A KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG PUBLICATION

IMMIGRATION and the PUBLIC

Centre for Migration Studies Working Paper Series 2023/5

Edited by Matthew Wright

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Centre for Migration Studies

KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG

This publication is based on the proceedings of the workshop, "Public Views of Immigration and Diversity: Causes and Consequences for Policy," held at the Centre for Migration Studies, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, May 17-18, 2022.

The workshop and this publication have been generously supported by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Canada Office).

The CMS Working Paper Series is published electronically by the Centre for Migration Studies (CMS) at the University of British Columbia (UBC). https://migration.ubc.ca/research/working-paper-series

ISBN 978-1-998256-00-6

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.
Canada Office
Suite 303, 8 York Street
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1N 5S6

info.canada@kas.de

Layout and cover designs: Renée Depocas

Cover photo: Fahrul Azmi | Unsplash

About the authors

Keith Banting is the Stauffer Dunning Fellow in the School of Policy Studies and a Professor Emeritus and Queen's Research Chair Emeritus in the Department of Political Studies.

Michael Donnelly is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science and the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy at the University of Toronto.

Marc Helbling is full professor at the Department of Sociology and the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES) at the University of Mannheim and a Research Fellow at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center.

Andrea Lawlor is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at King's University College, Western University.

Rahsaan Maxwell is a Professor of Politics at New York University.

Angela X. Ocampo is an Assistant Professor of Mexican American and Latina/o/x Studies at The University of Texas at Austin.

Mireille Paquet is an Associate Professor of Political Science and Research Chair on the Politics of Immigration at Concordia University.

Margaret Peters is a Professor in the Department of Political Science and the Chair of the Global Studies Interdisciplinary Program at UCLA.

Richard Traunmüller is a Professor of Political Science and Empirical Democracy Research in the School of Social Sciences at the University of Mannheim.

Paul Vierus is a research assistant in the project 'Democracy in Crisis: The Role of Emotions and Affective Polarization for Citizens' Political Support During Threatening Events' at the Department of Political Science at the University of Duisburg-Essen.

Conrad Ziller is an Akademischer Rat (eq. Senior Researcher) in the Department of Political Science at the University of Duisburg-Essen.

About the Centre for Migration Studies

The UBC Centre for Migration Studies (CMS) was established in 2020. The Centre is located in the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people, and our work extends across unceded Coast Salish territories in what is commonly known as Metro Vancouver. CMS is committed to advancing the study of migration, mobilities, and belonging and serves as an incubator for transformative research within the academy and beyond.

As an interdisciplinary network of over 80 faculty members, 80 graduate students, and numerous community practitioners and partners, we work together to facilitate publicly-engaged dialogue that fosters inclusive and just communities. CMS does this through a rich and diverse array of research collaborations and programming initiatives. We facilitate over 50 events per year, hosting lectures, workshops, conferences, and other events for the UBC community and beyond.

In the University, CMS supports research and training through its Graduate Fellows Program, seven thematic research groups, research conferences, and its Working Paper Series. With partners in the settlement sector, neighbourhood organizations, and policy-making bodies, we strive to ground our scholarly research in relationships with people and institutions engaged in matters of migration firsthand. Our programming and research also embody our fundamental commitment to exploring possibilities for decolonizing migration studies by grappling with the intersection of migration, settler colonialism, empire, and Indigeneity.

In 2023, CMS was awarded $12.4 million in Canada First Research Excellence Funds as a partner on the “Bridging Divides” research project,

led by Toronto Metropolitan University. We are grateful for the ongoing support of the UBC Office of the Vice President, Research & Innovation (GCRC program); the Faculty of Arts; the Departments of Political Science, Sociology, Geography, Anthropology, and Central, Eastern and Northern European Studies; and the Peter A. Allard School of Law.

migration.ubc.ca

Table of contents

At a glance

Questions about immigration – how many should be allowed to come, who should be allowed to come, and on what terms – cut to the core of what political communities are about. In democratic societies, political elites mobilize public sentiment to gain office, and they depend on public support to stay there and, ultimately, make policy.

In what follows, we present, in condensed form, the findings of a May 2022 workshop generously supported by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. For this workshop, titled, "Public Views of Immigration and Diversity: Causes and Consequences for Policy," we assembled a group of leading scholars of public opinion to present cutting-edge work describing what people in modern, immigrant-receiving countries think about immigrants and immigration, why they think it, and how knowing the answers to these questions shapes the policy-making process. In addition, we asked these scholars to reflect on how their work, considered holistically, informs broader relationships between researchers, media, the punditocracy, and the political class.

Introduction

Matthew Wright
University of British Columbia

Debates among scholars, pundits, wits, and wags over immigration and its impact transpired long before Gallup did its first "real" opinion polling on the issue in the wake of 1965's Immigration and Nationality Act. The act, which formally removed *de facto* discrimination in American immigration policy and changed the demographic face of the country over ensuing decades far more than any of the bill's supporters realized at the time, spurred interest in what exactly ordinary Americans thought of those coming to their shores, to say nothing of how they would answer the key questions of any immigration policy: *how many* should be allowed to come, *who* should be allowed to come, and *on what terms*?

If what people think is the province of the pollsters, though, what has really motivated those interested in public opinion from a more academic angle has been the question of why. We now have, give or take, something like five decades' worth of research on the subject. This work focused for a long time on the attitudes of (mostly white) non-immigrants, almost always centered on the U.S., and mainly viewed public opinion about immigration through the prism of "perceived threat." The debate, above all else, was over the distinction between "economic" motivations and "cultural" ones. In a nutshell, we wanted to know whether hostility to immigration stemmed mostly from the threats immigrants posed to one's job or bottom line, or the fact that immigrants were too ethnically, culturally, and/or linguistically different to successfully "fit in."

We never really resolved these debates, but we have nevertheless come a long way. And in May of 2022, UBC's Center for Migration Studies, with the generous support of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, showcased recent work by some of the top researchers in this field. We asked them to present cutting-edge work describing *what* people in modern, immigrant-receiving countries think about immigrants and immigration, *why* they think it, and how knowing the answers to these questions shapes the policy-making process. In addition, we asked these scholars to reflect on how their work, considered holistically, informs broader relationships between researchers, media, the punditocracy, and the political class.

> We never really resolved these debates, but we have nevertheless come a long way.

Our invitees delivered, as this collection of essays shows. Our participants provided work on a variety of geographies, and with the kind of careful attention to measurement and research design that allows them (and their readers) to grapple intelligently, if still not conclusively, with the issues at stake.

What have we learned? We now, as some of the essays in this collection show, take seriously the idea that most people carry a variety of positions in their heads, and are not comfortably slotted as universally "pro-" or "anti-immigrant" on every possible dimension. For instance, Banting argues that a decades-long effort by political elites to redefine the nature of Canadian society as "multicultural" has borne fruit, but that there are limits. In particular, while Canadians readily associate "Canadianism" and "multiculturalism" to a substantial degree *in the abstract*, they are far less enthusiastic about the specific policies engineered to give minorities cultural rights. This is still a good-news story for Banting, because even

symbolic support can sustain the public's appetite for programs of mass immigration and blunt anti-immigrant, anti-minority backlash. Or, as another example of taking nuance in attitudes seriously, Helbling and colleagues contrast the questions of how many (numbers), who (selectivity), and what do they get (rights), finding that many if not most people are willing to make tradeoffs when evaluating policies; for example, many are willing to trade immigration reductions for rights-expansion to those ultimately allowed to come.

We have also expanded the menu of causes beyond the shopworn distinction between economics and culture. Some of these could be termed "bottom up," in the sense that they are based on long-standing psychological characteristics of individuals. Donnelly, for example, argues that immigration has become more salient to people as they have become more educated. Education, in this story, leads people to embrace immigration because it benefits them both economically and culturally. The flipside of the argument that some people become dispositionally more favourable to immigrants is that others may become less so. One implication of Donnelly's argument is that less-educated voters will succumb more readily to reactionary, anti-immigrant politics. Another, raised here by Ocampo, is that latent anti-Latino prejudice – a feeling that encompasses perceptions that Latinos are unwilling to assimilate, are prone to socially deviant behaviours, and threaten the long-term stability of the country – has increasingly motivated supporters of the Republican party in U.S. politics, a resource that Donald Trump harnessed in his first presidential run and will do again in 2024 along with virtually every other serious contender on the GOP side. Along similar lines, Peters examines Colombians' attitudes about Venezuelan migrants with an eye to answering whether or not immigrants' (perceived) ideological extremism might engender hostility from the host population.

Others tend to take a more top-down, which is to say elite-driven, view of public attitudes. Donnelly, for one, argues that the decline of traditional mass-based political parties and their base has opened up avenues for reactionary, anti-immigrant parties to mobilize support. And, as noted above, Banting's view of public opinion on multiculturalism places it as a consequence of decades of political story-telling about what Canada is.

Lastly, the issue of elite/institutional signalling is also taken up in Paquet and Lawlor's essay, which explores, once again leveraging the Canadian case, how official discourse on the number of immigrants allowed to come to Canada, the outlines of policy particulars, and immigrants' deservingness shapes the way Canadians think about immigration. Finally, Vierus and Ziller explain right-wing, anti-immigration politics as the product of political entrepreneurship: specifically, progressive policy change – i.e., measures enacted to facilitate immigrant integration, fight climate change, and achieve gender equality in the labor market – act as fodder for right-wing parties, who portray them as damaging to the "ordinary citizen" and thereby gain electoral support.

These models – "top down" and "bottom up" – are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are disagreements not of principle but of emphasis. Political elites require support and know how to play up various threats to get it, while at the same time people on the ground are susceptible to elite (and media) framing of what is at stake. Approaching immigration attitudes from either side yields insight on some of the more pressing questions that immigration poses. The real challenge, as many of our participants indicated throughout our workshop, may no longer be actually doing the work but rather getting it into the hands of policy-makers and stake-holders. We hope this is a productive step in that regard, and the first of many.

Immigration and the symbolic roles of multiculturalism in Canada

Keith Banting
Queens University

The year 2021 represented the 50th anniversary of the adoption of multiculturalism in Canada. In many other countries, including Germany, the multicultural approach to the ethno-racial diversity has faced a powerful political backlash. In Canada, however, support for multiculturalism seems both stable and widespread and, for many Canadians, a defining feature of their country.[1]

A closer look, however, reveals a more complex pattern. Despite its remarkable longevity, the multicultural policy strategy is not sustained by a deep and comprehensive political consensus among Canadians. At the level of public attitudes, support remains strong for the symbolic roles of the policy, but less enthusiastic about more specific interventions to accommodate difference. At the level of organized politics, several opponents have challenged multiculturalism's iconic status over the years. Many social conservatives are uncomfortable with the celebration of difference implicit in the concept; Quebec leaders have rejected the language of multiculturalism in favour of another conception of state-minority relations; and critical race analysts complain that multiculturalism obscures the reality of racial inequality in the country.

This essay explores the nature and limits of support for multiculturalism in Canada and reflects on the implications for its role in this culturally diverse country.

---

1 This essay draws on Keith Banting, "Multiculturalism Policy in Canada: Conflicted but Resilient," in Evert Lindquist et al., eds., *Policy Success in Canada* (Oxford University Press, 2022).

Public attitudes

From the outset, multiculturalism policy was part of a larger effort to reshape the traditional sense of national identity, an effort to diversify the historic conception of the country as a British/French society and to build a more inclusive nationalism reflective of Canada's cultural diversity. Multiculturalism has had considerable success in this regard. For Canadians, especially younger Canadians, multiculturalism has become a defining feature of their national identity. Surveys find that most Canadians consider multiculturalism to be very important or somewhat important to their Canadian national identity. Canadians also regard multiculturalism as part of what makes their country unique. To be sure, there are limits to public enthusiasm for multiculturalism. Canadians seem strongly committed to symbolic roles of multiculturalism, expressed in policies that recognize diversity as a central feature of Canadian life. Public support is less enthusiastic when the focus shifts to concrete policy or program changes designed to support diverse cultures or accommodate the special needs of minorities.

> Despite such limits to Canadians' embrace of multiculturalism, its symbolic role remains important.

Despite such limits to Canadians' embrace of multiculturalism, its symbolic role remains important. Perhaps most importantly, multiculturalism is one important factor helping sustain public support for one of the largest immigration programs among democratic countries. Public attitudes about immigration have remained remarkably stable throughout the turmoil of the 2000s. Canada is not immune to the tensions that exist in other countries, and about 30 percent of Canadians worry that immigrants do not embrace Canadian values. Nonetheless, the stability in general support for immigration is impressive, and the pervasive multicultural identity undoubtedly helps sustain it. In the words of one

analyst, "popular multiculturalism creates a positive political environment for the development of Canada's expansionist immigration policy and helps immigrants integrate into the economy and society" (Reitz, 2014: 108).

Despite this broad support, multiculturalism has faced opposition from social conservatives, Quebec nationalists, and critical race analysts. Examining the impact of opponents helps illuminate the nature of support for this approach to diversity.

Social conservatism

In the early years after its adoption in 1971, multiculturalism was largely protected by an all-party consensus. That political insulation ended in the election of 1993, which saw the breakthrough of the populist Reform Party. The Reform Party articulated a potent social conservatism and a highly individualist approach to diversity. The party opposed 'special' status for Quebec, spending on Aboriginal peoples, gender equality, multiculturalism, and affirmative action, all of which they saw as catering to 'special interests.' The party's 1996-97 policy statement promised to end funding of the multicultural program, and their 1997 election manifesto pledged to lead a campaign to repeal the multicultural section of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is part of the constitution of the country (Reform Party 1997).

Although the Reform Party did not last, its views on immigration and diversity became one of the streams of opinion flowing into the restructured Conservative Party in the early 2000s. The new Conservatives were determined to win power nationally, and therefore faced two conflicting imperatives: to appeal to social conservatives among their electoral base; and to build long-term electoral support among immigrant minorities, whose support is important to electoral victory. The result was a complicated balancing act. The Conservative government, which came to power in 2006, never explicitly attacked multiculturalism. They did, however, rely on a more subtle strategies to reassure social conservatives. To take one case, their 2009 revisions to the citizenship guide, which is given to immigrants preparing for the citizenship tests, sought to rejuvenate an earlier conception of Canada, downplaying multicul-

turalism in favour of Canada's military history and its legacy of British institutions and traditions. The Conservatives also targeted Muslims. They repeatedly denounced "barbaric cultural practices" and demanded that those becoming citizens would have to uncover their face during the citizenship oath.

> The Conservative government (..) did, however, rely on more subtle strategies to reassure social conservatives.

This strategy fell apart during the election of 2015, which took place during the Syrian refugee crisis. Conservatives maintained their anti-Muslim trope, campaigning hard on a promise to protect Canadian values and suggesting a wider ban on the niqab. They also promised a "barbaric cultural practices" tipline on which Canadians could inform on their neighbours. These measures proved a step too far. Support for the Conservatives dropped in the last weeks of the campaign and the Liberals won the election. Later, the former Conservative immigration minister admitted that their emphasis on "barbaric cultural practices" made many immigrants, including non-Muslims, nervous. "It's why we lost...we allowed ourselves to be portrayed in the last election as unwelcoming. That was a huge mistake." (CTV News 2016). By and large, the Conservatives have tried to avoid such mistakes since then.

Despite the Conservatives' best efforts, surveys detect no decline in the public's embrace of the symbol of multiculturalism in the later 2000s. The subsequent Liberal government reversed several of the Conservatives' policies, diluting the imprint of social conservatism. Nonetheless, the policy space remains politically sensitive, and the Liberal government has moved cautiously. It is notable that the revised citizenship guide, which was promised in the 2015 election, had still not emerged before the 2021 election. The sector seems steady and calm but perhaps also becalmed.

Quebec nationalism

In the same period, a more successful challenge to multiculturalism was emerging in Quebec. Political elites in the province were developing a different approach to diversity, known as interculturalism, which has two features that set it apart from the federal government's approach. First, while federal multiculturalism promotes the choice of two official languages, English and French, the Quebec model defines French as the language of public life in the province. Beginning in the 1990s, Quebec also developed a distinct approach to diversity, announced in a policy document entitled, *Let's Build Quebec Together: Policy Statement on Integration and Immigration* (Quebec 1990). While federal multiculturalism was seen as implying the equal recognition of all cultures, negating the centrality of any particular culture, Quebec's intercultural approach defines the francophone majority culture as the central hub towards which other minority cultures are expected to move.

In the 2000s, the differences in approach were magnified by the growing salience of religion. Commentators in Quebec increasingly define secularism as a central feature of Quebec culture, and many Quebecers fear that this commitment to *laicité* is undermined by the greater religiosity of some minorities, especially the Muslim and Sikh communities. The result has been a series of increasingly intense controversies around the wearing of religious symbols. Finally, in 2019, the provincial government passed the *Loi sur la laïcité de l'État,* which prevents new employees in the public sector from wearing religious symbols and requires members of the public to uncover their face when receiving public services. To preempt legal challenges, the government took the dramatic step of invoking the notwithstanding clause shielding the legislation from review under the Charter of Rights for five years.

As a result, two diversity models prevail in the province of Quebec, reflecting two distinct nation-building projects. The federal multicultural approach continues to apply in federal areas of jurisdiction, including in Quebec, informing such critical processes as the granting of citizenship and the conduct of citizenship ceremonies. However, the federal government has also accommodated the Quebec approach by requiring federally regulated companies to adhere to the provincial language

legislation. Moreover, given the decentralized nature of the Canadian federation, it is Quebec's less accommodating model that dominates most of the space within which Quebecers live.

Critical race perspectives

A third challenge to multiculturalism has emerged more recently in the academic community. Students of race and racism contend that multiculturalism has failed to eliminate the toxic effects of racism and racial inequality in Canada. Although there are considerable differences across racial minorities, poverty levels among some racialized communities are much higher than across the population as a whole. Among Blacks, Arabs, and West Asian communities in particular, high poverty rates persist into the second and even the third-plus generations. There is also evidence that job applicants with foreign-sounding names face discrimination in the labour market. In addition, there are racial disparities, especially for Black populations, in nearly every aspect of the criminal punishment system, including policing, the courts, and incarceration.

Defenders of multiculturalism reply that multiculturalism policies may well reduce the levels of discrimination that would otherwise prevail. However, critical race theorists worry that by focusing attention on *cultural* equality, multiculturalism serves to reassure Canadians that their country has a progressive response to diversity, deflecting attention from the realities of racial discrimination and racial economic inequality. This critique is now widespread in the academic community, but has so far not generated the sort of political challenge posed by social conservatism or Quebec nationalism.

Concluding reflections

Multiculturalism has stood the test of time for half a century in Canada. It remains a contested political project but has survived challenges that have proved potent elsewhere. So far, multiculturalism has survived its encounter with social conservatism, but has had to concede some ground in Quebec. However, as a symbol, multiculturalism remains central to national identity in English-speaking Canada.

The importance of this symbolic role should not be underestimated. In part, this is perhaps best seen in what has not happened here. Canadian politics have been less transformed by populist backlash and authoritarian anti-system politics than in some countries. Analysts have debated the extent to which populist backlash is driven by economic factors, such as growing precarity and inequality, or cultural factors, such as immigration and diversity. Canada has experienced greater inequality and precarious employment, but potential conservative populists cannot also tap into a deep public hostility to immigration and cultural diversity. They are thereby deprived of a major ingredient that has fueled backlash elsewhere.

As a result, recent populist mobilization has centred on anti-government attitudes, especially opposition to public health mandates during the pandemic. The People's Party of Canada received a derisory 1.6 per cent of the vote in 2019 when it ran on an anti-immigrant platform; but it captured almost 5 percent of the vote in 2021 when it ran in opposition to public health mandates. Similarly, despite xenophobic tinges to the truckers' convoy that occupied the centre of the capital city in 2022, it was opposition to public health mandates, not immigration, that fueled the protest.

Undoubtedly, other factors are important in explaining the limited impact of populist backlash, including an electoral system that punishes small protest parties whose support is evenly distributed across the country. Nevertheless, multiculturalism has undoubtedly been part of this outcome. That alone is a singular mark of success.

References

CTV News. 2016. "Chris Alexander on 'barbaric cultural practices': 'It's why we lost'" October 9. https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/chris-alexander-on-barbaric-cultural-practices-it-s-why-we-lost-1.3106488

Lindquist, Evert, Michael Howlett, Grace Skogstad, Geneviève Tellier, and Paul 't Hart, eds. 2022. *Policy Succes in Canada* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Quebec. 1990. *Let's Build Quebec Together: Policy Statement on Integration and Immigration.* Montréal: Ministère des Communautes Culturelles et de l'Immigration du Québec.

Reform Party of Canada. 1997. "A Fresh Start for Canadians: A 6 Point Plan to build a brighter future together." https://www.poltext.org/en/part-1-electronic-political-texts/electronic-manifestos-canada

Reitz, J. G. 2014. "Multiculturalism Policies and Popular Multiculturalism in the Development of Canadian Immigration," in J. Jedwab, ed. *The Multiculturalism Question: Debating Identity in 21st century Canada*. McGill-Queen's University Press, pp. 107-126.

Immigration policy compromises between people with pro- and anti-immigration attitudes[1]

Marc Helbling
University of Mannheim

Rahsaan Maxwell
New York University

Richard Traunmüller
University of Mannheim

Immigration is a highly divisive political issue in Western Europe and North America, with pro-immigration advocates pushing for increased migration numbers while anti-immigration constituencies mobilize for reduced migration numbers. However, a comprehensive immigration policy must also address which people are allowed into the country and what rights they will have after arriving in the country. Despite the close connection between these aspects of immigration policy, most research has examined them separately, without exploring whether preferences for one dimension are conditional on how policy is formulated on the other dimensions.

In our project we analyze immigration preferences from a multi-dimensional perspective using original nationally-representative survey data from Germany. Germany has a long history of immigration and has recently liberalized its citizenship law. As many other countries it

1 This contribution summarizes the findings from the research article, "Numbers, Selectivity, and Rights: The Conditional Nature of Immigration Policy Preferences" (2023) by Marc Helbling, Rahsaan Maxwell, and Richard Traunmüller, in *Comparative Political Studies*, 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140231178737

has experienced a divide between those who see immigration as a vital resource and those who view it as destructive. During the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis, Germany opened its borders, which was controversial and remains a contentious issue. The data collected for the research was during the Covid-19 pandemic, which may have influenced negative attitudes towards immigration due to fears of contamination from outside the country. However, recent research suggests that support for immigration did not change significantly during the pandemic in Germany.

We conducted a series of survey experiments that randomly vary the contents of policy proposals to determine how variation in restrictiveness or openness across multiple immigration policy dimensions affects public support. The key research question is whether respondents who are generally pro/anti-immigration are willing to compromise on those preferences and admit fewer/more immigrants, conditional on the selectivity of the entrance criteria and the generosity of migrants' rights eligibility. We argue that understanding the trade-offs that people are willing to make between different policy dimensions can help policymakers develop policies that are more likely to be accepted by the public. They also suggest that their research could help reduce polarization on the issue of immigration by highlighting areas of potential compromise.

We analyze support for immigration policy combinations that mix open and restrictive policies across dimensions, forcing respondents to evaluate trade-offs. We expected to find that policies that are open on all dimensions will receive the most support from people who are generally positive about immigration, and the least support from people who generally oppose immigration. Conversely, policies that are restrictive on all dimensions will receive the least support from people who are generally positive about immigration, and the most support from people who generally oppose immigration.

We then assumed that people care most about how many migrants enter the country. Research suggests that people feel more obligation to migrants already in the country, as opposed to potential future migrants. This implies that the biggest policy hurdle could be getting people to agree on how many people to admit. Therefore, people will be less flexible

on their preferences for migration flows, as opposed to selectivity or rights. Second, we like to emphasize the importance of selectivity policies. For people who tend to oppose immigration, their skepticism of migration could be overcome by the ability to choose 'the right kind' of immigrants. People who lean anti-immigration might be persuaded by the idea of selecting immigrants with demographic, educational, and occupational profiles that would contribute economically to the host country. For people who tend to support immigration, the logic is that their goals of an open society might be better accomplished by preserving open access for migrants. Therefore, people who tend to be pro or anti-immigration might both have reasons to prefer compromising on their preference for migration flows, if they get policies consistent with their preferences for selectivity. Finally, migrant rights might also play an important role. Most migrants occupy a separate legal status that does not allow them to receive a wide range of economic, cultural and political rights. Therefore, policies that are consistent with respondents' preferences for migrant rights could overcome their opposition to other policies.

> Policies that are consistent with respondents' preferences for migrant rights could overcome their opposition to other policies.

In a first survey we investigated whether people's preferences for immigration policies are conditional, that is, whether they are influenced by the specific policy combinations rather than their overall stance on immigration. The study finds that while the most extreme policy positions are the most popular among pro and anti-immigration respondents, large portions of both groups are also willing to support policy bundles that trade migration flow preferences for their preferred outcome on other dimensions, indicating conditional preferences. The main finding of the study is that sizeable percentages of the respondents would support policy combinations that involve compromising their general

immigration preferences. Among respondents who oppose immigration in general, there is a roughly 40 percent chance of supporting a compromise and allowing more immigration if the entrance criteria become more selective. Among respondents who generally support immigration, there is a roughly 35 percent chance of compromising and accepting less immigration if rights become more generous for migrants already in the country.

A second round of analyses examined whether specific economic or cultural criteria affect the conditionality of immigration policy preferences. Among pro-immigration respondents, there are no reliable interactions, and the most-preferred options are open on each policy dimension. Among anti-immigration respondents, the most-preferred options are restrictive on each policy dimension, but there is small variation across options with different economic or cultural criteria. The results suggest that the economic versus cultural distinction has modest implications for policy support, but the overall interpretation are consistent with Study 1.

In the last study we introduce two refinements to validate our previous findings regarding the conditional policy preferences of German respondents towards immigrants. The first refinement involved adjusting the survey design to more directly measure whether respondents were willing to compromise on their general immigration preferences. The second refinement focused on exploring whether conditional policy preferences were dependent on the countries of origin of the immigrants. The results of the third survey suggest again that German respondents were willing to compromise on their general preferences for immigration flows, depending on how selectivity criteria and migrant rights policies were formulated. For example, anti-immigration respondents were more likely to accept more immigrants if immigration policy became more selective, while pro-immigration respondents were more likely to accept fewer immigrants if immigrants were granted more expansive rights once in the country. It appeared again that both preferences could be reconciled in an immigration policy that is highly selective but generous with rights.

We then explored the possibility of finding a policy combination that could win support from people who were both 'pro' and 'anti' immigration. We used a Condorcet vote decision rule to examine which immigration policy the pro- and anti-immigration camps would choose if they had to make a collective decision. We found that in principle, both preferences could be reconciled in an immigration policy that is highly selective but generous with rights.

> The issue of immigration has been a contentious one in many countries for years.

The issue of immigration has been a contentious one in many countries for years. Governments and policy makers are often torn between addressing the concerns of their constituents who are anti-immigration and ensuring that their policies are inclusive and equitable for all. We found that people who are generally anti-immigration are willing to compromise and allow more immigrants to arrive if the selection process is more restrictive. This suggests that anti-immigration individuals may be more concerned with the type of immigrants that are entering their country rather than the overall number of immigrants. If policies can be put in place that ensure that only the "right" type of immigrants are allowed in, anti-immigration individuals may be more likely to support immigration. On the other hand, the study also finds that people who are generally pro-immigration are willing to compromise and reduce the number of immigrants if those who arrive get more rights. This highlights the importance of not only focusing on the number of immigrants but also ensuring that the immigrants who do arrive are treated fairly and equitably. It suggests that pro-immigration individuals may be more concerned with the treatment of immigrants rather than the overall number of immigrants.

The research also highlights the multi-dimensional nature of immigration policy preferences. This means that immigration policies cannot be viewed as a one-dimensional issue, but rather must be examined across a range of policy dimensions. It is crucial for policy makers to understand the nuanced and complex nature of immigration policy preferences in order to create policies that are effective and that resonate with their constituents.

Overall, the study offers valuable insights into the conditions under which people are willing to compromise on their general immigration preferences. It highlights the importance of considering immigration policy across multiple dimensions and suggests potential compromise patterns that could be useful for policy makers. However, more research is needed to fully understand the nuances of immigration policy preferences and to develop policies that are effective and equitable for all. As immigration continues to be a contentious issue, it is crucial for policy makers to approach it with sensitivity and an understanding of the complexity of the issue.

Three factors driving immigration politics

Michael Donnelly
University of Toronto

Immigration is a key axis of political competition in many countries. It is notable as a policy area that cuts across traditional political cleavages. Right-leaning employers stand side by side with left-leaning social justice activists in calling for more immigration, while working class natives ally themselves with conservative elites. Immigration is changing politics, and political scientists have used these changes to help us understand politics more generally.

Immigration has gone from a minor issue, far from the center of politics, to something that motivates voters on both sides of the debate. In the 1960s, by one measure, just 0.15% of sentences in major party manifestos in 12 European countries focused on immigration. Since 2000, though, that number is closer to 4% (Dancygier and Margalit 2020). In other words, it has moved from being a marginal issue to one that is comparable to law and order as a political issue.

The factors that have led immigration to move to the top of the agenda in many countries are varied, but three interrelated drivers stand out. First, mass higher education has created a substantial minority of adults that can be classed, according to Sobolewska and Ford (2020), as "conviction identity liberals." This group moves immigration to the fore because they see anti-immigration politics as xenophobic demagoguery rather than a reasonable and natural outgrowth of the existence of nation-states. Second, the weakening of party systems (Mair 2013) and their underlying integrative institutions such as unions and churches

(Donnelly 2014) has allowed political entrepreneurs to leverage latent anti-immigrant sentiment for political gain. Finally, changes in mass media mean that inevitable failures of immigration and integration policy become high profile events.

> Immigration has gone from a minor issue, far from the center of politics, to something that motivates voters on both sides of the debate.

Education, immigration, and ideology

The single most robust finding in research on attitudes toward immigration in high-income countries is that better educated survey respondents are more favorable toward immigration than otherwise similar, less educated, respondents (Cavaille and Marshall 2019; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007, 2010; Scheve and Slaughter 2001). This is commonly attributed to two basic causal relationships, usually summarized as interest and culture (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014). The interest-based arguments suggest that immigrants are generally less well educated, and so compete in the labor market with less well-educated natives, leading, naturally, to resentment among those natives. On the other hand, cultural arguments suggest that education produces different ideas and values. Going to university might mean learning more about other cultures, hearing arguments for cosmopolitan values, and meeting students from other parts of the world. This leads, in turn, to more openness to immigration.[1]

In 1970, 14% of men and 8% of women over the age of 25 in the US had bachelor's degrees. Today those numbers are both just under 40% (Schaeffer 2022). Similar patterns can be seen across rich democracies.

1 There are many challenges in establishing a causal relationship here, but Cavaille and Marshall 2019) provide convincing evidence that the basic relationship is causal.

Almost 50% of young people in the average OECD country have a tertiary education, compared to just 30% of people nearing retirement (2022). The creation of a large constituency of university-educated voters means that parties who want their votes need to appeal to their values. Parties on the left need to appeal to those voters despite wanting, often, to raise their taxes, while parties on the right need to avoid being seen as old-fashioned racists. They both need to do this while also trying to appeal to the still very large share of the population without university degrees. This basic conflict has opened space in the party system for both pro- and anti-immigrant policy pushes.

Institutional decline

A second major factor in the rise of immigration as a major political issue is the related decline of the kinds of organizations that, in the past, helped shape attitudes and channel political activism toward other issues. Most notably, mass membership political parties have declined throughout Western Europe (Mair 2013). This is perhaps starkest for parties that traditionally relied heavily on trade unions for their base, as trade union membership has declined in many countries. Similarly, secularization has meant that church attendance has declined in many countries, loosening the tie between Christian Democratic Parties and their voters (Biezen and Poguntke 2014). Political and economic elites are typically more pro-immigrant than average voters, so reducing their influence over those voters' attitudes makes anti-immigrant mobilization more likely.

These changes have worked out in different ways over time, in part depending on the electoral system. In more proportional systems, upstart parties have the ability to challenge the traditional powers, and so we have seen the rise of anti-immigrant parties on the right and identity liberal parties (such as the Greens) on the left (Vries and Hobolt 2020). This means that both center right and center left parties have felt squeezed and have sought out alternative issues, often trying to appease anti-immigrant voters by putting in new restrictions (Abou-Chadi and Helbling 2018). Less proportional systems have often prevented these challenger parties from winning elections, but the

threat of losing voters to those parties has brought about many policy concessions, most notably Brexit (Hayton 2018; Sobolewska and Ford 2020). Of course, the US Republican Party is clear evidence that single member districts cannot prevent the conversion of mainstream parties into radical anti-immigrant parties.

One case that has been spared particularly ugly fights over immigration so far is Canada. Though there was a populist movement in the form of the Reform Party of the 1990s, the single member district system provides strong incentives to avoid offending immigrants, who make up a large share of the population in some key swing ridings (Taylor 2020). That has meant that no party seeking national power can stake out an anti-immigration program. This is true despite the fact that there is fertile ground in the form of a public where a large minority oppose immigration or hold attitudes that are quite negative about immigrants (Besco and Tolley 2018; Donnelly 2021).

Scandals and failures

All policies, including immigration policies, have failures. If large numbers of immigrants enter a country, it is inevitable that some of those immigrants will eventually commit crimes, fail to obtain work, or need expensive health care. When that happens, whether it is politicized depends on both the party system and the media environment.

Whether it is the 2015 New Year's Eve attacks at Cologne Train Station (Wigger, Yendell, and Herbert 2022), repeated "crises" at the US-Mexico border, or over-crowded boats in the Mediterranean (Dennison and Geddes 2022), when something goes wrong, the media can focus attention on immigration in way that is disproportionate to the size of the event. Competitive, 24-hour news cycles reward this disproportionality. Social media also seems to reinforce pre-existing opinions on immigration by connecting them with like-minded interlocutors and presenting them with additional evidence for their point of view (Ohme 2021).

COVID, Japan, and Immigration

In my recent work with co-authors Nicholas Fraser (Harvard) and John Cheng (Tsuda), we have been examining the impact of both COVID and immigration reforms on immigration attitudes in Japan. Our findings so far – to be replicated and expanded in a 2023 survey – suggest that the policy changes, rather than the pandemic, are the bigger drivers of public opinion. As COVID hit, Japan quickly closed its borders. Doing so halted a very brief opening of immigration policy initiated under Abe (Song 2020) and took immigration off the front page. Instead, political discourse focused on the pandemic and other political issues. That, in turn, meant that immigration attitudes became more positive. Absent scandals or public focus on the issue, people simply answered without much thought (Zaller 1992). We look forward to finding out how the re-opening of Japan to travel and, increasingly, to immigration, will shape these attitudes in the years to come.

References

Abou-Chadi, Tarik, and Marc Helbling. 2018. "How Immigration Reforms Affect Voting Behavior." *Political Studies* 66(3): 687–717.

Besco, Randy, and Erin Tolley. 2018. "Does Everyone Cheer? The Politics of Immigration and Multiculturalism in Canada." In *Federalism and the Welfare State in a Multicultural World*, eds. Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant, Richard Johnston, Will Kymlicka, and John Myles. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Biezen, Ingrid van, and Thomas Poguntke. 2014. "The Decline of Membership-Based Politics." *Party Politics* 20(2): 205–16.

Cavaille, Charlotte, and John Marshall. 2019. "Education and Anti-Immigration Attitudes: Evidence from Compulsory Schooling Reforms across Western Europe." *American Political Science Review* 113(1): 254–63.

Dancygier, Rafaela, and Yotam Margalit. 2020. "The Evolution of the Immigration Debate: Evidence from a New Dataset of Party Positions over the Last Half-Century." *Comparative Political Studies* 53(5): 734–74.

Dennison, James, and Andrew Geddes. 2022. "The Centre No Longer Holds: The Lega, Matteo Salvini and the Remaking of Italian Immigration Politics." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48(2): 441–60.

Donnelly, Michael. 2014. "Competition and Solidarity: Union Members and Immigration in Europe." *European University Institute: Max Weber Working Papers*. http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/31611.

Donnelly, Michael J. 2021. "Discrimination and Multiculturalism in Canada: Exceptional or Incoherent Public Attitudes?" *American Review of Canadian Studies* 51(1): 166–88.

Hainmueller, Jens, and Michael J Hiscox. 2007. "Educated Preferences: Explaining Attitudes toward Immigration in Europe." *International Organization* 61(02): 399–442.

———. 2010. "Attitudes toward Highly Skilled and Low-Skilled Immigration: Evidence from a Survey Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 104(1): 61–84.

Hainmueller, Jens, and Daniel J Hopkins. 2014. "Public Attitudes toward Immigration." *Annual Review of Political Science* 17: 1–25.

Hayton, Richard. 2018. "British Conservatism after the Vote for Brexit: The Ideological Legacy of David Cameron." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 20(1): 223–38.

Mair, Peter. 2013. *Ruling the Void*. London: Verso Books.

OECD. 2022. "Population with Tertiary Education." https://data.oecd.org/eduatt/population-withtertiary-education.htm#indicator-chart.

Ohme, Jakob. 2021. "Algorithmic Social Media Use and Its Relationship to Attitude Reinforcement and Issue-Specific Political Participation – The Case of the 2015 European Immigration Movements." *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 18(1): 36–54.

Schaeffer, Katherine. 2022. "10 Facts about Today's College Graduates." *Pew Research Center*. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/04/12/10-facts-about-todays-college-graduates/.

Scheve, Kenneth F, and Matthew J Slaughter. 2001. "Labor Market Competition and Individual Preferences over Immigration Policy." *Review of Economics and Statistics* 83(1): 133–45.

Sobolewska, Maria, and Robert Ford. 2020. *Brexitland*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Song, Jiyeoun. "The Political Dynamics of Japan's Immigration Policies during the Abe Government." *Pacific Focus* 35(3613–640).

Taylor, Zachary. 2020. "The Political Geography of Immigration: Explaining Party Competition for Immigrants' Votes in Canada, 1997–2019." *This volume*.

Vries, Catherine E De, and Sara B Hobolt. 2020. *Political Entrepreneurs*. Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691206547.

Wigger, Iris, Alexander Yendell, and David Herbert. 2022. "The End of 'Welcome Culture'? How the Cologne Assaults Reframed Germany's Immigration Discourse." *European Journal of Communication* 37(1): 21–47.

Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

The role of anti-Latino prejudice in the 2024 U.S. presidential election

Angela X. Ocampo
University of Texas at Austin

Undoubtedly, the issue of immigration will be front and center in the 2024 Presidential Election. As Title 42 – a health law implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic to dictate migration control at the U.S.-Mexico border – comes to an end, the Biden administration will be forced to grapple with continued migration and limited pathways for the thousands of asylum seekers seeking to enter or stay in the United States. Most recently, U.S. House Republicans released an immigration bill which seeks to enact Trump-era immigration proposals, such as reducing the number of people who can seek asylum, and numerous provisions that could lead to family and minor detentions and separations.[1]

Not only will immigration be a key issue in the U.S. Presidential Election, but so will the sentiments that dictate people's attitudes toward immigration. One of these sentiments is anti-Latino prejudice. These attitudes are bound to play an important role in the upcoming 2024 U.S. Presidential Election, just as they have in prior electoral cycles. The nexus between immigration and the U.S. Latino population is undeniable (Chavez, 2008; Hajnal and Abrajano, 2015; Brader et al., 2008). Prior research has shown that reactions to immigration are not only highly racialized but are specifically about one group with a large immigrant population: U.S. Latinos (Hajnal and Abrajano, 2015).

1 https://thehill.com/homenews/house/3955546-house-gop-immigration-bill/

The current presidential hopefuls and potential candidates who are likely to announce their candidacies in the coming weeks could not be positioned any more differently on the issue of immigration. These stances are clear to the voters, and voters' policy preferences on immigration, along with specific prejudicial beliefs about U.S. Latinos, will dictate preferences towards certain presidential candidates.

The current presidential candidates include former President Trump and current President Biden, along with a several others. On November of 2022, Trump announced he would be running for the U.S. presidency for a third time.[2] Despite his 2020 defeat, the tumultuous and violent end of his presidential term, and his countless legal battles, Trump has vowed to make the case yet again to the American public. Trump's current presidential campaign is making appeals to voters that are reminiscent of his political priorities during his prior term. Not only has he underscored immigration, tax-cuts, religious freedom, and a desire to 'Make America Great Again (MAGA)' but these have also been characterized by a much more vengeful message of retribution.[3]

Trump is only one of several other Republican contenders. At the moment, three other Republicans have announced their candidacy. These are Nikki Haley, former Governor of South Carolina and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations; Asa Hutchinson, former Governor of Arkansas; Vivek Ramaswamy, a former bio-tech executive, and Larry Elder, radio host and former California gubernatorial candidate. Another presidential hopefully is Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. Although DeSantis has not publicly announced he will be running, he has received extensive media coverage and has been formally endorsed by current and former American politicians.

Governor DeSantis has positioned himself as an anti-immigration hard-liner, pushing for tough policies in his home state of Florida. In 2022, DeSantis signed a budget and implemented a program to round up Venezuelan asylum seekers and send them to Martha's Vineyard in

2 https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/15/politics/trump-2024-presidential-bid/index.html

3 https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2023/03/donald-trump-rally-waco-2024-campaign/673526/

Massachusetts.[4] He has called for Florida legislators to enact policies that curb the movement of migrants in Florida and penalize their presence in the U.S. Last week, the Florida legislature passed a sweeping immigration crackdown bill pushed by DeSantis. The bill appropriates $12 billion for the migrant relocation program. It expands requirements for compliance with the E-Verify system, a system that determines if individuals can legally work in the United States. It also invalidates driver's licenses from other states held by undocumented individuals.[5]

On the Democrat side, President Biden formally announced his campaign on April 25 of this year. After months of a possible bid for another term, Biden officially became a contender. His campaign video delivered a strong message about defending American freedom, standing against the political priorities and decisions of MAGA extremists and finishing the job that his administration has been steadily working on.[6]

> All of these candidates are positioned distinctly on the issue of immigration.

All of these candidates are positioned distinctly on the issue of immigration. Immigration policy under the Trump presidency was marked by harsh policies and anti-immigrant hateful rhetoric. Trump implemented a Muslim ban, which prohibited entry into the U.S. for anyone from certain Muslim majority countries. His administration also attempted to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, a program which allowed a reprieve for deportation for undocumented youth. It also included a zero-tolerance policy, which required the arrest of anyone apprehended for crossing the U.S.-

4 https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/02/us/migrants-marthas-vineyard-desantis-texas.html

5 https://apnews.com/article/desantis-florida-immigration-president-39c6c542e24516d427359d58e349e631

6 https://www.npr.org/2023/04/25/1145679856/biden-president-announcement-2024-running-reelection

Mexico border illegally, resulting in the forced separation of thousands of children from their parents.

Although President Biden has been critiqued by immigration advocates for the way his administration has handled the issue, specifically because of the extension of Title 42, his stance and policies on immigration have been much more tempered than his predecessor's. Biden lifted a ban from the Trump administration which had temporarily prohibited issuing legal permanent resident visas (green cards).[7] When Biden became President, he announced several proposals and goals on immigration for his term as President. These included increasing per-country caps for family reunification visas, increasing diversity visas, providing permanent work permits to spouses of certain visa holders, providing a path to U.S. citizenship to DACA recipients, among others.[8] These are indicative of a distinct policy outlook from Trump and the Republican contenders on immigration as Biden heads off to run for the 2024 Presidency.

While it is clear how the issue of immigration will be a major factor in 2024 U.S. Presidential campaign, it is less clear how anti-Latino attitudes will play a role in the election. In my research with Dr. Sergio Garcia-Rios, we examine how anti-Latino prejudice shapes attitudes in U.S. politics, and specifically how it drives evaluation of political candidates, especially those with anti-immigrant policy priorities.

U.S. Latinos encompass the largest ethno-racial minority group in the United States, making up 19% of the population. While a sizeable share of U.S. Latinos are immigrants (32%), a majority of U.S. Latinos were born in the United States to immigrant parents, immigrant grandparents, or have been in the United States for three or more generations. Historically, U.S. Latinos have been the target of segregation and extra-judicial violence (Martinez, 2018). Presently, Latinos have also experienced violence driven by anti-Latino hate, and are often the targets of every-day discrimination.[9]

---

7 https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/biden-lifts-trump-era-ban-blocking-legal-immigration-us-n1258817

8 https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/01/11/key-facts-about-u-s-immigration-policies-and-bidens-proposed-changes/

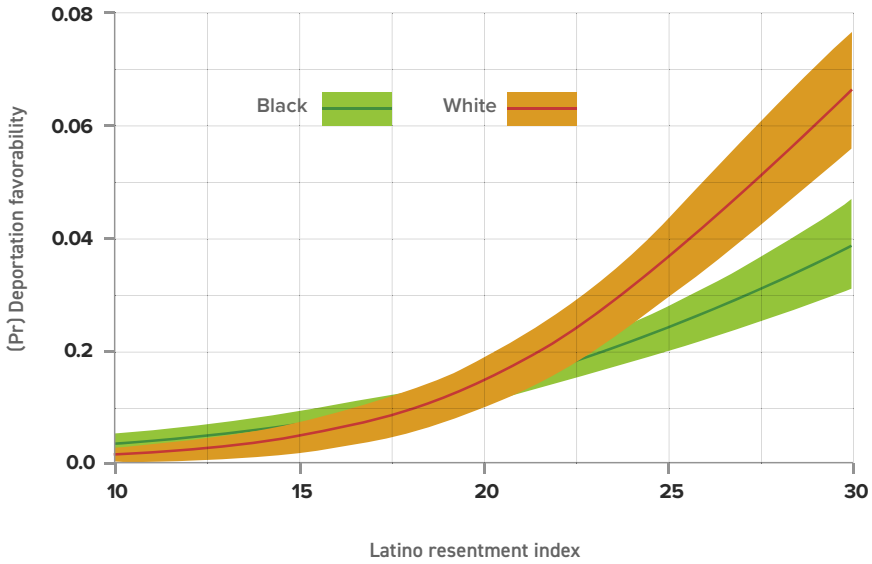
9 https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2021/11/04/half-of-u-s-latinos-experienced-some-form-of-discrimination-during-the-first-year-of-the-pandemic/

To investigate how anti-Latino prejudice is associated with people's attitudes toward U.S. political candidates and the issue of immigration, we developed a set of measures to capture a prejudice-oriented belief system about U.S. Latinos. This belief system is centered on three themes, which we argue capture racial prejudice specifically toward the members of this community. The first theme captures sentiments about Latinos not assimilating and integrating into U.S. society, despite evidence to the contrary. The second theme touches on the idea that Latinos are prone to socially deviant behaviors, such as criminality. The third theme captures the sentiment that Latinos are a threat to the longevity and stability of the U.S.

We study these three themes through nine specific questions, which we asked on various surveys during 2016 and 2020. The questions asked individuals to report their beliefs about whether or not they thought that Latinos continued to have attachments to their countries of origin, despite being in the U.S. for many generations. We assess people's beliefs about the extent to which Latinos are likely to engage in crime and gang activity. We asked about their beliefs on the likelihood of Latinos to rely on social welfare to maintain their families and to generally get more economically than they truly deserve. Lastly, we asked about their fears over the U.S. becoming a 'Latino' country, and the belief that Latinos were a drain on U.S. society and its resources.

We used these measures, which we call *Latino ethno-racial resentment* (LERR), to investigate how these predispositions predicted support for Trump in 2016 and 2020, and also support for immigration policies. As part of these surveys, we also measured respondent's partisanship, demographic characteristics, and socioeconomic standing. We also included questions that allowed us to test for alternative explanations such as anti-Black prejudice (which was measured using a traditional racial resentment scale), feelings of warmth or coldness toward people of Latino origin or immigrants (feeling thermometers), preferences for one's in-group over out-groups (ethnocentrism) and personality traits that support social hierarchies (social dominance orientation).

FIGURE 1: PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF SUPPORTING DEPORTATION FOR ALL UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS



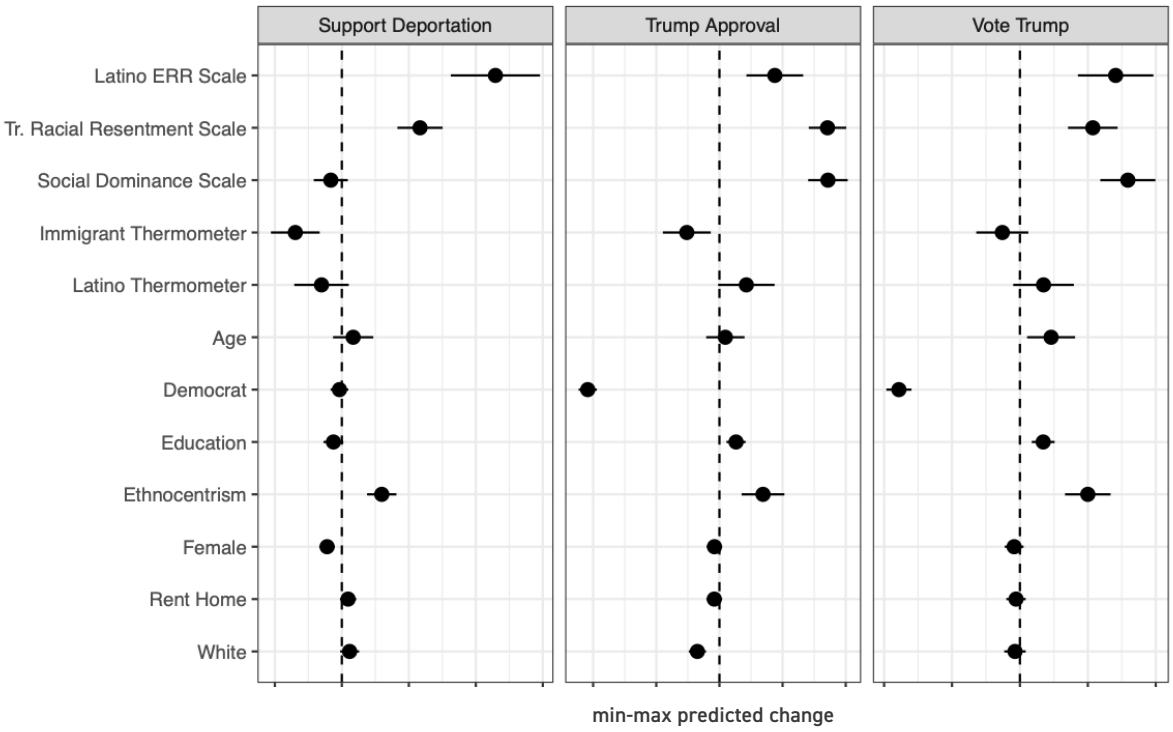
Note: Results are derived from logistic regression model which includes controls for age, gender, income, education, partisanship, and the traditional racial resentment scale. Figure represents predicted probabilities of supporting deporting all undocumented immigrants as a function of Latino-ethno-racial resentment. The line indicated the predicted probability of supporting deporting all undocumented immigrants. Band indicates 95% confidence interval.

Source: 2016 collaborative multi-racial post-election survey, white and Black samples (n=4,137).

The findings revealed that *Latino ethno-racial resentment* was a unique and significant predictor of support for Donald Trump in 2016 and 2020. The scale was a particularly powerful predictor of whites' attitudes toward Trump, and those who scored higher on the scale were much more likely to favor Trump and to have voted for him in 2016. In 2020, we find the same relationship. Respondents who scored higher on the LERR scale had a higher probability of supporting Trump in 2020.

To evaluate attitudes toward immigration, we asked respondents their policy preferences on the issue of immigration. We rely on one question which evaluated respondents' preference for deporting all

FIGURE 2: LATINO-ETHNORACIAL RESENTMENT AS A PREDICTOR OF TRUMP SUPPORT AND IMMIGRATION ATTITUDES



Note: Results are derived from logistic regressions. Points are predicted probability changes when going from the minimum to the maximum on each covariate. Lines around the points indicate 95% confidence intervals.

Source: 2022 Survey on Politics and Policy. CloudResearch Panel (n=609).

undocumented immigrants in the United States. The results revealed that the LEER scale once again was highly predictive of supporting a policy that would deport all undocumented individuals. The more anti-Latino prejudice that respondents felt, the more likely they were to prefer deporting all undocumented immigrants.

Our findings also revealed that the LEER scale was uniquely associated with support for Trump, and uniquely predicted attitudes towards issues of immigration. Specifically, the LEER scale still holds predictive power and explains support for Trump and immigration restrictionism even when accounting for alternative explanations. Lastly, we tested for

the possibility that the LEER scale would predict attitudes toward policies that impacted other U.S. immigrant groups such as Asian Americans or other U.S. policies such as tax-cuts or climate change policies. We found no evidence of this.

In sum, our research shows that anti-Latino prejudice played an independent and significant role in predicting support for Trump and restrictionist immigration policies in 2016 and 2020. During Trump's presidency, he led a strong anti-immigrant agenda, fueling his base, which yielded high returns from his supporters. What is clear from our research is that not only anti-immigrant attitudes drive Trump's supporters to vote for him, but that prejudice that is specifically anti-Latino also drives support for Trump and candidates like him. Highlighting this important nuance allows us to better understand how prejudice that is specific to one ethno-racial group is at the forefront of U.S. politics. Without a doubt, as Donald Trump, and other presidential hopefuls such as DeSantis put forth their anti-immigrant agendas, prejudice toward U.S. Latinos will drive support for them and their immigration policy proposals.

References

Abrajano, M., & Hajnal, Z. L. (2015). *White backlash.* Princeton University Press.

Brader, T., Valentino, N. A., & Suhay, E. (2008). What triggers public opposition to immigration? Anxiety, group cues, and immigration threat. *American Journal of Political Science,* 52(4), 959-978.

Chavez, L. (2008). *The Latino threat: Constructing immigrants, citizens, and the nation*. Stanford University Press.

Martinez, M. M. (2018). *The injustice never leaves you: Anti-Mexican violence in Texas*. Harvard University Press.

Fear of political change: How concerns over immigrants' political views can affect support for immigration

Margaret Peters
UCLA

Do the perceived political views of immigrants affect how they are welcomed in host countries? There are many historical examples in which political concerns have affected the treatment of immigrants. The U.S., for instance, has a long history of limiting immigration and citizenship rights in reaction to political fears. In the colonial and early Republic period of the U.S., concerns that Catholic immigrants would be loyal to the Pope, rather than to the English monarch and later to the Republic, led to laws that prohibited Catholics from naturalization or serving as elected officials under the New York Constitution unless they renounced their faith. These laws stayed in place until 1806 (Duncan 2005). In the wake of the French Revolution, the arrival of refugees from France and radical sympathizers from Great Britain and Ireland led to fears that immigrants would spread radical ideas, leading to the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts (Cogliano 1999, p.662).

Political concerns about immigrants resurfaced in the twentieth century around the spread of socialist, communist, and anarchist ideas (Higham 1983). In Europe, a spate of political assassinations by anarchists led to deportations and increased political vetting of immigrants. In the U.S., the Alien Exclusion Act of 1903 banned anarchists and a 1906 law denaturalized anarchists (Kraut 2020, p.59). At the height of the

Red Scare of the 1920s, approximately 3,000 immigrants were held as radicals at Ellis Island and 556 were deported (Kraut 2020, p.74) and concerns about the spread of leftist ideas help motivate the 1921 and 1924 Quota Acts (Kraut 2012; 2020).

Political fears can also involve misperceptions about the views of entire national groups. A clear example comes from the internment of Japanese-Americans as potential fascists, even though most had come decades before or were born in the U.S. Similarly, Vietnamese refugees were often portrayed as communist enemies in the 1970s, even though most were fleeing the policies of their government (e.g., Wooten 1975).

In the developing world, migrants often leave countries pursuing extreme ideological projects and cross to neighboring countries. Host countries may worry about possible "contagion" in which political movements in a neighboring country spread to their own. For instance, in Thailand, the government and media portrayed Vietnamese refugees as communist sympathizers and a potential "vanguard" for a Communist invasion, even while the majority of refugees disavowed their government, as a way to discredit local socialist groups (Flood 1977, 39).

How migrants' perceived political views affect locals' views of them

Whether migrants' perceived political views affect their reception has been largely overlooked in a growing body of research on migrant reception. Migrants to wealthy democracies tend to differ in their ethnicity, language, and skill sets. To the extent differences in political views exist, they are hard to disentangle from the broader racial, religious, and labor market concerns thought to drive attitudes towards migrants. Yet the largest migrant flows occur between neighboring countries in the Global South (IOM 2018). Migrants are often more similar to locals in their demographics, but flee governments that pursue extreme ideological projects. Left-wing governments in contemporary Venezuela, North Korea, and Cuba have produced large population outflows, as did right-wing and nationalist dictatorships in El Salvador, Eritrea, Japan, and Nazi Germany.

Little is known about how citizens in receiving countries perceive migrants' politics or if it matters for their treatment. On the one hand, host communities may understand that migrants flee out of political opposition to their host government. While some governments with clear ideological projects, like the Soviet Union, restrict emigration, many others allow emigration and may even prefer that political opponents flee abroad (Miller and Peters 2020). Like political exiles, many migrants that leave for economic or humanitarian reasons come to oppose the government ideology that forces them to flee (Lim 2022).[1] On the other hand, receiving communities often draw a political false equivalence and expect migrants to share the political views of their home governments. As we can see above, anecdotes abound: Vietnamese refugees fled a Communist regime only to arrive to the United States to be dubbed Communists (Flood 1977). Syrians and Iraqis fleeing ISIS were branded as terrorists (Richard 2016).

Political fears can be salient as host citizens worry that migrants will change the electoral dynamics or support extreme political movements in their new homes. Over fifty countries allow noncitizen residents to vote in local, regional, or even national elections (Ferris et al. 2019; Alarian 2021). Political parties need to make calculations about how to appeal to both the existing electorate and migrants that stand to gain voting rights (Dancygier 2017). Beyond formal rules for voter registration, residents in developing countries may worry about informal electoral practices, such as registering and buying off migrant voters before their legal incorporation.

Context: Venezuelans in Colombia

To isolate the role of political perceptions, my co-authors and I examine a case where migrants share a language and religious background with their hosts but flee an opposing political context: Venezuelans in Colombia. Colombia has endured more than 50 years of civil conflict involving left-wing guerrillas groups, right-wing paramilitaries, and the

1 Throughout this paper, I use "migrants" to refer to a mixed flow of those leaving due to forced displacement crises and those leaving for other reasons, while recognizing that migrants is not a value-neutral term and affects the legal protections afforded to individuals.

state. The conflict killed 220,000 people and displaced an estimated 10% of Colombia's population (Steele 2017). Due to fears of left-wing violence, the majority of Colombians identify with the political right and the country didn't follow Latin America's "left turn" in the 2000s. In 2022, Gustavo Petro, a former guerrilla, overcame fears of the left and harnessed popular frustration with the existing political class to win the presidency. Colombia's neighbor, Venezuela, has elected left-wing populist presidents since 1999. President Hugo Chávez embarked on a project of what he dubbed "21st century socialism." While Chávez enjoyed broad popular support, an economic crisis and increased repression diminished support for his successor, Nicolás Maduro. Venezuela's GDP has shrunk by 62% since Maduro took office in 2013, constituting one of the largest economic collapses outside of war.

> The recent humanitarian crisis facing Venezuelans has been due to democratic backsliding and an economic collapse.

The recent humanitarian crisis facing Venezuelans has been due to democratic backsliding and an economic collapse. A small initial wave of Venezuelan migrants left the country in 2003, after the referendum against Hugo Chávez, and in 2010, after Maduro installed himself in power. They were mostly political opponents of the regime and largely came from middle-class and educated backgrounds. Between 2010 and 2015, due to decreased oil prices, corruption, and economic mismanagement, the Venezuelan economy collapsed, leading approximately 5 million migrants to flee, one of the largest migration crises in the world today.

The vast majority of Venezuelan migrants have stayed in the region: according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Latin American countries host approximately 80% of the Venezuelan migrants. Colombia has received the highest number

of migrants from Venezuela, reaching 1.7 million migrants in 2021.[2] Most Venezuelans do not meet formal international legal definitions as refugees. Only a minority have faced direct political persecution, although investigations have revealed alarming extrajudicial executions of political opponents and regime critics.[3] Barring formalities, the UNHCR has urged receiving countries to provide international protections in line with the 1951 Refugee Convention because "while individual circumstances and reasons for these movements vary, international protection considerations have become apparent for a very significant proportion of Venezuelans."[4] In 2017, the Colombian government created special residency permits (*Permiso Especial de Permanencia, PEP*) that granted Venezuelans two years of legal residency, as well as the right to right to work, education, and public health care.[5] The government expanded the program to regularize all Venezuelans who had entered in 2021.[6]

Foreigners can vote in local elections in Colombia after five years of residency.[7] Colombia is similar to most Latin American countries in this respect: ten Latin American countries enfranchise noncitizen populations, and most provide clear paths to citizenship with full voting rights (Escobar 2017). Given that the increase in Venezuelan migration began in 2015, most Venezuelans could not vote in the 2018 presidential and 2019 mayoral elections, which are the focus here.

Colombia differs from many advanced industrial economies in that right-wing politicians led the welcoming response to migrants. A center-right president, Juan Manuel Santos (2010-18), spearheaded

2 World Bank report: worldbank.org/en/results/2021/10/31/supporting-colombian-host-communities-andvenezuelan-migrants-during-the-covid-19-pandemic

3 UN Human Rights Council, "Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of Human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela," July 5, 2019.

4 UNHCR, "Guidance Note on the Outflow of Venezuelans," March 2018, http://www.refworld.org/docid/5a9ff3cc4.html.

5 For an overview of Colombia's response, see "Todo lo que tiene que saber sobre la migracion venezolana," Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, November 1, 2018, www.migracioncolombia.gov.co/infografias/todo-lo-que-tiene-que-sabersobre-la-migracion-venezolana

6 "Duque presenta proyecto para regularizar a los migrantes venezolanos, de qu´e trata?," *El Espectador*, February 8, 2021.

7 Law 1070 of 2006.

the initial tolerant response to Venezuelans. Santos drew on a long history of Venezuela receiving migrants from Colombia's civil war. While most Colombians were internally displaced, some Colombians fled to Venezuela, and others lived fluid cross-border lives (Janetsky 2019). Economic flows between the two countries remain substantial. For instance, 30,000 people on average cross back and forth between Venezuela and Colombia each day using TMF cards to work and make purchases.[8] The border with Venezuela has long been permeable, with Colombians crossing into Venezuela to buy (and smuggle) cheap gasoline and subsidized goods and Venezuelans working and trading on the Colombian side (Villegas et al. 2009). Santos emphasized this shared history and called for solidarity between Colombia and Venezuela.[9] Subsequently, President Iván Duque (2018-22), who also came from the political Right, regularized the status of Venezuelan migrants and emphasized the shared history and solidarity between the neighboring countries.[10] While justified by a shared history of migration, the lack of a xenophobic response to migrants is not unique to the Colombian Right – Brazil, Chile, and Peru all welcomed Venezuelans under right-wing administrations.

Although right-leaning governments have welcomed migrants and tried to prevent xenophobic scapegoating, not all politicians have followed suit. In the context of a polarizing presidential race in Colombia in 2018, right-wing politicians leveraged fears of a Venezuela-style economic collapse and tried to tie Venezuelan migrants to support for leftist *economic* policy in Colombia. Faced with a strong challenge on the left (Gustavo Petro, a left-wing former guerrilla fighter and mayor of Bogotá who won 42% of the vote in the run-off in 2018 and won the presidency in 2022), center and right-wing candidates played up an association between voting for the left and socialist economic policies. Rumors circulated that Venezuelans could vote in the election.[11] In

8 "Todo lo que tiene que saber sobre la migración venezolana," Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, November 1, 2018.

9 For instance, see "Santos pide no 'caer en la xenofobia' con venezolanos y hace un llamado a la solidaridad," *Noticias Caracol*, April 28, 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTUCtZ_o3A4

10 "Duque presenta proyecto para regularizar a los migrantes venezolanos, de qu´e trata?," *El Espectador*, February 8, 2021.

11 For a discussion, see the fact-checking site, "No es cierto que todos los venezolanos

particular, former president Alvaro Uribe (2002-10) used his social media presence to scare voters that Venezuelans were bringing left-wing ideas of "castrochavismo," would vote for left-wing parties, and create a "second Venezuela." Uribe tweets constantly and has five million Twitter followers, who may have read his messages directly or spread indirectly through popular WhatsApp chat groups.[12]

> Debates in major newspapers were concerned with how real the chances were that Colombia "becomes Venezuela."

Uribe was not alone in linking Petro to socialist ideas. Uribe's ally, President Duque, used the example of Venezuela to portray his opponent as a radical. Propaganda for Duque advertised, "The tragedy of Venezuela is the result of a socialist government. Vote wisely, vote Duque" (Ordóñez and Ramírez Arcos Arcos 2019). In an interview, he emphasized that voters had to pick between his model and "that of the failed socialism of Venezuela" peddled by Petro.[13] A leading center-right presidential candidate, Germán Vargas Lleras, also wrote that Colombia risked following Venezuela's economic path: "It's worrying to think that the tragedy in Venezuela can repeat itself in Colombia. I propose to stop it!"[14] Debates in major newspapers were concerned with how real the chances were that Colombia "becomes Venezuela."[15]

---

puedan votar en elecciones de Colombia," *Colombia Check*, May 14, 2019.

12 Right-wing candidates are again using the spector of "castrochavismo" against Petro in the 2022 Presidential Election. www.npr.org/2022/04/28/1094609544/colombia-election-candidate-gustavo-petro.

13 "Iván Duque llama a elegir entre su modelo o Venezuela," *Agencia Efe*, February 9, 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v= BeskrX84FlE.

14 "Sobre Eln y Venezuela, hay que poner orden ya," *El Tiempo*, February 18, 2018; www.eltiempo.com/opinion/columnistas/ german-vargas-lleras/sobre-eln-y-venezuela-hay-que-poner-orden-ya-german-vargas-lleras-184028

15 See, "Qu´e posibilidad real hay de que Petro convierta a Colombia en una Venezuela?" *Portafolio*, March 15, 2018, www. portafolio.co/economia/gobierno/posibilidad-que-colombia-se-convierta-en-una-venezuela-515262.

Rumors spread on social and news media that Venezuelans living in Colombia would swing the election. One widely shared post claimed that the Colombian government expanded Venezuelans' residency permits so they could vote in the presidential elections.[16] Another viral audio clip featured a supposed Venezuelan leader assuring a Colombian woman, "[Venezuelans] have only come to register as voters, and they are going to support Colombia voting for Petro, for all that is communism."[17] Stories in major newspapers and informal WhatsApp message groups that often got picked up local radio stations emphasized that Venezuelans sympathize with left-wing leaders like Hugo Chávez, as well as Fidel Castro, and would "infect" Colombian society (Ordóñez and Ramírez Arcos 2019). Right-wing messaging seems to have been effective. One public opinion poll prior to the presidential election found that 55% of Colombians believed that Venezuelan migrants put the country at risk of becoming another Venezuela (Ordóñez and Ramírez Arcos 2019). These messages were also repeated by politicians prior to regional and local elections in 2019. For instance, campaign slogans for one of the main right-wing political parties, Centro Democrático, in Bogotá, Bucaramanga, and Cali included, "I don't want to live like a Venezuelan," and "So Colombia won't be another Venezuela" (Ordóñez and Ramírez Arcos Arcos 2019).

Studying views on Venezuelan Immigrants

To understand whether concerns over political views affected the willingness to receive Venezuelan immigrants, we fielded a face-to-face survey with 1,000 Colombians and 1,600 Venezuelan migrants in Colombia before local elections in 2019. The survey is unique in that it includes both Colombians and Venezuelans living in Colombia, allowing us to compare host communities' perceptions to the actual views of migrants.

16 "Es falso que esta´n ofreciendo nacionalidad colombiana a los venezolanos para que voten en las elecciones," *Colombia Check*, July 18, 2019.

17 "Campan˜a sucia? Cadena de WhatsApp advierte de venezolanos registrados para votar por Presidente," *La FM Radio*, February 28, 2018, www.lafm.com.co/politica/campana-sucia-cadena-de-whatsapp-advierte-de-venezolanosregistrados-para-votar-por-presidente

We find substantial and consequential political misperceptions. 40% of Colombians think that most Venezuelan migrants support the political left. Additionally, 29.5% believe that most Venezuelans already have the right to vote in local elections (even though only 1.4% have met the five-year residency requirement), and 37.4% believe that migrants have the right to vote in national elections, which is reserved for citizens. In contrast, we find that only 12.1% of Venezuelans placed their political views on the left. This is comparable to the share of Colombians, 11% in our sample. If anything, Colombians are more likely to be centrist, compared to Venezuelans, who are more likely to position themselves on the far right.

Colombians additionally saw Venezuelans as susceptible to vote buying and armed recruitment. More than half (55.5%) of Colombians believe politicians try to buy Venezuelans' votes. However, only 3.7% of Venezuelan migrants in our sample said they received an offer to sell their vote. Colombians are also concerned that Venezuelans may perpetuate Colombia's internal conflict: 46.1% of Colombians believe that the majority of Venezuelan migrants support left-wing guerrilla groups, 72.9% are worried that Venezuelans will be recruited into a guerrilla organization, and 78.5% worry that Venezuelans will join a criminal gang (which often can be a source of money). In contrast, a small minority of Venezuelans said that they or a family member were approached to join a guerrilla group (0.7%) or a gang (0.5%).

Yet the descriptive evidence alone makes it hard to disentangle the importance of political misperceptions in shaping the reception of Venezuelans. Colombians voice a variety of fears about Venezuelan migration. More than half (57.6%) say that they are competing with Venezuelans for work and 78% think that it has become harder to obtain public services. Unlike poorer developing countries with large migrant flows, Colombia is a net fiscal contributor to hosting Venezuelan migrants and Colombians feel the strain: 62.9% believe that the international community is not providing enough aid and 80.1% think their own taxes will likely go up because of the migrants. Despite cultural similarities, Colombians also have concerns about their societal impact: only 38.9% say that Venezuelans have integrated successfully.

We, therefore, test if political views motivate migrant exclusion using a conjoint survey experiment that minimizes social desirability bias and allows us to compare the relative importance of migrant attributes. The conjoint asks survey respondents to choose one of two hypothetical migrants to give residency benefits. The characteristics of the two candidates are randomized to allow us to test which types of migrants are supported.

We find that Colombians strongly disfavor migrants from the political left, and ideology is more important than race or skill in shaping which migrants Colombians prefer to host. These findings differ from the substantial research on attitudes towards immigrants in wealthy democracies that emphasizes racial and labor market anxieties.

> While we cannot isolate the origins of political misperceptions, we suggest that national political elites cultivate political misperceptions for their electoral advantage.

While we cannot isolate the origins of political misperceptions, we suggest that national political elites cultivate political misperceptions for their electoral advantage. We analyze Twitter data to illustrate how right-wing politicians have fostered political misperceptions to discredit more moderate left-wing opponents. Colombian politicians stoke fears that Venezuelan migrants sympathize with left-wing views, import "socialist" ideas, and vote in elections. Elite cues are consistent with the fact that political misperceptions exist and matter across cities with different levels of contact and electoral demographics. In so doing, our paper builds on work on how political entrepreneurs can heighten the salience of some identities over others. While most research focuses on the instrumental creation of ethnic identity (e.g., Posner 2005; Pérez 2015), we emphasize how politicians can successfully use political differences – not just racial or linguistic ones – to mobilize anti-immigrant sentiment and build electoral support.

Conclusion

Taken together, our findings highlight the role that political misperceptions can play in how migrants are received in host countries. Political fears can be a critical and overlooked, driver of hostility towards migrants. We show that ordinary Colombians care about migrants' views, even when compared to more concrete differences like race and skill. Conversely, scholars might overstate the role of ethnic prejudice when it aligns with other political cleavages. We also provide unique evidence that perceptions of migrants' political ideologies are often wrong. Politicians and partisan media in receiving countries have incentives to cultivate political misperceptions as a way to discredit political opponents in their countries. In many countries still shaped by Cold War divides, the fear of left-wing groups coming to power remains a salient fear. Right-wing politicians have incentives to play up these fears and associate them with migrant communities to mobilize turnout and strengthen their support.

Our findings suggest that the political consequences of migration are likely to be the opposite of those feared by host countries. As Venezuelans gain the right to vote, they are likely to push the electorate further right. Indeed, consistent with our findings, one study of municipal election results shows an increase in support for the political right where Venezuelan migration has increased the most (Rozo and Vargas 2021).

Yet the channel of electoral impact differs. Rather than simply an increase in xenophobic appeals, we show that voters may turn to the political right out of fear of following a similar leftist path like Venezuela, and eventually migrants that sympathize with the right will gain the right to vote in local elections. Our results also reinforce the potential impact that emigration has on politics in Venezuela: even those fleeing for economic reasons are deeply dissatisfied with Maduro. Migrants may have strengthened the political opposition to the regime had they stayed.

Given the gap between perceived and actual political views, our results suggest a potential role for the media to strengthen support for migrants and for future research on how political parties design their migration platforms. Rumors circulating through social media that Venezuelans

support socialist policies, already are voting in large numbers, and are bought off by clientelistic politicians or recruited by armed groups can create antipathy among Colombians, particularly among right-leaning Colombians. Campaigns providing accurate information about whether migrants can participate in elections and Venezuelans' critiques of their government's policies potentially could help build support for their resettlement. Important research remains to be done on how host communities learn about migrants' political views, and whether media and political campaigns can correct misperceptions.

Finally, this paper suggests an interesting tension for leaders of conservative political parties. While the political right often is associated with anti-immigrant messages, immigrants may become an important bastion of its political support in contexts where they flee left-wing regimes. How right-wing parties campaign to attract anti-immigrant voters and court migrant votes is an interesting dilemma. Whether migrants are portrayed as "unskilled," "culturally backwards," "leftist", or "terrorists" depends on the existing political context and how parties sow divisions to boost their own electoral prospects.

References

Alarian, Hannah. 2021. "Local Suffrage increases Citizenship Acquisition: Evidence from the European Union." Working Paper.

Cogliano, Francis D. 1999. "America and the French Revolution." *History* 84 (276):658–665.

Dancygier, Rafaela M. 2017. *Dilemmas of inclusion: Muslims in European politics*. Princeton University Press.

Duncan, Jason K. 2005. *Citizens Or Papists?: The Politics of Anti-Catholicism in New York, 1685-1821*. Fordham University Press.

Escobar, Cristina. 2017. *Migration and franchise expansion in Latin America*. Technical report.

Ferris, Dan, Ron Hayduk, Alyscia Richards, Emma Strauss Schubert and Mary Acri. 2019. "Noncitizen Voting Rights in the Global Era: A Literature Review and Analysis." *Journal of International Migration and Integration* pp. 1–23.

Flood, E Thadeus. 1977. "The Vietnamese refugees in Thailand: Minority manipulation in counterinsurgency." *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 9(3):31–47.

Higham, John. 1983. *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*. New Brunswick:Rutgers University Press.

IOM. 2018. *Migration Trends in the Americas*. Technical report.

Janetsky, Megan. 2019. "Here's Why Colombia Opened Its Arms to Venezuelan Migrants Until Now." *Foreign Policy*. https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/01/14/heres-why-colombia-opened-its-armsto-venezuelan-migrants-until-now/.

Kraut, Julia Rose. 2012. "Global anti-anarchism: the origins of ideological deportation and the suppression of expression." *Ind. J. Global Legal Stud.* 19:169.

Kraut, Julia Rose. 2020. *Threat of Dissent: A History of Ideological Exclusion and Deportation in the United States*. Harvard University Press.

Lim, Junghyun. 2022. "The Electoral Consequences of International Migration in Sending Countries: Evidence from Central and Eastern Europe." *Comparative Political Studies*.

Miller, Michael K. and Margaret E. Peters. 2020. "Restraining the huddled masses: Migration policy and autocratic survival." *British Journal of Political Science* 50(2):403–433.

Ordóñez, Juan Thomas and Hugo Eduardo Ramírez Arcos. 2019. "(Des) orden nacional: la construcci ´on de la migraci ´on venezolana como una amenaza de salud y seguridad pu ´blica en Colombia." *Revista Ciencias de la Salud* 17:48–68.

Pérez, Efrén O. 2015. "Ricochet: How elite discourse politicizes racial and ethnic identities." *Political Behavior* 37(1):155–180.

Posner, Daniel N. 2005. *Institutions and ethnic politics in Africa*. Cambridge University Press.

Richard, Sisk. 2016. "ISIS Fighters Hiding Amongst Refugees Pose Terror Threat: Breedlove." *Military.com*. https://www.military.com/daily-news/2016/03/01/isis-fighters-hiding-refugees-post-terror-threatbreedlove.html

Rozo, Sandra V. and Juan F. Vargas. 2021. "Brothers or invaders? How crisis-driven migrants shape voting behavior." *Journal of Development Economics* p. 102636.

Steele, Abbey. 2017. *Democracy and displacement in Colombia's civil war*. Cornell University Press.

Villegas, Mauricio García, Camilo García, Natalia Niño, Andrés Henao, José Fernando Mejía, Sebastián Rubiano, Claudia Ordóñez, Héctor Abad Faciolince, Nathaly Rodríguez, Farid Samir Benavides Vanegas et al. 2009. *Normas de papel: la cultura del incumplimiento de reglas*. Siglo del Hombre Editores.

Wooten, James T. 1975. "The Vietnamese Are Corning and the Town of Niceville, Fla., Doesn't Like It." *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/1975/05/01/archives/the-vietnamese-arecoming-and-the-town-of-niceville-fla-doesnt-like.html.

Canadian immigration attitudes: the role of institutional signals

Mireille Paquet
Concordia University

Andrea Lawlor
King's University College, Western University

Canada is often touted as uniquely pro-immigration. Indeed, since the 1990s public attitudes toward immigration have remained remarkably positive. During the same period, Canada has used selective immigration policies to fill key gaps in the labour market and boost its overall economic productivity. Doing so, successive governments have promoted the contribution of immigration to Canada's growth and the need to welcome immigrants to ensure demographic and labour market stability in a large, sparsely populated and aging country. This reality disrupts the picture of Canadians themselves being more immigration-friendly than the rest of the world. What it reveals instead is a highly selective and competitive immigration system that is shaped by official discourse and elite cues that celebrate the contribution of immigrants.

Our research program is focused on understanding how governments' discourses and the indirect signals generated by official policies can shape attitudes toward immigration and immigrants. In a context of growing disinformation and the increased politicization of immigration, we explore whether institutional signals can increase trust and decrease anxieties toward immigration. Canada is the perfect case to evaluate these dynamics because of the highly proactive role that the government has taken in shaping a pro-immigration consensus. The first step of this research program is to uncover whether citizens respond to elite signals

of our official immigration system – namely, information about immigration levels and programs as well as official signals about immigrants' perceived deservingness.

> An important institutional signal in the Canadian context is the assignment of numerical targets for different categories of the immigration program.

An important institutional signal in the Canadian context is the assignment of numerical targets for different categories of the immigration program. In other words, how many newcomers will be admitted? And how many of these will come based on our economic, our family reunification, and our humanitarian and compassionate grounds programs? These targets, designed by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada through a process of consultation with stakeholders, are widely discussed in the media and in mainstream politics. For many, the number of migrants admitted to each category is the formative piece for understanding contemporary immigration policy. Comparatively less is said about settlement services available to migrants or the integration of immigrants into the Canadian political and community environment.

We suggest that the circulation of this information affects how Canadians think and feel about immigration. In a 2022 article published in the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, we surveyed Canadians to understand their perceptions around our yearly immigration intake as well as the mental images they carried about why people came to live permanently in Canada. Research in other countries has shown that citizens tend to overestimate the size of the immigrant population and to hold distorted images of newcomers, which in turn might affect their attitudes toward immigration.

In Canada, we found that citizens tend to overestimate the number of refugees and asylum seekers but are comparatively less prone to overestimating the overall number of immigrants. Like in other settings, however, our results show that Canadians rely on mental images about the reasons for immigrating to Canada that do not entirely reflect the reality of Canada's immigration program. Interestingly, we also found that numerical estimations of annual immigration intake are less consequential for Canadians' attitudes toward immigration than images of immigrants coming primarily for non-economic reasons. These results hint at the potential impact of messages from elites on the subject of immigration, and how they relate to the attitudes about immigration in Canada.

While the mechanisms at play remain to be identified, this study reinforces the intuition that official messaging about immigration programs and targets – especially if it can instill trust in government capacity to "manage" immigration – can contribute to the development of positive attitudes toward immigrants.

In a second article, published in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, we report on a survey experiment examining when Canadians accept providing status and access to services to two categories of immigrants: refugees, and asylum seekers who arrived irregularly through the Canada-U.S. land border. Comparative research has shown that perceptions of deservingness are central to how citizens evaluate potential refugees and asylum seekers (Bansak, et al. 2016). The geographic location of Canada means that most of its refugees arrive in the country pre-vetted; they have been granted refugee status by UNHCR or through similar official channels.

As a result, Canadian institutions have sent a strong institutional signal that refugees arriving in Canada through state planned processes are legitimate and thus, deserving of help and government support. Since 2017, a growing number of immigrants have crossed the border at the Roxham Road point of entry to evade the limitations for those seeking protection created by the Third Safe Country Agreement between Canada and the United States (Paquet & Schertzer 2020). These

arrivals challenge the dominant signal of deservingness in humanitarian immigration that is communicated by Canadian institutions. Furthermore, it signals that some asylum seekers are "evading" what is perceived as "due process" to immigrate to Canada, and the disruption to the norms surrounding the system opens the door to public questions about whether these migrants are genuinely deserving of protection.

We explored this potential case by asking Canadians respondents to decide whether different fictional profiles of refugees and asylum seekers should be granted the right to stay permanently in the country and if they should receive financial support from the government. The results of this experiment confirm, again, that Canadian citizens are attuned to institutional signals and that this results in unique patterns of deservingness evaluation.

> When considering refugee applicants, respondents to our study consistently relied on cues about their potential economic contribution as opposed to other characteristics.

When considering refugee applicants, respondents to our study consistently relied on cues about their potential economic contribution as opposed to other characteristics. This demonstrates that Canadians are prone to evaluate refugees, like other immigrants, using the dominant economic paradigm of the national immigration program. We hypothesize that this is not because Canadians are inherently more concerned with the economy but that, instead, this type of evaluation stems from decades of institutional signals that render moot concerns about the genuineness of refugees' need for protection. Indeed, this is confirmed by how respondents to the same experiment evaluated irregular border crossers that requested asylum in Canada.

In those cases where government pre-vetting is missing, Canadians overwhelmingly appear to make decisions based on humanitarian deservingness cues (e.g., why a person would need protection) and rely less on economic cues, differentiating the result from their evaluation of refugees. These results demonstrate that immigration policy regimes generate important heuristic cues for the development of citizens' attitudes toward immigration, even if more research is needed to validate the conditions under which these cues are likely to generate stable attitudes and whether individual determinants might neutralize these effects. Nonetheless, these results help us better understand how the policies and actions of the Government of Canada contribute to the overall pro-immigration approach of its citizens.

The implications of this are profound: if Canadians are attuned to institutional signals of the country's immigration system, then the state's actions can potentially foster pro-immigration attitudes. While research on the provision of correct information about immigration has shown mixed results (Hopkins, et al. 2019), there are multiple other types of interventions that remain to be tested at different scales, with different publics and over different time periods. Identifying ways in which governments can institutionalize signals that decrease disinformation and anxiety about immigration is a crucial step to ensure the respect of human dignity in relation to migration and mobility opportunities.

These results also have important implications for Canada at this moment in time. Our current national immigration levels plan is to substantially increase the number of immigrants entering Canada, with the goal of bringing in 500,000 new Canadians by 2025. Of these 500,000 newcomers, 301,000 are set to be admitted as high skilled workers, 118,000 would fall into the family reunification class, 72,000 would be refugees, with another 8000 admitted on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. In addition to this, a record 50,000 irregular border crossers have arrived on foot at the Canada-U.S. border in 2023, a phenomenon that has only recently been upended by a revised agreement between these countries.

These planned and unplanned increases are starting to provoke concerns in some segments of the Canadian population. Our research demonstrates the need for governments to remain highly proactive in communicating about the immigration program as the country enters a period of rapid change.

References

Bansak, K., Hainmueller, J., & Hangartner, D. 2016. "How economic, humanitarian, and religious concerns shape European attitudes toward asylum-seekers," *Science* (354): 217-222.

Hopkins, D., Sides, J., & Citrin, J. 2019. "The Muted Consequences of Correct Information About Immigration," *Journal of Politics* (81): 315-320.

Lawlor, A., & Paquet, M. 2022. "Deservingness in context: perspectives towards refugees and asylum-seekers in Canada," *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* (48): 3484-3504.

Paquet, M., & Lawlor, A. 2022. "Numbers and Images: Representations of Immigration and Public Attitudes about Immigration in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. (55): 827-851.

Paquet, M., & Schertzer, R. 2020. "Irregular Border Crossings and Asylum Seekers in Canada: A Complex Intergovernmental Problem," *IRRP Study 80*. Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy.

Advocates of the status quo: Right-wing populist party success undermines citizens' political support in times of progressive policy change

Paul Vierus
University of Duisburg-Essen

Conrad Ziller
University of Duisburg-Essen

Crisis events often trigger governments to implement policies that go beyond incremental changes. While these policies may address long-term societal problems and their consequences, they may also challenge the current status quo of social status arrangements. Such challenges to the status quo may elicit resistance from privileged groups, whether this refers to economic resources or cultural dominance. Populist right-wing parties may exploit this resistance and present themselves as righteous advocates of the "pure people" to gain support. The study, *Advocates of the Status Quo: Right-Wing Populist Party Success Undermines Citizens' Political Support in Times of Progressive Policy Change,* investigates the conditions under which progressive policy under which progressive policy changes may help erode citizens' political support – that is, the support for specific policies, incumbent governments, and democratic political institutions more generally.

The authors of the study, Paul Vierus and Conrad Ziller, both researchers from the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany, argue that the combination of progressive policy change and successful populist right-wing

parties represents a scenario under which decreasing levels of political support among the citizenry are most likely to occur. Populist right-wing parties are well-known for their strategy of framing the enacted policies as projects of elites that run against the interests of ordinary citizens. The study focused on political measures enacted to facilitate immigrant integration, fight climate change, and achieve gender equality in the labor market, all of which are highly visible in Western countries through mass media attention and political debates. These issues also represent core concerns that proponents of the populist radical right oppose in order to gain votes from societal segments that reject progressive socio-cultural change.

To empirically assess the theoretical assumptions, the authors use a survey experiment conducted in Germany in 2022 that manipulates the degree of progressivity of policies to be implemented, as well as the degree of populist right-wing party response to it. Germany is well suited as a case since the Alternative for Germany (AfD) is an established populist right-wing party that is continuously present in mass media and has been opposing all three policy fields by using populist rhetoric. The study also uses observational data from repeated cross-sectional European Social Survey rounds in order to extend the focus beyond the case of Germany.

The results show that citizens' exposure to both progressive policy change and populist right-wing rhetoric leads to decreasing levels of political support, which is evidence for the theoretical predictions that were made. Nevertheless, three findings surprised the researchers: first, a progressive policy communicated neutrally did not affect political support, but when framed as a threat to current living standards, it caused a substantial decline in political support. This means that the framing of policy is critically important for how it is received by the public and ultimately shapes their political support – no matter whether experts, political actors, or proponents of populist right-wing parties are the initiator. Second, the mention of policy opposition by the populist radical right AfD did not negatively affect citizens' political support. Hence, populists are only able to cause a decrease in political support if they explicitly use a populist rhetoric where they play off citizens' interests

against established political elites. Third, there was no evidence that people who are more critical of social change will be more responsive to policy progressiveness and populist rhetoric, which is surprising given several previous studies that found groups to differ rather strongly.

The study shows that citizens' political support is situational and contextual, and it can be shifted by highlighting potentially negative consequences of implemented policies and playing the populist card of anti-elite rhetoric. Populist right-wing parties employing populist rhetoric about progressive political topics other than immigration and immigrant integration represent avenues for these parties to elicit political discontent. To strengthen support for democracy among citizens, one option is for mainstream parties to adopt the communication style of populist parties, which might be at the expense of giving up civilized democratic conflict. Another option would be to strengthen citizens' civic skills and political efficacy, which potentially buffer against populist appeals and and foster support for incumbent governments even during times of change.

The **Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.** (KAS, Konrad Adenauer Foundation) is one of six so-called political foundations of Germany and is politically associated with but legally and financially independent of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), post-war Germany's governing party for more than 50 years. As co-founder of the CDU and the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967) united Christian-social, conservative and liberal traditions. His name is synonymous with the democratic reconstruction of Germany, the firm alignment of foreign policy with the transatlantic community of values, the vision of a unified Europe and an orientation towards the social market economy. His political legacy continues to serve both as our aim as well as our obligation today. **KAS** receives almost all of its funding by decision of the German parliament from the German government. The amount of funding is proportionate to the election results of the CDU to Germany's federal parliament, the Bundestag.

Nationally and internationally, **KAS** promotes freedom, peace, and justice through civic education. Our offices worldwide are in charge of over 200 projects in more than 120 countries and focus on consolidating democracy, promoting European integration, the strengthening of transatlantic relations, as well as on development cooperation. We cooperate with governmental institutions, political parties, civil society organizations and decision-makers, building strong partnerships along the way. Together with our partners we make a contribution to maintaining and developing a rules-based international system that enables every country to develop in freedom and under its own responsibility. In Canada, we also seek to intensify political cooperation between Germany and Canada to strengthen transatlantic relations and to address common challenges of global nature. For more information, please go to:

kas.de/en/web/canada/home.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
Suite 303, 8 York Street
Ottawa, ON K1N 5S6, Canada