

# A not-so 'natural' decision

Impact of bureaucratic trajectories on forced migrants' intention and ability to naturalize

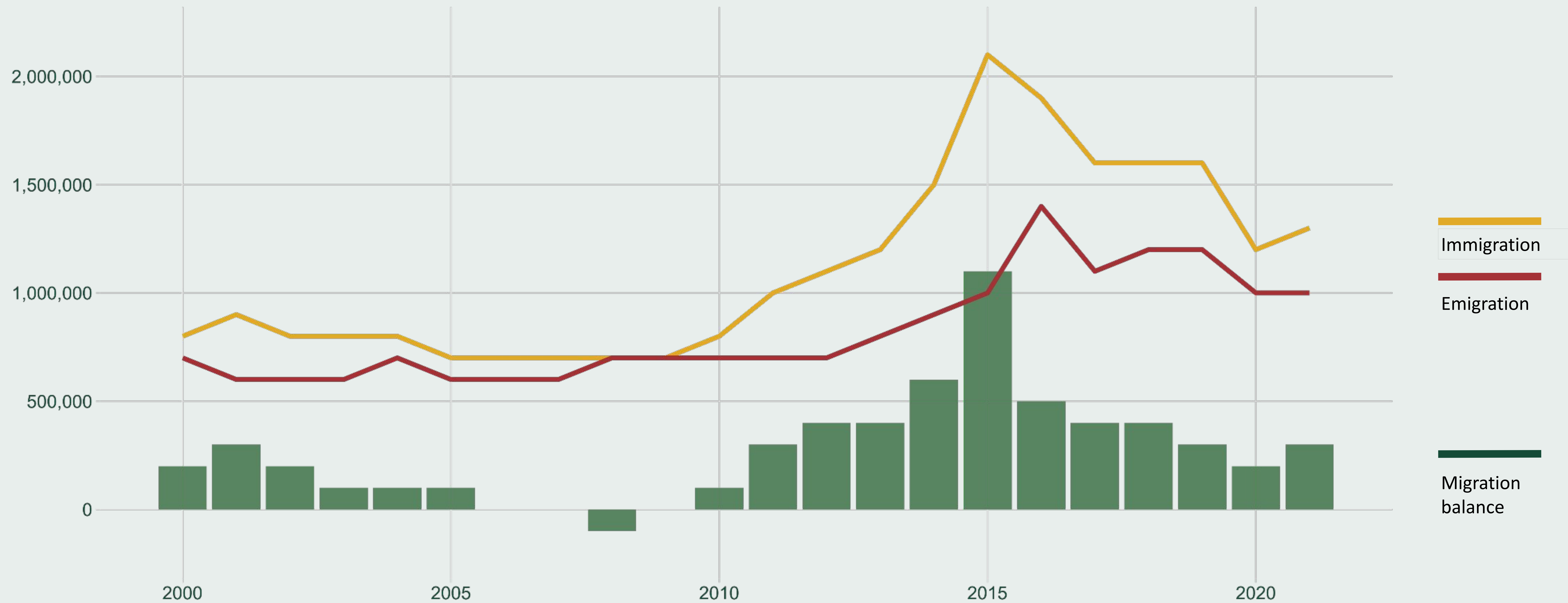
Liam Haller & Zeynep Yanasmayan



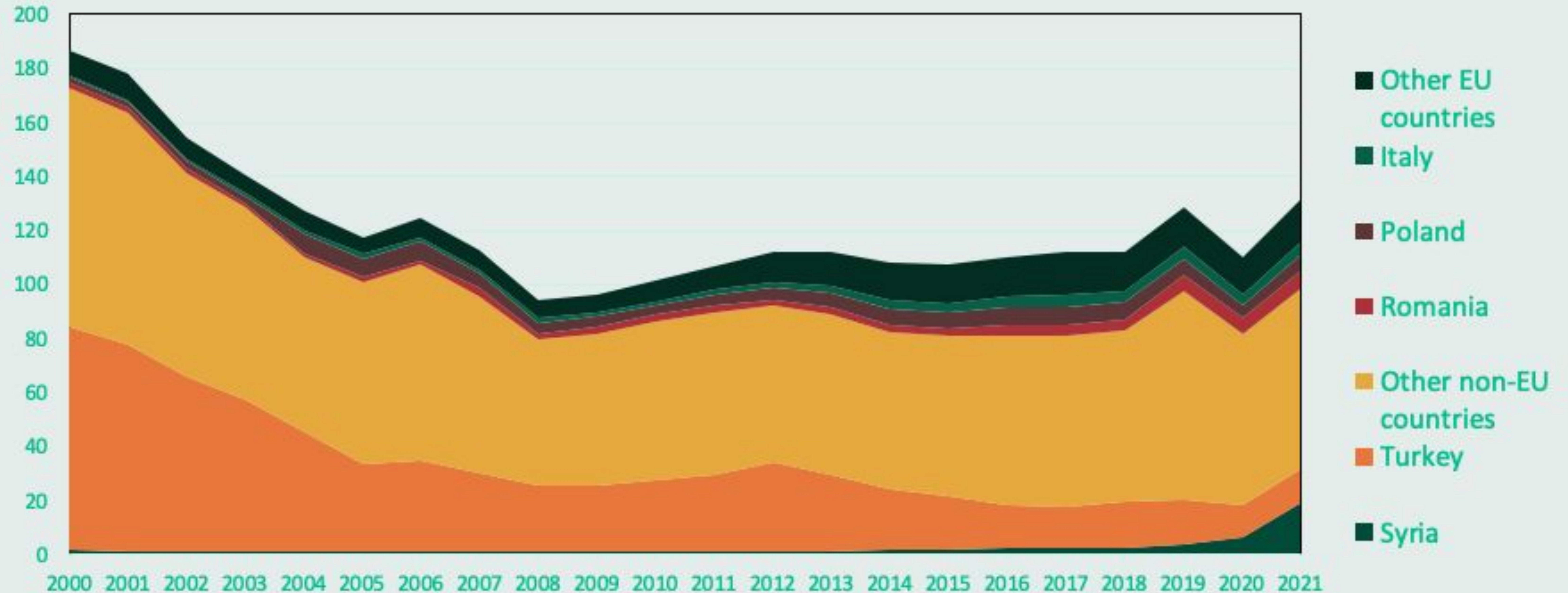
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# German context: Population trends & legal framework

# Foreign population has increased



# Naturalizations have decreased



# Access to citizenship

## From ethnic to civic requirements

### ● De-ethnicization of citizenship

- Since 2000: a form of jus soli access in place.

### Civic turn

- Institution of naturalization exams (2008) & official language criteria (2007): disproportionate effect on disadvantaged groups such as elderly, low-educated, women & refugees (van Oers 2020)

### ● Current Requirements

- Residence (8 years with exceptions)
- Naturalization exam
- Financial independence
- Administrative fees
- Sufficient language skills
- Clean criminal record
- Renunciation of former citizenship (with exceptions)



# Naturalization decisions in practice

# Intention-Ability framework

- Studies based on administrative- and survey-level data
- Quant Interest–Ability framework (by Huddleston)

## Methods

- Population statistics
- 30 in-depth interviews with refugees from Syria who arrived prior to 2017 in Berlin

**Intention** - willingness to engage with the government and desire to acquire citizenship

**Ability** - fulfill officially-stated requirements, navigate red tape, luck

# Intention

## Why do some qualified individuals choose not to apply?

“We didn’t allow you here in Germany for you to fulfill your dreams. We allowed you here because we need workers, so go work in a bakery or work as a nurse — do anything. We have a lot of artists already.”

### Jamila

- Aspires to leave the EU and live in North Africa or the Middle East
- Anxious to engage with additional bureaucracies
- Applying would be ‘giving in’ and undignified

### Ajmal

- Arrived as an unaccompanied minor, and lived alone until reunited with family
- On track to receive Abitur
- Actively trying to get an appointment to naturalize for two years



# Ability

## Why does ability 'on paper' not translate to ability in practice

### Ability to navigate red tape

*I sent 10 emails. I sent my documents many times and they always rejected me... but when I spoke with a lawyer he got it done in like four or five months...what's the difference between me and the lawyer? ...He took the same papers that I had and just sent it.*

### Discretion

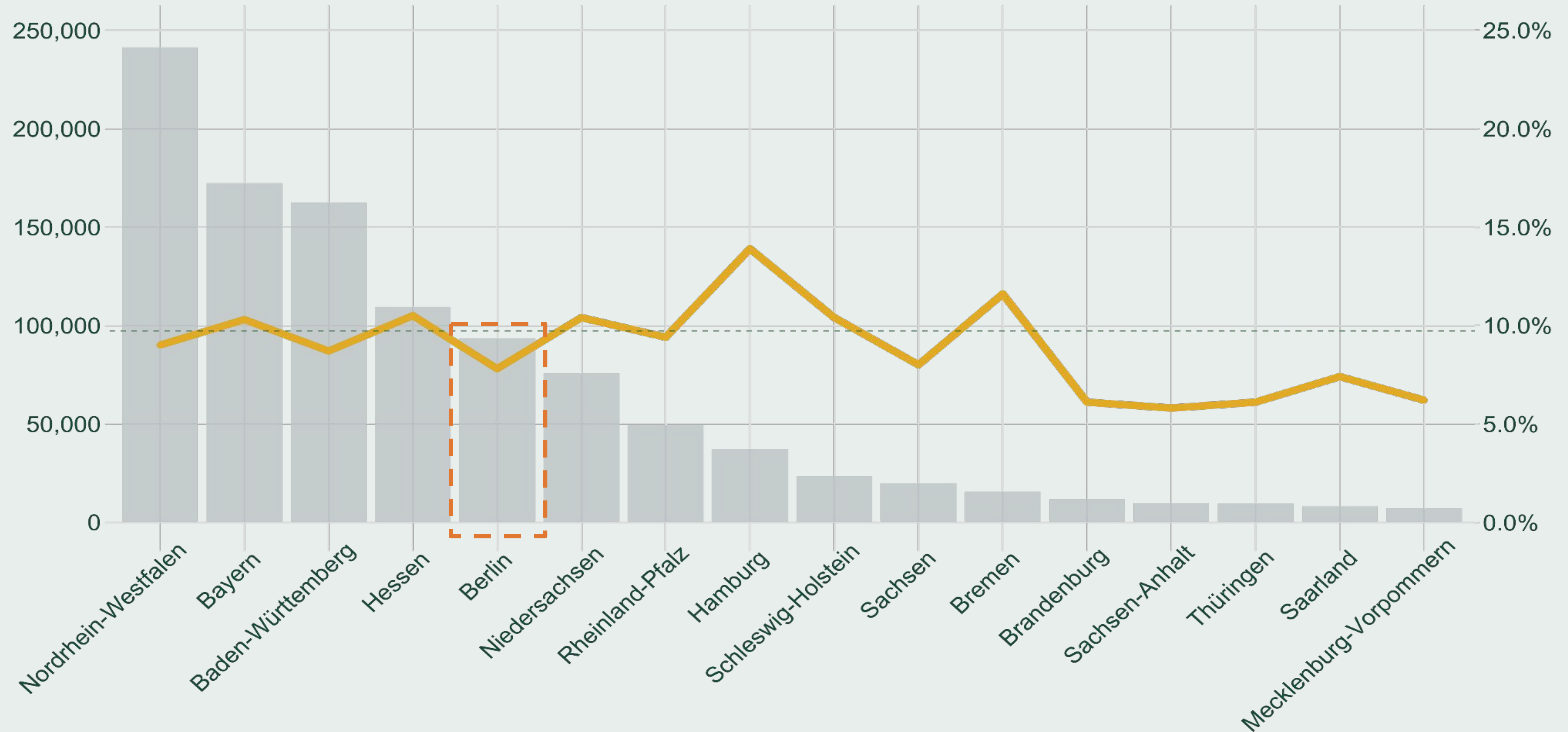
*You cannot decide. Like you give everything that you have and you're sure about it, but you cannot decide. The [official] decides themselves whether or not you get it... It's not that it depends on the laws or each office, it depends on which employee you see that day. It's shit*



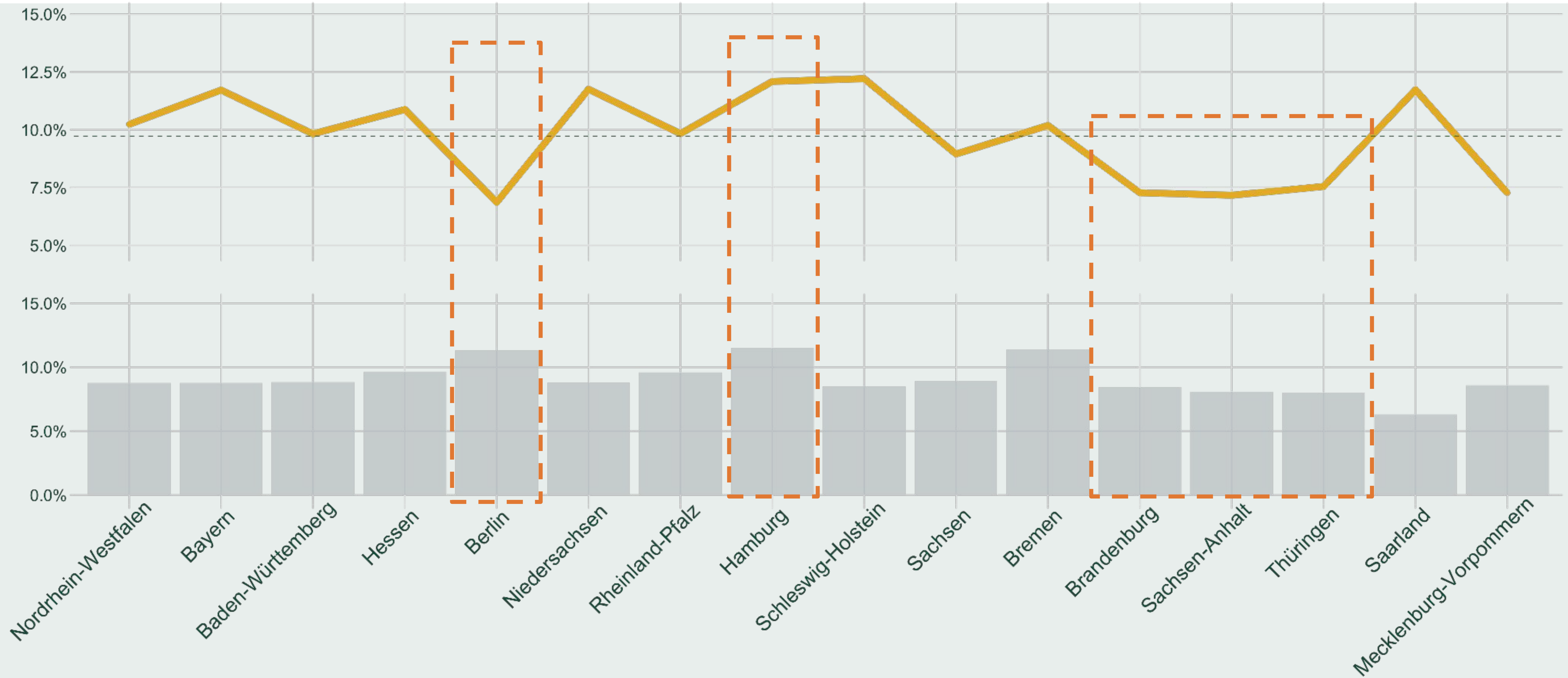
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## Way forward? Concluding remarks

# Population eligible to naturalize and naturalization rate, by state



# Percent of population eligible to naturalize and naturalization rates, by state





**Vielen Dank!**