When is Contact Effective? Evidence on Refugee-Hosting and Far-Right Support in France.

Sarah Schneider-Strawczynski

Paris School of Economics, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne
When is Contact Effective? Evidence on Refugee-Hosting and Far-Right Support in France
Sarah Schneider-Strawczynski

Paper
Results
Channels
Bibliography

The Paper

**Research questions**: How exposure to refugees impact far-right voting?

**Identification**: Uses the spatial allocation and the timing of 446 refugee housing centers openings in France between 1995 and 2017.

**Figure**: Housing centers for refugees and asylum seekers in France

**Empirical strategy**: DiD in a staggered adoption (de Chaisemartin and d’Haultfoeuille (2020)) design with several specifications (full sample, only-treated, matching, polling-station level within municipalities, instrumental variables, etc...).
RESULTS

Table: Refugee center openings effect on far-right voting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Far-right vote-share at presidential elections</th>
<th>(1) Full Sample</th>
<th>(2) Only Treated</th>
<th>(3) Matching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refugee center opening</td>
<td>-0.037***</td>
<td>-0.021***</td>
<td>-0.018***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election year FE</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipality FE</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>135,048</td>
<td>1,522</td>
<td>3,928</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A refugee center opening decreases far-right voting in presidential election by about 2%.

Figure: Effect on far-right vote at presidential and European elections

(a) Full sample (b) Only treated (c) Matching
Channels

- It **discourages non-voters** who could have been lured to the far-right to start voting for them.

- The **contact hypothesis** is at work, but **too-disruptive** contact, as measured by the magnitude of the flows, the cultural distance, and the media-salience of the refugee topic, can mitigate beneficial effects of contact on reducing far-right support.

- **Composition changes** from native avoidance can explain up to 25% of the decrease in far-right voting.

- Potential positive **economic or amenities shocks** cannot explain the decrease in far-right voting.

- The political shift away from the far-right induced by the opening of a refugee center is likely to be **long-lasting**.