Individual and Context Determinants of Attitudes towards Immigration in Latin America

Background

Despite the recent liberal turn in several Latin American countries´ immigration policies (Acosta & Feline 2015), 34% of its population rejects current level of immigration (Esipova et al. 2015). However, within this heterogeneous region, there is a wide range of rejection rates, which extends from values above 50%, in Central America and the Caribbean, to less than 30% in South America. Nevertheless, the evidence on economic integration of Latin American intra-regional migrants underlines serious difficulties in the access to formal employment or acceptable wages. This is the case for Andean migrants in Argentina (Maguid & Bruno 2010; Sala 2009) and Chile (Stefoni 2002); Cubans, Dominicans, Paraguayans and Peruvians in Uruguay (Prieto 2016); or Haitians in Brazil (Cavalcanti 2015). These kind of hardships could be due to the short time elapsed since the migrants arrival, or to the negative selection of interregional migrants, who on average are less educated than the extra-regional migrants. But, they could be associated to characteristics of the hosting country as well, such as restrictive migration policy frameworks -still enforced in some Latin American countries (García Zamora & Gainza 2014)-, or structural dynamics of exclusion of hosting labour markets (Weller 2009). Also within this contextual dimension, we should consider the attitudes of the hosting society, since xenophobic attitudes also affect the integration of immigrants and their wellbeing (Bahamonde 2013; Stephan & Stephan 1985).

Either individual or contextual determinants have been suggested as predictors of these attitudes. The literature on contextual determinants points to economic changes, unemployment rates, magnitude of immigration, religion, culture, or media as key drivers of attitudes (Atwell Seate & Mastro 2016; Lawrence 2011; Kunovich 2016). The literature on the individual determinants found that youngster, males, highly educated, politically left-oriented, urban residents, and people with direct or indirect migration experience have greater odds of having a positive attitude (Markaki & Longhi 2012; Mayda 2004; O'rourke & Sinnott 2006). However, some authors argue that the context affects the impact of individual attitudes, especially of education, depending on the magnitude of immigration, its composition by origin, the hosting country´s population size, its human development and employment rates (Johnson & Rodger 2015; de Oliveira et al. 2005).

This paper focuses on the individual and contextual determinants of attitudes towards immigration in 18 Latin American countries. We examine how spread are negative attitudes towards immigration among natives, which individual attributes are associated to them (sex, age, schooling, employment, and migration experience), and where these attitudes are more likely to arise (economic hardship, restrictive migration policy, and growing immigration). Findings may contribute to the identification of target population for further awareness campaigns driven to eradicate the negative prejudices about immigration. The study of natives´ attitudes to immigration is of significant relevance in a context like the Latin American, where immigration is growing and changing its origin composition.

Data and Methods

This paper uses the most recently released data from Latinobarómetero 2015 for 18 Latin American countries, including: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The total number of cases is about 20,250 cases, and country-specifics samples are approximately from 1000 to 1200 cases.

Despite that questions on attitudes towards immigration were included in four editions of Latinobarómetro (2002, 2009, 2010 and 2015), no previous work has discussed the responses concerning labour market prejudice on immigration, the policies banning immigration or the assumption that only rich countries should host immigration, which are the three questions asked in this survey. We have focused on the statement suggesting that immigrants take away natives´ jobs which approximate the material fear to immigration in the labour market. The Likert scale of response was recodified from the

five original categories into two: ¨0¨ neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree, and ¨1¨ agree and strongly agree. By means of a logistic binomial regression we have estimated the probability of agreeing with this statement among the native population aged 20-60 years, using two strategies.

First, focusing on the individual determinants we examine the effect of employment status on the probability of agreeing with the idea that immigrants negatively affect jobs competition. Control variables include sex, age, attended University, ever consider migrating, and a dummy for country of residence. Second, to account for variation between countries in the effect of individual characteristics on the fear to labour market competition, a multilevel logistic regression with mixed effects was specified. This strategy enables exploring variations due to country-differences in unemployment and net migration rates. Control variables considered at country-level include GDP per capita and GDP per capita growth rate. The following table introduces the data sources for the variables used at individual and country level.

Figure 1. Independent variables in logistic regression models for the probability of agreement with statement ¨immigrants compete for local jobs¨
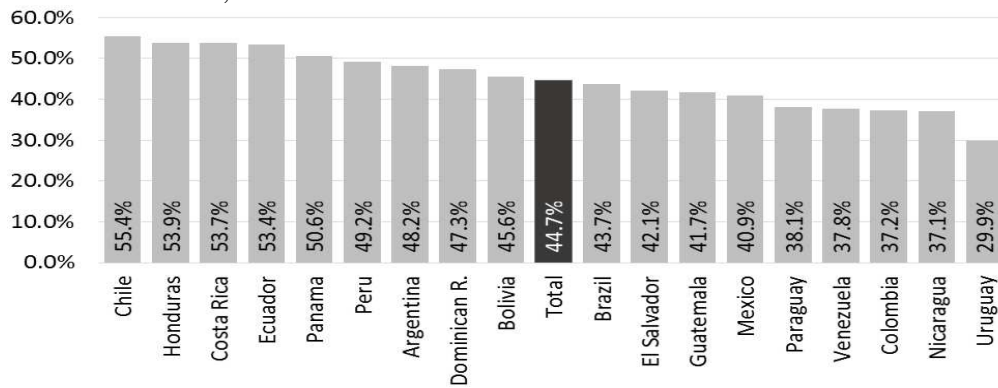
Variable by level	Data sources
Individual level	
Age	
Sex	
Educational attainment	Latinobarómetro 2015
Ever thought of migrating	
Employment status	
Country level	
GDP per capita growth (2015)	
GDP per capita, for 2010 US$ (2015)	World Bank Dataset
Unemployment (2014), modelled ILO estimate	
Net migration rate j (2015)	United Nations Population Division Estimates 2015 Revision
Dummy indicator of progressive migration policy j	(Martínez-Pizarro 2011; Koolhaas et al. 2015)

In the full version of this paper (in progress), we will test for other variables capturing migration (share of immigrant in stock population at 2010 census round), skills of immigrants (same source), enforcement of progressive immigration policy (based on literature review, Figure 1), and the vulnerability of employment index estimated by ILO (World Bank Dataset). Also, we expect to include trans-level interactions between individual attributes as education, employment status or sex (at first level), and unemployment or net migration rates (country level).

Preliminary Results

The idea that immigration increases job competition is widespread among Latin Americans (44.7%). Despite bivariate analysis does not show an evident association between net migration and fear to job competition due to migration - rejection rates above 50% are observed in both net immigration and net emigration countries (figure 2) -, multilevel regression with country-random effects suggests that net migration rate, as well as unemployment and GDP growth rates, predict this negative attitude. In accordance to previous evidence, the fear to labour market competition among Latin American population is influenced by context, and the effect of individual variables differs by country (figure 3). Regarding individual characteristics, we confirm the expected significant negative association between employment status and the negative attitudes. Unemployed people have from 14% to 20% more chances to believe that immigrants affect job competition, and those with a stable employment –more common within the public sector- have from 7% to 15% less odds of thinking so. This effect holds its significance ceteris paribus education, sex, and age. In respect to control variables, though education shows the expected effect –those who attended University are less likely to have a negative attitude-, age does not have a significant effect, and the results for sex point to females as less likely to fear immigration for material reasons.

Figure 2. Share of population that agrees or strongly agrees with the idea that immigrants compete with natives' jobs. Latin America, 2015

Country	Share
Chile	55.4%
Honduras	53.9%
Costa Rica	53.7%
Ecuador	53.4%
Panama	50.6%
Peru	49.2%
Argentina	48.2%
Dominican R.	47.3%
Bolivia	45.6%
Total	44.7%
Brazil	43.7%
El Salvador	42.1%
Guatemala	41.7%
Mexico	40.9%
Paraguay	38.1%
Venezuela	37.8%
Colombia	37.2%
Nicaragua	37.1%
Uruguay	29.9%

Figure 3. The effect of individual characteristics on the probability of agreeing with ¨immigrants compete for jobs with natives. Latin America 2015

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Self-employed	1.007	0.960	0.965	0.958	0.957	0.950
(ref. inactive)	(0.0432)	(0.0442)	(0.0450)	(0.0448)	(0.0447)	(0.0440)
Employed/Public	0.892[+]	0.857[*]	0.863[*]	0.880[+]	0.881[+]	0.873[*]
(ref. inactive)	(0.0557)	(0.0548)	(0.0555)	(0.0576)	(0.0576)	(0.0568)
Employed/Private	0.936[+]	0.892[*]	0.898[*]	0.896[*]	0.895[*]	0.890[*]
(ref. inactive)	(0.0459)	(0.0462)	(0.0468)	(0.0468)	(0.0468)	(0.0463)
Unemployed	1.191[*]	1.149[+]	1.153[*]	1.147[+]	1.146[+]	1.144[+]
(ref. inactive)	(0.0848)	(0.0831)	(0.0834)	(0.0831)	(0.0830)	(0.0828)
Female		0.900[**]	0.902[**]	0.900[**]	0.901[**]	0.898[**]
(ref. Male)		(0.0327)	(0.0329)	(0.0329)	(0.0329)	(0.0327)
20-29 years old			0.990	1.008	1.005	
(ref.45-60)			(0.0437)	(0.0449)	(0.0449)	
30-44 years old			0.950	0.956	0.953	
(ref.45-60)			(0.0402)	(0.0405)	(0.0405)	
Attended University				0.840[**]	0.836[**]	0.845[**]
(ref. no)				(0.0528)	(0.0527)	(0.0526)
Considered migration					1.050	
(ref. no)					(0.0427)	
Argentina	1.314[**]	1.319[**]	1.319[**]	1.326[**]	1.335[**]	1.324[**]
	(0.126)	(0.127)	(0.127)	(0.127)	(0.128)	(0.127)
Brazil	1.087	1.090	1.091	1.106	1.109	1.104
	(0.103)	(0.103)	(0.103)	(0.105)	(0.105)	(0.105)
Bolivia	1.159	1.158	1.159	1.166	1.166	1.166
	(0.112)	(0.112)	(0.112)	(0.113)	(0.113)	(0.113)
Colombia	0.901	0.902	0.901	0.914	0.916	0.914
	(0.0854)	(0.0855)	(0.0855)	(0.0869)	(0.0872)	(0.0870)
Chile	1.873[***]	1.879[***]	1.874[***]	1.894[***]	1.911[***]	1.897[***]
	(0.179)	(0.179)	(0.179)	(0.181)	(0.184)	(0.181)
Costa Rica	1.703[***]	1.700[***]	1.701[***]	1.708[***]	1.714[***]	1.706[***]
	(0.168)	(0.168)	(0.168)	(0.168)	(0.169)	(0.168)
Dominican Rep.	1.250[*]	1.251[*]	1.251[*]	1.259[*]	1.244[*]	1.259[*]
	(0.122)	(0.122)	(0.122)	(0.123)	(0.122)	(0.123)
Ecuador	1.591[***]	1.591[***]	1.592[***]	1.667[***]	1.683[***]	1.664[***]
	(0.149)	(0.149)	(0.149)	(0.159)	(0.161)	(0.159)
El Salvador	0.958	0.957	0.958	0.953	0.951	0.953
	(0.0973)	(0.0972)	(0.0973)	(0.0968)	(0.0966)	(0.0968)
Guatemala	0.977	0.974	0.974	0.963	0.968	0.964
	(0.0987)	(0.0984)	(0.0984)	(0.0974)	(0.0981)	(0.0975)
Honduras	1.632[***]	1.628[***]	1.632[***]	1.616[***]	1.612[***]	1.611[***]
	(0.160)	(0.159)	(0.160)	(0.158)	(0.158)	(0.158)
Nicaragua	0.804[*]	0.802[*]	0.803[*]	0.799[*]	0.800[*]	0.800[*]
	(0.0840)	(0.0839)	(0.0840)	(0.0837)	(0.0837)	(0.0836)
Panama	1.468[***]	1.465[***]	1.467[***]	1.485[***]	1.493[***]	1.483[***]
	(0.146)	(0.145)	(0.146)	(0.148)	(0.149)	(0.147)
Peru	1.352[**]	1.352[**]	1.354[**]	1.363[**]	1.372[***]	1.363[**]
	(0.128)	(0.128)	(0.128)	(0.129)	(0.131)	(0.129)
Paraguay	0.920	0.922	0.922	0.927	0.936	0.928
	(0.0895)	(0.0897)	(0.0897)	(0.0903)	(0.0915)	(0.0903)
Uruguay	0.627[***]	0.630[***]	0.630[***]	0.630[***]	0.634[***]	0.629[***]
	(0.0636)	(0.0639)	(0.0639)	(0.0640)	(0.0645)	(0.0639)

Venezuela	0.864	0.865	0.865	0.868	0.870	0.867
	(0.0826)	(0.0827)	(0.0828)	(0.0831)	(0.0833)	(0.0830)
Random-effects						
sd(Net migration rate)						
sd(GDP pc growth)						
sd(GDP pc)						
sd(Unemployment rate)						
sd(Constant)						
Constant	0.7086	0.7727	0.7867	0.7963	0.7873	0.7894
AIC	20140.0	20133.7	20135.9	20130.4	20131.0	20128.5
N	14845	14845	14845	14845	14845	14845

Note: Estimation from logistic regression for models 1-6, and Multilevel logit with mixed effects for model 7. Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses; $^+ p < 0.10$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$, $^{***} p < 0.001$.

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