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# **CANADIAN IMMIGRATION POLICY AND THE RUSSO- UKRAINE WAR**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Millions of Ukrainians have been displaced since Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine earlier this year. Yet, Canada has only received a small number of Ukrainian refugees compared to other countries, despite citizens' overwhelming willingness to receive them. Canadian immigration policies are the issue and need to be revised to allow faster and easier access for Ukrainians.

While the federal government has launched a program to fast-track Ukrainian refugees, Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET), statistics show that it isn't enough. Under CUAET, visas and temporary residency permits are expedited for Ukrainians and their families. While the number of applications is increasing, the program's number of approvals is slowing.

That Canadian visa policies are the cause of the comparatively low number of Ukrainian arrivals is supported by empirical evidence from Ireland and the United Kingdom. Both countries are similar in ways that attract displaced Ukrainians, but only Ireland lifted its visa requirements in response to the war; the U.K. has maintained a Canada-like visa process. As a result, approximately 13 times the number of Ukrainian refugees per capita arrived in Ireland than in the U.K. during the first two months of the invasion. The visa requirements in Canada have, in a similar way, stymied the arrival of Ukrainian refugees.

There are several options that could be implemented to increase the flow of Ukrainian refugees to Canada. The first, visa-free travel, is already in place in Ireland and has proven very successful, allowing an additional estimated 23,000 arrivals above what might have been expected under pre-war Irish visa policies. The second is a visa-on-arrival system. Security checks are done at the port-of-entry and a visa can be issued onsite. The third option is a hybrid of CUAET and options 1 or 2 — allow visa-free travel or a visa-on-arrival program for Ukrainians with proper documentation while those without documentation go through CUAET. This will speed up the CUAET process since documented refugees will not be part of the list anymore.

National security concerns are one of the reasons for Canada's more strict immigration policies. However, research shows that foreign agents are less likely to infiltrate strong, stable countries through refugee streams. As well, refugees tend to be targets of espionage themselves and can be a valuable source of intelligence. Canada could invest more in counterespionage to help identify high-risk entries and mitigate the small risk of infiltration.

Approximately 80 per cent of Canadians are willing for this country to receive Ukrainian refugees. The chance of refugee-related espionage is minuscule while the impact of Canada's humanitarianism is huge. The federal government needs to consider this trade-off and amend immigration policies for Ukrainian war refugees.

## INTRODUCTION

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, an escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian war that has been ongoing since 2014. More than 8.4 million border crossings from Ukraine have occurred as of June 28, and 5.4 million Ukrainian refugees have been recorded across Europe (UNHCR 2022). The majority of these are in states that neighbour Ukraine, with 1.2 million recorded in Poland alone. Canada is home to the third-largest population of self-identified ethnic Ukrainians, but the number arriving here since the invasion is unclear. The federal government has provided figures that suggest 40,000 Ukrainians have arrived in relation to the war, but the reporting structure obscures the real number (IRCC 2022).

In this paper, we estimate Ukrainian war arrivals to Canada. We analyze data from Statistics Canada that suggest approximately 1,900 non-resident Ukrainians arrived between February 24 and March 31, 2022. We find that 1,400 of these arrivals may be directly attributed to the conflict, while the rest comprise other reasons for travel. More Ukrainians have arrived since the federal government launched an expedited visa program, but lag arrivals in other countries with similar characteristics on an absolute and per capita basis. The small number of arrivals early in the invasion and the current lag suggest a barrier between the needs of displaced Ukrainians and the 80 per cent of Canadians willing to receive them (Angus Reid Institute 2022). What explains this mismatch between public good will and low arrivals? The answer is federal visa policy.

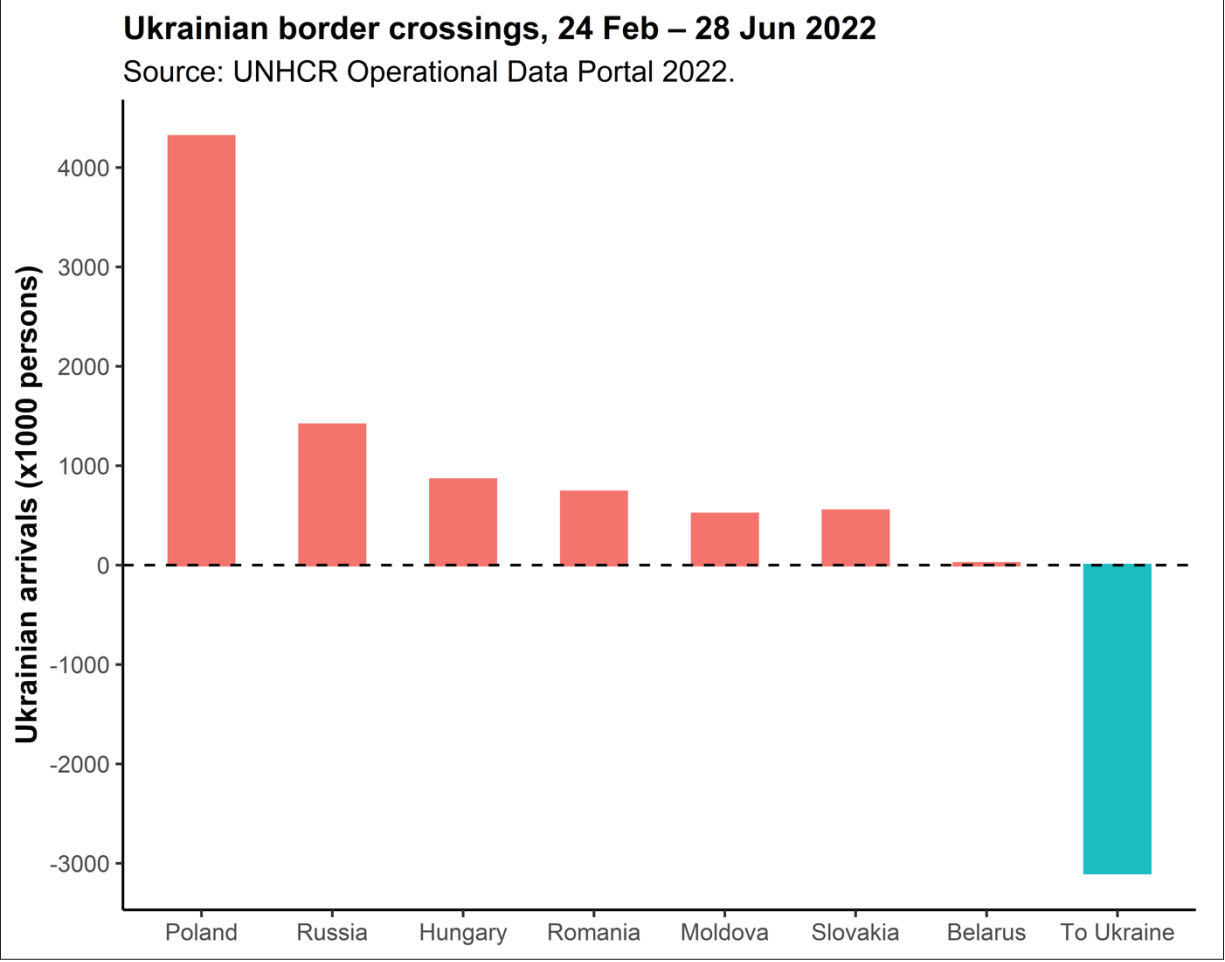
We provide evidence from the U.K. and Ireland that suggests visa restrictions have significantly hampered the protection of displaced Ukrainians. Before the invasion, Ukrainians required visas to enter either country, but on February 25, the Irish government waived these restrictions and permitted Ukrainian citizens to enter Ireland using whatever documentation was available to them. Using a difference-in-differences approach, we find a large effect from this decision. During the first two months of the invasion, we estimate that Ukrainian arrivals were 12 times higher in Ireland than in the U.K. on a per capita basis, equal to an extra 7.7 Ukrainians per 100,000 Irish daily. We find the Irish visa waiver enabled 23,000 additional arrivals to Ireland than what might have occurred otherwise. As a result of this policy, there were 506 Ukrainian refugees in Ireland for every 100,000 Irish by April 25, compared to 40 Ukrainian refugees for an equal number of Britons in the U.K. The differential outcomes for the U.K. and Ireland based on policy identify the negative impact of visa restrictions on refugees and suggest that Canadian visa policy has had a similar impact.

The federal government has several options for better aligning the needs of displaced Ukrainians with public sentiment in Canada. We outline these options at the conclusion of this report. This includes an Irish-style visa waiver, a visa-on-arrival policy or limiting expedited visa programs to Ukrainian citizens without passports. We address concerns that looser visa policy will allow Russian agents to enter Canada and find that this risk is both small and manageable. The federal government should therefore take steps to ease the travel of Ukrainians to Canada and permit greater numbers to seek protection here.

# FLIGHT FROM UKRAINE

As of June 1, 2022, approximately 7.8 million Ukrainians have crossed from Ukraine, many to neighbouring countries. Figure 1 shows the influx of Ukrainians into these countries. It also shows the return of some citizens to Ukraine, which may be temporary rather than permanent returns. Poland has received the majority of these refugees at 51 per cent of all arrivals, or 4.3 million people, followed by Russia (17 per cent; 1.4 million), Hungary (10 per cent; 861,000), Romania (8.8 per cent; 736,000 arrivals), Slovakia (6.5 per cent; 584,000), Moldova (6.1 per cent; 515,000) and Belarus (0.2 per cent; 16,700). Russian figures are suspect, however, as reporting suggests the Russian government is deporting Ukrainian civilians from occupied areas in what may be described as ethnic cleansing (Schmitt 2022).

Figure 1: Ukrainian Border Crossings in Neighbouring States, February 24 - June 28, 2022



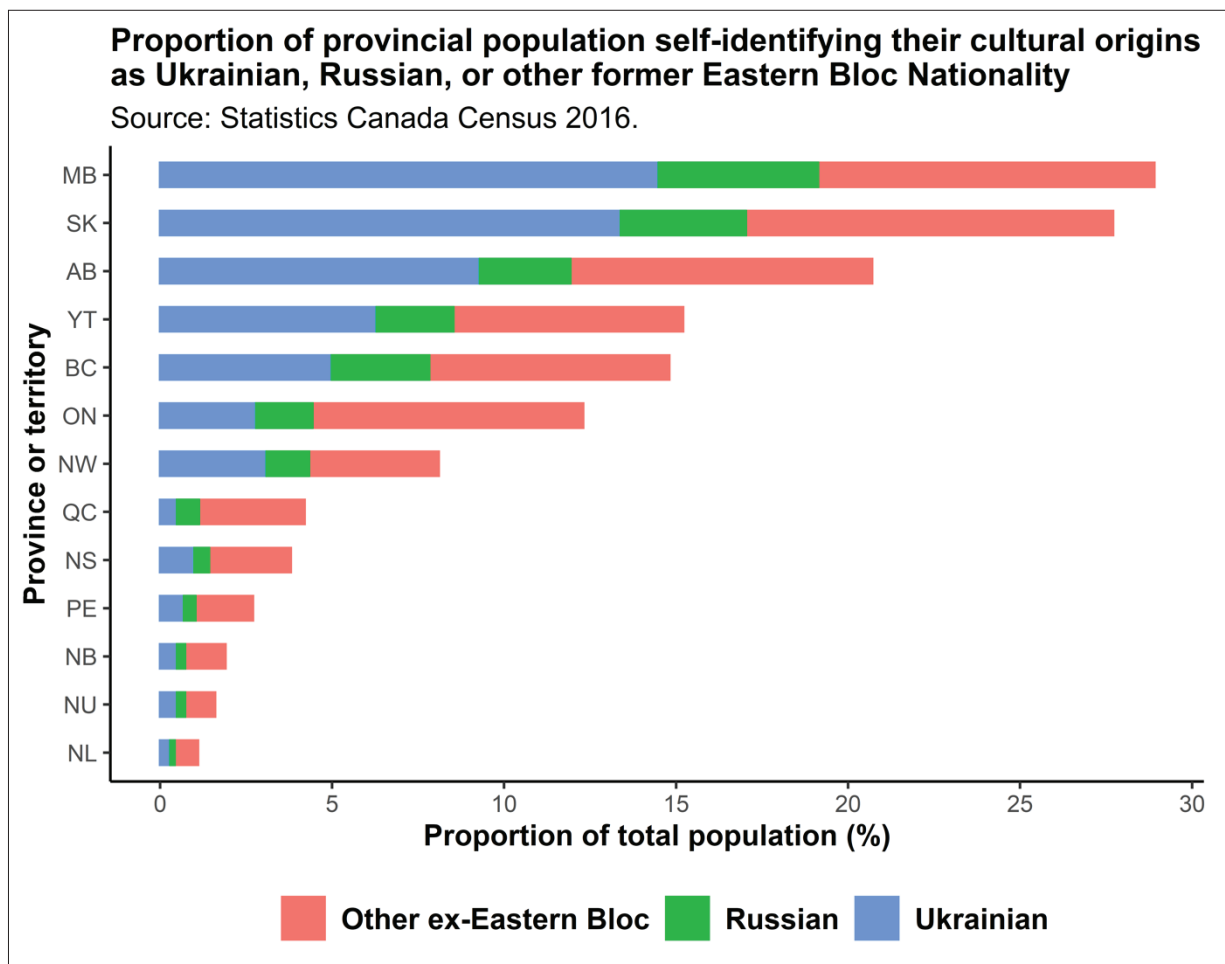
Other factors also mean that statistics on Ukrainian crossings may not represent the number of Ukrainians residing in the countries shown in Figure 1. The Schengen Area is one of these factors. It represents 22 EU member states, as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland (GAC 2022). There are no internal passport or border controls within the Schengen Area, meaning that Ukrainians crossing into Hungary, Poland, Slovakia or any other Schengen Area member state can then travel to other member states, such as Germany, France or Italy, among others. It does not include Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Romania, or notable for this paper, Ireland, all of which maintain their own visa policies and border controls. Indeed, as of June 1, there were 780,000 Ukrainians recorded in Germany, with the likely number being much higher (Murray and More 2022).

In response to the Russian invasion, the European Union voted on March 7, 2022 to grant temporary protection to Ukrainians and to those with refugee status or permanent residency in Ukraine at the time of the invasion (ECRE 2022). Temporary protection provides recipients with access to schools, health care, housing and employment for one year with the possibility of extension. It differs from refugee resettlement and asylum claim processes; beneficiaries do not have to meet all the criteria of the Refugee Convention, are not transferred to a third-party state and do not receive permanent residency or a pathway to citizenship.

## CANADIAN PUBLIC OPINION AND POLICY

Canada is home to the largest population of Ukrainians outside Ukraine itself and Russia. Approximately 1.4 million Canadians identify as Ukrainian, equal to four per cent of the total population (Statistics Canada 2017). Another 2.8 million Canadians identify their cultural or ethnic origins with former Eastern Bloc countries, such as Poland (1.1 million), Russia (622,000), Hungary (348,000) and Romania (238,000).<sup>1</sup> They are particularly present in the Prairie Provinces, accounting for almost one in four residents there (Statistics Canada 2017). Figure 2 provides the number of Canadians identifying with Ukrainian, Russian or other nationalities in the former Eastern Bloc.

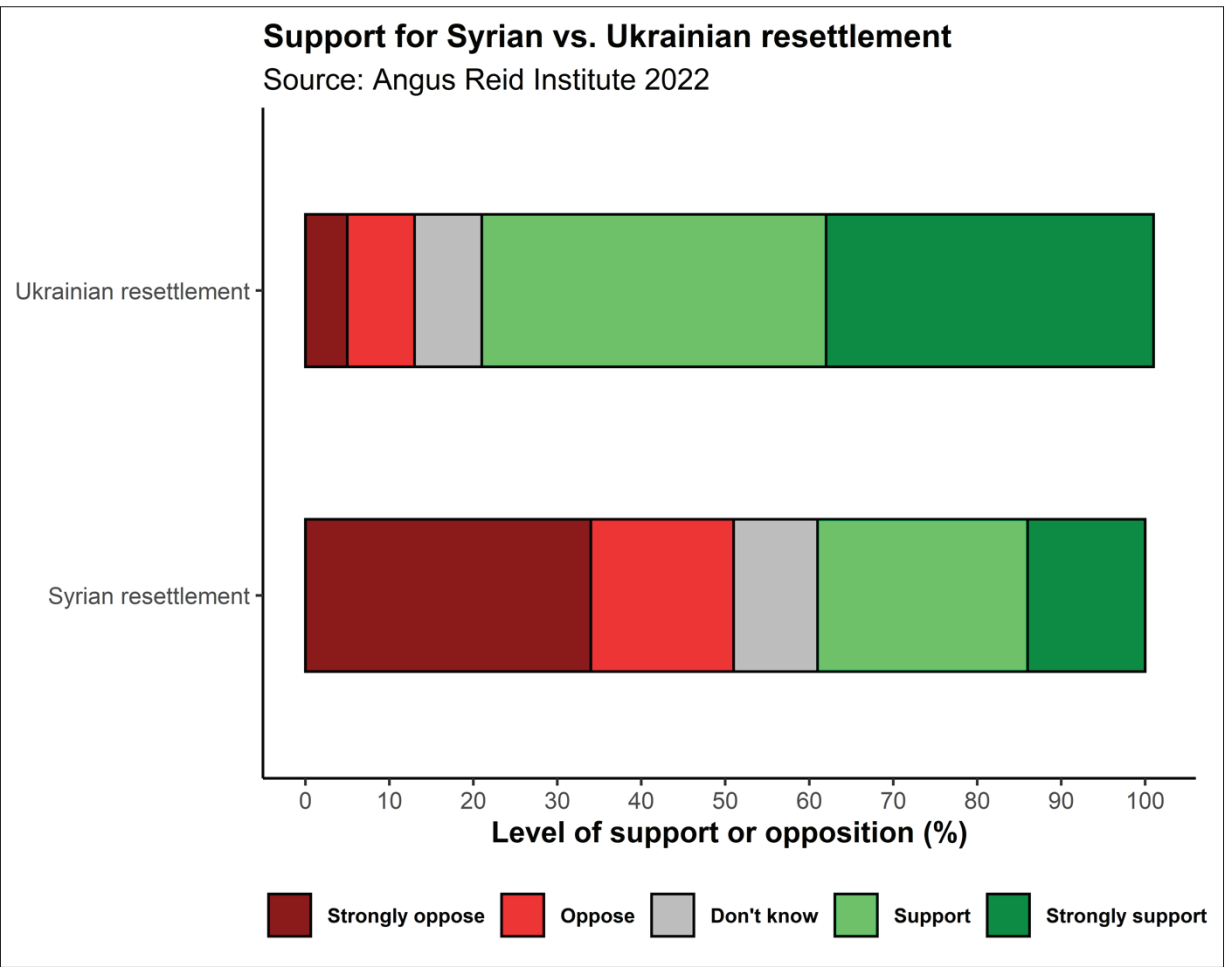
**Figure 2: Proportion of Canadians with Ukrainian, Russian or other Eastern Bloc Identity**



<sup>1</sup> This includes Eastern European countries, ethnic groups such as Tartars and Central Asian members of the former USSR, such as Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan.

Figure 3 shows public opinion polling on accepting Ukrainian refugees into Canada. Approximately 80 per cent of Canadians support accepting an unlimited number of Ukrainian refugees, 41 points higher than support for the initial resettlement of Syrians in 2015 (Angus Reid Institute 2022). The large population of Canadians who identify their culture or ethnicity as Ukrainian or other former members of the Eastern Bloc may explain these high levels of support. This includes Canadians who identify with Russian heritage or ethnicity. Immigrant self-selection means that people who move from Russia to Canada are unlike those who stay (Borjas 1987). This selective process extends to ideological and cultural values (Docquier, Tansel and Turati 2019; Rapoport, Sardoschau and Silve 2020). Russian-Canadians are therefore less likely to express the same pro-war or anti-Ukrainian sentiments as the Russian public. For example, the Russian Orthodox Church in Canada, which is under the nominal jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, has raised funds for displaced Ukrainians and expressed its support for the preservation of Ukraine (Russian Orthodox Church in Canada 2022).

**Figure 3: Support for Syrian vs. Ukrainian Resettlement**



## RECENT MEASURES

Ukrainian nationals seeking to enter Canada must have valid visas. The federal government has refused to lift this requirement since the full-scale invasion, despite a unanimous vote by Opposition members in committee to do so (CIMM 2022). The justification offered by government members of the committee for not waiving this requirement is that it would mean forgoing biometric and security checks, opening the door to “infiltration by Russian agents” and potential terrorists among Ukrainians who arrive in Canada (CIMM 2022).

On March 17, 2022, the federal government launched the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET), which expedites visas and temporary residency permits for Ukrainians and their non-Ukrainian family members (IRCC 2022). It grants them access to three-year visitor, work or study permits in Canada, and to most social benefits available to temporary residents. Application fees under CUAET have been waived and applicants without a valid passport may receive a single-journey travel document from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Ukrainians and their family members are exempt from COVID-19 vaccination requirements to travel to Canada but must test and quarantine on arrival, if necessary. Meanwhile, those Ukrainian citizens currently inside Canada on a temporary permit may extend their status for three years without application fees. Biometrics and security checks are still required for Ukrainians before receiving a visa and arriving in Canada, with few exceptions.

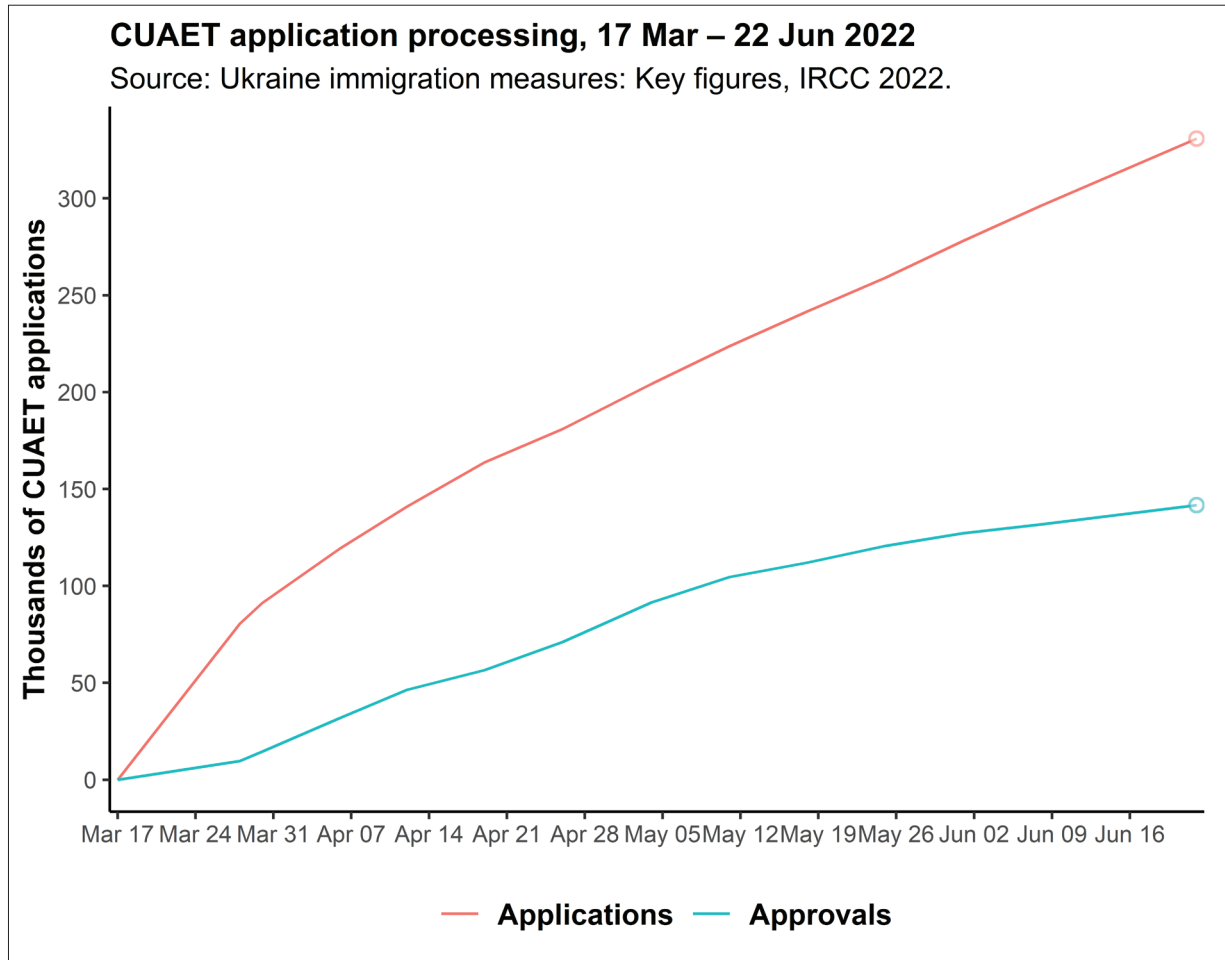
Besides the visa measures provided under CUAET, IRCC expanded settlement services to Ukrainians on March 30 (IRCC 2022). These federally funded services are administered through the non-profit sector and are usually limited to permanent residents. These services include English or French training, labour market services and cultural orientation programs for life in Canada.



## CUAET APPLICATION STATISTICS

Between the implementation of CUAET on March 17 and June 22, 2022, approximately 331,000 applications from Ukrainian citizens and immediate family members were submitted, while 142,000 have been approved (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: CUAET Applications Received and Approved, March 17 – June 22, 2022

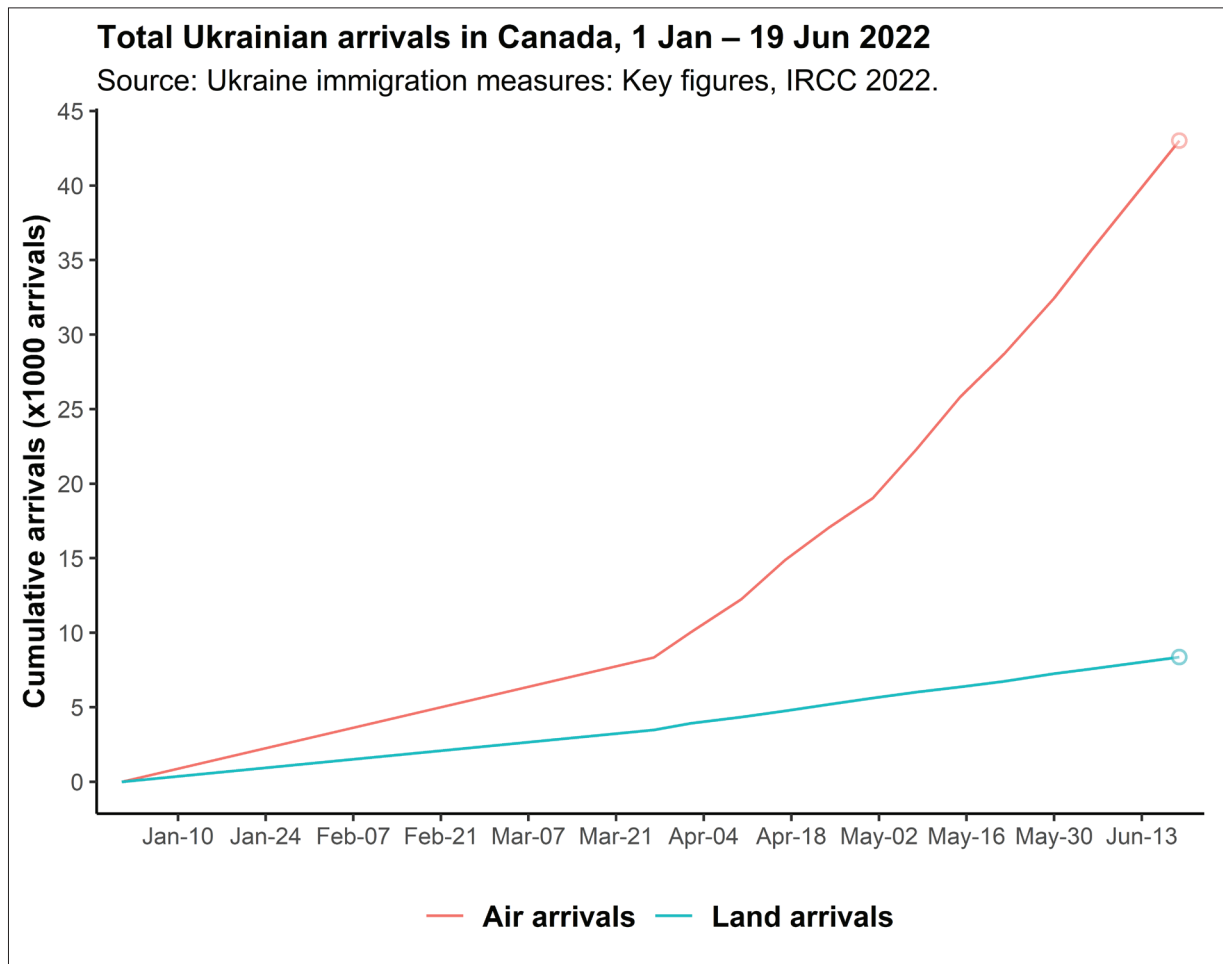


While the cumulative number of applications is increasing, the program shows recent signs of slowing down. After peaking around 7,300 applications per day during the first 11 days of the program, applications fell to 2,500 per day as of June 22, a drop of 66 per cent. Approvals have declined as well, falling from a peak of 2,600 per day in early April to approximately 700 per day by June 22, an even sharper drop of 72 per cent. As a result of this slowdown, there is an increasing gap between applications submitted by Ukrainians and approvals by Canadian officials. As of June 22, there were approximately 190,000 Ukrainians with pending applications to come to Canada, up from 140,000 approximately one month before. The growth in this gap suggests that the CUAET program is not meeting Ukrainians' needs in a timely fashion, to the detriment of Ukrainians themselves, unequal burden sharing with NATO allies hosting them and unfulfilled potential of Canadian citizens willing to help new arrivals.

## UKRAINIAN ARRIVAL STATISTICS

Figure 5 shows the arrival of approximately 51,000 Ukrainian citizens between January 1 and June 19, 2022, including arrivals by air and by land via the United States. While a clear uptick in air arrivals is noted following CUAET's introduction on March 17, 2022, the current reporting structure obfuscates the war's impact and related immigration measures. For example, the total number includes Ukrainians who arrived in Canada between January 1 and February 23, before the Russian invasion. It also includes Canadian permanent residents and those returning from routine trips to the U.S. for business or pleasure. A Ukrainian truck driver, for example, with permanent residency in Canada, would be counted each time they crossed back from the United States on a trip. Likewise, a Canadian permanent resident visiting family in Ukraine, who returned because of the war, would be counted here despite their arrival bearing no relation to government measures. Therefore, the 51,000 figure is unlikely to reflect the true number of Ukrainians who have arrived in Canada as a direct result of the war or through government intervention. In the next section, we provide one estimate of the invasion's impact on Ukrainian arrivals to Canada.

Figure 5: Total Ukrainian Arrivals in Canada, January 1 – June 19, 2022



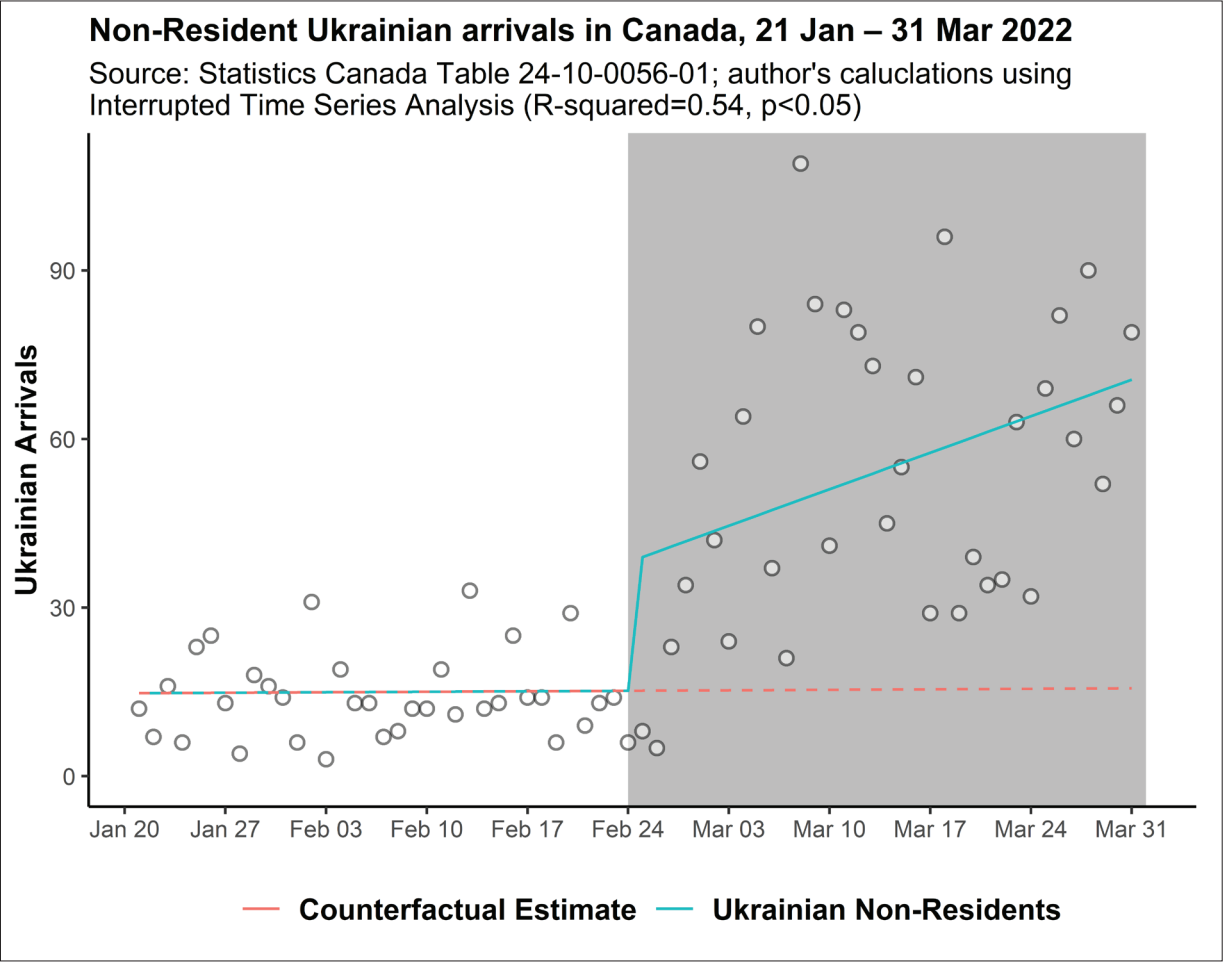
Note: The above includes arrivals of Ukrainian citizens in Canada before the Russian invasion of February 24, 2022. It also includes Ukrainian passport holders already living in Canada with temporary or permanent residency, who may be counted multiple times if they make regular cross-border trips to the U.S. and other countries for purposes unrelated to the invasion.

# POLICY IMPACT AND EVALUATION

As noted, the paucity of data and their current aggregation makes it difficult to estimate an exact number. One way to address this is by using air travel data from Statistics Canada. Given the requirement to have a U.S. travel visa before crossing the Canada-U.S. land border, using air travel data makes it less likely that Ukrainians with a pre-war legal status in either the U.S. or Canada will be included. We further limit our data to Ukrainian non-residents, or those without permanent or temporary residency in Canada before the conflict. This helps limit the data to Ukrainians without a rationale for travel to Canada or the U.S. aside from the invasion.

Figure 6 shows the impact of the conflict on Ukrainian arrivals after February 24, 2022. The dots represent daily arrivals between January 21 and March 31, or two equal periods of 35 days before and after the invasion. The dashed red line is an extrapolation of pre-war trends, showing the average arrival of Ukrainians in Canada for business, study or tourism had the conflict not escalated. The blue line shows the trend in arrivals since the invasion. The vertical distance between the blue line and the dashed red line provides an estimate of the arrivals of Ukrainians to Canada associated with the start of the Russian invasion.

Figure 6: Non-Resident Ukrainian Arrivals in Canada, January 21 – March 31, 2022

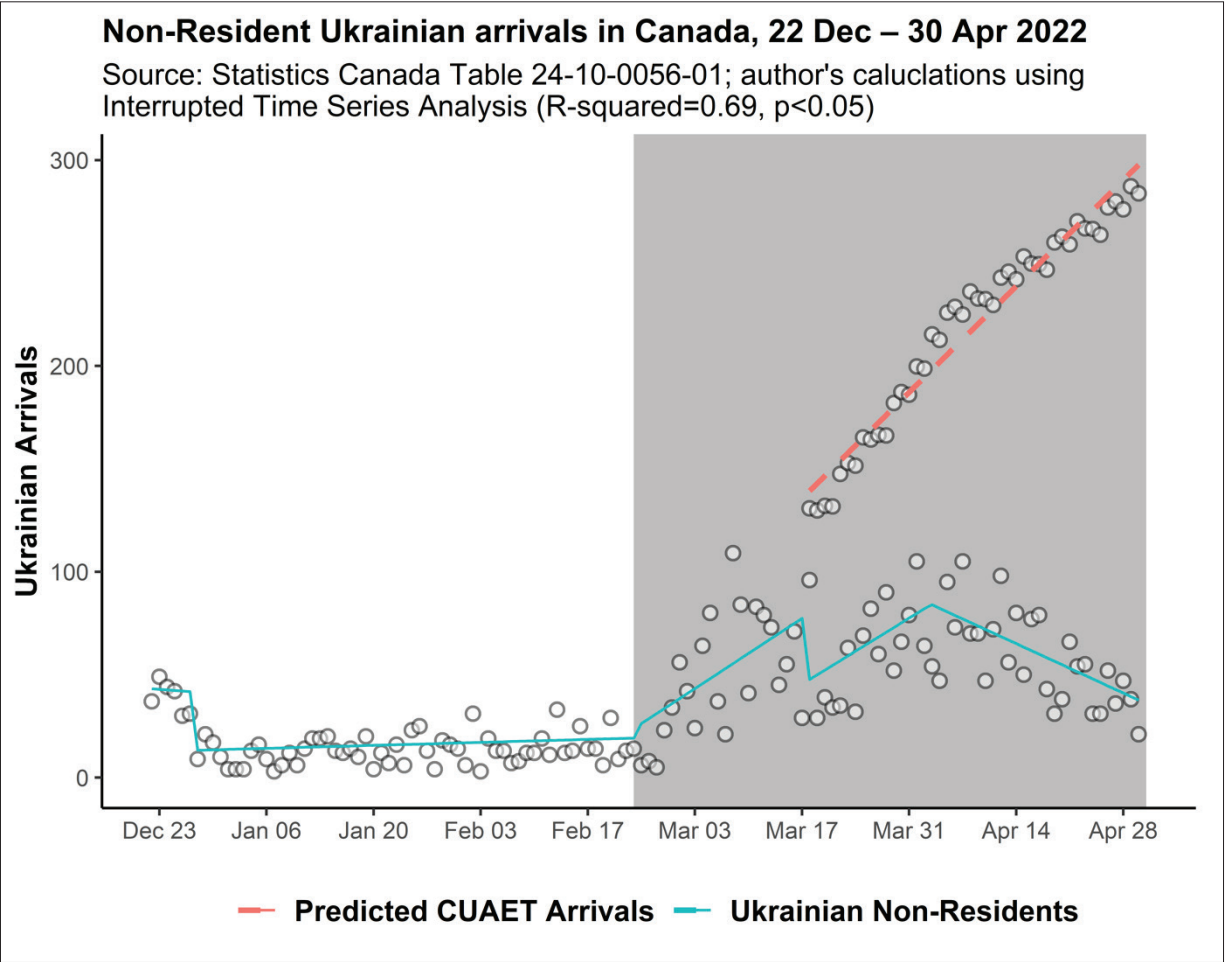


If we add the daily arrivals shown in the figure after the Russian invasion, it shows that approximately 1,900 Ukrainians arrived in Canada after February 24, of whom we can reasonably attribute 1,400 to the war. This implies the vast majority of the 8,344 Ukrainians reported by the federal government as arriving in Canada between January 1 and March 27 came before the conflict or were returning residents of Canada. While the federal government bears responsibility for the safety of its citizens and residents, those individuals could already enter Canada regardless of war or federal policy. Current government reporting does not provide clear estimates of new Ukrainian arrivals due to the war. As we have shown that number was low during the early stages of the war and remains low relative to other countries. Is this just the result of Ukrainians choosing closer countries in Europe, or have federal visa policies played a role in preventing their travel?

Internal evidence suggests the latter. Figure 7 shows how non-resident Ukrainians have shifted their behaviour in response to changes in visa policy. The blue line in Figure 7 shows a drop in non-resident Ukrainians entering Canada after the introduction of CUAET, which granted them an opportunity to enter as residents instead. The red line and the dots through which it passes show the inverse of this drop in non-residents, the sum of which is approximately equal to the number of post-CUAET arrivals by air reported between March 27 and May 1. Arrival numbers have grown further since that period, as shown earlier. This supports the notion that Ukrainian arrivals are sensitive to federal visa policy; when given the option to arrive here as residents, Ukrainian arrivals shifted entry categories and increased in number. It is likely that, from this evidence, Ukrainian arrivals would increase further if they were allowed visa-free travel to Canada.

These above findings are supported by additional insights from overseas. In the next section, we show how a divergence in visa policy between Ireland and the United Kingdom helps us measure the extent to which visa-free travel would impact Ukrainian arrivals in Canada.

Figure 7: Non-Resident Ukrainian Arrivals in Canada, December 22, 2021 - April 30, 2022



**EVIDENCE FROM IRELAND AND THE UNITED KINGDOM**

The impact of visa restrictions on reducing Ukrainian arrivals is best seen in the situation of Ireland and the United Kingdom. Both countries share important characteristics that help estimate the cause and effect of policy changes. This includes sharing common languages, similar forms of government and comparable income levels per capita (World Bank 2021). Both are island nations roughly equidistant from Ukraine. In other words, it is easy to imagine Ireland and the U.K. to be equally attractive locations for Ukrainians seeking to escape the war. Each country operates its own visa policy, and restricted Ukrainian entries before the war.<sup>2</sup> Where they differ is their response to the Russian invasion.

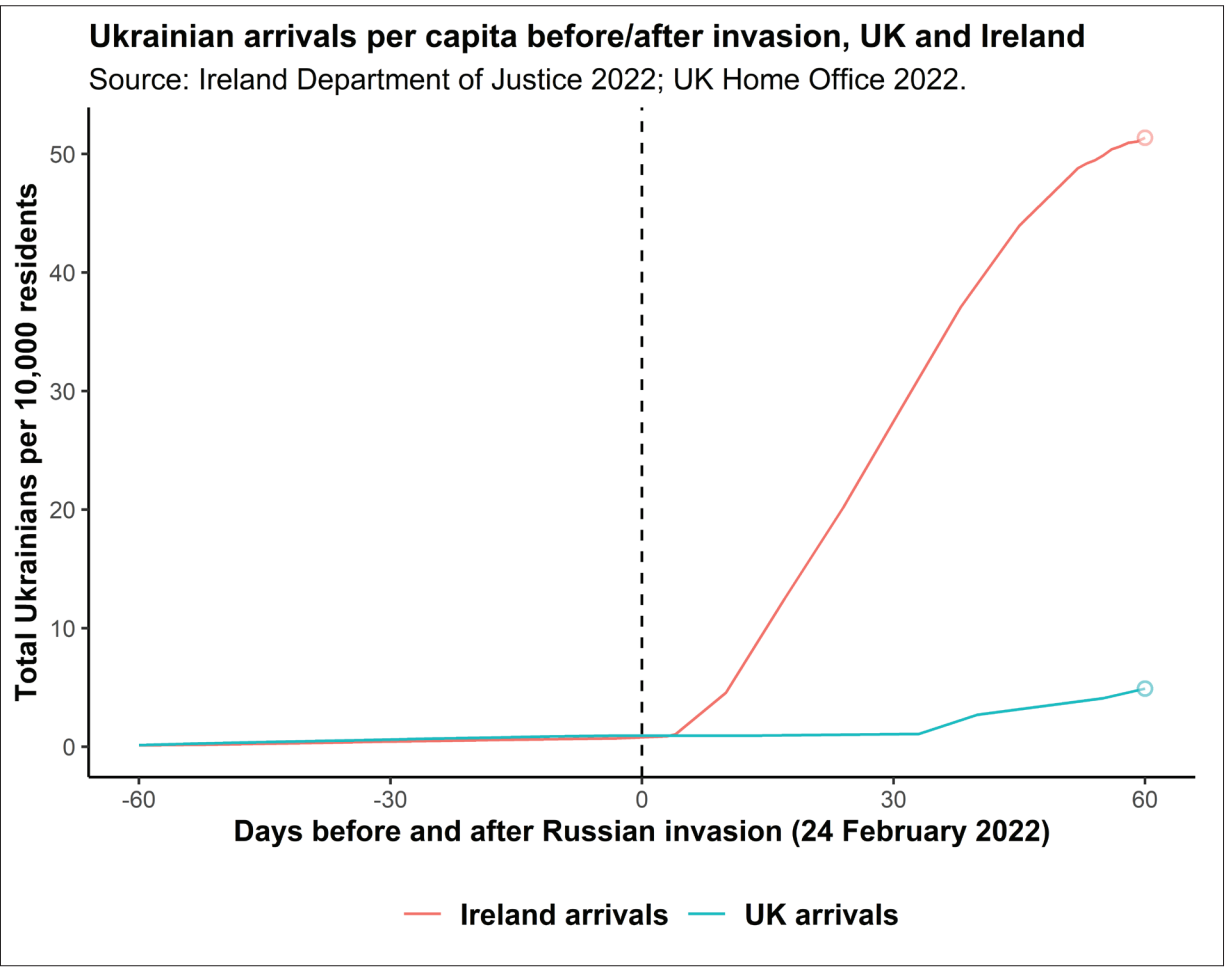
On February 25, 2022, the Irish government waived its visa requirement for Ukrainians, and permitted them to enter Ireland using any form of identification available to them, whether current or expired. It opened reception hubs at Dublin Airport and Rosslare Europort to receive and process Ukrainians (Department of Justice Ireland 2022). By contrast, the U.K.

<sup>2</sup> Ireland is not part of the Schengen area of 26 European countries without internal border controls or visa requirements. This includes 22 EU member states, as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

retained its pre-war visa policy for Ukrainians (M and James 2022), only opening its own CUAET-style visa scheme several weeks into the invasion. These different responses by Ireland and the U.K., combined with their shared characteristics, provide a useful test for comparing the impact of visa waivers on displaced Ukrainians.

There are multiple ways to test this impact. The first is a simple comparison of Ukrainian arrivals in both countries since the Russian invasion. Figure 7 shows total arrivals adjusted to population size in Ireland and the U.K. since February 24, 2022. In the first 30 days after the invasion, more than 14,000 Ukrainians arrived in Ireland, or 280 Ukrainians for every 100,000 Irish residents. Only 1,000 Ukrainians arrived in the U.K. during the same period, equal to 1.5 for every 100,000 Britons. Numbers had equalized in absolute terms by day 60 of the invasion, with 25,400 Ukrainian arrivals in Ireland and 27,100 in the U.K., but the per capita disparity persisted. By April 25, there were a cumulative 507 Ukrainian arrivals for every 100,000 Irish residents, but only 40 Ukrainians for an equivalent number of Britons – a ratio achieved by Ireland just 10 days into the invasion.

**Figure 8: Ukrainian Arrivals Per Capita Before/After Invasion, U.K. and Ireland**



A second way to test this impact is through a difference-in-differences strategy. This approach estimates the differential effect of a treatment between two groups, one that receives it and a control group that does not (Card and Krueger 1994; Bertrand, Duflo and Mullainathan 2004). As described previously, Ireland and the U.K. share important characteristics that make them comparable draws for Ukrainians fleeing war, and each shows similar pre-war trends in Ukrainian travel. The Russian invasion was exogenous to the visa policies of both countries, but only Ireland waived its visa requirement. This allows the U.K. to act as a control group. By comparing the differential impact of the war on Ukrainian arrivals in both countries, we can establish the impact of the Irish visa waiver.<sup>3</sup>

Using this approach, we estimate that arrivals in Ireland after the invasion were higher than the U.K. by approximately 7.7 refugees per 100,000 residents each day, equal to an average of 380 Ukrainian arrivals per day. In the absence of the Irish visa waiver, it is estimated that Ukrainian arrivals would be 92 per cent lower, for a total of 2,100 by April 25 instead of the 25,400 that actually arrived. By contrast, a British visa-free policy may have increased arrivals by an average of 5,300 per day, resulting in 344,000 Ukrainian refugees in the U.K. by April 25 instead of the 27,100 who actually arrived by that date. These estimates support the claim that visa restrictions stymied the timeliness and number of Ukrainian arrivals to the U.K. If the same applies to Canada, then federal visa policies have negatively impacted the number of refugees arriving here and significantly obstructed a willing Canadian public.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR CANADA

As described previously, the sensitivity of Ukrainian arrivals to shifts in Canadian visa policy suggests that the above findings indeed apply here. It also suggests that Ukrainians would respond similarly to visa-free travel to Canada. By applying the estimates from Ireland, we find that a visa-free policy would have increased daily arrivals in Canada to an average of 1,750 per day, for a total of 114,000 Ukrainian arrivals between February 24 and April 30, 2022. This represents 4.6 times the number recorded between January 1 and May 1, 2022, and constitutes a total of 296 Ukrainians for every 100,000 Canadians. While such a large figure may seem implausible, other jurisdictions besides the U.K. and Ireland with similar geographic conditions to Canada have recorded comparable numbers. Iceland, for example, has recorded 270 Ukrainian arrivals per 100,000 Icelanders (UNHCR 2022; Statistics Iceland 2022). While farther away than Reykjavik, important factors such as Canada's reputation for welcoming immigrants, as well as its population of self-identified Ukrainian-Canadians, serve as an additional draw and help justify this estimate.

The current visa restrictions on Ukrainians provide clear examples of how government immigration policies can run counter to the good will of private citizens to help refugees. Seventy-six per cent of Britons surveyed by YouGov support taking in Ukrainian refugees (Smith 2022), while just 31 per cent think the U.K. is currently doing enough (Ibbetson 2022). The Canadian government similarly risks missing the same opportunity to align the needs of Ukrainians and the good will of Canadians. Given the popularity of helping Ukrainians in Canada and the presence of the Ukrainian diaspora across the country, the federal government should consider it in the public interest to align the needs and wishes of these two groups. We provide several options for doing so here.

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<sup>3</sup> The introduction of the U.K. visa scheme is addressed in our model, using approaches outlined by Athey and Imbens (2022) and Fricke (2017). Details on this model and our results are available in Appendix A.



## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Canada has several options to protect more Ukrainians in a timelier fashion and to involve civil society and the wider public in the process. Option 1 includes the Irish policy of waiving visa restrictions for Ukrainians and permitting them to travel to Canada using any form of identification. As in Ireland, this would include reception centres at specific airports to process new arrivals and acquaint them with Canada. Option 2 is a modified Irish policy, where Canada issues visas on arrival (VOA) after temporarily holding and screening Ukrainians. More than 90 countries currently pursue the VOA policy and the EU has used it during previous emergencies where visa-restricted passengers were diverted to EU member states because of natural disasters. Option 3 may be considered as a complementary alternative to the above policies and would restrict the visa-free travel or VOA options to Ukrainian passport holders but continue the CUAET program for non-passport holders and non-Ukrainian family members. This would screen these latter groups before issuing them single-journey travel documents like the existing CUAET program, but they would not have to share the queue with Ukrainian passport holders as they currently do, granting them faster processing times. We address all these options in greater detail below. We also address the humanitarian/security trade-off entailed with looser visa restrictions, represented by a higher risk of Russian espionage.

### OPTION 1: VISA-FREE TRAVEL (THE IRISH OPTION)

As described in the introduction to this section and throughout parts of this paper, Ireland decided on February 25, 2022 to waive its visa requirement for Ukrainian citizens (Department of Justice Ireland 2022). Included in this is a decision to allow Ukrainians without a current passport to board airlines using other forms of identification, expired or otherwise (Citizens Information Board 2022f). Those who arrive without visas have 90 days to regularize their immigration status and receive an Irish residence permit (DOJ Ireland 2022; Citizens Information Board 2022c).

Arriving Ukrainians are directed to reception hubs at the Dublin Airport and Rosslare Europort (DOJ Ireland 2022; Citizens Information Board 2022c). Staff at these reception centres help arrivals get started on the residency process, find accommodation and get access to money. In addition to these reception centres, complementary Ukraine support centres in Dublin, Cork and Limerick provide arrivals with information on social welfare, housing and additional immigration information. Ukrainians are eligible to work and study in Ireland (Citizens Information Board 2022g), to exchange their driver's licences for Irish ones (Citizens Information Board 2022d) and are eligible for Irish welfare benefits, including child benefits, rent supplements and temporary free accommodation (Citizens Information Board 2022a). The scheme is supported by the efforts of the nascent Community Sponsorship Programme, modelled on the Canadian Private Refugee Sponsorship program, which allows private Irish citizens to donate their means and time to welcoming and settling refugees (Citizens Information Board 2022b; DOJ Ireland 2018).

The Canadian federal government has several tools to enact the Irish model. The first is the Immigration minister's power to waive normal visa requirements. They may do this by listing Ukraine as one of the visa-exempt countries in Schedule 1.1 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations (DOJ 2022). The minister may also use their discretionary authority under section 25.2 of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* to issue a



public policy that exempts Ukrainians from regular requirements for a visa and for electronic travel authorization requirements (CIMM 2016; DOJ 2021). This would enable Ukrainians to travel to and enter Canada without needing a visa or other form of pre-arrival authorization.

Canada also has an established sector of volunteers and non-profit organizations that help resettle refugees and integrate newcomers into the Canadian economy and society. Groups like Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (n.d.) or Malton Neighbourhood Services (n.d.) in the Greater Toronto Area have established programs for meeting refugees at airports, providing them accommodation and assisting them in similar ways to those described in Ireland. Provinces also have a role to play. For example, the Manitoba government has established a reception centre in Winnipeg to aid Ukrainian arrivals with accommodation, health care, social assistance, education and other supports. A visa-free policy for Ukrainians could build on this foundation of public-private services to receive and process arrivals.

## **OPTION 2: VISA ON ARRIVAL**

An alternative to the visa waiver option is to process Ukrainian arrivals using a VOA approach. This involves taking biometrics and doing security checks at designated ports-of-entry before issuing an entry visa onsite. More than 90 countries issue VOAs as a matter of course, including Ukraine itself, Taiwan, Turkey and Thailand. Other countries use VOAs to manage the arrival of persons in unforeseen circumstances. After the 2010 eruption of Eyjafjallajökull in Iceland, the EU adopted a VOA approach to the unexpected arrival of passengers on rerouted flights (European Commission 2010).

As with the first option, the federal government may issue a temporary public policy to process VOAs for Ukrainians. The time between biometrics, security clearances and issuing the visa may be used to orient arrivals at reception hubs. Arrivals who pose high security risks for Canada, such as single males or less-documented travellers, may be temporarily housed onsite or nearby before release into Canada. Those with a low-risk profile, such as young families with children, seniors and well-documented travellers, may be processed in a timelier fashion.

## **OPTION 3: COMPLEMENTARY CUAET**

This third option may function as a complement rather than an alternative to the above two recommendations. That is to restrict visa-free or VOA programs to Ukrainian citizens who arrive with current passports and other supporting documents, and to retain CUAET for Ukrainian nationals and non-Ukrainian family members who do not hold a current travel document. This would have the benefit of expediting both Ukrainian passport holders and non-passport holders by allowing the former to travel to Canada without delay and to concentrate IRCC processing capacity on fewer cases that require more extensive background checks. A similar system of queueing passport holders and non-passport holders has been used to great effect in previous crises, most famously in the response to Indochinese refugees (Employment and Immigration Canada 1982).

## LONG-TERM CONSIDERATIONS

The Canadian government is currently issuing temporary work, study or visitor permits to eligible Ukrainians and their immediate non-Ukrainian family members. This may be reasonable for a short-term conflict. It is important to remember, however, that the Russo-Ukrainian war did not start in 2022, but on February 20, 2014, with the Russian annexation of Crimea, and has been going on now for eight years. It is entirely possible that a prolonged conflict will endure for months, or even years longer. The invasion's indeterminate length provides a strong rationale for the Canadian government to begin long-term planning around the possibility of permanent resettlement of Ukrainians inside Canada and those temporarily residing in EU states and other locales.

There are several options for accomplishing this. This includes a TR-to-PR temporary policy similar to that used during COVID-19 to aid eligible temporary residents to achieve permanent residency in Canada (IRCC 2021). Another option is to accept UNHCR referrals and referrals from private sponsors, similar to the current refugee resettlement structure. Both of these schemes, however, suffer from bureaucratic additions that may significantly slow down the process for both IRCC and Ukrainians. Layering on economic qualifications to the program undermines the humanitarian rationale for helping Ukrainians and prolongs processing, while Ukrainian citizens may not qualify for refugee status under the UNHCR's strict criteria.

An alternative to the above solutions is to revive the defunct "designated class" in legislation, created in 1976 and first used during the Indochinese refugee crisis (Batarseh 2016). The designated class provides IRCC officers with a simplified list of criteria to process displaced persons. Under the Indochinese designated class, any citizen of Cambodia, Laos or Vietnam outside their home country after the fall of Saigon could come to Canada if they had no alternatives (Casasola 2016). This approach has the benefit of applying simple criteria to Ukrainians both inside and outside Canada, allowing the federal government to regularize the status of those already here, facilitating quicker resettlement and aiding foreign allies hosting large numbers of Ukrainians. A Ukrainian designated class would also name and shame Russia for causing the displacement of Ukrainians and for interfering with Canadian affairs vis à vis our humanitarian obligations.

In all cases, a robust effort to temporarily accommodate or permanently resettle Ukrainians provides the Ukrainian government with the benefit of sheltering its citizens, bolstering private remittances back to Ukraine and relieving pressure on its public services and funds needed to address wartime demands (La Corte 2018; Coleman 2020). The federal government should frame its objectives and policy instruments around these strategic considerations as well as humanitarian ones.

## NATIONAL SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS

As mentioned in the introduction, government MPs have expressed concerns that visa-free travel to Canada would increase the risk of infiltration by “Russian agents” or “terrorists” (CIMM 2022). The British government has cited similar risks to support its visa restrictions, harkening back to the Skripal poisonings by Russian agents on U.K. soil (Richards 2022). This may be described as the Trojan horse theory of migration — the idea that migrants (and more specifically, refugees) pose significant risks to national security. This includes risks of terrorism, defined here as acts of mass violence designed to intimidate the Canadian public, and risks of espionage, which may include targeted violent or non-violent acts to gather information, sabotage industry or eliminate specific threats.

We find that the empirical debate on migrant-related terrorism is between those who find small, conditional effects, and those who find no effects at all. Some have found that inflows of refugees increase acts of terrorism, but that these increases are highly conditional on the characteristics of host countries. For example, states with strong economies, stable bureaucracies and rights for migrants demonstrate reduced or negligible terrorist incidents (Milton, Spencer and Findley 2013; Choi and Salehyan 2013; Dreher, Gassebner and Schaudt 2020). Acts of terrorism also differ by migrant category. The annual chance, for example, of a U.S. citizen being killed by refugee-related terrorism was one in 3.9 billion, or one in 1.3 billion for an asylum seeker, but only one in 4.1 million by a tourist (Nowrasteh 2019). Other scholars note that increases in migrant-related terrorism rise in proportion to migrant populations at a comparable rate to increases in domestic terrorism in proportion to the native-born population, and that migrants themselves are often the targets of terrorists (Bove and Böhmelt 2016; Helbling and Meierrieks 2020; Eybergen and Andresen 2020; Dreher, Gassebner and Schaudt 2020). Relevant to this paper, a breakdown of terrorism into sponsoring groups finds that state-sponsored terrorism, such as the type committed by the Russian government, does not increase with the number of refugees among OECD countries (Choi and Salehyan 2013; Polo and Wucherpfennig 2022). In all pieces of literature, including those that do find significant risks of terrorism from refugee flows, authors agree that blanket restrictions are ineffective policy instruments in combating terrorism. It does not seem likely that Ukrainian arrivals will be a major source of Russian-sponsored terrorism, that federal agencies should be sufficient to mitigate such possibilities and that the likely targets of whatever terrorism is being plotted will be Ukrainian arrivals themselves.

In contrast to the research on migrant-related terrorism, the body of literature on foreign espionage entering through refugee channels is less conclusive. This may be because few governments involved in the flight of refugees in recent years, like Syria or Afghanistan, have had the resources or inclination to infiltrate government agents through refugee camps or among groups of asylum seekers. The closest analogues to Ukraine are events during the Cold War, such as the Prague Spring or Hungarian Revolution, when the Soviet Union intervened militarily in those countries and caused thousands to flee. It also includes intermittent spikes of East German and other Eastern Bloc members fleeing through Berlin. The literature during this period shows that Soviet agents did occasionally use the flight of refugees to insert agents into Western countries, but there is little indication this was done systematically compared to the espionage conducted from Soviet embassies (Adam 2008; Cunningham 2016; Bjerke 2020; Sayle 2021). The primary activity of these agents was to spy on refugees themselves, to harass them and keep tabs on their communication with their relatives behind the Iron Curtain (Adam 2008). Other activities sometimes included

attempts to infiltrate political parties or influence activities at universities (Bjerke 2020). It is also clear, however, that refugee flows were often boons to Western intelligence agencies. Western governments often conducted debriefs of refugees as a matter of course during their processing at refugee reception centres (Maddrell 2006). Refugees would be interviewed while being set up with social assistance and residency permits, with high-value individuals such as scientists, army officers or suspected infiltrators being recommended for further interviews at British or American military bases (Maddrell 2006). Canada played an important role during this period, becoming the unofficial home for defectors in a quasi-witness protection program, where they could be further debriefed (Sayle 2021). The case of Igor Gouzenko, the Cold War's first defector in 1945, is an example of how refugees were often sources of intelligence. His own documents revealed that Soviet espionage often focused more on recruiting local sympathizers rather than inserting their own agents. This evidence suggests that while refugee-related espionage did occur, it was a more limited route than traditional means, and that refugees themselves are both the targets of espionage as well as valuable sources of intelligence.

In the trade-off between humanitarianism for Ukrainians and the risk of Russian infiltration, Ireland has chosen to value the benefits of the former to a greater extent than Canada. Our review of current research shows that the risk of terrorism or infiltration by Russian agents through the arrival of Ukrainians is limited, with high guaranteed benefit to displaced Ukrainians. The federal government can mitigate whatever risks that do exist by investing greater resources in counterterrorism and counterespionage through the CBSA, CSIS and RCMP. These agencies may wish to play a greater role at airports and refugee reception centres, identifying high-risk entries for interviews and conducting outreach to arriving Ukrainians. Finally, the federal government should consider arriving Ukrainians as a potential source of intelligence. Recent arrivals who escaped from eastern Ukraine may provide insight there that can be fed back to the Ukrainian government, and it gives Canada a recruiting pool of Russian-speaking Ukrainians for its law-enforcement and intelligence services. In each case, the federal government should not be quick to respond to the risk of Russian infiltration through blanket visa policies, but properly assess and employ alternative targeted methods within Canada to the humanitarian benefit of Ukrainians.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have shown the consequence of overly cautious visa policies for those fleeing the Russo-Ukrainian war. We began by outlining the relatively small volume of Ukrainian arrivals to Canada in the weeks after Russia launched its full-scale invasion. During a period when Canadian sentiments ran high for receiving Ukrainians, only 1,900 non-resident Ukrainians arrived in Canada by air, of whom only 1,400 may be reasonably attributed to the conflict. While arrivals have begun to tick upwards with the introduction of the CUAET expedited visa policy, current restrictions likely slowed the arrival of Ukrainians during a critical period and may continue to dampen future arrivals.

To support this assertion, we turned to Ireland and the U.K., which share important economic, cultural and political characteristics, but different visa policies towards Ukraine. While roughly equidistant from Ukraine, the U.K. has maintained visa restrictions that limit Ukrainian entry, while Ireland waived its policy and opened an extensive welcoming campaign. Using a difference-in-differences strategy, we showed that Ireland's open-door policy resulted in timelier arrivals by Ukrainian citizens in absolute terms, and a striking increase of 7.7 arrivals per 100,000 residents over the U.K. Circumstances in Canada suggest that despite farther distances, a visa waiver policy would create similar possibilities for more Ukrainian arrivals in Canada.

The federal government has several options to amend its visa policy in favour of more Ukrainian arrivals. These include the use of temporary public policies by the IRCC that permit visa-free travel to Canada by Ukrainian citizens, introducing a visa-on-arrival (VOA) system used in other countries that would screen arrivals on Canadian soil before issuing a visa and focusing the CUAET program on Ukrainian citizens without passports. These options should all be supported by the large network of non-profit agencies and volunteer groups across Canada that have decades of experience resettling refugees, using them to create reception centres for Ukrainians that help them quickly access housing, employment, financial assistance and other supports in Canada. Current visa restrictions cannot be justified using national security concerns, which are not supported by empirical literature. This research demonstrates that the risk of foreign agents using migrant flows to infiltrate stable countries with strong economies and human rights records is limited and manageable. With adequate investments in intelligence and law enforcement agencies, the federal government can mitigate the risks of espionage and maximize the benefits of protection in Canada for Ukrainian citizens. In the trade-off between humanitarianism and security, the benefits to Ukrainians and the good will of Canadians are considerable, while the cost is negligible. In the words of former German chancellor Angela Merkel during the arrival of Syrians in 2015: "We can do this" (Oltermann 2020).

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## APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

This paper relies on two types of empirical analysis, including interrupted time series analysis (ITS) and difference-in-differences (DiD). Both types of analysis aid researchers to identify the causal impact of policies and events. We use the ITS to identify the impact of the Russian invasion on February 24, 2022, on Ukrainian arrivals to Canada. We then use the DiD approach to identify the impact of the Irish visa waiver on Ukrainian arrivals per capita using arrivals to the United Kingdom as a comparison group. We describe the approach, intuition and results in the two subsections below.

### INTERRUPTED TIME SERIES: UKRAINIAN ARRIVALS

The interrupted time series analysis (ITS) measures changes in an outcome over time after an intervention takes place (Ewusi et al. 2020)<sup>2</sup>. It compares this measure to an extrapolation of pre-intervention trends, which serves as a counterfactual. Put another way, it compares how much a certain outcome increased, decreased or otherwise changed compared to an extension calculated from patterns before the intervention occurred.

In this study, the intervention is the Russian invasion of February 24, 2022. The outcome we are measuring is the daily number of Ukrainians arriving in Canada without a residency permit before and after the war. We measure this group because they have access to Canada through the form of an entry visa but have looser ties than Ukrainians with permanent residency or residency for work and study purposes. It is this group that could access Canada in the event of a war but might not choose to travel here otherwise. A significant difference between daily arrivals after the invasion and an extrapolation of pre-invasion trends gives the estimated impact of the war on arrivals. To estimate this, we use the following regression model:

$$Y_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_i + \beta_2 W_i + \beta_3 (T_i - T_w) W_i + \beta_4 X_i + \varepsilon$$

Where  $Y_i$  is the number of Ukrainians arriving on a particular day  $t$ ,  $T$  is a time trend increase by one for each day before and after the invasion,  $W_i$  is a dummy variable representing one for observations after the invasion and zero before,  $X_i$  represents covariates such as the holiday season or the Russian retreat from Kyiv and  $\varepsilon$  is the error term. We control for seasonality using a Fourier term.

In the equation,  $\beta_0$  is a constant representing baseline Ukraine arrivals when time  $T = 0$ ,  $\beta_1$  indicates the change in Ukrainian arrivals for each passing day,  $\beta_2$  measures the level of Ukrainian arrivals after the invasion and  $\beta_3$  is a slope change that shows by how much arrivals increase each day after the Russian invasion. By comparing outcomes  $Y$  for each day where  $T = 1$  to an extrapolation of a scenario where  $T = 0$  we can estimate the impact of the war on Ukrainian arrivals to Canada. The results of this model are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Results for Ukrainian Arrivals in Canada Using Interrupted Time Series Analysis (ITS).**

	Pre-CUAET Arrivals	CUAET Arrivals
Intercept	22.50 (12.97)	3.54 (19.94)
Time	0.01 (0.14)	0.10 (0.06)
War	22.88 (9.22)	4.65 (9.56)
CUAET	—	-31.97 (18.49)
Kyiv Retreat	—	3.56 (13.34)
Holiday	—	30.87 (8.02)
War × ( $Time_i - Time_{war}$ )	0.92 (0.44)	—
War × ( $Time_i - Time_{war}$ )	—	2.33 (0.79)
CUAET × ( $Time_i - Time_{cuaet}$ )	—	-0.14 (1.70)
Kyiv × ( $Time_i - Time_{cuaet}$ )	—	-4.01 (1.52)
Holiday × $Time_i$	—	-0.39 (1.78)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.54	0.69
Observations	70	130
Date Range	Jan. 21 - March 31, 2022	Dec. 22, 2021 - April 30, 2022

Notes: In each regression, the dependent variable is the daily number of non-resident Ukrainian arrivals to Canada. Standard errors are in brackets.

Source: Statistics Canada Table 24-10-0056-01; author's calculations.

## DIFFERENCE-IN-DIFFERENCES: U.K. VS. IRELAND VISA POLICY

The difference-in-differences approach imitates experimental research designs by comparing the differential effects of an intervention on an outcome between a treatment group and a control group. It assumes that different outcomes between each group remain constant across time and that exogenous shocks will affect trends in both groups equally, unless there is an intervention that impacts the outcome in one only. A deviation from these parallel trends in the treatment group after such an intervention helps establish its impact and size. Picking treatment and control groups that share similar characteristics helps minimize the possibility that other factors besides the intervention influence the outcomes differently in either group.

In this study, our treatment group is the Republic of Ireland and the control group is the United Kingdom. The outcome is per capita Ukrainian arrivals to both countries. As described in the main body, the U.K. and Ireland are similar in important ways, including shared languages, political systems and similar economies. Each boasted similar numbers of Ukrainians relative to its population size before the invasion, and both are island nations that control their own visa policies. When the 2022 invasion began, however, only Ireland waived its visa requirement. This waiver is the intervention tested in this paper. To estimate the impact of the waiver on Ukrainian arrivals  $Y$ , we run the following regression model using Driscoll-Kraay standard errors:

$$Y_{ict} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 IR_c + \beta_2 W_t + \beta_3 (IR * W)_{ct} + \beta_4 C + \varepsilon_{ict}$$

Where  $IR$  is a dummy variable equal to one indicating that an observation is from Ukrainian arrivals to Ireland,  $W$  is a dummy variable equal to one indicating that an observation occurs in the post-invasion period, and  $C$  represents covariates, such as the Christmas holiday period. The interaction term  $(IR * W)_{ct}$  indicates that an observation belongs to both Ireland and the post-invasion period. In this model, we estimate parameter  $\beta_3$ , which represents how much bigger Ukrainian arrivals per capita were in Ireland during the post-invasion period than the U.K. The results of this model are provided in Table 2 below. Tests for robusticity were conducted to confirm parallel trends prior to the invasion. Further details on this model, tests and covariates are available upon request.

**Table 2: Results for Ukrainian Arrivals Per 100,000 Residents in the U.K. and Ireland Difference-in-Differences Approach with OLS Regression.**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
Intercept	0.10 (0.01)	0.10 (0.01)	-0.36 0.08	0.09 (0.00)	0.10 (0.01)	0.09 (0.00)	0.09 (0.00)	0.10 (0.01)	0.10 (0.00)	-0.43 (0.17)	-0.67 (0.21)	-1.03 (0.29)	0.16 (0.16)
Country	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.85 (0.57)	0.01 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)	0.85 (0.57)	0.85 (0.57)	0.85 (0.56)	0.21 (0.35)
Waiver	0.57 (0.11)	-0.04 (0.01)	-0.35 (0.14)	0.59 (0.11)	0.77 (0.24)	0.78 (0.24)	-0.02 (0.00)	-0.04 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.00)	-0.39 (0.16)	-0.60 (0.25)	-0.85 (0.30)	0.02 (0.14)
U.K. Visa	–	1.41 (0.13)	–	–	–	–	1.41 (0.13)	5.70 (0.75)	5.70 (0.75)	–	–	–	5.60 (0.79)
Time trend	–	–	0.02 (0.00)	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.02 (0.00)	0.03 (0.01)	0.03 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.00)
Holidays	–	–	–	0.08 (0.01)	–	0.08 (0.01)	0.08 (0.01)	–	0.08 (0.01)	0.17 (0.37)	–	0.66 (0.37)	-0.06 (0.25)
Kyiv retreat	–	–	–	–	-0.48 (0.50)	-0.48 (0.24)	–	-4.46 (0.70)	-4.46 (0.70)	–	-0.82 (0.46)	-1.06 (0.49)	-4.32 (0.73)
Country × Waiver	7.74 (0.51)	7.57 (0.94)	9.39 (1.31)	7.74 (0.51)	7.74 (0.51)	7.74 (0.51)	7.57 (0.94)	7.57 (0.94)	7.57 (0.94)	9.39 (1.31)	9.39 (1.31)	9.39 (1.30)	7.82 (1.15)
Country × U.K. Visa	–	-0.20 (1.10)	–	–	–	–	-0.20 (1.10)	-1.63 (1.15)	-1.63 (1.15)	–	–	–	-1.39 (1.14)
Country × Time trend	–	–	-0.03 (0.02)	–	–	–	–	–	–	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.01)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.76	0.77	0.77	0.76	0.76	0.77	0.77	0.83	0.82	0.76	0.77	0.77	0.82
Observations	240												

Notes: In each regression, the dependent variable is the daily number of Ukrainian arrivals per 100,000 residents. Standard errors are in brackets.

Source: Irish Department of Justice; U.K. Home Office; author's calculations.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Robert Falconer** is a Research Associate at the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary, focusing on immigration and refugee policy. He holds a Master of Public Policy from the University of Calgary, and a Bachelor of Arts (Hon.) from the University of Toronto. Before joining the School, Robert worked in the immigration and refugee non-profit sector for Calgary Catholic Immigration Society. In Fall 2022 he will be joining the London School of Economics as a PhD Student, SSHRC Doctoral Fellow, and member at Goodenough College.



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