

From immigrants to (non-)citizens: Political economy of naturalizations in Latvia

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Abstract:

Latvia enjoys the dubious distinction of having the highest population share of ethnic minorities and foreign-born residents in the European Union. In addition there exists a peculiar Latvian “institution”, a category of resident known as “non-citizen”, originating from the Soviet era migration flows. This “non-citizen” status has a number of serious disadvantages relative to citizen status. It is, therefore, of interest why a significant number of “non-citizen” opt to keep this status, although they have the opportunity to obtain full citizenship, and why others choose to become citizen. Using data from a representative 2007 survey of 624 former and current non-citizens in a multinomial probit model reveals characteristics of those who want to remain non-citizen, and of those who have obtained citizen status, are in the process of obtaining it or plan to do so in the future. Proficiency level of the state language (Latvian) is the single most significant correlate of the willingness to obtain citizenship. Significant influence also accrues to age, gender, education, emigration intentions and municipality level factors – the unemployment rate and the share of non-citizens.

Keywords: Immigrants, non-citizens, naturalization, integration, Latvia, political economy.

JEL: F22; J15; J61

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1. Introduction

Latvia hosts one of the highest shares of foreign-born (16.6%)³ and ethnic minorities (40.7%)⁴ in the EU. It also hosts a substantial number of *non-citizens* (15.3% in 2010)⁵ – a highly non-standard categorization of residents consisting of the former Soviet immigrants *and* their descendants born on the territory of Latvia during Soviet times. The issue of non-citizenship has been controversial in Latvia: the high share of people without voting rights has arguably contributed to social exclusion and marginalisation, fuelled far-right and far-left political parties and bred different forms of ethnic conflict. However, the dynamics of the naturalization process in Latvia – and in particular its slow pace - are still not well understood. Answers to the questions why the non-citizens do not want to naturalize and who are the “hard-shell” non-citizens is of primary importance to Latvian policymakers and the international community.

Being a non-citizen of Latvia brings, not surprisingly, disadvantages relative to citizen status. Non-citizens are prohibited from participating in elections (state or municipal) implying very limited opportunities to influence the political processes of the country. Non-citizens of Latvia are not considered to be EU citizens – so “free movement of labor” clauses do not apply to them. They are also not allowed to work in government, the police and civil services (Hughes 2005). Some evidence suggests non-citizens in Latvia (and Estonia) have lower employment probability and lower earnings (Kahanec and Zaiceva 2009).⁶

More surprising is the fact that non-citizen status also brings some advantages – the biggest advantage being visa-free travel to Russia. As, in addition, non-citizens can enjoy visa-free travel in the Schengen area, this adds up to a rather attractive package for those engaged in frequent travel to Russia. Up to 2006 non-citizen males harvested an additional advantage in the exemption from military service.

³ Data for 2005 from UN World Migrant Stock Database.

⁴ Data for 2009 from Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia.

⁵ Source: The Naturalization Board of the Republic of Latvia.

⁶ Note, however, that it is unclear whether ascending to Latvian citizenship would automatically increase the income and employment opportunities. Devoretz and Pivnenko (2005) and Devoretz (2008) argue that the decision to naturalize and the labour market impact of naturalization may be endogenous: if people expect a premium from becoming a citizen, they may acquire more education and linguistic skills (increasing their wage and employment prospects) and integrate socially and politically in anticipation, which would in turn facilitate their decision to become a citizen.

This paper studies the costs and benefits of acquiring Latvian citizenship and determines what individual and municipality level factors affect the willingness and/or reluctance to naturalize.⁷ For our empirical analysis we use data from a representative survey conducted in Latvia in the summer of 2007. A unique feature of the data is that we know whether the respondents with Latvian citizenship are former non-citizens, and whether the current non-citizens have the intention to naturalize.

We find that the non-citizens with insufficient proficiency in the state language, low levels of education, the elderly and males are more likely to report that they have no intentions to naturalize. Early naturalizations (more than 5 years prior to the interview) were more common among the respondents with a good knowledge of Latvian, those working in public sector, those living in Riga, its agglomeration and other urban areas, as well as those from the municipalities with low-share of non-citizens and high unemployment rates. The recent and current naturalizations are more common among the young and females, as well as the respondents considering going working abroad.

To the best of our knowledge, this paper is the first attempt to analyse econometrically individual and municipality level determinants of the (non-)willingness to naturalize in Latvia. Exploring a highly controversial group of migrants and their descendants, the paper informs the current policy debate in Latvia and the EU, and contributes to the growing theoretical and empirical literature on citizenship acquisition (see e.g. Devoretz (2008) and Kahanec and Tosun (2009) for an overview). We follow this literature in viewing the decision to ascend to citizenship within a cost-benefit framework and recognising the role of social, economic and demographic factors, ethnic networks, and regional, institutional and attitudinal effects in the immigrant's decision to naturalize (Garcia 1981; Kahanec and Tosun 2009; Zimmermann et al. 2009; Devoretz and Pivnenko 2005; Devoretz 2008; Yang 1994; Bratsberg et al. 2002; Woodrow-Lafield et al. 2004).

⁷ Note that this paper does *not* address the question why the non-citizenship status was introduced in the first place. There are several explanations for the existence of the strict citizenship legislation in Latvia – from “threat to the national identity and language” and “correcting historical injustice” (Barrington 2000, Muiznieks 2005) to rent-seeking and “ethnic democracy” (Smith 1996, Smooha 2001, Hughes 2005).

2. Historical background and the costs and benefits of becoming citizen of Latvia.

Latvia's non-citizens originate from the Soviet era migration flows. Workers from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine were "sent" by central planners to transform Latvia into an industrial economy (Karklins, 1994; Laitin, 1998; Munz and Ohliger, 2003). Although the in-migration originated in central planning rather than individual choices, the high standard of living known to prevail in Latvia, its proximity to Western Europe and related factors made an assignment to move to Latvia, for the most part, a relatively pleasant prospect (Parming, 1980). As a result of these migration flows, the share of ethnic Latvians in the population of Latvia decreased dramatically from 82% in 1945 to 52% in 1989.

Upon the break-down of the Soviet Union in 1991, Latvia did not consider itself as a new state but as a continuation of a Latvian state that existed between the two World Wars. Therefore, only former (pre-1940) Latvian citizens and their descendants were allowed to restore their citizenship. About 700,000 former immigrants from the Soviet Union and their descendants born in Latvia remained with passports of a USSR that no longer existed. In 1995, when the new citizenship law came into effect, they received a special status of *non-citizen of Latvia/ aliens/ stateless* (Galbreath 2005, Hughes 2005, Budryte 2005, Kolströ 1996). Non-citizens may naturalize provided that they have been permanent residents of Latvia for at least 5 years, have a legal source of income, are fluent in the Latvian language (have to pass an exam), know the text of the National Anthem and correctly answer questions regarding Latvia's Constitution and history.⁸ Double citizenship (e.g. non-citizenship of Latvia and citizenship of Russia) is not allowed.

According to the Naturalization Board of the Republic of Latvia, the number of the non-citizens decreased from 670,480 (27.2% of the population) in 1996 to 344,095 (15.3%) in 2010. However, a relatively small part of this decrease was due to naturalizations (there were 132,870 naturalizations between 1996 and 2010, or 19.8% of the total number of non-citizens in 1996); the remainder is attributable e.g. to deaths and acquisition of citizenship of another

⁸ Source: Citizenship Law of the Republic of Latvia.

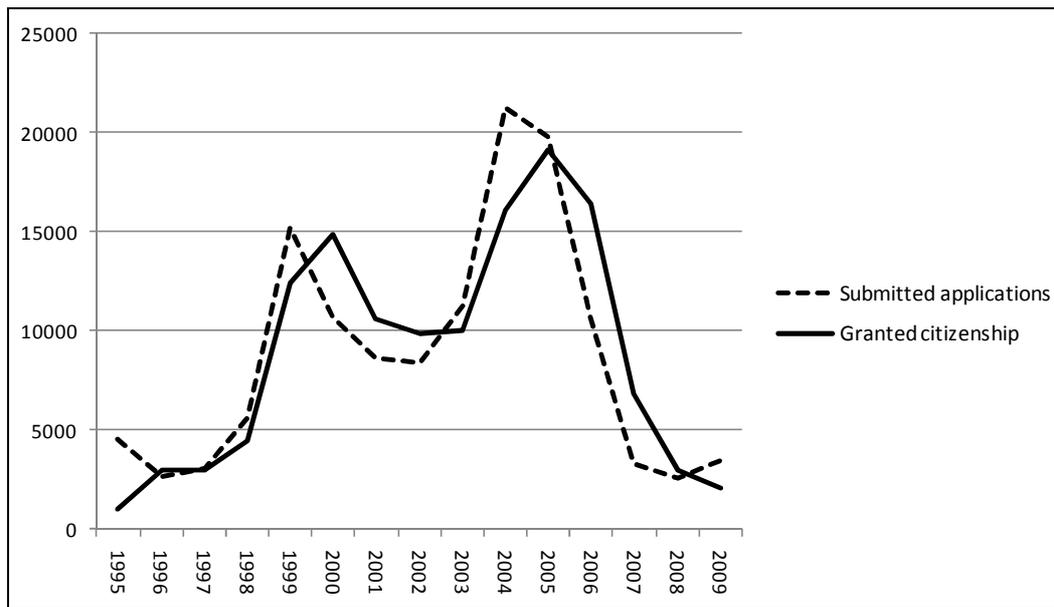
country (ECRI 2002).⁹ The naturalization rate in general has been relatively low and the number of non-citizens remains high - as has been regularly pointed out by international institutions (Open Society Institute 2001, ECRI 2002, European Commission 2002, The Baltic Times 2008, ECRI 2008).

Figure 1 illustrates the evolution of the number of the submitted applications for citizenship of Latvia and granted citizenships, from 1995 to 2009, conveying two peaks. The first peak is explained by a major “supply shock” - the abolition in 1998 of so called “age-windows system” which set a specific timetable for naturalizations giving priority for the younger and those born in Latvia (Open Society Institute 2001, ECRI 2002). This major softening of the citizenship policy was a result of a criticism from the international community and, to a large extent, was a precondition for Latvia’s accession to the EU (Morris 2003, Gelazis 2004, Hughes 2005, Haughton 2007, Galbreath and Muiznieks 2009).

The second peak occurred in 2004-2006 and is explained by the EU enlargement. In 2004 Latvia joined the EU, and Latvian citizens obtained the right to work without work permits in the UK, Ireland and Sweden. Given that the non-citizens of Latvia are not considered citizens of the EU, labour mobility acted as a strong incentive to naturalize (Galbreath and Muiznieks 2009). This is confirmed by the increase in the share of the young among the applicants for Latvian citizenship after 2004 (left panel of Figure 2).

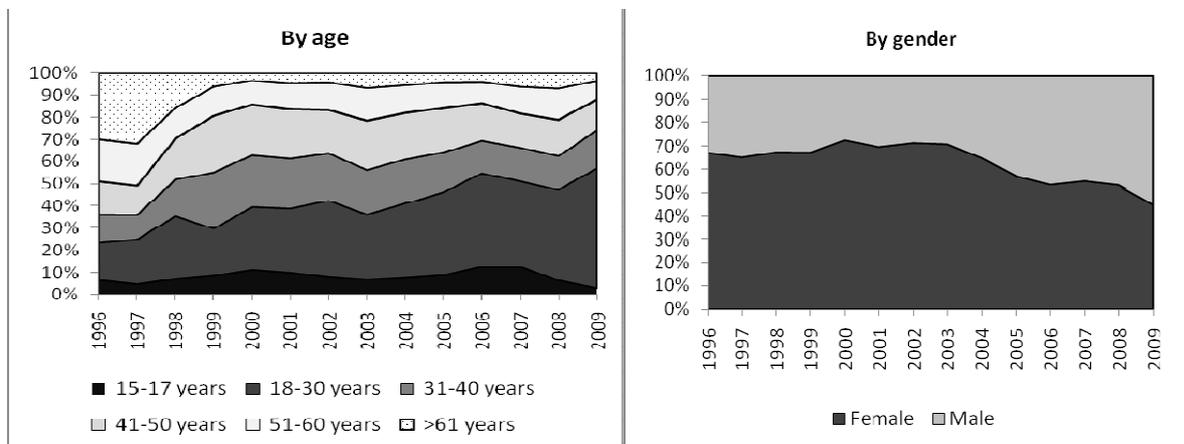
⁹ In addition, despite the fact that the post-independence born children are entitled to citizenship of Latvia upon request of the parents, some non-citizens still prefer to register their post-independence born children as non-citizens (International Helsinki Federation of Human Rights 2007, p.104).

Figure 1. Submitted applications and granted Latvian citizenship



Source: The Naturalization Board of the Republic of Latvia.

Figure 2. Applications for Latvian citizenship by age and gender.



Source: The Naturalization Board of the Republic of Latvia.

Of particular interest for this study is the question why some of the non-citizens of Latvia do *not* want to naturalize. To provide answers we present, in table 1, the findings from two qualitative surveys conducted in Latvia in 2003 and 2007.¹⁰ The first survey was

¹⁰ We provide evidence from these more qualitative studies for two reasons: 1) Both are available only in Latvian and therefore not easily accessible for international audiences. The studies, however, are very

commissioned by the Naturalization Board of the Republic of Latvia, conducted in 2003, and consists of interviews with 6825 non-citizens from municipalities with a high share of non-citizens and low pace of naturalization (Brandē Kehre and Stalīdzāne 2003). The second survey was commissioned by the Secretariat of the Special Assignment Minister for Social Integration of the Republic of Latvia, conducted in 2007, and consists of interviews with 1,200 residents of Latvia, out of whom 239 respondents are non-citizens of Latvia (Secretariat of the Special Assignment Minister for Social Integration 2008).

informative and merit a wider audience; 2) The two qualitative studies complement our paper in that they provide answers to *why* the non-citizens do or do not want to naturalize.

Table 1. The reasons for non-naturalizing – evidence from Brande Kehre and Stalīdzāne (2003) and Secretariat of the Special Assignment Minister for Social Integration (2008).

2003 : Why don't you use the possibility to naturalize?*	% of respondents
1) I consider that I have an automatic right to Latvian citizenship	34%
2) I hope that the process of naturalization will be simplified	26%
3) It is easier to travel to the CIS countries	26%
4) I think that I will not be able to pass the Latvian language exam	24%
5) I do not feel the necessity	22%
6) I think that I will not be able to pass the Latvian history exam	21%
7) I do not have money to pay the fee	20%
8) I do not have time to do the necessary formalities	18%
9) I consider that the process of naturalization is humiliating	18%
10) I feel it is difficult to start the naturalization process	11%
11) I want to be/am a citizen of another country	4%
12) It is difficult to get to the Naturalization Board office	3%
2007 : The reasons why you do not plan to acquire Latvian citizenship**	% of respondents
a) I do not see the necessity	44%
b) Insufficient knowledge of Latvian	37%
c) I do not have time to do the necessary formalities	29%
d) Insufficient knowledge of Latvian history	24%
e) I consider that the process of naturalization is humiliating	21%
f) I do not have enough information about the naturalization process	20%
g) I do not feel belonging to the Latvian state	17%
h) Latvian citizenship will complicate travelling to Russia and other CIS countries	10%
i) I want to acquire citizenship of another state	6%

* From Brande Kehre and Stalīdzāne (2003), survey conducted in 2003, 6825 respondents

** From Secretariat of the Special Assignment Minister for Social Integration (2008), survey conducted in 2007, 112 respondents (the non-citizens who do not plan to acquire citizenship)

Table 1 shows that the two distinct surveys elicit very similar responses regarding the reasons for why non-citizen do not naturalize. One of the major obstacles is the rejection of the whole idea of naturalization. Saying “no” to naturalization is a form of protest. A common perception among the non-citizens is that they should not have to undergo the “unfair/ humiliating/ offending” procedure of naturalization because they were born in Latvia, lived in

Latvia all their lives, worked in Latvia all their lives, supported the independence of Latvia in the early 1990s etc. (ECRI 2008, Zepa et al. 2003, Balandina 2004). In Table 1 this sentiment is strongly and directly expressed in the 2003 responses - lines (1) and (9), and in the 2007 responses – line (e). Indirectly the sentiment may, additionally, be expressed in lines (5) and (a).

Next, it costs money to naturalize. Currently, the state duty for submission of a naturalization application is 20 LVL (28 EUR), down from 30 LVL (55 EUR) up till 2001.¹¹ While low by western European standards, this amount of money is non-negligible relative to the Latvian monthly minimum wage (60 LVL (110 EUR) in 2000 and 140 LVL (200 EUR) in November 2009). According to the European Commission, a high application fee remained an obstacle for naturalization in 2000 (European Commission 2000). In Table 1 line (7) addresses the cost side directly. In addition, as the above table shows, people perceive the naturalization procedure as administratively and organisationally cumbersome and complex in terms of information requirements. Lines (2), (8), (10), (12), (c), (f) of Table 1 give ample testimony to this obstacle.

Successful naturalization implies passing Latvian language and history exams. However, many non-citizens of Latvia, and especially the old, report that passing the exams would be difficult for them (Zepa et al. 2003). The language and history exam barrier is clearly revealed in the above table in lines (4), (6), (b), (d).

The next cluster of motivations for keeping the non-citizen status is best understood against the backdrop of the advantages for travel that citizenship of Latvia entails. Up to January 2008, non-citizens needed visas to travel to all EU countries. A Latvian passport would give them the possibility to travel without visas throughout the EU, and in countries like the US (visa-free from 2008). The desire to travel in Europe without visas might have increased the willingness to naturalize up to January 2008: 25.2% of the respondents in the Brande Kehre and Stalidzane (2003) survey said that the possibility to travel visa-free in Europe would be a motivating factor for acquiring citizenship. In January 2008, the Latvian non-citizens

¹¹ The politically repressed, the disabled, orphans, people with very low income, the unemployed, pensioners, pupils and students are either exempt from paying the fee or pay a reduced rate (**3 LVL**). Source: Naturalization Board of the Republic of Latvia.

obtained the right to travel without visas in the Schengen area¹² – removing this pro-citizenship motive. This might in part explain why the number of applicants went down in 2008 – as can be seen from Figure 1.

Non-citizens of Latvia, typically, have family ties in the ex-Soviet Republics – primarily Russian Federation, Belarus and Ukraine. For most of the period under consideration, both citizens and non-citizens of Latvia required visas to travel to Russia. However, the non-citizens have always had important discounts - so cheaper visas, in particular, to Russia and Belarus¹³ acted as a monetary incentive to keep the non-citizenship passport. This sentiment is clearly expressed in Table 1 lines (3) and (h).

In 2008, i.e. after the survey results of Table 1, the Russian government abolished visas for non-citizens of Latvia and Estonia for travelling to Russia. This significantly increased the attractiveness to keep the non-citizen status which now gave the possibility to travel to most of the EU *and* Russia without visas, and arguably contributed to the fall in citizenship applications in 2008 and 2009. Among other things, Russia’s decision to introduce a visa-free regime for the non-citizens was considered by the officials of Latvia and Estonia as a direct attempt to influence their citizenship policy (Rianovosti 2008, Reuters 2008). This gives reason to expect that a post-2008 survey would point to an increased emphasis of travel-related reasons for keeping the non-citizen status relative to the surveys of 2003 and 2007, on which Table 1 draws.

There also is a gender-specific motive for saying “no” to naturalization. Up to 2006, there was a compulsory military service in Latvia. By the end of 2006 the conscription was abolished. The non-citizen passport gave the right to avoid military service for young (up to 27 years old) non-citizen men - making the non-citizen passport attractive to them. After the end of 2006, this disincentive to naturalization disappeared. The aggregate data support these trends: although we do not notice an increase in the number of total applications in 2007 and

¹² The non-citizens still need visas to go to Ireland and the UK. They also need work permits to work in any EU country.

¹³ For example, the cost of a single entry visa to Belarus for citizens and non-citizens of Latvia was: 15 USD and 10 USD respectively in 2002-2003; 20 USD and 15 USD respectively in 2004; 32 USD and 20 USD respectively in 2005-2007. When Latvia joined the Schengen area in 2008 the dual price system ended and a common price of LVL 18 (EUR 25.4) has, since then, been charged for citizens and non-citizens alike. We are grateful to the Embassy of Belarus in Latvia for providing this information.

2008, the share of males in the total number of applicants increased in 2006-2008 - as can be seen from the left panel of Figure 2.

Further advantages to obtaining Latvian citizenship are related to pensions. Citizens of Latvia who have served in the military or worked outside Latvia during Soviet times (i.e. in another Soviet republic) have these years taken into account when their pension is calculated. For non-citizens of Latvia, only the years worked on the territory of Latvia are taken into account in pension calculation. Therefore non-citizens who have served in the military or worked outside Latvia have an incentive to naturalize.

In light of the many advantages conveyed by citizenship the proportion of non-citizen who want to maintain this status is surprisingly large – pointing in the direction of both practical and emotional reasons for not wanting Latvian citizenship: administrative and informational obstacles are combining with rejection of Latvian citizenship as an expression of protest. In the next section we take a closer look at the individual and municipality level factors which have influenced the decision to naturalize in Latvia.

3. Empirical results

a. Data

Our empirical analysis is based on a survey we commissioned – face-to-face interviews with individuals aged 15-74. The survey was conducted by Marketing and Public Opinion Research Centre (Riga) during June and July 2007.¹⁴ The database contains 2161 observations. The sample is representative, insofar as it closely replicates regional, ethnic,

¹⁴ The survey questions were written by the authors of this paper and attached as a “rider” to the company’s routinely and regularly scheduled survey. The data were generated via face-to-face interviews at the respondents’ places of residence. The sampling method consisted of multistage stratified random sampling (district sampling, place-of-residence sampling, survey point and household selection) with stratification criteria being ethnicity and administrative-territorial division of Latvia. The households were selected according to the random route procedure and third flat rule, and within each household, respondents were selected on the basis of the first birthday. Detailed information on survey design and methodology is available on request (see appendix 1). Information on the Marketing and Public Opinion Research Centre is available at <http://www.skds.lv/index.php?lng=1Eng>

gender and citizenship distributions of the general population (see appendix 2). The interview questions were designed by the authors of this paper.

All respondents of the survey were asked a nested set of questions on citizenship. First, whether the respondent is a citizen of Latvia or not, followed by separate tracks of questions for citizen and non-citizen respectively. Citizens were asked whether the citizenship was obtained through registration (descendants of citizens) or naturalization and when citizenship was obtained. Non-citizens were asked whether they planned or not to obtain citizenship in the future.

Table 2 shows the distribution of answers. Altogether 17.08% of the respondents said that they did not have citizenship of Latvia, which replicates the true share of the non-citizens in Latvia (17.20 % at the beginning of 2007 and 16.37 % at the beginning of 2008 (Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia). Another 12 % of the respondents had obtained Latvian citizenship prior to the interviews. It is these two groups - the current and former non-citizens - that we focus on in our empirical analysis.

Table 2. Do you have Latvian citizenship, and if yes, how and when did you obtain it?
(*only one answer*)

		N	%	
Has Latvian citizenship	Citizenship obtained through registration	1534	71.0	
	Citizenship obtained through naturalization	More than 5 years ago	159	7.4
		Less than 5 years ago	99	4.6
Does not have Latvian citizenship	Currently undergoing the procedure of naturalization	15	0.7	
	Plans to obtain citizenship in the future	127	5.9	
	Does not plan to obtain citizenship	227	10.5	

b. Empirical model

In the following, we concentrate on the respondents who do not have Latvian citizenship (current non-citizens) or who obtained Latvian citizenship through naturalization (former non-citizens). This gives us a total sample of 627 individuals, which we divide into 4 groups: 1) those who obtained Latvian citizenship more than 5 years ago; 2) those who obtained

Latvian citizenship less than 5 years ago or are currently undergoing the naturalization procedure; 3) those who plan to obtain Latvian citizen in the future; and 4) those who do not plan to obtain Latvian citizenship.

To determine how different socio-demographic and community characteristics affect the probability of falling into one of the four non-citizen categories we estimate a multinomial probit model (see e.g. Wooldridge 2003). The set of individual-level regressors consists of age, dummy variables for gender, marital status, having children under 18, being a pupil or student, being unemployed, working in the public sector, living in rural area, born outside Latvia (former migrant), five education levels and six income levels (*see appendix 3 for summary statistics of all regressors*). Next, dummies for six levels of self-reported proficiency in the State (Latvian) language allow to determine whether insufficient knowledge of the State language is a potential barrier to the acquisition of citizenship. Dummies for self-reported likelihood of emigration (low or high) serve to check whether Latvian citizenship is sought in order to emigrate. To control for regional effects, we include 6 province dummies, as well as two municipality-level variables: the unemployment rate and the share of non-citizens in the village/town/city in which the respondent lives (both for the beginning of 2007). Finally, in order to preserve the observations corresponding to the respondents who did not report their income level (27.6% of the sample) and their likelihood of emigration (11.5%), we create two dummies for the non-reported income and the non-reported likelihood of emigration.¹⁵

c. Empirical results

Table 2 presents the marginal effects of a multinomial probit regression, which includes the individual, regional and municipality level regressors outlined above. Figure 3 plots the

¹⁵ The three emigration intentions dummies (low, high, non-reported) were constructed from five possible answers to the emigration intentions question (very low, rather low, rather high, very high, NA/non-reported). We checked the robustness of our empirical results to different specifications of the emigration intentions variable. The results remained qualitatively unchanged when instead of three emigration intention dummies we used 1) five emigration intentions dummies; 2) an ordinal variable consisting of 4 categories of emigration intentions (in this case the respondents who did not report their emigration intentions were excluded from the analysis); 3) an ordinal variable consisting of 5 categories of emigration intentions with the “NA/non-reported” taking the middle value.

marginal effects for the three continuous variables: age, the municipality unemployment rates and the municipality share of non-citizens. In the following, we only discuss the coefficients of statistically significant regressors.

Table 2. Determinants of the decision to naturalize; multinomial probit marginal effects

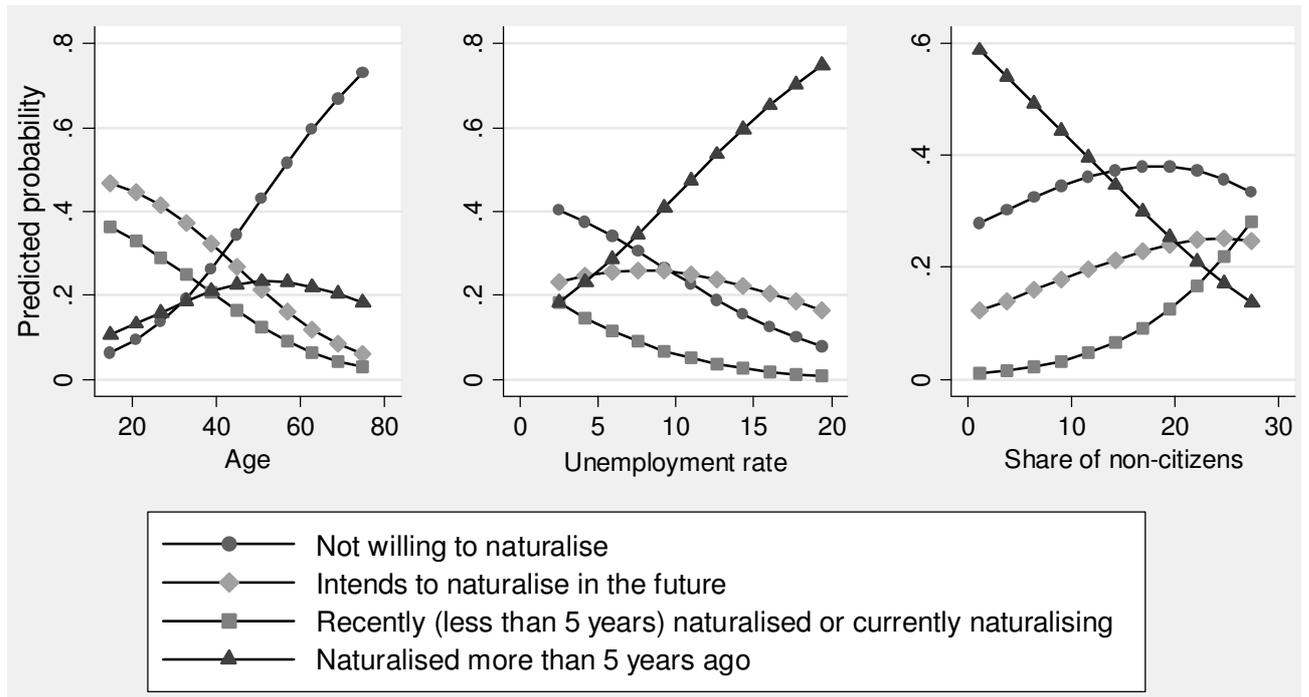
	<i>Naturalized more than 5 years ago</i>		<i>Naturalized less than 5 years ago or currently naturalizing</i>		<i>Plans to naturalize in the future</i>		<i>Not willing to Naturalize</i>	
	ME	SE	ME	SE	ME	SE	ME	SE
Age	0.002	<i>0.002</i>	-0.007***	<i>0.001</i>	-0.009***	<i>0.002</i>	0.014***	<i>0.002</i>
Male	-0.001	<i>0.046</i>	-0.094***	<i>0.033</i>	-0.027	<i>0.039</i>	0.121**	<i>0.054</i>
Married	0.055	<i>0.047</i>	0.012	<i>0.035</i>	0.044	<i>0.043</i>	-0.111**	<i>0.055</i>
Has a child under 18	-0.053	<i>0.049</i>	-0.018	<i>0.038</i>	0.012	<i>0.050</i>	0.060	<i>0.068</i>
Pupil/student	0.042	<i>0.118</i>	-0.015	<i>0.079</i>	-0.056	<i>0.091</i>	0.030	<i>0.150</i>
Unemployed	0.100	<i>0.120</i>	0.110	<i>0.113</i>	-0.100	<i>0.079</i>	-0.110	<i>0.122</i>
Works in public sector	0.130*	<i>0.067</i>	0.039	<i>0.052</i>	-0.092*	<i>0.051</i>	-0.077	<i>0.068</i>
Lives in rural area	-0.139**	<i>0.057</i>	0.052	<i>0.084</i>	0.113	<i>0.103</i>	-0.026	<i>0.100</i>
Income (ref: 101 - 150 LVL)								
< 51 LVL	0.258	<i>0.169</i>	-0.025	<i>0.142</i>	-0.206***	<i>0.052</i>	-0.026	<i>0.207</i>
51 - 100 LVL	-0.041	<i>0.074</i>	0.043	<i>0.062</i>	-0.054	<i>0.059</i>	0.052	<i>0.077</i>
151 - 200 LVL	0.078	<i>0.084</i>	0.118	<i>0.076</i>	-0.121**	<i>0.053</i>	-0.075	<i>0.088</i>
201 - 300 LVL	0.107	<i>0.093</i>	-0.053	<i>0.052</i>	-0.014	<i>0.073</i>	-0.040	<i>0.099</i>
> 300 LVL	0.109	<i>0.110</i>	0.026	<i>0.093</i>	-0.125**	<i>0.064</i>	-0.011	<i>0.134</i>
Non-reported	0.038	<i>0.069</i>	-0.039	<i>0.052</i>	-0.142***	<i>0.051</i>	0.142*	<i>0.077</i>
Education (ref: secondary)								
Primary	-0.086	<i>0.067</i>	-0.066	<i>0.053</i>	-0.010	<i>0.074</i>	0.162***	<i>0.090</i>
Secondary vocational	-0.054	<i>0.054</i>	-0.046	<i>0.040</i>	-0.020	<i>0.050</i>	0.120**	<i>0.065</i>
Higher non-completed	0.117	<i>0.132</i>	-0.028	<i>0.058</i>	-0.174***	<i>0.049</i>	0.085	<i>0.148</i>
Higher	-0.083	<i>0.055</i>	-0.005	<i>0.046</i>	0.009	<i>0.061</i>	0.079	<i>0.080</i>
Knowledge of Latvian (ref: intermediate)								
Native speaker level	0.592***	<i>0.080</i>	-0.094**	<i>0.044</i>	-0.207***	<i>0.042</i>	-0.292***	<i>0.064</i>
Very good	0.453***	<i>0.086</i>	0.075	<i>0.073</i>	-0.200***	<i>0.040</i>	-0.328***	<i>0.053</i>
Good	0.151**	<i>0.061</i>	0.116**	<i>0.050</i>	0.005	<i>0.050</i>	-0.272***	<i>0.055</i>
Basic	-0.239***	<i>0.043</i>	-0.079*	<i>0.041</i>	0.063	<i>0.056</i>	0.254***	<i>0.064</i>
No knowledge	-0.193***	<i>0.063</i>	-0.142***	<i>0.036</i>	-0.205***	<i>0.045</i>	0.540***	<i>0.077</i>
Former migrant	-0.110**	<i>0.050</i>	0.041	<i>0.045</i>	-0.034	<i>0.047</i>	0.103*	<i>0.060</i>
Probability of emigration (ref: low)								
High	-0.022	<i>0.061</i>	0.113*	<i>0.059</i>	-0.038	<i>0.053</i>	-0.053	<i>0.075</i>
Non-reported	-0.075	<i>0.062</i>	0.075	<i>0.059</i>	-0.080	<i>0.053</i>	0.080	<i>0.076</i>
Municipality (NUTS-5) level variables								
Unemployment rate	0.031**	<i>0.014</i>	-0.020*	<i>0.012</i>	0.006	<i>0.014</i>	-0.016	<i>0.018</i>
Share of non-citizens	-0.018***	<i>0.006</i>	0.018***	<i>0.005</i>	0.003	<i>0.005</i>	-0.004	<i>0.007</i>
Province fixed effects (ref: Riga)								
Pieriga	-0.089	<i>0.073</i>	0.176*	<i>0.096</i>	-0.064	<i>0.070</i>	-0.024	<i>0.109</i>
Vidzeme	-0.149*	<i>0.083</i>	0.502***	<i>0.187</i>	-0.122	<i>0.094</i>	-0.231*	<i>0.122</i>
Kurzeme	-0.214***	<i>0.042</i>	0.154**	<i>0.077</i>	0.146*	<i>0.083</i>	-0.087	<i>0.081</i>
Zemgale	-0.136*	<i>0.070</i>	0.318**	<i>0.140</i>	-0.110	<i>0.079</i>	-0.073	<i>0.123</i>
Latgale	-0.177***	<i>0.063</i>	0.072	<i>0.084</i>	0.046	<i>0.086</i>	0.059	<i>0.110</i>

n = 624; Wald chi2 = 479.07; Prob > chi2 = 0.000; Log pseudolikelihood = - 557.91119

Note: ME = marginal effect; SE = Robust standard error (in italics)

* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Figure 3. Predicted probabilities of the willingness to naturalize as a function of age, unemployment rate and the share of non-citizens.



Age has a strong impact on the willingness to naturalize. As shown in the left panel of Fig. 3, the probabilities of being a “recent citizen” (naturalized in the past 5 years or currently undergoing naturalization procedure) and a “future citizen” (planning to obtain Latvian citizenship in the future) decrease with the respondent’s age. Conversely, the probability of not wanting to naturalize increases with age. The result, in line with the existing literature (Woodrow-Lafield et al. 2004; Kahanec and Tosun 2009; Devoretz 2008) is not surprising: compared to the elderly, the gains from citizenship for the younger people are higher. The younger are more likely to be economically active and have jobs for which citizenship is required, they are more willing to travel abroad and participate in the political processes of the country, and arguably they are more likely to accept the whole idea of naturalization.

Males are found to be 12.1 percentage points more likely to remain non-citizens and 9.4 percentage points less likely to fall into the “recent citizen” category, other factors held constant. One explanation for such gender gap could be lower civic engagement of males in Latvia. Also males could possibly have a stronger perception of the naturalization process being humiliating. Note that the literature delivers mixed results in this regard. For example, our findings are consistent with Zimmermann et al. (2009) who show that female heads of households are both more likely to acquire citizenship in the future and to already be in possession of citizenship, compared to their male counterparts. However, based on data for immigrants in Canada, Devoretz (2008) reports the opposite result: Males are more likely to attain Canadian citizenship – a result that is also in agreement with Yang (1994). Kahanec and Tosun (2009), based on a dataset of immigrants in Germany, conclude that gender does not play any role for the propensity to obtain citizenship.

Married respondents are on average 11.1 percentage points less likely to report unwillingness to naturalize, possibly reflecting consideration for the future of their children. This is in line with existing results in the literature; e.g. Zimmermann et al (2009) find a positive and significant effect of marriage on the plans to obtain citizenship in the future, using a dataset for immigrants in Germany.¹⁶ Such results are, however, not uniform in the literature. Kahanec and Tosun (2009), for example, report negative correlation between marriage and naturalization propensity. Earlier literature also provides mixed findings. For example Beijbom (1971) finds a positive and statistically significant effect of marriage on Swedish

¹⁶ Interestingly they show that marriage does not have any statistically significant effect on the probability of already having acquired citizenship. Our analysis confirms this finding too.

immigrants' propensity to obtain citizenship in the USA, while Guest (1980) does not find any discernable correlation between marital status and naturalization.

Working in the public sector increases, by 13 percentage points, the probability of early naturalization (more than 5 years prior to the interview). The result reflects the incentive to obtain citizenship in order to preserve public sector jobs.¹⁷ Those working in the public sector could also be more civically active and politically aware and ready to make use of the opportunity to influence the political process, which citizenship bestows. The important positive correlation between civic and political participation and the propensity to obtain citizenship is demonstrated empirically by e.g. Kahanec and Tosun (2009) for a dataset of immigrants in Germany.

Living in rural areas decreases, by 13.9 percentage points, the probability that a respondent naturalized more than 5 years ago. This finding could be explained by the less rapid diffusion of information about acquiring Latvian citizenship in rural areas. Also, the concentration of different kinds of civic organizations is lower in rural areas, hence lower political awareness and lower willingness to participate in the political processes of the country.

We do not obtain any clear relationship between income and willingness to naturalize. This is not unusual against the backdrop of mixed results in the literature. For example, Devoretz (2008) obtains significant and positive correlation between income and immigrants' propensity to obtain citizenship for a dataset of immigrants in Canada, while Kahanec and Tosun (2009), using a different dataset on immigrants in Germany, arrive at negative correlation.

However, education significantly affects the likelihood of naturalizing. In particular, keeping other factors constant and with reference to respondents with secondary education, the respondents with primary education are 16.2 percentage points more likely, and the respondents with secondary vocational education 12 percentage points more likely to say that they are not planning to naturalize. This lends itself to the interpretation that the naturalization procedure is complicated and discouraging for people with lower levels of education. This significant and positive correlation between education level and propensity

¹⁷ However, it cannot be ruled out that the public sector variable is endogenous: the acquisition of citizenship may help people find a job in the public sector. Unfortunately, our survey does not contain information on whether the former non-citizens worked in the public sector prior to naturalization.

to naturalize is in agreement with large parts of the literature, e.g. Zimmermann et al (2009) who arrive at positive and significant correlation, or Kahanec and Tosun (2009), who arrive at positive correlation – albeit non-significant.

Knowledge of the state language is by far the most significant correlate of the willingness to naturalize in Latvia. *Ceteris paribus* and with reference to respondents speaking Latvian at the intermediate level, respondents having no knowledge of Latvian are 54 percentage points more likely and respondents with basic knowledge of Latvian 25.4 percentage points more likely to report that they are not willing to naturalize. Symmetrically, respondents with better than average proficiency in Latvian are significantly more likely to report that they obtained citizenship long (more than 5 years) ago. It is important to note that the causality between the knowledge of State language and willingness to naturalize can run both ways: on the one hand, people with better knowledge of Latvian are more efficient in overcoming administrative barriers associated with naturalization procedure and passing the language and history exam; on the other hand people willing to naturalize may choose to improve their proficiency in Latvian. Such two-way causality makes the proficiency in State language potentially endogenous and the obtained coefficients potentially biased, especially for dummies capturing high levels of proficiency in Latvian. However, the bias is less likely to happen for the lowest level of proficiency in Latvian: people with “no knowledge” of Latvian by definition did not improve (and most likely did not downgrade) their knowledge of Latvian. A positive and significant effect that the “no knowledge” dummy has on the probability of remaining non-citizen therefore points to the important role of speaking the state language in obtaining citizenship.

Next, we find that former migrants are 11 percentage points less likely to be “early citizens”. This finding can be explained by the “window system” which, until 2000, prevented former migrants from applying for Latvian citizenship. In addition, former migrants are found to be 10.3 percentage points less likely to naturalize in the future. This finding can be explained by a particular “ideological stubbornness” of the former migrants, who may have difficulties to accept the very existence of the independent Latvian state and to reconsider their role in it.

Perhaps not surprisingly the results suggest a positive and significant correlation between the willingness to naturalize and emigration intentions: compared to respondents with low self-reported likelihood of emigrating and keeping other factors constant, respondents with high self-reported likelihood of emigration are 11.3 percentage points more likely to be “recent

citizens” – those who naturalized in the past five years or were undergoing the procedure of naturalization at the time of the interview. This finding confirms the hypothesis that intentions to emigrate from Latvia, motivated by the 2004 EU enlargement and the subsequent liberalisation of the EU labour markets, is an important incentive to obtain Latvian citizenship. This, indeed, gives reason for concern. While seeking citizenship is typically interpreted as a positive sign of acceptance of, and integration into, the country of residence, our findings suggest that for a non-negligible number of Latvian residents it signals the opposite: a preparation for “escape” from the country.

Interesting insights are offered by the municipality-level variables. First, we find that higher unemployment at the respondent’s place of residence increases the probability of “early naturalization” and decreases the probability of “recent naturalization” (see the centre panel of Figure 3). This is broadly in line with results in the literature – for example Kahanec and Tosun (2009), who work with a dataset on immigrants in Germany, find a positive and significant effect of unemployment on citizenship aspirations. The finding can be explained as follows: confronted with a necessity to obtain citizenship in order to preserve a public sector job (e.g. in public administration), an individual will be more motivated to obtain citizenship if the unemployment rate is high - because it is difficult to find another job in the private sector. However, if the unemployment rate is low and alternative jobs, for which Latvian citizenship is not essential, can be easily found, an individual can “afford” not to pass the naturalization exams or would postpone the naturalization for the future. Note that the necessity to pass the required State language test for employees in the public sector (e.g. for teachers, doctors, etc) would also lead to higher naturalization rates – people who have passed the language exam would be more confident to pass the naturalization exam.

Second, the results suggest that, other things equal, earlier naturalizations (more than 5 year prior to the interview) are more frequent in localities with lower share of non-citizens, while more recent and ongoing naturalizations are more frequent in localities with higher shares of non-citizens, as shown on the right panel of Figure 3. One explanation could be that in localities with low shares of non-citizens, the respondents have more contacts with citizens of Latvia, are more integrated with the citizen community, speak the State language better, and

are more likely to be married to a citizen. All these factors could facilitate the early decision to naturalize.¹⁸

Finally, we notice a substantial regional variation in earlier and more recent rates of naturalizations. Respondents from the capital Riga and its agglomeration (Pieriga) were the first to obtain citizenship; respondents from other regions tend to be more recent citizens. Easier access to information in the capital and its agglomeration, the high concentration of government and public administration jobs with their requirement of citizenship, as well as more numerous and diverse possibilities to travel abroad from the more affluent capital region could explain this result.

¹⁸ Note that causality could, in principle, run in the opposite direction: localities with lower share of non-citizen (in 2007) may be that way because non-citizen naturalized early on – thereby reducing the incidence of non-citizenship thereafter. To check whether this is the case, we use municipality share of non-citizens in 1998 – the earliest year for which such data are available – as an instrument for 2007 rates and as an independent regressor. The results, available on request, point in the same direction as our reported findings: early naturalizations were more frequent in municipalities with low share of non-citizens, more recent and current naturalizations were more frequent in municipalities with high share of non-citizens.

4. Summary and discussion

This paper takes as a point of departure a peculiar Latvian “institution”, a category of resident, known as “non-citizen”, stemming from special historical/political circumstances. This “non-citizen” status has a number of serious disadvantages relative to citizen status. It is, therefore, of interest why a significant number of “non-citizen” opt to keep this status, although they have the opportunity to obtain full citizenship, and why others choose to become citizen. Using data from a representative 2007 survey of 624 former and current non-citizens in a multivariate probit model reveals characteristics of those who want to remain non-citizen, and of those who have obtained citizen status, are in the process of obtaining it or plan to do so in the future.

Not surprisingly age makes a difference. Younger economically active people are more likely to opt for obtaining citizenship than retired people, as it brings advantages on the job market and allows for visa-free travel in selected countries. Job-related motives also support the finding that people who work in the public sector tend to have become citizen early on – in order to preserve their public sector position.

Differences are also apparent along gender lines, with males more likely to remain non-citizen – possible explanations range from a lower level of civic engagement relative to females to outright rejection of the naturalization procedure itself.

Where you live matters – with rural areas lagging behind urban areas in conversion to full citizenship, possibly based on differences in information diffusion or the simple fact that it is in the cities where the public sector jobs are to be found, with citizenship facilitating job attainment and preservation. Among other factors connected to locational differences that matter with regard to willingness to obtain citizenship is the unemployment rate. A higher unemployment rate is associated with a higher rate of naturalization – interpreted as an attempt to make oneself more attractive on the (difficult) labour market.

While the analysis does not establish a clear correlation between income and willingness to naturalize, a positive correlation is visible between education and the willingness to naturalize – suggesting that the naturalization procedure may appear complicated and discouraging to people with lower levels of education.

Proficiency level of the state language (Latvian) is the single most significant correlate of the willingness to obtain citizenship. The naturalization process, after all, requires the candidate to take a language exam. In addition language proficiency lowers the administrative/procedural difficulties, while the careers in the public sector with a language requirement of their own are an attractor for citizenship, as already mentioned above.

Apart from common socio-economic characteristics the analysis also reveals that former migrants (people who themselves immigrated into Latvia earlier, mostly from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus) are more reluctant to obtain citizenship compared to people without this attribute – possibly stemming from a relatively stronger ideological orientation that questions the legitimacy of the state of Latvia. Former migrants may also keep stronger links with their relatives and friends in the post-Soviet space. For frequent travellers between Latvia and Russia & CIS there are some advantages in remaining a non-citizen that relate to travel documents and their costs.

Turning from immigration to emigration, one finding stands out in that it is disturbing: a positive and significant correlation between the willingness to naturalize and emigration intentions. Obtaining citizenship, rather than being a manifestation of integration, signals the opposite: a preparation for “escape”.

The paper’s findings are policy relevant in that they suggest possible improvements in the naturalization process. If the goal is to maximize the proportion of citizens in the resident population of Latvia our findings suggest several avenues worth pursuing. First, the naturalization procedure should be simplified, and more guidance should be provided, so that people with lower levels of educational attainment do not feel discouraged. Second, access to Latvian language and history courses, free of charge, should be secured in both urban and rural areas and information about them should be widely distributed. Third, information diffusion regarding benefits and procedures of attaining citizenship should be augmented in the small towns and rural areas. This could be made a part of regional development policy and would, arguably, be a worthy cause for structural fund financing.

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Appendices 1, 2 and 3 contain information on survey design and implementation (A1), representativeness of the survey (A2), and summary statistics of variables included in econometric analysis (A3).

Appendix 1. Survey design and implementation

Description of survey design and implementation

The survey on which our analysis is based was conducted by the Marketing and Public Opinion Research Centre (abbreviation in Latvian: SKDS) - a private and independent research company whose major fields of activity include various types of marketing and public opinion research.

The survey questions were written by the authors of this paper. Our commissioned survey questions were attached as a “rider” to the company’s routinely and regularly scheduled survey. This has the advantage that we get routine demographic and socio-economic survey data for free, in addition to our paid-for designer questions.

The data was generated via face-to-face interviews at the respondents’ places of residence. The sampling method consists of multistage stratified random sampling (district sampling, place-of-residence sampling, survey point and household selection) with stratification criteria being ethnicity and administrative-territorial division of Latvia. The households were selected according to the random route procedure and third flat rule, and within each household, respondents were selected on the basis of the first birthday.

About SKDS

The centre was established in 1996 and since then has become one of the leading research suppliers in Latvia. Since 2000 SKDS is represented in the E.S.O.M.A.R. (European Society for Opinion and Market Research) and is subject to the ethical and methodological rules and standards for research institutes within opinion and marketing research. SKDS has a network of 200 trained interviewers, covering the entire territory of Latvia. <http://www.skds.lv>

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Appendix 2. Representativeness of the survey.

		Data from the Central Statistical Bureau (2007) for the entire population of Latvia (N=2,281,305)	Distributions from our survey Total sample, n=2,161
Gender	Male	46.91%	46.27%
	Female	53.09%	53.73%
Age	15-24	19.88%	18.83%
	25-34	17.73%	15.27%
	35-44	17.72%	17.31%
	45-54	17.92%	19.39%
	55-64	13.99%	14.39%
	65-74	12.77%	14.81%
Ethnicity	Latvian	59.03%	57.75%
	Russian	28.29%	31.19%
	other	12.68%	11.06%
Citizenship	Non-citizen of Latvia	17.20%	17.08%
	Citizen of Latvia	82.80%	82.92%
Region	Riga	31.67%	32.62%
	Pieriga (Riga agglomeration)	16.36%	14.95%
	Vidzeme	10.54%	11.20%
	Kurzeme	13.42%	13.70%
	Zemgale	12.48%	12.17%
	Latgale	15.54%	15.36%

Appendix 3. Summary statistics, based on a sample of 624 former and current non-citizens.

Variable	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Age	47.319	16.342	15	74
Male	0.465	0.499	0	1
Married	0.546	0.498	0	1
Has a child under 18	0.282	0.450	0	1
Pupil/student	0.045	0.207	0	1
Unemployed	0.037	0.189	0	1
Works in public sector	0.127	0.333	0	1
Lives in rural area	0.120	0.325	0	1
Income				
< 51 LVL	0.018	0.132	0	1
51 – 100 LVL	0.202	0.402	0	1
101 – 150 LVL	0.202	0.402	0	1
151 – 200 LVL	0.138	0.345	0	1
201 – 300 LVL	0.099	0.299	0	1
> 300 LVL	0.066	0.248	0	1
Non-reported	0.276	0.447	0	1
Education				
Primary	0.128	0.335	0	1
Secondary	0.279	0.449	0	1
Secondary vocational	0.362	0.481	0	1
Higher non-completed	0.051	0.221	0	1
Higher	0.179	0.384	0	1
Knowledge of Latvian				
Native speaker level	0.072	0.259	0	1
Very good	0.079	0.269	0	1
Good	0.248	0.432	0	1
Intermediate	0.285	0.452	0	1
Basic	0.229	0.421	0	1
No knowledge	0.087	0.281	0	1
Former migrant	0.258	0.438	0	1
Probability of emigration				
High	0.163	0.370	0	1
Low	0.721	0.449	0	1
NA/non-reported	0.115	0.320	0	1
Municipality unemployment rate	4.140	2.272	2.5	19.4
Municipality share of non-citizens	20.978	8.618	1.12	27.37
Regions				
Riga	0.466	0.499	0	1
Pieriga	0.114	0.318	0	1
Vidzeme	0.093	0.291	0	1
Kurzeme	0.106	0.308	0	1
Zemgale	0.079	0.269	0	1
Latgale	0.143	0.350	0	1