

Svein Blom

7. Comparison of attitudes in Norway and other European countries

Norway appears in the liberal or «immigrant-friendly» third of the participating countries in the European Social Survey (ESS). However, we are not completely convinced that immigrants contribute more than they receive.

- Of the six questions on immigration that have been asked in the ESS since 2002, Sweden takes first place on as many as four questions, and second place in a fifth question in 2008 when the countries are ranked according to how liberal or immigrant-friendly their population is.
- Norway is in second place in relation to whether the population believes that immigration is good for the country's economy, and in third place with regard to the willingness to receive immigrants from poor countries outside Europe.
- Probably because we regard our social welfare system to be generous, Norway is only ranked in the middle of the countries with regard to our belief that immigrants contribute more to society through taxes than they receive in social benefits and services.

The European Social Survey (see the text box below) enables a comparison between Norwegian attitudes towards immigrants and immigration and the attitudes in a number of other European countries. To date, the survey has been conducted four

times – each time with some questions on immigrants. Some topics are repeated in every survey, whilst others are replaced with new topics.

Data from the second round of interviews (in 2004) is provided in Blom 2006 and from the third round (in 2006) in Blom 2009. The results from the fourth round of interviews are presented below, and these show Norway's ranking for questions concerning immigrants compared with the other countries that participated in the survey in 2008-2009. Norway's ranking in previous rounds of interviews is referred to in the text to some extent. The appendix tables at the end of the chapter show Norway's distribution of responses to the relevant ESS questions in each of the four rounds.

7.1. Swedes are most benevolent

Eight out of 10 of the adult population of Norway would allow many or some immigrants «of the same race or ethnic group as most Norway's people» to come and live here. This is 10 percentage points more than in 2002 (appendix table 7.1). The wording of the question is not decided by Statistics Norway, but by the ESS planners.

The European Social Survey

The European Social Survey (ESS) is an interview-based survey that is conducted every second year in more than 20 countries throughout Europe, with the aim of mapping the population's attitudes towards political, social, moral and religious issues. The project is financed through the European Commission, the European Science Foundation and national research councils in the participating countries. The ESS is characterised by a standardised sampling methodology, uniform translation from the same questionnaire and uniform execution of field work and file construction in all participating countries. In Norway, the field work is carried out by Statistics Norway. Data is freely available at the website of Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD): <http://ess.nsd.uib.no/>. Ringdal and Kleven (2004) provide further details of the survey.

In the four interview rounds to date, a total of 32 countries have taken part. These are as follows, with the number of times they have participated in brackets: Austria (3), Belgium (4), Bulgaria (2), Croatia (1), Cyprus (2), Czech Republic (3), Denmark (4), Estonia (3), Finland (4), France (4), Germany (4), Greece (3), Hungary (4), Iceland (1), Ireland (3), Israel (2), Latvia (2), Luxemburg (1), Netherlands (4), Norway (4), Poland (4), Portugal (4), Romania (2), Russian Federation (2), Slovakia (3), Slovenia (4), Spain (4), Sweden (4), Switzerland (4), Turkey (2), Ukraine (3), United Kingdom (4). Our presentation of results does not include Israel, since we do not consider this to be a European country.

In the first interview round in 2002, a whole section was dedicated to questions relating to immigration and asylum (Blom 2005, 2007), followed by sections on media use and confidence in others, political interests and participation, well-being, social exclusion, religion and discrimination. Subsequent interview rounds have not had a separate section for questions on immigration. Instead, six of the questions from the first round are included in the section on political interests and participation, after the section on media and confidence in others. We do not consider this change to have had any effect on the answers reported. New sections in the fourth interview round include attitudes towards welfare offers, support schemes and taxation, and also include a few questions on immigrants and immigration, which will be discussed.

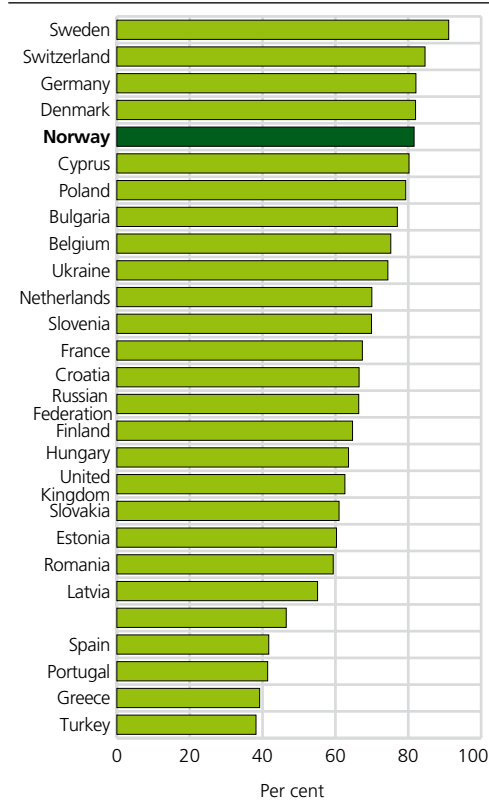
Ethnicity is not part of Statistics Norway's standard for immigrant classification, and neither is «race».

Norway is ranked fifth on this question; behind Sweden, Switzerland, Germany and Denmark, when the countries are ranked by degree of benevolence (figure 7.1), but the distance between third and fifth place is moderate. This is the same ranking we had in 2006, but at that time we shared it with the Ukraine. Sweden was also in first place in 2006. In the first and second interview rounds, Norway took sixth place. Both Switzerland and Germany are accustomed to a large number of labour immigrants. Denmark has a somewhat lower share of immigrants than Norway (7.5 compared with 9.5 per cent) (Statistics Denmark 2010, Statistics Norway 2010), while Sweden has a somewhat higher

share (13.9 per cent) (Statistics Sweden 2010). Among the Nordic countries, Finland is far down the rankings with regard to willingness to receive immigrants with the same ethnicity (16th place in 2008, as in 2006). Finland is the Nordic country (including Iceland) with the lowest share of the population born abroad; 4.4 per cent at the start of 2010 (Statistics Finland 2010).

More than 6 out of 10 in Norway (64 per cent) report that they would accept many or some immigrants with a «different race or ethnic group from most of Norway's people»; 7 percentage points more than in 2002. Norway thereby falls one place in the rankings, to sixth place, when the question is changed to relate to willingness to receive immigrants with a foreign ethnicity (figure 7.2). This also means that

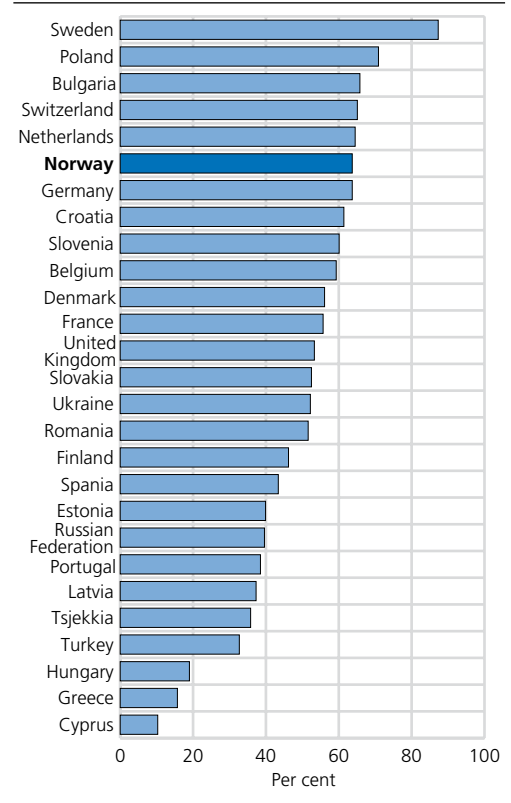
Figure 7.1. Share who would allow many or some immigrants of the same race or ethnic group as most people in the country to come and live in the country. 2008. Per cent



Source: The European Social Survey 2008.

the share that shows benevolence falls 18 percentage points compared to when the question relates to persons with the same ethnicity. This is about the same reduction as in 2006, when Norway retained its fifth place in relation to the other countries, despite the question being changed. For whatever reason, the populations of the emigration countries Poland and Bulgaria, in addition to the Netherlands, are more willing to receive immigrants with a foreign ethnicity than Norway. In the 2002 and 2004 surveys, Norway took seventh

Figure 7.2. Share who are willing to allow many or some immigrants of a different race or ethnic group from most people in the country to come and live in the country. 2008

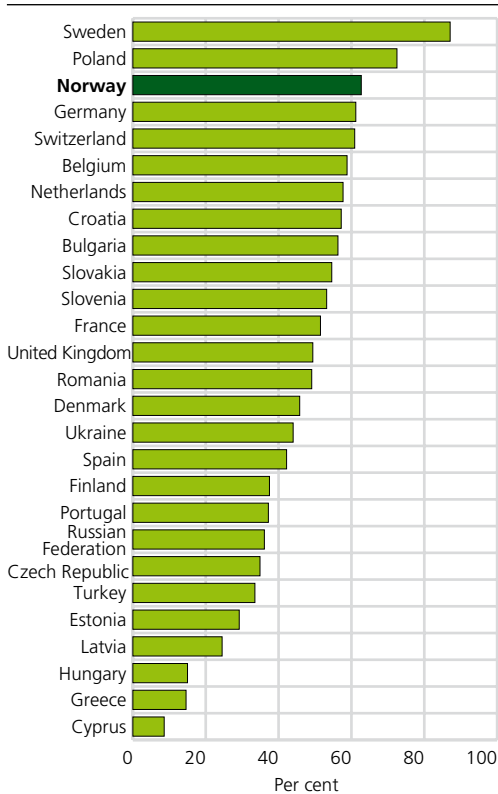


Source: The European Social Survey 2008.

and eighth place respectively on this question.

Otherwise, Sweden retained first place in the rankings in 2008, also with regard to receiving immigrants with a different ethnicity from the majority population. The share of the population that is willing to receive many or some immigrants with a foreign ethnicity is only 4 percentage points lower in Sweden than when the question relates to persons with the same ethnic background as the majority.

Figure 7.3. Share who are willing to allow many or some immigrants from poor countries outside Europe to come and live in the country. 2008. Per cent



Source: The European Social Survey 2008.

Conversely, Denmark fell from fourth place to eleventh place with regard to the question on immigrants with a different ethnicity. Thus, the share in Denmark that is willing to receive many or some immigrants fell by 26 percentage points (from 82 to 56 per cent). The most dramatic change in attitudes was among the Cypriot and Hungarian populations on this occasion. The fall for Cyprus was 70 percentage points and for Hungary 45 percentage points. This can hardly be explained as a result of random current events, since similar tendencies have been observed before. Special circumstances in the geopoliti-

tical situation of these countries are likely to be behind such results. In 1974, Cyprus was split between a Greek-speaking and a Turkish occupied territory, and Hungary has had large numbers of Hungarian-speaking minorities in its neighbouring countries since it had to relinquish two thirds of its territory in 1920 as a punishment for being on the wrong side during World War I.

Sixty-three per cent of the population in Norway think we should allow many or some from «poor countries outside Europe» to come to Norway and take up residence. This is an insignificant increase since the survey in 2002. Overall, the answers clearly indicate a preference to accept some (cf. appendix table 7.1). Compared with other countries, Norway is in third place with regard to how willing the population is to allow immigrants from poor countries outside Europe take up residence in Norway (figure 7.3); this is two places higher than the survey in 2006, and four places higher than in 2004. Indications are that the majority of countries do not perceive there to be any essential difference in receiving immigrants from poor countries outside Europe and receiving immigrants with a different ethnicity. The order of the countries in figures 7.2 and 7.3 is largely coincidental.

The questions above are not directly comparable with the question in Statistics Norway's survey of attitudes towards granting residence permits to refugees and asylum seekers. The questions in the ESS are less precise since they do not include any mention of reason for residency, and the reference to ethnicity is also not used by Statistics Norway. Neither do the questions refer to a specific reference level («compared with today»), in the way that Statistics Norway's questions on attitudes

do. Additionally, it is also unclear how many may be covered by words such as «many», «some» and «a few».

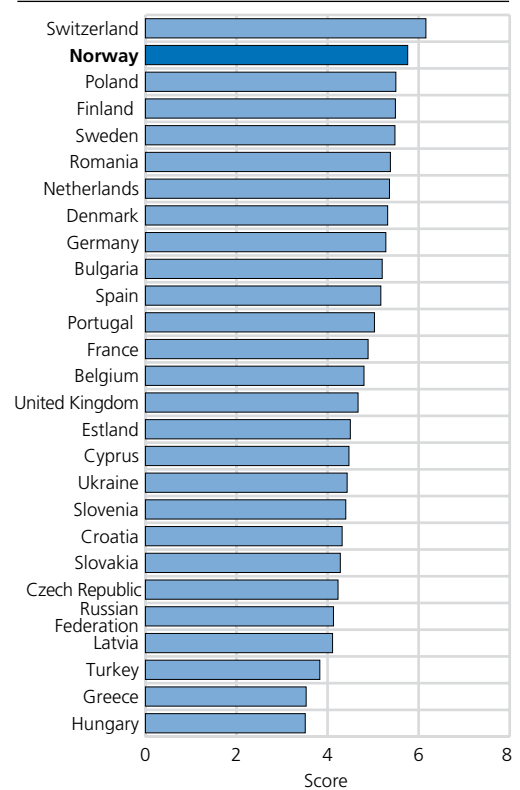
7.2. Population in Norway believes that immigration is good for the economy

The responses to the next three questions are based on an 11-point scale. The extreme points on the scale are allocated key words for the opposite points of view. The first question relates to whether immigration is «good or bad» for the national economy. The extreme points are marked «bad for the economy» (0) and «good for the economy» (10) respectively.

When the scale is divided into three, around the values 0-3, 4-6 and 7-10, it is clear that the majority of the Norwegian answers fall into the neutral middle group («neither good nor bad») and the group to the right («good for the economy») (cf. appendix table 7.2). Since 2002, the share lying in the interval 7-10 has increased by 9 percentage points.

When the countries are ranked according to the average value on the scale, Norway is in second place with regard to the view that immigration is good for the economy (figure 7.4). In 2002 and 2006, Norway was in fifth place out of all the countries and sixth place in 2004. All the populations in the Nordic countries have a high ranking for immigration being good for the economy. It is also worth noting that Norway ranks ahead of Sweden in this question. The greatest belief in the immigrants' positive effect on the economy, however, is held by the population of Switzerland; a country with a high level of labour immigration from 2004-2008 and a foreign-born population of 26 per cent in 2008 (Swiss Statistics 2010). It should further be noted that the field work

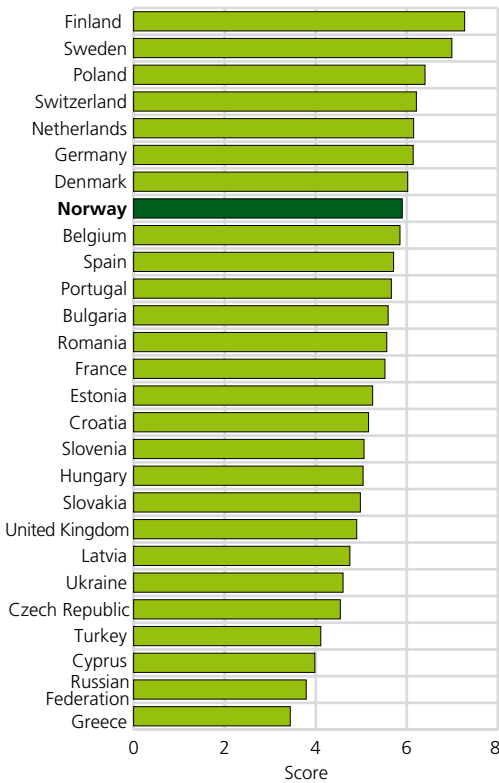
Figure 7.4. «Would you say it is generally bad or good for the country's economy that people come to live here from other countries?» (0: Bad for the economy, 10: Good for the economy). 2008. Mean score on 11-point scale



Source: The European Social Survey 2008.

for the survey – with the exception of a few countries – was carried out after the financial crisis was a fact in autumn 2008. In Norway, Germany and Switzerland, interviewing began during the last week of August 2008, followed by Denmark, the Netherlands and Spain in the first half of September. The field work in Sweden was initiated on the date of the global financing company Lehman Brothers' bankruptcy; 15 September 2008.

Figure 7.5. «Would you say that the country's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?» (0: Cultural life undermined, 10: Cultural life enriched). 2008. Mean score on 11-point scale

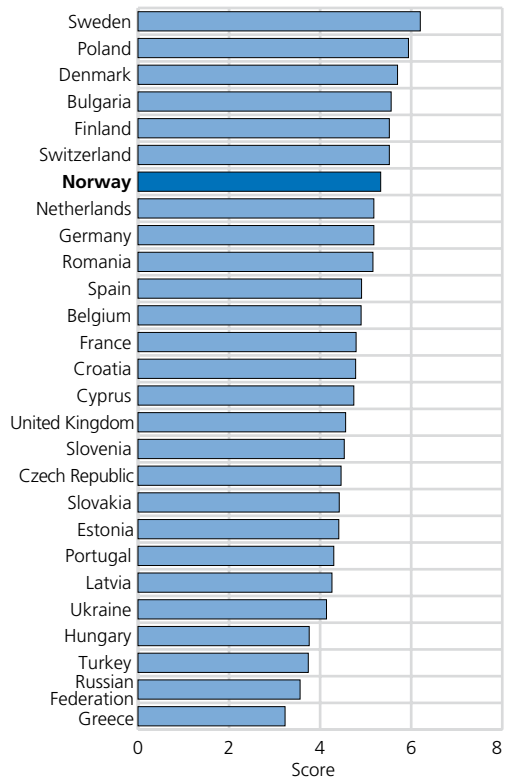


Source: The European Social Survey 2008.

7.3. Finland appreciates the immigrants' culture

In relation to a similar question to the economy question on the immigrants' contribution to the country's culture, Norway lies in eighth place, as in 2004 and 2006 (figure 7.5). In 2002, Norway shared tenth place with Belgium. The question is about whether the culture is undermined or enriched as a result of immigration. The average on the scale for Norway is somewhat higher for the question on culture (5.90) than for the question on the economy (5.76). Nevertheless, Norway is farther down the list compared with the

Figure 7.6. «Is the country made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?» (0: Worse place to live, 10: Better place to live). 2008. Mean score on 11-point scale



Source: The European Social Survey 2008.

other countries in relation to the question on the immigrants' effect on culture. This is clearly because there are quite a few more countries with a higher score for the question on culture than on the question about the effect on the economy.

According to figure 7.5, the populations of Finland and Sweden have the greatest belief that immigration enriches the culture of the country. Finland and Sweden also took first and second place respectively in this question in 2004 and 2006. Poland, Switzerland, Netherlands, Germany and Denmark are all higher up the scale than

Norway. In the case of Denmark and the Netherlands, this may seem surprising in light of the more polarised public with regard to Islam that no doubt prevails in these countries (cf. the caricature controversy and murder of the filmmaker Theo van Gogh).

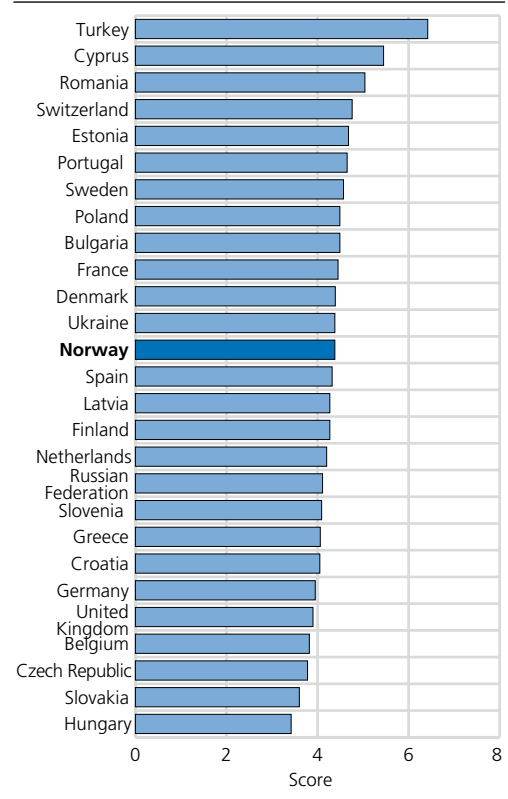
7.4. Does immigration make the country a better place to live in?

On the question of whether it has become «worse» or «better» to live in the country as a result of immigration, between 5 and 6 out of 10 Norwegians have a predominantly neutral attitude. A further 3 out of 10 believe that immigration has made the country a better place to live in, while 17 per cent have the opposite view. The share believing that immigration has made the country better, has increased by 11 percentage points since 2002 (appendix table 7.2). This gives Norway seventh place in the list of countries (figure 7.6); one place higher than in 2006. In 2002 and 2004, Norway had ninth and eleventh place respectively in relation to this question. The three other Nordic countries that took part in the survey in 2008 are all ranked above Norway with regard to their belief in immigration's beneficial effect, again with Sweden at the top. This was also the case in 2006.

7.5. Immigration and the social welfare system

In the fourth round of interviews (2008), a new question module was included on attitudes towards the social welfare system, including some questions relating to immigrants and immigration. One of the questions was worded as follows: «A lot of people who come to live in [country] from other countries pay taxes and make use of social benefits and services. On balance, do you think people who come to live in [country] receive more than they contri-

Figure 7.7. «On balance, do you think people who come to live in [country] receive more than they contribute or contribute more than they receive?» (0: Receive much more than they contribute, 10: Contribute much more than they receive), 2008. Mean score on 11-point scale



Source: The European Social Survey 2008.

bute or contribute more than they receive?» The response is given as a score on an 11-point scale, where 0 means «Receive much more than they contribute», and 10 means «Contribute much more than they receive».

Surprisingly, twice as many persons in Norway believe that immigrants receive more than they contribute (32 per cent scored 0-3), than believe that they contribute more than they receive (14 per cent scored 7-10) (appendix table

7.3). More than half of the population was in the middle of the scale (4-6). This gives Norway thirteenth place among the countries when they are ranked by degree of belief that the contribution is greater than the receipt (figure 7.7). Turkey and Cyprus take the top two spots, which are two of the countries with the most negative attitudes towards immigrants and immigration in the other questions. We are not entirely certain how this should be interpreted, but it may of course be connected with how (un-) generous the social welfare system is in many of the countries that come high up the scale.

It may also be considered surprising that 7 out of 10 Norwegians believe that labour immigration makes a positive contribution to the Norwegian economy, and that immigrants make an important contribution to Norwegian working life (cf. Chapter 6), simultaneous to more believing that immigrants receive more than they contribute than who believe the opposite.

However, it is not the first time that the population or individuals have had perceptions that can seem contradictory (Converse 1964, Festinger 1957), but one possible explanation in this case could be that the question on the immigrants' contribution to the Norwegian economy and working life primarily relates to society's production of goods and services, while the question on the relationship between contribution and receipt of social benefits and services is more narrowly related to government spending and income, as implied in the question's introduction.

With regard to the next two questions in the section on the welfare system, one question relates to how quickly and under what circumstances immigrants should be given access to social benefits and services in line with the country's own citizens.

Here it is the populations of Sweden, Denmark and Norway who are the most generous since they are largely willing to give immigrants access to social benefits when they arrive or within a year of their arrival without any requirement for them to have been employed in the country (figure not shown).

The second question is whether social benefits and services «encourage people from other countries to come and live here». In this case it is Germany, the UK and France who to a large extent (70-80 per cent) agree with this. However, Norway is, perhaps surprisingly, in fourth place (figure not shown). As in the question on whether immigrants contribute more than they receive or vice versa, the response is partly determined based on the degree of generosity of the country's welfare system. The greater the belief that the system is generous, the greater the share of respondents who agree with this question. This question is, therefore, just as much about how the welfare system is perceived as about attitudes to immigration.

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Appendix table 7.1. **Attitudes towards receiving different categories of immigrants. Norway. 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008. Per cent**

«To what extent do you think Norway should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most Norwegian people to come and live here?»

| Year | All | Allow many to come and live here | Allow some | Allow a few | Allow none | Number of persons that answered |
|------|-----|----------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|---------------------------------|
| 2002 | 100 | 20 | 52 | 26 | 2 | 2 019 |
| 2004 | 100 | 21 | 56 | 20 | 2 | 1 754 |
| 2006 | 100 | 25 | 53 | 20 | 2 | 1 739 |
| 2008 | 100 | 28 | 54 | 18 | 1 | 1 544 |

«How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most Norwegian people?»

| Year | All | Allow many to come and live here | Allow some | Allow a few | Allow none | Number of persons that answered |
|------|-----|----------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|---------------------------------|
| 2002 | 100 | 11 | 45 | 38 | 6 | 2 018 |
| 2004 | 100 | 12 | 46 | 35 | 7 | 1 753 |
| 2006 | 100 | 14 | 45 | 36 | 6 | 1 741 |
| 2008 | 100 | 14 | 49 | 33 | 3 | 1 540 |

«How about people from the poorer countries outside Europe?»

| Year | All | Allow many to come and live here | Allow some | Allow a few | Allow none | Number of persons that answered |
|------|-----|----------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|---------------------------------|
| 2002 | 100 | 12 | 49 | 34 | 5 | 2 019 |
| 2004 | 100 | 12 | 47 | 35 | 6 | 1 753 |
| 2006 | 100 | 14 | 46 | 36 | 6 | 1 743 |
| 2008 | 100 | 15 | 48 | 33 | 4 | 1 543 |

Source: The European Social Survey 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008.

Appendix table 7.2. **Assumed social consequences of immigration. Norway. 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008.**
Percentage distribution and mean score on 11-point scale

| Year | All | Bad for the economy (0-3) | Neither bad nor good (4-6) | Good for the economy (7-10) | Mean score | Number of persons that answered |
|------|-----|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|
| 2002 | 100 | 17 | 52 | 31 | 5,41 | 1 994 |
| 2003 | 100 | 21 | 50 | 29 | 5,16 | 1 737 |
| 2004 | 100 | 17 | 47 | 36 | 5,51 | 1 727 |
| 2005 | 100 | 14 | 46 | 40 | 5,76 | 1 534 |

| Year | All | Cultural life undermined (0-3) | Neither undermined nor enriched (4-6) | Cultural life enriched (7-10) | Mean score | Number of persons that answered |
|------|-----|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|
| 2002 | 100 | 16 | 41 | 43 | 5,83 | 2 019 |
| 2003 | 100 | 16 | 40 | 44 | 5,84 | 1 747 |
| 2004 | 100 | 16 | 40 | 45 | 5,89 | 1 740 |
| 2005 | 100 | 16 | 38 | 46 | 5,90 | 1 542 |

| Year | All | Worse place to live (0-3) | Neither worse nor better (4-6) | Better place to live (7-10) | Mean score | Number of persons that answered |
|------|-----|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|
| 2002 | 100 | 21 | 62 | 17 | 4,82 | 2 022 |
| 2003 | 100 | 24 | 56 | 20 | 4,84 | 1 745 |
| 2004 | 100 | 21 | 55 | 24 | 5,08 | 1 740 |
| 2005 | 100 | 17 | 55 | 28 | 5,33 | 1 539 |

Source: The European Social Survey 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008.

Appendix table 7.3. **Attitudes towards relations between social benefits/services and immigrants and immigration. Norway. 2008. Percentage distribution and mean score on 11-point scale**

«A lot of people who come to live in Norway from other countries pay taxes and make use of social benefits and services. On balance, do you think people who come to live in Norway receive more than they contribute or contribute more than they receive? Please use this card to answer.»

| Year | All | Receive more than they contribute (0-3) | Neither receive nor contribute more (4-6) | Contribute more than they receive (7-10) | Mean score | Number of persons that answered |
|------|-----|---|---|--|------------|---------------------------------|
| 2008 | 100 | 32 | 54 | 14 | 4,38 | 1 539 |

«Thinking of people coming to live in Norway from other countries, when do you think they should obtain the same rights to social benefits and services as citizens already living here? Please choose the option on this card that comes closest to your view.»

| Year | All | Immediately on arrival | After living in Norway for a year, whether or not they have worked | Only after they have worked and paid taxes for at least a year | Once they have become a Norwegian citizen | They should never get the same rights |
|------|-----|------------------------|--|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| 2008 | 100 | 13 | 13 | 35 | 37 | 2 |

«Using this card please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree that social benefits and services in Norway»

| Year | All | Agree strongly or agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree or disagree strongly | Number of persons that answered |
|------|-----|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2008 | 100 | 71 | 18 | 11 | 1 542 |

Source: The European Social Survey 2008.