

Reducing Public Hostility to Immigration: The Impact of Information Campaigns

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- Immigration is one of the most controversial features of globalization.
- As the number of immigrants has increased, so has support for right wing parties in many destination countries.
- Acts of hostility towards foreigners, expressions of bigotry and racism have escalated.
- Many public opinion surveys reveal high levels of hostility against immigration.
- How can this antagonism be countered?
- To start answering this question we carry out a large-scale, systematic assessment of different approaches to influencing attitudes toward immigration.

- Immigration attitudes strongly predicted by:
 - Sociotropic economic considerations
 - Cultural concerns
 - Education levels

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- Our conjecture: Gap in understanding potential sociotropic benefits of immigration accounts for some of the difference in attitudes.

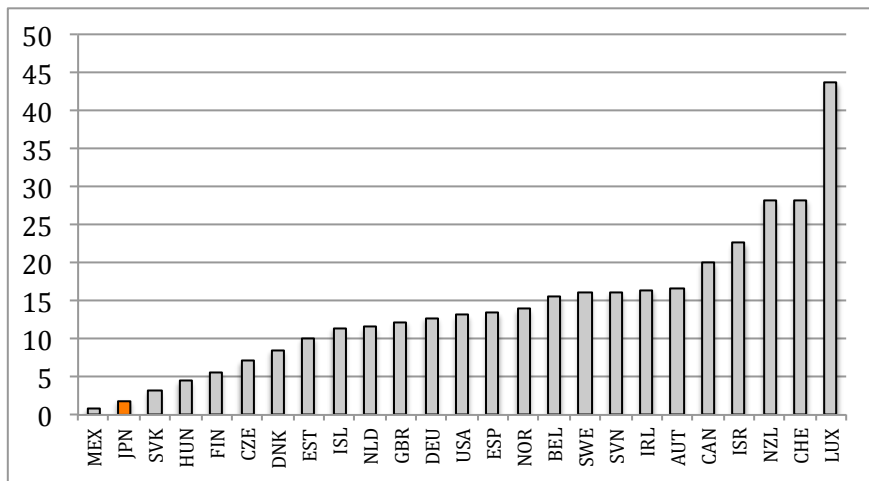
Can attitudes toward immigration be changed through information campaigns?

Can opposition toward immigration be reduced by informing people about its potential economic benefits?

Context: Japan's Economic and Demographic Problems

- Population shrinking
 - From a peak 128m (2008), will drop below 100m by 2050
- Aging society
 - 65+ comprise 27% of population; projected 39% by 2050
- Labor Shortages
 - Ratio of vacancies: 3.64 in catering and hospitality, 3.62 in domestic support services; 2.25 for motor vehicle drivers
- Underfunded pension system
 - Old age dependency ratio approaching 1 by 2050.

Share of Foreign Born (OECD 2015)



Opinions on consequences of immigration (ISSP 2013)

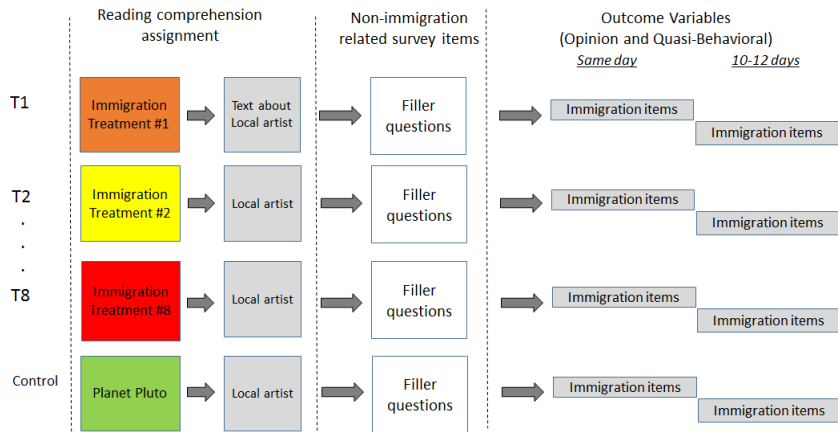
	Good for Econ	Steal Jobs	Improve Society	Undermine Culture
Belgium	0.21	0.43	0.33	0.45
Taiwan	0.42	0.53	0.51	0.19
Croatia	0.15	0.52	0.24	0.21
Czech Republic	0.17	0.7	0.22	0.38
Denmark	0.37	0.26	0.6	0.34
Finland	0.28	0.3	0.44	0.22
France	0.27	0.35	0.33	0.42
Germany	0.51	0.24	0.64	0.31
Hungary	0.19	0.53	0.34	0.3
Iceland	0.53	0.15	0.74	0.07
Ireland	0.47	0.42	0.66	0.23
Israel	0.28	0.54	0.26	0.39
Japan	0.42	0.17	0.28	0.19
South Korea	0.51	0.26	0.29	0.17
Mexico	0.27	0.34	0.31	0.33
Norway	0.51	0.12	0.48	0.27
Portugal	0.57	0.56	0.6	0.2
Slovak Republic	0.16	0.62	0.24	0.32
Slovenia	0.38	0.42	0.38	0.32
Spain	0.44	0.46	0.5	0.25
Sweden	0.46	0.14	0.59	0.28
Switzerland	0.58	0.28	0.71	0.22
Turkey	0.23	0.65	0.22	0.51
UK	0.32	0.5	0.4	0.42
USA	0.55	0.37	0.66	0.2
Japan's Ranking	15/26	23/26	6/26	23/26

- Administered in Japan, Oct-Dec 2015.
- Carried out in two waves (+ pilot)
 - Pilot in October (1,000 respondents)
 - Wave I in the week starting on November 27 (6,000 respondents)
 - Wave II 10-12 days later (3,000 respondents)
- To avoid eliciting social desirability bias, participants were told that their task was to assess suitability of two short texts in Japanese for reading comprehension at high school entry level.

Experimental Treatments

- Aging society
 - Pensions crisis
 - Longterm care for the elderly (x2)
 - Healthcare costs
- Population shrinking
- Labor shortages (x2)
- Comparative facts

Experimental Design



July 14, 2015

Debate in Japan over immigration controls grows louder

In a recent television program, senior government officials were asked about the issue of immigration: was it time for the country to open its doors to more migrants?

According to current trends, the future Japanese population will become much older on average (due to longer lives, fewer babies). Today there are three people of working age for each retiree, but by 2050, because of population's aging, there will only be one person of working age for each retiree. This means that there will be too few people to fund the pension system. This is potentially a major problem, and serves as a basis for calls to allow more foreigners into the country.

One recent proposal circulated among policy advisers calls for the number of foreign residents to be increased by 200,000 a year. Such an increase would help address the aging of the population and the challenge of funding the pension system.

"The question Japan faces is - do we continue to do nothing or do we admit more foreign workers to help deal with the situation?" says Ryusei Sasaki, a researcher from a policy think-tank. "We are at a crossroads."

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Several times a night, Koharu Ide (61) wakes up to help her 89-year-old mother use the toilet. To make sure she can assist immediately, Koharu sleeps right next to her. This is not a duty that many would enjoy. But Koharu tells me she feels obliged to do it, "because we owe it to our elderly, and I am concerned that there are not enough professionals to take care of them in this country". Worryingly, the lack of nurses and caregivers for our aging population is only getting worse.

According to current trends, in the coming years there will be too few people to provide long-term care for Japan's growing elderly population. This is potentially a major problem, and serves as a basis for calls to allow more foreigners into the country.

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- *General preferences on immigration policy:*

“Overall, do you think that the number of immigrants allowed into Japan should be increased, decreased or kept at the current level?”

Answers: 5-point scale from “Decrease greatly” to “Increase greatly”

- *Preferences towards temporary migration:*

“Some have proposed increasing the number of visas for temporary workers (including *Ginou Jissyyu Sei*). Overall, do you think that the number of immigrants allowed to Japan temporarily should be increased, decreased or kept at the current level?”

Answers: 5-point scale from “Decrease greatly” to “Increase greatly”

- *Willingness to actively engage in lobbying their elected officials:*

“Finally, please select one of the three options below concerning a petition to the government stating your position on immigration (The petition will contain your name, city of residence and opinion on the issue)” .

Answers: “I would like to join a petition to the government stating MY SUPPORT for increasing the number of immigrants allowed in Japan”; “I would like to join a petition to the government stating MY OPPOSITION to increasing the number of immigrants allowed in Japan”; “No, I do not wish to sign up a petition” .

- *Placebo:*

“Should Japan reduce its greenhouse emissions?”

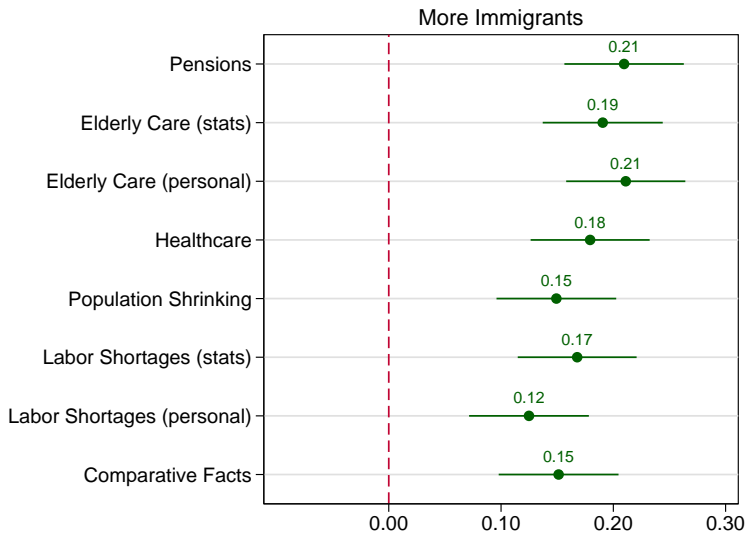
Answers: “Yes, Regardless of what other countries do”; “Yes, but only if other industrialized countries (such as England, Germany and the United States) reduce their emissions”; “Yes, but only if other Asian countries (such as China, India, Korea) reduce their emissions”; “No, Japan should not reduce its emissions” and “Don’t know” .

- *Dependent variable* in the (main) analysis is dichotomous, coded 1 if answer is “increased” or “greatly increased” etc. Results are robust if we use instead the continuous measure.

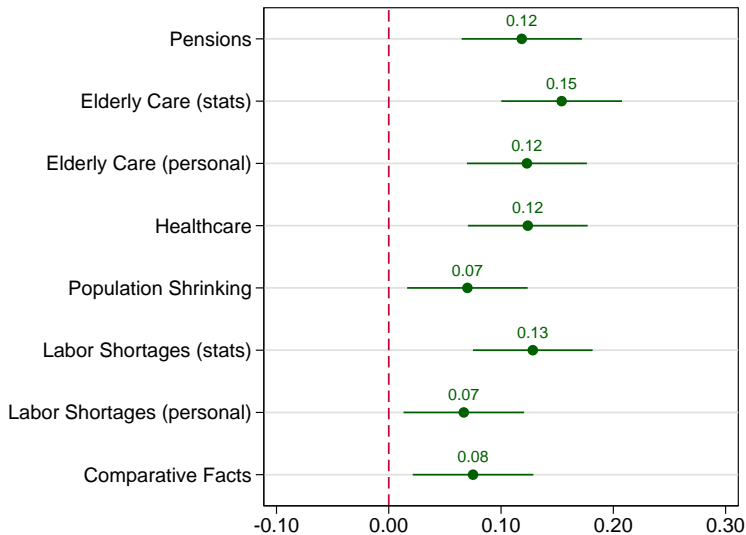
Summary Statistics

	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max	Population
<i>Short Run Sample</i>					
More Immigrants	0.45	0.50	0.00	1.00	
More Temp Visas	0.46	0.50	0.00	1.00	
Sign Pro Petition	0.17	0.38	0.00	1.00	
Emissions	0.74	0.44	0.00	1.00	
Median Age	48				47
Share of Over 65	0.20				0.26
Percent Females	0.51				0.51
Unemployment Rate	0.03				0.03
Percent Primary Educated	0.02				0.00
Percent Secondary Educated	0.32				0.49
Percent Tertiary Educated	0.66				0.51
Observations			6000		
<i>"Longer Run" Sample</i>					
More Immigrants	0.30	0.46	0.00	1.00	
More Temp Visas	0.35	0.48	0.00	1.00	
Sign Pro Petition	0.14	0.35	0.00	1.00	
Emissions	0.71	0.45	0.00	1.00	
Median Age	48				48
Share of Over 65	0.21				0.26
Percent Females	0.51				0.51
Unemployment Rate	0.03				0.03
Percent Primary Educated	0.03				0.00
Percent Secondary Educated	0.33				0.49
Percent Tertiary Educated	0.63				0.51
Observations			3000		

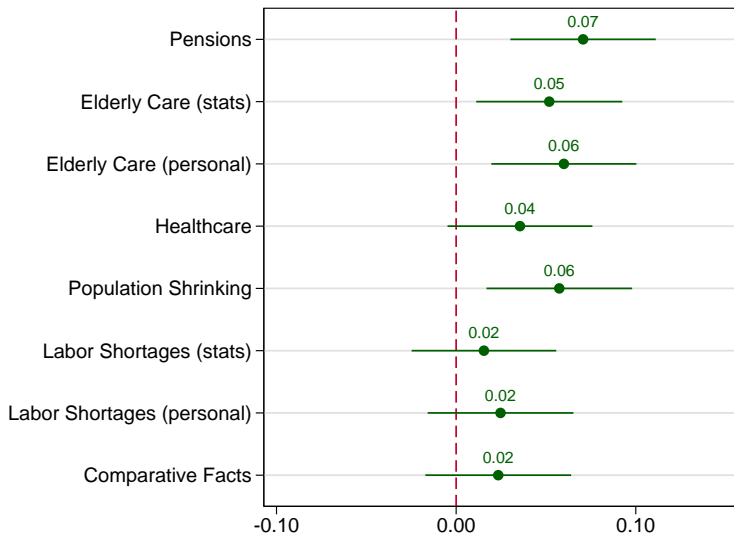
Treatment Effects on Support for Immigration



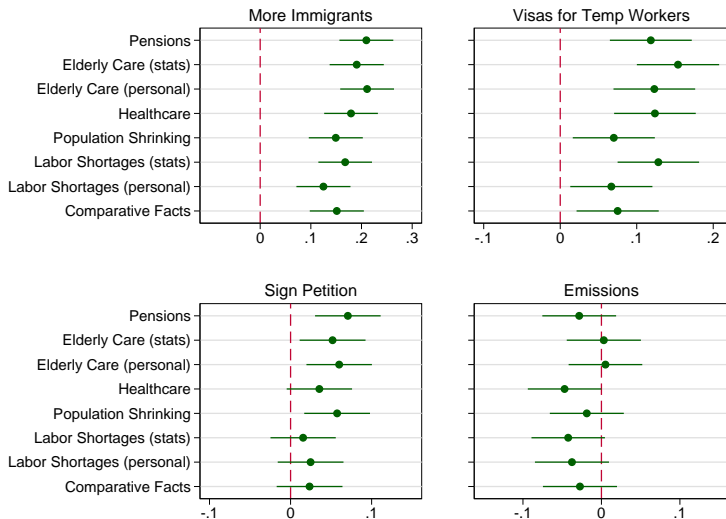
Treatment Effects on Support for Temporary Visas



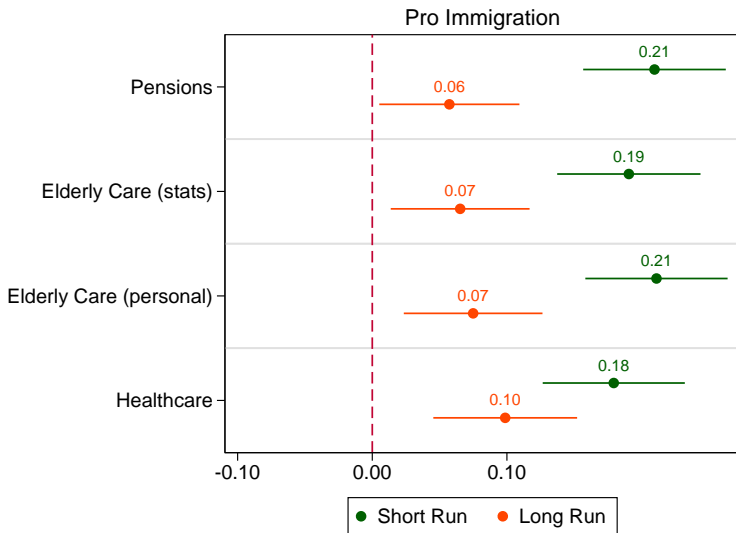
Treatment Effects on Willingness to Sign Pro-Immigration Petition



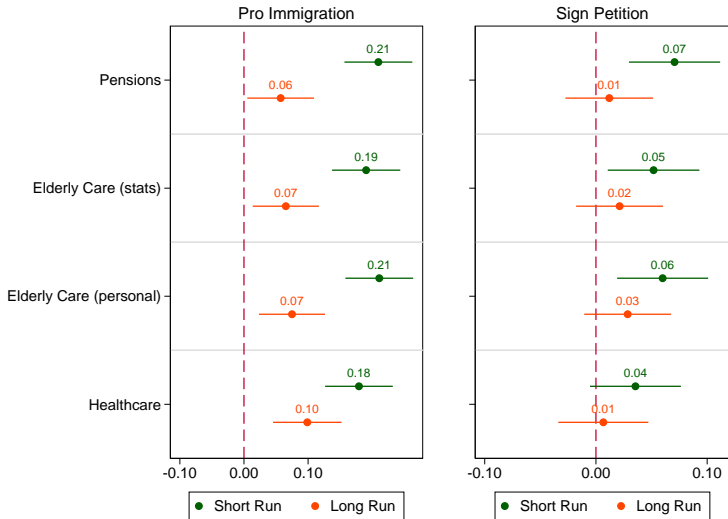
Treatment effects across outcomes



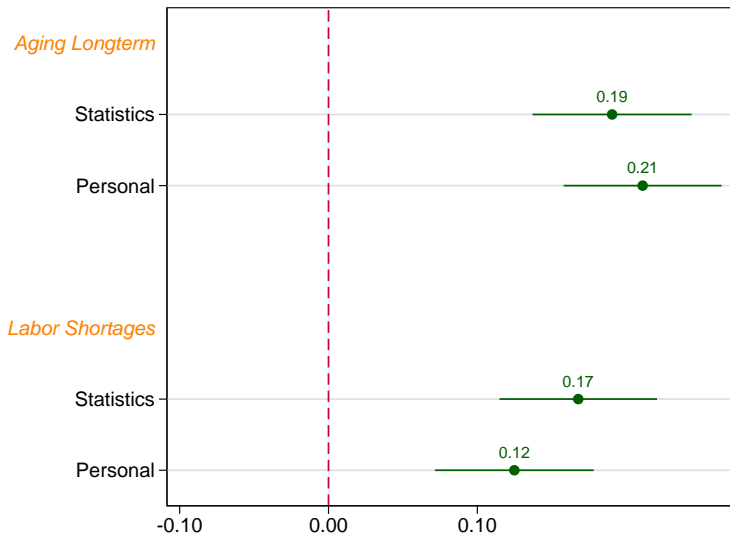
Effect Persistence



Effect Persistence

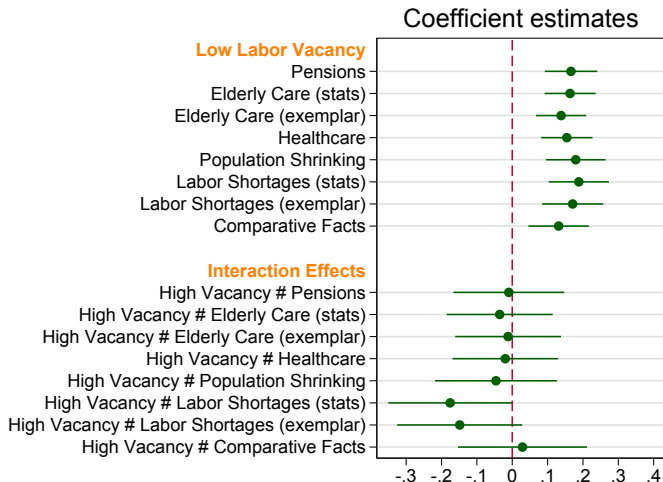


Mode of Communication



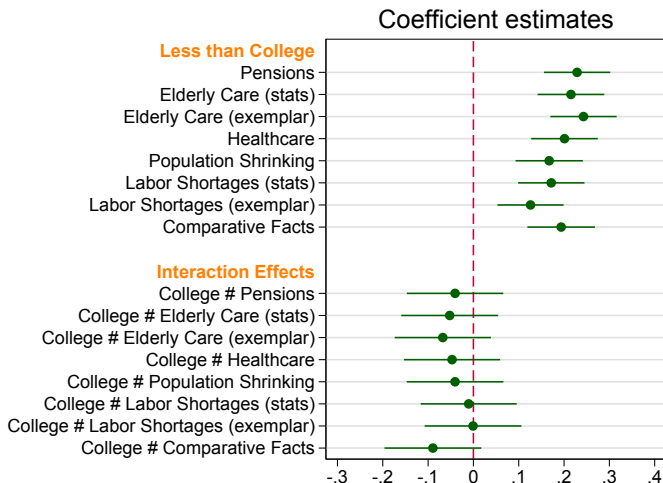
- Do the treatments affect attitudes by making pre-existing information more accessible (“priming”) or by providing new and applicable knowledge?
- Persistency of the effects over time is compatible with the idea that new knowledge is being made available.
- We further explore this issue by investigating the heterogeneity of the effects across groups that are expected to differ in their pre-treatment knowledge about the relevant issues:
 - Individuals working in high vs. low shortage sectors
 - Highly educated individuals vs. the rest.

Treatment Effect by Exposure to Labor Shortage Problem



Note: Bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Outcomes are binary, where '1' indicates a pro-immigration stance.

Treatment Effect by Education Level



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Key Findings

- Sizable positive effects of information treatments on reducing opposition to immigration
- The effects on expressed attitudes persist over time
 - No persistence for mobilization outcome
- Mode of communication: no clear difference
- Some evidence of that information treatments are more effective when they bring in new information.

- External validity beyond Japan must be assessed.
- Japan has some “unique” features:
 - People hold benign views of immigration when it comes to economic considerations;
 - People are more opposed when it comes to cultural implications.
- To what extent the results generalize beyond the case of Japan needs to be assessed.