

# Right-Wing Extremism and the Well-Being of Immigrants

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In this paper, we want to study how xenophobia and right-wing extremism affect a region's attractiveness for migrants with different skill levels. As a measure for the prevalence of xenophobia in a region and this region's attractiveness for (high-skilled) immigration, we use the share of votes received by political parties on the extreme right in parliamentary elections at the state level and the life satisfaction of (high-skilled) migrants living in the respective state. The empirical analysis is based on data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) for the years 1984 to 2006 merged with state-level information on election outcomes. We estimate how the voting behavior of the residents' population affects immigrants' life satisfaction.

Our paper contributes to the existing literature in the following respects. First, this study explores the effects of right-wing extremism of the host country's population on the well-being of immigrants. Thus, it extends existing studies that restrict their attention to the resident population when analyzing attitudes towards immigration and related issues. Second, by distinguishing between high-skilled and low-skilled immigrants, we are able to analyze to what extent recent policy reforms that aim at increasing the share of high-skilled immigrants through targeted immigration programs are offset by deterrent right-wing attitudes.

Our results show that immigrants in Germany experience, on average, lower life-satisfaction than natives. We also find that the life satisfaction of immigrants is significantly reduced if right-wing attitudes in the native population increase, i.e. higher vote shares for the extreme right are associated with lower subjective well-being of immigrants. The results are robust to changes in the estimation method applied or the specification of the model. Moreover, we can clearly establish an educational effect: the life satisfaction of highly educated immigrants is affected more strongly by right-wing attitudes of the host population than that of low-skilled immigrants. This supports the view that policies aimed at making immigration more attractive to the high-skilled have to include measures that reduce xenophobic attitudes in the native population.