

The Impact of Context of Exit and of Reception on the Mental Health of Migrants from Muslim Countries in Canada, Germany, and France

Marie-Pier Joly, PhD
University of Göttingen

This study examines how armed conflict in countries of origin, and policies, attitudes and public discourse in countries of reception together affect the mental health of migrants from Muslim-majority countries living in Canada, France and Germany. Using country-level data on armed conflicts from the UCDP Armed Conflict Termination Dataset and individual-level data from the Canadian Community Health Survey and the European Social Survey, it considers variation in mental health among migrants from Muslim-majority countries according to their contexts of exit (defined here by the presence or absence of armed conflict in countries of origin at the time of migration) and contexts of reception. In recent years, migration from Muslim countries has increased in all three of these receiving countries, and as a group, migrants from Muslim countries may be experiencing unusually higher levels of discrimination in day-to-day living relative to other incoming migrant groups. Migrants from Muslim countries are also more likely to have experienced armed conflict in their home countries prior to migration relative to other incoming migrant groups, with current armed conflicts happening mostly in Muslim countries. Given the different histories, policies, and public discourse and attitudes towards immigration and immigrant integration across the three receiving countries, one question of particular interest is whether the context of reception moderates the effect of past exposure to armed conflict in countries of origin on mental health for migrants from Muslim-majority countries.

To understand the unique effect of migration from a Muslim-majority country, this study includes comparisons with both the native-born population of each receiving country and migrants from non-Muslim-majority countries in or not in conflict at the time of migration. There is further variation at the individual level within the receiving country that it considers, specifically, perceived discrimination, labour force participation, and the feeling of belonging. Ultimately, this study will shed light on the impact of context of exit and of reception on the mental health of migrants from Muslim-majority countries, and the relative significance of each. Because it considers the simultaneous impact of both sources of variation -- in the existence of armed conflicts in countries of origin and in the context of reception -- it will also demonstrate whether certain context of reception can exacerbate, protect, or add to the impact of armed conflicts in countries of origin on the mental health of migrants from Muslim majority countries.