —. 2018b. "Partisanship, Local Context, Group Threat, and Canadian Attitudes toward Immigration and Refugee Policy." *Migration Studies* 6(3): 448–467.
- Ha, Shang E. 2008. "The Consequences of Multiracial Contexts on Public Attitudes toward Immigration." *Political Research Quarterly* 63(1): 29–42.
- Hainmueller, Jens, and Daniel J. Hopkins. 2014. "Public Attitudes Toward Immigration." *Annual Review of Political Science* 17: 225–49.
- Harell, Allison, Stuart N. Soroka, Shanto Iyengar, and Nicholas A. Valentino. 2012. "The Impact of Economic and Cultural Cues on Support for Immigration in Canada and the United States." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 45(3): 499–530.
- Hawley, George. 2011. "Political Threat and Immigration: Party Identification, Demographic Context, and Immigration Policy Preference." *Social Science Quarterly* 92(2): 404–22.
- Hibbing, John R., Kevin B. Smith, and John R. Alford. 2014. *Predisposed: Liberals, Conservatives, and the Biology of Political Differences*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hood, M. V., and Irwin L. Morris. 1997. "¿Amigo o Enemigo?: Context, Attitudes, and Anglo Public Opinion toward Immigration." *Social Science Quarterly* 78(2): 309–23.
- Hopkins, Daniel J. 2010. "Politicized Places: Explaining Where and When Immigrants Provoke Local Opposition." *American Political Science Review* 104(1): 40–60.
- Hopkins, Daniel J., Van C. Tran, and Abigail Fisher Williamson. 2014. "See No Spanish: Language, Local Context, and Attitudes Toward Immigration." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 2(1): 35–51.

- Ivarsflaten, Elisabeth. 2005. "Threatened by Diversity: Why Restrictive Asylum and Immigration Policies Appeal to Western Europeans." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 15(1): 21–45.
- Johnston, Christopher D., Benjamin J. Newman, and Yamil Velez. 2015. "Ethnic Change, Personality, and Polarization Over Immigration in the American Public." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 79(3): 662–86.
- Jones, S.D., S. Eagleson, F.J. Escobar, and G.J. Hunter. 2003. "Lost in the Mail: The Inherent Errors of Mapping Australia Post Postcodes to ABS Derived Postal Areas." *Australian Geographical Studies* 41(2): 171–79.
- Kaufmann, Eric. 2017. "Levels or Changes?: Ethnic Context, Immigration and the UK Independence Party Vote." *Electoral Studies* 48: 57–69.
- Kaufmann, Eric, and Matthew J. Goodwin. 2018. "The Diversity Wave: A Meta-Analysis of the Native-Born White Response to Ethnic Diversity." *Social Science Research* 76: 120–31.
- Kaufmann, Eric, and Gareth Harris. 2015. "'White Flight' or Positive Contact? Local Diversity and Attitudes to Immigration in Britain." *Comparative Political Studies* 48(12): 1563–90.
- Key, V. O. 1949. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. New York, NY: Vintage.
- Lawlor, Andrea. 2015a. "Framing Immigration in the Canadian and British News Media." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 48(2): 329–55.
- — —. 2015b. "Local and National Accounts of Immigration Framing in a Cross-National Perspective." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41(6): 918–41.
- Little, Roderick J.A., and Donald B. Rubin. 2002. *Statistical Analysis with Missing Data*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Markus, Andrew. 2014. "Attitudes to Immigration and Cultural Diversity in Australia." *Journal of Sociology* 50(1): 10–22.
- Markus, Andrew, James Jupp, and Peter McDonald. 2009. *Australia's Immigration Revolution*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin.
- Martinez i Coma, Ferran, and Rodney Smith. 2018. "Jobs, Crime, Proximity and Boats: Explaining Australian Public Attitudes to Immigrant Numbers." *Australian Journal of Political Science*: 1–19.
- Mayda, Anna Maria. 2006. "Who Is Against Immigration? A Cross-Country Investigation of Individual Attitudes toward Immigrants." *Review of Economics and Statistics* 88(3): 510–30.
- McAllister, Ian. 1993. "Immigration, Bipartisanship and Public Opinion." In *The Politics of Australian Immigration*, eds. James Jupp and Marie Kabala. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 161–78.
- — —. 2003. "Border Protection, the 2001 Australian Election and the Coalition Victory." *Australian Journal of Political Science* 38(3): 445–63.
- McLaren, Lauren M. 2003. "Anti-Immigrant Prejudice in Europe: Contact, Threat Perception, and Preferences for the Exclusion of Migrants." *Social Forces* 81(3): 909–36.
- Moore, Ryan T., and Andrew Reeves. 2018. "Defining Racial and Ethnic Context with Geolocation Data." *Political Science Research and Methods* (forth.).

- Mughan, Anthony, and Pamela Paxton. 2006. "Anti-Immigrant Sentiment, Policy Preferences and Populist Party Voting in Australia." *British Journal of Political Science* 36(2): 341.
- Newman, Benjamin J., and Yamil Velez. 2014. "Group Size versus Change? Assessing Americans' Perception of Local Immigration." *Political Research Quarterly* 67(2): 293–303.
- O'Connell, Ann A. 2011. *Logistic Regression Models for Ordinal Response Variables*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Oliver, J. Eric, and Janelle Wong. 2003. "Intergroup Prejudice in Multiethnic Settings." *American Journal of Political Science* 47(4): 567.
- Ostfeld, Mara. 2017. "The Backyard Politics of Attitudes Toward Immigration." *Political Psychology* 38(1): 21–37.
- Pottie-Sherman, Yolande, and Rima Wilkes. 2017. "Does Size Really Matter? On the Relationship between Immigrant Group Size and Anti-Immigrant Prejudice." *International Migration Review* 51(1): 218–50.
- Rubin, Donald B. 1987. *Multiple Imputation for Nonresponse in Surveys*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Salt, Bernard. 2018. "Shifting Shapes of a Migrant Nation." *The Australian*: 16.
- Scheve, Kenneth F., and Matthew J. Slaughter. 2001. "Labor Market Competition and Individual Preferences over Immigration Policy." *Review of Economics and Statistics* 83(1): 133–45.
- Sides, John, and Jack Citrin. 2007. "European Opinion About Immigration: The Role of Identities, Interests and Information." *British Journal of Political Science* 37(3): 477–504.
- Simon, Rita J., and Keri W. Sikich. 2007. "Public Attitudes toward Immigrants and Immigration Policies across Seven Nations." *International Migration Review* 41(4): 956–62.
- Weber, Hannes. 2015. "National and Regional Proportion of Immigrants and Perceived Threat of Immigration: A Three-Level Analysis in Western Europe." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 56(2): 116–40.
- Weisberg, Herbert F., and Steven H. Greene. 2003. "The Political Psychology of Party Identification." In *Electoral Democracy*, eds. Michael MacKuen and George Rabinowitz. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 83–124.
- Wilkes, Rima, Neil Guppy, and Lily Farris. 2008. "'No Thanks, Were Full': Individual Characteristics, National Context, and Changing Attitudes Toward Immigration." *International Migration Review* 42(2): 302–29. 10.1111/j.1747-7379.2008.00126.x.
- Zaller, John R. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Appendix: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Min	Max	SD	N	Missing
Immigration: Reduced a lot	0.25	0	1	0.44	5,937	42
Immigration: Reduced a little	0.22	0	1	0.41	5,937	42
Immigration: Remain about the same as it is	0.32	0	1	0.47	5,937	42
Immigration: Increased a little	0.15	0	1	0.35	5,937	42
Immigration: Increased a lot	0.06	0	1	0.24	5,937	42
Turn Back Boats: Strongly agree	0.30	0	1	0.46	5,917	62
Turn Back Boats: Agree	0.20	0	1	0.40	5,917	62
Turn Back Boats: Neither agree nor disagree	0.18	0	1	0.38	5,917	62
Turn Back Boats: Disagree	0.18	0	1	0.38	5,917	62
Turn Back Boats: Strongly disagree	0.14	0	1	0.35	5,917	62
Year: 2010	0.23	0	1	0.42	5,979	0
Year: 2013	0.45	0	1	0.50	5,979	0
Year: 2016	0.32	0	1	0.46	5,979	0
Sex: Male	0.48	0	1	0.50	5,951	28
Age (years logged)	3.83	2.89	4.74	0.39	5,953	26
Education: University Degree	0.30	0	1	0.46	5,827	152
State/Territory: New South Wales	0.32	0	1	0.47	5,979	0
State/Territory: Victoria	0.25	0	1	0.44	5,979	0
State/Territory: Queensland	0.21	0	1	0.41	5,979	0
State/Territory: South Australia	0.08	0	1	0.27	5,979	0
State/Territory: Western Australia	0.09	0	1	0.28	5,979	0
State/Territory: Tasmania	0.03	0	1	0.17	5,979	0
State/Territory: Northern Territory	0.01	0	1	0.08	5,979	0
State/Territory: Australian Capital Territory	0.02	0	1	0.14	5,979	0
Party Identification: Liberal-National Coalition	0.40	0	1	0.49	5,959	20
Party Identification: Labor	0.34	0	1	0.47	5,959	20
Party Identification: Greens	0.07	0	1	0.25	5,959	20
Party Identification: Other/No Party	0.20	0	1	0.40	5,959	20
Ideology (Left–Right)	0.50	0	1	0.22	5,308	671
Immigration Negative Effect on Economy	0.46	0	1	0.23	5,918	61
Immigration More Open	0.68	0	1	0.24	5,892	87
Median Household Income (\$000) (SA 2016)	77.88	29.22	156.09	21.46	5,979	0
Median Household Income (\$000) (SA 2016) (logged)	4.32	3.37	5.05	0.27	5,979	0
Unemployment % (SA 2016)	6.60	1.32	19.36	2.10	5,979	0
Immigrant % (SA 2016)	22.33	2.92	73.65	12.09	5,979	0
Immigrant % (SA 2016) (logged)	2.95	1.07	4.30	0.58	5,979	0
Immigrant % point change (SA2 2006–2016)	2.96	-5.56	38.06	3.39	5,979	0
Immigrant % point change (SA2 2006–2016) (logged) (+10)	2.53	1.49	3.87	0.24	5,979	0