

IMMIGRATION AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR: EVIDENCE FROM ANDALUSIAN 2018 ELECTIONS

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OBJETIVES

In this study, we mainly analyse the impact of immigration on the unexpected, and probably historical, electoral outcome of the 2018 Regional Election in Andalusia. Specifically, the analysis focuses on the extreme-right Populist Party VOX election results, since it was the first time this party gained support for its distinct policy stance. It is important to note that, far from being an exception, the Andalusian case is rather representative of what could even be considered one of the main trends in recent elections around the world: the unprecedented good results of various populist (in many cases right-wing) parties.

METHODOLOGY

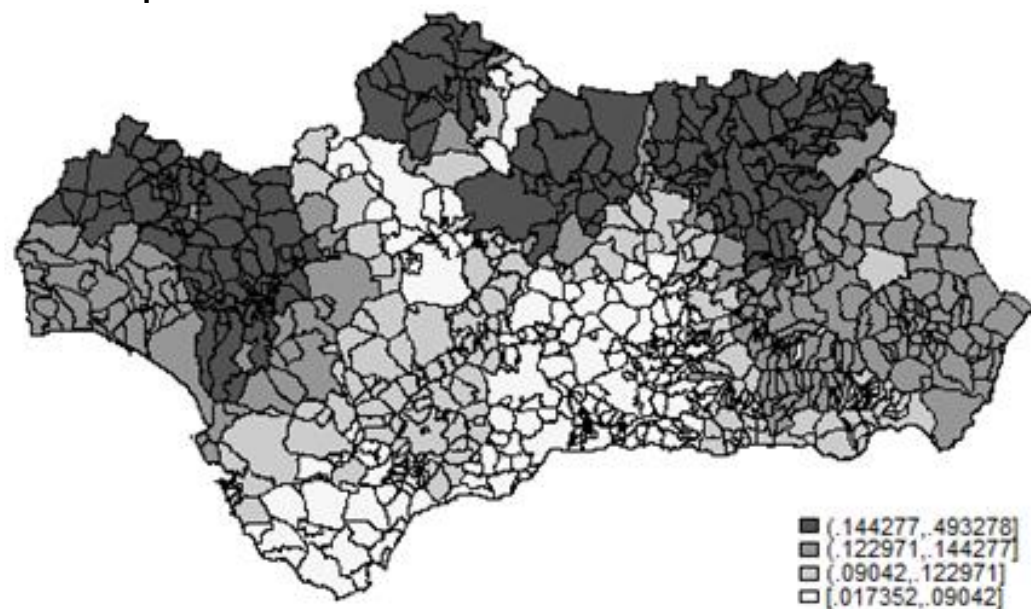
Under this new political reality, we should wonder which factors have contributed to the growth of right-wing populism. After carrying out the estimation of several spatial models including all the potential explanatory factors for which data were available, we identify the set of variables that are instrumental for explaining the election outcome got by the far right-wing party VOX in Andalusian 2018 elections. These are related, basically, to the share of votes won by the PP in the previous election, immigration, age, the size of each municipality, and the level of income.

We then use the so-called Geographically Weighted Regression (GWR) model (LeSage, 2004) to account for the differences that exist by municipality in the effect of immigration on the aforementioned outcome. We choose this model because it allows to map a different coefficient for each municipality and, therefore, to handle potential spatial non-stationarity between dependent and independent variables.

The data we use were directly taken from the election outcome for the 778 municipalities that make up the region of Andalusia. As for the potential explanatory variables, data were collected from the Official Statistics Website of Andalusia.

GRAPHS TEXT

FIGURE: Explanatory power of immigration. Differences by municipalities.



Note: The variable used measures the share of foreign population in each municipality

RESULTS

Our empirical insights lead, focusing our attention, as above, on the role played by immigration, to the following results:

1. Immigration arises as likely the main socio-economic factor that has led to the rise of right-wing populism in Andalusia, which is to be expected for this kind of political party. The higher the share of immigrants, the better the VOX result
2. The above effect turns out to be especially strong when foreigners are not working.
3. The factors, not only those related to immigration but all of them, which moved voters to cast ballots for the right-wing populism in Andalusia varied significantly among municipalities.
4. Regarding the effect of immigration, it was much stronger, as can be seen in the previous figure, in the municipalities located in the north than in the south of the region.

CONCLUSIONS

According to our results, high levels of foreigners who are not working but receive subsidies was a factor with a noticeable influence on voting behaviour during the 2018 Andalusian elections and, in particular, on the political success of the right-wing populism in the region. As the current COVID-19 pandemic is hitting labour market especially hard in Andalusia, and most particularly the hotel and restaurants sector (where the presence of foreign workers is particularly high), we shouldn't be surprised if the right-wing populism expands its electoral footprint in future regional elections in Andalusia.

REFERENCES

LeSage, J. P. (2004). A family of geographically weighted regression models. In: L. Anselin, R. J. G. M. Florax, & S. J. Rey (Eds.), *Advances in spatial econometrics* (pp. 241-264). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer.