

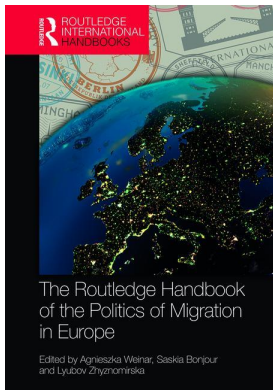
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26

THE LABOUR MARKET IMPACTS OF IMMIGRATION IN EUROPE

Ravi Parekh and Carlos Vargas-Silva

Introduction

The concern that immigration may have adverse effects on the labour market outcomes of host country residents is one of the key arguments of those campaigning for stricter immigration policies. Overall, the impacts of immigration on the labour market depend on the skills of immigrants, the skills of natives, macroeconomic conditions and the characteristics of the host economy. As such, the validity of concerns about the labour market impact of immigration depend on the group, time period and country under consideration.

This chapter explores the evidence on the labour market impacts of immigration putting particular emphasis on the case of Europe. There is a large body of literature looking at the impact of immigration in the United States (for example: Card, 2007; Peri and Sparber, 2009; Boustan, Fishback and Kantor, 2010; Ottaviano and Peri, 2012; Ottaviano, Peri and Wright, 2013; Borjas, 2015; Peri and Yasenov, 2015; Llull, 2017). However, less is known about the case of Europe. Looking at Europe is important given the substantial heterogeneity in countries of origin of migrants, the key role of different migration regimes; such as free movement of workers within the European Economic Area (EEA), differences in labour market regulation across countries and the number of historical events which have led to large migration movements (such as: WWII, the fall of the Berlin wall and the Syrian crisis).

The analysis in this chapter starts by providing a conceptual discussion of the mechanisms by which immigrants can affect the European labour market. Then there is a discussion of the empirical regional evidence for Europe. Next, the analysis concentrates on the evidence for three countries: the UK, Germany and Turkey. The UK and Germany are the two countries for which there is more evidence available, while Turkey is included to highlight the recent research on the labour market implications of the so-called 'refugee crisis'. The final section provides some conclusions in light of the evidence discussed.

Conceptual background

The traditional 'textbook' model of the impact of immigration on the receiving country's labour market assumes that immigration leads to an increase in the supply of homogenous workers.

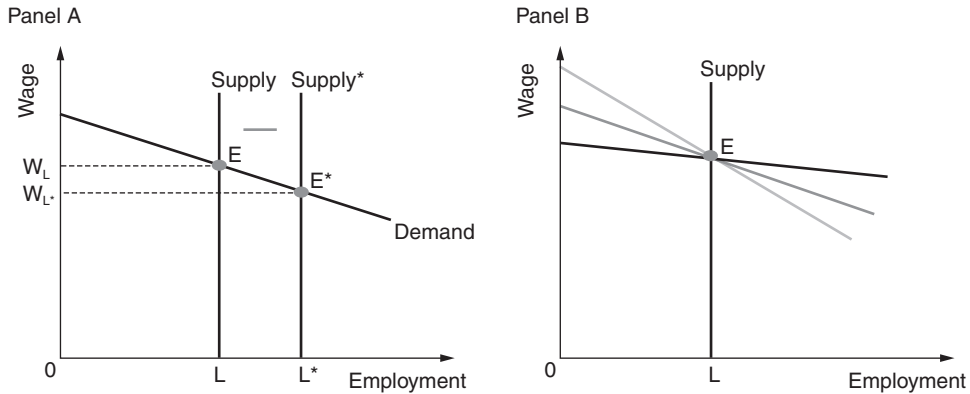


Figure 26.1 The textbook model

That is, within a particular skill group, migrant and native workers are assumed to be perfect substitutes. The main logic behind this model is presented in Figure 26.1. For the purpose of the example, all immigrants are assumed to be low skilled.

Panel A of Figure 26.1 presents the consequences of low-skilled immigration for the wages of low-skilled natives.¹ The initial supply of low-skilled workers (without immigration) is given by L , the equilibrium point is E and the prevailing wage rate is W_L . Immigration leads to an increase in the supply of homogenous workers from L to L^* . As a result of immigration, the wage rate decreases from W_L to W_L^* . As such, an influx of low-skilled immigrant workers into the economy lowers the wage rate for the native low-skilled workers.

Please note that low-skilled immigrants, in this case, do not necessarily mean those with low levels of education, but rather those doing low-skilled work in the host country. This is important because many European migrants 'downgrade' after migration, that is, they accept jobs that do not correspond to their educational levels (Voitchovsky, 2014).

There are three important considerations to keep in mind when evaluating the insights of the textbook model and the implications for the empirical evidence: the slope of the labour demand curve, the complementarity between immigrants and natives of different skills and the possibility of heterogeneous skills. These three considerations are discussed below.

A key insight from the textbook model is that the impact of immigration on wages depends on the slope of the labour demand curve. This slope reflects the responsiveness of the economy to changes in labour supply. Panel B presents three possible labour demand curves. In the case of the lighter curve, where the wage rate is more responsive to changes in the supply of workers, immigration would result in a greater reduction of wages. In the case of the darker curve there would also be a reduction, however to a smaller degree. This is important because labour markets in European countries have different degrees of flexibility. Some are very flexible (e.g. the UK), while others are less flexible (e.g. Sweden).

It is also important to note that, while those native workers who are similar to immigrants in their skills may lose from immigration, other workers with different skills may gain. For instance, an inflow of low-skilled workers is expected to decrease the wages of low-skilled natives, but increase the wages of high-skilled natives. The reason for the increase in wages for high-skilled natives is that these workers do not compete with low-skilled immigrants for work and actually benefit from their presence (i.e. complements instead of substitutes).

Several studies also suggest that the heterogeneity in the labour market goes beyond the broad classifications of high and low-skilled people (see D'Amuri and Peri, 2014; Cattaneo, Fiorio and Peri, 2015) and propose a model in which natives and immigrants from the same 'skill level' could complement each other. For low-skilled migration, the main idea is that manual skills are easily transferrable across countries, but this is not the case for communication skills. This is particularly relevant in Europe given the large diversity of spoken languages across countries. As a result, low-skilled immigrants have a comparative advantage in manual-intensive jobs, while low-skilled natives have an advantage in communication-intensive jobs due to better language skills. In this case immigration could result in native workers moving towards jobs in which they have a comparative advantage.

Regional evidence

Several studies have looked at the impacts of immigration on labour market outcomes of natives in multiple European countries. One of the earlier studies, Angrist and Kugler (2003), studied EU15 and EEA countries between 1983 and 1999, focussing on the impact of immigration on native employment rates. This study also explores how these impacts interact with institutional features such as labour standards. They find a negative effect of immigration on native employment, which they attribute to labour market rigidities in Europe. They suggest that natives lose 35 to 83 jobs per 100 additional immigrants. With regards to the role of labour market institutions, the study finds that the negative impact of immigrants on employment rates seems to worsen with more rigid institutions and in particular labour standards. This comes despite the fact that such measures are intended to protect native workers. Theoretically, this result does seem to be in line with the idea that if wages cannot fall, an increase in the supply of labour will lead to more unemployment.

In contrast to this, the other papers that consider EU15 countries, do not find a significant negative impact on employment rates of natives. D'Amuri and Peri (2014) consider 14 of the EU15 countries and Norway between 1996 and 2010, looking at whether foreign-born migrants cause native workers to shift towards higher-skilled tasks. They note that in 11 of these countries for which there is complete data, the share of immigrants nearly doubled from under 8 per cent to almost 14 per cent. They find that immigration does in fact push natives into more complex tasked work, such that they estimate an increased share of immigrants increases native specialisation into more complex skilled work by 5–6 per cent. However, the results suggest that immigration does not significantly affect native unemployment, but imply that increases in the foreign-born share of the population were associated with 0.7 per cent higher native wages. This study also looks at institutional aspects of the labour market and how these impact the effect that immigration has on natives. Specifically, they find that the reallocation of natives into complex jobs is more intense in less protected labour markets and that in these labour markets reallocation is stronger for workers with lower levels of education. These findings resonate with Angrist and Kugler's (2003) regarding the rigidity of labour market institutions. Interestingly, D'Amuri and Peri (2014) find that this specialisation into more complex tasks as a result of immigration, even occurs during negative labour demand shocks such as during recession years, albeit at a slower pace.

On a similar theme, a pair of studies, Cattaneo, Fiorio and Peri (2013) and Cattaneo, Fiorio and Peri (2015), on the careers of native workers in 11 of the EU15 countries, both find similar results to D'Amuri and Peri (2014). These studies, uniquely, track the careers of individuals between 1995 and 2001. Cattaneo, Fiorio and Peri (2013) find that a percentage point increase in the share of immigrants increases the probability that native workers will move on to higher

skill occupations in the next two years by around 0.8–1.1 per cent. Again, as with D’Amuri and Peri (2014), both studies indicate that there is no significant impact of immigration on the probability of the natives becoming unemployed. Cattaneo, Fiorio and Peri (2015) do find however, that self-employed natives are likely to leave self-employment as a result of immigration, presumably because immigrants themselves are more likely to be self-employed. Upgrading occupations is evidence of the labour market absorbing immigrants. It is through the complementarity of immigrant workers taking up lower-skilled jobs, that demand is driven for higher-skilled occupations, which natives are better suited towards. This complementary effect serves as a form of protection for natives against the competition that the immigrants would otherwise represent. Cattaneo, Fiorio and Peri (2013) fail to find any significant impact on the wages of natives, despite upgrading occupations. However, Cattaneo, Fiorio and Peri (2015) find some indications of increased native wages after a lag. The reason behind the lag could be due to the fact that the higher wages in these occupations take a longer time to accrue because workers need time to gain new job-specific skills before they receive higher wages. Cattaneo, Fiorio and Peri (2013) also look into the role of institutions in this reallocation of native workers and find some preliminary indications that the mobility of workers into higher-skilled occupations is greater in countries with lower social expenditure and lower employment protections, as well as those with high product market regulation. The findings of this pair of studies and D’Amuri and Peri (2014) seem to paint a similar picture regarding the way that native workers in EU countries upgrade occupations when faced by immigration.

Although these studies seem to find different results with regards to unemployment, it is important to note that they consider different time periods and slightly different groups of countries. It is also interesting that despite their disparate findings with regards to unemployment, their consideration of the role of institutions leads to similar results, which may contrast with the US where labour markets tend to be less rigid (a topic discussed in: Nickell, 1997; Nickell and Layard, 1999; Mortensen and Pissarides, 1999; Blanchard and Wolfers, 2000; Neumark and Wascher, 2004). D’Amuri and Peri (2014) in fact contrast their relatively more modest results, with those Peri and Sparber (2009) find for the US, noting that it may be down to more rigid employment protections in Europe.

Several studies have relied on simulations to explore the labour market impact of immigration. For example, Docquier, Ozden and Peri (2014) simulated the impact of immigration on labour market outcomes in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and current EU countries between 1990–2000, and a few of these countries between 2000–2007. These simulations vary by different scenarios regarding the degree of substitution between immigrants and natives. In the ‘pessimistic’ scenario, immigrants are perfect replacements of native workers, whereas in the ‘optimistic’ scenario natives are less substitutable. Generally Docquier, Ozden and Peri (2014) estimate small positive wage impacts in the pessimistic case, and positive wage impacts of varying sizes in the optimistic case. Poland and Baltic countries are exceptions, where in the optimistic case there are large falls in native wages, while other former socialist countries; Romania and Hungary have almost no impact from immigration on wages nor employment. In terms of wages, less-educated natives seem to have benefited more. With regards to employment of natives, Docquier, Ozden and Peri (2014) find either small and generally positive effects or no effects regardless of scenario or country.

Kone, Mattoo and Ozden (2017) ran similar simulations to explore the impact on wages, for a slightly different group of countries between 2000 and 2010 (including Norway and excluding some Eastern European countries), to explore the impact of age groups. Their simulations are comparable to the intermediate scenario in Docquier, Ozden and Peri (2014). They find that in all European countries, besides Belgium and Finland, immigration has negative impacts on the

wages of high-skilled workers and positive impacts on the wages of low-skilled workers, regardless of age. For the most part, immigration's impact on wages is small and largely positive, except for high-skilled workers, similar to Docquier, Ozden and Peri (2014). There are some relatively more extreme results, for example Luxembourg, the UK and Switzerland show relatively large negative effects for highly skilled natives, and relatively large positive effects for low-skilled workers.

Individual country evidence

Looking at studies that look at individual European countries presents us with more studies and diverse evidence on how immigration affects natives. As explained above we focus on three countries: the UK, Germany and Turkey.

United Kingdom

As a major recipient of European and non-European migrants, the UK has multiple studies dedicated to exploring the labour market impacts of immigration. Concerning wages, Dustmann, Frattini and Preston's (2013) study of the UK between 1997 and 2005, finds that an increase in the number of immigrants corresponding to 1 per cent of the UK-born working-age population resulted in an increase in average wages of 0.1 to 0.3 per cent. However, the impact is felt differently by different skill groups, and this study finds that the lowest paid native workers tend to see their wages fall as a result of immigration, whereas higher-skilled native workers see an increase in their wages. Another study looking between 2000 and 2007, finds the opposite impact; that an increase in immigrants slightly reduces average wages by almost 0.3 per cent (Reed and Latorre, 2009). The impact with regards to workers in different occupations is explored by Nickell and Saleheen (2008) and Nickell and Saleheen (2015), which consider 1992 to 2006 and 1992 to 2014 respectively. The former finds that an increase in the share of migrants reduced wages in unskilled and semi-skilled service sector jobs by 0.5 per cent, while the latter finds a similar result albeit the reduction is around 0.2 per cent. Manacorda, Manning and Wadsworth (2012) look at the period between 1975 and 2005, and find that the main adverse impact of immigration on wages falls upon earlier migrants, while native-born workers did not face any major impact.

With regards to unemployment, Dustmann, Fabbri and Preston (2005) find no statistically significant impact on overall employment outcomes for UK-born workers during 1983–2000, but find that UK-born workers with intermediate education could expect a significantly adverse effect, whereas those with advanced education could expect a positive impact on their employment outcomes. Lemos and Portes (2008) focus on how A8 (EU accession 8) immigrants affect the UK claimant count (number of people claiming unemployment benefits) and find little evidence for an adverse impact between May 2004 and November 2005. Lucchino, Bondibene and Portes (2012) similarly find that immigration did not affect employment outcomes between 2002 and 2011, not even during periods of recession. The Migration Advisory Committee (2012) conducted a study looking between 1975 and 2010, and its findings suggest that immigrants overall have no impact on UK-born employment, but that non-EU migrants had adversely affected UK-born workers' employment for the 1995–2010 period. By contrast, EU workers had no significant impact.

Germany

Like the UK, Germany has also been a large magnet of immigration. The immigration waves following the fall of the Berlin wall are of particular interest to quite a few studies, because they provide 'natural experiments' that facilitate the identification of causality. One example is the repatriation of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe and the USSR. Many of these immigrants migrated without jobs waiting for them in Germany, and so the government attempted to evenly allocate them across Germany, independent of labour market conditions. Glitz (2012) exploits this natural experiment to investigate the impact of the repatriation on the native population in West Germany (excluding Berlin) between 1996 and 2001 (while the allocation policy was in effect) and finds that while there was no impact on wages, for every ten additional migrants in the labour market, there were 3.1 additional unemployed natives in the short run. This may be reflective of substitution and labour market rigidities.

D'Amuri, Ottaviano and Peri (2010) look at the impact migration in West Germany had between 1987 and 2001. They find a small adverse impact on wages, which particularly affects previous immigrants. While native employment is unaffected, earlier immigrants see a negative impact that is driven by wage rigidities and closer competition. Brücker and Jahn (2008) consider Germany between 1980 and 2004. They find that in the short run, immigration has very small adverse impacts on aggregate unemployment and average wages, which increase by less than 0.1 per cent and falls by less than 0.1 per cent respectively, as a result of a 1 per cent increase of immigrants in the German labour force. In the longer run, this impact neutralises however. This study also finds that earlier foreign workers and lower-skilled natives are particularly adversely impacted by immigration, even in the long run. Both studies therefore, seem to reflect the idea of heterogeneity of natives and immigrants, leading to more direct competition between earlier and new migrants. Dustmann and Glitz (2015) look at how immigration impacted different German sectors between 1985 and 1995, finding strong adverse impacts on wages for workers in 'non-tradable sectors' but not in other sectors.

Another interesting case in German immigration history was a policy between 1990 and 1993 that allowed Czech workers to commute and work across the German border without being given residency rights in Germany. Dustmann, Schönberg and Stuhler (2017) examine the impacts of the subsequent immigration that occurred and found that by 1993, a 1 per cent increase in the share of Czech workers in a local labour market, lead to moderate declines in local wages (about 0.13 per cent) and a sharp decline in the employment of natives (about 0.9 per cent). The fall in employment was due to reduced hiring rather than separation for those already in work, and lower-skilled natives, who matched the skill profiles of the Czechs more closely, were more affected. Importantly, the immigrants did not live and consume in Germany and thus their adverse impact was not offset by them introducing additional consumption demand into the local economies.

Looking at earlier waves of German immigration, Pischke and Velling (1997) find no significant evidence that immigrants between 1985 and 1989 had displaced natives in terms of unemployment, nor that immigrant inflows affected the internal migration of natives during that period.

Turkey

Turkey has recently become a focus of research on the labour market impacts of immigration in Europe given the recent inflow of refugees from Syria. Del Carpio and Wagner (2015) using the 2014 distribution of Syrian refugees, find large-scale displacement for natives in the informal

sector, with ten Syrian refugees displacing around six workers from the informal sector. They also find concurrently that for every ten Syrian migrants, three formal jobs are created. However they note that native women do not see an increase in employment in the formal sector and see net displacement, while men's informal displacement is largely offset by new formal jobs. They also find that low-skilled workers are particularly disadvantaged, with more displacement from the informal sector than entrance to the formal sector. Ceritoglu *et al.* (2017) find no impact on Turkish wages between 2010 and 2013 (2011 being the shock year) in areas which received large inflows, but also find significant employment outcomes with an increase in unemployment of around 0.7 percentage points, and a reduction in likelihood of being in informal employment of 2.2 percentage points (1.9 percentage points for men and 2.6 for women) and increase in likelihood of being in formal employment by 0.4 percentage points, Ceritoglu *et al.* (2017) note that Syrian refugees are not allowed to work officially and thus the impact is mostly in the informal sector. Akgündüz, van den Berg and Hassink (2015) treating 2011 as the shock year and looking at 2012 and 2013, by contrast find that employment rates of different skill groups are largely unaffected, arguing that this may be because Syrian refugees are unable to compete with native incumbents. They do see that internal migration into regions with Syrian refugees has slowed down, but exit migration from the regions is unaffected. These studies are largely concerned with the very initial-run impacts of the influx of Syrian refugees in Turkey's border regions, and the longer-run implications may take more time to become fully apparent. Nonetheless this impact in Turkey, clearly relates to the presence of informal labour market opportunities for Syrians, and also potentially different mobility between sexes. This may be indicative of relatively different social and markets institutions in Turkey, as compared with the EU15 countries considered earlier.

Conclusions

There are several possible conclusions that can be made about the impact of immigration on the European labour market. First, the literature is heavily concentrated on Western Europe. Second, the results depend on the flexibility of the labour market in question. This differentiates Europe from other parts of the world, as there is a very large degree of variation in labour market regulation, profoundly altering the ways that labour markets react to immigration even among countries that are otherwise similar in other types of regulations (e.g. among members of the EU). This may also explain some of the diverse and occasionally contrasting results, alongside factors like the time period considered, nature of migration flows and other economic conditions. There are some suggestions that institutions are generally more rigid in Europe as compared with the US, driving differences in outcomes between the US and Europe. Third, studies find that natives tend to upgrade occupationally in response to immigration, but earlier migrants (and in Turkey, women) tend to be negatively impacted. This suggests some labour market complementary between migrants and natives of the same skill level, and could relate to the multilingual nature of Europe.

Note

- 1 We are using the term natives as for simplicity we assume that this is an economy without immigrants in the first stage. The same conclusions hold if we allow for previous migration waves and use the term 'resident population'.

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