



Economic Perception as a Predictor of Immigration Sentiments in the E.U.

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Research Question

- What factors influence one's attitudes towards large-scale issues such as immigration?
- Can a person's perception of his or her national economic situation serve as a predictor of his or her sentiment regarding immigrants from non-E.U. countries?



Literature

Experts regarding views on immigration largely point to 4 main explanatory models

- Contact Theory: increased levels of contact and dialogue with immigrants often results in higher levels of support
- Issue Saliency: anti-immigrant sentiments tend to rise when immigrants are displayed in media, especially in connection with issues such as terrorism and crime
- Education Level: some experts believe people with higher levels of educational attainment are less likely to display animosity towards immigrants
- Limited Resource Theory: those who perceive immigrants as a threat to their job or economic situation are more likely to oppose immigration

Theory

Based on the limited resource theory, this study focuses on how economic perceptions influence European reactions to immigrants from non-E.U. countries.

Hypothesis

- If a person perceives the economy to be doing poorly, then he or she will be significantly more likely to express an anti-immigrant sentiment

Research Design

- IntUne Mass Survey Wave II (2009) on the ICPSR database
- Questions
 - Independent Variable: how do you think the economic situation in (our country) has changed over the past 12 months?
 - Possible answers range from 1 (Got a lot worse) to 5 (Got a lot better)
 - Dependent Variable: do you think that immigration from non EU countries is a threat or not a threat for the EU? Is it...
 - Possible answers range from 1 (A big threat) to 4 (Not a threat at all)
- Data
 - 16,614 respondents from 16 EU countries and Serbia
 - Data from Serbian respondents and respondents with missing data were removed from the analysis resulting in a total of 14,540 cases



Results

- Null Hypothesis: economic perception has no impact on immigration sentiment
- t-statistic: 7.465
- Degrees of freedom: 14,538
- Alpha: 0.01
- Critical value range: -2.576 to 2.576
 - The t-statistic falls outside the critical value range, we can therefore reject the null hypothesis

Conclusions

- The results of this study support the hypothesis that personal perceptions of the economic situation of a person's country do influence his or her sentiment towards immigrants originating from non-E.U. states
- Generally, there appears to be a correlation between negative perceptions of the economy and negative attitudes towards immigration



Potential Future Research

- Additional variables such as age, gender, race, level of educational attainment, and socio-economic status
- Further breakdown of respondents by country, allowing for analysis of a country's historical and current immigration policies and their effectiveness