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## E-MINDFUL PROJECT

# IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

What works and what does not when promoting a balanced narrative about migration? Experimental evidence from the E-Mindful project

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## Executive summary

- This report addresses the question of what forms of strategic communication are most effective when seeking to rebalance migration narratives. The need for strategic communication to meet migration policy objectives is increasingly pressing, widely recognized, and thus, attempted.
- Scientifically, studies such as this have the potential to provide greater insights into how human beliefs, values and preferences – to migration and other issues – are formed.
- We show that various theories offer competing perspectives. Some see attitudes as volatile, interest- and information-driven, and susceptible to manipulation, on the one hand. Others see attitudes as motivated, embedded, and reflecting deep-seated predispositions and early-life socialization. We consider the interactions between these perspectives.
- Recent academic studies have shown several strategies – appealing to common interests and common ground, appealing to values, and utilizing empathy, emotions and storytelling— are consistently effective. By contrast, emphasizing diversity and self-interest is less effective.
- The E-Mindful project created separate communication interventions in six European countries designed by ‘National multidisciplinary creative groups’ (NMCGs). Stated in general terms, the main objectives of the campaigns were to induce changes in attitudes toward migration through the message that ‘we are all part of a “social and relational identity”, naturally mixed up, getting out from the defensive identitarian contraposition of “us versus them”.’ Such a concept of identity – which is the common thread of all the stories narrated by each of the interventions – intends to communicate an idea of more cohesive hosting communities, where everyone can feel welcome
- The artistic freedom offered to each group resulted in highly distinctive approaches. Within the project, the team at the Migration Policy Centre (MPC) of the European University Institute (EUI) then developed Randomized Control Trials (RCTs) to test the effects of these interventions. These RCTs were embedded as experiments within six nationally representative surveys in each country that included questions on attitudes to migration and other indicators that measured psychological, socio-economic, and political variance. These surveys are based on gold-standard principles of social scientific design in the field of social and political attitudes.

The interventions and results are as follows:

- Austria’s animated video campaign achieved consistent positive impacts on attitudes toward migration immediately after viewing, particularly regarding

migration's effects on the country, economy, culture, and demography. However, these positive effects did not endure after one month. Subgroup analysis revealed interesting variations in impact, with for example positive effects with regard to immigration's impact on the demographic future on older respondents during the first wave, but negative effects one month later. Similarly, respondents who feel comfortable with their present income felt negatively towards immigration's effect on demography even one month after viewing the video. However, younger respondents who viewed the video felt significantly more positive regarding immigration's demographic effect one month later, an effect that was not observed immediately after viewing the video.

- Bosnia and Herzegovina's video campaign, despite its efforts to promote empathy and understanding, did not yield significant impacts on attitudes toward migration. This suggests that the complexities and deeply ingrained beliefs surrounding migration require a more targeted and innovative approach.

- Germany's comic series, focusing on everyday discrimination, had a limited impact on migration attitudes, with only a temporary effect on the overall perception of Germany as a better place. The impact evaluation raises questions about the effectiveness of the campaign in conveying its message and suggests the need for more clarity in linking the protagonist to the migrant experience.

- Italy's short video featuring a well-known social media influencer had a very limited impact on migration attitudes, with only a temporary effect on the perception of Italy as a better place. This evaluation raises the question of whether choosing a social media influencer effectively communicated the message about shared migration backgrounds.

- North Macedonia's video intervention, designed to cultivate empathy for migrants, did not produce significant changes in attitudes toward migration. This underscores the challenges of altering deeply ingrained beliefs and suggests a more targeted approach.

- The Republic of Serbia's video/song campaign, using a mosaic of karaoke participants, initially achieved large positive effects on attitudes toward migration. However, these effects diminished after one month, highlighting the temporary nature of the campaign's impact. Subgroup analysis showed variations in impact across gender, income, age, and employment status.

- In each country, we show how the effects of the intervention varied according to the respondent's age, educational status, employment status, and income.

We consider novel and broader theoretical lessons from these interventions and make recommendations for future research and similar public policy initiatives that seek effective interventions and reliable tests of their effects. a better place

# 1. Introduction

The imperative to comprehend the dynamics of effective strategic communication on migration<sup>1</sup> is underscored by increasing attention by policymakers and social scientists. International organizations, governments, non-governmental entities, etcetera, are increasingly engaged in leveraging strategic communication to counter polarizing, misleading, and inflammatory narratives. These narratives pose a threat to legal- and rights-based migratory governance, potentially undermining the benefits and exacerbating the costs of migration. Policymakers thus increasingly pursue communication goals such as informing, publicizing, and motivating behavior regarding migration to mitigate these risks. Understanding what forms of strategic communication are effective is key not just to counter misinformation. More balanced public discussion on migration can contribute to enhancing migrant integration, realizing migration's broad economic benefits while upholding the safety and rights of migrants, and achieving the objectives outlined in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM)<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, insights into effective communication can equip policymakers with better knowledge concerning whether, how, and for which target audiences they should design future interventions, including considerations about their substantive value from a cost-effectiveness perspective.

From a scientific standpoint, understanding the effectiveness of strategic communication in shaping opinions, perceptions, and narrative popularity on migration raises profound questions. Until recently, most studies on migration attitudes focused on socio-demographic, psychological, and contextual determinants (Dražanová et al., 2023). Experimental tests of communication effects on attitudes to migration remained a minority, but a rapid shift has occurred in recent years, with a surge in studies since 2019 (Dennison, 2022). These recent developments either support or challenge various social scientific theories concerning attitude formation and the broader reasons behind human variation in thought and beliefs.

This report contributes to understanding what works when promoting a balanced narrative about migration. It bases its findings on recent academic experimental evidence, policymaker recommendations, and – above all – the findings of the E-Mindful project. The main objectives of the campaigns developed within the E-Mindful project were to induce changes in attitudes toward migration through the message that we are all part of a “social and relational identity”, naturally mixed up, getting out from the defensive identitarian contraposition of “us versus them”. Such a concept of identity – which is the common thread of all the stories narrated by each of the interventions – intends to communicate an idea of more cohesive hosting communities in which everyone can feel welcome.

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<sup>1</sup>For the purpose of this report, we consistently use the term “migrant” to refer to a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. Accordingly, the term “migration” refers to the movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, across an international border.

<sup>2</sup>Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Intergovernmentally negotiated and agreed outcome, 13 July 2018 and A/RES/73/195, 19 December 2018, <https://www.un.org/en/migration2022/global-compact-for-migration>.

The E-Mindful project, between June 2021 and May 2023, designed and tested separate communication strategies aimed at ‘Promoting a balanced and effective communication about migration’ in six European countries – Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, Italy, North Macedonia and The Republic of Serbia.

The communication interventions were designed by ‘National multidisciplinary creative groups’ (NMCGs) to ‘explore fresh ideas on how to communicate migration, measuring which messaging is most effective in resonating with the target audiences’, as put in the project description. The respective six communication interventions are notable for the artistic freedom that each set of creators was offered, resulting in highly distinct approaches with artistic expression rather than scientific constraints as the central objective during design.

The effects of the interventions on five measures of attitudes to migration were tested using randomized control trials in each of the six countries based on nationally representative surveys using several batteries of questions from gold-standard international social scientific surveys.

This report is structured as follows. First, we consider recent findings from the academic literature using experimental evidence to test the effects of various communication interventions on attitudes to migration, followed by an overview of recent policymaker recommendations. We then move on to assess the evidence from the E-Mindful project. We first overview our method for evaluating the campaigns’ impact, provide an overview of factors that potentially affect attitudes toward migration in each of the six countries surveyed, and whether there are any commonalities or differences between our sample countries. This is followed by six country sections that specify: each intervention; its overall effects; and sub-group effects, showing how the intervention’s effects varied by the respondents’ age, educational level, employment status and income difficulties. We then offer conclusions and a discussion of the results, their shortcomings, and recommendations for future research and similar projects.

## 1.2 Previous Findings

There is increased interest in using strategic communication interventions to reduce tensions and polarization on migration (Epps, 2015). These interventions use various strategies to change attitudes and beliefs about migrants and migration, such as providing accurate information, increasing empathy, and changing the way migrants are represented in the media. Some of the most common types of communication interventions used include video storytelling, social marketing campaigns, and media literacy programs. These interventions have been used in various settings, such as online, in schools, and in communities and using different media, such as photographs, virtual reality and video stories (Paluck and Green, 2009). However, from an empirical perspective, there is little evidence of whether such interventions actually work. For instance, out of the 98 Migration Communication Campaigns in Europe conducted between the years 2013–2020 only five included an assessment of their success (Dennison, et al, 2023). The causal

effects of many of these prejudice-reduction interventions thus remain unknown. This problem underscores the need for additional research on possible ways to communicate about migration, particularly in countries that are often overlooked by researchers within the social sciences.

### 1.3 Academic Experimental Findings

As recently as 2020, it could still be argued that 'there is still relatively underdeveloped academic literature considering what types of migration communication are effective' (Dennison, 2020). However, the last few years have seen that trend swiftly reversed. Indeed, the experimental literature on the subject is growing rapidly (Dennison, 2022), dividing into nine groups, each of which broadly constitutes a strategy for communicating on migration. These are: (1) providing information, correcting misperceptions and "myth-busting"; (2) appealing to emotions rather than facts; (3) appealing to self-interest rather than common interest; (4) emphasizing diversity rather than conformity; (5) migrant descriptions; (6) emphasizing common ground; (7) appealing to empathy; (8) using certain messengers; (9) appealing to identity. Table 1 summarizes experimental findings, when effects may take place or be more powerful, and how they mediate other effects.

Broadly speaking, according to the experimental literature, what consistently shows to be effective is appealing to common interest rather than self-interest, appealing to conformity rather than diversity, migrant descriptions, appealing to common ground, and appealing to empathy. Fact-checking on the effects of migration and appealing to emotions is mostly shown to be effective, as is appealing to identity, although this is not always applicable. By contrast, appealing to diversity is consistently shown to be ineffective, while correcting information about migrant stocks and appeals to self-interest in migration are mostly shown to be ineffective.

Strategy	Evidence on effectiveness	Contingencies, mediations, and specificities
1a. Correcting information on migration stocks/flows	often ineffective (4/8 studies show statistically significant effects)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shown to be effective when combined with migrants' unemployment rate or revenue information.</li> <li>• More effective when exposure was longer.</li> <li>• Information on flows shown to lead to greater negativity than stocks.</li> </ul>
1b. Fact checking on effects of migration	mostly effective (9/11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More effective when exposure to information was longer.</li> </ul>

2. Appeal to emotion	mostly effective (4/5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More effective when exposure was longer.</li> <li>• Shown to be more powerful than information</li> <li>• Anxiety amplifies effects of negative news stories</li> <li>• Emotive language shown to have effects</li> </ul>
3a. Appeal to self-interest	mostly ineffective (3/7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Self-interest” economic concerns are primarily via concerns on tax burdens, rather than job competition, and can also be conceived as a common interest concern.</li> <li>• Some evidence of depolarization instead of uniform effects</li> </ul>
4. Emphasizing conformity or diversity (respectively for positive or negative effects)	effective (7/7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migrants shown to be attempting to integrate more powerful than already integrated migrants.</li> <li>• Social integration, language and food shown to matter</li> </ul>
5. Migrant description	effective (11/12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attributes matter less than adherence to rules (regularity) or sense of fairness</li> </ul>
6. Emphasizing common ground	effective (2/2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridging shown to be more effective than appeal to political values or information</li> </ul>
7. Appeal to empathy	effective (4/4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humanitarian messages shown to elicit empathy</li> <li>• Communication based on individuals shown to be more effective than groups or statistics</li> </ul>
8. Messenger effects	mostly ineffective (1/3)	
9. Appeal to identity	Mostly effective (4/5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contingent on (1) assumptions behind the identity and (2) migrants holding that identity</li> </ul>

Table 1. Overview of experimental findings on migration communication (adapted from Dennison, 2022)



## 1.4 Policymaker Recommendations

During the 2010s, migration advocacy groups published several reports that outlined recommendations for how to effectively communicate on migration issues in a way that might change attitudes. Dennison (2020) overviewed the findings of six of these reports, five of which were published since 2017. Table 2 below synthesizes the main findings.

	Sharif (2019)	Banulescu-Bogdan (2018)	Marthouz (2006)	Bamberg (2018)		Christiano (2017)	GFMD (2020)	OHCHR (2020)
<i>Strategic arrangements</i>								
Develop a proactive communications strategy	X	X					X	
Set up partnerships for communications/support others	X		X				X	X
Research and target 'moveable' audience, know their perceptions and prejudices	X		X	X	X		X	
<i>Communications content</i>								
Focus on values	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Appeals to emotion	X				X	X		
Hope/positivity/solutions/vision focus	X		X					X
Avoid attacking audience		X						
Avoid repeating opposing ideas / increasing their salience		X		X				X
Find common ground		X					X	X
Neutralize opposition arguments			X				X	
Use storytelling				X		X	X	X
Be responsive to (local) context							X	X
Acknowledge complexities							X	
<i>Communications delivery</i>								
Choose credible messengers, including migrants or moderates	X	X					X	
Use succinct / digestible / focused messaging	X			X	X	X		
Be visual	X					X		
Test impact							X	

Table 2. Summary of key recommendations from existing best-practice guides for migration communication (adapted from Dennison, 2020)

In Table 2 we see that the most common recommendation is to focus on values-based messaging. This raises the question of what values-based messaging is and what type of value-based messaging is likely to work regarding migration. Dennison’s (2020) study of migration policy communication examples from an inventory of 135 campaigns found that few pro-migration campaigns contained value-based messaging, whereas all anti-migration campaigns did. Similarly, very few pro-migration campaigns included values besides ‘universalism’ and ‘benevolence’, whereas anti-migration campaigns included values associated with both pro- and anti-migration attitudes. Similarly, Table 2 shows that “emotions” and “use storytelling” are also regularly cited as vital components of effective strategic communication in the world of migration and beyond.

Emotions are vital to persuasion because attitudes have both a cognitive (thinking) and an emotional (feeling) component. Research suggests that communicators should choose the appropriate emotion to elicit, according to the desired physiological and behavioral reactions (Dennison, 2023) <sup>3</sup>. When it comes to storytelling, Figure 1 illustrates the complex interactions between context, narrative and recipient, and it lists a range of features that crucially impact on the ultimate effectiveness of communication strategies on migration (Dennison, 2021).

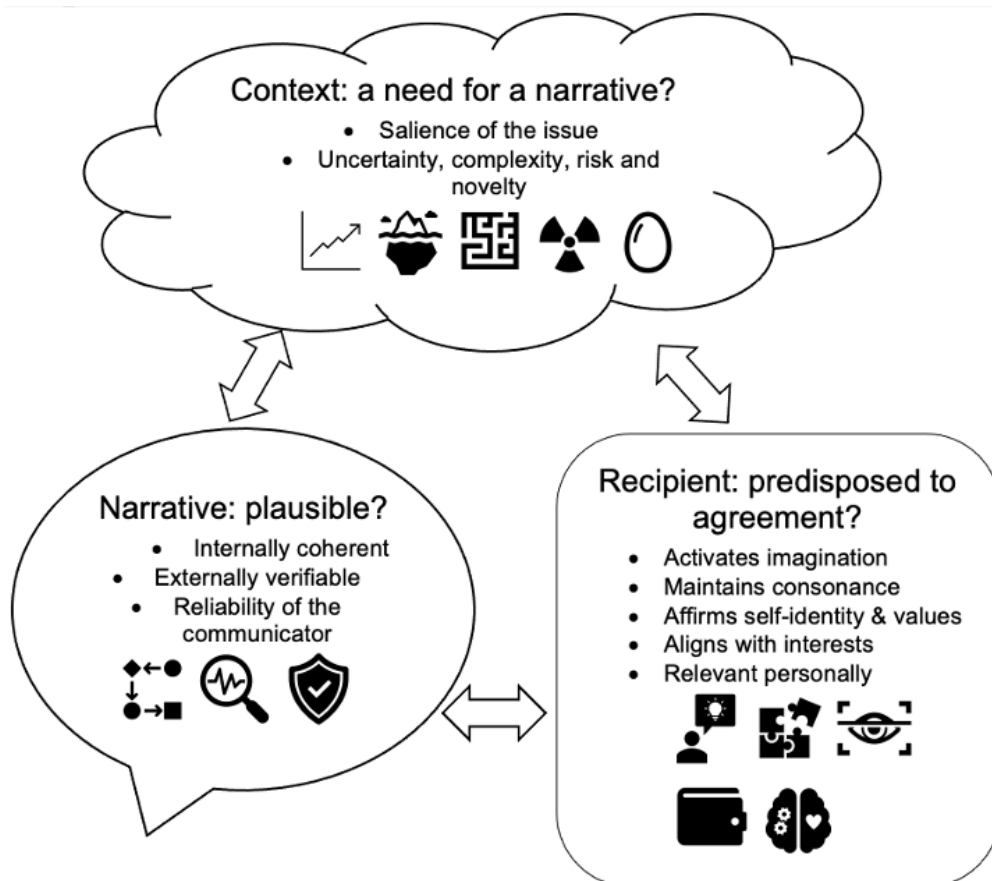


Figure 1. Causes of variation in the popularity of migration narratives (from Dennison, 2021)

<sup>3</sup> In his paper, Dennison lists 32 different emotions that communicators can elicit through their work.

## 2. Testing the Information Campaigns of the

### E-Mindful Project

Migration remains a polarizing and salient issue in many European countries (Dennison and Geddes, 2019). The E-mindful project contributes to investigating the key factors that shape public perceptions about migration and migrants and aims to promote more balanced and effective communication around migration.

Against this background, this report experimentally evaluates the effect on attitudes toward migration of the six information campaigns, conceived and developed by the NMCGs in Austria, Germany, and Italy from the EU, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and The Republic of Serbia from the Western Balkans. Our research design answers the questions of whether, why, and under what conditions the proposed information campaigns work. The proposed experiment is as an example of an impact assessment of interventions wishing to combat prejudice.

Our focus on attitudinal change builds on recent innovative work examining the efficacy of strategies to generate greater openness toward migrant populations (Facchini et al., 2016; Adida et al., 2018). More specifically, we designed a survey experiment to study the impact of small-scale communication interventions for promoting positive attitudes toward migration. Within the E-mindful project, we aimed to empirically evaluate whether the visual campaigns created by the NMCGs (5 videos and 1 series of comic strips) could be an effective way to enhance awareness of the contribution of migration to societies by exposing individuals to counter-stereotypic and persuasive narratives that challenge their prejudices and biases. The format of video/comic storytelling allows people to be engaged in an emotional and immersive way, providing them with a perspective they may not have considered before.

We carried out two rounds of surveys in all participating countries – the first round took place between August 14th, 2023 and September 19th, 2023 and the second round between September 28th, 2023 (for those countries that have already finished collecting data one month prior) and October 25th, 2023. The questionnaire was the same in all countries and both waves, translated into national languages. The sample was representative of the national population for the main socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, education and region of residence).<sup>4</sup>

The E-mindful project chose randomized experiments as the preferred evaluation method to test strategies for affecting attitudes toward migration. Random assignment, within the randomized controlled trial (RCT) research design, ensures that participants who are “treated” with an intervention have the same expected background traits and levels of exposure to outside influences as participants in the control group. Outcomes in a randomized experiment are thus explained by a quantifiable combination of the intervention and random chance. By contrast, in nonexperimental research, the outcomes can be explained by a combination of the

<sup>4</sup> The quotas for age for Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia needed to be relaxed towards the end as the penetration into this subgroup proved hard.

intervention, random chance, and unmeasured pre-existing differences between comparison groups (Paluck and Green, 2009). So long as researchers remain uncertain about the nature and extent of these biases, nonexperimental research eventually ceases to be informative and experimental methodology becomes necessary to uncover the unbiased effect (Gerber et al., 2004). We therefore combine the external validity of subjects drawn from representative surveys with the internal validity of experiments using random assignment (Sniderman and Grob, 1996).

We implemented the survey experiment in all six participating countries. These countries have all experienced migration from various parts of the world, although with wide variations in terms of scale, composition, and time. Most of the participating countries are transit and destination countries simultaneously. Each country, to varying extents, also generates outward migration and mobility of its own citizens, resulting in the establishment of significant communities abroad.

More details on the methodology and survey design, including data collection, randomization, sampling and data analysis can be found in the Technical Annex.

## 2.1 Ethical Considerations

It is important for a study regarding attitudes to migration to seek approval from an ethics committee before the research starts. An ethics review ensures that a study on attitudes toward migration is conducted in an ethical manner by evaluating the study design, methods, and potential risks to participants while ensuring that the study is conducted in a way that respects the rights and dignity of all participants and that findings are accurately reported and communicated to the relevant parties. This is necessary because, first, studies on attitudes toward migration can be sensitive and controversial. It is thus important to ensure that the study is designed and conducted in a way that minimizes harm and maximizes benefits to all participants.

Second, studies on attitudes toward migration can have real-world implications and can potentially influence public policy, legislation, and public opinion. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the study is conducted in an ethical manner and that the findings are accurately reported, to avoid any potential negative consequences.

Third, studies on attitudes toward migration can be seen as part of a wider societal context, where issues of equality, diversity, and discrimination are prevalent. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the study is conducted in a way that is sensitive to the context in which it is being conducted. This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the European University Institute.

## 2.2 Data Collection Procedures

Participants were recruited online from a panel curated by the survey company. Participants must have been at least 18 years old.

Each new participant was given detailed information in advance about the rules of participation. Participation in the panel is voluntary and can be ended by both parties at any time. Panel members are invited to take part in each survey by email. They are informed in this email of the expected length of the survey, the period of participation and the incentive.

The survey company rewards all members for taking part and they receive bonus points for their answers. All personal data held on the respective participant is destroyed immediately once the member leaves the panel. The details given by the panelists are treated in accordance with the strict laws on European data protection and GDPR.

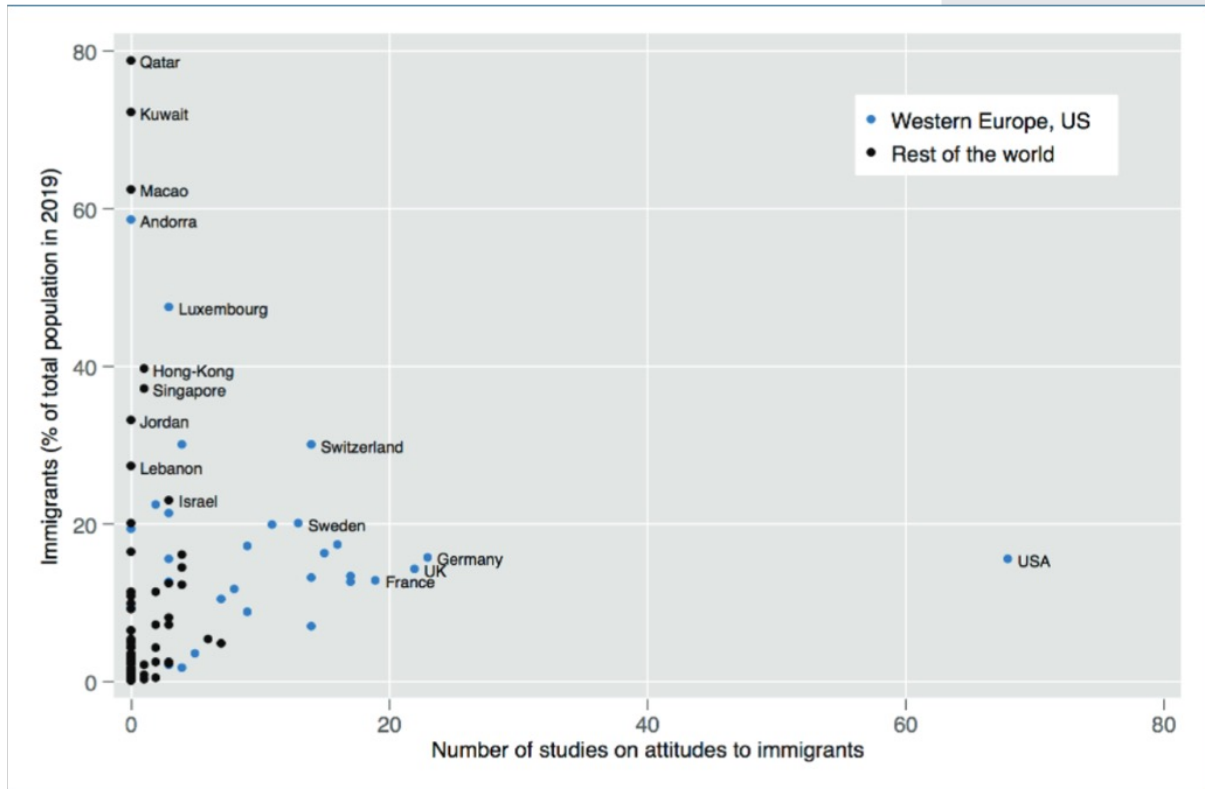
The survey results are evaluated anonymously, i.e. the answers from each of the surveys are never linked to the names or addresses of the panelists in the analysis.

## 3. Factors Affecting Attitudes Toward Migration in the Six Participating Countries

Attitudes toward migration have attracted much scholarly interest and fueled extensive empirical research in recent years. Many different hypotheses have been proposed to explain individual and contextual differences in attitudes toward migration (Dražanová, 2022; Dražanová et al., 2023).

However, most of the scholarly research carried out in top-level journals regarding factors affecting attitudes toward migration is concerned with the United States and Western Europe (Gonnot et al., 2020). Moreover, these countries have admittedly, rather smaller proportions of migrants and refugees compared to other, often understudied, countries (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Percentage of migrants across the total population across a number of studies on attitudes toward migration in the country.



(Source: Gonnot et al., 2020)

This may lead to a “sample bias” as it is not clear that the same factors that affect attitudes toward migration in WEIRD countries (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic) function in the same way in different contexts.

In this chapter, therefore, we focus on describing factors affecting attitudes toward migration in the six countries surveyed for the E-mindful project paying particular attention to similarities and differences concerning attitudes toward migration in these countries. We also focus on factors of gender, economic background, (un)employment, education, age, rural/urban settlement and a set of political attitudes. All the regressions control for the treatment (whether respondents have seen or read the video/comics) to keep its effect constant. We describe the actual impact of the intervention in the following Chapter (Impact evaluation results).

### 3.1 Gender

Research into anti-migrant sentiment often lacks a systematic examination of gender dynamics. Theoretically, the question of whether women or men harbor stronger anti-migration attitudes remains unclear. Prevailing studies tend to assume that men, given their more authoritarian personalities (Adorno et al., 1950) and their inclination for conservatism (Harteveld et al., 2015, p. 107), are expected

to exhibit higher levels of anti-migration attitudes. However, recent debates on migration, particularly the politicization of gender (Farris, 2017), introduce the possibility that native women may perceive certain migrants as a threat to gender equality (Ponce, 2017). Overall, the surveys conducted within the E-mindful project suggest that gender does not seem to play a major role in determining attitudes toward migration in either the Western European countries or the Balkan countries. A notable exception is Germany where female respondents are significantly more negative regarding migration's effect on the country and its economy compared to males. The finding that gender is not a significant factor in affecting attitudes toward migration, and that men and women are similarly likely to hold either negative or positive views, is fully consistent with previous research. Recent meta-analyses (Dražanová, 2022; Dražanová et al., 2023) have found that gender does not play a significant role in attitudes toward migration across the scholarly literature from five disciplines in the last ten years. When significant, women are roughly equally likely, or even slightly more likely, to hold anti-migration attitudes than men.

### 3.2 Education

Educational achievement frequently serves as a key indicator of anti-migration sentiments. The prevailing theoretical consensus in the literature asserts that individuals with higher education levels tend to exhibit less anti-migration attitudes than their lower-educated counterparts. Nonetheless, various studies have demonstrated that the robustness of this correlation is contingent upon contextual factors (Borgonovi & Pokropek, 2019) and does not consistently apply beyond the well-established Western context (Dražanová, 2017). As our samples are slightly skewed toward the higher educated, we contrasted those with university degrees to those without one, instead of disaggregating all the educational categories (in particular respondents with only primary education were too small in number to be analyzed). University-educated individuals do indeed hold more pro-migration attitudes than the lower educated in Austria, Germany and Italy, but only for a few of our dependent variables. In contrast, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and The Republic of Serbia, there appears to be no educational effect on attitudes to migration, which is consistent with the findings of Dražanová (2017).

### 3.3 Age

Although older respondents are often found to hold more anti-migration attitudes compared to their younger counterparts, in none of the six countries does age have a significant effect. This means that older respondents were not significantly more or less pro-migration than younger ones. We also did not find cohort (individuals born around the same time) effects in any of the countries studied.

### 3.4 Economic Conditions

Individual variations in attitudes toward migration are frequently linked to one's personal economic circumstances. This connection is rooted in the 'realistic group conflict theory', which posits that different groups compete for limited resources (Quillian, 1995). Working class individuals and those facing economic hardship are often believed to embrace more authoritarian and less tolerant attitudes toward outgroups and minorities than their middle-class counterparts because they perceive a direct economic threat from these groups. Research also suggests that those facing economic vulnerability are more inclined to support protectionist measures and the reduction of competition from migrants for employment, welfare benefits, and housing (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2010). However, the analysis presented here shows that the empirical link between income and attitudes to migration is very weak. In none of the countries does income play a significant role in predicting attitudes to migration. That said, subjective income difficulties do significantly affect attitudes to migration in many countries in our sample. This is fully consistent with earlier research (Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Espenshade & Hempstead, 1996) that showed that perceived economic competition manifested as a pessimistic personal economic outlook correlates with increased negativity toward migrants, indeed surpassing the impact of actual economic competition (Espenshade and Calhoun, 1993). Subjective income difficulties negatively affected most of the attitudes toward migration in Austria, Germany, North Macedonia and The Republic of Serbia, while they had no effect in Italy and Bosnia and Herzegovina. There seems not to be any Western Europe/Western Balkan pattern.

Based on a similar theoretical framework, known as labor market competition theory, we also expected that those who are employed and work full- or part-time to have more positive attitudes to migration. However, in most countries, those who are employed and work full- or part-time are not significantly more pro- or anti-migration than those not working (the reference group is rather heterogeneous with students, pensioners and those on maternity leave forming a single group).

### 3.5 Rural/Urban Settlement

Individuals residing in urban areas often display more favorable attitudes toward migration, and three primary explanations underlie this trend. Firstly, their increased exposure to migrants, fostering interactions as equals in work or personal settings, tends to cultivate positive attitudes (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006; Stolle et al., 2013). Secondly, urban residency can be associated with what are referred to as compositional effects that contribute to more positive migration attitudes, partly due to self-selection. This means that individuals with a predisposition for positive attitudes toward migration are more likely to choose large cities with multicultural environments (Maxwell, 2019). Thirdly, urban dwellers are often more highly educated, engaged in high-skill occupations, and possess higher incomes, factors correlated with a more positive stance on migration. In our sample, living



in larger cities significantly contributes to positive migration attitudes in Austria, Germany and The Republic of Serbia. We now move to a more detailed description of each country.

### 3.6 Findings By Country

#### / Austria

In Austria, most factors affect attitudes to migration similarly for all types of attitudes. Those who have a university degree have significantly more positive attitudes toward migration's effect on the country and culture. Those who are employed, and face income difficulties are significantly less positive about migration's effect on the economy and culture, and those with income difficulties also on people's lives in general.

People living in large cities view migration's effect on the country and culture more positively, while those living in areas (neighbourhoods) with a considerable share of migrants (compared to people living in areas with almost no share of migrants) view it negatively. For all types of attitudes toward migration, those who have an exclusive concept of national identity are significantly more negative (they only feel Austrian compared to those who also partly feel European or as citizens of the world) and possess an ethnic concept of nationalism believing that society should stay the same instead of continuously evolving. For all types of attitudes to migration, those who feel progressive (compared to conservative) and have high contact with migrants are significantly more pro-migration. Religion and religiosity do not play any role concerning attitudes to migration in Austria.

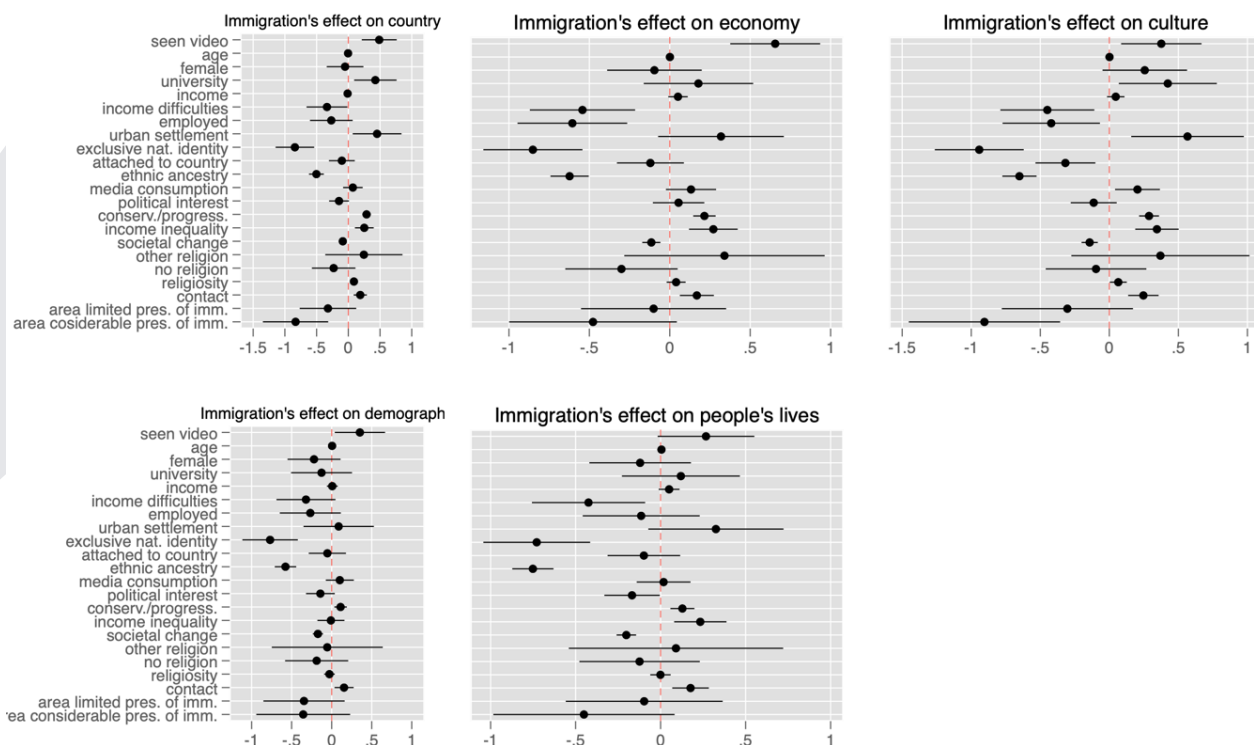


Figure 3. Factors affecting attitudes to migration in Austria. Note: All coefficients on the right-hand side of the red line are positively associated with attitudes to migration. All coefficients on the left-hand side are negatively associated with attitudes to migration. Coefficients whose confidence intervals touch the red line are not statistically significant.

## */* Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, people who are exclusive nationalists view migration's effects on the country, culture and people's lives significantly more negatively than those who also feel European or citizens of the world. People who feel strongly emotionally attached to Bosnia and Herzegovina are significantly more likely to view migration's effect on the country and the economy as positive, while those who view nationality in ethnic terms as negative. Being progressive leads to significantly more positive attitudes regarding migration's impact on the country, on the economy and culture. Having frequent contact significantly improves attitudes toward migration apart from attitudes toward migration's effect on demography. People who have another religion (for example Muslims or Buddhists) are significantly more likely to view migration's effect on culture more positively compared to Christians. Otherwise, religion does not play a role in determining attitudes toward migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

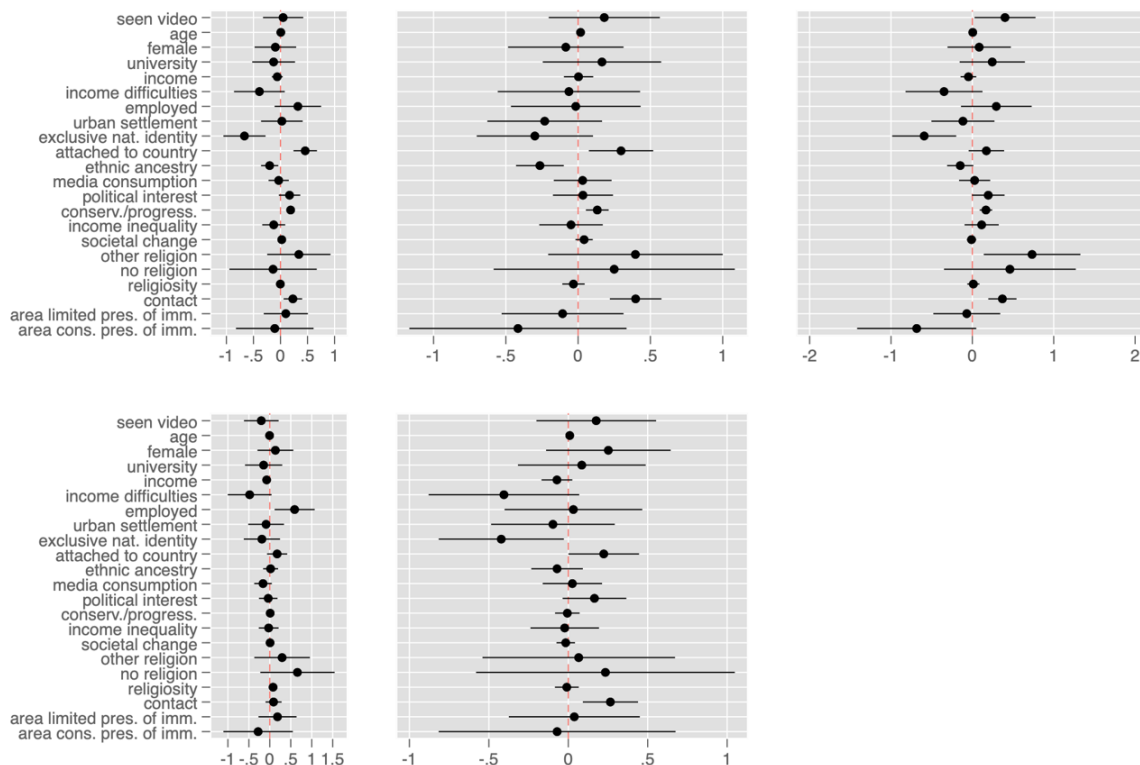


Figure 4. Factors affecting attitudes to migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Note: All coefficients on the right-hand-side of the red line are positively associated with attitudes to migration. All coefficients on the left hand side are negatively associated with attitudes to migration. Coefficients whose confidence intervals touch the red line are not statistically significant.

## / Germany

Women are significantly more negative about migration's effect on the country and on the country's economy. Facing income difficulties leads to more negative attitudes toward migration's effects on the country overall, the economy and the culture. Having an exclusive national identity and viewing nationality in ethnic terms leads to significantly more negative attitudes toward migration while having contact with migrants leads to significantly more positive attitudes. Living in areas with a significant proportion of migrants leads to more negative attitudes about migration's effect on the country and the country's economy compared to those living in areas with no presence of migrants.

Those who have another religion other than Christianity are significantly more likely to view migration's effect on the culture and demography as positive. Those who view themselves as progressives are significantly more positive about migration's effect on the country, economy and culture.

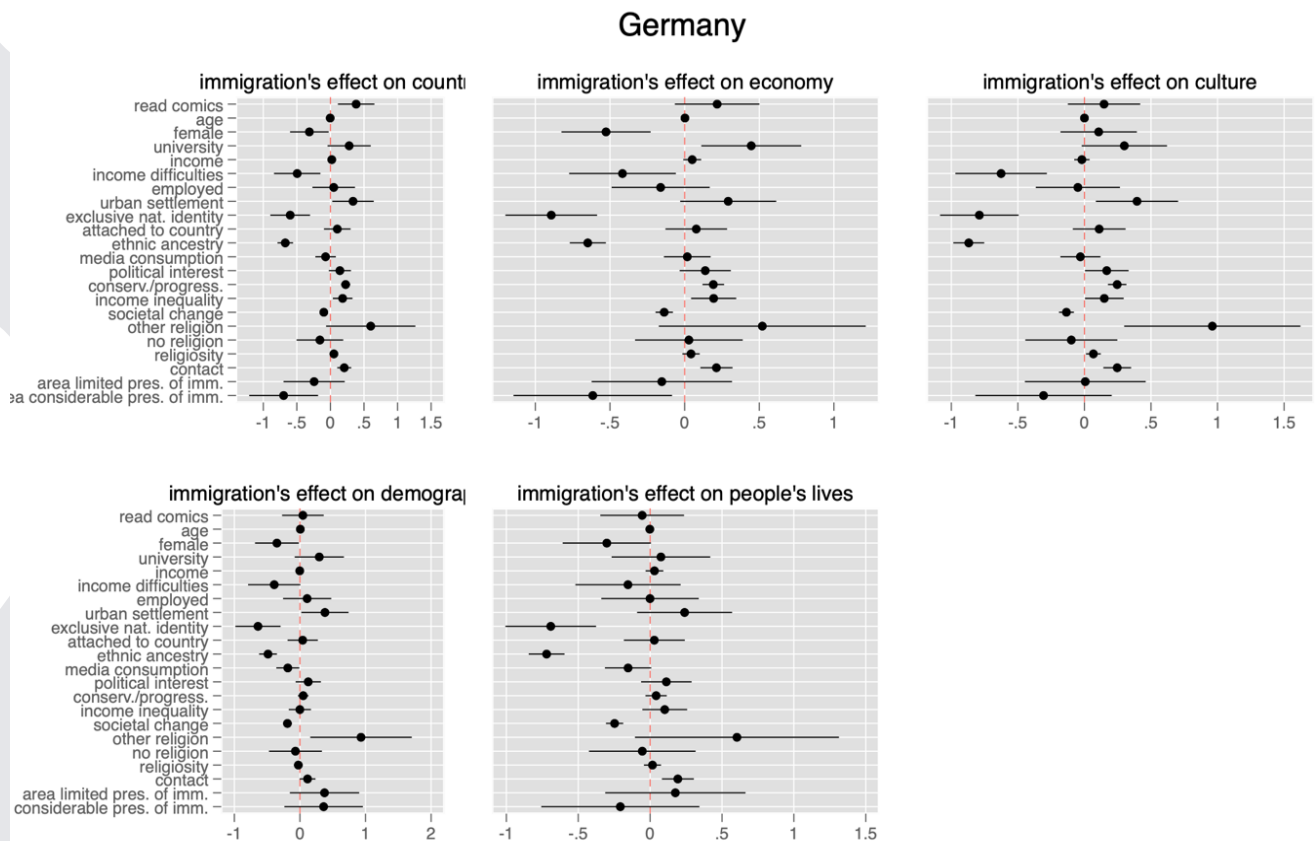


Figure 5. Factors affecting attitudes to migration in Germany. Note: All coefficients on the right-hand side of the red line are positively associated with attitudes to migration. All coefficients on the left-hand side are negatively associated with attitudes to migration. Coefficients whose confidence intervals touch the red line are not statistically significant.

## / Italy

Individuals with university degrees generally hold more positive views regarding migration's impact on demography than those without such degrees. Conversely, maintaining an exclusive national identity, perceiving nationality through ethnic lenses, and residing in areas with a high migrant population tend to foster more negative attitudes toward migration. Having progressive beliefs generally enhances overall positive attitudes toward migration, except in the context of attitudes toward demography.

Additionally, displaying an interest in politics tends to correlate with more favorable attitudes toward migration, considering its effects on the country, the economy, and demography.

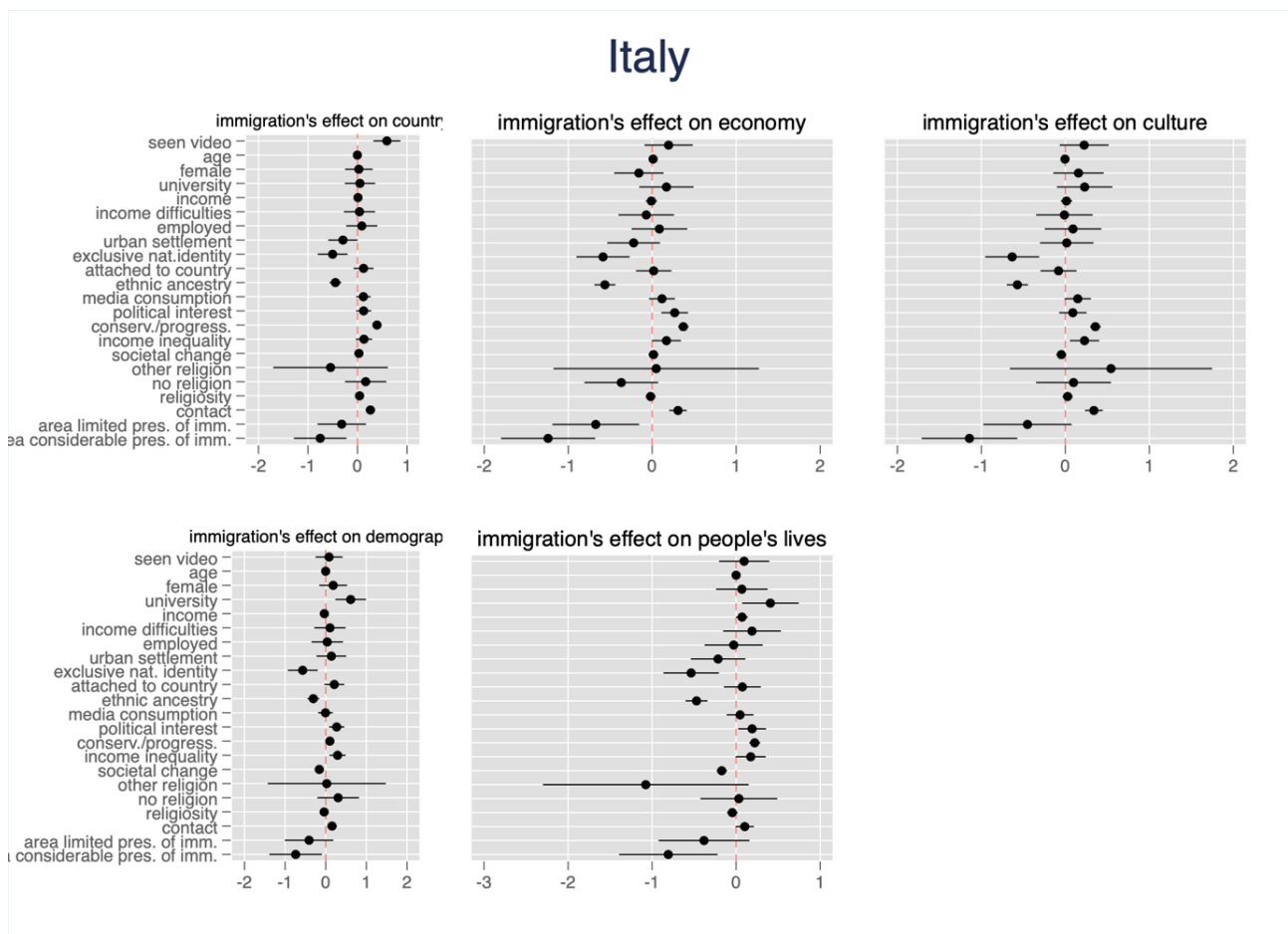


Figure 6. Factors affecting attitudes to migration in Italy. Note: All coefficients on the right-hand side of the red line are positively associated with attitudes to migration. All coefficients on the left-hand side are negatively associated with attitudes to migration. Coefficients whose confidence intervals touch the red line are not statistically significant.

## North Macedonia

Subjective income difficulties lead to more negative attitudes toward migration (except attitudes toward migration's effect on demography). Those who are strongly emotionally attached to North Macedonia are more positive toward migration's effect on the country, the economy and culture. Compared to Christians, those who have another religion are more positive toward the effects of migration on the country and the economy.

Those who possess an exclusive national identity are significantly more negative in their evaluation of migration's effects on the economy, the culture and people's lives in general. Otherwise, most of the predictors in the model are insignificant. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that the sample is rather small (around 500 respondents).

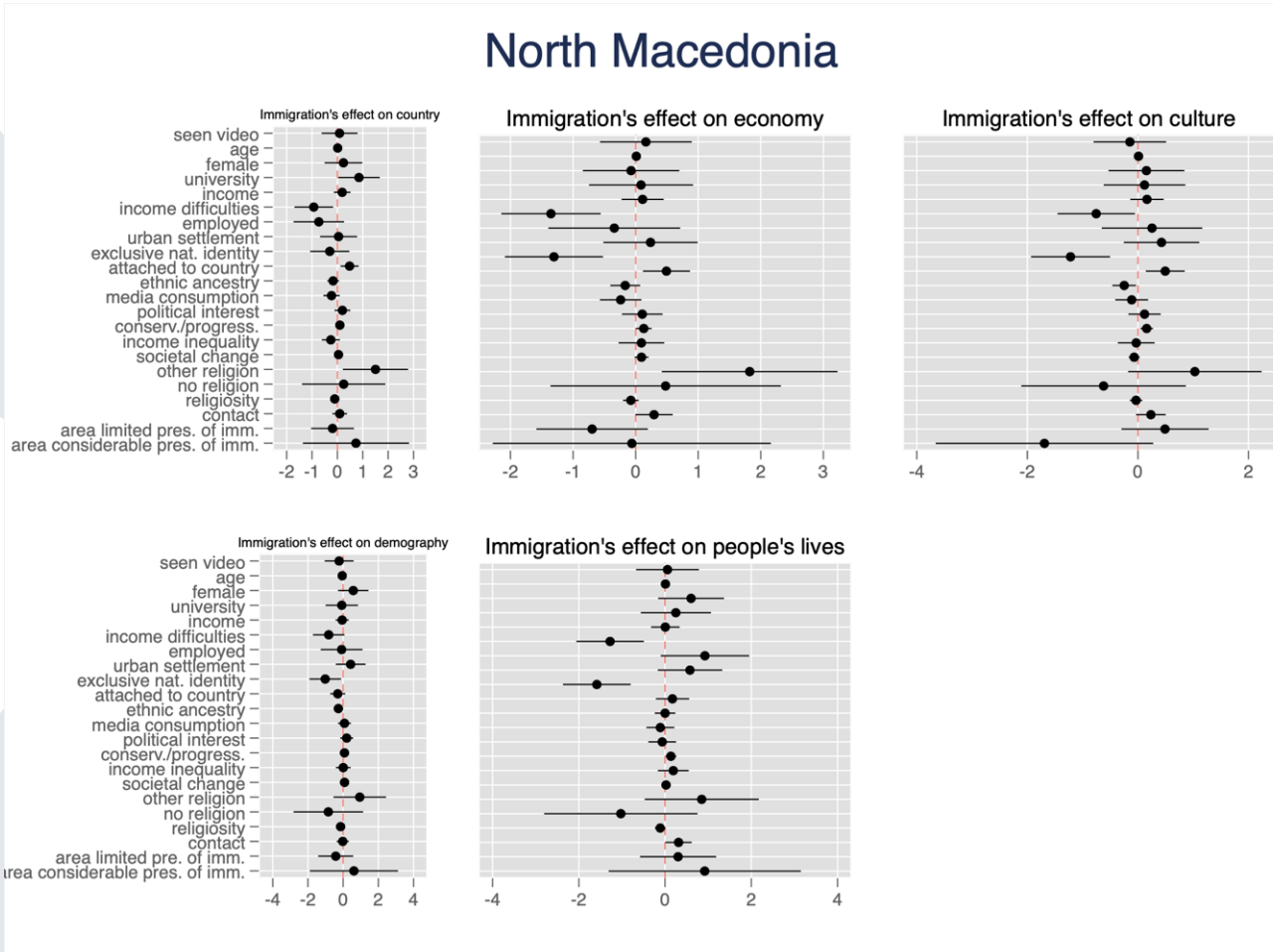


Figure 7. Factors affecting attitudes to migration in North Macedonia. Note: All coefficients on the right-hand side of the red line are positively associated with attitudes to migration. All coefficients on the left-hand side are negatively associated with attitudes to migration. Coefficients whose confidence intervals touch the red line are not statistically significant.

## Republic of Serbia

In The Republic of Serbia, those facing income difficulties view migration's impact on the country and the economy significantly more negatively compared to those living comfortably or coping with their present income. Those having an exclusive national identity and viewing nationality in ethnic terms are significantly more negative in their attitudes toward migration. Those who have frequent contact with migrants and who self-describe as progressive compared to conservatives consider migration's effect on the country, the economy, culture and lives overall significantly more positive. Those who consider themselves more religious view migration's effect on demography significantly more negatively.

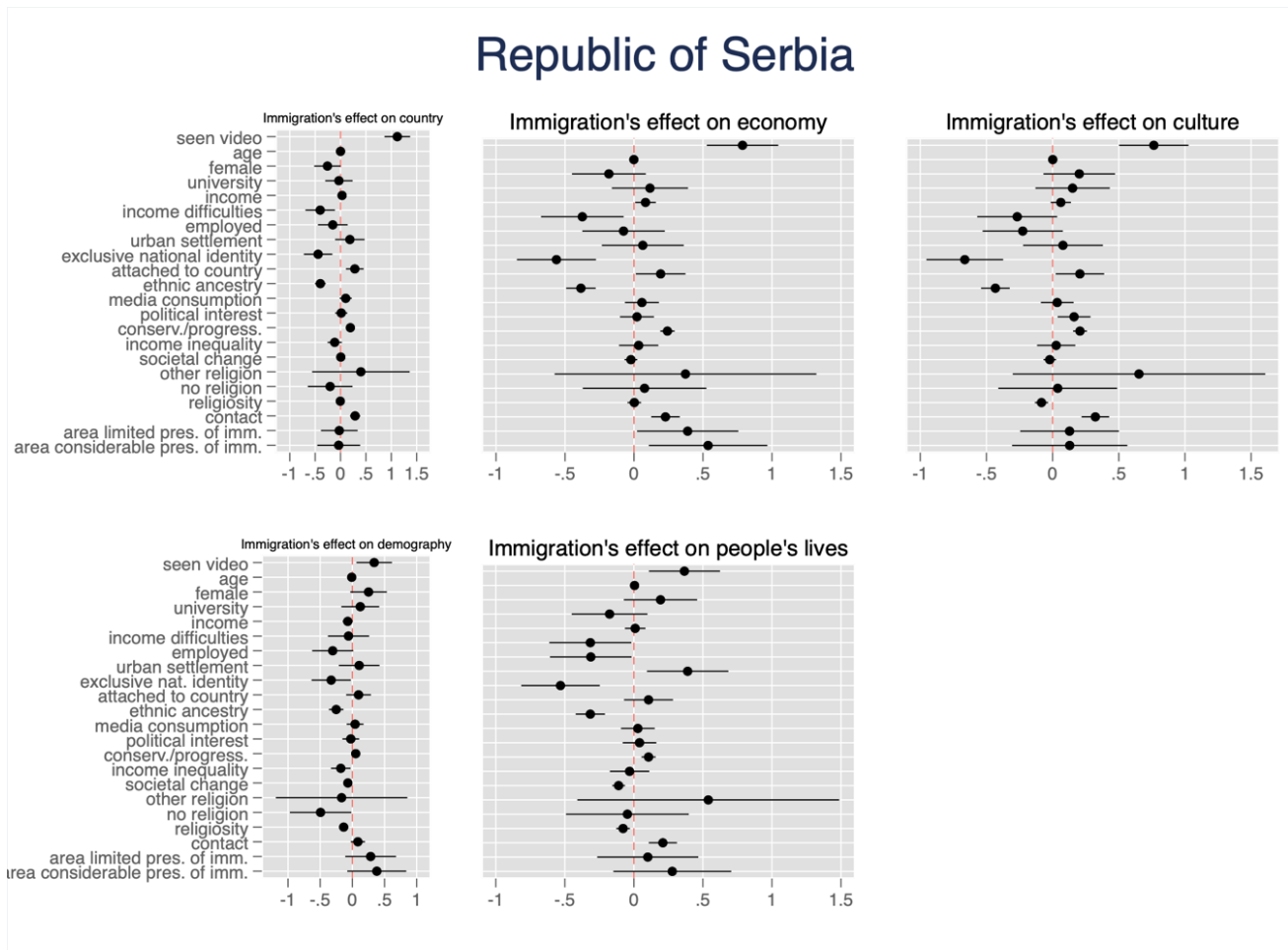


Figure 8. Factors affecting attitudes to migration in The Republic of Serbia. Note: All coefficients on the right-hand side of the red line are positively associated with attitudes to migration. All coefficients on the left-hand side are negatively associated with attitudes to migration. Coefficients whose confidence intervals touch the red line are not statistically significant.

## 3.7 Summary

This chapter analyzed the multifaceted factors influencing attitudes toward migration across six countries: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, Italy, North Macedonia, and The Republic of Serbia. While scholarly attention has primarily focused on the United States and Western Europe, our examination aimed to uncover insights in less studied regions. The “sample bias” inherent in much existing research, rooted in Western-centric perspectives, raised questions about the universality of factors influencing attitudes toward migration.

Despite variations in migration proportions among the surveyed countries, our analysis revealed interesting patterns. Gender differences played a limited role, with Germany being a notable exception where female respondents expressed significantly more negative attitudes. Education’s impact was nuanced, with university-educated individuals generally holding more pro-migration stances in Austria, Germany, and Italy, but no such effect was observed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and The Republic of Serbia. Contrary to expectations, age and economic conditions did not significantly influence attitudes toward migration in the studied countries. The weak empirical link between income and migration attitudes challenged assumptions derived from the realistic group conflict theory. However, subjective income difficulties emerged as a significant predictor, aligning with earlier research indicating their strong association with negative attitudes toward migrants.

A further important highlight is that while frequent contact with migrants leads to more positive attitudes to migration, our analysis reveals that living in areas with a significant proportion of migrants generally significantly worsens attitudes toward migration. This highlights the importance of the type of contact one has with minorities and populations from different countries.

Detailed country-specific analyses revealed nuanced influences. One of the important differences between the Western European and Western Balkan countries is that while in the European sample, strong emotional attachment to one’s country leads to negative attitudes toward migration, in the Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia) it affects migration attitudes positively. In North Macedonia, subjective income difficulties influenced negative attitudes, and exclusive national identity played a significant role. The Republic of Serbia revealed the impact of economic conditions, contact with migrants, and progressive self-identification. These nuanced findings emphasize the need for context-specific analyses, challenging the assumption that factors influencing attitudes toward migration in WEIRD countries universally apply.

The next chapter will explore the impact of the E-Mindful intervention (video/comics) on migration attitudes, shedding light on the potential efficacy of educational interventions in shaping public perceptions.

## 4. Impact Evaluation Results

This section evaluates the campaigns' impacts on people's attitudes toward migration in the six E-Mindful case countries. Stated in general terms, the campaign's main objectives were to induce changes in attitudes toward migration through the message that we are all part of a "social and relational identity", naturally mixed up, getting out from the defensive identitarian contraposition of "us versus them". Such a concept of identity – which is the common thread of all the stories narrated by each intervention – intends to communicate an idea of more cohesive hosting communities, where everyone can feel welcome. Furthermore, the NMCGs designed their information campaigns intending to address primarily youth as the target population<sup>5</sup>. Based on this, we expected that the group shown the videos/comics intervention regarding a shared sense of belonging between natives and migrants would manifest significantly more positive attitudes toward migration compared to the control group that was not shown anything. By the same token, we expected to observe possible subgroup differences among younger respondents when shown the video/comics intervention leading them to express more positive attitudes toward migration. This is because the information campaigns were conceived by the NMCGs as appealing to younger audiences.

Each country's results are described in a separate section below that also presents the general background regarding the intervention. Each country's team designed and produced its own intervention. Despite a common overarching message, the use of different interventions and the diversity of formats (for example, the German team produced comics while all the other countries presented videos) did encourage creativity but reduced the comparability of the interventions across countries. In each section of this report, we utilize a rigorous impact evaluation design (RCT) to estimate the causal effect of being subjected to the campaign when compared to a randomly selected control group within the wider sample of respondents that were not subject to the intervention. This allows us to assess the campaign's relative impact, if any. Here, we present only figures for those attitudes that were significantly affected by the intervention. Figures for attitudes that did not significantly change are reported in the Technical Appendix.

It is also important to consider whether the effects endure over time. Consequently, in the countries where we did detect campaign effects, we also present results from a survey conducted one month after the intervention that allows evaluation of whether the effect has endured. Figures are presented only for significant effects.

Please note that all analyses are based on the online surveys conducted in the local language (see Chapter "Methodology and survey design" for details regarding methodology).

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<sup>5</sup> Austria, North Macedonia and Serbia did not target a specific age group; Bosnia and Herzegovina's target group is aged 18-30; Germany 18-25; and Italy 18-35.



## 4.1 Austria

### Campaign Intervention

The animated video shows a fictional TV game show very similar to “Who Wants to be a Millionaire”. In this captivating game show, “WHO WILL BE A MIGRANT,” the tension rises as a candidate competes to answer questions about migration for cash prizes. The host guides the participant through a series of inquiries, testing their knowledge and beliefs. As the candidate grapples with a question on the perceived impact of migration in Austria, confident at first, uncertainty creeps in, leading to the use of an “ask the whole country” joker. The show incorporates real-life street interviews on migration, adding an interactive element. As the stakes escalate, the candidate faces a final question on the role of migration in defining Austria’s identity, with a creative twist involving a “future joker.” The climactic resolution unfolds with scenes depicting a transformed Vienna, exploring the consequences of different choices. The show concludes with a whimsical farewell, accompanied by the melodic strains of Georg Kreisler’s music.

### Campaign impacts

Our evaluation finds consistent positive impacts of the video campaign on attitudes toward migration, with four out of five impacts being statistically significant (attitudes toward migration’s effect on the country, the economy, culture and demography, see Figures 9-12). The video did not significantly impact attitudes toward migration’s effect on people’s lives. These results are robust after adjusting for controls. The impact of seeing the video was especially strong for attitudes toward migration’s effect on the economy, where seeing the video was associated with a 0.509-points higher score on positive attitudes toward migration’s effect on the economy compared to not seeing the video. Nevertheless, none of this impact lasted after one month. People who watched the video one month prior were not significantly more likely to be more pro-migration than those who have not seen it.

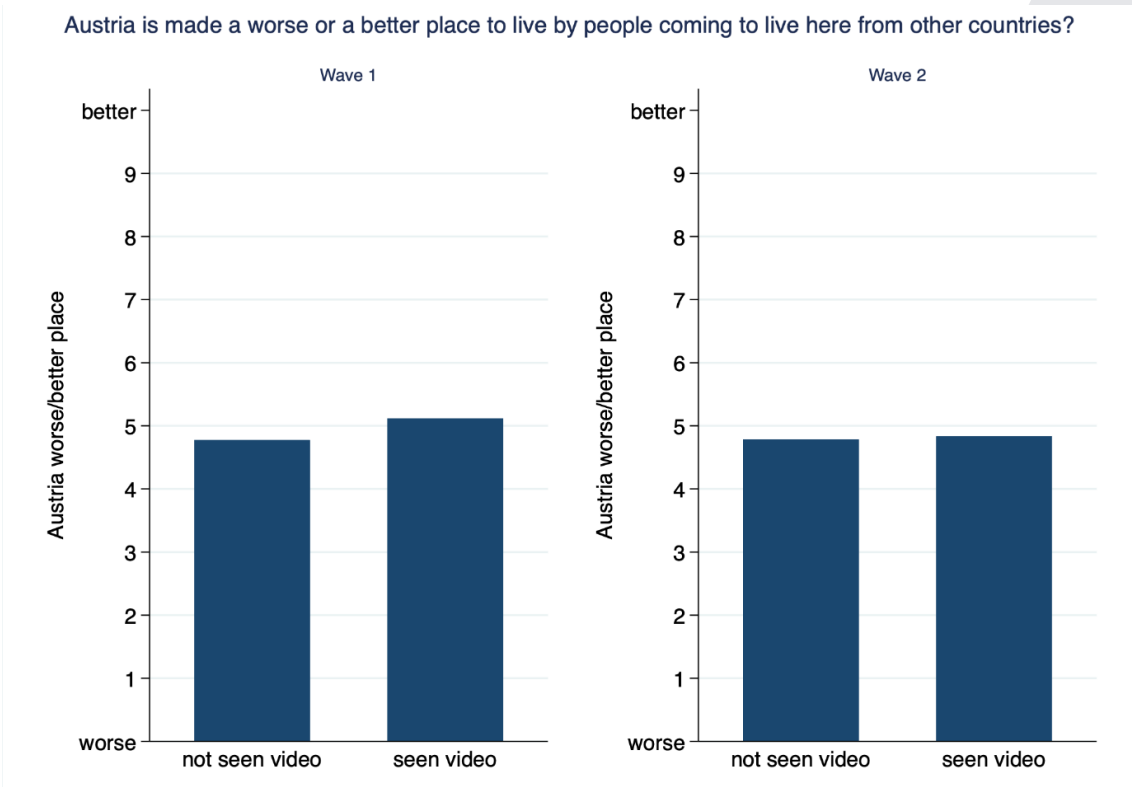


Figure 9. Mean for attitudes toward migration's effect on the country between the treatment and control group in the two waves in Austria. Note: Treatment effects considered significant at  $p < 0.05$ . See Tables A1 and A2 in the Technical Annex for more information. Wave 1 N = 1,447; Wave 2 N = 1,195.

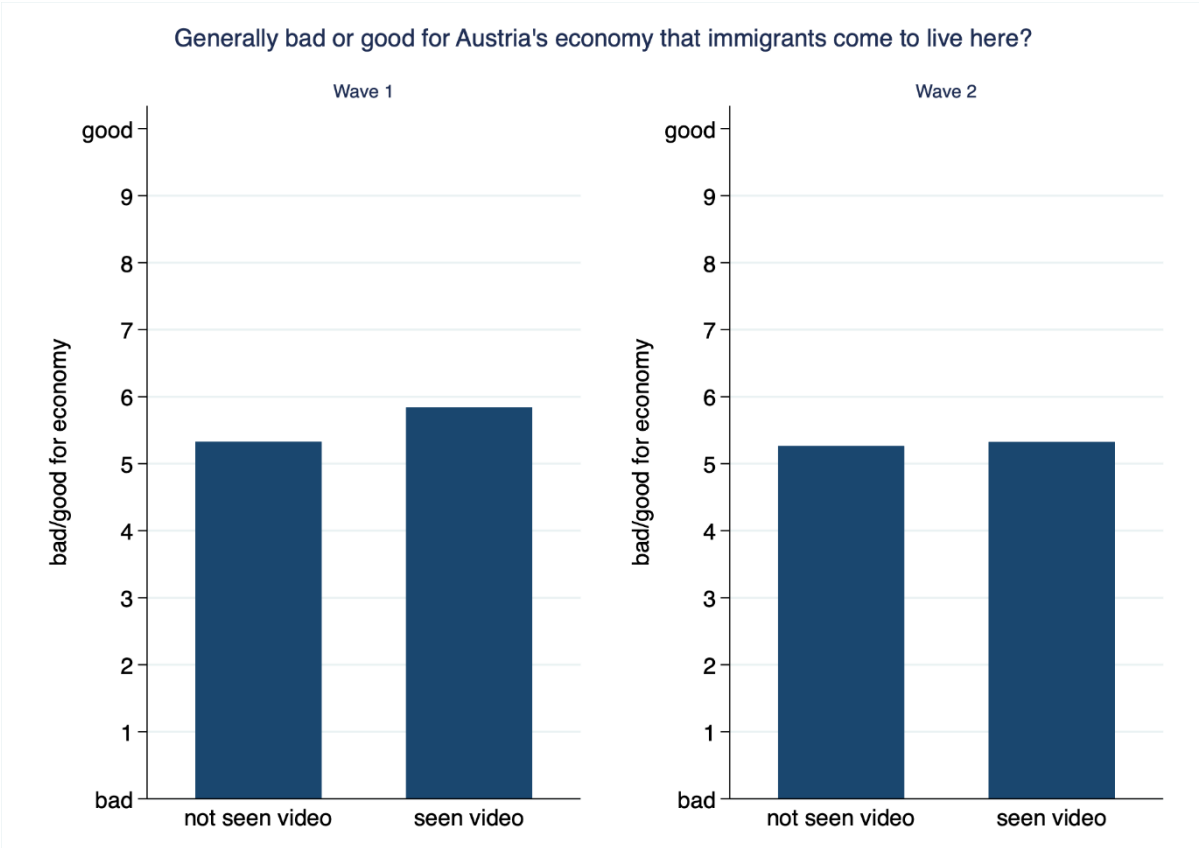


Figure 10. Mean for attitudes toward migration's effect on the country's economy between the treatment and control group in the two waves in Austria. Note: Treatment effects considered significant at  $p < 0.05$ . See Tables A1 and A2 in the Technical Annex for more information. Wave 1 N = 1,441; Wave 2 N = 1,195.

Austria's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by immigrants coming to live here?

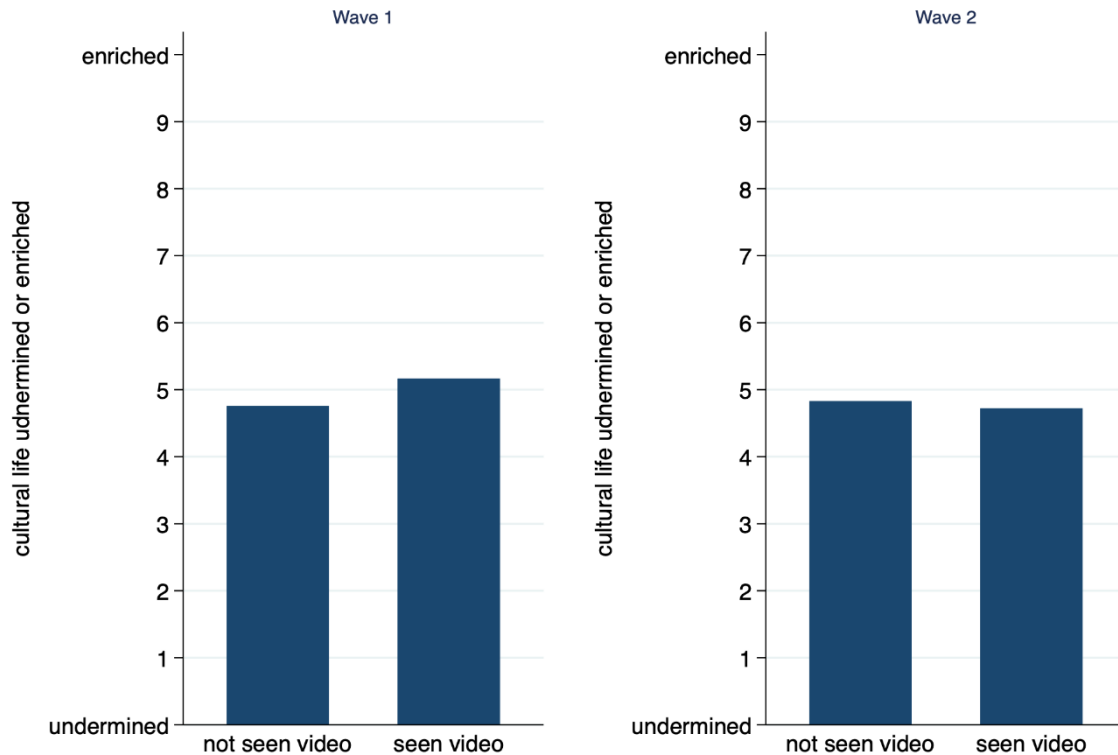


Figure 11. Mean for attitudes toward migration's effect on the country's culture between the treatment and control group in the two waves in Austria. Note: Treatment effects considered significant at  $p < 0.05$ . See Tables A1 and A2 in the Technical Annex for more information. Wave 1  $N = 1,451$ ; Wave 2  $N = 1,220$ .

Austria's demographic future is generally made better or worse by people coming to live here?

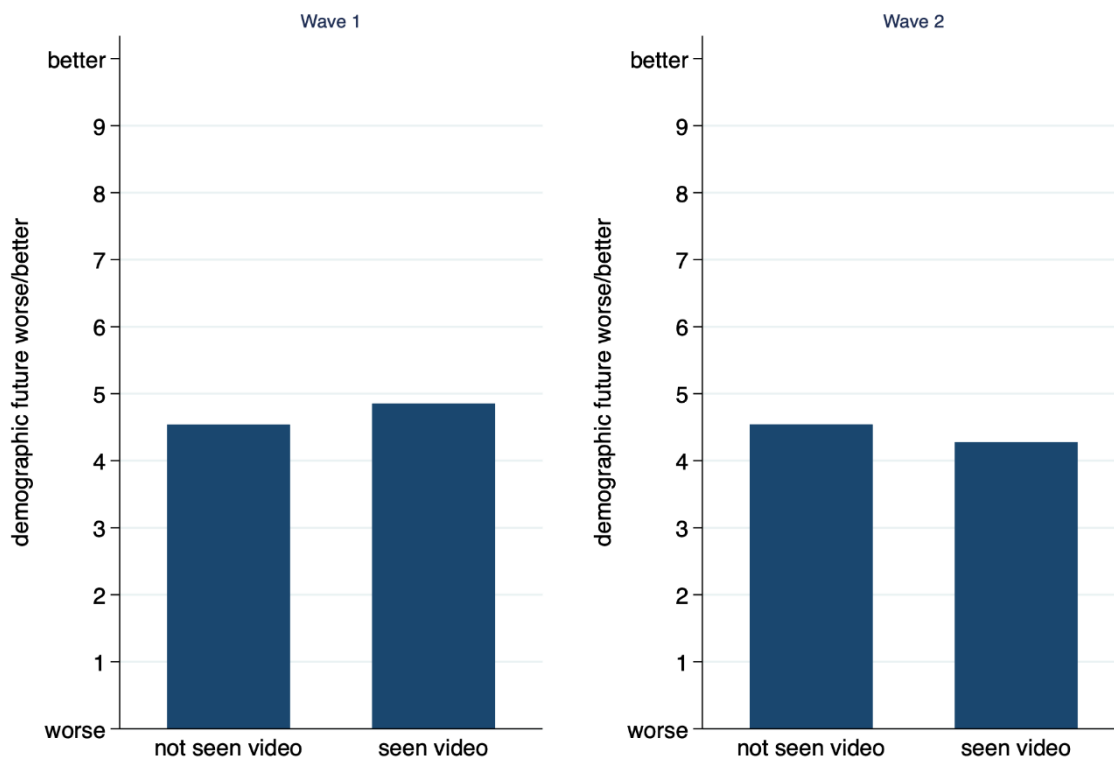


Figure 12. Mean for attitudes toward migration's effect on the country's demographic future between the treatment and control group in the two waves in Austria. Note: Treatment effects considered significant at  $p < 0.05$ . See Tables A1 and A2 in the Technical Annex for more information. Wave 1  $N = 1,004$ ; Wave 2  $N = 1,151$ .

## Subgroup analysis

The video had a significantly positive effect on attitudes toward demography for older respondents (55 years and older) and attitudes toward migration's effect on the economy for those who find it difficult to live on their present income. Nevertheless, the effect on attitudes toward the impact on the economy disappeared after one month for those facing income struggles. In a somewhat puzzling turn, older respondents who have seen the video have a significantly more negative attitude toward migration's effect on demography one month later, while younger respondents (those between 18-34 and 35-54 years) are significantly more positive one month after viewing the video.

For any other subgroups and any other type of attitude to migration's effect, there are no significant differences between older and younger respondents, between males and females, between respondents with different educational degrees, those coping or finding it difficult on their present income and those who are employed compared to anyone else.

Interestingly, there have been some effects of the intervention on particular subgroups that were not been detected immediately after the intervention. For instance, for peoples' attitudes towards migration's effect on the economy, in the second wave we found that younger respondents (between 18 and 34 years old) who had seen the video were significantly more positive compared to those who had not. One month later, among those who were not facing income difficulties, respondents who had viewed the video were significantly more likely to view migration's effect on culture more negatively compared to those who had not seen it, whereas among those who were facing income difficulties, the video has a significantly positive effect. As mentioned above, for migration's effect on demography, older respondents were significantly more negative one month after seeing the video compared to those who had not seen it, while the other two age categories (young and middle-aged respondents) were significantly more positive toward migration if they have seen the video compared to those who have not one month after the viewing. Finally, those who do not find it difficult on present income were significantly more negative one month after seeing the video regarding attitudes toward migration's effect on demography.

## 4.2 Bosnia and Herzegovina

### Campaign Intervention

The video begins by rolling the dice and showing the world map by alluding to countries from which migrants come. It shows three people sitting at a table – two men (whose faces are not seen on camera) and a woman – the narrator and the main character of the video. The woman gets up from the table and walks around the room. She describes the history of migrations – from ancient times to modern times – while behind her are illustrations (photos and videos) which visualize the processes of migration. The

video ends with a note that our planet is on the move and that we are all migrants in some way. The woman exits the room and is seen joining a group of walkers-by (migrants) on the street.

## Campaign impacts

We did not find any significant impacts of seeing the video on any of the attitudes toward migration that were measured. <sup>6</sup>This means that those respondents who saw the video were not significantly more likely to have different (positive) attitudes toward migration compared to those who have not seen it. Despite the considerable efforts put into crafting a compelling narrative that sought to promote empathy and understanding, the outcomes have not proven successful in yielding any significant effects on the attitudes of those who viewed it. This lack of impact suggests that the inherent complexities and deeply ingrained beliefs surrounding migration require more targeted approaches to overcome resistance and foster genuine shifts in public opinion. The video intervention, despite its initial promise, appears to have struggled to navigate the intricacies of deeply rooted attitudes within the community. Logically, there were no effects detected also one month later after viewing the video (see Tables A5 and A6 in the Technical Appendix for all results).

## Subgroup analysis

The analysis above shows that respondents who have seen the video (treatment group) did not differ significantly in their responses toward migration effects compared to respondents who did not (control group).

In this section, we analyze the effects on sub-groups because, technically, it would have been possible that certain subgroups demonstrated changes in attitudes to migration due to the campaign, even though the campaign had no effect on the overall sample.

Seeing the video has significantly improved the attitudes of women toward migration's effect on the country overall and on culture (Table A7). Nevertheless, this effect did not persist one month later. Attitudes toward migration's effect on culture were also significantly improved for those who are not employed full or part-time after seeing the video. However, this effect also did not last after one month (Table A8). The campaign did not show differential impacts on younger or older respondents, more or less educated respondents and those with income difficulties.

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<sup>6</sup> Apart from a significant impact on attitudes toward migration's effect on culture after adjusting for other covariates. Given that the effect is non-significant in the empty model with the treatment as the sole predictor, this appears to be rather a statistical artefact.

## 4.3 Germany

### Campaign Intervention

The German intervention showed a series of comic strips. In this comic series set in the bustling city of Berlin, the protagonist is a fox who serves as the “other”. The series focuses on everyday discrimination, tackling issues such as othering and exclusion. The narrative unfolds with the fox encountering situations that highlight societal challenges. The stories address the denial of equal opportunities and discrimination as the fox faces obstacles, stereotypes, and attempts to integrate into human activities, such as pursuing an Ausbildung (apprenticeship) or getting a job.

### Campaign impacts

Generally, the results show that the comics had a very limited effect on migration attitudes across the different measures. Only for the measure examining the overall effect of migration on Germany, respondents in the treatment group are significantly more likely to consider Germany as a better place compared to those who have not read the comics (see Figure 13). For all the other measures (migration’s effect on the economy, culture, demography and people’s lives) none of the differences are statistically significant and are thus not reliable (see Table A9 in the Technical Appendix).

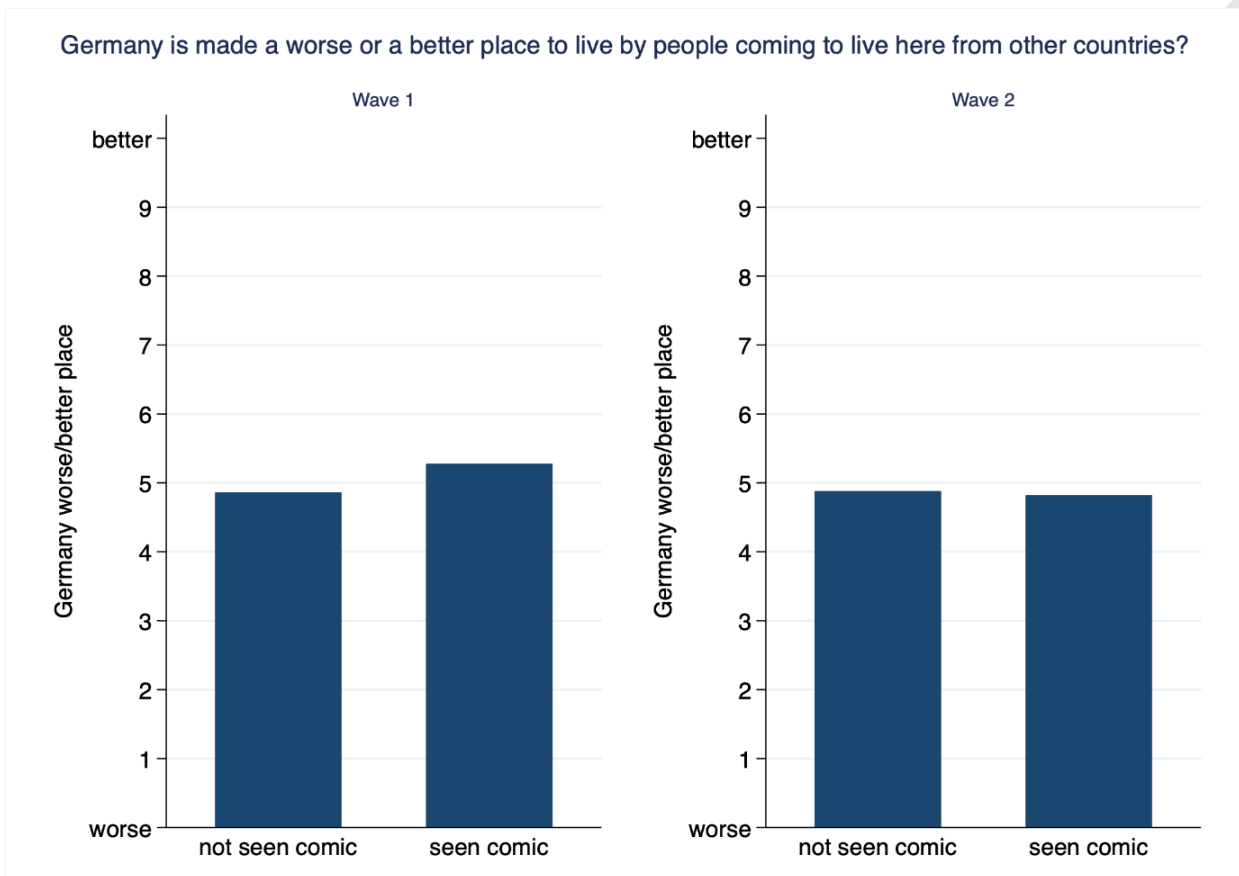


Figure 13. Mean for attitudes toward migration’s effect on the country between the treatment and control group in the two waves in Germany. Note: Treatment effects considered significant at  $p < 0.05$ . See Tables A9 and A10 in the Technical Annex for more information. Wave 1 N = 1,048; Wave 2 N = 1,184.

We also looked at the effects of the intervention after one month. We found that there were no significant impacts for the measure looking at migration's overall effect on the country observed in the survey conducted one month after reading the comics and therefore the impact has only been temporary and not long-lasting.

These results raise some questions that feed into a wider discussion of the limited impact of campaigns such as this in terms of its specific effects on attitudes to migration. It might have been hard for the average respondent to decipher that the fox represents migrants as this aspect was not particularly emphasized. Viewers may not have connected the struggles faced by the fox to those generally faced by migrants and thus not fully understood the message. In the one case where it did, the effect did not endure beyond a month.

### Subgroup analysis

The comics also had a limited impact on any subgroup population. Overall, the intervention did not affect differentially people of different ages, different genders, different educational backgrounds, with different employment statuses and with or without income difficulties. The only exception is attitudes toward migration's effect on the country when reading the comics positively affected those with only elementary school completed and those who find it difficult to live on their present income. However, these effects did not last after one month and there were no significant differences in attitudes toward migration's effect on one's country who read the comics and those who did not within these two groups.

## 4.3 Italy

### Campaign Intervention

Half of the respondents in the sample viewed a short video (lasting for around 3 minutes) using a visual form that intertwines 2D compositing and 3D animation and the latest image generation techniques through Artificial Intelligence. The animation explains the long family history of a world-famous Italian fashion influencer and how, like the influencer, we all originate from the same Homo Sapiens that migrated, traveled and discovered new worlds, becoming hunters, farmers, scientists, dentists, singers and, finally, social media influencers.

### Campaign impacts

The average treatment effect of seeing the short video on 5 attitudes toward the effect of migration is presented here (see Tables A13 and A14 in the Technical Annex for all results). Generally, the results show that the video campaign had a very limited effect on migration attitudes across the different measures. Only for the measure looking at migration's overall effect on the country (would you say that Italy is made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?) respondents in the treatment group are significantly more likely to consider Italy

a better place compared to those who have not seen the video. For all the other measures (migration's effect on the economy, culture, demography and people's lives) none of the differences are statistically significant and are thus not reliable (see Table A13).

We also looked at the effects of the intervention after one month (see Table A14 in the Technical Appendix. We found that there were no significant impacts for the measure looking at migration's overall effect on the country observed in the survey conducted one month after seeing the video. This means that the impact of seeing the video on this particular attitude has only been temporary and not long-lasting. As already noted, the impact of seeing the video is not significant on all the other measures one month after seeing the video, since there was no immediate impact.

These results raise some questions that feed into a wider discussion of the impact of campaigns such as this. Without a doubt, the design quality was very high and the video is a compelling account of the human journey. However, in terms of its specific effects on attitudes to migration, we found its impact to be very limited and, even where there were effects, these did not endure. The short video featured one of the most prominent and rich Italian fashion influencers, who is very well known but we might wonder to what extent such a public figure could be associated with the issue of migration by the general public. Our results indicate that the key message of the video intervention – that a world-famous Italian fashion influencer, like us all, has a migration background, did not actually convey its message in a way that affected peoples' existing attitudes. Even in the limited area where it had an impact, the effect did not endure beyond a month.

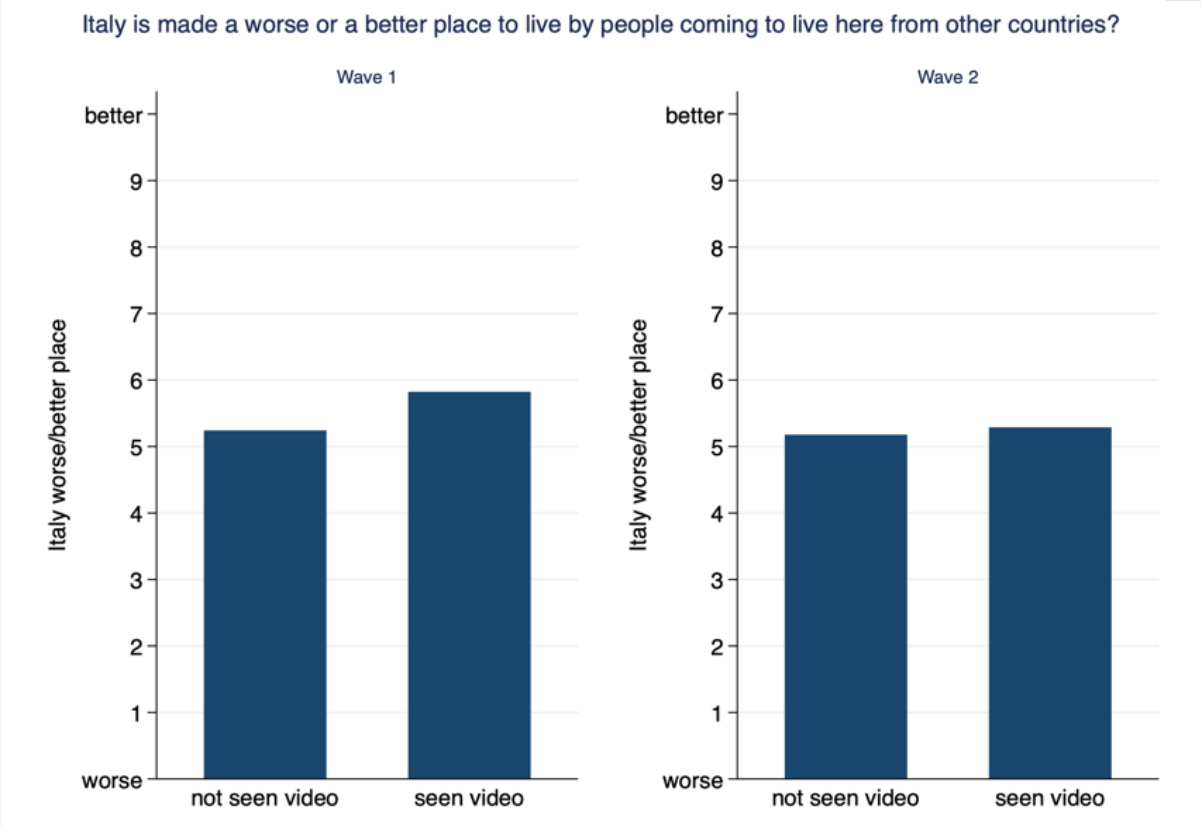


Figure 14. Mean for attitudes toward migration's effect on the country between the treatment and control group in the two waves. Note: Treatment effects considered significant at  $p < 0.05$ . See Tables A13 and A14 in the Technical Annex for more information. Wave 1 N = 982; Wave 2 N = 897.



## Subgroup analysis

The analysis above shows that respondents who have seen the video (treatment group) did not differ significantly in their responses toward migration effects on the economy, culture, demography and lives) compared to respondents who did not (control group).

In this section, we analyze the effects on sub-groups because, technically, it would have been possible that certain subgroups demonstrated changes in attitudes to migration due to the campaign, even though the campaign had no effect on the overall sample.

While generally there is not much evidence of sub-group variation, there are some notable exceptions (see Tables A15 and A16 in the Technical Annex). About attitudes toward migration's effect on Italy, seeing the video had a positive effect among older people (55 years and above), males, those living comfortably on present income and those who are not employed full or part-time at the moment. For attitudes toward the effect of migration on Italy in general and on Italy's economy, individuals with elementary school education experience a significantly positive increase in attitudes toward migration after seeing the video, compared to those with elementary school without the treatment. On the other hand, for attitudes toward migration's effect on the economy, the analysis revealed negative and statistically significant interaction terms for all three educational categories (general secondary school, vocational or technical secondary school, and college/university). These results indicate that seeing the video had a more adverse effect on attitudes toward the economic impact of migration for individuals with these three completed educational levels compared to those who completed only elementary school. For attitudes regarding migration's effect on Italy overall, the same effect occurred, but only for respondents with completed secondary schools, while effects among those with university degrees were not statistically significant.

We can also observe an interesting phenomenon for unemployment. While the video had a significantly positive effect on attitudes towards immigration's effect on the country for those unemployed who viewed the video immediately after and rather negative effects on attitudes towards people's life and demography (but the effect have not reached statistical significance), one month later the video's positive effect disappeared but a significant negative effect appeared on attitudes towards culture, demography and people's life. Similarly, a significantly negative effect can be observed one month later for those facing income difficulties on attitudes towards immigration's effect on people's lives.

Notably, individuals with higher levels of education experienced greater negativity in their attitudes toward migration's economic effects after seeing the video compared to their counterparts with only elementary-level education. It could be suggested that this was because the video intervention was eliciting reactions – both negative and positive – to pop culture and social media influencers rather than to migration. People who have negative attitudes toward pop culture and social media influencers, which might conceivably be the case for more highly educated people or those facing economic insecurity, could have been negatively affected by the video and this might have had a “spill-over effect” on their attitudes toward migration.

## 4.4 North Macedonia

### Campaign Intervention

The plot follows a young (30-40 years old) highly educated man who decides to leave the country due to his inability to find a job and the associated uncertainty and insecurity. After delaying the inevitable decision for a long time due to his connection with family, friends, and his city, a conflict situation means that he decides to leave forever. He sends out dozens of applications, none of which are accepted because of his country of origin. He finally manages to find work and accommodation through intermediaries/agencies. He says goodbye to his loved ones, packs his life in a suitcase and leaves. On the way, he uses different forms of transport, waits in long queues for passengers from "other countries" and faces constant document checks. Finally, he reaches the destination. He spends hours in front of various counters convincing clerks who do not understand him or think he does not understand anything. He starts working in a service industry that is below his qualifications. Co-workers and customers do not accept or respect him. He lives in isolation, on the street he passes by walls with xenophobic messages, and sometimes they scold him because they see him as a foreigner. He fights loneliness occasionally by seeing family and friends on video calls. One evening, returning tired, he passes by a restaurant that is playing music that he recognizes. He enters and, during a break, he asks the musicians if he can join them. They agree and he starts playing.

### Campaign impacts

Despite the careful construction of a narrative aimed at cultivating empathy and understanding for the uneasy life of migrants, the outcomes yielded null results. The video, envisioned as a catalyst for positive change, failed to elicit any significant differences in the attitudes to migration of those who viewed it compared to those who did not. This lack of impact underscores the challenges in altering deeply ingrained beliefs surrounding migration. The null results suggest that a more targeted approach may be necessary to navigate the complexities and overcome the resistance inherent in shaping public opinion on this contentious issue. There were also no significant results one month after the intervention.

### Subgroup analysis

The analysis above shows that respondents who have seen the video (treatment group) did not differ significantly in their responses toward migration effects compared to respondents who did not (control group).

Effects on sub-groups are possible, even though the campaign had no effect on the overall sample. Indeed, we were able to detect some effects. Women's attitudes toward migration's effect on culture significantly improved after seeing the video. Attitudes toward migration enriching people's lives have worsened for those who find it difficult to live on their present income after seeing the video. None of these effects persisted after one month. Other than these two exceptions, there were no differential effects of the video between people of different age groups, educational backgrounds, gender, income level or employment status.

## 4.5 The Republic of Serbia

### Campaign Intervention

Half of the respondents in the survey viewed a video/song containing a mosaic of 9 squares, where 6 squares contain a video of a person (karaoke participant) singing the same song. The other 3 squares hide the karaoke participants until the finale of the video in the form of a vector silhouette drawing. The karaoke participants are at home, at work, or outdoors singing in everyday situations. They cover different socio-economic groups and different age groups.

Just before the chorus of the song begins, the image and sound freeze and the question appears: “WHOSE VOICE CAN NOT BE HEARD?” When the question disappears, location pinning symbols appear, with a place in The Republic of Serbia written on each square. The video and music unfreeze, and the chorus begins, revealing hidden singers. The ‘hidden’ people that we can now see and hear belong to the migrant and minority population in The Republic of Serbia. All voices are amplified and finish the chorus together.

### Campaign impacts

This evaluation estimates the (causal) effect of seeing the video described above on individual attitudes toward migration. In other words, do people, on average, have more positive attitudes toward migration after seeing the short video? Moreover, we also investigate whether the potential positive effect of the intervention on attitudes toward migration persists one month later.

For the Serbian intervention, there were large campaign effects immediately after seeing the video with significantly improved attitudes toward migration for all five dependent variables measured compared to the control group (see Figures 15-19). For example, on average, seeing the video is associated with a 1.279-point increase in positive attitudes toward migration’s effect on the country on a scale ranging from 0 to 10 compared to not seeing the video. Similarly, seeing the video positively affected attitudes toward migration’s effects on the economy, culture, demography and people’s lives. However, a month later, the campaign effects decreased while remaining statistically significant for attitudes toward migration’s effect on the economy and migration’s effect on enriching the country. Nevertheless, for migration’s effect on the economy, the results are not robust to adjusting for other covariates. For all the others (the measures looking at migration’s overall effect on the country, culture and demography) the positive effect of seeing the video disappeared and there were no significant differences between the control and treatment groups after one month from the intervention.

These results are consistent with previous findings showing that many intervention results do not have a lasting and enduring effect (Luskin, Fishkin, and Jowell 2002, Druckman and Nelson 2003, Mutz and Reeves 2005). This is an indication that following up on the effects of campaigns and interventions after some time has passed can bring further knowledge on the campaign’s strength and long-lasting effects.

Serbia is made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?

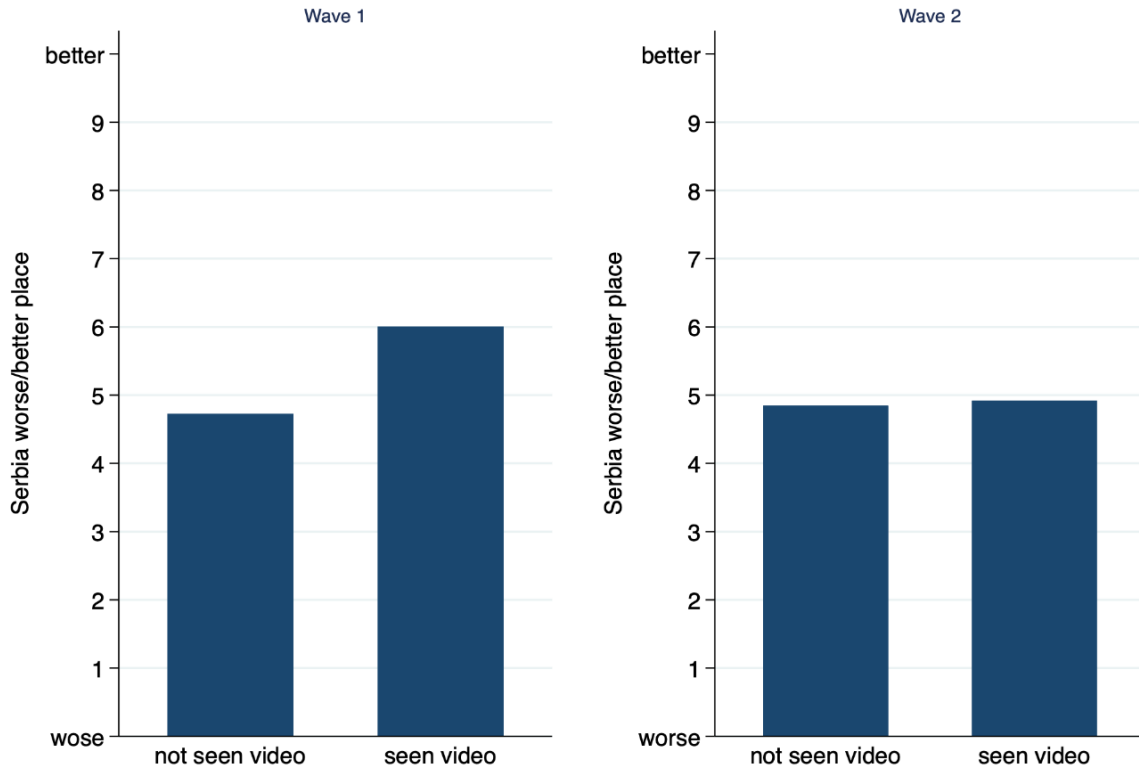


Figure 15. Mean for attitudes toward migration's effect on the country between the treatment and control group in the two waves in The Republic of Serbia. Note: Treatment effects considered significant at  $p < 0.05$ . See Tables A21 and A22 in the Technical Annex for more information. Wave 1 N = 1,516; Wave 2 N = 1,021.

Generally bad or good for Serbia's economy that immigrants come to live here?

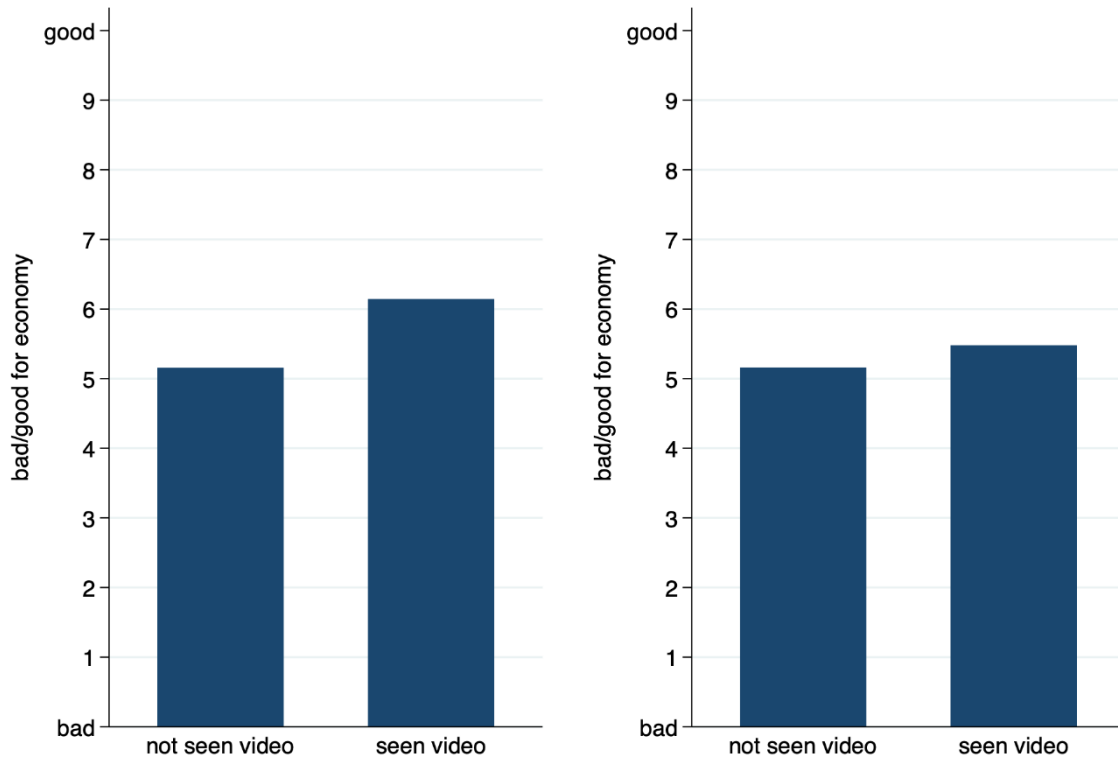


Figure 16. Mean for attitudes toward migration's effect on the economy between the treatment and control group in the two waves in The Republic of Serbia. Note: Treatment effects considered significant at  $p < 0.05$ . See Tables A21 and A22 in the Technical Annex for more information. Wave 1 N = 1,551; Wave 2 N = 1,048.

Serbia's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by immigrants coming to live here?

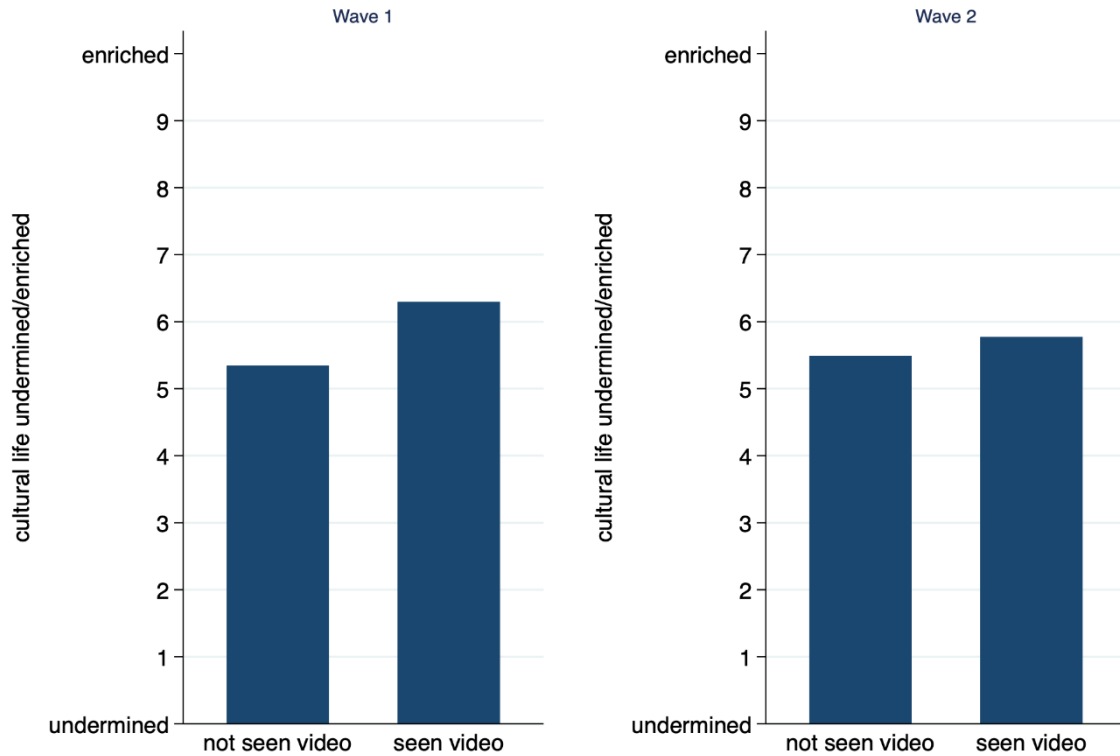


Figure 17. Mean for attitudes toward migration's effect on culture between the treatment and control group in the two waves in The Republic of Serbia. Note: Treatment effects considered significant at  $p < 0.05$ . See Tables A21 and A22 in the Technical Annex for more information. Wave 1 N = 1,578; Wave 2 N = 1,066.

Serbia's demographic future is generally made better or worse by people coming to live here?

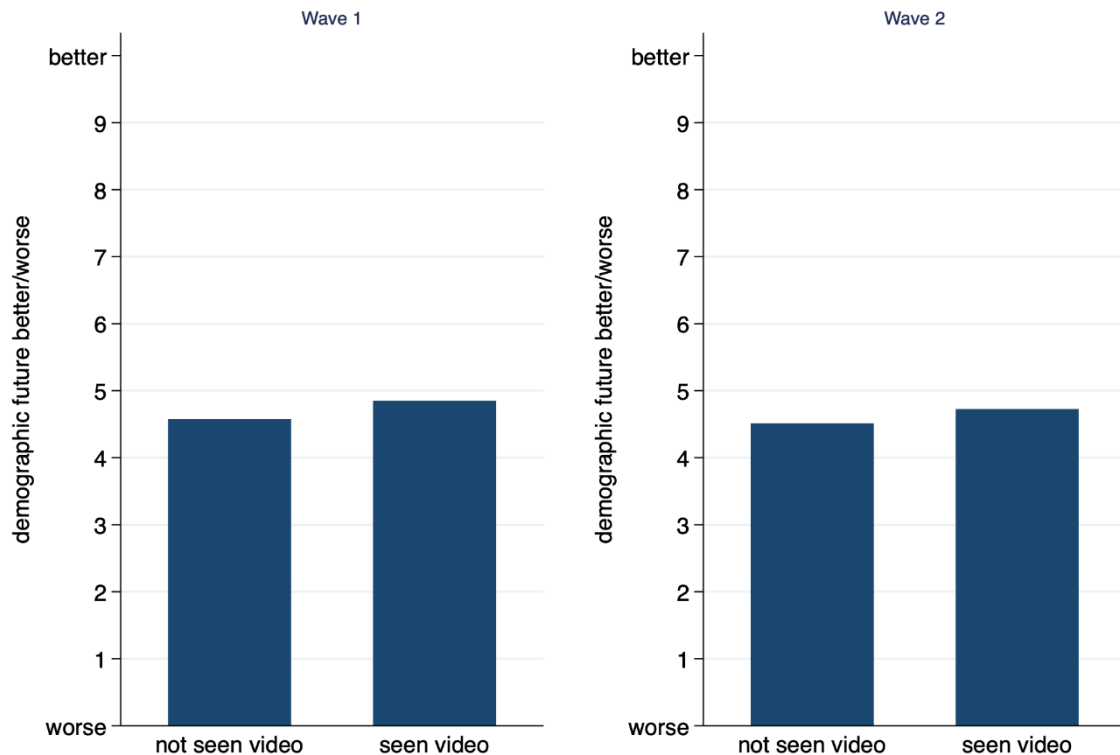


Figure 18. Mean for attitudes toward migration's effect on the country's demographic future between the treatment and control group in the two waves in The Republic of Serbia. Note: Treatment effects considered significant at  $p < 0.05$ . See Tables A21 and A22 in the Technical Annex for more information. Wave 1 N = 1,530; Wave 2 N = 1,040.

## A presence of immigrants from different cultures in Serbia has enriched or undermined people's lives?

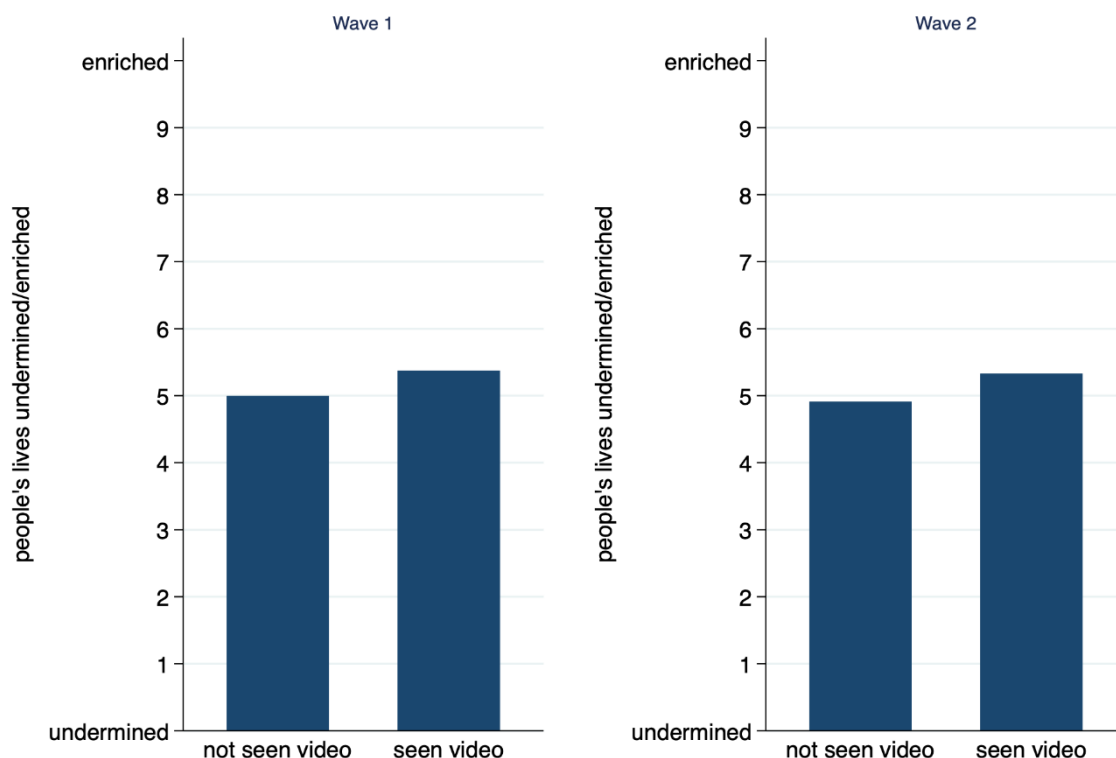


Figure 19. Mean for attitudes toward migration's effect on people's lives between the treatment and control group in the two waves in The Republic of Serbia. Note: Treatment effects considered significant at  $p < 0.05$ . See Tables A21 and A22 in the Technical Annex for more information. Wave 1 N = 1,568; Wave 2 N = 1,349.

## Subgroup analysis

The data allow us to go one step further and break down the effects on attitudes toward migration for particular subgroups (i.e. heterogeneous treatment effects, see Tables A23 and A24 in the Technical Appendix).

The video had significant positive effects regarding attitudes toward migration among males and those living comfortably on their present income. However, for males, the effect persisted only for opinions that migration enriches people's lives. For all the other types of attitudes, there were no significant differences between males who had and had not seen the video one month prior. For those who live comfortably on their present income, the positive effect persisted for attitudes toward migration's effect on the economy, culture and people's lives. The campaign had also significantly positive effects on attitudes toward migration's effect on the country, the economy and culture among older people (55 years old and above) and those who are not employed full or part-time (those are a very heterogeneous group that includes anyone from those on maternity/paternity leave, pensioners and housewives). The effect persisted only for attitudes toward the economy and people's lives for the oldest cohort and for enriching lives for those who are not employed. For attitudes toward migration's effect on the economy, seeing the video had a significantly negative impact on those who have income difficulties. Nevertheless, this effect did not persist one month later. The campaign did not show differential impacts on more or less educated respondents, except for a positive effect of seeing the video on attitudes toward migration's effect on the country among those with only elementary school education.

## 4.6 Summary

To summarize, this Chapter has provided a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of diverse campaigns on attitudes toward migration across different countries. The overarching goal of these campaigns was to foster a shared sense of belonging between natives and migrants, promoting a more cohesive and welcoming community. We now draw together the results of each country's intervention, emphasizing the importance of using a rigorous impact evaluation design, specifically RCTs. These evaluations allowed us to estimate the causal effects of the campaigns by comparing the responses of those exposed to the interventions with a randomly selected control group. Our analysis focuses on attitudes toward migration in various aspects, such as its impact on the country, economy, culture, demography, and people's lives.

Austria's animated video campaign achieved consistent positive impacts on attitudes toward migration immediately after viewing, particularly regarding its effects on the country, economy, culture, and demography. However, these positive effects did not endure after one month. Subgroup analysis revealed interesting variations in impact, with, for example, opposite effects on older respondents immediately after viewing the campaign (positive) and one month later (negative) for attitudes to immigration's effect on the demographic future.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's video campaign, despite its efforts to promote empathy and understanding, did not yield significant impacts on attitudes toward migration. This suggests that the complexities and deeply ingrained beliefs surrounding migration require more targeted approaches.

Germany's comic series, focusing on everyday discrimination, had a limited impact on migration attitudes, with only a temporary effect on the overall perception of Germany as a better place. The impact evaluation raises questions about the effectiveness of the campaign in conveying its message and suggests the need for more clarity in linking the fox protagonist to the migrant experience.

Italy's short video featuring a world-famous Italian fashion influencer had a very limited impact on migration attitudes, with only a temporary effect on the perception of Italy as a better place. The impact evaluation questions whether choosing a world-famous social media influencer managed to communicate the message about shared migration backgrounds.

North Macedonia's video intervention, designed to cultivate empathy for migrants, did not produce significant changes in attitudes toward migration. This underscores the challenges of altering deeply ingrained beliefs, requiring a more targeted approach.

The Republic of Serbia's video/song campaign, using a mosaic of karaoke participants, initially achieved large positive effects on attitudes toward migration. However, these effects diminished after one month, highlighting the temporary nature of the campaign's impact. Subgroup analysis showed variations in impact across gender, income, age, and employment status.

In summary, while some campaigns demonstrated immediate positive effects on attitudes toward migration, the sustainability of these effects varied across countries and demographic subgroups. The chapter underscores the importance of considering not only the immediate impact but also the endurance of these effects over time. The findings highlight the challenges of effectively addressing deeply rooted beliefs and emphasize the need for ongoing efforts to understand the dynamics of public opinion on migration. Finally, the fact that for some subgroups the campaigns had negative effects leaves room for careful consideration of how specific messages might also have unintended effects for certain specific groups.

## 5. Conclusion

For most of the campaigns studied, our analysis suggests “null results”, meaning that the information campaigns being tested did not produce a significant difference in attitudes to migration between those who have seen the video/read the comics and those who did not. Null results may occur for a number of reasons. For example, the effect of the information campaigns was simply not powerful enough to produce a significant difference in attitudes to migration. In some countries studied, such as North Macedonia, the sample size may have been too small to detect a significant difference. It is important to note that this is in any case a valid outcome. Null results can help to inform future research and communication campaigns by providing information about the limitations of the study design, sample size, and the intervention or manipulation.

In cases where the information campaigns were able to affect attitudes to migration, these effects proved short-lived. This is consistent with previous evidence from the academic literature, which shows that the results of such interventions do not have a lasting and enduring effect (Luskin, Fishkin, and Jowell 2002, Druckman and Nelson 2003, Mutz and Reeves 2005). This aspect is particularly important in contexts where the purpose of assessing the outcomes of an intervention is to evaluate the efficacy of campaigns funded with taxpayers’ money.

While in many countries younger respondents were, on average, significantly more pro-migration than middle-aged and older respondents, this was not connected to the effect of the campaign. Interestingly, even though the campaigns were specifically intended for young audiences, in those countries where the campaign had a (short-lived) positive effect, it was always exclusively on older cohorts (those who are 55 years old and above). One possible interpretation is that the videos/comics were too long to capture and keep the attention span of the young audience, who is used to very short videos from social media.

The information campaigns applied in different cultures and countries can also have different levels of effectiveness depending on the population or the specific context. Even if these interventions showed some positive results, it is important to note that anti-migrant sentiment is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by many factors and cannot be solved through communication interventions alone.



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