



Università
di Genova

DIEC DIPARTIMENTO
DI ECONOMIA

Economics and Quantitative Methods PhD Seminar Series

“A More Conservative Country? Asylum Seekers and Voting in the UK”

FRANCESCO FASANI (UNIVERSITY OF MILAN)

Abstract

This study examines the impact of dispersed asylum seekers on local electoral outcomes in the UK from 2004 to 2019. We identify the causal effect of asylum seekers on electoral outcomes by combining variation from a dispersal policy with an IV strategy which predicts the allocation based on pre-determined public housing characteristics. Our IV results show a significant shift in the Conservative-Labour vote share difference, with a one standard deviation increase in dispersed asylum seekers leading to a 3.2 percentage point rise in favour of the Conservatives at the local elections. We find similar and significant effects in national elections and the Brexit referendum, with increased support for the Leave vote. Evidence from survey data confirms that exposure to asylum seekers shifted votes away from the Labour Party and towards the Conservative one. Further, the English context allows us to extend the analysis to asylum seekers who are not dispersed throughout the country. A shift-share IV analysis indicates that non-dispersed asylum seekers do not significantly affect the voting behaviour of natives. Exploring potential mechanisms, we find that the salience of immigration in MPs speeches has increased over time, and even more so in areas that hosted more asylum seekers. Finally, heterogeneity analyses reveal that the effect is particularly pronounced in areas hosting asylum seekers from Muslim-majority countries and those who arrived unaccompanied.

Wednesday 2 October 2024, h. 14.30

Aula Passadore