CONTESTED SOLIDARITY

Trade Union Membership and Immigration Attitudes in Europe

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Abstract

Do trade union members have more positive or negative attitudes towards immigration compared to non-members? This paper answers the question by analyzing ten rounds of the European Social Survey data. Focusing on a sample of over 70,000 native-born workers across 15 countries, I present three key observations. First, a significant gender difference exists in the relationship between union membership and immigration attitudes. On average, male union members exhibit more negative attitudes toward immigration than non-members within the same country, while female members generally express more positive views. Second, the 2015 European migrant crisis marks a turning point in union members' immigration attitudes. Following its onset, male union members began to hold more negative views than non-members, and female union members stopped showing more positive attitudes. Third, institutional contexts matter. Union members in strong industrial relations systems tend to express more negative views on immigration than non-members. I further demonstrate that these observed patterns are at least partly explained by individuals' gendered motives for joining unions and the tensions between egalitarianism and inclusiveness as union objectives. Finally, I contend that immigration has broader implications for social equality, which extend beyond the internal solidarity of organized labor, using support for redistribution as an example.

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Introduction

For decades, immigration has been one of the central issues on the agenda of trade unions, raising fundamental questions for organized labor (Penninx and Roosblad 2000). Should immigration be viewed as an opportunity or a threat to the labor movement? Should trade unions oppose or support government restrictions on immigration? And, with declining membership among native-born workers, should unions allocate precious resources to immigrants? In a critical review, Marino et al. (2015) conclude that as migration has become an increasingly common feature of modern Western societies, most European trade unions have moved away from their restrictive stances of the past, embracing principles of international solidarity and equality. Despite the positions of many trade unions, it remains unclear whether native-born union members (hereafter "union members" unless otherwise noted) have adopted a similar mindset and shown more favorable attitudes towards immigration than non-members. This question is of significant importance, as a less liberal membership base could eventually undermine unions' efforts to engage and build solidarity with immigrants.

While previous quantitative studies have examined how union members differ from non-members in their immigration attitudes, they have often relied on oversimplified assumptions or questionable empirical settings (e.g., Artiles and Molina 2011; Donnelly 2016; Rosetti 2019). Some have presumed that union members' views on immigration simply mirror the positions held by union leaders, overlooking the complexity of individual attitudes. Others have faced challenges in selecting appropriate samples, including individuals who are out of the labor force in the analyses. Perhaps more importantly, most quantitative studies have ignored the significance of institutional contexts, despite qualitative research consistently emphasizing their importance in shaping immigration attitudes (Gumbrell-McCormick et al. 2017; Marino et al. 2017). Moreover, given the changing landscape of migration in Europe, particularly following the 2015 migrant crisis, a more updated analysis may be needed to capture union members' evolving attitudes towards immigration (Kazlou et al. 2024).

In light of these concerns, I revisit the relationship between union membership and immigration attitudes in Europe by proposing a more integrated theoretical framework. Specifically, I argue that union members' views on immigration are shaped by both micro and macro-level determinants. At the micro level, three key factors are at play: the influence of union leadership, labor market competition with immigrants, and individual motives for joining unions.

Particular attention is paid to individual motives for unionization, which suggests that male and female workers join unions for distinct reasons and therefore approach immigration with different considerations. At the macro level, three pairs of institutional and strategic tensions are highlighted: the trade-offs between unions' incentives and abilities to advocate for immigrants, between universalism and particularism as labor organizing strategies, and between egalitarianism and inclusiveness as union objectives. Among these trade-offs, the last pair has received less attention, despite its intuitive nature: representing a diverse workforce complicates unions' capacity to obtain equal outcomes for all groups of workers, while increasing employers' perceived risk of extending equal treatment to different workers.

Empirically, I analyze ten rounds of the European Social Survey data to study union members' immigration attitudes. Focusing on a sample of over 70,000 native-born workers, I identify three main patterns. First, a significant gender difference exists in the relationship between union membership and immigration attitudes. On average, male union members exhibit more negative attitudes toward immigration than non-members within the same country, while female members generally express more positive views. Second, the migrant crisis signals a shift in union members' immigration attitudes: following its onset, male union members began to hold more negative views than non-members, and female union members stopped showing more positive attitudes. Third, institutional contexts matter. Union members in strong industrial relations systems tend to express more negative views on immigration than non-members. I further demonstrate that these patterns can be at least partly explained by the gendered motives for unionization and the trade-off between egalitarianism and inclusiveness. Finally, I contend that immigration has broader implications for organized labor. To support this argument, I show that negative immigration attitudes reduce union members' support for redistribution, especially among females. This is likely due to the growing tendency of the populist right to co-opt liberal values in its anti-immigration rhetoric.

The present paper makes several contributions to the study of immigration in industrial relations. Most notably, the analysis distinguishes between the immigration attitudes of union members and their leaders. Thus, the question is more than analyzing the stances of trade unions; it also involves whether union members will support the positions of their leaders—an issue crucial to internal solidarity, especially in countries where trust in trade unions has been declining (Aleks et al. 2021; Culpepper and Regan 2014; Smith and Duxbury 2019). The analysis also reveals significant heterogeneity in the relationship between union membership

and immigration attitudes, highlighting the need for a more pluralist perspective. This aligns with prior research that has challenged both the "prevailing caricatures of organized labor as a monolithic and unidirectional restrictionist actor" (Fine and Tichenor 2009, p. 86) and the "assumption of trade unions as inclusive and equitable organizations of social justice" (Lee and Tapia 2021, p. 654). Lastly, the link between negative immigration attitudes and diminished support for redistribution among union members suggests that organized labor should not view immigration in isolation, but in connection with other important agendas and changing socioeconomic landscapes.

1 Understanding Union Members' Immigration Attitudes

1.1 Solidarity, Competition, and Individual Motives for Unionization

Do union members have different views on immigration compared to non-members? If so, are union members less or more inclusive towards immigrants than non-members? The existing literature on these questions highlights two micro-level determinants that often yield contrasting predictions. On the one hand, several studies indicate that union members have more favorable perceptions of immigration than non-members (Artiles and Molina 2011; Donnelly 2016; Rosetti 2019). Central to their findings is a leadership effect, whereby union leaders communicate pro-immigration messages to the rank and file, fostering solidarity among workers of diverse backgrounds. However, recent work raises doubts about the extent to which union leaders can shape members' political and social attitudes. In particular, Yan (2023) contends that union members may not always receive messages from their leadership. Even if messages are delivered, their acceptance may be impeded by mistrust and conflicting interests between union members and union leaders (Budd 1995; Culpepper and Regan 2014).

On the other hand, theories of labor market competition implicitly suggest that union members have less favorable attitudes towards immigration than non-members, due to the concern that the increased labor supply of immigrants would lower wages and undermine other working conditions (Burgoon et al. 2010). In addition, union members may respond more adversely to the threat of unemployment caused by immigration, because of their accumulation of specialized, less transferable skills through long tenure (Kambourov and Manovskii 2009; Pardos-Prado and Xena 2019; Porreca and Rosolia 2024). While intuitive and insightful, theories of labor market competition have a relatively narrow focus on wages and jobs, ignoring other

potential interest conflicts between native-born union members and immigrants, such as social policies and welfare (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Rueda 2005, 2006).

Perhaps a more general critique is that both perspectives have overlooked the agency of workers, particularly in the European context where union membership is often a voluntary choice. Specifically, research has identified two explanations for individual decisions to join unions: interest-based and norm-based motives (Schnabel 2003; Toubøl and Jensen 2014). In the interest-based account, workers become union members to enjoy exclusive employment benefits offered by trade unions, as well as to have a voice in the workplace or higher-level decision-making processes (Jima Bedaso and Jirjahn 2024; Berger and Neugart 2012; Goerke and Pannenberg 2011; Sojourner 2013; Verma 2017). Crucially, workers with interest-based motives may hold less positive views towards immigration due to their heightened awareness of potential losses (Kovacic and Orso 2023; Shim and Lee 2018). Note that this argument differs from those of labor market competition, in which unions directly influence whether their members face greater risk in the labor markets. Instead, the interest-based motives imply a pattern of negative selection into trade unions, such that workers who have less favorable perceptions of immigration—primarily due to their pre-existing material concerns—are more likely to be union members.

In contrast, the norm-based account emphasizes the impact of individual values, social customs, and the perceived images of unions on workers' decisions to become union members (Schnabel 2003; Toubøl and Jensen 2014). The norm-based motives can manifest in both passive and active forms: workers may join unions simply due to peer pressure, or they may choose to affiliate with unions that align with their values and beliefs (Kelly and Kelly 1994; Kirmanoğlu and Başlevent 2012; Visser 2002). Importantly, as migration has become an increasingly common feature of Western societies, many European trade unions have moved away from their previous restrictive positions and embraced principles of international solidarity and equality (Donnelly 2016; Marino et al. 2015). In this broad context, the norm-based motives—especially the active form—may create a pattern of positive selection, such that workers with pre-existing liberal values, hence often more inclusive attitudes towards immigration, are more likely to become union members.

While the interest and norm-based motives lead to very different predictions of union members' immigration attitudes, they do not conflict with each other. Both scenarios can be true, and the final outcome hinges on the relative strength of each selection process. In

what follows, I will argue that for female workers, the norm-based motives (i.e., selection into union membership based on pre-existing liberal values) are more salient than the interest-based motives (i.e., selection based on material concerns), and vice versa for male workers. A first reason is that women may not always benefit from the employment protections that unions provide. As Estevez-Abe (2006) indicates, women face greater risk of voluntary job interruption due to family responsibilities. This reduces employers' willingness to hire and invest in female workers, since the opportunity to reap the benefit of training in the long run is smaller. Importantly, strong employment protections limit employers' abilities to replace off-duty workers, further amplifying the cost of women's job interruption. Consequently, strong employment protections can exacerbate occupational sex segregation, resulting in a higher concentration of women in low-paying, low-investment jobs.

A second reason for the gender difference is related to the landscape of women's movement. As Fraser (2013) observes, the second-wave feminist movement dovetails with the rise of neoliberalism, which prioritizes individualism, self-interest, and negative liberty (e.g., no interference with individual rights, including those of women and immigrants). While skeptical of the true merit of these values, Fraser acknowledges that neoliberalism has (uncritically) facilitated the emancipation of marginalized groups by forging an alliance of social actors who all advocate for diversity and multiculturalism (Brenner and Fraser 2017). This orientation has spilled over into the field of industrial relations, where female workers are increasingly viewing unions as a vehicle to champion and advance the rights of women and other marginalized groups, such as immigrants (Blaschke 2015; Kirton 2005; Preminger and Bondy 2023; Sa'ar 2015; Williamson 2012). Thus, female workers' decisions to join unions are more likely to be driven by the norm-based motives rather than the interest-based ones.

In short, the analysis suggests that female workers tend to select into unions due to their pre-existing liberal values, thereby exhibiting more positive attitudes towards immigration than non-members. Conversely, male workers tend to select into unions due to their material concerns, which are associated with more negative perceptions of immigration compared to non-members. Focusing on individual motives for unionization, therefore, introduces a gendered perspective that is largely missing in alternative theoretical explanations such as the union leadership effect and labor market competition.

1.2 Institutional Tensions and Strategic Trade-offs

Whether union members hold different immigration attitudes compared to non-members may also depend on the institutional contexts and strategic choices faced by trade unions. That is, the extent to which union leaders promote international solidarity, the impact of labor market competition, and the individual motives for joining unions can all be influenced by macro-level factors. However, instead of providing unambiguous predictions, the literature suggests considerable tensions and trade-offs in how institutional contexts and strategic choices may shape union members' immigration attitudes. In what follows, I will highlights three pairs of trade-offs that have been more or less explored in previous studies.

The first trade-off centers on unions' incentives and abilities to advocate for immigrants. Specifically, several analyses have found that unions that lack institutional security (e.g., in fragmented markets and non-Ghent systems) have greater incentives to organize and represent immigrants (Benassi and Dorigatti 2015; Kranendonk and De Beer 2016; Marino 2012; Tapia and Turner 2013; Wrench 2004). This tendency arises because unions in these contexts perceive membership growth as crucial for strengthening their influence on employers and governments. Nevertheless, despite greater incentives, these unions often have limited capacity to regulate the labor markets, as they are less integrated into the socioeconomic decision-making process. Supporting this view, a number of studies have indicated that institutionally strong unions can achieve better outcomes for marginalized workers without significant costs to their core members (Alho 2015; Benassi et al. 2019; Doellgast 2022; Park 2023). Consequently, due to the trade-off between the incentives and abilities to advocate for immigrants, it remains unclear whether union members hold more or less positive attitudes toward immigration when their unions are institutionally secure.

The second trade-off relates to how trade unions choose between different strategies to organize and represent immigrants. On the one hand, unions can adopt a universalistic organizing approach, which emphasizes workers' mutual interests, shared identities, and common challenges. By downplaying immigration status, the universalistic approach can reduce in-group/out-group biases and promote solidarity among different groups of workers (Benassi and Vlandas 2016; Mosimann and Pontusson 2017, 2022; Pulignano and Doerflinger 2013). On the other hand, unions can rely on a particularistic organizing approach, which highlights immigrants' specific needs and concerns. Such an approach may foster greater understanding and engagement of immigrants within unions, leading to a higher level of

interaction and integration (Alberti et al. 2013; Alberti and Però 2018; Tapia et al. 2017; Tapia and Alberti 2019). While both strategies can be employed, unions typically favor one over the other. More importantly, it remains uncertain which approach is more effective in promoting inclusive attitudes toward immigration among union members, given the benefits and costs involved in each strategy.

The third trade-off, which has been less discussed, concerns the tension between egalitarianism and inclusiveness as union objectives. Here, "egalitarianism" refers to the goal to achieve equal economic outcomes for workers, while "inclusiveness" pertains to the goal to represent a diverse body of workers. Although both egalitarianism and inclusiveness are valued by many unions, these two objectives may not always be compatible. Specifically, maintaining egalitarianism is more challenging for unions when the workforce diversifies. This is because marginalized groups, such as migrant workers, tend to prioritize economic measures that differ from those valued by native-born union members (Alberti and Però 2018; Butschek and Walter 2014; Gschwind 2021; Rueda 2005, 2006). These differences pose challenges for unions in ensuring that their initiatives are equally beneficial to all groups of workers. Additionally, diversity may provoke competition for political representation and resources, which could undermine labor solidarity (Bürgisser and Kurer 2021). The tension between egalitarianism and inclusiveness may be more pronounced in high-road industrial relations systems, because of the concern that diversity may be used to prioritize business interests and weaken social dialogue (Ierodiakonou et al. 2024; Stringfellow 2020).

Moreover, even if trade unions can balance egalitarianism and inclusiveness on their end, employers may not be willing to extend equal treatment to marginalized workers like immigrants (Krings 2009). This is due to employers' perceived uncertainty about the performance of migrant workers, which justifies alternative compensation schemes—like lower wages and pay for performance—as a risk-sharing mechanism (Ko and Weaver 2023; Lazear 2000; Lemieux et al. 2009). Crucially, this uncertainty cannot be easily reduced through repeated interactions, since migrant workers often have higher turnover rates (Jima Bedaso and Jirjahn 2024; Forde and MacKenzie 2009). Moreover, in high-road industrial relations systems, employers may be particularly reluctant to grant same protections to migrant workers since labor costs are elevated. In short, both resistance within trade unions and from employers can contribute to the tension between egalitarianism and inclusiveness—an aspect that has largely been overlooked in the previous literature.

2 European Social Survey Data and Measures

2.1 Data Sources and Sample Construction

Guided by the theoretical framework, I now empirically examine the relationship between trade union membership and immigration attitudes using ten rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS) data. The ESS is a repeated cross-sectional survey of individuals aged 15 and over in Europe. The survey has been conducted biennially from 2002 (ESS-1) to 2020 (ESS-10), following strict random probability sampling methods with a minimum target response rate of 70% (Stoop et al. 2010). Over the past two decades, more than 30 European countries have participated in at least one round of the ESS. To improve cross-national comparisons, the ESS has implemented comprehensive measures to minimize discrepancies in different country questionnaires (ESS 2023). Given its high data quality and broad range of topics, the ESS has been used extensively for studies on individual attitudes, social relations, and political institutions, including research on union members' immigration attitudes (Artiles and Molina 2011; Donnelly 2016; Rosetti 2019).

To provide a comprehensive but tractable analysis, I follow two criteria to construct an analytical sample. First, I limit my analysis to respondents in 15 high-income, longstanding democratic European countries.[1] This criterion excludes countries that are typically origins of immigrants, as well as countries that are surveyed in only a few rounds. My sample thus diverges from that used by Donnelly (2016), which includes a broader array of countries in Eastern and Southern Europe. Second, I focus on native-born, working-age respondents who were employed by others and worked for pay in the last 7 days. This further differs my sample from the ones in Artiles and Molina (2011) and Donnelly (2016), which include respondents who were unemployed or out of the labor force. The final sample includes 73,359 workers after removing incomplete responses and missing data. While this sample is more restrictive, it avoids unfair comparisons between respondents of different employment status, changes in country composition over time, and distinct socio-economic conditions between immigrant-sending and receiving countries.

[1] The included countries are Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Switzerland (CH), Germany (DE), Denmark (DK), Spain (ES), Finland (FI), France (FR), Great Britain (GB), Ireland (IE), Italy (IT), the Netherlands (NL), Norway (NO), Portugal (PT), and Sweden (SE). All countries have participated in more than 8 rounds of the surveys in the pooled ESS 1-10 data, except for Austria (6 rounds) and Italy (5 rounds).

2.2 Key Variables

The key dependent variable in this study is attitudes towards immigration. The ESS defines immigrants as "people who come to live in the country from abroad" (Card et al. 2005, p. 12). To measure immigration attitudes, I follow Pardos-Prado and Xena (2019) and calculate the average value of three items: (1) whether immigration is good or bad for the country's economy, (2) whether the country's cultural life is undermined or enriched by immigrants, and (3) whether immigrants make the country a worse or better place to live. All three items are recoded on an 11-point scale, such that higher scores indicate more positive attitudes towards immigration (0 = negative, 10 = positive). The three items demonstrate high internal consistency in measuring the latent immigration attitudes, which is confirmed by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.84.

Union membership, the key independent variable, is dummy coded (0 = non-member, 1 = union member). I also include a number of control variables that may correlate with both union membership and immigration attitudes. For individual characteristics, I control for gender, age, years of education, income deciles, self-positioning on the left-right scale, citizenship, household size, religiosity, supervisor status at work, marital status, urban residence, industries, and occupations.[2] For country-level variables, I collect three macro indicators from the OECD database: immigrant inflow, unemployment rate, and GDP per capital. These variables are matched to the ESS using the actual survey years. However, for simplicity and ease of replication, I will use ESS rounds as a proxy for time throughout the rest of the anlaysis. Note that ESS rounds can span multiple years. For instance, the ESS-7 data were collected during both 2014 and 2015, straddling the beginning of the migrant crisis. More information on the key variables used in this study can be found in Table 1.

To further understand the data, I plot the raw means of immigration attitudes by round and union membership in Figure 1. The figure shows that both union members and non-members have gained more positive attitudes towards immigration over time, with union members consistently showing higher raw scores than non-members. A closer look at the figure reveals more details. Specifically, the raw union-nonunion immigration attitude gap was relatively large and stable before the 2015 European migrant crisis. Yet this gap narrowed following the beginning of the migrant crisis, primarily driven by a sharp decline in positive attitudes

[2] Industry and occupation variables in the ESS are harmonized using the NARCE 1 broad sections and 4-digit ISCO-08 classification, respectively. The crosswalk for occupations can be found in Humlum (2019).

towards immigration among union members. Surprisingly, non-members who generally had less employment protection held similar immigration attitudes before and after the migrant crisis. In more recent years, both union members and non-members have showed increasingly positive attitudes towards immigration. Nevertheless, the overall change has been relatively small during the 2002-2020 period: for both union members and non-members, positive attitudes towards immigration have grown by only about 11%.

While the raw comparison uncovers important trends in immigration attitudes, it does not account for any individual characteristics and macro environments. Consequently, the raw differences might simply reflect compositional differences between union members and non-members or shifts in socioeconomic conditions over time. Furthermore, the raw comparison overlooks potential gender and country heterogeneity, despite these factors being emphasized in the earlier theoretical discussions. Given these limitations, I will use regression analysis to provide a more rigorous examination of whether and how union members may differ from non-members in their immigration attitudes.

3 Do Union Members Have Different Immigration Attitudes?

3.1 Pooled ESS Results and Gender Differences

What does regression analysis reveal about union members' immigration attitudes relative to non-members? To answer this question, I run OLS regression with the pooled ESS data to estimate the coefficient of union membership on immigration attitudes, controlling for individual characteristics, macro indicators, and time dummies. Two specifications are used for this analysis: one excluding country dummies and the other including them. The former compares union members to non-members across different countries, while the latter makes the comparison within the same country. For each comparison, I further investigate potential gender differences in union members' immigration attitudes by running separate regressions for the full, male, and female samples.

Figure 2 plots the OLS coefficients of union membership on immigration attitudes from the above analysis. The results indicate that there is no straightforward answer to whether union members hold more or less positive attitudes towards immigration than non-members. The conclusion largely depends on how one would frame the question and conduct the comparison. When comparing across the 15 European countries involved in this study (i.e., the left panel),

union members tend to show more positive immigration attitudes than non-members on average. This finding holds not only in the full sample ($b = 0.242$, $p < 0.01$), but also in the male sample ($b = 0.141$, $p < 0.01$) and female sample ($b = 0.356$, $p < 0.01$). How large are these effect sizes? For reference, positive immigration attitudes are estimated to increase by 0.075 and 0.259 points on average in the full sample for respondents (1) who complete one additional year of education and (2) who move from countryside to big cities, respectively. Given these benchmarks, the sizes of the union membership coefficients are relatively substantial.

However, when comparing union members to non-members within the same country (i.e., the right panel), no significant difference in immigration attitudes is found in the full sample ($b = 0.001$, $p > 0.1$). Instead, the data reveal a notable gender difference. Specifically, in the male sample, union members exhibit more negative attitudes towards immigration compared to their non-member counterparts ($b = -0.041$, $p < 0.1$). Conversely, female union members tend to have more positive immigration attitudes than non-members on average ($b = 0.044$, $p < 0.1$). Further tests confirm that the two coefficients are statistically different at the 0.05 level. Although the sizes of the coefficients are much smaller now, they are still comparable to the differences in immigration attitudes estimated for respondents who are ten years apart in their ages ($b_{age} = 0.004$, $p < 0.01$).

While the results in the left and right panels of Figure 2 are contrasting, they are not conflicting with each other. From a descriptive perspective, they simply reflect different types of comparisons between union members and non-members (i.e., between-country vs. within-country comparisons). Nevertheless, given the existence of institutional differences, comparing union members to non-members across countries may not always be reasonable. Accordingly, the within-country comparison may be a more appropriate choice. By including country dummies, OLS regression can combine country-specific differences in immigration attitudes between union members and non-members into one coefficient, ensuring a fair comparison while allowing for heterogeneity.[3] Given these advantages, I will focus only on the within-country comparison in my subsequent analyses. In other words, the remaining discussion in the paper will be based solely on comparisons between union members and non-members in the same country.

[3] See Angrist and Pischke (2009) for technical details on how OLS regression weights covariate-specific effects.

3.2 Time Dynamics

The above analysis has showed a notable gender difference in union members' immigration attitudes but may have masked potential time dynamics. To that end, I estimate an OLS model that includes three-way interactions between union membership, gender, and time dummies (proxied by ESS round). The model also controls for individual characteristics, macro indicators, and country effects. Figure 3 plots the marginal effects of union membership on immigration attitudes by gender and over time. The most striking finding is that compared to non-members, union members become less pro-immigration over time. Specifically, since the migrant crisis, male union members has showed more negative perceptions of immigrants than non-members. Before that, male union members did not differ significantly in immigration attitudes from their non-member counterparts. Similarly, female union members has stopped exhibiting more positive perceptions of immigrants than non-members in recent years. These results remain robust in a two-period subgroup analysis (see Table A1 in the appendix). The time trend, therefore, unveils a concerning finding: while many union leaders have become increasingly supportive of immigration, individual members have not closely followed in their footsteps. Instead, union members have become less tolerate towards immigration than non-members, particularly among male workers.

A less salient but interesting finding in Figure 3 is that union members did not show more anti-immigration attitudes during the financial crisis. If anything, union members demonstrated more positive perceptions of immigrants than non-members at the peak of the turbulence (i.e., circa 2010). Note that these results do not indicate that union members are immune to the negative influence of economic pressure on pro-immigration attitudes (Vogt Isaksen 2019). More likely, the results suggest that such negative influence might be weaker among union members. It might be tempting to attribute this buffering effect to the employment protection provided by unions. However, this reasoning may fail to explain why union members, who typically enjoy job security, have become less tolerant of immigration than non-members since the migrant crisis. Alternatively, a more plausible account is that trade unions resort to their social and class identities in hard times, building solidarity and class conscientiousness across national and ethnic lines (Hyman 2001). Importantly, it is easier for unions to do so in the seemingly impersonal financial crisis than in the ethno-cultural conflict-ridden migrant crisis.

3.3 Country Heterogeneity

So far, the analysis has relied on OLS regression that includes country dummies as control variables. This approach yields a coefficient of union membership that effectively summarizes the overall pattern in the data by combining country-specific differences in immigration attitudes between union members and non-members. Nevertheless, one can further disentangle these country-specific estimates by interacting union membership with country dummies. Such a specification offers a clearer view of how union members' immigration attitudes, compared to non-members, vary across institutional contexts. Considering the time dynamics, I perform this analysis for the periods before and after the migrant crisis separately. Further, Germany is used as the baseline group against which cross-country differences are evaluated.

Figure 4 presents the results by plotting the marginal effects (MEs) of union membership by country. Panel A shows that before the migrant crisis, union members in Germany, represented by the black dot, held more positive perceptions of immigration than non-members ($ME = 0.165$, $p < 0.05$). Additionally, as marked by the grey dots, the marginal effects of union membership in seven countries (ES, IT, CH, GB, NL, FR, IE) are not statistically different from Germany's. In another seven countries represented by the white dots (NO, FI, BE, SE, PT, AT, DK), the marginal effects of union membership are not only significantly smaller but also predominantly negative. Interestingly, the latter set of countries tend to feature strong industrial relations institutions where trade unions have substantial influence.

The picture remains largely similar after the migrant crisis. As panel B of Figure 4 shows, union members in Germany continued to have more positive perceptions of immigration than non-members ($ME = 0.269$, $p < 0.1$). Meanwhile, seven countries still have marginal effects of union membership that are statistically different from that in Germany, while another seven countries do not. Nevertheless, two changes in this period are worth mentioning. First, union members in Austria and Denmark no longer exhibited more negative perceptions of immigration compared to non-members. Instead, in Ireland and Switzerland, union members held more negative attitudes towards immigration than non-members following the crisis. Second, in the seven countries represented by the white dots (CH, BE, FI, IE, NO, SE, PT), the union effects tend to become more negative than before. This shift likely contributes to the overall time trend observed earlier. Finally, in unreported results, I find that the positive marginal effects of union membership in many countries are driven by female members, further confirming the gender difference found in the pooled results.

Taken together, the analyses in this section reveals an intricate pattern of union members' immigration attitudes. The results, however, are mostly descriptive and do not explain the underlying reasons for the observed complexities, such as the gender difference and country heterogeneity. In what follows, I will build on earlier theoretical discussions and present evidence on the mechanisms that may drive some of the findings. Particular attention is paid to the gendered motives for unionization and the trade-off between egalitarianism and inclusiveness as union objectives, since these perspectives have largely remain unexplored in the existing literature.

4 Are Individual Motives for Unionization Gendered?

Why do male union members hold more negative perceptions of immigration than non-members, whereas female members view it more positively? One explanation is that male and female workers join unions for different reasons: men might prioritize the material benefits that unions offer, while women may be more attracted to the progressive values that unions advocate. Directly testing this hypothesis is challenging, as the ESS data do not ask why respondents join unions. However, it is possible to indirectly assess this hypothesis by exploring various outcomes associated with the gendered motives for unionization. For instance, if male and female workers join unions for different reasons, they may react differently to union campaigns that promote solidarity with immigrants, or to changes in socioeconomic conditions such as unemployment rates. In what follows, I formalize this rationale to analyze if male and female workers tend to join unions for different reasons.

4.1 Gendered Responses to Labor Solidarity with Immigrants

How do different motives for joining trade unions influence workers' responses to union campaigns that promote solidarity with immigrants? Arguably, if female workers select into unions based on pre-existing liberal values, they may already hold favorable views towards immigration before unionization. This could limit the scope for unions to further shape female members' immigration attitudes. On the contrary, if male workers join unions due to material concerns, their initial attitudes towards immigration might be less positive or even negative. Yet unions may have a greater opportunity to influence male members' immigration attitudes by correcting explicit biases. Consequently, under the gendered motives for unionization, one

would expect a significant impact of union campaigns on immigration attitudes among male workers but not among female workers.

Motivated by this reasoning, I employ an instrumental variable (IV) approach to investigate whether union campaigns have gendered impacts on members' immigration attitudes. Specifically, I use establishment size—the number of people employed in the workplace—as an instrument for union membership, since union members are mostly likely to be exposed to union campaigns. Nevertheless, to be a valid instrument, establishment size should not only be sufficiently correlated with union membership (i.e., the relevance condition), but also have no direct effect on immigration attitudes (i.e., the exclusion restriction). In the present case, the relevance condition is likely to hold, as a strong and positive correlation between establishment size and union membership is expected. This is because workers in large workplaces can effectively share the risk of collective action (e.g., retaliation from employers), thereby increasing the likelihood of being union members (Ebbinghaus et al. 2011; Farber 2001).

However, the exclusion restriction may fail if establishment size directly affects immigration attitudes. For example, larger establishments may have a more diverse workforce, which can facilitate intergroup contact and promote trust between workers from different countries (Allport 1954; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006).[4] To mitigate these concerns, I implement two remedies. First, I restrict the sample to 64,025 respondents in tiny (< 25 workers) and small (25 – 99 workers) establishments. The underlying assumption is that compared to large establishments (≥ 100 workers), tiny and small establishments are more likely to be similar to each other, reducing the likelihood of violating the exclusion restriction. Second, I conduct several placebo tests and find no evidence for violations of the exclusion restriction (see Table A3 and related discussions in the appendix). With these preliminary analyses supporting the use of establishment size as an instrument, I turn to discuss the findings from the IV analysis.

Do trade unions influence male and female members' immigration attitudes differently? The results presented in Table 2 confirm that they do. Specifically, becoming a union member does not change the immigration attitudes of female workers, as indicated by the small and statistically insignificant IV estimate in column 1 ($b = 0.328$, $p > 0.1$). However, unionization leads to more positive views on immigration among male workers. This is evidenced by the large, positive, and statistically significant IV estimate in column 2 ($b = 1.013$, $p < 0.05$). Moreover,

[4] Other scenarios that could challenge the exclusion restriction are also possible and discussed in Table A2 in the appendix.

the results do not suffer from the weak instrument problem, which could exacerbate the bias caused by violations of the exclusion restriction, as the first-stage F statistics are relatively large in both samples (for females, effective F = 32.373; for males, effective F = 71.211).

One may also be interested in whether the effects of unionization have changed since the migrant crisis, which has dramatically altered the landscape of immigration in Europe. To shed light on this question, I further include and instrument an interaction term between union membership and an indicator for the post-migrant crisis period. The results are presented in columns 3 and 4 of Table 2. The IV estimates of the interaction term are positive but not statistically significant among workers of both genders (for females, $b = 0.409$, $p > 0.1$; for males, $b = 0.473$, $p > 0.1$). Consequently, there is no enough evidence to conclude that the effects of unionization on workers' immigration attitudes differ before and after the migrant crisis. Despite this lack of time dynamics, the overall findings from the IV analysis support the notion that male and female workers may join trade unions for different reasons, leading to distinct impacts of unionization on their immigration attitudes.

4.2 Gendered Responses to Socioeconomic Changes

Different motives for joining unions may also influence how workers respond to changes in socioeconomic conditions. For instance, if male union members prioritize material interests, they might express more negative views toward immigration during periods of high unemployment and increased immigration inflow. Conversely, female union members, who tend to be more liberal, may advocate more strongly for labor solidarity with immigrants under adverse socioeconomic conditions. Exploring these varied responses can thus provide insights into the gendered motives for unionization. Moreover, compared to the IV approach, this analysis offers greater flexibility as it does not rely on strict assumptions about the relationships between variables (e.g., the exclusion restriction).

To perform this analysis, I first create a dummy indicator for socioeconomic conditions, which equals to one if both the unemployment rate and immigration inflow are above the median. I then run an OLS model by regressing immigration attitudes on three-way interaction between union membership, gender, and the indicator for socioeconomic conditions. All covariates are controlled, including time and country dummies. The results indicate that the three-way interaction is positive and statistically significant ($b = 0.186$, $p < 0.01$). To further understand this interaction, Figure 5 plots the marginal effects of union membership

on immigration attitudes under different socioeconomic conditions for workers of both genders. Notably, when both immigration inflow and employment rate are low, female union members hold more positive immigration attitudes than non-members ($ME = 0.078$, $p < 0.01$), whereas male members view it more negatively compared to their non-union counterparts ($ME = -0.066$, $p < 0.01$). When both immigration inflow and employment rate rise, female union members become even more positive towards immigration than non-members ($ME = 0.179$, $p < 0.01$), while male union members hold increasingly negative views of immigration ($ME = -0.153$, $p < 0.01$). The figure thus demonstrates a diverging trend in the changes of immigration attitudes among female and male union members as socioeconomic conditions shift, which is consistent with the predictions of gendered motives for unionization.

In conclusion, the results of both tests in this section lend support to the idea that male and female workers join unions for different reasons: men appear to prioritize the material benefits provided by unions, whereas women may be more attracted to the progressive values that unions champion. Since male workers typically do not hold more positive views towards immigration prior to unionization, there is more scope for unions to shape their immigration attitudes. However, despite this potential causal effect, male members do not exhibit more pro-immigration attitudes than non-members on average, as revealed by the OLS results. This discrepancy may suggest that there is substantial negative selection of male workers into trade unions, or that union campaigns to promote solidarity with immigrants are insufficient. Moreover, under unfavorable socioeconomic conditions, female and male union members show distinct changes in their immigration attitudes. This divergence could further complicate labor solidarity in hard times.

5 Are Egalitarianism and Inclusiveness a Trade-off?

Recall that there is also significant country heterogeneity in union members' immigration attitudes. That is, union members view immigration more positively than non-members in some countries, while more negatively in some other countries. Previous research suggest that these cross-country differences may be attributed to the tensions between unions' incentives and abilities to advocate for immigrants, and between the universalistic and particularlistic organizing approaches adopted by unions. In what follows, I will argue for one additional mechanism that drives the observed differences: the trade-off between egalitarianism and

inclusiveness as union objectives. A first piece of evidence comes from Figure 4 that union members in countries with strong industrial relations institutions tend to have more negative (or less inclusive) immigration attitudes than non-members. This is likely because the emphasis on equality is typically stronger in high-road industrial relations systems, which is not always compatible with the diverse needs of immigrants. In addition, high labor costs possibly increase employers' perceived risk of including migrant workers in trade unions.

The trade-off between egalitarianism and inclusiveness is also evident in two countries: Austria and Denmark. As shown in Figure 4, before the migrant crisis, union members in both countries were most negative about immigration compared to non-members. Yet after the migrant crisis, union members in these two countries did not have more negative views on immigration than non-members. This change may be attributed to the unique industrial relations institutions in Austria and Denmark, which help alleviate the tension between egalitarianism and inclusiveness. For instance, although Austria maintains a highly centralized collective bargaining system, adjustments in working conditions are justified by market-driven supply and demand dynamics, and are achieved through a complex system of sectoral and plant-level negotiations (Iversen 1996). This structure eases unions' burden of egalitarianism and reduces employers' perceived risk of hiring migrant workers.

Similarly, Danish trade unions have shifted away from the principle of wage solidarity—equal wages across occupations—by focusing on skill development and access to employment opportunities (Ibsen and Thelen 2017). Several social policy reforms have also provided employers with greater flexibility in treating migrant workers, such as offering the minimum wage rate and prohibiting collective action aimed at further improvements (Arnholtz and Andersen 2018). These changes relieve unions from the obligation to extend benefits and protections in an egalitarian manner, while simultaneously alleviating employers' concerns over the uncertainty of hiring migrant workers. The inclusion of immigrants in trade unions and workplaces are thus more possible, albeit often at the cost of different treatment.

While the Austrian and Danish cases provide some support for the trade-off between egalitarianism and inclusiveness, it remains unclear whether this pattern still holds when a broader range of countries is considered. Additionally, the case study does not rule out other institutional differences as alternative explanations. To strengthen the evidence, I employ OLS regression to test the trade-off using the 15 countries in the sample. Specifically, I first calculate the standard deviation of income (deciles) for each country-round to generate a measure of

income variability, which serves as a proxy for egalitarianism (i.e., higher income variability indicates less egalitarianism). I then regress immigration attitudes on the interaction between union membership and income variability. This analysis helps investigate whether union members' immigration attitudes are different under conditions of low and high egalitarianism. The model also controls for time-invariant institutional differences by including country dummies as covariates. Interestingly, the results indicate that union members tend to view immigration more favorably as income variability increases, although the effect is not statistically significant as the coefficient of the two-way interaction suggests ($b = 0.203$, $p > 0.1$).

One explanation for this insignificant finding is that the trade-off between egalitarianism and inclusiveness is much tenuous in weak industrial relations systems, where diversity is less concerning for unions and labor costs are lower for employers. To account for this contextual influence, I further calculate the average income level for each country-round as a proxy for high/low-road industrial relations. I then regress immigration attitudes on the three-way interaction between union membership, income variability, and income level. If the proposed contextual influence holds, one would expect to observe the trade-off between egalitarianism and inclusiveness in strong industrial relations systems but not in weak ones. For this analysis, I find a positive and statistically significant coefficient for the three-way interaction between union membership, income variability, and income level ($b = 1.147$, $p < 0.01$).

To better understand this three-way interaction, Figure 6 plots the marginal effects of union membership at different levels of income variability and average income (i.e., a standard deviation below and above the mean). The figure suggests that in strong industrial relations systems characterized by high income, union members have more negative attitudes towards immigration than non-members when egalitarianism is emphasized (i.e., low income variability). Conversely, union members tend to show more positive attitudes towards immigration compared to non-members when egalitarianism is not emphasized (i.e., high income variability). However, no similar pattern is observed in weak industrial relations systems characterized by low income, where union members' attitudes towards immigration are similar to those of non-members, regardless of the emphasis on egalitarianism. These results are thus consistent with the tension between egalitarianism and inclusiveness as union objectives in high-road industrial relations systems.

Overall, both the qualitative analysis, which relies on cross-country institutional differences, and the quantitative analysis, which examines within-country changes in contextual character-

istics, suggest the existence of a trade-off between egalitarianism and inclusiveness. To some extent, this finding is consistent with prior research indicating that unions representing a larger share of workers in industries are more likely to negotiate two-tier provisions in their collective bargaining agreements (Laroche et al. 2019). However, contrary to the conventional wisdom that two-tier provisions lead to tensions between different groups of workers, the trade-off between egalitarianism and inclusiveness presents a more challenging and ironic situation for trade unions: positive immigration attitudes, which are crucial for fostering solidarity with immigrants, are more likely to be achieved among native-born union members through a non-solidaristic approach—such as via differential treatment of migrant workers.

6 Consequences for Organized Labor

The previous sections have outlined the complex dynamics of union members' immigration attitudes in Europe. The finding that certain groups of union members tend to have more negative immigration attitudes than non-members provide valuable insights for building a more inclusive labor movement. In what follows, I will argue that immigration has even broader implications for social equality that extend beyond the internal solidarity of organized labor, as it affects native-born union members' support for redistributive policies. To begin with, the existing literature suggests that union membership is positively linked to support for redistribution through two key mechanisms: an 'enlightenment effect,' whereby union members have better knowledge about their positions in the income distribution, and a 'solidarity effect,' whereby trade unions institutionalize distributive norms and foster trust between workers with diverse backgrounds (Mosimann and Pontusson 2017, 2022).

Given this rationale, I hypothesize that negative attitudes towards immigration will reduce union members' preferences for redistribution by weakening both the enlightenment and solidarity effects. Specifically, negative immigration attitudes are closely tied to the misconception that immigrants are predominantly low-income and often exploit social welfare (Alesina et al. 2023). This belief can erode the enlightenment effect, as better economic conditions may lead native-born union members to perceive themselves as the taxpayers for redistributive policies, while viewing immigrants as the primary beneficiaries. Additionally, negative immigration attitudes often reinforce ingroup-outgroup biases to justify intergroup inequality (Jaśko and Kossowska 2013). This can undermine the solidarity effect among native-born union members,

resulting in the perception that immigrants as less trustworthy and less deserving.

Moreover, I suspect that the influence of negative immigration attitudes on support for redistribution is particularly pronounced among female union members. This is because radical right populist politicians have strategically deploys "women's rights" to cultivate resentment against non-Western and Muslim immigrants (Farris 2017; Morgan 2017). To co-opt female voters, right-wing populist leaders have accused immigrants of violating commonly accepted liberal values such as gender equality. Since female union members tend to endorse these values, they may respond more strongly than male members when anti-immigration rhetoric is framed through liberal arguments about women's rights.

This hypothesis can be empirically tested using the data at hand. Specifically, the ESS provides a measure of support for redistribution by asking respondents to indicate their agreement with the statement that "the government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels" on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). With this key measure, I run an OLS model by regressing support for redistribution on the three-way interaction between union membership, negative immigration attitudes (i.e., reverse-coded immigration attitudes), and gender. For completeness, I also estimate models without any interaction term and with the two-way interaction between union membership and anti-immigration attitudes. All control variables are included in the models.

Table 6 presents the results of this analysis. Column 1 indicates that union members show more support for redistributive policies than non-members on average ($b = 0.093$, $p < 0.01$), which is consistent with the enlightenment and solidarity effects. Crucially, in column 2, the coefficient of the two-way interaction between union membership and anti-immigration attitudes is negative and statistically significant ($b = -0.023$, $p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that support for redistribution decreases, on average, when union members become more negative towards immigration. Column 3 further demonstrates a gender difference, as the coefficient of the three-way interaction between union membership, negative immigration attitudes, and gender is negative and statistically significant ($b = -0.015$, $p < 0.05$).

To better characterize this three-way interaction, Figure 7 plots the marginal effects of union membership at different levels of negative immigration attitudes for male and female workers, respectively. The figure indicates that union members become less supportive for redistribution when negative immigration attitudes increase, and this decline is more pronounced among female union members than among male members. Collectively, these results are consistent

with the hypothesis that negative attitudes towards immigration have a gendered impact on union members' support for redistribution.

7 Discussion and Conclusion

Organized labor has historically wrestled with the challenges posed by immigration. While trade unions leaders have increasingly embraced international solidarity, it remains unclear whether native-born union members have adopted a similar mindset and shown more inclusive immigration attitudes than non-members. The present paper makes a unique contribution to this question by proposing a more integrated framework to analyze how union members' immigration attitudes may differ from those of non-members. At the micro level, I argue that union members' attitudes towards immigration are shaped by three key factors: the influence of union leadership, labor market competition, and individual motives for joining unions. In particular, taking into account why workers become union members introduce a gendered perspective that has been overlooked: male workers' decisions to join unions are likely driven by material concerns, while female workers' decisions are often motivated by liberal values. Because of these different motives, it is hypothesized that male union members tend to show more negative perceptions of immigration compared to non-members, while female union members tend to have more positive views.

At the macro level, union members' immigration attitudes also depend on the institutional contexts and strategic choices faced by trade unions. However, instead of providing clear predictions, the literature suggests considerable uncertainty in how macro-level factors influence union members' views on immigration. Three pairs of tensions are highlighted: the trade-offs between unions' incentives and abilities to advocate for immigrants, between universalism and particularism as organizing strategies, and between egalitarianism and inclusiveness as union objectives. Among these trade-offs, the last pair has received less attention, despite its intuitive nature: representing a diverse workforce complicates unions' efforts to ensure that their initiatives benefit all groups equally, while increasing employers' perceived risk of extending equal treatment to different groups of workers. This tension between egalitarianism and inclusiveness may be more pronounced in strong industrial relations systems, in which equality is prioritized and labor costs are elevated.

Guided by this theoretical framework, I empirically investigate the relationship between

union membership and immigration attitudes using data from ten rounds of the European Social Survey. Analyzing a sample of over 70,000 workers from 15 countries, I present three key observations. First, there is a notable gender difference in how union members' immigration attitudes differ from those of non-members. On average, male union members hold more negative perceptions of immigration compared to non-members within the same country, whereas female union members tend to have more positive views than their non-member counterparts. Second, the European migrant crisis marks a turning point in union members' immigration attitudes. It is only after the crisis that male union members began to hold more negative perceptions of immigration than non-members, while female union members stopped showing more positive views. Third, despite the overall pattern, the relationship between union membership and immigration attitudes varies across countries. Importantly, union members in countries with strong industrial relations institutions, such as Belgium and Sweden, tend to have more negative immigration attitudes than non-members.

I further demonstrate that the proposed theoretical framework at least partly accounts for the empirical observations. In terms of the gender difference, I show that unionization leads to more positive immigration attitudes among male workers, but not among female workers. This is likely because unions find it easier to address explicit biases against immigrants among male members, while more challenging to further shift the attitudes held by female members. In addition, I show that male union members hold even more negative immigration attitudes than non-members during hard times (i.e., high unemployment and high immigration inflow), whereas female members tend to express increasingly positive views. These results are consistent with the notion that male and female workers join trade unions for different reasons, hence showing distinct responses to immigration. In terms of the country heterogeneity, I present evidence supporting the trade-off between egalitarianism and inclusiveness, utilizing both cross-country institutional differences and within-country changes in contextual characteristics. The evidence indicates that union members hold more positive attitudes toward immigration than non-members when egalitarianism is less emphasized. However, this effect is mainly observed in strong industrial relations systems (e.g., relatively high income), in which diversity is more concerning and labor costs are higher.

Finally, I argue that immigration has broader implications for social equality, which extend beyond the internal solidarity of organized labor. To support this view, I present empirical evidence showing that negative attitudes toward immigration diminish union members' support

for redistribution. This is because misconceptions of immigration reduce union members' perceived benefits of redistributive policies, while eroding trust in other groups of workers. Additionally, the negative effect is more pronounced among female members, likely because the populist radical right has weaponized liberal values, particularly women's rights, in their anti-immigration rhetoric. Overall, this analysis suggests a complex interplay between labor, gender, and politics in Europe.

The present study also paves the way for future inquiry. For example, regarding the time dynamics, one empirical observation is that union members exhibited less positive attitudes toward immigration during the migrant crisis but not the financial crisis. A possible explanation is that trade unions resort to their social and class identities in hard times, building solidarity across national and ethnic lines (i.e., a universalistic organizing approach). Importantly, unions may find it easier to do so in the seemingly impersonal financial crisis than in the ethno-culturally charged environment of the migrant crisis. This suggests that the effectiveness of the universalistic and particularistic organizing strategies may be context-dependent. More research in this direction could provide valuable insights for unions to address the challenges with immigration. Another empirical observation is the existence of country heterogeneity in the relationship between union membership and immigration. The analysis in this study highlights the trade-off between egalitarianism and inclusiveness as one of the underlying drivers. However, other influencing factors may still remain unexplored. This opens up the space for qualitative fieldwork to uncover new mechanisms by examining country-specific patterns or conducting cross-country comparisons.

While there is more to be done, this study carries important implications for trade union leaders. Most notably, immigration remains to be a contentious issue for organized labor. Union leaders may want to avoid the assumption that individual members will always align with the pro-immigration positions often adopted by unions. Instead, more attention should be paid to the overlooked sources of bias against immigrants among union members, at both the micro and macro levels. Particularly noteworthy are the findings that male and female members may approach immigration with different considerations, and that egalitarianism and inclusiveness may conflict as union objectives. Beyond the issue of internal solidarity, union leaders can further consider how immigration intersects with their broader agenda for social equality, especially as the populist right has increasingly weaponized liberal values to co-opt union members in its anti-immigration rhetoric.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1. Means of Variables, ESS 1-10

	Full Sample (1)	Union Members (2)	Non-Members (3)
Immigration attitudes (0 = Negative, 10 = Positive)	5.67	5.89	5.51
Union member	0.43		
Female	0.48	0.48	0.47
Age	42.56	44.35	41.22
Years of education	14.11	14.41	13.90
Income decile	7.05	7.33	6.84
Left-right scale (0 = Left, 10 = Right)	4.98	4.93	5.02
Citizen	0.99	1.00	0.99
Household size	2.90	2.84	2.94
Religiosity (0 = Not at all, 10 = Very)	3.99	4.05	3.95
Supervisor	0.37	0.36	0.38
Marital Status			
Never married	0.32	0.29	0.34
Married	0.57	0.59	0.55
Separated, divorced, widowed	0.11	0.13	0.11
Residence			
Big city	0.15	0.14	0.15
Suburban	0.15	0.17	0.14
Town or small city	0.31	0.32	0.31
Country village	0.31	0.26	0.34
Farm or countryside	0.08	0.11	0.06
Macro Indicators			
Immigrant inflow (% population)	0.70	0.71	0.70
Unemployment rate	7.09	6.76	7.34
GDP per capital (in 1,000 USD)	45.02	45.18	44.89
Establishment Size			
Tiny ($\leq$ 25 workers)	0.39	0.33	0.45
Small (25-99 workers)	0.26	0.29	0.24
Large ($\geq$ 100 workers)	0.34	0.38	0.31
Support for redistribution (1-5)	3.69	3.70	3.67
Perceived Impact on Crime (0 = Worse, 10 = Better)	3.42	3.43	3.41
Observations	73359	31358	42001

Notes: The sample includes native-born, working-age respondents who were employed by others and resided in 15 Western European countries: Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, the UK, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and Sweden. Individual-level variables are available in all rounds of the ESS, except for the perceived impact of immigration on crime (Rounds 1 and 7 only). In addition, industry and occupation variables in the ESS are harmonized using the NARCE 1 broad sections and the 4-digit ISCO-08 classification, respectively. Macro indicators are obtained from the OECD Statistics. Results are weighted using the ESS design weights to adjust for the unequal probabilities of sampling across countries.

Table 2. IV Results of Immigration Attitudes on Union Membership
(Small and Tiny Establishments)

	Pooled ESS 1-10		Time Dynamics	
	Female Sample	Male Sample	Female Sample	Male Sample
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Union member	0.328	1.013**	0.143	0.876*
	(0.769)	(0.493)	(0.732)	(0.493)
Union member × Post-migrant crisis			0.409	0.473
			(0.389)	(0.684)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Round Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Industry Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Occupation Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	24166	23810	24166	23810
Effective F-Statistic	32.373	71.211	16.347	27.797

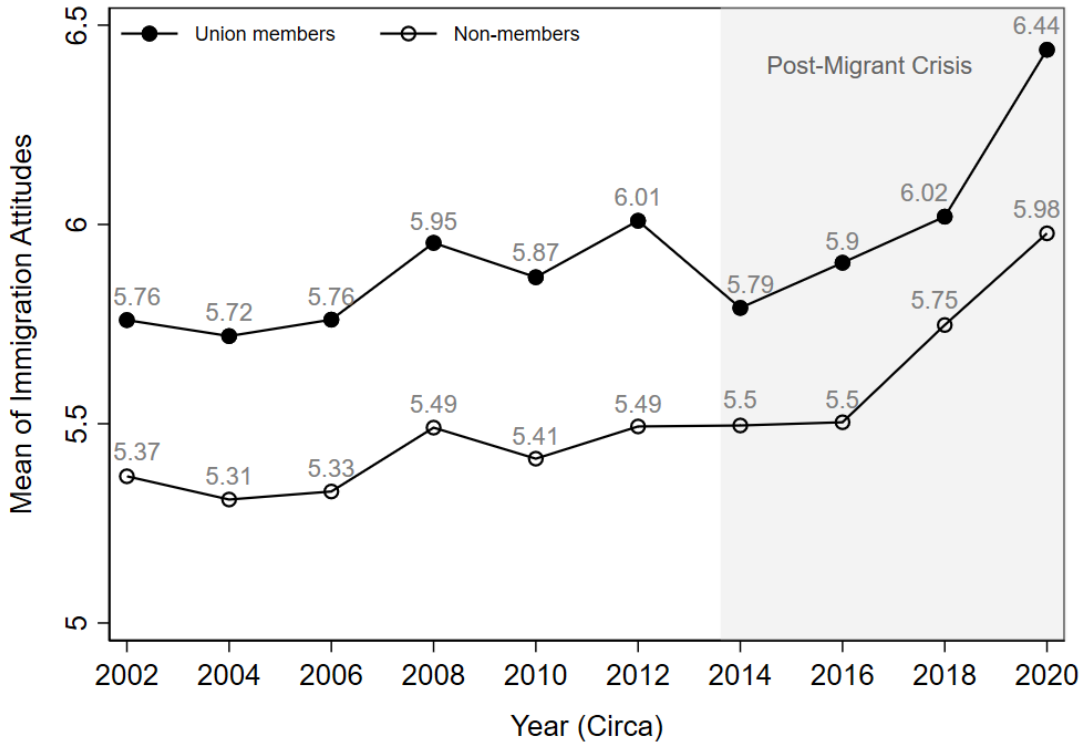
Notes: The table shows the IV results when using establishment size (0 = tiny establishment with fewer than 25 workers, 1 = small establishment with 25-99 workers) as an instrument to identify the causal effect of union membership on immigration attitudes. The sample includes native-born, working-age respondents who were employed by others at small and tiny establishments in 15 Western European countries. Columns 1 and 2 present the IV results for female and male workers, respectively, in the pooled ESS-10 sample. Columns 3 and 4 investigate time dynamics by further including an (instrumented) interaction term between union membership and the post-migrant crisis period (0 = no, 1 = yes). Standard errors are clustered at the occupation level and reported in parentheses. *, **, *** indicate significance levels at 0.1, 0.05, and 0.01, respectively. Results are weighted using the ESS design weights.

Table 3. OLS Results of Support for Redistribution

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Union member (a)	0.098***	0.224***	0.183***
	(0.010)	(0.020)	(0.029)
Anti-immigration attitudes (b)	−0.005**	0.007**	−0.004
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Female (c)	0.102***	0.100***	0.001
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.028)
a × b		−0.029***	−0.020***
		(0.004)	(0.006)
a × c			0.090**
			(0.038)
b × c			0.023***
			(0.006)
a × b × c			−0.020**
			(0.008)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Round Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Industry Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Occupation Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	73359	73359	73359
R-squared	0.200	0.201	0.201

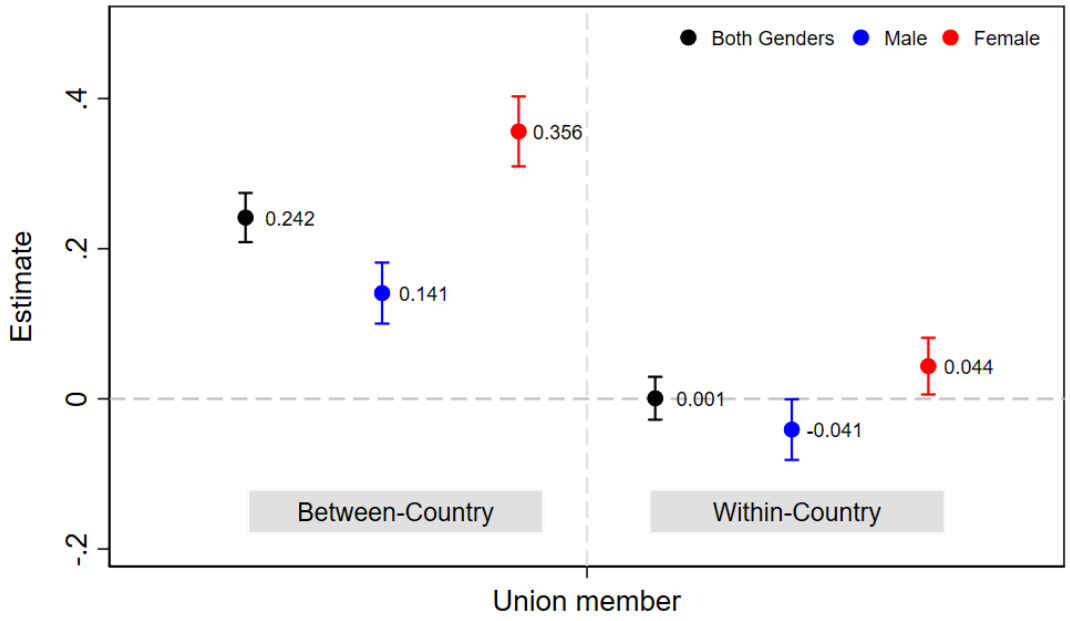
Notes: The table presents the OLS results of support for redistribution on three-way interaction between union membership, anti-immigration attitudes, and gender. The sample includes respondents from 15 European countries in the ESS 1-10, who were native-born, between 15-64 years old, employed by others, and worked for pay in the last 7 days. Standard errors are clustered at the occupation level and reported in parentheses. *, **, *** indicate significance levels at 0.1, 0.05, and 0.01, respectively. Results are weighted using the ESS design weights.

Figure 1. Raw Trend in Immigration Attitude by Union Membership



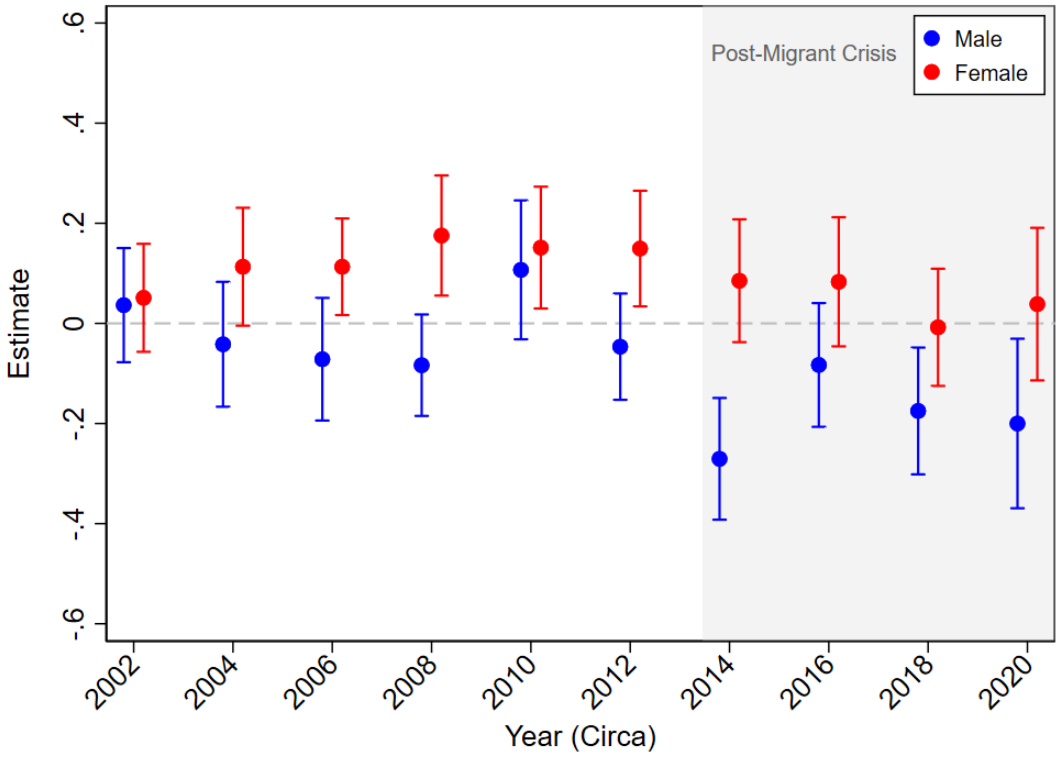
Notes: The figure plots the raw means of immigration attitudes by ESS round and union membership. The black markers indicate the evolution of immigration attitudes among union members, while the white markers indicate that among non-members. Time is proxied by ESS round, which can span multiple survey years. The shaded area indicates the post-migrant crisis period, starting with the ESS-7 data which were collected during 2014 and 2015. Results are weighted using the ESS design weights.

Figure 2. OLS Coefficients of Union Membership on Immigration Attitudes



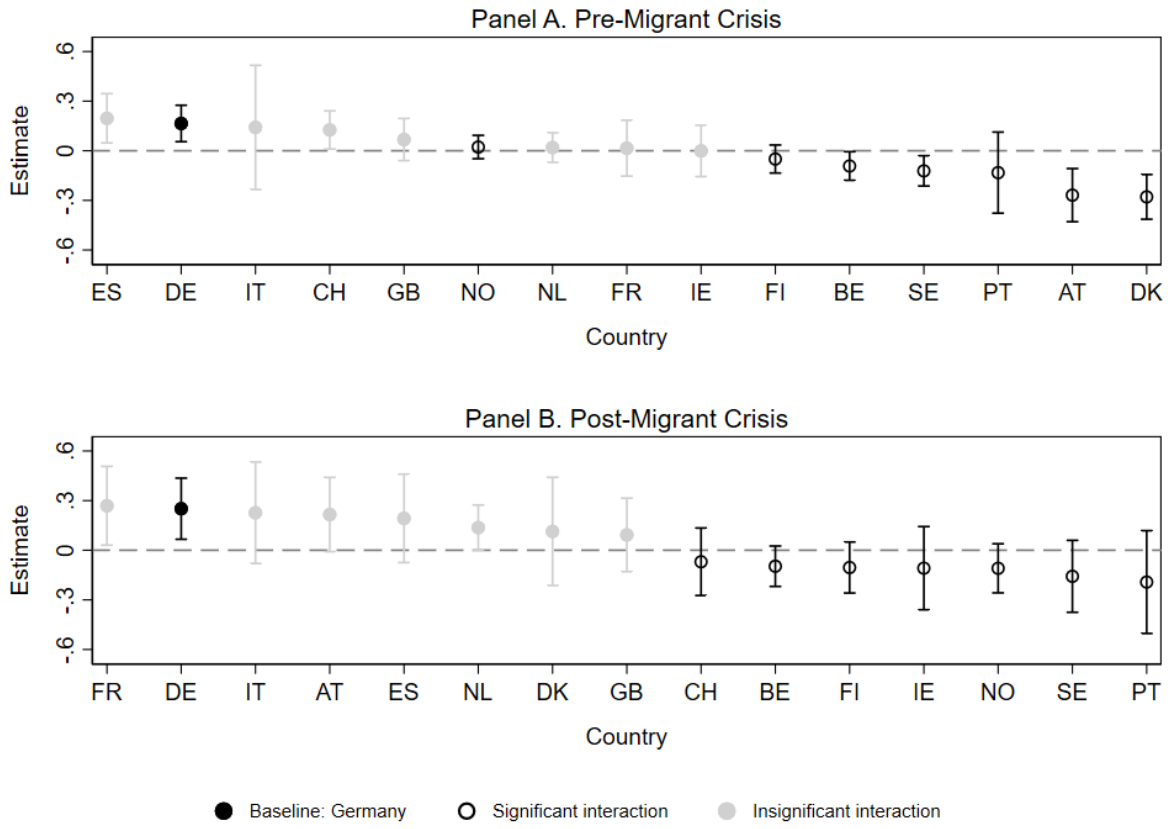
Notes: The figure presents the OLS coefficients of union membership on immigration attitudes. The left panel shows the results that control for individual characteristics, macro indicators, but not country effects (i.e., between-country comparison). The right panel shows the results that further control for country effects (i.e., within-country comparison). The black, blue, and red dots represent the coefficients of union membership in the full sample (N = 73359), male sample (N = 38218), and female sample (N = 35142), respectively. The bars indicate the 90% confidence intervals. Standard errors clustered at the occupation level. Results are weighted using the ESS design weights.

Figure 3. Marginal Effects of Union Membership on Immigration Attitudes over Time



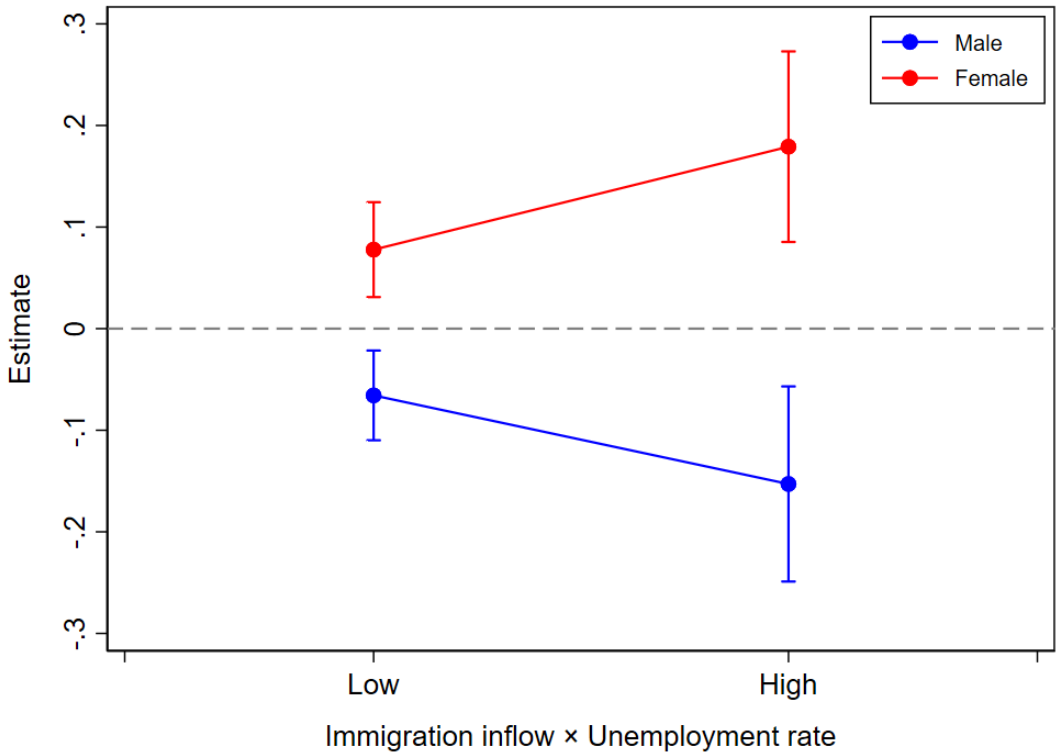
Notes: The figure presents the marginal effects of union membership on immigration attitudes over time and by gender. The OLS regression includes three-way interaction between union membership, gender, and ESS round dummies, controlling for all covariates and country effects. The blue and red dots represent the marginal effects of union membership for male and female workers, respectively, in different ESS rounds. The bars indicate the 90% confidence intervals. Standard errors clustered at the occupation level. The shaded area indicates the post-migrant crisis period. Results are weighted using the ESS design weights.

Figure 4. Marginal Effects of Union Membership on Immigration Attitudes by Country



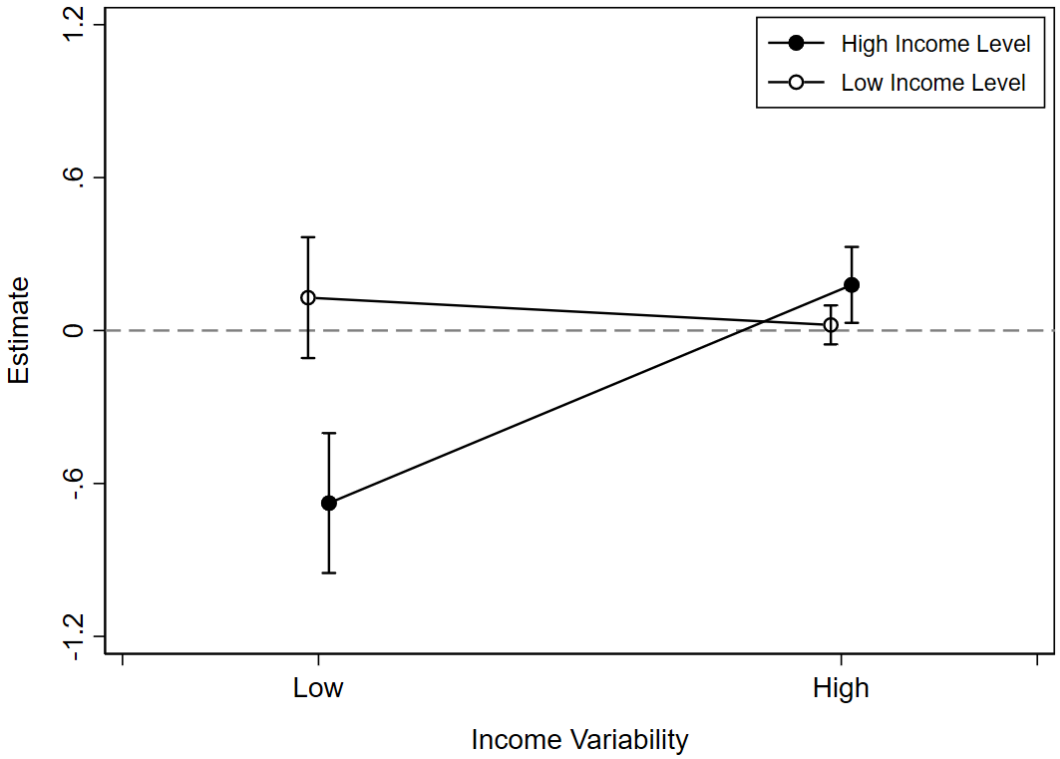
Notes: The figure presents the marginal effects of union membership on immigration attitudes by country. The OLS regression includes two-way interaction between union membership and country dummies, controlling for all covariates and round effects. The baseline country is Germany. Panel A shows the results for the pre-migrant crisis period (i.e., ESS 1-6), and panel B shows the results for the post-migrant crisis period (i.e., ESS 7-10). The black dot highlights the marginal effects of union membership in Germany. The white dots denote marginal effects calculated from significant interaction between union membership and country dummies (i.e., $p < 0.1$), while the grey dots denote insignificant one. The bars indicate the 90% confidence intervals. Standard errors clustered at the occupation level. Results are weighted using the ESS design weights.

Figure 5. Marginal Effects of Union Membership on Immigration Attitudes by Immigration Inflow and Unemployment Rate



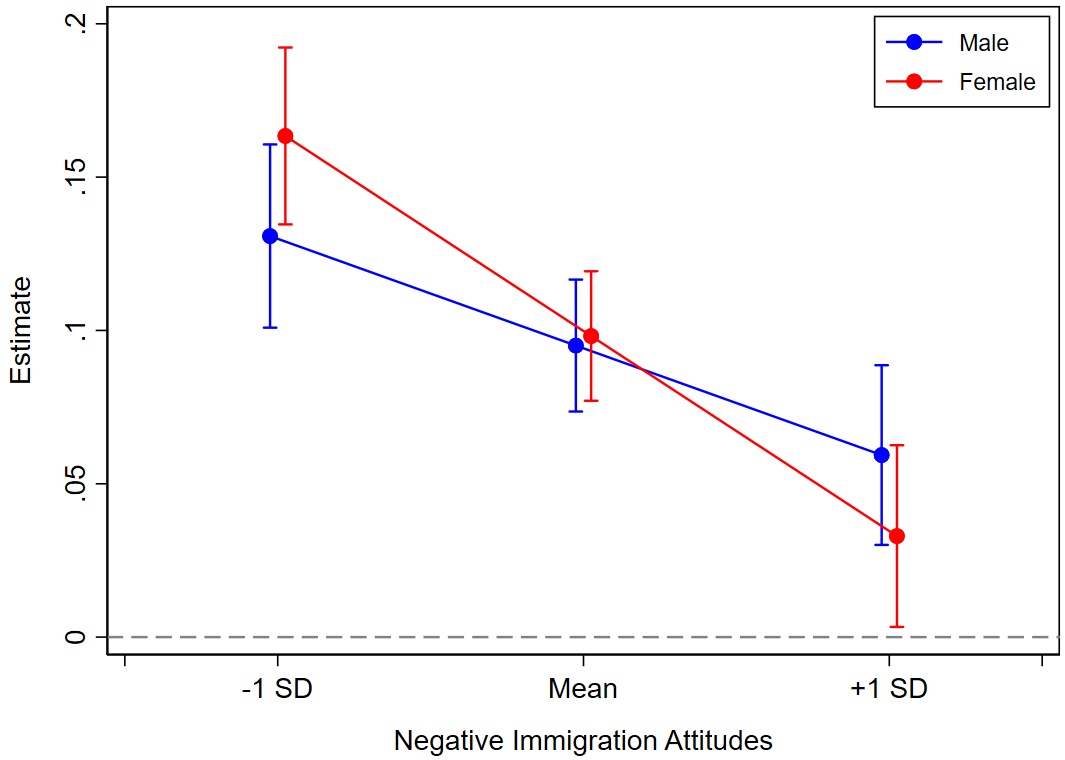
Notes: The figure shows the marginal effects of union membership on immigration attitudes by immigration inflow and unemployment rate. The OLS regression includes three-way interaction between union membership, gender, and an indicator for the level of immigration inflow and unemployment rate (0 = low, 1 = high), controlling for all covariates, round effects, and country effects. The blue and red dots represent the marginal effects of union membership for male and female workers, respectively, at different levels of immigration inflow and employment rate. The bars indicate the 95% confidence intervals. Standard errors clustered at the occupation level. Results are weighted using the ESS design weights.

Figure 6. Marginal Effects of Union Membership on Immigration Attitudes by Income Variability and Income Level



Notes: The figure shows the marginal effects of union membership on immigration attitudes by income level and variability calculated for each country-round cell. The OLS regression includes three-way interaction between union membership, income level, and income variability, controlling for all covariates, round effects, and country effects. The white and black dots represent the marginal effects of union membership at different levels of income variability for low and high income levels (i.e., a standard deviation below and above the mean), respectively. The bars indicate the 95% confidence intervals. Standard errors clustered at the occupation level. Results are weighted using the ESS design weights.

Figure 7. Marginal Effects of Union Membership on Support for Redistribution



Notes: The figure shows the marginal effects of union membership on support for redistribution. The OLS regression includes the three-way interaction between union membership, gender, and negative immigration attitudes, controlling for all covariates, round effects, and country effects. The blue and red dots represent the marginal effects of union membership for male and female workers, respectively, at different levels of anti-immigration attitudes. The bars indicate the 95% confidence intervals. Standard errors clustered at the occupation level. Results are weighted using the ESS design weights.

Appendix

Placebo Tests for the Instrument Variable

To further probe into the validity of the instrument, I perform two sets of placebo tests. In the first test, I estimate the OLS coefficient of establishment size on immigration attitudes among self-employed workers such as contractors. The rationale is that self-employed workers, given their high autonomy and unique task structure, are not likely to join unions merely because of the reduced cost of collective action. In other words, establishment size should not meaningfully predict union membership among self-employed workers. Consequently, for these workers, a significant OLS coefficient of establishment size is indicative of violations of the exclusion restriction (i.e., influence of establishment size on immigration attitudes through non-union channels), whereas an insignificant coefficient can be interpreted as suggestive evidence for the IV validity (Bound and Jaeger 2000; Lal et al. 2024).

For this test, I use two different groups of self-employed workers in small and tiny establishments: one from the 15 European countries in the sample (female $N = 2978$, male $N = 6801$), and the other from several other European countries where the law prohibits self-employed workers from unionization (female $N = 302$, male $N = 725$).[5] The results are presented in columns 1-4 of Table A3 in the appendix, which indicate that for both groups of countries and regardless of gender, the coefficients of establishment size on immigration attitudes are not statistically significant among self-employed workers. Further analysis demonstrates that establishment size is not a significant predictor for union membership among these workers. Accordingly, there is no sufficient evidence for the influence of establishment size on immigration attitudes through non-union channels, alleviating the concern of potential violations of the exclusion restriction.

In the second test, I use the same instrument to estimate the effect of unionization on the perceived impact of immigrants on crime (11-point scale, with 0 = crime problems made worse and 10 = crime problems made better). The rationale for this placebo test is twofold. First, trade unions are likely to have limited influence on their members' perceptions of crime, an issue typically beyond the scope of workplace representation. Second, violations of the exclusion restriction would lead to a specious effect of unionization on the perceived impact on crime. For instance, if large establishment tends to hire workers with greater cognitive ability, these workers should be less affected by false information that execrates immigrants' negative impact on crime (De keersmaecker and Roets 2017; Fitzgerald et al. 2012; Ousey and Kubrin 2018). As such, if the exclusion restriction does not hold, one may expect a significant IV estimate of union membership on the perceived impact of immigrants on crime.

To perform such a test, I use the first and seventh rounds of the ESS data collected circa 2002 and 2014, which provide information on the perceived impact of immigrants on crime. Since only two rounds of data are available, one may be concerned about the statistical power of the IV analysis (female $N = 5164$, males $N = 5235$). To address this issue, I first show that even with only two rounds of the data, there is enough statistical power to detect the gendered influence of unionization on immigration attitudes. I then proceed to estimate the effect of unionization on the perceived impact of immigrants on crime. The results are reported in columns 5-6 of Table A3 in the appendix. The findings indicate that for both female and male workers, the IV estimates of unionization on the perceived impact of immigrants on crime are not statistically significant. The placebo test thus provides additional evidence in favor of the validity of the instrument.

[5] These other countries are Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey (ETUC 2018). I restrict the sample to industries and occupations in which there are at least five self-employed workers.

Table A1. OLS Coefficient of Union Membership × Post-Migrant Crisis

	Full Sample (1)	Female Sample (2)	Male Sample (3)
Union member	0.049**	0.078***	0.023
	(0.020)	(0.026)	(0.028)
Post-migrant crisis	−0.008	−0.015	0.009
	(0.030)	(0.046)	(0.034)
Union member × Post-migrant crisis	−0.126***	−0.090*	−0.173***
	(0.033)	(0.047)	(0.040)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Industry Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Occupation Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	73359	35142	38217
R-squared	0.241	0.259	0.244

Notes: The table shows the OLS coefficient of union membership interacted with a dummy variable that indicates the post-migrant crisis period (0 = no, 1 = yes). The sample includes native-born, working-age respondents who were employed by others in 15 Western European countries. Standard errors are clustered at the occupation level and reported in parentheses. *, **, *** indicate significance levels at 0.1, 0.05, and 0.01, respectively. Results are weighted using the ESS design weights.

Table A2. Potential Violations of the IV Exclusion Restriction

Theory	Prediction	Scenario
Intergroup contact	Interaction between dominant and minority groups will break down stereotypes and encourage understanding towards each other (Allport 1954; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006).	Large establishments have a more diverse workforce and therefore facilitate intergroup contact between workers of different races, ethnicities, and country origins.
Labor market sorting	Individuals possess different skills, preferences, and characteristics. Hiring organizations offer various job characteristics and working conditions (Jovanovic 1979).	Large establishments select workers with higher ability (Brown and Medoff 1989; Lochner and Schulz 2024). Meanwhile, these workers are less influenced by false anti-immigration information and sentiments (De keersmaecker and Roets 2017).
Vulnerability theory	Individuals who are economically and socially vulnerable tend to express negative attitudes towards immigrants (Ceobanu 2011).	Large establishments provide better total compensation due to higher abilities to pay (Oi and Idson 1999). This insures workers against potential risks.
Social enforcement	Organizations visible to the public incline to respond to societal pressure concerning diversity and inclusion (Edelman 1992).	Large establishments face more social and regulatory pressure to provide training and implement protocols to promote diversity and inclusion.

Notes: The table presents several examples of potential violations of the exclusion restriction, when using establishment size as an instrument to identify the causal effect of trade unions on their members' immigration attitudes. The analysis indicates that additional tests are needed to ensure the credibility of the IV approach.

Table A3. Placebo Tests for the IV Approach (Small and Tiny Establishments)

	OLS: Immigration Attitudes				IV: Perceived Impact on Crime	
	Self-Employed Workers (Western Europe)		Self-Employed Workers (Other Countries, Legal Restriction)		Employees (Western Europe)	
	Female Sample	Male Sample	Female Sample	Male Sample	Female Sample	Male Sample
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Establishment size	0.078	0.145	1.679	−0.359		
	(0.206)	(0.117)	(1.179)	(0.411)		
Union member					0.366	−0.942
					(1.182)	(1.117)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Round Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Industry Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Occupation Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2978	6801	302	725	5164	5235
R-squared	0.350	0.247	0.401	0.290		
Effective F-Statistic					13.059	16.527

Notes: The table presents several placebo tests for the IV approach that uses establishment size as an instrument for union membership. The sample includes workers who are self-employed or employed by others in small and tiny establishments (i.e., fewer than 100 workers). Columns 1-4 perform the first placebo test by showing the OLS estimates of establishment size on immigration attitudes (i.e., the reduced form regression) among self-employed workers in the ESS 1-10. Columns 5-6 perform the second placebo test by showing the IV estimates of union membership on perceived impact of immigration on crime among employees from 15 Western European countries in the ESS-1 and ESS-7. Standard errors are clustered at the occupation level and reported in parentheses. *, **, *** indicate significance levels at 0.1, 0.05, and 0.01, respectively. Results are weighted using the ESS design weights.