

Socioeconomic and psychological adaptation of immigrants in Greece

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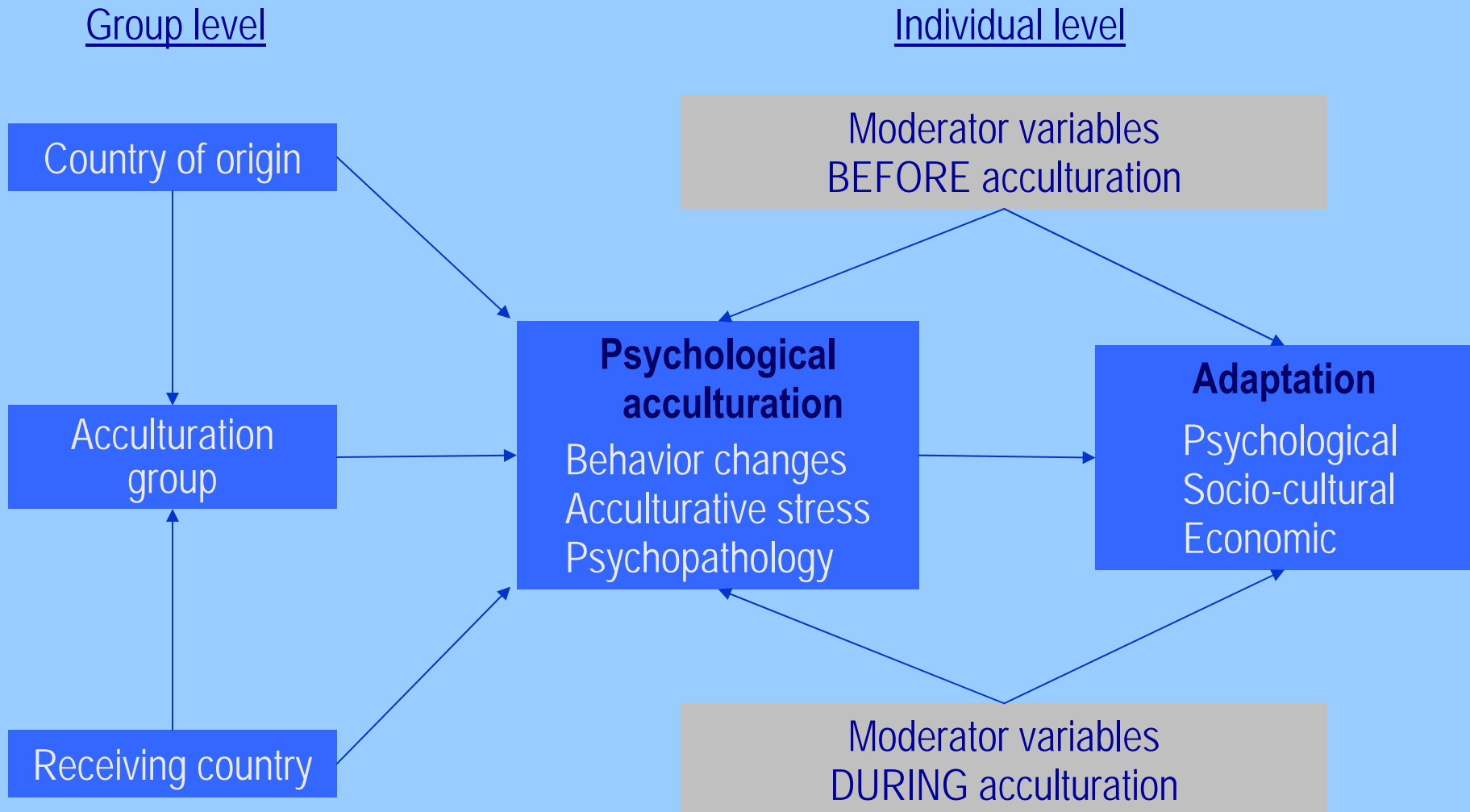
Vassilis Pavlopoulos, Katerina Georganti
University of Athens, Greece

In Elias Besevegis & Vassilis Pavlopoulos (Convenors), *Acculturation and mutual accommodation: Immigrant and host-national perspectives*. Workshop organized at the 14th International Metropolis Conference. Migration and Mobility: National Responses to Cultural Diversity, 14-18 September 2009, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Definitions

- **Acculturation:** the phenomena related to intercultural contact. It is viewed as a bidimensional (rather than a unidimensional) process, as well as an intergroup (rather than an interpersonal) one.
- **Adaptation:** the changes that result in response to the “culture shock”. Three domains:
 - psychological (e.g., self-esteem, psychopathology);
 - sociocultural (e.g., everyday social interactions);
 - economic (e.g., occupation status).

Acculturation Framework (Berry, 1997, 2006)



Immigration: Greek Data

- Immigration in Greece: transition from the emigration to the immigration experience.
- The number of immigrants quintupled within 10 years, between 1991-2001.
- Officially, the number of immigrants reach 7% of the total population (GNSD, 2001)...
- ...while the proportion of undocumented immigrants is calculated to be of similar size (Fakiolas, 2003).
- About 100.000 immigrant children and adolescents are enrolled in Greek schools (Gotovos & Markou, 2004).

Research Questions

- **What is the level of psychological adaptation of immigrants in Greece?**
 - **Which demographic and family variables are related to adaptation?**
- **What strategies are adopted by immigrants in order to deal with the multiple challenges of acculturation?**
- **What is the relationship between acculturation strategies and immigrant adaptation?**

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Country of origin	N	Age (Mn)	Women (%)	Years in GR (Mn)	Education (Mn/7-point)
Albania	277	35.2	39.4	9.4	3.6
Balkan countries	89	38.0	69.7	6.2	3.8
Former USSR and Eastern Europe	108	36.3	66.7	7.0	4.4
Arab/Muslim	50	36.5	14.0	10.4	3.8
African countries	46	24.5	2.2	1.7	2.6
Latin America	20	43.6	57.1	14.6	4.3
Asian countries	7	30.1	10.0	5.0	4.1
Western countries	4	33.5	50.0	14.0	5.8
TOTAL	601	35.0	43.1	7.9	3.8

Greece in the world atlas



Measures: Variables Before and During Immigration

	BEFORE immigration	DURING immigration (acculturation)
<i>Demographic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ethnicity ✓ Gender ✓ Education level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Length of stay in Greece
<i>Psychosocial</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Motivation for immigration ✓ Voluntary/forced immigration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Co national relations ✓ Use of native language ✓ Host national relations ✓ Use of host language <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Acculturation strategies</i></p>

Measures:

Adaptation Variables (Quantitative)

Socio-economic adaptation indices

- ✓ Occupational status
- ✓ Steady job at present
- ✓ Monthly savings
- ✓ Economic benefits
- ✓ Professional development
- ✓ Improve financial status
- ✓ Improve occupational status

Psychological adaptation indices

- ✓ Gained skills
 - ✓ Lost skills (-)
 - ✓ Provide family support
 - ✓ Personal development
 - ✓ More opportunities
 - ✓ Isolated from family (-)
 - ✓ Lost social networks (-)
 - ✓ Racism (-)
 - ✓ Health problems (-)
 - ✓ Fulfilled expectations
-

Measures: Adaptation Variables (Qualitative)

Positive and negative aspects of immigration

- ✓ Factors that impair adaptation
- ✓ Factors that facilitate adaptation

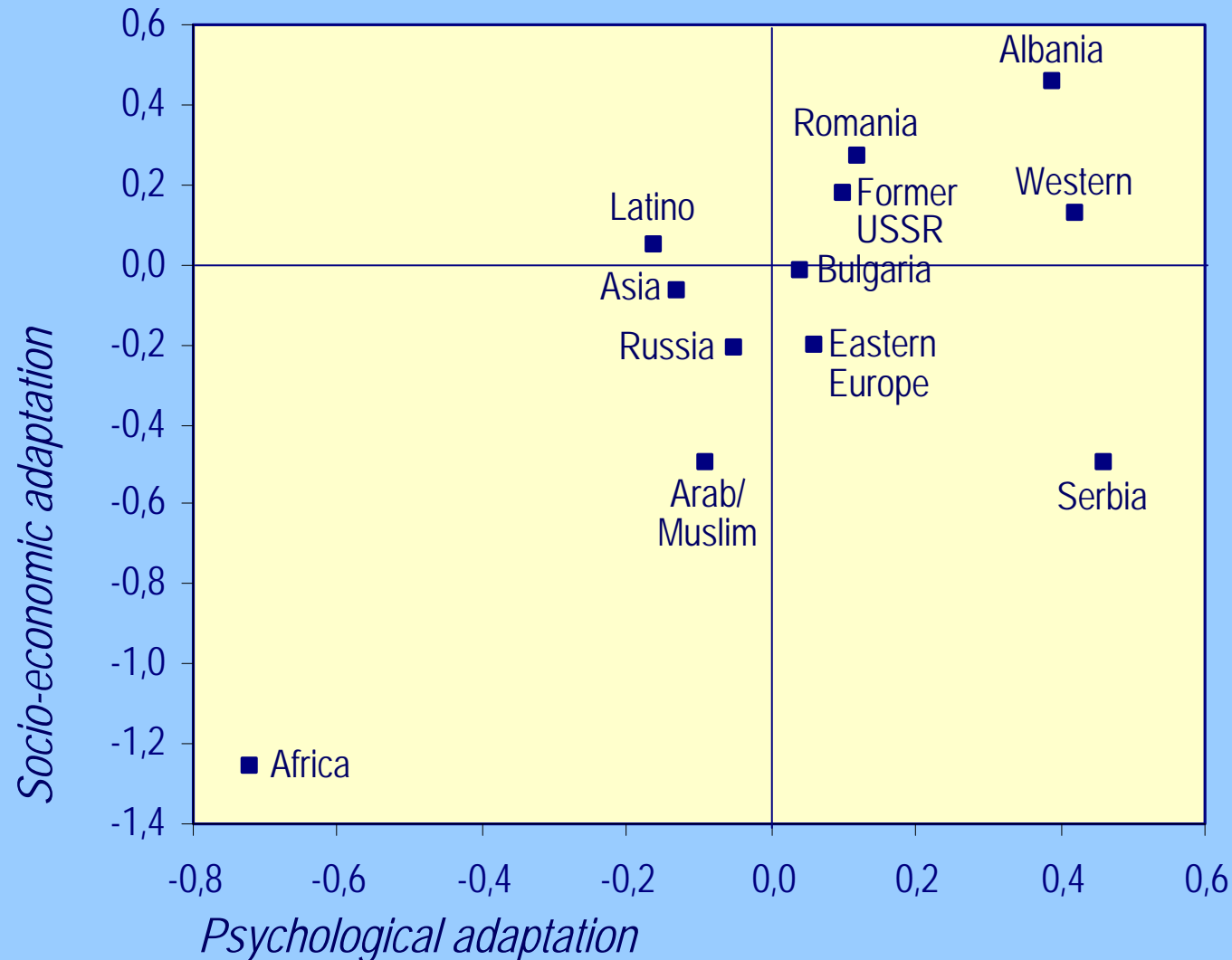
Future goals and plans

- ✓ Intentions to stay in Greece and/or ask for citizenship
- ✓ Goals related to children's education, work and personal life

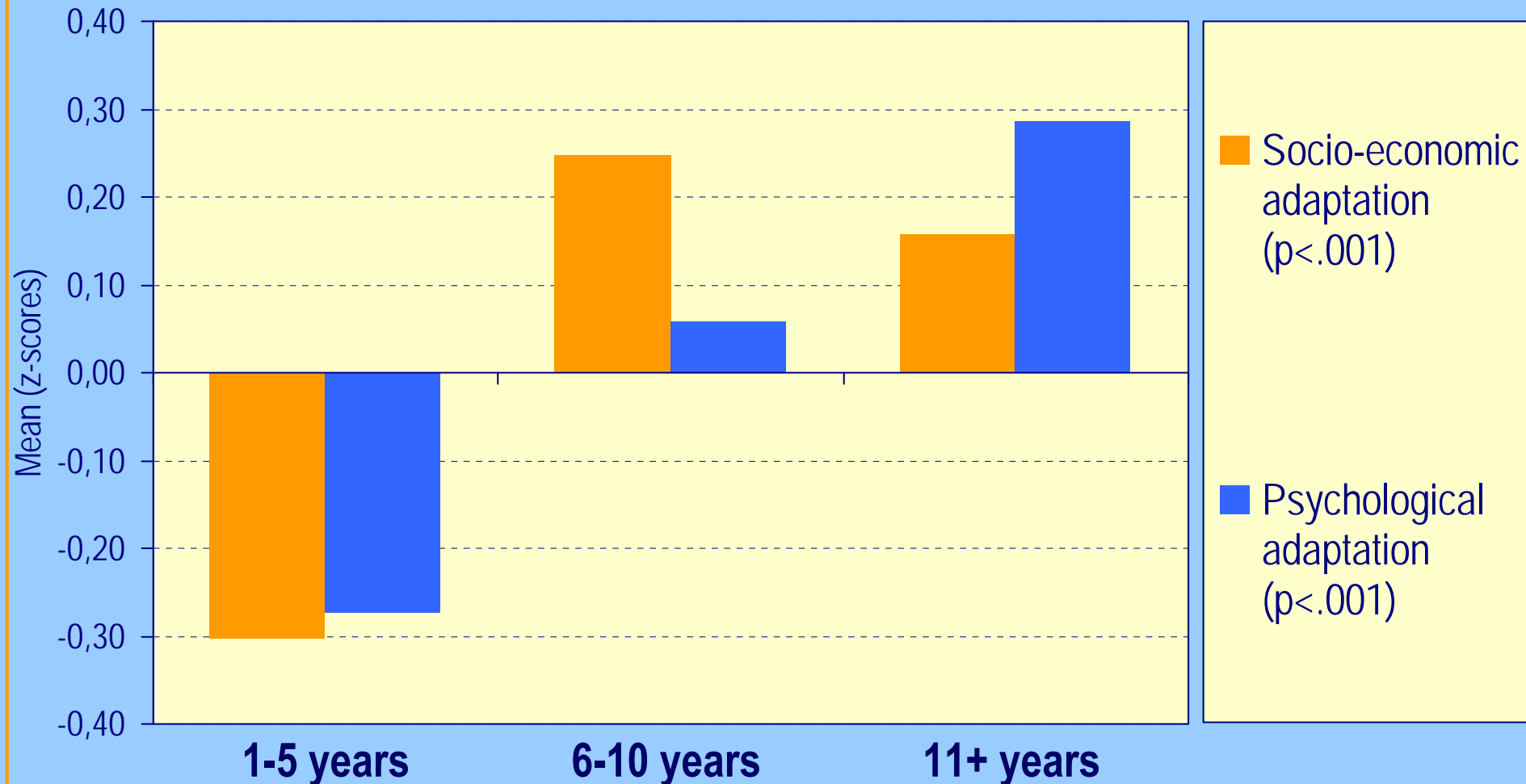
Results 1

- Quantitative adaptation indices in the socio-economic and psychological domains.

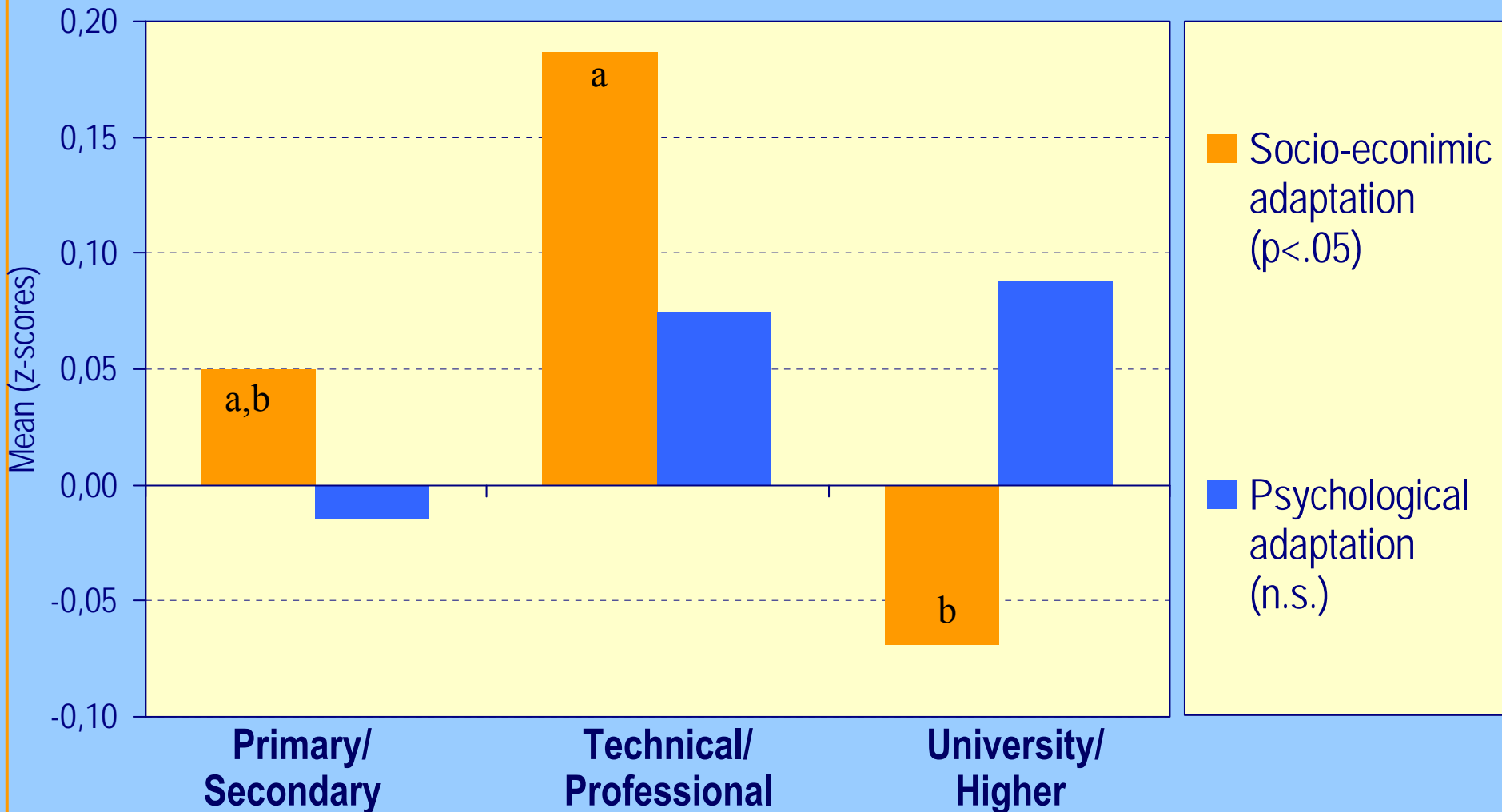
Position of Immigrant Groups on the Socio-economic and Psychological Adaptation Indices



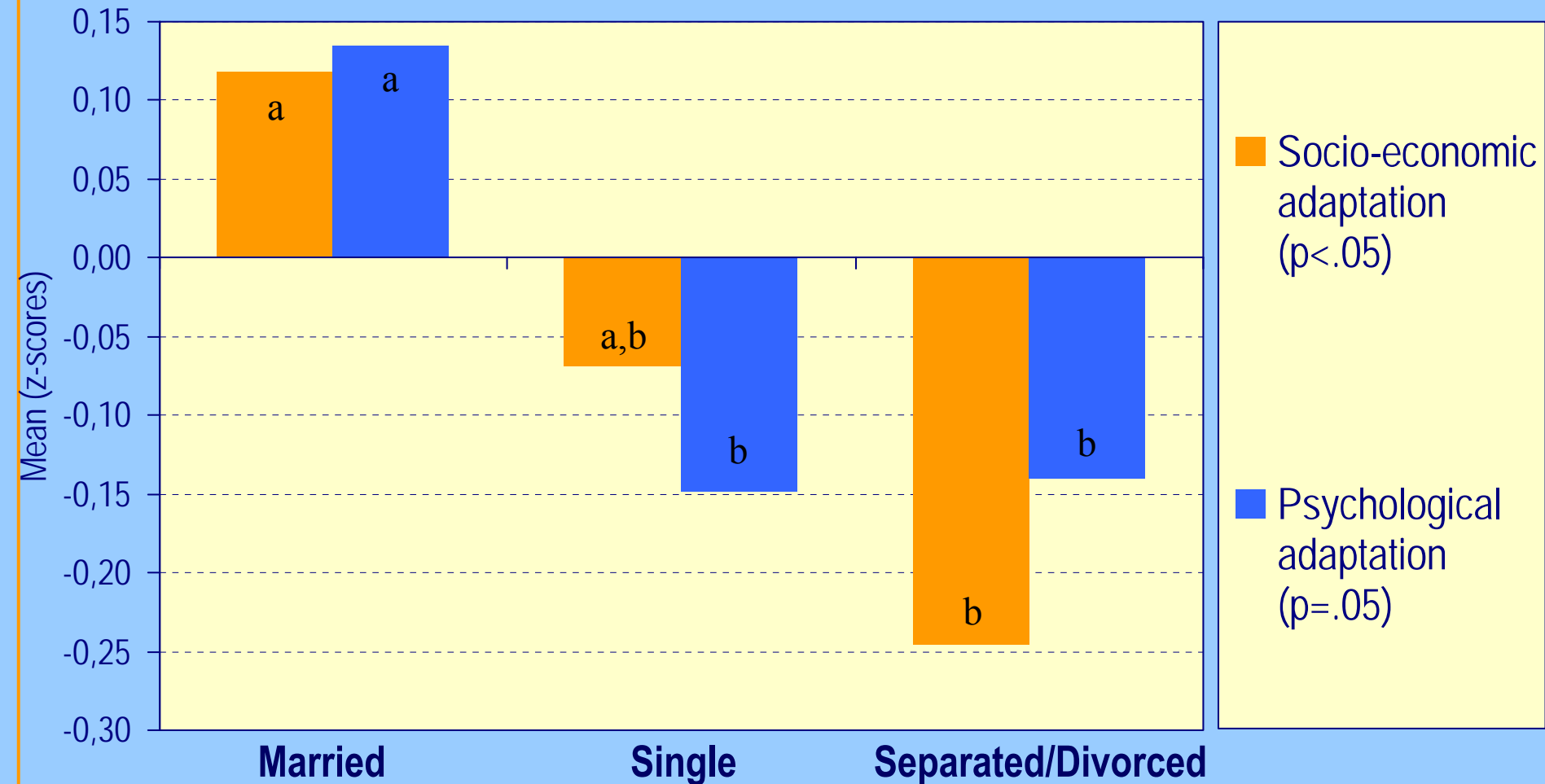
Socio-economic and Psychological Adaptation as a function of Length of Stay in Greece



Socio-economic and Psychological Adaptation as a function of Education Level



Socio-economic and Psychological Adaptation as a function of Family Status



Results 1: Summary

- Immigrant adaptation tends to be generally positive (slightly above the middle point of the measuring scale).
- The most positive outcomes are reported by Albanians and by immigrants from Balkan countries while the most negative outcomes belong to immigrants from Africa and – to a lesser extent – from Arab/Muslim countries.
- Length of stay in the host country, medium education level and married family status are positively related to both socio-economic and psychological adaptation.

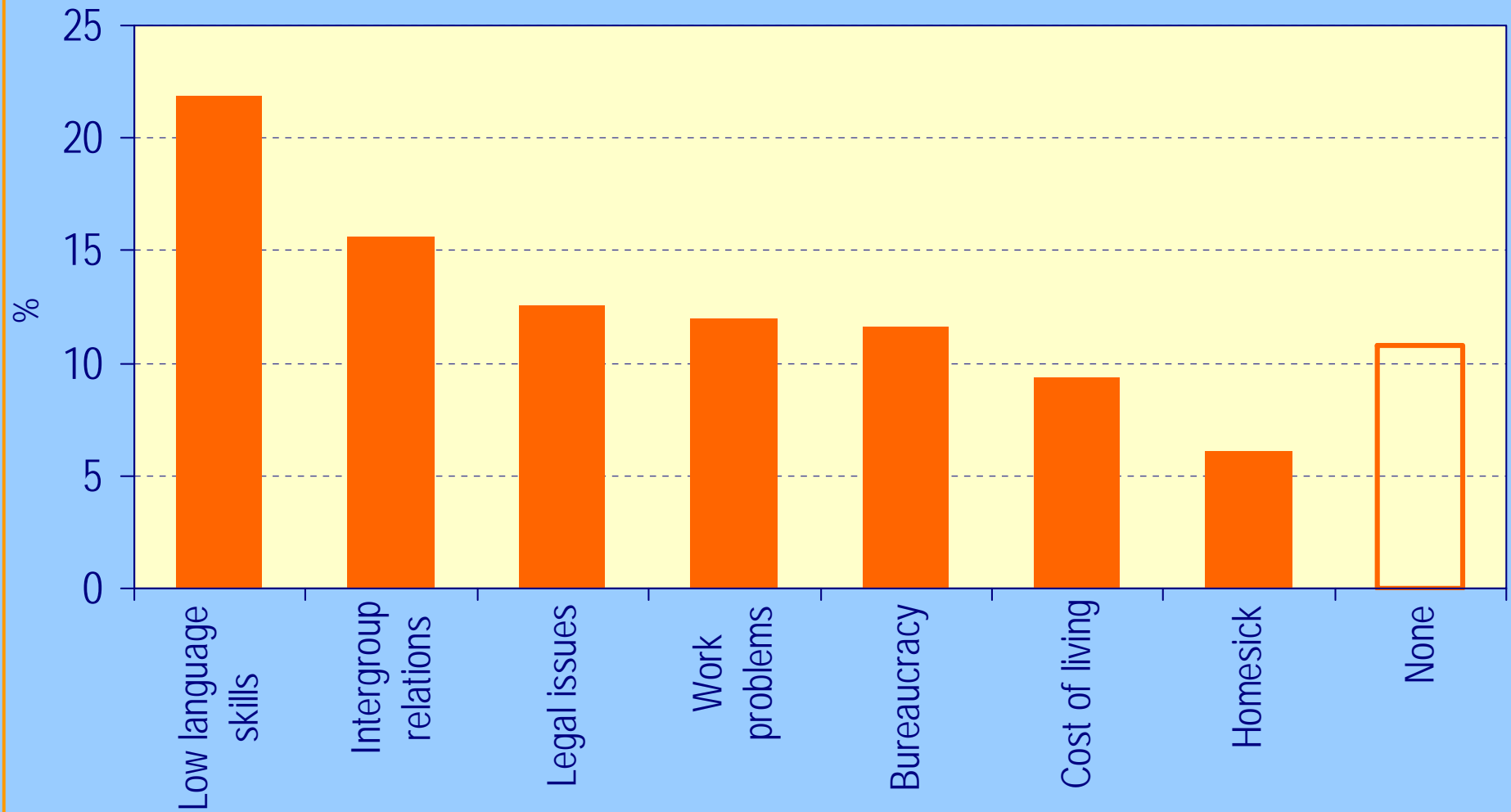
Results 2

- Qualitative adaptation indices: positive and negative aspects of immigration

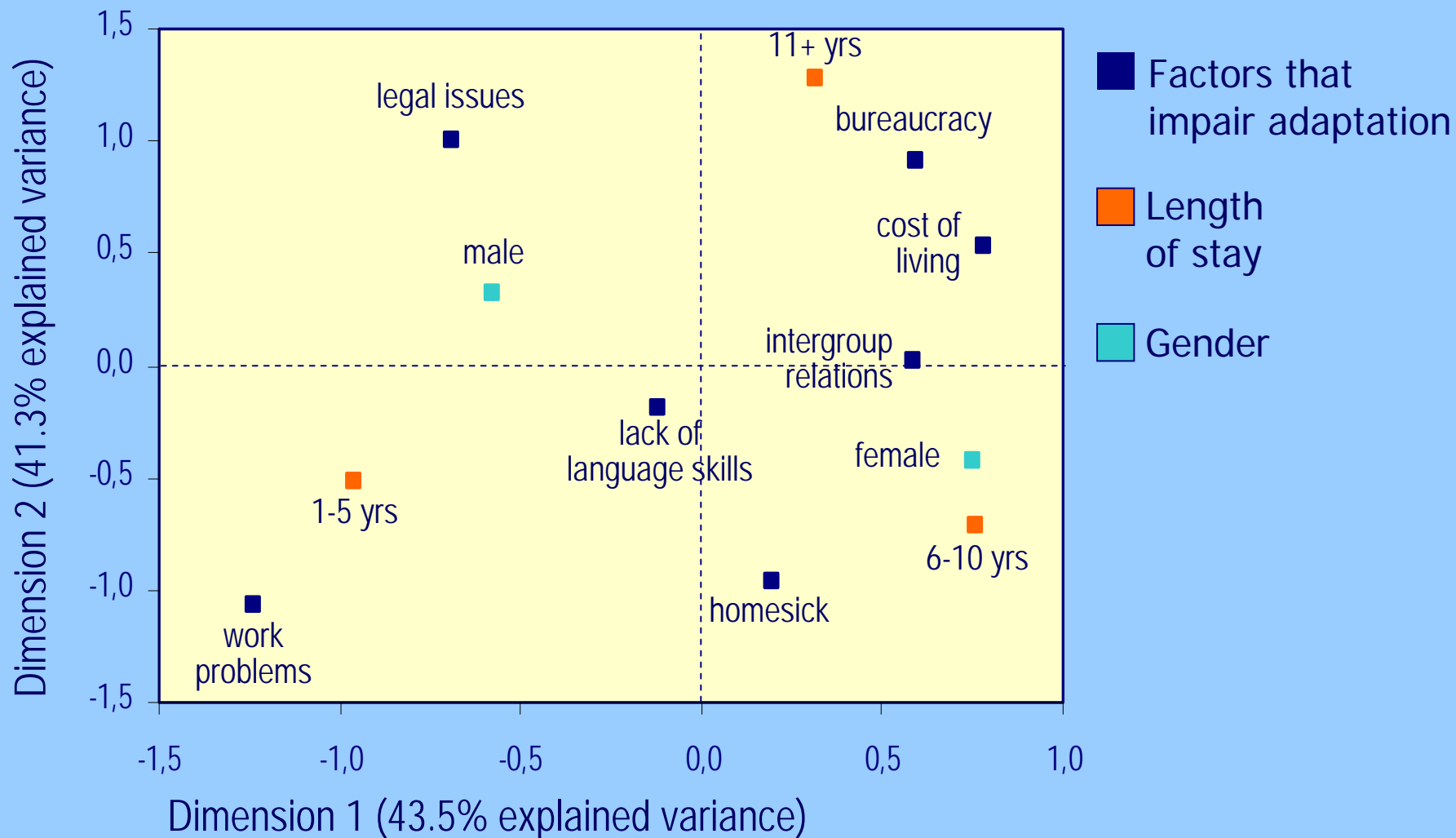
Negative Factors that Impair Immigrant Adaptation

- ✓ Legal issues (e.g., green card, legal status, relations with the authorities-police)
- ✓ High cost of living
- ✓ Difficulties in the workplace, unemployment
- ✓ Bureaucracy
- ✓ Intergroup relations (e.g., perceived discrimination, sense of insecurity)
- ✓ Low language skills (Greek)
- ✓ Homesickness
- ✓ No particular impairment
- ✓ Did not answer: 93 (16%)

Negative Factors that Impair Immigrant Adaptation



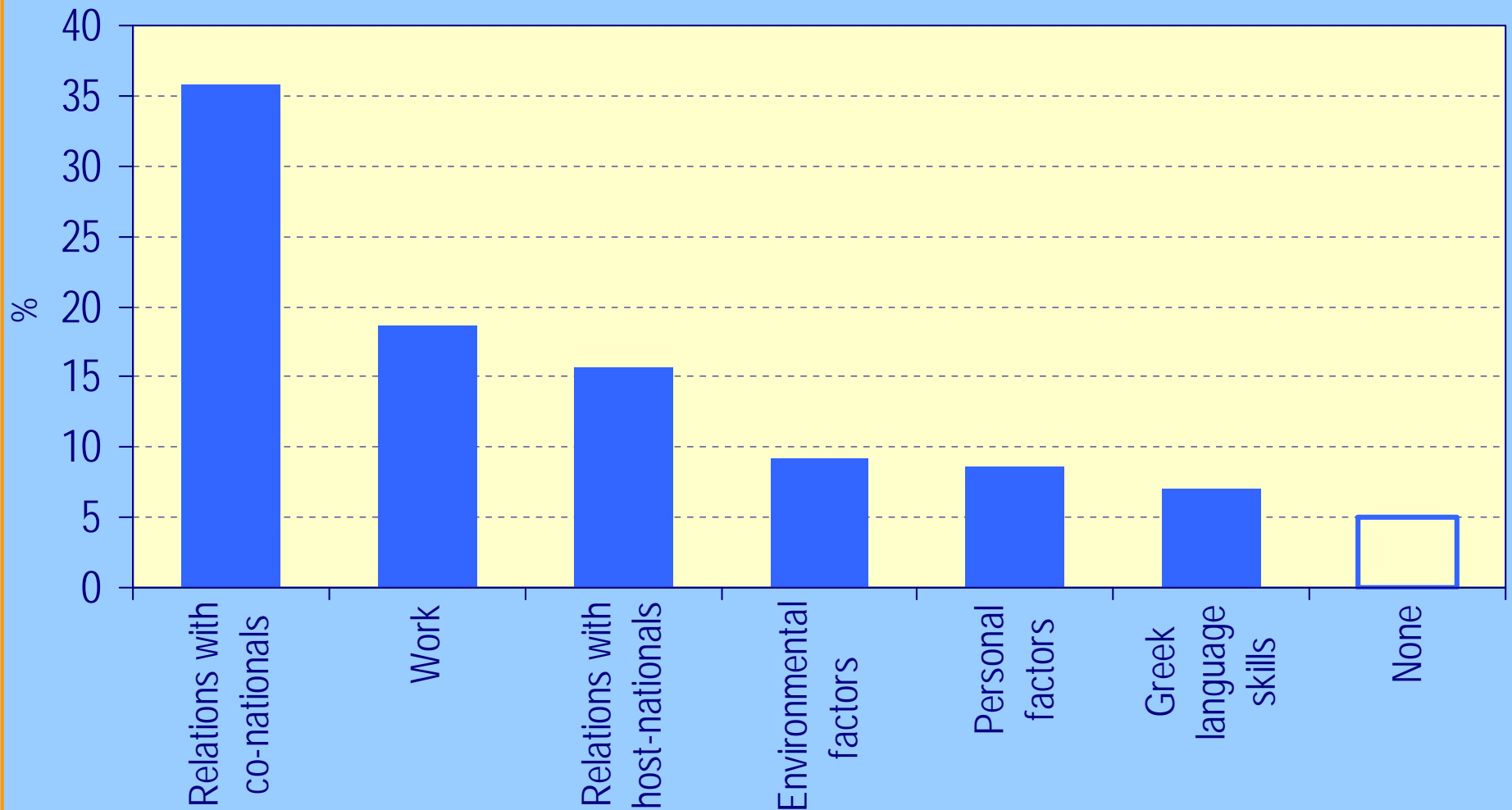
Factors that Impair Adaptation in relation to length of Stay and Gender



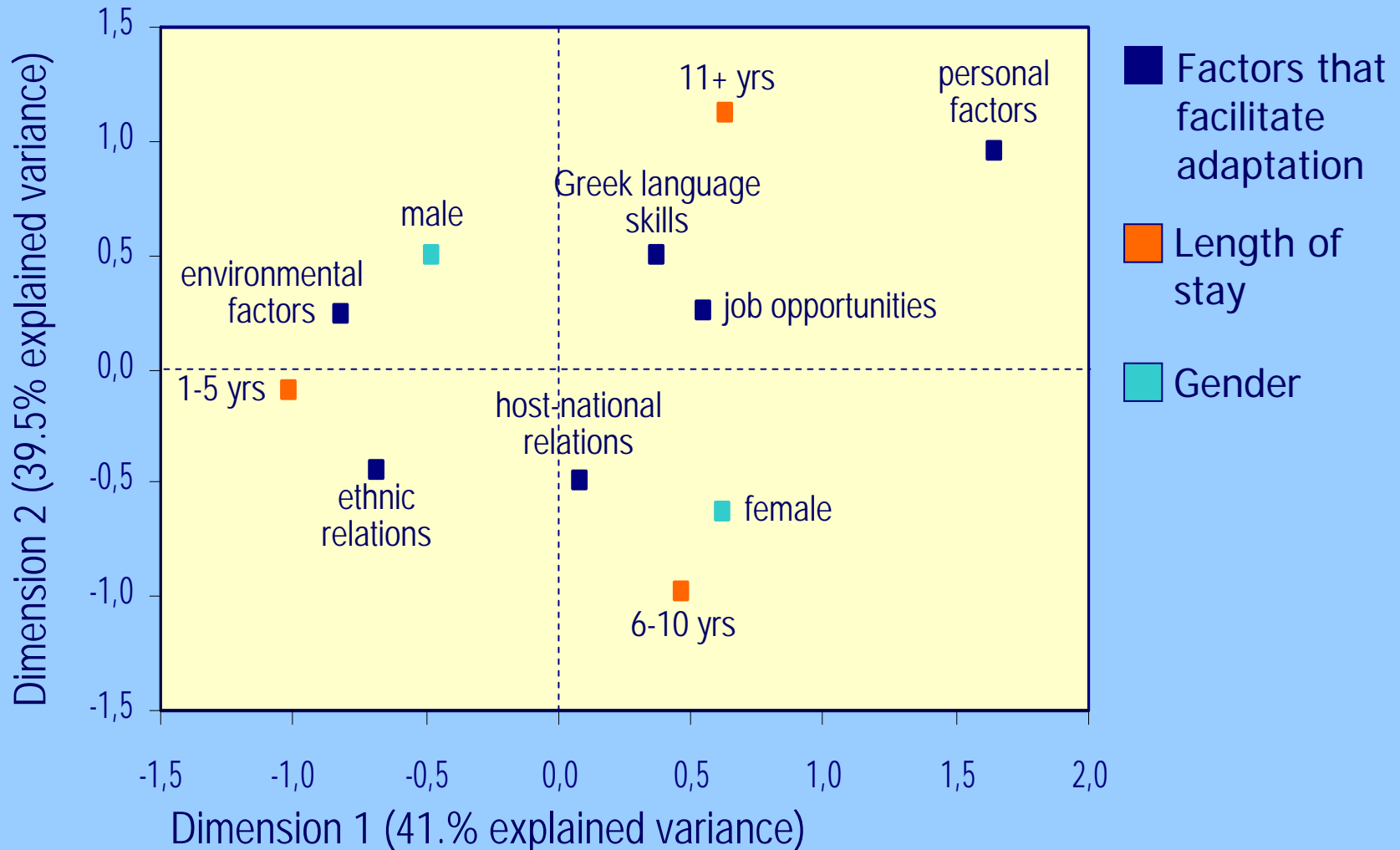
Positive Factors that Facilitate Immigrant Adaptation

- ✓ Work (job opportunities, level of satisfaction)
- ✓ Greek language skills
- ✓ Relations with co-nationals (relatives, friends)
- ✓ Relations with host-nationals (positive interactions)
- ✓ Environmental factors (conditions of living, climate, «I like it here»)
- ✓ Personal factors (e.g., optimism, hope for the future)
- ✓ None
- ✓ Did not answer: 79 (13%)

Positive Factors that Facilitate Immigrant Adaptation



Factors that Facilitate Adaptation in relation to Length of Stay and Gender



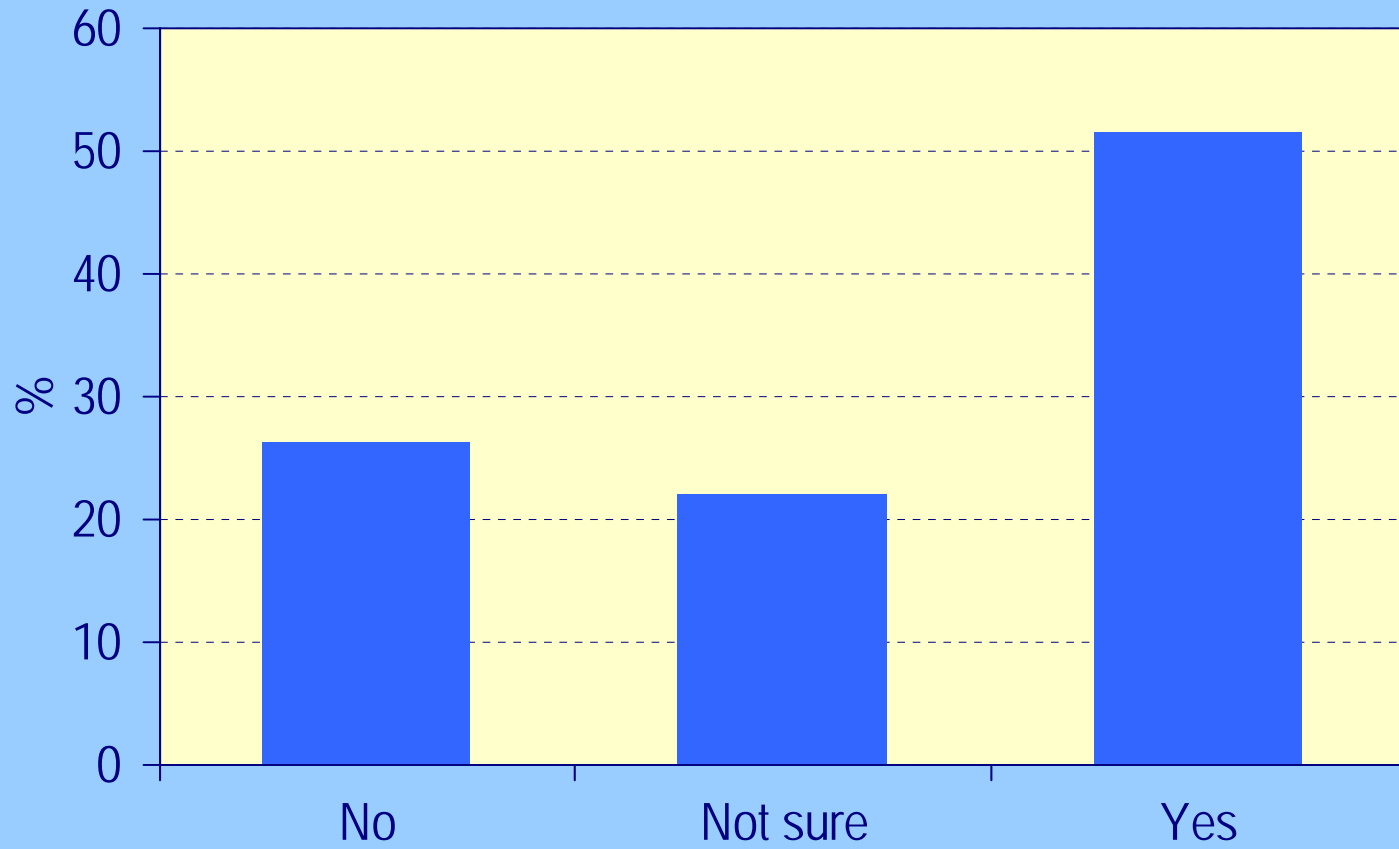
Results 2: Summary

- Language skills, intergroup relations, work, and legal issues are reported as either negative or positive aspects of immigration, depending on the quality of adaptation.
- Practical issues (e.g., work, legal status, language) are predominant in early stages of immigration.
- Relations with co-nationals and positive attitudes towards the host-country are important resources for adaptation.
- Females tend to focus on interpersonal relationships more than males.

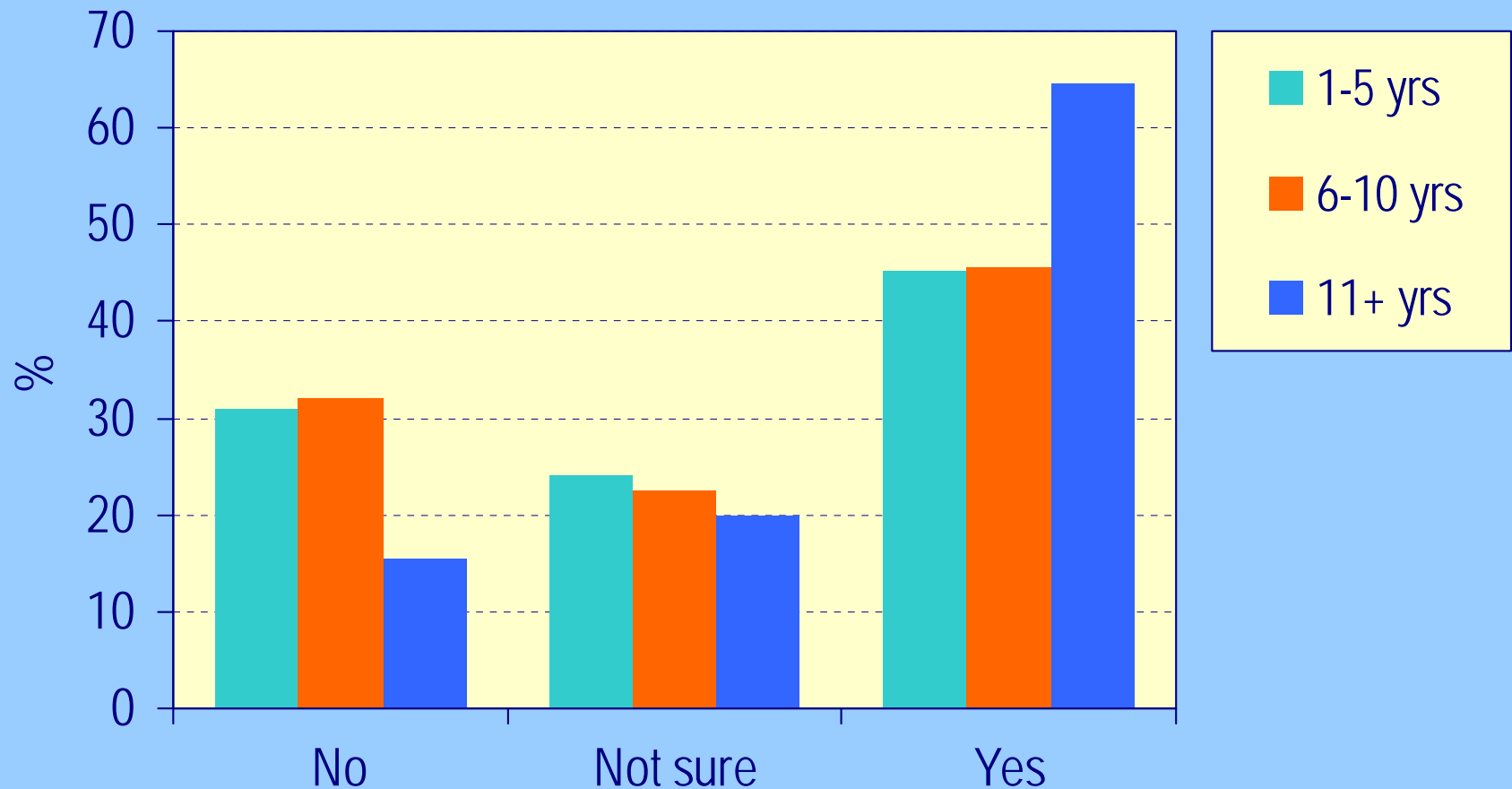
Results 3

- Qualitative adaptation indices: future goals and plans

Intentions re: Submitting for Greek Citizenship



Intentions re: Submitting for Greek Citizenship as a function of Length of Stay



$\chi^2(4, n=561)=21.00, p<.001$

Goals re: Children's Future



Goals re: Children's Future as a function of Length of Stay



$\chi^2(8, n=469)=39.13, p<.001$

Results 3: Summary

- In general, positive attitudes of immigrants emerge in what concerns submitting for Greek citizenship and, especially, the future of their children in Greece.
- The main demographic factor relating to immigrants' future goals and plans seems to be their previous length of stay in the host country.

General Summary – Conclusions

- The general evaluation of immigrant adaptation, estimated by quantitative and qualitative indices that derive from self-reports, is rather positive.
- The two domains of adaptation (i.e., socio-economic and psychological) tend to be related.
- Immigration is perceived as an opportunity for a better future rather than a threat.
- Because of the complex nature of the processes involved during immigration, longitudinal research designs are suggested as more appropriate in order to disentangle the effects of demographic, social and psychological factors.



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Thank you for your attention!

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