

# Deep trade agreements may not facilitate international migration: Evidence from a clustering-based approach

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## **Abstract**

This study empirically analyzes the heterogeneous effects of regional trade agreements (RTAs) on bilateral migration flows by estimating the structural gravity model for international migration. I use the clustering method to classify 164 migration-related RTAs into several groups based on their contents of provisions (in labor market regulation, visa and asylum, and services policy areas). Using a sample of 35 OECD destination countries and 201 origin countries over the period 1995–2016, I first find signing migration-related RTAs significantly increases bilateral migration flows, whereas the average effect of signing an RTA in general is insignificant. By classifying RTAs into groups, I find that the impact of RTAs on migration flows is actually quite heterogeneous. In particular, deep RTAs in the labor market regulation and services policy areas do not facilitate migration. By contrast, deep RTAs in the visa and asylum policy areas do promote international migration. I further characterize each cluster of RTAs in detail by the mean scores of migration-related provisions to show why deep RTAs do not necessarily have the positive impact on bilateral migration flows.

*Keywords:* deep trade agreements, international migration, clustering