

Socio-economic determinants of return migration intentions: A case study from Bulgaria






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Introduction

The study explores how socio-economic factors influence the return migration intentions of Bulgarian emigrants. It is particularly relevant in light of Bulgaria’s demographic crisis and the limited understanding of what influences the decision for emigrants to return. Employing four different statistical models, we analyse the most influential determinants shaping the intention to return to Bulgaria.





Aim and main questions

-  An empirical analysis of the impact of socio-economic factors on the return intentions of Bulgarian emigrants.
-  What factors influence the intention to return to Bulgaria?
-  What is their relative importance?
-  How do they affect the likelihood of return migration?
-  How can we develop more effective policies to promote return?

Data and Methodology

The empirical approach leverages survey data collected online by "Global Metrics" Ltd. in 2016, with responses from over 600 Bulgarian emigrants. The data includes demographic, economic, and social factors and ties to both host and home countries. Four statistical models—logistic regression, logistic regression with backward elimination, decision tree, and random forest—were used to determine the relative importance of each factor to predict the likelihood to have an intention to return.

Target variable: “Would you return to Bulgaria?” – Yes or No

-  **Economic**
 - employment status, income, work opportunities, industry, work position etc.
-  **Social**
 - family ties, social networks, community support, connections to Bulgaria, etc.
-  **Demographic**
 - age, gender, marital status, education (lower is underrepresented), children, destination countries, etc.
-  **Psychological**
 - motivation, expectations, perceived opportunities, reasons to migrate, etc.

Acknowledgements & References

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Results

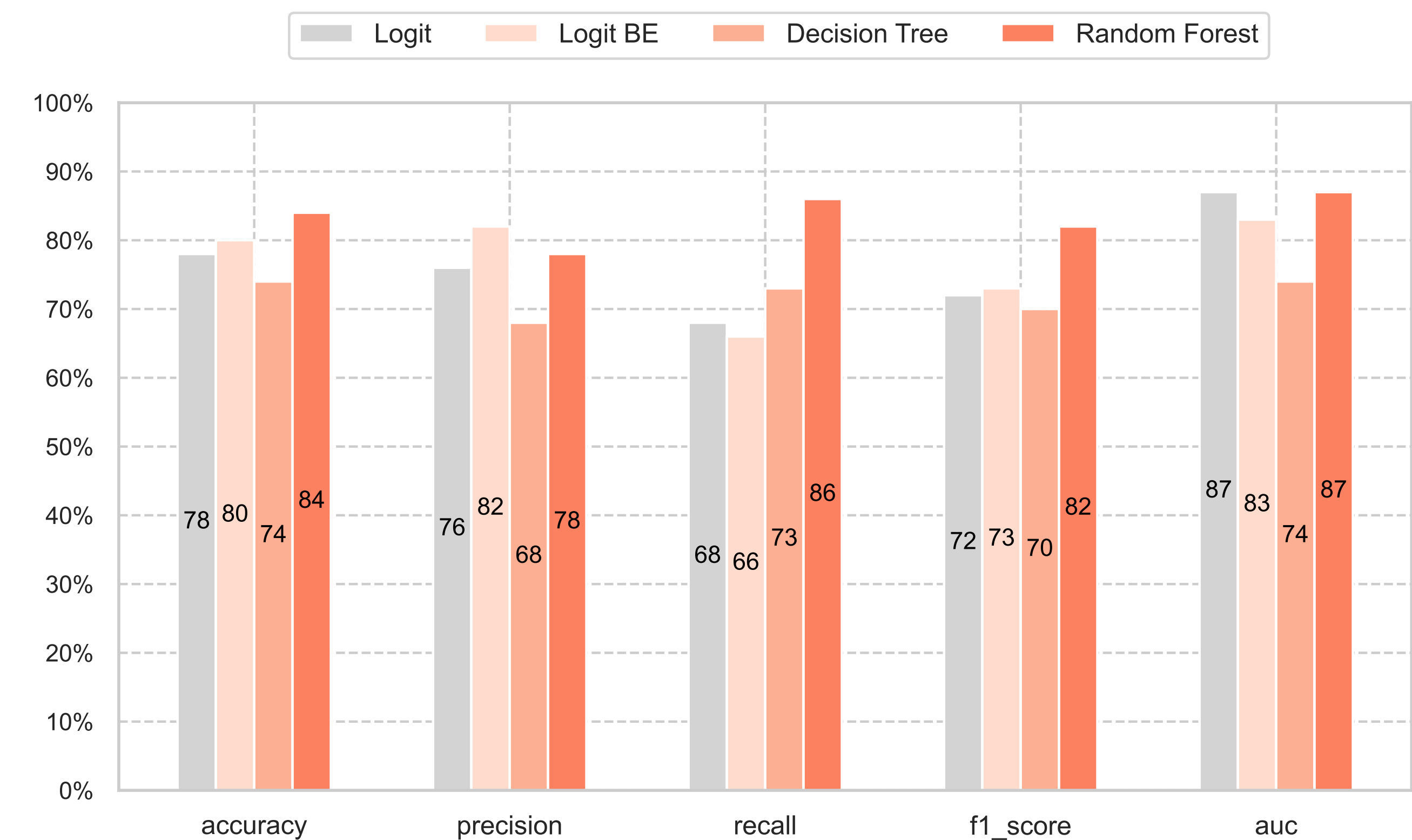



Figure 1: Comparison of the models performance metrics

The Random Forest model proves to be the most effective in identifying an individual’s intention to return to Bulgaria.


- Economic factors** such as job opportunities and work availability in Bulgaria, emerged as significant positive influencers on the likelihood of return migration. The most influential factor, as indicated by our logistic regression models, was the initial lack of employment opportunities in Bulgaria. The decision-tree-based models pointed to a willingness to work in a similar job in Bulgaria as the primary determinant.
- Psychological and social factors** Negative factors include psychological and social variables like absence of public services, perceived corruption, and the motivation to leave due to the presence of rules and regulations in the host country.
- Demographic factors** Age, gender, and marital status were found to have a less significant impact on the decision to return.

Discussion and Conclusions

-  **Most likely to return**
 - Initially left to seek employment opportunities abroad
 - Now willing to continue working in their field of expertise in Bulgaria.

Economic factors pull individuals back to Bulgaria.

Policies:
Maximize positive factors

 - Industries with more high-added value
 - Reintegration programs
 - Networking programs
-  **Least likely to return**
 - Initially moved due to dissatisfaction with the social and institutional aspects.
 - Found employment in the host country that matches their education and skills and is well-integrated within the host society.

Pushed away by social and psychological factors from Bulgaria.

Policies:
Minimize negative factors

 - Improving public services
 - Reducing perception of corruption

Limitations

Relatively small sample size, potential underrepresentation of certain groups, the focus exclusively on Bulgarian migrants, and pre-COVID data.