



High hopes, high disappointment?

How unmet migration expectations shape perceived discrimination and destination attachment of immigrants

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The gambling migrant

- Even if international migration is carefully planned, it always involves **uncertainty** and **limited personal agency**, some of which migrants may not be aware of (Collins 2018; de Haas 2021)
- Migrants as **risk-takers** and **optimistic decision-makers** (Kao & Tienda 1995; Czaika 2015)
 - The gambling metaphor (Belloni 2019)

It portrays migrants as **gamblers** who believe they can calculate the migration-related risks, although they are in fact exposed to the „migration game“

**Where there are risks and expectations, there
can also be disappointment**

Higher educated immigrants: The (overly) confident gamblers?

Theory of rising expectations

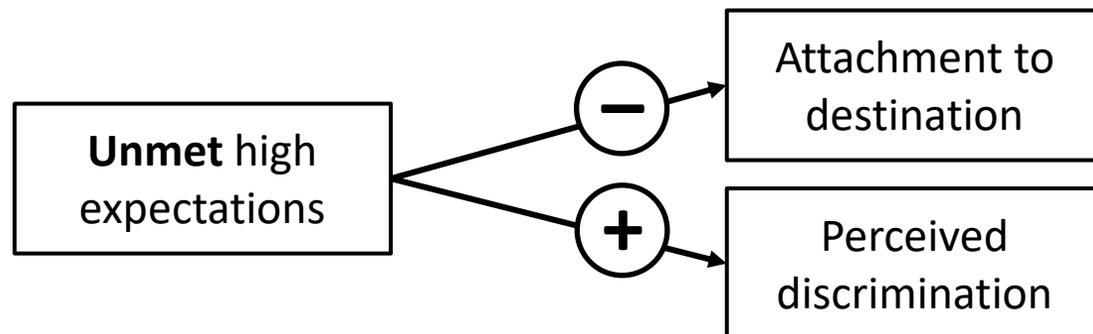
- They are particularly expectant about migration outcomes (Silberman et al. 2007; Cooney 2009)
- Highly expectant to fare well (*structural*), to fit in (*cultural*), and to be treated equally (*social*) (e.g. Verkuyten 2016; Geurts et al. 2021)
- Main explanation of high migration expectations
 - Higher educated immigrants demand **adequate returns in the destination country** based on past personal and family investments and their accumulated resources
 - Their **frame of reference** is anchored in the destination country
 - Comparison of their life with the lives of non-immigrants

**If expectations are high,
the potential disappointment can be too**

High unmet migration expectations and disappointment

Theory of rising expectations

- Increase in emotional disengagement from the destination country (e.g. Geurts et al. 2021)
- Increase in perceived discrimination (Schaeffer & Kas 2023)



The Integration Paradox

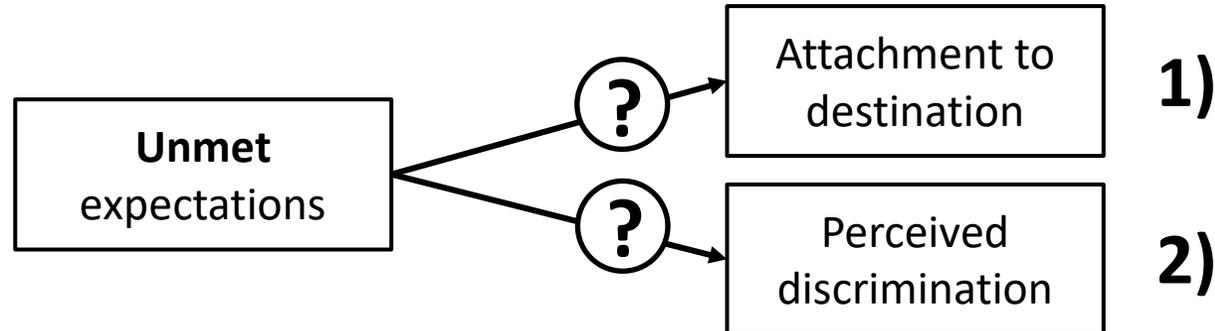
Despite appearing integrated, immigrants do not feel so

Existing research

- **Unmet migration expectations:** Role is unclear (but see Geurts et al. 2021)
- **Some address the theory but do not have the panel data**
 - Mostly cross-sectional studies
 - E.g. unmet structural expectations proxied over international or intergenerational social downward mobility (Silberman et al. 2007; Schaeffer 2019) – no robust evidence (Schaeffer & Kas 2023)
- **Few have the panel data but do not address the theory**
 - The few panel studies: Cast doubt on increasing discrimination and decreasing attachment over time (Careja & Schmidt-Catran 2018; Diehl et al. 2021; Geurts et al. 2020)

Our aim

*to investigate **the role of unmet migration expectations** for the lives of lower and higher educated immigrants using panel data*



Hypotheses

- H1** Unmet migration expectations **decrease** the destination attachment of higher educated immigrants **comparably stronger** than of their lower-educated counterparts (**attachment hypothesis**)
- H2** Unmet migration expectations **increase** perceived discrimination of higher educated immigrants **comparably stronger** than of their lower-educated counterparts (**discrimination hypothesis**)

An open empirical question: High hopes, high disappointment?

If unsupported: Higher educated immigrants are not more disappointed.

Less to worry about? (regarding educational differences at least!)

Potential for resilience (self-regulation, self-control), which could be leveraged to enhance integration experiences.

If supported: Higher educated immigrants struggle with unmet migration expectations.

More to worry about?

Feelings of social exclusion; mental health issues; brain drain.

Some of these issues may not be noticed: Higher educated immigrants fall through the cracks since they tend to be better off in terms of more „objective“ integration indicators (e.g. job position, income, language skills).

Data, Methods & Variables

The Migration-Mobility Survey (MMS) (Steiner & Wanner 2019; Wanner et al. 2023)

- **Panel study:** 4 waves (2016/18/20/22), new samplings in each wave
- **High quality data:** Register-based, stratified random sampling, all nationalities
- **Recent immigrants:** Arrived after 2006, on average 4 years of stay
- **Adults:** Min. 18 years at immigration and 24-64 years old at survey time
- **Voluntary immigrants:** exclusion of asylum seekers & temporary admittees

- **Analytical sample:** $N = 5.240$, 13.885 observations (unbalanced, 2 obs. min., no re-entries)

- **Method:** Fixed Effects (linear and logit)

Model variables

Dependent variables

- Attachment to Switzerland (0-7)
- Experiences of prejudice or discrimination in Switzerland the past 24 months (no/yes)

Explanatory/interaction variables

- Migration expectations: proxied by dissatisfaction with decision to move to Switzerland (0-10)
- Highest educational qualification (non-tertiary/tertiary)

Covariates

- Age (categorised), residence duration, obtaining C permission (permanent residency), local language comprehension, pandemic year 2020

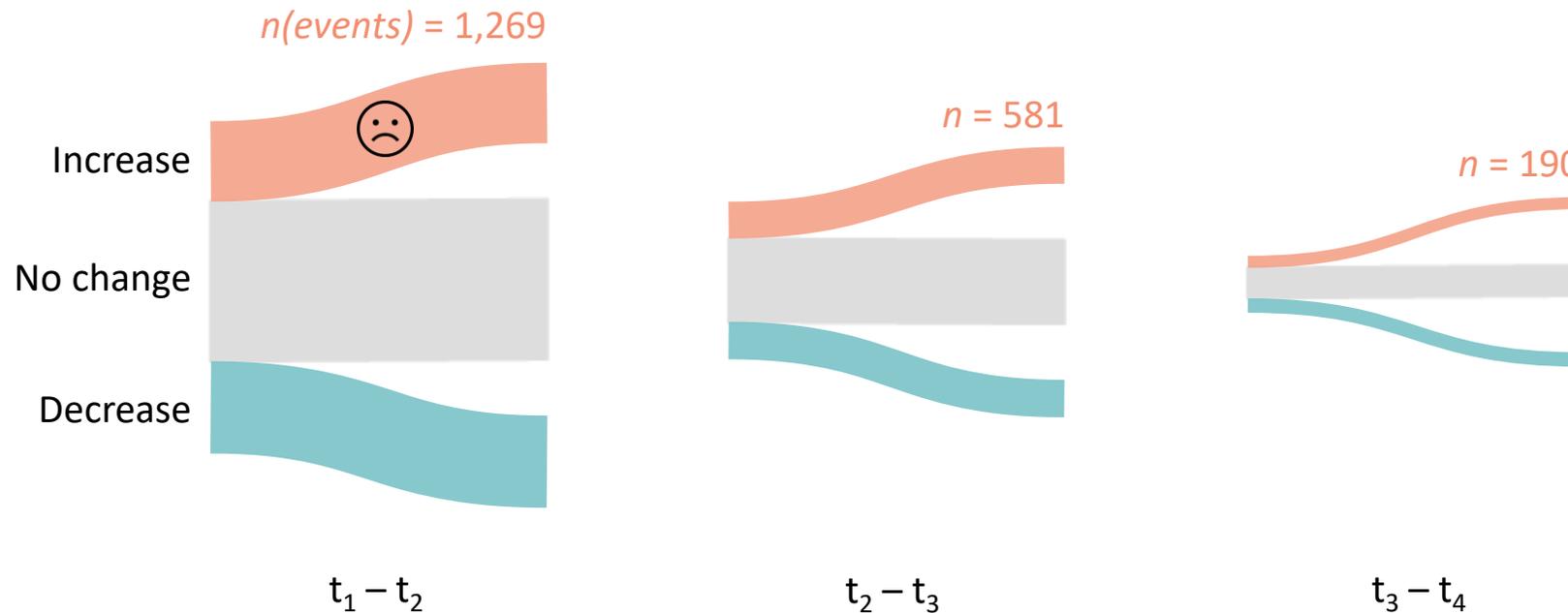
Most immigrants are located in the positive scale range

Satisfaction with the decision to move to Switzerland,
distribution of observations:



2,040 times, immigrants reported increases in dissatisfaction during the survey

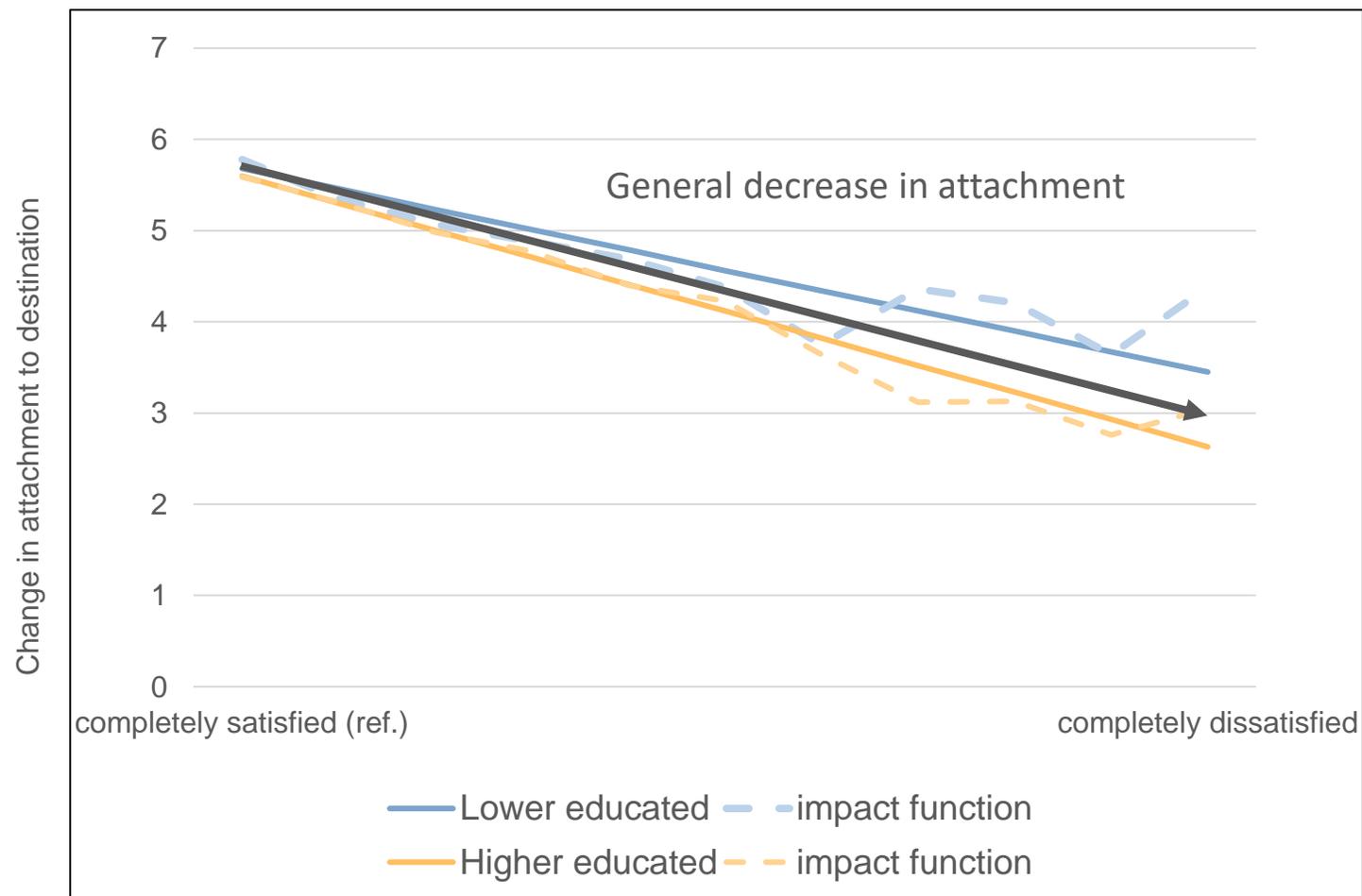
1,448 times, it was higher educated immigrants (more than 70%)



Findings

Do unmet migration expectations affect the destination attachment of higher educated immigrants comparably stronger? (H1)

Unmet migration expectations and destination attachment



Significant and systematic difference in decrease between education levels:

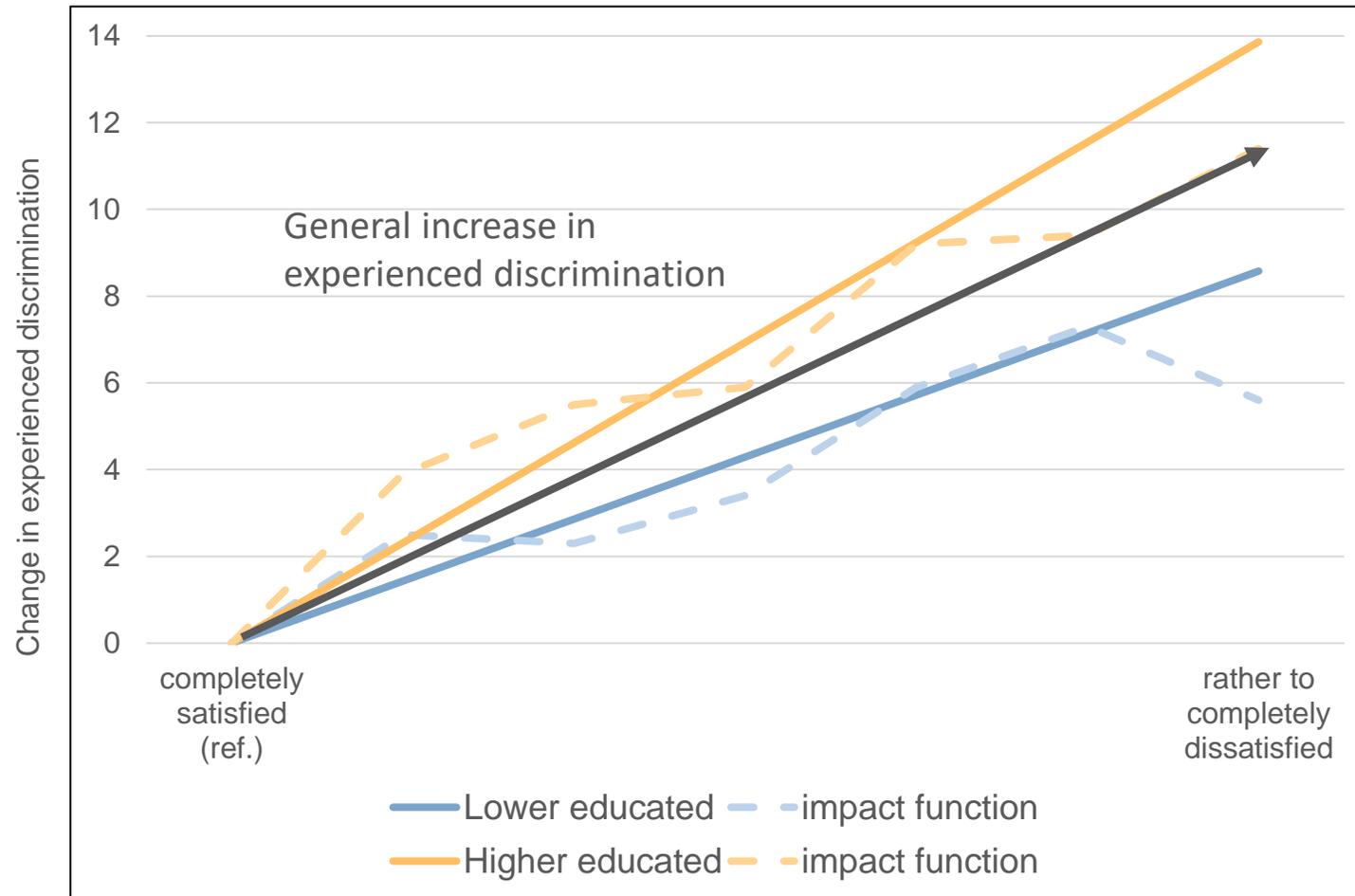
An **increase in dissatisfaction** with the migration decision **decreases destination attachment** of tertiary educated immigrants **comparably stronger**.

Note. Separate FE linear models, waves 1-4.

Do unmet migration expectations affect perceived discrimination of higher educated immigrants comparably stronger? (H2)

Unmet migration expectations and experienced discrimination

%-points



No significant but **systematic difference** in increase between education levels:

An **increase in dissatisfaction** with the migration decision **increases experienced discrimination somewhat stronger** for tertiary educated immigrants.

Nearly 40% of observations dropped because experienced discrimination of immigrants did not change over time.

Note. Separate FE logit models, waves 1-4.

Conclusion

Take-home

- 1) Higher educated immigrants are **more affected** by unmet migration expectations
 - Decreased destination attachment (H1) & increased perceptions of discrimination (H2)
 - Supports theory of rising expectations
 - Just because of better integration (conditions), feelings of connectedness decrease stronger

- 2) Findings highlight **multifaceted** integration processes
 - Higher educated immigrants are not immune to struggles, particularly in dimensions we typically find difficult to quantify
 - Also quantify „soft“ factors such as self-perceived integration measures to catch otherwise unnoticed vulnerable groups, before they fall through the cracks



Questions? Remarks?

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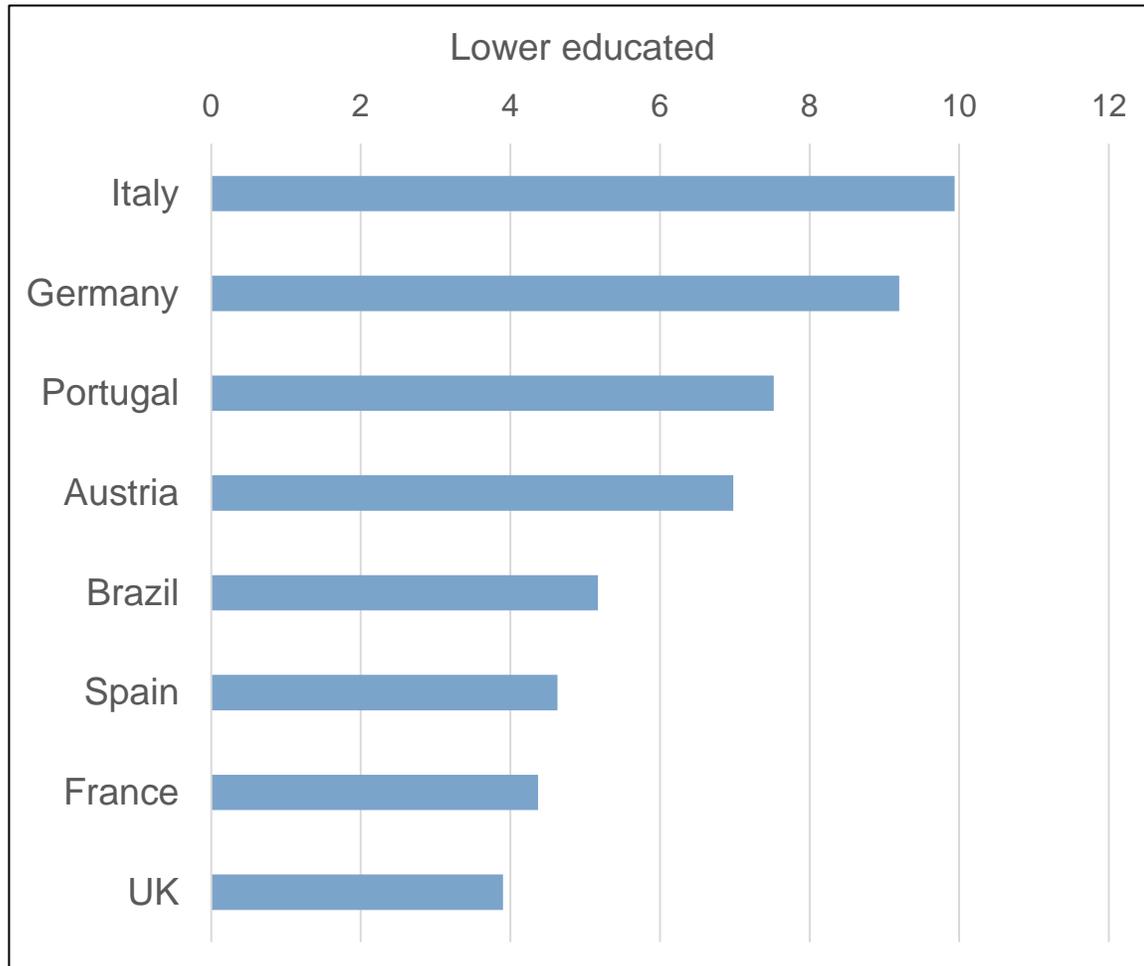
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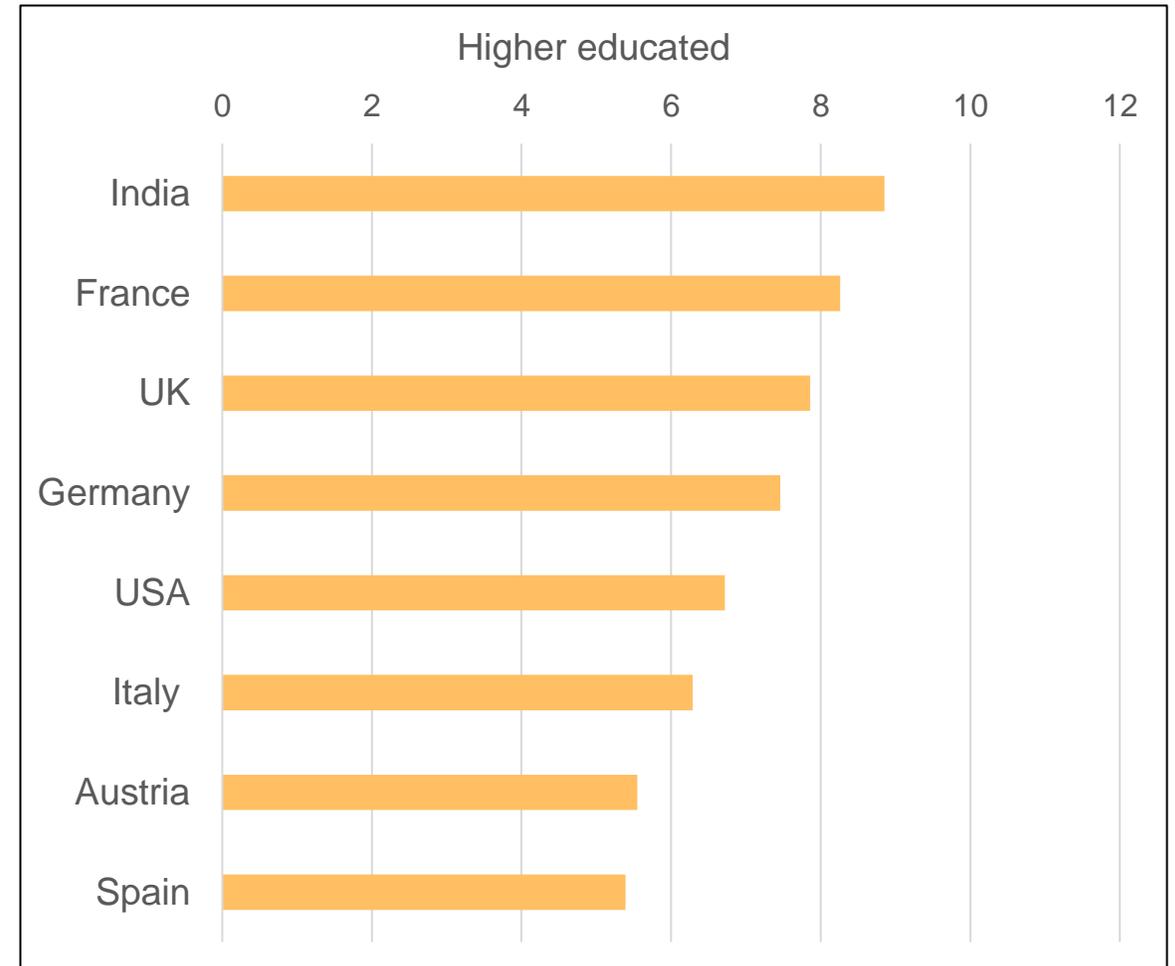
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Top 8 origin countries for each education group



N = 1,489 immigrants with non-tertiary education



N = 3,751 immigrants with tertiary education