

# Immigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina in Croatia: A Sense of Belonging and Acceptance in the New Social Environment

---

Podgorelec, Sonja; Gregurović, Margareta; Klempić Bogadi, Sanja

Source / Izvornik: **Razprave in gradivo = Treatises and documents, 2019, 82, 5 - 23**

Journal article, Published version

Rad u časopisu, Objavljena verzija rada (izdavačev PDF)

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:303:557926>

Rights / Prava: [Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported / Imenovanje-Nekomercijalno-Bez prerada 3.0](#)

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2025-02-23**



Repository / Repozitorij:

[Repository of the Institute for Migration Research -  
Institutional repository for storing papers and data  
sets](#)

Sonja Podgorelec, Margareta Gregurović, Sanja Klempić Bogadi

---

## Immigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina in Croatia: A Sense of Belonging and Acceptance in the New Social Environment

According to the 2011 census, among the 584,947 people born abroad who live in Croatia 70 per cent were born in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H). With the aim of determining the perception of acceptance and sense of belonging to the new social environment, i.e. the City of Zagreb and Croatia, this paper presents the results of empirical research conducted on judgemental/purposive sample (N = 301) of adult Croatian citizens born in B&H and living in Zagreb-Sesvete. The results suggest that, on average, the immigrants from B&H feel very accepted in the local community, and their origin is not an obstacle to acceptance and adaptation to the social environment. They also cherish their relationships with neighbours. Furthermore, they show a higher level of sense of belonging to the city and the country in which they live as opposed to the country of origin.

**Keywords:** immigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, sense of belonging, Croatia, identity, acculturation.

### Priseljenci iz Bosne in Hercegovine na Hrvaškem: občutje pripadnosti in sprejetosti v novem družbenem okolju

*Po popisu iz 2011 je bilo na Hrvaškem med 584.947 osebami rojenih izven Hrvaške kar 70 odstotkov rojenih v Bosni in Hercegovini. Prispevek govori prav o njih ter o njihovi percepciji sprejema in občutja pripadnosti v novem okolju – to je v Mestu Zagreb. Raziskava je zajela 301 osebo odraslih državljanov Hrvaške, rojenih v Bosni in Hercegovini, živečih v zagrebski mestni četrti Sesvete. Rezultati analize so pokazali, da se priseljenci iz Bosne in Hercegovine v povprečju počutijo zelo sprejete v okolju in njihovo prostorsko poreklo ni ovira pri vključevanju v družbo. Zelo negujejo midsosedske odnose, še posebej pa kažejo visoko stopnjo pripadnosti mestu Zagreb in državi, v kateri živijo, kot pa državi, iz katere so se priselili.*

**Ključne besede:** priseljenci iz Bosne in Hercegovine, občutje pripadnosti, Hrvaška, identiteta, akulturacija.

---

**Correspondence address:** Sonja Podgorelec, Institut za migracije i narodnosti / Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, Trg Stjepana Radića 3, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia, e-mail: sonja.podgorelec@imin.hr; Margareta Gregurović, Institut za migracije i narodnosti / Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, Trg Stjepana Radića 3, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia, e-mail: margareta.gregurovic@imin.hr; Sanja Klempić Bogadi, Institut za migracije i narodnosti / Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, Trg Stjepana Radića 3, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia, e-mail: sanja.klempic@imin.hr.

## 1. Introduction

The population trends of Croatia and its demographic picture are primarily a reflection of migration trends. Croatia has for many decades been a place of considerable emigration. From the end of the Second World War to 1991, an average of 20,000 people per year left the country, and during the 1990s this number increased to an average of 50,000 people per year (Nejašmić 2014). The constant emigration flows initially slowed down population growth and in time led to a negative natural change, deteriorating demographic structures (with significant ageing) and a decrease in the total number of inhabitants. However, in addition to emigration, immigration to Croatia also took place, mostly from the other, less economically developed republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), with the largest numbers of people coming from the neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H). This immigration delayed and slowed down the negative demographic processes.

All population censuses from the last 60 years (1948–2011) have shown that immigrants from B&H are the most represented among the foreign-born citizens of Croatia (Klempić Bogadi et al. 2018). According to the 2011 census, 584,947 people born abroad live in Croatia, and 409,357 or 70 per cent of them were born in B&H (CBS 2013).

### 1.1 Demographic Outline of Immigration from B&H

Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) was the republic with the highest emigration rate, and at the beginning, the destinations were mainly to Vojvodina, Croatia and Central Serbia, and later Slovenia (IDN CDI 1968; Oliveira-Roca 1978). The reason for the intense emigration was a strong increase in total population; high natural growth led to an expanding workforce that was not supported by economic growth. Unemployment was on the rise, stimulating emigration flows to the more developed republics of SFRY and abroad. Within the immigration flows between the other republics of SFRY and Croatia, the share of immigrants from B&H increased constantly; in the period from 1946 to 1952 it amounted to 44.6 per cent of the total number of immigrants; from 1953 to 1960 the figure was 60 per cent, and from 1961 to 1971 it stood at 65.2 per cent (Oliveira-Roca 1978). Even after the collapse of the SFRY, migrants from B&H still represent the most significant immigration flow to Croatia.<sup>1</sup>

During all periods of emigration from B&H, the ethnicity of the migrant has a notable role when selecting the destination country. The main destination of emigration for ethnic Serbs was towards Central Serbia, and for Croats and Muslims towards Croatia (Petrović 1987; Breznik 1991). Although people of all nationalities moved to Croatia from B&H, the largest number of immigrants was ethnic Croats, which is a trend that continues to this day. According to the population census of 1991, 60.8 per cent of the 317,923 Croatian citizens born in

B&H claimed to be ethnic Croats (Pepeonik 2000). Twenty years later (2011), following a period of major socio-political changes in both countries, 85.2 per cent of Croatian citizens born in B&H were ethnic Croats (CBS, 2018).

The motives for migration of immigrants from B&H, primarily employment opportunities in Croatia, changed in the early 1990s. A lot of the population was forcibly displaced as a result of war conflicts in Croatia and B&H during the first half of the 1990s. A large number of refugees from B&H were temporarily settled in Croatia. During 1992, 402,768 refugees resided in Croatia, mainly from B&H (Government of the Republic of Croatia 1995). At the end of the war in 1995, 185,669 refugees from B&H were located in Croatia, with 72.3 per cent being Croats, 25.8 per cent Muslims, 0.9 per cent Serbs and 1 per cent others (Government of the Republic of Croatia 1995). A large portion of these ethnic Croats would go on and settle in Croatia permanently.

Since 2000, the intensity of migration from B&H to Croatia has decreased, and the motives for migration are once again mostly economic (Klempić Bogadi et al. 2018).

Immigrants from B&H have rarely been the subject of scientific research in Croatia, especially considering the sense of belonging (SoB) in the new environment in the context of acculturation or social integration. Therefore, the main aim of this paper is to analyse the immigrants' SoB to a new social environment (in the City of Zagreb) and perceptions of their social status determined by their origin within the context of acculturation.

## 1.2 Theoretical Background of the Research

Contemporary migrations of citizens of B&H to Croatia are part of a special form of international migration in which ethnicity, language, historical and cultural traditions of immigrants are very similar or identical to those present in the receiving society. Comparing this type of migration with similar examples of Hungarian minorities moving from Romania to Hungary (Gödri 2004) or Jews from France to Israel (Amit 2012), some unique characteristics can be noted. More precisely, the social-political changes in SFRY and South-eastern Europe in the 1990s led to a change in character for migrations from B&H to Croatia, as they were no longer internal, but international in character. Regardless of the socio-economic changes happening in both countries, Croatia remains the traditional destination for B&H emigrants. Among immigrants from B&H, the majority is comprised of ethnic Croats, one of the three constituent peoples of B&H, unlike Romania or France, where the Hungarian and Jewish emigrants are members of ethnic minorities. The political integration of most of the immigrant population from B&H in Croatia has proven to be successful, as evidenced by the inclusion of their members into the political elite of Croatia during the last thirty years.<sup>2</sup>

8

The analysis of the results of research on immigration from B&H to the Republic of Croatia theoretically relies on Berry's (1990) four-fold model of acculturation, measuring the SoB to the receiving society (Croatia) and the immigrants' country of origin (B&H).

The features of the country of origin are an important source that influences the acculturation profile of immigrants. If migrants arrive from more economically unfavourable conditions, economically poorer countries, with a lower GDP, higher unemployment rates and lower personal income, they are less likely to experience a reduction in personal quality of life, therefore they frequently opt to participate through integration or assimilation in the receiving society (Hou et al. 2018; Klemić Bogadi et al. 2018). A greater cultural distance (relating to the knowledge of the language and cultural differences)<sup>3</sup> between the two societies causes even greater problems – cultural conflicts and less adaptation. Although the sample for this research is largely made up of ethnic Croats, a similar success rate of acculturation can be expected for other immigrant ethnic groups, Serbs and Bosniaks from B&H, due to the knowledge of languages, history and culture and their similarities.

Research has also shown that apart from the objective living conditions in the country of origin and the receiving country, the success of immigrant integration also depends on subjective perception of the immigrants (Massey & Redstone 2006). One of the subjective indicators is to determine the factors affecting immigrants' self-identity in the receiving society. According to Karin Amit (2012, 1288), identity is the “way a person views himself/herself in relation to existing groups or social categories in his/her societies”.

A widely accepted model that systematises the identity of immigrants, and which has proven practical in interpreting the results of the immigrant's SoB (Amit, 2012), is John Berry's (1990) acculturation model. Berry defines acculturation as a “process by which individuals change both by being influenced by contact with another culture and by being participants in the general acculturative changes underway in their own culture” (Berry 1990, 235). The model is based on an analysis of different levels of preservation of a personal cultural identity and building relationships with other groups. This interdependence results in four types of acculturation: integration, separation, assimilation and marginalisation. Immigrants whose behaviour fits into the integration profile have an active engagement within the receiving society and a strong link with the cultural heritage of the country of origin. The assimilation profile involves the active involvement of immigrants in the receiving society and a weaker link with the cultural heritage of the country of origin. The separation profile is observed in immigrants who maintain a strong link with the cultural heritage of the country of origin, showing low participation in the receiving society. The marginalisation profile is the position in which the immigrants lose their links with the cultural heritage of the country of origin while also failing to build new ones with the receiving society (Hou et al. 2018, 1613). In this context, the connection with

cultural heritage and participation is expressed as a SoB to the country of origin and the new society.

The need to belong is the response to the manner in which individuals experience themselves in relation to their social environment. "Identity, sense of belonging and feeling 'at home' are concepts used interchangeably to capture the same subjective and dynamic sense of being part of a social group or a place (either physical or imaginary)" (Black 2002 cited in Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015, 948). When attempting to understand immigrants' SoB, we must examine the process of the development of this feeling after entering the new society, whereby the immigrant is expected to gradually release previous attachment, social identifiers and even a sense of national commitment to his country of origin, and develop a sense of local identity and belonging in the host society (Amit & Bar-Lev 2015, 948). A sense of belonging reflects whether immigrants feel accepted and secure in their adopted country (Hou et al. 2018, 1615) and is one of the indicators of how the individual is connected with others in the community, their sense of community (Rogers & Sukolratanamete 2009). When it comes to immigrants, the sense of community is often interpreted by two types of social capital, bonding and bridging capital (Putnam 2000), which are dependent on the immediate immigrant communities – the neighbourhoods in which they live. Bonding social capital dominates in neighbourhoods where social networks are comprised mostly of residents of the same immigrant ethnic group, which can result in a sort of ethnic segregation. Bridging social capital is developed in neighbourhoods where immigrants live together with the population of the receiving country, or through social networks that cross ethnic boundaries or boundaries of distinction between the immigrants and the population of the receiving country (Amit & Bar-Lev 2015; Hou et al. 2018).

Given the stated specific characteristics of the immigrant population from Bosnia and Herzegovina in Croatia, and above else the dominant number of ethnic Croats<sup>4</sup> in the research we present, we have proposed the following hypotheses:

1. Migration motives affect the acculturation profile of immigrants from B&H in Croatia. It is to be expected that immigrants whose emigration motives were a kind of coercion (unemployment, inability to find housing, poverty, etc., and/or war and consequences of war in the country of origin) will have a lower SoB than immigrants whose reasons were a personal choice and the attractiveness of the migration destination (employment opportunities, education, family reunion, etc.).
2. The length of time after immigration affects the immigrant's SoB to the host society. The longer the immigrants from B&H live in Croatia, the stronger SoB to the receiving society they feel.
3. The economic status of immigrants in the receiving society significantly influences the SoB to the new society, whereby those with higher status feel a stronger SoB.

4. The human capital<sup>5</sup> of an individual affects the SoB to the new social environment, whereby immigrants with a higher degree of education feel a stronger SoB.
5. The SoB is stronger with immigrants who are married and whose family members are in Croatia than with those whose family stayed in B&H or in another country.
6. The SoB to the immigration society is stronger if the ethnicity of the immigrant corresponds to the receiving society. It can be expected that Croats from B&H will feel a stronger SoB to Croatia than the other two ethnic groups of immigrants.
7. Research findings on the level of SoB vary depending on the type of neighbourhood in which the immigrants, specifically Croat immigrants, live – mixed (including the population of the receiving country) or ethnically segregated (including only immigrants from the countries of origin). The original assumption of the research is that a stronger SoB to the receiving society will develop in a mixed neighbourhood.

## 2. Methods, Measures and Sample

The data used in this paper are based on the survey conducted in 2014 as a part of the research project *The Effect of Immigration from Bosnia and Herzegovina on the Socio-Demographic Development of Croatian Urban Regions*. The applied questionnaire consisted of 69 mostly closed questions and was divided into eight thematic sections: employment and finances, migrations, identity, integration, housing and standard of living, health and quality of life. The main goal of research was to investigate the factors effecting the intentions to move, dimensions of integration and quality of life of adult (18+) Croatian residents born in B&H and living in the city district Sesvete (Zagreb) where a large proportion of immigrants from B&H reside.

The survey was conducted on a judgemental/purposive sample of 301 respondents and was conducted face-to-face respondents' households. All respondents were born in B&H and all were living in Zagreb at the time of conducting the survey. Respondents are evenly distributed between genders and age categories (Table 1). The mean age of the sample is 48.5 years. Most of the respondents have finished secondary school as the highest level of education. Almost half are employed and around 30 per cent is retired. Among the unemployed the gender proportions are quite balanced (47.7 per cent males and 52.3 per cent females). Around three quarters estimate their socioeconomic status (SES) neither better nor worse than the majority's.

The sample is specific due to large proportion of ethnic Croats (93.4 per cent). Serbs were included in the proportion of 3.7 per cent and Bosniaks in 2.3 per cent (there was 0.7 per cent of other ethnic affiliations). The other

characteristics of the sample indicate that 99 per cent of respondent have Croatian citizenship among which 1/3 has dual – Bosnian and Herzegovinian and Croatia citizenship. The last country of residence before moving to Croatia, besides from B&H, were Germany, Austria, Slovenia and Serbia (in total 12 per cent of respondents lived in these countries). Another migration experience (and living a longer time period somewhere else than in B&H) was indicated by 20.6 per cent who lived in Croatia, 15.9 per cent who lived in other European countries and 0.3 per cent who lived in countries outside Europe.

**Table 1: Sample descriptives**

Variable	Categories	N	%
Gender	Male	151	50.2
	Female	150	49.8
Age	18–29	39	13.0
	30–39	58	19.3
	40–49	61	20.3
	50–59	64	21.3
	60–69	46	15.3
	70+	33	11.0
Education	Primary school or lower	56	18.6
	Secondary school	205	68.1
	College of higher	40	13.3
Employment status	Employed	141	46.8
	Unemployed	44	14.6
	Housewife	20	6.6
	Retired	88	29.2
	Students	8	2.7
Self-estimated SES	Much lower than the majority	3	1.0
	A bit lower than the majority	18	6.0
	Neither better nor worse than the majority	221	73.4
	A bit better than the majority	54	17.9
	Much better than the majority	5	1.7

Several indicators measuring sense of belonging (SoB) were included in the questionnaire. Six items referred to specific statements of feeling accepted and adapted in the place of immigration and appreciation of Croatia. Respondents expressed their agreement on the 5-point Likert scale where a higher value refers to grater agreement. Eleven items referred to perception of the neighbourhood and relations with neighbours. Again, stronger agreement on the 5-point Likert scale indicates a stronger feeling of acceptance in the neighbourhood. Finally,



three items were used to estimate the SoB to the city where they live, to the state of Croatia and state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, using a 4-point scale for each indicator from 1 – very strong SoB to 4 – no SoB.

In the next section we first present the descriptive results of the analysed indicators. Afterwards, based on a nonparametric analysis of differences (Kruskal Wallis and WMW tests), we present the differences based on the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents which have a significant effect on expressed attitudes. Lastly, we compare the intensity of the expressed SoB to different locations and differences based in selected characteristics of respondents, as well as the possible connection to selected socio-contextual indicators related to the circumstances of migration to Croatia and the duration of living in Croatia among immigrants from B&H.

The limitations of this study derive from the sampling method which was used. Namely, judgemental/purposive sampling as the nonprobability method is based in the researchers' judgement of respondents who fit the predetermined characteristics. Since the city district chosen for the survey represents the Zagreb district that record, in the 2011 population census data, the highest concentration of immigrants from B&H, the obtained results do not enable conclusions at the level of the entire city of Zagreb. However, the data bring specific insights about this local community since this is the first research study conducted on this specific population in Croatia.

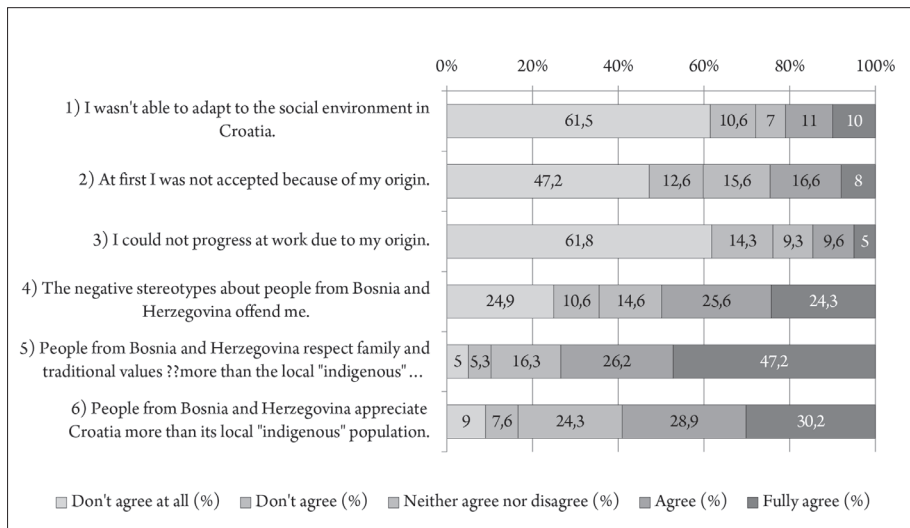
### 3. Results

In the results section we first present the frequency distributions of the attitudes regarding the estimation of adaptation and acceptance in the social surrounding to which the immigrants have moved (Chart 1). Among six statements which were used to describe this, at clear divide can be noticed. In the highest proportions the respondents do not agree with the notions that they were not able to adapt to the new social environment, nor that they were not accepted or could move up at work due to their origin. On the other hand, the results of statements which refer to values and ethnic perceptions indicate that a height proportion of respondents feel offended by the negative stereotypes about people from B&H, and also, consider that people from B&H respect family and traditional values, as well as Croatia itself, more than the local indigenous population.

To take these results further, a series of analyses were conducted based on selected socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. Since the previously presented distributions significantly deviated from normal distributions, non-parametric analyses based on ranks<sup>6</sup> were conducted to enable the comparisons of selected groups. Even though a larger proportion of significant differences was expected, only three of general sociodemographic characteristics had a significant effect on only three of the tested variables. The significance of gender

was recorded by using the Mann-Whitney U test on one variable ( $U=9563.500$ ;  $Z=-2.359$ ;  $p=0.017$ ) indicating at the 95 per cent confidence level that female respondents feel more offended by the negative stereotypes about people from B&H than do the male respondents. Age categories differ significantly according to the Kruskal-Wallis H test in two cases: the youngest respondents (30 years old or younger) feel most able to adapt to social environment in Croatia ( $H(3)=11.976$ ;  $p=0.007$ ) and the oldest respondents (61+) feel more offended by the negative stereotypes about people from B&H than do respondents aged between 30 and 60 ( $H(3)=9.295$ ;  $p=0.026$ ). Finally, the most educated respondents disagree the most that they were not accepted because of their origin ( $H(2)=8.350$ ;  $p=0.015$ ). No differences were obtained regarding employment status, self-estimated socioeconomic status or the ethnic affiliation of respondents.

**Chart 1: Adaptation and acceptance in the social surrounding to which the immigrants have moved**



A series of analyses were also conducted to investigate the relation of acceptance in the new social environment to specific circumstances of arrival to Croatia and the length of living in Zagreb. The indicators used to make these estimates were the reasons (or circumstances) of arrival in Croatia<sup>7</sup> and duration of living in Croatia, as well as having family members back home in their place of origin.

The only indicator of adaptation and acceptance in the new social surrounding significantly connected to the reasons of migration to Croatia and duration of stay is the notion that, at first, they were not accepted because of their origin. Agreement with this was expressed significantly more by respondents migrating due to war atrocities in comparison those moving for economic reasons

( $H(4)=17.125$ ;  $p=0.002$ ) as well as the respondents who are living in Croatia for a shorter period of time ( $r_s = -0.160$ ;  $p=0.005$ ).

In testing hypothesis of stronger SoB among married respondents whose other family members<sup>8</sup> also live in Croatia no significant relations have been found.

The second part of the results deals with analysis of the perception of neighbourhood and relations with neighbours (Chart 2). Most of the respondents express a highly positive attitudes towards the neighbourhood, implying good and friendly relations with their neighbours who are in many cases also their relatives or friends from the same place of origin back in B&H. There are very few respondents who feel like strangers and mostly they perceive Sestvete as an ideal location for the immigrants from B&H (and other immigrants as well). Neighbours are of great importance to the majority of the respondents and are as equally relevant in the new social environment as they were back in B&H.

**Chart 2: Perception of neighbourhood and relations of neighbours**



The analysed differences based on sociodemographic, socioeconomic and contextual variables yielded a number of statistically significant results. The perception that the relations with neighbours are a very important part of their life is the least present among the youngest respondents ( $H(3)= 15.493$ ;  $p=0.001$ ). The respondents with the lowest educational attainment agree the most that the neighbours acted reserved towards them when they moved in ( $H(2)=$

10.060;  $p=0.007$ ) but they agree more than the respondent with completed secondary school that their neighbours are their friends as well ( $H(2)=7.241$ ;  $p=0.027$ ). There was no significant difference based on the gender or ethnicity of respondents.

The determinants of the socio-economic status of respondents showed that the respondents who estimate their socioeconomic status as lower than the majority perceive those as their friends to the greatest extent ( $H(2)=6.165$ ;  $p=0.046$ ) and they agree the most that they regularly visit their neighbours and help each other ( $H(2)=7.245$ ;  $p=0.027$ ). The relations with their neighbours is more important part of life among the respondents who perceive their SES as neither better nor worse than the majority in comparison to the ones who perceive it better ( $H(2)=8.768$ ;  $p=0.012$ ). The dimension of employment status mostly singles out the category of housewives who agreed more than the students that the neighbours acted reserved towards them when they moved in ( $H(4)=12.221$ ;  $p=0.016$ ) and agree more than the employed, unemployed and retired that the neighbours with whom they have good relations mostly come from their old neighbourhood in B&H ( $H(4)=10.524$ ;  $p=0.032$ ). Students disagree most of all that they felt like strangers during their first years in Croatia, while the housewives agree the most with this statement ( $H(4)=19.390$ ;  $p=0.001$ ).

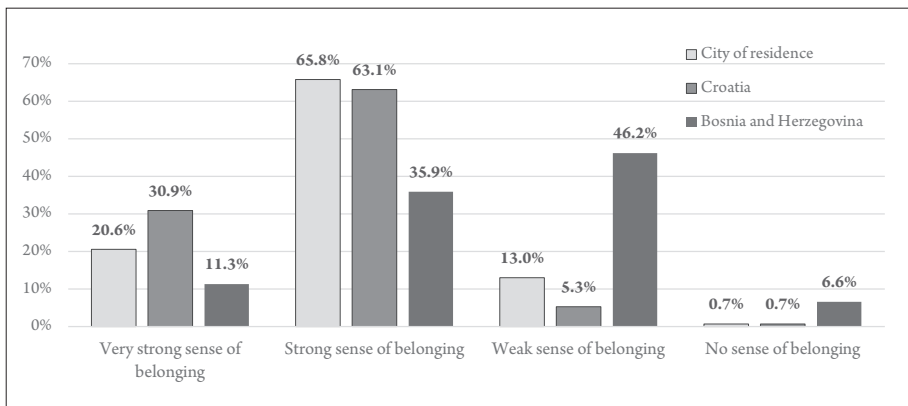
When referring to the marital status and residence of family members the results show that the married respondents agree the most that relations with their neighbours are a very important part of their life, while the divorced disagree the most with this statement ( $H(3)=10.660$ ;  $p=0.014$ ). The divorced also disagree the most that their neighbours, with whom they are in good relations come mostly from B&H ( $H(3)=8.542$ ;  $p=0.036$ ). There were no differences obtained according to the place of residence of parents of respondents.

Circumstances or reasons determining the migration to Croatia and the duration of living in Croatia are significantly correlated to several indicators of neighbourhood perception. The most frequent reason for migration is the war situation in B&H. The respondents who migrated due to war atrocities agree more than those migrating for education or economic reasons that the neighbours acted reserved toward them and their family when they moved in ( $H(4)=13.730$ ;  $p=0.008$ ), that they felt like strangers during the first few years in Croatia ( $H(4)=19.913$ ;  $p=0.001$ ) and that the neighbours with whom they have good relations, come mostly from B&H ( $H(4)=35.467$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). Further on, the respondents who live longer in Croatia agree more that relations with neighbours are an important part of their everyday life ( $r_s=0.139$ ;  $p=0.016$ ) and that they feel completely accepted in their local community ( $r_s=0.161$ ;  $p=0.005$ ). On the other hand, the respondents who have lived for a shorter time in Croatia agree more that neighbours were a more important part of their everyday life back in B&H ( $r_s=-0.123$ ;  $p=0.033$ ), that neighbours acted reserved towards

them when they moved in ( $r_s = -0.141$ ;  $p = 0.014$ ), that they felt like a stranger for the first few years in Croatia ( $r_s = -0.235$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and that the neighbours with whom they are in good relations come mostly from B&H ( $r_s = -0.180$ ;  $p = 0.002$ ).

The final part of the results refers to the SoB and emotional attachment to the city of residence, Croatia and B&H. The results in Chart 3 show what is further confirmed by the results of a t-test (Table 2) that the immigrants from B&H express the strongest SoB to Croatia. Somewhat weaker but still significantly different is the SoB to the city of residence – Zagreb. The weakest SoB (averagely on the level between moderate and weak) is expressed towards B&H.

**Chart 3: Sense of belonging**



**Table 2: Average differences in expressed sense of belonging to different locations**

Level of sense of belonging and emotional attachment:	N	M	SD	t (df) p
1) to the city of residence	301	1.94	0.599	Pair 1, 2: 6.340 (300) 0.000 <sup>a</sup> Pair 1, 3: -10.027 (300) 0.000 <sup>b</sup> Pair 2, 3: -13.707 (300) 0.000 <sup>c</sup>
2) to Croatia	301	1.76	0.575	
3) to Bosnia and Herzegovina	301	2.48	0.781	

<sup>a</sup> Pair-sampled t-test tested the difference in the expressed sense of belong and emotional attachment to the city of residence and to Croatia.

<sup>b</sup> Pair-sampled t-test tested the difference in the expressed sense of belong and emotional attachment to the city of residence and to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>c</sup> Pair-sampled t-test tested the difference in the expressed sense of belong and emotional attachment to Croatia and to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Differences based on selected socio-demographic characteristics were also analysed in case of indicators of the SoB, but no significant differences were obtained by gender, age, education, employment status, self-estimated socio-economic status or family status and characteristics. Additionally, the effects of respondents' ethnicity and citizenship were analysed. The results showed that

Bosniaks on average express stronger SoB to the city of residence than do Croats ( $F=3.441$ ;  $p=0.017$ ), while the respondents with dual – Croatian and Bosnian and Herzegovinian citizenship – on average express a stronger SoB to B&H than respondents with only Croatian citizenship ( $F=6.960$ ;  $p=0.000$ ).

According to selected contextual variables there were no differences connected to the reasons for migration to Croatia, although respondents who have lived longer in Croatia express significantly a stronger SoB to the city of residence ( $r=-0.202$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) and Croatia ( $r=-0.148$ ;  $p=0.010$ ) and weaker to B&H ( $r=0.161$ ;  $p=0.005$ ).

To test the final hypothesis, correlations were calculated between the indicators of neighbourhood perception and the SoB to the city, Croatia and B&H. Even though relatively weak, significant correlations ranging from  $-0.139$  to  $0.294$  indicate that a stronger belonging to Zagreb and Croatia is connected to the greater importance of neighbours in everyday life, regular visits and mutual help among neighbours, friendships with neighbours, perception of complete acceptance in the local community and the perception of Sesvete as an ideal city district for immigrants. The SoB to Zagreb and Croatia was expressed respondents who perceived the relations with neighbours as more important in B&H and who would rather choose some other city quarter to live in. A stronger SoB to B&H was expressed by respondents who perceived the relations with neighbours as more important in B&H and who socialise mostly with the neighbours originating from B&H.

#### 4. Discussion

Based on an extensive review of the literature and the results of their research Amit and Bar-Lev (2015) developed an index of the sense of belonging (SoB) expressed by immigrants towards the receiving country grounded in three components: immigrants' national identity, feeling at home which mirrors the identity of an individual in terms of space and commitment to stay in the receiving country (expressed also as naturalisation). Results obtained through the survey on immigrants from B&H in Croatia (Zagreb) confirmed the relevance of all three components of belonging, although with some specificities of the investigated group. The discussion and conclusions are based on seven hypotheses, whereas the interpretations of the results of immigrants' SoB in a new social environment and assessment of acculturation profile necessarily overlap.

The reasons or motives for migration play an important role in shaping immigrants' expectations and integration in the receiving society. According to Chow (2007) immigrants who have left their country for political and cultural reasons express stronger SoB than economically driven immigrants. In contrast to these findings, immigrants from B&H, whose reasons for migration belong

to the area of personal choices and appeal of destination country (i.e. economic circumstances such as the possibility of employment or housing) perceive stronger acceptance, regardless of their origin than do the forced immigrants, respondents whose migration was driven by war and its legacy in B&H which could also be described as a political motivation for migration.

Among sociodemographic characteristics of immigrant population two often have a significant correlation to SoB: economic status in the receiving society and family status, i.e. marital status of immigrants. When analysing the relationship between the economic status of immigrants and their belonging to a new society the direction of this relation is always the same: by increasing one's status on the labour market and the related economic power the SoB to the environment also increases. Some studies particularly stress that the stronger SoB is related to full-time employment and owning a house or apartment (Kitchen et al. 2015). These findings were somewhat confirmed by the results of immigrants from B&H in Zagreb: their self-estimated SES and employment status are relevant indicators for the estimation of belonging to the neighbourhood where the respondents with lower SES stand out: they attach greater importance to neighbourhood in context of friendship and mutual interdependence, while housewives indicated a weaker sense of acceptance at the neighbourhood level.

Another factor of belonging to a receiving society is presented by the marital status of the immigrant, as well as whether their family members live in the same country. Research of immigrants from B&H partially confirms the hypothesis that married immigrants whose family members also live in Croatia express a stronger SoB than do those whose family members live in B&H or in some other country. Even though the married respondents stress that their relations with neighbours represent an important part of everyday life, divorced respondents disagree the most with this statement and additionally express that they spend more time with the neighbours who originate from B&H. The fact that family members – parents – live back in B&H is not significantly related to the measured constructs of SoB. Here it is important to stress that most of the respondents live together with their spouses. Their children mostly live in the same town or elsewhere in Croatia.

The duration of life in the receiving country and language proficiency also greatly contribute to the SoB to the new environment. The length of stay often affects language learning and knowledge as well as improving the economic status of immigrants (Chiswick & Miller 2002). A sense of belonging in the immigrant communities, which in general express stronger affiliation to the new society (the example of Canada (Kitchen et al. 2015)), is significantly weaker among those immigrants who live there less than 5 years. The feeling of acceptance of immigrants from B&H is also significantly correlated with the duration of their life in Croatia indicating that those immigrants who live there longer also express a great SoB to Zagreb and Croatia and a weaker one to B&H.

Respondents who lived for longer period in Croatia also report that they were accepted (in spite of their origin) – at the neighbourhood level and in general – from the beginning when they moved to Croatia. The length of stay should also be related to the time-period and type of migration (inter-republic migration within the same state), and consequently to reasons for migration characteristic of the time-period.

Further, speaking the language of the receiving country play a central role in immigrants' economic and sociocultural integration (Amit 2012; Gödri 2004). For this reason, a language which does not present an obstacle to immigrants from B&H and their inclusion in the education system, labour market or public life, impacts significantly on their acculturation profile. Language proficiency also contributes a stronger sense of national identity and affiliation. When speaking of immigrants from B&H who are ethnic Croats, the sense of affiliation to Croatian identity is often strongly expressed even before the migration to Croatia.

If the desire for naturalisation is traditionally used as an indicator of SoB to a receiving society (Chow 2007; Amit & Bar-Lev 2015) the fact that almost all respondents included in this study (99 per cent) state that they have Croatian citizenship, and only a third kept also the citizenship of B&H (as dual citizenship), we can conclude that the surveyed immigrants express strong SoB to Croatia. In this context it is also important to stress that over 90 per cent of respondents plan to stay in Croatia.

Research on the integration of immigrants within regard to their education confirms a strong correlation between higher education and acceptance in the new surroundings, whereas higher education can have the effect in both directions (Hou et al. 2017). Having in mind immigrants from B&H in Zagreb, the most educated respondents disagree the most that they were not accepted because of their origin, the same as highly educated immigrants in Israel (Amit 2012) who express significantly stronger sense of belonging to the new society.

The hypothesis that the SoB to the receiving society will vary depending on the ethnic affiliation of respondents was also partially confirmed – immigrants of Bosniak ethnicity expressed somewhat weaker SoB to Zagreb and weaker to Croatia in comparison to other ethnic groups. It was confirmed that the ethnicity is not significantly correlated to other indicators of the SoB, although it might be assumed that this is possibly the result of an ethnically imbalanced sample where Croats dominate.

Migration studies (Phinney et al. 2001; Amit & Bar-Lev 2015) also accentuate the relative deficiency of the social capital of immigrants in the new society in comparison to a native-born population. They also confirm that in context of the SoB to a receiving society it is extremely important knowing the neighbours and having trust in them (Rogers & Sukolratnametee 2009; Kitchen et al. 2015). A sense of belonging and feeling of acceptance is firstly expressed in relation to the neighbourhood, and only then to the town in which they live.



The research confirmed that higher concentration of immigrants in a city quarter could influence a weaker desire for participation in wider society; however, it can provide support, especially in the early period after migration and prevent their marginalisation (Hou et al. 2017). Considering that this research was conducted in a typical immigrant city quarter, it was expected that the hypothesis would be confirmed as relatively stronger bonding of immigrants from B&H with the neighbourhood. The results showed that stronger sense of belonging to Zagreb and Croatia is connected to the greater importance of neighbours in everyday life, regular visits and mutual help among neighbours, friendships with neighbours, perception of complete acceptance in local community and perception of Sesvete as an ideal district for immigrants. On the other hand, a stronger sense of belonging to B&H is characterised by stronger relations with neighbours originating from B&H and an assessment of closer relationship to neighbours back in B&H.

## 5. Conclusion

The results showed that on average, immigrants from B&H feel very accepted in the local community, and their origin is not an obstacle to acceptance and adaptation to the social environment. They respect family and traditional values more than the rest of the local population, and they appreciate Croatia more than its indigenous people. Also, they perceive the life on the neighbourhood level in the context of friendship, mutual help and community structure based on the place of origin where they feel completely accepted and comfortable. In general, they show a higher level of SoB to the city and the country in which they live as opposed to the country of origin. However, somewhat different opinions were expressed by respondents who arrived in Croatia during the war in B&H, whose perception was that they were not accepted due to their origin and who felt like strangers during the first few years in Croatia.

In general, we can conclude that the immigrants from B&H (who are mostly Croats) are untypical immigrants in Croatia. They have a strong SoB possibly due to better symbolic fit in the Croatian society and due to a long tradition of labour migration and migration aimed at better education opportunities.

However, we have to take into account that B&H has gone through dramatic changes in the last three decades. These changes were mostly driven by the war atrocities and economic crisis, and hence the economic, social and political contexts which condition the micro level decisions beside the historical and cultural relationships, and the personal networks linking the countries of origin and destination should be considered when analysing migrations from B&H.

It should be stressed that between Croatia as the receiving country and B&H as sending country there is no large cultural distance since they share common history and similar language, and both are going through a socio-political transi-

tion period, so there are no systematic differences between them. Among the seven tested hypotheses, the first (H1), the second (H2), the third (H3) and the fourth (H4) were fully confirmed. While the forced emigration motives (as opposed to personal choices and attractiveness of immigration destination – H1) reduce the SoB in the new environment, SoB levels grow with the length of life of immigrants in the new society (H2), with higher economic status of respondents (H3) and higher education (H4), all important variables that facilitate the acculturation process. The effects (of the immigrant's marriage/marital status (H5), the ethnic affiliation of immigrants corresponding to the ethnicity of the receiving society (H6) and life in the ethnically mixed or segregated neighbourhood (H7)) on the SoB level were partially confirmed – only in some segments of the measured variables. Therefore, according to the results of this study, besides all the specific characteristics of migration and sample limitations, it could be concluded that the acculturation profile of immigrants in B&H in Croatia is positive and positioned between integration and assimilation.

So within the next stage of qualitative research further focus should be placed on exploration of the relation between immigrants' life satisfaction and SoB, on the effect of the duration of life in Croatia and on the role of networks which are proven by other studies to have a significant impact during the integration process and also in the context of ensuring a better quality of life.

## References

- Amit, K., 2012. Social Integration and Identity of Immigrants from Western Countries, the FSU and Ethiopia in Israel. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35 (7), 1287–1310.
- Amit, K. & Bar-Lev, S., 2015. Immigrants' Sense of Belonging to the Host Country: The Role of Life Satisfaction, Language Proficiency, and Religious Motives. *Social Indicator Research: An International and Interdisciplinary Journal for Quality-of-Life Measurement* 124 (3), 947–961.
- Berry, J. W., 1990. Psychology of Acculturation. In J. Berman (ed.). *Cross-Cultural Perspectives: Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 201–234.
- Black, R., 2002. Conception "at Home" and the Political Geography of Refugee Repatriation: Between Assumption and Contested Reality in Bosnia-Herzegovina. *Applied Geography* 22 (2), 123–138.
- Breznik, D., 1991. *Stanovništvo Jugoslavije*. Chronos, Titograd.
- Chiswick, B. R. & Miller, P. W., 2002. Immigrants Earnings: Language Skills, Linguistic Concentrations and the Business Cycle. *Journal of Population Economics* 15 (1), 31–57.
- Chow, H. P. H., 2007. Sense of Belonging and Life Satisfaction among Hong Kong Adolescent Immigrants in Canada. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33 (3), 511–520.
- Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2013. *Census of Population, Households and Dwellings 2011*, Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb.
- Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2018. *Census of Population, Households and Dwellings 2011*, Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb.

- Government of the Republic of Croatia, Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees, 1995. *Displaced Persons and Refugees in the Republic of Croatia*. Government of the Republic of Croatia, Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees, Zagreb, [http://digured.srce.hr/arhiva/1584/106779/report\\_refugees\\_july95.pdf](http://digured.srce.hr/arhiva/1584/106779/report_refugees_july95.pdf) (accessed May 2019).
- Gödri, I., 2004. A Special Case of International Migration: Ethnic Hungarians Migrating from Transylvania to Hungary. *Yearbook of Population Research in Finland* 40, 45–72.
- Hou, F., Schellenberg, G. & Berry, J., 2018. Patterns and Determinants of Immigrants' Sense of Belonging to Canada and their Source Country. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41 (9), 1612–1631.
- IDN CDI – Institut društvenih nauka, Centar za demografska istraživanja, 1968. *Demografski i ekonomski aspekti prostorne pokretljivosti stanovništva*. Institut društvenih nauka, Beograd.
- Josipović, D., 2016. The Post-Yugoslav Space on a Demographic Crossway: 25 Years after the Collapse of Yugoslavia. *Stanovništvo* 54 (1), 15–40.
- Kitchen, P., Williams, A. M. & Gallina, M., 2015. Sense of Belonging to Local Community in Small-To-Medium Sized Canadian Urban Areas: A Comparison of Immigrant and Canadian-Born Residents. *BMC Psychology* 3 (1), 28.
- Klempić Bogadi, S., Gregurović, M. & Podgorelec, S., 2018. Doseljavanje iz Bosne i Hercegovine u Hrvatsku: migracijski obrasci na primjeru doseljenika u Zagrebu. *Stanovništvo* 56 (2), 39–62.
- Massey, D. S. & Redstone, I., 2006. Immigrant Intentions and Mobility in a Global Economy: The Attitudes and Behaviour of Recently Arrived US Immigrants. *Social Science Quarterly* 87 (5), 954–971.
- Nejšmić, I., 2014. Iseljavanje iz Hrvatske od 1900. do 2001.: demografske posljedice stoljetnog procesa. *Migracijske i etničke teme* 3 (3), 405–435.
- Oliviera-Roca, M., 1978. Obujam, razvoj i pravci suvremenih unutrašnjih migracija stanovništva SR Hrvatske. *Rasprave o migracijama* 50, Zagreb.
- Pepeonik, Z., 2000. Stanovništvo Republike Hrvatske 1991. godine rodom iz Bosne i Hercegovine. In D. Pejnović (ed.) *Zbornik radova 2. Hrvatskog geografskog kongresa*. Hrvatsko geografsko društvo, Zagreb, 201–212.
- Petrović, R., 1987. *Migracije u Jugoslaviji i etnički aspekt*. Istraživačko-izdavački centar SSO Srbije, Beograd.
- Phinney, J., Horenczyk, G., Liebkind, K. & Vedder, P., 2001. Ethnic Identity, Immigration, and Well-Being: An Interactional Perspective. *Journal of Social Issues* 57 (3), 493–510.
- Putnam, R. D., 2000. *Bowling Alone*. Simon & Schuster, New York.
- Rogers, G. O. & Sukolratanamete, S., 2009. Neighborhood Design and Sense of Community: Comparing Suburban Neighborhoods in Houston Texas. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 92 (3/4), 325–334.
- Shenkar, O., 2001. Cultural Distance Revisited: Towards a More Rigorous Conceptualization and Measurement of Cultural Differences. *Journal of International Business Studies* 32 (3), 519–535.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> For more details on the consequences of the 1990s-war on the displacement of the population inside B&H and outmigration from B&H, cf. Josipović (2016).
- <sup>2</sup> The inclusion of immigrants from B&H into the political elite of Croatia is well illustrated by the number of politicians born in B&H taking positions of ministers in the Croatian Government, city majors (including Zagreb for the last 16 years), members of Croatian Parliament etc.

- <sup>3</sup> For critical comments on the cultural distance, cf. Shenkar (2001).
- <sup>4</sup> In the light of this result the affiliation to different ethnic groups ceases to be one of the basic differences between immigrants and local population.
- <sup>5</sup> Human capital is primarily determined by the degree of education and language proficiency; therefore, regardless of their ethnic background, B&H immigrants to Croatia have a significant acculturational advantage due to their knowledge of Croatian.
- <sup>6</sup> Conducted non-parametric analyses were: Kruskal-Wallis H test when analysing differences between three or more categories of independent indicator, Mann-Whitney U test when analysing differences between two categories of independent indicator and Spearman's rank correlation ( $r_s$  or  $\rho$ ).
- <sup>7</sup> The reasons to migrate to Croatia were grouped in 5 categories: 1) family reasons; 2) economic reasons; 3) education; 4) war atrocities; 5) other.
- <sup>8</sup> By other family members in this article we mean parents of the respondents, since it was recorded in higher proportions that they still live in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Spouses and children are in most of cases living together with respondents, or at least in the same country.

