

## DOES IMMIGRANTS' CHARACTERISTICS SHAPE THE PREDISPOSITION TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

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### ABSTRACT

The immigration crisis in Europe and the challenges of social and economic integration of immigrants has become a relevant subject to advanced economies. This communication aims to enhance the knowledge base about the immigrant's entrepreneurial propensity. To explore this topic the paper examines the gender, age, education, área of study and previous experience of immigrants in Portugal, assesses the individual's entrepreneurial propensity, and evaluates whether that propensity is related to the immigrant's characteristics.

The paper uses a quantitative approach, based on an online survey sent to immigrants whose hosting country is Portugal. The data collection process was carried out between March and September 2020 and the final sample considered for analysis was 100.

The results show that many immigrants have already launched their own businesses, and most of them intend to do it in the future. The effective propensity to invest is mainly influenced by gender and age while the potential entrepreneurial intention is independent of the immigrants' characteristics.

The results suggest that gender (men) and age (middle-aged) lead to an effective propensity to invest. Therefore, policymakers can increase economic activities by developing and deploying specific programs according to immigrants' demographics in order to encourage them to launch new ventures.

This study brings new empirical data to examine the level of association between the effective propensity to invest and the potential entrepreneurial intention with some personal factors of the immigrants in Portugal. It theoretically conceptualizes that immigrants of certain gender and age are more predispose to invest.

*Keywords: Immigrants, immigrant entrepreneurship, profile, propensity to entrepreneurship, Portugal.*

### INTRODUCTION

Although migration is already a very long-established phenomenon, it has experienced a significant increase in recent years (Li, 2013). Nowadays, as argued by (Baycan-Levent and Nijkamp, 2009), international migration has become a key feature of the modern open societies.

Currently, around one in every thirty people worldwide is an international migrant (IOM, 2020). According to the International Organization for Migration, in 2019, almost 272 million people were migrants, which corresponds to 3.5 per cent of the world's population, with nearly two-thirds of them being labour migrants (IOM, 2020). It is also important to note that 74 per cent of all international migrants were workers, between 20–64 years (IOM, 2020). According to the same report, in 2019, Europe, for example, had hosted around 82 million international migrants, which represents about 30,1 per cent of the total global international migrant stock. Indeed, the migration corridors have been traced over many years and typically happen from developing countries to larger and more developed economies.

Despite the relevance of migration flows at an international level, people moving to a new country sometimes face significant social and economic barriers that may lead to difficulties in integrating into the formal labour market (Sah and Li, 2019). Other migrants, when they arrive in the new host country, also seek to explore business opportunities that allow them to improve their own living conditions and their family members. For those reasons, entrepreneurial activity is quite important and promising for immigrants, who tend to be more prone to take entrepreneurial actions than the general native population (Baycan-Levent and Nijkamp, 2009).

The literature on entrepreneurship has sought to understand the main factors that constrain the propensity for entrepreneurship. Herein, a branch of the literature has studied the relevance of personal factors on the formation of entrepreneurial intentions. However, there is still a lack of robust empirical evidence about these factors.

This communication aims to enhance the knowledge base about this topic. Thus, the paper's main purpose are threefold: i) identify the profile and characteristics of immigrants in Portugal; ii) examine the predisposition of immigrants towards entrepreneurship; and iii) evaluate whether the predisposition of immigrants to entrepreneurship depends on their profile.

The communication is divided into 4 main sections. In section 1 is presented the literature review on the main topics. Firstly, the concepts of immigration and immigrant entrepreneurship are discussed. Thereafter, the main personal factors that influence the propensity to entrepreneurship are explored. The methodology of the study is described in section 2, and in Section 3 the results attained are presented. In the end, the main conclusions of the communication are summarized.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *Immigrants and immigrant entrepreneurship*

International migrants are, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2020), people who stay outside their usual country of residence for a period of at least one year. These people

leave their own country of origin because of economic, geographic, demographic motives that are the basis for creating migration flows and migration flows (IOM, 2020).

Migration flows have brought some important economic and social benefits, contributing for example, to world economic growth, society evolution, cultural enrichment, and dynamization of the societies' level of entrepreneurial activity, either in origin and destination countries (IOM, 2020).

Despite the growth and potential of immigration, the migration phenomenon is also associated with many difficulties (Li, 2013). The main challenges faced by immigrants could result from their economic and socio-cultural integration, which are considered critical for people arriving in a new country (Sah and Li, 2019). Economic integration refers to the ability to enter the labour market successfully; Socio-cultural integration, on the other hand, involves a process of mutual adaptation between migrants and host communities, and is related to the migrants' sense of belonging, the knowledge of the host country's culture and social norms, and the ability to establish relational ties within the new community.

Existing literature indicates that entrepreneurship is an important activity for immigrants. Indeed, empirical evidence reveals that migrant entrepreneurs are more likely to work independently and launch new businesses than native-born entrepreneurs in most countries, including Portugal (Baycan-Levent and Nijkamp, 2009). Herein, entrepreneurship often becomes a tool for immigrants' labour integration in the host country, mainly as an alternative against lack of employment and possible exploitation by employers (Baycan-Levent and Nijkamp, 2009; Coutinho *et al.*, 2008). In addition, as observed by Baycan-Levent and Nijkamp (2009), immigrants and foreigners are often more exposed to unemployment than the native population.

Immigrant entrepreneurship can be understood as the process by which an immigrant sets up a business in the host country (Dalhammar, 2004). Thus, the concept of immigrant entrepreneurship refers to the portion of immigrants who opt for entrepreneurship, either driven by choice or by necessity. In the first case, immigrants adopt an entrepreneurial behavior to explore opportunities in the business environment that they perceive to provide better living conditions for themselves and their families. In entrepreneurship by need, the option by an entrepreneurial activity is related to the scarcity of opportunities found in the host country (Baggio and Baggio, 2015; Van Auken *et al.*, 2006; Zolfagharian and Iyer, 2020).

#### *Propensity to entrepreneurship*

The concept of entrepreneurship is often linked to starting a business, typically a private for-profit business (Drucker, 1985). In its origin, the concept means to undertake, to try and experiment.

Currently, the term is used to describe initiatives that combine productive resources (human, material and financial), which are used to achieve an end (profit), with the entrepreneur accepting the risks of the business itself.

As entrepreneurship is an individual act taking place in a social setting (GEM, 2020), several researchers have studied the influence of the entrepreneurs' personal factors, such as personality traits and demographics, and contextual variables on the development of entrepreneurial intentions and the predisposition to become an entrepreneur (Faria and Couto, 2019; Teixeira and Davey, 2010). Specifically, one of the topics investigated includes the analysis of socio-demographic variables and to what extent these variables are able to trigger the propensity to start an entrepreneurial venture.

*a) Gender*

Research on economic entrepreneurship generally identifies a gender gap favorable to men (GEM, 2020). This gender gap is found in most countries, as in most of them, new businesses are more likely to be started by men than women (GEM, 2020). Indeed, in 2020, female entrepreneurship was higher than the male one in just six countries, located in Central and East Asia or the Middle East and Africa. Thus, early-stage entrepreneurial activity is gender-sensitive for a combination of cultural, societal and economic reasons.

As argued by (Colombelli *et al.*, 2021), a justification for this gender gap could be provided by the barriers to starting a new venture, which is higher for women and could be even more intense in the case of women immigrants. Among these difficulties, (Colombelli *et al.*, 2021), highlight the lower financial education of women and the lower amounts of credit that women ask for and have access if compared to men.

Further, the motivations for female entrepreneurship vary from country to country as they are related to the various factors in each country (economic, political, social, cultural, legal). Nevertheless, According to the GEM Report on Women's Entrepreneurship (GEM, 2019), starting an entrepreneurial activity lead by necessity motivations is more common in women than in men.

*b) Age*

Age has been mentioned as a factor capable of influencing the propensity for entrepreneurship, although the age profile of entrepreneurs varies according to the country's economic characteristics.

There is an inverted u-shaped pattern for most countries, since the entrepreneurial activity rate increases with age group and then decline. Indeed, for most countries studied in the GEM Report (GEM, 2020), the most prevalent age of entrepreneurs is between 25 and 34 years old.

The influence of age on entrepreneurial predisposition could be explained by different factors such as: (i) the energy, propensity to new experiences, capacity to use new technologies and follow a trend, and time available to take benefit from a successful initiative, which is especially common in younger people; and (ii) the skills, knowledge, access to information, networks and other resources essential to launch a new venture, for which older people may be more capable and empowered (GEM, 2020).

Concerning immigrants age, it should be noted that young people born abroad are significantly more exposed to unemployment than are their native counterparts (Baycan-Levent and Nijkamp, 2009).

*c) Education and area of study*

Education has been pointed out as an encouraging element of entrepreneurial behaviour. Several studies, in different contexts, suggest that training increases the likelihood that an individual will engage in entrepreneurship (Estrin *et al.*, 2012; GEM, 2020; Teixeira and Davey, 2010).

The relevance of education in entrepreneurship could be explained by the facility that individuals with higher levels of education could have in identifying and exploring new opportunities, and the financial capacity that they have to access funding (GEM, 2020). Even so, the GEM report (GEM, 2020) identifies some few exceptions with countries where the entrepreneurial activity of graduates are lower when compared with non- graduates individuals.

In addition, education in entrepreneurship, through the inclusion of entrepreneurship courses and activities on campus, has been recognized as very important to the development of an entrepreneurial attitude (GEM, 2020; Teixeira and Davey, 2010).

Existing literature also indicates that the area where people develop their studies can constrain the entrepreneurial propensity, emphasizing the positive impact of training in economics and business. Similarly, (Wadhwa *et al.*, 2007) found some prevalence of science, technology, engineering and mathematics-related fields among immigrant entrepreneurs.

*d) Previous experience*

Literature has also pointed out that the individual's personal and professional experience is an important factor in developing a new venture.

Previous exposure to the business sector is confirmed as relevant to entrepreneurship predisposition, as well as parental work experiences, professional education, and personal work experiences. The influence of role models on the decision to become self-employed have also been confirmed as relevant (Lasпита *et al.*, 2012), which are justified in accordance with the social learning theory (Chlosta *et al.*, 2012). (Chlosta *et al.*, 2012) argue that the growth and exposure in families with an

entrepreneurial heritage allow children to learn from others who play the role models for them and influence their attitudes, values, and lifestyle. These role models could even be found among immigrants, as shown by (Colombelli *et al.*, 2021), who found a higher propensity to entrepreneurship if immigrants are located in ethnic communities, providing industry-specific institutional knowledge and exerting this role model effect and foster learning-by-example mechanisms.

In addition to personal contacts, migrants can follow behaviour models performed by other respected and admired businesspersons, whose success has inspired them. As suggested by (Griskevicius *et al.*, 2012), individuals tend to imitate those who are perceived as prestigious or successful under the contingent behaviour theory.

Type of variable	Variable name	Variable description
Dependent variable	Effective entrepreneurial propensity	Refers to the fact that immigrants have already created an organization; Dummy variable, where 0 corresponds to "no" and 1 corresponds to "yes".
	Potential entrepreneurial propensity	Refers to the likelihood of immigrants in Portugal start a new venture in the future. A five-point Likert scale was used, where 1 corresponds to highly unlikely and 5 to highly likely.
Independent variable	Gender	Refers to the immigrants' gender, where 1 corresponds to "female" and 2 corresponds to "male";
	Age	Refers to the immigrants' age; The variable comprises the following categories: 1. < 25 years old 2. Between 25 and 35 years old 3. Between 36 and 45 years old 4. Between 46 and 55 years old 5. > 56 years old
	Education level	Refers to the immigrants' educational degree, where 1 corresponds to secondary studies and 2 corresponds to higher education;
	Area of study	Corresponds to the field where the immigrants have developed their studies; The variable comprises the following categories: 1 corresponds to education in engineering sciences, 2 corresponds to economic and businesses, 3 corresponds to social sciences and 4 corresponds to others.
	Number of years in Portugal	Refers to the number of years over which immigrants have already been in Portugal, where 1 refers to less than 1 year ago; 2 between 5 and 10 years, and 3 corresponds to a situation where immigrants have been in Portugal for more than 3 years;

Table 1. Summary of the variables in the research model (Own elaboration)

Job satisfaction has also been mentioned as a driver of entrepreneurial activity, as empirical evidence shows that dissatisfaction with past experiences increases the likelihood of individuals being involved in creating their own ventures (Smith-Hunter *et al.*, 2003). Entrepreneurial orientation can also be explained by the beliefs and social norms that prevail in the circles closer to the individuals (e.g. friends and family). According to (do Paço *et al.*, 2011), these subjective social norms are, in part, determined by the opinion of those people who influence individuals' entrepreneurial behaviour. In addition, (Wadhwa *et al.*, 2007) found, in the American case, that immigrant entrepreneurs usually launched their venture after working and residing in the country for an average of thirteen years.

## METHODOLOGY

This communication aims to understand if the immigrants' gender, age, education, area of study and previous experience can influence their current and future propensity to entrepreneurship. To implement the research objectives a set of variables was considered in the investigation (see summary in Table 1).

The primary data was collected through a survey sent to immigrant entrepreneurs in Portugal. The questionnaire was made available online through the Lime Survey platform.

The sampling frame of the study comprises the individuals coming from other countries and currently residing in Portugal, who attend training courses on entrepreneurship, such as the Program for the Promotion of Immigrant Entrepreneurship, conducted by the Office of Support to Entrepreneurial Migrants held by the Portuguese High Commission for Migration, as well as the Women's Connection Network focused on women's issues, especially female entrepreneurship. Initially, we requested the support of the office of the High Commissioner for Migration, which forwarded the request to the responsible by the Office of Support to Entrepreneurial Migrants, which has collaborated by sending the questionnaire to the immigrants participating in different editions of the Program for the Promotion of Immigrant Entrepreneurship. We have also asked a network that supports female entrepreneurship (Women's Connection Network) to disseminate the questionnaire among its members.

The data collection process was carried out between March and September 2020, which allow to collect 100 valid responses, provided by immigrants from different countries such as Brazil (81.0%), Venezuela (4.0%), Germany (3%) or Angola (2%). The data analysis was made through the use of the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software, version 26.

## RESULTS

The profile of immigrants who have participated in the research is summarized in Table 2.

		N	%
Gender	Female	66	66,0%
	Male	34	34,0%
Age	< 25 years old	5	5,0%
	25-35 years old	24	24,0%
	36-45 years old	34	34,0%
	46-55 years old	29	29,0%
	> 56 years old	8	8,0%
Number of years in Portugal	< 3 years	68	68,0%
	Between 5 and 10 years	23	23,0%
	> 10 years	9	9,0%
Education Level	Secondary education	9	9,1%
	Higher education	90	90,9%
Area of study	Engineering Sciences	10	10,0%
	Economic and business sciences	28	20,1%
	Social sciences	24	14,8%
	Other	38	27,5%

Table 2. Profile of immigrants in Portugal (Own elaboration)

The respondents are mostly female (60.0%) and only 34.0% are male. The age of most immigrants in the sample are over 36 years old (71.0%), especially the groups aged between 36 and 45 years old (34.0%) and between 46 and 55 years old (29.0%). By contrast, the percentage of respondents who are less than 36 years old was only 29.0%.

Questions		N	%
Have you already created any organizations?	No	49	49,0%
	Yes	51	51,0%
Probability of starting an organization in the future	1- Highly unlikely	10	11,2%
	2- Unlikely	7	7,9%
	3- Neither likely nor unlikely	16	18,0%
	4- Likely	23	25,8%
	5- Highly likely	33	37,1%

Table 3. Entrepreneurial attitudes of immigrants in Portugal (Own elaboration)

Most respondents are living in Portugal for less than 3 years (68.0%), and only 9.0% have been living in the country for more than 10 years. The vast majority of the respondents have higher education (90.9%), while the remaining respondents have secondary education (9.1%). The immigrants have developed their studies in economics and business (20.0%), social sciences (14.8%) and engineering (10.0%).

Regarding the entrepreneurial activity of the immigrants in Portugal, the analysis of Table 3 indicates that slightly more than half of the respondents have already created an organization in the past (51.0%). In addition, 62.9% of them consider as likely or very likely the possibility of launching an organization

in the future. On the other hand, just 19.1% of the respondents mentioned being unlikely to start an organization in the future.

When analyzing the entrepreneurial attitude of immigrants in Portugal in accordance with their profile (Table 4), we observe that the creation of an organization was more frequently among male immigrants than female ones. Indeed, we observe that most male respondents had already created an organization in the past (73,5%), while only about one-third of women reported the same (39,4%). Regarding the future entrepreneurial activity, we observe that the percentage of men who indicate to be likely or very likely to create an organization in the future (71.9%) is higher than that observed for women (57.9%).

With regard to age, it is more common that younger immigrants have never created any organization. Further, respondents aged between 46 and 55 are those for whom a higher percentage of entrepreneurial activity is already observed. Interestingly, it is observed that most respondents are likely or very likely to start an entrepreneurial activity in the future for most age groups. The exceptions were found in younger and older migrants. Indeed, only 40% of individuals aged less than 25 years old expressed a positive intention to create an organization in the future. However, a large percentage of people aged less than 25 do not have a definitive idea about the possibility of developing an organization in the future. The same pattern is also observed in people over 56 years of age.

The results show that people who are living recently in Portugal have a higher effective entrepreneurial attitude than those immigrants who have been in Portugal for more than 10 years. The same is found for the possibility of developing an entrepreneurial activity in the future.

Most immigrants who have higher education levels have already created an organization (53,3%), which is considerably lower for individuals with lower education levels education (22,2%). However, those individuals with only secondary education have a higher potential in the future, since most (75%) consider it likely or very likely to launch a business in coming years.

Regarding the area of study, we observe that the effective entrepreneurial behaviour was higher in individuals from engineering (60.0%) and economic and business sciences (60,7%); however, when looking at the future entrepreneurial potential, the responses are very similar across the different areas of study under analysis, being most of the respondent prone to launch a venture.

Variables		Have already created any organizations?		Probability of starting an organization in the future				
		No	Yes	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Gender	Female	60,6%	39,4%	12,3%	8,8%	21,1%	24,6%	33,3%
	Male	26,5%	73,5%	9,4%	6,3%	12,5%	28,1%	43,8%
Age	< 25 years old	100,0%	0,0%	20,0%	0,0%	40,0%	0,0%	40,0%
	25-35 years old	62,5%	37,5%	4,5%	13,6%	9,1%	31,8%	40,9%
	36-45 years old	47,1%	52,9%	13,3%	3,3%	16,7%	23,3%	43,3%
	46-55 years old	31,0%	69,0%	12,0%	12,0%	16,0%	28,0%	32,0%
	> 56 years old	50,0%	50,0%	14,3%	0,0%	42,9%	28,6%	14,3%
Number of years in Portugal	< 3 years	50,0%	50,0%	11,1%	9,5%	17,5%	23,8%	38,1%
	Between 5 and 10 years	34,8%	65,2%	15,8%	5,3%	5,3%	31,6%	42,1%
	> 10 years	77,8%	22,2%	0,0%	0,0%	57,1%	28,6%	14,3%
Education Level	Secondary education	77,8%	22,2%	0,0%	12,5%	12,5%	50,0%	25,0%
	Higher education	46,7%	53,3%	12,3%	7,4%	18,5%	23,5%	38,3%
Area of study	Engineering Sciences	40,0%	60,0%	11,1%	0,0%	33,3%	11,1%	44,4%
	Economic and business sciences	39,3%	60,7%	7,7%	7,7%	23,1%	34,6%	26,9%
	Social sciences	54,2%	45,8%	4,5%	4,5%	22,7%	18,2%	50,0%
	Other	55,3%	44,7%	18,8%	12,5%	6,3%	28,1%	34,4%
Number of years in Portugal	< 3 years	50,0%	50,0%	11,1%	9,5%	17,5%	23,8%	38,1%
	Between 5 and 10 years	34,8%	65,2%	15,8%	5,3%	5,3%	31,6%	42,1%
	> 10 years	77,8%	22,2%	0,0%	0,0%	57,1%	28,6%	14,3%

Table 4. Entrepreneurial intentions according to immigrants' profile (Own elaboration)

In order to understand the level of association that may exist between propensity for entrepreneurship and the profile of the respondents, a correlation analysis based on Spearman's rho coefficient was undertaken (Table 5).

Variable	Have already created any organizations	Probability of starting an organization in the future
Gender	0,323**	0,127
Age	0,263**	-0,111
Number of years in Portugal	-0,009	-0,010
Education Level	0,179	-0,009
Area of study	-0,135	-0,029
Number of years in Portugal	-0,009	-0,010

Note: \*\* The correlation is significant at 0.01; \* The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 5. Correlations matrix between entrepreneurial intentions and immigrants' profile (Own elaboration)

The analysis reveals that the effective creation of organizations in the past is statistically significant for gender ( $r_s = 0,323$ ,  $\alpha = 0.01$ ) and age ( $r_s = 0,263$ ,  $\alpha = 0.01$ ). No statistically significant correlations were

observed concerning the number of years in Portugal, education level and area of study. In addition, the analysis reveals that the probability of starting an organization in the future is not statistically correlated with the immigrants' profile.

## CONCLUSIONS

The investigation carried out reveals that immigrants in Portugal have a highly effective and potential entrepreneurial activity, since more than half of the participants indicated having already created their own business, and most have already consider this possibility as likely or very likely in the future.

The work developed shows that the demographic pattern of immigrants in Portugal can slightly influence the predisposition to entrepreneurship. The factors that better discriminate the entrepreneurial behaviour is gender and age. Indeed, the investigation reveals that men, similarly to the observed in entrepreneurship in a broader sense, are more prone to get involved in immigrant entrepreneurship initiative than women. This finding may be justified by the more significant difficulties of women immigrants to launch a new venture, regardless of the integration barriers they could face in the host country.

The investigation further indicates that age can condition the predisposition to entrepreneurship, being this propensity more evident among middle-aged immigrants. The propensity to create an entrepreneurial activity in the future, in turn, is independent of the immigrants' profile.

In the future, it would be interesting to study the main motivations that led immigrant entrepreneurs to start their activity in Portugal and if those motivations are or not constrained by the immigrants' profile.

The paper contributes to the understanding of the personal factors (gender, age, education level, area of study and previous experience) of the immigrant potential entrepreneurs in Portugal. Also, the study brings new empirical data about the relation between immigrants personal factors and, respectively, the effective propensity to invest and the potential entrepreneurial intention propensity.

The practical implications of the research is for policymakers that can increase economic activities by developing and deploying specific programs according to immigrants' demographics in order to encourage them to launch new ventures. Also, financial institutions could be interested in the results as they could design niche marketing strategies in order to attract immigrants of certain gender and age. Finally, the study brings awareness to non-governmental organizations that hosts immigrants that entrepreneurship is an important way to create self employment.

Despite the enlargement of the knowledge base, the research has some limitations, especially the sample size, and the fact that it was performed in a single country.

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