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Short-Haul Moves and the Political Geography of Partisanship: Intrametropolitan Migration as a Force for Change in U.S. Politics

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Abstract

We consider how the high volume of short-distance migration within metropolitan areas contributes to partisan sorting across the United States. Compared to long-distance moves, these local moves involve many more individuals each year and thus have substantial potential to shape political geography. At the same time, short-distance moves set a high bar for any assortative hypothesis because local movers face more limited destination options. If one cannot find a more politically compatible neighborhood nearby, it may be impossible to move to one. We draw on voter records comparing movers and nonmovers within 215 metro areas across nine states. Our results show surprisingly high levels of sorting even when moves occur within the same core-based statistical area and state. These patterns persist even after accounting for other destination characteristics known to influence relocation. Short-distance moves contribute modestly but meaningfully to the growing political lopsidedness of many legislative districts between censuses.

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An important question in studies on population mobility and political geography is whether the high volume of residential relocation in the United States results in population mixing or sorting. Do like-minded people tend to cluster together, creating a patchy and differentiated settlement quilt? Or does movement serve to break down segregated settlement patterns to enhance local political diversity? Within densely populated metro areas, mobility choices are constrained by housing availability and its attendant costs, land area, and the effort required in the journey to work. While metro areas are thought to be quite cosmopolitan, such broadscale characterizations may mask a more granular fabric of well-defined racial, socioeconomic, and political communities, with homophilous, inward-looking populations. If mobility and resettlement are guided by selection processes that reinforce bounded areas of shared identity, rather than break them down, there are downstream implications. Insular settlement pockets housing politically homogeneous populations, even if created inadvertently because of nonpolitical choices, are thought to be generative of polarized discourse, radicalization, and political rigidity. Internal to these communities, political pluralism is weakened because political dissenters have no meaningful influence in elections. Across communities, these local differences stimulate greater state and national division, feeding contention and making governance more difficult (Goldenberg et al. 2022; Nilforoshan et al. 2023).

Mobility is not a trivial source of metropolitan, municipal, and neighborhood change, though it is not the only source. For example, in 2024, 25.9 million people—about 8% of the total population—moved.[1] Over a five- or ten-year period, this is an extraordinary amount of movement, given that the same people do not move each year, an indication that relocation is largely cumulative. Moreover, the present level of mobility, though noteworthy, represents a low point relative to the 1960s when census estimates showed that an astounding 20% of the population moved annually (Frey 2023). Given the mass relocation of Americans each year, it is unsurprising that observers frequently wonder if migration contributes to social and political segregation in the United States (e.g., Bishop 2008).[2] Most moves are short-haul journeys to nearby locations, with approximately 60% of movers staying within their county and 80% remaining in-state.[3] In this paper, we focus on this high volume of short-distance relocations to examine how residential mobility contributes to political differentiation *within* metropolitan areas.

The relative rootlessness of the U.S. population is a foundational aspect of the nation's culture (Turner 2010), and mobility is a central feature of Western

modernity (Cresswell 2006; Oishi and Tsang 2022; Oishi et al. 2012). Movement offers opportunities for not only upward mobility but also personal reinvention and self-expression. At the same time, relocation to a new city or state can weaken bonds of family and friendship, strain social capital formation, and erode civic engagement. From a political behavior standpoint, moving often requires acclimation to a new information environment as well as re-registration to vote at the new locale (Berinsky 2005; Highton 2000; Squire, Wolfinger, and Glass 1987). The literature on how residential mobility affects the individual psychology of voting (e.g., Brown 2018; Campbell, Winkle, and Brown 1989; Campbell, Converse, et al. 1960) and transforms a place's balance of partisanship has emerged slowly as the necessary data sources have become available (Gimpel and Shaw 2023; Holbrook 2016; Jurjevich and Plane 2012; Robinson and Noriega 2010). Much of the observable impact on locations depends upon the volume of flow, how distinct it is from the present politics of the population at the destination and the geographic scale at which the results of change are observed to accumulate (Gimpel and Schuknecht 2003).

We evaluate how individual-level partisan identity may be associated with the choice to move to a more politically compatible and fitting destination compared with where the mover started (Carlson and Gimpel 2019; Cho, Gimpel and Hui 2013). Not every change in residence will mark an appreciable improvement in the match between individual party preference and partisan surroundings. This is because other considerations motivating relocation are also important. Moreover, in many areas, higher priorities for destination choice could be incompatible with selection of a more politically fitting destination (Mummolo and Nall 2017). For instance, few people would choose to live in a more crime-ridden neighborhood simply because it presented a more congenial political mix (Gimpel and Hui 2017). Moreover, in some settings, the choice of alternatives may be so limited as to obstruct consideration of finding an improved sociopolitical fit. If there are few places that offer a more attuned political resonance, it may not be realistic to do much more than seek to reduce the level of possible friction. This would be done not by maximizing ideological alignment with the destination, but by trying to narrow the political gap between oneself and the new neighborhood.

In carrying out this research, we examine individual movements of 32.3 million registered voters within 215 U.S. metropolitan areas over eight years to capture the ongoing processes of electoral redistribution and partisan sorting. We deliberately focus on short-haul or local moves, spanning short distances within a single metro area, because they are the most frequently observed. Long-distance flows across state lines are politically consequential but usually smaller in volume (Carlson and Gimpel 2019; Cho, Gimpel, and Hui 2013; Gimpel and Shaw 2023; Holbrook 2016; Schwartz 1973). Though

exceptions exist (e.g., Gregory 1991; Gregory 2005; and Bazzi, Ferrara, et al. 2023), electoral changes resulting from long-distance flows typically accumulate slowly. By contrast, local and within-state flows are of much higher volume, though they may be characterized by less dramatic differences between origin and destination. Especially in less politically diverse locations, the supply of distinctive destinations to choose from can be constrained by the narrower range of neighborhood settings.

The argument here is not for selection over socialization as the primary cause of neighborhood change. The composition of the political environment can be both a force for selection, whereby people choose to relocate to a politically friendly location, and a socializing force, whereby new residents are pulled into conformity with surrounding populations (Campbell, Winkle, and Brown 1989; Finifter and Finifter 1989; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1987; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1988; Lyons 2017). Often, they are both (Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilasse 2020) as neighborhoods attract a certain kind of person and reinforce certain beliefs and values among their residents, old and new (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954). The numerous proximate and middle-range flows occurring within metropolitan areas lying in the same state make for a demanding test of whether moving appreciably changes the mover's political environment.

Because a nearby move presents a more constrained set of destination alternatives than relocating far away, it is entirely possible that moves across short distances are not of political importance. If the location of one's job constrains the choice of destination, for instance, some destinations are not feasible regardless of neighborhood preferences. The range of destinations is limited not only by housing price but by matters such as commuting or school attendance, and proximity to family and friends, so moving is a 'constrained choice' (Cho, Gimpel, and Hui 2013; Cho, Gimpel, and Hui 2019; Desbarats 1983; Clark 1976). Such limitations may make selecting a more politically compatible area difficult, especially in places dominated by opposing partisans (Brown and Enos 2021; Cho, Gimpel and Hui 2013; Cho, Gimpel and Hui 2019). The upshot is that when moves occur over a sufficiently short distance, the variation in alternative political environments may be too limited for political characteristics to matter. Since most moves are over shorter distances, they should concern researchers interested in studying migration and change, and this is why we make shorter-distance relocation within state boundaries the focus here.

In the sections that follow, we explore the political implications of short-haul moves, discuss our approach to studying nine million movers identified from the voter file, present an exploratory analysis of the flows of short-haul movers, and then present our statistical analyses. In addition to examining overall relationships, we model relationships for each metro area. Taken

together, we find that internal migrants do seek out zip codes that are more consonant with their party identification than the ones they left behind. Even though we might not expect short-haul moves to be politically assortative, we discover that indeed they are, demonstrating that even when confined to a choice of locations within a limited radius of their origin, movers will choose a destination that turns out to be a better political match.

We then provide a brief examination of the way that these trends contribute to spatial polarization. Other scholars have shown effects that go beyond partisanship and into issue preferences (Kinsella, Mctague, and Raleigh 2019). We study the way that local migration shifts the political balance in Philadelphia over our period of analysis and find not only that migration to new political districts is assortative but also that these moves can have small but meaningful impacts on the partisan makeup of state legislative and congressional districts. This analysis suggests that over the long term, local migration has played a role in increasing geographic polarization.

1 Short-Haul Moves, Partisan Change, and Stability

Residential relocation flows are often gauged in terms of the distance between origin and destination locations.[4] If we take two human population settlements, larger ones have a greater potential for interaction through migration flows than smaller ones. However, these flows can be expected to decline as distance increases. Distance is especially relevant for human migration because it is closely related to cost (Clark and Burt 1980; Long 1988; Muth 1974; Quigley and Weinberg 1977; Sjaastad 1962). Because moving is expensive, most migration flows occur over a short distance, within a city, across proximate cities, or across nearby locations within a region (Haynes and Fotheringham 1984; Long 1988; Molloy, Smith, and Wozniak 2011; Quigley and Weinberg 1977; Simmons 1968; Taeuber and Taeuber 1964; Yankow 2003). Local moves within a region constrain the variability in the local political environment compared to a more dramatic relocation. The closer places are to one another, the more similar their politics. If nearby moves show some propensity to sort people into more homophilous environments, then we can be confident that residential relocation is reshaping political life. Longer-distance moves, on the other hand, are generally thought to be more selective since the geographic scope of options is much wider. Moving far away commonly involves employment opportunities and the potential to consider a broader range of destinations with more widely variable characteristics (Cadwallader 1992; Clark and Maas 2015; Molloy, Smith, and Wozniak 2011). Imagining a long-distance mover coming to consider the political compatibility of a destination is more plausible and a less stringent test of the connection between relocation and electoral change.

Residential relocation is a multiscale decision-making process. Once a general location is chosen, the search becomes a neighborhood-level choice: social compatibility and community identity, school quality, walkability, public safety, and access to services. Typically, the first decision is to satisfy basic economic criteria, locating a place that offers access to employment or at least maintains current access to current employment. But once this essential criterion is met, noneconomic considerations come into play, including the fittingness of the particular neighborhood in which housing is sought. The social and political compatibility of the entire metro may not matter much, since daily routines typically unfold in only in a very small part of it. Still, once other needs are satisfied, it can be valuable to find a place where relations with neighbors are easy, where values are largely shared, and where, at the very least, no sense of mutual avoidance is present.

Means and variances at one scale of observation will commonly take on very different values at another. The practical reality is that considering a county as one's social context is very different than considering the zip code or city block. The statistical relationship between variables changes across scales because the social/ecological process operates differently at one level than at another (Kwan 2012; Sayre 2005). Prospective new residents may assess the partisan leaning of states, counties, and neighborhoods when considering a move. A relocating Democrat may prefer a politically compatible state, county, and neighborhood. But if unable to secure all three, a more compatible neighborhood would be the higher priority. After all, there is far more limited value in relocating to a politically compatible state or county if your daily life lies squarely embedded in the most unsuitable and alienating part of it.

Not surprisingly, previous research has shown there to be a positive relationship between long-distance relocation and resettlement in politically consonant environments (Cho, Gimpel, and Hui 2013; Gimpel and Hui 2015). Having more destination choices means an improved capacity to match self with environment. The degree of local compatibility one is able to secure, however, is plainly contingent upon the scale of the geographic units compared at origin and destination locales (e.g., block, zip code, county, state) (Carlson and Gimpel 2019; Cho, Gimpel, and Hui 2013; Gimpel and Shaw 2023; Liu, Andris, and Desmarais 2019).

One of the most enduring and voluminous migration flows has occurred within U.S. metro areas: the long-term flight of residents of older core cities to surrounding suburbs. This historically momentous development pattern was noticed first by social scientists in the mid-1950s, quickly followed by regular expressions of concern about its political implications (Banfield 1957; Bell 1969; Frey 1979; Hirsch 1968). The dominant partisan

pattern has been for Democratic residents of central cities to flee to less Democratic suburbs. Over several decades, the volume of these flows has been heavy enough to politically realign many closer-in suburbs. At the same time, the abandonment of core cities by the upwardly mobile and young has left a poorer, less educated, Black, and older population behind (Thompson 1999; Wilson 2012). Older, inner-ring suburbs are also now finding themselves with poorer, older, and diverse populations, as they are being abandoned for neighborhoods further distant from the core (Kneebone and Berube 2013; Orfield and Luce 2013). Suburbs of fringe metropolitan areas are a mix of low-density affluent new developments and older towns that have been absorbed by growth.

As more jobs have been located outside of the core city, residents of metro areas are no longer forced to compete to find housing close to the downtown. They can live further out from the once-central business district and maintain a reasonable commute. This means that many closer-in suburbs have lost the competition for high-income, tax-paying residents to locations further away. With most U.S. residents living in the suburbs by the early 2020s, the political heterogeneity of these communities has increased. Suburbs lying closer to city boundaries continue to be most influenced by short-distance migration out of the largest core cities and, hence, have become Democratic strongholds. More politically mixed suburbs lie in the middle reaches of distance from the core, and the most Republican locales are on the metropolitan rim. Many of the metro fringe communities were themselves discrete settlements in previous decades, and development has filled in around them, eliminating the open spaces that once clearly demarcated their boundaries. Though counterexamples of these generalizations are plentiful, there is an empirical regularity about Democratic Party dominance lessening as one ventures from the center of the core city to the metro periphery. This is true even in Southern and Western cities where city boundaries are expansive, and suburbs are most distant (Gimpel and Lovin, 2020). High levels of mobility internal to many metro areas have contributed to an ever more fragmented regional political landscape, where relatively small geographic distances separate communities with distinct political attitudes and voting behaviors.

2 Using the Voter File to Understand Geographic Mobility

While other approaches could include surveys or aggregated Census statistics, we rely on studying the entire population of movers across 215 core-based statistical areas (CBSAs) in nine states. We draw upon voter files in 2012 and 2020 to gauge movement within metropolitan areas. Data files originate from publicly available records maintained by the state Secretary of State, or

state election authority, from each of the nine states as of the fall of 2012 and 2020. Records from the complete state voter files were matched across the years using the last name; the first name; and the day, month, and year of the birth date of each voter. Matches are based on exact matches, not probabilistic ones, to avoid false positives. Additionally, if voters alert relevant agencies, we can identify those who changed their names over the period.[5] As all of these states enroll voters by party, the party registration figures are not based on modeled or estimated party affiliation, but the party registration of the voter as identified in the record. Since the complete addresses of voters are contained in these files, the zip code of the voter's registration address was used to place voters within the corresponding zip code tabulation area (ZCTA). We then identify a mover as someone who changed zip codes between 2012 and 2020.

Currently, thirty-one states (and the District of Columbia) enroll voters by party, and the remaining nineteen do not.[6] Of these, we focus on a regionally diverse cross section of states with especially well-managed records: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Utah. We study all of the 215 CBSAs with at least a portion of their population within these nine states. Of the 215 metros analyzed, 199 are fully contained within a single state. Of the remaining sixteen CBSAs, the urban core is in the state analyzed for all but six.

There are many ways to conceptualize a metro region. We chose the CBSA level because these are defined as regions that are based around a centralized population and the economically and socially connected neighboring areas. CBSAs refer to both metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) and micropolitan statistical areas (μSAs).[7] The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) definition defines a CBSA as a county (or equivalent) with an urban core consisting of a population of at least 10,000, and any neighboring counties with high social and economic integration.[8] This ensures we are capturing moves at a truly local level. A further necessary criterion is including only those counties in the CBSA for which party registration is available in the voter file. For example, for the Charlotte CBSA, which includes three counties in South Carolina, we include only those voters in North Carolina.

The 215 metro areas we examine vary in size, political composition, and the broad contours of change from 2012 to 2020. The largest CBSA we examine in full is the MSA of Los Angeles–Long Beach Anaheim, California, with a population of roughly thirteen million in 2020, and the smallest is the μSA of Craig, Colorado, with 13,000 people in 2020. We see substantial variation in the racial composition, with some CBSAs failing to reach a whole percentage of Black residents (e.g., Fort Collins, Colorado; Medford, Oregon; Provo–Orem, Utah) compared to others seeing 45% (e.g., Rocky Mount, North Carolina).

Another notable feature of the locations studied is the variation in partisan leaning. The least Republican CBSA in 2020 is Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina (83.1% registered as Democratic in 2012), with the least Republican MSA being San Francisco–Oakland Berkeley, California (81.7%). The most Republican CBSA is Vernal, Utah (93.1% Republican in 2020), with the most Republican MSA being Provo–Orem, Utah (88.5%). Though it may be routine to associate larger metropolitan areas with the Democratic Party, we see substantial partisan variation across our cases for both larger metro areas (MSAs) and smaller micro areas (μSAs).

3 Geographic Constraints on Political Choice

As discussed, short-haul moves present a more constrained choice of place type than a cross-country or metro-to-metro relocation. One of our central questions is whether partisan sorting is conditional on, among other things, the menu of options in the region in terms of political diversity. Consider the cases of the San Francisco Bay and Philadelphia areas. We present maps of the San Francisco, California, CBSA (Figure 1) and the Pennsylvania portion of the Philadelphia CBSA (Figure 2). Each figure contains two maps showing the distributions of partisanship by zip code in 2012 (left) and 2020 (right) based on voter files from the respective year. Several observations are worth noting. First, different metros have strikingly different patterns of variation in the geographic distribution of partisanship. Take, for example, the political characteristics of San Francisco and its neighboring counties. The left panel in Figure 1 presents the percentage of individuals registered as Democrats by zip code based on data from the 2012 voter file. Dark blue (red) colors indicate more Democrats (Republicans). For those seeking to

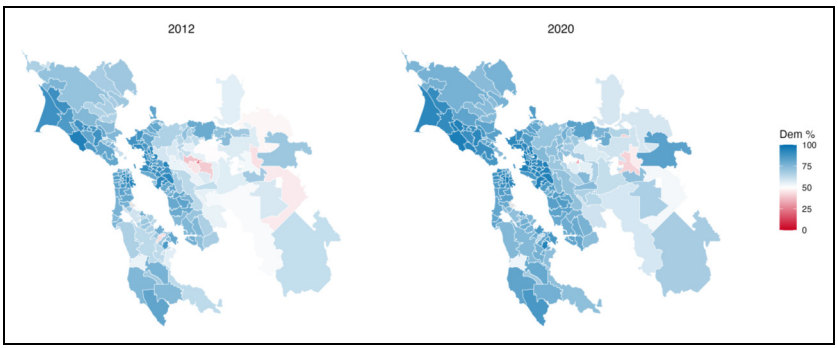

Figure 1. Distribution of Two-Party Registered Voters by Zip Code for the Core-Based Statistical Area (CBSA) of San Francisco, California. Figures Calculated from Voter File by Authors.

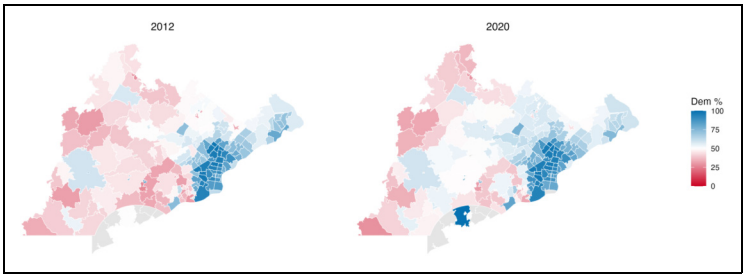

Figure 2. Distribution of Two-Party Registered Voters by Zip Code for the Philadelphia Core-Based Statistical Area (CBSA) (Pennsylvania Only). Figures Calculated from Voter File by Authors.

live among a more Republican electorate, the menu of options is limited. The median partisan composition of all zip codes is 77% Democratic voters, and only nine of the nearly 200 San Francisco zip codes are majority Republican. An individual living in Noe Valley, one of the more family-friendly neighborhoods in San Francisco just south of Dolores Park, would find over 90% of their neighbors registered as Democrats. If they sought to live in a majority-Republican locale, their options would be highly restricted.

Their closest option would be to relocate to Atherton, over 30 miles to the South and an hour-long commute to downtown San Francisco.

We can contrast the distribution of partisans in the San Francisco Bay Area to Philadelphia in Figure 2. The numerous shades of blue are replaced with various reds, blues, and purples, indicating a fair supply of areas with differing partisan characteristics. Focusing again on the left panel showing 2012 data, the median for Democratic partisanship in Philadelphia area zip codes is 54%. One seeking to live in a majority-Republican neighborhood could look to many locations within 10 miles of the city center. For example, Clifton Heights (19018), 9.5 miles from the city center, saw 56% of voters registered as Republicans.

We also observe changes across the eight years from 2012 to 2020. For the zip codes in the Philadelphia CBSA, that 80% have become more Democratic over the eight years. For the San Francisco Bay Area, the Democratic shift is more pronounced with over 95% of zip codes becoming more Democratic from 2012 to 2020. One goal of this research is to understand how within-metro moves may influence these changes compared to secular changes.

In the analyses that come, we show that sometimes, these constraints on destination supply limit the extent of partisan sorting. However, especially among those who experience individual-level partisan change over our eight-year span, there is consistent partisan geographic sorting across metro areas regardless of partisan tilt or variation.

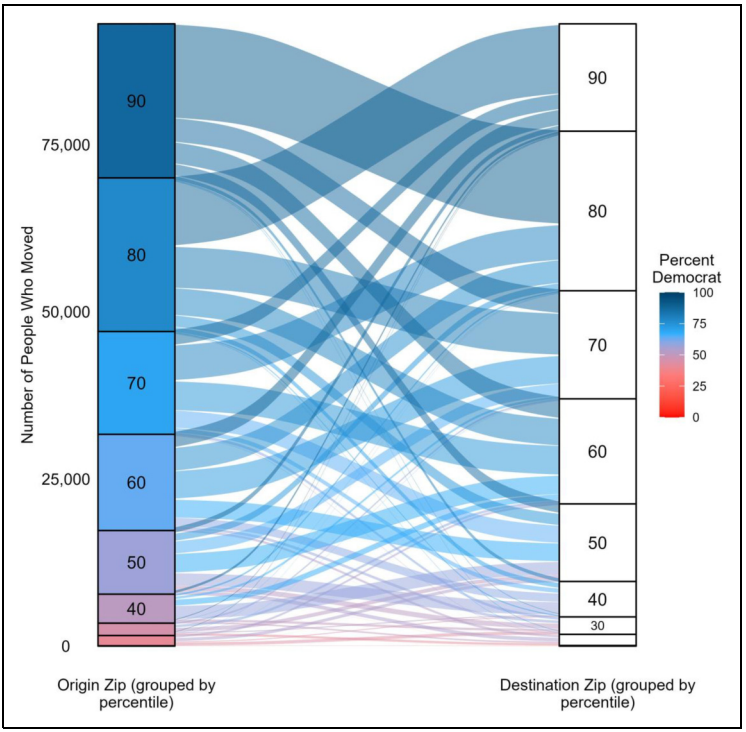

Figure 3. Origin–Destination Plots for Residential Relocation by Partisanship within the San Francisco Core-Based Statistical Area (CBSA), 2012–2020.

4 Exploratory Analysis of Flows

We begin our exploratory analysis of origin–destination flows with the Sankey-style alluvial plots, again focusing on the CBSAs of San Jose–San Francisco–Oakland, California, and Philadelphia–Reading–Camden (Pennsylvania–New Jersey–Delaware–Maryland; Pennsylvania only) in Figures 3 and 4 as our running example (Brunson 2020). These plots summarize the volume and political composition of flows from origin to destination locations within these metro areas. The "ribbons" in the plots connect the two vertical axes, the left one representing origin locations and the right one representing destinations. The width of each ribbon corresponds to the volume of the flow. The narrower the ribbon, the fewer voters are relocating. The shading of the ribbons corresponds to the dominant partisan composition of the flow. Shades of pink to red represent that more Republicans than Democrats are in the flow. Blue and darker blue flows indicate that Democratic voters dominate the flow. While our geographic

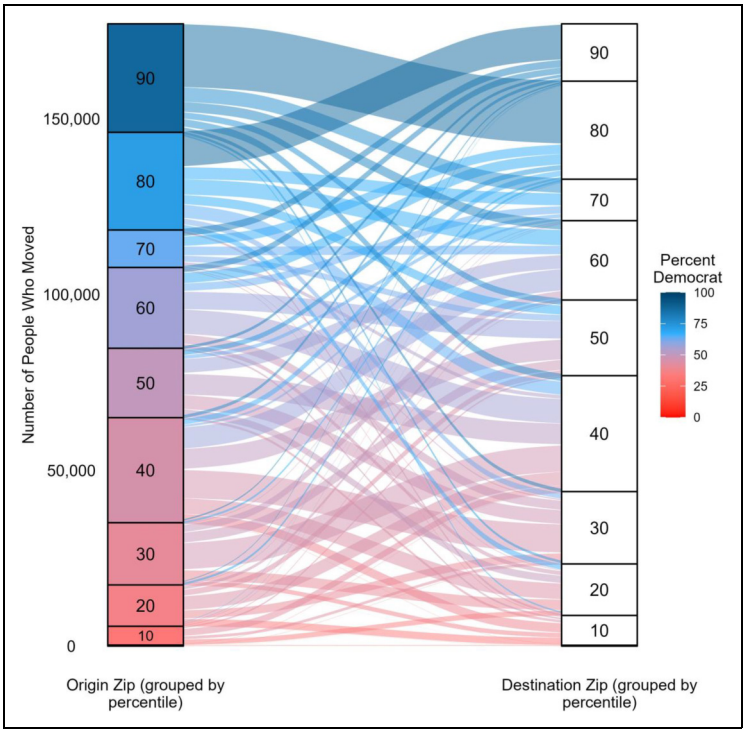

Figure 4. Origin–Destination Plots for Residential Relocation by Partisanship within the Philadelphia Core-Based Statistical Area (CBSA), 2012–2020.

unit of analysis is the zip code, we aggregate to deciles for ease of interpretation and remove intradecile flows (which include the largest component of moves).

As the descriptive figures reveal, some locations consist largely of voters of one party moving from one lopsided place to another. The first plot (Figure 3) shows streams within the San Francisco–Oakland–Fremont MSA, heavily dominated by blue shades. The darkest blue flows move towards the zip codes that already lean Democratic. The few streams that exist in the least Democrat zip codes, which are composed of less populous inland locations, see little population movement both to and from more blue zip codes (shown by the smaller width of the lines). Republicans have few choices within this metro that would situate them among a majority or even a plurality of copartisans.

The Philadelphia metro area exhibits much more variety in zip code choice (see Figure 4). The flows to and from the most Democratic (blue) zip codes resemble the extremes shown in San Francisco, as large-volume migration

streams are moving back and forth between the most Democratic-leaning locales, which happen to be situated inside Philadelphia and lying within its most proximate suburbs in Montgomery and Delaware counties. Notice that the Democratic (blue) flows out of the ninetieth percentile of Democratic strength on the left vertical axis (sending locations) get smaller as you move down the tiles of Democratic strength on the right vertical axis (receiving locations), reflecting lighter volumes. Very few Democrats exiting lopsidedly Democratic environments find their way to lopsidedly Republican ones. Figure 4 also shows movement patterns back and forth among the more Republican-leaning neighborhoods, though these are smaller streams than those flowing in and out of Philadelphia proper. Once again, very few Republican-origin migrants in the tenth or twentieth percentile of Democratic support on the left vertical axis (sending locations) find their way to the most Democratic destinations in the seventieth percentile of support or greater on the right (receiving locations). In between the extremes are small but noticeable streams of Democratic (blue) voters moving from zip codes in the fiftieth and fortieth percentiles on the left to the eightieth and ninetieth percentiles on the right, but very few Republican voters make that move. Republicans willingly flow in the other direction, however, as red-shaded streams can be seen connecting the fortieth and fiftieth on the left to the thirtieth and below on the right.

Considered together, these patterns are consistent with the idea that Republicans migrating within a metropolitan area relocate to more distant, less dense, fringe metro locations. In contrast, Democratic flows are to locations closer to the core city. Certainly, Democrats and Republicans seek opportunities to exit densely settled cities, but quite evidently, they do not flow to the same destinations.

5 Results

Table 1 reports estimates of the change in Democratic partisanship across three geographic units: block groups, census tracts, and zip codes. For each unit, we estimate the change in the share of Democratic residents separately for movers and nonmovers. Among movers, the models capture how patterns of residential selection are associated with partisan composition in destination neighborhoods. Among nonmovers, the estimates reflect changes in local partisan composition among those who remain in the same location. This analysis framework allows for a comparison of partisan change driven by mobility and by shifts that occur within stable populations.

Each model is a linear regression where the dependent variable is the change in percent registered Democrats (relative to all registered partisans) between the destination block group, tract, or zip code and the origin block

Table 1. Effects of Individual Characteristics and Neighborhood Change on Democratic Vote Share by Geographic Level.

	Block group % Dem		Tract % Dem		Zip code % Dem	
	Movers	Nonmovers	Movers	Nonmovers	Movers	Nonmovers
Democrat (in 2020)	2.15***	0.40***	1.78***	0.28***	1.41***	0.09**
	(0.20)	(0.05)	(0.13)	(0.03)	(0.08)	(0.03)
Republican (in 2020)	−2.68***	−0.52***	−2.16***	−0.39***	−1.64***	−0.26***
	(0.21)	(0.06)	(0.21)	(0.06)	(0.20)	(0.05)
Age (in 2012)	−0.38	−0.00	−0.35	−0.00	−0.25	−0.01*
	(0.24)	(0.01)	(0.20)	(0.01)	(0.15)	(0.01)
Female (in 2012)	−0.12**	−0.00	−0.13***	−0.00	−0.14***	0.00
	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.01)
% Democratic registrants	0.61***	0.92***	0.67***	0.93***	0.68***	0.97***
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Δ pop density	0.99***	0.51***	0.87***	0.90***	0.61***	1.02
	(0.21)	(0.14)	(0.20)	(0.25)	(0.17)	(0.63)
Δ % non-White	3.27***	0.76***	3.42***	1.16***	3.54***	0.72**
	(0.44)	(0.15)	(0.49)	(0.25)	(0.55)	(0.23)
Δ median HH income	−2.27***	−0.30***	−2.30***	−0.29*	−2.60***	1.24***
	(0.18)	(0.07)	(0.21)	(0.13)	(0.27)	(0.18)

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

	Block group % Dem		Tract % Dem		Zip code % Dem	
	Movers	Nonmovers	Movers	Nonmovers	Movers	Nonmovers
Δ % college ed	0.07	−0.30***	0.29	−0.50***	0.95**	−0.46**
	(0.30)	(0.04)	(0.34)	(0.07)	(0.34)	(0.14)
CBSA fixed effects						
Num. obs.	3,664,831	17,304,284	4,365,345	19,168,276	7,176.399	25,100,702
Num. groups: r cbsacode 20	214	214	214	214	215	215
R^2 (full model)	0.66	0.92	0.71	0.93	0.76	0.96
R^2 (proj model)	0.49	0.86	0.57	0.89	0.59	0.92

Note. Results from fixed-effects regressions predicting Democratic Party composition in 2020 at block group, tract, and zip code levels. Models compare movers (individuals who changed zip codes) versus nonmovers between 2012 and 2020. All demographic change variables are standardized. CBSA fixed effects included. Standard errors clustered at the CBSA level.
***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$.

group, tract, or zip code. Each model includes fixed effects for the origin and destination geographic units for the respective model (i.e., block group, tract, and zip code). Standard errors are clustered at the CBSA level to account for regional heterogeneity in partisan sorting patterns. In the model, we include changes in a number of relevant geographic characteristics: the change in non-White population, population density, median household income, and percent college-educated. All demographic change variables are standardized to facilitate comparison across different metrics.

While our analysis is descriptive and not causal, we note some uncertainty about whether to include the more fully specified model. As is well known, contextual characteristics including education, urban density, and race are closely related to partisanship. In our descriptive analyses, we are controlling for contextual variables that may well be bundled with the political complexion of a place and therefore jointly influence the eventual destination choice. To account for this possibility, we include more parsimonious models without demographic controls in Appendix A.

Because many of these geographical units experience meaningful change in our variables of interest across this time period, there is also uncertainty over whether we should compare utilizing the destination characteristics gauged in 2012 or 2020. The latter better reflects the new partisan environment at the destination (i.e., in 2020), but the former is a more accurate representation of what the destination looked like for those that moved earlier in the period (i.e., closer to 2012). To account for this possibility, we include a model using both destination and origin data from 2012 in Appendix B.

Figure 5 presents the key findings visually, showing the percentage point differences in Democratic Party composition between destination and origin areas for both movers and nonmovers across the three geographic levels. The results reveal clear and consistent patterns of partisan sorting that vary systematically by mobility status, party affiliation, and geographic scale.

Taking the models in Table 1 together, several general patterns emerge. First, movers are relocating to areas that better align with their partisanship. Whether considering the geographies of block groups, tracts, or zip codes, Democrats land in destinations that are between 1.4 and 2.2 percentage points more Democratic than their origins. As shown in Figure 5, the effect is most pronounced at the block group level (2.2 points) and smallest at the zip code level (1.4 points), suggesting that partisan sorting operates most precisely at more granular geographic scales. This finding is related to the sociological regularity that other types of spatial segregation are greater at smaller geographic scales (Logan, Zhang, and Chunyu 2015). For Republicans, the magnitude is similar but slightly larger, ranging between 1.6 and 2.7 percentage points more Republican. Republicans

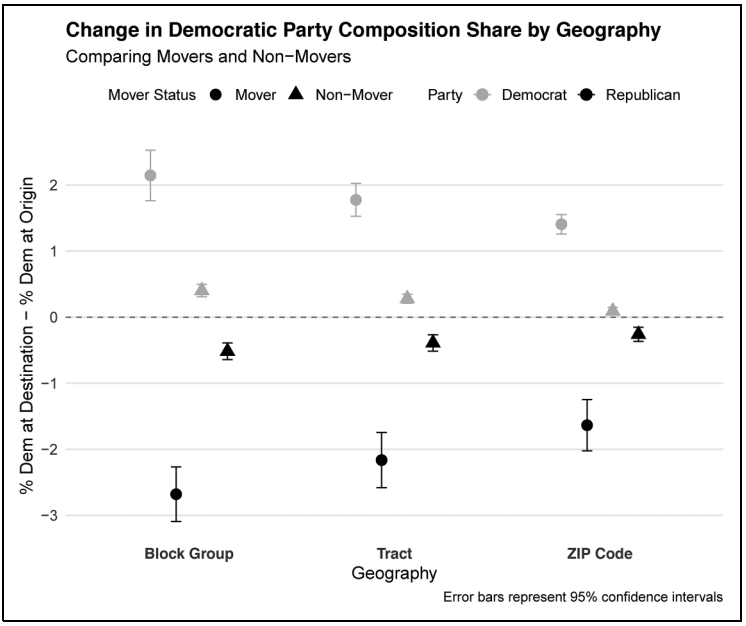

Figure 5. Differences in Democratic Party Composition Between Origin and Destination Areas by Geographic Level. Points Represent the Percentage Point Difference in Democratic Party Composition Between Destination and Origin Areas, Comparing Movers (Circles) and Nonmovers (Triangles) by Party Affiliation. Results Shown at Block Group, Tract, and Zip Code Geographic Levels. Error Bars Represent 95% Confidence Intervals. Positive Values Indicate Movement Toward More Democratic Areas; Negative Values Indicate Movement Toward More Republican Areas.

show their largest sorting effects at the block group level (2.7 points) and smallest at the zip code level (1.6 points).

The effects of the demographic controls also largely fall in line with traditional partisan expectations. Those moving to more dense, less White areas are largely moving to areas with a larger percentage Democrat across the board, while those moving to higher-income areas are moving to more Republican areas. While nonmovers that see local demographic changes experience similar effects, they are typically at a smaller magnitude as many of these factors are slow to change over time. The change in percentage with college education has little effect for movers, but for nonmovers, an increase in education levels actually correlates with a slightly more Republican shift; though this result may be in part due to correlation with other control variables. Given the results from Appendix A, which show the point estimates for Democratic and

Republican movers increasing without control variables, sorting along these other demographic lines and sorting by partisanship are highly correlated as expected. The visual presentation in Figure 5 also reveals a modest asymmetry in sorting patterns. While both parties sort toward copartisans, Republican sorting effects are consistently larger in magnitude than Democratic effects across all geographic levels. This asymmetry is most pronounced at the block group level, where Republicans move to areas 2.7 points more Republican while Democrats move to areas 2.2 points more Democratic. The gap narrows but persists at larger geographic scales.

Among nonmovers, we observe similar directional changes but much smaller coefficients. As illustrated in Figure 5, Democratic nonmovers see their neighborhoods trend between 0.1 and 0.4 percentage points more Democratic over the study period, while Republican nonmovers see their areas become 0.2 to 0.3 points more Republican. The figure clearly shows that these nonmover effects, while statistically significant at the tract and zip code levels, exhibit only a fraction of the sorting observed among movers. The relative positioning of the triangular markers (nonmovers) near the zero line compared to the circular markers (movers) underscores that residential mobility is the primary driver of increasing partisan geographic polarization. If no one moved locally, there might be some partisan trend toward greater homophily in these places, but it would be far more gradual.

The mechanisms driving nonmover effects likely include several processes. Out-partisans may be moving away from their neighbors to more homogeneous communities, leaving their original neighborhoods more tilted toward the remaining residents' partisan preferences. Additionally, partisan conversion or new voter registration within stable neighborhoods may contribute to these patterns. However, the stark visual contrast in Figure 5 between the magnitude of mover and nonmover effects confirms that residential choice dominates in-place partisan change.

It is notable that we find substantively meaningful relationships even within single metropolitan areas. The period we examine, 2012–2020, covers an era when the American electorate was already geographically divided. Our analysis is limited to individuals who relocate within a single metro area, excluding long-distance moves between states or even between metropolitan areas within states. These are relatively short-distance moves within integrated housing and labor markets. Nonetheless, Figure 5 demonstrates clear evidence that partisan identity shapes destination choice even when moves are limited to destinations lying within the same metropolitan area.

The consistency of partisan sorting across different geographic levels, as shown in Figure 5, suggests that the phenomenon operates through multiple spatial mechanisms. The strongest effects at the block group level indicate that individuals are selecting neighborhoods with precision, likely drawing

on detailed local knowledge about community characteristics. The persistence of effects at larger scales like zip codes suggests that partisan sorting also operates through broader community reputation and administrative boundaries that shape real estate marketing, school districts, and local governance. Notably, the convergence of effect sizes across parties at the zip code level suggests that administrative boundaries may constrain the extent to which fine-grained sorting can be expressed at larger scales.

6 Local Migration and Spatial Polarization

In the previous section, we showed that local migration changes the partisan environment of those who move. While we find that the partisan context of those who do not move does not change in the aggregate, particular individuals may experience quite drastic changes in their environment. Given the large volume of within-city moves, some zip codes or even political districts may see meaningful shifts in partisan balance, having a real impact on representation. As discussed with reference to the maps in Figure 2, Philadelphia area zip codes shift an average of nearly three percentage points over this period. As a result, this migration can contribute to ongoing shifts in the extent of geographic polarization (Johnson and Lichter 2019; Mastrosavvas 2024; Kinsella, Mctague, and Raleigh 2019). In this section, we will utilize the case of Philadelphia to explore how local migration can reshape local political landscapes enough to alter political representation.

Within-metro moves produce a sizable mixing of population in Philadelphia over the course of the eight-year period we examine. Table 2 summarizes the zip code level churn across the 189 zip codes within the Philadelphia MSA that have at least 500 partisans in the metro.[9] As shown in the table, most zip codes see very meaningful levels of change; the median zip code sees one of every five residents cycled to a new location within the region over this period.

This volume of movement leaves room for potential change in local political alignment over a sufficient span of time. As shown in Figure 4, these moves tend to be politically assortative. Yet a large portion of these moves also occurs with people moving between zip codes sharing similar political environments. After

Table 2. Movement Between Zip Codes Within the Philadelphia MSA.

	Min.	1st Qu.	Median	Mean	3rd Qu.	Max.
Percent in	9.85	17.93	21.55	22.13	26.28	46.52
Percent out	7.07	16.29	19.04	21.55	24.53	53.05
Net migration	−15.54	−2.18	0.99	0.58	3.88	14.83
Movement volume	20.20	34.42	40.28	43.68	50.71	99.57

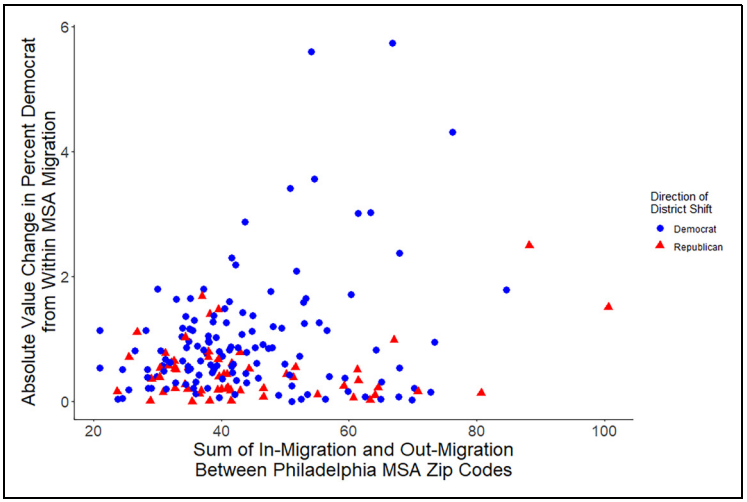

Figure 6. Sum of Percentage Point Change of In-Migration and Out-Migration and Absolute Value of Partisan Shifts by Zip Code within the Philadelphia Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with Direction of Shift Colorized, 2012–2020.

all, the period we analyze is situated in a context of several previous decades of continual sorting. That leaves an important question of how much new sorting occurs in addition to what has already occurred in previous periods.

While the answer is variable, in some zip codes, a meaningful shift in partisanship occurs solely due to within-metro movement. Figure 6 shows that some zip codes experienced up to a six-percentage-point swing in partisanship over the eight-year period analyzed. The *x*-axis here shows the sum of the percentage points of in-migration and out-migration, while the *y*-axis shows the percentage point shift in the partisanship of the zip code as a result of intrametro migration only. While many zip codes experienced minimal movement, *a quarter* of the Philadelphia zip codes saw a full-percentage-point change in local partisanship solely from within-metro migration. These changes also appear to be correlated with higher levels of movement between districts.

To obtain a better sense of how these changes might affect representation, Table 3 summarizes the interdistrict movement across the sixty-five Philadelphia districts for the Pennsylvania State House, the sixteen Philadelphia districts for the Pennsylvania State Senate, and the seven Philadelphia Congressional Districts.[10] The relative structure of migration is the same across each type of district as well as the zip code level. In-migration, out-migration, the volume of movement, and the net migration all follow a normal distribution for each level of geography. But as the size of the geographical unit increases (i.e., from State House to State Senate to

Table 3. Movement Between Representative Districts Within the Philadelphia MSA by District Level, 2012–2020.

	Min.	1st Qu.	Median	Mean	3rd Qu.	Max.
Lower chamber (State House)						
Percent in	9.35	16.73	18.69	20.72	25.99	36.02
Percent out	7.88	15.00	17.90	20.64	23.96	40.21
Net migration	−11.83	−2.47	0.87	0.07	3.13	12.06
Movement volume	17.23	31.38	36.24	41.36	53.15	70.35
Upper chamber (State Senate)						
Percent in	7.95	11.07	14.67	15.00	19.01	21.80
Percent out	8.08	10.83	11.48	14.91	20.06	27.03
Net migration	−5.78	−1.71	−0.29	0.10	2.23	5.82
Movement volume	17.15	21.94	25.69	29.91	36.74	48.27
Congressional (US House)						
Percent in	3.43	9.10	11.51	10.83	13.59	15.49
Percent out	2.24	7.31	12.97	10.56	13.17	17.76
Net migration	−2.27	−1.45	0.86	0.27	1.37	3.46
Movement volume	5.67	16.78	23.75	21.39	26.76	33.25

Congressional Districts), the amount of between-district migration shifts downward.

The ideological implications of this migration follow similar patterns. The changes in district ideology are shown with the total of migration in Figure 7. Here, we use the same methodology as shown in Figure 6, except with the use of legislative districts instead of zip codes. Districts with higher volume of moves tend to experience more change. The range of this shift is limited as districts increase in size; for Pennsylvania state house districts, local migration can cause shifts as large as three percentage points, yet the largest shift at the Congressional district level is less than one point. These shifts tend to favor Democrats; yet these plots are insufficient to explain why.

To fully understand why the vast majority of districts are moving towards the Democrats, we return to the Sankey-style alluvial plots for Philadelphia, this time with the origin and destination changed to congressional districts within the MSA. Districts 1 and 2 comprise the core of the city of Philadelphia, District 13 is divided between Philadelphia and Bucks County and the remaining districts include parts of the Philadelphia MSA but lie outside of the city of Philadelphia. As Figure 8 shows, a large portion of the redistribution in population comes from continued movement to the suburbs from Philadelphia proper (Districts 1, 2, and 13). In particular, movement out of District 1 into District 6 and flows from District 13 into

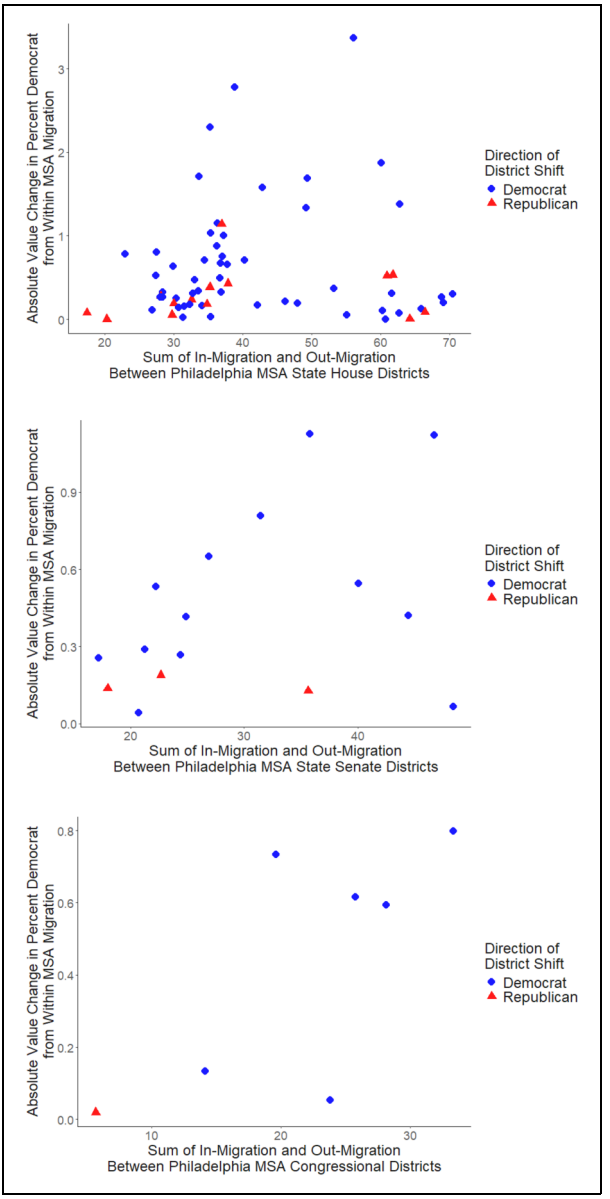

Figure 7. Sum of Percentage Point Change of In-Migration and Out-Migration and Absolute Value of Partisan Shifts by Various Representative District Levels within the Philadelphia Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with Direction of Shift Colorized, 2012–2020.

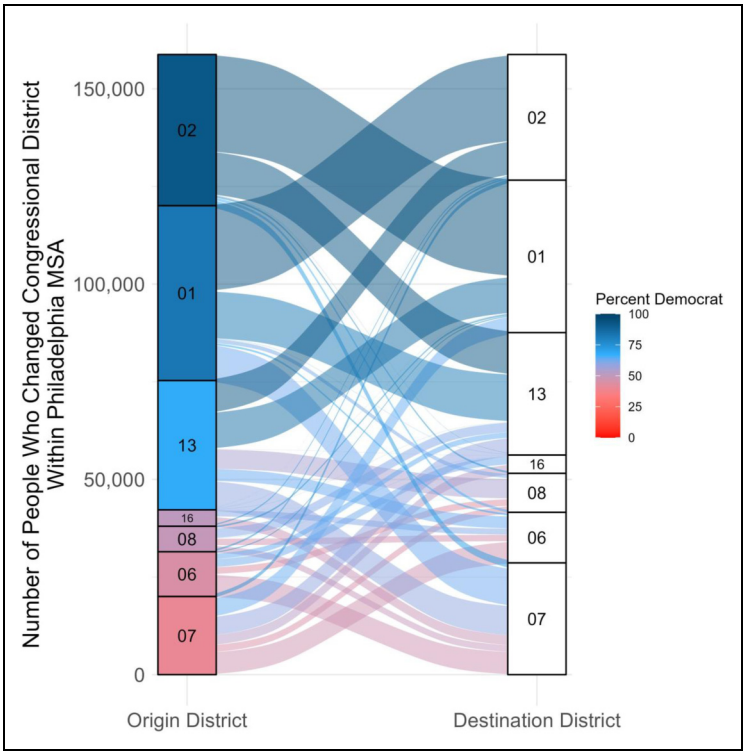

Figure 8. Flow of Migration Between Philadelphia Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) Congressional Districts, 2012–2020.

Districts 6 and 7 represent many of the moves. While these "mixing" moves represent a small fraction of the movement out of the Philadelphia city districts, they are large enough to influence the more conservative suburbs. At the same time, while a large number of Democrats are leaving the most liberal districts in the core metro, these districts are already dominated by Democrats to such a degree (while only seeing movement in from Democrats), they are actually seeing the level of Democratic registrants increase slightly as well. As a result, the majority of shifts across all districts during this period favors Democrats.

This example of Philadelphia extracted from our larger data collection shows that local migration can have a small but substantively meaningful impact on the partisan leanings of legislative districts. The pattern of these results is also largely consistent with our analysis of individual movement and choice—the geographic scale of the district increases, and the magnitude of the effect of mobility decreases. Not only does local

migration fuel partisan sorting, but also, it can meaningfully shift the partisanship of state legislative districts over the course of a single redistricting cycle. While we present data only for Philadelphia in the main text, our findings are consistent with other cities in our dataset.[11]

7 Discussion and Conclusion

Despite broad recognition of persistent transience and mobility in U.S. history, the political significance of these forces has not been thoroughly charted. Recently, questions have been raised about how voters engage in partisan sorting, deliberately or inadvertently, as a function of related nonpolitical choices. Recent studies have revealed notable partisan sorting patterns among long-distance movers, but these moves are of low volume, usually acting very gradually to transform the politics of sending and receiving locales. These cross-state and cross-country migration flows affect receiving locations with significant in-migration, but in most places, the inflow is not strong enough to contribute to rapid transformation. New arrivals to a neighborhood may amount to only a handful of individuals every year. Over a long period, political transformation occurs because of mobility, but it may take several decades.

Desired changes in neighborhood economic and racial compositions steer movement within metro areas. Even so, our evidence reveals that partisan sorting occurs across jurisdictions within a CBSA, even when controlling for racial preferences, income of neighbors, and housing quality. The evidence for partisan sorting does not vanish when we consider movements to alter specific socioeconomic conditions in the migrant's local environment.

By studying a broad and diverse crosssection of U.S. metro areas and focusing on intrametropolitan migration, we evaluate whether short-haul higher-volume moves, with a far greater potential for impact, follow a pattern of partisan sorting. By confining the study to movers within metropolitan areas, our approach provides a conservative test of the partisan sorting hypothesis. Short-distance migration constrains would-be movers to a limited menu of destination options. In locations such as the San Francisco Bay area or Salt Lake City, the entire metro tilts largely in a single political direction. A Republican mover is hard-pressed to find a Republican majority in the Bay area. Similarly, many Democrats are distributed across the Salt Lake metro, but few live in copartisan-majority communities. Sorting will obviously be muted in locales where the minor party is a minuscule presence outside the central city core. What we have found is that even in metro areas that show a limited range of variability in local partisan balance, movers will still discriminate by party when they choose to resettle.

These moves can have a meaningful impact on the ideological makeup of legislative districts. While many of these moves are assortative at the micro

level, other factors still may drive migration across district lines. Because these representative districts are larger in geographic scale, the sorting occurring within them is less focused on the characteristics of the district itself, and more on the specifics of the constituent neighborhoods. As a result, larger volume flows (particularly as cities experience increased suburbanization) can produce district political shifts as a result of these proximate exchanges, even if newcomers are not moving in from outside the metro.

Future research should examine moves that are intermetropolitan—from one CBSA to another—and not just those occurring within metro areas. Relocation from rural areas and small towns into metro areas is another important focus, as are any flows outward from large cities into the distant countryside. Greater consideration of the changing political conditions that nonmovers experience in their neighborhoods is merited, as nonmovers do see changes in the places they live, even if they stay put. Studies of repeated, successive moves are also necessary.

We also ignore intermediate moves over the eight years. However, studying successive moves across time may reveal whether relocation is a stepwise venture to reach more congenial destinations. As our results for age suggested, moves at some points in the life cycle may allow movers the flexibility to select highly congenial destinations, while relocation at other points may be more constrained.

In future work, we encourage an expansion of the locales studied and do not make claims about external validity for locations not studied here. Students of migration and political change in other countries that keep similar administrative records can borrow the template and steps of this research as they gather facts about and extend their understanding of their focal locations (Długosz and Szmytkie 2021; Bijker and Haartsen 2012).

We conclude by recommending a contextually sensitive, location-based approach to the analysis and comparison of these mobility patterns. There is no substitute for a detailed understanding of particular metro areas, states, and regions. That is not because law-like generalizations do not exist, only that the most general laws might not be very informative for the intriguing cases dispersed far away from any central tendency. Along with other components of population change, residential relocation alters the political landscape of the nation, affecting elections at all levels of office. Migration is only one of these components, but in the history of the United States, it has been of enduring importance.

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Notes

1. https://www.northamerican.com/relocation-moving-statistics, accessed June 5, 2025.
2. John Barnett, "Americans Are Fleeing to Places Where Political Views Match Their Own." NPR, February 18, 2022; Dora Mekouar, "Are Americans Purposely Moving Next to People Who Share Their Politics?" *Voice of America*, May 18, 2022.; Nicholas Riccardi, "Conservatives Move to Red States and Liberals Move to Blue as the Country Grows More Polarized." NPR, July 5, 2023.
3. https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2022/03/united-states-migration-continued-decline-from-2020-to-2021.html.
4. For instance, the classic gravity model (Fotheringham 1986; Haynes and Fotheringham 1984) takes its name from the determinants of the attraction of two celestial bodies, where the force between them is associated with their size (mass) and distance from each other.
5. The matching approach may miss some movers, for instance, those who change their names upon moving, the largest share of which would be newly married women. We also miss movers who might re-register under a slightly different name or a preferred nickname (e.g., "James" vs. "Jim" or "Sandra" vs. "Sandy"). Any slight misspellings will also eliminate a match. Typically, registrants are asked to register under their full given name, but not everyone complies. Our method might also miss movers who choose not to report their full birth information upon re-registration (i.e., those who report the year but not the month and day), although this is likely to be a small number for the specific states we study.
6. https://ballotpedia.org/Partisan, affiliations of registered voters, accessed May 1, 2025.
7. MSAs are counties or groups of counties with at least one urban cluster with a population of 50,000. μSAs are counties or groups of counties with at least one urban cluster of at least 10,000, but less than 50,000.
8. US Census Bureau (n.d.). *Glossary*. Retrieved May 20, 2024.
9. The 500 partisan threshold is set to filter out zip codes that are only partially in the metro area, ensuring lower minimums are not a result of being edge cases in the metro. There are seventy-six zip codes that fall at least partially within the Philadelphia MSA but have fewer than 500 partisans in 2012.

10. As with the zip-code-level table, districts are included if they have at least 500 registered partisans in 2012.
11. Additional data for CBSAs of Charlotte, North Carolina, and Miami, Florida, are available in Appendix C.

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Appendix A. Models Without Control Variables

Table A.1. Effects of Individual Characteristics and Neighborhood Change on Democratic Vote Share by Geographic Level.

	Block group % Dem		Tract % Dem		Zip code % Dem	
	Movers	Nonmovers	Movers	Nonmovers	Movers	Nonmovers
Democrat (in 2020)	3.03*	0.43*	2.85*	0.29*	2.52*	0.09*
	(0.29)	(0.05)	(0.28)	(0.04)	(0.25)	(0.03)
Republican (in 2020)	−3.41*	−0.59*	−3.14*	−0.45*	−2.73*	−0.28*
	(0.18)	(0.06)	(0.18)	(0.06)	(0.18)	(0.06)
Age (in 2012)	−0.42	−0.00	−0.35	−0.00	−0.28	−0.01
	(0.29)	(0.01)	(0.25)	(0.01)	(0.20)	(0.01)
Female (in 2012)	−0.12	−0.00	−0.15*	−0.00	−0.21*	−0.01
	(0.06)	(0.01)	(0.05)	(0.01)	(0.05)	(0.01)
% Democratic registrants	0.45*	0.91*	0.46*	0.93*	0.45*	0.96*
	(0.03)	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.02)
CBSA fixed effects						
Num. obs.	7,252,852	25,154,425	7,252,856	25,154,430	7,252,835	25,154,429
Num. groups: r cbsacode 20	215	215	215	215	215	215
R^2 (full model)	0.54	0.91	0.56	0.93	0.57	0.96
R^2 (proj model)	0.29	0.85	0.29	0.87	0.27	0.92
Adj. R^2 (full model)	0.54	0.91	0.56	0.93	0.57	0.96
Adj. R^2 (proj model)	0.29	0.85	0.29	0.87	0.27	0.92

Note. Results from fixed-effects regressions predicting Democratic Party composition in 2020 at block group, tract, and zip code levels. Models compare movers (individuals who changed zip codes) versus nonmovers between 2012 and 2020. No contextual demographic variables are included. CBSA fixed effects included.

*$p < .01$.

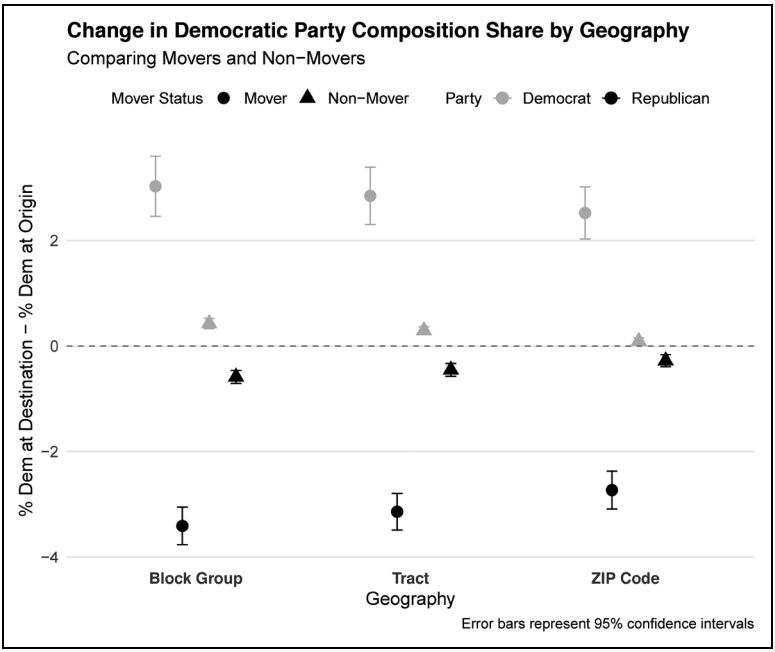

Figure A.1. Differences in Democratic Party Composition Between Origin (in 2012) and Destination (in 2020) Areas by Geographic Level. Points Represent the Percentage Point Difference in Democratic Party Composition Between Destination and Origin Areas, Comparing Movers (Circles) and Nonmovers (Triangles) by Party Affiliation. Results Shown at Block Group, Tract, and Zip Code Geographic Levels. Error Bars Represent 95% Confidence Intervals. Positive Values Indicate Movement Toward More Democratic Areas; Negative Values Indicate Movement Toward More Republican Areas. No Contextual Demographic Variables are Included in the Models.

Appendix B. Robustness Check—Destination Data at 2012 Levels

Table B.1. Effects of Individual Characteristics and Neighborhood Change on Democratic Vote Share by Geographic Level.

	Block group % Dem CBG movers	Tract % Dem Tract movers	Zip code % Dem Zip movers
Democrat (in 2020)	1.68*	1.74*	1.13*
	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.06)
Republican (in 2020)	−2.12*	−2.10*	−1.27*
	(0.21)	(0.17)	(0.19)
Age (in 2012)	−0.40	−0.45	−0.28
	(0.26)	(0.29)	(0.19)
Female (in 2012)	−0.08	0.00	−0.09
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)
% Democratic registrants	0.64*	0.72*	0.70*
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Δ pop density	0.95*	0.57*	0.53*
	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.18)
Δ % non-White	3.12*	2.92*	3.25*
	(0.39)	(0.44)	(0.49)
Δ Median HH income	−2.61*	−2.64*	−2.80*
	(0.16)	(0.23)	(0.25)
Δ % college ed	−0.44	0.54	0.37
	(0.28)	(0.32)	(0.33)
CBSA fixed effects			
Num. obs.	3,660,744	7,173,454	7,176,250
Num. groups: r cbsacode 20	214	215	215
R^2 (full model)	0.65	0.67	0.76
R^2 (proj model)	0.51	0.52	0.62
Adj. R^2 (full model)	0.65	0.67	0.76
Adj. R^2 (proj model)	0.51	0.52	0.62

Note. Results from fixed-effects regressions predicting Democratic Party composition in 2012 at destination block group, tract, and zip code levels. Models for movers between 2012 and 2020. All demographic change variables are standardized. CBSA fixed effects included.
*$p < .01$.

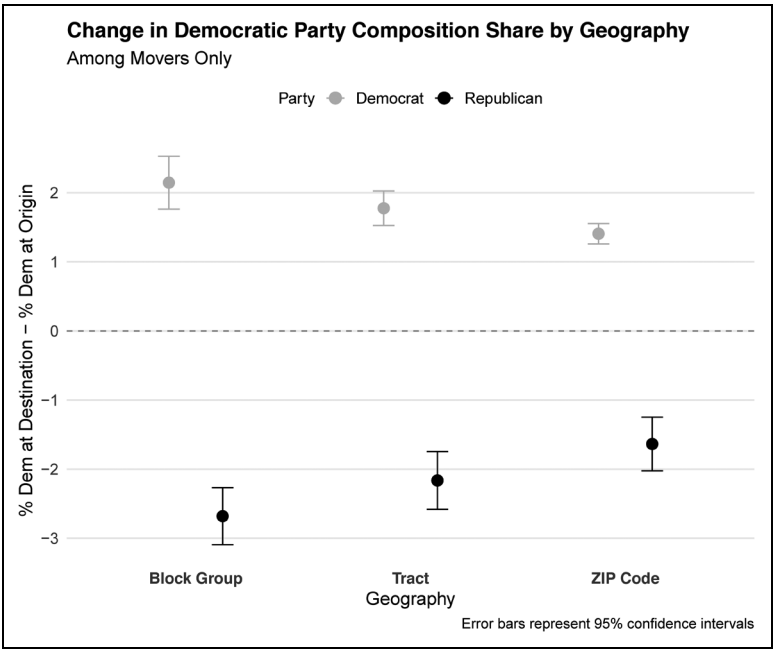

Figure B.1. Differences in Democratic Party Composition Between Origin (in 2012) and Destination (in 2012) Areas by Geographic Level. Points Represent the Percentage Point Difference in Democratic Party Composition Between Destination and Origin Areas, Comparing Movers (Circles) and Nonmovers (Triangles) by Party Affiliation. Results Shown at Block Group, Tract, and Zip Code Geographic Levels. Error Bars Represent 95% Confidence Intervals. Positive Values Indicate Movement Toward More Democratic Areas; Negative Values Indicate Movement Toward More Republican Areas.

Appendix C. Geographic Polarization Analysis for Alternative MSAs

C.1. Charlotte

Table C.1. Movement Between Zip Codes Within the Charlotte MSA.

	Min.	1st Qu.	Median	Mean	3rd Qu.	Max.
Percent in	1.47	16.47	20.22	21.55	26.07	52.28
Percent out	6.21	13.97	17.66	21.29	26.05	70.21
Net migration	−68.74	−1.85	0.79	0.26	3.28	22.42
Movement volume	14.42	30.68	37.64	42.84	53.84	103.08

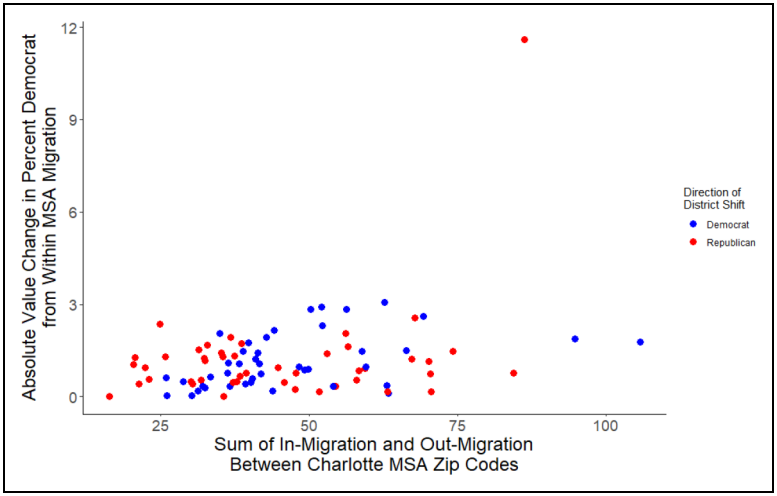

Figure C.1. Sum of Percentage Point Change of In-Migration and Out-Migration and Absolute Value of Partisan Shifts by Zip Code within the Charlotte Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with Direction of Shift Colorized, 2012–2020.

Table C.2. Movement Between Representative Districts within the Charlotte MSA by District Level, 2012–2020.

	Min.	1st Qu.	Median	Mean	3rd Qu.	Max.
Lower chamber						
Percent in	6.44	14.09	16.52	17.09	22.45	27.05
Percent out	2.94	11.49	15.29	16.91	23.87	33.75
Net migration	−6.81	−1.80	1.29	0.17	2.25	8.34
Movement volume	10.07	26.17	31.39	34.00	47.08	60.80
Upper chamber						
Percent in	1.81	4.85	8.23	10.37	17.81	18.93
Percent out	1.71	2.78	5.40	10.18	16.51	26.27
Net migration	−7.34	−0.47	1.21	0.19	2.44	3.88
Movement volume	3.52	7.52	13.30	20.55	34.72	45.20
Congressional						
Percent in	4.28	7.52	7.98	8.38	10.75	11.38
Percent out	1.41	6.82	7.42	7.95	9.50	14.58
Net migration	−3.83	0.56	0.69	0.43	1.88	2.87
Movement volume	5.69	14.34	15.40	16.33	20.88	25.32

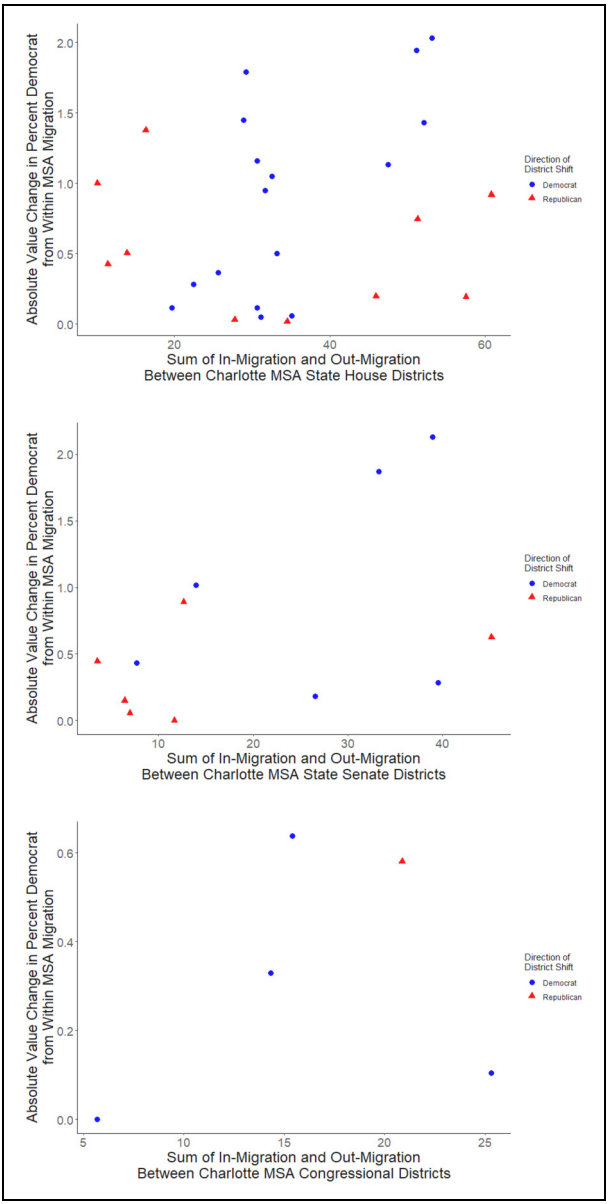

Figure C.2. Sum of Percentage Point Change of In-Migration and Out-Migration and Absolute Value of Partisan Shifts by Various Representative District Levels within the Charlotte Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with Direction of Shift Colorized, 2012–2020

C.2. Miami

Table C.3. Movement Between Zip Codes Within the Miami MSA.

	Min.	1st Qu.	Median	Mean	3rd Qu.	Max.
Percent in	6.75	22.41	27.34	28.38	32.95	75.38
Percent out	11.21	24.63	28.12	28.10	30.83	55.47
Net migration	−16.89	−5.08	−0.40	0.28	3.33	48.11
Movement volume	18.48	48.17	53.92	56.48	63.52	110.80

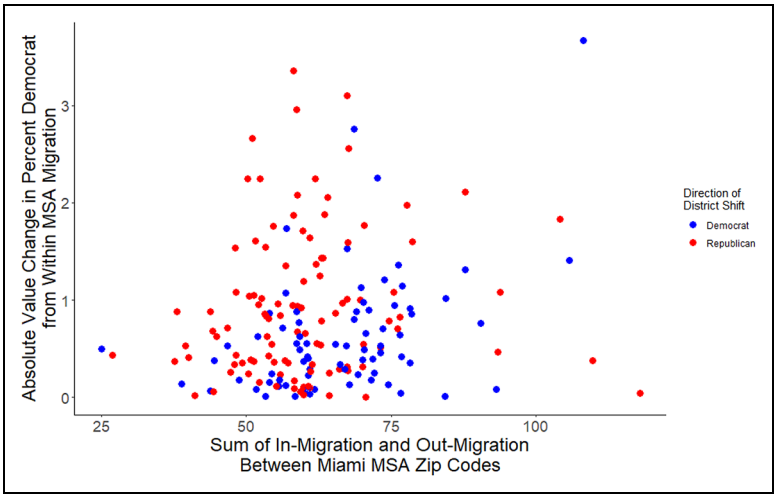

Figure C.3. Sum of Percentage Point Change of In-Migration and Out-Migration and Absolute Value of Partisan Shifts by Zip Code within the Miami Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with Direction of Shift Colorized, 2012–2020.

Table C.4. Movement Between Representative Districts Within the Miami MSA by District Level, 2012–2020.

	Min.	1st Qu.	Median	Mean	3rd Qu.	Max.
Lower chamber						
Percent in	14.47	19.65	21.50	22.19	24.98	31.02
Percent out	14.43	20.92	22.89	22.39	23.70	29.48
Net migration	−10.01	−3.81	−0.16	−0.20	2.67	11.10
Movement volume	31.53	41.07	43.92	44.58	48.94	53.80
Upper chamber						
Percent in	10.95	13.91	17.40	16.78	18.23	26.82
Percent out	8.85	15.83	16.85	16.24	18.01	19.25
Net migration	−6.72	−1.98	0.77	0.53	2.74	9.97
Movement volume	20.43	30.58	34.04	33.02	34.63	43.67
Congressional						
Percent in	11.53	12.27	14.90	15.15	17.94	18.80
Percent out	10.04	13.76	15.52	15.18	16.48	19.08
Net migration	−6.81	−2.23	−1.03	−0.03	2.43	5.75
Movement volume	25.28	25.84	31.35	30.33	33.46	34.91

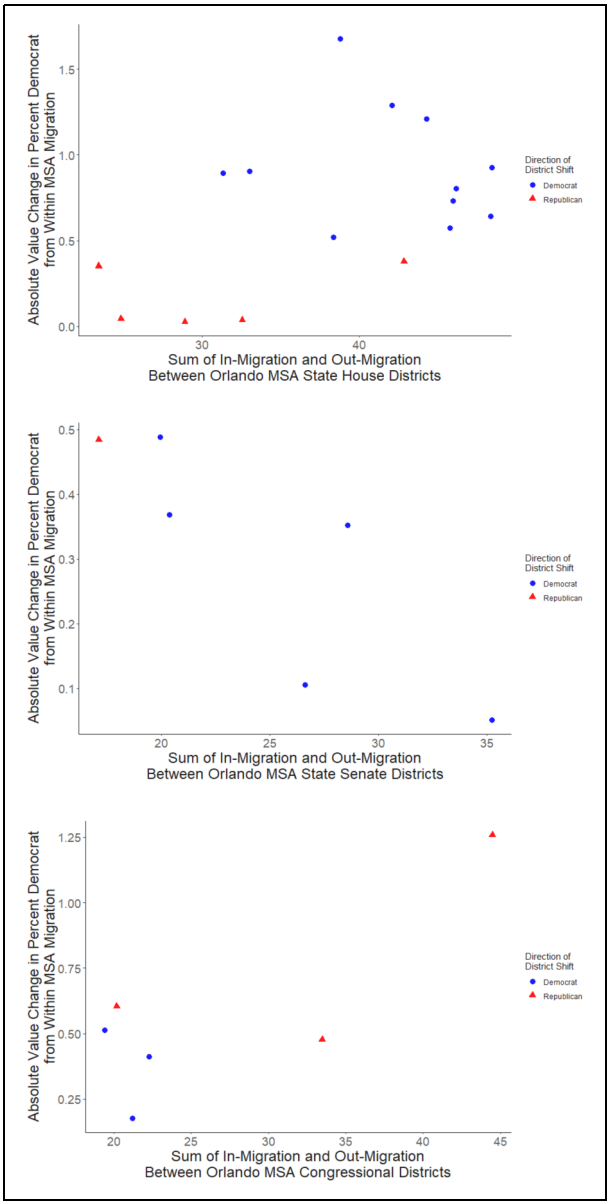

Figure C.4. Sum of Percentage Point Change of In-Migration and Out-Migration and Absolute Value of Partisan Shifts by Various Representative District Levels within the Miami Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with Direction of Shift Colorized, 2012–2020.

C.3. Orlando

Table C.5. Movement Between Zip Codes Within the Orlando MSA.

	Min.	1st Qu.	Median	Mean	3rd Qu.	Max.
Percent in	0.35	21.91	26.41	28.39	32.58	73.77
Percent out	5.18	21.46	25.34	25.63	29.54	50.74
Net migration	−50.39	−5.17	2.56	2.77	8.34	40.83
Movement volume	13.13	46.89	53.93	54.02	59.72	106.71

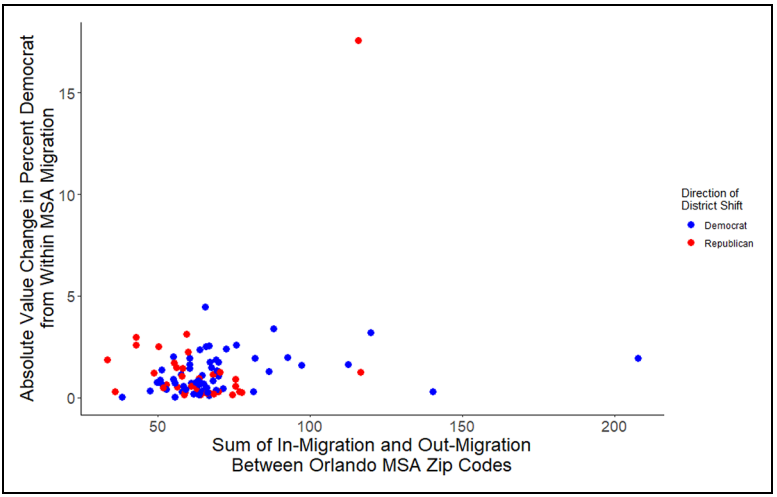

Figure C.5. Sum of Percentage Point Change of In-Migration and Out-Migration and Absolute Value of Partisan Shifts by Zip Code within the Orlando Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with Direction of Shift Colorized, 2012–2020.

Table C.6. Movement Between Representative Districts Within the Orlando MSA by District Level, 2012–2020.

	Min.	1st Qu.	Median	Mean	3rd Qu.	Max.
Lower chamber						
Percent in	12.97	16.54	18.29	19.08	21.84	26.08
Percent out	9.03	14.88	19.51	19.35	24.38	28.52
Net migration	−11.13	−4.48	0.60	−0.27	2.06	13.40
Movement volume	23.45	32.25	40.41	38.43	45.77	48.40
Upper chamber						
Percent in	10.52	10.81	11.52	13.08	12.48	21.55
Percent out	5.19	9.28	11.55	11.55	15.34	15.91
Net migration	−5.20	−2.14	1.51	1.53	5.52	7.87
Movement volume	17.10	20.04	23.49	24.63	28.07	35.22
Congressional						
Percent in	8.13	10.50	12.02	14.03	15.04	25.99
Percent out	9.15	9.63	11.05	12.80	16.17	18.49
Net migration	−3.14	−1.71	0.61	1.24	3.40	7.49
Movement volume	19.40	20.42	21.73	26.83	30.67	44.48

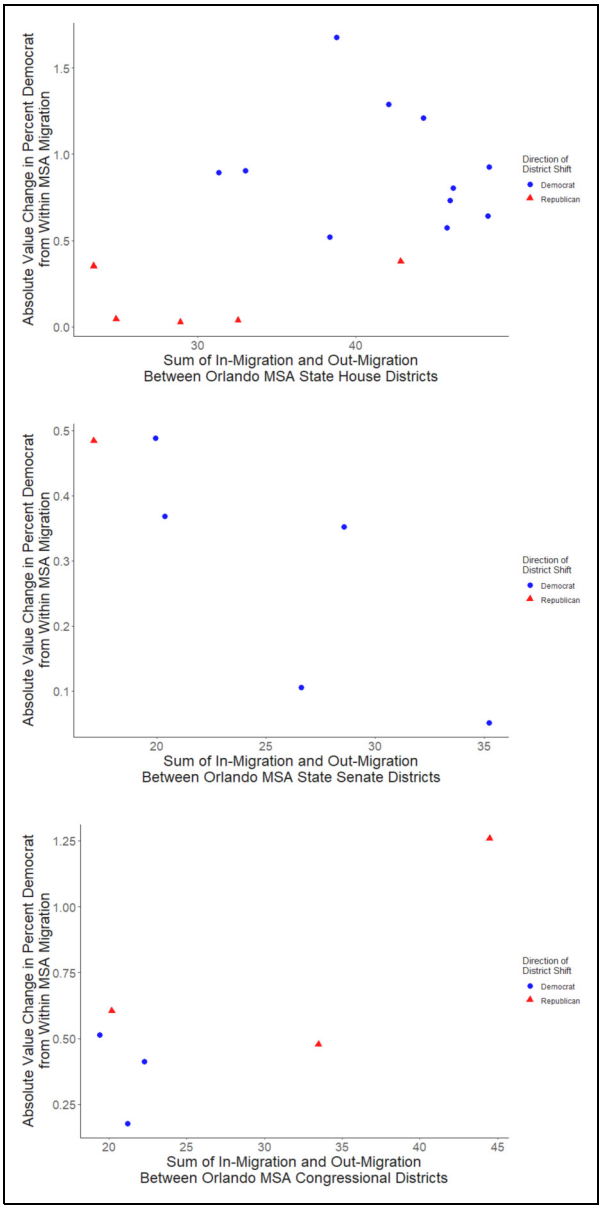

Figure C.6. Sum of Percentage Point Change of In-Migration and Out-Migration and Absolute Value of Partisan Shifts by Various Representative District Levels within the Orlando Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with Direction of Shift Colorized, 2012–2020.