

Immigration and Voting Patterns in the European Union |
Todd Sorensen and Ethan Grumstrup, University of Nevada,
Marta Pachocka and Jan Misiun, University of Warsaw

Tempers flared in Europe in response to the 2015 European Refugee Crisis prompting some countries to totally close their borders to asylum seekers. At the same time and for some time after, anti-immigrant sentiment grew in Europe along with the support for far-right political parties that had previously languished. This sparked a flurry of research into the relationship between immigration and far-right voting with vast and varied findings. Past research has found mixed and nuanced evidence of immigration increasing far-right support in some cases, while decreasing support in others. Theory suggests that both are possible: the Contact Hypothesis proposes that contact brings acceptance of immigrants, but Realistic Conflict Theory suggests the opposite. Our study joins the literature in finding which, if any, of the two theories is prevailing with a unique approach to party ideology identification that is consistent across countries and has not been used in research. Using regression analysis on data from over 400 European parties, our preliminary analysis finds little evidence that immigrant populations are related to changes in voting for the far-right. Our finding may suggest that immigration effects are not observable at the country-level, or possibly that other factors are the true cause of rises in far-right voting.