



# A Tale of Two Contexts:

The Ukrainian and Afghan Refugee Crises in Canada and the UK



Social Sciences and Humanities  
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# Executive Summary

*A Tale of Two Contexts* presents a comparative study of Canada and the UK, examining the similarities and differences in the reception of Ukrainian and Afghan refugees and their classification as either deserving or undeserving of state protection.

The report synthesizes scholarly and grey literature from May 2021 to May 2023 through a comprehensive keyword strategy designed to address fundamental realist review questions, such as the effectiveness of certain policies and their situational specificities. Keywords used included: “Asylum and Refugee Policies”; “State Responses for Refugees/Asylum Seekers”; “Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel”; “Ukraine Family Scheme”; “Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme”; “Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme”; “Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy”; and “Ukraine Extension Scheme.”

*A Tale of Two Contexts* searched the following databases: Sociological Abstracts; Oxford Scholarship Online; PAIS Index; Research Library; CBCA Complete; Google Scholar; Factiva; Google; and Canada Commons. A total of **113 articles were reviewed for Canada and 80 articles for the UK**. The main findings are summarized below:

## Welcoming Refugees<sup>1</sup>: A Russian Matryoshka Doll

Welcoming extends beyond the mere act of border opening; it also encompasses the level of hospitality refugees encounter upon arrival in their host country. Research indicates that the quality of this hospitality hinges on a variety of factors:

- › International, regional, and national legal agreements.
- › The physicality of borders, such as hyper-securitization through walls, fences, and border patrols.
- › Externalization practices, such as state efforts to prevent refugees from entering a country in exchange for benefits (i.e., country-to-country agreements, such as those between EU and Turkey, Italy and Libya, Spain and Morocco, and Australia and Indonesia).
- › Internal borders (i.e., the containment of refugee populations in detention camps).

The literature shows that the welcoming of refugees is a multilayered process, resembling a Russian matryoshka doll: if any layer is tightly closed, a refugee will ultimately not be welcomed in the destination country.

## Making Ends Meet

The welcome that the refugees receive matters in relation to their needs:

- › Freedom of cross-border movement, supplemented through complementary pathways of seeking international protection (e.g., resettlement, private or community sponsorship programs).
- › The right to internal movement in the host country, as well as the right to family reunification and the right to transit back and forth from the host country to their country of origin.
- › Recognition of legal status connected with permanent forms of protection.
- › Integration through access to housing, the labour market, healthcare, and education.

<sup>1</sup>We use the terms “refugees,” “asylum seekers,” “people on the move,” and “irregular migrants” interchangeably. Refugees are those who have secured some status in the destination country, while asylum seekers are those awaiting a decision regarding their status; both refugees and asylum seekers have experiences that are different from those of citizens. We use these categories of migrant subjects interchangeably to denote lack of permanency in the destination country and exclusion from citizenship.

## Interlocking Deservingness

What matters in the welcoming process? And who deserves to be welcomed?

- › Refugees' **identitarian characteristics** are among the most salient variables in assigning deservingness. These include:
  - Gender, as regards women, especially mothers with children.
  - Age, as regards children and unaccompanied youth.
  - Religion, as regards Christians over Muslims.
  - Race and ethnicity, especially whether one is white and/or of similar culture (i.e., European.)
  - Nationality, as in preferred country of origin, but also functioning as a proxy for race.
  - Class, as evidenced through refugees' previous occupational and professional activities.
- › Also relevant are circumstantial attributes, such as personal history (e.g., whether one has a criminal record) or refugees' entry routes into the destination country (i.e., legal pathways versus irregular entry).
- › Politics are also a factor, in relation to:
  - Economic considerations, in terms of balancing competing economic interests of the national and migrant populations, and in relation to pre-existing labour migration programs in the country.
  - Electoral interests, in terms of voters' preferences but also in terms of a state's leveraging political power domestically and internationally.
  - Geopolitics, especially as reflected in friendly asylum policies for refugees fleeing a country towards which the receiving state has a hostile foreign policy and restrictive policies for refugees fleeing a state with which the receiving states has friendly relations.
- › Time, in terms of "generosity fatigue."
- › Public perception mediated through negative stereotypes perpetuated in both traditional and social media.

## Different Reception Policies for Afghans and Ukrainians in the West

**About 1.6 million Afghans have fled their country since 2021; about 6.29 million Ukrainians have fled their country since 2022.**

### Afghan Refugees:

- › Irregular ways of entering the West, evidence of frequent pushbacks and forced encampment.
- › Ad hoc welcoming support; each state designed and implemented its own scheme.

### Ukrainian Refugees:

- › EU-broad approach through the Temporary Protection Directive 2001/55/EC, which granted Ukrainian nationals the right to a two-year residence permit in EU, as well as access to education, health care, housing, and the local labour market.
- › New Zealand offered a Special Ukraine Visa for family reunification for New Zealanders of Ukrainian origin.
- › Japan granted Ukrainians 90-day visas and a chance to apply for a Designated Activities Visa.
- › Australia implemented a Temporary Humanitarian Concern scheme and a range of ulterior entry routes.
- › The US implemented the Uniting for Ukraine (U4U) programme.

## Reception Policies for Afghans and Ukrainians in Canada and the UK: They Are Both Worse!

**Canada welcomed 40,415 Afghans (2.52 percent of the global share of Afghan refugees) and 198,642 Ukrainians (3.15 percent of the global share of Ukrainian refugees).**

### Afghans in Canada:

- › Special Immigration Measures Program for those who assisted the Government of Canada as interpreters or diplomatic staff. Target: 18,000 people.
- › Pathway to permanent residence for extended family members of former interpreters. Target: 5,000.

- › Afghans who are extended family of former language and cultural advisors (LCAs). No target.
- › Special program to privately sponsor Afghan refugees with regulated refugee status. Target: 3,000.
- › Special humanitarian program focused on vulnerable Afghans, such as women leaders, human rights activists, persecuted religious or ethnic minorities, LGBTI individuals, and journalists. No target.
- › Migrants by all pathways can receive **permanent residency status** on arrival.

#### **Ukrainians in Canada:**

- › Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET), offering an uncapped number of **temporary residence permits**. Closed on July 15, 2023.
- › Selective permanent residency pathway launched in October 2023 but only for those who have a family member already in Canada who is a Canadian citizen or permanent resident.

Afghan and Ukrainian refugees are granted permanent residency in Canada primarily when they have pre-existing ties to the country. While Afghans obtain permanent residency status on arrival, they face challenges integrating into Canadian society, including limited access to affordable housing, the labor market, and social networks. Notably, the current literature lacks an examination of the integration experiences of Ukrainian refugees in Canada.

**The UK welcomed 21,526 Afghans (1.34 percent of the global share of Afghan refugees) and approximately 214,400 Ukrainians (3.40 percent of the global share of Ukrainian refugees).**

#### **Afghans in the UK:**

- › Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), aimed at women, children, religious, ethnic, and sexual minorities. Capped at 5,000 resettlements in the first year and 20,000 thereafter. Eligibility restricted to people evacuated from Kabul in August 2021 (Operation Pitting); those referred by UNHCR and other NGOs as well as the British Council; and former GardaWorld contractors and Chevening alumni.
- › Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy Scheme (ARAP) aimed at Afghans who have previously worked for the British military.

#### **Ukrainians in the UK:**

- › The Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme, commonly referred to as "Homes for Ukraine," for those sponsored by a UK-based individual willing to host them for at least six months.
- › The Ukrainian Family Scheme for Ukrainian nationals with a family member settled in the UK prior to 2022.
- › Ukraine Visa Extension for Ukrainian nationals (and families) already in the UK prior to 2022.

Entry pathways for Afghan refugees in the UK afford them the possibility of indefinite stay, enabling them to seek citizenship after a five-year period. However, the eligibility for these protection schemes is limited due to quota restrictions and selective criteria.

By contrast, Ukrainian refugees face no numerical limits under the UK's entry programs, yet they must demonstrate established links to the British state, such as family connections or previous legal residence. Despite this, the permanency of their stay remains uncertain. The existing entry frameworks for Ukrainians have drawn criticism for their inefficiency, restrictive nature, and complex bureaucracy, leading to issues like homelessness, poverty, job access difficulties, inadequate transportation and childcare, challenges in obtaining disability benefits, outsourced medical evaluations, and the potential for exploitation under the "Homes for Ukraine" Scheme, particularly where sponsors fail to provide appropriate housing.

Similarly, Afghan refugees in the UK encounter obstacles in finding accommodation and employment and face the additional hurdles of language barriers and cultivating community and social networks.

**Both Canada and the UK each welcomed less than 4 percent of the global share of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees.**

# Introduction

The start of the Ukraine war in February 2022 marked a pivotal shift in geopolitical dynamics, challenging the established post-Cold War order and resulting in a significant displacement of individuals who deviate from the traditional refugee profile, in being Europeans with white skin.

Despite their European identity, Ukrainians could not escape the impacts of Russian aggression. Nevertheless, their European roots played a role in the international response received by Ukrainian refugees, who quickly gained access to temporary protection, streamlining their entry into Eastern and Western European countries, as well as the Anglo-American world. The European Council invoked for the first time the Temporary Protection Directive to support those fleeing Ukraine, granting them access to the EU labour market and providing housing and medical assistance. This unprecedented move influenced similar protective measures beyond the Eurozone, including the UK's temporary sponsorship program, together with family reunification options and a route for previous UK residents. Canada followed suit with the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET).

Most of these programs were implemented within a week of the start of the war and seemed to be open to an unlimited number of Ukrainians. Wittingly or not, they thus constructed Ukrainians as a privileged type of refugee, in stark contrast with those coming from Afghanistan, who did not benefit from provisional schemes of support and were restricted in entering the Western world at the start of the Taliban-led Afghan crisis.

Funded through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada and Genome Canada, this report fits within the "Identities, Privileges and Opportunities" theme under SSHRC's Knowledge Synthesis Call as it relates to the displacement of people and the increasing global divides between the shifting dynamics of privilege and marginalization.

Coordinated between Dalhousie University and the University of Oxford, the project leading to "A Tale of Two Contexts" has used Canada and the UK as two case studies to conduct a *realist knowledge synthesis review* to explore what has been written within the last two years on the categorization of people on the move as deserving or undeserving of state protection, with particular emphasis on Ukrainian and Afghan refugees.

*A Tale of Two Contexts* has two policy objectives:

- (a) First, it explores the literature in relation to the types of individuals in need of humanitarian assistance that are produced by immigration policies, and the type of rights and access to state provisions granted to these individuals through the legal pathways of securing entry into the host country.
- (b) Second, it explores the literature in relation to the disadvantages and the advantages of temporary protection schemes versus classic refugee determination programs. Ukrainians have entered both Canada and the UK through temporary schemes of protection, whereas Afghans have entered both Canada and the UK through traditional refugee determination streams geared towards permanent residency and citizenship acquisition.

The synthesized insights from this research will provide valuable guidance for Canadian and British policymakers in crafting and refining international and temporary protection strategies for migrants, and in shaping effective transit and resettlement policies for individuals uprooted by conflicts and global crises.

Additionally, the outcomes of this study will inform future identity studies by illustrating the interplay between privilege and marginalization in different national policy frameworks, offering a comparative analysis of how these dynamics evolve in response to legislative changes.

# Background

At the start of the Taliban crisis in Afghanistan, in August 2021, most Western states implemented resettlement programs for Afghans wanting to flee the country. Canada committed to resettling 40,000 Afghans, primarily family members of former interpreters, individuals who assisted Canadian war efforts in Afghanistan, and others, through government-assisted and privately sponsored streams (IRCC, 2021). The UK committed to resettlement through the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), mainly for Afghans who had worked closely with the British military and UK government, and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). Through ACRS, 20,000 people were to be welcomed within the next few years, mainly those previously connected to the UK government, but also vulnerable individuals, including women and members of ethnic, religious, and LGBTQIA+ communities (UK Home Office, 2021). Within two years, Canada had met its commitment to welcome 40,000 vulnerable Afghans by October 30, 2023 (IRCC, 2023a). Despite differences in resettlement schemes, both Canada and the UK have welcomed Afghans on permanent residency pathways.

When Russia invaded Ukraine, both Canada and the UK extended support to fleeing Ukrainians. Canada launched a temporary residency pathway (IRCC, 2022), the CUAET. The UK launched the Ukraine Family Scheme for those with former family ties to the UK, the Ukraine Extension Scheme for those with previous residency in the country, and the UK Sponsorship Scheme, by which private individuals and organizations could sponsor Ukrainians (UK Home Office, 2023a). Both countries have welcomed Ukrainians on a temporary basis, with no path to permanent residency shown in any policy positions.

Public commentators, however, have jumped to racist explanations as to why Ukrainians were welcomed in the Anglo-American world (Bejan & Bogovic, 2022). Critics implied that the West treated them better than refugees from the Global South differently and attributed this to racial favouritism (Hawthorn, 2022; Øverlid, 2022). When the European Council also activated the Temporary Protection Directive to assist Ukrainians (European Commission, 2022a), voices in both mainstream and social media pointed out that Afghans had not benefited from the same rights, as the EU had not activated this directive at the start of the Afghan crisis (Micinski, 2022; Barhoush, 2022). Such differential treatment was seen as reflective of a racial double standard discriminating against non-white refugees (Barhoush, 2022; Wakarindi, 2022). It led some to go as far as to use the phrases like “refugee hypocrisy” (Miller et al., 2022), “hierarchies of compassion” (Sajjad, 2022), or “Janus-faced” dynamics (Montgomery et al., 2023).

According to these commentators, the reason Ukrainians were welcomed in Western countries is because they are white. It is their whiteness that privileges them and eases their way through national migration schemes. Afghans on the other hand are racialized, hence have restricted entry in the West; it is their race that marginalizes them and consigns them to backlogged and capped streams of migration.

However, the perspective singling out race as the primary force behind the categorization of refugees as privileged or marginalized, as deserving or undeserving, overlooks several complexities. First, it ignores the fact that national refugee policies are often shaped by a myriad of factors such as geopolitics, economics and diplomatic relations, in addition to identitarian markers like ethnicity, race, gender, and nationality. Furthermore, it is not entirely true that Ukrainian refugees received better treatment, since the temporary nature of the protections offered to them lacks the comprehensive integration available to traditional refugees.

The public sentiment that Ukrainians are more welcomed than the Afghans because no caps are placed on their numbers, ignores the fact that the programs supporting Ukrainians have been exclusively designed on temporal grounds, meaning they come ascribed with fewer rights. Ukrainians are not classified as typical refugee claimants; hence they will not be afforded access to the standard refugee-determination process. Nor will they be government-assisted refugees who arrive with the entitlements of permanent residents. Temporary protection does allow immediate access to the labour market as well as to housing and health care but lacks the “hand-holding” assistance



provided under the classic refugee-determination streams, such as state-supported integration programs (Bejan & Bryan, 2022). Temporary status might also mean that Ukrainians will be ineligible for settlement programs, such as employment assistance, which are accessible only to permanent residents.

Scholars have long argued that temporary migration programs that allow only provisional entry into a country produce precarity, dependency, and other conditions ripe for exploitation. In the West, temporary employment of foreign nationals has proliferated across a range of employment sectors. This is the case of the Mexican, Guatemalan, and Jamaican workers in the agricultural and seafood processing sectors in Canada (Bejan et al., 2021; Bejan et al., 2022) or the Romanian, Bulgarian and Ukrainian workers in the construction and fruit-picking sectors in the UK (Cockbain & Sidebottom, 2022; Rogozanu & Gabor, 2020) and Germany (Bejan & Boatcă, 2021). These workers are employed in dangerous environments, with low wages, few legal protections, and limited opportunity to remain in their host country. They are considered good enough to work in the country, but not good enough to reside there permanently.

To answer Hannah Arendt's (1970) question, "Who has the right to have rights?": there is a hierarchy, within national contexts when it comes to rights and state protections. Citizens have the most rights, followed by immigrants with permanent residency, and then those with temporary work permits. Migrants with irregular status (e.g., undocumented migrants) are at the bottom. Immigration policies produce categories of classifiable subjects and assign those subjects various rights based on the category they fall into. Immigration policies also impact migrants' integration, as they determine who are the ones that have the right to access settlement support. Less secure migrants, those without access to permanent status, tend to be excluded from integration. There is not a strict dichotomy between secure and non-secure, 'regular' and 'irregular' status, but rather a variety of statuses on a continuum between regularity and irregularity (Triandafyllidou & Bartolini, 2020). Permanent residency, effectively equal to national status, constitutes the most secure condition before obtaining citizenship. Less secure statuses are formed by different legal regimes, including temporary residency (e.g., temporary protection visas, seasonal work permits), leaves to remain (e.g., the German *Duldung* status for non-returnable migrants, also called a "tolerated stay"), dependent visas, etc. Insecure statuses are precarious, as they entail exposure to the risk of "befallen irregularity" (Gonzalez Enriquez, 2014) and semi-legality, and they limit migrants' ability to interact with the host society, and thus potentially foster exclusion.

It is in this context that *A Tale of Two Contexts* explores how welcoming is defined for various migrant groups in Canada and the UK, and what rights are allocated through temporary protection versus classic refugee determination schemes for Afghan and Ukrainian refugees. The project aims to answer the following **questions** and to meet the following **objectives**:

**Knowledge Synthesis Questions:** What type of subjects are created through the refugee policies implemented in Canada and UK to protect the Afghans and Ukrainians? Do these policies produce migrants with secure statuses, such as migrants who have gained permanent residency and are subject to low risks of befallen irregularity, and have access to equal treatment in the host country, including access to services? Or are they creating migrants with less secure status and prone to precarity, as they are either temporary, dependent, or subject to strict legal conditions? What do we know about the advantages and disadvantages of the refugee protection schemes for Afghans and Ukrainians in Canada and the UK? What rights do they grant to their beneficiaries? Which schemes would provide better state protection? And what is their impact on the integration of people in need of humanitarian assistance?

**Objectives:** This project aims to map the knowledge in the forced migration field in relation to: (a) what rights are attached to the definitions and categorizations of refugees; (b) what rights are attached to the migration schemes welcoming Afghans and Ukrainians in Canada and the UK; and (c) what works, in what circumstances, and how, with regard to the allocation of rights and state benefits for both of these groups in Canada and the UK.

# Methods

**Realist Review:** *A Tale of Two Contexts* undertook a realist review methodology. Knowledge synthesis systematic reviews, in which studies are appraised on measurable evidence, generally operate from the assumption that certain types of evidence are better: quantitative or randomized control studies are to be preferred over qualitative appraisals and theoretical works. Their aim is to identify empirically informed strategies drawn from the scholarly literature, in order to inform policy (Grimshaw, 2010). However, such systematic reviews are limited in their explanatory power when contextual conditions need to be considered, such as legal interpretations as to how a state classifies its migrant populations. Realist reviews, by contrast, take context into account and interpret evidence in a non-hierarchical way, as they aim to build a theory as to why and how programs work or do not work (Gielen, 2017).

Realist reviews serve the policymaking domain effectively by bridging the gap between the comprehensive information needed by policymakers and the expedited timelines often required for decision-making (Saul et al., 2013). Realist reviews have a clear conceptual scope, and are guided by specific research questions (see above); hence they are purposely focused on the target audience (i.e., policymakers). Realist reviews are concerned with the most useful way to categorize the most explanatory data to elucidate the social issue at hand. Usefulness to the target audience is more important than reviewing a specific type of “scientific” data. Realist review methodology has been developed to provide policymakers with a transferable theory in terms of what works “in certain respects, for particular subjects, and in specific kinds of situations” (Saul et al., 2013, p. 1). Assessing which protection schemes grant more rights for people on the move, and mapping the advantages and disadvantages of the entry schemes for Afghans and Ukrainians, could open new heterodox ways to theorize the factors in the valuation of refugees as deserving or undeserving of public protection.

**Search Methods:** We compiled a list of keywords to address strategic realist review questions: *What works? For whom? Under what circumstance? And how?* We included the following keywords in the search: (1) “Asylum and Refugee Policies”; (2) “Asylum and Refugee Policies Canada”; (3) “Asylum and Refugee Policies UK”; (4) “Asylum Seekers and Refugees Afghanistan”; (5) “Asylum Seekers and Refugees Ukraine”; (6) “State Responses Refugees/Asylum Seekers”; (7) “Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel”; (8) “Ukraine Family Scheme (UK)”; (9) “Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (UK)”; (10) “Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (UK)”; (11) “Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) (UK)”; (12) “Ukraine Extension Scheme (UK)”; (13) “Citizenship (access) for Ukrainian refugees”; and (14) “Illegal Migration Bill (UK).”

We searched the following databases: Sociological Abstracts, Oxford Scholarship Online, PAIS Index, Research Library, CBCA Complete, Google Scholar, Factiva, Google, and Canada Commons. We reviewed the yielded articles, and selected final entries in relation to the review questions and objectives. We did not select wire feeds (i.e., press releases, many of them sourced from Associated Press and recirculated in a variety of outlets). When searches yielded higher numbers of results, we were more selective with the range of articles to choose for review. For instance, if the Research Library database yielded 825 or more results for a specific search term, we reviewed only the first 500 articles. Similarly, when Google Scholar yielded over 17,000 entries for a search term, we reviewed only the first six pages (see detailed examples of keyword searches in Appendix A).

The date range set for the search was **May 2021 to May 2023**.

**Selection of Articles:** We imported entries into Excel files. We organized the entries so that the articles selected for each keyword were grouped into their own standalone Excel files with different tabs differentiating between each database we searched. Two researchers took turns in fine-tuning the selection of articles.

Researcher 1 highlighted in green the articles of interest from each keyword-based Excel file for each database. Researcher 2 reviewed all articles and left highlighted in green the articles that they agreed with Researcher 1 should be included; they highlighted in red those articles they suggested for exclusion; and they highlighted in yellow texts not marked by Researcher 1 which could constitute possible additions. Researcher 1 reviewed the suggestions from Researcher 2. Only the articles that both Researchers agreed on were included in the final set.

We initially considered incorporating articles from traditional media and newspapers, but we ultimately determined that they would be more suitable for a dedicated media analysis at a later date. Similarly, we excluded entries from the Canada Commons database; these consist predominantly of government-issued policy documents which, while informative about the logistics of refugee entry programs, lack substantial analysis or research findings. Instead, these policy documents will be subject to a separate, more focused policy analysis. However, during our review process we scrutinized the Canada Commons entries for any substantial reports or scholarly articles relevant to our topic; when such pieces were identified, they were retained and included in our final analysis. Furthermore, we omitted articles found using the “Illegal Migration Bill (UK)” search term, as the majority did not pertain directly to the entry of Afghan refugees into the UK.

At this stage in the selection, we also removed duplicates. In addition, we deleted entries that could be classified as blog posts, but we have kept blog posts written by academics and indexed through institutional repositories (e.g., Harvard Review or Verf.blog). We conducted two additional rounds of review to remove overlooked duplicates.

The final selection included **113 articles to review for Canada and 80 articles for the UK.**

We then created two separate Excel files, one containing the 113 articles for the Canadian selection and one containing the 80 articles for the UK selection. We labelled each article numerically, from 1 to 80 for the UK list and from 1 to 113 for the Canada list. We created a separate table in which every numbered article was grouped in relation to the specific realist review question(s) and was assigned to a specific research team member for review (see Appendix B). Finally, an additional Excel file was created to contain summaries of the selected articles. This file included: (a) the number assigned to each article; (b) the reviewer’s name; (c) the realist review question; (d) the title of the article; (e) the summary and its findings; and (f) the overall conceptual theme. We used colour-coded highlights to differentiate between the type of realist review question and the Researchers/Reviewers assigned to each text. These summaries served as the first step for our write-up of the overall findings.

# Results

## Welcoming Refugees: A Russian *Matryoshka Doll*

The literature reviewed showed that the refugee experience is multilinear (Ratzmann & Sahraoui, 2021; López & Ryan, 2023; Rowen et al., 2022). Rather than embodying a unidirectional journey from the country of origin to the destination country, it involves push-and-pull factors, complex routes, a mix of choices made both intentionally and under the influence of external forces, as well as “long periods of immobility punctuated by shorter instances of travel” (Kaytaz 2016, p. 287, as quoted in López & Ryan, 2023). Most importantly, what is often thought of as the end point of the refugee journey – namely, arrival in the host country – tends to be a complex phenomenon shaped by **how welcomed people are in their destination country**. An analogy can be made to the mundane situation of **being welcomed in somebody’s house**. First, the resident might not open the door to a stranger, or even if they do, the stranger might be received only at the door or only in certain areas of the house. Once inside, a guest might not be allowed, or might not *feel allowed*, to act as freely as members of the household. The guest might also face the pressure from household members to do things in a certain way or to avoid doing them altogether.

In the welcoming of refugees, one might observe **parallel** processes. A refugee might feel welcomed or unwelcomed once they entered the host nation. A hospitable reception is a necessary part of being welcomed and feeling welcomed. Once in the country, however, a refugee also faces a set of legal rules, physical and cultural boundaries, and social attitudes that impose behavioural guidelines. Such processes correspond to the distinction made in the literature between **openness**, loosely defined as the physical capacity to cross national borders, and **hospitality**, which comprises the policies and attitudes that together determine the level of genuine protection that refugees can access in their destination country. Stavo-Debauge et al. (2018) summarize this distinction:

It is not enough to “leave the way” **open** to the one who comes, because it is also necessary to make room for them and give them a place, which can sometimes mean having to contain them and being able to accommodate them, for example by accommodating their differences and vulnerabilities.... In this sense, **hospitality** is the quality of what ensures a stay, facilitates an activity and invites someone to stay. It is also what offers support and assistance to newcomers, providing them with the necessary space and appropriate accommodations. (Stavo-Debauge et al., 2018, p. 4, as quoted in Carlier 2020, p. 248)

### **Openness**

Borders being open or closed to refugees falls under the **legal domain** of international agreements. These agreements determine who should be recognized as a refugee and bestow rights on all people on the move, whether refugees or not. The basic international agreement stipulating the rights of refugees and obligations to them is the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (hereafter **1951 Refugee Convention**) and the associated Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (hereafter **1967 Protocol**). The Convention and the

Protocol provide the most widely recognized definition of a refugee, as someone, who “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (Article 1(2) Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees). The Convention also establishes the **core principles on how refugees should be welcomed**, including:

- Non-discrimination as to race, religion or country of origin (Arts. 3, 4).
- Access to political rights, including rights of association, access to courts, and freedom of movement, on the same level with the nationals (Arts. 15, 16, 26).
- Access to public goods, education, and public relief, on the same level with the nationals (Arts. 22, 23).
- No penalization of illegal entry (Art. 31).
- Non-refoulement (Art. 33).

The Convention was developed in the aftermath of World War II, and so was principally concerned with its immediate repercussions. The 1967 Protocol was adopted to make the provisions of the Convention universally applicable by removing its original restrictions of time and region<sup>2</sup>. A total of 146 countries are signatory to the Convention and 147 to the 1967 Protocol.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond the 1951 Refugee Convention, the rights of refugees are guaranteed through other global agreements, such as the **1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (hereafter UDHR) which contains a provision stating that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind” (UDHR, Article 2). This provision is taken to apply also to refugees (Nzabamwita & Dinbabo, 2022).

Protection of refugees is regulated by a range of **regional agreements** and **national legislative frameworks**. These should not contradict international refugee law provisions, although in practice they often restrict the rights of refugees or the obligations of governments to welcome them (Venter, 2021; Nzabamwita & Dinbabo, 2022).

Unlike international legislation, domestic laws are rarely static, and they tend to change in response to shifting public attitudes, internal political situations, and geopolitical determinants. In recent years, several states have shifted their domestic legislation towards **securitized approaches to the welcoming of refugees** (Robinson, 2022; Kabacaoğlu & Memişoğlu, 2021). The most visible examples include the overreliance on police, the military, physical security infrastructure, and sophisticated monitoring equipment to manage irregular migration (Aliu & Aliu, 2022), as well as the rampant appeal to national security in political discourse on migration (Kabacaoğlu & Memişoğlu, 2021). Another feature of the securitization of migration is the increased denial of asylum to whole groups of people (Rowen et al., 2022; Wadhia, 2018), such as denial on the basis of terrorism claims, or the “Muslim ban” implemented in the US. Bose (2022) argues that this restrictiveness demonstrates “the primacy of national immigration interests over international migration policy” (p. 376). Refugees are thus increasingly viewed as a group in need of regulation and management that prioritizes the needs of national governments over those of refugees.

The openness of states to refugees is also determined through the **physicality of borders**. With few exceptions (e.g., the EU Schengen area), most borders around the world are regulated through sophisticated physical obstacles aiming to prevent “irregular” entry, including walls and fences, border patrols, cameras, satellite imagery, motion and heat detectors, and noise-blasting devices (Webber, 2022; Carr 2015; Rigby & Crips 2021). Even in the EU, these hyper-securitized measures have been increasingly implemented; for example, in recent years fences have gone up on the borders of Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, to a total of 1,800 kilometers (Rigby & Crips, 2021; Morrice, 2022). Similar actions have been undertaken outside Europe, among others by the US on its border with Mexico, and by South Africa on its border with Zimbabwe (Moyo et al., 2021). Pushbacks of people crossing borders are another example of the physical closeness of nations. They have been a common part of migration policy and of the debate on migration, including in the context of refugees arriving in the UK (Webber, 2022) via the English Channel, or people crossing from North Africa and the Middle East into the Mediterranean (De Genova 2017; Bilgin & Arikan, 2021).

<sup>2</sup>The original convention applied only to “events occurring before 1 January 1951,” and covered events outside Europe only if the Contracting States declared so at the time of signing (Article 1, Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees).

<sup>3</sup>Countries that did not join those agreements, for instance most Middle Eastern and South-East Asian states, often imitate the provisions contained in them, to a larger or smaller extent, by relying completely on regional and domestic legislation (Barbour, 2021).

Borders are also sealed through processes of **externalization**, which comprise a broad set of practices that remove the responsibility of states to accept refugees, often in exchange for certain benefits. UNHCR (2021) defined this as the “measures taken by States—unilaterally or in cooperation with other States—which are implemented or have effects outside their own territories, and which directly or indirectly prevent asylum-seekers and refugees from reaching a particular ‘destination’ country or region, and/or from being able to claim or enjoy protection there.” The direction in which the responsibility for refugee protection is shifted usually follows a developed-developing countries linearity. The prime example of this practice is the 2016 deal between the **EU and Turkey**, in which Turkey agreed to prevent further migration into the EU by, for example increasing border security, and accepting deported irregular migrants who had managed to cross into Greece, in exchange for, among other concessions, a payment of €3 billion from the EU (Bilgin & Arikan, 2021). In a different setting, Robinson (2022) discusses the **Canadian GAIM** (Global Assistance for Irregular Migrants) program, which is designed for would-be refugees from Sri Lanka stranded in West Africa, a measure that externalizes Canada’s international refugee protection obligations by offering assisted voluntary return and reintegration measures in third countries rather than providing full assessment of the asylum claims in the country. Such instances lead to “*neo-refoulement* [emphasis in the original] – the return of asylum-seekers to regions of origin before they can access sovereign territory and make a refugee claim” (Robinson, 2022, p. 892). An additional example is the UK’s deal with France for the payment of €541 million to increase the securitization of the English Channel, by boosting aerial surveillance, patrol deployment, and physical pushbacks, as well as the building of new detention centres on the continent (Webber, 2022; European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2023). Welander (2021) discusses this case as an example of the **politics of exhaustion**. The stated aim of such agreements is to discourage would-be asylum-seekers from entering the UK by containing them in closed spaces, often permeated with violence and abuse, and regular dispossessions, evictions, and detentions. This approach resembles the logic of the policies of externalization prevalent in the management of refugee flows between several other destination-origin country dyads, like Italy-Libya, Spain-Morocco, and Australia-Indonesia. Although many externalization practices are legal, the literature strongly judges them to be incompatible with the humanitarian values embedded in the international refugee protection system (UNHCR, 2021; Garlick, 2021).

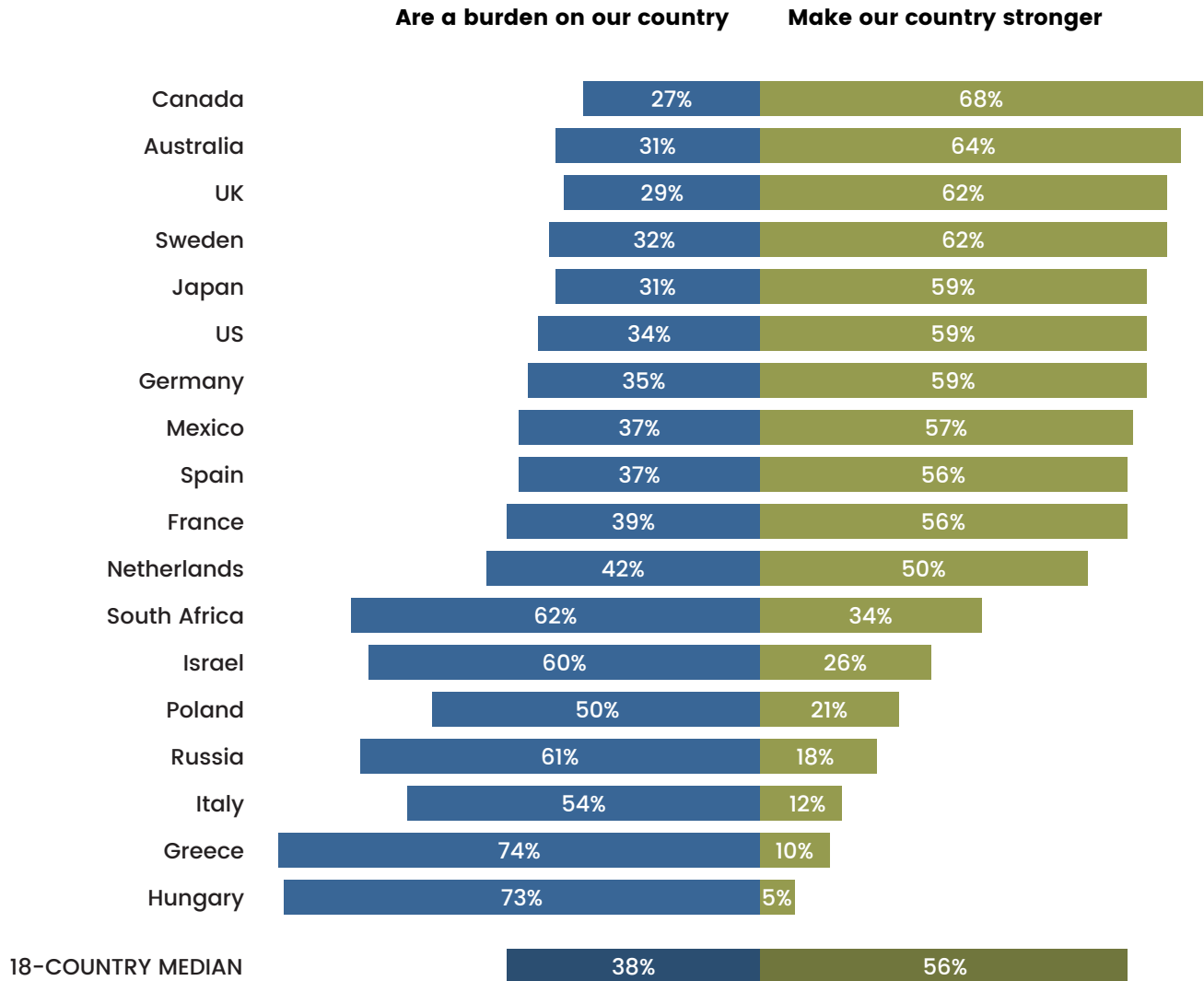
Moreover, upon arriving in their destination countries refugees remain subject to **internal bordering**. **Refugee camps** and **detention centres** are the most conspicuous manifestations of the physical separation of migrants from citizens, who are part of the national fabric. A similar approach is to house refugees in designated spaces, such as hotels, hospitals, and military bases. Although these are formally open, they are often in **remote locations**, far from public services and local communities (Besana et al., 2022). Lastly, refugees might be physically removed from the destination country (i.e., deported). Although this practice universally raises concerns about violating the non-refoulement principle, several large-scale deportation programs have recently been underway, such as the UK government’s plan to **deport asylum-seekers to Rwanda**, which would have set a precedent for other countries facing high rates of asylum-seeker arrivals (Beirens & Davidoff-Gore, 2022).

### **Hospitality**

Whether refugees are truly welcome in their destination country is also determined by the way they are received, what is often referred to as **hospitality** (Boudou, 2022; Owen, 2022). Hospitality reinforces assumptions that make the refugee experience more precarious, by underscoring the temporariness of reception, since to “overstay” is the most common offence against hospitality, and by underlining the ethical obligation of welcoming, thus downplaying any legal obligations, which are the only ones for which there can be redress if violated: legal obligations apply to everyone whereas the tenets of hospitality do not.

As Boudou (2022) observes, the notion of hospitality used to be a universal norm, thus providing a broader base for refugee protection than ever-changing legal standards. However, many prevalent norms are re-evaluated and often deemed outdated in the contemporary world. For instance, as public attitudes on migration differ starkly between countries (see Figure 1), appeal to a shared notion of hospitality might be necessary, but is still insufficient in relation to a sustainable refugee policy.

Figure 1. Views on Migrants across Western Nations in 2019



Similarly, some of the scholarly literature consider the infrastructure of migration policy in refugee-receiving states to be the opposite of hospitality: that is, it is deliberate **precarity**. For instance, Basok (2022) discusses the “architecture of precarity” in the context of Syrian refugees in Turkey: although Syrians are granted the right to stay in Turkey and the right to access healthcare and education, they have only a temporary protection status and restricted freedom of movement and employment rights, and they face numerous challenges, from linguistic barriers to widespread discrimination. Other works point out that the precarity encountered in countries of arrival often forces refugees to continue onward in their journey. The significance of this precarious status tends not to enter public consciousness in the West, despite the fact that it applies to millions of refugees: think for example of the lack of integration rights for the Afghan refugees hosted in Iran and Pakistan (Dinger, 2022; Kraler et al., 2021; Lenehan, 2022; Crawley & Kaytaz, 2022; Belabbas et al., 2022).

The scholarly literature reviewed shows that being welcomed is not the final point in the journeys of refugees, but is rather a multilayered process. Working through each of the layers – crossing international borders into the destination country, securing freedom of movement and access to basic human rights, and being integrated into the community – might be compared to the process of opening a Russian matryoshka doll. If any one of these layers is closed too tightly, a refugee will ultimately never be welcomed in the destination country. It is therefore necessary to ensure that a state remains open at each stage of the refugee reception process.

Refugees require an environment that not only welcomes them but also addresses their fundamental needs. Work, healthcare, education, and social integration are basic human needs that should be available to refugees just as they are to citizens, and their right to them is underpinned by both international and national laws. However, refugees often face significant hurdles in actualizing these rights. For instance, legal status recognition in the country, a right taken for granted by citizens, can be a formidable challenge for refugees. A thorough understanding of the specific needs of refugees and the obstacles they encounter is crucial for migration scholars and practitioners. This knowledge forms a vital foundation for analyzing the multifaceted approaches needed to meet these needs effectively.

### ***Freedom of Movement***

Refugees need freedom of movement to enter their destination country. Moreno-Lax (2021) points out that governments have to increase the availability of **complementary pathways** in seeking international protection (e.g., resettlement, private or community sponsorship programs, humanitarian admission, evacuation schemes, protected entry or embassy procedures, family reunification, educational scholarships, or labour mobility schemes), which would reduce the reliance of refugees on “spontaneous arrivals,” that is, arriving via irregular, informal, and often dangerous ways due to lack of legal and safe alternatives.

Once inside the destination country, refugees need continued freedom of movement. Exclusionary practices in relation to freedom of movement take a variety of shapes. Think for example of ethnic minorities from the Caucasus and Central Asia living in Russia who can settle only in certain areas of the country (Martín & Indelicato, 2022), or in the West, the refugees confined to remote accommodation or hotels in the UK. However, **internal freedom of movement** is both a human right in itself (Article 13, UDHR) and a right necessary for the realization of other rights, including access to adequate housing, employment opportunities, healthcare, and education. Pop (2022) lists freedom of movement at the bottom of a Maslow pyramid of refugees’ needs.

Multiple studies also point out that refugees need to have access to **family reunification**, that is, the possibility of bringing their family to their destination country (Moreno-Lax, 2021; Webber, 2022; Wilkinson et al., 2022; Jensen, 2021). Charsley and Wray (2023) note multiple negative consequences of family separation, including mental health concerns, distrust of the state, high living costs, childcare-related issues, and missing significant life events.

Freedom of movement also refers to the ability to **leave one’s host country** to travel abroad, including to visit family (Jensen, 2021). Although freedom of movement is a human right, the ability to travel, particularly back to the country of origin from which a refugee seeks protection, remains an understudied area in forced migration.

### ***Legal Recognition***

The recognition of formal status and the rights it confers are pivotal themes in the literature on refugees. Researchers have noted that barriers to legal recognition can drastically curtail refugees’ ability to meet their basic needs. Examples such as the use of Title 42 during the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States to deny asylum considerations (Sajjad, 2022), or the UK-Rwanda deal (deemed unlawful by the UK Supreme Court on November 15, 2023) to deport illegal arrivals to Rwanda (Beirens & Davidoff-Gore, 2022), underscore how such policies can extinguish the prospects for legal recognition and contravene international protections (Shen, 2022). More routinely, protracted asylum proceedings trap applicants in a state of legal uncertainty, with severe implications for their rights and well-being, including adverse effects on physical and mental health (Phillimore & Cheung, 2021). Conversely, some scholars highlight cases such as refugees in Brazil to illustrate that formal recognition may not be as critical to refugees as the ability to exercise other rights like movement, and access to housing and employment (Jensen, 2021). The significance of legal recognition, especially the granting of asylum, thus appears to be contingent on how it influences the attainment of other fundamental rights.

Yet even when granted, the **temporary** status of many rights is a key concern discussed by migration researchers. The temporary nature of protection, write Sahin-Mencutek et al. (2022), “has led to practices of containment being



the norm, living standards being very poor, and asylum seekers being marginalized” (p. 11). Temporariness is also indirectly manifested in the couching of the reception of refugees in terms of hospitality rather than granting them legal rights (Boudou, 2022). It is through the legal classificatory system that Syrian refugees, for instance, are treated as temporary guests in Jordan and not allowed to work, whereas in Lebanon they are temporary workers.

## ***Integration***

Integration refers to the processes of interaction among individuals and institutions across structural, social, cultural, and civic domains and in relation to identity; these processes are multidirectional and have spatial and temporal dimensions (Spencer & Charsley, 2016). The literature reviewed identified the following dimensions of integration in terms of the needs of the refugee groups: housing, access to the labour market, health care, and education.

### *Housing*

One of the basic needs of refugees is securing a place to stay in the new country. Flatau et al. (2015) write that housing “plays a fundamental role in the journey of refugees following resettlement in a host country.... [Housing] not only offers shelter and security, but provides a base from which both community and social connections may be formed and education and employment links secured” (p. 2). However, refugees’ socio-legal status, their pre-migration experiences, and their socio-economic standing, all make refugees “particularly disadvantaged in relation to housing” (Brown et al., 2022, p. 34), as many must rely on poor-quality housing accommodations (Brown et al., 2022).

Poor-quality housing relates to several other issues, such as poor mental health (Brown et al., 2022), restricted labour market access (Brown et al., 2022), and limited integration opportunities (Strang et al., 2018). Similar consequences are observed by Kreichauf (2018) in his study of the progressive “campization” of refugee housing in Athens, Berlin, and Copenhagen, that is, their spatial and legal separation, distinct architecture, and the high level of control exerted. The temporary nature of many housing solutions also exposes refugees to a higher risk of homelessness (Mitton, 2020), as does the lack of appropriate institutional housing support (Freedman et al., 2022).

### *Labour Market*

The right to work once established in the destination country is also a basic human right (UDHR, Article 23). Researchers called the immediate granting of the right to work to Ukrainian refugees in Europe in 2022 both a “welcome” and “essential” measure. However, refugees’ need to work is frequently perceived as a threat to the national labour market (Machin, 2023). There is a common perception that refugees (or migrants in general) take jobs away from locals, increase local unemployment, and cause inflationary pressures on prices (Sahin & Nashwan, 2021). As a result, refugees are often restricted in their access to the labour market. Sometimes these restrictions are an effect of the state’s overreliance on refugees’ encampment (Turnet, 2015). Other times, labour market restrictions result from state rules that regulate who can work in the country and under what conditions. For instance, the UK’s “iron rod” welfare system (and those of Norway and Sweden) provides generous welfare support for a narrow group of refugees with secure status while leaving the rest in precarity. The “colander” system in Italy, which provides much more room for navigation between the formal and informal sectors, does not allow for a similarly comprehensive care, but it relaxes state control over the livelihoods of refugees (Allsopp, 2022).

Further complications arise from refugees’ lack of experience in the national labour market and the resulting difficulty in obtaining work references (Silvius et al., 2021). Linguistic barriers and the recognition of qualifications obtained abroad are also common, even for high-skilled refugees (Mykolayets et al., 2023). Some scholars have found that even in long-term residency scenarios, refugees in Canada face high poverty and unemployment rates, while earning only 65 percent of the average Canadian income (Lenard, 2021).

### *Healthcare*

Farrant et al. (2022) survey the needs of refugees requiring targeted healthcare interventions, such as immunizations and diagnostic tests, reinstatement of interrupted treatments, management of violence-related injuries, and screening for infectious diseases. Clark and Farrington (2021) point out that most vulnerable individuals in the UK cannot even

register with a GP if they lack official documentation, despite primary healthcare being available for free to anyone, regardless of immigration status or documentation.

Mental health is another area where refugees have specific needs due to their common experiences of trauma, grief, and despair (Ahlness, 2022; Kaufman et al., 2022). Those fleeing conflict are particularly susceptible (an estimated one in five individuals) to negative mental health outcomes (Murphy et al., 2022). Farrant et al. (2022) mention that nine out of ten refugee families were found in need of referrals after mental health assessments.

Yet for many refugees, healthcare access is limited due to factors that have little to do with healthcare as such. For instance, refugees housed in hotels in the UK are unable to purchase medicine due to lack of money, have trouble obtaining receipts due to frequent relocations, and often lack NHS identification (Rowlands, 2023). Moreover, since 2015, UK hospitals can check immigration status and share this information with the Home Office, creating a disincentive to seeking treatment for those with irregular status (Besana et al., 2022).

### *Education*

Access to education plays multiple roles in the lives of the refugees, from improving their economic status to better integration and more comprehensive self-development. A telling fact is that the desire for their children's education prospects is often a key factor motivating parents to abandon their place of origin (Edwina & Ewazi, 2023). Likewise, asylum-seeking youth express a strong wish to educate themselves, as indicated by a UNICEF service provider in the UK (UNICEF, 2018, p. 1): "I'd say the first thing that unaccompanied children tell you is, 'When can I start college?'"

However, refugees face a mix of exclusionary realities when accessing education, in particular the non-recognition of their foreign qualifications, as well as financial and linguistic barriers (Morrice, 2022), which, as identified by Hutchinson and Reader (2021), can lead to educational attainment gaps amounting to 17.3 months as compared with national pupils, and as high as 37.4 months for unaccompanied children.

### *Additional Integration Aspects*

"Integration" is a contested term, in part because it is used empirically to refer to integration processes, but also normatively to refer to the competing goals of assimilation or multiculturalism. There are strong disagreements in the forced migration literature on these goals, though the studies reviewed here did not focus primarily on integration outcomes as such. Despite the integration-specific factors outlined above, such as participation in the labour market, access to education, housing and health care, access to civic rights, and the fostering of belonging, the literature also found that language training is a major need of refugees in Germany (Heidinger, 2023) and that religious inclusion is also a commonly identified need (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh & Qasmiyeh, 2010).

Integration overall constitutes a positive feedback loop, as it leads to the convergence of refugees' preferences and attitudes with those of the host community, making them indistinguishable within a generation and thus making migrants more welcome (Androff, 2022). Indeed, Marchetti (2020) argues that public perceptions of asylum seekers' willingness to integrate – in other words, proving their ability to be "good citizens" – are crucial in whether they are judged to be deserving of state services in the host country.

## **Interlocking Deservingness**

What matters in the welcoming process? And who deserves to be welcomed? The level to which the needs of refugees are met in the destination country varies greatly. The determining factors in the hospitality of a society towards refugees fall under several broad categories, all of which seem to result from the "latent variable" of **deservingness** to receive support, help, and protection.

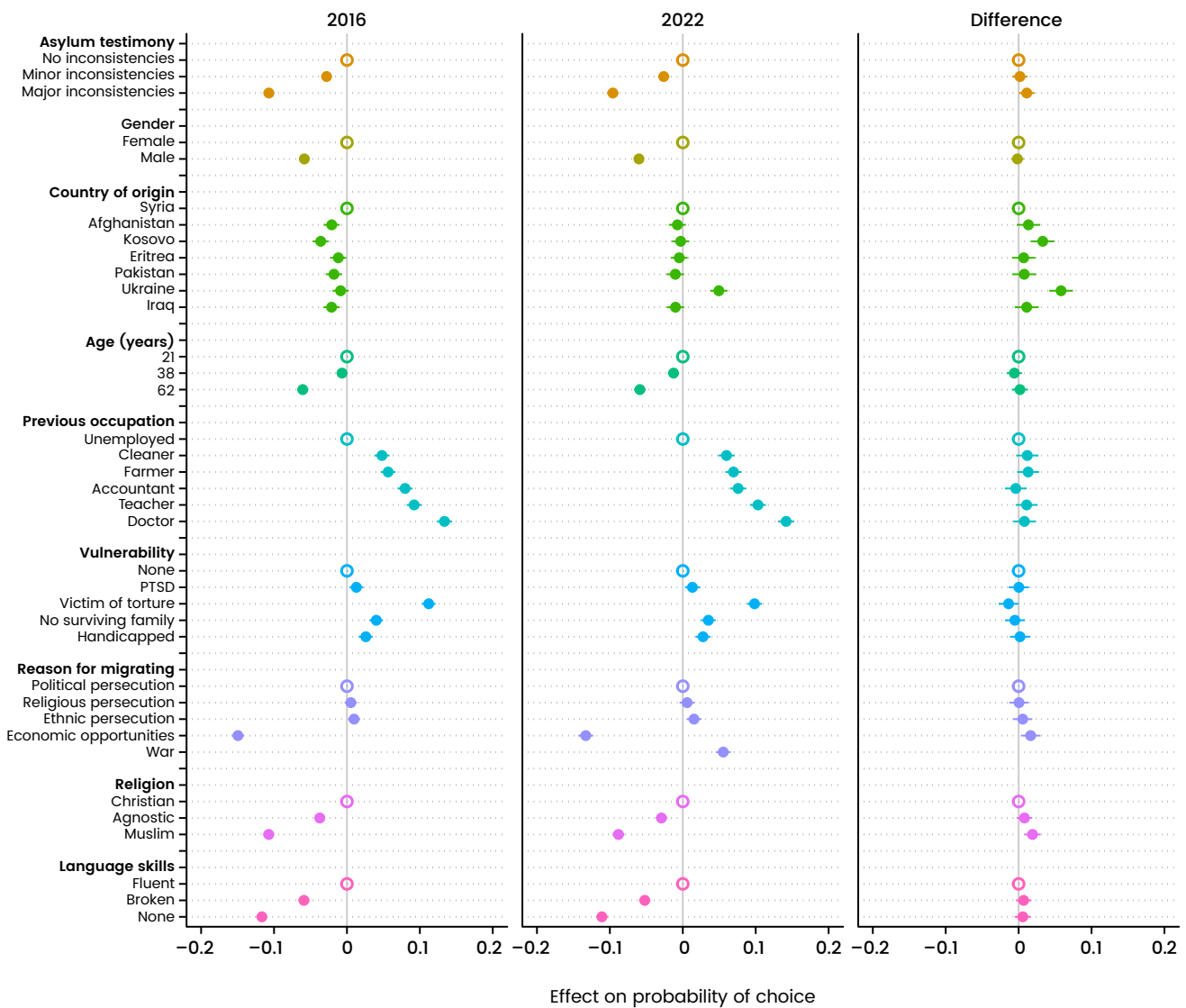
This notion of deservingness, as identified in numerous studies, is a fundamental dimension that both affects secondary hospitality variables and shapes a society's openness to refugees (Jeannet et al., 2021; López & Ryan, 2023; Rowen et al., 2022; Khan, 2022; Esposito, 2022). When explicitly considered, deservingness tends to be negatively assessed, and

leads to a simplistic, unidimensional, and binary distinction that both stigmatizes groups of refugees and narrows the conceptual lenses applied by researchers (Androff, 2022; Carmel & Sojka, 2021). Nevertheless, deservingness is frequently referred to as the underlying determinant in welcoming refugees. Deservingness is important because its effects are evidenced by interconnecting factors.

### Identity

Some of the most salient factors in the welcoming of refugees in destination countries are their identitarian factors. Largely immutable in public consciousness, identitarian variables carry strong discriminatory undertones. Paradoxically, many identitarian factors, including race, ethnicity, and religion, are often the very factors that led refugees to flee their countries of origin in the first place, and are specifically prohibited as a basis of discrimination by the 1951 Refugee Convention. The literature reviewed here referenced the hierarchical classification of different groups of refugees on the basis of identitarian characteristics<sup>4</sup>, when discussing differences in the reception of refugee groups, in relation to gender, age, religion, race, ethnicity, nationality, and class.

**Figure 2. Conjoint Experiment where Respondents Chose from a Pair of Randomized Refugee Profiles**



**Notes (original):** Dots with horizontal lines indicate point estimates with cluster-robust 95% confidence intervals from linear (weighted) least-squares regression. The unfilled dots on the zero line denote the reference category for each asylum seeker attribute. Attributes that were only included in 2022 are shown in italics; n = 178,740 profiles evaluated for 2016 and n = 148,460 profiles evaluated for 2022.

**Source:** Bansak, Hainmueller & Hangartner (2023)

<sup>4</sup> Several demographic characteristics, including marital status, sexual orientation, and disability are likely also to play a role in the reception of refugees, but the literature did not discuss them explicitly as separate issues.

## Gender

Gender is rarely recognized as a legal distinction in refugee policies, but it is an important determinant in the perceived deservingness of different refugee groups. Women, especially mothers with children, are deemed most deserving, as shown by focus group (Vaughan-Williams, 2021) and survey research (see Figure 2 from Bansak et al., 2023), whereas male migrants are often stigmatized by narratives portraying them as sexual predators. The sexual predator stereotype was frequently mentioned in relation to public safety (Vaughan-Williams, 2021). Events like the New Year's 2015/2016 sexual attacks in Cologne made those considerations even more salient, despite a lack of empirical research to link refugee populations with crime and sexual assault rates (Lido et al., 2021; Kirdar et al., 2022). However, hostile stereotyping is not restricted to male refugees: think for example of the British context, in which asylum-seeking mothers and their children are imagined as seeking undeserved welfare benefits from the state (Shobiye & Parker, 2023).

Focus group discussion across five European countries carried out by Vaughan-Williams (2021) revealed that people see women fleeing countries where they are forced into marriage or face female genital mutilation as having more of a "legitimate" claim to asylum in the EU. Plümper and Neumayer (2021) also showcase that the gender gap in asylum recognition rates between 2012 and 2018 in Germany was higher for refugees fleeing countries with greater prevalence of such gender-specific violence. The outpouring of support for Ukrainian refugees after the 2022 invasion is perhaps the strongest example of this dynamic of openness to refugees operating on gendered lines.

Gender is also a key factor shaping the outcomes of refugees' journeys, already at the border-crossing stage. As Pickering and Cochrane (2013) demonstrate, across EU, US, and Australian borders, women are more likely to die during irregular entry attempts. And although multiple countries see gender gaps in asylum recognition rates, with females being granted asylum more frequently (Plümper & Neumayer, 2021), female refugees are less likely to be employed and more likely to earn less than male refugees in most contexts (Kabir & Klugman 2019). Thus, there is a complex and dynamic relationship between gender and the welcome that refugees receive – an observation that also applies to the other variables discussed below.

## Age

Children are overrepresented in many refugee streams. For example, children made up around one-third of asylum claims in Europe in 2016 (Pruitt, 2021). Despite this overrepresentation, children are one of the few refugee categories to be universally welcomed. Their plight evokes strong emotional responses, as exemplified by the tragic death of two-year-old Alan Kurdi, whose body was washed up on a Turkish beach in 2015. This event evoked widespread international outcry, which contrasts starkly with the generalized apathy towards other refugees facing a similar fate of drowning in the Mediterranean Sea.

The fate of children as a refugee category deserving protection is also prioritized in the legal domain. Unaccompanied children fall under special international legal protections (Beirens & Davidoff-Gore, 2022) which expedite their asylum claims (Webber, 2022). Some countries, such as Italy, recognize children as having the right to stay in a host country even without claiming asylum (Allsopp, 2022). Such policies reduce the vulnerability of this refugee category. Children are significantly more vulnerable to suffering from the long-term adverse effects that usually accompany the refugee journey, including a reduction in life expectancy of several years (Kaufman et al., 2022). However, some authors (Mavelli, 2022) qualify this reasoning by highlighting that ideas about 'sick bodies', such as children, raped women, and tortured men, ease the public conscience of many Western nations, which continue to deny protection to the majority of refugee groups which do not fall into any of these categories, as well as to reproduce paternalistic saviour-victim relationships between host nations and refugees.

<sup>5</sup> There are some examples where gender did explicitly enter into the rules of refugee admission, such as the 2015 Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) in the UK, where it was listed as one of the reasons for resettlement (Diamond, 2022). Moreover, gendered perceptions of deservingness in the public discourse might still translate into migration policy in indirect ways, for instance by tightening of the arrival rules for migrants from countries where those fleeing are predominantly male.

<sup>6</sup> Since 2014, over 28,000 refugees have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea (Missing Migrants Project, 2023).

### *Religion*

Refugees' beliefs also affect what is believed about them. Muslim refugees are perceived particularly negatively across most European states (see Figure 2 above). Emeriau (2022) found that between 1976 and 2016 Christian asylum-seekers in France were more likely to be granted asylum than Muslims refugees. Liebe et al. (2018) found that the preferences for Christian over Muslim refugees is largely uniform across different types of respondents, although their research also found that, when it comes to accepting refugees near their own home, German respondents place greater emphasis on the family situation of their would-be neighbours than on their religion. In contrast, some groups are deemed particularly deserving of protection, especially if they face religiously motivated persecution in their country of origin, like Christians coming from Afghanistan (Diamond, 2022). It is important to note, however, that these broad designations as Christian or Muslim do not adequately account for how refugees are received. For instance, based on 14 semi-structured interviews, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh (2010) show that Middle Eastern Muslim refugees in the UK do not find needed support in the established Muslim community in the country, as its members originate from culturally distinct Asian countries.

### *Race and Ethnicity*

The racial and ethnic prejudices extant in many societies unavoidably spill over to shape attitudes towards migration. For example, Stevens (2011) discusses how race acts as an important factor in cases of illegal deportation of US citizens, and Anderson (2021) discusses it in the case of the Windrush scandal in the UK. According to Jackson Sow (2022), race as a factor also came to the forefront of most Western states' refugee policies during the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, when millions of white Ukrainian refugees were welcomed in far more hospitable environments than most non-European refugees have been in recent years. Shared race and ethnicity also appear to matter outside the context of the Global North,<sup>7</sup> as shown in the cases of Jordan (Chatty, 2021) and Egypt (Abdelaaty, 2021) opening their borders to Syrians, with whom they share kinship ties. Another example is Turkey, which in 1989 welcomed ethnic Turks from Bulgaria, who were Muslims, yet it was hostile to Gaguz Turks from Moldova, who were Orthodox Christians (Abdelaaty, 2021). Similarly, Turkey declined to grant status to Bosniac Muslims and ethnic Albanian refugees, as they had no ethnic ties with the Turks; they were considered "guests" and only received temporary protection. In fact, research has shown that the asylum recognition rate is 8.7% higher when there is co-ethnicity as compared to when there is no ethnic tie (Abdelaaty, 2021).

Race and ethnicity are considered crucial variables for the reception of refugees also because they interact with other identitarian factors. For instance, focus group discussants quoted by Vaughan-Williams (2021) underscore that the apprehension they feel about male refugees is racially conditioned, remarking for example that "what is natural for them is not natural for us.... How they behave with women, for example – European men do not treat women like objects" (p. 110). Freedman et al. (2022) also argue that the supposed greater deservingness of female refugees is similarly filtered through racist lenses. They support this with an example of female refugees from West Africa, who in 2022 were refused accommodation in the empty spaces of a refugee centre for Ukrainians in Paris.

Racial bias is also discussed as having **neo-colonial** undertones. For instance, Freedman et al. (2022) write: "This racialized coloniality is the institution of a double standard [with] zones of 'being' (with rights, expectations, norms) and zones of 'non-being' (without rights, without places, without names) ... within French migration and asylum policies" (p. 426).

### *Nationality*

Country of origin is also a determining factor in refugee reception, one that is particularly complex and dynamic. On the one hand, the impact of nationality on public attitudes towards refugees varies across time, depending on geopolitics and the foreign policy of the country in question. Widespread violence or group-specific persecution in the country of origin are found to contribute to an open reception of refugees (see Figure 2). At the same time, a violent situation in the country of origin might activate negative stereotypes working against a warm welcome, as seen with the commonplace suspicions that the ranks of Syrian refugees coming to Europe during the 2015–2016 "refugee crisis" would be infiltrated with ISIS terrorists (Bose, 2022). Others have also noted that the Canadian and

<sup>7</sup>The term "Global North" is used interchangeably with phrases like "developed countries" and "the West."

British governments have both cited the risk of terrorism, including the risk of infiltration by Russian agents, to justify their decision to keep visa restrictions in place for Ukrainians (Falconer, 2022).

Importantly, nationality often conditions the salience of other variables, especially race/ethnicity and religion. Esposito (2022) discusses how the **fallacy of composition** – ascribing every individual of a given group a particular characteristic associated with that group – predominantly affects non-white Muslim refugees to Europe, who tend to be all grouped under pejorative labels such as “terrorists” or “invaders,” in a way that, for example, white Muslim refugees from former Yugoslavia were not in the 1990s. The so-called “Muslim ban”<sup>8</sup> imposed by President Donald Trump in 2017, which excluded the nationals of seven predominantly Muslim countries, was a prime example of this fallacy, as it remained largely blind to the individual circumstances of asylum-seekers from those countries. In a similar fashion, multiple articles underscore the point that fleeing Ukraine after the Russian invasion in 2022 was not in itself a reason for automatic admission to the EU for many non-white non-Ukrainians who were in the country, including many African students (Sky, 2022; Sajjad, 2022; Esposito, 2022; Bejan & Bogovic, 2022).

Those observations lead some researchers as well as public commentators to speak of **civilizational factors** as the key variable in determining refugee reception. A particular mix of race, ethnicity, religion, and nationality appears to make societies more open to certain refugee groups. In Europe this usually implies a white Christian refugee, preferably from a culturally adjacent country (Ociepa-Kicińska & Gorzałczyńska-Koczkodaj, 2022; McCloskey, 2022; De Coninck, 2023) – conditions met by Ukrainian refugees.

Two particularly insightful tests in relation to the idea of civilizational factors were conducted by Pepinsky et al. (2022) using survey research in Hungary in 2022. They showed that public receptiveness to refugees from four countries, which differ on two key variables of interest – being at war or at peace and being European or non-European – was the highest for refugees from Ukraine (at war, European), followed by Belarus (at peace, European), and then by Pakistan (at peace, non-European) and Afghanistan (at war, non-European). A second test showed that the greatest share of the public would like their country to be open to immigrants of Hungarian origin, followed by German, Russian, Chinese, Arab, and only then, interestingly, the made-up nations of Piresians and Piresistanians, which would naturally arouse the least familiarity. This clearly shows that the greater the cultural distance, the greater the apprehension in the general public about immigrants of a particular origin.

### *Class*

A separate set of reasons that emerge as important in the literature on welcoming refugees are the personal, human capital attributes of individual refugees – in other words, their markers of class. Unlike the immutable identitarian factors described above, class does not signal *who* the refugees are, but it does signal *what* they have been doing prior to their arrival in the host country.

One key concern seems to be the previous **occupation and professional activities** of a refugee. Those seen to advance the interests of the host country, such as Afghan refugees who has previously worked for NATO forces operating in their country (Simpson, 2021), are generally more welcomed. Class also makes people more open to refugees who are high-skilled, educated, and work in professional occupations, such as teachers or doctors for example (see Figure 2 again). These are the types of subjects that are anticipated to contribute to the economy, not to rely on welfare support, and, due to their relatively low numbers, not to create competition in the local labour market. Thus, class is the reason why the poorer segments of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (Chatty, 2021) are stigmatized yet their more affluent compatriots are not. This class-based thinking about refugees is also common when considering their **reason for arrival**. While people fleeing political, gendered, or racial persecution are mostly perceived as deserving of protection, those fleeing economic hardship are seen as undeserving (see Figure 2).

### ***Circumstantial Attributes***

Alongside identity, circumstantial attributes of refugees also seem to matter in establishing their deservingness. For instance, their personal history might make them seem like a threat to the safety of the host society. Predominantly,

<sup>8</sup>Formally this refers to Executive Order 13769, titled *Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States*.

this concerns those with a criminal past (Beirens & Davidoff-Gore, 2022) and those involved in what the receiving state defines as terrorist activities (Vaughan-Williams, 2021). Some, however, have shown (Rowen et al., 2022) that even this variable is more nuanced. American respondents seem somewhat open to granting a visa to an asylum-seeker who used to work for the Taliban as a dishwasher, although they are far less tolerant of granting it to a prison guard or a leader of a Taliban organization (Rowen et al., 2022). It is by such reasoning that citizens of the refugee-hosting society differentiate between various circumstances that force refugees into certain life pathways against their will, as opposed to intentionally choosing a particular activity. At the opposite end of the spectrum stand those who have endured violence in their originating country, which seems to be one of the strongest predictors of openness in a host society (Figure 2).

Public perception of how refugees arrived in the destination country also seems to matter. Arriving through legal and orderly pathways is seen as the only salient consideration both for the government and for the general public in host countries (Banulescu-Bogdan, 2022). Those arriving illegally (e.g., in small boats or through undesignated border crossings) are often exposed to legal complications, including not being able to have their asylum claim considered, or even being automatically deported (Shen, 2022), despite the fact that the 1951 Refugee Convention prohibits penalization for irregular entry.

## **Politics**

In addition to the identitarian and circumstantial attributes identified above, host societies face particular economic, political, and geopolitical circumstances that might make them more or less open to refugees.

### *Economic Considerations*

Refugees are welcomed if they are seen to positively contribute to the local labour market (Lawlor & Paquet, 2022) and to improve the national economy (Ford & Morris, 2022) without draining any state support that would traditionally cater to the local population (Chatty, 2021).

The literature identified that national labour needs were similarly related to greater openness to migration already during the “Roaring Twenties” in the West (Banko et al., 2022). Relatedly, pre-existing diasporas made up of migrant workers representing refugees’ origins countries as well as pre-existing labour mobility bilateral agreements between origin and destination countries can also be conducive to welcoming refugees. This was demonstrated in the context of Ukrainians in Poland (Duszczuk & Kaczmarczyk, 2022), as close to 1 million Ukrainians were already in Poland for work prior to the 2022 war (Strzelecki, Growiec & Wyszynski, 2022), and when comparing EU and Latin American refugee policies (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Hoffmann, 2022).

Yet as Morris (2021) argues, the austerity measures implemented by many European nations after the 2007 global financial crisis culminated in restrictive migration policies, as newcomers were perceived as a drain on national resources. Welfare support for newcomers is oftentimes considered unjust if left unbalanced with the welfare provision for the national population. This is shown, for instance, by surveys conducted in Romania (Jackson Sow, 2022), in which 60.5 percent of respondents support Romanian assistance for Ukrainian refugees, but believe that the precarious economic situation of Romanians needs also to be taken into account.

### *Electoral Politics*

The local political climate and competing electoral interests also matter in the reception of refugees. Divergent responses of the American and Canadian governments to the Syrian refugee crisis for instance, reflected a broader **backlash against the then-national leaders** and the immigration policies they proposed (i.e., the relatively open migration policy of President Obama and the restrictive one of Prime Minister Harper). Moreover, national election cycles can be watershed moments in a country’s openness towards refugees, as shown by both Canada and the US, as after elections in both countries they reversed their migration policies, towards a more open approach in Canada and a more restrictive one in the US (Bose, 2022). Bose (2022) also shows how voters’ views in both countries about would-be refugee arrivals, rather than international legal or humanitarian obligations, determine the final migration policy decisions made by national governments.

Similarly, a study drawing on 32 interviews in South Africa and 24 in Uganda with policymakers, politicians, civil society actors, and expert academics, highlights that the pandemic responses in relation to the welcoming of the refugee populations in both South Africa and Uganda have been dependent on the political goals of political parties (Moyo et al., 2021): Uganda opened its borders throughout its lockdowns to welcome refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, but this was a kind of a “diplomatic coup” in the wake of the 2021 elections, aimed to reiterate the positive image of the country on the global scene in order to attract funding (€24 million from the EU); South Africa similarly weaponized COVID-19 to stop regional migration; it increased deportations, limited access to emergency relief for asylum seekers, and used a public rhetoric of xenophobia to differentiate between foreigners and citizens. The electoral goal was for the party in power to get legitimacy from a “frustrated public” by scapegoating refugees and migrants, blaming them for the country’s corruption, poverty, and inequality, a move that gained it political leverage domestically.

Similarly, electoral politics have also been found to matter for Lebanon’s openness towards Syrian refugees (Chatty, 2021). The Lebanese government is fractured, as it contains several ethno-religious political parties as well as two political coalitions: The US- and Saudi-backed alliance with an anti-Syrian stance, and another alliance backed by Iran, which is pro-Syrian; hence partisan political ideology and competing stances on foreign policy matter in how Syrians have been perceived in Lebanon (Chatty, 2021).

Openness towards refugees might also change without any shift in domestic politics. Webber (2022) provides a sweeping account of how the “hostile environment” policy towards migrants and asylum-seekers in the UK is “only” a part of a broader pattern of what she terms the “erosion of human rights,” which is gradually being implemented by the Conservative Party and includes expanding military and ministerial impunity, campaigning against anti-racism efforts, as well as subverting parliamentary procedures.

### *Geopolitics*

Refugees are often tools for leveraging geo-strategic interests, and so international political dynamics also determine how welcome refugees are in different host countries. The importance of geopolitics in refugee welcoming echoes the Cold War era (McCloskey, 2022), when the perception of existential threats stemming from the other side of the Iron Curtain filtered issues of national interest through a foreign policy lens. It is geopolitics that can explain the US’s openness at the time to Soviet and Cuban refugees (Sajjad, 2022). Siddikoglu and Sagiroglu (2023) provide a similar analysis of the Pakistani welcoming of Afghan refugees during the Cold War years, when Pakistan had the West as its ally, and so welcoming Afghans served their strategic interests. As Pakistan-US relations deteriorated, Pakistan adopted in 1977 a preventive policy towards Afghans and closed its borders, declaring that Afghans would no longer be considered refugees; their treatment worsened once the US sanctioned Pakistan for testing nuclear weapons in 1998 (Siddikoglu & Sagiroglu, 2023).

Abdelaaty (2021) argues that refugees are still used today by host countries to reassure political allies and to pressure rivals, although when such interests conflict with the government’s domestic goals there is a strong incentive to shift the responsibility for refugees to the UN. Similarly, McConnachie (2022) discusses how refugees from Myanmar have been managed across Southeast Asia (one of the rare case studies outside the Global North), highlighting the priority of national interests, in particular stable border governance.

Selectiveness in asylum reception is manifested in friendly policies when refugees are fleeing a country with whom the receiving state has hostile relations, and in restrictive policies when refugees are fleeing a state that has friendly relations with the receiving state (Abdelaaty, 2021). For instance, Palestinians were initially welcomed in Egypt between 1948 and 1967, and had access to education, employment, and health services; in the 1970s, however, when Egypt grew closer to Israel, Palestinians were excluded from schools and public sector work. Similarly, since Turkey was part of NATO and was anti-communist, it accepted refugees from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union during the Cold War and was friendly towards ethnic Turks fleeing Bulgaria in 1989, but after the fall of the Berlin wall, when relations between Turkey and Russia became cordial, Turkey refused to grant refugee status to fleeing Chechens. Similarly, friendly relationships between Kenya and Uganda in the 1970s led to Ugandans facing repressive policies,



but when these relationships deteriorated, between 1976 and 1980, Ugandans were granted asylum (Abdelaaty, 2021).

The literature also underlines that geopolitics influence not only the management of many refugee “crises” but also their creation. Sarkin and Capazorio (2022) point out that in contemporary international relations, state sovereignty takes precedence over human rights. This leads to inaction by the international community in the face of human rights violations committed within sovereign countries, which ultimately lead to refugee exoduses.

### **Time**

Another variable shaping the openness of societies to host refugees, one that is less frequently recognized in the literature, is time. It is a variable that operates independently of economic, political, and geopolitical considerations, though all of these also have temporal dimensions. This is what Aldamen (2023) refers to when discussing **compassion fatigue**, reflecting on the risk of diminishing public compassion with the passage of time.

**Generosity fatigue** is a closely analyzed concern (Banulescu-Bogdan, 2022), particularly in refugee-hosting contexts where the situation gets prolonged and resources dwindle (e.g., Colombia, Jordan). A similar notion is that of **neoliberal fatigue**. Elcioglu (2023) engages with how time constraints prevent Canadian private sponsors of refugee resettlement from reflecting on the gaps in social service provision that necessitate reliance on private initiatives. It appears that initial responses to refugee arrivals evolve with time, frequently towards restriction.

### **Public Perception**

Public perception, mediated through media, is the last identified variable to influence refugee reception.

In most accounts referenced by the literature, the images of refugees generated by the media and the issues related to their reception tend to be negative. Some have labelled this **refugee media bias** (Lido et al., 2021), that is, the circulation of stigmatizing stereotypes of refugees (Basok, 2022, p. 199) as “dangerous, threatening and intrusive.” In reviewing over 400 articles from the British left-wing *The Guardian* and the right-wing *The Times*, Połńska-Kimunguyi (2022) shows how the media contribute to undermining genuine welcoming of refugees. This includes portraying them as national security and economic threats, often associating their threatening status with their “Muslimness,” misrepresenting them as economic migrants rather than genuine refugees, and thus (implicitly) depriving them of internationally protected status. A study on media coverage of Syrian migrants in Canada (Mustafa et al., 2021) found a clear distinction between conservative-leaning media, which tends to portray refugees almost exclusively negatively, and the more liberal media, which tends to be more balanced in its coverage. A different study of UK newspapers by Montgomery et al. (2023) also found that it matters who publicly speaks on the topic of refugee admission, as over 61 percent quoted claims on the subject are made by politicians and political parties, who tend to view refugee groups in a more negative light compared to civil society actors. Social media messaging seems to replicate the views expressed through traditional media, as pejorative messaging of Syrian refugees was also promoted through social networking platforms (Bisimwa, 2023).

However, some argue against ascribing too great of a role to the media (Martín & Indelicato, 2022) while others show that media can also play a positive role in shaping public perception, for example, when media mobilized humanitarian attempts to stop the expulsion of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, although, despite such efforts, the military junta did not reduce their violence as a result (Lee, 2021).

## **Differing Reception Policies for Afghans and Ukrainians in the West**

Refugees fleeing Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover in August 2021 and those fleeing Ukraine after the Russian invasion in February 2022 are two of the most recent refugee flows received by the Global North. Comparing the West’s welcoming of these two groups allows us to analyze how the variables conditioning refugees’ deservingness operate in practice.

## Ukrainians

The Ukrainian refugee crisis was different from the Afghan crisis in several ways. First, there is the element of **scale**. As of writing, **6.29 million people have fled Ukraine since 2022**, of which 5.9 million fled to Europe (UNHCR 2023b) and of these over 1.5 million did so in the first 10 days (Tomlinson, 2022). In a matter of days and weeks, rather than months, the absolute scale of the exodus from Ukraine was greater than from Afghanistan (1.6 million since 2021).

In normal circumstances, such large numbers would trigger apprehensions in the destination countries, for instance in relation to potential housing shortages, stress on the welfare systems, inflationary pressures, or cultural conflicts. Yet on-the-ground experience gives little evidence of this. On the contrary, Ukrainians fleeing Russian aggression found themselves in an extraordinarily open environment. The EU received the great majority of Ukrainian refugees and adopted multiple reception policies. The literature reviewed here mentions how unprecedented it was for the EU to activate the **Temporary Protection Directive 2001/55/EC** (Esposito, 2022; Dadush & Weil, 2022). This directive granted all Ukrainian nationals fleeing the war a right to obtain a two-year<sup>9</sup> residence permit in any EU country, as well as the rights to access education, health, housing, and the local labour market<sup>10</sup>. Thus, all refugee needs were addressed in all 27 EU states, at least at a formal level, through a single policy decision. This decision was seen as remarkable, especially in light of the fact that the Directive was not triggered during the 2015–16 refugee crisis, which involved smaller numbers of refugees and was more spread out over time (Negron, 2022). Still, this reception was available to Ukrainians but not to third-country nationals fleeing from Ukraine<sup>11</sup>, many of whom encountered racism when trying to cross the border out of the country (Sky, 2022; Sajjad, 2022; Esposito, 2022; Bejan & Bogovic, 2022).

The high level of support for Ukrainian refugees is also evidenced in public opinion, which has generally been highly supportive of accepting Ukrainians. This support shows little variation across countries and few signs of compassion fatigue, remaining at almost equally high levels in mid-2023 as it was at the start of the conflict (Drazanova & Geddes, 2023).

Many authors interpret this openness as a sign of the prevailing role of identitarian factors, including race, religion, culture, and nationality (Ramji-Nogales, 2022). Others emphasize that geopolitical imperatives, including the proximity of the conflict and the security threat posed by Russia, expedited the welcoming of Ukrainians. Still others recognize the interplay of all these factors (Parusel & Varfolomieieva, 2022; Esposito, 2022).

Though less explicitly suggested in the literature, another reason for this openness could have been related to the economic benefits Ukrainians might represent to the host countries, in terms of boosting the dwindling labour force and taking on some of the least desirable jobs (Charsley & Wray, 2023).

Poland and Hungary have been the most discussed case studies in the literature, not only because they admitted some of the largest numbers of Ukrainians per capita, but also because in the past they have vehemently opposed the admission of refugees from the Middle East and Africa. In contrast to its earlier anti-immigration official stance in the case of other refugees, the **Polish** conservative government went far beyond the bare minimum prescribed by the EU law in relation to Ukrainian refugees. Ukrainians in Poland were granted access to daycare and school allowances, medical and psychological care, free higher education and access to student loans; as well, the state also opened 36 reception points across the country (Ociepa-Kicińska & Gorzałczyńska-Koczkodaj, 2022)<sup>12</sup>. Although some issues in relation to the welcoming of Ukrainians in Poland remain, including the lack of recognition of professional qualifications, little access to drugs and vaccinations, and some extant levels of xenophobia (Kardas et al., 2022; Amnesty International, 2022), Poland provided overall a hospitable environment for Ukrainians. This has been confirmed by the refugees themselves, who ranked their satisfaction with the support received in Poland at 6.0 on a 1–7 scale (compared to 5.7 in Germany) (Pötzschke et al., 2022).

<sup>9</sup> This was subsequently extended to three years.

<sup>10</sup> A basic allowance for Ukrainians was also an optional measure, which was enacted by several countries, including France (€426 per month) and Poland (€64 euros per month); see Charsley & Wray, 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Exceptions to this were stateless persons and third-country nationals already covered by international or national protection before the war.

<sup>12</sup> This is in addition to the extraordinary mobilization of civil society and individual citizens, who, especially in the first weeks of the conflict, provided their homes, supplies, money, and all kinds of help to Ukrainian refugees.

A similar “180-degree reversal” was observed in **Hungary**. Pepinsky et al. (2022) compared survey results from 2017, before any significant numbers of Ukrainians arrived in Hungary, with surveys from April 2022. While at first, in 2017, about 57 percent of respondents were opposed to letting any refugees in, this number dropped to 11 percent in 2022, with noticeable decreases observable also among voters supporting the right-wing anti-immigrant Fidesz party.

This open reception of Ukrainian refugees can hardly be contrasted with that of Afghan refugees, primarily because there were very few Afghans in the aforementioned countries. Yet it remains clear that the welcoming of Ukrainians was not associated with any attitudinal change in approach to other migration streams. For instance, the Polish government still organized a referendum in October 2023 on the topic of EU-mandated relocation mechanism of distributing Middle Eastern and African refugees from the front line “burdened” states to other EU member states<sup>13</sup>, and actively campaigned against such a mechanism. It is, however, unclear if it was identitarian factors that played a key role in the open reception of Ukrainian refugees, or other factors as well. For instance, theoretical works on the reluctance of Eastern Bloc countries to adopt the relocation scheme had suggested that it is primarily the structural inequality among EU member states which is to be blamed for these states failure in equally sharing responsibility for relocation, as well as the Eastern vs. Western Europe frame of reference, which positions the Eastern Bloc states as unequal and inferior players at the EU table (Bejan, 2018). Qualitative research has shown that, even when Eastern Bloc countries were accepting refugees through the relocation mechanism, most refugees were uninterested in settling in Eastern European countries, primarily citing economic concerns and low employment prospects. For instance, in 2015–17 Romania received 728 refugees through the EU relocation mechanism, although it had committed itself to receiving 4,946 relocations; the problem seems to have been a lack of requests and refugees’ refusal to come to Romania (Bejan, 2021).

Outside of the EU, Western countries have adopted similar policies to welcome Ukrainian refugees, such as **New Zealand** offering a Special Ukraine Visa scheme for family reunification for New Zealanders of Ukrainian origin; **Japan** granting Ukrainians 90-day visas and a chance to apply for the (pre-existing) Designated Activities Visa; and **Australia** implementing a Temporary Humanitarian Concern scheme and a range of follow-up visa application routes (OECD, 2022). In the **US**, the Uniting for Ukraine (U4U) program provides a “primary” pathway of entry for Ukrainian refugees, although it is not a traditional asylum program (USCIS, 2023). It allows Ukrainians and their immediate family members to come for up to two years, but they have to secure a financial sponsor to support them. Sajjad (2022) observes that, contrary to the situation of Afghans, Ukrainians did not have to pay for U4U visa and were exempted from most COVID-19 restrictions.

## **Afghans**

When discussing the situation of Afghan refugees, there is hardly a single explanatory story. Afghans have had to flee their country multiple times in the past several decades and have been forced to enter various countries across all continents via a multitude of different routes (Crawley & Kaytaz, 2022).

People fleeing Afghanistan during the Cold War were considered “‘first-class’ [quotes in the original] asylum-seekers” in the West since they were associated with the struggle against the Soviet invasion, a status they lost after the onset of the War on Terror (Skodo, 2017). In a sense, one could argue that a comparable “first-class,” status together with the associated preferential treatment, is now being (re-)assigned to Ukrainian refugees, as the ones fighting against the renewed threat of Russian imperialism.

**Since 2021, more than 1.6 million people have fled Afghanistan**, but only around 232,000 Afghan asylum-seekers came to Europe (Migration Observatory, 2023)<sup>14</sup> and 90,000 to the US (US State Department, 2023), which suggests that the West did not accept great responsibility for the Afghan refugees.

The International Rescue Committee (2023) lists several hurdles experienced by the Afghans trying to reach Europe,

<sup>13</sup> The exact referendum question read: “Do you support the admission of thousands of illegal immigrants from the Middle East and Africa, according to the forced relocation mechanism imposed by the European bureaucracy?”

<sup>14</sup> This number reflects the number of asylum applications in EU+ countries for 2021 and 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Note however that methodological differences might preclude direct comparison of those numbers.

such as frequent pushbacks at the European borders (40 percent of all pushbacks), encampment in prison-type facilities in Greece, decreased asylum acceptance rates, as well as high rates of mental health problems, including an over 80 percent prevalence of depression and anxiety. In contrast, Ukrainian refugees have not faced pushbacks, and when they were housed in communal spaces it was only temporarily. Ukrainians seem also to have a much lower prevalence (45 percent) of anxiety and depression (Kavanová et al., 2022)<sup>15</sup>.

In further contrast to Ukrainian refugees, Afghan refugees rarely transit directly to Europe or other Western countries, but typical have multiple stops along the way, often experiencing protracted displacement lasting years (Crawley & Kaytaz, 2022). This turns them into a less desirable group once they arrive in the Global North: without fleeing immediate persecution, they are perceived as seeking economic benefits rather than making “legitimate” asylum claims.

## Reception Policies for Afghans and Ukrainians in Canada and the UK: They Are Both Worse!

The reception of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees in Canada and the UK followed in many ways the contrasts outlined above. Nevertheless, there are some major points of difference between the two countries as it relates to the reception of the two groups.

### Canada

Canada is not typically the first destination for refugees, in contrast to the UK and other European countries, largely due to its geographical location with a single land border. The implementation of the Third Country Agreement with the US (Jedwab, 2022) compels refugees to seek asylum in the first country they enter, significantly limiting land arrivals seeking protection in Canada. This has transformed Canada into a predominantly resettlement country. In absolute numbers, Canada was the largest resettlement country globally in four of the last five years (see Kaga et al., 2021, and Figure 3 below). UNHCR (2023c) reports that since 1980 Canada has welcomed almost 1.1 million refugees. This openness to resettling refugees, however, tends also to be closely connected with meeting domestic labour needs (Hathaway, 1988).

The overall refugee policy in Canada tends to be positively evaluated in the literature. However, some of these evaluations could best be described as lukewarm, like Lenard (2021), who notices that Canada appears exceptional in terms of refugee resettlement only because other developed countries are doing too little. Others, like Kaga et al. (2021), list several protections available to people arriving in Canada compared to those in the EU, even calling Canada “a leader in expanding the concept of vulnerability in international law” (p. 55).

Canada has resettled 40,415 Afghans since August 2021.<sup>16</sup> It has developed several pathways of entry for Afghans, many of which were designed for people who had assisted the Canadian government during its war in Afghanistan, including:

- **The Special Immigration Measures Program for Afghan nationals (and their families) who assisted the Government of Canada**, with the goal of resettling 18,000 people. Refugees need to prove their employment in “significant and/or enduring relationship with the Government of Canada” (e.g., as interpreters or diplomatic staff), and need to be referred through Global Affairs or National Defence.
- **Pathway to permanent residence for extended family members of former interpreters**, targeting 5,000 people, who are required to demonstrate their kinship with an interpreter who had worked for the Canadian government and had already arrived in Canada between 2009 and 2012.
- **Afghans who are extended family members of former language and cultural advisors (LCAs)**, closely resembling the preceding scheme, though it has no numerical target and is directed to those whose family members worked in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021 during which time they had to have become Canadian citizens or permanent residents.
- **A special program to sponsor Afghan refugees without refugee status from the UNHCR** aimed at 3,000

<sup>16</sup> All numbers and factual descriptions of the program details in the subsection on Canada come from the Canadian government website (<https://www.canada.ca/>) and are accurate as of October 17, 2023, unless otherwise indicated.

people who needed to be privately sponsored yet without the sponsors having to submit a refugee status determination document.

- **A special humanitarian program focused on resettling vulnerable Afghans**, without a numerical target and aiming to enroll women leaders, human rights activists, persecuted religious or ethnic minorities, LGBTI individuals, and people engaged in journalism.

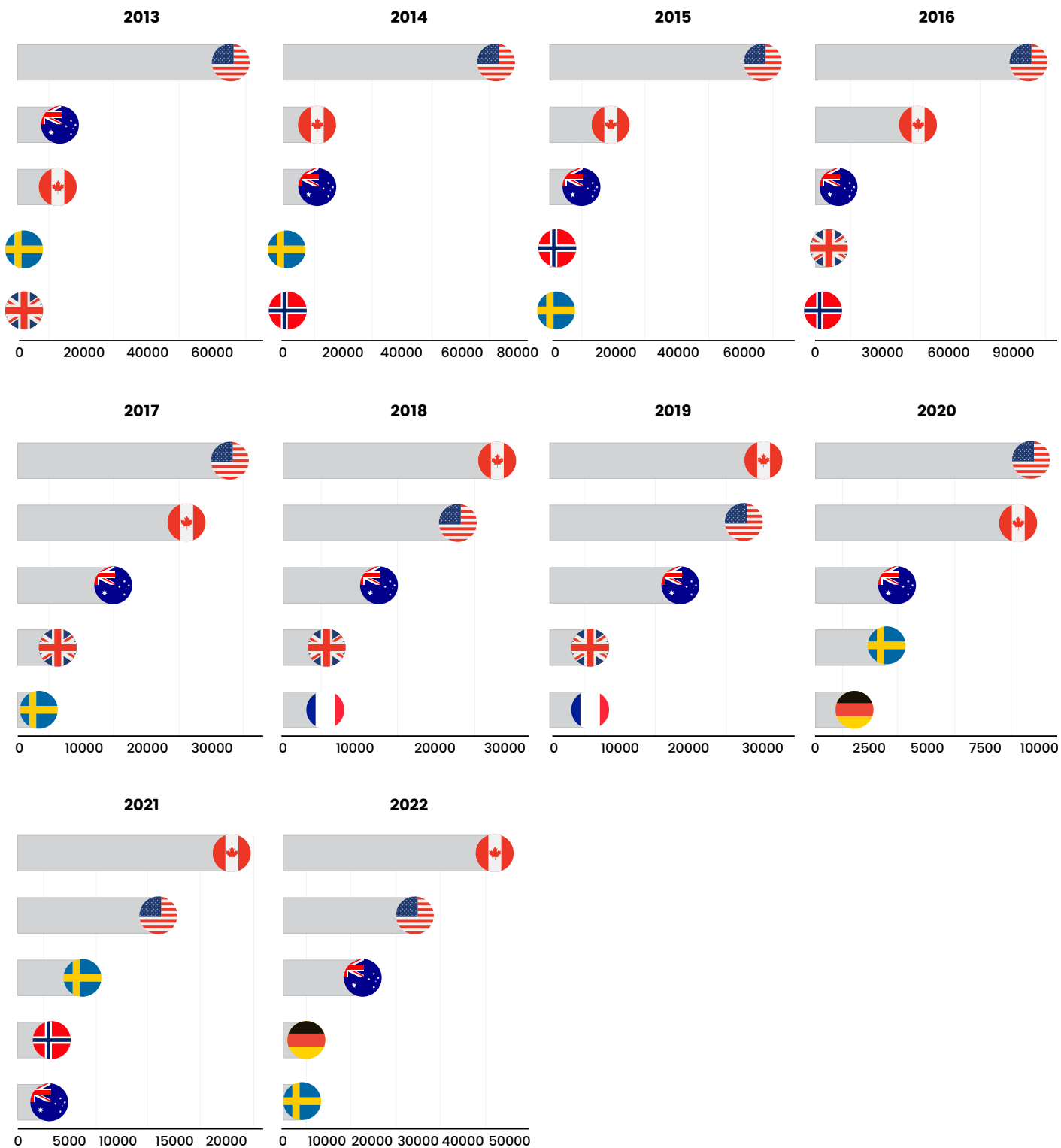
Although multiple entry pathways have been made available to Afghan refugees, these are heavily focused on fast-tracking people who helped Canadian military efforts in Afghanistan. This makes clear the importance of refugee streams for domestic politics, in terms of benefiting Canada but also in terms of making visible the identitarian markers of class, as interpreters, journalists, and cultural advisors would be people with high human capital skills. As discussed above, circumstantial attributes, for instance the experience of group-specific persecution in the country of origin (e.g., against women or religious minorities) also play a role in making host societies more open to certain groups of refugees (e.g., the special protection schemes for vulnerable Afghans). Notably, all pathways for Afghan refugees have been designed with permanency in mind. Afghans get legal **permanent residency status** on arrival in Canada, meaning that within five years they will be eligible to apply for citizenship (Dawi, 2023).

When it comes to **Ukrainian refugees**, the Canadian government relied primarily on a single-entry scheme, called the **Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel**, or **CUAET** for short (Hamilton et al., 2022). CUAET allowed Ukrainian nationals and their family members to apply for a three-year temporary residence permit free of charge, which provided them with access to primary and secondary education, provincial healthcare coverage, and open work permits (by separate application) (Greenaway et al., 2022). As of October 2023, a total of 198,642 people had come to Canada under this scheme. However, several issues have been identified with CUAET, including delay in approvals by Canadian officials, as well as skewed reporting: it appears that the official counts include Ukrainians who arrived before the war, in January, and those crossing the border for repeated trips (e.g., truck drivers going to the US or those with Canadian permanent residency visiting home) (Falconer, 2022). The overseas application process under CUAET closed on July 15, 2023, but in October 2023 Canada launched a selective permanent residency pathway for Ukrainians in Canada, but only for those who have a Canadian citizen or permanent resident family member already in the country (IRCC, 2023b).

Public sentiment in Canada has shown strong support for welcoming Ukrainians, with 80 percent approval, aligning with the government's uncapped CUAET policy (Falconer, 2022). In contrast, approval for Afghan refugee resettlement stands at 56 percent (IRCC, 2023c). Some have interpreted this support as being related to ethnicity, as 1.4 million Canadians identify as Ukrainian and 2.8 million as having Eastern Bloc roots (Falconer, 2022).

While the entry pathways for Ukrainian and Afghan refugees differ, evaluating which is the "better" approach is complex. Afghans have typically gained permanent residency upon arrival, whereas Ukrainians have been granted entry on a temporary basis. The debate centres on what constitutes a more hospitable welcome: open borders or the promise of permanent integration. Critics of Canada's temporary measures for Ukrainians suggest a preference for offering permanent residency upon arrival (Bejan & Bryan, 2022). However, an aspect that has been less examined is the commonality in admissions among both groups, namely, that permanent residency is often reserved for those who already have ties to Canada.

Figure 3. Top 5 Countries for Refugee Resettlement Globally (2013-2022)



Number of resettled refugees

Notes: Original figure created for this publication.

Data source: UNHCR (2023a) Refugee Data Finder.

Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=4oP9dU> [Accessed on November 10, 2023]

Some might argue that the entry pathways for Afghans were better designed because of Canada's strong historical experience with resettlement. In comparison, the CUAET scheme is not a transitional program for refugees, as it differs significantly from Canada's earlier resettlement initiatives in a number of aspects, notably, in providing only temporary protection. While CUAET has guaranteed that Ukrainians can enter Canada quickly and have expedited access to the labour market, it also lacked the "hand-holding" assistance provided under the classic refugee-determination streams, such as state-supported integration programs (Bejan & Bryan, 2022).

However, although Afghans have entered Canada with permanent residency, the literature identified several issues relating to their integration in Canada, such as access to affordable housing and the labour market, and difficulty in establishing social networking connections (Wilkinson et al., 2022). None of the articles reviewed for Canada explored the integration of Ukrainians into Canadian society. In the EU, however, research has found that many Ukrainians cannot enroll in integration classes or study foreign languages, and that they are unable to find quality employment despite their education (Mykolayets et al., 2023).

Most of the literature reviewed took a positive view of the CUAET, especially because entries were uncapped. The difference between the design of Ukrainian and Afghan entry schemes was often interpreted as being related solely to racial favouritism. This points to a perceived hierarchy of victims based on binaries such as Global North/Global South, white/racialized, deserving/undeserving, and civilized/uncivilized, which seem to cloud the lens of some Western media and government policies (McCloskey, 2022) in constructing Ukrainians as more European and hence more white (De Coninck, 2023), hence as and less threatening compared to racialized refugees from the Middle East (Esposito, 2022).

## **United Kingdom**

In recent years, the road to hospitality in UK asylum policy, the "unconditional and unpredictable" kind advocated by Derrida and Dufourmantelle (2000) has not only stalled, but has deliberately been taken in a U-turn. In (an admittedly imperfect) contrast to Canada, the UK government chose to build a hostile rather than a hospitable environment for migrants and asylum-seekers (Ratzmann & Sahraoui, 2021).<sup>17</sup>

These hostile policies aim "to dissuade illegal residence in the UK by preventing people from accessing basic services" through a series of bureaucratic controls "requiring migrants to frequently prove their right to reside during everyday life" (Griffiths & Yeo 2021, pp. 2–3). They tend to manifest through restricted access to the labour market and the welfare state (Allsopp, 2022; Bales, 2023), including healthcare (Besana et al., 2022), as well as through tighter border controls, delays in asylum processing (Webber, 2022), and negative portrayal in media and the public discourse (Lido et al., 2021; Montgomery et al., 2023).

In broad terms, the approach taken towards **Afghan refugees** in the UK fits closely with this hostile approach. Afghan refugees were sorted into two distinct categories – those eligible and enrolled on two specially designed programs that emphasized a prior connection to the UK, and those who were ineligible because they lacked such a connection. The dedicated programs in question were:

- The **Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)**, targeted at women, children, and religious, ethnic, and sexual minorities fleeing violence.<sup>18</sup> ACRS capped entry at 5,000 resettlements in the first year and 20,000 thereafter in total. Accommodation had to be secured in advance or entrants had to be able to pay for housing for themselves. Moreover, ACRS set strict eligibility requirements, limiting it to people evacuated from Kabul in August 2021 (Operation Pitting)<sup>19</sup> and those referred by the UNHCR, other NGOs, or the British Council, GardaWorld contractors, and Chevening alumni.<sup>20</sup>
- The **Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy scheme (ARAP)** was for Afghans who had worked for the British military. Applicants were able to submit their files online and were eligible to bring their families as well. However, the fine print specified multiple conditions that made many Afghans ineligible to apply. Among these was the requirement not to have been dismissed from their role, the requirement to demonstrate that the role in which they had worked had a level of public recognition, and not already having an internationally recognized refugee status.

Entrants through both ARAP and ACRS were able to stay for an indefinite period of time in the UK. As reported by Walsh and Sumption (2023), as of June 2023 the two programs had resettled 10,052 and 11,474 Afghans respectively (out of 1.6 million Afghans fleeing the country since 2021).

Although they are fleeing the same violence and destitution, Afghans who are not eligible for the two “bespoke” routes, including many at-risk people like journalists, who were left in Afghanistan during the August 2021 evacuation, are left with no regularized way of entering the UK, and are thus forced to choose dangerous entry routes (Webber, 2022; López & Ryan, 2023). This leads to thousands of Afghans having to claim asylum only after they arrive in the UK, which limits their right to work until their application is evaluated (Schultz & Kaytaz, 2021). In addition, they are regularly stigmatized by politicians and demonized in the press as illegal migrants (López & Ryan, 2023). According to the UK Home Office (2023b), in 2022 there were 10,011 Afghan applicants who had arrived irregularly in the UK. According to the same data, however, up to 98 percent of the applications by Afghans are reviewed positively, a rate double that of almost all other major groups of asylum-seekers, apart from Syrians and Eritreans.

**Ukrainian refugees** have been arriving in the UK under three programmes:

- The **Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme**, commonly referred to as “**Homes for Ukraine**”. This allows any Ukrainian to enter the UK if they are sponsored by a UK-based individual (the sponsor can also be the devolved government in the case of Scotland and Wales), meaning a person who will host them for six months minimum. 175,400 visas were issued under this program as of November 2023, making it the most common route of entry into the UK for Ukrainians, even if only 137,200 arrivals under the scheme were reported.
- The **Ukrainian Family Scheme**, directed at Ukrainian nationals with a family member already settled in the UK prior to 2022. This route has granted 70,900 visas thus far, recording 55,500 arrivals.
- The **Ukraine Visa Extension**, which allows Ukrainian nationals (and their families) who had permission to stay in the UK prior to 2022 to extend their right to stay and the associated rights to work, study, and access welfare benefits for up to three years. Thus far, 21,700 extensions of this type have been granted.

Applications to all the Ukrainian schemes are free and entrants have the right to work and to access education and welfare benefits. Ukrainian university students are also eligible for home fee status (Lewis & Wilson, 2023).

Despite their relatively broad eligibility criteria, these schemes have been criticized on several grounds, as being too slow, restrictive, and bureaucratic (Tomlinson, 2022; Miller et al., 2022). Tomlinson (2022) lists several types of barriers that these programs unduly presented to potential applicants, including failing to incorporate the complexities of the situation on the ground (e.g., visa-based travel requirements, biometric passports, administrative and linguistic complexity), leaving room for bureaucratic discretion, providing narrow legal definitions (e.g., with regard to unaccompanied children or who counts as a family member), as well as poor policy guidance on individual applications. Tomlinson (2022) also cites a survey from April 2022 in which 55 percent of UK respondents believed that the British state was making it too difficult for Ukrainian refugees to arrive in the UK. Moreover, a study surveying 191 Ukrainians found that after six months in the country refugees faced acute risks of homelessness and poverty, and faced various difficulties with employment, citing barriers such as language requirements, lack of recognition of educational qualifications, and lack of transportation and childcare (Sehic, 2022). Other works highlight additional issues for Ukrainians, such as assessments for disability benefits, outsourcing of medical assessments, and risk of exploitation in the “Homes for Ukraine Scheme” where potential sponsors had criminal records or could not provide suitable accommodation (Machin, 2023).

<sup>17</sup> Ironically, the words “hostile” and “hospitality” share the Latin root *hostis*, ‘stranger’, yet clearly “hospitality appears more rightfully as the opposite of hostility” (Boudou, 2022, p. 77)

<sup>18</sup> All numbers and factual descriptions of the programmes’ details in the subsection on the UK come from the UK government website (<https://www.gov.uk/>) and are accurate as of October 17, 2023, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>19</sup> Including those assured of evacuation, which for various logistical and security reasons did not happen.

<sup>20</sup> Those three groups are listed separately as eligible to apply for the ACRS under Pathway 3. The British Council is a cultural and educational institution for the promotion of British culture and language around the world. GardaWorld is a private security company, which offered protection services to the embassies of Western countries in Kabul, including the embassy of the UK. Chevening is a UK government program offering international scholarships funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, which has worked with over 55,000 alumni globally in the 40 years since its establishment.



For Afghans in the UK, challenges in securing accommodations and accessing employment have also been identified (Mackenzie, 2022), as well as issues related to acquiring English proficiency and the development of networks and community-based social connections (Vidal & Palombo, 2022). Overall, there has not been much written on the integration of Afghan refugees in the UK.

As in Canada (see Figure 4), public sentiment in the UK is tipped in favour of the Ukrainians, with only 50 percent of UK respondents willing to let in the Afghan refugees, compared to 70 percent in the case of Ukrainians (Alamy, 2022).

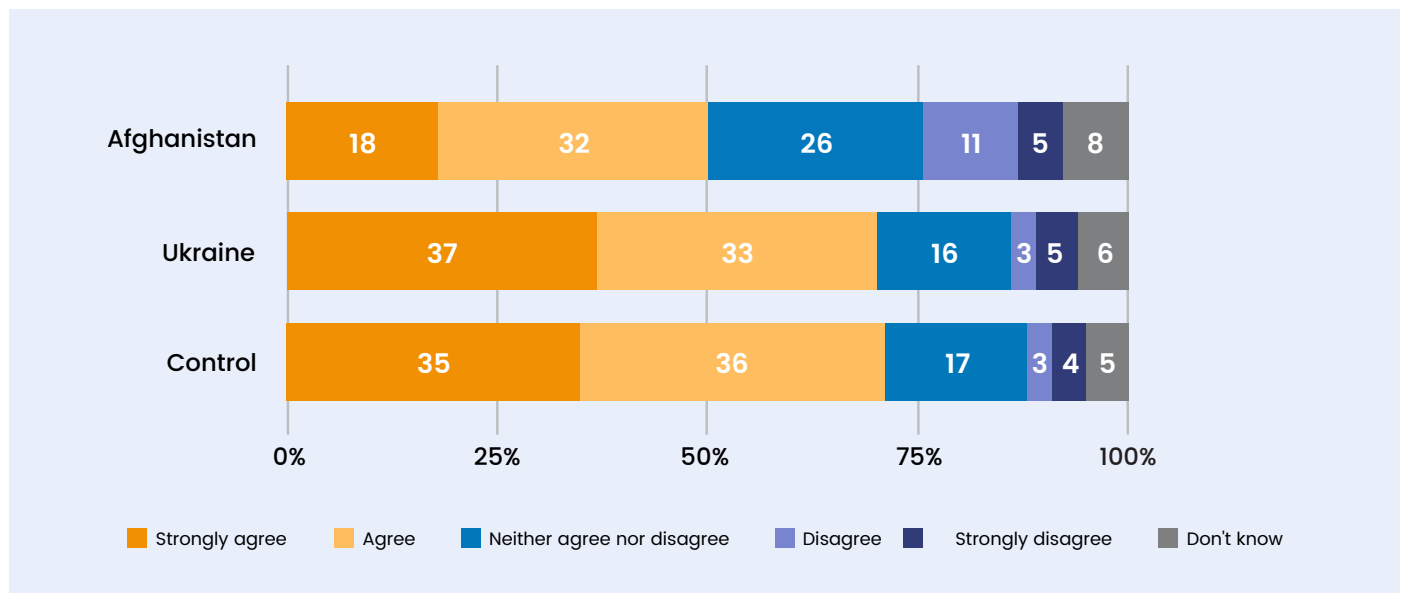
As in the Canadian context, it is difficult to interpret which of the two groups of migrants had access to a hospitable welcoming. The **overall approach towards Afghan refugees appears far less welcoming compared to Ukrainians**, if expedited access across the border is the welcoming axis taken into account. Far fewer people are eligible from the start to enroll in the Afghan protection schemes, primarily because entries are capped and eligibility is selective, and Afghans must meet a stricter set of criteria, like membership in a vulnerable group or past engagement with the British state. In contrast, there are no caps on the numbers of Ukrainians who can enter through the UK schemes; however, Ukrainians also have to show connection with the British state, either by having family in the country or themselves having had the right to be in the country. And although Ukrainians can apply to the streams of entry themselves and without a formal referral by a designated organization, the requirement of a British sponsor still entails that a British individual needs to refer them to the state, as they will not be able to enter without this sponsorship.

The entry streams for Afghans do grant leave to remain in the country indefinitely, and so entrants will have the right to apply for citizenship after five years, whereas the schemes for Ukrainians are envisioned on temporary grounds, with little clarity on what options will be available for entrants at the end of their three-year period.

The main issue with restricted border access for Afghans is that most are forced to enter the West by irregular pathways. For example, in 2022 alone, over 9,000 Afghans arrived in the UK by crossing the English Channel in small boats (UK Home Office, 2023c). There are no similar figures for Ukrainians entering irregularly.

Despite the presumption that Canada is more welcoming to refugees than the UK, and that Ukrainians have been more warmly welcomed in both Canada and the UK compared to Afghans, it is important to note that both countries welcomed an insignificant number, **less than 4 percent of the global total share of both Afghan and Ukrainian refugees**.

**Figure 4. Responses to a YouGov UK Survey Question Reading “We Should Let Refugees Fleeing Conflict Come and Stay in the UK.”**



Source: Alamy (2022)

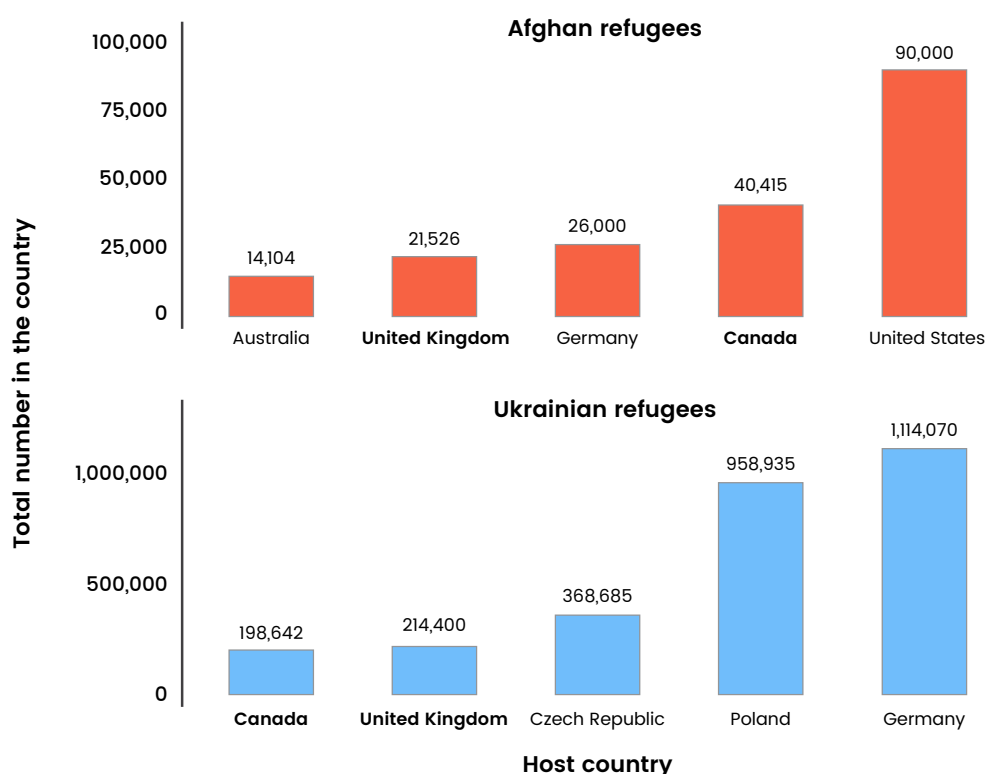
## Canada vs. the UK

Overall, the literature reviewed proves to be, at worst, cautiously praising the Canadian asylum policy, especially when it comes to resettlement, while the UK is highly criticized for its continued hostile approach. The UK welcomed slightly more Ukrainians than Canada, but overall, both countries welcomed an insignificant number of both Afghans and Ukrainians. Considering Canada's geographic position, located much further away from both refugee groups' countries of origin, the UK's welcoming appears to be more restrictive.

**Canada welcomed 40,415 Afghans (just over 2 percent of the global share of Afghan refugees) and approximately 198,642 Ukrainians (just over 3 percent of the global share of Ukrainian refugees).**

**The UK welcomed 21,526 Afghans (just over 1 percent of the global share of Afghan refugees) and approximately 262,000 Ukrainians (just over 3 percent of the global share of Ukrainian refugees).**

Figure 5. Number of Afghan and Ukrainian Refugees in Selected Western Countries



**Notes:** Original figure created for this publication. Values show the most accurate and most up-to-date numbers of refugees staying in a country, at the time of publication. Values for Afghan refugees refer only to people that arrived after August 2021.

**Data sources:** Refugee Council of Australia (2023), UNHCR (2023c), UK Home Office (2023d), IRCC (2023b, 2023c).

The Canadian and British approaches both tend to value applicants who can show **prior connection to the country**, especially in terms of granting them permanent residency status. For those who cannot show prior connection to the country, as in the case of those entering through the CUAET without family members in Canada, there are no pathways to permanent resident status. The insistence in both Canada and the UK on family ties seems to serve as an insurance measure against the welcomed refugee applicants becoming dependent on the state.

The end of these entry schemes in both countries invite criticism, in light of the fact that the political situation has not been normalized in either Ukraine or Afghanistan. Both Canada and the UK set numerical caps on the number of resettled Afghans, making it uncertain what will happen to the “excess” people who are also eligible for protection. Furthermore, the Canadian CUAET visa provision for Ukrainians was closed in July 2023, thus ending the pathway with the most generous protection for that group, despite the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Moreover, the mere existence of such “bespoke” schemes reveals the existence of “hierarchies of deservingness” (Vaughan-Williams, 2021) in the two states’ approaches to refugee protection. The conflicts and persecution in countries such as Ethiopia, Libya, Syria, or Yemen are not any less real, and not even all Afghans and Ukrainians are deemed equally worthy of special protection measures, given that they must meet specific criteria pertaining to their previous occupation, connection to the destination country, or membership in a designated vulnerable group.

## Conclusion

The literature identified a variety of factors that play a role in the perceived deservingness of a refugee group to access protection in host states, from identitarian factors such as gender, race, age, nationality, and class, to circumstantial factors, to the interplay of economics, as well as domestic and foreign policy considerations.

Ukrainians were expedited into the EU and neighbouring countries in Eastern Europe and given the right to work and to access state support. Afghans, by contrast, usually can enter the EU only via irregular means, and so have to deal with regular pushback at the EU’s borders and possible encampment, and so encounter a much more strenuous journey into Europe.

Canada and the UK together have welcomed only an insignificant number of Ukrainians and Afghans, less than 4 percent of the global share of the refugees represented by these two populations. In both countries, both Ukrainians and Afghans have had the right to access further rights inside the country, and thus to access the right to permanent residency, only if they were able to show a prior connection to the country.

Although the literature reviewed here identifies a variety of intersecting factors in the determination of the deservingness of refugees’ groups, it seems often to conflate race with ethnicity when discussing identity as a determining factor in refugees’ reception, without defining what race is or what ethnicity is, and without explaining why race and ethnicity should be treated as synonymous. Consider, for example, that South Africans and Zimbabweans share ethnic and linguistic commonalities, yet South Africa has built a fence to keep Zimbabweans out of its territory, primarily because they are seen as taking over local jobs (Al-Jazeera, 2020). Or consider Afghans in Iran: they are culturally close to Iranians and the Dari-speaking Pashtuns, and can easily communicate in Farsi, yet they are the most inferiorized migrant category in Iran (Khosravi, 2010), similar to Mexican workers in Canada or Albanian workers in Greece.

This is not to say that race and ethnicity do not matter, but rather that future research in forced migration studies needs to explore when and how identitarian factors matter and how they change according to the geopolitical context. That is, forced migration research needs to stop universalizing singular factors of analysis as if they were applicable to multiple geopolitical contexts that each have their own complicated dynamics. Forced migration researchers need to take the time to study the contexts and variables that affect refugees’ trajectories from their country of origin to their destination country, and map the fields in which these variables interact, including their geopolitical context.

The question of the positive reception of Ukrainian refugees should be posed not only in relation to others – explaining the fact that Ukrainians are privileged in terms of the fact that others are underprivileged –but also in relation to why the Ukrainians were treated the way they were. The question is of what were the variables specific to them and their geopolitical context that led to their having access to fast-tracked routes of entry into Europe, and not necessarily what was *lacking* in others that framed them a less deserving category of people to be helped.

Nationality is identified in the literature as a variable determining how refugees are received, yet it is often interpreted as simply a proxy for race, ethnicity, or culture. This is why restrictions on the freedom of African students in Ukraine at the time of the Russian invasion to enter Western Europe and adjacent Eastern European countries were seen as a matter of race rather than nationality, despite the fact that EU migration laws classify subjects on the basis of nationality, not race. It is nationality that will classify a subject as a third-country national and not race per se. Such reasoning, which treats nationality merely as a racist proxy, disregards the objective reality of the *hierarchy of nations*. For example, a holder of an American passport can enter almost every country on the globe, but a holder of

an Iranian passport might be allowed to enter only a handful of countries, yet both the American and Iranian might be classified on the US census form as “white.”<sup>21</sup> However, the simplistic reasoning about race, which is only one determining variable among many in establishing the deservingness of refugee groups, obscures the discriminatory effects of nationality and of the current regimes of citizenship in bestowing freedom of movement.

It is their nationality per se, that is, being citizens of Ukraine, that most likely positioned Ukrainian nationals as a special class of refugees, especially given the pre-existent diplomatic relations between the EU and Ukraine, which aimed to move Ukraine towards EU integration. As a candidate for EU integration, Ukraine is a signatory to both the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the EU Association Agreement, which both outline the foreign policy relations with countries on the path to EU integration. With a budget of 15.4 billion euros, the ENP supports economic and social reforms in the EU’s neighbouring countries, including Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia, and Ukraine (European Commission, 2022a). Since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis in 2014, the ENP has directed close to 365 million euros to building Ukraine’s economy and supporting its integration into the EU (European Commission, 2015). In 2014, Ukraine also signed the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (European Parliament, 2014), which was key in defining Ukraine as a European country with shared history and values, and in granting Ukrainians, via the Visa Liberalization Action Plan, visa-free access to the Schengen space for up to 90 days. Ukraine was granted EU candidacy in June 2022, having submitted its application just after the start of the war (European Council, 2022). These legislative agreements have been positioning Ukraine at the East-West crossroads, with one foot inside the EU and one foot outside. One effect of these treaties is to construct Ukrainians as a special class of migrants who are entitled to mobility rights in Europe that are often unavailable to those from countries outside the EU, whose citizens are classified in EU migration law as third-country nationals.

While social class is mentioned in the reviewed literature, it is by far the most understudied among all the identitarian characteristics. We know very little about how socio-economic status influences the movement of people in need of humanitarian protection. Class manifests through habitus, social capital, and status distinction (Appiah, 2018; Bourdieu, 1984). It is easily visible on the body, in one’s choice of clothes, one’s mannerisms, one’s vocabulary and ways of talking, and generally one’s ways of being (Bourdieu, 1984). When a journalist on France’s BFM TV remarked that Ukrainians fleeing the country are “Europeans leaving in cars that look like ours” (Bayoumi, 2022), referring to the SUVs lined up at the borders, he saw this as indicative of their class position.

The literature exploring the role of geopolitics in states’ reception policies is complex, and rarely enters into the broad public discourse. Egypt, Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and Pakistan are all used in the literature as examples to show that national interests are always leveraged in international politics, as they relate to the allocation of mobility rights. Clearly, foreign policy considerations have also mattered in the responses of Canada and the UK to Afghan and Ukrainian refugees. The West’s unequivocal position that Russia is an enemy most likely has also played a role in the inclination of both countries to open their borders to Ukrainians.

<sup>21</sup> The 2020 US Census for the first time recorded Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) appurtenance, such as Lebanese, Iranian and Egyptian populations, but the racial category in the census listed them under the ‘white’ race (US Census Bureau, 2023).

## Implications

The findings of *A Tale of Two Contexts* have both policy and research implications.

### Policy Implications

- **Eligibility for the Afghans permanent residency streams of entry into both Canada and the UK should be broadened.** Considering the low number of Afghan entries in both nation-states, *A Tale of Two Contexts* recommends lifting the strict eligibility criteria that only allow entry based on proof of a prior connection to the destination country.
- **Permanent residency should be granted to Ukrainians** who have entered both Canada and the UK, not only to those showing prior connection to the destination country. Current schemes for Ukrainians do not grant permanent residency on arrival and are generally set to end after a limited time. However, the war in Ukraine might not end within that time frame, and many might choose to remain in their new country.
- **The CUAET scheme in Canada should be reopened**, considering that the war in Ukraine has not ended.
- **The use of irregular routes of entry should be decriminalized** and domestic laws should be implemented to ensure that refugees are not criminalized for the mode of entry into the country. This would also abide by Article 31 of the 1951 Refugee Convention and would not assign deservingness to refugees based on their route of entry. It would also decrease the reliance of refugees on dangerous routes of entry.
- **Monthly allowances should be provided.** Many refugees struggle financially especially in terms of accessing affordable accommodation. Monthly allowances provided on universal criteria would improve the integration of all refugee groups accessing them.
- **Professional credentials and diplomas should be recognized.** Lack of recognition of credentials prevents refugees from accessing the local labour market after arriving in the destination country. In an era marked by global mobility, national economies need to provide faster routes for people to have their credentials recognized. This will also benefit the receiving countries, many of them with shrinking national populations, by facilitating high-skill asylum-seekers in meeting needs in the national labour markets.]
- **Cooperation with the civil society settlement sector should be promoted.** As welfare state provisions in the West have been shrinking, civil society has been stepping in to fill service gaps in relation to the protection of refugees. Western states need to support and foster cooperation with service providers, as integration-related concerns, such as belonging, obtaining linguistic proficiency, or accessing the labour market, have been identified in both Canada and the UK, and these are generally the type of issues that settlement service providers aim to address in the community.

### Research Implications

- **The integration outcomes and the structural challenges to integration should be explored** for both Afghans and Ukrainians in both contexts, Canada, and the UK. This will provide data in terms of how hospitable both nations really are for the two groups of people.
- **Identitarian factors of refugees, such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, nationality, and class, should be empirically isolated**, and their role as determinants for mobility rights and for a country's hospitality towards groups of refugees in terms of their deservingness of access to state protection should be explored across different geopolitical contexts. Extant literature conflates multiple identitarian factors into singular ones.
- **Geopolitical considerations should be explored.** This is an understudied area of refugee studies, in shaping domestic policies as they relate to the allocation of rights to different refugee groups.
- **Online discourse** surrounding the welcoming of various migrant groups should be explored, and how public opinion dynamics leveraged through both traditional and social media influence asylum reception policy positions should be empirically tested.
- **Global North bias in refugee studies should be reduced.** The region that is commonly called the Global North is over-researched when it comes to refugee policy, despite the fact that the majority of refugees are hosted in developing countries.

## **Knowledge Mobilization**

Findings from *A Tale of Two Contexts* will provide valuable insights into Canadian and British policymaking in relation to international protection mechanisms for refugees. *A Tale of Two Contexts* is published by the Centre of Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), University of Oxford, and can be accessed at the following link:  
<https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/2023/a-tale-of-two-contexts/>

The report will be presented at the Government of Canada's Knowledge Synthesis Grant - Knowledge Mobilization Forum on January 16, 2024.

Findings will also be presented at the Jean Monnet European Union Centre at Dalhousie University in March 2024, and at the British Association of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies in April 2024. Further knowledge dissemination events will also be scheduled at COMPAS.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A. Examples of Data Search Tables

### ASYLUM AND REFUGEE POLIC\* CANADA

Database	Results	Notes
Sociological Abstracts	284 results (283 scholarly journals, 1 magazine)	Reviewed 284 results, selected 31
Oxford Scholarship Online	558 results (335 books, 3 book parts, 176 chapters, 42 end matter, 2 front matter)	Reviewed the first 160 results, selected 20
PAIS Index	63 results (58 scholarly journals, 3 magazines, 2 reports)	Reviewed all results and selected 4
Research Library	825 results (443 scholarly journals, 2 newspaper, 74 magazines, 26 trade journals, 44 reports)	Reviewed the first 500 results, selected 12
CBCA Complete	504 results (97 scholarly journals, 88 newspaper, 16 magazines, 1 trade journal, 262 wire feeds)	Reviewed all results, selected 15 (erased wire feeds)
Google Scholar	17,300 results	Reviewed the first 6 pages of results, selected 27
Factiva	1 result	Reviewed and selected the single result
Google	27,300,000	Reviewed the first 3 pages of results, selected 10
Canada Commons	218 results (204 reports, 11 books, 3 journals)	Reviewed all selected 4

### CANADA UKRAINE AUTHORIZATION FOR EMERGENCY TRAVEL + CUAET

Database	Results	Notes
Sociological Abstracts	1 result (1 scholarly journal)	Reviewed and selected the 1 result
Oxford Scholarship Online	3 results	Reviewed all results, all judged not relevant
PAIS Index	3 results (3 scholarly journals)	Reviewed all results, selected 2
Research Library	141 results (26 scholarly journals, 1 newspaper, 85 magazines, 1 trade journal, 17 reports)	Reviewed all results, selected 1 (erased 21 wire feeds)
CBCA Complete	142 results (3 scholarly journals, 37 newspaper, 3 magazines, 92 wire feed, 7 other sources)	Reviewed all results, selected 17 (erased 34 wire feeds)
Google Scholar	44 results	Reviewed all results, selected 11
Factiva	376 results	Reviewed all results, selected 33.
Google	37,200 results	Reviewed the first 3 pages of results, selected 10
Canada Commons	28 results	Reviewed all selected 4

## AFGHAN CITIZENS RESETTLEMENT SCHEME

Database	Results	Notes
Sociological Abstracts	11 results (11 scholarly journals)	Reviewed all, selected 3
Oxford Scholarship Online	0 results	Selected 0 articles
PAIS Index	2 results (2 scholarly journals)	Reviewed all, selected 1
Research Library	99 results (16 scholarly journals, 11 magazines, 11 trade journals, 3 reports, 57 wire feeds, 1 other sources)	Reviewed all, selected 51 (removed 34 wire feeds)
CBCA Complete	3 results (3 scholarly journals)	Selected 0 articles
Google Scholar	37 results	Reviewed all, selected 17
Factiva	1,098 results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 54 The Guardian</li> <li>• 46 Daily Mail</li> <li>• 13 British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)</li> <li>• 0 The Conversation UK</li> <li>• From The Conversation UK website:</li> </ul> 3 results From the BBC News website: 240 results	Reviewed 54 articles from The Guardian, selected 29 Reviewed 46 articles from the Daily Mail, selected 15 Reviewed BBC Factiva articles, selected 0 Reviewed all results from The Conversation UK, selected 3 Reviewed all results from the BBC News website, selected 28
Google	17,200 results	Reviewed the first three pages, selected 26
Canada Commons	0 results	Selected 0 articles

## Appendix B. Review Master Sheet

Review Questions	Team Member	Article Number
<p><b>What Works?</b>            What makes certain refugee groups deserving of state protection?            What matters in states' responses in terms of allowing asylum seekers to enter the country (e.g., ethnicity, bilateral relations, foreign policy, race, class, etc.)            International focus: What works in other countries?            Domestic focus: What works in Canada and the UK? (positive policies for various groups of refugees)</p>	Researcher A	<p><b>UK List:</b> 1, 2, 5, 9, 14, 17, 22, 23, 27, 30, 34, 35, 37, 44, 47, 48, 50, 52, 55, 59, 64, 67  <b>Canada List:</b> 3, 10, 16, 17, 19, 21, 32, 40, 41, 48, 60, 62, 82, 83, 93, 98, 99, 100, 101, 103, 104, 108, 111</p>
	Researcher B	<p><b>UK List:</b> 3, 10, 15, 18  <b>Canada List:</b> 7, 8, 26, 27, 36, 37, 43, 45, 90, 91, 92, 95, 97, 110</p>
	Researcher C	<p><b>UK List:</b> 6, 13, 16, 19, 24, 26, 28, 31, 39, 40, 42, 46, 49, 58, 60, 62, 63, 69, 73, 77, 78  <b>Canada List:</b> 5, 20, 22, 25, 30, 39, 42, 46, 49, 51, 94, 96, 106, 112</p>
	Researcher D	<p><b>UK List:</b> 8, 11, 12, 21, 25, 29, 32, 33, 36, 38, 41, 43, 56, 61, 65  <b>Canada List:</b> 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 14, 18, 23, 24, 29, 38, 57, 63, 80, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 102, 105, 109, 113</p>
<p><b>For whom?</b>            How welcomed were Afghans and Ukrainians generally, in other states? + some positive policy measures.            How welcomed were Afghans and Ukrainians in Canada and the UK?</p>	Researcher A	<p><b>UK List:</b> 4, 51            Canada List: 11, 68, 69</p>
	Researcher B	<p><b>UK List:</b> 7,  <b>Canada List:</b> 31, 33, 34, 35, 58, 72, 74, 76</p>
	Researcher C	<p>Canada List: 64, 66, 73, 77</p>
	Researcher D	<p><b>UK List:</b> 45, 66  <b>Canada List:</b> 13, 15, 67, 71, 78</p>
<p><b>Under what circumstances?</b>            What type of subjects are created through the refugee policies implemented in Canada and UK to protect Afghans and Ukrainians?            Migrants with secure statuses, who have gained permanent residency and with access to equal treatment in the host country, including full access to services?            Or migrants with less secure status, prone to precarity, as they are either temporary or subject to strict legal conditions?</p>	Researcher A	<p><b>UK List:</b> 53, 70</p>
	Researcher B	<p><b>UK List:</b> 54, 70, 74, 79, 80  <b>Canada List:</b> 44, 47</p>
	Researcher C	<p><b>UK List:</b> 75  <b>Canada List:</b> 59, 65, 75</p>
<p><b>How?</b>            What do we know about the advantages and disadvantages of the refugee protection schemes for Afghans and Ukrainians in Canada and the UK? In terms of rights, state protection and impact on the integration of people in need of humanitarian assistance?            What policies could be implemented in Canada and the UK?</p>	Researcher A	<p>UK List: 57, 68, 71, 76, 52</p>
	Researcher B	<p>UK List: 72, 56</p>
	Researcher C	<p>Canada List: 12, 50, 53, 54, 55</p>



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