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"The Evolution of First-Generation Immigrants' Political Preferences in Western Europe"

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Abstract

This paper documents the evolution of a range of political preferences among first-generation immigrants in Western Europe. The overall aim is to study to what extent and at what pace immigrants adapt to the political norms that prevail in their host countries. I use a cross-national research strategy to compare and analyze attitudes of foreign-born individuals in 16 European countries and find strong empirical support for assimilation over time: On average, the opinion gap between natives and immigrants' political preferences on redistribution, gay rights, EU unification, immigration policies, and trust level in national governments is reduced by 40% after 20 years of residence in the destination country. I also provide evidence that most of this assimilation is driven by immigrants from non-developed countries, and that convergence in political preferences varies significantly across immigrants' economic and cultural background as well as with the size of the immigrant group from their country of origin. Finally, I show that a substantial part of assimilation on gay rights, immigration and political trust is driven by acculturation at the national level where immigrants with longer tenure tend to adapt more to the political preferences of natives in their destination country. These findings shed new light on the timing and magnitude of the political assimilation of first-generation immigrants, with potentially important implications for the political economy of immigration policy.

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1 Introduction

Modern European countries are witnessing an especially vivid political and social debate about immigrants' assimilation and integration into receiving societies. As policymakers of traditionally "immigrant" countries are struggling to integrate already sizable foreign-born populations into the economic, political, and social fabric of the state, the recent refugee crisis has increased concerns among public opinion and the political pressures associated with immigration flows. The COVID-19 pandemic notwithstanding, dealing with the ethnic and cultural heterogeneity associated with immigration is therefore one of the most important challenges that European governments are facing, not least because immigrants' political preferences can significantly alter the design and the political economy of public policies in their host society. To gain a complete understanding of the policy impact of foreign-born populations, and in particular whether or not immigrant voters represent a distinctly different political bloc from their native counterparts, scholars need to address a number of issues. What are the patterns of political assimilation? How do they differ across immigrants of different social, religious, and ethnic backgrounds? How do they differ across host societies and integration policies? What are the implications and consequences for economic and electoral outcomes and public policy? How can institutions help accommodate the political integration of immigrants? The purpose of this paper is to provide a modest but original contribution to this debate by studying the dynamics of the opinion gap between immigrants and natives' political preferences.

Previous literature has stressed the important role of cultural transmission in shaping individual preferences. Immigrants often take cultural values with them from their countries of origin, and these cultural and preferential traits translate into specific behaviors that have a wide-ranging, substantial and persistent impact on immigrants' integration. Transmitted culture is a long-lived component of preferences for redistribution (Luttmer and Singhal, 2011; Hammar, 2020), family and social values such as fertility and female labour force participation (Fernandez and Fogli, 2006), living arrangements (Giuliano, 2007), economic behaviour (Guiso et al., 2006; Tabellini et al., 2010; Henrich, 2000), political and civic participation (Alesina and Giuliano, 2011; Aleksynska, 2011), trust (Algan and Cahuc, 2010), electoral choices (Just et al., 2010), tax morale (Kountouris, 2013), or environmental preferences (Litina et al. 2016). Another strand of the large scholarship on immigrants' integration documents the symmetric influence of receiving societies on the attitudes of immigrants and their children at destination. Although assimilation patterns remain highly heterogeneous across destination and origin countries, one of the general findings in this field is that immigrants' attitudes tend to converge with those of native born individuals. In America, immigrants have been found to assimilate with respect to earnings and labour markets (Borjas, 1995; Uhlendorff and Zimmermann, 2006; Hu, 2000), occupational mobility (Chiswick et al., 2005; Green, 1999), participation in welfare programs (Borjas, 2002; Riphahn, 2014), fertility choices (Blau, 1992; Fernandez and Fogli, 2009), or cultural assimilation at large (Abramitzky et al., 2016; Giavazzi et al. 2019). In Europe, several contributions highlight the convergence to the norm of foreign-born residents in matters of interpersonal trust (Dinesen et al., 2010), social and economic outcomes (Algan et al., 2012), civic participation (Aleksynska, 2011), gender roles (Breidahl et al., 2016) and social relations (De Palo et al., 2007). At the same time, immigrants' political views on welfare assistance (Dancygier et al., 2006; Reeskens et al., 2015; Schmidt-Catran et al., 2017), political satisfaction and trust in institutions (Maxwell, 2010) are also

subject to the influence of European host societies.

In my reading, the previous works provide an essential yet incomplete picture of immigrants' assimilation. While all recognize that the amount of time that immigrants spend in their host country is one of the major factors of integration, with few exceptions, mostly in the US context, these studies focus on intergenerational differences between immigrants and natives and adopt a static framework which fails to address the dynamics of assimilation patterns. Instead, I propose in this paper to track the evolution of first-generation immigrants' preferences over time and provide a chronological account that is more appropriate to study assimilation and ultimately explore the consequences of immigrants' political participation on policy and electoral outcomes[1]. Moreover, focusing on intergenerational differences is not necessarily the most intuitive way of thinking about integration. For instance, first-generation immigrants who emigrated to their country of residence at an early age have hardly been exposed to the culture and institutions of their country of origin prior to relocating. In fact, for many of them, the only channel of cultural transmission from their origin country is likely to be parental influence. These "early" migrants also benefit from increased contact with their host society through schooling and education, which is likely to play a critical part in their socialization process. In this regard, one could expect their integration to be closer to that of second-generation immigrant than a fellow first-generation immigrant who came to live in that same country at the age of 50.

My study therefore treats political assimilation as a dynamic phenomenon. I examine the distance and convergence in political preferences between natives and foreign-born immigrants in Western Europe on the following political issues: Redistribution, gay rights, EU unification, immigration policy, and political trust.

I first investigate whether or not immigrants have the same distribution of preferences as comparably situated natives, and whether this distribution varies with the time spent in the host country. I document how the political preferences of first-generation immigrants from over 180 origin countries differ from those of natives in 16 European countries. On average, I find that immigrants are slightly more conservative than natives in terms of welfare preferences. They also hold more restrictive views on gay rights, show greater levels of trust in national parliaments and are more supportive of EU unification and open immigration policies. For all political issues but redistribution, the dynamic analysis reveals a gradual disappearance of migrants' original preference patterns, suggesting assimilation through a natural process where they gain access to the same socio-economic opportunities and cultural traits as natives of the host country. Spending 20 years in the destination country - the average tenure of first-generation immigrants in the study - therefore reduces the opinion gap by as much as 40% in matters of immigration, political trust, gay rights and attitudes towards the European Union. In contrast, immigrants' support for redistribution coincide with those of natives after only 5 to 10 years in the destination country.

Next, I build on the segmented assimilation theory (Gordon, 1964; Portes and Zhou, 1994) and look for variations in assimilation patterns across immigrants' background and community size. My intuition is two-fold. First, migrants' origin country and community size at destination may create or remove specific barriers to integration which are associated with lagged or incomplete political assimilation. Second, the economic approach to cultural integration emphasizes the importance of individual incentives and of the opportunity costs

[1] On this subject, see Aleksynska (2011), whose results show that immigrants' political involvement in the political life of their receiving societies increases with the duration of stay and therefore calls for a dynamic approach to the study of immigrants' political integration.

associated with different integration patterns (see Lazear, 1999; Bisin and Verdier, 2000, 2001, 2010; Konya, 2005). Immigrants may therefore form endogenous preferences about assimilation based on whether assimilation increases their chances in the host country, which are themselves determined by immigrants' cultural or economic background as well as the size of their social networks. My results show that these characteristics play an important part in shaping both the size of the preference gap and the speed of assimilation. Assimilation is almost exclusively driven by immigrants from non-developed countries, while Western migrants have closer preferences to natives upon arrival and show no sign of convergence whatsoever. Moreover, cultural legacy and religious beliefs strongly influence assimilation: Muslim immigrants hold political opinions that are consistently further from those of natives than other immigrants, and their views on gay rights remain much more conservative over time. I also find that immigrants that are better equipped to integrate economically and socially - either through language proficiency or access to larger social networks - and for whom the relative value of cultural and political assimilation is relatively lower are much less likely to assimilate than other immigrants. In the last part of the paper, I examine immigrants' gradual adoption of country-specific cultural norms and conventions. I find that the average political preference in an immigrant's destination country has a large and significant effect on her own preference. Moreover, this effect is greater among immigrants with longer tenure for political preferences on gay rights, immigration, and trust in national parliaments, suggesting acculturation to country-specific norms.

In light of these findings, it is worth noting that the ESS has not been designed to include or oversample immigrants, which might increase the potential for bias in the general analysis. However, previous studies have shown that the ESS sampling method is reliable when it comes to reflect the actual structure of the population between foreign-born and native residents and the actual origin countries of the foreign-born immigrants (Castles and Miller, 2003; De Rooij, 2012). Also, I do not have, for example, panel data on immigrants before and after migration, nor do I have data on their socioeconomic characteristics while still in their sending countries. Therefore, I cannot fully control for cohort effects and the categorization of immigrants by duration of stay is not free from composition concerns. In particular, if cross-country migration decisions are correlated with political preferences, my results could suffer from a self-selection bias. This issue will be further discussed in the robustness section of the paper.

This paper is directly related to the empirical research that analyzes the political preferences of immigrants in their host environment. Within this literature, the issue of preferences for redistribution has probably received the most attention. Dancygier et al. (2006) show that immigrants are no more likely to support increased social spending or redistributive measures than natives and find support for hypotheses highlighting selection effects and the impact of the immigration regime. Reeskens et al. (2015) analyse the 2008 "Welfare Attitudes" module of the European Social Survey and find that differences in welfare opinions are primarily explained by the more disadvantaged position of immigrants in society. Moreover, their results suggest that immigrants' views on welfare closely follow those of the non-migrant population of the country they are living in, suggesting strong social integration at the opinion level. Using German longitudinal survey, the findings of Schmidt-Catran et al. (2017) are also consistent with the claim that immigrants' welfare preferences are subject to a socializing effect of the host countries. Turning to political trust, Maxwell (2010) finds that first-generation immigrants have

more positive attitudes to national governments in Europe while native-origin and second-generation migrant-origin individuals have similar political trust and satisfaction scores. He interprets these outcomes as a sign that political expectations about the government are highly determined by integration factors related to the stages of migration, and in particular the influence of first-generation migrants' experience of undemocratic regimes in their home country. Using the same data, Algan et al. (2012) documents that the gap in political trust level between first-generation immigrants and natives is exclusively driven by foreign-born individuals with less than 20 years of residence, while second-generation immigrants hold actually more negative opinions of national parliaments. The present study is also related to Roeder's contribution (2018) on immigrants' attitudes toward homosexuality, in which she finds that immigrants in Europe hold overall more negative attitudes than natives, and provides evidence of both intra and inter-generational acculturation of these attitudes with declining importance of origin country context. Finally, a recent paper by Giavazzi et al. (2019) contains a comprehensive analysis of the values and beliefs of different generations of US immigrants. They find that attitudes towards politics and redistribution, sexuality, abortion, religious values show a lower degree of convergence to the prevailing norm than attitudes towards cooperation such as trustworthiness, helpfulness and fairness. Because my paper attempts to characterize the political force that immigrants potentially represent, it also speaks to the literature on immigrants' voting behaviour and electoral participation. Within this literature, my approach builds on Aleksynska (2011), which documents that immigrants actively participate in the life of the receiving societies, increasingly so with the duration of stay, but that the speed of assimilation is different for immigrant groups with different background and origin countries.

My contribution to the study of immigrants' political preferences is innovative in several respects. First, while most existing contributions study the persistence of cultural traits or the convergence in preferences from one generation of immigrants to the next, I focus on a dynamic analysis of first-generation immigrants. I am therefore able to provide a more detailed picture of the speed of political assimilation and quantify the size of the preference gap between immigrants and natives at the time of migration and its evolution over time. Also, I study the differences between natives and immigrants in preferences over national immigration policies and EU sentiment, which, to the best of my knowledge, have not yet been studied in the literature, at least in the European context. Third, I present the first large-scale, cross-country study on the intra-generational acculturation of immigrants' political preferences using European data.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the data used in the analysis. Section 3 outlines the estimation strategy and examines results. The last section concludes.

2 Data description

I use 5 rounds of the European Social Survey (2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018) and focus on Western European, OECD member states. I also restrict the sample to respondents who were older than 16 and younger than 100 years old at the time of the interview and distinguish between natives and first-generation immigrants. I identify natives as respondents born in their country of residence with parents also born in their country of residence to avoid the potentially confounding effects of second-generation immigrants, who are excluded from the model. First-generation immigrants are drawn among individuals born outside of their country of

residence, and for whom at least one parent was not born in their country of residence. I decide to leave out immigrants born in a foreign country but with both parents born in their current country of residence as members of this group are very likely to be influenced by their parents' cultural origins and therefore not suited for the exploration of the assimilation hypothesis. To capture immigrants' duration of stay in their destination country, I use information provided by the survey from the 2010 round onwards: All foreign-born respondents in the sample are asked about the year they first came to live in their host country. I use the difference between the year respondents were surveyed and the year they claimed to have arrived in the country as a measure of the years of residence spent at destination[2]. Foreign-born whose country of origin and year of arrival in the destination country are not specified are excluded from the analysis. This leads to an overall sample size of 127,000 observations, of which 12,000 first-generation immigrants and 115,000 natives in 16 countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Table 1 and 2 of the Appendix contain the description of this sample.

Individual political and policy preferences on five different issues are measured through an ordinal scale. The first one is redistribution. I use respondents' opinion to the following statement: *"The government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels"*, to which respondents are asked if they strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or disagree strongly. I recode this question on an ascending 4-point scale in the following way: 0 from strongly disagree to 4 for strongly agree[3]. Using an identical scale, the second variable captures political attitudes to homosexuality through respondents' opinion about the following statement *"Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish"*. I use the same rescaling method as for redistribution to construct the associated dependent variable. Third, I investigate attitudes towards European Union through respondents' position about greater unification of the EU from 0 - *"Unification already gone too far"* to 10 - *"Unification must go further"*. Fourth, I look at migrants' attitudes to immigration policy through respondents' opinion about the following statement on a 0-3 scale: *"To what extent do you think [country] should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most [country] people to come and live here"*[4]. Last, I study trust in political institutions using respondents' level of trust in their residence country's parliament, on a scale from 0 - *"No trust at all"* to 10 - *"Complete trust"*.

Table 3 and 4 summarizes the distribution of political preferences for foreign-born and native individuals. Although differences between them are modest in absolute terms, these descriptive statistics suggest that immigrants are slightly more opposed to redistribution and gay rights than Western European natives. They also show markedly higher levels of trust in national parliaments and support for EU unification, and are in favour of more open immigration policies. Moreover, among immigrants, those with longer duration at destination have views that are significantly closer to natives as opposed to immigrants with shorter duration, which suggests assimilation with natives at the political level. Also, the size of the opinion gap between natives

[2]The distribution of immigrants' tenure at destination is presented in Figure 1.

[3]While the 2008 and 2016 ESS rounds have specific modules on welfare preferences, I choose to use the only question capturing policy preferences for redistribution that is present in all rounds of the survey to maximize the number of first-generation immigrants in the sample.

[4]The ESS asks in every round several other questions about individuals' perception of the level of immigration, with mentions to migrants' relative economic position and place of origin. In practice, individual answers to these questions are strongly correlated, and I therefore choose the most neutral of these statements as the reference variable.

and migrants with greater duration of stay varies across political items, indicating that the speed and pattern of convergence may be heterogeneous across political opinions.

3 Empirical analysis

First, I report a descriptive analysis of the patterns of convergence in political attitudes between natives and first-generation immigrants in Western Europe. This provides an initial indication of the extent to which immigrants adapt to the political preferences of natives and the speed at which convergence in attitudes takes place. Second, I investigate whether migrants' background and community size matter for political integration. Third, I ran a multivariate analysis limited to immigrants, in which I examine the effect of natives' average preferences on each political issue on immigrants' own political views in the same country.

3.1 The opinion gap in political attitudes between migrants and natives

The point of departure my the analysis of differences in political preferences between immigrants and native-born. I therefore adopt the following specification over the full sample of natives and immigrants:

$$Pref_{ijt} = \alpha + \beta_0 Firstgen_i + \beta_1 Resyears_i + \gamma X_i + \mu_j + \mu_t + \epsilon_{ijt} \quad (1)$$

where the dependent variable $Pref$ is the preference of individual i surveyed in country j and ESS round t on a specific political issue. My main independent variables are the dummy variable *Firstgen*, which takes value 1 if the respondent is foreign-born, and 0 otherwise, and the continuous variable *Res_years*, which captures the duration of stay of a migrant in his or her host country[5]. In all regressions, I control in vector X for several individual socio-economic characteristics such as gender, age, whether or not the respondent is married, years of education, the respondent's assessment of his or her financial situation, the size of the household, individual employment status, whether or not the respondent is a member of an ethnic minority, and religiosity, education level and work status of the respondent's partner, household's income level (based on the income distribution in the residence country) and primary source of income, as well as past unemployment experience. I also include a full set of dummy variables for the country of residence and ESS survey round.

Table 6 presents the results of this baseline regression. They confirm the intuition from the descriptive statistics in Table 4. On average, there is a significant opinion gap between first-generation migrants and natives across all five political variables. After controlling for socio-economic individual characteristics, first-generation migrants are slightly more opposed to redistribution, have more conservative views towards gay rights, are more supportive of EU unification and open immigration policies, and possess higher levels of trust in their host country's parliament than natives. These differences vary however in magnitudes. The average gap in preferences for redistribution (column 2) is very small and corresponds to 0.05 standard deviation. Ceteris paribus,

[5]This variable is coded 0 for natives. It therefore applies only to immigrants and is thus effectively an interaction term.

the marginal effect of being born in a foreign country on attitudes to redistribution is therefore equivalent to moving up from the 5th to the 6th decile of the income distribution[6]. This coefficient is however significant at the 1% level, indicating that upon arrival, migrants coming to live in Western Europe hold generally slightly more conservative views towards redistribution. Contrary to the welfare magnet hypothesis which posits that immigrants are benefit tourists who migrate to take advantage of generous welfare services in the destination country, I therefore observe no support for such a claim, in line with the previous literature (Dancygier, 2006; Algan et al., 2012). Instead, because immigrants represent a self-selected group of people that are willing to uproot themselves to migrate and are often characterized as risk-averse, they may be more likely to believe in effort and individualism and show greater reluctance to state provided financial assistance.

On the other hand, migration status is one, if not the strongest individual predictor of other political attitudes. The opinion gap between natives and immigrants on homosexuality, EU, immigration, and political trust all ranges between 0.2 and 0.3 standard deviation. On gay rights, immigrants have much more restrictive views than natives, which is not surprising if one considers that most of the migrants in the sample come from non-developed, more socially conservative countries. This effect is equivalent to 1.6 times the effect of gender on attitudes to gay rights, and correspond to an average 0.365 gap on a $0-10$ scale while men score on average 0.22 lower than women on that same issue. Turning to attitudes to EU unification, the marginal effect of being born in a foreign country is almost twice as large as that of living in an urban area[7] and is matched in size only by respondents' perception of their household's income. To the extent that political attitudes towards EU unification reflects political beliefs about internationalism, it comes as no surprise that first-generation migrants who travelled across borders to come and live in Europe are more enthusiastic about European integration. Likewise, because first-generation immigrants experienced the hardship of leaving their home country to go and settle abroad, they are also significantly more in favour of allowing more immigrants to come and live in their destination country. The positive effect of being foreign-born in column 11 is equivalent to having completed 4 additional years of education. Finally, immigrants score 0.6 point higher than natives when asked about their level of trust in national parliaments. Ceteris paribus, this opinion gap corresponds to the difference that exists between individuals at the bottom and at the top of the income distribution. A possible explanation for this substantial gap is that many migrants leave their home country because they are in some way unsatisfied with the existing political regimes. Poor economic outcomes, conflict, political repression or other forms of discrimination are among the several motives for which immigrants may hold particularly negative view about the government of their origin country. At the same time, existing research has documented that first-generation migrants are more optimistic and positive about the government of the country where they have self-consciously chosen to emigrate in hopes of improving their lives (Roder et al, 2012; Maxwell, 2010), and therefore place greater faith in their destination country's political institutions.

As a second step, I turn to assimilation by studying the effect of time spent in the destination country. Controlling for immigrants' duration of stay in the host country gives more information on the timing and structure of the preference gaps. When this regressor is included in the analysis, the coefficient associated with being a first-generation immigrants captures the difference in preferences between natives and freshly arrived immigrants.

[6]The coefficient - not reported here - associated with individual household income decile rank in model (2) is -0.043.

[7]The corresponding coefficient in column 8 is 0.381, while individuals living in rural areas score 0.2 unit lower than urban dwellers in the same model.

My results show that the years of residence have a significant and negative effect on the gap between natives and first-generation migrants for all political preferences. While these changes in opinions remain modest in absolute terms - in the order of a tenth of a standard deviation -, the effect is quite sizable in relative terms: Spending 20 years - the average residence time of migrants in our sample - reduces the initial preference gap by as much as 40% in matters of redistribution, gay rights and immigration policy and up to 50% for political trust and attitudes to EU unification. For a better grasp of these mechanisms, I analyze the effect of residence time by breaking the first-generation immigrant sample into cohorts and report graphically the results of the following estimation:

$$Pref_{ijt} = \beta_0 + \beta_k \sum_k Cohort_i^k + \gamma X_i + \mu_j + \mu_t + \epsilon_{ijt} \tag{2}$$

where X contains the same individual control variables as model (1)[8]. I break down the immigrants sample into 7 time cohorts, and let $Cohort^k$ be the dummy variable that takes value 1 if an individual belongs to cohort k, and 0 otherwise[9].

The blue lines in the graphs of Figure 2 show a strong convergence of political attitudes over time between natives and all first-generation immigrants. With the exception of redistributive preferences, where a statistically significant opinion gap remains between natives and immigrants with more than 45 years spent at destination, it is very modest in size and orders of magnitude smaller than the existing gap between immigrants upon arrival and natives. Another interesting feature of these results is the pace at which convergence in attitudes takes place.

My findings show a very flexible adjustment of redistributive preferences, where immigrants' support for redistribution coincides with those of natives after only 5 to 10 years in the destination country. As discussed previously, immigrants' welfare preferences are relatively close to natives' upon arrival, and a possible explanation for this swift convergence is that immigrants' access to welfare services improve significantly after a few years of residence in their destination country when they obtain legal permanent residency and are therefore entitled to the same benefits as natives[10]. This interpretation is also in line with the findings of Renema et al. (2019) that immigrants are indeed more supportive of spending on welfare to which they perceived they have greater access, and consistent with the contributory nature of many welfare schemes such as unemployment benefits or social security which require individuals to have participated for some years before they can benefit from them.

In contrast, it takes 20 years before any statistically significant change in migrants' relative attitudes towards gay rights shows up. Political opinions about gay rights have arguably fewer self-interested motives and greater religious and cultural roots than other the political outcomes studied in this paper, which could explain why immigrants' policy preferences takes a long time to change. [11]

[8] While being important in predicting political preferences, household income level is missing for almost one fifth of the sample, for both immigrants and native-born. In regressions similar to model (1) without the income variable, coefficients retain their significance, and most of them change only marginally in magnitude. I therefore omit income decile rank in model (2) and all further estimations.

[9] The number of observations for each cohort is available in Table 2

[10] According to many, permanent residency outweighs citizenship as the relevant eligibility criterion for accessing welfare benefits in Europe (see for instance Guiraudon, 2002; or Koopmans, 2010).

[11] This of course assumes away the sexual orientation of respondents, which is not reported in the survey. However, given that

Surprisingly, I find that foreign-born attitudes towards immigration become more negative overtime and converge to those of natives. Rather than showing solidarity with future potential migrants, they appear to be subject to a club effect as their support for immigration starts to decrease sharply after 10 years in the destination country once their position has become less vulnerable[12].

Finally, the bottom graphs in Figure 2 reveal that the opinion gap in trust in national parliaments and attitudes to EU unification is also reduced significantly over time. Whether it is driven by cultural changes or the slow updating of the quality of government and the role played by the European Union is still unclear at this stage. However, political assimilation of attitudes to domestic and international institutions exhibit different trajectories: While no significant difference remain between immigrants and natives after 20 years in terms of support of EU unification, it takes over 45 years before foreign-born individuals' level of trust in national parliaments is the same as natives'.

Before moving further into the analysis, I run the previous regressions excluding immigrants who came to live in their country of residence under the age of 15.[13] The reason is two fold. First, as already mentioned in the introduction, immigrants who came to live at an early age in their country of residence are not only much less exposed to the culture and institutions of their country of origin prior to relocating, but also have increased contact with native society through schooling and education, which is likely to play a critical part in their assimilation[14]. Second, because the ESS surveys individuals aged 15 and older, the distribution of the number of years spent in the country of residence is heavily skewed to the left among these migrants compared to those who came to live at an adult age. This could lead to a compositional bias if those migrants arrived at an early age are only represented in older cohorts (i.e among immigrants that have spent more time in the host country). If these migrants have views that are closer to natives, this would in turn artificially increases convergence in attitudes. The red line in each graph of Figure 2 shows that this convergence bias exists but remains very modest in size. The general trend observed for the full sample of immigrants holds when I reduce the sample to those who came to live in their country of residence at an adult age. Convergence in political attitudes is only slightly weaker among these late migrants on matters of homosexuality and EU unification, indicating that some of the migrants that are the most assimilated have been excluded from the analysis. Besides, there is no significant difference in political orientations whether early migrants are excluded from the sample or not in terms of political trust. The pattern for redistribution preferences for the full sample and the late sample are also remarkably similar, and age at arrival matters little in the pace and extent to which migrants' preferences over immigration policy converge with natives' views.

sexual orientation is relatively stable, I shall not be concerned with the possibility that migrants' sexual orientation change over time to coincide with that of natives. This pattern could also be due partly to the fact that the ESS question about gay rights is the only dependent variable that does not explicitly refer to the current situation in the host country, leading respondents to express views that are less directly influenced by national contexts

[12]Although immigrants can face deportation, those who have lived more than 5 to 10 years are in general well settled in their host country and unlikely to face such deportation threats

[13]These migrants represent around 25% of the entire first-generation migrant sample.

[14]In fact, for an overwhelming majority among them, the only channel of transmission of culture from their origin country is parental influence.

3.2 Differences in assimilation patterns across immigrant groups

The main objective of this section is to provide a more complete picture of assimilation by looking at patterns of convergence across migrants with different backgrounds. To do that, I build on the segmented assimilation literature and look for systematic variation across different sub-groups of immigrants. Because political and economic factors at the origin can affect significantly the way immigrants assimilate (Borjas, 1987), I first split the immigrant sample into sub-samples of developed and non-developed countries of origin[15]. This division potentially reflects the costs of integration, considering that Western migrants have an economic, political, social and cultural background that is closer to Western European natives[16]. Another significant barrier to integration is racial and ethnic discrimination. Contemporary non-white migrants in Europe may face intense discrimination even after living in the host country for a very long time. This discrimination creates numerous social, economic, and political problems for integration. Because the ESS does not ask about respondent's ethnicity, I use religion and more specifically Islam - the most stigmatized religion in Europe -. Building on previous evidence highlighting potentially different assimilation patterns for Muslim immigrants (Constant et al., 2006; Bisin et al., 2008), I split the sample between immigrants with Muslim religious denomination and immigrants with none or all other religious belonging. I also look at whether the convergence in political attitudes is stronger for first-generation migrants whose country of origin shared a common language with their destination country. Because linguistic and colonial ties can be regarded as a vector of cultural transmission, I expect immigrants who possess those traits to hold political opinions that are closer to those of Western European[17]. Finally, I investigate the effect of the size of immigrant communities on the political assimilation of their members. On the one hand, immigrants' local context and contact with co-ethnics may shape their political preferences through network effects that help them adjust to their new environment. For instance, economists have found that information about the welfare state and its benefits can be spread through networks and social chains. In particular, increased neighborhood contact with co-ethnics with above-average welfare participation rates may raise individual welfare use (Bertrand, Luttmer, and Mullainathan, 2000; Borjas and Hilton, 1996), which may in turn increase support for government redistribution. In this regard, bigger immigrant community can facilitate assimilation. In contrast, another strand of the economics literature on cultural transmission argues that a bigger community size decreases immigrants' incentives to integrate. The underlying trade-off weighs cultural against economic incentives, which posits that there exists a large enough critical mass of immigrants that if the group maintains its distinct culture then, for any immigrant, the cost of switching culture outweighs the benefits of increased interaction. To the extent that political preferences have an important cultural component, one could expect foreign-born that belong to bigger communities to assimilate less because they have more limited benefits from such assimilation. Following previous studies on community behavior (see Card et al., 2008; Munshi, 2013; Advani et al., 2015; Giavazzi et al., 2019), I split the immigrant sample based on community size. For each foreign-born individual, I compute the share

[15]The list of developed countries includes EU-15, Norway, Switzerland, Canada, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, and Israel. All other countries are treated as non-developed

[16]A further distinction was made between migrants originating from democratic countries VS those coming from non-democratic countries at the time of migration. Due to the high correlation between economic development and the level of democracy, the results were very similar to the analysis conducted on the developed and non-developed samples and are therefore not reported here.

[17]Data on language proximity comes from the CEPII (Centre d'Etudes Prospectives et d'Informations Internationales).

of immigrants from the same origin country living in his or her destination country, and distinguish between those for whom this community represents less or more than 1% of the destination country's total population.[18]

Average opinion gaps are reported in Table 7. Taken together, they suggest that immigrants from more developed countries, non-Muslim migrants, and migrants who originate from a country that shares a common language with their destination country have political preferences that are closer to natives on matters of homosexuality, EU, and political trust. Because politics in developed countries is a relatively homogeneous set that includes democracy and free market institutions since the beginning of the post-WWII era, individuals from these countries are arguably more familiar with the functioning of parliamentary democracies, therefore showing more similar levels of trust in parliaments to natives than immigrants from non-developed countries. Also, individuals in developed countries usually have more liberal attitudes to homosexuality, and it is not surprising that their views are not significantly different from those of native-born Western Europeans. Finally, because 85% of migrants from developed countries in the sample are EU citizens, their attitudes towards EU unification are obviously closer to those of fellow EU-citizen, Western European native-born. Turning to the opinion gap across religious sub-groups, most of Muslim immigrants come from countries ruled by undemocratic political regimes, sometimes where political institutions have collapsed or failed so badly that they represent one of the main reasons why immigrants chose to emigrate in the first place. As a result, immigrants' preferences continue to be influenced by the quality of government and institutions in their origin country even when living in their host country, which leads to relatively better opinions about Western political institutions, either national - country parliaments - or international - the European Union -. It is also very intuitive that these migrants hold significantly more conservative views on gay rights if one considers that Islam strongly prohibits homosexuality. Moreover, Table 7 indicates that immigrants who come from a country that shares a common language with their destination country are also more likely to hold preferences that are close to European natives. This is reflected for instance by the coefficients on preferences about redistribution and gay rights, as well as the coefficients associated with immigrants' perception of political institutions, both domestic and European. Finally, no clear patterns emerge for immigrants that belong to larger communities and networks. The opinion gaps for redistributive preferences are remarkably similar, and while immigrants with larger communities retain significantly higher levels of trust in national parliaments, they are in contrast much closer to natives in terms of support for EU unification, and their views are on average not statistically different from other immigrants on gay rights and immigration.

I now replicate the dynamic analysis of model 2 on the sub-groups of immigrants.[19] Figure 3, 4, 5, and 6 respectively contains the results of this analysis for immigrants subgroups based on economic development, religion, language, and community size.

First, no significant differences exist between the various sub-groups of migrants under study at the time of arrival on preferences for redistribution. While migrants belonging to smaller communities and those who do not

[18] I use 2010 national Census data provided by the OECD International Migration Database. I group immigrants from Czech Republic, Slovakia and former Czechoslovakia into a single group. Moreover, I also exclude from the analysis immigrants whose country of birth is listed as $USSR$ because the ESS does not report which of the former soviet states these immigrants came from.

[19] Because the number of observations in each sub-group is smaller than in the full sample used in model 2, the number of cohorts is reduced from 7 to 5 groups.

share a common language with their destination country appear less supportive of redistribution upon arrival, the confidence interval of their respective sub-groups is too large to draw any conclusions about their relative preferences that would pass the test of statistical significance. No distinctive pattern of assimilation therefore emerges for any of the subgroups under consideration, and the evidence points towards an assimilation process where migrants' cultural and social background plays a relatively small part.

Policy preferences on gay rights paint a very different picture. Upon arrival, immigrants from developed countries exhibit no significant differences with natives, and this gap remains statistically insignificant over time (see Figure 3). This suggests that immigrants from non-developed countries are the main group driving the general convergence on attitudes to gay rights. Across religious sub-groups, a striking pattern emerges from Fig. 4. Muslim foreign-born are not only significantly more opposed to gay people living their life as they wish than non-Muslim first-generation migrants, but they also show no sign of assimilation. While the views of non-Muslim migrants slowly catch up to natives', those of Muslim immigrants remain about 1 point lower on a 0-4 scale throughout.

On political trust in national parliaments, immigrants coming from a developed country assimilate faster but this is mostly the product of smaller initial differences at the time of migration. Moreover, because Muslim migrants are more likely to suffer from discrimination, one would expect that they show lower levels of trust in governments as a result. Yet, my findings point in the opposite direction. Although some convergence with natives is taking place, they exhibit consistently higher levels of trust in political institutions than other immigrants, at least 1 point higher on the 0-10 scale regardless of the number of years spent in their destination country. On the other hand, non-Muslim immigrants assimilate completely after 35 years of residence. As outlined previously, a plausible explanation is that Muslim immigrants judge the quality of government and political institutions based on the previous experience of their home country, which are often ruled by undemocratic regimes. A similar pattern is also visible when we turn to community size. Immigrants from smaller communities strongly assimilate while the relative level of trust in national parliaments changes little among immigrants living among numerous co-ethnics.

On immigration policies, Figure 3 reveals that the preferences of immigrants from developed countries are relatively closer to those of natives upon arrival but never close the gap with them[20]. On the other hand, immigrants from less developed countries are significantly more supportive of immigration at the time of migration but this support decreases over time to the point where they hardly show any differences with natives after 35 years, driving the general convergence in attitudes observed in Figure 2. A possible intuition behind these patterns of convergence is the different nature of migration for individuals from developed and non-developed countries. Indeed, immigrants from developed countries are less subject to re-emigration[21], which could explain why their opinion on border control and immigration policy remain more liberal than those of other foreign-born residents. Attitudes towards EU unification confirms the previous intuition. Although their views are significantly closer to those of natives upon arrival, migrants from developed countries show no sign of assimilation while support for EU unification decreases significantly among immigrants coming from non-developed countries.

[20]The fact that immigrants from developed countries are less supportive of open immigration policies than migrants from non-developed countries upon arrival can be explained by the fact that many of them come from countries with a large share of foreigner residents where immigration policy itself is a contentious issue.

[21]Bratsberg et al. (2007) show that the retention rate of immigrants from OECD countries is below 30% while that for immigrants from non-Western countries is above 75%.

On a more general level, the heterogeneity across different subgroups of immigrants provides valuable insight on the drivers of political assimilation.

First, while my method does not allow to disentangle elements of preferences that reflect the current economic and institutional environment and those that reflect culture, marked differences in opinion between subgroups at the time of migration suggest that the opinion gap between immigrants and natives may have a large cultural component. Earlier cohorts - between 1 and 5 years of residence - of immigrants from developed countries, non-Muslim immigrants, and immigrants sharing a common language have preferences that are relatively closer to those of natives, which highlight the role of cultural proximity. In fact, whether these differences reflect individuals' perception of the current context in their destination country rather than deep-seated beliefs does not affect my conclusion that cultural background matters for political assimilation [22].

Moreover, the dynamic analysis provides empirical support to the economic models of cultural integration that account for endogenous preferences. As suggested previously, the difference in convergence patterns between immigrants from developed and non-developed countries can be explained by group-specific incentives to assimilate. First, immigrants from developed countries have a lower intended duration of stay in their residence country and a higher propensity among the former to re-emigrate, which reduce the relative value of integration. Second, origin country characteristics make it more costly for migrants from non-developed countries to return to their home state and more difficult to reverse the migration, which in turn enhance their assimilation process (Jasso and Rosenzweig, 1986; Portes and Rumbaut, 1996).

I also find that immigrants that are part of a community that represents less than 1% of the destination country's population start assimilating sooner than other immigrants. In particular, my findings indicate that the general reduction in the opinion gap observed after 20 years spent in the destination country in section 3.1 is driven almost exclusively by those immigrants belonging to smaller communities[23]. To a lesser extent, slower convergence in political preferences is observed among immigrants whose country of origin shares a common language with their destination country. Because language proficiency and access to larger social networks increase immigrants' chances in the host country, it is possible that this slower convergence reflects the lower relative value of cultural and political assimilation for these immigrants[24].

[22] It is possible that these differences are caused by greater self-selection of immigrants with cultural ties to Western Europe. However, I discuss in the last section of the paper why the political preferences studied in this paper are unlikely to suffer from a self-selection bias

[23] Because of the scarcity of historical data on immigrants' birth country, the relative size of immigrant communities is measured in 2010. My proxy of community size is therefore potentially problematic for immigrants who migrated a long time ago, when the number of immigrants from the same country of origin was significantly different than in 2010. However, the birth country composition of foreign-born populations in the sample is highly correlated overtime. Because my measure of community size depends ultimately on the relative size of these populations, this reduces the risk of misallocation between small and big immigrant communities. Finally, the main difference in assimilation across communities regards immigrants with shorter tenure - i.e less than 20 years since migration -, for which the 2010 Census data is a more accurate proxy of the actual composition of the foreign-born population than for immigrants with longer tenure.

[24] The literature has found that language proficiency has a positive effect on employment probabilities of immigrants (see Dustmann et al. (2003), and that migrant networks can lead to better economic prospects when the corresponding community is well-established (Colussi, 2015; Beaman, 2012)

3.3 The role of host societies

The previous section suggests that immigrants' institutional, cultural, and religious background as well as the size of their community are important drivers of the preference gap with natives and potentially reflect the cost and benefit structure of assimilation. In this section, I investigate a different aspect of the key mechanisms driving assimilation. In light of the fact that the political assimilation of foreign-born immigrants is almost exclusively driven by individuals from non-developed countries outside Europe, I ask the following question: Does assimilation result from destination country effects and immigrants' gradual adoption of country-specific cultural norms and conventions, or do migrants adjust to a set of institutions and opportunity structures that are not specific to their country of residence, but rather the product of Western Europe's cultural, political and economic heritage, such as a free-market economy, democratic institutions, multicultural societies, and general distrust in modern-day democratic politics, both domestically and at the European level? To answer this question, I look at the role played by destination country-specific culture and institutions through acculturation, i.e. the tendency of immigrants to adapt over time to the political preferences of natives in their destination country.

Because of the limited number of countries in the study, using a regression such as (1) on the immigrant sample and including measures of national mean political preferences and other institutional and economic characteristics at the country level is problematic. If included one at a time, these measures will capture all other unobserved country effects, and their own effect will not be identified. If, instead, they are included into regressions together, the problem is their high collinearity and limited variation. To tackle this issue, I adopt the two-stage methodology formalized by Card and Krueger (1992), and applied to studying culture transmission by Blau (1992), Fernandez and Fogli (2009), and Aleksynska (2011). In the first stage, I estimate the following regression for immigrants with destination country fixed effects:

$$Pref_{ijtk} = \alpha + \gamma X_i + \delta_{jtk} + \epsilon_{ijtk} \tag{3}$$

To make sure that I am able to isolate the effect of national political culture on immigrants' preferences, the X vector includes all individual controls from model (1), as well as several migrant-specific additional controls that are likely to influence political opinions. In particular, I know from what precedes that cross-national differences in immigrants' attitudes could originate from composition effects, especially in terms of the origin and religion of immigrants. I therefore include a categorical variable to control for the region of origin of immigrants[25] as well as a full set of dummy variable controlling for religious affiliation. I also control for whether migrants have the citizenship of their country of residence, and whether they possess EU citizenship or not.
Coefficient δ_{jtk} captures destination country effects that are both time and cohort specific. These regressions are estimated separately for each survey round t because of the country-specific changes that affected political preferences between 2010 and 2018[26]. Also, to check for acculturation and the differentiated effect of destination

[25]These groups are Africa, South Asia, East Asia, MENA, Western Europe and Anglo-Saxon countries, Southern Europe, and South America and the Caribbean. A detailed list of immigrants by country of birth is available in Table 10

[26]Prominent examples of major international events that had country-specific political consequences include the 2008 economic and financial crisis, the 2015 refugee crisis, or Brexit.

country on immigrants with more or less residence time, I split the immigrants sample into 2 cohorts using the median tenure among immigrants. The subindex k distinguishes between migrants that have lived less or more than 15 years in the destination country. I also restrict the sample to country-year pairs for which I have at least 25 observations in each sub-group of immigrants[27].

In the second stage, the vectors of coefficients on destination country effects δ are regressed on destination country variables in a pooled regression with all survey rounds, in order to explain ceteris paribus differences in political preferences:

$$\delta_{jtk} = \beta_0 + \beta_{1k}\overline{Pref}_{jt} + \beta_2 C_{jt} + \mu_t + \epsilon_{jtk} \tag{4}$$

where δ is the coefficient on the dummy variable for cohort k, destination country j in survey round t estimated from equation (3), $\overline{Pref}_{jt}$ are natives' average political preferences in year t and C_{jt} are destination country variables that include time-specific destination country per capita GDP and share of foreign-born population[28]. Regressions are estimated by weighted least squares, with first-stage inverse sampling variances of the estimated effects serving as weights[29]. Coefficient β_{1k} then captures the cohort-specific marginal effect of natives' mean political preferences as predictor of immigrants political preferences in the destination country[30].

Before discussing the results of model (3) and (4), I provide in Table 8 a preliminary estimation on the full sample of immigrants - i.e where all immigrants are pooled into a unique time cohort -. Panel A provides an example of coefficients on destination-country fixed effect δ from the first-stage regression in the 2012 ESS round. Panel B summarizes second-stage results for the full sample of immigrants based on first-stage destination country coefficients pooled across survey rounds. For each political preference, the first specification presents the results including only a measure of natives' mean political preferences as explanatory variables while the second specification presents the results when destination country per capita GDP and the share of foreign-born population are added. In the absence of controls, the mean preference variable is positive and highly significant for all political items, and the R2 values are sizable, indicating that variation in destination country mean political preferences explains an important proportion of the variation in the coefficients that captures immigrants' country-specific preferences. Moreover, regressions with controls show that among destination country variables, natives' mean political preferences remain extremely important in explaining first-stage destination-country fixed effects.

In the next table (Table 9), I run the analysis corresponding to model 3 and 4 where I distinguish between immigrants with respectively less and more than 15 years of residence in their destination country. I find that

[27]Immigrants from Finland (rounds 2010, 2014, 2016), Italy (2012), Norway (2016), and Portugal (2014, 2016) were therefore excluded from the analysis because too few migrants were surveyed to permit meaningful analysis. Estimating baseline model (1) with the resulting sample yields very similar results to the original one.

[28]Natives' mean score in country j and round t on a given political issue is computed using the average across native respondents, weighted by design weights.

[29]This allows to control for possible within country correlation of regression errors in the first-stage.

[30]My results are robust to using the mean tenure (20 years of residence) as a threshold and to the inclusion of country-year survey rounds with less than 25 migrant observations.

the explanatory power of natives' mean political preferences increases significantly with tenure for three of the five dependent variables. The coefficient is more than twice as large for attitudes to gay rights, and a sizable, although less spectacular gap, exists for preferences on immigration policies (1.7 times larger) and trust in national parliaments (1.2 times larger). These differences suggest that an acculturation of immigrants' preferences to country-specific norms takes place on these issues. The acculturation of immigrants' preferences on social issues such as homosexuality and immigration is not surprising and reflects the diversity of opinions in Western Europe, which are themselves the product of cultural and religious traditions and immigration history[31]. On the other hand, acculturation of political trust may seem counter-intuitive at first since little variation exists across Western Europe democracies in terms of political regimes. It is however consistent with the cultural theories on political trust, which hypothesize that trust in political institutions originates outside the political sphere in long-standing and deeply seated cultural beliefs about people (see Inglehart, 1997; Putnam, 1993), and the findings of Dinesen et al. (2010), who show that an intergenerational acculturation of trust takes place among non-western foreign-born individuals upon migrating to Western Europe.

In contrast, Table 9 indicates that no acculturation takes place in the long-run for preferences over redistribution and attitudes to EU unification. The explanatory power of natives' mean political preferences on immigrants' support for redistribution increases slightly with tenure, but this increase is far from significant. In line with the interpretation suggested in section 3.1, this result lends support to the idea of a flexible adjustment of immigrants' attitudes to redistribution, where foreigners gain access to welfare services and face the same opportunity structures as native-born individuals after a few years of residence in their destination country. Thus, I hypothesize that natives' attitudes towards redistribution may predict cross-national differences in immigrants' attitudes through self-selection rather than changes in cultural values in the long run. Moreover, the strong assimilation of preferences towards EU unification observed in Section 3.1 does not seem to be driven by country-specific attitudes. The coefficient associated with natives' mean preferences is slightly lower for immigrants with longer tenure and the difference between both cohorts is nowhere near statistical significance. Two distinct channels can potentially explain this result. First, it is likely that the perception of EU institutions as whole influences immigrants' political attitudes about greater unification. In this context, international political institutions are often regarded as responsible for individual economic outcomes, and assimilation could then simply reflect the general distrust in traditional political institutions that has accompanied the rise of populism and anti-EU rhetoric in Western Europe over the past 20 years. A second possibility is that over time, migrants develop an attachment to their country of residence which, in turn, favors nationalistic feelings and more hostile views towards the EU, regardless of their destination country.

This section documents the long-term acculturation of immigrants' political preferences about gay rights, immigration, and political trust to country-specific norms and conventions. Yet, in the current framework, I shall stress that it is not possible to claim with certainty that this acculturation is driven by an actual shift in cultural beliefs. Indeed, while cross-country differences suggest that political preferences may have an important cultural component, they are also determined by contextual and institutional determinants. For instance, I would expect differences in political preferences to be influenced by economic, political, or social aspects of the

[31]For instance, while all European countries have received an increasing number of immigrants in the past decade, Scandinavian and Northern European countries are historically regarded as immigration countries, whereas Southern European states such as Portugal, Italy, and Spain are mostly considered as emigration countries.

environment and reflected in the national policies associated with each of these preferences. If this is the case, I cannot rule out the possibility that migrants slowly update information about the current context in their destination country, and that my estimates are simply picking up this slow updating rather than the true effect of cultural changes. Unfortunately, testing the role played by each of these mechanism is not possible with the ESS data. It therefore remains an important question but one that lies outside the scope of this paper.

3.4 Robustness to self-selection bias

A primary concern when examining the preferences of immigrants is selection. Cross-country migration decisions are clearly non-random, and my primary issue here regards out-migration and the possibility that migrants with preferences closer to natives stay longer in their country of residence, which would bias my results. In fact, in a recent report, the OECD (2008) estimates that, depending on the countries and time periods considered, 20 to 50 percent of immigrants leave their host country within the first five years after arrival. In 2011, for some of the countries under consideration in this study, foreign-born outflows stood respectively at a ratio of 41 percent, 64 percent, and 76 percent for the United Kingdom, Germany, and Spain. In the case of Europe, close to 50 percent of the original arrival cohort has left the destination country ten years after arrival. If temporary migrants are negatively self-selected with respect to their opinion gap with natives, the tenure effect that I identify in the general analysis would reflect this self-selection mechanism rather than political assimilation.
Ideally, I would have longitudinal data to control for these cohort effects. In the absence of such data, I turn to the existing literature on temporary migration. This literature identifies several individual characteristics of return migrants in Europe which indicate that we should not be too concerned with the possibility that the previous results are driven by self-selection of less integrated foreign-born individuals into return migration. First, immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe are less likely to depart. For instance, in Norway, although the average re-emigration rate after five years is about 50%, the retention rate of immigrants from OECD countries is below 30% while that of immigrants from non-Western countries is above 75% (Bratsberg et al., 2007). Likewise, in Sweden, the probability that an immigrant will leave the country is lower amongst immigrants from Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe (Nekby, 2006). Against this backdrop, my analysis shows that convergence in political attitudes is primarily driven by immigrants from non-developed countries, which are therefore the least subject to return migration. If self-selection was indeed driving the results, I would estimate a comparatively stronger assimilation effect among Western-born immigrants, who are relatively more likely to re-emigrate than migrants from less developed countries. Second, the return rate in OECD countries after five years is not much higher than the return rate after three years among working-age immigrants, suggesting that immigrants who leave their country of destination do so relatively shortly after arrival. This result is largely explained by the fact that, in many European countries, an immigrant can obtain a long-term residence permit after five years of residence, or even take out the nationality of the host country. More generally, the longer a migrant stays in the host country, the less likely he or she is to return home or emigrate to a third country (OECD, 2008; Nekby, 2006). In contrast, my findings indicate that the convergence of immigrants and natives' political preferences goes on for several decades after the time of migration and is therefore not particularly prone to selection effects that may occur during the first years of residence in the

host country[32]. Finally, the re-emigration rate of highly skilled immigrants is above the average (OECD, 2008), and immigrants with higher earnings have shorter intended stay: Data from the US New Immigrant Survey (NIS) and the German Socio-economic Panel (SOEP) have shown that working-age immigrants with higher level of education were significantly less likely to report an intention to stay permanently than their less educated counterparts, suggesting that immigrants' plans to return differ along the distribution of pre-migration education (see Dustmann, 2003). I ran separate analyses for low and high educated migrants, and found that while high-educated migrants converge more rapidly to natives' views on matters of homosexuality, trust, and immigration, assimilation remains strong and statistically significant among low-skill migrants, indicating that my general effect is not primarily driven by the self-selection of more skilled migrants into return migration.

4 Conclusion and discussion

As the proportion of immigrants is growing in developed countries, they increasingly influence the scope, shape, and directions of the political life of receiving communities. This paper documents the political assimilation of immigrants and therefore contributes to the understanding of the potential political and electoral consequences of these demographic changes. It presents a descriptive analysis of first-generation immigrants' political preferences on redistribution, homosexuality, immigration, political trust and attitudes to EU unification, and builds on assimilation theory and economic models of cultural transmission to inform the interpretation of the results.

For all political outcomes with the exception of redistribution, I find that immigrants hold on average much different views from natives, and that migration status has a greater effect on these preferences than any other individual traits I am able to control for. In particular, foreign-born immigrants hold more restrictive views on gay rights but show greater levels of trust in national parliaments and are more supportive of EU unification and open immigration policies. Moreover, I find strong empirical support in favour of assimilation: The preference gap between immigrants and natives gradually closes over time as immigrants' preferences converge to the norm, and the residual difference in preferences for immigrants with the longest tenure is negligible. In contrast, at the time of migration, immigrants are only slightly more conservative than European natives, and these differences disappear after only a few years in the destination country. My findings also suggest that differences in migrants' religious, linguistic and economic background play an important role in shaping both the size of the preference gap with natives and the speed of assimilation. Political assimilation is almost exclusively driven by immigrants from non-developed countries, and religious beliefs play an important part in this assimilation process. Muslim immigrants hold political opinions that are consistently more distant from those of natives than non-religious immigrants or immigrants who belong to another religious denomination, and remain much more conservative than natives on the issue of gay rights over time. I also find that immigrants with greater language proficiency or access to larger social networks are less likely to assimilate, suggesting that immigrants may form endogenous preferences about the relative value of cultural and political assimilation, in

[32]This, in turn, would be problematic if most of the assimilation took place between the first and second cohorts of our sample, i.e between immigrants with less than 5 years of residence and those with 6 to 10 years of residence. One exception is redistributive preferences, for which I cannot exclude that the interpretation of the results may suffer from this bias.

line with the economic literature on cultural transmission. Finally, I show that assimilation of preferences on gay rights, immigration policy and trust in national parliaments is driven by acculturation to country-specific norms, while the convergence patterns of attitudes to EU unification in the long run cannot be explained by national specificities.

Throughout the analysis, the nature of political preferences appears to have a significant impact on the way immigrants assimilate beside individual characteristics and host countries' environment. On the one hand, they reflect the economic and social integration of immigrants and their access to the same opportunities as natives. At the same time, they also have large cultural underpinnings, which traditionally take longer to evolve. In the current setting, I cannot however disentangle the role played by each of these channels. More research in this direction is necessary.

From a policy perspective, my study informs the design of naturalization and citizenship policies, which are, with very few exceptions, the only way to become eligible to vote in national elections in Western Europe. By providing a detailed account of the chronological changes in political preferences between natives and first-generation immigrants, this paper helps policy makers in receiving countries to estimate how the conditions and timing of access to naturalization and citizenship can affect the consequences of foreign-born residents on electoral and political outcomes[33].

Last, this paper and the extant literature have documented the influence of European political norms on the preferences of first-generation immigrants from outside Europe. One may ask symmetrically whether immigrants who bring with them the culture of their origin country are in a position to influence natives at destination. Tabellini and Giuliano (2020) go some way towards answering this question and find that immigration left its footprint on American ideology via cultural transmission from at the time of the New Deal. This paper neither intends to, nor can provide an answer to this question in the European context. However, whether such influence and transformation of existing societies are indeed taking place is an important issue for further research.

[33]In practice, second-generation immigrants born in Western Europe are de facto eligible to naturalization before they reach the age of voting, both in jus soli countries and those with a mixed citizenship regime. The consequences of immigrants' political integration are therefore directly and substantially impacted by citizenship policies through the size and composition of the foreign-born population that they add to the franchise.

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Appendix

Tables

Table 1: Sample statistics, Destination countries

Destination country	Total number of obs.	Native-born % of sample	Foreign-born as % of sample	Percent of foreign-born with over 20 yrs. of residence	Number of ESS rounds
Austria	7,734	89.67	10.33	55.07	4
Belgium	8,223	86.87	13.13	42.04	5
Denmark	4,486	93.89	6.11	53.65	3
Finland	9,441	97.22	2.78	22.52	5
France	8,785	90.27	9.73	64.56	5
Germany	13,243	90.11	9.89	53.66	5
Greece	2,429	91.68	8.32	24.75	1
Ireland	11,346	87.75	12.25	19.06	5
Italy	5,291	94.37	5.63	30.54	3
Netherlands	8,364	91.98	8.02	60.51	5
Norway	6,895	93.62	6.38	37.27	5
Portugal	6,212	95.64	4.36	33.58	4
Spain	6,929	91.15	8.85	15.17	4
Sweden	6,237	88.26	11.74	60.11	4
Switzerland	6,782	74.3	25.7	52.21	5
United Kingdom	9,940	90.96	9.04	39.82	5
Average	7,646	90.49	9.52	41.5	

Table 2: Dependent variables

Redistribution			Gay rights			Political trust			EU attitudes			Immigration		
Scale	Natives	Foreign-born	Scale	Natives	Foreign-born	Scale	Natives	Foreign-born	Scale	Natives	Foreign-born	Scale	Natives	Foreign-born
0	2.42 %	2.76 %	0	2.24 %	6.66 %	0	8.96 %	5.64 %	0	7.25 %	6.17 %	0	6.72 %	2.74 %
1	11.15 %	11.62 %	1	4.14 %	7.77 %	1	4.18 %	2.83 %	1	4.27 %	3.36 %	1	22.32 %	16.03 %
2	14.79 %	15.76 %	2	8.66 %	12 %	2	7.4 %	5.47 %	2	7.62 %	6.51 %	2	49.27 %	52.88 %
3	44.13 %	44.7 %	3	38.18 %	36.47 %	3	10.44 %	8.33 %	3	10.26 %	7.88 %	3	21.68 %	28.35 %
4	27.51 %	25.16 %	4	46.78 %	37.6 %	4	10.64 %	8.47 %	4	9.89 %	7.56 %			
						5	17.79 %	19.66 %	5	23.33 %	23 %			
						6	13.04 %	12.55 %	6	10.21 %	10.2 %			
						7	13.69 %	15.44 %	7	10.52 %	11.69 %			
						8	9.52 %	12.77 %	8	9.03 %	11.62 %			
						9	2.78 %	4.64 %	9	3.01 %	4.53 %			
						10	1.55 %	4.2 %	10	4.62 %	7.47 %			

Notes: Cross-tabulations account for survey design and population weights. The categories for all dependent variables have been reordered to run from conservative to liberal or negative to positive attitudes.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics - Immigrants

Destination country	*Obs.*
Austria	799
Belgium	1,080
Denmark	274
Finland	262
France	855
Germany	1,390
Greece	202
Ireland	1,390
Italy	298
Netherlands	671
Norway	440
Portugal	271
Spain	613
Sweden	732
Switzerland	1,743
United Kingdom	899
Tenure (Years of residence)	*Obs.*
Less than 5	1,796
6-10	1,904
11-15	1,777
16-20	1,427
21-30	1,871
31-55	1,674
More than 45	1,390
Region of origin	*Obs.*
Africa	930
South Asia	667
East Asia	447
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	2,801
MENA	1,621
South America	956
Southern Europe	779
Western Europe and Anglo-Sax.	3,644
Total	*11,839*

Table 4: Political preferences - Natives and first-generation immigrants

	Redistribution (0-4)	Homosexuality (0-4)	EU attitudes (0-10)	Immigration (0-3)	Trust (0-10)
Natives	2.86	3.26	5.09	1.90	4.41
Foreign-born	2.82	2.83	5.53	2.08	5.21
Of which					
- Less than 20 years of residency	2.80	2.78	5.86	2.14	5.41
- More than 20 years of residency	2.86	2.88	5.12	2.00	4.96

Source: Own calculations based on the ESS using survey design and population weights. For all dependent variables, the table presents the weighted average. T-tests show that differences in mean values are significant at 1% between foreign-born and natives, and between foreign-born individuals with less than 20 years and more than 20 years of residency.

Table 5: Summary statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N
Individual characteristics (Full sample)					
Foreign-born	0.1	0.3	0	1	122337
Age	50.02	18.45	16	100	122337
Male	0.48	0.5	0	1	122337
Married	0.48	0.5	0	1	122337
Years of education completed	12.93	4.29	0	54	122337
Lives in rural area	0.39	0.49	0	1	122337
Log household size	0.8	0.53	0	2.94	122337
In the labour force and employed	0.53	0.5	0	1	122337
Concerns about hh income	1.84	0.82	1	4	122337
Religiosity (0-10) scale	4.47	3.02	0	10	122337
Member of ethnic minority	0.04	0.19	0	1	122337
Income level (decile rank)	5.32	2.78	1	10	102413
Ever unemployed and seeking work for over 3 months	0.28	0.45	0	1	122337
Partner doing last 7 days: paid work	0.35	0.48	0	1	122337
EU citizen	0.97	0.17	0	1	122337
Citizen of host country	0.95	0.22	0	1	122322
Main source of income:					
- Wage and salaries	0.57	0.5	0	1	122337
- Self-employed	0.07	0.26	0	1	122337
- Pensions	0.27	0.44	0	1	122337
- Unemployment benefits	0.03	0.17	0	1	122337
- Social benefits	0.04	0.19	0	1	122337
- Investments	0.01	0.08	0	1	122337
- Other sources of inc.	0.01	0.12	0	1	122337
Political attitudes:					
Redistribution	2.83	1.03	0	4	120908
Gay rights	3.2	0.96	0	4	120716
Trust in national parliament	4.79	2.53	0	10	120109
EU unification	4.92	2.59	0	10	89709
Support for immig.	1.88	0.82	0	3	120033
Individual characteristics (Immig. sample)					
Years of residence in host country	21.73	16.93	1	89	11839
Developed origin country	0.3	0.46	0	1	11839
Muslim	0.16	0.37	0	1	11778
Common official language	0.31	0.46	0	1	11746
Community size (% of birth country group in tot pop.)	0.32	0.47	0	1	11839
Country characteristics					
Log of gdp	10.47	0.38	9.71	11.16	16
Unemployment (%)	9.18	4.77	3.85	23.08	16
Share of foreign-born (%)	8.91	4.67	3.58	23.32	16

Table 6: Opinion Gap between First-Generation Immigrants and Natives

	Redistribution			Homosexuality			EU attitudes		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
First-generation immig.	-0.004	-0.047***	-0.120***	-0.470***	-0.365***	-0.558***	0.481***	0.381***	0.775***
	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.027)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.030)	(0.048)	(0.054)	(0.085)
Yrs. in host country			0.003***			0.008***			-0.016***
			(0.001)			(0.001)			(0.003)
Individual controls	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
N	102073	102073	102073	101957	101957	101957	78194	78194	78194
r2	0.046	0.091	0.092	0.059	0.166	0.168	0.063	0.103	0.104

	Immigration			Trust		
	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)
First-gen. immig.	0.119***	0.139***	0.236***	0.688***	0.641***	1.155***
	(0.011)	(0.013)	(0.020)	(0.039)	(0.044)	(0.069)
Yrs. in host country			-0.004***			-0.021***
			(0.001)			(0.002)
Individual controls	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
N	101329	101329	101329	101487	101487	101487
r2	0.087	0.160	0.161	0.095	0.161	0.163

Individual controls include age, gender, marital status, years of education, whether the respondent lives in a rural or urban area, household size, employment status of the respondent and the respondent's partner, household's income level (decile rank), primary income source, past unemployment experience, respondent's feelings about household's income, religiosity, whether the respondent is a self-declared member of an ethnic minority. All regressions include dummies for country of residence and ESS survey round and account for survey design and population weights. Robust standard errors in parentheses. * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

Table 7: Opinion Gap and Immigrants' Background

	Coefficient on dummy variable for being born outside of the country of residence					
	Redistribution	Homosexuality	EU attitudes	Immigration	Trust	**Immig. obs.**
Origin: Non-developed	-0.0423**	-0.486***	0.428***	0.140***	0.755***	8,318
	(0.0184)	(0.0201)	(0.0574)	(0.0136)	(0.0469)	
Origin: Developed	0.0334	0.0175	0.360***	0.173***	0.215***	3,521
	(0.0289)	(0.0249)	(0.0885)	(0.0193)	(0.0683)	
Non-muslim	-0.0313*	-0.291***	0.386***	0.141***	0.564***	9,900
	(0.0168)	(0.0174)	(0.0531)	(0.0122)	(0.0421)	
Muslim	0.0153	-0.893***	0.656***	0.200***	1.193***	1,878
	(0.0381)	(0.0455)	(0.111)	(0.0282)	(0.102)	
No common language	-0.0495***	-0.410***	0.423***	0.136***	0.661***	8,150
	(0.0190)	(0.0205)	(0.0624)	(0.0141)	(0.0490)	
Common language	0.00628	-0.304***	0.269***	0.181***	0.584***	3,596
	(0.0286)	(0.0306)	(0.0779)	(0.0197)	(0.0686)	
Small community (< 1% of pop.)	-0.0209	-0.364***	0.481***	0.158***	0.580***	8,084
	(0.0182)	(0.0193)	(0.0576)	(0.0133)	(0.0464)	
Large community ((> 1% of pop.)	-0.0289	-0.410***	0.226***	0.123***	0.850***	3,755
	(0.0281)	(0.0312)	(0.0826)	(0.0206)	(0.0690)	
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	

Each cell represents a separate regression, in which column heading denotes the independent variable, and row heading denotes the sub-sample of migrants included in the regression with the native-born sample. The last column indicates the number of migrants in each sub-group. All regressions include dummies for country of residence and ESS survey round and account for survey design and population weights. Robust standard errors in parentheses. * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Table 8: The Role of Destination Countries

Panel A: Example of a first stage regression (2012 survey round, full sample)

	Redistribution	Homosexuality	Trust	EU attitudes	Immigration
Belgium	0.131	-0.459***	0.173	0.513	0.152
	(0.167)	(0.171)	(0.325)	(0.384)	(0.114)
Denmark	-0.324*	-0.390**	1.308***	1.409***	0.270**
	(0.189)	(0.175)	(0.409)	(0.461)	(0.125)
Finland	0.025	-0.859***	0.042	-0.656	0.092
	(0.279)	(0.301)	(0.509)	(0.534)	(0.173)
France	0.385**	-0.586***	-0.962***	-0.031	0.190*
	(0.181)	(0.168)	(0.357)	(0.384)	(0.115)
Germany	0.436***	-0.665***	0.040	0.506	0.509***
	(0.151)	(0.149)	(0.313)	(0.378)	(0.108)
Ireland	0.399**	-0.109	-1.679***	-0.500	-0.072
	(0.198)	(0.159)	(0.389)	(0.450)	(0.146)
Norway	-0.138	-0.410**	0.870**	-0.091	0.452***
	(0.188)	(0.174)	(0.368)	(0.405)	(0.128)
Portugal	0.357*	-0.349	-1.366***	1.107	0.315
	(0.184)	(0.243)	(0.526)	(0.789)	(0.226)
Spain	0.501**	-0.303	-1.538***	1.469***	0.315**
	(0.199)	(0.189)	(0.474)	(0.480)	(0.158)
Sweden	0.600***	-0.556***	0.611*	0.209	0.519***
	(0.154)	(0.145)	(0.320)	(0.376)	(0.107)
Switzerland	0.361**	-0.633***	1.526***	0.117	0.286***
	(0.152)	(0.150)	(0.293)	(0.356)	(0.105)
United Kingdom	0.254	-0.438***	-0.987***	-1.136***	-0.037
	(0.173)	(0.158)	(0.356)	(0.391)	(0.120)
Obs.	2301	2307	2176	2193	2288
r2	0.108	0.226	0.206	0.088	0.124

Regressions account for survey design weights and include the full set of controls from model 1 as well as region of origin, religious affiliation, citizenship of residence country and EU citizenship. Omitted residence country for this and all other first-stage regressions: Netherlands. Austria and Greece were not surveyed by the ESS in 2012. Italy is excluded from the analysis in 2012 because too few migrants were surveyed to permit meaningful analysis.

Panel B: Second stage regression (full-sample)

	Redistribution		Homosexuality		EU attitudes		Immigration		Trust	
Natives' mean pref.	0.734***	0.655***	0.491***	0.553***	0.682***	0.613***	0.286***	0.328***	0.792***	0.754***
	(0.060)	(0.069)	(0.103)	(0.112)	(0.112)	(0.112)	(0.063)	(0.068)	(0.041)	(0.049)
log GDP		-0.269**		-0.182		-0.841*		-0.116		-0.073
		(0.110)		(0.139)		(0.438)		(0.108)		(0.293)
Share of foreigners		0.009**		0.007		0.003		-0.003		0.027***
		(0.004)		(0.006)		(0.017)		(0.004)		(0.010)
Obs.	56	56	56	56	56	56	43	43	56	56
r2	0.783	0.812	0.455	0.477	0.516	0.576	0.356	0.408	0.895	0.912

All regressions include year dummy variables. Dependent variable: Corresponding destination country fixed effect from the first-stage. Estimation method: weighted least squares; with first-stage inverse sampling variances of the estimated fixed effects as weights. Missing country-year pairs: Finland (2010, 2014, 2016), Italy (2012), Norway (2016), Portugal (2014, 2016) * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

Table 9: Acculturation to Destination Country's Political Preferences

	Redistribution		Homosexuality		EU attitudes		Immigration		Trust	
Tenure	Less than 15 yrs	More than 15 yrs	Less than 15 yrs	More than 15 yrs	Less than 15 yrs	More than 15 yrs	Less than 15 yrs	More than 15 yrs	Less than 15 yrs	More than 15 yrs
Natives' mean pref.	0.594***	0.648***	0.346**	0.747***^{a}	0.672***	0.604***	0.243***	0.420***^{b}	0.697***	0.842***^{b}
	(0.130)	(0.104)	(0.150)	(0.124)	(0.136)	(0.119)	(0.088)	(0.070)	(0.099)	(0.082)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	56	56	56	56	56	56	43	43	56	56
r2	0.581	0.581	0.383	0.383	0.593	0.593	0.424	0.424	0.842	0.842

All regressions include year dummy variables and control for log of GDP and foreign population. Dependent variable: Cohort-specific destination country fixed effect from first-stage. Estimation method: weighted least squares; with first-stage inverse sampling variances of the estimated fixed effects as weights. For each dependent variable, coefficients for both cohort are estimated in a single regression. *a*: T-test for difference in coefficients between cohorts is significant at the 5% level. *b*: T-test for difference in coefficients between cohorts is significant at the 10% level. Missing country-year pairs: Finland (2010, 2014, 2016), Italy (2012), Norway (2016), Portugal (2014, 2016) * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Table 10: Immigrants - Country of origin

Country of origin	Obs.	Country of origin	Obs.	Country of origin	Obs.
AE	1	GN	22	NO	52
AF	72	GP	2	NP	19
AG	1	GQ	7	NZ	14
AL	214	GR	61	PA	2
AM	30	GT	4	PE	77
AN	4	GW	12	PF	1
AO	71	GY	7	PG	1
AR	73	HK	9	PH	94
AS	1	HN	7	PK	178
AT	125	HR	141	PL	899
AU	30	HT	6	PR	2
AW	10	HU	118	PS	7
AX	2	ID	73	PT	303
AZ	5	IE	105	PY	13
BA	279	IL	14	RE	6
BD	33	IM	1	RO	471
BE	74	IN	307	RS	160
BF	6	IO	1	RU	224
BG	100	IQ	144	RW	21
BI	9	IR	141	SA	9
BJ	6	IS	21	SC	1
BN	3	IT	411	SD	13
BO	37	JE	1	SE	97
BQ	4	JM	38	SG	5
BR	222	JO	6	SI	34
BW	1	JP	31	SK	56
BY	19	KE	39	SL	8
CA	26	KG	21	SN	47
CD	51	KH	8	SO	78
CF	5	KM	5	SR	80
CG	41	KP	4	ST	8
CH	43	KR	17	SV	6
CI	34	KW	6	SX	1
CL	58	KZ	125	SY	93
CM	31	LA	5	RS	16
CN	92	LB	53	TD	4
CO	81	LC	3	TG	14
CR	2	LI	2	TH	68
CU	28	LK	65	TJ	7
CV	63	LR	2	TL	2
CW	25	LS	1	TM	2
CY	4	LT	98	TN	99
CZ (Rep.)	94	LU	8	TR	473
CZ	24	LV	62	TT	4
DE	777	LY	4	TW	3
DJ	3	MA	468	TZ	12
DK	71	MD	34	TL	2
DM	3	ME	7	UA	87
DO	39	MG	20	UG	10
DZ	198	MK	95	US	144
EC	77	ML	8	USSR	241
EE	81	MM	1	UY	14
EG	45	MN	3	UZ	13
ER	28	MO	2	VE	42
ES	51	MQ	4	VN	63
ET	23	MR	4	XK	141
FI	128	MT	3	YE	1
FO	8	MU	17	YT	2
FR	342	MW	2	YG	75
GA	7	MX	32	ZA	68
GB	562	MY	22	ZM	4
GD	3	MZ	23	ZW	34
GE	21	NE	4		
GF	1	NG	105		
GH	38	NI	4		
GL	4	NL	204		
GM	11	NO	52		

Figures

Figure 1: Tenure in destination country (First-generation immigrants)

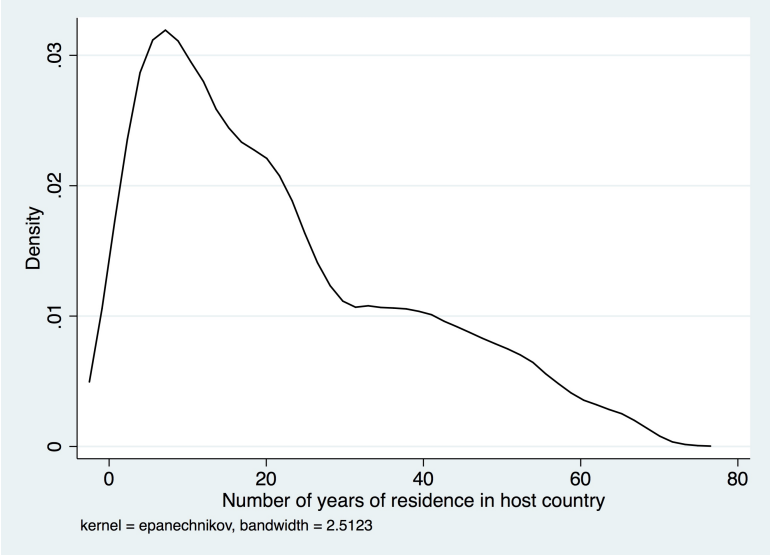

Figure 2: Convergence in political attitudes: Full sample

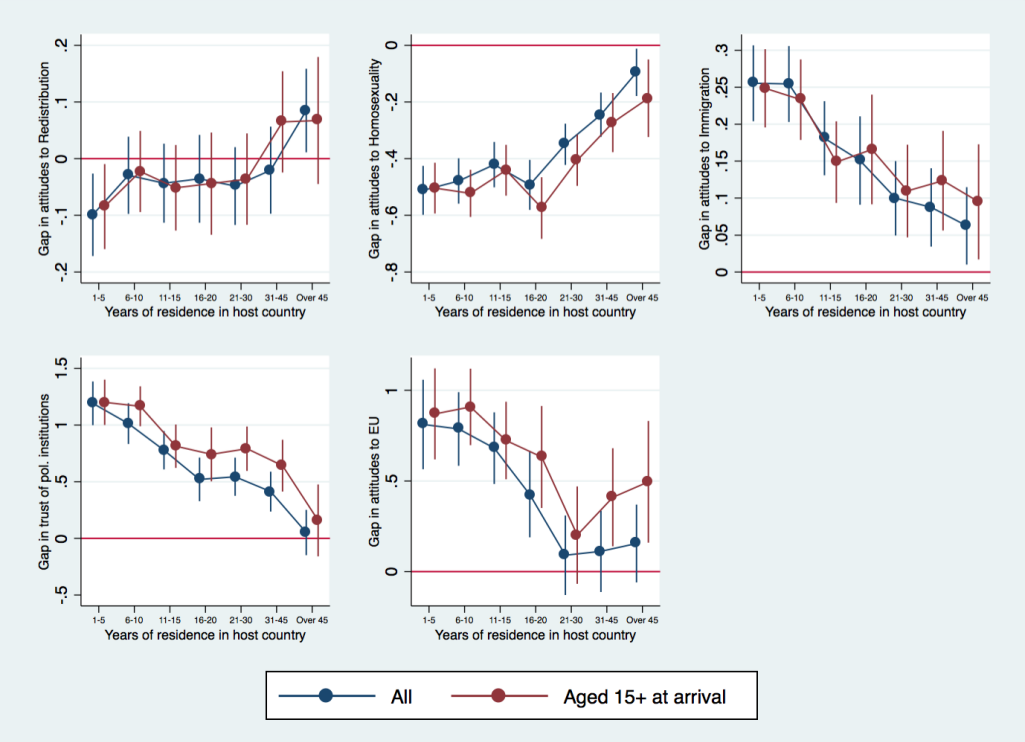

Figure 3: Convergence in attitudes: Developed vs non-developed

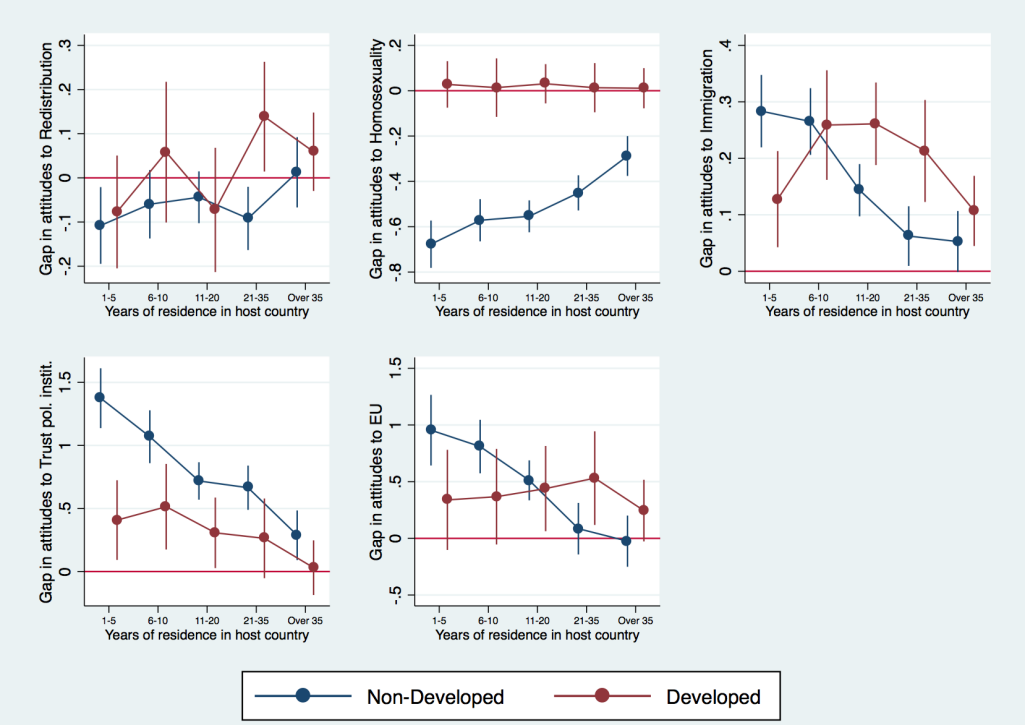

Figure 4: Convergence in attitudes: Religion

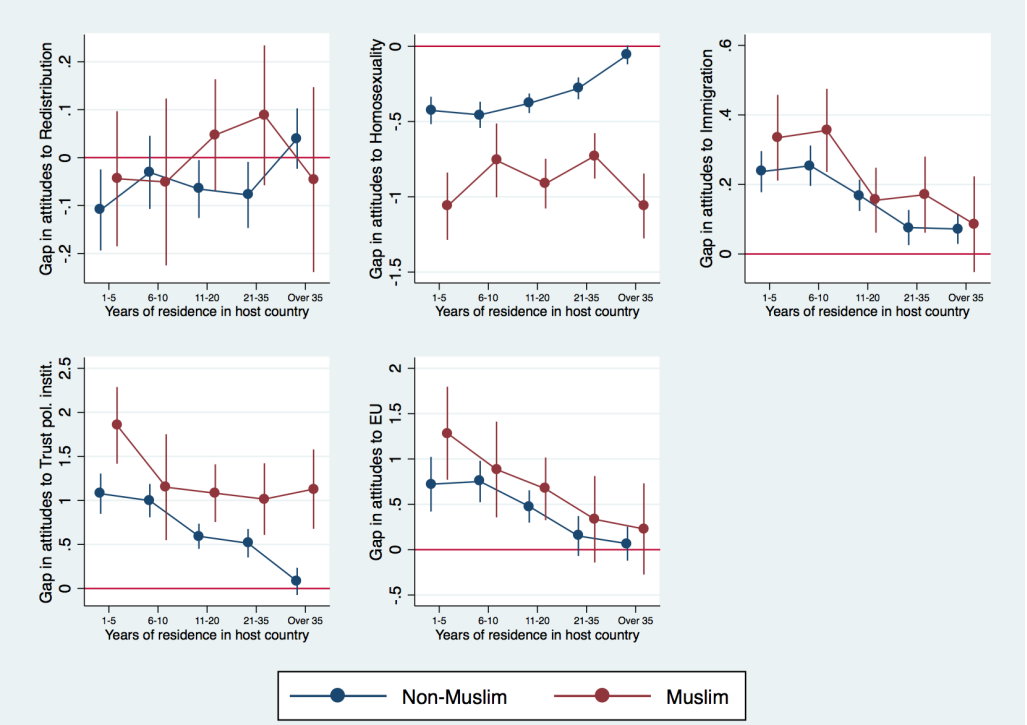

Figure 5: Convergence in attitudes: Common language

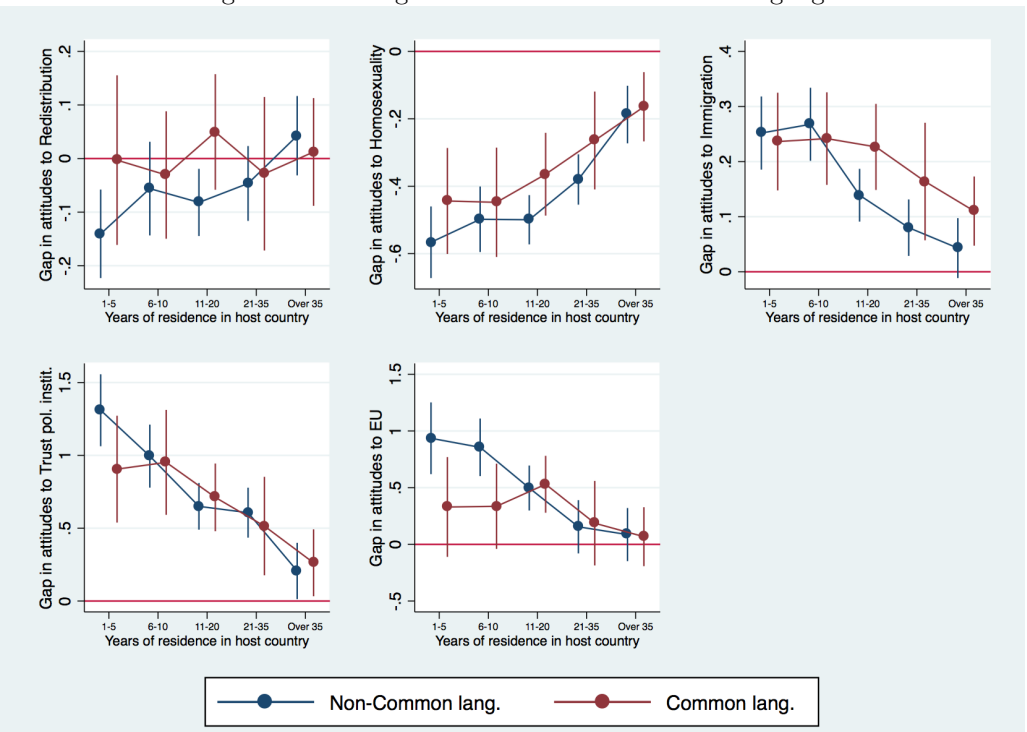

Figure 6: Convergence in political attitudes: Community size