

Settlers and seekers: Immigrant proximity and voter polarisation

We exploit a natural experiment involving the random placement of refugee hosting facilities in an urban setting. Using survey data on voting, we estimate the causal effect of proximity to immigrants on political behaviour. By examining both refugees and long-term immigrant presence, we reconcile conflicting findings in the literature and offer a unifying framework highlighting the key role of past experiences in determining polarised responses to refugee shocks. We show that polarisation is driven by voters with limited prior contact and is amplified near migrant services or family-hosting facilities. By contrast, those with high baseline exposure remain unaffected.