

# Voting with Their Feet by Staying? The Political Drivers of Noncitizens' (Im-)mobility

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## Abstract

While research documents that some migrants leave their country of origin for political reasons, we do not know how the political factors in the host-country matter to explain immigrants' (im-)mobility behaviours after an initial migration. Addressing this gap, this study explores noncitizens' (im-)mobility responses to regional integration policies. Building on the evidence that inclusive policies foster immigrants' ties to the host-country over time, the paper argues that effective exposure to inclusive policies decreases inter-cantonal and international mobility, i.e. increases non-citizens' immobility. To test this, we run multilevel analyses using STATPOP register data on the entire immigrant resident population of Switzerland, and cantonal integration policy data. Findings reveal that inclusive policies do indeed amplify the sedentary effect of time spent in Switzerland, and, thus, increase noncitizens' immobility. This pattern holds true for international and inter-cantonal mobility, and is most pronounced among vulnerable immigrants, i.e. non-EU citizens holding a less-stable legal permit.

## Zusammenfassung

Die Forschung belegt, dass einige Migrant\*innen ihr Herkunftsland aus politischen Gründen verlassen. Wie politische Faktoren im Aufnahmeland das weitere (Im-)Mobilitätsverhalten von Migrant\*innen beeinflussen ist jedoch bislang unbekannt. Um diese Lücke zu

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schließen, untersucht die vorliegende Studie die (Im-) Mobilitätsreaktionen zugewanderter Personen auf regionale Integrationsmaßnahmen. Ausgehend von der Erkenntnis, dass inklusive Integrationspolitiken die Bindung zugewanderter Personen an das Aufnahmeland im Laufe der Zeit stärken, erwarten wir, dass Nicht-Staatsangehörige, die einer inklusiven Integrationspolitik ausgesetzt sind, weniger interkantonale und internationale Mobilität zeigen. Die Ergebnisse unserer Mehrebenenanalysen basierend auf STATPOP-Registerdaten und Daten kantonaler Integrationspolitik zeigen, dass integrationspolitische Maßnahmen tatsächlich die Immobilität von Nicht-Staatsangehörigen in der Schweiz erhöhen. Dieses Muster gilt sowohl für internationale als auch für interkantonale Mobilität und ist bei vulnerablen zugewanderten Personen, d.h. Nicht-EU-Bürgerinnen und Nicht-EU-Bürgern mit einer weniger stabilen Aufenthaltsgenehmigung, besonders ausgeprägt.

### Résumé

Alors que la recherche documente que certain.e.s migrant.e.s quittent leur pays d'origine pour des raisons politiques, nous ne savons pas comment les facteurs politiques dans le pays d'accueil importent pour expliquer les comportements d'(im-)mobilité des immigré.e.s après une première migration. Pour combler cette lacune, cette étude explore les réponses d'(im-)mobilité des non-ressortissant.e.s aux politiques d'intégration régionale. En nous appuyant sur la littérature qui montre que des politiques d'intégration inclusives favorisent les liens des immigrant.e.s avec le pays d'accueil, l'article soutient qu'une exposition effective à des politiques d'intégration inclusives diminue la mobilité des non-ressortissant.e.s. Pour vérifier cette hypothèse, nous effectuons des analyses multi-niveaux en utilisant les données STATPOP sur l'ensemble de la population résidente immigrée de Suisse, et un indice des politiques d'intégration cantonales. Les résultats révèlent que les politiques d'intégration inclusives amplifient l'effet sédentaire du temps passé en Suisse et augmentent donc l'immobilité des immigré.e.s. Cette tendance est plus prononcée chez les immigré.e.s avec un

statut vulnérable, c'est-à-dire originaires de pays-tiers et titulaires d'un permis de résidence moins stable.

#### KEYWORDS

Big administrative Data, Integration Policies, Migration, Mobility, Swiss Cantons

## INTRODUCTION

In public and political debates, there is still a very widespread perception of migration as a static phenomenon. The most common assumption is that immigrants come, settle, and stay in the host country. This conception also dominates political discourses; consider for instance the various and recurring initiatives against free movement of persons within Switzerland or the Brexit debate in the United Kingdom. However, this perception is rather a misconception than an accurate description. The reality is more dynamic; individuals come, possibly stay, leave again for a third country, or return to their country of departure. For instance, in the Swiss case, one out of four immigrants leave the country again after a single year of residency and almost 50% leave after 18 years (nccr – on the move, 2019). This average onward mobility rate hides some important disparities across groups with, for instance, 84% of US citizens but only 8% of Sri Lankans leaving after 17 years in Switzerland.

The question of why immigrants decide to stay in the host-country or engage in onward mobility is not only neglected in the public debate but also in scientific research. Research on this immobility-mobility nexus is still rather scarce, with existing studies focusing on individual drivers of onward mobility, such as the lack of social or economic roots in the destination country (e.g. Steiner, 2019). So far, we do not know whether immigrants' decision to stay or leave is influenced by contextual factors such as the political reception or integration policy context. Given the important demographic, political, and economic consequences of noncitizens' (im-)mobility, this neglect is surprising. By deciding to stay and eventually naturalize, or to move again instead, noncitizens reshape not only the economy, but also the face of a society and the political demos of a country or region. The paper sets out to address this question and examines the policy drivers of noncitizens' immobility<sup>1</sup> as opposed to their mobility within and out of Switzerland.

The lack of studies on this topic is also due to data limitations. Until quite recently, data collection on noncitizens has been restricted to national contexts, and large-scale transnational data on movement were not available (Dustmann et al., 2016). In Switzerland, the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) has been providing access to administrative register data since 2010, which is available on a yearly basis and at the individual level. This access to administrative big data allows us to investigate noncitizens' immobility thoroughly, rather than relying on a random sample, tracking all noncitizens' mobility trajectories in and out of Switzerland on a daily basis.

The paper addresses the topic of noncitizens' immobility combining macro- and micro-level data, looking at the effects of subnational integration policies on noncitizens' movement. By addressing this question, our paper contributes to existing research in three regards. First, migration/mobility studies focus extensively on 'push' or 'pull' factors, meaning the drivers of mobility regarding either the first international movement (Triandafyllidou & Gropas, 2014) or onward mobility after arrival in the host-country (Della Puppa & King, 2019). In contrast, research neglects 'keep' factors motivating noncitizens' immobility at their new place

<sup>1</sup>Throughout this paper, the term "immobility" refers to voluntary (i.e., not forced) settlement in the host country when policy decisions allow a stay by, for instance, granting a residence permit.

of residence. Our study complements this research by examining the importance of policy drivers to explain why noncitizens decide to stay in their location rather than moving again internationally or regionally. Therefore, we consider that immigrants do also ‘vote with their feet’ (Tiebout, 1956), not only by moving again but also by deciding actively to stay at their new place of residence. By adding a macro-level policy perspective to explain individual (im-)mobility behaviour, we also add a political science perspective to this field, which has been, so far, mainly analysed through economic lenses.

Second, migration studies have been criticized for their ‘methodological nationalism’ (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2003). By restricting the focus of analysis to the national level, existing research hides important regional disparities that can exist, especially in strongly federal states like Switzerland, where cantons have very far-reaching competences regarding integration policies (Manatschal, 2011). Our paper goes beyond the ‘national container’ perspective (Dahinden, 2016) in the following two ways. First, by focusing on cantonal (subnational) integration policies, and second, by accounting for onward mobility as a counter-part of immobility not only at the national level (international mobility), but also at the subnational level (inter-cantonal mobility).

Lastly, our study complements the recently emerging literature on how integration policies affect immigrants’ integration regarding their economic, political, and social integration. For instance, when integration policies are inclusive, these rights and obligations can foster and increase immigrants’ ties to the host-country, e.g. in terms of feeling of attachment to the host-country, national identification, naturalization intentions as well as political attitudes (Bennour & Manatschal, 2019; Bennour, 2020; Filindra & Manatschal, 2020; Van Hook et al., 2006; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012). However, little is known about integration policies’ effects on immigrants’ immobility. Therefore, it seems important to analyze if this increase in ties to the host-country materializes in a higher immobility among noncitizens when they live in, and are exposed to, an inclusive policy context. We also expect that policies require effective policy exposure and that effects thus unfold only over time (Lerch, 2012; Bennour & Manatschal, 2019; Bennour, 2020). Accordingly, we hypothesize that more inclusive cantonal integration policies amplify the positive effect of time on immigrants’ immobility, thereby decreasing their onward mobility. In addition, we assume that these policies influence more strongly immigrants having less rights in terms of both entry into the territory (non-EU citizens) and stay such as a conditional residence permit (B permit holders), as opposed to more stable settlement (C permit).

Our paper focuses on Switzerland because its pronounced federal political structure and constitutional principle of subsidiarity result in a heterogeneous puzzle of subnational integration policies. Swiss federalism implies not only that cantons can implement federal law in the field of integration, but they can even formulate their own integration policies, e.g. in the political, social or cultural-religious realms. For instance, some cantons allow immigrants to vote while others do not, whereas some provide easier access to citizenship or religious minority rights than others. This subnational policy heterogeneity allows us to analyse policy effects on immigrants (im-)mobility in a nuanced way, contrasting immobility with both inter-cantonal and international mobility. The heterogeneity across Swiss cantons does not only reflect in integration policies but also in demographics. In 2011, the period under scrutiny in this paper, the foreign-born share reached 22.8% at the national level, whereas regional shares range from 9.8% in Uri to 39.6% in Geneva (Federal Statistical Office).

In line with our theoretical expectations, the results of our multilevel regression models using cantonal integration policy data (Manatschal, 2011) and exhaustive registry data on individual (im-)mobility behaviour show that inclusive cantonal integration policies further amplify the sedentary effect of time spent in Switzerland, increasing thereby noncitizens’ immobility. In addition, our analyses reveal heterogeneous policy effects across immigrant subgroups. As

expected, the immobilizing policy effect over time is strongest for vulnerable immigrants, e.g. non-EU citizens with a conditional residence status (B permit). These main findings are robust to a series of additional empirical checks, including models using citizens for a placebo test as well as alternative policy indices at a later point in time (only cantonal citizenship policy), and underscore the relevance of the policy reception context in shaping noncitizens' (im-)mobility patterns.

## THEORETICAL SECTION

### Migration and mobility literature

This paper draws on two theoretical research strands: the migration and mobility literature, and research on integration policies and their effects on noncitizens. With respect to the first strand, Lee (1966) proposed a first theory to explain migration with his foundational ‘push/pull’ model. There is a substantial literature on ‘push’ factors, which explains why individuals decide to leave their birthplace; such as relative economic deprivation, the lack of career prospects (Triandafyllidou & Gropas, 2014), natural disasters as well as civil wars (Gheasi & Nijkamp, 2017). For a long time, migration studies have overlooked the dynamic character of mobility (Meeus, 2010) and have, thus, left aside immigrants' mobility behaviours after their first international migration. To respond to this gap, an increasing number of studies analyse secondary movements of international movers in terms of onward mobility (see e.g. Della Puppa & King, 2019).

As regards internal (intra-country) mobility, Tiebout's (1956) classical ‘voting with their feet’ theory states that when people disagree with policies, they can move to another polity where their preferences are better fulfilled. ‘Voting by feet’ may be even more predominant in a federal state like Switzerland, with its important variations between regional policies (Somin, 2014). Economic factors play an important role in noncitizens' mobility across Swiss cantons. A higher level of unemployment, weak economic specialization (Lerch, 2012) and differences in municipal taxes (Schmidheiny & Slotwinski, 2018) can explain why noncitizens move from one canton to another – in other words, people ‘vote with their feet’.

More recently, research has broadened the understanding of macro-level factors influencing mobility by accounting for sociological and political drivers. For instance, studies show that immigrants' mobility towards a municipality or a country decreases if natives have negative attitudes towards immigration (Bracco et al., 2018; de Coulon et al., 2016; Slotwinski & Stutzer, 2019). These studies rely on specific events such as a far-right party victory in municipal elections or the 2009 Swiss referendum resulting in a national ban on the construction of new minarets. Summing up, the focus of this research is clearly on push or pull factors that make immigrants move, whereas it neglects the question of which factors make immigrants stay at their new place of residence.

From our perspective, two gaps appear thus in the above-mentioned studies. First, investigations on the effects of natives' attitudes neglect the broader integration policy context addressed in this paper. While natives' attitudes may play a role to explain immigrants' mobility, we do not know to which extent other aspects of the political reception context, and in particular the broader integration policy context, affect immigrants' (im-)mobility behaviours. Given the increasing body of research documenting integration policy effects on noncitizens' integration and ties to countries of residence discussed below, it seems very likely that these policies may also affect the decision to stay, as opposed to leave again. Second, research focuses almost exclusively on mobility. However, a decision to stay is also an active choice made by immigrants, if policies allow such a decision (e.g. renewal of residence permit). We argue here that ‘voting by feet’ is not limited to mobility but should also encompass immobility

behaviours. Given the lack of research on immigrants' immobility, it seems important to understand this phenomenon better, since immobility and mobility are the two faces of the same coin. To address these two gaps, we examine how political norms of inclusion, as expressed in integration policies, can act as 'keep' factors and thereby motivate immigrants to stay in their new place of residence.

## Integration policies

With respect to the second research strand on integration policies, we adopt an internationally established multidimensional understanding of these policies. We thereby define integration policies as those policies that intend to guide the integration processes of immigrants in the socioeconomic, cultural–religious, civic, and political realms of society (Joppke & Seidle, 2012; Koopmans et al., 2012; Manatschal et al., 2020). In all these domains, policies can have inclusive or exclusive orientations. Inclusive examples include policies facilitating access to state employment (e.g. the police force), Swiss citizenship or noncitizen voting rights; the absence or limitation of these rights, such as restrictive naturalization regulations, represent exclusive policies. In the cultural domain, inclusive policies typically accommodate diversity (e.g. allowing Islamic burials) while exclusive policies focus on assimilation (e.g. high language proficiency requirements) (e.g. Koopmans et al., 2012; Manatschal, 2011). Since these integration policies target predominantly foreign-born noncitizens, and given our focus on “secondary immobility”, i.e. immobility after a move to Switzerland, our study focuses on policy effects on foreign-born noncitizens, excluding Swiss-born noncitizens, as well as dual and naturalized citizens.

Traditionally, studies on integration policies mainly concern the national level (e.g., Brubaker, 1992; Favell, 2001; Koopmans et al., 2012). This national focus largely overlooks the important policy heterogeneity that can exist within one ‘national container’ at the sub-national level (Dahinden, 2016; Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2003). Furthermore, regions are increasingly important for immigrants' integration in the host-country (Hepburn, 2011; Manatschal et al., 2020; Paquet, 2014). There is also a strong emphasis on understanding the determinants of integration policies (e.g., Favell, 2001; Koopmans et al., 2012; Lutz, 2019). Only more recently did research start to address questions of integration policies' effects on economic, cultural, or political integration (Bloemraad, 2006; Ersanilli & Koopmans, 2011; Koopmans, 2010). Qualifying the notion of naturalization as the endpoint of the integration process, or even its milestone (Ersanilli & Koopmans, 2011), further studies show that inclusive policies e.g. in terms of citizenship attribution can have beneficial effects on immigrants' social integration even beyond citizenship attainment (Hainmueller et al., 2017).

Our study aligns with this increasing body of research on (integration) policy effects on immigrant noncitizens. No matter whether these studies adopt a neo-institutional perspective (Pierson, 2006; Schlicht-Schmälzle & Möller, 2012), adhere to the “political opportunity structure” approach (Cinalli & Giugni, 2011), or theories of policy feedback (Filindra & Manatschal, 2020; Pierson, 1993), the common denominator of these studies is that integration policies affect immigrants' attitudes and behavior. Integration policies can thereby shape immigrants' behaviors via two main channels; namely material and symbolic effects (Bloemraad, 2013). First, material resources provide immigrants with, for instance, an access to the labor market, language classes, or voting rights. These material resources directly facilitate immigrants' active participation and inclusion into the host society. Second, these policies also convey symbolic resources or what Koopmans et al. (2005) describe as discursive opportunity structure. By granting different levels of rights to immigrants, this discursive structure is more or less inclusive, offering noncitizens either a ‘warm handshake’ or a ‘cold shoulder’ (Reeskens & Wright, 2014). The ‘symbolic boundary’ that these policies define between natives and immigrant groups can thus be more or less thick (Lamont & Molnár, 2002), affecting

thereby how immigrants can feel at home in the receiving country or materialize in terms of, for instance, naturalization behaviors (Witte, 2014). From this perspective, we expect that inclusive integration policies constitute an incentive structure than can motivate immigrants' immobility by strengthening ties to the host country.

In line with this perspective, research documents a positive impact of inclusive integration policies on immigrants' national identification, language skills, school and labour market integration or psychological wellbeing (Manatschal & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2013; Pecoraro et al., 2022; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012). Some studies also depict the opposite pattern. The threat emanating from exclusive integration policies can for instance increase immigrants' political engagement and mobilization against these restrictive policies (Filindra & Manatschal, 2020). Koopmans (2010) further suggests that, compared to multiculturalism, assimilationist integration regimes can improve immigrants' inclusion in the labour market. In other cases, research is inconclusive as regards integration policies' effects on immigrants (Dinesen & Hooghe, 2010; Wright & Bloemraad, 2012).

This mixed evidence may relate to the fact that the above-mentioned studies ignore that an effective exposure of immigrants (e.g. in terms of time spent in the country) to integration policies may be needed to observe policy effects, in particular symbolic effects strengthening the ties to the place of residence. Research shows that inclusive integration policies can indeed amplify the positive effect of time spent in Switzerland on noncitizens' attachment to the country or naturalization intentions (Bennour, 2020; Bennour & Manatschal, 2019), which may express a sedentary intention of noncitizens. Building on this literature, and following the logic of strengthening ties and increasing immobility over time (see e.g. Lerch, 2012), we formulate the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** *More inclusive cantonal integration policies amplify the positive effect of time on immobility.*

The preceding hypothesis concerns the entire noncitizen population of Switzerland, but the literature has shown that differentiated policy effects exist for subgroups and their naturalization behaviours and intentions (Bennour, 2020; Filindra & Manatschal, 2020; Vink et al., 2013). We refine thereby this general approach by looking more closely at how different immigrant categories may react to cantonal integration policies.

To construct these subgroups, we use the vulnerability of immigrants living in Switzerland. To do so, we use an approach based on Swiss laws regulating rights to enter and stay in Switzerland. As regards entry rights, the most important dichotomy exists between EU and non-EU citizens. The former can 'enter and find employment on par with Swiss citizens' (Hercog & Sandoz, 2018) as EU nationals benefit from an unrestricted access to the Swiss territory thanks to the bilateral agreement. As for family reunification, EU citizens can settle with their family in all cantons, independently of their residence permits. Non-EU nationals, in contrast, encounter stricter entry conditions as they need to find an employment before arriving in Switzerland (State Secretariat for Migration, SEM). Furthermore, the employer must prove that the job position could not be given to a Swiss citizen. Therefore, practically and legally, non-EU nationals have to be highly qualified in order to seek a job in Switzerland (Hercog & Sandoz, 2018). Family reunification is also more complex for non-EU citizens, depending more on the type of residence permits, and, in some cases, of the canton of residence. These limitations of access rights of non-EU citizens as compared to EU citizens render their status in Switzerland more vulnerable.

As regards rights to stay, residence permits create a second important divide in terms of vulnerability among immigrants. The latter can apply for a C permit (settled foreign nationals), after ten, or, under certain circumstances, five years of residence in Switzerland. Obtaining a C permit is however not automatic. Immigrants need to apply for it and fulfill some conditions

such as respect for Swiss security and public order, language proficiency as well as participation in the labor market.

This permit for settled foreign nationals does not have any time restrictions or conditions, and gives also access to the naturalization process (State Secretariat for Migration, 2021a). In contrast, the second most common permit in Switzerland, the B Permit (resident foreign nationals) depends on having either a job position in Switzerland or having sufficient financial means to live in the country (State Secretariat for Migration, 2021b). When obtaining it for the first time, a B permit is valid and renewed for a single year for non-EU nationals. EU citizens can directly obtain a B permit for five years before being renewed for the same amount of time, or a single year if the immigrant is unemployed.

To summarize, it appears that EU citizens holding a C permit are certainly the least vulnerable immigrant subgroup in Switzerland. Following this logic, non-EU citizens with a C permit could have faced quite harsh conditions upon arrival but still benefit of stable rights to stay. By opposition, holding a B permit definitely makes the rights to stay less secure. With such a permit, EU citizens can still enjoy more rights than non-EU nationals.

As more vulnerability means less rights, security, and stability, we expect that more vulnerable noncitizens are most receptive for an inclusive integration policy context which facilitates their access to a variety of rights, increasing thereby the security and stability of their status in Switzerland. Based on these considerations, we can now develop a finer-grained hypothesis for immigrant subgroups:

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** *The amplifying impact of inclusive integration policies on the sedentary effect of time is strongest among the most vulnerable, i.e. most right deprived immigrants.*

## DATABASE, VARIABLES AND METHODOLOGY

### Integration policy index

The focus of our paper is on the effects of integration policies and, thus, the main independent variable is the ‘Integration Policy Index’ (IPI) (Manatschal, 2011). The IPI ranks the 26 Swiss cantons’ integration policies according to the ease or difficulty of accessing various rights and obligations across four integration-related domains: civic, political, socio-structural, and cultural-religious. The IPI covers these four domains using 24 indicators, measuring integration policy in a comprehensive manner that captures, for instance, noncitizens’ access to citizenship and state employment in the public administration, noncitizen voting rights, or the right to a burial in line with Islamic traditions (for a detailed discussion, see Manatschal, 2011). The IPI allows us to test the expectation that a canton’s overall reception context matters for noncitizens’ immobility decisions. The index gathered policy data from 2005 to 2008. Since these policies are characterized by a strong path dependency and are thus relatively stable over time (Manatschal, 2012), and given that the effect of these policies is expected to unfold over time, this data should allow us to assess policy impacts on immigrants’ (im-)mobility behaviour in 2012. The IPI ranks from  $-0.54$  (most exclusive policy pole) to  $0.76$  (most inclusive policy pole) (Mean:  $0.12$ ; Median:  $0.12$ ; SD:  $0.26$ ).

### Individual level database - STATPOP

This paper mainly uses individual register data from the FSO, which we link with cantonal integration policy data. The register dataset, named STATPOP, provides individual-level



demographic data on the entire permanent resident population of Switzerland. This exhaustivity is of important analytic value as it provides us with the complete picture of immigrants' mobility in and out of Switzerland. However, because STATPOP was not created for research but for administrative purposes, it offers a large number of observations but a limited number of variables (Connolly et al., 2016). Importantly, STATPOP data also contains both stocks and flows of the population, indicating the precise date and direction of any individual movement occurring during the period of study. We run our analyses on the movements happening in 2012. As elaborated below, this decision was taken to be able to include the most adequate cantonal control measures (e.g. natives' attitudes in terms of party vote shares in federal elections from 2011). The difference of three years between our IPI's data collection and our individual (im-)mobility outcomes should not be problematic, given that these policies are highly path dependent and stable over time (e.g. Manatschal, 2012).

The data of 2012 include 1,272,856 observations. In this year, 2.03% of noncitizens made an inter-cantonal move, while 3.35% moved out of Switzerland. These shares show that, overall, onward mobility is rather low. A look at some sample demographics substantiates further how the share of immigrants declines over time. For instance, 88'209 immigrants have spent 3 years on Swiss territory (86'429 with a B permit and 1'780 with a C permit) and this share decreases to 30'128 individuals after 20 years (2'248 with a B permit and 27'880 with a C permit).

As developed in the theoretical section, we only keep in our data immigrants holding a B or C Permit as these permits allow noncitizens to move freely within Switzerland.<sup>2</sup>

As discussed in the theoretical section, we also create a categorical variable to seize immigrants' vulnerability in terms of residence permit and whether noncitizens are from an EU country or not. This second main independent variable of our study was constructed as follows: 1. EU citizens holding a C Permit; 2. Non-EU citizens holding a C Permit; 3. EU citizens holding a B permit; 4. Non-EU citizens holding a B Permit. This categorical variable ranges from the least to the most vulnerable status. EU citizens represent a share of 68.38% of the sample. The ones holding a C permit are 39.52% compared to 28.86% with a B permit. Non-EU citizens represent 31.62% of our data. Among them, C permit holders represent a share of 17.36% and B permit holders are the smallest subgroup with 14.27% of the entire population under scrutiny. In our analysis, we exclude individuals holding other permits such as Ci permits for diplomats or L Permit for short-term residence. We discard the former because of the very specific profile of diplomats, who are highly mobile and do not seek to stay in Switzerland. We do not account for L Permit holders because they officially aim at staying less than a year in Switzerland.

## Dependent variables

The two dependent variables are dummies extracted from the STATPOP database. The first measures inter-cantonal mobility, reporting if an individual has moved from one canton to another in a given year (1 = inter-cantonal mobility, 0 = immobility). The second dependent variable relates to mobility out of Switzerland (1 = move out of Switzerland, 0 = immobility). The two DVs are mutually exclusive. For instance, an international mover is not included in the analysis of inter-cantonal mobility, and vice versa.

<sup>2</sup>It is important to note that free movement for B and C permits holders is restricted in case of unemployment and dependence on social benefits. We do not have access to unemployment and social benefits data at the individual level. However, our analytic models control for foreign-born unemployment rates at the cantonal level.

## Control variables

We use a dummy to indicate each individual's gender (1 = female, 0 = male; Mean: 0.47; SD: 0.5). Age (Mean: 40.8 years; Median: 39 years; SD: 16.80) and time spent in Switzerland (Mean: 13.6 years; Median: 8 years; SD: 13.9) are also included in the analyses and coded as continuous variables (in years).

To ensure the possible cantonal drivers precede the individual effects, the models include various control variables with a one-year time lag with respect to our individual outcome variables, with exception of the three-year gap for the policy index as discussed above. In other words, all cantonal control variables are measured in 2011, with noncitizen movement measured in 2012. The first two controls relate to economic factors. Since we know that economic factors are important drivers of mobility decisions, we control for the cantonal foreign-born unemployment rate (State Secretariat for Economic Affairs) and tax rates (Federal Tax Administration). We have constructed the latter variable using an average of the tax level for married couples with two children and that of single individuals, in both cases living in the cantonal capital and earning between 60'000 and 80'000 CHF a year. Sociodemographic factors such as the foreign-born share are also considered. A dummy variable captures the official cantonal language (0 = French/Italian-speaking canton, 1 = German-speaking canton). Two final variables relate to the political context of the canton. As a proxy for an immigrant-friendly cantonal context (Manatschal, 2015; Ruedin, 2013), the first variable captures the left-wing share in National Council elections (combining votes for the Swiss Socialist Party, Swiss Party of Labour, Green Party of Switzerland and Solidarity). The second variable measures the conservative right-wing share during the very same elections as a proxy for an immigrant-sceptic cantonal context, tallying votes for the Swiss People's Party (SVP), the Ticino League, the Geneva Citizens' Movement, the Swiss Democrats and the Federal Democratic Union (Strijbis, 2014). Before running the models, we have conducted a variant inflation factor (VIF) test that indicates an absence of multicollinearity with all variables ranking well below the limit of 10.

## Methodology

This paper's data are nested at two levels: level-1 data represent the individual or micro-level while level-2 data relate to cantonal factors. Given this nested structure and the dichotomous nature of our outcomes, we apply multilevel logistic regressions, running random intercept and random slope regressions for the baseline models. This multilevel modelling strategy allows level-1 units to 'borrow strength' from level-2 units when the number of observations at the macro-level is relatively low (Steenbergen & Jones, 2002). To test the amplifying policy effect over time (H1), we include simple interaction terms between time spent in Switzerland and inclusive policies. Heterogeneous group effects (H2) are analysed via triple-interaction terms to test policy effects on the sedentary effects of time on different immigrant subgroups.

As our models consider contextual and individual level variables, one may raise the question of immigrants' selection into specific cantons before their subsequent movement or immobility, which we analyse here. Table A1 (in the Appendix) shows that, based on the information available via registry data, cantonal noncitizen samples are very balanced, and cantonal differences are marginal as indicated by the small standard deviations across cantonal means of the various individual variables. At the same time, turnover, i.e. influx and remigration, is not equally distributed across cantons – we return to this point when discussing our empirical results.

**TABLE 1** Multilevel logistic regression – Baseline and Interaction-term (Time X IPI)

	International onward mobility – Full sample	Inter-cantonal mobility – Full sample
	Model 1	Model 2
Time spent in Switzerland	–0.05*** (0.00)	–0.05*** (0.00)
Integration policy index (IPI)	0.31 (0.21)	0.21 (0.31)
Time spent X IPI	–0.02*** (0.00)	–0.01* (0.00)
Control variables	YES	YES
Cut 1	3.74*** –0.34	2.25*** –0.51
Cantonal variation	0.02** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.02)
AIC	332065.81	227032.72
BIC	332258.36	227225.05
Log-Likelihood	–166016.9	–113500.36
N	1'244'526	1'227'621

Notes: \*p < 0.1; \*\*p < 0.05; \*\*\*p < 0.01. All models use random intercepts and fixed slopes.

Source: STATPOP (Federal Statistical Office).

## EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

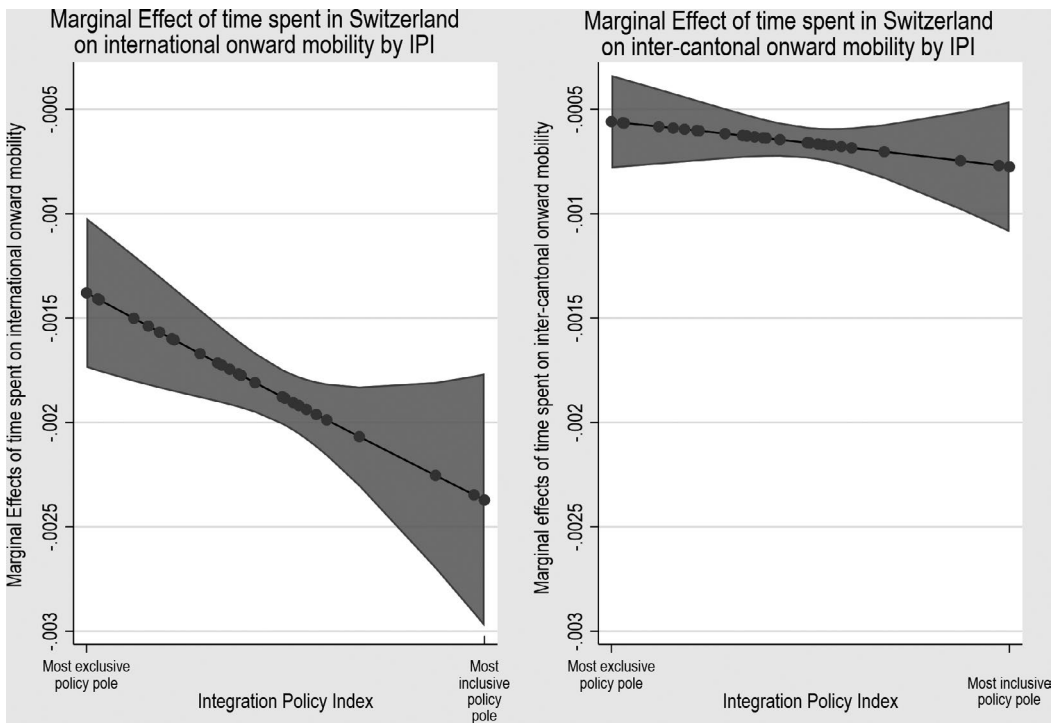
The empirical test of integration policies' correlation with noncitizen immobility proceeds in two steps. Table 1 shows the cross-level interaction terms between time spent in Switzerland and the IPI to predict international (Model 1) and inter-cantonal onward mobility (Model 2) (see full baseline and interaction term models including all variables and constituent terms in the Appendix, Table A2). Then, we turn towards the subsamples' analyses to see if some subgroups' characteristics make it more likely that noncitizens' immobility behaviours are shaped by the interaction between the IPI and time spent in Switzerland.

### Analyses on the entire sample

#### First hypothesis – *Over time effects of the IPI on immigrants' immobility*

Model 1 in Table 1 displays the cross-level interaction term between time spent in Switzerland and the IPI with international onward mobility as outcome. The model tests our first hypothesis, which stipulates that inclusive integration policies amplify the sedentary effects of time on immobility. The estimates give a first validation that, after a certain period of time in Switzerland, noncitizens are more likely to stay in Switzerland, since less likely to move, as expressed by the negative interaction term, if they live in a canton with relatively inclusive integration policies compared to living in an exclusive policy context.

This pattern can also be confirmed for inter-cantonal (im-)mobility, as shown in Model 2 (Table 1). The cross-level interaction term between integration policies and time spent in Switzerland is negatively correlated with inter-cantonal onward mobility, indicating an increase in immobility. These models confirm our first hypothesis which stipulates that inclusive



**FIGURE 1** Marginal effect of time spent by IPI on international and inter-cantonal onward mobility of the entire sample. *Notes:* Marginal effect plots based on results in Table 1. Grey bands indicate 95% confidence intervals

integration policies amplify the positive effect of time spent in Switzerland on noncitizens' immobility. It also appears that this correlation is stronger for international onward mobility than for inter-cantonal mobility. Note also that the baseline models in the appendix show no direct effect of integration policy on neither international nor inter-cantonal mobility (Models 1 and 3 in Table A2), supporting our argument that policy effects unfold only over time.

Following Berry et al., (2012), we produced marginal effect plots to visually capture how time spent in Switzerland and integration policies interact to explain (im-)mobility patterns. Figure 1 displays the marginal effects of immigrants' time spent in Switzerland on international (left plot) and inter-cantonal (right plot) onward mobility as a function of all cantonal integration policies (x-axis) for the entire sample. The plots visualize the findings of Table 1, showing how for both types of mobility, inclusive integration policies further amplify the negative, i.e. sedentary, effect of time on moving among immigrants. Also, Figure 1 clearly demonstrates that international onward mobility is more influenced by this effect than inter-cantonal moves.

## Control variables

We also use Model 1 in Table A2 (in the Online Appendix) to briefly discuss how individual factors relate to onward mobility out of Switzerland. Compared to the baseline (EU citizens with C permit), non-EU citizens with the same permit are more likely to stay in Switzerland. Both EU and non-EU citizens holding a B permit tend to be more mobile than EU citizens with a C permit. Being a female and time spent in Switzerland decrease the likelihood of onward mobility out of Switzerland. Also being older significantly increases the likelihood of staying in Switzerland. With respect to cantonal controls, a higher foreign-born share increases the

**TABLE 2** Multilevel logistic regression – Triple interaction terms – Vulnerability X Time Spent X IPI

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>
	<b>International onward mobility</b>	<b>Inter-cantonal onward mobility</b>
<i>Triple Interaction terms</i>		
Vulnerability (ref. cat.: EU with C Permit) X Time spent X IPI		
-Non-EU/C Permit X Time spent X IPI	-0.071*** (0.012)	-0.018 (0.014)
-EU/B Permit X Time spent X IPI	-0.043** (0.015)	-0.021 (0.019)
-Non-EU/B Permit X Time spent X IPI	-0.11*** (0.016)	-0.11*** (0.020)
Control variables	YES	YES
Cut 1	4.07*** (0.35)	2.30*** (0.51)
Cantonal variation	0.023** (0.0071)	0.052*** (0.016)
AIC	328100.1	226669.5
BIC	328400.9	226970.0
Log-Likelihood	-164025.0	-113309.8
N	1'244'526	1'227'621

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01. All models use random intercepts and fixed slopes. Source: STATPOP (Federal Statistical Office).

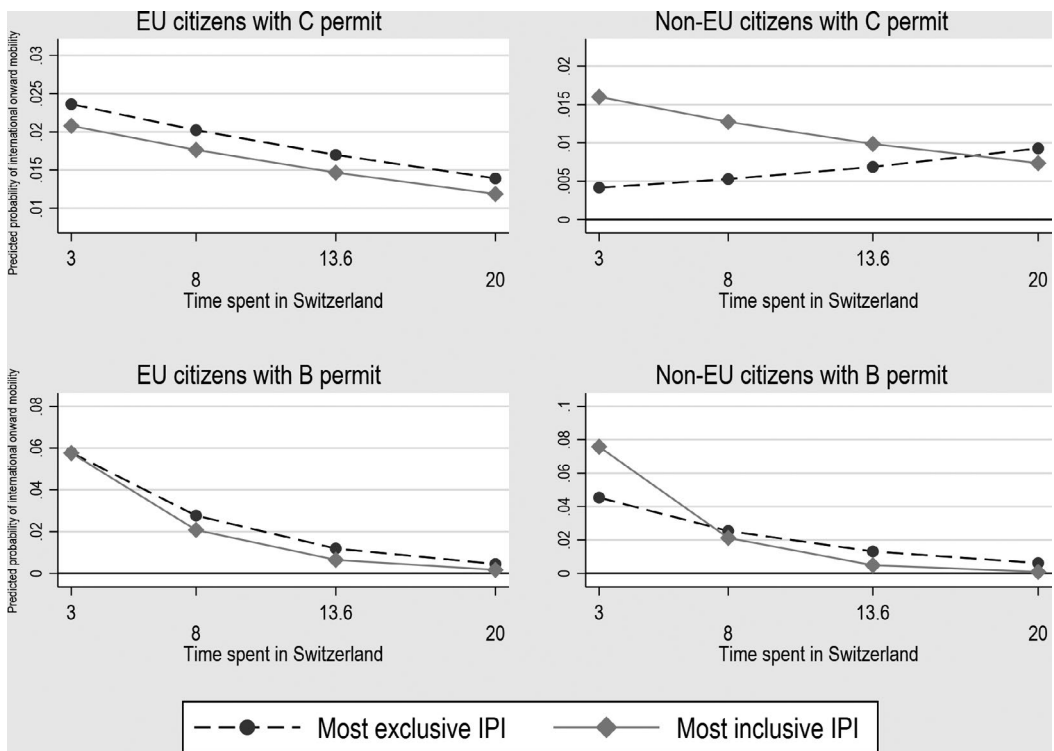
likelihood that noncitizens will move out of Switzerland. Of the other cantonal control variables, none play a statistically significant role in explaining onward mobility out of Switzerland.

As regards the baseline model for mobility across cantons (Model 3, Table A1), the influence of individual and cantonal factors are rather similar as for mobility out of Switzerland. Relative to immigrants' vulnerability, only one difference appears, as EU citizens with a B permit move more across cantons than EU citizens holding a C permit. As for cantonal control variables, the foreign-born share is insignificant and living in a German-speaking canton increases inter-cantonal mobility.

## Analyses on subsamples

**Second hypothesis** – *Over time effects of the IPI on immobility are the largest among most vulnerable immigrants*

Turning to the subsamples, we run a model with triple interaction terms between time spent in Switzerland, the IPI and the vulnerability group variable. As shown in the restricted models in Table 2 (see full models including all variables and constituent terms of the triple interaction in the Online Appendix, Table A3), the influence of the interaction between time spent and integration policies varies across subgroups. As regards international onward mobility (Model 1), on the one hand, it appears that the legally most stable immigrants (EU citizens with C permit, baseline in the models) are the least influenced subcategory. On the other hand,



**FIGURE 2** Predicted probability plot – International onward mobility – All subcategories. *Notes:* Probability plots based on results in Table A4. Lines represent predicted probabilities for most inclusive (diamonds) and exclusive (circles) values of integration policy over time

inclusive integration policies amplify the sedentary effect of time most among the most vulnerable immigrants (Non-EU nationals with B permit). Both intermediate immigrant categories in terms of legal vulnerability (Non-EU citizens with C permit and EU nationals with B permit) also display an amplification of the sedentary effect of time by inclusive integration policies compared to the baseline category.

As regards inter-cantonal onward mobility (Model 2 in Table 2), only the most vulnerable immigrants (Non-EU citizens with B permit) are significantly influenced differently than the baseline (EU nationals with C permit).

For visual and substantive interpretation of these results, we also drew predicted probability plots (see full predicted probability tables in the Online Appendix, Table A4 – Models 1 to 5). To produce these plots, the IPI's minimal and maximal values were interacted with the number of years spent in Switzerland; 3 years (first quartile), 8 years (median), 13.6 years (mean) and 20 years (third quartile). All other control variables are maintained at their mean values. Figure 2 displays the results from these triple interaction terms for international (im-)mobility and each immigrant subgroup as predicted probability plots. Note that these plots base on the two most extreme cantons in terms of IPI only, and not the full range of the policy index, as in Figure 1. The differential decrease of the policy slopes shows that not only time affects mobility behaviour (in which case we would observe parallel decreasing policy slopes), but that inclusive policies indeed amplify the sedentary effect of time. This pattern emerges most clearly for the more vulnerable immigrant categories in Figure 2, in line with our expectations.

Remember that in 2012, on average, only 3.35% of immigrants moved out of Switzerland and 2.03% to another canton. More specifically, for EU citizens with a C permit, the decrease in mobility ranges from 2.1% to 1.2% in the inclusive policy context and from 2.4% to 1.4% in

the most exclusive one. Non-EU nationals with a C permit see their decrease ranging from 1.6% to 0.74% in the most inclusive canton while the likelihood to be onward mobile increases even slightly over time in the most exclusive canton from 0.42% to 0.93%. Among EU citizens with a B permit the mobility probability after three years is about 5.8% in both inclusive and exclusive policy contexts, and decreases to 0.17% (most inclusive context) and to 0.45% (most exclusive context). As expected, non-EU nationals holding a B permit face the strongest decrease in mobility over time. In inclusive cantons, the decrease in mobility ranges from 7.6% to 0.09%, while in the most exclusive context, the decrease goes only from 4.5% to 0.61%.

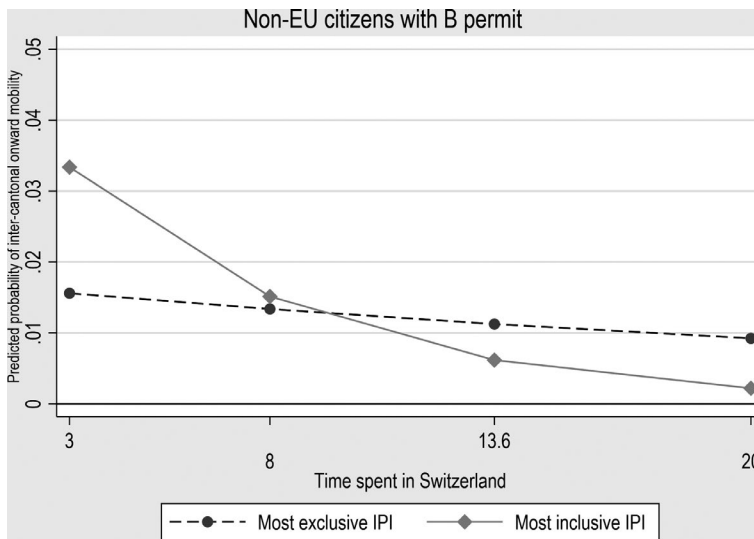
To summarize, in an inclusive policy context, the decrease of the probability to move, i.e. the increase in immobility, is between 1.8 (for EU citizens with a C permit) and 85.4 times (for non-EU citizens with a B permit) higher after 20 years compared to 3 years of residence. For the most exclusive policy pole, the decrease in mobility probability over time is significantly smaller, ranging from 1.7 (for EU citizens with a C permit) to 12.9 times higher immobility levels (for non-EU citizens with a B permit) after 20 years than after 3 years.

Therefore, regarding international (im-)mobility, it appears clearly that living in an inclusive canton amplifies the sedentary effect of time on noncitizens. These findings tend to confirm again our first hypothesis on such effects as these effects appear in all samples. In addition, these estimates also show that non-EU nationals with a B permit which we classified as the most vulnerable immigrant group are indeed most affected by an inclusive policy context, which is in line with our second hypothesis. Also, it may appear from these subgroup analyses that the effects on the entire sample may be driven by non-EU citizens with B and C permit. However, even if the strength of the impacts is large for these subsamples, these categories only account for 31.62% of the entire sample. Therefore, further research would be needed to decipher these effects more precisely.

One may wonder why immigrants, in the first years after arrival (i.e. after 3 years), tend to leave more cantons with inclusive IPI compared to more exclusive ones (see Figure 2, vignettes for non-EU citizens with B and C permit). Official statistics clearly show that not all cantons attract an even share of international immigrants (nccr – on the move, 2022). For instance, cantons such as Geneva, Vaud, or Basel-City attract most international immigrants. If, in addition, we take into account that immigrants' onward mobility mostly happens in the first years after arrival (nccr – on the move, 2019), we can consider that immigrants' turnover is not evenly distributed across Swiss cantons. In spite of these unequal movement patterns after 3 years of residence, which can be explained by this differential turnover across cantons, Figure 2 clearly shows how inclusive policies amplify the sedentary effect of time in the following years of non-citizens' residence in a canton.

Figure 3 shows the same triple-interaction term to predict the (im-)mobility probability for inter-cantonal moves (full predicted probability tables in the Online Appendix, Table A4 – Models 6 to 10). The plot contains only the sample with a statistically significant estimate in the multilevel logistic regression model (Table 2). As expected, non-EU nationals holding a B permit experience the strongest decrease in inter-cantonal mobility over time in an inclusive policy context, from 3.3% to 0.02%. In an exclusive canton, the same decrease is again clearly smaller, going from 1.6% to 0.09%.

Overall, the subsample analyses reveal first that non-EU nationals with a B permit are indeed most affected by an inclusive policy context. This finding confirms our second hypothesis stating that the amplification of the positive effect of time on immobility by an inclusive policy context is largest among most vulnerable immigrants. Second, international onward mobility is clearly more influenced by the moderation between IPI and time spent in Switzerland than inter-cantonal movements. Last, especially for non-EU citizens, the likelihood of onward moving (internationally or between cantons) is surprisingly higher during the first years in an inclusive context than in an exclusive one. A possible explanation could be the important



**FIGURE 3** Predicted probability plot – Inter-cantonal onward mobility – Non-EU citizens with B permit.  
*Notes:* Probability plots based on results in Table A4. Lines represent predicted probabilities for most inclusive (diamonds) and exclusive (circles) values of integration policy over time

immigrant turnover in cantons with inclusive IPI, as discussed above. However, further analyses would be needed to fully understand this particular outcome.

## Robustness checks

We have run two different robustness checks. First, we use the SWISSCIT – Index on Citizenship laws (CI) as a second policy measure, which covers only one dimension – albeit a central one – of integration policy, access to citizenship. The analyses are run in 2016 to be in line with the CI data collection and the national elections of 2015 to seize natives' political attitudes via parties' electoral vote shares. For international onward mobility of the entire population (Model 2 in Table A5 in the Online Appendix), cross-level interaction terms between time spent and the CI display a similar picture as in Table A2. Thus, it also appears that inclusive cantonal citizenship policies amplify the sedentary effects of time on immigrants' immobility, compared to international onward mobility, in line with our integration policy findings. As for the subgroup analyses, non-EU citizens with a B permit are the most affected subgroup, closely followed by non-EU nationals with a C permit (Model 2 in Table A5 in the Online Appendix). The only difference with the main findings is that EU citizens with a B permit are not influenced by the interaction term between time spent and the IPI. This may be explained by the particular nature of citizenship policies, and the fact that non-EU nationals tend to benefit more from Swiss citizenship than EU citizens, for instance regarding employment and salary (Peters et al., 2020).

As for immobility compared to inter-cantonal migration, there is no effect of the interaction term for the entire sample (Model 4 in Table A5). Again, non-EU citizens holding a B permit see the sedentary effects of time being amplified in inclusive citizenship policy contexts. In contrast to our main findings for integration policies, the sedentary effect of time on inter-cantonal mobility even amplifies in cantons with exclusive citizenship policies for EU nationals with a B permit. We hypothesize that this may again be related to the particular nature of citizenship policies, as the required duration of stay before starting the naturalization process may play a key role and varies greatly across cantons. According to this perspective, years



spent in a canton are more precious in exclusive cantons with long residency requirements for citizenship application. Therefore, it is possible that living in a canton with exclusive citizenship practices creates “sunk costs”, which may, in turn, increase costs of onward mobility.

Because integration policies focus on noncitizens, we have also run a placebo test of the effects of integration policies on Swiss citizens (Table A6). As reported in Model 2, integration policies do not influence Swiss citizens' immobility, when compared to international mobility. For inter-cantonal mobility, Swiss citizens tend to leave cantons with inclusive integration policies slightly more (Model 4). The estimate of the interaction term being very close to zero and in the opposite direction as for noncitizens indicates that integration policies do not seem to matter for citizens. Both checks confirm thus the robustness of our main findings.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

By deciding to stay, immigrants reshape the face of the host-country sociologically, demographically and politically. A wealth of economic evidence points to the marked positive effects of immigrant location decisions on local economies (see e.g. Bracco et al., 2018). It is therefore hardly surprising that the sparse research on noncitizens who ‘vote with their feet’ in post-industrialized destination countries still focuses on economic ‘push’ or ‘pull’ factors (e.g. the influence of taxes or unemployment rates).

Our paper shows that widening the study of macro-level factors is necessary to understand immigrants' (im-)mobility behaviours better. As our findings show, integration policies do not directly affect the (im-)mobility patterns studied in this paper. Instead, the effects of integration policies need time to unfold, which is in line with previous findings on noncitizens' naturalization intentions (Bennour, 2020). It appears that integration policies can moderate the sedentary effect of time spent in Switzerland. In other words, inclusive integration policies amplify the sedentary effect of time by increasing noncitizens' immobility in a canton. The other key finding of this paper is that immigrants' vulnerability, in terms of rights to enter and stay in the country, is an additional important moderator of the effects of integration policies. It appears that most vulnerable immigrants are the most influenced by the political reception context as regards their (im-)mobility behaviours. This finding resonates with recent scholarly discourses on the interplay between integration and immigration policies (see e.g. Helbling et al., 2020). It appears that immigrants facing most obstacles to enter the country are also the ones benefiting most from inclusive integration policies.

We demonstrate here that integration policies targeted at noncitizens are important for their mobility decisions. Indeed, integration policies can act as a ‘keep’ factor, motivating noncitizens to stay at their place of residence. To date, studies have mainly shown that integration policies influence immigrant integration. Pushing this perspective further, this paper demonstrates that these policies also affect noncitizens' immobility behaviour, which can be interpreted as the ultimate physical integration into a place of residence. Overall, our findings suggest that research should pay more attention to the political drivers of noncitizens'(im-)mobility behaviour to better understand when and why noncitizens decide to stay or leave their place of residence.

The fact that integration policies affect predominantly international rather than inter-cantonal onward mobility merits further reflection. Future research is needed to better understand the interplay between pull, push, and ‘keep’ factors. For instance, qualitative research on onward movers could give substantive pieces of information on the personal reasons behind (im-)mobility decisions, and how they relate to political macro factors. Finally, future research could analyze whether international return or onward mobility to a third country are more affected by the policy context, as both types of mobility depend on different reasoning.

With respect to the generalizability of our findings, it would be interesting to replicate this study on the effects of subnational integration policies on (im-)mobility in other federal political contexts. The effects may be even stronger in countries with a single official language because learning the local language implies unlimited mobility across the entire country without facing language hurdles, which is not the case in multilingual Switzerland. In a linguistically unified country, inter-regional mobility may thus be even more influenced by subnational integration policies.

We also need to emphasize some limitations of this paper. First, while using administrative register data gives us access to the full sample of noncitizens' individual mobility trajectories, individual information beyond mobility is very limited. For instance, we lack relevant variables that might explain mobility, such as education, income, or the employment sector. Including these individual factors could help develop more precise and complete explanations of the ways integration policies influence immigrant mobility. Previous research further shows that subjective factors such as attachment to the host country or the localization of social networks likely moderate or mediate the effects of integration policies.

A second limitation concerns the main independent variable. In our study, we use the legal framework of integration policies and study the link between policy outputs and policy outcomes. This approach has its merits, but it may overlook the implementation of laws. The question of policy implementation also englobes the room for manoeuvre at the municipality level. For instance, understanding how policies are implemented by street-level bureaucrats could help to explain the mechanisms through which policies influence mobility.

Last, as an inherent limitation of quantitative research, our findings represent group averages and hence simplify individual life trajectories. The top-down perspective, and the analysis of different variables and subsamples, help understand the complex and multifaceted features of migration and mobility across the entire noncitizen population of Switzerland. However, this perspective hides important disparities within a single category of people.

Based on its findings and limitations, this paper opens promising perspectives for future research. One approach would be to adopt a bottom-up perspective on policy effects. Qualitative data or vignette experiments could be useful in understanding how noncitizens perceive the political reception context in which they live. This can be an important complement to our top-down perspective, offering a finer-grained perspective on noncitizens' motivations concerning their (im-)mobility behaviour. A second perspective, at the subnational level, would be to explore the interplay between regional push and pull factors in shaping immigrants' (im-)mobility decisions. A third path to future studies would be to analyze the effects of integration policies from a causal perspective. In the Swiss case, integration policies are quite path-dependent and thus relatively stable over time. However, popular votes such as the federal initiative 'against mass immigration' in 2014 can introduce major changes to migration policies in Switzerland. Scrutinizing the effects of such a policy change via a quasi-experimental research design could further improve our knowledge on the effects of exclusive policy contexts on immigrants' (im-)mobility. Nevertheless, from a radical empiricist perspective, which postulates that Big Data inherently produce meaningful and insightful knowledge about complex phenomena, this paper's correlational analyses based on exhaustive administrative data already allows us to draw sound conclusions (Kitchin, 2014). Using the full, rather than a random, sample of all noncitizen movements, our analyses examine 'the complete set of data for patterns that reveal effects, producing scientific conclusions without further experimentation' (Prensky, 2009).

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## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from Federal Statistical Office. Restrictions apply to the availability of these data, which were used under license for this study. Data are available <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/population/surveys/statpop.html> with the permission of Federal Statistical Office.

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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