

**Migration, Perception, and Attitudes.
The Case of the Temuco Commune, Chile**

**Migración, percepción y actitudes.
El caso de la comuna de Temuco, Chile**

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the perceptions and attitudes of the native population of the city of Temuco, Chile, toward the growing influx of international immigrants, from a survey of 384 residents over 18. The results show that Chileans tend to have more favorable perceptions of migrants when they maintain frequent contact with them. It also reveals that negative perceptions of immigration appear to be largely imagined without necessarily being based on direct experiences with migrants. These negative perceptions are more common among older individuals than among younger ones. Overall, the study suggests that in cities where the migratory phenomenon is recent, local perceptions and attitudes toward migrants are shaped without substantial prior contact and vary according to certain demographic characteristics, particularly age.

Keywords: 1. xenophobia, 2. coexistence, 3. immigration, 4. migrations, 5. discrimination.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo analiza las percepciones y actitudes de la población autóctona de la ciudad de Temuco, Chile, frente a la creciente llegada de inmigrantes internacionales, a partir de una encuesta aplicada a 384 habitantes mayores de 18 años. Los resultados muestran que las personas chilenas tienden a tener percepciones más favorables hacia la población migrante cuando mantienen un contacto más frecuente con ella. Así mismo, se observa que la percepción negativa hacia la inmigración parece construirse de manera imaginaria, sin basarse necesariamente en experiencias directas con personas migrantes. Dichas percepciones negativas son, además, más recurrentes entre las personas de mayor edad que entre las más jóvenes. En conjunto, este estudio sugiere que en ciudades donde el fenómeno migratorio es reciente, las percepciones y actitudes de la población local hacia la población migrante se conforman sin antecedentes claros de contacto y varían según ciertas características demográficas, particularmente la edad.

Palabras clave: 1. xenofobia, 2. convivencia, 3. inmigración, 4. migraciones, 5. discriminación.

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ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS TOWARD IMMIGRATION⁵

One of the major phenomena that has characterized the 21st century and has intensified throughout it, both globally and in Chile, is migration. The flows of people from neighboring countries such as Peru, Argentina, and Bolivia observed in the last decade have been both complemented and increased by migration from other Latin American and Caribbean countries, especially Colombia, Haiti, and Venezuela (Maturana et al., 2023; Soto-Alvarado et al., 2024). Particularly in the case of Venezuela, the deepening of its internal sociopolitical crisis has led to the departure of millions of its inhabitants, who have migrated to various countries in Latin America, the United States, and Europe (Castillo & Reguant, 2017; Stefoni & Contreras, 2022). Thus, in less than a decade—between years 2015 and 2017—the international immigrant population in Chile has doubled in size, the Venezuelan community being the largest group in that segment.

It is in this context that the debate on integration processes has gained momentum, considering that these depend on the destination and various other factors. Among these, the attitude adopted by the natives towards the foreign population is particularly relevant. This attitude manifests itself in terms of perceptions on migration and also in relation to how distant the natives feel from *the other*. In this sense, Godenau et al. (2014) argued that intergroup relations are essential for developing integration networks, and that one of the aspects to carefully observe is the attitudes and perceptions that the receiving society has towards migrants, so as to determine how open it is to the arrival of foreign populations. This latter point has become a public agenda item in many countries (Joppke, 2024; Landabur & Urzúa, 2024).

As such, attitudes are understood as expressions of subjectivity, constituting a predisposition or tendency toward certain behaviors, and characterized by a distinctive component: the subjective meanings that people develop when interpreting social reality (Cabrera, 2020; Cabrera et al., 2024). Perception, on the other hand, is more of a construct, and can be understood as the meaning that individuals assign to the phenomenon itself based on their interpretation (Baron & Branscombe, 2012). That is, the former is more closely linked to prejudice, understood as a rather negative stance or attitude toward a phenomenon (Carmona-Halty et al., 2018). Thus, Beutin et al. (2006) argue that observing attitudes toward immigration is essential when accounting for issues associated with territorial identities, common themes, or the rights granted to this group.

Thus, from a psychosocial perspective, the dynamic forms of social subjectivity constitute shared configurations that emerge in spaces of socialization and are expressed in individual subjectivity. In the configuration of racial perception, racism manifests itself through stereotypes, prejudices, and acts of discrimination (Cabrera Ruiz et al., 2024; Ha, 2010; Morales-Domínguez & Yubero, 1996). Stereotypes, understood as shared beliefs about the attributes of a given group (Ovejero, 1998), define positions in the social hierarchy (Fiske et al., 2002) and fulfill an

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ideological and historical function by legitimizing social interests (Martín-Baró, 1998). Through processes of social perception, stereotypes guide the interpretation of reality and intergroup interaction, reinforcing ingroup similarities and outgroup differences. Thus, race acts as a central category in the construction of social subjectivities, based on phenotypic traits that reproduce hierarchies and inequalities (Johnson et al., 2012).

Studies on attitudes toward migration have therefore focused primarily on the conditions and factors that influence the various modes of behavior toward foreign populations (Gu et al., 2022), highlighting the different dimensions in which the phenomenon can be observed. They identify a micro-level where individual attitudes related to the lifeworld are analyzed; a meso-level referring to civil society and community morality; and finally, a macro-level that analyzes attitudes at the level of institutions and politics (Rétiová et al., 2021).

At least three factors that determine attitudes toward foreign populations can be identified: socioeconomic, ideological-political, and contextual. Regarding economic factors, evidence indicates that these are of significant influence, and that in situations of economic crisis, the native population tends to develop a more negative attitude towards migration. On the other hand, having a left-leaning ideological position makes a tolerant attitude towards migration more likely, while those individuals of right-leaning ideologies tend to have a negative attitude towards migration. Finally, contextual factors refer to the conditions of each country in terms of variables such as inequality, risk of poverty, unemployment, among others (Martín et al., 2013).

In the case of Chile, academic efforts have focused particularly on researching the relationship between locals and migrants, mostly from the perspective and experiences of the latter. A substantial body of work has addressed the adaptation of the immigrant population in the country and the discrimination and racism faced by the Chilean population toward people from South America and the Caribbean (Soto-Alvarado, 2020). Some more recent studies have also explored attitudes toward south-south migration (Landabur et al., 2024).

An example of this can be found in Bonhomme (2021), who argues that the structure of public policies, especially those related to housing, perpetuates racism and exclusion against migrants, which extends beyond mere issues of coexistence among those living in multicultural neighborhoods. Furthermore, he reveals how rental agreements established by Chilean landlords for foreigners are characterized by informal practices that exacerbate their precariousness.

Baeza-Rivera et al. (2022), in their analysis of the challenges faced by migrants upon arriving in a new country, concluded that in the Araucanía region, Haitian citizens evidence higher levels of cumulative stress than citizens of other origins, such as Colombians or Venezuelans. This suggests that cultural barriers between Haiti and Chile, as well as the language barrier, could make Haitians more vulnerable to discrimination.

On the other hand, while Colombians exhibit lower levels of cumulative stress, their immersion in Chilean culture makes them more aware of subtle forms of exclusion (Baeza-Rivera et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the work of Urzúa et al. (2019), focused on the relationship between discrimination

and the phenotype of immigrants in Chile, posits that discrimination based on skin color exists in levels. In light of the above, it is important to note that immigration in Chile is characterized by a complex interplay of linguistic and cultural differences. For example, in terms of egalitarianism, individualism, solidarity, etc., between native and foreign citizens. Therefore, such an issue presents several challenges (Madariaga et al., 2025), given that a population's predisposition toward the arrival of foreigners is comprised of various, multifactorial dimensions (Sirlopú et al., 2015).

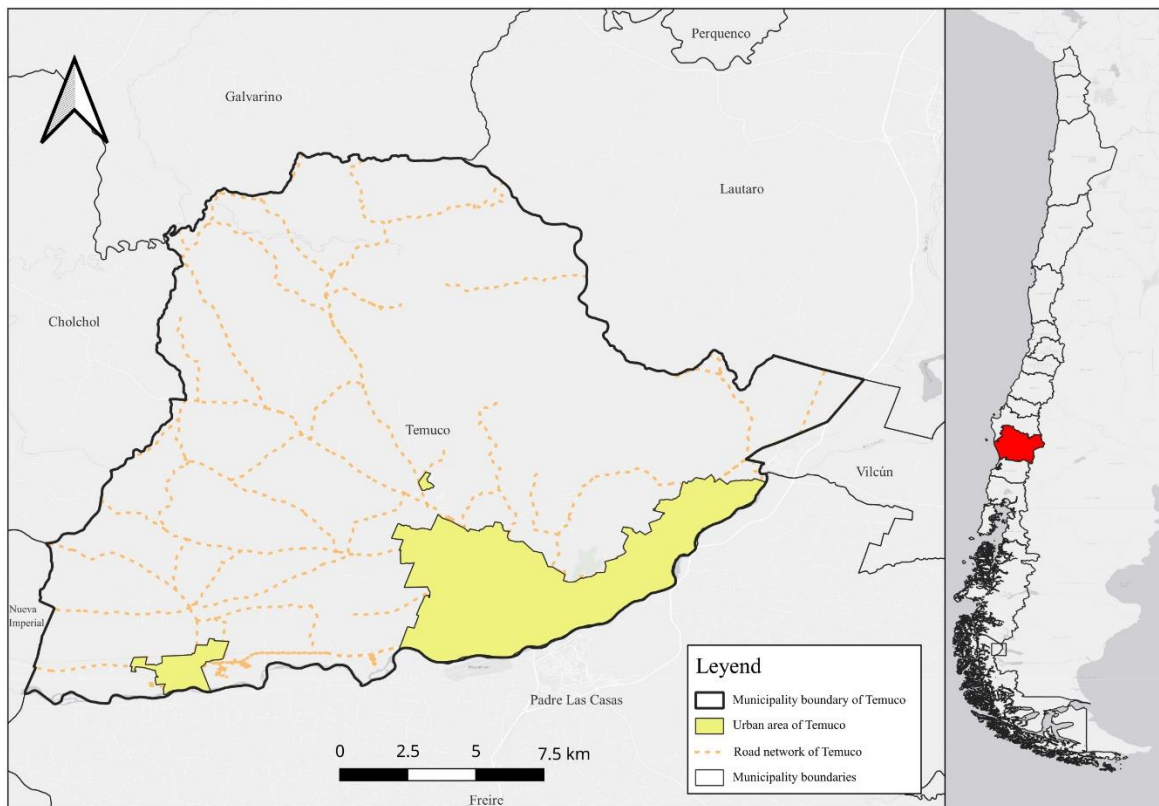
As can be seen, most studies tend to be national in scope or focus on large cities, leaving medium-sized cities or those undergoing metropolitanization less studied, despite experiencing significant migration processes that warrant analysis. Therefore, one factor that has been little explored in terms of shaping attitudes and perceptions toward the migrant population is the size of the cities and the perception of distance or proximity to the capital, wherein the largest proportion of migrants tends to concentrate.

In this context, this study aims to analyze the attitudes and perceptions of residents of Temuco, the capital of the Araucanía Region, located 680 kilometers from Santiago, Chile, toward migration and the migrant population. This city, like others in southern Chile, has not historically been a destination for migrants. However, since 2015, migration flows have increased due to the internal spatial redistribution resulting from the significant increase in international migrant stock.

The 2024 census estimated 21 077 foreigners in the Araucanía Region, with Temuco accounting for approximately 50% of this total, thus becoming the city with the highest migrant population in the region (INE, 2024). Nonetheless, it still has a relatively lower proportion of migrants than municipalities in the capital or cities near the northern border, regions where the migrant population reaches 20% of the regional population, or up to 5% in the Metropolitan Region, while in Araucanía the rate is only 2%.

However, this incipient process is precisely what makes it relevant for analysis within this context of drastic changes in migration dynamics. It is important to observe the development of this immigration process in host countries and the perceptions and attitudes of the population regarding it. It is along this line that this study analyzed how Chilean residents of the Temuco Commune perceive and express their attitudes and perceptions toward the international immigration process, thus making visible the position of these individuals regarding this migration process in general and its impacts on a territory undergoing transition to metropolitanization, or recently metropolitanized, depending on how it is viewed (Map 1).

Map 1. Location of the Temuco Commune



Source: Own elaboration.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative methodology, administering a survey to local Temuco residents. The survey accounted for sociodemographic variables, contact with migrants, perceptions of migration, distinctions between local and national perceptions, the relationship between migration and public safety, and the relationship between the economy and migration, among others. A descriptive statistical analysis was conducted thereafter, including individual variable analysis and contingency tables, to identify potential relationships between variables. Finally, a multiple correspondence analysis was applied to analyze the specific behavior of selected variables.

Regarding the first step, a 15-question questionnaire was elaborated (see Table 1). The questions were adapted from other surveys and studies that have already addressed the topic (National Center for Migration Studies [CENEM, for its acronym in Spanish], 2021; Chuaqui et al., 2024; Rinken, 2011, 2021).

Table 1. Questionnaire Administered

Questions	Answers
Age	18-25
	26-40
	41-65
	More than 60
Gender	Female
	Male
	Other
Last level of education completed	No schooling
	Incomplete elementary school
	Completed elementary school
	High-school education (science and humanities)
	Technical high school
	Professional technical school
	University degree
	Postgraduate degree
Macro-sector of residence	Pueblo Nuevo
	Labranza
	Costanera
	West
	Pedro de Valdivia
	Botrollhue
	El Carmen
	Amanecer
	Downtown
How would you rate your perception of the immigration in Chile?	Very positive
	Positive
	Neutral
	Negative
	Very negative
How would you rate your perception of the immigration process in Temuco?	Very positive
	Positive
	Neutral
	Negative
	Very negative

(continues)

Questions	Answers
<i>(continuation)</i>	
Do you consider that your perception has changed recently?	Yes, it has worsened No, it has not changed Yes, it has improved
You consider that the influence of the migrant population on the national economy is:	Very negative Negative Neutral Positive Very positive
You consider the influence of the migrant population on public safety to be:	Very negative Negative Neutral Positive Very Positive
How have you formed your perception of immigration?	Personal experience with migrants Experience of people close to you with migrants Traditional media Information on social networks Other
Most important elements when assessing immigration:	Economic situation of the country Public safety Work aspects Cultural Aspects Functioning of public services
How should the State act regarding irregular migrants in Chile?	Deport them Regularize those who have jobs Regularize those who have been in the country for years Let them stay as they are Does not know/No answer
How should the State act towards new migrants?	Let in anyone who wants to enter Do not allow the entry of any migrant Reinforce the entry regularization process Does not know/No answer

(continues)

Questions	Answers
(continuation)	Never
Do you have any contact with migrants?	Almost never
	Occasionally
	Almost every day
	Every day
How would you rate your contact with migrants?	Very negative
	Negative
	Neutral
	Positive
	Very positive

Source: Own elaboration.

First, a section was established to define the sociodemographic profile of the sample, followed by general questions about perceptions of migration, both nationally and in the commune. Participants were also asked about issues of public relevance and their relationship to immigration, such as public safety and the national economy. The frequency and assessment of the contact with migrants were also explored.

This instrument was administered to a sample of 384 people, considering that the total population of the Temuco Commune was 282 415 in 2017, with an error margin of 5% and a confidence level of 95% (See Table 2). A non-probability quota sampling method was used, thus ensuring heterogeneity in the categories of sex and age. The instrument was administered to both men and women over 18 years of age, of different education levels.

Table 2. Technical Specifications of the Survey

Universe	282 415 inhabitants of the Temuco Commune (2017 Census).
Target Population	Chilean citizens residing in the Temuco Commune.
Type of Survey	Closed-ended questions survey, conducted face-to-face in downtown locations.
Sample and Accuracy	384 respondents, 95% confidence level, 5% error margin.
Date of Application	July 9-23, 2024.

Source: Own elaboration.

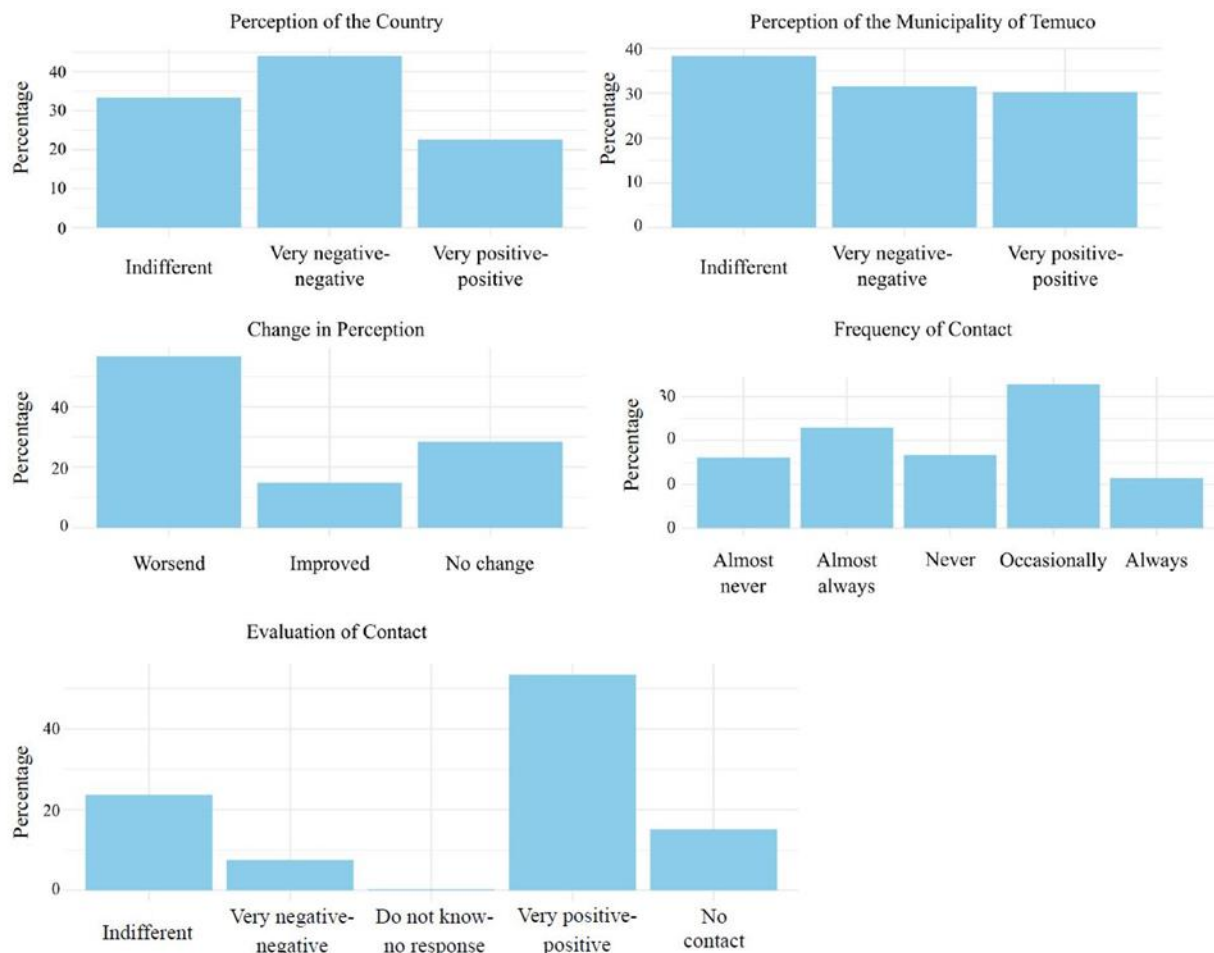
In order to achieve the greatest possible heterogeneity among respondents, the surveys were conducted in public spaces in down-town locations of the city with high pedestrian traffic, specifically in the Plaza Aníbal Pinto, the entry point to the Portal Temuco Mall, and the Plaza Dagoberto Godoy.

Once the survey was administered, a database was created, simple frequencies were calculated, and graphs were created. Contingency tables were then created, and finally, a multiple correspondence analysis was performed using the FactoMiner R package (Lê et al., 2008). This factor analysis allowed for the examination of categorical variables from the survey, and was substantially useful for comparing the results to questions in general and thus appreciating the profile of the respondents at the factor level, elucidating general response patterns (Husson et al., 2017).

RESULTS

The respondents' perceptions of the migration process in the country differed when asked about the national level versus their commune. At the national level, a larger percentage (44.1%) held a negative or very negative perception, while at the commune level, this figure was 31.1%. Similarly, 33.3% responded that they had neither positive nor negative perception for the country as a whole, reaching 38.8% at the commune level. Finally, 22.6% perceived the migration process as positive or very positive for the country as a whole, while for the Temuco Commune this figure was 29.8% (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Perceptions of Migration and Migrants, Assessment and Frequency of Contact



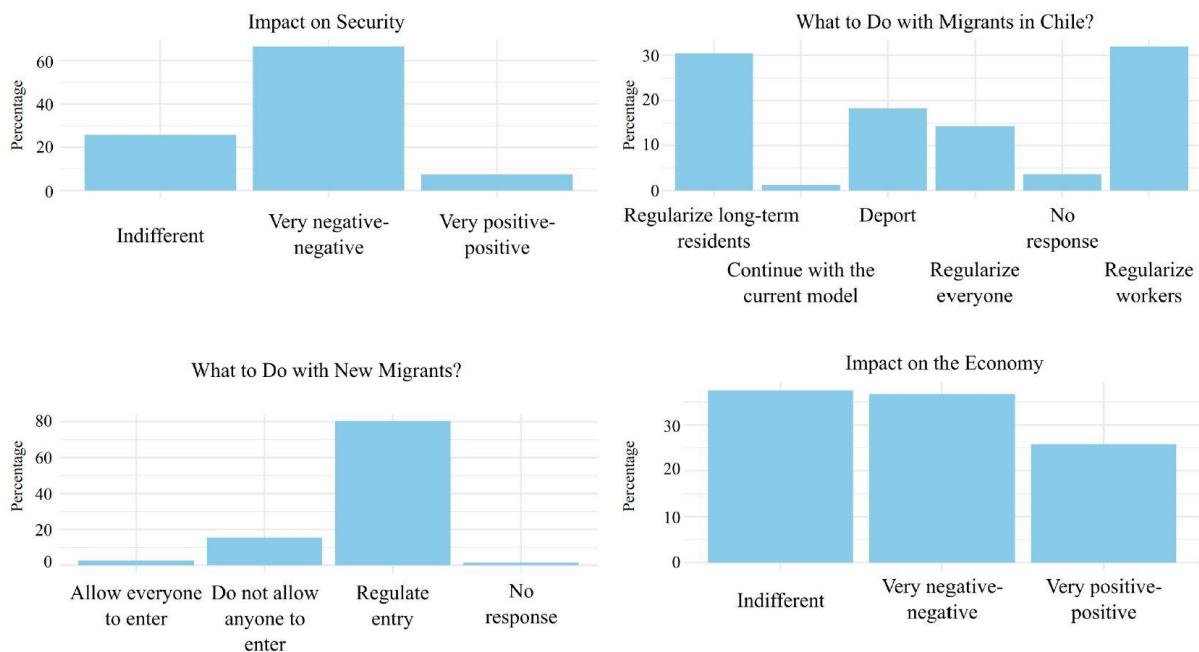
Source: Own elaboration.

Along with it, the perception of migration has worsened in recent years, which, according to the literature, is related to the increase in the arrival of migrants to the country and to the city of Temuco in particular. For 55.8% of the sample, their perception of migration has worsened, 28.4% have not changed opinions, while only 14.8% have experienced an improvement in their perception of the phenomenon.

When it comes to the respondents' personal experience with the migration process, two questions were asked to define the frequency of their contact with migrants and their assessment of these situations (see Figure 1). Of our sample, 16.7% indicated never having contact with migrants, 16.1% almost never, 32.8% indicated occasional contact, 22.9% stated having contact with migrants almost every day, and 11.5% stated having such contact every day. Contact with migrants is considered a positive experience by 53.4% of the sample; meanwhile, 23.7% consider it neither positive nor negative, while 7.5% assess it negatively or very negatively. Finally, 15% acknowledge never having contact with migrants.

When asked about the impact of migrants in areas representing ideological positions and partisan debate, respondents tended to express rejection or neutrality (see Figure 2). As for the impact of migration on the national economy, 36.7% consider it negative or very negative, 37.5% have neither a negative nor a positive view, and 25.8% believe it to be a positive or very positive influence.

Figure 2. Impact of Migrants on Safety and The Economy and What to Do About Migration



Source: Own elaboration.

The survey also addressed the topic of public safety, a relevant issue on the public agenda of all political sectors and prominently featured in the media (Dammert & Erlandsen, 2020; Scherman et al., 2022). On this, 66.6% of respondents believe that the migrant population has a negative or very negative influence, 25.8% stated to be indifferent about it, and 7.5% believe it has a positive or very positive influence (see Figure 2).

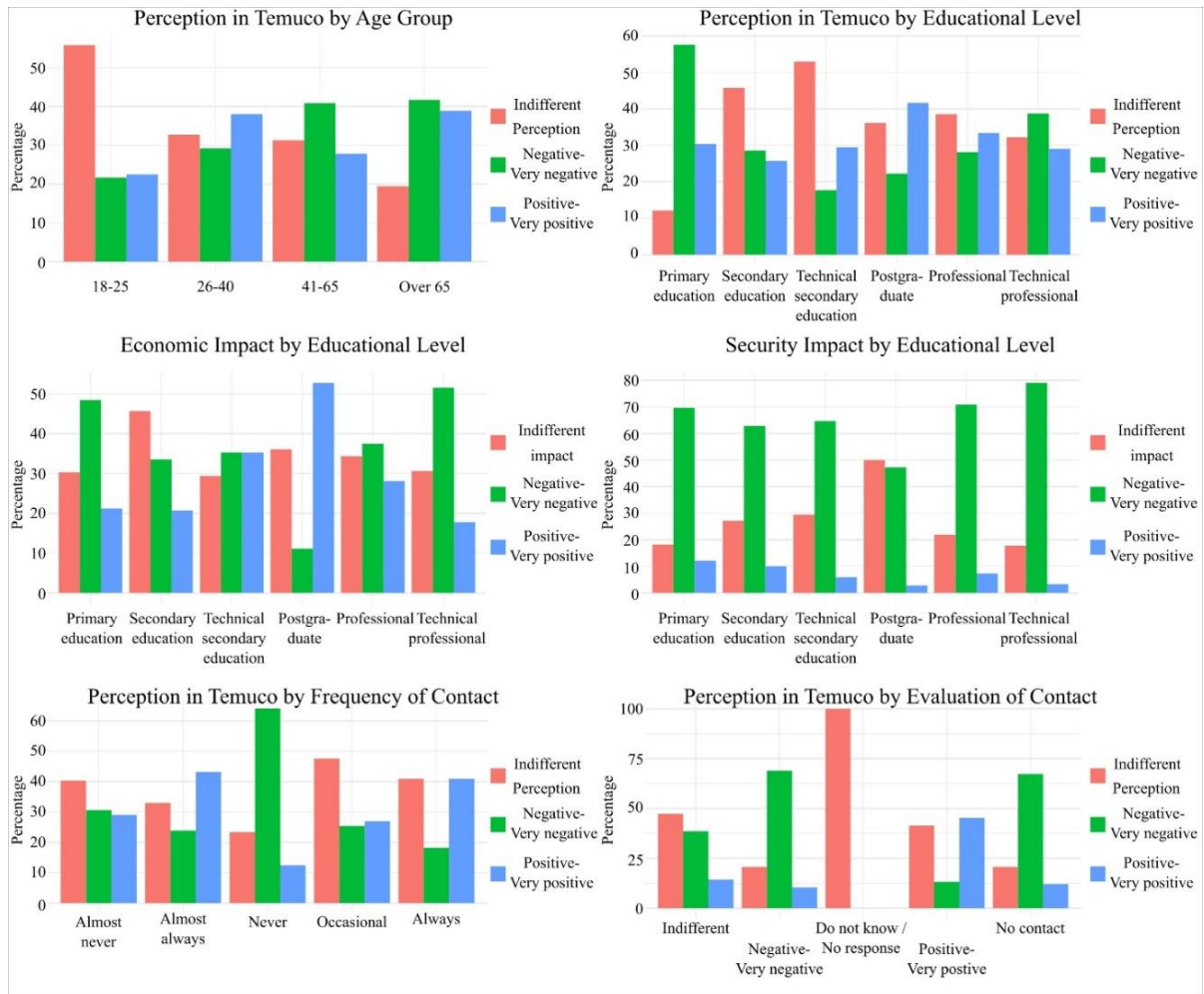
When asked how they believe the Chilean State should act regarding migrants already in Chile, 30.5% believe that the situation of those who have lived in the country for years should be regulated, 31% believe that only immigrants with jobs should be regulated, 18.2% think that all migrants should be deported, 14.3% think that the situation of all migrants should be regulated regardless of their status, 1.3% believe that the status of undocumented immigrants in Chile should remain as it is, and finally, 3.8% did not have a definite answer.

Regarding the situation of future new migrants (see Figure 2) who wish to enter Chile, 80.5% believe that the entry regulation process should be reinforced, 15.4% believe that no migrants should enter the country, 2.6% indicate that anyone who wishes to enter the territory should be able to do so, and 1.6% do not have a clear answer (see Figure 2).

IMPACT, PERCEPTION, AND RELATIONSHIP OF VARIABLES IN THE MIGRATION PROCESS

When observing how the age of the respondents influences their opinions on migration, in figure 3 it can be seen that, older individuals tend to have rather negative perceptions of the migration process. This is particularly so for the 41-65 and 65+ age groups, while it is less pronounced for the 26-40 age group. As for the youngest respondents (18-25 years), over 50% are indifferent to the migration process. This position was also analyzed according to their educational level. The data in figure 3 also reveals that individuals with only a basic education exhibit negative or highly negative perceptions compared to the rest of the sample.

Figure 3. Relationships Between Perception, Impact on The Economy, and Impact on Safety, B Age Group and Educational Level



Source: Own elaboration.

Moreover, for all levels of secondary or technical education, the negative view is much lower, with indifference being the most prevalent position. For professionals and technical professionals, the percentages for the three positions are quite similar. Finally, those with postgraduate studies exhibit the highest percentage of positive perceptions toward migration.

A relevant finding from the literature review is that one of the elements that could have the greatest influence on the attitudes of local residents toward immigrants is the level of contact between the two groups. As stated by González et al. (2019), the observation of everyday experiences between Chileans and immigrants is an underdeveloped aspect in Chile. Therefore, two variables were examined to explore this: the frequency of contact and the quality of contact in relation to perception.

When analyzing the data resulting from the cross-tabulation of contact frequency and perceptions of migration in Temuco, it was found that residents with less frequent contact with

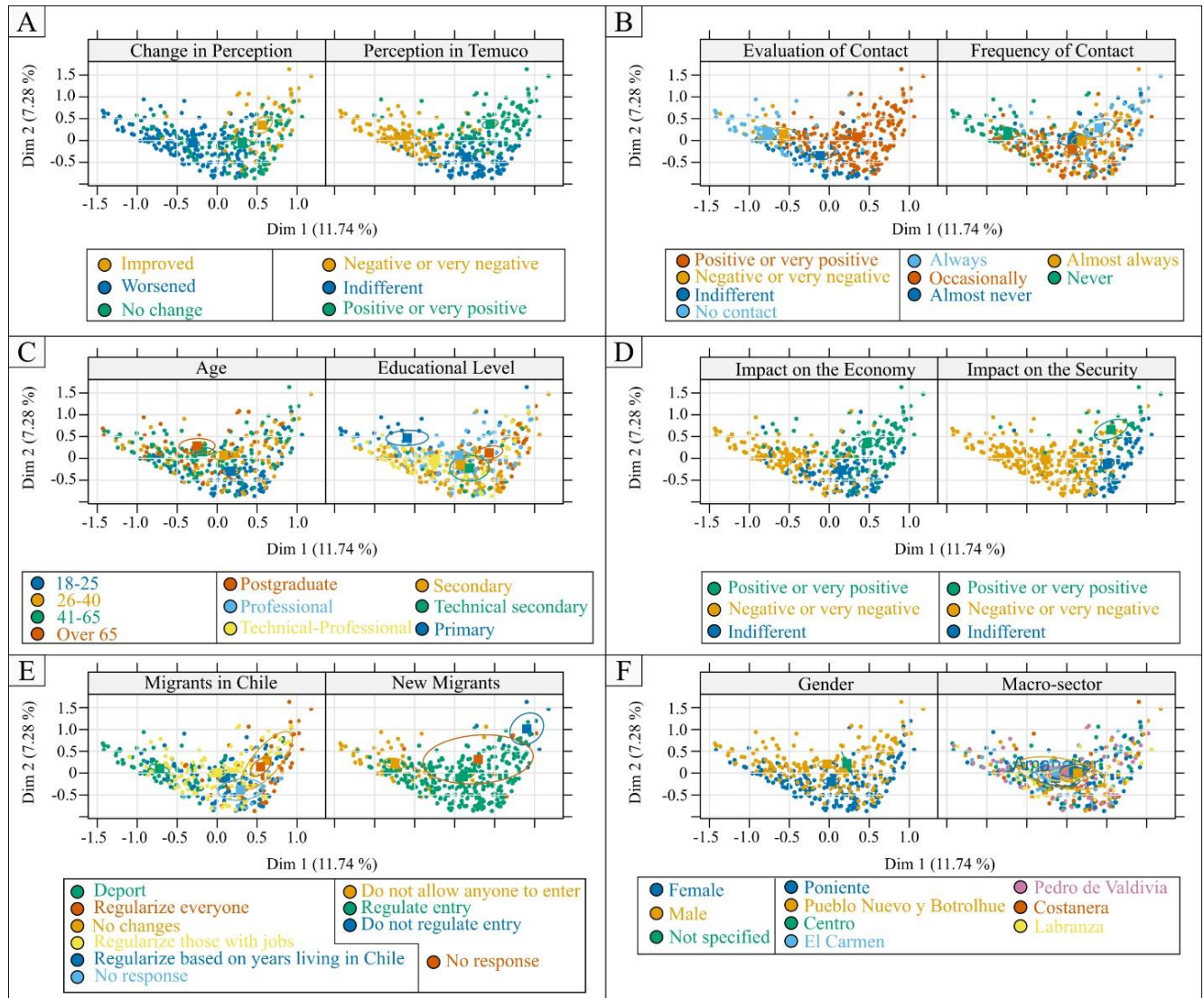
migrants hold a negative or highly negative view of immigration (see Figure 3). Positive perceptions of migration increase with greater contact. Those with occasional contact express a more neutral stance on the impact of migration. It is also noteworthy that a large majority of those who report never having contact with migrants also express the most negative perceptions.

When comparing how Chileans assess their contact with immigrants, with their perceptions of the immigration process as a whole, the results show the same trends as before: those who have never had contact hold predominantly negative opinions about the arrival of migrants and their impacts.

Positive perceptions are only prevalent among those who assess their experiences with migrants as positive or very positive.

The survey results can be compared by analyzing the response patterns of each respondent. Figure 4 shows, for each variable, the response of a particular individual, according to the category selected for that variable (represented by a point). Each point coordinate (an individual) on the factor plane is exactly the same for all variables.

Figure 4. Multiple Correspondence Analysis



Source: Own elaboration.

One of the interesting aspects of multiple correspondence analysis is that it allows to visually and succinctly observe the link between variables based on response patterns within the categories. In Figure 4, as mentioned, each point represents an individual. In quadrant 4A, a group of individuals clearly responds with negative or very negative responses regarding their perception of the migration process (yellow). Subsequently, the impact on safety (4D) and, to a lesser extent, on the economy (4D) is observed. These surveys also clearly show that the same group of individuals (in yellow) also express that migrants have a negative or very negative impact on this area. In Figure 4, but in quadrants C and F, it is evident that this observation is independent of gender, age, or neighborhood, since, as seen in the categories and colors of each individual's response, these factors do not result in a clear grouping pattern.

Regarding gender-differentiated positions (quadrant 4F), it is worth noting that women (shown in blue) remain mostly neutral regarding their perception of the immigration process (quadrant 4A), unlike men (shown in yellow), who present more divided positions between negative and positive.

DISCUSSION

Overall, the citizens of Temuco certainly recognize that the development of the migration process in the country has occurred differently than in their commune. This is demonstrated by the fact that their assessment of immigration in Chile is more negative (44%) than in the specific case of their city (31.5%).

While there is no direct data to help compare the changes in perception among Temuco locals with those of the country in general, Chuaqui et al. (2024) showed that 74% of respondents consider their perception of immigrants who arrived in the last five years to be worse than that of those who arrived prior to that.

The results of this study show that almost 57% of respondents in Temuco state that their perception of immigration has worsened in recent years. This is one of the data points that demonstrates that attitudes and perceptions are the result of particular contexts. Goubin et al. (2022), after observing data from different European countries during the refugee crisis, found that the views on migrants have worsened in Eastern European countries, while Nordic countries show an increase in positive assessment.

Regarding the link between immigrants and crime, the study reveals that approximately 67% of the local population of Temuco believes that migration negatively affects public safety; this aligns with Chuaqui et al. (2024), who indicated that 69% believed migrants increased crime levels in the country, in line as well with the arguments of Gissil and Aguilar (2023) regarding the criminalization of the migrant population. In this respect, the survey conducted and focused on a specific commune is not significantly different from a national survey. However, these percentages should always be cautiously interpreted, considering that other surveys, such as the 2024 Bicentennial Survey, indicate that 91% of respondents believe immigration has impacted on public safety.

Regarding the relationship between migration and the country's economy, the results of this study showed that 36.7% believe the immigrant population negatively impacts the economy. In this sense, the work of Chuaqui et al. (2024) shows similar values, indicating that 35% strongly disagree with the statement that immigrants contribute to the country's economy.

As for how Chilean citizens believe the State should act in response to the entry of new migrants and the presence of undocumented migrants in the country, the vast majority of respondents in Temuco Commune showed a tendency towards regulation, similar to what Navarrete Yáñez (2017) already evidenced. That is, they believe the correct approach is to increase regulations upon entry into the country, rather than completely closing the borders to all new migrants. They also favor

different alternatives for regularizing undocumented immigrants, depending on their status in Chile, and do not propose the deportation of all those who have not yet regularized their immigration status.

In this vein, the April 2024 CADEM survey (Plaza Pública, 2024) indicates that 67% agree with the idea of a complete border closure, and 90% agree that entry regulations should be made stricter. Regarding this, Dražanová et al. (2024) suggest that contradictions can be identified in the topic of preferences regarding migration policies. That is, those with favorable views toward migrants will not necessarily opt for less restrictive immigration policies.

The specialized literature on this issue has converged on the idea that, as Müller and Tai (2020) relate, material factors and racial and cultural judgments play key roles in shaping the attitudes of the local population toward those who come to live in their countries. This may be related to the perceived impact of international migrants on safety and the economy, given that a high percentage of respondents' attribute problems in these areas to the increased arrival of people born in South American and Caribbean countries.

In their review of existing data in Chile, González et al. (2019) bring attention to the fact that the age of the local population does not result in significant differences in their attitudes toward migration. McCollum et al. (2014) argue that, in the specific case of Scotland, young people hold more negative views toward immigration. This contrasts with the situation in North America, where the opposite relationship has been found; that is, the older the population, the more negative the attitudes (Burns & Gimpel, 2000). However, in the case of the population surveyed in Temuco, it is striking that the youngest segment of the sample remains primarily neutral or indifferent to the immigration process, both at the country level and for their commune, despite a more negative attitude toward immigration at the national level than in the case analyzed.

Furthermore, the results also suggest that perceptions of immigration tend to be more negative among older people. This trend is more pronounced when referring to the national situation than at the local level. Thus, it resembles the findings of Chuaqui et al. (2024) and Cirano et al. (2017), who relate how age and the perception of native-born individuals influence attitudes toward migration in most studies conducted worldwide, which show the same trend.

Regarding the relationship between gender and perception, while the results of this study show that women have a more positive perception of immigrants than men, European studies (Lee, 2025; Messing & Ságvári, 2021) are inconclusive regarding the importance of gender as a discriminating factor, although some studies (Kobayashi & Tanaka, 2023) would support the results obtained in this research. In this case study, it is concluded that women remain largely neutral on the issue.

On the other hand, the available literature also tends to agree that the educational level of locals is a predictive factor for their attitudes toward foreign immigration, and ethnic and racial diversity overall. It has been concluded that people with higher levels of education tend to be more tolerant of migration. This has been demonstrated in the studies by Burns and Gimpel (2000) and Dixon

and Rosenbaum (2004) in the United States, and by McCollum et al. (2014) in Scotland, as well as in the studies by González et al. (2019) and Chuaqui et al. (2024) in Chile.

The results of the present study are consistent with those presented in others. Thus, the highest proportions of negative perceptions are found among those with a basic level of education, while those with higher levels of education, including university and postgraduate students, record higher percentages of acceptance. Notably, those with postgraduate studies are the ones who predominantly hold positive perceptions. More positive than negative views are observed among those with vocational or technical secondary education, but significantly more neutral views as well.

In this sense, it would appear that age and education are the predominant factors influencing perceptions and attitudes toward the migrant population, consistent with the findings of Dražanová et al. (2024), and more so than other factors such as socioeconomic strata or place of residence within the city. The latter was evaluated too in this study, and it was found not relevant to describing attitudes and perceptions.

Regarding the factor of contact between groups and its influence on the attitudes or perceptions of locals toward foreigners, there is relative ambiguity in the cases studied previously. It has been suggested that, depending on the circumstances, such as the quantity and quality of contact, the attitudes of one social group toward another could improve or worsen (Buraschi et al., 2020). As Dempster and Hargrave (2022) posit based on an analysis of existing literature, positive and prolonged contact has the potential to modify negative attitudes.

The research conducted yielded results that support this view. On the one hand, those who have more frequent contact with migrants exhibit more positive perceptions of the migration process than those who do not have contact with migrants or maintain it only minimally. Similarly, respondents who report positive experiences with migrants also present more positive views.

However, Putnam et al. (2007) state that the above could be relative, as highly ethnically diverse environments can potentially generate animosity between foreigners and locals. This assertion is corroborated by the results of Chuaqui et al. (2024), who, studying the issue in the north of the country, conclude that in areas with a higher proportion of migrants, where there is a greater contact between groups, no greater positive assessment of migration was identified. On the contrary, greater reluctance arises there, where certain cultural differences between foreigners and Chileans begin to gain relevance. Even so, the authors highlight the ambiguity in the interviewees' responses, since, although aspects such as the "manners" and "behavior" of migrants can be seen as negative points, there are also those who point to these elements positively. In other words, the assessment is contradictory.

The aforementioned could indicate that in Chile, and in the Temuco Commune, as well as in other previously studied areas, the necessary conditions for contact to reduce negative perceptions have not been developed. Buraschi and Godenau (2020) draw on Allport's (1954) idea that

intergroup contact must be sustained, with equitable positions, and geared towards cooperation, so that both groups can establish bonds of coexistence and positive perceptions.

Chuaqui et al. (2024) further emphasize the importance of the circumstances in which the interaction takes place. In scenarios of economic crisis or abrupt increases in the influx of foreign residents, initial contacts could be hostile, which would then hinder the potential development of coexistence and integration.

CONCLUSIONS

This study gathered the perceptions and attitudes of the Temuco Commune natives regarding the migration process. Temuco has a lower proportion of foreign-born residents than the Metropolitan Area and the far north of the country. This data collection was carried out in order to develop studies situated at different scales that focus on the relationships between groups and in different contexts.

It can be concluded that, although this study was descriptive in nature, it shows that, along with the increase in the international immigrant population in the Temuco Commune, there has been a worsening of perceptions among local residents toward the phenomenon. Although the characteristics of immigrant arrival in the city differ from those in other parts of the country, similarities can still be observed in how the local population's perception has changed.

As a second finding, diverse positions were observed depending on the gender and age of the respondents. On the one hand, women tend to have a more positive attitude towards migration than men, and on the other hand, when considering age, young people remain more neutral towards the migration phenomenon than older people, who tend to have a rather negative view of it.

Thirdly, it was found that Temuco locals hold a negative view of the impact of the migrant population on public safety and the economy. This result can be explained by the fact that attitudes toward immigration are not only motivated by emotional issues, but also by material factors that influence people's concerns and shape their perceptions of these phenomena (Dempster & Hargrave, 2022). From this perspective, the negativity expressed by Chilean citizens could be rooted in underlying prejudices and in how these are linked to material elements, which are not addressed in this study.

Future research would benefit from incorporating variables such as socioeconomic status, political affiliation, religious beliefs, and opinions on the state of the national economy. While this study explored the attitudes of Chileans toward foreigners, it did not account for the type of contact, connection, or closeness the respondents had with migrants. Previous studies suggest that defining the nature of these relationships is important for the analysis. Therefore, future research should incorporate the types of contact people hold, the location of such contacts, and the type of bonds; all of this can shed more light on the circumstances under which contact between groups occurs and thus motivates different attitudes.

In closing, the objectives of studies focused on evaluating coexistence between groups could align with observing how perceptions can influence the public functioning of societies. Thus, linking these efforts with the analysis of public policy development is crucial to defining the existence of a dialogue between citizen behavior and the implementation of migration-related measures. This must be done objectively and by means of rigorous methodologies for analyzing how different social groups relate to one another.

Understanding the prejudices and negative attitudes toward diverse groups, especially migrants, implies acknowledging their structural and relational nature. These are not merely individual dispositions, but rather subjective configurations that develop in socialization processes and are sustained by historical structures of inequality. These attitudes, when ingrained in symbolic systems and everyday practices, erode coexistence and reproduce hierarchies that naturalize exclusion.

The persistence of prejudice—even in its subtlest forms—directly impacts the quality of social bonds, limiting the possibility of building common spaces of recognition and trust among diverse populations. In contexts marked by human mobility, these dynamics affect the sense of belonging of migrants and strain overall social cohesion.

Overcoming these mechanisms requires a collective effort aimed at dismantling the imaginaries (as researched by Navarro-Conticello, 2024) that sustain the inferiorization of *the other* and at promoting ethics of coexistence based on empathy, respect, and social justice. Education, public policies, and institutional practices must be understood as strategic spaces for transforming the subjective meanings that perpetuate inequality and for fostering an inclusive citizenship that recognizes diversity as a source of social wealth, not as a threat.

Translation: Fernando Llanas

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