

# Opinion The United States is no longer the world's friendliest country to migrants



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As an immigrant to the United States who has traveled a great deal around the world, I have always been certain that America was the best place for people like me — people who looked different, with brown skin and a strange name. I remember coming to America as a college student and feeling the openness and generosity of a country born of and made by immigrants. When visiting Britain around the same time, I could sense that I was treated politely but as an outsider.

But in 2019, [a tweet](#) from Britain's then chancellor of the exchequer, Sajid Javid, caught my eye: "Britain is the most successful multiracial democracy in the world." He [tweeted](#) something similar last week after the appointment of Rishi Sunak as prime minister of Britain. So I spent some time looking at the data.



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The [Migrant Integration Policy Index](#) measures policies to integrate migrants in dozens of countries around the world. As of 2019, the United States is in the top 10, but in the bottom half. In general between 2014 and 2019, the average country studied improved its score by two points. The United States on the other hand retreated by two points.

The story is largely one of the rise of the rest. Countries such as [Canada](#) have long been welcoming to immigrants but have gotten even better. Any would-be immigrant with technical skills and strong academic standing knows that it is easier to get a green card equivalent in [Canada](#) or Britain (or Ireland or Sweden) than in the United States these days. And since the Trump crackdown in every area of immigration — from business visas to [work permits](#) — the experience has become even more hellish and demeaning for people trying to move to the United States.

Others have also become far more tolerant. If you look at a recent Pew Research Center survey on attitudes toward national identity, you see that major European countries are becoming more tolerant and inclusive. The percentage who say that to truly belong you need to be born in that country is about the same in Britain, France and the United States. (Germany is even lower.) And those who say you have to be Christian to belong make up 14 percent in France, 20 percent in Britain, 23 percent in Germany and a high of 35 percent in the United States.

Britain did not score as high on the Migrant Integration Policy Index in 2019 as the United States, but the more you observe the day-to-day reality, Javid's comments do not look like an empty boast. (Though Canada likely does better than Britain or the United States on any objective set of measures.) When Boris Johnson resigned, of the eight candidates who came forward to replace him, four were members of ethnic minorities (Sunak, Suella Braverman, Kemi Badenoch and Nadhim Zahawi). And not one — unlike, say, Bobby Jindal or Nikki Haley — has converted to Christianity. Sunak took his oath of office on the Bhagavad Gita and lit Diwali lamps at his 10 Downing Street residence.

The Tory Party, the party of the old English aristocracy, has had an explosion of diversity. In contrast, about 90 percent of Republicans in Congress are White and virtually all the Republicans are Christian. Much of the credit in Britain should go to David Cameron, the former Conservative prime minister who took it upon himself to make his party more open to minorities of all kinds, including gender minorities. Once the party put out the welcome mat, it should not have come as a surprise that so many migrants proved to be natural Tories. After all, the Indian community in Britain is socially conservative, often with an entrepreneurial streak (including an aversion to high taxes). The same is true of Indian Americans, but because the Republican Party so powerfully signals its embrace of White racist politics, it turns off many minorities who would agree with them on most issues. It is also worth noting that Britain does not have affirmative action policies, which might explain why there is less resentment toward minorities who have succeeded there.

America has had distinct advantages compared with other countries that have allowed it to thrive — an open market, business-friendly policies — but many of these have been copied by other countries. I always believed that being truly welcoming to immigrants was America's last and greatest competitive advantage. It does appear that now others are catching up or even beating the United States at a game that it invented.