

DO ATTITUDES ATTITUDES TO IMMIGRANTS CHANGE IN HARD TIMES? IRELAND IN A EUROPEAN CONTEXT

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Abstract

The enlargement of the European Union and the subsequent global economic recession has drawn attention to individual-level attitudes towards immigrants across Europe. In this context, using the European Social Survey we compared Irish attitudes towards immigrants with those in twelve other European countries at three critical moments in time – prior to large immigration flows in 2002; at the height of the economic boom in 2006; and after the global financial crash in 2008. Our analysis examines whether significant changes in attitudes towards immigrants has occurred in the Europe Union as a whole and within individual countries over time. We predicted that fluctuations in economic condition such as the rise in unemployment would affect attitudes towards immigrants. This relationship receives some support from our findings. In Ireland, positive attitudes to immigrants between 2006 and 2010 decreased and negative attitudes increased, on all attitudinal measures, more sharply than in any of the other European countries. Taking the twelve countries as a whole, attitudes have tended to polarise particularly with regard to allowing access to immigrants and their impact on the economy. This research reveals worrying trends in attitudes to immigrants in European countries, particularly in light of the importance of immigrants to the European labour market, both currently and in the future.

Introduction

A significant increase in migration occurred in most European Union (EU) countries in the latter part of the 20th century; this includes countries previously characterised as emigrant countries such as Ireland, Italy and Spain (Garson and Loizillon, 2003). Immigrants are a significant feature in the demographic profile of Europe as they now comprise more than 10 percent of the population of the majority of European Union countries (Fargues et al, 2011). However various Eurobarometer surveys indicate that the trend in attitudes towards immigrants is far from positive. In the late 1980s a Eurobarometer survey indicated that 30 percent of respondents believed there were too many foreigners in their country; ten years later this figure had increased to 41 percent (Lahav, 2004: 86). A recent survey of 8,000 European respondents found that those who hold negative attitudes are more likely to both oppose the integration of immigrants and discriminate against them (Zick, Kupper and Hovermann, 2011). It appears that throughout the EU policy towards immigrants from outside Europe is becoming more restrictive and protectionist (Lahav, 2004). At best there appears to be a grudging acceptance of immigrants who are perceived as aliens and outsiders (Sassen, 1999) giving rise as Turner (2007: 287) argues to a 'deep contradiction between the economic need for labour mobility and the state's political need to assert sovereignty'.

In recent years there has been growing electoral support for anti-immigration political parties in a number of European countries (Hayes and Dowds, 2006). Anti-immigrant sentiment has taken the form of violent protests and riots in countries such as France and there has been a notable rise in support for far right political parties in Europe (Rustenbach, 2010). Attitudes towards immigrants are thus an important consideration for those involved in policy formulation. Despite the current global economic recession European countries will increasingly depend on immigrant workers in the 21st century due to a combination of

demographic changes and the highly segmented labour market and differentiated economies (OECD, 2003; Hix and Noury, 2007; Finch et al. 2009).

Ireland represents an interesting case in Europe as a relatively recent country of destination for a substantial number of immigrants (Barrett and Duffy, 2008). Using data from the European Social Survey (ESS) this paper compares Irish attitudes towards immigration at three critical moments in time during the first decade of the 21st Century – prior to large immigration flows post 2004, at the height of the economic cycle in 2006 and after the financial crash in 2010. These are three significant dates as they allow us to compare attitudes prior to the entry of the new EU ten accession countries; at the high point of the economic boom; and after the global financial crash. These time points map the recent economic boom and bust cycle experienced in Ireland and Europe. An examination of the trends in attitudes towards immigrants in Europe in this time period is thus a timely addition to the literature on immigrants. The ESS data allows a comparison of attitudes towards immigration at a national level across countries in Europe.

Our analysis first examines whether significant changes in attitudes towards allowing access to immigrants have occurred in countries of the Europe Union, particularly in Ireland. Secondly, whether perceptions of the economic and cultural impact of immigrants have altered in the period examined. As most studies on attitudes towards immigrants are conducted at the individual country level this study provides a useful addition to the existing comparative literature by emphasising the role of national characteristics in shaping attitudes to immigrations (Semyonov, 2006; Meuleman et al, 2009). Previous work on attitudes to immigration for the period 2002 to 2007 using the ESS found a pronounced evolution in anti-immigration attitudes since 2002 (Meuleman et al, 2009). However, there was considerable variation across the 17 countries studied with a surge in anti-immigration sentiment in three countries, while resistance to immigration decreased in seven countries. Given the dramatic

economic changes that have occurred since 2007 it might be expected that the increase in negative sentiment towards immigration has continued. This paper first addresses some theoretical considerations on the formation of attitudes towards immigration and immigrants in the literature. Secondly the economic background and changes occurring during the time period covered. Thirdly the data and measures used in the study are outlined and fourthly the findings and their significance are discussed. Finally areas are identified for further investigation given the significance of the impact of the economic environment on immigrants in European countries.

Attitudes to immigration

Most studies on the formation of attitudes towards immigration stress either rational type explanations based on self-interest cost benefit calculations about the perceived (usually negative) effect of immigration on the labour market and welfare system or social-psychological based explanations such as social identity, inter-group conflict and personality type (Markaki and Longhi, 2013; Dustman and Preston, 2007).

Inter-group theory offers a suitable framework for our purposes as it encompasses both the economic rationale and the social-psychological perspective. A key premise of group conflict theory is that attitudes to immigration are driven by changing levels of perceived group conflict. Group conflict arises out of the competition for scarce material resources such as jobs, housing and welfare. Conflict can also occur over the distribution of power and status as capacities that influence the share out of scarce resources. A negative attitude towards an out-group like immigrants occurs where the in-group (natives) perceives that certain rights or privileges that convey advantage are threatened. Negative sentiment regarding immigration is thus a defensive reaction to perceived inter-group competition for scarce goods. Subjective perceptions of competition play a vital mediating role between actual competitive conditions

and the perceived threat to group interests in the formation of negative attitudes to the out-group. In studies using inter-group theory actual competitive conditions have in the main been operationalised by two measures: economic conditions and minority group size (Meuleman, et al, 2009).

Economic conditions

In less favourable economic conditions the availability of goods that are the objective of competition between immigrant groups and natives become scarcer, leading to increased negative attitudes towards immigration. Alternatively in good times more goods are available lessening competition and leading to positive or indifferent attitudes to immigration. A crucial arena of competition occurs in the labour market. In theory employers are likely to substitute immigrant labour for similarly endowed native workers since the former are cheaper (Roy, 1997). All things being equal the higher the ratio of foreign-born to native born workers the lower the wage rate for native workers. In such a case immigrants and native workers are ‘substitutable’ labour inputs in production (Roy, 1997). Thus native workers, particularly the low-skilled are more likely to oppose immigration and form negative perceptions of immigrants because of a fear of labour market competition (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). Alternatively, immigration flows can lead to increased wages for native workers and an expansion of job opportunities. This arises where a labour market is expanding and there are shortages, particularly skill shortages, in the host country. Immigrant workers relieve bottlenecks in the labour market facilitating economic expansion, increasing available jobs and hence better opportunities for native workers. In this case immigrants and natives work in non-competing segments of the labour market and are ‘complementary’ inputs in production (Roy, 1997). Consequently, where immigrant workers complement rather than compete with native workers then attitudes towards immigration are more likely to be positive; and, conversely, in a

static or shrinking economy where immigrants are substitutes for native workers, attitudes are more likely to be negative. Since business cycles are innate to capitalist economies attitudes to immigration are likely to be dynamic and cyclical where immigration is encouraged/tolerated during expansionary phases but becomes the focus of anxieties in bad times when unemployment rises (Freeman, 1995).

Minority group size

The greater the size of the minority group the greater the perceived threat to the in-group in the competition for scarce goods. Hence, a sizeable group of immigrants presents a greater challenge to the position of certain native groups particularly in the low skill sector of the labour market. Aside from the perceived threat to in-groups from the minority group size attitudes to immigration and immigrants may also be affected by the racial and ethnic characteristics of the minority group and the ‘natural immigration cycle’ over time (Freeman, 1995: 886).

Attitudes towards minority groups may be related to the cultural and ethnic closeness of non-natives to the native population. Negative attitudes to immigration and immigrants have been found to be motivated by reasons related to the cultural and ethnic difference of the immigrant population and reflect nationalist sentiment in a society (Dustman and Preston, 2003; O’Rourke and Sinnott, 2006). Hostility may arise from a fear of loss of national identity or a taste for cultural homogeneity. As Dustman and Preston (2003: 3) note ‘there is ample evidence that deeply rooted hostility exists towards immigration groups with largely different cultural and ethnic background’. Indeed, early research on attitudes to immigrants in the United States, Australia and New Zealand revealed a relatively uniform hierarchy of preferences for immigrants of different national backgrounds, with North Western Europeans the most preferred, followed by Southern and Eastern Europeans with non-European groups at the

bottom of the hierarchy (Trlin and Johnston, 1973). The most acceptable groups are those which appear to be the most similar to the core culture or the least physically dissimilar to members of the host society (Trlin and Johnson, 1973: 184). Recent evidence from the UK appears to confirm this hierarchy of preference. Dustman and Preston (2003) found that a negative attitude towards further immigration into the UK is strongly associated with immigrants of an Asian or Indian origin, the two groups that are ethnically more different than the native population. In a later paper (Dustman and Preston, 2007) they found strong evidence that racial or cultural prejudice is an important component to attitudes towards immigration; however, it was restricted to immigration from countries with ethnically different populations.

According to Freeman (1995) migration is a phenomenon that takes time to develop, beginning with an initial influx, followed by settlement and secondary immigration through family reunion and chain migration processes. In this cycle immigration tends initially to produce concentrated benefits, particularly to employers and business that benefit from expansions in the population and diffuse costs that fall initially and disproportionately on the minority of the population competing with immigrants for scarce jobs and other goods such as housing and only belatedly on the population as a whole. Based on this logic Freeman (1995: 885) argues that rather than the host society becoming more comfortable with immigrants over time the opposite occurs, with opposition to immigration likely to grow over the lifetime of the natural immigration cycle. This argument predicts that negative sentiment towards immigration among the broad public will tend to increase over the natural immigration cycle of perhaps a generation (30-40 year span).

Immigrants and the Economic Cycle in Ireland

In the Irish case at least up to 2007 it is plausible to argue that immigrants are likely to have been predominantly complementary rather than substitutable inputs in the labour market

(Turner, 2009). In the short run, effects of immigrant labour most likely produced an immigration surplus to employers who employ immigrants, without any noticeable redistribution of income from native workers who compete with immigrants. There are many reasons for this. Firstly, immigration flows occurred in a period of unprecedented growth in the Irish labour market. Between 1996 and 2006 the labour force increased by almost 50 per cent from 1.3 to 1.9 million (CSO, 2006). Initially this growth in jobs was filled by increased participation of women in the labour market, but latterly immigrant workers became an increasingly important source in the expansion of the labour market. Secondly, in a rapidly expanding labour force it is most likely that many Irish workers have experienced upward mobility or at least a greater range of occupational opportunities. In general, rather than displacing Irish nationals, immigrants are mainly filling low-skill type jobs. Between 2002 and 2006 the proportion of immigrants employed in high-skill jobs decreased while the number in low-skill jobs increased substantially (Turner, 2010). Studies of the economic impact of immigrants in the labour market indicate that immigrants who have high levels of productivity and contribute to the host nation's economy can make a significant contribution to economic growth (Borjas, 1994; Borjas, 1999). Immigrant labour allows countries to address both specific labour shortages and the problems associated with aging populations in the EU (OECD, 2001). Temporary employment of non-natives brings flexibility into a labour market, relieving labour shortages, particularly during economic upswings.

Thirdly, unemployment remained among the lowest in Europe, fluctuating around four per cent between 2002 and 2006. Fourthly, there appears to be no evidence that the wages of Irish nationals have been depressed. The influx of immigrants has more likely acted to dampen down wage rates for immigrant workers in the low-skill service sectors of the economy (see Barrett et al, 2006). Thus, in the context of a positive economic environment, the broadly complementary nature of immigrant workers attitudes to immigration is likely to

have either remained stable or became more positive between the 2002 and 2006 surveys. A perceived absence of inter-group competition over scarce goods is also likely to have encouraged positive sentiment about the effects of immigrants on the economy as a whole.

Such positive sentiment however is likely to have changed since the onset of the financial and employment crisis from 2008. The growth conditions in the Irish economy up to 2007 changed dramatically. While the overall unadjusted unemployment rate rose to 12 per cent of the labour force by the middle of 2009, the unemployment rate for non-Irish nationals was 15.6 per cent compared to 11.4 per cent for Irish nationals (CSO, 2009). Among non-Irish nationals the unemployment rate for the new member states (NMS) was particularly high at 19 per cent. As the economic recession deepened non-Irish nationals experienced higher unemployment levels than nationals. Immigrants from the new member states appear especially vulnerable. In the altered economic realities since the financial crisis, immigrants may be increasingly perceived as a burden on state welfare. Even in the liberal Scandinavian countries non-western immigrants are perceived to pose problems for extant universal welfare systems. It has been argued that the institutions of the Scandinavian welfare state are incompatible with mass migration experienced during the last two decades and that the financial burden of immigration can be substantial (Paldman, 2004; Andersen, 2004; Nannestad, 2004).

According to Barrett et al (2013) there appears to be a commonly held perspective that immigrants in Europe are disproportionately represented amongst those receiving social welfare, despite a lack of empirical evidence to support this view. Recent media coverage in the UK of 'welfare abuse' by immigrants has focused on the increase in the number of 'non-active' EU migrants in Britain, which rose by 42 per cent between 2006 and 2012 (OECD, 2013). OECD studies suggest that the negative effect of immigration on native wage levels is small with little or no obvious impact on native unemployment (ILO, 2004; Coppel et al, 2001;

Friedberg, 2000). Generally pre-enlargement fears of free labour mobility in the European Union proved to be unfounded with no detrimental effects on receiving countries labour markets and no evidence of ‘welfare shopping’ (Kahanec, 2012). Despite much of the prevailing evidence that job displacement is relatively sparse and immigrant labour competes with one another far more often than with natives, this issue continues to be a contested terrain among scholars (see Borjas, 2003; 2006; Smith and Edmonston, 1997:218). As labour market conditions deteriorated in most EU countries after 2008 inter-group conflict between immigrants and natives over scarce jobs is likely to have increased. In Ireland, economic decline and increasing unemployment may act to increase competition for low-skill jobs and alter the mix of complementary and substitutable labour between immigrant and native workers. Consequently attitudes to immigration are likely to have become more negative between the 2006 and 2010 surveys.

Immigrants and minority group size in Ireland

An unusual dimension of Ireland’s migration experience is the speed at which the non-Irish national population has grown (Barrett and McCarthy, 2007; Honohan, 2010; Ruhs, 2004). While non-Irish nationals accounted for just 2 per cent of the employed labour force in 1994, this figure reached 16 per cent by 2006 (CSO, 2006) and even in the course of the recession, was 12 per cent in 2010 (CSO, 2011). This dramatic increase was particularly associated with the entry of ten new mainly Eastern European member states into the European Union in 2004¹. In Ireland the largest group of immigrants in the period under study are Polish immigrants comprising 12 per cent of the entire Irish population (CSO, 2011). Polish people have a close ethnic affinity to Irish people and share similar cultural and particularly religious beliefs (catholic). The origin of the majority of these new immigrants is likely to have a benign effect on the formation of attitudes towards immigration particularly prior to the financial crisis and

rising unemployment. Given the almost wholly European origin of the vast majority of immigrants coming to Ireland (CSO, 2011), Irish attitudes to immigration between 2002 and 2006 are likely to have been relatively more liberal compared to other European countries. Thus, in the context of the predominantly Western origin of new immigrants, it is likely that attitudes to immigration and its cultural effects either remained stable or became more positive between the 2002 and 2006 surveys.

Increases in the number of immigrants in a country are often opposed on the basis of fears that significant inflows of foreign workers will increase unemployment, depress wages and lead to a decline in the employment opportunities of national workers who are available for low-skill work (OECD, 2001; Fetzer (2000:3). After the financial crisis the perception that an individual's economic position could be disproportionately harmed by immigration is likely to have increased opposition to immigration. The benign occupational effect of immigrants in the labour market during the boom times may not have persisted as the economic cycle worsened leading to an increase in anti-immigration sentiment. However the relatively close ethnic affinity of a majority of the immigrants coming to Ireland after 2000 is likely to have dampened the negative impact of minority group size despite the financial crisis and the rise in unemployment after 2007.

Dominant causes of changing attitudes to immigration

According to Meuleman et al (2009) it is not the absolute levels of competition that matters but rather the rate of change, or the extent to which competition levels fluctuate, that transform inter-group conflict theory from a static to a dynamic analysis. Consequently, attitudes to immigration are more likely to evolve either positively or negatively when sudden changes occur in economic conditions or in minority group size. Rapid changes in immigration or economic conditions can affect labour demand, wage rates and the availability of rental and

social housing more dramatically than slow paced evolution. While economic factors and minority group size influence the formation of attitudes towards immigrants the difficulty lies in determining the dominant explanation. Dustman and Preston (2001) argue that in Great Britain racial prejudice is a more important factor than economic determinants in explaining attitudes towards immigrants. Alternatively in a wide ranging study covering developed and developing countries Mayda (2006: 526) found that economic factors continued to play a 'key and robust role' in explaining attitudes to immigrants even after controlling for non-economic cultural factors.

However, given the short time period (2002 to 2010) covered in this paper we predict that changes in the labour market, particularly the rise in unemployment, are likely to affect attitudes to a greater extent than minority group size in the formation of attitudes towards immigration in Ireland. Generally more rapid changes in attitudes towards immigration can be expected in those EU countries that experienced the greatest increases in unemployment between 2002 and 2010 such as Ireland (+9.6%), Spain (+8.8%) and Portugal (+6.0%). In absolute terms the four countries with the highest unemployment levels of the twelve countries in 2010 were Spain (20.2%), Ireland (13.9%), Greece (12.7%) and Portugal (11.4%). These are countries where immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon and changes in attitudes related to any long term shifts associated with a 'natural immigration cycle' are not applicable.

To summarise, economic factors rather than group minority size are likely to be the dominant explanation for shifts in attitudes towards immigration, particularly in the Irish case. The relatively close ethnic affinity of the majority of immigrants in Ireland is likely to have diminished the negative impact of minority group size even after the financial crisis. Between the 2002 and 2006 surveys attitudes to immigration are expected to have either remained stable, or became more positive given the buoyant economic conditions. A

perceived absence of inter-group competition over scarce goods is likely to have encouraged positive sentiment about the effects of immigrants on the economy and culture of society as a whole. Conversely, with economic decline and increasing unemployment after 2007 attitudes to immigration are predicted to have become more negative between the 2006 and 2010 surveys.

Data and Measures

The data used here comes from recent European Social Surveys (ESS)³. The European Social Survey (the ESS) is a biennial multi-country survey covering over 20 nations. The first round was fielded in 2002/3, a third round in 2006/7 and a fifth in 2010/11. The survey is designed to chart and explain the interaction between Europe's changing institutions and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of its diverse populations. It is funded jointly by the European Commission and the European Science Foundation and directed by a Central Co-ordinating Team¹. Data collection was by means of face-to-face interviews of approximately an hour in duration. The objective of the ESS sampling strategy is the design and implementation of workable and equivalent sampling strategies in all participating countries. The requirement is for random (probability) samples with comparable estimates based on full coverage of the eligible residential populations aged 15+. An essential element of the strategy is the achievement of high response rates in all participating countries, in order to ensure that the people interviewed in each country closely represent the country's total population. A target response rate of 70 per cent was set for each country. The countries within the European Union used for comparative purposes are the European Union member states before the recent accessions. Italy and Austria are omitted from our analysis as data for either round 1 or 5 surveys are missing. Luxemburg is also excluded because immigrants account for up to 40per cent of its population. The 12 countries analysed are: Belgium, Germany, Denmark,

Spain, Finland, UK, Greece, Ireland, Netherlands, France, Portugal and Sweden. We have excluded the recent new entrants such as Poland and Hungary as these are the source of much of the recent immigration wave into Ireland. A total of 24,094 responses were returned from these 12 countries for round one in 2002, 22,209 responses (excluding Greece) for round three in 2006 and 24,991 responses for round five in 2010. The number of responses for Ireland was 2,046 in 2002, 1,800 in 2006 and 2,576 in 2010. The appropriate design and population size sample weights are used in the data analysis below.

Immigrants in this study are defined as ‘someone born, brought up and living outside the respondent’s country’. Thus, a number of the questions on attitudes to immigrants do not clearly distinguish between those coming from inside and outside of Europe as a single group. Since attitudes to western and non-western immigrants could plausibly be significantly different, the responses in the ESS survey may be biased in either direction.

Our two central questions relate to allowing access to immigrants from outside the respondents country who are: (1) people of the same race and ethnic group as most people in the respondent’s country (2) people of a different race or ethnic group to the majority in the respondent’s country. These questions essentially gauge the pro-immigration preferences of respondents and measure the degree to which people in Europe are open to allowing in immigrants, particularly those of a different ethnic origin to that of the host country. Survey respondents have four possible choices. Two are broadly positive - ‘allow many’ and ‘allow some’ and two mainly negative – ‘allow few’ and ‘allow none’. A third question examines whether respondents believe that people from other countries are ‘good’ or ‘bad’ for the economy. Subjective perceptions that immigrants are bad for the economy are likely to be associated with beliefs that immigrants take the jobs of native workers, reduce the going rate for a job and are likely to be a burden on state welfare. Finally, to capture the cultural and

social impact of immigrants on the quality of life generally respondents are asked whether the country is made a worse or better place to live by people coming to live there from other countries. Items were measured on a scale of 1 (bad) to 10 (good) where respondents were asked if it is 'bad' or 'good' when people come to live from other countries for three areas - the economy, the country's cultural life, and the country in general.

Apart from the influence of broad structural economic and cultural factors, attitudes to immigrants are also affected by individual characteristics such as social class, occupational level, income and education. Structural factors attempt to measure the impact of shifts in the social and economic structure including the labour market, education, welfare and national cultural values. Since our focus here is on country comparisons over a relatively short time period the individual level factors such as gender, education, occupation and even personal predispositions (Dinesen et al, 2011) are effectively controlled for, hence structural factors, particularly labour market considerations we contend will assume a significant influence on the formation of attitudes.

To examine the changes in attitudes to immigrants over the three time periods 2002, 2006 and 2010 the three databases have been combined together and analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-tests used to test for statistically significant relationships between the time periods and attitudes to immigrants. Generally causality in cross-section surveys can often present unresolvable issues. However we can be relatively certain firstly that differences in attitudes towards immigrants are caused by the source country, since it's implausible that attitudes determine country of residence and secondly, that changes in attitudes are due to the different time periods as it is improbable that respondent attitudes determine the time period. Here we use the aggregation of specific country responses as the independent or causal variable. Hence attitudes to immigrants can be assumed to be a function of country of residence and attitudinal shifts a function of the different time periods. In the following tables

using ANOVA the results from 2006 are compared to 2002 and those from 2010 with 2006 for statistical significance.

Results

Overall it seems there has been a relatively moderate change in attitudes to immigration and the impact of immigrants for the twelve countries between 2002 and 2010. The proportion in favour of allowing many immigrants in with the same race or ethnic background as the host country increased from 16 per cent in the 2002 survey to 19 per cent in 2010, while 6 per cent in 2002 and 8 per cent in 2010 believed that no immigrants should be allowed. Attitudes to immigrants with a different ethnic background are more negative, with 10 per cent agreeing with allowing many immigrants in 2002 and 12 per cent in 2010, while 11 per cent in 2002 and 12 per cent in 2010 would allow no immigrants in to their country. The majority of respondents - approximately 75 per cent - prefer to allow minimal access (allow some or a few) to immigrants either of the same or different ethnic background. Respondents who believe that immigrants make their country a better place to live has increased slightly, while agreement with the statement that immigrants are good for the economy has decreased marginally. Both are statistically significant (using ANOVA) but the differences between 2002 and 2010 are relatively minor.

Thus, attitudes to immigration in these twelve core European countries taken as a whole have remained relatively constant, despite the economic and financial difficulties experienced since the global financial crisis began. Such aggregate figures however disguise considerable variations in mean attitudes at the country level (figure1). Respondents in Sweden, Denmark and Germany are most positive towards allowing both immigrants of the same ethnic race and from a different ethnic race to live in their countries and the shift in these affirmative

attitudes between 2002 and 2010 is statistically significant (based on Anova). In contrast the UK, Portugal and Greece report the highest mean negative attitudes towards immigrants with a statistically significant shift between 2002 and 2010 and are below the overall average (see figure 1 lower straighter line marked with bolded arrows).

Positive sentiment towards allowing in immigrants from the same or different ethnic backgrounds in Ireland declined more rapidly than any other country between 2002 and 2010. From being ranked the second most positive country in allowing in immigrants from the same ethnic background in 2002 it dropped to joint seventh place by 2010 and from second most positive to joint sixth country in terms of allowing immigrants from a different ethnic race into the country. On both measures Ireland moved from having mean scores above average among the twelve countries in 2002, to below average in 2010. In particular in both cases the dramatic negative turn in attitudes to immigration occurred essentially after 2006 and the financial crisis and rising unemployment as predicted (upper line marked with bolded arrows).

Insert Figure 1 about here

As figure 2 indicates there is substantial variation in attitudes to the economic impact of immigrants across the twelve countries. On balance, negative attitudes to the impact of immigrants on the economy increased more strongly than positive attitudes between 2002 and 2010 across all 12 countries. Mean scores on immigration being good for the economy were highest in Sweden, Denmark, Germany and Finland in 2010 and lowest in Greece and Ireland. In general, attitudes to the impact of immigrants on the economy in Greece, Ireland, France and Spain between 2002 and 2010 became significantly more negative (based on ANOVA) while positive attitudes in Sweden, Denmark and Holland increased significantly. Interestingly, only five countries scored above five in 2010 - the midpoint in the attitudinal scale and the overall average was below 5 as shown by the lower bolded line. Thus, in seven

countries less than fifty per cent of respondents believed that immigrants were good for the economy. In 2006 Ireland had the highest positive mean score of the twelve countries, but experienced the most rapid decline in positive sentiment after 2006, indicating the likely influence of the economic downturn. Indeed the percentage of respondents with negative attitudes more than doubled in Ireland from sixteen per cent in 2006 to thirty eight per cent in 2010.

A more positive trend is apparent on the broad question of whether immigrants make the country a better place to live. The mean scores increased for all countries except Greece and Ireland, both of whom recorded a statistically significant decline between 2002 and 2010. Positive perceptions of the impact of immigrants on Irish society increased between the 2002 and 2006 surveys but declined after 2006, possibly related as we have argued to changing economic conditions. Nevertheless, the Irish mean score on this measure is still above the twelve country average for both 2002 and 2010 and may well stem from the similarity in ethnic background characteristic of a majority of immigrants to Ireland since 2000.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Polarisation of Attitudes to Immigration

While the mean scores in figures 1 and 2 provide overall aggregate trends of our four measures we are also interested in the trend in the intensity of attitudes at the positive and negative ends of the attitudinal scales. In the following two tables the trend in the proportion of respondents who believe many immigrants should be allowed access to their country and the proportion who feel that no immigrants should be allowed in to the country are compared. (The eleven point attitudinal scales measuring the impact on the economy and quality of life are adjusted by defining those in the range 0 to 4 as negatively disposed and those in the range 7 to 10 as positively orientated). The ratios for each country are also reported for 2002

and 2010 as this provides a clear comparative indication of the magnitude of the attitudinal difference between countries. Calculation of the ratio is based on the proportion of responses agreeing with allowing many immigrants in to the proportion allowing none. For example in Sweden in 2002 for every 30 respondents allowing many there was one respondent allowing none giving a ratio of 30 and Belgium for every 15 respondents allowing many, 8 allowed none a ratio of almost 2 to 1.

Between 2002 and 2010 only Sweden and Denmark experienced substantial ratio increases in favour of allowing more immigrants of the same ethnic race in, while Germany, France, Holland and Greece showed modest increases (table 1). Alternatively, positive attitudes declined considerably in Ireland, Spain and Finland and less severely in the UK and Greece. Ireland slipped from second most positive country after Sweden to seventh in 2010 and scored below the average ratio of 2.4 for the twelve countries. Overall there was little change in the ratio of respondents allowing many immigrants of the same ethnic race in to respondents allowing none for the twelve countries between 2002 and 2010.

However, there was an overall increase from 15 to 19 per cent of respondents agreeing with allowing many immigrants in and also an overall increase in the proportion believing that no immigrants of the same ethnic race should be allowed in - from six per cent in 2002 to over eight in 2010. Noticeable decreases in negative attitudes occurred in Sweden and Denmark, but negative attitudes became significantly more pronounced in Ireland, Spain, UK and Greece. Ireland shifted to the third most negative country in 2010 after Portugal and Greece. The trends between 2002 and 2010 show an increasing polarisation at both ends of the spectrum in the proportion of respondents agreeing with allowing many immigrants in and allowing none in.

Insert Table 1 about here

Unsurprisingly, the proportion of respondents agreeing with allowing many immigrants from a different ethnic race is relatively low (table 2). Taking the 12 countries as a whole there was little change in the proportions allowing many or none between 2002 and 2010. For every one respondent agreeing with allowing many there was one respondent in favour of allowing none in 2002 and 2010. However, the percentages and ratios vary quite dramatically from thirty six per cent in Sweden in 2010, and a ratio of 36, to four per cent in Greece and a ratio of 0.1 (for every 1 allowing many, 10 allowed none). Nevertheless, the overall mean percentage increased slightly for the twelve countries in favour of allowing many, with only Finland, Spain and Portugal showing a negative trend. Attitudes to allowing many in Ireland remained relatively stable at the start and end of the period (peaking at sixteen per cent in 2006).

The proportion of respondents who believe that no immigrants of a different ethnic race be allowed into the country also increased slightly for the twelve countries. Again, there are significant variations within this, as a large reduction in negative attitudes occurred in Sweden, Denmark and to a lesser extent Germany and substantial increases occurred in Ireland, Greece and Spain. Irish attitudes veered sharply from being ranked the second lowest after Sweden in 2002 for holding negative attitudes to being ranked third among the countries with the most negative attitudes in 2010.

Insert Table 2 about here

A broadly similar pattern is evident with regard to perceptions of whether immigrants are good for the economy. While Holland, UK and Sweden experienced substantial positive increases, attitudes in Greece, France, Ireland and Portugal became significantly more negative. In 2006 (the peak of the economic boom) Ireland had the highest proportion of

respondents who believed that immigrants were good for the economy. This decreased significantly to twenty three per cent by 2010 and was below the average for the twelve countries. At the same time mean scores for those who believed that immigrants are bad for the economy increased in the twelve countries between 2002 and 2010. Negative attitudes to the impact of immigrants on the economy decreased markedly in Sweden, Denmark and Holland and increased in Ireland, Spain, France and Greece. The percentage of respondents with negative attitudes more than doubled in Ireland between 2006 and 2010. Overall, negative attitudes to the impact of immigrants on the economy increased more strongly than positive attitudes between 2002 and 2010 across all 12 countries.

Somewhat paradoxically, except for Greece, all countries showed an increase between 2002 and 2010 in the proportion of respondents who believed that immigrants had made their country a better place to live. The proportion of respondents indicating that immigrants make their country a worse place to live declined slightly between 2002 and 2010 for the twelve countries as a whole. Nevertheless in 2010 a greater proportion of respondents believed that immigrants made their country a worse rather than a better place to live. Negative attitudes increased significantly in Ireland and Greece between 2002 and 2010. In both cases negative attitudes declined between 2002 and 2006 and increased rapidly between 2006 and 2010.

Discussion and Future Research Directions

Our aim in this paper was to explore the trend in attitudes towards immigration across Europe with a central focus on Ireland in the context of the current economic crisis. In the 12 countries surveyed aggregate mean attitudes to allowing access to immigrants and their perceived impact on the economy and quality of life appear to have changed little between 2002 and 2010. Yet this masks considerable fluctuations in attitudes to immigration within

the twelve countries examined. Attitudes to immigration became significantly more positive in countries such as Sweden and Denmark but more negative in other countries, particularly Ireland, Spain and Greece. Taking the twelve countries as a whole, attitudes have tended to polarise, particularly with regard to allowing access to immigrants of the same or different ethnic race to the majority resident in a country and to a lesser extent their impact on the economy.

We argued that economic factors rather than group minority size was likely to be the dominant explanation for shifts in attitudes towards immigration, particularly in the Irish case. Given the buoyant economic conditions between the 2002 and 2006 surveys, the absence of inter-group competition over scarce goods is likely to have encouraged positive sentiment about immigration and the effects of immigrants on the economy and society. With economic decline and increasing unemployment after 2007 attitudes to immigration were predicted to have become more negative by the 2010 survey. This relationship between fluctuations in economic condition and attitudes towards immigration receives some support from the findings, particularly in the Irish case.

In Ireland a significant decrease in positive attitudes towards immigration and a significant increase in negative attitudes occurred between 2006 and 2010; a four-year period of unprecedented economic turbulence accompanied by high rates of unemployment. The dramatic economic collapse and a significant rise in unemployment in Ireland were associated with the sharpest fall in the proportion of respondents in favour of allowing new immigrants into the country. Similarly, there was a reduction in positive attitudes of respondents to the economic and social impact of immigrants. On both measures the decline in positive sentiment on the impact of immigrants on the economy and society was highest in Greece and Ireland, countries experiencing severe economic recessions in recent years.

Secondly, negative sentiment to immigration in Ireland increased despite the ethnic and cultural similarity of the largest group of immigrants (mainly Polish) to the native population.

Given these results a number of areas in terms of attitude formation require more nuanced study. A more thorough analysis of the relationship between changes in unemployment, economic performance and the formation of attitudes towards immigration is required at the individual rather than the aggregate country level. The relationship between unemployment and attitudes towards immigration is far from universal among the twelve countries. Sweden, for example, with the sixth highest unemployment rate in 2010 and the fifth highest increase since 2002 consistently registered the most positive attitudes to immigration among the twelve countries. Conversely Finland with a similar unemployment rate in 2010 and the second lowest rate of increase displays a considerably more negative attitudinal profile towards immigration. In Holland positive attitudes to immigration fell well below Sweden and Denmark even though it registered the lowest unemployment history of any country between 2002 and 2010. It may be that the severity of the economic crisis and rapid rise in unemployment in Ireland, Greece, Spain and Portugal provided a shock effect on attitudes to immigration. The relatively short history of sizeable inward immigration in these countries may be another factor making it difficult to cope with the adjustment required by downturns in the economic cycle in a multi-ethnic society.

Perhaps the most intriguing finding from the European Social survey is the sizeable gap between the ratio of people in Sweden and Denmark willing to allow many immigrants in to their country compared to the numbers willing in other European countries. Clearly other cultural, historical and political influences besides economic factors act to form and inform attitudes towards immigrants and their impact. More nuanced work is thus required to specify the theoretical and empirical relationships between unemployment, the economic health of a country and the formation of attitudes towards immigration. A significant gap in our

understanding exists as to how these various factors interact in forming attitudes. Ideally more quantitative and qualitative work exploring how positive or negative attitudes to immigration are formed would significantly add to the existing literature on attitudes to immigration.

Given the projected shortage of people to work in Europe in the future, the perception of immigration and immigrants among Europeans are of significant concern for all those involved in migrant policy formulation. The determinants of social attitudes are an important consideration for governments in the development of successful policies aimed at the social and economic integration of immigrants. Future studies on the economically derived determinants of attitudes of host country natives at various levels of analysis would provide information to enable governments to focus on appropriate social and economic policies. The evidence from the European Social Survey indicates that attitudes to immigration in many countries shifted significantly over the period 2002 to 2010. While aggregate attitudes towards immigration became more positive in some countries, such attitudes turned significantly more negative in many others.

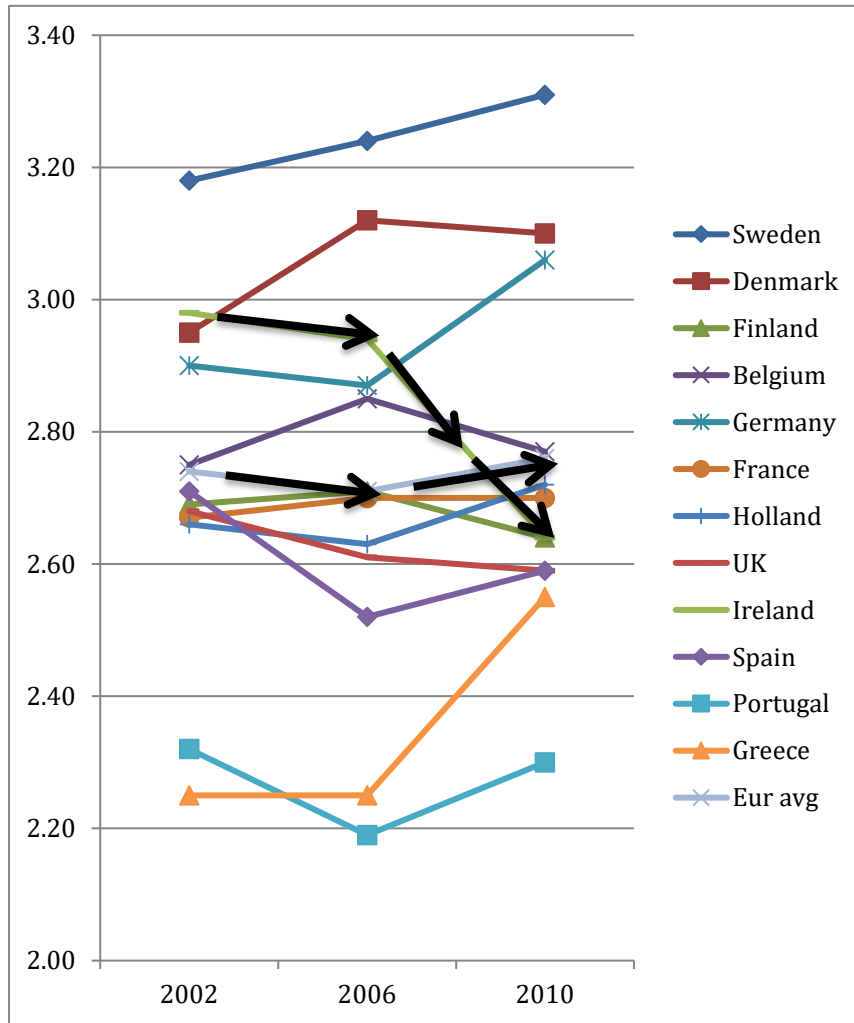
Notes

1 Only three countries in the EU, Ireland, the United Kingdom and Sweden did not place restrictions on the entry of immigrants from the accessions states. Thus immigrants from the new member states are full European citizens and do not require a work permit or experience any restrictions in seeking work in Ireland.

2 Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) is the data archive and distributor of the ESS data. R. Jowell and the Central Co-ordinating Team, European Social Survey

2002/2003: Technical Report, London: Centre for Comparative Social Surveys, City University (2003).

Figure 1: Attitudes to allowing access to immigrants
Allow the same ethnic race as majority to live here:
 Scored: 4=allow many to live here to 1=Allow none



Allow a different ethnic race from majority to live here
 Scored: 4=allow many to live here to 1=Allow none

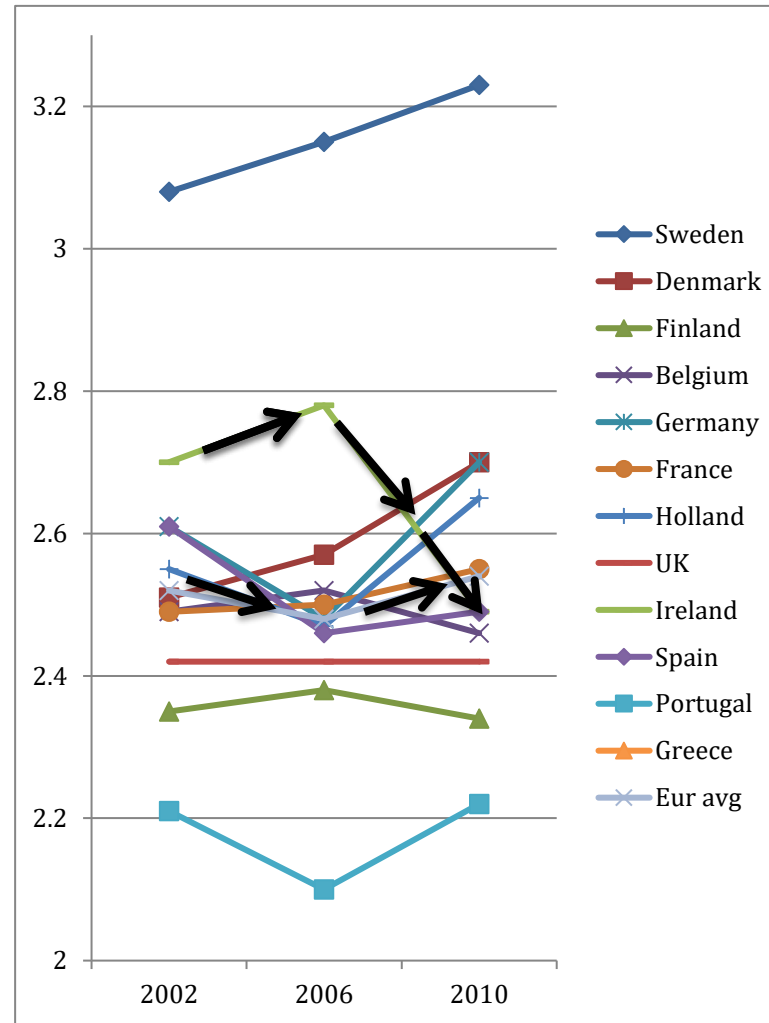


Figure 2: Impact of immigrants on economy and society

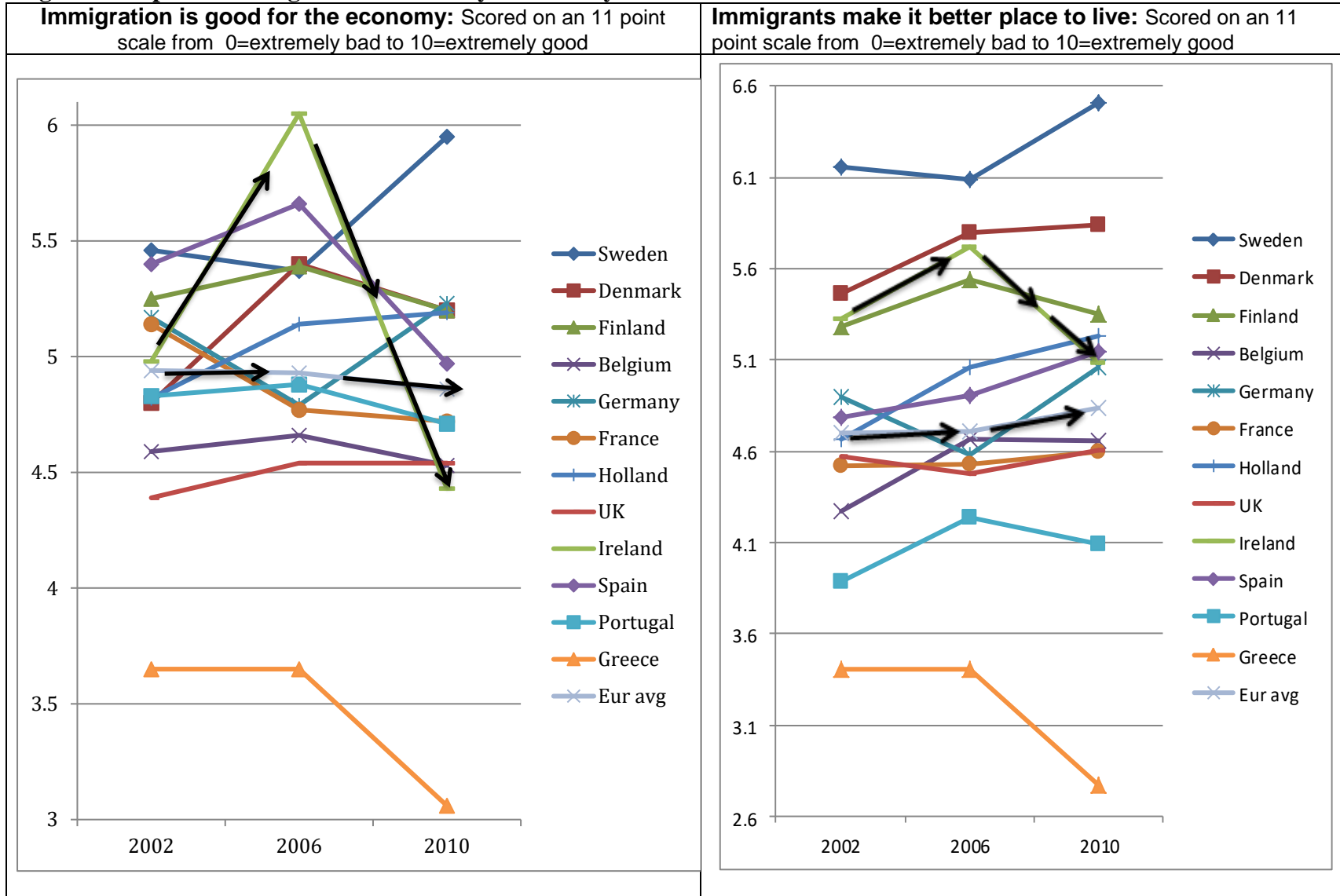


Table 1: Trend in proportion agreeing with allowing in many/no immigrants from the same ethnic race ^a

	Allow many from same ethnic race as majority to live here ^{b,c}		Allow none from same ethnic race as majority to live here^{**}		Ratio of many respondents to none 2002	Ratio of many respondents to none 2010
	2002 %	2010 %	2002 %	2010 %	Ratio	Ratio
Scandinavian						
Sweden	30	39	1	1	30	39
Denmark	21	27	1	1	21	27
Finland	14	11	3	4	4.7	2.8
Central Europe						
Belgium	15	16	8	9	1.9	1.8
Germany	20	31	3	4	6.7	7.8
France	10	12	7	6	1.4	2.0
Holland	8	12	6	6	1.3	2.0
Anglo-Saxon						
UK	12	11	8	12	1.5	0.9
Ireland	23	16	4	14	5.8	1.1
Southern European						
Spain	21	17	6	12	3.5	1.4
Portugal	6	6	18	20	0.3	0.3
Greece	10	27	15	19	0.7	1.4
Average %	15	19	6	8	2.5	2.4
N	3598	4578	1573	2436		
Irish ranked	2	7	8	3		

Source: European Social Surveys, 2002, 2006 and 2010

^a All weights applied

^b The other two responses to the question: 'Allow some' and 'Allow a few' are not reported here.

^c Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole figure.

Table 2: Trend in proportion agreeing with allowing in many/no immigrants from a different ethnic race ^a

	Allow many from different ethnic race as majority to live here^{bc}		Allow none from different ethnic race as majority to live here		Ratio of many respondents to none 2002	Ratio of many respondents to none 2010
	2002	2010	2002	2010	Ratio	Ratio
Scandinavian						
Sweden	27	36	2	1	13.5	36
Denmark	10	15	8	5	1.3	3
Finland	8	6	10	10	0.8	0.6
Central Europe						
Belgium	8	9	14	17	0.6	0.5
Germany	11	16	8	8	1.4	2.0
France	7	10	11	9	0.6	1.1
Holland	6	11	9	8	0.7	1.4
Anglo-Saxon						
UK	8	9	16	16	0.5	0.6
Ireland	12	12	6	17	2.0	0.7
Southern European						
Spain	18	15	9	14	2.0	1.1
Portugal	5	5	23	22	0.2	0.2
Greece	3	4	25	41	0.1	0.1
% Average	10	12	11	12	0.9	1.0
N (unwtd)	2282	2845	2750	3843		
Irish ranked	3	5	11	3		

Source: European Social Surveys, 2002, 2006 and 2010

^a All weights applied

^b The other two responses to the question: 'Allow some' and 'Allow a few' are not reported here.

^c Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole figure.

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