

Gone for Good: The Electoral Consequences of Plant Closures and Mass Layoffs

Leonardo Baccini, McGill University

Stephen Weymouth, Georgetown University

As a result of trade, offshoring and technological advances, upwards of five million US manufacturing jobs have disappeared since 2000. These layoffs tend to be geographically clustered, and the effects of one plant closure often reverberate to proximate and complementary industries. While the economic implications of deindustrialization are widely studied, we know less about the effects of large scale employment shocks on American elections. We combine county-level mass layoff data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics with election and turnout data to study the effects of plant closures on electoral outcomes. To better understand the mechanisms through which mass layoffs may influence voting, we also examine the effects of mass layoffs on local level attitudes about economic and policy conditions using the University of Michigan consumer surveys and data from Pew Research. Our paper contributes to a new literature examining how global economic transformations influence domestic politics in democratic countries.