

# Preferring Refugees

How German Attitudes Changed During the European Refugee Crisis and Along  
Historical State Divides

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## **Abstract**

The 2015 refugee crisis brought 1.3 million migrants to Europe; of those, one million sought asylum in Germany, bringing profound social and political repercussions. Germany is now challenged with aiding and integrating over a million migrants; my thesis aims to understand how German attitudes towards refugees have changed over the course of the refugee crisis. This study uses data from national surveys to determine trends in German public opinion on migrants between March 2015 and March 2016. A discrete choice experiment revealed implicit preference biases among German citizens on the bases of religious affiliation, gender, profession and education level, origin, and reason for immigrating. German citizens felt most strongly towards religion and reason for immigrating; Muslim refugees and migrants seeking economic improvement were heavily disfavored when compared to Christians and migrants claiming persecution. Respondents in the former GDR disfavored Muslim migrants more than respondents in western Germany, but western Germans' attitudes towards Muslims changed significantly during the refugee crisis. Respondents in west Germany also held stronger preferences against economic migrants; these attitudes changed significantly more than eastern respondents' over time. These trends in German public opinion on refugees have important social and political implications for integration efforts and asylum policies moving forward.

## **Introduction**

On New Years Eve, 2015, Angela Merkel gave an address to both the German people and newly arrived refugees. Her declaration, broadcast for the first time in both English and Arabic subtitles, was meant to unite the German people and remind refugees to respect German laws and culture. During her speech, approximately a thousand men, believed to be migrants of North African and Middle Eastern origin, gathered in the streets of Cologne, Germany. These men descended on the crowds gathered to view the annual fireworks, and split into groups that proceeded to sexually assault over 600 women attending the event. This news surfaced as an incredible blow to Merkel's "open door" refugee policy, driven by what many saw as compassion, and provided ammunition for minority German right-wing, anti-immigrant movements. According to a National Institute of Applied Sciences (INSA) poll in Germany, 61% of respondents became less supportive about taking refugees after the assault, and only 29% of respondents still thought Germany could handle the heavy influx of migrants ("Cologne's Aftershocks").

The refugee crisis challenging Europe is the largest mass migration crisis since the end of the Second World War. Germany has become the de facto leader in Europe's response by bearing the brunt of the humanitarian call and taking on far more refugees and monetary commitment than any other European Union member state. The world responded in admiration of the German initiative, but as numbers climbed in late 2015, the German political atmosphere altered and the socio-economic reality of the situation settled in. Today, Germany has enacted numerous laws and engaged in international negotiations to restrain the numbers of refugees crossing its borders.

As the migrant crisis worsened, how did the German public react? Anti-immigrant factions surged in popularity and restrictive asylum laws were passed, but what fueled these movements? If public opinion changed, was it grounded in changing facts or an inherent fear of the social

implications? My research question asks: Has German public opinion changed as a result of the refugee crisis?

### **Research Question**

Liberal sentiment across Europe and America points to shifts towards populism in Western society as the cause of rising prejudice and political upheaval. From the British referendum to leave the European Union, to Donald Trump's election and the rise of Marine le Pen and Viktor Orban; many believe the world is heading to a new age of anti-globalism (Brönig). This thesis cannot sustain a full analysis of the broader questions on populism or Euroscepticism, but taps into a segment that falls under this umbrella. The migrant crisis raises many questions of Germany's willingness to cope with and support refugees. Are political parties taking reactionary stances to the late-2015 influx, or are they catering to widely changing attitudes among the electorate? Is the European Union an effective body in managing the crisis, and do migrants really pose an economic threat to Germany and the EU?

The overarching question of how German public opinion has changed as a result of the refugee crisis ties many of these themes together. Literature on public opinion provides a connection to party stances on policy, and understanding systems and laws managing the crisis provides insight into the situations within Federal States, where attitudes towards refugees are potentially changing.

This question also arises several sub questions my thesis will explore. What criteria make Germans more accepting of refugees? Does German public opinion on refugees and the migrant crisis differ from before the crisis to after? Do public attitudes towards refugees vary among states that were formerly part of the GDR and of West Germany?

Public opinion over the course of the refugee crisis presents an interesting opportunity to investigate underlying movements in German society that align with greater Euroscepticism and anti-establishment populism. If public opinion towards refugees and Germany's capability in handling the crisis has changed, deciphering what drives these changes can implicate some of the larger effects of German policy. Researching opinion differences between states hints at how the historic division of Germany persists and may affect current day politics. This research is particularly pertinent given the highly charged political climate in Germany, evident in the recent regional elections. Policies enacted within the next year will determine the impact refugees have on economic, sociological, and demographic facets of a highly developed and prosperous European state. The extensive implications of the refugee crisis will test the foundations of Germany's policies and the perseverance of people in coping with one of the greatest humanitarian crises in history.

I will discuss the context surrounding the crisis stemming from the Syrian Civil War, as well as prerequisite information on the Syrian conflict, political developments, European Union asylum laws, the German government and asylum laws, and economic implications of the crisis. I will then review literature relevant to public opinion trends towards immigrants and refugees. The preliminary data analysis explores three particular survey questions of German citizens taken in March of 2015 and 2016. The core data analyzed in this thesis is a discrete choice experiment run through these same surveys in March of 2015 and 2016. I will discuss the trends and interconnected results of this data to answer the sub questions. I will offer interpretations of the results, but my thesis aims to use public opinion data and statistical tests to reveal facts about German public opinion on refugees.

## **Background**

### *The Conflict and Crisis*

The Syrian Civil War, dawning in early 2011, has killed over 470,000 people and internally displaced over 6.3 million (“Syrian Arab Republic”). More than 5 million people have fled the conflict, and hundreds of thousands more from Afghanistan, Iraq, and African conflicts have ridden the coattails of the mass emigration from Syria (“Syria: The Story of the Conflict”). Neighboring countries to Syria harbor the vast majority of refugees; Turkey currently accommodates more than 2.5 million and Lebanon more than 1.1 million (Amnesty International).

The journey to Europe was incredibly dangerous for hundreds of thousands of refugees. In 2015, about 1.01 million migrants traveled by sea to either Greece or Italy. The Mediterranean Sea route took approximately 3,567 lives in 2015, and approximately 4,699 up until November 2016 (GMDAC). Out of the 1.3 million refugees who entered Europe in 2015, Germany opened its doors to 1.1 million, the most among the European member states (Connor, “Refugees to Europe Surges”). The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees also expects an additional 300,000 migrants to arrive by the end of 2016 (Berlin). In 2015, Germany pledged 39,987 resettlement places for refugees through its humanitarian admission program, making up 54% of the EU’s total pledge (Amnesty International).

In March 2016, Turkey and the EU signed a deal requiring EU member states to return new asylum seekers traveling from Turkey. The deal also effectively closed the most popular route through the Mediterranean, from Turkey to the Greek Islands (“EU-Turkey Statement”). This deal significantly mitigated the numbers of refugees travelling to Europe; approximately 334,000 have migrated as of November 2016. Since the agreement, migrants have instead traveled other sea routes, such as those to Italy, and land routes through the Balkans in higher frequency. Italy saw a



spike in migrant flows to its shores in October 2016, accepting 159,000 primarily originating from Africa (Connor, “Italy Surpasses Greece”). Germany received approximately 280,000 asylum applications, just under the predicted amount, in 2016, 600,000 less than in 2015. At the start of 2017, German civil servants were working to process a massive backlog of 430,000 applications from the previous year (Dearden, “Refugee Crisis”).

### *Political Developments*

As the Syrian Civil War and conflicts in Africa forced refugees to Europe, Angela Merkel and Francois Hollande of France called for an overhaul of the European asylum system to address the crisis. In August 2015, Germany effectively suspended The Dublin Regulation, allowing migrants to cross the borders of EU member countries without fear of being deported (Holehouse). The Chancellor committed to an “open door” policy, signaling to hundreds of thousands of refugees to seek asylum in Germany.

Angela Merkel constantly proclaimed, “Wir schaffen das,” “We can do this.” However, the political fervor behind the rhetoric has faltered. Divided German citizens, those who support welcoming refugees versus the right wing group PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident), have clashed in protests in major cities across the country. The German public’s attitude towards Merkel’s open door policies has drastically shifted with the surge in numbers and potential threats, particularly after the Paris attacks (Deutsche Welle, “Poll”). The opinion of the German constituency has the ear of German political parties, particularly the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union coalition (CDU/CSU), and the Alternativ für Deutschland (AfD).

Distinguished members of German politics have also spoken out against Merkel's decisions; Horst Seehofer of the CSU, the more conservative coalition party representing Bavaria, has proclaimed the Chancellor's policy, "a mistake that will keep us occupied for a long time" ("Merkel at her Limit"). This "mistake" may burden Germany for the foreseeable future, and may also contribute to increasing polarization in Germany. According to an INSA poll taken in January of 2016, the AfD, a right wing anti-immigrant political party, accounts for approximately 11.5% of the potential voting population, a statistic that has grown by 6.8% since the September 2013 elections. Additionally, the poll projects that the CDU's representation of the population decreased from 41.5% in September of 2013 to 35% in January of 2016 (Electrograph).

These polls have proven to be accurate. Recently in the September 2016 regional elections, the CDU had its worst ever result in Berlin, obtaining only 17.6% of the vote, compared to the AfD's 14.2%. In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern during the same month, the AfD overtook the CDU, winning 20.8% of the vote over the CDU's 19%. The AfD currently holds parliamentary seats in 10 of the 16 Federal state governments, and is expected to gain representation in the Bundestag in the upcoming fall 2017 national elections (Ashkenas).

The AfD's expectations for the 2017 elections have been blunted, however, by recent opinion surveys. After scoring as high as 15% in recent months, national polling numbers have fallen to 10% as of late February 2017. This dip is in part due to a speech made by Björn Höcke, an AfD party leader, that contained National Socialist elements, alienating many of the party's moderate voters. The setback is also attributed to the SPD's nomination of Martin Schulz, a progressive who assumed party leadership in December, as their candidate for Chancellor. Shultz has rejuvenated the party in the polls, bringing SPD ratings to 30%, and stands as a serious

candidate to the more conservative Angela Merkel in the September 2017 elections (Deutsche Welle, “AfD Takes Dip in Polls”).

### *The European Union and UN Asylum Law*

Article 1(a) of the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees states:

the term “refugee” shall apply to any person who:

As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (United Nations)

This convention establishes international law relating to refugees and international protection. Countries who offer asylum to refugees are, under Article 33 of the Convention, prohibited from “returning refugees or asylum seekers back to countries where they face persecution.” All laws of the European Union are adherent to this Convention on Refugees. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union guarantees the stipulations of the Convention in articles 18 and 19, and the Court of Justice of the European Union is trusted with the enforcement of these laws (Papademetriou). Two particular European Union agreements critical to understanding the complications of the EU asylum system are the Dublin Regulation and the Schengen Agreement.

The Dublin Regulation, originally passed by the European Union in 1990 at the Dublin Convention, is the cornerstone of the Dublin system established to handle the application of asylum

seekers in the European Union, in compliance with the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The law stipulates that asylum seekers are registered in the country of first entry, where they are to be fingerprinted and have their application reviewed (European Union, “Regulation No 604/2013”). Any attempt to enter other European Union countries before registration would result in deportation. As of July 2013, The Dublin III Regulation is the current law in place. The heavy flow of migrants entering Europe has put significant strain on EU member states’ asylum systems, particularly those of first entry states such as Italy and Greece, who bore over one million refugee arrivals via the Mediterranean in 2015, and 329,000 as of November 2016 (Connor, “Italy Surpasses Greece”).

The Schengen Agreement of 1985 implemented a free movement area with limited border checks in the established Schengen Area. The Schengen Area includes 26 countries, 22 EU member states and four non-EU members- Liechtenstein, Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland. Under Article 26 of the agreement, Schengen area members may reinstate internal border controls for two years maximum in “exceptional circumstances.” Currently, Austria, Denmark, Germany, France, Norway and Sweden have reinstated border controls in an effort to stem the flow of migrants (“Schengen”). Due to the extreme populations of refugees entering Europe from the Mediterranean, Greece and Italy continually allowed migrants to pass their borders into other EU countries to alleviate the burden, even before Merkel’s suspension of The Dublin Regulation. This violation of the Dublin Regulation took advantage of the Schengen agreement, and countries north of Greece and Italy were suddenly faced with waves of migrants crossing their borders.

Between 2011-2014, the European Union reformed the original 1999 Common European Asylum System (CEAS). These reforms addressed the overburdening of countries of first entry, harsh conditions at reception centers, a lack of uniform standards for asylum application

assessment, among other issues. The reformed CEAS passed new requirements under the Dublin regulation to ease the burden of first entry states. A member state is responsible to review an asylum application if, in hierarchical order, the applicant has a family member in the state, has a visa to the state, and has entered into that state. If none of these criteria apply, the member state in which the first application is filed is responsible for reviewing the application (European Union, “Regulation No 604/2013”). CEAS also reaffirmed asylum seekers’ rights in their country of application. The member country reviewing the application must allow the asylum seekers to remain in the country, with freedom of movement within its borders, until their case is decided on. During that period, minors have access to the state education system and are entitled to any preparatory or language classes required to ease their transition. Member states are also obliged to provide access to the labor market and vocational training for asylum seekers no later than nine months since their application submission (Papademetriou).

Apart from ensuring international protection in accordance with the UN Convention, member states under CEAS are required to provide subsidiary protection to “those who would face a real risk of suffering serious harm if returned to his/her country of origin.” Member states are also required to deport “illegal economic migrants” to their origin country (Papademetriou). Placing the refugee crisis in context of an established European legal system is critical in understanding the political implications for Germany’s actions and socioeconomic underpinnings of public opinion.

### *German Asylum Law*

Germany adheres to the 1951 Refugee Convention as well as laws and regulations passed by the European Union. The German Basic law, Asylum Act and Residence Act are the most

important laws handling immigration in the Federal Republic of Germany. The right to asylum is included in Article 16a of the Basic Law, specifying that persecution of an individual can only be perpetrated by the state. The UN definition of a refugee was incorporated in the Asylum Act, which elaborates the processes of granting or denying asylum. The Residence Act handles laws concerning the residency, entry, exit, and employment of foreigners, including asylum seekers. Germany also grants refugee status, in accordance with UN law, for humanitarian reasons including political asylum. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees handles all cases and implementation of laws relating to refugees. Those granted asylum obtain a three year residence permit; upon expiration, a permit with no time limit is issued. Individuals receiving subsidiary protection are entitled to a year long residency permit, which can be extended for two more years (Gesley).

A provision many asylum seekers invoke is codified in the European Commission for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, stating that a country is prohibited from deporting a migrant to a country where they may face a real threat of serious harm. If an asylum seeker's application is denied, he/she is responsible for leaving the country or will be deported. Germany has instated a list of "safe countries," migrants from which are disqualified from the asylum process and must return to their origin country. The list includes all EU countries, Albania, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Ghana, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Senegal, and Serbia. This list defines applications from these countries as "manifestly without merit," outlined in the Asylum Act. In 2015, for example, most asylum applications came from Syria, Albania, and Kosovo; 0.2% of Albanians and 0.4% of Kosovarians were accepted, compared to 94.8% of Syrian applications (Gesley).

Germany has steadily reformed numerous asylum procedures, immigration statutes, and systems for accommodating refugees in response to the crisis. The Act on the Acceleration of Asylum Procedures was entered into force in October 2015, accelerating the asylum process, enhancing integration and cash benefit policies, and transferring aid to German states to reduce financial burden. This law along with several others aimed to both speed up reviewing procedures and protect unaccompanied minors (Gesley). Asylum Package II was approved by the German Cabinet on February 3, 2016, significantly tightening asylum rules to ease the flow and financial burden of refugees. This package suspended family reunification for two years for persons given subsidiary protection; decreased monthly cash benefits for those granted asylum; enabled easier deportation procedures; and added Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia to the safe-countries list. Germany's more recent laws have successfully stemmed the flow of migrants and effectively managed their asylum situation (Smale).

### *Germany's EASY System*

The German EASY system, standing for Initial Distribution of Asylum-Seekers, is a record and quota system outlining asylum procedures for incoming refugees. Refugees entering Germany are registered at the nearest reception facility into the EASY system, which records arrivals who intend to apply for asylum and their country of origin as well as the receiving German state. At the height of the refugee crisis, there was a significant difference between those registered through the EASY system and those who had actually submitted asylum applications (GMDAC).

The EASY system is aligned with "die Königsteiner Schlüssel," or Königstein Key, utilized for refugee allocation across the 16 federal states. The distribution quota was originally devised to determine relative funding to research institutions and universities. The allocation is

calculated as a third of the “percentage of the state population as a share of the total population in Germany,” plus two thirds of the “percentage of state tax revenue as a share of the total revenue in Germany,” equals the total percentage of refugees allotted to the state (Figure 1) (Katz).

The rather simplistic equation managing a more complex issue than research funding has received heavy criticism. The Königstein system undermines other metrics such as landmass, affordable housing, and job markets. The city states of Bremen, Hamburg, and Berlin are heavily disadvantaged when accounting for these metrics; the cities receive disproportionately more refugees per square kilometer than other regions because of their smaller territories and larger populations. Berlin currently hosts “64.4 times more refugees per square kilometer than Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.” The refugee populations residing in these recently growing real estate markets also face higher rents and limited affordable housing, leading to overcrowded reception centers (Katz).

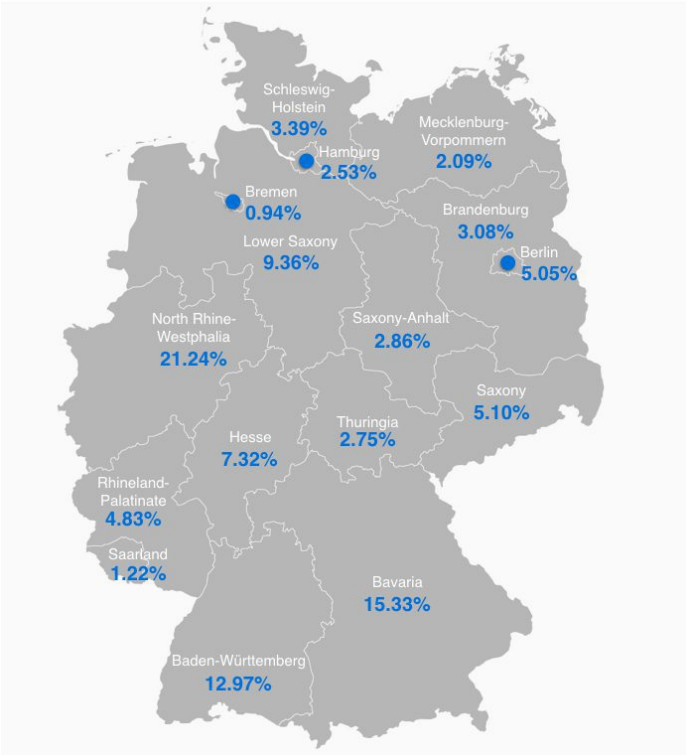


Figure 1. Königstein Key distribution across the Federal States (Katz).



### *Economic Implications*

Germany has in place a system to reimburse federal states for refugee costs. For every asylum seeker the state holds, the federal government pays €670 per month to the state. This sum reduces the financial burden incurred by states from consequently reimbursing municipalities who pay for asylum seekers and migrants essential needs out of pocket. This sum may have increased in recent months, but was based on projections of 800,000 asylum applications taking approximately five months. German states in 2016 spent over €20 billion on refugees, well above their allotted budget. Berlin set aside €685 million for refugees, but spent double their budget at €1.3 billion; these heavier than predicted costs of accommodation, integration programs, healthcare and others are likely due to the Königstein system's major disadvantage to city states (Dearden, "Germany Spent More on Refugees"). Despite the underestimated cost for accommodating refugees, Germany recorded a budget surplus in 2016 of €6.2 billion.

Apart from direct costs, admitting refugees has other economic implication such as unemployment rates and social benefits expenditures. The IMF ran a study testing these metrics with immigrants in Europe from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Somalia, and Syria. Immigrants from this group are 17 percentage points more likely to rely on benefits as their primary source of income. These immigrants were also 15 percentage points less likely to be employed, all samples having been in Europe for less than 6 years. The IMF also predicted that in 2016, Germany will add 0.35% of GDP to public expenditure from refugees. However, as new laborers integrate into the work force, refugees' output is predicted to contribute to a boost of 0.3% annual output for the German economy ("For Good or Ill").

## Literature Review

The refugee crisis faced by Germany has multiple implications for public opinion and policy implementation. Germany policymakers have come under intense pressure to manage the refugee population. Literature discusses the dynamic response of policy to public opinion, and indicates that public opinion has a substantial impact on policy, particularly when policy initiatives are salient (Burnstein 29; Stimson 543). German policies have been accommodating for the influx of refugees, and immigration has always been an emotionally charged issue. Brader finds that opposition to immigration increases when the problem is perceived as severe, and immigration topics primarily surround the rights and status of ethnically diverse non-white individuals (959-78). Public attitudes towards minorities have also been studied in Western Europe, where tolerance of ethnic minorities is dependent on the institutionalization of a nation's dominant ethnic traditions in laws and government (Weldon 331-49).

These attitudes are particularly relevant when discussing Muslim immigrants. Kalkan finds that Muslims are frequently associated with negatively viewed cultural minority groups in American society (847-62). Western public opinion literature also shows that people frequently hold negative stereotypes against Muslims relating to violence and untrustworthiness (Sides 583-98). In America, citizens express negative attitudes towards migrants who lack job requirements, are illegal, come from Iraq, and do not speak English (Hainmueller 529-48). Attitudes towards refugees specifically are particularly pertinent; a study by the Pew Research Center showed that eight out of ten European countries surveyed had tangible fears that the influx of refugees would increase terrorism in their home countries. Sixty-one percent of respondents in Germany in particular believed this, and 31% believed refugees were a burden on the job market and social benefits programs. Negative attitudes specifically towards Muslims were held by 29% of

respondents, a percentage much lower than countries such as Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Greece (Wike). These polling results correlate with literature predicting that attitudinal variables, such as political ideology, prejudice, and evaluations of the EU, are solid determinants of public opinion toward immigrants within the European Union (Kessler 825-50). The same European countries with larger proportions of people possessing negative views of migrants and the EU coincidentally have political spectrums leaning farther right (Wike).

Unfavorable views towards asylum seekers are also mitigated by exposure. McLaren found that contact, group conflict, and symbolic prejudice often explain exclusionary feelings towards immigrants in the EU (909-36). These attitudes can often be stemmed through intimate exposure to ethnically and culturally different groups. This method of mitigating prejudices is unrealistic on the larger public opinion scale, however, given immigrants within Germany are often residentially isolated based on income, education, language skills, and city size (Sager 2617-632). This segregation only worsens German attitudes towards migrants because of integration concerns.

Verkuyten finds that when finding support for public assistance, opportunities, and rights for asylum seekers, peoples' endorsement of such policies is affected positively by sympathy towards refugees claiming political persecution, and negatively by anger towards economic refugees (293-314). Additionally, public opinion studies on support for foreigners' rights within Germany show that income, right-wing political orientation, and the perception of threat of foreigners are large considerations for opinions on immigrant rights (Raijman 379-92). However, despite higher levels of xenophobia in former East Germany and the rise of PEGIDA, public attitudes towards asylum seekers and policies are steadily improving in Germany, particularly with the younger generation (Adam 446-64).

Bansak studied the specific public opinion trends towards types of asylum seekers entering Europe (217-222). This public opinion survey tested 15 countries on acceptance of asylum seekers based on nine different attributes. They found that Europeans shape their preferences on asylum seekers according to their employability, humanitarian concerns and deservingness of claims, and religion. An anti-Muslim bias was a large factor in shaping opinion, as well as a bias against claims for economic opportunity. This study is similar to mine in that it uses characteristics of asylum seekers to determine preferences of the public. Bansak's study does not, however, use surveys taken at two points in times encompassing the refugee crisis, and does not focus specifically on German preferences and preference differences between times and geographic locations.

### **Terminology**

It is important to note the distinction between terminology used to discuss the refugee crisis. The terms "asylum seekers" and "asylum applicants" refer to someone who has specifically applied for asylum in a host country. As of 2008, all men, women, and children are required to apply for asylum separately. An application does not necessarily grant the applicant the right to stay, but does provide them with initial accommodations at their reception center where they apply. As of October 23, 2015, through changes to the German Asylum Law, applicants must stay in their initial reception facility for up to 6 months (GMDAC). If an asylum applicant is accepted, they gain the legal right to remain in Europe. I use the term "asylum seeker" to reference official numbers of applicants reported by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

"Refugee" technically denotes a legal status obtained by asylum applicants once their case has been reviewed and accepted. The term also refers to individuals fleeing war and oppression, a definition that this paper ascribes to frequently. "The refugee crisis" specifically refers to the

period between March of 2015 and March of 2016, in which approximately 1.1 million refugees entered Germany. I refer to the two surveys as wave 1 and wave 2, which are the March 2015 and March 2016 surveys respectively.

A term commonly used in this paper to describe those who entered Germany in 2015 and 2016 as part of “the refugee crisis” is “migrants.” This term encompasses those who are refugees in the non-legal sense, asylum-seekers, and economic migrants. A “migrant” technically refers to anyone who has crossed international borders, including any newcomers to a country outside the EU-28. I use “refugees” and “migrants” interchangeably unless otherwise specified (Connor, “Refugees to Europe Surge”).

## **Data Analysis**

### *Data Overview*

I obtained the data from the Collaborate Research Center for “Political Economy of Reforms” at the Universität Mannheim through their national survey titled ‘German Internet Panel’ (GIP). Principle investigators Dr. Daniel Stegmueller and Dr. Thomas Gschwend of the Universität Mannheim received funding to include discrete choice experiments in two of the national surveys. The longitudinal survey was based on a probability random sample of Germans ages 16 to 75. The survey included individuals with and without internet access; GIP provided a computer and training to those without. The participants answered the surveys every other month, containing questions touching on a myriad of current events. The GIP survey began in 2012 with a recruitment of 1,603 registered participants; this sample was refreshed to 3,426 new participants in 2014 (“German Internet Panel”). My thesis uses data collected from surveys ran in March of 2015 and March of 2016, which included questions relating to the refugee crisis and the German

government's capability in handling the influx of migrants, and the discrete choice experiment relating to immigration run by Drs. Stegmüller and Gschwend. The March 2015 survey had 3,426 randomly selected respondents, and March 2016 had 3,143 of the same individuals, both sets representing all 16 Federal states.

### *Survey Questions*

Three survey questions were included in the two surveys, one in March 2015, two in March 2016. These questions gauged respondents more direct opinions regarding immigration. March 2015 asked more generally about foreigners, whereas questions in March 2016 directly asked about refugees and refugee policy. These questions examined general attitudes before and after the crisis, and the means of respondents from each of the 16 Federal States were calculated. These states were then coded for "east" or "west" depending on their former affiliation with the German Democratic Republic. The city-states of Berlin, Bremen, and Hamburg were grouped with the larger Federal states encompassing them, Brandenburg, Niedersachsen, and Schleswig-Holstein, respectively. I used a p-value cut off of 0.05 to test statistical significance. This analysis framework between east and west provides an additional layer of understanding accounting for historic divisions that still affect public opinion in Germany, but is not carried for all variables in the discrete choice analysis.

### Question I, March 2015

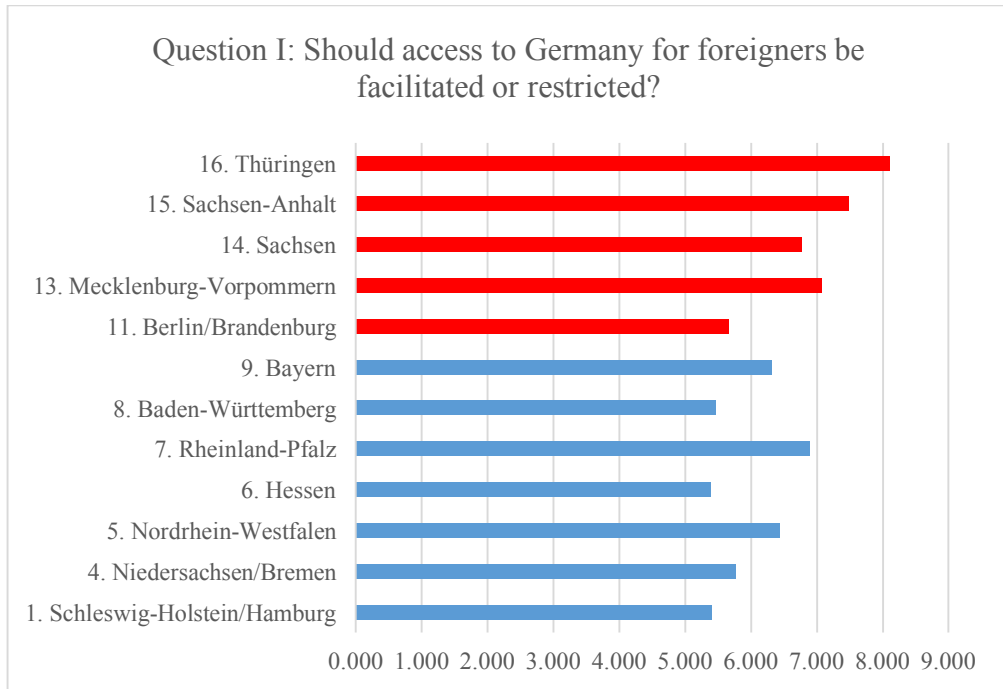
Sollten Zu- zugsmöglichkeiten für Ausländer erleichtert oder eingeschränkt werden?

Translated: Should access to Germany for foreigners be facilitated or restricted?

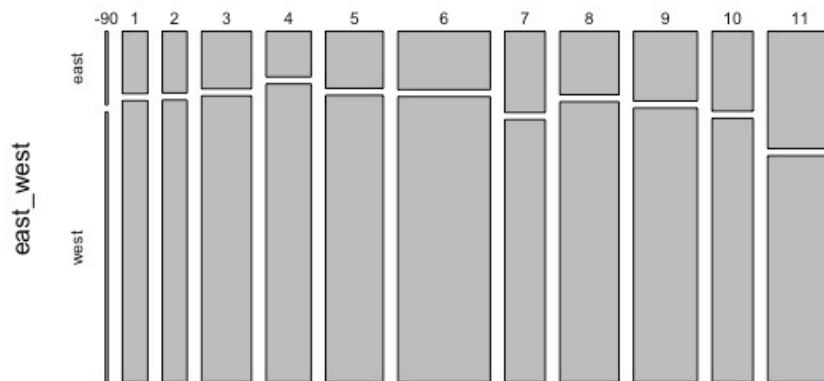
Respondents were given a scale from 1, facilitate, to 11, restrict. This data was aggregated and the means for individual states were calculated, shown in Figure 2, with Thüringen obtaining by far the highest mean. The overall mean answer for respondents was 6.15 out of 11. Figure 3 depicts the mean answer for each Federal state, with western states coded blue and eastern states red. The averages for states in the east appear to be slightly higher than those of the west. The differences between means of east and west was found significant at  $P < 0.05$  through a Wilcoxon-Mann Whitney test. Figure 4 shows the partition of respondents between east and west for each numerical response selected, 1 through 11. The population of respondents who chose 7, 10, and 11, disproportionately leaned to the east when compared with the distributions of other numerical responses.

State	east_west	Avg.
1. Schleswig-Holstein/Hamburg	west	3.109
4. Niedersachsen/Bremen	west	2.906
5. Nordrhein-Westfalen	west	3.119
6. Hessen	west	2.970
7. Rheinland-Pfalz/Saarland	west	3.170
8. Baden-Württemberg	west	2.883
9. Bayern	west	3.062
11. Berlin/Brandenburg	east	3.067
13. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	east	3.338
14. Sachsen	east	3.474
15. Sachsen-Anhalt	east	3.424
16. Thüringen	east	3.373

**Figure 2. Question I, averages by state**



**Figure 3. Graphical representation of Question I averages by state, coded red for east and blue for west.**



**Figure 4. Mosaic plot depicting numerical responses for Question I proportioned by east and west.**

Question II, March 2016

Distributed after the heavy influx of migrants in 2015, this survey question asks respondents how much they agree or disagree with the following statement:



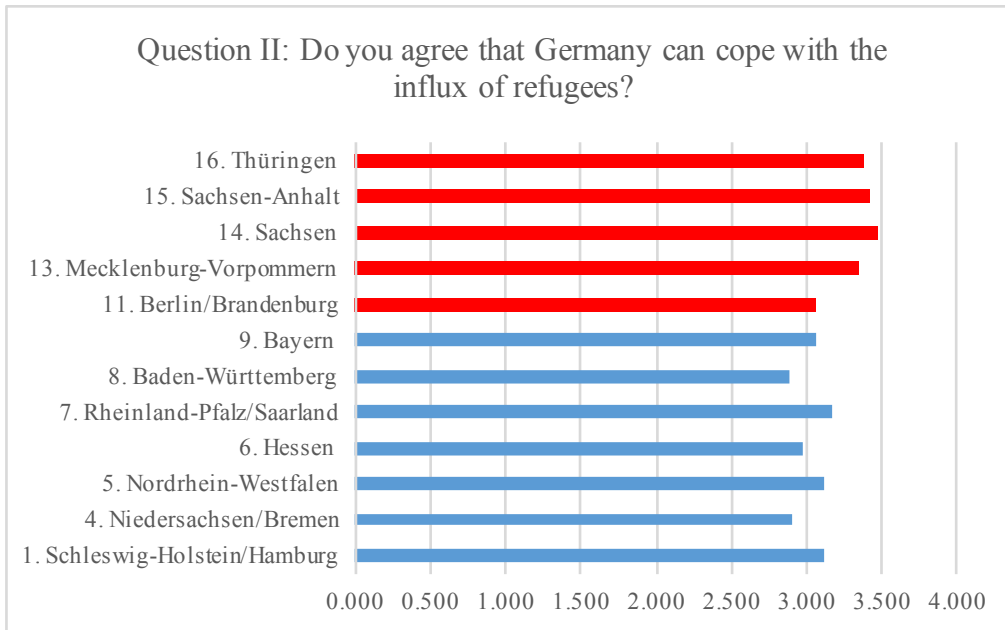
Deutschland kann die Herausforderungen bewältigen, die durch den Zuzug von Flüchtlingen entstehen.

Translated: Germany can cope with the challenges posed by the influx of refugees.

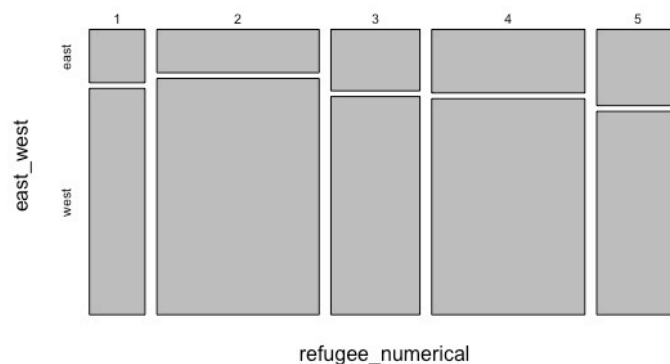
Respondents could answer from “totally agree” (1) to “do not agree at all” (5). These answers were converted from categorical to numerical, ranging from 1 to 5. Figure 5 lists the means for individual states, and Figure 6 depicts the averages for each state in a bar graph color coded for east and west, with Sachsen obtaining the highest mean. This initial depiction and the means in Figure 5 illustrates only a small difference between eastern and western states, possibly due to the question’s smaller selection range. The Wilcoxon-Mann Whitney test showed the differences in eastern and western means was statistically significant at  $P < 0.05$ . Figure 7 shows a mosaic plot grouping the responses by east/west distribution. The proportion of respondents who selected 5, do not agree at all, leaned toward eastern respondents more so than other answers.

State	east_west	Avg.
1. Schleswig-Holstein/Hamburg	west	3.109
4. Niedersachsen/Bremen	west	2.906
5. Nordrhein-Westfalen	west	3.119
6. Hessen	west	2.970
7. Rheinland-Pfalz/Saarland	west	3.170
8. Baden-Württemberg	west	2.883
9. Bayern	west	3.062
11. Berlin/Brandenburg	east	3.067
13. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	east	3.338
14. Sachsen	east	3.474
15. Sachsen-Anhalt	east	3.424
16. Thüringen	east	3.373

**Figure 5. Question II, averages by state**



**Figure 6. Graphical representation of Question II averages by state, coded red for east and blue for west.**



**Figure 7. Mosaic plot depicting numerical responses for Question II proportioned by east or west.**

Question III, March 2016

This question also asks respondents how much they agree or disagree with the following statement:

Deutschland sollte seine Politik, Flüchtlinge aus Kriegsgebieten aufzunehmen, beibehalten.

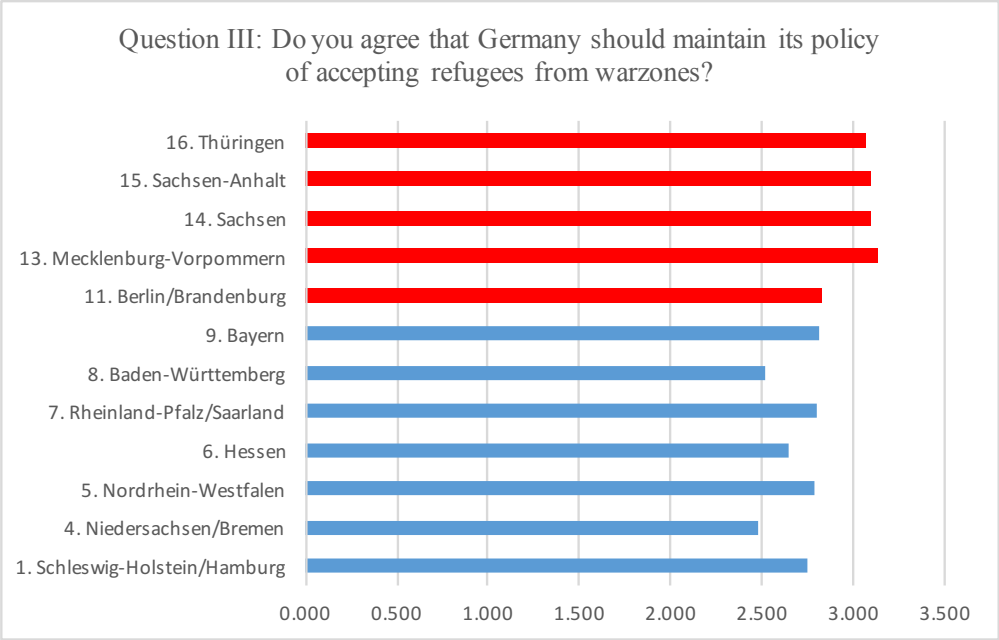
Translated: Germany should maintain its policy of accepting refugees from warzones.

The question offered the same response options as question II, and the categorical answers were converted to numerical. Figure 9 shows the bar plot with means from each state color coded for east and west. This plot depicts a more noticeable difference than the corresponding plot for Question II, with Mecklenburg-Vorpommern earning the highest mean. The means between eastern and western states in data table Figure 8 were tested for statistical significance using the Wilcoxon-Mann Whitney test. The means were determined to be statistically significant at  $P < 0.05$ .

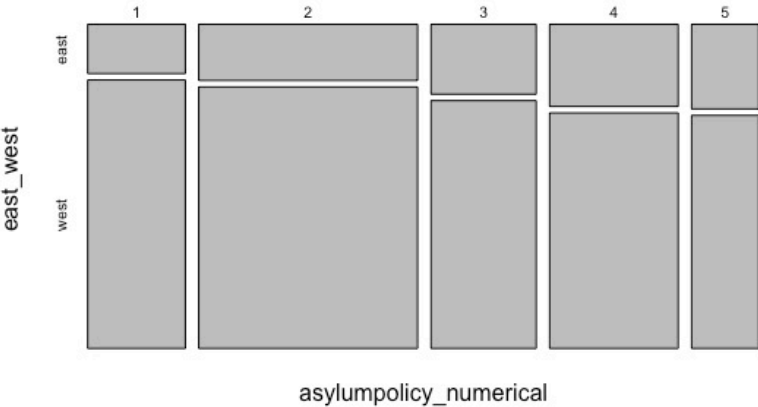
The mosaic plot Figure 10 displays the proportional distribution of responses between east and west across all five options. As in the previous question, the higher numbers corresponding with “disagree” and “do not agree at all” are disproportionately leaning to the east when compared with other responses.

State	east_west	Avg.
1. Schleswig-Holstein/Hamburg	west	2.750
4. Niedersachsen/Bremen	west	2.480
5. Nordrhein-Westfalen	west	2.786
6. Hessen	west	2.649
7. Rheinland-Pfalz/Saarland	west	2.793
8. Baden-Württemberg	west	2.511
9. Bayern	west	2.816
11. Berlin/Brandenburg	east	2.826
13. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	east	3.129
14. Sachsen	east	3.096
15. Sachsen-Anhalt	east	3.087
16. Thüringen	east	3.063

**Figure 8. Question III, averages by state**



**Figure 9. Graphical representation of Question III averages by state, coded red for east and blue for west.**



**Figure 10. Mosaic plot depicting numerical responses for Question III proportioned by east or west.**

### *Discrete Choice Experiment*

A discrete choice experiment was run during the March 2015 and March 2016 surveys. This form of experiment presents a respondent with a choice between hypothetical alternatives with assigned attributes, and asks for a preference of one alternative. The data can elicit preferences based on these attributes without explicitly asking the respondents about preferences towards certain attributes (Mangham). The design and implementation of the experiment was the same across both surveys. Respondents were presented with the same question six times. The question asked, “Which person would you rather have immigrate to Germany?” Each question presented two hypothetical persons, and each person was randomly assigned seven attributes. The categories of attributes, as translated, are: “origin,” “comparable educational achievement,” “knowledge of the German language,” “has a professional qualification sought in Germany,” “religious affiliation,” “gender,” “reason for immigration.” Based on these seven attributes, the respondent chooses one of the two hypothetical persons.

Each attribute category has different numbers of possible attributes, but the distributions of attributes among hypothetical immigrants in each category are roughly equal. The possible attributes for each category are:

Origin: Africa, Asia, Europe, Middle East, North America, South America.

Education: High School, Certificate of Secondary Education, None, General Certificate of Secondary Education, University Degree.

German Language: Fluent German, Broken German, No German.

Profession: Yes, No.

Religious Affiliation: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, None.

Gender: Man, Woman.

Reason: Family lives in Germany, Political Persecution, Religious Persecution, Economic Improvement.

The data recorded each hypothetical person, their attributes, and whether or not they were chosen when compared to their alternative. The total number of observations amount to 78,588. The original dataset was transformed from wide to long format, and each attribute was listed in numerical form, corresponding with the order of available attributes as listed (i.e.- Africa [1], Asia [2], Europe [3], etc.). To segment the responses into the March 2015 and 2016 surveys, the data was grouped into “wave 1” and “wave 2,” respectively. Wave 1 contained 41,112 observations, and wave 2 contained 37,476. To determine which person was chosen, I made the dummy variable “accept,” quantifying where the alternative was equal to the choice; this dummy variable also eliminated questions that were skipped, which were accounted for in the original “chosen” variable.

For attributes of interest, I created dummy variables to hold a particular attribute constant. The dummy variable assigned “1” for persons with the desired attribute and “0” for all other possible attributes in that category, setting up a linear probability model with the dummy as the dependent variable. Testing of this data revealed a difference between the probability of persons being chosen with each individual attribute when compared to the alternative of the attribute held constant from that category. These differences were then compared to the differences in the second wave, following a difference-in-difference model.

### *Discrete Choice Experiment Analysis*

The linear probability model was run with twenty-three different attributes among seven categories. I compared these differences to that attribute’s difference in probabilities from the

second wave. I tested all categories, except for “knowledge of the German language.” The cut-off for statistical significance for all tests was  $P < 0.05$ .

### Religious Affiliation

I created six dummy variables for each possible religious affiliation. I set the dummy Christian variable as a baseline, and all coefficients represent the percentage point difference between being selected when the alternative denomination attribute is Christian. All religions tested were not preferred over hypothetical persons of Christian denomination. Persons of who were Buddhist lagged 5.6 percentage points<sup>1</sup> in wave 1, and 7.3 percentage points in wave 2. Hindu migrants were 6.6 percentage points less likely to be chosen in wave 1, and 9 percentage points in wave 2. Persons with no denomination were 6 percentage points less likely to be chosen over Christians in the first wave; this number actually decreased slightly in wave 2, with non-denominational persons being 5.9 percentage points less likely to be chosen. In wave 1, Jewish migrants were 4.7 percentage points less likely to be chosen over Christians, and in wave 2, 5.7 percentage points less likely. The largest dependent variable difference was in persons assigned Islam. Hypothetical migrants who were assigned Islam were 17 percentage points less likely to be selected over Christians. This difference increased; people of Islamic denomination were 20 percentage points less likely to be chosen in wave 2. All linear models testing attributes had a significant error of 0.87 percentage points for wave 1 and 0.9 percentage points for wave 2. No differences between waves were significant at 95% confidence.

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<sup>1</sup> units of differences between percentage chances of being chosen are percentage points

**Figure 2. Religious affiliation preferences.**

	<i>Wave 1</i>	<i>Wave 2</i>	<i>Difference</i>
<i>Islam</i>	-0.170 (-0.1873, -0.153)	-0.203 ( -0.22, -0.185)	-0.032
<i>Jewish</i>	-0.047 (-0.064, -0.03)	-0.057 (-0.075, -0.04)	-0.010
<i>None</i>	-0.061 (-0.078, -0.044)	-0.059 (-0.077, -0.042)	0.002
<i>Hindu</i>	-0.066 (-0.083, -0.049 )	-0.090 ( -0.108, -0.073)	-0.024
<i>Buddhist</i>	-0.057 (-0.074, -0.04)	-0.073 (-0.091, -0.056)	-0.017

### Origin

I created dummy variables for all six areas of origin. The origin attribute Europe was held constant, and all other origins were compared to the probability of being chosen if European. In both waves, the migrants from South America and Asia were not significantly preferred over their alternatives. The first wave of data with Africa as the origin did not show a significant difference in probabilities, but the second wave did, revealing that respondents were 2.7 percentage points less likely to prefer Africans to Europeans. The difference between waves for persons of African origination was significant at 95% confidence and a standard error of 0.87 percentage points. Persons originating from North America were 2.7 percentage points less likely to be preferred in the first wave of respondents, and 1.9 percentage points less likely in the second wave. Lastly, immigrants originating from the middle east were 3.2 percentage points less likely to be preferred in wave 1. This probability actually decreased over time; respondents were 2.9 percentage points less likely to prefer Middle Eastern migrants when compared to Europeans in wave 2. All linear models testing attributes yielded standard errors of 0.87 percentage points.



**Figure 3. Origin preferences.**

	<i>Wave 1</i>	<i>Wave 2</i>	<i>Difference</i>
<i>Middle East</i>	-0.033 (-0.05, -0.015)	-0.030 (-0.047, -0.013)	0.003
<i>Africa</i>	0.000	-0.027 (-0.044, -0.01)	-0.027
<i>North America</i>	-0.027 (-0.044, -0.01)	-0.020 (-0.037, -0.003)	0.007
<i>South America</i>	0.000	0.000	0.000
<i>Asia</i>	0.000	0.000	0.000

Education

I tested only three out of five attributes for education- high school, university, and no education. The attribute for no education was held constant. Persons with a high school education were preferred 7.3 percentage points more than persons with no educational background in wave 1, and 8 percentage points more in wave 2. Hypothetical immigrants with a university degree were 11.3 percentage points more likely to be preferred than persons with no education in the first wave of respondents, and 12.2 percentage points more likely to be preferred in the second wave of respondents. The standard error for wave 1 linear models was 0.65 percentage points, and for wave 2 linear models was 0.67 percentage points.

**Figure 3. Education preferences.**

	<i>Wave 1</i>	<i>Wave 2</i>	<i>Difference</i>
<i>High School</i>	0.073 (0.061, 0.086)	0.080 (0.067, 0.093)	0.007
<i>University</i>	0.114 (0.101, 0.126)	0.122 (0.109, 0.135)	0.008

## Profession

Survey respondents consistently preferred potential immigrants with professional qualifications that were sought in Germany. Hypothetical persons with a profession were 14.6 percentage points more likely to be preferred in wave 1 with a standard error of 0.0049, and 14 percentage points more likely in wave 2, with a standard error of 0.0051, over those with no profession sought in Germany.

**Figure 4. Profession sought in Germany preferences.**

	<i>Wave 1</i>	<i>Wave 2</i>	<i>Difference</i>
<i>Yes</i>	0.1463 (0.137, 0.156)	0.1401 (0.13, 0.15)	-0.006

## Gender

Respondents in both waves consistently preferred women immigrants over men. A woman was 4.1 percentage points more likely to be chosen in the first wave, and 6.3 percentage points more likely to be chosen in the second wave. The 2.2 percentage point difference between the two waves is significant with 95 percent confidence and a standard error of 0.5 percentage points.

**Figure 5. Gender preferences.**

	<i>Wave 1</i>	<i>Wave 2</i>	<i>Difference</i>
<i>Male</i>	-0.041 (-0.051, -0.032)	-0.063 (-0.073, -0.053)	-0.021

## Reason for Immigration

Four options were available for reason for migration: political persecution, religious persecution, family lives in Germany, and economic improvement. I tested the attributes using a

linear probability model with dummy variables for each attribute, holding political persecution constant. The model showed a migrant whose family lives in Germany was 9 percentage points less likely to be chosen against those who claim political persecution in wave 1, and 11.6 percentage points less likely in wave 2. For religiously persecuted migrants, wave 1 respondents were 4.3 percentage points less likely preferred, and wave 2 respondents were 3.4 percentage points less likely preferred. Respondents tended to not prefer persons who claimed economic reasoning for their migration. The first wave was 24.9 percentage points less likely to select individuals with this reasoning, and the second wave was 28.4 percentage points less likely. The differences between waves 1 and 2 for attributes of economic improvement and family lives in Germany were significant at a standard error of .7 percentage points, constant across all linear models, and at 95 percent confidence.

**Figure 6. Reason for immigration preferences.**

	<i>Wave 1</i>	<i>Wave 2</i>	<i>Difference</i>
<i>Religious Persecution</i>	-0.043 (-0.057, -0.029)	-0.034 (-0.048, -0.02)	0.009
<i>Economic Improvement</i>	-0.249 (-0.263, -0.236)	-0.284 (-0.298, -0.27)	-0.034
<i>Family Lives in Germany</i>	-0.091 (-0.104, -0.077)	-0.116 (-0.130, -0.102)	-0.025

*Discrete Choice Experiment Analysis Comparing East vs. West*

For the attribute categories that were most significant, I segmented the data between respondents in former eastern and western states, as assigned by whether their home state was part of the former GDR. The same linear probability models were run for “religion” and “reason for immigration” on new data sets exclusively of eastern and western residents, respectively.

## Religious Affiliation

### Wave 1

I used the same dummy variables for each religion attribute, holding Christian constant. In March 2015, respondents living in western states preferred Islam 15.8 percentage points less than Christian, whereas respondents in eastern states preferred Islam 21.8 percentage points less. The 6 percentage point difference between the preferences was significant at 95 percent confidence. Western respondents preferred Jewish migrants less by 4.4 percentage points, and eastern respondents preferred Jewish migrants less by 5.8 percentage points. Westerners did not prefer migrants of Hindu affiliation by 6.7 percentage points, whereas easterners had a 6.2 percentage point negative preference. Eastern and Western respondents equally did not prefer Buddhist migrants by 5.7 percentage points. Respondents in the east did not have a preference regarding non-denominational migrants over Christians, but western respondents had a 6.8 bias against non-denominational migrants. The difference between preferences for no denomination was significant at 95 percent confidence.

**Figure 7. Wave 1, Religious affiliation preferences between east and west.**

	<i>East</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>Difference</i>
<i>Islam</i>	-0.218 (-0.256, -0.18)	-0.1580 (-0.17, -0.139)	0.0600
<i>Jewish</i>	-0.058 (-0.097, -0.02)	-0.0444 (-0.063, -0.025)	0.0138
<i>None</i>	0.000	-0.0685 (-0.088, -0.05)	-0.0685
<i>Hindu</i>	-0.062 (-0.101, -0.024)	-0.0671 (-0.086, -0.048)	-0.0047
<i>Buddhist</i>	-0.057 (-0.095, -0.018)	-0.0570 (-0.076, -0.038)	-0.0002

Wave 2

These preferences all became more negative across both western and eastern respondents in March 2016, except for migrants that were non-denomination. Islam in the west was less preferred by 19.1 percentage points and in the east by 24.6 percentage points. Jewish immigrants were 5.1 percentage points less preferred by western respondents, and 8.3 percentage points less preferred by eastern respondents. Germans in the west did not prefer Hindu migrants by 8.3 percentage points, and by 11.8 percentage points in the east. The negative preference towards Buddhist migrants was nearly equal between western and eastern respondents. Non-denominational respondents were still not significantly preferred either way in the east, but were, again, negatively preferred by 6.3 percentage points in the west. Just as in wave 1, the difference between these differences for no denomination was significant at 95 percent confidence.

**Figure 8. Wave 2, Religious affiliation preferences between east and west.**

	<i>East</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>Difference</i>
<i>Islam</i>	-0.246 (-0.284, -0.207)	-0.1911 (-0.21, -0.172)	0.0545
<i>Jewish</i>	-0.083 (-0.122, -0.045)	-0.0508 (-0.07, -0.032)	0.0326
<i>None</i>	0.000	-0.0663 (-0.085, -0.047)	-0.0663
<i>Hindu</i>	-0.118 (-0.157, -0.08)	-0.0833 (-0.102, -0.064)	0.0351
<i>Buddhist</i>	-0.077 (-0.116, -0.039)	-0.0726 (-0.092, -0.054)	0.0047

## Reason for Immigration

### Wave 1

I created four dummy variables for each reason attribute, and held political persecution constant in the linear probability model. No attribute was preferred over political persecution. In March 2015, western and eastern respondents disfavored religiously persecuted migrants by approximately 4.3 percentage points when compared to politically persecuted. Respondents living in western states also had a 9.8 percentage point negative preference toward migrants who had familial ties to Germany, and respondents in the east had a 6.3 percentage point negative preference. Economic improvement was the most severe preference; westerners disfavored migrants who claimed this reasoning by 25.6 percentage points, and easterners disfavored this reasoning by 22.2 percentage points. None of the differences between eastern and western preferences were statistically significant at 95 percent confidence.

**Figure 9. Wave 1, Reason for immigrating preferences between east and west.**

	<i>East</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>Difference</i>
<i>Religious persecution</i>	-0.044 (-0.074, -0.013)	-0.0430 (-0.058, -0.028)	0.0009
<i>Economic improvement</i>	-0.222 (-0.253, -0.191)	-0.2560 (-0.271, -0.241)	-0.0340
<i>Family lives in Germany</i>	-0.063 (-0.094, -0.032)	-0.0980 (-0.113, -0.083)	-0.0350

### Wave 2

Survey respondents in March 2016 also did not prefer any reasoning over political persecution. Negative preferences for migrants claiming economic improvement and familial ties to Germany exacerbated, whereas religiously persecuted migrants were slightly more preferred relative to wave 1. Religiously persecuted migrants suffered a 4.2 percentage point penalty in the

east, and a 3.2 percentage point penalty in the west. Immigrants coming to Germany to reunite with their family were 12.3 percentage points disfavored among western respondents, and 8.9 percentage points disfavored among eastern respondents. Economic improvement as a reason for immigration was still the least favored, with a 29.4 percentage point negative preference among western respondents and 24.7 percentage point negative preference among eastern respondents. The 4.7 percentage point difference between east and west on economic improvement was significant at 95 percent confidence.

**Figure 10. Wave 2, Reason for immigrating preferences between east and west.**

	<i>East</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>Difference</i>
<i>Religious persecution</i>	-0.042 (-0.073, -0.011)	-0.0322 (-0.048, -0.017)	0.0095
<i>Economic improvement</i>	-0.247 (-0.278, -0.216)	-0.2940 (-0.313, -0.275)	-0.0470
<i>Family lives in Germany</i>	-0.089 (-0.12, -0.058)	-0.1230 (-0.142, -0.104)	-0.0340

## Discussion

General intuition would suggest that western trends in populism and anti-globalism stipulate that Germans are prejudiced against admitting more refugees and migrants after the 2015-2016 crisis. This data demonstrates far more nuanced public opinion trends among the German populous. The GIP survey provides rare insight into how German citizens change their opinion over a particularly politically and socially tumultuous event, one of the more significant times in modern German history.

### *Causation vs. Correlation*

Attributes that tested significant in this experimental model imply causation, because the respondents were randomized among the German population and the sample size is adequate. For example, the attribute “Islam” assigned for religion has a causal negative effect on the likelihood of a respondent choosing that hypothetical immigrant over one who is Christian. The differences of preferences between the two surveys, however, is correlative. The refugee crisis is not a definitive cause of significant differences between preferences for attributes between March 2015 and March 2016. Causation due to the refugee crisis for these differences is, however, highly probable, considering no other major event occurred in that timeframe that can be attributed to change in German public opinion.

### *Question I, March 2015*

The first survey question, asking whether access to Germany for foreigners should be facilitated or restricted, gives a fairly good overview of general opinion towards admitting migrants before the refugee crisis. The average answer for respondents in wave one was 6.15 out of 11, leaning towards restrict. By this time, refugees had already begun fleeing the Middle East to Germany, but Angela Merkel’s ‘open door policy’ had not taken full effect. The significant difference between means of respondents from eastern and western states is emblematic of the historical divide between Germany as discussed later, as well as the political trends in those regions at the time. The AfD has stronger footholds in former GDR states, and the INSA poll taken in January 2016 showed their growing support among the voting population. The party vouches for stricter immigration and asylum policies, potentially explaining the more restrictive means of



eastern states for question I. This survey question sets the basis for general immigration opinion before the refugee crisis.

### *Religious Affiliation*

The discrete choice experiment interconnects the twenty-three attributes tested and reveals inconsistent opinions towards commonly associated attributes of potential migrants. Firstly, denomination was a heavy factor in respondents' choice. In March 2015, respondents did not prefer migrants whose religious affiliation was Islam; persons were 17.7 percentage points less likely to be chosen over the Christian alternative, consistent with Bansak et al.'s findings. This difference increased to 20.25 percentage points after the refugee crisis in March 2016, but the difference between the two waves was not significant at 95 percent confidence. Respondents, not surprisingly, did not prefer any religion over Christian, but preferred Jewish immigrants over immigrants of Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, or no affiliation. As with Islam, these biases only exacerbated after the introduction of the refugee crisis, except for non-denominational immigrants who obtained a slight premium in March 2016 over March 2015. Respondents in 2016 preferred Christian migrants more than in March of 2015, and Jewish, Islam, Buddhist, and Hindu migrants were preferred less. Jewish immigrants were still the second most preferred behind Christian in March 2016.

Germans' preferences on religion are particularly interesting when accounting for which religious affiliations the country as a whole has greater exposure to. According to the Research Group for Worldviews in Germany, 56% of the German population is Christian or of Christian affiliation. Jewish individuals only account for 1% of today's German population, but Jews have lived in Germany since 321 AD and have a clearly prominent role in Germany history. The second

largest group are people who are non-denominational, accounting for about 36% of the population. The former German Democratic Republic's heavily influence against the proliferation of religion in the communist state has a lasting impact on German citizen's religious affiliation; many non-denominational citizens or atheists currently reside in former East Germany ("Religion in Germany"). This correlation between non-denomination Germans and religious preference for migrants is further explored in the separation of eastern and western respondents. The third largest category is Muslims. Germany hosts the largest population of Muslims in Western Europe, and Islam comprises 4.4% of Germany's religious makeup, much of which derives from the Gastarbeiter program in the 1960's and 70's (Hackett; "'Religionszugehörigkeiten,'" Kolinsky 78-81). However, according to the trends in the GIP survey, Germans may only relatively prefer persons of a religion they have had significant exposure to. Despite no affiliation out-favoring Christianity, Judaism and non-denominational were the second and third most preferred affiliations for migrants, and coincidentally the two other religious categories Germans' have extensive history with. Although Islam is the third largest population, the majority of Muslims did not enter Germany until the Gastarbeiter years; in 1970, 92.3% of the population of the former Federal Republic was Christian.

### *Origin*

Preference biases on denomination, however, do not translate to as severe biases toward origin across both surveys, despite connections between regions and their majority religions. European as an origin was held constant, and all other origins were less likely to be chosen over European migrants in both surveys. As mentioned, preferences towards immigrants of South American and Asian origin were not significant across surveys, regardless of Germans' positive

preference towards Christianity and negative preference toward commonly associated Asian religions like Buddhism or Hindu. The trends revealed between surveys for Middle Eastern, African, and North American origins were also not closely aligned with religion. North Americans were less preferred in both samples despite North American countries' majority Christian populations. Germans slightly preferred North Americans in March 2016, but the difference between differences was not significant at 95 percent confidence. Europeans, however, were preferred despite also being majority Christian; this preference can be explained through European Union initiatives such as the Schengen area, and Germans' relative comfortability with admitting immigrants who embrace European values. North Americans are likely not preferred because of their connection with economic prosperity, discussed later under preferences on reason for immigrating.

Respondents negatively preferred immigrants originating from the Middle East, but the penalty of 3.25 percentage points is nowhere near as drastic as the 17 percentage point bias against Islamic migrants in the same 2015 survey. Interestingly enough, although the negative bias for Islam increases relative to Christians in March 2016, the negative bias for Middle Easterners decreases relative to Europeans in the same survey. The relatively smaller bias against migrants of Middle Eastern origin is most likely attributed to the increase in bias against migrants of African origin in March 2016. Continuing with the connection between religion and origin, persons of African origin can be assumed to be a mix of Christian and Islam, given that much of sub-Saharan Africa is Christian, possibly explaining the lack of significant preference over Europeans in wave 1 (Liu). In the March 2016 survey, Germans revealed a negative bias towards Africans of 2.68 percentage points, and the difference across waves proved to be significant. This trend is likely explained by the demographics of refugees during the fall 2015 influx into Germany. Refugees

from African countries such as Eritrea, Nigeria, and Somalia comprised a significant portion of the refugees crossing the Mediterranean and entering Europe (“Moving Europe Beyond Crisis”). Highly publicized conflicts, such as those in Iraq and Syria, were commonly known as the primary sources of refugees; refugees originating from Africa as part of the influx into Europe may not have been anticipated in March 2015, but were a prominent component of the crisis by March 2016.

### *Education, Profession, and Gender*

The trends in the next three categories of attributes can be explained by the demographics of refugees entering Germany. Germans heavily preferred migrants who were educated versus those who weren't in March 2015. Holding no education constant, migrants listed as having a high school degree were 7.3 percentage points favored and those with a University degree were 11.4 percentage points favored. These preferences increased in the second wave, but not by significant differences between waves. Education preferences also aligned closely with profession preferences; Germans favored those with professions sought in Germany 14.6 percentage points more than those with no profession, a statistic that remained constant over the course of a year. Potential migrants who were male were 4.1 percentage points less preferred than females; this penalty increased by 2.2 percentage points in March 2016 and the difference tested significant. These trends correlate with the facts on the ground; the refugee population that entered Germany in 2015 was comprised of predominately uneducated males. Seventy-three percent of Europe's asylum seekers in 2015 were male, of those about 39% of asylum seekers in Germany were males ages 18-34 (Connor “Refugees to Europe Surge”). The German Federal Labor Officer released a report stating that 74% of migrants had never completed any sort of job training, and only about

25% of those looking for work have the equivalent of a German Abitur, or the diploma qualifying students for college (Deutsche Welle “Refugees Lack Training”).

### *Reason for Immigration*

Although the differences representing selection biases discussed are statistically significant across many categories, the category in which respondents most heavily favored particular attributes was reason for immigrating. It is important to mind that the question posed before the selection was “which person would you rather have immigrate to Germany?” No reasoning was preferred more than political persecution. Overall, Germans heavily favored individuals hypothetically claiming either political persecution or religious persecution relative to economic improvement and familial ties to Germany. Hypothetical persons claiming religious persecution became more favored in wave 2 relative to wave 1, but the difference was not significant. The inconsistency between favorability of those whose claims are among the most common for refugees and the bias against those of Islamic affiliation or from Middle East and Africa is particularly intriguing. Germans want to admit people who have legitimate claims for immigrating to their country and are looking for a better life free of persecution, but at the same time would prefer they not come from the very places where this persecution takes place. Alternative forces altering public opinion, such as stereotypes breeding fears of terrorism and increased crime, are likely to have an effect on this change in public opinion. If this is the case, the counterfactual can not be argued that Germans would prefer persecuted Europeans or South Americans immigrating to their country.

Survey respondents had a negative bias towards immigrants who claimed their family lives in Germany, and this bias exacerbated in the second survey by a significant 2.5 percentage point

penalty. Coincidentally in March 2016, Germany enacted asylum regulations that allowed application boards to grant many Syrian refugees subsidiary protection, as opposed to full asylum. This alternative status puts significant limitations on family reunification; the status only allows residence for one year until refugees must apply again, and applicants must wait two years until they're permitted to bring their families to Germany (Deutsche Welle "Refugees Suing Germany"). Following the passing of this law, the negative trend across surveys also may reflect the growing concern among the German populous, that numbers of non-integrated refugees will only increase as refugees attempt to bring their families from origin countries.

Survey respondents during both waves had a very strong preference against those who intended to immigrate for economic improvement. Migrants who claimed economic improvement were 24.9 percentage points less likely to be selected over claims of political persecution in March 2015. After the crisis, they were 28.4 percentage points less preferred, representing the largest significant increase in negative bias and largest change out of any attribute across categories. This trend suggests that Germans do not qualify unfavorable economic conditions as a legitimate declaration for immigration, also consistent with Bansak et al.'s conclusions. This public opinion is well represented in European sentiment towards "economic migrants," given many countries having called for their deportation and denial of refugee status (Dearden "Economic Refugees"). German leaders have also affirmed these sentiments; Angela Merkel at the CDU's annual conference in 2016 stated that economic migrants would not be allowed to stay in Germany (Deutsche Welle "Economic Migrants"). Refugees and economic migrants have been forcibly separated into two categories of migrants, the latter having become an increasingly pejorative term referencing workers from the Middle East and Africa. No legal definition of "economic migrant" exists, and the 1951 UN convention does not include severe economic poverty as a consideration

in defining the refugee. Many migrants emigrating from these regions are often a combination of the persecuted and those seeking a better economic life (Dearden “Economic Refugees”). Despite a lack of legal consensus, European Union law reflects this German sentiment, requiring for the deportation of “illegal economic migrants” back to their country of origin. Reasoning behind this mindset may derive from the difference between moral obligation and economic obligation. Germans generally see, as demonstrated by the trend in this study, a clear moral obligation to aid those who are politically or religiously persecuted, given Germany’s own history with humanitarian violations (Bershidsky). Economic obligation, however, strikes at the growing concern among Germans that providing refugee assistance and state welfare to migrants may have negative effects on the economy and their personal financial wellbeing. Despite whether this is true or not, “economic migration” pins down the concerns many have about admitting refugees in general, but does not carry the same moral duty to accept.

This inference between the economic concerns and moral ties to political and religious persecution for German citizens correlate with the differences in means between survey questions II and III. The means across all states appear to be higher in response to question II and lower in response to question III. This disparity could be explained by the specific wording of the questions. Question II is framed in the context of the “influx” and asks more about whether Germany can manage the situation effectively. The question context plays more into what people have heard about the ‘crisis’ and what their personal reservations on the matter are. These harsher responses to question II objectively correlate with Germans’ strong preference against economic migrants and those who come to Germany to reunite with family. Question III digs deeper into respondents’ moral convictions. The explicit use of language, “accepting” and “warzones,” draws on whether respondents believe Germany should continue helping people in dire need, referenced in “maintain

the policy.” The leniency in responses to question III are affirmed by Germans’ strong preference in admitting politically and religiously persecuted migrants, many of whom come from warzones. Therefore, individuals who hold stronger reservations against refugees entering the country may answer both questions consistently with a “disagree” (4) or “do not agree at all” (5). Others who have general reservations against Germany’s policy towards the crisis could be swayed by the implicit ethical differences between the questions; they would answer question II neutrally or in disagreement, but would be more accepting of Germany not turning away deserving refugees in question III.

#### *Most Significant Criteria*

Out of all the attributes tested in the discrete choice experiment, why do Germans have the strongest preferences towards religion and reasoning for immigration? These two categories strike at the central issues citizens of all countries, let alone Germany, use to determine both a person’s fit into their society and their ethical obligation to help them. If these two attributes were to align with an accepting nation’s primary stipulations, the refugee crisis would not be a crisis at all. Similar to the United States’ reluctance to accept Jewish refugees during and after the Second World War, Germans’ preference against admitting Muslim refugees may stem from fears of Jihadists infiltrating their country or of the difficulties in integrating Muslim culture into German society, as experienced with the Turkish influx in the Gastarbeiter years (“United States Policy Toward Jewish Refugees;” Deutsche Welle “Turiskish Immigrants”). Ethical obligation calls into question a person or nation’s morality, and justifies the immediacy with which a nation should act to aid migrants. In this study, survey respondents would most likely not reject those claiming persecution, a choice that would provide a sense of self-gratification that they made the correct



moral decision. As mentioned previously, these preferences are played out in German refugee and immigration policy, further affirming these trends' relevance to Germany's modern society.

### *East vs. West*

Diving deeper into Germany's two most significant criteria for entering migrants, religion and reasoning, preference discrepancies among respondents who live in states of the former GDR and states of western Germany reveal highly relevant trends. Preferences for Buddhist or Hindu migrants were not severely different, but respondents in the respective geographic groups had variant preferences relating to non-denominational, Muslim, and Jewish migrants. Respondents living in former GDR states were harsher than westerners on migrants who were Islamic and Jewish overall, but the only significant variance among these two attributes was the 6 percentage point difference between preferences towards Muslims in the east and west in March 2015. All three survey questions correspond with this discrepancy between east and west. Respondents living in former GDR states for question I were more restrictive on access to Germany, and in questions II and III were more disagreeable on accepting refugees from warzones and with Germany's ability to cope with the numbers.

The only attribute, however, that revealed a significant preference difference across waves was Islam for western respondents. Despite both negative preferences for Islam among eastern and western respondents increasing, the 2.8 percentage point difference between wave 1 and 2 in eastern respondents' preference was not significant. Instead, the exacerbation of westerners' negative preference towards Muslim migrants, by 3.3 percentage points, was significant at 95 percent confidence. This trend suggests that Germans living in the former GDR are more prejudiced against Muslims, but began that way in March 2015. Western respondents,

coincidentally, were the ones whose negative preferences against Muslims increased by a statistically significant amount over the course of the refugee crisis.

Survey respondents residing in former GDR states consistently had no significant preference towards immigrants of no denomination, but western respondents did. There was no statistically significant change between waves for either group, but the differences between easterners' and westerners' preferences within waves were significant. Western respondents disfavored migrants of no religious affiliation fairly consistently at approximately 6.6 percentage points, and this negative preference compared to no preference among easterners was significant with 95 percent confidence in both surveys. This trend harks back on the religious makeup of Germany. The vast majority of Germany's non-denominational or atheist citizens reside in former East Germany. Their lack of preference for non-denomination migrants affirms the argument that Germans comprise their preferences based on religious affiliations they have significant exposure to.

Overall trends among preferences for the four reasons for immigrating to Germany remained consistent with conglomerate data, but trends within surveys between eastern and western respondents were relatively variant. Between both the March 2015 and 2016 surveys, respondents living in western states consistently expressed more negative preferences than eastern respondents for options other than political persecution, except for preferences towards religious persecution in wave 2. The most intriguing preference trend was towards migrants claiming economic improvement. Both groups within waves 1 and 2 least preferred economic migrants, but westerners revealed more severe negative preferences when compared to political persecution. Over the course of the refugee crisis, western respondents became increasingly more negative towards economic migrants, and easterners were relatively more accepting. This trend may be in

large part due to the economic disparity between former east and west Germany. As of 2015, former East Germany comprises only 15 percent of Germany's GDP. Germany's GDP per capita is €37,099, meanwhile the GDP per capita for former GDR states, including Berlin, averages at €27,892, and five of the six former East German states fall at the bottom for states' GDP per capita (Statistisches Amt). East Germans may be relatively more accepting of economic migrants because of their less fortunate economic reality. West Germans' harsh preference against economic migrants may also derive from economic redistribution laws; West Germany has transferred more than \$2 trillion in aid to former East German states since reunification in efforts to boost their lagging economies (Matthews). The influx of more migrants for economic improvement incites more distaste among western Germans who continue to bear the economic burden of reunification.

## **Conclusion**

My thesis finds real preferences of German citizens towards different types of asylum seekers entering Germany. Public opinion towards migrants entering Germany was consistently biased against Muslims, economic migrants, and uneducated males with no profession, and consistently favored Christians, politically and religiously persecuted migrants, and educated females. Germans overall did not have strong attitudes towards regional origins of migrants. Comparing attitudes across time, negative preferences for certain attributes mostly exacerbated. Only differences in select few attributes were statistically significant between the two surveys; all significant changes were in negative attitudes towards Africans, migrants who claimed economic improvement or familial ties to Germany, and male refugees.

Germans preferred immigrants on the basis of numerous attributes, but prioritized religious affiliation and reasoning for immigration. These categories revealed intriguing trends when separated into respondents who lived in western states and within the former communist GDR. Respondents in the east held consistently more negative views on religions other than Christianity across both waves. For non-denominational migrants, easterners were indifferent where westerners had a statistically significant bias against these migrants within surveys. Differences in preferences against Muslim refugees between east and west were significant within the first wave, but only significant for western respondents across surveys; these trends suggest Germans living in the west became more prejudiced against Muslims than easterners over the course of the refugee crisis. Germans living in the former GDR had ironically less severe attitudes towards migrants' claims than Germans living in the west. The difference between negative preferences for economic migrants in 2016 was statistically significant, showing that westerners heavily disfavored economic migrants more so than easterners. These trends are critical in understanding the dynamics of German public opinion on asylum seekers and refugees entering their country, and how these differences vary along historical divisions of the German populace.

Germany's *Willkommenskultur*, or welcoming culture, was propagated as a genuine source of the German people's willingness to come to the aid of hundreds of thousands of refugees. This enthusiasm was seen at the busiest terminals of Munich's Hauptbahnhof, teeming with German supporters as refugees arrived on train from Hungary. The trends in these surveys depict aspects of this culture, but reveal the deeper seated biases held by many German citizens. Some believe the early popularity of Angela Merkel's 'open door' policy was partially influenced by German guilt over the Holocaust and World War II. Many Germans were also refugees themselves after the conflict (Horn). However, modern German history reveals very real struggles with cultural

integration and acceptance. Deep divides between the minds of East and West Germany persist today, and continually challenge the political system; yet, Germans collectively embrace humanitarian considerations in aiding deserving refugees. Knowing public attitudes towards refugees allows German government officials to gather support and align with their constituencies in crafting new laws and initiatives. Policy makers should strive to emphasize the humanitarian concerns in accepting refugees, so that Germany may define a positive legacy by providing refuge to hundreds of thousands of persecuted people at the early dawn of this century.

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