

Public views on the 'deserving' migrant

Highlighting the migrant deservingness framework for policy and practice

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Structure

1. Introduction
 - a. Measures of public attitudes towards migrants/migration
 - b. Welfare deservingness
2. First conceptualisation of *settlement deservingness*
3. Migrant Deservingness Scale
4. Postdoc-project (DeMiSo)
5. Deservingness and policy

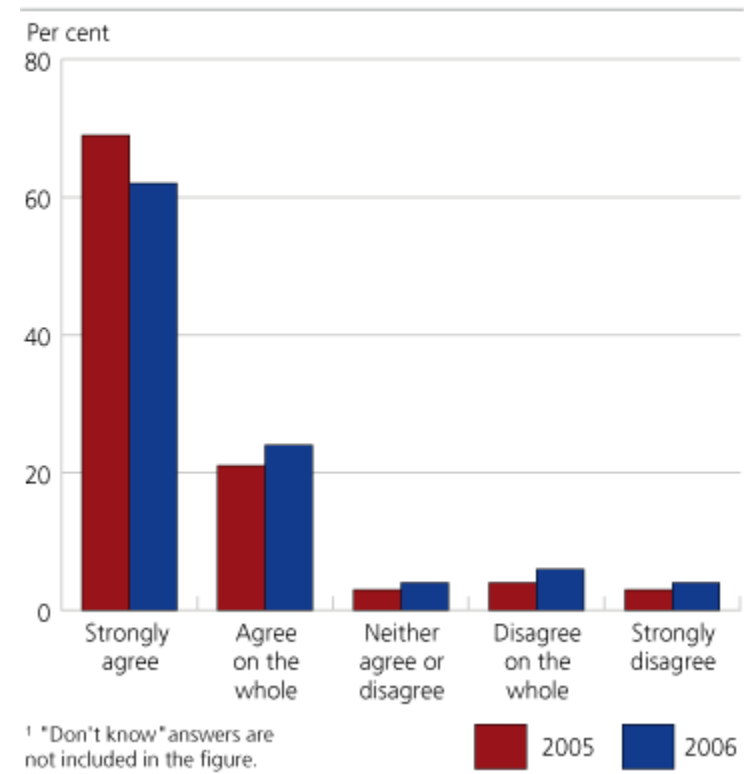
My PhD...

- European migration crisis (2014-2016)
 - Armed conflict in Syria catalyst for large refugee movement into Europe
- Studying public perceptions towards immigrants and refugees in Europe
 - Focus on:
 - Intergroup contact
 - Perceived threat
 - Media effects
- During PhD trajectory, two things caught my attention...

Measures of public attitudes

- Upon studying the literature
 - Measures traditionally majority-focused
 - Realistic vs symbolic threat
 - Distinctions between immigrants and refugees at best
 - Unidimensional
- Recent improvements
 - See conjoint analyses by Bansak et al. (2016)
 - Empirically, not theoretically driven

Attitudes towards the assertion "All immigrants in Norway should have the same opportunities to have a job as Norwegians"¹. 2005-2006. Per cent



Welfare deservingness

- Five criteria used to assess support for welfare provisions for groups:
 - Control
 - Attitude
 - Reciprocity
 - Identity
 - Need
- Immigrants consistently rated lowest
 - Critical reflections:
 - Growing immigrant diversity
 - Support for welfare provisions for immigrants 'relevant'?

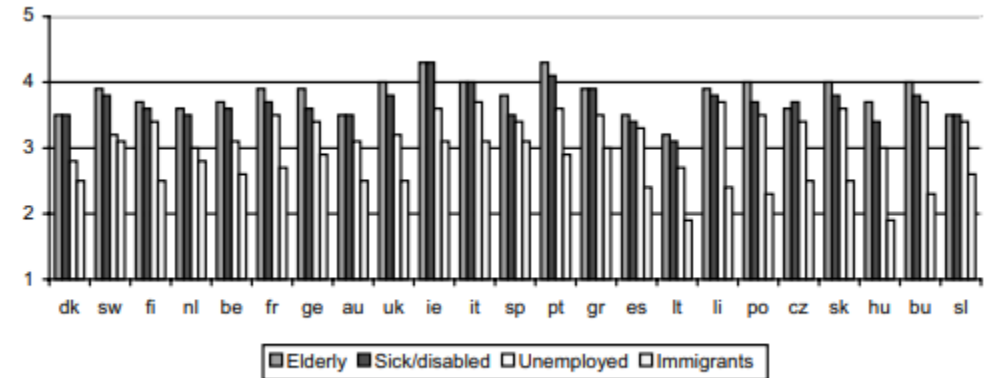


Figure 1 Informal solidarity (national averages)

Source: Van Oorschot (2006)

“The basic claim of deservingness theory is that individuals tend to target their solidarity towards groups that are considered as deserving, while others are excluded.”

Source: Meuleman et al. (2020)

'Settlement deservingness'

Conceptualisation

- Could CARIN-criteria be applied to different question?:

"Which 'type' of migrant deserves to settle in a country?"

- Re-interpretation required:

Control	Attitude	Reciprocity	Identity	Need
Migrants with less control over their migration (i.e. refugees) more deserving?	Migrants that are grateful for help received (i.e. via integration efforts) more deserving?	Migrants that reciprocate (i.e. via labor market participation) more deserving?	Migrants that are culturally/religiously 'closer to us' (i.e. EU-migrants) more deserving?	Migrants that are more needy more deserving?

- Coined 'migrant (settlement) deservingness'

Migrant Deservingness Scale

- Opportunity to collect new survey data in 9 countries (7 in Europe, US, Colombia; N = 13,645)
- Developed new survey instrument to capture CARIN criteria
- 13 items following validation

Control	Attitude	Reciprocity	Identity	Need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unaccompanied minors who decide to come to country should be allowed to stay in <i>country</i>. • Refugees who are fleeing from armed conflicts in their home country should be allowed to stay in <i>country</i>. • Refugees who are fleeing from the consequences of climate change in their home country should be allowed to stay in <i>country</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migrants who are allowed to remain in <i>country</i> should be grateful for that. • Migrants who are allowed to remain in <i>country</i> do not have a right to complain about their circumstances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only migrants with work skills from which the economy of <i>country</i> can profit, are allowed to stay in country. • Only migrants who have a job and pay taxes should be allowed to stay in <i>country</i>. • Only migrants who can positively contribute to the culture of <i>country</i> are allowed to stay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only migrants with a similar cultural background as the <i>country</i> population are allowed to stay. • Only migrants with similar religious backgrounds as the <i>country</i> population are allowed to stay. • Only migrants with a similar ethnic background as the <i>country</i> population are allowed to stay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only poor migrants with dependent young children are allowed to stay in <i>country</i>. • Only migrants who are truly poor are allowed to stay in <i>country</i>.

Migrant Deservingness Scale

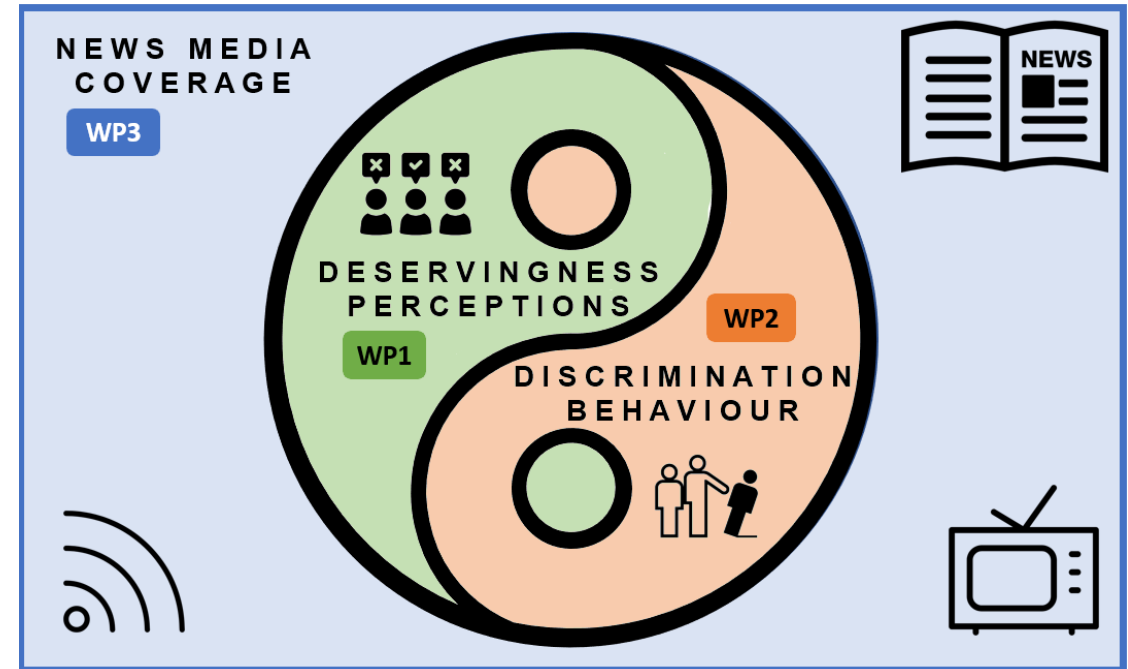
- Highest scores for Attitude and Reciprocity – most valued?
- Lowest scores for Identity (except in HU) and Need
- High conditionality in Hungary for three criteria
- Low conditionality reported in Spain

	AT	BE	COL	DE	ES	HU	IT	SE	US
Control	2.92	2.94	2.96	2.86	3.21	3.11	2.72	2.97	2.68
Attitude	3.57	3.40	3.18	3.46	2.97	3.21	3.29	3.46	3.60
Reciprocity	3.18	3.06	3.09	3.08	2.91	3.25	3.14	3.14	3.36
Identity	2.71	2.50	1.99	2.55	2.08	3.76	2.57	2.54	2.82
Need	2.50	2.24	2.47	2.38	2.34	2.37	2.61	2.28	2.87

Scores range from 1 (low conditionality; more permissive) to 5 (high conditionality; less permissive)

DeMiSo – what's it about?

*“[...] the **main objectives of this project** are (1) to develop an innovative framework on the public's deservingness perceptions regarding migrants, (2) use this framework to gain further insights into discriminatory behaviour towards migrants, and (3) evaluate how this framework is evidenced in news media coverage of migrants.”*



DeMiSo – what's it about?



WP1

→ Online Survey

1. Online survey (N = 3,000) in Belgium in summer 2024
2. Further validation of MDS
3. Inclusion of conjoint experiment
4. Oversampling of (non-)EU-migrant groups

WP2

→ Correspondence tests

1. Measure discriminatory behavior on housing market
2. Application for 1,000 rental ads
3. 1 ad with 'Belgian' name, 1 with 'foreign' name
4. With foreign name, manipulation of accompanying email to emphasize different CARIN criteria

WP3

→ Media Content Analyses

1. Focus on press media in Belgium
2. Collect articles on migrants/migration through iCANDID infrastructure:
 1. 2015-2016 (Syrian/Afghan refugees)
 2. Early 2022 (Ukrainian refugees)
3. Study if and how keywords related to CARIN criteria appear in news coverage

Conjoint experiment (WP1)

A conjoint experiment presents participants with different profiles of migrants, each with varying characteristics, to assess which traits make certain migrants seem more 'deserving' of acceptance.

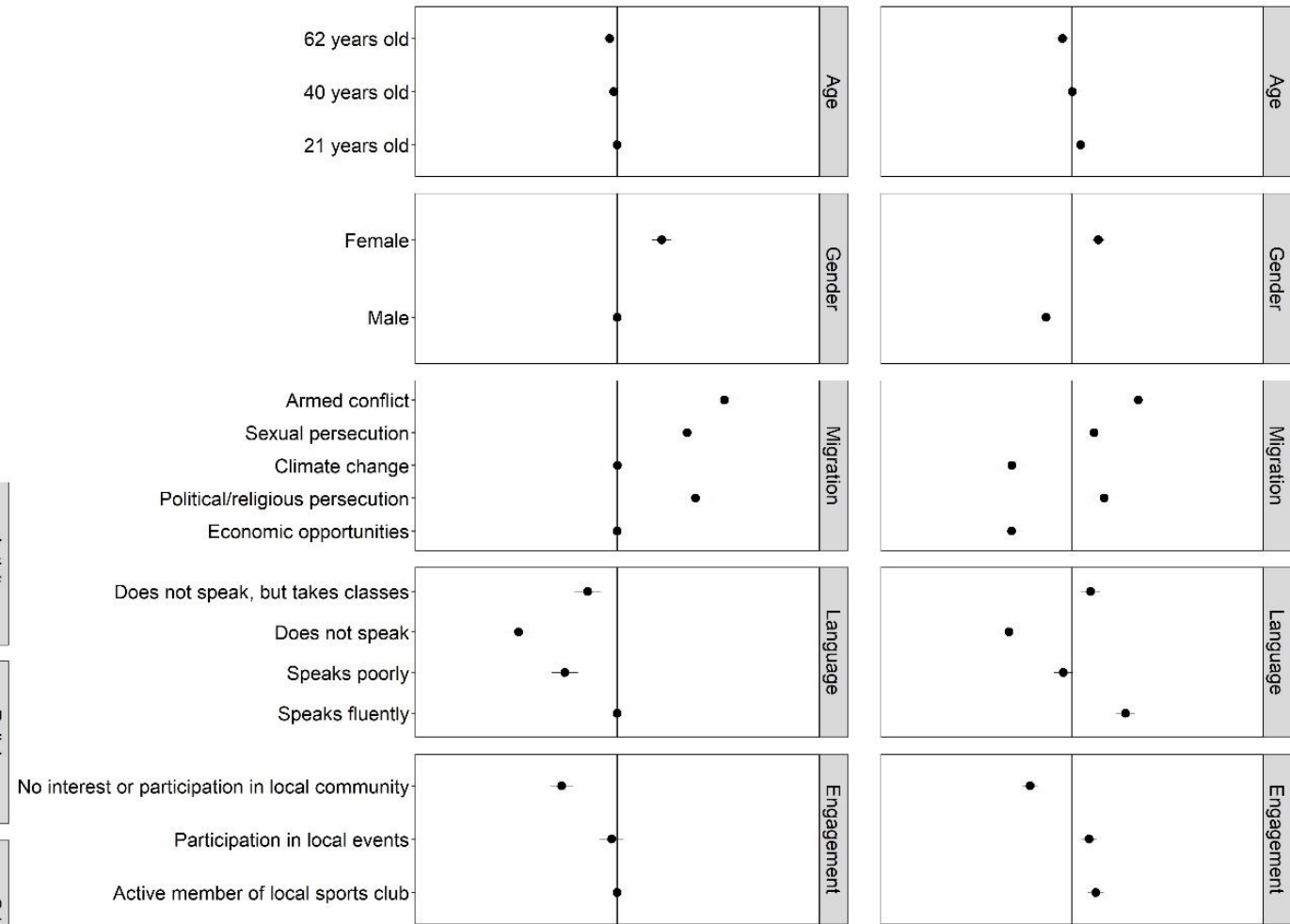
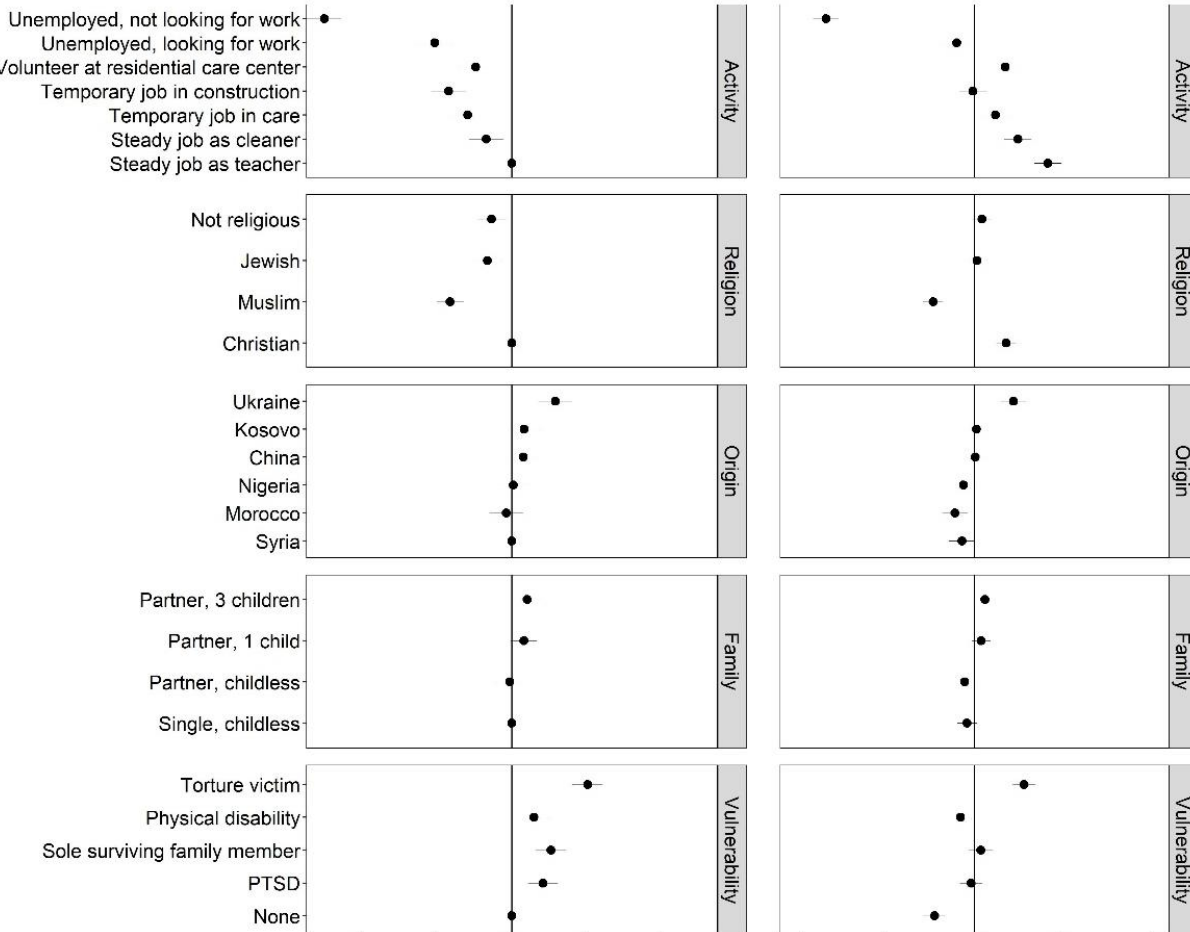
This approach helps reveal the specific criteria (like economic contribution or vulnerability) that shape public preferences on migration.

Table A1. Example of two profiles in force-choice design

"We would now like to show you the profiles of potential asylum seekers in Europe. You will see two asylum seekers, along with various characteristics about them. We would like to know your opinion on whether you would support sending each applicant back to their country of origin or allowing them to stay in Belgium. In total, we will show you four pairs of comparisons. Please take your time to read the descriptions of each applicant. People have different opinions on this subject, and there are no right or wrong answers."

	Person 1	Person 2
Gender	Female	Female
Age	21 years old	62 year sold
Reason for migration	Sexual persecution	Climate change
Language proficiency	Fluent Dutch/French	No Dutch/French
Local engagement	Participation in local events	Participation in local events
Current activity	Temporary job in care	Permanent job as cleaner
Religious denomination	Muslim	None
Country of origin	Nigeria	Kosovo
Family situation	Partner, no children	Partner, 1 child
Vulnerability	None	None

Conjoint experiment - results



Deservingness and policy

	EU Policy Area	Policy Example
Control 	Border security Immigration control	EU Pact on Migration and Asylum
Attitude 	Integration Social cohesion	European Social Fund Plus
Reciprocity 	Economic migration Skilled labor pathways	EU Blue Card Directive
Identity 	Cultural integration Identity promotion	Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund
Need 	Humanitarian assistance Refugee resettlement	EU Resettlement Program

CARIN and effective policymaking?

Actionable insights

Concrete action?

Control 

Incorporate public sentiment on secure borders by emphasizing transparent entry requirements and border screening processes

Share regular reports on border management effectiveness to increase transparency and public trust

Attitude 

Design integration programs that highlight migrants' willingness to integrate (e.g., language) and communicate these efforts to the public

Include community leaders in migrant integration policies to encourage mutual understanding and trust

Reciprocity 

Promote skilled migration programs by framing policies as mutually advantageous, meeting EU labor needs and offering opportunities for migrants

Emphasize economic/cultural benefits of migrants in public campaigns, showcasing contributions to local industries (e.g., healthcare, arts...)

Identity 

Support initiatives that create shared cultural spaces (e.g. festivals), emphasizing a “both-and” approach where migrants’ identities coexist within a European identity framework

Fund cultural exchange programs that celebrate shared values and customs between migrant and local communities

Need 

Prioritize refugees and vulnerable migrants in policy narratives to maintain public support, emphasizing Europe’s moral responsibility

Highlight successful stories of humanitarian resettlement to sustain public empathy and emphasize responsible humanitarian commitments

Targeted policy messaging?

Messaging strategy



Emphasize border security efforts to build public trust, presenting statistics on managed migration and screened entries



Share stories of migrants participating in community activities or volunteering, showcasing their efforts to integrate and contribute



Highlight the economic or cultural contributions of migrants in specific sectors, focusing on industries where there are skill shortages - use testimonials from employers



Promote intercultural events that celebrate both local and migrant cultural heritage, positioning diversity as a strength that enriches communities



Feature stories of refugees who were resettled due to humanitarian needs, appealing to public empathy and reinforcing Europe's commitment to humanitarian principles

Looking ahead

- Adapting CARIN for new challenges: Use criteria to frame responses to gender diversity (e.g. transgenders), stigmatized professionals (e.g. sex workers), homeless individuals...
- Expanding deservingness research across EU member states: Country-specific insights needed to adapt the CARIN framework to local contexts
- Embedding public feedback loops: Potential for periodic public surveys or focus groups to adjust policy narratives based on real-time attitudes

Conclusion

- The CARIN framework provides insights into what makes certain groups appear “deserving,” allowing for more responsive and publicly accepted policy design.
- While initially developed for welfare attitudes, the framework can also inform policies in other areas
- By aligning policies with values captured by CARIN, policymakers can foster greater public trust

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