Getting workers 'on board' with automation: Evidence from shipping container adoption*

Jacob Greenspon[1]

[1]University of Oxford and Harvard Kennedy School of Government

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Abstract

Labor-saving technologies offer opportunities for increased productivity and welfare gains, but are controversial among workers whose jobs they threaten. In competitive, tradable industries, however, these workers are faced with a dilemma: blocking adoption at their own firm protects against their direct displacement, but failing to block adoption industry-wide means that product demand—and jobs—may shift toward firms able to adopt the automation. I explore these dynamics in the context of the mid-20th century 'containerization' of US oceangoing shipping. Ports that adopted containers drastically reduced the labor intensity of their cargo handling services, resulting in substantial cost-savings passed on to consumers. I first show that dockworker employment fell in containerized ports–a direct displacement channel–and decreased by a nearly as large magnitude following containerization of competing ports. I use newly-digitized historical data on product-by-port cargo throughput and show that demand for cargo handling by port firms increased after their containerization. I next find evidence for a first-mover advantage, where ports that adopted containers earlier had higher demand for cargo-handling than late- and never-adopting ports, and that this was passed on to dockworkers in early-adopter ports as higher earnings. Finally, I test historical arguments that divergent approaches by dockworker unions to the threat of containerization influenced adoption timing across ports. Using newly-digitized data on union locals membership, I find that the probability of early container adoption decreases in union density among East Coast ports where the union obstructed containerization, but increases in density among Pacific ports where unions cooperated in exchange for compensatory payments, suggesting that in the latter higher unionization rates facilitated bargaining for rent-sharing from automation.

*Doctoral student, Department of Economics, University of Oxford and Research Coordinator, Reimagining the Economy Project, Harvard Kennedy School of Government. Email: jacob.greenspon@economics.ox.ac.uk. I thank Nathaniel Lane, Noam Yuchtman, Robert Margo, Douglas Gollin, and Hillary Vipond for insightful conversations and the University of Oxford Centre for Research on Structural Transformation and Growth and Rothermere American Institute for funding.

1 Introduction

Accelerated development of artificial intelligence, robotics, and other automation technologies offers the prospect of reversing long-term slowdowns in labour productivity growth. However, labour-saving technologies are often controversial. The adoption of automations may be hindered, or even blocked entirely, by workers threatened by displacement (Mokyr, 1992; Caprettini and Voth, 2020; Rauh and Golin, 2023; Frey, 2019), possibly resulting in foregone productivity and overall welfare gains.[1]

Workers are typically unable to prevent all firms in an industry from adopting the labour-saving technology. The firms that do adopt, and successfully translate their productivity gains into lower consumer prices, may be able to steal business from firms that are unable to adopt the automation. In competitive, tradeable industries, non-adopting firms could therefore face declining demand for their products—with potential negative implications for their workers. As a result, workers face a dilemma when an automation technology is developed for their industry: blocking adoption at their own firm preserves their jobs from direct replacement by the technology, but early-adopter firms may increase production at the cost of business—and jobs—at non- or late-adopting rivals.

Analyzing these dynamics empirically requires detailed data on an industry where technological adoption, both firm and worker long-run outcomes, inter-firm competition, and worker bargaining power are easily observed. In this paper I study 'containerization': the adoption of shipping containers for oceangoing cargo stowage in the mid-twentieth century United States. Beginning in 1956, shipping lines began packing goods in containers, rather than as separate 'breakbulk cargo' items packed tightly throughout ships' holds, and ports installed dockside cranes to hoist these boxes on and off ships. This meant a few workers with a large crane could move as much freight on and off cargo ships in a few hours as several crews of a dozen longshoremen and stevedores could in days.[2] Shipping productivity improvements from containerization increased overall welfare and

[1] In an early example, Queen Elizabeth I blocked invention of a stocking frame in 1589 after lobbying from English hosiers whose livelihoods depended on knitting stockings by hand (Schneider and Vipond, 2023). More recently, Hollywood screenwriters bargained for limitations against the use of generative artificial intelligence following a 2023 strike (Coyle, 2023).

[2] For example, the first purpose-built container crane, installed in Houston, TX in 1959, loaded a 40,000-pound box every three minutes, translating to 400 tons per hour, which was over 40 times the average productivity of a longshore gang using shipboard winches (Gomtsyan, 2016).

developing container handling facilities in ports could be very profitable for port owners. However, dockworkers quickly recognized the threat to their jobs.[3] Both contemporary commentators (Weir, 1967) and some later analyses (El-Sahli and Upward, 2017; Gomtsyan, 2016) document the mass dislocation of dockworkers following containerized shipping adoption (hereafter 'containerization'). Some unions took an adversarial approach to containers, with one leader pledging his union would "not see the dockworker made a human sacrifice to 'progress'" (ILA, 1959). Other union leaders, however, recognized the threat of containerization would not disappear, and negotiated for their members to accept buyouts and other job transition assistance in exchange for not opposing containerization at their docks. Elsewhere, in ports with weak dockworker unions, containerization proceeded without resistance.

The containerization of some ports meant that the services provided by dockworkers at all ports—inter-modal cargo transshipment— re-concentrated in fewer ports, typically those early-to-adopt containers (eg. Newark, NJ or Oakland, CA), which served increasingly-larger container ships (Hall, 2009). Ports that had previously been among the largest in the US, but never incorporated containers into their cargo transshipment processes (eg. Brooklyn and Manhattan) or adopted too late to catch up to earlier adopters (eg. San Francisco), declined significantly thereafter (Levinson, 2006). Indeed, most of the largest US container ports today were among the earliest ports to containerize.[4] For dockworkers, their union successfully preventing container adoption in their port protected against their *direct* displacement by machines, but may have reduced demand for their cargo handling services—and thus *indirectly* hurt their employment—as boats shifted to visit only more productive containerized ports, and goods then traveled by land to (or from) their final destinations (or initial sources).

The degree of competitive threat faced by any given port from other ports having containerized can be relatively easily estimated. For a goods importer, the alternative to having their products unloaded at the port in their own city was shipping them through a competing port further away and transporting the goods over land to their final destination (with the same logic in reverse for goods exporters). The substitutibility between ports is therefore based on the cost of land

[3]While at times 'longshoreman', 'stevedore', and 'dockworker' had slightly different meanings, in this paper I use the terms interchangeably in accordance, for example, with titles in occupational classifications.

[4]Six of the ten current largest US container ports (in 2021 in terms of TEU (twenty-foot equivalent unit) tonnage) were among the first seven ports to containerize: Angeles, CA; Long Beach, CA (containerized 1960 and combined in my data); Port of New York and New Jersey (Newark, NJ adopted 1956); Savannah, GA (1971); Port of Virginia (Norfolk adopted 1968); Houston, TX (1956); Charleston, SC (1970); Oakland, CA (1959); Tacoma, WA (1970); and Seattle, WA (1964). Of the 22 largest US ports today in my data (excluding Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and Alaska), all but one containerized by 1972.

transportation. I capture this via a market access style measure of the degree of 'containerized competition' faced by each seaport in each year from all other ports that have containerized by that time, using estimates of contemporary county-to-county land transport costs (Jaworski and Kitchens, 2019).

I use data for ports on their own container adoption (Brooks et al., 2021) as well as the degree of containerized competition they faced from rival ports to study worker and firm outcomes in ports as containers were adopted in the US over the second half of the 20th century. Across 90 major seaports, total county dockworker employment fell by a similar amount following containerization in that port (direct displacement) or increased containerized competition (indirect impacts), with the competitive threats neutralized once a port containerizes. On the firm side, I find increased cargo handling activity at ports following their adoption of containers using novel data on annual port-by-product cargo throughput digitized from historical US Army Corps of Engineers reports (USACE, 1953). I then highlight an apparent first-mover advantage: 14 years after the onset of containerization, both worker earnings and indicators of firm revenue were significantly higher in the earliest ports to adopt containers. Following the historical literature on containerization, I examine the role of dockworker unions among other possible explanations for why certain ports containerized earlier. I argue that in more unionized ports, dockworker unions had more credibility when either bargaining with port owners over compensation in exchange for cooperating with containerization, or when pledging to oppose adoption. I find that early adoption is positively associated with union density in cooperative-bargain ports but negatively associated with density in ports that opposed containerization, using new estimates of pre-container dockworker union density by port from digitizing union locals membership records (ILA, 1955; ILWU, 1955).

My empirical analysis begins by regressing annual dockworker employment at a port on the full interaction of an indicator for whether the port had containerized by that year and the degree of containerized competition it faced from elsewhere in a two-way fixed effects model. I find that dockworker employment decreases following own-port containerization and also decreases by almost as large a magnitude with the increasing competition from nearby ports containerizing. However, controlling for these main effects, containerization appears to insulate dockworkers from further competitive threats: dockworker employment somewhat *increases* with container adoption in ports that face more containerized competition, though on net containerization is associated with job losses. I run similar regressions for the volume of container-suitable cargo tonnage handled at

each port, and find that the demand for transshipment services at a port increases with its own containerization, especially when controlling for the level of competition it faces, suggesting that containerization also benefited port owners.

Next, I show that containerization entailed a first-mover advantage for ports that adopted earlier, and therefore were able to attract cargo transhipment business from non-containerized ports. I first run a regression of container-suitable cargo activity (in terms of both tonnage and estimated value) in 1970 across a cross section of ports, controlling for pre-container (1953) levels of cargo activity. I find that, compared to ports that had not containerized by 1970, early-adopter ports (by 1960) had significantly higher demand for their services in 1970, with a much smaller advantage for ports that containerized during the 1960s. I then run Mincer wage regressions to compare dockworkers' income in 1969 based on the container adoption timing of their ports. I find a substantial pay premium for dockworkers in early-adopter ports versus later- and non-adopters, especially when controlling for metropolitan area fixed effects. Early adoption appears to benefit both workers and firms (port owners).

Together, these findings suggest that containerization resulted in dockworker dislocation via both direct displacement and indirect substitution away from non-adopting ports, but that it also entailed a first-mover advantage whereby ports that adopted containers earlier, and the workers employed there, fared better. I therefore explore potential explanations for containerization decisions and timing across ports. In particular, I focus on the role of labour unions. Despite their strength, dockworker unions recognized that they could not prevent containerization everywhere in the US and that consequent business stealing by containerized ports would threaten job security. I argue these direct and indirect threats to dockworker jobs were taken into account when forming their strategies for bargaining with employers over container adoption, though bargaining outcomes differed for the two US dockworker unions.

I first replicate first-stage relationships in Brooks et al. (2021) and Ducruet et al. (2024) where adoption is predicted by a geographic cost shifter, ex-ante port depth. I include this cost-shifter and other potential predictors of adoption from the literature on adoption in a regression of early containerization on dockworker union density, a measure of local bargaining power, with separate coefficient estimates for each of the two coast-wide dockworker unions. Contemporary and retrospective accounts of containerization attribute some differences in adoption across ports to the divergent stances of these unions (Levinson, 2006; Monaco and Olsson, 2005; Ross, 1970), with

variation in the ability of unionized workers in a given port to either uphold a union-wide bargain, or to credibly oppose adoption, based on their local union density. I find that the probability of early container adoption is decreasing in union density among Atlantic and Gulf coast ports (whose union fought containerization to protect all dockworker jobs) but increasing in union density among Pacific ports (whose union bargained to cooperate in exchange for job buyouts for union members only). This suggests that in the latter, higher unionization rates facilitated bargaining for rent-sharing from automation, contrary to most previous research where greater worker representation hinders adoption.

Finally, I construct a simple game theory model where employers attempt to adopt an automation and bargain to provide compensatory payments in exchange for the union's support. In the face of increasing adoption by its rivals, an employer may elect to attempt adoption without compensation, but if there is a high degree of worker hold-up power then the result is non-adoption (i.e. no containerization). The employer could instead offer a package of payments to compensate the union for the lower labour-intensity of the automated production (e.g. containerized transshipment). I show the conditions which govern the size of this compensation package, namely the level of competition, the degree of hold-up power the workers have over production, and the differences between wages and between employers' profits with and without adoption. Understanding the role of these factors generally, and lessons from container adoption specifically, can shed light on how to encourage automation today in industries with high worker bargaining power.

Contribution to literature. This paper builds on several strands of research related to shipping containerization, worker displacement from automation, and the influence of unions on technological change in a firm.

I use newly-digitized historical data on cargo throughput and dockworker employment by port to study the impacts of containerization on cargo transshipment firms and longshoremen. Previous research has mainly focused on the drastic reductions in trade costs, and increases in trade flows and economic development, that containerization enabled (Levinson, 2006; Coşar and Demir, 2018; Hummels, 2007; Bernhofen et al., 2016, 2021). Bridgman (2024) argues that the reduction in shipping costs at US ports from containerization was delayed by a decade after its 1965 adoption into international shipping. He attributes this delayed impact to compensation deals for longshoremen that artificially inflated labour costs despite increasing labour productivity in containerized ports.

While I do not study these shipping or labor costs specifically, in contrast I find a much earlier impact (by 1970) of containerization increasing demand for cargo transshipment in early-adopting ports and earnings for dockworkers in those ports. More recent studies have also estimated increases in local population around containerized ports due to increased market access (Brooks et al., 2021; Ducruet et al., 2024), highlighting the positive impact of container adoption on local economic development.[5]

The impact of containerization on dockworkers received much attention from contemporary commentators (Glazier, 1960; Weir, 1967; Fairley, 1961; Ross, 1968, 1970; Goldberg, 1968) and later scholars (Donovan, 1999; Herod, 1998). However, in contrast to research on trade costs and population growth, there has been less empirical research on containerization's labour impacts, especially in the US where it was first adopted. El-Sahli and Upward (2017) document the employment and earnings trajectories of British dockworkers using 40 years of longitudinal micro data. They find that union-negotiated job guarantees protected dockworker employment until the guarantees were removed three decades later and that even after their expiration dockworkers did not experience worse labour market outcomes than observably similar workers. Work in the U.S. has been limited by insufficiently detailed historical data on dockworker employment. Gomtsyan (2016) looks at the share of workers employed as longshoreman in both containerized and non-containerized ports, finding that after the onset of containerization this share declined across all ports, with steeper declines in initially larger ports (but also larger declines in overall unemployment in these ports). He does not analyze the number of dockworkers employed in each port nor their earnings and also does not take into account differential container adoption by ports, indirect effects of containerized competition on workers (especially competing ports within the same metropolitan area labor market, such as New York City and Newark), or how worker unions navigated job threats from containerization. Hall (2009) also analyzes earnings of US dockworkers but only after 1975 and with a focus on the effects of deregulation. He finds that dockworkers in the 11 largest US container port cities (as of 2005) had a statistically significant earnings premium compared to dockworkers elsewhere in the US, which grew from the late 1970s until 2005. This aligns with the pay premium I estimate for dockworkers in early-adopter ports even in 1970, given that many early-adopter ports became the largest US container ports by the early 2000s. However, I build on this prior research by using data on dockworker earnings and employment counts by US county

[5] Brancaccio et al. (2024); Blonigen and Wilson (2008) and Clark et al. (2004) also show the importance of port productivity in general for increasing trade.

starting before containerization began in 1956 (from Eckert et al. (2022)) to study labour market impacts in adopting and non-adopting ports. I also add a new analysis of firm outcomes, from newly-digitized data on cargo throughput by port, as well as examine the influence of dockworker unions on adoption with newly-digitized data on union locals membership.

In studying impacts of containerization on dockworkers, this paper builds on a growing body of research on worker displacement and job trajectories after automation, both historically (see review in Schneider and Vipond (2023)) and more recently (Humlum, 2020; Bessen et al., 2019). Historical episodes of technological unemployment are often found to have substantial and lasting impacts. For example, Cockriel (2024) finds that American shoemakers most exposed to adoption of a boot-stitching machine in the 1860s lost over 2 years worth of earnings, with almost as large declines for their children. While this paper does not study intergenerational outcomes, I do find lasting declines in dockworker employment following containerization. Other work finds that mechanization in the late 19th century led to both job loss and creation of new roles (Atack et al., 2019), which echoes my findings of increases in the share of cargo handling workers in jobs that benefited from containerization, such as crane operation and mechanics. However, most research on the labour market impacts of automations focus on local service sectors (e.g. Feigenbaum and Gross (2020)) or on manufactured goods (e.g. Boustan et al. (2022); Koch et al. (2021)). Given the competition among ports for attracting transshipment business, the containerization of cargo handling dockwork can be considered automation of a tradeable services sector, a context in which these dynamics have rarely been studied. Containerization may therefore have stronger parallels to modern tradable service industries where unionized workers may be threatened by–and influence the pace of—automation, such as warehousing or retail sales. I also build on previous work by leveraging variation in the degree of competition faced by firms over time to explicitly estimate both direct and indirect disemployment impacts of automation and find the latter is nearly as large in magnitude as direct displacement. This suggests that workers may be misguided in seeking to block automation at their own firm (Rauh and Golin, 2023) if they nonetheless face reduced labor demand due to business stealing by competitors that do adopt productivity-improving technologies. It is therefore important for workers to consider both sources of dislocation when deciding their stance on automation threats, as some dockworkers appeared to (Herod, 1998).

In examining how workers respond strategically to threats of technological unemployment, I contribute to previous work on "technological resistance" (Schneider and Vipond, 2023) as well as

a wider literature on directed technical change (Acemoglu, 2002). Historical research on the former has focused on "machine breaking" in the first industrial revolution (Nuvolari, 2002; Caprettini and Voth, 2020), where workers without union representation attempted to delay adoption of automations that would reduce demand for their labour. Other research has focused on guilds of skilled artisans, arguing they opposed technologies that undermined their position in markets (Mokyr, 1992; Rosenberg and Curci, 2023; Epstein, 1998). Research focused on more recent periods typically views their modern analogues—labour unions—as negatively impacting incentives for firms to invest in new technologies because of the risk of a union's ex-post hold-up power (Grout, 1984; Card et al., 2014; Cardullo et al., 2015).[6] Labour conflicts that hinder technological adoption may meaningfully contribute to regional economic decline (Alder et al., 2023).

However, union bargaining power may not necessarily hinder technological adoption (Berton et al., 2021; Dowrick and Spencer, 1994). Insider-outsider theories of labor unions argue that they protect incumbent workers (Lindbeck and Snower, 2001) and therefore resist automations that displace them. Compensating workers that are displaced may mitigate this opposition. On the US Pacific Coast, where union members received high levels of compensation, the probability of early adoption was increasing in union bargaining power. Theoretical work by Tauman and Weiss (1987) also finds that unions may increase adoption of technologies that attract new demand or help surmount competitive threats. This fits with dockworkers recognizing the competitive threat to their jobs from their port losing business if it did not containerize. A similar view argues that in oligopolistic markets, unions that have bargained for higher employment levels incentivize firms to innovate in order to protect their market shares (Beath et al., 1989; Ulph and Ulph, 1994).[7] This may only hold if unions can credibly commit to facilitating the adoption of an innovation that boosts productivity, which may be more difficult with labour-saving technologies. I find that local union density predicts containerization in ports organized by the more centralized Pacific-coast dockworker union and not in ports organized by the relatively decentralized east coast union, in line with the latter being less able to credibly commit to allowing containerization. This also aligns with Haucap and Wey (2004) who argue that firms' investment incentives are largest under centralized unions. Together, these results fit with more positive views of unions' influence on technological

[6] A complementary literature also studies the impact of unions on *innovation*, rather than technological adoption (Bradley et al., 2017; Menezes-Filho et al., 1998).

[7] However, this literature focuses primarily on research and development (e.g. Menezes-Filho et al. (1998)), rather than technology adoption. Another view is that unions boost labour productivity by acting as collective voice institutions that increase effort, improve knowledge-sharing and innovation within a firm, and reduce turnover (Freeman and Medoff, 1984).

adoption and worker outcomes. Acemoglu and Johnson (2024) argue that shared prosperity from technological change after 1850, where both wages and profits increased, was "undergirded by a changing balance between capital and labor, as...trade unions were empowered to negotiate wages and working conditions."

Finally, this paper relates to a limited empirical literature on the role of competitive dynamics in firms' technological adoption decisions. Schmidt-Dengler (2024) finds that US hospitals' adoption of MRI machines is motivated to a small, but significant, extent by their desire to pre-empt adoption by rivals rather than solely considering their own marginal benefits. This builds on a larger theoretical literature on competitive dynamics in adoption (Ruiz-Aliseda and Zemsky, 2006), and specifically the role of preemption on the timing of adoption (Fudenberg and Tirole, 1985; Riordan, 1992). To the best of my knowledge, this paper is the first study of competitive dynamics in adoption of automation technologies specifically, for which it is more important to incorporate dynamics around workers facilitating or opposing the adoption.

2 Historical background

Until the mid-twentieth century, oceangoing shipping of general cargo was all 'break-bulk': items were packed individually into ships holds, either loose or in small containers such as boxes, barrels or pallets (El-Sahli and Upward, 2017).[8] The dockside services that moved this cargo between ships and land-based transportation such as railcars and trucks—hereafter defined as ocean transshipment shipping—were primarily manual: longshoremen used some tools such as hooks, pulleys, or winches but often relied on their brute strength to move cargo. This is illustrated in the images in Figure 1 of both breakbulk goods and containers .

The containerization era began in 1956 when the *Ideal-X* sailed from Port Newark to the Port of Houston (Gomtsyan, 2016). By 1960, containerized shipping had been adopted at two other east coast ports (Tampa and Miami, Florida) and on the Pacific coast (in Oakland and Los Angeles, California) (Ross, 1970) While the idea of packing goods into boxes had been experimented with since the late nineteenth century, it was not successfully adopted until integration with other cargo transport innovations (Levinson, 2006). The core of this system was substantial capital investments

[8]Note the focus here is on 'general cargo' goods that were the most labour-intensive to move on/off ships and small enough to fit in containers (eventually standardized at 40 feet long) rather than tankers (eg. oil) or dry-bulk shipments (e.g. wheat).

Figure 1: Transmodal cargo shipping before and after containerization



(a) Break bulk: US ship in Korea, early 1950s



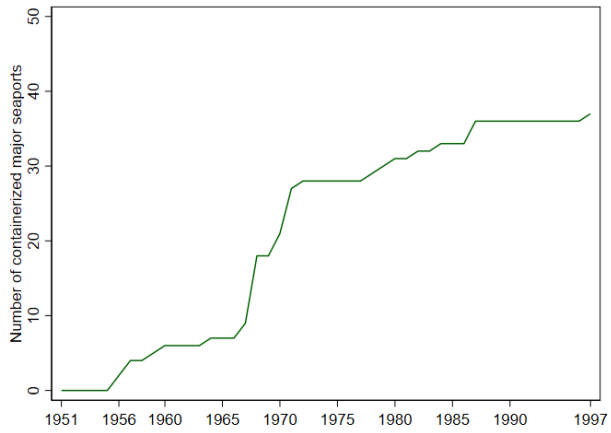
(b) Containerized: Sea-Land *Ideal-X*, late 1950s

Notes: Source: Wikimedia Commons and Port Authority of New York and New Jersey

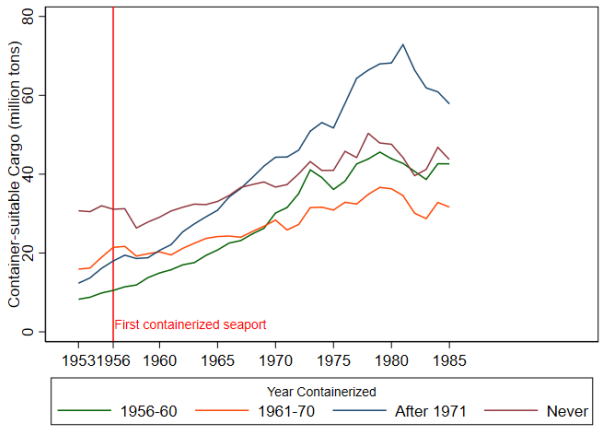
into dockside container-handling facilities featuring cranes. By reducing the time required for all three parts of the breakbulk cargo (un)loading process—bringing goods from warehouses to winches; lifting cargo into (or out of) ships' holds; and packing cargo in efficiently (National Academy of Sciences, 1957)—containerized shipping drastically reduced the time ships spent in port and the labour requirements of on- and off-loading cargo, two of the most important costs to trade at the time (Levinson, 2006). Ships spent 90 to 94% less time moored in containerized ports, which allowed for larger vessels that caused greater efficiencies via returns to scale (Ducruet et al., 2024). These translated to a large decrease in shipping costs, on the order of a 16 to 22% decrease in variable shipping costs (Coşar and Demir, 2018). These efficiencies convinced many ports that the capital investments associated with adoption were worthwhile. Figure 2a shows the increase in the number of containerized seaports over time.

Ocean transshipment was historically a 'last-mile' business: since waterborne transport was much cheaper than land-based transport, goods were typically shipped along water for much of their journey, as near as possible to their final destination (even after the advent and rapid expansion of railway networks) (Levinson, 2006). This meant that ports—the locus of ocean transshipment—were distributed across coastlines roughly in proportion to the nearby commercial and consumer populations they primarily served. This is illustrated by Figure 3, which shows all ocean coastal counties with ports that did not containerize in grey and counties with ports that did containerize

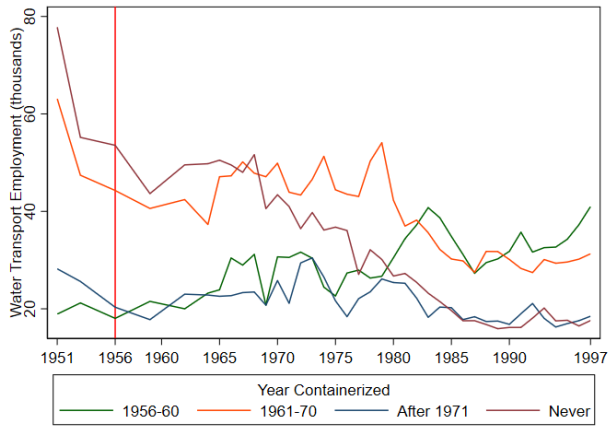
Figure 2: Dockworker employment and cargo handling trends grouped by year of containerization



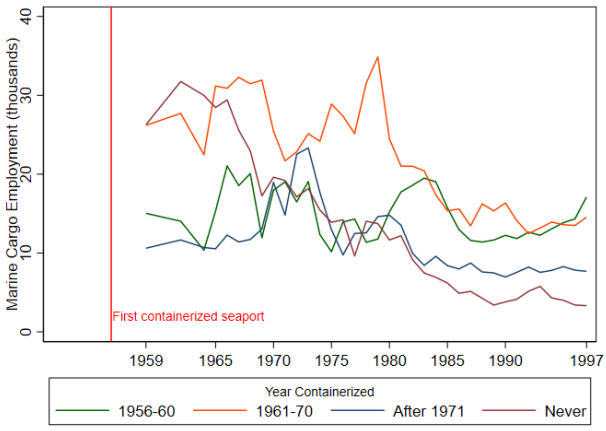
(a) Coastal containerized port counties by year



(b) Container-suitable cargo handled (M Tons)



(c) Overall Water Transport employment



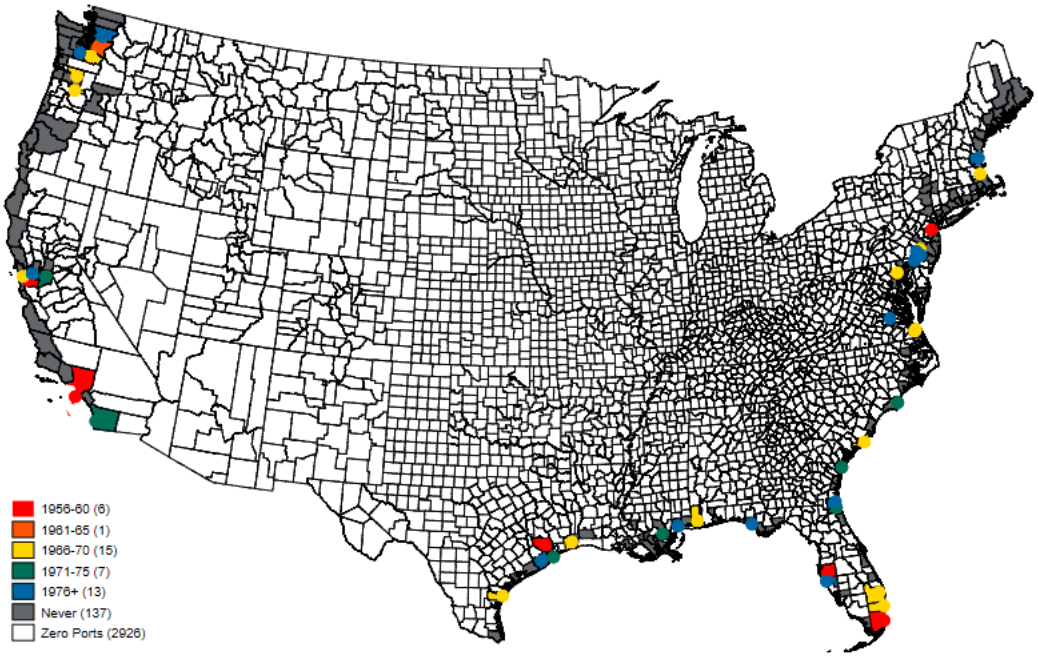
(d) Marine Cargo Handling employment

Notes: Panel (a) shows total number of major seaports that had containerized by each year, out of 90 total in data, with port locations and containerization timing from Brooks et al. (2021). Panel (b) shows total employment across these seaports in the overall Water Transportation sector, with County Business Patterns (CBP) data from Eckert et al. (2022) beginning in 1951. Panel (c) shows the estimated total tons of container-suitable cargo handled by these seaports, with shipping data from USACE (1953) from 1953 to 1985 and product container-suitability as assessed in 1968 and reported by El-Sahli (2013). Panel (d) shows total employment in the Marine Cargo Handling subsector of Water Transportation, with County Business Patterns (CBP) data from Eckert et al. (2022) beginning in 1959.

coloured by the period of adoption.

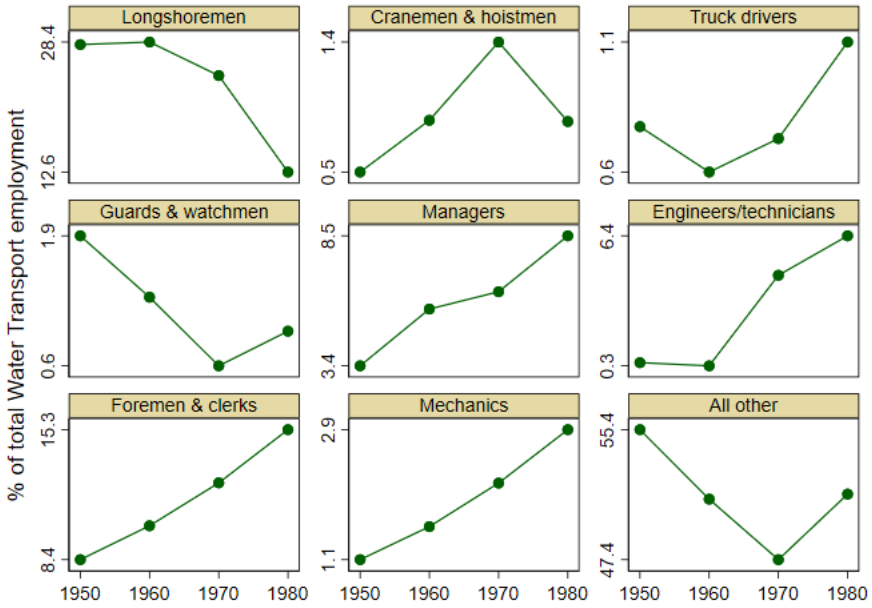
Containerization entailed a substantial reallocation of port activity to concentrate in fewer, larger ports (Hall, 2009). Historically large ports such as New York City, San Francisco, and Boston that containerized late, or never, experienced fewer visits from cargo ships and therefore relatively less demand for their transshipment services. Figure 2b shows the increase in the amount of cargo suitable to be transported in containers handled at the earliest ports to adopt containers.

Figure 3: Counties with major seaports by period of container adoption



Notes: Includes only counties with ports on oceanic coasts. Port locations and containerization timing from Brooks et al. (2021).

Figure 4: Total share of water transport employment in select occupations by year



Notes: US totals. Occupations of employed individuals in each census sample from Ruggles et al. (2022). Select occupation groups defined as following: Engineers/technicians (mechanical-engineers, engineers (nec), testing-technicians, technicians (nec), professional, technical and kindred workers (nec)); Foremen & clerks (bookkeepers, shipping and receiving clerks, salesmen and sales clerks (nec), clerical and kindred workers (n.e.c.), foremen (nec)); mechanics (mechanics and repairmen (nec), machinists, automobile-mechanics and repairmen).

Reduced demand for dockworkers in ports that containerized late and never is clear in Figures 2c and 2d. These dockworkers could not easily work at in-demand ports because their seniority-based hiring did not transfer to other piers even in the same city. For example, hirings on Manhattan piers declined by 10 percent from 1961 to 1966 while increasing by over 45 percent in Port Newark-Elizabthport (Goldberg, 1968).[9]

The shift of ocean transshipment from a labor-intensive to capital-intensive industry (Monaco and Olsson, 2005) entailed changes in the types of workers required. Figure 4 shows the composition of employment in the water transport industry between 1950 and 1980 for select occupations.[10] The share of workers employed as longshoremen decreased steadily with the onset of containerization while the share of workers employed as engineers/technicians, mechanics, and clerical workers increased steadily. Increased containerization was also associated with smaller shares of guards/watchmen, likely due to the vastly decreased risk of theft from shipping goods in containers rather than as break bulk cargo (Levinson, 2006).

Containerization was also associated with a 'de-casualization' of longshore and stevedore employment. Historically, as in much of the world, longshoremen in the US had been hired daily based on whichever ships were in port (Donovan, 1999). The smaller number of workers required in a containerized port meant owners preferred having fewer 'steady men' employed for regular hours on a scheduled basis, especially as the tasks involved with longshoring became more technical and required higher skill levels (e.g. operating a large crane) (Monaco and Olsson, 2005; Levinson, 2006).

Despite their irregular employment patterns, longshoremen in the US were very well-organized historically (Donovan, 1999), in part due to their high degree of bargaining power given the "costliness of dock delays" (Ross, 1970). There have been two large dockworker unions since the 1930s: the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) representing dockworkers in ports along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) in Pacific Coast ports (Cole, 2017). Since they had split apart in 1937, these unions had an acrimonious relationship marked by attempted poaching of locals and public disputes (Levinson,

[9]Eventually, declines in transshipment services also reduced manufacturers' incentive to locate near non-containerized ports that no longer served as reliable sources of traded inputs or means to export their products (Levinson, 2006).

[10]As detailed below, the census did not include an industry category specifically for waterborne transshipment services. An alternative data source, the County Business Patterns, does however report employment counts for establishments in a "Marine Cargo Handling" (earlier titled "Stevedoring") sub-industry, which, in coastal counties that report counts for both the industry and sub-industry, made up 63% of Water Transportation employment in 1959.

2006). This likely severely limited their ability to coordinate and prevent containerization from entering any U.S. port.

The unions also differed in their organizational structures and bargaining arrangements, with consequences for their ability to navigate the threat of containerization. The ILWU negotiated a single contract for all Pacific ports (Bridgman, 2024) and was relatively centralized, while the ILA was far less centralized with rivalries between union leadership and locals (Ross, 1968). This reflected well-publicized corruption scandals within the union leadership as well as the ILA's large size and substantial variation among ports (Cole, 2017). Aside from being "riven with factional differences" (Ross, 1970), these internal tensions resulted in contract differences among locals in Atlantic and Gulf coast ports that bargained separately (Goldberg, 1968). For example, dockworkers in New York, Boston, and Hampton Roads voted to end a 1972 strike but those in Philadelphia and Baltimore rejected theirs until much later because of insufficient wage guarantee payments (BLS, 1980). During an earlier ILA strike, in 1965, an employer-side negotiator for the port of Savannah, Georgia lamented that "something created in New York" was causing them trouble.[11] These internal governance issues and variation within the ILA made it more difficult for employers to bargain with compared to the ILWU, whose more centralized structure of the ILWU meant employers believed "the union could be relied upon to deliver the fruits of any agreement." (Ross, 1968)

These unions approached the threat of containerization displacing jobs very differently, with the ILWU's "provision-ridden acceptance" contrasted with the ILA's "stubborn resistance" (Ross, 1970).

The ILWU conducted an extensive study of trends in shipping and the implications of containerization for longshoring and, in 1956, decided to "permit the ship operators and stevedore [firm]s to buy out the property rights of registered [dock]workers" (Goldberg, 1968). The result was the 1960 Mechanization and Modernization Agreement, which allowed employers to introduce new technology and modify work rules in exchange for compensation in the form of at least 35 hours per week of guaranteed pay, limited profit sharing, and pensions for voluntary early retirement for long-serving longshoremen aged 62 to 65 (when they qualified for Social Security) (Fairley, 1979). This reflected the employer's approach of sharing productivity gains 50-50 with the ILWU (Monaco and Olsson, 2005).[12] However, the agreements mainly compensated a majority of established union

[11] Quote from *Savannah Evening Star*, January 11, 1965.

[12] Later, the employers instead decided to buy out work rules to ensure increased productivity, which saved

members over more marginally-attached dockworkers and younger members (Reagan, 2019).

The ILA also understood the threat of containerization, and was ostensibly willing to negotiate for container adoption if its members could share the gains (ILA, 1959). However, the union's weak degree of centralization—that is, leadership's control over union locals—required it to prioritize job security for all and prevented it from making credible bargains with employer associations on the east coast. As a result, the ILA strongly criticized the ILWU's accommodative approach, arguing that "the West Coast sold their men out, but here on the East and Gulf Coasts, we don't do that... if we have to fight, we'll do so." (Talley, 2002). The ILA also believed that job buyouts would undermine its political power by reducing union membership. Although eventually forced by an arbitrator to accept minuscule employer payments (which were not distributed to workers) in exchange for allowing containerization, the ILA struggled to hold up its side of the bargain and engaged in several major strikes to protect longshore jobs (Ross, 1968).[13]

I return to differences in each union's centralization and consequent bargaining outcomes regarding the containerization in Section 5 when examining their influence on the timing of container adoption across ports.

3 Data and measurement

I combine data on containerization by port with newly-digitized data on the volume of container-suitable cargo handled by each port, aggregate dockworker employment by county, and individual dockworker labour market outcomes from the 1970 population census. Each source is discussed below.

The analysis focuses on 90 seaports, restricting the sample to ports on ocean coasts due to different trends affecting inland ports in this period (e.g. the construction of the St Lawrence Seaway) and the generally larger volume of transshipment activity at coastal ports. These ports are geolocated using data from Brooks et al. (2021) and matched to counties in the aggregate and individual labour market data and ports listed in USACE (1953). I focus on the period from the early 1950s, when sufficiently detailed statistics on dockworker employment and port cargo volumes begin, until 1997, when increasingly larger cargo boats greatly increased the importance of depth,

them as the amount of containerized freight increased: by 1970 the estimated productivity gains were $120 million, compared to $29 million of early retirement and job guarantee payouts (Monaco and Olsson, 2005).

[13]However, it did not combat the efforts of the first two Atlantic ports to containerize, arguing they were "new operations" and hence did not reduce any existing union employment (Ross, 1970).

rather than container adoption, on the amount of transshipment business ports attracted. Table 1 provides summary statistics on the three different data samples used in this analysis.

3.1 Containerization and port characteristics

Information on the universe of US ports that existed as of 1953, as recorded in the *World Port Index*, is drawn from Brooks et al. (2021).[14] This includes the latitude/longitude coordinates of each port, which was used to geolocate each port in a 1960 county boundary, as well as the depth of each port in 1953 before containerization. It also includes the year of container adoption, drawn from the *Containerization International Yearbook* editions from 1968 and 1970 to 2010. A port is deemed to have containerized when it has invested in installing special infrastructure and equipment to "handle shipping containers that enables their movement in and out of ship and onto a train or a truck," consistent with industry definitions (Brooks et al., 2021). I aggregate to the county level using the earliest year of containerization of any port in the county and the maximum port depth and then combine certain counties to match geographical aggregations in other datasets.[15] This results in 90 different ports in my data, 39 of which containerize by 1997.

3.2 Volume of container-suitable cargo handled by port

I argue that containerization impacted the amount of total cargo transshipment business at every port, including those that did and did not adopt containers. This requires data on the throughput volume at each port of only goods that could potentially be transported in a shipping container or as break-bulk cargo. I first digitize tables on freight cargo volume at each seaport from annual reports published starting in 1953 by the United States Army Corps of Engineers titled *Waterborne Commerce of the United States* (WCUS) (USACE, 1953). These provide the total number of short tons (2,000 lbs) that travelled through each port in each year from 1953 to 1985, including both foreign trade as well as domestic coastwise and internal waterway trade. I manually crosswalk ports listed in the WCUS to counties used in my other data sources.

However, not all products that are shipped via ocean are possible to ship inside a container (e.g.

[14] Special thanks to Nicolas Gendron-Carrier for sharing this data. An alternative version has since been uploaded to ICPSR (Project 199582).

[15] Groupings include all New York City counties with Bergen and Hudson, NJ; Gloucester and Camden, NJ; Brunswick and New Hanover, NC; Norfolk and Suffolk, MA; Penobscot and Hancock, ME; Solano and Sacramento, CA; Orange and Los Angeles, CA; Liberty, Long, and McIntosh, GA; and several Virginia independent cities combined into their adjoining counties.

Table 1. Summary statistics

(a) Time-variant port-level variables

	N	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min	Max
Employment, Marine Cargo Handling	1944	1106.17	2385.47	0.00	27524.00
Employment, all Water Transport	2277	2025.40	4521.96	0.00	72378.00
Containerized competition faced by port	2801	1.94	1.54	0.00	6.70
Tons of container-suitable cargo (millions)	1954	1.97	4.55	0.00	46.25
Value of container-suitable cargo (millions)	119	174.06	518.27	0.00	3797.77

(b) Time-invariant port-level variables

	N	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min	Max
Ever-containerized	90	0.43	0.50	0.00	1.00
Containerized by 1960	90	0.07	0.25	0.00	1.00
Containerized 1961-1970	90	0.17	0.37	0.00	1.00
Port shallowness, 1953	88	3.16	1.45	1.00	8.00
Land supply, 1942	90	46.81	14.48	21.04	80.97
Pacific	90	0.32	0.47	0.00	1.00
% Union Non-HS, 1950	90	5.35	13.05	0.00	100.00
% Union Non-BA, 1950	90	5.18	12.86	0.00	100.00
ln(Container-suitable cargo), 1953	82	-1.82	2.20	-9.36	3.00
Competition, 1960	89	0.43	0.30	0.03	1.17

(c) Longshoremen in 1970 Census variables

	N	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min	Max
ln(Wage/salary income)	931	8.61	0.88	3.91	10.82
Port containerized by 1960	1021	0.18	0.38	0.00	1.00
Port containerized 1961-1970	1021	0.28	0.45	0.00	1.00
Port's containerized competition in 1970	1021	2.00	0.80	0.43	3.46
Employed	1107	0.73	0.45	0.00	1.00
Age	1107	46.49	15.20	14.00	100.00
Male	1107	0.98	0.13	0.00	1.00

Notes: Panel (a) sample includes annual observations for 1951 to 1997 for all major coastal ports where county has non-zero initial year (1951) total Water Transport employment. Marine Cargo Handling employment is only separately reported starting in 1959. Containerized competition is an inverse distance-weighted measure of other ports that had containerized. Cargo data is available only for 1953 to 1985. for all counties with major coastal ports. Container-suitable cargo is defined as share of cargo tonnage made up by products that were reported as feasible to ship in a container in 1968, as reported by El-Sahli (2013). Panel (b) sample is cross-section of ports. Port shallowness is 8-level scale with smaller values for deeper ports. Land supply is index of share of port counties area that can be built on. Union shares is number of dockworker union local members as percentage of employed individuals in port counties with less than high school (or college) education. Panel (c) sample is all individuals located in major coastal ports reporting occupation as longshoremen/stevedore in 1970 Census Metro Samples, with variables for characteristics of the port they are located near as well as their individual characteristics.

crude oil). In order to focus only on handling activity of 'container-suitable cargo' I also digitize tables from the 1953 and 1970 WCUS on the volume of freight of each product at each port, with product codes then crosswalked to the SITC Rev. 2 classification. I then use data from a 1968 assessment of which products are feasible to ship in containers (NMC, 1969), listed in El-Sahli (2013), to calculate the share of total cargo volume at each port composed of container-suitable products. Finally, to estimate the annual container-suitable volume of shipments (in tons) handled at each port, I scale the total tons of cargo at each port by the annual share of tons in container-suitable products.[16] I also use data from OECD (2022) on the annual dollar value per ton of foreign trade (imports/exports) in each product to estimate the total value of container-suitable products handled in each port in 1953 and 1970.[17].

3.3 Labour market outcomes

A key measure of interest is aggregate annual dockworker employment in each seaport. The total number of dockworkers employed in each county and year from 1951 onwards is drawn from historical reports of the U.S. Census Bureau *County Business Patterns* (CBP) digitized in Eckert et al. (2022, 2020). From 1959 onwards, the CBP includes data for the granular four-digit SIC industry "Longshoring and Stevedoring", later renamed "Marine Cargo Handling" (SIC code 4463). However, before 1959 the CBP only includes county-industry-year employment counts at the level of the coarser two-digit SIC sector for "Water Transportation" (SIC 44). I use both definitions of dockwork employment in the analyses below. This is because even after 1959, many counties with few Marine Cargo Handling establishments are only included in the total Water Transportation counts due to confidentiality concerns.[18] The employment count in a county-industry-year is based on the number of employees during the pay period that includes March 12 of the year, summed across all establishments in a county in that industry.

The CBP is a valuable data source but with certain limitations. Certain counties are grouped together before 1964, which for consistency then requires these counties to be grouped together for all years of the analysis. Establishment employment is defined only on the extensive margin,

[16] Annual shares of container-suitable cargo for each port in 1954 to 1969 are estimated by linear interpolation of 1953 and 1970 values from WCUS tables. The share of container-suitable cargo at each port in 1970 are used for 1971 to 1985.

[17] Future research can use this along with data on national ad-valorem freight-handling rates from Bridgman (2024) to estimate port revenues

[18] However, establishment counts are not included in the Eckert et al. (2022, 2020) data.

meaning it is not possible to analyze how total worker-hours evolved with changes in labour demand. It is not clear how exactly businesses reported their employee counts in an industry with many casually-employed workers. For example, it is not clear whether these counts include dockworkers who reported to their workplace daily to collect 'job guarantee' payments during this period under the mechanization agreements but did not actually work any hours.[19] Finally, there is other unexplained 'spikiness' observed in the data, likely due to select establishments relocating between counties, switching industry classifications, or not reporting in the CBP in a given year. For the aggregate employment analyses below, I remove any port-year observations with zero employment at established ports before 1975, after which the CBP measurement and reporting quality appears to substantially improve.

The labour market outcomes of individual dockworkers in seaports are tracked using cross sections of microdata from the 1950 full-count census and 1960 to 1980 Census samples on IPUMS (Ruggles et al., 2022). These data include two relevant industry and occupational identifiers as recorded in the variables harmonized across censuses: Water transportation (IND1950 code 546) and Longshoremen and stevedores (OCC1950 code 940). Note that these industry and occupational identifiers are based on whatever an individual reports to (and is interpreted by) a census enumerator, and for non-employed individuals are their most recent industry/occupation of employment. To determine whether each individual is in a county with a seaport and whether any seaport in that county has containerized by the time of the census, I use county information in the 1950 full-count census and county groups in 1970 census samples. I also use various other variables defined by Ruggles et al. (2022) including employment status, educational attainment, income, and age. I focus in particular on the 1970 census samples. Half of the observations in these samples also report an individual's occupation and industry in 1965, which I use to explore outcomes as of 1970 for those who report dockworker employment in 1965 but not 1970.[20]

[19] See for example an account from the port of Brooklyn in 1983: https://www.nytimes.com/1983/06/23/nyregion/guaranteed-wage-is-crux-of-pier-economics.html

[20] Future analyses can also leverage the 1970 Census 'neighborhood samples' from Ruggles et al. (2022) to analyze wider local effects of dockworker employment transitions, given extremely high spatial concentration of dockworkers within cities (Levinson, 2006). These include 20 different neighborhoods, with 1,713 total residents observed, where $\geq 5\%$ of residents age 15-70 are recorded in the Longshoremen and stevedores occupation in 1970 or 1965.

3.4 Dockworker union density

As discussed above, both contemporary and retrospective analyses emphasized the role of dockworker labour unions in shaping the adoption of containers by ports. One way to operationalize the role of these unions is through the degree of bargaining power held by dockworkers in each port at the advent of containerization. This can be proxied by dockworkers' local union density, defined as the ratio between the number of dockworkers union local members in a port and the number of non-union dockworkers (or potentially substitutible workers) in that port. For the numerator, I follow recent work by Medici (2024); Downes (2024); Schmick (2018) and digitize proceedings of the ILWU and ILA 1947 and 1955 conventions that include lists of delegates from each union local in attendance and their voting power (ILWU, 1955; ILA, 1955). Delegate counts can be translated to estimates of locals membership based on union representation rules whereby each local received 1 vote for each 100 members. Union locals not represented at the convention have their membership counts listed. For the denominator, I attempt to capture the total pool of *potential* longshore workers at each port in order to calculate the bargaining power of those who are union members. My primary measure is the number of employed individuals with less than a high school education in a port county as of the 1950 census. Alternatively, I define this denominator as employed individuals without a college education. According to the 1950 Census, 98.0% of employed longshoremen in counties with a major coastal port had less than a high school education (educational attainment under grade 12) and 99.9% had less than 4 years of college education.[21]

3.5 Competition between ports from containerization

Compared to break bulk shipping, containerized cargo transshipment required fewer dockworkers to transfer each ton of cargo freight onto or off a ship—a direct labour displacement effect of this technological change. These large labour productivity gains for transshipment services due to containerization translated to substantial cost savings for ships loading and unloading at a containerized port. Transshipment services provided at a seaport are a tradeable service: cargo ships have some degree of flexibility over which port to stop at and unload their cargo for transportation onward to its final destination onshore, especially with improvements to

[21] An additional measure available for future research is each union locals' representation on committees of the convention, which could be indicative of the local's alignment to the 'international' union organization and therefore its coordination with other dockworker union locals.

the highway and railway system in the mid-20th century. Containerized ports could therefore attract transshipment business away from non-containerized ports. For example, Levinson (2006) highlights the cases of Newark/Port Elizabeth, New Jersey attracting shipping business away from elsewhere in the Port of New York (particularly Manhattan and Brooklyn) and Oakland, California attracting shipping business away from the Port of San Francisco. As the interstate highway system was built-out, ports on one coast even competed with ports on the other side of the US (Hall, 2009).

To estimate the relationship between dockworker employment in a port and containerization elsewhere, I construct a 'market access style' distance-weighted measure of the degree of containerized competition faced by port c in each year t based on containerization in all other ports $j \in J$ as

$$ContainerCompetition_{ct} = \sum_{j}^{J} \left((TradeCosts_{cj})^{-\theta} \mathbf{I} \left(Containerized_{jt} \right) \right) \tag{1}$$

where $TradeCosts_{cj}$ is a measure of iceberg trade costs between c and competing port j, based on the cost of transporting cargo by land in 1960 (Jaworski and Kitchens, 2019).[22]

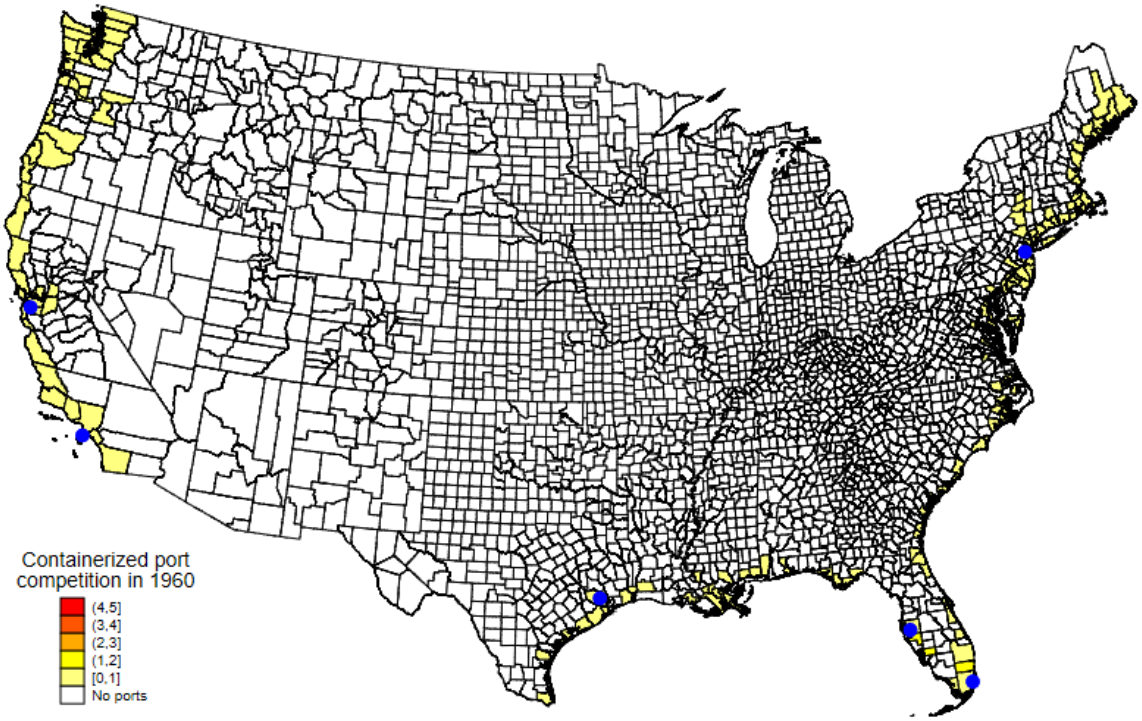
$\mathbf{I}\left(Containerized_{jt}\right)$ is an indicator equal to one if there was a containerized port in county j in year t and zero otherwise. $ContainerCompetition_{ct}$ is increasing in the number of containerized ports across the U.S. and decreasing in the transportation cost from any port c to those containerized ports. Similarly to Cockriel (2024), this term mirrors the reduced form definition of market access in Donaldson and Hornbeck (2016) but replaces access to populations with access to a new technology that affects employment elsewhere. I use a trade elasticity value of $\theta = 8$, following Jaworski and Kitchens (2019) who study a similar period and location and report that this value is within the range reported in the international and domestic trade literature.

No ports faced containerized competition before adoption in the US began in 1956. Figure 5 maps all containerized ports (represented by blue dots) and the corresponding level of containerized competition (shaded from yellow to red) at each ten-year point from 1960 to 1990. In 1960 the median port county had a level of containerized competition of 0.38. The level of competition was highest in Florida, where two counties already had containerized ports and also faced competition

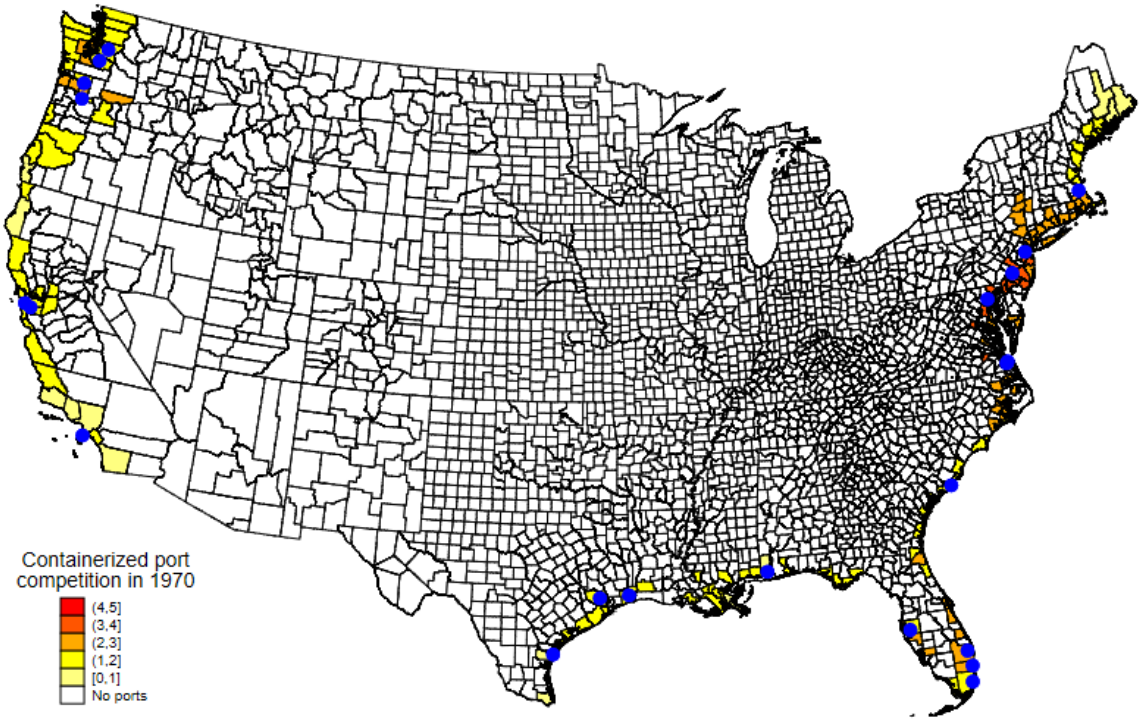
[22] See Appendix A.1 for details on the calculation of trade costs. Future research could exploit variation over time in highway expansion (for example, using data from Jaworski and Kitchens (2019) on 1980 county-to-county land transport costs) in order to improve measurement and obtain exogenous variation in competition faced by each port.

from being located in between other containerized ports in New Jersey and Houston. The level of containerized competition faced by all ports increased over time as more ports containerized: the median port county had a level of containerized competition of 1.92 in 1970, 2.77 in 1980, and 3.50 in 1990.

Figure 5: Level of competition from containerization in other ports



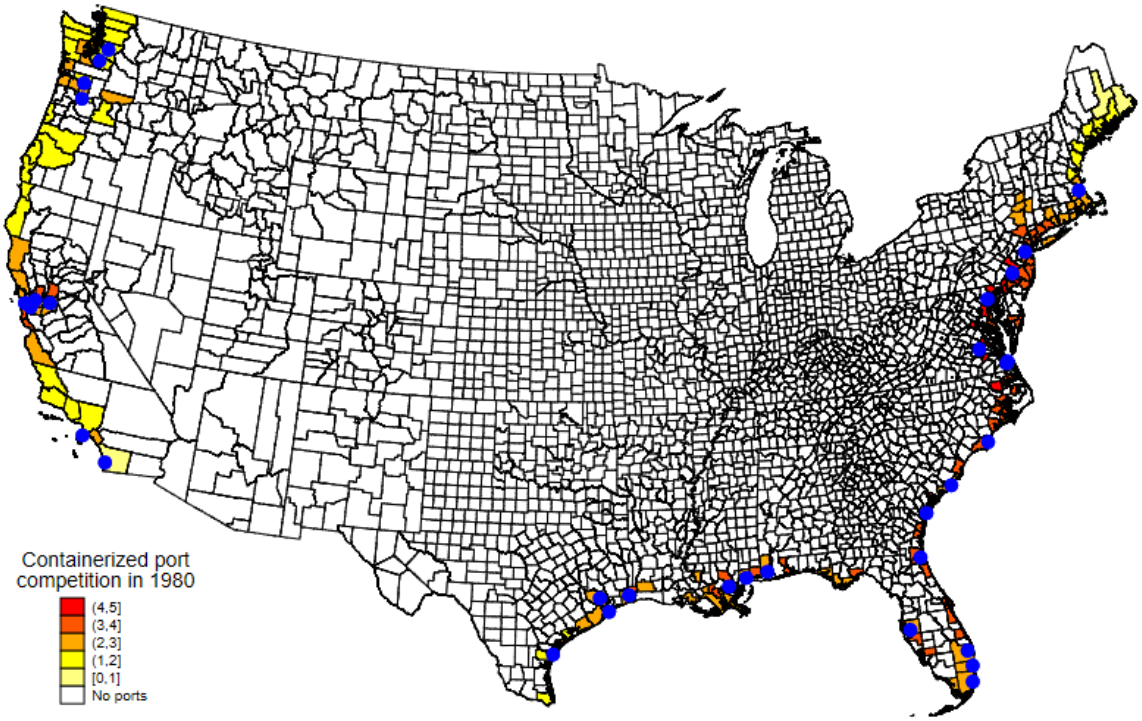
(a) Ports containerized by 1960



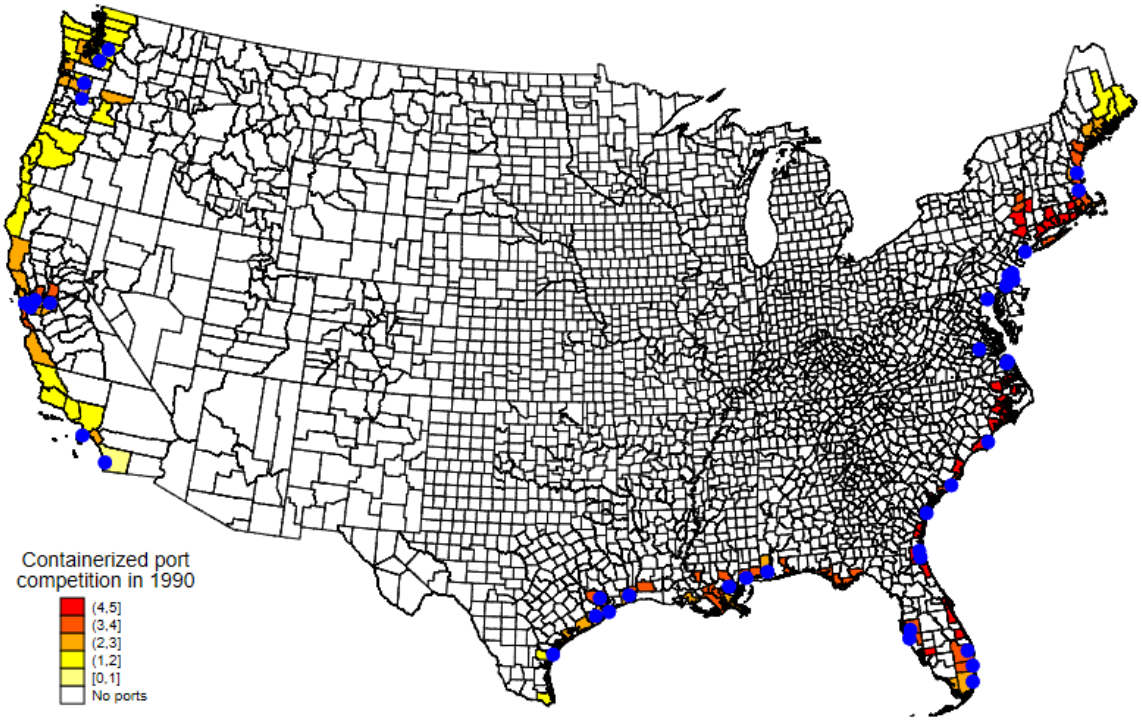
(b) Ports containerized by 1970

Notes: Blue dots represent counties with ports containerized up to and including each year. Containerized competition from other ports is distance-weighted measure of number of other ports that have containerized. Port locations and containerization from Brooks et al. (2021).

Level of competition from containerization in other ports (contd.)



(c) Ports containerized by 1980



(d) Ports containerized by 1990

Notes: Blue dots represent counties with ports containerized up to and including each year. Containerized competition from other ports is distance-weighted measure of number of other ports that have containerized. Port locations and containerization from Brooks et al. (2021).

4 Containerization and dockworker and port firm outcomes

In this section I document the relationships between a port's own containerization, the level of containerized competition it faces, and dockworker labour market outcomes and cargo activity at that port. I first provide descriptive statistics on trends by port. I then use a two-way fixed effects regression analysis to analyze these relationships on an aggregate level, finding that dockworker employment decreased with own-port containerization and containerized competition from other ports, but that a port adopting containers insulated its workers from these declines. The volume of cargo handled by a port also increased following containerization. I next look at the benefits of early adoption in a cross-section of 1970 outcomes. I find that ports that containerized by 1960 had significantly higher cargo handling volumes and that dockworkers in these early-adopter ports had significantly higher pay in 1970 compared to dockworkers in later-adopting ports and ports that never containerized. These results motivate my discussion in Section 5 of the role of unions in the timing of a port adopting containers.

4.1 Port aggregate outcomes

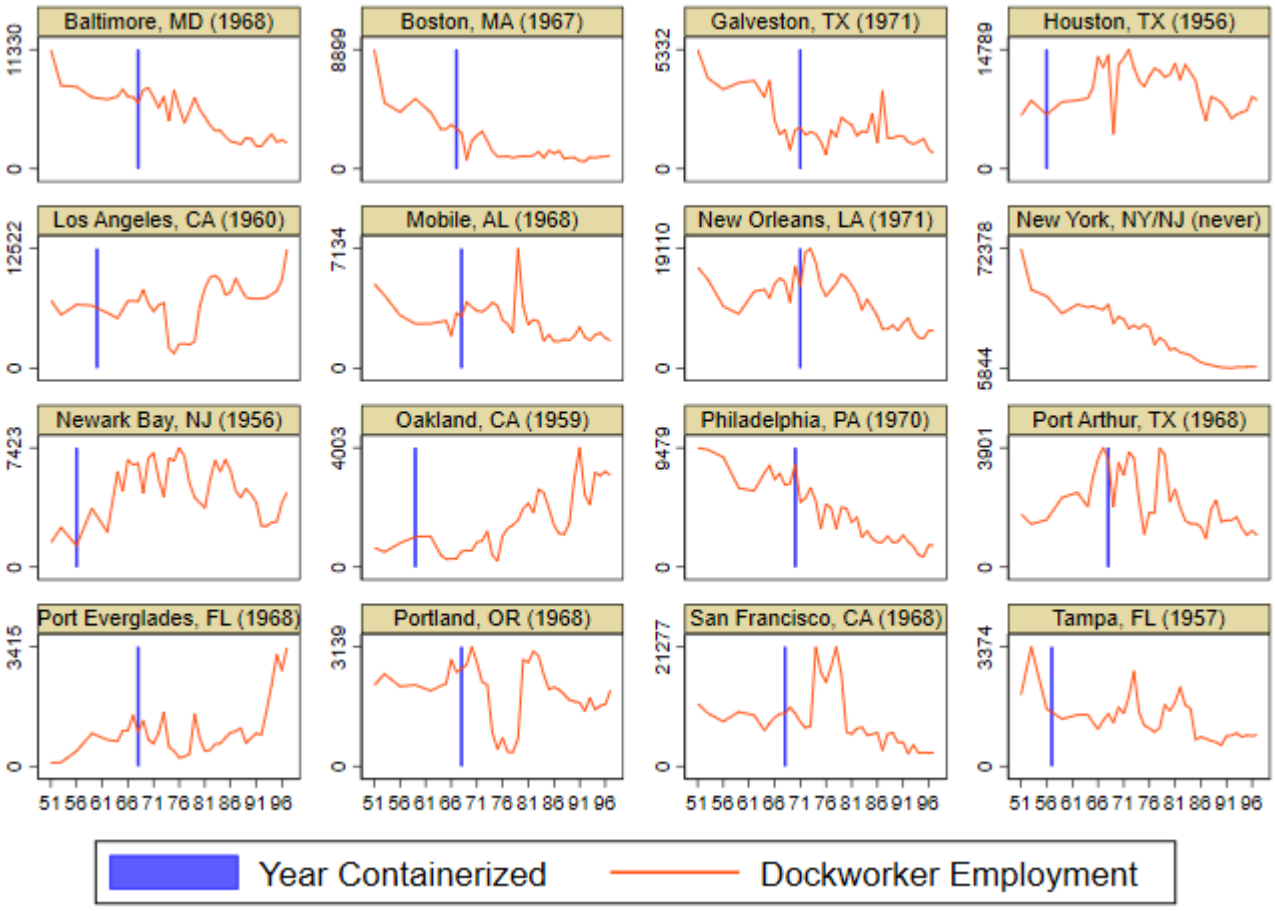
4.1.1 Trends in dockworker employment and cargo volume by port

Total dockworker employment appears to have fallen more at ports that containerized later, or never. Figure 6 plots total annual county employment in the Water Transportation sector for the 16 ports with the highest dockworker employment in 1959 (the first year Marine Cargo Handling is separately reported in the CBP).[23] The vertical blue lines on each plot illustrate the year of container adoption in that port, also indicated in parentheses after the port name. These plots suggest that ports where containers were adopted earlier (i.e. the blue line is further left on the X axis) had smaller declines in dockworker employment. Note however there are large differences in employment levels in each port (obscured by the changing y-axis for each subplot).

Figure 7 illustrates similar trends for the volume of container-suitable cargo handled by each of these ports. Several early-adopter ports (e.g. Newark Bay, NJ; Los Angeles, CA; Oakland, CA; and Houston, TX) experienced increases in cargo volume after containerization. While the downward trend in cargo volume at several late- or never-adopter ports is clear (e.g. Boston, MA; New York, NY/NJ; and Philadelphia, PA) the more limited time span of the current shipping data

[23] Appendix Figure A1 provides these trends for the Marine Cargo Handling subsector.

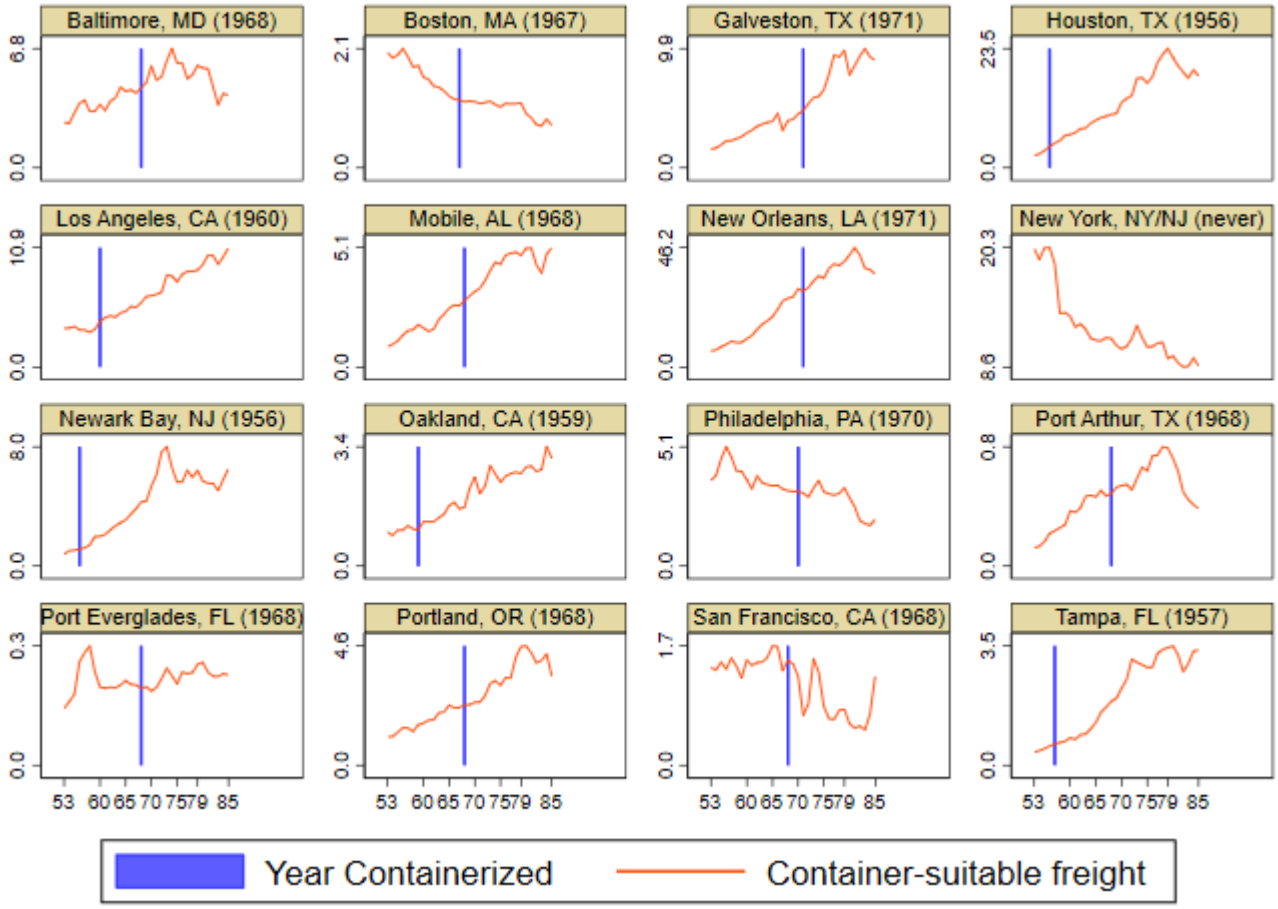
Figure 6: Total water transport employment and container adoption for largest ports



Notes: Dockworker employment is total annual county employment in the Water Transportation sector (SIC 44) from Eckert et al. (2022). Port locations and containerization timing from Brooks et al. (2021).

until 1985 means many declines after this year may not be shown. Furthermore, the extrapolation of 1970 port shares of container-suitable cargo as applied to total annual cargo tonnage for 1971-1985 may artificially inflate the estimates of container-suitable cargo tonnage pictured here, if ports increasingly substituted away from container-suitable products after 1970 (for example, by increasing their shipments of refined petroleum or bulk wheat).

Figure 7: Tons (M) of container-suitable cargo throughput and container adoption by port



Notes: Shown for 16 ports with highest amount of Marine Cargo Handling employment in 1959. Cargo activity from USACE (1953) and product container-suitability from El-Sahli (2013). Port locations and containerization timing from Brooks et al. (2021).

4.1.2 Regression analysis

I estimate the direct and indirect relationships between containerization and annual port dockworker employment and cargo volume in port c in year t in a two-way fixed effects model as:

$$\begin{aligned}\ln(Y)_{c,t} =& \beta_0 + \beta_1 \mathbf{I}(Containerized_{c,t}) + \beta_2 CompetitionContainers_{c,t} \\ &+ \beta_3 (\mathbf{I}(Containerized_{c,t}) \text{ x } CompetitionContainers_{c,t}) + \beta_c FE_c + \beta_t FE_T + \epsilon_{ct} \quad (2)\end{aligned}$$

where $\ln(Y)_{c,t}$ represents the two aggregate outcomes of interest: (1) log of annual county dockworker employment in port c, defined as either in the Marine Cargo Handling subsector or the overall Water Transportation sector or (2) the annual volume of container-suitable cargo that travelled through port c. FE_c are port fixed effects, to account for time invariant port-specific factors such as climate and location or the number of Water Transportation jobs outside Longshore services (e.g. local ferry services). FE_t are year fixed effects, included due to the possibility of unobserved factors that affect overall demand for shipping services each year, such as business cycles or the Vietnam War (Levinson, 2006). $\mathbf{I}(Containerized_{c,t})$ is an indicator equal to 1 if port c adopted containerization by year t (an absorbing state) and zero otherwise. $CompetitionContainers_{c,t}$ is a distance-weighted measure of the level of competition port c faced from other ports that have adopted containers by year t, as described in Section 3.5.

Results are provided in Table 2. Panel 2a contains results for dockworker employment. Columns (1) and (3) first provide results from a 'naive' regression of annual dockworker employment on an indicator for whether that county containerized by that year. This yields a positive coefficient (though only statistically significant in column (3)) indicating that, on average, ports that containerize have better aggregate employment outcomes than non-adopter ports—which can be largely accounted for by business stealing. This is shown by the baseline specification in columns (2) and (4), from a regression of employment on the full interaction of containerization and competition. This regression estimates negative coefficients on the indicator for 'own port containerization' and the level of containerized competition from other ports but a positive coefficient on their interaction. This suggests that dockworker employment in a port declines when it adopts containerization or faces greater competition from other ports containerizing, holding each other constant, but that

Table 2. Regression of annual port outcomes on containerization and container competition

(a) Dependent variable: ln(Employment)

	Marine Cargo Handling		All Water Transport	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
I(Containerized)=1	0.426	-0.636***	0.526**	-0.390**
	(0.252)	(0.147)	(0.190)	(0.103)
Competition		-0.506***		-0.393***
		(0.049)		(0.038)
I(Containerized)=1 × Competition		0.367***		0.245***
		(0.035)		(0.014)
Constant	7.487***	8.980***	8.497***	9.722***
	(0.144)	(0.261)	(0.086)	(0.131)
Port FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Obs.	1357	1357	2271	2271
R-Squared	0.79	0.83	0.90	0.92

Standard errors clustered by Census Division in parentheses.
* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

(b) Dependent variable: ln(Tons of container-suitable cargo)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
I(Containerized)=1	0.606*	0.613*	0.186
	(0.280)	(0.288)	(0.269)
Competition		0.190	0.126
		(0.140)	(0.144)
I(Containerized)=1 × Competition			0.198**
			(0.065)
Constant	12.752***	12.475***	12.567***
	(0.068)	(0.242)	(0.242)
Port FE	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y
Obs.	2577	2572	2572
R-Squared	0.86	0.86	0.86

Standard errors clustered by Census Division in parentheses.
* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Notes: Sample for employment regression includes annual observations for 1951 to 1997 for all counties with major coastal ports and non-zero initial year employment (1959 for Marine Cargo Handling and 1951 for total Water Transport). Sample for cargo regression includes annual observations for 1953 to 1985 for all major coastal ports. Independent variables are indicator that county c was containerized by year t as recorded by Brooks et al. (2021), a measure of the distance-weighted competition posed by other ports that had containerized by year t, and their interaction. Container-suitable cargo defined as share of cargo tonnage made up by products that were reported as feasible to ship in a container in 1968, as reported by El-Sahli (2013). Regressions weighted by level of port county initial year employment in dependent variable industries.

containerization insulates dockworkers from further job loss due to competition. The adoption of containers in a port is associated with a 47% decrease in Marine Cargo Handling employment, or a smaller 32% decrease in overall Water Transportation employment. Similarly, a one-unit increase in the level of containerized competition faced by a port (roughly equivalent to moving from the 50th to the 75th percentile) is associated with a 40% decrease in Marine Cargo Handling employment or again a 32% decrease in overall Water Transportation employment. However, when the port is containerized, increased competition is associated with a 44% increase in Marine Cargo Handling, or a 28% increase in Water Transport employment.[24] For both sectoral measures of dockwork employment, the coefficient on competition is larger in magnitude than on the interaction term, indicating that while a port that containerizes insulates itself somewhat from business stealing, there is still net job loss.

Panel 2b contains results for similar regressions with cargo volume as the dependent variable. This similarly shows a positive coefficient estimate on the containerization indicator when it is the sole explanatory variable, and when also controlling for the level of containerized competition facing the port. Column (3) shows a positive coefficient estimate on the interaction of these variables. These results show that the volume of container-suitable cargo handled by a port increases with its own containerization, especially when controlling for the level of competition it faces from other containerized ports. They suggest that there was a benefit to port owners from adopting containers. However, the results are much noisier than the employment regressions. This could be due to the smaller sample period (only to 1985) as well as potential bias in the amount of container-suitable cargo at non-containerized ports after 1970 due to the use of the 1970 shares of container-suitable tonnage at each port to extrapolate the post-1970 volumes. In addition, Bridgman (2024) suggests that the benefits of containerization to shippers may have been delayed, resulting in a slower shift to containerized ports from break bulk-only ports.

Note these baseline results are from regressions weighted by the port county's initial year level of employment or cargo (with the year differing by the specific dependent variable). Appendix Tables A2 and A4 provide results for the same regressions without any weighting. These are similar to the results from the weighted regressions, but with less precision in some cases.

[24]This positive and statistically significant coefficient on the interaction term could mean that containerized ports that were more centrally located (i.e. closer to other containerized ports), had more opportunities for bilateral shipping relationships and/or business stealing.

4.2 Early adoption

The results discussed above indicate that, following containerization, ports did not experience as large declines in employment or product demand as non-containerized ports, and may have even gained cargo transshipment business at the expense of rival ports. This is indicative of a first-mover advantage for ports that containerized earlier, and therefore were able to attract cargo transhipment business from non-containerized ports. I next attempt to estimate this more precisely, by focusing on a cross section of outcomes by 1970. By this time, 21 of the 90 major coastal ports in my sample had containerized. Six of these ports were early-adopters that containerized by 1960.

4.2.1 Ports

I first explore whether demand for the product offered by ports—cargo transhipment services—was higher in 1970 in early-adopter ports. I estimate the following regression across the cross-section of 90 ports:

$$\begin{aligned} Cargo_{c,1970} =& \beta_0 + \beta_1 \mathbf{I}(Containerized1960_c) + \beta_2 \mathbf{I}(Containerized1961to1970_c) \\ &+ \beta_3 CompetitionContainers_{c,1970} + \beta_4 Cargo_{c,1953} + \epsilon_{i,c,1970} \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

where $Cargo_{c,1970}$ is the one of two measures of container-suitable cargo handled in port c by 1970. I first use the same measure as above, the log of cargo tonnage. Second, I leverage port-by-product shipping data as well as trade data from OECD (2022) that contains the average dollar value per ton of each product to estimate the dollar value of container-suitable cargo at each port in 1970, and take its log. For both measures, I also calculate each port's share of the total cargo tonnage and value handled by all ports in my sample (ranging from 0 to 100). I then control for the initial (pre-containerization) values of each measure in 1953.

On the right hand side, the main explanatory variables are $\mathbf{I}(Containerized1960_c)$ and $\mathbf{I}(Containerized1961to1970_c)$, indicators for whether port c adopted container shipping by 1960 or between 1961 and 1970 (respectively). I also control for $CompetitionContainers_{c,1970}$ the distance-weighted level of competition port c faced in 1970 from other ports adopting containers.

The results are provided in Table 3. These suggest that, compared to ports that had not containerized by 1970 (the omitted group), early-adopter ports (by 1960) handled a significantly

Table 3. Regression of container-suitable cargo handled at port in 1970 on container adoption

	1970 level		1970 share of total	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	ln(Tons)	ln(Value)	Tons	Value
Containerized by 1960	1.82**	4.30***	2.24**	2.97***
	(0.78)	(1.21)	(0.92)	(1.06)
Containerized 1961-1970	0.90	2.86***	0.18	0.09
	(0.54)	(0.85)	(0.62)	(0.70)
Competition in 1970	0.56	0.29	0.12	-0.04
	(0.41)	(0.64)	(0.48)	(0.55)
Pre-containerization level (1953)	0.62***	0.44***	0.41***	0.63***
	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.07)	(0.10)
Constant	3.70***	8.01***	0.28	0.29
	(1.33)	(1.77)	(0.97)	(1.09)
Census Division FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Obs.	77	81	80	84
R-Squared	0.61	0.56	0.52	0.51

Standard errors in parentheses.

* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Notes: Dependent variables are various measures of the volume of cargo transshipped by each port in 1970 that could be transported in a container. Column (1) is the log number of tons, Column (2) is the value of is the ln(tons) of cargo, and Columns (3) and (4) are a port's share of total tons and cargo value at all ports (respectively). Each specification includes the 1953 level or share of containerized products at the port. Port shipments data from USACE (1953) includes foreign, coastwise, and internal trade at each port in tons by product. Cargo-suitable products are a subset of all products, assessed as of 1968 and reported in El-Sahli (2013). Total cargo value estimated from product values (dollars per ton) of US foreign trade in OECD (2022). Includes census division fixed effects.

higher amount of container-suitable cargo in 1970. In terms of cargo value, ports that adopted during the 1960s also had a significantly higher value, though not in terms of tonnage or their share of total cargo handling activity. These results suggest that there was a benefit to port owners from earlier adoption of containers.

4.2.2 Dockworkers

I next compare dockworkers' income in 1970 in non-containerized ports versus those that containerized earlier or later, controlling for the level of containerized competition they faced in 1970, to test how pay varied with containerization timing.[25] I run Mincer wage regressions on indicators for whether a dockworker i is in a county group c with any port that containerized by 1960 or between 1961 and 1970 (with the omitted group again counties with ports that containerized

[25]Note this is actually annual income in 1969, since it is as respondents reported in the 1970 census.

later or never):

$$\begin{aligned}\ln(Income)_{i,c,1970} =& \beta_0 + \beta_1 \mathbf{I}(Containerized1960_c) + \beta_2 \mathbf{I}(Containerized1961to1970_c) \\ &+ \beta_3 CompetitionContainers_{c,1970}) + \beta_4 \mathbf{I}(Employed_{i,c,1970}) \\ &+ \beta_x X_{i,c,1970} + \gamma_m FE_m + \epsilon_{i,c,1970} \end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

where $\ln(Income)_{i,c,1970}$ is the log of wage/salary income for an individual i in county group c in 1970, $\mathbf{I}(Containerized1960_c)$ and $\mathbf{I}(Containerized1961to1970_c)$ are indicators for any port in county group c having adopted container shipping by 1960 or between 1961 and 1970 (respectively) and $CompetitionContainers_{c,1970}$ is the distance-weighted level of competition port county group c faced in 1970 from other ports adopting containers. All specifications include individual-level $X_{i,c,t}$ controls for age and its squared term, educational attainment, and sex. Importantly, some specifications include local labour market fixed effects $FE_{c,t}$, where this geography is defined as a US Census metropolitan area. Many metro areas have multiple ports, in different counties, with different containerization timing by 1970 (e.g. Newark, NJ vs. the rest of New York City or Oakland, CA vs. San Francisco).

Some specifications also control for the extensive margin of employment by including $\mathbf{I}(Employed_{i,c,1970})$, an indicator for whether individual i reported being employed in 1970. The sample is all dockworkers in (ocean) coastal counties from the 1970 Census microdata 'metro sample' (Ruggles et al., 2022) where county group, and hence container adoption, can be observed. Various specifications include all individuals that reported their industry (occupation) of current or most recent employed as Water Transportation (Longshoreman and Stevedore) as of 1970 as well, in some specifications, as of 1965 (but reported a different industry/occupation in 1970) in order to include those that moved from dockwork to other jobs in 1970.

Results from these regressions are provided in Table 4. I find that in 1970 dockworkers in 'early adopter' ports that containerized at least ten years earlier enjoy a pay premium compared to similar workers in ports that did not containerize by 1970, though among workers in the Longshoreman and Stevedore occupation this pay premium for early adoption is only statistically significant when comparing workers within the same metro area.[26] In contrast, in 'late adopter' ports as of 1970 pay levels were the same as for similar dockworkers in ports that did not containerize by 1970.

[26]In Appendix Table A7, I show that in 1950 dockworkers in early-adopter ports were not already earning more, when metropolitan area fixed effects are included.

Table 4. Regression of dockworker ln(income) on port containerization timing by 1970

(a) Longshoremen occupation definition of dockworkers

	Full dockworker sample				Only 1970 dockworkers			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Containerized by 1960	0.13	0.42***	0.09	0.40**	0.14	0.43***	0.11	0.40**
	(0.08)	(0.16)	(0.08)	(0.16)	(0.08)	(0.16)	(0.08)	(0.16)
Containerized 1961-1970	0.05	0.15	0.02	0.11	0.06	0.16	0.03	0.12
	(0.06)	(0.11)	(0.06)	(0.11)	(0.06)	(0.12)	(0.06)	(0.11)
Competition in 1970	0.12***	0.21**	0.11***	0.21**	0.13***	0.22**	0.12***	0.22**
	(0.04)	(0.11)	(0.04)	(0.10)	(0.04)	(0.11)	(0.04)	(0.10)
Employed			0.61***	0.61***			0.64***	0.63***
			(0.08)	(0.07)			(0.08)	(0.08)
Constant	5.46***	5.37***	5.50***	5.36***	5.36***	5.24***	5.40***	5.22***
	(0.33)	(0.39)	(0.32)	(0.37)	(0.34)	(0.40)	(0.33)	(0.39)
Metro FE	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Sample includes:								
—1970 dockworkers	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
—1965 dockworkers	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
Obs.	942	934	942	934	864	855	864	855
R-Squared	0.18	0.24	0.24	0.29	0.18	0.25	0.24	0.30

Standard errors in parentheses. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

(b) Water Transportation industry definition of dockworkers

	Full dockworker sample				Only 1970 dockworkers			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Containerized by 1960	0.15***	0.24***	0.13***	0.22***	0.14***	0.22**	0.12***	0.18**
	(0.05)	(0.09)	(0.04)	(0.08)	(0.05)	(0.09)	(0.04)	(0.09)
Containerized 1961-1970	0.02	-0.07	0.02	-0.03	-0.01	-0.11*	-0.02	-0.08
	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.04)	(0.06)
Competition in 1970	0.04**	0.03	0.04*	0.05	0.04*	0.03	0.03	0.06
	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.05)
Employed			0.84***	0.84***			0.84***	0.85***
			(0.04)	(0.04)			(0.04)	(0.04)
Constant	5.82***	5.90***	5.77***	5.78***	5.72***	5.77***	5.76***	5.75***
	(0.15)	(0.18)	(0.14)	(0.17)	(0.15)	(0.18)	(0.14)	(0.17)
Metro FE	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Sample includes:								
—1970 dockworkers	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
—1965 dockworkers	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
Obs.	3239	3238	3239	3238	2948	2947	2948	2947
R-Squared	0.21	0.23	0.31	0.33	0.23	0.25	0.34	0.36

Standard errors in parentheses. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Notes: Dependent variable is log wage and salary income. Individual controls include age, age^2, sex, and education level. Sample is all individuals reporting current or most recent employment in the Longshoremen and Stevedore occupation as of 1970 and/or 1965 (depending on the specification), from the Ruggles et al. (2022) 1970 Census Form 1 and 2 'metro sample' PUMS. Containerized by 1960 (1961-70) equals one if individual is located in a county group with a port that adopted container shipping by 1970 (during 1961-70) and zero otherwise. Competition is distance-weighted level of competition faced by workers' county group in 1970 from other ports adopting containers. Even-numbered columns include metropolitan area fixed effects.

There are likely three forces driving the higher earnings of dockworkers in early-adopter ports. First, the increased demand for transshipment services in early-adopter ports shown in Table 3 may have translated into higher worker pay. Second, it is possible dockworkers' wage and salary income as reported in the 1970 Census includes compensation payments they received for their port adopting automation. Third, while there is a separate occupation code for 'Cranemen, derrickmen, and hoistmen', the 1965 Dictionary of Occupational Titles featured a revised definition of the 'Longshoremen and stevedores' occupation that added the task of "operat[ing a] crane or winch to load or unload cargo." Therefore the sample in Table 4a may include higher-paid cranemen, in ports that containerized by 1970. These forces cannot be disentangled in the data. However, all are in line with evidence that dockworkers in early adopter ports had better economic outcomes than those in late- or never-adopting ports. Together, these results suggest there is a first-mover advantage where both marine cargo handling firms and dockworkers are better off in ports that containerized earlier.

5 Dockworker unions and port container adoption timing

The above analyses show that dockworker labor market outcomes generally worsen following containerization at their own port or others, but that dockworkers in early-adopter ports are better off. The firms that employed these dockworkers to provide cargo transshipment services similarly have better outcomes following early adoption. However, these analyses take a port's decision to adopt containers as a given. Which factors predict if, and when, a port containerized?

In this section, I focus on the role of longshore unions in influencing adoption of containers at a port. As described in Section 2, the two major unions, on each coast of the US, took very different approaches to the threat of containerization in the 1950s and 1960s. I test a theory in the historical literature on containerization that attributes some differences in adoption timing across ports to the divergent stances of these unions (Levinson, 2006; Monaco and Olsson, 2005; Ross, 1970). The Pacific-coast dockworker union, the ILWU, "embraced the modernization concept... [and] concentrated its strength on securing its share of the gains." (Ross, 1968). That is, it bargained to allow port employers to adopt containers in exchange for providing union members with substantial compensation. In contrast, the ILA on the Atlantic/Gulf-cost was not able to come to an agreement with employers to allow containerization, instead prioritizing saving dockworker jobs—and therefore opposing containerization forcefully (Cole, 2017). One indication of these diverging approaches and

bargaining outcomes is strike activity during the onset of containerization: from 1958 to 1970 the annual average number of worker-days lost to strikes was 3,400 in Pacific ports compared to 162,100 in the Port of New York alone and 291,700 in the rest of the US (including other Atlantic and Gulf ports as well as inland ports) (FMCS, 1971).

Given these differences in the stance of each union towards adoption, variation in union local bargaining power across ports may not be linearly related to containerization outcomes, unlike in typical models of unionization and technological adoption. Rather than adoption being uniformly more likely to occur in ports with weaker union representation, as predicted by models emphasizing the investment effects of hold-up power (Grout, 1984; Card et al., 2014; Cardullo et al., 2015), union locals with more power would be better placed to enforce whichever position towards containerization their union had taken coast-wide. Differences in dockworker bargaining power within ports on the same coast (all represented by the same union) impacted the ability to uphold, and make credible, their unions' bargains with firms to support containerization—or their ability to oppose it. Specifically, I argue that differential local bargaining power influenced the ability of ILA workers to successfully prevent containerization at their port as well as whether cooperative ILWU workers could enforce their side of an adoption bargain with employers.

To test this, I estimate the following linear probability model regression of early containerization (by 1960) on a variety of ex-ante characteristics of the port:

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{I}(Containerized)_{c,1960} =& \beta_0 + \beta_1 PortShallowness_{c,1953} + \beta_2 LandSupply_{c,1942} + \beta_3 \mathbf{I}(PacificPort)_c) \\ &+ \beta_4 ILADensity_{c,1950} + \beta_5 ILWUDensity_{c,1950} \\ &+ \beta_6 \ln(CargoTons)_{c,1953} + \beta_7 CompetitionContainers_{c,1960} + \epsilon_c \qquad (5)\end{aligned}$$

where the dependent variable is an indicator of whether port c adopted containerized shipping by 1960. $PortShallowness_{c,1953}$ is a categorical variable in five-foot increments with smaller values for deeper ports, as provided by Brooks et al. (2021). This is used to instrument for containerization in based on recent studies on its effects on local population growth.[27] $LandSupply_{c,1942}$ is a similar geographic cost-shifter used in Ducruet et al. (2024), however it does not have any predictive power

[27]Since container ships require deeper ports than ships carrying break bulk cargo, and since there is a high cost to making an initially shallow port sufficiently deep for container ships, "initial port depth is a key component of the cost of converting a breakbulk port into a containerized port." (Brooks et al., 2021) Initial depth is therefore an "exogenous cost-shifter" that makes it less expensive for a port to reach a certain depth by dredging (Ducruet et al., 2024).

of containerization in the US by 1960 in this case (due to either measurement differences, the more limited sample here to the US only rather than globally as in Ducruet et al. (2024), or a different dependent variable of *early* adoption timing).

The main independent variables of interest are measures of the ex-ante local membership density of each dockworker union: $ILADensity_{c,1950}$ on the Atlantic/Gulf coast and $ILWUDensity_{c,1950}$ on the Pacific coast.[28] These union density measures are calculated as union local members as a percentage of the pool of potential members. This denominator is defined mainly as all employed individuals in the port county with less than-high school education in 1950 across all industries. This is motivated by the fact that in 1950, 98% of longshoremen in major seaports had less than a high-school education. Alternatively, the denominator is defined as all employed individuals with less than-college education (see detailed discussion in Section 3.4.). The goal of these union density measures are to capture the bargaining power of the union local within a port. The ability of the union locals to coordinate the labor of dockworkers and those with similar skill levels that could work on the dock is one measure of this bargaining power. However, both the ILWU and ILA organized workers in other industries, such as fishermen, canneries, and manufacturing near ports. Assuming these workers would strike alongside dockworkers, this definition of bargaining power therefore captures how much hold-up power the union local had in a port county, in terms of how much damage it could do to the overall local economy.

I also include controls for variables that previous work on technological adoption has found to influence adoption timing. I include $\ln(CargoTons)_{c,1953}$, the volume of container-suitable cargo handled by port c in 1953, given the finding by Koch et al. (2021) that ex-ante higher-output firms are more likely to install industrial robots. I also control for $CompetitionContainers_{c,1960}$, the degree of containerized competition faced by port c as of 1960, to account for ports adopting in the face of rivals' adoption (as suggested by e.g. Schmidt-Dengler (2024)).

Results from these regressions are included in Table 5. Column (1) finds a similar relationship as the first-stage regressions in Brooks et al. (2021) and Ducruet et al. (2024) where adoption is predicted by ex-ante port depth. Unlike in Ducruet et al. (2024), local land supply does not predict container adoption in this case, due either to measurement, sample coverage, or specification differences.

I find a negative and significant value for β_4, the local membership density of the ILA dockworker

[28] Note this is actually run equivalently as a full interaction of a single union density variable and $\mathbf{I}(PacificPort)_c$.

Table 5. Linear probability model regressions of port container adoption by 1960

	Non-HS emp union density denominator				Non-BA emp denominator	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Port shallowness, 1953	-0.1208***		-0.1488***	-0.0673	-0.1488***	-0.0672
	(0.0127)		(0.0274)	(0.0616)	(0.0274)	(0.0616)
Land supply, 1942		-0.0034				
		(0.0048)				
Pacific port			-0.2560	-0.1088	-0.2552	-0.1075
			(0.1356)	(0.1114)	(0.1353)	(0.1110)
ILA density (%), 1950			-0.0048**	-0.0064**	-0.0049**	-0.0065**
			(0.0018)	(0.0025)	(0.0018)	(0.0025)
ILWU density (%), 1950			0.0143***	0.0123**	0.0147***	0.0125*
			(0.0018)	(0.0047)	(0.0018)	(0.0049)
ln(CargoTons), 1953				0.0926**		0.0926**
				(0.0287)		(0.0286)
Competition, 1960				0.2694		0.2687
				(0.1671)		(0.1669)
Constant	0.8249***	0.5905*	1.0141***	0.7836***	1.0134***	0.7827***
	(0.0587)	(0.2416)	(0.1838)	(0.1657)	(0.1833)	(0.1652)
Observations	88	90	88	80	88	80

Standard errors clustered by Census Division in parentheses.

* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Notes: Linear regression of indicator that port adopted containers by 1960 on potential predictors. All predictors are measured before containerization begins in 1956. ILA density and ILWU density are local longshore union density, calculated as number of union local members as a percentage of potential members, where latter is defined in Columns (1) through (4) as all employed individuals in port with less than-high school education across all industries and in Columns (5) and (6) as all employed individuals with less than-college education. Port shallowness is 8-level categorical variable with smaller values for deeper ports. Land supply is index of available land to build near port. ln(CargoTons) is volume of container-suitable cargo handled by port. Pacific port is indicator that port is on Pacific coast, controlled by different union than Atlantic/Gulf coast. Competition is distance-weighted level of competition faced by workers' county group in 1960 from other ports adopting containers.

union, in 1950. The probability of early container adoption is decreasing in union density among Atlantic and Gulf coast ports, where the union fought containerization. On the other hand, I estimate a significant positive value for the β_5 coefficients on ex-ante ILWU local union density. The probability of early container adoption is increasing in union density among Pacific ports where the union cooperated with adoption in exchange for compensation. These results are robust to alternative definitions of union density and to the inclusion of additional controls for ex-ante port output and the level of competition in 1960. In terms of magnitudes, a port with one standard deviation higher union density on the east coast (15.4%) has a 9.9 percentage point smaller probability of early container adoption. On the Pacific coast, one standard deviation higher union density (4.2%) is associated with a 5.2 percentage point larger probability of early container adoption. On both coasts, only about 7% of ports had containerized by 1960 (4 of 61 on the east coast and 2 of 29 on the west).

These results suggest that the influence of worker bargaining power on adoption is highly dependent on whether these workers are part of a union that has bargained for compensation for their dislocation by the adopted automation. The negative coefficient on bargaining power of ILA union locals is perhaps unsurprising: adoption will occur earlier in ports where the union local is weaker and less able to prevent their displacement. This is in line with views of unions as primarily resisting adoption of technologies that displace their members. However, among ILWU ports where the union bargained to cooperate with adoption in exchange for compensation, there is a positive and significant coefficient on bargaining power. One possibility is that higher unionization rates mean that it is more credible for the union in these ports to uphold its side of the bargain, since a larger share of potential dockworkers are being compensated for their dislocation. Firms are therefore incentivized to innovate to protect their market shares (Beath et al., 1989; Ulph and Ulph, 1994). A complementary interpretation is based on the fact that only more senior ILWU members received compensation, unlike the ILA where more marginal members also were compensated, but all members at much lower amounts–hence the combative stance towards containerization. Adoption therefore appears more likely where there is a greater share of potentially dislocated workers being compensated and at higher amounts. This raises the question of whether there were potential inefficiencies where ports could have compensated workers more (or a larger share of workers) in order to automate earlier, increasing productivity and social welfare.

6 Modeling worker-firm bargaining over adoption

The results above indicate that port containerization is negatively associated with dockworker employment via both direct channels of technology replacing workers in a containerized port as well as a nearly as large indirect channel of containerized ports attracting shipping business away from non-containerized ports. However, containerization appears to insulate dockworkers from further indirect employment losses. On the firm side, ports that containerize attract more cargo handling business. Moreover, there appears to be a first-mover advantage whereby ports that adopted containers earlier have higher cargo handling activity and dockworkers in these early-adopter ports enjoy a pay premium. Finally, the local dockworker union density in a port—indicative of workers' relative bargaining power—is associated with lower probability of early adoption in ports where no compensation agreement was reached, but higher probability where bargaining was successful.

I outline a simple game theory model to explain these results and understand how each factor influences the size of the compensation required to ensure adoption. Firms (port owners) are faced with some exogenous probability that competitors (other ports) have adopted a labour-saving automation technology that increases their productivity (containerization) and hence ability to attract business away from the firm (demand for transshipment services). The firm seeks to adopt the automation in the face of workers (longshoremen) that can exercise some degree of hold-up power over the firms business. For example, Levinson (2006) notes various strikes by dockworkers along the North Atlantic coast, in southern California, and in Puerto Rico that resulted in port owners dropping demands for labour-saving changes.

The firm must therefore decide whether, and how much, to offer workers in compensation in order to support the automation adoption. This fits the case of the Mechanization and Modernization Agreement of 1960 between Pacific coast port owners and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), which supported the ports in developing containerized shipping facilities in exchange for guarantees of job security, a limited form of profit sharing, and some early retirement (Reagan, 2019).

First, adoption by a rival port $\emptyset$ occurs with some probability $x \in [0, 1]$, which can be viewed equivalently as the degree of containerized competition a port faces (i.e. if the measure described in Section 3.5 was rescaled to [0,1]). There are then two actors in this game, the owner of given port P and the dockworkers employed there taken as a single representative body, i.e. a union local. The payoffs to both actors are a function of the total demand for transshipment (cargo

handling) services at port P, which in this model is simplified to be either a 'high level' of demand D_H or 'low level' D_L. Demand is higher for containerized ports, in line with the empirical results in Sections 4.1.2 and 4.2 where containerization is associated with higher levels of cargo throughput. In this game, if containerization has occurred at competing ports (i.e. $x > 0$) but port P does not containerize, then demand at port P also decreases by an amount corresponding to the degree of competition it faces, $(1 - x)$. The payoffs also depend on the labour intensity of transshipment services at the port (equivalently the labour share), again either a 'high level' L_H or 'low level' L_L. This labour intensity governs how the revenue at port P from demand for its services is distributed: the payoff to dockworkers is earnings $W_i = L_i D_i$ and the payoff to port owners is $\Pi_i = (1 - L_i)D_i$ where all variables are characterized as either low or high (i.e. $i \in (L, H)$). Finally, these payoffs may be adjusted by adding or subtracting (respectively) some amount of compensation C that encompasses the job guarantee, pension, and other payments that were the subject of port-union negotiations.

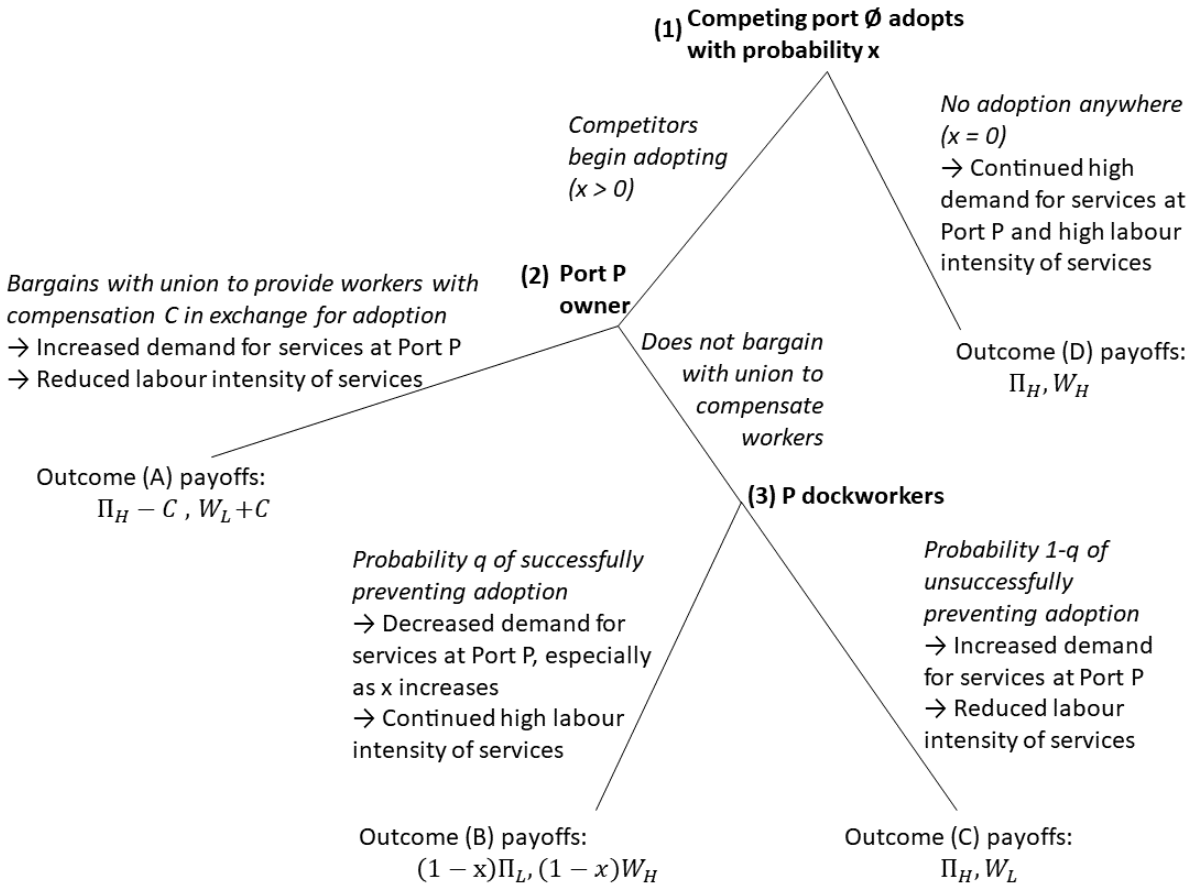
Figure 8 provides an extensive-form game tree of the strategic decisions facing the owners of a port P and its dockworkers.

- In **Node 1** in Figure 8, a competing port $\emptyset$ may or may not adopt containerized shipping (e.g. invest in installing cranes), with probability $x \in [0, 1]$. If it does not adopt, then **Outcome (D)** is reached, where port P also does not containerize, and the status quo is maintained of high demand for high-labour intensity cargo handling services.

- **Node 2** is reached if a competing port $\emptyset$ adopts with some positive probability $x > 0$. Then, the firm that owns port P recognizes the competitive threat to its business and decide to attempt to containerize as well. This requires deciding whether to offer the dockworker union at their port compensation to 'buy support' for containerization.

  - If the port P firm offers the union some sufficient amount of compensation C then the workers support the automation adoption and the firm adopts. **Outcome (A)** is reached, where because of the container adoption shipping demand for the cargo handling services at port P is high but the labour intensity is low. The port owner has a payoff of the high profit $\Pi_H = (1 - L_L)D_H$, which is higher because of the high demand and lower labour costs, minus the cost of compensating the dockworkers C. The dockworkers have a payoff of the low earnings $W_L = L_L D_H$ (because of the low

Figure 8: Automation adoption and compensation game extensive form tree



labour intensity) plus the compensation C.

- Alternatively, if the port P firm decides not to offer compensation to their dockworkers then **Node 3** is reached. The dockworkers therefore attempt to oppose the containerization because of labour displacement, with their ability to successfully prevent it determined by probability $q \in [0, 1]$, the degree of local workers' hold-up power (e.g. determined by the union local's density).

  - If opposition is successful, then **Outcome (B)** is reached. Because no containerization occurs at port P despite competing ports containerizing, demand for services at port P is lower and labour intensity of those services is higher (since it is all breakbulk shipping). However, demand for port P services will continue decreasing as other ports increasingly containerize, i.e. as x increases. The port firm therefore has a payoff of the low profit $(1-x)\Pi_L = (1-x)(1-L_H)D_L$ and the dockworkers have a payoff of the high wages $(1-x)W_H = (1-x)L_H D_L$.
  - If opposition is unsuccessful, then **Outcome (C)** is reached. Port P containerizes, meaning demand for services at port P is high and labour intensity of those services is low (with no further decreases due to containerization, in line with the estimates in Section 4.1.2). The port firm therefore has a payoff of the high profit $\Pi_H = (1-L_L)D_H$ and the dockworkers have a payoff of the low wages $W_L = L_L D_H$.

  Since arriving at outcome (B) or (C) from node 3 depends on probability q, the payoffs at node 3 can be summarized as linear combinations of the outcome (B) and (C) payoffs:

$$(\text{Payoff}_{PortP}, \text{Payoff}_{Workers}) = ((1-x)q(\Pi_L) + (1-q)\Pi_H, (1-x)q(W_H) + (1-q)W_L)$$

The only strategic decision in the model is the level of compensation C, although there is also an important role for the degree of worker hold-up power q and level of containerized competition port P faces x, which are not determined within the model.

In the scenario following adoption by the competing port $\emptyset$, the model can be solved to find the factors influencing the optimal compensation level by comparing the payoffs of each actor in outcome A versus the linear combination of payoffs from outcomes (B) and (C). Containerization

will occur at port P under an agreement to compensate the dockworkers if:

$$\text{For workers: } W_L + C > (1-x)q(W_H) + (1-q)W_L \longleftrightarrow C > q((1-x)W_H - W_L) \quad (6)$$

$$\text{For port P firm: } \Pi_H - C > (1-x)q(\Pi_L) + (1-q)\Pi_H \longleftrightarrow C < q(\Pi_H - (1-x)\Pi_L) \quad (7)$$

The level of compensation will therefore be higher if the dockworkers have greater hold-up power, if there is less competition, and if there is a larger difference in the pay they get under non-containerization vs. containerization. Symmetrically for firms, the level of compensation is lower if there is a lower degree of worker hold-up power, more competition, or a smaller profit gain to the port firm from containerizing. Combining these inequalities, compensated adoption as long as the level of compensation satisfies: $q((1-x)W_H - W_L) < C < q(\Pi_H - (1-x)\Pi_L)$

7 Conclusion and future research

This paper analyzes how automation in a tradeable industry impacts workers and how adoption by firms is influenced by union strategies by analyzing the case of US container adoption across ports and dockworker labour market outcomes. I highlight the importance of indirect channels of job loss from automation in firms that do not adopt the automation, due to business stealing by adopting firms, estimating it is of nearly as large a magnitude as direct job displacement with an adopting firm. In particular I show that ports that adopted containers earlier had better outcomes, as did the dockworkers employed there. I argue that this channel of indirect job loss was taken into account by dockworker unions who attempted to bargain with employers for compensation in exchange for supporting containerization. However, my results in Section 5 suggest that only where a union was able to reach a bargained agreement, and in ports where this bargain was most effective due to higher union density, did this encourage adoption. Otherwise, containerization occurred where non-cooperative unions were less able to resist it.

This contributes to growing bodies of research on the labour market impacts of automation as well as on directed technological change, in particular the role of unions and labour power. The findings suggest in the case of competitive, tradable industries, unions can encourage adoption of even labour-saving technologies. I provide a simple game theory model of employer-union bargaining over automation technological adoption to illustrate which factors influence the optimal compensation levels required to obtain union buy-in for automations. Given that ports where

compensation agreements were negotiated appear to experience better outcomes, this appears to be a case where unions and firms can share the rents from a labour-saving technological improvement and therefore both reap the productivity benefits.

Future research could seek to expand on this analysis along several dimensions, for example by:

- Digitizing further years of port-by-product cargo throughput data from *Waterborne Commerce of the United States* annual reports (USACE, 1953). This will expand the sample of firm (port) outcomes, refine existing measures, and possibly allow for additional measures such annual port cargo handling productivity (tonnage per worker) and cargo value.

- Incorporating an instrumental variables strategy for the main analyses. For example, pre-containerization port depth could be used to instrument for own-port containerization as in Brooks et al. (2021) and Ducruet et al. (2024), and similarly containerized competition could be instrumented with the depth of neighboring ports, in order to compare with results of the two-way fixed effects regressions in Section 4.1.2. Dockworker local union density could also be instrumented with historical predictors of this measure or the degree of unionization in other industries locally.

- Developing a model to explain the divergent stances of each dockworker union towards containerization (i.e. the ILA's obstruction versus the ILWU's cooperation), for example by taking into account the degree of union centralization (vis a vis its locals), differential concerns about the threat of business-stealing, and past negotiations with port employers. This model could also incorporate a strategic aspect of union behaviour, where if all unions (or locals) cooperate they could prevent automation entirely, but if any one deviates (e.g. due to a belief that cooperation among all ports is not possible and/or automation *somewhere* is inevitable) then they enjoy a first-mover advantage, steal business from rivals, and can make a rent-sharing bargain to compensate their displaced workers.

- Identifying dockworkers in restricted-access individual census microdata and linking them across censuses to analyze their labour market outcomes, including how these may have been influenced by the different schemes across US ports for compensating displaced workers. For example, it could be that displaced dockworkers have lower earnings after containerization and job switching, or that instead they have improved outcomes because containerization boosts their local economy (Brooks et al., 2021; Gomtsyan, 2016) and creates opportunities

to earn more in other occupations. These individual-level analyses could also identify formerly casually-employed dockworkers—who may not report this as their primary census occupation/industry— based on their proximity to self-reported dockworkers (e.g. other household members or family ties). Finally, they could leverage information in union convention proceedings (ILA, 1955; ILWU, 1955) on dockworker union locals representatives to identify outcomes for these (and related) individuals.

- Exploring how the decline of local ports affected local industries (e.g. manufacturers) that sourced inputs or sent exports through local ports. This could be important for understanding worker trajectories if the indirectly displaced manufacturing jobs served as typical roles for dockworkers to transition to.

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A Appendix

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A.1 Iceberg trade costs calculation

Iceberg trade costs $TradeCosts_{cj}$ are calculated based on the data and methodology in Jaworski and Kitchens (2019). This is based on their matrix of county-to-county travel distance (in miles) and time (in hours) along the interstate, national, and state highway systems network as of 1960. I then calculate the monetary cost τ_{cj} of moving between each county pair (a symmetric cost) as the sum

$$\tau_{cj} = (Distance_{cj} \times CostPerMile_{1960}) + (TravelTime_{cj} \times CostPerHour_{1960})$$

The $CostPerHour_{1960}$ is the hourly wage in trucking in 1960 as reported in Jaworski and Kitchens (2019) ($18.59 in 2015 dollars, taken from the decennial census). Following Jaworski and Kitchens (2019), for $CostPerMile_{1960}$ I calculate the fuel cost per mile in 1960 as the product of the miles per gallon (12.4, from the U.S. Department of Transportation)[29] and the per gallon cost of diesel ($1.38 in 2015 dollars, from the US Department of Energy) [30]. Finally, following Jaworski and Kitchens (2019); Hornbeck and Rotemberg (2021); Donaldson and Hornbeck (2016) I convert this county-to-county trade cost τ_{cj} to an iceberg trade cost between counties by normalizing by the average price per ton of transported goods. I divide τ_{cj} by the average value of a shipment ($1003.03 in 2015 dollars, from the US Department of Transportation) then adding one.[31]

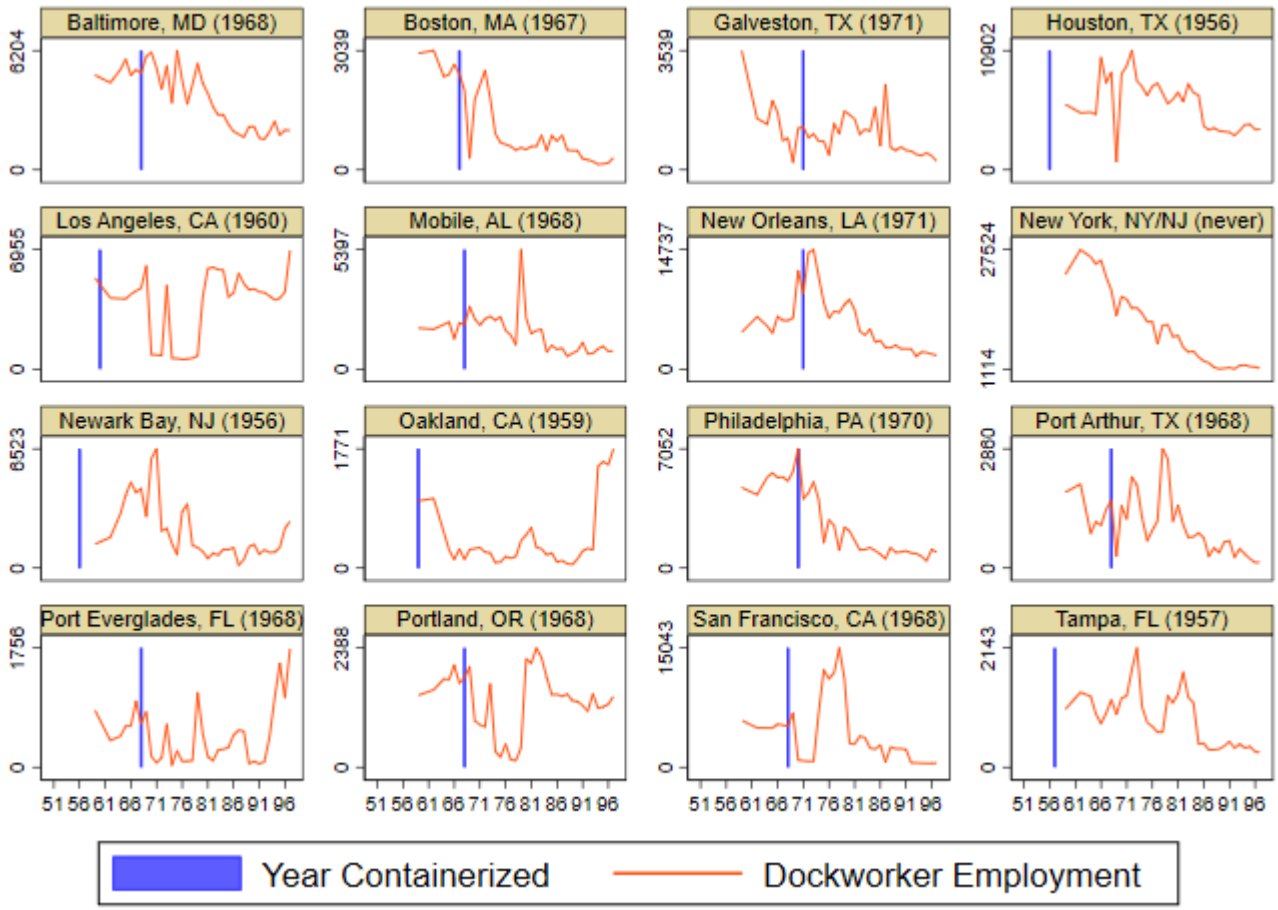
[29] As reported by infoplease.com https://www.infoplease.com/math-science/earth-environment/motor-vehicle-fuel-consumption-and-travel-in-the-us-1960-2006

[30] The diesel price per gallon in 1960 is calculated by first using the 1.109 dollars per gallon in 1995 (in 1995 dollars) of diesel (from https://www.eia.gov/totalenergy/data/annual/showtext.php?t=ptb0524) indexed back to 1960 using the ratio of 1995 to 1960 average retail price of gasoline, 1.59/1.86 (from https://www.energy.gov/eere/vehicles/fact-741-august-20-2012-historical-gasoline-prices-1929-2011), to obtain the diesel price of 0.948 dollars per gallon in 1960 (in 1995 dollars). This is then converted to 2015 dollars using the Implicit Price Deflator (from https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/GDPDEF)

[31] I use average value per ton of freight shipment in 2007 of $890 from https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/freight_analysis/nat_freight_stats/docs/10factsfigures/table2_2.htm equal to $1003.03(=890*1.127) in 2015 dollars.

A.2 Additional descriptives

Figure A1: Total longshore services employment and container adoption for largest ports



Notes: Dockworker employment is total annual county employment in SIC 4463 "Marine Cargo Handling" from Eckert et al. (2022). Port locations and containerization timing from Brooks et al. (2021).

A.3 Additional regression results

A.3.1 Aggregate employment

Table A1. Weighted regression of annual port employment on containerization and container competition

(a) Dependent variable: ln(Employment)

	Marine Cargo Handling		All Water Transport	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
I(Containerized)=1	0.426	-0.636***	0.526**	-0.390**
	(0.252)	(0.147)	(0.190)	(0.103)
Competition		-0.506***		-0.393***
		(0.049)		(0.038)
I(Containerized)=1 × Competition		0.367***		0.245***
		(0.035)		(0.014)
Constant	7.487***	8.980***	8.497***	9.722***
	(0.144)	(0.261)	(0.086)	(0.131)
Port FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Obs.	1357	1357	2271	2271
R-Squared	0.79	0.83	0.90	0.92

Standard errors clustered by Census Division in parentheses.
* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

(b) Dependent variable: Employment

	Marine Cargo Handling		All Water Transport	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
I(Containerized)=1	6959.7	-2914.5***	18044.3**	-4121.0**
	(4046.8)	(420.3)	(5931.7)	(1343.6)
Competition		-4169.6***		-7648.9***
		(245.2)		(260.1)
I(Containerized)=1 × Competition		3432.1***		6358.9***
		(175.6)		(272.2)
Constant	943.7	13224.7***	4118.2	27810.1***
	(2300.5)	(533.1)	(2688.7)	(759.9)
Port FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Obs.	1495	1495	2277	2277
R-Squared	0.67	0.86	0.80	0.92

Standard errors clustered by Census Division in parentheses.
* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Notes: Sample for employment regression includes annual observations for 1951 to 1997 for all counties with major coastal ports and non-zero initial year employment (1959 for Marine Cargo Handling and 1951 for total Water Transport). Independent variables are indicator that county c was containerized by year t as recorded by Brooks et al. (2021), a measure of the distance-weighted competition posed by other ports that had containerized by year t, and their interaction. Regressions weighted by level of port county initial year employment in dependent variable industries.

Table A2. Unweighted regression: Annual port employment on containerization and container competition

(a) ln(Employment)

	Marine Cargo Handling		All Water Transport	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
I(Containerized)=1	0.274**	-0.304**	0.209	-0.221
	(0.095)	(0.087)	(0.129)	(0.216)
Competition		-0.127		-0.028
		(0.142)		(0.100)
I(Containerized)=1 × Competition		0.248***		0.170*
		(0.048)		(0.075)
Constant	5.904***	6.158***	5.971***	6.023***
	(0.054)	(0.355)	(0.050)	(0.229)
Port FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Obs.	1357	1357	2271	2271
R-Squared	0.78	0.79	0.85	0.85

Standard errors clustered by Census Division in parentheses.
* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

(b) Employment

	Marine Cargo Handling		All Water Transport	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
I(Containerized)=1	413.2	-685.2	347.5	-922.8
	(626.9)	(782.8)	(712.1)	(874.3)
Competition		-1151.8		-1189.2
		(855.7)		(803.1)
I(Containerized)=1 × Competition		467.0		460.6
		(489.8)		(530.1)
Constant	1115.8**	3853.7*	1822.9***	4559.5**
	(336.3)	(1805.0)	(276.8)	(1630.0)
Port FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Obs.	1495	1495	2277	2277
R-Squared	0.62	0.65	0.72	0.73

Standard errors clustered by Census Division in parentheses.
* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Notes: Sample for employment regression includes annual observations for 1951 to 1997 for all counties with major coastal ports and non-zero initial year employment (1959 for Marine Cargo Handling and 1951 for total Water Transport). Independent variables are indicator that county c was containerized by year t as recorded by Brooks et al. (2021), a measure of the distance-weighted competition posed by other ports that had containerized by year t, and their interaction.

A.3.2 Aggregate cargo volume

Table A3. Weighted regression: annual port cargo volume on containerization and container competition

(a) ln(Tons) of container-suitable cargo

	(1)	(2)	(3)
I(Containerized)=1	0.606*	0.613*	0.186
	(0.280)	(0.288)	(0.269)
Competition		0.190	0.126
		(0.140)	(0.144)
I(Containerized)=1 × Competition			0.198**
			(0.065)
Constant	12.752***	12.475***	12.567***
	(0.068)	(0.242)	(0.242)
Port FE	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y
Obs.	2577	2572	2572
R-Squared	0.86	0.86	0.86

Standard errors clustered by Census Division in parentheses.
* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

(b) Tons of container-suitable cargo

	(1)	(2)	(3)
I(Containerized)=1	6.440*	6.288*	-0.497
	(2.976)	(2.856)	(1.591)
Competition		-1.241	-1.924
		(1.503)	(1.053)
I(Containerized)=1 × Competition			3.059
			(1.767)
Constant	5.946***	8.136**	9.273***
	(0.929)	(2.652)	(2.137)
Port FE	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y
Obs.	2609	2604	2604
R-Squared	0.78	0.78	0.80

Standard errors clustered by Census Division in parentheses.
* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Notes: Sample for cargo regression includes annual observations for 1953 to 1985 for all major coastal ports. Container-suitable cargo defined as share of cargo tonnage made up by products that were reported as feasible to ship in a container in 1968, as reported by El-Sahli (2013). Independent variables are indicator that county c was containerized by year t as recorded by Brooks et al. (2021), a measure of the distance-weighted competition posed by other ports that had containerized by year t, and their interaction.

Table A4. Unweighted regression: annual port cargo volume on containerization and container competition

(a) ln(Tons) of container-suitable cargo

	(1)	(2)	(3)
I(Containerized)=1	0.601*	0.610*	0.176
	(0.261)	(0.269)	(0.295)
Competition		0.167	0.114
		(0.152)	(0.154)
I(Containerized)=1 × Competition			0.197**
			(0.056)
Constant	12.450***	12.202***	12.281***
	(0.054)	(0.259)	(0.260)
Port FE	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y
Obs.	2753	2748	2748
R-Squared	0.87	0.87	0.87

Standard errors clustered by Census Division in parentheses.
* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

(b) Tons of container-suitable cargo

	(1)	(2)	(3)
I(Containerized)=1	1.220	1.230	-0.726
	(0.677)	(0.722)	(0.666)
Competition		0.069	-0.144
		(0.413)	(0.272)
I(Containerized)=1 × Competition			0.882
			(0.665)
Constant	1.306***	1.202	1.530**
	(0.137)	(0.723)	(0.520)
Port FE	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y
Obs.	2818	2813	2813
R-Squared	0.81	0.81	0.81

Standard errors clustered by Census Division in parentheses.
* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Notes: Sample for cargo regression includes annual observations for 1953 to 1985 for all major coastal ports. Container-suitable cargo defined as share of cargo tonnage made up by products that were reported as feasible to ship in a container in 1968, as reported by El-Sahli (2013). Independent variables are indicator that county c was containerized by year t as recorded by Brooks et al. (2021), a measure of the distance-weighted competition posed by other ports that had containerized by year t, and their interaction.

A.3.3 Full 1970 dockworker income regression results

Table A5. Regression of longshoremen log wage/salary income on port containerization by 1970

	Full dockworker sample				Only 1970 dockworkers			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Containerized by 1960	0.13	0.42***	0.09	0.40**	0.14	0.43***	0.11	0.40**
	(0.08)	(0.16)	(0.08)	(0.16)	(0.08)	(0.16)	(0.08)	(0.16)
Containerized 1961-1970	0.05	0.15	0.02	0.11	0.06	0.16	0.03	0.12
	(0.06)	(0.11)	(0.06)	(0.11)	(0.06)	(0.12)	(0.06)	(0.11)
Competition in 1970	0.12***	0.21**	0.11***	0.21**	0.13***	0.22**	0.12***	0.22**
	(0.04)	(0.11)	(0.04)	(0.10)	(0.04)	(0.11)	(0.04)	(0.10)
Age	0.13***	0.13***	0.11***	0.10***	0.13***	0.13***	0.10***	0.10***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age^2	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Sex	-0.35*	-0.36*	-0.30	-0.31	-0.18	-0.17	-0.11	-0.10
	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.22)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.20)
Education level	0.09***	0.08***	0.09***	0.07***	0.09***	0.08***	0.08***	0.07***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Employed			0.61***	0.61***			0.64***	0.63***
			(0.08)	(0.07)			(0.08)	(0.08)
Constant	5.46***	5.37***	5.50***	5.36***	5.36***	5.24***	5.40***	5.22***
	(0.33)	(0.39)	(0.32)	(0.37)	(0.34)	(0.40)	(0.33)	(0.39)
Metro FE	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Indiv. controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sample includes:								
—1970 dockworkers	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
—1965 dockworkers	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
Obs.	942	934	942	934	864	855	864	855
R-Squared	0.18	0.24	0.24	0.29	0.18	0.25	0.24	0.30

Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Notes: Dependent variable is log wage and salary income. Sample is all individuals reporting current or most recent employment in the Longshoremen and Stevedore occupation as of 1970 and/or 1965 (depending on the specification), from the Ruggles et al. (2022) 1970 Census Form 1 and 2 'metro sample' PUMS. Containerized by 1960 (1961-70) equals one if individual is located in a county group with a port that adopted container shipping by 1970 (during 1961-70) and zero otherwise. Competition is distance-weighted level of competition faced by workers' county group in 1970 from other ports adopting containers. Includes metro area fixed effects.

Table A6. Regression of water transport employees log wage/salary income on port containerization by 1970

	Full dockworker sample				Only 1970 dockworkers			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Containerized by 1960	0.15***	0.24***	0.13***	0.22***	0.14***	0.22**	0.12***	0.18**
	(0.05)	(0.09)	(0.04)	(0.08)	(0.05)	(0.09)	(0.04)	(0.09)
Containerized 1961-1970	0.02	-0.07	0.02	-0.03	-0.01	-0.11*	-0.02	-0.08
	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.04)	(0.06)
Competition in 1970	0.04**	0.03	0.04*	0.05	0.04*	0.03	0.03	0.06
	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.05)
Age	0.14***	0.14***	0.10***	0.10***	0.14***	0.14***	0.11***	0.11***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age^2	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Sex	-0.56***	-0.55***	-0.53***	-0.52***	-0.56***	-0.54***	-0.54***	-0.53***
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Education level	0.08***	0.07***	0.07***	0.07***	0.08***	0.07***	0.07***	0.06***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Employed			0.84***	0.84***			0.84***	0.85***
			(0.04)	(0.04)			(0.04)	(0.04)
Constant	5.82***	5.90***	5.77***	5.78***	5.72***	5.77***	5.76***	5.75***
	(0.15)	(0.18)	(0.14)	(0.17)	(0.15)	(0.18)	(0.14)	(0.17)
Metro FE	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Indiv. controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sample includes:								
—1970 dockworkers	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
—1965 dockworkers	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
Obs.	3239	3238	3239	3238	2948	2947	2948	2947
R-Squared	0.21	0.23	0.31	0.33	0.23	0.25	0.34	0.36

Standard errors in parentheses.

* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Notes: Dependent variable is log wage and salary income. Sample is all individuals reporting current or most recent employment in the Water Transportation industry as of 1970 and/or 1965 (depending on the specification), from the Ruggles et al. (2022) 1970 Census Form 1 and 2 'metro sample' PUMS. Containerized by 1960 (1961-70) equals one if individual is located in a county group with a port that adopted container shipping by 1970 (during 1961-70) and zero otherwise. Competition is distance-weighted level of competition faced by workers' county group in 1970 from other ports adopting containers. Includes metro area fixed effects.

A.3.4 Test for 1950 pre-trend dockworker income

Table A7. Pre-trend check: Regression of log wage/salary income on port containerization in 1950

	Longshore occ.				Water transport industry			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Containerized by 1960	0.24***	0.04	0.21***	0.03	0.12***	0.07*	0.12***	0.07*
	(0.03)	(0.07)	(0.03)	(0.07)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.04)
Containerized 1961-1970	0.13***	0.01	0.12***	0.01	0.05***	-0.04	0.06***	-0.05
	(0.02)	(0.08)	(0.02)	(0.08)	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.01)	(0.04)
Competition in 1970	0.07***	0.03	0.07***	0.04	0.03***	-0.02	0.03***	-0.02
	(0.01)	(0.13)	(0.01)	(0.13)	(0.01)	(0.05)	(0.01)	(0.05)
Age	0.03***	0.03***	0.03***	0.03***	0.04***	0.04***	0.04***	0.04***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Age^2	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Sex	-0.31***	-0.32***	-0.31***	-0.31***	0.04***	0.04**	0.07***	0.07***
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Education level	0.02***	0.01**	0.02***	0.01**	0.01***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Employed			0.35***	0.32***			0.08***	0.09***
			(0.02)	(0.02)			(0.01)	(0.01)
Constant	6.78***	7.02***	6.58***	6.79***	6.65***	6.81***	6.58***	6.73***
	(0.12)	(0.34)	(0.12)	(0.34)	(0.06)	(0.14)	(0.06)	(0.14)
Metro FE	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Obs.	10154	10145	10154	10145	29020	29019	29020	29019
R-Squared	0.02	0.06	0.04	0.07	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.03

Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Notes: Dependent variable is log wage and salary income. Sample is all individuals reporting current or most recent employment in the Longshoremen and Stevedore occupation as of 1970 and/or 1965 (depending on the specification), from the Ruggles et al. (2022) 1970 Census Form 1 and 2 'metro sample' PUMS. Containerized by 1960 (1961-70) equals one if individual is located in a county group with a port that adopted container shipping by 1970 (during 1961-70) and zero otherwise. Competition is distance-weighted level of competition faced by workers' county group in 1970 from other ports adopting containers. Includes metro area fixed effects.