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ARTICLE

The Impact of EU Immigration Law and Policy on Immigrants' Subjective Well-Being

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ABSTRACT: Background: Against the backdrop of the complex interplay between global migration flows and the European Union's governance system, immigrants' subjective well-being (SWB) has become a crucial indicator for assessing both their social integration and the effectiveness of integration policies. However, few studies have systematically linked immigration law and policy to SWB through a structured framework of human needs. This study aims to assess how European Union (EU) immigration policies influence immigrants' SWB by facilitating the fulfillment of hierarchical needs based on Maslow's theory. **Methods:** Using data from the European Social Survey (ESS, 2010–2023), this study analyzed 28,854 first-generation and second-generation immigrants across 24 EU member states. This study employed hierarchical regression models to assess the relative contribution of five levels of needs—physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization—in predicting life satisfaction and happiness, controlling for sociodemographic factors. **Results:** Safety needs—comprising perceived safety and institutional trust—produced the largest model improvement ($\Delta R^2 \approx 0.06$–0.07). Physiological needs (stable income and self-rated health) also had significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.06$–0.25, $p < 0.001$). Social and esteem needs showed moderate associations ($\beta \approx 0.09$–0.17, $p < 0.001$), while self-actualization needs (education and union membership) displayed generational variation ($\beta = 0.02$–0.10, $p < 0.01$). **Conclusion:** This study not only validates the applicability of Maslow's theory in migration research but also empirically establishes a policy hierarchy: ensuring physiological and safety needs as a foundation, supporting social and esteem needs, and enabling self-actualization pathways are essential for enhancing immigrant well-being. The findings offer valuable theoretical insights and practical guidance for refining immigrant integration policies within the EU's multi-level governance structure.

KEYWORDS: Subjective well-being; immigration law and policy; EU immigration; Maslow's hierarchy of needs

1 Introduction

International migration represents a profound social phenomenon that not only reshapes demographic structures but also entails complex interactions among ideological, ethnic, religious, and cultural factors, serving as an intrinsic component of social transformation and development [1]. The European Union (EU), which has long been regarded as a region of economic prosperity and political stability, continues to attract a substantial number of international migrants [2]. According to the latest Eurostat data, on 1 January 2024, 44.7 million persons born outside the EU were residing in an EU country, representing 9.9% of the EU population. This represents an increase of 2.3 million compared with the previous year [3]. This expanding immigrant population poses significant challenges not only to the social structure of host societies but also to the quality of life and integration outcomes of immigrants themselves.

In this context, subjective well-being (SWB) has gained increasing scholarly attention as a critical indicator for assessing immigrants' psychological adaptation and social integration [4]. SWB reflects

individuals' affective and cognitive evaluations of their lives and has been widely used to assess the effectiveness of integration policies [5]. However, existing research remains fragmented, often focusing on a single country or a specific group, and lacks a systematic theoretical framework that systematically connects immigration legal policies, needs fulfillment, and SWB within the EU's multi-level governance structure.

While scholars have acknowledged the role of legal and policy environments in shaping immigrant outcomes, there has been insufficient integration of need-based theories into empirical studies of immigrant well-being. Maslow's theory, which classifies human needs into five ascending levels (physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization), offers a robust framework for understanding how institutional structures, including laws and policies, affect the satisfaction of these needs [6]. However, few studies have operationalized this framework to examine how EU immigration policies predict SWB through these needs channels.

It is also important to note that the term 'immigrant' encompasses diverse legal categories, including both voluntary migrants and refugees, among others [7,8]. However, the ESS database does not systematically distinguish between legal categories of immigrants. Therefore, this study does not distinguish between types of immigrants by legal categories [9]. This research instead focuses on first-generation and second-generation immigrants, defined by birthplace and parental origin, which is consistent with international legal principles that combine *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli* [10].

Against this backdrop, the present study aims to examine how EU immigration laws and policies are associated with immigrants' subjective well-being through indicators of needs fulfillment, as articulated by Maslow's five-tier hierarchy. Using cross-national data from the European Social Survey (ESS) from 2010 to 2023, we construct hierarchical regression models to analyze the relative importance of physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs in shaping life satisfaction and happiness among first-generation and second-generation immigrants.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Application and Shortcomings of Subjective Well-Being Theory in Migration Research

As a core indicator to measure an individual's quality of life, SWB has evolved from its early psychological focus on a two-dimensional structure to comprising affective and cognitive components into an interdisciplinary, multi-dimensional construct. Diener defines that SWB encompasses two fundamental dimensions: affective balance (the experience of positive and negative affect) and cognitive evaluation (overall and domain-specific life satisfaction) [11]. In recent years, scholars have increasingly applied SWB within migration studies to assess the adaptation status and integration outcomes of immigrants in host countries [12]. Baltatescu emphasizes that immigrants' SWB is shaped by a multitude of factors, including individual-level characteristics such as cultural background, economic status, and personal experiences, as well as macro-level elements such as immigration policies, societal attitudes, and institutional environments [13]. Demireva and Zwysen further indicate that legal rights, social recognition, and policy stability significantly relate to immigrants' psychological experiences and life satisfaction [14]. Research by Cummins and Pollenne, among others, demonstrates that migration motivations are diverse, encompassing economic improvement, educational opportunities, family reunification, and asylum-seeking needs; these factors collectively shape the trajectory of their post-migration well-being [15,16].

Notably, SWB not only reflects the psychological state of individual immigrants but also serves as a crucial indicator of policy effectiveness. Brzozowski and Sikorska advocate the use of subjective well-being as an alternative measure of migrants' socioeconomic adaptation [17]. Ambrosetti et al. propose that SWB can effectively capture immigrants' subjective evaluations of their living conditions in the host country, thereby offering a means to assess the practical outcomes of integration policies [18]. Scholars like

Carlquist et al. further argue that, compared to objective socioeconomic indicators, SWB provides a more comprehensive and sensitive reflection of immigrants' quality of life and degree of social integration [19].

However, existing research still exhibits significant limitations. Most literature focuses on a single country or a specific group [20], lacking a holistic examination of how EU-level immigration policies influence SWB within a unified framework. At the level of theoretical integration, a systematic theoretical link between immigration law and policy, needs satisfaction, and subjective well-being has yet to be established. Based on Maslow's needs theory, this study attempts to explore the relationship between EU immigration law and policy and subjective well-being.

2.2 Applicability and Frameworks of Maslow's Theory in Immigration Legal Policy Research

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory categorizes human needs into five hierarchical levels: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization [6]. This theory not only reveals the structure of individual motivation but also provides a classic framework for understanding how institutions respond to and facilitate human needs [21]. Maslow observed that "human nature is essentially defined by its needs," and the satisfaction of these needs must be achieved through socially sanctioned channels [6]. Pote's latest research explores the legal promotion of the all-round needs of human beings from the perspective of Maslow's hierarchy of needs [22]. A dynamic interplay exists between law and the hierarchy of needs. Specifically, the law secures lower-level needs (physiological and safety) by guaranteeing basic rights to survival, labor, and health. Conversely, it enables the realization of higher-level needs (social, esteem, and self-actualization) by upholding fairness and justice, promoting social mobility, and protecting personal dignity.

As far back as 1977, Adler attempted to use Maslow's theory to explain the process of basic needs satisfaction among immigrants, positing immigration laws and policies as an objective reality possessing need-fulfilling properties [23]. In recent years, scholars have further connected this theoretical framework to the issues of immigrant rights protection. Building on this foundation, Ramakrishnan notes that immigrants often prioritize the pursuit of physiological and safety needs during their acculturation process [24]. Similarly, Weinberg emphasizes the critical role of social connections and a sense of belonging for psychological integration [25], while more recent research by Teslyuk highlights the institutional barriers in career development and self-actualization, pointing to a clear need for supportive policies [26]. While existing research has laid a foundation for understanding immigrant needs, empirical research that operationalizes immigration laws and policies into specific need-based dimensions remains scarce.

2.3 The Relationship Between EU Immigration Law and Policy and Subjective Well-Being: Existing Research Gaps

EU immigration policy has evolved from an initial focus on economic free movement toward a greater emphasis on rights protection and social integration. The 2009 *Lisbon Treaty* strengthened the EU's competencies in migration matters, establishing the protection of fundamental rights and the principle of non-discrimination as core policy pillars [27]. However, the converging impacts of the refugee crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and geopolitical conflicts have placed the EU migration system under severe strain, exacerbating policy instability and disparities in implementation across member states [28]. In 2021, the EU introduced the "*New Pact on Migration and Asylum*" in an effort to reform the system and address gaps in previous treaties. Nevertheless, the long-term effectiveness and certainty of these policies are yet to be fully realized. It is within this complex policy landscape that subjective well-being has emerged as a meaningful tool for evaluating both social policies and individual living conditions [29], making it highly relevant to assessing the actual effects of migration policies [30]. For instance, Ambrosetti argues that subjective well-being acts as a "barometer" for monitoring social integration processes [5]. Similarly, Zunino

emphasizes that subjective well-being reflects the lived experience of immigrants and provides critical insights for designing and implementing integration policies [31]. Möllers further notes that empirical data and sociological analysis can uncover the social realities embedded within legal frameworks, thereby providing an empirical foundation for evidence-based policy refinement [32].

Although existing studies have recognized the influence of policy factors on SWB, several research gaps persist. First, much of the literature examines economic or social factors in a fragmented manner, lacking a systematic and layered analysis of legal and policy structures. Second, the absence of an integrated theoretical framework that bridges Maslow's hierarchy, policies, and subjective well-being.

Therefore, this study investigates the relationship between EU immigration policies on immigrants' subjective well-being through the lens of Maslow's five-tier hierarchy (physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs).

3 Methods

3.1 Data and Sample

This study utilizes cross-national, cross-sectional data from Rounds 5 to 11 (2010–2023) of the ESS. The ESS employs a rigorous multi-stage stratified probability sampling design and conducts face-to-face interviews, ensuring high representativeness and cross-country comparability [33]. The ESS immigration-related scales have been validated for cross-cultural reliability and validity [34]. To analyze the policy effects of the *Lisbon Treaty* (effective 2009), we selected 24 EU member states that participated in at least three consecutive survey rounds: Finland, Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden, Austria, Ireland, Germany, Belgium, Czechia, Lithuania, France, Slovenia, Slovakia, Estonia, Spain, Italy, Poland, Latvia, Cyprus, Croatia, Hungary, Portugal, Greece, and Bulgaria.

Immigrant status was determined by using three ESS items: "Born in country," "Mother born in country," and "Father born in country." A first-generation immigrant was defined as an individual not born in the current country of residence. A second-generation immigrant was defined as an individual born in the country of residence but with at least one parent born abroad. The analysis sample includes both first-generation and second-generation immigrants, encompassing a broad range of legal statuses and migration reasons.

The final analytical sample consisted of 28,854 immigrants (15,206 first-generation; 13,648 second-generation). Missing values and outliers were handled through data cleaning and multiple imputation (see Appendix A for details).

3.2 Dependent Variable—Subjective Well-Being

SWB refers to individuals' affective and cognitive evaluations of their own quality of life and is widely operationalized in large-scale surveys [35]. The single-item measures of life satisfaction and happiness employed in the ESS have been widely used in cross-national research and have demonstrated good reliability and validity, exhibiting strong correlations with other well-being indicators and stability over time [36]. It was operationalized using two ESS items:

Cognitive dimension:" How satisfied are you with life as a whole?" (stflife)

Affective dimension: "How happy are you?" (happy)

3.3 Independent Variables: Core Explanatory Variables Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The independent variables correspond to the five levels of Maslow's hierarchy, operationalized using ESS items.

3.3.1 Physiological Needs

Physiological needs represent the most basic and fundamental human requirements, encompassing essentials such as food, clothing, shelter, and transportation. These needs stem from humans' natural attributes. Maslow's theory posits that only after these basic physiological needs are met can individuals pursue higher-level needs [6]. With economic growth, the relationship between income and fulfilling physiological needs has become increasingly strong [37].

Physiological needs were measured by two indicators:

Main Income Source: Measured by the item," Main source of household income"

Self-rated Health: Assessed using the item, "State of health services"

3.3.2 Safety Needs

Safety needs were measured along two dimensions:

Sense of Security: Measured by the item, "Feeling of safety when walking alone at night"

Institutional Trust: A latent variable constructed via Principal Component Analysis (PCA) from four items: trust in the legal system, police, politicians, and political parties [38]. PCA yielded one component with high loadings (>0.7) and a variance explained approximately 70% for both immigrant groups (see Appendix B.1).

3.3.3 Social Needs

Social needs encompass the human requirements for social interaction, a sense of belonging, as well as friendship and affectionate relationships. According to intergroup contact theory, such contact is a positive correlate of intergroup relations. Social needs were operationalized by the item: "How often socially meet with friends, relatives or colleagues," labeled as "Social Contact."

3.3.4 Esteem Needs

Esteem needs refer to individuals' expectations regarding their reputation, status, personality, achievements, and interests, coupled with a desire for societal acknowledgment and respect. Existing research has established a significant correlation between perceived discrimination and subjective well-being [39]. Esteem needs were represented by a composite variable "Attitudes," constructed via PCA from three items: The attitudes of host-country citizens toward immigrants relate to the nation's economy, cultural life, and living environment. One principal component was extracted, explaining over 75% of the variance in both groups (see Appendix B.2).

3.3.5 Self-Realization Needs

Self-actualization refers to the need of individuals to realize their potential and utilize their talents. People experience the greatest satisfaction when their potential is fully developed and expressed. Self-actualization was measured by two indicators:

Education: "State of education in the country nowadays" (0–10)

Union Membership: "Member of a trade union or similar organisation" (yes/no)

3.4 Control Variables

To ensure the validity of the econometric results and to be in line with previous studies, this study controls for a set of individual characteristics, including age, gender, and marital status. Furthermore, considering the specific context of our research on immigrants within the EU, we also incorporate religious

affiliation and language proficiency as additional control variables. Consequently, age, gender, marital status, religious affiliation, and language proficiency are included as control variables in our analysis.

3.5 Date Analysis

All data analyses were performed using SPSS 27.0 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA). Prior to analysis, variables were examined for missing values, multicollinearity, and outliers. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize sociodemographic characteristics and key study variables.

To identify factors influencing immigrants' subjective well-being, hierarchical linear regression models were employed with life satisfaction and happiness as dependent variables. The predictors were entered sequentially following Maslow's hierarchy of needs to assess the incremental explanatory power of each needs dimension.

Model 1: Control variables only (age, gender, marital status, religiosity, language proficiency)

Model 2: Adds physiological needs (income source, self-rated health)

Model 3: Adds safety needs (sense of security, institutional trust index)

Model 4: Adds social needs (social contact frequency)

Model 5: Adds esteem needs (perceived societal attitudes index)

Model 6: Adds self-actualization needs (satisfaction with education, union membership)

Separate analyses were conducted for first-generation and second-generation immigrants. Model fit and assumptions were verified using variance inflation factors (VIF < 5).

4 Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

The control variables in this study encompass basic demographic characteristics: age, gender, marital status, and language proficiency. As immigrants' religious affiliation is frequently used as a control variable in studies on their subjective well-being in the host country, it was also included herein.

This study draws on data from Rounds 5 to 11 of the ESS, comprising a total sample of 28,854 immigrant respondents, including 15,206 first-generation immigrants (foreign-born) and 13,648 second-generation immigrants (native-born with at least one foreign-born parent).

Table 1 presents the frequency distributions of the categorical variables. Regarding gender, females slightly outnumbered males in both immigrant generations. Marital status patterns indicate that a higher proportion of first-generation immigrants were married (54.8%), whereas a majority of second-generation immigrants were unmarried (57.4%). In terms of language proficiency, the proportion of second-generation immigrants fluent in the local language was significantly higher than that of the first-generation (80.0% vs. 40.0%). The primary source of income was wage income, with similar proportions across both generations (62.6% for first-generation, 64.5% for second-generation). The proportion of union membership was approximately 36% in both groups. Regarding the sense of security, most immigrants felt "Safe" or "Very safe", but about twenty percent felt unsafe. In terms of social contact frequency, the proportion reporting high-frequency contact was slightly higher among second-generation immigrants compared to the first generation (44.5% vs. 38.8%).

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for the continuous variables. Both generations reported comparable levels of life satisfaction and happiness (approximately 7.0 and 7.4, respectively). The level of religiosity was significantly higher among first-generation immigrants (5.35 vs. 4.48). In terms of age, first-generation immigrants were older on average (48.06 years) than their second-generation counterparts (44.92 years). Regarding self-rated health, first-generation immigrants reported slightly higher mean scores (6.08 vs. 5.55). Across trust dimensions, first-generation immigrants generally reported higher levels of

trust in the legal system, police, politicians, and political parties compared to the second generation. The attitudes of host-country citizens relate to first-generation immigrants to a greater extent compared to the second generation. They also report higher satisfaction with education (6.08 vs. 5.49).

Table 3 reports the standardized scores for the "Institutional Trust Index" and the "Perceived Societal Attitudes Index" constructed through Principal Component Analysis. Both indices were standardized, resulting in means approximately equal to 0 and standard deviations equal to 1, facilitating subsequent comparative analysis.

Table 1: Sample characteristics by immigrant generation (n = 28,854).

Variable	Category	First-Gen, *n* (%)	Second-Gen, *n* (%)
Gender	Female	8261 (54.3%)	7212 (52.8%)
	Male	6945 (45.7%)	6436 (47.2%)
Marital Status	In marriage	8331 (54.8%)	5813 (42.6%)
	Not married	6875 (45.2%)	7835 (57.4%)
Language Proficiency	Native Language	6080 (40.0%)	10,923 (80.0%)
	Non-Native Language	9126 (60.0%)	2725 (20.0%)
Main Income Source	Salary income	9523 (62.6%)	8803 (64.5%)
	Non-wage income	5683 (37.4%)	4845 (35.5%)
Union Membership	Yes	5486 (36.1%)	5001 (36.6%)
	No	9720 (63.9%)	8647 (63.4%)
Sense of Security	Very safe	4364 (28.7%)	3809 (27.9%)
	Safe	7616 (50.1%)	6741 (49.9%)
	Unsafe	2605 (17.1%)	2544 (18.6%)
	Very unsafe	621 (4.1%)	554 (4.1%)
Social Contact	Low frequency	1731 (11.4%)	1284 (9.4%)
	Medium frequency	7574 (49.8%)	6294 (46.1%)
	High frequency	5901 (38.8%)	6070 (44.5%)
Total		15,206 (100%)	13,648 (100%)

Note: *n* (%) for categorical variables. First-generation immigrants are foreign-born; second-generation immigrants are native-born with at least one foreign-born parent. Data are from the European Social Survey (ESS), Round 5–11. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding or missing responses.

Table 2: Means and standard deviations (SD) of continuous variables by immigrant generation.

Variable	Definition	First-Gen, Mean (SD)	Second-Gen, Mean (SD)
Stflife	Life satisfaction (0–10)	7.03 (2.18)	7.01 (2.18)
Happy	Happiness (0–10)	7.47 (1.88)	7.38 (1.88)
Religiosity	Religiosity (0–10)	5.35 (3.18)	4.48 (3.19)
Age	Age in years	48.06 (16.64)	44.92 (18.25)
Self-rated Health	Self-rated health (0–10)	6.08 (2.55)	5.55 (2.49)
Trstlgh (Original)	Trust in the legal system (0–10)	5.62 (2.63)	5.19 (2.63)
Trstplc (Original)	Trust in police (0–10)	6.54 (2.46)	6.15 (2.47)
Trstplt (Original)	Trust in politicians (0–10)	3.86 (2.47)	3.48 (2.38)
Trstprt (Original)	Trust in political parties (0–10)	3.84 (2.41)	3.50 (2.36)
Imbgeco (Original)	Immigration is bad or good for the country's economy (0–10)	5.87 (2.51)	5.27 (2.52)

Table 2: *Cont.*

Variable	Definition	First-Gen, Mean (SD)	Second-Gen, Mean (SD)
Imueclt (Original)	Country's cultural life undermined or enriched by immigrants (0–10)	6.32 (2.49)	5.82 (2.61)
Imwbcnt (Original)	Immigrants make a country a worse or better place to live (0–10)	5.85 (2.37)	5.25 (2.36)
Education	Satisfaction with education (0–10)	6.08 (2.37)	5.49 (2.35)

Note: SD, Standard Deviation. Data are presented as Mean (SD) for continuous variables. Trstlgh, Trstplc, Trstplt and Trstprt are "Trust" original index. Imbgeco, Imueclt and Imwbcnt are "Attitudes" original index.

Table 3: Trust and Attitude principal component analysis variables.

Variable	Definition	First-Gen, Mean (SD)	Second-Gen, Mean (SD)
Trust Index	Institutional Trust (PCA score)	0.00 (1.00)	0.00 (1.00)
Attitudes Index	Perceived Societal Attitudes (PCA)	0.00 (1.00)	0.00 (1.00)

Note: Both indices are standardized component scores derived from PCA, with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

4.2 Regression Assumptions and Robustness Checks

To assess multicollinearity among the predictor variables, Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) were calculated for all models. The results indicated that all VIF values (see Appendix C) were below 5, with the majority below 2, suggesting that multicollinearity is not a serious concern in the specified models.

To test the robustness of our findings, we first constructed a composite subjective well-being index as an alternative measure of the dependent variable. This index was calculated as the average of the two items: life satisfaction (stflife) and happiness (happy). The hierarchical regression results using this composite index as the dependent variable (see Appendix D.1) show that the significance and direction of effects of all key predictors remain highly consistent with those reported in the main analysis. In particular, safety needs continue to be the most robust predictor. This indicates that our core conclusions are not contingent on any specific measurement approach of subjective well-being.

Secondly, we tested the robustness of our core findings by altering the entry sequence of variable blocks in the hierarchical regression. In the main analysis, variable blocks were introduced sequentially from lower to higher levels according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. For the robustness check, we prioritized entering the 'safety needs' block before the 'physiological needs' block in the model. The results (see Appendix D.2) demonstrate that introducing safety needs first produced a substantial increase in model explanatory power at the initial step, with all its predictors (sense of security, trust) showing highly significant coefficients of magnitudes similar to those in the main analysis. This finding strongly confirms the core explanatory power of safety needs for immigrants' subjective well-being. Crucially, this conclusion does not depend on their specific sequential position in the theoretical model, thereby demonstrating high robustness.

4.3 Hierarchical Regression Analysis Results

To comprehensively examine the factors influencing the subjective well-being of immigrants, hierarchical regression analyses were conducted separately for first-generation and second-generation

immigrants, with life satisfaction and happiness as the dependent variables. The models were built sequentially by introducing blocks of predictors based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

For first-generation immigrants, the final model (Model 6) accounted for 17.8% of the variance in life satisfaction (Table 4) and 17.4% in happiness (Table 5). The introduction of physiological needs (stable income and self-rated health) in Model 2 significantly increased the explanatory power ($\Delta R^2 = 0.065$ for life satisfaction; $\Delta R^2 = 0.047$ for happiness). The introduction of safety needs in Model 3 yielded the most substantial increase in explanatory power ($\Delta R^2 = 0.064$ for life satisfaction; $\Delta R^2 = 0.048$ for happiness), establishing it as another critical set of predictors. Notably, the feeling of safety (reverse-coded, with higher scores indicating greater insecurity) had a consistent negative effect on both outcomes ($\beta = -0.107$, $p < 0.001$). In contrast, the trust index exhibited stable positive effects ($\beta = 0.185$ and 0.127, $p < 0.001$). Social needs (social contact) and esteem needs (attitude index) also contributed significantly to subsequent models, showing positive coefficients. Finally, in the self-actualization block, education level emerged as a significant positive predictor ($\beta = 0.103$ and 0.083, $p < 0.001$), while union membership had a smaller but significant effect only for the first-generation cohort ($\beta = 0.020$, $p < 0.01$ and $\beta = 0.021$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 4: Hierarchical regression results for first-generation immigrants (dependent variable: life satisfaction-Stflife).

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Control Variables						
Gender	0.000	−0.019*	−0.047***	−0.047***	−0.047***	−0.049***
Age	−0.085***	−0.030***	−0.016	0.001	0.014	0.014
Marital Status	0.109***	0.097***	0.085***	0.094***	0.094***	0.092***
Religiosity	0.035***	0.004	0.006	0.003	0.003	0.000
Native Language	−0.060***	−0.083***	−0.081***	−0.073***	−0.074***	−0.077***
Physiological Needs						
Income Source		0.073***	0.058***	0.062***	0.059***	0.059***
Self-rated Health		0.253***	0.149***	0.142***	0.138***	0.102***
Safety Needs						
Sense of Security			−0.135***	−0.126***	−0.112***	−0.107***
Trust Index			0.228***	0.227***	0.209***	0.185***
Social Needs						
Social Contact				0.123***	0.119***	0.121***
Esteem Needs						
Attitude Index					0.087***	0.080***
Self-actualization						
Education						0.103***
Union Membership						0.020**
Model Statistics						
R^2	0.020	0.085	0.149	0.163	0.170	0.178
ΔR^2	—	0.065	0.064	0.014	0.007	0.008
F	61.029	200.763	295.579	296.806	282.829	252.334

Note: Beta (β) = standardized regression coefficient. *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$. ΔR^2 denotes the increase in explained variance relative to the previous model. The dash (—) for ΔR^2 in Model 1 indicates that it is the baseline model, hence no change is calculated.

Table 5: Hierarchical regression results for first-generation immigrants (dependent variable: happiness-happy).

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Control Variables						
Gender	−0.018*	−0.034***	−0.063***	−0.063***	−0.064***	−0.065***
Age	−0.107***	−0.050***	−0.037***	−0.016	0.003	0.002
Marital Status	0.155***	0.144***	0.130***	0.141***	0.141***	0.139***
Religiosity	0.067***	0.041***	0.045***	0.041***	0.041***	0.038***
Native Language	−0.062***	−0.081***	−0.076***	−0.066***	−0.067***	−0.070***

Table 5: *Cont.*

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Physiological Needs						
Income Source		0.085***	0.071***	0.076***	0.071***	0.070***
Self-rated Health		0.210***	0.126***	0.118***	0.111***	0.082***
Safety Needs						
Sense of Security			−0.143***	−0.132***	−0.111***	−0.107***
Trust Index			0.175***	0.173***	0.146***	0.127***
Social Needs						
Social Contact				0.151***	0.145***	0.147***
Esteem Needs						
Attitude Index					0.132***	0.127***
Self-actualization						
Education						0.083***
Union Membership						0.021**
Model Statistics						
R^2	0.037	0.084	0.132	0.154	0.169	0.174
ΔR^2	—	0.047	0.048	0.022	0.015	0.005
F	117.453	200.301	257.369	276.648	281.430	246.803

Note: Beta (β) = standardized regression coefficient. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001. ΔR^2 denotes the increase in explained variance relative to the previous model. The dash (—) for ΔR^2 in Model 1 indicates that it is the baseline model, hence no change is calculated.

A similar pattern was observed for second-generation immigrants, as shown in Table 6 (life satisfaction) and Table 7 (happiness). In Model 2, which incorporated physiological needs, both income source and self-rated health demonstrated significant positive predictors on life satisfaction (β = 0.070 and 0.253, p < 0.001) and happiness (β = 0.077 and 0.213, p < 0.001), producing a notable increase in explained variance (ΔR^2 = 0.066 and 0.048). The final models accounted for 19.5% of the variance in life satisfaction and 18.9% in happiness. Again, safety needs were highly significant, with their inclusion in Model 3 leading to a substantial R^2 change (ΔR^2 = 0.067 and 0.049). The negative relation of the reverse-coded safety feeling remained robust (Life Satisfaction: β = −0.127, p < 0.001; Happiness: β = −0.123, p < 0.001). Social contact (β = 0.141 and 0.170, p < 0.001) and the attitude index (β = 0.093 and 0.116, p < 0.001) were again strong, positive contributors. Within self-actualization, education was a consistent positive predictor (β = 0.086 and 0.076, p < 0.001). However, a notable generational difference emerged regarding union membership, which was not a significant predictor for second-generation immigrants' life satisfaction (β = 0.007, p > 0.05) or happiness (β = −0.008, p > 0.05).

Table 6: Hierarchical regression results for second-generation immigrants (dependent variable: life satisfaction-Stflife).

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Control Variables						
Gender	0.018*	0.002	−0.036***	−0.034***	−0.029***	−0.028***
Age	−0.161***	−0.095***	−0.089***	−0.055***	−0.043***	−0.043***
Marital Status	0.104***	0.099***	0.097***	0.109***	0.107***	0.105***
Religiosity	0.036***	0.027***	0.029***	0.023**	0.024**	0.023**
Native Language	−0.095***	−0.105***	−0.081***	−0.069***	−0.068***	−0.067***
Physiological Needs						
Income Source		0.070***	0.054***	0.058***	0.057***	0.057***
Self-rated Health		0.253***	0.149***	0.132***	0.127***	0.094***
Safety Needs						
Sense of Security			−0.157***	−0.144***	−0.129***	−0.127***
Trust Index			0.217***	0.215***	0.193***	0.172***
Social Needs						
Social Contact				0.145***	0.139***	0.141***

Table 6: *Cont.*

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Esteem Needs						
Attitude Index					0.092***	0.093***
Self-actualization						
Education						0.086***
Union Membership						0.007
Model Statistics						
R^2	0.032	0.097	0.164	0.183	0.190	0.195
ΔR^2	—	0.066	0.067	0.019	0.007	0.005
F	89.298	209.852	297.527	305.017	290.872	254.682

Note: Beta (β) = standardized regression coefficient. *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$. ΔR^2 denotes the increase in explained variance relative to the previous model. The dash (—) for ΔR^2 in Model 1 indicates that it is the baseline model, hence no change is calculated.

Table 7: Hierarchical regression results for second-generation immigrants (dependent variable: happiness-happy).

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Control Variables						
Gender	−0.005	−0.018*	−0.057***	−0.054***	−0.049***	−0.048***
Age	−0.194***	−0.129***	−0.124***	−0.082***	−0.068***	−0.062***
Marital Status	0.170***	0.163***	0.161***	0.176***	0.173***	0.172***
Religiosity	0.061***	0.054***	0.057***	0.050***	0.051***	0.049***
Native Language	−0.056***	−0.065***	−0.043***	−0.029***	−0.027***	−0.026***
Physiological Needs						
Income Source		0.077***	0.062***	0.067***	0.066***	0.067***
Self-rated Health		0.213	0.128***	0.107***	0.101***	0.071***
Safety Needs						
Sense of Security			−0.159***	−0.142***	−0.124***	−0.123***
Trust Index			0.166***	0.163***	0.135***	0.116***
Social Needs						
Social Contact				0.176***	0.168***	0.170***
Esteem Needs						
Attitude Index					0.116***	0.116***
Self-actualization						
Education						0.076***
Union Membership						−0.008
Model Statistics						
R^2	0.048	0.096	0.146	0.173	0.184	0.189
ΔR^2	—	0.048	0.049	0.027	0.011	0.004
F	138.482	207.080	258.085	285.197	280.235	243.668

Note: Beta (β) = standardized regression coefficient. *$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.001$. ΔR^2 denotes the increase in explained variance relative to the previous model. The dash (—) for ΔR^2 in Model 1 indicates that it is the baseline model, hence no change is calculated.

In summary, the hierarchical regression results robustly demonstrate that both physiological needs (including self-rated health) and safety needs are the foremost predictors of subjective well-being for both immigrant generations. The consistent negative coefficient for safety feeling underscores that insecurity is a major detriment to immigrants' life satisfaction and happiness. In addition, elements such as social contact and public attitudes toward immigration also play a fundamental role. The positive role of education highlights the importance of self-actualization, while the divergent effect of union membership suggests potential differences in self-actualization between the two generations.

5 Discussion and conclusions

This discussion synthesizes the empirical findings from our hierarchical regression analyses with the evolution of EU immigration law and policy, interpreting them through the theoretical lens of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The results robustly demonstrate that immigrant SWB is built upon a hierarchical foundation.

5.1 Physiological and Safety Needs as the Foundation of Immigrant Well-Being

The hierarchical regression results robustly validate the sequential importance of the lower levels of Maslow's hierarchy for immigrant subjective well-being. The analysis demonstrates that the well-being of both first-generation and second-generation immigrants is built upon a base of physiological needs, which is then critically superseded by the imperative of safety needs.

The block of physiological needs—defined as a stable income source and good self-rated health—contributed significantly to the explanatory power of the models (Model 2). This confirms that access to material resources and bodily well-being is a necessary precondition for a satisfactory life in the host country, aligning with EU policies that facilitate labor market access and healthcare coverage.

However, the most striking result across all models and for both immigrant generations is the powerful and consistent significance of safety needs. The introduction of these variables (sense of security and trust index) resulted in the single largest increase in explained variance (ΔR^2) in all analyses. This underscores that beyond basic demographics and the foundational fulfillment of physiological needs (e.g., income source), the sense of security forms the foundational critical layer upon which other well-being factors are built.

Notably, the reverse-coded safety feeling variable consistently exhibited a significant negative association with both life satisfaction and happiness, underscoring that perceived insecurity is a major detriment to immigrant well-being. This result carries profound policy implications: immigration and integration measures that foster stable, predictable, and trustworthy institutional environments are essential for safeguarding immigrant welfare.

EU migration governance has predicted immigrants' sense of security and trust. The post-Lisbon Treaty framework, which established agencies like the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), aimed to enhance immigrants' institutional trust and safety. However, the 2015 refugee crisis exposed systemic flaws, such as the disproportionate burden of the Dublin System, creating policy instability that likely undermined safety needs [40]. Subsequent reforms, including the 2020 New Pact and the 2022 activation of the Temporary Protection Directive for Ukraine, sought to rebuild a cohesive system [41]. The strong link between institutional trust and well-being indicates that such a stable policy framework is crucial for fostering immigrant trust and positive expectations.

5.2 The Supporting Role of Social and Esteem Needs

As the models progressed, social needs (social contact) and esteem needs (attitude index) consistently contributed to the explanatory power, demonstrating their roles as crucial secondary factors.

The positive prediction of social contact affirms the importance of social capital and integration networks. Cultural and social rights encompass measures such as fostering a sense of community, neighborly relations, and social capital, of which interactions with locals are an important factor of immigrant well-being [42]. EU integration policy has increasingly focused on these higher-level needs of immigrants. Beginning with the 2009 Stockholm Programme, which introduced language courses for immigrants (Council of the European Union, 2010), continuing through the 2011 European Commission agenda proposing integration measures for Third-Country Nationals, and culminating in the 2016 Action Plan encouraging their active engagement in social exchange, the EU's policy direction has progressively deepened (European Commission, 2016). The 2020 Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021–2027) explicitly recognized

that participation in socio-cultural activities enhances immigrants' cultural and social empowerment (European Commission, 2020). Current EU policies directly aim to support the fulfillment of immigrants' social needs by encouraging their social engagement.

Furthermore, regional attitudes towards immigrants (ATI) are associated with immigrants' life satisfaction, which indicates a link between host-country citizens' attitudes and immigrants' subjective well-being [43]. Unfair attitudes from the host country may lead immigrants to perceive discrimination, which directly violates their right to personal dignity and hinders the formation of a positive group identity. The positive impact of non-discrimination on immigrants' sense of belonging is highly significant [44]. Consequently, efforts to promote a more inclusive public discourse and to combat negative stereotypes can thus indirectly contribute to immigrant well-being by bolstering these esteem needs. The principle of non-discrimination, which is enshrined in key human rights instruments, is fundamental to protecting immigrants' rights. The finding—that host-country attitudes are strongly associated with SWB—provides empirical support for these legal norms, which suggests that anti-discrimination laws yield tangible psychological benefits for immigrants.

5.3 Generational Shifts and the Path to Self-Actualization

In the domain of self-actualization, satisfaction with education emerged as a significant positive predictor for both generations, which reinforces the role of educational access and quality in facilitating long-term integration and personal growth. By contrast, union membership showed a generational difference: it positively predicted SWB among first-generation immigrants but was non-significant for the second generation.

5.4 Theoretical and Policy Implications

The findings strongly validate the applicability of Maslow's hierarchy as a framework for understanding immigrant well-being. The sequential and hierarchical nature of the models effectively demonstrates how higher-level needs build upon the fulfillment of more basic ones.

From a policy perspective, this study provides a clear, evidence-based hierarchy of priorities for EU immigration policy:

Policies that support immigrants in meeting basic physiological needs, such as ensuring access to legitimate income sources and safeguarding physical well-being.

Creating a secure environment—through stable legal status, effective protection from harm, and fostering institutional trust—is most strongly associated with immigrant well-being, and may therefore merit high policy priority.

Policies should actively promote social contact and combat isolation, recognizing that social and esteem are the supporting roles of happiness.

Finally, supporting immigrants' education and fostering positive attitudes toward them, thereby promoting their self-actualization, may ultimately benefit the development of the host society as a whole.

5.5 Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the use of cross-sectional data limits causal inference. Future studies could employ longitudinal designs to trace how changes in policy contexts relate to need fulfillment and SWB over time. Second, while the ESS provides robust cross-national data, some dimensions (e.g., physiological, esteem, and self-actualization) were proxied with limited indicators. Future research could incorporate more nuanced measures. For instance, physiological needs were represented solely by income source; future work could include measures of housing security. Third, this analysis treats

immigrants as a broad category; future research should disaggregate them by legal status (e.g., refugee vs. labor migrant), country of origin, or religious identity to better capture heterogeneous policy effects. Finally, the most recent ESS survey data available are up to 2023. Consequently, data from 2024 and 2025 could not be included in this analysis. While this presents a limitation, it simultaneously opens a new perspective for evaluating the implementation and effects of the upcoming Pact on Migration and Asylum.

6 Conclusions

This study set out to investigate the relationship between EU immigration law and policy on immigrants' subjective well-being through the theoretical lens of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Using cross-national data from the ESS (2010–2023) and employing hierarchical regression models for both first- and second-generation immigration, we systematically examined how indicators of physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs are linked to immigrant well-being.

The results robustly show that safety needs—comprising perceived safety and institutional trust—are most strongly and consistently associated with life satisfaction and happiness among immigrants. The model sequence confirmed that physiological needs (income source and self-rated health) provide a significant but foundational base, while the introduction of safety-related variables led to the largest increase in explanatory power across all models, underscoring that security is a prerequisite for higher-level well-being. This finding underscores the strong association between stable, predictable, and trustworthy institutional environments and immigrant well-being, highlighting their potential policy relevance. Social and esteem needs likewise serve a crucial function. The significant positive effects of social contact and favorable host-society attitudes on subjective well-being justify integration policies designed to foster social cohesion, combating discrimination, and encouraging inclusive public dialogue. In the realm of self-actualization, education satisfaction emerged as a positive predictor for both generations, whereas union membership showed a generational divide—beneficial only for the first generation. Theoretically, this study validates the applicability of Maslow's hierarchy in migration research, offering a new perspective to understand how policies predict well-being through need fulfillment. Practically, it provides a clear policy hierarchy: policies that ensure the provision of physiological and safety needs as a foundation, that support social and esteem needs, and that create pathways to self-actualization are likely to yield the most significant enhancements in immigrant well-being.

Several limitations should be noted, including the cross-sectional nature of the data and the use of proxy indicators for some need dimensions. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs, incorporate more nuanced measures of higher-order needs, and examine heterogeneous effects across migrant subgroups.

In conclusion, by bridging migration policy with well-being research, this study offers a structured, need-based framework for designing more effective and humane integration strategies within the EU. It compellingly argues that a holistic policy approach must systematically address the entire spectrum of human needs, from securing material and physical security to ensuring safety, fostering belonging, and ultimately enabling personal growth.

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Availability of Data and Materials: The data supporting the findings of this study are openly available at https://ess-search.nsd.no/en/study/172ac431-2a06-41df-9dab-c1fd8f3877e7 (accessed on 22 July 2025). All data are accessible without restrictions.

Ethics Approval: This study is based on secondary data from the European Social Survey (ESS). As the ESS adheres to stringent ethical standards and its data are anonymized, the use of this public dataset for secondary analysis does not require separate ethical approval.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest to report regarding the present study.

Appendix A Analytical Sample

This study uses cross-sectional data from the 5th to 11th rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS) (2010–2023). In order to ensure the national representativeness, temporal continuity and regional comparability of the samples, the initial samples were treated as follows:

Appendix A.1 Country Screening

The European Social Survey (ESS) includes data from 39 countries. However, given that EU member states share a common legal and policy framework for migration and integration—and are the primary focus of this study—the analysis is restricted to EU member states only.

Excluded non-EU/EEA countries: Albania, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Russian Federation, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

Excluded EU member states: Luxembourg, Romania.

The 24 EU member states that were finally analyzed were: Finland, Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden, Austria, Ireland, Germany, Belgium, Czechia, Lithuania, France, Slovenia, Slovakia, Estonia, Spain, Italy, Poland, Latvia, Cyprus, Croatia, Hungary, Portugal, Greece, Bulgaria.

Table A1: Excluded Countries and Their Participation in ESS Rounds (5–11).

Country	ESS Round						
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Albania		×					
Austria			×	×	×	×	×
Belgium	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Bulgaria	×	×			×	×	×
Croatia	×				×	×	×
Cyprus	×	×			×	×	×
Czechia	×	×	×	×	×	×	
Denmark	×	×	×		×		
Estonia	×	×	×	×	×	×	
Finland	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
France	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Germany	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Greece	×					×	×
Hungary	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Iceland		×		×	×	×	×
Ireland	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Israel	×	×	×	×		×	×
Italy		×		×	×	×	×
Kosovo		×					
Latvia					×	×	×
Lithuania	×	×	×	×	×	×	×

Table A1: *Cont.*

Country	ESS Round						
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Luxembourg							
Montenegro					×	×	×
Netherlands	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
North Macedonia						×	
Norway	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Poland	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Portugal	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Romania							
Russian Federation	×	×		×			
Serbia					×	×	×
Slovakia	×	×			×	×	×
Slovenia	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Spain	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Sweden	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Switzerland	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Turkey							
Ukraine	×	×					
United Kingdom	×	×	×	×	×	×	×

Appendix A.2 Individual Screening

According to the principle of combining ancestry and place of birth, immigration status is defined through three items: "country of birth", "country of birth of mother" and "country of birth of father":

Generation immigrants: Those who were not born in their current country of residence.

Second-generation immigrants: Those who were born in their country of residence but at least one of their parents was born outside their home country.

Individuals who could not be classified as native or immigrant samples according to the above criteria, as well as individuals with missing values for the above key variables, were removed from the list.

After the above cleansing, the final analysis sample included a total of 28,854 migrants, including 15,206 first-generation immigrants and 13,648 second-generation immigrants.

Table A2: Sample cleansing process for immigrant identification.

Step	Description	First-Gen	Second-Gen
1	Initial Sample Pool	271,175	
2	Excluded: Missing or Invalid Key Variables		
	- Country of Birth (Missing)	24,847	Not Applicable
	- Father's Country of Birth (Missing)	Not Applicable	1388
	- Mother's Country of Birth (Missing)	Not Applicable	173
	Subtotal Excluded (Missing Data)	24,847	1561
3	Excluded: Unclassifiable Immigration Status	248,348	22,833
	Subtotal Excluded (Unclassifiable)	248,348	22,833

Table A2: *Cont.*

Step	Description	First-Gen	Second-Gen
4	Excluded: Specific Response Issues (from variables)		
	- Refusal	49	112 (91 + 21)
	- Don't Know	27	1101 (1014 + 87)
	- No Answer	210	348 (283 + 65)
	Subtotal Excluded (Response Issues)	286	1561
5	Total Number of Excluded Cases (Sum of Rows 2–4)	273,481	25,955
6	Final Analytical Sample (Row 1–Row 5)	15,206	13,648

Note: The final analytical sample comprises a total of 28,854 migrants (15,206 first-generation + 13,648 second-generation).

Appendix B Detailed Principal Component Analysis (PCA) Results

This appendix provides the full details of the Principal Component Analyses conducted to construct the latent variables "Political" and "Attitudes".

Appendix B.1 PCA for "Political" (Safety Needs)

The suitability of the data for PCA was assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The results indicated that the data were appropriate for further analysis: the KMO statistic was 0.702 for immigrants and 0.703 for the second generation (both >0.7), and Bartlett's test yielded a *p*-value of <0.001, confirming significant correlations among the variables. Detailed test results are presented in Table A3.

Table A3: KMO and Bartlett's test for "Trust".

		First-Gen	Second-Gen
KMO statistic		0.702	0.703
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approximate Chi-square	33,967.446	32,101.891
	Degrees of Freedom	6	6
	p-value	<0.001	<0.001

Table A4: Total variance explained for immigrants.

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Sum of Squared Loadings		
	Eigenvalue	Variance %	Cumulative %	Eigenvalue	Variance %	Cumulative %
1	2.745	68.623	68.623	2.745	68.623	68.623
2	0.752	18.801	87.424	—	—	—
3	0.358	8.866	96.381	—	—	—
4	0.145	3.619	100.000	—	—	—

Table A5: Total variance explained for the second generation.

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Sum of Squared Loadings		
	Eigenvalue	Variance %	Cumulative %	Eigenvalue	Variance %	Cumulative %
1	2.784	69.590	69.590	2.784	69.590	69.590
2	0.745	18.618	88.208	—	—	—
3	0.335	8.363	96.571	—	—	—
4	0.137	3.429	100.000	—	—	—

Table A6: Component score coefficient matrix.

Coefficient	Factor	
	First-Gen	Second-Gen
trstlgl	0.301	0.300
trstplc	0.264	0.265
trstplt	0.322	0.319
trstprt	0.317	0.312

Appendix B.2 PCA for "Attitudes" (Esteem Needs)

Table A7: KMO and Bartlett's Test for "Attitudes".

		First-Gen	Second-Gen
KMO Statistic		0.723	0.727
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approximate Chi-square	18,570.202	18,320.338
	Degrees of Freedom	3	3
	p-value	<0.001	<0.001

Table A8: Total variance explained for immigrants.

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Sum of Squared Loadings		
	Eigenvalue	Variance %	Cumulative %	Eigenvalue	Variance %	Cumulative %
1	2.275	75.838	75.838	2.275	75.838	75.838
2	0.405	13.490	89.328	—	—	—
3	0.320	10.672	100.000	—	—	—

Table A9: Total variance explained for the second generation.

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Sum of Squared Loadings		
	Eigenvalue	Variance %	Cumulative %	Eigenvalue	Variance %	Cumulative %
1	2.323	77.436	77.436	2.323	77.436	77.436
2	0.385	12.822	90.258	—	—	—
3	0.292	9.742	100.000	—	—	—

Table A10: Component score coefficient matrix.

Coefficient	Factor	
	First-Gen	Second-Gen
imbgeco	0.374	0.370
imueclt	0.386	0.381
imwbcnt	0.388	0.385

Appendix C Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) for Predictor Variables

Table A11: Hierarchical regression results for first-generation immigrants (dependent variable: life satisfaction–Stflife), final model with VIF.

Predictors	VIF	1/VIF
Control Variables		
Gender	1.083	0.924
Age	1.503	0.665
Marital Status	1.086	0.921
Religiosity	1.056	0.947
Native Language	1.054	0.948
Physiological Needs		
Income Source	1.283	0.780
Self-rated Health	1.448	0.691
Safety Needs		
Safety Feeling	1.136	0.880
Trust Index	1.336	0.748
Social Needs		
Social Contact	1.049	0.954
Esteem Needs		
Attitude Index	1.152	0.868
Self-actualization		
Education	1.450	0.689
Union Membership	1.133	0.883
Statistics		
Mean VIF	1.213	
Maximum VIF	1.503	

Note: VIF = Variance Inflation Factor; Tolerance = 1/VIF. Assessment criteria: Tolerance > 0.5 (Excellent), 0.2–0.5 (Acceptable), <0.2 (Problematic). All variables show excellent tolerance values, indicating no multicollinearity concerns.

Table A12: Hierarchical regression results for first-generation immigrants (dependent variable: happiness–happy) final model with VIF.

Predictors	VIF	1/VIF
Control Variables		
Gender	1.083	0.924
Age	1.503	0.665
Marital Status	1.086	0.921
Religiosity	1.056	0.947
Native Language	1.054	0.948
Physiological Needs		
Income Source	1.283	0.780
Self-rated Health	1.448	0.691
Safety Needs		
Safety Feeling	1.136	0.880
Trust Index	1.336	0.748
Social Needs		
Social Contact	1.049	0.954
Esteem Needs		
Attitude Index	1.152	0.868
Self-actualization		
Education	1.450	0.689
Union Membership	1.133	0.883
Statistics		
Mean VIF	1.213	
Maximum VIF	1.503	

Note: VIF = Variance Inflation Factor; Tolerance = 1/VIF. Assessment criteria: Tolerance > 0.5 (Excellent), 0.2–0.5 (Acceptable), <0.2 (Problematic). All variables show excellent tolerance values, indicating no multicollinearity concerns.

Table A13: Hierarchical regression results for second-generation immigrants (dependent variable: life satisfaction–Stflife) final model with VIF.

Predictors	VIF	1/VIF
Control Variables		
Gender	1.104	0.906
Age	1.765	0.566
Marital Status	1.187	0.842
Religiosity	1.056	0.947
Native Language	1.060	0.944
Physiological Needs		
Income Source	1.308	0.765
Self-rated Health	1.451	0.689

Table A13: *Cont.*

Predictors	VIF	1/VIF
Safety Needs		
Safety Feeling	1.164	0.859
Trust Index	1.341	0.746
Social Needs		
Social Contact	1.135	0.881
Esteem Needs		
Attitude Index	1.171	0.854
Self-actualization		
Education	1.397	0.716
Union Membership	1.174	0.852
Statistics		
Mean VIF	1.255	
Maximum VIF	1.451	

Note: VIF = Variance Inflation Factor; Tolerance = 1/VIF. Assessment criteria: Tolerance > 0.5 (Excellent), 0.2–0.5 (Acceptable), <0.2 (Problematic). All variables show excellent tolerance values, indicating no multicollinearity concerns.

Table A14: Hierarchical regression results for second-generation immigrants (dependent variable: happiness–happy) final model with VIF.

Predictors	VIF	1/VIF
Control Variables		
Gender	1.104	0.906
Age	1.765	0.566
Marital Status	1.187	0.842
Religiosity	1.056	0.947
Native Language	1.060	0.944
Physiological Needs		
Income Source	1.308	0.765
Self-rated Health	1.451	0.689
Safety Needs		
Safety Feeling	1.164	0.859
Trust Index	1.341	0.746
Social Needs		
Social Contact	1.135	0.881
Esteem Needs		
Attitude Index	1.171	0.854
Self-actualization		
Education	1.397	0.716
Union Membership	1.174	0.852

Table A14: *Cont.*

Predictors	VIF	1/VIF
Statistics		
Mean VIF	1.255	
Maximum VIF	1.765	

Note: VIF = Variance Inflation Factor; Tolerance = 1/VIF. Assessment criteria: Tolerance > 0.5 (Excellent), 0.2–0.5 (Acceptable), <0.2 (Problematic). All variables show excellent tolerance values, indicating no multicollinearity concerns.

Appendix D Robustness Checks

Appendix D.1 Replace the Dependent Variable

Table A15: Hierarchical regression results for first-generation immigrants.

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Control Variables						
Gender	−0.009	−0.028***	−0.060***	−0.060***	−0.060***	−0.062***
Age	−0.105***	−0.043***	−0.028***	−0.007	0.009	0.009
Marital Status	0.143***	0.129***	0.116***	0.127***	0.127***	0.1252***
Religiosity	0.055***	0.023**	0.026***	0.023**	0.023**	0.019
Native Language	−0.067***	−0.090***	−0.087***	−0.077***	−0.078***	−0.081***
Physiological Needs						
Income Source		0.086***	0.070***	0.075***	0.071***	0.070***
Self-rated Health		0.256***	0.152***	0.144***	0.138***	0.102***
Safety Needs						
Safety Feeling			−0.152***	−0.141***	−0.123***	−0.118***
Trust Index			0.224***	0.222***	0.198***	0.174***
Social Needs						
Social Contact				0.149***	0.114***	0.146***
Esteem Needs						
Attitude Index					0.118***	0.112***
Self-actualization						
Education						0.103***
Union Membership						0.022**
Model Statistics						
R^2	0.032	0.100	0.168	0.189	0.202	0.209
ΔR^2	_	0.068	0.68	0.021	0.012	0.008
F	101.855	242.214	341.111	354.925	348.694	309.286

Note: Beta (β) = standardized regression coefficient. $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$. ΔR^2 denotes the increase in explained variance relative to the previous model.

Table A16: Hierarchical regression results for second-generation immigrants.

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Control Variables						
Gender	0.008	−0.008	−0.049***	−0.047***	−0.042***	−0.040***
Age	−0.191***	−0.120***	−0.114***	−0.073***	−0.059***	−0.056***
Marital Status	0.146***	0.139***	0.137***	0.152***	0.194***	0.148***
Religiosity	0.052***	0.043***	0.046***	0.039***	0.039	0.038***
Native Language	−0.083***	−0.094***	−0.068***	−0.055***	−0.053***	−0.052***
Physiological Needs						
Income Source		0.080***	0.063***	0.067***	0.067***	0.067***
Self-rated Health		0.254***	0.151***	0.130***	0.125***	0.090***
Safety Needs						
Safety Feeling			−0.171***	−0.155***	−0.137***	−0.136***
Trust Index			0.210***	0.207***	0.180***	0.158***
Social Needs						
Social Contact				0.123***	0.165***	0.168***
Esteem Needs						
Attitude Index					0.112***	0.112***
Self-actualization						
Education						0.088***
Union Membership						0.000
Model Statistics						
R^2	0.044	0.111	0.179	0.206	0.217	0.222
ΔR^2	_	0.067	0.068	0.026	0.011	0.006
F	126.061	243.288	331.385	353.610	342.686	299.478

Note: Beta (β) = standardized regression coefficient. ***$p < 0.001$. ΔR^2 denotes the increase in explained variance relative to the previous model.

Appendix D.2 Change the order of entry of the model.

Table A17: Hierarchical regression results for first-generation immigrants (dependent variable: life satisfaction–Stflife).

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Control Variables						
Gender	0.000	−0.034***	−0.047***	−0.047***	−0.047***	−0.049***
Age	−0.085***	−0.005***	−0.016	0.001	0.014	0.014
Marital Status	0.109***	0.092***	0.085***	0.094***	0.094***	0.092***
Religiosity	0.035***	0.021**	0.006	0.003	0.003	0.000
Native Language	−0.060***	−0.072***	−0.081***	−0.073***	−0.074***	−0.077***
Safety Needs						
Safety Feeling		−0.147***	−0.135***	−0.126***	−0.112***	−0.107***
Trust Index		0.285***	0.228***	0.227***	0.209***	0.185***

Table A17: *Cont.*

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Physiological Needs						
Income Source			0.058***	0.062***	0.059***	0.059***
Self-rated Health			0.149***	0.142***	0.138***	0.102***
Social Needs						
Social Contact				0.123***	0.119***	0.121***
Esteem Needs						
Attitude Index					0.087***	0.080***
Self-actualization						
Education						0.103***
Union Membership						0.020**
Model Statistics						
R^2	0.020	0.129	0.149	0.163	0.170	0.178
ΔR^2	_	0.109	0.020	0.014	0.007	0.008
F	61.029	320.817	295.579	296.806	282.829	252.334

Note: Beta (β) = standardized regression coefficient. $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$. ΔR^2 denotes the increase in explained variance relative to the previous model.

Table A18: Hierarchical regression results for first-generation immigrants (dependent variable: happiness–happy).

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Control Variables						
Gender	−0.018	−0.058***	−0.063***	−0.063***	−0.064***	−0.065***
Age	−0.107***	−0.075***	−0.037***	−0.016***	0.003	0.002
Marital Status	0.155***	0.139***	0.130***	0.141***	0.141***	0.139***
Religiosity	0.067***	0.057***	0.045***	0.041***	0.041***	0.038***
Native Language	−0.062***	−0.068***	−0.076***	−0.066***	−0.067***	−0.070***
Safety Needs						
Safety Feeling		−0.154***	−0.143***	−0.132***	−0.111***	−0.107***
Trust Index		0.224***	0.175***	0.173***	0.146***	0.127***
Physiological Needs						
Income Source			0.071***	0.076***	0.071***	0.070***
Self-rated Health			0.126***	0.118***	0.111***	0.082***
Social Needs						
Social Contact				0.151***	0.145***	0.147***
Esteem Needs						
Attitude Index					0.132***	0.127***
Self-actualization						
Education						0.083***
Union Membership						0.021**

Table A18: *Cont.*

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Model Statistics						
R^2	0.037	0.116	0.132	0.154	0.169	0.174
ΔR^2	_	0.079	0.016	0.022	0.015	0.005
F	117.453	284.775	257.369	276.648	281.430	246.803

Note: Beta (β) = standardized regression coefficient. $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$. ΔR^2 denotes the increase in explained variance relative to the previous model.

Table A19: Hierarchical regression results for second-generation immigrants (dependent variable: life satisfaction–Stflife).

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Control Variables						
Gender	0.018	−0.031***	−0.036***	−0.034***	−0.029***	−0.028***
Age	−0.161***	−0.129***	−0.089***	−0.055***	−0.043***	−0.043***
Marital Status	0.104***	0.102***	0.097***	0.109***	0.107***	0.105***
Religiosity	0.036***	0.032***	0.029***	0.023**	0.024**	0.023**
Native Language	−0.095***	−0.072***	−0.081***	−0.069***	−0.068***	−0.067***
Safety Needs						
Safety Feeling		−0.172***	−0.157***	−0.144***	0.127***	−0.127***
Trust Index		0.274***	0.217***	0.215***	−0.129***	0.172***
Physiological Needs						
Income Source			0.054***	0.058***	0.057***	0.057***
Self-rated Health			0.149***	0.132***	0.127***	0.094***
Social Needs						
Social Contact				0.145***	0.139***	0.141***
Esteem Needs						
Attitude Index					0.092***	0.093***
Self-actualization						
Education						0.086***
Union Membership						0.007
Model Statistics						
R^2	0.032	0.144	0.164	0.183	0.190	0.195
ΔR^2	_	0.112	0.020	0.019	0.007	0.005
F	89.298	327.850	297.527	305.017	290.872	254.682

Note: Beta (β) = standardized regression coefficient. $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$. ΔR^2 denotes the increase in explained variance relative to the previous model.

Table A20: Hierarchical regression results for second-generation immigrants (dependent variable: happiness–happy).

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Control Variables						
Gender	−0.005	−0.053***	−0.057***	−0.054***	−0.049***	−0.048***
Age	−0.194***	−0.166***	−0.124***	−0.082***	−0.068***	−0.062***
Marital Status	0.170***	0.168***	0.161***	0.176***	0.173***	0.172***
Religiosity	0.061***	0.059***	0.057***	0.050***	0.051***	0.049***
Native Language	−0.056***	−0.035***	−0.043***	−0.029***	−0.027***	−0.026***
Safety Needs						
Safety Feeling		−0.172***	−0.159***	−0.142***	−0.124***	−0.123***
Trust Index		0.214***	0.166***	0.163***	0.135***	0.116***
Physiological Needs						
Income Source			0.062***	0.067***	0.066***	0.067***
Self-rated Health			0.128***	0.107***	0.101***	0.071***
Social Needs						
Social Contact				0.176***	0.168***	0.170***
Esteem Needs						
Attitude Index					0.116***	0.116***
Self-actualization						
Education						0.076***
Union Membership						−0.008
Model Statistics						
R^2	0.048	0.130	0.146	0.173	0.184	0.189
ΔR^2	_	0.081	0.016	0.027	0.011	0.004
F	138.482	289.890	258.085	285.197	280.235	243.668

Note: Beta (β) = standardized regression coefficient. ***$p < 0.001$. ΔR^2 denotes the increase in explained variance relative to the previous model.

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