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

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Does Immigration Erode Social Cohesion?

Contrast/Conflict Theory
- Immigration a threat to majority
  \[ \Rightarrow \text{less social cohesion} \]
- “Hunkering Down” (Putnam, 2007)

Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954)
- Regular contact with immigrants increases social cohesion

This Paper
- Sudden inflow of >1m asylum seekers in Germany in 2015
- Study the impact on general indicators of social cohesion (trust, fairness, ...)
- ...and immigration-specific indicators (attitudes, violence)
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The 2015 Refugee Inflow in Germany
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Source: Guardian

Source: Evangelische Zeitung
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Data: Measuring Social Cohesion

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

2) Anti-Immigrant Violence
   ▶ Data collected by the Antonio Amadeu Foundation
   ▶ Newspaper articles on anti-immigrant violent attacks (physical violence, arson, etc)
Difference-in-Difference Analysis

Our analysis compares

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

Basic Idea

- Compare people who start with the same attitudes
- See if the changes are stronger among people in high-inflow areas
No Substantial Effects on Social Cohesion

People can be trusted
(Mean = 0.67)

People are helpful
(Mean = 0.41)

People are fair
(Mean = 0.41)

Caution towards foreigners
(Mean = 0.85)

Worry about crime
(Mean = 0.37)

Donations
(Mean = 0.51)

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Coefficients and C.I.

-0.04 -0.02 0.00 0.02 0.04 0.06

High Afd votes counties

Low Afd votes counties
Significant Effects on Anti-Immigrant Violence
1m Refugees Did not Erode Social Cohesion

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

Questions for future research:
  - Long-run effects (10-20 years after)
  - Implications for new immigration waves (Ukraine)