

Attitudes Towards Non-Marital Family Forms Among Polish Immigrants in the Netherlands

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Abstract: Understanding the alignment of Eastern European immigrants' attitudes with those of their host societies in Western Europe is critical for exploring cultural convergence and divergence, particularly in the context of mass migration and freedom of movement within the European Union (EU). This study examines the extent to which Polish migrants' attitudes towards non-marital family forms – cohabitation, divorce, and single motherhood – align with those of both their host (Dutch) and sending (Polish) societies, thereby increasing understanding of the challenges involved in cultural assimilation processes in Europe. Using data from the Polish and Netherlands Generations and Gender Survey (GGG) and the Families of Poles in the Netherlands (FPN) survey, we estimate a series of regression models to assess how nativity status influences attitudes towards non-marital family forms. We further examine the role of social integration indicators – such as Dutch language proficiency and usage, post-migration education, and having a Dutch partner – in shaping these attitudes among Polish migrants.

Polish migrants show greater acceptance of cohabitation and divorce than Polish non-migrants, although their attitudes regarding divorce are more aligned with those of Dutch non-migrants than Polish non-migrants. They exhibit less acceptance of single motherhood than both Polish and Dutch non-migrants, and these attitudes are not significantly influenced by social integration factors typically associated with host-country assimilation. Our findings suggest that Polish migrants' attitudes towards non-marital family forms reflect a mix of assimilation and *sui generis* adaptation, combining elements of origin and host cultures with views shaped by the unique conditions of migration. This study advances the literature on migrant acculturation by identifying unique patterns of attitudes among Polish migrants in the Netherlands. It also suggests that migrants are at the forefront of cultural encounters, contributing to greater convergence on some, but not all, attitudes across EU member states.

Keywords: Immigration • Adaptation • Non-marital Family Attitudes • Poland • Netherlands

1 Introduction

Migration within Europe has emerged as a key driver of cultural change, with migrants acting as vectors of cultural diffusion by absorbing, transmitting, and blending cultural norms (*Rapoport et al.* 2020). These different processes – often framed as cultural assimilation, dissemination, or hybridization – shape whether migration fosters cultural convergence. When these processes are absent or limited, however, cultural divergence may persist or even deepen. Nowhere is this tension between cultural convergence and divergence more pronounced than within the European Union (EU), a political and cultural project that emphasizes shared values such as democracy and human rights, freedom, tolerance, and gender equality, yet encompasses societies with diverse historical, religious, and cultural legacies.

While prior research (*Akaliyski et al.* 2022) has primarily examined the extent to which officially declared EU values are accepted, this study shifts attention to attitudes regarding three non-marital family forms, namely cohabitation, divorce, and single motherhood. These attitudes are of interest not only because they represent crucial, yet underexplored, dimensions of cultural change within the EU, but also because they are associated with the Second Demographic Transition (SDT), which views shifts towards values of post-materialism, individualism, and self-actualization as bringing about change in family-related behaviors and attitudes (cf. *Lesthaeghe* 2014). The gender revolution, which refers to dramatic progress towards gender equality over the past 50 years, primarily in terms of women's educational attainment and employment (*England* 2010; *Goldin* 2006), has been viewed as an important driver of family-related trends associated with the Second Demographic Transition (*Sobotka* 2008: 211).

Using Polish migrants in the Netherlands as a case study, we ask two questions. First, how do attitudes towards non-marital family forms differ between first-generation Polish immigrants living in the Netherlands and non-migrants living in Poland and the Netherlands? Second, do Polish migrants' attitudes towards non-marital family forms vary by the extent to which they are an integral part of Dutch society? Our findings with regard to single motherhood challenge conventional models of assimilation and dissemination by demonstrating that the attitudes held by Polish migrants are less accepting than those of both Dutch and Polish non-migrants. While our analysis focuses only on three specific attitudes, the pattern for the single motherhood attitude suggests that migrants do not simply absorb or transmit attitudes from either their origin or host society. Instead, they may develop a distinct cultural hybrid, holding some attitudes that draw upon either the origin or the host cultures and other attitudes that are shaped by the unique conditions of the migrant experience and do not prevail in either society. This novel insight complicates existing understandings of cultural convergence and divergence within Europe, highlighting the dynamic role played by migrants in reshaping shared values and fostering integration.

2 Background

The literature on migration as a channel of cultural diffusion identifies several mechanisms through which migrants act as agents of cultural exchange. These include the transmission of values and attitudes from migrants to the native population of the host society ("dissemination"; cf. *Giuliano/Tabellini* 2020), from migrants to their origin society ("cultural remittances"; see *Levitt* 1998), or from the host society to migrants ("assimilation"; cf. *Abramitzky et al.* 2014; *Fouka et al.* 2022). This study focuses on the third mechanism, assimilation, which has often been linked in public discourse and policy debates to concerns about immigrants failing to adopt the host culture. These concerns may include fears of cultural dilution, loss of ethnic cohesion, or even so-called "ethnic replacement" within the host society (*Coleman* 2006; *Rapoport et al.* 2020). While our primary focus here is on the process of *cultural assimilation*, defined as the adoption by immigrants of the dominant society's norms, values, attitudes, and behaviors (*Gordon* 1964), we also consider how cultural assimilation may be related to *social integration*, the incorporation of immigrants into core social institutions, such as education, language, and marriage, and the social life of the host country (*Gordon* 1964; *Alba/Nee* 2003).

The literature on attitudinal change (*Bolzendahl/Myers* 2004; *Brooks/Bolzendahl* 2004), immigrant assimilation (*Fitzgerald et al.* 2014; *Röder/Lubbers* 2016; *Röder/Mühlau* 2014), and migrants' family-related attitudes (*De Valk/Liefbroer* 2007; *Holland/de Valk* 2013; *Mussino/Ortensi* 2018) provide various explanations for individual differences in attitudes. One explanation, *socialization*, relies on exposure-based models of attitude formation to suggest that attitudes are shaped by one's environment. According to this view, attitudes developed early in life through social institutions and personal experiences have a lasting impact on individuals (*Davis/Greenstein* 2009; *Röder* 2015). Migrants often originate from more traditional (less individualistic), familistic societies where institutions, such as religion and family, socialize individuals to view non-marital family behaviors, such as divorce and cohabitation, as less acceptable or desirable (or as socially stigmatized) compared to traditional heterosexual marriage with its different and unequal roles for men and women (cf. *De Valk/Liefbroer* 2007; *Ferree* 2010; *Ridgeway* 2011; *Rumbaut/Portes* 2001). Subsequently, migrants may be more reluctant to adopt attitudes prevailing in their host country (*Röder/Mühlau* 2014; *Su et al.* 2010). A socialization explanation suggests that migrants' pre-migration attitudes will persist after migration and remain aligned with those of non-migrants in the origin country.

A second explanation, *adaptation*, also aligns with exposure-based models of attitude formation, in that life course transitions, including migration, expose individuals to new ideas and situations that can influence their attitudes. In the context of migration, individuals may increasingly abandon the dominant attitudes of their country of origin in favor of those of the destination country (*Alba/Nee* 1997). The extent to which cultural assimilation occurs may depend at least in part on the migrant's level of social integration within the host country, which is shaped by several factors. Research has shown that where migrants stay in the host country for longer, alignment with the host country's attitudes is greater (*Fitzgerald et al.*

2014; Röder 2015; Röder/Mühlau 2014). For example, *Fitzgerald et al.* (2014) found that among Eastern European immigrants relocating to Western Europe, longer periods of residency correlated with more tolerant views towards homosexuality, aligning with the prevalent attitudes in the host countries. This type of alignment may also be influenced by the age at which migration occurs, as suggested by Röder and Mühlau (2014). However, some research shows only modest effects of migration duration on attitudes (*Breidahl/Larsen* 2016) or effects for certain family-related attitudes but not others (*Williams et al.* 2014). Duration of residence alone may not fully capture the complexities of adaptation, as it does not account for the degree of interpersonal contact outside one's ethnic group (*Huijnk et al.* 2010; *Panicacci* 2019). Living in a host society for an extended period does not necessarily guarantee interaction with individuals who are not co-ethnic, as some migrants reside and work in co-ethnic neighborhoods or immigrant enclaves, limiting their exposure to differing perspectives (*Danzer/Yaman* 2013). Interacting with native-born (non-migrant) individuals can promote attitudinal change through social contact, a process that, in non-migrant populations, has been linked to more favorable views of non-traditional family behaviors, such as cohabitation and out-of-wedlock births, in some research (*Piotrowski et al.* 2022; *Rindfuss et al.* 2004). Host language proficiency and usage, post-migration education, and having a native-born partner have also been identified as both outcomes and drivers of social integration (*Martinovic et al.* 2009). However, disentangling these bi-directional relationships is challenging in cross-sectional research.

Two variants of the migrant adaptation perspective – namely classical (full) assimilation and hybrid assimilation – have been identified. The classical assimilation perspective (*Gordon* 1964) views adaptation as a unidimensional process, where the influence of the culture of birth or upbringing gradually lessens for the migrant relative to the culture of the host country. However, this model has been criticized on various grounds (*Zhou/Gonzalez* 2019): (1) it assumes that the host society consists of a single dominant culture to which migrants must adapt; (2) it neglects structural constraints – such as ethnic and racial hierarchies – that can be barriers to assimilation; and (3) it assumes a unidirectional process that overlooks selective assimilation and cultural reaffirmation (i.e., holding onto traditions of one's origin culture).

These critiques have led to the development of the hybrid assimilation perspective. Here, adaptation has been conceptualized as a bi(multi)dimensional (*Ryder et al.* 2000), integrative (*Berry* 1997, 2005), or transnational (*Erdal/Oeppen* 2013) process, suggesting that individuals can adopt elements of the new culture while retaining aspects of their heritage culture. For instance, *Parrado and Flippen* (2005) found that Mexican immigrant women embraced certain U.S. cultural values regarding gender relations while simultaneously upholding traditional Mexican values in that domain.

Another (overlooked) possibility is that migrants develop attitudes reflecting neither socialization nor adaptation as they navigate social, cultural, and political pressures in the host society. In the Netherlands, this navigation has occurred amid intensifying demands for assimilation, reflecting a broader shift in European migration policy towards what *Vasta* (2007) terms a “rhetoric of migrant responsibility,” and

what *Bonjour* and *Duyvendak* (2018) describe as the “civic integration turn.” Although the Netherlands has long been seen as tolerant – for example, welcoming religious refugees in the 17th century and embracing multicultural policies in the late 20th century – it has shifted in recent decades to a more assimilationist stance towards immigrants (*Albada et al.* 2021; *Banting/Kymlicka* 2013). This shift – most notably following the 2015 refugee crisis – has fueled polarization in public opinion, with growing dissatisfaction over migration policy and increased pressure to take sides in contentious debates about immigrants (*Albada et al.* 2021; *SCP* 2019).

Against this backdrop, the figure of the “migrant with poor prospects” became central to Dutch discourse around migrants’ “responsibility to integrate” (*Vasta* 2007: 718) and civic integration policies. *Bonjour* and *Duyvendak* (2018) argue that this figure is racialized as culturally deficient, particularly with regard to gender and family norms, and framed as fundamentally “unassimilable.” While this framing primarily targets non-European migrants, some of its moral and economic dimensions extend to EU citizens.

Although Poles are legally exempt from civic integration requirements in their capacity as EU nationals (*Bonjour/Duyvendak* 2018: 887), they have been variously depicted as low-skilled laborers who either displace native workers or defraud the Dutch welfare system (*McGinnity/Gijsberts* 2016), marking them as “poor prospects.” Though their whiteness offers some protection against racialized exclusion, they remain subject to stigmatizing moral judgments.

A more hostile climate toward Polish migrants in the Netherlands has emerged, fueled by media and political narratives. Sensationalist terms like “Polish invasion” and “Polish tsunami” (*Mączka* 2014: 196) and far-right initiatives such as the 2012 *Polenmeldpunt* – a website launched by Geert Wilders’s Party for Freedom (PVV) encouraging the public to report problems with Eastern European migrants – have contributed to their stigmatization (*Dutch News* 2012). *Pszczołkowska* (2024: 154) calls *Polenmeldpunt* the “culmination of the anti-Polish attitude,” though it also prompted some media sympathy for exploited Polish workers. Panel studies using waves of data collected in the months before and after the launch of the *Polenmeldpunt* website support this narrative: Polish migrants in the Netherlands report rising experiences of discrimination and a weaker sense of belonging over time (*Gijsberts/Lubbers* 2015). Compared with their counterparts in the UK, Germany, and Ireland, they face higher and increasing levels of both personal and perceived group discrimination (*McGinnity/Gijsberts* 2016; 2018). Dutch public opinion remains divided – 42 percent see immigrants as a burden, while 50 percent see them as a strength (*Gonzalez-Barrera/Connor* 2019). Together, these dynamics make the Netherlands a particularly challenging sociopolitical context for Polish migrants.

This moral framing creates pressure on migrants to adopt values, attitudes, and beliefs that will deflect stigma away from their ethnic group. Supporting this view, *Fleischmann* and *Khoudja* (2023) find that among recent immigrants in the Netherlands, greater economic participation and endorsement of liberal-egalitarian values on gender, homosexuality, abortion, and divorce are linked to declining religiosity – suggesting that attitudes and beliefs shift in response to secularizing pressures. Migrants may also respond to social and cultural pressures within the host

society by engaging in respectability politics – a strategy whereby marginalized groups adopt certain values, attitudes, and beliefs to secure moral legitimacy within the host society. Originally used to describe African American women’s activism in the United States during the early twentieth century, the term has since been applied more broadly to immigrants navigating exclusion and scrutiny (*Dazey* 2021). Respectability politics can signal normative conformity and protect the group’s public image. For example, *Gooding’s* (2018) research shows that Afro-Caribbeans in the United States, by emphasizing cultural differences, distinguish themselves strategically from African Americans in order to resist stigma and elevate their perceived status.

While the dynamics differ, the same logic applies to migrants in Europe. Among Polish migrants in the Netherlands, respectability politics may involve distancing from practices like divorce or single motherhood – behaviors perceived as morally questionable – despite rising acceptance over time to deflect stigma away from their ethnic group. As a result, migrants may hold attitudes towards non-marital family forms that are even more conservative than those that prevail in their origin society as a strategic adaptation to the moral surveillance of the host society (i.e., a *sui generis* pattern).

3 Setting

Polish migrants in the Netherlands offer a compelling case study for two main reasons. First, since joining the EU in 2004, Poland has become a major source of migration within Central and Eastern Europe (*Fihel/Grabowska-Lusinska* 2014). As EU citizens, Polish migrants benefit from freedom of movement, which sets them apart from non-EU migrants who face mandatory visa requirements (*Dagevos* 2011). The influx of Poles into the Netherlands has surpassed traditional migrant groups, such as Turks and Moroccans (*Kleinepiet et al.* 2015). According to *Statistics Netherlands* (2018), there are approximately 135,000 first-generation Polish immigrants living in the Netherlands. Polish migrants tend to be young (under 35), relatively well-educated, and proficient in foreign languages (*Chmielewska et al.* 2018). Economic motivations primarily drive their migration, and many do not plan to settle permanently. Despite often being overqualified for the low-skilled jobs they take in construction, agriculture, or service industries, Polish migrants earn higher wages than they would in Poland (*Chmielewska et al.* 2018; *Dagevos* 2011; *Schothorst* 2009).

Second, the cultural contexts of Poland and the Netherlands differ markedly, particularly in how they have experienced the Second Demographic Transition (SDT). The SDT refers to a broader societal shift in advanced societies towards post-materialist values, emphasizing individuality, gender equality, and self-actualization – accompanied by the rise of non-marital family forms such as cohabitation, divorce, and childbearing outside of marriage (cf. *Lesthaeghe* 2014). However, scholars have questioned whether these changes unfold as a unified cultural package, arguing instead that their expression is shaped by institutional and historical context (*Brzozowska* 2021; *Coleman* 2004; *Zaidi/Morgan* 2017). This is especially true in

Central and Eastern Europe, where the SDT has followed a distinct trajectory due to the legacy of communism and more conservative societal norms (Sobotka 2008). Poland, in particular, has been slower to adopt the family behaviors and liberal attitudes typical of Western Europe, earning itself the label of a “cultural laggard” (Kotowska *et al.* 2008). Deeply rooted in conservative Catholic traditions and shaped by its post-communist transition, Poland continues to trail traditionally Protestant, capitalist countries like the Netherlands in embracing values such as personal freedom, gender equality, and ethnic tolerance (Akaliyski *et al.* 2022).

These between-country cultural gaps are further accentuated by the uneven progress of the “gender revolution,” which has advanced more in the public sphere (e.g., women’s education and employment) than in the private sphere (e.g., the gendered division of household labor) (Goldin 2006; England 2010). Countries that embraced gender equality earlier, such as those in the Nordic region, tend to exhibit more advanced SDT patterns (Sobotka 2008). In contrast, in countries like Poland (among others), traditional family norms remain more resilient, especially among less-educated groups (Kalmijn 2007; Furstenberg 2014). The result is a cultural disjuncture: while Dutch society generally reflects progressive family norms and gender egalitarianism, Polish migrants may bring more traditional attitudes shaped by Poland’s slower SDT trajectory. These differences matter, as attitudes toward family life, men’s and women’s roles, and personal freedoms not only shape migrant adaptation but also reflect broader tensions in cultural convergence across the EU. Polish migrants in the Netherlands thus provide a critical case for examining how migrants navigate conflicting normative environments – and how such friction can both challenge integration and illuminate the barriers to cultural cohesion within Europe.

To illustrate how Poland and the Netherlands differ in their attitudes towards the non-marital family forms we study, as well as the broader context of Polish immigration to the Netherlands, we now turn to differences between the two settings in terms of alternatives to traditional marriage. Begall *et al.* (2023) characterize Poland and other Eastern European countries (e.g., Ukraine, the Baltic states) as part of the “familistic class,” reflecting a family-centered ethos that emphasizes both genders’ involvement in domestic life while reinforcing the centrality of household tasks for women. Polish society, for its part, remains relatively traditional, with rigid gender-differentiated roles and high societal value placed on marriage and children (Kotowska *et al.* 2008; Kraus *et al.* 2020; Sobotka 2008; Zygmunt 2017). Nevertheless, studies have found a decline in support for traditional attitudes regarding gender and a rise in alternative frameworks, such as “egalitarian familism” (Knight/Brinton 2017) and the “flexible-traditionalist” model (Shu *et al.* 2025). Both characterize a growing acceptance of women’s paid employment, even when they have young children, while maintaining the expectation that women remain primarily responsible for domestic work and childcare. This dual expectation reflects a model that endorses women’s labor force participation without fully embracing gender equality.

Poles, like their counterparts in other Central and Eastern European countries, tend to evaluate changes in family formation more negatively than individuals in more secularized societies (Kotowska *et al.* 2008). While non-traditional family forms,

such as cohabitation, are becoming more accepted, they are still less commonplace than in Western Europe (Kraus *et al.* 2020; Sobotka 2008). However, the extent of attitudinal change varies by family form. Disapproval of cohabitation and divorce has declined in Poland, and attitudes towards premarital sex and single parenthood have become notably more accepting (Treas *et al.* 2014). However, from an institutional perspective, Poland has been unsupportive of single motherhood, for which there is a low degree of social acceptance and limited welfare support (Baranowska-Rataj *et al.* 2014; Kotowska *et al.* 2008; Sobotka 2008), although there are indications that the situation may have improved more recently (Berghammer *et al.* 2024; Frericks *et al.* 2023).

While post-communist Poland has experienced some family changes similar to those observed elsewhere in Europe – such as higher divorce rates, delayed marriage, lower fertility, and more out-of-wedlock births (Krywult-Albanska 2016; Sobotka/Berghammer 2021) – socio-historical factors have contributed to family-related attitudes that differ from those in the Netherlands. The Netherlands has been a pioneer in the Second Demographic Transition (SDT) in terms of rising cohabitation, delayed marriage and childbearing, and growing acceptance of diverse family forms (De Valk/Liefbroer 2007; Sobotka/Berghammer 2021). The Netherlands is also characterized by a greater diversity of gender attitudes than is found in many other European countries, including Poland, although egalitarian and “choice egalitarian” (i.e., emphasizing individual choice of work and family roles for both women and men) attitudes predominate (Begall *et al.* 2023).

Although divorce acceptance has been rising across Europe, the increase has been most pronounced in Western Europe, followed by post-communist countries and then post-Soviet countries (Fučík 2020). Vidal and van Damme (2024) describe the Netherlands as an intermediate adopter of divorce, with divorce rates peaking in the 1980s, while Poland is considered a laggard, with divorce diffusion and peak rates occurring more recently. Additionally, the Netherlands has undergone significant changes in family policy, such as legislation in 2009 encouraging joint custody of children following divorce, reflecting broader social acceptance of divorce and divorced fathers’ rights (Koster/Castro-Martín 2021; Spijker *et al.* 2022) and a requirement that couples with children who decide to end their union (marital, civil partnership, or cohabiting) form a “parenting plan,” which is an agreement between the parents about the care and upbringing of their children intended to reduce family conflict and increase child well-being (but see Bruijn *et al.* 2018).

Cohabitation is widely accepted and increasingly practiced in the Netherlands, with most young adults either living independently or cohabiting with a partner for a period after leaving home (De Valk/Liefbroer 2007). This trend is part of a broader “de-standardization” of family life trajectories, where individual choices and preferences take precedence over traditional marriage norms (Vidal/van Damme 2024). While specific data on Dutch attitudes towards single motherhood are limited, the Netherlands’ emphasis on gender egalitarianism and support for female employment suggests a more accepting stance compared with more traditional societies. However, the high prevalence of part-time work among Dutch women – nearly 60 percent, significantly above the OECD average for women – highlights the

persistent gender gap in labor market participation and economic outcomes (*OECD* 2019).

Single motherhood is relatively common among some immigrant groups in the Netherlands, particularly women from Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles, many of whom balance paid work with parenting responsibilities (*De Valk/Liefbroer* 2007). Although the Netherlands is often seen as accepting of diverse family forms (*Koops et al.* 2012), single mothers – both Dutch-born and migrant – still experience stigma, rooted in class and gender norms, in both overt and subtle ways (*Ypeij* 2009). Those single mothers reliant on welfare may face compounded stigma (*Chant* 2009). Despite reforms aimed at improving financial support for single parents (*Boer/Jongen* 2023), most single mothers continue to have relatively low incomes, regardless of their employment status (*Harkness* 2022).

Research on the social attitudes of Polish migrants in the Netherlands remains limited, but existing studies suggest notable differences compared with Poles residing in Poland. For instance, Polish migrants in the Netherlands tend to hold more favorable attitudes towards homosexuality than their counterparts in Poland, which has been attributed to selectivity (*Röder/Lubbers* 2015). However, over time, Polish migrants' attitudes towards homosexuality have become less favorable, potentially influenced by negative perceptions within their host country (*Röder/Lubbers* 2016). Additionally, Polish migrants in the Netherlands report higher fertility intentions compared with non-migrants living in Poland (*Mondal* 2024). Collectively, these findings suggest a unique migration adaptation pattern among Poles, characterized by a complex interplay of attitudes and behaviors in the host society.

4 Hypotheses

Given Poland's socially conservative and predominantly Catholic background, Polish non-migrants are expected to hold more traditional (less accepting) attitudes towards cohabitation, divorce, and single motherhood than Dutch non-migrants. Our hypotheses for Polish migrants draw upon socialization and adaptation perspectives. However, due to the limitations of our cross-sectional data, we cannot directly examine migrants' attitudes prior to migration and whether they change afterwards.

The socialization hypothesis (H1) posits that if pre-migration socialization shapes attitudes, Polish migrants will resemble Polish non-migrants in their lower acceptance of all the non-marital family forms we examine, thereby distinguishing themselves from Dutch non-migrants. The classical assimilation hypothesis (H2) posits that Polish migrants' attitudes towards all three non-marital family forms will fall between those of Polish and Dutch non-migrants or will align with Dutch non-migrants if full assimilation occurs. By extension, H2 suggests that greater social integration – a longer period of residence, having a Dutch partner, greater Dutch language proficiency and usage, and post-migration education in the Netherlands – will be associated with acceptance of the three non-marital family forms we examine.

The hybrid assimilation hypothesis (H3) suggests that Polish migrants may align more closely with Dutch non-migrants on some attitudes and more closely with Polish non-migrants on others. This hypothesis requires a comparative analysis of multiple attitudes but does not specify which will align more with the host (Dutch) or origin (Polish) society. In contrast, the *sui generis* adaptation hypothesis (H4) proposes that Polish migrants may develop distinct attitudes towards one or more non-marital family forms that diverge from those of both Polish and Dutch non-migrants. While it is difficult to predict which, if any, of the three non-marital family forms will support *sui generis* adaptation, our expectation is that it is most likely to occur for attitudes towards divorce and single motherhood. These behaviors, while tolerated, are not necessarily seen as optimal (cf. Ypeij 2009), and may be perceived as obstacles to full acceptance within the host society, potentially leading migrants to reject them. However, it remains unclear whether divorce and single motherhood face an equivalent level of social disapproval, suggesting that migrants may be more accepting of one than of the other.

It is important to acknowledge that attitudinal differences may reflect self-selection, whereby migrants' pre-existing attitudes influence their decision to migrate. However, due to a lack of data on pre-migration attitudes, we cannot directly test this effect. Instead, we analyze Polish migrants' social integration (i.e., duration of residence, host language proficiency and usage, post-migration acquisition of education, and having a native-born partner) to strengthen the case for assimilation over selection.

5 Methodology

5.1 Data

Data are taken from Wave 1 of the Polish (2010-2011) and Dutch (2002-2004) Generations and Gender Survey (GGS), along with the Families of Poles in the Netherlands (FPN) study (2014-2015), collected during a period of growing integration pressures and rising anti-Polish sentiment. A key challenge stems from the fact that these data were collected at different time points, raising the possibility that observed attitudinal differences may reflect temporal discrepancies rather than actual differences in the assimilation experiences of Polish migrants. To address this concern, we conducted a sensitivity analysis using a subsample of birth cohorts present across all three time periods to assess the robustness of our findings. Additionally, we incorporated external data from the International Social

Survey Programme (ISSP)¹ to demonstrate stability over time in attitudes towards the behaviors we examine, particularly in the Netherlands – the dataset with the largest temporal gap relative to the others.

The GGS is part of the Generations and Gender Programme (GGP), which is a cross-national study focusing on families in industrialized countries (for more information, see *Gauthier et al.* 2018; *Vikat et al.* 2007). The Polish GGS covers the entire country and collected information from Polish-speaking individuals aged 18–79 years. The data were obtained through a multistage sampling design, with enumerated census areas as the primary sampling units and dwellings as the second stage of selection. The National Official Register of Territorial Division of the Country served as the sampling frame. Stratified sampling was employed within provinces (*voivodeships*), and strata were delineated by municipalities (*gminas*), cities, or districts. To achieve a sample size of 20,000 individuals, 48,000 sampled addresses were visited. Data were collected using paper-and-pencil interviews, resulting in 18,310 completed interviews and 1,677 partial interviews.

The Dutch GGS encompassed Dutch-speaking individuals aged 18–79 years residing in private households throughout the Netherlands. The sampling frame relied on residential address data obtained from a subsidiary of Dutch Mail (TPG Post). A random sample of residential addresses ($N = 40,000$) was drawn, and data collection employed computer-assisted personal interviews and paper-and-pencil interviews. The initial non-response rate was 55.35 percent (12,104/21,869 eligible cases), resulting in 8,161 completed full-length interviews.

The FPN survey, based on the GGS, is also a component of the Generations and Gender Programme. The sampling frame for the FPN utilized Dutch population registers (*Basisregistratie Personen*, BRP). All newcomers intending to stay for longer than four months are required to register with their resident municipality, although not all comply. A simple random sample of names and addresses was drawn from Statistics Netherlands. The selection criteria included being born in Poland to at least one Polish parent, first-time registration with the BRP between January 1, 2004, and August 2014, and aged 18–49 years at the time of the most recent registration (individuals aged 21–58 years were surveyed). Data collection involved online surveys and computer-assisted personal interviews conducted in Polish or Dutch, depending on the respondent's language skills and preference. The aim was to gather information from approximately 1,000 respondents, but a total of 1,131 completions were achieved.

¹ The International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), established in 1984, conducts annual surveys across 57 member nations, enabling cross-national and longitudinal comparisons. One key module, "Family and Changing Gender Roles," has been replicated four times (1988, 1994, 2002, 2012), examining attitudes towards women's employment, marriage, parenting, household roles, and work-family conflict. The ISSP ensures high-quality, comparable data through a Methodology Committee that oversees areas including demography, non-response, and translation. More information can be found at <https://issp.org/>; for more information about the Family and Changing Gender Roles module specifically, see *Scholz et al.* (2014).

5.2 Analytical sample

Our analytical sample comprised Polish migrants in the Netherlands ($N = 1,129$), Polish non-migrants in Poland ($N = 12,277$), and Dutch non-migrants in the Netherlands ($N = 5,132$). We restricted the Polish and Dutch GGS samples to non-migrants (i.e., native-born individuals) within the age range of the Polish migrants in the Netherlands sample (21–58 years). Listwise deletion of cases missing information on the variables used in our analysis resulted in 3.3 percent of all respondents being excluded. Most missing data originated from dependent variables (attitudes towards cohabitation, divorce, single motherhood) in the Dutch GGS, with over 7.5 percent of those cases containing invalid data (i.e., listed as “no response/not applicable”).

6 Measures and analytical approach

To harmonize the FPN data with the Polish and Dutch GGS data, we created measures of our dependent variables based on the following survey questions, some of which have been used in prior cross-national studies (cf. *Hogendoorn/van den Berg* 2024; *Kreidl/Žilinčiková* 2021). These questions, despite being in different languages, adopted a similar wording in the three surveys:

Variable	Literal Question (from GGS Core Questionnaire)
Cohabitation	“It is all right for an unmarried couple to live together even if they have no interest in marriage”
Divorce	“It is all right for a couple with an unhappy marriage to get a divorce even if they have children”
Single Motherhood	“A woman can have a child as a single parent even if she doesn’t want to have a stable relationship with a man”

All three variables were assessed using a five-point Likert scale (“least accepting,” “less accepting,” “neutral,” “more accepting,” and “most accepting”), where higher values indicated more accepting views. It is unclear from the question wording whether the single motherhood item pertains to a situation preceding a birth (e.g., a woman choosing to carry a pregnancy to term) or following a birth (e.g., dissolution of a union with the child’s father). Additionally, the phrasing of the question implies that the woman is in the situation voluntarily. Therefore, it is uncertain whether the responses received from individuals related to single motherhood itself or the absence of a relationship with a man. The divorce item also presents a double-barreled question in that it asks about both the experience of divorce and the presence of children.

Our analysis has two parts. First, to assess mechanisms of adaptation (albeit indirectly), we examined how Polish migrants in the Netherlands compare with (generally more traditional) Poles in Poland and (generally less traditional) Dutch in the Netherlands. Second, to assess the relationship between attitudes and measures

of social integration (for Polish migrants only), we conducted analyses that included measures of Dutch language proficiency and usage, post-migration education, duration of migration, and having a native-born (Dutch) partner to predict attitudes. For both parts of the analysis, we use a series of ordered logit models, one for each non-familial attitude, collapsing the “least accepting” and “less accepting” categories of each attitudinal item (which had lower sample proportions), thereby giving us four response categories to aid in model estimation.²

In the full-sample analysis, our primary independent variable was nativity status, which was coded as dummy variables indicating whether a respondent was a Polish non-migrant, a Polish migrant in the Netherlands (reference category), or a Dutch non-migrant. We controlled for several socio-demographic variables shown to be associated with family-related attitudes (cf. *Hakovirta et al.* 2021; *Kreidl/Žilinčiková* 2021; *Rijken/Liefbroer* 2012; *Röder/Mühlau* 2014), including sex (male = 1, female = 0); age (in years); marital status (dummy variables: never married, married [reference category], divorced or widowed); partnership (residential) status (dummy variables: co-resident partner [reference category], non-resident partner, no partner)³; ever divorced or cohabited (separate dummy variables); single parent (dummy variable); household size (count); number of children (dummy variables: no children [reference category], one child, two children, three or more children); employment status (dummy variables: employed [reference category], unemployed, student, other); and home ownership (a dummy variable proxy for wealth). We measured religious denomination as a set of dummy variables: Catholic (reference category), Protestant,

² Using Brant tests, we assessed the parallel regression assumption for each model. We identified violations of this assumption, particularly in the analysis comparing the three subsamples (part I of the analysis, which used the full sample). Substantively, violating this assumption implies that coefficient estimates for certain independent variables could vary across categories of the dependent variable. To address this violation, we employed generalized ordered logit models (see *Williams* 2016) which relax the parallel regression assumption, and we estimated separate equations for different configurations of the dependent variable using a cumulative logit specification similar to an ordered logit regression. In part I, the coefficient estimates – although differing in magnitude – exhibited consistent patterns of direction and statistical significance compared with the ordered logit model. For part II (migrant-only analysis), Brant tests yielded inconclusive results, but the overall pattern was much like the results presented in the ordered logit model. Consequently, violating the parallel regression assumption does not appear to undermine any of our key findings.

³ Including the partnership (residential) status variable along with marital status resulted in minor collinearity issues. The “Married” category exceeded the threshold for a high variance inflation factor, with a value of 5.72 (R-square of .8251, indicating that 82.5 percent of its variation is explained by the combination of other independent variables). As a sensitivity analysis, we estimated models excluding partnership status to eliminate the collinearity problem. We also excluded variables for ever divorced, ever cohabited, and single parenthood status to test for potential overadjustment. The results reflected those reported in our final analysis, except that the difference between Polish migrants and Dutch non-migrants in terms of their attitude towards divorce became non-significant. This aligns with the findings from our “cohort-specific approach” discussed below. Therefore, except for this specific case, we believe that neither collinearity nor over-adjustment significantly affect our results.

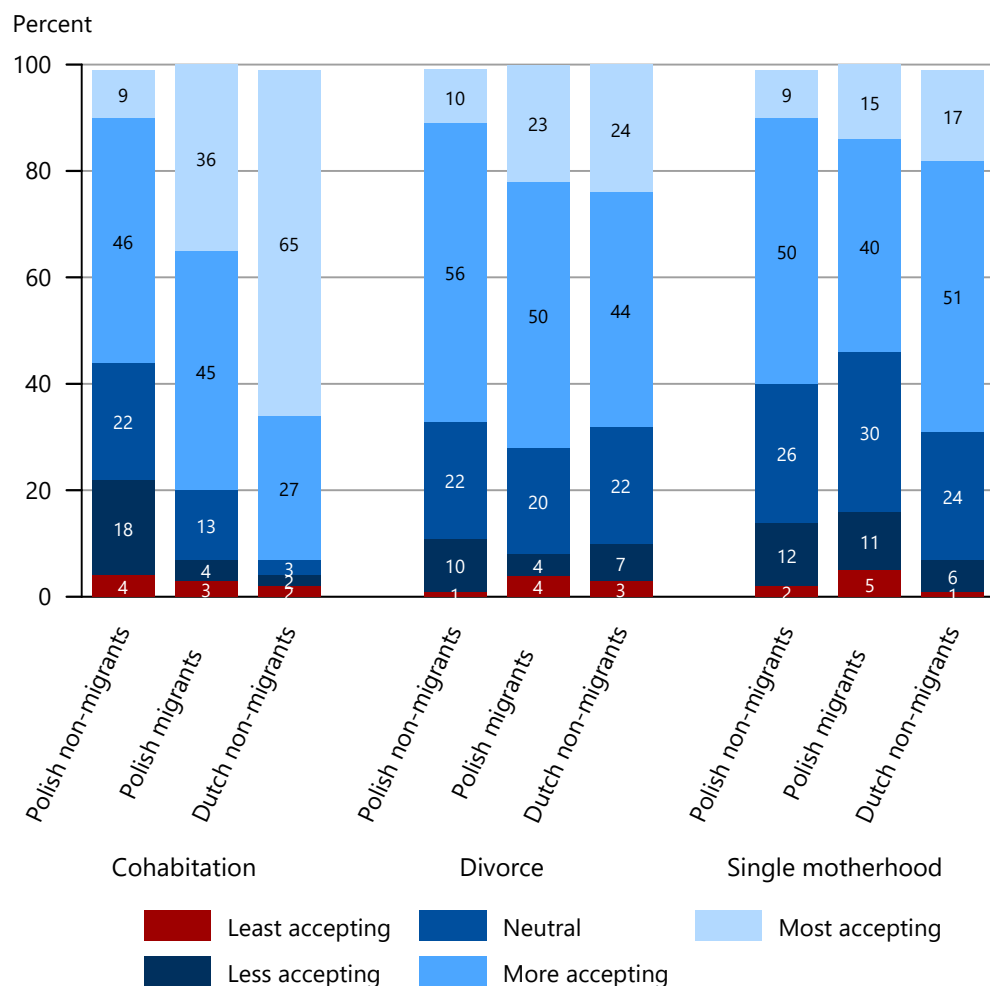
other (mostly Orthodox Christian and Jehovah's Witnesses), and none.⁴ (Although the data included measures of religious attendance, which can serve as a measure of religiosity, we had concerns about the quality of the measures and therefore did not use them.)

In the analysis focused specifically on Polish migrants, the main independent variables were measures of social integration: post-migration acquisition of education, duration of migration, having a native-born (Dutch) partner, and Dutch language proficiency and usage. Post-migration education was measured as a dummy variable for any education acquired after migration that was based on the reported year of migration to the Netherlands and the year of completing the highest level of education.⁵ Migration duration, representing the number of years spent in the Netherlands, was measured as a continuous variable. In contrast to the analysis using the full sample, where we distinguished between co-resident partners, non-resident partners, or no partners, in the migrant-only analysis, we categorized whether their partner was Polish (reference category), Dutch, another ethnicity, or if they had no partner.

We utilized latent class analysis (LCA) to construct a Dutch language proficiency and usage measure that included the following: ordinal variables for assessing respondents' abilities in understanding, speaking, reading, and writing the Dutch language and for the frequency with which they watched Polish television and Dutch television; dummy variables for whether respondents attended Dutch language classes and for the language in which the survey questionnaire was completed (Polish = 1, Dutch = 0); and variables for the language used with their boss, friends, neighbors, or partner (dummy variables for Polish, Dutch, English, or another language, or indicating non-applicability). Descriptive statistics for the language variables used in the LCA across the resulting classes, along with fit statistics for models varying the number of classes, are provided in the appendix. The identified classes effectively capture significant variation in Dutch language proficiency and usage among Polish migrants. Class 4 represents the group with the highest proportion of individuals reporting good or very good understanding, speaking, reading, and writing skills in Dutch. In contrast, Class 1 exhibits the lowest level of Dutch language proficiency and usage across these dimensions but a relatively high incidence of English language use by some people, with most respondents indicating poor or no Dutch proficiency or usage. Classes 2 and 3 fall between Classes 1 and 4 in terms of Dutch language proficiency and usage, with Class 2 having less proficiency and usage than Class 3. We label the classes, in order of

⁴ For the Dutch non-migrant sample, we combined "none" with "no response/NA" (~10.8 percent of cases), classing respondents who failed to designate a religious denomination as non-religious. About two-thirds of these cases did not have responses on our dependent variables- so they were dropped anyway.

⁵ If respondents reported completing their education in the same year as migrating to the Netherlands, we used additional information on their reason for migration to assign codes. Those indicating "education" as the reason were coded as 1 to indicate that they had received education in the Netherlands, while all other cases were coded as 0.

Fig. 1: Distribution of non-marital family form attitudes, across nativity status

N = 18,538

Source: Data from wave 1 of the Polish and Dutch Generations and Gender Survey and Families of Poles in the Netherlands.

proficiency and usage as "Least" (Class 1), "Mid-Low" (Class 2), "Mid-High" (Class 3), and "Most" (Class 4).

Figure 1 presents the percentage distributions of response categories for the cohabitation, divorce, and single motherhood attitudinal items across the three subsamples, namely Polish non-migrants, Polish migrants, and Dutch non-migrants. The figure illustrates that Polish migrants in the Netherlands have cohabitation attitudes falling between those of Polish and Dutch non-migrants. Approximately 9 percent of Polish non-migrants hold the "most accepting" attitude, compared with

Tab. 1: Descriptive statistics for independent variables: full sample and by nativity status

	Polish non-migrants		Polish migrants		Dutch non-migrants	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Male	0.44	0.50	0.40	0.49	0.41	0.49
Age (in years)	40.65	11.27	33.04	7.15	40.80	9.96
Migration duration			5.46	3.26		
Highest level of education						
Primary or below	0.09	0.29	0.03	0.18	0.04	0.20
Secondary	0.66	0.47	0.70	0.46	0.58	0.49
Tertiary	0.25	0.43	0.26	0.44	0.38	0.48
Has post-migration education			0.07	0.26		
Dutch language proficiency and usage						
Least			0.23	0.42		
Mid-low			0.25	0.43		
Mid-high			0.31	0.46		
Most			0.20	0.40		
Employment status						
Employed	0.65	0.48	0.77	0.42	0.73	0.44
Unemployed	0.10	0.31	0.07	0.26	0.04	0.19
Student	0.03	0.18	0.02	0.14	0.03	0.16
Other	0.22	0.41	0.14	0.34	0.20	0.40
Marital status						
Never married	0.24	0.43	0.45	0.50	0.33	0.47
Married	0.65	0.48	0.44	0.50	0.56	0.50
Divorced or widowed	0.11	0.31	0.11	0.31	0.12	0.32
Partner status						
Co-resident partner	0.68	0.47	0.77	0.42	0.69	0.46
Non-resident partner	0.06	0.23	0.08	0.27	0.08	0.26
No partner	0.26	0.44	0.15	0.35	0.23	0.42
Partner status (migrants)						
Polish partner			0.69	0.46		
Dutch partner			0.11	0.32		
Partner other ethnicity			0.05	0.23		
No partner			0.15	0.35		
Ever divorced	0.10	0.31	0.13	0.34	0.14	0.35
Ever cohabited	0.09	0.29	0.19	0.39	0.27	0.44
Single parent	0.08	0.27	0.03	0.18	0.06	0.23
Religious denomination						
Catholic	0.96	0.20	0.81	0.39	0.26	0.44
Protestant	0.00	0.05	0.01	0.08	0.19	0.39
Other	0.01	0.12	0.02	0.13	0.02	0.15
None	0.02	0.15	0.16	0.37	0.52	0.50

Tab. 1: Continuation

	Polish non-migrants		Polish migrants		Dutch non-migrants	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Number of children						
No children	0.26	0.44	0.46	0.50	0.35	0.48
1 child	0.24	0.42	0.30	0.46	0.14	0.35
2 children	0.33	0.47	0.17	0.38	0.33	0.47
3 or more children	0.18	0.39	0.07	0.26	0.18	0.38
Homeowner	0.67	0.47	0.28	0.45	0.68	0.47
Household size	3.27	1.50	2.75	1.23	2.72	1.38
N	12277		1129		5132	

Source: Data from wave 1 of the Polish and Dutch Generations and Gender Survey and Families of Poles in the Netherlands.

36 percent of Polish migrants and 65 percent of Dutch non-migrants. Polish migrants exhibit the highest acceptance of divorce, with 73 percent of Polish migrants and approximately 66-68 percent of Polish and Dutch non-migrants respectively, falling into the "most accepting" and "more accepting" categories combined. For single motherhood, similar percentages of Polish non-migrants and migrants are in the "most accepting" and "more accepting" categories combined (55-59 percent versus 68 percent of Dutch non-migrants), but the percentage exhibiting a "least accepting" attitude is higher among Polish migrants (5 percent) than it is for Polish non-migrants and Dutch non-migrants (approximately 2 percent and 1 percent, respectively). Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for independent variables across nativity status groups, though we do not discuss these in detail for the sake of brevity.

Multivariable regression allows us to assess the impact of nativity status on attitudes towards non-marital family forms. The ordered logit regression results in Table 2 align with the patterns shown in Figure 1. Polish non-migrants are the least accepting of cohabitation, followed by Polish migrants, while Dutch non-migrants are the most accepting – supporting the classical assimilation perspective. For divorce, Polish migrants exhibit higher acceptance than both Polish and Dutch non-migrants. Similarly, Polish migrants are less accepting of single motherhood than either group of non-migrants, which is consistent with *sui generis* adaptation.

To test the robustness of our findings, we re-estimated all models using a restricted age range (21-35 years) to better align the age distributions of Dutch and Polish non-migrants with Polish migrants. The results (*available on request*) remained broadly consistent with Table 2, although the difference between Polish migrants and Dutch non-migrants on the divorce attitude became non-significant. We also re-estimated the models using only birth cohorts common across all three subsamples (1956-1985; N = 13,875; see Table 3). Since data collection years varied, age ranges differed: Polish non-migrants were 24-55 years, Polish migrants were 29-58 years, and Dutch non-migrants were 17-47 years. Due to collinearity concerns,

Tab. 2: Ordered logit regressions of attitudes towards non-marital family forms

	Cohabitation		Divorce		Single motherhood	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Variables						
Sample						
Polish migrants	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Polish	-0.946***	0.07	-0.263***	0.07	0.245***	0.06
Dutch	1.828***	0.08	-0.154*	0.07	0.578***	0.07
Male	0.125***	0.03	-0.303***	0.03	-0.312***	0.03
Age (in years)	0.022	0.01	0.049***	0.01	0.056***	0.01
Age squared	-0.001***	0.00	-0.001***	0.00	-0.001***	0.00
Highest level of education						
Primary or below	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Secondary	0.097	0.06	0.156**	0.06	0.076	0.06
Tertiary	0.397***	0.06	0.289***	0.06	0.090	0.06
Employment status						
Employed	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Unemployed	0.178***	0.05	-0.011	0.05	0.088	0.05
Student	0.190	0.10	-0.062	0.09	0.096	0.09
Other	-0.094*	0.04	-0.036	0.04	0.004	0.04
Marital status						
Married	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Never married	0.501***	0.07	0.299***	0.07	0.110	0.07
Divorced or widowed	0.335***	0.08	0.124	0.08	-0.046	0.08
Partner status						
Co-resident partner	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Non-resident partner	-0.094	0.08	-0.049	0.08	0.077	0.08
No partner	-0.432***	0.07	-0.160*	0.07	-0.038	0.07
Ever divorced	0.625***	0.06	0.808***	0.06	0.226***	0.06
Ever cohabited	0.703***	0.06	0.283***	0.06	0.250***	0.05
Single parent	0.172*	0.07	0.215**	0.07	0.418***	0.07
Religious denomination						
Catholic	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Protestant	-1.554***	0.08	-0.588***	0.07	-0.269***	0.07
Other	-0.681***	0.12	-0.285*	0.11	-0.673***	0.11
None	0.572***	0.06	0.520***	0.05	0.336***	0.05
Household size	-0.110***	0.01	-0.058***	0.01	-0.064***	0.01
Number of children						
No children	.ref		.ref		.ref	
1 child	0.275***	0.06	0.185***	0.05	0.221***	0.05
2 children	0.132*	0.06	0.133*	0.06	0.118*	0.05
3 or more children	-0.141*	0.07	-0.057	0.07	-0.022	0.07
Homeowner	-0.137***	0.03	-0.015	0.03	-0.067*	0.03

Tab. 2: Continuation

	Cohabitation		Divorce		Single motherhood	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
<i>Cut points</i>						
τ_1	-2.376***	0.27	-1.510***	0.27	-0.744**	0.26
τ_2	-1.283***	0.27	-0.057	0.27	0.786**	0.26
τ_3	1.279***	0.27	2.594***	0.27	3.375***	0.26
N	18538		18538		18538	
Log likelihood	-19811.32		-21361.49		-21882.33	
AIC	39678.63		42778.97		43820.65	
BIC	39897.80		42998.15		44039.82	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Source: Data from wave 1 of the Polish and Dutch Generations and Gender Survey and Families of Poles in the Netherlands.

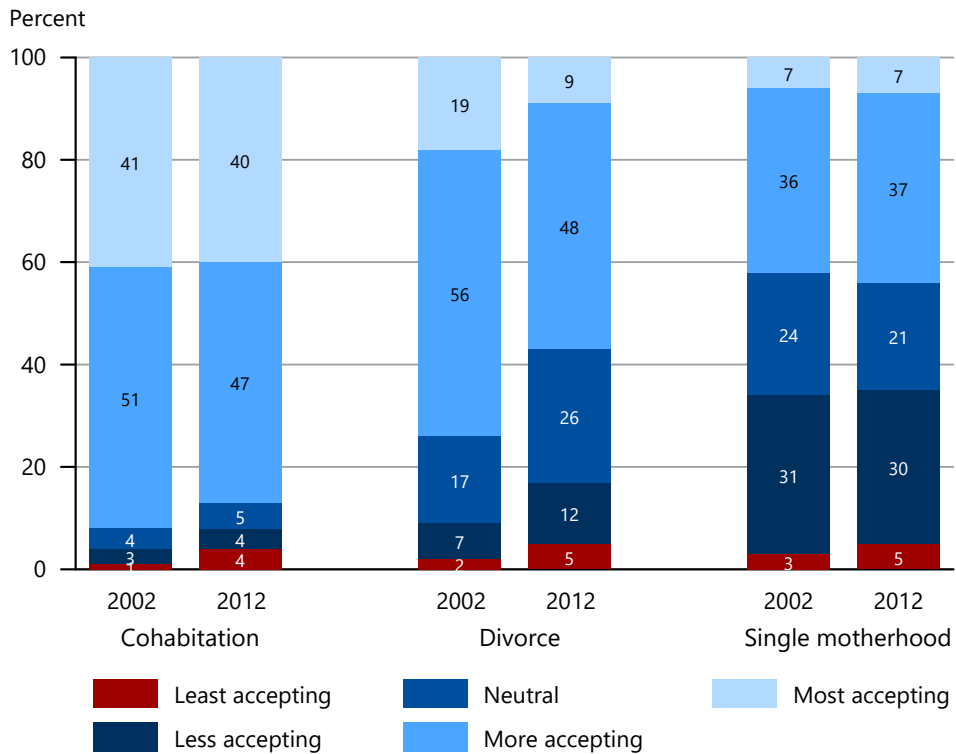
we controlled for age (and its square) but not birth cohort. The results confirm that Polish migrants are less accepting of cohabitation than Dutch non-migrants but more accepting than Polish non-migrants, supporting a classical assimilation pattern.

For single motherhood, Polish migrants are less accepting than both non-migrant groups, aligning with *sui generis* adaptation. However, differences in divorce attitudes between Polish migrants and Dutch non-migrants (as in the age-restricted analysis) were not statistically significant. This suggests that while Polish migrants are more accepting of divorce than Polish non-migrants, they do not differ from Dutch non-migrants – consistent with classical (full) assimilation.

To further investigate the discontinuity in data collection years for our three subsamples, we utilized data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) for the Netherlands for 2002 and 2012, which were the only available years that covered our study period. To ensure comparability with our study, we restricted our analysis to individuals aged 21-58 years, matching the age range in our study.

We examined attitudes towards cohabitation, divorce, and single parenthood across these years.⁶ Figure 2 illustrates that there was minimal change in attitudes towards cohabitation and single parenthood over the 10-year period. However,

⁶ The ISSP survey items are slightly different from those used in the GGS. The ISSP questions are as follows: "It is all right for a couple to live together without intending to get married" (cohabitation); "Divorce is usually the best solution when a couple can't seem to work out their marriage problems" (divorce); and "One parent can bring up a child as well as two parents together" (single parenthood). Beyond question wording, differences between the ISSP and GGS results may arise from two main factors: (1) in the ISSP data, we were unable to specifically analyze the native (non-migrant) population alone, which could impact the comparison; and (2) the sample sizes in the ISSP data are considerably smaller than the Dutch GGS sample, which may affect the precision of estimates and potentially introduce sampling variability.

Fig. 2: Percent distribution of non-marital family form attitudes, ages 21-58, in the Netherlands in years 2002-2012

N = 1,581

Source: 2002 and 2012 NL ISSP.

there was some decline in support for divorce over time, consistent with a trend towards "re-traditionalization" in this attitude, as noted in some of the literature (cf. *Kreyenfeld/Trappe* 2020). We posit that if we had used more recent Dutch data in our full-sample analysis, the difference in attitudes towards divorce between Polish migrants and Dutch non-migrants would likely be more pronounced. Nevertheless, due to inconsistent results for divorce across analyses (full-sample, age-restricted, and cohort-specific designs), we cannot assert that the difference in attitudes towards divorce between the Dutch non-migrant and Polish migrant subsamples reported in Table 2 is robust. However, we have greater confidence in the results presented in Table 2 for attitudes towards cohabitation and single motherhood, as they are unlikely to be merely an artifact of the time discontinuity across our subsamples, given the minimal change observed in these attitudes over time in the Dutch ISSP data.

Tab. 3: Ordered logit regressions of attitudes towards non-marital family forms (cohort design)

	Cohabitation		Divorce		Single motherhood	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Variables						
Sample						
Polish migrants	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Polish	-0.989***	0.08	-0.360***	0.08	0.148*	0.07
Dutch	1.726***	0.09	-0.087	0.09	0.494***	0.08
Male	0.113**	0.04	-0.357***	0.04	-0.317***	0.03
Age (in years)	0.068***	0.02	0.062***	0.02	0.049**	0.02
Age squared	-0.001***	0.00	-0.001***	0.00	-0.001**	0.00
Highest level of education						
Primary or below	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Secondary	0.024	0.07	0.142*	0.07	0.083	0.07
Tertiary	0.338***	0.07	0.294***	0.07	0.067	0.07
Employment status						
Employed	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Unemployed	0.125*	0.06	0.019	0.06	0.126*	0.06
Student	0.437**	0.15	0.076	0.13	0.333**	0.13
Other	-0.103*	0.05	-0.089	0.05	-0.038	0.05
Marital status						
Married	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Never married	0.518***	0.09	0.303***	0.08	0.162*	0.08
Divorced or widowed	0.364***	0.10	0.134	0.09	-0.025	0.09
Partner status						
Co-resident partner	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Non-resident partner	-0.065	0.10	-0.064	0.09	0.048	0.09
No partner	-0.393***	0.08	-0.194*	0.08	-0.158*	0.08
Ever divorced	0.667***	0.08	0.905***	0.08	0.229**	0.08
Ever cohabited	0.731***	0.07	0.229***	0.06	0.168**	0.06
Single parent	0.116	0.09	0.222**	0.09	0.489***	0.09
Religious denomination						
Catholic	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Protestant	-1.815***	0.10	-0.801***	0.09	-0.292***	0.09
Other	-0.706***	0.13	-0.412**	0.13	-0.757***	0.13
None	0.545***	0.07	0.465***	0.06	0.319***	0.06
Household size	-0.121***	0.02	-0.065***	0.02	-0.073***	0.02
Number of children						
No children	.ref		.ref		.ref	
1 child	0.301***	0.06	0.173**	0.06	0.207***	0.06
2 children	0.187**	0.07	0.167*	0.07	0.154*	0.07
3 or more children	-0.025	0.08	-0.044	0.08	0.034	0.08
Homeowner	-0.135***	0.04	-0.030	0.04	-0.054	0.04

Tab. 3: Continuation

	Cohabitation		Divorce		Single motherhood	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
<i>Cut points</i>						
τ_1	-1.773***	0.39	-1.429***	0.38	-1.127**	0.37
τ_2	-0.666	0.39	0.025	0.38	0.419	0.37
τ_3	1.927***	0.39	2.700***	0.38	3.025***	0.37
N	13875		13875		13875	
Log likelihood	-14717.95		-15850.36		-16285.90	
AIC	29491.91		31756.72		32627.79	
BIC	29702.97		31967.78		32838.85	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Source: Data from wave 1 of the Polish and Dutch Generations and Gender Survey and Families of Poles in the Netherlands.

Results for the control variables in Tables 2 and 3 show that males are more accepting of cohabitation and females are more accepting of divorce and single motherhood.⁷ Age has a curvilinear (inverted U-shaped) effect on acceptance (except for cohabitation in Table 2). Education is significantly (and positively) associated with cohabitation and divorce attitudes only. With few exceptions, acceptance of non-marital family forms is higher among the never married (versus the married), those who have ever divorced (or been widowed), those who have ever cohabited, single parents, and those who have one or two children (versus none). Acceptance of non-marital family forms is generally lower among those without a partner (versus those with a coresident partner), those from larger households, and Protestants and those of other religions (versus Catholics), but acceptance is higher among those with no religious affiliation.

Table 4 presents ordered logit results for Polish migrants' attitudes towards non-marital family forms, incorporating social integration and control variables. The key finding is that social integration factors – Dutch language proficiency and usage, migration duration, post-migration education, and having a Dutch partner – are not significantly associated with attitudes towards single motherhood. For cohabitation, mid-low and mid-high Dutch language proficiency and usage are negatively associated with acceptance (relative to the highest proficiency and usage group), while post-migration education is positively associated. This points to post-migration adaptation rather than pre-migration selection as a key mechanism, although, strictly speaking, selection cannot be ruled out entirely. Regarding divorce

⁷ We also tested interaction effects between sex and nativity status but generally found that males and females held similar views on the three non-marital family forms across nativity status, consistent with our main results.

Tab. 4: Ordered logit regressions of attitudes towards non-marital family forms (migrants only)

	Cohabitation		Divorce		Single motherhood	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Variables						
Dutch language proficiency and usage						
Least	-0.313	0.20	-0.571**	0.20	-0.135	0.19
Mid-low	-0.380*	0.19	-0.566**	0.19	-0.165	0.18
Mid-high	-0.378*	0.18	-0.334	0.18	-0.037	0.17
Most	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Migration duration	0.015	0.02	-0.018	0.02	0.002	0.02
Male	0.197	0.13	-0.268*	0.13	-0.047	0.13
Age (in years)	-0.005	0.01	0.025*	0.01	0.029**	0.01
Highest level of education						
Primary or below	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Secondary	0.107	0.32	0.150	0.33	0.387	0.33
Tertiary	0.080	0.34	0.410	0.35	0.350	0.34
Has post-migration education	0.683**	0.26	-0.168	0.24	0.062	0.24
Employment status						
Employed	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Unemployed	0.084	0.23	0.098	0.23	-0.136	0.22
Student	-0.525	0.41	-0.736	0.44	0.658	0.41
Other	-0.231	0.18	-0.034	0.18	-0.170	0.17
Marital status						
Married	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Never married	0.506***	0.15	0.663***	0.15	0.052	0.15
Divorced or widowed	1.495***	0.33	0.477	0.33	0.052	0.31
Partner status						
Polish partner	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Dutch partner	-0.058	0.21	-0.446*	0.21	0.122	0.20
Partner other ethnicity	0.200	0.28	-0.020	0.28	-0.062	0.25
No partner	-0.360	0.20	-0.510**	0.19	-0.047	0.19
Ever divorced	-0.435	0.30	0.380	0.31	-0.182	0.29
Ever cohabited	0.256	0.16	0.008	0.15	0.009	0.15
Single parent	-0.027	0.36	0.489	0.35	0.523	0.34
Religious denomination						
Catholic	.ref		.ref		.ref	
Protestant	0.231	0.67	-0.388	0.66	0.462	0.66
Other	-1.869***	0.47	-1.239**	0.44	-1.048*	0.44
None	0.675***	0.17	0.728***	0.16	0.411**	0.15
Household size	-0.002	0.06	-0.012	0.05	-0.060	0.05
Number of children						
No children	.ref		.ref		.ref	
1 child	0.165	0.16	-0.154	0.16	0.023	0.15
2 children	-0.046	0.21	0.032	0.20	-0.054	0.20
3 or more children	-0.260	0.29	-0.341	0.29	0.309	0.28
Homeowner	0.235	0.14	0.143	0.14	0.005	0.14

Tab. 4: Continuation

	Cohabitation		Divorce		Single motherhood	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
<i>Cut points</i>						
τ_1	-2.474***	0.56	-1.865***	0.56	-0.543	0.53
τ_2	-1.214*	0.55	-0.293	0.55	0.981	0.53
τ_3	0.942	0.55	2.051***	0.55	2.974***	0.54
N	1129		1129		1129	
Log likelihood	-1262.40		-1306.18		-1446.23	
AIC	2586.80		2674.36		2954.46	
BIC	2742.70		2830.26		3110.37	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Source: Data from wave 1 of the Families of Poles in the Netherlands study.

attitudes, low and mid-low Dutch language proficiency and usage are negatively associated with acceptance. Additionally, having a Dutch partner (versus a Polish one) is linked to lower acceptance of divorce, possibly reflecting a general effect of partnering rather than an effect of migration *per se*. Notably, migration duration does not significantly affect any attitudes, indicating that simply residing in the host society is insufficient for cultural assimilation.

7 Discussion and conclusion

Our study addresses the underexamined topic of attitudes towards divorce, cohabitation, and single motherhood – types of family behavior that have been linked to the Second Demographic Transition and the gender revolution – among Polish migrants, Polish non-migrants, and Dutch non-migrants. Attitudinal differences between old and new EU member states have implications for cultural divergence across Europe. By examining attitudes among Polish migrants and Polish and Dutch non-migrants, this research contributes towards understanding the cultural dimensions of EU integration (or the lack thereof) and the role of Eastern European migrants living in Western Europe as cultural agents.

Our use of multiple types of non-marital family attitudes also helps to understand the uneven adoption of the Second Demographic Transition and its implications for migrant assimilation. Our findings indicate that Polish migrants in the Netherlands are more accepting of divorce than Polish non-migrants. However, differences between Polish migrants and Dutch non-migrants are not robust across all models, though some suggest greater adoption of Dutch divorce attitudes than of cohabitation attitudes by Polish migrants. For cohabitation, Polish migrants' views fall between those of Polish and Dutch non-migrants. These patterns align with the classical assimilation perspective, indicating that migrants adjust to host-

country norms and attitudes, albeit not uniformly – adaptation appears to be more complete for divorce than for cohabitation.

While inconsistencies across our models caution against overinterpreting the divorce findings, our study underscores how migrant assimilation may contribute to more unified cultural attitudes for some family forms across member states. The shifts in attitudes towards both divorce and cohabitation may also signal alignment with core EU values, including gender equality. Cohabitation, which offers greater freedom in union formation, is consistent with more egalitarian relationship dynamics (e.g., the division of household labor) and is often linked to more egalitarian gender norms (*Batalova/Cohen 2002; Domínguez-Folgueras 2013*). As migrants adopt more accepting views on both divorce and cohabitation, this could signal the diffusion of gender-egalitarian attitudes across the EU, reinforcing the broader EU vision of gender equality and social inclusion.

In contrast to the findings for divorce and cohabitation, Polish migrants consistently expressed lower acceptance of single motherhood than both Polish and Dutch non-migrants – a pattern we interpret as *sui generis* adaptation. Rather than signaling resistance to cultural change, this stance may reflect respectability politics, whereby migrants adopt conservative attitudes towards behaviors that are perceived as stigmatized or are associated with economic vulnerability. In a context marked by integration pressures, public hostility, and discrimination towards Polish and other migrants, holding less favorable views of single motherhood may serve as a form of boundary management (cf. *Fleischmann/Khoudja 2023*): an effort to project responsibility and respectability and counter negative stereotypes about migrants as being dependent on welfare or lacking moral values. Notably, unlike attitudes towards divorce or cohabitation, views on single motherhood were not significantly associated with indicators of social integration, such as Dutch language proficiency, post-migration education, or having a Dutch partner. This suggests that these views may be shaped less by exposure to host norms and prevailing attitudes and more by migrants' strategic positioning within a stigmatizing social context and hostility towards "migrants with poor [integration] prospects" (*Bonjour/Duyvendak 2018*).

The lower acceptance of single motherhood may also reflect the distinct symbolic and economic dimensions of this family form. Like cohabitation and divorce, single motherhood represents an expansion of personal autonomy – particularly for women – but it also raises concerns about financial precarity and parenting norms. These concerns may be especially acute for migrants, who are more likely to face economic insecurity and discrimination. Moreover, single motherhood may be seen as a more fundamental challenge to gendered family roles than divorce, which still preserves a two-parent model of childrearing (albeit across households). In this sense, Polish migrants' attitudes may reflect a strategic response to their social position in the Netherlands, suggesting that migration-driven cultural change does not proceed uniformly across all domains of family life.

Although our findings are specific to Polish migrants in the Netherlands, we note that they may also apply to other Eastern European migrants (e.g., Romanians, another major migration group within the EU) moving to Western European

countries following their country's EU accession. However, we are more cautious about generalizing to non-EU migrants, given the different selection pressures and institutional barriers they face in migrating to the EU.

Our analysis had several limitations. First, the time periods covered by the three datasets did not align, with different years for each dataset. While our robustness checks yielded mostly similar results when analyzing the same birth cohorts across the datasets, there were some discrepancies, particularly regarding divorce attitudes among Polish migrants and Dutch non-migrants. We also found that support for cohabitation and single parenthood in the Netherlands remained rather stable between 2002 and 2012 according to data from the ISSP, which helps mitigate concerns about survey timing discrepancies. We chose not to use more recent data from the Netherlands GGS due to potential panel attrition bias⁸ and because attitudes towards single motherhood were not available in that wave. Second, the survey items for single motherhood and divorce attitudes were worded in a way that combined multiple aspects of those family forms. Thus, it was not possible to determine whether respondents were primarily considering the presence of children or the absence of a spouse/partner when answering the questions. However, we have no reason to believe that Polish migrants' reaction to the question wording would have differed from that of Polish and Dutch non-migrants, so the results are unlikely to be an artifact of varied interpretation of question wording but instead reflect actual differences in attitudes between the groups. Nonetheless, attention should be paid to question wording when comparing our results with those of other studies. Third, like many other studies, our data lack information on pre-migration attitudes, which makes it challenging to isolate selection mechanism(s). However, our analysis of factors related to social integration gives us some (albeit indirect) leverage in adjudicating pre-migration selection versus post-migration adaptation. Having detailed data on pre-migration attitudes would be valuable in addressing this limitation.

Despite these limitations, our research expands understanding of migrant attitudes and adaptation, shedding light on the complexities of sociocultural changes and continuities among migrants. These findings underscore the need for further exploration of the diverse pathways and factors associated with migrant attitudes, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between migrants and their host and origin societies. Our results also demonstrate the complexity of ideational processes among migrants (*Levitt/Vertovec* 2003; *Williams et al.* 2014) and align with scholarship that questions the view of the Second Demographic Transition theory (*Brzozowska* 2021; *Coleman* 2004; *Sobotka* 2008;

⁸ Panel attrition in the second (2007) round of the Dutch GGS data is rather high: only about 58 percent of our analytical sample could be matched across waves. Note that the temporal disjuncture across datasets would still be present even if we had used the more recent wave of Dutch GGS data. It is worth noting that the distribution for the divorce and cohabitation attitudes in the second round of the Dutch GGS for a sample of 21 to 58-year-olds looks very similar to the distributions for our analytical sample from the first (2002–2004) round of the Dutch GGS (i.e., there was little change in the 5-year period separating waves).

Zaidi/Morgan 2017) of non-marital family forms as a unified package characterizing societal transitions.

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Date of submission: 23.08.2024

Date of acceptance: 03.09.2025

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Appendix

Tab. A1: Fit statistics for model selection

	ll	df	AIC	BIC
1 Class	-16152.51	28	32361.01	32501.83
2 Classes	-14143.02	53	28392.04	28658.58
3 Classes	-13471.23	78	27098.47	27490.74
4 Classes	-13248.27	103	26702.54	27220.54

Source: Data from wave 1 of the Families of Poles in the Netherlands study.

Tab. A2: Item responses (polish migrants only), by latent class

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
	in %			
Dutch language proficiency				
Understands				
Not at all	0.24	0.00	0.00	0.00
Not well	0.63	0.26	0.02	0.00
Neither good nor bad	0.13	0.53	0.37	0.00
Well	0.00	0.20	0.57	0.46
Very well	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.53
Speaks				
Not at all	0.55	0.01	0.00	0.00
Not well	0.45	0.60	0.11	0.00
Neither good nor bad	0.00	0.36	0.60	0.02
Well	0.00	0.02	0.29	0.65
Very well	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.33
Reads				
Not at all	0.71	0.16	0.00	0.00
Not well	0.27	0.71	0.05	0.00
Neither good nor bad	0.02	0.13	0.64	0.01
Well	0.00	0.01	0.29	0.58
Very well	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.41
Writes				
Not at all	0.88	0.40	0.01	0.00
Not well	0.12	0.59	0.31	0.00
Neither good nor bad	0.00	0.01	0.59	0.18
Well	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.60
Very well	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.21
Frequency watching polish TV				
Every day	0.60	0.66	0.51	0.28
Several times per week	0.12	0.10	0.13	0.09
Once, twice per-week	0.06	0.10	0.06	0.09
Less often	0.09	0.05	0.09	0.12
Never	0.13	0.08	0.20	0.42
Frequency watching dutch TV				
Every day	0.10	0.11	0.23	0.53
Several times per week	0.08	0.14	0.22	0.19
Once, twice per week	0.08	0.14	0.18	0.13
Less often	0.22	0.24	0.20	0.08
Never	0.53	0.37	0.17	0.07
Language used with boss				
Polish	0.15	0.05	0.03	0.01
Dutch	0.04	0.47	0.57	0.78
English	0.60	0.38	0.23	0.08
Other, no answer	0.20	0.10	0.18	0.12

Tab. A2: Continuation

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
	in %			
Language used with friends				
Polish	0.77	0.68	0.52	0.23
Dutch	0.00	0.08	0.27	0.60
English	0.20	0.21	0.13	0.10
Other, no answer	0.03	0.02	0.07	0.07
Language used with neighbors				
Polish	0.16	0.16	0.05	0.01
Dutch	0.07	0.53	0.79	0.97
English	0.62	0.26	0.13	0.02
Other, no answer	0.15	0.05	0.03	0.00
Speakspolish with partner	0.73	0.83	0.75	0.45
Took dutch language class	0.25	0.58	0.72	0.81
Questionnaire taken in Polish	0.82	0.84	0.82	0.65
N	265	283	350	231

Source: Data from wave 1 of the Families of Poles in the Netherlands study.

Comparative Population Studies

www.comparativepopulationstudies.de

ISSN: 1869-8980 (Print) – 1869-8999 (Internet)

Published by

Federal Institute for Population Research
(BiB)
65180 Wiesbaden / Germany



2025

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