

Immigration Policy and Crime

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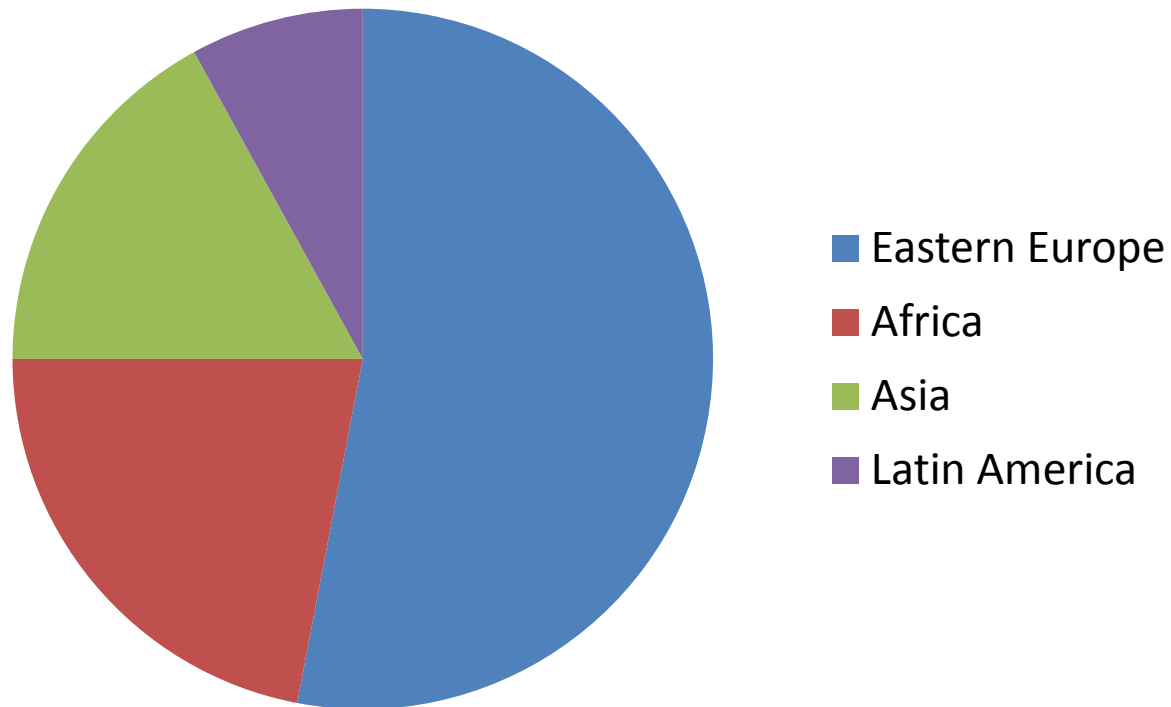
Who are the immigrants to Italy?

- 7% of the population are legal immigrants
- 0.7% are undocumented (illegal) immigrants

- Immigrants are:
 - a bit less educated than natives
 - more likely than natives to be employed
 - more likely to hold blue collar jobs

Where do they come from?

Composition of legal immigrants



Immigrants and crime

- 4 times more likely to be charged with a crime than natives
- 7 times more likely to be jailed (because less likely to be given alternative sentencing)
- Over time, becoming somewhat more likely to be charged with a crime

- Also, immigrants are 3 times more likely to be victims of crime

A few rotten apples

The 10% of immigrants who are undocumented commit 70% of all immigrant crime

Effect of legalizing immigrants on crime

Small impact when measuring aggregate effect of amnesties

- Doubling the number of legalized immigrants (through amnesty programs) reduces immigrant crime by only 4%
- Similar (or lower) estimates if doubling happens through random variability across provinces in “click day” quotas
- Also, effect only lasts one year

Large impact when measuring individual effect of being given amnesty

- Use variability in individual treatment due to timing of application around the “click-day” deadline
- Effect goes up from 4% to 100%
- Only for applicants sponsored by domestic employers (not those sponsored by firms).

Comments

- It would be nice to have a strategic immigration policy (import the skills we lack)
- But, immigration policy is wrapped up with politics (labor market & voting population)
- Data have an important role to play in the political debate.
- This report is good work on an important policy topic

- *Measurement comment:* would be good to explore the gap between individual and aggregate measurements
- *Policy comment:* only look at very short run estimates of effect of legalization on crime.

Of course, there are many pros and cons of legalizing immigrants, beyond reducing crime in the short run.