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Explaining attitudes to immigration in France

James Dennison and Teresa Talò

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EUI Working Paper **RSCAS** 2017/25

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ISSN 1028-3625

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Printed in Italy, May 2017

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I – 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)

Italy

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Executive summary

- Attitudes to immigration in France, as in most European countries, are highly stable and are in fact becoming slightly more favourable.
- France has relatively negative attitudes to immigration when compared with other western European countries.
- However, the French see immigration as a relatively unimportant issue affecting their country, considerably less so than other western European electorates.
- The recent uptick in perceived importance of immigration in almost all western European countries has been far less pronounced in France.
- The French see cultural assimilation as more important when deciding who should be allowed to immigrate than economic self-sufficiency, relative to other western European states.
- Attitudes to immigration can be powerfully predicted by fundamental psychological traits, with individuals displaying openness and excitability more drawn towards pro-immigration positions and those displaying conscientiousness and concern over safety more drawn towards anti-immigration positions.
- Attitudes to immigration are also powerfully predicted by broader political attitudes, such as left-right self-placement, desire for egalitarianism and desire for a strong government to secure safety. Also, individuals who are more sceptical of the motives of politicians tend to be more opposed to immigration.
- Individuals living in more diverse regions and who have more ethnically diverse friends tend to hold more pro-immigration positions.
- With the above variables, we can explain around 40 per cent of variation in attitudes to immigration.
- Surprisingly, with the above variables taken into account, we find no direct effect of university education, parental education, nationalism, cultural supremacism, interest in politics or having lived abroad on attitudes to immigration.
- Attitudes to immigration in France, it seems, are the result of deep-lying psychological differences within the electorate and are unlikely to be easily changed by exposure to new information or political campaigns.

Keywords

Immigration, France, Elections, Attitudes, Public Opinion

The background to immigration and the French election

Immigration has been a key topic of the 2017 French electoral debate and of French political discourse in general in the past decade. While this is common to many European countries, in France it has been deeply intertwined with issues of identity. The debate on immigration in France is rooted historically in its post-colonial past and in its traditional assimilationist policies. Indeed, these policies were one of the main ideological underpinnings of French colonial rule; the idea being that by adopting French values and cultures citizens of the colonies would be considered French. This focus on assimilation was still very much present in the policies of post-colonial France during the 1960s and 1970s (Lacroix, 2015). From the mid-1980s onwards, however, a more multiculturalist policy that encouraged immigrants to keep their own traditions became more predominant (Zappi, 2003). This, however, went hand-in-hand with increasingly closed borders policy and with de-industrialization that meant that fewer immigrants were needed as workers in factories.

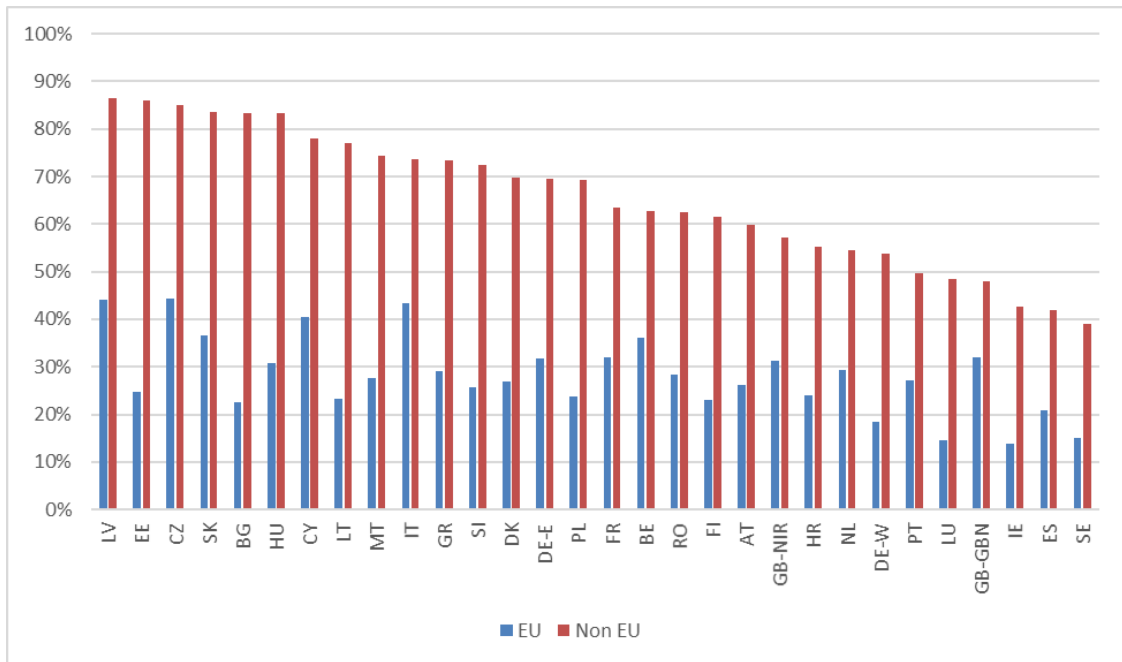
From 2000 onwards, under the pressure of FN and the identitarian right, there has been a revamp of assimilationist policies. In 2003, an “integration contract” was introduced with which migrants were required to abide by French values and norms. In 2011 “citizenship tests” were required for immigrants hoping to get French nationality while integration and anti-discrimination policies were gradually eliminated. Similarly, throughout the 2000s French political discourse has strongly focused on secularism as a key component of the French republican identity, which the radical right argues is threatened by religious immigrants’ values (mainly, Muslims). The heated debate on headscarves and its formal ban in schools in 2004 is as an example of this assimilationist reaction. In 2011 Burqas were banned in public places and in summer of 2016 the discussion on ‘Burkinis’ was widely debated in the media.

The idea that a growing and increasingly diverse set of immigrants potentially fatally threatens France’s identity is one of the key narratives proposed by Marine Le Pen’s Front National. Le Pen has presented herself as the defender of the French nation and her references to immigration are mainly identitarian. The slogan of the Front National’s campaign “au nom du peuple” reflects FN’s strategy of trying to embody both the interests and values of the French people that she conceived as a homogeneous “heartland” (Taggart, 2000). This heartland is portrayed as ordinary French people that are eager to defend what they believe are quintessential French values. The FN juxtapositions the idea of the ‘people’ (as an in-group) and immigrants (as an out-group) who are considered ‘unwilling to adapt’ and pose a threat to the French traditional way of life. This heartland is defined very much in identitarian terms as values and traditions (e.g. stressing France’s traditional secularism versus a supposed Islamisation of French society). Economic considerations (such as competition with immigrants over jobs) or references to the recent refugee crisis have been part of the political discourse of this campaign, however, less so than in other countries. By 2017, French attitudes to immigration are largely addressed through allusions to the French Republican identity and multiculturalism.

French attitudes to immigration in the European context

To investigate actual French attitudes to immigration, we start by comparing aggregate favourability to immigration in France with that in other European countries. French attitudes to immigration lay somewhere around the average of European attitudes. Around 60 per cent of Frenchmen have negative attitudes towards non-EU immigrants while just over 20 per cent have negative attitudes towards EU immigrants, making France, amongst Western European countries, relatively positive towards European immigrants though relatively opposed to non-EU immigration (Eurobarometer, 2016). Indeed, in Western Germany, this number is ten percentage points lower.

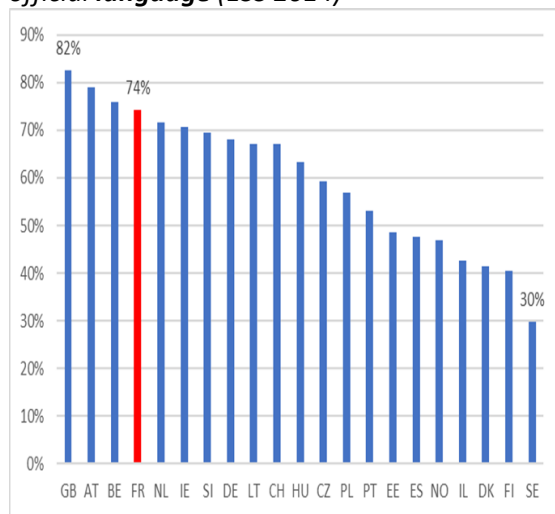
Figure 1. Negative (very negative and fairly negative) attitudes towards immigration, percentages (Eurobarometer 2016)



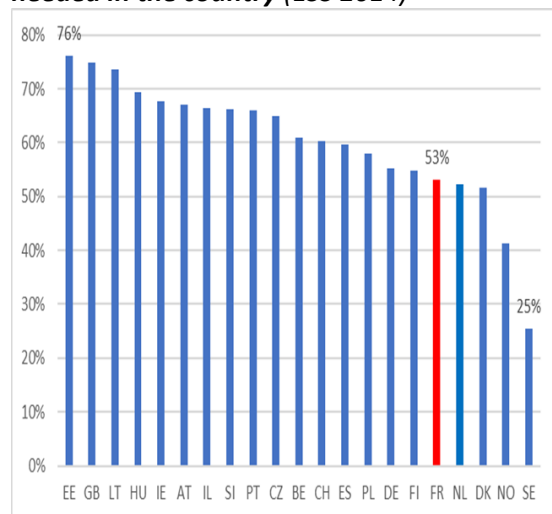
In general, with respect to other European countries, France positions itself as more welcoming than Eastern European countries but the French seem more concerned about the characteristics migrants have than fellow Western European countries. A distinctive trait of French attitudes seems to be the relatively lower concern for immigrants work skills. However, French respondents overwhelmingly believe that it is very important that immigrants speak French (74%). This seems to be in line with the importance that has been traditionally placed in France on cultural assimilation.

Figure 2: French attitudes to the requirements of immigrants (ESS 2014)

Percentage of population that believe it is very important that immigrants speak the country's official language (ESS 2014)

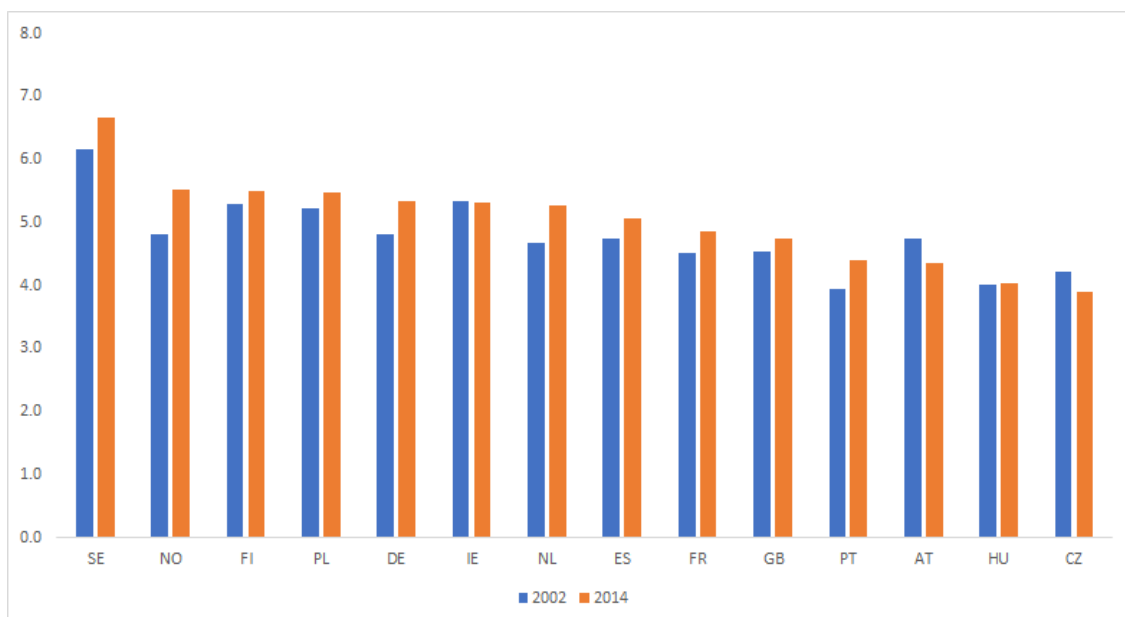


*Percentage of population that believe it is very important that immigrants **have work skills needed in the country** (ESS 2014)*



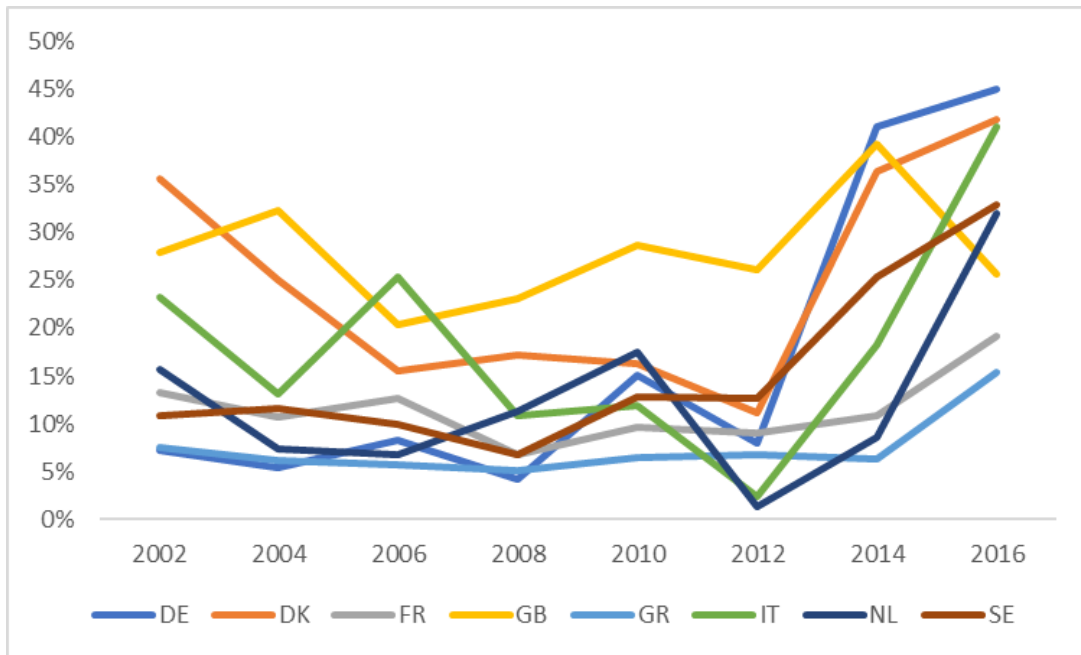
As shown in Figure 3, French attitudes to immigration across time, like those of most European countries, have changed little in the twenty-first century, displaying a remarkable degree of stability. This suggests that attitudes are largely uninfluenced by contingent events. In particular, the relative position of European countries with respect to attitudes seems to be stable; suggesting a powerful role of country-specific histories, cultures and social structures, all of which are stubborn. This stability seems to dismiss portrayals of an anti-immigration tide in Europe; if anything, overall, attitudes have become slightly positive. Given the rise of anti-immigration parties throughout Europe, and in France in particular, this stability in attitudes seems rather surprising, possibly suggesting that although they remain unchanged, anti-immigration attitudes have been increasingly activated politically. Although attitudes have not changed, it is likely, therefore, that the salience of the immigration issue has increased for some who were always opposed to immigration in the abstract (Davis and Deole, 2015; Hatton, forthcoming).

Figure 3. Mean evaluation of whether immigrants make the country a better or worse place to live (0 = worse to 10 = better) (source: ESS 2014)



Indeed, when considering people’s evaluation of the most important issue in their country, the percentage of those pointing to immigration has risen in the years between 2002 and 2016 (Eurobarometer). However, its increase was not constant – it seems to decrease in most countries between 2002 and 2008 and then rises sharply from 2012 to 2016. This might partially be attributed to the steep rise in immigration to Europe with the ‘refugee crisis’. Most notably, in France the proportion of the electorate choosing immigration as one of the most important issues affecting the country is considerably lower than other western European countries through the period, despite a minor uptick between 2014 and 2016.

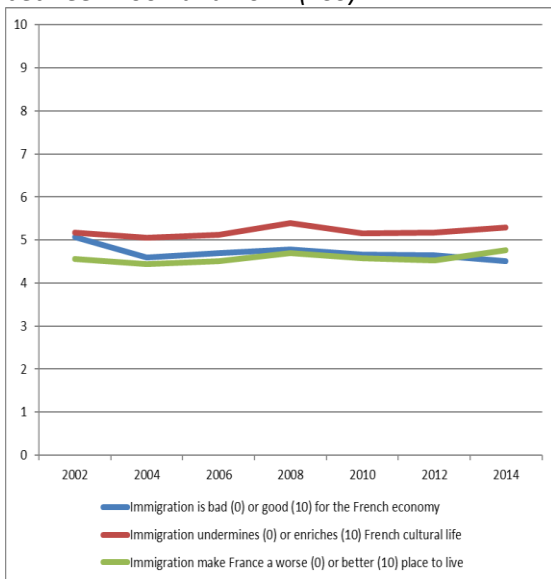
Figure 4: Percentage of the population that picked immigration as the most important issue facing their country between 2002 and 2016 (Eurobarometer)



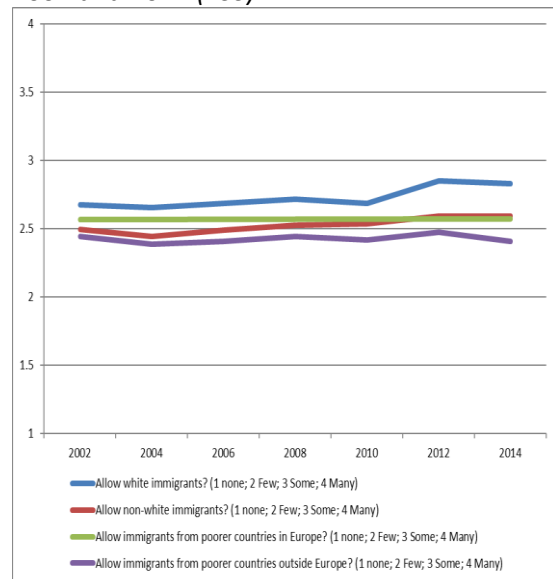
Turning to France in particular, remarkably little change can be seen between attitudes from 2002 and 2014, as shown in Figure 4. This is true both for the perceived effects of immigration in France (in cultural and economic terms) and for French attitudes towards different types of immigrants. Nonetheless, there is a slight differentiation of attitudes towards different types of immigrants; this may be due to the increased policy relevance of immigration, which could lead to slightly more nuanced attitudes.

Figure 5: Variance in attitudes towards different effects of immigrants and types of immigrant in France, 2002-2014

Perceived effects of immigration in France between 2002 and 2014 (ESS)



French attitudes to type of immigrant between 2002 and 2014 (ESS)



Regional variation

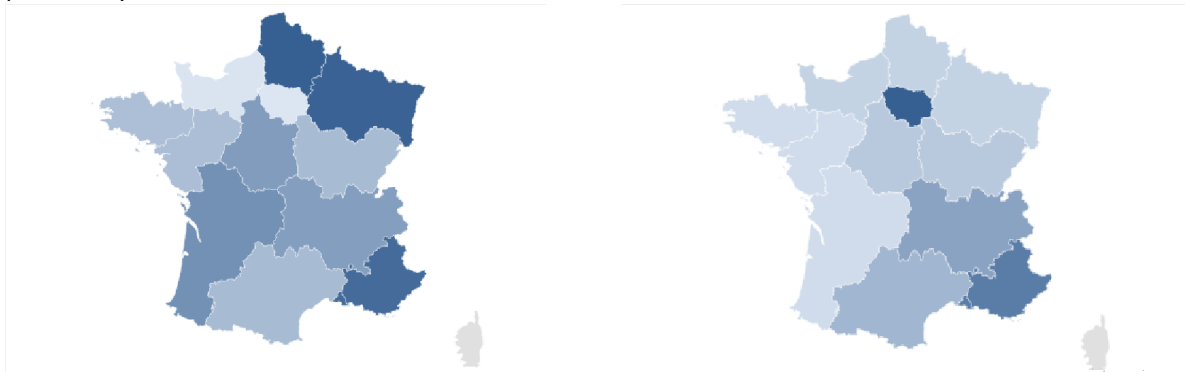
At the regional level attitudes are more negative in the North East of France, sometimes referred to as the country's rust belt. This is a region often characterised by deindustrialisation, higher unemployment and lower wages than elsewhere in France. Also, attitudes are very negative in the South-East while, unsurprisingly, the Paris area seems to be the most tolerant. When compared to the proportion of foreign-born population in the latest census, there is a positive correlation between favourability to immigration and the presence of immigrants.

Overall, the regional distribution of negative attitudes to immigration mirrors votes obtained by the Front National in the first round of the election. Indeed, the Front National was particularly strong in the North-Eastern region of Hauts-de-France where the party obtained 31% of the vote share and in the South-Eastern region of Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur (28.2% of votes) in the first round of the 2017 Presidential Election. Its vote share was lowest in Ile-de-France and Brittany (12.6% and 15.3% of votes respectively), which, particularly in the case of Ile-de-France, are also among the areas in which attitudes towards immigrants are more positive.

Figure 6: Attitudes to immigration and foreign-born population by French region

Percentage of the population that believe that immigrants make France a worse place to live in¹ (ESS 2014)

Percentage of the population born outside the EU (Eurostat 2011 Census)



Explaining variation in attitudes to immigration in France

There is no shortage of academic studies that examine the causes of attitudes to immigration. As our starting point, we draw on the findings of two overviews of the literature (Berg, 2015; Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014) as well as the literature reviews of two recent empirical papers (Rustenbach, 2010; Kauffman, 2014). These four articles alone consider around 250 academic studies into variance in attitudes to immigration, as well as related phenomena such as attitudes to race and support for radical right parties. We very briefly attempt to classify and describe this large number of studies in the following text.

The various explanations for variation in attitudes to migration can be placed in four theoretical groups: psychological explanations, socialisation explanations, attitudinal explanations, and contextual explanations. The first of these groups, *psychological variables*, sees attitudes to immigration – and, indeed, attitudes to broader political phenomena – as a reflection of deep-seated, fundamental (and, arguably, fixed and genetic) personality traits and cognitive patterns, as well as the individual's self-

¹ The question asks whether respondents believe that immigrants make the country a better or worse place to live in on a scale from 0 (worse) to 10 (better). Here we consider only those that answered 0,1,2 or 3.

identity. Early classic works such as Allport (1954) argued that racist attitudes were the result of an authoritarian personality type. More recently works such as Lee *et al* (2001) have found that anti-immigration attitudes result from valuing obedience to rules and law. Stets and Burke (2000) and Fussell (2014) show that such attitudes result from in-group favouritism, one of the five variables found in moral foundation theory. Haidt and Graham (2011) show that liberals derive their moral views from a strong sense of fairness and caring whereas conservatives draw on their greater predisposition towards loyalty, authority and sanctity. Political attitudes have also been shown to relate to the 'Big Five' personality traits, with greater openness to experience resulting in more liberal views whereas greater conscientiousness and emotional stability lead to more conservative views (Dennison, 2016).

Second, the broad range of socialisation effects see attitudes to immigration as the result of various life experiences. According to this view, early life experiences such as norm acquisition through parents and schooling lead to political attitudes. Later in life, tertiary education and living abroad lead to one having a more cosmopolitan outlook and pro-immigration views (e.g. Haubert and Fussell, 2006; Mayda, 2006; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007; Espenshade and Calhoun, 1993). Having a family and children is also supposed to lead to a greater sense of responsibility and therefore risk aversion towards large-scale demographic transformation (Jackson *et al*, 2001). A weaker socio-economic position may also lead to greater risk aversion or sense of economic threat and therefore lower propensity towards accepting major societal changes or increased economic competition (e.g. Espenshade, 1995; Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996; Scheve & Slaughter, 2001).

Political attitudinal explanations argue that attitudes to immigration are the result of, or at least form a part of, prior and broader political ideological positions, as measured through left-right self-placement, authoritarianism, egalitarianism and nationalism or cultural pride. These arguments find support in the finding that in recent years attitudes to immigration in Europe have become more correlated with broader political attitudes and subsumed within traditional partisan and ideological cleavages (Semyonov, Rajzman, and Gorodzeisky, 2006). Anti-establishment and populist attitudes, as well as feelings of political alienation, have also been argued to result in greater anti-immigration sentiment (though it may be that, inversely, individuals develop these feelings because of antipathy towards immigration, which they already hold).

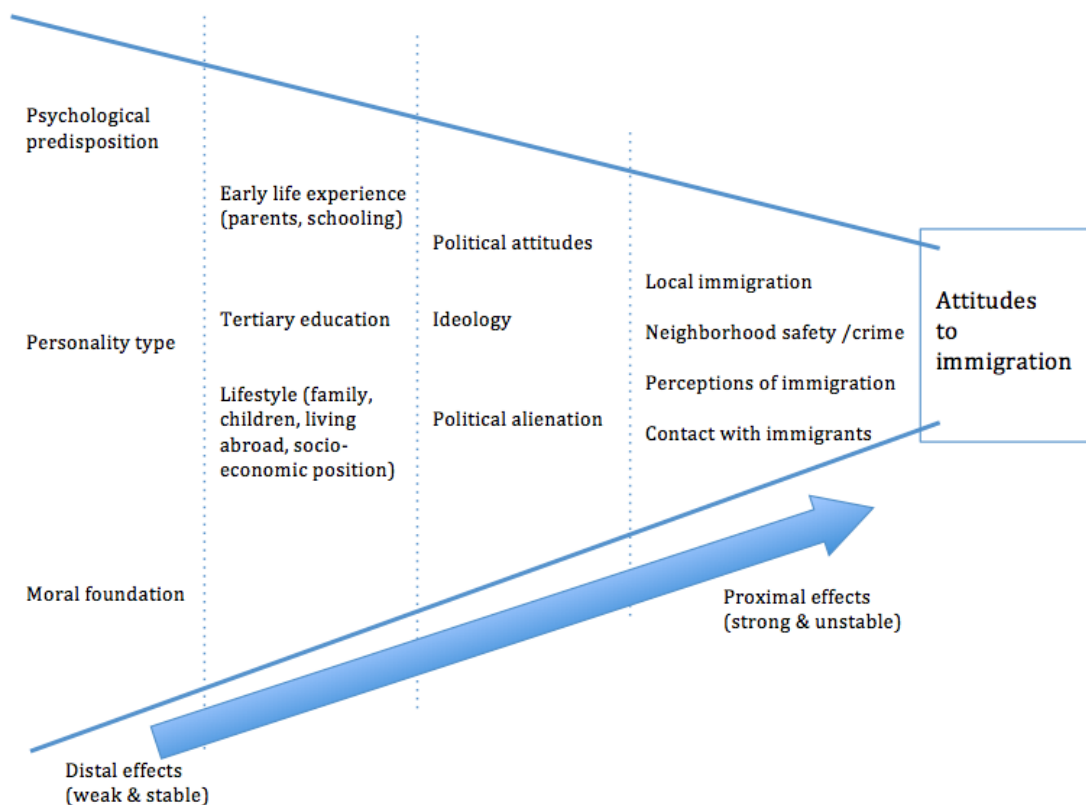
Finally, contextual variables measuring the individual's experiences of and perceptions of immigration and their community have been shown to have effects on attitudes to immigration. Most prominently, the individual's amount of intimate personal contact with immigrants is theorized to increase their favourability towards immigration by increasing their empathy for immigrants (e.g. McLaren, 2003; Dixon, 2006; Ha, 2010). Alternatively, less intimate contact, such as increased perception of local immigrant presence has been supposed to trigger a feeling of threat in the individual and thus greater opposition to immigration (Kauffmann, 2013). Finally, studies (e.g. Chandler and Tsai, 2001) show that one's sense of broader neighbourhood security and safety affects their favourability to immigration.

Despite its breadth, the extant explanations for variation in immigration contain a number of weaknesses. First, most explanations, let alone broader groupings, are tested singularly rather than comparatively, potentially overestimating the relative importance of each account and ignoring the interdependence and causal ordering of respective explanations. Second, the majority of studies use research in the United States to make generalised claims, ignoring potential country-specific differences. Third, and partially because of the American source of many studies, attitudes to immigration and race are often treated as analogous, which in the case of EU migration is less apt. Fourth, there are major endogeneity concerns in the literature, particularly regarding issues such as self-selection towards contact with immigrants and the issue that attitudes to immigration compose broader political attitudes, which have been used to then explain the former. Fifth, the literature is overwhelmingly concerned with explaining variance in individual-level variance, rather than

aggregate-level variation (in either cross-country or cross-time terms). Finally, studies have focused on explaining anti-immigration attitudes, assuming that pro-immigration attitudes are somehow the default or ‘correct’ stance, rather than explaining variation *in toto*.

We propose to integrate the various explanations of variation in attitudes to immigration by taking a ‘funnel of causality’ approach, which has been used previously to explain party choice in elections (Hofferbert, 1974). The funnel sees various explanations for a phenomenon as not mutually exclusive but instead as interdependent and ordered in terms of proximity in a causal chain. In this case, more distal variables are the foundational, if less obvious, causes of variation in attitudes to immigration and their effects are felt both directly as well as indirectly via more proximal, variant and acutely impactful factors. We create such a funnel of causality based on the key findings of the literature, displayed in Figure 7. Although the exact positioning of each grouping is a matter of debate, and of course there is a degree of multi-directional covariance, this model goes some way to integrate the extant literature in a single theoretical model.

Figure 7: Funnel of causality of attitudes to immigration



To test the effects of the four groups of explanations for variation in attitudes to immigration in France we use data from the 2014 European Social Survey (ESS). The ESS asks over 1,800 representative respondents about their attitudes to immigration as well as a range of other attitudes, personality traits, and one’s social background. Participants in the ESS are asked to indicate on a scale of 0 to 10 whether they believe immigrants make France a worse or better place to live, with 10 indicating a better place to live.

We first consider the relationship between psychology and attitudes to immigration by examining the correlation between variables that measure individual personality traits and responses to whether the respondent believes that immigrants makes France a worse or better place to live. They are also asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 6 how important various aspects and approaches to life are to them, which we use to measure their latent personality traits. We do not follow an extant personality trait

typology (e.g. the Big Five Personality Traits) but instead examine correlations between the personality variables in the ESS and our chosen question on immigration, before proceeding to more advanced analytics.²

The resulting correlations are presented in Table 1. Those variables that have statistically significant relationships with favourability to immigration (at the 95 per cent level) are in bold. Variables are ordered in order of strength of correlation, with those most strongly correlating with favourable attitudes to correlation first, followed by those that show little or no correlation, and ending with those that show strong negative correlations with favourability to immigration.

Table 1: Correlations between belief that immigrants make France a better place to live and personality traits (source: ESS, 2014)

| It is important ... | Immigrants make France a better place to live |
|---|---|
| To understand different people | 0.183 |
| To seek adventure and have an exciting life | 0.164 |
| To seek fun and things that give pleasure | 0.063 |
| To try new and different things in life | 0.058 |
| To think new ideas and be creative | 0.054 |
| To have a good time | 0.053 |
| To make my own decisions and be free | 0.038 |
| To help people and care for others' well-being | 0.029 |
| To be rich, have money and expensive things | 0.023 |
| To be loyal to friends and devote to people close | 0.016 |
| To be successful and people recognize my achievements | 0.014 |
| To show abilities and be admired | -0.032 |
| To be humble and modest, not draw attention | -0.059 |
| To get respect from others | -0.075 |
| To follow tradition and customs | -0.117 |
| To do what is told and follow rules | -0.135 |
| To behave properly | -0.147 |
| To live in secure and safe surroundings | -0.227 |

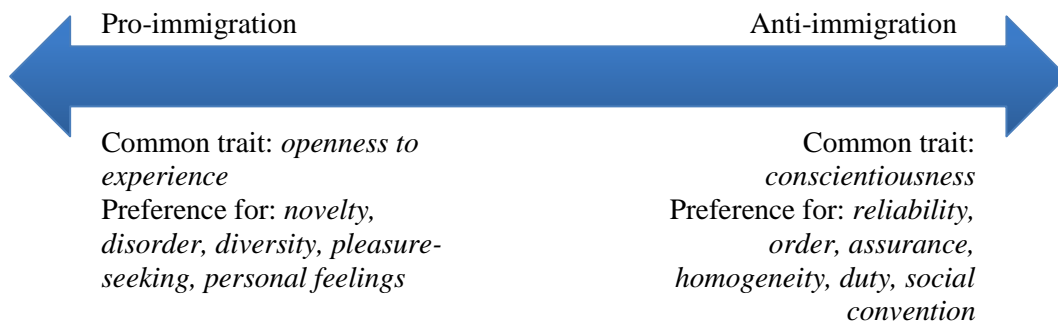
Statistically significant correlations in bold (95% level) ; N=1883

There are clear similarities between those personality traits with statistically significant positive correlations with favourability to immigration and those with negative such correlations. The findings closely echo previous political psychological academic research, which has repeatedly shown that two of the Big Five personality traits – openness and conscientiousness – are respectively associated with liberal and conservative political attitudes (Dennison, 2016). Table 1 shows that, on the one hand, personality traits that correlate *positively* with favourability to immigration share a predisposition towards openness. This foundational predisposition results in a preference for novelty, disorder and

² Of the 21 personality variables in the ESS, we exclude the resultant variables from three questions that we interpret as directly measuring political attitudes rather than more latent personality traits. These ask how important the following are to the respondent: ‘that government is strong and ensures safety’; ‘that people are treated equally and have equal opportunities’; ‘to care for nature and the environment’. We see the first two of these as likely having strong associations with attitudes to immigration, but capture political attitudes rather than personality traits (though of course the distinction between the two categories is blurred in some cases). We discount as unlikely the possibility that environmental attitudes may causally affect immigration attitudes.

diversity and sees pleasure-seeking as the primary goal of life and personal feelings as the best guide to decision-making. On the other hand, personality traits that correlate *negatively* with favourability to immigration share a predisposition towards conscientiousness. This foundational predisposition results in a preference for reliability, order and homogeneity and sees meeting one's obligations or duty as the primary goal of life and social convention as a superior guide to decision-making than personal feelings. This relationship is displayed in Figure 8.

Figure 8: The relationship between psychology and attitudes to immigration



We now proceed to produce a multivariate regression analysis of the effects of various psychological variables on favourability to immigration. To produce more comparable results, we standardise the psychological variables. In Table 2, we present two regression analyses. The first includes all of the above psychological variables that have statistically significant correlations in Table 1. The second includes only variables with statistically significant effects after those without such effects were incrementally removed. Because of the possibility of multicollinearity, we present Variance Inflation Factors from the first regression in Appendix 1.

Table 2: Multivariate analysis of the effects of psychological traits on favourability to immigration (source: ESS 2014; weighted survey data)

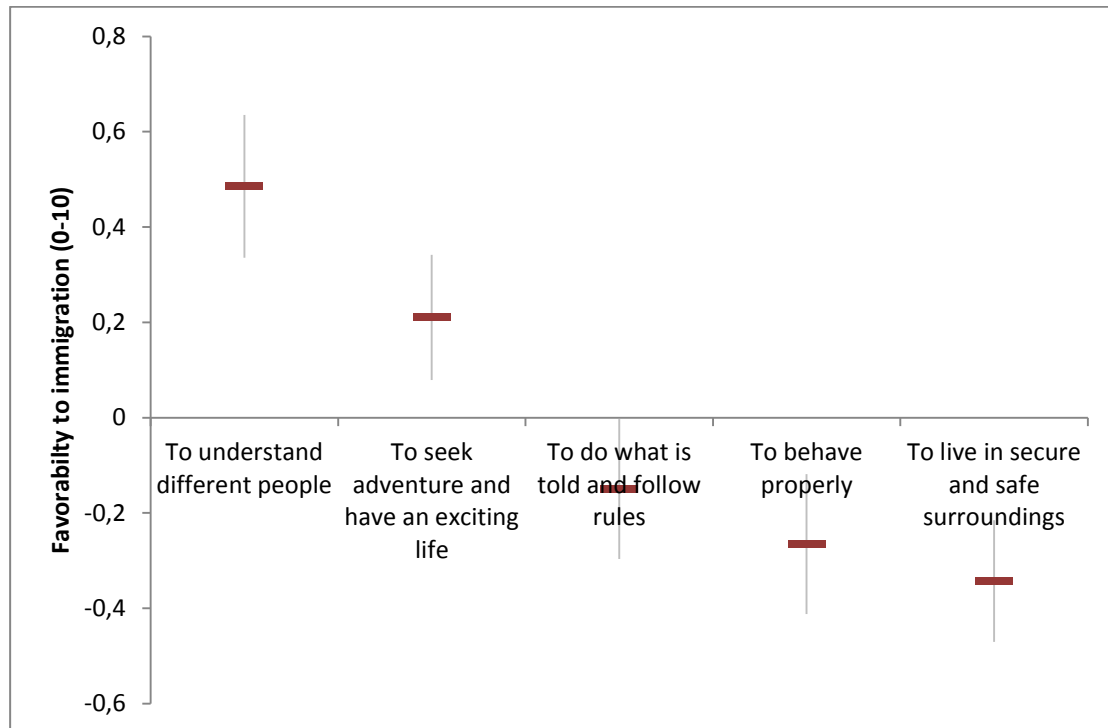
| 'I think it's important to ...' | Immigrants make France a worse or better place to live (0-10) | |
|---|--|----------------------|
| | (1) | (2) |
| To understand different people | 0.49*** (0.080) | 0.485*** (0.076) |
| To seek adventure and have an exciting life | 0.215*** (0.080) | 0.210** (0.067) |
| To seek fun and things that give pleasure | -0.062 (0.084) | |
| To try new and different things in life | 0.027 (0.078) | |
| To think new ideas and be creative | 0.019 (0.075) | |
| To have a good time | 0.036 (0.084) | |
| To be humble and modest, not draw attention | -0.045 (0.078) | |
| To get respect from others | 0.013 (0.075) | |
| To follow tradition and customs | -0.020 (0.074) | |
| To do what is told and follow rules | -0.161** (0.076) | -0.150* (0.075) |
| To behave properly | -0.249*** (0.079) | -0.265*** (0.075) |
| To live in secure and safe surroundings | -0.349*** (0.070) | -0.343*** (0.065) |
| Constant | 5.179*** (0.062) | 5.177*** (0.062) |
| Observations | 1,816 | 1,852 |
| R-squared | 0.116 | 0.113 |

*Standard errors in parentheses ; *** $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.001$
All independent variables are standardised*

As we can see in Table 2, all of the variables with statistically significant effects maintain the same direction of effect as with the basic correlations in Table 1. In these models only five psychological traits have statistically significant effects, however. A preference towards understanding different types of people and seeking adventure and excitement both increase favourability towards immigration. On the other hand, a preference towards observing rules, behaving in a socially-prescribed manner and living in security all decrease positivity towards the effects of immigration. Psychological traits explain around 11 per cent of variation in attitudes to immigration. The explanatory power of these traits is barely lessened when non-statistically significant effects are removed, a testament to the high correlation between the various variables. The marginal effects of a

one standard deviation increase in each of the five variables with statistically significant effects is presented in Figure 9.

Figure 9: The marginal effects of standardized psychological traits on favourability towards immigration (0-10 scale) with 95% confidence intervals



In the same manner, we now move on to test the effects of various types of socialisation on attitudes to migration. We measure the individual's early life in terms of whether each of their parents has a university degree, whether the individual was born in France, and whether they report having had financial difficulties when growing up. We measure later 'cosmopolitan' socialisation effects by whether the individual has a university degree and whether they have worked abroad for more than six months in the past ten years. We also include whether the individual is married, whether they have children, their age and their household income as a measure of their socio-economic position. The correlations of these variables with favourability to immigration, in order of positivity to negativity, are presented in Table 3. All, except marriage, are statistically significant. Having a university degree, parents having university degrees, household income and having had fewer financial difficulties when growing up are all associated with more positive attitudes to immigration. Having children, being born in France and being older are all associated with more negative attitudes to immigration.

Table 3: Correlations between belief that immigrants make France a better place to live and socialisation variables (source: ESS, 2014)

| | Immigrants make France a better place to live |
|---|---|
| University degree | 0.185 |
| Father university degree | 0.141 |
| Household Income | 0.113 |
| Mother university degree | 0.108 |
| Worked abroad for 6 months in last 10 years | 0.07 |
| Fewer financial difficulties when growing up | 0.065 |
| Married | 0.006 |
| Children | -0.106 |
| Born in France | -0.124 |
| Age | -0.192 |

Statistically significant correlations in bold (95% level) ; N=1883

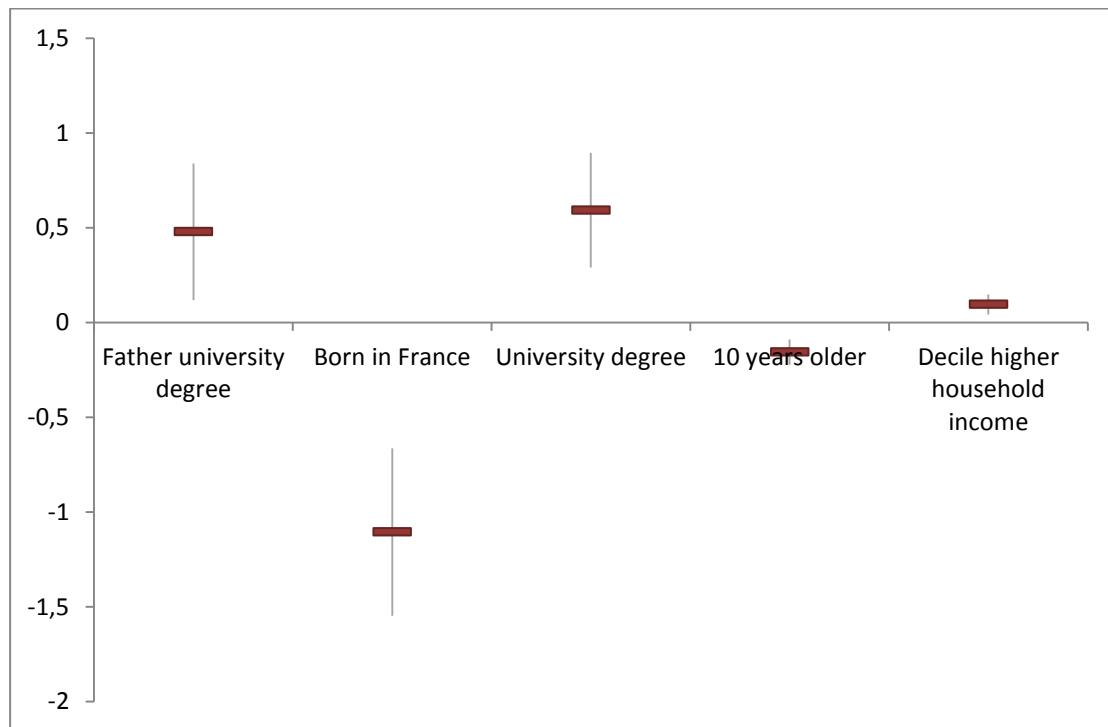
We now produce a multivariate analysis of these socialisation effects, shown in Table 4. The effects of one's mother's educational background, financial difficulties when growing up, being married, having children and having lived abroad all lose their statistical significance when controlling for other variables. Most interesting is that the effects of one's father having a university degree and having a university degree are highly similar. This may suggest that these variables pick up the effects of being in certain social environments rather than the educational (or 'indoctrinating') effects of higher education itself. Socialisation effects explain around 8 per cent of variation in attitudes to immigration.

Table 4: Multivariate analysis of the effects of socialisation on favourability to immigration (source: ESS 2014; weighted survey data)

| | Immigrants make France a worse or better place to live (0-10) | |
|--|---|----------------------|
| | (1) | (2) |
| Mother university degree | -0.079 (0.277) | |
| Father university degree | 0.471* (0.219) | 0.478** (0.184) |
| Born in France | -0.960*** (0.237) | -1.106*** (0.225) |
| Fewer financial difficulties when growing up | 0.0411 (0.064) | |
| University degree | 0.613*** (0.161) | 0.592*** (0.154) |
| Married | 0.153 (0.162) | |
| Children | -0.087 (0.179) | |
| Worked abroad for 6 months in last 10 years | 0.171 (0.268) | |
| Age | -0.013** (0.004) | -0.016*** (0.003) |
| Household Income | 0.090** (0.032) | 0.095*** (0.027) |
| Constant | 5.388*** (0.404) | 5.826*** (0.294) |
| Observations | 1,643 | 1,778 |
| R-squared | 0.080 | 0.087 |

*Standard errors in parentheses ; *** p<0.05, ** p<0.01, * p<0.001*

In Figure 10 we present the marginal effects of a one-unit increase in each of the five variables with statistically significant effects. The most powerful socialisation predictors are one's father's educational background, having a university degree and being born in France. Age and household income have smaller, though still statistically significant, effects.

Figure 10: The marginal effects of socialisation variables on favourability towards immigration (0-10 scale) with 95% confidence intervals

Correlations between political attitudes and attitudes to immigration are presented below, in Table 5. These political attitudes measures external political efficacy, trust in politicians, valuing egalitarianism, interest in politics, feelings of discrimination, nationalism, authoritarianism, cultural supremecism and broader left-right position. All except sense of being discriminated against have statistically significant correlations with attitudes to immigration. Individuals who are left wing, believe that politicians care what people think, trust politicians, believe in egalitarianism and are interested in politics tend to be more pro-immigration. On the other hand, more nationalistic, authoritarian, culturally supremacist and right wing individuals tend to be more anti-immigration.

Table 5: Correlations between belief that immigrants make France a better place to live and political attitudes (source: ESS, 2014)

| | Immigrants make France a better place to live |
|---|---|
| Politicians care what people think | 0.278 |
| Trust politicians | 0.263 |
| Important that people are treated equally | 0.229 |
| Interested in politics | 0.12 |
| Feel discriminated against | -0.022 |
| Feel close to France | -0.106 |
| Want a strong government that ensures safety | -0.202 |
| Some cultures are better than others | -0.205 |
| Left-right scale (0 left – 10 right) | -0.288 |

Statistically significant correlations in bold (95% level) ; N=1883

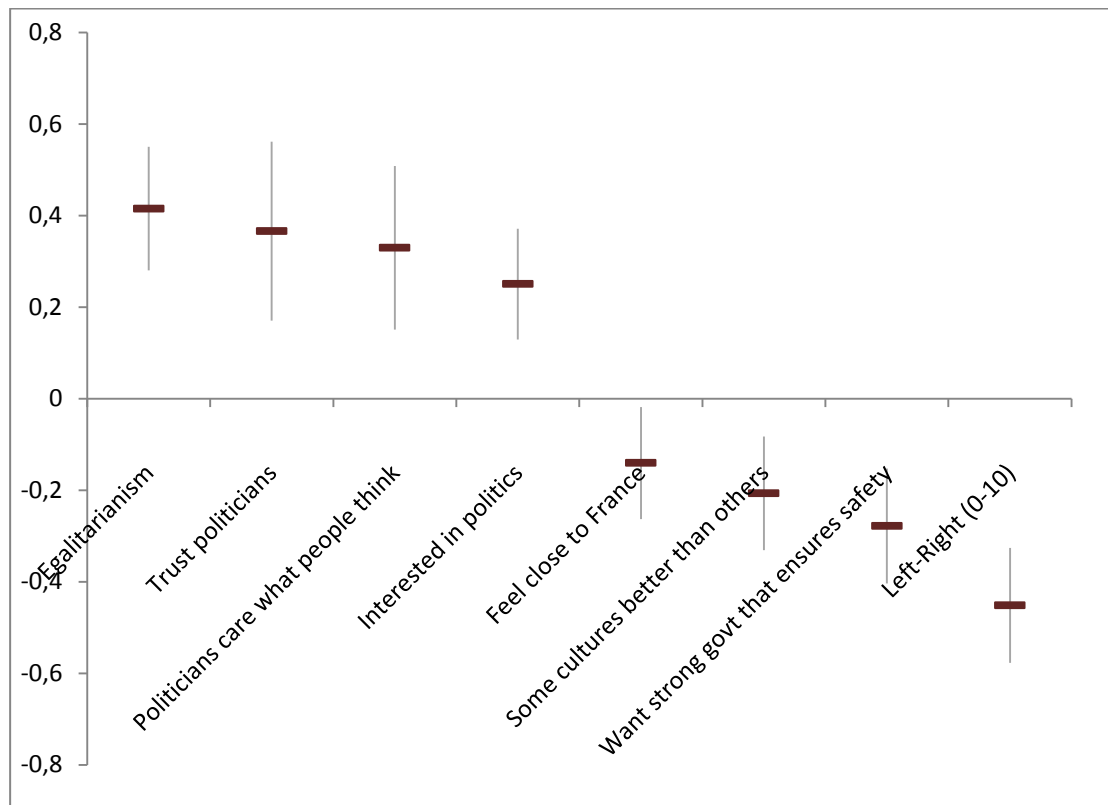
In Table 6, we test the effects of variables with statistically significant effects above in a multivariate analysis. All retain their statistical significance and direction of effect. These political attitudes explain around a quarter of variation in attitudes to immigration. Variance Inflation Factors are presented in Appendix 2.

Table 6: Multivariate analysis of the effects of political attitudes on favourability to immigration (source: ESS 2014; weighted survey data)

| | (1) |
|--|-----------------------|
| Politicians care what people think | 0.151*** (0.0418) |
| Trust politicians | 0.172*** (0.0469) |
| Important that people are treated equally | 0.398*** (0.0660) |
| Interested in politics | 0.264*** (0.0650) |
| Feel close to France | -0.218* (0.0970) |
| Want a strong government that ensures safety | -0.210*** (0.0481) |
| Some cultures are better than others | -0.466*** (0.143) |
| Left-right scale (0 left – 10 right) | -0.188*** (0.0266) |
| Constant | 5.493*** (0.347) |
| Observations | 1,720 |
| R-squared | 0.250 |

*Standard errors in parentheses ; *** $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.001$*

The marginal effects of these variables, all standardised, are presented in Figure 11. Broad left-right self-placement has the largest effect on attitudes to immigration in France. In terms of specific attitudes, egalitarianism is most strongly associated with pro-immigration sentiment and desire for strong government that ensures safety is most strongly associated with anti-immigration sentiment.

Figure 11: The marginal effects of political attitudes on favourability towards immigration (0-10 scale) with 95% confidence intervals

At the most proximal end of the funnel of causality are variables that measure individual perceptions and experiences of immigration and immigrants. The more vulnerable one feels, in terms of safety, in their neighbourhood and the higher their estimate of the proportion of immigrants in France, the more anti-immigration they are. Inversely, the actual percentage of foreign-born residents in one's region (NUTS-2) and having friends who are of a different race or ethnicity are associated with more positive sentiment towards immigration.

Table 7: Correlations between belief that immigrants make France a better place to live and contextual variables (source: ESS, 2014)

| | Immigrants make France a better place to live |
|--|---|
| Feel unsafe walking alone after dark | -0.271 |
| Guess of number of people of minority ethnicity in current area | 0.082 |
| Guess of % of foreign born in country | -0.183 |
| Actual regional foreign born % | 0.078 |
| Have friends of different race or ethnicity | 0.277 |
| <i>Statistically significant correlations in bold (95% level) ; N=1883</i> | |

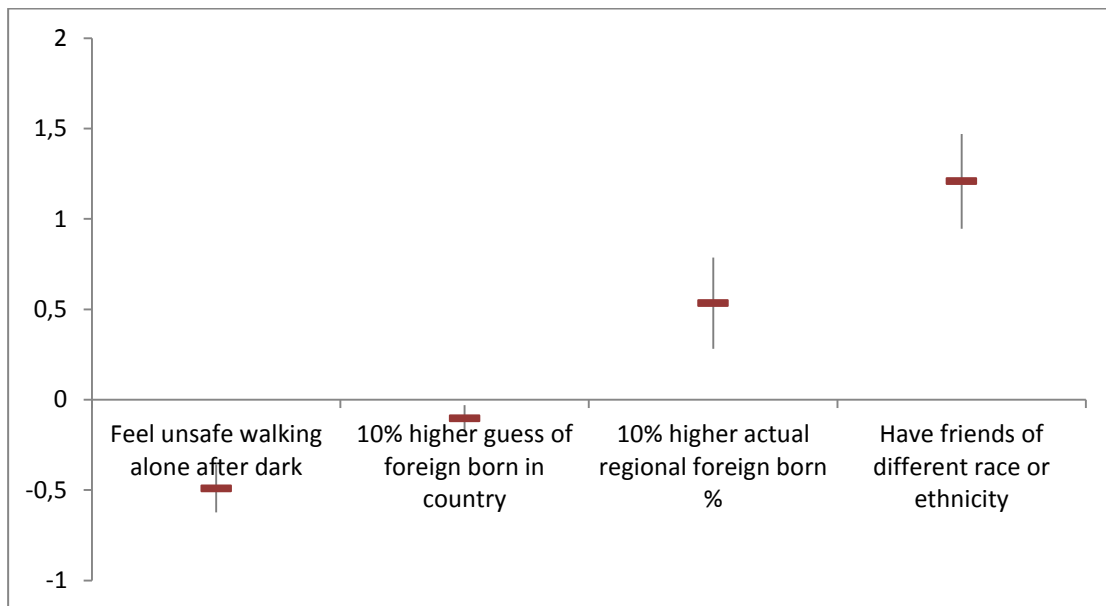
These variables are all included in a multivariate analysis, the results of which are presented in Table 8. The effects of all retain their statistical significance; while the effect of one's estimation of the number of ethnic minority individuals in their neighbourhood retains its statistical insignificance. Together, these variables account for over 16 per cent of the variation in attitudes to immigration. Variance Inflation Factors for Model 2 are presented in Appendix 3.

Table 8: Multivariate analysis of the effects of contextual variables on favourability to immigration (source: ESS 2014; weighted survey data)

| | Immigrants make France a better place to live | |
|---|---|----------------------|
| | (1) | (2) |
| Feel unsafe walking alone after dark | -0.564*** (0.075) | -0.544*** (0.075) |
| Guess of number of people of minority ethnicity in current area | 0.183 (0.095) | |
| Guess of % of foreign born in country | -0.011*** (0.004) | -0.010*** (0.004) |
| Actual regional foreign born % | 4.875*** (1.338) | 5.337*** (1.284) |
| Have friends of different race or ethnicity | 1.145*** (0.137) | 1.208*** (0.134) |
| Constant | 4.704*** (0.254) | 4.938*** (0.234) |
| Observations | 1,719 | 1,727 |
| R-squared | 0.164 | 0.162 |

*Standard errors in parentheses ; *** $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.001$*

As shown in Figure 12, the most powerful marginal effects of these contextual variables are the actual proportion of foreign born residents in one's region and having friends of a different race or ethnicity, both of which are associated with more positive views of immigration.

Figure 12: The marginal effects of contextual variables on favourability towards immigration (0-10 scale) with 95% confidence intervals

Finally, we produce a multivariate analysis that tests the effects of all of the variables from the four theoretical groupings that had statistically significant effects in their final models. This analysis is presented in Table 9. The final model shows those variables that have direct, statistically significant effects on attitudes to immigration.

Table 9: Combined multivariate analysis of favourability to immigration (source: ESS 2014; weighted survey data)

| | (1) | (2) |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Important to understand different people | 0.263*** (0.066) | 0.258*** (0.067) |
| Important to seek adventure and have an exciting life | 0.007 (0.064) | |
| To do what is told and follow rules | 0.123 (0.067) | |
| To behave properly | -0.146* (0.064) | -0.178** (0.062) |
| To live in secure and safe surroundings | -0.145* (0.064) | -0.181** (0.061) |
| Father university degree | 0.062 (0.186) | |
| Born in France | -0.501** (0.212) | -0.511* (0.212) |
| University degree | 0.0569 (0.141) | |
| Age | -0.007 (0.004) | -0.009** (0.003) |
| Household income | 0.052* (0.004) | 0.056* (0.003) |

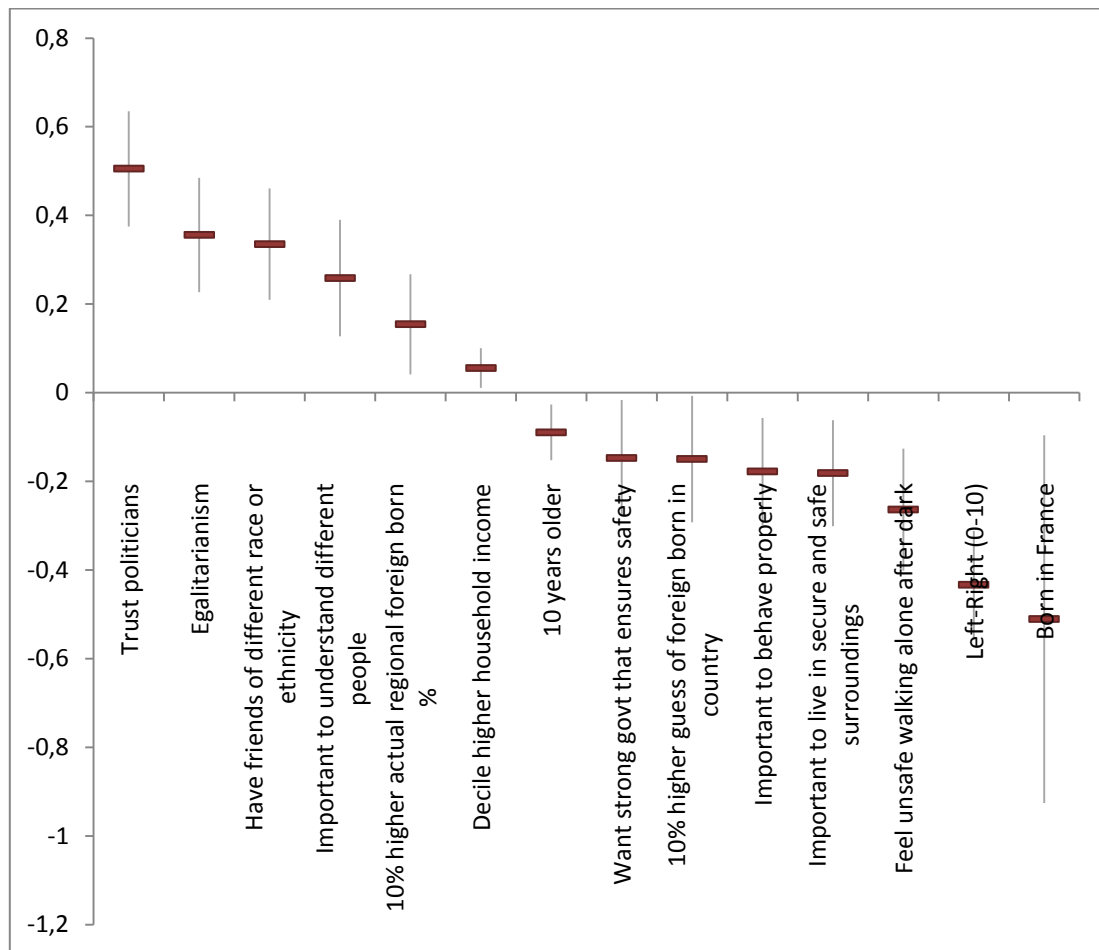
Explaining attitudes to immigration in France

| | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| | (0.024) | (0.023) |
| Politicians care what people think | 0.154 (0.079) | |
| Trust politicians | 0.404*** (0.088) | 0.505*** (0.066) |
| Important that people are treated equally | 0.345*** (0.065) | 0.356*** (0.066) |
| Interested in politics | -0.037 (0.062) | |
| Feel close to France | 0.054 (0.060) | |
| Want a strong government that ensures safety | -0.145* (0.067) | -0.148* (0.067) |
| Some cultures are better than others | -0.114 (0.06) | |
| Left-right scale (0 left – 10 right) | -0.417*** (0.062) | -0.433*** (0.062) |
| Feel unsafe walking alone after dark | -0.268*** (0.076) | -0.292*** (0.077) |
| Guess of number of people of minority ethnicity in current area | -0.007 (0.004) | -0.008* (0.004) |
| Actual regional foreign born % | 3.235** (1.271) | 3.281** (1.222) |
| Have friends of different ethnicity | 0.657*** (0.135) | 0.703*** (0.134) |
| Constant | 5.274*** (0.362) | 5.427*** (0.360) |
| Observations | 1,508 | 1,551 |
| R-squared | 0.375 | 0.361 |

*Standard errors in parentheses ; *** p<0.05, ** p<0.01, * p<0.001*

Trust in politicians, being left-wing, strong egalitarianism, having friends of a different race or ethnicity, valuing diversity, living in a more diverse area and being more well-off financially are all associated with more pro-immigration attitudes, in descending order of magnitude. On the other hand, being born in France, being more right-wing, feeling unsafe in one's neighbourhood, valuing security, adhering to societal norms, perceiving immigration rates as higher, wanting a stronger government to ensure safety and being older are all associated with more negative attitudes. Interestingly, having a university degree, interest in politics, nationalism and cultural supremicisim do not have direct effects on attitudes to immigration. Overall, the 14 direct, statistically significant effects predict nearly 40 per cent of variation in attitudes to immigration. Their marginal effects are presented in Figure 13.

Figure 13: The marginal effects of combined variables on favourability towards immigration in France (0-10 scale) with 95% confidence intervals



Conclusion

We find in this paper that, perhaps contrary to media reports and common perception, attitudes to immigration in France are both stable and reflect deeply-formed psychological and value-based cleavages amongst individuals. In terms of opposition to immigration, France stands in middle of Europe, relatively more opposed than other western European states, such as Germany, but still considerably more positive than eastern European states. Given the cross-time stability in this position, it seems relatively unlikely to change and there is no evidence of a ‘wave’ of anti-immigration sentiment or any form of backlash against recent immigration rates. Most surprising is that the French are considerably less concerned by immigration, in terms of the issues that they perceive as important to their country, than other western European countries, particularly compared to the United Kingdom, Denmark or, lately, even Germany. The recent uptick in the importance of the immigration debate is far less pronounced in France than in any other western European country. Where France does stand out is in its concern over the cultural assimilation of immigrants and its relative lack of concern over their economic assimilation, reflecting and causing France’s history and its on-going political discourse.

The divide between those who hold favourable and unfavourable views to immigration is rooted in deep psychological differences and is relatively immune towards later life socialisation effects, even including university education. Instead, we see that having an open and excitable personality leads to support for immigration, whereas having a conscientious and assurance-seeking personality leads to

greater scepticism over the effects of immigration. These personality types also lead to attitudes such as support for egalitarianism and strong government, which respectively lead to pro- and anti-immigration positions. The immigration cleavage is also clearly a result of broader ideological placement on the left-right spectrum. Furthermore, individuals who are trusting of politicians' motives tend to be more supportive of immigration whereas those who are more sceptical of politicians are also more sceptical of the effects of immigration. With these variables, as well as youth, income, having ethnically diverse friends and living in a diverse area (all of which increase favourability to immigration) we are able to explain around 40 per cent of variation in attitudes to immigration in France. Most surprisingly, we find no *direct* effects of university education, parental education (as a proxy for background), nationalist and supremacist attitudes, interest in politics and having lived abroad on attitudes to immigration. This suggests that, once attitudinal predispositions are formed very early – or even immediately - in life, they are relatively immune from contextual changes and are unlikely to be altered through exposure to new information.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Variance Inflation Factors of Model 1 in Table 2

| | |
|---|------|
| To understand different people | 1.50 |
| To seek adventure and have an exciting life | 1.44 |
| To seek fun and things that give pleasure | 1.43 |
| To try new and different things in life | 1.42 |
| To think new ideas and be creative | 1.36 |
| To have a good time | 1.28 |
| To be humble and modest, not draw attention | 1.25 |
| To get respect from others | 1.21 |
| To follow tradition and customs | 1.20 |
| To do what is told and follow rules | 1.19 |
| To behave properly | 1.16 |
| To live in secure and safe surroundings | 1.15 |
| Mean VIF | 1.30 |

Appendix 2: Variance Inflation Factors of Model 1 in Table 6

| | |
|--|------|
| Politicians care what people think | 1.70 |
| Trust politicians | 1.69 |
| Important that people are treated equally | 1.10 |
| Interested in politics | 1.07 |
| Feel close to France | 1.08 |
| Want a strong government that ensures safety | 1.12 |
| Some cultures are better than others | 1.05 |
| Left-right scale (0 left – 10 right) | 1.14 |
| Mean VIF | 1.24 |

Appendix 3: Variance Inflation Factors of Model 1 in Table 8

| | |
|---|------|
| Feel unsafe walking alone after dark | 1.12 |
| Guess of number of people of minority ethnicity in current area | 1.14 |
| Guess of % of foreign born in country | 1.06 |
| Actual regional foreign born % | 1.06 |
| Have friends of different race or ethnicity | 1.08 |
| Mean VIF | 1.24 |

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