

Educational Mismatch And Multidimensional Immigration Attitudes: Evidence From Europe

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Abstract

This paper uses European Social Survey (ESS) Round 11 (2023/24) data to analyse how educational mismatch is associated with attitudes toward immigration among European employees. It measures overeducation and undereducation through a realized-match approach, comparing workers' educational attainment to the modal level within their specific country and occupation. The study distinguishes between two attitudinal dimensions:¹ support for restrictive admission policies and the perceived positive consequences of immigration. Regression models reveal that while tertiary-educated workers show more favourable views, the pattern associated with educational mismatch is more nuanced. Specifically, undereducated workers tend to perceive the consequences of immigration more negatively than overeducated individuals but are simultaneously less supportive of restrictive admission policies. These findings indicate that educational mismatch relates differently to distinct dimensions of immigration attitudes, qualifying the assumption that overeducated workers are uniformly more pro-immigration.

Keywords: attitudes toward immigration; educational mismatch; overeducation; undereducation.

1. Introduction

The processes of formation and change of attitudes toward immigration are a central issue in European social research because they connect economic change, political conflict, social identities, and welfare-state concerns (Palermo et al., 2022). The topic has become even more relevant in recent years, when labour shortages, inflation, geopolitical instability, and renewed debates on borders and asylum have interacted with long-standing patterns of intra-European and extra-European mobility. In this context, the European Social Survey (ESS) continues to offer an unusually valuable source for comparative evidence because it combines harmonised attitudinal items observed over time with full socio-demographic information across a large set of national settings.

In this paper, we aim to evaluate the role played by educational mismatch as a proxy for labour-market competition with the purpose of discussing the hypothesis that overeducated workers are more favourable toward immigrants than matched or undereducated workers (Nieto et al., 2015), because their qualifications may make them feel less substitutable in the labour market, building on previous exploratory evidence (Palladino & Sironi, 2019) within a more rigorous multidimensional framework. In order to do this, we distinguish between two dimensions of immigration attitudes: the propensity to admit immigrants and the perceived economic, cultural, and social consequences of immigration. Taken together, these two perspectives suggest that the relationship between labour-market position and immigration attitudes may be more complex than a simple pro- versus anti-immigration divide.

This paper therefore merges these two lines of argument using ESS Round 11. The theoretical point of departure is the broad literature showing that immigration attitudes are shaped by both economic and socio-psychological mechanisms. Group conflict approaches interpret negative attitudes as defensive reactions to perceived competition over scarce resources, whether jobs, welfare benefits, housing, or status (Blalock, 1967). In a related labour-market perspective, lower-skilled or economically insecure

natives may expect immigration to intensify competition for employment or wages, particularly when immigrants are perceived as occupying similar positions in the skill distribution (Scheve & Slaughter, 2001; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007, 2010).

At the same time, comparative research shows that immigration attitudes are also connected to symbolic boundaries, ethnocentrism, and a broader cultural threat. Education, for instance, is not only a marker of labour-market position; it is also associated with lower ethnic exclusionism and broader cosmopolitan orientations (Coenders & Scheepers, 2003). Likewise, perceived ethnic threat is shaped by the interaction between individual positions and contextual cues about migration, diversity, and group boundaries (Manevska & Achterberg, 2013). Reviewing a large body of cross-national literature, Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014) conclude that immigration attitudes are best understood as multidimensional reactions in which economic and cultural evaluations are tightly intertwined, even when one or the other receives greater emphasis in specific contexts.

A second strand of literature is directly relevant to the present contribution because it concerns educational mismatch. Educational mismatch refers to the discrepancy between workers' attained education and the level of education required, expected, or typical in the job they perform. The literature identifies a variety of measurement strategies, including workers' self-assessments, job-analysis approaches, and realized-match methods based on observed educational distributions within occupations (Alba-Ramirez, 1993; Verdugo & Verdugo, 1989; Bauer, 2002). Following Kiker et al. (1997), one common realized-match strategy classifies workers as overeducated when their education exceeds the modal level observed for their occupational cell, as undereducated when it falls below that mode, and as matched when it coincides with it.

In light of the previous literature, the research question asks why educational mismatch should be associated with attitudes toward immigration. The traditional argument is straightforward. If immigration is perceived through the lens of labour-market competition, workers with weaker employment positions or with lower qualifications should feel more exposed to competition from newcomers. Conversely, overeducated workers may perceive themselves as having a broader skill margin, a safer occupational position, or greater mobility across jobs. In that sense, educational mismatch may capture a dimension of subjective labour-market security that is not reducible to education alone. While initial exploratory research (Palladino & Sironi, 2019) pointed to a positive association between overeducation and pro-immigration views, that analysis was limited by a single-item attitude measure and a pre-pandemic context. A central question to be tested is whether the same pattern persists in more recent ESS data after the reset of labour market conditions following the pandemic crisis, and whether it applies to different dimensions of immigration attitudes.

The distinction between admission preferences and evaluations of consequences with respect to immigration is central to this paper and present in the literature (Palermo et al. 2022). A respondent may, for example, support relatively restrictive admission rules while still acknowledging that immigration contributes positively to the economy or enriches cultural life. Conversely, an individual may be willing to admit some groups of migrants while expressing anxiety about fiscal pressure or social cohesion. This point has been emphasised in regional and cross-national studies showing that immigration attitudes are composed of partly separable dimensions rather than a single latent orientation (Markaki & Longhi, 2013; Billiet et al., 2014). The multidimensional design of the current paper is intended to capture that complexity more explicitly.

Against this background, the paper pursues three objectives. First, it provides a contemporary assessment of educational mismatch and immigration attitudes using the most recent data from ESS Round 11 (2023/24). Second, it combines theoretical insights from the mismatch literature with the two-factor strategy developed in the broader ESS-based study. Third, it evaluates whether the classical expectation that overeducated workers are more pro-immigration still holds once attitudes are measured separately as admission preferences and perceived consequences, and once education, occupation, income, domicile, and country fixed effects are taken into account.

Anticipating the results, the analysis yields a more differentiated picture than the older one-dimensional framework would suggest. Overeducated workers retain a relative advantage on the perceived-consequences dimension, but not unequivocally on the admission dimension. More generally, the evidence confirms the importance of education, nativity, place of residence, and occupational structure

in shaping attitudes toward immigration. The contribution of the paper is therefore to show that the relationship between labour-market position, educational mismatch, and immigration attitudes varies across attitudinal dimensions. In light of the discussed literature, the remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 will present the data from Round 11 of the ESS and the models applied to the empirical analysis. Section 3 will present the model estimates. Finally, Section 4 concludes.

2. Data and Methods

The empirical analysis uses data from ESS Round 11 (ESS ERIC, 2025), fielded in 2023/24 and released through the ESS data infrastructure as part of the Round 11 integrated file. The ESS is an academically driven cross-national survey designed to monitor attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour across European societies through a harmonised questionnaire and rigorous sampling standards. The present study concentrates on the immigration battery and on workers' education and occupation, making the ESS particularly suitable for focusing on the relationship between labour-market position and attitudes toward migrants. The analytical strategy starts with the construction of two latent dependent variables. The first latent variable, exploring support for restrictive admission policies, is extracted from three core ESS items:

- Whether the country should allow immigrants of the same race or ethnic group as the majority (imsmetn).
- Whether it should allow immigrants of a different race or ethnic group (imdfetn).
- Whether it should allow immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe (impctr).

Table 1. Descriptive distribution of the items used to construct the factor exploring support for restrictive admission policies

Response category	imsmetn Allow immigrants of the same race/ethnic group as the majority	imdfetn Allow immigrants of a different race/ethnic group from the majority	impctr Allow immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe
Allow many to come and live here	6,260 (29.65%)	3,900 (18.48%)	3,556 (16.87%)
Allow some	9,680 (45.85%)	8,718 (41.30%)	8,255 (39.16%)
Allow a few	3,858 (18.27%)	6,032 (28.58%)	6,264 (29.71%)
Allow none	1,316 (6.23%)	2,457 (11.64%)	3,007 (14.26%)
Total	21,114 (100.00%)	21,107 (100.00%)	21,082 (100.00%)

Source: ESS Round 11. The table reports absolute frequencies and corresponding percentages for the three admission items used to generate the unique factor for model 1.

These items are measured on the standard four-category ESS scale ranging from "allow many" to "allow none." Principal-factor analysis yields a common factor strongly associated with all three items (Table 2). Based on 20,832 valid observations, the factor loadings are:

Table 2. Loadings for the factor exploring support for restrictive admission policies

Variable	Factor Loading
Allow immigrants of the same race or ethnic group as the majority (imsmetn)	0.856
Allow immigrants of a different race or ethnic group (imdfetn).	0.940
Allow immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe (impctr)	0.907

Source: ESS Round 11. The table reports loadings of a principal factor analysis on three items related with support for restrictive admission policies

Because the factor is based on the original ESS coding, higher values correspond to more restrictive admission preferences and, therefore, lower acceptance of immigration.

The second latent variable, exploring the perceived positive consequences of immigration, is constructed analogously from three items:

- Whether immigration is bad or good for the country's economy (imbgeco),
- Whether immigrants undermine or enrich the country's cultural life (imueclt),
- Whether immigrants make the country a worse or a better place to live (imwbcnt).

Table 3. Descriptive distribution of the three items used to construct the factor exploring perceived positive consequences of immigration

Response category	imbgeco Immigration bad or good for country's economy	imueclt Country's cultural life undermined or enriched by immigrants	imwbcnt Immigrants make country worse or better place to live
0 - Most negative endpoint	1,247 (5.93%)	1,162 (5.50%)	1,084 (5.17%)
1	610 (2.90%)	593 (2.81%)	611 (2.91%)
2	1,163 (5.53%)	1,219 (5.77%)	1,197 (5.70%)
3	1,608 (7.64%)	1,692 (8.01%)	1,770 (8.44%)
4	1,601 (7.61%)	1,685 (7.97%)	1,974 (9.41%)
5	4,290 (20.38%)	4,101 (19.40%)	5,798 (27.63%)
6	2,454 (11.66%)	2,278 (10.78%)	2,232 (10.64%)
7	3,208 (15.24%)	2,946 (13.94%)	2,506 (11.94%)
8	2,671 (12.69%)	2,860 (13.53%)	2,082 (9.92%)
9	938 (4.46%)	1,112 (5.26%)	752 (3.58%)
10 - Most positive endpoint	1,255 (5.96%)	1,487 (7.04%)	976 (4.65%)
Total	21,045 (100.00%)	21,135 (100.00%)	20,982 (100.00%)

Source: ESS Round 11. The table reports absolute frequencies and corresponding percentages for the three perceived consequences items used to generate the unique factor for model 2.

These items are measured on 0–10 scales, where higher values denote more positive assessments. Again, principal-factor analysis yields a robust latent summary. Based on 20,497 valid observations, the factor loadings are as follows (Table 4):

Table 4. Loadings for the factor exploring support for perceived positive consequences of immigration

Variable	Factor Loading
immigration is bad or good for the country's economy (imbgeco)	0.879
immigrants undermine or enrich the country's cultural life (imueclt)	0.903
immigrants make the country a worse or a better place to live (imwbcnt)	0.902

Source: ESS Round 11. The table reports loadings of a principal factor analysis on three items related with perceived positive consequences of immigration

In this case, higher values on the second factor indicate more favourable perceived consequences of immigration.

Educational mismatch has been operationalised through a realized-match approach. In order to do this, we collapsed educational attainment into three broad categories: less than upper secondary, upper secondary, and tertiary education. We then created eight major ISCO occupational groups from the two-digit occupational codes, excluding the agricultural, forestry, and fishery group because of insufficient cell sizes. The estimation sample is restricted to respondents who are currently in paid employment as wage-earners, with the age range limited to 16–64. Within each country and broad occupation, the modal educational level is computed. Workers whose own education exceeds the country-by-occupation mode are coded as overeducated, those below the mode are coded as undereducated, and those equal to the mode as matched. This choice closely follows the realized-match literature and is especially consistent with Kiker et al. (1997), while remaining comparable with the strategies discussed by Alba-Ramírez (1993), Verdugo and Verdugo (1989), and Bauer (2002).

In the regression models, overeducated workers are treated as the omitted category. This means that the coefficients for undereducated and matched workers measure deviations from the overeducated reference group. This decision is substantively useful because the earlier literature framed overeducation as the category expected to be most favourable toward immigration. If the earlier argument still holds in Round 11, the coefficients for undereducated and matched workers should point toward more restrictive admission preferences and less positive evaluations of consequences, relative to the overeducated reference group.

The specification also includes a standard set of individual controls. Gender is included following the ESS coding, so the coefficient can be read as the difference between women and men. Nativity is captured by a dummy for being foreign-born. Age enters in both linear and squared forms, allowing for a non-linear life-cycle pattern. Domicile is measured through the ESS urban-rural typology, with big cities as the omitted category. Education is included separately from the mismatch variable using a three-category classification. Household income is introduced through a series of income-decile dummies. In addition, the models include major occupational group dummies and country dummies, which absorb cross-national heterogeneity and a considerable share of structural labour-market differences.

The models are estimated using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) with robust standard errors. Given the inclusion of country dummies, the specification is best interpreted as a pooled cross-sectional model with fixed effects for country and occupation, rather than as a multilevel model. The empirical equation can be summarised as follows:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Undereducated}_i + \beta_2 \text{Matched}_i + \mathbf{X}_i^T \boldsymbol{\gamma} + \text{Occupation}_i^T \boldsymbol{\lambda} + \text{Income}_i^T \boldsymbol{\theta} + \text{Country}_i^T \boldsymbol{\delta} + \varepsilon_i$$

where Y_i alternatively denotes the standardized factor scores for admission restrictiveness and the perceived positive consequences of immigration.

The coefficient vector $\boldsymbol{\gamma}$ represents the coefficients for the remaining socio-demographic controls. Although the broader literature often exploits multilevel structures in ESS data, the present specification is appropriate for the paper's primary goal: comparing educational mismatch categories within a rich set of observed controls in a single, up-to-date ESS round. The final sample size decreases from approximately 20,000 valid cases used in factor construction to 16,238 for the admission restrictiveness regression and 16,025 for the perceived positive consequences regression.

This reduction reflects the sample restrictions (focusing on wage-earners) and listwise deletion resulting from missing values across the covariates. Descriptive statistics for the explanatory variables are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics for the explanatory variables in the regression models – estimated samples

Variables	Mean	Min	Max
Age	43.804	16	64
Age squared	2052.136	256	4096
Gender			
Male	0.481	0	1
Female	0.519	0	1
Foreign-born			
Yes	0.105	0	1
No	0.895	0	1
Educational Mismatch			
Undereducated	0.155	0	1
Matched	0.739	0	1
Overeducated (derived share)	0.105	0	1
Domicile			
Big city (derived share)	0.233	0	1
Suburbs/outskirts of big city	0.115	0	1
Town or small city	0.296	0	1
Country village	0.317	0	1
Farm/home in countryside	0.039	0	1

ISCO			
Managers (derived share)	0.079	0	1
Professionals	0.266	0	1
Clerical support workers	0.087	0	1
Technicians and associate professionals	0.156	0	1
Service and sales workers	0.172	0	1
Craft and related trades workers	0.095	0	1
Plant and machine operators	0.067	0	1
Elementary occupations	0.078	0	1
Education			
Less than upper secondary	0.087	0	1
Upper secondary	0.525	0	1
Tertiary	0.388	0	1

Note. Means for binary variables can be interpreted as category shares. The table focuses on the variables most central to the argument and on the main compositional dimensions of the sample. Income-decile and country fixed-effect dummies are included in the regressions but are not reproduced here in full because they are less informative descriptively than the substantive variables of interest. Descriptive statistics refer to the intersection of the data used in the regression models.

Respondents are, on average, 43.8 years old, and the age distribution covers the broad working-age range from 16 to 64 years. Using the standard ESS coding for gender, women account for a slight majority of the sample, while foreign-born respondents represent 10.5 per cent. These figures are important because they show that the estimation sample is neither socially homogeneous nor demographically restricted to a narrow age bracket.

The key independent variable, educational mismatch, displays a distribution that is substantively informative. Undereducated respondents make up 15.5 per cent of the sample and matched respondents 73.9 per cent; since overeducation is the omitted category in the regressions, its share can be derived residually and amounts to approximately 10.5 per cent. The matched condition is therefore by far the most common, while undereducation is more frequent than overeducation. This asymmetry suggests that, within the estimation sample, vertical mismatch more often reflects workers occupying jobs above their formal educational credentials than workers carrying surplus schooling into positions below their attained level.

The sample is also geographically and socio-economically varied. About 23.3 per cent of respondents live in a big city, 11.5 per cent in the suburbs of a large city, 29.6 per cent in a town or small city, 31.7 per cent in a country village, and 3.9 per cent on a farm or in a home in the countryside. Educational attainment is concentrated in the middle and upper segments of the distribution: 52.5 per cent report upper-secondary education and 38.8 per cent tertiary education, leaving only 8.7 per cent in the lower-education reference category. Occupation is similarly diversified, with professionals forming the largest group (26.6 per cent), followed by service and sales workers (17.2 per cent) and technicians and associate professionals (15.6 per cent). Managers, the omitted occupational category in the regressions, account for approximately 7.9 per cent of the sample.

3. Empirical Results

The regression results are reported in Table 6. The first model uses admission restrictiveness as the dependent variable and therefore captures the admission dimension of immigration attitudes. Because higher values on the factor indicate greater restrictiveness, a negative coefficient should be interpreted as greater openness to admitting immigrants. The second model uses perceived positive consequences and therefore captures the consequences dimension; here, positive coefficients imply more favourable assessments of immigration's effects on the economy, culture, and the country's overall quality of life.

A key result concerns the broad socio-demographic pattern, which is highly consistent across both models. Educational attainment remains one of the strongest predictors of attitudes toward immigration. Relative to respondents with less than upper-secondary education, those with upper-secondary schooling are significantly less restrictive on admissions, and those with tertiary education are markedly less restrictive still. The coefficients are sizeable: the tertiary-education coefficient estimate is -0.395 in the

restrictiveness model. The same ordering reappears in the consequences model, where tertiary education is associated with a significantly more favourable view of immigration's consequences. These findings are fully consistent with the long comparative literature reporting a strong positive association between educational attainment and pro-immigration attitudes (Coenders & Scheepers, 2003; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007; Mayda, 2006).

Place of birth is another very strong predictor. Foreign-born respondents are substantially less restrictive on admission preferences and substantially more positive on perceived consequences than native-born respondents. While this pattern is expected theoretically, the size of the coefficients is remarkable: net of remaining controls, foreign-born workers exhibit a 0.228-point decrease in admission restrictiveness and a 0.400-point increase in the consequence factor. This confirms that migrants and non-native respondents are not only more supportive of immigration in a general sense but are also more likely to evaluate its consequences positively. In the present data, this is the most robust and substantively important individual predictor after education.

Table 6. OLS estimates for attitudes toward immigration, ESS Round 11

Variables	Model 1 (admission restrictiveness)	Model 2 (perceived positive consequences)
Age	0.031*** (0.004)	-0.019*** (0.004)
Age squared	-0.0003*** (0.0001)	0.0002*** (0.0001)
Gender		
Male	Ref.	Ref.
Female	-0.034** (0.015)	-0.004 (0.015)
Foreign-born		
No	Ref.	Ref.
Yes	-0.228*** (0.023)	0.400*** (0.023)
Educational Mismatch		
Undereducated	-0.133** (0.059)	-0.101* (0.058)
Matched	-0.063* (0.035)	-0.049 (0.034)
Overeducated	Ref.	Ref.
Domicile		
Big city	Ref.	Ref.
Suburbs/outskirts of big city	-0.051** (0.025)	0.014 (0.025)
Town or small city	0.013 (0.020)	-0.028 (0.020)
Country village	0.088*** (0.020)	-0.109*** (0.021)
Farm/home in countryside	-0.042 (0.038)	-0.100*** (0.037)
Education		
Less than upper secondary	Ref.	Ref.
Upper secondary	-0.167*** (0.039)	0.036 (0.038)

Tertiary	-0.395*** (0.061)	0.186*** (0.059)
Occupation fixed effects (ISCO dummies)	Yes	Yes
Income deciles	Yes	Yes
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes
Observations	16,238	16,025
R-squared	0.198	0.194

Note. Coefficients are reported with robust standard errors in parentheses. The omitted educational-mismatch category is overeducated; the omitted domicile category is big city; the omitted education category is less than upper secondary. Occupation, income, and country coefficients are included in the estimates but not displayed in full. * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

Place of residence also matters, although the pattern does not follow a simple or monotonic urban-rural gradient. Relative to respondents living in big cities, those in country villages are significantly more restrictive in admitting new migrants and significantly less positive in their perceptions of the consequences of immigration, while those living on a farm or in the countryside are significantly less positive only on the consequences dimension. By contrast, respondents living in the suburbs or outskirts of a big city are slightly less restrictive than big-city residents, while those living in towns or small cities do not differ significantly from them on either dimension. These findings therefore suggest that residential context is associated with immigration attitudes in a differentiated way, with the clearest negative pattern emerging among respondents living in country villages rather than along a uniform urban-rural continuum. Age enters non-linearly in both models. In the first model, the positive age term and negative squared term imply a curvilinear relationship in which restrictiveness rises until midlife and then attenuates. In the consequence factor model, the opposite signs indicate a U-shaped relationship, with the most negative evaluations concentrated around midlife rather than at older ages per se. These age patterns should not be over-interpreted, but they suggest that attitudes toward immigration are shaped by different life-course mechanisms depending on whether respondents are asked about admission rules or about immigration's concrete societal consequences.

Gender plays a comparatively minor role. Women appear slightly less restrictive than men in admitting new migrants, but the coefficient is small and the difference disappears entirely in the consequence factor model. Household income is also less decisive than education or nativity. Only some income categories are statistically significant, and the pattern is not monotonic in the restrictiveness model. In the consequences model, more favourable evaluations are concentrated toward the highest income deciles. This limited income gradient is consistent with the view that individual labour-market competition alone cannot account for the full structure of immigration attitudes (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014).

The main theoretical interest of the paper lies in educational mismatch. Because overeducated workers are the omitted category, the negative coefficient for undereducation regarding the evaluation of positive effects of immigration indicates that undereducated workers are less positive than overeducated workers when they evaluate the consequences of immigration, although the coefficient is significant only at the 10% level. This result is in line with the labour-market-security argument: overeducated workers appear more favourable, or at least less sceptical, when the question concerns immigration's economic, cultural, and social effects. The matched category is also below the overeducated baseline, although the estimate is not statistically significant in the consequence factor model.

The model investigating admission restrictiveness points in a different direction. Relative to overeducated workers, undereducated and matched workers display lower scores for the dependent variable, which means less restrictive admission preferences. In other words, overeducated workers do not emerge as the most permissive group when the outcome is defined in terms of whether immigrants should be allowed to enter. The undereducation coefficient is statistically significant at conventional levels, while the matched coefficient is marginally significant. In comparison with past studies, educational mismatch still matters, but it does not operate identically across all attitude dimensions.

One way to understand this result is to recognise that admission preferences and consequence evaluations are not interchangeable. Respondents may distinguish between abstract views about who should be admitted and more concrete judgments about what immigration does after migrants arrive. Overeducated workers may evaluate immigration's aggregate consequences more positively because their labour-market position is comparatively secure or because educational mismatch captures differences in perceived job security, career prospects, or other work-related characteristics that persist within broad occupational groups. These mechanisms cannot be directly identified with the present data and should therefore be regarded as possible interpretations rather than established explanations. At the same time, these same respondents may not be the most permissive when directly asked about levels of admission for specific migrant categories.

Although the detailed coefficients are omitted from Table 6, the occupational dummies provide complementary evidence of labour-market stratification in immigration attitudes. Relative to managers, workers in service and sales occupations, craft and related trades, plant and machine operation, and elementary occupations are significantly more restrictive in their admission preferences and significantly less positive on the perceived consequences of immigration. By contrast, professionals do not differ markedly from managers once education and the remaining covariates are controlled. This occupational gradient is substantively important because it mirrors the classic distinction between higher-status and lower-status labour-market positions in the immigration-attitudes literature. It also suggests that occupation and education capture related but not identical channels.

The fact that the two models explain a similar share of variance, with R-squared values around 0.19 in both cases, is also informative. A common orientation in the literature is to assume that the same predictors will carry the same meaning across all immigration outcomes. The present analysis, conducted using data from ESS Round 11, suggests otherwise. Some of the covariates included in the models operate differently across the two attitudinal dimensions, once the opposite coding of the two outcomes is taken into account. This is particularly evident for undereducated workers, who have negative coefficients in both models: this implies less restrictive admission preferences but, at the same time, less favourable evaluations of immigration's consequences relative to overeducated workers. For this reason, the present paper argues that recent research should avoid collapsing immigration attitudes into a single undifferentiated scale whenever the underlying questionnaire allows a richer distinction.

Taken together, the regression evidence supports three conclusions. First, the classic education gradient remains strong: tertiary-educated respondents are less restrictive and more positive toward immigration than low-educated respondents. Second, foreign-born respondents display systematically more favourable attitudes, while place of residence is associated with attitudes in a less uniform way, with the most consistent negative difference observed among country-village residents. Third, educational mismatch matters, but its effect is domain-specific rather than uniform. Overeducated workers appear to evaluate immigration's consequences more positively than undereducated workers, yet they are not clearly the most open group on admission preferences. The implication is not that the educational mismatch hypothesis should be discarded, but that it should be reformulated in a more differentiated way.

4. Concluding Remarks

This paper focused on immigration attitudes and educational mismatch using ESS Round 11 data. Results showed that attitudes toward immigration can be analytically separated into an admission dimension and a consequences dimension. Bringing these two perspectives together offers a more useful framework for current research because it recognises that labour-market positions may influence different attitudinal dimensions in different ways.

The empirical results, as expected, support the enduring importance of education, nativity, domicile, and occupational structure. Higher education is closely associated with more favourable attitudes towards migration and foreign-born respondents are much more supportive of immigration. With regard to place of residence, country-village residence is associated with less favourable attitudes on both dimensions, while other residential differences are less consistent. These findings are broadly consistent with the comparative literature on immigration attitudes and indicate that, even in the most recent ESS round, the broad social gradient identified in earlier studies remains in place.

The mismatch results are more complex and are arguably the most interesting outcome of the analysis. Relative to overeducated workers, undereducated respondents tend to express less favourable views of immigration's consequences, which is broadly compatible with the labour-market competition hypothesis. Yet, they are also less restrictive on the admission factor, a result that complicates any straightforward conclusion that overeducated workers are uniformly more pro-immigration. The matched group lies between the two and, in several cases, does not differ significantly from the overeducated reference group. What emerges, therefore, is not a simple hierarchy of categories but a more differentiated structure in which educational mismatch is associated with distinct outcomes in ways that may reflect partially separate mechanisms.

Substantively, this suggests that educational mismatch should not be treated as a one-dimensional proxy for anti-immigration sentiment. It may capture feelings of labour-market security, occupational status, or symbolic self-placement that influence evaluations of immigration's consequences more strongly than admission preferences. This distinction is important for both theory and policy. Policies designed to reduce labour-market insecurity, improve recognition of qualifications, or strengthen the matching between education and jobs may affect immigration attitudes, but not necessarily in the same way across all dimensions of public opinion.

Although the paper is limited by its use of cross-sectional data, it demonstrates that the relationship between educational mismatch and immigration attitudes depends on which dimension of attitudes is being measured. For contemporary research, this is an important refinement. Attitudes toward immigration are multidimensional, and the association between educational mismatch and immigration attitudes differs across admission preferences and perceived economic, cultural, and social consequences.

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