**Discussion**

*Some cool introductory sentence*

why is 2015 a turning point in immigration opinion dynamics?

Several results pointed at 2015 being a pivotal year for immigration dynamics across Europe. This can be explained by the fact that that year was the height of the European refugee crisis. During that year, over one million people arrived by sea, mainly fleeing conflicts in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia, and especially Syria (Almustafa, 2021; Piguet, 2024). Previous research shows that the 2015 refugee crisis placed strain on European institutions and politics, leading to increased party competition and polarization. Political elites and parties shifted their positions, with right-wing and populist movements gaining traction by emphasizing national sovereignty and stricter immigration controls. The crisis acted as a catalyst for movements and parties that challenged the existing political order, often using xenophobic rhetoric (e.g., Izak, 2021; Hutter & Kriesi, 2021; Yaseen et al., 2025). However, there were regional differences as the crisis sparked different reactions in Eastern and Western Europe, with trust in domestic and EU institutions playing a key role in shaping attitudes. While some regions saw a rise in xenophobia and support for extreme right parties, others maintained more stable or nuanced views (Peshkopia, Bllaca & Lika, 2018).

why is there an increase in avg. deviation from neutrality in for all 3 variables in europe?

We found evidence for an ongoing shift away from a neutral opinion stance about immigration. The framing of immigration by political actors and the media can contribute to the differentiation and sometimes polarization of public opinion (Lahav, 2004; Kehrberg, 2007). Interestingly, it seems to be the distinguishment between the words “immigrant” and “refugee” which can already lead to more nuanced, but also polarized, attitudes. People generally hold more positive views toward refugees than immigrants, and attitudes vary further based on ethnicity, country of origin, and economic background of newcomers (Kehrberg, 2007).

However, while some countries experienced more restrictive opinions in response to increased immigration flows and political framing, overall shifts in public opinion across Europe have been relatively mild, with significant variation between countries (Hatton, 2016).

Why is, for Germany, "imbgeco" increasing in terms of avg. deviation from neutrality?

For example, in Germany, we only found an increasing polarization with regards to economic considerations as per an increasing average deviation from neutrality value with the “imbgeco” variable. In fact, the sentiment of Germans about immigration can be shaped by both economic self-interest such as concerns about personal finances and job security (Van Hauwaert & Vegetti, 2025). Germans with neoliberal economic views are more likely to see immigrants as a drain on the welfare state, while those with left-leaning economic views are more likely to see immigrants as beneficial (Grdešić, 2019). While we found economic factors to be the divisive force of immigration opinion shaping with the metric, others report more of a mix of factors. According to Fetzer (2000), cultural marginality and ethnocentrism are often stronger predictors of anti-immigration sentiment than economic self-interest, especially in West Germany.

Why is PC1 explaining more and more across Europe / Germany / Hungary

To the polarization metrics described in literature, we added a new one in the form of the explained variance of the first principal component (PC1) of the PCA using the three immigration variables. We interpreted an increase of the proportion of explained variance of PC1 as an increase in issue alignment – the synchronization of opinions towards a specific topic. For example, if a person would agree that immigrants are good for the cultural life of a country, with increasing issue alignment, it would be increasingly likely that that person would also consider immigrants to be good for the economy. This is exactly what we found - averaged across Europe, but also on the country-level for both Germany and Hungary. Indeed, individuals who view immigrants positively in one domain, such as cultural life, are often more likely to hold positive views in other domains such as economic contributions (Van Hauwaert, S., & Vegetti, F., 2025). According to our findings, the ongoing trends of issue alignment were roughly equally fast for both Germany and Hungary after 2015. Germany generally has a more positive opinion about immigration than Hungary (see below. Also, Bocskor, 2018; Heath & Richards, 2019; Bíró-Nagy, 2021). However, other research suggests that the alignment of positive opinions is more likely among those with higher political tolerance, stronger European identity, and better information about immigration (Lahav, 2004; De Coninck, 2020; Van Hauwaert & Vegetti, 2025). Meaning we would have expected a faster rate in Germany than in Hungary.

Why is moderate divergence increasing across Europe / Germany / Hungary

Why identified two moderate groups based on Lorenz’s (2017) research: The moderate acceptors and the moderate opponents. Our results suggest an increase in moderate divergence across Europe, but also distinctively in Germany and Hungary. In Germany, the presence of both pro- and anti-immigration stances within moderate parties, such as the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), has led to internal divisions and conflicting messages on immigration policy, reflecting broader divergences among moderate voters (Schmidtke, 2024). Indeed, studies show a clear antagonism between supporters and opponents of immigration within the German electorate, including among those who identify as moderate or centrist. This divide is especially visible on the issue of immigration (Hebenstreit, 2022). In Hungary, on the other hand, the government’s intensive anti-immigration campaigns, especially during and after the 2015 migration wave, significantly influenced public opinion. These campaigns made anti-immigration sentiment widespread across the political spectrum - including among moderates (Bocskor, 2018). Before the crisis, differences in anti-immigrant attitudes between political groups, including moderates, were minor. However, after the crisis and the government’s campaign, these differences became more pronounced, with party preference playing a larger role in shaping attitude (Barna & Koltai, 2019).

Why is in Germany the moderate group consensus decreasing for all variables?

When moderate divergence increases, moderate consensus should logically decrease – which is what we found for Germany and Hungary after 2015. Interestingly, in comparison to Germany, the moderate group consensus for Hungary fluctuated much stronger. This indicates that the opinions about immigration of moderate voters in the Hungary are much more volatile in comparison with Germany. Our finding here is directly contradictory to other research which states that immigration preferences among the public tend to remain stable over time. However, it could be changes in the frequency of the salience of immigration as a political issue, which can drive temporary increases in support for far-right parties when immigration is highly visible in public debate, which might a hidden driver here (Magistro & Wittstock, 2021; Cools, Finseraas & Røgeberg, 2021)

Why is moderate size parity decreasing across Europe?

Why is moderate size parity increasing for all variables in Germany?

Why is moderate size parity increasing (not as much) for Hungary, why were the values so small in hungary in 2015?

Why is non-neutrality increasing across Europe/Germany/Hungary

Why is there, overall, an increasing in the likert-opinion values in Europe?

Overall good

Some countries (Italy, hungary) pull it down

Why is there a growing body of people who think that immigrants might be good for the economy, yet, at the same time, there is a body of people who believe that immigrants might negatively impact the cultural life?

Considering the raw likert-scale opinion values, we found that in Germany, there seems to be a growing body of people who think that immigrants might be good for the economy, yet, at the same time, there is a body of people who believe that immigrants might negatively impact the cultural life after 2015. In fact, In Germany, immigration is widely recognized as having positive economic effects, particularly by addressing labor shortages and supporting economic growth. Historically, immigration has helped Germany tackle demographic challenges, such as an aging population and labor shortages, by providing both high- and low-skilled workers. This has boosted productivity, innovation, and overall economic growth (Higgins & Klitgaard, 2019; Grajdeanu, 2023). While a common concern, most studies find little to no negative impact of immigration on native employment or wages (Prantl & Spitz-Oener, 2020). Yet at the same time, while immigrants clearly can contribute to cultural diversity (Giovanis, Akede & Ozdamar, 2021), there are ongoing debates and concerns among some groups about the potential for cultural change or loss of traditional values. Some native-born Germans become less supportive of welfare programs as the proportion of immigrants increases, especially during periods of high unemployment. This reflects concerns about social cohesion and resource allocation, particularly in the early phases of immigration wave (Schmidt-Catran & Spies, 2016).

Why is there a trend of an overall resentment towards immigration in Hungary?

In contrast to the mixed trends in Germany, there is an overall trend of increasing resentment towards immigration in Hungary. The Hungarian government, especially under Viktor Orbán, has run intensive anti-immigration campaigns since 2015, framing immigration as both an economic and security threat. These campaigns conflated migrants with terrorists and criminals, and presented the government as the defender of Hungarian and Christian values (Bocskor, 2018; Bajomi-Lázár, 2019). The media environment in Hungary is highly politicized, with limited pluralism and critical voices. This has amplified government messaging and reduced the visibility of alternative or critical perspectives on immigration (Farkas, 2021). Thus, this trend is largely the result of deliberate political strategies that portray immigration as a danger to Hungarian values and identity, especially since 2015.

*Some cool conclusion*

Limitations

* Only two countries considered besides European averages
* Not this method used that identifies trend in time series (find smart arguments against it, e.g., too few data points or something)