

Elites' Attitudes Toward Immigration. Evidence from Central America

Asbel Bohigues
University of Salamanca

Mar Martínez Rosón
University of Salamanca

Abstract

Central America has been characterized in the last decades by high levels of emigration, mainly to the US. Even though migration is an important topic for researchers, the number of studies that analyze this issue in sending countries is scarce. Although works on immigration attitudes usually focus on public opinion, this paper fills a research gap regarding legislators' opinions. This paper aims to identify the individual-level determinants of political elites, namely legislators, attitudes toward immigration. To do so we rely on surveys conducted in five Central American parliaments in recent years: Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. We distinguish two types of dimensions on immigration as the dependent variable. In the first one, we consider immigration under a human rights frame. In the second dimension, we address legislators opinions taking into account the impact of immigrants over the benefits and resources available, like jobs or welfare policies. Following previous works on public opinion, we test for four main groups of factors on each of the immigration dimensions: ideological-programmatic positions, cultural values, economic factors, and socio-demographics variables.

Keywords: immigration, elites, Central America, attitudes