

Abstract (word count: 300)

The normalization of far-right politics across Europe has reshaped the local political environments in which migrants live, exposing them to rising exclusionary rhetoric, anti-immigrant mobilization, and hostility. While prior research examines migrant political participation, less is known about how migrants strategically adjust their economic and political orientations as local contexts become more openly exclusionary. This paper asks how migrants respond to rising local political hostility: by withdrawing from the host society or intensifying engagement.

Building on Albert O. Hirschman's exit–voice framework, the paper conceptualizes two response strategies. Opting out reflects a partial form of exit through reactive transnationalism, captured by remittance behavior, attachment to the country of origin, and return intentions. Voicing-out denotes an outward-facing response in which migrants react to exclusion by increasing political interest, clarifying ideological self-placement, and expressing stronger support for social and political participation in the host society.

Empirically, the analysis exploits the longitudinal structure of the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) by linking individual-level data to time-varying subnational indicators of local political hostility, including far-right electoral strength, protest activity, and hate-crime incidence. The sample pools SOEP subsections covering non-refugee migrant populations, including original guest worker cohorts (Samples B and D) and IAB-SOEP labor migration samples (M1, M2, M7, M8, M10). Linking individuals to changing local contexts over time allows the study to trace within-person shifts in orientations as political environments evolve.

The paper contributes to research on migrant political incorporation and transnationalism by showing that local political hostility does not generate a uniform response. It produces strategic divergence: some migrants retreat toward transnational ties, while others become more politically engaged in the host society. These responses are conditioned by migrants' resources, legal security, and civic embeddedness. This highlights migrants' agency and the analytical value of longitudinal data for understanding political adaptation under rising hostility contexts.