

Attitudes Toward Immigrants: Evidence from Veterans of Colonial Wars in Africa

We use data from the European Social Survey to identify Portuguese citizens likely to have been drafted, between the years 1961 and 1974, to fight in the former Portuguese colonies in Africa. The draft is estimated to have conscripted around 70 percent of the entire male population in particular age groups, each man serving between 2 and 4 years in what was the widest draft in post-World War II Western Europe. These cohorts, from one of the poorest countries in Western Europe, were catapulted to Africa, to fight against and alongside Africans. We show that men likely to have fought in African wars are more accepting of immigrants than women of their same cohort, as well as than males from younger and older cohorts. The use of corresponding cohorts from Spain as placebo tests confirm our results. Our findings also hold in a regression discontinuity design setting.