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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Immigrants and trade union membership: Does integration into society and workplace play a moderating role?

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Abstract

We hypothesize that incomplete integration into the workplace and society implies that immigrants are less likely to be union members than natives. Incomplete integration makes the usual mechanism for overcoming the collective action problem less effective. Our empirical analysis with data from the Socio-Economic Panel confirms a unionization gap for first-generation immigrants in Germany. Importantly, using the presence of a works council as an indicator of workplace integration and contacts with Germans as an indicator of integration into society, the analysis shows that the immigrant-native gap in union membership is heterogeneous. The gap is smaller for immigrants working in firms with a works council and having social contacts with Germans. Our analysis also confirms that the gap is decreasing in the years since arrival in Germany.

1 | INTRODUCTION

The past decades have witnessed a remarkable increase in the number of migrants making migration an important dimension of globalization. The number of international migrants worldwide was almost 272 million in the year 2019, more than three times the number in the year 1970 (IOM, 2019). While this figure remains a relatively small percentage of the world population (at 3.5 per cent), it is rather the absolute numbers that matter from the viewpoint of the receiving countries. Nearly, two-thirds of the migrants resided in high-income countries. The increase in international migration leads to the question of how immigrants influence the industrial relations systems of the destination countries. This question is particularly relevant given that union density has fallen in many countries (Visser, 2019a).

Only a few studies have examined whether there is a link between migration and unionization. Using panel data for the years 1962–1997, Lee (2005) finds that OECD countries with a higher inflow of immigrants experienced a higher decline in union density. While immigration may also affect the unionization of natives (Antón et al., 2022), an obvious reason for this finding is a lower unionization among immigrants. Gorodzeisky and Richards (2013) and Kranendonk and de Beer (2016) use employee data from European countries to show that immigrants indeed have a lower likelihood of union membership than natives. However, Cools et al. (2021) find for Norway that the unionization gap to a large (albeit not complete) extent can be explained by the labour market sorting and individual characteristics of immigrants. A German study by Behrens et al. (2017) does not provide evidence of a significant unionization gap. These mixed results clearly call for further research.

Our study brings a new twist to the topic by hypothesizing that incomplete integration of migrants into society and workplace plays a role in the unionization gap. We derive this hypothesis from the collective action problem that unions face in many countries. Individuals have little incentive to join a union and pay membership dues since the results of collective negotiations are often available to both union members and non-members. The literature suggests that two mechanisms help mitigate the collective action problem. First, unions provide selective services such as legal advice and legal representation only to their members. Second, workers comply with a social custom of union membership; that is influences such as peer pressure, solidarity and social recognition can lead workers to join a union. However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms depends on several preconditions. Selective services are only effective if workers are informed about these services. Social custom is only effective if workers are affected by peer pressure and social recognition.

We argue that the incomplete integration of immigrants into workplace and society diminishes the effectiveness of the mechanisms for overcoming the collective action problem. Incomplete integration means that immigrants have less access to the host country's informal information networks than natives and, hence, have only insufficient information about the services provided by unions. Moreover, incomplete integration also means that immigrants are less affected by the social pressure or recognition they receive from natives. This suggests that the immigrant-native gap in union membership depends on migrants' integration into society and workplace. The gap should be greater for those immigrants who are less integrated. It should be smaller for those immigrants who are more integrated into society and the workplace.

Our empirical analysis examines the immigrant-native gap in unionization for West Germany. Germany provides an interesting case study. The country is the second top destination for migrants after the United States (IOM, 2019) and union density has substantially declined during the last

decades (Schnabel, 2020). Using data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), our estimations show that first-generation immigrants are less likely to be union members than natives. This result holds in regressions controlling for industry, occupation and a long list of personal characteristics.

Most importantly, our estimations show that the size of the unionization gap depends on the integration of immigrants. The immigrant-native unionization gap is smaller for those employees working in firms with a works council. This finding supports the notion that works councils are an important institution in helping integrate immigrants into the workplace. Works councils not only support unions in recruiting and retaining members. They also promote solidarity among workers within firms. Thus, the presence of a works council very likely implies that immigrants are better informed about unions and are more responsive to the social pressure and recognition they receive from native coworkers.

Moreover, not only integration into the workplace but also integration into society as a whole plays a role. Social contacts with natives are an important indicator of integration into society. Our estimates show that the unionization gap is smaller for those immigrants who have social contacts with Germans. This suggests that it is important to go beyond the narrow boundaries of the labour market to fully understand the immigrant-native gap in unionization. Finally, the estimates confirm that the unionization gap is decreasing in the years since arrival in Germany. This finding conforms to the notion that integration takes time.

A series of reasons have been discussed for the decline of unionization observed in many countries. Changes in employment regulations, rising earnings inequality, digitalization of work, demographic and sectoral shifts, and the rise of non-standard and flexible work are factors that have very likely contributed to this decline (Checchi et al., 2010; Visser, 2019a). Our study suggests that migration and, hence, globalization has played a role, too. However, our study also indicates that the consequences of globalization are not given by nature. Governments and societies have various opportunities of responding to globalization. The negative consequences of migration for unionization can be mitigated if the host country is able to integrate immigrants into workplace and society. On the one hand, a more targeted migration policy may attract immigrants with a higher willingness to integrate. On the other hand, it appears to be important to counter prejudices and discrimination by natives. In particular, it may be important to promote institutions that foster the integration of immigrants. Our study suggests that works councils are such an institution.

The rest of the article is organized as follows. Section 2 provides the institutional and theoretical background discussion. Section 3 discusses the data and variables. Section 4 provides the regression results. Section 5 discusses the results. Section 6 concludes.

2 | BACKGROUND DISCUSSION

2.1 | Institutional framework

Industrial relations in Germany are characterized by a dual structure of employee representation with both works councils and unions (Behrens, 2016; Jirjahn, 2016; Jirjahn & Smith, 2018; Keller & Kirsch, 2015; Mohrenweiser, 2022; Silvia, 2013). Works councils provide a highly developed mechanism for firm-level codetermination, while collective bargaining agreements

are usually negotiated between unions and employers' associations on a broad industrial level.

Works councils shall be elected by the workforce of firms with five or more employees. However, their creation depends on the initiative of the firm's workforce. Thus, works councils are not present in all eligible firms. This allows conducting a within-country study that compares workers in firms with and without a works council. In our data, about 60 per cent of workers are employed in (private- or public-sector) firms with a works council.

While works councils and unions are formally independent, there are important linkages. Unions provide training and legal expertise for works councils. Works councils in turn help unions recruit new members (Behrens, 2009; Jirjahn, 2021; Windolf & Haas, 1989). They not only provide information about unions. They also promote norms of mutual solidarity and, hence, increase the reputation effect of belonging to a union. Works councils may also put informal pressure on workers to join a union.

Collective bargaining agreements regulate wage rates and general aspects of the employment contract. The coverage by an agreement does not depend on the decision of the firm's workforce but on the decision of the employer. Typically, firms are covered if they are members of an employers' association (Jirjahn, 2023). Employers' associations and unions negotiate collective agreements usually on a broad industrial level. The share of firms with a firm-level agreement is small.

2.2 | The collective action problem

As in many other countries, covered firms in Germany pay the negotiated wage rates to both union members and non-members. Thus, collectively agreed wage rates and working conditions are like public goods. They are non-rival in consumption and exclusion of non-members is not possible. This entails a potential collective action problem.[1] Workers may have little incentive to join a union as they benefit from collective agreements even without a membership. Indeed, the share of workers covered by collective bargaining is much higher than the share of union members. In the year 2018, 54 per cent of the workers in the whole of Germany were covered by collective agreements, while union density was only 16.5 per cent (Schnabel, 2020).

It is usually argued that two broad factors help mitigate or overcome the collective action problem. First, as suggested by the social custom approach, influences such as peer pressure, solidarity and social recognition may involve incentives to join a union (Booth, 1985; Corneo, 1995; Naylor & Cripps, 1993). This explanation is supported by empirical studies showing that the social background of an individual and the share of other workers who are unionized play a role in the membership decision (Bryson & Davies, 2019; Fitzenberger et al., 1999; Goerke & Pannenberg, 2004; Schnabel & Wagner, 2005; Visser, 2002).

Second, unions may increase workers' interest in membership by providing selective services such as legal advice and legal representation only to their members (Blanchflower et al., 1990; Olson, 1965). A series of empirical studies for Germany show that members indeed benefit from the selective services provided by unions. These studies suggest that union members are better protected than non-members. Union members are more likely to be successful in labour dispute processes (Berger & Neugart, 2011) and are less likely to be dismissed than non-members (Goerke & Pannenberg, 2011). Moreover, in case of a dismissal, union members have a higher probability of receiving severance pay (Goerke & Pannenberg, 2010).

2.3 | Immigrants

However, the mechanisms to overcome the collective action problem depend on several preconditions. The effectiveness of selective incentives requires that workers have sufficient information about the services provided by unions. The effectiveness of social influences requires that workers are affected by peer pressure and social recognition. This brings us to the specific situation of immigrants.

From a theoretical viewpoint, the specific situation of immigrants makes it less likely that the requirements for overcoming the collective action problem are met. Incomplete information can play a role. Immigrants tend to be on average less familiar with the institutional frameworks of the host country. In particular, they may have less access to the host country's informal information networks than natives. Such informal networks are important as they not only provide information on the availability of the services provided by unions, but also on the quality of those services. As emphasized by the experience good model of union membership, the benefits of a membership are *ex-ante* uncertain and difficult to assess (Bryson & Gomez, 2003; Gomez & Gunderson, 2004). To reduce this uncertainty and obtain a better assessment of the quality of the services, it is important that other persons share the experiences they have made with the services provided by unions.[2] Thus, to the extent immigrants have less access to the relevant information networks, they know less about unions and their selective services. As a consequence, they will have a lower propensity to become union members.

Furthermore, immigrants may be less affected by those normative influences which typically induce workers to join a union. Research on the consequences of ethnic diversity has shown that social sanctions are more effective within than between ethnic groups (Habyarimana et al., 2007; Miguel & Gugerty, 2005). Thus, ethnic diversity is associated with lower levels of public goods provision. The insights obtained from this research may also apply to the decision of immigrants to join a union. To the extent immigrants are outside the typical social networks in the host country, they are less likely to receive peer pressure or recognition from natives. Moreover, even when immigrants receive pressure and recognition from natives, they may be less responsive to these social influences. A person's responsiveness to others' actions depends on his or her social identity, that is the social category the person identifies with (Akerlof & Kranton, 2000). Research in social psychology shows that persons tend to be influenced more by similar or like-minded others (Spears, 2021). Thus, to the extent immigrants identify with their home and not with the host country, they will be less responsive to the normative influences of natives.

Altogether, immigrants should have a lower propensity to become union members as the mechanisms which typically help overcome the collective action problem are less effective for this group of workers. Thus, we can state our first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: Immigrants are less likely to be union members than natives.

The underlying assumption of this hypothesis is that immigrants are on average not fully integrated into society and workplace. Several reasons for the incomplete integration of immigrants are discussed in the literature. On the one hand, learning the culture and language of the host country may be too costly (Konya, 2007; Lazear, 1999) or immigrants may have preferences to keep their home country's culture also abroad (Chiswick & Miller, 2005). On the other hand, stereotypes and discrimination by natives hinder integration and contribute to the social isolation of immigrants (Constant et al., 2009). Studies for Germany provide evidence of discrimination in

the housing and the labour market (Cornelißen & Jirjahn, 2012; Dill & Jirjahn, 2014; Dill et al., 2015; Kaas & Manger, 2011). Attitude surveys confirm that there exist serious xenophobic tendencies in German society (Bauer et al., 2000; Gang & Rivera-Batiz, 1994). There is even evidence of an increase in violence against foreigners after the reunification of East and West Germany (Krueger & Pischke, 1997).

2.4 | Varying degrees of integration

Whatever the exact reasons for an incomplete integration of immigrants may be, we are interested in the consequences of incomplete integration for union membership. Most salient to our topic, the extent of the immigrant-native gap in union membership should depend on the degree to which immigrants are integrated into society and workplace. Individual immigrants can differ in their degree of integration for several reasons. They may differ in the costs of learning the host country's culture, the preferences for keeping the culture of the home country, and the extent of discrimination and social exclusion they experience. The basic point is that the immigrant-native gap in union membership should be less pronounced for those immigrants who are characterized by a higher degree of integration into society and workplace. A higher degree of integration means that immigrants have better information about the host country increasing the likelihood that they know about the services provided by unions. A higher degree of integration may also imply that immigrants are more affected by the social influences which lead workers to join a union. Immigrants participate to a larger (albeit probably still incomplete) extent in the typical networks of the host country and, hence, are more likely to receive normative influences from natives to join a union. Immigrants may also be more responsive to these normative influences as they identify to a higher degree with the host country. Against this background, our second hypothesis stresses the moderating role of integration.

Hypothesis 2: Immigrants' lower propensity to unionize is less pronounced if they are to a higher degree integrated into society and workplace.

At issue is how to capture the integration of immigrants in the empirical analysis. Considering that integration takes time, one can use the time since arrival as an indicator. The longer an immigrant lives in the host country, the higher the degree of integration. Empirical studies provide evidence for this view. Casey and Dustmann (2010) show that years since arrival are positively associated with the host-country identification of immigrants. Cools et al. (2021) and Kranendonk and de Beer (2016) find that the immigrant-native gap in union membership is decreasing in the time since arrival. Thus, we can state the first variant of Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 2a: Immigrants' lower propensity to unionize is less pronounced the longer they live in the host country.

Of course, the time since arrival is only a crude indicator of integration. Some immigrants may be integrated into society already after a short time, while others may not be integrated even after living many years in the host country. This calls for a more direct indicator of integration into society. Social contacts with natives are such an indicator. Contacts with natives mean that an immigrant is to a larger degree inside the social networks of the host society and, hence, has better access to information about the host country (Putnam, 2000). Empirical studies for Germany

support this view. Immigrants having contacts with Germans experience greater labour market success than those without such contacts (Kanas et al., 2011; Kanas et al., 2012). Moreover, social contacts with natives not only provide better access to information, but also contribute to a sense of belonging and foster host-country identification (De Vroome et al., 2011; Nesdale, 2002). These considerations lead to our second variant of Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 2b: Immigrants' lower propensity to unionize is less pronounced if they have contacts with natives.

Furthermore, integration into the workplace should play a role in the union membership of immigrants. This brings us to the influence of works councils. As explained in Section 2.1, works councils help unions recruit and retain members. Of course, this alone may not imply that the presence of a works council in a firm is associated with a lower unionization gap between immigrants and natives. If a works council influences migrants' and natives' taste for union representation to the same degree, we would observe the same increase in the likelihood of union membership for both groups, but no change in the unionization gap. Increased effort to recruit members might even widen the unionization gap if the works councils is only able to reach out to native workers and incomplete integration makes it difficult to reach migrant workers.

However, works councils are much more than just a channel for unions to reach workers. Works councils play an important role in increasing solidarity among workers and reducing inequality within firms. They foster the integration into the workplace and, hence, increase immigrants' responsiveness to unions' recruitment effort. This can imply that works councils have an even stronger influence on the unionization of migrant workers than on the unionization of native workers.

The idea of fair treatment of all workers within the firm is clearly laid out in the Works Constitution Act (WCA), the law that governs codetermination at the workplace (Goldberg et al., 1995). If a works council is present, it represents all workers in the firm. Every worker has an active and a passive voting right – a right to vote for candidates and a right to be elected as a works councillor. Most salient to our topic, Section 75 of the WCA stipulates that employer and works council shall ensure that 'all persons working in the establishment are treated in accordance with the principles of law and equity, in particular that no one is subject to discrimination on grounds of race, ethnic origin, descent or other origin, nationality, religion or belief, disability, age, political or trade union activities or convictions or on the grounds of gender or sexual identity'.

Theoretical considerations also suggest that works councils promote collegiality and universal rules for all workers within a firm. A successful representation of workers' interest requires that a works council has bargaining power *vis-à-vis* the employer. Cohesiveness among workers strengthens the bargaining power of the works council (Jirjahn & Kraft, 2007, 2010). Thus, works councils indeed have an incentive to promote fairness and solidarity. Moreover, the presence of a works council fosters communication among workers (Jirjahn & Le, 2023a). For example, the works council holds regular works meetings with the whole workforce to report about its activities and to discuss topics such as social policy, equal opportunities and workplace integration. Open discussion about fairness and legitimacy of rules, exposure to different points of view, learning about others' needs and confrontation with social problems can lead workers to develop a stronger prosocial orientation and a sense of 'oneness' and shared interest (Weber et al., 2008, 2009).[3] Altogether, this suggests an important role of works councils in the workplace integration of immigrants.

Empirical research confirms this notion. Ryan and Turner (2021) show in a European context that worker participation fosters pluralistic democratic values and contributes to positive attitudes towards immigration. Jirjahn and Le (2023b) find for Germany that works councils have a positive influence on workers' preferences for pro-working class, left-wing parties and a negative influence on preferences for extreme right-wing parties which have a strong anti-immigration stance. Finally, Schmidt and Müller (2013, 2021) provide case study evidence on workplace integration of immigrants in firms with a works council. They conclude that increased cooperation and universal rules for all lead to an industrial relations climate in which workers develop a group identity based on shared interests that is distinct from an identity based on origin or ethnicity.

Improved integration into the workplace suggests that the influence of works councils on the union membership of workers can be stronger for immigrants than for natives. A works council not simply provides information about unions. By strengthening workplace integration, the works council has improved opportunities to reach out to immigrants. Thus, workplace integration enables the works council to provide immigrants effectively with information about unions and, hence, to narrow or possibly even close the information gap between immigrants and natives. Moreover, a works council not simply fosters social influences (peer pressure or social recognition) to increase workers' willingness to become union members. By integrating migrant workers into the social networks within the workplace, the works council also improves the effectiveness of the social influences on this group. Workplace integration implies that migrants are more likely to receive peer pressure or social recognition from natives and that they are more responsive to these influences.

To summarize, works councils provide information on unions and foster social influences to increase workers' willingness to join a union. This applies to both immigrants and natives. However, for migrant workers, the presence of a works council involves a further factor. A works council contributes to better workplace integration. Thus, for the group of migrants, the works council additionally increases the effectiveness of information provision and social influences. Against this background, we can formulate the third variant of Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 2c: The unionization gap between immigrants and natives is smaller if a works council is present in the firm.

3 | DATA AND VARIABLES

3.1 | Dataset

Our empirical analysis uses data from the SOEP to test the hypotheses. The SOEP is a large representative longitudinal survey of private households in Germany (Goebel et al., 2019). The survey is administered by the German Economic Institute (DIW). Infratest Sozialforschung, a professional survey and opinion institute, conducts face-to-face interviews. Routine socio-economic and demographic questions are asked annually. Different 'special' topic questions appear in specific waves.

Our basic analysis is based on the waves 2001, 2011 and 2019 of the SOEP.[4] These waves provide information on union membership, social contacts and the presence of a works council. The estimation sample consists of part-time and full-time employees aged 16–65 in the private and the public sector. The analysis focuses on West Germany (including Berlin) as the number of immigrants in the East German subsample of the SOEP is very small. We exclude employees with extensive managerial duties from the analysis as these employees are usually not union members.

We also exclude those public sector employees who are civil servants. Only German citizens can become civil servants.

3.2 | Variables

Table 1 provides definitions and descriptive statistics of the variables. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to 1 if the employee is a union member. In the main part of the empirical analysis, we compare first-generation immigrants and natives to examine the gap in unionization. Thus, our key explanatory variable is a dummy equal to 1 if the employee is a first-generation immigrant.[5] It equals zero if the employee is a native. As a matter of comparison, we will also provide estimates comparing second-generation immigrants and natives. In that case, we use a dummy equal to 1 if the employee is a second-generation immigrant. The dummy equals zero if the employee is a native.

Our theoretical considerations suggest that the relationship between immigrants and union membership is heterogeneous and depends on immigrants' integration into society and the workplace. We include a variable for the number of years an immigrant resides in Germany. This variable takes into account that immigrants differ in their experience with the host country. As the variable specifically refers to immigrants, it is set equal to zero if the employee is a native.

Furthermore, we include an ordered variable of whether a migrant visited Germans in their home or was visited by Germans during the last year: 0 = the migrant did not visit Germans *and* was not visited by Germans; 1 = the migrant either visited Germans *or* was visited by Germans; 2 = the migrant visited Germans *and* was visited by Germans. The variable takes into account that immigrants can differ in their contacts with natives and, hence, in their integration into society. As this variable specifically accounts for heterogeneity among immigrants, we set it equal to zero if the employee is a native.

Non-union worker representation is captured by a dummy equal to 1 if a works council is present in the firm the employee works for. As stressed in Section 2.1, works councils are not present in all eligible firms. This allows comparing employees in firms with and without a works council. Importantly, we also include an interaction variable for immigrants and works council presence to account for heterogeneity in workplace integration among immigrants. As suggested by our theoretical considerations, while works councils should have a positive influence on the union membership of both natives and immigrants, the influence should be stronger for the latter group if works councils promote workplace integration.

In a robustness check, we will also take into account that immigrants can differ in the experience they had with unions in their countries of origin. This experience may influence the propensity to unionize in the host country (Cools et al., 2021; Kranendonk & de Beer, 2016). Thus, we will use information from Visser's (2019b) ICTWSS database and additionally include a variable for the unionization rate in the migrant's country of origin; the variable is set equal to zero if the employee is a native. However, the influence of this variable is ambiguous from a theoretical viewpoint. On the one hand, a higher union density in the origin country may positively influence the propensity to become a union member in the host country if migrants trust unions to represent their interests. On the other hand, specifically, unions in autocratic and less developed countries are often either a mere shell for the state or a repressed organization that it is dangerous to be associated with (Cooke & Wood, 2021; Horwitz & Cooke, 2020). Such negative experience may imply a negative influence of origin country unionization on union membership in the host country.

TABLE 1 Variable definitions and descriptive statistics.

Variable	Definition	Mean, Std. dev.
Union member	Dummy equals 1 if the employee is a member of a trade union.	0.180, 0.384
First-generation migrant	Dummy equals 1 if the employee is a first-generation immigrant (i.e. a person who was born outside Germany). The dummy equals 0 if the employee is a native.	0.132, 0.338
Second-generation migrant	Dummy equals 1 if the employee is a second-generation immigrant (i.e. a person who was born in Germany and has at least one parent who was born outside Germany). The dummy equals 0 if the employee is a native.	0.076, 0.264
Years in Germany	The number of years an immigrant resides in Germany. The variable is set equal to 0 if the employee is a native.	2.863, 8.416
Contacts with natives	Ordered variable for visits during the last year: 0 = The migrant did not visit Germans in their home and was not visited by Germans; 1 = The migrant either visited Germans in their home or was visited by Germans; 2 = The migrant visited Germans in their home and was visited by Germans. The variable is set equal to 0 if the employee is a native.	0.230, 0.630
Works council	Dummy equals 1 if a works council is present in the firm the employee works for.	0.597, 0.491
Full-time employee	Dummy equals 1 if the employee is a full-time employee.	0.723, 0.4474
Working hours	Number of weekly hours the employee actually works including possible overtime.	24.85, 19.05
Tenure	The employee's tenure with the firm in years.	11.42, 10.30
Log of income	Log of gross income (in Euro) received last month.	7.745, 0.636
Public sector	Dummy equals 1 if the employee works in the public sector.	0.226, 0.418
Firm size 20–199	Dummy equals 1 if the employee works in a firm with 20–199 employees.	0.270, 0.444
Firm size 200–1999	Dummy equals 1 if the employee works in a firm with 200–1999 employees.	0.244, 0.430
Firm size ≥ 2000	Dummy equals 1 if the employee works in a firm with 2000 or more employees.	0.279, 0.449
Work experience	The employee's years of full-time and part-time work experience.	20.11, 11.07
Unemployment experience	The employee's total unemployment experience in years.	0.525, 1.577
Years of schooling	The employee's years of schooling.	12.40, 2.567
Age	The age of the employee.	43.91, 10.69
Male employee	Dummy equals 1 if the employee is a man.	0.511, 0.499
Married	Dummy equals 1 if the employee is married.	0.647, 0.478

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Variable	Definition	Mean, Std. dev.
Social democratic party	Dummy equals 1 if the employee leans towards the social democratic party (SPD).	0.149, 0.356
Conservative party	Dummy equals 1 if the employee leans towards a conservative party (CDU/CSU).	0.130, 0.336
Origin country unionization	Union density of the workforce in the migrant's country of origin (in %). The variable is set equal to 0 if the employee is a native.	6.806, 21.219
Occupation dummies	Seven occupation dummies for blue-collar worker with apprenticeship training, foreman, industrial or factory craftsman, unskilled or semi-skilled white-collar workers, white-collar worker with apprenticeship training, professionals and highly qualified white-collar employees. The reference group consists of unskilled and semi-skilled blue-collar workers.	—
Industry dummies	Eight one-digit industry dummies for agriculture, energy & mining, manufacturing, construction, trade, transport, banking and insurance, and service. The reference group consists of employees in other industries.	—
State dummies	Eleven federal state dummies.	—
Wave dummies	Two dummy variables for the year of observation.	—

Note: Number of observations = 16,234. For the variable for second-generation immigrants, the number of observations is 15,248.

The dataset allows including a rich set of standard control variables. Variables for full-time employment, actual working hours, tenure, income, firm size, occupation, industry and public versus private sector employment capture work-related characteristics. Variables for the years of unemployment experience and the years of work experience take into account the person's work history. Furthermore, we include variables for years of schooling, age, gender, marital status and party preferences to control for the socio-demographic background. Dummy variables for the federal state and the year of observation are also included.

Table 2 provides separate descriptive statistics for natives, first-generation immigrants and second-generation immigrants. The table shows that the unionization rate of first-generation immigrants and (albeit less pronounced) second-generation immigrants is significantly smaller than the one of natives. However, natives and immigrants also differ significantly in many other characteristics. Thus, only a multivariate analysis can determine the extent of the unionization gap.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Initial estimates

We estimate the determinants of trade union membership are estimated by using a random effects logit model.[6] For individuals who are observed more than one time, the random effects

TABLE 2 Mean comparisons.

Variable	(1) Natives Mean, Std. dev.	(2) First-generation migrants Mean, Std. dev.	(3) Second-generation migrants Mean, Std. dev.	(4) (1) minus (2)	(5) (1) minus (3)
Union member	0.183, 0.387	0.155, 0.362	0.163, 0.369	0.028***	0.020*
Works council	0.600, 0.490	0.571, 0.495	0.592, 0.492	0.030***	0.009
Full-time employee	0.720, 0.449	0.745, 0.436	0.753, 0.432	−0.025**	−0.033**
Working hours	25.793, 18.987	18.614, 18.272	21.205, 19.403	7.179***	4.587***
Tenure	11.776, 10.505	9.067, 8.485	7.145, 7.638	2.709***	4.633***
Log of income	7.759, 0.641	7.655, 0.600	7.708, 0.608	0.104***	0.051***
Public sector	0.236, 0.424	0.162, 0.369	0.192, 0.394	0.073***	0.044***
Firm size < 20	0.208, 0.406	0.193, 0.394	0.204, 0.403	0.016	0.005
Firm size 20–199	0.266, 0.442	0.298, 0.456	0.246, 0.431	−0.032***	0.019
Firm size 200–1999	0.244, 0.429	0.245, 0.430	0.242, 0.428	−0.002	0.002
Firm size ≥ 2000	0.282, 0.449	0.263, 0.440	0.308, 0.462	0.018*	−0.026*
Work experience	20.190, 11.129	19.595, 10.628	12.255, 9.329	0.595**	7.935***
Unemployment experience	0.475, 1.499	0.850, 1.985	0.532, 1.478	−0.374***	−0.056
Years of schooling	12.609, 2.553	11.026, 2.214	12.374, 2.710	1.583***	0.235***
Age	43.905, 10.808	43.959, 9.893	35.649, 10.053	−0.055	8.255***
Male employee	0.507, 0.499	0.535, 0.499	0.504, 0.500	−0.028**	0.003
Married	0.627, 0.484	0.779, 0.415	0.498, 0.500	−0.152***	0.129***
Social democratic party	0.157, 0.364	0.092, 0.289	0.122, 0.328	0.065***	0.035***
Conservative party	0.139, 0.346	0.071, 0.256	0.062, 0.242	0.068***	0.077***

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Variable	(1) Natives Mean, Std. dev.	(2) First-generation migrants Mean, Std. dev.	(3) Second-generation migrants Mean, Std. dev.	(4) (1) minus (2)	(5) (1) minus (3)
Occupation dummies					
Unskilled or semi-skilled blue-collar worker	0.101, 0.296	0.332, 0.471	0.138, 0.345	−0.235***	−0.041***
Blue-collar worker with apprenticeship training	0.112, 0.315	0.122, 0.327	0.118, 0.323	−0.010	−0.006
Foreman	0.028, 0.164	0.022, 0.147	0.014, 0.117	0.006	0.014**
Industry or factory craftsman	0.006, 0.089	0.002, 0.091	0.001, 0.029	0.004**	0.005**
Unskilled or semi-skilled white-collar worker	0.046, 0.209	0.091, 0.287	0.072, 0.259	−0.045***	−0.026***
White-collar worker with apprenticeship training	0.098, 0.297	0.079, 0.271	0.108, 0.310	0.018***	−0.010
Professional	0.382, 0.486	0.215, 0.411	0.357, 0.479	0.168***	0.024*
Highly qualified white-collar worker	0.232, 0.422	0.137, 0.344	0.192, 0.394	0.095***	0.040***
Industry dummies					
Agriculture	0.008, 0.0007	0.008, 0.091	0.003, 0.051	−0.0004	0.005**
Energy and mining	0.011, 0.107	0.007, 0.086	0.003, 0.051	0.004*	0.005**
Manufacturing	0.267, 0.442	0.370, 0.483	0.276, 0.447	−0.103***	−0.009
Construction	0.056, 0.229	0.056, 0.230	0.036, 0.187	−0.0004	0.019***
Trade	0.141, 0.348	0.122, 0.327	0.159, 0.366	0.019**	−0.018
Transport	0.040, 0.197	0.034, 0.180	0.060, 0.237	0.007	−0.019***
Banking and insurance	0.056, 0.230	0.014, 0.120	0.035, 0.183	0.041***	0.021***
Service	0.368, 0.482	0.337, 0.473	0.365, 0.482	0.031***	0.003
Other industry	0.053, 0.223	0.051, 0.221	0.064, 0.245	0.001	−0.012*

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Variable	(1) Natives Mean, Std. dev.	(2) First-generation migrants Mean, Std. dev.	(3) Second-generation migrants Mean, Std. dev.	(4) (1) minus (2)	(5) (1) minus (3)
Migrant-specific variables					
Years in Germany	0.000, 0.000	21.725, 11.304	—	—	—
Contacts with natives	0.000, 0.000	1.746, 0.606	—	—	—
Origin country unionization	0.000, 0.000	51.656, 33.178	—	—	—
Number of observations	14,095	2139	1153	—	
Number of employees	11,135	1954	995	—	—

***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

model decomposes the error term into a time-varying and an individual-specific time-invariant component.[7] Furthermore, we cluster the standard errors at the employee level. Our initial regressions aim at identifying the average immigrant-native unionization gap conditioning on the control variables. In this initial step, we do not consider moderating factors and, hence, possible heterogeneity of the unionization gap across immigrants.

Table 3 shows the regression results with the combined sample of first-generation immigrants and natives. The table provides the results of four different specifications. The estimations start with our key explanatory variable and add ever more extensive controls. In column (1), we include only a constant and the dummy variable for first-generation immigrants. In column (2), we expand the specification by controlling for the worker's socio-economic background. We also include the dummies for region and year of observation. Column (3) adds job-related control variables and the occupation dummies. Finally, column (4) presents the results with the full specification that also includes variables for firm characteristics and industry.

Many of the controls take significant coefficients of the expected sign. The presence of a works council is a positive determinant of union membership. This confirms that works councils play an important role in recruiting union members. Tenure, firm size and income are also positive determinants. Furthermore, men are more likely to be union members. Preferences for the social democratic party are positively and preferences for a conservative party are negatively associated with union membership. The relationship between education and union membership is inverse U-shaped. Employees with about 11 years of education have the highest probability of being union members. Finally, having a full-time job is a positive determinant, whereas the number of actual working hours emerges as a negative determinant.

Most salient to our topic, each of the four regressions shows that first-generation immigrants are significantly less likely to be union members than natives. This finding provides support for Hypothesis 1. The regressions do not support Behrens et al.'s (2017) and Cools et al.'s (2021) claim that the unionization gap simply reflects labour market sorting or specific individual characteristics of immigrants.[8] Quite the contrary, the estimated unionization gap particularly increases when controlling for socio-demographic characteristics, region, firm characteristics and industry. The regressions reveal a sizable gap. In the estimation with the full specification, a first-generation immigrant has an almost 11 percentage point lower probability of being a union member than a native. Taking into account that 18 per cent of employees in our sample are union members, this gap between first-generation immigrants and natives is quantitatively quite substantial.

Table 4 shows the regressions with the combined sample of second-generation immigrants and natives. The regression largely repeats the pattern of results on the control variables. However, we find a significant unionization gap between second-generation migrants and natives only in the regression with the very parsimonious specification that does not account for any control variables. When we include the variables for socio-demographic characteristics, the estimated unionization gap completely vanishes. Adding the other variables does not change the result. The variable for second-generation immigrants is no longer a significant determinant of union membership.

Altogether, our analysis provides evidence of a unionization gap for first-generation immigrants, but not for second-generation immigrants. Thus, in what follows, we focus on the unionization gap of first-generation immigrants and analyse this gap in more detail. The gap we have identified so far should be interpreted as an average gap between first-generation immigrants and natives. The gap can depend on moderating circumstances and, hence, is very likely to be heterogeneous. As suggested by our theoretical considerations, an immigrant's integration into society and workplace should influence the extent of the unionization gap.

TABLE 3 Initial estimates; combined sample of first-generation migrants and natives.

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
First-generation migrant	−0.533***	−0.685***	−0.567***	−0.746***
	[−0.078]	[−0.101]	[−0.083]	[−0.109]
	(0.115)	(0.155)	(0.155)	(0.158)
Years of schooling	—	0.347*	0.508**	0.475**
		[0.051]	[0.075]	[0.070]
		(0.191)	(0.205)	(0.207)
Years of schooling squared	—	−0.021***	−0.022***	−0.021***
		[−0.003]	[−0.003]	[−0.003]
		(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)
Age	—	0.080**	−0.003	0.016
		[0.012]	[−0.0004]	[0.002]
		(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.036)
Age squared	—	−0.0003	−0.00008	−0.0002
		[−0.00004]	[−0.00001]	[−0.00003]
		(0.0003)	(0.0004)	(0.0004)
Male employee	—	1.684***	0.486***	0.379***
		[0.247]	[0.071]	[0.056]
		(0.114)	(0.128)	(0.129)
Married	—	−0.032	−0.068	−0.048
		[−0.005]	[−0.009]	[−0.007]
		(0.107)	(0.109)	(0.111)
Social democratic party	—	1.144***	1.075***	1.040***
		[0.168]	[0.158]	[0.153]
		(0.131)	(0.127)	(0.131)
Conservative party	—	−0.765***	−0.791***	−0.732***
		[−0.112]	[−0.116]	[−0.108]
		(0.151)	(0.152)	(0.152)
Full-time employee	—	—	0.231	0.346**
			[0.034]	[0.051]
			(0.161)	(0.167)
Working hours	—	—	−0.033***	−0.014*
			[−0.048]	[−0.002]
			(0.007)	(0.008)
Tenure	—	—	0.105***	0.059***
			[0.015]	[0.009]
			(0.014)	(0.014)
Tenure squared	—	—	−0.0008**	−0.0003
			[−0.00001]	[−0.00004]
			(0.0004)	(0.0004)
Log of income	—	—	1.481***	0.539***
			[0.217]	[0.079]
			(0.155)	(0.147)

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Work experience	—	—	0.010	0.017
			[0.001]	[0.002]
			(0.011)	(0.012)
Unemployment experience	—	—	−0.026	−0.0145
			[−0.004]	[−0.002]
			(0.035)	(0.036)
Public sector	—	—	—	0.363***
				[0.053]
				(0.138)
Firm size 20–199	—	—	—	0.150
				[0.022]
				(0.183)
Firm size 200–1999	—	—	—	0.584***
				[0.086]
				(0.205)
Firm size ≥ 2000	—	—	—	1.252***
				[0.184]
				(0.212)
Works council	—	—	—	2.324***
				[0.342]
				(0.170)
Wave dummies	Not included	Included	Included	Included
State dummies	Not included	Included	Included	Included
Occupation dummies	Not included	Not included	Included	Included
Industry dummies	Not included	Not included	Not included	Included
Pseudo R^2	0.0003	0.041	0.088	0.159
Rho	0.975***	0.803***	0.765***	0.743***
	(0.0007)	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.022)
Number of observations	16,234	16,234	16,234	16,234
Number of employees	13,089	13,089	13,089	13,089

Note: Dependent variable: Union member. Method: Random effects logit. The table shows the estimated coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the employee level. Marginal effects evaluated at the mean of the dependent variable are in square brackets.

***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

4.2 | Integration into society and workplace

Using the combined sample of first-generation immigrants and natives, Table 5 shows regressions that additionally include variables for the years in Germany, for contacts with natives, and the interaction of immigrants and works councils. Control variables are included, but are suppressed to save space.

TABLE 4 Initial estimates; combined sample of second-generation migrants and natives.

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Second-generation migrant	−0.519***	0.031	0.071	−0.104
	[−0.077]	[0.004]	[0.011]	[−0.015]
	(0.152)	(0.204)	(0.204)	(0.205)
Years of schooling	—	0.495**	0.598***	0.539**
		[0.073]	[0.088]	[0.079]
		(0.213)	(0.232)	(0.235)
Years of schooling squared	—	−0.027***	−0.027***	−0.025***
		[−0.004]	[−0.004]	[−0.004]
		(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Age	—	0.098***	0.034	0.057
		[0.014]	[0.005]	[0.008]
		(0.033)	(0.037)	(0.037)
Age squared	—	−0.0005	−0.0003	−0.0006
		[−0.00007]	[−0.00004]	[−0.00008]
		(0.0004)	(0.0004)	(0.0004)
Male employee	—	1.707***	0.545***	0.402***
		[0.253]	[0.081]	[0.059]
		(0.118)	(0.136)	(0.136)
Married	—	−0.045	−0.086	−0.079
		[−0.007]	[−0.013]	[−0.012]
		(0.110)	(0.114)	(0.114)
Social democratic party	—	1.206***	1.155***	1.084***
		[0.178]	[0.171]	[0.160]
		(0.137)	(0.135)	(0.137)
Conservative party	—	−0.864***	−0.903***	−0.831***
		[−0.127]	[0.134]	[−0.123]
		(0.157)	(0.163)	(0.159)
Full-time employee	—	—	0.287*	0.403**
			[0.042]	[0.059]
			(0.169)	(0.173)
Working hours	—	—	−0.032***	−0.014*
			[−0.005]	[−0.002]
			(0.007)	(0.008)
Tenure	—	—	0.104***	0.057***
			[0.015]	[0.008]
			(0.016)	(0.015)
Tenure squared	—	—	−0.0007*	−0.0002
			[−0.0001]	[−0.00003]
			(0.0004)	(0.0004)
Log of income	—	—	1.428***	0.490***
			[0.211]	[0.073]
			(0.162)	(0.151)

(Continues)

TABLE 4 (Continued)

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Work experience	—	—	−0.003	0.006
			[−0.0004]	[0.0009]
			(0.013)	(0.013)
Unemployment experience	—	—	−0.040	−0.027
			[−0.006]	[−0.004]
			(0.041)	(0.040)
Public sector	—	—	—	0.329**
				[0.049]
				(0.143)
Firm size 20–199	—	—	—	0.136
				[0.020]
				(0.191)
Firm size 200–1999	—	—	—	0.542**
				[0.080]
				(0.214)
Firm size ≥ 2000	—	—	—	1.296***
				[0.192]
				(0.222)
Works council	—	—	—	2.257***
				[0.334]
				(0.176)
Wave dummies	Not included	Included	Included	Included
State dummies	Not included	Included	Included	Included
Occupation dummies	Not included	Not included	Included	Included
Industry dummies	Not included	Not included	Not included	Included
Pseudo R^2	0.0006	0.039	0.083	0.152
Rho	0.972***	0.816***	0.788***	0.756***
	(0.0008)	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.022)
Number of observations	15,248	15,248	15,248	15,248
Number of employees	12,130	12,130	12,130	12,130

Note: Dependent variable: Union member. Method: Random effects logit. The table shows the estimated coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the employee level. Marginal effects evaluated at the mean of the dependent variable are in square brackets.

***$p < 0.01$. **$p < 0.05$. *$p < 0.1$.

Regression (1) does not account for the unionization rate in the country of origin. By contrast, as a check of robustness, regression (2) includes a variable for this unionization rate. The variable takes a significantly negative coefficient. This finding conforms to the Norwegian experience (Cools et al., 2021). Most importantly, controlling for the unionization rate in the immigrant's country of origin does not change our key results.

The variable for first-generation immigrants continues to take a significantly negative coefficient. Compared to our initial regression, the magnitude of the coefficient has roughly

TABLE 5 The moderating role of integration into society and workplace.

Variable	(1)	(2)
First-generation migrant	−3.348***	−2.706***
	[−0.492]	[−0.398]
	(0.627)	(0.676)
Years in Germany	0.036***	0.028**
	[0.005]	[0.004]
	(0.013)	(0.013)
Contacts with natives	0.455**	0.518**
	[0.067]	[0.076]
	(0.220)	(0.226)
Works council	2.195***	2.195***
	[0.322]	[0.322]
	(0.173)	(0.173)
First-generation migrant × Works council	1.185***	1.216***
	[0.174]	[0.179]
	(0.391)	(0.393)
Origin country unionization	—	−0.012**
		[−0.002]
		(0.005)
Control variables	Included	Included
Pseudo R^2	0.162	0.162
Rho	0.744***	0.744***
	(0.022)	(0.022)
Number of observations	16,234	16,234
Number of employees	13,089	13,089

Note: Dependent variable: Union member. Method: Random effects logit. The regressions are based on the combined sample of first-generation immigrants and natives. The table shows the estimated coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the employee level. Marginal effects evaluated at the mean of the dependent variable are in square brackets.
***$p < 0.01$. **$p < 0.05$.

quadrupled. The coefficient can be interpreted as reflecting the base gap in unionization. This base gap is moderated by an immigrant's integration into society and workplace. Indeed, all three moderating variables for an immigrant's integration take significant coefficients of the expected sign and, hence, provide support for the hypothesis that integration makes the mechanisms for overcoming the collective action problem more effective.

The variable for the years in Germany emerges with a significantly positive coefficient. Thus, the years in Germany mitigate the negative base effect that is given by the coefficient of the immigrant variable. Or put differently, the immigrant-native gap in unionization is decreasing in the years an immigrant has lived in Germany. This finding supports Hypothesis 2a. The longer an immigrant has lived in the host country, the higher the likelihood that he or she is informed about the services unions provide. The immigrant may also show a stronger host country identification and, hence, may be more responsive to the normative influences (peer pressure or social recognition) of natives. Altogether the moderating role of the years since arrival in Germany confirms that integration into the host country often takes time.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that the years since arrival in the host country are only an imperfect indicator of integration. Some immigrants may be integrated into society within a relatively short time. Others may not be integrated even after living for a long time in the host country. Thus, additional indicators which can capture integration more directly should also play a moderating role in the unionization gap.

Indeed, the variable for social contacts with natives takes a significantly positive coefficient. Thus, contacts with natives mitigate the negative base effect that is given by the coefficient of the immigrant variable. Put somewhat differently, the immigrant-native gap in unionization is smaller for immigrants who have contacts with Germans. The finding supports Hypothesis 2b and, hence, suggests that the integration of immigrants into society reduces the unionization gap. Contacts with Germans mean that an immigrant is to a larger extent inside the social networks of the host society. This implies that the immigrant has better access to information, receives more normative influences from natives and is more responsive to these influences.

Finally, both the works council variable and the variable for the interaction of immigrants and works councils emerge with significantly positive coefficients. Thus, while the presence of a works council increases the likelihood of union membership for both natives and immigrants, the influence of works council presence on union membership is stronger for immigrants than for natives. This implies that the presence of a works council reduces the immigrant-native unionization gap and, hence, supports Hypothesis 2c. That hypothesis is based on the assumption that works councils not only help unions recruit members, but also foster notions of solidarity and fairness within the workplace. Solidarity and fairness are likely to contribute to a greater workplace integration of immigrants implying that the influence of works council presence on union membership is particularly strong for immigrants.

As emphasized in endnote 6, we follow Greene's (2010) advice by putting our primary focus on the estimated coefficients and using marginal effects only as quantitative illustrations. Let us consider the marginal effects of regression (2) for such illustrations. In order to demonstrate the sole influence of the years in Germany, we first consider immigrants who have no visits with Germans and work for a firm where no works council is present. A relatively fresh immigrant with 5 years since arrival in Germany has an approximately 38 percentage point lower likelihood of unionization than a native ($-0.398 + 0.004 \times 5 + 0.076 \times 0 + 0.179 \times 0 = -0.378$). An immigrant with 15 years since arrival has a roughly 34 percentage point lower and an immigrant with 25 years since arrival has a 30 percentage point lower likelihood of being a union member. Thus, while the unionization gap is decreasing in the years since arrival, it remains large even after many years in Germany when there are no visits with Germans and no works council is present in the workplace. This again shows that years since arrival are only a very imperfect indicator of integration. By contrast, the other two indicators of integration into society and the workplace play a quantitatively quite important role. If an immigrant with 25 years since arrival visits Germans and is visited by Germans, the unionization gap amounts to less than 15 percentage points ($-0.398 + 0.004 \times 25 + 0.076 \times 2 + 0.179 \times 0 = -0.146$). If the immigrant instead works in a firm with a works council, the gap is less than 12 percentage points ($-0.398 + 0.004 \times 25 + 0.076 \times 0 + 0.179 \times 1 = -0.119$). Thus, integration into society and workplace substantially reduce the unionization gap. If an immigrant both has visits with Germans and works in a firm with a works council, he or she has with 3 percentage points an even slightly higher likelihood of unionization than a native. Altogether, these quantitative illustrations underscore that the average unionization gap estimated by our initial regressions hides a far richer pattern. The gap differs substantially across immigrants and depends on the degree to which they are integrated into society and workplace.

4.3 | Robustness checks

We performed a series of further estimations to check the robustness of the results. Our variable for the presence of works council not only captures workers who are represented by a works council, but also works councillors; that is members of a works council. This gives rise to the question of whether our works council results really reflect the influence of works council representation. The results might be simply driven by works councillors who have a higher propensity for unionization. In column (1) of online Table A1, we exclude works councillors from the estimation sample to address this issue. This decreases the sample size by 619 observations.[9] The regression confirms our key pattern of results and, hence, shows that our findings indeed reflect the influence of works council representation.

Next, we examine whether the key findings are driven by our focus on West Germany. We have focused on workers in West Germany as the share of migrants in the East German sample of the SOEP is small. Nonetheless, as a check of robustness, we now expand the estimation sample and also include observations from East Germany. The key results of this exercise are shown in column (2). Compared to the estimation in Table 4, this increases the sample size by 5094 observations. However, only 1 per cent of these additional observations are from immigrants. Most importantly, including workers from East Germany in the analysis does not change our key findings.

Furthermore, we experimented with alternative specifications including additional controls. Online Table A2 shows their definitions and descriptive statistics. In column (1) of online Table A3, we additionally control for the intention to permanently stay in Germany. This accounts for the possibility that a migrant's incentive to unionize might depend on his or her time horizon in the destination country. Moreover, we add a control for the union density in the industry the worker works for.[10] This accounts for the possibility that the industry-specific propensity to unionize might influence the individual worker's decision to join a union. The two additional variables do not emerge as significant determinants. Most importantly, including the additional controls does not change our key pattern of results.

We also experimented with alternative estimation procedures. As our estimation sample has a large share of singleton observations, the value added of a random effects model might be limited.[11] Thus, column (2) of online Table A3 shows the results of a simple pooled logit. Furthermore, column (3) presents the results of a regression using sample weights. The sample weights correct for disproportional sampling probabilities and selective non-response that might lead to over- or under-representation of certain groups in the survey. Both regression (2) and regression (3) confirm our key pattern of results.

Moreover, we checked in more detail if the unionization gap is driven by migrants' background. Even though regression (2) of Table 3 controls for the unionization rate in the country of origin, other factors might also play a role. In column (1) of online Table A5, we add a control variable indicating whether the country of origin is inside or outside the EU. This variable does not emerge with a significant coefficient. We also include additional variables capturing the reason for migration. The regression suggests that the unionization gap is greater for those who have come for political reasons. Nonetheless, including the additional control variables does not change our key pattern of results.

In column (2), we add controls capturing the labour market institutions in the country of origin in more detail. Building from Koumenta et al. (2022), we use Botero et al.'s (2004) indicators of labour market regulations. The indicators deal with three broad areas: (i) laws regulating individual employment relationships (e.g. laws imposing restrictions on firing workers); (ii) laws

regulating collective relations (laws granting power to unions and protecting workers during labour disputes); and (iii) laws providing more generous social security (in the areas of old age and disability, sickness and health, and unemployment). We also include a dummy for countries with a common law tradition. Common law countries tend to regulate labour markets less extensively than civil and socialist law countries (Deakin, 2001). None of these additional controls emerge as significant determinants and our key results are also confirmed in this robustness check.

In column (3), we replace the variables for EU immigrants and labour market institutions by more detailed dummies for the region of origin. We include dummies for East Europe, Asia, and Africa and Middle East. None of the variables takes a significant coefficient and our key pattern of results is again confirmed.

The unionization gap between first-generation immigrants and natives might reflect differences in personality traits. Thus, in online Table A6, we include variables for the Big Five personality traits in the regressions. The Big Five model is one of the most recognized approaches to describe personality (Borghans et al., 2008). It consists of extraversion, openness to new experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness and neuroticism. The SOEP provides information on the Big Five for the year 2019, but not for the years 2001 and 2011. Taking into account that personality traits are relatively stable (Cobb-Clark & Schurer, 2012), we match information on the Big Five from wave 2005 to wave 2001 and from wave 2013 to wave 2011. Three out of the five personality variables emerge with significant coefficients. Extraversion and openness are positive determinants, whereas conscientiousness is negatively associated with union membership. Most importantly, this robustness check also does not change our key pattern of results.

Online Table A7 shows regressions examining the role of integration into society in more detail. In column (1), we replace our ordered variable for contacts with natives by two dummy variables, a dummy equal to 1 if the immigrant either visited *or* was visited by Germans and a dummy equal to 1 if the immigrant visited *and* was visited by Germans. The latter dummy emerges with a significant and sizable coefficient confirming that close contacts with natives reduce the unionization gap between immigrants and natives. In column (2), we include a dummy for naturalization, and in column (3), a dummy for marriage with a native as alternative indicators of integration. These variables do not emerge with significant coefficients, while our contact variable remains a significant determinant of union membership.

So far, we have based our analysis on three waves (2001, 2011 and 2019) of the SOEP as these waves also provide information on works councils. If we do not control for works council incidence, we can substantially expand our estimation sample by using six waves (2001, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019). Online Table A8 shows the results of regressions using the expanded estimation sample. Column (1) presents a random effects logit estimation, column (2) a pooled logit estimation and column (3) a logit estimation using sample weights. All three estimations confirm the key pattern of results. First-generation migrants are significantly less likely to be union members than natives. The unionization gap is decreasing in the years since arrival in Germany and it is smaller for migrants who have social contacts with Germans.

5 | DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Our empirical analysis shows a substantial unionization gap for first-generation immigrants in Germany. The extent of the gap depends on the years since arrival in Germany, the presence of a works council in the workplace and on whether immigrants have contacts with Germans. These findings conform to theoretical considerations suggesting that integration into workplace and

society plays a role in the unionization gap between immigrants and natives. Of course, a question often arising in social sciences is how a specific explanation for an empirical finding is related to alternative interpretations.

One may ask whether there are any institutional or legal restrictions that could explain the lower unionization of immigrants. The German constitution stipulates freedom of association implying that the state cannot restrict union membership of immigrants. Thus, it depends on the unions whether they accept migrants as members. Migrants can become union members if they have a work permit. There have been some controversies within unions whether they also should accept membership applications of immigrants who do not have a work permit. Yet, this is not relevant for our study. We focus on working immigrants; that is those immigrants who have a work permit. Thus, the gap found in our study cannot be explained by institutional restrictions.

Previous studies have presented inconclusive results as to the extent to which labour market sorting or differences in individual characteristics play a role in the unionization gap between immigrants and natives. Kranendonk and de Beer (2016) emphasize in their cross-country study for Europe that the gap cannot be explained by what they call compositional differences between immigrants and natives. A substantial gap also remains in the European study by Gorodzeisky and Richards (2013). By contrast, Cools et al. (2021) find in their Norwegian study that the gap (albeit not completely) to a large extent can be accounted by differences in individual characteristics and labour market sorting of immigrants. Similarly, using only one wave of our data, Behrens et al.'s (2017) exploratory study fails to show a significant gap for Germany. Our analysis supports the findings by Gorodzeisky and Richards (2013) and Kranendonk and de Beer (2016). We find a substantial unionization gap between first-generation immigrants and natives even when controlling for industry, occupation and individual characteristics, such as gender, education and age. To find an explanation for the gap, we go a step further and examine an aspect that has not been considered so far. Our results suggest that incomplete integration into workplace and society is one source of the unionization gap between immigrants and natives. The gap is smaller for those immigrants who are to a larger degree integrated into workplace and society.

The European cross-country studies by Gorodzeisky and Richards (2013) and Kranendonk and de Beer (2016) show that the magnitude of the immigrant-native gap in unionization differs between countries. Their results suggest that differences in industrial relations systems play a role. The gap is higher in countries in which unions enjoy organizational security (e.g. in form of state financing) and institutional embeddedness and, hence, face less pressure to recruit new members. Our study for Germany examines within-country differences in industrial relations regimes. It shows that the gap is lower in firms with a works council, that is in those firms where solidarity among workers is fostered and unions have better opportunities to make contact with workers. Moreover, our study makes clear that not only labour markets and labour market institutions are relevant. We find that the unionization gap is smaller if immigrants have contacts with Germans outside the workplace. This suggests that also the broader society has an influence on the gap. Our findings have implications for future cross-country studies. It would be interesting to examine if cross-country differences in the unionization gap can be accounted for by differences in the access of unions to the workplace or differences in societal integration policies.

Another explanation for the unionization gap might be that unions tend to discourage migrants if they view them as a threat to existing wage levels and working conditions. Our analysis does not support this explanation. It shows that the unionization gap between migrants and natives is smaller in firms with a works council. Works councils are closely intertwined with unions. They are an important channel through which unions recruit new members. If discour-

agement of migrants by unions was the driving force, we would not find that the presence of works council is associated with a smaller gap, but instead that it is associated with a larger gap.

Unions provide their services and legal support to both native-born and foreign-born members. A unionization gap could also arise if immigrants value the services and the support to a lesser degree than natives. This might be the case if immigrants have the intention to stay in Germany only for a limited time period. Our robustness checks with an additional control for stay intentions do not support this interpretation. Most importantly, they do not change our key results supporting the notion that the unionization gap is instead related to immigrants' (incomplete) integration into workplace and society.

Alternatively, one may argue that the unionization gap simply reflects the cultural or political background of immigrants; that is a culturally or politically formed distaste for unions or a general distrust in unions. Our robustness checks suggest that this is not likely to explain our key pattern of results. The key results remain robust in a series of specifications accounting for heterogeneity among immigrants and various characteristics of the country of origin. Relatedly, a study by Gorodzeisky and Richards (2020) also does not support the view that immigrants generally distrust unions.

Altogether, while other factors certainly also play a role, our study suggests that incomplete integration of immigrants into workplace and society is one factor influencing the union membership gap between immigrants and natives. We recognize that integration is a multi-dimensional and multi-stage phenomenon. Clearly, unions themselves can also foster immigrants' integration through the services and support they provide. However, this requires that immigrants learn about unions and are willing to become and stay union members. This is the reason why broader workplace factors and even societal factors come into play. The degree to which immigrants are integrated into workplace and society influences the likelihood that they get in contact with unions and become members. Once immigrants have become members, unions may further strengthen their integration.

6 | CONCLUSIONS

In many countries, concerns about the insufficient integration of immigrants play a prominent role in the political discussion. Our study sheds light on an aspect that has received little attention so far. Insufficient integration of immigrants can also affect the industrial relations system of a country. Our theoretical consideration suggests that the incomplete integration of immigrants makes the usual mechanisms for overcoming the collective action problem of workers less effective. Incomplete integration implies that immigrants have less information about the selective services provided by unions and are less influenced by social pressure or recognition from natives. As a consequence, immigrants should be less likely to join a union than natives. Clearly, immigrants can differ in the extent they are integrated into the host country. Thus, the unionization gap should be greater for immigrants who are less integrated and smaller for immigrants who are more integrated into society and workplace. Our empirical analysis confirms a unionization gap for first-generation immigrants in Germany and shows that the magnitude of the gap indeed depends on an immigrant's integration into society and workplace. The gap is smaller if an immigrant has lived for a longer time in Germany, has contacts with Germans and works for a firm where a works council is present.

Altogether, our study suggests that improving the integration of immigrants can contribute to the stability of the industrial relations system of a host country. This has to be seen particularly against the background that industrial relations systems in many countries face a series of challenges and unionization is often in decline (OECD, 2017). Thus, the factors that influence the integration of immigrants are important from an industrial relations perspective. A widely held view is that some immigrants have insufficient willingness to integrate into the host country. To the extent such a view corresponds to facts, a more targeted migration policy would be required. Such migration policy should aim at attracting immigrants who are willing and able to integrate into the host country. However, discrimination by natives is also a factor hampering the integration of immigrants. This calls for measures that help overcome prejudices and foster equal treatment.

Our results indicate that works councils play an important role in the workplace integration of immigrants. This aspect should be taken into account in political discussions on measures to strengthen the position of works councils. In Germany, works councils are in decline in recent years (Ellguth & Kohaut, 2021). Managers fear to lose power and their resistance to worker voice appears to be one factor contributing to a lower prevalence of works councils (Hartcourt et al., 2020; Jirjahn & Mohrenweiser, 2016). Measures facilitating the implementation of works councils and strengthening their position may not only be important to increase economic performance (Jirjahn & Smith, 2018; Mohrenweiser, 2022), but may also help overcome social cleavage between natives and immigrants.

Of course, the integrative function of works councils may depend on broader political developments that also play into the workplace. In recent years, there have been combative attempts of right-wing groups to nominate candidates for works council elections and to ideologically indoctrinates workforces (Aderholz, 2021; Dörre, 2018; Kim et al., 2022; Schroeder et al., 2019).Their agenda involves stirring up fear against migrants. The success of these groups so far has been limited. Nonetheless, we are careful and stress that the integrative function of works councils may depend on how resilient this institution will be to further attempts of right-wing groups to gain influence within workplaces.

Finally, our results on the influence of social contacts with Germans show that not only workplace integration but also integration into society as a whole plays a role in the unionization gap of immigrants. This underscores that it is important to consider factors beyond the narrow boundaries of the firm. Future research could fruitfully expand the analysis and examine if factors such as residential segregation and discrimination in the housing market affect immigrants' unionization.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The SOEP is publicly available at the DIW.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Alternatively, one may use the term 'free rider problem'. The terms 'collective action problem' and 'free rider problem' are largely used interchangeably in the literature.

[2] The issue is the same as with many other goods offered by suppliers. A supplier may advertise a product. Nonetheless, potential customers may still remain uncertain about the quality of the product. They can only reduce the uncertainty if other customers who already bought the product share their experiences.

[3] This reasoning builds from Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis suggesting that intergroup contact under appropriate conditions reduces prejudice between majority and minority group members. Allport emphasizes that institutional support of such contacts (by law, custom or local atmosphere) can lead to the perception of common interests and common humanity.

[4] Pooling the data yields an unbalanced panel. Using panel data not only allows controlling for individual heterogeneity, but also reduces collinearity problems and results in more accurate inference of model parameters as panel data contain more sample variability and more degrees of freedom (Baltagi, 1995).

[5] We consider first-generation immigrants who have lived for at least 1 year in Germany.

[6] The logit model provides a straightforward way to calculate marginal effects at the mean $\overline{y}$ of the dependent variable by multiplying the estimated coefficients with the scalar $\overline{y}(1-\overline{y})$. Our subsequent regressions will include interactions of the explanatory variables. Calculating marginal effects for interaction effects requires particular care in nonlinear models, such as logit or probit. In nonlinear models, evaluating marginal effects of interaction variables can potentially result in artificial and atheoretical predictions if they are calculated at the means of the explanatory variables or as average marginal effects. Greene (2010) has made this problem clear in his critique of Ai and Norton (2003) – a problem that already had been recognized in political science decades before (Frant, 1991). The functional form of a nonlinear model implies that all explanatory variables have a nonlinear influence on the probability of interest. Hence, calculating the marginal effect for an interaction variable can produce interaction effects simply by distributional assumption. For example, the marginal effect may be non-zero even if the coefficient of the interaction variable is zero. One may even obtain marginal effects with signs reversed to those of the estimated coefficients. This problem can also not be solved by a linear probability model since the coefficients of this model reflect average marginal effects. Using a logit model and evaluating marginal effects at the mean of the dependent variable avoids spurious results as the coefficients are multiplied by a constant factor (e.g. Allen, 2007; Bishop & Mane, 2001; Dill & Jirjahn, 2016). When interpreting our estimates, we follow Greene's (2010) advice to put primary focus on the coefficients and to use marginal effects just as quantitative illustrations.

[7] In a random effects (RE) context, failure to account for this error structure can lead to biased standard errors and erroneous measures of statistical significance. A further advantage of the random effects model is that it allows including time-invariant variables in the regression. In contrast to a fixed effects (FE) approach that only uses the within variation in the variables, the RE model does not throw away the between variation contained in the data. This is particularly important for our study as our key explanatory variable – the dummy indicating whether an individual is a migrant or a native – is time-invariant. A potential limitation of the RE model may be the requirement that the individual-specific effects are uncorrelated with the regressors. However, Clark and Linzer (2015) provide Monte Carlo simulations showing that the RE model may be preferred even if this requirement is violated. As long as the correlation between random effects and explanatory variables is not too high and, hence, the resulting bias is small enough, the lower variance of the RE estimator produces root mean square errors below those of the FE estimator. This advantage is particularly strong in regressions including variables with small within variation. Of course, we are careful and recognize that our estimations may not allow definite causal inferences to be drawn. Nonetheless, we stress that our analysis is an important first step to bring

a new twist to the topic and to analyse the immigrant-native unionization gap in a much more differentiated way.

[8] Note that while the German study by Behrens et al. (2017) also uses the SOEP, it is only based on one single wave (the 2011 wave) of the data. Moreover, Behrens et al. do not provide separate multivariate comparisons of natives with first-generation immigrants and natives with second-generation immigrants.

[9] 574 of these observations are from natives and 72 from first-generation migrants.

[10] We use our data to calculate the union density for 19 two-digit industries. When calculating the union density for a worker's industry, we exclude that worker. Note that we can still include the eight broadly defined one-digit industry dummies when controlling for the union density within an industry.

[11] Online Table A4 shows the share of individuals participating in the various waves.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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