

Open to Goods, Closed to People?*

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Abstract

Why are countries more open to international trade than to migration flows? To address this question, we examine the determinants of the voting behavior of U.S. legislators on all major trade and migration reforms voted in Congress since the early 1970s. We collect systematic information on the representatives voting on those bills (e.g., party affiliation, age, gender, incumbency gains), as well as economic and non-economic characteristics of their constituencies (e.g., skill composition, fiscal burden of immigrants, percentage of foreign born population). We find that skill composition of legislators' constituencies affects votes on trade and migration liberalization bills in the same direction. Party affiliation has instead opposite effects: Democrats are more likely to support liberal immigration policies but to oppose trade liberalization. Voting differences between the two issues are also driven by the fiscal burden of immigrants and non-economic characteristics of the constituencies.

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