

The Impact of Exposure to Xenophobic Violence on the Integration of Immigrants – Insights from Germany *

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Abstract

Integration of immigrants is a two-way process involving immigrants and the host society. An underexplored question is how xenophobia in the host country affects the integration of immigrants. For this purpose, we exploit a unique series of anti-immigrant attacks in the early 1990s in West Germany. Using a difference-in-differences regression framework, we find that macro exposure to xenophobic violence has an impact on several dimensions of social and economic integration of immigrants. Our results indicate that an unexpected rise in right-wing extremist violence increases return intentions and induces outmigration. Among those staying, it strengthens home country ties and reduces investment in German language skills. From a policy perspective, the paper shows that anti-immigrant violence can have non-negligible, indirect costs by impairing the integration of those immigrants who belong to the target group of xenophobic attacks.

JEL classifications: A14, J15, J61.

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