

Public Perceptions of Immigration in European Union: A Survey Analysis of Eurobarometer 83.3 and 85.2

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Abstract

Immigration has recently become a considerable topic to debate by the governmental authorities as the illegal immigration has increased substantially along with the well-known immigration crisis, that has brought numerous concerns among with terrorism. Considering this fact the opinion regarding immigrants from outside the European Union countries in European Union may have been influenced and also changed in a negative way. The analysis focuses on the EU citizens' perception toward the feeling about outside immigrants related with concerns as unemployment and terrorism, based on data collected by the Eurobarometer 83.3 from 2015 and Eurobarometer 85.2 from 2016 for the European Union country members.

Key words: migration, survey analysis, logistic regression, Eurobarometer

J.E.L. Classification: C25, C83, F22, O10, O15

1. Introduction

Migration is a very old process and phenomenon but still an actual topic nowadays especially considering the recent European migration crisis. Migration is generated mostly by economic and political aspects, and the main hypothesis noted in the literature regarding human migration have been developed in the area of the determinants and factors that influence the migration. The reasons to migrate evolved among the time and within the evolution of technology and society, if at first people emigrated for survival purposes this aspect has gained new values. So migration is a result of the emergence of needs that have to be satisfied taking in consideration the social environment of the individual.

Most of the theories that explain human migration concern aspects that are related with the human needs starting from the basic needs (as survival and safety) and ending up to the higher level needs (as self-esteem and fulfillment) (Ravenstein, 1885; Stark, 1984; Cassarino, 2004). Regarding these theories it can be conclude that nowadays migration is strongly related with employment (respectively unemployment), or generally with work (if considered the business), mostly because to fulfill their need people need money. Unfortunately, with the migration crisis in Europe the perspective on migrants have changed mainly because the term migrants always creates confusion, migrant being considered by the public opinion that is every person who leaves its country, so they do not make any differences between migrants or refugees. The recent migration crisis as it is known is actually a refugee crisis. As UNHCR (2016) mentions migrants are the persons that choose to leave their country to improve their lives and they can return back to their homes without confronting any danger, while refugees leave their countries mainly because of armed conflicts or persecution.

2. Method and Data

In order to analyse in which direction three of the most important issues that the respondents consider the European Union is facing was used the Ordinary Least Squares Multiple Regression Analysis, represented mathematically as a first degree equation:

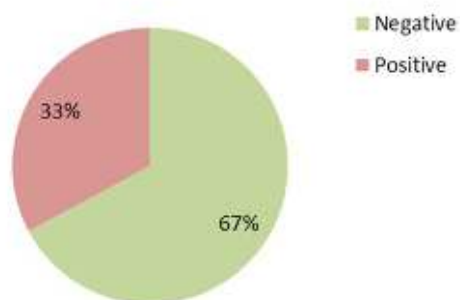
$$y_i = a + b_1 \times x_{i1} + b_2 \times x_{i2} + \dots + b_n \times x_{in} + e_i \text{ (eq. 1.)}$$

Where the y_i is the endogenous variable, x_i are the exogenous variables.

In 2014 the results from the Eurobarometer 81 regarding public opinion about economic and social topics showed that one of the main concerns were unemployment (48% of the respondents) and immigration (being on the fourth place with an increase of 3% from year 2013), terrorism at that time remained a matter of low interest (European Commission, 2014). In the last decades migration was more associated with unemployment, rather than terrorism.

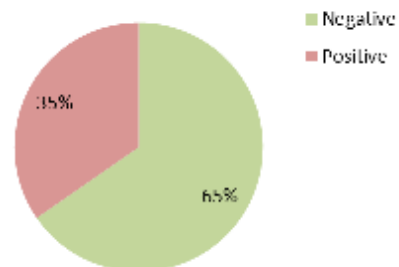
For this analysis were considered four variable: as a dependent variable was used the question: "if the immigration of people from outside the EU evokes a positive or negative feeling" and as independent variables the opinion about the most important issues that EU confront: immigration, unemployment, terrorism.

Figure 1. Opinion about immigration from outside EU 2016



Source: own construction based on Eurobarometer 83.3

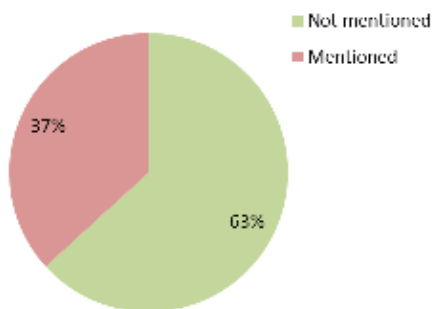
Figure 2. Opinion about immigration from outside EU 2017



Source: own construction based on Eurobarometer 85.2

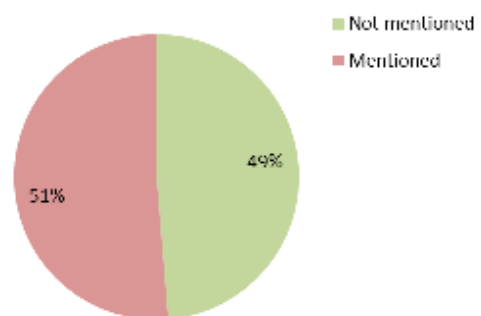
It can be observed that there is a slightly insignificant difference between year 2016 and 2017 regarding the opinion about immigration that occurs in European Union from outside countries.

Figure 3. Immigration 2016



Source: own construction based on Eurobarometer 83.3

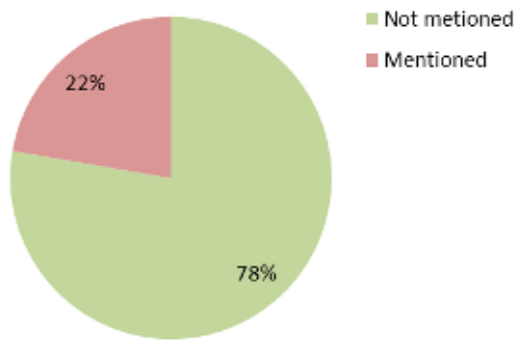
Figure 4. Immigration 2017



Source: own construction based on Eurobarometer 85.2

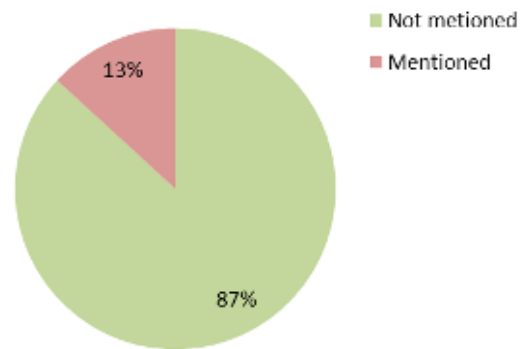
In 2016 immigration was considered an important issue for European Union by fewer respondents than in year 2017, when it is observed an increase in the perception of the importance of immigration in European Union.

Figure 5. Unemployment 2016



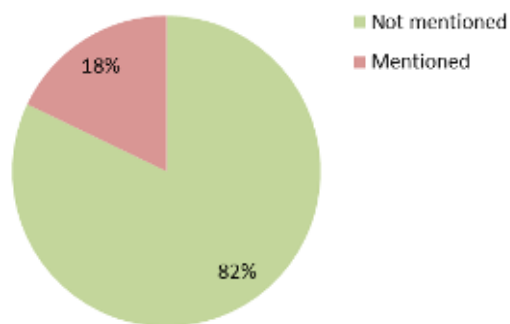
Source: own construction based on Eurobarometer 83.3

Figure 6. Unemployment 2017



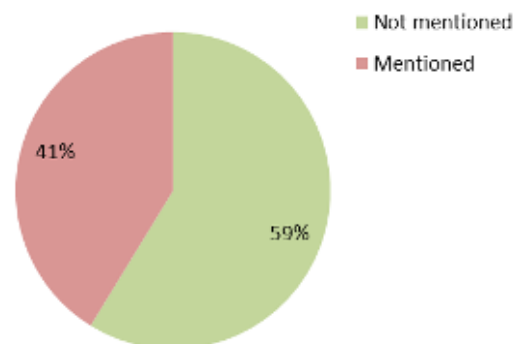
Source: own construction based on Eurobarometer 85.2

Figure 7. Terrorism



Source: own construction based on Eurobarometer 83.3

Figure 8. Terrorism



Source: own construction based on Eurobarometer 85.2

The public perception regarding the issue of terrorism has doubled in year 2017 compared to year 2016, European Union citizens becoming more worried about terrorism than they were about unemployment.

The general model can be described as the following equation:

$$\text{Perception of immigration outside of EU countries}_i = a + b_1 \times \text{Immigration}_i + b_2 \times \text{Unemployment}_i + b_n \times \text{Terrorism}_i + e_i \text{ (eq. 2)}$$

With i from 1 to 28, because there were considered all the 28 European member countries, for this model the situation of Brexit (Great Britain has voted to exit European Union in year 2016 and the date to leave EU was set to march 2019 (Hunt and Wheeler, 2017)) was not considered. The model was made both for negative and positive perception of the respondents regarding immigration outside of EU countries, and also both for year 2016 and 2017.

3. Results and conclusions

This paper employs four different regression models two for each positive and negative feeling. The main objective is firstly to observe if there are differences regarding perception towards migrants, and secondly to observe the differences between year 2016 and 2017 for each type of feeling.

Table no. 1. The influence on the positive perception of immigration outside of European Countries

Dependent Variable: Immigration from outside EU is Positive 2016 vs. 2017								
	2016				2017			
	Constant	Immigration	Unemployment	Terrorism	Constant	Immigration	Unemployment	Terrorism
Coefficients	-67.807	0.189	1.168	0.258	1.681	0.207	1.155	0.138
Std. Error	116.855	0.159	0.308	0.410	120.839	0.189	0.421	0.303
t test	-0.580	1.184	3.788	0.629	0.014	1.097	2.745	0.457
Sig. t	0.567	0.248	0.001	0.536	0.989	0.284	0.011	0.652
Lower Bound (95%)	-308.985	-0.140	0.532	-0.589	-247.718	-0.183	0.287	-0.487
Upper Bound(95%)	173.371	0.518	1.805	1.105	251.080	0.598	2.024	0.763
Collinearity Statistics: Tolerance	-	0.874	0.863	0.764	-	0.556	0.884	0.609
R Squared	0.415				0.28			
F test	5.667				3.116			
Sig. F	0.004				0.045			
DW	2.319				1.953			
Observations	28				28			

Source: own calculation based on Eurobarometer 85.2 and 83.6

In case of positive feeling towards immigrants from other countries than those that are EU members it can be noted that both for year 2016 and 2017 the unemployment has a significant and direct influence on the dependent variable. So for those respondents who consider that unemployment is an important issue for European Union there is an increase for the respondents that perceive immigration as a positive thing.

In case of negative perception of immigrants outside European Countries the main concerns for European Union that influence the negative perception were immigration and unemployment for year 2016, as for year 2017 there can be noticed a difference regarding the issues that influence the negative perception, terrorism being significant instead of unemployment.

Therefore until 2016 the main concerns for the respondents that consider immigration as a negative feeling were immigration and unemployment, starting with year 2017 there has been a replacement with the issue of terrorism. If after the financial crisis the perception was strictly a matter of jobs and employment, starting with the refugees crisis and the terrorist attacks in the last period the situation of public perception regarding immigrants has been changed, negative feeling being associated with terrorism instead of unemployment.

Table no. 2. The influence on the negative perception of immigration outside of European Countries

Dependent Variable: Immigration from outside EU is Negative 2016 vs. 2017								
	2016				2017			
	Constant	Immigration	Unemployment	Terrorism	Constant	Immigration	Unemployment	Terrorism
Coefficients	92.162	0.689	0.714	0.143	242.314	0.496	0.015	1.114
Std. Error	116.559	0.182	0.406	0.292	147.848	0.202	0.390	0.519
t test	0.791	3.778	1.757	0.489	1.639	2.460	0.038	2.146
Sig. t	0.437	0.001	0.092	0.629	0.114	0.021	0.970	0.042
Lower Bound (95%)	-148.403	0.313	-0.125	-0.460	-62.829	0.080	-0.790	0.042
Upper Bound(95%)	332.727	1.066	1.552	0.745	547.457	0.913	0.820	2.186
Collinearity Statistics: Tolerance	-	0.556	0.884	0.609	-	0.874	0.863	0.764
R Squared	0.535				0.418			
F test	9.222				5.755			
Sig. F	0.000				0.004			
DW	1.993				2.898			
Observations	28				28			

Source: own calculation based on Eurobarometer 85.2 and 83.6

Unemployment remains an issue for European Countries for in year 2017 for those who consider immigration from outside the European Countries as being positive, instead for those who consider immigration from outside of EU as being negative the issue of unemployment has been replaced with the issue of terrorism. This fact might be interpreted as if so far public perception towards migrants was that they are a threat for the workforce in the receiving country, now migrants are more associated with terrorist and terrorism, being a threat for public safety.

Unfortunately, European Union citizens consider that refugees are a threat and they associate migration with negative aspects as unemployment and terrorism in high proportion considering the results in table 2. were immigration and terrorism are explaining the negative perception migrants outside European Union in proportion of over 40%. This should be a signal alarm on political decision-makers, because as although the number of refugees has increased and the number of terrorist acts alike, this does not necessarily imply a cause-effect relationship.

4. References

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