

# Where will the British Go? And Why?

Raymond M. Duch  
Centre for Experimental Social Sciences  
Nuffield College  
University of Oxford, UK

Denise Laroze  
Universidad de Santiago de Chile, Santiago, Chile

Constantin Reinprecht  
Department of Politics and International Relations  
University of Oxford  
and

Thomas S. Robinson  
Department of Politics and International Relations  
University of Oxford

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## **Abstract**

**Objective:** Immigration is a highly salient political issue. We examine the migration preferences of potential emigrants from the UK to determine whether the migration calculus is primarily economic or political.

**Methods:** A conjoint survey experiment conducted with UK subjects drawn from the CESS, Nuffield College, Oxford University, student subject pool to identify causal drivers of emigration preferences.

**Results:** Logit estimation of emigration preferences indicates that economics and politics matters. Anti-immigrant rhetoric, ‘Trumpian policies, and the USA deter high skilled UK potential emigrants; economic growth, education, and social benefits attract them. Politics and social benefits are more important for those on the political left while economics and education weigh more heavily for those on the right.

**Conclusion:** What will attract the highly-skilled migrants from a post-Brexit UK? Economics matters of course but for many of these potential emigrants politics is important – they are particularly sensitive to anti-immigrant rhetoric.

High skilled immigration has been shown to positively affect the labor market, national finances, economic growth, and innovation ([Chaloff and Lemaitre 2009](#), [Hunt 2010](#), [OECD 2014](#)) and states have increasingly enacted immigration policies to attract the highly skilled ([Betts and Cerna 2011](#)). However, those policies may be ineffective if placed alongside populist or nativist immigration policies. Such policies (and the anti-immigrant sentiment associated with them) have the potential to decrease the country’s attractiveness to high skilled immigrants.

In the future post-Brexit era, with freedom of movement to EU countries potentially curtailed, high skilled UK emigrants might increasingly look beyond Europe. The USA has historically attracted many high skilled UK immigrants ([Khoo 2014](#)). However, this might be changing ([USCIS 2017](#)). Visa quotas and non-point-based systems make it harder to immigrate and the political sentiment, particularly political populism, nativism, and anti-immigrant rhetoric – ‘Trumpian policies’ – might deter or deflect the high skilled to other countries ([Czaika and Parsons 2017](#), [Czaika and de Haas 2017](#)). They might also increase emigration of foreign high skilled labor from the USA. First signs of the ‘Trump effect’ seem to support both conjectures ([Murnane 2017](#)). Similar effects might also happen in the UK. Early signs of the ‘Brexit effect’ indicate that the UK’s attractiveness to foreign high skilled labor has decreased and emigration of foreign high skilled workers from the UK has increased ([Busse and Barslund 2017](#)).

Considering the potential economic costs of reduced high skilled immigration, it is imperative to understand whether anti-immigrant rhetoric and ‘Trumpian policies’ affect emigration preferences of high skilled migrants, despite the potential for large individual economic gains from migration. This study uses a conjoint survey experiment to identify political and economic drivers that explain migra-

tion preferences of current and former Oxford University students – generally considered ‘desirable’ high skilled migrants.

Our findings indicate that politics matters, especially for those on the political left. However, economics matters for everyone. The ‘Muslim ban’, ‘Deportation of illegal immigrants’ and identifying a potential destination as being in the ‘USA’ are deterrents for destination selection. Generous social benefits increase the destination’s appeal, especially for those on the political left or center.

## Motivation and Conjectures

There has been considerable recent scholarship that focuses on explaining attitudes towards immigrants, particularly anti-immigrant sentiment, which appears to have grown in a variety of countries over the past decade ([Bohman and Hjerm 2016](#)). The basic question is whether anti-immigrant attitudes and immigration policy preferences are determined by economic or socio-cultural factors. The former relates to the occupational competition argument: high (low) skilled natives will favor low (high) skilled immigration to avoid competition with new immigrants and complement their respective skills. The latter holds that support or antipathy is determined by social, cultural, and ideological values and beliefs.

A recent comprehensive review of the literature notes that both political economy and psychological studies find that personal economic circumstances play a relatively minor role in the formation of immigration attitudes ([Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014](#)). Individuals in Europe and the USA, regardless of skill level, seem to favor high skilled over low skilled immigration due to the anticipated positive fiscal impact. Sociotropic cultural and economic concerns – such as national identity

and the effect of immigration on state finances – seem to weigh more heavily in the formation of immigration attitudes than egocentric economic concerns. [Konitzer et al. \(2018\)](#) document cross-national variation in ethnic stereotyping and its importance for immigration policy preferences. They find that immigration policy preferences are not driven by general antipathy towards all outsiders but rather by negative attitudes towards the most salient immigrant group. [Valentino et al. \(2017\)](#) conduct an extensive cross-national vignette study and provide strong support for the sociotropic economic argument rather than the occupational competition argument. They conclude that the public in different national contexts values skilled immigration. However, culture, racial attitudes, and immigrants’ religious affiliation seem to determine attitudes towards immigration. In particular, immigrants from Muslim-majority countries are opposed at a higher rate.

These positive attitudes toward high skilled immigration may reflect the positive net fiscal impact ([OECD 2014](#)); relieves pressure on welfare states and defers the demographic change ([Gagnon 2014](#)); increases research, innovation, and entrepreneurship ([Hunt 2010](#), [Kerr and Lincoln 2010](#), [Wadhwa 2009](#)); and decreases the skills shortage ([Chaloff and Lemaitre 2009](#)). Our conjecture is that an important political consideration in a skilled immigrant’s choice of a country is public sentiment about immigrants and official immigration policies. With post-Brexit changes with regards to freedom of movement of UK citizens on the horizon, we examine what factors shape the emigration destination preferences of UK high skilled labor. In particular, we are interested in how political versus economic signals shape their emigration preferences.

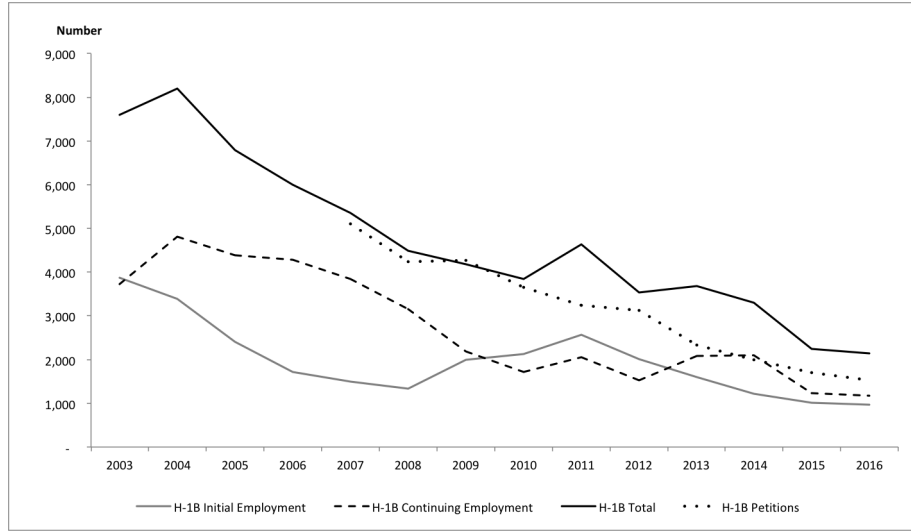


Figure 1: H-1B visa petitions and approvals for UK citizens in the USA, FY 2003-2016. Source: [USCIS \(2017\)](#) and Annual USCIS Reports to Congress

**Do the preferences of emigrants matter?** There is a high demand in most developed economies for high skilled immigration to fill skill shortages ([Chaloff and Lemaitre 2009](#)). While the USA has historically attracted a large proportion of the world’s highly skilled, other countries, such as Australia and Canada, have increasingly tried to replace the USA by enacting immigration policies favoring the highly skilled ([Betts and Cerna 2011](#), [Czaika and Parsons 2017](#), [Karaca 2018](#)). More than 120,000 British citizens have emigrated in the year following the Brexit referendum in June 2016; the USA has been a favorite destination for high skilled UK labor emigrants, alongside Australia and Western Europe ([ONS 2017](#)). However, the attractiveness of the USA seems to be in decline, as indicated by fewer H-1B visa petitions for UK high skilled workers (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> We provide insights into these trends by implementing experiments that are designed to ex-

<sup>1</sup>The H-1B visa is employer-sponsored and the largest visa program for temporary skilled immigration to the USA. For an overview of the program see [Kerr and Lincoln \(2010\)](#).

plore the factors shaping the demand (on the part of skilled potential immigrants) for migration destinations.

**Socio-economic conditions.** The evidence suggests that emigration decisions of high skilled individuals are determined by macro and microeconomic factors, such as after-tax wages, the wage premium for education, welfare benefits, health and education systems, as well as immigration restrictions (Boeri et al. 2012, Czaika and Parsons 2017, Geis, Uebelmesser and Werding 2013).<sup>2</sup> While welfare benefits are often assumed to affect migration decisions, the evidence is mixed. De Giorgi and Pellizzari (2009) find that generous welfare states attract more immigrants, Boeri (2010) that they attract lower skilled immigrants. The latter relates to the selection hypothesis: skilled migrants are deterred by generous welfare states, as they imply higher taxes and lower economic returns from migration (Borjas 1999). Giuliatti et al. (2013) conclude that there is no significant relationship between welfare and immigration.

**The politics of emigration decisions.** Another aspect that potentially shapes emigration decisions is social attitudes and the political discourse around immigration in the destination country. Assuming equal socio-economic benefits from migration, migrants would presumably relocate to a country where they feel welcome rather than to one where they are greeted with hostility.

President Trump seems to be shutting the door to (high skilled) migration, de-

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<sup>2</sup>Policies to facilitate or restrict emigration could also affect migration decisions but have received little academic attention (McKenzie and Yang 2013).

spite individual attitudes in the USA in favor of high skilled immigration ([Iyengar et al. 2013](#), [Valentino et al. 2017](#)); the widening gap between demand and supply of skilled labor ([Chaloff and Lemaitre 2009](#)); and job openings at record high levels and low unemployment ([Desilver 2017](#)). Strict immigration policies, alongside political populism and nativism, anti-immigrant rhetoric, and xenophobia might deter or deflect the highly skilled ([Czaika and de Haas 2017](#)).

Nativism, “an ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (the nation) and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state” ([Mudde 2012](#), p.2) has been on the rise in the USA ([Wadhwa 2009](#)). The ‘Muslim ban’ – immigration restrictions for Muslim-majority countries; defamations of Hispanics and African Americans as criminals and rapists; the claim that immigrants take American jobs; that Mexico is sending their criminals to the USA; and Trump’s alleged dismissal of Haiti, El Salvador, and African nations as “shithole countries” are examples of nativist frames in contemporary USA discourse.

While these statements were arguably not aimed at high skilled UK migrants, this discourse forms the politics of emigration decisions. There are signs that the ‘Trump effect’ has already led to decreased interest in American jobs from foreign high skilled individuals ([Murnane 2017](#)). Although the British continue to have a favorable view of the USA, the majority has negative views about Trump and his policies ([de Vries and Hoffmann 2018](#), [Wike et al. 2017](#)). The findings further indicate that individuals from countries with higher average skill levels, the young, those on the political left, and women are more critical of Trump’s policies. The ‘Trump effect’ might therefore particularly discourage young female leftist high skilled UK emigrants from relocating to the USA.



Populism and nativism might not only deter foreign high skilled immigration, they might also encourage foreign high skilled workers already in the destination country to emigrate. There are signs that the ‘Trumpian’ immigration policies contribute to high skilled individuals’ intentions to leave the USA ([Wadhwa 2009](#)).

Having highlighted early signs that nativism and populism might have a detrimental effect on the preferences of foreign high skilled labor to immigrate to the USA, we aim to causally identify their effect – as well as the effect of classic migration drivers – on emigration preferences of high skilled UK citizens. We make two contributions. First, a novel quantitative measure of the importance of different migration drivers, including salary, welfare benefits, education opportunities, nativist immigration policies, and the destination country itself. Second, the findings could help to inform post-Brexit immigration policy and give insights into future migration between the USA and the UK. Our conjectures are as follows.

**Politics: Nativist Policy Cues.** Our core contribution is to isolate the causal effect of strident anti-immigration rhetoric and policies on the migration decisions of highly skilled potential immigrants. Given the above discussion we expect that:

1. The USA might no longer be the only (or the most) preferred destination for high skilled foreign individuals. High skilled UK citizens might increasingly prefer to relocate to Australia or Canada;
2. Associating “USA” with skilled job offers significantly reduces their appeal to prospective employees in highly skilled foreign labor pools;
3. Associating ‘Trumpian’ immigration policies with skilled job offers significantly reduces their appeal to prospective employees in highly skilled foreign

labor pools; and

4. These effects are stronger for high skilled UK citizens with less favorable views of the USA and who are more critical of Trump's policies (e.g. those on the political left, the young, and women).

**Economics: Classic Migration Drivers.** As part of the causal estimation strategy we identify the primary classic factors that distinguish migration destinations in the migration calculus. Our conjectures are the following:

5. Associating higher average salaries or higher economic growth with employment destinations significantly increase their appeal to prospective employees in highly skilled foreign labor pools. Salaries for high skilled workers are generally high in the USA and should hence attract high skilled UK citizens;
6. Associating higher levels of social benefits with employment destinations significantly increases their appeal to prospective employees in highly skilled foreign labor pools. High skilled emigrants from countries, like the UK, with a generous welfare state will favor similar policies in destination countries; and
7. Associating better education opportunities with employment destinations significantly increases their appeal to prospective employees in highly skilled foreign labor pools due to their expected economic benefits for oneself and for one's children in the future. USA universities top the league tables in most international rankings and should hence attract high skilled UK citizens.

## Experiment Design

Our intuition is that potential highly skilled immigrants from the UK will seek out, and be exposed to, various characteristics of destination countries. And again our intuition here is that these messages that resonate will be primarily economic and political. We focus on three economic characteristics: welfare benefits; educational opportunities; and salary levels. With respect to politics, we are interested in whether strident anti-immigrant messages play a relatively important causal role in emigration preferences compared to the other salient information potential migrants acquire. We believe that conjoint survey experiments might be ideal for teasing out the causal effect of this strident anti-immigrant rhetoric.

The power of conjoint survey experiment for identifying the causal effect of different choice attributes has been extensively developed in political science ([Hainmueller and Hangartner 2013](#), [Hainmueller, Hangartner and Yamamoto 2015](#)). But of course conjoint experiments have a long history and have been widely implemented in the social sciences.

Our conjoint design has the following features: Subjects choose between Employment Destination 1 and Employment Destination 2 (those exact choice names are provided). Each employment destination has five attributes and each attribute has three values. The values associated with each attribute are randomly assigned to each of the two destinations for each choice set presented to the subjects. There are three conjoint experiments, which vary the attributes displayed to the participant. Subjects make three choices per conjoint, for a total of nine choices. The five attributes of the conjoint design correspond to the factors we conjectured drive the migration decision for skilled labor. Table 1 summarizes the attributes and

their values. Screen shots of the conjoint treatments are presented in the online appendix.

We have implemented different immigration treatments to tease out the immigration rhetoric, or simple country cues, that might cause potential high skilled immigrants to avoid migrating to specific destination countries. There are four treatments designed to capture the classic factors that might affect emigration preferences of high skilled labor: social benefits, the economy, education opportunities, and the attractiveness of service sector jobs. These treatments are implemented in all three conjoint experiments. There are three different immigration treatments corresponding to the three conjoint experiment columns in Table 1. The first two immigration conjoint experiments simply vary the nature of the anti-immigration rhetoric or policy. In the third conjoint, we vary the country name – the idea is that the USA ‘brand’ has been sufficiently tarnished by ‘Trumpian’ policies and rhetoric to cause potential highly skilled migrants to avoid the USA.

**Subject Pool.** The subject pool plays a critical element in the experimental design. First, our primary interest is in understanding the migration preferences of high skilled potential emigrants. Accordingly, we are only initially interested in administering the experimental treatments to this sub-group in the population. Second, we are interested in administering these treatments to populations from which the USA typically attracts high skilled immigrants. Accordingly, the experiments were conducted on the Nuffield CESS, University of Oxford student subject pool, populated with the high skilled labor profiles of interest to USA firms. Table B1 (online appendix) summarizes the subject profiles for this experiment. The experiments were conducted with Nuffield CESS Online facilities and

Table 1: Immigration Conjoint Experiment Treatments

	Conjoint 1	Conjoint 2	Conjoint 3
<b>Social Benefits</b>			
Generous guaranteed monthly family allowance (+)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Basic hourly minimum wage (neutral)	Yes	Yes	Yes
No state minimum wage or income support (-)	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Economy</b>			
Annual GDP Growth of 6 percent (+)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Annual GDP Growth of 4 percent (neutral)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Annual GDP Growth of 2 percent (-)	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Education (Average international rank)</b>			
Universities: 90th Percentile (+)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Universities: 60th Percentile (neutral)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Universities: 40th Percentile (-)	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Service Jobs (Average international rank)</b>			
Service salaries: 90th Percentile (+)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Service salaries: 70th Percentile (neutral)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Service salaries: 50th Percentile (-)	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Immigration One</b>			
Implementation of point-system (positive) (+)	Yes	No	No
Change in visa processing centres (neutral)	Yes	No	No
Restriction on Muslim immigration/tourist visas (-)	Yes	No	No
<b>Immigration Two</b>			
Implementation of point-system (positive) (+)	No	Yes	No
Change in visa processing centres (neutral)	No	Yes	No
Deportation of all illegal immigrants (-)	No	Yes	No
<b>Country</b>			
USA (-)	No	No	Yes
Australia (neutral)	No	No	Yes
Canada (+)	No	No	Yes

implemented on Qualtrics. In addition, the experiments were incentivized and offered subjects proper compensation for their time. On average subjects took 18 minutes and earned £5. All participants are 18 or older, each of them signed a consent form before taking part in the survey, and no deception was used.

Participants in the study are predominantly young (mean age = 26, standard deviation = 8.6), as expected with a (current and former) student subject pool that includes post-graduates. Female participants (56 percent) slightly outnumber males. The ideological preferences of subjects have a fairly normal distribution although, as we expected with student subjects, these are skewed to the Left. Participants' interest in migrating is relatively high, with a mean of 5.5 in a 1–7 point scale, indicating the relevance of the subject pool as representatives of potential high skilled migrants. The self-reported likelihood of emigrating is also high, with a mean of 4.9 in a 1–7 point scale, however somewhat lower than interest for migration. Including these variables as controls does not alter the results of the estimation (see Table D3 in online appendix). The full summary statistics Table B1 and relevant density plots are available in the online appendix.

Overall participant's rated Canada and Australia more favorably than the USA ( $p < 0.000$  and  $p = 0.000137$  for respective pairwise t-tests). This is possibly associated with the slightly more female and left wing composition of the subject pool. However, the negative evaluation of the USA brand persist in the logit estimations that control for age and gender (Table D3, online appendix).

Balance tests were carried out to evaluate adequate implementation of the randomization protocol (Tables E8-E12, online appendix). Multinomial logit estimations of the likelihood of observing a specific attribute indicate that people most interested in migrating were presented a significantly lower amount of times

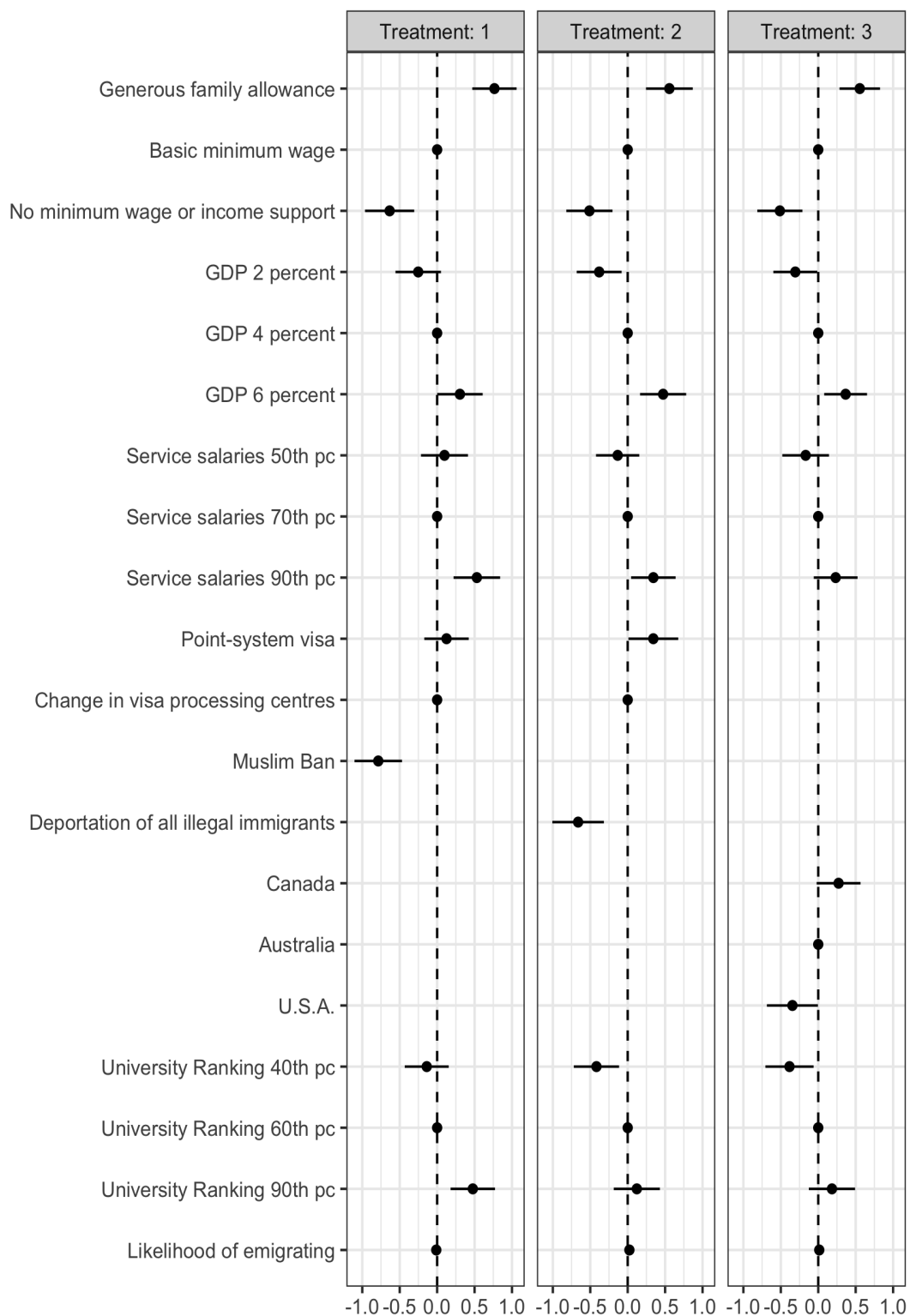
with the Canada attribute. Given the importance of having a balanced potential migrant sample across treatments, we included this variable as a control in the estimations. However, it is not a substantive or consistent predictor of destination choice, and omitting it does not alter results (data in replication material). Age also has a significant association with the likelihood of observing “No state minimum wage,” however, it is not associated with any other of the conjoint attributes and including “Age” as a control does not alter the results of the estimations. This could be caused by the existence of a few older participants in the sample. The “Other” gender category also appears significant in the balance tests, but is because only one person identified as such.

## Estimation strategy and results

We adopt a very simple strategy for recovering the causal effects of the specific characteristics of emigration destinations: we estimate a logistic regression, with individual clustered standard errors, of destination choice (whether they choose or do not choose any of the destination choices). Recall that subjects make choices for nine two-destination choice sets – each subject makes three dichotomous choices for each of the three conjoint treatments. Figure 2 presents graphical summaries of the estimated effects of the regression coefficients with 95 percent confidence intervals – see the full regression table in the online appendix. The reference categories for the conjoint attributes are the neutral categories indicated in Table 1 and they are included as dots with coefficient zero in Figure 2.

The logit results nicely confirm our expectations regarding immigration policy. In the first Immigration Treatment, the ‘Muslim Ban’ attribute has a large

Figure 2: Conjoint Results





negative coefficient. In the second Immigration Treatment the ‘Deportation’ treatment is negative and large, while the “Point-system” treatment is positive. And in the third Treatment, the “USA” value has a negative coefficient, indicating a large negative country brand (relative to the baseline Australia). However, the magnitude of the USA brand treatment effect is roughly half that of the “Muslim Ban” and “Deportation of illegal immigrants.” These results suggest that while ‘Trumpian’ politics are a strong deterrent, the USA itself might not deter high skilled immigrants as much.

In line with expectations, economic condition are relevant. Oxford subjects clearly preferred destinations with higher economic growth; those with higher service sector salaries; and destinations with generous social welfare benefits (favoring generous family allowances and avoiding those with no minimum wage or income support). Overall, both socio-economic and political factors seem to shape the emigration preferences of our highly skilled subjects. Political effects are on par with other socio-economic considerations. In particular the spread in effect size between the “No minimum wage/no income support” value and “Generous family allowance” is quite large – more than the immigration policy effect.

The pattern of effects in the second Immigration Treatment is very similar to Treatment one. Socio-economic factors matter but immigration policy clearly influence migration destination choice. In fact, the spread between the positive “Point system visa” and negative “Deportation of illegal immigrants” immigration policies are slightly wider than was the case in the first Immigration Treatment.

The negative values for the two immigration policy attributes were meant to reflect some of President Trump’s nativist rhetoric. Our intuition is that potential high skilled immigrants to the USA are quite informed of this nativist rhetoric and

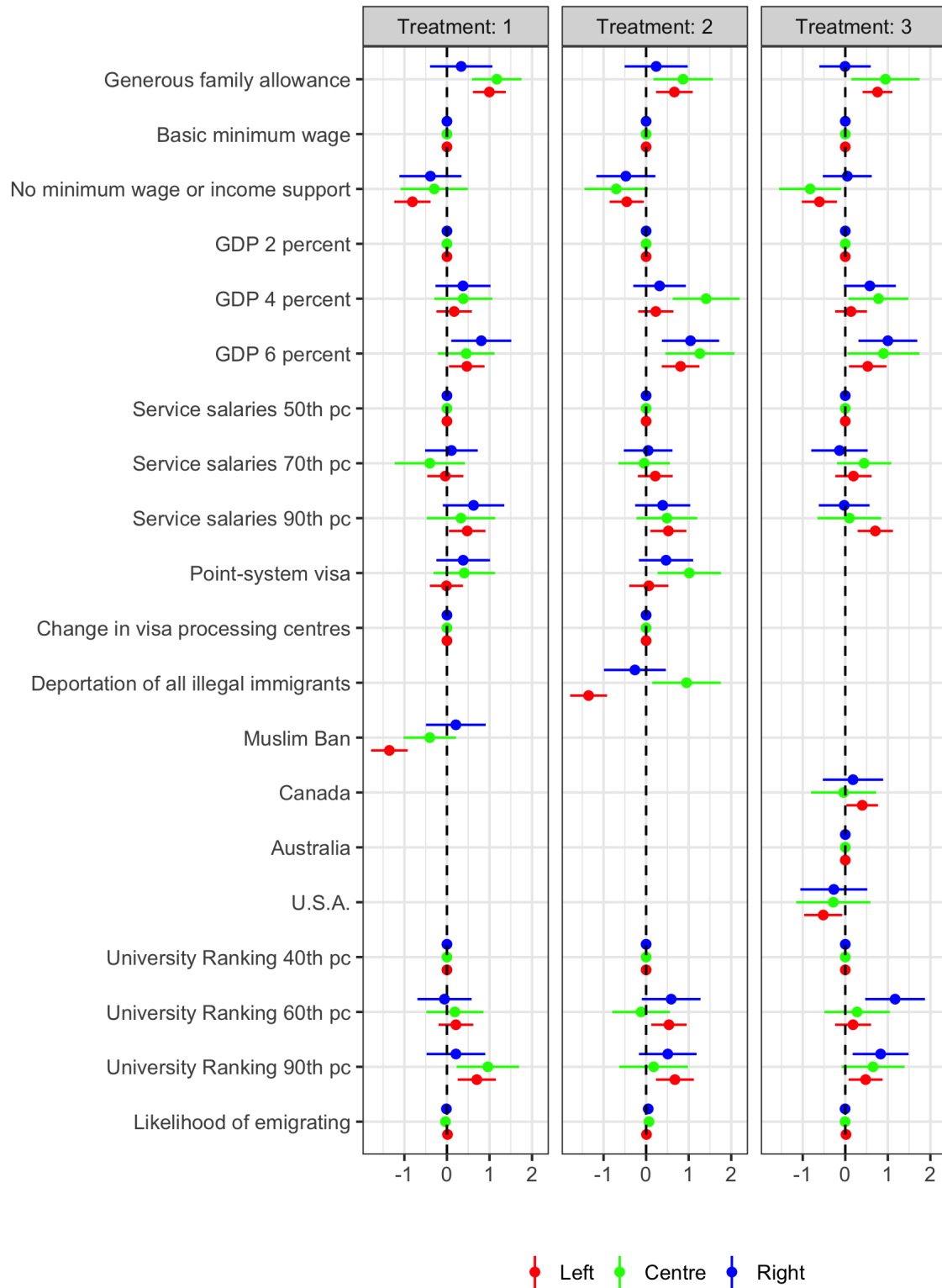
this has tarnished (at least for certain elements of the highly skilled foreign labor pools) the USA brand. Our expectation is that we would see exactly the same outcome if we replaced the immigration policy attribute with a country name attribute that included the USA as one of the randomly assigned values. The right panel of Figure 2 presents the results from the third Immigration Treatment. While the USA’s political disadvantage is large, this effect is smaller than some of the socio-economic effects. And the USA effect is smaller than the immigration rhetoric effects in the other two treatments. The USA brand has a negative effect on the preferences of potential immigrants but the anti-immigration rhetoric has an even more powerful negative effect.

Moreover, on the policy dimensions that shape emigration preferences, the results are not encouraging for the USA, at least with respect to social policies. The potential highly skilled migrants that took part in this experiment express a strong and significant preference for generous social policies. However, the USA does not have such generous social benefits.

**Left-Right Divide.** We conjectured above that potential emigrants may have partisan leanings that might affect their preferences for different employment destinations. Table B1 (online appendix) suggests that the Oxford current and former student subject pool had a slightly disproportionate number identifying to the Left on the Left-Right self-placement scale. This Left-leaning sample may partly explain the preferences for destination countries with generous welfare benefits as well as the antipathy for countries with anti-immigrant policies.

Accordingly, we divided the subjects into Left, Center and Right and then

Figure 3: Conjoint Treatments: Left-Right Divide



estimated the same conjoint models that were presented in Figure 2.<sup>3</sup> Figure 3 presents the graphical results from these three models.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, politics matters! Right-leaning subjects are almost exclusively concerned with economic performance in all three immigration treatments – they favor employment destinations that have high GDP growth and high service sector salaries. In addition to these economic factors, Left-leaning subjects appear to be very much concerned about immigration policy and social welfare. They were clearly put-off by the immigration treatments that mentioned a “Muslim Ban” and “Deportation of Illegal Immigrants,” and they were deterred by the USA as a migration destination. Finally, they responded positively to destinations with highly ranked universities, albeit less so than Right-leaning subjects.

## Conclusion and Discussion

There is an increasingly global competition for highly skilled immigrants. Historically, the USA has been active in recruiting talent from this global market for skilled labor. This essay examines whether the recent immigration politics and policies in the USA have negatively affected its ability to attract high skilled immigrants. The UK has been an important source of skilled labor for the USA and hence we study the effect of these policies on the emigration preferences of

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<sup>3</sup>Participants on the Left were operationally defined as those who indicated they were 4 or lower on an 11-point scale, Center those who selected 5, and Right those who selected 6 or more.

<sup>4</sup>The numeric logistic estimations are presented in Tables [D5–D7](#) in the online appendix.

individuals in a highly skilled British subject pool. The conjoint experiment implemented was designed to help us understand the political economy of migration by highly skilled individuals. The findings suggest that both the economy and politics matter. Politics is of particular concern to potential immigrants on the Left and Center while economic considerations shape the destination preferences of all potential migrants.

In general, anti-immigrant rhetoric seems to discourage UK highly skilled emigrants. Moreover the ‘Trumpian’ policies and rhetoric seem to have tarnished the USA brand, at least for the highly skilled participants in our sample. In line with our conjectures, the USA is not currently viewed as favorably as Canada or Australia and associating the “USA” with skilled job offers significantly reduces their appeal to prospective high skilled employees.

Furthermore, associating ‘Trumpian’ immigration policy proposals, such as the “Muslim Ban” and “Deportation of illegal migrants,” with an employment destination strongly reduces its attractiveness to potential high skilled immigrants. However these predispositions have a strong partisan flavor, with those on the Left less likely to chose an employment destination involving the USA or ‘Trumpian’ immigration policies compared to those on the Right.

Consistent with our conjectures, destinations with higher economic growth and better universities are more attractive – though education is not a strong driver of these choices. These results suggest that countries like the USA with high paying salaries and universities of excellence, are attractive destinations for high skilled labor, especially for migrants on the political right. There are, on the other hand, aspects of the USA economy and current immigration policies that will dissuade highly skilled immigrants: Skilled migrants, on both the Left and Right, prefer

destinations with generous social benefits; and high skilled migrants are dissuaded by populist or nativist politics.

Our effort to understand how USA politics and economic fundamentals shape the migration decision of highly skilled immigrants is based on potential skilled migrants from the UK. Ongoing research will explore whether these migration preferences generalize to the broader global talent pool from which the USA attracts skilled immigration.

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	Employment Destination 1	Employment Destination 2
<b>New Immigration Policies</b>	Implementation of point-system	Implementation of point-system
<b>Economic Performance</b>	Annual GDP Growth of 2%	Annual GDP Growth of 2%
<b>Education Opportunities</b>	Average international ranking of universities: 40th Percentile	Average international ranking of universities: 40th Percentile
<b>Service Sector Salaries</b>	Average international ranking of service salaries: 50th Percentile	Average international ranking of service salaries: 90th Percentile
<b>Social Benefits</b>	Basic hourly minimum wage	No state minimum wage or income support

7 = strongly **approve** of the employment destination

[illegible]

Figure A2: Screenshot conjoint treatment 2



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	Employment Destination 1	Employment Destination 2
<b>Education Opportunities</b>	Average international ranking of universities: 40th Percentile	Average international ranking of universities: 60th Percentile
<b>Social Benefits</b>	Basic hourly minimum wage	No state minimum wage or income support
<b>Economic Performance</b>	Annual GDP Growth of 6%	Annual GDP Growth of 4%
<b>New Immigration Policies</b>	Deportation of all illegal immigrants	Implementation of point-system
<b>Service Sector Salaries</b>	Average international ranking of service salaries: 70th Percentile	Average international ranking of service salaries: 90th Percentile

Figure A3: Screenshot conjoint treatment 3



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	Employment Destination 1	Employment Destination 2
<b>Social Benefits</b>	No state minimum wage or income support	No state minimum wage or income support
<b>Service Sector Salaries</b>	Average international ranking of service salaries: 50th Percentile	Average international ranking of service salaries: 70th Percentile
<b>Education Opportunities</b>	Average international ranking of universities: 90th Percentile	Average international ranking of universities: 40th Percentile
<b>Economic Performance</b>	Annual GDP Growth of 2%	Annual GDP Growth of 4%
<b>Country</b>	Canada	Australia

## Appendix B Descriptives

Table B1 presents summary statistics for age, gender and ideological self-placement of the participants, as well their interest in emigrating, their likelihood of emigrating and how favorable they rate Australia, Canada and the USA as employment destinations. As expected with a current and former student subject pool, participants are predominantly young, but there are a few older participants in the sample. Female participants (56 percent) slightly outnumber males. The ideological preferences of subjects have a fairly normal distribution although as we expected with student subjects, these are skewed somewhat to the Left. Density plots of age and ideological self-placement are below. Participant's interest in migration is relatively high, with a mean of 5.5 in a 1–7 point scale, indicating the

relevance of the subject pool as representatives of potential high skilled migrants. The self-reported likelihood of emigrating is also high, with a mean of 4.9 in a 1–7 point scale, however somewhat lower than interest for migration. Including a control for the likelihood of migration in the logit analysis does not alter the results of the estimation (see Table D3).

The overall employment destination perceptions (middle section Table B1) indicate that participants significantly favored Canada and Australia more highly than the USA ( $p < 0.000$  and  $p = 0.000137$  for respective pairwise comparisons). This is possibly associated with the slightly more female and left wing composition of the subject pool. However, the negative evaluation of the USA brand is also present in the logit estimations in Table C2, and is sustained when we incorporate controls for age and gender (Table D3).

The bottom section of the table presents the proportion (exemplified in the mean) of the participants that observed each attribute in the conjoint experiments. Roughly 1/3 of the participants saw each of the socio-economic alternatives. Since the immigration alternatives were varied across the three treatments, we expect to see the country label and negative treatment attributes roughly 1/9 of the time. However, the neutral ('Change in visa processing centers') and positive alternatives ('Implementation of point-system') were held constant across immigration treatments one and two, therefore, these attributes should have been presented twice as often (2/9). The proportions of observed attributes (Table B1) comply with expectations of a successful randomization. Further balance tests on randomization of conjoint attributes (in online appendix) indicate that socio-demographic variables are not significant predictors of observing an attribute. One notable exception is the lower probability of observing Canada for those most interested in migrating. Given this significant association we have included migration interest as a control variable in the models, however, it is not a substantive or consistent predictor of destination choice, and omitting it does not alter results (data in replication material).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>The 'Other' gender category also appears significant in the balance tests, but is because there is only one participant in that category. Age has a significant association with the likelihood of observing 'No state minimum wage' relative to 'Basic minimum wage', however, it is not associated with any other of the conjoint attributes and including age as a control does not alter the results of the estimations.

Table B1: Characteristics of the Subject Pool and summary statistics

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>N</b>
Age	25.81	8.6	19	68	196
Female	0.56	0.5	0	1	196
Ideology	4.1	1.84	0	10	196
Interest in emigrating	5.48	1.48	1	7	195
Likelihood of emigrating	4.91	1.76	1	7	195
Employment destination perceptions:					
Australia	5.18	1.26	1	7	196
Canada	5.6	1.27	1	7	196
U.S.A.	4.61	1.65	1	7	196
<b>Conjoint attribute variables</b>					
Basic hourly minimum wage	0.32	0.46	0	1	1112
Generous guaranteed monthly family allowance	0.34	0.47	0	1	1212
No state minimum wage or income support	0.34	0.47	0	1	1204
Annual GDP Growth of 2%	0.34	0.47	0	1	1200
Annual GDP Growth of 4%	0.34	0.47	0	1	1191
Annual GDP Growth of 6%	0.32	0.47	0	1	1137
Service salaries: 50th Percentile	0.35	0.48	0	1	1236
Service salaries: 70th Percentile	0.33	0.47	0	1	1168
Service salaries: 90th Percentile	0.32	0.47	0	1	1124
Change in visa processing centres	0.22	0.41	0	1	776
Implementation of point-system	0.22	0.41	0	1	770
Restriction on Muslim immigration/tourist visas	0.11	0.32	0	1	397
Deportation of all illegal immigrants	0.12	0.32	0	1	409
Country label: Australia	0.12	0.32	0	1	413
Country label: Canada	0.11	0.31	0	1	392
Country label: U.S.A.	0.11	0.31	0	1	371
Ranking of universities: 40th Percentile	0.34	0.47	0	1	1195
Ranking of universities: 60th Percentile	0.33	0.47	0	1	1164
Ranking of universities: 90th Percentile	0.33	0.47	0	1	1169

Figure B4: Age Distribution of UK Subject Pool

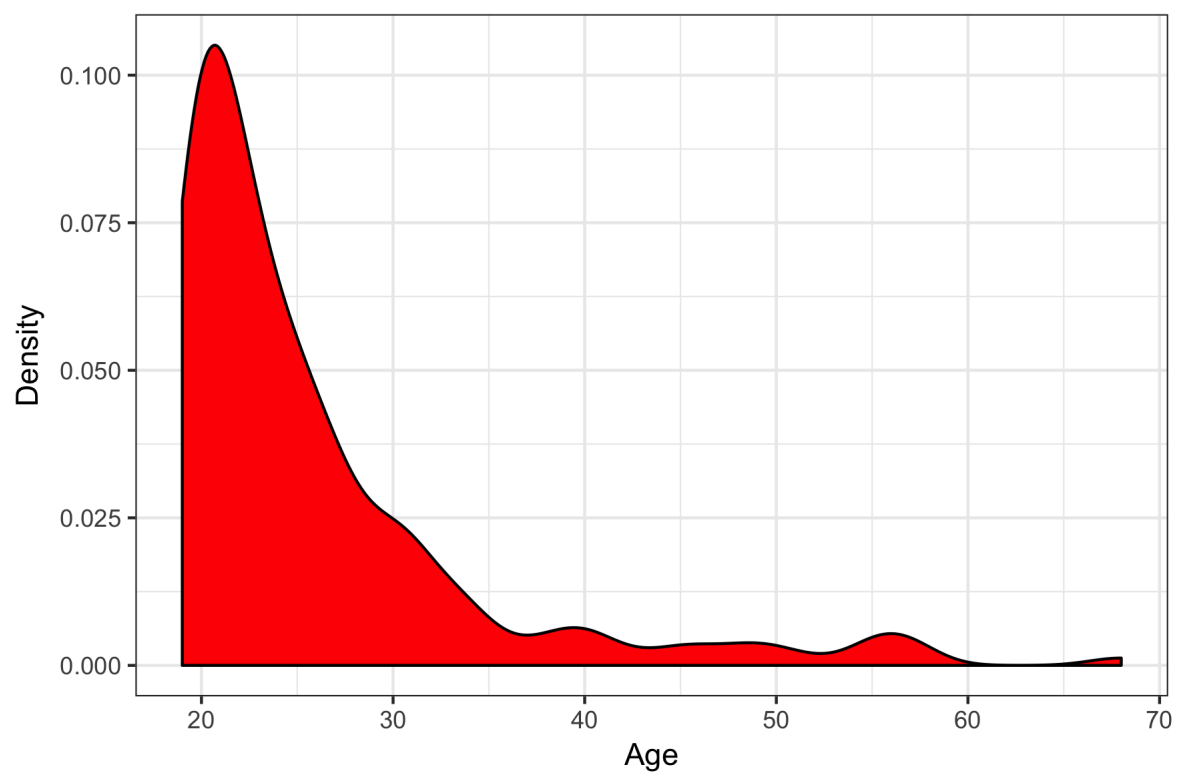




Figure B5: Gender Distribution of UK Subject Pool

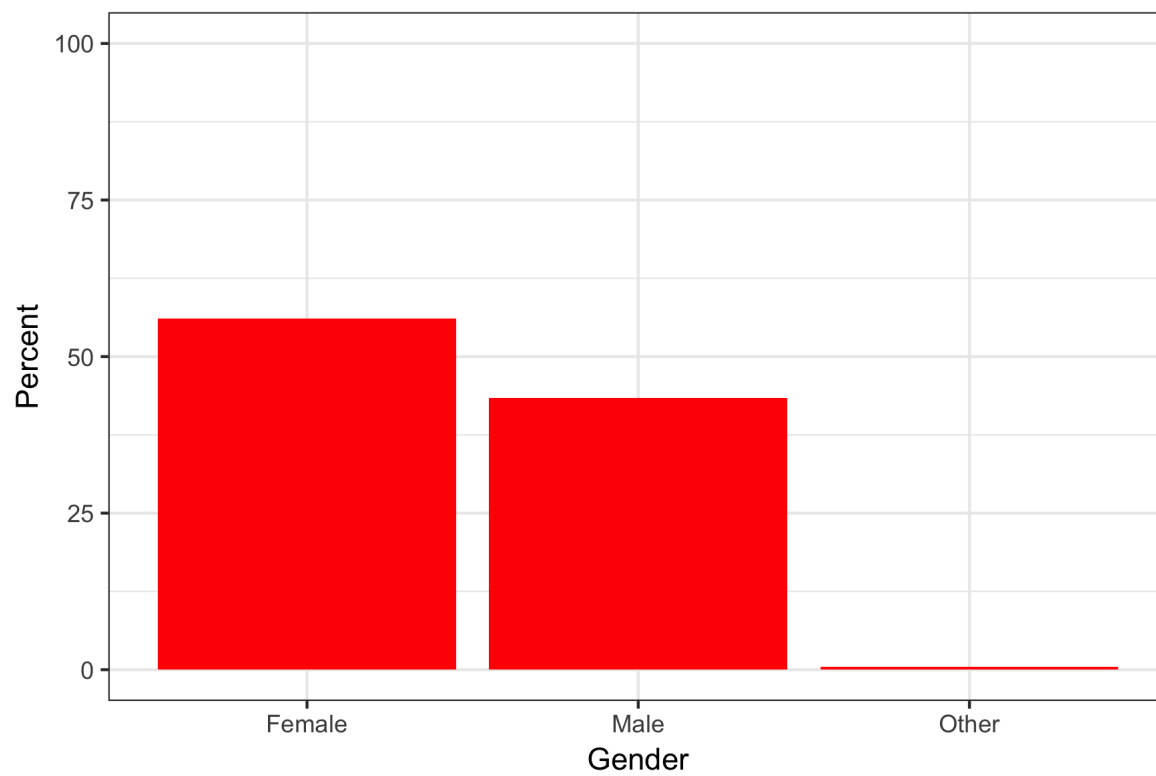
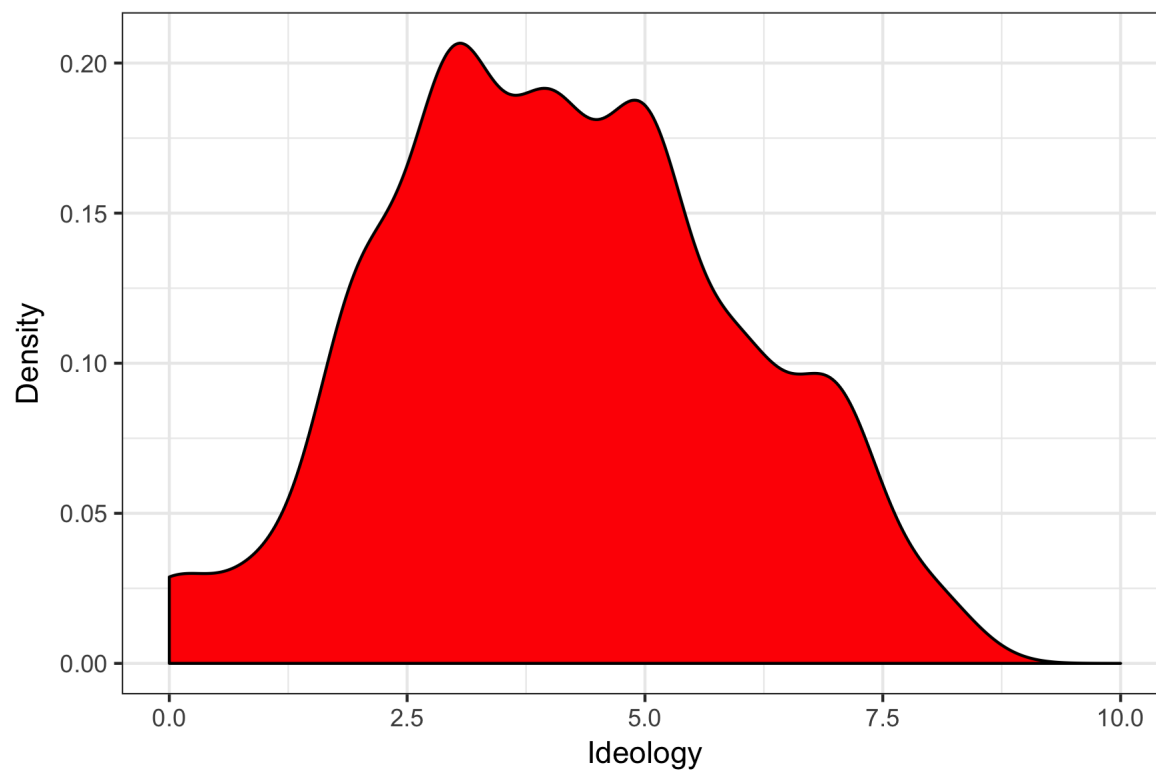


Figure B6: Ideological Distribution of UK Subject Pool



## Appendix C Main model table

Table C2: Logistic regression results

	Immigration Treatment		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Generous family allowance	0.765*** (0.151)	0.557*** (0.159)	0.555*** (0.138)
No minimum wage or income support	−0.635*** (0.168)	−0.511*** (0.157)	−0.513*** (0.154)
GDP 2 percent	−0.253 (0.155)	−0.381** (0.153)	−0.307** (0.150)
GDP 6 percent	0.304** (0.155)	0.473*** (0.157)	0.366** (0.146)
Service salaries 50th pc	0.098 (0.160)	−0.134 (0.148)	−0.168 (0.159)
Service salaries 90th pc	0.530*** (0.159)	0.343** (0.152)	0.233 (0.149)
Deportation of all illegal immigrants		−0.662*** (0.176)	
Point-system visa	0.125 (0.151)	0.342** (0.170)	
Muslim Ban	−0.787*** (0.162)		
Canada			0.272* (0.150)
U.S.A.			−0.345** (0.174)
University Ranking 40th pc	−0.139 (0.150)	−0.417*** (0.154)	−0.384** (0.164)
University Ranking 90th pc	0.476*** (0.151)	0.122 (0.157)	0.183 (0.158)
Likelihood of emigrating	−0.012 (0.014)	0.023* (0.014)	0.014 (0.011)
Constant	−0.092 (0.213)	0.003 (0.199)	−0.019 (0.201)
Observations	1,170	1,170	1,170
Log Likelihood	−731.956	−740.916	−759.410
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,487.913	1,505.832	1,542.820

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

Standard errors clustered by participant



## Appendix D Additional models

Table D3: Logistic regression results including control variables

	Immigration Treatment		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Generous family allowance	0.769*** (0.153)	0.556*** (0.160)	0.557*** (0.138)
No minimum wage or income support	-0.637*** (0.169)	-0.514*** (0.158)	-0.527*** (0.155)
GDP 2 percent	-0.252 (0.155)	-0.383** (0.153)	-0.303** (0.150)
GDP 6 percent	0.307** (0.156)	0.478*** (0.158)	0.370** (0.146)
Service salaries 50th pc	0.102 (0.161)	-0.136 (0.148)	-0.174 (0.160)
Service salaries 90th pc	0.528*** (0.159)	0.339** (0.152)	0.235 (0.150)
Deportation of all illegal immigrants		-0.662*** (0.176)	
Point-system visa	0.131 (0.152)	0.346** (0.170)	
Muslim Ban	-0.790*** (0.162)		
Canada			0.281* (0.150)
U.S.A.			-0.346** (0.175)
University Ranking 40th pc	-0.141 (0.150)	-0.418*** (0.155)	-0.389** (0.165)
University Ranking 90th pc	0.482*** (0.152)	0.126 (0.158)	0.175 (0.158)
Age	-0.006** (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)
Gender: Male	0.020 (0.047)	-0.025 (0.046)	-0.013 (0.040)
Gender: Other	-0.196 (0.127)	0.346*** (0.094)	0.735*** (0.145)
Ideological self-placement	-0.005 (0.013)	-0.013 (0.012)	-0.001 (0.010)
Likelihood of emigrating	-0.012 (0.014)	0.023* (0.014)	0.015 (0.011)
Constant	0.077 (0.231)	0.100 (0.219)	0.071 (0.208)
Observations	1,170	1,170	1,170
Log Likelihood	-731.562	-740.666	-758.904
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,495.124	1,513.333	1,549.808

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

Standard errors clustered by participant

Table D4: Comparison of logistic results for treatment 3 by country pair

	Country Pair	
	Non-identical	Identical
Generous family allowance	0.338* (0.177)	0.961*** (0.267)
No minimum wage or income support	−0.409** (0.193)	−0.755*** (0.264)
GDP 2 percent	−0.248 (0.176)	−0.235 (0.279)
GDP 6 percent	0.433** (0.172)	0.448 (0.280)
Service salaries 50th pc	−0.112 (0.184)	−0.278 (0.281)
Service salaries 90th pc	0.258 (0.180)	0.208 (0.277)
Canada	0.381* (0.225)	0.142 (0.111)
U.S.A.	−0.508** (0.245)	0.001 (0.119)
University Ranking 40th pc	−0.531*** (0.204)	−0.184 (0.272)
University Ranking 90th pc	−0.065 (0.194)	0.648** (0.270)
Age	−0.003 (0.003)	−0.002 (0.005)
Gender: Male	0.012 (0.045)	−0.058 (0.102)
Gender: Other	0.495*** (0.162)	1.036*** (0.310)
Ideological self-placement	−0.004 (0.012)	−0.014 (0.024)
Likelihood of emigrating	0.010 (0.014)	−0.002 (0.024)
Constant	0.211 (0.271)	−0.171 (0.365)
Observations	772	398
Log Likelihood	−503.758	−244.928
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,039.515	521.855

*Note:*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

*Standard errors clustered by participant*

Table D5: Model breakouts by gender and ideology (Treatment 1)

	Breakout					
	Gender			Ideology		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Left</i>	<i>Centre</i>	<i>Right</i>	
Generous family allowance	0.949*** (0.233)	0.622*** (0.213)	0.997*** (0.198)	1.172*** (0.297)	0.335 (0.374)	
No minimum wage or income support	-0.451* (0.272)	-0.834*** (0.209)	-0.811*** (0.218)	-0.298 (0.405)	-0.388 (0.372)	
GDP 4 percent	0.380* (0.225)	0.160 (0.220)	0.170 (0.213)	0.384 (0.348)	0.377 (0.330)	
GDP 6 percent	0.743*** (0.251)	0.428** (0.203)	0.467** (0.213)	0.453 (0.341)	0.807** (0.360)	
Service salaries 70th pc	-0.119 (0.238)	-0.113 (0.221)	-0.039 (0.217)	-0.403 (0.421)	0.106 (0.316)	
Service salaries 90th pc	0.551** (0.246)	0.400* (0.222)	0.476** (0.219)	0.329 (0.412)	0.626* (0.369)	
Point-system visa	0.220 (0.196)	0.102 (0.223)	-0.013 (0.199)	0.407 (0.370)	0.382 (0.322)	
Muslim Ban	-0.186 (0.238)	-1.260*** (0.219)	-1.353*** (0.220)	-0.403 (0.315)	0.209 (0.358)	
University Ranking 60th pc	0.221 (0.238)	0.092 (0.199)	0.210 (0.208)	0.187 (0.343)	-0.058 (0.325)	
University Ranking 90th pc	0.685*** (0.252)	0.593*** (0.228)	0.702*** (0.229)	0.962** (0.374)	0.211 (0.352)	
Likelihood of emigrating	-0.008 (0.019)	-0.012 (0.022)	0.014 (0.022)	-0.034 (0.042)	-0.013 (0.024)	
Constant	-0.925*** (0.327)	-0.008 (0.295)	-0.303 (0.284)	-0.790* (0.419)	-0.781 (0.512)	
Observations	510	654	684	222	264	
Log Likelihood	-320.449	-397.813	-402.620	-137.496	-174.728	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	664.898	819.627	829.239	298.992	373.455	

Table D6: Model breakouts by gender and ideology (Treatment 2)

	Breakout					
	Gender			Ideology		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Left</i>	<i>Centre</i>	<i>Right</i>	
Generous family allowance	0.307 (0.247)	0.713*** (0.214)	0.665*** (0.220)	0.869** (0.357)	0.237 (0.378)	
No minimum wage or income support	-0.676*** (0.249)	-0.437** (0.202)	-0.456** (0.205)	-0.702* (0.382)	-0.476 (0.354)	
GDP 4 percent	0.307 (0.222)	0.419** (0.212)	0.228 (0.211)	1.410*** (0.401)	0.316 (0.315)	
GDP 6 percent	0.842*** (0.257)	0.808*** (0.223)	0.810*** (0.227)	1.264*** (0.414)	1.044*** (0.344)	
Service salaries 70th pc	-0.027 (0.213)	0.279 (0.206)	0.215 (0.209)	-0.045 (0.309)	0.048 (0.292)	
Service salaries 90th pc	0.352 (0.249)	0.569*** (0.217)	0.523** (0.216)	0.489 (0.364)	0.389 (0.330)	
Point-system visa	0.868*** (0.254)	-0.033 (0.225)	0.065 (0.234)	1.015*** (0.380)	0.468 (0.326)	
Deportation of all illegal immigrants	-0.335 (0.253)	-0.883*** (0.246)	-1.352*** (0.221)	0.951** (0.412)	-0.263 (0.371)	
University Ranking 60th pc	0.369 (0.239)	0.388* (0.204)	0.537** (0.212)	-0.119 (0.346)	0.589* (0.352)	
University Ranking 90th pc	0.488** (0.249)	0.510** (0.224)	0.677*** (0.227)	0.177 (0.412)	0.509 (0.346)	
Likelihood of emigrating	0.030 (0.020)	0.022 (0.020)	0.009 (0.023)	0.068* (0.041)	0.049* (0.026)	
Constant	-0.966*** (0.370)	-0.850*** (0.328)	-0.633** (0.311)	-2.054*** (0.617)	-1.232** (0.577)	
Observations	510	654	684	222	264	
Log Likelihood	-320.405	-411.187	-414.744	-132.023	-170.605	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	664.811	846.373	853.488	288.046	365.209	



Table D7: Model breakouts by gender and ideology (Treatment 3)

	Breakout					
	Gender			Ideology		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Left</i>	<i>Centre</i>	<i>Right</i>	
Generous family allowance	0.627*** (0.182)	0.485** (0.212)	0.757*** (0.178)	0.945** (0.409)	-0.006 (0.308)	
No minimum wage or income support	-0.126 (0.218)	-0.882*** (0.216)	-0.607*** (0.211)	-0.825** (0.373)	0.047 (0.293)	
GDP 4 percent	0.222 (0.236)	0.368* (0.191)	0.135 (0.191)	0.780** (0.359)	0.577* (0.312)	
GDP 6 percent	0.823*** (0.260)	0.555** (0.225)	0.528** (0.225)	0.897** (0.431)	1.001*** (0.353)	
Service salaries 70th pc	0.355 (0.241)	0.086 (0.219)	0.192 (0.218)	0.443 (0.326)	-0.137 (0.338)	
Service salaries 90th pc	0.487** (0.234)	0.365* (0.215)	0.705*** (0.212)	0.096 (0.383)	-0.026 (0.304)	
Canada	-0.002 (0.239)	0.524*** (0.194)	0.399** (0.189)	-0.040 (0.390)	0.182 (0.362)	
U.S.A.	-0.280 (0.252)	-0.393 (0.243)	-0.518** (0.228)	-0.282 (0.445)	-0.270 (0.402)	
University Ranking 60th pc	0.495** (0.251)	0.261 (0.217)	0.182 (0.216)	0.278 (0.393)	1.171*** (0.359)	
University Ranking 90th pc	0.549** (0.255)	0.583*** (0.196)	0.478** (0.204)	0.653* (0.378)	0.831** (0.335)	
Likelihood of emigrating	0.012 (0.017)	0.005 (0.018)	0.016 (0.019)	-0.004 (0.036)	-0.005 (0.032)	
Constant	-1.090*** (0.327)	-0.664** (0.287)	-0.821*** (0.305)	-0.958* (0.523)	-1.102*** (0.507)	
Observations	510	654	684	222	264	
Log Likelihood	-335.061	-412.989	-429.735	-137.432	-170.784	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	694.123	849.978	883.470	298.864	365.567	

## Appendix E Balance Tests

Table E8: Balance test: Social Benefits

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Generous family allowance	No state minimum wage
	(1)	(2)
Age	−0.001 (0.005)	−0.009* (0.005)
Gender: Male	−0.025 (0.085)	−0.056 (0.085)
Gender: Other	−2.010* (1.073)	0.241 (0.501)
Likelihood of emigrating	−0.006 (0.024)	0.004 (0.024)
Ideology	0.027 (0.023)	0.013 (0.023)
Constant	0.055 (0.194)	0.248 (0.197)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	7,716.613	7,716.613
<i>Note:</i>		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table E9: Balance test: Economy

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	GDP 2%	GDP 6%
	(1)	(2)
Age	−0.001 (0.005)	0.004 (0.005)
Gender: Male	−0.054 (0.084)	0.036 (0.085)
Gender: Other	−0.088 (0.508)	−1.346* (0.795)
Likelihood of emigrating	−0.015 (0.024)	−0.010 (0.024)
Ideology	−0.011 (0.023)	−0.010 (0.023)
Constant	0.168 (0.194)	−0.067 (0.195)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	7,726.969	7,726.969
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table E10: Balance test: Service Jobs

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Service salaries ranking: 50th pc	Service salaries ranking: 90th pc
	(1)	(2)
Age	0.001 (0.005)	−0.004 (0.005)
Gender: Male	0.098 (0.084)	0.053 (0.086)
Gender: Other	0.551 (0.633)	0.572 (0.633)
Likelihood of emigrating	0.015 (0.024)	−0.015 (0.024)
Ideology	−0.014 (0.023)	−0.0001 (0.024)
Constant	−0.030 (0.192)	0.116 (0.197)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	7,725.379	7,725.379
<i>Note:</i>		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table E11: Balance test: Education

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Ranking of universities: 40th pc	Ranking of universities: 90th pc
	(1)	(2)
Age	−0.006 (0.005)	−0.0001 (0.005)
Gender: Male	−0.006 (0.084)	−0.125 (0.085)
Gender: Other	1.060 (0.821)	1.565** (0.780)
Likelihood of emigrating	0.010 (0.024)	−0.037 (0.024)
Ideology	0.001 (0.023)	0.038 (0.023)
Constant	0.125 (0.195)	0.081 (0.193)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	7,718.298	7,718.298
<i>Note:</i>		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table E12: Balance test: Immigration

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Point-system (1)	Muslim Ban (2)	Deportation of illegal immigrants (3)	Australia (4)	Canada (5)	U.S.A. (6)
Age	0.006 (0.006)	-0.010 (0.008)	-0.002 (0.007)	-0.010 (0.008)	0.007 (0.007)	0.002 (0.007)
Gender: Male	0.019 (0.104)	0.012 (0.127)	-0.105 (0.126)	-0.007 (0.125)	-0.025 (0.127)	-0.00002 (0.130)
Gender: Other	-0.825 (0.699)	-1.398 (1.077)	-1.409 (1.077)	-0.577 (0.813)	-11.112*** (0.00002)	0.196 (0.641)
Likelihood of emigrating	-0.028 (0.029)	-0.055 (0.036)	-0.012 (0.035)	0.053 (0.036)	-0.084** (0.036)	-0.031 (0.036)
Ideology	0.014 (0.029)	0.017 (0.035)	-0.007 (0.034)	-0.002 (0.034)	-0.010 (0.035)	0.032 (0.036)
Constant	-0.083 (0.239)	-0.221 (0.294)	-0.448 (0.290)	-0.633** (0.299)	-0.391 (0.285)	-0.771*** (0.296)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	13,325.390	13,325.390	13,325.390	13,325.390	13,325.390	13,325.390

*Note:*

\*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01