

ABSTRACT

What are the economic gains from free mobility of labor? Straightforward economic arguments point to the potential for large global output gains from movement of labor from less to more productive locations. Yet the politics of receiving countries seems resistant, characterized rather by efforts to limit migration, or to stop it altogether. In this lecture we examine what explains the obvious differences between what many economists agree upon, and the political reality. We discuss implications of liberalizing migration, paying attention not only to overall gains but also to how gains are distributed. We ask whether it is those distributional consequences or considerations beyond economics that motivate keenness to impose restrictions on migration.