

Refugee Inflows and Social Cohesion: The 2015/16 Mass Inflow in Germany

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Does Immigration Erode Social Cohesion?

Contrast/Conflict Theory

- ▶ immigration a threat to majority \Rightarrow less social cohesion
- ▶ “Hunkering Down” (Putnam, 2007)

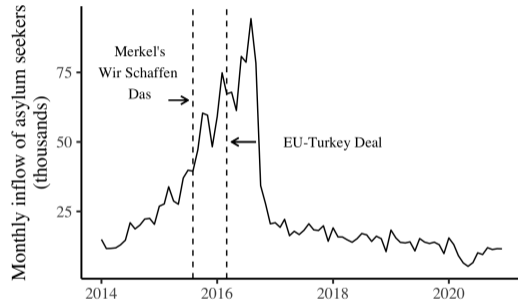
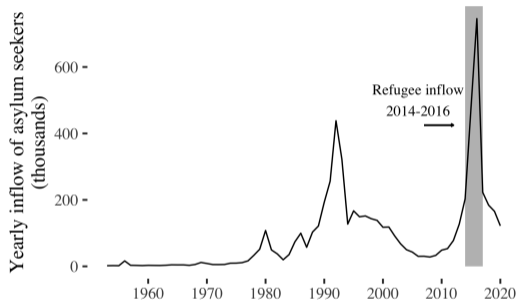
Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954)

- ▶ regular contact with immigrants increases social cohesion

This Paper

- ▶ Sudden **inflow of >1m asylum seekers** in Germany in 2015/16
- ▶ Study the impact on **general indicators of social cohesion** (trust, fairness,...)
- ▶ ...and **immigration-specific** indicators (attitudes, violence)

The 2015 Refugee Inflow in Germany



The 2015 Refugee Inflow in Germany



Source: Guardian



Source: Evangelische Zeitung



Source: Deutsche Welle



Source: Deutsche Welle

Data: Measuring Social Cohesion

1) Survey Data from SOEP

- ▶ Representative panel survey (>30k respondents)
- ▶ **General social cohesion:** trust, reciprocity, fairness, donations
- ▶ **Specific:** exert caution towards foreigners?

2) Anti-Immigrant Violence

- ▶ Data collected by the Amadeu Antonio Foundation
- ▶ Newspaper articles on anti-immigrant violent attacks (physical violence, arson, etc)

Difference-in-Difference Analysis

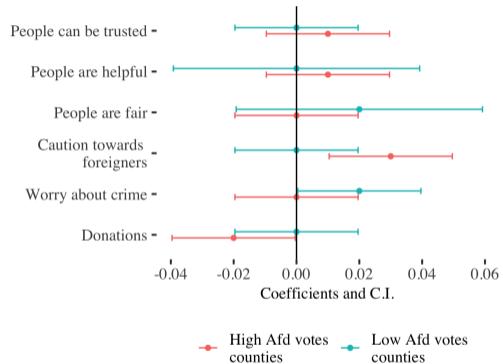
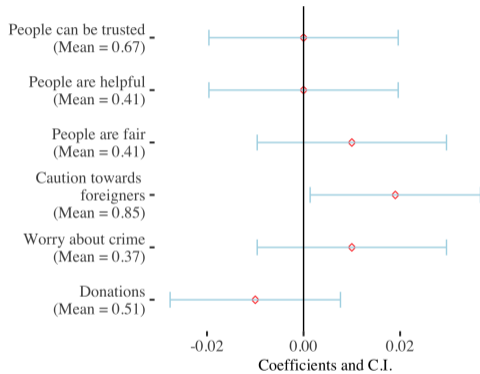
Our analysis compares

- ▶ People's attitudes after vs. before 2015
- ▶ In places with many vs. few refugees in 2015

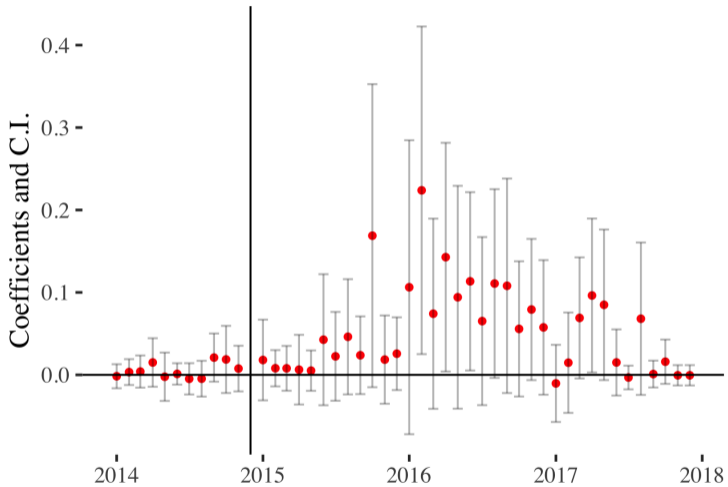
Basic Idea

- ▶ Compare people who **start with the same attitudes**
- ▶ See if the **changes are stronger** among people in **high-inflow areas**

No Substantial Effects on Social Cohesion



Significant Effects on Anti-Immigrant Violence



1m Refugees Did not Erode Social Cohesion

But: short term impact on anti-immigrant attitudes and even violence

Policy lessons

- ▶ Assignment can be done with native reactions in mind
- ▶ Natives can be prepared better

Questions for **future research**:

- ▶ **Long-run effects** (10-20 years after)
- ▶ Implications for **new immigration waves** (Ukraine)

