

ACCEPTANCE OF IMMIGRATION AND
THE EVALUATION OF
DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

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The paper addresses the interrelationship between the attitudes towards migrants and fertility behaviour. Does a weaker orientation towards having children go together with greater acceptance of migrants and the perception of benefits related to their presence in the receiving countries, and conversely, are the individuals who have more children less willing to accept immigrants in the country and more skeptical about the benefits of immigration. In a broader framework, the analysis supports a general understanding about the extent to which preferences and attitudes in major policy-relevant domains are interrelated to or independent from each other, and to what extent this link is manifested in eight European countries.

The data come from the Population Policy Acceptance survey (PPA) and Needs for Female Immigrants and their Integration in Ageing Societies survey (FEMAGE). Analytic techniques include bivariate descriptive analysis and multivariate logistic regression models which allow to control for the effects of relevant socio-demographic characteristics.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The demographic, social and economic development of Europe since the Second World War has been shaped by changing patterns of international migration. Following the countries Northern and Western Europe, who were among the first to make a turn from emigration to immigration, other nations have experienced a similar transformation. As a cumulative result of the past flows, migration processes generated large and diverse foreign-origin population in most receiving countries (e.g. overviews by [Bonifazi 2003; Compton and Courbage 2002; Poulain and Herm 2003]). Despite the differences in history, approach and context, however, the difficulties arising in handling the immigration and the integration of foreigners appear common. An increasing evidence from different countries indicated that the integration of the second generation has not progressed smoothly and is likely to take much greater efforts than previously expected [Tribalat 1997; Lesthaeghe 2000; Crul and Vermeulen 2003]. After September 11 and related events, the corresponding concerns have definitely acquired dimensions that require deliberate action from governments and increasing international cooperation.

The attitude towards immigration and foreigners tends to have multiple faces. On the one hand, there is an acceptance of cultural exchange, sympathy for individual cases and for the general principle of protecting refugees, particularly when the mass media brings the horror and misery of conflicts to every home. On the other hand, fears of terrorism, crime, public disorders, unemployment, burdens of welfare system and indirect societal costs of immigration generate opposite feelings. Although comparative studies about the dynamics of opinion on immigration issues are not numerous, there is evidence from several countries that dissent with the consequences of continued large-scale immigration is likely on the rise [Kitschelt 1997; Simon and Lynch 1999; Fetzer 2000]. At the same time, findings from attitudinal surveys towards immigrants have repeatedly pointed to a noticeable diversity of opinions, across individual and contextual characteristics [Bonifazi and Kamaras 1998; Jackson *et al* 2001; Hanson *et al* 2002; Saggat 2004].

The present study focuses on the differentiation of opinions, by relating the attitude of immigration and foreigners to the perception of demographic trends. This link deserves attention because immigration has not seldom been substantiated by the necessity to avoid or defer the population decline and demographic ageing [UN 2001]. The debate about the modern demographic regime has increased the public awareness about the undesirable consequences of these trends that call for careful assessment and coherent policies both and national and European level. Among scholars, the arguments for sustained immigration as a remedy for demographic ageing and population decline have been convincingly refuted [Coleman 2002; 2004; Macura, MacDonald and Haug 2005]. Judging upon the recent international survey, the idea of replacement migration is neither considered seriously by most of the governments [UN 2004; 2006]. In public opinion, which at least partly mirrors a mixture of emotional and rational approach to population issues, the perception of immigration as a cure may hold a more firmly established position.

In particular, the analysis addresses the relationship the between acceptance of immigration, and the evaluation of trends in three areas — population number, age structure and fertility — that enfold the essential features of prevailing demographic regime. Does a more accepting stance towards foreigners go along with a greater concern over current population trends, or, on the contrary, is it paralleled with greater acceptance of underreplacement fertility, depopulation and advancement of population ageing. From a

theoretical point of view, there is nothing particularly novel about this claim. Despite relatively numerous attitudinal studies addressing immigration, however, the evidence on the relationship between acceptance of immigrants and the demographic situation and major population trends appears scarce.

There are probably reasons for such a situation. First, databases containing attitudinal information on all major dimensions of modern population development covering different countries with comparable information are not widespread. More importantly, even if available at national level, attitudes towards foreigners are rarely looked upon in the context of a broader perception of demographic situation. Internationally, this kind of database may not so far existed before the PPA/FEMAGE (Population Policy Acceptance survey/Needs for Female Immigrants and their Integration in Ageing Societies survey). It should be mentioned that a first round of the PPA in the 1990s did not attempt to analyse the referred linkage.

Structurally the paper consists of five sections. Following the introduction, the second section explains the data, analytical approach applied, and the specification of dependent and independent variables. The third section outlines the general pattern of opinions on the change in population number, age structure and fertility in the FEMAGE countries. The fourth section presents the findings from the analysis of the relationship between the evaluation of these demographic trends and immigration acceptance, obtained by means of multivariate logistic regression models. The concluding section summarises the results and discusses research and policy implications that may be drawn from the findings.

2. DATA AND METHODS

The data come from the PPA and FEMAGE surveys (the international database on nationals). The second round of PPAS was undertaken between 2000 and 2003 and encompassed information on practices, attitudes and opinions concerning demographic changes, fertility behaviour, intergenerational exchange of resources and services, and population-related policies. The eight FEMAGE partner countries that undertook the national PPAS chose to address also the topic of migration and included a module on attitudes towards immigration and integration of foreigners. Within the framework of the FEMAGE the data on migration issues have been integrated and streamlined in an international MIG database. The MIG database covers eight countries, with German data available separately for East and West. The information used for the present analysis is derived from the core section, and the modules on ageing and foreigners.

Dependent variables describe the attitudes towards major demographic trends and their societal consequences among national populations. The information about the change in the size of population is derived from the core section (the questionnaire item CI7). It distinguishes between the preferences for three alternative scenarios: the increase, the stability and decrease of population. The consequences of demographic ageing are evaluated in terms of the increase in the proportion of population aged 65 and older (A1) and in the fall in the share of younger people (CI7). Both changes were assessed on a five-grade scale, ranging from 'excellent' to 'very bad'. The evaluation of trends and levels of modern fertility is also based on two items. The questionnaire item CL1d provides an opinion on the declining number of births, recorded on a similar five-grade scale. The assessment of fertility trend was supplemented by the acceptance of societal responsibility

for the individual decisions about childbearing, operationalised as an agreement with statement 'having children is one's a duty towards society' (C5e).

The independent variable is derived from three questions (M5, M6 and M7) of the module on foreigners, which describe the attitudes of nationals, — positive as well as negative —, towards immigration, resident foreigners in the country and government policies. In specifying the independent variable, a preference was given to a comprehensive account that would cover the perceived economic, social and cultural benefits and disadvantages related to foreigners, and acceptance of different immigration and integration policy measures.

From the question M5 which seeks to identify the respondents' general views of the foreigners, the following statements were applied for the purposes of the present study:

- The presence of foreigners is positive, it allows cultural exchange;
- Foreigners are necessary to do the work which the nationals no longer want to do;
- The increase of the number of foreigners favours the spread of crime and terrorism;
- Foreigners take away the jobs from nationals;
- The country belongs to nationals and there is no room for foreigners;
- Children of immigrant families should attend school in the same classroom as the children of nationals.

The questions M6 and M7 address primarily the policy measures that governments could implement with respect to foreigners and integration issues. The statements for the respondents to express their views used in the analysis are the following:

- The number of foreigners admitted to enter the country every year should be tied to a maximum;
- Foreigners who have lived in the country for at least five years should have the right to vote in local elections;
- The government should economically support those foreigners who, after 5 years or more, would like to return to their own country to stay there;
- All illegals should be expelled from our country;
- Foreigners who are integrated should be enabled to get the citizenship as soon as possible;
- Companies who employ illegals should be imposed a large fine;
- The government should grant a general amnesty to all illegal migrants from time to time;
- Integration of foreigners should be fostered;
- Foreigners who have lived in the country at least 5 years and have not integrated should return to their own country;
- It is the moral duty to allow political refugees to allow political refugees to settle in the country;
- Asylum seekers whose request has been turned down should immediately be expelled from the country.

For each item, the respondents were asked to express their acceptance or non-acceptance. The answers were recorded on the five-grade Lickert's scale, from a strong agreement to a strong disagreement. It should be noted that all these statements have a general, impersonal character. In such manner, they are likely to a smaller extent

influenced by a diversity of personal situations and experiences, which allows for better comparability across population groups. Also, it can be assumed that the general stance of the statements involves to a less extent a social desirability bias as compared to personal attitudes.

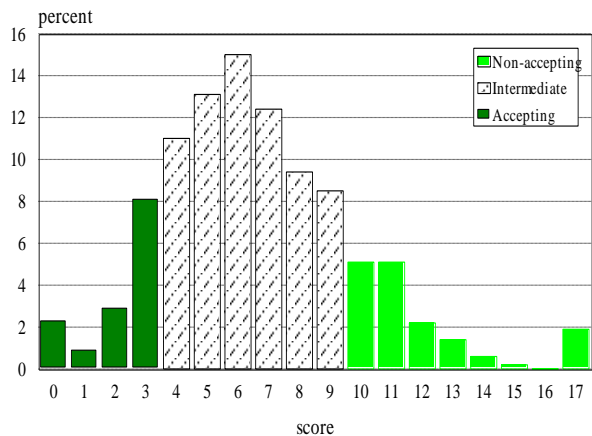
To develop an independent variable that would generalise the prevailing attitude towards foreigners, the responses for the above-mentioned individual items have been consolidated into a composite index. Based on exploratory analysis, in constructing the index the preference was given to the simple score of the responses that express, first, an agreement or strong agreement with positive statements on immigrants and their integration, and second, disagreement or strong disagreement with negative statements on foreigners and restrictive policy measures¹. Across FEMAGE countries, for the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland and Slovenia the information is available for all components of the index, Estonia and Hungary provide data on near-to-complete set of items (88%). The remaining two countries, Austria and Finland, applied a more selective approach to the implementation of the migration module. The coverage of the items is limited to 24% and 48% respectively², which, as shown below, should be considered in the analysis and interpretation of the findings. To secure comparability across countries, the values of the index have been standardised for the number of items available for each country. Another minor adjustment is necessary to exclude a small proportion of respondents who did not provide answers for one or more components of the index. On average, the proportion of values missing for such reason is limited to 4.8 per cent.

The maximum value of the resulting composite measure — labeled as immigration acceptance index — is 17 points, which corresponds to a overwhelmingly positive view of foreigners, support for their social integration in host society and rejection of any measure aimed at restriction of immigration. The minimum index value is zero, indicating the consistently negative views on foreigners. As confirmed by frequency distribution of the index for all countries combined, plainly positive and negative views occur relatively infrequently (Figure 1). Although the curve does not follow the perfect normal distribution — from technical viewpoint it is somewhat skewed towards less positive attitudes and features certain irregularity at its extremes — the measure succeeds in capturing a considerable variation in the attitudes of the population towards immigration and foreigners in both positive and negative direction. It is also worth of mentioning that irregularities at both extremes of the distribution relate to the countries with less complete information.

¹ Positive (47%) and negative statements (53%) have basically equal representation among the 17 components of the migration acceptance index. Negative statements and restrictive policy measures refer to database items (M5c, M5d, M5e, M6a, Mc, M6f, M6i and M7).

² The coverage of questionnaire items by FEMAGE countries is available from the codebook and international database description [Avramov 2006].

Figure 1. IMMIGRATION ACCEPTANCE INDEX FOR *FEMAGE* COUNTRIES
From non-acceptance to acceptance



For the analytical purpose, on the basis of accumulated agreement or disagreement with various statements, three basic categories are distinguished. On the one side, respondents with predominantly positive views on foreigners and support for integration are classified as *accepting* of immigration. On the other side, the prevailing negative attitudes towards foreigners and support for restrictive policy measures are defined as *non-accepting* immigration. The accumulated attitudes, which were neither strongly for immigration nor strongly against

it, were classified in an *intermediate* category. Applying the cut-off levels shown in the figure, on average 16.5% of the respondents were classified as accepting immigration in the countries studied, 14.2% were classified as non-accepting immigration, and 69.3% were left in the intermediate group. As noted above, in general the attitudes are skewed towards less positive with mean score 6.7 and modus of the distribution 6.0.

Not surprisingly, the values of the migration acceptance index and the proportions of the three groups are not similar across countries. The mean score of the index ranges from 5.7 in Hungary to 7.1 in East Germany³. The magnitude of cross-country variation in the immigration acceptance index approximately coincides with that across main socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. age groups). To further check the validity of the constructed index, the respondents classified as accepting and non-accepting immigration were compared on the basis of their opinion towards the number of foreigners in the country (questionnaire item M4) was compared. The data reveal a clear split in opinions according to the values of migration acceptance index. Among the respondents who were classified as accepting immigration only a relatively small minority (on average 20.1%, country variation from 6 to 27%) considered that there are already too many foreigners in the country. Among the respondents defined as non-accepting immigration, the corresponding opinion strongly prevailed (average 85.4%, country variation between 32 and 94%).

The focus of the present paper, however, is not on the examination of variation in the opinions about foreigners (relevant analyses are presented in other contributions to this volume) but on the relationships between the acceptance of immigration and attitudes demographic trends. In the following sections, this relationship is analysed by means of logistic regression models, controlling for the effects of demographic and social characteristics (gender, age, education etc) which are known as relevant for the evaluation of population trends. Before presenting the results of multivariate analysis, to set a stage, the next section outline the attitudes towards major demographic trends and issues prevailing in the *FEMAGE* countries.

³ For Austria, the average score is exceptionally high (11.3) but this reflects primarily the limited scope of items available on that country rather than a major difference in public opinion.

3. EVALUATION OF DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

In the PPA survey, the respondents were called upon to reveal their awareness of population change and evaluate the demographic population trends. In the present study, the opinions on three major issues — the change in population size, age structure and fertility — are examined. All these issues are of central concern in the search of sustainable human development have multifarious implications for society. The shape to an increasing extent political decisions concerning economic development, social welfare, health care, education and regional planning.

Population number

Virtually all FEMAGE countries have completed the stage of demographic growth and the rates of population increase are turning to negative. According to recent demographic statistics, the natural increase had become to negative in seven out of eight countries, in 2003 only Finland still featured a marginally positive balance of births and deaths [CoE 2005]. In four countries (Austria, Czech Republic, West-Germany and Slovenia), a positive net migration compensated the excess of deaths which allowed to maintain or slightly increase the population number. It should be noted, however, that growth supported by positive migration balance does not help to avert the decline in the number of natives in host societies but expands the stock of foreign-origin population.

The survey data reveal that apart from the prevailing trend, the majority of people are not willing to accept the prospect of population decline in the FEMAGE countries. On average less than one tenth of the respondents (7%) considered the decrease in population number as the preferred course of development. On the contrary, as regards to the two remaining alternatives, the supporters of population growth (49.5%) outnumbered those who considered the stability of population number as the most desirable scenario (43.5%). The opinions reflect uncertainty and concern, in that the decrease of population can be cause unexpected problems. Perhaps this relates to somewhat different collection of countries but the comparison with the results of the 1990s round Population Policy Acceptance survey indicate a decrease rather than an increase in the non-acceptance of shrinking population⁴.

Table 1. PREFERRED CHANGE OF POPULATION NUMBER (%)

	To increase	To remain the same	To decrease
Czech Republic	54.9	40.4	4.7
Estonia	77.1	21.8	1.1
Finland	40.1	57.9	2.0
Hungary	76.8	21.0	2.2
Poland	38.9	50.9	10.3
Slovenia	61.5	35.2	3.4
Total	49.5	43.5	7.0

Source: MIG international database

⁴ In PPA1, 22% preferred the decrease of population, 53% considered the least worrying option if the population size could remain stable and 28% gave the preference to further increase of population [Bonifaci and Kamaras 1998].

Table 1 presents opinion about the preferred change of population number by across individual countries⁵. As revealed by the data, the strongest support for continued increase of population can be found in Estonia and Hungary, in these countries more than three quarters of respondents would like to see the size of population expanding. Evidently, this mirrors the greater concerns in these two countries which feature the largest excess of death over births among the FEMAGE countries (around 4 per thousand in recent years), not compensated by positive net migration. The Czech Republic and Slovenia represent largely similar pattern, although the preference for further increase of population number most pronounced, it is shared by the majority of the respondents. In Finland and Poland, on the other hand, the stability of population number gained somewhat greater support, with 57.9% and 50.9% respectively. At least partly, the somewhat different profile of opinions may reflect the fact that natural population growth sustained somewhat longer in the latter countries. Both in Finland and Poland, it had not turned negative by the time when the PPA surveys were conducted.

Population age structure

Population ageing forms a central feature of modern demographic regime that derives from the fundamental changes in fertility and mortality. In spite of the variation in the current age structure that reflects demographic past, all FEMAGE countries are increasingly confronted with the ageing of their population. In terms of the proportion of persons aged 65 and over among the total population, the most advanced situation can be found in Germany (18.0%). Ageing is also relatively advanced in Estonia (15.9%), Finland (15.6%), Austria, Hungary (both 15.5%) and Slovenia (15.0%). The Czech Republic and Poland are still in a slightly more favourable position with the proportion of elderly at the levels of 13-14%.

Table 2. OPINION ON POPULATION AGEING (%)

	Declining proportion of young people			Rising number of people aged 65+		
	Good/ Excellent	Neither good, nor bad	Bad/ Very Bad	Good/ Excellent	Neither good, nor bad	Bad/ Very Bad
Czech Republic	4.3	19.9	76.0	4.8	23.7	71.6
Estonia	na	na	na	5.5	26.6	68.0
Finland	3.9	19.7	76.5	na	na	na
Germany	2.1	14.2	83.8	6.5	22.0	71.5
East-Germany	0.9	9.2	89.7	6.2	16.2	77.6
West-Germany	2.4	15.4	82.2	6.6	23.5	70.0
Hungary	1.1	7.9	91.0	na	na	na
Poland	6.9	28.1	65.0	6.3	28.5	65.3
Slovenia	2.4	9.6	88.0	17.0	26.5	56.5
Total	3.5	18.1	78.4	6.4	24.3	69.3

Source: MIG international database, na - not available

It is obvious that the implications of population ageing go far beyond demographics and influence virtually all social processes. Due to these multiple impacts the population

⁵ The information about the attitudes towards population growth was collected in all FEMAGE countries, except Austria and Germany.

ageing drives a fundamental transformation of society that involves shifts in the economic patterns of production and consumption, provision of health and social protection, taxation and pension systems, housing and several other important issues. To cope with this transformation, accommodating policies are urgently needed, as in many countries the main thrust population ageing is yet to come with large baby-boom cohorts reaching the old age. The seriousness of the challenge posed by demographic ageing is mirrored in the ways how people evaluate the change in the age structure. In the PPA survey, the opinions on the change in age structure were recorded on two dimensions of the ageing trend — increase in the number of persons aged 65+ and the decrease in the proportion of young people. The assessment of both aspects follows a similar pattern, dominated by a pessimistic view on population ageing. On average, nearly four fifths (78.4%) of the respondents considered the decrease in the proportion of young people as “bad” or “very bad”.

The attitude towards the increase in the number of elderly is somewhat less pronounced but the percentage of negative opinions is shared by more than two thirds of the population (69.3%). Most of the remainder refers to neutral stance whereas the positive opinion on the change in age structure is rather exceptional, held by 3.5% and 6.4% of the respondents respectively.

The observed pattern is repeated across countries with relatively moderate differentiation — in spite of variation in demographic, socio-economic and cultural conditions, ageing of the population is regarded as negative by a majority of people in all countries (Table 2). With respect to the rising number of elderly, the proportion of those answering “bad” or “very bad” ranges from 77.6% (East-Germany) to a somewhat more narrow majority of 56.5% in Slovenia. Even more clearly negative are the attitudes to the falling proportions of the young people. The most unfavourable views are to be found in Hungary, where 91% responded “bad/very bad”, followed by East-Germany (89.7%) and Slovenia (88%). On the other hand, in Poland the corresponding figure is “only” 65%. All in all, the prevailing pattern indicates that the awareness of the risks and unresolved concerns at the societal level seem to outweigh the benefits from ageing process, related to increased longevity at the individual level. At the same time it is important to stress that it is the process of demographic which is being judged negatively. However, this by no means indicates an overwhelmingly negative attitude towards the role of the elderly in society.

Fertility and role of children

The root causes of the change in population structure, discussed in the previous subsection, relate to mortality and fertility. On the one hand, increasing longevity, particularly in the older age groups advance ageing from the “top” of the age pyramid and yield growing proportions of persons reaching the old and very old age. On the other hand, population ageing is fuelled by subreplacement fertility, resulting in the shrinking of the number of the young, sometimes termed as ageing from the “bottom”. The implications of declining fertility levels require some time to accumulate, the turning point in the demographic situation will occur after the relatively small cohorts born under low fertility have reached the childbearing age and started to reproduce themselves.

According to recent demographic statistics, very low fertility appears to be a common feature for most FEMAGE countries. The single exception Finland where the total fertility rate has kept somewhat higher, fluctuating between 1.7-1.8 in the recent

years. In other countries, the TFR is clustered closely at the levels of 1.2-1.3, with the lowest level in East-Germany (1.06 in 2002). Against that background, it is not a major surprise that the public opinion is strongly dominated by concerns over the consequences of fertility decline. On average, more than four fifths of the respondents (80.9%) rate the decline in the number of births as “bad” or “very bad”. The opposite view that the fertility decline is beneficial is shared only by a marginal 5.1% and 14.% regard the development as neutral. Table 3 reveals relatively little variation in opinions across countries. In most cases, between 80-90% of the population express dissatisfaction about the fertility trend. The concordance of public opinion on the matter appears the highest in Hungary and Slovenia where negative views make up 91.8% and 92.4% respectively. In Poland, where fertility reached very low level somewhat later compared to other FEMAGE countries, the corresponding concerns are slightly less pronounced (71%).

Table 3 also presents information about the acceptance of responsibility for the situation, the corresponding statement referred to the “duty towards society to have children”. Compared to the evaluation of the situation, the data on the acceptance of individual commitment reveal a noticeable greater diversity of viewpoints — on the one hand, on average, 48% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with responsibility towards society, whereas 28.4% rejected the idea and 23.4% kept to the neutral stance. Substantial variation exist also across countries. The acceptance of individual responsibility is manifested most clearly in the Czech Republic (61.6% agrees or strongly agrees) and Poland (56.3%), non-acceptance is relatively common in Finland (49.3%) and Slovenia (43.4%).

Table 3. OPINION ON FERTILITY TREND (%)

	Declining number of births			Duty towards society to have children		
	Good/ Excellent	Neither good, nor bad	Bad/ Very Bad	Agree/ Strongly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/ Strongly disagree
Austria	4.7	13.5	81.9	42.5	22.9	34.6
Czech Republic	3.0	12.3	84.7	61.6	22.1	16.4
Estonia	na	na	na	51.8	23.7	24.4
Finland	2.3	16.0	81.7	19.9	30.7	49.3
Germany	4.1	11.6	84.4	45.5	23.1	31.4
East-Germany	2.7	7.4	89.9	49.4	21.7	28.8
West-Germany	4.4	12.6	83.0	44.6	23.4	32.1
Hungary	1.9	6.3	91.8	38.7	26.9	34.3
Poland	6.9	22.0	71.0	56.3	23.7	20.0
Slovenia	1.5	6.1	92.4	36.5	20.1	43.4
Total	5.1	14.1	80.9	48.0	23.7	28.4

Source: MIG international database, na - not available

The next sections examine how the evaluation of the demographic trends is differentiated according to the attitudes towards immigration and foreigners.

4. RESULTS

Five evaluations of general population trends have been regressed against the Immigration Acceptance Index, applying the multiple logistic regression models. The first statement concerns the preferred change in population number. The second and third statements concern the evaluation of decreasing proportion of young people, and the rising number of

elderly. Stressing two complementary aspects of the same change in population age structure, the evaluations are analysed together as only some minor differences appear in results. The fourth and fifth statements concern reproduction/fertility — evaluation on the declining number of births and acceptance of (societal) duty to have children — which are also analysed together. Correspondingly, the results of the analyses are presented for three groups of demographic processes.

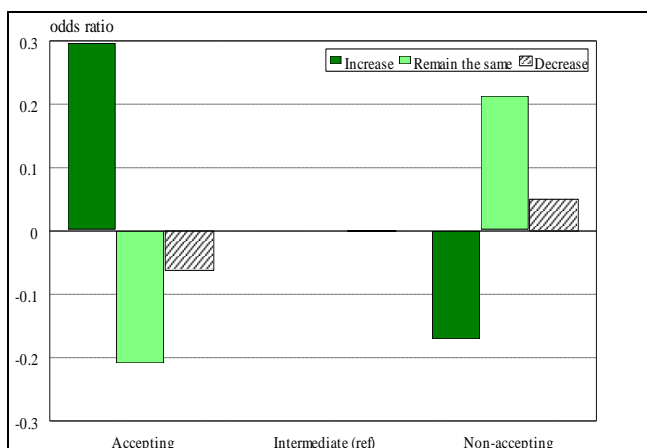
In the models, the main dependent variable of the Immigration Acceptance Index. The models also incorporate a set of other characteristics to control the impact and explanatory power of the index, including sex, age, number of (own) children, place of residence, education and religiosity. For the analysis two sets of models were estimated. The first set produced non-adjusted estimates, by including every characteristic into a model as a single covariate, in addition to country dummies. The second set of models produced adjusted estimates, by including all other characteristics and controlling for their effects in the model. In the following, the results from adjusted models are presented and discussed.

The presentation of the results follows a similar plan for all three groups of population processes. The graphs present odds ratios from adjusted models with data on all countries pooled. In all cases, The reference group is comprised of the respondents holding an intermediate position with respect to Immigration Acceptance Index, and odds ratios for those accepting immigrants and those non-accepting have been plotted. A table with model estimates for demographic and social characteristics is the second element for every section, with the discussion of the notable differences. The third element — estimates from country-specific models — are presented and analysed at the end of each section.

Preferred change in population number

The results on multivariate regression of the Immigration Acceptance Index against the preferred change in population number are presented in Figure 2. As outlined in previous sections, about the half of the respondents indicated the preference for population growth. The preference for increase, not much surprisingly, reveals a positive association with acceptance of immigrants, and correspondingly, reduced willingness to accept migrants shows a negative association.

Figure 2. LOGISTIC REGRESSION OF THE IMMIGRATION ACCEPTANCE INDEX: PREFERRED CHANGE IN POPULATION NUMBER



That may simply imply that people understand that the continuation of population increase in Europe could be hardly imaged, if at all, without immigration. And conversely, the population with prevailing negative attitude towards immigrants is more likely prepared to accept the decrease of population number.

The figure demonstrates that the same kind of association, with the gradient for odds ratios for immigration acceptance reversed, can be observed also among people who are inclined towards the stability population number. The group

preferring a decrease in population number forms a rather small minority (7 percent), and among them, the association with immigration acceptance is less pronounced.

As regards to demographic and social characteristics, the preference for population growth increases with age (Table 4). The association with age is clearly revealed among those who favour population increase, as well as among those who are ready to see population decreasing. Among the latter group, naturally, younger population is overrepresented. Other characteristics, such as number of children, place of residence and education do not strongly differentiate the preference towards the change of population number. The same could be said about sex. Another characteristic with stronger association, in addition to age, is the religiosity. Religious people express greater support for population increase whereas the situation turns to the opposite with respect to stability and decrease of population. It should be noted that presented model estimates are adjusted, i.e. the explanation does not lie, for example, in the older age composition and/or lower educational attainment of religious population.

The estimates from country-specific models (Table 5) on the acceptance of immigrants vary substantially from country to country. Like previously, the most informative is the column for those preferring the population increase. In most countries, the latter option is more favoured among those who are positively minded towards immigrants. The strongest association is characteristic to Hungary and Poland, where among others, the estimates are reach the level of statistical significance. In two smaller countries —Estonia and Slovenia — the association appears to be the other way round: those accepting immigrants are favouring population decrease. The differentiation, however, is relatively weak and statistically insignificant to make any conclusion, particularly for Slovenia. Evidently, the explanation could be sought from the column representing the preference for stable population: the difference in the proportion of those favouring the increase and stability in population number varies from country to country, contributing to the difference in model estimates.

Table 4. LOGISTIC REGRESSION OF THE IMMIGRATION ACCEPTANCE INDEX:
PREFERRED CHANGE IN POPULATION NUMBER (odds ratios)

	Increase	Remain the same	Decrease
<i>Immigration acceptance</i>			
Accepting	1.296***	0.789***	0.938
Intermediate	1	1	1
Non-accepting	0.819***	1.213***	1.005
<i>Control variables</i>			
Female	0.931*	1.119***	0.861*
Male	1	1	1
Age 18-34	0.881**	1.046	1.301**
Age 35-54	1	1	1
Age 55+	1.341**	0.782***	0.755***
Childless	0.905	1.035	1.228*
One child	1.031	0.963	1.036
Two children	1	1	1
Three+ children	0.993	0.997	1.058
City	1.070	0.890**	1.196*
Town	1.072	0.998	0.755***
Rural	1	1	1
Low education	0.975	1.046	0.93
Medium education	1	1	1
High education	1.073	0.974	0.834
Religious	1.378***	0.795***	0.806**

Non-religious	1	1	1
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***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

Table 5. LOGISTIC REGRESSION OF THE IMMIGRATION ACCEPTANCE INDEX: PREFERRED CHANGE IN POPULATION NUMBER BY COUNTRIES (odds ratios)

Country	Immigration acceptance	Increase	Remain the same	Decrease
Czech Republic	Accepting	1.193	1.043	0.142**
	Non-accepting	0.796	1.228	1.216
Estonia	Accepting	0.817	1.302	-
	Non-accepting	1.087	0.941	0.645
Finland	Accepting	1.065	0.913	1.349
	Non-accepting	0.900	1.078	1.341
Hungary	Accepting	1.050	0.846	2.025
	Non-accepting	0.761**	1.246*	1.702
Poland	Accepting	1.458***	0.683***	1.022
	Non-accepting	0.825**	1.229**	0.923
Slovenia	Accepting	1.170	0.855	0.986
	Non-accepting	1.192	0.935	0.280*

Reference category “intermediate” (not shown); ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

Preferred change in population age structure

The preferred change in population age structure is evaluated from two complementary perspectives. First, the respondents were asked to express their opinion on the decrease in the proportion of young people, and second, on the rising number of elderly. Both statements refer the manifestations of population ageing, and understandably, the responses are highly correlated, although not precisely coinciding.

Very few people regarded the decrease in the proportion of young people as excellent or good whereas the growth of elderly received slightly more balanced assessment. As the results of the modelling exercise overlap to a great extent, the presentation of the results concerning the change in the population age structure focuses on the attitudes towards the rising number of elderly.

Figure 3. LOGISTIC REGRESSION OF THE IMMIGRATION ACCEPTANCE INDEX: EVALUATION OF THE RISING NUMBER OF ELDERLY

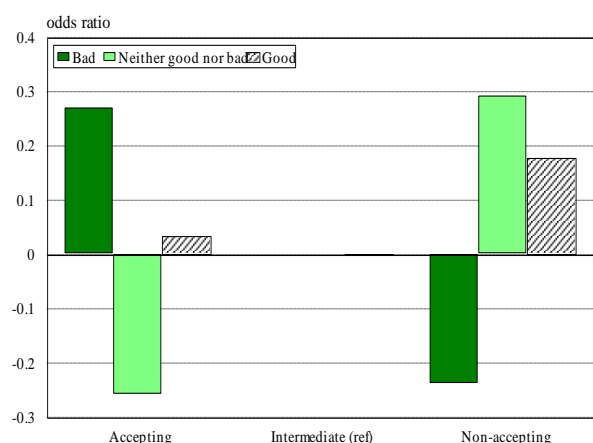


Figure 3 presents the model estimates for the Immigration Acceptance Index from the models of rising number of elderly. As noted above, more than two thirds of population considered the rise as “bad” (or “very bad”) and about one fourth saw the trend as “neither good nor bad”. A relatively tiny proportion (less than 7 percent) evaluates population ageing — “the biggest triumph in history of mankind” according to Frank Notenstein [1954]— as “good” (or “excellent”). Like for the preferred change in population number, those people who well accept immigration are more inclined to regard the rise in

the number of elderly as bad. On the other hand, non-acceptance of immigration relates to an increased likelihood of neutral (and positive) stance towards population ageing. The reversal of the gradients is particularly visible when the columns representing the models of neutral and negative attitude towards the rise of elderly are compared. The number of respondents expressing a positive opinion on demographic ageing appears too small to yield statistically significant estimates.

In general, social and demographic characteristics do not strongly differentiate the assessment of population ageing. Quite noticeably, there appears only a slight and statistically insignificant difference across groups among those who perceive the rise in the number of elderly negatively. Understandably, the likelihood of negative opinion is somewhat higher among younger people. At the same time, a positive assessment of the demographic ageing features a strong (and statistically significant) association with the adherence to older age groups, although the number of those who expressed a positive opinion on ageing trend was relatively small. As regards to other characteristics, the negative assessment of the growth in elderly seems to be associated with living in bigger cities which, in fact, does not correspond to more advanced ageing in these settlements in most (if not all) countries in the study. The most pronounced effect relates to education — the higher the educational attainment, the more negative appears the attitude towards the rise in the number of elderly. With the gradients reversed, the effect of schooling is present also in the other two columns of the table. In general terms the observed association is a little bit unexpected because one could expect a better knowledge and hence a more balanced assessment of demographic trends among more educated people.

Table 6. LOGISTIC REGRESSION OF THE IMMIGRATION ACCEPTANCE INDEX: EVALUATION OF THE RISING NUMBER OF ELDERLY (odds ratios)

	Bad	Neither good, nor bad	Good
<i>Immigration acceptance</i>			
Accepting	1.270***	0.741***	1.033
Intermediate	1	1	1
Non-accepting	0.761***	1.292***	1.177*
<i>Control variables</i>			
Female	0.937*	1.069*	1.015
Male	1	1	1
Age 18-34	1.027	0.976	0.960
Age 35-54	1	1	1
Age 55+	0.939	0.852***	1.745***
Childless	0.947	1.232***	0.604***
One child	0.928	1.128**	0.919
Two children	1	1	1
Three+ children	1.019	1.003	0.933
City	1.140***	0.925*	0.782***
Town	1.029	0.954	1.048
Rural	1	1	1
Low education	0.750***	1.241***	1.382***
Medium education	1	1	1
High education	1.194***	0.920*	0.664***
Religious	1.060	0.927	1.037
Non-religious	1	1	1

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

Table 7. LOGISTIC REGRESSION OF THE IMMIGRATION ACCEPTANCE INDEX: EVALUATION OF THE RISING NUMBER OF ELDERLY BY COUNTRIES (odds ratios)

Country	Immigration acceptance	Bad	Neither good, nor bad	Good
Czech Republic	Accepting	1.659*	0.609*	0.781
	Non-Accepting	0.625**	1.765***	0.847
Estonia	Accepting	0.998	0.879	1.498
	Non-Accepting	0.800	1.281*	0.993
Germany	Accepting	1.174*	0.792**	1.113
	Non-Accepting	0.772**	1.061	1.838***
East-Germany	Accepting	0.995	0.864	1.342
	Non-Accepting	0.866	1.301	0.762
West-Germany	Accepting	1.229	0.775*	1.021
	Non-Accepting	0.756*	1.022	2.119***
Poland	Accepting	1.493***	0.606***	1.085
	Non-Accepting	0.769***	1.506***	0.578***
Slovenia	Accepting	1.004	1.035	0.960
	Non-Accepting	1.037	1.537**	0.393***

Reference category “intermediate” (not shown); ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

This finding points to the possibility that the public judgement proceeds from a rather narrow fiscal perspective on population ageing. Religiosity and parity are not strongly differentiating the evaluation.

Across countries, once again, aside similarities in the general pattern there is also a noticeable diversity. The negative evaluation of the rising number of elderly appears negatively associated with the acceptance of immigrants in all countries, except Slovenia. In such countries as Czechia and Poland the difference is strong and statistically significant whereas in Estonia and East-Germany the association is relatively weak. With respect to neutral stance towards population ageing, the corresponding differentiation is somewhat more pronounced and the countries (again with a slight exception of Slovenia) follows a similar pattern: non-acceptance of immigrants relates to greater likelihood of the neutral attitude towards the rise in the number of elderly. The estimates for the positive evaluation ageing trend, the results do not present a systematic evidence, because of small absolute number of people in the group.

Fertility change and the role of children

The PPA/MIG database provides two different evaluations on fertility. The first covers the opinion about the declining number of births, with the profile of responses resembling rather closely the attitude towards the decreasing proportion of young people. In both cases, as discussed earlier, very few respondents (less than 6 percent) expressed a positive (“good” or “excellent”) opinion. The second addresses the acceptance of the duty towards society to have children, i.e. the presence of arguments beyond the purely individualistic considerations. The issue touched the sense of individual responsibility, and expectedly, generated a much greater split of opinions, in general as well as across most of the social and demographic characteristics. As the corresponding results may of greater interest, the following presentation focuses on the acceptance of duty to have children.

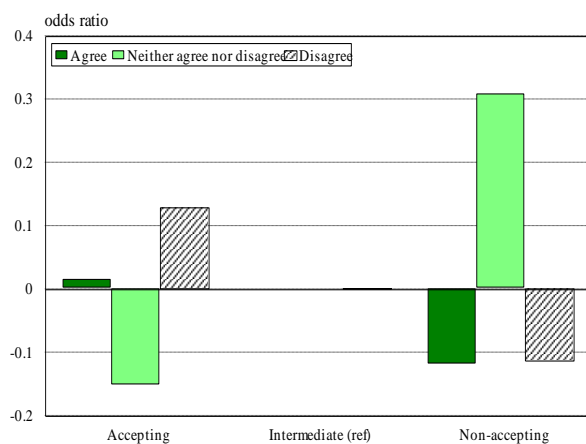
The estimates for the Immigration Acceptance Index from the models of duty of childbearing are presented in Figure 4. Apart from the analyses on population number and age structure, the positive stance towards immigrants appears not related to the acceptance of the duty of childbearing. The corresponding odds ratio is statistically insignificant, although, marginally positive. This association seems somewhat contradictory in that the people accepting immigrants are described as more open and less favourable towards

societal (and administrative) regulation, with respect to both immigration and fertility. Most probably, the acceptance of immigrants largely derives from other sources. A negative association between the non-acceptance of immigrants and the agreement with the duty of childbearing provides another argument along the same line.

The clearest differentiation can be found among those who neither agree nor disagree with the duty of having children, i.e. among those who do not have a strong opinion. The neutral stance towards having children is associated positively with the acceptance and negatively to non-acceptance of immigrants. Once again, this seems to be an untypical situation where the group with neutral attitude in one area (duty to have children) is expressing strong opinions in another (acceptance of immigrants).

Disagreement with the duty to have children, understandably, features a positive association with the acceptance and negative association with the non-acceptance of immigrants, however, the estimates are less pronounced compared to the neutral group.

Figure 4. LOGISTIC REGRESSION OF THE IMMIGRATION ACCEPTANCE INDEX: EVALUATION OF THE DUTY TO HAVE CHILDREN BY COUNTRIES



Social and demographic characteristics noticeably differentiate the acceptance of the duty to have children. Among all characteristics included in the model, only age seems to have neither a strong nor a systematic effect. A clear pattern is featured by parity which did not make a difference in the evaluations of the trends in population size and age structure. The effect of parity follows a rather expected direction: the higher the number of children, the stronger is the acceptance and smaller the non-acceptance with the duty to have children. Correspondingly, the gradient of odds ratios becomes

reversed when moving from the agreement with the duty of childbearing to neutral and negative stance towards having children. More or less similar pattern can be observed with respect to place of residence and educational attainment — the acceptance of the duty to have children is associated with rural residence and lower education. Females and non-religious population feature are to a lesser extent accepting childbearing as a duty towards society.

Models by individual countries display an interesting pattern, which, however, is not easy to explain. Most probably, some items in the survey were not understood similarly in all countries, and the duty of childbearing may be one of those. In five countries — Czechia, Finland, Germany (both East and West-Germany), Poland and Slovenia — the acceptance of the duty to have children tends to be positively associated with the acceptance of immigrants. In the remaining three countries — Austria, Estonia and Hungary — the relationship appears negative. In four out of the five countries mentioned above, the association holds a positive direction also with the non-acceptance of the duty to have children, the exception in this group is Germany (East as well as West-Germany) where the gradients are reversed for those rejecting childbearing as a duty towards society.

In the remaining countries there is also a change of gradients and the positive association between the acceptance of immigrants and rejection of the duty of

childbearing. In all eight countries, the neutral opinion towards childbearing relates to non-acceptance of immigrants, and in six countries out of eight the estimates reach the level of statistical significance.

Table 8. LOGISTIC REGRESSION OF THE IMMIGRATION ACCEPTANCE INDEX:
EVALUATION OF THE DUTY TO HAVE CHILDREN (odds ratios)

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
<i>Immigration acceptance</i>			
Accepting	1.015	0.847***	1.128***
Intermediate	1	1	1
Non-accepting	0.880***	1.308***	0.886**
<i>Control variables</i>			
Female	0.855***	1.053	1.145***
Male	1	1	1
Age 18-34	1.124***	0.975	0.895***
Age 35-54	1	1	1
Age 55+	1.763***	0.840***	0.556***
Childless	0.436***	1.498***	1.769***
One child	0.746***	1.168***	1.258***
Two children	1	1	1
Three+ children	1.119**	0.850***	0.978
City	0.742***	1.023	1.396***
Town	0.812***	1.151***	1.137***
Rural	1	1	1
Low education	1.165***	1.031	0.804***
Medium education	1	1	1
High education	0.928*	1.103**	0.986
Religious	1.532***	0.795***	0.698***
Non-religious	1	1	1

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

Table 9. LOGISTIC REGRESSION OF THE IMMIGRATION ACCEPTANCE INDEX:
EVALUATION OF THE DUTY TO HAVE CHILDREN BY COUNTRIES (odds ratios)

Country	Immigration Acceptance	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
Austria	Accepting	0.729***	0.836	-
	Non-Accepting	0.834	1.369*	0.591
Czech Republic	Accepting	1.121	0.603*	1.395
	Non-Accepting	0.704*	1.641**	0.919
Estonia	Accepting	0.685	0.535*	2.338***
	Non-Accepting	0.822	1.368**	0.922
Finland	Accepting	1.014	0.553***	1.605***
	Non-Accepting	0.869	1.324**	0.832
Germany	Accepting	1.095	0.962	0.931
	Non-Accepting	0.939	1.034	1.045
East-Germany	Accepting	1.103	0.966	0.915
	Non-Accepting	0.970	0.995	1.040
West-Germany	Accepting	1.091	0.957	0.942
	Non-Accepting	0.938	1.037	1.043
Hungary	Accepting	0.861	0.679	1.555*
	Non-Accepting	1.047	1.194	0.811*
Poland	Accepting	0.934	0.629***	1.614***
	Non-Accepting	0.8**	1.776***	0.624***
Slovenia	Accepting	1.085	0.601**	1.252
	Non-Accepting	0.963	1.518**	0.744*

Reference category "intermediate" (not shown); ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

5. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The results of the analyses presented above corroborate with the findings from other analysis on the project on the fact that public opinion in European societies is divided with regard to the acceptance immigrants. This is not a discovery by itself — there is a number of studies which have reached similar conclusions by addressing the profile of groups who carry positive and negative attitude towards foreigners among the population. At the same time, however, there has been relatively few attempts, if any, to place the acceptance of immigration into a context of demographic situation in broader terms, i.e. studies that would relate the attitudes towards immigrants to the perception of changes in population number, demographic ageing, fertility trends, marriage etc.

In this context, two competing hypotheses can be proposed. According to the first one, people develop definite views on population issues, including immigration and foreigners. These views and attitudes are grounded in the facts of reality, and reflect the awareness, to a smaller or greater extent, about the relationships observed among demographic phenomena. In that case, the diversity in opinions may result, for example, from whether the judgements are driven by primarily short-term or long-term considerations.

According to the second hypothesis, people may develop attitudes towards immigration without necessarily relating them to other demographic processes. In that case, the individual experience and circumstances, for example the presence of foreigners in one's home town and respective contacts, be it positive or negative, are decisive in shaping the attitudes. Compared to the former case, the attitudes draw from an emotional rather than rational basis and allegedly feature a more accidental and volatile character.

The present study attempted to evaluate these hypotheses by examining the relationships between the acceptance of immigration, and the views on three groups of demographic processes — the change in population number, demographic ageing and fertility (five different items on a more specific level). In most cases, the analysis revealed a systematic and statistically significant associations between the attitudes towards and the perception of major demographic trends. In other words, the results give support the first hypothesis.

At the same time, however, it should be noted that the attitudes towards immigrants can be measured and operationalised in multiple ways. To avoid potential pitfalls, several alternatives were examined during the exploratory analysis. First, the index of immigration acceptance applied in the study was made to incorporate information from a broad range of items, covering demographic, economic, social and cultural issues, advantages as well as disadvantages related to foreigners. As a results, the index approximates the normal distribution which is an essential requirement for capturing the diversity of opinions. Second, more than two thirds of the respondents were classified into intermediate category, and only those with relatively strong distinction of attitudes from the average, in positive or negative direction, were defined as favouring or disfavouring immigrants respectively. The resulting taxonomy seems to have performed sufficiently well in multivariate models and secured the robustness of the results. But of course, there are alternative ways of constructing the index which would probably lead to somewhat different outcomes.

It must be also acknowledged that on several counts the model estimates failed to conform a fully systematic pattern. In those cases, poor knowledge of demographic reality, observance to “politically correct” answers, stereotypes cultivated in public opinion, emotional approach or others factors evidently took over. Also, the irregularities may have

derived from the noticeable variation in the demographic context of the countries. Even in the relatively concise group of our eight countries, the proportion of foreign-origin population ranges from less than 5% to around 40%, not to mention the diversity in the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of immigrant populations. For example, this may be relevant in case of Finland and Poland which both feature highly homogeneous populations with relatively limited immigration experience.

A final remark is in order concerning a more specific issue. The analysis highlighted a prevailing negative attitude towards population ageing, associated positively with the acceptance of immigrants. This stance presents a salient contrast with the scholarly perspective on demographic ageing, formulated by Frank Notestein more than half a century ago, according to which the problem of ageing ... "is only a pessimistic way of looking at a great triumph of civilisation". Of course, this statement does not overemphasise the numeric proportions between age groups but points to the fact that under modern demographic regime an average newborn can expect a lifespan of 70-80 years, shared with younger generations, instead of 30-35 years before the demographic transition.

Against that background, the overwhelmingly negative stance towards population ageing requires an explanation. The opinion observed on the issue likely reflects the perception of individual ageing, which can be seen as a pathway towards frailty and death. At the same time, it also points to the fact that the discourse of population ageing in mass media appears insufficiently balanced. In a broader framework, the prevailing negative attitude towards population ageing could be regarded as the evidence that the challenges posed by modern demographic development still tend to outpace the solutions that are available in most countries. This is definitely true about population ageing, but it extends to a number of other issues and processes, including the immigration and integration of foreigners.

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