

**Direct democracy and immigrant voting:
Source of mobilization or
disenchantment with politics?**

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Ambivalent nature of direct democracy: Active citizens...



Landsgemeinde («cantonal assembly») in the Swiss canton of Glarus, 05/05/2013

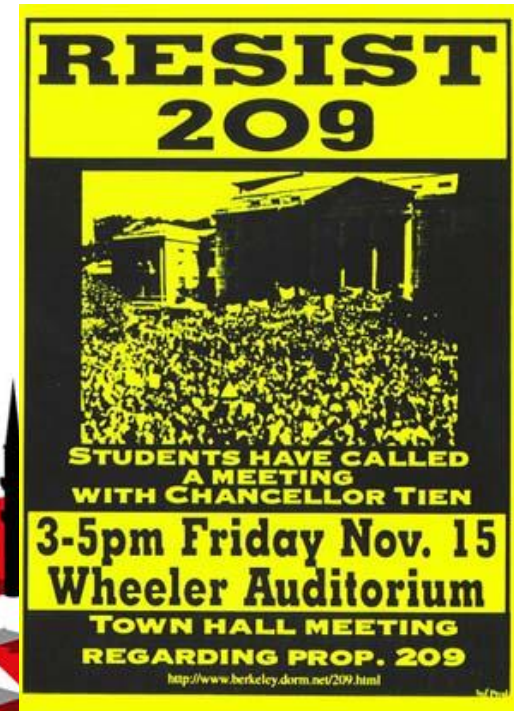
...versus immigrant sceptic outcomes

US states, e.g. California

- Proposition 187, “save our state initiative” (1994)—sought to eliminate public services (e.g. health care, education) to undocumented immigrants in California
- Proposition 209 (1996)—eliminated California’s affirmative action policies
- Proposition 227 (1998)—eliminated bilingual education in California’s public schools

Switzerland

- National vote banning the construction of minarets, adopted in 2009
- National vote on the deportation of criminal immigrants, adopted in 2010
- National vote on the initiative against “mass immigration”, adopted in 2014



Theory

- *Direct democracy and civic engagement*: “educative” participation enhancing effect of direct democracy, especially on voting
(Bowler and Donovan 2004, Smith & Tolbert 2007, Stadelmann-Steffen & Freitag 2014)
- *Direct democracy and minorities*: tyranny of the majority, anti-immigrant minority bias of direct democracy
(Campbell et al. 2006, Hainmüller & Hangartner 2012, Vatter et al. 2014)
- *Immigrants’ civic engagement*: individual and immigrant specific contextual determinants (e.g. integration regimes)
(Bass and Casper 2001, Bloemraad 2006, Koopmans et al. 2005, Cho 1999, Manatschal & Stadelmann-Steffen 2014)

Research question and hypotheses

How does direct democracy affect immigrant voting?

Hypotheses:

- + educative, i.e. participatory effect of direct democracy extends to immigrant voters (1st and 2nd gen.)
- Immigrant voters intimidated/disenchanted by majoritarian institution of direct democracy.
Result: political apathy, lower voting turnout

Empirical strategy

- Fixed effects models on DD (focus on use) and individual voting
- 50 US states
- Three midterm elections 2002, 2006 and 2010
- Data: CPS voting supplements, Bernauer and Vatter 2015, ACS, census, ANES etc.

Inferential challenges

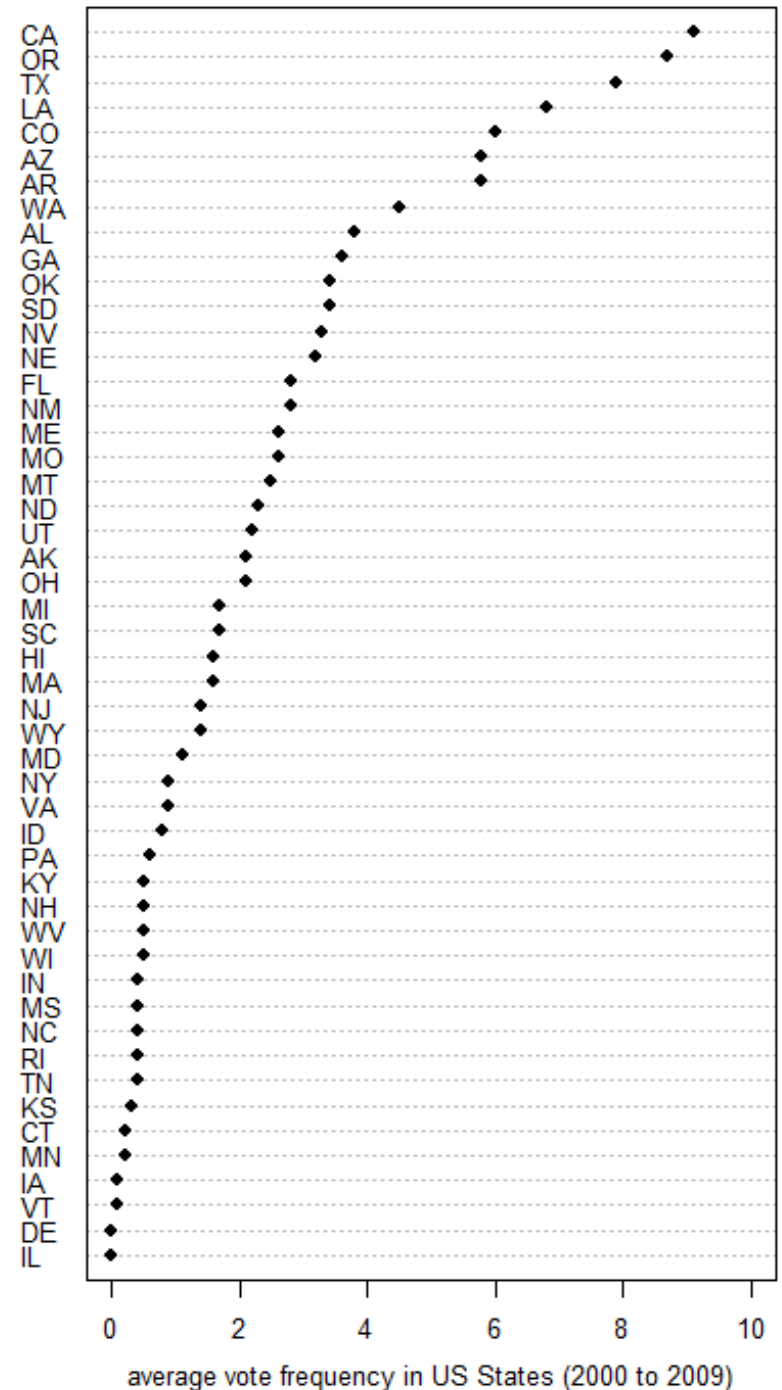
1. Endogeneity in terms of omitted variables or reversed causality
 - Statistical adjustment: **IV approach** to estimate the exogenous part of the relationship between use of DD and voting
2. Self-selection of naturalized 1st generation immigrants
 - Statistical adjustment: **Heckman selection model**

DD «in use», US states

Average (yearly) frequency of direct democratic elections in US states

DD instruments included in measurement:

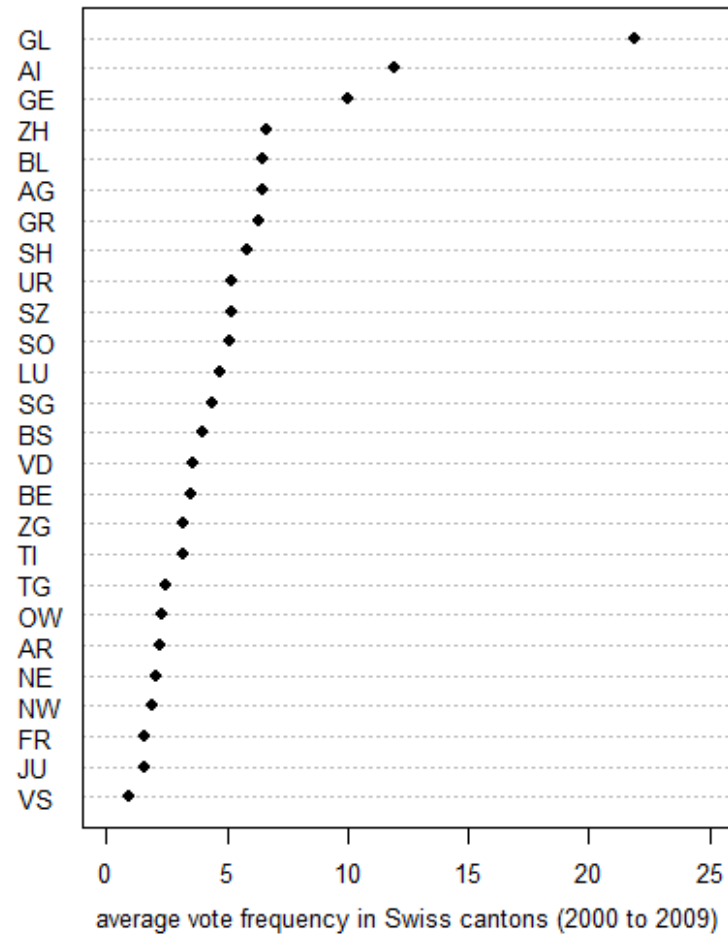
- (1) statutory initiative
- (2) constitutional initiative
- (3) statutory legislative referendum
- (4) constitutional legislative referendum
- (5) popular referendum



DD in use, Swiss cantons

Swiss cantons

Source: Schaub and Dlabac (2012)

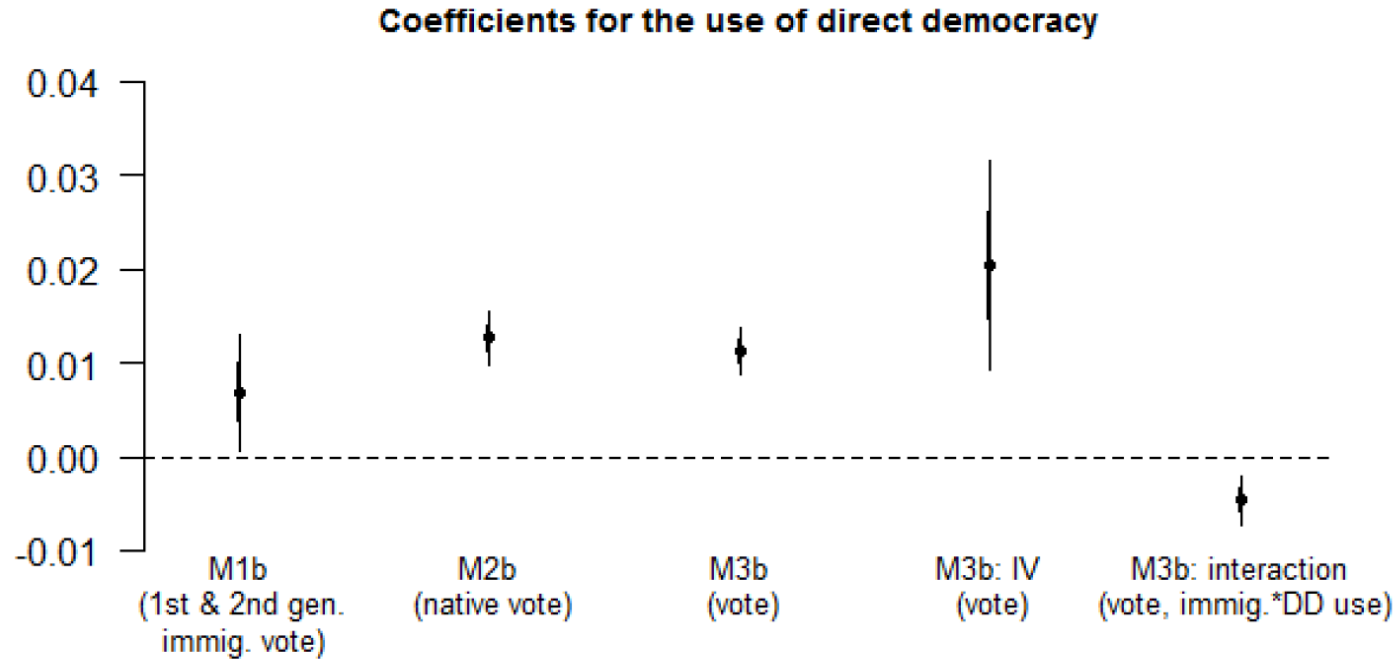


Base models

| | M1 <i>Immigrant vote</i> (1st & 2nd gen.) | M2 <i>Native vote</i> (3rd gen. +) | M3 <i>Vote</i> (all) |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| <i>Individual covariates</i> | | | |
| Age | 0.03 (0.00) *** | 0.03 (0.00) *** | 0.03 (0.00) *** |
| Gender (male) | -0.01 (0.01) | -0.05 (0.01) *** | -0.04 (0.01) *** |
| Black | 0.11 (0.03) *** | 0.21 (0.01) *** | 0.20 (0.01) *** |
| Marital status (Ref.cat: divorced) | | | |
| Married | 0.24 (0.02) *** | 0.43 (0.01) *** | 0.41 (0.01) *** |
| Single | 0.13 (0.03) *** | 0.23 (0.01) *** | 0.22 (0.01) *** |
| Separated | -0.07 (0.06) | -0.06 (0.02) ** | -0.06 (0.02) ** |
| Widowed | -0.11 (0.03)*** | -0.08 (0.02) *** | -0.07 (0.01) *** |
| Education (Ref.cat: no/primary educ.) | | | |
| Secondary. educ. | 0.50 (0.02) *** | 0.61 (0.01) *** | 0.58 (0.01) *** |
| Tertiary educ. | 0.87 (0.02) *** | 1.13 (0.01) *** | 1.08 (0.01) *** |
| Labor force | 0.12 (0.02) *** | 0.17 (0.01) *** | 0.16 (0.01) *** |
| Immigrant background | -- | -- | -0.19 (0.01)*** |
| <i>State covariates</i> | | | |
| Political ideology | -0.02 (0.01) *** | -0.01 (0.00) *** | -0.01 (0.00) *** |
| Organizational density | 0.04 (0.06) | 0.05 (0.02) * | 0.04 (0.02) * |
| Unemployment | 0.04 (0.02) ** | 0.01 (0.00) * | 0.02 (0.01) ** |
| GDP (log) | 0.14 (0.37) | 0.10 (0.14) | 0.14 (0.13) |
| Urbanization | 0.01 (0.01) | -0.01 (0.00) + | -0.01 (0.01) |
| Foreign born share | -0.02 (0.01) + | - 0.00 (0.00) | - 0.01 (0.01) |
| <i>State FEs</i> | <i>yes</i> | <i>yes</i> | <i>yes</i> |
| <i>Year FEs</i> | <i>yes</i> | <i>yes</i> | <i>yes</i> |
| AIC | 45564 | 246462 | 292339 |
| N | 37539 | 210060 | 247599 |

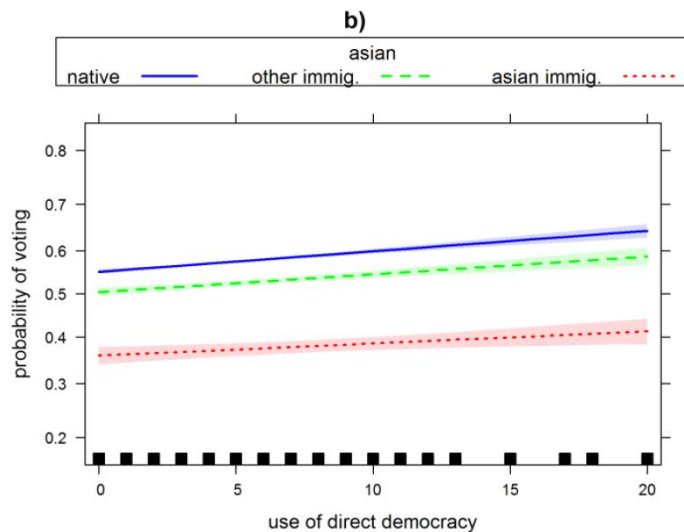
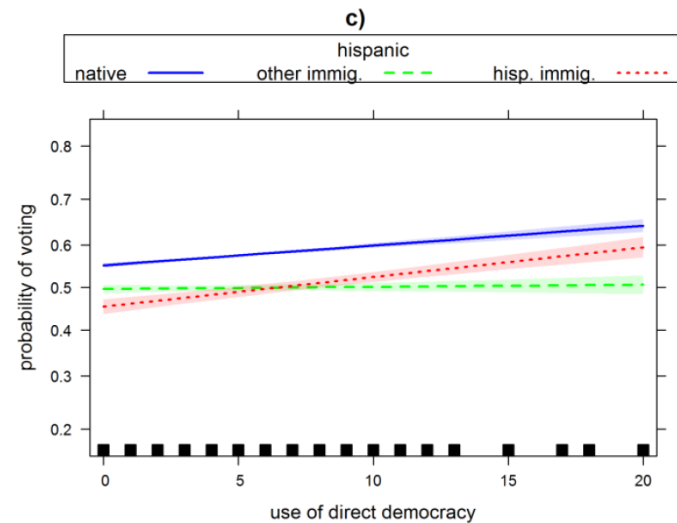
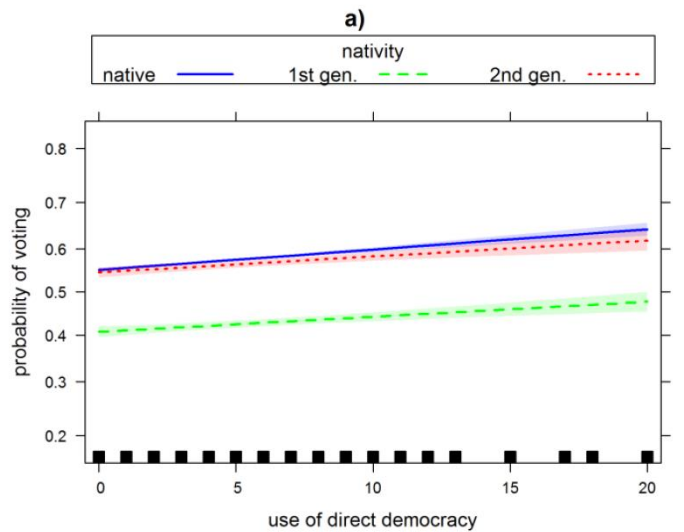
Note: Logistic regression coefficients (robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses). All models include state and year fixed effects (states = 50, years = midterm elections 2002, 2006, 2010). Significance codes: 0.001 < ***, 0.01 < **, 0.05 < *, 0.1 < +.

Main models for direct democracy

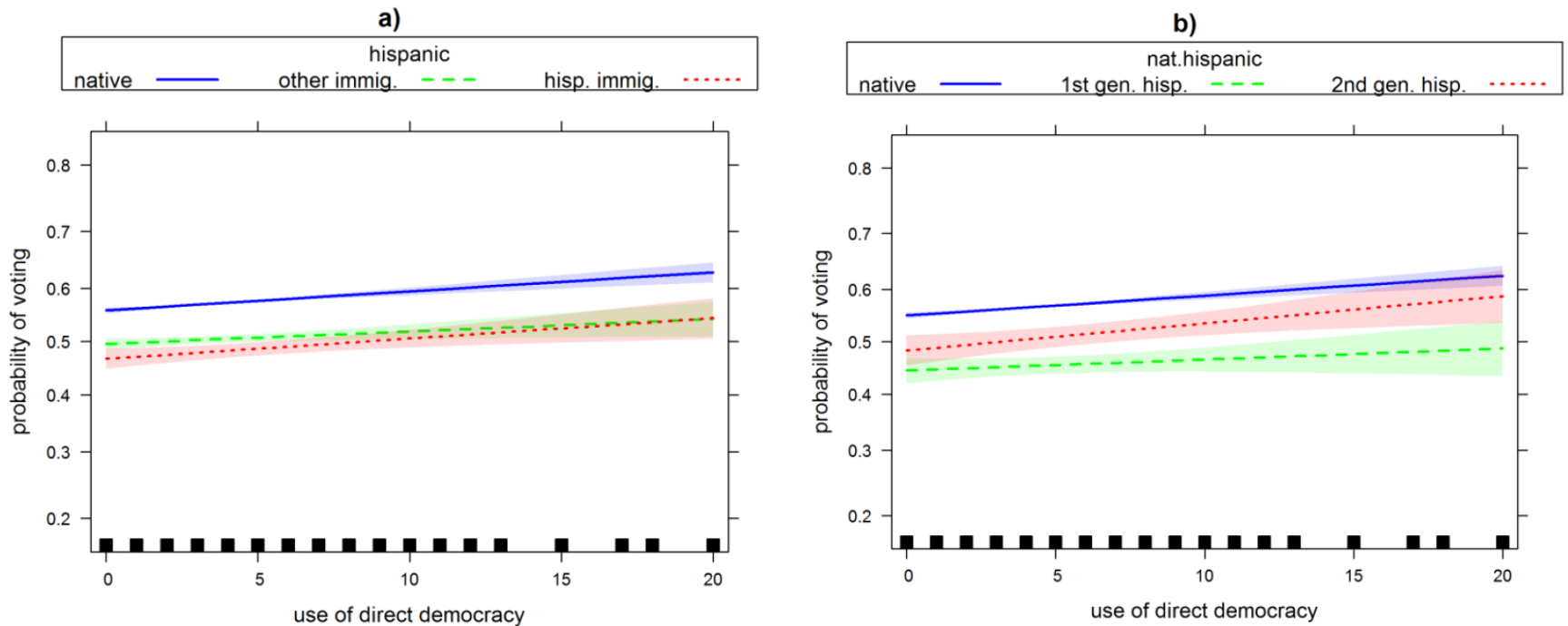


Note: Logistic regression coefficients for the variable “use of direct democracy” (M1b to M3b), and the interaction term of immigrant background with direct democracy (M3b: interaction). Bands represent 50/95 per cent confidence intervals. All models control for the individual and state covariates as well as state and year fixed effects as reported in M1 to M3 in Table A2 of the appendix.

Predicted probabilities: Ethnic, racial, and nativity groups



Without California



Note: Predicted voting probabilities (lines) and 95% confidence intervals (bands) for interactions between ethnic, racial, and nativity groups and direct democracy. All models control for individual and state covariates as well as state and year fixed effects as reported in M1 to M3 in Table A2 of the appendix.

Conclusion and outlook

- “Educative effect” of the practice of direct democracy extends to all nativity groups, meaning native and immigrant voters
 - Yet: Mobilizing pattern slightly smaller for immigrants than for natives
 - Heterogeneous effects for different ethnic, racial and generational immigrant groups, as well as state contexts
 - Conditions for disproportionate immigrant voter mobilization through DD: 1) imminent anti-minority threat of direct democracy and 2) large/increasing electoral group affected by this threat (e.g. Hispanics in CA)
- Overall, empirical evidence underscores the *integrative potential* of frequent direct democratic elections to integrate new voters into the electorate

Appendix I: Heckman selection model for first generation immigrants

| | <i>Selection Model</i> Naturalized (1 st gen. immigrants) | <i>Outcome Model</i> Immigrant voting (1 st gen. voters) |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| <i>Individual covariates</i> | | |
| Age | 0.01 (0.00) *** | 0.02 (0.00) *** |
| Gender (male) | 0.10 (0.01) *** | -0.04 (0.02) + |
| Black | 0.17 (0.04) *** | 0.25 (0.07) *** |
| Asian | 0.30 (0.03) *** | -- |
| Hispanic | -0.29 (0.07) *** | -- |
| Marital status (Ref.cat.: divorced) | | |
| Married | -0.00 (0.03) | 0.19 (0.04) *** |
| Separated | -0.14 (0.05) ** | -0.00 (0.12) |
| Widowed | -0.09 (0.05) + | -0.11 (0.06) + |
| Single | -0.08 (0.03) * | 0.00 (0.06) |
| Education (Ref.cat: no degree) | | |
| Secondary. educ. | 0.34 (0.04) *** | 0.18 (0.04) ** |
| Tertiary educ. | 0.49 (0.04) *** | 0.43 (0.00) *** |
| Labor force | 0.14 (0.02) *** | 0.10 (0.03) *** |
| Years of residence | 0.06 (0.00) *** | -- |
| <i>State covariates</i> | | |
| Use of direct democracy | 0.01 (0.00) ** | 0.01 (0.01) * |
| Organizational density | -0.01 (0.03) | 0.05 (0.10) |
| Unemployment | 0.02 (0.02) | 0.01 (0.03) |
| Urbanization | 0.01 (0.02) | 0.04 (0.03) |
| Foreign born share | 0.01 (0.01) | -0.02 (0.02) |
| GDP (log) | -- | -0.89 (0.88) |
| Political Ideology | -- | -0.01 (0.01) |
| Inverse Mill's Ratio | -- | -0.43 (0.04) *** |
| <i>State FEs</i> | yes | yes |
| <i>Year FEs</i> | yes | yes |
| AIC | 38063.44 | 17468.57 |
| N | 38215 | 13846 |

Note: Probit Heckman selection model on first generation immigrants (robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses). Significance codes: 0.001 < ***, 0.01 < **, 0.05 < *, 0.1 < +.

Immigrant sceptic content and outcome of DD votes

- DD votes: identification of anti-immigrant initiatives and referendums, using the following **key words** (cf. Filindra and Pearson-Merkowitz 2015): *immig, migr, alien, asylum, foreign, refugee, citizenship, noncitizen, non-citizen, illegal, English, national origin, ethnic, and race*
- Source: Ballot Measures Database of the National Council of State Legislatures (NCSL)
- Time span: 2000 to 2010
- N = only **1.8 per cent** of all DD votes (25 out of 1354 referendums and initiatives put to state ballots between 2000 and 2010) are immigrant/immigration related