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How do Europeans differ in their attitudes to immigration? Findings from the European Social Survey 2002/03 – 2016/17

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How do Europeans differ in their attitudes to immigration?

Findings from the European Social Survey 2002/03 – 2016/17

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Executive summary

Immigration continues to be one of the most pressing political issues in Europe. This report draws on data from the European Social Survey to explore how attitudes to immigration differ both between and within European countries, and how public opinion has changed over the course of the 21st century.

The data show that in general Nordic countries such as Sweden, Norway and Finland have been consistently the most favourable to immigration while eastern European countries such as the Czech Republic and Hungary have been the least favourable. There is also a consistent pattern across Europe for highly-skilled migrants to be preferred to less-skilled, and those from a European background to be preferred to those from non-European backgrounds.

Despite their relatively high average levels of support for immigration, however, many countries of western and northern Europe are quite strongly polarized internally along educational and age lines. This can perhaps explain why political divisions over immigration can be so salient in these countries.

Comparing results from the first round of the ESS (2002/03) and the most recent (2016/07) round, one finds that European attitudes were on average quite stable. However, this overall stability masked considerable variation between countries in the direction and magnitude of changes in public opinion. A number of countries became more generous while several others became more negative. This means that there was increasing divergence between European countries in their attitudes: Europe became less united.

Moreover, on the specific issue of government policy towards refugees, there was a marked shift in a negative direction after the 2015/16 refugee crisis. Countries such as Austria, Germany and Sweden which had experienced large inflows of refugees showed particularly large declines in public support for generous government policy with respect to the treatment of asylum requests.

Résumé

La question de l'immigration continue d'être un enjeu politique des plus pressants en Europe. Ce rapport, basé sur les données de l'« Enquête Sociale Européenne (ESS) », révèle comment les attitudes envers l'immigration varient entre les pays européens ainsi qu'à l'intérieur de ces pays, et comment l'opinion publique a évolué au cours du 21e siècle. Les données indiquent qu'en général, les pays d'Europe du Nord tels que la Suède, la Norvège et la Finlande, ont toujours été les plus favorables à l'immigration, tandis que la pays d'Europe de l'Est tels que la République tchèque et la Hongrie ont été les moins favorables. On observe également partout en Europe une tendance à préférer les immigrés qualifiés aux moins qualifiés, et ceux originaire d'Europe à ceux originaires de pays non-européens.

Malgré des opinions dans leur ensemble relativement favorables à l'immigration dans de nombreux pays d'Europe du Nord et de l'Ouest, les opinions dans ces pays sont très polarisées entre les différents niveaux d'éducation et classes d'âge. Cela pourrait expliquer les divisions politiques si marquées sur les questions d'immigration dans ces pays.

En comparant les données de la première vague de l'ESS (2002/03) à celles de la dernière (2016/17), on constate que les opinions sur l'immigration sont en moyenne assez stables en Europe. Cependant, cette stabilité générale masque des évolutions contradictoires et d'ampleur différente des opinions publiques vis-à-vis de l'immigration. Certains pays sont devenus encore plus favorables à l'immigration tandis que d'autres sont devenus encore plus réticents. La divergence des attitudes des pays européens s'est ainsi accrue, conduisant aujourd'hui à une Europe moins unie.

D'ailleurs, suite à la crise des réfugiés de 2015/16, on a observé une volonté de durcir les politiques gouvernementales sur les réfugiés. En effet, dans des pays tels que l'Autriche, l'Allemagne et la Suède, qui ont connu un afflux important de réfugiés, la part de l'opinion publique favorable à une politique généreuse en matière de l'asile s'est fortement érodée.

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How do Europeans differ in their attitudes to immigration?

Introduction

1. Immigration continues to be one of the most topical and pressing political issues in Europe, with voters in many countries rating it high on the political agenda, and new 'radical right' political parties which oppose immigration emerging in many countries. There have also been increasing concerns in some countries about the integration of migrants. With continuing high levels of labour migration both from European and from non-European countries to many western countries, as well as new pressures to accept refugees and asylum seekers from war zones around the world, this topic is unlikely to lose its significance in the foreseeable future.

2. Since its inception in 2002, the biannual European Social Survey (ESS) has included a number of core questions on European publics' opinions about immigration, enabling us to track changes over time from 2002 up until 2016/17 (when the most recent round was conducted). In addition to these core questions, more detailed supplementary modules of questions on immigration were included in the first round (2002/03) and in the seventh round (2014/15) enabling more in-depth analysis of particular themes. The ESS is the most highly regarded cross-national survey programme in the world, conducting rigorous representative surveys to the highest methodological standards, thus providing the most authoritative data on support for or opposition to immigration.

3. There were 23 countries which participated in the 2016/17 round of the ESS: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK. Most of these countries (with the exception of Estonia, Iceland, Lithuania and Russia) also participated in ESS Round 1. (For details of the sample sizes, response rates and period of fieldwork in round 8 see table A1 in the appendix.)

4. Since the first round of the ESS conducted in 2002/03, there has been considerable inward migration to many of these countries, and as a result the total stock of the foreign-born populations has grown both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the total population. Between 2002/03 and 2016/17 there were substantial increases in numbers entering western and northern European countries such as Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. In contrast, east European countries such as the Czech Republic, Estonia and Poland did not experience the same high levels of inward migration (see table A2 in the appendix for details). Rates of immigration were further increased by the refugee crisis of 2015 and 2016 which saw particularly large inflows to Austria, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Sweden. The most recent round of ESS data postdates the refugee crisis and enables us to see what, if any, effect the crisis had on public opinion.

5. The core ESS questions, asked in every round, enable us to monitor overall levels of support for or opposition to immigration. We can thus look both at longer-term changes and at short-run changes as a result for example of the refugee crisis. In addition, the questions asked in the special modules of the ESS on public opinion about immigration enable us to go somewhat deeper and to explore questions such as: What do the public feel should be the main criteria for accepting or excluding migrants? Do European publics distinguish between different sorts of migrants? Do they distinguish between migrants from different ethnic and racial backgrounds or from different faiths?

6. In this report we will document: (1) the overall levels of support, or lack of support, for immigration, and how this changed between 2002/03 and 2016/17; (2) the extent of divisions within and between European countries in support for immigration, (3) the effect of the refugee crisis on public opinion, (4) European publics' criteria for accepting migrants and the extent to which European publics differentiate between different types of migrant, for example between migrants of different religious traditions and (5) the socio-demographic drivers of support for and opposition to immigration, and how this differs between European countries.

7. There has been extensive research on the data from the first and seventh rounds of the ESS (for a detailed review of the cross-national research based on the ESS and on other cross-national programmes, see Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010). Notable findings are that the Nordic countries tend to be much more favourable to immigration than are eastern European countries, with other large west European countries lying somewhere in between (Sides and Citrin 2007, Heath and Richards 2019). Previous research also showed that citizens had clear preferences for migrants from a culturally-close country, and for migrants with a European background over those from less-developed countries (Ford 2011). The research also showed considerable internal differences along socio-demographic lines, with young and highly-educated people holding more favourable views towards migration than do older and less-educated respondents (Kunovich 2004).

8. Researchers have also studied whether the extent of anti-immigrant sentiment is related to the size or composition of the migrant inflows. There has been no clear consensus on this question, partly because of limitations arising from the small number of countries studied, and the cross-sectional nature of much of the research (see for example Hjerm and Nagayoshi 2011, Schlueter and Wagner 2008, Schneider 2008, Semyonov et al. 2008, Weber 2015, Gorodzeisky and Semyonov 2018). In this report we focus in particular on the impact of the refugee crisis and the numbers seeking asylum in different countries, since this represents a kind of natural experiment where we can study the effects of the change in numbers of applications for asylum before and after the crisis.

Key findings

- Between 2002/03 and 2016/17 there was little change overall in the extent to which European publics felt that their countries were made a better or worse place to live as a result of migration. If anything, European publics became slightly more positive about the benefits of immigration. There was also considerable stability over time with respect to which countries were more positive towards migrants and those whose publics were less positive. In the former category come Nordic countries such as Sweden, Norway and Finland. In the latter category come eastern countries such as the Czech Republic and Hungary.
- On the more specific policy issue of how many migrants should be allowed to enter from poorer countries outside Europe, there was also overall stability in attitudes between 2002/03 and 2016/17. However, the overall stability masked considerable variation between countries in the direction and magnitude of changes in public opinion. A number of countries, such as Germany, Norway, Portugal and Spain, became more favourable over this period while several others, such as Italy and Hungary became more negative. This means that there was increasing divergence between European countries in their attitudes towards this particular policy issue. In this respect, Europe became less united. In addition to the growing divergence between countries, there were also a number of countries where internal polarization occurred, with increasing numbers both of supporters of immigration and of opponents.
- In contrast, there was a marked overall shift in a negative direction after the 2015 refugee crisis (that is between 2014/15 and 2016/17) in public opinion about how generous government should be to refugees. In the majority of countries publics became significantly more negative about government policy. Countries such as Austria, Germany and Sweden which had experienced large inflows of asylum seekers showed particularly large declines in public support for generous government policy towards refugees. These shifts in public opinion did however appear to be fairly specific to the refugee question and were only weakly reflected in changes on other questions.
- 'Way of life', language, and work skills were generally considered more important than religious and racial background as immigration criteria. However, western countries which have received large numbers of labour migrants tended to put relatively more emphasis on work skills, while countries which had experienced less immigration placed relatively more emphasis on religious background. Three broad clusters of European countries can be distinguished depending on the criteria which they prioritize: a west European cluster which prioritizes work skills, an east European cluster which gives work skills and religion more or less equal priority, and a Nordic cluster which assigns low importance to both criteria.
- In all countries there was a clear hierarchy in the kinds of migrants who were preferred – notably migrants of the same racial or ethnic group as the majority were preferred to those from a different ethnic group or to those from poorer countries in Europe, who in turn were preferred to those from poorer countries outside Europe. New questions asked for the first time in 2014/15 show that there are relatively positive attitudes towards Jewish migrants (who are only slightly

less preferred to those from the same racial or ethnic group as the majority) but there are more negative attitudes towards Muslim migrants.

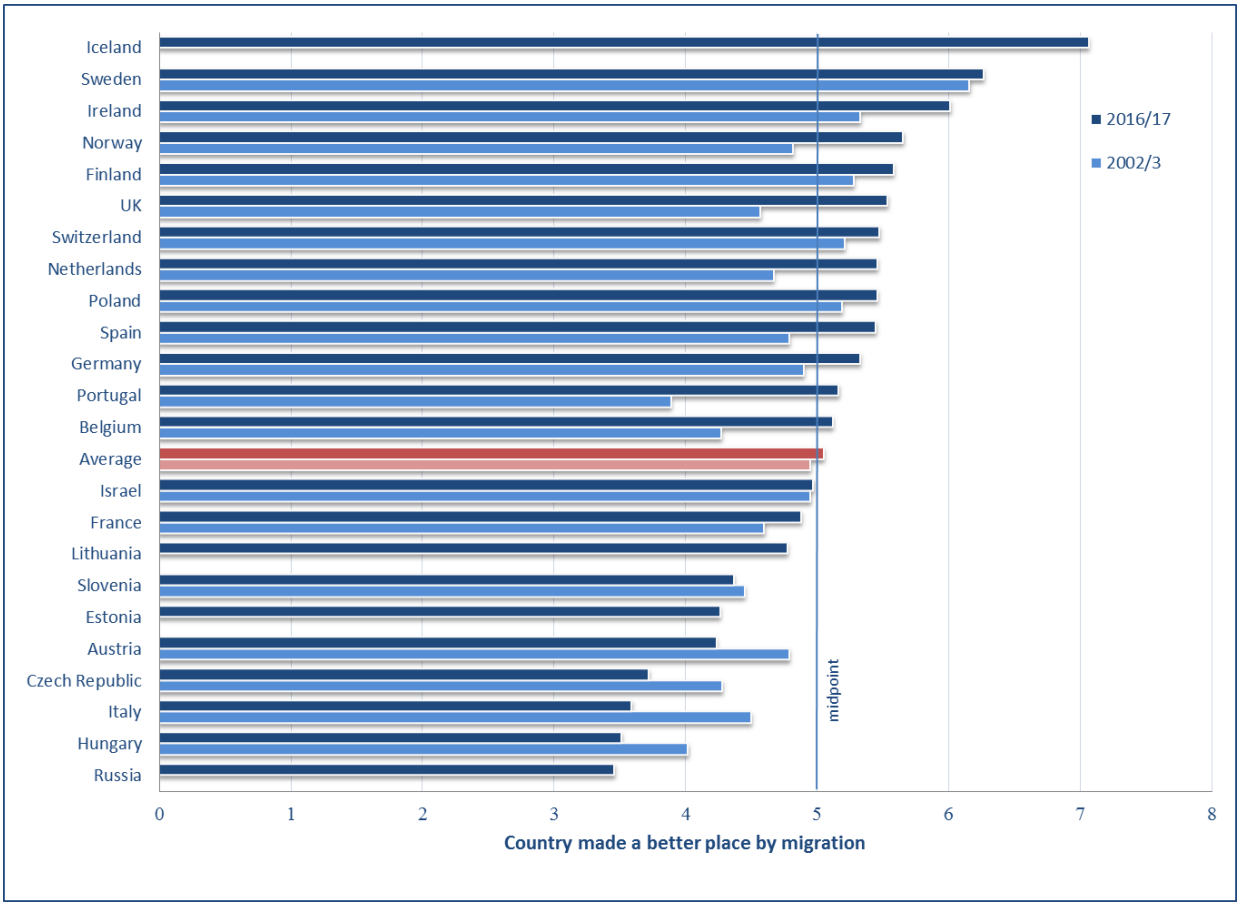
- Most countries have similar preference orderings for the different types of migrant. That is, most countries prefer migrants of the same race or ethnic group over Jewish migrants, who in turn are preferred to those from poorer European countries, from poorer non-European countries, and to Muslims. However, there were some exceptions, with the UK, France, Denmark and Germany being relatively more favourable to Muslim migrants. These exceptions are in line with the theory that contact tends to reduce prejudice since nearly all the countries with large Muslim populations are relatively favourable to Muslim immigration.
- The most significant and widespread differences in attitudes towards migration are between the highly educated (more favourable attitudes) and the less educated, between younger (more favourable) and older, and between more affluent (more favourable) and less affluent citizens.
- Despite their relatively high average levels of support for immigration, many countries of western and northern Europe are quite strongly polarized along educational and age lines (which can perhaps explain why political divisions over immigration are so salient in these countries). Examples include Austria, Finland, France, Sweden and Switzerland. Some of the least divided countries are in Eastern Europe – Lithuania, Estonia, Poland and Hungary for example.

1. Levels of support for migration

9. As an introductory overview of levels of European support for immigration in 2016/17, and how they have changed since 2002/03, we explore answers to the question: "Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?"

10. Respondents gave their answers on a scale from 0 to 10, 0 indicating 'a worse place to live' and 10 'a better place to live'. This question was asked, in identical form, both in the first and in the most recent round of the ESS, thus enabling us to chart change over time in public opinion. In Figure 1 we show the mean score for each country, ordering them from the countries which are most positive at the top to those which are most negative at the bottom.

Figure 1. Country differences in whether one's country is made a better or worse place to live as a result of immigration (mean scores on 0 to 10 scale), 2002/03 and 2016/17



Source: European Social Survey Round 1, 2002/03 and Round 8, 2016/17 (all countries participating in rounds 8). Average based on the 19 countries present in both rounds

11. Given the increasing levels of immigration in many of these countries since 2002, and the increasing political prominence of debates about immigration, we had expected to find that attitudes had become more negative. However, this is not what we find. As Figure 1 shows, European publics became slightly more positive overall about the effect

of migration on their societies[1]. In 2002, the balance of opinion was slightly negative: thirteen of the countries had a mean score less than 5 (the midpoint of the 0 to 10 scale), the overall average being 4.96. But by 2016/17 six of these countries had moved into positive territory. In total twelve countries became significantly more positive. In contrast only four countries – Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Italy – moved in the opposite direction. To be sure, in most countries the overall changes were rather small. So the headline finding is one of stability rather than of change in overall assessments of immigration.

12. One complication is that the size of the migrant population has increased in most western countries. Given that migrants tend to hold slightly more favourable attitudes towards immigration than the native-born, this increase could in theory explain the slight overall move in a positive direction. However, the differences between migrants and non-migrants in attitudes to migration are relatively small (see Figure 8 below) and, if we exclude migrants from the samples, we find that the results do not greatly change. If we consider only the native-born population in each country, we find that the same twelve countries became more positive and just two (Austria and the Czech Republic) became significantly less positive. The small shift between 2002/03 and 2016/17 in a positive direction cannot therefore be explained by the increasing proportion of migrants in the populations.

13. There was also considerable stability over time in the relative positions of the different countries: in both 2002/03 and 2016/17 Nordic countries such as Sweden, Norway, and Finland tended to be relatively positive in their assessment of immigration, as was Iceland in 2016/17. And in both years the eastern European countries of the Czech Republic and Hungary were among the most negative, along with Russia in 2016/17. In both years, too, west European countries such as Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands were in between, fairly close to the overall average. However, there are a number of important exceptions to these generalisations – Poland for example is an eastern European country which appears to have been consistently positive about the benefits of immigration while Austria and Italy have been consistently among the more negative countries.

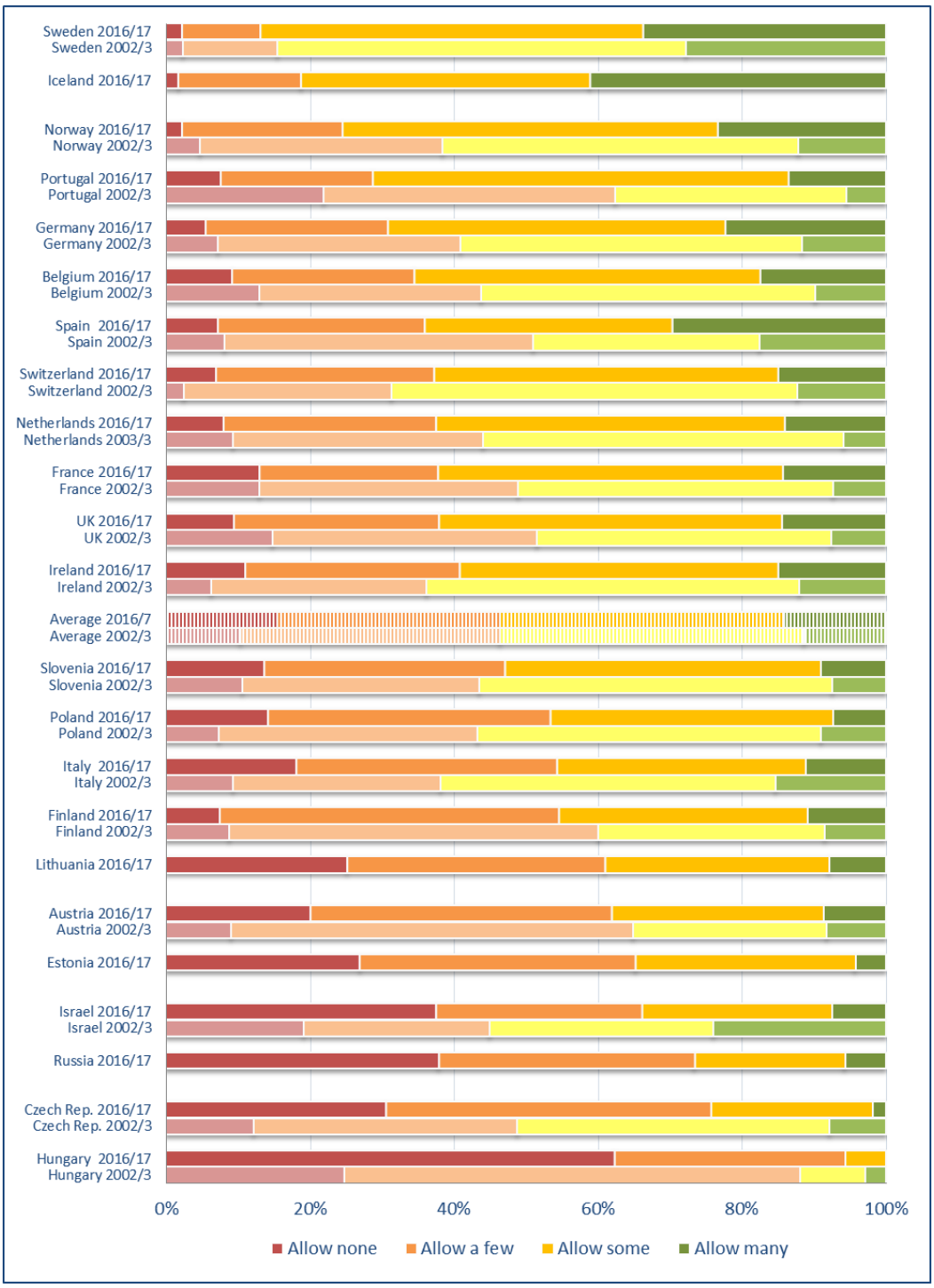
14. While European publics have, on average, shown little change in their assessments about the impact of immigration on society, what about views on current immigration policy? One core question asked in all rounds of the ESS asks: "To what extent do you think [country] should allow people from the poorer countries outside Europe to come and live here?"

15. The response codes were 'allow many to come and live here', 'allow some', 'allow a few' and 'allow none'. In Figure 2 we show the distributions of responses in 2002/03 (where they are available) and 2016/17. As with Figure 1 we order countries from the most generous at the top to the least generous at the bottom.

16. In some respects Figure 2 replicates Figure 1: broadly speaking we find as before that Nordic countries such as Iceland, Sweden and Norway tend to be at the top of the list while eastern European countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary and Russia lie towards the bottom. Poland, however, has now moved down the list to join other east European countries in the bottom half of the figure while Portugal has moved up to become one of the most generous countries. However, we cannot be sure exactly which origin countries respondents had in mind when they answered this question about immigration from poorer countries outside Europe. It may well vary as source countries differ considerably across Europe, depending on geography and traditional ties. Spain and

Portugal for example have larger (proportionate) inflows from countries with whom they share strong historical ties and who speak the same language. We need to bear these differences in mind when interpreting the results of Figure 2

Figure 2. Country differences in how many migrants should be allowed to enter from poorer countries outside Europe (percentages), 2002/03 and 2016/17



Source: European Social Survey Round 1, 2002/03 and Round 8

17. Overall, there was stability between 2002/03 and 2016/17 on this measure. However, this overall stability masks a picture of considerable variation between countries in their trajectories. Whereas in Figure 1 only four countries (Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Italy) had become more negative about the overall impact of immigration, in Figure 2 we see that these four are joined by Israel, Poland, Slovenia, Ireland, and Switzerland, all of which became more negative between 2002/03 and 2016/17 about accepting migrants from poorer countries outside Europe. Conversely, there were also a number of countries where public opinion became considerably more favourable, with particularly large shifts in a positive direction in Portugal, Spain, Norway and the UK.

18. One important implication of these differential movements is that there was increasing divergence between European countries over time in their willingness to accept migrants from poorer non-European countries. For example, the index of dissimilarity between Sweden and the Czech Republic had been 33.4 points in 2002/03. In 2016/17 it had grown to 62.6 points. Between Norway and Hungary the index had been 49.6 points in 2002/03 but had grown even further to 69.6 points in 2016/17. (The index of dissimilarity can be interpreted as the percentage who would need to change their opinions in order to make the two distributions identical.) More generally, the countries at the top and bottom of Figure 2 had been much more similar in 2002/03 than they were in 2016/17 in their willingness to accept migrants from poorer countries outside Europe. European publics thus diverged in their policy preferences over these years at the start of the twenty-first century. This might help to explain why immigration and refugee policy has become harder to coordinate within the European Union.

19. A second important development is that some European publics appear to have become more divided and polarized over time internally as well as externally. Thus in the cases of Switzerland, Ireland, Slovenia and Austria we can see that there have been increases **both** in the proportions saying ‘none’ should be allowed **and** in the proportions saying ‘many’ should be allowed. This suggests that there are contradictory currents of opinion within these countries: there is not a uniform process of the public becoming generally more or less favourable but processes going in opposite directions among different sections of the population. More generally, the proportions giving the two intermediate responses (‘allow some’ and ‘allow a few’) became squeezed between 2002/03 and 2016/17.

20. Overall then, Figure 2 suggests that there was both increasing divergence **between** European countries as well as increasing polarization **within** a number of countries in their attitudes towards government policy. This is suggestive of the potential of the immigration issue to divide countries both nationally and internationally.

2. The 2015 refugee crisis

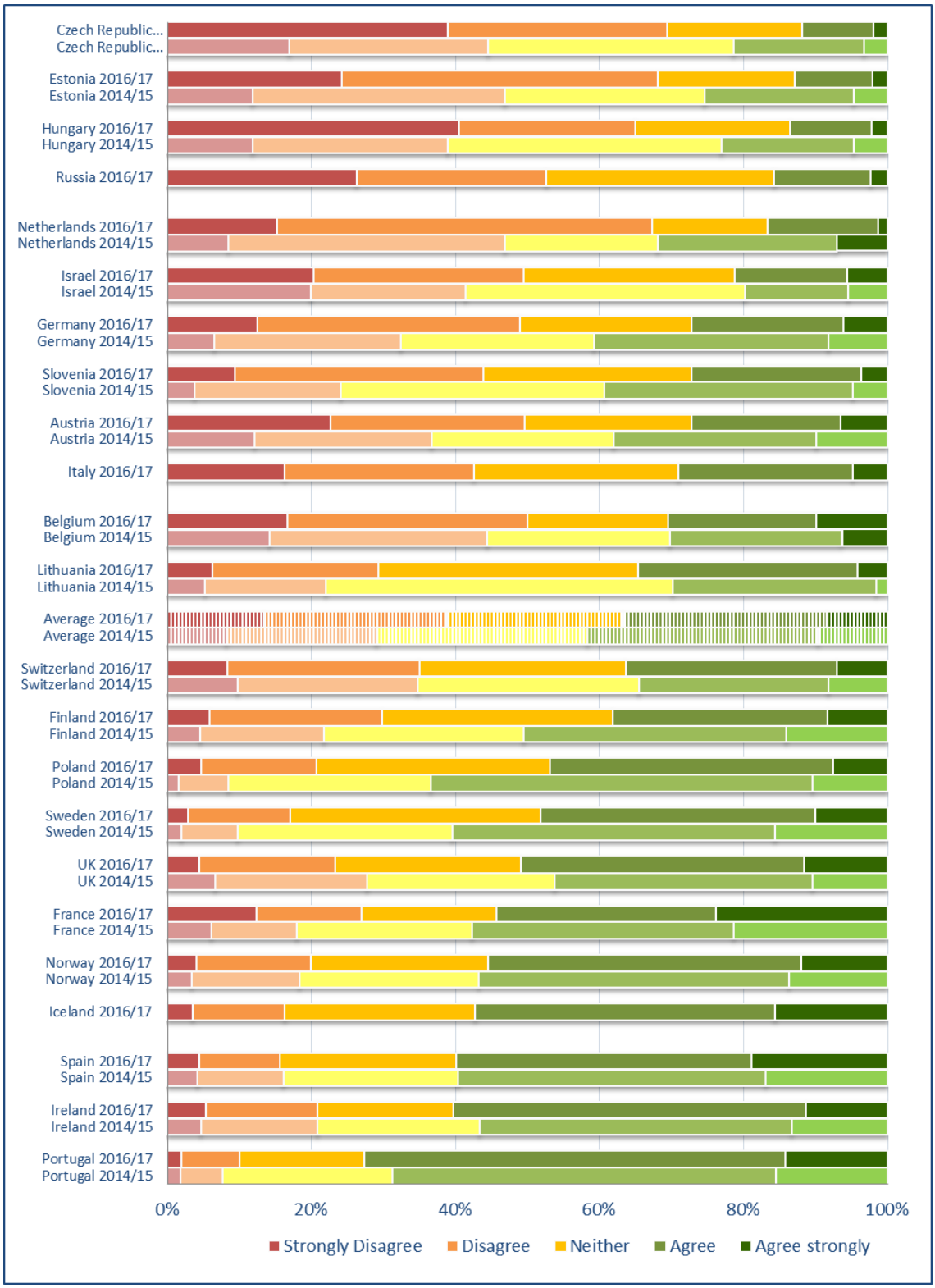
21. There were also some important changes in public opinion after the 2015 refugee crisis. The crisis saw huge flows of asylum seekers coming from war-torn Syria in particular, but also from Afghanistan, Iraq and parts of Africa. According to Eurostat, EU member states received over 1.2 million first-time asylum applications in 2015, more than double that of the previous year. Four states - Germany, Hungary, Sweden and Austria - received around two-thirds of the EU's asylum applications in 2015, with Hungary, Sweden and Austria being the top recipients of asylum applications per capita. In addition, more than one million migrants crossed the Mediterranean Sea in 2015 (sharply dropping to 364,000 in 2016), many arriving in Italy. Other countries, especially those further west in Europe, saw relatively small flows and more modest increases over time in numbers applying for asylum. For example the refugee flows to Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the UK were relatively modest (if expressed as a proportion of the country's population – see table A3.) There were also relatively small flows to Estonia, the Czech Republic and Poland.

22. The ESS core includes a question specifically on refugees. The question on refugees asked respondents how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "The government should be generous in judging people's applications for refugee status".

23. The response options were 'agree strongly', 'agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'disagree', and 'disagree strongly'. Figure 3 shows the distributions of responses in 2014/15 and 2016/17, that is immediately before and after the refugee crisis. (In the great majority of countries round 7 fieldwork finished in the early months of 2015 before the refugee crisis accelerated while round 8 fieldwork did not start until later in 2016, after the crisis had peaked.)

24. As can readily be seen from Figure 3, European publics became significantly more negative after the refugee crisis, the overall percentage favouring generosity falling from 41% in 2014/15 to 35% in 2016/17. Only four countries – Ireland, Portugal, Lithuania and the UK – became more positive. In a number of countries such as Belgium, Israel, Norway and Switzerland attitudes did not change significantly but in the majority of countries European publics became more negative about government generosity towards treating asylum requests. There were particularly large drops in the countries which had received the largest numbers of asylum seekers such as Germany, Austria and Sweden, where the percentages favouring generosity fell by ten points or more. While we do not have a 2014/15 reading for Italy, it is perhaps worth noting that Italy was quite close to Austria in attitudes in 2016/17.

Figure 3. Country differences in agreement that government should be generous in their treatment of asylum requests (percentages), 2014/15 and 2016/17

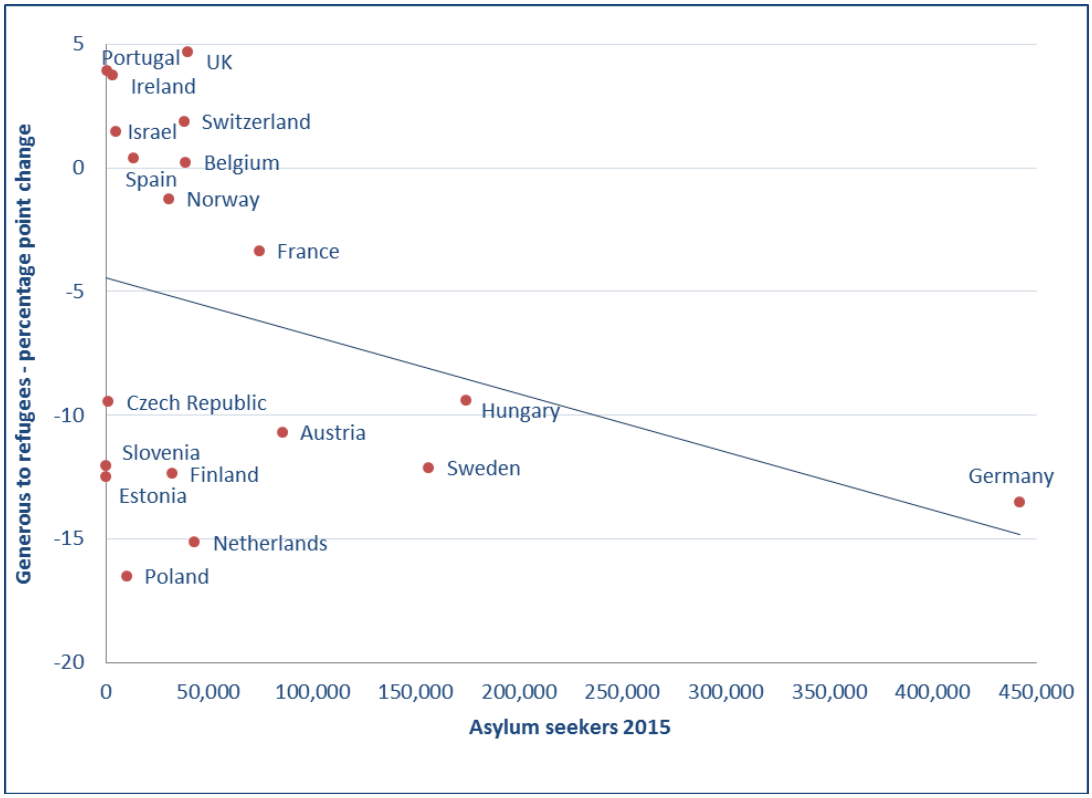


Source: European Social Survey Round 7 and Round 8

25. These short-term changes in a negative direction following the 2015 refugee crisis therefore contrast with the longer-term stability in public opinion which we saw in Figure 1 and Figure 2. There were in fact some short-term moves in a negative direction between 2014/15 and 2016/17 on the Figure 1 and Figure 2 measures too, although they tended to be relatively small and affected fewer countries. Thus, whereas eleven countries became unambiguously more negative between 2014/15 and 2016/17 about refugees, over the same two-year period only five became more negative with respect to our first question (whether immigration makes the country a better or worse place to live), and only four became more negative with respect to our second question (on allowing migrants to enter from poorer countries outside Europe). It therefore seems that European publics differentiated to some considerable extent between concerns over refugees and concerns over immigration and immigration policy more generally.

26. While there can be little doubt that the declining generosity towards asylum seekers was linked with the refugee crisis, there is no one-to-one relation between the changes in public sentiment and the number of asylum seekers applying for refugee status. This can be seen in Figure 4 where we plot the changes in public opinion against the magnitude of the refugee inflow in 2015. Note that the statistics on the magnitude of the inflow refer to the number of applications made for asylum in the particular country, not the number of refugees actually entering the country, some of whom might have been in transit.

Figure 4. The relationship between the number of asylum seekers in each country in 2015 and the change in public attitudes to refugee policy (percentage point change)



Source: OECD 2017

27. Figure 4 suggests that larger flows of asylum seekers in 2015 were associated with declining support for generous policy towards refugees, most clearly in the case of Germany, Hungary and Sweden, although the overall association is a weak one and largely driven by Germany (and is not statistically significant). However, a number of other countries such as Poland, Netherlands, Estonia and Slovenia also became substantially less generous despite having rather small number of people applying for asylum. (Scaling the number of asylum seekers according to the size of the destination country's population fails to account for the paradox.)

28. One possibility is that some of these countries such as Slovenia may have had large numbers of asylum seekers passing through although this is unlikely to have affected the other countries. More likely, the negative shift in these countries which had not directly experienced major inflows of asylum-seekers reflects general disquiet about the nature of the refugee crisis and the proposals to deal with it (such as the idea of EU quotas) rather than direct experience of refugees. The public visibility of the crisis in the media and politics was not confined to particular countries to the same extent that the actual movements of asylum seekers were.

29. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in perspective these short-term changes in attitudes to refugees. For example, while Sweden saw substantial declines between 2014/15 and 2016/17 both in support for generosity towards refugees and in overall support for immigration, the Swedish public nonetheless remained among the most positive and generous in Europe. The changes, then, did not greatly impact the longstanding overall pattern of cross-national differences in support for or opposition to immigration. Compared to the enduring national differences, these short-term changes as a result of the refugee crisis were relatively modest.

3. Criteria for selecting migrants

30. To achieve a more in-depth understanding of European publics' attitudes towards immigration, round 7 of the ESS included a battery of questions about the criteria for accepting migrants (a battery which had been asked in identical form in round 1). These questions can help us to understand why countries may be more or less favourable to immigration.

31. Respondents were asked to rate several criteria for immigration on a scale running from extremely unimportant (0) to extremely important (10). Thus respondents were asked:

"Please tell me how important you think each of these things should be in deciding whether someone born, brought up and living outside [country] should be able to come and live here. Firstly, how important should it be for them to...

…have good educational qualifications?

…be able to speak [country's official language(s)]?

…come from a Christian background? [In Israel 'Jewish background']

...be white?

...have work skills that [country] needs?

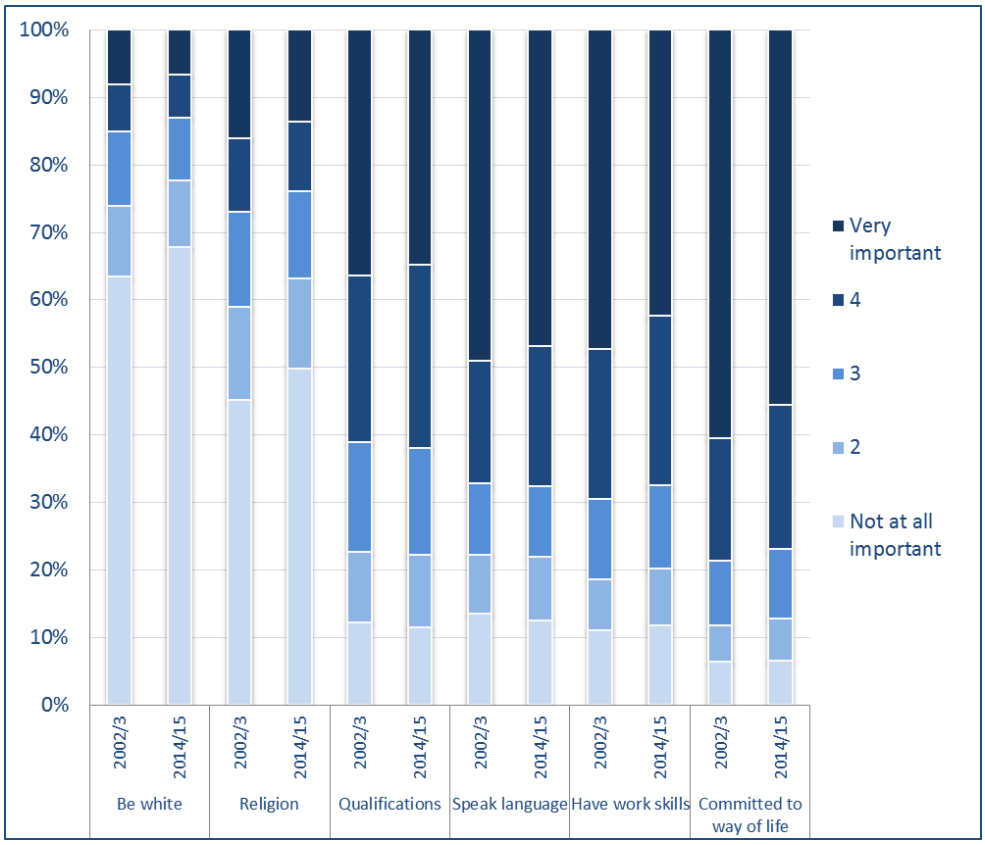
...be committed to the way of life in [country]?"

(For ease of presentation we reduce these categories to five in Figure 5 below[2].)

32. As shown in Figure 5, being 'committed to the way of life in [country]' was considered highly salient with 56% overall rating this to be very important and just 6% saying that it was not important at all. This was the most highly-rated criterion, although it was followed fairly closely by language, work skills and educational qualifications. Compared to these skill-based criteria, coming from a background of the dominant religion (which one can interpret as a cultural criterion) and being white (a racial criterion) were deemed to be relatively unimportant for deciding whether migrants could enter. Just 13% gave high scores on the former, indicating that it is very important to be Christian (Jewish in Israel), while being white was judged even less important with only 6% assigning this latter criterion top scores. Overall, then, it would appear that European publics prioritize skill-related criteria over racial or cultural criteria.

33. Since the same items were included in the special module on immigration in the first round of the ESS, we can also compare change between the two time points for all these criteria. As we can see, stability is once again more evident than change. In general, respondents tended to rate all criteria as being slightly less important in 2014/15 than they had in 2002/03, although the changes over time were rather modest. Furthermore, the ranking of the different criteria remained fundamentally unchanged. There was also substantial stability over time within the individual countries.

Figure 5. Importance of different criteria for accepting immigrants (percentages), 2002/03 and 2014/15



Source: European Social Survey Round 1, 2002/03 and Round 7, 2014/15 (countries participating in both rounds, including Denmark which did not participate in Round 8)

34. Green (2009), analysing the 2002/03 round of the ESS, has conducted a detailed analysis of the six criteria for immigration which are included in Figure 5. She found that they represent two distinct dimensions, which she labelled 'acquired' and 'ascribed' dimensions. The acquired dimension included work skills, qualifications, language and commitment to the way of life of the country, while the ascribed dimension included the two remaining items of religion and being white. Work skills proved to be the central component of the acquired dimension while religion was the central component of the ascribed dimension. We therefore use work skills and religion as our key indicators of these two types of criterion for immigration.

35. We find that there are substantial and enduring differences between countries in the emphases placed on particular criteria for immigration. In Table 1 we compare the percentages who said that work skills and religion (Christianity for all countries except Israel) were important. (We take the top two categories in Figure 5, that is scores of 6 to 10, as indicating importance.) We also compute the ratio between the two criteria and arrange countries according to these ratios.

36. We find, first, that in all countries alike (apart from Israel) work skills were rated as more important than religion. However, some countries such as Sweden and other Nordic countries gave rather little importance to either criterion, whereas the Israeli

public regarded both criteria as highly important. To be sure Israel is something of a special case because of its status as the Jewish homeland.

37. Second, even though religion was consistently rated less important than work skills, there was considerable variation between countries in the importance attributed to religious affiliation. Not surprisingly Israel stands out, but there were relatively high proportions in Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Estonia who rated religion as an important criterion. Incidentally, while Poland remains a religious country with high rates of church attendance, this does not apply to the same extent to the other east European countries, whose rates of church attendance tend to be lower than those in many west European which attach lesser importance to religion as a criterion for immigration.

38. The ratio of the two criteria provides a useful view of the cross-national differences. The ratio brings out that some countries such as the UK and the Netherlands give much greater weight to work skills than to religion, while other countries such as the eastern ones come closer to giving equal weight to the two criteria. These differences between countries may well reflect the fact that western countries like the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and the UK all encouraged high levels of labour migration as a result of the demands of their economies in the post-war period and have thus become more accustomed to ethnic diversity, whereas the eastern countries like Poland, Lithuania and the Czech Republic did not have the same economic demand for labour migration.

Table 1. Comparison of importance of work skills and religious background as criteria for accepting migrants, percentages and ratios (2014/15)

	Percentage agreeing that work skills are important	Percentage agreeing that religious background is important	Ratio of the percentages (work skills: religious background)
Netherlands	65%	9%	7.11
Germany	64%	10%	6.37
Belgium	71%	15%	4.90
UK	83%	18%	4.74
Sweden	32%	7%	4.42
Norway	50%	13%	4.02
France	61%	16%	3.90
Slovenia	74%	19%	3.88
Switzerland	69%	19%	3.67
Finland	64%	19%	3.29
Ireland	79%	24%	3.29
Denmark	60%	18%	3.28
Austria	75%	23%	3.20
Spain	69%	22%	3.10
Average	**69%**	**26%**	**2.65**
Portugal	73%	29%	2.48
Estonia	83%	35%	2.38
Hungary	81%	41%	1.95
Czech Republic	75%	40%	1.85
Lithuania	81%	51%	1.58
Poland	67%	43%	1.56
Israel	72%	71%	1.02

Source: European Social Survey Round 7, 2014/15 (all countries participating in Round 7 including Denmark which did not participate in Round 8)

39. More extensive analysis of these questions by Bail (using the first wave of the ESS) and by Heath and Richards (using the seventh wave) suggests that countries can be divided into more or less distinct clusters on the basis of these criteria. While there are some differences between the authors in their methods and data, both analyses suggest that European countries can be reasonably sorted into three clusters. These can be approximately characterized as a Nordic cluster, a west European cluster, and an east European cluster (which also includes Israel). Bail argued that these clusters reflect the nature of the symbolic boundaries between members of the nation and outsiders. The east European cluster, which can be described as having strong and restrictive boundaries, consists of countries which regard both the ascribed and achieved criteria as important and which exhibit ratios close to 1. In contrast the Nordic cluster, which can be termed the unrestrictive or open cluster, tends to assign less importance to either criterion, while the west European cluster, which can be termed the selective cluster, emphasizes work skills but attaches little importance to the ascribed characteristics of Christianity or being white.

40. These country profiles seem to have deep historical roots, reflecting histories of emigration and immigration. Moreover, it is no surprise that the countries with strong symbolic boundaries in 2002/03 tended to be the ones which were the most negative in 2016/17 in public opinion about immigration in general, about entry of migrants from poorer non-European countries, and were the least generous towards refugees. In contrast, the countries with weaker and less restrictive symbolic boundaries are among the most generous, while countries with more selective symbolic boundaries lie in between.

41. The 2014/15 wave of the ESS asked some further questions asking about what sorts of migrants should be allowed to enter, and these can give us further insights about the construction of symbolic boundaries. Respondents were asked:

"I am going to ask you about different groups of people who might come to live in [country] from other countries. Using this card, please tell me to what extent you think [country] should allow …

…people of the same racial or ethnic group as most [country] people

…people of a different racial or ethnic group from most [country] people

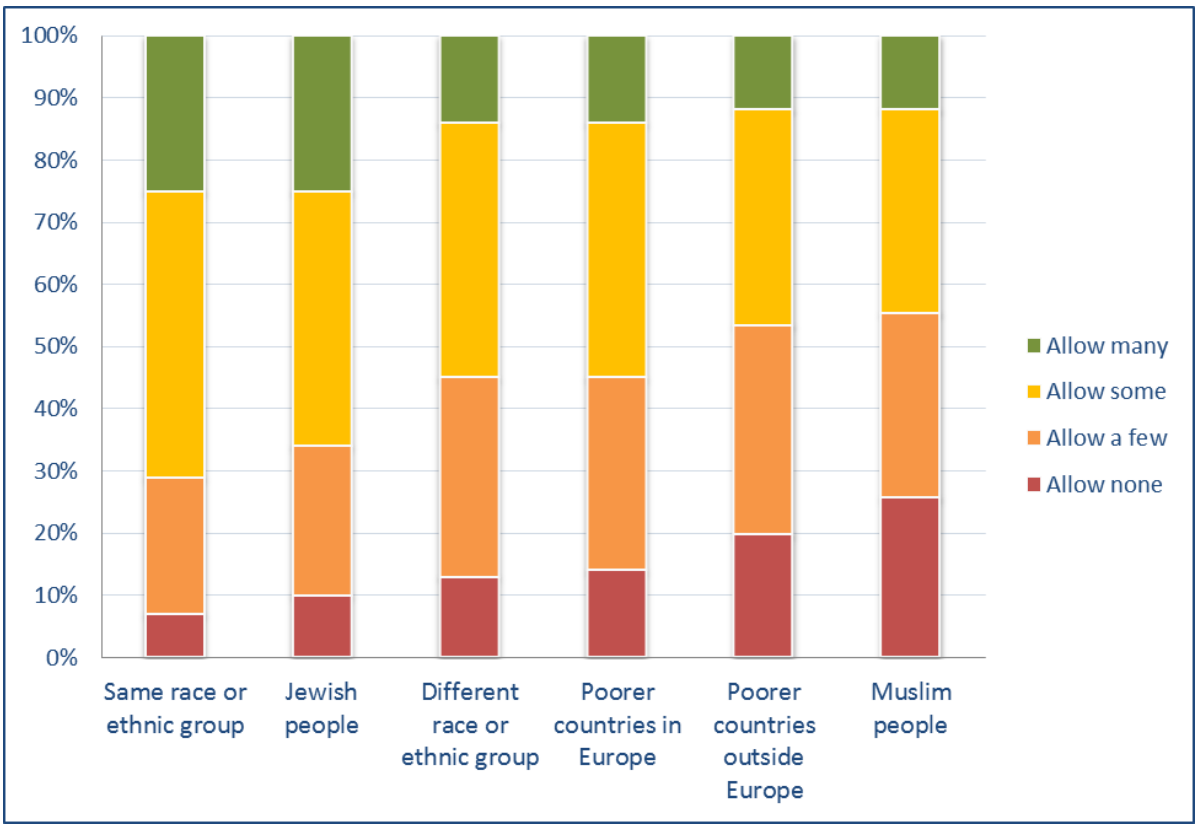
…people from the poorer countries within Europe

…people from the poorer countries outside Europe

…Jewish people from other countries

…Muslim people from other countries to come and live in [country]"

Figure 6. Attitudes towards different sorts of migrant (percentages), 2014/15



Source: European Social Survey Round 7, 2014/15 (all countries participating in Round 7)

42. Figure 6 shows that there is a clear hierarchy of preferred type of migrant. The most preferred were people from the same race or ethnic group as the majority. Europeans were preferred to non-Europeans, while Jewish people were much more welcome than Muslims. Responses concerning Muslims were somewhat more negative than those from poorer non-European countries, despite the fact that these groups overlap considerably in many countries.

43. In general, we find that different European countries have rather similar preference orderings for different sorts of migrant. However, given the debates over the perceived difficulties of integrating people of Muslim faith into historically Christian western countries, we might expect to find some deviations from the general pattern shown in Figure 6 above. There have for example been well-publicized issues in a number of countries, such as Denmark, Switzerland and France, over accommodation of Muslim practices and institutions. Is this reflected in the attitudes of the different publics in Europe?

44. To be sure, not all of the respondents with less favourable views about Muslim immigrants will be concerned about the accommodation of religious practices. Some may have more general concerns about immigrants coming from poorer countries. In order to tease apart anti-Muslim sentiment from these more general concerns, we compare attitudes towards Muslims with attitudes towards poor non-European countries.

45. In Table 2 we show the percentages who were favourable to these two sorts of migrant and also compute the ratio in order to see how preferences differ. We order countries as in Table 1 according to the size of the ratio. (Note that these ratios simply express the relationship between the two different attitudes; for example, Sweden is relatively neutral between Muslim migrants and those from poorer non-European countries but is nevertheless the country with the most pro-Muslim attitudes in absolute terms with 79% saying that some or many should be allowed in, a figure higher than in any other country in round 7 of the ESS.)

Table 2. Comparison of support for Muslim migrants and for migrants from poorer non-European countries, percentages and ratios (2014/15)

	Percentage willing to allow some or many from poorer non-European countries	Percentage willing to allow some or many Muslim migrants	Ratio of the percentages (Muslim migrants:migrants from poorer non-European countries)
UK	41%	53%	1.28
France	51%	63%	1.23
Denmark	44%	53%	1.20
Germany	66%	70%	1.07
Finland	35%	36%	1.04
Slovenia	49%	51%	1.04
Netherlands	52%	53%	1.01
Belgium	51%	51%	1.00
Austria	42%	42%	1.00
Ireland	42%	42%	1.00
Switzerland	54%	53%	0.98
Norway	67%	65%	0.96
Average	**45%**	**43%**	**0.95**
Sweden	86%	79%	0.92
Estonia	30%	27%	0.90
Hungary	12%	10%	0.83
Spain	49%	39%	0.79
Lithuania	37%	28%	0.76
Portugal	46%	35%	0.76
Poland	50%	30%	0.61
Czech Republic	27%	14%	0.53
Israel	24%	12%	0.49

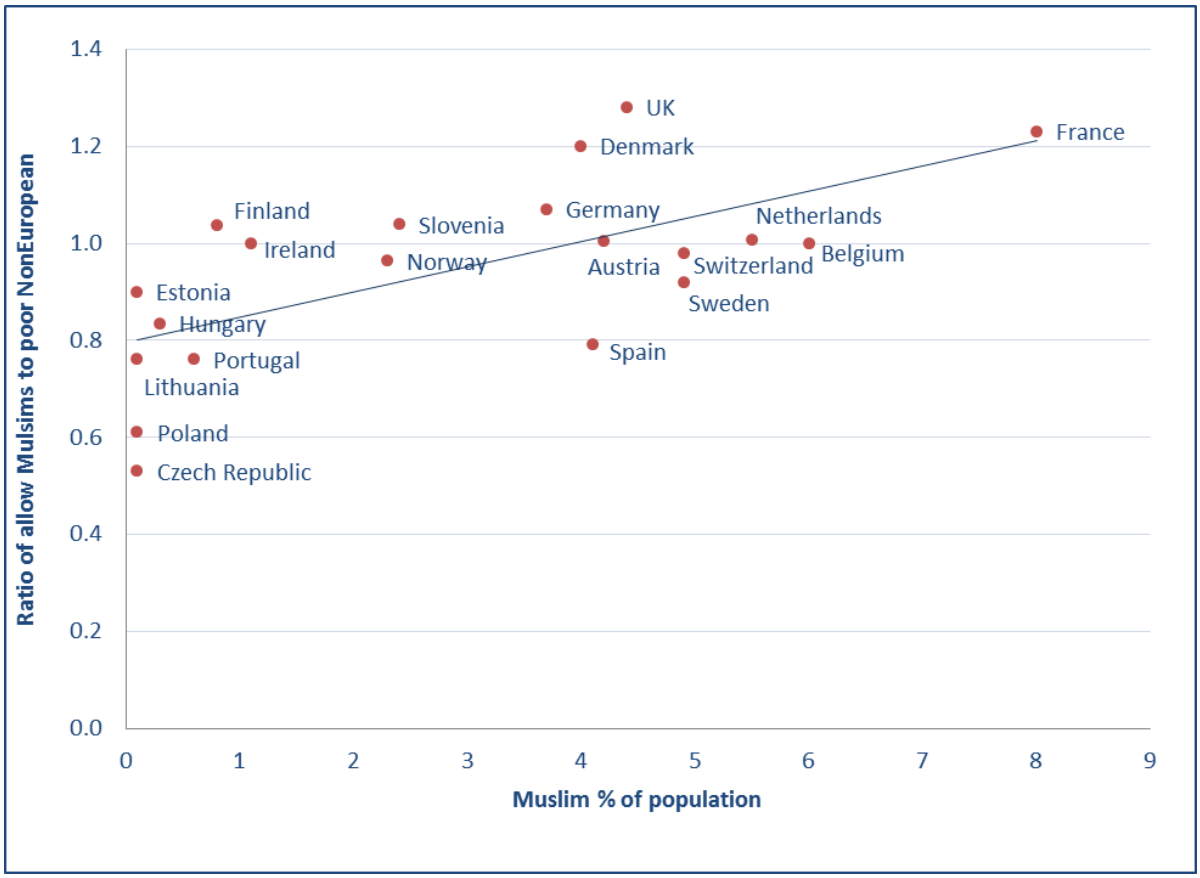
Note: Muslim respondents are excluded from this analysis.
Source: European Social Survey Round 7, 2014/15 ((all countries participating in Round 7 including Denmark which did not participate in Round 8)

46. Table 2 reveals that there are several countries with more favourable attitudes towards Muslims than to poor non-Europeans, and these are indicated by ratios above one. The highest ratio of 1.28 is in the UK where the proportion favourable towards Muslim migrants (53%) is markedly higher than the proportion (41%) favourable towards migrants from poorer non-European countries. Others that are relatively favourable towards Muslims are France and Germany. Several countries make little or no distinction

between these two types of migrant, such as Austria, Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Finally, a preference for immigrants from poor non-European countries is expressed in Israel, the Czech Republic, Poland, Lithuania, Portugal and Spain.

47. The situation of Portugal and Spain may well reflect the fact that many of their migrants from poorer countries outside Europe come from culturally-similar Catholic countries in Latin America, speaking Portuguese and Spanish respectively. Thus, OECD migration data show that Brazil and Cabo Verde were two of the major poorer non-European source countries for Portugal while Venezuela, Colombia and Honduras were major source countries for Spain.

Figure 7. The relationship between the size of the Muslim population and the ratio of favourable attitudes towards Muslim migrants:migrants from poorer non-European countries



Note: Israel excluded
Source: Muslim population estimates taken from CIA World Fact Book and Pew Research Center
R squared = 0.42

48. While there are a number of exceptions, Figure 7 shows that in general the countries which are relatively unfavourable towards Muslims tend to be those with very low proportions of Muslims in their country. Conversely the countries which are relatively more favourable tend to be those with larger Muslim populations. This pattern is clearly in line with contact theory (Pettigrew and Tropp 2007). Contact theory emphasizes the ways in which positive contact between people of different ethnic groups

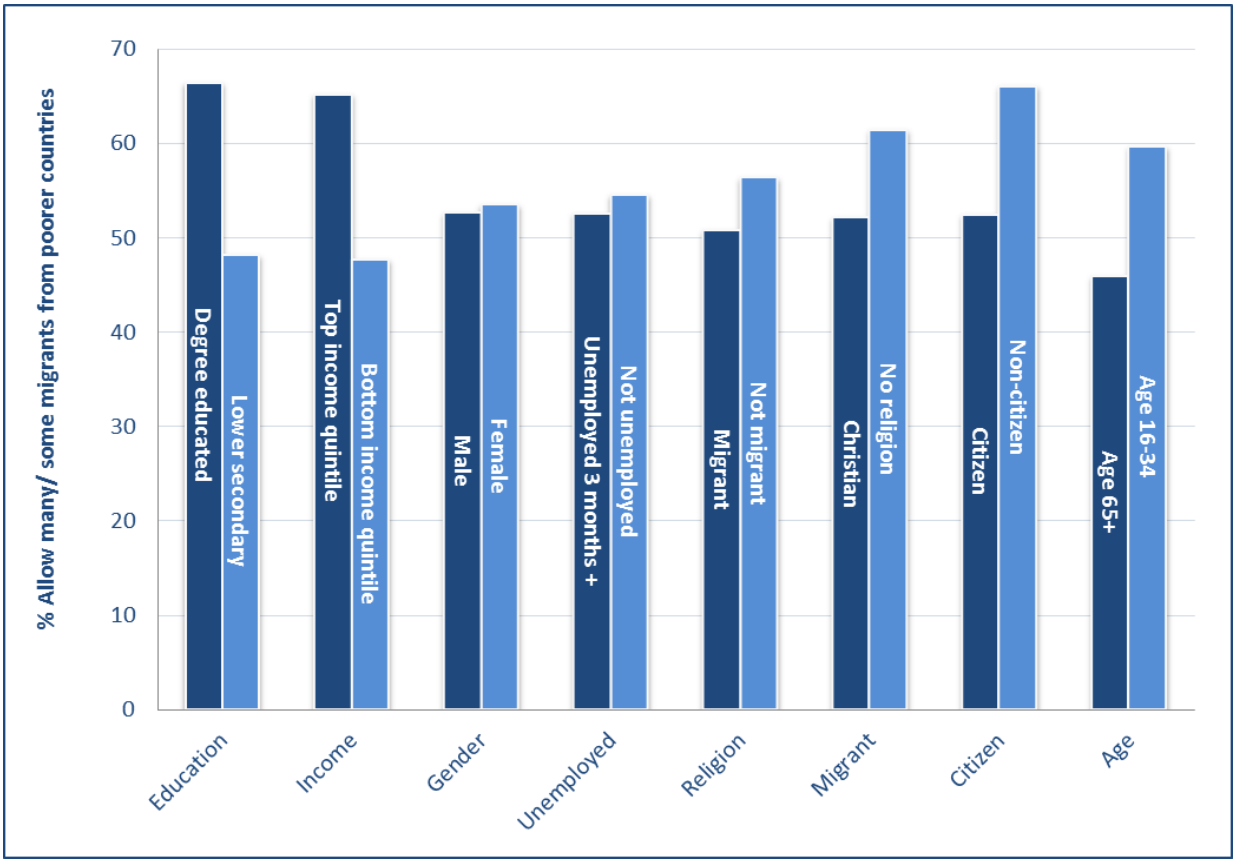
or religions can reduce prejudice and lead to more favourable attitudes. Larger Muslim populations increase the opportunities for contact and this may well therefore help to account for the relatively favourable attitudes in Denmark, France, and the UK. This may be a major factor therefore in weakening the strength of symbolic boundaries.

4. Socio-demographic differences in attitudes

49. We now shift from looking at the characteristics of different groups of migrants to the characteristics of the European publics. Previous research (Kunovic 2004) has shown that attitudes to immigration are strongly linked with age, educational level and economic situation, but which of these are most important? Further, are some countries more divided sociologically and economically than others?

50. We begin by looking at the overall relationships before turning to the differences between countries in their magnitude. Figure 8 compares the attitudes of people with different educational levels, income, economic situation, religion, place of birth, citizenship and age. For simplicity we focus on attitudes to migrants from poorer countries outside Europe. (The pattern is very similar for the attitudes towards other groups.)

Figure 8. Socio-demographic differences in willingness to allow many or some migrants from poorer countries outside Europe (percentages willing to allow some or many to come)



Source: European Social Survey Round 8, 2016/17 (all countries participating in round 8)

51. Figure 8 shows that the strongest cleavage is between the highly educated (graduates) and the less educated (those with lower secondary education or below), where the gap is 18 percentage points. Education is closely followed by income, where the gap between the top quintile and the bottom quintile is 17 points. Next comes age, where it is the younger people who are more favourable to immigration than are older people, with a

difference of 14 percentage points. Differences between migrants and non-migrants, between Christians and people with no religion, between the unemployed and others, and between men and women are relatively small in comparison although there is a substantial difference of 13 points between citizens and non-citizens.

52. It is probable that different mechanisms are involved with these different socio-demographic characteristics. It is likely (although impossible to be certain) that generational differences lie behind the large age effects – in other words, generations who grew up before the years of mass migration are more negative than those who grew up more recently and for whom diversity has always been part of their experience (Gorodzeisky and Semyonov 2016). In contrast the educational and income differences may reflect the extent to which the less-educated and those on lower incomes feel greater levels of cultural and economic threat respectively.

53. The differences shown in Figure 8 represent the gross, unadjusted differences. Since characteristics such as education and income tend to be highly correlated, the patterns shown in Figure 8 will to some extent simply be re-describing the same underlying cleavages. We therefore undertake a multivariate analysis in order to unpick the patterns. We do this separately for each country participating in round 8 of the ESS. Statistically significant results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Linear regression of attitudes towards allowing migrants from poorer non-European countries (coefficients)

	Tertiary education	Income	Age	Christian	Muslim	Foreign-born	Non-Citizen	Female	R^2
Austria	0.413***	0.024*					0.279*	0.157***	0.06
Belgium	0.445***	0.024*	-0.007***	-0.319+					0.1
Czech Rep.		0.031***	-0.003*	-0.583+			0.596*		0.04
Estonia	0.311***	0.040***	-0.006***				-0.203**		0.09
Finland	0.343***	-0.012+	-0.007***					0.185***	0.1
France	0.554***	0.023**	-0.003*				0.213+	0.092*	0.1
Germany		0.029***	-0.006***	-0.332*		-0.190**			0.07
Hungary	0.525***	0.021*		-0.410*		0.248***		0.036	0.11
Iceland	0.315***		-0.010***			-0.445***		0.108*	0.11
Ireland	0.525***	0.021*		-0.410*		0.248***			0.11
Israel	0.206*							0.123**	0.02
Italy	0.212**	-0.026**	-0.007***					0.081+	0.02
Lithuania	0.406***							0.087*	0.05
Netherlands	0.406***							0.087*	0.05
Norway	0.232***		-0.005***	-0.564***				0.120**	0.08
Poland	0.262***	0.028**	-0.005***						0.07
Portugal	0.287***		-0.006***			-0.172*		0.091*	0.06
Russia			-0.008***			0.296**	0.709**		0.06
Slovenia	0.407***	0.034**	-0.009***			0.190*			0.14
Spain	0.485***	0.019+	-0.004*			0.248*			0.1
Sweden	0.287***		-0.005***			-0.172*		0.091*	0.06
Switzerland	0.493***		-0.003*					0.099*	0.08
UK	0.497***		-0.007***						0.11
All	0.289***	0.027***	-0.005***	-0.392***	-0.396***	0.176***	0.054+	0.028**	0.07

Note: Reference categories are less than lower secondary education; no religion; native-born; citizen; male. Negative signs indicate that, for example, older people or Christians are more negative about allowing migrants from poorer countries outside Europe. Coefficients which are not significant at the 0.10 level are not shown. Age is measured in years and standardized; income is measured in deciles;
Models also included lower secondary and upper secondary education, Jewish religion, other religion (coefficients available on request).
Source: ESS + indicates $p < 0.10$ * indicates $p < 0.05$, ** indicates $p < 0.01$, *** indicates $p < .001$

54. The multivariate analysis suggests that education and age are in fact the dominant lines of cleavage in most countries, with income having a lesser role. Thus there are significant educational differences in 20 of the 23 countries, and significant age differences in 17, compared with only 11 significant differences along income lines (one of which surprisingly has a reversed sign from the expected one). Educational differences are particularly marked in the western countries of Belgium, France, Ireland, Spain, Switzerland and the UK but are absent or weaker in the eastern countries of the Czech Republic, Israel, Poland and Russia. Moreover, all countries apart from Russia show a significant difference in attitudes along one or other of education and income. Socio-economic divides are therefore the norm, although differing in magnitude.

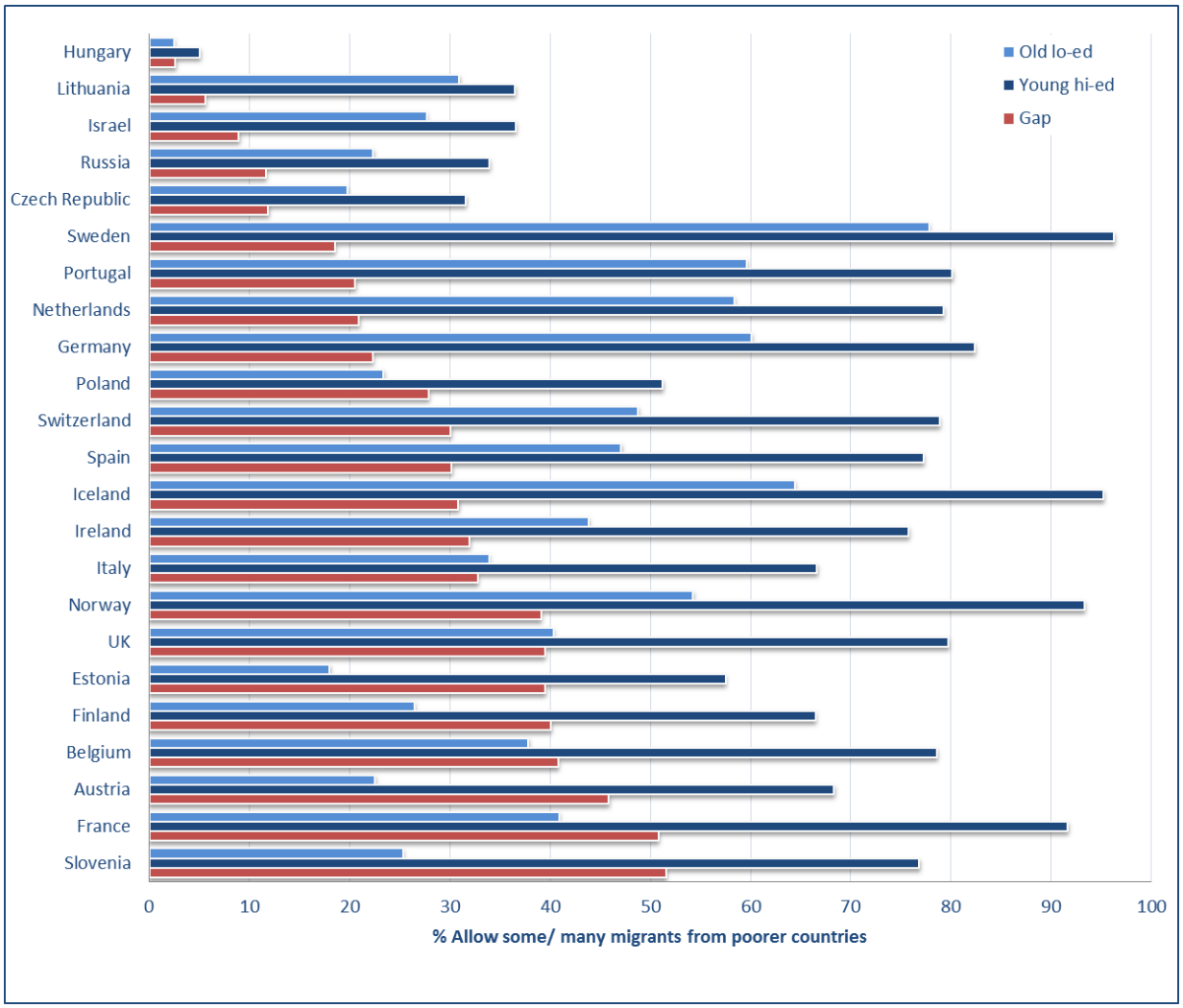
55. Age differences are also widespread right across Europe, and always consistently show the expected pattern for younger people to be more positive about immigration than are older people. There is also a consistent and widespread pattern for women to be more

sympathetic to immigration than men – a difference that was not evident in Figure 8, probably because it was masked by women's lower income. While less widespread, there was also a consistent pattern for Christians to be more negative about immigration than are people of no religion. In none of the individual countries, however, was there a significant tendency for Muslims to be distinctive in their attitudes, almost certainly due to the small numbers of Muslim respondents in each sample. For more detailed analysis of Muslim attitudes to immigration see Mustafa and Richards (2018).

56. For the two remaining variables, being foreign-born or a non-citizen, patterns were surprisingly mixed. While the overall pattern, for the pooled sample, was for the foreign-born and for non-citizens to be more sympathetic to immigration, there were a number of countries where there were significant coefficients but of the 'wrong' sign. These might be 'false negatives' – when one estimates a large number of coefficients, one can expect to find some 'significant' ones just by chance. Alternatively, there may be specific historical factors at work, as perhaps in the case of Estonian Russians in Estonia for whom citizenship rules have been complex in the past.

57. To summarize the differences between countries in their degree of socio-demographic differentiation, we compare in Figure 9 the size of the gaps between young highly educated people on the one hand and older less educated people on the other hand in support for migrants from poorer countries outside Europe.[3] We focus on age and education as Table 3 had shown that these were the two most widespread axes of differentiation.

Figure 9. Percentage point gaps between the young highly educated and the older less educated in support for allowing migrants from poorer countries outside Europe



Source: European Social Survey Round 8, 2016/17 (all countries participating in round 8).

58. As we can see, the degree of differentiation varies hugely across countries. The gaps are around 50 percentage points in Slovenia and France, and are also substantial (around 40 points or more) in Norway, the UK, Estonia, Finland, Belgium and Austria. At the other extreme the gaps are 20 points or less in Hungary, Lithuania, Russia, Israel and the Czech Republic. While these patterns do not match exactly the three clusters based on symbolic boundaries which Bail had identified, there is a clear tendency for the eastern European cluster to be to on average the least stratified economically and socially, the west European cluster to be the most divided, and the Nordic cluster to lie in between.

5. Discussion

59. The major surprise is how stable attitudes, and their structure, have been over the decade and more which the European Social Surveys have covered, despite the increased rates of migration to many western countries, the refugee crisis, and the politicization of immigration. True, there was a notable decline after 2015 in several countries' generosity towards refugees, but in general stability is much more evident than change. This suggests that attitudes to immigration reflect relatively enduring features of European societies.

60. Furthermore, it is clear that there are some enduring distinctions between the different European publics, and that these can broadly be grouped into Nordic, eastern European and western European clusters. Israel, interestingly, despite its distinctive character as a Jewish homeland fits quite well into the eastern European cluster.

61. Perhaps the most distinctive of the three clusters is the eastern European one, exemplified by Hungary and the Czech Republic. In this model, public opinion is relatively unfavourable to immigration. Work skills are not seen as all that much more important than religious background, and opinion tends to be more negative towards Muslims than toward migrants from poorer non-European countries. In other words there are strong symbolic boundaries between members of nation and outsiders. In these countries the public is fairly consensual, with no major divisions between social groups in their attitudes. It may well be relevant for understanding this model that these countries have not historically had high rates of immigration, and that the proportions of foreign-born residents is among the lowest of all the countries. The publics in these countries will therefore have had rather little contact with migrants from culturally-different countries.

62. To be sure, this model does not apply equally well to all east European countries. Slovenia is perhaps the major exception, and in many respects looks closer to the west European model which we describe below. Poland is also an exception in its more positive attitude towards immigration, although in other respects (the relative importance of work skills and the relative reluctance to accept Muslim migrants) it fits well into the basic east European model.

63. There is also a fairly distinct Nordic model, exemplified by Sweden and Norway. In this model, public opinion is relatively favourable to immigration. Neither work skills nor religious background are rated all that highly as criteria for immigration, and little distinction is made between Muslim migrants and those from poorer non-European countries. Publics in these countries are not especially divided socio-demographically, although they are not as consensual as in the east European model. Symbolic boundaries are thus weaker or more blurred with a relatively open and accepting approach to outsiders.

64. The west European model, exemplified by Belgium, France and the UK, is interesting in that it is not a straightforward half-way house between the east European and Nordic models. The countries in this cluster lie in between in their overall attitudes to immigration, but they are much more divided internally than the members of either of the other two clusters. They also tend to place the greatest emphasis on work skills as a criterion for immigration, and are inclined to be more favourable towards Muslims than to non-European migrants.

65. Interestingly, Germany and the Netherlands tend to be rather closer to the Nordic model (more positive and less divided) while Spain and Portugal have some similarities

with the east European model in their lower rating of the importance of work skills over religious background.

66. The enduring character of these different models suggests that current rates of migration are unlikely to be the major drivers of these distinct constellations of attitudes. Attitudes to immigration appear to have deep-rooted origins. Enduring differences, which possibly have institutional or historical explanations (including longer-term histories of immigration and extent of contact) are much more evident than short-term contingent changes. Only in the case of the 2015 refugee crisis did we find evidence of major short-term changes in public opinion, but these changes were by and large restricted to the refugee issue and did not change fundamentally the character of public opinion of shift the countries affected from one cluster to another.

Notes

[1] Analysis was conducted on the full sample of ESS respondents. ESS design weights have been applied for country-level analysis. Both design and population weights have been applied for analysis pooling data across countries to give all countries weight proportional to population size in pooled analysis. Results exclude DK and refusal responses.

[2] Score 0-2 = not at all important, 3-4 = unimportant, 5 = neutral, 6-7 = important, 8-10 = very important

[3] To construct the categories for young highly-educated and older lower-educated we use the same definitions as in figure 8, that is, the young are defined as those aged 34 or less and the old as those aged 65 and over. Highly educated are defined as graduates and less educated as those with secondary education or less. The outcome variable, as in Figure 2, is the percentage willing to allow many or some migrants to come from poorer countries outside Europe. We should note that in some countries, such as Slovenia, the number of young highly-educated respondents in the sample will be quite small and the confidence intervals will accordingly be quite large. One should therefore be cautious in drawing conclusions about individual countries.

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Annex A. Supplementary Tables

Table A.1. Details of the surveys in the eighth round of the ESS (2016/17)

	Fieldwork dates	Achieved sample size	Response rate (%)
Austria	19.09.16 - 28.12.16	2010	52.54
Belgium	14.09.16 - 31.01.17	1766	56.77
Czech Republic	22.10.16 - 19.12.16	2269	68.45
Estonia	01.10.16 - 31.01.17	2019	68.44
Finland	15.09.16 - 08.03.17	1925	57.67
France	10.11.16 - 11.03.17	2070	52.38
Germany	23.08.16 - 26.03.17	2852	30.61
Hungary	14.05.17 - 16.09.17	1614	42.71
Iceland	02.11.16 - 08.06.17	880	45.81
Ireland	25.11.16 - 08.05.17	2757	64.46
Israel	10.09.16 - 08.02.17	2557	74.37
Italy	11.09.17 - 19.11.17	2626	49.74
Lithuania	04.10.17 - 28.12.17	2122	64.03
Netherlands	01.09.16 - 31.01.17	1681	52.99
Norway	22.08.16 - 17.01.17	1545	52.82
Poland	07.11.16 - 22.02.17	1694	69.63
Portugal	20.10.16 - 15.06.17	1270	45.00
Russia	03.01.17 - 19.03.17	2430	63.41
Slovenia	21.09.16 - 11.01.17	1307	55.93
Spain	16.02.17 - 23.06.17	1958	67.66
Sweden	26.08.16 - 10.02.17	1551	43.01
Switzerland	01.09.16 - 02.03.17	1525	52.21
UK	01.09.16 - 20.03.17	1959	42.82

Source: ESS8 – 2016 documentation report.
http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round8/survey/ESS8_data_documentation_report_e02_0.pdf

Table A.2. Migration to the survey countries 2002-2014

	2002			2014		
	Annual inflow (000s)	Total stock of foreign born (000s)	Foreign-born as percentage of the population	Annual inflow (000s)	Total stock of foreign born (000s)	Foreign-born as percentage of the population
Austria	86	1,137	14.1	154	1,485	17.4
Belgium	70	1,112	11.1	124	1,812	16.1
Czech Republic	44	449	4.6	39	745	7.1
Estonia	1	245	17.7	1	133	10.1
Finland	10	145	2.9	24	322	5.9
France	124	6,201	10.7	168	7,921	12.4
Germany	658	10,399	12.6	1,343	10,689	13.2
Hungary	18	303	3.0	26	476	4.8
Ireland	40	390	9.9	49	754	16.4
Israel	34	1,983	30.2	24	1,817	22.1
Lithuania	Not available					
Netherlands	87	1,714	10.6	139	1,953	11.8
Norway	31	334	7.4	61	705	14.4
Poland	30	776	2.0	32	675	1.8
Portugal	72	719	6.9	35	885	8.1
Slovenia		170	8.5	18	341	16.6
Spain	443	3,302	8.0	266	6,155	13.2
Sweden	47	1,054	11.8	106	1,604	16.6
Switzerland	102	1,659	22.8	152	2,355	28.8
UK	418	4,865	8.4	504	8,482	13.3

Note: For Estonia, figures for annual inflow relate to 2004 not 2002
For Germany, figures relate to 2005 not 2002
For the Czech Republic and Ireland the figures relate to 2013 not 2014
For Poland the figures relate to 2011 not 2014
Source: OECD 2014, 2016.

Table A.3. Asylum seekers, 2012-14 and 2015

	2012-14 annual average	2015	Change (Ratio of 2015 to 2012-14 figures)	Asylum seekers per million population	Top three origin countries (most recent year)
Austria	20,000	85,620	4.28	4673	Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq
Belgium	14,740	38,700	2.63	1298	Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq
Czech Republic	550	1,250	2.27	115	Ukraine, Iraq, China
Estonia	70	230	3.29	53	Syria, West Bank and Gaza, Sudan
Finland	2,960	32,270	10.90	967	Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria
France	58,040	74,300	1.28	1209	Sudan, Afghanistan, Haiti
Germany	115,540	441,900	3.82	8952	Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq
Hungary	20,550	174,430	8.49	2847	Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan
Ireland	970	3280	3.38	478	Pakistan, Albania, Zimbabwe
Israel	1,420	5,010	3.53	1011	Eritrea, Sudan, Nigeria
Italy	35,370	83,240	2.35	2042	Nigeria, Pakistan, Gambia
Lithuania	Not available				
Netherlands	15,030	43,100	2.87	1087	Syria, Eritrea, Albania
Norway	11,400	30,520	2.68	614	Eritrea, Syria, Afghanistan
Poland	9,510	10,250	1.08	255	Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine
Portugal	330	900	2.73	141	Ukraine, Guinea, Afghanistan
Slovenia	230	260	1.13	609	Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq
Spain	4,110	13,370	3.25	353	Venezuela, Syria, Ukraine
Sweden	57,470	156,460	2.72	2291	Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq
Switzerland	22,260	38,120	1.71	3117	Eritrea, Afghanistan, Syria
UK	29,550	39,970	1.35	593	Iran, Pakistani, Iraq

Source: OECD 2017, table 1.5