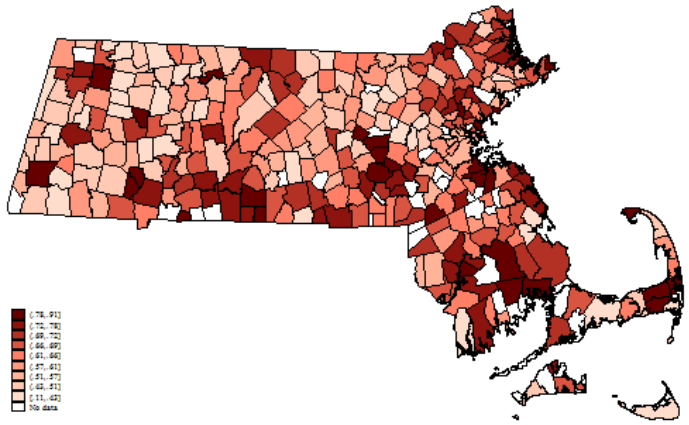
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The Causes and Consequences of Nativism in the United States:

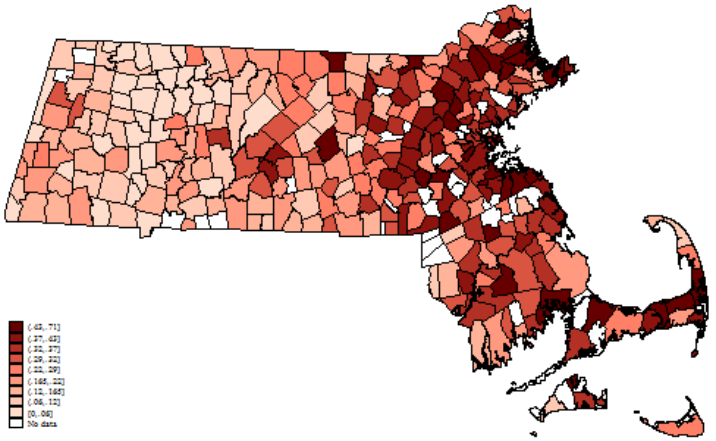
Evidence from the Know-Nothing Party

Marcella Alsan—Stanford University and NBER
Katherine Eriksson—UC Davis and NBER
Gregory T. Niemesh—Miami University

Abstract: During the 1850's, the nativist and staunchly anti-Catholic Know-Nothing Party emerged as a dominant force in Massachusetts politics. Using newly discovered annual town-level vote counts in Massachusetts as well as newly digitized birth and death certificate data from the 1850s coupled with various censuses, we propose to examine the causes and consequences of the Know-Nothing party's rapid rise to power. Our first aim is descriptive: to understand where Know-Nothing support was strongest and examine how they lost their advantage. In 1855, the Know-Nothings won almost every seat in the General Court as well as the governorship. Yet this success was short-lived and their area of ardent support consolidated on the coast (see maps below). Our second aim is to causally identify the effects of the Know-Nothings on the health and socioeconomic outcomes of the Irish. To do so, we will construct a share-shift instrument based on the occupational composition of native-born men prior to the Know-Nothing ascent and the growth over time of Irish male labor into traditionally native-born occupations. We are excited to obtain feedback during an egg-timer session as we are at an early phase of the project and hope this historical episode can help inform the present.



Know Nothing Vote Share (Governor Race, 1855)



Know Nothing Vote Share (Governor Race, 1858)