

Extended abstract: The legacy of historical emigration on attitudes towards immigrants: Evidence from Italian municipalities

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In this paper, I analyze the effect of historical emigration on current attitudes towards immigration. I collect data on Italian emigrants by municipality of origin from the Ellis Island archives in the period 1892-1924, the main period of activity of the Ellis Island port. I focus on central and southern Italy, the major areas of origin of Italian emigrants to the U.S. at that time. I estimate, then, the causal effect of emigration on a series of outcomes used to measure attitudes towards immigrants through an Instrumental Variables strategy, by exploiting exogenous variation in proximity to departure port to the U.S. during years 1892-1924, which I show to be orthogonal to pre-determined municipal characteristics. I find that emigration has a negative and significant long-run effect on attitudes towards immigration. A 1% increase in the historical emigration reduces the propensity to voluntarily open a refugees' reception center (*SPRAR*) in municipalities by roughly 4 percentage points. Moreover, a higher historical emigration reduces social expenditure on immigrants and nomads, the volunteers and non-profit organizations active in the reception and the integration of immigrants, the salience of multicultural diversity in society and significantly decreases political support for inclusive parties. Furthermore, I match local politicians' surnames and place of birth with individual passenger list data to

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detect ancestry, and find that local politicians having at least one ancestor who emigrated to Ellis Island are significantly less likely to affiliate to inclusive parties.