Anti-Immigration Parties and Immigrant Location Choice: Evidence from Italy

Authors: Emanuele Bracco (Lancaster University), Colin Green (Lancaster University), Maria De Paola (Università della Calabria), Vincenzo Scoppa (Università della Calabria).

Abstract:
It is well known that the presence of immigrants has substantial effect on the political views of the electorate (see for example Barone et al. 2016), to the advantage of parties with anti-immigration or identitarian platforms. This paper aims at exploring a closely related issues: we study whether immigrants are sensitive to the political leaning of local government when deciding where to reside. We construct a dataset of mayoral elections in Italy for the years 2000-2013, and calculate what is the effect of electing a mayor belonging or supported by the anti-immigration party Lega Nord. To deal with endogeneity between presence of immigrants and election of anti-immigration mayors, we use a Regression Discontinuity Design, exploiting mayors who have been elected with narrow margin of victory. Early results show a strong effect of electing a Lega-Nord mayor in discouraging immigrants to move into the municipality from other Italian municipalities. This effect is not found for immigrants who are just arrived in Italy, and are choosing their first municipality of residence.