



# AN OVERVIEW OF FAMILY MIGRATION IN OECD COUNTRIES

## SCALE AND CHARACTERISTICS

**EMN Ireland Conference - Migrant family reunification:  
policy and practice**

**Dublin**

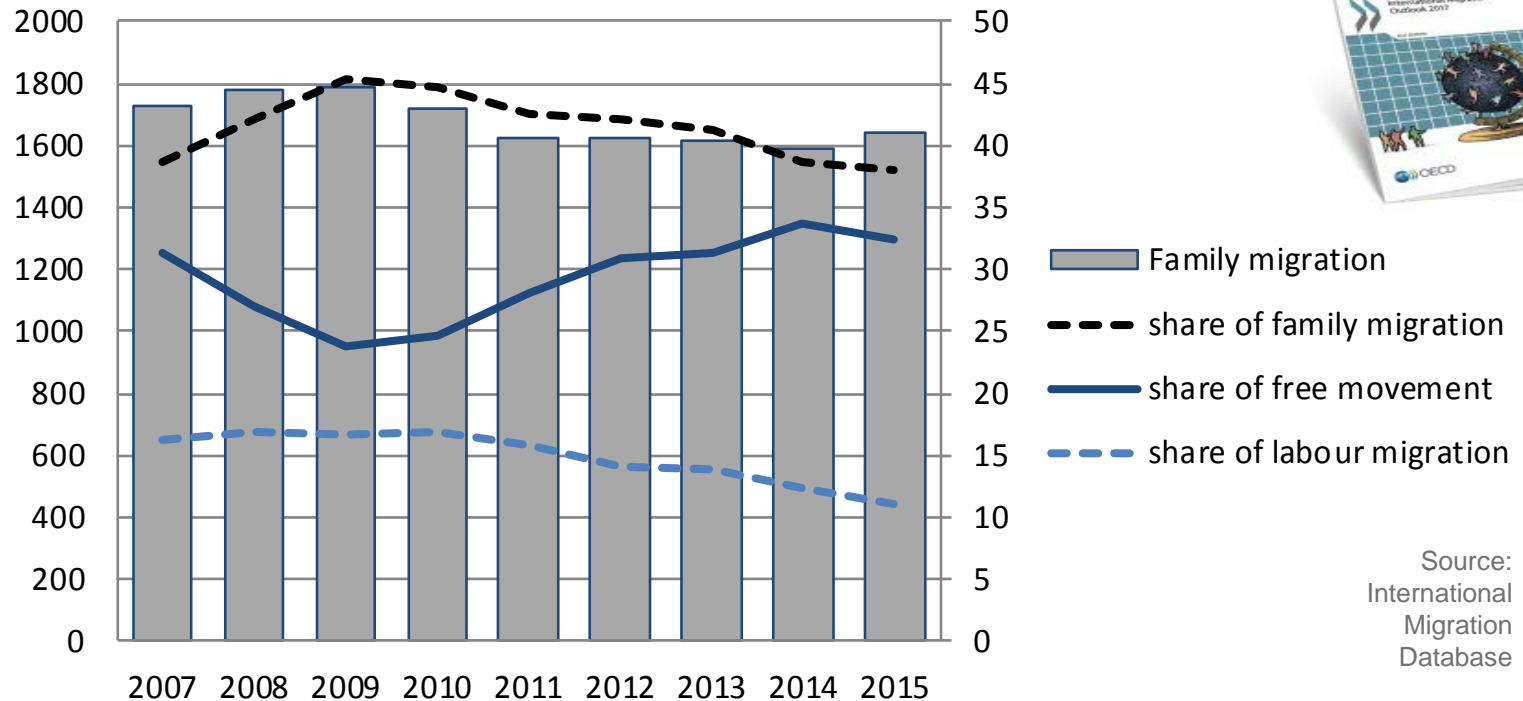
**27 November 2017**

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# Family migration inflows are consistently the largest part of inflows to the OECD

Level of family migration flows to the OECD area (in thousands) and shares of permanent migration inflows (in percent), 2007-2015



Source:  
International  
Migration  
Database

- Family migration inflows would be even larger if it included the share (about 50%) of free movement flows that happen for family reasons



## *These flows cover a large heterogeneity*

- Family visas are always related to a primary applicant or sponsor

### Accompanying family

- Family members who are admitted with the sponsor or primary applicant

### Family reunification

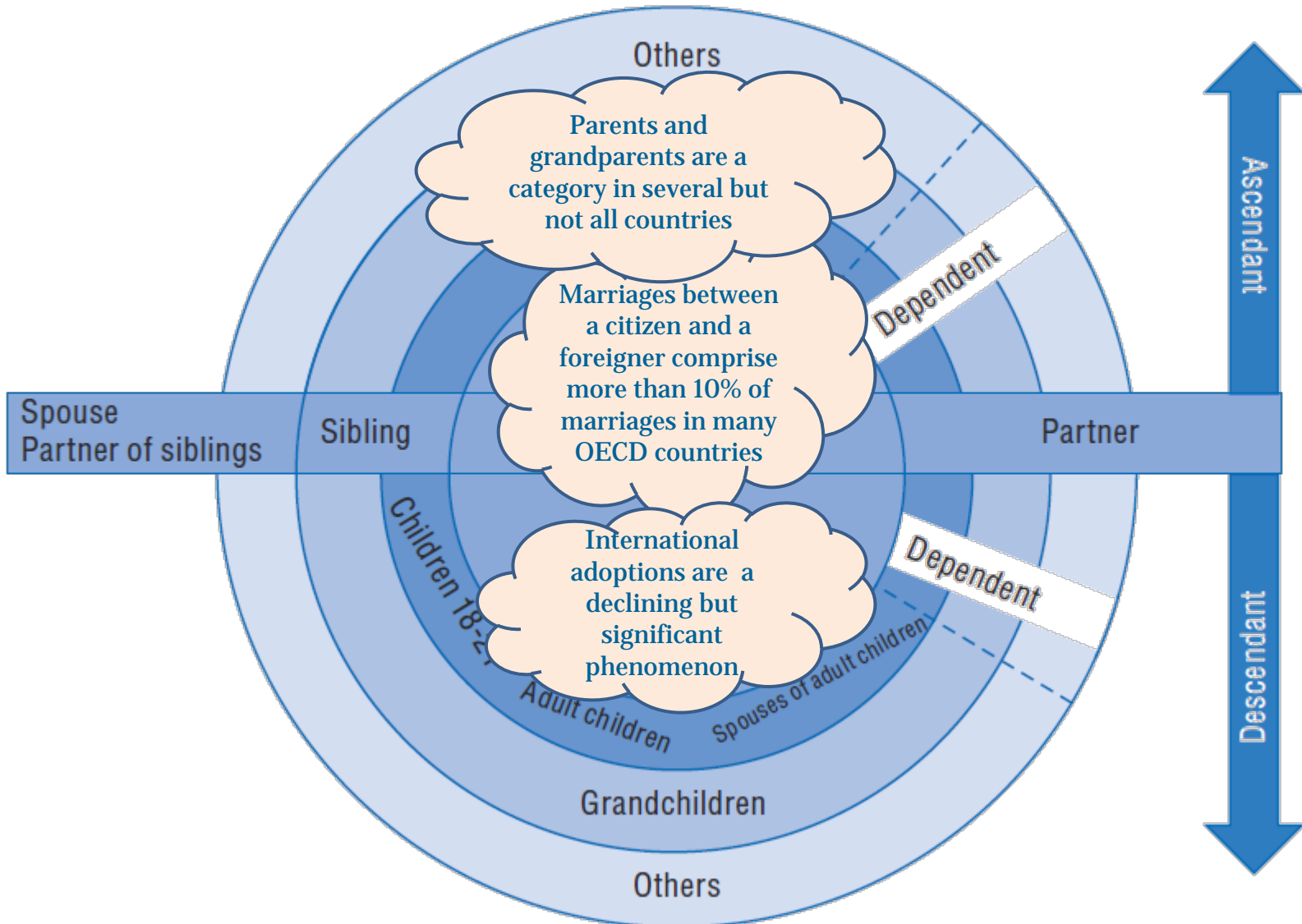
- Family members who are admitted following the admission of the primary applicant but on the basis of a pre-existing family relationship with the sponsor

### Family formation

- Family members who are admitted on the basis of a new family relationship with the sponsor.
- Can be a partner/spouse and his/her dependents (e.g., children of previous union)



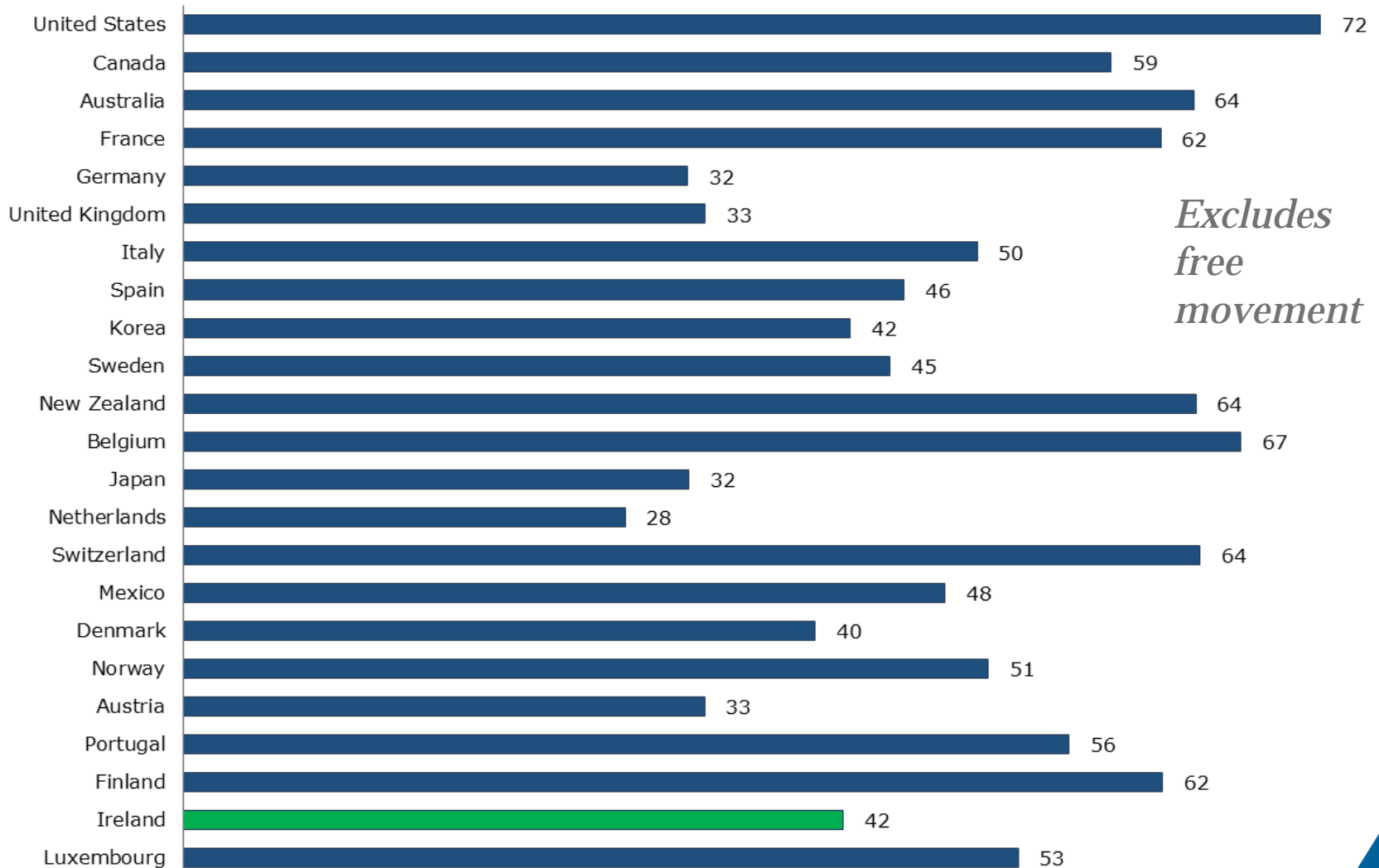
# Family means many different relationships





# In many OECD countries family migrants are the majority

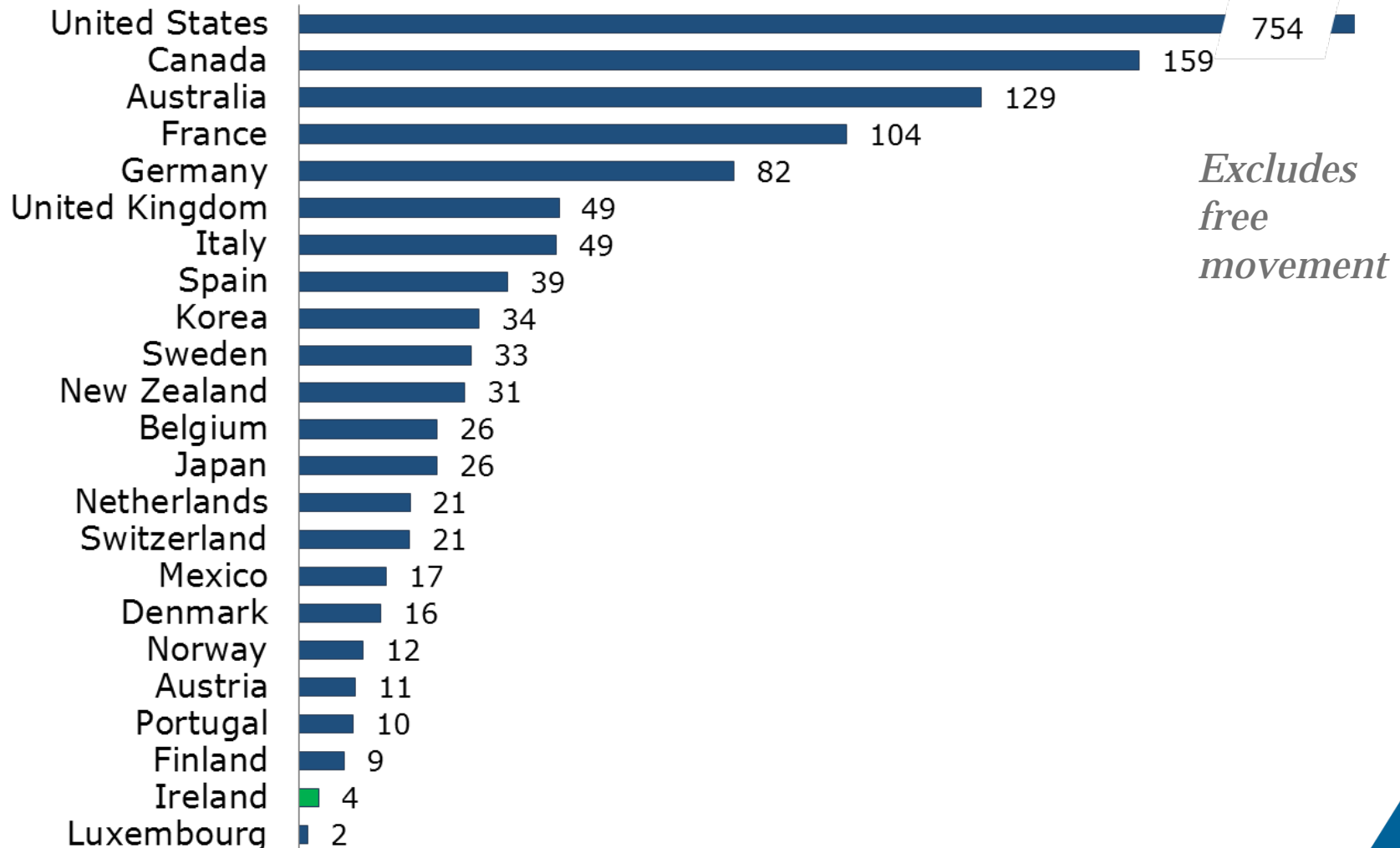
## Percentages





# This adds up to some large numbers

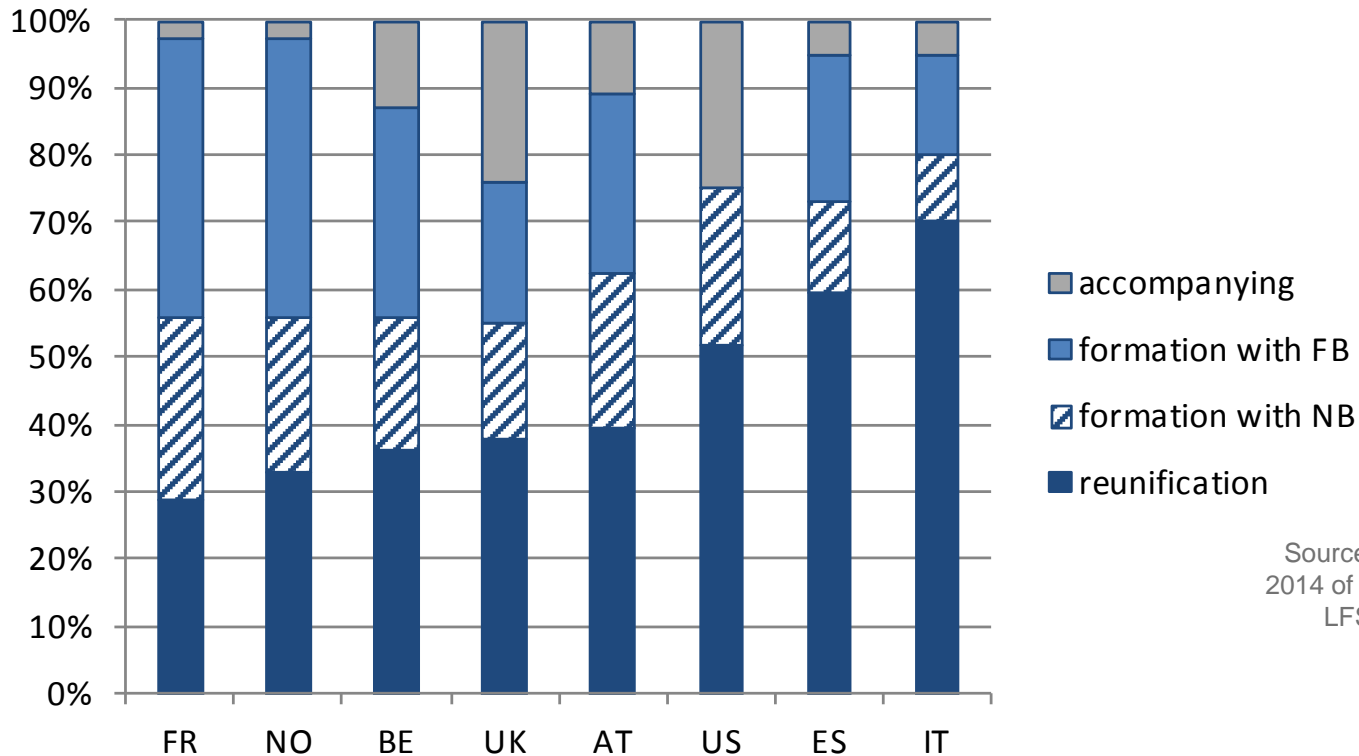
Thousands





# Countries have different family migration profiles

Estimated subcategories of recent migrants, selected European OECD countries (2014) and the United States (2010), in percent



Source: AHM  
2014 of the EU  
LFS, ACS

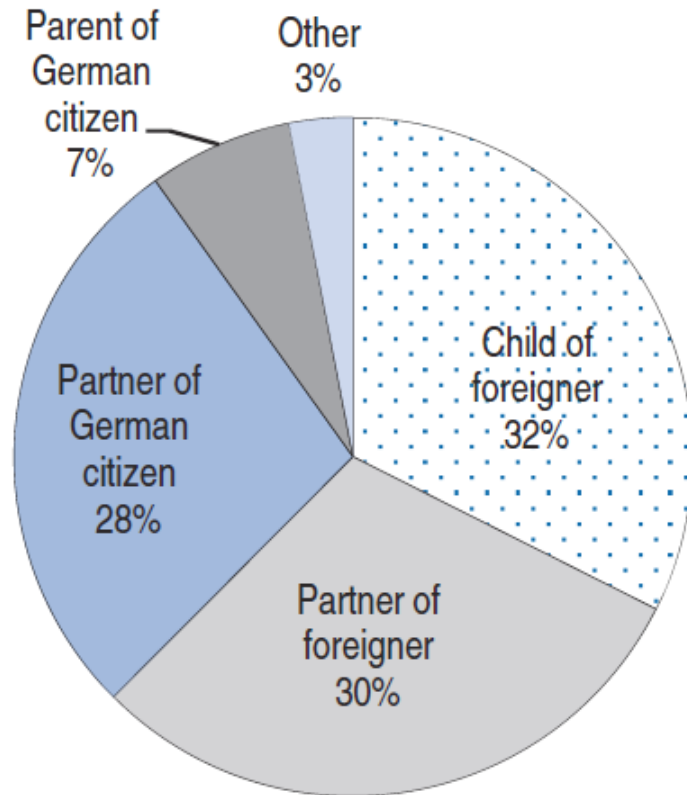
- In the United States, family reunification includes family formation with FB
- Family formation appears dominant where family reunification following initial immigration waves has abated



## *...and different sponsor profiles*

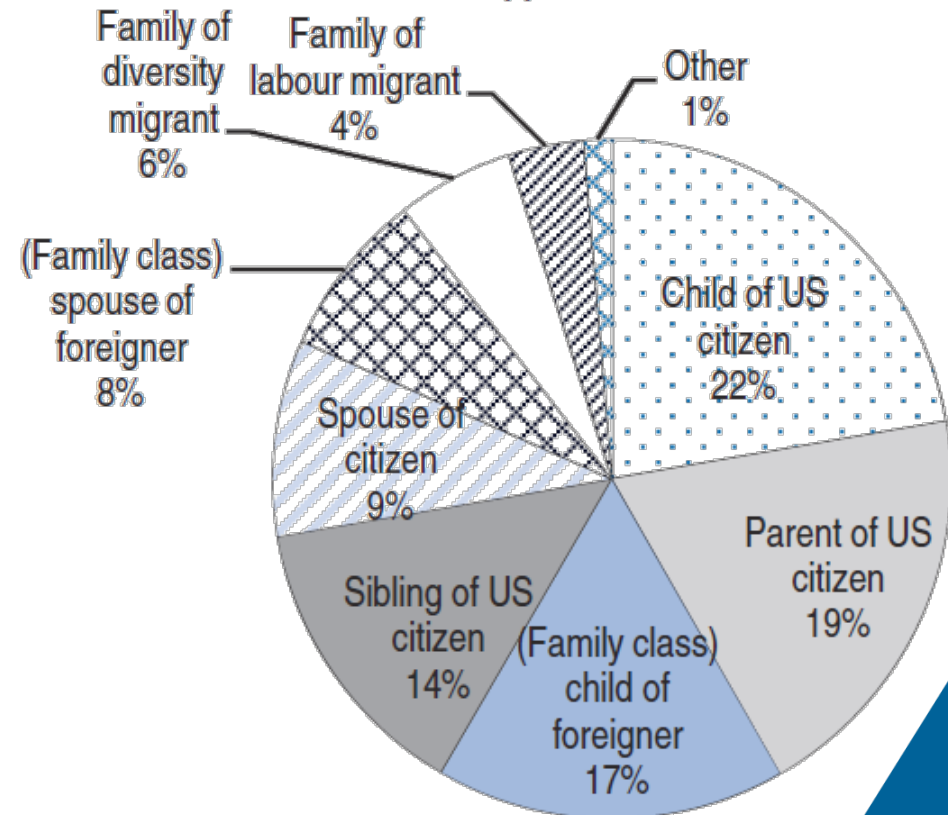
### Germany, 2015

Main origin countries: Syria, Turkey, Russian Federation



### United States, 2015

Main origin countries: Mexico, Dominican Republic, Philippines

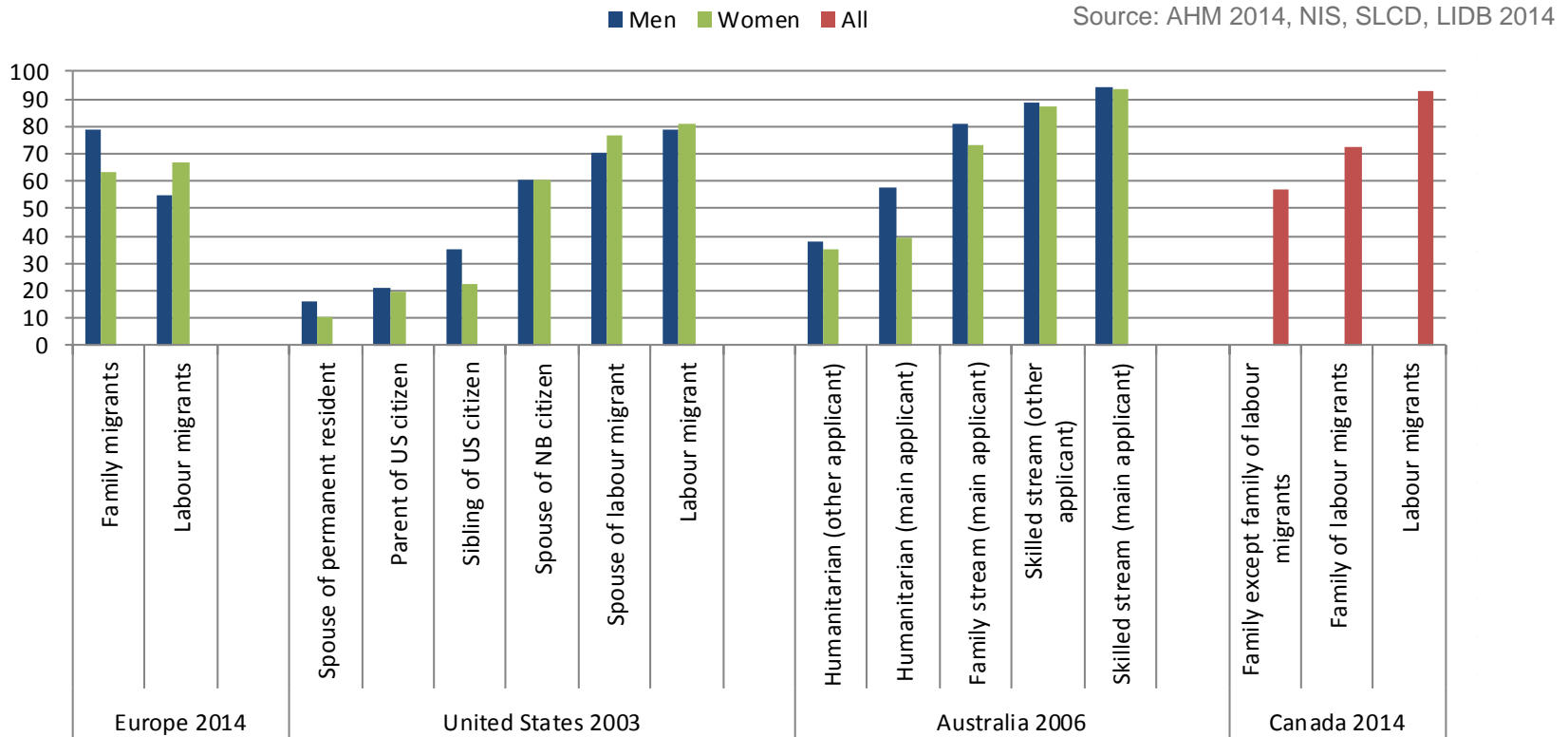






# Family migrants have poorer language skills than labour migrants

Share with fluent/ advanced language abilities by sex and migration motive, Europe (2014), United States (2003), Australia (2006) and Canada (2014)



- In Australia, Canada and the United States, family of labour migrants have better abilities in the host-country language than other family migrants
- Family members of U.S. citizens do much better than family members of migrants



# Family reunification as a factor in attracting talent

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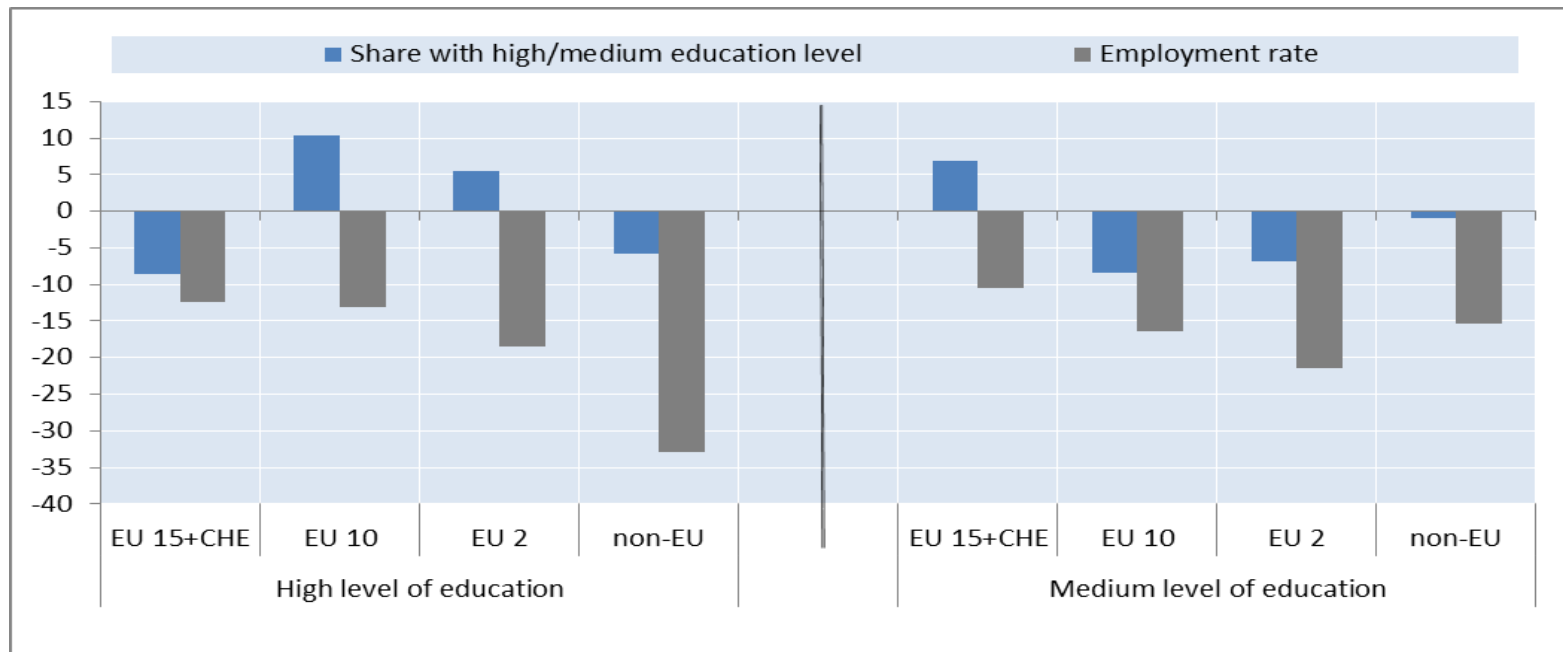
- Highly-educated migrants tend to have highly-educated spouses
- In most couples, both partners are employed, and career opportunities are considerations in choosing destinations for migration of family units...
- ...so restrictive family reunification policy can damage attractiveness for talent
- This calls for clear, predictable and favourable conditions for family reunification and the status of family members
  - Simple, fast procedure, with no additional documentation or certification
  - Labour market access



# The spouses of qualified labour migrants are also qualified and can double the contribution

Family members of skilled migrants are usually highly educated and could effectively double the contribution of labour migration to the skilled workforce.

**Norway: Differences in educational attainment and employment rates between labour migrants and their spouses, by nationality, 2012**



Source: Register data, 2012.



# Spousal employment increases the retention of skilled migrants

Their labour market outcomes are correlated with the likelihood of stay of labour migrants.

Probability of leaving Norway for labour migrants (by origin and gender)

	WOMEN			MEN		
	Non-EU	EU15	EU12	Non-EU	EU15	EU12
<b>Panel A: Basic</b>						
Spouse: unemployment (lagged)	-1.637 (1.313)	0.991 ** (0.412)	-0.105 (0.912)	0.091 (0.343)	0.515 * (0.279)	-0.337 (0.703)
Spouse: no participation (lagged)	1.215 *** (0.31)	1.692 *** (0.196)	2.509 *** (0.389)	1.895 *** (0.131)	2.162 *** (0.099)	1.064 *** (0.304)
Spouse: study (lagged)	0.280 (0.59)	-0.072 (0.392)	-0.243 (1.252)	-0.373 (0.273)	-0.732 *** (0.227)	-0.955 (1.041)
Omitted: spouse in employment (lagged)						
N	13721	23295	10934	33317	63080	60716

Source: Register data (2002-11).

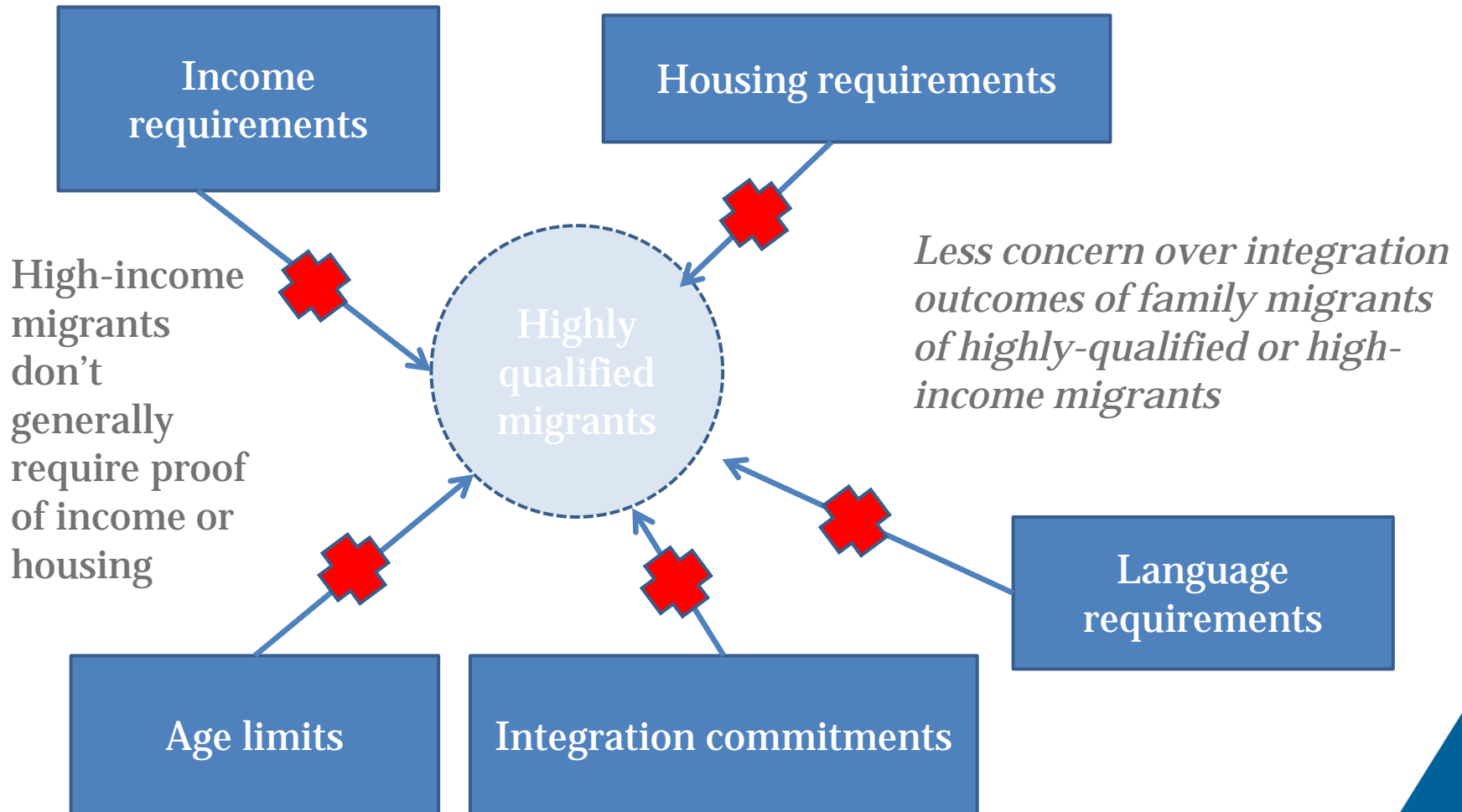
Possible responses:

- establishment of networks for spouses (“welcome packages”)
- allow access to subsidised language courses
- allow access to mainstream initiatives to support integration



## For sought-after categories, most OECD countries lift restrictions on family reunification

- Highly skilled migrants are generally allowed to bring family, and are exempt from many of the restrictions applied to other family reunification categories





Labour market access is not universally granted to family of temporary skilled migrants

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- In **EU countries covered by migration directives**, labour market access is granted for family of EU Blue Card holders and ICTs.
- Elsewhere, spouses of intra-company transfers generally have no or conditional labour market access
- In **non-European OECD countries**, many temporary permits for skilled workers do not extend labour market access to family members.
  - Canada, Australia and New Zealand grant access
  - In USA, only some family of H-1B can apply for employment authorisation (may change!)
  - In Japan and Korea, except for the highest-qualified migrants, family members must qualify under other programmes.



# Practices to use family migration as a factor of attractiveness

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- Migration policy measures
  - Accompanying family, with few restrictions on eligibility
  - Labour market access without conditions (LMT, sector, skill level...)
- Integration measures
  - establishment of networks for spouses (“welcome packages” co-ordinated with local employers and actors)
  - allow access to subsidised language courses (generally family of labour migrants do not have access to subsidised measures)
  - allow and encourage access to mainstream initiatives to support integration



Thank you

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A portrait of family migration in OECD countries

[http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr\\_outlook-2017-6-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2017-6-en)