

### Navigating new gender roles: Attitudes among immigrant origin youth

Gender roles have become a symbol of cultural division between Western Europe and its growing immigrant population. This has raised the question of whether immigrants and their children from more gender-conservative backgrounds will stick with their more traditional gender roles, or if they over time and across generations will adopt more egalitarian attitudes.

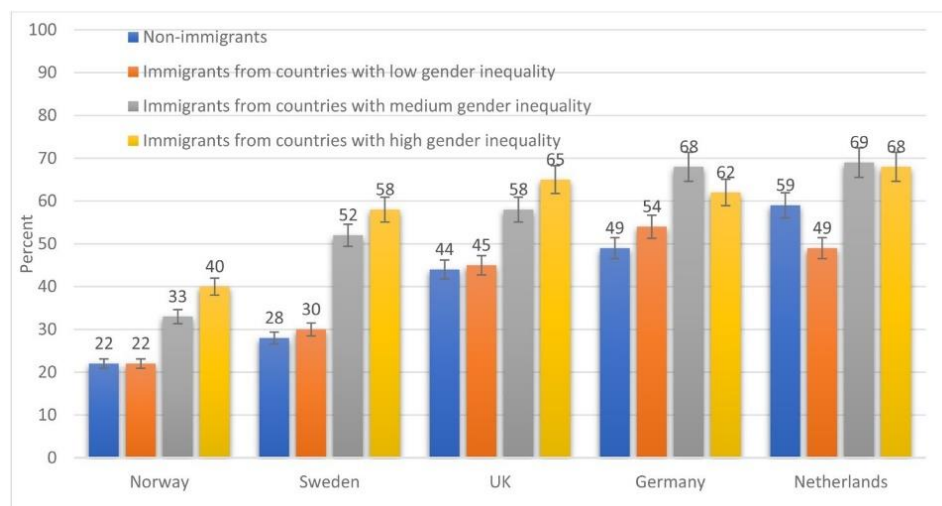
However, different European host countries offer distinctly different contexts of reception regarding the institutional support for gender equality. Adapting to their new surroundings thus means quite different things depending on their country of settlement. Whereas the social democratic welfare states in Scandinavia stand out with exceptionally high levels of gender equality, countries with more liberal welfare models such as the UK and Ireland, as well as continental welfare states including Germany, Austria and the Netherlands, tend to maintain a more traditional and unequal gendered division of labour.

Comparing the gender attitudes of immigrants and their children across different European countries could therefore provide valuable insights into the process of adaptation. However, immigrants to Europe have vastly different backgrounds when it comes to gender roles in their countries of origin, and the different compositions of immigrant populations in different European host countries make it difficult to simultaneously examine the influences of cultural origins and contexts of settlement. We have tried to overcome this challenge by comparing the gender attitudes of immigrant youth living in different countries of settlement, who originate from countries with comparable levels of gender inequality, using three distinct global gender inequality indices.

The results show that the level of gender inequality in the adolescents' parental countries of origin exerts a lasting impact on the gender attitudes of the youths themselves. We also find that religion and religiosity, particularly among Muslims, play a significant role in preserving conservative attitudes.

However, our most important finding is that immigrant origin youth are nevertheless strongly influenced by the different norms in their countries of settlement. To a large extent, youth adapt their gender attitudes to better align with the context in which they live. In fact, even the most conservative groups of immigrant adolescents living in Scandinavia have more gender-egalitarian beliefs than immigrants – and to some extent natives – in continental Europe.

**Figure 1. Percentage of youth who report that they prefer traditional gender roles, according to immigration status, country of residence, and level of gender inequality in parental country of origin.**



#### Key Research Publication

Friberg, Jon Horgen & Jahanlu, David (2023), Navigating new gender roles: impacts of cultural origins, context of settlement, and religious beliefs on gender attitudes among immigrant origin youth across five European countries, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, DOI: [10.1080/1369183X.2023.2287404](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2023.2287404)

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\*Major immigrant sending countries within each category:

- "Low" levels of gender inequality: Europe, some countries in East-Asia and Latin-America
- "Medium" levels of gender inequality: Turkey, Sri Lanka, the Balkans, Vietnam etc.
- "High" levels of gender inequality: Pakistan, Iraq Morocco, Somalia, Afghanistan, India etc.