



Regular Research Article

Policy preferences in response to large forced migration inflows

William L. Allen^a, Isabel Ruiz^{b,*}, Carlos Vargas-Silva^{c,d}^a Department of Politics and International Relations and Nuffield College, University of Oxford, United Kingdom^b Blavatnik School of Government, Harris Manchester College, and Department of Economics, University of Oxford, United Kingdom^c Centre on Migration, Policy, and Society (COMPAS), University of Oxford, United Kingdom^d Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO), Norway

ARTICLE INFO

JEL Codes:

F22

F51

J61

J68

Keywords:

Policy preferences

Forced migration

Humanitarianism

Conjoint experiment

Venezuela

Colombia

ABSTRACT

What migration policies do people in receiving countries prefer, and to what extent do humanitarian concerns matter for these preferences? Despite sustained scholarly attention to migration attitudes in high-income countries, much less work examines public policy preferences—particularly in low- and middle-income countries that receive most forced migrants globally. While legislators can propose and implement migration policies involving multiple domains that differ in restrictiveness, their choices partly rely on public support that may vary depending on the policy area at stake. This makes understanding preferences for realistic migration policies in a multidimensional manner theoretically and empirically important. In response, we conducted a pre-registered conjoint experiment ($N = 2,508$) fielded in Colombia, the country that has received the largest share of Venezuelan emigrants who themselves currently comprise one of the world's largest migratory flows. Colombians prefer more open policy options that place either some or no restrictions on Venezuelan migrants' labor market access, ability to bring family members, access to public healthcare, or freedom to choose where they live within Colombia. However, there is support for restrictions on the overall number of Venezuelans allowed to settle in the country, as well as the length of time that Venezuelans are allowed to stay in Colombia. Moreover, respondents holding higher levels of humanitarianism prefer less restrictive policies towards Venezuelans relative to those holding stronger economic and material values—particularly in domains addressing core needs of health, family reunification, and employment. Our study contributes novel and timely evidence of multidimensional migration policy preferences from a highly-impacted case, while also showing how altruistic values relating to humanitarianism selectively matter for these preferences.

1. Introduction

Recent forced migration flows into the US and Europe have reignited public debates about asylum-seekers and refugees, particularly about their impacts on host societies and how governments should respond (Allen et al., 2018). While a body of research has focused on identifying the determinants and consequences of attitudes towards migrants of various categories,¹ it displays several characteristics that limit both empirical understanding about public responses to this issue and theoretical explanations as to why these patterns exist.

First, existing evidence is skewed towards understanding the

experiences of high-income countries,² despite the reality that low- and middle-income countries host 76 % of the world's refugees and that 70 % of refugees move to countries neighboring their own countries of origin (UNHCR, 2023a).³ Moreover, low- and middle income countries display characteristics such as porous borders, high levels of labor market informality and less capacity for public service provision which potentially limit the applicability of findings and theories that predominately derive from the experiences of high-income countries.

Second, most work to date has focused on measuring *attitudes* towards migrant groups. While these attitudes may inform policy choices, explicitly measuring *preferences for policies* set by governments who are

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: william.allen@politics.ox.ac.uk (W.L. Allen), isabel.ruiz@bsg.ox.ac.uk (I. Ruiz), carlos.vargas-silva@compas.ox.ac.uk (C. Vargas-Silva).¹ See Dinesen and Hjorth (2020) for an overview.² One exception is Alrababa'h, Dillon, Williamson, Hainmueller, Hangartner, & Weinstein, (2020). They consider attitudes and policy preferences towards Syrian refugees in Jordan. However, the emphasis of their experimental study is on attitudes and not on policy preferences.³ Note that UNHCR statistics about "refugees" cited here also include people categorized as "Venezuelans displaced abroad."

responsible for hosting forced migrants is also empirically and theoretically necessary. On the one hand, citizens' expressions about what they want to be done about migration may be distinct from their beliefs and attitudes about specific migrants, which makes studying those preferences important in their own rights (Dinesen & Hjorth, 2020). On the other hand, governments' responsiveness to their citizens' preferences is often taken as an indicator of democratic performance (Jennings, 2009; Soroka & Wlezien, 2005; Wlezien, 1995). Prior scholarship identifies how large migration inflows have contributed to the erosion of public trust in governments, particularly when they are perceived to be ineffective in dealing with these inflows (Altındağ & Kaushal, 2021; Campo, Giunti, & Mendola, 2021; Dustmann, Vasiljeva, & Piil Damm, 2019; Hangartner, Dinas, Marbach, Matakos, & Xefteris, 2019; Marbach & Ropers, 2019; McLaren, 2012; Roza & Vargas, 2021; Steinmayr, 2021).

Third, the evidence that does exist with respect to public support for migration policies mainly measures preferences for changing immigration levels or setting specific admission parameters in isolation from other relevant considerations involving migrants (Citrin, Green, Muste, & Wong, 1997; Facchini & Mayda, 2008; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2015; Scheve & Slaughter, 2001). However, controlling inward flows through levels or admission criteria is just one of several kinds of policy levers that are available. In practice, migration policies are usually multidimensional and involve trade-offs among their components (Ruhs, 2013). Therefore, existing observational surveys cannot readily reveal how host country citizens either perceive migration policies appearing in bundled forms or to what extent they distinguish among policies' constituent parts (Helbling, Bjerre, Römer, & Zobel, 2017; Helbling & Leblang, 2019).

We address these limitations by way of an original pre-registered conjoint experiment fielded in Colombia in March 2021 ($N = 2,508$). Specifically, we ask two questions: (1) what policy responses to large Venezuelan inflows do Colombians prefer, and (2) how does holding humanitarian values relate to these preferences? The Colombian case is instructive in two ways: first, because of the scale of the inflows; and second, because of similarities between migrant and host populations. Official estimates suggest between 2014 and 2023 over 7.3 million Venezuelans had left the country, making this group one of the largest global migratory flows as of August 2023 (R4V, 2023; UNHCR, 2022; 2023a,b). Moreover, of the approximately 6.1 million Venezuelan migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean as of June 2023, Colombia hosts nearly 2.5 million or about 40 % of the total.⁴ As such, our study provides one of the first assessments of mass public support for migration policies in a context that continues to be affected by one of the world's largest inflows.

The Colombian experience of hosting displaced Venezuelans is also important for empirical and theory development because both populations not only have a shared past and recent history but also share ethnolinguistic, social, and cultural features. Evidence about attitudes and preferences towards migrants in Europe or the US tends to involve testing the saliency of threats based on visible religious or ethnic dissimilarities to the host population. By contrast, Venezuelans and Colombians are more similar along these lines, which presents divergent possibilities for policy preferences that we develop later.

Our conjoint design presented respondents with sets of hypothetical policy packages that could be applied to Venezuelans entering Colombia. These packages comprised six dimensions typically available to policymakers and which are relevant to both public debate in Colombia as well as in other countries that host forced migrants: labor market access, location restrictions, access to public healthcare, family

reunification, numerical limits, and length of residency. At the aggregate level, we find that Colombians prefer more open policy options that place either some or no restrictions on Venezuelan migrants' labor market access, ability to bring family members, access to public healthcare, or freedom to choose where they live within Colombia. However, there is some support for restrictions on the overall number of Venezuelans allowed to settle in the country, as well as the length of time that Venezuelans are allowed to stay in Colombia. These overall patterns contrast with preferences in high-income countries for policies that place greater restrictions on forced migrants (Jeannet, Heidland, & Ruhs, 2021).⁵

We also consider whether these preferences vary depending on the extent to which respondents either hold humanitarian values or view the situation in Venezuela as a primarily economic crisis. We find that respondents holding higher levels of humanitarianism prefer less restrictive policies relative to those holding higher levels of economic material values, particularly in areas addressing core needs of health, family reunification, and employment. However, in terms of absolute preference levels, respondents holding either set of values preferred policies that placed financial criteria on family reunification and occupational restrictions on Venezuelans' access to the labor market. By contrast, both groups do not display different preferences with respect to imposing annual limits on inflows or restrictions on forced migrants' lengths of residency.

2. Multidimensional policy preferences towards forced migration

Policy preferences are important to study in their own rights because successful democratic governance is usually assumed to rely on readings of what voters want. This relationship is often characterized as thermostatic, whereby politicians respond to citizens' demands for more or less policy activity on a given topic (Wlezien, 1995). Prior empirical work generally supports this thermostatic model of opinion-policy formation, including on forced migration (Andersson, Bendz, & Olofsdotter Stensöta, 2018), although its strength varies across policy domains and institutional contexts (Soroka & Wlezien, 2004, 2005). While evaluating whether the Colombian context displays such dynamics is beyond the scope of this paper, measuring what the public thinks about realistic policy options with respect to forced migration is empirically valuable because it allows comparison to extant work on policy preferences in high-income countries (Jeannet et al., 2021).

Most work to date conceives forced migration policy preferences in binary terms of support or opposition for discrete actions such as redistributing asylum-seekers in more equitable ways (Bansak, Hainmueller, & Hangartner, 2017) or placing limits on entry levels (Hercowitz-Amir & Rajman, 2020). Yet these choices present significant challenges for the validity of studying preferences. First, citizens of receiving countries may simultaneously hold both positive and negative views on forced migrants depending on the aspect in question that cannot be reliably captured by the kinds of prompts typically used in observational studies (Jeannet et al., 2021). Second, responses may be sensitive to the reality of trade-offs in policymaking across several dimensions: the desire to achieve some objectives, such as extending more rights to forced migrants, may relate to preferences for restrictions on overall numbers (Adolph, Breunig, & Koski, 2020; Ruhs, 2013). Third, on a methodological level, directly asking respondents about whether they oppose or support individual policies affecting vulnerable populations may induce social desirability bias that obscures actual levels of prejudice towards these groups (D'Ancona, 2014; Janus, 2010).

In addition to measuring policy preferences, our study aims to shed

⁴ This information is accurate as of August 2022 and comes from the R4V platform (<https://www.r4v.info/en/refugeeandmigrants>). The R4V platform is an inter-agency coordination that partners with different countries and multilateral organizations (including UNHCR) in order to accurately report statistics about the Venezuelan population abroad.

⁵ Also, by way of illustration, countries like the UK impose conditions such as "No Recourse to Public Funds" (NRFP) that applies to asylum seekers and limits their access to public services, welfare and other benefits.

light on a key potential driver: humanitarian values. Preferences in the forced migration context are fundamentally based on a tension between self-interested material concerns and humanitarian (i.e. altruistic) concerns (Hamlin, 2014; Rosenblum & Salehyan, 2004). On the one hand, citizens' preferences may be shaped by considerations about the extent to which they think migrants represent burdens on the economy and state resources (Ivarsflaten, 2005). Extending protections specifically to forced migrants can be risky for governments as they face perceptions—sometimes inaccurate yet widely shared by political elites and media—that existing humanitarian protection regimes are prone to abuse by people who are actually seeking economic benefits (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008). On the other hand, preferences may also be shaped by perceptions about migrants' deservingness of entry and support in host societies, with reasons of persecution attracting higher levels of support (Bansak, Hainmueller, & Hangartner, 2016; Attitudes Toward Asylum Seekers: Evidence from Germany, 2019).

Cross-national and individual-level research also demonstrates how holding certain values including humanitarianism and collectivism is associated with more positive immigration attitudes (Davidov & Meuleman, 2012; Leong & Ward, 2006), although experimental evidence suggests such altruism may be circumscribed by nationalist predispositions (Kustov, 2021). Therefore, given these two competing sets of theoretical considerations, it is unclear which—if either—holds in the context of policy preferences and Latin American forced migration.

2.1. Dimensions of policy responses to large forced migration inflows

Policymakers in receiving countries can decide among several options when formulating responses to forced migration. In our study, we focused on six dimensions comprising our experimental treatments: labor market access, location restrictions, access to public healthcare, family reunification, numerical limits, and length of residency. In this section, we outline each policy area, and then relate it to our theoretical expectations regarding humanitarianism. The discussion below relies heavily on findings from other parts of the world because the evidence on these issues for Latin America, while growing, is still relatively small. However, as we explain in the next section, these six policy dimensions have appeared in discussions relating to migration in the Latin American context.

First, restricting labor market access is a popular policy in forced migration contexts because it intends to reduce concerns about competition between receiving communities and newcomers, reductions in wages, and worsened employment conditions (Fasani et al., 2021, 2022). Yet restrictions can negatively impact migrants' well-being by pushing them into informal employment with greater risks of exploitation. Restrictions can also lead to psychological distress (Hainmueller, Hangartner, & Lawrence, 2016; Hvidtfeldt, Petersen, & Norredam, 2019; Laban, Gernaat, Komproue, Schreuders, & De Jong, 2004). However, existing evidence suggests that concerns regarding job competition dominate concerns about migrants' well-being, particularly in economies with weaker labor markets (Zetter & Ruadel, 2016).

Second, restricting where forced migrants can relocate within receiving countries is a common practice globally. Whether taking the forms of formal camps or imposing temporary restrictions on migrants' ability to move across administrative boundaries, this policy choice involves concerns about migrants' perceived burdens on economies and societies being concentrated in certain regions (Auer, 2018; Bratsberg, Ferwerda, Finseraas, & Kotsadam, 2021; Ruiz & Vargas-Silva, 2016). Yet restrictions on movement potentially have negative consequences for migrants' flexibility in responding to opportunities elsewhere.

Third, restricting access to public services such as subsidized healthcare is a common policy in the case of migrants without regular legal status (Juanmarti Mestres, López Casasnovas, & Vall Castelló, 2021). By contrast, migrants and refugees with legal statuses typically are granted some degree of access to services which varies by country. Generally, questions about the extent to which forced migrants should

be able to access public services relate to concerns about whether host citizens will experience decreases in service quality (e.g. waiting times for medical treatment) (Giuntella, Nicodemo, & Vargas-Silva, 2018). However, public services restrictions have substantial negative long-term effects for migrants' well-being (Bozorgmehr & Razum, 2015).

Fourth, policymakers can restrict migrants' abilities to bring their family members with them. These restrictions are typically justified on the grounds that they limit the potential burden that additional dependents may place on public finances (Cholewinski, 2004; Jeannot et al., 2021; Sumption & Vargas-Silva, 2019). Although cross-national evidence shows that family members of migrants tend to have lower employment rates compared to other types of migrants, other work also shows that such policies have highly negative impacts on migrants' well-being, notably mental distress at the prospects of indeterminate periods of separation from loved ones and financial insecurity (Bragg & Wong, 2016).

Fifth, policymakers may set numerical limits on inflows, such as by restricting the number of available visas or work permits. These limits aim to address concerns about immigrants competing with host communities for employment (Borjas, 2014; Boubtane, Dumont, & Rault, 2016). Although setting explicit caps on arrivals is more controversial in the context of refugees, often those in need of protection are not formally recognized as refugees (Blouin, Berganza, & Freier, 2020). This means that numerical caps could be practically imposed. Yet doing so presents a challenge for humanitarian objectives, as it would result in providing protection to fewer people.

Sixth, setting conditions for return is a key area of policymaking for forced migration. Many countries offer protection for a limited period coinciding with the immediate crisis, and then require forced migrants to return (Black & Koser, 1999; Ruiz & Vargas-Silva, 2021). On the one hand, requiring return goes some way in avoiding potential abuses of humanitarian protection as a way of accessing receiving countries' labor markets. On the other hand, keeping migrants in a state of temporariness with no long-term prospects affects their well-being and leads to further distress (see Tize, 2020).

Within each area, policymakers have several options available to them that range in restrictiveness. Table 1 displays these options (called

Table 1
Policy Dimensions and Levels.

Policy Dimension	Levels
Access to Labor Markets	Venezuelans can work in Colombia without restrictions . Venezuelans can work in Colombia only in selected occupations . Venezuelans cannot work in Colombia.
Geographic Location	Venezuelans are allowed to locate in their city of preference in Colombia. Venezuelans are allowed to locate in certain designated cities in Colombia.
Access to Healthcare	Venezuelans can access the subsidized public healthcare system on an equal basis to Colombians . Venezuelans cannot access the subsidised public health care system in Colombia.
Family Reunification	Venezuelans are allowed to bring their spouse and children. Venezuelans are allowed to bring their spouse and children if they can pay for their cost of living . Venezuelans are not allowed to bring their spouse and children.
Numerical Limits	Venezuelans are allowed into Colombia without numerical limits . Venezuelans are allowed into Colombia until an annual limit is reached .
Length of Residence	Venezuelans are allowed into Colombia for an indefinite period . Venezuelans are allowed into Colombia for a period of ten years, which can be renewed . Venezuelans are allowed into Colombia for a period of ten years, which cannot be renewed .

“levels”) for each policy dimension. The key differences among each level are displayed in bold text and represent the treatment text for the experiment. In this design, the first level within each dimension corresponds with the least restrictive category. Here, it is worth highlighting that the length of residence dimension (i.e. 10 years) reflects the regularization program announced by the Colombian government in February 2021 which granted Venezuelans the possibility of applying for a temporary protection permit that could be renewed for up to 10 years (Cancillería de Colombia, 2021). We discuss the implications of this program in the results.

It is important to note that while these policies vary in levels of restrictiveness and likelihood of eventual adoption, we consulted with Colombian policymakers—including those in charge of border management and the overall response to Venezuelan inflows—at the research design stage to confirm these options’ plausibility. Since our interest was on preferences across policy options, we opted to emphasize policy possibilities rather than policy intentions.

2.2. Hypotheses

If forced migration policy preferences are indeed multidimensional and sensitive to different considerations as prior theories of attitude formation suggest (Dinesen & Hjorth, 2020; Jeannet, Heidland, & Ruhs, 2023; Jeannet et al., 2021), then we expect that aggregate preferences will vary depending on whether the domain in question relates to either economic or humanitarian concerns about forced migrants’ impacts on the host community. Specifically, based on the discussion in the previous section we expect that individuals will prefer more restrictive policies in domains related to economic concerns (Dancygier & Donnelly, 2014; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2010; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2015; Scheve & Slaughter, 2001) and less restrictive policies in domains related to humanitarian concerns (Bansak et al., 2016; Fraser & Murakami, 2022). Based on this our pre-registered hypotheses were:

H1 (economic concerns). On average, respondents will prefer *more* restrictive policies related to labor market access and location restrictions.

H2 (humanitarian concerns). On average, respondents will prefer *less* restrictive policies related to access to health services and allowing for family reunification.

Yet it is also possible that these aggregate-level preferences will mask heterogeneity with respect to respondents’ own values—specifically, the extent to which they hold material or humanitarian priorities. Prior studies into immigration attitudes and policy preferences have tended to focus on the importance of either economic (material), prejudice, or sociotropic concerns at a broad societal level (Kinder & Kiewiet, 1981; Solodoch, 2021). However, recent work has extended the understanding of preferences and attitudes to values and principles (e.g. political ideology, humanitarianism, e.g. Fraser & Murakami, 2022). In contexts of large forced migration inflows, we argue that sentiments of humanitarianism may also become relevant. These values, which are different from solely sociotropic concerns, may shape preferences by activating pro-social and altruistic behavior towards out-groups—especially when those out-groups are disadvantaged because of reasons beyond their control (e.g. war, hunger, civil conflict, irregular immigration). Indeed, there is some evidence that values related to humanitarianism or egalitarianism correlate with strongly with pro-migration attitudes (Fraser & Murakami, 2022; Wright, Levy, & Citrin, 2016). Therefore, we set a third pre-registered hypothesis that links the salience of these values to preferences for specific policies:

H3 (economic versus humanitarian concerns). Respondents who prioritize economic values or see the Venezuelan crisis as a primarily economic problem will prefer *more* restrictive policies related to numerical limits, location, labor market access and length of residence, compared to those who prioritize humanitarian values or see the Venezuelan crisis as a primarily humanitarian problem.

3. Venezuelan migration to Colombia

The Venezuelan crisis has a long history, but the peak of the crisis occurred after the death of former President Hugo Chavez and the subsequent collapse of the economy. The result of the economic collapse in 2014 and the increased political tensions resulted in the outflow of more than 7 million Venezuelan citizens, or around 20 % of the country’s population (R4V, 2021, 2023).

Colombia shares a large border with Venezuela spanning 1,378 miles. In addition, Venezuela and Colombia were part of the same country called *Gran Colombia* in the early 19th century. As a result, both countries have a shared history and display important cultural similarities. Venezuela was also an important destination for Colombians during the 1970’s “oil boom” which made Venezuela an attractive economic destination for Colombians. In addition, the long civil conflict in Colombia triggered additional waves of migration from Colombia to Venezuela, particularly in the 1980’s. With the collapse of the Venezuelan economy, many Colombians have now returned home. Therefore, it is not surprising that Colombia has also been the largest recipient of Venezuelans migrants, with nearly 2.5 million living in the country as of June 2023.⁶

The official crossing points at the Colombia-Venezuela border have remained open for much of the Venezuelan crisis. The border crossing points were temporarily closed in 2015 but re-opened in 2016, after which many migrants crossed (see Fig. 1). Colombia’s border with Venezuela is largely unguarded and it has always been relatively easy for Venezuelans to cross the border at unofficial border-crossing points.

While the situation of Venezuelan migrants has many similarities with the situation of refugees (i.e. those with the legal status), Colombia and other countries in the region do not automatically recognize Venezuelans as refugees (Blouin et al., 2020). In 2017, the Colombian government created a new migratory status known as the “*Permiso Especial de Permanencia*” (Special Permanency Permit) or PEP. This

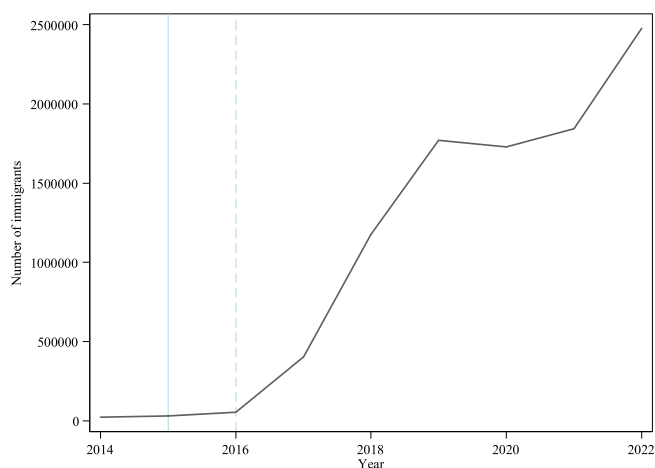


Fig. 1. Migration of Venezuelans to Colombia Source: Authors’ calculations using data published by the Ministry of External Relations 2020 and R4V - Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela. 2014 to August 2022. The vertical solid line indicates the border closure in 2015 and the dashed line the re-opening of the border in 2016.

permit has had different versions: the 2018 iteration was initially valid

⁶ This represents about 3.6% of Colombia’s population and 7.2% of the labor force (Santamaria, 2020).

for to two years. Venezuelans who held a PEP were able to join the labor market and access public services.⁷ While the permit regularized a significant proportion of Venezuelans, the number of unauthorized Venezuelans in the country remained high. In fact, until late-2020, nearly 50 % of Venezuelans did not have regular status as shown in Fig. 2 (Migración Colombia, 2020). However, given the large level of informality in the Colombian labor market—estimated at over 60 % of all employment in Colombia (Arango & Flórez, 2021)—the lack of regularization and formal work authorization might not have represented a major impediment for Venezuelans to find employment.⁸

Comparing demographic and labor market characteristics of Colombians, Colombian returnees and Venezuelans during the first quarter of 2021 (when our survey fieldwork occurred) reveals patterns that largely accord with prior studies. A Colombian returnee is a Colombian national who was residing in Venezuela and returned to Colombia after the crises unfolded. As shown in Table 2, the three populations have similar sex ratios, while Venezuelans are younger and have slightly higher levels of education (Bahar, Ibáñez, & Rozo, 2021; Santamaría, 2020) which highlights how labor market competition may have a stronger impact. Venezuelan migrants also work longer weekly hours (similar to returnees) and report lower wages compared to those of Colombians.

In February 2021, immediately prior to our survey fieldwork, the Colombian government announced a mass regularization for Venezuelan migrants currently living in the country, called “*Estatuto Temporal de Protección para Migrantes Venezolanos*” (ETPV). This initiative aimed to grant Venezuelans a temporary regular migratory status for a 10-year period.⁹ The permit allows holders access to formal labor markets and public services such as health and education.¹⁰ This scheme covers migrants already living in Colombia with either regular or irregular status and has taken place in stages: it first required Venezuelans to sign up in the national registry, then, after cases were evaluated, permits started being granted in October 2021. Given the

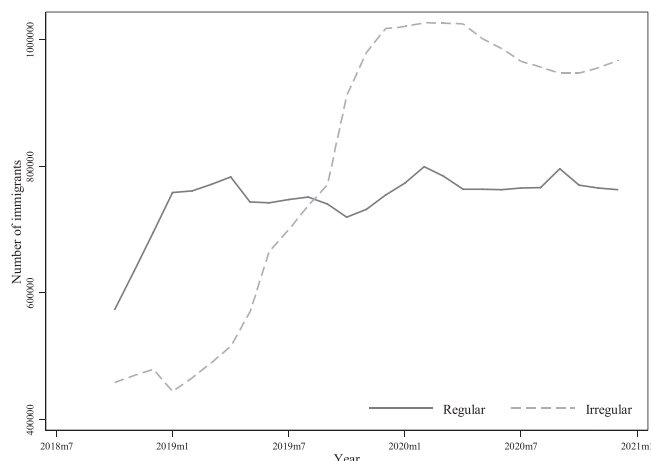


Fig. 2. Regular and Irregular Migrants since 2018. Source: Authors' calculations using data published by the Ministry of External Relations 2020.

⁷ The PEP was initially rolled out in 2017 and came to be known as the PEP-I. Three resolutions were enacted in 2018 with three different forms of the PEP. Current evidence shows negligible effects of these amnesties on the Colombian labor markets (Bahar et al., 2021).

⁸ There is evidence that, even after being eligible for regularization, some migrants chose to keep working in the informal sector (Bahar et al., 2021).

⁹ <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2021/2/60214cf74/unhcr-iom-welco-me-colombias-decision-regularize-venezuelan-refugees-migrants.html>.

¹⁰ <https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/newsroom/news/presidente-duque-anuncia-decision-historica-crear-estatuto-proteccion-temporal>.

Table 2

Demographic and labor market characteristics of Colombian, Colombian returnees, and Venezuelans – Quarter 1, 2021.

	Colombians	Colombian returnees	Venezuelans
Female	0.50	0.51	0.51
Age	34.3	28	25.7
Married	0.14	0.08	0.06
Years of education	5.5	6.3	5.9
Education			
None	0.05	0.03	0.06
Primary	0.25	0.23	0.24
Secondary	0.37	0.51	0.46
Tertiary	0.22	0.15	0.13
Labor market			
Labor force	0.71	0.71	0.65
Employment	0.52	0.60	0.60
Weekly hours worked	44.5	48.5	48.4
Monthly wages	1,260	739.2	772
Sample size	2,569,051	96,355	114,852

Source: authors' calculations using data from the Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH), which is the Colombian Labour Market Survey, 2017–21. LFP: Labour force participation. Monthly wages expressed in thousands of Colombian pesos. 1 USD = c. 3,561 COP as of January 31, 2021.

timing of the announcement, which allowed us to incorporate this new policy reality into our design, our study contains (to the best of our knowledge) the first assessment of public support immediately following the decision.

Generally, there is limited information on which migration policies the Colombian public prefers. Fig. 3 shows the percentage of individuals agreeing to different statements based on data from Proyecto Migración Venezuela collected in September 2020. At the time of that survey, a majority (57 %) of Colombians perceived Venezuelans as a threat to employment (i.e. taking jobs away) as well as a fiscal burden (58 %). Yet most respondents also agreed that Venezuelan migrants should be given access to health (72 %), jobs (54 %), and granted legal documents to access health and labor markers under the same conditions as Colombians (48 %).¹¹

Evidence from other cross-national surveys echoes these patterns, and also enables us to place Colombian immigration attitudes and preferences in their regional and global contexts. For example, data from the 2018 wave of the Americas Barometer indicates that nearly half (48.4 %) of Colombians disagreed with the idea that the government should offer Venezuelans access to social services, compared to 37.3 % in neighboring Ecuador. Meanwhile, as shown in Fig. 4, World Values Survey data indicates how Colombian preferences are moderately restrictive compared to other countries in the region, and certainly less so compared to other countries such as Lebanon and Jordan that have also experienced large inflows of refugees.

It is also important to highlight that there is substantial news media and political discussion about the impacts of Venezuelan migration across Latin American countries. Many of the ideas in this discussion reflect suggestions for policy restrictions that resemble those discussed in our survey. For instance, Claudia López, who is currently the mayor of Colombia's capital Bogotá, has blamed Venezuelans for criminality in the capital and urged national authorities to be more effective with deportations.¹² Meanwhile, the mayor of Huancayo in Peru has called for restrictions on the mobility of Venezuelans and wants to make his town “a Venezuelan free zone,”¹³ while the mayor of Yopal, in Colombia, has advocated for excluding Venezuelans from most services

¹¹ Proyecto Migración also collected data in April 2019 and March 2020. The proportions of respondents agreeing to these statements have remained stable between these waves.

¹² <https://www.heartsonvenezuela.com/a-xenophobic-claudia-lopez-blames-venezuelans-over-crime-wave-in-bogota/>.

¹³ <https://andina.pe/agencia/noticia.aspx?id=746971>.

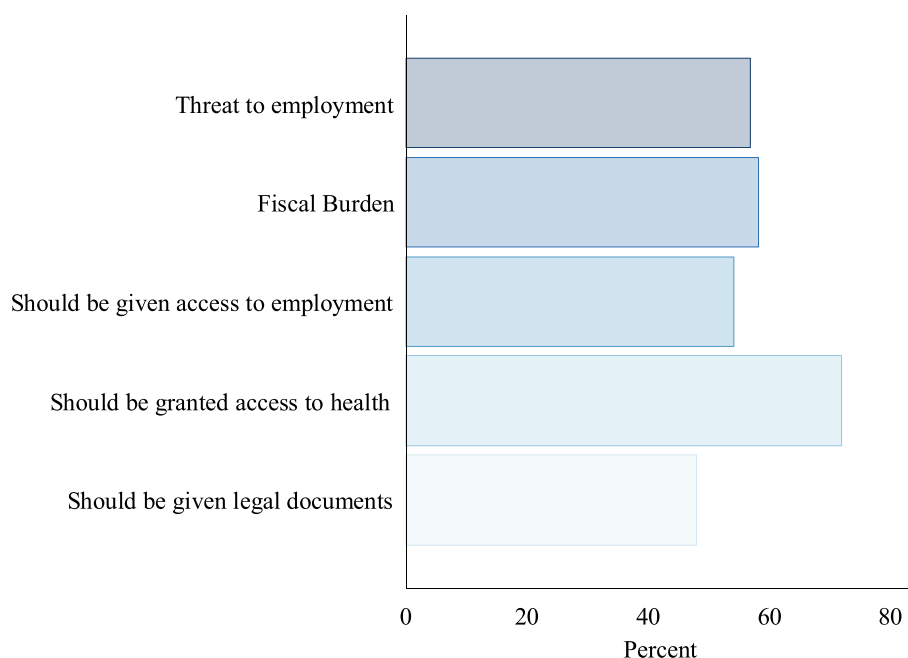


Fig. 3. Attitudes towards Venezuelan migrants, September 2020. Note: Authors' calculation using data from Proyecto Migración Venezuela, Revista Semana 2020. Percentage of respondents agreeing with the following statements: Venezuelans (1) take jobs away from Colombians (Le quitan los empleos a los colombianos), (2) Are a burden for the welfare system (son una carga para los servicios sociales del Estado). For the next three questions: do you agree or disagree with the following: (3) Access to employment should be facilitated for migrants (es necesario facilitar que los migrantes consigan empleo), (4) Access to health and education services should be facilitated for migrants (es necesario facilitar el acceso a servicios de salud y educación para los migrantes) (5) Migrants should be granted legal documents so that they can work and access public services in similar conditions as Colombians (brindar documentos legales a todos los migrantes para que puedan trabajar y acceder a servicios, en igualdad de condiciones, que los Colombianos).

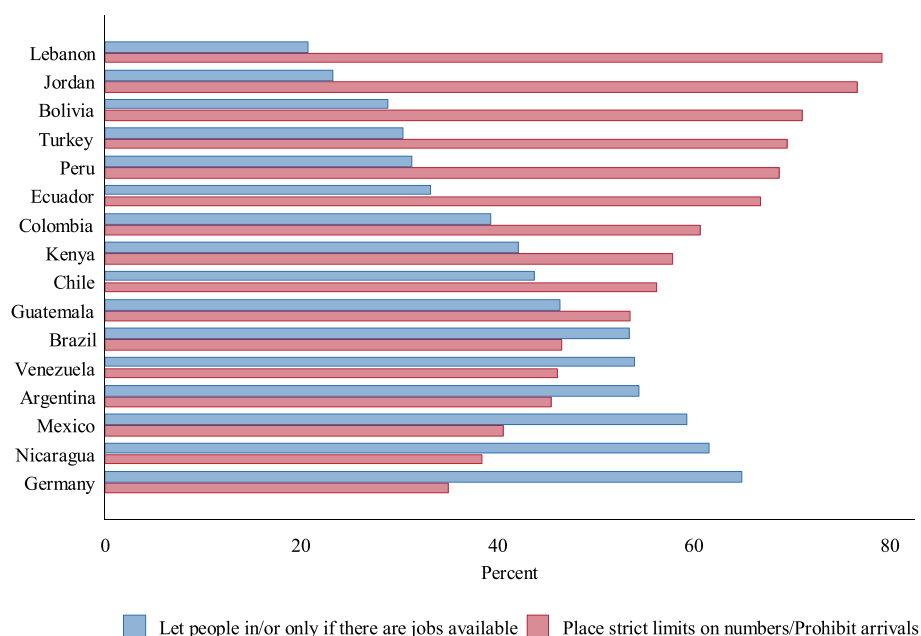


Fig. 4. Immigration Policy Preferences – Admission (WVS 2017–2021). Source: Authors' calculation using data from the World Values Survey (2017–2021). Percentage of respondents agreeing with the statements.

and declared that the municipality does not have resources to cover the cost of providing public services to them.¹⁴ Finally, the regional government of Cusco in Peru passed an ordinance to stop the employment of

Venezuelans in the region.¹⁵ These examples of political and media discussions in the region, besides further illustrating the real-world significance of migration and its consequences, serve as

¹⁴ <https://www.eltiempo.com/politica/gobierno/alcalde-de-yopal-dice-que-no-tiene-plata-para-los-venezolanos-480120>.

¹⁵ <https://gestion.pe/economia/mtpe-le-pone-alto-cusco-fijar-sanciones-contratar-venezolanos-273762-noticia/>.

demonstrations of how our experimental design has a degree of external validity with respect to legislators' responses towards Venezuelans.

4. Data and research design

4.1. Conjoint experimental design and key variables

To measure Colombian policy preferences, we conducted a fully randomized choice-based conjoint experiment. The pre-analysis plan was registered with As-Predicted (60418).¹⁶ Conjoint designs enable estimating the causal effects of different treatment components that vary simultaneously, making them well-suited for measuring multidimensional outcomes like preferences for specific aspects of forced migration policy packages (Bansak, Hainmueller, Hopkins, & Yamamoto, 2021; Hainmueller, Hopkins, & Yamamoto, 2014; Rodon & Sanjaume-Calvet, 2020). We presented respondents with five pairs of hypothetical packages comprising one randomly selected level within each of the six policy dimensions displayed in Table 1. Then, we asked respondents to choose which of the two packages they preferred more (forced choice outcome) as well as rate each package on a 1–7 scale where 1 indicated “absolutely dislike” and 7 indicated “absolutely like” (rating outcome).¹⁷ To reduce order effects, where respondents give disproportionately more attention to items at the beginning of a list, we randomized the appearance of each dimension between respondents but kept the order constant across trials to minimize fatigue. Conjoint designs also help reduce social desirability bias when asking about sensitive subjects like political attitudes towards outgroups, by allowing respondents to justify their choices along any number of the available dimensions (Bansak et al., 2021; Dahl, 2018; Horiuchi, Markovich, & Yamamoto, 2021).

To measure the extent to which respondents held more material or humanitarian priorities, we used a pre-treatment battery of questions (full wordings provided in the Supporting Information). These questions aimed to establish the extent to which respondents agreed with statements that prioritized the welfare of people in need over economic growth, recoded so that higher values on a 1–5 scale indicated more humanitarian values. Following our pre-registration plan, we considered respondents whose mean response across the questions was greater than 3 as holding stronger humanitarian values. Conversely, we considered respondents whose mean response was equal to or lower than 3 as having stronger material values.¹⁸

4.2. Data collection

We fielded the survey experiment between March 1–13, 2021 to a sample of 2,508 Colombian adults who came from a larger online panel

of approximately 140,500 respondents.¹⁹ Since each respondent saw five pairs of policy packages, our analysis comprises 25,080 observations. Our sampling strategy aimed to capture representativeness across key demographics including age, gender, region, and socioeconomic strata (a measure of social class used in Colombia). Although our achieved sample displays close similarity with the 2018 Colombian census (see Table A2 in the Supporting Information), we acknowledge how online sampling approaches may over-represent individuals who have internet access and sufficient digital literacy levels—features that may in turn relate to urbanization and education.²⁰ Therefore, for the results reported in both the main text and Supporting Information, we constructed and applied population weights using entropy balancing weighting in line with established practice (Hainmueller, 2012; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2015).

4.3. Estimation strategy

We analyze and visualize our data in two steps.²¹ First, we estimate both the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) and marginal means (MMs) to measure aggregate-level preferences for each policy option within each dimension. In the main results, we use the forced choice outcome variable to express the likelihood of a given policy being chosen. In our robustness checks, we replicated the results using the rating outcome variable and saw no substantive differences. AMCEs report a series of linear probability estimations where the dependent variable is a binary (forced choice) variable indicating respondents' preferred policy. The dependent variable is regressed on the levels of each policy dimension (with a researcher-chosen reference category as the baseline level) to estimate the probability of respondents choosing that policy option in relation to the reference category. In all estimations, we report robust standard errors clustered at the respondent level since each respondent saw multiple treatments (Hainmueller et al., 2014). Meanwhile, MMs represent the mean outcome across all appearances of a particular feature, averaging across all other features. They are the differences in the outcome of interest caused by the presence of a specific attribute, all other attributes being equal (Leeper, Hobolt, & Tilley, 2020; Ratkovic, 2021). By contrast to AMCEs, these quantities reveal level preferences rather than relative preferences.

Second, we estimate conditional marginal means (CMMs) to compare preferences between respondents holding either material or humanitarian priorities. When comparing subsamples, the marginal mean approach gives clearer results than their equivalent conditional AMCEs, while also reducing concerns about how arbitrary selection of reference categories might impact the causal interpretation of the results.²²

¹⁶ Link to the pre-registration can be found here: https://aspredicted.org/bl_ind.php?x=B94_Q67. All the relevant Ethics clearance for the surveys were processed and approved by the author's Institutions.

¹⁷ The introductory paragraph and exact wording of the questions were: “Imagine that the Colombian government is considering various packages of measures to address migration from Venezuela. Next we will show you two possible options of packages, A and B. Read their descriptions carefully.” Then, in each conjoint task they are asked: (1) Which package is closest to what you would prefer?, and (2) On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means “you absolutely dislike” and 7 means “you absolutely like”, how would you rate each of these packages? The full survey instrument is included in the supporting material (Supporting Information). Figure A1 also provides an example of the task within the survey interface.

¹⁸ The full battery of statements appears in Table A1 (Supporting Information) and the corresponding summary statistics in Figures A2 and A3.

¹⁹ We worked with Invamer (<https://www.invamer.com.co/>), a reputable nationally recognized survey firm with one of the largest online panels in the country. They operated through the Netquest platform, and their recruitment strategy is based on incentives that are granted to the respondents at the end of the survey.

²⁰ In terms of internet access, Colombia ranks in the middle of other Latin American countries of similar income levels: according to World Bank estimates, 65% of the population in the country has access to use of the internet. This is higher than Ecuador (54%), Peru (60%), and Bolivia (44.2%), but lower than Mexico (70%), Argentina (74%), and Brazil (70%) (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS>).

²¹ We report here the results obtained using the cregg package in R (Leeper, 2020). We also provide the coding in STATA for the main analysis and Supporting Information.

²² See Leeper et al. (2020) for a demonstration of this phenomenon.

5. Results

5.1. Aggregate-level policy preferences

Fig. 5 shows the AMCEs and MMs for each level across the six policy dimensions. Among the AMCEs, we set the reference category to be the least restrictive level within each dimension, which in some of the policy areas also clearly coincides with the current policy in Colombia at the time of the experiment. For instance, there were no numerical limits on how many Venezuelans can cross the border or restrictions on the location of Venezuelans within Colombia. For other policy areas, such as the right to work, access to health and family reunification, there is variation in rights across Venezuelans in Colombia depending on time of arrival into the country and migration status. Some Venezuelans have full access to work, healthcare, and family reunification rights, while others lack all three—particularly those who crossed the border in an irregular manner as well for more recent inflows.

The results provide mixed support for our aggregate-level hypotheses, and generally paint a picture of modest preferences for some or no restrictions on Venezuelans across the six domains. H1 stated that respondents would favor more restrictive policies with respect to labor market access and geographic location, owing to the potential for economic concerns to be salient in low- and middle-income migratory contexts. On the one hand, Colombians prefer restricting Venezuelans' access to the labor market over no restrictions by 2 percentage points. On the other hand, they clearly reject the complete prohibition of Venezuelans from employment: this option was 12 percentage points less favored compared to completely open access. There is also slight opposition (by about 3 percentage points) to restricting Venezuelans' ability to relocate within Colombia compared to having completely free mobility.

One of the objectives of the analysis was to explore if formal labor market restrictions are relevant in the context of a country with high levels of informality. The results suggests that employment restrictions play a significant role. However, it is not a straightforward story of labor market competition or fiscal burden. Respondents preferred some restrictions rather than no restrictions, which speaks to concerns regarding labor market competition with Venezuelans. On the other hand, respondents are less likely to favor policies which completely block labor market access of migrants, which highlights potential fiscal concerns about Venezuelan migration.

Meanwhile, H2 stated that respondents would prefer less restrictive policy options with respect to Venezuelans' access to public health services and ability to bring dependents, given the forced nature of Venezuelan migration. Again, we find mixed support for this hypothesis. Respondents do prefer granting Venezuelans access to public health services compared to not granting access by 4 percentage points. However, there was substantial preference for allowing family reunification with economic criteria over either of the alternatives of allowing reunification without restrictions (by 10 percentage points) or completely prohibiting reunification (by 11 percentage points).

Finally, although we did not pre-register aggregate-level hypotheses with respect to numerical limits and length of residency, we found that respondents prefer some kind of annual limit (by 6 percentage points, compared to no annual limit) and having a time-limit on residency whether or not it can be renewed (by about 5 percentage points over having an unlimited residency period). The preference for limits on future inflows via numerical limits suggest that many Colombians see the Venezuelan situation as ongoing and expected inflows to be significant in the future even with the large number of Venezuelans already in the country. Moreover, preferences for numerical limits do not appear to be systematically related to preferences in other dimensions: interacting the numerical limits dimension with the other five dimensions does not reveal differences in the effects' signs (see Figure A4 in the [supporting information](#)). Overall, the results suggest that Venezuelans' access to labor markets and their right to bring dependents are the dimensions

that matter more for Colombians, as seen in the spread of preferences.

5.2. Heterogeneity by material versus humanitarian values

We are also interested in addressing whether humanitarian values potentially matter for policy preferences, and if so, for which aspects.²³ We expected that respondents holding material or economic priorities would prefer more restrictive policy options with respect to numerical limits, location, labor market access and length of residence, compared to respondents holding humanitarian priorities. Fig. 6 displays the conditional marginal means for each group, deriving from our measure of respondents' priorities described earlier. Meanwhile, Fig. 7 displays the differences between groups: values greater than 0 indicate more preference for a given feature among those holding stronger humanitarian values and values less than 0 indicate more preference for a given feature among those holding stronger economic values.

Our results partially support this pre-registered hypothesis. On the one hand, these groups do differ in the predicted directions when it comes to location restrictions and labor market access: people holding stronger humanitarian values are more likely to prefer the most liberalized policy options compared to those holding stronger material values. On the other hand, these groups do not express significantly different preferences for numerical limits on inflows and the length of residency granted to Venezuelans.²⁴

Notably, the strongest differences between these groups appears to be in the domains of family reunification, access to healthcare, and employment rights (see Fig. 7 and formal F-tests for statistically significant differences in Table A3). Respondents holding more humanitarian values are more likely to support policy options that place no restrictions on Venezuelans in these areas, compared to those holding more material values. By contrast, respondents holding more material values are more likely to support the most restrictive policy options towards Venezuelans compared to those holding humanitarian values. Yet is also important to signal that these *relative* differences in preferences between the two groups accompany *absolute* preferences for placing some criteria on bringing dependents as well as accessing labor markets. Moreover, whether respondents hold altruistic or materialistic priorities does not appear to matter for their preferences towards the protection conditions offered to Venezuelans, which were the subject of Colombia's amnesty program announced in February 2021.

5.3. Other heterogeneities

We also considered a range of features as potential moderators, which was done in an exploratory manner separate from the pre-registered analyses. These included age, gender, socio-economic status, education, employment status, political ideology, contact with migrants, and the density of migrants in the location where the respondent resides. Given that the fieldwork took place in 2021 when the COVID-19 pandemic was still ongoing, we considered whether the respondent had been negatively impacted by COVID-19 or subsequent lockdowns by way of a question battery from Adams-Prassl, Boneva, Golín, and Rauh (2020). The results to all the above are presented in Figure A9 in the [Supporting Information](#).

We observe some notable differences among subgroups in some dimensions that correspond with prior work on the drivers of immigration attitudes in high-income countries, with results for all the above

²³ As we mention in the discussion section, we acknowledge that our study cannot strictly test holding humanitarianism versus material values as a causal mechanism because we did not randomly assign these values to respondents. Rather, our results provide suggestive evidence of humanitarianism as a potential mechanism for future research to examine.

²⁴ The analysis of the statistical difference between conditional means is also presented in Table A3 in the supporting information.

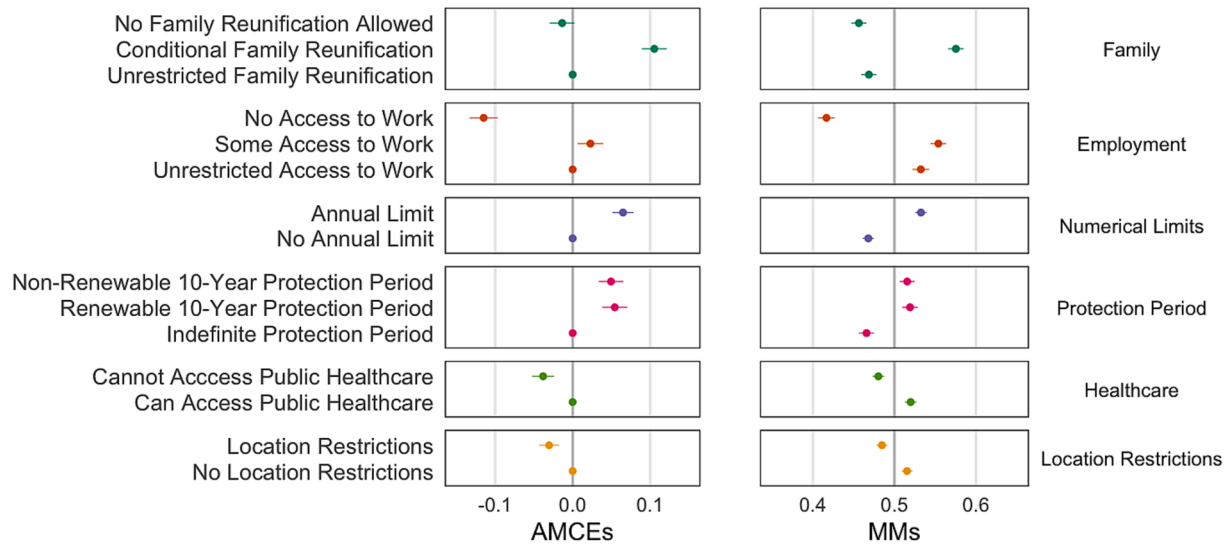


Fig. 5. Colombian policy preferences towards Venezuelan migration: Average Marginal Component (AMCEs) and Marginal Means (MMs). Note: N = 2,508 respondents. Estimates based on linear probability models with clustered and robust standard errors with 95 % confidence intervals. In the AMCE column, single points without horizontal bars denote the reference category used for that dimension.

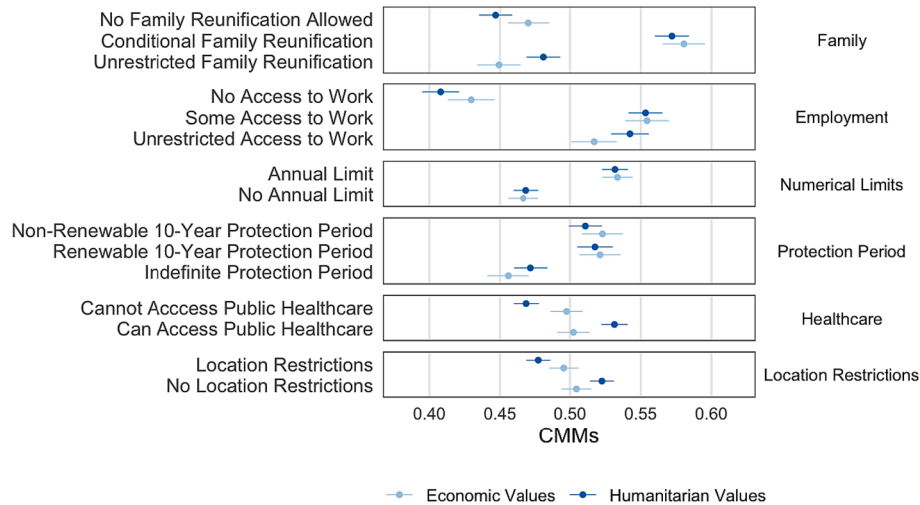


Fig. 6. Colombian policy preferences towards Venezuelans by sets of priorities: conditional marginal means (CMMs). Note: N = 2,508 respondents. Estimates based on linear probability models with clustered and robust standard errors with 95 % confidence intervals.

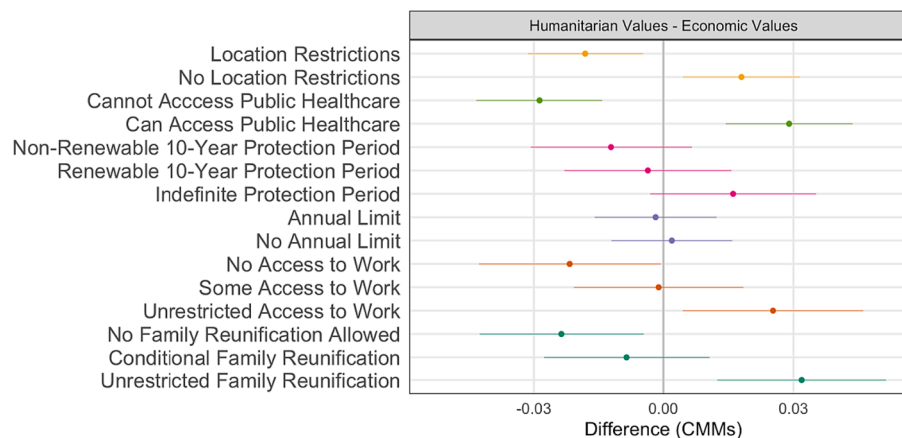


Fig. 7. Differences in conditional marginal means by sets of priorities.

moderators appearing in the [supporting information](#). Younger respondents (those aged below 40), those of who identify on the left in terms of their political ideology, and those who report higher contact with migrants are less likely to prefer restricting work compared to those that are older, identify with the right, or report lower contact. However, the groups express largely similar responses with respect to the other policy dimensions. Interestingly, those impacted by the COVID pandemic (financially or by losing their jobs) are less likely to prefer restrictions on work for Venezuelan migrants.

5.4. Robustness checks

We also conducted a series of robustness checks to test the validity of our main findings, the results of which appear in the [supporting information](#).²⁵ First, it is possible that other covariates may matter for our treatment effects. Successful randomization simplifies modeling assumptions, and good experimental practice advocates for pre-registration to mitigate concerns about deciding which covariates (if any) to include ([Mutz & Pemantle, 2015](#)). Nevertheless, including controls such as age, education, political ideology, and prior migration attitudes does not substantially affect the magnitude and direction of our treatment effects.²⁶ Second, the results may be sensitive to using a binary forced choice outcome variable. Using the rating question and rescaling these responses to vary between 0 and 1 produces similar results. Third, we check for any changes in results due to survey fatigue: although we had limited the number of tasks to be well within the bounds of what respondents typically complete without losses in quality,²⁷ we acknowledge that our treatment of policy packages might have put greater cognitive demands on respondents than other kinds of treatments. Nevertheless, comparing estimates by task number reveals a high degree of consistency among trials. Finally, it is possible that respondents could have placed equal importance on material and humanitarian priorities. We address this possibility in two ways. First, we re-estimate our results while dropping respondents whose mean score on our values question battery is exactly at the midpoint of 3.0: if a respondent did indeed place equal importance to these sets of priorities, then it is plausible they would choose the middle option for each question to express their ambivalence. Second, we use an alternative question that directly asks whether respondents viewed the Venezuelan crisis as either a primarily economic or humanitarian crisis, and then construct subgroups corresponding to each answer. The substantive results using both methods remain the same.²⁸

6. Discussion

As countries around the world continue to experience large-scale migration inflows, governments face choices of which policies to implement in response. Thermostatic models of democratic responsiveness suggest these choices will be partly informed by public demands and consent for different kinds of interventions. While existing research has tried to ascertain host communities' preferences for immigration policies, this work displays shortcomings that limit both

theoretical and empirical development. This includes the lack of focus on low- and middle-income countries which, by sheer numbers, experience most of the world's forced migration inflows.

In response, we used a pre-registered conjoint experiment fielded in Colombia to measure the extent to which receiving country residents prefer a range of policies realistically available to policymakers as they respond to Venezuelan migration. We also addressed the extent to which people holding humanitarian values expressed different preferences to people holding material (i.e. economic) values, which recent research suggests are important drivers for general immigration attitudes.

Our empirical results reveal how Colombians' policy preferences with respect to forced migration are multidimensional and vary depending on the domain in question. Specifically, they tend to support policy options that place some or no restrictions on Venezuelans' access to the labor market and subsidized healthcare, as well as their ability to bring dependents and relocate where they wish within the country. However, we also find that Colombians support the use of numerical caps on inflows and time-limited residency permits such as those announced by the government in February 2021. Meanwhile, respondents who hold stronger material values tend to support policies that are more restrictive *relative* to respondents who hold humanitarian values—particularly on family reunification, healthcare access, and employment rules (see Panel B of [Fig. 2](#))—although we stress that both groups *absolutely* prefer policy options that place some limitations on Venezuelans' ability to work and bring dependents (see Panel A of [Fig. 2](#)).

These findings display some consonance with the very limited conjoint experimental evidence to date on forced migration policy preferences from high-income contexts ([Jeannet et al., 2023](#); [Jeannet et al., 2021](#)). Europeans, for instance, prefer placing annual limits on asylum applications over having no limits (by about 5 percentage points, compared to about 6 percentage points in Colombia), as well as requiring financial support for dependents over no such criteria (by about 7 percentage points, compared to about 11 percentage points in Colombia). Observing both similarities and differences in the levels of preferences for various policy areas between developing and developed country contexts lends further support for the importance of comparatively measuring multidimensional preferences. Yet our study goes further in considering additional kinds of policy responses available to governments which have gained traction in political and media coverage within and beyond Colombia, such as access to healthcare and mass regularization. While we acknowledge our study lacks a longitudinal dimension owing to its snapshot nature, which would reveal the dynamics of preferences as they potentially change in varying forced migration circumstances, we nevertheless argue that it provides a valuable window onto this specific context that opens further research avenues.

Theoretically, our study makes two key contributions. First, it improves understanding about how multidimensional policy preferences towards forced migration are structured, particularly along lines of humanitarianism. Areas of policy that have more directly-felt consequences on forced migrants' lives—notably employment prospects, bringing family members, and (to a lesser degree) accessing healthcare—appear to attract more permissive preferences in the Colombian context. Moreover, these are areas where we observed significant relative differences between those holding material or humanitarian values. To be clear, strictly speaking given our design, we do not make strong claims about the extent to which altruistic values are *driving* policy preferences. Rather, when read alongside our multidimensional conjoint approach, our results suggest that values potentially matter for some immigration policy domains more than others—bluntly, those relating to fundamental areas of life, labor, and loved ones. This implies that invoking such values to change public sentiment, as elites in media, politics, and civil society organizations might do, may be met with varying levels of success depending on the policy in question.

Second, it extends existing theorization about immigration policy

²⁵ Results of all robustness tests included in the supporting information in Table A4 and Figures A5, A6, A7 and A8, respectively.

²⁶ Acknowledging debates about when adding control variables is needed in experimental settings where researchers control randomization ([Mutz, 2011](#))—and particularly when looking for heterogeneous effects among subgroups using covariates which are not randomly assigned ([Kam & Trussler, 2017](#))—we lean more heavily on the treatment effects reported in the main text.

²⁷ See [Bansak et al. \(2019\)](#); [Hainmueller et al. \(2014\)](#).

²⁸ We placed this question well after the experiment to avoid priming respondents to think about the Venezuelan crisis before the experimental treatment. Nevertheless, as a result, it is susceptible to post-treatment bias (see [Montgomery et al., 2018](#)) and leads us to put more stock in the battery of questions reported in the main results which appeared before the treatment.

preferences to contexts where host and migrant populations are more likely to share key sociodemographic characteristics such as language and religious identity—a situation that is more typical of forced migratory contexts that involve neighboring countries, and one which contrasts with the experiences of receiving countries in Europe and North America where cultural markers of identity tend to be stronger (Tabellini, 2019). On this basis, in the case of Venezuelan migration, we might expect that public preferences in other countries in the region, such as Ecuador and Peru, which have also received many Venezuelans and also share key sociodemographic features would be similar to those in Colombia. Yet whether this is the case—an empirical question worth asking in its own right—the moderating role of humanitarianism may still differ in direction or size in these countries due to differences either in how the initiating crisis is framed by political elites or media, or because of country-specific relations with the originating country. Indeed, observing the variation in even high-level policy preferences across other country contexts that have also experienced large migration inflows in Fig. 4 should give pause in making strong claims to generalizability without further comparative work that considers the forms, drivers, and consequences of preferences. After all, large migration inflows are not exclusive to Colombia: such episodes are occurring not only across the region but also in other areas of the world.

At the outset of this paper, we observed how research into the political economy of migration public opinion displayed several limitations, including biases towards high-income countries' experiences, focus on attitudes rather than explicit policy preferences, and a lack of consideration of how these preferences involve multiple trade-offs and distinctions. On these fronts, our study has broken new ground that can support future research. That research should look more closely into the microlevel drivers of policy preferences and extend its scope to other countries experiencing large numbers of forced migration.

Funding

This research was supported by the John Fell Fund at the University of Oxford (0008313), the British Academy (PF21\210066), and the DFID-World Bank-UNHCR partnership initiative “Building the Evidence on Protracted Forced Displacement” on its theme “Preventing social conflict and promoting social cohesion in forced displacement contexts.” Ethics approval for this project was obtained from the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) of the University of Oxford (C1A-20-2) and the pre-analysis plan was registered with As-Predicted (#60418).

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

Data included in Dataverse

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the John Fell Fund at the University of Oxford (0008313), the British Academy (PF21\210066), and the DFID-World Bank-UNHCR partnership initiative “Building the Evidence on Protracted Forced Displacement” on its theme “Preventing social conflict and promoting social cohesion in forced displacement contexts.” Ethics approval for this project was obtained from the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) of the University of Oxford (C1A-20-2) and the pre-analysis plan was registered with As-Predicted (#60418).

Previous versions of this work were presented at the Midwest

Political Science Association (MSPA) Annual Meeting (April 14–18, 2021); the “Barriers and Bridges to Immigrants’ Integration” workshop from the Penn Development Research Initiative hosted by the University of Pennsylvania (May 7, 2021); the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) Annual Congress (May 26–29, 2021); the European Political Science Association (EPSA) Annual Conference (June 24–25, 2021); the European Consortium of Political Research General Conference (August 30–September 3, 2021); the Elections, Public Opinion, and Parties (EPOP) specialist group conference (September 3–4, 2021); the “Immigration in OECD Countries” Conference hosted by the OECD (December 13–14, 2021); and at seminars hosted by the Centre on Migration, Policy, and Society (COMPAS); the Blavatnik School of Government; the Latin American Centre at Oxford; the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO); and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Economist Knowledge Exchange Group. We are very grateful for the generous comments provided by all the discussants, chairs, and participants at these events. Moreover, we would particularly like to acknowledge (in alphabetical order) Jere Behrman, David Doyle, Juan Carlos Guataqui, David Leal, Kostas Matakos, Felipe Muñoz, Sergi Pardos-Prado, Audrey Sacks, Andres Felipe Segura-Arnaiz, Tobias Stohr, Juan Vargas, Dalston Ward, Netta Weinstein, the journal Editor and five anonymous referees for useful comments and suggestions at various steps of this project. We are also thankful to Andres Alvarez and the Invamer Team in Colombia for their assistance in data collection, as well as Adriana Sabogal and Proyecto Migración Venezuela (<https://migravenezuela.com>) for granting access to their survey data. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the University of Oxford, the John Fell Fund, the British Academy, or the World Bank.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2023.106462>.

References

- Adams-Prassl, A., Boneva, T., Golin, M., & Rauh, C. (2020). Inequality in the impact of the coronavirus shock: Evidence from real time surveys. *Journal of Public Economics*, 189, Article 104245. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2020.104245>
- Adolph, C., Breunig, C., & Koski, C. (2020). The political economy of budget trade-offs. In *Journal of Public Policy* (Vol. 40, Issue 1, pp. 25–50). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X18000326>
- Allen, W., Anderson, B., Van Hear, N., Sumption, M., Düvell, F., Hough, J., ... Walkere, S. (2018). Who counts in crises? The new geopolitics of international migration and refugee governance. *Geopolitics*, 23(1), 217–243. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2017.1327740>
- Alrababa'h, A., Dillon, A., Williamson, S., Hainmueller, J., Hangartner, D., & Weinstein, J. (2020). Attitudes Toward Migrants in a Highly Impacted Economy: Evidence From the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan. *Comparative Political Studies*, 54(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414020919910>
- Altundag, O., & Kaushal, N. (2021). Do refugees impact voting behavior in the host country? Evidence from Syrian refugee inflows to Turkey. *Public Choice*, 186(1–2), 149–178. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-019-00768-3>
- Andersson, D., Bendz, A., & Olofsdotter Stensöta, H. (2018). The limits of a commitment? Public responses to asylum policy in Sweden over time. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 41(3), 307–335. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9477.12125>
- Arango, L. E., & Flórez, L. A. (2021). Regional labour informality in Colombia and a proposal for a differential minimum wage. *Journal of Development Studies*, 57(6), 1016–1037. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2020.1841170>
- Auer, D. (2018). Language roulette—the effect of random placement on refugees’ labour market integration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(3), 341–362. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1304208>
- Bahar, D., Ibáñez, A. M., & Rozo, S. V. (2021). Give me your tired and your poor: Impact of a large-scale amnesty program for undocumented refugees. *Journal of Development Economics*, 151, Article 102652. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2021.102652>
- Bansak, K., Hainmueller, J., & Hangartner, D. (2016). How economic, humanitarian, and religious concerns shape European attitudes toward asylum seekers. *Science*, 354(6309), 217–222. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aag2147>
- Bansak, K., Hainmueller, J., & Hangartner, D. (2017). Europeans support a proportional allocation of asylum seekers. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 1(7), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-017-0133>
- Bansak, K., Hainmueller, J., Hopkins, D. J., & Yamamoto, T. (2019). Beyond the breaking point? Survey satisficing in conjoint experiments. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2019.13>

- Bansak, K., Hainmueller, J., Hopkins, D. J., & Yamamoto, T. (2021). Conjoint Survey Experiments. In *Advances in Experimental Political Science* (Available (pp. 19–41). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108777919.004>.
- Black, R., & Koser, K. (1999). The end of the refugee cycle? In the end of the refugee cycle? Refugee repatriation and reconstruction (p. 288). Berghahn Books.
- Blouin, C., Berganza, I., & Freier, L. F. (2020). The spirit of Cartagena? Applying the extended refugee definition to Venezuelans in Latin America | Forced Migration Review. *Forced Migration Review*, 63, 64–66. <https://www.fmreview.org/cities/blouin-berganza-freier>.
- Borjas, G. J. (2014). Immigration Economics. In Immigration Economics. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674369900>.
- Boubtane, E., Dumont, J. C., & Rault, C. (2016). Immigration and economic growth in the OECD countries 1986–2006. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 68(2), 340–360. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oeq/gpw001>.
- Bozorgmehr, K., & Razum, O. (2015). Effect of restricting access to health care on health expenditures among asylum-seekers and refugees: A quasi-experimental study in Germany, 1994–2013. *PLOS ONE*, 10(7), e0131483.
- Bragg, B., & Wong, L. L. (2016). “Cancelled dreams”: Family reunification and shifting canadian immigration policy. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 14(1), 46–65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2015.1011364>.
- Bratsberg, B., Ferwerda, J., Finseraas, H., & Kotsadam, A. (2021). How settlement locations and local networks influence immigrant political integration. *American Journal of Political Science*, 65(3), 551–565. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12532>.
- Campo, F., Giunti, S., & Mendola, M. (2021). The Refugee Crisis and Right-Wing Populism: Evidence from the Italian Dispersal Policy *. <https://www.iza.org/publications/dp/14084/the-refugee-crisis-and-right-wing-populism-evidence-from-the-italian-dispersal-policy>.
- Cholewinski, R. (2004). Family reunification and conditions placed on family members: dismantling a fundamental human right. *European Journal of Migration and Law*, 4(3), 271–290. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157181602322768902>.
- Citrin, J., Green, D. P., Muste, C., & Wong, C. (1997). Public opinion toward immigration reform: The role of economic motivations. *Journal of Politics*, 59(3), 858–881. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2998640>.
- Migración Colombia. (2020). Mas de 1 millón de Venezolanos estarian radicados en Colombia - Migración Colombia. Viernes, 03 Abril 2020. <https://www.migracioncolombia.gov.co/noticias/mas-de-1-millon-825-mil-venezolanos-estarian-radicados-en-colombia>.
- D’Ancona, M. A. C. (2014). Measuring xenophobia: Social desirability and survey mode effects. *Migration Studies*, 2(2), 255–280. <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnt014>.
- Dahl, M. (2018). *Social desirability bias in candidate conjoint experiments: What is the optimal design when studying sensitive topics?* University of Copenhagen. Working Paper.
- Dancygier, R., & Donnelly, M. (2014). Attitudes Toward Immigration in Good Times and Bad. In *Mass Politics in Tough Times* (pp. 148–184). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199357505.003.0006>.
- Davidov, E., & Meuleman, B. (2012). Explaining attitudes towards immigration policies in European countries: The role of human values. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 38(5), 757–775. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2012.667985>.
- de Colombia, C. (2021). Presidente Duque anuncia decisión histórica de crear Estatuto de Protección Temporal para migrantes venezolanos en Colombia. *Online*. <https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/newsroom/news/presidente-duque-anuncia-decision-historica-crear-estatuto-proteccion-temporal>.
- Dinesen, P. T., & Hjorth, F. (2020). Attitudes toward Immigration: Theories, Settings, and Approaches. In *The Oxford Handbook of Behavioral Political Science*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190634131.013.26>.
- Dustmann, C., Vasiljeva, K., & Pili Damm, A. (2019). Refugee migration and electoral outcomes. *Review of Economic Studies*, 86(5), 2035–2091. <https://doi.org/10.1093/restud/rdy047>.
- Facchini, G., & Mayda, A. M. (2008). From individual attitudes towards migrants to migration policy outcomes: Theory and evidence. *Economic Policy*, 23(56), 651–713. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0327.2008.00212.x>.
- Fasani, F., Frattini, T., & Minale, L. (2021). Lift the ban? Initial employment restrictions and refugee labour market outcomes. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 19(5), 2803–2854. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jeaa/jvab021>.
- Fasani, F., Frattini, T., & Minale, L. (2022). (The Struggle for) Refugee integration into the labour market: Evidence from Europe. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 22(2), 351–393. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jege/lbab011>.
- Fraser, N. A. R., & Murakami, G. (2022). The role of humanitarianism in shaping public attitudes toward refugees. *Political Psychology*, 43(2), 255–275. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12751>.
- Gabrielatos, C., & Baker, P. (2008). Fleeing, sneaking, flooding: A corpus analysis of discursive constructions of refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press, 1996–2005. *Journal of English Linguistics*, 36(1), 5–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0075424207311247>.
- Giuntella, O., Nicodemo, C., & Vargas-Silva, C. (2018). The effects of immigration on NHS waiting times. *Journal of Health Economics*, 58, 123–143. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhealeco.2018.02.001>.
- Hainmueller, J. (2012). Entropy balancing for causal effects: A multivariate reweighting method to produce balanced samples in observational studies. *Political Analysis*, 20(1), 25–46. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pan/mpr025>.
- Hainmueller, J., Hangartner, D., & Lawrence, D. (2016). When lives are put on hold: Lengthy asylum processes decrease employment among refugees. *Science Advances*, 2(8), e1600432.
- Hainmueller, J., & Hixcox, M. J. (2010). Attitudes toward highly skilled and low-skilled immigration: Evidence from a survey experiment. *American Political Science Review*, 104(1), 61–84. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055409990372>.
- Hainmueller, J., & Hopkins, D. J. (2015). The hidden American immigration consensus: A conjoint analysis of attitudes toward immigrants. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3), 529–548. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12138>.
- Hainmueller, J., Hopkins, D. J., & Yamamoto, T. (2014). Causal inference in conjoint analysis: Understanding multidimensional choices via stated preference experiments. *Political Analysis*, 22(1), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pan/mpt024>.
- Hamlin, R. (2014). Let Me Be a Refugee. In *Let Me Be a Refugee*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199373307.001.0001>.
- Hangartner, D., Dinas, E., Marbach, M., Matakos, K., & Xefteris, D. (2019). Does exposure to the refugee crisis make natives more hostile? *American Political Science Review*, 113(2), 442–455. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055418000813>.
- Helbling, M., Bjerre, L., Römer, F., & Zobel, M. (2017). Measuring immigration policies: The IMPIC database. *European Political Science*, 16(1), 79–98. <https://doi.org/10.1057/eps.2016.4>.
- Helbling, M., & Leblang, D. (2019). Controlling immigration? How regulations affect migration flows. *European Journal of Political Research*, 58(1), 248–269. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12279>.
- Hercowitz-Amir, A., & Rajman, R. (2020). Restrictive borders and rights: Attitudes of the Danish public to asylum seekers. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 43(4), 787–806. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2019.1606435>.
- Horiuchi, Y., Markovich, Z. D., & Yamamoto, T. (2021). Can conjoint analysis mitigate social desirability bias? *Political Analysis*, Forthcoming. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3219323>.
- Hvidtfeldt, C., Petersen, J. H., & Norredam, M. (2019). Prolonged periods of waiting for an asylum decision and the risk of psychiatric diagnoses: A 22-year longitudinal cohort study from Denmark. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 49(2), 400–409. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyz091>.
- Ivarsflaten, E. (2005). Threatened by diversity: Why restrictive asylum and immigration policies appeal to western Europeans. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties*, 15(1), 21–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13689880500064577>.
- Janus, A. L. (2010). The influence of social desirability pressures on expressed immigration attitudes. *Social Science Quarterly*, 91(4), 928–946. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6237.2010.00742.x>.
- Jeannot, A. M., Heidland, T., & Ruhs, M. (2021). What asylum and refugee policies do Europeans want? Evidence from a cross-national conjoint experiment. *European Union Politics*, 22(3), 353–376. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14651165211006838>.
- Jeannot, A.-M., Heidland, T., & Ruhs, M. (2023). *A need for control? Political Trust and public preferences for asylum and refugee policy*. *European Political Science Review* (EPSR), forthcoming.
- Jennings, W. (2009). The public thermostat, political responsiveness and error-correction: Border control and asylum in Britain, 1994–2007. *British Journal of Political Science*, 39(4), 847–870. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000712340900074X>.
- Juanmarti Mestres, A., López Casasnovas, G., & Vall Castelló, J. (2021). The deadly effects of losing health insurance. *European Economic Review*, 131. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euroecorev.2020.103608>.
- Kam, C. D., & Trussler, M. J. (2017). At the nexus of observational and experimental research: theory, specification, and analysis of experiments with heterogeneous treatment effects. *Political Behavior*, 39(4), 789–815. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-016-9379-z>.
- Kinder, D. R., & Kiewiet, D. R. (1981). Sociotropic politics: The American case. *British Journal of Political Science*, 11(2), 129–161. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400002544>.
- Kustov, A. (2021). Borders of compassion: Immigration preferences and parochial altruism. *Comparative Political Studies*, 54(3–4), 445–481. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414020938087>.
- Laban, C. J., Gernaat, H. B. P. E., Komproe, I. H., Schreuders, B. A., & De Jong, J. T. V. M. (2004). Impact of a long asylum procedure on the prevalence of psychiatric disorders in Iraqi asylum seekers in The Netherlands. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 192(12), 843–851. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.nmd.0000146739.26187.15>.
- Leeper, T. J., Hobolt, S. B., & Tilley, J. (2020). Measuring subgroup preferences in conjoint experiments. *Political Analysis*, 28(2), 207–221. <https://doi.org/10.1017/pan.2019.30>.
- Leeper, T. J. (2020). Cregg: Simple Conjoint Tidying, Analysis, and Visualization. Working Paper. <https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/cregg/cregg.pdf>.
- Leong, C. H., & Ward, C. (2006). Cultural values and attitudes toward immigrants and multiculturalism: The case of the Eurobarometer survey on racism and xenophobia. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 30(6), 799–810. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2006.07.001>.
- Marbach, M., & Ropers, G. (2019). Not in my backyard: do increases in immigration cause political violence? *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3310352>.
- McLaren, L. M. (2012). The cultural divide in Europe migration, multiculturalism, and political trust. *World Politics*, 64(2), 199–241. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887112000032>.
- Montgomery, J. M., Nyhan, B., & Torres, M. (2018). How conditioning on posttreatment variables can ruin your experiment and what to do about it. *American Journal of Political Science*, 62(3), 760–775. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12357>.
- Mutz, D. C., & Pemantle, R. (2015). Standards for experimental research: Encouraging a better understanding of experimental methods. *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, 2(2), 192–215. <https://doi.org/10.1017/XPS.2015.4>.
- Mutz, D. C. (2011). *Population-based survey experiments*. In *Population-Based Survey Experiments*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094306112462561s>.

- R4V. (2023). Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) 2023-2024 | R4V. R4V Document. <https://www.r4v.info/en/rmrp2023-2024>.
- R4V. (2021). Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela Response Plan 2021. <https://www.r4v.info/en/refugeeandmigrants>.
- Ratkovic, M. (2021). Subgroup Analysis: Pitfalls, Promise, and Honesty. In J. Druckman, & D. P. Green (Eds.), *Advances in Experimental Political Science* (pp. 271–288). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108777919.020>.
- Rodon, T., & Sanjaume-Calvet, M. (2020). How fair is it? An experimental study of perceived fairness of distributive policies. *Journal of Politics*, 82(1), 384–391. <https://doi.org/10.1086/706053>
- Rosenblum, M. R., & Salehyan, I. (2004). Norms and interests in US asylum enforcement. In *Journal of Peace Research* (Vol. 41(6), 677–697. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343304047432>
- Rozo, S. V., & Vargas, J. F. (2021). Brothers or invaders? How crisis-driven migrants shape voting behavior. *Journal of Development Economics*, 150, Article 102636. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2021.102636>
- Ruhs, M. (2013). The price of rights: Regulating international labor migration. In *The Price of Rights: Regulating International Labor Migration*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.3917/crri.064.0161>.
- Ruiz, I., & Vargas-Silva, C. (2016). The labour market consequences of hosting refugees. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 16(3), 667–694. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jeg/lbv019>
- Ruiz, I., & Vargas-Silva, C. (2021). The impacts of refugee repatriation on receiving communities. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 21(2), 169–194. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jeg/lbaa004>
- Santamaria, J. (2020). “When a Stranger Shall Sojourn with Thee”: The Impact of the Venezuelan Exodus on Colombian Labor Markets.
- Scheve, K. F., & Slaughter, M. J. (2001). Labor market competition and individual preferences over immigration policy. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 83(1), 133–145. <https://doi.org/10.1162/003465301750160108>
- Solodoch, O. (2021). Do sociotropic concerns mask prejudice? Experimental evidence on the sources of public opposition to immigration. *Political Studies*, 69(4), 1009–1032. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321720946163>
- Soroka, S. N., & Wlezien, C. (2004). Opinion representation and policy feedback: Canada in comparative perspective. In *Canadian Journal of Political Science* (Vol. 37, Issue 3, pp. 531–559). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423904030860>.
- Soroka, S. N., & Wlezien, C. (2005). Opinion-policy dynamics: Public preferences and public expenditure in the United Kingdom. In *British Journal of Political Science* (Vol. 35, Issue 4, pp. 665–689). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123405000347>.
- Steinmayr, A. (2021). Contact versus exposure: refugee presence and voting for the far right. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1162/rest_a_00922
- Sumption, M., & Vargas-Silva, C. (2019). Love is not all you need: Income requirement for visa sponsorship of foreign family members. *Journal of Economics, Race, and Policy*, 2(1–2), 62–76. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41996-018-0022-8>
- Tabellini, M. (2019). Gifts of the immigrants, woes of the natives: Lessons from the age of mass migration. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 87(1), 454–486. <https://doi.org/10.1093/restud/rdz027>
- Tize, C. (2020). Living in permanent temporariness: The multigenerational ordeal of living under Germany’s toleration status. *Journal of Refugee Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fez119>
- UNHCR. (2023a) Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/global-trends-report-2022.pdf>.
- UNHCR. (2023b). UNHCR - Refugee Statistics. <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>.
- UNHCR. (2022). Ukraine Situation Update #29. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/95460>.
- Wlezien, C. (1995). The public as thermostat: dynamics of preferences for spending. *American Journal of Political Science*, 39(4), 981. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2111666>
- Wright, M., Levy, M., & Citrin, J. (2016). Public attitudes toward immigration policy across the legal/illegal divide: the role of categorical and attribute-based decision-making. *Political Behavior*, 38(1), 229–253. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-015-9311-y>
- Zetter, R., & Ruadel, H. (2016). Refugees’ Right to Work and Access to Labor Markets – An Assessment (Part 1) | KNOMAD. In *Knomad Working Paper*. <https://www.knomad.org/publication/refugees-right-work-and-access-labor-markets-assessment-part-1>.