

‘Bloom where you’re planted.’

Explaining public opposition to (e)migration*

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Abstract

Why is migration unpopular? A vast literature argues that voters oppose *immigration* because of ethnic prejudice and threatened interests. This paper is among the first studies of opposition to *emigration*—the other side of the issue salient in many countries. Departing from existing theories, I develop a number of tests juxtaposing predictors of emigration and immigration attitudes and then exploit the relevant survey data from 32 countries, as well as the original experimental and qualitative evidence. First, I document high opposition to both emigration and immigration by majorities in most countries and show that respondents are unlikely to confuse these issues. I then show that emigration and immigration attitudes are nonetheless highly correlated and have similar predictors, which is also reflected in respondents’ open-ended explanations. The evidence suggests that many voters have a moralistic preference for “rooted” communities and oppose both immigration and emigration independent of other factors.

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Introduction

When surveyed about the right of their own citizens to freedom of movement in the EU, the majority of UK voters were positive. However, only a fraction agreed with a similar question about the right of other EU citizens to live and work in the UK.¹ While such self-serving inconsistencies are rather common in public opinion, it is instructive that far from everyone is even willing to let their fellow citizens go and live abroad. Why do many people shun human mobility between countries? A large literature across social sciences has argued that voters strongly oppose migration because of threatened interests and deep psychological predispositions related to dislike of foreigners (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014).

Nonetheless, due to its current politicization in Europe and the United States, most research is focused only on attitudes toward *immigration*—not international mobility in principle. This paper argues that a full account of migration politics and public opinion should also consider *emigration*—the other side of the issue salient in many middle- and even high-income countries.² As I demonstrate below, concerns about issues such as “brain drain” are not limited to pundits and policy-makers. In fact, in some countries the overwhelming majority wants their government to reduce emigration—which may include limiting people’s own civil rights to exit. Furthermore, these attitudes also have real-world consequences. In Lithuania—where more than 10% of population left for other EU countries since 2004—the surprising victory of the Peasants and Green Union (LPGU) party in 2016, for instance, was attributed to their anti-emigration stance.³ Exploring the roots of these sentiments may in turn also shed a light on some of controversies in the immigration politics literature.

Departing from existing public opinion theories, I develop a number of empirical tests juxtaposing predictors of emigration and immigration attitudes and then exploit the relevant Gallup World Poll and Transatlantic Trends data from 32 middle- and high-income coun-

¹According to the *YouGov* survey from November 19-24, 2015

²For instance, see *Foreign Affairs* from March 30, 2017: Tej Parikh, “The EU’s Other Migration Problem Brain Drain in Central and Eastern Europe.”

³According to *Telegraph* from October 24, 2016.

tries, as well as the original survey experiment and qualitative evidence from the UK. First, I document a high public opposition to both emigration and immigration by majorities or pluralities in most middle-income countries and demonstrate that respondents are unlikely to confuse these issues. I further establish that emigration and immigration attitudes have systematically distinct *contextual* predictors—respondents are expectedly more likely to oppose emigration (immigration) in countries with lower (higher) net migration rates.

Second, I show that emigration and immigration attitudes are nonetheless highly correlated (0.2-0.6 depending on a country) and have similar *individual* predictors, indicating a substantial common component. As further indicated by the regression analysis, the biggest correlate of both emigration and immigration is related to concerns about national—but not personal or outgroup—well-being. Given that the relative extent of opposition to in- or out-migration is context-dependent, it is unlikely that one attitude is just an artifact of another.

Third, I conduct a follow-up population-based survey experiment in the UK and demonstrate that voters are much more opposed to high-skilled than low-skilled emigration regardless of their own skills. A further analysis of open-ended responses corroborates the idea that most voters prioritize perceived national interest over personal concerns in their policy preferences. The qualitative evidence, however, also reveals that many may also simply prefer others to stay where they are born regardless of consequences and group attitudes.

Overall, the analysis of popular emigration sentiments reveals that many voters are averse to any human mobility between countries in general, not immigration in particular. While in line with group interest accounts and the existence of moralistic preference for “rooted” communities, this evidence challenge the established ideas that people oppose migration primarily due to self-interest or anti-foreigner prejudice. Given that most governments restrict immigration but almost never emigration—despite the strong will of their citizens—the study results also have implications for democratic theory and migration politics in general.

The other side of migration

Historically, most states were more interested in controlling exit rather than entrance. They thus had significant and harsh out-migration controls—prosecuting potential emigrants, forcing them to pay high exit fees, refusing to issue identification documents, preventing departure with personal property, and even renouncing their citizenship (Fitzgerald, 2006). After the fall of the “Iron Curtain” and the Berlin Wall, however, emigration restrictions for either political or economic reasons have become rather rare (de Haas and Vezzoli, 2011). After all, prompted by the ideas embodied in the American and French revolutions (Green and Weil, 2007), the right to exit and emigration—as opposed to entrance and immigration—was internationally recognized in the UDHR in 1948.⁴

Nonetheless, while the outright use of coercion to restrict emigration have almost disappeared, at least one out of four governments worldwide today have policies to discourage emigration (United Nations, 2013). States—especially those in the developing world—use a variety of instruments to reduce the number of their (disproportionately young and educated) emigrants, encourage return migration, and work with their diasporas abroad (de Haas and Vezzoli, 2011; Weinar, 2017). Since the famous proposal of Bhagwati and Dellarfar (1973), calls to combat so-called “brain drain” by taxing high-skilled emigrants or the receiving governments, as well as imposing professional quotas and punishing recruiters, have become common among pundits and policymakers. At the same time, some political theorists point out that most accepted normative reasons to restrict immigration (such as related to its distributive consequences) should imply similar reasons to restrict emigration (Ypi, 2008). Many scholars are, however, increasingly skeptical that “brain drain” is a problem to be solved pointing out to a number of practical and ethical issues (for a review, see Clemens, 2014; Sager, 2014).⁵

⁴“Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13).

⁵For a general review of economic effects of emigration, see Leeson and Gochenour (2015). For normative considerations, see Stilz (2016).

But despite a substantial interest in the drivers of emigration from developing countries (e.g., Adnanes, 2004), the literature has largely ignored public attitudes toward emigration—perhaps due to its little political salience in the developed world. Who would want to limit emigration and why? While these questions may be of interest in themselves, I believe it would be even more informative to juxtapose it with well-established explanations of immigration attitudes. Although a comprehensive theory of migration attitudes is beyond this paper’s scope, examining the ways people think about regulating emigration can potentially help better understand widespread resistance to immigration and human mobility in general.

Study design and theoretical expectations

Departing from existing public opinion literature, the study design is aimed at comparing the predictors of immigration and emigration attitudes. In doing so, I exploit similarities and differences of the two processes and the respective policy issues. As for differences, while immigration naturally leads to the increase, emigration leads to the decrease of population and economy size. Furthermore, despite the fact that the average fiscal and labor market effects of either are likely small (Leeson and Gochenour, 2015), immigration—especially compared to emigration—is generally perceived to *increase* the competition for resources by the public (Muste, 2013). Most important, individual emigration rights should be much more widely recognized than the rights to immigration around the world. As for similarities, both processes relate to human mobility between countries and thus potentially imply the change of nationality for individuals involved and some quantitative and qualitative population change on the societal level. Furthermore, their differences notwithstanding, both emigration and immigration may be popularly viewed as social problems to be addressed by the government.

On the societal level, the literature generally suggests that people are more likely to be concerned about immigration in contexts with more foreign-born population (for a review, see Pottie-Sherman and Wilkes, 2017). Similarly, one can expect emigration to be a political issue in contexts where a substantial amount of people are leaving for other countries. While

this contextual relationship is consistent with various theories of individual attitudes, it is important for explaining the relative levels of opposition. At the extreme, a non-zero level of immigration or emigration is simply a necessary condition for people to have an opinion about these issues. For instance, this may explain why people rarely voice their concerns about emigration in the US and other developed (largely immigrant-receiving) countries.

The first most widely explored predictor of individual immigration attitudes—or any political attitude for that matter—is (perceived) *self-interest* (e.g., Weeden and Kurzban, 2017). According to the logic of labor market competition, for instance, people of higher skills should be less opposed to immigration—provided that it is generally low-skilled. But who would be more or less interested in keeping their own citizens from leaving their countries? On the surface, the factors may be the reverse of basic political economy explanations of anti-immigration attitudes. Given that most emigrants are higher-skilled than the average population, however, the predictions are less clear. This is especially true considering emigrants’ fiscal impacts and the fact that skills are often correlated with non-economic reasons to support or oppose migration (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014).

More direct tests of self-interest hypothesis regarding migration are unfortunately hard and thus rare (but see Malhotra et al., 2013). After all, for an average voter or even an expert alike, it is impossible to precisely estimate the economic effects of a certain policy on various groups of workers. The task is less difficult for emigration than for immigration, however. For instance, one can expect that people who plan to emigrate themselves or those who receive remittances from abroad would directly benefit and thus be especially supportive of emigration. Importantly, these factors should not relate to one’s immigration attitudes at least for purely self-interest reasons.⁶

Another prominent explanation of opposition to immigration is related to *prejudice* or dislike of foreigners. While this may encompass a variety of cultural and demographic factors, the basic premise is that some people hold antipathy against certain (immigrant, largely non-

⁶Nonetheless, it is possible that those who have some connection to emigration may be more supportive of immigration for reasons unrelated to self-interest such as ideology, identity, or empathy.

white) ethnic outgroups and thus want government to restrict immigration to their country (for a review, see Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010). It is not clear, however, why people who are biased against foreigners would oppose emigration and limit mobility of their fellow citizens. Of course, it is possible that those who want to preserve the ethnic demographic composition of their communities would want to limit (native) emigration. But while sometimes equated with prejudice, such diversity concerns can also be viewed as a separate factor which may or may not itself be caused by prejudice (for a discussion, see Kaufmann, 2019).

Outgroup prejudice, however, is sometimes hard to disentangle from various *group interest* motivations to support restrictive policies. Most prominently, the ideas of “sociotropic politics” and “group threat” suggest that—unrelated to dislike of foreigners—people support or oppose immigration because they think it is good or bad (not necessarily for them but) for others in their national ingroup (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014). While the widespread perceptions of immigration’s negative impacts are well-documented (Muste, 2013), it is likely that emigration is perceived in an equally negative way due to widespread “brain drain” concerns. Consequently, one would expect people—who care more about the well-being of their countries and compatriots—to be especially opposed to both immigration and emigration.⁷

Finally, it is possible that people may exhibit a principled opposition to human mobility in general regardless of its form, as well as economic and cultural consequences. For instance, there is a well-established understanding in environmental psychology and sociology that most people do not just happen but prefer to stay rooted in their communities (for a review, see Lewicka, 2011). Furthermore, besides being rooted themselves, voters may have a *moralistic* preference (Baron, 2003) for others to be rooted as well. Unlike various ethnic preferences, the political ideal of rooted population is evidently violated by both immigrants and emigrants. As a result, in line with the growing literature on the communitarian-cosmopolitan divide (Hooghe and Dassonneville, 2018; Goodhart, 2017), people may simply resist migration due to their strong place attachments.

⁷Although self- and group-interest explanations are empirically distinct, in theory voters may advance their collective interests as a heuristic for their self-interest without being altruistic (Weeden and Kurzban, 2017).

Are people more supportive of emigration than immigration and, if so, why? Do immigration and emigration attitudes tend to go together or not? As can be seen, depending on a particular theory, our expectations regarding the two sides of the migration debate may either converge or diverge. Specifically, conditional on some non-negligible level of both emigration and immigration, we would expect the following relationship between emigration and immigration attitudes (in the case of self-interest or prejudice and group interest or rootedness explanations respectively):

Hypothesis (1) *Opposition to emigration has a null correlation with opposition to immigration [self-interest or anti-foreigner bias explanations]*

Hypothesis (2) *Opposition to emigration has a positive correlation with opposition to immigration [group interest or rootedness explanations]*

Overall, while it is likely that individual attitudes are driven by all of the factors described above, disentangling between their relative strength has important implications for migration politics and our understanding of public attitudes in general.

Data

As the main source, this paper exploits the unique and previously unexplored Gallup World Poll data from 19 European and CIS countries (2013 and 2015) on attitudes toward regulation of *both immigration and emigration*.⁸ The main dependent variables are defined as follows⁹:

- *Emigration policy attitudes*: “In your view, should emigration from this country be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?”
- *Immigration policy attitudes*: “In your view, should immigration in this country be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?”

⁸The dataset consists of representative samples including Armenia (2013), Azerbaijan (2013, 2015), Belarus (2013, 2015), Bulgaria (2015), Croatia (2015), Czech Republic (2015), Georgia (2013, 2015), Greece (2015), Hungary (2015), Kazakhstan (2013, 2015), Kyrgyzstan (2013, 2015), Moldova (2013), Poland (2015), Romania (2015), Russia (2013, 2015), Slovakia (2015), Tajikistan (2013, 2015), Ukraine (2013, 2015), Uzbekistan (2013, 2015). Given the absence of a proper survey infrastructure, the results from Turkmenistan (2013, 2015)—though seemingly not significantly different from neighboring countries—are excluded from the analysis.

⁹While these items do not specify particular government interventions, I follow the immigration literature and assume that they are indicative of related policy attitudes.

To proxy self-interest, I use quasi-behavioral measures of individual emigration plans and the receipt of remittances from abroad. As for ethnic prejudice, the survey across the samples in question unfortunately does not have any direct items used in the literature. To proxy dislike of foreign groups, I thus calculate the mean approval of other governments and their leadership.¹⁰ To proxy group interest concerns, I construct an index of individual worries about various national problems (not directly related to migration) including terrorism, poverty, and corruption. For immigration and emigration population shares, I complement the survey data with World Bank data (2015). All variables are normalized on a 0-1 scale. Since the main dependent variables only have three levels (decrease, keep, increase), some of the analysis below relies on their binary versions (decrease, keep or increase). For the detailed variable descriptions, see Appendix.

To make a stronger empirical case for my argument, I also complement the analysis with the Transatlantic Trends Survey of 15 countries from 2013 and 2014. The main advantage of the dataset is that it offers an alternative and a much more explicit item on emigration which can help rule out potential measurement error concerns. At the same time, in addition to some of the countries in the Gallup survey, it also includes countries from more developed and immigrant-receiving contexts.¹¹ While the survey does not have any policy items on migration, its emigration item was importantly modified for clarification in 2014:

- *Emigration attitudes (2013)*: “Do you think that emigration in [COUNTRY] is a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, not a serious problem, or not a problem at all for [COUNTRY]?”
- *Emigration attitudes (2014)*: “Do you think that emigration in [COUNTRY], that is the number of [NATIONALITY] who are leaving to live in other countries, is a very serious problem, not a serious problem, or not a problem at all for [COUNTRY]?”

¹⁰The question is as follows: ‘Do you approve or disapprove of the job performance of the leadership of [foreign country]?’ The countries include the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Russia, China, Japan, India. Since the question asks about the (current) government rather than the people, this is undoubtedly a rough measure of anti-foreigner prejudice. However, the average differences in approval rates should constitute a meaningful, albeit conservative, proxy.

¹¹The full list of countries is as follows: France (2013, 2014), Germany (2013, 2014), Greece (2014), Italy (2013, 2014), the Netherlands (2013, 2014), Poland (2013, 2014), Portugal (2013, 2014), Romania (2013), Russia (2014), Slovakia (2013), Spain (2013, 2014), Sweden (2013, 2014), Turkey (2013, 2014), the United Kingdom (2013, 2014), and the United States (2013, 2014).

Finally, I complement these cross-national studies with an original follow-up population-based UK survey¹², which can be considered a hard case to test my argument. In doing so, I am able to include a better measure of emigration attitudes and an open-ended item so that people can elaborate on their stated preferences. Most important, I also made an explicit distinction between high-skilled and low-skilled emigration in a survey experiment framework:

- *Low-skilled emigration condition*: “Now, please consider British citizens without university degree who are leaving to live in other countries. Do you think low-skilled emigration from Britain should be increased a lot, increased a little, left the same as it is now, decreased a little, or decreased a lot?”
- *High-skilled emigration condition*: “Now, please consider British citizens with university degree who are leaving to live in other countries. Do you think high-skilled emigration from Britain should be increased a lot, increased a little, left the same as it is now, decreased a little, or decreased a lot?”

According to the empirically established logic of group interest politics, people are more opposed to low-skilled than high-skilled immigration regardless of their own skills, because the former is perceived to contribute less to the society (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2010). If group interest explanations are at work, we should also expect that, independent of their own skills, people are more opposed to high-skilled than low-skilled emigration (**Hypothesis 3**).

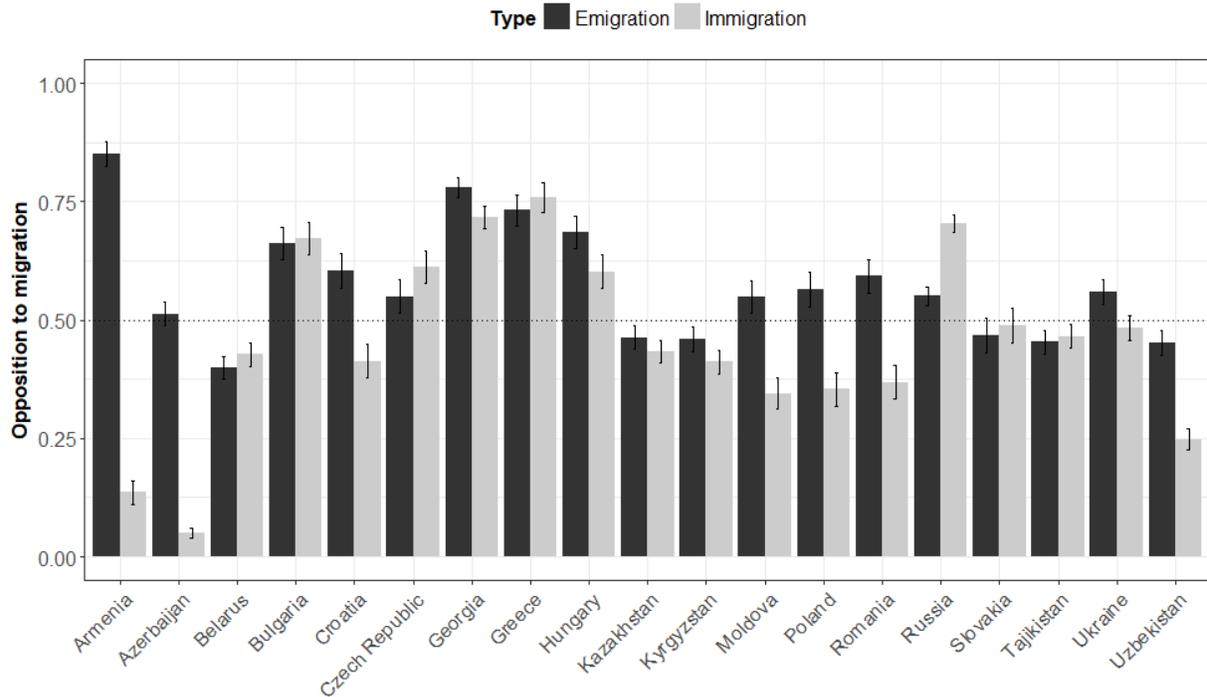
Analysis and results

Cross-national evidence

First, I estimate the overall level of opposition to human migration across the available representative samples. Given the remarkable stability of both emigration and immigration attitudes in all ten countries surveyed by Gallup twice (no change exceeds the margin of error), most of the analysis below combines their 2013 and 2015 samples (see Figure A1 in Appendix). As can be seen from Figure 1, across most countries the majority or an

¹²The survey has been administered online by Qualtrics in May 2018 as a part of a larger research project.

Figure 1: Policy opposition to emigration and immigration (Gallup)

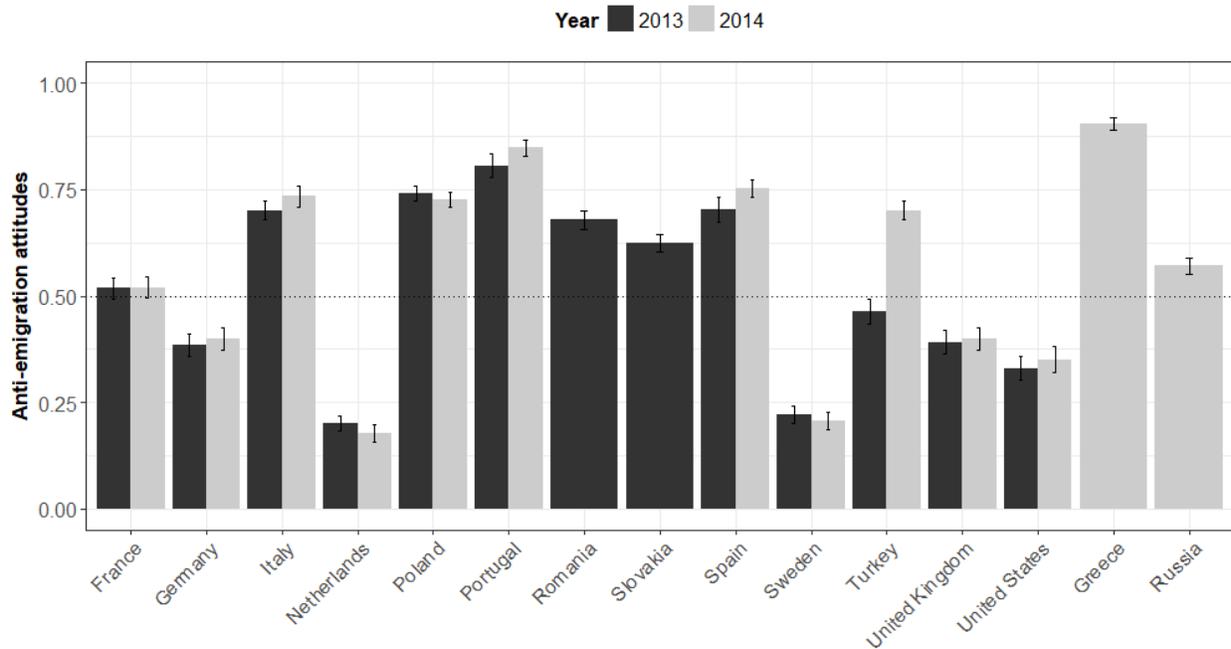


Based on Gallup World Poll (2013 and 2015). Each bar represents a (weighted) share of respondents in a given country (with a margin of error) who thinks that emigration or immigration should be decreased.

overwhelming plurality wants to reduce both emigration and immigration. To rule out potential language confusion, I also calculate the absolute levels of concern about emigration and its change depending on the explicit wording using the Transatlantic Trends data. As Figure 2 indicates, all of the Gallup countries described earlier (Greece, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Russia) exhibit a similarly high level of anti-emigration attitudes. Furthermore, with the sole exception of Turkey, these attitudes are very stable from one wording to another (and from year to year). In sum, explicitly defining emigration to a respondent and thus minimizing the potential for measurement error does not seem to impact the results.

Descriptively, we can see that the opposition to emigration almost always exceeds the one to immigration (Figure 1). While somewhat surprising, as explained earlier, this can be a function of a particular migration context across countries sampled by Gallup. The scatter plots below (Figure 3) show that this is indeed the case: in countries with negative (positive)

Figure 2: Opposition to emigration and its sensitivity to wording (Transatlantic Trends)



Based on Transatlantic Trends Survey. Each bar represents a (weighted) share of respondents in a given country (with a margin of error) who considers emigration (defined explicitly in 2014) to be a serious problem.

migration rates people are more likely to oppose emigration (immigration).¹³ This systematic relationship is important because it further suggests that emigration attitudes is a meaningful construct distinct from immigration attitudes. Overall, however, these correlations are rather small. As emphasized by some scholars (Hopkins, 2010), somebody first has to connect a more or less observable demographic change with politics.

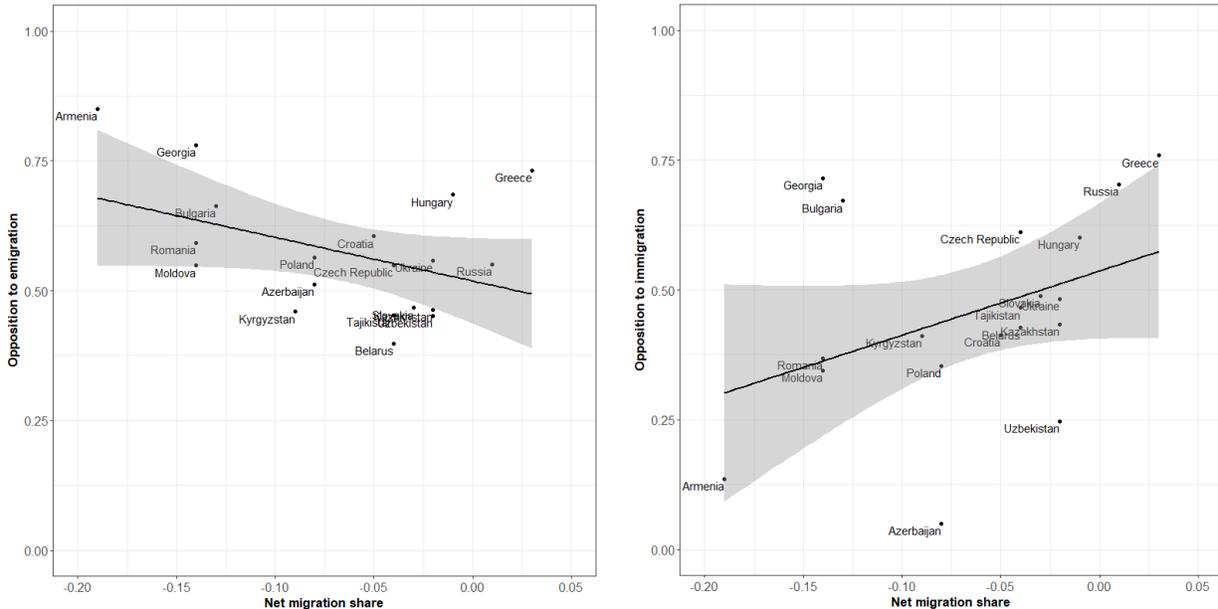
After establishing the meaningfulness and distinctiveness of attitudes toward emigration at least on the societal level, I move to testing hypotheses regarding public opinion on the individual level. What are the differences and similarities in the predictors of anti-emigration and anti-immigration attitudes? To answer this question, I regress migration attitudes on a number of covariates using a standard OLS specification with fixed country and year effects.¹⁴

As can be seen from Table 1 (1-2), most standard demographic covariates are similarly related to opinion on either issue. Most prominently, younger respondents and those born

¹³The results are virtually the same if, instead of net migration, one uses separate indicators for emigration and immigration shares (not shown).

¹⁴For more appropriate logit models with no change in the results, see Table A2 in Appendix.

Figure 3: The relationship of net migration shares and migration attitudes



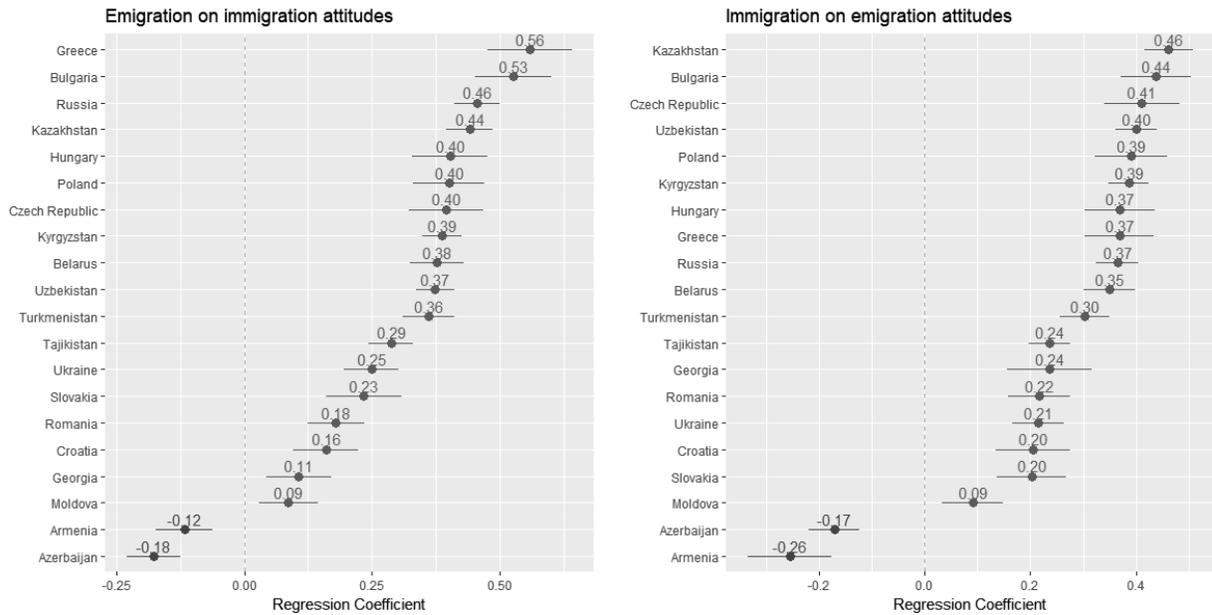
Based on Gallup World Poll and World Bank data (2015). X-axis indicates a share of immigrant minus emigrant populations in a given country. Y-axis indicates a (weighted) share of respondents in a given country (with a margin of error) who thinks that emigration or immigration should be decreased.

abroad are much less likely to oppose human mobility between countries. Somewhat surprising, but consistent with previous evidence from Eastern Europe (Bessudnov, 2016), urban residents are not more, but less, likely to support migration.¹⁵ Overall, we can see that immigration attitudes are generally better predicted than emigration attitudes, although this is largely a result of the greater between-country variation of the former (country fixed effects alone explain 9% and 26% of variation respectively).

As for direct evidence for self-interest at work (Table 1, 3-4), people who plan to emigrate and receive remittances are expectedly less likely to oppose emigration. However, this relationship, while substantial, is less strong than that of age. More important, it is virtually the same for immigration attitudes, which is hardly consistent with the pure self-interest account. As for anti-foreigner prejudice (Table 1, 5-6), we again see that the relationship is similar for either attitude: those who dislike foreign governments are more likely to oppose

¹⁵Albeit of seemingly various magnitude, the coefficients for education, income, and unemployment are not statistically different between emigration and immigration attitudes.

Figure 4: The relationship of anti-migration attitudes by country (Gallup)



Based on Gallup World Poll (2015). Each bar represents a random slope coefficient (with 95% CI) of emigration and immigration attitudes on each other in the multi-level linear model with full control variables (similar to Models 11-12 in Table 1).

immigration and emigration. While this is expected in the case of immigration, the fact that xenophobia predicts anti-emigration attitudes is not in line with theoretical expectations. When it comes to group interest concerns (Table 1, 7-8), we see that those who worry more about various national issues are expectedly likelier to oppose emigration and immigration. Furthermore, this relationship is stronger than that of any other variable.¹⁶

Finally, I regress emigration and immigration attitudes on each other (Table 1, 9-12). The bivariate correlation between the two variables is substantial (0.32) and it remains so even after the inclusion of all other covariates in the regression. Moreover, while there is some between-country variation in the strength of the coefficient (see Figure 4), we can see that the relationship is strong and positive (0.2-0.6) in nearly all countries (with exceptions of Azerbaijan and Armenia¹⁷). Nonetheless, it is not the case that the correlation is different

¹⁶Quite important, this is not a result of some kind of negativity bias (Hibbing et al., 2014). For instance, general concerns about personal or even communal (as opposed to national) well-being are not systematically related to migration attitudes (not shown).

¹⁷While this calls for further research, it is worth noting that both of these emigrant-sending countries have virtually no immigration and the related opposition to it.

Table 1: Predictors of anti-emigration and anti-immigration attitudes (OLS)

	Baseline		Self-interest		Prejudice		Sociotropic		Migration		Full	
	(1 E)	(2 I)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Female	0.020*** (0.004)	0.006 (0.004)	0.021*** (0.004)	0.005 (0.004)	0.020*** (0.004)	0.006 (0.004)	0.020*** (0.004)	0.006 (0.004)	0.018*** (0.004)	-0.001 (0.004)	0.019*** (0.004)	-0.001 (0.004)
Age	0.095*** (0.011)	0.106*** (0.011)	0.090*** (0.012)	0.104*** (0.012)	0.090*** (0.011)	0.099*** (0.012)	0.087*** (0.011)	0.095*** (0.011)	0.067*** (0.012)	0.081*** (0.012)	0.055*** (0.012)	0.068*** (0.012)
Married	0.011* (0.005)	0.026*** (0.005)	0.009* (0.005)	0.026*** (0.005)	0.010* (0.005)	0.025*** (0.005)	0.010* (0.005)	0.025*** (0.005)	0.004 (0.005)	0.018*** (0.005)	0.004 (0.005)	0.018*** (0.005)
Urban	0.005 (0.005)	0.037*** (0.005)	0.007 (0.006)	0.036*** (0.006)	0.005 (0.005)	0.038*** (0.005)	0.002 (0.005)	0.033*** (0.005)	-0.006 (0.006)	0.037*** (0.006)	-0.006 (0.006)	0.033*** (0.006)
Born abroad	-0.032** (0.011)	-0.078*** (0.011)	-0.031** (0.011)	-0.074*** (0.011)	-0.032** (0.011)	-0.076*** (0.011)	-0.031** (0.011)	-0.075*** (0.011)	-0.017 (0.011)	-0.065*** (0.011)	-0.018 (0.012)	-0.060*** (0.011)
College	-0.005 (0.006)	-0.013* (0.006)	-0.004 (0.006)	-0.012* (0.006)	-0.006 (0.006)	-0.013* (0.006)	-0.006 (0.006)	-0.014* (0.006)	-0.002 (0.006)	-0.011 (0.006)	0.004 (0.013)	-0.010 (0.014)
Income	0.009 (0.006)	-0.005 (0.006)	0.010 (0.006)	-0.001 (0.006)	0.010 (0.006)	-0.005 (0.006)	0.015* (0.006)	0.003 (0.006)	0.011 (0.006)	-0.007 (0.006)	0.014* (0.007)	0.003 (0.006)
Unemployed	-0.024*** (0.007)	-0.012 (0.007)	-0.022** (0.007)	-0.011 (0.007)	-0.025*** (0.007)	-0.013 (0.007)	-0.027*** (0.007)	-0.016* (0.007)	-0.017* (0.007)	-0.010 (0.007)	-0.018* (0.007)	-0.012 (0.007)
Plans to emigrate			-0.056*** (0.014)	-0.036** (0.014)							-0.052*** (0.014)	-0.025 (0.014)
Receives Remittances			-0.024** (0.008)	-0.034*** (0.009)							-0.016 (0.009)	-0.024** (0.008)
Dislikes foreign governments					0.054*** (0.008)	0.070*** (0.008)					0.031*** (0.008)	0.042*** (0.008)
Worries about national issues							0.104*** (0.009)	0.159*** (0.009)			0.063*** (0.009)	0.127*** (0.009)
Anti-immigration attitudes									0.293*** (0.006)		0.286*** (0.007)	
Anti-emigration attitudes										0.291*** (0.006)		0.281*** (0.007)
Anti-migration x College											-0.008 (0.016)	-0.004 (0.017)
Observations	24,525	23,953	23,985	23,442	24,391	23,809	24,525	23,953	21,956	21,956	21,422	21,422
Adjusted R ²	0.055	0.255	0.056	0.257	0.057	0.257	0.061	0.266	0.139	0.315	0.141	0.323

All OLS models are based on Gallup World Poll data (2013, 2015). Odd (even) model numbers refer to emigration (immigration) attitudes. For details, see Appendix. The standard errors are given in parentheses: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

among college-educated respondents, further indicating that it is unlikely a result of confusion. In other words, those who want to limit immigration and those who want to limit emigration are largely the same people (and they are in overwhelming plurality¹⁸).

Experimental evidence

One important finding that emerges from the Transatlantic Trends survey is that many people have negative views about emigration even in the predominantly immigrant-receiving, high-income countries such as the United Kingdom. The amount of negativity in these views is instructive, since the emigration issue—unlike immigration—is arguably not politicized in rich countries with positive net-migration. As in many middle-income countries, however, it is still unclear whether these attitudes can indeed be politically meaningful and translate into actual, albeit seldom realized, policy preferences for the government regulation of migration.

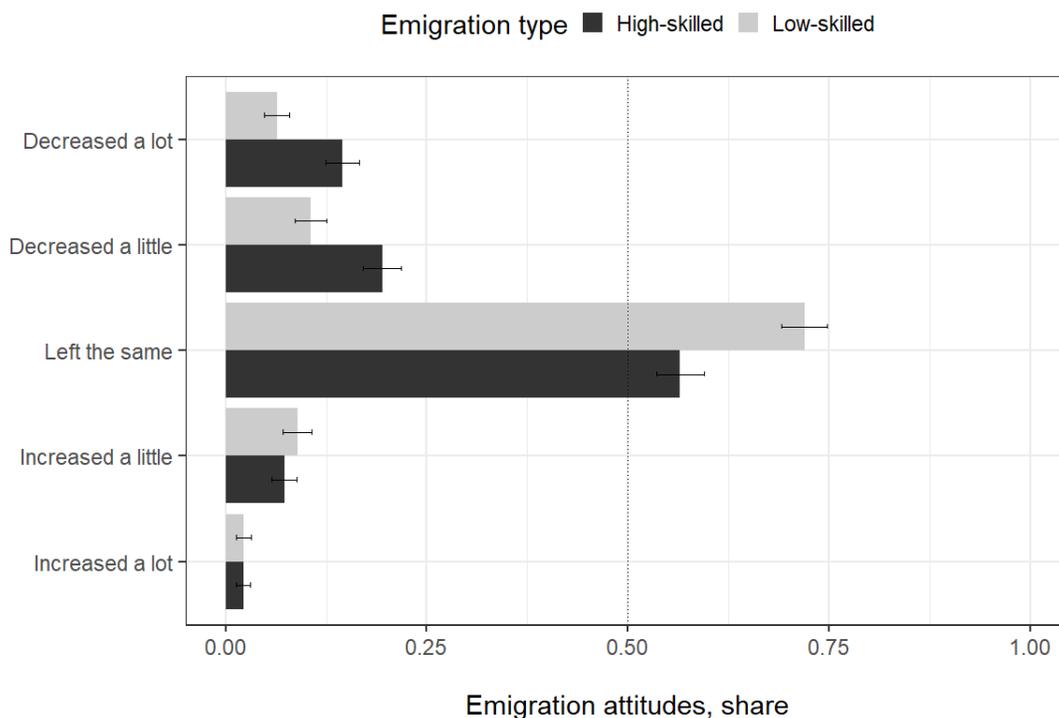
To answer this question and provide a harder test for my argument, I also administered an original, population-based study of 2008 UK respondents with an embedded skill-based survey experiment and an open-ended policy item.¹⁹ In line with the results from the Transatlantic Trends data, the majority of British respondents do not seem to have a particular preference about emigration levels. After all, while emigration and immigration levels have recently been quite comparable in the UK (Vargas-Silva and Markaki, 2017), the former is evidently much less discussed and debated than the latter.

However, it is important to differentiate between the existence of meaningful attitudes themselves—whether positive or negative—and their salience in the public discourse (Dennison and Geddes, 2018). Indeed, it appears that a significant fraction of the UK population does oppose emigration and, similar to other countries, this opposition correlates with anti-

¹⁸In particular, around 45% on average would like to see both emigration and immigration to be decreased, while only less than 5% would want the opposite across countries.

¹⁹As a part of a larger research project, the sample was obtained from the initial pool of 2050 respondents after accounting for response quality (attention check and survey completion) and excluding non-citizens. The inclusion of all 2050 respondents in the analysis, however, does not affect the results (not shown). The employed Qualtrics panel, albeit not probability-based, was largely representative of the overall population across most important demographic and political characteristics (see Table A1 for summary statistics).

Figure 5: Emigration attitudes by skill-level (UK)



Based on the original UK data (2018). Each bar represents a share of respondents in the following item: “Now, please consider British citizens without (with) university degree who are leaving to live in other countries. Do you think low-skilled (high-skilled) emigration from Britain should be increased a lot, increased a little, left the same as it is now, decreased a little, or decreased a lot?”

immigration attitudes at 0.24.²⁰ Moreover, this opposition is also expectedly related to emigrants’ skill level in question (see Figure 5). In fact, twice as many people are willing to decrease high-skilled compared to low-skilled emigration (34% vs. 17%).

How can we explain these significant differences? Building on the research design of Hainmueller and Hiscox (2010), I regress emigration attitudes on education (university degree), treatment condition (low- or high-skilled), and their interaction. As can be seen from Table 2, while respondents’ education and emigrants’ skill have a consistent effect on emigration attitudes, these factors do not interact with each other. Put differently, all respondents are less supportive of high-skilled emigration regardless of their own skills and educated respondents are more supportive of any emigration regardless of emigrants’ skills. In turn, these results are more consistent with group interest rather than self-interest accounts of politics.

²⁰Relatedly, those who oppose emigration are also more likely to report voting Leave in the 2016 EU referendum ($r = 0.18$), even after accounting for major demographic covariates (not shown).

Table 2: The effect of emigrants' skills on anti-emigration attitudes by respondents' education

High-skilled condition	−0.063*** (0.011)
University degree	0.055*** (0.014)
High-skilled x University	−0.012 (0.020)
Constant	0.458*** (0.008)
Observations	2,008
Adjusted R ²	0.036

Based on the original UK data (2018). University degree is a binary variable. The outcome is rescaled as 0-1 from the following item: “Now, please consider British citizens without (with) university degree who are leaving to live in other countries. Do you think low-skilled (high-skilled) emigration from Britain should be increased a lot, increased a little, left the same as it is now, decreased a little, or decreased a lot?” The standard errors are given in parentheses: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

Qualitative evidence

While we have a good understanding of popular immigration attitudes, it is much less clear what people may think about emigration. Do voters have meaningful concerns about others leaving their country and how different are those from common immigration concerns? To address these questions, I asked my UK respondents to elaborate on their emigration attitudes stated earlier. As may be expected, about half of the respondents did not report any stance on the issue—they either left the form blank or said that they did not have an opinion.

The analysis of the remaining responses, however, indicates a clear predominance of group interest concerns, especially in the high-skilled condition. Specifically, the most common explanation for anti-emigration attitudes was related to the idea that “we [the British people] need them [the workers] here” to help the economy or avoid “brain drain.” Interestingly, it was also common to state group interest reasons in favor of greater emigration, especially in the low-skilled condition (e.g., “[Low-skilled workers are] not contributing to society”). Consequently, one should be careful with interpreting pro-emigration preference as a principled embrace of “freedom of movement.” While many people did reference personal choice

arguments, they were more likely to prefer status quo levels to increased emigration.²¹

In addition to group interest concerns, the most cited reason to restrict emigration was a moralistic preference for rootedness (or, equivalently, aversion to any mobility). In particular, many respondents alluded to the idea that people simply *ought to* live and work in their own country regardless of consequences. Finally, a few people also mentioned that they want to decrease emigration due to their concerns about increased immigration or, specifically, “population replacement.” While this might explain why anti-foreigner sentiment correlates with opposition to either type of migration, it is unclear whether such preferences for ethnic homogeneity can themselves be considered a part of prejudice or group interest concerns.

Discussion and conclusion

This paper is one of the first to document and examine high public opposition to emigration salient in many contexts. By systematically comparing these attitudes to those on immigration, the study also contributes to the literatures on migration politics and public opinion. The fact that emigration and immigration attitudes are highly correlated and have similar individual predictors indicates a substantial common component underlying both attitudes. What can it be? As mentioned earlier, this result is more in line with some theories of public opinion than others. Most important, it seems hard to explain why most people feel similarly about immigration and emigration by just appealing to self-interest or outright prejudice (at least in terms of anti-foreigner sentiment). At the same time, the results are more in line with group interest accounts, according to which people may oppose both emigration and immigration because they view them as social problems. Consistent with these results is also the idea that, regardless of their reasons, many people may simply prefer others to have roots (indicating an aversion to human mobility rather than to foreign outgroups). Both of these accounts are also reflected in people’s own explanations of their attitudes.

²¹While many people also cited their fairness concerns, these notions were extremely heterogeneous—from explaining preferences for decrease (“fair if we reduce immigrants who are low skilled”) to status quo (“give fair chance to all”) and increase (“migration works both ways”).

Overall, this study makes a strong empirical case that emigration and immigration attitudes, albeit being distinct, are both driven by common factors. It is important, however, to provide a more comprehensive theory and collect other data on the topic in the future. For instance, scholars could elaborate on what “self-interest” and “prejudice” imply in the context of emigration, as well as measure how people actually perceive the effects of emigration. Furthermore, future studies may examine the interrelationship of group interest concerns, anti-foreigner sentiments, as well as general aversion to human mobility revealed in the qualitative data in more detail. Compared to more consequentialist concerns about national interest that can be used for either support or opposition to migration (e.g., “the country needs more/less migration because of x ”), the unconditional preference for rooted community is against any type of migration. Consequently, while being largely overlooked in the immigration literature, such moralistic preference can potentially explain a large share of anti-immigration sentiments beyond group interest concerns and prejudice against foreigners.

One of the most important concerns about the study design is perhaps a potential measurement error related to the confusion of emigration with immigration by the respondents. Nonetheless, there are several reasons why it should not significantly affect the results. First, as emphasized earlier, opposition to emigration (or immigration) is predictably higher in countries with greater emigrant (or immigrant) shares. Second, it is hard to argue that self-reported opposition to emigration attitudes is just a function of opposition to immigration since the former is significantly higher across sampled countries. Third, it is instructive that the percentage of “don’t know” answers is actually lower for emigration than immigration in most countries (13% vs 15% on average), which is in line with the overall emigrant-sending demographic context there. Fourth, the correlation between immigration and emigration attitudes is similar among low-educated and high-educated respondents. Fifth, there is little evidence that the observed correlation can be explained as a language artifact²², especially

²²While in most languages the terms “immigration” and “emigration” are pronounced and spelled similarly to English (with a difference in a prefix or a suffix), some languages use either the same or a completely different word for these processes. Depending on one’s language, people may thus be more or less likely to confuse emigration and immigration. Nonetheless, language differences can only explain a part of between-

given the evidence on differential wording from Transatlantic Trends. Finally, the analysis of qualitative UK responses revealed only a few cases where people clearly confused the issues.

Finally, the evidence of widespread anti-emigration attitudes has important implications for democratic theory and politics. Most obviously, the fact that most governments (including the countries studied here) do not restrict emigration despite the strong will of their—even most educated—citizens presents both an empirical and a normative challenge. Normatively, theoretical accounts that defend immigration restrictions by appealing to sovereignty and citing public opinion, should also be able to explain why it would not apply to emigration (for a related discussion of distributional concerns, see Ypi, 2008). Empirically, scholars may want to consider why emigration has become much freer than immigration despite the similarities in public attitudes (e.g., see Peters, 2015).

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Appendix

Gallup World Poll

The Gallup World Poll dataset consists of representative samples including Armenia (2013), Azerbaijan (2013, 2015), Belarus (2013, 2015), Bulgaria (2015), Croatia (2015), Czech Republic (2015), Georgia (2013, 2015), Greece (2015), Hungary (2015), Kazakhstan (2013, 2015), Kyrgyzstan (2013, 2015), Moldova (2013), Poland (2015), Romania (2015), Russia (2013, 2015), Slovakia (2015), Tajikistan (2013, 2015), Ukraine (2013, 2015), Uzbekistan (2013, 2015). Given the absence of a proper survey infrastructure, the results from Turkmenistan (2013, 2015)—though seemingly not significantly different from neighboring countries—are excluded from the analysis.

- Emigration attitudes (WP14599): “In your view, should emigration from this country be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?”
- Immigration attitudes (WP1328): “In your view, should immigration from this country be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?”
- “Plans to emigrate” (WP1325): “Ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you like to move PERMANENTLY to another country, or would you prefer to continue living in this country?”
- “Receives Remittances (from abroad)” (WP9086): “In the past 12 months, did this household RECEIVE help in the form of money or goods from another individual living inside this country, living in another country, both, or neither?”
- “Dislikes foreign governments” (8-item index): “Do you approve or disapprove of the job performance of the leadership of the United States (United Kingdom, Germany, France, Russia, China, Japan, India?”
- “Worries about national issues” (6-item index):

- (WP4941) “Do you think the government is doing enough to fight terrorism, or not?”
- (WP6763) “Do you think the government of your country is doing enough to fight corruption, or not?”
- (WP7503) “In your opinion, is the government doing enough to fight domestic violence?”
- (WP131) “In this country, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with efforts to deal with the poor?”
- (WP132) “In this country, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with efforts to preserve the environment?”
- (M30) “How would you rate economic conditions in this country today – as excellent, good, only fair, or poor?”

Transatlantic Trends Survey

The Transatlantic Trends Survey dataset consists of representative samples including France (2013, 2014), Germany (2013, 2014), Greece (2014), Italy (2013, 2014), the Netherlands (2013, 2014), Poland (2013, 2014), Portugal (2013, 2014), Romania (2013), Russia (2014), Slovakia (2013), Spain (2013, 2014), Sweden (2013, 2014), Turkey (2013, 2014), the United Kingdom (2013, 2014), and the United States (2013, 2014).

- *Emigration attitudes (2013)*: “Do you think that emigration in [COUNTRY] is a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, not a serious problem, or not a problem at all for [COUNTRY]?”
- *Emigration attitudes (2014)*: “Do you think that emigration in [COUNTRY], that is the number of [NATIONALITY] who are leaving to live in other countries, is a very serious problem, not a serious problem, or not a problem at all for [COUNTRY]?”

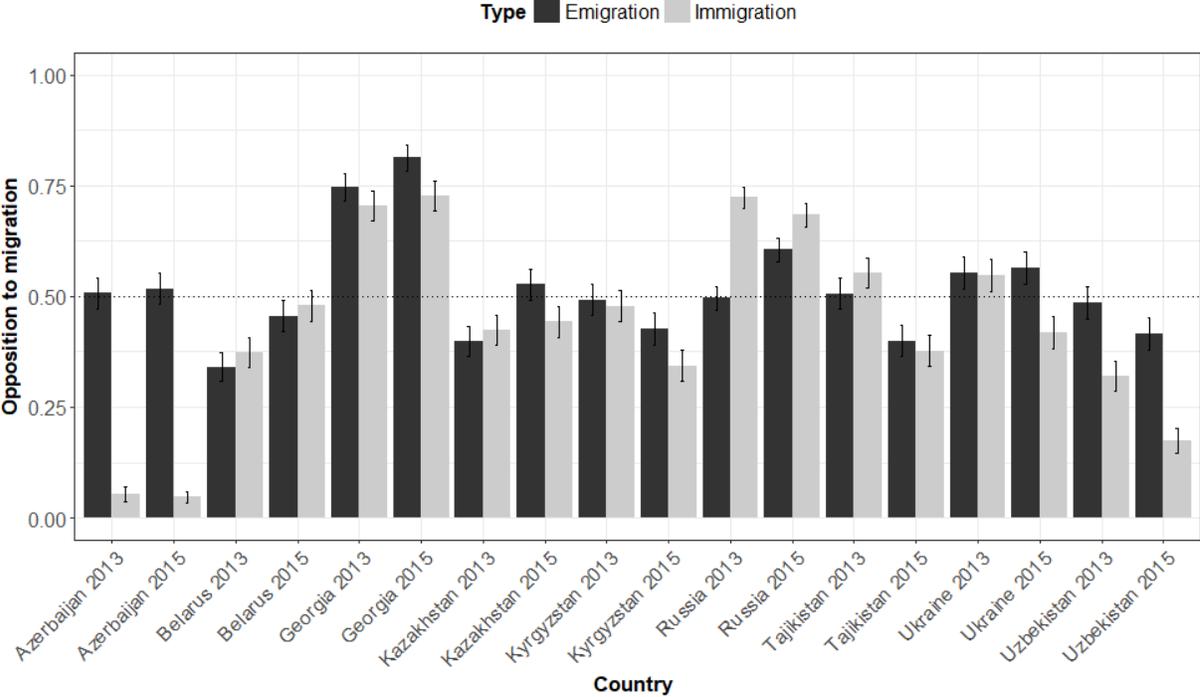
Original UK survey

This quasi-representative survey has been administered online by Qualtrics in May 2018 as a part of a larger research project.

- *Low-skilled emigration condition*: “Now, please consider British citizens without university degree who are leaving to live in other countries. Do you think low-skilled emigration from Britain should be increased a lot, increased a little, left the same as it is now, decreased a little, or decreased a lot?”
- *High-skilled emigration condition*: “Now, please consider British citizens with university degree who are leaving to live in other countries. Do you think high-skilled emigration from Britain should be increased a lot, increased a little, left the same as it is now, decreased a little, or decreased a lot?”

Figures and Tables

Figure A1: Public opposition to emigration and immigration across time



Based on Gallup World Poll (2013 and 2015). Each bar (or a dot) represents a (weighted) share of respondents in a given country (with a margin of error) who answered “decreased” in a following question: “In your view, should (e/in)migration from this country be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?”

Table A1: Descriptive statistics: UK Qualtrics sample

Statistic	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Female	0.56	0.50	0	1
Age	52.47	14.74	18	86
Non-white	0.06	0.24	0	1
Has university degree	0.30	0.46	0	1
Makes more than 50000	0.13	0.34	0	1
Has relig. affiliation	0.41	0.49	0	1
Voted Conservative	0.42	0.49	0	1
Voted Labour	0.39	0.49	0	1
Voted Lib. Dem.	0.07	0.26	0	1
Voted Remain	0.44	0.50	0	1
Voted Leave	0.56	0.50	0	1

N = 2008.

Table A2: Predictors of anti-emigration and anti-immigration attitudes (Logit)

	Baseline		Self-interest		Prejudice		Sociotropic		Migration		Total	
	(1 E)	(2 I)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Female	0.128*** (0.027)	0.043 (0.028)	0.136*** (0.027)	0.041 (0.029)	0.122*** (0.027)	0.037 (0.029)	0.131*** (0.027)	0.044 (0.029)	0.136*** (0.031)	-0.029 (0.032)	0.137*** (0.031)	-0.035 (0.033)
Age	0.706*** (0.073)	0.793*** (0.076)	0.694*** (0.074)	0.797*** (0.078)	0.674*** (0.073)	0.743*** (0.077)	0.648*** (0.073)	0.722*** (0.077)	0.514*** (0.084)	0.615*** (0.086)	0.447*** (0.085)	0.541*** (0.088)
Married	0.065* (0.029)	0.116*** (0.030)	0.058* (0.029)	0.117*** (0.030)	0.057* (0.029)	0.113*** (0.030)	0.064* (0.029)	0.114*** (0.030)	0.027 (0.033)	0.074* (0.034)	0.019 (0.033)	0.075* (0.035)
Urban	0.064 (0.034)	0.222*** (0.037)	0.076* (0.035)	0.219*** (0.037)	0.049 (0.035)	0.213*** (0.037)	0.040 (0.035)	0.186*** (0.037)	-0.004 (0.039)	0.239*** (0.041)	-0.017 (0.040)	0.201*** (0.042)
Born abroad	-0.224** (0.070)	-0.569*** (0.074)	-0.222** (0.071)	-0.552*** (0.075)	-0.223** (0.070)	-0.566*** (0.074)	-0.218** (0.070)	-0.555*** (0.074)	-0.070 (0.079)	-0.493*** (0.085)	-0.080 (0.081)	-0.473*** (0.087)
College	-0.057 (0.038)	-0.133*** (0.039)	-0.049 (0.038)	-0.137*** (0.039)	-0.060 (0.038)	-0.133*** (0.039)	-0.067 (0.038)	-0.146*** (0.039)	-0.008 (0.042)	-0.141** (0.043)	-0.005 (0.043)	-0.160*** (0.044)
Income	0.073 (0.040)	-0.001 (0.042)	0.083* (0.040)	0.023 (0.043)	0.065 (0.040)	-0.013 (0.042)	0.113** (0.040)	0.054 (0.042)	0.077 (0.045)	-0.001 (0.047)	0.097* (0.046)	0.058 (0.049)
Unemployed	-0.131** (0.043)	-0.008 (0.046)	-0.126** (0.043)	-0.002 (0.047)	-0.135** (0.043)	-0.012 (0.046)	-0.157*** (0.043)	-0.034 (0.047)	-0.141** (0.049)	0.021 (0.052)	-0.156** (0.049)	0.003 (0.053)
Plans to emigrate			-0.242** (0.087)	-0.169 (0.093)							-0.226* (0.099)	-0.128 (0.107)
Receives Remittances			-0.161** (0.052)	-0.232*** (0.056)							-0.122* (0.059)	-0.126* (0.063)
Dislikes foreign governments					0.448*** (0.052)	0.605*** (0.055)					0.211*** (0.059)	0.429*** (0.063)
Worries about national issues							0.823*** (0.054)	1.198*** (0.057)			0.518*** (0.063)	1.013*** (0.066)
Anti-immigration attitudes									1.776*** (0.034)		1.720*** (0.035)	
Anti-emigration attitudes										1.779*** (0.034)		1.730*** (0.035)
Observations	26,310	25,709	25,693	25,116	26,148	25,535	26,308	25,707	23,600	23,600	22,964	22,964
Log Likelihood	-15,960	-14,457	-15,531	-14,113	-15,809	-14,278	-15,838	-14,240	-12,793	-11,822	-12,381	-11,340

All logit models are based on Gallup World Poll data (2013, 2015). Odd (even) model numbers refer to dichotomous anti-emigration (anti-immigration) attitudes. For details, see Appendix. The standard errors are given in parentheses: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.