

Immigrants and the public purse

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The fiscal implications of migration – that is whether immigrants are a burden on, or net contributor to, the public purse – has been the basis of much public discussion on immigration. Studies and analysis using varying (and sometimes [questionable](#)) methodologies have been made supporting both sides of the argument. But now the OECD has thrown itself into the ring, conducting a [ground-breaking cross-country analysis](#) of 28 OECD countries (blogged about by the authors [here](#) and Michael Clemens [here](#)).

Their findings show that *employed* immigrants do have a positive impact on the public purse. This positive impact, however, is largely offset by immigrants that are *unemployed*. When the authors combine these two groups they find that “the [fiscal] impact of the cumulative waves of migration that arrived over the past fifty years in OECD countries is on average close to zero, rarely exceeding 0.5% of GDP in either positive or negative terms.”