

Attitudes towards immigration in the Netherlands:  
The role of social trust, satisfaction with the state of the country and  
welfare attitudes



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## Abstract

With the number of foreign born people in the Netherlands exceeding 2.0 million in 2017, immigration has become a topic on which every individual seems to have a strong opinion. While some argue that immigrants should be welcomed into the country, others want to close the borders in order to keep them out. Because attitudes towards immigration tend to vary widely, scholars have tried to explain the differences in attitudes towards immigration by focusing on factors such as personal and social identities, competition over resources, economic self-interest and social contact. With these theories in mind, this thesis questions whether social trust, satisfaction with the state of the country and welfare attitudes have a significant effect on immigration attitudes in the Netherlands. It is hypothesized that people with higher levels of social trust and satisfaction with the state of the country, tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigration. In addition, it is expected that those in support of the provision of social benefits and services by the government tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigration. To answer the research question, multiple linear regressions were conducted with data from round 8 of the European Social Survey. Personal characteristics were used as control variables. Support is found for the hypothesis that those with higher levels of social trust and satisfaction with the state of the country tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigration. Regression results also support the hypothesis that those who are supportive of the provision of social benefits and services by the government tend to be more supportive of immigration. One result goes against this hypothesis and finds that those who feel like the standard of living for the old is to a large extent the government's responsibility, tend to have more negative attitudes towards immigration. All in all, the results presented in this thesis provide an insight into the factors that shape immigration attitudes in the Netherlands. Hence, the findings are especially of use to those involved in the development and implementation of immigration policies in the country.

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## 1. Introduction

Immigration has been shaping Dutch society for decades. Over the years different groups of immigrants have come to settle in the Netherlands, think of: immigrants from the former Dutch colonies, guest workers recruited in the 60s and 70s, the families of (mainly) Turkish and Moroccan guest workers, and large numbers of refugees seeking for asylum in the Netherlands since the 1980s. As a result of these processes, a large part of the Dutch population has a migration background. However, immigration is not an issue of the past, since the number of immigrants<sup>1</sup> in the Netherlands continues to increase. In 2017, almost 12 percent of the total population was born abroad (CBS, 2018).

However, as practice has shown, immigration is not an ‘easy’ topic. Migration is a controversial subject, capable of sharply dividing politicians as well as citizens. Socioeconomic issues such as the integration of immigrants and their labor participation have figured prominently on the political agenda. Results of the Eurobarometer illustrate that immigration is an important issue for many living in the Netherlands. The 2016 edition, pointed out that the Dutch perceive migration as the most important issue in the European Union at the moment (Europese Commissie, 2016, p. 3). Moreover, a third of the respondents considered migration to be the most important topic in the Netherlands as well (Europese Commissie, 2016, p. 6).

The recent ‘European refugee crisis’, once again illustrated the political controversies surrounding the subject of migration. Questions on how to deal with the large numbers of migrants coming to Europe, and which countries should take them in, have proven to be difficult to answer. The rise of various right-wing anti-immigration parties across Europe shows that an increasing number of people is willing to limit immigration. Nevertheless, views on the topic differ widely; whereas some argue that immigration will benefit the receiving countries, others argue that immigrants will be a drain on national resources.

With immigration being such a central and divisive topic in our current societies, many scholars have attempted to explain those differences in attitudes towards immigration focusing on different explanatory factors, which will be discussed in the next section. This thesis will look into the factors that might have an effect on Dutch immigration attitudes, by looking into variables on social trust, satisfaction with the state of the country and welfare attitudes. Data of the European Social Survey (ESS) round 8 are used to conduct the research. The next section

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<sup>1</sup> The Dutch Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS, in Dutch: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek) defines immigration as: “Immigration is about the settlement of people from abroad in the Netherlands. To count as an immigrant, these persons need to be subscribed in the municipal population database” (translated from Dutch) (CBS, n.d.).

will provide a literature review of the existing theories on factors shaping attitudes towards immigration and provide more information on the focus of the research presented in this thesis. The methods section will go on to explain the dataset, the variables and the statistical methods used to conduct this research. Consequently, the results section will provide the results of the statistical analyses, and illustrate which variables have a significant effect on immigration attitudes in the Netherlands. To wrap up, the conclusion will summarize the main findings of the thesis and answer the research question. Finally, the discussion will go into the broader implications of the findings presented in this thesis and make recommendations for further academic research to be carried out.

## 2. Literature review

With immigration being such a central topic, many scholars have tried to explain attitudes towards immigrants and immigration. These studies try to find explanations for immigration attitudes, looking at factors on the individual or group level. Over the years, a wide variety of theories has been developed, focusing on different explanatory factors (for an overview of these theories see: Berg, 2015; Card et al., 2005). This section will provide a basic overview of the different theories on immigration attitudes. Examples of studies finding support for the different theoretical approaches will also be provided.

Some scholars have focused on *social identities* in order to explain attitudes towards immigration. This set of studies originates from social identity theory,<sup>2</sup> which explains intergroup behavior on basis of in-group-out-group categorizations. In order to maintain or enhance self-esteem, one's own group (the in-group) needs to compare favorably to the out-group (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 225). This process can result in prejudice and hostility towards the out-group, to such an extent that "the mere awareness of the presence of an out-group is sufficient to provoke intergroup competitive or discriminatory responses on the part of the in-group" (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). In line with this argument, Blumer (1958) argued that race prejudice mainly depended on the "positional arrangement of racial groups" (p. 4). Similarly, Lee and Ottati (2002) found that in-group-out-group bias shaped opinions on California's Proposition 187, which severely limited services for illegal immigrants in the State of California.

At the level of the individual, scholars have often looked at *personal identities* to explain immigration attitudes. These studies take into account personal characteristics such as gender, age and education. Studying immigration attitudes in the U.S., Chandler and Tsai (2001) find that age and sex have a significant influence on immigration attitudes. The results point out that older individuals and females, express higher levels of opposition to legal immigration. Also Espenshade and Hampstead (1996) take into account personal characteristics such as gender, age, race and education, when examining immigration attitudes in the U.S. They find that age, education and race have a significant effect on immigration attitudes.<sup>3</sup> Investigating attitudes towards foreigners in the European Union, Gang et al. (2002) find that younger individuals and

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<sup>2</sup> The social identity theory was developed during the 1970s and 80s by social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner.

<sup>3</sup> The study finds that the age groups 18-24 and 45-54 are significantly more supportive of immigration than other age groups. High school graduates are significantly less supportive of immigration than college graduates, whereas individuals who have not graduated high school are significantly more supportive. Finally, blacks and Asians are significantly more supportive of immigration than whites, but the effect is not significant for Hispanics.

higher educated individuals are more supportive of immigration. Similarly, Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007) find that higher levels of education and skill increase support for immigration across Europe.

Another strand of studies is associated with realistic conflict theory.<sup>4</sup> In this line of reasoning, intergroup hostility and discrimination of out-groups originates from a *real or perceived competition over scarce resources* (Scheepers et al., 2002, p. 18). Out-groups are perceived as a threat to tangible and intangible resources such as: housing, jobs, religion, language and power. As such, Bobo (1983) argued that whites' opposition to busing<sup>5</sup> in the U.S. at the time, was not just a manifestation of mere prejudice or symbolic racism but should be explained by realistic group conflict motives. Accordingly, whites respond to busing as "a threat to their social world, a world of near ubiquitous residential segregation and, as a result, school segregation" (p. 1208). Applying the realistic conflict theory to the subject of immigration, Quillian (1995) studies prejudice towards immigrants and racial minorities across Europe. Results show that perceived intergroup threat (based on the current economic situation and the size of the subordinate group) is an important factor shaping prejudice attitudes. In a study conducted in the U.S. and Canada, Esses et al. (2001) find that perceived competition for resources and a belief in zero-sum competition between groups are "strongly implicated in negative attitudes towards immigrants and immigration" (p. 402).

Taking the conflict theory to the individual level, many studies on immigration argue that *economic self-interest* is an important factor influencing attitudes towards immigration. Using this argument, anti-immigration attitudes develop because individuals perceive immigrants as a threat to their own economic position in terms of job opportunities and wages, especially in times of economic downturn. Nevertheless, whether immigration indeed leads to lower wages and a reduction in employment opportunities is debatable (Gang et al., 2002, p. 6). Scheve and Slaughter (2001) find that less skilled workers in the U.S. are significantly more likely to favor limiting immigration into the country. Mayda (2006) finds that immigration opinions are significantly related with individual skill level, and that the skill level of natives relative to that of immigrants is important. As such, skilled natives are more likely to have pro-immigration attitudes when the skill composition of the natives relative to the immigrants is high. Malchow-Møller et al. (2006) find support for the economic self-interest hypothesis by

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<sup>4</sup> Realistic conflict theory was originated from the work of social scientist Donald Campbell in the 1960s.

<sup>5</sup> Also called desegregation busing. It is the practice of transporting students in the U.S. to schools in or outside of their neighborhoods, to redress racial segregation.

looking into people's perception of the consequences of immigration. The results show that: "among those who believe that immigration disproportionately harms the poor, the poor are more opposed to immigration" and "among those who believe that immigration lowers wages, those in the workforce are significantly more negative of further immigration" (p. 23).<sup>6</sup> Also in line with the economic self-interest hypothesis, Espenshade and Hampstead (1996) find that between 1945 and 1995 U.S. unemployment rates were good predictors of opinions on the reduction of immigration. The higher the unemployment rate, the more people felt that immigration should be reduced (p. 538-539). In addition, they found that the people who felt like the American economy was deteriorating, were particularly prone to express that immigration to the U.S. should be reduced (p. 549-550). Despite these supportive results, it is important to note that there are also studies that do not find support for the theory (see for example: Burns & Gimpel, 2000; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2010).

Another group of studies is concerned with the question whether *social contact* between groups can shape intergroup behavior and attitudes. These studies are in line with the intergroup contact theory, which was developed by psychologist Gordon Allport in his 1954 book *The Nature of Prejudice*.<sup>7</sup> Several studies have found support for the social contact hypothesis, suggesting that social contact improves intergroup relations. In their study of intergroup contact with immigrants in Italy, Voci and Hewstone (2003) find that positive contact with people from the out-group helps improve intergroup relations, mainly through reducing anxiety. Similarly, Neumann and Moy (2018) find that those who have frequent and positive social contact with different others, are more likely to support immigrant groups (p. 8). Dixon (2006) finds that superficial contact between whites, Hispanics and Asians reduces prejudice between them. McLaren's (2003) results suggest that intimate contact with minority groups reduces the level of willingness to expel legal immigrants across Western European countries.

Looking at these different types of theories, one could question whether there is also a relationship between immigration attitudes and *individual attitudes* towards other matters. Looking at the social contact theory for example, which predicts that intergroup contact

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<sup>6</sup> The same analysis is done among those who believe that immigrants take jobs away and among those who believe that immigrants place a burden on public budgets, similar results are found (p. 23-24). The study also finds that there is a positive relationship between education and attitudes towards immigration. However, the authors argue that this is not due to motives of economic self-interest because they do not find that higher educated people are against high skilled migration (p. 23).

<sup>7</sup> According to Allport (1954) there are four key conditions for contact situations to have a positive effect: equal status, intergroup cooperation, common goals, support by social and institutional factors (p. 281).

improves intergroup attitudes, the question arises whether a priori individual levels of social trust affect immigration attitudes. Do individuals with higher levels of social trust have different attitudes towards immigration than those with lower levels of social trust?<sup>8</sup> Similarly, in view of realistic conflict theories, one could question whether satisfaction with the state of the country, for example with the economy and the government, affect immigration attitudes. Is it the case that people who are satisfied with the economy and government of their country view immigration more positively because they perceive out-groups as less of a threat?<sup>9</sup> Finally, considering realistic conflict theories and theories of economic self-interest, one could question whether opinions on the welfare state affect immigration attitudes. Are people who are supportive of the provision of social benefits and services also more positive about immigration, because with social benefits and services immigrants become less of a threat in an economic sense? Or is the opposite true, and is there a general tendency towards welfare chauvinism in which people who are supportive of social benefits and services express more negative attitudes towards immigration because they are afraid that immigrants will disproportionately make use of such benefits and services? To a large extent, these questions remain unanswered by present studies on immigration and immigration attitudes. This is primarily the case because studies that do touch upon these subjects treat immigration as the independent variable, and variables such as social trust and welfare attitudes as the dependent variable.

This thesis will, therefore, attempt to answer these questions by including variables measuring immigration attitudes as dependent variables and variables measuring social trust, opinions on the state of the country and welfare attitudes as independent variables. The research question of this thesis is the following: *What is the effect of social trust, satisfaction with the state of the country and welfare attitudes on immigration attitudes in the Netherlands?* In line with this research question three hypotheses were formulated. First of all, it is hypothesized that individuals with higher (a priori) levels of social trust will express more positive attitudes towards immigration. Secondly, individuals who express higher levels of satisfaction with the country are expected to express more positive attitudes towards immigration. Finally, it is hypothesized that individuals who are supportive of the provision of social benefits and services by the government express more positive attitudes towards immigration. This effect is expected

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<sup>8</sup> This would be in line with the findings of a study by Herreros and Criado (2009) who find that people with higher levels of social trust tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigration.

<sup>9</sup> This would be in line to with the study of Quillian (1995) who finds that perceived threat is influenced by the economic situation faced by the dominant group.

because, in one of the few studies exploring the relationship between immigration attitudes and welfare attitudes, Garand et al. (2017) find that immigration attitudes are positively related to welfare attitudes.<sup>10</sup> These three hypotheses will be tested in the results chapter. However, before doing so, chapter three will explain more about the methodology of the research.

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<sup>10</sup> Many studies explore whether immigration (and increased diversity) lead to anti-welfare state attitudes across countries. However, very few studies investigate the particular effect of welfare attitudes on attitudes towards immigration.

### 3. Methodology

This section will discuss the research methods used to conduct the research presented in this thesis. Paragraph 3.1 will first explain more about the dataset used to conduct this research and the number of respondents included in the analysis. Paragraph 3.2 will, subsequently, discuss the variables included in the statistical analyses, and paragraph 3.3 will go into the type of regression analysis used and the corresponding assumptions related to such an analysis. To conclude the methodology section, paragraph 3.4 will discuss some of the limitations of the research.

#### 3.1 The dataset

To examine immigration attitudes in the Netherlands the results of the European Social Survey (ESS) are used. The ESS is a cross-national survey is conducted every two years, currently covering the period from 2002 till 2016. Its questions focus on attitudes, beliefs and behavior patterns of people living in different European countries. The main part of the Survey covers ‘core’ themes (such as politics and socio demographics) which are included in all survey rounds. Nevertheless, the ESS also makes use of different ‘rotating modules’ covered by just one or two rounds (on topics such as democracy or justice). The data is mainly collected through face-to-face interviews and the results are made available to the public via the ESS website ([www.europeansocialsurvey.org](http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org)). Eight rounds of the ESS have currently been completed (2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016) all of them including a sample or respondents from the Netherlands.<sup>11</sup> This thesis will make use of the data collected in the Netherlands in ESS round 8 (2016). This dataset contains information on 1681 respondents and includes questions of the rotating module on welfare attitudes.<sup>12</sup>

#### 3.2 Operationalization of concepts

In this thesis regression analyses will be carried out with the ESS dataset to assess whether personal characteristics, social trust, satisfaction with the state of the country and welfare attitudes have a significant influence on attitudes towards immigration in the Netherlands. The regression analyses are carried out with the statistics program SPSS. All cases are weighted by design weight. A table with an overview of all the different labels of the variables discussed in this paragraph can be found in appendix 2.

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<sup>11</sup> Every ESS round uses a newly selected cross-sectional sample of the population.

<sup>12</sup> For an overview of the themes covered in the different ESS rounds see appendix 1.

Since the aim of this thesis is to assess which variables have a significant effect on attitudes toward immigration in the Netherlands, an operationalization of ‘immigration attitude’ is required. Three different questions on immigration were used to operationalize the concept ‘immigration attitude’. These questions are all measured on a scale from 0 – 10 and an average of the scores on the three variables was taken. The three questions are the following:

- *Would you say it is generally bad or good for the Dutch economy that people come to live here from other countries?*
- *Would you say that the Dutch cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?*
- *Is the Netherlands made a worse or better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?*<sup>13</sup>

In order to see which factors have an effect on this immigration attitude, various independent variables were included in the regressions. Some of these were taken directly from the ESS data file, others were first recoded into different variables. The personal characteristics included in the analysis are the following:

- *Age*
- *Male*
- *Born in country*
- *In labor force*
- *No education*
- *Primary education*
- *Lower secondary education*
- *Upper secondary education*

These personal characteristics were also included in the other regression analyses presented in this thesis, in which they serve as control variables. To assess whether social trust variables are significant three variables measuring social trust were included in the analysis. All three are measured on a scale from 0 – 10.

- *Most people can be trusted or you can't be too careful*
- *Most people try to take advantage of you, or try to be fair*
- *Most of the time people are helpful or mostly looking out for themselves*

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<sup>13</sup> Note that, on basis of these questions, immigrants are defined as ‘people coming from other countries who come to live in the Netherlands’.

The following variables were used to assess satisfaction with the state of the country. These three variables are also measured on a scale from 0 – 10.

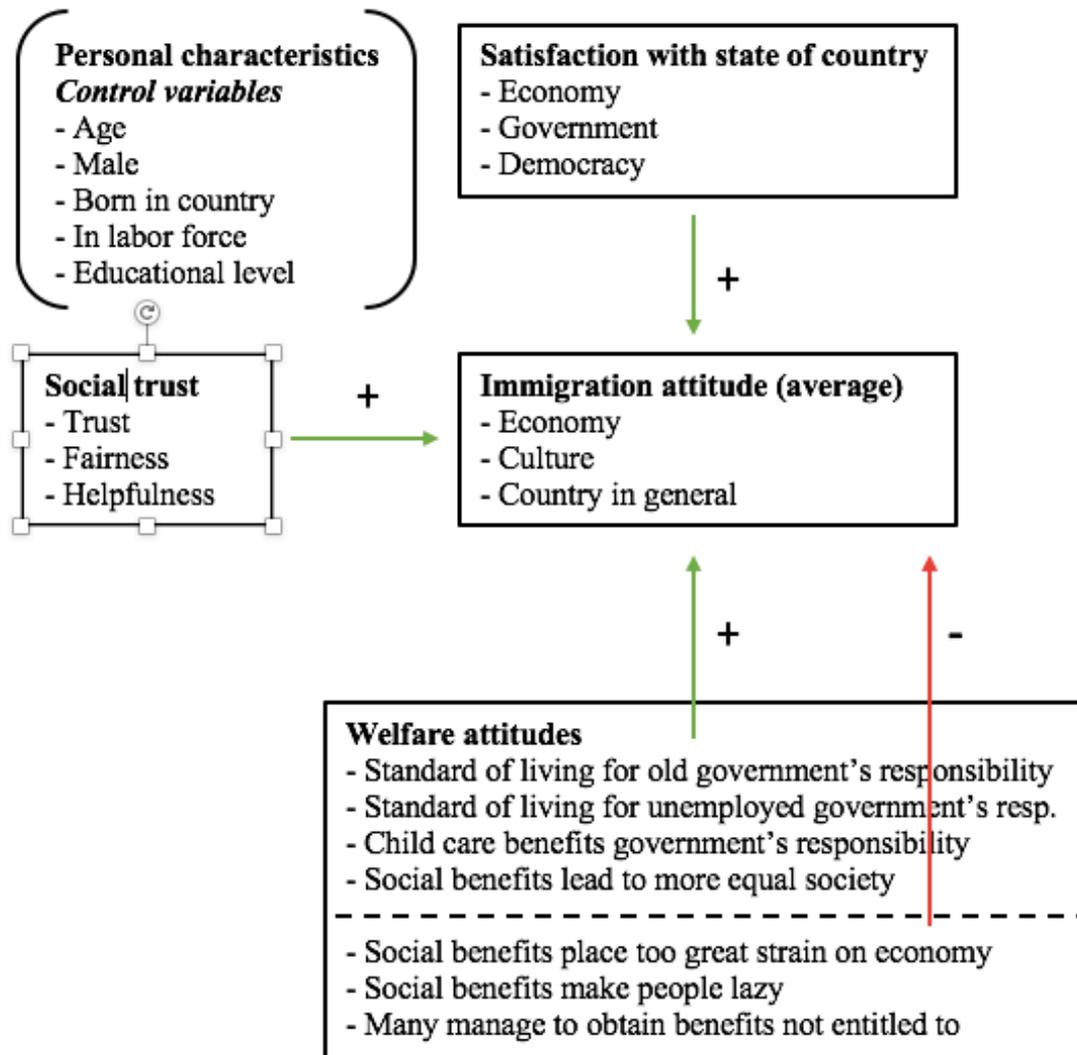
- *How satisfied with present state of the Dutch economy?*
- *How satisfied with the national government?*
- *How satisfied with the way democracy works in the Netherlands?*

Finally, a number of variables is included in the regression to analyze whether welfare state attitudes have a significant effect on immigration attitude. The first three variables of the list are measured on a scale from 0 – 10, in which higher scores express a higher level of responsibility of the government. The other four variables were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, but were transformed into dichotomous variables (agree/neutral and disagree) and included into the regression. The variables on welfare attitudes are the following:

- *Standard of living for the old, government's responsibility*
- *Standard of living for the unemployed, government's responsibility*
- *Child care services for working parents, government's responsibility*
- *Social benefits/services lead to a more equal society*
- *Social benefits/services place too great strain on economy*
- *Social benefits/services make people lazy*
- *Many manage to obtain benefits/services not entitled to*

Figure 1 schematically illustrates all the variables included in the analysis and how they are expected to influence immigration attitude. The green arrows with a + illustrate an expected positive effect of the set of variables on immigration attitude, whereas the red arrow with a – illustrates an expected negative effect of the set of variables on immigration attitude. The personal characteristics as listed in the upper left corner of the figure are included in the analysis as control variables. The figure illustrates that higher levels of social trust and satisfaction with the state of the country are expected to have a positive effect on immigration attitude. Looking at the welfare attitudes the effect is less straightforward. It is expected that the variables which are positive about the provision of social benefits and services by the government (the top four) have a positive effect on immigration attitudes, whereas the variables which are negative about the provision of social benefits and services by the government (the last three) have a negative effect on immigration attitude.

**Figure 1: The variables included in the analysis and their expected influence on immigration attitude**



### 3.3 Linear regression and its assumptions

In order to analyze the influence of the independent variables on the dependent one (immigration attitude) a multiple linear regression will be conducted. The basic regression equation of a multiple linear regression is:  $\hat{Y} = B_0 + B_1 * X_1 + B_2 * X_2 + \dots + B_k * X_k$ . As the equation indicates, multiple linear regression is used to explain the relationship between the predicted value of one dependent variable ( $\hat{Y}$ ) and several independent variables ( $X_1, X_2$ , etc.). The  $B_0$  in the equation represents the constant, or in other words, the intercept with the Y-axis.  $B_1, B_2$ , and  $B_k$  are the estimated regression coefficients which will be presented in the results section. Multiple linear regression is a form of linear regression, which assumes that the dependent variable is continuous and the independent variables are continuous or dichotomous. First of all, the dependent variable included in the analysis is an average of three variables

measured on an ordinal scale from 0 – 10. Therefore, the dependent variable is, strictly speaking, not continuous. This is also true for several of the independent variables included in the analysis (those measuring social trust and satisfaction with the state of the country). Because these variables are measured on a relatively broad 11-point scale (which is broader than the traditional 5- or 7-point Likert scale) they are considered as continuous for the purpose of this analysis. Various authors have argued that parametric techniques can indeed be used on Likert scales (see for example: Carifio & Perla, 2008; Norman, 2010; Sullivan & Artino Jr., 2013). In addition, the distance between each successive category of these variables is assumed to be equal.<sup>14</sup> The remaining independent variables included in the analysis are measured on a dichotomous scale and can therefore be included in the analysis without violating any of the requirements.

In addition to the measurement scale of the variables, four other assumptions have to be met in order to conduct a reliable multiple linear regression analysis. These assumptions relate to: normality, linearity, homoscedasticity and multicollinearity. In order for the data to have a normal distribution, the residuals of the regression should have a normal distribution. This assumption was tested and confirmed with a normal probability plot of the residuals. To test for linearity, various scatterplots were created which set out the dependent variable against the different independent variables (the non-dichotomous ones). A linear trend line could be drawn through all of these scatterplots, pointing towards the presence of a linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The assumption of homoscedasticity, or in other words the constant variance of errors, was tested for with a scatterplot of the residuals. This scatterplot sets out the residuals against their predicted values. The scatterplot illustrates that the residuals are more or less equally distributed to the left and right of the zero on the X-axis, and above and below of the zero on the Y-axis, confirming homoscedasticity. Finally, the VIF values show that the predictor variables are not highly correlated with one another (all are below the value of 3), so there is no presence of multicollinearity. Having taken all these assumptions into account, the data at hand is assumed to be suitable for multiple linear regression analysis.

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<sup>14</sup> The ordinal variables that will be treated as continuous variables in the analysis are measured on a scale from 0 – 10. Assuming an equal distance between each successive category of these variables means that the distance between, for example, the values 1 and 2 is equal to the distance between the values 9 and 10.

### 3.4 Limitations

When reading this research several limitations have to be taken into account. First of all, the research is based on data collected by the European Social Survey. This guarantees random sampling, since the samples “must be representative of all persons aged 15 and over (no upper age limit) resident within private households in each country, regardless of their nationality, citizenship or language” (ESS, n.d.). Nevertheless, only the data of one ESS round in one country are used in this research. Even though this dataset contains a relatively large number of respondents (1681), the results are limited to the Netherlands and the year 2016 (ESS round 8). The decision to focus on one country and one year only was made because this specific ESS round contains questions on welfare attitudes. Moreover, the analysis and the results are easier to interpret because no country or time specific dummies were needed for the regressions.

A second limitation has to do with the concepts focused on in this research (immigration attitude, social trust, satisfaction with the state of the country and welfare attitudes). These concepts were operationalized with different sets of variables included in ESS round 8 (as explained in paragraph 3.2). When interpreting the results of this research, and especially when comparing it to previous studies, it is important to keep in mind this operationalization. The measurement of concepts in this research is based on the best available variables in the ESS dataset, nevertheless it might not be the most common way to measure those concepts. Therefore, the operationalization might differ from the operationalization used by other authors. As a result, outcomes might also differ from results obtained by other researchers.

The final limitation relates to the statistical methods used. As explained in paragraph 3.3, the method of multiple linear regression is used to see which variables have a significant effect on immigration attitudes. It is important to keep in mind that not all variables included in the analysis were perfectly suitable for the multiple linear regression method. In order to make them suitable for this purpose, some variables were transformed into different (dichotomous) variables and others (the ordinal variables) were treated as continuous variables.

## 4. Results

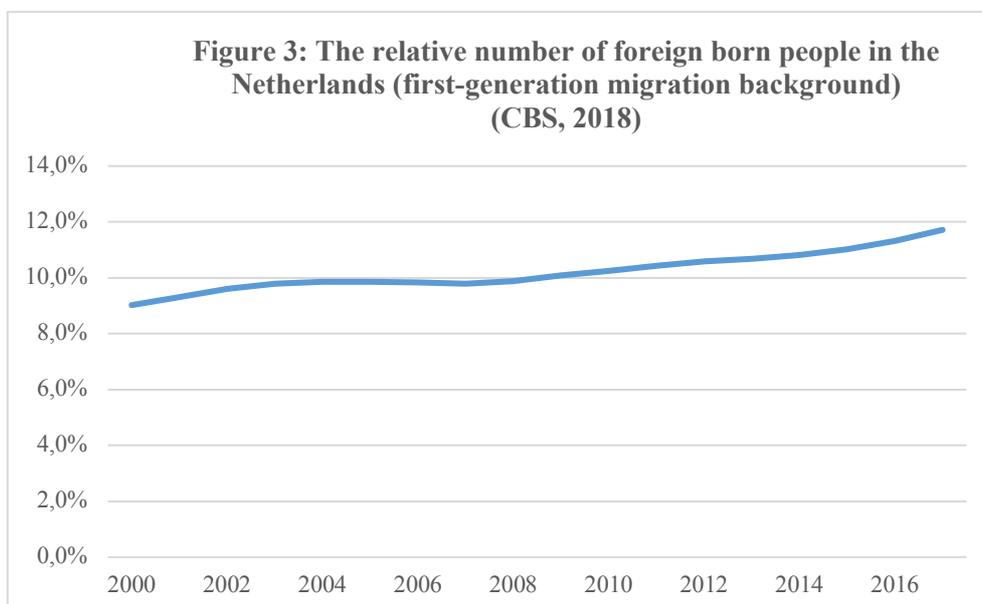
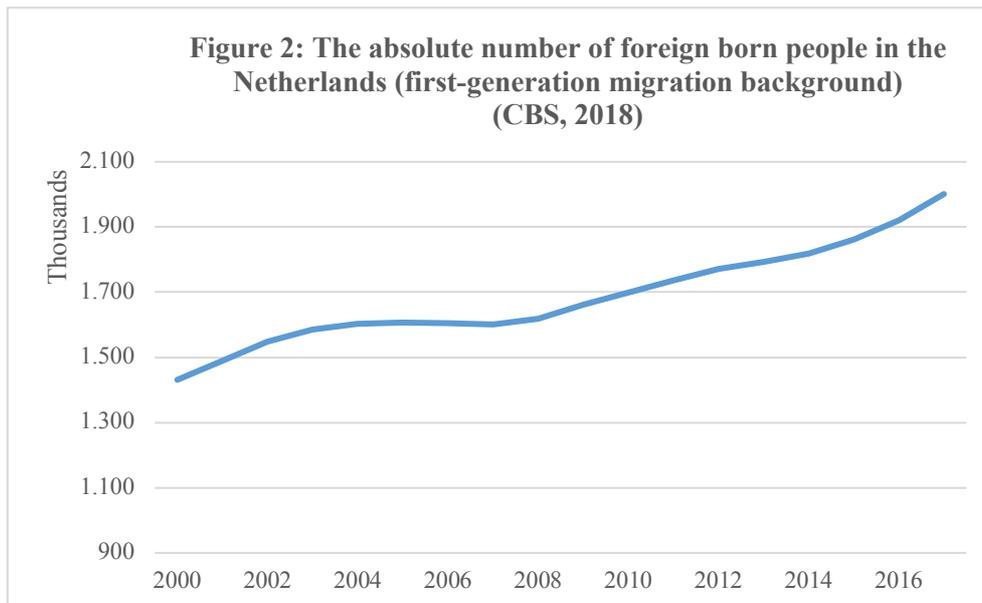
This section will provide the results of the regressions conducted with the data of ESS round 8, conducted in the Netherlands. Paragraph 4.1 will first provide some background information on immigration attitudes in the Netherlands over time. Paragraph 4.2 will then present the results of the regression including only personal characteristics as independent variables. These variables will be included in subsequent regressions as control variables. Paragraph 4.3 will look into the effect of social trust on immigration attitudes by including three variables on social trust into the analysis. With variables on the satisfaction with the state of the economy, the government and democracy, paragraph 4.4 tests whether satisfaction with the state of the country has a significant effect on immigration attitudes. Consequently, paragraph 4.5 will include various variables on welfare state attitudes into the model. Finally, paragraph 4.6 will include all the independent variables discussed in the preceding paragraphs in one regression model, to see whether and which independent variables maintain their significance.

### 4.1. Immigration and immigration attitudes in the Netherlands over time

Before analyzing the effect of a series of independent variables on immigration attitude in the Netherlands, it is useful to have a general idea about the number of immigrants in the country and the general attitude towards them.<sup>15</sup> For a country with the number of inhabitants exceeding 17 million in 2017, the Netherlands has quite a lot of immigrants. Figure 1 shows the absolute number of immigrants in the Netherlands from the year 2000 onwards. In this figure immigrants are defined as ‘first-generation’ immigrants, which are those people living in the Netherlands but who are born in another country. The figure illustrates an almost continuous growth in the number of immigrants in the country, increasing from 1.4 million in the year 2000 up to 2.0 million in 2017. Similar to figure 1, figure 2 shows the number of immigrants in the Netherlands over time, but this time the relative number of immigrants is presented on the Y-axis. The figure shows an almost continuous increase of the relative number of immigrants in the country, ranging from 9,0 percent in the year 2000 up to 11,7 percent in the year 2017. In short, the absolute as well as the relative number of immigrants in the Netherlands has rapidly increased over time. Currently, more than one tenth of the Dutch population is foreign born (has a first-generation migration background).

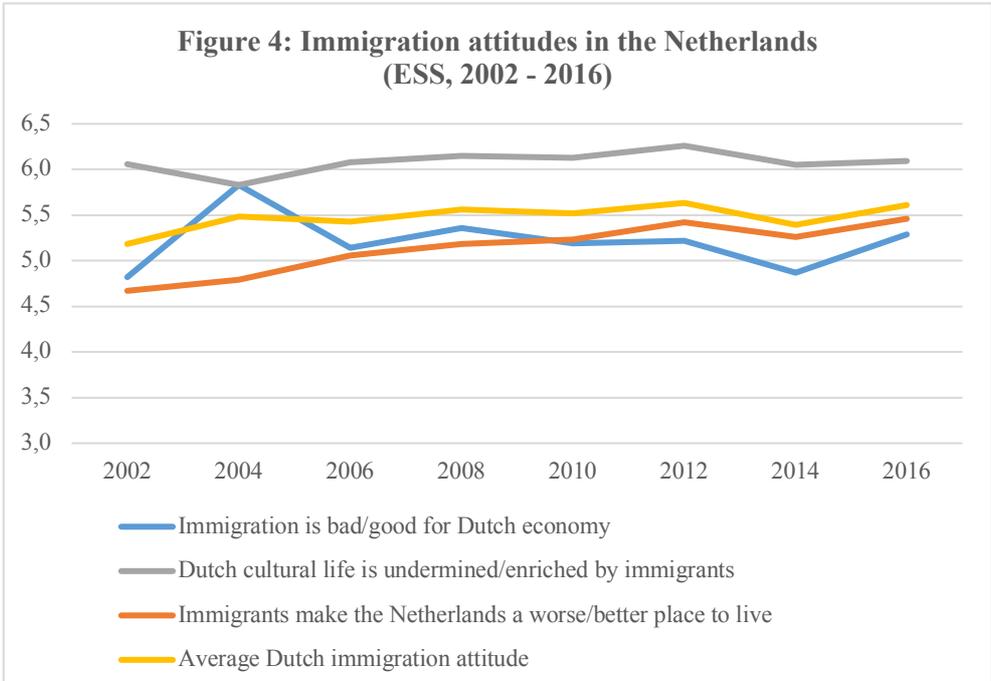
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<sup>15</sup> The tables with the exact values and numbers of observations, on which the figures presented in this paragraph are based, can be found in appendix 3 and 4.



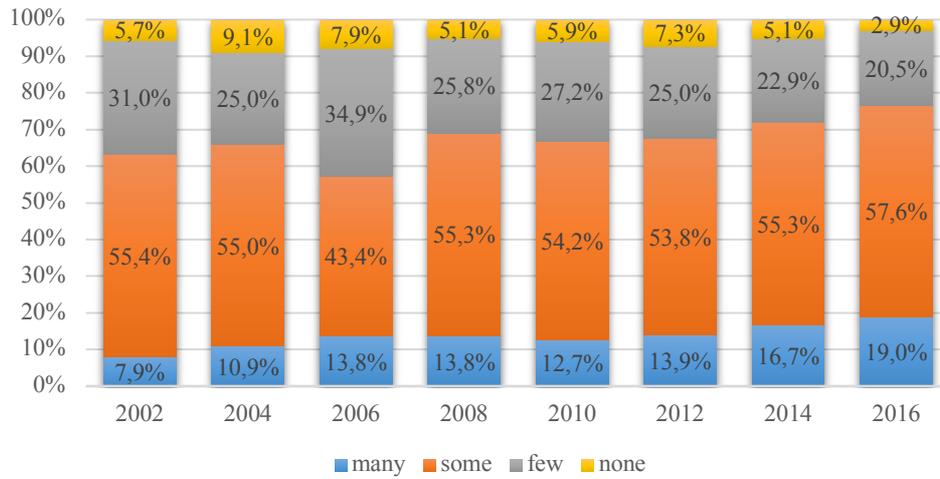
As explained in the methodology section (paragraph 3.2), three statements on immigration are used to measure immigration attitudes in the Netherlands. All are measured on a scale from 0 - 10, with higher scores expressing a more positive attitude towards immigration. To operationalize the concept ‘immigration attitude’ the average score on the three variables is taken as the dependent variable in the regression analyses presented in this thesis. Figure 3 illustrates the mean scores on each of these statements in the Netherlands over time, measured across different ESS rounds. The figure illustrates that the Dutch population neither expresses extreme anti-immigration attitudes (very low scores), nor extreme pro-immigration attitudes (very high scores). What stands out is that scores on the impact of immigration on the cultural life of the country are much higher than the scores on the other two statements, suggesting a

more positive perception of the effect of immigration on culture than on the economy or the country as a whole. Moreover, there seems to be no sign of deteriorating attitudes towards immigration in the Netherlands. The yellow line, which takes the average of the blue, grey and orange line, shows no downward trend.

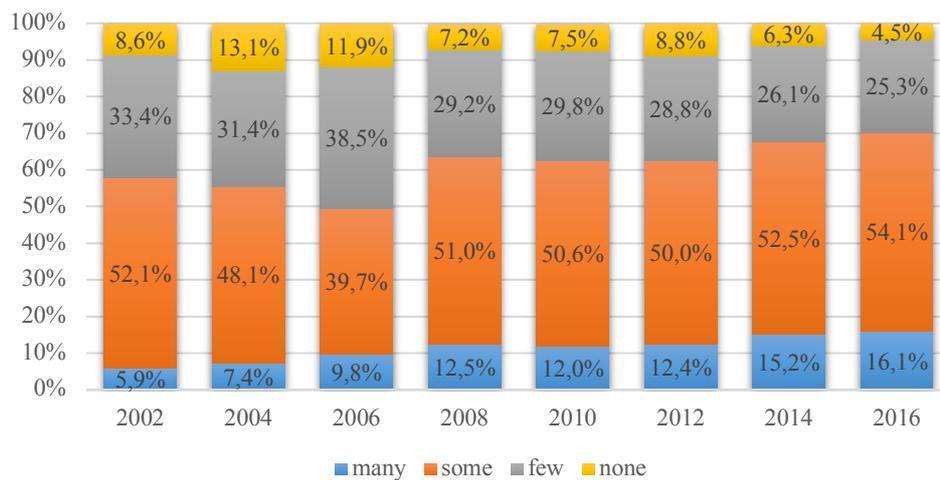


Other questions on immigration covered by all rounds of the ESS focus on the allowance of immigrants into the Netherlands. The questions focusing on this topic are: ‘allow many/few immigrants from the same race/ethnic group as the majority’, ‘allow many/few immigrants of a different race/ethnic group from the majority’, and ‘allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe’. These questions are measured on a scale from 1 – 4 in which 1 indicates ‘allow many’ and 4 indicates ‘allow none’. Figures 5, 6 and 7, show the results on these questions measured across the different ESS rounds. All three figures show a rather supportive attitude towards immigration in the Netherlands, with the majority of respondents choosing the category ‘many’ or ‘some’. In addition, the three figures illustrate that these categories have become more popular over the past few years, at the expense of the categories ‘few’ and ‘none’. Respondents seem to be most supportive of immigrants of the same race/ethnic group as the majority, followed by those of a different race/ethnic group from the majority. Respondents express most restrictive attitudes towards immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe.

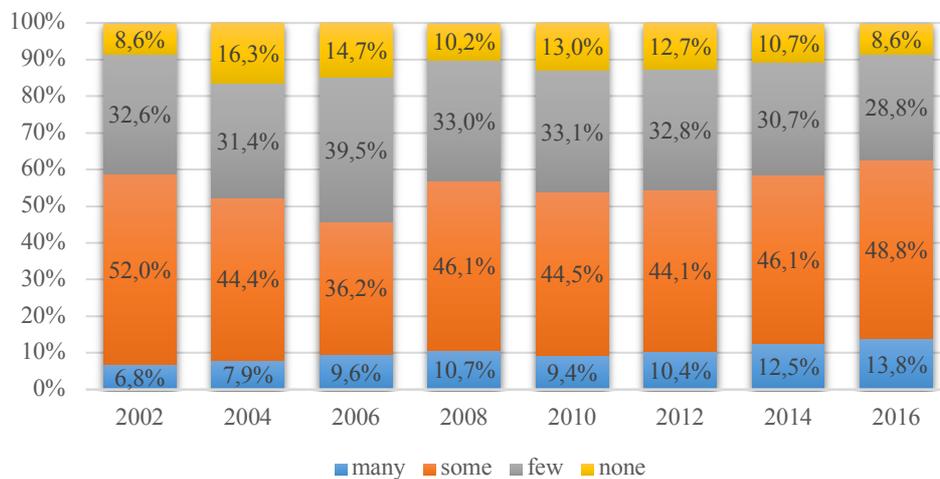
**Figure 5: Allow many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority (ESS, 2002 - 2016)**



**Figure 6: Allow many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority (ESS, 2002 - 2016)**



**Figure 7: Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe (ESS, 2002 - 2016)**



## 4.2 Personal characteristics and immigration attitude

First of all, various personal characteristics will be added to the multiple linear regression as independent variables. As such one can determine whether and which personal characteristics have an effect on immigration attitude. The personal characteristics to be included in this regression as independent variables are: age, male, born in country, in labor force, and educational level (which consists of the categories: no education, primary education, lower secondary education and upper secondary education).<sup>16</sup> Before running the regression, however, it is measured to what extent the dependent and independent variables correlate. Correlation coefficients express the strength and direction of the correlation between the dependent and independent variables. The correlation coefficients can range between -1, (indicating a perfectly negative relationship) and +1 (indicating a perfectly positive relationship). Hence, these coefficients already provide some preliminary information on the direction and size of the various regression coefficients to be found in the regression analysis that will follow. The correlation coefficients between the various personal characteristics and immigration attitudes are presented in table 1. Both age and male have a negative but non-significant correlation coefficient. Born in country, on the other hand, negatively correlates with immigration attitude and is significant. The variable in labor force provides a positive but non-significant correlation coefficient and finally all the educational levels have a negative coefficient and all but one, are significant.

	<b>Immigration attitude</b>
<b>Age</b>	-0,014
<b>Male</b>	-0,007
<b>Born in country</b>	-0,111**
<b>In labor force</b>	0,022
<b>No education</b>	-0,053*
<b>Primary education</b>	-0,038
<b>Lower secondary education</b>	-0,213**
<b>Upper secondary education</b>	-0,090**

*Pearson/Point-Biserial correlation<sup>17</sup> (2-tailed). \*\* $p < 0,01$ , \* $p < 0,05$*

<sup>16</sup> The reference categories are: female, born outside of country, outside of labor force and tertiary education.

<sup>17</sup> The Pearson correlation coefficient is used to express the correlation between two continuous variables. In this case the Pearson correlation coefficients is, for example, used to express the correlation between immigration attitudes and age. The Point-Biserial correlation coefficient is used to express the correlation between a continuous

The results of the multiple linear regression conducted with these personal characteristics are shown in table 2.<sup>18</sup> The first row of the table shows the regression coefficients of the independent variable age. The variable age has a relatively small and insignificant effect on immigration attitude, which was already predicted by its correlation coefficient. As a result, one's age does not seem to significantly affect one's attitude towards immigration. The same effect can be observed for the variable male, which has a small negative and insignificant coefficient as well. This suggests that being either male or female does not have a significant effect on one's attitude towards immigration. The variable born in country, on the other hand, provides a negative and significant regression coefficient. This indicates that individuals born in the Netherlands tend to have a more negative attitude towards immigration than those individuals who are not born in the Netherlands. A possible explanation for this effect is the social contact hypothesis, which states that intergroup relationships can be improved through social contact between different groups. Moreover, it is possible that individuals who are not born in the Netherlands can identify more closely with immigrants resulting in more sympathetic and positive attitudes towards immigration (the fact that non-natives or people with foreign born parents tend to have more pro-immigration attitudes than natives is also found by Bridges & Mateut, 2009 and O'rourke & Sinnott, 2006). The regression coefficient for being in the labor force (those who have a job or are actively looking for a job) is negative and significant as well. This means that those in the labor force tend to have a more negative attitude towards immigration than those outside of the labor force. A possible explanation for this effect can be found in the economic self-interest theory. In this line of reasoning, those in the labor force perceive immigrants and immigration in general as a threat to their own economic position in terms of the availability of jobs and wages, resulting in more negative attitudes towards immigration. Various studies point to the fact that labor market competition shapes immigration attitudes (see for example: Kunovich, 2017; Scheve & Slaughter, 2001). The next four rows of table 2 show the effect of different educational levels on immigration attitudes. The variable tertiary education is taken as a reference category and is therefore not presented in the table. All regression coefficients are significant and have a negative sign. This implies that, compared to individuals with tertiary education, people with no education, primary education, lower

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and a dichotomous variable. In this case it is, for example, used to express the correlation between immigration attitudes and gender.

<sup>18</sup> The results of the regression run with only those variables that have significant correlation coefficients in table 1, can be found in appendix 5.

secondary education or upper secondary education, tend to express more negative views towards immigration. The largest effect is observed for the category lower secondary education. The adjusted R square value of 0,112 show that the model explains 11,2 percent of the variance in the dependent variable immigration attitude. In order to get reliable and comparable results, all personal characteristics as presented in table 2 are included as control variables in the regressions presented in the remainder of this thesis.

<b>Table 2: Regression results of personal characteristics and immigration attitude</b>	
	<b>Immigration attitude</b>
<b>Age</b>	-0,020 (0,002)
<b>Male</b>	-0,021 (0,077)
<b>Born in country</b>	-0,082** (0,147)
<b>In labor force</b>	-0,074** (0,083)
<b>No education</b>	-0,085*** (0,614)
<b>Primary education</b>	-0,162*** (0,106)
<b>Lower secondary education</b>	-0,355*** (0,106)
<b>Upper secondary education</b>	-0,264*** (0,092)
<b>Constant (unstandardized)</b>	7,012***
<b>Number of observations</b>	1555
<b>Adjusted R square</b>	0,112

*Multiple linear regression, standardized coefficients, standard errors in parentheses, design weight used, \* $p < 0,05$ , \*\* $p < 0,01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0,001$*

### 4.3 Social trust and immigration attitude

Another personal property included in the analysis, is the level of a priori social trust one possesses.<sup>19</sup> It is hypothesized that people with higher levels of social trust express more positive attitudes towards immigration, because they tend to assess the behavior and intentions of others more positively. In the analysis presented here, the concept social trust is operationalized with three questions which are measured on a scale from 0 – 10. Higher scores on these questions indicate higher levels of social trust. The variables included in the analysis are to what extent most people can be trusted, to what extent most people try to take advantage of you, and to what extent people try to be helpful. The correlation coefficients between the dependent and independent variables are presented in table 3. All coefficients presented in the table are positive and significant at the 0,01 level. This provides evidence for the existence of a positive correlation between social trust and attitudes towards immigration.

**Table 3: Correlation between social trust and immigration attitude**

	<b>Immigration attitude</b>
<b>Most people can be trusted or you can't be too careful</b>	0,303**
<b>Most people try to take advantage of you, or try to be fair</b>	0,310**
<b>Most of the time people helpful, or mostly looking out for themselves</b>	0,244**

*Pearson correlation (2-tailed). \*\* $p < 0,01$ , \* $p < 0,05$*

Table 4 presents the results of the linear regression conducted with the variables on social trust. The personal characteristics as presented in table 1 are included in the regression as control variables and presented in the table in italics. The adjusted R square of 0,203 shows that the independent variables included in the analysis explain 20,3 percent of the variance in the dependent variable. Compared to the adjusted R square presented in table 2 (0,112), the explanatory power of the model has increased with several percentage points. What stands out is that all variables on social trust are positive and significant at the 0,001 level. Hence, the results provide strong support for the hypothesis that people who have higher levels of social trust express more positive attitudes towards immigration. Individuals who have a high level of

<sup>19</sup> That social trust is a personality trait of individuals is argued by the social-psychological school of thought prominent in the 1950s and 1960s in the U.S. According to this school of thought social trust is already learned in early childhood and tends to change only very slowly later in life (Delhey & Newton, 2003, p. 95).

believe that most people can be trusted, that most people try to be fair and that most people try to be helpful, tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigration.

**Table 4: Regression results of social trust and immigration attitude**

	<b>Immigration attitude</b>
<i>Age</i>	-0,055* (0,002)
<i>Male</i>	-0,006 (0,073)
<i>Born in country</i>	-0,086*** (0,140)
<i>In labor force</i>	-0,071** (0,079)
<i>No education</i>	-0,055* (0,586)
<i>Primary education</i>	-0,141*** (0,166)
<i>Lower secondary education</i>	-0,268*** (0,104)
<i>Upper secondary education</i>	-0,214*** (0,088)
<b>Most people can be trusted or you can't be too careful</b>	0,127*** (0,023)
<b>Most people try to take advantage of you, or try to be fair</b>	0,151*** (0,027)
<b>Most of the time people helpful, or mostly looking out for themselves</b>	0,118*** (0,024)
<b>Constant (unstandardized)</b>	4,799***
<b>Number of observations</b>	1555
<b>Adjusted R square</b>	0,203
<i>Multiple linear regression, standardized coefficients, standard errors in parentheses, design weight used, *p&lt;0,05, **p&lt;0,01, ***p&lt;0,001</i>	

#### 4.4 Satisfaction with the state of the country and immigration attitude

This paragraph will examine whether satisfaction with the state of the country has an effect on immigration attitudes. It is hypothesized that individuals who are more satisfied with the state of the country express more positive attitudes towards immigration. This effect is expected to be observed because higher satisfaction with the state of the country could make the view of perceiving immigrants as a threat to one's own position less likely (the rationale on which realistic conflict theories are based). Satisfaction with the state of the country is operationalized with three variables measured on a scale from 0 – 10 and higher scores indicate higher levels of satisfaction. The variables on satisfaction with the state of the country are: 'How satisfied with the state of the Dutch economy?', 'How satisfied with the national government?' and 'How satisfied with the way democracy works in the Netherlands?'. Table 5 presents the correlation coefficients between the independent variables and the dependent variable. All coefficients are positive and are significant at the 0,01 level, suggesting a positive relationship between satisfaction with the state of the country and immigration attitude. The strongest positive correlation is observed between satisfaction with the national government and immigration attitude.

**Table 5: Correlation between satisfaction with the state of the country and immigration attitude**

	<b>Immigration attitude</b>
<b>How satisfied with present state of the Dutch economy?</b>	0,337**
<b>How satisfied with the national government?</b>	0,416**
<b>How satisfied with the way democracy works in the Netherlands?</b>	0,392**

*Pearson correlation (2-tailed). \*\* $p < 0,01$ , \* $p < 0,05$*

Table 6 shows the regression results of the model including these three variables and the personal characteristics as control variables. The three variables expressing satisfaction with the state of the country provide positive regression coefficients which are significant at the 0,001 level. Thus, the results provide support for the hypothesis since they suggest that people who have a higher level of satisfaction with the state of the country (the economy, the national government and the way democracy works), tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigration. The adjusted R square of 0,252, presented in the last row of the table, shows that the model explains 25,2 percent of the variance in the dependent variable.

**Table 6: Regression results of satisfaction with the state of the country and immigration attitude**

	<b>Immigration attitude</b>
<i>Age</i>	-0,003 (0,002)
<i>Male</i>	-0,037 (0,071)
<i>Born in country</i>	-0,053* (0,136)
<i>In labor force</i>	-0,051* (0,077)
<i>No education</i>	-0,041 (0,680)
<i>Primary education</i>	-0,120*** (0,162)
<i>Lower secondary education</i>	-0,245*** (0,101)
<i>Upper secondary education</i>	-0,201*** (0,085)
<b>How satisfied with present state of the Dutch economy?</b>	0,109*** (0,029)
<b>How satisfied with the national government?</b>	0,190*** (0,029)
<b>How satisfied with the way democracy works in the Netherlands?</b>	0,155*** (0,026)
<b>Constant (unstandardized)</b>	4,161***
<b>Number of observations</b>	1514
<b>Adjusted R square</b>	0,252
<i>Multiple linear regression, standardized coefficients, standard errors in parentheses, design weight used, *p&lt;0,05, **p&lt;0,01, ***p&lt;0,001</i>	

#### 4.5 Welfare attitudes and immigration attitude

ESS 8 also contains a rotating module on welfare attitudes, including variables which will be used for the regression analyses conducted in this paragraph. It is hypothesized that people who are supportive of the provision of social benefits and services by the government tend to express more positive attitudes towards immigration. This positive relationship between immigration attitude and welfare attitude was found in a study conducted by Garand et al. (2017). The first variables included as independent variables in the analysis focus on whether or not it is the responsibility of the government to provide certain social benefits and services to its citizens. Three statements are included in the analysis to measure this, they focus on the standard of living for the old, the standard of living for the unemployed and child care benefits for working parents. These three variables are measured on a scale from 0 – 10 with higher scores indicating higher levels of responsibility for the government. The other four independent variables on welfare attitudes focus on social benefits and services and question whether social benefits and services lead to a more equal society, whether they place too great strain on the economy, whether they make people lazy and whether many people manage to obtain benefits they are not legally entitled to. The correlation and regression coefficients presented in table 7 and 8 are for those who agree or are neutral with regard to the four statements as formulated in the table. The ‘disagree’ group functions as the reference category.

Table 7 presents the correlation coefficients. It illustrates that all coefficients are significant at the 0,01 level. Most correlation coefficients point in the direction envisaged by the hypothesis which predicts that people who are supportive of the provision of social benefits and services by the government tend to express more positive views towards immigration.<sup>20</sup> The one striking exception to this rule is shown in the first row of the table which contains a negative and significant correlation coefficient between the government’s responsibility with regard to the standard of living for the old and immigration attitude. It suggests that higher scores on this independent variable lead to lower scores on immigration attitude.<sup>21</sup> The next section will look into possible explanations for this negative relationship between the two variables.

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<sup>20</sup> Note that some of the statements are positive about social benefits and services (such as ‘social benefits/services lead to a more equal society’) whereas others are negative about social benefits and services (such as ‘social benefits/services make people lazy’). Support for the hypothesis can, therefore, be found with negative coefficients (on negatively formulated statements) as well as positive coefficients (on positively formulated statements).

<sup>21</sup> A negative correlation coefficient between these two variables is also found in the data of ESS round 4 (2008), which also includes welfare attitudes in the Netherlands.

<b>Table 7: Correlation between welfare attitudes and immigration attitude</b>	
	<b>Immigration attitude</b>
<b>Standard of living for the old, government's responsibility</b>	-0,097**
<b>Standard of living for the unemployed, government's responsibility</b>	0,184**
<b>Child care services for working parents, government's responsibility</b>	0,128**
<b>Social benefits/services lead to a more equal society</b>	0,156**
<b>Social benefits/services place too great strain on the economy</b>	-0,201**
<b>Social benefits/services make people lazy</b>	-0,184**
<b>Many manage to obtain benefits they are not legally entitled to</b>	-0,221**
<i>Pearson/Point-Biserial correlations (2-tailed). **<math>p &lt; 0,01</math>, *<math>p &lt; 0,05</math></i>	

Table 8 presents the results of the linear regression including the variables on welfare attitudes. The adjusted R square, presented in the last row of the table, expresses that 19,9 percent of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables included in the model. As predicted by the correlation coefficients all regression coefficients point in the direction as hypothesized, with the exception of the variable on the government's responsibility for the standard of living for the old. Moreover, all regression coefficients on welfare attitudes are significant. Table 8 illustrates that support for the hypothesis is found in several ways. First of all, those who believe that the standard of living for the unemployed is to a large extent the government's responsibility, tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigration. This is also the case for the variable on child care benefits. Those who believe that child care services for working parents are to a large extent the government's responsibility tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigration. In addition, those who agree or are neutral with regard to the statement that social benefits and services lead to a more equal society tend to express more positive attitudes towards immigration than those who disagree with this statement. Furthermore, those who agree or are neutral with regard to the statement that social benefits and services place too great strain on the economy tend to have more negative attitudes towards immigration than those who disagree with this statement. The same holds true for those who agree or are neutral with regard to the statement that social benefits and services make people lazy, they tend to have more negative attitudes towards immigration than those who disagree with this statement. Finally, those who agree or are neutral with regard to the statement that many manage to obtain benefits they are not legally entitled to tend to have more negative attitudes towards immigration than those who disagree with this statement.

Only the regression coefficient on the government's responsibility towards the standard of living for the old points in a direction opposite to what is predicted by the hypothesis. The negative coefficient indicates that those who believe that the standard of living for the old is to a large extent the government's responsibility tend to have more negative attitudes towards immigration. This is surprising because different scholars claim that immigration is in fact beneficial for the long-term sustainability of pension benefits, especially in an ageing society (Han, 2013; Lacomba & Lagos, 2010; Razin & Sadka, 1999). Besides, immigrants are unlikely to make disproportionate use of state pensions (AOW), because the height of a state pension is related to the number of years one has lived in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, people might not be aware of this potential positive effect of immigration on old age benefits and the fact remains that social benefits for the old (in terms of AOW) are one of the largest social benefit expenses of the Dutch government. It could be the case that people associate immigration with even higher costs and the need for additional measures to keep these costs in check (like raising the retirement age). In addition to the cost aspect, elderly people are perceived as the most deserving group of needy people throughout Europe (van Oorschot, 2006). As a result, it is expected that people in general find the government to a large extent responsible for the standard of living for the old.<sup>22</sup> The combination of these two factors, might have led to the negative relationship between the two variables. Yet, further research is needed in order to identify and fully understand the exact causes of this negative relationship.

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<sup>22</sup> This deservingness can be observed in the average scores on the variables measuring the extent of the government's responsibility with regard to the standard of living for the old, the standard of living for the unemployed and child care benefits for working parents (measured on a scale from 0 – 10). The average score on the government's responsibility with regard to the standard of living for the old is 7,4, whereas the average score on the standard of living for the unemployed is 6,4 and the average score on child care benefits for working parents is 6,2. For an overview of the scores on the different variables see appendix 6.

**Table 8: Regression results of welfare attitudes and immigration attitude**

	<b>Immigration attitude</b>
<i>Age</i>	-0,024 (0,002)
<i>Male</i>	-0,020 (0,076)
<i>Born in country</i>	-0,071** (0,147)
<i>In labor force</i>	-0,028 (0,083)
<i>No education</i>	-0,063** (0,633)
<i>Primary education</i>	-0,106*** (0,172)
<i>Lower secondary education</i>	-0,260*** (0,108)
<i>Upper secondary education</i>	-0,188*** (0,092)
<b>Standard of living for the old, government's responsibility</b>	-0,149*** (0,028)
<b>Standard of living for the unemployed, government's responsibility</b>	0,172*** (0,028)
<b>Child care services for working parents, government' responsibility</b>	0,058* (0,019)
<b>Social benefits/services lead to a more equal society</b>	0,112*** (0,102)
<b>Social benefits/services place too great strain on the economy</b>	-0,112*** (0,081)
<b>Social benefits/services make people lazy</b>	-0,090** (0,087)
<b>Many manage to obtain benefits they are not legally entitled to</b>	-0,074** (0,091)
<b>Constant (unstandardized)</b>	6,635***
<b>Number of observations</b>	1424
<b>Adjusted R square</b>	0,199
<i>Multiple linear regression, standardized coefficients, standard errors in parentheses, design weight used, *p&lt;0,05, **p&lt;0,01, ***p&lt;0,001</i>	

#### 4.6 The variables influencing immigration attitudes in the Netherlands

The previous paragraphs have included different sets of independent variables into the regression with immigration attitude as the dependent variable. All models included the personal characteristics as listed in table 1 as control variables. This paragraph will conclude the results section with one last linear regression model including all the variables discussed in the previous sections. Table 9 shows the results of this multiple linear regression in which the personal characteristics function as control variables. The first column includes all the independent variables whereas the second column includes only those independent variables that are significant (and the control variables).

Due to the inclusion of all the independent variables in the first column, the explanatory power of the model is increased to 0,325, meaning that 32,5 percent of the variance in immigration attitude is explained by the model. The three variables on social trust still have a positive sign, but their effect has become much smaller than the effect as presented in table 4. Moreover, only two out of three variables remain significant in the current model. The variable ‘most people can be trusted or you can’t be too careful’ is no longer significant. Looking at the three variables on the satisfaction with the state of the economy, it appears that they maintain their positive sign, and two out of three maintain a similar effect as presented in table 6. Though, the effect of the variable ‘how satisfied with the way democracy works in the country’ becomes much smaller and loses its significance. When comparing the regression results of the welfare attitudes in table 9 with those in table 8 several changes stand out. First of all, the effect of the variable ‘child care services for working parents, government’s responsibility’ becomes smaller and loses its significance. The effect of the variable ‘standard of living for the old, government’s responsibility’ becomes much smaller as well, nevertheless it maintains its negative sign and significance. The effect of the variable ‘standard of living for the unemployed, government’s responsibility’ only becomes slightly smaller, and maintains its significance as well. The regression coefficients on the statements on social benefits and services still point in the direction predicted by the hypothesis and all four remain significant. Nevertheless, their effects, with the exception of the variable ‘social benefits/services make people lazy’ has become much smaller. So overall the direction of all the regression coefficients remains the same, but the size of the effect has generally become smaller. In addition, several variables have lost their significance. The second column includes only those variables which have a significant effect and the control variables. Due to this selection, the regression coefficients of the variables included in the model become slightly higher than those illustrated in column 1, although the explanatory power of the model remains more or less the same.

**Table 9: Regression results of all independent variables and immigration attitude**

	<b>Immigration attitude</b>	
	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(2)</b>
<i>Age</i>	-0,033 (0,002)	-0,041 (0,002)
<i>Male</i>	-0,032 (0,071)	-0,035 (0,070)
<i>Born in country</i>	-0,057* (0,135)	-0,061** (0,134)
<i>In labor force</i>	-0,020 (0,076)	-0,021 (0,076)
<i>No education</i>	-0,042 (0,644)	-0,044* (0,645)
<i>Primary education</i>	-0,082** (0,161)	-0,098*** (0,159)
<i>Lower secondary education</i>	-0,167*** (0,102)	-0,174*** (0,101)
<i>Upper secondary education</i>	-0,144*** (0,085)	-0,146*** (0,085)
<b>Most people can be trusted or you can't be too careful</b>	0,041 (0,022)	
<b>Most people try to take advantage of you, or try to be fair</b>	0,079** (0,027)	0,098*** (0,024)
<b>Most of the time people helpful, or mostly looking out for themselves</b>	0,053* (0,023)	0,062* (0,023)
<b>How satisfied with present state of the Dutch economy?</b>	0,109*** (0,029)	0,135*** (0,028)
<b>How satisfied with the national government?</b>	0,189*** (0,029)	0,215*** (0,025)
<b>How satisfied with the way democracy works in the Netherlands?</b>	0,052 (0,026)	
<b>Standard of living for the old, government's responsibility</b>	-0,054* (0,026)	-0,056* (0,026)
<b>Standard of living for the unemployed, government's responsibility</b>	0,140*** (0,026)	0,149*** (0,026)
<b>Child care services for working parents, government' responsibility</b>	0,024 (0,018)	
<b>Social benefits/services lead to a more equal society</b>	0,055* (0,095)	0,058** (0,095)
<b>Social benefits/services place too great strain on the economy</b>	-0,089*** (0,074)	-0,089*** (0,074)

<b>Social benefits/services make people lazy</b>	-0,093*** (0,080)	-0,096*** (0,080)
<b>Many manage to obtain benefits they are not legally entitled to</b>	-0,049* (0,083)	-0,053* (0,083)
<b>Constant (unstandardized)</b>	3,329***	3,498***
<b>Number of observations</b>	1398	1410
<b>Adjusted R square</b>	0,325	0,328
<i>Multiple linear regression, standardized coefficients, standard errors in parentheses, design weight used, *<math>p &lt; 0,05</math>, **<math>p &lt; 0,01</math>, ***<math>p &lt; 0,001</math></i>		

## 5. Conclusion

This thesis has focused on the topic of immigration attitudes in the Netherlands. On basis of data from the ESS this research has attempted to explain the effect of social trust, satisfaction with the state of the country and welfare attitudes on immigration attitudes in the Netherlands. Various multiple linear regressions were run with immigration attitude as the dependent variable. The concept of immigration attitude was operationalized by taking the average score on three questions which were measured on a scale from 0 – 10, these are: ‘Is immigration bad/good for the Dutch economy?’, ‘Does immigration undermine/enrich Dutch cultural life?’, and ‘Is the Netherlands made a worse/better place to live by immigration?’ Personal characteristics were included in the regressions as control variables to be able to make reliable comparisons and draw meaningful conclusions. A number of conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the results.

First of all, regression results in table 2 point out that being born in the Netherlands has a negative and significant effect on immigration attitudes, meaning that those born in the Netherlands tend to express more negative views towards immigration than those that are not born in the Netherlands. The various educational levels included in the regression (no education, primary education, lower secondary education, and upper secondary education) provide negative and generally significant results, illustrating that people with these educational levels tend to have more negative attitudes towards immigration, compared to individuals with tertiary education. The biggest effect was measured for the category ‘lower secondary education’. Furthermore, ‘in labor force’ has a negative and significant regression coefficient (although not always significant as control variables, see table 8 and 9) implying that those within the labor force tend to have more negative attitudes towards immigration than those outside of the labor force. Surprisingly, the variables age and male provide negative but non-significant regression coefficients, meaning that both age and gender do not have a significant effect on immigration attitude.

Secondly, results of the regression including three variables measuring the level of social trust as shown in table 4, point out that one’s personal level of social trust has a positive effect on immigration attitude. This is in support of the hypothesis and suggests that those individuals who possess a higher level of social trust, tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigration. All three independent variables measuring social trust provide positive and significant regression coefficients. However, in the final model including all independent variables, one of the three variables measuring social trust loses its significance (see table 9).

Thirdly, satisfaction with the state of the country has a positive effect on immigration attitude. Satisfaction with the state of the country was conceptualized using three variables which measured the level of satisfaction with the present state of the Dutch economy, the Dutch government, and the way democracy works in the Netherlands. All three independent variables deliver positive regression coefficients, which are significant at the 0,001 level. These results offer strong support for the hypothesis and indicate that those who are more satisfied with the Dutch economy, the Dutch government and the way democracy works in the Netherlands tend to express more positive attitudes towards immigration. Nevertheless, in the model including all independent variables, one of the three variables measuring satisfaction with the state of the country loses its significance (see table 9).

Finally, welfare attitudes were included in the analysis. Different statements on social benefits and services were used to operationalize the concept of welfare attitudes. It was hypothesized that those in support of the provision of social benefits and services by the government tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigration. Table 8 shows that all welfare attitudes provide significant regression coefficients, and all but one point in the direction as predicted by the hypothesis. Those who believe that the standard of living for the unemployed and child care benefits for working parents are to a large extent the government's responsibility tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigration. Also, those who agree or who are neutral with regard to the statement that social benefits and services lead to a more equal society tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigration than those who disagree with this statement. On the other hand, those who agree or are neutral with regard to the statements that social benefits and services place too great strain on the economy, make people lazy and that many manage to obtain benefits they are not legally entitled to, tend to express more negative attitudes towards immigration than those who disagree with this statement. These findings are all in support of the hypothesis. Nevertheless, results also indicate that those who believe that the standard of living for the old is to a large extent the government's responsibility, tend to have more negative attitudes towards immigration, which is not in line with the hypothesis. This may be due to the high level of deservingness of the elderly and the high costs associated with this type of benefit. In the model including all independent variables, one of the variables measuring welfare attitudes loses its significance (see table 9).

The overall conclusion based on the analyses presented in this thesis is therefore that higher levels of social trust and higher levels of satisfaction with the state of the country tend to have a positive effect on immigration attitude, illustrated by positive and significant regression coefficients. Additionally, the results of the regression conducted with welfare

attitudes as independent variables generally provide support for the hypothesis that those who are supportive of the provision of social benefits and services by the government have more positive attitudes towards immigration. All but one of the coefficients point in the direction predicted by the hypothesis and all of the regression coefficients are significant. When all independent variables are included in the analysis (including the personal characteristics as control variables), the R square of the model becomes 0,325. However, the size of the effect of the individual independent variables generally becomes smaller and three of the previously significant independent variables, lose their significance.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> These independent variables are: ‘most people can be trusted or you can’t be too careful’ (see table 4), ‘how satisfied with the way democracy works in the Netherlands’ (see table 6), and ‘child care services for working parents, government’s responsibility’ (see table 8).

## 6. Discussion

As discussed in the second chapter, a wide variety of theories have been developed in order to explain differences in attitudes towards immigration. Taking these different theories as a point of departure, this thesis has questioned whether individual levels of social trust, satisfaction with the state of the country and welfare attitudes have an effect on immigration attitudes. The results presented in this thesis suggest that social trust, satisfaction with the state of the country and welfare attitudes do have an effect on immigration attitudes in the Netherlands. As such, this research provides a valuable insight for those involved in the development and implementation of immigration policies in the Netherlands.

First of all, various personal characteristics do seem to play a role in the shaping of welfare attitudes, a topic which has already been extensively explored. Those born in the country tend to express more negative views towards immigration than those born outside of the country. This effect was already found by other scholars (see for example: Bridges & Mateut, 2009 and O’rourke & Sinnott, 2006). A possible explanation can be found in the social contact hypothesis, and the fact that individuals born outside of the country can have more shared understanding and sympathy towards (fellow) immigrants. People in the labor force also express more negative attitudes towards immigration, an effect which can be explained by theories of economic self-interest. Education seems to play an important role in the shaping of immigration attitudes as well. Individuals with no education, primary education, lower secondary education and higher secondary education tend to express more negative views towards immigration than those with tertiary education. These results are in line with the findings of previous studies conducted in Europe by Gang et al. (2002) and by Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007), who find that individuals with higher education are more supportive of immigration. Contrary to what was expected on basis of previous studies, results suggest that age and gender do not have a significant effect on immigration attitudes.

Social contact theory predicts that social contact between groups improves intergroup relationships by means of reducing anxiety and prejudice. In line with this theory it was hypothesized that individuals with higher (a priori) levels of social trust express more positive attitudes towards immigration. This hypothesis is confirmed by the regression results presented in this thesis, since all regression coefficients are positive and significant (see table 4). The effect logically follows from the fact that people with higher levels of social trust tend to evaluate the impact of other people’s actions and behavior more positively.

Also, individuals with higher levels of satisfaction with the state of the Dutch economy, the national government and the way democracy works in the Netherlands, tend to have more

positive attitudes towards immigration. All regression coefficients are positive and significant (see table 6). This result provides support for the hypothesis and the observed effect can be explained by the fact that higher satisfaction with the state of the country makes the view of perceiving immigrants as a threat to one's own position less likely (the rationale on which realistic conflict related theories are based).

Finally, the results suggest that those in support of the provision of social benefits and services by the government tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigration (see table 8). This effect is in the direction predicted by theories of economic self-interest. In this line of reasoning immigrants are perceived as less of an (economic) threat due to the safety provided by social security systems. Therefore, people who are supportive of social benefits and services are likely to be more supportive of immigration. On the other hand, these results contradict theories related to realistic conflict theory or the presence of welfare chauvinism, which predict that those in support of the provision of social benefits and services by the government tend to have more negative attitudes towards immigration. However, there is one result on welfare attitudes that does provide support for the realistic conflict theory line of reasoning. Regression coefficients point out that those who think that the standard of living for the old is to a large extent the government's responsibility tend to have more negative views towards immigration. As explained in paragraph 4.5 this might be due to the fact that elderly are seen as the most deserving group of needy people (van Oorschot, 2006), and due to the high costs associated with this type of benefit. People might associate immigration with further rising costs of old age benefits and additional undesirable measures to keep these costs in check. Still, additional research into this topic is needed to further explore the potential causes and consequences of this negative relationship.

When interpreting the results presented in this thesis, several limitations have to be taken into account. One of the main limitations of this research is that it only includes data of the year 2016 of the Netherlands (ESS round 8). In order to gain a better understanding of attitudes towards immigration and the factors that shape these attitudes future research should include different countries and years in the analysis. As such, the number of respondents would sharply increase and cross-country comparisons over time would become possible. As a result, one can attempt to answer more complex questions such as: *“Are attitudes towards immigration in a particular country changing when the number of immigrants entering that country is changing?”* Or *“Does a particular set of independent variables have the same effect on immigration attitudes in different countries?”* Consequently, it would become possible to explain whether or not the same mechanisms shaping immigration attitudes are at work in different times and

places. In addition, it would be valuable to develop an indicator which is able to measure immigration attitudes more closely than the three ordinal indicators included in the different rounds of the ESS. This would make a more precise analyses of immigration attitudes and the factors influencing it possible. Since migration has become such a common practice in our globalized world, it is important to gain a better understanding of attitudes towards immigrants and immigration. As a result, one can also work on possible ways to improve these attitudes. This thesis has attempted to contribute to this process.

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## Appendix 1: Themes covered in the different ESS rounds

**Table 1: ESS themes**

	ESS 1	ESS 2	ESS 3	ESS 4	ESS 5	ESS 6	ESS 7	ESS 8
Media and social trust	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Politics	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Subjective well-being, social exclusion, religion, national and ethnic identity	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Gender, year of birth and household grid	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Socio demographics	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Human values	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Immigration	X						X	
Citizen involvement	X							
Health and care seeking		X						
Economic morality		X						
Family, work and well-being		X			X			
Timing of life			X					
Personal and social well-being			X			X		
Welfare attitudes				X				X
Ageism				X				
Justice					X			
Democracy						X		
Social inequality in health							X	
Public attitudes to climate change								X

## Appendix 2: SPSS coding of all variables included in the analyses

**Table 2: Variables and their labels**

Variable	Label
<b><i>Immigration attitude (average of three statements taken)</i></b>	
Would you say it is generally bad or good for the Dutch economy that people come to live here from other countries?	0 = Bad for the economy Cultural life undermined Worse place to live
Would you say that the Dutch cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?	1 = 1 2 = 2 3 = 3 4 = 4 5 = 5
Is the Netherlands made a worse or better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?	6 = 6 7 = 7 8 = 8 9 = 9 10 = Good for the economy Cultural life enriched Better place to live 77 = Refusal ( <i>missing value</i> ) 88 = Don't know ( <i>missing value</i> ) 99 = No answer ( <i>missing value</i> )
<b><i>Personal characteristics</i></b>	
Male	0 = Female ( <i>reference category</i> ) 1 = Male 9 = No answer ( <i>missing value</i> )
Age	Continuous variable 999 = Not available ( <i>missing value</i> )
Educational level	1 = No education 2 = Primary education 3 = Lower secondary education 4 = Upper secondary education 5 = Tertiary education ( <i>reference category</i> ) 5555 = Other ( <i>missing value</i> ) 6666 = Refusal ( <i>missing value</i> ) 7777 = Don't know ( <i>missing value</i> ) 8888 = No answer ( <i>missing value</i> )
Born in country	0 = No ( <i>reference category</i> ) 1 = Yes 7 = Refusal ( <i>missing value</i> ) 8 = Don't know ( <i>missing value</i> ) 9 = No answer ( <i>missing value</i> )
In labor force	0 = Not in labor force ( <i>reference category</i> ) 1 = In labor force 7 = Refusal ( <i>missing value</i> ) 8 = Don't know ( <i>missing value</i> ) 9 = No answer ( <i>missing value</i> )

<b><i>Social trust</i></b>	
<p>Most people can be trusted or you can't be too careful</p> <p>Most people try to take advantage of you, or try to be fair</p> <p>Most of the time people helpful, or mostly looking out for themselves</p>	<p>0 = You can't be too careful Most people try to take advantage of you People mostly look out for themselves</p> <p>1 = 1 2 = 2 3 = 3 4 = 4 5 = 5 6 = 6 7 = 7 8 = 8 9 = 9</p> <p>10 = Most people can be trusted Most people try to be fair People mostly try to be helpful</p> <p>77 = Refusal (<i>missing value</i>) 88 = Don't know (<i>missing value</i>) 99 = No answer (<i>missing value</i>)</p>
<b><i>Satisfaction with state of the country</i></b>	
<p>How satisfied with present state of the Dutch economy?</p> <p>How satisfied with the national government?</p> <p>How satisfied with the way democracy works in the Netherlands?</p>	<p>0 = Extremely dissatisfied</p> <p>1 = 1 2 = 2 3 = 3 4 = 4 5 = 5 6 = 6 7 = 7 8 = 8 9 = 9</p> <p>10 = Extremely satisfied</p> <p>77 = Refusal (<i>missing value</i>) 88 = Don't know (<i>missing value</i>) 99 = No answer (<i>missing value</i>)</p>
<b><i>Welfare attitudes</i></b>	
<p>Standard of living for the old, government's responsibility</p> <p>Standard of living for the unemployed, government's responsibility</p> <p>Child care services for working parents, government's responsibility</p>	<p>0 = Not government's responsibility</p> <p>1 = 1 2 = 2 3 = 3 4 = 4 5 = 5 6 = 6 7 = 7 8 = 8 9 = 9</p> <p>10 = Entirely government's responsibility</p> <p>77 = Refusal (<i>missing value</i>) 88 = Don't know (<i>missing value</i>) 99 = No answer (<i>missing value</i>)</p>

Social benefits/services lead to a more equal society	0 = Disagree ( <i>reference category</i> )
Social benefits/services place too great strain on economy	1 = Neutral or agree
Social benefits/services make people lazy	7 = Refusal ( <i>missing value</i> )
Many manage to obtain benefits they are not legally entitled to	8 = Don't know ( <i>missing value</i> )
	9 = No answer ( <i>missing value</i> )

### Appendix 3: The number of immigrants in the Netherlands over time

**Table 3: The number of immigrants in the Netherlands over time (in thousands)**

	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
Total population	15.864	15.987	16.105	16.193	16.258	16.306
First-generation migration background	1.431	1.489	1.547	1.586	1.603	1.607
First-generation migration background (% of population)	9,0%	9,3%	9,6%	9,8%	9,9%	9,9%

	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Total population	16.334	16.358	16.405	16.486	16.575	16.656
First-generation migration background	1.604	1.601	1.619	1.662	1.700	1.735
First-generation migration background (% of population)	9,8%	9,8%	9,9%	10,1%	10,3%	10,4%

	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
Total population	16.730	16.780	16.829	16.901	16.979	17.082
First-generation migration background	1.772	1.793	1.818	1.861	1.921	2.001
First-generation migration background (% of population)	10,6%	10,7%	10,8%	11,0%	11,3%	11,7%

Source: CBS, 2018

## Appendix 4: ESS immigration attitudes in the Netherlands over time

**Table 4: Descriptive statistics of ESS immigration attitudes over time in the Netherlands<sup>24</sup>**

<i>Immigration is bad/good for the Dutch economy (scale 0 - 10)</i>								
	Round 1 (2002)	Round 2 (2004)	Round 3 (2006)	Round 4 (2008)	Round 5 (2010)	Round 6 (2012)	Round 7 (2014)	Round 8 (2016)
Valid N	2.299	1.843	1.857	1.751	1.789	1.807	1.878	1.637
Mean	4,82	5,83	5,14	5,36	5,19	5,22	4,87	5,29
Std. dev.	1,981	2,088	1,914	1,886	1,945	2,016	1,997	1,904

<i>Immigrants make the Netherlands a worse/better place to live (scale 0 – 10)</i>								
	Round 1 (2002)	Round 2 (2004)	Round 3 (2006)	Round 4 (2008)	Round 5 (2010)	Round 6 (2012)	Round 7 (2014)	Round 8 (2016)
Valid N	2.322	1.861	1.863	1.753	1.802	1.821	1.877	1.645
Mean	4,67	4,79	5,06	5,18	5,23	5,42	5,26	5,46
Std. dev.	2,001	2,032	1,814	1,928	1,839	1,799	1,851	1,814

<i>Dutch cultural life is undermined/enriched by immigrants (scale 0 – 10)</i>								
	Round 1 (2002)	Round 2 (2004)	Round 3 (2006)	Round 4 (2008)	Round 5 (2010)	Round 6 (2012)	Round 7 (2014)	Round 8 (2016)
Valid N	2.313	1.864	1.857	1.760	1.797	1.817	1.884	1.647
Mean	6,06	5,83	6,08	6,15	6,13	6,26	6,05	6,09
Std. dev.	2,095	2,088	1,939	1,945	1,888	1,937	2,019	2,067

<i>Allow many/few immigrants of the same race/ethnic group as the majority (scale 1 – 4)</i>								
	Round 1 (2002)	Round 2 (2004)	Round 3 (2006)	Round 4 (2008)	Round 5 (2010)	Round 6 (2012)	Round 7 (2014)	Round 8 (2016)
Valid N	2.312	1.867	1.857	1.753	1.819	1.819	1.900	1.652
Many	7,9%	11,1%	13,7%	13,5%	11,8%	14,8%	16,6%	19,0%
Some	55,3%	54,3%	43,5%	56,5%	54,1%	53,3%	55,4%	58,4%
Few	31,3%	25,5%	35,3%	25,3%	28,3%	25,0%	23,0%	19,8%
None	5,5%	9,1%	7,5%	4,7%	5,7%	7,0%	5,0%	2,8%

<i>Allow many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from the majority (scale 1 – 4)</i>								
	Round 1 (2002)	Round 2 (2004)	Round 3 (2006)	Round 4 (2008)	Round 5 (2010)	Round 6 (2012)	Round 7 (2014)	Round 8 (2016)
Valid N	1.316	1.865	1.862	1.757	1.795	1.824	1.900	2.656
Many	6,0%	7,2%	9,8%	12,0%	11,0%	12,8%	15,1%	16,3%
Some	51,9%	47,5%	39,3%	52,5%	51,0%	49,6%	52,2%	54,5%
Few	33,7%	32,1%	39,4%	28,6%	30,6%	29,1%	26,6%	24,9%
None	8,5%	13,1%	11,6%	6,9%	7,5%	8,5%	6,1%	4,3%

<i>Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe (scale 1 – 4)</i>								
	Round 1 (2002)	Round 2 (2004)	Round 3 (2006)	Round 4 (2008)	Round 5 (2010)	Round 6 (2012)	Round 7 (2014)	Round 8 (2016)
Valid N	2.324	1.852	1.864	1.757	1.780	1.821	1.900	1.661
Many	5,8%	8,2%	9,7%	10,5%	8,9%	10,9%	10,8%	14,1%
Some	50,2%	43,8%	35,7%	47,2%	43,8%	43,8%	42,4%	48,4%
Few	34,7%	31,4%	39,8%	32,6%	34,3%	32,7%	33,9%	29,5%
None	9,3%	16,6%	14,8%	9,7%	12,9%	12,6%	12,9%	8,0%

<sup>24</sup> Design weight applied. The answer categories: ‘Refusal’, ‘Don’t know’ and ‘No answer’, are categorized as missing values and therefore not regarded as part of valid N.

## Appendix 5: Significant personal characteristics and immigration attitude

<b>Table 5: Regression results (significant) personal characteristics and immigration attitude</b>	
	<b>Immigration attitude</b>
<b>Age</b>	
<b>Male</b>	
<b>Born in country</b>	-0,078** (0,146)
<b>In labor force</b>	
<b>No education</b>	-0,082** (0,614)
<b>Primary education*</b>	-0,139*** (0,165)
<b>Lower secondary education</b>	-0,340*** (0,102)
<b>Upper secondary education</b>	-0,258*** (0,091)
<b>Constant (unstandardized)</b>	6,723***
<b>Number of observations</b>	1579
<b>Adjusted R square</b>	0,110
<i>Multiple linear regression, standardized coefficients, standard errors in parentheses, design weight used, *<math>p &lt; 0,05</math>, **<math>p &lt; 0,01</math>, ***<math>p &lt; 0,001</math></i>	

\* The dummy variable primary education is included in the analysis despite the fact that it did not deliver a significant correlation coefficient. This is done to make sure that all dummy variables for educational categories, with the exception of tertiary education, are included in the analysis. As a result, tertiary education remains the reference category.

## Appendix 6: Frequencies of variables on government's responsibilities

**Table 6: Frequencies of the variables on the government's responsibilities towards social benefits and services**

	Standard of living for the old		Standard of living for the unemployed		Child care benefits for working parents	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Cumulative %</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Cumulative %</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Cumulative %</i>
Not government's responsibility	3	0,2	5	0,3	32	1,9
1	2	0,3	4	0,5	16	2,9
2	9	0,8	15	1,4	45	5,6
3	22	2,1	49	4,3	104	11,8
4	37	4,4	93	9,8	117	18,8
5	83	9,3	257	25,3	229	32,6
6	184	20,3	384	48,3	254	47,8
7	489	49,5	526	79,8	391	71,2
8	552	82,5	248	94,6	361	92,8
9	154	91,7	52	97,7	75	97,3
Entirely government's responsibility	139	100,0	38	100,0	45	100,0
Total (valid N)	1673		1668		1669	
Mean	7,39		6,38		6,17	