Explaining Foreign Worker Disparities: Japan Versus the UK

by Alexia Gallon, Irvine Valley College
Mentor: Prof. Joon Kil

Abstract

Between 2021 and 2022, foreign workers (FW) constituted a mere 2.64% of the employed population of Japan versus 18% in the UK – a difference of approximately 4.1 million FWs (Fernández-Reino and Rienzo). Both countries explore a market-driven approach to social issues such as “population decline and economic stability” (Wakisaka and Cardwell), though Japan has historically and uniquely maintained a closed-door policy. This research project turns a critical eye to the differing federal policies, strategies, and welfare protections to attract foreign workers to Japan and the UK. In particular, the present study investigates the FW discrepancy in the labor market of Japan versus the UK. I devised questions and conducted primary interviews for twelve total FWs surveying experiences in either country based on four factors: awareness of resources, access to welfare benefits, and overall perception of federal support. I cross-compared immigration legislative barriers and analyzed primary federal documents in Japanese and English. I led data comparisons surveying welfare benefits from the Japanese Ministry of Justice and the Home Office in the UK. This study first found a higher availability of resettlement initiatives and employment opportunities in the UK. Second, FWs were highly incentivized by welfare benefits such as Recourse to Public Funds in the UK, found absent in Japan. Third, there were greater employment opportunities for HSFWs in the UK. Lastly, this study found foreign workers in the UK consistently experienced a greater awareness of resources, access to welfare benefits, and had an overall positive (> 51% rating) of federal support when compared to their Japanese counterparts. This study is crucial as it illuminates key explanations for the current considerable FW disparity between the labor forces of Japan and the UK.

Introduction

As of 2022, foreign workers constitute 2.64% of the employed population of Japan with an estimated population of 1.8 million (Statistica 2023). In stark contrast, foreign workers constituted 18% of the employed population in the United Kingdom (UK) as of Q3 of 2021 with an estimated population of 5.9 million (Fernández-Reino and Rienzo 2022). The disparity in both the percentage as well as the sheer number of foreign workers in the total labor force proved intriguing due to the governmental similarities of the UK and Japan; both countries rooted in parliamentary systems. The similarity in governmental structures yet such a great disparity in foreign worker outcomes thus sparked the investigation and focus of this research study.

Both Japan and the UK have seen a noted increase in the number of foreign workers in their respective labor forces over time. Both have introduced recent points-based immigration systems, with the UK’s 2021 points-based system allowing immigrants to apply for visas on a system of points and Japan’s points-based system differentiating between high-skilled foreign workers and unskilled through point allocation. Both have additionally undergone a series of federal reforms and initiatives to increase the admittance of immigrants to the country. However, there is an evidently significant difference in the magnitude of foreign workers as demonstrated by Figure 1 and Figure 2. As of 2013, Japan had 713 foreign workers compared to approximately 1,500 foreign workers in the UK. The discrepancy must thus be attributed to the federal government’s approach to immigration policies and strategies.

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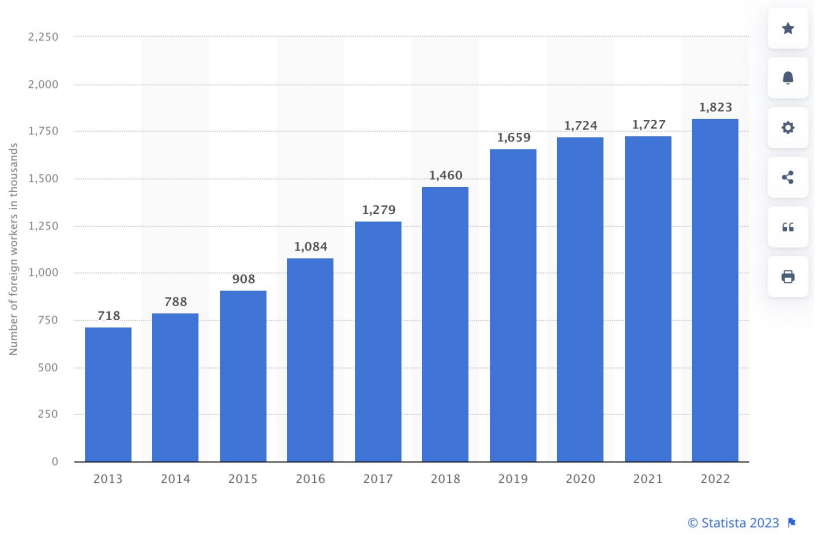


Figure 1: Number of foreign workers in Japan from 2013-2022 (Statistica 2023)

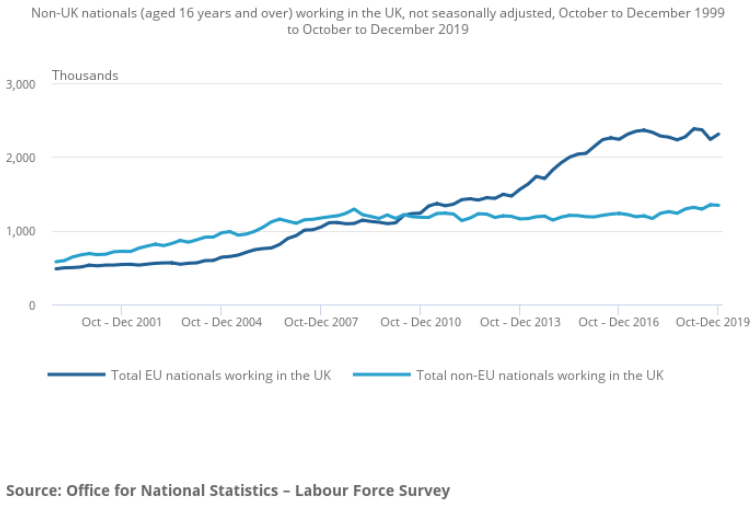


Figure 2: Number of foreign workers in the UK from 2001-2019 (Watson 2020)

To better understand the discrepancy between the foreign workers in Japan and the UK, I posed the research question for this study: Why does the UK have a greater percentage of foreign workers in the labor market than Japan? This study will seek to answer the research question through the exploration of three main independent variables: firstly the asylum seeker and refugee support; second, the social welfare programs and protections for foreign workers; and third, immigration policies for highly skilled foreign workers (HSFWs). The methodology section provides a detailed explanation of each of the aforementioned variables along with context, purpose, and hypotheses. In the literature review section, I summarize and critique five scholarly journals which provide context to the overall academic area of immigration policies in the UK and Japan. The research findings section proves the variables through a three-pronged approach for each individual variable and validates the overarching dependent variable – the research question. Finally, the conclusion explains the connection between the three variables and the research question as well as the connection between each variable.

The investigation of foreign workers composition in the workforces of Japan and the UK hold key significance to me personally as I studied abroad in Japan for three years whilst my parents were expatriates. I experienced and witnessed xenophobia against foreigners and additionally remarked at the low number of expatriates and foreign workers alike. During a summer study in the UK, I experienced a sharp contrast with the diversity of people and foreign workers I encountered. Thus, this study seeks to answer both my limitless inquisitions into

this subject area as well as to answer the research question and compare the politics of federal immigration policies between both nations.

Methodology

The significant discrepancy between the proportion of foreign workers in the labor force of Japan versus that of the United Kingdom (UK) is a topic of discussion which is analyzed and explained in this study through the lenses of three independent variables. This study seeks to explain the discrepancy in foreign workers through three variables: first through highly-skilled worker immigration policies, second through low skilled worker immigration policies, and lastly through the lack of government protections and social welfare programs.

The first of these three variables is the availability of federal protections and social welfare programs for asylum seekers and refugees in Japan versus that of the UK. In addition to a discrepancy in asylum seekers, refugees, and foreign workers between the two nations, there is a lack of information on Japanese welfare programs and refugee resettlement initiatives compared to easily accessible information on those in the UK. The purpose of this variable is to prove that contrasting federal protections and social programs targeting asylum seekers and refugees have had significantly different effects on the UK and Japan's labor market. This variable seeks to examine particular federal reforms and social welfare programs and their consequent effects on the federal support of asylum seekers and refugees. I hypothesize that the UK spends a greater portion of the federal budget and has a greater quantity and quality of programs providing asylum assistance and refugee resettlement services compared to Japan. The greater monetary commitment as well as continuous extended support by the UK lends itself to a greater number of asylum seekers and refugees in the workforce, thus resulting in a higher number of foreign workers in the labor market of the UK over that of Japan.

The second of these three variables is the availability of social welfare programs and government protections in Japan and the UK. The Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare in Japan published white papers on Karoshi such as the October 2016 white paper discussing death by overwork. The intense work culture surveyed in Japan which is facilitated by corporations is only exacerbated by the lack of government protections and benefits for foreign workers migrating to Japan. The UK in comparison faces higher employee and statutory benefits such as greater maternity leave (International Labour Organization). The purpose of this variable is to prove that contrasting federal protections and social programs targeting foreign workers have had significant effects on the attraction of foreign workers to their respective labor markets. This variable seeks to examine particular social welfare programs and government protections and their consequent effects on the attraction and retention rates of foreign workers in labor industries. I hypothesize that the UK provides greater social welfare programs, government protections, and employee and statutory benefits than Japan which results in a greater number of foreign workers in the labor market of the UK than that of Japan.

The third of these three variables is the difference between Japan and the UK's pursuit of highly-skilled foreign worker (HSFW) immigration policies. Japan has historically pursued state interests through an active government employing interventionist measures and strategic trade policies to develop rapidly as a late industrialized nation. Moreover, Japan has encouraged the migration of HSFWs through policies such as the Highly Skilled Professional Visa which utilizes a points-based system to grant migrants a visa–providing they meet the requirements. Following Brexit, the UK created a system to offer a Skilled Worker visa to migrants through the 2021 Points-Based Immigration System to similarly facilitate higher rates of HSFWs migration. The purpose of this variable is to prove that contrasting immigration strategies targeting HSFWs have had significantly different effects on Japan and the UK's respective labor markets. This variable seeks to define and explain the effect of immigration policies on the rate of HSFWs in both countries. This variable will be measured mainly quantitatively through an analysis of particular policies enacted by both states and the particular effects on the rates of HSFWs in various industries of work. I hypothesize that Japan has more restrictive immigration policies for HSFWs and that the threshold for what constitutes a HSFWs is higher than

that of the UK, thus resulting in less immigration of HSFWs to Japan and less foreign workers in the labor market as a result.

A Literature Review

The article “Exploring the trajectories of highly skilled migration law and policy in Japan and the UK” by Daisuke Wakisaka and Paul Cardwell explores the lack of efficacy pertaining to state policies for highly skilled migrants (HSM) in both countries (Wakisaka and Cardwell 1). Though both the UK and Japan seek to uphold a market-driven approach characterized by a “regulatory regime” and simplicity and efficiency, Wakisaka and Cardwell emphasize how this is not the case for either country and how, on the contrary, currently-enforced policies lack the ability to address long-term social issues–such as population decline and economic stability–by pursuing short-term goals for political gain (15). The article first faces an omission pertaining to the larger scope of foreign workers–and particularly HSM–as a proportion of the labor market overall. Though Wakisaka and Cardwell concede that according to Bartram, Japan in the 1960s and 70s represented a “negative case” in which the migrant ratio was significantly lower than that of other industrial economies whilst maintaining high economic growth, the article fails to address the currently existing disparity in the migrant ratio of Japan to other countries (Wakisaka and Cardwell 17). Moreover the article exhibits bias as it next states “the statistics [from OECD Migration Outlook] suggest that Japan has been successful in attracting HSMs” when compared to the UK; though Japan may have increased its HSM ratio compared to the UK, the magnitude of HSM workers and foreign workers overall in the labor force of Japan is significantly lower than that of the UK. The small scope of the research is misleading as it suggests Japan has a greater success as a result of its market-driven policies, however the sheer number of immigrants accepted to Japan is indeed fairly low–according to the Japan’s Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, foreign workers constitute merely 1.8 million, which is 2.61% of the overall employed population in 2022 (Wakisaka and Cardwell 18), compared to 5.9 million foreign workers in UK, which is 18% of the overall employed population in 2021. In addition, the article claims that “Despite the prioritisation of HSMs, the data indicates trainees as less-skilled migrants were in fact much more successful in migrating to Japan” though this does not explain the current limited number of foreign workers in Japan; according to Mina Pollman in a debate by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, low-skilled laborers and trainees face abuses such as “less pay, excessive overtime, and having their passports and travel documents confiscated by employees…[and overall] terrible work conditions” (2021). Though migrant workers may be moving to Japan, their retention rates are lower due to the work conditions and lack of welfare protections by the federal government, resulting in a decreased incentive for foreign workers to migrate to Japan. Lastly, the article fails to clearly define what a HSM is for Japan and what the definition is for the UK. Wakisaka and Cardwell point to the lack of a universal definition but fail to provide specific distinctions between Japan and the UK and instead provide a generalized statement of university graduations and sufficiently experienced workers qualifying as HSM without expanding on what constitutes “sufficient experience” for Japan and the UK. Without the specific definition, it is difficult to compare HSM rates for both countries.

Keiko Yamanaka’s article “New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan” takes a step away from highly-skilled workers and into the lenses of unskilled workers and the economic and labor exploitation faced by low-skilled workers (LSW) in Japan (Yamanaka 72). Despite the economic benefits LSWs bring to Japan–such as tackling chronic labor shortages and increasing the abundance of workers in labor-intensive industries, LSWs have continuously faced exploitation and treatment as if they were “second-class citizens” due to the problematic ad-hoc nature of Japanese immigration policies (Yamanaka 86). Yamanaka categorizes LSW residing in Japan under five categories: Nikkeijin, foreign trainees, students, female entertainers, and illegal workers. Pertaining to the subdivision of foreign trainees particularly, the article cites a study of 597 companies which accepted foreign trainees between 1989 and 1990, finding evidence of disguised cheap labor in 72% of the companies–especially in those in the electronics, automobile, and auto parts makers sectors. First, the study has a small sample size and thus making claims on Japan’s immigration policies for LSW

overall would be a hasty generalization due to the limited scope of the research. Second, though the article alludes to the context, there is no direct evidence provided as to the legal frameworks for LSWs during the time in which the cited study was conducted, as well as policies. During 1990, Japan formed a revision to its Immigration Control and Refugee Act which effectively excluded unskilled laborers and only permitted HSM visas. Moreover, Japan has a history of pursuing state interests and prioritizing the economy through interventionist measures and strategic trade policies in sectors such as consumer electronics and automobile industries to advance economically as a late industrialized country. The omission of context as well as the legal frameworks essentially places the study in a void without information on the frameworks, policies, and state's market approach which is harmful to education and the study overall as it limits knowledge. Additionally, though Yamanaka comments on the exploitation of LSW by companies, there is insufficient evidence to prove such a claim besides the 1989-90 study, rendering the overall argument weaker as a result.

The article "Why Japan Is Not a Migration State: A Case of Postcolonial Migration Management and Increased Side-Door Policies" by Jaisan Sun seeks to disprove earlier ideas of Japan's existence as a migration state due to its exercise of side-door immigration policies. Sun refers to a 1998 article by Hollifield in order to define the idea of a "migration state" and claims due to its basis in conceptions of "embedded liberalism and "rights-based politics" which are rooted in a free market movement of migration not presently exhibited by Japan. To explain the state of migration management, Sun categorizes Japan's immigration policies into four stages: the first stage from 1945 to 1979, characterized by the exclusion and discrimination of former colonial subjects; the second stage form 1980 to 1990 with a focus on globalization, refugees, and the incorporation of Nikkeijin; the third stage from 1990 to 2008 with a focus shift to permanent residency; and the current stage characterized by "fabricated multiculturalism" and side-door policies (Sun 1364). Due to the recency of the article, there is an expected analysis of the effect of policies enacting between 2008 and the present such as the immigration reform through the expansion of visa programs enacted in April 2019 or the obstacles to asylum seekers presented by reforms made to the Immigration reform in 2023. Though policies such as the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and the 2012 high-skilled labor point system are noted, there is insufficient evidence explaining the effects of such policies on Japan's rate of immigration or that of foreign workers. Moreover, Sun contests the idea of the migrant state due to its historical applications to Western and tradition migrant destination countries and states that the "simple acknowledgment that such countries are in their early stages of development as migration states does not suffice the claim that the trajectory of their transition will mirror that of the traditional destination countries" (Sun 1371). Though it is true that the pattern created by Western countries cannot necessarily be applied to Japan, Sun provides no evidence to prove the contrary. If countries such as Japan and South Korea begin to exemplify patterns demonstrated by earlier industrialized countries and there is no evidence to prove the contrary, the existing "emerging migrant state" thesis cannot be entirely nullified.

An exploration on immigration bail and legislative restrictions to asylum seekers is conducted by Helen Baron in the article "UK immigration policy: restrictions on asylum seekers' right to study." Baron begins with the context of the Immigration Act of 2016 which brought the idea of "immigration bail" into widespread force in the UK, contrary to earlier parliamentary discussions and claims it would be used sparingly and for particular purposes (Baron 39). According to an investigation on 53,901 individuals given immigration bail forms between the 15th of January and the 31st of May 2018, "12,642 individuals (24%) were prohibited from studying" (Baron 39). Moreover, the problematic nature of immigration bail was found in the lack of transparency and communication; according to the Home Office official policy, contact must be maintained with individuals as their immigration bail is processed, though this seldom was the case (Baron 40). A study following a state policy change in 2018 sought to investigate the errors associated with immigration bail. The Home Office led the process to identify errors, removing study restrictions from 4,709 individuals by the end of the month in May 2018 (Baron 40). Though the studies are conclusive in proving the errors within the system of processing of the Home Office, there is a weak correlation proven between immigration bail and asylum seekers studying in the UK. Baron points to case examples such as those of Sharif, Henry, and Farooq but fails to provide a

quantification of the number of asylum seekers who were studying and received immigration bail. Moreover, the lack of transparency noted by Baron is similarly a weak argument due to the insufficient evidence presented; the case of the Home Office and the errors it makes prove the immigration process may have fundamental flaws, though exact flaws or holes are both not presented by Baron nor substantiated by external evidence or support. The lack of support and the lack of an explanation of potential correlations thus weakens the overall argument that UK immigration policy harms asylum seekers studying.

The article “The making of irregular migration: post-Brexit immigration policy and risk of labour exploitation” by Meri Åhlberg and Lucila Granada exposes the role states play in allowing labor exploitation to occur– specifically pertaining to immigration policies following the UK’s exit from the EU. Åhlberg and Granada hypothesize in their investigation that Brexit will result in a significant increase in the number of “irregular migrants” in the UK which will effectively exacerbate labor exploitation when combined with historically restrictive immigration policies. In the subsection classifying the immigration system as a “hierarchy of vulnerability,” Åhlberg and Granada contend strict immigration employment restrictions “make workers highly dependent on their employer and therefore vulnerable to abuse and exploitation” (Åhlberg and Granada 126). However, there is a limited link between the dependency workers face and the exploitation that will occur as a result. The article does not answer how dependency directly results in labor abuse and exploitation in specific instances, which is an overall weakness of the article and its arguments pertaining to the correlation between irregular migration and exploitation. There is an overall methodological as well as research shortcoming as the article is formatted by explaining the generalized correlation between irregular migration and exploitation and explaining its prominence in the UK; the article creates a generalized blanket statement which it then applies to various categories. However, there is a lack of overall specificity in the analysis which the article as a whole could greatly benefit from; due to the lack of particular immigration policies and laws such as the UK’s 2016 Immigration Act and their direct effects on irregular migrants and exploitation as a result. Similarly, case examples or investigative studies examining the link between irregular migrants and labor exploitation would strengthen overall assertions made. The lack of specificity in immigration and labor laws as well as in case examples results in an overall excessively generalized statement which does not sufficiently analyze the correlation between irregular migrants and labor exploitation.

Research findings

Independent Variable 1 – Asylum Seeker and Refugee Support

The first independent variable is asylum seeker and refugee support. The variable will be analyzed and investigated through a three-pronged comparative approach. To prove that contrasting federal protections and social programs targeting foreign workers have had significantly different effects on the UK and Japan’s labor market: this study will begin by presenting the definition of “asylum seeker” and “refugee” for Japan and the UK; next it will demonstrate the federal reforms for asylum seekers and refugees in both countries; lastly, it will explain the availability of federal assistance programs for both countries.

1. Asylum Seeker and the Disparity

Japan has no found definition of “asylum seeker.” The lack of a definition lends itself to ambiguity within the federal system as the government has no means of identifying asylum seekers; if the government cannot define asylum seekers, the process of providing support to such unidentifiable asylum seekers becomes more challenging and difficult. Japan does, however, have a definition for “refugee,” which is an individual who may face persecution for their race, religion, nationality, or otherwise membership in a particular group (UNHCR). Their definition is based upon the Article 1 of the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention;

> "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of [their] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail [themself] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of [their] former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (UNHCR 1951).

It is relevant to note that the Japanese definition of refugee does not necessarily guarantee protection to those fleeing conflict. Therefore, asylum seekers or refugees fleeing an area of war or conflict may not necessarily fall into the definition of refugee. If they are not included in the definition, this makes identification as an asylum seeker or refugee impossible and thus prevents them from accessing relevant social welfare services and federal protections.

The UK provides both a definition of "asylum seeker" as well as one for a "refugee." An asylum seeker is an individual who has applied for asylum and is awaiting a decision on refugee status (Commons Library Parliament UK). Asylum is a protection granted by the UK to someone fleeing from persecution in their home country, which contrasts with the conditions detailed above for asylum seekers seeking protection in Japan. Moreover, the UK provides protections in the instance that an applicant does not qualify for refugee status – they are still granted leave to remain in the UK for a particular period of time for humanitarian reasons. The refusal rate for asylum applicants has additionally been decreasing over time. The House of Commons finds that asylum applicants refused during an initial decision hit 88% in 2004 but has since steadily declined, reaching its lowest point of 24% in 2022. Moreover, refused applicants can still appeal. Therefore, the acceptance of asylum seekers remains high in the UK and even those refused are often granted leave to remain – and are thus able to seek jobs or rely on federal protections. The definition of a refugee in the UK is similar to that of Japan. When an individual who has applied for asylum is recognized as a refugee and is provided with refugee status documentation (UK Refugee Council).

Year	**Japan**	**UK**	**% Difference**
2022	17,406	328,989	179.9%
2021	1,508	138,078	195.679%
2020	1,132	132,304	196.607%
2019	1,463	133,083	195.651%
2018	1,893	126,709	194.112%

Table 1: Comparison of refugee applications each year

There exists a clear disparity between the number of refugee applications every year in Japan and the UK as seen in Table 1, based on refugee application data from Macro Trends 2023. The average percent difference between refugee applications Japan and UK is a striking 192.39%;

(179.9 + 195.679 + 196.607 +195.651 + 194.112) / 5 = 192.3898% average

The high disparity in refugee applications thus decreases the potential for foreign workers; less incoming refugees and people means less potential for employment. Moreover, there is a spike in refugee applications during 2022 which is not an outlier but rather a marker of circumstance. The Russian invasion of Ukraine served as a catalyst for a great displacement crisis with a number of roughly 110 million displaced individuals as of May 2023 (UN refugees). Therefore, the number of Ukrainian refugee applications to both Japan and the UK reached a sharp jump between 2021 and 2022.

Year	**Japan**	**UK**
2022	202	15,451
2021	74	14,734

Table 2: Comparison of the refugee recognition rate between Japan and the UK

Table 2 compares the difference between the refugee recognition rate in Japan versus that of the UK. The refugee recognition rate identifies the number of refugee applications accepted out of all total refugee applications. Japan's rate in 2022 – the 202 individuals accepted – composed only 2% of all individuals applying for refugee status (Kyodo News 2023). The 74 individuals accepted in the previous year was the highest number accepted since Japan began recognizing refugees in 1982 (Kyodo News 2022). The exceedingly low number of refugee applications, coupled with the low number of refugees applying, results in a low number of total refugees housed in Japan – this impacts the workforce as there are less people able to apply for work and employment. In comparison, the UK accepted around 15.4k people including dependents, which constitutes 82% of all total applicants who were granted refugee status following asylum application. The previous year with 14,734 people accepted constituted 72% of all applicants, with the record high 72% of aforementioned applicants being granted refugee status at the initial decision. The discrepancy of 2% acceptance versus the 82% acceptance in the UK explains the reason there are less refugees and asylum seekers in Japan than the UK. Less refugees and asylum seekers is correlated with less foreign workers as there are less individuals getting employed.

An investigation of asylum applications and acceptances yields a similar conclusion.

	Japan	**UK**
2022	3,347	89,146
Number of initial decisions	5,621	22,382
Response rate	4% (+)	75% (+)

Table 3: Comparison of the refugee recognition rate between Japan and the UK

Table 3 examines the number of asylum applications in 2022 in Japan and the UK. The UK not only received more asylum applications in a landslide victory but additionally had an incredibly higher positive response rate of 75%, compared to the 4% positive response rate of Japan. With more asylum applicants and more applications responded favorably, the UK thus houses more asylum seekers who are able to reside in the UK and seek services and employment. Therefore, the disparity in both asylum seekers as well as refugees in Japan and the UK proves the hypothesis correct as it supports the dependent variable through the potential worker numbers.

2. Asylum and Refugee Status Federal Reforms Over Time

Japan has led four pivotal federal reforms for refugee and general immigration recognition from 1981 until the present. Beginning with the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act of 1981, Japan introduced the refugee recognition system and provides a guide titled "A Guide to the Procedure for Recognition of Refugee Status." Section 3 of the guide, "Procedure for Recognition of Refugee Status" details how an applicant must provide proof of their accepted refugee status: "Recognition of refugee status will be based on the materials submitted by the applicant. Therefore, an applicant him/herself is expected to prove that he/she is a refugee by substantial evidence or by testimony of persons concerned" (Ministry of Justice 5). The phrasing of the guide is hyper vague and problematic as there are no directions or a clear-cut method of evaluation for the applicant to abide by. The issue of vagueness in the guide may thus pose a challenge to prospective applicants, discouraging applicants due to the limited specificity.

In 2010, Japan introduced the three year pilot resettlement program which was the first of its kind in Asia and made permanent in 2015. Resettlement is the process through which refugees are provided assistance in their transition and residency in a new country. Such a process is particularly important as it is "the only durable solution that involves the relocation of refugees from an asylum country to a third country" (United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees). Through the resettlement program and the execution of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the Japanese government chooses refugees who are deemed “better fit for resettlement” with the goal of increasing the number of refugees without the complex and lengthy Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process which is often used to evaluate applicants. However, there is a similar issue with the pilot program in terms of vagueness; the MOJ does not explain what a “better fit for resettlement” entails or means, which allows them to shift their definition based on cases and provides no aid to prospective applicants when preparing their applications. The harm in vagueness was demonstrated by the MOJ’s failure to meet their quota of 90 refugees, falling short with only 45 refugees integrated through the program. The funding for the program cannot be found in available databases and information online. Due to the low actual number of refugees, the low target number of refugees, and the hidden nature of the initiative, the funding was likely – and can assumed to have been – relatively low.

The journal “A Socio-Economic Review of Japan’s Resettlement Pilot Project – criticisms” by Barbara Treviranus and Sayaka O. Törngren in the UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service critique the infectivity of the resettlement program. The study of refugees resettled through the program found that the main barrier was language: “the refugees report that their major difficulty, even after as much as five years in Japan, remains the Japanese language. . . Lacking time, financial resources, and language skills, the resettled adults have yet to feel truly at home in Japan” (Treviranus and Törngren 2). The purpose of resettlement programs is to introduce incoming refugees into a new country and community and to adequately support their transition. However, the pilot resettlement program failed to sufficiently address challenges such as language barriers for refugees. Continued barriers prevent refugees from gaining access to jobs due to a lack of Japanese language proficiency and communication skills, thus decreasing the overall number of refugees that can gain jobs and join the workforce.

Another critique of the program lies in the lack of accessibility to pertinent information. Treviranus and Törngren found that the majority of those involved “became aware of the Resettlement Pilot Project when they were approached either directly by Ministry representatives, or the staff from RHQ . . . There is also broad agreement that there is currently a lack of effort by the Government of Japan to promote the Resettlement Programme and raise awareness among the public” (50-51). The lack of program information – mirroring the vagueness of refugee application guidelines and documents – forms a barrier to refugees attempting to integrate into Japanese society as they are not able to locate programs such as the pilot resettlement program in the first place. Without access to resettlement, the barriers such as language faced by refugees dramatically increases as they do not have the guidance and support of a resettlement program. With exacerbated barriers, the potential of securing a job in the workforce as an asylum seeker or refugee thus decreases.

In March 2022, Japan widened its refugee acceptance for Ukrainian refugees. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida created an announcement in March that would accept Ukrainian refugees fleeing war, and Japan accepted 2,302 Ukranians which greatly surpassed the average number of accepted refugees each year as seen above in Figure 3. This dramatic change was shocking: “many were surprised with the decision given that Tokyo has long held a strict definition of who is eligible for asylum” (Takahara 2023). The acceptance of more refugees into the country, however, marked an important shift in Japanese refugee policy as the implications hinted at a more lenient immigration policy.

In June 2023 however, there was an amendment to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act which added the “Forced repatriation” of asylum seekers. The new amendment to the act grants the Japanese government the ability to immediately deport asylum seekers who apply more than twice for refugee status (Human Rights Watch 2023). The purpose of the amendment was to “end the extended detention in immigration facilities of foreign nationals who do not comply with deportation orders issued for overstaying and other reasons” (Kyodo news). The added change poses a challenge to non-Japanese residents who apply multiple times or who fail to leave Japan after being ordered to do so as it makes them subject to enforced

deportation. This means any non-Japanese residents who overstay a visa, were denied refugee status, or apply more than twice for refugee status, can be immediately deported.

The added amendment is non unique given the strict history of Japan's immigration and refugee policies. However, the recent amendment poses concerns for international human rights and faces opposition from groups such as the Japan Federation of Democratic Medical Institutions (MIN-IREN). A survey conducted by the aforementioned group pertaining to denied cases of asylum seekers found that applicants who, according to international refugee standards, should have been accepted were denied refugee status. An example lies in asylum seekers who risked their lives to flee their home country after witnessing the murder of relatives; they should have been granted refugee status due to circumstance but were still denied by Japan. The strict enforcement and past of harsh refugee status denials, coupled with the new amendment for enforced deportation, thus poses human rights concerns and decreases the likelihood of applicants as they run the risk of facing deportation and have no security if applying for refugee status.

In comparison, the UK has a significantly different history pertaining to refugee acceptance and asylum protections and has a greater availability of resettlement initiatives (Beirens and Fratzke 2017). Starting in 2014, the UK launched the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) in response to the crisis in Syria with the goal of resettling up to 20,000 refugees by the year 2020. The high goal and magnitude of target refugees for resettlement proves great contrast to Japan, with its strict enforcement and high likelihood of refusal. Another key difference remains in further screening; while resettlement refugees in Japan often fall subject to additional screening for "employability potential," resettlement refugees in the UK are not subject to any additional employment screening (Phillimore et al 6). The screening process in Japan likely serves as an additional barrier to discourage refugees and asylum seekers from resettlement, decreasing the likelihood of refugees and asylum seekers entering the workforce. This has an immediate effect on the number of foreign workers entering the labor market in Japan due to the additional barrier, thus proving the hypothesis correct.

In 2016, the UK launched another program titled the Community Sponsorship Scheme (CSS) , a federal initiative to accept refugees overseen by the Home Office, Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government, as well as the Department for International Development. The CSS provides a process through which local groups and families can support refugees hoping to resettle in the UK (Global Compact Refugees). Moreover, the oversight of the Community Sponsorship Scheme is connected to additional federally-funded and overseen initiatives such as the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS). In 2022, 280 refugees were resettled through the CSS. Accessible information on the CSS finds the federal funding provided to the sponsors is a minimum of £4500 provided per adult and at least £9000 for a family with two adults (Community Sponsorship). Therefore:

$$\text{COST: } 280 * 4500 \text{ or } 280 * 9000 \Rightarrow £1.26M \leq x \leq £2.52M$$

where x is the federal spending for the CSS

£1.26M to £2.52M is a great deal of funding by the federal government, which demonstrates UK's commitment to resettlement for its refugees. Thus, the support provided – through the funding of sponsors alone – demonstrates a greater allocation of resources to refugees and thus federal protection. The federal protection incentivizes refugees and asylum seekers to relocate to the UK as a result, which increases the number of employable individuals.

In 2022, the UK launched two new schemes: the Ukrainian Family Scheme and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, two new visa routes through which Ukranians fleeing the Russian-Ukraine war could relocate to the UK. As of June 2023, approximately 179,000 refugees relocated to the UK through the aforementioned schemes, which is "Much larger in scale than any other single forced migration flow to the UK in recent history" (Commons Library Parliament). To put the amount in perspective, the number of Ukrainian refugees in 2022 is roughly equivalent to all individuals granted refugee and asylum between 2014 and 2021. Moreover, similar to CSS, the two schemes received significant funding from the UK's federal government. Sponsors under either

scheme received £350 per month for the first 12 months of their guests' stay, which increases to £500 a month following the 12-month mark. Therefore:

12 months: 179,000 * 350x where x = 12 ⇒ £751.8M total

> 12 months: 179,000 * 500x + 751,800,000 where x = # months - 12

Therefore if x = 13 → £841.3M

Therefore, the total spending for the Ukrainian schemes was immensely high at a lowest rate of £751.8M – assuming all sponsors gave refuge for 12 months – and could exceed well beyond £841.3M if each sponsor gave refuge for more than 12 months. In addition to housing and support, the UK additionally provides a welfare support system for the Ukrainian Family Scheme (Gloucester County Council). The amount of funding demonstrates a key commitment to refugee and asylum seeker protection which encourages more refugees and asylum seekers to relocate to the UK due to the availability of schemes providing protections such as housing as well as welfare support. The influx of refugees and asylum seekers increases the potential for work, which means there are more foreign workers in the UK as a result.

3. Work Opportunities and Assistance

A brief comparison on the budget spent for refugees in 2022 between Japan and the UK exposes a discrepancy in the countries' commitment to refugee support. The Japanese government allocated ¥1.9 billion from their federal budget for living expenses and the temporary accommodation of Ukrainian refugees (Mitsui 2022). If Japan's overall budget for aid is around ¥13.2 trillion according to JP Statistics Bureau 2023, then:

Sum: (1.9B / 13.2T) * 100 = 0.01439393939 ≈ 0.014% of budget

In comparison, the UK spent £3.7 billion of its aid budget – or 29% – for refugees in 2022 (House of Commons Library 2022). The gap in budget spent on refugees signals the countries' commitment to supporting its refugees and asylum seekers. The number of refugees and asylum seekers definitively impacts the workforce as they present additional foreign worker populations who could become employed. Thus, the discrepancy in funding supports the hypothesis that a discrepancy in asylum seekers and refugees is correlated with a discrepancy in the percentage of foreign workers between the UK and that of Japan.

In addition to discrepancies in funding allocation for refugees, there exist discrepancies in social welfare and federal protections between the UK and Japan. In Japan, work permission is usually denied following the first six months after applying for refugee status (Nagoya International Law Office). This poses an issue as refugees and asylum seekers alike are essentially sent into limbo as they await a decision on their application. And with the significantly low acceptance rate and likelihood of rejection, this essentially means that refugees and asylum seekers may remain forcibly unemployed for a year – two applications – before they are then subject to enforced deployment as per the new amendment. This directly impacts refugees and asylum seekers' potential to work and thus directly decreases the number of foreign workers in the labor force in Japan as they do not allow refugees and asylum seekers to work while they are awaiting a decision on their applications.

Japan has programs such as the Refugee Assistance Headquarters Support Center (RHQ 2023) with the purpose of providing resettlement assistance to convention refugees through seven initiatives: those facing difficulty in their lives, without a place of residence, Japanese language assistance, Japanese language learning resources, consultations for life in japan, job consultation, as well as subsidies for education and training. The government allegedly "offers Japanese language training, guidance on social adaptation & customs, etc. to help refugees readjust" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). However, the absence of data on refugees helped result in no method of proving or disproving the claim. If anything, the absence of data on the number of refugees provided resettlement assistance hints that a negligible amount of people is in the programs and benefit. The lack of accessible information on the funding for RHQ or similar resettlement

programs paints a similar picture, as there is no means to evaluate Japan's commitment to refugees through refugee resettlement programs from an economic standpoint.

Therein exists a similar challenge with other programs such as the Japanese Association for Refugees (JAR) and the social security system for foreign nationals. The former provides legal counseling on Japanese procedure and provides assistance in asylum seeker applications through the Regional Bureau of Immigration Services Agency (UNHCR). The latter claims "Persons recognized as being refugees are given the same benefits under the social security system as provided to Japanese citizens and other foreign nationals" (MOFA). However, both programs fall into the same issue as the RHQ; they are both vague with no information on the benefits provided or social systems accessible to those eligible. The lack of accessible information and the absence of data supporting its impact supports the conclusion that such programs have had negligible impacts on refugee resettlement and asylum support.

In contrast, the UK has readily accessible data on the number of refugees who have been resettled or relocated through its programs. According to the House of Commons Library, the UK has resettled or relocated 51,000 people between 2014 and June 2023 through its resettlement assistance program. Moreover, there is no block from working whilst awaiting a decision on refugee status unlike in Japan. Though permission is not formally granted until refugee status has been given, the UK allows foreign individuals to apply for benefits and support if they either: 1) are not ready or able to look for work or 2) have little to no income (CitizensAdvice).

A report providing a conclusive summary to the two-year investigation of the The Economic Integration of Refugees in the UK (ECONREF) by Kone et al postulates that unemployed asylum migrants have a higher likelihood of relying on public agencies to look for jobs (2019). And there is a great availability of programs supporting asylum seekers. Individuals can gain housing and money as well as free school and healthcare from the National Health Service if they are homeless or do not have the money to buy food and can demonstrate they cannot leave the UK (GOV.UK). They are immediately given a place to live and granted £47.39 / each person in household per week. Even if an individual is refused refugee status or denied asylum, they still gain benefits: they are still given somewhere to live and £47.39 per person on a payment card for food, clothing, and toiletries – however, payment is not given if the offer to live somewhere is not accepted. There are additional benefits such as maternity payment for a one-off of £300 and a one-off £250 maternity payment if refused asylum and the baby is due in less than 8 weeks or is less than 6 weeks old. This means that whether an individual is granted status or asylum, they will still gain social welfare benefits and thus are incentivized to move to the UK as they can work or are provided housing and payment regardless of the status of their application. Due to the increased social welfare and federal protection, more refugees and asylum seekers are likely to move to the UK, which thus increases the pool of applicants for jobs and the number of foreign workers in the labor force – again proving the hypothesis for this variable true.

Independent Variable 2 – Welfare States and Foreign Worker Protections

The second independent variable is the welfare state and foreign worker protections for all foreign workers. The variable will similarly be analyzed and investigated through a three-pronged comparative approach. To prove that contrasting federal protections and social programs targeting foreign workers have had significantly different effects on the UK and Japan's labor market, this variable will: firstly, define social welfare; second, explain the foreign worker protections in both countries; and third, provide the number of foreign workers over time and link it to the labor force.

1. Social Welfare

Firstly, social welfare is the assortment of programs such as housing, healthcare, maternity support, and more which aim to assist the disadvantaged in society. Japan has incredibly limited social welfare access for

immigrants; in 2014, the Japanese Supreme Court ruled against foreign workers, denying their access to social welfare (Richards). The ruling of the Supreme Court was that foreigners residing in Japan – even if granted permanent residency status – are not guaranteed social welfare benefits. The court claimed “Foreigners do not possess the right to receive assistance based on the law and are only limited to being subjects for public assistance in a practical sense based on administrative decisions” (Richards 2014). The justification for the limit on access to social welfare is that only “citizens” have the right to public assistance; since foreign residents do not fall within the legal definition of a “citizen,” they are denied social welfare benefits. However, the implications of the court ruling are clear: foreign workers in Japan do not have access to social welfare benefits, which acts as a force to discourage foreign workers from entering the Japanese labor force – supporting the hypothesis for this variable as there is less incentive for foreign workers to enter the Japanese labor force due to the lack of federal protections such as social welfare benefits.

Though Japan lacks a direct definition of an “immigrant,” the UK defines an immigrant as a person who is subject to immigration control, or rather, a person who requires leave to enter or remain in the UK but has not achieved it (Immigration and Asylum Act 1999). In the UK, a foreign worker’s eligibility for benefits is not explicitly denied but is rather determined by and dependent on factors such as their nationality, immigration status, circumstances in which they arrived, whether they are “habitually resident”, employed or looking for work, and alone or with family members (Commons Library Parliament). “Habitual residence” refers to the requirement that an individual must have taken residence in the UK for a certain period of time. However, even the requirement of habitual residence is accessible to the common individual; though a newly-arrived immigrant does not immediately become habitually resident, they must demonstrate residence for an “appreciable period of time.” There is no set period of time, however, “benefits case law believes the time frame to be between 1 and 3 months (UK Social Security and Child Support Commissioners' Decisions). Therefore, the requirements are generally lenient and open to the applicant. Moreover, the specificity of the UK’s requirements contrasts greatly with the vagueness and ambiguity of Japan. The accessible information allows for applicants to understand the requirement better, increasing the number and success of applicants in the status quo.

2. Enacted Welfare Policies

Japan’s history of immigration denial is best represented by the 2014 Supreme Court ruling on immigration restriction. The case was brought before the court by an 82 year old Chinese woman who was born and lived her life in Japan. Her application was denied by the Oita government in 2008 on the basis that she had “sufficient savings to survive without welfare” (Richards 2014). The case was appealed and overturned by the Fukuoka High Court on the grounds that, under the Public Assistance Law (PAL), foreign nationals are entitled to Japanese social welfare programs. In 2014, the federal Supreme Court intervened in the case. The issue raised by the case is the question: Should foreign workers be eligible for benefits in Japan? The ruling overturned the Fukuoka ruling by claiming foreigners do not have the right to receive government assistance as they are not citizens. The impact of the case is immense as foreign workers now have no access to social welfare benefits.

The UK maintains a significantly different stance on foreign worker access to benefits. Under the Immigration and Asylum Act of 1999, immigrants – or rather, those subject to immigration control – are officially excluded from social welfare benefits (UK government legislation). However, immigrants are allowed access to benefits if they fall under any of the five following categories: Part 1 of the Welfare Reform Act 2021, which provides the immigrant with universal credit; the Jobseekers Act of 1995 based on the income of the jobseeker’s allowance; the State Pension Credit Act of 2002 which provides state pension credit; Part 1 of the Welfare Reform Act of 2008 which provides income-related, employment, and support allowance; and finally the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act of 1992 which provides the individual with an independence payment or disability living allowance, income support, social fund payment, health in pregnancy grant, child benefit, or

housing benefit. The implications are high as there are various means in which an immigrant can gain access to social welfare benefits as listed above.

In addition to exceptional benefits, the UK has an accessible repeal process for their No Recourse for Public Funds (NRPF) claim which is especially advantageous for foreign workers. NRPF maintains that “Migrants in the UK on visas, illegally or seeking asylum are usually ineligible for most social welfare benefits and public housing. This is referred to as having ‘no recourse to public funds’, or ‘NRPF’” (Commons Library Parliament). In essence, an immigrant is defaulted to NRPF when they first enter – assuming they do not fall under one of the categories for allowance to social benefits listed above. However, all individuals are able to apply to appeal NRPF in order to change permission and gain access to public funds (GOV.UK). Immigrants can apply for access to public funds if they fall under one of the three following categories: the permission is based on family or private life, they hold a British national Overseas Visa, or if financial circumstances change. The ability to appeal and gain access to public funds is a great incentive for foreign workers and immigrants alike as they are able to locate in the UK with the assurance that they can gain public funds or social welfare under various circumstances.

3. Foreign Workers and the Labor Force

If immigrants to or foreign workers residing in the UK can appeal NRPF and gain substantial benefits, the question is then: what is the success rate for engaging in such a process? According to the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, around 1.4 million foreign workers in the UK People have NRPF on their visas. Removing NRPF is desirable for immigrants due to the potential for destitution as around 75% of migrants subject to NRPF are unable to access federal support. However, applications to change NRPF to gain access to public funds have a high rate of acceptance. According to the House of Commons Parliament, there was an estimated 60% rate of success for 3,200 applications for recourse to public funds in 2022. The high rate of success for gaining recourse to public funds (RPF) means that out of the aforementioned 3,200 applications, around two thousand (precisely 1,920) individuals were able to successfully change their status to gain RPF With a majority of individuals gaining RPF, this clearly marks the separation between the UK and Japan; whilst Japan provides no public funds or assistance to foreign-born individuals, foreign workers, and immigrants alike, the UK has various systems through which a foreign worker can gain access to public funds and assistance. The public assistance serves as an incentive for foreign workers to work in the UK rather than Japan as they know they have a high likelihood of gaining access to public funds and assistance through either RPF or through their alignment with a category as per the Immigration and Asylum Act of 1999’s five categories of exceptions.

Another example of the UK’s accessibility to RPF lies in a sample study of England and Wales. As of June 2022, around 10.39 million foreign-born individuals – accounting for 14.8% of the total UK population – resided in England and Wales (Immigration Advice Services 2023). Out of these 10.39 million people, 1.4 million had NRPF which means:

$$1{,}400{,}000 / 10{,}388{,}000 = 13.4770889488 \Rightarrow \approx 13.48\%$$

around 13.48% of the sample foreign worker population had NRPF status on their application. By the rule of inverse, this means that approximately 86.52% of the sample population has RPF. The high percentage of people with access to public funds means that foreign workers in the sample population are more supported by the federal government. Since the sample population is representative of the UK overall, this means that on a nation-level scale, a great proportion of the population has RPF. Therefore, the incentive to locate in the UK as a foreign worker is supported and proves the hypothesis correct.

Independent Variable 3 – Highly Skilled Foreign Worker Immigration Policies

The third independent variable is the highly skilled worker immigration policies for Japan and the UK. Similar to the previous two variables, this variable will be analyzed and investigated through a three-pronged comparative approach. To prove that contrasting immigration strategies targeting highly skilled foreign workers have had significantly different effects on the UK and Japan's labor market, this variable will: first, explain the definition of "highly-skilled foreign workers" (HSFWs) according to Japan and the UK; second, explain the immigration strategies each country used to attract HSFWs; lastly, provide the number of HSFWs and link it to the respective labor forces of Japan and the UK.

1. Highly-Skilled Foreign Workers

It must first be addressed that there exists great ambiguity on what constitutes HSFWs (Parsons et al 2014). There is no universally accepted definition and any existing definition fluctuates depending on the "subject and context" (Weinar and Koppenfels 2020). There can be criteria determined; however, they would not be realistic to the real-world function of the state; the state defines what a HSFW is and can affect the acceptance of foreign workers through the establishment and oversight of functions such as visas, eligibility criteria, data collection, etc (Weinar and Koppenfels 2020). Therefore, due to both the ambiguity as well as the necessity for a real-world applicable definition, each state must define what a HSFW is in the context of their country.

Japan currently uses a Highly Skilled Professional Visa (HSPV) as a point-based system to grant entry to HSFWs (Visa Guide World). There are three categories in which a HSPV is issued: first for advanced academic research activities such as education, research, or research guidance; second, through the advanced specialization or technical activities such as in the fields of the natural sciences or humanities; third, through advanced business management activities where a foreign worker will operate or manage. It must be clear that for the aforementioned categories, the individual must be working with a private or public organization in Japan. This means that the amount of foreign workers is decreased as they must have secured a job with a Japanese private or public organization before they begin to consider relocation or immigration. If they do secure a job, however, this does not guarantee a visa; they must still achieve greater than 70 points on the point-based system and only work for the company sponsoring the visa. Any broken contracts or leave from the company result in the removal of the visa and the required application for another through a new Certificate of Eligibility or a standard Japan Work Visa. Below is the breakdown of the points-based system according to the Japan Immigration Bureau based on four categories:

Academic background

Advanced Academic Research or Advanced Specialized / Technical Activities	**Point Breakdown**
Doctorate degree	30
Masters degree	20
Bachelor's degree	10

Table 4: Point Breakdown for Academic Background, Advanced Academic Research or Advanced Specialized or Technical Activities

Advanced Business Management Activities	**Point Breakdown**
Doctorate or master's degree	20
Bachelor's degree	10

Table 5: Point Breakdown for Advanced Business Management Activities

Professional career

Work Experience	**Point Breakdown**
10+ yrs	15
5+ yrs	10
3+ yrs	5

Table 6: Point Breakdown based on Work Experience

Annual salary

Annual salary	**Points**
10 million Yen	40
9 million Yen	35
8 million Yen	30
7 million Yen (unless 40+ yrs)	25
6 million Yen (unless 40+ yrs)	20
5 million Yen (unless 35+ yrs)	15
4 million Yen (unless 30+ yrs)	10

Table 7: Point Breakdown based on Annual Salary

Age

Age	**Additional Points**
<= 29 yrs	15
30 - 34 yrs	10
35 - 39 yrs	5

Table 8: Point Breakdown based on Age

With additional points if the foreign worker fulfills certain requirements such as:

Circumstance	**Additional Points**
Work for an organization receiving financial support measures	10
Degree issued by Japanese higher ed instit	10
Level N1 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT)	15
Graduated from foreign institution w/ a major in Japanese	15
Level N2 of the JLPT	10
Previous research achievements	15 - 20

Table 9: Points for Additional Circumstances

The issue with the Japanese points-based system lies in the drastically small number of people who exceed 70 points and gain recognition as a HSFW. According to Nikkei Asia, “As of Feb. 28, around 146,000 people had been granted the specified skill visas. That is equivalent to about 8% of the 1.82 million total foreign workers in Japan as of October 2022” (2023). Moreover, at the end of June in 2022, there were around 16k individuals who had HSPV (Immigration Services Agency 2023). The exceedingly low number of individuals with HSPVs thus means that not many HSFWs are being accepted or admitted to Japan. They either retain standard visas with lower paying jobs and less prospective career opportunities, or cannot enter Japan as they have not secured a job.

Similar to Japan, the UK's point based system requires a foreign worker to reach more than or equal to 70 pts to work in the UK with the checklist in Table 10.

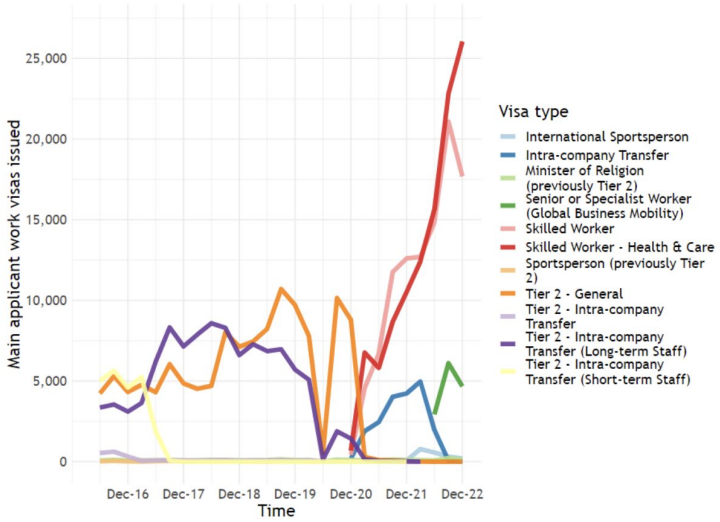
Characteristics	**Mandatory (M) / Tradeable (T)**	**Points**
Offer of job by approved sponsor	M	20
Job at appropriate skill level	M	20
Speaks English at required level	M	10
Salary of £20,480 - £23,039 or >= 80% of the going rate for profession (whichever = higher)	T	0
Salary of £23,040 - £25,599 or >= 90% of the going rate for profession (whichever = higher)	T	10
Salary of >= £25,600 or >= the going rate for profession (whichever = higher)	T	20
Job in a shortage occupation as designated by the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC)	T	20
PhD in subject relevant to job	T	20
PhD in STEM subject relevant to job	T	20

Table 10: UK Foreign Worker Point Checklist

With the Skilled Worker (SW) route, applicants can trade characteristics such as qualifications against lower salary in order to achieve more points. For instance, if a job offer is less than a minimum salary requirement (but greater than £20,480), an applicant may be eligible as long as they have either: a job offer in specific shortage occupation, a PhD relevant to job, or a PhD in STEM subject relevant to job. Moreover, in stark contrast to Japan, foreign workers in the UK do not need to secure an offer of employment before arriving, which decreases the threshold and makes it more attractive for foreign workers.

In addition to greater accessibility, the UK has a dramatically increasing number of HSFW visas

Figure 10: Work visas issued, by visa type (non-temporary)



Source: Home Office immigration statistics, year ending December 2022.

Figure 3: Comparison of the refugee recognition rate between Japan and the UK

Figure 3 illustrates the work visas based on the type (Home Office immigration statistics qtd in CIPD survey report 2023). The skilled worker in health care proved to be the highest number of work visas issued in 2022, with skilled worker visas overall placing as the second highest number of any visa issued in the UK. The

availability of visas additionally provides incentive to HSFWs to enter the UK and proves the hypothesis consequently true.

2. Immigration Strategies Attracting HSFWs

In 1993, Japan passed the Technical Practical Trainee System (TPTS). After one year of training, trainees would gain a second year in duties of job performance. The purpose of the TPTS was to provide workers with additional training so that they could have social mobility and enter into highly skilled jobs. However, there is an absence of data on how many workers entered the program or left successfully, which therefore makes the program inconclusive in results.

In April 2019, Japan launched the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) visa, a status that was created with the purpose of giving foreign workers more opportunities in Japan – similar to the TPTS program. Generally skilled foreign workers are defined as individuals who are eligible for the Specified Skill Visa (ssw.go.jp). There are two types of SSW status of residence: type (i) and type (ii). The type (ii) status of residence requires more specialized skills than type (i), which makes it essentially the HSFW version. SSW program can be obtained through four categories: first, proficiency tests, switching from another state of residence, signing a contract with a company, or through the required documentation. The goal of the program was to issue 340k work visas for foreign workers by 2025, though they have only issued 64,730 by 2022 (Chua and Lim 2023). The series of challenges such as through ambiguity or lengthy visa processes which prevent foreign workers from maintaining visas such as the SSV decrease the total number of foreign workers in Japan compared to the ease in the UK, which supports the conclusion of the hypothesis.

Ever since the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, foreign workers – specifically within the EU – have experienced freedom of movement and residence, being granted the ability to visit, live, work, or study in any EU state without needing a visa (House of Commons 2022). However, the UK's departure from Brexit on the 31st of January in 2020 ended the free movement of foreign workers. To respond to this, the UK introduced the Immigration Bill with a points-based system, claiming that they "will extend the current Global Talent route to EU citizens on the same basis as non-EU citizens. The most highly skilled, who can achieve the required level of points, will be able to enter the UK without a job offer if they are endorsed by a relevant and competent body" (Gov.UK). The points-based system is more accessible than that of Japan with less restrictions; a college education or degree is one of the minimum qualifications along with salary and no secured job is needed. The ease of achieving 70 points thus makes the UK a more attractive destination for foreign workers and explains why there is a greater percentage of foreign workers in the UK versus in Japan.

3. HSFWs and the Labor Force

A current issue revolving around foreign work pertains to deskilling. It is common for foreign workers to "experience deskilling–or rather, the 'occupational downward mobility' of workers (Siar 2013). This poses a problem as employers prefer high over low-skilled workers for three reasons: the labor market competition model, where citizens oppose workers who pose as competition in the job market; the welfare state model where low skilled workers use more funds than they provide benefits to the state; and the deservingness model which postulates there is a social stigma as low skilled workers are perceived as having a lessened work ethic (Helbling and Kriesi 2014).

The conclusion is that the points-based system of Japan is more demanding than that of the UK. The process of qualifying as a HSFW is both less complex and easier to attain for foreign workers in the UK than Japan as proven through the requirements which allows more foreign workers to come to the UK. The necessity to secure a job in Japan serves as an additional barrier that foreign workers going to the UK do not face. As a result, the hypothesis is proven correct as there are less barriers for foreign workers in the UK as compared to in Japan.

Conclusion

The focus of the research was in answering the research question: Why does the UK have a greater percent of foreign workers in the labor market than Japan? This present study has answered the dependent variable through three independent variables and respective hypotheses.

Firstly, the first independent variable concludes that the UK spends a greater portion of the federal budget and has a greater quantity and quality of programs providing asylum assistance and refugee resettlement services compared to Japan. The greater budget and quality of programs incentivizes foreign workers to move to the UK for work. In essence, the greater monetary commitment as well as continuous extended support by the UK lends itself to a greater number of asylum seekers and refugees in the workforce, thus resulting in a higher number of foreign workers in the labor market of the UK over that of Japan. The second independent variable concludes that the UK provides greater social welfare programs, government protections, and employee and statutory benefits than Japan which results in a greater number of foreign workers in the labor market of the UK than that of Japan. Finally, the third independent variable concludes Japan has more restrictive immigration policies for HSFWs and that the threshold for what constitutes a HSFWs is higher than that of the UK, thus resulting in less immigration of HSFWs to Japan and less foreign workers in the labor market as a result.

Many of the limitations of the research laid in the absence of information pertaining to Japanese foreign workers and refugees. I understand this limitation as there are not many foreign workers in Japan. However, future research could potentially be independently led in order to gain primary evidence of refugees, asylum seekers, and foreign workers and their federal protections and assistance in Japan versus in the UK.

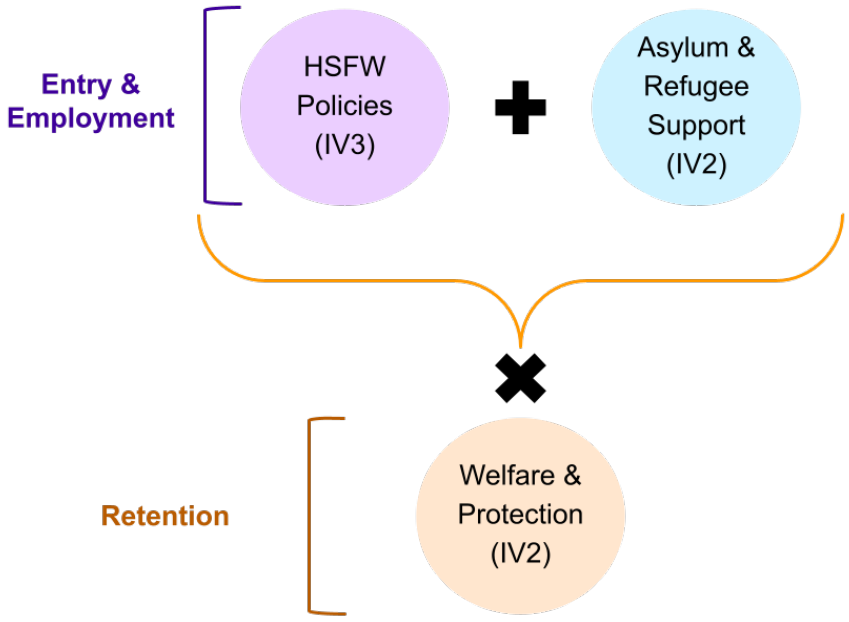


Figure 4: Relationship between independent variables

The three independent variables explained through this research share connections and commonalities through entry and employment and retention. The second and third help foreign workers remain in their countries whilst the second allows them to stay with federal protections and assistance.

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