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Immigrant franchise and immigration policy: Evidence from the Progressive Era

Abstract

What is the role played by immigrant groups in shaping migration policy in the destination country? We address this question focusing on the U.S. during the Progressive Era. In this period, residency requirements to exercise the voting franchise varied significantly across states, and consequently naturalized U.S. citizens were unevenly able to influence House Representatives. We show that congressmen representing districts with large numbers of naturalized U.S. citizens were more likely to support open migration policy. This effect is reversed as residency requirements become more stringent. We find suggestive evidence that electoral accountability played a key role in shaping their behaviour.

(with Costanza Biavaschi)