

# Effect of Redistribution on Preferences over Foreign Workers

Daiki Kishishita\*  
Tomoko Matsumoto†

August 7, 2024

## 1 Motivation

Previous studies have empirically examined preferences for foreign workers (see Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014) for a literature review). A concern for accepting immigrants is that it may increase welfare expenditures; that is, immigrants could be a burden for the welfare states (e.g., Gerber, Huber, Biggers, and Hendry, 2017; Kage, Rosenbluth, and Tanaka, 2022a). This may change what types of immigrants are preferred by citizens. The objective of this study is to test this hypothesis rigorously by conducting a survey experiment in Japan.

## 2 Experimental design

We conduct an online survey experiment in Japan with roughly 2000 respondents.

The survey design is summarized as follows. After several socio-demographic questions are asked, respondents are randomly assigned to one of the following two groups:

- Treatment: Respondents read sentences showing that immigrants will join a part of national healthcare insurance in Japan, and immigrants with lower income are more likely to become beneficiaries of the healthcare insurance system given the redistributive nature of the system.
- Control: Such information will not be provided.

---

\*School of Management, Tokyo University of Science. 1-11-2, Fujimi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, Japan. 102-0071. E-mail: [daiki.kishishita@gmail.com](mailto:daiki.kishishita@gmail.com). ORCID number: 0000-0002-2462-0728.

†Institute of Arts and Sciences, Tokyo University of Science. 1-3, Kagurazaka, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, Japan. 162-8601. E-mail: [tomoko.matsumoto@rs.tus.ac.jp](mailto:tomoko.matsumoto@rs.tus.ac.jp). ORCID number: 0000-0002-3705-9140.

After this, every respondent will participate in conjoint experiments, where each respondent is asked to answer the following question:

- Imagine that you have to accept one hundred foreign workers to Japan. There are the following two types of foreign workers. After reading the profiles of each type carefully, please answer how many of workers you will accept from each type.

The profiles of each type are randomly determined as in standard conjoint experiments.

### 3 Hypotheses and analysis plan

**Manipulation check:** To check whether the treatment works as intended, we conduct the following analysis. Both the treatment and control groups are asked to answer whether foreign workers participate in the national healthcare insurance system. If the treatment works as intended, the fraction of respondents who answered YES in the treatment group should be larger than that in the control group. To test this, we run the following regression:

$$y_i = \nu T_i + X_i\beta + \epsilon_i,$$

where  $y_i$  is the binary outcome of asking whether foreign workers participate in the national healthcare insurance system,  $T_i$  is the binary variable that takes one if respondent  $i$  is in the treatment group, and  $X_i$  is the set of controls. We expect that  $\nu$  is positive.

**Baseline preferences over foreign workers' income levels:** Previous literature reports that Japanese tend to prefer skilled immigrants to low-skilled immigrants (e.g., Fraser and Cheng, 2022; Kage, Rosenbluth, and Tanaka, 2022b). Given this, we obtain the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1.** *In the control group, respondents tend to prefer high-income immigrants to low-income immigrants.*

To test this hypothesis, we report the marginal means of each attribute, following Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley (2020). We statistically test whether the marginal means of high-income and low-income immigrants differ.

**Effect of treatment:** The treatment group receives information that low-income immigrants become a burden for the welfare state. Therefore, after receiving this information, respondents are expected to prefer high-income immigrants more aggressively than in the control group.

**Hypothesis 2.** *Compared with the control group, respondents in the treatment group prefer high-income immigrants more aggressively than in the control group.*

If this hypothesis is supported, it indicates that concerns about burdens for welfare states are a driver of preferences for high-income immigrants. To test this hypothesis, we report the marginal means of high-income immigrants in the treatment and control groups and test the difference between them.

Other than incomes, attributes of immigrants in our conjoint experiments include age, industry, the region where they come from, and political regime and economic development of the country where they come from. Because these are irrelevant to whether immigrants will become beneficiaries of the healthcare system conditional on their income level, we expect that the treatment has no impact on preferences over these attributes.

**Hypothesis 3.** *Preferences over other attributes are the same between the treatment and control groups.*

**Heterogeneous effect of treatment:** For those who have a concern that high-income immigrants could be their job competitors, accepting high-income immigrants is not good for their self-interest. Therefore, for these respondents, the effect of the treatment could be smaller.

**Hypothesis 4.** *The effect claimed in Hypothesis 2 is small among those who have a concern that immigrants could be their job competitors.*

We test this hypothesis by dividing our samples into two subsamples based on the question asking whether respondents have a concern that immigrants may threaten their jobs.

**Baseline preferences over other attributes:** In addition to these main hypotheses, we also present several hypotheses on the baseline preferences over other attributes. These are derived from the previous empirical researches in Japan (e.g., Kage, Rosenbluth, and Tanaka, 2022b; Fraser and Cheng, 2022).

**Hypothesis 5.** *In the control group, respondents prefer*

- *younger immigrants,*
- *immigrants working in the care industry*
- *immigrants from Western and Asian countries to those from African and Middle-East countries,*
- *immigrants from countries with democracy to those from authoritarian countries, and*
- *immigrants from developed countries to those from developing countries.*

## References

- Fraser, Nicholas AR, and John W Cheng. 2022. "Do natives prefer white immigrants? Evidence from Japan." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45(14): 2678–2704.
- Gerber, Alan S, Gregory A Huber, Daniel R Biggers, and David J Hendry. 2017. "Self-interest, beliefs, and policy opinions: Understanding how economic beliefs affect immigration policy preferences." *Political Research Quarterly* 70(1): 155–171.
- Hainmueller, Jens, and Daniel J Hopkins. 2014. "Public attitudes toward immigration." *Annual Review of Political Science* 17(1): 225–249.
- Kage, Rieko, Frances M Rosenbluth, and Seiki Tanaka. 2022a. "The Fiscal politics of immigration: expert information and concerns over Fiscal Drain." *Political Communication* 39(6): 826–844.
- Kage, Rieko, Frances M Rosenbluth, and Seiki Tanaka. 2022b. "Varieties of public attitudes toward immigration: Evidence from survey experiments in Japan." *Political Research Quarterly* 75(1): 216–230.
- Leeper, Thomas J, Sara B Hobolt, and James Tilley. 2020. "Measuring subgroup preferences in conjoint experiments." *Political Analysis* 28(2): 207–221.