Refugee Policy and Refugee Integration

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Motivating facts

► The rate of forcible displacement has been increasing in the past 10-15 years.

► About **75%** of refugees and asylum seekers are hosted in the Global South.

► Consider two the three permanent solutions for refugees:

  • Return to home country: **Only 1%** of the stock of refugees.

  • Resettle in high-income country: **Only 0.5%** of the stock of refugees.

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Refugees' integration in their host country is a first-order concern, especially in developing country settings.

What factors affect refugees' social and economic integration?

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1. **Cultural proximity?** (religion / race / ethnicity)

2. **Refugee hosting policies?**

Now say we want to test whether a more inclusive hosting policy environment will help refugee integration, OR

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Which policies are more consequential for integration: work permits, encampment policies, or access to gov services?

1. **Outcome variable**: proxy measures of refugee integration.

2. **Input variable**: the refugee policy environment of different countries.

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Hosting policies $\Rightarrow$ Refugee integration

Motivation

► Until recently, testing this hypothesis was . . . not possible.

► Global South migration policy was largely neglected in scholarly work.

Coverage of Highly-Cited Migration Policy Indices

Index	Years Covered	Asylum Specific	Total	Europe	North Am.	Latin Am.	Middle East	Asia (Non-ME)	Africa	Oceania
LOI Index	1995	No	8	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mayda (2010)	1980-1995	No	14	10	2	0	0	1	0	1
Ortega and Peri (2009, 2013)	1980-2006	Yes	14	10	2	0	0	1	0	1
Peters (2015, 2017)	1783-2010	Yes	19	5	2	2	2	5	1	2
Hatton (2009, 2016)	1997-2012	Yes	19	16	2	0	0	0	0	1
IMPALA	1960-2016	Yes	26	21	2	0	0	1	0	2
ICRI	1980-2008	No	29	16	2	2	3	2	2	2
IMPIC	1980-2018	Yes	35	24	3	1	2	2	1	2
MIPEX	2007-2019	Yes	56	36	3	1	1	8	2	2
DEMIG Policy	1945-2013	Yes	45	28	3	3	2	5	2	2

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▶ How have refugee policies changed across **regions / wealth**?

▶ To what extent trends reflect specific domains (access, services, livelihood)?

▶ What explains big movements toward policy inclusion or restriction?

Dataset of World Refugee and Asylum Policies (DWRAP)
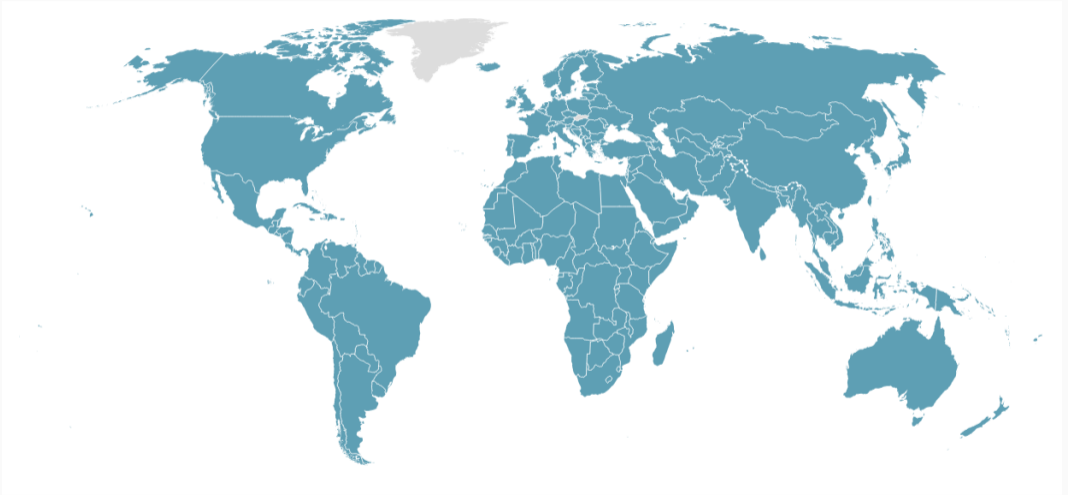
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DWRAP	**1951-2022**	Yes	**205**	**47**	**3**	**32**	**23**	**36**	**50**	**14**

DWRAP Breadth

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- ▶ For each country-year, we code **54 provisions** across relevant laws.

- ▶ The 54 provision are aggregated into **5 fields** (14 subfields).

  - • **Access**: the ease of entrance and security of status.

  - • **Services**: provision of social services and welfare.

  - • **Livelihoods**: ability to work and own property.

  - • **Movement**: encampment policies.

  - • **Participation**: citizenship and political rights

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Descriptive Trends in DWRAP (2.0)

Field 1: Access domain (ease of entrance and security of status)

1. **Status** = Non-Refoulement, Exclusion and Cessation Categories, Right to Remain

2. **Control** = Penalty for Illegal Entry, Security Procedures

3. **Family** = Status Extended to Family, Family Reunion, Personal Status Rights

4. **Recourse** = Court Access, Right to Reasoned Decision, Right to Appeal

Access policy domain (by region)

15
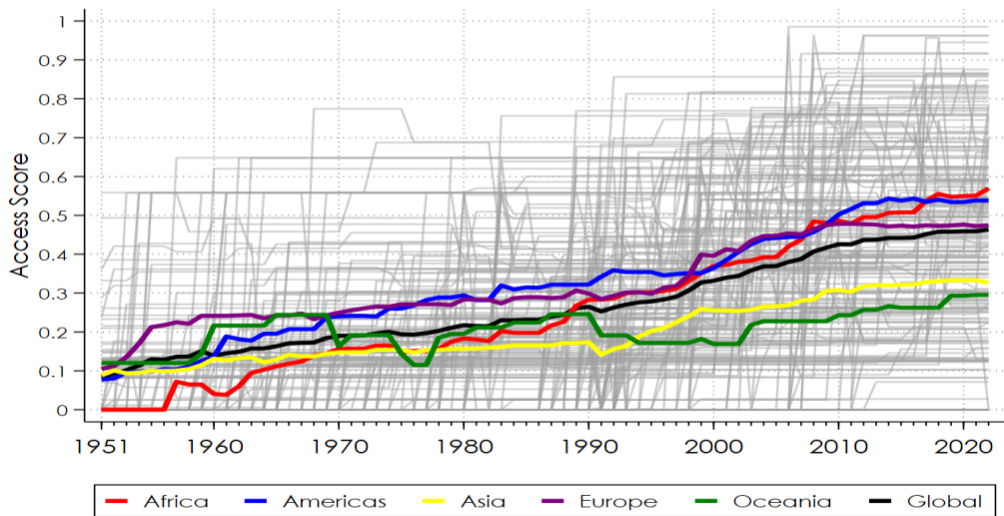
Field 2: Services domain

1. **Education** = Primary Education, Post-Primary Education, Affirmative Action, Religious Education, Language Training, Vocational Training

2. **Healthcare** = Healthcare Access, Healthcare Costs, Health-based Entry (e.g. Pregnant, Elderly), Health-based Restrictions (e.g. HIV/AIDs)

3. **Aid** = Aid Access, Types of Aid (e.g. Food, Clothes, etc.), Social Security

Services policy domain (by region)

17
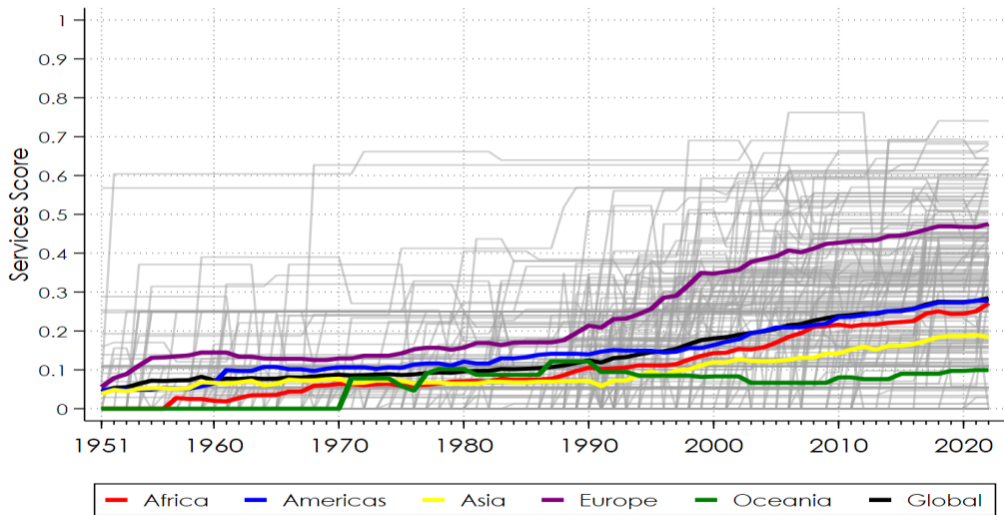
Field 3: Livelihoods domain

1. **Employment** = Right to Work, Self-Employment, Professional Employment, Employment Permit, Employment Restrictions, Taxation

2. **Property** = Transfer Property, Asset Seizure, Asset Compensation, Own Movable Property, Own Fixed Property, Intellectual Property, Leasing Rights

3. **Land** = Provided Land, Land Lease

Livelihood policy domain (by region)
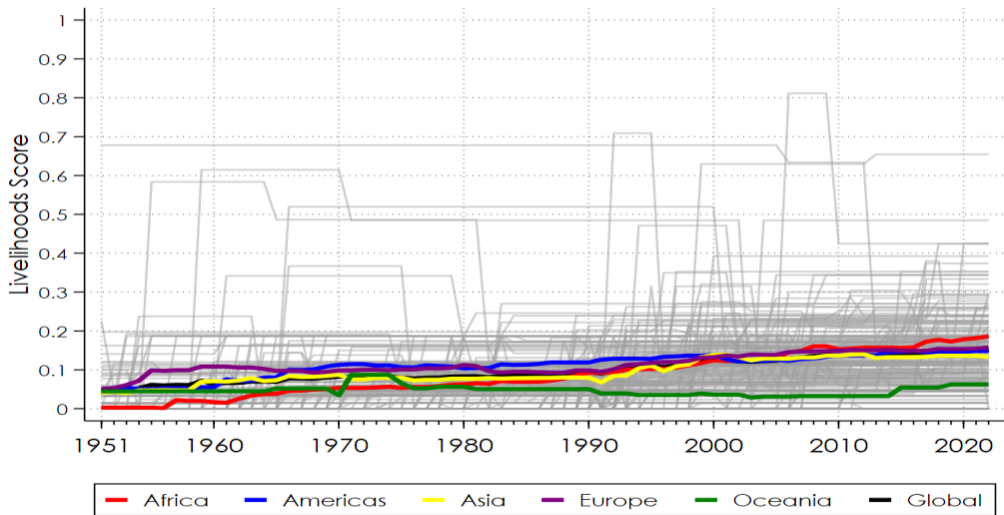
Field 4: Movement domain and subfields

1. **Settlement** = Free Movement, Conditional Movement, Encampment

2. **Documents** = Document Access, Document Cost

Movement policy domain (by region)

21
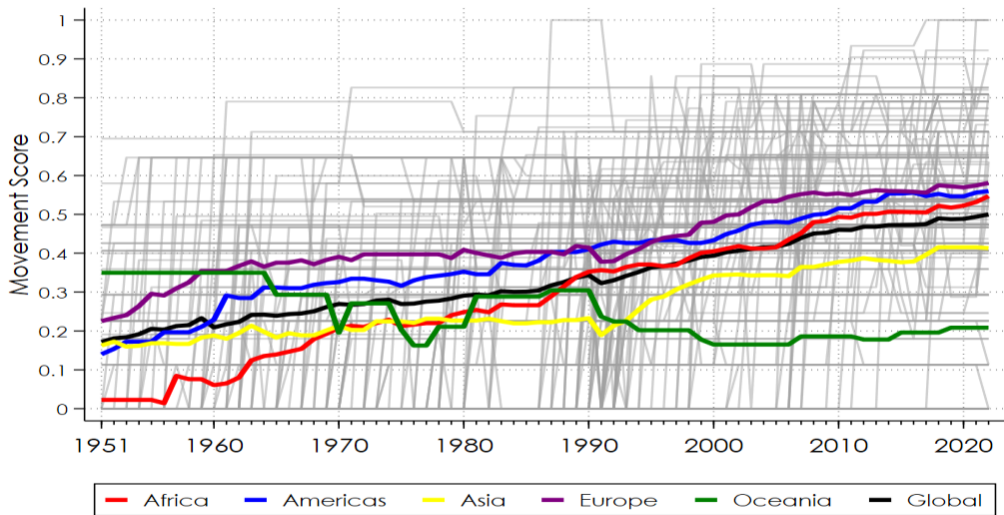
Field 5: Participation domain and subfields

1. **Citizenship** = Citizenship Path, Years for Citizenship, Citizenship by Marriage, Citizenship by Birth, Citizenship for Unaccompanied Minors

2. **Political Rights** = Political Participation, Associational Rights

# Participation policy domain (by region)
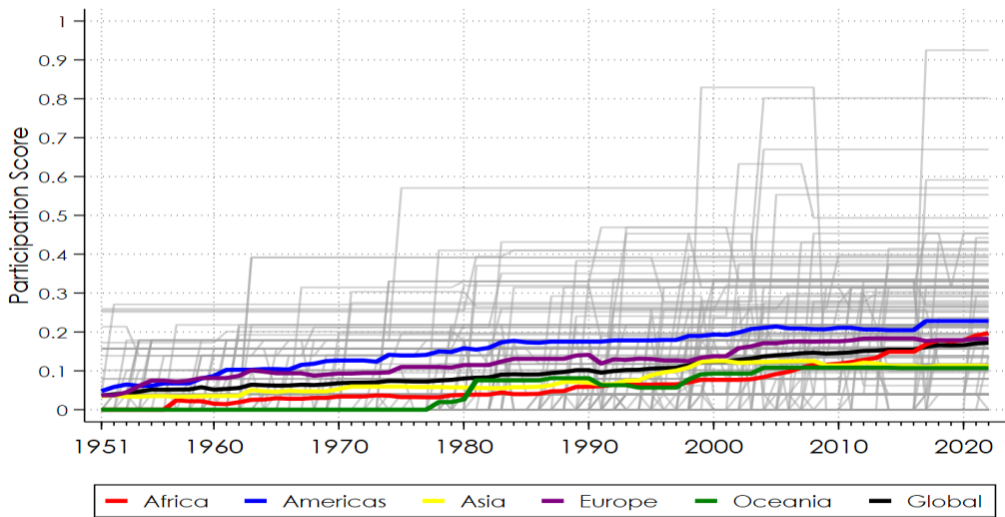
Refugee hosting summary index

- ▶ The five fields can be aggregated into a refugee hosting policies **summary index** (restrictive–inclusive continuum).

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▶ **Cautionary tale**: aggregation schemes — even when principled — involve subjective assessments and should be treated with care.

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- **Possible aggregations schemes**: equal weighting; inverse covariance weighting; weighting by "importance," etc.

- **Cautionary tale**: aggregation schemes — even when principled — involve subjective assessments and should be treated with care.

- **Our recommendation:** to focus, first and foremost, on the 54 individual indicators, and avoid 'horse races.'

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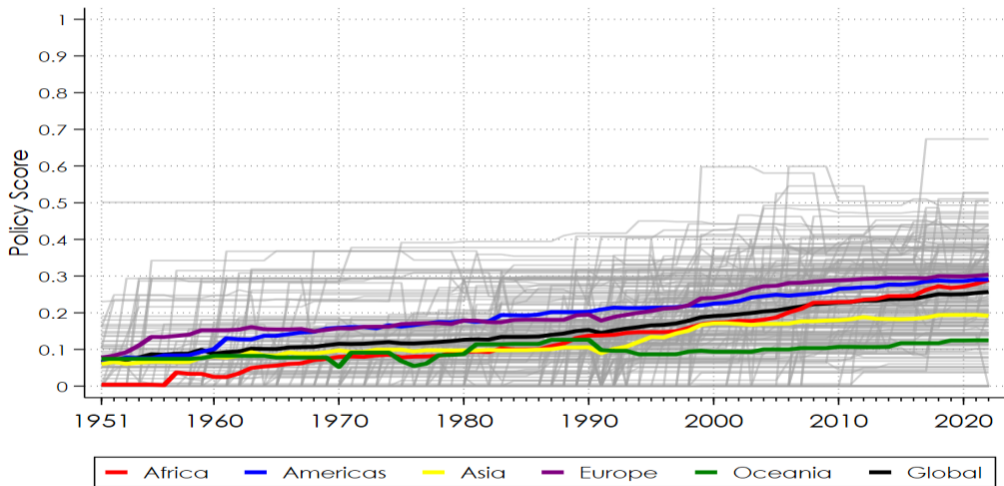
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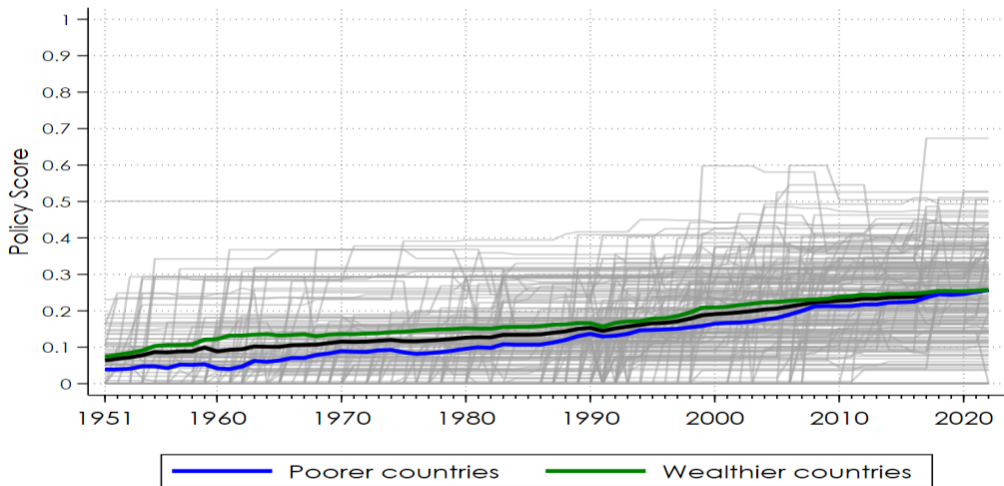
Refugee hosting policies trends – what did we learn?

- ▶ In past 20 years, asylum policy is liberalizing in some regions (e.g. Africa and Americas), but not in other (e.g., Europe and Oceania).

- ▶ In relative terms, the least change is in 'participation rights,' and the most change in is 'access to services' and 'movement rights'

- ▶ Poorer countries are catching up with wealthier countries, and contrary to misperceptions, not all rich countries are adopting more restrictive policies.

- ▶ Regional analysis, however, masks a lot of within-region variation (e.g., Uganda vs. Tanzania).

DWRAP Public Dashboard

https://datanalytics.worldbank.org/dwrap/

DWRAP Public Dashboard

What explains big movements toward policy inclusion or restriction in the global south?

Key take-away message

1. Major Asylum policy reforms are rare (i.e., there is a strong status quo bias) and most reforms in the global south are toward liberalization.

2. Policy-making politics in low-income countries is different from that of high-income countries.

3. The factors that provide impetus for policy change, are not necessarily those influencing the direction of change.

Major policy reforms are relatively rare

► 148 reforms of +/- 1 SD (129 liberalization + 19 restrictions)

Number of Liberalizing and Restrictive Changes Over Time
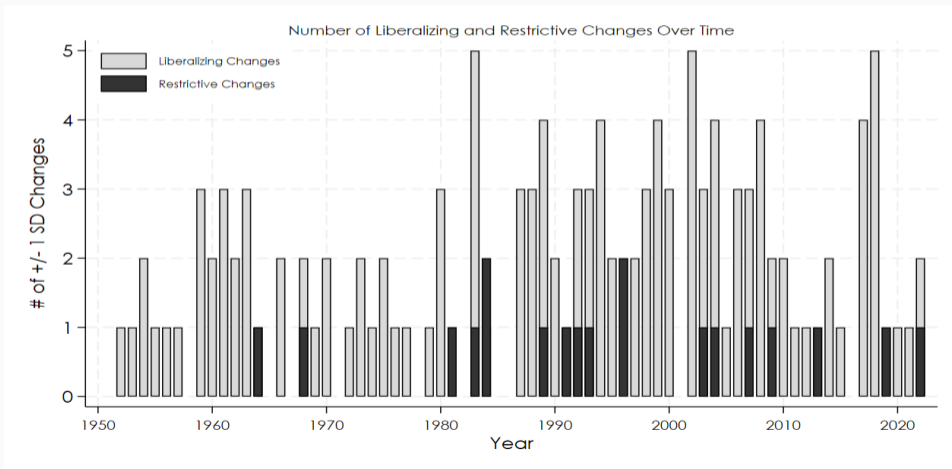
Policy-making politics differ between low- and high-income countries

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► Greater vulnerability to (some) negative spillover (conflict, low-skill labor competition, price increase, service delivery congestion, disease spread).

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- ► Greater vulnerability to (some) negative spillover (conflict, low-skill labor competition, price increase, service delivery congestion, disease spread).

- ► Many hosting costs fall on the international community.

- ► Hosting operations outsourced to the international humanitarian community.

- ► Policy effects are more localized.

- ► Stronger transnational kinship networks.

- ► Weaker representation of the public's preferences.

When do countries reform their asylum policies? (IO 2021)

▶ Expectations of increased flows provide impetus for policy change (Czaika, 2009; Bubb, Kremer, and Levine, 2011).

▶ Episodes of intense civil war in neighboring countries dramatically increase the likelihood of policy change.

What factors affect the direction of policy change? (IO 2021)

▶ **Liberalization**: kin of political elites are targeted in neighboring countries.

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► **Restriction**: restriction more likely in relatively wealthier countries that are worried that large number of refugees would disrupt labor markets, and in the short term, pressure the welfare state.

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► **Restriction**: restriction more likely in relatively wealthier countries that are worried that large number of refugees would disrupt labor markets, and in the short term, pressure the welfare state.

► **Surprising finding:** No systematic evidence that repressive, aid-dependent countries are more likely to liberalize their asylum policies.

Refugee Policies reforms: consequences

Open Questions: Hosting Policy Consequences

1. Do refugees take hosting policies into account in destination choice?

2. How and why refugee hosting policies affect refugee integration?

3. What is the response of locals to major hosting policy reforms (backlash)?

► Asylum-seekers in the Global North are attracted to more inclusive refugee policies because these ease access and integration.

Are refugee host policies a pull factor? (APSR 2021)

▶ Asylum-seekers in the Global North are attracted to more inclusive refugee policies because these ease access and integration.

▶ **But this may not be the case in south-south displacement:**

1. enforcement gaps.

2. knowledge gaps.

Are refugee host policies a pull factor? (APSR 2021)

Refugee policies will only affect destination choice if:

1. enforcement gaps are not too large, and

2. asylum seekers are sufficiently informed about the policy environment.

What did we find?

What did we find?

1. A large, significant positive effect of refugee policy liberality on FDP flows (1sd increase in policy liberality $\rightarrow$ about 35k more refugees).

2. Effect stronger in the presence of co-ethnic networks, which facilitate both information diffusion and integration.

3. **Theoretical implications**: different factors affect (a) the decision to flee, and (b) destination choice.

Refugees Policies and Host Communities Response

Concern: Popular Backlash

► Adopting an inclusive refugee hosting regime might be good policy but bad politics.

► The concern is popular backlash against refugees and generous / inclusive refugee hosting policies.

► In Europe, when voters are more exposed to refugees: increase support for anti-migrant policies; punish incumbents; turn to anti-migrant parties.

Public Response May Differ for Lower-Income Countries

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Reasons for backlash

- Dev countries host refugees at a much larger scale

- Concerns over growing competition over scarce resources (e.g., jobs, land)

- Concerns over congestion of public services (affect poorer citizens)

- Other negative externalities (disease spread, inflation, conflict spillovers)

- Humanitarian aid that target refugee settlements may cause resentment

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Reasons for less / no backlash

- Non-programmatic political parties

- (Immigration) politics do not fall on a left-right partisan divide

- Fewer concerns about "drag on the welfare state"

- Refugees' presence brings aid that (might) support local development

Refugee presence $\longrightarrow$ Integrated foreign aid $\longrightarrow$ Improvements to local public goods $\longrightarrow$ Voters observe improvements & attribute to govt $\longrightarrow$ Support incumbent

Development-Oriented Theory

Refugee presence → **Integrated foreign aid** → Improvements to local public goods → Voters observe improvements & attribute to govt → Support incumbent

We build on three strands of past research in LICs:

1. **Saliency**: Voters care a lot about public service delivery

2. **Development**: Positive effects of refugee hosting on local development

3. **Aid**: Credit attribution of foreign assistance to government

Test theory in Uganda, the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa
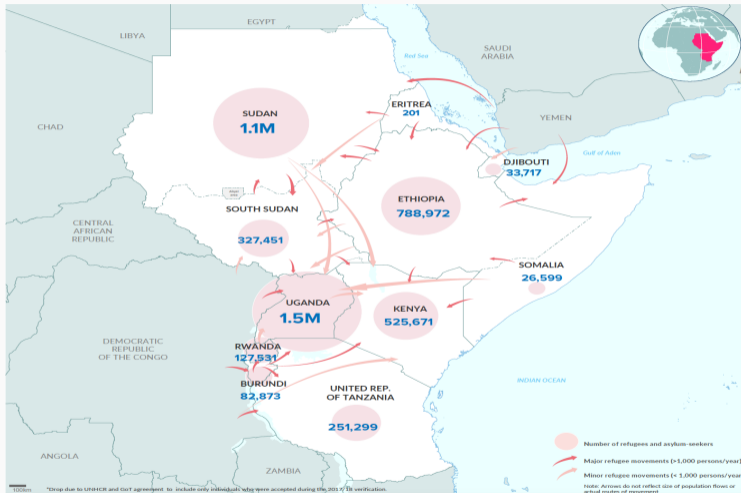
Data source: UNHCR population statistics database

Refugee and Asylum Policy Regime

1. **Development Assistance for Refugee Hosting Areas** (DAR, 2004)

   - Resource allocation: '70-30 Principle'
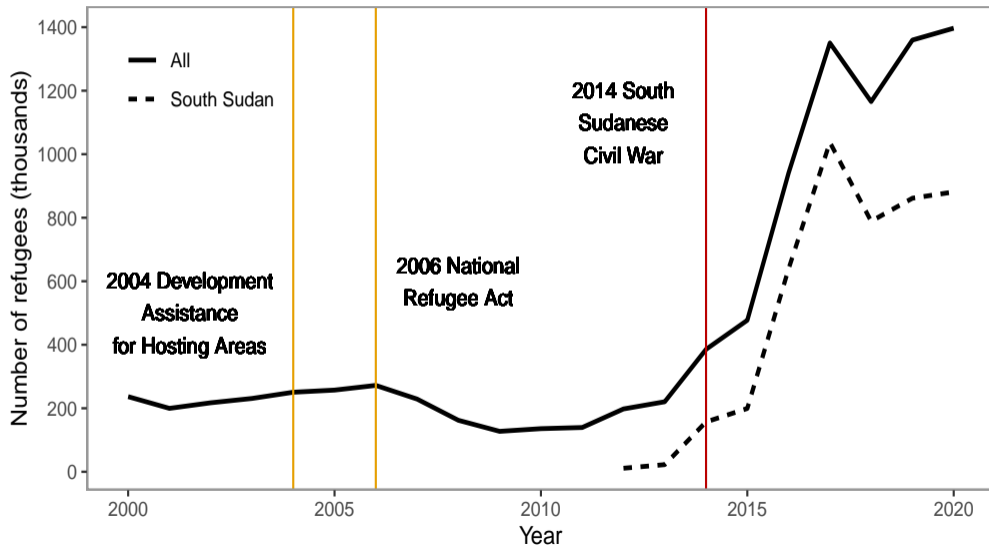   - Integration with governments' development plans

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1. **Development Assistance for Refugee Hosting Areas** (DAR, 2004)

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   - Integration with governments' development plans

2. **National Refugee Act** (2006)

   - right to documentation, access public services
   - freedom of movement, and of religion
   - right to family unification
   - right to work, to own land, to transfer assets

Policy reform
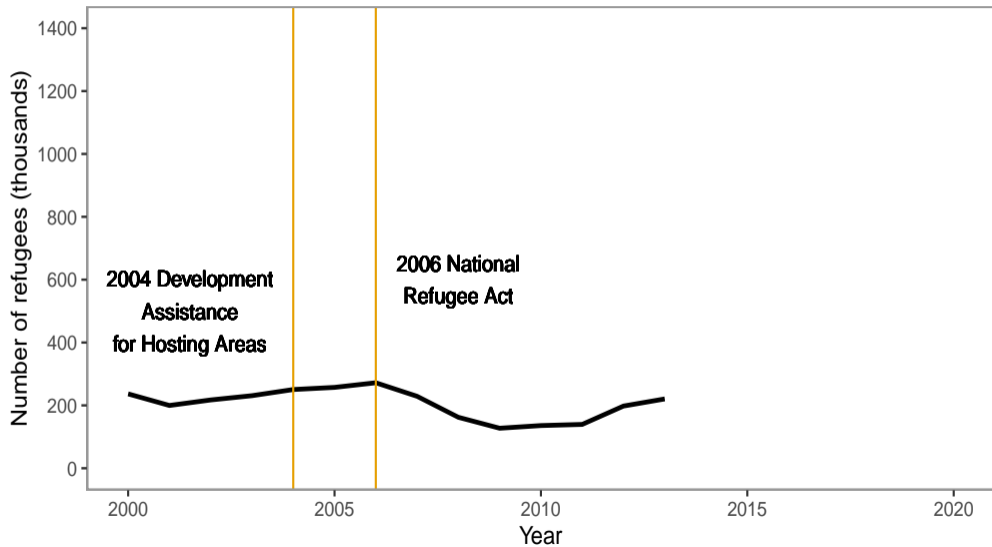
Arrival of South Sudanese Refugees Post-2014 (Shock)
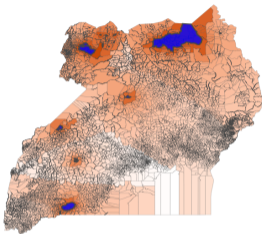

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Measuring refugee presence

Refugee presence $\longrightarrow$ Integrated foreign aid $\longrightarrow$ Improvements to local public goods $\longrightarrow$ Voters observe improvements & attribute to govt $\longrightarrow$ Support incumbent

- Units: parish ($n = 5133$) - years ($t = 5$)
- Nearest + 20km refugee presence: $\text{ihs}\left(\frac{\text{refpop}_{\text{nt}}}{\text{distance}_{\text{nt}}+1} + \sum_{i \in \text{rad}_{20km,-n}} \frac{\text{refpop}_{\text{it}}}{\text{distance}_{\text{it}}+1}\right).$

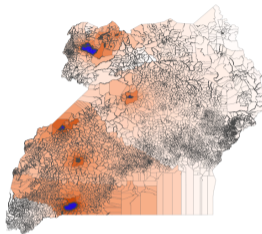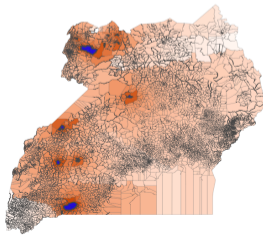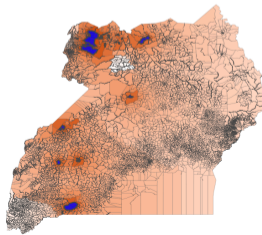# Refugee Presence Measure: Refugee Population and Proximity
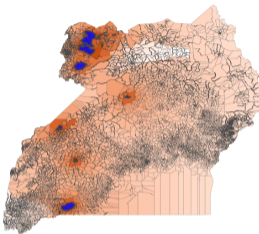
Mechanism: Local Public Goods & Well-being

Refugee presence → Integrated foreign aid → **Improvements to local public goods** → Voters observe improvements & attribute to gov → Support incumbent

- primary school access (EMIS; 22k),
- secondary schools access (World Bank; 3.6k),
- health facilities access (MoH, UBoS, 7k),
- health utilization (DHS, 30k households),
- road density (NASA, OpenStreetMap WFP),
- **Public Goods summary index**,
- **Nightlights density** (harmonized global Night-Time Light)

Refugee Presence Improves Local Public Goods & Well-being

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Downstream effects
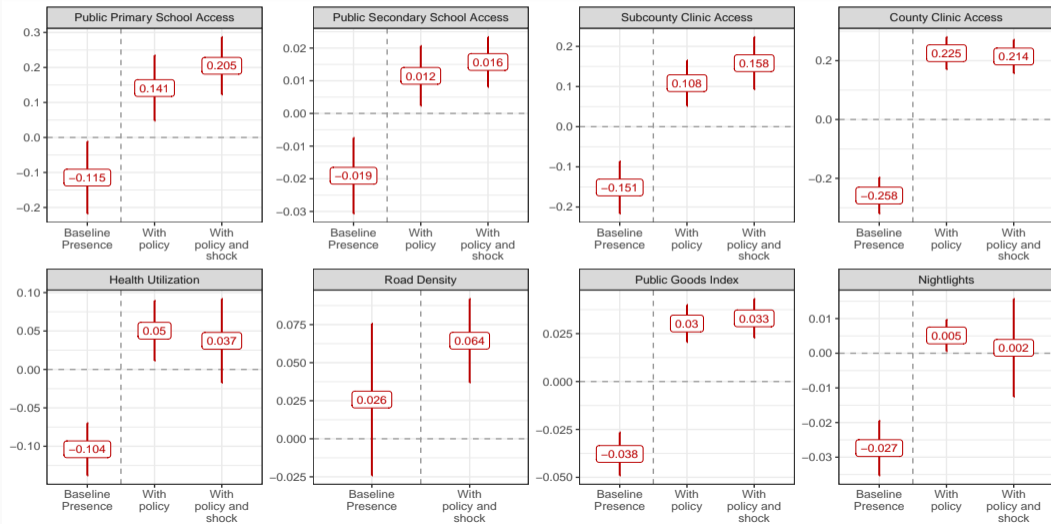
► Museveni vote share ↑

► Refugee acceptance

Key Findings

1. Refugee presence led to positive spillovers for local communities, but only after Uganda adopted inclusive hosting policies.

2. The reform did not generate backlash against refugees, inclusive hosting policies, nor the incumbent: backlash is not a generalized phenomena.

3. Hosting policies mediate the relationship between local communities and refugees in host countries.

4. Policy implications for approaches to hosting refugees that emphasize self-sufficiency for refugees.

Summary

- We have much to gain analytically from taking more seriously domestic policy space on forced displacement.

- We hope DWRAP (and RIMAP) will be used to support theory-building and theory-testing about migration policy-making and refugee integration.

- DWRAP (and RIMAP) can and should aid in advocacy and planning without resorting to useless "horse racing."

Thank you!