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**Boiling Point: How the UK and US  
Governments Crafted Immigration  
Environments of Extreme Unwelcoming in  
the Brexit and Trump Eras and their Impact  
on Immigrant Inclusion Efforts**

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**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Politics  
and International Relations  
The University of Edinburgh  
July 2025**



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## Acknowledgements

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'At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.'

-Albert Schweitzer

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I wish to express my deep, unending gratitude to the multitude of people who made this research possible. Their diverse, abundant forms of generosity, support, and kindness profoundly humbled, inspired, and propelled me and served as the backbone of this project.

First, thank you to the many immigrant inclusion practitioners who took time away from their vital work to contribute to this research. Practitioners helped shape this project at all stages: from its inception (providing anecdotes from the field that sparked my investigation) to its implementation (serving as survey pretesters, participants, and recruiters) and its delivery (offering to read and share it with others once it was completed). I am immensely grateful for their invaluable participation and for the depth and richness that their experiences and knowledge brought to this work.

Second, I would like to express tremendous gratitude to my thesis supervisors, professional colleagues, and PhD peers who helped bring this research idea to fruition. I had the joy and privilege of being shepherded through this doctoral experience by two incredible supervisors, Professor Shaun Bevan and Professor Oliver Escobar. Their on-going guidance, feedback, and support helped me to grow as a researcher, colleague, and professional. I also would like to acknowledge the generosity and support of Professor Christina Boswell, who served as the examiner for my board review; Professor Alan Marshall, who provided feedback on the survey; the individuals who functioned as survey pretesters; Dr Sarah Spencer CBE and Dr Pontus Odmalm, who served as the external examiners for this thesis; and my fellow PhD peers (and dear friends) Nokwazi, Tamara, Hillary, and Maria, who gave feedback on this project and whose own doctoral journeys motivated me to finish mine.

Third, a huge and heartfelt thank you to the remarkable tapestry of family, friends, and colleagues who offered encouragement, financial and emotional support, helpful feedback, and, at times, a sympathetic ear. In particular, I want to thank my mother, Evelyn, for her unwavering transatlantic love and support, as well as Alena, Kael, Monica, Bert and Laura, Cathy and Peter, Bev, Tonia, Ardyne, Donna, Maggie, Bridget, the Blue Line crew and its regulars, the JFO Foundation, and all who donated to my GoFundMe campaigns. This doctoral thesis is a collective achievement as it simply would not have happened without their support.

Finally, this whole endeavour is only possible because of the unswerving love and support of my husband, Jesse, and our two young children, Zev and Raviv. Each, in their own ways, enabled me to undertake and complete this doctoral thesis. Jesse paused his thriving US-based business to relocate and help manage our young family in a new country so that I could pursue this research. He made many sacrifices personally and professionally because, as he shared with a close friend, he believed so much in me and in the value of this work. As

has been the case with so many personal and professional milestones in my life, it is with his immense, steadfast love and support that I was able to reach this point of completion. Our son Zev not only offered on-going words of support, but as an accomplished origami artist and musician at the ripe old age of nine, he supplied me with inspiring art and animating music throughout the doctoral process that kept me going. And how could I not derive infinite motivation from our five-year-old daughter, Raviv, who informed me only a few weeks ago that she had completed her doctoral thesis (a pioneering piece of research on unicorn raptors as well as other animals)? Her notes and chapters scrawled on sticky notes decorated my office walls and prevented me from getting too mired in the weeds of work. Needless to say, we are excited to celebrate our twin doctoral accomplishments. Words truly cannot describe how incredibly thankful I am to have the three of them in my life and accompanying me on this journey.

A closing acknowledge goes to my grandfather, Maurice Katz. His experiences as an immigrant and as a lifelong learner significantly shaped my vocational trajectory and helped bring me to this research. The unexpected death of his father shortly after he had matriculated to college ended my grandfather's formal education and his dream of pursuing a PhD. He immediately left school to financially provide for his mother and young sisters, but he always encouraged me to chase my educational and professional dreams. I recognise how very privileged I am to have been able to undertake this doctoral programme. In completing it, it is a fulfilment both of his dream and of mine.

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## Abstract

Both the Leave campaigns of the Brexit referendum in the UK and presidential campaign of Donald Trump in the US trafficked the idea that immigrants and unbridled immigration had severely diminished their country's domestic and international autonomy, power, and prosperity (Hinojosa Ojeda & Telles, 2021; Newth, 2023). Each promised that, if successful, they would drastically curb immigration, restructure their respective immigration systems, and root out, deport, and deter 'undesirable' immigrants in order to create a (more) unwelcoming immigration environment (Gonzalez & Carranza, 2020; Zapettini, 2019). This was framed by the Brexit and Trump campaigns as necessary to restoring and preserving their countries.

Following the Brexit vote and Trump's inauguration, the governing Conservative Party under the premierships of Theresa May and Boris Johnson in the UK and the Trump Administration in the US acted to fulfil these campaign promises of promulgating a (more) unwelcoming immigration environment. These harsh tactics have been well documented (e.g. Bolter et al, 2022; Griffiths & Yeo, 2021; Taylor, 2018; Waslin, 2020), but did they achieve their intended effect of generating a (more) unwelcoming environment for immigrants and immigration in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras and, if so, what were the repercussions of this for immigrant inclusion efforts?

Scant literature exists on how immigrant inclusion practitioners, those working on the front lines in a variety of everyday contexts to welcome and include immigrants, perceived the national government's actions and their implications. This study employs original quantitative and qualitative survey data collected from immigrant inclusion practitioners operating in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras along with content analysis to respond to these questions.

It establishes that the participating immigrant inclusion practitioners almost unanimously perceived their national governments' immigration approaches to have been extremely unwelcoming during the Brexit and Trump eras. Yet, a striking difference emerges from the data that alludes to distinctive paths taken by their national governments to accomplish this. Distilled through the metaphor of bringing a pot to boil on a stove top, this research charts the distinct paths of the UK Government's '*slow boil*' *graduated intensification* and the US Government's '*fast boil*' *rapid transformation* that ultimately allowed each government to bring their country's immigration environment to a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming in these time periods. The thesis constructs profiles, based on participant comments and substantiated by the literature, of key components of the Brexit and Trump Governments' immigration approaches, facilitating a comparative examination and identifying seven common features of these approaches. This research underscores the pivotal role that a national government plays in crafting immigration environments of un/welcoming.

Analysis of quantitative data shows that the Brexit and Trump Governments' immigration approaches had a decisive impact on immigrant inclusion efforts overall and in three critical areas: messaging, funding, and daily operations. Analysis of qualitative data reveals several conditions produced by these approaches (1) a surge in demand for inclusion work, 2) significant reductions in public funding and state capacity for immigrant inclusion work, and 3) more extreme reactions from politicians and sections of the public towards immigrant inclusion) that significantly impacted the field's capacity and practitioners' health, well-being, and safety. These impacts were largely detrimental to the field though opportunities did emerge for some UK and US participants' inclusion efforts to grow. However, this increased capacity was highly contextual, often influenced by the geographic scope and type(s) of inclusion work undertaken and localised responses to it. Subnational governmental responses appear to either amplify or muffle the national government's approach and impact based on their supportive or resistant positions to it.

Findings from this study suggest that both the UK and US Governments during the Brexit and Trump eras extended their immigration authority at subnational levels through direct (e.g. executive action, resource reallocation, funding cuts, etc.) and indirect (e.g. extending 'everyday bordering' (Yuval-Davis et al, 2018) and 'deputisation' practices (Walsh, 2014)) means. This adds to assertions made by Emilsson (2015) and Coker (2018) of a 'national turn' in immigrant inclusion (traditionally handled and increasingly led predominantly by subnational governments) that compromises the ability of subnational governments to set and implement localised policy.

In addition to demonstrating the substantial impact of the national government's approach on crafting immigration environments and impacting inclusion efforts, this study contributes to the mapping of the immigrant inclusion field in the UK and the US, which is heavily under-researched. It also develops and employs a comprehensive typology of immigrant inclusion activity that may be used in future research.

### **A Note About This Research**

This research is, in part, designed as a result of my more than two decades of professional experience as a US-based social inclusion practitioner and from my personal experiences of marginalisation and inclusion. Both motivated me to investigate how efforts to promote social inclusion are affected by a national government that is opposed to them.

## Lay Summary

The Brexit and Trump eras offer two of the most notable examples of national governments brought to power by campaigns that centred and problematised the issue of immigration. The two Leave campaigns of the UK referendum to exit the European Union (commonly referred to as Brexit) and the US presidential campaign of Donald Trump promulgated the idea that immigrants and immigration had severely diminished their country's domestic and international autonomy, power, and prosperity. Each promised that, if successful, they would drastically curb immigration, restructure their immigration system, and root out, deport, and deter 'undesirable' immigrants in order to create a more unwelcoming immigration environment. The campaigns framed this as necessary to restoring and preserving their countries.

Following the Brexit vote and Trump's inauguration, the governing Conservative Party under the premierships of Theresa May and Boris Johnson in the UK and the Trump Administration in the US took severe action to fulfil these campaign promises. These harsh tactics have been well documented by researchers, journalists, and practitioners. But did they achieve their intended effect of generating a more unwelcoming environment for immigrants and immigration in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras and, if so, what were the repercussions of this for immigrant inclusion efforts? This study employs original quantitative and qualitative survey data collected from immigrant inclusion practitioners (those working on the frontlines in a variety of everyday contexts to welcome and include immigrants) who operated in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras along with content analysis to respond to these questions.

It establishes that the participating practitioners almost unanimously perceived their national governments' immigration approaches to have been extremely unwelcoming during the Brexit and Trump eras. Yet, a striking difference emerges from the data that alludes to different paths taken by their national governments to accomplish this. Distilled through the metaphor of bringing a pot to boil on a stove top, this research charts the distinct paths of the UK Government's '*slow boil*' *graduated intensification* and the US Government's '*fast boil*' *rapid transformation* that ultimately allowed each government to bring their country's immigration environment to a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming in these time periods.

The thesis constructs profiles, based on participant comments and substantiated by the literature, of key components of the Brexit and Trump Governments' immigration approaches, facilitating a comparative examination and identifying seven common features. This research underscores the pivotal role that a national government plays in crafting immigration environments of un/welcoming. It then explores the substantial and enduring repercussions of this achievement on immigrant inclusion efforts in the UK and the US. The thesis offers original contributions and insights about the significant ways that the national government can affect the immigration environment and the immigrant inclusion field, opening up possibilities for future lines

of research. It concludes with an invitation to those seeking to counter the current global proliferation of national governments who oppose immigration and immigrant inclusion to build on this research and to identify practical ways forward for expanding welcoming, inclusion, and equity in immigration environments of extreme unwelcoming.

This research is, in part, designed as a result of my two decades of professional experience as a US-based social inclusion practitioner and from my personal experiences of marginalisation and inclusion. Both motivated me to investigate how efforts to promote social inclusion are affected by a national government that is opposed to them.

## List of Frequently-used Acronyms and Abbreviations

CDC	US Center for Disease Control and Prevention
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
DHS	US Department of Homeland Security
DOJ	US Department of Justice
EOIR	Executive Office for Immigration Review
ICE	US Immigration and Customs Enforcement
MPP	Migrant Protection Protocols
NHS	UK National Health Service
USCBP	US Customs and Border Protection
USCIS	US Citizenship and Immigration Services
Title 42	Title 42 of the United States Code. It contains statutes addressing public health, social welfare, and civil rights. The United States Code is the collation and categorisation by subject matter of the US's general and permanent laws.

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# **Part I: Research Rationale, Design, Methodology, and Participants**

## Chapter 1: Introduction

A wave of violent attacks targeting immigrants, Muslims, and people of colour, many instigated and spread on social media by far-right groups and sympathisers, swept the UK from 30 July through 10 August 2024. I watched these events unfold with revulsion but, sadly, without surprise. The findings from my research had already suggested that the UK was ripe for such widespread terror to occur. As this thesis will illustrate using survey and historical data, the UK Government has steadily cultivated an immigration environment of extreme unwelcoming over the past forty plus years that reached a boiling point in the Brexit era (the time period following the passage of the United Kingdom European membership referendum on 23 June 2016 until 31 December 2020, the end of the formal transition period for the UK's EU departure).

At almost the same time as the dawning of the Brexit era, the US was ushering in a radical new age of extreme unwelcoming towards immigration. This formally started with the inauguration of Donald Trump as the 45<sup>th</sup> US president on 20 January 2017. Yet, as this study will demonstrate, the Trump campaign had already kicked off this new era with its explicit, dehumanising anti-immigrant rhetoric and policy promises. My reaction to Trump's presidential election victory mirrored my reaction to the recent UK racist, anti-immigrant riots: I was deeply disturbed by it, but not surprised.

More than two decades of work as a social inclusion practitioner had suggested to me that the US was primed for such a jarring political earthquake. This had become especially apparent in a role that I held before embarking on this PhD research. In 2005, I founded and ran for nearly ten years a US non-governmental organization (NGO) that worked to advance community-based social inclusion, particularly around religious and cultural identity and diversity. In that decade, our work grew to encompass inclusion efforts on multiple levels of society (local, regional, national, international, and online) and collaborations with practitioners in other countries, including the UK. During this tenure, I began to observe a concerning trend. I saw mainstream politicians and political parties in the UK, the US, and elsewhere adopting with increasing frequency divisive, xenophobic messaging and policies that undermine social inclusion.

As I watched this phenomenon grow, I became curious as to how the incorporation of such exclusionary rhetoric and policies by national governments were impacting those trying to progress social inclusion. I left my role with the NGO in 2014, but this question lingered. Simultaneously, I heard anecdotes from social inclusion colleagues and friends in the field of how these exclusionary national political shifts exacerbated existing challenges and created new ones for their inclusion efforts. I also heard inspiring stories of resilience, adaptation, and innovation as those committed to social inclusion found ways to advance it despite of, or sometimes in response to, these exclusionary national political swings. This led me to want to move beyond anecdotal evidence and investigate this in a more formal manner.

Hence, I initiated this PhD research in the hopes that it would yield findings that hold both theoretical and practical implications for those seeking to promote social inclusion in (increasingly) inhospitable environments. It did. These are woven throughout the thesis and explicitly discussed in Chapter 8.

My decision to situate this research in the context of immigration politics and immigrant inclusion work is in part a recognition of the enduring political and social potency that the issue of immigration holds for social inclusion and exclusion efforts and its function as political capital for populist, often far-right, politicians, parties and movements. As I detail in Chapter 2, immigration has long been used to great effect as a grievance point by politicians and populist movements in a range of countries to mobilise public support (Ivarsflaten, 2008), (further) marginalise and exclude groups, and to create or reinforce social hierarchies. The appropriation and mainstreaming by conventional politicians and parties of extreme anti-immigrant rhetoric and platforms previously consigned to far-right, fringe political actors is an unsettling feature of twenty-first century global politics (Brown et al, 2023).

The authority to set and implement a country's immigration system typically resides with the national government. This gives those running it significant power to shape immigration and the public discourse and perceptions about it. Thus, how a national government approaches immigration can have substantial consequences for those seeking to welcome and include immigrants and their efforts as Chapter 7 underscores. The thesis probes this, animated by the overarching question: 'How are efforts to promote the inclusion of immigrants impacted by a national government which is (perceived to be) unwelcoming of immigrants and immigration?'

It examines this larger research question using the cases of the UK and the US in the Brexit and Trump eras.<sup>1</sup> Both cases supply striking examples of national governments brought to power by campaigns that centred and problematised immigration and who used their immigration approaches to enact the campaigns' central pledge of generating a (more) inhospitable immigration environment.<sup>2</sup> Chapter 2 further elaborates on this, highlighting important parallels between the Brexit and Trump campaigns' use of immigration as a catalytic electoral issue and the immigration approaches that they crusaded. It also briefly touches on how the proceeding national governments in both countries set about implementing the shared campaign promise of fostering a (more) unwelcoming immigration

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<sup>1</sup>As previously mentioned, I define the Brexit era as beginning with the passage of the Brexit referendum on 23 June 2016 and ceasing on 31 December 2020 with the end of the formal transition period of the UK's EU departure. The Trump era began with Donald Trump's presidential inauguration on 20 January 2017 and lasted until Joseph Biden's presidential inauguration on 20 January 2021.

<sup>2</sup> In this research, the term 'Brexit campaigns' is used interchangeably with the term 'Leave campaigns.' These campaigns encompass both the official Vote Leave (VL) campaign as well as its surrogate offshoot the Grassroots Out (GO) campaign. The GO campaign, led by UKIP's Nigel Farage, ran a coordinated parallel campaign that centred the 'question of immigration' as the primary reason to leave the EU, both linking it with VL's economic argument while also superseding it (Zappettini, 2019).

environment using their immigration approaches.<sup>3</sup> Chapter 2 then outlines the rationale for case selection, noting important similarities and key differences between the UK and the US in regards to immigration politics and their respective immigration systems and histories. It also explores how race and nationalism are intertwined with these systems and histories

Establishing whether the Brexit and Trump Governments actually achieved the campaigns' pledge to generate a (more) unwelcoming immigration environment is a fundamental step in responding to the study's overarching research question. To assess this, I chose to survey immigrant inclusion practitioners (those involved with efforts to welcome and include immigrants) operating in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras. I define immigrant inclusion efforts as the formal and informal structures and activities that practitioners use to welcome and include immigrants. Chapter 2 explains why these practitioners, who work on the front lines in a variety of everyday contexts, are uniquely positioned to evaluate this and elucidates the four research sub-questions that further determined the study's design and quantitative and qualitative survey methods. It outlines the rationale for using a written questionnaire to collect quantitative and qualitative data and provides an overview of the survey's key components along with details of its administration. The chapter then lays out the response inclusion criteria and the methodology for conducting survey analysis and, when appropriate, relevant document analysis. It concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations weighed and actions taken to address them.

Chapter 3 sheds light on the individual immigrant inclusion practitioners participating in this research, their organisational inclusion efforts, and the types of immigrant inclusion work they undertook. Understanding the assorted occupational and personal vantage points that research participants bring to this study is important for contextualising their encounters with the national government's immigration approach. It also is critical to mapping the field, of which little has been done and is made more difficult by the fact that the practitioners constituting this field are not a tallied or censused group. As Chapter 3 notes, the limited mapping that exists tends to be focused on particular sub-groups of practitioners (e.g. immigration attorneys, social workers, health care providers), certain types of inclusion work (e.g. direct service provision, legal assistance, advocacy) or on inclusion efforts occurring within the same country or societal scale (e.g. in cities). Thus, the details explored in Chapter 3 contribute to a deeper awareness of the individual practitioners, the organisations, and types of work that comprise the immigrant inclusion field. Further, it introduces a novel typology for categorising immigrant inclusion activities that was developed for this research and may be utilised in future research on the field.

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<sup>3</sup> In this study, the term 'national government' refers to the central executive authority of each country's government. In the UK, this is constituted by whichever political party or coalition of parties holds the majority of seats in the UK House of Commons. In the US, this is the federal executive branch, which is headed by the elected president.

Chapter 4 presents UK and US participants' rankings of the Brexit and Trump Governments' immigration approaches in regards to their perceived degree of un/welcoming. The findings confirm that participants overwhelmingly viewed these national governments' approaches to be extremely unwelcoming. While this is a notable finding in and of itself, a review of participant rankings of their previous government's immigration approach (the Cameron Government in the UK and the Obama Administration in the US) reveal a startling difference. This critical distinction suggests that while each country exhibited extremely unwelcoming immigration environments in the Brexit and Trump eras, they took distinct paths to reach this common point. Chapters 5 and 6 analyse qualitative data supported by relevant literature to construct profiles of each government's immigration approach and to illuminate these different paths. A theoretical metaphor of bringing a pot to boil is used as an analytic heuristic to further understand how the national government of each country, in their own distinctive way, generated a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming towards immigrants and immigration. Comparative analysis also identified common features of the Brexit and Trump Governments' immigration approaches. These are discussed in Chapter 8 and may prove useful for future analysis and for profiling unwelcoming immigration regimes employed by national governments.

Chapter 7 returns to the study's larger research question, examining the impact that operating in immigration environments of extreme unwelcoming fostered by the national government's approach had on practitioners and their immigrant inclusion efforts. Quantitative survey data clearly demonstrates the substantial impact wrought by the national government on inclusion efforts overall and in three critical areas: messaging, funding, and daily operations. Analysis of qualitative data spotlighted three conditions produced by the Brexit and Trump Governments' approaches that significantly impacted the field. These conditions and the specific effects on the field- both immediate and long-term- are discussed along with germane literature.

When taken together, these cases of the Brexit-era UK and the Trump-era US paint vivid and, in many ways, unsettling portraits of the instantaneous and enduring impacts that unwelcoming national governments can have on immigrant inclusion efforts. At the same time, they also show the resiliency, courage, creativity, and adaptability of the field to navigate these challenges and, in certain contexts, to even grow and thrive. Chapter 8 recaps these findings, considers the caveats and limitations of this study, and identifies lines for future related research.

The global proliferation of national governments who are unwelcoming of immigrants and immigration is a growing trend that threatens social inclusion efforts. It requires a robust, sustained, multi-disciplinary, collaborative response. Continual, rigorous interrogation of the ways in which these governments prosecute their immigration approaches and their impact on the immigrant inclusion field is an essential part of this. This generated knowledge can empower those working in the field and their allies to act in more informed, sustainable, and, when possible, proactive ways,

something that several UK and US research participants lamented was difficult to do under the current circumstances. This study contributes to this vital knowledge production and, hopefully, encourages others to do so as well.

### **A Final Note to Introduce my Positionality in this Research**

My family immigrated to the US in the early twentieth century. They fled rampant, abusive anti-Semitism and came, as so many who immigrate do, in search of safety, freedom, opportunity, and prosperity. While in many ways they thrived, the trauma that they experienced remained. This, coupled with my own experiences of marginalisation, profoundly impressed on me the importance of creating communities and societies where all are welcomed and included. It set me on a vocational trajectory that, as touched on in the beginning of this chapter, led me to pursue this PhD research. My young family and I moved from the US to Scotland for this. In doing so, I experienced being an immigrant for the first time and had to directly navigate the Brexit-era UK immigration system. These first-hand experiences provided me with additional layers of knowledge and sensitivity that I believe ultimately strengthened this research.

## **Chapter 2: Research Rationale, Design, and Methodology**

The introductory chapter relayed how my extensive and diverse experiences as a social inclusion practitioner led me to observe the growing frequency of politicians and governments brought to power espousing divisive, xenophobic rhetoric and policies that undermine social inclusion. I embarked on this research motivated by a desire to better understand the impact of these governments on social inclusion efforts. As noted in Chapter 1, the thesis explores this impact in the context of immigration politics and immigrant inclusion efforts. It is guided by the overarching question: 'How are efforts to promote the inclusion of immigrants impacted by a national government which is (perceived to be) unwelcoming of immigrants and immigration?'

The decision to locate this research in the context of immigration politics and immigrant inclusion work is both a recognition of the perennial significance of immigration on social inclusion/exclusion efforts and of its political value for populist, often far-right, politicians, parties, and movements. This chapter begins by further elaborating on this and why the tangible lens of immigration and immigration politics offers a concrete and abundant space in which to consider this larger research question. It then details the logic behind the selection of the Brexit-era UK and the Trump-era US as cases for this study, spotlighting important commonalities and critical differences that made them an appropriate and compelling pairing.

The chapter then sets forth the design and methodology of this research both of which were heavily influenced by relevant literature, my professional practitioner knowledge and experience, and by my relationships with those in the immigrant inclusion field. It discusses why I chose to survey immigrant inclusion practitioners operating in the UK and the US during these time periods and lays out the four research sub-questions that further determined the study's design and quantitative and qualitative survey methods. This is followed by the rationale for using a written questionnaire to collect quantitative and qualitative data, a summary of the survey's key components, and the specifics of its administration. The chapter then discusses the study's response inclusion criteria and the methodology used for survey analysis and, when appropriate, relevant document analysis. The chapter closes with a consideration of the ethical issues raised by this study and actions taken to address them. In sum, this chapter seeks to lay the foundation for the rich discussion that follows of the original findings yielded by this study and their multiple theoretical and practical contributions.

### **Research Focus**

Historically, as in contemporary times, immigrants and immigration have served as an animating issue of far-right and exclusionary politics (Meyer & Rosenberger, 2015; Mudde, 1999; Westlake, 2018). A significant body of scholarship has been devoted to the use of anti-immigrant messaging and exclusionary policies by far-right

politicians, parties, and populist movements (e.g. Iakhsnis et al, 2018; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Mudde, 2019; Odmalm, 2021; Yilmaz, 2012). These individuals and groups employ the issue to mobilise public support, (further) marginalise and exclude groups, create and reinforce social hierarchies, and gain political traction (Ivarsflaten, 2008). The co-opting and mainstreaming by conventional politicians and parties of extreme anti-immigrant rhetoric and platforms once relegated to far-right, fringe political actors is a disturbing trend of twenty-first century global politics (Brown et al, 2023). While this trend has ebbed and flowed at previous points in history, the proliferation and ferocity of its current manifestation, substantially facilitated by the internet and social media, is remarkable (Campion & Poynting, 2021, p.63). Thus, the abundance of national governments prominently featuring an anti-immigrant, anti-immigration platform made immigration politics an appropriate and fertile topic on which to focus.

In addition, the transversal, multi-faceted nature of immigration and immigrant inclusion work provided the opportunity to explore the larger research question through the perceptions and experiences of immigrant inclusion practitioners operating in different spheres and sectors of society.<sup>4</sup> Immigration as both a policy area and as a practical reality is complex and multi-scalar with components involving transnational, national, sub-national, regional, local and hyperlocal politics, actors, and activity (Adamson et al, 2024; Caponio, & Jones-Correa, 2018; Lacroix & Spencer, 2022; Scholten & Penninx, 2016).

As touched on in Chapter 1, the authority to formally structure and administer a country's immigration system is often the purview of the national government, providing it with unique powers to shape immigration and public discourse regarding it. At the same time, the settlement and incorporation of immigrants often depends on the involvement and, in some contexts, the leadership of subnational governments and non-governmental actors (e.g. civil society, religious communities, businesses, etc.). Substantial scholarship investigating this subnational phenomenon, often termed the 'local turn' in immigration governance, has emerged over the past twenty years (Hooghe & Marks, 2001; Piattoni, 2010; Zapata-Barrero et al, 2017; see Muhammad, 2023, for a systematic literature review on this). But as existing scholarship (Coker, 2018; Desille, 2024; Emilsson, 2015) and this study (Chapter 8) show, the relationship between these different levels of governance and the assorted actors involved is complicated, varied, and impacted by power differentials including the singular authority of the national government to control key aspects of immigration policy and implementation.

The literature also has illuminated how the governance of immigration presents dilemmas for governments that complicate immigration as a policy area and as an

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<sup>4</sup> As described in the introductory chapter, I defined immigrant inclusion practitioners as 'those working to welcome and include immigrants.' I will elaborate more on the individuals and organisations that constitute this field in the next chapter.

everyday reality. Immigration affects a range of core concerns and duties of government, from deciding who is allowed to enter and reside within a country to the public benefits and services (e.g. welfare entitlements, education, housing, etc.) provided or denied and under which conditions residents can access them as well as a host of other issues. Governments must weigh competing policy objectives such as economic competitiveness, the capacity for public service delivery, international relations, and obligations under domestic and international law in determining how to govern immigration (Spencer, 2011). No consensus exists on how to prioritise these weighty considerations. Policy choices are further constricted by the vestiges of previous historical, political, and legal precedents and by a dissonance in what governments promise in terms of policy and what they have the capacity to actually deliver. But as Spencer (2011, p. 2) notes, governments are seldom transparent about these constraints, especially in societies with an increasingly polarised and highly charged public and media discourse environment, as is the case with the UK and the US.

These policy and practical tensions frequently result in a seemingly incongruous coexistence of domestic policies and laws towards immigrants that contain elements of formal inclusion and formal exclusion (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2014, p. 424). However, even formal inclusion measures are often conditional, dependent upon immigrants and their children meeting pre-determined benchmarks of behaviour and identity and unequally applied in ways that uphold and perpetuate the society's existing racialised hierarchy (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2012; Hackl, 2022). Scholarship has shown that discord can arise in differing approaches taken by the national government and subnational governments, who may have distinct or even conflicting policy, political, and practical priorities (Kos et al, 2016, p. 358). Competing policy priorities, domestic and international legal obligations, and charged political environments also can produce duelling pressures to admit and bar immigrants (Ruhs, 2013, Chapter 5). Evidence of these various tensions appear in both the UK and US cases of this study (see Chapters 5 and 6), adding to these bodies of research and underscoring the complexities of immigration politics and governance.

A growing corpus of research has demonstrated that governments can use both instrumental and symbolic or expressive policy-making to manage these tensions and to control immigration (Ataç & Schütze, 2020; Schiller & Jonitz, 2023; Slaven & Boswell, 2019). Instrumental interventions are designed to steer the behaviour or impacts of a specific population (Slaven & Boswell, 2019, p.1479). In the context of immigration, the targeted group is usually immigrants or sub-categories of immigrants (e.g. those seeking asylum or with refugee status), though as this study will show they also can be directed at immigrant inclusion practitioners (Chapters 7). Symbolic interventions are discussed in the literature as having the primary aim of communicating to an audience a government's commitment to particular values or goals rather than to impact the targets of interventions. Symbolic interventions have

largely been treated in the literature as distinct from instrumental interventions and with a limited or negligent substantive effect. However, findings from this study (Chapter 8) add to a reconsideration of this bifurcation and to the notion dominant in the literature that symbolic interventions' have a negligent or shallow substantive effect (see Schiller & Jonitz (2023) for an example of this reconsideration). Once again, this speaks to the multi-faceted and often untidy nature of immigration politics and policymaking that make it ripe for further investigation.

As will be discussed further in this chapter and in Chapter 3, immigrant inclusion practitioners are embedded throughout these various layers and processes of governance. This allows many practitioners to witness and experience these forces, tensions, and interventions. Thus, the diversity of their scale, activity, and positionality offered a potentially rich, layered portrait of how those working to advance social inclusion via immigrant inclusion efforts operated in politically inhospitable environments as shaped by the actions of their national governments and in the context of these complex, fluid dynamics.

### **Research Approach and Case Selection**

A case study approach is particularly well-suited for an exploratory investigation of this kind as it facilitates detailed, multifarious examinations of complex issues in their naturally-occurring contexts (Crowe et al, 2011). I chose the Brexit-era UK and the Trump-era US as the cases. Including two cases allowed me to identify and explore commonalities and divergences in how immigrant inclusion efforts operated in two countries that share important similarities but also marked differences. This ability to consider the same phenomena across different contexts and observe likenesses and differentiations is a significant strength of the comparative case study approach (Stewart, 2012). Research rationale and key similarities and differences between the two cases are discussed below.

### **The Brexit and Trump Eras, the Preceding Campaigns and their National Governments**

In Chapter 1, I delineated the Brexit era as beginning with the passage of the Brexit referendum on 23 June 2016 and ending on 31 December 2020 with the cessation of the formal transition period of the UK's EU departure. The Trump era commenced with Donald Trump's inauguration as the 45<sup>th</sup> president of the US on 20 January 2017 and continued until Joseph Biden's presidential inauguration on 20 January 2021.

As touched on in the introduction, the Brexit and Trump eras offer two of the most prominent examples of national governments brought to power by campaigns that centred and problematised the issue of immigration. The campaigns that propelled

them occurred in 2015 and 2016 with the Leave campaigns of the Brexit referendum in the UK and with the presidential campaign of Donald Trump in the US.<sup>5</sup>

Important parallels exist between the Brexit and Trump campaigns in terms of their conduct and in the immigration approaches that they championed. These campaigns portended the harsh(er) immigration approaches employed by the UK and US executive authorities in the national governments that followed.

One key parallel is that each campaign invoked xenophobic, nativist, and racist tropes and explicit anti-immigrant rhetoric in their framing and messaging (Grinan-Moutinho, 2022; Hooghe & Dassonneville, 2018). The campaigns portrayed immigrants as dangerous threats to their respective countries. Nigel Farage, a prominent figurehead of the Brexit Leave campaigns, and US presidential candidate Donald Trump routinely employed rhetoric that othered and dehumanised immigrants and often cast them in a criminal light (Beauchamp, 2016; Crandall et al, 2018). Many of these negative portrayals drew from or explicitly utilised long-standing anti-immigrant tropes and stereotypes. The Brexit and Trump campaigns heavily used social media as well as politically-conservative and far-right media to craft or resurrect, promulgate, and repackage these anti-immigrant messages and policies to reach wider audiences (Anbinder, 2019; Moore & Ramsay, 2017).

Another important similarity of the Brexit and Trump campaigns was the exploitation and framing of significant refugee flows occurring in their respective geographical hemispheres as 'crises' to activate and stoke existing anti-immigrant sentiment. The Vote Leave (VL) campaign and its tertiary campaigns used images of refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria to imply that if the UK remained in the EU, it would be inundated through legal and illegal channels with refugees who threatened the UK's safety, national identity, and social cohesion (Gietel-Basten, 2016). In the US, the Trump campaign drew on the swell of Central American refugees experienced during the Obama Administration as evidence that the US had lost control of its borders, making it vulnerable to nefarious immigrants (McCaskill, 2016).

Yet the most critical likeness of the Brexit and Trump campaigns for the purpose of this research was that each campaign promulgated the idea that immigrants and unbridled immigration had severely diminished their country's domestic and international autonomy, power, and prosperity (Hinojosa Ojeda & Telles, 2021; Newth, 2023). The Brexit and Trump campaigns asserted that their country's political and social environment needed to be (more) inhospitable to immigrants in order to remedy this (Beauchamp, 2016; Gietel-Baston, 2016; Klinkner, 2017). Each campaign promised that, if successful, they would drastically curb immigration,

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<sup>5</sup> As noted in Chapter 1, the term 'Leave campaigns' in my research refers to both the official Vote Leave (VL) campaign as well as its surrogate offshoot the Grassroots Out (GO) campaign. The GO campaign, led by UKIP's Nigel Farage, ran a coordinated parallel campaign that centred the 'question of immigration' as the primary reason to leave the EU, both linking it with VL's economic argument while also superseding it (Zappettini, 2019). In this study, these campaigns also are referred to as the 'Brexit campaigns.'

restructure their respective immigration systems, and root out, deport, and deter undesirable immigrants (Gonzalez & Carranza, 2020; Zapettini, 2019). Though the Brexit referendum did not directly elect new political leadership (as was the case in the US with Donald Trump), the governing Conservative party telegraphed the referendum outcome as a mandate from the public to further institutionalise a more hostile and restrictive approach towards immigrants and immigration (Cressey, 2016; Walker, 2016). Prime Minister David Cameron resigned after the referendum and was succeeded by Theresa May, who while serving as Home Secretary during the Cameron premiership had become the public face of the UK Government's 'hostile environment' immigration policies. This will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

After the Brexit vote and Trump's inauguration, the governing Conservative Party under the premierships of Theresa May and Boris Johnson in the UK and the Trump Administration in the US set about implementing the campaign mandates to generate (more) unwelcoming immigration environments through their caustic approaches to immigration. Both national governments continued to use derogatory messaging about immigrants and to frame immigration as a 'crisis' plaguing their respective countries (Connelly, 2021; Utych, 2017). Each pursued policies to dramatically reduce immigrant and refugee levels (Baker, 2017; Stewart & Walker, 2017); more aggressively target immigrants who do not have secure legal status (Thompson & Calderon, 2019); and decrease the staffing and funding of the immigration system (Brooks, 2017).

Hence, campaign congruencies and the implementation of the campaigns' pledged unwelcoming immigration approach by the ensuing national governments rendered the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras as fitting cases for this research.

### **The UK and the US as Cases**

The UK and the US exhibit other important similarities and key differences that facilitated the success of the anti-immigrant Brexit and Trump campaigns and the national governments that followed.

#### ***Relevant Similarities between the UK and US***

A number of germane similarities exist between the UK and the US that make them appropriate to consider together.

First, structural racism, xenophobia, and classism are inherent in the architecture and functioning of both the UK's and the US's economic, political, and immigration systems (UNHR, 2023; Banaji et al, 2021).<sup>6</sup> These structural biases and inequalities

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<sup>6</sup> Structural racism is 'the totality of ways in which societies foster discrimination, via mutually reinforcing [inequitable] systems (e.g., in housing, education, employment, earnings, benefits, credit, media, health care, criminal justice, etc.) that in turn reinforce discriminatory beliefs, values, and distribution of resources, reflected in history, culture, and interconnected institutions.' (Krieger (2014)

acted as a primary driver in the construction of each country's immigration system and continue to shape the framing, discourse, and policy choices regarding immigration in each country (Griffiths and Yeo, 2021; Johnson & McKanders, 2022; Jones, 2021).

In the case of the UK, its immigration system arose as a direct result of the disintegration of the British empire and was an outgrowth of a political desire to restrict the admission of racialised and dispossessed people from its former colonies (El-Enany, 2020, p. 3). In the independent review for the UK Government on the Windrush scandal, Wendy Williams CBE (2020) assessed UK immigration policy and its system, especially after the 1950s, as being the product of 'overlapping (and sometimes speedily enacted) legislation that set out to tighten eligibility rules in response to a hardening political, social and economic climate that saw non-white immigration as a problem to be solved.' (p. 52). A subsequent report produced for the UK Home Office to educate its staff about the historical development of UK immigration policy stated that '...during the period 1950-1981, every single piece of immigration or citizenship legislation was designed at least in part to reduce the number of people with black or brown skin who were permitted to live and work in the UK.' (The Historical Roots of the Windrush Scandal, 2024, p. 4). Griffiths and Yeo (2021) note that restraining policies, complicated and shifting rules for immigrating, opaque and seemingly arbitrary immigration decision-making, criminalisation of immigrant movement and activity, and indefinite detention of immigrants have long been hallmarks of the UK immigration system, reflecting an enduring colonial mentality and endemic structural inequity.

The US immigration system similarly grew out of a desire to restrict or prohibit people based on conceptions of race, nationality, and religion. The earliest iteration of codified racial exclusion in regards to immigration in the US occurred only fourteen years after its founding with the Naturalization Act of 1790, which restricted citizenship to 'any alien, being a free white person' (Jones, 2021, paragraph 3). The subsequent legislation that built the US immigration system through the middle of the twentieth century continued to be derived from racist, xenophobic, and nativist ideas. It favoured immigrants from northern Europe and severely limited the entry of people from other countries through the enactment of a system of national quotas.<sup>7</sup> Certain pieces of US immigration legislation went even further, barring entire populations from immigrating. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which ushered in a ten-year ban on Chinese laborers and was periodically renewed until 1943, and the Immigration Act of 1917, which created an Asiatic Barred Zone prohibiting any immigration from a large swath of Asia and the South Pacific, are two notable

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as cited in Samari et al, 2021, p. 1). Structural xenophobia is the 'systemic exclusion of others based on their cultural or national identity as foreign from that of the host country' and 'is rooted in fear or hatred of immigrants' (Samari et al, 2021, p. 2). Classism is 'discrimination against an individual or a group on the basis of social class' and 'can take a variety of forms and be perpetrated by both individuals and institutions' (Limbert & Williams, 2014, p. 245).

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed accounting of this, see Jones (2021) and Young (2017).

examples of this, though many more exist. The passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act in 1965 ended the national quota system and replaced it with a system preferencing family relationships and professional skills. However, structural racism and xenophobia still permeate the US immigration processes and system including its surveillance, policing, and enforcement mechanisms.<sup>8</sup> The formative impact of these structural inequalities and how they potentially occlude social inclusion, especially in regards to immigration, in both the UK and the US is an important commonality and one that informed my case selection.

Long-standing, active traditions of nativism and energetic anti-immigrant populist movements in the UK and the US provide a second compelling similarity that influenced case selection. Nativism is:

a racist and xenophobic discourse structured around an exclusionary vision of 'the nation' in which the 'native' is discursively constructed as a disadvantaged and threatened 'in-group' through its juxtaposition along antagonistic and horizontal lines to a racialised 'non-native', 'foreigner', or 'non-integrated co-citizen'. (Newth, 2023, p. 172)

Nativist ideas often serve as the bedrock of anti-immigrant sentiments. Champions of nativism in each respective country have successfully mainstreamed and institutionalised these ideas at different points in UK and US history (Newth, 2023; Young, 2017). Hearty anti-immigrant populist movements in both countries have been instrumental in keeping the issue of immigration at the forefront of their national politics for more than a decade (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2017; Reich 2018). Two particularly impactful manifestations of these anti-immigrant populist movements that influenced the Brexit and Trump eras were the UK Independence Party (UKIP) in the UK and the Tea Party movement in the US. Their influence will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. These grassroots anti-immigration movements eventually found extraordinary political champions in the elected national administrations of each country in the Brexit and Trump eras. Their harsh restrictionist messaging and policy have been adopted by mainstream political parties in each country (Blum, 2017; Evans & Mellon, 2019, p. 84). The political cocktail of entrenched nativism and lively anti-immigrant populist movements helped prime the UK and US political environments for the success of the Brexit and Trump campaigns and the antagonistic immigration approaches of their national governments.

A third compelling commonality between the UK and the US that led me to select them as comparative exploratory cases involves the concepts of exceptionalism and global dominance. Exceptionalism and global dominance are integral to each country's prevailing historical narrative and national identity. Both countries' waning

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<sup>8</sup> For example, the American Bar Association (ABA), the largest voluntary organisation of lawyers in the world, passed a resolution at their 2022 mid-year meeting calling on the US Federal Government to investigate and root out perceived and actual racism and xenophobia in immigration enforcement (Robert, 2022).

power and shifting geopolitical and domestic power dynamics have challenged the national narratives built on these concepts.

Exceptionalism is the belief that one's country is uniquely different from other countries due to its distinct political, historical, and cultural qualities and that because of these differences it is special or, in some cases, superior to others.<sup>9</sup> The concept of exceptionalism has long been a central tenet of both prevailing American and British political and historical narratives.

American exceptionalism is rooted in its origins of European Puritanical colonisation, which saw the founding of the colonies (that eventually became the US) as divinely orchestrated to serve as a source of moral inspiration and instruction to others (Gilmore et al, 2020). The US's historical evolution and its political and economic systems and policies (Van Assche et al, 2019, p. 2) also shaped the notion of American exceptionalism. British exceptionalism is derived from perceptions both within and outside the UK of it having pronounced distinctive political and cultural traditions that set it apart from the rest of Europe (and the world) (Kaunert et al, 2020, p. 547), making it often viewed as the "odd one out" in European politics' (Van Assche et al, 2019, p. 2). Both countries' global imperialism and hegemonic international roles (and the powers and privileges flowing from that) have been offered as proof of their respective exceptionalism. However, both countries have experienced significant declines in their global power and influence. This has created a tension between these dominant national narratives of distinguishing greatness and prosperity and the day-to-day economic and political realities that many within those countries experience. The Brexit and Trump campaigns seized upon this dissonance and used it as a main theme of their campaigns. Each campaign conjured these prevailing national narratives while casting them as bygone. They blamed immigrants for eroding their country's prominence and prosperity and framed their campaigns and the harsher immigration regimes that they would install as opportunities to restore their country's exceptionalism and global dominance.

A fourth important similarity between the UK and the US that made these cases ripe for exploring together are common socio-psychological trends present in both countries leading up to and since the Brexit and Trump campaigns. Building on previous scholarship, Van Assche et al (2019) found that the psychological factors of a disposition towards authoritarianism and an orientation towards social dominance, both facilitated by anti-immigrant and ethnic prejudicial attitudes, undergirded individual support for the Brexit and Trump campaigns. They had been incubated through the growing influence of right-wing ideologies and groups in each country. These socio-psychological trends continued to strengthen in the aftermath of the campaigns. The authors attribute this fortification to the activation of a post-campaign reinforcement mechanism whereby the success of these campaigns

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<sup>9</sup> This definition is developed based on information and definitions offered by Islentyeva & Dunkel (2022), Kaunert et al (2020), and Van Assche et al (2019).

deepened the existing ethnically-prejudicial, right-wing ideologies that initially galvanised voters' support. These socio-psychological trends facilitated the appetite among a significant portion of each country's electorate for a national government that would employ a harsher immigration approach in the Brexit and Trump eras.

A fifth and final similarity between the UK and US that made them both fitting cases for my research is the presence of active, sizeable, established networks of immigrant inclusion practitioners. This similarity was important for my case selection for three reasons. These networks enabled a fuller exploration of the research topic given the presence of such developed and varied practitioner communities. They offered grounded perspectives from the vanguards of everyday life of how the national governments immigration approach affected immigrant inclusion efforts. In practical terms, these networks also provided accessible, substantial groups of possible research participants.

### ***Critical Immigration Differences between the UK and the US***

Critical differences in immigration exist between the UK and the US as a result of their respective political systems, institutions, and histories. These notable differences generate distinct contexts for how immigration policy, enforcement, and integration as well as immigrant inclusion work are conceived, implemented, and contested in each country. These political and historical differences also shape the production and circulation of dominant narratives in each country about immigration, national identity, and belonging that reflect these discrete histories and contexts.

As a unitary state, the UK has a more centralised immigration system than the US, a federal state. Immigration in the UK is not a devolved matter, meaning that the power to set and carry out immigration policy is reserved as a responsibility for the UK Parliament alone, despite sustained petitioning by Scotland for immigration to be devolved (Hepburn & Rosie, 2014, p.255). However, that is not to say that immigration is an exclusive affair of the UK Government.

The UK always has heavily relied upon regional and local authorities to carry out its national policy framework (Scholten, 2014). The integration of migrants in the UK began as an 'open door' policy to uphold good economic and political relations within the Commonwealth and then became framed in terms of ethnic and racial relations in the 1960s until a backlash against multiculturalism recast the issue in the mid-2000s (Hunter & Boswell, 2015, pp. 233-234).

The UK's membership in the European Union (EU) added an additional layer of complexity to its immigration system as it was obliged to participate in the EU's free movement system. This allows any national of an EU member state to work in any other member country and as workers to equally access employee and state benefits. The requirement to participate in the EU free movement system was viewed by some in the UK as a loss of British control, autonomy, and sovereignty. The EU ascension of Central and Eastern European states in 2004 and the pan-

European/global refugee 'crisis' in 2015 were seized on by far-right, anti-immigrant political parties and groups such as UKIP as evidence of this loss of control over immigration and to channel xenophobic messages that immigrants threatened the UK's cultural identity and national security. British loss of control and erosion of cultural and national security due to immigration facilitated by EU membership became a key argument of the Brexit Leave campaigns (Boswell, 2017; Clarke et al, 2017; Goodwin & Milazzo, 2017).

The 2016 Brexit referendum introduced the possibility for a comprehensive reworking of UK immigration policy. In the referendum's wake, several proposals were put forth for devolving immigration power to constituent nations and regions of the UK in a post-Brexit context (BBC News, 2017; Sumption, 2017). To date, the UK Government has rejected such proposals. Since Brexit, it has further concentrated its immigration authority by enacting legislation that expanded its statutory and discretionary powers over immigration enforcement, detention, and deportation.<sup>10</sup>

In the US, immigration traditionally has been understood as the exclusive purview of the federal government, though sub-federal governments and communities have always played a role in influencing immigration policy. This activity by sub-federal government and community actors often takes the forms of active resistance to the federal government and in the integration of immigrants at the local level (Rodriguez, 2017, p. 510).

Whether active resistance to the federal government is carried out in support of immigration or in opposition to it depends on the specific sub-national actors and circumstances. An example of pro-immigration active resistance can be found in the US Sanctuary movement. Spearheaded by religious communities and other community activists in the 1980s, the Sanctuary movement gave safe haven to undocumented refugees escaping conflict and persecution from Guatemala and El Salvador who had been denied political asylum in the US and were in jeopardy of being deported (Chinchilla et al, 2009).

The 2010 passage and implementation of Arizona Senate Bill (SB) 1070 is a well-known example of anti-immigration activism undertaken at the sub-national level. Successfully championed by Tea Party Movement activists (Esparaza & Blau, 2012), the state-level law required immigrants to carry proof of legal status and allowed state law enforcement agents to request this if they had reason to believe that the individual was undocumented. The legislation also precluded local and state agencies from inhibiting federal enforcement of immigration laws and imposed

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<sup>10</sup> The recent enactment of two controversial immigration bills added new powers and deepened some of the UK Government's existing ones in regards to immigration. The 'Nationality and Borders Act 2022,' enacted in April 2022, granted new and enhanced powers to the home secretary, including the ability to strip UK citizens of their citizenship without notice (Balch, 2022). The 'Illegal Migration Act 2023', enacted in July 2023, expanded the detention powers of the UK Government and allowed the government to deny immigrants being detained access to immigration bail or judicial review for up to 28 days (JCWI, 2023).

punishments on anyone who employed, housed, or transported undocumented immigrants (Schildkraut et al, 2019). Though most of the bill was stricken down by the US Supreme Court in 2012, the portion of the law permitting local law enforcement to verify an individual's immigration status was upheld (Barnes, 2012).

Since the mid-1990s sub-federal activism on immigration at state and local levels has surged. This is a result of a number of converging factors: (1) the growth over the past three decades of immigration in 'new gateway' states that for several generations have had limited or no experience with immigration; (2) the failure of Congress to pass immigration reform proposals; (3) policy activity by the executive branch that has created opportunities for increased cooperation between national and subnational governments regarding law enforcement for unauthorized immigration; (4) the efficacy of local policy entrepreneurs and coalitions of national and local groups in prioritising immigration policy at the state and municipal levels; and (5) the stimulating effect of direct democracy initiatives (e.g. local ballot initiatives and popular referendums) in easing the incorporation of policy innovations in a particular local context and then creating a template that could then be replicated by those in other states who supported such initiatives (Reich & Barth, 2012).

The proliferation of sub-federal activism has expanded and redefined the roles of these subnational actors. This has further fragmented the already patchwork system of immigration federalism, and introduced on a sub-federal level a 'centrifugal' dynamic surrounding immigration that previously had been seen to exclusively characterize federal immigration policymaking (Reich, 2018; Ramakrishnan & Gulasekaram, 2012).

In addition to their different immigration systems, each country's distinct history of immigration and the roles that race and nationalism play in these respective histories and contexts make them an interesting case pairing. Researchers have illuminated the deep influence that race and ethnicity politics enacts on the politics of immigration (Bautista-Chavez et al, 2024). This influence can be seen across time periods and geographical contexts, though with manifestations idiosyncratic to their respective contexts (Bautista-Chavez et al, 2024, p. 2068). The immigration histories and prevalent racialised national narratives that can be found in the UK and the US are products of this reality.

The UK derived much of its wealth and prosperity through colonisation and its exploitation of the people and resources in colonised areas both within Great Britain ('the inner empire') and around the world ('the outer empire') (Kumar, 2006, p. 434). This colonial legacy and its inherent hierarchical racism have shaped its history of immigration as well as scholarship about this history. Much of the literature until recently had heavily focused on immigration and settlement in the UK in the post-war period through the present-day (Solomos, 2022, p. 55), even though, as previously touched upon, immigrants have always been present in the UK (Holmes, 1988, cited

in Spencer, 2011, p. 23; *The Historical Roots of the Windrush Scandal: Independent Research Report*). Scholarship continues to reveal hidden or neglected histories of the settlement and presence of immigrants, particularly black and Jewish immigrants, that exist throughout the UK's history (e.g. Feldman, 1994; Talibi, 2011).

In contrast to the UK, immigration has been a substantial, constant, and debated feature of the US since its founding (Bolter, 2022). As a white settler-colonial country<sup>11</sup>, significant levels of forced immigration (e.g. enslaved people from Africa and the Caribbean) and elective immigration have been instrumental to the country's development. This steady though fluctuating immigration flow has meant that immigrants have always constituted a sizeable share of the US population (Moslimani & Passel, 2024).<sup>12</sup>

Unlike the US, the UK, in spite of having received immigrants since its inception, has only consistently been a country of net immigration (meaning that more people immigrated than emigrated) since 1994 (Somerville & Walsh, 2021). Until the end of the twentieth-century, the UK traditionally had been a net exporter of people. This is, in part, due to the erection of immigration laws beginning in the 1960s and continuing into the 1980s that made Britain territorially distinct from its remaining colonies and the Commonwealth and institutionalised a concept of citizenship that 'made Britishness commensurate with whiteness' (El-Enany, 2019).

This hierarchical, racialised conception of British nationalism, a contemporary outgrowth rooted in its colonial legacy, and its impact on immigration also drew on and fuelled racialised national narratives about immigration's role in Britain's post-empire decline. As discussed earlier in this chapter, these narratives were pivotal in animating the Brexit campaign and continue to espouse and proliferate a politically-potent nativism. In particular, scholars have pointed to colonial racism as having had a profound impact on the development of a dominant narrative of what constitutes 'Englishness' (Kumar, 2003; Solomos, 2022, Virdee & McGeever, 2018).

Like many Western European states in the post-war period, the UK used immigration policy as a way to formulate national identity and to define itself as a liberal democracy (Benson et al, 2022). Prior to this period, Englishness and Britishness were often conflated, reflecting the concentration of power among elites in England (Kumar, 2003). The articulation of a discrete 'English' national identity is a more recent phenomenon that gained significant political traction at the end of the twentieth century (Kumar, 2006). This conceptualisation is inextricably bound up with the ways in which race and racism manifest and shape both government policy and public discourse about immigration in a UK context. The birth of the 'race relations' field, which developed 'social inquiry, knowledge production, and political

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<sup>11</sup> See Piperoglou (2023) for detailed overview of core characteristics of settler-colonial countries.

<sup>12</sup> The immigrant share of the US population (meaning foreign-born individuals residing in the US) has ranged from a low of 4.7% in 1970 to a high of 14.8% in 1890. In 2023, it was 14.3% (Moslimani & Passel, 2024).

practice...tasked with the management and governance of racial difference in modern Britain' was a product of this as was a series of legislative acts beginning in 1965 that instituted a formal 'race relations' structure through policies 'designed to adjudicate lawful and unlawful discrimination' (Matera et al, 2023, p. 408). The 'race relations' paradigm alongside omissions of race and imperial history in analyses of class effectively consigned black and other non-white British citizens as permanent outsiders of their country (Gilroy, 1987, cited in Matera et al, 2023).

Racialisation constructed around culture and religion yielded a similar effect in the UK for people who are or are perceived to be Muslim. This gained significant political movement in the twenty-first century. Kundnani (2007, cited in Virdee & McGeever, 2018) points to the 2001 summer riots in Northern English mill towns and a fast-changing geo-political climate after 9/11 and the war in Iraq as pivotal moments in the minting of a new racialized enemy within the UK: 'the Muslim'. Proponents argued with growing political effect that 'Muslim culture' and, more broadly, the presence of Muslims in the UK were incongruent with contemporary British values of tolerance and diversity. This led to a:

new consensus on race and difference... in which anti-Muslim racism formed an intrinsic justification for the Labour and subsequently Conservative elite to turn away from multiculturalism [state recognition of cultural and ethnic diversity within a nation-state] and towards an assimilatory nationalism. (Virdee & McGeever, 2018, pp. 1812-1813).

These government actions also reinforced and contributed to the UK's long-standing nativist tradition and mythology. Scholars have noted how nativism, often framed in a racialised way, has become intertwined with many UK Government policies (Smith, 2021). A prime example of this is in the UK Government's employment of welfare chauvinism, by which a government curtails access to and/or fully excludes non-citizens (and, in some cases, certain citizens) from public benefits and services (D'Angelo, 2023; Donoghue & Kuisma, 2022; Guetner et al, 2016; Leruth et al, 2024). Chapter 5 offers a further consideration of this.

Scholars have shown how the Brexit campaigns invoked and trafficked two racialised national narratives, 'Global Britain' and 'Little England,' to great effect (Melhuish, 2024; Virdee & McGeever, 2018). The 'Global Britain' narrative utilises imperial ideas and nostalgia to cast a vision of an outward-oriented Britain that commandeers the Anglosphere and Commonwealth, prospers from its conquests, and upholds the racialised social and economic order. The 'Little England' narrative presents a vision of a pristine, racially and socially-ordered, (white) English homeland which needs to be vigilant in warding off invaders and other outsiders who threaten its cultural, social, and economic order.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See Melhuish (2024) for a more detailed analyses of both narratives.

Though these two visions may seem juxtaposed, Melhuish (2024) argues that they are actually two sides of the same coin. Both present a racialised nationalist vision of the world and the UK's role in it, interlinked through the use of a Powellite form of nostalgia. This nostalgia, named after the racialised anti-immigrant politics of former British MP Enoch Powell, promulgates hierarchical ideas of race developed and enshrined in British colonialism. Both narratives also rest on the need to defend the country's sovereignty. Wellings (2018) notes that the protection of British sovereignty had been historically conditioned to be seen through a lens of Englishness, which bolstered English nationalism. The Brexit campaigns claimed that the UK's sovereignty was being compromised through its EU obligations and rampant immigration. They invoked these nationalist narratives to frame Brexit as an opportunity to halt the 'crisis' instigated by immigration and regain its compromised sovereignty through 'taking back' control of its borders and restoring a more racially homogenous (i.e. white), ordered nation.

Race and nationalism also animate US immigration history and feature in two influential national mythologies of the US, but in ways that reflect the country's distinct origins and history. Since its founding, the US has racialised its population. As a result, resources and opportunities in the US have been allotted differently to its citizens and residential non-citizens based on this racialised hierarchy (Kamasaki, 2021). Though racial patterns and categories may shift over time (for example, Southern and Eastern Europeans, once viewed as non-white, are now regarded as white in US social construction), the underlying racialised hierarchical structure and the deep inequalities related to access to resources and opportunity in the US are maintained (Sáenz & Manges Douglas, 2015). A highly visible occurrence of this was the implementation of the Jim Crow caste system for black people following the abolishment of slavery. Immigrants to the US are racialised and incorporated into the existing racialised hierarchy, affecting and stratifying their collective experience.

Racialisation of culture and religion in ways that reflect and reinforce the established racialised hierarchy also is present in the US. The white AngloSaxon Protestant tradition has been the dominant influence on American culture and society since the country's inception (Schlesinger, 1998, p. 34, cited in Chouhoud (2022). Though its cultural supremacy has been eroded in recent decades, it still yields significant power in many crucial aspects of American culture and public life. The ingrained cultural and religious racialisation process of the US has had an especially pronounced effect on those who are Muslim or are perceived to be Muslim in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the US Government's subsequent domestic and global 'war on terror' campaign (Considine, 2017). The comingling of racial and religious bias has produced and perpetuated social and institutionalised forms of Islamophobia and the othering of Muslims, who are cast as culturally inferior, uncivil, and incompatible with 'American' culture and values (Considine, 2017, p.170).

Until recently, much scholarship on US immigration experiences had been focused on historiographies of European immigrants. This is in part due to the establishment in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of an assimilationist perspective of immigrant incorporation promulgated by Chicago School sociologists, whose work centred on European immigrants. This perspective assumed that the social and economic situations of immigrants in the US would improve as they acquire the dominant language and culture. However, it failed to acknowledge or account for the different experiences of immigrants racialised into non-white categories, whose ability to fully incorporate was limited or prevented by laws and social norms that reinforced the racialised hierarchy. If immigrants were not incorporated into US society after three generations, the assimilationist perspective asserted, then immigrants themselves were to blame either for not working hard enough to achieve this or for not being compatible with 'American' values and culture. This perspective and its branding of (white) European immigrants as the desirable and quintessential American immigrant became ingrained in the American ethos and the standard by which non-European immigrants were judged (Sáenz & Manges Douglas, 2015).

Like the UK, a racialised immigration history gave rise to nationalist narratives about immigration and its impact on the US's power that factored into a seminal political event (in the case of the US, the presidential election of Donald Trump). But unlike the UK, two of the racialised national narratives that arguably were most influential during and in the aftermath of the presidential campaign contained divergent portrayals of immigration and its import to the US's national identity and development. Both can be classified as what sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild (2016) termed 'deep stories', meaning they are narratives *as felt*, rooted in culture and to varying extents history, but mythologised. Or as Gorski et al (2022) so aptly describe it, it is 'a mythological version of history' (p. 13).

The Trump campaign heavily drew on a white Christian nationalist deep story to bolster its support and anti-immigrant messages. The campaign utilised the idea that America was founded as an exceptional white Christian nation, blessed by God to be successful, but that the divine blessings and success afforded to it are threatened by both foreign and domestic 'un-American' influences who are degrading it. This narrative has been espoused by many influential, mainstream figures and can be found throughout American popular culture (Gorski et al, 2022). The Trump campaign cast immigrants, especially those who were not white or Christian, as the primary source of this degradation. While the incorporation of this established racialised nationalist narrative was an impactful factor in the campaign's electoral success (Whitehead et al, 2018), it also challenged another prevalent deep story about immigration to which many Americans ascribe.

The other powerful American myth that is highly influential in how many Americans view themselves and immigration is the idea of the US as a nation of immigrants. According to this deep story, the US was founded as a nation of immigrants and as such has always been a refuge for immigrants seeking freedom and opportunity

(Bertossi et al, 2021). Political figures from both major US political parties have invoked and promoted this idea. It has become so pervasive in the American imagination that the phrase 'America's promise as a nation of immigrants' was included in the mission statement of the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) when the agency was established under the second George W. Bush Administration in 2005. Its removal during the first Trump Administration prompted a public outcry (Gonzales, 2018). The phrase was subsequently reinstated under the Biden Administration.

It is important to note that even though this national narrative presents immigration as an essential and positive feature of the US's development and national identity, it is highly racialised and mythologised as well. The deep story often told about the US as a nation of immigrants is one of (white) European immigrants in the early twentieth century entering the US through Ellis Island with the Statue of Liberty beckoning them. This mythos upholds white Europeans as model immigrants and ignores the very different experiences of immigrants of colour as a result of the racial hierarchy present in the US (Sáenz & Manges Douglas, 2015, p. 177). In doing so, it reinforces an assimilationist notion that the many of the barriers that immigrants of colour face for full inclusion in the US are of their own making rather than manifestations of systemic inequities.

The assimilationist undertones of the nation of immigrants myth limited its power in countering the anti-immigrant, white Christian nationalist narrative put forth by the Trump campaign. It may have even added to Trump's support as the Trump campaign drew on anxiety among white Americans that the US was allowing in too many immigrants who (they believed) were unable or unwilling to assimilate (Lind, 2016).

Thus, the UK's and the US' distinct immigration histories and cultural contexts involving race and nationalism have shaped influential racialised national narratives about identity, immigrants, and the role of immigration in each country's development or decline. This further adds to the reasons why the UK and the US make a compelling case pairing for this study. Taken together, these critical differences between UK and US allowed me to consider how key contextual factors can impact the formation and intensification of unwelcoming immigration environments vis-à-vis the national government's immigration approach and affect immigrant inclusion efforts.

### **Units of Analysis**

Immigrant inclusion practitioners served as this study's unit of analysis. They can be individuals, groups, or organisations, many of whom work with and/or on behalf of immigrants as they navigate the immigration system and/or (re)settle and integrate into a country and community. I explore this field and the practitioners who participated in this study in greater detail in the next chapter. As previously

discussed, the national governments in the UK and the US who assumed power after the successful Brexit and Trump campaigns vowed to bring their campaign promise of creating a (more) unwelcoming environment for immigrants to fruition. But did they achieve this goal through their respective immigration approaches and how did this impact immigrant inclusion efforts operating in these contexts? This is how I considered my principal research question ('How are efforts to promote the inclusion of immigrants impacted by a national government which is (perceived to be) unwelcoming of immigrants and immigration?') in the contexts of the cases that I had selected. In this study, the term 'immigrant inclusion efforts' refers to the formal and informal structures and activities that practitioners use to welcome and include immigrants.

While there are many different ways to potentially gauge this, the perceptions of immigrant inclusion practitioners were particularly suitable to consider. Three observations from the immigrant integration literature about the nature of efforts to welcome and include immigrants in many contemporary contexts illuminate why practitioners' perspectives would be an apropos unit of analysis to investigate my primary research question.

A prolific body of theoretical and empirical research spanning many disciplines has been developed under the term 'integration'.<sup>14</sup> This term, alongside 'inclusion' and 'incorporation,' is among the most widely used of terms to describe and theorise about efforts to settle and include immigrants. Though this study employs the term 'inclusion' (a definition and rationale is provided later in the chapter (see the 'Selecting and Defining the Terms "Immigrant," "Immigrant Inclusion," and "Immigrant Inclusion Practitioner"' section)), scholarship from the integration literature offer insights about the nature of efforts to welcome and include immigrants that informed the selection of immigrant inclusion practitioners as the study's unit of analysis and the research sub-questions which it investigates.

Integration scholarship has empirically examined and theorised what constitutes integration. While no formal conceptual consensus of integration exists in this literature, analyses increasingly speak to the *relational* nature of integration, whereby integration is understood as a fluid process or processes rather than a fixed outcome. These processes usually involve a constellation of public and private actors and institutions. This relational quality is often framed as being 'two way,' occurring between immigrants and assorted societal actors and institutions at all levels (Klarenbeek, 2021, p. 902) or 'three way' also encompassing transnational and supranational actors and institutions (Erdal & Oeppen, 2013; Garcés-Mascreñas & Penninx, 2016). Immigrant inclusion practitioners are uniquely positioned to observe this as they must interpret and often engage with the larger political climate, including the national government, to carry out their work (e.g. see

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<sup>14</sup> It is important to acknowledge that much of the scholarship on 'integration' focuses on efforts in a European context and that its production is dominated by Global North researchers and institutions (Natter & Welfens, 2024, p. 1684).

Bloemraad et al, 2022, p.320, for a discussion of the varied roles that practitioners within immigrant organisations play in this respect).

The relational nature of integration processes and actors can manifest on multiple societal levels. It can present vertically, encompassing different societal scales (e.g. local, regional, national, supranational, and global), horizontally across a societal level (e.g. within and across cities, transnationally, etc.), and in entangled ways where 'local contexts are always entangled with broader transnational and geopolitical forces operating at multiple levels and scales' (Adamson et al, 2024, p. 519). This extensive body of research highlights the complex *multiscalar* nature of integration efforts (Adamson et al, 2024; Filomeno, 2017; Hantson et al, 2024; Panizzon & van Riemsdijk, 2019).

A significant trove of scholarship within this larger research corpus has developed exploring the multiscalarity of integration efforts in the context of multi-level governance (Dekker et al, 2015; Emilsson, 2015; Hepburn & Zapata-Barrero, 2014; Scholten, 2015; Zapata-Barrero et al, 2017). Researchers have observed a spectrum of multi-level governance approaches among vertical and horizontal levels that span from policy convergence to divergence to the absence of coordination ('policy decoupling') of integration policy and processes and the use of this term is often applied more broadly to reflect this (Scholten, 2014; Penninx & Scholten, 2016; Zapata-Barrero et al, 2017). While a considerable amount of the vertical political relations research in this strand has treated the national politics of immigration as a separate external factor that unidirectionally shapes subnational/local immigration policies, calls have arisen for a more relational approach in examining how political dynamics, policy interventions, and relations among and across these different levels of governance influence one another (Filomeno, 2017, p. 106). More research is emerging which explores this (Adamson, 2023; Bazurli et al, 2022; Caponio et al, 2022; Pettrachin, 2023) and the research questions investigated in this study also contribute to this examination. The enactment of many integration policies, regardless of from which levels of government they flow, is overseen and in some cases directly conducted by public sector practitioners who Lipsky (1980) coined 'street-level bureaucrats.' These individuals operate the frontlines of government, directly interacting with the public as they carry out government policies. Integration research has shown that although these figures have some degree of discretion as to how they implement these policies, limited time and resources often force them to make difficult choices about who they will help and how (Belabus & Gerrits, 2017). As Chapters 7 and 8 illustrate, this dynamic was exacerbated in the Brexit and Trump eras and those working in geographical contexts where the local politics diverged from the national immigration directives were especially affected. Practitioners operating in these contested spaces provide insight into the impact of multiscalar political dynamics on the immigrant inclusion field and their work, adding to the literature on this topic (e.g. Van der Leun, 2006). Thus, the diversity of roles and positions from which immigrant inclusion practitioners carry out efforts to

welcome and include immigrants often enable them to witness and contribute to this multiscalarity (Chapter 3) and may also produce political and ethical tensions for public sector practitioners charged with navigating and enforcing immigration policies that may impede or conflict with their other professional responsibilities (Chapters 7 and 8).

Integration scholarship also has showcased the *multidimensional* quality of integration processes as they often span across different life spheres ('dimensions'), encompass a range of actors, and are impacted by an assortment of factors (Heath & Schneider, 2021; Maxwell, 2013; Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016; Spencer, 2022). For example, Spencer and Charsley (2016) identify five key domains in which integration processes take place (social, structural, cultural, civic and political, and identity) along with five groupings of factors which they call 'effectors' that may facilitate or impede engagement with integration processes. The effectors that they identify relate to the realms of individuals (e.g. one's language ability, gender, etc.), families and social networks (e.g. care responsibilities and cultural expectations), opportunity structures in society which are influenced by structural inequalities (e.g. job opportunities and education systems), policy interventions (e.g. restrictions and entitlements), and transnational structures and activities (e.g. networks and remittances). The wide breadth of activities performed by those in the immigrant inclusion field as discussed in Chapter 3 and the diversity of the inclusion initiatives with which they are connected (e.g. immigrant organisations, refugee resettlement organisations, higher education institutions, and initiatives within religious communities, etc.) means that they can be found operating in all five of the domains suggested by Spencer and Charsley. Their efforts may be advanced or impeded by a multitude of effectors in the operational context of these interventions. This provides a fertile perspective for which practitioners can consider and assess the impact of the national government on their work and their field.

Thus, selecting immigrant inclusion practitioners as the unit of analysis for this research allowed a rich, textured picture to emerge of the varied contexts in which immigrant inclusion efforts occurred in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras. I intentionally used a broad definition of immigrant inclusion practitioner for this study so that I could approach individuals working in a variety of roles and spaces within the field. This provided an assortment of vantage points through which the impact of the national government's immigration approach may be viewed.

### **Research Sub-questions**

The selection of immigrant inclusion practitioners as the units of analysis and relevant literature then informed the formulation of research sub-questions. I used the following research sub-questions and underpinning logic to guide the inquiry:

***Research Question 1 (RQ1):*** *How did immigrant inclusion practitioners working in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras perceive their*

*national government's approach to immigration in terms of being un/welcoming and how did they see this manifest in their national government's immigration approach?*

In order to investigate the overarching research question, I first had to establish if research participants found the national government's immigration approach in the Brexit and Trump eras to be unwelcoming. This sub-question does this. Querying tangible manifestations of this from participants also provides a profile of what constitutes an unwelcoming immigration approach in each country during these time periods.

**Research Question 2 (RQ2):** *Is the perception of their national government's immigration approach in the Brexit and Trump eras different from how they perceived the immigration approach of the previous national government (the Cameron Government in the UK and the Obama Administration in the US)?*

This sub-question determines if the Brexit and Trump Governments fulfilled the campaigns' promise of escalating the level of unwelcoming for immigrants and immigration. Additionally, practitioner perceptions of the previous national government's immigration approach can illuminate if the UK and US Governments' immigration approaches in the Brexit and Trump eras were distinctive or merely a continuation of the previous governments' approaches.

**Research Question 3 (RQ3):** *How did immigrant inclusion practitioners working in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras perceive the national government's immigration approach impacting their immigrant inclusion work?*

The main focus of the overarching research question is to understand the impact that operating in an unwelcoming environment had on immigrant inclusion efforts. This sub-question seeks to articulate this impact in concrete ways.

**Research Question 4 (RQ4):** *What information and experiences formed these perceptions?*

This sub-question facilitates an understanding of the sources of information and experiences that shape participants' perceptions of the Brexit and Trump Governments' immigration approaches and of the previous governments' approaches. Identifying these sources provides greater context about what shapes these perceptions and highlights the assorted vantage points and positionalities that participants bring to this research.

Once I determined my research sub-questions, I then developed the following research design and methodology to explore this.

## **Research Design: Choosing an Abductive Sequential Approach and Methods Used**

I chose to take an abductive approach in interrogating the research sub-questions. An abductive approach utilises a 'creative inferential process' (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p.167) that can both generate theory from surprises in the data as well as confirm and elaborate on existing theory. This aligned with my philosophical and pragmatic preferences for undertaking exploratory research. It allowed me to probe questions raised through my professional practitioner experience and my deep reading of relevant literature by engaging others in the inclusion field and adding their voices, which have been largely absent, to existing research.

A sequential research design let me gather and analyse a significant amount of data through the first phase (an online written questionnaire using closed and open-ended questions) and then to contextualise and build on this data through the second phase (document analysis). This approach, detailed below, enhanced the richness of the research and the utility that it may hold for scholars and practitioners.

The second phase of data collection also provided an opportunity to validate through triangulation some of the qualitative data gathered in the initial phase of the research. This enabled me to corroborate information through the gathering of data from a range of individuals and sources (Carter et al, 2014). Types of additional sources that I used to verify or to better understand open-ended survey responses included government documents, websites, and archival resources; peer-reviewed academic journal and traditional media articles; grey literature publications such as civil society, professional organisations, and think tank websites and reports; and websites of some immigrant inclusion practitioner organisations and groups.

Combining quantitative and qualitative methods enabled me to leverage the strengths of both approaches by using quantitative and qualitative tools to tackle both the confirmatory and exploratory dimensions of my research sub-questions. The quantitative method (survey research using close-ended multiple choice or ranked Likert-scale survey questions) produced data in a standardised way that enabled me to compare responses both within and across the two data sets. It also resulted in descriptive demographic statistical information about research participants and their immigrant inclusion initiatives that provided greater context and contributed to field mapping.

The two qualitative methods employed were survey research using open-ended questions and document analysis. The former yielded data that added depth and context to close-ended questions. The latter also offered greater context to, in some situations, explained or triangulated items referenced in the open-ended survey responses. This resulted in a fuller delineation of participants' perceptions about the national government's approach to immigration, its impacts on their inclusion efforts,

and on the larger political ecosystem and immigrant inclusion field than if I had deployed an exclusively qualitative or quantitative approach.

### **Selecting and Defining the Terms ‘Immigrant,’ ‘Immigrant Inclusion,’ and ‘Immigrant Inclusion Practitioner’**

This study centres around and frequently employs the terms ‘immigrant,’ ‘immigrant inclusion’ and ‘immigrant inclusion practitioner.’ None of these terms has a universal definition and other terms often are used interchangeably with them. Therefore, it is important to be clear about their meaning in the context of this research.

In this study, I utilise a common definition for the term ‘immigrant,’ meaning someone who is residing in a country different from the one in which they were born (Bolter, 2019). I elected to use the ‘immigrant’ instead of ‘migrant’ because ‘migrant’ tends to encompass internally-displaced people, who are not included in this research.<sup>1516</sup>

As discussed earlier in this chapter, various terms also exist in the literature to describe efforts to welcome and include immigrants. The term ‘inclusion’ in regards to immigrants, immigration, and migration governance can be found within documents from a range of sources and sectors.<sup>17</sup> ‘Integration’ and ‘incorporation’ are two other terms frequently used to label these efforts (Spencer, 2022), further complicating efforts to distinguish them. Variability in the application of these terms also occurs since they can denote processes, outcomes, or both (Gilmartin & Dagg, 2022). Additionally, their deployment as concepts in research or in policymaking settings can affect the meanings and functions ascribed to them (Penninx, 2019). This assortment of terms, meanings, applications, and semantic convolution illuminate philosophical, cultural, and practical variegations in how this work is conceptualised and carried out as well as the complexities of these efforts.<sup>18</sup> They also reflect the evolving but inherently limited nature of jargon to capture such a dynamic, interdisciplinary, and transnational field of practice.

I was aware of these different but overlapping terms when I constructed this study. Two factors influenced my decision to use the term ‘immigrant inclusion’. First, this study is part of a larger research agenda in which I seek to interrogate how those

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<sup>15</sup>Though it is considered primarily in the context of the UK, Anderson & Blinder (2019) offer a concise discussion of some of the various meanings and uses applied to the terms ‘immigrant’ and ‘migrant,’ the importance of being clear on which term and definition is employed, and the potential impact of this in data collection and analysis and in public debate and policy.

<sup>16</sup> My preference is also shaped by my positionality as an American researcher and social inclusion practitioner. In the US and North America, ‘immigrant’ tends to be the dominant term used regarding immigration (Bolter, 2019).

<sup>17</sup> These include numerous academic disciplines such as migration and refugee studies, information studies, sociology, social work, and psychology (e.g. Beretta et al, 2018; Bruhn & Gonzales, 2023; Keating & Janmaat, 2020; Neville et al, 2018; Sorrell-Medina, 2022; Vasquez Guzman et al, 2020), government and intergovernmental organisations (e.g. Cities for Action, nd; IOM, n.d.; San Mateo Office of Community Affairs, 2023; World Bank, 2023), and civil society and third sector organisations (e.g. City of Sanctuary UK, 2023; OneAmerica, 2023; Welcoming America, 2023).

<sup>18</sup> For a succinct but fuller unpacking of the use and evolution of these terms in the context of migration studies, see Spencer (2022).

working to advance social inclusion navigate and adapt in spaces where those in power are hostile to inclusion efforts and/or are actively promoting social exclusion. Therefore, using the term 'inclusion' situated this research within that larger context. Second, I encountered and utilised the term 'inclusion' frequently in my extensive professional experience as a US-based community organiser and social inclusion practitioner. This familiarity and comfort with the term undoubtedly influenced my selection and employment of it in this research.

I define 'immigrant inclusion' as 'efforts by individuals, groups, and/or organisations to welcome and include immigrants.' In this research, the term 'immigrant inclusion practitioner' can refer to a collective body such as a formal or informal organisation or group carrying out these efforts. It also can apply to a specific individual working autonomously (e.g. an immigration attorney) or as part of these collective efforts (e.g. a caseworker at a refugee resettlement agency, an international student advisor at a university, a local government worker administering municipal immigrant inclusion programmes and funding, etc)The next chapter discusses the immigrant inclusion field in greater detail, revealing the diversity of actors constituting it, the interventions undertaken, and the categories of migrants affected by these efforts (e.g. skilled expats, labour migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants with irregular/undocumented status).<sup>19</sup> Chapter 3 highlights the variety of organisational missions and inclusion activities performed by those represented in this study. As such their work collectively is not limited to serving one category of immigrants and many of the immigrant inclusion practitioners in this study were involved with immigrant inclusion efforts whose work affected immigrants of multiple categories.

As referenced earlier in this thesis, immigrant inclusion practitioners are not a formally tallied or censused group. Other terms with similar meanings also are used in the literature to describe these practitioners. Alternative terms include 'immigration advocates' (e.g. Bada, 2023; Biggerstaff & Taiyyeba, 2020; Markham, 2020) and 'immigration practitioners' (e.g. Pearman & Olinga-Shannon, 2017; Riddell, 2014; Scott et al, 2019). Both labels can refer to individuals as well as to organisations. Germane terms that apply exclusively to groups and organisations engaged in this work are '[immigrant/migrant/refugee-led or serving] third sector organisations (TSOs)<sup>20</sup>, 'immigrant serving organisations (ISOs)<sup>21</sup>, 'migrant and refugee community organisations/refugee community organisations (MRCOs/RCOs)<sup>22</sup>,

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<sup>19</sup> It is important to note that these commonly-used subcategories of migrants are deeply powerful in shaping immigrants' experiences and public perceptions of immigration and immigrants. These labels affect immigrants' positions and entitlements in society along with their portrayal in public discourse (Dahinderen et al, 2021). They do not represent tangible, objective categories, but rather are social constructs. Nevertheless, the political and economic constraints that they produce for immigrants are real and significant (Kunz, 2019; Sigona, 2018).

<sup>20</sup> For examples of this, see Benwell et al (2023), Mesarič & Vacchelli (2021), and Garkisch et al (2017).

<sup>21</sup> Examples of this can be found in Bernstein et al (2020), Roth et al (2018), and Sorrell-Medina (2022).

<sup>22</sup> Examples include Gonzalez Benson (2020a), Griffiths et al (2005), and Phillimore & Goodson (2010).

'migrant community-based organisations (MCBOs)<sup>23</sup>', and 'immigrant/migrant organisations (IOs/MOs)<sup>24</sup>'. While I draw on these strands of research, I exclusively use the term 'immigrant inclusion practitioner' in this study.

### **Data Collection: Tools Used and Selection Rationale**

I developed an online written questionnaire containing both closed and open-ended questions as the primary tool for gathering data for the following reasons.

First, an online written questionnaire provided a format that would be accessible and convenient for many immigrant inclusion practitioners. I knew from my extensive practitioner experience and from previous conversations with colleagues in the field that many immigrant inclusion practitioners were facing incredibly challenging conditions: ballooning workloads, limited or diminished resources and support for their work, professional burnout, and the struggle of balancing the demands of their inclusion work with their family/caring responsibilities and social/community commitments. I also was cognisant that I would be administering the survey during the final months of the 2020 US presidential campaign and election and in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both of these events generated additional work and stress for some US immigrant inclusion practitioners. I reasoned that the plasticity, accessibility, and convenience of an online survey would increase the likelihood of participation, enabling immigrant inclusion practitioners to start and return to it as they are able/willing and without any need for facilitation from me. Research identifies these qualities as some of the methodological strengths that online surveys can offer (Ball, 2019, p.413).

The inclusion of closed and open-ended questions also gave respondents flexibility in the ways in which they could partake in this research. I constructed the survey so that participants could progress through the entire questionnaire without having to answer every question. This supported participation from practitioners with limited time or energy and would encourage participants to continue with the survey even if they found portions of it less relevant or engaging.

Second, using an online written questionnaire enabled me to invite a wide, diverse array of immigrant inclusion practitioners to participate in this study since a link to it could be easily circulated via email to individuals, groups, and networks of practitioners working throughout the UK and the US in different occupational and organisational contexts. The online format also lent itself well to the snowball sampling technique that I planned to use to increase the scope of my outreach. This technique allowed willing immigrant inclusion practitioners to share the survey with

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<sup>23</sup> See Bloemraad & Terriquez (2016), Guo (2014), and Martinez-Damia et al (2023) for examples of this.

<sup>24</sup> Examples include Babis (2016), Bloemraad et al (2022), Braglowski & Bonfert (2023), and Gleeson & Bloemraad (2012).

others in their networks, thereby extending the questionnaire's reach and further legitimising the research.

Third, using an online written questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions could capture different types of data to yield a more robust illustration of the UK and US immigrant inclusion landscape and of perceptions from those working within it than if I only used a purely qualitative or quantitative approach. The close-ended questions provided me with standardised responses from these diverse practitioners while the open-ended questions captured their discrete reflections.

Fourth, as a doctoral researcher on a tight budget with a young family carrying out my research during a pandemic (part of which was spent in lockdown with my infant and school-age child), I needed a tool which was economical, secure, easy-to-use, accessible from a range of mobile devices, convenient, and flexible for my shifting availability. An online survey ticked all these boxes. Using a secure online survey platform also gave me as a researcher a consistent, safe, structured way to collect, store, and analyse data.

Fifth and finally, as previously mentioned, I undertook my research in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. Keeping people healthy and safe during this early stage of the pandemic was paramount and required avoiding or severely limiting in-person contact. Thus, an online written survey had the added benefit of allowing people to participate without putting their health in jeopardy.

### **Selecting an Online Platform for the Questionnaire**

I used the online survey platform Qualtrics (<http://qualtrics.com>) for administering the questionnaire.<sup>25</sup> Qualtrics enabled me to design web and mobile-compatible versions of the surveys in a relatively simple, streamlined format. It also provided a secure, robust space for collecting, storing, and analysing the data. Additionally, Qualtrics offered tools such as data comparison features and filtered data report generation that aided me in analysis. All of these were important considerations in selecting it.

### **Questionnaire Design and Development**

The online questionnaire was a multinational, multicultural, or multiregional (3MC) survey as it was administered to participants in different countries (de Jong et al, 2019). 3MC surveys require an additional layer of consideration as cultural, contextual, and/or linguistic differences may affect how participants understand and respond to the questions posed and the methods by which they are being asked. I employed an ask-the-same question (ASQ) approach, whereby I developed a source questionnaire guided by my overarching research question and based on my research sub-questions that I then tailored into a version for UK-based participants and one for US-based participants (see Appendix I for full copies of the UK and US

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<sup>25</sup> I was able to use a basic version of Qualtrics without fees through the University of Edinburgh's institutional subscription.

versions of the written questionnaire including the survey's embedded Participant Information Sheet and Participant Informed Consent Form). The ASQ approach is a frequent choice for researchers collecting data from participants in different countries as it 'targets comparability on the basis of similar wording across questionnaires, permitting comparison during analysis of both geographical and temporal data' and 'facilitates replicability in both of these dimensions' (de Jong et al, 2019, p. 116).

A prime example of this occurred in Part II of the survey. This section sought to capture participants' perceptions of their national government's immigration approach during the Brexit or Trump era as well as under their previous government. In the UK survey, this section is titled 'Part II: Perceptions of the UK Government's approach to immigration' whereas in the US survey, it is labelled 'Part II: Perceptions of the US Federal Government's approach to immigration.'

In each survey, I then offered a context-specific definition for what constitutes the national government's immigration approach. In the case of the UK, this referred to the language, policies, and actions undertaken by the prime minister, any member serving in their cabinet or as their advisors, and the UK government departments and agencies that they oversee. For the US, this referenced the language, policies, and actions undertaken by the US president, any member serving in their cabinet or as their advisors, and the US Federal Government departments and agencies that the president and their cabinet members oversee. This was followed in each survey by an explicit delineation of the Brexit or Trump time period.

The questions asking for the participant's perception of the previous government's immigration approach also contained an explanation of which government I was referencing and the years that constituted its tenure. In the UK survey, this was worded as 'I perceive the UK government's approach to immigration before the Brexit referendum while David Cameron was prime minister (2010-2016) to have been...' whilst in the US survey it appears as 'I perceive the US Federal Government's approach to immigration while Barack Obama was the US president (2009-2017) to have been...'

The online written questionnaire used a combination of closed and open-ended questions. Close-ended questions utilised either a multiple-choice format or a Likert scale for questions requiring a ranked response. The inclusion of close-ended questions allowed me to compare responses in a standardised way and generated descriptive statistical data. Likert scales in this survey featured either a five-point or seven-point scale plus a 'don't know' option. Odd-numbered Likert scales offered the participant a neutral option, reducing the chance of response bias since it does not oblige the participant to take a particular position (Croasmun & Lee, 2011).

Most of the close-ended questions were followed by one or more open-ended questions. Qualitative data collected through open-ended questions can provide greater context and clarity about the participant's responses to the close-ended

questions. In turn, this can mitigate the limitations of Likert scales as measurement tools (Ogden & Lo, 2011).

Open-ended questions invited participants to share sources of information and relevant experiences that shaped their rankings. They gave participants space to articulate examples of their understandings of key concepts explored through this research, to explain their meaning-making of these concepts, and to provide contextual details. This is in keeping with the abductive, interpretive research approach that I employed. This approach emphasises the importance of rooting research-derived knowledge to the specific human beings who participated and to their particular historical, geographical, and cultural situations (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012).

The combination of a closed-ended broad question followed by open-ended questions seeking more specificity and detail can also be helpful in minimising the cognitive effort that participants need to respond (Hipp et al, 2020, p. 112). Retrospective questions, some of which the survey contained, can be cognitively taxing. I incorporated exact dates and specific anchor points into questions about time-bound matters as research has shown that this can aid in the accuracy recall of retrospective details (Barsky, 2002, p. 981; Beckett et al, 2001, p. 621).<sup>26</sup> For example, in asking US-based participants to rank their national government's immigration approach during the Trump era, I offered a specific definition for the term 'US Federal Government' and demarcated the beginning of the Trump era as the time period 'since Donald Trump became the US President on January 20, 2017' in the wording of the question (the survey was available until the end of the Trump era so I did not need to provide an end date in the question).

Another example of this occurred in the UK survey when I asked participants to rank their perception of the UK Government's approach to immigration after the Brexit referendum. In the survey question, I used wording that explicitly indicated the premierships and years that constituted the Brexit era in the study ('this time period includes both the premierships of Theresa May (2016-2019) and Boris Johnson (2019-present)') so as to help participants locate and recall their experiences for this time period.

### **Survey Sections and Inclusion Rationale**

The online questionnaire consisted of six parts detailed below and took approximately 30-45 minutes to complete. Table 1 elaborates on the content provided and information sought from each survey section and highlights for which research sub-questions they generated data. While I did tailor each version of the survey to reflect the different definition of the national government in each country and to explicitly identify the executives leading those governments during the

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<sup>26</sup> This occurs in Part II and Part III of each survey. Copies of both surveys are available in Appendix I.

surveyed time periods, there are no substantive differences in the two survey versions (see full copies of both versions in Appendix I).

### ***Section 1- Introduction***

This section provided information about me as a researcher, the survey (including its aim, intended use, ethical review and approval, and data confidentiality and security measures), and a participant consent form. It gave participants key information necessary for making an informed decision as to whether or not they would participate and allowed them to give consent if they wanted to participate.

### ***Section 2- Part I: Immigrant Inclusion Initiative(s) with which You Are Involved***

This section collected essential details about the participant's immigrant inclusion work. The information illuminated where their inclusion initiative was physically based, the geographical and/or online scope of their work, and the types of activities involved. It used an immigrant inclusion activity typology originally developed for this study to catalogue and map the types of activities performed on a micro level by individual participants and their initiatives as well as those happening on a macro level in the field. When taken together, responses sketched a portrait of the varied immigrant inclusion work occurring in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras.

### ***Section 3- Part II: Perceptions of the National Government's Approach to Immigration***

This section gauged how welcoming or unwelcoming the participant perceived the national government's immigration approach to be during the Brexit or Trump era and how that compared to their perceptions of the previous national government's immigration approach. I used a seven-point Likert scale of 'extremely welcoming' to 'extremely unwelcoming' with an eighth option of 'don't know' to measure their perceptions of each national government's immigration approach. I included a close-ended question about their perception of the previous government's immigration approach using the same seven-point Likert scale with an eighth option of 'don't know' to ascertain if they perceived a shift in the national government's immigration approach. This gave me a standardised way to compare the data and observe if any shifts occurred. Having this comparison coupled with the collection of open-ended data regarding what informed these perceptions also illuminated if participants saw the national government's approach towards immigration during the Brexit or Trump era as being distinctive from that of the previous government.

### ***Section 4- Part III: Perceptions of Opportunities, Risks, and Consequences Related to Your Immigrant Inclusion Work***

This section probed how the participant conceived of and assessed the opportunities, risks, and consequences of pursuing immigrant inclusion work in the Brexit or Trump era. Immigrant inclusion practitioners are impacted by the larger

political and social climate in which they operate. Research has shown practitioners are negatively affected by a government's increasingly restrictive or punitive immigration approaches (Canning, 2021). Perceptions of an unwelcoming environment and the barriers that it presents may in turn impact how practitioners carry out their work (Roth & Grace, 2018). I included these questions to better understand how practitioners understood the opportunities, risks, and consequences of practising their work during the Brexit and Trump eras. This survey data proved instructive for theory development and for highlighting lines of possible future research that I discuss in later chapters.

#### ***Section 5- Part IV: The National Government's Impact on Your Immigrant Inclusion Work***

This section queried to what degree, if any, the national government's immigration approach had on affecting the participant's immigrant inclusion work during the Brexit or Trump era. Using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'extremely strong impact' to 'no impact at all' (with a sixth option of 'don't know'), the questions captured the perceived impact that the national government's immigration approach had on the participant's initiative's overall work as well as in three key areas: 1) messaging about its inclusion work, 2) its daily operations, and 3) the funding and resourcing of its work. The inclusion of these questions revealed the degree of impact that a core component of the national political environment (the executive national government) had on immigrant inclusion efforts. This is explored in Chapter 7.

#### ***Section 6- Part V: Demographic Information***

This section captured important details about the participant's intersecting identities and their positionality within their immigrant inclusion organisation and in the broader field. This data contributes to the nascent mapping of the field (Chapter 3) and illuminated possibilities for future research. These are discussed in Chapter 8.

**Table 1. Survey Section Content Details and Relevant Research Sub-questions**

Survey Section	Section Content	Relevant Research Sub-questions
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank you to participants for taking survey</li> <li>• Expected time length for completing survey</li> <li>• My professional background and university affiliation</li> <li>• Survey focus and aims</li> <li>• Confirmation of the survey’s ethical review and approval</li> <li>• Link to the university’s ethics process</li> <li>• Link to the Participant Information Sheet</li> <li>• Participant Informed Consent Form</li> </ul>	Not applicable
Part I: Immigrant Inclusion Initiative(s) with which You Are Involved	<p>Asked participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List immigrant inclusion initiatives with which they were involved</li> <li>• Select one initiative that would be used to answer the rest of the survey questions. Indicate this by capitalising the letters of that initiative in their response.</li> <li>• Detail where their immigrant inclusion initiative was based and where they operated (both online and offline and on what scale)</li> <li>• Select immigrant inclusion initiative activities from listing of different activity types</li> </ul>	All research sub-questions since it provided important context for analysing the data
Part II: Perceptions of the National Government’s Approach to Immigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defined the term ‘the national government’s immigration approach’ is provided (Note: each version’s wording and definition is tailored to the country-specific context. For example, the national government is referred to as the ‘US Federal Government’ in the US version whereas in the UK version it is called the ‘UK Government’) and offered specific time periods for the governments being referenced</li> </ul> <p>Asked participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a Likert scale to rank how welcoming or unwelcoming they perceive their national government’s immigration approach to be during the Brexit or Trump era</li> </ul>	RQ1, RQ2, RQ4

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a text box to share what information or experiences they considered in ranking their national government</li> <li>• Use a Likert scale to rank how welcoming or unwelcoming they perceived the <i>previous</i> national government's immigration approach to have been</li> <li>• Use a text box to share what information or experiences they considered in ranking the <i>previous</i> national government's immigration approach</li> </ul>	
Part III: Perceptions of Opportunities, Risks and Consequences Related to Your Immigrant Inclusion Work	<p>Asked participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a Likert scale to rank the degree of opportunity for pursuing their immigrant inclusion work during the Brexit or Trump eras</li> <li>• Use a text box to describe examples of opportunities related to their immigrant inclusion work that they considered when choosing a ranking</li> <li>• Use a text box to share what information or experiences they considered in ranking the degree of opportunity for their immigrant inclusion work</li> <li>• Use a Likert scale to rank the degree of risk for pursuing their immigrant inclusion work during the Brexit or Trump era</li> <li>• Use a text box to describe examples of risks related to their immigrant inclusion work that they considered when choosing a ranking</li> <li>• Use a text box to share what information or experiences they considered in ranking the degree of risk for their immigrant inclusion work</li> <li>• Select a close-ended response ('yes', 'no', 'don't know') to answer if their immigrant inclusion initiative has experienced any consequences (either positive or negative) from pursuing immigrant inclusion work in the Brexit or Trump era</li> <li>• Use a text box to describe examples of consequences related to their immigrant inclusion work that they considered when choosing a ranking</li> </ul>	RQ3, RQ4
Part IV: The National Government's	<p>Asked participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a Likert scale to rank the degree of impact that the national government's</li> </ul>	RQ3, RQ4

<p>Impact on Your Immigrant Inclusion Work</p>	<p>immigration approach has on their immigrant inclusion initiative's overall work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a Likert scale to rank the degree of impact that the national government's immigration approach has on their immigrant inclusion initiative's messaging and description of its work</li> <li>• Use a Likert scale to rank the degree of impact that the national government's immigration approach has on how their immigrant inclusion initiative's carries out its daily work</li> <li>• Use a Likert scale to rank the degree of impact that the national government's immigration approach has on their immigrant inclusion initiative's gains the necessary funding and resources for its work</li> </ul>	
<p>Part V: Demographic Information</p>	<p>Asked participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicate if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview</li> <li>• Indicate if they would like to receive updates on this research</li> <li>• Provide their email if they answered 'yes' to either previous question. This question was explicitly marked optional.</li> <li>• Mark from a close-ended list all of their current [at the time of the survey] roles at the immigrant inclusion initiative with which they are involved (this includes a 'prefer not to answer' option). They could tick all roles that apply.</li> <li>• Mark from a list of options the total amount of time that they have been active with their immigrant inclusion initiative, not just the time they had spent in their current role(s) with that initiative.</li> <li>• Indicate if they are an immigrant (this included a 'prefer not to answer' option). This question was explicitly marked optional.</li> <li>• Indicate if they are a citizen of the country about which they are taking the survey (this includes a 'prefer not to answer' option). This question was explicitly marked optional.</li> <li>• Indicate their gender identity from a list of options (this included a 'not listed' option with an open text box for them to describe their gender identity in their own words and</li> </ul>	<p>All research sub-questions since it provided important context for analysing the data</p>

	<p>a 'prefer not to answer' option). This question was explicitly marked optional.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Indicate from a list of options their age (this includes a 'prefer not to answer' option). This question was explicitly marked optional.</li><li>• Use a text box question to describe in their own words their ethnic identity. This question was explicitly marked optional.</li><li>• Use a text box to provide their name. This was explicitly marked optional.</li></ul> <p>I also included a thank you to participants for taking survey, my email, and an invitation to contact me with any questions or concerns.</p>	
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## **Review of My Draft Survey**

My thesis supervisors, a colleague in my doctoral programme, and Dr Alan Marshall (Professor of Social Research on Inequality at the University of Edinburgh, who has significant experience developing and administering online written questionnaires) reviewed and provided feedback on my survey drafts. I incorporated their feedback into the final version of each survey which was then pretested.

## **Questionnaire Pretesting**

Once I set-up the questionnaire within Qualtrics, I initiated a round of pretesting for each version. Pretesting is an important practice in general for increasing the validity of measurement in questionnaires (Sue & Ritter, 2012, p. 74). It is especially critical to include with 3MC surveys where cultural and contextual differences can impact how participants understand and respond to both the questions being asked and the survey process itself (de Jong et al, 2019, p. 125).

In line with the pretesting guidance offered by Sue & Ritter (2012), pretesters were those active with immigrant inclusion or analogous social inclusion efforts. I also sought out pretesters who were diverse in terms of their backgrounds, identities, educational experiences, and languages spoken as these different facets may impact how participants interpret and answer the survey questions. Pretesters contributed to this research exclusively through this role and did not participate in the final survey. I recruited and instructed pretesters via emails (see Appendix II for email instructions to pretesters).

I pretested both versions of the questionnaire to solicit feedback on the clarity of the wording, the definitions used, and on the accessibility and relative user-friendly formatting of my online survey instrument. Eight individuals from the UK and eight individuals from the US served as pretesters. I reviewed and incorporated feedback from pretesters into the final formatting and wording for each survey version. Overall, pretesters commented that the survey worked well. One pretester, who is a social scientist and has extensive experience administering surveys, proffered helpful guidance on the options for the demographic question on gender. The final versions of the survey use these suggested options.

## **Participant Recruitment**

Immigrant inclusion practitioners (the target population for the survey) constitute a diverse, vast cohort that is not formally defined or tracked through a census.<sup>27</sup> The

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<sup>27</sup> As previously discussed, I intentionally employed a broad definition for immigrant inclusion practitioner. I defined it as 'an individual, group or organisation involved with welcoming and including immigrants.' This was done so as to capture the variegation in activity, scope, and organisation of practitioners and the efforts in which they participated. It included paid and unpaid practitioners as well as those who worked with organisations and groups that are explicitly immigrant-serving as well as those that are not but still perform immigrant inclusion work to achieve their larger mission (e.g. religious congregations, higher education institutions, and health care institutions).

lack of clearly-defined, firm parameters for this population made probability sampling impossible (Parker et al, 2019). Therefore, I used a combination of purposeful direct recruitment and snowball sampling techniques to recruit a sample that provided perspectives from an assortment of real-world vantage points and highlighted the variety and multiscalarity within the field.

I directly recruited participants by sending personalised emails to select individuals who were active with immigrant inclusion efforts in the UK and the US during the studied time period. Further outreach occurred via tailored emails to immigration and immigrant inclusion list serves, online networks, and organisations containing members operating in the UK and the US (see Appendix III for a list of list serves, online networks, and organisations contacted).

I paired direct recruitment efforts with snowball sampling to expand the scope of prospective participants and to increase the likelihood of participation. I commenced snowball sampling by inviting those with whom I directly corresponded to share the survey link with others in their network who fit the research criteria. I asked individuals within immigrant inclusion organisations, networks, and groups in the UK and the US who had received the survey to then disseminate it to their peers. I also approached practitioners recommended through the snowballing process. This extended the research participation chain (Parker et al, 2019) and the encouragement from peers and community gatekeepers to participate enhanced the legitimacy and credibility of the study. The latter effect can be especially helpful in engaging ignored, underrepresented, and 'hard-to-reach' groups (Parker et al, 2019). This technique also may have been helpful in persuading immigrant inclusion practitioners in the US to participate in spite of increased workloads and stress occurring from the US presidential campaign and election.

I used three rounds of contact to increase the likelihood of participation. This consisted of an initial email or posting followed by subsequent emails or postings to remind and encourage eligible individuals to participate. Outreach emails and online postings occurred between September 2020 through December 2020. Using this method, I directly contacted ten individual immigrant inclusion practitioners and three online networks/organisations operating in the UK during the Brexit era; 7,187 individuals and four online networks/organisations active in the US in the Trump era; and five list serves/networks containing members operating in either the UK or US during these time periods.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Robust outreach to individuals operating in the US was facilitated by my online membership in a network of 7,172 US-based immigrant inclusion practitioners. Part of my membership included access to an email roster containing members' individual emails. We were allowed and encouraged to contact each other to support each other's work so I directly emailed individuals from this list even though I knew very few of them personally. I did not find a comparable network that I could join in the UK and thus had more limited email outreach to individuals operating there.

Survey recruitment was almost exclusively conducted via email outreach.<sup>29</sup> This presented both recruitment advantages and challenges. The ease, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and scalability afforded by email outreach were all strengths that enabled me to reach more prospective research participants. However, it also limited my recruitment efforts as some people who were sent it may not have received it due to spam filters. Even if an individual received the email in their inbox, they may have not opened it if they did not directly know me or regarded it as junk mass email.

Because of these factors, I do not have a precise accounting of the totality of individuals who received, opened, and considered taking the survey. Therefore, the number of survey responses (meaning the number of individuals who answered at least one of the survey questions) was 88 responses for the UK survey and 239 responses for the US survey. I then developed the inclusion criteria detailed below to ascertain which responses would be analysed for this research.

### **Survey Administration**

The UK version of the survey was available online from 19 September through 31 December 2020. I selected 31 December 2020 as the end date for the UK survey because it marked the end of the formal transition period of the UK's departure from the EU, concluding the Brexit era as I had defined it. The US version of the survey was available online from 19 September 2020 until 20 January 2021. I chose 20 January 2021 as the closing date for the US survey because it was day when the formal transfer of power from Donald Trump to Joseph Biden as US president happened, ending the Trump era as I had demarcated it.

### **Survey Analysis: Inclusion Criteria and Methods**

I applied three criteria to determine which responses would be analysed. First, the participant must have completed the Participant Informed Consent Form at the beginning of the questionnaire (see Appendix I to view this in each version of the survey). Ethically, it would not be appropriate to include responses given without explicit consent for their use. I considered responses that did not answer these questions to be unusable.

Second, the participant must have answered the first survey question in Part I of the questionnaire that asked the participant to identify an immigrant inclusion initiative with which they were active in the UK or the US during the Brexit or Trump era. This affirmed that they were engaged with immigrant inclusion work during the studied time period.

Third, the participant must have answered two close-ended questions in Part II of the survey. The first question asked them to rank their perception of the national

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<sup>29</sup> I did have video or phone conversations with three UK-based and six US-based individuals who were active with immigrant inclusion efforts to seek their help in sharing the survey with their relevant networks. Otherwise, all recruitment correspondence was conducted via email.

government's approach to immigration during the Brexit or Trump era. It used a seven-point Likert scale containing a range from 'extremely unwelcoming' to 'extremely welcoming' plus an eighth option ('don't know'). The second question asked participants to do the same for their perception of the national government's approach to immigration under the previous national government (the Cameron government in the UK or the Obama Administration in the US). This allowed me to gauge whether their perceptions about the national government's immigration approach had shifted between the previous and current eras and, if so, how their perceptions had changed. These two questions were fundamental to answering my larger research question and for better contextualising and understanding participant responses regarding the impact of the national government's immigration approach on their work.

These three criteria addressed essential occupational, ethical, and methodological dimensions of my research. Therefore, I only analysed surveys that met all the criteria. The application of this criteria resulted in 18 surveys from UK participants and 95 surveys from US participants being eligible for inclusion. Table 2 shows the number of UK and US surveys that met each criterion as well as the total amount of surveys from each cohort that fulfilled all the inclusion criteria.

**Table 2. Number of UK and US Surveys Meeting Individual and Collective Inclusion Criteria**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Number of UK Survey Participants</b>	<b>Number of US Survey Participants</b>
Gave consent to participate in research (survey questions 41 & 42)	29	133
Active in UK or US immigrant inclusion work during Brexit or Trump era as indicated by answering survey question 50	23	113
Answered survey questions 9 and 13 regarding perceptions of current and previous national government's immigration approach	19	97
<b>Fulfilled all of the criteria</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>95</b>

*Source: Author's research*

I employed the same methodology for analysing both survey data sets, but I analysed each discreetly. I examined the quantitative and qualitative data together as many of the qualitative survey questions were included to elicit details or explanations for the close-ended responses. I used descriptive statistics to interrogate the quantitative survey responses and thematic analysis, at times accompanied by document analysis, to interpret the qualitative ones.

Quantitative data from close-ended questions was tallied and displayed using the Qualtrics data analysis tools. These tools permitted me to easily compare quantitative responses within and eventually across the two surveys.

I performed separate thematic analysis for each data set using the same multi-step approach. My approach was inspired by readings from Braun & Clarke (2006), Ryan & Bernard (2003), and Schwartz-Shea & Yanow (2012). In keeping with the guidance from these resources and other subsequent writings (e.g. Bourke, 2014; Braun et al, 2022; Holmes, 2020), I entered this activity cognisant that my positionality, especially as an American social inclusion practitioner, an immigrant who moved to and resided in the UK during the Brexit era, and a PhD researcher prioritising an abductive, interpretivist approach, will shape my analysis and interpretations of the data.

To begin, I read through the open-ended data twice. Each time I noted my reactions to what I encountered, including questions raised, surprising or puzzling information, possible insights, and passages that I found particularly compelling.

Next, I reread the open-ended data a third time. As I read through each open-ended response to a survey question, I generated and applied codes. For each cohort, I kept a simple codebook containing the label for each code along with the basic criteria of what would make me tag a response with this code. I coded the UK data set first and then the US data set. If the data that I was coding in the US data set fit the definition for a code from the UK data set, then I used that code. Examples of codes that were used in both data sets are 'deportation', 'government language', 'racism', and 'entry'.<sup>30</sup> I generated new codes for data that did not fit any existing code.

Each data set contained codes that were idiosyncratic for that data set. These codes involved data that referenced events and items unique to that particular country. Many of these codes were created for data that mentioned political actors (e.g. 'prime minister', 'home secretary', 'president', 'attorney general', 'Bannon'), government agencies and departments (e.g. 'Home Office', 'USCIS', 'ICE'), policies (e.g. 'points-based system', 'Title 42') or events that were specific to that country (e.g. 'Brexit [referendum]', '[2016 presidential] campaign').

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<sup>30</sup> I defined and employed the code 'deportation' for data that referenced 'policies and actions regarding deportation of immigrants,' the code 'government language' for data that mentioned 'language of government officials,' the code 'racism' for 'data that referenced racism' and 'entry' for 'data referencing access to entering and entry process/system (e.g. processing visas, asylum claims, etc.)'.

Once all the qualitative data from that survey was initially coded, I then reread the data and reviewed the coding an additional time. This was done in recognition that coding is a 'cyclical act' that often requires at least two rounds to allow full scrutiny and thoughtful coding of the data (Thompson, 2022, p. 1413). The first round allowed me to disaggregate the data in order to examine each response individually. The second round then provided an opportunity for 'synthesis' of the data, whereby I was able to '[put] things together into new assemblages of meaning' (Saldaña, 2021, p. 6). Through this round of coding, I identified themes under which different codes could be clustered. These themes became the basis for how I organised and discussed the data in this thesis. They were based on my interpretation of the data in light of my research sub-questions, preliminary hunches, my assessment of the saliency of the information offered in the qualitative responses in relation to my investigation, and descriptive statistical analysis of the quantitative data. Some of the themes were codes that frequently appeared in the data set or under which many other codes could be organised. The codes 'treatment of immigrants' and 'safety' are two instances of this. They became two important themes in the analysis and discussion of the data.

As I sifted through the qualitative data, I also used document analysis of online resources to contextualise and verify events and information in the open-ended survey responses. Documents can provide critical background and contextual information that can enhance or supplement data collected through other methods (Bowen, 2009). This was certainly true for this research. I came to this research without a background in migration studies or immigration law and with limited knowledge of both countries' immigration systems, especially the UK's system. Document analysis allowed me to deepen my understanding of each country's immigration system; of relevant policies, legislation, and events that I encountered in the data; and to glean multiple perspectives as to the broader dynamics and conditions occurring in these time periods that may have affected research participants. This enriched my ability as a researcher to understand and consider the survey data.

Document analysis of the historical record also enabled me to critically examine the immigration approaches of UK and US Governments preceding the ones included in my survey (i.e. the Brexit, Cameron, Trump and Obama Governments). This allowed for a more comprehensive analysis and construction of the profiles and paths that both governments took to generating environments of extreme unwelcoming than if I had exclusively relied upon survey data.

When an open-ended response referenced an event, policy, legislation, or activity of which I was unfamiliar or that contradicted or exceeded my knowledge about it, I then performed a web-based search for relevant documents. When possible, I included documents from primary sources in triangulating the data. For example, a number of US respondents in their open-ended comments referenced President Trump's 'travel ban' or 'Muslim ban' implemented by executive order. I reviewed this document

(Executive Order 13769) directly to confirm and deepen my understanding of it. I frequently consulted additional documents from academic journals, reputable research institutions, and traditional media sources to broaden and deepen my understanding of what was being referenced (Grant, 2018, p. 103). Documents consulted included websites, policies, and white papers from government institutions and actors (e.g. UK and US courts, UK Parliament, US Congress, departments within UK Government, departments within the US executive branch), articles appearing in academic publications and traditional media (e.g. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *Critical Social Policy*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*), websites and documents produced by immigrant inclusion organisations (e.g. Welcoming America, Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants), and documents drafted by professional and research organisations (e.g. The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, Brookings Institution, the American Bar Association). These assorted sources of information then fed into my analysis of the data.

An example of the data triangulation process used in this research occurred with the interpretation of open-ended comments offered by four UK participants about the UK Government's Vulnerable Syrian Resettlement Scheme (VSRS, later expanded and renamed the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS)). Three UK participants explicitly referenced this scheme in their open-ended responses to what information and experiences factored into their ranking of the Cameron Government (one other UK participant did mention 'resettlement schemes' in their comment to this question but did not offer greater specificity). Prior to this, I was unfamiliar with VSRS/VPRS scheme. I searched the UK Government's website ([www.uk.gov](http://www.uk.gov)) for information about this programme and reviewed two documents (UK Government, 2021; UK Home Office, 2017). I then reviewed two academic journal articles (Bolt, 2020; Bolt 2018) to gain further perspective and additional historical background on this programme and its subsequent evolution. This helped me to better understand their comments and what led them to rank the Cameron Government as being more slightly more welcoming than the Brexit Governments. This information fed into my discussion of the rankings in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Once I had completed my initial coding and review of the data, I then wrote up a descriptive summary with the major themes that I had identified for each data set and offered preliminary analysis. I subsequently shared these write-ups with my thesis supervisors for their feedback and broadly presented these initial themes in papers given at political science and migration conferences. I incorporated this feedback into subsequent analysis.

I then considered both data sets together, noting any similar patterns or themes as well as ways in which they diverged. I reflected on how this relates to my research sub-questions, what additional questions were raised for me as a researcher from this exercise, and how this connects or diverges with existing related theoretical and empirical scholarship.

## **Ethical Considerations and Actions**

My work went through the University of Edinburgh's research ethics review and was approved in August 2019. I then was able to commence data collection. In addition, I discussed any ethical questions or concerns that I had with my thesis supervisors throughout the research process to ensure that I was being transparent and that these questions or concerns were being appropriately addressed.

I weighed and responded to a number of ethical issues related to this research project. Ethical considerations contained procedural and practical dimensions. Procedural dimensions involved how the research is designed and carried out so that it will uphold ethical standards and reflect researcher competency. They are usually identified and attended to in the early stages of research. Practical dimensions can occur throughout the research process and involve 'the real issues that arise in the fieldwork' (Ferreira & Serpa, 2018, p.14). Some of the issues I considered were procedural in nature, others practical, but many had elements of both. Below I discuss these ethical issues and the specific ways that they were considered for this research.

### ***Ethical Consideration #1: Potential Risks to Participants***

The first set of ethical considerations centred around the potential risks that participating in this research might hold for participants. I identified three ethical concerns regarding this. First, questions in the survey may trigger feelings of vulnerability, discomfort, or even trauma in research participants due to the sensitive or personal topic(s) raised by some survey questions. Many immigrants, especially those who are refugees or seeking asylum, individually and collectively experience trauma. Research has shown that those who work with marginalised and vulnerable individuals and communities who have experienced trauma may suffer psychological or emotional distress from hearing about or responding to their trauma (Canning, 2021; Mesa et al, 2020; Posselt et al, 2019). This practitioner distress may appear in different forms that can adversely impact practitioner's mental health and how they carry out their work. These manifestations include Secondary Trauma Stress (often referred to as 'secondary trauma') (Mesa et al, 2020), vicarious trauma (Puvimanasinghe et al, 2015), or compassion fatigue (Canning, 2021). Survey questions may trigger participants to recall trauma experienced by the immigrants with whom they work or trauma that they may have experienced themselves either through their immigrant inclusion work or because of aspects of their identity (e.g. encountering racism as a person of colour). Further, answering certain demographic questions included in the survey may make some participants feel vulnerable and at greater risk. For example, the survey included a question asking the participant if they are a citizen of the country where they are pursuing immigrant inclusion work. This may elicit feelings of heightened vulnerability and risk for those who do not have citizenship or with irregular or precarious immigration status.

I took several actions to manage this concern. I communicated to all participants through the Participant Information Sheet and the Participant Consent Form that participation is optional, their identity and data will be kept confidential, and that they may opt out of the study at any time (see Appendix I to view these). This was done to increase their trust and confidence in the researcher and the research process as well as to give them the ability to control their participation in case they did not feel comfortable going forward. I also explicitly noted in the demographic questions that these questions were optional and provided a 'Prefer not to answer' option. These questions requested some of the most personal and potentially sensitive information from participants so I wanted to make it clear that they were elective. In addition, I reviewed the terms of use for the Qualtrics survey platform to ensure that data was securely and confidentially collected and stored. This was relayed to participants through the Participant Information Form.

Another possible risk to participants was the potential negative impact that their participation in this research could have on their immigrant inclusion initiative and their involvement with it. Participants may be reluctant to participate or may limit their responses out of concerns that the research may cast their immigrant inclusion efforts in an unflattering light if they comment in a candid or critical way. Many initiatives rely on donors, volunteers, and collaborative networks to advance their work. These are all sensitive relationships that can be affected by these partners' perceptions of them. Thus, a research participant may alter or omit information in order to maintain or project political clout, leadership, or credibility or out of fear that they would be adversely impacted by criticising or sharing details about their immigrant inclusion experiences. To tend to this concern, I explicitly emphasised the confidentiality of their participation in the Participant Information Form and the Participant Consent Form. The information form also stated that participants would be given access to the completed thesis, enabling them to see how their data was used.

The third and final concern related to participation risks was that participants may find it challenging to allocate time and energy to taking the survey amidst the myriad of other professional and personal responsibilities that they juggle. As discussed earlier in this chapter, research and conversations with colleagues in the field revealed that many practitioners faced challenging conditions in their work. This was in addition to the personal and/or community commitments that they had. Therefore, I needed to find ways to make their participation as accessible and flexible as possible. I did so by utilising an online questionnaire since the accessibility and flexibility that they afford is among the strengths of using this research instrument (Sue & Ritter, 2015). It also was important to acknowledge and thank them for their participation, which I included in at both the beginning and end of the survey.

### ***Ethical Consideration #2: Possible Risks to the Researcher***

An additional consideration that I anticipated and planned for was possible risks to myself as the researcher. I recognised that given the data that I sought to collect for

this study, I might be exposed to experiences and information involving trauma that could in turn produce secondary trauma and/or compassion fatigue. I had previously experienced compassion fatigue as a social inclusion and human rights practitioner. From this, I learned strategies and skills that helped me to process and recover from this. I planned to employ these if needed to help me move forward with this research in a healthful way. One example of this was that I identified several trusted individuals from my personal and professional circles (this included both my thesis supervisors) with whom I could confidentially share if I was feeling taxed from this research. I utilised this group throughout this investigation, including as I wrote and submitted the thesis. I made sure that I did not breach any data confidentiality in what I shared with them.

### ***Ethical Consideration #3: Confidentiality and Secure Handling of Data***

Another set of ethical concerns that I identified centred around issues of confidentiality and secure handling of data. I foresaw five issues related to this that I needed to address. First, data collection and its storage needed to be carried out in a secure, ethical way that upheld the confidentiality of research participants. In preparation to undertake this research in a thoughtful, ethical manner, I reviewed guidance from two professional ethics guides: *A Guide to Ethics in Political Science, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (APSA, 2012) and *The Research Ethics Guidebook: A Resource for Social Scientists* (Boddy et al, 2010). I also took the 'Data Protection' and 'Data Protection for Research' online trainings offered through the University of Edinburgh prior to commencing my data collection. These resources helped me to identify ways in which I could ethically, confidentially, and securely collect, store, and analyse data. I used them to establish a basic ethical protocol for carrying out this study (see Appendix V for a copy of this). This protocol was woven into the Participant Information Sheet and Participant Consent Form (see Appendix I for these documents) and guided how I conducted this study.

Second, I also needed to ensure that any online platforms and technology used to gather, store, or analyse data was secure and maintained the confidentiality of survey participants. To do so, I read through the terms of use regarding security and data storage for the online platform that I used to administer the survey (Qualtrics). All email correspondence regarding this project was conducted exclusively through my University of Edinburgh email account and cloud storage of research data was through the University of Edinburgh's cloud storage site, both of which met the threshold for security.

Third, research data could not be shared with anyone beyond what was outlined in the study's Participant Information Sheet and Participant Consent Form without having first received consent from research participants and that anyone with whom I shared research data needed to uphold the protocol that I implemented for confidentiality and data security.

Fourth, I took steps to protect the confidentiality of participant data and to communicate this to participants as confidentiality concerns could prevent or hinder participation. As described above, I developed and integrated a protocol for data confidentiality and security based on the professional ethics resources that I had reviewed and the ethics training that I had received. I informed participants of this in the Participant Information Sheet and in the Participant Informed Consent Form. I also anonymised any revealing data details in the codebooks that I generated so as to further protect their identities. Finally, I received a request in the survey content from one participant about how to refer to their immigrant inclusion role and work. This individual worked for a government entity and requested that I referred to their role in a specific way so as to preserve their confidentiality and allow them to share their experiences freely. I incorporated this feedback into how I described their identity and utilised their data.

#### ***Ethical Consideration #4: Informed Consent and Participant Information***

Ethical concerns surrounding the collection and handling of informed consent and participant information formed the fourth set of considerations. I needed to obtain informed consent from research participants in order to carry out this research in an ethical, transparent manner. I developed a Participant Information Form which I included at the beginning of the online survey in order for prospective research participants to make an informed decision about whether or not to consent to participate (see Appendix I). The document outlined what participants could expect during the study including anticipated length of time to take the survey, their ability to skip questions in the survey or to terminate their participation at any time, and the confidentiality, storage, and security of the data that they share. It also described what will happen after the study concludes and that they can elect to receive a copy of the thesis produced from this research. I also shared prospective benefits to them as immigrant inclusion practitioners of participating in the study. Finally, I included an explanation of what it means to sign the Participant Consent Form, authorising their participation in this study. Information about me as a researcher and the aims of the research were provided in the introduction to the online survey. These are all important parts to enabling the participant to give informed consent. Having these details explicitly stated and giving consent in a written form is considered an optimal form for relaying critical information and signifying awareness among both the researcher and the participant of their respective roles and relationship in the research (Ferraira & Serpa, 2018, p. 16).

A connected ethical issue to this was that due to financial and research constraints, I could only offer this information and the survey in English as I am not proficient in another language. I recognised that this would limit who would be able to participate and acknowledge this as a caveat of this study.

### ***Ethical Consideration #5: Potential Conflicts of Interest***

The potential always exists in research for conflicts of interest, defined by the American Political Science Association (APSA) (2022, p.13) as ‘whenever an individual (an interested person, researcher or investigator) faces competing interests between their personal/private interests and their professional/official, interests or duties.’ I was aware of this and wanted to prepare for it should conflicts arise. I reviewed the University of Edinburgh’s Conflict of Interest Policy which provided guidelines for assessing and managing these conflicts should they occur before commencing this research.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Ethical Consideration #6: Participant Access to and Comfort with Technology***

I heavily relied on technology to carry out this research. Email outreach was the primary tool that I used for participant recruitment and the online questionnaire was the sole means by which people could take the survey. This posed an ethical concern as people have varying levels of access to and comfort with technology. Initially, I had planned to make hard copies of the survey available upon request. However, the pandemic and research constraints only permitted me to offer it digitally. I acknowledge that this is a potential limitation of my research. However, accessibility, ease-of-use, and mobile compatibility were important criteria I used for selecting an online survey platform in the hopes that it might reduce this ethical barrier.

### ***Ethical Consideration #7: Timing of Research***

I recognised that this study would most likely occur during summer and autumn holidays in both the UK and the US and would be underway during the 2020 US presidential campaign and election. I anticipated that the confluence of this may adversely affect access to potential research participants who are on leave or that it may limit the ability of practitioners to participate due to increased workloads and additional stressors. Both versions of the survey were available from September 2020 through 31 December 2020 to UK-active participants and until 20 January 2021 for US-active participants. This coupled with the online format of the survey allowed participants a window of time and flexibility for taking the survey.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the research rationale, approach, design, and methodology of this study. The overarching question animating this research centred on how efforts to promote the inclusion of immigrants are impacted by a national government which is (perceived to be) unwelcoming of immigrants and immigration. I identified the UK and the US in the Brexit and Trump eras as two appropriate and compelling cases in which to explore this. Parallels in the conduct and immigration promises of both the Brexit and Trump campaigns coupled with key similarities and critical differences

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<sup>31</sup> The University of Edinburgh Conflict of Interest Policy and other related ethics policies are available at <https://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/research/ethics>.

between the UK and the US informed my selection. Research sub-questions and the research design and methodology flowing from these sought to establish if immigrant inclusion practitioners (this study's unit of analysis) operating in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras perceived the national government's immigration approach to be unwelcoming (Chapter 4), to profile significant components of the national government's immigration approach as observed by practitioners and supported by relevant literature (Chapters 5 and 6), and to concretely capture the effects of this on the immigrant inclusion field (Chapter 7).

In preparation for this research, I weighed and addressed a number of ethical considerations and utilised several strategies to enhance the accessibility and security of this research for participants. This planning and preparation along with utilising an interpretivist, abductive approach resulted in the collection of rich, textured data from a variety of UK and US immigrant inclusion practitioners. Scant research exists on these practitioners and on the immigrant inclusion field. This study helps to address this paucity. The next chapter uses survey demographic data to offer more details about research participants and their organisations. In doing so, it reveals a diverse, complex field of practitioners, activities, and organisations that contributes to the mapping of an under-researched but vitally important field.

## Chapter 3: Mapping Research Participants and the Immigrant Inclusion Field

The diverse assortment of frontline contexts in which immigrant inclusion practitioners work exceptionally situated them to observe the Brexit and Trump Governments' immigration approaches as well as their effects on immigrant inclusion practitioners and their inclusion efforts. As previously referenced, this study defines immigrant inclusion efforts as the formal and informal structures and activities that practitioners use to welcome and include immigrants. Their assessments of these approaches will be fleshed out in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 and of the national government's impact on immigrant inclusion efforts is the focus of Chapter 7. But first, this chapter examines the practitioners who participated in this research and the immigrant inclusion efforts with which they were active during the Brexit and Trump eras. It uses demographic survey data to probe this and, in doing so, facilitates a richer understanding of the personal and professional vantage points brought to this study by participants. It also lends context and credibility to their qualitative comments, especially in regards to answering Research Question 3.<sup>32</sup>

Additionally, this examination contributes to the mapping of the immigrant inclusion field. Chapter 2 noted that immigrant inclusion practitioners are not a formally tallied or censused group. The field is severely under-researched in spite of the critical roles as advocates, interlocutors, essential service providers, and social cohesion community-builders that practitioners often play (Bloemraad et al, 2022, p.320).

The limited research about the field often is focused on a sub-group of immigrant inclusion practitioners centred around the sub-population(s) of immigrants with whom research participants work (e.g. refugees, asylum seekers, unaccompanied youth, students, etc.), the types of immigrant inclusion activities that they perform (e.g. direct service provision, legal assistance, advocacy, etc.), or the professional or community contexts in which they operate (e.g. health care, social work, community development, education, etc.). The incomplete but valuable mapping that has occurred is often within a country (e.g. see Gleeson & Bloemraad (2012) and Sorell-Medina (2022) for two contributions to mapping the US field), on subnational scales such as those operating within immigrant inclusion ecosystems at the municipal level (e.g. Castañeda, 2020; Majka & Longazel, 2017), or across networks of cities prioritising immigrant inclusion (e.g. Broadhead, 2020; Lacroix, 2021; McDaniel et al, 2019; Rodriguez et al, 2018).

Moreover, Mayblin and James (2019b, p. 376) note an academic paucity in research and theory development regarding the refugee-third sector organisations both *within* and *beyond* the UK. However, there appears to be even less research and theory

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<sup>32</sup> RQ3 asks: 'How did immigrant inclusion practitioners working in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras perceive the national government's immigration approach impacting their immigrant inclusion work?'

generated about the broader immigrant inclusion field and the individual practitioners who comprise these efforts.<sup>33</sup> The findings discussed in this chapter add new details to this under mapped field and offer a comparative consideration of the field in two countries, of which little research exists.

Finally, this study also employed an original typology of immigrant inclusion activities. The typology and its findings are discussed in this chapter and may be utilised in future research to track inclusion activities in a variety of contexts. This adds to the very limited available tools to catalogue and compare immigrant inclusion activities.

### **Generating Contextual Snapshots of Participants**

The introduction referenced that I came into contact and collaborated with UK and US-based immigrant inclusion practitioners operating in the public, private, and third sectors during my decade-long tenure heading a US-based social inclusion NGO. Through this exposure, I witnessed an array of immigrant inclusion work including advocacy, legal aid, direct service provision, and community development. This impression was reinforced in my review of relevant literature once I began the PhD programme. My experiential and academic knowledge led me to employ a broad definition for the term ‘immigrant inclusion practitioner’ in this research. I did so in an effort to attract an amalgam of research participants who embody the diversity that I saw in the field. This decision also was reflective of the interpretivist approach underlying this research. The varied perspectives and contextually-derived meanings generated by participants occupying assorted positions within the research setting anchored this study and facilitated a complex, layered interpretation of the data (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 85).

Pertinent demographic details about the 18 UK and 95 US individual immigrant inclusion practitioners and their initiatives produced contextual snapshots that ‘thicken’ the understanding of their positionality and perceptions.<sup>34</sup> <sup>35</sup> Analysis of these details revealed a dynamic tapestry of immigrant inclusion work occurring in various contexts and conditions during the Brexit and Trump eras. In turn, this thickening yielded a richer, more textured, though still limited, composite of how these immigrant inclusion practitioners interpreted their national government’s immigration approaches and its effects on their inclusion efforts than if this contextual information had not been considered.

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<sup>33</sup> One important contribution to remedying this is Bloemraad et al (2022)’s work on immigrant organisations.

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of contextuality and its thickening function using an interpretivist research approach, see chapter 3 in Schwartz-Shea & Yanow (2012).

<sup>35</sup> Positionality references ‘how differences in social position and power shape identities and access in society’ (CTLT Indigenous Initiatives, n.d.). Though commonly used to refer to individuals, positionality can apply to groups, organisations, and institutions as well. For example, Gonzalez Benson et al (2023, p. 3) discuss the effects of social positioning on refugee-led community organisations (RCOs) both in relation to external actors and to other RCOs.

Some of this contextual thickness is teased out from participants' qualitative responses to the questionnaire's issue-based questions. Much of it is derived from two sections of the survey designed to explicitly capture important descriptive demographic information about research participants and the primary immigrant inclusion initiatives with which they were involved.<sup>36</sup> The two sections of the survey that elicited data about this were: 1) 'Part I: Immigrant inclusion initiative(s) with which you are involved' and 2) 'Part V: Demographic information' (see Appendix I).

### **Mapping Participant Immigrant Inclusion Initiatives**

The 113 immigrant inclusion practitioners who participated in this study were involved with 14 UK-based initiatives and 94 US-based immigrant inclusion initiatives. These initiatives ranged in geographic location and the immigrant population size and voter support for Brexit or Trump in the areas where they were based. They also varied in their operational scale(s), the types of immigrant inclusion activities conducted, and their organisational missions and structures. This variety facilitated a myriad of ways in which participants encountered their national government's immigration approach and observed its impact. Below is a descriptive overview of the UK and US immigrant inclusion initiatives with which research participants were engaged during the Brexit and Trump eras.

#### ***Geographic Location, Regional Immigrant Population Size, and Local Voter Support for Brexit or Trump***

Variations in the geographic location, regional immigrant population size, and place-based political support for the Brexit referendum and Trump presidency are all geographically-related contextual factors that provide differing positions from which immigrant inclusion practitioners encountered and understood their national government's immigration approach during the Brexit and Trump eras.

The immigrant inclusion initiatives of UK and US participants were located in an assortment of geographic locations in both countries. This range meant that research participants were experiencing their national government's immigration approach and viewing its effects in the context of their area's distinctive political, cultural, and economic conditions.

These subnational conditions may influence participant perceptions. For instance, UK Respondent #8, whose immigrant inclusion initiative was based in Scotland, assessed the UK Government's immigration approach in light of their experiences with the Scottish Government's efforts to integrate immigrants:

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<sup>36</sup> Both versions of the survey asked participants in Part I to list all of the immigrant inclusion organisations with which they were involved but to select only one about which they would draw on in answering the remaining survey questions. Participants were asked to indicate this organisation by typing the name of this initiative in all capital letters. The immigrant inclusion initiatives included in this study were the ones that research participants denoted through capitalisation in their open-ended response to this question.

...the Scottish Government continues to be committed to integration... also really appreciate their multi-faceted view of integration... I am grateful for the leadership and support that the Scottish Government provides. I haven't seen anything like this from the UK government.

As touched on in the previous chapter, though immigration was and continues to be a power reserved solely for the UK Government, the Scottish Government through other devolved powers is able to set and implement policies that impact the reception and treatment of immigrants, especially refugees and asylum seekers. Its New Scots refugee integration strategy (Scottish Government, 2018), initiated in the Brexit era, is a prime example of this.

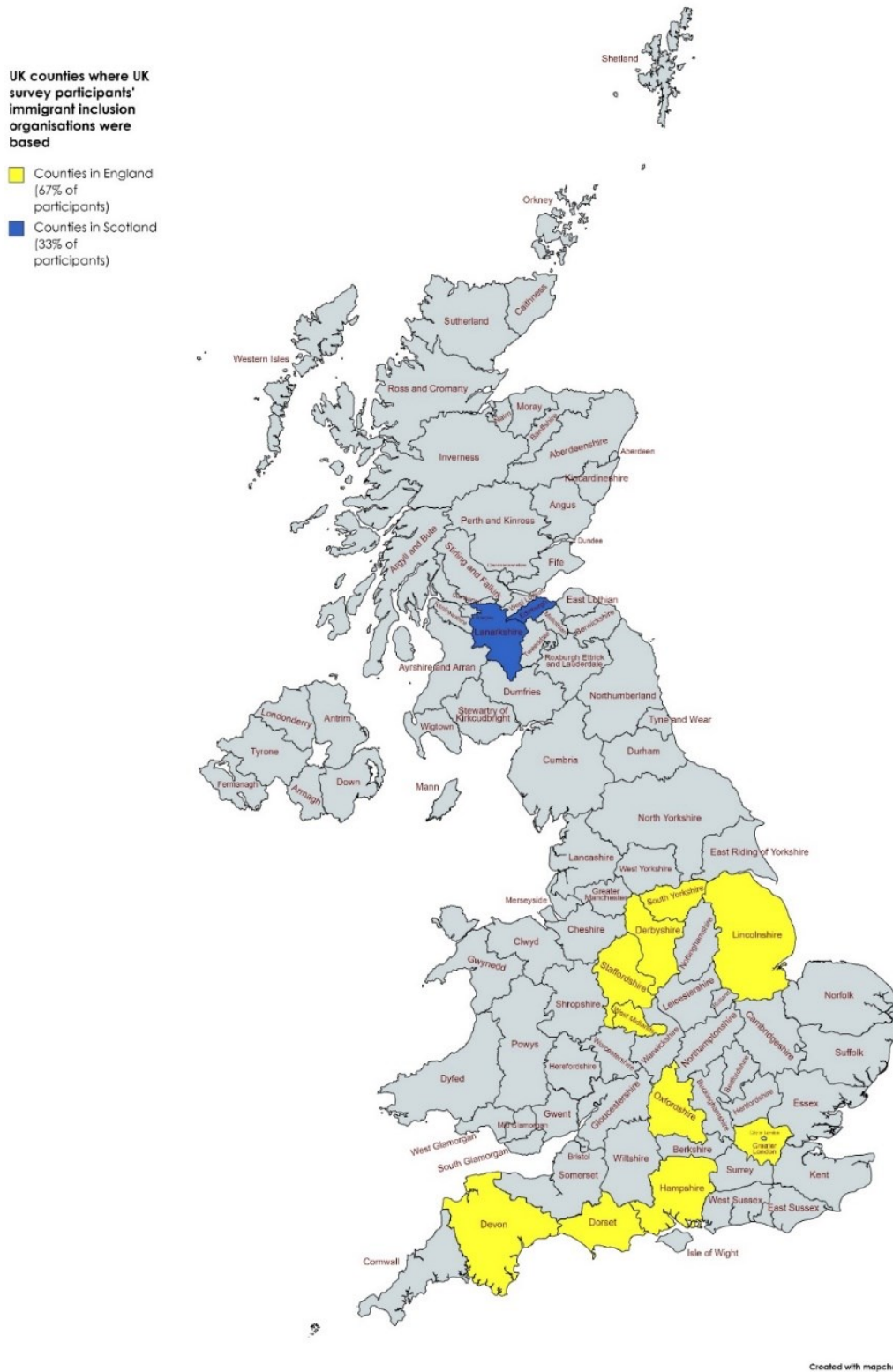
The varied geographical locations of the included immigrant inclusion initiatives allowed for the identification of several distinctive place-based themes, such as the roles of subnational governments in countering or amplifying the national government's immigration approach (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7). The variety in settings also helped reveal themes that transcend geography, such as the de facto welfare state role that many immigrant inclusion practitioners played during the Brexit and Trump eras. These distinctive and universal themes about the national government's immigration approach during these eras will be further explored in Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8.

The areas in which these initiatives were situated not only presented geographical diversity but also variations in the sizes of the immigrant populations residing within them and in the levels of voter support for the Brexit referendum in the UK and the 2016 Trump presidential campaign. The size and rate of growth of the immigrant population in an area can affect attitudes towards immigrants in the larger population (Esses, 2021, p. 507; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014, p. 237). Research has found higher levels of anti-immigrant attitudes among UK voters in the Brexit referendum who voted to leave the EU than among those who supported remaining (Pickup et al, 2021). Similarly, anti-immigrant sentiment and racial resentment were found to be significant motivators among US voters who voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election (Hooghe & Dassonneville, 2018). These dynamics may affect the subnational political climate and the localised treatment of immigrants. This, in turn, offered different contextual lenses through which research participants experienced and interpreted the national government's immigration approach and its effects. The political conditions of subnational spaces and the ways in which they affect the immigration environment are discussed in greater detail in Chapters 7 and 8.

The 18 UK participants who responded to the survey question about the geographical location of their immigrant inclusion initiative were involved with 14 UK-based initiatives located in two of the four UK nations: England and Scotland. Of the UK nations, England and Scotland receive the most immigrants (Vargas-Silva & Rienzo, 2022). 67% of the UK participants were active with immigrant inclusion initiatives based in 10 counties within England. The remaining 33% were associated

with immigrant inclusion initiatives located in two counties within Scotland. Figure 1 shows the geographic distribution of UK survey participants' organisations.

**Figure 1. Geographic Distribution of UK Survey Participants' Immigrant Inclusion Organisations**



Source: Author's research

The UK-based immigrant inclusion initiatives in this study were situated in seven of the twelve UK regions. The regions in which they were based have differing shares of the total population who are immigrants. In the UK, immigrants constitute 16% of the total population, with a little over a third concentrated in the London region (Cuibus, 2024). A listing of these seven regions and their population shares that are immigrants can be found in Appendix VI.<sup>37</sup>

A majority (10 UK initiatives) were based in regions where the share of the population who are immigrants is below the UK national average of 16% (e.g. Yorkshire and the Humber region, where immigrants comprise 11% of the total population, and the Scotland region, where 9% of the total population are immigrants). Three initiatives were located in two regions where the share of immigrants is about the same as the national average: immigrants account for 16% of the overall population in the West Midlands region and 15% in the South East region. One organisation was based in the London region, whose immigrant population exceeds the national average. Immigrants constitute 37% of the region's entire population.

The regions in which UK immigrant inclusion initiatives were based also were mixed in their levels of support for the Brexit referendum. Five of the seven regions (East Midlands, South East, South West, West Midlands, and Yorkshire and the Humber) in the UK survey had a majority that voted to leave the EU in the referendum while two (Scotland and London) had a majority that voted to remain (The Electoral Commission, n.d.).

Among the US cohort, 95 survey participants were active with 94 immigrant inclusion initiatives based in 31 US states and the District of Columbia. These initiatives were spread across all four regions of the US, with 15% located in northeastern states, 33% in midwestern states, 28% in southern states and the District of Columbia, and 24% in western states.<sup>38 39</sup> Figure 2 showcases the geographic locations of these immigrant inclusion organisations by US state and region.

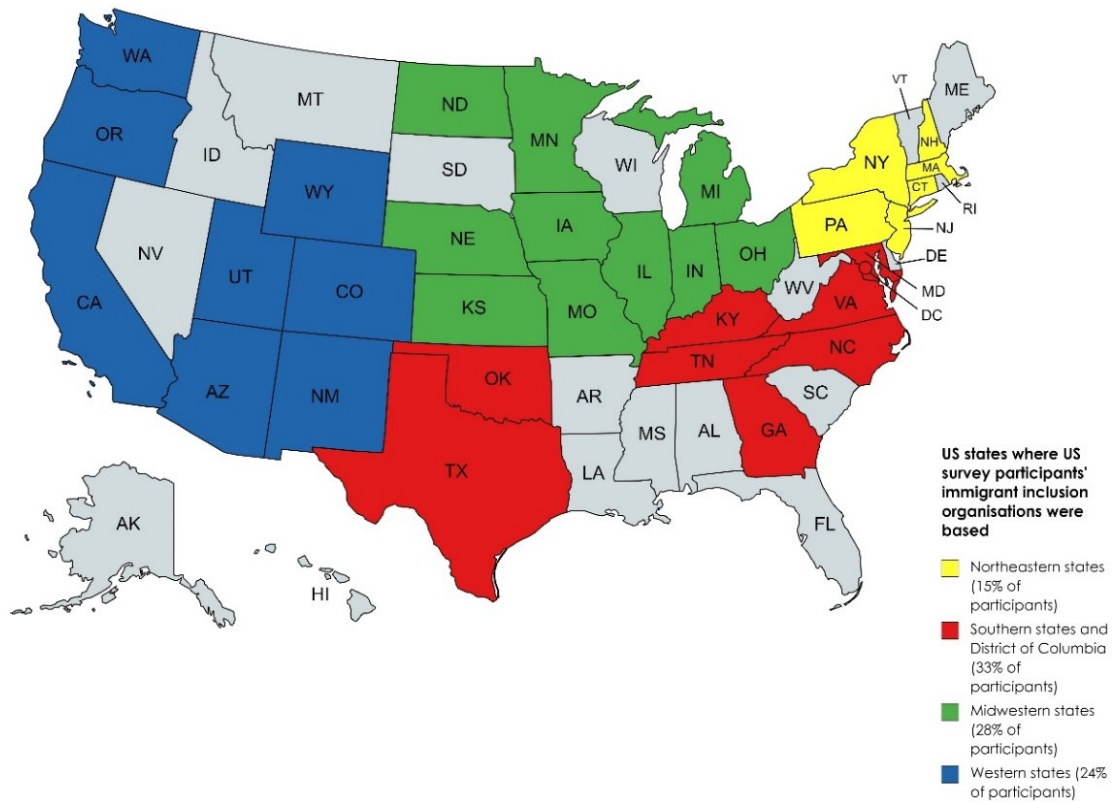
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<sup>37</sup> These statistics are from Cuibus (2024), who drew on data from the UK Office of National Statistics to calculate this. The immigrant population is defined as those in the UK who are foreign-born.

<sup>38</sup> Regional categorisation is based on that used by the US Census Bureau. For more details, see US Census Bureau (2021a).

<sup>39</sup> As of 2020, 34% of US immigrants resided in the western region, 34% in the southern region, 21% in the northeast region, and 11% were in the midwest region (Budiman, 2020). Immigrant in this publication refers to the US foreign-born population.

**Figure 2. Geographic Distribution of US Survey Participants' Immigrant Inclusion Organisations**



Source: Author's research

Immigrants account for almost 14% of the total US population, with approximately two-thirds of immigrants (68%) residing in the western and southern regions of the US (Budiman, 2020).<sup>40</sup> The US-based immigrant inclusion initiatives were located in areas with large concentrations of immigrants as well as in areas with emerging or smaller immigrant communities. For example, 15 of these organisations were located in the two US states (California and Texas) where 35% of the US immigrant population lives (Budiman, 2020) while several initiatives were based in Nebraska, North Dakota, and Wyoming, US states with immigrant populations who are small but growing (American Immigration Council, 2024a).

The US states in which immigrant inclusion initiatives were based also varied in their support for Donald Trump in the 2016 US presidential election. Donald Trump won the electoral college vote in 18 of the 32 US states with participant immigrant inclusion initiatives in them, constituting 57% of the states in the survey. Hillary Clinton won the electoral college vote in the remaining 14 US states (44% of the US states in the survey) and the District of Columbia (The New York Times, 2017).<sup>41</sup>

Thus, assorted geographic locations, regional immigrant population sizes, and place-based political support for Brexit and the Trump presidency offered different geographically-related contexts and political conditions from which immigrant inclusion practitioners interacted with and perceived the Brexit and Trump Governments' immigration approaches.

### ***Scale(s) of Operation***

Immigrant inclusion work can occur at all scales of society ranging from the international to the hyper-local (e.g. in neighbourhoods). Initiatives in this study also operated at a multitude of scales, allowing participants to observe and engage with their national government's immigration approach in these different spheres.

A majority of immigrant inclusion initiatives in both the UK and the US surveys had some local presence. I defined local presence to be activity conducted at the city or county level in the UK or at the city, county, or state levels in the US.

In the UK data set, 61% of participants were connected to an initiative with a local presence. Of these, 28% were involved with initiatives that carried out work in the

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<sup>40</sup> Statistics on the share of the immigrant population in each US region were not available. Therefore, I used data regarding the distribution of immigrants in the US by region and shifting settlement to point to the diverse contexts in which US immigrant initiatives were based.

<sup>41</sup> The 18 Trump-voting US states in which immigrant inclusion practitioners were based are: Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, North Dakota, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming. The 14 Clinton-voting US states represented in the survey are: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Virginia, and Washington.

city or village in which they were based and 33% worked throughout the county where they were located.<sup>42</sup>

In the US data set, 67% of participants were involved with an initiative that had a local presence. 23% of respondents' initiatives were active within the city or village in which they were based, 18% operated throughout the county, and 26% worked state-wide. The US states in which these state-wide initiatives functioned included all four regions of the country.<sup>43</sup>

On a country-wide level in the UK, 6% of UK participants' initiatives operated throughout the entire UK. On a nation-wide level in the UK, 17% of the initiatives carried out their efforts throughout the UK nation in which they were based. All who indicated this were based in England.

In this study, US initiatives that were active in more than one US state were considered to work on a national scale. Among US participants, 18% were affiliated with an initiative operating in more than one US state.

Examples of work occurring internationally could be found in both surveys though this operational scale was less prevalent than the others. Only 6% of UK respondents and 8% of US respondents engaged in immigrant inclusion work in other countries. Most of these participants indicated that their international work took place alongside some form of domestic work. For instance, in the UK data set, a participant described that their inclusion work at a higher education institution took place in multiple countries as well as across the UK and locally. Another example of this was offered by US Respondent #48, who explained that their initiative's advocacy, legal, and organising work occurred nationally and along the southern border in the US while it provided humanitarian relief in Mexico and in Central America.

The data in this study also signifies the multiscalar nature of many immigrant inclusion initiatives' work, of which scholars are increasingly noting (e.g. Gonzalez Benson, 2022; Ellis, 2005; Furuseth et al, 2015; Lacroix & Spencer, 2022; Scholten, 2016). 17% of UK participants and 23% of US participants indicated that their immigrant inclusion initiative operated in a multilevel way. This amount may be even higher as a technical error prevented some participants from ticking if their initiative

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<sup>42</sup> These calculations are counting the responses to each of the close-ended categories for my definition of 'local presence.' However, the close-ended 'other' option to this question provided participants with a textbox in which they could describe where their immigrant inclusion operated. All three of the UK 'other' responses and 10 of the 15 US 'other' responses indicated work at the local scale in their open-ended description of the immigrant inclusion initiative's operational scale.

<sup>43</sup>Of these 31 US survey participants whose immigrant inclusion initiative operated throughout the state in which it was based, six were located in states in the Northeast, ten were in states in the Midwest, eight were in states in the South, and seven were in states in the West.

operated at more than one scale.<sup>44</sup> This multiscalarity potentially gave participants multiple vantage points through which to simultaneously view their national government's immigration approach.

The online sphere was also another scale of operation for some participants' immigrant inclusion initiatives. Only one UK participant indicated that their initiative carried out its work online. This online activity was in concert with other in-person work at the local level. 5% of US participants were involved with organisations that conducted work online, with all but one of these operating exclusively online.

### ***Types of Immigrant Inclusion Activities Undertaken***

Immigrant inclusion practitioners undertake many types of activities to welcome and include immigrants. These activities can offer very tangible and often immediate forms of relief, such as through the provision of direct services or legal and financial assistance. Other forms may involve on-going or longer-term actions, such as advocacy and community relations work, that champion causes, relationships, and policies which directly or indirectly benefit immigrants. This spectrum of activity could be seen in participant responses regarding the types of immigrant inclusion work that their organisations engaged in during the Brexit and Trump eras.

This study included an original typology for cataloguing major strands of immigrant inclusion activity. Much of the literature interrogating immigrant inclusion work centres on a particular strand of activity such as advocacy (e.g. Apolonia Calderon et al, 2021; Roth et al, 2018) or direct service provision (e.g. Browne et al, 2016; Gonzalez Benson, 2020b). Few typologies exist for considering these activities collectively. One notable exception is Brenner's (2009) typology of six integration approaches used by local governments. My study sought to engage participants from a range of sectors, scales, and occupations within the field. It necessitated a typology that could accommodate this diversity of activity. Thus, I created that a wide-ranging typology to capture this. Table 3 below details this typology, listing and describing the seven immigrant inclusion activity types and offering examples of each. This typology can be used in future research to map and compare activity in the field regardless of sector or scale.

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<sup>44</sup> The survey question invited participants to tick as many spaces in which their immigrant inclusion initiative operates, but I accidentally formatted the question in both final survey versions so that they could only select one multiple choice option. No UK participants flagged this as an issue in their text box responses or contacted me about it. I only discovered this at the end of November 2020 when several US survey participants commented on this as part of their text box response to this question. Upon learning this on 1 December 2020, I altered the format in both surveys to allow for multiple responses to this question. None of the three UK surveys submitted after this change had multiple ticks in their response to this question whereas seven of the included US surveys that were completed after this had been changed utilised this feature. That is why there are more responses than surveys from the US cohort but not the UK group (118 responses from 95 US surveys analysed versus 18 responses from 18 UK surveys). Three UK participants elected to tick the 'other' option and used the text box to explain the different spaces in which their immigrant inclusion initiatives work as did 15 US participants who took the survey before the multiple-response functionality was activated.

**Table 3. Typology of Immigrant Inclusion Activity**

<b>Immigrant Inclusion Activity Type</b>	<b>Description of Activity Type</b>	<b>Examples of Activities</b>
1. Serve as an umbrella group or organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connects assorted immigrant inclusion initiatives/organisations who are working on shared goals, projects, and/or in overlapping spaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering a group email listserve</li> <li>• Facilitating programme or funding collaborations among various immigrant inclusion groups</li> <li>• Coordinating different organisations' responses to pressing immigration issues</li> </ul>
2. Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Champions greater public and political awareness of and support for immigration and immigrant inclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobbying public officials</li> <li>• Conducting public awareness campaigns</li> <li>• Working with policymakers to draft legislation</li> </ul>
3. Direct service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides direct services to immigrants that help them to settle into and navigate their community and/or that can improve their health, well-being, and welfare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assisting immigrants with securing housing or employment</li> <li>• Offering food and clothing</li> <li>• Providing educational programmes and services such as language classes</li> <li>• Helping immigrant families enroll their children in school</li> <li>• Assisting immigrants with navigating the public benefits system if eligible</li> </ul>

4. Legal advice or assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist immigrants with understanding their rights and navigating the legal and immigration systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing information and advice about immigration, immigrant rights, and navigating the immigration and legal systems</li> <li>• Connecting immigrants with immigration Attorneys</li> <li>• Serving as legal counsel to immigrants</li> </ul>
5. Community relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fosters relationships, understanding, and connectivity among newly-settled immigrants and others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offering activities that help newly-settled immigrants connect with their neighbours</li> <li>• Providing programs that build/improve relations among different groups within a locale</li> </ul>
6. Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitates economic opportunity and mobility for immigrants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offering job training/business development to immigrants</li> <li>• Providing/distributing funding and training to help immigrants start and grow businesses</li> <li>• Networking to help immigrants promote their businesses/integrate into the wider business community</li> </ul>
7. Other activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities that do not fit into the six types listed above</li> </ul>	

*Source: Author's research*

I developed the typology of activities for this question based on three sources of knowledge. First, I utilised insights from my significant experience as a social inclusion practitioner and in the third sector. This gave me an awareness of general kinds of inclusion activities that many practitioners perform, some targeted to immigrants but many offered more broadly. Second, I incorporated information from colleagues working specifically on immigration and in immigrant inclusion. Third and finally, I drew on relevant scholarship and practitioner resources about immigrant inclusion activities (e.g. City of Sanctuary UK, 2023; Huang & Yang Lui, 2018; Majka & Longazel, 2017; Welcoming America, n.d.). The multiple-choice activity categories offered to survey participants were sense-checked in the pretested survey and did not receive any criticism.

In both surveys, all seven types of immigrant inclusion activity received responses (see Part I of the survey in Appendix I to view this question and the accompanying examples for each activity type). The provision of direct services was the most undertaken activity type in both the UK and US surveys.<sup>45</sup> 67% of UK participants and 74% of US respondents indicated that their immigrant inclusion initiative provided direct services. These activities include assisting immigrants with securing housing or employment, offering food or clothing, helping immigrants enrol their children in school, or aiding with navigating the public benefits system.

The high volume of immigrant inclusion initiatives who provided direct services during the Brexit and Trump eras, which also coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, is consistent with research showing that in both the UK and the US, the third sector has increasingly functioned as a 'shadow' or 'de facto' welfare state (Trudeau, 2008, Gonzalez Benson, 2022). Many immigrant inclusion organisations are part of this sector.

In this shadow role, the third sector tenders vital support and services that had been the responsibility of the government but have since been cut or privatised.<sup>46</sup> Third sector organisations in both the UK and the US have long played a role in settling and with helping immigrants to meet their basic needs. For example, the settlement house movement, which began in the late 1800s in Britain and swiftly spread to many other countries including the US, arose to confront issues of poverty faced by many immigrants and to support their urban integration. However, in the post-Keynesian neoliberal era, the shrinking role of the public welfare state in assisting

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<sup>45</sup>It should be noted that in the US cohort, two activity types (direct service provision and offering legal advice and assistance) were equally the most undertaken in the Trump era. Both activity types were carried out by the initiatives of 74% of US participants. I will examine this in more detail later in this section.

<sup>46</sup> This role initially began during the Reagan administration in the US and under the Thatcher administration in the UK. It mushroomed in the wake of further neoliberal reforms such as the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act legislation (commonly referred to as 'welfare reform' or 'PRWOA') in the US and the enactment of austerity policy in 2010 in the UK.

immigrants has altered the relationship between the government and the third sector in regards to the provision of direct services to immigrants in these countries (see Shields et al (2016, pp. 11-19) for a fuller discussion of this).

Financial crises such as the Great Recession in 2008 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 also contributed to the third sector in both countries undertaking this role. Immigrants, who tend to be more vulnerable to societal crises and economic shocks, have been particularly affected and left in an even more precarious state (Burton-Jeangros et al, 2020; Papademetriou & Terrazas, 2009). Open-ended comments in both the UK and US surveys speak to this. An example can be seen in US Respondent #19's comment: '...unfortunately the coronavirus has put people in even more desperate situations, which increases uses of our food bank and baby supplies (diapers, car seats, etc).'

This heightened vulnerability has been compounded in both countries by the expansion of policies that explicitly restrict immigrant access to public benefits and services (Coker, 2018; Broder & Lessard, 2024). UK Respondent #5 observed the harmful bind that these increased restrictions placed on refugees in the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic: 'benefits and social support measures for COVID effectively excluded refugees who could not claim benefits, but were denied opportunities to work.' The impact of the mounting pressure on the immigrant inclusion field to compensate for diminishing state welfare services and the national government's curtailing of immigrant access to them in the Brexit and Trump eras will be expounded upon in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

In the US survey, two activity types, 1) providing direct services and 2) offering legal advice and assistance, were equally most undertaken during the Trump era. Each was performed by 74% of US participant initiatives. For many immigrants, understanding and navigating the legal system of the country to which they have moved is a fundamental part of their immigration experience. Immigrant inclusion practitioners, which include immigration attorneys and asylum and refugee case workers, are often critical partners in helping immigrants do this. In the US, legal aid is almost exclusively provided through the third sector or by private law firms who may offer their services pro bono or at greatly-reduced rates.<sup>47</sup> This may factor into why so many US immigrant initiatives offered it. However, specific events occurring in the US during the Trump era exacerbated the need and demand from immigrants for such services.

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<sup>47</sup> While predominantly an enterprise of the third and private sectors in the US, in 2013, some subnational jurisdictions began piloting publicly-funded immigration legal services. Initially, these programmes were carried out by a few large cities. However, after the 2016 US presidential election, these initiatives proliferated as states and cities sought to prepare for and, in some cases, to defy the anti-immigration policies proposed and often enacted by the Trump administration. As of 2021, such programmes can be found in more than a dozen US cities, counties and states and several national advocacy networks have developed to build support in more states and communities across the US. See National Immigration Forum (2021) for an overview of these programmes and their development.

During the Trump presidency, profound changes in a short period of time were made to the US immigration system and how it functioned (Bolter et al, 2022). This created an even greater need among immigrants for legal advice and assistance (Laird, 2018). These changes and the surge in need that they caused will be discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7. Several US participants in their open-ended comments noted an increase in demand from immigrants for legal assistance due to these changes and the confusion, fear, and uncertainty that they wrought. For instance, US Respondent #58 commented: 'We're an immigration law firm. People needed us under Trump more than ever before. The system became more difficult and people wanted the security of an attorney to help with even basic things.'

While offering legal advice and assistance was the fourth most undertaken activity among UK participants, a significant percentage (39%) still engaged in this activity type. In the UK, legal aid traditionally has been publicly-funded but administered through attorneys employed in the third or private sectors. However, beginning in 2013 as part of its austerity policy, the UK Government has enacted severe, sustained cuts to legal aid while increasing the administrative hurdles for both providers and clients. These changes have resulted in what has been branded a 'collapsing sector' (Wilding, 2023). This has had a particularly damaging effect on the provision of legal aid for immigration and asylum. More than 30% of the providers awarded contracts in September 2018 had ceased providing legal aid work by March 2023 (Wilding, 2023). The decrease in this type of activity being offered in the UK was reflected in a comment by UK Respondent #5 who wrote: 'The reduction in legal aided advice...very difficult to get a solicitor to take [a] case on, and too far away.'

The second most undertaken activity type differed in the two countries. In the UK, it was community relations work, which includes offering activities that help newly-settled immigrants connect with their neighbours or providing programmes that build or improve relations among different groups within a community. 61% of UK respondents were involved with initiatives that carried out this work.

In the US, performing advocacy was the second most undertaken type of activity, with 59% of respondents involved with initiatives who engaged in this. Advocacy work can include lobbying public officials, conducting public awareness campaigns, or working with policymakers to draft legislation that directly or indirectly aids immigrants.

In the UK survey, all remaining activity types, with the exception of economic development, were performed by the initiatives of at least one third of participants.<sup>48</sup> They are offering legal advice or assistance (39%), serving as an umbrella organisation for immigrant inclusion work (39%), performing advocacy (33%), and

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<sup>48</sup> Examples of economic development activities listed in the survey are: offering job training/business development to immigrants, providing/distributing funding to help immigrants start businesses, or offering networking activities to help immigrants promote their businesses/integrate into the wider business community. See Part I of the survey in Appendix I to view this and the other types of immigrant inclusion activities queried.

other activities (44%). Economic development was only undertaken by one UK participant's initiative.

In the US survey, all remaining activity types were carried out by significant portions of the represented initiatives. 45% conducted community relations work, 45% served as an immigrant inclusion umbrella organisation, 25% pursued economic development activities, and 22% engaged in other immigrant inclusion activities.

In both surveys, most participants (78% of UK respondents and 82% of US respondents) were involved with initiatives that conducted more than one type of activity. This coupled with the fact that in both surveys each activity type had a sizeable amount of participants engaged in it (the only exception being economic development activity among UK participants) provided a variety of frontlines from which participants could comment about their national government's immigration approach and its impact during the Brexit and Trump eras.

### ***Organisational Mission and Structure***

How an immigrant inclusion initiative is organised constitutes another dimension of diversity in the field. Two aspects of this that can impact the vantage points through which the national government's immigration approach may be seen are in 1) how immigrant inclusion work fits into the organisation's mission and 2) how the organisation is configured.

An organisation's mission articulates its purpose, intentions, and goals (SHRM, n.d.). Broadly speaking, immigrant inclusion organisations and groups can be classed into two categories based on whether immigrant inclusion work is central or peripheral to their missions. The latter are organisations or groups that carry out inclusion work in order to achieve their larger mission but whose primary mission is not focused on immigration. Higher education institutions, health care providers, libraries, food pantries, schools, and sports clubs can serve as peripheral organisations for this work.

The entry into immigrant inclusion work for some of these peripheral organisations has been necessitated by the UK and US Governments' growing 'interiorisation' (Jain, 2019) (also referred to as 'internalization' (Menjívar, 2014) or 'everyday bordering' (Yuval-Davis et al, 2018)) of restrictionist or immigrant-excluding policies. Immigration interiorisation extends borders to a myriad of spaces of everyday life by embedding restrictionist or exclusionary policies across sectors. It also forces those working in these sectors to effectively police and enforce them, a process that Walsh (2014) and Griffiths & Yeo (2021) describe as 'deputisation.' UK Respondent #13, who works at a higher education institution in the UK, hinted at the consequences of not complying with the UK Government's immigration approach: 'A risk would be having our Tier 4 [Student] Visa threatened or to be seen as non-compliant with immigration regulations regarding students.' This phenomenon is particularly notable in the UK (Boswell, 2017; Yuval-Davis et al, 2018), but examples of this can also be

found within the US (Coleman, 2012; Jain, 2019). This will be explored in greater detail in Chapters 5,6,7, and 8.

Both surveys contained a mixture of these two types of organisations and groups. In the UK survey, a strong majority of participants (78%) were involved with initiatives where immigrant inclusion work was central to their missions, while 22% were involved with organisations where this work was peripheral. Two higher education institutions, a youth organisation, and a religious organisation providing local support and services to people in need constituted the four organisations whose inclusion work was a peripheral part of their mission.

In the US survey, a smaller majority (58%) were involved with organisations where immigrant inclusion work was central to their missions while 42% were active with organisations where this was peripheral. The kinds of peripheral organisations and groups with which US survey participants were active included higher education institutions, law firms, religious organisations, equity and justice groups and organisations, health care institutions, youth organisations, research centres, a community-based direct service organisation, and a literacy organisation.

The organisational structure of immigrant inclusion initiatives can be formal or informal. Formal organisations have been officially incorporated and usually, though not always, are professionally staffed. A growing strand of scholarship has flagged that many immigrant inclusion organisations are informally structured, meaning that they are not officially incorporated and may rely heavily, if not exclusively, on volunteers and shifting leadership (McCabe et al, 2010). This is an under-researched vein of initiatives (Gleeson & Bloemraad, 2013; McCabe et al, 2010), though a growing body of literature shows how important these informal groups and networks can be for immigrants (Barglowski & Bonfert, 2023; Guo, 2014).

The organisational structure of an immigrant inclusion initiative may evolve over time as it matures or with changes in leadership, funding, external contextual conditions, and programmatic priorities. Many immigrant inclusion organisations start as informal initiatives and can transition into formal structures as they become more established. An example of this was shared by US Respondent #3:

Our organization has done a lot of press and media outreach since the Trump Administration entered office and as a result have gotten more attention from funders/donors and have been able to expand to become a full-services providing organization with multiple staff members, compared to its existence pre-2018 when it really just existed on paper.

Though there are many possible ways to differentiate formal from informal initiatives, in this research, immigrant inclusion initiatives that were totally volunteer-run were considered informal organisations. Three participants, all from the US data set, were connected to informally-organised initiatives. An example of one of the volunteer-run initiatives present in the US survey centred around having volunteers congregate

alongside undocumented immigrants who were reporting to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) local office. Practitioners affiliated with this initiative bear witness to and keep a written record of these immigrants' experiences with ICE. They also provide both emotional and physical forms of support (e.g. snacks, beverages, and cold weather clothing) to those waiting in line. They then use their written records to advocate to ICE for improved conditions for immigrants.

Variation existed in the configurations of the formal immigrant inclusion initiatives represented in both surveys. Some formal organisations were large, established organisations; others were small, community-based operations. Another group of formally-structured initiatives were those housed within larger institutional structures. An immigrant legal services centre based at a higher education institution and a refugee resettlement organisation that was supported by a religious community were two examples of this that were present in the US survey.

The assorted missions and structures of participant initiatives offered diverse contexts in which participants experienced their national government's immigration approach and its effects. This yielded a textured and nuanced examination of the research phenomena and also appear at times in Chapters 5,6, and 7 to offer greater clarity and context for some of the quoted participant comments.

### **Mapping Individual Research Participants**

Research about the individual practitioners who comprise the immigrant inclusion field is extremely sparse. What limited scholarship exists is heavily centred on the occupational identity of the practitioner (e.g. case workers of refugees and asylum seekers,<sup>49</sup> immigrant-serving health care and social service practitioners,<sup>50</sup> immigration attorneys<sup>51</sup>, etc.).

While these focused studies have generated valuable information, the lack of research mapping the wider field of individuals carrying out immigrant inclusion work is both striking and problematic. Greater clarity about who is performing this vital work is essential to the health and development of the immigrant inclusion field. Having key demographic information about participants facilitates a deeper understanding of the positionality and intersecting identities of these individuals. This mapping can foster greater reflexivity and insight about how these intersecting identities and positions impact the conception, implementation, evaluation and support of inclusion work. The demographic details from this study contribute to a

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<sup>49</sup> For examples of this, see Akinsulure-Smith et al (2017), Birger & Nadan (2022), Canning (2021), Guhan & Liebling-Kalfini (2011) and Robinson (2014).

<sup>50</sup> Examples of this are: Medact Manchester (2017), Mesa et al (2020), and Puvimanasinghe et al (2015).

<sup>51</sup> See Harris & Mellinger (2021), Hynes (2023), Poggio (2022), and Vázquez (2021) for examples of this.

more holistic understanding of the people constituting this field and their varied identities, roles, contexts, and occupational sub-fields.<sup>52</sup>

### ***Individual Role(s) Played within Immigrant Inclusion Initiatives***

As described in earlier parts of this chapter, immigrant inclusion initiatives come in a wide variety of organisational structures and forms. The occupational roles that research participants performed both within their specific immigrant inclusion initiative and in the larger field mirror this diversity and provided different positions from which participants could view the national government's immigration approach and its effects.<sup>53</sup>

Close-ended answers offered in the survey illustrate broad categories of occupational roles within inclusion efforts.<sup>54</sup> These options included both staff and voluntary positions. Staff positions may involve positions which oversee the overall functioning and management of these initiatives such as being the executive director (ED)/chief executive officer (CEO) of a particular immigrant inclusion organisation or being the ED/CEO of a collaborative agency that supports immigrant inclusion work. Staff positions also may involve holding administrative, technical, and programmatic positions within these organisations and agencies. Staff positions such as administrative assistants, staff attorneys, development officers, program directors, and IT support staff would all be examples of these occupational roles.

Voluntary roles within initiatives can range from formal leadership positions that govern and manage the initiative (e.g. being a chairperson or member of an

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<sup>52</sup> All demographic questions in the survey were explicitly marked optional. Participants could skip any question and all close-ended demographic questions contained a 'prefer not to answer' option.

<sup>53</sup> Both versions of the survey contained a close-ended question asking respondents to tick all roles that they currently (at the time of responding) held with their immigrant inclusion initiative. This resulted in some participants marking more than one role. 21 responses were received from the 18 UK participants who answered it. 110 responses were received to this question from the 89 US participants who completed it. The 'other' option for this question contained a textbox in which participants could detail the other role(s) that they held. See Part V of each survey in Appendix I to view this question.

<sup>54</sup> I constructed the close-ended answers regarding organisational roles based on several knowledge sources: 1) my extensive practitioner experience in the third sector, 2) conversations with colleagues in the field, and 3) academic and grey literature about the various roles that 'champions' and 'sponsors' play in moving forward cross-sector collaborations, which many immigrant inclusion initiatives are. Bryson, Crosby & Middleton Stone (2006) define cross-sector collaborations as 'partnerships involving government, business, nonprofits and philanthropies, communities and/or the public as a whole' in which there is 'the linking or sharing of information, resources, activities, and capabilities by organizations in two or more sectors to achieve jointly an outcome that could not be achieved by organizations in one sector separately' (pp. 44). Champions and sponsors have been identified in the integrative leadership and public management literature (Bryson, Crosby & Middleton Stone, 2015; Carlile, 2004; Crosby & Bryson, 2010) as being instrumental in launching and sustaining change efforts through their ability to employ personal assets and leverage their structural positions to advance change. A champion is "a person who is a tireless, process-savvy organizer and promoter of the change effort; ...a sponsor is less involved in the process, but deploys authority, money, or connections to move the change effort forward" (Crosby & Bryson, 2010, p. 219). To view this question about the participant's current roles in their immigrant inclusion organisation, see Part V of each survey in Appendix I.

initiative's board of directors) to assisting staff or, in some cases, functioning as unpaid staff to carry out programs, public relations, community engagement, fundraising and organisational operations. These various types of volunteerism were reflected in the answers of both UK and US survey participants.

Individuals also can serve as donors/funders of an initiative. In this role, a person provides funding and/or other donated resources to an organisation. In some cases, initiatives can gain legitimacy and greater support by leveraging the resources, authority, and networks provided by donors/funders. Both staff and volunteers of an initiative can serve as donors. Most of the survey participants who indicated that they were donors/funders to their initiatives did so in addition to occupying other roles in their organisations.

Both the UK and US surveys contained a mixture of individuals who held professionally staffed roles (e.g. executive director, programme director, etc.), volunteer roles (e.g. they volunteered for the organisation or served as a member of its board of directors), and/or were donors/funders of their initiative. In the UK survey, 44% of the 18 respondents indicated that they exclusively held a staff position with their initiative, with 17% of UK responding participants holding the role of executive director/CEO of the initiative and 28% of UK responding participants occupying a staff position other than executive director/CEO. 28% answered that they solely served in a volunteer position with their initiative (meaning that they either served as a voluntary board member or as a generic volunteer). 17% selected 'other' for the role that they held in their immigrant inclusion initiative. 11% of respondents held more than one position with their initiative. One of the UK participants who indicated that they occupied more than one position with their organisation was a donor as well as a staff member and volunteer at their initiative.

In the US cohort, all the occupational options to this question received responses. Of the 89 US participants who responded, 60% exclusively held a staff role connected to their initiative. 15% of US participants who responded to the question were executive directors/CEOs of the initiative, 42% were staff in other roles at the initiative, 2% were executive directors/CEOs of a collaborating group or agency, and 1% were staff other than executive directors/CEOs of a collaborating group or agency. 12% of the US respondents to this question singularly held a volunteer role. 17% of US respondents held more than one position with their initiative. 7% of US respondents to this question identified as donors/funders of the initiative. Only 1% who responded were exclusively donors/funders of their initiative. All other individuals who ticked 'donor/funder' marked that they held other roles as well.

This range in the occupational roles held by research participants provided another filter through which participants were able to perceive the national government's immigration approach and its repercussions. They also can offer greater context for understanding participant comments and accompany some of those included in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

### ***Length of Involvement with Immigrant Inclusion Initiative***

The amount of time that participants had been involved with their immigrant inclusion initiative varied in both data sets. All categories offered received responses in both surveys.<sup>55</sup> Of the 18 UK respondents who answered this question, 17% indicated that they had been involved with their initiative for less than one year; 44% had been involved for 1-3 years; 17% for 4-7 years; 11% for 8-10 years; 6% for 11-15 years and 6% for more than 15 years.

In the US survey, 89 respondents answered this question. 9% indicated that they had been involved with their initiative for less than one year; 25% had been involved for 1-3 years; 29% for 4-7 years; 12% for 8-10 years; 9% for 11-15 years and 16% for more than 15 years.

The span in involvement times for respondents in both data sets meant that some participants were able to observe the immigration approaches of more than one national government and the effects of this over time on their organisation while others had only been active with that initiative during the Brexit or Trump era and only viewing its impact through this more abbreviated lens.<sup>56</sup> This variety in the lengths of time that participants were active with their initiative offered another filter through which participants distilled their national government's immigration approach and its effects.

### ***Identity as an Immigrant***

Another lens that can shape participant perceptions about the national government's immigration approach and its impact is through their identity as an immigrant or non-immigrant. Personal experiences as an immigrant and traversing the immigration system first-hand offer different vantage points of the national government's immigration approach than for those who are encountering it solely as a practitioner.

Immigrants account for roughly 16% of the total populations in the UK (Cuibus, 2024) and 14% in the US (Budiman, 2020). They comprise 19% of the UK labour force (Fernández-Reino & Brindle, 2024). In the US, they account for 17% of the US adult workforce (Pillai & Artiga, 2023) and 10% of the third sector paid workforce (Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2020).

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<sup>55</sup> Part V of each survey contained a close-ended question in which participants were asked to mark the total length of time in which they had been involved with their immigrant inclusion initiative, not just the time in which they had been in their current role. To view this question, see Part V in each survey located in Appendix I.

<sup>56</sup> It should be noted that this question only asked for the length of time that they were active with their primary immigrant inclusion initiative. Many participants in both surveys listed more than one immigrant inclusion initiative with which they were involved. Their answers to this question only are for the initiative that they designated as their primary one and do not speak to the overall length of time in which they have been involved with immigrant inclusion work.

In both surveys, a modest percentage of those who responded to the question identified as being immigrants. In the UK data set, this constituted 17% of the 18 UK participants who replied to this question. In the US survey, 16% of the 89 US participants who responded identified as immigrants.

Though only a small number of the UK and US survey participants identified as being an immigrant, several participants did disclose in their open-ended responses to other questions that they are the children of immigrants or have close relatives who are immigrants. For example, US Respondent #71 included in their open-ended answer to a survey question about ethnic identity that their ‘parents are immigrants from Central America but I was born in the US.’

Identifying as an immigrant or having close relatives who are immigrants may provide participants with a more intimate understanding of the immigration system and immigration politics than that of their peers who are more personally removed from it. As alluded to in the introduction, my own experience as both someone researching immigration in the UK and as an immigrant to the UK who has had to navigate its immigration system and the politics surrounding it have given me two different vantage points from which to perceive and understand the UK immigration ecosystem.

### ***Citizenship Status***

The citizenship status of participants is only one of multiple identities that affect participant positionality and understanding of the issue being researched. However, it is a significant one to consider. Citizens of a country possess more power and security than non-citizens through the rights and freedoms accorded to them by their citizenship status.<sup>57</sup> Having research participants who are attuned to this both occupationally as well as personally offers another array of viewpoints through which to observe and understand the national government’s immigration approach and its implications.

In both the UK and the US data sets, an overwhelming majority of those who responded to this question were citizens. 83% of the 18 UK participants and 96% of the 89 US participants who answered this question identified as citizens of the country for which they took the survey. The remaining 17% of UK respondents answered that they were not UK citizens. In the US survey, 3% of the remaining respondents indicated that they were not US citizens and 1% selected ‘preferred not to answer.’

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<sup>57</sup>Citizens who are people of colour or those of certain ethnic or national backgrounds have at different points in UK and US history including during present times had to prove their citizenship or do not experience the same rights and privileges from citizenship as others. See Prabhat (2019, pp. xiv) for a fuller discussion of this in regards to the UK context and Solomon et al (2019) for examples of this in the US.

Obtaining the participation of those without citizenship during the Brexit and Trump eras may have been further complicated by the inhospitable external political conditions present in each country. The 'hostile environment' rhetoric and policies of the UK Government and the aggressive anti-immigrant language and policies proliferated during the Trump Administration had a chilling effect on the visibility and activity of non-citizens (Capps et al, 2020; Taylor, 2018). Many feared that they would be targeted and punished by the national government for their participation in public spaces, potentially jeopardising their residency in that country.<sup>58</sup> This may have adversely impacted the participation of non-citizens in this research. It also highlights the importance for immigration researchers to recognise that additional measures may be needed to encourage and facilitate the safe participation of those without citizenship in research as they bring critical and unique perspectives.

### ***Gender***

Gender is another key aspect of identity which impacts a person's experiences, positionality, and vantage points. It also can impact how work is conceived of and carried out in a field. Research has shown 'legal, political, economic, cultural and kinship systems are all profoundly gendered' (UNC Gender Studies, n.d.). A sizeable majority of those who responded to this question in both surveys identified as female: 72% of the 18 UK respondents and 80% of the 89 US respondents. The remaining 28% of the UK participants who responded identified as male. In the US survey, 19% of those who responded identified as male and 1% identified as gender variant/non-conforming.

Though these research participants do not constitute a representative sample, the high number of practitioners in both surveys who identified as female echoes research conducted on the third sector, to which, as previously, stated many immigrant inclusion initiatives belong. The workforce of the third sector is heavily female, with women accounting for 65% of the third sector workforce in the UK (NCVO, 2021) and 75% in the US (AAUW, 2018).

### ***Ethnicity***

Ethnicity refers to a way to categorise people based on a shared culture. This shared culture is derived from a common geographical ancestry and/or history (Braverman & Parker Dominguez, 2021) and can include language, food, clothing, music, beliefs, customs, and values. Along with race, ethnicity is a powerful force in shaping

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<sup>58</sup> This was reflected in a number of open-ended comments offered by participants in both surveys. The chilling effect that the UK and US national government immigration approaches had on immigrant participation in public life as discussed by research participants will be explored in later chapters of this thesis.

people's lived experiences and often in demarcating lines of power, privilege, access, and inequalities (Frontiers, 2019).<sup>59</sup>

Understanding the ethnic identities of practitioners at an aggregate level is helpful to determine if the field of practitioners reflects the various ethnic and immigrant communities with which it is seeking to serve. Having practitioners from different ethnic communities can increase the cultural, social, and linguistic knowledge, competency, and culturally-appropriate practices of the field and can facilitate greater empathy, trust, and collaboration among practitioners and immigrant communities.

At an individual level, it can be an important variable in considering how individual practitioners may be exposed to and experience their national government's immigration approach and in shaping how practitioners conceptualise and conduct their work. As detailed below, whiteness was the ethnicity claimed by a majority of the immigrant inclusion practitioners in this study. The power and privileges of whiteness have been well documented (e.g. Delgado et al, 2023; Hafen, 2022; Pease, 2021) and are structurally embedded in both UK and US society. The effects of this are far-reaching and, as I will explore Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8, surfaced in participant comments regarding their immigrant inclusion work. For example, US Respondent #83 described how the difference in ethnicities between she and her board chair impacted their senses of safety and the implications that this had on how they performed their work:

... for the most part, as a white woman who is a Christian, I don't worry about my own safety. My board president...is a Kenyan immigrant, and DOES worry about being a public face in heated discussions... we take efforts to keep her anonymous and not expose her to angry members of the public.

In the UK survey, 13 of the 14 participants who responded to this question (93%) identified as ethnically white. The ethnic identity given by the one UK participant who

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<sup>59</sup> I chose to inquire about participant's ethnic rather than racial identity. The social construct of race since its development and employment in the 1600s has been used to justify enslavement, exploitation, genocide, and inequality within and across societies. It is rooted in the flawed concept that biological differences exist among people based on physical characteristics, such as skin and eye colour, hair texture, and facial features. This has been used to classify certain racial groups as superior to others. Though it has been widely discredited and rejected by the scientific community, the continued employment of the term 'race' promulgates the disproven idea that biological differences exist among people based on appearance. This promulgation continues to validate the unequal and unjust social systems, structures, and treatment of communities and individuals based on the concept of race. While it is critical to recognise and address the implications that racialisation has had and continues to have on societies and individuals, a shift to asking people to share their ethnic identity is a more useful and less problematic way to account for the cultural diversity and shared cultural identities that shape individuals and societies and that are important to capture. See Braverman and Parker Dominguez (2021) for a fuller exposition of this. The UK census uses the term ethnic groups to capture racial and ethnic identity while the US census uses race.

did not identify as white was from a sub-Saharan African ethnic group.<sup>60</sup> While the UK survey sample was not a representative one, the underrepresentation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups in it mimics larger patterns of underrepresentation of employees with BAME identities in the UK third sector. Persons with BAME identities make-up only 9% of the total third sector workforce in the UK and even less of its leadership (6%) (Mohideen, 2020) despite constituting 14% of the total UK population (Uberoi & Lees, 2020).

The 77 US survey participants who responded to this question were more ethnically diverse than their UK peers. 49% identified as ethnically white (this includes those who wrote 'white' as well as those who described themselves as 'Caucasian' or 'white/Caucasian' as that is commonly understood in a US context as another way of identifying as ethnically/racially white<sup>61</sup>). 11% identified as either Latin(x)/a/o or Hispanic. 8% identified as 'Asian American' or listed ethnic identities in whole or part that were derived from Asian countries. 4% had indigenous identities as a whole or part of their ethnic description. 3% included 'Jewish' in their ethnic identities. Only one US participant (1%) identified as 'African/Black American'.

Once again, the US survey sample is not a representative sample and comprehensive data does not exist on the ethnic composition of the larger immigrant inclusion field. However, as with the UK, the US third sector is predominantly white, especially for those in institutional leadership positions. 59% of the third sector workforce in the US identify as white, 15% as Black/African American, 11% as Latinx/Hispanic, 8% as Asian American, 8% as Multiracial, 1% as Native American/Indigenous and less than 1% as Arab American (Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2020). 79% of third sector board chairs and executive directors in the US are white (Mitchell, 2021). Approximately 62% of the US total population exclusively identifies as white (US Census, 2021b).

## **Age**

The generational diversity found in both survey cohorts adds another relevant filter that participants brought to their immigrant inclusion work and to their interpretation of the national government's immigration approach. Both the UK and US surveys contained a mixture of participants across different age categories.

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<sup>60</sup> Part V of both versions of the survey contained an open-ended question asking participants how they identified ethnically. 14 UK participants and 77 US respondents answered this question. See Part V of the survey in Appendix I to view this question.

<sup>61</sup> The US Census Bureau (2021b), which uses the term 'race' to account for racial and ethnic identity in the national census, defines 'white' as: 'A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. It includes people who indicate their race as "White" or report responses such as German, Irish, English, Italian, Lebanese, and Egyptian. The category also includes groups such as Polish, French, Iranian, Slavic, Cajun, Chaldean, etc.... People who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be of any race.' (information section for 'White alone, percent' category under 'Race and Hispanic Origin' category).

In the UK cohort, 6% of the 18 respondents identified as being within the '18-24 years' category, 39% marked '25-39 years', 17% ticked '40-60 years', and 33% identified as being '61-80 years'. 6% of UK participants marked 'prefer not to answer.'

The 89 US respondents to this question were also spread across the age categories: 2% identified as being in the '18-24 years' category, 43% indicated '25-39 years', 33% selected '40-60 years', and 22% identified as being '61-80 years.'

As previously noted, immigration has been an issue that has waxed and waned in the UK's and the US's national political saliency throughout the last half century (Hopkins, 2011) with calls by mainstream political elites to curb immigration having steadily gained traction in both countries since 2010 (Allen & Sumption, 2015; Everett & Parti, 2013). The age of a practitioner affects their exposure to these varying levels of national political saliency. Older practitioners were exposed to this longer-term political ebb and flow and to the immigration approaches of multiple national governments, while younger practitioners may have spent most of their lives in a time period where immigration was a dominant and increasingly fraught part of the national discourse. These different experiences provide another set of diverse vantage points that could shape participant perceptions of what they witnessed in the Brexit or Trump eras and how they answered the survey.

## **Conclusion**

Details captured through demographic questions and respondents' open-ended comments illuminate the diversity of both the individual practitioners who participated in this research as well as the immigrant inclusion initiatives with which they were involved during the Brexit and Trump eras. In doing so, they add to the organisational mapping of the immigrant inclusion field, of which little has been done, and contribute to a greater understanding of the individuals who constitute it.

The UK and US initiatives represented in this research varied in geographic location and in the immigrant population size and voter support for Brexit or Trump in the areas in which they were based. Participant comments coupled with the literature referenced in this chapter highlight how these place-based conditions can affect the local immigration environment, potentially amplifying or mitigating the impact of the national government's immigration approach. This will be further elucidated in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. The featured UK and US initiatives carried out their work at a multitude of scales, with a majority of initiatives in both surveys exhibiting some local presence to their work. Sizeable amounts of initiatives in both data sets carried out work at multiple levels, potentially giving participants various viewpoints from which to witness and appraise the national government's immigration approach and its effects. The assorted levels at which participant immigrant inclusion initiatives operated also underscores the vast and transversal scope of immigrant inclusion work.

This study also documented the wide variety of immigrant inclusion activities undertaken by participants' initiatives. To do so, I developed a typology of immigrant inclusion activities, a novel contribution which may aid in future research. In both surveys, the provision of direct services was the most undertaken activity. This resonates with the literature showing the increasing role that the third sector in both countries has played over the past forty years in acting as a de facto welfare state and will feed into the analysis offered in Chapters 5,6,7 and 8. In the US survey, offering legal advice and assistance was performed at the same high rate as providing direct services, reflecting a greater need and demand for this type of activity in the Trump era as a result of the profound transformation of US immigration enacted by the Trump Administration (Chapter 6). It is notable though that each activity type offered in the survey received responses from UK and US participants and that strong majorities of participants in both surveys were affiliated with initiatives that performed more than one type of immigrant inclusion activity. This illustrates the breadth of immigrant inclusion activity that occurred in the UK and the US during these time periods and the different ways in which they were able to engage with the national government's immigration approach.

Both surveys contained a combination of immigrant inclusion organisations where inclusion work was central to its work or where it was peripheral. Variation also existed in the structuring of the immigrant inclusion organisations represented. Three of the US organisations were informally-organised meaning that they were totally volunteer-run. The remaining initiatives represented in both surveys were formally-organised and professionally staffed, though they ranged in size and composition as some were large, established organisations and others small, community-based initiatives. Once again, this variety positioned research participants in a myriad of contexts through which they encountered the national government's immigration approach and its impact. It also potentially impacted the funding and adaptability of their initiatives, which is discussed in Chapter 7.

This chapter also offered demographic insights about the individuals who were performing immigrant inclusion work in this study. Participants in both surveys occupied a variety of roles within the immigrant inclusion initiatives including as staff, volunteers, and donors. In some cases, they held multiple roles. Diversity could also be found in the length of involvement that participants had with their immigrant inclusion initiative and in participants' ages. In terms of gender and ethnicity, UK and US survey participants mirrored the broader trends in the third sector of being predominantly female and white. Most of the UK and US participants were not immigrants, though some did indicate that they had close family members who were, and a vast majority in both surveys were citizens of those countries. These various individual characteristics of practitioners also offer different vantage points that can shape the ways in which they perceived and interacted with the national government's immigration approach in the Brexit and Trump eras.

In sum, the findings in this chapter enhance the sparse mapping of the diverse, complex immigrant inclusion field and of the individual practitioners who constitute it. This assorted collection of roles, contexts, and positions through which participants encountered the Brexit and Trump Governments' immigration approaches allow for a holistic assessment of these approaches and their impact. In some instances, this data also can add grounding and depth to their observations, further strengthening the credibility of the claims.

Now that the diverse contexts and vantage points of participants have been mapped, the second part of this thesis commences responding to the four research sub-questions articulated in Chapter 2. The next chapter addresses the fundamental questions of whether or not participants from their varied vantage points perceived the Brexit and Trump Governments' immigration approaches to have been unwelcoming and if this differed from their assessments of the previous government's approach. What emerges from analysis of the data is a revealing tale of two countries brought to a common place of extreme unwelcoming but, as will be explored in Chapters 5 and 6, achieving this through distinctive paths. As Chapter 7 will illustrate, the repercussions of this for immigrant inclusion efforts are significant and enduring.

**Part II: Reaching a Boiling Point: The UK and US' Distinct  
Paths to Extreme Unwelcoming and their Impact on  
Immigrant Inclusion Efforts**

## **Chapter 4: Perceptions of Unwelcoming: Participant Rankings of the UK and US National Governments' Immigration Approaches during the Brexit and Trump Eras**

As discussed in previous chapters, the central premise of this study is to investigate how practitioners and their efforts to promote the inclusion of immigrants are impacted by a national government which is (perceived to be) unwelcoming to immigrants and immigration. To ascertain this, I first had to determine if practitioners working in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras viewed the national government's immigration approach as being unwelcoming. The results from analysis of both data sets are clear and resounding: participants in the UK and the US overwhelmingly perceived their national governments' immigration approaches to be extremely unwelcoming during the Brexit and Trump eras. Yet, this analysis also reveals that even though both countries ended up in the Brexit and Trump eras with national governments who employed extremely unwelcoming immigration approaches, they arrived there from very different places. This chapter unpacks this and sets the stage for the deeper analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 of the distinct paths that each country took to generate an immigration environment of extreme unwelcoming and the ramifications of this for the immigrant inclusion field as explored in Chapter 7.

### **Determining Perceptions of a Welcoming or Unwelcoming Immigration Approach**

As detailed in Chapter 2, the Brexit and Trump campaigns' overt problematising of immigrants and immigration and their pledges to use the national government's powers to generate a (more) unwelcoming immigration environment found champions in the UK and US Governments that followed. Both national governments continued to employ disparaging messaging about immigrants, framed immigration as a destructive force afflicting their respective countries, championed policies to severely shrink immigrant and refugee levels, vigorously pursued and punished immigrants with precarious legal status, and reduced the staffing and funding of their immigration systems (Bolter et al, 2022; Griffiths & Yeo, 2021; Taylor 2018; Waslin, 2020).

These harsh tactics have been well documented, but did they achieve their intended effect of generating a (more) unwelcoming environment for immigrants and immigration in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras? This was the first line of inquiry that I sought to explore with the 18 UK and 95 US-based immigrant inclusion practitioners who participated in this research. The wide array of research participants' identities, contexts, and immigrant inclusion activities discussed in Chapter 3 provide a multitude of vantage points from which they could assess this.

Research Question 1 of this study asked: ‘How did immigrant inclusion practitioners working in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras perceive their national government’s immigration approach to be in terms of un/welcoming and how did they see the national government manifest this?’ I unpacked this query through a series of questions in ‘Part II: Perceptions of the national government’s approach to immigration’ of the survey. These questions gauged how welcoming or unwelcoming the participant perceived their national government’s immigration approach to be during the Brexit or Trump era and how this compared to their perceptions of the previous national government’s immigration approach (i.e. that of the Cameron Government in the UK and the Obama Administration in the US). I included questions about their perception of the previous government’s immigration approach to determine if they saw a shift in the national government’s immigration approach and, if so, to indicate which way they perceived it changing (see Part II of the survey in Appendix I). This showed whether or not the level of unwelcoming perceived by participants about their national government’s immigration approach had grown during the Brexit or Trump eras, indicating if the Brexit and Trump campaigns’ common goal of creating a more unwelcoming immigration environment had been fulfilled.

This study defined the term ‘national government’s immigration approach’ as the collection of language, policies, and actions used by the head of the executive branch of the national government, their cabinet members and advisors, and the government departments and agencies that the executive and their ministers oversee. Both versions of the survey explicitly included a definition that was tailored to their particular political context. For example, the head of the executive of branch was listed as the prime minister in the UK version and the president of the USA in the US version (see Part II of each survey in Appendix I for the exact question wording, including context-specific details and ranking options).

Survey participants used a seven-point Likert scale to rank their perception of the national government’s immigration approach during the Brexit or Trump era for the country in which they worked. The seven Likert-scale rankings ranged from ‘extremely welcoming’ to ‘extremely unwelcoming,’ plus an eighth ‘don’t know’ option. After this close-ended question, participants could explain via a textbox what information or experiences they considered for their ranking.

Participants then used the same seven-point welcoming/unwelcoming Likert scale with an eighth ‘don’t know’ option to rank and a textbox to explain their perception of the previous national government’s immigration approach. The coupling of a close-ended ranked question with an open-ended question enabled me to gather and compare standardised data through the ranked responses while offering participants an open-ended space to share discrete information and experiences that influenced these rankings.

I then analysed the open-ended responses for common and distinct themes both within and across the two data sets. Collecting participant responses through quantitative and qualitative means gave me a fuller portrait of participant perceptions and the factors affecting these perceptions than if I had used only one type of data.

### **Wording Used (and Not Used) for the Rankings and the Logic Behind This**

I deliberately chose to use the wording of 'welcoming' and 'unwelcoming' rather than 'hostile' or 'not hostile' for these Likert-scale rankings. This reduced the likelihood of the question triggering pre-existing associations held by participants about the latter terms and biasing their responses. Wording that evokes a strong emotional response can obfuscate the question being asked and lead participants to answer in certain ways, compromising the validity of their responses (Iarossi, 2006, p. 36).

In the UK context, the term 'hostile environment' is commonly associated with Conservative Party politics and policies that negatively impact immigrants. In a May 2012 interview, Theresa May in her role as home secretary introduced this wording to describe efforts by the Coalition Government under the premiership of David Cameron to thwart illegal immigration (Kirkup & Winnett, 2012). However, the term 'hostile environment' pre-dated the Cameron Coalition Government. Its origins can be traced to language used by the US Government and other governments, including the UK Government, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks to indirectly eradicate terrorist activity by limiting available streams of finance and other support (Griffiths & Yeo, 2021, p. 524).

The term 'hostile' environment transformed what was seen as a previously 'safe' environment for terrorism by expanding the counterterrorism spaces and tools available outside the scope of criminal law. This new approach reflected a growing awareness that indirect regulatory or unconventional administrative measures also could disrupt and weaken terrorist operations and their activity (Hendry, 2020, p. 27). This concept of undermining safe spaces for illicit or unwanted activity started to travel to other nexuses of policy and law enforcement, such as efforts targeting organised crime networks, and eventually found a home with those seeking to restrict immigration.

There is some dispute about when the term first surfaced in a UK immigration context. According to Taylor (2018, p. 2), claims exist that the ideology resided in the Home Office prior to the Cameron Government with former Labour Shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry crediting former Labour Home Secretary Alan Johnson with its initial usage. The term also appeared passingly in a 2010 UK Border Agency (UKBA) immigration white paper, issued under the then Labour government (UKBA, 2010).

Regardless of its exact genesis, the term took on greater prominence and profound policy expansion under the Cameron Coalition Government. The government's convening of the 'Hostile Environment Working Group' epitomised this scaling. This

working group brought together ministers from a wide and diverse array of government departments including the Ministers of State for Immigration, Care Services, Employment, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Housing and Local Government, Justice, Schools, and Universities and Science along with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of States for Health and Transport and the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury. Ministers then propagated policies flowing from this working group that ‘dramatically diffused the immigration system across the breadth of society,’ effectively ‘deputising...a medley of actors...’ to interpret and enforce immigration policy in people’s everyday lives (Griffiths & Yeo, 2021, p. 522).

The term ‘hostile environment’ has gained traction in the broader discourse about the harsh treatment of immigrants. It frequently is invoked by those within and outside the UK (including by some in the US) to describe conditions unfavourable to immigrants (Griffiths & Yeo, 2021; JCWI, n.d.). Examples of this can be found across disciplines including in health and social care (e.g. Canning, 2021; Danaher et al, 2022; Pinillos-Franco & Kawachi, 2022), politics and public policy (e.g. Hiers et al, 2017; Morgan, 2023; Suro, 2015), and law and criminology (e.g. Bala Akal, 2021; Escarcena, 2019; Tervonen et al, 2018).

### **Participant Rankings of their National Government’s Immigration Approaches before and during the Brexit and Trump Eras**

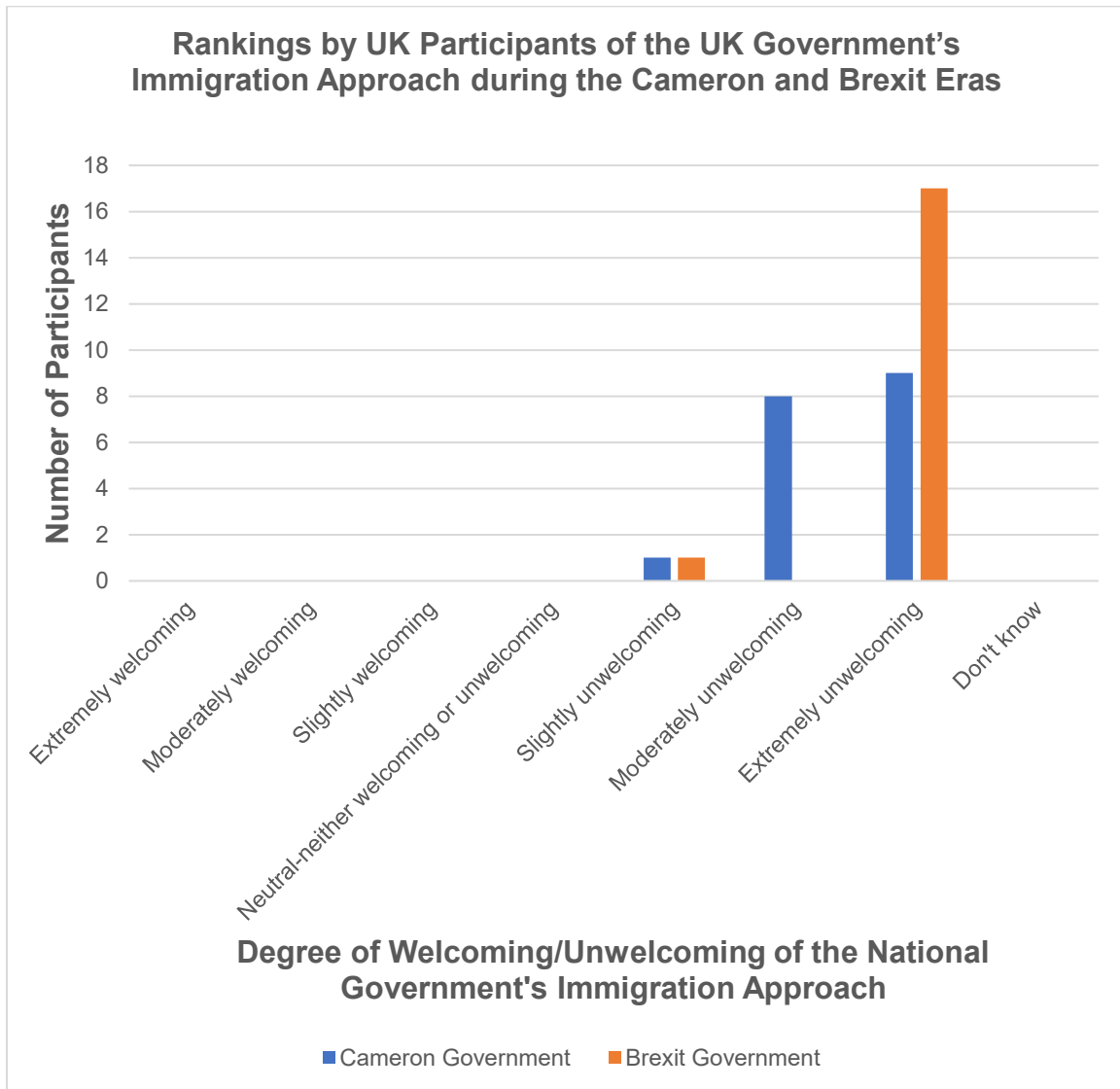
An overwhelming majority of participants in both the UK and the US surveys (99% or 112 out of 113 respondents) regarded their national government’s immigration approaches in the Brexit and Trump eras to be unwelcoming. What distinguished these two data sets is the amount of change in participant perceptions about the degree of un/welcoming of the Cameron and Obama Governments’ immigration approaches in relation to the unwelcoming approaches of the Brexit and Trump Governments.

All 18 UK respondents perceived their national government’s approach to immigration to have been unwelcoming during both the Cameron and Brexit Governments. However, there is a consolidation and intensification in the degree of unwelcoming that participants perceived in the UK Government’s immigration approach during the Brexit era compared to the range in the degrees of unwelcoming attributed to that in the Cameron era.

In ranking the immigration approach of the Cameron Government, 50% (nine of the 18 UK participants) chose ‘extremely unwelcoming’, 44% (eight UK participants) marked ‘moderately unwelcoming’ and 6% (one UK participants) ticked ‘slightly unwelcoming.’ When it came to ranking the Brexit Government’s immigration approach, the responses coalesced: all but one (94% or 17 of the 18 UK respondents) of the UK participants selected ‘extremely unwelcoming’ with the remaining UK participant choosing ‘slightly unwelcoming.’ Figure 3 shows the

rankings by UK participants of the UK Government's immigration approach during the Cameron and Brexit eras.

**Figure 3. Rankings of the UK Government’s Immigration Approach during the Cameron and Brexit Eras**



Source: Author's research

A significant number of UK participants (44% or eight of the 18 UK respondents) found no difference in the approaches undertaken by their national government in both the Cameron and Brexit eras. It is notable that all of these eight UK participants who did not shift their rankings viewed both the Cameron Government's and the Brexit Government's immigration approaches as 'extremely unwelcoming.'

It also is noteworthy that these eight respondents were active with immigrant inclusion initiatives that were diverse in location, scope, and the types of activities conducted and that these participants varied in their roles and length of involvement with these efforts. Thus, practitioners who perceived a sense of continuity in the extreme unwelcoming of the UK Government could be found throughout the immigrant inclusion field and working in many spheres of society rather than being limited to those performing particular activities or roles or who were operating in specific locations or scales.

Nine of the ten UK participants (90%) who ranked the Cameron and Brexit Governments differently perceived the Brexit Government's approach to have been more unwelcoming than that of the Cameron Government. Yet, this shift in rankings from the Cameron era to the Brexit era was a change in degrees rather than a change in category, as all were within the unwelcoming category. Eight of these nine UK participants ranked the Cameron Government as 'moderately unwelcoming' and one assessed it as 'slightly unwelcoming.' All nine of these UK participants merely increased the degree of unwelcoming that they saw the UK Government exhibit through its immigration approach during the Brexit era. All of these nine UK participants selected 'extremely unwelcoming' for their rating of the Brexit national government's approach.

The sole UK respondent who ranked the national government's immigration approach as more welcoming in the Brexit era than in the Cameron era stayed within the unwelcoming range for this shift. This respondent moved from an 'extremely unwelcoming' ranking for the Cameron Government to a 'slightly unwelcoming' ranking for the Brexit-era governments. Open-ended comments by this participant suggested that their more welcoming assessment of the Brexit-era Governments was driven by Boris Johnson's government reception of Hong Kong political refugees. This appeared to have countered their negative assessment of Johnson's home secretary Priti Patel and the Home Office's stance on asylum seekers, resulting in a more welcoming ranking: 'Priti Patel and the home office's stance on asylum seekers crossing the English Channel (very negative). The welcome made by Boris Johnson to people from Hong Kong (moderately positive)' (UK Respondent #15). Their open-ended response identified the 'hostile environment' and 'Windrush' (a reference to the Windrush scandal in which the UK Government was found to have wrongly detained, deported, and denied legal rights to hundreds of

Commonwealth citizens whose families originated from Caribbean countries<sup>62</sup>) as being considerations that shaped their more unwelcoming assessment of the Cameron Government.

The relatively consistent perception of unwelcoming expressed by UK participants during the Cameron-era and the Brexit-era Governments stood in stark contrast to the rankings from US participants. US responses revealed a substantial change in US participant perceptions about the national government's immigration approach during the Obama and Trump eras.

US participant perceptions of the Obama Administration's immigration approach were far more diverse than their perceptions about the Trump Administration's approach. 55% (52 of the 95 US participants) ranked the Obama Administration's approach within the welcoming range, 12% (11 US participants) rated it neutral, and 34% (32 US participants) ranked it within the unwelcoming range.

When examining participant rankings for the Trump Administration, the rankings almost completely concentrate in the unwelcoming range. 99% of US participants (94 of the 95 US respondents) selected some degree of unwelcoming when ranking the Trump Administration. A robust majority (94% or 89 US participants) perceived an 'extremely unwelcoming' immigration approach while the other 5% (five US participants) selected 'moderately unwelcoming.' The one US participant who perceived the Trump Administration's approach as being some degree of welcoming

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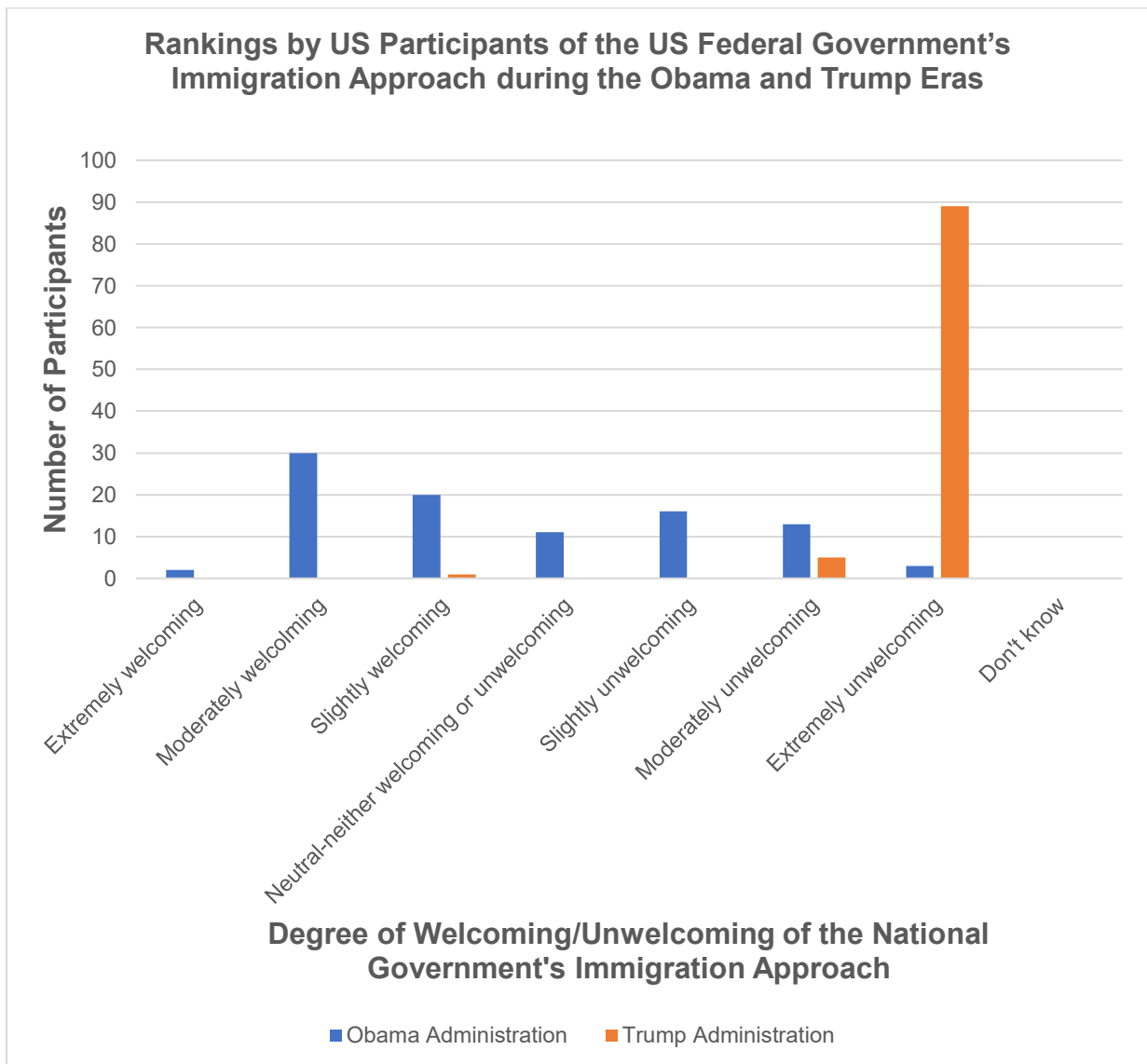
<sup>62</sup> The 'Windrush' generation refers to those who immigrated to the UK from Caribbean countries between 1948 and 1973. The 'HMT Empire Windrush' ship brought one of the first large groups of Caribbean people to the UK in 1948 and it is from that the name 'Windrush' is derived. During this period, Caribbean countries who were former colonies were part of the British Commonwealth. The 1948 British Nationality Act gave people from British Commonwealth countries the right to permanently reside and work in the UK. Many of the 'Windrush' generation who immigrated came to pursue jobs in Britain's post-war labour shortage.

An investigative report published in *The Guardian* in 2017 revealed that the UK Government had wrongly detained, deported, and denied legal rights to hundreds of Commonwealth citizens, many of whom were from the 'Windrush' generation. The resulting scandal ultimately led Prime Minister Theresa May to apologise and launch a formal inquiry along with plans for a compensation scheme. In March 2020, the inquiry released its report which concluded that the scandal was 'foreseeable and avoidable.' It traced the causes of the Windrush scandal 'to successive rounds of policy and legislation about immigration and nationality from the 1960s onwards, the aim of which was to restrict the eligibility of certain groups to live in the UK.' (Williams, 2020, p. 7). It also pointed to a toxic culture of arrogance, ignorance, and disbelief within the Home Office that facilitated such grave mistreatment and rights violations. Inquiry author Wendy Williams CBE warned of a 'grave risk' of these violations continuing to occur without government intervention (BBC News, 2023). The report contained 30 recommendations for government action to address this injustice and to prevent future violations. The recommendations were accepted in full by then Home Secretary Priti Patel.

However, in 2023, Home Secretary Suella Braverman announced that the government would be discontinuing three of its committed Windrush-related actions. The Windrush compensation scheme, which the government unveiled in April 2019, has been repeatedly criticised for processing delays, insufficient compensation offers, and unfair rejections which were later reversed on appeal.

selected the minimum degree ('slightly welcoming'). Figure 4 details the breakdown of US participant rankings for the Obama and Trump Administrations.

**Figure 4. Rankings of the US Federal Government's Immigration Approach during the Obama and Trump Eras**



Source: Author's research

97% (92 of the 95 US respondents) ranked the US national government's immigration approach differently in the Obama and Trump eras. Nearly all of the respondents who selected different rankings for these time periods (99% or 91 of these 92 US respondents) perceived the Trump Administration's immigration approach to have been more unwelcoming than that of the Obama Administration.

Interestingly, the only respondent to have ranked the Trump administration's immigration approach as some degree of 'welcoming' was also the sole respondent who found the Trump Administration's immigration approach to have been more welcoming than that of the Obama Administration. They attributed their rankings to their experiences assisting immigrants as a behavioural health professional. They remarked that it was during the Obama Administration that they started having to visit clients in jail while the client was awaiting deportation, but that they did not have to do this during the Trump era:

I have about 15 years of assisting in immigration cases as a behavioural health professional. December 2016 was the last time I had to visit a client in jail due to awaiting deportation. Thus, although the social imagery is that Trump rejected immigrants, that has not been my experience. (I am a foreign-born [midwestern state] resident). (US Respondent #50).

The additional information collected through the survey did not offer clarity about why US Respondent #50 answered as they did to this question. It seems a curious anomaly though and future lines of research may seek to investigate this and similar view points.

Only 3% (three US respondents) in the US survey chose the same ranking for the national government's approach in both eras. Notably, all three of these US participants ranked their national government's immigration approach in both the Obama and Trump eras as 'extremely unwelcoming.' These three respondents all held voluntary roles within their respective immigrant inclusion organisations. Two of these respondents were active with different humanitarian efforts located in the same Southern border state and one was involved with an initiative in a Northern border state that engaged in a range of immigrant inclusion activities.

## **Conclusion**

While both the UK and US cohorts viewed their national governments' immigration approaches to be roundly unwelcoming during the Brexit and Trump eras, they diverged in their assessments of their previous government's approaches. UK participants largely perceived the Brexit Government's immigration approach to be equally or more unwelcoming than that of the Cameron Government, signalling an *intensification* of an already unwelcoming approach.

In contrast, US participant rankings revealed a striking alteration in their perceptions of the national government's immigration approach from the Obama to the Trump

Administrations. US participant perceptions about the Obama Administration's immigration approach were distributed across all the response options, with a slight majority of them within the welcoming range. However, all but one US participant ranked the Trump Administration's immigration approach as having been within the two most unwelcoming categories. This suggests that US participants observed a more radical *transformation* of their national government's immigration approach from the Obama to the Trump eras compared to what the UK participants perceived of their national government's immigration approach in the Cameron and Brexit eras.

This fundamental difference in the perceived change and escalation of the unwelcoming immigration approach exhibited by the UK and US Governments during the Brexit and Trump eras became even clearer upon taking into account respondents' open-ended comments and is the focus of Chapters 5 and 6. In these chapters, I offer an original framework based on my analysis that uses the theoretical metaphor of bringing a pot to boil to highlight the distinctive paths of *intensification* pursued by the UK Government and *transformation* taken by the US Government to extend and deepen an unwelcoming environment for immigrants and immigration. These chapters also construct portraits of each national government's extremely unwelcoming approach based on analysis of participants' comments and supported by relevant literature, allowing for an examination in Chapter 6 and revisited in Chapter 8 of the common features of these distinct nevertheless extremely unwelcoming immigration approaches. Chapter 7 examines the impact that these decidedly unwelcoming immigration approaches enacted by the UK and the US Governments had on the immigrant inclusion field in the Brexit and Trump eras. Chapter 8 offers reflections on the paths and approaches used by the UK and US Government in the pursuit of fostering an immigration environment of extreme unwelcoming and the repercussions that this holds for immigrant inclusion efforts.

## Chapter 5: The Brexit-era UK: A Case of ‘Slow Boil’ Graduated Intensification

This chapter builds on Chapter 4’s discussion of UK participant rankings that suggest the UK Government generated an immigration environment of extreme unwelcoming incrementally through an intensification of hostility. It focuses on the distinct path that the UK Government took to establishing this. I scrutinise the various facets of its path using the theoretical metaphor of bringing a pot to a boiling point as an analytic heuristic to succinctly illustrate them. This metaphor also will be applied to the US case in Chapter 6, illuminating the different paths that each country took to arriving at a common point of extreme unwelcoming. In addition, this chapter uses analysis of UK participant responses complimented by relevant literature to construct a profile of the Brexit Government’s extremely unwelcoming immigration approach. I do the same for the Trump Government’s approach in Chapter 6, allowing for reflections on commonalities and differences between these approaches that are detailed in Chapter 6 and returned to in Chapter 8. This chapter and the next chapter further address Research Questions 1 and 4 by providing greater detail about the tangible ways in which the national government’s immigration approach exhibited extreme unwelcoming and what information and experiences shaped research participants’ impressions of this.<sup>63</sup>

### **Achieving a Boiling Point of Extreme Unwelcoming: A Metaphor for Understanding the UK’s and the US’s Different Paths to Reaching the Same Point**

As highlighted in the previous chapter, UK and US survey participants almost unanimously perceived their national governments’ immigration approaches to have been extremely unwelcoming during the Brexit and Trump eras. The striking difference between the consolidations of the two cohorts’ rankings alludes to distinctive paths taken by their national governments- one of *intensification* by the UK Government and one of *transformation* by the US Government- to generate and propagate inhospitable immigration environments. Analysis of participants’ open-ended comments synthesised with relevant literature further elucidate these paths. These different paths can be understood using the metaphor of bringing a pot to boil on a stove top whereby the UK’s graduated intensification is an example of a ‘slow boil’ and the US’s rapid transformation is a case of a ‘fast boil’.

In this metaphor, the boiling point marks the achievement of an extremely unwelcoming immigration environment. Here, the national government’s immigration approach acts as the stove top’s dial, igniting and intensifying underlying political, economic, social, and historical conditions. These underlying conditions can be

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<sup>63</sup> RQ1 asked: ‘How did immigrant inclusion practitioners working in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras perceive their national government’s approach to immigration in terms of being un/welcoming and how did they see this manifest in their national government’s immigration approach.’ RQ4 asked: ‘What information and experiences formed these perceptions?’

exploited by the national government to serve as fuel for bringing the pot to a boil. Sudden or temporary political, economic, and social conditions such as elections, economic shocks, public crises, and changes to the media/information ecosystem, some of which may be generated by the national government, can act as accelerants that more quickly bring the pot to a boil. Ultimately, the national government is the hand which controls the dial and can utilise accelerants to manipulate the speed and severity of the heat (the degree of unwelcoming) to produce a boil. A discussion of each case using this metaphor follows in this chapter and the proceeding one.

### **Extreme Unwelcoming in the Brexit-era UK: A Case of a ‘Slow Boil’ Graduated Intensification**

The UK’s ‘slow boil’ path to reaching a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming in the Brexit era was gradually achieved through the immigration approaches of multiple Conservative and Labour-led governments using sustained, incremental but escalating actions of unwelcoming. This is illuminated by UK survey participants’ comments, which describe an unwelcoming immigration environment in the UK that pre-dated Brexit.

Several UK respondents attributed this unwelcoming environment to the Conservative Party’s control of the government leading up to and during the Brexit era. UK Respondent #14, who ranked the Cameron Government as ‘moderately unwelcoming’ and the Brexit Government as ‘extremely unwelcoming,’ suggested that because both the Cameron and Brexit Governments were products of the Conservative Party, they would embody the party’s perceived unwelcoming position on immigration, writing: ‘same political party-same approaches.’ UK Respondent #12, who shifted their ranking of the government from ‘moderately unwelcoming’ during the Cameron era to ‘extremely unwelcoming’ in the Brexit era, extended this line of thinking further implying that any Conservative government would employ an unwelcoming approach: ‘The Conservatives have never been pro-immigration or pro-refugee welcoming.’ Indeed, scholars have observed that since 2010 the Conservative Party has embraced a decidedly restrictive, discriminatory, and increasingly draconian immigration approach in an attempt to secure the social right of its voter base and to bolster an issue in which it historically has held a sizeable lead in the polls over the UK Labour Party (Consterdine, 2022; Bale et al, 2011).<sup>64</sup> However, this more graphic articulation of the Conservative Party’s hostility towards immigration had been gradually built over several decades, starting in the mid-1960s

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<sup>64</sup> This is not to say that the Conservative Party’s immigration platform has been wholly restrictive or anti-immigrant. One of the key ideological fault lines within the UK Conservative Party is between the neoliberal New Right, who see liberal immigration policy as essential to UK economic competitiveness and growth, and the social conservatives, who view immigration as a threat to British identity, security, and prosperity. However, since 2010, the populist, highly restrictive impulses of the social conservative wing have come to dominate the party’s immigration platform though some limited pro-business concessions have been made. See Consterdine (2022) for a fuller exploration of this.

when the party began weaponizing immigration as a wedge issue to divide Labour's electoral coalition (Bale, 2022, p. 484).

Though survey questions only asked about participant perceptions of the UK Government's immigration approach during the Cameron and Brexit eras, some participants noted that an unwelcoming immigration environment existed in the UK prior to these time periods. UK Respondent #16, who ranked both the Cameron and Brexit Governments as being 'extremely unwelcoming,' traced the genesis of an extremely unwelcoming immigration environment further back, crediting both New Labour and Conservative governments with its establishment:

So many of the policies that cause significant harm that we are trying to change were introduced by Pro-EU New Labour. It took the Coalition government to end detention of immigrant children, and Cameron's Tory government introduced the Syrian Resettlement Scheme...we [had] some extremely pervasive immigration policies well before the term Brexit even existed and the two examples given show that it has not always been one way.

Relevant scholarship supports this assertion. As discussed in Chapter 4, the origins of what became the UK Government's 'hostile environment' immigration approach of the Cameron and Brexit Governments have been attributed to a series of messaging and policies introduced under the New Labour Governments of 1997-2010 (Consterdine, 2020; Griffiths and Yeo, 2020; Taylor, 2018). During New Labour's tenure, a spectrum of immigrant desirability was codified that deemed certain types of immigrants as 'good' or 'wanted' (e.g. labour migrants in sectors facing shortages) and others as 'bad' or 'unwanted' (e.g. those seeking asylum). This differentiation of immigrant worthiness and the government language and policies surrounding it seeded a perception of crisis about immigration and the immigration system that reshaped the public immigration debate and embedded a broader hostility towards immigrants (Mulvey, 2011, p. 1477).

Others chart its roots back even further to policies enacted under the Conservative Governments in the 1980s and 1990s (York, 2018, p. 1751). These policies limited immigrant access to social benefits and housing, though initial curtailments enacted in the 1980s were part of broader neoliberal welfare reforms and did not explicitly target immigrants as the legislation and policy changes implemented in the 1990s did (Slaven et al, 2021, p. 873).

What is also clear from the literature is that each government preserved significant unwelcoming components of the previous government's immigration approach while also adding new components. New Labour retained the restrictive policies towards asylum seekers, including welfare restrictions, enacted by the preceding Conservative governments (Somerville & Walsh, 2021), while introducing a host of changes to the immigration system that facilitated economic immigration but also

implemented a harsh security and control framework geared toward deterring and controlling undesirable immigration (i.e. immigrants seeking asylum or with irregular status) (Somerville et al, 2009). The Cameron Government, in turn, continued many of the neoliberal immigration management practices instituted by New Labour governments that have been deleterious to immigrants.<sup>65</sup> These included the outsourcing and commercialisation of immigration controls and differentiating immigrants based on their economic worthiness (Consterdine, 2020, p. 189). At the same time, the Cameron Government enacted its 'hostile environment' policy, which ushered in an overtly punitive approach to immigration. I term this process 'immigration policy scaffolding', whereby one administration built on the unwelcoming approach of the previous one while also introducing additional novel components. The immigration policy scaffolding practiced by the UK Government resulted in a gradual, sustained intensification of immigration unwelcoming in the UK. As the following section demonstrates, this practice produced a strong foundation of unwelcoming upon which the Brexit Government's immigration approach expanded and enhanced, ultimately facilitating a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming in the Brexit era.

### **Fully Turning Up the Dial of Extreme Unwelcoming in the Brexit Era**

The existing unwelcoming environment reached a full boil during the Brexit era. Even participants who ranked both the Cameron and Brexit Governments as being 'extremely unwelcoming' in their immigration approaches note through their comments that there was an intensification of unwelcoming in the Brexit era. For example, UK Respondent #1 wrote: '...policy and practice has become more entrenched since [Cameron's] administration...' Analysis of UK comments reveal that this perceived intensification is derived from three components of the UK Government's immigration approach in the Brexit era. These significant components are highlighted in Textbox 1 and expounded upon below.

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<sup>65</sup> Griffiths and Yeo (2021, p. 526) write that although many of the unwelcoming immigration policies instituted under the New Labour governments laid the foundation for what would become the hostile environment, these policies were designed to make an 'uncomfortable' rather than 'hostile' immigration environment. They note that the unwelcoming elements of the New Labour immigration approach were contained in their scope, had a sliding scale of punishment to offset its punitive element, and were instituted with the aim that their straightforwardness they would make immigration rules easier to follow. This stood in contrast to the intention and practices of the 'hostile environment' immigration approach initiated by the Cameron Government.

## **Textbox 1. Three Significant Components of the Brexit Government's Immigration Approach**

### **Three Significant Components of the Brexit Government's Immigration Approach**

1. Expansion and further institutionalisation of its 'hostile environment' policy
2. The weaponization of inaction to promulgate unwelcoming
  - a. Failure to investigate and account for government and contractor wrongdoings
  - b. Failure to Protect Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Their Journeys to the UK and Once They Arrive
  - c. Failure to counter rising anti-immigrant sentiment and far-right activity and to foster greater community cohesion and welcoming in the UK
  - d. Failure to lift or modify existing immigrant restrictions on public benefits and work during the COVID-19 pandemic
3. Employment of explicit anti-immigrant discourse and other forms of symbolic politics and policymaking to emphasise extreme unwelcoming

*Source: Author's research*

## ***Component 1: Expansion and Further Institutionalisation of its 'Hostile Environment' Policy***

The first component of the UK Government's immigration approach that intensified the sense of extreme unwelcoming in the Brexit era was the expansion and further institutionalisation of its 'hostile environment' policy. As described in Chapters 2 and 4, the 'hostile environment' is a sweeping web of administrative and legislative measures that 'dramatically diffused the immigration system across the breadth of society' (Griffiths and Yeo, 2021, p. 523) with the aim of making life in the UK so difficult for immigrants that they would voluntarily leave.<sup>66</sup> A defining feature of this policy regime is the 'deputisation' of non-state actors to enact border enforcement in people's everyday lives (Griffiths and Yeo, 2021). This practice has forced a wide range of civil servants, public and private agencies, businesses, and members of the public operating in a variety of sectors including housing, banking, healthcare, and education to verify a person's immigration status and enforce restrictions related to immigration.

Several UK respondents observed that during the Brexit era the UK Government deepened its emphasis on controls, detention, and deportation while reducing opportunities for safe and legal immigration. UK Respondent #13, who ranked the Cameron Government as being 'somewhat unwelcoming' and the Brexit Government as 'extremely unwelcoming', described this combination: '...More focus on detention and deportation. Suggestions of offshore detention facilities. Lack of interest in family reunion and safe routes to asylum.' Though in actual numbers, the amount of 'returns' (individuals who have been deported, removed, or voluntarily departed the UK) has significantly dropped and the number of people in detention has fluctuated over the past decade<sup>67</sup>, the rhetoric surrounding the issues of detention and deportation of immigrants has increased. Mainwaring and Silverman (2017) describe this dissonance between government discourse and optics and the efficacy of its actual detention policies as the 'detention-as-spectacle' phenomenon. In this case, the national government effectively uses the optics of detention to convey its sovereign power and control of immigration in spite of failing to meet its policy aims. They note that the detention-as-spectacle is merely one of a number of political spectacles employed by the UK and other governments in regards to immigration.

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<sup>66</sup> Though the UK Government framed the 'hostile environment' as an effort to stem irregular migration, many of the policies enacted applied to immigrants more broadly and its negative impacts on immigrants in general and British citizens of colour has been widely documented (Williams, 2020).

<sup>67</sup> Between 2013 and 2020, the total number of people returned from the UK through deportation, removal, and voluntary departure decreased by 82% to around 8,400 (Walsh & Cuibus, 2024).

The number of people entering detention from 2009 to 2021 has varied per year, ranging from around 15,000 to 32,000 (Silverman et al, 2022). The number peaked in 2015 at 32,447, but by 2020 that number had dropped to 15,000 individuals. This was 40% lower than in 2019 and was attributed to the pandemic. By 2021, the amount of people entering detention returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Mainwaring and Silverman also observe that governments utilise the language of crises to construct a narrative in the public imagination of a dangerous immigration crisis that needs to be managed, thereby justifying their severe and sometimes extraordinary interventions such as indefinite detention. UK Respondent #5 described this in their comments about an intensification of unwelcoming during the Brexit era. They cited the government's 'Language of crisis in response to migrants crossing the channel' as evidence of this (UK Respondent #5).

The government's denial of rights and access to basic need provisions for immigrants also appear in several UK participant comments as evidence of further entrenchment of the hostile environment during the Brexit era. UK Respondent #13, who increased their ranking of the UK Government from 'slightly unwelcoming' in the Cameron era to 'extreme unwelcoming' in the Brexit era, listed '...Lack of benefit upgrading. Resistance to right to work...' as examples of this. In the UK, most people seeking asylum are barred from the right to work. They receive welfare support administered exclusively by the Home Office rather than by the income support payments made to UK citizens who are unemployed (Gower, 2024). The financial support received by asylum seekers is less than half of the support given to those receiving unemployment benefits (Mayblin & James, 2019b, p.375). The UK Government's twin policies of preventing those seeking asylum from participating in the labour market while providing them paltry financial support were first instituted under the New Labour Government in 2002 but have been carried forward by subsequent governments. In spite of heavy and persistent criticism from civil society and community groups, the UK Government maintains that these policies are necessary to deter economic immigrants from falsely applying for asylum (a claim which has never been substantiated) (McKinney et al, 2023) and that the provided support satisfies its duty under human rights law to sufficiently aid those who have entered the UK asylum system (Mayblin, 2017, p.7).

UK Respondent #1, who ranked both the Cameron and Brexit Governments as 'extremely unwelcoming,' offered an example of immigrants' children in England being deprived of health care as epitomising this extremely unwelcoming approach:

...The fact that therapeutic, life enhancing treatments and aids are being withheld from babies and children because they can't pay upfront- if their parents have no recourse to public funds...

This comment references legal provisions set forth in the *National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations* of 2015 and 2017. The 2015 legislation, enacted under the Cameron Government, required NHS bodies in England and Wales to charge patients who are not 'ordinarily resident', including those with irregular immigration status and refused asylum seekers, for secondary care at 150% of the actual cost (UK Government, 2015). The 2017 amendment, promulgated in the Brexit era, extended the services that are billable under this legislation (UK Government, 2017). Child health and maternity services were put into

this chargeable category. The amendment levied a statutory duty on NHS bodies to make patients pay the total costs of care before treatment is given. Treatment is denied if patients are unable to pay. In cases where the care is deemed 'urgent' or 'immediately necessary,' the provision states that care should be given even if the total costs cannot be paid in advance, although research has shown that in practice this has not always been upheld (Worthing et al, 2021, p. 28). The NHS can retroactively charge patients who are unable to pay these full care costs and some NHS trusts retain private debt collectors to recover these charges (Essex et al, 2022). Fear caused by real or perceived barriers to health care due to immigration status as a result of the UK Government's 'hostile environment' policy has prevented and curbed health care access among some immigrant groups within the UK (Rassa et al, 2023; Weller et al, 2019).

UK respondents also cited increased administrative obstacles, such as exorbitant immigration fees, opaque and ambiguous policies, and a culture of unwelcoming exhibited by government workers and contractors, as influencing their sense of an extremely unwelcoming approach to immigration in the Brexit era. While these administrative obstacles may have been present prior to its implementation, the 'hostile environment' policy formalised and deepened them (Griffiths and Yeo, 2021). UK Respondent #16 saw these features intertwine through immigrant encounters with the government that had a dehumanising effect:

...I haven't even scratched the surface of the niche experience of indignity that people face when dealing with the Home Office (NHS fees on visas, extortionate citizenship fees)... the culture of the relevant ministries is completely unwelcoming.

An organisational culture of hostility towards immigrants endemic in the UK Home Office has been cited as a significant cause of injustice towards immigrants and as having contributed to the Windrush scandal (Williams, 2020, p. 71).

### ***Component 2: The Weaponization of Inaction to Promulgate Unwelcoming***

The second component mentioned in the UK comments is the use of inaction as a weapon by which the UK Government inflicted (additional) uncertainty, stress, and harm on immigrants, heightening the unwelcoming environment. This detrimental inaction can be grouped into four types: 1) failure to investigate and account for wrongdoing by the government and its contractors that affected immigrants; 2) failure to protect the safety and welfare of those seeking asylum and those with refugee status both in their journeys to the UK and once they had arrived; 3) failure to counter rising anti-immigrant sentiment and far-right activity and to foster greater community cohesion and welcoming in the UK; and 4) failure to lift or modify existing immigrant restrictions on public benefits and work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Component 2a: Failure to Investigate and Account for Government and Contractor Wrongdoings**

UK participants offered several examples of the UK Government's failure to interrogate and rectify wrongdoings by its staff and by organisations to which it has outsourced certain immigration activities. UK Respondent #5 listed the government's 'failure to investigate hostile policies of Home Office' as one of the considerations that factored into their 'extremely unwelcoming' ranking of the Brexit Government (they ranked the Cameron Government as 'moderately unwelcoming'). As discussed in the preceding chapter, the Windrush scandal, in which British citizens of Caribbean descent were illegally denied access to health care and benefits and threatened with or experienced detention and/or deportation, factored in the 'extremely unwelcoming' rankings of five UK respondents. A December 2018 independent report for the UK Government by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Wendy Williams found that the government's hostile environment policy contributed to these grave injustices and set forth recommendations to correct them and to prevent future violations. Several UK survey comments suggested that the UK Government had not taken appropriate action to adequately compensate victims and to address government failings highlighted in the report: '...we had seen [Windrush] develop and worsen and the devastation it was causing and is still ongoing...' (UK Respondent #1).

This sense of the UK Government's unwillingness to fully understand and account for its transgressions towards immigrants also included its inaction towards the misconduct of private companies to which it had outsourced some immigration duties. For instance, UK Participant #9 flagged the failure of the government to protect asylum seekers from mistreatment by the Mears Group, a private company that the UK Government contracts with to provide housing accommodation and support to asylum seekers, and to hold them liable: 'The shocking treatment of asylum seekers by the Mears Group in Glasgow and the incidents that precipitated from that.' The Mears Group received a 10-year £1 billion contract in 2019 to deliver these provisions (Reuters, 2019), which the UK is responsible under international obligation to furnish to asylum seekers and their families while their cases are being processed (Davies, 2020). Since receiving this contract and by the time the survey was administered, the Mears Group had been embroiled in several controversies regarding failures to exercise its duty of care, undertake vulnerability assessments, and to offer adequate housing and support to asylum seekers who are in their charge (Findlay, 2020).

## **Component 2b: Failure to Protect Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Their Journeys to the UK and Once They Arrive**

Inaction by the government to protect those seeking asylum or who had been granted refugee status was mentioned by four UK survey participants. UK Respondent #5, who ranked the Cameron Government as 'moderately unwelcoming'

and the Brexit Government as ‘extremely unwelcoming,’ lamented that this failure left refugees vulnerable to abuse: ‘...Failure to deal effectively with exploitation of refugees, especially [by] people traffickers, poor accommodation, modern slavery...’ UK Government immigration policies adopted during the Brexit era have been criticised for putting asylum seekers and their families at greater risk of harm and exploitation (UNHCR & British Red Cross, 2022).

Participants comments regarding government inaction to protect asylum seekers and refugees encompassed conditions experienced both in the journey to the UK as well as once they had arrived. A lack of safe routes in general and the closure of these limited routes during the pandemic were conditions that refugees encountered enroute to the UK that were mentioned by several UK participants. UK Respondent #5, who works with unaccompanied asylum seekers, conveyed apprehension that the Brexit Government’s policies were putting young unaccompanied asylum seekers at greater risk of abuse: ‘...I worry that very few more young people will be allowed in officially now, and that leaves them vulnerable to exploitation and people traffickers in the future, rather than legitimate support.’

A number of concerns were expressed about the conditions that those seeking asylum and with refugee status faced upon reaching the UK and the government’s failure to address them. These included a lack of sufficient financial support, prohibition of the right to work while their claims are being considered, and substandard accommodations.

The government’s failure to fix the inherent dysfunction of the asylum system and its negative implications for those navigating it was also a source of distress expressed by some UK survey participants. UK Respondent #14 illustrated this through their comment:

The asylum system is very broken. It is common for the Home Office to make mistakes in processing asylum claims and for asylum seekers to be left in limbo for years. When people are granted refugee status it is taken as a given that they will likely become homeless at this point and the pressure on their lives continues.

A recent joint report by the UN High Commissioner of Refugees and the British Red Cross (2022) echoed these concerns. It found that the UK Government’s policies prompt greater exploitation of those seeking asylum and those with refugee status because they fail to protect them from harm and elevate the risks of poverty and homelessness.

## **Component 2c: Failure to Counter Rising Anti-immigrant Sentiment and Far-right Activity and to Foster Greater Community Cohesion and Welcoming in the UK**

Several UK respondents described inaction by the Brexit Government to counter anti-immigrant and far-right activity as evidence of its unwelcoming approach: 'At no point have any lies or myths about immigration been challenged...' (UK Respondent #2, who ranked both the Cameron and Brexit Governments as 'extremely unwelcoming'). UK Respondent #17, who shifted their ranking of the government from 'moderately unwelcoming' during the Cameron era to 'extremely unwelcoming' during the Brexit era, saw the government compound the negative effects of its unwillingness to confront growing racism with its explicitly hostile immigration policy: 'The atmosphere in the UK changed after the referendum. Racism increased and the government failed to challenge it. In fact, they reinforced it by their policy of "controlling borders".'

Research confirms that racism and xenophobia have become more prolific and explicit in the UK since the Brexit referendum. Hate crimes and overt displays of racism have surged (Booth, 2019; Gayle, 2018), with those seeking asylum and with refugee status frequently targeted (British Red Cross, 2019). A 2018 report by Professor E. Tendayi Achiume, UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, found that in the UK during the Brexit campaigns and after the referendum, 'explicit expressions of racial, ethnic and religious intolerance have become acceptable in ways that mark a notable shift' (Achiume, 2018, p. 17). Among its recommendations to the UK Government, the report called for the repeal of hostile environment policies that deepen racial disparities and that effectively force private citizens and civil servants charged with delivering critical public and social services to carry out immigration enforcement. The UK Government did not heed those recommendations (UK Government, 2019) and instead continued to expand its hostile environment policies.

Similarly, a number of UK respondents framed the government's failure to promote positive messages about immigrants and immigration coupled with its lack of action to foster community cohesion as tactics to spread unwelcoming. For example, UK Respondent #14, who rated the Cameron Government as 'moderately unwelcoming' and the Brexit Government as 'extremely unwelcoming,' stated:

Anything positive [the UK Government] have done (community sponsorship and resettlement) has generally been kept under the radar. Far-right anti-immigration protests continue to grow and the government doesn't seem to mind these. They show a lack of concern for the needs and experiences of asylum seekers and refugees and don't do anything to encourage community cohesion or a welcome to those seeking refuge...

UK Respondent #12, who ranked the Cameron Government as ‘moderately unwelcoming’ and the Brexit Government as ‘extremely unwelcoming,’ reiterated this sentiment, portraying the Brexit Government’s failure to recognise the positive contributions of immigrants as bolstering unwelcoming: ‘...Newcomers are often highly skilled and highly motivated members of our society; that is undervalued by the current governments.’ These criticisms of the UK Government’s failure to promote social cohesion and welcoming in the Brexit era have been reiterated by others in civil society and by former government officials (Townsend, 2019).

### **Component 2d: Failure to Lift or Modify Existing Immigrant Restrictions on Public Benefits and Work during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Several UK respondents described the UK Government’s refusal to lift or modify existing restrictions affecting immigrant access to public benefits and work during the COVID-19 pandemic as another way the UK Government perpetuated extreme unwelcoming in the Brexit era. UK Respondent #5, who assessed the Cameron Government as ‘moderately unwelcoming’ and the Brexit Government as ‘extremely unwelcoming,’ depicted how the UK Government intentionally left refugees out of the forms of emergency relief that it provided to the public during the pandemic: ‘During first lockdown, benefits and social support measures for COVID effectively excluded refugees who could not claim benefits, but were denied opportunities to work.’

As formerly discussed, immigrants are stratified in the UK immigration system with different rights and access afforded to certain groups while denied to others. For example, under current UK immigration policy, the right to work is denied to virtually all immigrants who are in the process of seeking asylum, restricted for those who hold a student visa, but permitted for most immigrants holding other types of visas (Citizens Advice, 2024).

Similarly, immigrants have varying access to public benefits depending on their immigration status. In the UK, No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) is the official condition tied to an immigrant’s status that prevents affected individuals and their dependents from accessing a range of benefits, including but not limited to Child Benefit, Tax Credits, Universal Credit, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Local Welfare Provision, Housing Benefit and social housing (Pinter et al, 2020). The exact number of immigrants with NRPF status is unknown since the UK Government will not release data on this despite repeated requests from campaigners and politicians (Pinter et al, 2020). However, it is UK Government policy to apply NRPF to all immigrants holding Limited Leave to Remain, a figure that by the end of 2019 had encompassed over 1.4 million adults and at least 175,000 children residing in the UK (Fernandez-Reino, 2022). Immigrants with irregular status or that are undocumented and their dependents also cannot access public benefits in the UK.

Restrictions on immigrants' right to work and accessing public benefits have long been decried and contested by many immigrant inclusion practitioners, civil society organisations, and community groups (Mayblin & James, 2019a). However, criticism swelled over the UK Government's refusal to relax restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic in spite of mounting evidence showing that the already-documented adverse impacts of existing immigration policies were growing, compounded by the additional stress, insecurity, and constraints of the public health emergency (Small, 2020). Comments by UK survey participants reflect these concerns and show that the failure to lift these restrictions added to the sense of extreme unwelcoming during the Brexit era.

### ***Component 3: Employment of Explicit Anti-immigrant Discourse and Other Forms of Symbolic Politics and Policymaking to Emphasise Extreme Unwelcoming***

The third component that fed into UK survey participants' perceptions of an intensification of unwelcoming during the Brexit era was the UK Government's deployment of explicit anti-immigrant discourse and other forms of symbolic politics and policymaking to emphasise extreme unwelcoming. As discussed in Chapter 2, symbolic politics and policymaking, in which political actors employ superficial rather than substantive measures designed 'to signal values and intent', is frequently utilised in regards to immigration (Slaven & Boswell, 2019, p.1477).

The discourse of political actors is a primary channel of symbolic politics. 13 of the 18 UK survey participants (72%) mentioned the use of disparaging discourse about immigrants and immigration by the UK Government and officials within it as having contributed to their rankings of the Brexit Government.

UK Respondent #9 offered examples of the government's use of dehumanising discourse about immigrants as evidence of the Brexit Government's extreme unwelcoming: 'The people who risks their lives crossing the channel were used as scapegoats and even blamed for bringing some of the virus during the pandemic.' The Brexit Government has been heavily criticised for using rhetoric that scapegoats immigrants, casting them as criminals and disease carriers (Buchan, 2019; Bulman, 2021; Grierson & Sabbagh, 2020). Anti-immigrant discourse by political elites can produce a sense of unwelcoming and fear among immigrants with adverse effects on health and well-being (Rojas Perez et al, 2023) and negatively affect public perceptions about immigrants and immigration (Schmidt-Catran & Czymara, 2022). Language depicting immigrants as a virus or as vessels of disease has been found to be particularly pernicious, increasing negative attitudes towards immigrants and preferences for more restrictive immigration policy (Utych, 2018, p.440).

Several UK participant comments noted an increase after the Brexit campaigns in the UK Government's employment of openly antagonistic discourse surrounding immigration that appropriated anti-immigrant, far-right messaging. UK Respondent

#2 observed that the Brexit Government directly incorporated language from the Brexit campaigns:

...I see the language as moving dangerously to the right and ever closer to the words and statements that figures like Nigel Farage use...The language used is simplistic and hostile to immigration. The language coming out of the Government is that immigrants are not welcome...

As previously mentioned, research shows that after the Brexit referendum overt dehumanising, xenophobic, and racist language about immigrants became further legitimised and embedded within mainstream political parties and the UK Government (Achieme, 2018; Brown et al, 2023, Winter & Mondon, 2018). However, the normalisation in the UK of far-right language and ideas about immigration and a narrative of white working-class opposition to it started much earlier than the Brexit referendum. This normalisation is attributed to the formation and influence of the British National Party (BNP) and subsequently the UK Independence Party (UKIP), who succeeded in turning these once fringe narratives into mainstream political wisdom and media fodder (Brown et al, 2023, p. 172). The normalisation and mainstreaming of divisive far-right xenophobic, nativist discourse in the traditional media and by conventional politicians over several decades served as a potent source of fuel that facilitated a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming in the UK during the Brexit era. It will be further explored in the next section of this chapter.

One UK respondent also cited the government's combative rhetoric about immigration attorneys and the judicial system as proof of an extremely unwelcoming immigration environment in the Brexit-era UK: '...attack on courts, lawyers...' (UK Respondent #3). Brexit Government officials, most notably Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Home Secretary Priti Patel, received extensive criticism from civil society, legal professionals, and politicians (including Conservative Members of Parliament) for their comments about 'activist' lawyers and judges that they accused of undermining their attempts at immigration reform (Townsend, 2020). The vilification of immigration attorneys and other practitioners working in the legal system and its impact will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 7.

Symbolic politics often involves the construction and use of social problems to reinforce existing ideologies and to imagine and distinguish the good and worthy from the nefarious and undesirable (Edelman, 1988). UK Respondent #2's comments describe the Brexit Government's discourse doing just this by problematising refugees, furthering anti-immigrant tropes, and framing immigration as a crisis: 'Refugees are talked about with disdain and as a problem to be solved - that they are overwhelming public services, and that we as a nation, have no control over the numbers arriving.'

As touched on earlier in this chapter, the language of crisis is often an effective tool that politicians use in the creation of a political spectacle. The generated symbolic

political spectacle then justifies decisive, harsh, and sometimes exceptional interventions by the government. This language of immigration as a crisis is not new in the UK. As Mainwaring & Silverman (2017) highlight, immigration crisis discourse by the government extends back to at least 1978 when Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher asserted that many Britons feared the UK being 'swamped' by immigrant cultures and called for an end to immigration (Apple Jr., 1978). It continued to gain traction in subsequent governments with the Brexit Government's discourse characterised by 'sensationalist and unsubstantiated accounts of an uncontrollable inflow of immigrants' (Mainwaring & Silverman, 2017, p. 27).

Three UK comments also discussed the ways in which the UK Government used the spectacle of detention to communicate its extreme unwelcoming and disdain for immigrants. For example, UK Respondent #16 spoke of the government's plans to externalise detentions as a deepening of its extreme unwelcoming approach: '...the government has leaked ideas about processing asylum seekers on a volcanic outcrop, Moldova, and disused ferries in the Channel. This is clearly disgusting and inhumane and is an approach completely in the wrong direction...'

Images are an inherent and powerful part of the symbolic spectacle. In the UK, most permanent detention sites are situated in rural areas, often adjacent to prisons or military barracks (Mainwaring & Silverman, 2017). Institutes for offenders are frequently repurposed by the UK Government to serve in this capacity. The remote geography and penal architecture of these spaces as communicated through discourse and accompanying images relay and reinforce messages of those being provided accommodation (i.e. those seeking asylum) or those being detained (i.e. immigrants with irregular status) as other, undesirable, dangerous, and criminal, thus necessitating such harsh, isolating treatment. Locating these centres offshore, whether in barges docked at British ports or at sites in other countries, has been interpreted as another way in which the Brexit Government and its successors employ symbolic politics to convey toughness on immigration (Dickson & Webber, 2023).<sup>68</sup>

The combination of extending its 'hostile environment' policy, weaponizing inaction, and employing explicit anti-immigrant discourse and other forms of symbolic politics enabled the UK Government to ratchet up the dial of unwelcoming through its

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<sup>68</sup> A shortage in accommodation spaces for those seeking asylum and pandemic-related restrictions led the UK Government to house some applicants in hotels as a contingency measure (Gower & Rankl, 2023). Housing immigrants in hotels has been portrayed by conservative and far-right figures and media as the government prioritising or catering to immigrants at the literal and figurative expense of UK citizens (Farage, 2020; Swinford, 2020). This was in spite of voiced concerns that the hotel accommodations provided to immigrants are prison-like, of poor quality, unhealthy, and unsafe (Doná et al, 2023). The criticism from conservative and far-right media undermined the ability of the Brexit Government to use the housing of immigrants as an effective political spectacle to demonstrate its tough stance towards immigration and served as a significant factor in its decision to move immigrants to alternative types of housing seen as being less hospitable and costly (Walker, 2023).

immigration approach in the Brexit era. This approach intensified the speed and severity of unwelcoming, ultimately bringing the UK to a boiling point. However, the UK Government couldn't have achieved this without sufficient fuel, which it found by exploiting several pre-existing conditions in the UK.

### **The Fuel that Became the Unwelcoming Fire: Underlying Conditions in the UK**

Underlying political, economic, social, and historical conditions in the UK provided ample kindling for the national government to bring the country to a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming during the Brexit era. Existing structural racism, xenophobia, and classism; an established nativist tradition; national narratives of British exceptionalism and its endangered postcolonial power; and a robust anti-immigrant media ecosystem are four key underlying conditions in the UK that the national government harnessed to stoke support for its inhospitable immigration agenda.

As described in Chapter 2, the Brexit campaigns used these conditions to (further) problematise immigration and to normalise and mainstream anti-immigrant discourse and restrictive immigration policy ideas. However, as several UK respondents intimate, the Brexit campaigns use of these underlying conditions was not novel. Rather it was a more explicit, aggressive iteration of images and tactics that subsequent UK Governments, particularly the Cameron Government, had employed to deter and restrict immigrants, especially those seeking asylum and who were not white (Goodfellow, 2021). After the Brexit referendum, the UK Government invoked these more brash tactics to regularly tap into these underlying conditions, allowing the government to sustain momentum for (or to at least undercut opposition to) their escalating anti-immigrant discourse and harsh immigration approach.

UK Respondent #2 illustrates this relationship, describing how the actions of the Cameron Government gave license to the more overt racism and xenophobia used by the Brexit campaigns:

The tone of the Government during Cameron's premiership was... soaked in hostile environment policies and intent. For example, Theresa May [as Home Secretary] commissioned vans with slogans about illegal immigrants...to advertise schemes to return immigrants to countries of origin, which was extremely offensive and counterproductive and again played into fears that the UK is a home to overwhelming numbers of illegal immigrants. This kind of language stoked and led into a successful Brexit campaign...<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> The short-lived but infamous Operation Vaken, more commonly referred to as the 'Go Home' vans campaign, was a pilot scheme undertaken by the Home Office to induce immigrants with irregular status to voluntarily leave the UK by threatening them with arrest and detention (Hattenstone, 2018). The centrepiece of the project involved vans bearing the message 'In the UK illegally? Go home or face arrest' being driven through six London boroughs from 22 July until 22 August 2013. The UK Government discontinued the programme after a legal complaint was lodged claiming that the rhetoric

In turn, the Brexit campaigns' normalisation of explicit aggression towards and vilification of immigrants became further institutionalised in the Brexit Government. This can be seen in Theresa May's 'hard Brexit' approach as prime minister, which emphasised that European Economic Area (EEA) citizens would be subject to immigration controls along with other proposed changes to the UK immigration system, but arguably became even more apparent during the premiership of Boris Johnson, one of the most visible champions of the Brexit Leave campaigns (Bale, 2022). UK Respondent #2 noted that the anti-immigrant rhetoric and actions of previous UK Governments laid the foundation for the more pugnacious expressions of the Johnson Government: '...Whilst...the language and position to immigration has gotten worse since Brexit, I would say that the language coming out of Government pre-Brexit was hostile too and has been built upon by the Boris [Johnson] Government.'

### ***Welfare Chauvinism: An Illustration of the UK Government's Use of Underlying Conditions to Fuel Immigrant Unwelcoming***

As referenced earlier in this chapter, a number of UK respondents describe various ways in which the UK Government uses welfare chauvinism, broadly defined as 'all sorts of claims and policies to reserve welfare benefits for the "native" population' (Keskinen et al, 2016, p. 323), as a means to affect extreme unwelcoming towards immigrants. These examples included denying and restricting access to health care, creating a separate and much weaker entitlement system for those seeking asylum via the Home Office, providing those seeking asylum with substandard and restrictive accommodation, withdrawing forms of support for unaccompanied immigrant youth, and preventing non-citizens from accessing an assortment of public benefits through the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) policy. The UK Government's use of chauvinistic welfare policies illustrates that its course towards achieving an extremely unwelcoming immigration environment in the Brexit era was set long before and that its exploitation of the aforementioned underlying conditions was consequential to eventually reaching this.

Welfare chauvinism has been a pillar of the UK's post-war immigration system along with ideas of marketisation and labour market stratification (D'Angelo, 2023).<sup>70</sup> It has

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on the vans violated the government's duties on equality. The initiative received widespread criticism, including from immigrant rights campaigners who charged it with 'causing a "climate of fear"' and from then UKIP leader Nigel Farage who called it 'a nasty campaign' (Mason, 2013).

<sup>70</sup> This is not to say that welfare chauvinism did not exist prior to the post-war period in the UK. Cohen (1985, p.74) notes that the 1906 legislation that formed the basis of the modern British welfare state made eligibility dependent on immigration status, a reaction to an influx of Jewish refugees fleeing pogroms in Eastern Europe. Guentner et al (2016) also observe that welfare chauvinism in many spheres existed in practice prior to its formal legal codification. They offer an example of this in the experience of health care access for immigrants from Commonwealth countries. Prior to the passage of legislation in 1962 that officially restricted this, immigrants from Commonwealth countries were supposed to have free access to health care, but that this was not the reality for many (Guentner et al, 2016, p. 395-396).

been embraced and expanded by both the Conservative and Labour parties in the UK (Balch & Balabanova, 2016). More recently, it has been viewed as an effective policy tool for the UK Government to realise a larger neoliberal political project seeking to shrink and privatise the welfare state (Farnsworth & Irving, 2021). Although immigrants are not the only targets of the UK Government's welfare chauvinistic policies,<sup>71</sup> the UK Government has frequently defended its adoption of such policies as being necessary. It cites the need to protect the welfare state and to deter 'unwanted' immigrants, a steadily-expanding category since the introduction of UK immigration controls, as justifications for this.

At the core of UK welfare chauvinism resides a perpetual manufactured but fluid notion of the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving'. This artifice

changes its target groups over time, but...is also constant in its function: stratifying the access to welfare and services in terms of migration origin, race, gender and class, making welfare and civil rights conditional, exclusionary, and the primary mechanism of internal bordering (D'Angelo, 2023, p. 240).

Nativism is inherent in this differentiation and in the framing and architecture of chauvinistic welfare policies. The 'deserving natives' worthy of welfare entitlements are depicted as under threat from 'undeserving immigrants' who exploit and siphon off these resources. De Cleen & Speed (2021) describe how the UK Government has used this frame to warrant its imposition of chauvinistic policies on its universal health care system:

The social rationality is one where a beleaguered health service is seen to be struggling to provide healthcare to those entitled to it, because too many people (who are not entitled to free, at the point of use healthcare) are using it, either as legal migrants, illegal migrants or health tourists. This functions to create "legitimate" welfare chauvinist limitations on access to what is ostensibly a universal healthcare service – in theory making the healthcare system more accessible to those who are 'entitled' to access it. (p. 525-526).

Intertwined with this nativist narrative of the 'deserving natives' and the 'undeserving immigrants' are ideas about British identity, values, and exceptionalism. These ideas draw on pervasive myths about its colonial past and its exceptional nature, capitalising on and promulgating structural racism, xenophobia, and classism in British society. The UK Government has long promoted myths about British

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<sup>71</sup> As Bamba and Lynch (2021) signpost, a variety of class-based welfare retrenchments were enacted in the 1980s onward by successive UK Governments. These included the reduction and restructuring of unemployment, lone parent, and disability benefits. However, Guentner et al (2016) observe that broader economic expansion in the 1990s helped to obscure some of the impact of these class-based policies.

exceptionalism, Britishness, and a 'British way of life' to justify structural inequalities and chauvinistic policies (Leruth & Taylor-Gooby, 2021, p. 180). In these myths, Britishness is often used interchangeably with notions of Englishness and defined in highly racialised, insular ways (Grosvenor, 2018; Lynn & Lea, 2003). This depiction of Britishness as fundamentally white and derived from England and its superior Christian and cultural traditions, not only have the effect of othering and maligning immigrants, but also autochthonal individuals and communities including nationals of colour, those descended from Commonwealth countries, and those who are Muslim or Jewish (Cohen, 1985; Virdee & McGeever, 2018; Williams, 2020).

The UK Government has portrayed immigrants as fundamentally incompatible with this racialised, ethnonationalist depiction of Britishness. Immigrants are framed as a triple threat to white British society in regards to economics, social cohesion, and security (Smith, 2016, p. 305); therefore, requiring separate, restricted, or denied access to welfare entitlements. Welfare entitlements then are reserved for those who are deserving which, in addition to class, becomes synonymous with an ethnonationalist conception of being British (D'Angelo, 2023).

Alongside utilising pre-existing nativism, ethnonationalist mythology, and structural inequalities, the UK Government drew on an established, muscular anti-immigrant media ecosystem to alchemise an immigration environment of extreme unwelcoming. Though the relationship between the UK Government and the media is complex and not unidirectional, the UK media's coverage of immigration has been substantially shaped by and is heavily dependent on government discourse and policy (Threadgold, 2009). At the same time, the UK media is a significant force in articulating, amplifying, and disseminating anti-immigrant discourse and tropes (e.g. Cooper et al, 2020; McGuire, 2019; Moore & Ramsay, 2017; Połowska-Kimunguyi, 2022). Even British media publications regarded as more sympathetic to immigrants and immigration, such as *The Guardian*, have been found to perpetuate threatening, racialised portrayals of immigrants (Połowska-Kimunguyi, 2022). Studies also have shown the powerful role that the media's coverage of immigration plays in influencing public opinion and political saliency (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2007; Eberl et al, 2018; Štětka et al, 2021). The advent of social media has produced an ever more toxic and expanded space for the circulation of xenophobic, racist, and anti-immigrant tropes and disinformation (Ekman, 2019) as well as for the recycling and reimagining of racialised colonial and postcolonial narratives.<sup>72</sup>

Successive UK Governments have utilised the UK media's enduring receptivity to anti-immigrant tropes and narratives to continually stoke public antipathy towards immigration and to generate a sense of impending crisis about welfare entitlements. These two ingredients that have been pivotal in legitimising its increasing welfare chauvinism towards immigrants (D'Angelo, 2023). Often animating these efforts is a

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<sup>72</sup> Kopytowska (2022) offers an example of this in their analysis of two YouTube producer/consumers' (also known as 'prosumers') recontextualised postings of British politician Enoch Powell's 1968 infamous anti-immigrant 'River of Blood' speech.

false narrative that economic immigrants masquerading as refugees are manipulating and straining public benefits and services. For instance, UK Government officials in both Conservative and Labour governments consistently spoke of ‘bogus’ asylum seekers and a pipeline of criminals who facilitate their entry as justification for enacting three pieces of immigration legislation in the 1990s that further curbed immigrant access to public benefits and services (Guentner et al, 2016). These were the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 and the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, both legislated under a Conservative government; and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, enacted under a Labour government. This trope of bogus asylum seekers preying on the welfare system, initially espoused by the government, was heartily endorsed and amplified by the British tabloids and many in the mainstream press, effectively transforming the public’s views of refugees:

Both Labour and its predecessor fuelled ‘the potent myth of the welfare-scourging bogus asylum seeker’ that has polluted immigration-related political discourse, playing a key role in shifting public perceptions of refugees from people deserving of protection to abusers of Britain’s generosity (Geddes, 2000, cited in Spencer, 2011, p. 57)

The efficacy of the government’s use of a sympathetic anti-immigrant media ecosystem to affect public perceptions and to promulgate its wider anti-immigrant agenda were not lost on observers. A parliamentary inquiry in 2007 admonished the UK Government for doing this:

We recommend that Ministers recognise their responsibility to use measured language so as not to give ammunition to those who seek to build up resentment against asylum seekers, nor to give the media the excuse to write inflammatory or misleading articles (paragraph 367). (Joint Commission on Human Rights, 2007, p. 41)

Thus, four significant underlying conditions (entrenched nativism, structural injustices, pervasive national mythologies, and an established anti-immigrant media ecosystem) were used as fuel by the UK Government to elevate the temperature of unwelcoming in the UK for immigrants. The employment of chauvinistic welfare policies towards immigrants offers tangible illustrations of how this was carried out in a continuous fashion by multiple governments of both dominant political parties. While these underlying conditions served as a perpetual source of fuel to stoke a hostile immigration environment, it was the UK Government’s exploitation and, in some cases, its creation of sudden, temporary conditions that acted as accelerants, quickening the speed and severity of unwelcoming and culminating in a Brexit-era boiling point.

## **Accelerants of Unwelcoming: Using Sudden and Temporary Conditions to Hasten a Brexit Boiling Point**

Sudden, intense changes to the political, economic, or social terrain can operate as accelerants in the national government's pursuit of an extremely unwelcoming immigration environment. Accelerants quickly exacerbate the underlying conditions serving as fuel for unwelcoming, hastening a rapid intensification. They can provide two important avenues through which the national government can seize on to enact harsher immigration measures. First, these immediate, penetrating changes can increase the appetite among the public and political elites for more restrictive immigration measures or, at a minimum, reduce stymying opposition to them. Second, accelerants can provide opportunities for the national government to consolidate power in ways which facilitate its ability to implement what would otherwise be regarded as exceptional immigration measures. These two dynamics are demonstrated in the following discussion of the UK Government's utilisation of accelerants to bring about a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming.

All accelerants are, to a degree, shaped by the national government. Through the national government's framing of and response to the accelerant event, it influences wider perceptions about it. However, not all events used to create accelerants are of the government's own making. The UK Government in its quest towards extreme unwelcoming has utilised three types of accelerants: externally-generated, government-generated, and wildfire accelerants. The employment of accelerants by both Conservative and Labour governments to facilitate a harsher immigration environment in the UK has been an important tool in advancing its 'slow boil' path towards extreme unwelcoming.

The Brexit referendum, which I categorise as a wildfire accelerant, was the formidable accelerant that many UK survey participants saw as enabling the national government to bring the country to a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming. The functioning of the referendum as an inhospitable immigration accelerant will be examined in greater detail later in this section, but first I will offer two examples of how the UK Government utilised externally-generated and government-generated accelerants to propel the country towards a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming.

### ***Externally-generated Accelerants***

Externally-generated accelerants organically occur without the national government's intervention. These events can then be utilised by the national government to sanction severer immigration rhetoric and action, which are often framed as a necessary response to deal with the spontaneous crisis.

The coordinated train and bus bombings carried out in London on 7 July 2005 (often referred to as '7/7') are an example of an externally-generated accelerant. The UK Government used this tragic attack as a justification for advancing immigration restrictions. Though a majority of the perpetrators were born and raised in the UK,

they all hailed from families of immigrants and were Muslim. Prime Minister Tony Blair's remarks to the terrorist attack called attention to these commonalities and implicitly drew on existing structural xenophobia and Islamophobia as well as racialised, ethnonational ideas of Britishness to portray immigrant and Muslim communities as existential threats both in terms of security as well as culturally:

We're angry about them abusing our good nature and our toleration. Coming to Britain is not a right. And even when people have come here, staying here carries with it a duty. That duty is to share and support the values that sustain the British way of life. (Blair, 2005, cited in Sullivan & Jordan, 2005).

This narrative that immigrants and Muslims posed a threat to British society and required further, even exceptional, action to bring them under control was used by the UK Government to justify the enactment of harsh security and immigration measures.<sup>73</sup> However, as Hampshire and Saggat (2006) point out, many of the immigration changes that the government put forth as evidence that they were resolutely dealing with the 'problem' of dangerous immigrants had been undertaken prior to the 7/7 bombings. The bombings provided the UK Government with an opportunity to accelerate the scale and implementation of their already-initiated immigration restrictions on the grounds of national security and to garner support for controversial immigration measures that would have normally been met with greater resistance from civil society and in the UK Parliament.

### ***Government-generated Accelerants***

At times, the national government through its rhetoric and actions orchestrates accelerants as a means to advance an inhospitable immigration environment. Although the Brexit referendum may appear to be an obvious example of this, it is more complex in its functioning as an accelerant. This will be discussed later in this section. A more straightforward example of a government-generated accelerant can be found in the decision to call a snap election in 2019 by UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

In this case, the accelerant was not framed as a crisis, but rather as an opportunity for the Conservatives to accrue a parliamentary majority that would allow them to 'Get Brexit Done' (a central slogan for Conservatives in the 2019 campaign), including the implementation of the Brexit campaign's promised harsh(er) immigration changes. The Conservatives had been in a minority government since 2017 and the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement, which was negotiated under Theresa

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<sup>73</sup> Changes to immigration policy that the UK Government claimed were necessitated by the 7/7 bombings affected four key areas: border controls, asylum restrictions, acquisition and removal of citizenship, and deportation orders. The extension of government powers to enact such changes had initially been announced in February 2005 as part of legislation containing a broader remaking of UK immigration and asylum policy.

For a more detailed discussion of these changes and their genesis prior to the 7/7 bombings, see Hampshire & Saggat (2006).

May's premiership and contained significant changes to the UK immigration system, had failed in Parliament three times. The Conservatives correctly calculated that they could win a parliamentary majority by centring the issue of completing the public's 'mandate' of reclaiming British sovereignty and control over its immigration system through exiting the EU and by utilising the popularity of Boris Johnson with far-right and Brexit 'Leave' voters (Evans et al, 2023). The former strategy drew heavily on the underlying conditions discussed in the previous section of this chapter.

As a result of the snap general election, the Conservative Party ended up with its strongest parliamentary majority since 1987, securing 80 seats from the general election. This robust parliamentary majority bolstered the Conservative government's power and allowed for the passage of a revised Brexit Withdrawal Agreement shortly thereafter. This legislation effectually demoted the immigration status of EU nationals who were residing in the UK and severely restricted future flows of EU citizenry. The consolidated and enhanced parliamentary power brought about by the general election also enabled the UK Government to enact broader immigration changes and restrictions through subsequent legislation, including the eventual introduction of a points-based immigration system. Thus, the employment of a snap general election by the UK Government allowed them to significantly elevate the degree of unwelcoming through the major immigration policy changes that they were able to enact as a result of its outcome.

### ***Brexit: A Wildfire Accelerant***

As touched on above, the Brexit referendum is a more complicated example of an accelerant. One that I classify as a wildfire accelerant. A wildfire accelerant is an event orchestrated by the national government that originates for other purposes, but is then transformed into a means to justify and advance more restrictive immigration measures. Internal and external factors can drive the national government to refashion the orchestrated event into a vehicle for escalating immigration hostility.

In the case of the Brexit referendum, the UK Government initiated the accelerant event (i.e. the Brexit referendum), but not for the express purpose of generating a more inhospitable immigration environment. Rather, the referendum was the culmination of a campaign promise issued by Prime Minister David Cameron to secure drifting support from far-right, centre-right, and Eurosceptic voters in the 2015 general election (Bale, 2022). It also should be noted that the prevailing expectation was that the result of the referendum would be for the UK to remain in the EU (Schwartz et al, 2021, p. 1163).

However, by the time the referendum was held in June 2016, another accelerant had simultaneously emerged that transformed the Brexit referendum into a wildfire accelerant. This concurrent externally-driven accelerant was a migratory surge into Europe of refugees fleeing the Syrian civil war and other Middle Eastern and African

turmoil and the Brexit Leave campaigns' framing and centring of this phenomena as a crisis threatening the UK because of its EU membership.

Of course, the Brexit Leave campaigns' ability to successfully frame and exploit this to their electoral advantage was only made possible after decades of UK Government rhetoric, especially from the Conservative Party, problematising and racializing immigration (Bale, 2022). This was exhibited by the Cameron Government in the run up to the referendum. Although his government eventually adopted a plan to admit and resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees, Prime Minister David Cameron had been heavily criticised as using dehumanising and criminalising language to describe those fleeing these conflicts. His rhetoric invoked existing anti-immigrant tropes such as invading 'swarms' and suggested that many refugees were actually bogus asylum seekers (Elgot, 2016).

The Leave campaigns' anti-immigrant framing and centring of the refugee 'crisis' as justification for the UK needing to leave the EU had a catalytic wildfire effect on the Conservative Party's Brexit negotiations and its overall immigration approach. With Prime Minister Theresa May at the helm, the UK Government used sovereignty over its borders and immigration as a primary justification for its 'hard Brexit' approach and referred to the outcome of the referendum as a mandate to do such (McTague, 2018). Although research showed that immigration as an issue of concern for the UK public diminished in saliency in the aftermath of the referendum (Schwartz et al, 2021), the UK Government continued to use the referendum's outcome as a license for instituting broader immigration restrictions in the name of taking back its borders now that it was liberated from EU immigration constraints. However, as public opinion about the efficacy of Brexit has soured, the accelerant effects of the referendum have waned and the UK Government has turned to other accelerants as it continues its aggressive immigration approach post-Brexit.

## **Conclusion**

The UK Government's 'slow-boil' path to an immigration environment of extreme unwelcoming was a process of incremental *intensification*, built gradually by successive Conservative and Labour-led governments using immigration policy scaffolding that came to a boiling point during the Brexit era. This boiling point of extreme unwelcoming in the UK Government's immigration approach was characterised by the UK Government's expansion and further institutionalisation of its 'hostile environment' policy, its weaponization of inaction as a means to promulgate unwelcoming, and its employment of explicit anti-immigrant discourse and other forms of symbolic politics to generate extreme unwelcoming. Four underlying conditions in the UK, 1) structural racism, xenophobia, and classism; 2) an established nativist tradition; 3) pervasive national narratives about Britishness, British exceptionalism, and its declining postcolonial power; and 4) a robust anti-immigrant media ecosystem, served as consistent sources of fuel that the UK

Government utilised to stoke and justify support for its extremely unwelcoming immigration approach.

The UK Government also used sudden, intense changes in the political, economic, and social landscape as accelerants to provide bursts of elevated unwelcoming, more rapidly hastening a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming. These accelerants can be externally-generated, as was the government's use of the tragic 7/7 bombings, or can be wholly manufactured by the government such as the snap general election of 2019. In the instance of the Brexit referendum, it was a wildfire accelerant whereby a government-originated event that was not expressly intended to propel immigration unwelcoming eventually is refabricated by the government as a result of internal and/or external factors to do this.

The UK's 'slow boil' arrival to a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming was a gradual intensification over an extended period of time. However, not all paths to extreme unwelcoming are so graduated. As the next chapter illustrates with the US case, a national government can also use a 'fast boil' approach to rapidly transform an immigration environment into one of extreme unwelcoming.

## Chapter 6: The Trump-era US: A Case of ‘Fast Boil’ Rapid Transformation

This chapter offers an examination of the immigration approach and path taken by the US Government to produce an environment of extreme unwelcoming in the Trump era. Once again, the theoretical metaphor introduced in Chapter 5 of a pot being brought to boil on a stove top proves useful for exploring this. It reveals essential qualities and mechanisms of the Trump Administration’s immigration approach that were consequential in its ability to enact a sweeping, fundamental *transformation* of US immigration. It then highlights how the Trump Administration utilised a number of underlying conditions to fuel this agenda and harnessed two potent external accelerants to further propel and institutionalise these changes in such a short time period. Finally, the metaphor allows for the identification of commonalities and differences between the UK and the US national governments’ approaches in their generation of such extreme unwelcoming environments. These similarities and distinctions will be discussed at the end of this chapter and revisited in Chapter 8.

In Chapter 5, I often noted when quoting a UK respondent if a shift occurred between their rankings of the Cameron and Brexit Governments. I did so to underscore that UK participants still perceived an intensification of unwelcoming during the Brexit era in spite of the dominant view that the Cameron Government was unwelcoming as well.

However, in the case of US participants, I chose to include details about the type of immigrant inclusion work that the quoted respondent performed and/or their geographic context. The number of survey responses that I analysed for the US case was substantially larger than for the UK case (95 US respondents compared to 18 UK respondents). This is not surprising given the significantly larger scale and scope of inclusion work occurring in the US. US respondents came from a greater range of occupational and geographical contexts than UK participants. I included these details when appropriate to contextualise or to affirm the credibility of their comments. For example, many of the respondents who commented on changes to the US asylum system were immigration attorneys. I often indicate their occupation and, in some cases, the contexts in which they practice as their legal training alongside their practical experience ground their assessments of the changes that they observed during the Trump era.

Offering occupational details for some US respondents also showcases the varied positionality of survey participants. In spite of these diverse positions, consistent accounts arose of the significant changes implemented during the Trump era. This accentuates the rapid, all-encompassing alteration to US immigration that took place in all spheres of society in that time period.

## **The US's 'Fast Boil' Path of Rapid Transformation into Extreme Unwelcoming**

In contrast to the UK's 'slow boil' path of graduated intensification, the US's 'fast boil' path to extreme unwelcoming was one of swift, comprehensive transformation. As with the UK case, analysis of US survey comments constructs a portrait of the Trump Administration's unwelcoming immigration approach that exposes its distinguishing components. However, unlike the UK case, these components are classified into two types: qualities and mechanisms. Qualities are the essential characteristics of the Trump Administration's immigration approach that facilitated such a comprehensive refashioning of US immigration. Mechanisms are the means by which it was able to expeditiously effect such far-reaching change in its relatively short span of four years. Consideration of both types of components is critical to understanding how the Trump Administration so rapidly and expansively brought the US to a boiling point and in doing so reshaped the US immigration environment and public discourse about immigration.

### **Qualities of the Trump Administration's 'Fast Boil' Path to Extreme Unwelcoming**

US survey responses indicate five consequential qualities that differentiate the Trump Administration's immigration approach from the past. These are highlighted below in Textbox 2 followed by a discussion of each quality.

**Textbox 2. Five Consequential Qualities of the Trump Administration's Immigration Approach**

**Consequential Qualities of the Trump Administration's Immigration Approach**

1. Severity of rhetoric, policies, and impact
2. Saturating, pervasive scope
3. Steep volume of change
4. Fast, unyielding pace
5. Fluidity of changes

*Source: Author's research*

First, the *severity of the immigration measures* undertaken during the Trump Administration was noted by numerous US participants. The severity of the US Government's immigration approach during the Trump era compared to previous eras has been widely observed by scholars (e.g. Anbinder, 2019; Massey, 2020; Martin, 2019), journalists (e.g. Cenziper et al, 2021; Dickerson, 2022; Swan, 2017), and immigrant inclusion practitioners (e.g. Bolter et al, 2022; Cantor et al, 2019; Hyunhye Cho et al, 2020).

The severity depicted by participant comments is multi-faceted. It encompasses the extremeness of the policies themselves. For example, US Respondent #8, who identified as an immigration attorney and the director of a non-governmental organisation that assists immigrants, wrote: '...we have seen nothing but constant efforts to exclude people from the US as well as every tactic and policy change to deny them benefits for which they are eligible.'

The severity also includes the grave toll that these measures exacted on immigrants and immigrant practitioners assisting them. Numerous comments reference the cruel, punitive nature of such actions. Examples of this offered by US respondents include the 'Zero Tolerance' policy, which separated more than 5,000 children from their asylum-seeking parents or guardians with whom they had entered the US, subjecting them to trauma and often abuse (Dickerson, 2022); the Migration Protection Protocols (MPP, also commonly referred to as the 'Remain in Mexico' policy), which forced nearly 70,000 people seeking asylum via the US southern border to wait indefinitely in Mexico for their US immigration court asylum hearing (American Immigration Council, 2024b), travel and admission bans targeting vulnerable populations such as refugees, individuals of particular nationalities, and many from Muslim-majority countries; and far-reaching, radical revisions by the Trump Administration to the definition of 'public charge,' which jeopardized the legal immigration pathways for many immigrants and deterred significant amounts of immigrant households from accessing public benefits to which they were legally entitled (Beier & Workie, 2022). US Respondent #68 volunteered at the southern border interviewing people who were waiting in Mexico because of the MPP to apply for asylum in the US. They recounted the severity of the conditions imposed by the US Government that they had witnessed:

People fleeing trauma are being held in dangerous situations. We talked to people who reported rapes occurring in the 'shelters.' People had been assaulted and robbed at money machines, denied medical care, harassed, kidnapped, etc. The situation is so dire that many, many people give up on the process.

Additionally, the severity of the immigration measures can be seen in participant descriptions of the anti-immigrant rhetoric and bellicose behaviour frequently exhibited by US government officials and the government workers and contractors implementing these harsh policies. US Respondent #88 shared observations that

highlighted this: 'Aid workers have been prosecuted and are under increased surveillance and threat of further prosecution. Migrants receiving care are more likely to be raided/detained/abused in the system.' The mainstreaming and normalisation of dehumanising, anti-immigrant language and tropes also served as a mechanism by which the Trump Administration advanced its larger immigration agenda and altered the public discourse about immigration. This will be revisited later in the chapter. In addition, the employment of aggressive and, at times, abusive anti-immigrant rhetoric and behaviour by the national government and those charged with carrying out its policies is a common feature of both the Brexit and Trump Governments' immigration approaches and will be further considered in Chapters 7 and 8.

The *saturating, pervasive scope* of the proposed and enacted changes was the second quality that differentiated the Trump Administration's immigration approach from previous ones. US Respondent #78 described the sweeping nature of the changes: 'The Trump Administration has systematically attacked the US immigration system to reduce immigration, limit access to resources for immigrant residents, and create a hostile climate of fear for those immigrants living in the US.' US Respondent #1 commented that these harsh changes applied to all categories of legal immigration, from humanitarian relief and family reunification to skilled and unskilled immigration, and impacted immigrants of all ages: '...Even business-based immigrants were threatened and discouraged by the effort to rescind work permits for accompanying spouses. The government violated laws, wrongfully detained and abused immigrants to further their anti-immigrant agenda and discourage would-be migrants of all ages.'

Others detail how even seemingly modest changes created a more complicated, extended bureaucratic web to navigate. An illustration of this can be seen in the comments of US Respondent #65 regarding providing legal representation to those seeking humanitarian protection:

Each humanitarian relief now requires more unnecessary evidence. Most immigration forms have [been] updated to ask more specific questions about the immigrant's history making it easier for US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to accuse them of a violation and thus preventing [them] from obtaining a relief...

Bolter et al (2022, p. 3), who catalogued the wide range of changes to US immigration policy executed by the Trump Administration, note that this coupling of massive alterations with smaller technical modifications resulted in a comprehensive, profound transformation of US immigration that most likely will endure for years to come.

The third distinguishing quality that multiple participants commented on was the *sheer volume of changes* levied on the immigration system during the four years of

the Trump Administration: ‘...a barrage (more than 400) of [immigration] policy changes...’ (US Respondent #31). The Trump Administration enacted 472 executive actions related to immigration during its four-year term, with 39 more put forward but unfulfilled. This set a new precedent for the amount of executive action on immigration (Bolter et al, 2022, p. 3).

The impact of this increased volume was compounded by the fourth and fifth distinguishing qualities described by US participants. Multiple US comments mention the *fast, unyielding pace* with which the Trump Administration deployed these immigration changes as well as the *fluidity of the measures*. This generated a perception among some that the immigration system was in a constant state of flux, making it more difficult and stressful for immigrants and immigrant inclusion practitioners to understand and navigate. US Respondent #55 describes the dizzying, taxing effect of engaging with an immigration approach that has these qualities:

The approach to immigration is very restrictive, punitive, and ever changing. There are constant changes proposed, some of them enacted...[others] have been stopped by the court system. Nonetheless, it is difficult for the immigrant population and their advocates to deal with a moving target.

Other researchers have highlighted the intense pace and fluidity of the immigration measures instigated in the Trump era as a departure from previous administrations and as qualities that facilitated the US immigration system’s rapid, drastic transformation (Bolter et al, 2022, p. 5-6; Harris and Mellinger, 2021, p. 759). While each of these five qualities individually increased the dial of unwelcoming, it was the combination of them along with the deployed mechanisms described below that caused such an expedited remaking of the US immigration environment.

### **How the Dial Moved so Swiftly to Extreme Unwelcoming: Five Mechanisms of Rapid Transformation**

US survey responses flag five pivotal mechanisms by which the Trump Administration expeditiously and aggressively unfurled its unwelcoming immigration approach (see Textbox 3). While some of these mechanisms had been used by previous US administrations, the Trump Administration employed them in unprecedented ways and, in this sense, maliciously innovated them to reach a fast, transfiguring boiling point. The employment of what I term ‘malicious innovation’ by the Trump Administration will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter and revisited in Chapter 8.

### **Textbox 3. Five Pivotal Mechanisms of the Trump Administration's Immigration Approach**

#### **Five Pivotal Mechanisms of the Trump Administration's Immigration Approach**

1. Use of executive power to undermine and dismantle US immigration infrastructure
2. Circumvention of legal and legislative norms and processes governing immigration
3. Politicisation of US democratic institutions and processes affecting immigration
4. Deployment and normalisation of explicit anti-immigrant rhetoric
5. Vilification and hostile treatment of immigrant inclusion practitioners

*Source: Author's research*

## ***Mechanism #1: Use of Executive Power to Undermine and Dismantle US Immigration Infrastructure***

The *use of executive power to undermine and dismantle US immigration infrastructure* was the first mechanism wielded by the Trump Administration to hastily produce a rapid transformation of the immigration environment. Multiple US respondents referenced ways in which the Trump Administration utilised its executive powers to significantly reduce the capacity and functioning of the US immigration system. These involve implementing hefty staffing, program, and funding cuts to the system, especially to its refugee and asylum infrastructure; increasing wait times for the processing of applications and immigration-related legal procedures; filling staff positions with individuals lacking sufficient knowledge and skills; and reducing information and user support for those navigating the system.

US Respondent #1, an immigration attorney and the former director of an immigrant-serving non-governmental organisation, describes a comprehensive reduction in the overall integrity and functionality of the system through a multiplicity of often small bureaucratic changes wrought exclusively through the executive branch: ‘...It was death by 1,000 administrative cuts as regulations and procedures governing the entire spectrum of immigration law were restricted and curtailed...’

The Trump Administration successfully pursued its radical alteration of the immigration system largely through executive action. No immigration legislation was passed by the US Congress during its tenure. The Trump Administration utilised a myriad of executive tools to accomplish this. These include more visible instruments such as executive orders and presidential proclamations, which the administration unconventionally used as substantive policy-making documents rather than in their traditional function as a means of delegating responsibility, generating taskforces, and implementing routine and symbolic tasks (Waslin, 2020, p. 55).

The Trump Administration also harnessed more obscure executive tools such as formal administrative directives (e.g. memos, guidance, training and operating procedures). It deployed these across a range of government agencies with the common objective of reducing immigration and making the use of legal channels as difficult as possible (Moynihan et al, 2022). Erecting this vast assortment of multi-level administrative actions created what historians of immigration describe as ‘paper walls’ (Wyman, 1985, as cited in Moynihan et al, 2022, p. 23), administrative barriers that impede the functioning of the immigration system and dramatically enhance the administrative burdens placed on those navigating it. US Respondent #7, who is a legal assistant at an immigrant-serving non-governmental organisation, witnessed this combination of visible and veiled changes, writing:

There are many examples [of extreme unwelcomeness], some which are quite obvious and others that are not really understood unless you work in immigration or are going through the system... There were MANY issues with

our immigration system as a whole before the Trump Administration, but these issues were exacerbated in the past four years.

These changes purposefully made administrative processes dysfunctional as a means to carry out the administration's regressive immigration agenda (Moynihan et al, 2022).

While US participants reference many ways in which the Trump Administration used its executive powers to undermine and denigrate the immigration system, comments about the devastation that it inflicted on the asylum process and on the refugee resettlement infrastructure are particularly notable. The evisceration of humanitarian protections via executive actions during the Trump era has been viewed as one of the most egregious, radical, and enduring alterations ever imposed on the US immigration system (Schoenholtz et al, 2021, p. 2). 83% of US survey participants (79 of 95 respondents) mentioned this in their comments. These responses range from blanket statements about the overall crippling effect that the policies had on humanitarian protections ('...ending asylum as we know it' (US Respondent #23); '...decimated the refugee resettlement program' (US Respondent #72)) to more granular descriptions of this dismantling and the devastating effects that it has had.

An example of the latter can be found in US Respondent #83's comments. The participant holds an executive leadership position with an immigrant inclusion organisation in a politically-conservative Midwestern US state. They describe how the adverse impact of the destruction of the federal refugee resettlement infrastructure was locally compounded by the way in which the Trump Administration framed this executive action:

President Trump's kickballing of refugee resettlement to individual counties was a huge blow to my community. Not because we resettle high numbers of refugees... but because the federal administration cleverly cloaked the issue as a matter of 'local rights/states' rights', opening up a discussion which nearly tore our community into opposing factions. Anti-immigrant and fear-based rhetoric hid behind arguments of 'local control' and 'fiscal responsibility,' but allowed nasty side conversations around race, poverty, and religious discrimination...It was awful.

During the Trump era, every aspect of the US refugee resettlement system, long considered an exemplary model in the world (Mathema & Carratala, 2020), was shrunk, with many programs and services significantly cut or shuttered (Bolter et al, 2022, p. 74). One major change referenced in the comment above was the issuance of Executive Order 13888 (2019). Titled 'Enhancing State and Local Involvement in Refugee Resettlement,' it required state and localities to give written consent in order to continue receiving refugees. Prior to this, states had no control over whether or which refugees would be settled within their jurisdiction as this is a power reserved for the federal government (Chishti & Pierce, 2020). Though this order was

eventually halted by the courts and later formally revoked by the Biden Administration, it further upended US refugee resettlement and was seen as politicising refugee resettlement in unprecedented ways (Chishti & Pierce, 2020).

### ***Mechanism #2: Circumvention of Legal and Legislative Norms and Processes Governing Immigration***

The second mechanism used by the Trump Administration and elucidated by US participant comments was *the circumvention of legal and legislative norms and processes governing immigration* that would have otherwise impeded their immigration changes. Several US participants mentioned President Trump's defiance at following the prescribed process for having agency appointments approved by Congress. US Respondent #25 described a common tactic used by the Trump Administration to skirt oversight and install sympathetic leadership throughout the agencies of the executive branch: '...the refusal to submit his agency appointments to Congressional process for appointment and just making them all "acting".'

In its four years in office, the Trump Administration honed its ability to circumvent official vetting procedures by creatively invoking obscure executive powers rarely used by previous administrations to avoid oversight and extend the length of these leadership appointments (Rose, 2020). It heavily relied on this strategy to install sympathetic leadership in agencies that were instrumental to carrying out its immigration agenda such as the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) (Frazelle, 2021).

Several US participants also highlighted the ways in which the Trump Administration exploited and expanded the authority of the US Attorney General, who heads the US Department of Justice (DOJ) and is the country's top immigration enforcement officer, to drive forward its immigration approach. This strategy buffered the harsh immigration changes implemented through the DOJ from the full scrutiny and oversight that they would have received if they had been pursued through more conventional avenues. US Respondent #49, an immigration attorney, offered an example of this: '...the attorney general has repeatedly referred cases to himself to rewrite precedent...' Attorney Generals Jeff Sessions and William Barr utilised the referral and review power of their position to overrule verdicts made by the Board of Immigration Appeals and to issue new precedent for the immigration courts, both of which are housed within the DOJ. While at times previous administrations' attorney generals have used this power, attorney generals during the Trump era employed it more than in any other administration (Pierce, 2021).

### ***Mechanism #3: Politicisation of US Democratic Institutions and Processes Affecting Immigration***

The *politicisation of US democratic institutions and processes affecting immigration and immigrants* was the third mechanism used by the Trump Administration to

speedily instigate their immigration agenda. Many participants discussed at least one of three strategies used by the Trump Administration to undercut the neutrality and functioning of democratic institutions and processes regarding immigration.

The first strategy that appeared in the data was the filling of political appointments with individuals who subscribed ideologically to the Trump Administration's highly restrictive immigration agenda but often lacked the qualifications or knowledge that warranted such an appointment. This marked a stark departure from previous administrations, who for the past 140 years have used a merit-based system as the primary consideration for installing individuals into public service roles (Kellough, 2023, p. 18). Federal and immigration court judges and those appointed to top leadership roles within executive branch government departments and agencies were most frequently flagged by participants as the types of political appointments utilised to advance the administration's immigration priorities.

A number of participants who identified themselves as immigration attorneys commented that they had witnessed under the Trump Administration a trend of appointing judges who had little or no knowledge of immigration law and/or who held anti-immigrant views that biased their rulings: '...the appointment of large numbers of anti-immigrant-leaning judges to federal benches and in immigration courts.' (US Respondent #42). The appointment of unqualified, inexperienced, and biased judges to the immigration courts in the Trump era has been widely substantiated (Misra, 2020; Taxin, 2019). This practice was condemned by legal scholars and immigrant inclusion practitioners for having compromised the independence and neutrality of the courts in favour of advancing an anti-immigrant political agenda (American Immigration Council, 2020; AILA, 2020; Schoenholtz et al, 2021, p. 99). The Trump Administration hired two-thirds of the 520 active US immigration court judges (Levinson et al, 2021). Judges are appointed to the US immigration courts for life, thus their impact extends long beyond the administration by which they were installed. 42% of those hired during the Trump era had no immigration experience, double the amount hired under previous administrations. However, judges hired by the Trump Administration were twice as likely to have military court experience, which an investigative report found was linked to a higher rate of deportation orders (Levinson et al, 2021).

US Respondent #74's comments suggested that ideological alignment was a key factor in the administration's staffing, offering as one example of the administration's extremely unwelcoming approach: '...the hiring and promotion of nativists and restrictionists.' Indeed, cultivating and rewarding ideologically-aligned individuals was a significant factor in the administration's ability to transform the immigration system on all operating levels (Blitzer, 2020, as cited in Moynihan et al, 2022, p. 24).

Multiple participants also observed that the very qualities discussed above (severity, scope, volume, pace, and fluidity) that characterised the Trump Administration's distinct immigration approach undermined the health and functionality of democratic

institutions and processes because they prevented transparency, oversight, and accountability. For instance, US Respondent #60 reflected on the administration's use of opaque manoeuvring as a means to hastily implement significant change: 'Impact of numerous changes, attempts to change asylum law...--- too often done by attempting to bypass legal channels...'

In addition, this second strategy diminished confidence in the US immigration system and its processes due to the perceived poor or unfair treatment of immigrants and immigrant advocates trying to use these established legal routes. US Respondent #66 highlighted this by sharing the experience of a client who was applying for asylum. They discuss how the volatility of the application process compounded their client's trauma and eroded their faith in the US immigration system:

...The administration's changes come so quickly and chaotically that it is extremely difficult to reassure clients that the process is working. We represent an asylum applicant who has been suicidal because of fear, anxiety, hopelessness as laws change, get muddled... (US Respondent #66).

Bullying by administration officials and employing institutional instruments such as quotas to pressure those in positions of power to achieve the administration's immigration goals was a third strategy that participants saw the Trump Administration employing to politicise democratic institutions and processes. To illustrate this, several participants communicated instances of immigration judges being coerced to meet immigration quotas instituted by the Trump Administration: '...I saw judges feeling empowered (or maybe forced) to deny as many cases as possible, even when they didn't have a solid reason for denying...' (US Respondent #7). Unlike other US courts that are part of the judiciary branch of government, US immigration courts are exclusively housed in the executive branch under the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), part of the DOJ (USDOJ, 2021). Thus, US immigration judges are employees of the DOJ and subject to the DOJ's guidance, potentially compromising their judicial independence (Barros, 2022). The Trump Administration instituted a number of metrics on immigration judges, including a quota requiring them to complete 700 cases per year or receive disciplinary action (AILA, 2021). These measures were designed 'to make it more difficult for judges to manage their dockets and for asylum seekers to win relief in court' (Schoenholtz et al, 2021, p. 40). This reflected the establishment during the Trump Administration of an organisational culture of intimidation, punishment, and purging for those not willing to demonstrate fealty to enacting its immigration objectives (Yglesias, 2019).

#### ***Mechanism #4: Deployment and Normalisation of Explicit Anti-immigrant Rhetoric***

The Trump Administration *deployed and normalised explicit anti-immigrant rhetoric* as a fourth mechanism to profoundly transform the immigration environment and

public discourse about immigrants and immigration. As previously described, many US survey participants saw the regularised use of dehumanising anti-immigrant rhetoric as a defining quality of the US Government's immigration approach in the Trump era. However, the normalisation of anti-immigrant rhetoric also served as a vehicle for facilitating greater acceptance of its complete remaking of the US immigration system.

Trump's election revived and mainstreamed the notion that immigration as a whole, not just illegal forms, threatened the US economy, national and individual security, and public safety (Pierce and Bolter, 2020). This idea had been prevalently circulated in the US via nativists politicians and groups in the late nineteenth century until the end of the Second World War, when it receded into the political fringe, politically supplanted by a more focused concern about the entry of undocumented immigrants (Young, 2017, p.226). In enthusiastically resurrecting such antagonistic and explicit anti-immigrant rhetoric and using it with such frequency and visibility, Trump is credited with having significantly reshaped public discourse on immigration, making overt expressions of xenophobia, racism, and anti-immigrant sentiment more socially acceptable both domestically and abroad (Crandall et al, 2018; Giani & Méon, 2021; Newman et al; 2021).<sup>74</sup> A number of US participants witnessed this and included it in their comments: '...negative words used in Trump's speeches create an environment where it is ok to be racist and speak against immigrants' (US Respondent #94).

By normalising and mainstreaming ideas that immigrants are a threat to economic well-being and public health and safety, the Trump Administration justified its severe immigration approach and reduced resistance to it. In particular, it was able to limit resistance from many Republican members of Congress by pointing to the popularity of Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies among the Republican base (Tanfani et al, 2018). Republicans have grown increasingly dependent on winning elections based on strong turnout from their party voter base and this has led to a proliferation of Republican Congress members and candidates tolerating and, in some cases, championing harsher immigration policies that aligned with the Trump Administration's agenda (Brownstein, 2018). The popularisation of such discourse also prompted some Congressional Democrats running in competitive seats to adopt language and policy positions traditionally associated with the conservative right and in some cases to support some of the Trump administration's actions (Hesson, 2018).

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<sup>74</sup> Evidence suggests that a shift in the acceptability of overt, often threatening, racial and anti-immigrant political rhetoric was already underway in the US prior to the Trump Administration (Valentino et al, 2017). This shift was heavily driven by the emergence and proliferation of the Tea Party Movement, which was galvanized by the presidential election of Barack Obama and whose assorted leaders and members often espoused racist, anti-immigrant, and nativist ideas (Williamson et al, 2011).

### ***Mechanism #5: The Vilification and Hostile Treatment of Immigrant Inclusion Practitioners***

The fifth mechanism by which the Trump Administration significantly altered the immigration environment was through *its vilification and hostile treatment of immigrant inclusion practitioners*. Multiple participants reflected on this in their comments and the deleterious toll that this had on their ability to effectively advocate and assist immigrants. US Respondent #21, who is a staff member at an immigrant inclusion organisation, shares how this increasingly antagonistic environment disrupts their ability to carry out their immigrant inclusion work:

We have lost funding, which has cost people jobs. We have been threatened with violence. We have had people targeted in the streets...Trump has politicized immigration and polarized opponents of immigration, mobilizing increasingly violent and vocal groups to riot and threaten people in the street. There have been numerous times where we have needed to close our office to maintain safety.

The Trump Administration used hostile rhetoric and policy changes to intimidate, frustrate, and punish practitioners seeking to assist them (Harris & Mellinger, 2021). This included frequently deriding and vilifying practitioners, including immigration judges and attorneys, through the rhetoric of Donald Trump and key officials within his administration. For example, Attorney General Jeff Sessions (Office of Public Affairs, 2017) in a speech to the EOIR accused 'dirty immigration lawyers' of helping people to game the US asylum system:

We also have dirty immigration lawyers who are encouraging their otherwise unlawfully present clients to make false claims of asylum providing them with the magic words needed to trigger the credible fear process.

The administration also targeted and punished immigrant inclusion practitioners in unprecedented ways. This included the prosecution of a volunteer who provided humanitarian aid to undocumented immigrants crossing along the US southern border (Stockler, 2019). Though the felony charges were eventually dropped, the prospect of being criminally prosecuted for offering humanitarian relief to undocumented immigrants created additional stress and legal risks for practitioners that adversely impacted their ability to conduct their work. Hindering practitioners made it easier for the Trump Administration to carry out its immigration approach by reducing the scrutiny and activism against it.

The detrimental effects of these actions on practitioners and the immigrant inclusion field will be further explored in both the accelerant section of this chapter, which explores this in the context of the administration's pandemic response, and more broadly in Chapter 7.

## **Ample Fuel for Extreme Unwelcoming: Underlying Conditions in the US**

Like the Brexit Government, the Trump Administration was able to utilise underlying domestic conditions to draw support for its widespread transformation of the US immigration system.<sup>75</sup> The Trump Administration also exploited three other pre-existing conditions in the US (political polarisation and hyper-partisanship, Congressional legislative impotence, and the growth of executive power) to exercise radical, comprehensive change to the US immigration environment in a concentrated amount of time.

### ***Underlying Condition #1: Political Polarisation and Hyper-partisanship***

Political polarisation and hyper-partisanship had become ingrained in US politics by the Trump era. This underlying condition became fuel for the Trump Administration to justify and advance its significant immigration changes.

Since the mid-1970s, US politics has become increasingly ideologically polarised and partisan, with a steady rise of political candidates embracing more ideologically-extreme positions (McCarty, 2014). At the same time, both major US political parties also have grown more 'ideologically cohesive' (DeSilver, 2022). This is reflected by the dwindling numbers of moderate Democrats and Republicans elected to Congress and a movement by both parties away from a bipartisan ideological centre. Although polarisation and partisanship has taken root in US politics as a whole, it is especially acute within the Republican Party. Research has shown that Republican Party leaders in the Trump era were particularly inclined to believe that extremists can win general elections and were five times as likely to say that they recruit extreme candidates relative to centrists to run in elections whereas Democratic Party leaders were only twice as likely to do so (Broockman et al, 2021).

The parties also have become more polarised around the issue of immigration over the last forty years, with Republicans ultimately moving to embrace an anti-immigration platform and Democrats championing a more pro-immigration one (Hetherington & Weiler, 2009, p. 161). Partisan division grew notably and steadily after the election of Barack Obama and the ascension of the Tea Party movement in conservative politics (Baker & Edmonds, 2021, p. 294). Donald Trump's presidential campaign and election is seen as both having contributed to and reflected this trend (Baker & Edmonds, 2021, p. 299).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, strong turnout from their party voter base, among which a harsh, restrictive approach to immigration is popular, has increasingly been key to Republicans winning elections. This resulted in Republican Congress members and candidates acquiescing and at times promoting harsher immigration policies that accorded with the Trump administration's approach (Brownstein, 2018).

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<sup>75</sup> See Chapter 2 for a more detailed dissection of these conditions in a US context.

Several US participants commented on the hyper-partisan political environment and how it ultimately fuelled the Trump administration's harsh remaking of immigration by preventing comprehensive immigration reform and pushing politicians to accept more extreme positions during the Trump era. For example, US Respondent #66 wrote about how this political climate prevented Congress from passing comprehensive immigration legislation in the Obama era: '...Obama tried for immigration reform, but the political environment was not receptive of his efforts...'

### ***Underlying Condition #2: Congressional Impotence***

The entrenchment of political polarisation and hyper-partisanship in US politics gave birth to another significant underlying condition for bringing the US to its boiling point: Congressional impotence to legislate on immigration.

Widening polarisation within Congress led to a precipitous decline in legislating because bipartisanship, which has traditionally been essential to passing bills, dwindled (Carmines & Fowler, 2017). By the Trump era, the US Congress could be described as legislatively impotent in its ability to pass immigration legislation of any sort. Nearly four decades have passed since Congress enacted comprehensive immigration reform (Galston, 2024) and it has been almost thirty years since it authorised a significant piece of immigration legislation (Bolter, 2022). This is in spite of numerous opportunities to legislate on the issue, including a 2013 proposal backed by the Obama Administration for comprehensive reform and a 2018 bill supported by the Trump Administration that would have legislated significant curbs on legal immigration.

Several US participants remarked on Congressional impotence in their comments, often in regards to its obstruction of immigration reform and its prompting of executive action. US survey participant #60 noted that during the Obama era Congress had failed to move forward on immigration reform in this intentionally-paralysed legislative environment: '...total obstructionism of Republicans in Congress hindered positive [immigration] initiatives...'

This dynamic created an immigration policy vacuum at the federal level that was filled by the executive branch (and to a lesser degree by the judiciary<sup>76</sup>). The Trump Administration leveraged this underlying condition to argue that its emboldened executive actions on immigration were necessary and, as described earlier in this chapter, to successfully act.

### ***Underlying Condition #3: Growth of Executive Power***

The growing power of the executive branch was the final underlying condition that the Trump Administration took full advantage of to fuel its rapid transformation of US immigration. As the legislative prowess of Congress has waned in the last fifty years,

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<sup>76</sup> See Chishti & Bush-Joseph (2023) for an exploration of the increasing role that federal judiciary is playing in determining US immigration policy.

the power of the executive has simultaneously swelled (Carmines & Fowler, 2017). This expansion of presidential power in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century was aided by the substantial authority delegated to the presidency in the post-World War II period by Congress along with the increasing willingness of presidents to assert their unilateral authority pre-emptively to manage potential emergencies rather than only impending ones (Driesen, 2021, p. 27). This pre-emptive turn has been justified by claiming its necessary to preserve national security.

While previous presidents had occasionally used executive action to address immigration-related issues, this greatly expanded during the Obama Administration. Though initially reluctant to use executive power to implement changes to US immigration, President Obama changed course in 2014 when the administration's proposed legislation for comprehensive immigration reform failed to pass in Congress. In the face of mounting political and public pressure to address immigration, Obama used executive action to make extensive changes to US immigration (Hipsman, 2014). In doing so, he furthered presidential power to shape immigration. The Trump Administration seized and expanded upon this to aggressively propel its immigration agenda.

As previously described in this chapter and noted by a number of US respondents, the administration both harnessed the existing powers afforded to the executive branch while continually testing the limits of such powers in pursuit of its antagonistic immigration agenda. This resulted in precedents that further expanded executive authority in the sphere of immigration as well as more broadly. For example, a large portion of the executive orders and proclamations issued by President Trump functioned as substantial immigration policy-making documents aimed at restricting legal immigration and bolstering enforcement both along the border and within the interior of the country (Waslin, 2020, p. 54). This was commented on by US Respondent #49: 'The Trump Administration has used action by the executive branch in a systematic attempt to dismantle... and discourage legal forms of immigration, making the United States unwelcoming to immigrants...'

Another notable feature of Trump's employment of executive action for immigration-related matters is that the administration aggressively used these powers even when his political party controlled both chambers in Congress. Within the first two months of holding office, Trump issued 17 executive orders with seven of these being immigration-related. He did so without first attempting to work with Congress to produce legislation to address these issues. Traditionally, presidents have proposed legislation that then is either taken up or rejected by Congress, with a greater likelihood of it passing when their party holds a majority in both chambers. Trump broke with this norm and instead routed immigration policies exclusively through executive action, shirking the legal and public oversight that passing legislation via Congress would have required (Waslin, 2020, p. 62).

Thus, the Trump Administration effectively utilised a number of underlying conditions as fuel to swiftly bring the US to a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming. However, two externally-generated accelerants allowed it to transform the US immigration system in ways that potentially will be felt for generations to come.

### **Accelerants of Unwelcoming in the Trump Era**

In addition to its aggressive exploitation of underlying conditions in the US, the Trump Administration also took advantage of two externally-generated accelerants to advance its remaking of US immigration.

#### ***A Republican-majority in the US Senate: An Accelerant that Helped Remake the US Judiciary***

Several US survey participants cite the appointment of ideologically-driven judges as a means by which the administration advanced an immigration environment of extreme unwelcoming: ‘...packing federal courts with anti-immigrant judges...’ (US Respondent #35). Indeed, the remaking of the US judiciary in the Trump era into a more politicised one and into the most conservative one on record (Manning et al, 2020) was an important step in not only bringing the US to its boiling point but ensuring that it can continue well beyond the Trump era. The Trump Administration achieved this by using an external accelerant: the Republican majority present in the US Senate in throughout the Trump era. The Republican majority allowed the administration to appoint a record number of judges, all of which require Senate confirmation, to the US federal judiciary. The US federal judiciary is constituted by the Supreme Court, appellate courts, and district courts.

Obstruction of judicial nominees by Republicans after they retook control of the Senate in the last two years of the Obama era provided 17 appeals court vacancies for Trump to fill, more than for any of his recent predecessors, along with a coveted Supreme Court appointment (McCarthy, 2020). This obstructionism also proved instrumental in facilitating the administration’s refashioning of the federal judiciary.

In only four years, the Trump Administration replaced nearly 30 percent of the US federal judiciary, appointing a third of the Supreme Court justices, 54 members of the circuit appeals courts, and 174 district court judges (Gerstein & Cheney, 2022). With the guarantee that its judicial nominations would be approved, the Trump Administration was able to install individuals who were more partisan and ideological than the appointees of previous administrations (Manning et al, 2020) and therefore more likely to issue rulings upholding its policies (Gerstein & Cheney, 2022).

The judges appointed during the Trump era also tended to be younger than those appointed by previous administrations. This ensured that they will constitute a significant portion of the US judiciary for decades to come since these positions are lifetime appointments (Scheindlin, 2021). Trump appointees also spent more time in politics and clerking for conservative judges and less time in private practice than

those installed under past administrations, increasing the likelihood that they draw on ideological commitments rather than practical legal experience in crafting their rulings (Zaring, 2020, p. 3).

Thus, this externally-generated accelerant allowed the Trump Administration to significantly accelerate a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming by increasing the chances of its immigration changes being codified and sustained by the judicial branch during its tenure as well as long after.

### ***COVID-19 Pandemic: The Ultimate Accelerant for Extreme Unwelcoming***

While the Republican-led Senate provided an external accelerant of which the total effects will be felt over time, the COVID-19 pandemic provided the Trump Administration with a powerful external accelerant of immediate, profound impact. The Trump Administration exploited and extended emergency powers granted to the executive branch for managing the COVID-19 public health crisis in order to hasten the enactment of its broader anti-immigration agenda.

In the US, the emergency powers afforded to the president are derived from the Constitution or from legislation passed by Congress. Presidential emergency powers conferred by the Constitution are quite narrow, but they have been generously expanded and enhanced through several laws enacted by Congress (Goitein, 2020, p. 29). These laws, such as the Public Health Service Act, allow the president and other executive branch officials to declare national emergencies in certain situations. Issuing a declaration then enables them to access special resources and powers as outlined in the legislation.

The authorities accessible by the presidency through declaring a national emergency extend to almost every area of governance, including immigration, public health, the military, agriculture, trade, and criminal law (Brennan Center for Justice, 2019). Though the procedures for issuing a national emergency are prescribed in the National Emergencies Act, the law does not contain a formal definition of what constitutes a national emergency. This is left to the president's discretion.

In addition to these laws, other legislated emergency powers are available to the president that do not require the formal declaration of a national emergency. These 'pseudo-emergency powers' grant the president extraordinary authorities to be used in exceptional situations (Goitein, 2020, p. 30).

While the Trump Administration was slow to use the emergency powers conferred on the executive to mitigate the COVID-19 disease, it wholly utilised one subset of emergency powers, those related to immigration, to promulgate its agenda (Goitein, 2020, p. 28). This was reflected in many of the comments offered by US survey participants.

US survey comments about the Trump Administration's pandemic response underscore the varied ways in which the administration capitalised on the pandemic

and the extraordinary executive powers available for managing a public health crisis to expeditiously propel its harsh immigration agenda. These include administrative changes, such as the slowing or stopping of visa and asylum processing; alterations in border security and enforcement policies and practices; further reducing or barring immigrant access to public benefits including COVID-related health care; imposing travel bans and the closing of the US border; and substantial systemic changes such as effectively ending asylum in the US. Researchers have noted the pervasiveness and the formidable significance of the changes to US immigration instituted by the Trump Administration as part of its pandemic response:

The pandemic response has touched each part of the U.S. immigration system and includes some of the administration's boldest actions on immigration...: a ban on travel from 31 countries, a suspension of immigration for most family- and employment-based visa categories and four temporary worker programs, and the invocation of a 1944 public-health statute allowing it to expel asylum seekers without first hearing their claims. (Pierce & Bolter, 2020, p. 8)

The 1944 public-health statute mentioned above (often referred to as 'Title 42') appeared in several US participant comments and was seen as facilitating some of the most administration's most egregious immigration actions: '...people can't even come into the US to seek asylum anymore because of the Title 42 rule...' (US Respondent #31).

Title 42 of the Public Health Services Act is a public health and welfare statute that, with the permission of the US president, gives the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) the authority to temporarily bar people from entering the US who are from countries where a hazardous communicable disease is present and could pose a threat to US residents if transmitted. The Trump Administration adopted a novel interpretation of this statute by allowing US Customs and Border Patrol (USCBP) agents to immediately deport anyone without authorization and by closing the border to non-essential travel (Castillo & Garcia, 2021). At the time of its implementation, it was seen as the toughest measure undertaken at its southern border by the US Government because it barred immigrants from access to asylum, instead fast-tracking their removal back to Mexico (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2023).

These far-reaching changes to immigration, which the administration claimed were in response to the pandemic and carried out in the interest of public health and to safeguard economic and national security (Norwood, 2020; Schoenholz et al, 2021, p. 86), retained the same five qualities as its larger immigration agenda (severity, comprehensiveness, rapidity, voluminousness, and fluidity). In fact, many of the changes that the Trump Administration successfully enacted after declaring a public health emergency were ones that the administration had tried but failed to implement before the pandemic (Bolter et al, 2022, p. 9). For example, a longstanding goal of

the Trump Administration was to find ways to expeditiously deport unaccompanied children who crossed at the southern border. Prior to the pandemic, the US Government had been unable to turn away unaccompanied children due to substantial legal protections that required it to guarantee that deportation would not put the children in harmful situations. However, the administration was able to manoeuvre around that during the pandemic and unaccompanied children were uniformly removed if they had crossed into the US or turned away at the border (Dickerson & Shear, 2020).

A number of US respondents also described the Trump Administration's pandemic response as weaponizing the extraordinary executive powers accorded to them in order to intentionally expose immigrants and practitioners to unsafe, harmful conditions. Participants described poor conditions at overcrowded immigration detention facilities, where those being held were unable to practice good hygiene, masking, and distancing to prevent the spread of the disease and had limited access to medical care. They attributed this inhumane response as part of the administration's larger efforts to implement its anti-immigration agenda. The squalid conditions of US immigration detention facilities both before and during the pandemic have been widely documented (e.g. Brennan Center for Justice, 2022; NYLPIMPN & Doctors for Camp Closure, 2020; Amnesty International USA, 2020) and are seen as having contributed to immigrants experiencing higher, more lethal rates of COVID-19 infections (Doan et al, 2021).

Several participants also wrote of hazardous deportation conditions that further put immigrants and others at risk and promulgated an environment of extreme unwelcoming: '...Our clients are dying in civil detention and the immigration apparatus is moving full steam ahead to deport people back to countries that do not have capacity to control the virus...' (US Respondent #25). The speed and haphazardness of the deportations conducted by the Trump Administration during the pandemic facilitated the spread of the coronavirus among those being deported as well as in the countries to which they were returned (International Crisis Group, 2020).

Others observed how the administration employed policies to prevent immigrants from accessing health care, public benefits, and financial support that were needed more than ever in the context of the pandemic. For example, US Respondent #9 recounts how immigrants with whom they work were unable to access COVID testing in spite of their jobs putting them at greater risk of contracting the disease: '...Workers were denied COVID-19 testing due to their [immigration] status, despite being essential workers...'

A plethora of policies were instituted by the Trump Administration that limited or barred access for immigrants to health care, public benefits, and other forms of pandemic-related support (Doan et al, 2021). In April 2020, President Trump signed an executive order that designated certain industries, such as meat and agricultural

processing, as 'critical infrastructure'.<sup>77</sup> The executive order compelled them to continue operating during the pandemic. These industries are overwhelmingly comprised of immigrant workers. This executive action put many immigrants at greater risk of contracting the virus, but with less support to prevent, diagnose, and treat the virus due to their immigration status (Goodwin & Chemerinsky, 2021, p. 340).

Additionally, respondents noted how the administration forced immigration courts to convene in person during the pandemic, putting all those involved at risk of catching COVID-19 and compounding the sense of extreme unwelcoming: '...Trump refuses to recognise the validity of a global pandemic...our attorneys have to choose to defend clients by video or go to court and risk their lives' (US Respondent #25). Throughout the pandemic, the Trump Administration insisted on having immigration courts operate in person in spite of vocal criticism from public health experts, legal professionals, and immigrant inclusion practitioners who charged that in-person hearings posed too great a risk for virus transmission due to insufficient and inconsistent safety protocols (Connolly & Clark, 2020). A report by the DOJ Office of the Inspector General (2021b) validated this criticism.

The consensus among US survey participants who described the administration's pandemic response was that it undertook these actions to maximise the risks and hardships incurred by immigrants and immigrant inclusion practitioners in an effort to intimidate, deter, and silence them. US Respondent #13, an immigration attorney, expressed this sentiment in their comments about what they had witnessed:

...the Trump Administration did its best to kill both us and our clients during the COVID-19 pandemic. In my state, an immigration lawyer died from a court room exposure to COVID-19 in March 2020. Despite this event, as well as several other events in which people have become extremely sick or exposed, the immigration court has continued to require in-person appearances throughout 2020. In addition, the detained docket has not shut down, and the immigration judges exhibit no sympathy or understanding for the life-threatening risks our clients face in ICE detention, and the risks we as their lawyers undertake to try to communicate with them and do our jobs during this pandemic. It is my sincere belief that Stephen Miller and his cronies intentionally kept the immigration courts open to try to use us as vectors of disease within immigrant communities. This administration has made no bones about how it believes we're "dirty immigration lawyers," and it's not a stretch of the imagination to think it wants us all dead. (US Respondent #13)

Thus, the pandemic response by the US Government in the Trump era rapidly accelerated the sense of extreme unwelcoming with the fear, danger, illness, trauma,

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<sup>77</sup> The executive order referenced is titled 'Delegating Authority Under the Defense Production Act with Respect to Food Supply Chain Resources During the National Emergency Caused by the Outbreak of COVID- 19' (Exec. Order No. 13,917).

and exhaustion that they generated as well as by reducing the capacity of immigrants and practitioners to oppose the anti-immigrant measures.

## **Conclusion**

The US Government's 'fast boil' path to generating an immigration environment of extreme unwelcoming saw a rapid, comprehensive transformation of US immigration that will endure well beyond the Trump era thanks to the vast scale and the often institutionalised and politicised nature (via life-time appointments to the judiciary and the installation of more ideologically-sympathetic administrators) of the changes. Its employment of 'malicious innovation' was instrumental to achieving this.

In malicious innovation, the Trump Administration invoked a policy precedent, tool, or concept used by preceding administrations, but conceptually and practically reinvented it to maximise its punitive capacity. This chapter identified a number of instances that exemplify this. These include the administration's use of obscure executive tools in unconventional manners (discussed in the 'Mechanism #1' and 'Underlying condition #3' sections), its interpretation and application of public health emergency powers afforded to it under the Title 42 statute (described in the 'COVID-19 pandemic' accelerant section), and its exploitation of the US Attorney General's authority to intervene in the immigration courts and to rewrite precedent (see Mechanism #2 section).

This path of aggressive transfiguration stands in contrast the UK's more graduated 'slow boil' path to extreme unwelcoming, which saw an environment of extreme unwelcoming built over multiple Conservative and Labour Governments through immigration policy scaffolding that came into full effect during the Brexit era.

However, it is important to recognise that although the paths that the two countries took to achieving a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming differed, the immigration approaches used by these national governments share a number of common features. Seven common features illuminated through this study are:

1. The national government's sustained use of explicit anti-immigration and dehumanising anti-immigrant rhetoric
2. The comprehensive embedding of immigrant-restricting and immigrant-excluding policies across sectors that extend the practices of 'everyday bordering' and 'deputisation'
3. The thwarting and erosion of democratic and procedural norms and processes related to immigration
4. A significant reduction of the immigration system's capacity coupled with an increase in the administrative hurdles for those navigating it
5. The employment of harsh, traumatic treatment of immigrants by the national government
6. Tacit and overt sanctioning of external anti-immigrant, xenophobic, and far-right actors and groups

## 7. The targeting and vilification of immigrant inclusion practitioners

These commonalities will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8. The shared features and distinctive paths to extreme unwelcoming had significant implications for UK and US immigrant inclusion practitioners, their field, and for the immigrants and communities with which they worked. This is the subject of the next chapter.

## Chapter 7: ‘Every Day Is a War’: The Impact of the UK and the US Governments’ Unwelcoming Immigration Approaches on the Immigrant Inclusion Field

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*‘...[We] constantly [are] feeling like we are in a reactive state...  
Every day is a war.’ (US Respondent #25)*

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Chapter 4 established that survey participants in both the UK and the US overwhelmingly found their national governments’ immigration approaches to be extremely unwelcoming in the Brexit and Trump eras. Chapters 5 and 6 explored this further, chronicling these approaches and the distinct paths forged by each government to achieve extremely inhospitable environments using the theoretical metaphor of bringing a pot to boil. This chapter will examine how the national government’s deep unwelcoming impacted immigrant inclusion practitioners and their efforts in the UK and the US during these discreet time periods. In doing so, it responds to Research Questions 3 and 4 of this study. RQ3 asks ‘How did immigrant inclusion practitioners working in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras perceive the national government’s immigration approach impacting their immigrant inclusion work?’ and RQ4 queries ‘What information and experiences formed these perceptions?’

I begin this chapter by drawing on quantitative survey responses to broadly chart the perceived impact of the UK and US Government’s immigration approaches on the overall functioning of immigrant inclusion efforts and on three critical areas of their work: messaging, funding, and operations.<sup>78 79</sup> I then couple this with analysis of qualitative survey comments to identify three conditions that these approaches produced in both countries that significantly impacted the field. The resulting effects on the field are discussed. This results in a fuller portrait of the impacts that operating in an extremely unwelcoming immigration environment cast on the field and on the communities with which they worked.

While scholarship on the unwelcoming immigration approaches utilised by the UK and US governments during the Brexit and Trump eras is plentiful, few studies have explored the impact of these approaches on those who were at the front lines of

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<sup>78</sup> As defined in prior chapters, this study defines ‘immigrant inclusion efforts’ as the formal and informal structures and activities that practitioners use to welcome and include immigrants.

<sup>79</sup> Quantitative responses analysed for this section come from ‘Part IV: The national government’s impact on your immigrant inclusion work’. This can be found in both versions of the survey, copies of which are available in Appendix I.

immigrant inclusion work.<sup>80</sup> This chapter adds to this nascent body of research, providing windows into how these far-reaching, extremely unwelcoming approaches considerably challenged, in some instances altered, and in certain spaces advanced immigrant inclusion efforts as practitioners manoeuvred the complicated, shifting conditions that they produced.

### **The National Government's Impact on the Immigrant Inclusion Field**

In both the UK and the US, the national government's vast powers allow it to potentially affect nearly every aspect of the immigration process from entry to (re)settlement and integration (Chapter 2). Responses from survey participants in both countries attest to the often significant and, in many cases, multidimensional influence of the national government's immigration approach on immigrant inclusion efforts.

Nearly all of the respondents in both the UK and the US surveys saw the national government's immigration approach as impacting their organisation's overall immigrant inclusion work.<sup>81</sup> Each of the 16 UK respondents (100%) who answered this close-ended question found their national government's approach to be impactful, with 31% ranking its overall impact on their inclusion work as extremely strong; 44% saying it had a strong impact; and the remaining 25% categorising its overall impact as moderate.

The US Government's immigration approach had a similarly substantial impact on the immigrant inclusion work of the 89 US participants who responded to this question. 99% found the national government's immigration approach as impactful on their organisation's overall inclusion work: 53% of respondents ranked its overall impact as extremely strong; 33% viewed it as strong; 10% saw it having a moderate effect; and 3% perceived its overall impact to be slight. Only one US respondent said that the national government's immigration approach had no impact on their immigrant inclusion efforts.

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<sup>80</sup> One notable exception is the research of Canning (2021), who documented multiple ways in which harsher immigration environments created by the national government's immigration approaches in Britain, Denmark, and Sweden adversely affected immigrant inclusion practitioners and by extension the immigrants and communities with whom they work. Similarly, the scholarship of Harris and Mellinger (2021) detailing the devastating toll that operating in the Trump era has had on US-based asylum attorneys is an important contribution in this respect as well.

<sup>81</sup> These responses were obtained using a close-ended question with a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'extremely strong impact' to 'no impact at all' (with a sixth option of 'don't know'). The question asked was: 'In your opinion, how much does the UK Government's/US Federal Government's approach to immigration impact your organisation's overall work to welcome and include immigrants?' The relevant national government was included in the corresponding version of each survey. See Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion of the logic and methodology behind the quantitative questions in this survey section and Appendix I to view the survey questions.

It is notable that in both surveys robust majorities of practitioners perceived the national government to have at least a strong impact on their immigrant inclusion efforts. Though in both the UK and the US the national government retains control over its borders and immigrant admissions, settlement and integration efforts have been multilevel affairs, with domestic regional and local authorities setting and implementing policies and programmes to address this and, in many contexts, leading these efforts (Scholten, 2014). This activity on a subnational level has increased in both countries over the past several decades, invigorated by devolution in the UK and federal legislative paralysis on immigration in the US (Mulvey et al, 2023; Reich, 2017). Given this dynamic, it can be easy to discount the impact of the national government on immigrant inclusion efforts, particularly on those whose work is primarily local in scope. These findings rebuff this idea since almost all practitioners who responded to this question, regardless if they predominantly worked on a local or on a national level, viewed the national government as having an extremely strong to moderate impact on their immigrant inclusion efforts.

Even survey participants who worked in areas where subnational governments actively operated in ways to counter the national government's unwelcoming immigration approach, such as in Scotland in the UK or in US states such as California, still perceived the national government as significantly affecting their efforts. An example of this can be seen in a comment offered by US Respondent #13. This participant, who ranked the national government's impact on their overall immigrant inclusion efforts as 'extremely strong,' was affiliated with an immigrant inclusion organisation located in New Jersey, a state frequently showcased as an example of state-level efforts to resist the Trump Administration's immigration agenda. In 2018, New Jersey's attorney general in direct response to the Trump administration's more aggressive enforcement directives issued a policy that limited how much state and local police can cooperate with federal officials in enforcing immigration laws (Catalini, 2020) and its governor used executive action to enact more inclusive immigration policies during the Trump era (Flanagan, 2019). US Respondent #13 reflects on the proliferation and the limits of local efforts to counteract the national government's extremely unwelcoming approach in the Trump era:

There is a lot of interest and funding for immigration legal services because of the Trump administration's extreme cruelty. The state grant that funds my immigration legal defense program was definitely created in response to the Trump administration so in some ways there was more opportunity than ever to work in immigration services under the Trump administration. At the same time, the options for giving people real aid and relief keep narrowing. This administration has put out awful decision/policy after awful decision/policy, eroding the grounds for asylum grants...We've had real discussions about whether our program does any good if there are so few people to serve, and our rates of success are so low.

Additional quantitative survey questions highlight the national government's impact on three crucial aspects of immigrant inclusion work: 1) the messaging that an immigrant inclusion organisation uses to communicate about its work; 2) its procurement of funding and other resources needed to carry out its efforts; and 3) the ways in which it conducts its day-to-day work. Once again, ranked, close-ended questions using a five-point Likert scale range of 'extremely strong impact' to 'no impact at all' (with a sixth option of 'don't know') gauged the degree of impact that participants perceived their national government having on each of the three dimensions of their immigrant inclusion work.<sup>82</sup>

16 UK participants and 89 US participants responded to the ranked question regarding the national governments' impact on their immigrant inclusion organisation's messaging. 94% of UK respondents and 91% of US respondents indicated some degree of impact on how their immigrant inclusion initiative messaged its work during the Brexit and Trump eras as a result of the national government's immigration approach.

14 UK survey participants and 80 US survey respondents answered the ranked question about the national governments' impact on the funding and resourcing of their immigrant inclusion organisation's work. 93% of respondents in each data set perceived the national government's immigration approach as having had some degree of impact on how their organisation funded and resourced its work during the Brexit and Trump eras.

The day-to-day operationalisation of immigrant inclusion work was the area in which the most respondents from both data sets indicated some degree of impact as a result of the national government's immigration approach. All 15 UK survey participants (100%) and 86 of the 89 US survey participants (97%) who answered this ranked question saw the national government's immigration approach as having had some degree of impact on the day-to-day work of their organisation during the Brexit and Trump eras.

Responses to these questions both confirm and underscore the influential role that the UK and US national governments had on participant immigrant inclusion efforts during the Brexit and Trump eras. They highlight the extensiveness of the national government's impact on shaping the immigration environment in all spheres of society as participating practitioners operated in a range of societal contexts. Policies and practices of 'everyday bordering' (e.g. Menjivar, 2014; Slaven, 2021; Yuval-Davis et al, 2018) and 'deputisation' (Griffiths & Yeo, 2021; Walsh, 2014), which constituted a core part of both the Brexit and Trump Governments' immigration approaches and were discussed in previous chapters, played a critical part in facilitating this and will be expounded on in Chapter 8. These findings add a unique

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<sup>82</sup> The amount of responses to each ranked question regarding impact varied as participants could elect to not answer these questions. I have noted the number of UK and US responses in my reporting of the rankings for each question.

contribution to existing research that shows that the effects of the national government's immigration approach reverberate throughout all sectors of society. This study does so by providing evidence of this through the first-hand experiences of immigrant inclusion practitioners operating in diverse contexts.

### **Three Conditions Generated by the National Government's Immigration Approach that Significantly Impacted the Immigrant Inclusion Field**

Comments from survey respondents further illustrate the pivotal ways in which the UK and the US Governments' immigration approaches affected the field during the Brexit and Trump eras. My analysis of these unwelcoming immigration approaches generated three conditions that caused significant impacts on the field's capacity and on practitioner's health, well-being, and safety:

1. Increased need and demand for immigrant inclusion programmes and services
2. Significant reductions by the national government to public funding and state capacity for immigrant inclusion work
3. More extreme reactions by politicians and the public towards the immigrant inclusion field and its work

These conditions are detailed below along with the formidable challenges and, in certain instances, opportunities that each of these produced for practitioners. Adaptations made by some practitioners to navigate them are explored as well.

#### ***Condition #1: Increased Need and Demand for Immigrant Inclusion Programmes and Services***

Participants in both surveys describe an increased need and demand for immigrant inclusion work during the Brexit and Trump eras driven or inflamed by the national government's unwelcoming immigration approach. UK and US participant comments indicate that heightened demand came from two sources.

The first source was from immigrants seeking programmes and services. Both UK and US respondents indicate that a wide range of programmes and services experienced a surge in demand during the Brexit and Trump eras. These include educational programmes such as civics and English language classes, know-your-rights and visa application trainings, and information about entitlements and accessing eligible public benefits; direct services such as food, housing, and financial assistance; and humanitarian relief and legal services. UK Respondent #1 depicted the intense pressure for programming that the increased demand from immigrants placed on their organisation: '...Setting up about 20 projects at any one time to support migrants...'

In the US survey, several participants also witnessed an uptick in immigrants wanting to apply for citizenship resulting from the uncertainty of the immigration environment under the Trump Administration. US Respondent #15 remarked on this

in their comments: ‘...many clients were motivated by fear of deportation or the unknown of what would happen under a Trump presidency so the desire to become US citizens increased dramatically.’ A spike in US citizenship applications began right before Trump’s election and reached its peak in the first year of his presidency, although the level of naturalisation applications remained high until the pandemic when restrictions and other containment measures severely disrupted application filings and processing (Passel & Cohn, 2022).

Members of the broader community who were seeking to engage with and support immigrants and inclusion efforts constituted the second source of demand. These included individuals, community groups, and religious communities. Several participants’ comments in the UK and the US surveys saw this increased demand develop as a reaction to the harsher immigration approach being employed by the national government. For example, UK Respondent #17 described how unwelcoming government policies towards refugees had spurred action among many in the broader community who opposed this:

In response to an unfavourable political climate, many members of the public have become more positively engaged in the refugee cause, particularly since 2015. Civil society, NGOs, and educational institutions have continued (or increased) their efforts to create a welcoming environment and counter government policy.

US Respondent #35 witnessed a similar effect occurring in the US. They observed that the Trump Administration’s unwelcoming approach had galvanised people who previously had not been actively supporting immigration issues:

In response to the extreme anti-immigrant rhetoric, many Americans have decided to engage for the first time or more deeply in immigration inclusion. We have seen new donors who want to help counter the terrible policies coming from the White House and we have seen a lot of inquiring about how people can advocate or respond.

In some communities within the US, opposition to the national government’s immigration approach also sparked increased engagement from subnational public officials, government workers, and law enforcement (Pham & Pham, 2019). US Respondent #37 experienced this: ‘...local government workers have participated in our trainings on [immigrant] integration because they, too, are perhaps sickened by the rhetoric and policies coming from the [federal government].’

However, ballooning need and demand for many of the provided programmes and services challenged many practitioners as the need and demand often outpaced collective and individual practitioner capacity. This was observed by US Respondent #64: ‘people in need of free or low-cost immigration services exceed the capacity of many organisations...’ Participants in both surveys discussed the toll on practitioners that the high volume of need caused. Swelling workloads, increased levels of

secondary trauma, exhaustion, burnout, and other adverse effects to physical and mental health appeared in survey responses and speak to the impact on practitioners of trying to manage the surging demand: 'Mentally- we're all exhausted!' (US Respondent #58).

This toll was compounded by the shifting and opaque immigration approaches of the Brexit and Trump Governments, which made many immigrant inclusion activities more time and labour intensive as well as mentally and emotionally taxing. US Respondent #22 commented how they thought this was a deliberate tactic that the Trump Administration used to wear down practitioners, rendering them less effective: '...there seems to be an attempt by the government to intentionally make things confusing and time consuming. Essentially running advocates to the ground hoping they'll give up.' Bolter et al (2022, pp. 6-7) in their assessment of how the Trump Administration was able to radically alter the US immigration environment also observed that the Trump Administration was able to reduce the efficacy of those opposing their immigration agenda over the course of the Trump era by overwhelming opponents with a constant, rapid stream of wide-ranging changes that required significant capacity to counter.

In the Trump era, the increased demand was often accompanied by palpably heightened fears about safety, detention, and deportation among many of the immigrants who were seeking programmes and services. This further added to US practitioners' workloads. Multiple US survey participants discussed needing to devote more time and energy to cultivating trust and reassuring clients as a result. This was exemplified in the comments of US Respondent #29:

...Our organization has a high level of trust with the immigrant community so the opportunity to provide direct services and resources has remained moderate to high throughout this presidency. That said, there has been higher levels of fear and distrust that have prevented some people from accessing even our resources.

At the same time, the national government's approach also generated greater opportunities for some UK and US survey participants to expand their work to meet increasing demand. US Respondent #70 noted that the immigration approach of the Trump administration became an issue around which the opposition could unite and one which resulted in greater support: 'Immigration became a touchstone of opposition to the Trump presidency...more money was available to expand legal services. More opportunities [for immigrant inclusion work] were created by the callous cruelty of just about everything Trump did...'

Examples could also be found in survey participants' comments of the surge in demand fostering and deepening collaborations among immigrant inclusion practitioners. These collaborations could be found within a particular sector of the field as was the experience of UK Respondent #17. They describe an example of

this in the higher education sector, in which their immigrant inclusion was involved: ‘...[Our organisation] is also part of a network of refugee-focused organisations that has come together to work on access to higher education for refugees and asylum seekers, and [this network] is growing all the time...’

In other instances, collaborations to meet the growing demand generated by the national government’s harsh policies extended across sectors. US Respondent #42, who operates in a conservative Midwestern US state, describes the robust subnational cross-sector collaborations that their organisation was a part of which emerged to counter the Trump administration’s unwelcoming immigration approach:

We have seen heightened need and opportunity for immigrant inclusion work in our local and regional community, including our agency advocating for and implementing municipal (city) ID’s for immigrants accepted by four local surrounding cities, including ours, by executive order of each municipalities’ mayor for local city offices, police departments, fire departments, schools, medical facilities, etc. to accept these as identification for those without other forms of ID. As well our advocacy efforts have increased toward passing legislation (unsuccessful to date in our conservative state...) for statewide drivers licenses for undocumented immigrants.

In the US, passing local laws allowing for the issuance of driver’s licences and other forms of legal identification to immigrants, especially to those with precarious legal status, and their acceptance by subnational governments as valid proof of identification have become common ways for pro-immigration subnational governments to symbolically and substantively contest more restrictive national immigration policy (Newton, 2018, p. 2100).

US Respondent #42 goes on to detail how these subnational cross-sector collaborations also include an array of legal services for immigrants and educational and activist opportunities for allies:

Our inclusion work has included increased immigration legal services, offering legal advise and application assistance and representation for immigrants in seeking immigration legal relief, ...a heightened amount of local public advocacy...in our community and within local universities and businesses, countering anti-immigrant sentiment and offering education to the contrary for local businesses, allies. We have increased offering Know Your Rights community advocacy events in conjunction with the local schools, with local immigration attorneys and our DOJ-accredited Immigration Legal Representative offering vital information to undocumented immigrants and allies for ways to protect rights and best responses to immigrant targeting actions by the federal government. This includes us having developed a team [to respond] to ICE raids and anti-immigration actions by government agencies in our community, including our agency, the mayor’s office, local

schools, other immigrant ally organizations, local churches, and immigrant assisting groups.

This example also speaks to the layered and complex subnational responses to immigration that can be found in the US. In spite of being located in a conservative Midwestern state where many state-level policies amplified the restrictive approach exhibited by the Trump Administration, US Respondent #42's comments showcase a vibrant pro-immigration cross-sector collaborative effort emanating from the municipal level that sought to counter this. This complexity and variegation in immigration responses at the US local level during the Trump era has been documented elsewhere in the literature (see Rissler et al, 2020).

The extremely unwelcoming environment generated by the national government's approach also required some practitioners to alter how they met this increased demand. For example, US Respondent #68 shared about adaptations that their organisation made to accommodate a surge in demand from immigrants in a time of heightened fear and anxiety:

We live in a rural area and many people rely on social media to get information. We have done workshops on the Public Charge Rule, for example, to clarify facts so families can make healthcare decisions with more confidence. We have also had people asking questions about their existing cases and if things are changing to weaken their applications for immigration benefits. We spread information about workshops and free consultations by word of mouth because if we advertise, people [who are immigrants] won't come out of fear of the public.

Other examples of adaptations made by practitioners to accommodate growing demand in these extremely unwelcoming environments include programmatic changes. For instance, US Respondent #39 discussed how the inhospitable environment in the Trump era prompted their organisation to add know-your-rights trainings: 'We have had to shift our curriculum to include information about basic civil rights, using the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) information available.'

The outcome of the Brexit referendum itself also required UK Respondent #2 to modify their immigrant inclusion work. The practitioner works at a higher education institution where they advise international students, some of whom are EU nationals, on visa application and compliance. The respondent describes how the post-Brexit need of helping students who are EU nationals apply for the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS) caused additional work and stress:

I can say that the immigration system we are working under presents difficulties - I worry that EU students who don't apply for the EUSS in time or even if they do apply, will struggle to get their rights, like the Windrush generation has experienced. I don't think the Home Office systems are fit for

purpose, and this has a knock-on effect in terms of the entitlements and rights students receive now and in the future...

The EUSS is the formal path offered by the UK Government for the millions of EU citizens and their family members who moved pre-Brexit to the UK as part of the EU free movement rules to secure legal UK residency status post-Brexit. It has been plagued by problems including challenges with informing those who are eligible about the application and process, a flurry of late applications, a significant backlog in the processing of applications, and concerns about the loss of status for applicants due to administrative error (Sumption & Cuibus, 2023).

Thus, the shifting and opaque immigration approaches employed by the Brexit and Trump Governments led to a surge in the need and demand for immigrant inclusion work in ways that made many activities more time and labour intensive as well as mentally and emotionally taxing. This condition took a significant toll on the field's already stretched capacity and on many individual practitioners' mental and physical health. While many of these impacts were negative and long-lasting, this condition did provide opportunities for practitioners in certain contexts to expand their work and to initiate and deepen collaborations. In some cases, this condition caused practitioner to adapt their efforts to meet elevated or emerging needs in these extremely unwelcoming immigration environments.

### ***Condition #2: Significant Reductions by the National Government to Public Funding and State Capacity for Immigrant Inclusion Work***

Both the Brexit and Trump Governments' immigration approaches involved significant reductions to public funding and state capacity for immigration. These changes had and will continue to have lasting effects on the immigrant inclusion field as demonstrated by both UK and US survey comments.

#### **Funding and Capacity Cuts in the UK**

As discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, reductions to public funding and state capacity by the UK Government affecting immigrant inclusion work pre-dated but also deepened during the Brexit era. Neoliberal reforms to shrink and privatise the welfare state, initiated by the Thatcher Government in the 1980s, were built on by subsequent Conservative and Labour Governments (Garland, 2016). Cuts to public funding and infrastructure and the commodification and outsourcing of many government immigration services indirectly and directly impacted immigrants and immigrant inclusion work. The UK third sector increasingly was tasked with filling the gaps that emerged from these changes, leading some to observe that it acts as a 'shadow welfare state' (Wolch, 2006). This shift also had led to criticism that the UK Government is shirking its legal duties to provide for those seeking asylum and granted refugee status (Mayblin and James, 2019a, p. 76).

Austerity and the hostile environment policies instigated during the Cameron era and expanded during the Brexit era aggravated this condition in the UK. For example, Coker (2018) points to pivotal cutbacks carried out by the Cameron Government that severely curbed the ability of local authorities to facilitate immigrant integration activities even though the UK Government had identified these activities as a remit of subnational governments (UK Communities and Local Government, 2012, p. 6). These consequential cuts included the removal of £16.5 million of funding from Strategic Migration Partnerships, which are local authority-led mechanisms for facilitating multi-level coordination and implementation of immigration policies; the closure of the Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES), which provided essential refugee integration services; the elimination of legal aid for all except asylum advice; and a nearly 40 percent reduction of the overall budget for local authorities (Coker, 2018, p. 145).

A few UK respondents did note efforts made by some subnational governments to support immigrant inclusion work in spite of the deep cuts instituted by the UK Government. UK Respondent #8, who operated in Scotland, saw the Scottish Government's support as critical to their work and UK Respondent #1, who worked in England, highlighted the importance that continued support from local government authorities has made to their efforts. However, other respondents found little or no support from their local authorities. This was the experience of UK Respondent #10 who wrote: 'Our local council seems unwilling to take on any responsibility or become actively involved.'

Overall, the diminishing role of the UK Government in providing adequate funding and infrastructure for immigrant inclusion activities made practitioners in the third sector increasingly reliant on funding and resources from private donors including individuals, philanthropic trusts and foundations, and religious communities. This brought an additional set of considerations and activity for practitioners as they sought to procure support from these non-governmental sources.

These dynamics are reflected in UK participant comments about funding. Five of the eighteen UK participants (28%) mentioned funding concerns in their comments. Most comments about funding noted the on-going precarity of funding for immigrant inclusion work in the Brexit era, for as UK Respondent #18 lamented: '...funding is a constant concern.' The scant literature on refugee-serving third sector organisations in the UK affirms the declining resources and financial uncertainty that many within the field face (Mayblin & James, 2019a, p.81).

The growing shift towards securing funding from private donors necessitated by the UK Government's neoliberal policies and an escalation of its immigration approach did not mitigate this financial uncertainty and volatility. Private funding of the third sector often comes with terms and situations that can complicate its use and, at times, can even arrest the growth of the organisations and work being funded. Terms and situations that can prove challenging for funding recipients include funding

restrictions, mercurial habits of funders, a competitive and finite funding environment, and limited capacity within the third sector to engage donors and to demonstrate the efficacy of their work (Chapman, 2022). This was reflected in several UK participant comments as well. For instance, UK Respondent #3 intimated the capriciousness of private sector funding for their work, writing: ‘funders are more aware of the plight of asylum seekers and this is, at the moment, a “flavour of the month” with funders making non-governmental funding for inclusion available and supportive.’ UK Respondent #1, whose organisation received funding from both government and non-government sources, described the significant drain on organisational capacity that fundraising activities took: ‘The struggle and disproportionate amount of time that [our organisation] has to spend on fundraising.’

Several participants also discussed the specific funding fallout that leaving the EU may hold for their immigrant inclusion work. UK Respondent #1 flagged the loss of EU funding resulting from Brexit as especially impairing for their work:

...EU money will cease [when Brexit is fully implemented] and the environment may be such that it becomes even harder to attract funds. We will then have to reduce our service and more individuals will not get the desperate support they need to overcome injustice and barriers to inclusion.

Trepidations about the damaging effects of losing EU funding for post-Brexit immigrant inclusion work in the UK were echoed in evidence given by several immigrant inclusion organisations to the UK Parliament in October 2019 as the UK Government considered the implications of its exit:

Both the British Red Cross and the Refugee Council were concerned about losing access to the EU’s Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), which was established in April 2014 to cover the period 2014–20. They noted that the UK had been the largest recipient of AMIF funding, and was allocated €370 million to spend on national priorities such as improving Home Office processes and the returns programme, and in support of refugee resettlement programmes and integration measures. (UK House of Lords European Union Committee, 2019, p. 28, section 78)

These apprehensions ended up being well-founded as UK organisations’ access to EU funding was significantly complicated and curtailed by the Brexit deal accepted by the UK Government (Bond EU Funding and Policy Group, 2022).

### **Funding and Capacity Cuts in the US**

Like their UK counterparts, the reduction and elimination of immigrant inclusion funding, programmes, and infrastructure by the US Government in the Trump era was a condition that multiple US participants viewed as substantially impacting the field and their work. 26 of the 95 US survey participants (27%) remarked upon the

effects of the government's reduction or elimination of immigration funding and infrastructure in their comments.

Comments offered by US survey participants about the types of cuts and alterations to state capacity flowing from the Trump Administration's unwelcoming immigration approach once again underscore the widespread, transformational nature of the enacted changes and their impact on the field. US Respondent #79, who works at an immigrant inclusion umbrella organisation with member organisations located throughout the US, saw the decrease in federal funding and the negative messaging used by the administration to justify these reductions as being harmful to its members' ability to carry out their work: '...our members, many who work in direct services to immigrants and refugees, losing the funding to continue this work due to rhetoric, and therefore being unable to participate or prioritize welcoming initiatives.'

US Respondent #19 identified two changes to federal funding instituted by the Trump Administration that significantly impacted the US immigrant inclusion field: '...attempts by the Trump Administration to refuse funding/aid to "sanctuary" cities and states (we are one) [and] to repurpose money meant for assisting immigrants (like housing unaccompanied minors)...'. During the Trump presidency, the administration instituted a policy that withheld hundreds of millions of dollars in federal grants to so-called 'sanctuary cities' (Lynch, 2021). These were cities and other subnational entities, such as state and county governments, who in response to the Trump Administration's severe, aggressive expansion of immigration enforcement had instituted their own policies that restricted cooperation with federal immigration authorities. While in some contexts this policy catalysed funding by subnational donors to offset the curtailment of funding and triggered lawsuits challenging it, it nevertheless resulted in large reductions in federal funding available for immigrant inclusion work (Lynch, 2021).

The reallocation of funds previously dedicated to assisting immigrants, including unaccompanied minors, is another tactic that the Trump Administration used to expeditiously carry out its unwelcoming agenda and avoid oversight (Bolter et al, 2022, p. 8). This tactic appreciably impacted the immigrant inclusion field. For example, repurposed funding by the Trump Administration resulted in the loss of \$4.5 million for a programme that furnished legal services to almost 7,000 unaccompanied minors (Einbinder, 2018). This funding removal came at a time when nearly 90,000 immigration cases involving children were backlogged in US immigration courts. The administration also cut funding for education and recreational services, including English language classes and soccer, at facilities charged with housing unaccompanied minors while their cases were pending in immigration court (Romo & Rose, 2019). This left the immigrant inclusion field to challenge these policies in court and to search for alternatives to mitigate these harmful cuts.

The Trump Administration's devastating cuts to refugee resettlement funds and the hollowing out of the federal US infrastructure to facilitate this were condemned by many US participants as being two of the most negatively impactful changes made in the Trump era. These were widely viewed as having caused permanent damage to the US field.

As described in the preceding chapter, the dismantling of the esteemed US refugee resettlement system and infrastructure was one of the most drastic outcomes of the Trump Administration's extremely unwelcoming immigration approach. During the Trump era, the annual presidential determination for refugee admissions, which is the maximum amount of refugees that the US will admit during that year and is set by the US president in consultation with Congress, reached historic lows. The number of refugees granted permission to enter the US dropped by 86 percent (Mathema & Carratala, 2020). The number of refugees granted permission to enter the US dwindled to just 15,000 individuals by 2020, the least in the programme's history, and only 11,800 of those successful applicants were actually admitted to the US (Finnegan & Gittleson, 2021). The Trump Administration halted the programme completely during the coronavirus pandemic. Though it resumed under the Biden Administration, the legacy of this dismantling persists as the resettlement programmes and infrastructure still have not fully rebounded (Santana, 2024).

The devastation wrought by these changes was, in part, from the cascade of adverse effects that the curbing of refugee admissions produced on the US refugee resettlement ecosystem:

Low admission levels translate to reduced funding available for the operation of the program, starting a domino effect on the entire system—from decimating the local infrastructure, which supports newly arrived refugees, to affecting those overseas who are waiting to be resettled—and making it harder to simply restart once the numbers rise again. (Mathema & Carratala, 2020, Introduction and Summary section)

Multiple US participants commented on the debilitating effects that the loss of funding and infrastructure in the Trump era had on their work and to the field. US Respondent #49 observed the widespread impact of this:

Funding has seen dramatic decreases. Decisions related to the refugee ceiling have put some resettlement agencies permanently out of business and destroyed the infrastructure dedicated to those efforts. Changes to law have impacted the ability of immigrants to seek relief.

Even though the number of new refugees admitted to the US during the Trump era dramatically shrank, substantial need for immigrant inclusion activities to assist refugees who had already arrived and were settling in the US still existed: '...There are many refugees who arrived before or during the few years of the Trump administration that need help...' (US Respondent #80). These efforts, too,

experienced devastating reductions as a result of Trump Administration policies. For example, during the Trump era 134 refugee resettlement affiliates (organisations that assist refugees after they arrive in the US) across the country had closed or been 'zeroed out', meaning that the State Department barred them from resettling refugees (Bolter et al, 2022, p. 78). This reduced the national resettlement capacity by 38 percent.

The resulting losses of jobs, programmes and spaces to foster interpersonal and community relationships, professional and community expertise, and institutional and occupational systems of knowledge from these cuts are profound. Many of the US comments attest to this and highlight how the damage from the Trump administration's dismantling of US refugee resettlement infrastructure and funding to the capacity of the field will reverberate well beyond the Trump era. US Respondent #93, who works at a higher education institution, describes how the closing of refugee resettlement agencies limits the ability to train future immigrant inclusion workers: 'I can't place students for learning experiences in organizations that don't exist because they have closed due to lack of funding.'

US Respondent #94, who conducts research on issues that affect immigrants, details another way in which the Trump administration's reductions in funding and infrastructure adversely impacted the immigrant inclusion field: 'lack of funding from federal organizations for research projects, harder to access clients due to their fear of being undocumented and not wanting to participate in research with the unwelcoming communities around us.' Thus, the Trump administration's sizeable cuts in federal research funding and the difficulty that such an inhospitable immigration environment posed to recruiting research participants negatively impacted research efforts for some in the field. This chilling effect on research is detrimental both occupationally for researchers in the field as well as to the field's capacity as it limits knowledge about the individuals and communities with whom the field seeks to collaborate and serve.

The dramatic reduction in the funding and infrastructure provided for immigrant inclusion activities by the US national government during the Trump era placed an even greater burden on the already strained third sector to compensate for these grave losses. As with their counterpart in the UK, the third sector in the US has increasingly played the role of a 'shadow welfare state' due to adoption and institutionalising of neoliberalism in the 1980s (Gonzalez Benson, 2022, p. 1746). Since then, it has taken on responsibility for what once were viewed as the exclusive duties of the welfare state in terms of immigration services and support (Chapter 3).

Several US participants affirmed the substantial role that the third sector plays in the delivering of immigrant inclusion work and how this is only exacerbated by the vast cuts and substantial changes implemented by the Trump administration. This was explicitly articulated in a comment from US Respondent #39: 'Financial support for programs that benefited immigrants and refugees was completely cut off. The not-

for-profit sector has been doing the majority of the work, and these agencies are funded through grants and donations.'

Beyond the specific financial cuts instituted by the Trump Administration, the topic of funding more broadly occurred in the comments of nearly half of US survey participants (46 of the 95 US respondents or 48%), reflecting the precarity and volatility of immigrant inclusion resources during the Trump era in the US. Many comments detailed the critical role played by private donors in supplementing lost federal funding: 'Private funders were open to doing more for refugees being resettled in our city since it became obvious our president was not going to help.' (US Respondent #92). In some cases, US respondents observed private donors were motivated to provide greater levels of support during the Trump era because of the federal policies and funding cuts being instituted: 'Donations in support of immigrants, for our organization, either in clothing, goods, services or monetary have steadily increased during the time Trump has been president.' (US Respondent #42).

Clusters of localised support even resulted in the expansion of the field in certain areas, though this was not a widespread phenomenon. For example, US Respondent #34 witnessed that an outpouring of local grants from within the state where their organisation was located facilitated a localised job boom for those seeking to pursue immigrant inclusion work: 'Lots of California-based grants have allowed organizations to grow and fund more projects, allowing for a field wide-open for jobs, mostly!'

However, perceptions among US practitioners about the fickleness of private funding and the ensuing strain on the field brought by this uncertainty also were discernible. A comment offered by US Respondent #15 encapsulated this:

Will funding continue? Funding for many programs is limited or foundations only want to go after what is shiny and new so they fund for a year or two and then move on. [It is] hard to start a program and then end it after such a short period.

Even among US participants who experienced an expansion of available resources for their work during the Trump era, there is a sober recognition that these often come with terms or situations that ultimately limit the efficacy of their work. US Respondent #1, who is an immigration attorney and ran an immigrant inclusion organisation, offers an example of this in the context of their work:

It seemed there were more resources available to address harms now that the public understood the threat of this administration than in the past, but it often felt like it was too little, too late and the money and you had to focus on triage rather than pro-actively seeking benefits for folks on the path to citizenship, all while every day you had fewer to tools to use.

Like their UK peers, a few US practitioners noted that funding from subnational governments also was a source of support to offset losses in funding from the federal government. US Respondent #42 spoke of this alternative support coming from several types of subnational governments: 'Increased funding at the local, county, and state-wide level to provide immigration/community services...'

Other US practitioners discussed adaptations that their organisations made to adjust to the shifting funding landscape during the Trump era. Strategies included explicitly linking and reframing their immigrant inclusion work with broader issues such as anti-poverty or equity and justice issues in order to gain greater support; turning to crowd-funding campaigns such as GoFund Me pages to attract individual donors; and starting income-generating initiatives, such as a candle-making programme, to diversify and sustain their funding.

In sum, deep cuts to funding and critical immigration infrastructure by the UK and US Governments placed an additional strain on the field as practitioners were often tasked with trying to fill this void and meet the intense deficits resulting from it. While a minority of UK and US survey respondents identified this as producing opportunities for their inclusion efforts to seek and acquire funding from other sources, a majority found it challenging and compounding their workload. This further strained the capacity of the field during the Brexit and Trump eras.

### ***Condition #3: More Extreme Reactions by Politicians and the Public towards the Immigrant Inclusion Field and Its Work***

Chapters 5 and 6 noted the dehumanising anti-immigration rhetoric and increasingly harsh measures that characterised the immigration approaches of both the UK and US Governments in the Brexit and Trump eras. In both countries, this occurred against the backdrop of increasingly polarised political environments. The Brexit and Trump Governments consistently foregrounded racialised anti-immigrant, xenophobic rhetoric in public and political discourse, framing immigration as a threat and a crisis and immigrants as manipulative, dangerous, and often criminal. The presence in the UK and the US of media ecosystems receptive to and also often co-producers of this anti-immigration rhetoric ensured that the issue received steady attention. Chapters 2, 5, and 6 offer a more detailed exploration of these dynamics. UK and US comments suggest that these dynamics fuelled more extreme reactions from politicians and the public towards practitioners and their inclusion efforts during the Brexit and Trump eras that markedly impacted the field.

For a majority of UK and US respondents, the constant negative portrayals of immigration and immigrants by the Brexit and Trump Governments and the extreme reactions that they engendered among politicians and the public complicated immigrant inclusion work and compromised the health, well-being, and, for some in the US, the safety of practitioners. The explicit targeting and vilification of practitioners by both the Brexit and Trump Governments (carried out in a particularly

aggressive fashion by the Trump Administration) further exacerbated these extreme reactions. This substantially strained and eroded the capacity of the field in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras in ways that will have lasting consequences.

As referenced in Chapters 5 and 6, both the Brexit Government and the Trump Administration vilified practitioners as part of their efforts to produce an immigration environment of extreme unwelcoming. Immigration attorneys, in particular, were targeted and this appears in comments by both UK and US practitioners. In the UK, verbal attacks by the UK Government on immigration attorneys started in August 2020 during Boris Johnson's premiership, with a Home Office video about immigration referencing challenges to asylum decisions being led by 'activist lawyers.' This was followed by then Prime Minister Boris Johnson generating the phrase 'lefty human rights lawyers,' which soon became part of the political vocabulary of the UK right (Mason, 2023). Both actions engendered swift condemnation from the UK legal community and immigrant inclusion practitioners (Bowcott, 2020; The Bar Council, 2020). However, the climate of hostility towards immigration attorneys in the UK promulgated by senior politicians and the media during the Brexit era and beyond continued to escalate, causing many immigration attorneys and other practitioners who assist them to feel increasingly threatened and unsafe to pursue immigrant inclusion work (ILPA, 2023, p. 3).

In the US, the targeting of immigration attorneys extended beyond verbal attacks. Investigative reporting has shown that during the Trump era a number of immigration attorneys, especially those working along the US southern border, were placed on a government watchlist and subject to government surveillance, harassment, and retaliatory measures, such as detention and travel bans (Carasik, 2019; Devereaux, 2019; Lind, 2021; Rivlin-Nadler, 2019). Several of the US survey participants commented that they had experienced or witnessed such actions by the US Government: 'I'm also probably on a government watchlist -- as are many immigrant advocates these days.' (US Respondent #17, an immigration attorney). The grinding effects of functioning in such an antagonistic environment was summed up by US Respondent #60, an immigration attorney, who wrote: 'The job of the immigration attorney has become infinitely more difficult, stressful, and discouraging.' This sentiment has been echoed in other research, which has documented a rise in the levels of trauma and burnout experienced by immigration attorneys as they navigate increasingly hostile circumstances for themselves and their clients (Harris & Mellinger, 2021; Poggio, 2022).

These adverse effects have led many to leave the legal profession, contributing to an acute shortage of immigration attorneys while the need continues to grow (Verstegen, 2022). This presents significant challenges to the capacity of the field and holds important ramifications for the outcome and welfare of immigrants in need of representation. Research has shown that legal representation improves the efficiency and quality of immigration court decisions and immigrants who have legal

representation are far more likely to have been granted relief than those without representation (Chishti et al, 2023, p. 29).

The sense of being targeted by the Trump Administration because of their immigrant inclusion work also applied to those who were engaged in other forms of immigration support. US Respondent #48, who worked at an immigrant inclusion organisation based in California, described the many ways in which they saw practitioners as a whole being affected by the Trump Administration's actions:

[as an immigrant inclusion practitioner, you] could be targeted for surveillance by the administration, could be barred from other countries based on your work, could be criminal charged for assistance, could be seen as more extremist and [it] may be harder to get posts within the government in immigration-related posts.

Other forms of retaliation by the US Government towards practitioners that were mentioned by US survey respondents include tax auditing<sup>83</sup> and the filing of complaints against individual practitioners with professional accreditation organisations such as the American Bar Association. Researchers and investigative journalists have substantiated these claims as ways in which the Trump Administration sought to intimidate, deter, and punish practitioners (Burnett, 2018; Pinto, 2020). A database established at NYU Law School chronicled more than 1,000 instances of retaliation levied on practitioners by the US Government during the Trump era (NYU Immigrant Rights Clinic and the New Sanctuary Coalition, 2020).

Operating in the extreme environments of unwelcoming during the Brexit and Trump eras came at a heavy expense to individual practitioners and to the wider field. While the Brexit Government's immigration approach caused discernible stress and anxiety for some UK survey participants (e.g. 'Social scorn from the general public' (UK Respondent #15)), the effects of the Trump administration's aggressive immigration approach on US participants' health, well-being, and safety were pronounced and wide-ranging.

Numerous US participants attributed their own personal experiences of anxiety, exhaustion, burnout, and other debilitating health conditions to the environment of extreme unwelcoming. Many also observed these ailments occurring among their colleagues as well. US Respondent #1 illustrates the high cost of working in the field during the Trump era for them and their colleagues:

It seemed there were more extremists influenced by Trump that felt angry and that were directing it us by making nasty comments on our website or in our public presentations. I also experienced vicarious trauma that over the course

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<sup>83</sup> The Trump Administration has been accused of using the Internal Revenues Service (IRS) to target political foes by directing it to conduct unnecessary audits of opponents' tax filings as a retaliatory measure (Schmidt, 2022).

of time had an impact on my mental health and exacerbated my anxiety. I saw this occur with numerous colleagues and noticed more and more were discussing burnout and taking a leave of absence.

Among the US survey cohort, safety concerns stemming from the vilification of their field by the Trump Administration and emboldened reactions from those holding anti-immigrant and far-right views presented another significant challenge to the health and well-being of individual practitioners as well as to the overall functioning of the field. Many US participants expressed feelings of their safety and the safety of the immigrants with whom they worked as being increasingly at risk: 'I felt that people who do not support immigrants and immigrants' rights work could be incited to come to my workplace to harass or hurt us.' (US Respondent #20). Several US respondents worried about the possibility of a mass shooting occurring at their workplace because of the heightened anti-immigration environment created by the Trump Administration: 'I recognize that as radicalization is taking place in this country, our agencies could be subjected to violence and potentially an in-office shooter.' (US Respondent #91). Anti-immigrant and racist rhetoric espoused by President Trump was seen as having encouraged the extremism that motivated at least two mass shootings that happened during his tenure in office (Baker & Shear, 2019).

Some US practitioners experienced threats and/or actual physical harm in pursuing their immigrant inclusion work. Descriptions of physical acts of intimidation and violence experienced by US survey participants during the Trump era include one participant's car window being shot out while the car was parked outside their immigration law office; being threatened with or experiencing arrest and other aggressive behaviour and destruction of property by US border patrol agents and other immigration enforcement officials; having anti-immigrant protesters congregate outside the immigrant inclusion organisation; receiving threats from local officials and employers; incurring harassment from people opposed to their inclusion work; and being a victim of a hate crime.

A number of US respondents reported adopting measures during the Trump era to protect their safety as well as the safety of the immigrants with whom they work. For several US participants, this took the form of removing any identifiable markers that would publicly signal their involvement with immigrant inclusion work. These included not posting signage on buildings and cars and not wearing clothing or accessories that would reveal the nature of their work. Multiple US participants noted that their inclusion efforts updated or bolstered organisational safety plans and protocol as a result of the increased hostility to their work. For other US participants, their organisations took more tangible measures to ensure the safety of their staff such as providing pepper spray for self-defence and staffing armed guards at their office. Several US respondents also discussed how safety concerns periodically halted their inclusion work: 'Trump has politicized immigration and polarized opponents of immigration mobilizing increasingly violent and vocal groups to riot and threaten

people in the street. There have been numerous times where we have needed to close our office to maintain safety.' (US Respondent #21). This accords with Harris and Mellinger's research (2021, p. 761), which also showed that some practitioners held heightened safety concerns and experienced threats to their physical safety in the Trump era.

Threats to safety for US practitioners during the Trump era came in digital forms, too. US Respondent #82 recounted how they witnessed the hacking of immigrant inclusion organisations by white nationalist groups. Several US respondents also shared how they received online harassment and threats to their safety.

Additionally, multiple US respondents mentioned that the policies of the Trump Administration during the COVID pandemic put many practitioners at greater risk of contracting the coronavirus:

Many of my co-workers have contracted COVID-19 from our work at the ICE detention centers and immigration courts...We still don't know all the long-term health risks these people will experience. The co-workers who haven't contracted COVID-19 have experienced severe physical and psychological complications of stress, including depression, PTSD, Scarlet Fever, elevated blood pressure, sleep disorders, lymphadenitis, flare ups of autoimmune conditions. (US Respondent #13)

As discussed in the previous chapter, a number of US respondents saw the Trump Administration's pandemic response as weaponizing the extraordinary executive powers afforded to them to intentionally expose immigrants and immigrant inclusion practitioners to unsafe, harmful conditions. These pandemic-related stressors added an additional layer of stress and health concerns to the escalating health and well-being challenges that practitioners were already facing in the Trump era.

Many UK and US respondents reported in their comments how the extreme unwelcoming immigration environment of the Brexit and Trump eras triggered greater fear, trauma, and distress among the immigrants with whom they work: 'Members of the immigrant community have been threatened, attacked and extorted due to the hostility the administration has created...workers extorted at their workplace, individuals forcibly removed from their homes, attacked for being immigrants - direct attacks by neighbors.' (US Respondent #9). This, in turn, elevated the levels of vicarious and secondary trauma, anxiety, exhaustion, and burnout experienced by practitioners as articulated by survey respondents. For example, UK Respondent #5, who works with unaccompanied youth immigrants, shared the tremendous stress that navigating the asylum process produced for both the youth who they were assisting and for them as a practitioner:

Each stage was a mountain to climb - getting professionals' time, applying for funding, form-filling, visits (not local so cost of travel needed funding). The application forms were extremely long, took hours to complete, involved

dredging up awful experiences with little support available afterwards especially for mental health problems like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The anxiety was immense, with each stage taking so long. The atmosphere at the Home Office venue was unnecessarily hostile (especially the security staffs' attitude)- and a strict limit on how many could accompany even a juvenile. Child had to choose between social worker and carer! The interviewing officer was in contrast more welcoming, but the wrong interpreter had been booked even though we were very specific about this beforehand. It took a long time for the Home Office to reach a decision in what should have been a very straightforward case.

The policies and practices of the Trump Administration's immigration approach traumatised immigrants and practitioners alike as illustrated by the comments of US Respondent #74:

I am not in danger of being arrested or imprisoned (yet), but there was a high degree of emotional risk. The pain and cruelty this administration inflicted was difficult to witness and doing my work requires me to witness it.

Moreover, practitioners discussed how the deepening sense of unwelcoming in the Brexit-era UK and Trump-era US toughened some of the public's views towards immigrant inclusion efforts, generated more social scorn, and in certain social circles created greater opposition to their work. UK Respondent #6 commented on how the unwelcoming environment had made it more difficult to build relationships among the refugees that they were helping to settle and the larger non-refugee community: '...the attitudes of people have hardened and polarised after Brexit, so trying to encourage refugees to join in with non-refugee-based activities is more difficult [as] they have greater fear about that.' These more extreme reactions by portions of the public had detrimental effects on the health and well-being of some practitioners as it strained relationships and reduced morale. US Respondent #35 describes the interpersonal costs of pursuing immigrant inclusion work in the Trump era: '...many people within my own family have become more polarized and radicalized in their anti-immigrant beliefs as a result [of] their loyalty to Trump.' The proliferation of more extreme anti-immigrant views among swaths of the public further frayed the individual and collective capacity of the field during the Brexit and Trump era.

In addition to the harm inflicted on the field by the Brexit and Trump Governments' overt vilification of immigrant inclusion practitioners and the use of traumatic tactics, UK and US respondents describe how the government mischaracterised immigrants and their inclusion work in ways that exploited and fanned existing public ignorance and fear about immigration: 'We experience a great deal of ignorance from British individuals about who is coming to the UK seeking asylum and why they are coming.' (UK Respondent #9).' This forced practitioners to reallocate their limited time and energy to countering these false narratives, further testing the capacity of the field.

In some cases, it also required practitioners to reframe the messaging about their immigrant inclusion work to mitigate more extreme reactions by a polarised public. US Respondent #22, who is based in a politically- conservative US state (commonly referred to as a 'red state' in a US context), explains how their organisation has had to navigate this:

We are in a 'red' state and our funding comes largely from religious organizations. We have a duty to educate the public about damaging policy that hurt our clients, but we have to do so in a way that seems bipartisan. When we have not, we have seen angry editorials in the media and even people claiming that our work is political and threatening to try to get our non-profit status taken away.

As intimated by the comments above, these incumbering individual effects also have an adverse collective effect on the field's capacity. High rates of illness, turnover, attrition, and burnout limit the ability of the field to carry out its critical work and make recruitment, retention, and professional development opportunities, such as mentorship, more difficult. These findings are in line with those of Canning (2021, p. 77), who concluded from her research on refugee-serving practitioners in three countries with hostile immigration regimes (one of which was the UK), that environments of extreme unwelcoming foster a sense of 'deprofessionalisation'<sup>84</sup> and 'powerlessness' among practitioners that can erode the morale and efficacy of those in the field. These findings also add to the research of Harris and Mellinger (2021), which identified a myriad of ways in which the Trump Administration's immigration approach and the antagonistic environment that it promoted adversely affected the health and well-being along with the occupational capacity of immigration attorneys and other immigrant inclusion practitioners.

The deleterious effects on practitioners also can negatively impact how inclusion organisations carry out their work, often putting them in a reactive rather than proactive mode as they try to manage the fluid and often opaque policies flowing out of these harsh immigration approaches. UK Respondent #18 provides an example of this in their comments: '...the unfavourable political climate has made it challenging to secure long-term policy change - as a result our work often focuses on adaptation/working within current policy rather than necessarily tackling the root issues...'. This further frustrates the ability of the field to pursue longer-term, systemic change.

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<sup>84</sup> Canning (2021, p. 76) describes the deprofessionalisation that results from immigrant inclusion practitioners operating in a hostile immigration environment. In this environment, practitioners often must become lay experts in areas beyond which they are trained (e.g. immigration law, immigrant health care access and restrictions, public entitlement policies and systems, etc.) in order to navigate the complex and overlapping web of immigrant restrictions that characterise this environment. This, in turn, can de-professionalise practitioner expertise 'and deflect from the role one is required to deliver, leading also to the likelihood of overworking.'

While operating in an environment of more extreme reactions to inclusion work during the Brexit and Trump eras generated many challenges for those in the UK and US fields, it also presented some practitioners with opportunities to strengthen their efforts. For a few UK and US respondents, the regular government attacks and media attention about immigration and the strong reactions that it catalysed helped to cultivate greater support for their immigrant inclusion efforts, in this way strengthening the field. This support came in the forms of increased funding, volunteerism, and organisational collaborations. US Respondent #3 explained how the uptick in media coverage on immigration allowed their immigrant inclusion organisation to significantly grow during the Trump era:

Our organization has done a lot of press and media outreach since the Trump administration entered office and as a result have gotten more attention from funders/donors and have been able to expand to become a full-services-providing organization with multiple staff members...

UK Respondent #17, whose immigrant inclusion organisation serves as an umbrella organisation and is embedded within the higher education landscape, detailed a surge in volunteerism and activism among students seeking to welcome refugees in response to the extreme unwelcoming position of the UK Government: '[The umbrella organisation's] groups at universities across the country organise volunteering, awareness-raising, and campaigning to help make the UK a more welcoming place for refugees. The number of...groups and...students involved is growing all the time.' Similarly, US Respondent #48 described how reactions to the severe unwelcoming environment sparked broader coalition-building and collaboration for their immigrant inclusion efforts, bringing more into the field:

Given the breadth of immigration exclusion, different communities could work together to fight for immigrants' rights. The discriminatory/racist rhetoric was broad so it could unify all the targeted groups. The attacks were so public more people wanted to be involved.

For several US respondents, the extreme environment of unwelcoming and the polarised reactions that it produced provided opportunities for greater solidarity and collaboration within the field. For example, US Respondent #72 more connectivity and support among existing practitioners in response to the heightened saliency and harsh measures employed by the national government:

Numerous organizations came together for information-sharing, program collaboration, and committees to work on problem-solving issues... The anti-refugee sentiment from the [Trump] Administration gave local organizations the opportunity to come together and work toward a common goal - this was noticeably absent in the Obama Administration.

Finally, more polarised and extreme reactions by subnational politicians and local publics also appear to have determined how subnational governments responded to

the immigration approaches of the Brexit and Trump Governments. Participants from the UK and the US who received some form of support for their immigrant inclusion work from a subnational government appear to have been in operating in areas where the subnational governments were dominated or led by politicians of opposition parties. These include the Scottish National Party in Scotland, the Labour Party in England, or the Democratic Party in the US. Receiving support whether that be through messaging, collaboration, funding, or some combination of these forms boosted the morale and capacity of immigrant inclusion practitioners. This is evident in the comments of UK Respondent #8, who drew inspiration as well as tangible support for their work from the Scottish Government:

I participated in a few meetings held in the Scottish Government premises that were meant to be of networking and learning from each other with several organisations doing work with refugee and migrants...I always appreciated the opportunities to meet others and the support by the government. I also like their New Scots policy. I find it foundational in all my work, and it gives me ideas and credibility as I do my own work.<sup>85</sup>

At the same time, respondents in both surveys who mentioned unsupportive subnational governments identified these entities as being controlled by politicians from the national government's political party (i.e. the Conservative Party in the UK and the Republican Party in the US). The comments of UK Respondent #10 illustrate this: 'When discussing immigration/refugees in council, the majority of councillors (Tory) ignore/ refuse to become involved/discuss the issue.' The lack of support or, in some cases, the promotion by subnational politicians of the anti-immigration agenda put forth by the national government made immigrant inclusion activity more difficult and added to the pressures faced by those in the field.

As highlighted in earlier parts of this chapter, subnational governments could play a substantial role in affecting immigrant inclusion efforts during the Brexit and Trump eras, depending on their political sympathies and practical capacities. Experiences shared by survey respondents in both cohorts underscore the limited but nevertheless significant potential for subnational governments to amplify or to muffle the national government's immigration approach in the Brexit and Trump eras.

Hence, the extremely unwelcoming immigration approaches of the Brexit and Trump Governments elicited more extreme reactions among politicians and the public that significantly impacted the practitioners and the field. While some survey participants derived opportunities to strengthen their capacity to provide inclusion work, a

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<sup>85</sup> During the Brexit era, the Scottish Government was dominated by the Scottish National Party (SNP). The SNP's New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022, a pillar of the Scottish Government's immigration approach, stood in marked contrast to UK Government in its welcoming language and more generous and inclusive policy. The full policy document can be found at <https://www.gov.scot/policies/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/new-scots/>.

majority of respondents found operating in this highly charged environment damaging to the field on individual and collective levels.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the Brexit and Trump eras posed many substantial challenges that diminished the capacity of individual practitioners and of the immigrant inclusion field. Interestingly, the rise in demand for programmes and services experienced by practitioners mirrors the larger paths that each country took to reaching immigration environments of extreme unwelcoming. In the UK, this 'slow boil' effect manifests as a steady but heavy increase in demand over the course of multiple governments with the full effects of these deteriorating circumstances being felt in the field during the Brexit era. In the US, although a healthy demand for immigrant inclusion work existed prior to the Trump era, the massive, swift changes enacted by the Trump administration clearly engendered a sharp spike in demand that overwhelmed the field's capacity, reflecting the 'fast boil' transformation of the immigration environment.

Steep cuts to public funding and immigration infrastructure instituted by the UK and US Governments further tested and strained the capacity of the field. This forced many practitioners to seek additional support from subnational governments and non-governmental funders. This provided space for additional engagement of the public and private donors and funding adaptations that for some practitioners brought an increase in capacity. However, terms attached to private funding and the mercurial habits of funders, the competitive funding environment, and limited fundraising capacity within the field posed additional challenges to the field's overall capacity.

The more extreme reactions by politicians and some members of the public engendered by the severe immigration approaches of the Brexit and Trump Governments largely had a negative effect on the health, well-being, and safety of practitioners, the legacy of which will be felt for years to come. Though opportunities did emerge for some UK and US respondents, these were highly contextual, often influenced by the geographic scope of their work; the localised responses of subnational officials, volunteers, community groups, and funders; and the types of inclusion work performed by practitioners. This limited the ability for these opportunities to be commonplace.

The constant and multi-dimensional barrage on the capacity of the immigrant inclusion field during the Brexit and Trump eras may best be summed up by US Respondent #25: '...[we] constantly [are] feeling like we are in a reactive state...Every day is a war.' As the number of national governments coming to power who embrace extremely unwelcoming immigration approaches proliferates, the findings from this study invite important considerations for the future of immigrant inclusion efforts. This will be discussed in the concluding chapter that follows.

## **Chapter 8: Immigration Environments Are Crafted and Alterable, Not Destined: Concluding Reflections**

Immigration environments are crafted, not destined, and although it may take time and considerable effort, they can be altered. This is the key point underscored by my research and one that I will revisit in more detail in this chapter's conclusion. The findings from this research illuminate the decisive role that the national government plays in constructing an immigration environment and in impacting efforts to welcome and include immigrants. In the cases of the Brexit-era UK and the Trump-era US, each government used their power to generate immigration environments of extreme unwelcoming. In doing so, they fulfilled a core promise of both the Brexit and Trump campaigns and significantly impacted the immigrant inclusion field and its work. This chapter recounts how the findings from this study illustrate this. It highlights the original contributions of this thesis, notes its limitations as well as possibilities for future research, and finishes with concluding reflections.

### **Perceptions of Extreme Unwelcoming**

This interdisciplinary study interrogated the overarching research question: 'How are efforts to promote the inclusion of immigrants impacted by a national government that is (perceived to be) unwelcoming of immigrants and immigration?' It did so by examining the cases of the Brexit-era UK and the Trump-era US. Both offer remarkable examples of national governments brought to power by campaigns that centred and problematised immigration and who used their immigration approaches as a means to fulfil the Brexit and Trump campaigns' core pledge of instituting a (more) inhospitable immigration environment (Chapter 2).

This research surveyed UK and US immigrant inclusion practitioners who, as described in Chapter 3, performed front line inclusion work in a variety of contexts and capacities during the Brexit and Trump eras. It yielded an array of vantage points from which the impacts of the national government's immigration approach could be assessed. Their impressions of the national government's immigration approach and its effects were captured using close-ended and open-ended survey questions to garner both comparable rankings and textured, nuanced detail. The latter half of Chapter 2 laid out this methodology.

What is evident from the ranked data is that, regardless of their particular vantage points, an overwhelming majority of participants in both the UK and the US surveys - 94% of respondents in each data set- identified the national government's immigration approach to have been extremely unwelcoming during the Brexit and Trump eras (Chapter 4). This large consensus in both data sets addressed the first part of Research Question 1: 'How did immigrant inclusion practitioners working in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras perceive their national government's approach to immigration in terms of being un/welcoming and how did they see this manifest in their national government's approach?'. Analysis of the

previous governments' rankings offered an answer to Research Question 2. This queried: 'Is the perception of their national government's immigration approach in the Brexit and Trump eras different from how they perceived the immigration approach of the previous national government (the Cameron Government in the UK and the Obama Administration in the US)?'.

While analysis of UK and US participant rankings revealed a pervasive perception of the Brexit and Trump Governments' extreme unwelcoming, it simultaneously uncovered a striking difference in the two cohorts' assessments of their previous governments' immigration approaches. This critical difference indicates that each country forged distinct paths to reach a common destination: an immigration environment of extreme unwelcoming.

As examined in Chapter 4, UK participants roundly perceived the Brexit Government's immigration approach to be equally or more unwelcoming than that of the Cameron Government, marking an *intensification* of an already unwelcoming approach. This stands in stark contrast to the dramatic consolidation of rankings that occurred in the US survey, where perceptions about the Obama Administration's immigration approach were distributed across all response options but then almost exclusively concentrate in the unwelcoming range for their appraisal of the Trump Administration. This signals that a *transformation* occurred.

Analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 further elucidated the distinctive paths that each country took to achieve this common point of extreme unwelcoming and highlighted key contours of each national government's immigration approach. In those chapters, I employed a theoretical metaphor of bringing a pot to boil as an analytic heuristic to illustrate these distinctions. Central to this metaphor is the role that the national government's immigration approach, which acts as the dial on a stovetop, plays in enflaming and stoking underlying political, economic, social, and historical conditions. These conditions serve as fuel for bringing the immigration environment to a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming. The national government can also utilise or, in some cases, create accelerants, which are sudden or temporary political, economic, and social conditions that rapidly hasten a country's boiling point. I identify three categories of accelerants: 1) externally-generated, 2) government-generated, and 3) wildfire accelerants (whereby a government-created event not originally meant to advance immigration unwelcoming is repurposed by the government to do just that). Accelerants can increase the appetite among the public and political elites for more severe immigration measures. Additionally, they can offer opportunities for the national government to consolidate its power and to avoid conventional scrutiny, enabling it to implement what would otherwise be regarded as exceptional immigration measures.

The analysis also distinguished key components of each government's immigration approach. These profiles respond to the second part of Research Question 1 and enabled the identification of seven shared features of these extremely unwelcoming

approaches. This is an original contribution of the study and is explored later in this chapter.

### **The UK Case: A 'Slow Boil' of Graduated Intensification**

As described in Chapter 5, the UK is a case of a 'slow boil' path to attaining a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming. The UK Government fashioned this 'slow-boil' path through the graduated *intensification* of its unwelcoming approach under successive Conservative and Labour-led governments, eventually reaching a boiling point in the Brexit era.

This gradual intensification was the product of what I have called 'immigration policy scaffolding', whereby a government builds on the immigration approach of the preceding one(s) while also introducing additional novel components. In this case, multiple Conservative and Labour-led governments largely built upon the unwelcoming policies of the previous government resulting in sustained, incremental but escalating actions of unwelcoming. New Labour governments preserved the restrictive policies towards asylum seekers initiated by prior Conservative governments while also adding a stringent security and control framework for deterring and controlling 'undesirable' immigration (i.e. immigrants seeking asylum or holding irregular status). The Cameron Government carried forward many of the neoliberal immigration management practices enacted by New Labour that proved harmful to immigrants such as the privatising of immigration controls and formally stratifying immigrants based on their economic worthiness. It also introduced its 'hostile environment' policy, heralding an explicitly punitive approach to immigration. This policy scaffolding served as the foundation of the UK Government's immigration approach in the Brexit era that produced a boiling point.

The Brexit Government's immigration approach, as constructed from participant responses and supported by relevant literature, was characterised by several components. The first was the expansion and deeper institutionalisation of its 'hostile environment' policy. This further extended the sweeping web of administrative and legislative measures designed to make life so difficult for immigrants that they would voluntarily leave. UK respondents observed this occurring through the government's deeper emphasis on controls, detention, and deportation; its reduction of safe and legal immigration paths; its deprivation of immigrant rights and access to basic need provisions such as health care; and its increasing of administrative obstacles for immigrants and practitioners.

The second component of the Brexit Government's approach was its weaponization of inaction as a means to propagate unwelcoming. Analysis of UK comments identified four types of inaction used by the government against immigrants: 1) failure to investigate and account for wrongdoing by the government and its contractors that affected immigrants; 2) failure to protect the safety and welfare of those seeking asylum and those with refugee status both in their journeys to the UK

and once they had arrived; 3) failure to counter rising anti-immigrant sentiment and far-right activity and to foster greater community cohesion and welcoming in the UK; and 4) failure to lift or modify existing immigrant restrictions on public benefits and work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Brexit Government's use of explicit anti-immigrant and anti-immigration discourse along with other forms of symbolic politics to generate extreme unwelcoming constituted the third component of its immigration approach. Several UK respondents noted that the openly inimical government discourse about immigration incorporated anti-immigrant, far-right messaging, some of which was central to the Brexit campaign. Comments also reflected the government's reliance on symbolic politics, such as framing immigration as a 'crisis' and constructing a spectacle of detention, to communicate its toughness and control of immigration as well as to justify its harsh approach.

Four underlying conditions in the UK, 1) structural racism, xenophobia, and classism; 2) an established nativist tradition; 3) pervasive national narratives about Britishness, British exceptionalism, and its declining postcolonial power; and 4) a robust anti-immigrant media ecosystem, provided constant sources of fuel that the Brexit Government drew on to invigorate and legitimise support for its extremely unwelcoming immigration approach. Yet, the exploitation of these conditions was not unique to the Brexit Government. The Brexit Government's co-opting of these conditions was a more overt, aggressive version of images and tactics that previous UK governments, particularly the Cameron Government, had used to deter and restrict immigrants.

The example in Chapter 5 of the UK Government's employment of chauvinistic welfare policies towards immigrants provided a concrete illustration of this. Welfare chauvinism centres on a perpetually manufactured yet fluid idea that portions of the population are 'deserving' of access to entitlements from the welfare state while others are not. It is a fixture of the UK's immigration system, having been expanded under both Conservative and Labour governments. They have argued that such policies are necessary to protect the welfare state and to deter 'unwanted' immigrants, a category which has continually grown since the introduction of UK immigration controls (D'Angelo, 2023). The UK Government has utilised the four pre-existing domestic conditions noted above to frame and reinforce their arguments in support of restricting or preventing immigrants access to various forms of welfare entitlements. Thus, the steady source of fuel supplied by these underlying domestic conditions and the UK Government's consistent utilisation of it over the years, as exemplified in its welfare chauvinism towards immigrants, contributed to fostering an environment of extreme unwelcoming in the Brexit era.

The UK Government also used a combination of all three types of accelerants to propel unwelcoming. The tragic 7/7 bombings (an externally-generated accelerant), the snap general election of 2019 that resulted in a Conservative majority in

Parliament (a government-generated accelerant) and the Brexit referendum (a wildfire accelerant) all provided critical bursts that ultimately brought the UK immigration environment to a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming.

### **The US Case: A 'Fast Boil' of Rapid Transformation**

The US Government's 'fast boil' path to generating an immigration environment of extreme unwelcoming provides a glaring contrast to the 'slow boil' path pursued by the UK Government. This path is one of swift, comprehensive *transformation* and was detailed in Chapter 6.

The Trump Administration's immigration approach contained multiple components that facilitated this rapid, aggressive boil. These components can be differentiated as *qualities* or *mechanisms*. Qualities are the essential characteristics of this approach that enabled such a comprehensive remaking of US immigration. The mechanisms are the means by which the administration was able to enact change so expeditiously and widely during its relatively short four-year term. Both types of components were fundamental to the Trump Administration achieving saturated, extensive change.

Five qualities characterised the Trump Administration's immigration approach. The first was the severity of its rhetoric and policies regarding immigration and the impact that this wrought. The second quality was the saturating, pervasive scope of change that affected all aspects of US immigration and expanded 'everyday bordering' and 'deputisation' practices. The steep volume of changes constituted the third quality. This was accompanied by the fourth quality: the fast, unyielding pace with which the changes were instituted. The fluidity of change was the fifth quality of the Trump Administration's immigration approach. This final quality generated a perception among some that the US immigration system was in constant flux, complicating immigrant and practitioner efforts to understand and navigate it.

These five consequential qualities were animated by five pivotal mechanisms that facilitated quick and often unscrutinised implementation. The use of executive power to undermine and dismantle US immigration infrastructure served as the first mechanism. The Trump Administration successfully progressed its fast transfiguration of US immigration largely through utilising a variety of well-known and obscure executive tools. This proved especially effective in its dismantling of the US asylum system.

The second mechanism was the circumvention of legal and legislative norms and processes governing immigration. This mechanism allowed the administration to evade the Congressional and public oversight that was an integral part of conventional norms and processes. It also enabled them to install and maintain sympathetic leadership in agencies instrumental to carrying out its immigration agenda such as US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Additionally, the administration harnessed and expanded the authority of the US Attorney General to

intervene in the immigration courts and its appeals body (both of which are part of the US federal executive branch) in unprecedented ways that advanced its immigration prerogatives.

The politicisation of US democratic institutions and processes affecting immigration constituted the third mechanism. This mechanism undercut the neutrality and functioning of these institutions and processes. It was manifested through ideologically-driven political appointments who lacked merit-based qualifications; the diminished health and functioning of these institutions and processes due to improper transparency, oversight, and accountability; and the establishment of an institutional culture of intimidation, punishment, and purging in the Trump era for those unwilling to enact the administration's immigration aims.

The deployment and normalisation of explicit anti-immigrant rhetoric was the fourth mechanism of the Trump administration's immigration approach. This significantly transformed the immigration environment as well as public discourse on immigrants and immigration, as it revived and mainstreamed a nativist idea that immigration as a whole, not just illegal forms, threatened the US economy, national and individual security, and public health.

The vilification and hostile treatment of immigrant inclusion practitioners formed the fifth and final mechanism. The implications of this were explored in depth in Chapter 7 and will be revisited later.

These critical components enabled the US Government to fully turn up the dial of unwelcoming, hastening a forceful boil in the Trump era. The Trump Administration capitalised on four similar underlying domestic conditions as the Brexit Government: (1) structural racism, xenophobia, and classism; 2) an established nativist tradition; 3) pervasive national narratives about exceptionalism and the country's declining global power; and 4) a robust anti-immigrant media ecosystem to fuel support for its comprehensive alteration of immigration. In addition, it exploited three other pre-existing conditions present in the US (political polarisation and hyper-partisanship, Congressional legislative impotence, and the growth of executive power) to power the US to a boiling point.

The administration utilised two externally-generated accelerants in its quest to regressively remake US immigration. First, it took full advantage of a Republican-majority in the Senate to appoint a record number of US federal judges, which require Senate confirmation. The Trump Administration used the guaranteed confirmation of its judicial nominees to install a cohort of judges who were far more partisan and ideologically-driven, less experienced, and younger than those appointed under previous administrations.

The second powerful accelerant that it used for immediate, extensive impact was the COVID-19 pandemic. The Trump Administration exploited and widened emergency powers granted to the executive branch for managing the public health crisis to

execute its larger anti-immigration goals. Through this, it was able to successfully implement immigration measures that it had tried but previously failed to enact, such as effectively preventing those seeking asylum to apply for it from within the US (Schoenholtz et al, 2021, p. 84). The administration's pandemic management practices (or in some cases, the lack thereof), such as continuing to convene immigration courts in-person at the height of the pandemic, also posed health and safety risks to immigrants and practitioners that undermined their ability to navigate and/or challenge enacted immigration measures. This additionally allowed the Trump Administration to progress its larger anti-immigration agenda. These two potent accelerants not only substantially advanced unwelcoming and hastened a boil, but they also reshaped the US immigration system in ways that potentially will last for generations.

Like the UK Government, the Trump Administration also utilised immigration policy scaffolding. However, it did so far less and in a very different way than the UK Government. As discussed in Chapter 5 and in the previous section, immigration policy scaffolding allowed multiple UK governments to build upon preceding unwelcoming policies, culminating in a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming in the Brexit era. Each subsequent UK government largely relied upon the preservation of its predecessors' unwelcoming immigration approaches and enriched these with additional components. The Trump Administration, on the other hand, utilised policy precedents of prior administrations, but practiced what I have termed 'malicious innovation.' In malicious innovation, the administration invokes a policy precedent, tool, or concept used by preceding administrations, but conceptually and practically reinvents it to maximise its punitive capacity. The administration practiced malicious innovation in its use of a number of obscure executive tools and in its exploitation of the US Attorney General's authority to intervene in the immigration courts and to rewrite precedent.

Perhaps the most visible example of malicious innovation was the Trump Administration's 'Zero Tolerance Policy,' which, as touched on in Chapter 6, included the detention and separation of more than 5,000 children from their asylum-seeking parents or guardians with whom they had entered the US. The Obama Administration instituted a family detention policy in 2014 in the hopes that it would deter and stem the surge of Central American families and unaccompanied minors fleeing violence and seeking asylum.<sup>86</sup> However, in the Obama era, children were not separated from their parent or guardian except for in extraordinary circumstances where there was concern that the child was being trafficked (Timm, 2018). In these rare instances of separation, the family was reunified as soon as custody concerns were settled. The initial idea for separating families did arise during the Obama era when at a meeting of top border-enforcement officials, Tom Homan, then the director of enforcement and removal for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

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<sup>86</sup> While the full history of immigrant family detention and separation in the US is beyond the scope of this thesis, see Dickerson (2022) and Perez (2020) for a more complete account.

suggested that immigrant parents be prosecuted and separated from their children (Dickerson, 2022). This proposal was immediately rejected by the Obama Administration, but resurfaced at the beginning of the Trump presidency as the administration sought to toughen the government's response at the southern border. It was incorporated into the administration's family detention procedures, which the Trump Administration falsely insisted was an extension of Obama-era policy (Timm, 2018).

Thus, in spite of the short time in which these changes occurred on its 'fast boil' path to extreme unwelcoming, the vast scale, institutionalisation, and politicised nature of these changes ensure that many will endure far beyond the Trump era.

### **Different Paths but Common Approaches**

This study also illuminated that, despite the different paths taken, the immigration approaches used by the UK and US national governments in the Brexit and Trump eras share seven common features. These were listed at the end of Chapter 6 and are expounded upon in greater detail below:

#### **1. The National Government's Sustained Use of Explicit Anti-immigration and Dehumanising Anti-immigrant Rhetoric**

As examined in Chapters 2, 5, and 6, both the Brexit and Trump Governments continually used explicit anti-immigration and dehumanising anti-immigrant rhetoric to desensitise political officials and the public to their proposed and enacted immigration measures and to legitimise the need for such harshness. This feature served two important political functions. First, it secured on-going support from far-right and immigration-sceptic voters. These voters increasingly constituted a greater share of both the UK Conservative Party's and the US Republican Party's bases (Evans et al, 2023; Tanfani et al, 2018). Second, the consistent focus on the deleterious effects of immigration and the government's 'tough' response to it allowed both governments to deflect criticism about other issues that would make them more politically vulnerable (e.g. social and economic inequalities) by reassigning the blame to immigrants and immigration.

#### **2. The Comprehensive Embedding of Immigrant-restricting and Excluding Policies across Sectors that Extend the Practices of 'Everyday Bordering' and 'Deputisation'**

Chapter 4 noted how the cross-sector extension of 'everyday bordering' (Menjívar, 2014; Slaven, 2021; Yuval-Davis et al, 2018) and 'deputisation' (Griffiths & Yeo, 2021; Walsh, 2014) practices resulted in a comprehensive embedding of immigrant-restricting and immigrant-excluding policies. This served as the bedrock of the UK Government's 'hostile environment' policy pioneered in the Cameron era. Chapter 5 discussed how this feature was then further deepened and expanded as a core component of its immigration

approach in the Brexit era. Chapter 6 showed how this feature also was significant for the Trump Administration's ability to carry out its unprecedented transformation of US immigration and how it attempted to punish 'sanctuary' states and municipalities that resisted this. Both the UK and US Governments used this feature to erect barriers for immigrants that they hoped would act as a deterrent (though there is no evidence that it achieved this). This feature also provided additional capacity for the national government to carry out its immigration approach by effectually outsourcing some surveillance and enforcement responsibilities to private citizens and non-governmental institutions such as universities, banks, hospitals, and private landlords (Grierson, 2018).

### **3. The Thwarting and Erosion of Democratic and Procedural Norms and Processes Related to Immigration**

The Brexit and Trump Governments thwarted and eroded immigration-related democratic and procedural norms and processes to circumvent or reduce the transparency, scrutiny, and accountability of their proposed and enacted immigration measures. This feature served as a primary mechanism of the Trump Administration's immigration approach as elucidated in Chapter 6. This was made possible in part because many of the safeguards that would have impeded such action by the executive branch had been weakened prior to or during the Trump Administration. Growing hyper-partisanship and Congressional impotence prevented the legislative branch from carrying out many of its oversight and legislative responsibilities. At the same time, the willingness of the judiciary to intervene on such matters increasingly diminished as the Trump Administration politicised the federal judiciary with its judicial appointments. Both of these factors contributed to the Trump Administration's effective use of this feature. Unlike the US, the UK had hardy democratic guardrails (e.g. scrutiny and legislating by Parliament, rulings by the judiciary, and statutory mechanisms for gathering and integrating public and civil society feedback). These limited the efficacy of the Brexit Government's employment of this feature. Nonetheless, this feature could be seen in the Brexit Government's immigration approach. Two notable examples of this are: 1) Boris Johnson's prorogation of Parliament in September 2019, which was viewed by many as being undertaken so as to avoid scrutiny of the government's Brexit deal and eventually was ruled unlawful (BBC News, 2019), and 2) the documented politicisation of the Home Office's internal culture that led it to disregard its own guidelines and policies as well as domestic and international laws that impeded its hostile environment policy (Home Affairs Committee, 2019; Taylor & Gentleman, 2022; Williams, 2020).

**4. A Significant Reduction of the Immigration System's Capacity Coupled with an Increase in the Administrative Hurdles for Those Navigating It**  
Chapters 5, 6, and 7 illustrated how both the Brexit and Trump Governments substantially reduced the capacity of their country's immigration systems while at the same time erecting more administrative hurdles to frustrate and deter immigration. Diminished staffing, programme closures, funding reductions and reallocations, and increased paperwork and documentation requirements were examples of this feature that both governments employed. As UK and US participant comments showed and the literature affirms (e.g. Bolter et al, 2022; Moynihan et al, 2022; York, 2018), this feature intentionally and indiscriminately made immigration more difficult, costly, time and labour-intensive, and confusing for both immigrants and the practitioners who assisted them.

**5. The Employment of Harsh, Traumatic Treatment of Immigrants by the National Government**

The UK and US Governments' employment of harsh, traumatic treatment of immigrants was a feature that both governments argued was necessary to segment, punish, and deter 'undesirable' immigrants (i.e. those with irregular status or 'falsely' seeking asylum). Participant comments presented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 add to a large body of research showing that severe treatment of immigrants and the resulting trauma from this was widespread during the Brexit and Trump eras (e.g. American Immigration Council, 2024c; Danaher et al, 2022; Home Affairs Committee, 2019; ILRC & USF, 2020). In both the UK and the US during these time periods, this feature was repeatedly spotlighted and criticised by immigrant inclusion practitioners, civil society, journalists, and politicians (ACLU, 2018; Alcindor et al, 2018; Bulman, 2018; Fertig, 2017; Singh, 2020; Taylor, 2018, section 3). Research also shows that both governments continued with such policies and practices even after being presented with clear evidence that they were problematic and causing significant trauma (Office of the Inspector General, 2021a; Gentleman, 2020; Trilling, 2021).

**6. Tacit and Overt Sanctioning of External Anti-immigrant, Xenophobic, and Far-right Actors and Groups**

Both survey cohorts contained comments describing the national government's tacit and overt sanctioning of anti-immigrant, xenophobic, and far-right actors and groups. This feature amplified a sense of unwelcoming and also courted support from those on the right and far-right, which each government needed to retain power. In the UK survey, participant comments indicated that the government did so in a tacit way. Its failure to explicitly counter rising anti-immigrant sentiment and far-right activity while also forgoing efforts to foster greater community cohesion and welcoming were cited by respondents as tantamount to endorsing them (Chapter 5). This

concern was repeatedly voiced to the government during the Brexit era and its failure to overtly address this can be seen as having contributed to the wave of anti-immigrant riots that occurred in England and Northern Ireland in July and August 2024 (Boffey, 2024). In contrast, US survey participants saw the Trump Administration overtly embracing and normalising far-right, anti-immigrant, and white supremacist groups (Chapter 6). The administration and these groups, many of whom are active in the US anti-immigrant, politically-conservative media ecosystem, formed a feedback loop, amplifying shared anti-immigrant and racist sentiments that then reverberated into the wider society (Levine, 2020). The Trump Administration and its 2020 presidential campaign also increasingly imported militarised, far-right language and imagery from these groups to frame and recruit public support (Cohen, 2020). For example, the 2020 Trump presidential campaign website was called Army for Trump. These actions by the Trump Administration and those closely connected to it contributed to the widespread mainstreaming of racist, anti-immigrant discourse and intimidation tactics in US public spaces previously unseen in the post-World War II era. In some instances, these groups acted as paramilitary units in local communities with the approval or at least indifference of government law enforcement (Felbab-Brown & Norio, 2021). This frequently occurred with militias who police the US southern border. In the case of the January 6 insurrection, assorted far-right and white supremacist groups such as the Oath Keepers, the Three-Percenter, and the Proud Boys, all of which had relationships with various figures within the Trump Administration, coalesced at a national level in an attempted coup (Sprunt, 2022).

## **7. The Targeting and Vilification of Immigrant Inclusion Practitioners**

UK and US participant comments included in Chapters 5, 6, & 7 provide vivid evidence of the targeting and vilification of immigrant inclusion practitioners by the Brexit and Trump Governments. These participant claims have been further substantiated by investigative journalists, practitioner organisations, and researchers (e.g. Carasik, 2019; ILPA, 2023; Lind, 2021; Mason, 2023; NYU Immigrant Rights Clinic & the New Sanctuary Coalition, 2000; Townsend, 2000). Employing this feature sought to discredit those seeking to help immigrants and offered yet another way by which these national governments could reduce, deter, and silence opposition to their immigration approaches. This feature proved especially consequential for the immigrant inclusion field as shown in Chapter 7. It will be briefly revisited in the next section.

### **Impacts on the Immigrant Inclusion Field**

Research Question 3 queried the impact of the national government's immigration approaches on the immigrant inclusion field: 'How did immigrant inclusion

practitioners working in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras perceive the national government's immigration approach impacting their immigrant inclusion work?'. Addressing this question is one of the original contributions of this thesis. While there is a growing body of literature studying the effects of the UK and US Governments' immigration approaches on immigrants in the Brexit and Trump eras (e.g. Achiume, 2018; Offidani-Bertrand, 2023; Rojas Perez et al, 2023; Weller et al, 2019; York, 2018), scant attention has been paid to the effects that these approaches have had on the immigrant inclusion field. As illustrated in this and many other studies (e.g. Gonzalez Benson, 2020b; Guo, 2014; Mayblin & James, 2019b; Martinez-Damia et al, 2023), immigrant inclusion practitioners provide vital services and support to immigrants as they navigate the immigration system and settle into a country and community. They also offer important support to the larger community in which immigrants are settling through relationship-building, community development, and policy-setting. Therefore, understanding the impact on practitioners of operating in an extremely unwelcoming immigration environment is imperative. This study adds to this limited but important research (e.g. Canning, 2021; Harris & Mellinger, 2021; Mayblin, 2019a, 2019b; Yu, 2023).

The immigration approaches of the Brexit and Trump Governments and the extremely unwelcoming immigration environment that they achieved substantially impacted the field in immediate and long-term ways. Chapter 7 began by establishing that for an overwhelming majority of survey respondents in both countries the immigration approach of the national government does in fact impact their inclusion efforts. 100% of the UK respondents and 99% of the US respondents who answered this survey question indicated that the national government's approach impacted their overall inclusion efforts. Similarly, high percentages of respondents in each data set also saw the national government's approach as impactful on three critical areas of inclusion work: messaging (94% of UK respondents and 91% of US respondents), funding/resourcing (93% of UK respondents and 93% of US respondents), and daily operations (100% of UK respondents and 97% of US respondents).

The widespread and pronounced impact of the national government's approach on immigrant inclusion efforts in both surveys regardless of their geographic location, activity type(s), or the level(s) of society in which they worked is notable. Even survey participants who worked in areas where subnational governments actively operated to counter the national government's unwelcoming immigration approach (e.g. Scotland in the UK or the US state of New Jersey) still perceived the national government as significantly affecting their efforts. These findings support research by Emilsson (2015) and Coker (2018) that identify a 'national turn' in local governance of immigration whereby national governments are asserting greater control and influence at subnational levels, complicating efforts at these levels to formulate their own integration policies. This will be further considered in the next section.

This study also identified three conditions induced by the Brexit and Trump Governments' immigration approaches that appreciably impacted the field's capacity and practitioners' health, well-being, and safety: 1) increased need and demand for immigrant inclusion programmes and services, 2) significant reductions by the national government to public funding and state capacity for immigrant inclusion work, and 3) more extreme reactions by politicians and the public towards the immigrant inclusion field and its work. These were discussed in detail in Chapter 7 and are recapped below along with their impacts on the field.

### ***Condition #1: Increased Need and Demand for Immigrant Inclusion Programmes and Services***

Elevated need and demand generated by the UK and US national governments' approaches came from two sources: 1) immigrants and 2) members of the broader community seeking to engage with immigrants and support inclusion efforts. In both countries, opposition to the national government's immigration approach motivated some of those in the latter group to act. This included subnational public officials, government workers, and law enforcement.

Ballooning demand presented a number of challenges to the field. The scale and scope of this growing demand often outpaced collective and individual practitioner capacity. Practitioners struggled to accommodate the high volume of requests resulting in overwhelming workloads and adverse effects to practitioner's mental and physical health. The ever-changing and obscure nature of the Brexit and Trump Governments' immigration approaches further taxed the field's capacity as this dynamic often made inclusion work more time and labour intensive. In the US, the Trump Administration's approach engendered a greater sense of fear and a reduction in trust for many of the immigrants with whom practitioners worked. This created an additional layer of time and emotional labour for some practitioners as they sought to address these concerns.

The increased need and demand also offered opportunities for some in the field to grow their work. Growth came in two basic forms: 1) greater levels of funding and volunteerism and 2) new and/or deepened collaborations with other practitioners in the field and with external allies (e.g. subnational public officials and government workers, civil society groups, higher education institutions and schools, health care providers, businesses, and religious communities). Several participants also described operational and programmatic adaptations, such as adding know-your-rights trainings, made by their inclusion efforts to manage this increased demand in an extremely unwelcoming environment.

Notably, the surge in demand for programmes and services experienced by UK and US practitioners mirrors the larger paths that each country took to reaching immigration environments of extreme unwelcoming. In the UK, this 'slow boil' effect manifests as a steady but heavy increase in demand over the course of multiple

governments with the full effects of these deteriorating circumstances being felt in the field during the Brexit era. In the US, although a healthy demand for immigrant inclusion work existed prior to the Trump era, the massive, swift changes enacted by the Trump Administration clearly engendered a sharp spike in demand that overwhelmed the field's capacity, reflecting the 'fast boil' transformation of the immigration environment.

***Condition #2: Significant Reductions by the National Government to Public Funding and State Capacity for Immigrant Inclusion Work***

Hefty cuts to funding and vital immigration infrastructure by the UK and US Governments exacted additional pressure and injury on the field. In the UK, austerity and the hostile environment policies enacted during the Cameron era and expanded during the Brexit era exacerbated this condition. In the US, the Trump Administration used steep cuts and the reallocation of funds not only as a means to significantly reduce immigration inclusion activity (which it did), but also to punish 'sanctuary' states and municipalities that refused to comply with its immigration agenda. In addition, the Trump Administration's drastic dismantling of US refugee resettlement infrastructure adversely affected the US field in seismic ways. The ensuing losses of jobs, programmes and spaces for developing community and interpersonal relationships, professional and community expertise, and institutional and occupational systems of knowledge were profound and produced long-lasting, knock-on effects for the field in terms of professional recruitment, training, and development and in conducting research.

In both countries, this reduction of funding and state infrastructure further entrenched the immigrant-inclusion third sector's functioning as a 'shadow welfare state,' an expanding role undertaken since the 1980s to compensate for neoliberal policies that shrink and privatise the welfare state. The fact that providing direct services was the most undertaken activity type in both surveys underscores this (Chapter 3). This finding contributes to a steady body of literature showcasing the shadow state role of immigrant inclusion organisations (e.g. Gonzalez Benson, 2022; Gonzalez Benson, 2020a; Gonzalez Benson, 2020b; Mayblin & James, 2019b; Piacentini, 2015).

This condition also fostered greater financial dependency within the field on non-governmental funders, subnational government funding, and revenue-generating tactics. Participants' comments in both surveys indicated that this increasing financial reliance on the private sector and philanthropy added to already overstretched workloads and brought a greater sense of uncertainty and instability to the field. These findings correspond with research showing a pattern of 'dwindling' and 'precarious' funding among refugee-serving third-sector organisations in the UK (Mayblin & James, 2019b, p. 379). They also are in line with US-focused research showing that philanthropic support for immigrant inclusion remains 'limited and

unstable' in spite of bursts of 'rage philanthropy'<sup>87</sup> (Uchida, 2023). Even among practitioners whose inclusion efforts experienced an increase in funding, many expressed uncertainty about the sustainability of this growth and it was beyond this study's scope to determine this longevity.

In both surveys, examples could be found of subnational governments supplementing some of these reductions. However, this was highly-contextual and does not ameliorate funding uncertainty as this support was contingent on the continued electability, political will, budgets, and term limits of sympathetic subnational officials and governments. Once again, this illustrates the bounds of subnational intervention to counter the national government's inhospitable immigration approach.

In sum, this condition posed more challenges than enhancements to the field's capacity. It did afford opportunities for some practitioners to engage private and subnational public funders and, in a few US cases, produced funding adaptations that increased capacity. As a whole though, it placed additional strain on the field in terms of increased workloads to offset these deficits, the required organisational capacity needed to fundraise, and an exacerbated sense of financial uncertainty and instability due to the volatile and shifting funding environment in both countries.

### ***Condition #3: More Extreme Reactions by Politicians and the Public towards the Immigrant Inclusion Field and Its Work***

For a majority of UK and US respondents, the national government's consistently negative portrayals of immigration and immigrants and the extreme reactions that they engendered among politicians and some sections of the public complicated their work and compromised the health, well-being, and, for some in the US, safety of practitioners. The Brexit Government's immigration approach caused noticeable stress and anxiety for some UK practitioners. The Trump Administration's combative approach produced extensive and wide-ranging adverse effects on many US participants' mental and physical health and well-being. For some, this compromised their ability to perform their work or reduced the efficacy of those efforts. A number of US practitioners also discussed safety concerns (e.g. harassment, mass shootings) and experiencing threats of or actual physical harm (e.g. a car window being shot out, being the target of a hate crime, experiencing aggressive behaviour and property destruction from US border patrol agents) as a result of this condition. This further undermined practitioner health and well-being as well as their ability to carry out their work. It also induced a number of adaptations within the field to protect against these threats including removing identifiable signage from buildings, updating organisation safety plans, and staffing a participant's office with armed guards. These findings showing adverse impacts on the field are consistent with the

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<sup>87</sup> 'Rage philanthropy,' a phenomenon in private-sector giving that emerged over the past decade, is where donations rise significantly in a time of perceived crisis, but then fade when the crisis is no longer seen to be urgent or 'front-page news' (Uchida, 2023).

research of Canning (2021) and Harris & Mellinger (2021), which captured the degrading effects on practitioner health, well-being, and professionalism for those operating in environments of extreme unwelcoming.

The explicit targeting and vilification of practitioners by both the Brexit and Trump Governments (implemented in an especially aggressive manner by the Trump Administration) further exacerbated these extreme reactions and adversely impacted the field. Comments in both surveys spoke of the particular targeting of immigration attorneys. Several US participants who identified as immigration attorneys or as providing legal services to immigrants shared their first-hand accounts of this. However, in the US survey, practitioners engaged in other forms of immigrant inclusion activities also reported feeling targeted and vulnerable to government surveillance, harassment, and retaliation. Additionally, multiple US respondents commented on how the Trump Administration intentionally tried to harm practitioners and immigrants by weaponizing the extraordinary powers afforded to it for managing the COVID-19 pandemic (Chapters 6 and 7). Participants linked these actions by the national government with deteriorating practitioner health and well-being and with increased levels of anxiety, trauma, burnout, turnover, and attrition. This study contributes to the documentation of the vilification and targeting of immigration attorneys and other practitioners in the Brexit and Trump eras and its corrosive effects on the field (e.g. Carasik, 2019; Harris & Mellinger, 2021; ILPA, 2023; NYU Immigrant Rights Clinic and the New Sanctuary Coalition; Poggio, 2022).

Hardened attitudes, greater opposition towards immigrants and immigration, and a proliferation of misinformation among parts of the public resulting from the national government's approach also took a toll on the field. These dynamics increased workloads, strained relationships, and reduced morale.

As with the other two conditions engendered by the Brexit and Trump Governments' approaches, this condition offered some practitioners opportunities for increasing the capacity of their inclusion efforts. These came in the forms of greater levels of media attention, funding, volunteerism, activism, and organisational collaborations prompted by extreme pro-immigration reactions. However, these opportunities were often highly contextual and this study did not capture the length or sustainability of these additional forms of support.

The other noteworthy finding from this condition was that the more polarised and extreme reactions by subnational politicians and local publics seem to have heavily influenced how subnational governments responded to the national government's approach. This localised response either *amplified* or *muffled* effects of the national government's immigration approach on the field. Participant responses suggested that amplification occurred in local areas dominated by anti-immigration politicians and publics whereas a muffling effect could be found in localised spaces where pro-immigration politicians and publics were the majority. In the case of the latter, the supportive subnational governments were dominated or led by politicians of

opposition parties such as the Scottish National Party in Scotland, the Labour Party in England, or the Democratic Party in the US. The various forms of subnational support, which included messaging, organisational collaborations, funding or some combination of these, boosted the morale and capacity of immigrant inclusion practitioners. This offers more evidence of the complex, multi-level nature of immigration politics (e.g. Scholten, 2016; Scholten, 2014; Scholten & Penninx, 2016) and the substantial role that subnational governments can play in impacting the inclusion field (e.g. Khan-Welsh et al, 2022; LaCroix & Spencer, 2022; McDaniel et al, 2019).

Thus, for many UK and US practitioners, the production of more extreme reactions among politicians and the public as an outgrowth of both national governments' approaches further complicated inclusion efforts and compounded the adverse health and capacity effects on the field. High rates of illness, turnover, attrition, and burnout impede the ability of the field to conduct its crucial work and make recruitment, retention, and professional development more difficult. This presented both immediate and longer-term challenges to the vitality of the field.

### **Contributions, Limitations, and Future Research**

This study generated a number of original contributions, some of which have been highlighted in earlier parts of this chapter. These include several novel concepts and frameworks.

First, this research synthesised relevant literature from assorted fields (e.g. migration studies, political science, media and discourse studies, public policy, social policy, sociology, etc.) and insights from my professional knowledge to generate a novel model for understanding different paths that national governments can take to bring their countries' immigration environments to a 'boiling point' of extreme unwelcoming. Presented as a theoretical metaphor of bringing a pot to boil on a stovetop, this analytic heuristic illuminated two distinct paths: the 'slow boil' graduated intensification path taken by the UK and the 'fast boil' rapid transformation path of the US. Future lines of research may employ this metaphor to interrogate how other national governments achieve a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming. Other paths to generating extreme unwelcoming may be uncovered in the process.

Second, it introduced two theoretical concepts related to how national governments generate immigration environments of extreme unwelcoming: immigration policy scaffolding and malicious innovation. This research found immigration policy scaffolding to have been instrumental in the 'slow boil' path taken by the UK Government to achieving extreme unwelcoming. Though the Trump Administration utilised precedents and policies of previous administrations in its 'fast boil' path, it practiced malicious innovation to radically transform these precedents, executive tools, and policies into (more) punitive measures. Prospective research may

investigate the employment of these concepts in the architecture and enactment of other national government's immigration approaches.

Third, this study generated assessments and profiles of the Brexit and Trump Government's immigration approaches based on perspectives from an understudied source: immigrant inclusion practitioners. Their varied vantage points from the front lines of everyday life uniquely position them to observe and interpret the national government's immigration approach and its impact. Yet, as far as I am aware, this is the first study to utilise a cross-section of practitioners for such a purpose and to consider the impact of the national government's immigration approach on such a diverse array of practitioners. The development of profiles for each government's immigration approach, based on participant insights and supported by relevant literature, also allowed for a comparative examination of the UK and US national government's immigration approaches in the Brexit and Trump eras. This is an area of emerging research (e.g. Joppke (2020)) still in its infancy and the study contributes to it.

The distinction between key components of each government's immigration approach, is another notable contribution of this thesis. The finding of the weaponization of inaction as a key component of the Brexit Government's immigration approach adds to literature showing the UK Government's use of ignorance and inaction as a strategy for deterring immigration (e.g. Boswell & Badenhop, 2021; York, 2022). It also is consistent with literature chronicling how racialised, anti-immigrant policies and culture have been entrenched through 'slow violence and neglect' (see Mayblin and James, 2019a p. 132).

It identified from these profiles seven common features of the UK and US Governments' extremely unwelcoming immigration approaches. Future research may investigate if these common features are present in the immigration approaches of other national governments with anti-immigration platforms. Thus, this study not only consulted an under-researched and highly-knowledgeable population to better understand extremely unwelcoming immigration regimes and environments, but it also provided groundwork to enable greater cross-country comparative examination.

Fourth, this research contributed to the mapping of the immigrant inclusion field operating in the UK and the US during the Brexit and Trump eras. As noted in Chapters 2 and 3, the field of immigrant inclusion practitioners is not a censused or tallied one. It also is a highly under-researched one in spite of the critical and varied roles that practitioners and their organisations, whether or formal or informal, play in welcoming and including immigrants and in fostering vital, connected communities through these efforts. This dearth of mapping significantly hinders the health and the development of the field as discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. While the mapping that emerged from this research is limited to those who participated, it generated a more holistic accounting and understanding of the field in the UK and the US on which future research can build. Future examinations of practitioners and their

organisational efforts in other country contexts would allow for a more robust comprehension of commonalities and distinctions within the global immigrant inclusion field.

Relatedly, this research developed and presented a comprehensive typology for mapping immigrant inclusion activity, another original contribution that also enhances the understanding of this field. As noted in Chapter 3, much of the literature interrogating immigrant inclusion work centres on a particular vein of activity such as advocacy (e.g. Apolonia Calderon et al, 2021; Roth et al, 2018) or direct service provision (e.g. Browne et al, 2016; Gonzalez Benson, 2020b). Typologies for considering these activities collectively are scarce. This study offers a wide-ranging typology that can be utilised in future research to map and compare activity in the field regardless of sector or scale.

This research also yielded several practical findings for those in the immigrant inclusion field and allies seeking to support them. It showed that the UK and the US Governments' immigration approaches had a decisive impact on immigrant inclusion efforts overall and in three critical areas: messaging, funding, and daily operations. While this finding is significant, it is limited. It was derived from quantitative rankings about the degree of the government's impact overall and in these three areas. Qualitative research, especially utilising interviewing and ethnography, could provide an enhanced understanding of the tangible ways by which the national government effects immigrant inclusion work broadly as well as in these three areas and may be a fruitful line of future research.

Additionally, this study added to a growing body of evidence (e.g. Canning, 2021; Harris & Mellinger, 2021; Mayblin & James, 2019a; Yu, 2023) that operating in immigration environments of extreme unwelcoming exacts a hefty toll on individual practitioners and on the field as a whole. It documented the deleterious effects of this environment for the health, well-being, morale, work performance, and, in some cases, the safety of practitioners. The adverse impact on practitioners undermines and threatens the functioning and vitality of the field. This study also spotlighted potential longer-term threats to the field that extremely unwelcoming immigration environments pose in terms of recruitment, retention, professional development and knowledge, fiscal solvency and stability, and carrying out research relevant for immigrants and the field. Unfortunately, immigration environments of extreme unwelcoming are on the rise, as are politicians and governments embracing increasingly restrictive and anti-immigration rhetoric and policies. Thus, it is imperative that those seeking to support the field recognise the social climate change that is occurring and allocate sufficient resources to identify and bolster various forms of individual and collective practitioner support (e.g. health and well-being care, professional development, safety planning and resourcing, peer-learning and networking, funding, etc.). Offering specific recommendations is outside the scope of this research, but could be an important contribution of future research.

Moreover, the findings from this study contribute to larger conversations within the literature about the complex, multi-level nature of immigration and immigration policy (e.g. Khan-Welsh et al, 2022; Rissler et al, 2020; Scholten, 2016; Scholten, 2014) and the power dynamics and practical impact of immigration politics (Coker, 2018; Dekker et al, 2015; Emilsson, 2015). This research involved immigrant inclusion efforts occurring at all levels of society as well as online and showcased examples of subnational governments' activity on immigration, a phenomenon heavily explored in the 'local turn' vein of immigration scholarship that has emerged over the past twenty years (e.g. Hooghe & Marks, 2001; Piattoni, 2010; Zapata-Barrero et al, 2017; see Muhammad, 2023, for a system literature review on this). However, this study also highlighted that these subnational government activities are highly-contextual and, in many cases, reactive to the national government's in/action on immigration. This finding adds to a growing body of literature spotlighting the tensions that can arise between discordant national immigration policy and local policy and practice (Kos et al, 2016; Pettrachin, 2024; Van der Leun, 2006).

Findings from this study suggest that both the UK and US Governments during the Brexit and Trump eras extended their immigration authority at subnational levels through direct (e.g. executive action, resource reallocation, funding cuts, etc.) and indirect (e.g. extending 'everyday bordering' and 'deputisation' practices) means. The Brexit and Trump Governments also used a combination of instrumental and symbolic politics and policymaking to promote their immigration agendas at subnational levels. In the context of immigration, much of the literature has identified distinct purposes for why governments use these two forms of politics and policymaking. Instrumental interventions are intended to steer the behaviour or impacts of a target population (e.g. those seeking asylum) whereas the primary aim of symbolic interventions is to signal to an audience (e.g. the public, voters, a political party's base) the government's commitment to particular values or goals rather than to affect the actions of the targeted population (Slaven & Boswell, 2019, p. 1479). Recent scholarship has questioned such a distinction, arguing that governments may deploy these in a combined and entangled manner (Schiller & Jonitz, 2023). The findings of this study support the challenging of this bifurcation. Both the Brexit and Trump Governments' immigration approaches used instrumental and symbolic measures in ways that comingled and reinforced the effects of each.

An example of this entanglement can be found in the UK Government's employment of immigrant detention, which combined instrumental and symbolic interventions for a heightened effect. As detailed in Chapter 5, the UK Government routinely houses immigrants who are being detained or those seeking asylum in sites that often are in isolated areas such as rural or offshore locations. Many of these sites also are either adjacent to military bases or prisons and a number of them are repurposed spaces that formerly housed offenders (Mainwaring & Silverman, 2017). Investigations also have shown harsh and substandard conditions in many of these accommodations (Doná et al, 2023; Findlay, 2020). This provides the UK Government with imagery

that they can broadcast to the public and to prospective and current immigrants of being tough on immigration (a symbolic device) while also delivering substantive effects in the harsh conditions that they enact on detained immigrants (an instrumental measure).

It is also a notable observation of this study that immigrant inclusion practitioners became frequent targets of the Brexit and Trump Governments rhetorical symbolic measures and that these interventions yielded tangible, traumatic effects on this population. Though there has been some scholarship that has noted the substantive impacts of symbolic measures, this is an area that deserves greater attention. Rhetorical symbolic interventions are becoming a common feature of governments espousing anti-immigrant platforms and there is an increasing tendency to vilify immigrant inclusion practitioners as part of these platforms.

The findings of this study add to assertions made by Emilsson (2015) and Coker (2018) of a 'national turn' in immigrant integration that compromises the ability of subnational governments to set and implement localised policy. As previously mentioned, over the last two decades much scholarship has examined the roles of subnational governments and actors in immigrant integration, indicating a 'local turn' in integration policies where subnational governments are important and at times decisive integration policy actors. Research by Emilsson (2015) challenged the pervasiveness of this idea by observing a national turn in local integration policy in Denmark and Sweden. The study found that the uneven power relationship between the national and local governments allowed both central governments to expand their control and influence at the local level, frustrating efforts by local governments to develop their own integration policies. Scholarship by Coker (2018) explored this further in a UK context where pivotal cutbacks carried out by the Cameron Government severely impeded the ability of local authorities to facilitate immigrant integration activities even though the UK Government had identified these activities as a remit of subnational governments (UK Communities and Local Government, 2012, p. 6). The findings of this thesis support and build on these pieces of scholarship, showing how the national governments in both the UK and the US utilised power differentials in direct and indirect ways and through instrumental and symbolic means to steer and stymie subnational immigration inclusion activity. This study also found that the extension and diffusion of immigration authority in multi-level and pedestrian ways (further) saturates and normalises extreme unwelcoming throughout a country, potentially increasing its longevity and endurance. Future research may seek to further interrogate this question of a national turn in immigrant integration efforts in both countries beyond the Brexit and Trump eras and in other countries.

Finally, the findings from this research also accentuate the growing prominence of the judicial branch on immigration policy and on inclusion efforts in both cases. In the Brexit and Trump eras, the UK and US judiciaries noticeably impacted the national government's ability to implement its immigration approaches. The judiciary barred

or limited many of the Brexit and Trump Governments' most severe measures, though this opposition lessened in the US as the Trump era proceeded and the administration increased its federal judicial appointments (Bolter et al, 2022, p. 7)). The growing import of the judiciary could also be seen in the way many US inclusion efforts operated during the Trump era. A number of US practitioners commented that their inclusion efforts were devoting more time and resources to engaging the judiciary as a primary means of countering the Trump Administration's harsh immigration agenda. These practitioner comments also spotlight the field's more frequent utilisation of litigation in the Trump era as a tool for advocacy, raising public awareness and activism, and building coalitions with other practitioners and allies. This finding of a 'judicial turn' in immigration policy and immigrant inclusion efforts warrants greater investigation in both the context of the UK and the US as well as in other countries. It is a topic ripe for future research as the literature on this is sparse (see Chishti & Bush-Joseph (2023) for some initial observations of this in a US context).

### **Concluding Reflections**

As touched on at the beginning of this chapter, immigration environments are crafted, not destined, and although it may take time and significant effort, they can be changed. That was my overriding takeaway from this study. This point that immigration environments are fashioned and not fixed seems to be an extremely timely and salient one, coming on the heels of violent, racist anti-immigrant riots in the UK and in the midst of the 2024 US presidential campaign that may usher in a second Trump presidency.

As this study shows and the boiling pot metaphor underscores, the ability to bring a country to a boiling point of extreme unwelcoming is influenced by many factors, but the national government plays a substantial and decisive role. Through its immigration approach, a national government is able to utilise underlying political, social, economic and historical conditions and co-opt or generate sudden or temporary events and dynamics to facilitate its vision for this environment.

Unfortunately, in both cases presented in this study, the immigration environments crafted were ones of extreme unwelcoming. The tolls that they inflicted on immigrants, practitioners, and the wider society were steep and enduring. However, just as the national government has the ability to generate immigration environments of extreme unwelcoming, it also has the ability to create welcoming immigration environments or, at least, to lower the degree of unwelcoming. This seems to have occurred in the US for a majority of the Biden era, during which the administration repealed many of the immigration changes instituted in the Trump era and rebuilt some of the decimated immigration infrastructure and capacity (Krogstad & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2022; Santana, 2024). In doing so, it shifted the US into more of a 'slow boil' since clearly some core elements of extreme unwelcoming remain and the US federal judiciary, now containing almost one-third of judges appointed by Trump,

has shown that it is increasingly likely to uphold many of the Trump-era changes and block efforts to undo them (Chishti & Bush-Joseph, 2023). As Consterdine (2020) notes, the institutional immigration legacy of administrations is hard to unmake. It remains to be seen how long this 'slow boil' will last. Arguably, the US is reverting back to a 'fast boil' path to extreme unwelcoming with immigration foregrounded as a primary issue of the 2024 presidential election cycle, an even more openly immigration-hostile Donald Trump as the Republican candidate (Garsd, 2024), and crescendoing subnational anti-immigration activism (Chishti & Gelatt, 2022).

Meanwhile, in the post-Brexit era, the UK Government under Conservative premierships appeared to have embraced a 'fast boil' path and an immigration approach that increasingly resembled the tenor and tactics of the US Government during the Trump era. This included the ratcheting up of explicit anti-immigration and dehumanising anti-immigrant rhetoric (Giuffrada & Savage, 2023), pursuing harsh immigration policies and legislation in spite of domestic and international outcries (Scottish Legal News, 2024; UN News, 2023), and amplifying its vilification of those opposing these efforts (ILPA, 2023). This switch to a 'fast boil' path to generate and maintain an even more ferocious sense of extreme unwelcoming was no doubt driven by the looming (and now fulfilled) prospect of the Conservatives losing their political dominance. So far, the new Labour Government has yet to chart a different course on immigration from its predecessor in spite of the violent mass attacks targeting immigrants, Muslims, and people of colour that broke out across England and Northern Ireland in July and August 2024.<sup>88</sup> Though it forcefully condemned the attacks and has begun arresting and prosecuting some of those involved, it still employs harsh, problematising rhetoric about immigration (Sparrow, 2024) and has been criticised for its unwillingness, to date, to probe and address the systemic causes that fuelled the anti-immigrant riots (Amnesty International, 2024; Boukari & Devakumar, 2024; Khan, 2024; Malik, 2024).

The world currently is witnessing a proliferation of national governments who oppose immigration and immigrant inclusion. Better understanding the immigration approaches of these governments and the paths that they have taken or are pursuing to generating extreme unwelcoming is the first step in countering them. This study aides in this. Hopefully, it will spark additional research and cross-sector conversations that further illuminate this and offer practical ways forward for building welcoming, inclusion, and equity.

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<sup>88</sup> The Starmer Government did immediately end the enacted-but-not-implemented UK Government scheme to deport immigrants who were seeking asylum to Rwanda. However, the Starmer Government has set illegal immigration as 'one of their key priorities' and has vowed to implement 'more effective' measures for tackling it (Francis, 2024), including the creation of a new border agency (Walsh, 2024) and an expansion of immigration detention.

# Appendix I: UK and US Versions of the Survey Including the Participant Information Sheet and Participant Consent Form

Below are pdf copies of both versions of the survey and the Participant Information Sheet.

Please note that the Participant Consent Form is embedded within pages 2-3 in each version of the survey.



PDF of full UK survey final version.pdf



PDF of full US survey final version.pdf



Participant information sheet.pdf

## Appendix II: Pretester Instructions

Below are pdfs of the instructions given to both UK and US survey pretesters. They are essentially the same except for the link to the survey for the respective country in which they are based and the requested subject line for their email providing feedback.



Instruction email to UK pre testers.pdf



Instruction email to US pre testers.pdf

## Appendix III: List of Listserves, Online Networks, and Organisations Contacted to Recruit Survey Participants

This is a listing of contacted listserves, networks, and organisations with members who are active with immigrant inclusion efforts. I invited their members to both participate in this research and to share the invitation with others in the field.

Please note that their listing does not indicate that anyone associated with them participated in this research.

<b>UK-based Listserves, Networks, and Organisations</b>	<b>US-based Listserves, Networks, and Organisations</b>
Lincoln Refugee Project	Nebraska Appleseed
City of Sanctuary UK	Heartland Workers Center
The Welcoming	Welcoming America
Welcoming Churches	No More Deaths
Scottish Refugee Council	Ajo Humanitarian Collective
Govan Community Project	Immigration Advocates Network
Places/City of Sanctuary Ireland	Immigrant Defenders Law Center
Migration Law Listserve	National Immigration Law Center
Forced Migration Listserve	United We Dream
Voluntary Sectors Listserve	Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES)
Refugee and Forced Migration Listserve	
Research and Practice in Migration and Asylum List	
Govan Community Project	
Central and West Integration Network- Glasgow	
South and East Integration Network- Glasgow	
Asylum Welcome	
Peterborough Asylum and Refugee Community Association (PARCA)	
Oxford University COMPAS	

## **Appendix IV: Ethical Protocol for This Research**

Below is the ethical protocol that I developed for this research:

### **Participant Rights and Informed Consent**

- Research participants will receive written information about participating in this study and then provide written consent to participate in order for their data to be used.
- The participant has the right at any point in time to withdraw from the study and their data will be purged.
- The participant can elect to receive a copy of the completed thesis.
- Participants will be informed that they can contact the principal researcher via a provided email at any time with questions, concerns, or feedback about this research. The principal researcher will acknowledge and strive to address any questions, concerns or feedback raised.

### **Secure Collecting, Management, and Storage of Data**

- Survey data will be collected and stored through secure online platform (Qualtrics) with only the principal researcher (Beth Katz) having access to the raw data.
- Data collection, processing, and storage used for this research will conform with the 2018 Data Protection Act (DPA) of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the University of Edinburgh's ethical guidelines, and the University of Edinburgh's Data Protection Handbook.
- Data generated into reports or distilled into other forms such as codebooks will be securely stored in the researcher's account through the University of Edinburgh's cloud platform. This data will not be shared with anyone beyond the principal researcher without written consent from research participants. Anyone who receives this data must adhere to the ethical protocol of this study in their handling and review of it.
- Any reproduction of data on external storage devices such as jump drives will be securely transported by the principal researcher and securely stored at their office and/or home.
- Any hard copies of data or notes about it by the researcher will be securely transported, reviewed, and stored in the principal researcher's office and/or home.

### **Participant Confidentiality**

- Participants' identities and the identities of the organisations and individuals with which they work on immigrant inclusion will be kept confidential. This means that any quotes or information used will not be directly attributable to the participant and/or their organisation. The principal researcher will anonymise data details that may compromise the confidentiality of participants in any other forms into which the data is distilled (e.g. survey codebooks and publications).

- If received, the principal researcher will consider and, when possible, will accommodate requests from participants for additional measures to ensure confidentiality.

#### **Transparency of research methods and output(s)**

- Participants will be informed that the data that they share will be used to produce a doctoral thesis and may also be used to generate additional outputs.
- Participants can elect to receive a copy of the completed thesis.

## Appendix V: UK Regions of Survey Participants and the Share of Their Population Who Are Immigrants

Below are the seven UK regions represented in the survey and the share of their population who are immigrants. This data is from The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford's analysis of the UK Office for National Statistics' Annual Population Survey 2023 (Cuibus, 2024). While these statistics provide sound and helpful contextual information, there are limitations to this data. To better understand these limitations, see the 'Understanding the evidence' section of the briefing.

**Table 4. UK Regions of Survey Participants and the Share of Their Population Who Are Immigrants**

UK Region	Share of Population Who Are Immigrants
East Midlands	14%
London	37%
Scotland	11%
South East	15%
South West	9%
West Midlands	16%
Yorkshire and the Humber	11%
UK Average	16%

Source: Cuibus, M.V. (2024). *Migrants in the UK: an overview*. The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford.

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