



## Selective Solidarity?

### What makes people willing to support refugees

#### Summary

Refugee migration to Germany increased significantly again in 2022. The number of asylum applications submitted by people from countries such as Syria or Afghanistan continued to rise, while from February 2022, refugees began to arrive in Germany as a result of the war in Ukraine. Since their arrival, it has been claimed that **Ukrainian refugees are in a more favourable position than refugees from elsewhere**. This advantage arises primarily from the application of a legal instrument; Ukrainians fall under the EU Temporary Protection Directive and thus receive collective, direct protection along with the legal rights that this entails. Refugees from other countries, by contrast, must first undergo an (individual) procedure. Meanwhile, critics claim that refugees are receiving unequal treatment as a result of prejudice, whether of a racist, religious or other nature. It was against this backdrop that in the spring of 2023, the SVR Research Unit carried out a vignette study on solidarity with refugees in Germany. Participants were asked to read a brief description of (fictional) refugees and then state to what extent they felt solidarity with them. The descriptions differentiated between the refugees in terms of their country of origin, religion, sex, educational status and whether they intended to stay in Germany or return to their home country. **Through comparing variations in participant solidarity, the study was able to show whether certain named characteristics correlated with certain responses.**

In general, the study identified **a substantial level of solidarity overall**, with only **minor differences in relation to the characteristics of the refugees**. However, findings showed a **statistically meaningful gradation in solidarity in relation to the spectrum of specified refugee characteristics**. For example, Ukrainian refugees elicited more solidarity than those from Syria or Nigeria. Christian, female and well-educated refugees were also more likely to elicit support than Muslim, male refugees and those with a low level of education. Respondents were also generally prepared to offer more support to refugees intending to return home than to those intending to stay in Germany. On the other hand, if refugees want to stay, respondents are more likely to favour the idea of granting them protected status. Overall, it was found that **respondents were especially likely to offer**

**support to Ukrainian, Christian, highly-educated women who intend to return home.**

Not only the **personal characteristics** of the refugees were taken into account, however, but also **those of the respondents. Political attitudes, a feeling of political self-efficacy and trust in institutions proved to be particularly relevant for whether or not a respondent showed solidarity towards refugees.** Thus, respondents identifying as politically (more) left-wing displayed solidarity with refugees from all three named countries of origin (Syria, Nigeria, Ukraine), while politically centrist or (more) right-wing respondents showed less solidarity and differentiated between Ukrainian refugees on the one hand and those from Syria or Nigeria on the other. Trust in institutions and political self-efficacy were also identified as important factors associated with higher levels of solidarity.

**The findings from the vignette study show that a significant proportion of the population is prepared to actively support refugees.** Three out of four respondents said they would donate; two thirds said they would accompany refugees to the authorities; just under one third would even be prepared to offer refugees accommodation in their home. Given the fact that refugee numbers from other world regions are continuing to rise, it is important that **the potential readiness to offer support extends not only to Ukrainian refugees but also to refugees from other countries.** Further, the findings on political self-efficacy and trust in institutions indicate that local politics have a particularly important role to play; in areas where the local residents feel that their needs are being addressed, this is likely to have a positive effect on solidarity with refugees.