When Refugee Presence Increases Incumbent Support through Development^{*}

Yang-Yang Zhou[†]

Guy Grossman[‡]

March 17, 2023

Abstract

Studies of higher-income democracies find that the growing presence of refugees has generally been met with electoral backlash, with voters punishing incumbents and increasing support for far-right parties. Yet there is a dearth of studies on the political consequences of refugee-hosting in low-income countries, where the vast majority of refugees reside. Theoretically, we discuss why findings from high-income countries may not generalize, and we offer an alternative framework rooted in the context of low-income countries. We then test our framework empirically in Uganda, one of the largest and more inclusive refugee-hosting countries. Combining information on refugee settlements with four waves of national elections data, we find that an increase in refugee presence leads to a significant increase in incumbent support. National survey data coupled with panel data on healthcare, schools, roads, and nighttime lights suggest that the mechanism is positive externalities of inclusive refugee-hosting and aid on local public goods.

Keywords: refugees, migration, voting, elections, international development, Uganda

JEL Codes: D72, D74, F22, H51, H52, O15

^{*}We are indebted to Shuning Ge for data management; Duncan Henry Katimbo, Bo Hurkmans, and the UNHCR Uganda staff for data and insights on refugee-hosting in Uganda; Herbert Musoke for help with collecting education data; and Lisa Akinyi May, Paul Heysch de La Borde, Ia Mantecon Garcia, Isabella Preite, and Bayley Tuch for research assistance. We thank Christopher Blair, Graeme Blair, Christopher Blattman, Cesi Cruz, Rafaela Dancygier, Benjamin Fifield, Vasiliki Fouka, Margarita Puerto Gomez, Mari-aflavia Harari, John Ilukor, Kosuke Imai, Rana Khoury, Apoorva Lal, Benjamin Laughlin, Steven Liao, Evan Lieberman, Adeline Lo, Matt Lowe, Craig McIntosh, Carl Müller-Crepon, Margaret Peters, Melina R. Platas, Hannah Postel, Pia Raffler, Benjamin Reese, Audrey Sacks, Tara Slough, Jeremy Springman, Abbey Steele, Sebastian Tello, Alexander Yarkin, Yiqing Xu, Stephanie Zonszein, and participants from University of Pennsylvania's PDRI Barriers and Bridges to Immigrants' Integration Conference, the MIT Global Diversity Lab, University of Rochester's Riker Seminar, the Political Behaviour Group and the African Political Economy Group at LSE, Tel Aviv University Public Policy School, Amsterdam Centre for European Studies and Center for Conflict Studies, Harvard Comparative Politics Seminar and Weatherhead Spotlight, UVA Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, Berkeley Comparative Politics Colloquium, Stanford Comparative Politics Seminar, UCBS Political Economy seminar and International Studies Association (ISA) 2022 Conference for helpful comments.

[†]Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of British Columbia; Academy Scholar, Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies; and CIFAR Azrieli Global Scholar, yangyang.zhou@ubc.ca, www.yangyangzhou.com

[‡]Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania, ggros@upenn.edu, www.web.sas.upenn.edu/ggros

What are the political implications of hosting large refugee populations in low-income country contexts? In the past two decades, the number of people affected by displacement events have more than doubled from 38 million in 2000 to 89 million in 2022. Over a third of this population are refugees who flee their country, and 83% of them are hosted within developing countries.¹ The arrival and settlement of such large numbers of displaced people can have far-reaching consequences on host communities. To date, studies on the effect of refugee hosting in low-income country contexts have predominantly focused on social and economic outcomes, (Maystadt et al., 2019; Verme and Schuettler, 2021) and on the possibility of conflict spillover (Zhou and Shaver, 2021). However, there is a dearth of research on the effects of refugee hosting on electoral outcomes in low-income country settings.

In this paper, we build on a body of work that has shown that refugee settlements, which tend to be located in relatively poor border regions, attract humanitarian and development aid that—under certain conditions that we theorize—can have positive spillovers for host communities. These positive spillovers include, among others, improved material well-being (Taylor et al., 2016), education attainment (Bilgili et al., 2019), and access to a wide range of local public goods (Zhou, Grossman and Ge, 2023).

We extend this research in two important ways. Theoretically, we describe when local communities are more likely to benefit from refugees’ presence. Here we focus in particular on public policies governing refugee hosting, including humanitarian aid management. Building further on aid attribution theory (Cruz and Schneider, 2017), we then explain why indirect benefits to refugee host communities can affect electoral behavior. Empirically, we use the case of Uganda to test our theoretical arguments on the effect of hosting refugees on voting, taking advantage of both spatial and temporal variation in our parameters of interest.

Uganda offers an important setting for exploring the political consequences of hosting large numbers of refugees in a low-income country. At 1.5 million refugees, Uganda is one of the largest refugee-hosting country in the world and the largest in Africa (UNHCR, 2021).² Notably, Uganda adopted inclusive hosting policies in the early 2000s. These include permitting refugees freedom of movement and the right to work, and providing access to public

¹UNHCR Refugee Statistics: <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/statistics>.

²Depending on whether Venezuelans displaced in Colombia are counted as refugees by different agencies and organizations, Uganda is either the fourth or fifth largest refugee-hosting country in the world.

services (Ronald, 2022). Additionally, as part of this reform, the government mandated that refugee related aid be integrated into the development plans of Uganda’s government ministries and that 30% of aid be spent directly on host communities. Throughout this time, between 2000 and 2014 the number of refugees in Uganda (around 200k) and the scale of refugee-related aid remained relatively constant, the only major difference in that domain was the policy reform. After 2014, however, there was a dramatic increase in refugee numbers in Uganda brought about by South Sudan’s civil war.

To examine the relationship between refugee presence and voting behavior, we constructed a new fine-grained georeferenced panel data (at the parish-level) of election results (in 2001, 2016, 2011 and 2016). Using UNHCR data on refugee settlement locations and population numbers, we further constructed a measure of refugee presence for each of Uganda’s over 5000 parishes. To explore the mediating role of public policies, we use a difference-in-differences estimation strategy to test the effect of refugee presence under three time periods: pre-2003 (baseline), from 2003–2014 (‘policy’ reform), and post-2014 (‘shock’).

Our key finding is that—in contrast to findings from higher-income countries—greater refugee presence *increased electoral support* to the incumbent government. This effect, however, only kicks in after the 2003 policy change (it is negative in 2001) and then strengthens after the 2014 shock. We estimate that a one sd increase in refugee presence in 2016 increases President Museveni’s vote share *relative to the base year* of 2001 by 4.2 percentage points. These results are robust to different ways of measuring refugee presence, sample restrictions, sensitivity analyses, and estimation strategies, including using nonlinear generalized additive models, and a shift-share instrumental variable. We further show that our electoral findings are likely due to a persuasion effect of opposition voters switching, and not due to a compositional change of the electorate due to greater turnout or internal migration.

To demonstrate that the electoral results are likely due to the hypothesized mechanism of increased public goods, we then turn to replicate and extend Zhou, Grossman and Ge (2023)’s analysis of the effect of refugees’ presence on public services. First, we confirm that following Uganda’s 2003 policy reform refugee proximity is associated with improved service delivery outcomes. Second, we use the Afrobarometer surveys to show that Ugandans residing in proximity to larger refugee settlements subjectively recognize the objective improvements in

public services and that they attribute these improvements to the incumbent government and president.

Our paper seeks to make several scholarly and policy-relevant contributions. First, we contribute to work on the political consequences of large migration flows. Second, we contribute to the international political economy literature by demonstrating an additional channel—public goods provision—through which humanitarian aid can affect domestic politics. We argue that when inclusive hosting policies are designed to ensure that refugee-related aid also benefits host communities, host citizens will recognize those improvements and credit and reward the government. Thus, in low-income country settings, incumbent governments can (under some conditions) reap electoral benefits from hosting even a large number of refugees. In so doing, we show that the electoral punishment of incumbent governments, which has been identified in higher-income countries, is not a generalized phenomena. Instead, the political response of host communities is highly contextualized.

1 Theoretical Framework

This study builds on two strands of research that have developed largely in isolation. The first strand explores the political implications of the presence of immigrants—commonly measured as the share of migrants within a locality. In part due to the paucity of granular public opinion and elections data in low-income countries, this literature has focused almost exclusively on high- and middle-income countries (HMICs). The second strand focuses on aid distribution credit claiming in developing country contexts.

There are good reasons to expect that inclusive refugee hosting policies could result in a backlash against incumbent governments. Consider past work that explores the effects of migrants’ presence on support for parties and politicians associated with allowing migrants to come settle. With few exceptions (e.g. Gamalerio et al., 2022), this work generally finds that migrants’ presence increases support for anti-immigration policies and for far-right political parties at the expense of more moderate, incumbent parties. These findings span Germany (Otto and Steinhardt, 2014), Italy (Barone et al., 2016), Switzerland (Brunner and Kuhn, 2018), Denmark (Dustmann, Vasiljeva and Piil Damm, 2019), Sweden (Mehic et al., 2019), France (Edo et al., 2019), Austria (Halla, Wagner and Zweimüller, 2017),

Greece (Hangartner et al., 2019), and Spain (Mendez and Cutillas, 2014). A recent meta-analysis of 20 Europe-based studies with a credible causal identification strategy, estimates that a one percentage point increase in immigrant share in a locality is associated with a 0.57 percentage point increase in the vote share for anti-immigration parties (Cools, Finseraas and Rogeberg, 2021).

Findings from a handful of upper middle-income countries suggest a consistent (albeit weaker) association. For example, in South Africa, municipalities with greater immigrant presence lower (somewhat) their support for the incumbent ANC party (Bedasso and Jaupt, 2020), and the large increase of Syrian refugees in Turkey has led to a moderate decline in support for the ruling AKP (Altındağ and Kaushal, 2021). Similarly, Rozo and Vargas (2021) find that the recent Venezuelan migration shocks have shifted votes from left- to right-wing political parties in Colombia.

Scholars have proposed several mechanisms to explain what drives this political backlash.³ Some of these mechanisms—but not all—are relevant to low-income country contexts. First, increased migrant presence has been shown to activate fiscal concerns given possible burdens on the state’s budget (Edo et al., 2019). Second, and relatedly, migrant hosting can activate congestion effects, defined as the concern that the quality of public services, such as public healthcare, will decline due to the increase in demand caused by migrants (Cavaille and Ferwerda, 2022). Indeed, some studies find adverse effects of refugee presence on health (Aygün, Kirdar and Tuncay, 2021), and education outcomes (Tumen, 2021).

Third, voters are also moved by wage and employment concerns. While past studies find small effects, *on average*, of immigration on wages and employment in OECD countries (Card and Peri, 2016), immigration can nonetheless have negative effects on low-wage workers (Whitaker, 2002), and when present, these are a key driver of anti-immigration backlash (Dancygier and Donnelly, 2013). In the context of low-income countries, migrant presence has been shown to affect the labor market (Fallah, Krafft and Wahba, 2019), in particular informal low-wage jobs (Altındağ, Bakış and Rozo, 2020), and most relevant to our context—to lower agricultural labor costs (Whitaker, 2002).⁴ Finally, a large influx of

³See Alesina and Tabellini (2022) for a comprehensive review.

⁴Greater competition for low-skilled labor has of course mixed (distributional) economic effects.

migrants can also have other adverse consequences for host communities in the form of increased housing (Rozo and Sviatschi, 2021), and commodity prices (Tumen, 2016); disease spread (Kalipeni and Oppong, 1998); personal insecurity (Bell, Fasani and Machin, 2013), and environmental pressure (Black, 2018).

On the other hand, there are also reasons to expect that findings from HMICs may not travel to low-income country contexts. First, in high-income countries, cultural, social and economic concerns have been exploited by far-right parties, which have invested heavily in making immigration a salient political issue. By contrast, in most low-income countries, political parties are not competing based on policy differences, and so there is no clear opposition party carrying the anti-migrant mantle.

Second, in the context of low-income countries, where a much smaller share of the population is formally employed, there is growing evidence that even large-scale arrivals of refugees are not detrimental to local economies proximate to refugee settlements (Alix-Garcia et al., 2018; Loschmann, Bilgili and Siegel, 2019), and can even be a boon (Taylor et al., 2016). These dynamics are driven by refugees' use of cash transfers to purchase goods and services from locals (Lehmann and Masterson, 2020), greater demand for local farmers' produce (Alix-Garcia et al., 2018), and greater formal wage employment opportunities for citizens (Loschmann, Bilgili and Siegel, 2019). Third, fiscal concerns are arguably less relevant (but not irrelevant) in low-income countries, both because such countries generally do not have a robust welfare system, and because low-income countries don't necessarily carry independently the fiscal burden of hosting refugees. Instead, host developing countries—such as Jordan (Arar, 2017), Lebanon (Tsourapas, 2019), Morocco (Norman, 2020), and Libya (Greenhill, 2010)—negotiate for humanitarian assistance from the international community as part of burden sharing agreements (Gamso and Yuldashev, 2018).

Indeed, in part due to international norms of burden sharing, and in part due to their desire to keep refugees outside of Europe, rich actors like the EU have been increasing aid transfers to developing countries for hosting refugees (Angin, Shehaj and Shin, 2021). In Uganda alone, in the past three years, over 1.5 billion USD in foreign assistance was used to support the government-led Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), and

it is estimated that at similar amount was provided by development partners.⁵ Increasingly, part of the aid that is designated for supporting refugees is also shared with host communities (Bermeo, 2017). The increased support for host communities is intended to address congestion effects, to reduce refugee-host citizen tensions, and to promote refugee self-reliance during long-term displacement spells.

1.1 A Development-Oriented Framework

How do the above considerations balance off each other to affect political attitudes and the electoral behavior of host communities? We argue that the most important factor is whether local communities are able to benefit from foreign aid that targets refugee hosting areas. Three bodies of work inform this expectation.

First, in low-income countries access to public (or club) goods and services, such as healthcare, education, security, roads, water, sanitation, and electricity is one of the most (if not the most) salient issues for voters (Grossman and Slough, 2022). The high salience of local development is, in part, because given low state capacity, government provision of basic services is wanting.⁶

Second, there is growing evidence that when policymakers consider the interests of local communities, humanitarian aid can have positive spillover to local communities. For example, Zhou, Grossman and Ge (2023) also examine the case of Uganda to demonstrate that refugee aid transfers can be sufficiently large to offset the growing pressure on local infrastructure and on public services.

Third, foreign assistance offers opportunities for governments to successfully credit claim, even when incumbents have little control over aid spending (Cruz and Schneider, 2017). Notwithstanding the fact that host communities are benefiting from foreign assistance that is primarily intended for refugees, host citizens, we argue, are likely to attribute these benefits to the incumbent government who they credit for improvement in local services, or at least for bringing in foreign donors to the area (Dietrich, Mahmud and Winters, 2018). Relatedly, surveys conducted in Uganda find that citizens prefer development projects from foreign

⁵Figures for humanitarian and development assistance were provided by UNHCR.

⁶We do not wish to imply that citizens care only or even mostly about service delivery outcomes. Our argument holds even if voters also care about other issues like crime rates, inflation, and corruption.

donors, because it reduces the chances of corruption, and they are likely to contact their member of parliament to increase oversight over aid-funded projects (Findley et al., 2017). Thus, constituents link the success of foreign aid projects with government accountability, which can lead to increased support for elected officials (Evans, Holtemeyer and Kosec, 2019).

Under what conditions those that are geographically *proximate* to *larger* settlements also benefit from better access to public services due to refugee-related aid? We highlight three primary conditions. First, resource allocation policies must be both enacted and enforced in ways that ensure that host communities benefit from the increased aid flowing into refugee settlements. Second, the state needs to have sufficient capacity to undertake large development projects, and third, governance institutions need to be sufficiently robust to guard against the embezzlement of (most) funds. We argue that if and when these conditions are met, citizens in host communities will both benefit from refugee-related aid, and credit the incumbent government for such improvements. And given the high political salience of public service delivery, this positive attribution to the government will result in increased (electoral) support for the incumbent.

2 Context

Due to the size of its refugee-hosting population and its inclusive refugee policies, Uganda offers an important case to test our argument. While Uganda’s history of hosting refugees dates back to the 1940s (Lomo, Naggaga and Hovil, 2001), the recent mass arrival brought about by the South Sudanese civil war has been the greatest the country has ever experienced. Since several neighboring countries—Burundi, the DRC, and South Sudan—have recently experienced political unrest, Uganda now hosts an exceptionally large refugee population (see Figure 1). About 57 percent of Uganda’s refugee population is from South Sudan, the remainder consisting of refugees from other East African countries, mainly the DRC (32%) and to a lesser extent Burundi, Somalia, Rwanda, Eritrea, and Ethiopia.⁷

Uganda’s refugee hosting policy regime is considered inclusive. First, under its open-door policy, Uganda does not prevent refugees from seeking asylum within its borders nor forcibly repatriate or deport them. Second, its *self-reliance strategy* (SRS), described in greater

⁷See <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/uga>

detail below, allows refugees to self-settle with a small plot of land, find employment, start businesses, and access local public services, such as schools and health clinics (Ahimbisibwe, 2019).

2.1 Refugee Settlements in Uganda

Refugees in Uganda are currently hosted in 12 districts, spread over 30 settlements located in some of the poorest areas of the country. The Northern and Western refugee-hosting areas are both border regions, in proximity to South Sudan and the DRC, respectively. SI Section S1.1 shows that prior to the major arrival of refugees starting in 2014, refugee-hosting areas generally had below median levels of public services and infrastructure. Unlike in many other countries, including neighboring Tanzania and Kenya, where refugees are forced to live within enclosed camps, refugees in Uganda can (in theory) self-settle. Approximately 94 percent of refugees in Uganda nonetheless reside in rural refugee settlements,⁸ where they are entitled to basic food assistance, small plots of land, and access to local public services.⁹

What determines where refugees are settled? In practice, the allocation of refugees to settlements is managed by the UNHCR and the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). Allocation depends on settlements' capacity (in particular, land availability and a service congestion assessment), country of origin (almost all South Sudanese refugees are settled in Northern districts while refugees from DRC and Burundi settle in the South-Western districts), and family reunification considerations. d'Errico et al. (2022) provides a comprehensive discussion of why the legal right to self-settle in Uganda is not a major inferential concern, given that de-facto UNHCR and OPM settle almost all refugees. Moreover, it is unlikely that refugee settlement locations are selected based on electoral considerations. In SI Section S1.2, we regress whether a district hosts refugees on baseline covariates. Refugee settlements tend to be located in slightly more populated and poorer areas. Incumbent vote share is not a determinant.

2.2 Uganda's Refugee-Hosting Policy Reform

⁸UNHCR Uganda Refugee Statistics Map June 2021: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/87747>.

⁹Asylum-seekers and refugees in urban centers are expected to be self-reliant.

Figure 1: The top plot shows the refugee population (solid line) in Uganda over time, when key policy changes were enacted (orange cutoffs), and the start of the South Sudanese civil war (red cutoff) which led to a drastic increase in the number of refugees from South Sudan (dashed line); the bottom left plot shows the salience of refugees measured by the number of Ugandan newspaper articles that mention refugees or migration; and the bottom right plot shows the increase in refugee aid levels from international organizations. Data sources: UNHCR, Lexis-Nexis, Factiva.

In the mid-2000, Uganda engaged in a comprehensive reform of its policies governing resource allocation for hosting refugees and regulating the rights of refugee and asylum seekers. We describe below the components of these reforms, and their implications.

First, in 2003 the Ugandan government enacted the Development Assistance for Refugee Hosting Areas (DAR) to address congestion concerns (since refugees can access government health and education services), and the concern that tensions might arise among locals if the services refugees receive were perceived as superior.¹⁰ DAR mandated that humanitarian investments to refugee services must improve, or add to, existing public services in the area. This was to be achieved by further mandating that for any international humanitarian funds intended for refugees, a substantial proportion must be set aside for host communities (Ronald, 2022). This allocation of aid is referred to in Uganda as the “30-70 Principle,” as 30 percent of all refugee investments must target host-community needs. Thus, even though

¹⁰DAR was a significant update to the Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS) from 1998.

refugee hosting aid levels will not drastically increase until after 2014 following the South Sudanese civil war, we expect that after 2004 hosting communities would begin experiencing the positive effects of refugee presence on public services.

DAR also called for integrating public services for refugees and host communities via district and line ministries' development plans. Consider, for example, public healthcare: Uganda's National Integrated Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities and UNHCR's Global Strategy for Public Health 2014-2018 guide the delivery of health services for refugees and nearby host communities. These plans operationalize integration by linking humanitarian and development programming, and health services integration is coordinated and implemented by the Ministry of Health through the district health system (Gari-moi Orach and De Brouwere, 2006). Aid agencies invest directly in refugee settlements, but also support host districts' health services via conditional grants.

The second major policy domain that the Ugandan government reformed around that time refereed to the rights of refugees. Specifically, Uganda's 2006 National Refugee Act created a legal framework that provides refugees with, among other things, the right to documentation, the same rights as Ugandan nationals to access public services, the right to own land for agricultural use and shelter, the right to work, freedom of movement, the right to receive fair justice, the right to family unity, the right to transfer assets in and outside the country, and freedom of religion (Sharpe and Namusobya, 2012). According to data collected by Blair, Grossman and Weinstein (2022a) on refugee and asylum policies in a sample of 128 developing countries, in 2016 the last year in our study's dataset, Uganda ranked as the country with the second most inclusive refugee policies, which partly explains the high number of refugees in Uganda, compared to its neighbors (Blair, Grossman and Weinstein, 2022b).

Notwithstanding Uganda's inclusive refugee policies, since refugee-hosting districts are among the poorest in the country, congestion concerns became even more salient after the dramatic increase in the number of refugees following South Sudan's civil war, which broke out in December 2013. And while the massive arrival of South Sudanese refugees was followed by a large increase in levels of international aid for refugee hosting between 2015 and 2019 (Figure 1, bottom-right panel), it remains unclear whether Uganda's refugee integration

policies can effectively address said challenges.

3 Research Design

3.1 Parish-Years as Main Units of Analysis

Our unit of analysis is the parish-year. Parishes ($N = 5167$ at the time of the 2002 census) are a small administrative unit, encompassing on average five villages. Our study period covers four years: 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016, corresponding to Uganda’s general elections. In the past two decades, Uganda has experienced substantial increase of administrative units (Grossman and Lewis, 2014): the number of parishes increased to 7,241 in the latest 2014 census. This means that the boundaries of Ugandan parishes are not constant over the study period. A major contribution of this research is generating a comprehensive crosswalk across the years with 2001 parish boundaries as the baseline. We use shapefiles, census data, matching techniques, and manual corrections to ensure that we hold constant parish boundaries over time. See SI Section S2.1 for details on how we constructed this parish dataset.

3.2 Main Independent Variable: Refugee Presence

Our key independent variable is refugee presence, which is measured for each parish- and respondent-year. First, we obtained shapefiles of refugee settlements over time from UNHCR Uganda, which we used to construct a matrix of distances between each parish (or Afrobarometer respondent) to the nearest boundary of every operating settlement during the study years. Next, we collected population data for each settlement measured in the year (typically December) prior to an election year, since elections in Uganda occur in February (i.e. refugee population numbers in December 2000 for the election of February 2001). We did this by manually coding from UNHCR reports and filling missing values with the help of the UNHCR Uganda staff. SI Figure S4 shows the population size of all settlements by year. Our measure of refugee presence is greater for parishes (respondents) that are *closer* to *larger* settlements.

Building on Maystadt and Verwimp (2014), our measure also allows a parish (respondent) to be affected by *multiple* nearby refugee settlements. For each parish-year (respondent-year),

Figure 2: This figure shows that for parishes within 150km of any refugee settlement in 2001, our three alternative refugee presence measures remain relatively unchanged for the first three study years even during the policy changes (orange cutoff), but they all increase after the December 2013 start of the South Sudanese civil war (red cutoff).

we operationalize *refugee presence* to include the nearest settlement n in year t , as well as all settlements i within 20km of the parish (*Nearest + 20km*): $\text{ih}\left(\frac{\text{refpop}_{nt}}{\text{distance}_{nt}+1} + \sum_{i \in \text{rad}_{20km,-n}} \frac{\text{refpop}_{it}}{\text{distance}_{it}+1}\right)$. We take the inverse hyperbolic sine (ih) of the quotient of settlement population and distance because otherwise this measure would be left-skewed since most parishes (and survey respondents) across Uganda have low levels of refugee presence. We also standardize our measure to have mean 0 and sd 1 for ease of interpretation.

In our empirical analysis, we do not necessarily include all parishes. Since we use a continuous measure of refugee presence, it is not a-priori clear whether greater refugee presence matters beyond a certain radius. Thus, we use different sample radius cutoffs: parishes within 100km, 150km, 200km of any refugee settlement in the baseline year of 2001, as well as all Ugandan parishes. Our main specification is with the 150km cutoff, but we also show results with other cutoffs in SI Section S5. Figure 2 shows for parishes within the 150km cutoff, their raw presence measures (jittered) by year and the mean values (blue). In 2016, we notice a sizable jump in all presence measures, which reflects the large arrival of refugees from South Sudan. Figure S5 in the SI shows the distribution of our key refugee presence measures.

As robustness checks, we use measures of refugee presence that are based only on the

nearest settlement (*Nearest*), and on all settlements within 50km (*Nearest + 50km*), as well as a measure that normalizes distance as a function of the ratio of the refugee settlement to parish populations. This latter measure considers the local Ugandan population by dividing the refugee settlement population by the parish population at baseline year 2001. Thus, in relation to the same settlement, refugee presence would be greater for parishes that have fewer residents. This alternate *Nearest + 20km* measure is therefore

$$\text{lhs} \left(\frac{\text{refpop}_{nt}/\text{parishpop}_{p01}}{\text{distance}_{nt}+1} + \sum_{i \in \text{rad}_{20km,-n}} \frac{\text{refpop}_{nt}/\text{parishpop}_{p01}}{\text{distance}_{it}+1} \right).$$

In sum, our measures of refugee presence are continuous, time variant, consider both the size of and distance to the proximate settlements, allow a locality to be affected by multiple settlements, take into account the size of the local Ugandan population, and are more directly related to theory.

3.3 Electoral Outcomes

Electoral outcomes are constructed from Uganda’s Electoral Commission, which publishes results at the polling station level.¹¹ To test the effect of refugee proximity on support for the incumbent government, we use president Museveni’s vote share in 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016. *Voteshare* is a continuous variable [0-1] measuring Museveni’s share of total valid votes. Yoweri Museveni from the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party has been Uganda’s president since 1986. Though the NRM enjoys pockets of popular support, it also resorts to intimidation of opposition members and misuse of state resources to maintain its power (Golooba-Mutebi and Hickey, 2016). While elections in Uganda are not free and fair (Khisra, 2019), the NRM did not engage in widespread election rigging during the study period (Hyde and Marinov, 2012). In other words, official presidential returns in our study are meaningful.

To explore whether refugee presence has had a persuasion or a mobilization effect, we measure *Turnout* and the *Effective Number of Candidates*. Turnout [0-1] is the share of valid votes out of a parish’s total number of registered voters. The continuous measure of *effective* number of candidates weighs the number of presidential candidates by their relative

¹¹In SI Section S2.3 we describe the crosswalk we performed to aggregate election results from the polling station to the parish level.

strength, and is commonly used as a proxy measure of competitiveness, since it captures how concentrated (or fragmented) support for the incumbent is.¹²

3.4 Government Attribution Outcomes

An improvement in service delivery outcomes should affect vote choice only to the extent that citizens attribute those outcomes to the government and report greater support for the incumbent. For these outcomes, we turn to geocoded Afrobarometer surveys, which are nationally representative in-person surveys across African countries. Each round in Uganda has about 2,400 adult citizen respondents, and we use Rounds 3 to 8 (2005—2019), which roughly correspond to our study years. Thus, the unit of analysis here is each geo-located respondent-year, not parish-year. These survey data are repeated cross-sections, not a panel. See SI Section S2.4 for additional data description.

We use the following three questions asked every round on trust and approval in the president and the ruling party:

- *Presidential Approval:*

Do you approve or disapprove of the way that President Yoweri Museveni performed his jobs over the past twelve months? .
Strongly Disapprove (1)... Strongly Approve (4).

- *Trust in the President:*

How much do you trust the President?
Not at all (0)... A Lot (3).

- *Trust in the NRM Party:*

How much do you trust the Ruling Party?
Not at all (0)... A Lot (3).

Next, we create an index measure of *Government Performance* perceptions by using a set of questions, again asked every round, that gauge respondents' subjective assessment from Very Badly (1) to Very Well (4) of how the current government is handling the following: the economy, improving the living standards of the poor, creating jobs, keeping prices down,

¹²The Laakso-Taagepera measure is computed as $N = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^n p_i^2}$, where n is the number of candidates with at least one vote and p_i^2 is the square of their vote share.

reducing inequality, reducing crime, improving health services, addressing educational needs, providing water and sanitation services, ensuring everyone has enough to eat, maintaining roads and bridges, providing a reliable supply of electricity, empowering women, and improving local roads. We combine these variables into a single summary index (Cronbach’s alpha 0.85).

3.5 Control Variables

We include the following covariates in our electoral analyses. Using the 2002 census, we have each parish’s citizen population, average age, proportion male, literacy rate, unemployment rate, agriculture share, share coethnic with the president, and average household wealth (based on a composite index of household items). We also include a binary indicator from ACLED for any violent events in 2001, as well as each parish’s distance to a major road in 2001, distance to the border, distance to Uganda’s capital, and distance to the nearest oil well.

To prevent post-treatment bias, we only include the baseline year measures of these variables. To flexibly control for these time-invariant variables, however, we interact them with year to allow for their effects to vary over time. For the Afrobarometer analysis, we include this set of respondents’ demographic controls: coethnicity with the president, education attainment, religion, gender, age, and rural residency. We also interact these demographic controls by year.

4 Empirical Strategy

We use a difference-in-differences research design. Specifically, we regress the study outcomes on refugee presence (time-varying), the interaction of refugee presence with *Policy*, a binary variable that takes a 0 in year 2001 and a 1 in years 2006, 2011, and 2016, the interaction of refugee presence with migrant *Shock*, a binary variable which takes a 0 in year 2001, 2006, 2011 and a 1 in year 2016. We further interact the time-invariant baseline controls with year, and include parish (η_i) and region-year (η_{rt}) fixed effects, with standard errors clustered at the parish level:

$$y_{irt} = \eta_i + \eta_{rt} + \beta_1 \text{presence}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{presence}_{it} \times \text{Policy} + \beta_3 \text{presence}_{it} \times \text{Shock} + \lambda_1 \mathbf{x}_i \times \mathbf{1}\{\text{year}_{it} = 2006\} + \lambda_2 \mathbf{x}_i \times \mathbf{1}\{\text{year}_{it} = 2011\} + \lambda_3 \mathbf{x}_i \times \mathbf{1}\{\text{year}_{it} = 2016\} + \epsilon_{irt}$$

where i indexes parishes, r indexes region, t indexes year. The parish FEs allows us to account for time-invariant characteristics of each parish, while the region-year FEs allow us to account for plausible time-varying regional development and regional electoral swings.¹³ Basic year FEs account for time-varying shocks that are uniform across all regions, which might be sufficient if we only anticipate nationwide swings for or against the incumbent.

By using region-year FEs and allowing the effects of our baseline control variables to change over time, we are also incorporating guidance from the recent literature on DiD, which discusses how the standard two-way fixed effects (TWFE) model under staggered treatment adoption can be biased when effects may be heterogeneous (e.g. Goodman-Bacon, 2021; Sun and Abraham, 2021). Furthermore, we relax the model specification by including district time trends as a robustness check. This ensures that unobserved district-level differences that vary smoothly over time (e.g. district budgets, local trends in voting) are purged from the effects of refugee presence. We use this main model for the survey-based (Afrobarometer and DHS) outcomes which too are measured repeatedly over time.

5 Results

5.1 Effects of Refugee Presence on Voting

We have argued that, in low-income country settings, incumbents could benefit electorally in areas with greater refugee presence, if and when host communities benefit from the influx of aid targeting refugee settlements. Our findings are consistent with this argument.

To interpret regression tables in this section, the top row ('Baseline Presence') reports the slope in the baseline year of 2001. The second row ('Presence $\times$ Policy') reports the change in slope as a function of refugee presence, following Uganda's adoption of a more inclusive

¹³The inclusion of the region-year FEs is important given that Museveni's electoral strategy targets regions, and not specific parishes and subcounties. For example, to increase his support in the northeast region, in 2009 President Museveni created a new cabinet position, State Minister for Karamoja Affairs, and appointed his wife to serve as the inaugural minister. See, Africa News, "Uganda: First lady appointed minister," February 18, 2009.

refugee hosting policy regime. The third row (‘Presence $\times$ Shock’) reports the additional change in slope post-2014 due to variation in refugee arrival, compared to the post-policy adoption period. Finally, in the fourth row we report the total change in slope (compared to 2001) of the policy reform and refugee shock.

	Voteshare	Voter Turnout	N Candidates
Baseline Presence	-0.022*** (0.003)	0.001 (0.003)	0.091*** (0.010)
Presence x Policy	0.025*** (0.002)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.047*** (0.006)
Presence x Shock	0.017*** (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	-0.053*** (0.007)
Policy + Shock	0.042*** (0.003)	-0.001 (0.004)	-0.1*** (0.009)
Presence Measure	N+20km	N+20km	N+20km
Sample Distance (km)	150	150	150
Controls x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes
Num. obs.	13839	13839	13839
R ²	0.932	0.724	0.763

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$

Table 1: Electoral Outcomes: OLS difference-in-differences models for parishes within 150km of any refugee settlement, interacting Nearest + 20km Refugee Presence (time-varying) with Policy and Shock, interacting control variables with year, parish FEs and region-year FEs. Standard errors clustered at the parish level.

Table 1 shows that at baseline there was a negative relationship between refugee presence and Museveni’s vote share (column 1), yet the slope of this relationship becomes increasingly more positive over time. Specifically, in 2001, a one sd increase in refugee presence is correlated with a lower [-2.2 percentage points (pp)] vote share for Museveni. Compared to that slope, in 2006 and 2011 (post-reform, but pre refugee-shock), there is a positive change of 2.51 pp. In these elections, the overall relationship between refugee presence and Museveni’s vote share is effectively zero. By 2016, we find that refugee presence even has a positive and significant effect on Museveni’s vote share; the additional effect of the refugee shock is 1.68 pp, for a total of 4.19 pp compared to the baseline year. This finding is striking especially given the evidence that backlash in host countries has more to do with the flow of refugees than with their stock (Margalit and Solodoch, 2022).

Interestingly, we find little evidence that Museveni’s relative increase in vote share is from the mobilization of low-propensity or new voters. The positive DiD effect of refugee presence on turnout is substantively small and stable over the subsequent years (column 2). Instead,

we find that areas with increased refugee presence after the policy change and after the refugee shock experience fewer effective number of candidates (column 3), which proxies for electoral competitiveness. Combined, the evidence is more consistent with existing voters switching their vote from opposition candidates to the incumbent president, rather than turning out new voters.

5.2 Development as the Mechanism

We argue that voters in local communities increase their support for the incumbent government due to positive spillovers from hosting nearby refugees. We test this mechanism in three ways. First, we replicate the main analysis in Zhou, Grossman and Ge (2023) using our model specification with the following outcomes: public primary and secondary school access, health clinic access, health utilization road density, and an index that combines these outcomes. At baseline (2001), refugee presence is negatively correlated with access to services across outcomes, but the effect of refugee hosting turns positive under the policy and shock periods (SI Section S3). Second, following Chi et al. (2022), we use nighttime lights density as a further outcome measure of development. We find that at baseline year, increase in refugee presence is associated with negative nighttime lights density. After the policy change, however, the effect of refugee presence becomes weakly positive, which suggests a slight increase in socioeconomic activity in refugee-hosting regions after the policy change (SI Section S4). Third, we regress the change in Museveni’s vote share on change in the public goods index from Zhou, Grossman and Ge (2023), with election-year fixed effects to account for possible election specific realignments. While not causally identified, we find that a one standard deviation increase in this public goods index is associated with a 4.73 pp increase in Museveni’s vote share.

5.3 Citizens’ Assessments of Government Performance

Objective improvements in public services and wellbeing should affect vote choice only to the extent that constituents first recognize these improvements in their communities, and second, give credit to the incumbent government (even if much of the funding comes from international sources). Since the Afrobarometer is not representative at the parish level, we

conduct our analyses at the respondent level, and report our findings in Table 2.

	Gov Perform	Improve Edu	Improve Health	Pres Approval	NRM Trust	Pres Trust
Baseline Presence	-0.061*	-0.065**	-0.019	-0.103***	-0.048	-0.058*
	(0.031)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Presence x Policy	0.051	-0.008	-0.062**	0.123***	0.145***	0.143***
	(0.037)	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)
Presence x Shock	0.125***	0.131***	0.138***	0.140***	0.043	0.040
	(0.047)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.046)	(0.045)	(0.045)
Policy + Shock	0.176***	0.123**	0.076	0.264***	0.189***	0.183***
	(0.068)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.066)	(0.066)	(0.065)
Presence Measure	N+20km	N+20km	N+20km	N+20km	N+20km	N+20km
Sample Distance (km)	150	150	150	150	150	150
Controls x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Num. obs.	5193	6502	6516	5052	5079	5067
R ²	0.099	0.095	0.106	0.102	0.112	0.110

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$

Table 2: Citizens' incumbent approval and government performance assessment (Afrobarometer): OLS repeated cross-sectional models for respondents within 150km of any refugee settlement, interacting Nearest + 20km Refugee Presence (time-varying) with Policy and Shock, interacting demographic controls with year, regional FE and year FE.

At baseline (Afrobarometer Round 3), a one sd increase in refugee presence was associated with significantly lower perceptions of government performance (-0.06 sd), of presidential approval (-0.1 sd), and of trust in the president (-0.06 sd). However, following the migration policy reforms of the mid-2000s, the slope of the relationship between refugee presence and those outcomes became significantly less negative. These dynamics continue even after the massive increase in refugees in 2014. By 2016 (Round 7), a one sd increase in refugee presence led to a 0.26 sd higher job approval for the president; 0.18 sd and 0.19 sd greater trust in the president and the NRM party, respectively; 0.12 sd higher assessment of educational services and 0.18 sd higher overall assessment of government performance.

These results are consistent with our conjecture that the reason president Museveni was able to increase his electoral appeal in high refugee presence areas is because humanitarian and development aid spilled over to host communities in the form of better public goods that people care about. Subsequently, those beneficiaries both recognized improvements and credited the government.

6 Robustness Checks

We conduct the following robustness checks for our main outcome of interest, voteshare. First, in our main linear DiD specification, we use the *Nearest + 20km* refugee presence measure and 150km radii sample restriction. We thus test alternative model specifications using different measures of refugee presence (*Nearest*, *Nearest + 50km*, and *Nearest + 20km* that considers parish population), as well as different sample restrictions (100km, 150km, 200km, and all parishes). Second, we use a standard two-way fixed effects specification which includes only parish and year fixed effects. Third, we add a district time trend to our model in order to address possible concerns of district-specific changes over time. Fourth, we replaced our continuous refugee presence measure with a binary version cut off at the median, which more closely resembles the canonical difference-in-differences model. Fifth, we replace the Policy and Shock dummy variables with year-by-year specifications to model the additional effect of refugee presence over time. SI Section S5 confirms the robustness of our incumbent support results across these alternative model specifications.

Next, in SI Section S6 we conduct formal sensitivity analyses to show that our results are robust to concerns of omitted variables bias across our outcomes. We also address concerns about multiple hypothesis testing by adjusting for the false discovery rate and showing Benjamini-Hochberg (BH) adjusted p-values in SI Section S7.

Lastly, we use a modified shift-share instrumental variable (e.g. Fouka, Mazumder and Tabellini, 2022) that exploits two sources of variation: the variation in the mix of refugees from various neighboring origin countries across the settlements in Uganda in our baseline year of 2000, as well as the time-series variation in rates of emigration from each origin country. Thus, the predicted number of refugees that are in each settlement depends both on the 2000 composition of refugees based on their origin countries and on the heterogeneity of forced displacement (i.e. conflict and political crises from origin countries) after 2000. Table 3 shows that the results using our instrumental variable for our main outcomes, voteshare and turnout are similar to our DiD specification. SI Section S8 describes the construction of our instrumental variable in more detail along with the first-stage regressions.

	Voteshare	Voter Turnout
Baseline Exposure	0.036 (0.038)	-0.012 (0.029)
Exposure x Policy	0.041*** (0.007)	0.000 (0.005)
Exposure x Shock	0.049** (0.024)	-0.025 (0.018)
Exposure Measure	Nearest + 20km	Nearest + 20km
Sample Distance (km)	150	150
Controls x Year	Yes	Yes
F-Statistic	31.231	7.004
Num. obs.	13839	13839
R ² (full model)	0.918	0.715
R ² (proj model)	0.005	0.080
Num. groups: parish_id	3637	3637
Num. groups: region_year	16	16

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$

Table 3: Modified Shift-Share Instrumental Variables results for the main outcomes: parishes within 150km of any refugee settlement, interacting Nearest + 20km Shift-share Instrument (time-varying) with Policy and Shock, interacting control variables with year, including parish and region-year fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the parish level.

7 Addressing Alternative Explanations

In this section, we address alternative explanations. First, it may be that our results, based on linear models, are driven by some other dynamics occurring in areas distant from refugee settlements. Rather than refugee-hosting areas increasing support for the incumbent, areas far from refugee settlements may, for some reason, become *less supportive* of the incumbent. We address this concern by exploring nonlinear effects of refugee presence over our study years. We regress both our refugee presence measure and the core outcomes on our set of controls, with parish and region-year fixed effects, to obtain the residuals. We then use generalized additive models to examine the nonlinear effects of refugee presence on the outcomes after projecting out the information from the control variables. The first row of Figure 3 shows that in the elections before 2016, the relationship between refugee presence and vote share was weakly negative. Yet this turns positive in 2016, and reassuringly—only in areas that have the highest levels of refugee presence. The second row confirms again that these positive electoral effects are not driven by mobilizing new voters.

A second alternative explanation is that our results are driven by a change in the composition of the electorate. While we find some positive effects on turnout, the estimates

Figure 3: This figure shows the nonlinear GAM fit between the residualized Nearest + 20km refugee presence measure and the residualized voteshare and turnout outcomes by year.

are too small to account for the estimated effects on Museveni’s vote share, and thus we rule out the mobilization of low propensity voters. It is possible, however, that the lack of electoral backlash is due to internal migration of Ugandans, whereby those who move into refugee settlement areas are positively disposed toward refugees and those who leave are more likely to be against them. Using the DHS survey data, we find that rates of both in- and out-migration are no different in refugee-hosting districts versus non-hosting neighboring districts.¹⁴

Lastly, there is a growing consensus that anti-immigration attitudes (at least in HMICs) are fueled to a large degree by perceived cultural threats (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014). It has also been argued that not all migrants elicit a similar response from host citizens; attitudes and behaviors toward migrants arguably depend on the ‘cultural distance’ between locals and immigrants (Mendez and Cutillas, 2014; Cogley, Doces and Whitaker, 2019). It is therefore possible that the lack of backlash we identify is because cultural threats are less relevant in countries such as Uganda, where refugees and locals share race, and at times also ethnicity, and religion. We do not find this alternative explanation to be compelling. Cultural distance is hardly a ‘factual, exogenous factor, but instead a political

¹⁴Due to space constraints in the SI, results can be obtained from authors upon request.

and social construct (Laitin, 1986; Chandra, 2002). Indeed, past research has shown that xenophobic violence against a marginalized migrant population can be prevalent even when host and refugees share many cultural and religious markers, as has been the case in South Africa (Kerr, Durrheim and Dixon, 2019) and Colombia (Knight and Tribin, 2013). Nonetheless, as an extension, we test for possible differences between Northern Uganda (where there are relatively strong ethnic ties between South Sudanese refugees and Nilotic Ugandans) and South-Western Uganda (where there are weaker ethnic ties between Burundi and Congolese refugees who are predominantly Banyarwanda, and Ugandans who are Ankole). Importantly, we do not find any difference between northern and southern Uganda in the relationship between refugee presence and electoral outcomes.

8 Conclusion

This study offers and tests a development-oriented framework on the political consequences of hosting migrants in low-income countries. From existing research conducted in high- and upper middle-income countries, exposure to large migrant shocks has been met with growing public backlash, substantiated as concerns about the welfare state, economic competition, and in some places, cultural differences. This backlash has led citizens to direct their ire not only at migrants and inclusive migration policies, but also at incumbent governments associated with allowing migrants in. In these contexts, where politics and programmatic platforms fall on a left-right ideological divide, voters then turn to nativist, far-right parties. However, in low-income countries—where most forcibly displaced people live—we argue that rather than competing for public services with migrants, locals may benefit from the influx of humanitarian and development aid, and consequently credit and reward the incumbent government. Thus, this study proposes a new theoretical framework that is rooted in the conditions of low-income countries.

To test our theory, we take the case of Uganda. We find that greater proximity to larger refugee settlements increased support for the incumbent president, and that this increase was present even after the large arrival of refugees, which began in 2014. In addition, we extend Zhou, Grossman and Ge (2023)’s finding that refugee presence is associated with meaningful improvements in service delivery in more exposed host communities, and demonstrate that

this relationship only holds after Ugandas government implemented a set of policy reforms governing the allocation of refugee-related aid.

Using individual-level surveys, we further find that where refugees' presence is most pronounced citizens recognized these improvements and attributed them to the incumbent government. As such, our study's findings are consistent with work suggesting that retrospective voting does affect at least some voters in developing country settings (Harding, 2015). These findings are also consistent with Zhou, Grossman and Ge (2023) who do not find evidence that greater refugee presence in Uganda causes a backlash against migrants or migration policies.

Our findings can inform an emerging literature that assesses the impacts of refugees on host communities. Without policy intervention, the arrival of a large groups of refugees may strain local infrastructure and public services (Whitaker, 2002). The unequal provision of humanitarian aid to refugees can provoke resentment. However, aid and infrastructural development, while primarily intended for refugees, can also lead to positive externalities for local host communities if access is open. To preempt tensions, some agencies make assistance directly available to local citizens given that refugee sites are often located in marginalized areas. Refugees also directly affect local economies by creating new businesses (Taylor et al., 2016) and by using aid to purchase goods and services locally (Lehmann and Masterson, 2020). Taken together, we recognize that the effects of refugees on host communities are not universal, and we highlight the importance of public policies in explaining the lack of backlash that is all too common in rich democracies.

Future work should also explore the generalizability of our findings to other contexts. As for scope conditions, we suspect that findings from Uganda are relevant to settings where elections are meaningful even if not completely free and fair, where refugee camps are not too segregated from the rest of the population, where the state has sufficient capacity to undertake large development projects, and where governance institutions guard against the embezzlement of (most) funds. Uganda is ranked as the 27th weakest state in the 2016 index of State Weakness in the Developing World (Rice and Patrick, 2008), and 144 out of 180 countries, according to the 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index reported by Transparency International. Thus, these scope conditions are not very binding.

Moreover, generalizability is not about whether we find these effects elsewhere today, but whether we would find similar results if other countries implemented inclusive resource allocation policies as the ones adopted by Uganda. Admittedly, compared to most other developing countries, Uganda seems unique in its inclusive migrant hosting policies. However, other countries, Zambia, Ethiopia and Kenya for example, are considering adopting the Ugandan model, and there are advocacy efforts pushing host governments towards this model.¹⁵ Given the scale of refugee inflow and its inclusive refugee policies, *not finding* a backlash against the incumbent government among those most directly affected by Uganda’s refugee-hosting policies would inform these advocacy efforts with evidence.

With respect to the broader implications on democratic governance, our study’s findings are nonetheless normatively ambiguous. On the one hand, it is a positive development when governments spend resources in ways that increase citizen welfare, and in turn, citizens use performance benchmarks instead of using heuristics like ethnic markers and clientelistic offers to inform their vote. On the other hand, we must also acknowledge that in this context, a long-term authoritarian government may be instrumentally using refugee policy and humanitarian aid to further entrench its own political authority, even as it is held up globally as an exemplar of refugee-hosting (Betts, 2021). Our research recognizes and illuminates the domestic and international political dynamics that are enmeshed in migration policymaking.

¹⁵Zambia began moving in that direction by passing in 2017 the Refugee Act No 1, which grants refugees freedom of movement and the right to live alongside host communities among other provisions (Gronau and Ruesink, 2021).

References

- Ahimbisibwe, Frank. 2019. "Uganda and the refugee problem: Challenges and opportunities." *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 13(5):62–72.
- Alesina, Alberto F and Marco Tabellini. 2022. "The Political Effects of Immigration: Culture or Economics?" *Journal of Economic Literature* .
- Alix-Garcia, Jennifer, Sarah Walker, Anne Bartlett, Harun Onder and Apurva Sanghi. 2018. "Do refugee camps help or hurt hosts? The case of Kakuma, Kenya." *Journal of Development Economics* 130:66–83.
- Altındağ, Onur and Neeraj Kaushal. 2021. "Do refugees impact voting behavior in the host country? Evidence from Syrian refugee inflows to Turkey." *Public Choice* 186:149–178.
- Altındağ, Onur, Ozan Bakış and Sandra V Rozo. 2020. "Blessing or burden? Impacts of refugees on businesses and the informal economy." *Journal of Development Economics* 146:102490.
- Angin, Merih, Albana Shehaj and Adrian J Shin. 2021. "Inside job: Migration and distributive politics in the European Union." *Economics & Politics* 33(2):264–288.
- Arar, Rawan. 2017. "The new grand compromise: How Syrian refugees changed the stakes in the global refugee assistance regime." *Middle East Law and Governance* 9(3):298–312.
- Aygün, Aysun, Murat G Kirdar and Berna Tuncay. 2021. "The effect of hosting 3.4 million refugees on native population mortality." *Journal of Health Economics* 80:102534.
- Barone, Guglielmo, Alessio D'Ignazio, Guido de Blasio and Paolo Naticchioni. 2016. "Mr. Rossi, Mr. Hu and politics. The role of immigration in shaping natives' voting behavior." *Journal of Public Economics* 136:1–13.
- Bedasso, Biniam E and Pascal Jaupart. 2020. "South-South migration and elections: evidence from post-apartheid South Africa." *IZA Journal of Development and Migration* 11(1).
- Bell, Brian, Francesco Fasani and Stephen Machin. 2013. "Crime and immigration: Evidence from large immigrant waves." *Review of Economics and statistics* 95(4):1278–1290.
- Bermeo, Sarah Blodgett. 2017. "Aid Allocation and Targeted Development in an Increasingly Connected World." *International Organization* 71(4):735–766.
- Betts, Alexander. 2021. "Refugees And Patronage: A Political History Of Uganda's 'Progressive' Refugee Policies." *African Affairs* 120(479):243–276.
- Bilgili, Özge, Craig Loschmann, Sonja Fransen and Melissa Siegel. 2019. "Is the education of local children influenced by living near a refugee camp? Evidence from host communities in Rwanda." *International Migration* 57(4):291–309.
- Black, Richard. 2018. *Refugees, Environment and Development*. Routledge.

- Blair, Christopher, Guy Grossman and Jeremy M Weinstein. 2022a. “Forced Displacement and Asylum Policy in the Developing World.” *International Organization* 76(2):337–338.
- Blair, Christopher, Guy Grossman and Jeremy M Weinstein. 2022b. “Liberal Displacement Policies Attract Forced Migrants in the Global South.” *American Political Science Review* 116(1):351–358.
- Brunner, Beatrice and Andreas Kuhn. 2018. “Immigration, Cultural Distance and Natives’ Attitudes Towards Immigrants: Evidence from Swiss Voting Results.” *Kyklos* 71(1):28–58.
- Card, David and Giovanni Peri. 2016. “Immigration economics by George J. Borjas: a review essay.” *Journal of Economic Literature* 54(4):1333–49.
- Cavaille, Charlotte and Jeremy Ferwerda. 2022. “How Distributional Conflict over In-Kind Benefits Generates Support for Far-Right Parties.” *Journal of Politics* .
- Chandra, Kanchan. 2002. *Constructivist theories of ethnic politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Chi, Guanghua, Han Fang, Sourav Chatterjee and Joshua E Blumenstock. 2022. “Microestimates of wealth for all low-and middle-income countries.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 119(3):e2113658119.
- Cogley, Nathaniel Terence, John Andrew Doces and Beth Elise Whitaker. 2019. “Which immigrants should be naturalized? Which should be deported? Evidence from a survey experiment in Côte d’Ivoire.” *Political Research Quarterly* 72(3):653–668.
- Cools, Sara, Henning Finseraas and Ole Rogeberg. 2021. “Local Immigration and Support for Anti-Immigration Parties: A Meta-Analysis.” *American Journal of Political Science* 65(4):988–1006.
- Cruz, Cesi and Christina J Schneider. 2017. “Foreign aid and undeserved credit claiming.” *American Journal of Political Science* 61(2):396–408.
- Dancygier, Rafaela M and Michael J Donnelly. 2013. “Sectoral economies, economic contexts, and attitudes toward immigration.” *The journal of politics* 75(1):17–35.
- d’Errico, Marco, Rama Dasi Mariani, Rebecca Pietrelli and Furio Camillo Rosati. 2022. “Refugee-Host Proximity and Market Creation in Uganda.” *The Journal of Development Studies* 58(2):213–233.
- Dietrich, Simone, Minhaj Mahmud and Matthew S Winters. 2018. “Foreign aid, foreign policy, and domestic government legitimacy: Experimental evidence from Bangladesh.” *The Journal of Politics* 80(1):133–148.
- Dustmann, Christian, Kristine Vasiljeva and Anna Piil Damm. 2019. “Refugee migration and electoral outcomes.” *The Review of Economic Studies* 86(5):2035–2091.
- Edo, Anthony, Yvonne Giesing, Jonathan Öztunc and Panu Poutvaara. 2019. “Immigration and electoral support for the far-left and the far-right.” *European Economic Review* 115:99–143.

- Evans, David K, Brian Holtemeyer and Katrina Kosec. 2019. "Cash transfers increase trust in local government." *World Development* 114:138–155.
- Fallah, Belal, Caroline Krafft and Jackline Wahba. 2019. "The impact of refugees on employment and wages in Jordan." *Journal of Development Economics* 139:203–216.
- Findley, Michael G, Adam S Harris, Helen V Milner and Daniel L Nielson. 2017. "Who controls foreign aid? Elite versus public perceptions of donor influence in aid-dependent Uganda." *International Organization* 71(4):633–663.
- Fouka, Vasiliki, Soumyajit Mazumder and Marco Tabellini. 2022. "From immigrants to Americans: Race and assimilation during the Great Migration." *The Review of Economic Studies* 89(2):811–842.
- Gamalerio, Matteo, Mario Luca, Alessio Romarri and Max Viskanic. 2022. "Refugee reception, extreme-right voting, and compositional amenities: evidence from Italian municipalities." *Available at SSRN 3277550*.
- Gamso, Jonas and Farhod Yuldashev. 2018. "Targeted foreign aid and international migration: Is development-promotion an effective immigration policy?" *International Studies Quarterly* 62(4):809–820.
- Garimoi Orach, Christopher and Vincent De Brouwere. 2006. "Integrating refugee and host health services in West Nile districts, Uganda." *Health Policy and Planning* 21(1):53–64.
- Golooba-Mutebi, Frederick and Sam Hickey. 2016. "The master of institutional multiplicity? The shifting politics of regime survival, state-building and democratisation in Museveni's Uganda." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 10(4):601–618.
- Goodman-Bacon, Andrew. 2021. "Difference-in-differences with variation in treatment timing." *Journal of Econometrics*.
- Greenhill, Kelly M. 2010. *Weapons of Mass Migration: Forced Displacement, Coercion, and Foreign Policy*. Cornell University Press.
- Gronau, Steven and Brigitte Ruesink. 2021. "What makes me want you here? refugee integration in a Zambian settlement setting." *Sustainability* 13(15).
- Grossman, Guy and Janet I. Lewis. 2014. "Administrative Unit Proliferation." *The American Political Science Review* 108:196–217.
- Grossman, Guy and Tara Slough. 2022. "Government Responsiveness in Developing Countries." *Annual Review of Political Science* 25.
- Hainmueller, Jens and Daniel J Hopkins. 2014. "Public attitudes toward immigration." *Annual review of political science* 17:225–249.
- Halla, Martin, Alexander F Wagner and Josef Zweimüller. 2017. "Immigration and voting for the far right." *Journal of the European Economic Association* 15(6):1341–1385.

- Hangartner, Dominik, Elias Dinas, Moritz Marbach, Konstantinos Matakos and Dimitrios Xefteris. 2019. “Does exposure to the refugee crisis make natives more hostile?” *American Political Science Review* 113(2):442–455.
- Harding, Robin. 2015. “Attribution and accountability: Voting for roads in Ghana.” *World Politics* 67(4):656–689.
- Hyde, Susan D and Nikolay Marinov. 2012. “Which Elections Can Be Lost?” *Political analysis* 20(2):191–210.
- Kalipeni, Ezekiel and Joseph Oppong. 1998. “The refugee crisis in Africa and implications for health and disease: a political ecology approach.” *Social Science & Medicine* 46(12):1637–1653.
- Kerr, Philippa, Kevin Durrheim and John Dixon. 2019. “Xenophobic violence and struggle discourse in South Africa.” *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 54(7):995–1011.
- Khisa, Moses. 2019. “Shrinking democratic space? Crisis of consensus and contentious politics in Uganda.” *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 57(3):343–362.
- Knight, Brian and Ana Tribin. 2013. “Immigration and violent crime: Evidence from the Colombia-Venezuela border.” *Journal of Development Economics* .
- Laitin, David D. 1986. *Hegemony and culture: Politics and religious change among the Yoruba*. University of Chicago Press.
- Lehmann, Christian and Daniel Masterson. 2020. “Does Aid Reduce Anti-refugee Violence? Evidence from Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.” *American Political Science Review* 114(4):1335–1342.
- Lomo, Zachary, Angela Naggaga and Lucy Hovil. 2001. “The phenomenon of forced migration in Uganda: an overview of policy and practice in an historical context.” *Refugee Law Project*, Working Paper 1.
- Loschmann, Craig, Özge Bilgili and Melissa Siegel. 2019. “Considering the benefits of hosting refugees: evidence of refugee camps influencing local labour market activity and economic welfare in Rwanda.” *IZA Journal of Development and Migration* 9(1):1–23.
- Margalit, Yotam and Omer Solodoch. 2022. “Against the flow: Differentiating between public opposition to the immigration stock and flow.” *British Journal of Political Science* 52(3):1055–1075.
- Maystadt, Jean-François, Kalle Hirvonen, Athur Mabiso and Joachim Vandecasteele. 2019. “Impacts of hosting forced migrants in poor countries.” *Annual Review of Resource Economics* 11:439–459.
- Maystadt, Jean-François and Philip Verwimp. 2014. “Winners and Losers Among a Refugee-Hosting Population.” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 62(4):769–809.

- Mehic, Adrian et al. 2019. *Immigration and right-wing populism: Evidence from a natural experiment*. Department of Economics, School of Economics and Management, Lund University.
- Mendez, Ildefonso and Isabel M Cutillas. 2014. “Has immigration affected Spanish presidential elections results?” *Journal of Population Economics* 27(1):135–171.
- Norman, Kelsey P. 2020. *Reluctant reception: Refugees, migration and governance in the Middle East and North Africa*. Cambridge University Press.
- Otto, Alkis Henri and Max Friedrich Steinhardt. 2014. “Immigration and election outcomes—Evidence from city districts in Hamburg.” *Regional Science and Urban Economics* 45:67–79.
- Rice, Susan E and Stewart Patrick. 2008. *Index of state weakness in the developing world*. Brookings Institution Washington, DC.
- Ronald, Mwangu Alex. 2022. “An assessment of economic and environmental impacts of refugees in Nakivale, Uganda.” *Migration and Development* 11(3):433–449.
- Rozo, Sandra V and Juan F Vargas. 2021. “Brothers or invaders? How crisis-driven migrants shape voting behavior.” *Journal of Development Economics* 150:102636.
- Rozo, Sandra V and Micaela Sviatschi. 2021. “Is a refugee crisis a housing crisis? Only if housing supply is unresponsive.” *Journal of Development Economics* 148:102563.
- Sharpe, Marina and Salima Namusobya. 2012. “Refugee Status Determination and the Rights of Recognized Refugees under Uganda’s Refugees Act 2006.” *International Journal of Refugee Law* 24(3):561–578.
- Sun, Liyang and Sarah Abraham. 2021. “Estimating dynamic treatment effects in event studies with heterogeneous treatment effects.” *Journal of Econometrics* 225(2):175–199.
- Taylor, J Edward, Mateusz J Filipinski, Mohamad Alloush, Anubhab Gupta, Ruben Irvin Rojas Valdes and Ernesto Gonzalez-Estrada. 2016. “Economic impact of refugees.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 113(27):7449–7453.
- Tsourapas, Gerasimos. 2019. “The Syrian refugee crisis and foreign policy decision-making in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey.” *Journal of Global Security Studies* 4(4):464–481.
- Tumen, Semih. 2016. “The economic impact of Syrian refugees on host countries: Quasi-experimental evidence from Turkey.” *American Economic Review* 106(5):456–60.
- Tumen, Semih. 2021. “The effect of refugees on native adolescents’ test scores: Quasi-experimental evidence from PISA.” *Journal of Development Economics* 150:102633.
- UNHCR. 2021. Global Trends in Forced Displacement in 2020. Technical report United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

- Verme, Paolo and Kirsten Schuettler. 2021. "The impact of forced displacement on host communities a review of the empirical literature in economics." *Journal of Development Economics* forthcoming.
- Whitaker, Beth Elise. 2002. "Refugees in Western Tanzania: The distribution of burdens and benefits among local hosts." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 15(4):339–358.
- Zhou, Yang-Yang and Andrew Shaver. 2021. "Reexamining the Effect of Refugees on Civil Conflict: A Global Subnational Analysis." *American Political Science Review* 115(4):1175–1196.
- Zhou, Yang-Yang, Guy Grossman and Shuning Ge. 2023. "Inclusive Refugee-Hosting in Uganda Improves Local Development and Prevents Public Backlash." *World Development* 166:106203.