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Physical Insecurity and Anti-Immigration Views in Western Europe

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Abstract

This article assesses the effect of feelings of physical insecurity on the perceived consequences of immigration and the preferred level of restriction in this policy area. Our comparative analysis uses individual level and country level data for 12 Western European countries. Our statistical analyses indicate significant effects both at pooled level and in most of the separate tests conducted on national samples. Overall, a switch in physical insecurity from the minimal to the maximal level decreases the preference for liberal immigration policies by 7.4% and increases the negative evaluations of the immigration consequences by 8.3%. The findings also emphasize the importance of social alienation, radical-right partisanship, and of 'tough on crime' attitudes on the formation of anti-immigration opinions. The cross-country variation in the main effect is partially explained by the size of the immigration community, unemployment rates and the change in GDP real growth.

Keywords

insecurity; immigration policy; crime; Western Europe

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Introduction[1]

The rising popularity of anti-immigration parties (Lubbers et al. 2002; Golder 2003; van Spanje and van der Brug 2007; 2009), recently raised to a new level by the True Finns or The Dutch Freedom Party reflects the dilemma of mainstream European political elites (Bos and van der Brug 2010). On the one hand, the 'demographic deficit' of depleted fertility rates and ageing populations makes increased immigration flows virtually unavoidable by any realistic economic strategy. On the other hand, the personal welfare and cultural apprehensions that many European citizens manifest towards liberalized immigration policies increase tremendously the political costs associated with them (Sides and Citrin 2007). This new window of political opportunity has not remained unexploited and, unsurprisingly, the appeal to anti-immigration sentiments has become the key issue that 'unites all successful populist right parties' (Ivarsflaten 2008).

The political relevance of this phenomenon has spurred huge academic interest across disciplines and paradigmatic beliefs, in an attempt to map out the causes of the 'exclusionist attitudes' of natives (Meuleman et al. 2009). The most common explanatory models are based on longitudinal cross-sectional data tapping economic interests (Kunovich 2004; Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Dustmann and Preston 2004; Kehrberg 2007), national identity (Sniderman et al. 2004; Sides and Citrin 2007), religiosity (Billiet 1995; Hobolt et al. 2011), education (Golebiowska 1995, 1996, Scheepers et al. 2002; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007) and political tolerance (Kehrberg 2007). Several macro-level indicators have also been found to influence anti-immigration attitudes: the change in the unemployment rates (Meuleman et al. 2009), economic growth rates, and the size of the immigrant population (Quillian 1995).

General perceptions of physical (Gibson 2002; Sniderman et al. 2000) and existential insecurity (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Inglehart et al. 2006) have been repeatedly shown to foster intolerance towards foreigners or members of other out-groups. However, most comparative scholarship on attitudes towards immigrants and immigration policies has failed to incorporate this insight. At best, the literature has focused on the anxiety attributed directly to the presence and contacts with immigrants (Wike and Grim 2010). A good example in this sense is the 'Integrated Threat Theory' proposed by Stephan and his colleagues (1999) which attributed the negative feelings towards the immigrant group(s) to four types of threats: realistic (economic competition), symbolic (norm and values differences), negative stereotypes (basis for prejudice) and inter-group anxiety (possibility of being rejected, embarrassed or ridiculed by the out-group).

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A partial exception to the identified gap in the literature is represented by the work of Sniderman et al. (2004) who experimentally assessed the impact of physical insecurity, i.e. perceived threats to personal and societal safety both coupled and decoupled from the mentioning of the minority group, on attitudes towards immigrants in The Netherlands. They also tested for the effect of the two most common threats associated with migrants – in relation to economic wellbeing (both at personal and national level) and towards the collective culture. However, this study focused on hostility, prejudice and social distance towards migrants, but not on comprehensive evaluations of immigration policy and its consequences. Their results were rather inconclusive: threats to both individual and national safety were 'the least important in accounting for hostility to ethnic minorities', exhibiting small coefficients, pointing in the wrong direction, and were not at all statistically significant in the model explaining social distance (Sniderman et al. 2004: 40).

Our paper argues that physical insecurity deserves much closer investigation as a possible determinant of anti-immigration attitudes, in a comparative setting. It displays substantial variation in the public opinion towards immigrants, in the actual societal safety levels, and in the economic and identity politics that represent the backbone of all the explanatory models presented so far in the literature. Thus, the research question guiding this study is: to what extent do Western European citizens who experience high levels of physical insecurity perceive more negative consequences of immigration and support restrictive immigration policies? To provide an answer we use a sequential analysis. The first stage of the investigation uses individual level data from 12 Western European countries, collected in the most recent wave of the European Social Survey (2008). The regression analyses (OLS) reveal specific strengths of hypothesized effects. The second stage of the study uses country level variables and provides explanations for the variation of the main effect across countries (using correlations).

The first section presents our central argument, building on existing knowledge accumulated in political psychology and immigration studies. This includes also a brief review of the main competing theories in the field. Next, we discuss the research design with particular emphasis on data, case selection, and variable operationalization. These methodological elements are complemented by a series of descriptive statistics. The third section includes the multivariate analyses at pooled level. The fourth section focuses on the explanations for the cross-country variation of the main effect (physical insecurity). The conclusions synthesize the findings, elaborate on the main implications of the study, and point to further directions of research.

Anti-Immigration Attitudinal Models

Our argument rests on three interconnected factors: information processing biases, the mediating effect of a conservative mindset, and the elite-driven discursive practices of redefining the community and its enemies. First, more fearful people are likely to exhibit higher levels of 'defensive exclusiveness' (MacLeod and Mathews 1991). This means they will be less able and less willing to process new information[2] – and will avoid situations in which they would have to interact with strangers. The repetition of this behavior does not allow them to learn whether the out-group members are indeed threatening (Hatemi 2009). Ideally, one would be able to test directly for the conditional effect of personal contact with migrants. This study incorporates a proxy for the likelihood of such meetings based on the type of community the individual lives in. It also includes a macro-level variable capturing the size of the immigration group in the country and a cross-level interaction between the former and insecurity feelings.

A second path through which physical insecurity could trigger out-group, i.e. immigrant rejection, is only partially mediated by threat, and has to do more with the fact that in such conditions, 'people tend to cling to the old familiar rules and reject social change' (Inglehart et al. 2006: 497). In other words, negative attitudes will not emerge directly from fear and avoidance, but as a byproduct of the conservative mindset it stimulates (Nail and McGregor 2009). This would happen because, under increased threat, conservatism (understood as cherishing traditional morality and reliance on authority) seems to better satisfy humans' longing for certainty and control (Thórisdóttir and Jost 2011). Most of the time, the culturally different immigrants would not 'correspond' to the standards of traditional, conservative models of life and this represents a powerful enough reason for their rejection.

The third causal path is made possible by the discursive 'chain of equivalences' (Laclau 2005: 30) resulting in the criminalization of immigration, one of the preferred techniques of extreme right and populist leaders (Ignazi 2003; Carter 2005; Mudde 2007; van der Brug and Mughan 2007; Bos and van der Brug 2010). The success in transferring this stereotype at mass level was documented in many Western post-industrial democracies. Using data from 22 countries covered by the 2003 European Social Survey (ESS) wave, Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007) showed that the variable measuring the extent to which respondents believed 'immigration worsens crime' had a significant effect on immigration policy preference, especially for immigrants coming from poorer countries. Similarly, Dinas and van Spanje (2011) have shown that Dutch citizens who link immigration and crime rates are significantly more likely to vote for an anti-immigration party (the *List Pim Fortuyn* in their case). More importantly, their study

[2] This is because cognitive closure appears as an optimal strategy when people feel a heightened psychological need to reduce threat, e.g.: the perception of a dangerous world, or death anxiety (Jost et al. 2003; Bonanno and Jost 2006; Thórisdóttir and Jost 2011).

showed also that what citizens experience in their direct environment is an important but not sufficient condition for the effect: '…living in areas with high crime rate boosts anti-immigration party support only among those who hold negative feelings against immigrants' (Dinas and van Spanje 2011: 659). Thus in the Dutch case, a pre-existing anti-immigration bias, as well as a 'tough on crime' attitude galvanize anti-immigration mobilization among citizens living in rather unsafe neighborhoods (Dinas and van Spanje 2011: 665-668).

This study departs from the common assumption of most literature on fear and political choice, i.e. that there is an undifferentiated way in which people are influenced by fear. In contrast, we side with previous research which has shown that the variance in the intensity of experiencing fear and anxiety correlates significantly with attitudes on defense issues, foreign aid or capital punishment (Kendler et al. 2001; Oxley et al. 2008; Hatemi 2009). This is of crucial importance because a the main independent variable should not be considered just an indicator for how safe the living environment is, but also a measure of the subjective way in which the individuals experience, react to and are shaped by insecurity.

Our empirical model includes the major competing theories about the formation of anti-immigration attitudes, starting with the interest-based explanations (Fetzer 2000; Lubbers et al. 2002; Dustmann and Preston 2004; Kehrberg 2007), i.e. judgments grounded on own welfare and/ or sociotropic evaluations of the state of the economy. One of the main tenets of this scholarship is that low-skilled workers will oppose immigration because they will compete for the same jobs with newcomers that are willing to accept lower wages (Scheve and Slaughter 2001). We test for this effect by looking at a proxy variable - the number of years of education (given the established correlation between income and education). Unemployed people or people who have experienced unemployment recently are also considered part of the same constituency of citizens feeling threatened economically by immigration. Additionally, we control for dissatisfaction with the general state of the national economy: those who perceive more intensely the effects of the economic crisis could be inclined to think that in hard times the new jobs should mainly benefit the natives.

The second most common explanation for rejecting immigration derives from 'the ideational' (Golder 2003: 439) logic: perceiving the migration influx as a threat to the specificity of the national culture (Sniderman et al. 2004; Sides and Citrin 2007). In order to capture these nationalistic worries, we focus on the ideological self-positioning and voting for extreme right parties. Previous research (Semyonov et al. 2006) has shown that citizens voting traditionally for these parties gradually became mobilized also by the anti-immigration rhetoric.

The psychological predispositions that are most frequently included in the models explaining immigration attitudes and voting for anti-immigration parties, derive under one form or another from the 'authoritarian personality' thesis, first formulated by Adorno and his colleagues (1950). According to

this concept, certain individuals display a longing for strengthening law and order in the society and the re-establishment of traditional values, while being easily fascinated by the idea of delegating power to strong leaders (Fromm 1983). They are the usual suspects to believe and appropriate the rhetoric of immigrant criminalization. Given the relevance of these aspects, we include a variable measuring the citizens' position on crime policy.

Societies are characterized by various levels of social trust (Newton 2001). This can be summarized as the "belief that others will not deliberately or knowingly do us harm, if they can avoid it, and will look after our interest, if this is possible" (Delhey and Newton 2005: 311). Empirically, Freitag and Bühlmann (2009: 1540) distinguish between particularized trust in well-known persons we interact regularly with and generalized trust in strangers and groups. In both instances, individuals who are socially alienated are 'naturally' more prone to reject interactions with out-groups, and consequently to dislike immigrants (Sides and Citrin 2007). We investigate the existence of this effect by taking into account the respondents' interpersonal trust (Newton 1999; 2007). Similarly, we check for the impact of political alienation, through the self-declared level of political interest and the citizens' satisfaction with democracy. Although not included in previous models, the citizens' overall evaluation of democracy should matter for immigration views[3], given that the quality of representation indicates the level of trust in the political elites' capacity to handle crucial policies, with potentially damaging consequences for their wellbeing, such as migration fluxes.

Apart from these relationships, we also control for a few relevant socio-demographic aspects: belonging to an ethnic minority group, being a foreign resident, religiosity, age and gender. Members of ethnic minorities and foreign residents are expected to favor a multicultural environment. The reverse should be true for older and more religious people, given their anchoring in traditional culture. Finally, previous studies have shown women held better views of immigrants (Hernes and Knudsen, 1992).

Moreover, as public opinion regarding migrants is varied across Western European countries (Angelescu et al. 2010), and the economic problems faced by these differ, we account for the country variation employing a number of macro-level variables. Four of them are economic measures: the unemployment rate in 2010 and the change in unemployment rate from 2009 to 2010 (Meuleman et al. 2009), the GDP, and the change in the GDP real growth from 2009 to 2010.[4] The fifth variable captures the size of the immigrant group[5]. The existing literature on the topic presents mixed results, but still most of these studies indicated that the larger the immigrant community, the more negative the native

[3] Usually, it is included in the models explaining the 'protest vote' for anti-immigration/ extreme right parties.
[4] Some studies (Meuleman et al. 2009) have shown that the change in macro-economic indicators could be a better predictor of public opinion than their sheer value.
[5] For the macro-economic indicators we use data collected from the CIA World Fact book (2011), while for the immigration community size we rely on the UN's 'Trends in International Migrant Stock' (2011).

public opinion, and the higher the vote for anti-immigration parties (Quillian 1995; Golder 2003; Dinas and van Spanje 2011).

Research Design

We use a sequential design in which the first stage uses individual level data to identify the effect of physical insecurity on perceived consequences and preferred policies of migration in Western Europe. The individual level data used comes from the fifth round of the European Social Survey (ESS), namely the samples collected from 12 Western European states: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The sample includes both old and relatively new democracies (Portugal and Spain), as well as countries that have only recently become destinations for immigrants, after being themselves for decades countries of migration to the more affluent Europe or North America. Moreover, there is also a relevant variation in the success registered by extreme right/ anti-immigration parties (Table 1). For all these reasons, one can claim that the sample is representative for Western Europe.

Table 1 includes the descriptive statistics for the two indicators of the dependent variable and for the most important independent variables. Swedish citizens support by far the most liberal immigration policy, in contrast with the Portuguese, Finns and Britons who exhibit much stronger exclusionary attitudes. The order is roughly the same when it comes to perceived immigration consequences, though the variation both within and between countries is somewhat smaller. The highest mean level of physical insecurity was registered for Portugal, followed by Great Britain and Germany. The respondents who feel in average the least unsafe are generally Scandinavians (particularly, Norwegians and Danes). The latter exhibit the highest levels of interpersonal trust, whereas the other extreme is occupied by citizens of Portugal and France. Extreme right partisans are more numerous (or better mobilized) in Switzerland, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands. Spanish, British, Finnish and Portuguese respondents would prefer on average harsher sentences for crimes.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the dependent and main independent variables

Country	Perceived Immigration Consequences	Preferred Immigration Policy	Physical Insecurity	Crime policy	Interpersonal Trust	Radical right partisans
Belgium	.49(.18)*	.52(.25)	1.98 (.72)	2.39 (.98)	.52(.15)	1.64**
Denmark	.57 (.19)	.58 (.22)	1.65 (.75)	2.80(1.05)	.67 (.15)	8.12
Finland	.58 (.17)	.46 (.22)	1.71 (.67)	2.06 (.88)	.64 (.15)	6.44
France	.48 (.21)	.51 (.24)	1.96 (.90)	2.31 (1.01)	.49 (.16)	2.08
Germany	.52 (.21)	.58 (.25)	2.02 (.78)	2.34 (.98)	.52 (.17)	0.6
Great Britain	.46 (.22)	.47 (.26)	2.11 (.85)	2.05 (.87)	.56 (.16)	0
Netherlands	.55 (.16)	.54 (.24)	2.00 (.64)	2.40 (.98)	.60 (.15)	7.16
Norway	.56 (.18)	.61 (.22)	1.60 (.74)	2.47 (.93)	.66 (.14)	9.75
Portugal	.47 (.17)	.41 (.27)	2.27 (.73)	2.10 (.81)	.42 (.17)	0.09
Spain	.53 (.19)	.51 (.29)	1.94 (.73)	2.06 (.86)	.51 (.14)	0
Switzerland	.59 (.17)	.58 (.22)	1.74 (.75)	2.43 (.97)	.59 (.17)	14.28
Sweden	.66 (.19)	.74 (.21)	1.75 (.78)	2.53 (.95)	.64 (.15)	1.8

*Cell entries are mean values, standard deviation in parentheses.
** Percentage respondents voting for extreme right/ anti-immigration parties

In line with the design of Sides and Citrin (2007), which was applied to data from a previous wave of the ESS, we use two measures for the dependent variable: 1) the preferences over immigration policy and 2) the perceived consequences of immigration. There are three items in the fifth round of the ESS measuring each of these dimensions. For the preferred level of immigration the questions were: *To what extent do you think [country] should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most [country]'s people to come and live here? How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most [country] people? How about people from the poorer countries outside Europe?* The respondents had to choose between four options: *'allow many/ some/ few and allow none'*. The corresponding items for the immigration consequences asked the respondents to rate on an eleven points scale whether: *Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]'s economy that people come to live here from other countries? …would you say that [country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries? Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?* The Cronbach's Alpha for the three items targeting respondents' opinion of the appropriate level of immigration was .86, while for the items measuring the immigration perceived consequences it was .85. We rescaled all the answers on a 0 to 1 scale - where 0 means the most negative attitude and 1 the most positive – and then created an index of immigration policy views and one of immigration consequences by averaging the re-scaled scores. The two resulting indexes are strongly correlated, with a Pearson's R of .601***. All 'no answer' or 'do not respond' cases were treated as missing values and left out of the analysis.

The physical insecurity variable is based on the item asking: *How safe do you – or would you - feel walking alone in this area after dark?* The respondents had four options: *very safe, safe, unsafe,* and *very unsafe*. As a proxy for the likelihood of contact with immigrants we use the type of residence of the respondent, which had five possible categories running from *farm or home in the countryside* to a *big city*. The interpersonal trust index includes the averaged rescaled (0 to 1) answers to the following three questions: *…generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? …do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair? Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves?* The Cronbach's Alpha for the original three items was .77.

For the importance given to national identity and culture as opposed to multicultural/ universal values, we use the respondents' self-positioning on a left-right eleven-point ideological scale, and an extreme right partisanship variable. The latter is dichotomous - '1' includes respondents that declared they feel closer to the following extreme right, anti-immigration parties: Vlaams Belang and Front National (Belgium), the Danish People's Party (Danemark), Swiss People's Party and the Swiss Democrats (Switzerland), Die Republikaner and NPD (Germany), True Finns (Finland), Front National (France), PVV/ List Wilders (The Netherlands), the Progress Party (Norway), PNR (Portugal) and the Sweden Democrats (Sweden).[6]

As a proxy for authoritarian personality, we use the attitude towards crime punishment, derived from the item: *'People who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days',* which is measured on a five point Likert scale, where 1 meant 'strong agreement' and 5 'strong disagreement'. Satisfaction with democracy and the national economy are measured on an eleven-point scale, 0 being 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 'extremely satisfied'. For unemployment, we use a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent has experienced prolonged periods of not having a job in the past five years. The other dummies indicated whether the respondents belong to ethnic minorities or are foreign residents.

The second stage of our research design includes five macro level variables seeking to explain the cross-country variation of the impact of physical insecurity on attitudes towards migration. The communities of immigrants hosted by the selected countries vary substantially in their size: they represent 4.2% of the population in Finland, compared to 23.3% in Switzerland. With the partial exceptions of Switzerland and Sweden, all the countries have suffered from the economic crisis, as indicated by the decrease in real GDP growth (Table 2).

[6] The list of radical right parties follows Golder (2003) and Cochrane and Nevitte (2007)

Table 2: Country level economic characteristics

Country	Size of Immigration Community	Unemployment 2010	Unemployment Change (2009-10)	GDP per capita	GDP Real Growth Change (2009-10)
Belgium	9.1	8.3	0.4	37800	-0.7
Denmark	8.8	6	1.3	36600	-3.1
Finland	4.2	8.4	0.2	35400	-5.1
France	10.7	9.3	0.2	33100	-1
Germany	13.1	7.1	-0.6	35700	-1.2
Great Britain	10.4	7.8	0.2	34800	-3.6
Netherlands	10.5	5.5	0.7	40300	-2.2
Norway	10	3.6	0.4	54600	-1
Portugal	8.6	10.8	1.3	23000	-1.1
Spain	14.1	20.1	2.1	29400	-3.6
Switzerland	23.3	3.9	0.2	42600	0.7
Sweden	14.1	8.4	0.1	39100	0.2

Anti-Immigration Feelings in Western Europe: A General Assessment

Table 3 includes the regression models for the perceived consequences and preferred policy of migration. The overall model fit is comparable to other studies on the topic.[7] The models accounting for the perceived consequences of immigration explain up to one third of the variance, whereas the corresponding percentage for the preferred immigration policy is around 24%. The regression coefficients indicate a robust and statistically significant effect of physical insecurity feelings across models: this holds true even when controlling for the economic interest variables, the objective state of the economy, the extreme right 'natural constituency', social and political alienation, 'tough on crime' attitudes, and a high number of socio-demographic controls. Running marginal effects indicated that a switch in physical insecurity from the minimal to the maximal level decreases the preference for liberal immigration policies by 7.4% and increases the negative evaluations of the immigration consequences by 8.3%.[8]

The effect of the proxy measuring the likelihood of meeting immigrants is extremely small: those respondents that are more prone to live in such multicultural environments are on average 4% more positive towards immigration than their counterparts living in rural, more isolated communities. In contrast, we find strong empirical support for the role of interpersonal trust. Among the variables included in the model, this variable has a predictive power which is much beyond its usual role assumed in the literature. Thus, socially alienated individuals are considerably more prone to reject liberal immigration policies and to feel threatened by ethnic networks embedded in a different culture than the national one:

[7] Multicollinearity was not a problem: the mean VIF was 1.17. The highest VIF was 1.41 for the 'satisfaction with democracy.

[8] The cross level interaction between physical insecurity feelings and the size of the immigration community proved to be insignificant (models not shown here).

running marginal effects indicated that a full scale switch from no trust to the highest level of trust increases the preference for liberal policies by 8.9%, whereas the positive evaluations of immigration consequences are augmented by 15.9%.

Similarly, radical right partisanship appears to have a strong impact on perceptions about migration consequences and policies. Following the theoretical expectation, the impact appears to be stronger in the case of preferred immigration policies as radical right parties usually refer to such elements in their manifestos and public discourse. The same is true for ideological self-placement: a ten-point move from 'unambiguous left' to 'pure right' decreases increases the support for restrictive policies by 19.4% and the negative perceptions of immigration by 15%.

The fact that the variable capturing the respondents' preferences on punishment is significant and points in the hypothesized direction could be interpreted as corroborating the previous findings on the appropriation by the mass publics in Western Europe of the criminalization of immigration theme advanced by many populist leaders. On the other hand, it might be considered just another sign of authoritarian personality leading to xenophobia. Compared to the citizens that reject completely harsher sentences, the respondents that support the most such measures are with 16.8% more in favor of restrictive immigration policies and their perceptions of the phenomenon's consequences are in average with 12.5% more negative.

Table 3: Determinants of immigration attitudes in 12 Western European countries (OLS models)

	Perceived consequences	**Preferred policy**
Physical insecurity	-.028*** (.004)	-.025*** (.004)
Likelihood of contact with immigrants	.010*** (.001)	.010*** (.001)
Ideological placement	-.015*** (.003)	-.019*** (.001)
Radical right partisan	-.114** (.024)	-.126*** (.025)
Interpersonal trust	.159*** (.018)	.089** (.027)
Satisfaction with democracy	.015*** (.001)	.010*** (.001)
Political interest	-.026*** (.003)	-.037*** (.002)
Ethnic minority	.041** (.011)	.013 (.013)
Foreign resident	.071** (.017)	.032 (.019)
Satisfaction with economy	.008** (.002)	.011** (.002)
Crime policy	.031*** (.004)	.042*** (.004)
Unemployed	.001 (.004)	-.009 (.007)
Education (years)	.007*** (.001)	.009*** (.001)
Religiosity level	.002* (.001)	.001 (.002)
Age (years)	-.001*** (.000)	-.002*** (.001)
Female	.010 (.005)	.013** (.004)
Constant	.345*** (.028)	.470*** (.031)
Observations	19,004	19,082
R^2	.321	.241

Notes: The entries are OLS coefficients. We used standard errors clustered by country.
Cases are weighted by PWEIGHT *p <.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

The variables 'satisfaction with democracy' and 'satisfaction with the national economy' are also significant predictors of immigration attitudes. A full scale upward move in the former increases the positive evaluations of immigration by 14.8% and the support for liberal policies by 9.8%. The same marginal effects simulation for satisfaction with economy augments the perceptions of benefic consequences by 7.8% and the opposition to restrictive immigration policies by 9.5%. Similar in magnitude to the latter is the effect of political interest: the more interested have in average with 8% (consequences) and 11% (preferred policy) more positive views on immigration than those least interested in politics.

More educated people generally have a better view of immigration and are willing to accept a higher number of immigrants, but it remains a question whether this happens because of their liberal worldview or because they are not in direct competition for jobs with these groups. Surprisingly enough, given the influence of the interest-based model, people that have recently experienced unemployment do not exhibit stronger anti-immigration opinions compared to the rest.

It is also quite relevant to note that ethnic minorities and foreign residents have more positive views of the consequences of immigration, but they do not seem to favor a liberalization of immigration policies – economic apprehensions similar to those of the natives might be at work, or the fear that their own integration could be damaged. Of the other socio-demographic controls, only age is a significant predictor for both models. Thus, younger people tend to be less concerned with the possible problems caused by immigration. Females seem to prefer more liberal immigration policies but this effect is rather small.

The Role of Physical Insecurity: Explaining Cross-Country Variation

The previous section outlined the general determinants of attitudes towards migration consequences and policies across Western Europe. However, this pooled analysis could obscure cross-country differences that are likely to occur and were often revealed by previous research (Pettigrew 1998; Kehrberg 2007; Sides and Citrin 2007). When running the regression models separately on national samples, this variation is visible. The models for the perceived consequences of migration explain on average 30.9% of the variance, with a maximum of 38.9% in the case of France and a minimum of 16.8% for Portugal. A similar situation is observed with respect to the models about migration policies that explain on average 22.1% of the variance, with a maximum of 30.6% for France and a minimum of 13.1% for Portugal.

This section focuses on the variation of the main hypothesized effect, the physical insecurity, trying to explain its variation across Western Europe at country level. The impact on the perceived

consequences of the phenomenon is present in ten of the Western states included in the sample.[9] Similarly, the effect of insecurity on immigration policies is statistically significant in seven of the twelve countries[10].

Feelings of insecurity are moderately correlated with both indicators of the dependent variable in each and every of the selected countries (see Table 4. The largest coefficients are registered for France, Belgium and Germany, whereas the smallest can be observed in Finland and Norway. In most of the countries (except for Belgium and Portugal) the relationship is stronger for perceived immigration consquences. One possible explanation is that asking for prefered levels of immigration might attract more ambivalent attitudes given the more abstract, long term-projections which are needed for such a judgment. On the contrary, insecurity and current perceived consequences can relate to the same feeling of urgency or perceived threat.

Table 4: Correlations between phisical insecurity and immigration attitudes

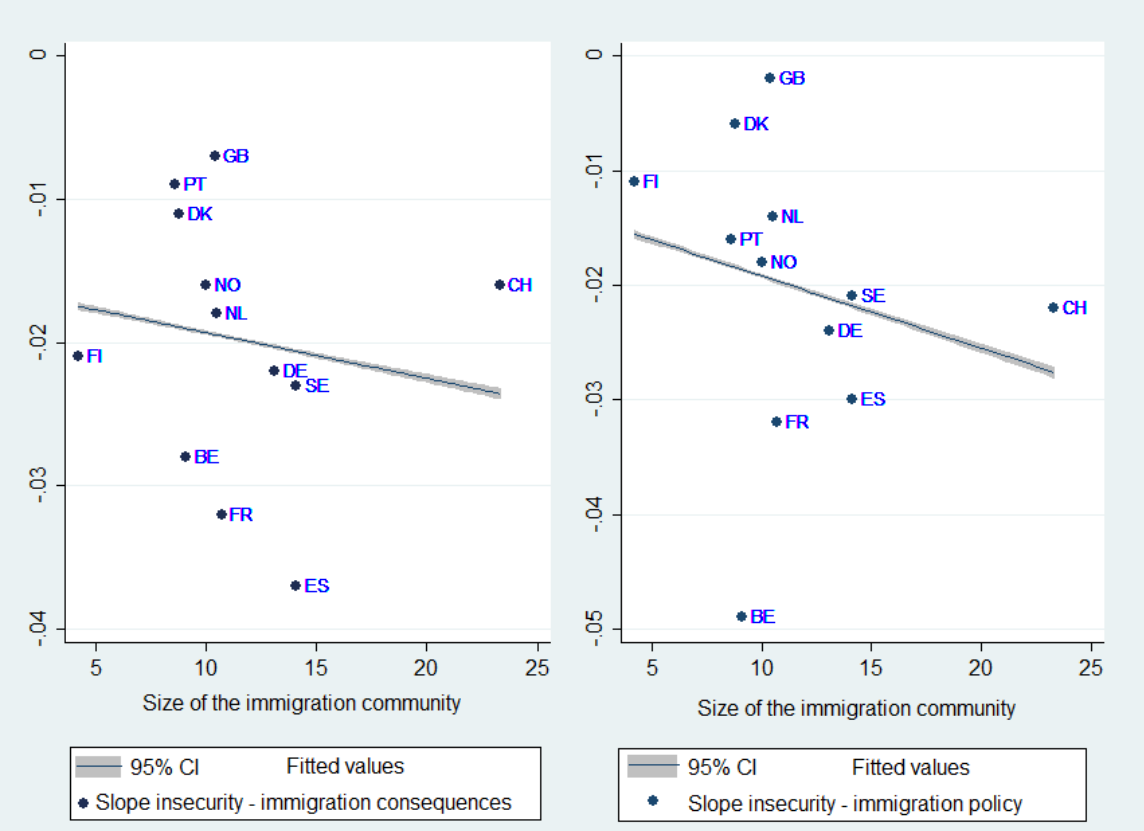
Country	Perceived Immigration Consequences	Preferred Immigration Policy
Belgium	-.213***	-.253***
Denmark	-.116***	-.064*
Finland	-.085**	-.061**
France	-.240***	-.225***
Germany	-.229***	-.184***
Great Britain	-.178***	-.139***
Netherlands	-.184***	-.132***
Norway	-.143***	-.091**
Portugal	-.120***	-.150***
Spain	-.228***	-.139***
Switzerland	-.149***	-.121***
Sweden	-.165***	-.156***

What can explain the differences in the magnitude of this effect across the 12 countries? First, there is a positive correlation between the size of immigration community and country slopes of physical insecurity on perceived consequences: Pearson's R=-.149*** and the slopes of physical insecurity on preferred policy: Pearson's R=-.216*** (see Figure 1). There are a few countries that cluster according to the strength of relationship between these variables. For example, Great Britain, Denmark, and Portugal display a similar relationship in which a relatively small community of migrants generates relatively low effects. This situation contrasts with what is observable in Belgium or France where the size of communities is relatively small and the effect is large. Both countries have dealt with issues

[9] The only respondents for which the effect is insignificant are those from Great Britain and Portugal.
[10] These are: Belgium, Germany, France, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

related to ethnicity, experiencing societal divisions along these lines, and some violence; such attitudes towards migration may be the result of those experiences. Five countries constitue a relatively homogenous group with medium-sized communities and medium effect of the physical insecurity on attitudes towards migration. This is particularly relevant for the Netherlands where a party emphasizing the dangers brought by migrant communities came third in the 2010 legislative elections. Switzerland appears as as an isolated case with respect to both relationships: large communities of migrants corespond to a medium effect of the physical insecurity.

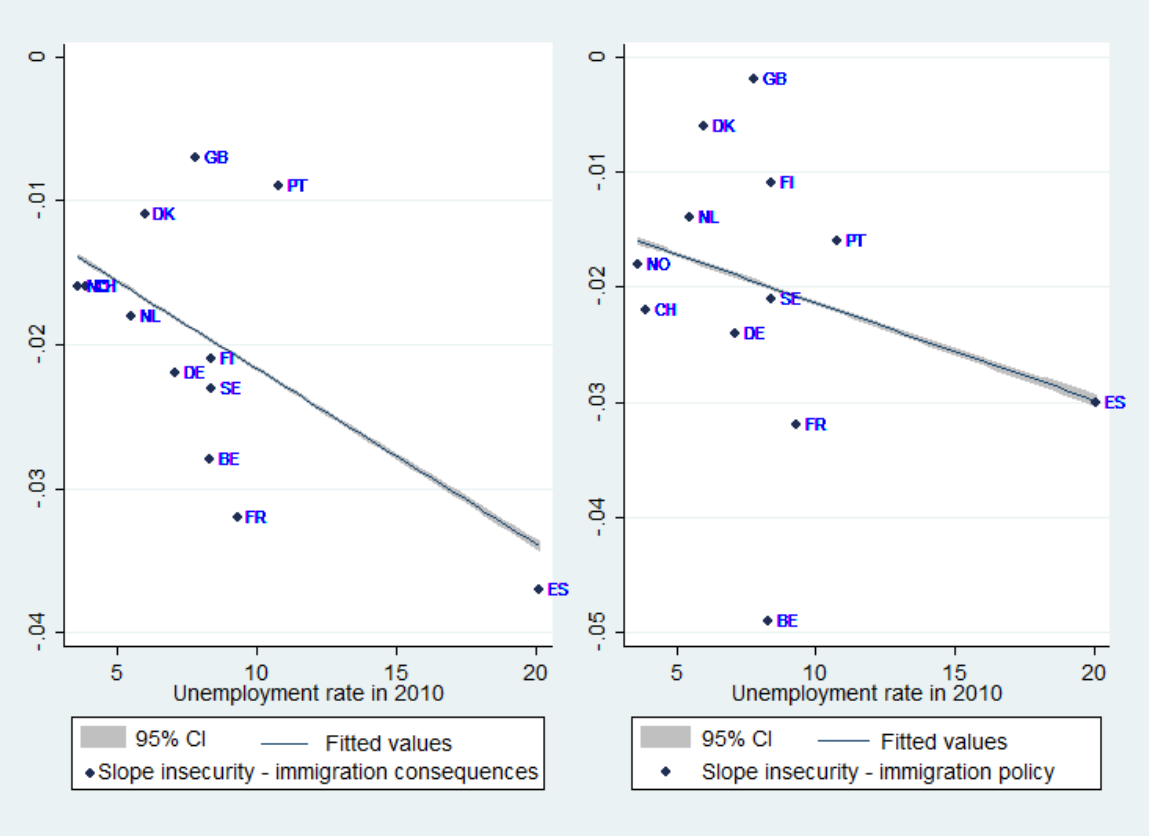
Figure 1: Immigration community size and the magnitude of the main effect



In addition to these cross-country differences and similarities, the relationships between the size of migrant communities and perceptions of migration consequences, on the one hand, and migration policies, on the other hand, are different within the same country. One such example is Belgium where the effect is considerably stronger in the case of policies. Its multi-ethnic setting and consociational institutional design may contribute to this emphasis on policy. In contrast, in Spain the effect is stronger for the perceived consequences of migration.

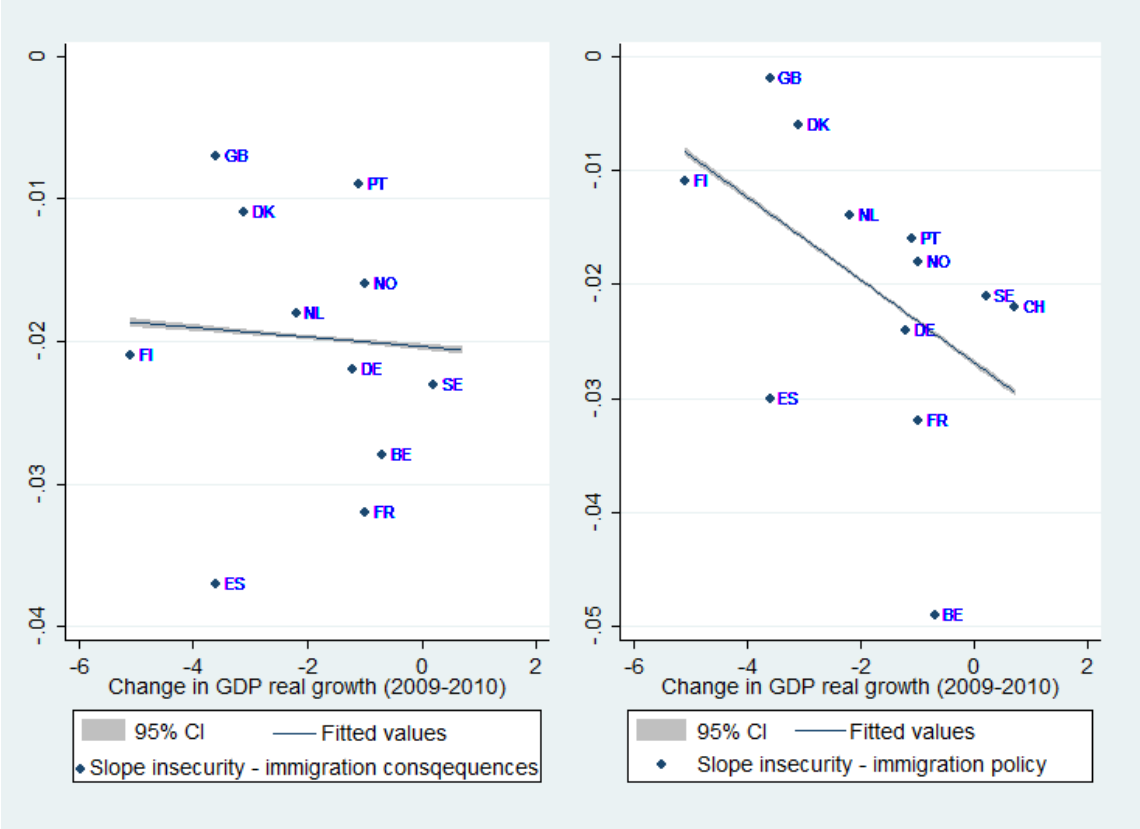
Second, the macro-level variable capturing unemployment in 2010 seems to explain better these coefficients: there is a correlation of -.282*** with the impact on preferred level of immigration, and a stronger one of -.553*** with the effect on the perceived consequences of immigration (see Figure 2). This effect seems to be mostly driven by Spain and France, and to a lesser extent by countries who have been hit very little by the crisis such as Norway and The Netherlands. The countries are quite clustered, especially with respect to the migration policies, only three states being clear outliers: Great Britain, Portugal (for the perceived immigration consequences) and Belgium, where the effect on policies is stronger than in the case of perceived consequences.

Figure 2: Unemployment rate in 2010 and the magnitude of the main effect



Third, of the other macro-economic indicators only the change in GDP real growth has a substantial effect (see Figure 3), but this is limited to the slopes of insecurity regressed on the preferred immigration policy (Pearson's R=-.486***). This represents an interesting puzzle in itself, deserving separate attention. As it can be seen in panel 2 of Figure 3, Belgium is once again an outlier, that is poorly explained by the economic indicator.

Figure 3: GDP real growth change(2009-2010) and the magnitude of the main effect



Conclusions

This article assessed the extent to which Western European citizens with high levels of physical insecurity perceive in a negative light the consequences of immigration and exhibit increased support for restrictive immigration policies. We have used a sequential analysis aimed to identify general determinants of attitudes towards migration in Western Europe and to distinguish cross-country differences. Our findings indicate empirical support for the hypothesized effect of physical insecurity. The social trust, radical right partisanship and attitudes about crime policies play a relevant role in explaining negative perceptions of migration. In general, the explanatory power of the models is stronger for migration policies than for perceived consequences of migration. When focusing on the effect of physical insecurity, its cross-country variation can be partially explained though the size of migrant communities and the unemployment rates. The GDP real growth change helps explaining the variation of effect only with respect to the attitudes towards migration policies.

In light of these results, our study has several implications. Its theoretical relevance stems from the fact that it is the first to test comparatively the effect of physical insecurity on the perceived

consequences and the preferred level of immigration in Western Europe. Unlike previous work on the topic – focused on a single case study (Sniderman et al 2004) – the findings presented here are significant both in the pooled and in most of the country models, even after controlling for all major competing explanations. The effect is far from negligible: a switch in physical insecurity from the minimal to the maximal level decreases the preference for liberal immigration policies by 7.4% and increases the negative evaluations of the immigration consequences by 8.3%. Empirically, the fact that personal safety apprehensions play this role in the formation of anti-immigration attitudes should be relevant to every stakeholder, from civil society activists to mainstream (socially) liberal parties: countering the criminalization of immigration discourse of populist and extreme-right leaders and tabloid media outlets is probably the key aspect in preventing the political mobilization of insecurity.

Further research can include a longitudinal dimension, thus accounting for the dynamic of the effect under different conditions within the same countries (e.g. panel data are also desirable). Moreover, the effect of physical insecurity can be thoroughly assessed using sub-national, preferably municipal level data. This would enable both to control for the number of immigrants in one's direct environment and to take into account the objective level of insecurity, through official crime statistics. Alternatively, a qualitative assessment of the relationship between physical insecurity and anti-immigration attitudes would allow observing the psychological propensity of feelings and the underlying mechanisms triggering the out-group adversity.

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