

**Colussi, T.**, with I.E. Ispording, and N. Pestel. "Minority salience and political extremism", forthcoming in *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*.

The political success of right-wing populists in the US and in many European countries is often attributed to a surge in anti-immigrant sentiments among broad parts of voter populations. Researchers, however, have struggled to understand the development of these hostile attitudes. The paper "Minority Salience and Political Extremism" (with I. Ispording and N. Pestel, *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, forthcoming) investigates how the salience of an ethnic minority affects the majority group's voting behavior. We focus on the increased visibility of Muslim communities in Germany during Ramadan as a natural experiment. In order to empirically address this question, we digitized and collected unique data on the construction of mosques and election results in municipalities over the 1980-2013 period. The results indicate that the presence of a mosque increases residents' political divergence from the political center. The negative effect of the presence of a mosque increases if an election is scheduled right after the holy month of Ramadan, a period in which mosques happen to be much more visible to the general public due to extensive 7 festivities and openly displayed religious practices. The findings show that vote shares for both far right- and left-wing parties become larger when the election date is closer to Ramadan. In addition, the change in visibility of the minority population increases the likelihood of politically motivated crimes against Muslims. This paper contributes to the literature of the electoral effects of immigration by showing that attitudes towards immigrants do not form on externally provided information alone; people also become more aware of immigrants and change their political choices by being exposed to their cultural and religious practices in public life.