

# Exclusionary Government Rhetoric and Migration Intentions

*Adrian & Gromadzki (2025) — **Discussion***

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# Summary

*RQ: county-level “LGBT-free-zone” resolutions in Poland  $\Rightarrow$  out-migration?*

## Main empirical results

- **Domestic job search  $\uparrow$  12 %**
- **International job search  $\uparrow$  15 %**

## Identification strategy based on clever use of very cool “big data” from large ads website

- **Treatment:** adoption of anti-LGBT resolution at county level
- **Outcome:** Indeed clicks on job ads **outside** the home county per 1 000 residents, 2016-2021
  - $\rightarrow$  Separate domestic vs. international destinations
- **DiD** – three specifications:
  1. Treated vs. all other counties
  2. Border-only sample
  3. **County-pair  $\times$  year FEs (preferred)**

**My comments:** channels + more checks on pre-trends (result) + real effects of rhetoric (interpretation of result)

# 1. What should we expect from a purely(?) rhetorical “policy”?

## Candidate channels?

- Non-pecuniary costs/disamenity from social norms & discrimination
  - neg. for LGBT/progressives, pos./0 for conservatives. **Good** (great if positive for conservatives)
- Labour-demand or EU-fund shock – negative for everyone. **Risky**

## Is the response is only LGBT-driven?

- LGBT share in Poland: ~ **9%** of adults (Ipsos Pride 2024)
- Paper results +6 % in international out-search
  - Equals +0.03 clicks / 1 000 pop (2019-21 vs. 2018 mean)
- Back-of-the-envelope:  $\approx \geq$  **60% increase for LGBT?**
  - $\Rightarrow$  Broader progressive cohort and/or labour-demand channel?

## 2. Parallel trends assumption

Specifications 1 and 2 may be subject to some pre-trends

### Pair-by-year FE may still leave room for some hidden slopes

- For each *county pair* subtracts the neighbour's outcome within every year
  - Treatment effect then identified only from the 2019–21 cross-section
- Risk of pre-trends if treated counties were already on an increasing trend of online job-search
  - Treated counties start out poorer and higher-unemployment; but what about trend?

### Potential checks

1. **County-specific linear trends** in the border sample
2. **Placebo “2017 treatment”**: shift adoption dates two years earlier
3. **Synthetic control?**

### 3. Predictable adoption?

Heterogeneity tests based on previous vote-share of far right work out – **nice!** Still:

**What if everyone already knew the council was highly conservative? (e.g. polls)**

- Residents may have already “priced in” intolerance
- Adoption may correlate with long-run trends (out-migration, job scarcity) in conservative counties

**Possible more robust specification: focus on close call elections**

- 2018 local elections in Poland, shortly before the resolution wave
- Compare counties where the conservative bloc won/lost by small margin
  - Implement as a RD:
    - 1→ Instrument: Resolution with Conservative Majority  $> 0$
    - 2→ Estimate only among close-call counties
  - Isolates an **unexpected policy signal**

## 4. “Symbolic” may embody fiscal implications

What if declaration is relevant signal of broader policy stance? E.g.

- Re-allocate spending toward less efficient “family” programs
- Perceived risk of EU or national fund suspensions and firm withdrawal?
- Perceived association of extreme conservatism with bad policies

### Implications

1. **Hidden pre-trends.** If residents feared fiscal issues as a result of 2018 elections, out-search could drift up *before* the 2019 vote
2. **Different mechanism** Even with clean timing, the +6 % spike may reflect expectations of pecuniary costs rather than rather than social disamenities

### Potential checks

- Heterogeneity large municipalities vs. counties goes in this direction. Other possible checks:
  - Dig deeper into local budget composition?
  - EU grant data? Applications, approvals

# Conclusion

## Smaller suggestions

- Think of using some sort of internet trends data (searches, social media activities, connections – see e.g. J. Stroebe papers using Facebook data) to try to disentangle search by LGBT vs. other progressives
- Results on the Census data exercise are not super convincing, perhaps just a matter of lack of power but as they stand they do not seem to add much

## Very interesting, clever paper!

- Important question
- Great novel data
- Identification strategy solid, just needs a few more robustness checks
- Some more work on discussing potential channels will complete the picture

# Thank you

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