The nature and extent of migrants, immigrants, and refugees' trust in the social institutions of their host countries: a scoping review

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Introduction: One of the most significant drivers of the public's decision-making is trust. Trust is a critical factor when making decisions in the face of uncertainty and risk. This same principle applies to trust in our social institutions, which is the topic this paper explores. Institutional trust may be especially important for migrant groups whose vulnerabilities are furthered by the decrease in institutional trust. As such, this review aims to investigate the nature and extent of immigrants, migrants, and refugees' institutional trust (and adjacent concepts) in social institutions.

Methods: A scoping review was done using the PRISMA-ScR's guideline and Arksey and O'Malley's framework. A total of 81 articles were selected from four databases following screening, and then data were charted using three extraction tables. Data were organized following 5 main objectives relating to: trust theories and explanations (objective 1), recommendations and solutions targeting different social institutions (objective 2), across population group comparisons (objective 3), defining trust concepts (objective 4), and areas for future research (objective 5).

Results: Findings revealed that many different theories and definitions of institutional trust exist across studies suggesting that institutional trust is a complex and nuanced concept that may vary across different migrant groups, contextual factors, and social institutions of focus. As well, we note the heterogeneity of immigrant groups and how this may relate to the various factors identified as shaping institutional trust. Not a lot of recommendations were presented, and these were mostly community-based. Lastly, research gaps were identified to inform future research and inform efforts and strategies to build institutional trust among migrant groups.

Discussion: These findings, accompanied by other results, demonstrated the significance of trust in migrants when it comes to their successful integration, as well as their health and well-being over time. We emphasize the need for trust interventions at different societal levels, and the need to target both immigrant populations and social institutions. We conclude that establishing trust in one institution will help build trust in other institutions, such as the public health and healthcare system institutions.

KEYWORDS

institutional trust, social institutions, immigrant, refugee, migrant, scoping review

1 Introduction

Trust in the context of health is critical for population health. Trust is associated with greater use of health services, acceptance of official health recommendations and behavior change that works in the interest of individual and population health (Meyer et al., 2008; Aboueid et al., 2023; Rădoi and Lupu, 2017). Trust as it relates to health implications, however, goes beyond trust in health officials and healthcare institutions within which they operate. Rather, it extends to the systems that influence and impact the operation of health systems and drive health policy—for example, government, legal and other systems that guide regulation in a given country, state or municipality. Hence, to understand trust as it relates to healthcare, it is important to also investigate the nature of public trust in social institutions more broadly and consider how this trust, or lack of trust, influences decisions that ultimately impact on individual and population health. For example, a recent study from South Korea highlights the crucial impact of institutional trust on health-related behaviors beyond clinical and/or acute care settings, through evidence suggesting that institutional trust (such as trust in government) is positively associated with formal long-term care services use, among older adults in the community (Fong, 2025). Also interesting, are the recent findings that during the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals were willing to overlook their lack of trust in government if the messages government were sharing regarding pandemic countermeasures actually came from public health [see (Herati et al., 2023a)]. In this case, individuals' lack of trust in one institution (i.e., government), did not have a bearing on their trust in other institutions (i.e., Public Health). Instead, public trust in Public Health worked to support their acceptance of recommendations that supported population health. This finding tells us a bit more about how trust can be maintained and support population health in light of trust being lost elsewhere. Better understanding of this interplay between trust in various systems, as well as if or how this works in immigrant populations, would be important to know. This nuanced and contextual information is something we are interested to understand in the context of migrants, immigrants, and refugees and their trust in social institutions.

Institutional trust is integral to the success, sustainability, and wellbeing of societies (Herati et al., 2023b; UN-iLibrary, 2021), and central to the present work. This may be especially important for immigrants, migrants, and refugee groups whose inequities and vulnerabilities are furthered with the decrease in institutional trust (Hermesh et al., 2020; Ike et al., 2023). However, the nature and extent of trust among these populations in the social institutions of their host countries has not been systematically documented. This information is critical if we are to understand the health of these populations as it relates to the actions of social institutions, or the perceptions and experience of immigrants, migrants, and refugee groups. The aim of the present scoping review is to document the extent of the literature on trust in social institutions with the goal of identifying evidence-informed strategies to support the development/maintenance of trust and identify gaps in need of further investigation.

According to the United Nations, a migrant is defined as "any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from [their] habitual place of residence, regardless of the person's legal status, whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary, what the causes for the movement are and what the length of the stay is" (United Nations, 2025). For the purpose of this review, we focus on long-term migration (i.e., not individuals relocating for the short term for work/pleasure). In contrast, for the purpose of this review, an immigrant "refers to a person who is, or who has ever been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident" (Statistics Canada, 2016). Lastly, refugees are identified as "people who have fled their countries to escape conflict, violence, or persecution and have sought safety in another country" (The UN Refugee Agency, 2025a).

These groups can be further characterized by how long they have been in the country, as well as defined by either generational status and/or documentation status. For instance, the term newcomer has been used to describe individuals who have been in a host country for <5 years and can be either an immigrant, migrant or refugee [e.g., (NewYouth, 2025)]. Generation status can include first-generation (persons who were born outside Canada), second-generation (persons who were born outside the host country and had at least one parent born outside the host country) and third- or more generation (persons who were born in the host country but both parents born outside of the host country; Statistics Canada, 2021). Documentation status is used to distinguish populations groups seeking protection in a country in which they are not a citizen (e.g., asylum seekers; The UN Refugee Agency, 2025b) and illegal immigrants (individuals who arrive to a country undocumented and/or through illegal means, or individuals who overstay in the host country without official status; Thrift and Kitchin, 2009). We note the above terminology as it is critical to our search of the literature but note that alternative and similarly defined terms have been used across the literature, reflecting the evolution of terminology (e.g., no longer using terms that promote discrimination or stigmatization of certain groups of individuals—such as "illegal aliens") and changes in migration policies and laws (Washington State Department of Social Health Services, 2025; Kashyap, 2021; Ruz, 2025; Rose, 2021; Governemnt of Canada, 2023a). These different terms are also partially a reflection of the different migration pathways that individuals undergo. For instance, some individuals voluntarily or involuntarily leave their homes due to conflict, violence, or persecution (The UN Refugee Agency, 2025a; European Parliament, 2024), while other individuals may be migrating with hopes of greater financial stability (Government of Canada, 2023b) or due to environmental and climate crisis (European Parliament, 2024).

The noted pathways to a host country, coupled with the unique conditions and contexts that drive the migration, may shape immigrants and migrant's institutional trust and ultimately their health within a host country. For example, literature suggests that newcomers' trust may decrease over time (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a) and that migrants are commonly less trusting of the health system of a given country (Savas et al., 2024), which aligns with work suggesting that immigrants tend to use fewer health services than the native population (Sarría-Santamera et al., 2016). This may be caused by skepticism toward public institutions in general, due to legal status and deportation fears (Savas et al., 2024). We further note that the decrease in trust may also be amplified by experiences

of exclusion, marginalization, racial discrimination, and violence that may occur pre-, during and post-migration (Savas et al., 2024), which supports the need to understand, not only why and how migrant groups' trust social institutions, but also how it may vary (or not) across different migrant groups and contexts.

Migrant groups are an important group for whom to consider institutional trust, as the number of migrants, immigrants, and refugees has increased substantially over the years. Even though the percentage of people living outside their birth country increases yearly (NewYouth, 2025; Statistics Canada, 2021), the nature and extent of immigrants, migrants, and refugees' trust in social institutions, or why it may be (or not) declining over time, has not been systematically documented despite the critical role of this literature in understanding how we might support the development or maintenance of trust in these growing populations. To fill this gap, the present research aims to investigate the nature and extent of immigrants, migrants and refugees' trust in social institutions, document practice recommendations to support (re)building trust and highlight areas for future research. To meet the aim of the present research, data extracted from articles are organized according to five key objectives: Objective 1 reports on information relating to trust theories and explanations for trust formation or deterioration; Objective 2 reports on any trust recommendations and solutions targeting social institutions as they relate to building trust amongst populations of interest; Objective 3 focuses on comparing population groups across studies; Objective 4 reports on trust definitions and conceptualizations of institutional trust; and Objective 5 reports on identified areas for future research. This knowledge will provide a comprehensive understanding of how trusting relationships between the population groups, and the institutions are formed and how they may be lost, which can then be used to inform health policy and practice aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of migrants, immigrants, and refugees' groups engaging with social institutions of host countries. Our overall goal is to provide knowledge on current challenges and barriers to trust building, as well as efforts that promote institutional trust and consequently promote population health for migrant groups, that can be used by researchers, industry, policymakers, and other important stakeholders, to inform future research, health policy, and practice.

1.1 Conceptual framework

The concept of trust has been a central focus in behavioral health research across many disciplines (Taylor et al., 2023). Accordingly, there is no single definition of trust, despite many forms of trust being described in the literature. Within the present research, we draw on conceptualizations of trust most commonly described in the health context (Taylor et al., 2023) and consider trust to be shaped by perceptions of benefits and risks, uncertainty, credibility, and vulnerability, in consideration of both institutions (e.g., healthcare system) and individual actors (e.g., health care providers; Lewis and Weigert, 1985; Roundtable on Public Interfaces of the Life Sciences, 2015). We also align with the perspective that fundamentally, public trust is shaped by the belief that the trustee is both capable and committed to act in the truster's

best interests, and this belief is both individual and context-specific (Lewis and Weigert, 1985).

Within the present work, we specifically focus on institutional trust; that is, the confidence individuals place in institutions (e.g., government, police, healthcare systems), based on their belief or expectation that these institutions act competently, fairly, and in the best interests of those trusting them (Quaranta, 2024). This is distinct from interpersonal trust, social trust, generalized trust, and relational trust (Kaasa and Andriani, 2022; Campos-Castillo et al., 2016; Frederiksen, 2014; You, 2012; Alesina and La Ferrara, 2002): Interpersonal trust can be defined as the trust an individual places on individuals they know personally (e.g., their close friends, family, or family doctor; Jovanović et al., 2023); Social trust (or generalized interpersonal trust) can be defined as a trust in most people broadly across society beyond individuals we know (You, 2012); Generalized trust has be defined as a "general propensity to trust others" (Kaasa and Andriani, 2022), which could include strangers (Alesina and La Ferrara, 2002); and Relational trust describes trust as going beyond an emotional or rational decision, to being the result of both ongoing social interactions over time (i.e., experience) and the context of the particular situation or interaction happening in the moment (Frederiksen, 2014).

Though distinct, relevant to our work are considerations of the relationship between institutional trust and interpersonal trust. For instance, it has been argued that institutional trust is an extension of personal trust, which may occur via socialization between citizens and greater civic engagement (Kaasa and Andriani, 2022). This may also relate to how institutions and the individuals performing duties within them are not separate from one another (Aboueid et al., 2023). Indeed, Giddens argues that in order to trust the medical system, which is a more abstract thing, one must first trust the physician which is the access point representing the medical system (Giddens, 1997). Luhmann, on the other hand, believes the opposite is true and that one must first trust the system in order to trust a representative of the system (Meyer et al., 2008). Despite different theories, which have limitations in their application (Meyer et al., 2008), it is evident that a relationship between institutional trust and interpersonal trust exists.

Trust can be influenced by many factors. For instance, a study investigating predictors of interpersonal trust has found that a history of traumatic experiences, belonging to a group that historically felt discriminated against (i.e., minority groups), being economically unsuccessful in terms of income and education, and living in a racially mixed community and/or in one with a high degree of income disparity, are all factors contributing to low levels of interpersonal trust (Alesina and La Ferrara, 2002). As such, both individual and community characteristics shape interpersonal trust levels (Alesina and La Ferrara, 2002). Individual level factors (e.g., personal experiences and demographic factors) are documented to impact trust in institutions (Wang and Gordon, 2011), as do macro-level factors (e.g., institutional quality and governance; Wang and Gordon, 2011). For example, research has found that factors shaping individuals' generalized trust and trust in local governments include the quality of local services, with local public services perceived as good resulting in higher levels of trust (Camussi and Mancini, 2019). Relatedly, the OECD argue that trust can be built and reinforced from better governance of societies and populations, which requires transparent, fair, inclusive

and responsive practices from our governments (OECD, 2017). Further validating these works is research investigating institutional trust during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time of crisis where trust was greatly challenged. A recent study found that government support measures including financial aid and protective policies, contributed toward an increased trust in institutions, which in turn helped increase citizens' satisfaction with democracy (Poma and Pistoresi, 2024).

Additionally, within the present work we consider trust to be a multidimensional concept. A 2023 systematic review documenting the extent of literature investigating trust in social institutions documented dimensions of trust, including competence, integrity, communication, benevolence, fidelity, fairness, global trust, confidentiality, relational comfort, and dependability as recurring when measuring trust levels of individuals in a population (Aboueid et al., 2023). These dimensions are complex and context-specific, with evidence suggesting that there is overlap between these dimensions across different forms of trust. For example, fairness appears to be an important dimension of both social and institutional trust, as supported by the previously mentioned systematic review (Aboueid et al., 2023), and a multilevel analysis conducted in 2012 arguing that fairness can better explain cross-national variations in social trust than ethnic or cultural homogeneity (You, 2012). Building on the discussion of trust, it is important to recognize its close relationship with social capital within the context of our population of interest. Social capital, for many scholars, has been discussed in relation to trust (Son and Feng, 2019; Meyer et al., 2008; Routledge, 2007), with trust often playing a critical role in both bonding and bridging social capital (Son and Feng, 2019; Füzér, 2016). Social capital refers to the value of having social relationships with others, being part of large social networks and adhering to social norms (McDonald et al., 2010), and it is an important consideration for immigrant trust. This is because social capital promotes health/wellbeing among newcomers as they navigate new services (e.g., health and employment services) and settle/integrate into the host country's society post-migration (McDonald et al., 2010; Steinbach, 2007). As such, social capital can help with observing and interpreting the role of trust in institutions as it relates to health and wellbeing of migrants, immigrants, and refugees. As noted, within the present research, we focus on institutional trust. However, given the conceptual conflation of trust with related concepts in the literature, we also included similar concepts commonly used to describe and explain the relationship between individuals and social/public institutions as part of our search strategy (Wang and Gordon, 2011). These included confidence in institutions which can be described as a "multidimensional concept which generally refers to citizens' assessments or beliefs that several types of institutions […], as well as their representatives, will at least do no harm to or at best serve public interests" (Wang, 2014), distrust in institutions which can be described as "the refusal to accept vulnerability based on negative expectations regarding another's intention or conduct" (Verhoest et al., 2024), mistrust described as a "doubt or skepticism about the trustworthiness of the other" (Citrin and Stoker, 2018), and finally trustworthiness which differently than the other concepts, "[places] the onus of responsibility on the entity looking to be trusted—most

commonly, the clinician, the organization, or the system—to be worthy of trust" (Meyer et al., 2024). In other words, the decision to trust institutions comes from the individuals' assessment of the institution as having attributes such as competence, willingness, integrity and capacity (Meyer et al., 2024).

Finally, within the present work we identify social institutions, as "the social structure and machinery through which human society organizes, directs and executes the multifarious activities required for human need" (Barnes, 1942), which could include systems such as, among others, the healthcare, military, legal, judiciary, educational, and political systems. Theoretically, we draw on the Luhmann's social systems theory as rationale for our decision to investigate trust in social institutions broadly, beyond that of medical institutions or the healthcare system, as a mechanism for promoting the health and wellbeing of immigrants. Indeed, trust in the healthcare system cannot be understood in isolation and it must be instead understood as connected with trusting other social systems such as trust in political and judicial systems, among others (Meyer et al., 2008). For example, Luhmann argues that trusting one social system is dependent on trust in other social systems (Luhmann, 1979), suggesting that trust in institution(s) is multidimensional (Brown, 2008) and rather than a linear path, should be considered as a complex web of interactions (Meyer et al., 2008; Luhmann, 1979). We adopt systems thinking theory in the present work and consider the critical role of trust across institutions as migrants integrate into the society of a host country.

2 Methods

The aim of this review is to systematically document the nature and extent of immigrants, migrants and refugees' trust in social institutions. Our approach followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR; Tricco et al., 2018), and the framework proposed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005).

2.1 Identifying the research question (framework stage 1)

The present work was designed to answer the following research question: what is nature and extent and nature of immigrants, migrants and refugees' trust in the social institutions of their host countries?

2.2 Eligibility criteria

Articles included in the review meet the following inclusion criteria: Peer-reviewed empirical papers; focused on migrants, immigrant, and refugee populations; focused on institutional trust and adjacent concepts (i.e., institutional distrust, mistrust, confidence and trustworthiness); focused on institutions and organizations. The search was limited to English-language articles because of the research team's primary fluency in English but

not limited to a year range so to ensure a comprehensive review of the literature. Articles excluded in the review meet the following summarized exclusion criteria: Focus on generalized trust, interpersonal trust, and social cohesion; focus on temporary migration and internal migrants; focus on trust in services, providers and professionals; papers not written in English. For a more detailed list of the inclusion and exclusion criteria, please refer to the Supplementary material.

2.3 Information sources (framework stage 2)

Four databases were utilized: Scopus (Multidisciplinary), Sociological abstracts (Sociology discipline), PubMed (Health discipline), and PsycINFO (Psychology and behavioral health disciplines).

2.4 Search (framework stage 3)

The search strategy, developed and refined with the assistance of a library scientist, was finalized on September 23rd, 2024. The full search strategy for each database is available in the Supplementary material.

2.5 Selection of sources of evidence (framework stage 3)

To ensure greater quality, HGN, SA, and GA independently screened a subset of the titles and abstracts as a practice screening exercise, where differences in inclusion/exclusion criteria interpretations were identified and addressed as a group. Following this exercise, the screening comprehensive process was conducted independently by three researchers (HGN, SA, and GA). Covidence software was used to identify duplicates and to conduct the title and abstract, as well as the full-text screening stages. Every article was screened by HGN, while the second reviewer for each article was either SA or GA. This was done for both screening stages (title and abstract, and the full-text screening stages). Any conflicts that arose during the screening were discussed and resolved through group consensus.

2.6 Data charting process (framework stage 4)

One researcher HGN independently developed data charting. To meet the aim of the work, articles were reviewed to identify information that fell under one or more of the following areas: theories and explanations (objective 1), recommendations and solutions (objective 2), across population groups comparisons (objective 3), defining trust concepts (objective 4), and areas for future research (objective 5). Two researchers then conducted data charting independently (HGN extracted 36 studies, while SA

extracted 45 studies). Any challenges encountered at this stage were addressed as a team through group consensus.

2.7 Data items

The information collected during the extraction and data charting stages are as follows: title, year, authors, country of publication, study population characteristics, study location, social institutions of focus, study purpose, study design, approach, study variables, main findings, limitations, future research directions, type of trust/adjacent concept, definition of trust/adjacent concept, dimensions of trust/adjacent concept, measures/items, factors influencing trust, insights into the relationship, theories, frameworks, models, explanations and hypothesis that may explain the nature and extent of trust, and recommendations.

2.8 Synthesis of results (framework stage 5)

The data that were extracted and charted were organized into three different extraction tables: Extraction Table 1 in Supplementary material is a summary of the different studies included, and gives an overview of the studies' purpose, methods and main findings; Extraction Table 2 in Supplementary material focuses on the conceptualization of institutional trust and adjacent concepts and it presents information on how concepts are defined and measured; and Extraction Table 1 in Supplementary material attempts to describe the scope of institutional trust and adjacent concepts by reporting potential factors shaping institutional trust and adjacent concepts, related theories and frameworks, and finally recommendations to increase trust or confidence.
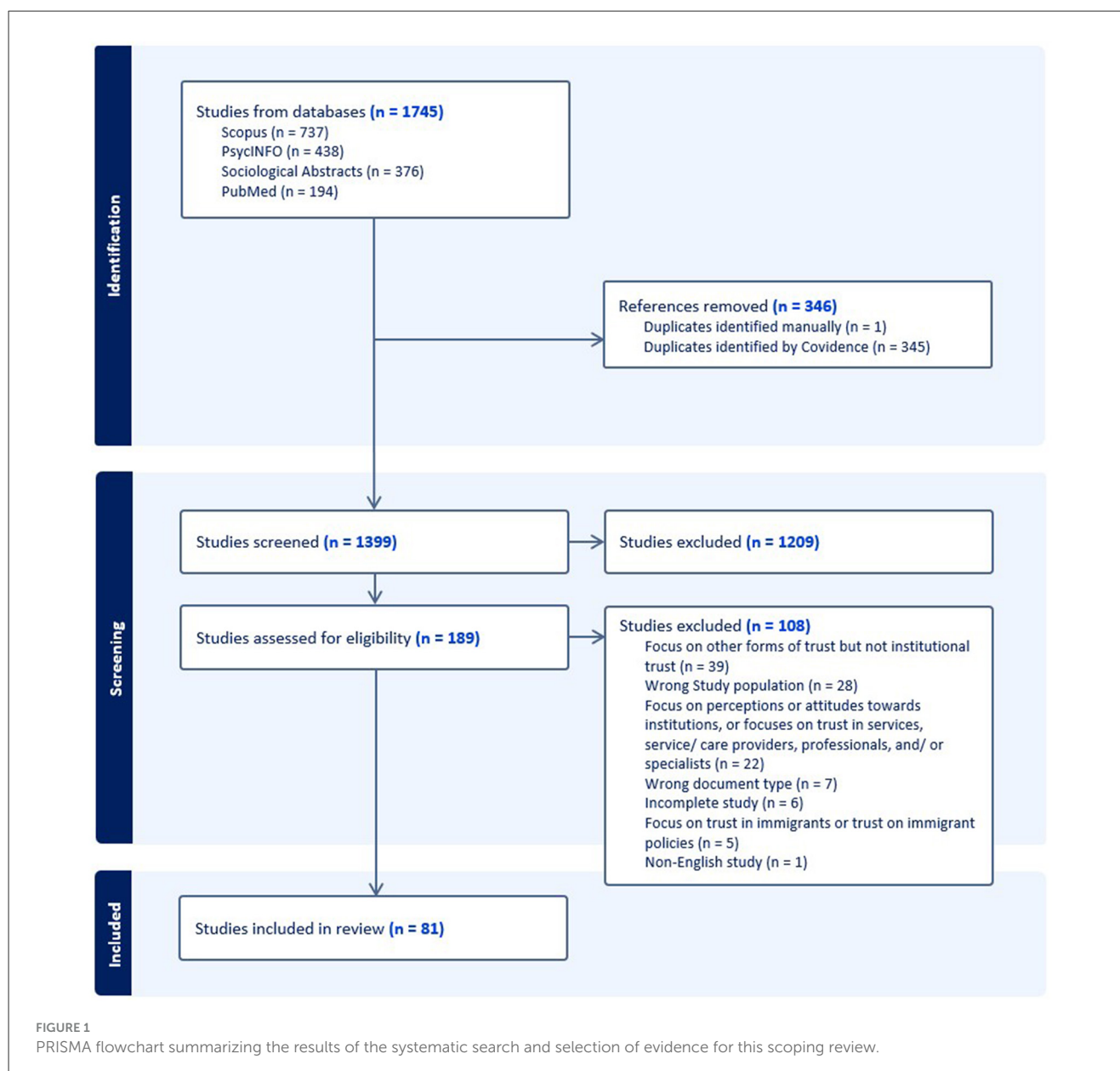
3 Results

3.1 Selection of studies

Our systematic search yielded a total of 1,745 studies, of which 346 were duplicates (Figure 1). Following title and abstract screening ($n = 1,399$), $n = 1,209$ were deemed irrelevant in accordance with the eligibility criteria (See the Supplementary material). A total of 189 articles were selected for full-text review and reviewed in their entirety for relevance. From the full-text screening, 108 studies were excluded based on 7 summarized items from the complete exclusion criteria (See the Supplementary material). A total of 81 articles met the stated inclusion criteria.

3.1.1 Characteristics of studies
Additional characteristics of the studies included in this review can be found in the extraction tables within the Supplementary material.

3.1.2 Study design of focus
Papers were published between 1996 and 2024. Most studies were quantitative in design ($n = 65$), with most employing a

FIGURE 1
PRISMA flowchart summarizing the results of the systematic search and selection of evidence for this scoping review.

cross-sectional survey design ($n = 15$; See Extraction Table 1 in the Supplementary material). Few used longitudinal data ($n = 4$), despite many studies noting that to be an important area for future research (Becerra et al., 2017; Shin and Yoon, 2023; van den Broek, 2021; Wals, 2011; Born et al., 2015; Krieg et al., 2023; Politi et al., 2023). Other study designs included qualitative studies ($n = 13$), and mixed-method studies ($n = 6$). Qualitative methods for data collection most reported were interviews ($n = 9$) and focus groups ($n = 8$). One study conducted a literature analysis (Rakiibu and Malatji, 2023).

Most studies focused on institutional trust ($n = 57$), while the remaining focused on adjacent concepts, namely institutional confidence ($n = 8$), and institutional distrust ($n = 7$). Of the 57 studies focusing on institutional trust, specifically categorized institutional trust as political trust ($n = 20$).

3.1.3 Institutions of focus

The institutions of focus for which trust (or adjacent concepts) were studied was another key aspect. Included studies looked at institutions of the host country such as, police/law enforcement ($n = 39$), judiciary/courts of justice/justice system/justice department/legal system ($n = 19$), healthcare system/healthcare institutions/medical institutions ($n = 16$), federal/national parliament ($n = 14$), and federal/national government ($n = 9$). Other institutions of the host country were also identified in less frequency, such as child welfare/welfare system ($n = 3$), education/school system ($n = 2$), local/provincial government ($n = 1$), financial institutions ($n = 1$), and support institutions ($n = 1$).

Some studies did not specify the institutions, broadly speaking to public institutions ($n = 3$), political institutions ($n = 2$),

government ($n = 15$). While some studies looking at immigrants in Europe looked at institutions related to the European union and not the specific country's institutions, including European union ($n = 1$), European parliament ($n = 1$), and United Nations ($n = 1$).

Lastly, in addition to institutions, some of the included studies looked at services, organizations and key characters within the institutions such as, politicians ($n = 7$), political parties ($n = 7$), the civil service ($n = 2$), healthcare organizations ($n = 1$), social services ($n = 1$), cabinet ($n = 1$), legal authorities ($n = 1$), politics ($n = 1$), and municipal boards ($n = 1$).

3.1.4 Host countries of focus

The following host countries were reported across the papers: USA ($n = 24$), Australia ($n = 7$), Canada ($n = 6$), Germany ($n = 5$), South Korea ($n = 3$), Norway ($n = 3$), Israel ($n = 3$), Finland ($n = 2$), Denmark ($n = 2$), Belgium ($n = 2$), Netherlands ($n = 2$), Sweden ($n = 1$), Turkey ($n = 1$), Italy ($n = 1$), Lebanon ($n = 1$), England ($n = 1$), Poland ($n = 1$), France ($n = 1$), and South Africa ($n = 1$).

Some studies looked at a vast list of host countries, and as such were categorized as European countries ($n = 9$), or even more broadly as multiple countries ($n = 6$).

3.1.5 Study population of focus

We reviewed studies focusing on the following immigrant groups based on nationality: Polish ($n = 6$), Turkish ($n = 5$), Mexican ($n = 4$), Vietnamese ($n = 4$), Pakistani ($n = 3$), Iraqi ($n = 3$), Somalian ($n = 3$), Chinese ($n = 3$), Syrian ($n = 2$), Americans (USA; $n = 2$), Filipino ($n = 2$), Russian ($n = 2$), Ethiopia ($n = 2$), Indian ($n = 1$), Moroccan ($n = 1$), Cuban ($n = 1$), Puerto Rican ($n = 1$), Dominican ($n = 1$), Taiwanese ($n = 1$), Indonesian ($n = 1$), Uzbekistani ($n = 1$), Mongolian ($n = 1$), Sri Lankan ($n = 1$), Lebanese ($n = 1$), Iranian ($n = 1$), Ex-Yugoslav ($n = 1$), Korean ($n = 1$), Ghanaian ($n = 1$), Bangladeshi ($n = 1$), Nigerian ($n = 1$), and Canadian ($n = 1$).

Rather than specify nationality, some studies focus on immigrants from regions such as continental Africa migrants ($n = 1$), and Latin-American immigrants ($n = 1$), Spanish speaking countries of Latin America immigrants ($n = 1$), MENA region (Middle East and North Africa) immigrants ($n = 1$), Caribbean immigrants ($n = 1$), UK immigrants ($n = 1$), and Middle eastern immigrants ($n = 1$).

Some papers also focused on ethnicity, specifically minority immigrants ($n = 6$), Latino immigrants ($n = 12$), Muslim immigrants ($n = 3$), and Jews immigrants ($n = 2$).

In addition to nationality, region and ethnicity, studies also investigated intergenerational immigrants. Majority of studies looked at first-generation immigrants, while others looked at second-generation immigrants ($n = 21$), third-generation immigrants ($n = 1$), fourth-generation immigrants ($n = 1$), Newcomers ($n = 1$), and even 1.5 generation immigrants ($n = 2$), which is when an "immigrant arrives in the destination country as a child and is socialized as a member of that society" (Sibblis et al., 2022).

Differences were observed across papers in terms of migration status. Most studies focused on general immigrant and migrant groups ($n = 75$), with a few papers looking at more specific groups such as refugee groups ($n = 3$), undocumented migrants/immigrants ($n = 2$), and illicit immigrants ($n = 1$).

Other studies ($n = 27$) included immigrants from various countries instead of targeting one specific immigrant group. For example, Sun et al. (2024) study looked at different immigrant groups by using datasets from the World Value Survey and the European Value Study (Sun et al., 2024).

While almost all studies collected demographic data on study participants, few specifically focused on groups based on age [youth/children ($n = 4$); older adults ($n = 2$)], income/SES [low income ($n = 1$); developing countries ($n = 1$)], sex [woman ($n = 5$); men ($n = 1$)], marriage/relationship status ($n = 2$), race [whites ($n = 1$); people of color ($n = 1$)], and language [Arabic-speaking immigrants ($n = 1$); Spanish speaking ($n = 1$)]. However, we do importantly note that some of these characteristics, and others (e.g., age of arrival, level of education, political ideology, religion), were considered as important factors shaping institutional trust (and adjacent concepts), especially in quantitative studies, and thus were controlled for in the analysis (See Extraction Table 1 in the Supplementary material). Specific to the marriage/relationship status, we note that one study specifically focused on marriage immigrants, which is an immigration process involving individuals marrying an individual from the country they are immigrating to Yang et al. (2012).

3.2 Charting results

This review aimed to investigate the nature and extent of immigrants, migrants and refugees' trust in the social institutions of their host countries. To do this, we charted the data in alignment with five objectives below. All complete extraction charts can be found in the Supplementary material.

3.2.1 Objective 1

This objective relates to the existing theories, frameworks and models used across studies that may explain the nature and extent of immigrants, migrants, and refugees' trust in various social institutions. About half of the studies ($n = 41/81$) included in this review relied on these to support or frame their findings (See Extraction Table 3 in the Supplementary material).

Different theories were used to explain the same concept. For instance, representative bureaucracy theory (Campbell, 2021) suggests that increased diversity in the public workforce is needed to trust, cultural approach (Quaranta, 2024) suggests that trust is rooted in cultural norms and learned through early-life socialization which can impact institutional trust, and institutional approach (Quaranta, 2024) suggests institutions must meet the expectations and needs of individuals they serve for them to trust institutions. While not an exhaustive list, from these we can see that more than one theory or approach exists to explain the formation of institutional trust. Interestingly, some authors argue that while multiple theories exist, these are not necessarily exclusive from one another. For instance, individuals may be more trusting of institutions

due to the cultural norms to which they have been exposed while growing up, which could then be reinforced if these said individuals believe as though they are understood by the institution of their host countries, their needs are met, and thus, the institution is performing well [see, (Quaranta, 2024; Shaleva, 2016)].

In the conceptual framework section of this paper, we also acknowledge that while related to one another, conceptually trust differs from that of confidence and distrust. From this, one could assume that different theories and explanations would be presented for each of the concepts. While some theories were uniquely applied to individual concepts [e.g., model for predicting trust in HCS (Pinchas-Mizrachi et al., 2020) was specific to institutional trust], we also observed the same theories being applicable uniformly across concepts. For example, the group position theory No Matches Found, which suggest that intergroup relations are influenced by individuals' perceptions of their group position in society, where there is competition for power, status, and rewards between dominant and the subordinate group (Piatkowska, 2015), was used to explain both the concepts of institutional trust and confidence. As well, an extension of this theory known as the group consciousness theory (Rakiibu and Malatji, 2023), was used to explain institutional distrust. Another example is cultural-persistence model (Sun et al., 2024), also known as the cultural approach/theory (Quaranta, 2024; Shaleva, 2016), being used to explain institutional confidence, while also used to explain institutional trust. From this, we note the following possibilities: (a) perhaps at the theory level these concepts overlap; (b) authors are not appropriately differentiating between similar yet conceptually distinct concepts such as confidence, trust and distrust; and/or (c) these theories are more a reflection of the relationship between individuals and institutions (i.e., interactions and perceptions of one another), more so than a reflection of whether the nature of the relationship is based on trust, confidence or distrust. Indeed, in relation to the last point, we note how procedural (justice) theory (Piatkowska, 2015; Kääriäinen and Niemi, 2014; Nägel and Lutter, 2023; Van Craen and Skogan, 2015), was cited across all concepts within the context of the relationship between individuals and police/justice system.

The most prominent theories are presented in Table 1. These theories showed up multiple times across various studies, despite differences in population groups, institutions, and contexts of the host and original countries, as were group based on how they explained institutional trust formation. These are important considerations not only to understand trust, but also when developing strategies to (re)build institutional trust of immigrants, migrants and refugees. For more details on these and other less prominent theories, please see Extraction Table 3 in Supplementary material.

3.2.2 Objective 2

This objective relates to the different recommendations, strategies, and solutions proposed by the studies for different social institutions, that may help inform future health policy and practice aimed at maintaining institutional trust for these population groups. Here we note that 31 studies did not explicitly provide any

recommendations to (re)build institutional trust and/or confidence in public institutions.

Only one of the studies that provided recommendations focused on refugees (Hall and Werner, 2022), while all others focused on migrants and immigrants. Despite the inclusion of studies focusing on different migrants and immigrants from different countries of origin and different host countries, recommendations across the papers acknowledged a lack of knowledge and understanding of the needs of the populations (i.e., immigrants and migrants) that institutions are serving, as well as lack of involvement with the same. This information is presented in Table 2, where recommendations are organized by the institution of focus. For more details on these, please refer to Extraction Table 3 in Supplementary material.

Most of the recommendations focused on institutions such as the police force and law enforcement systems, and relatedly most recommendations were addressed to institutions' representatives such as police officers. Moreover, very few recommendations were provided that addressed specific institutions (e.g., the education system). As well there was a lot of overlap in recommendations across institutions and trustees.

Despite the broad recommendations, which can be applicable across immigrant groups, some studies suggest that interventions or efforts to build trust should take into considerations the intended audience and consider how different groups may react to shifts in policy or practice (Bradford et al., 2022). This further supports the heterogeneity of migrant groups and suggests that there is a need for tailored and specific trust strategies (Lajunen and Wróbel, 2022), which should then be evaluated and adapted based on results of those evaluations. In alignment with this, one study emphasizes the importance of scholars, politicians and policy makers not assuming homogeneous political interests within groups of immigrants from the same region (Superti and Gidron, 2022). Indeed, the recommendation of not making assumptions about migrant groups is interesting, as most recommendations emphasized the need for institutions to become more knowledgeable of the communities they serve, including understanding migrant groups' culture, background, and their unique needs and challenges (see Table 2). These recommendations suggest that a first step in building trust is to connect with and better understand the different immigrant groups. Although not a lot of directions are given as to how to do this. The other main recommendation is the development of better communication strategies, followed by evaluation of said strategies (see Table 2).

3.2.3 Objective 3

This objective relates to the differences (if any) in trust across different immigrants, migrants and refugees' groups and contexts. While the initial goal was to see if we could observe differences across immigrants, migrants and refugee groups, very few studies looked at refugee groups. Accordingly, all factors measured or hypothesized to impact trust, confidence and distrust levels in institutions reported in included studies are organized by institution, immigrant generation, and status (see Table 3). The three studies focused on refugee groups [see (Bou-Orm et al., 2023; Johnson-Agbakwu et al., 2014)] and two studies focusing

TABLE 1   Prominent theories organized by how they explain institutional trust formation.

Institutional trust formation because of....	Theories, frameworks, approaches, models, and hypothesis
...how institutions perform and function, and how their actions are perceived as fair and beneficial to individuals	Institutional approach (Quaranta, 2024; Shaleva, 2016); Performance theory (Van Craen and Skogan, 2015); "Institutional performance model" (Sun et al., 2024; Röder and Mühlau, 2011); Trust–Confidence–Cooperation model (Yoon et al., 2021); Instrumental approach (Kääriäinen and Niemi, 2014); The "instrumental" model and the normative model (Griffiths, 2018); The instrumental model and the expressive model (Han et al., 2020a)
...individuals' integration into society	Acculturation Hypothesis (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a); Acculturation theory (Munier et al., 2015); Acculturation explanation (Wals and Rudolph, 2019); Integration over time (Maxwell, 2010); Assimilation theory (Weber et al., 2023); The segmented assimilation theory/Barriers to integration/Ethnic competition (Maxwell, 2010; Michelson, 2001; Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010); "straight-line" or "classic assimilation" (Jeong, 2016; Michelson, 2001; Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010)
...individuals' experiences with institutions, including negative interaction with institution (e.g., experiencing discrimination)	Sense-of-injustice model (Rakiibu and Malatji, 2023); Discrimination as a mechanism shaping immigrants (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a); personal experience with knowledge (Kogan et al., 2024)
...individual's early life events (socialization) and cultural norms	Cultural approach (Quaranta, 2024); Cultural theory (Shaleva, 2016); Psychological mechanism: the role of experiences from the formative years (Superti and Gidron, 2022); Imported socialization theory (Wals, 2011; Jung et al., 2019); Trust as a result of parental socialization (Kogan et al., 2024)
...dramatic events/crisis affecting society	*Rally 'round the flag effect* (Weber et al., 2023)
...comparison individuals' make between their country of origin and new country of residence	"Dual frame of reference" or "bifocal lens" (Quaranta, 2024; Röder and Mühlau, 2012a); Reference point hypothesis (Röder and Mühlau, 2012b); Dual frame of reference (Weber et al., 2023); The dual frames of reference model (Sun et al., 2024; Jang et al., 2019); "Contrast thesis" or "frames of reference" perspective (Jung et al., 2019)
...individuals' positioning within society as compared to other groups (e.g., population majority)	Group Position theory (Ali et al., 2023; Piatkowska, 2015); Social identity theory (Breidahl and Gustavsson, 2022); Representative bureaucracy theory (Campbell, 2021); The group consciousness theory (Rakiibu and Malatji, 2023), System avoidance (Sibblis et al., 2022)
...individual characteristics (e.g., social position, values, demographic characteristics)	Indifference hypothesis (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a); Value mediation hypothesis (Röder and Mühlau, 2012b)

undocumented migrants [see (Sudhinaraset et al., 2022)], did not highlight potential factors impacting institutional trust. Various countries, including the US, award citizenship to children born within the country regardless of the parent's immigrant status via the principle of "birthright citizenship" (Reed, 2025). As such in this review, undocumented or illicit immigrants/migrants are considered 1st generation, while their children would be 2nd generation. These categories are reflected in Table 3.

Unique to refugees, exposure to violence and associated trauma (including posttraumatic stress) is suggested to have impacted trust across various institutions, including the police, courts and government (Hall and Werner, 2022). It is anticipated, but not yet explored, that institutional trust is shaped by factors identified within migrant and immigrant populations. However, this is an area for future research.

The majority of studies focused on 1st generation immigrants, with only a few (n = 9) looking at 2nd generation immigrants. Within the nine studies that look at 2nd generation immigrants, the majority also focused on 1st generation immigrants within the same study for comparison. Only two studies looked at 2nd generation immigrants (Fernandez-Barutell, 2020; Hill and Moreno, 1996). Once again, the scarcity of studies focused on 2nd generation immigrants, make it more challenging to understand how these different groups differentiate from one another in terms of factors impacting their level of trust. We do note that across studies that

there is a difference in levels of trust between 1st and 2nd generation immigrants (Ali et al., 2023) in that 2nd generation immigrants are reported to be less trusting of institutions as compared to the 1st generation immigrants (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a, 2011; Maxwell, 2010; Jeong, 2016; Röder and Mühlau, 2012b). This is because 1st generation immigrants are more sensitive to perceived discrimination, have gone through the disruptive process of changing countries, have lower expectations on institutions, and do not stayed in host country for a longer period of time yet, as compared to their 2nd generation counterparts (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a, 2011; Maxwell, 2010; Jeong, 2016; Röder and Mühlau, 2012b). These reasons are supported by theories presented in objective 1 of this results section. Namely, being more sensitive to discrimination can be explained by the "straight-line" or "classic assimilation" theory (Jeong, 2016; Michelson, 2001; Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010), which explains how immigrants face discrimination in their everyday lives due to stigmatization as "unassimilable outsiders" (Jeong, 2016). As well, low expectations can be explained by the reference point hypothesis, which proposes that immigrants' trust in the institutions of the host country is expected, because in comparison to their country of origin, the quality of institutions are better and so, immigrants are less critical of the host-country institutions (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a). Relatedly, it is suggested that the disruptive process of changing countries may also contribute to more positive evaluations of the

TABLE 2 Main recommendations to improve the relationship between migrant groups and institutions of the host country.

Institutions of host country	Institutions should...
Police Law enforcement Courts	• Figure out where deficits in trust lie (e.g., identify discriminatory and unequitable practices toward minority groups; Ali et al., 2023); • Make the research on the unique needs and challenges of communities publicly available (Ali et al., 2023); • Enhance cultural competence and sensitive training of police and law enforcement, that reflects the challenges and unique needs of immigrants (Becerra et al., 2017; Ali et al., 2023; Piatkowska, 2015; Jung et al., 2019; Han et al., 2020b); • Improve communication with communities (e.g., teach and train police officers on language of the communities they serve) (Han et al., 2020a,b); • Create greater community partnerships with immigrants, stakeholders and native-born citizens (Becerra et al., 2017; Han et al., 2020b; Pryce, 2018); • Focus on diversifying police departments (Ali et al., 2023; Jung et al., 2019); • Educate immigrants about their legal rights (Becerra et al., 2017); • Refined procedural justice practices to reduce discrimination (Czymara and Mitchell, 2023); • Promote convey distributive fairness, ensuring all groups are treated equally, and especially for immigrants residing in the host country for longer periods of time (Pass et al., 2020); • Improve immigrants' perceptions of police (Pass et al., 2020)
Healthcare system Health organizations	• Make establish consistent vaccination practices (deRose, 2018); • Have nurses educate policymakers on culturally sensitive health practices (deRose, 2018); • Create strategies to better communicate and share knowledge with communities (Lajunen and Wróbel, 2022; Read et al., 2020; Gele et al., 2017); • Evaluate different communication strategies (Gele et al., 2017); • Equip healthcare providers with resources to help mitigate the negative impacts of immigration policy stressors (Mendoza et al., 2018); • Understand the risk factors for immigrant patients as they relate to immigration policy (Mendoza et al., 2018); • Educate providers of the larger contexts that influence health outside of the clinic (Mendoza et al., 2018); • Increase the representation in the healthcare system (e.g., concordant in language or racially/ethnically; Mendoza et al., 2018)
Government	• Demonstrate that recommended health behaviors are generated with the interests of citizens in mind (Koshy et al., 2023); • Avoid ramping up enforcement levels of punitive immigration policies (Rocha et al., 2015); • Implement measures to enhance the level of democracy (Sun et al., 2024); • Focus on understanding the immigrants' political behavior from their home country (Wals, 2011); • Not view immigrants as blank slates when designing outreach strategies targeting these individuals (Wals, 2011); • Implement targeted efforts (Wals and Rudolph, 2019).
Financial institutions	• Create and implement financial capability–building interventions for low-income older Asian immigrants (Nam et al., 2019); • Equip social workers with financial literacy and in-depth understanding of financial needs, perceptions, values, behaviors, and resources of immigrants (Nam et al., 2019)
Institutions in general	• Create school programs aimed at improving civic knowledge should be introduced and reinforced (Azzolini, 2016); • Create more opportunities for face-to-face interactions with frontline professionals (Fersch and Breidahl, 2018); • Establish more checks and balances of welfare professionals so that negative experiences are identified and addressed (Fersch and Breidahl, 2018); • Reduce minority-based discrimination (Fretheim et al., 2024); • Create polices that prohibit various kinds of discrimination against immigrants (Jeong, 2016); • Create better dissemination strategies of societal information (Sibbie et al., 2024); • Improve communication strategies from authorities (e.g., more direct communication; Sibbie et al., 2024); • Focus on addressing socio-economic challenges on both individual and structural levels exacerbating inequalities and further marginalizing immigrant, including discrimination and trauma (Sibbie et al., 2024); • Work toward building nations that do not have institutionalized racism, where marginalized Canadians are intergenerational socialized to reduce contact with neighbors, children's schools, healthcare systems, and law enforcement, as making these systems more robust only serves to empower the relatively empowered (Sibblis et al., 2022); • Consider immigrants' national and historical backgrounds should when designing policies aimed at integrating immigrants into host-country institutions (Superti and Gidron, 2022).

host society (Maxwell, 2010). Lastly, the impact of length of stay can be explained by the Acculturation Hypothesis (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a).

Many of the factors we listed in Table 3 for 2nd generation immigrants are also listed for 1st generation immigrants. This may suggest that the difference in trust between these two groups may not be because of different issues, challenges and barriers, but rather, in the degree (or level) to which these factors matter to the two generations. Differences across institutions and how much different institutions matter to different generation of immigrants (or play a role in the lives of individuals), may also be at play here. For instance, one study suggests that immigrants' overconfidence is somewhat less pronounced

for the police than for the legal system, and that the lower trust of the second generation is also more strongly observed for the police (Röder and Mühlau, 2012b). There is also some overlap of factors with 1st generation undocumented/illicit immigrants/migrants, such as negative experiences with police (Rakiibu and Malatji, 2023), also suggest some overlap between the groups. However, we also note some more unique factors such as, the belief that representatives of institutions have the power to interact with immigration enforcement (Hacker et al., 2011), group consciousness (Rakiibu and Malatji, 2023), and blurring of roles between immigration officials and local police (Rakiibu and Malatji, 2023), and how these seem to relate to situations where their residence and safety within

TABLE 3 Factors and/or variables impacting institutional trust (or adjacent concepts) organized by institutions, generation and immigration status.

Institution	1st Generation legal immigrants/migrants	2nd Generation legal immigrants/migrants	1st Generation undocumented/illicit immigrants/migrants
Police	• Negative experiences with police: Experiencing discrimination and mistreatment, stigma, exclusion, and/or harassment (Sibblis et al., 2022; Kääriäinen and Niemi, 2014; Van Craen and Skogan, 2015; Röder and Mühlau, 2011, 2012a; De Vroome et al., 2013; Abu et al., 2017; Kogan et al., 2024; Wilkes and Wu, 2019); • Discrimination in childhood (Fretheim et al., 2024); • Poor policing (Ali et al., 2023); Policing style (Pass et al., 2020); • Institutional performance (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a); • Experiencing crimes (Kääriäinen and Niemi, 2014); • Frequency of police contact (Ali et al., 2023); • Previous experience with police in original country (Röder and Mühlau, 2011; Griffiths, 2018); • Frame of reference effect (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a,b); • Fear of deportation (Becerra et al., 2017); • Acculturation (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a; Bradford et al., 2017); • Length of stay in host country (Kääriäinen and Niemi, 2014; Van Craen and Skogan, 2015; Adman and Strömblad, 2015; Czymara and Mitchell, 2023); • Community/Group membership (Bradford et al., 2022; Han et al., 2020a); • Documentation status (André, 2014; Cavanagh et al., 2020); • Citizenship of host nation (Han et al., 2020a); • Diversity of host nation/workplace (Campbell, 2021; Han et al., 2020a); • Trust in neighborhood (Han et al., 2020a); • Generation of immigrant (Sibblis et al., 2022; Han et al., 2020b); • Immigrant Ethnicity/migrant background (Krieg et al., 2023; Han et al., 2020b); • Home country's (level of) democracy (Jang et al., 2019; Jung et al., 2019); • Procedural justice (Madon and Murphy, 2021); • Length of stay in host country (Kazemipur, 2012); • Levels of civic knowledge (Azzolini, 2016); • Belief that police, health care personnel, and health insurers, had power to interact with immigration enforcement (Hacker et al., 2011); • Personal experiences (Nägel and Lutter, 2023); • Perceived fairness (Nägel and Lutter, 2023); • Media coverage/Media negative portrayal of police (Nägel and Lutter, 2023; Pryce, 2018); • Migrant background (Nägel and Lutter, 2023); • Lack of understanding on police decisions, actions and protocols (Pryce, 2018); • Socioeconomic status (Nägel and Lutter, 2023); • Frequency of media consumption (Nägel and Lutter, 2023); • Frequency of Internet use (Nägel and Lutter, 2023); • Increased police visibility (Pass et al., 2020); • Length of residence (Pass et al., 2020); • Political discrimination (Han et al., 2020b); • Individual-level factors and Attitudinal factors (Han et al., 2020b); • Political factors (Han et al., 2020b); • Socialization (Sibblis et al., 2022);; • Age (Van Craen and Skogan, 2015); • Feelings of insecurity (Van Craen and Skogan, 2015); • Disorder caused by loitering youths (Van Craen and Skogan, 2015); • Administration policy and rhetoric disproportionately targeting immigrants and racialized citizens (Ybarra and Lua, 2023); • History of Policing (Ybarra and Lua, 2023); • Negative experiences with safety net programs (Ybarra and Lua, 2023); • Fears of program enrollment and eligibility related to immigration status (Ybarra and Lua, 2023)	• Poor policing (Ali et al., 2023); • Frequency of police contact (Ali et al., 2023); • Perceived or experience of personal discrimination in host country (Fernandez-Barutell, 2020; Röder and Mühlau, 2011; Jeong, 2016; Röder and Mühlau, 2012b); • Procedural justice (Madon and Murphy, 2021); • Institutional performance (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a); • Frame of reference effect/experiences in the origin country (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a, 2011, 2012b); • Acculturation (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a); • Social exclusion (Röder and Mühlau, 2011)	• Belief that police, health care personnel, and health insurers, had power to interact with immigration enforcement (Hacker et al., 2011); • Demographic, experiential, structural, and attitudinal variables (Rakiibu and Malatji, 2023); • social and political marginality status of minorities (Rakiibu and Malatji, 2023); • Negative experiences with police (Rakiibu and Malatji, 2023); • Having strong group consciousness (Rakiibu and Malatji, 2023); • Blurring of roles between immigration officials and local police (Rakiibu and Malatji, 2023); • Socialization (Rakiibu and Malatji, 2023); • Perceptions of the police in the home country (Rakiibu and Malatji, 2023)

(Continued)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Institution	1st Generation legal immigrants/migrants	2nd Generation legal immigrants/migrants	1st Generation undocumented/illicit immigrants/migrants
Legal System/Criminal Justice/Courts	• Fear of deportation (Becerra et al., 2017); • Documentation status (Cavanagh et al., 2020); • Sense of security in host country (Kaur, 2019); • Cultural familiarity (Gilbert et al., 2019); • Length of stay in host country (Superti and Gidron, 2022; Kazemipur, 2012); • Experiencing discrimination (Sibblis et al., 2022; Röder and Mühlau, 2011; Jeong, 2016; Röder and Mühlau, 2012b; De Vroome et al., 2013; Wilkes and Wu, 2019); • Experiencing exclusion (Röder and Mühlau, 2011); • Diversity in the workplace (Campbell, 2021); • Levels of civic knowledge (Azzolini, 2016); • Migrant Status (André, 2014); • Generation of immigrant (Sibblis et al., 2022); • Socialization (Sibblis et al., 2022); • Institutional performance (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a); • Acculturation (Röder and Mühlau, 2012b); • Frame of reference effect, experiences in origin country (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a; Superti and Gidron, 2022; Röder and Mühlau, 2011, 2012b); • Age of migration (Superti and Gidron, 2022); • Historical context (Superti and Gidron, 2022)	• Perceived discrimination in host country (Röder and Mühlau, 2011; Jeong, 2016; Röder and Mühlau, 2012b); • Institutional performance (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a); • Frame of reference effect/experiences in the origin country (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a, 2011, 2012b); • Acculturation (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a); • Social exclusion (Röder and Mühlau, 2011)	
Healthcare system	• Experienced disparities (deRose, 2018); • Time constraints for physicians (Rahemi, 2019); • Perceived discrimination (Pinchas-Mizrachi et al., 2020); • Anti-immigrant discourses, policies, and projects of deservingness (Duncan and Nabor Vazquez, 2023); • Poor relationship between patients and GP (Gele et al., 2017); • Refugee and family reunion (Renzaho et al., 2013);; • Migration statuses (Renzaho et al., 2013); • Being Christian (Renzaho et al., 2013); • Living in rural or village areas prior to migration (Renzaho et al., 2013); • Downward social mobility (Mendoza et al., 2018); • Acculturation (Lajunen and Wróbel, 2022); • Length of stay in host country (Lajunen and Wróbel, 2022; Kazemipur, 2012); • Prior experiences with health care providers in home country (Read et al., 2020); • Mandatory enrollment in the National Health insurance plan (Yoon et al., 2021); • Provision of medical testing and medical treatment for every immigrant (Yoon et al., 2021); • Comparison between countries in their responses to COVID-19 (Yoon et al., 2021)		
Education system	• Length of stay in host country (Kazemipur, 2012); • Administration policy and rhetoric disproportionately targeting immigrants and racialized citizens (Ybarra and Lua, 2023); • History of Policing (Ybarra and Lua, 2023); • Negative experiences with safety net programs (Ybarra and Lua, 2023); • Fears of program enrollment and eligibility related to immigration status (Ybarra and Lua, 2023)		
European Union/European parliament	• Experiencing discrimination (De Vroome et al., 2013); • Migrant Status (André, 2014)		
United Nations	• Migrant Status (André, 2014)		
Financial institutions	• Ethnic financial resources (Nam et al., 2019); • Personal experiences of institutional discrimination (Nam et al., 2019); • Collective experiences of institutional discrimination (Nam et al., 2019)		

(Continued)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Institution	1st Generation legal immigrants/migrants	2nd Generation legal immigrants/migrants	1st Generation undocumented/illicit immigrants/migrants
Government /parliament/ welfare system	- Experiencing discrimination (Röder and Mühlau, 2011; Jeong, 2016; De Vroome et al., 2013; Wilkes and Wu, 2019; Isani and Schlipphak, 2017); - Experiencing exclusion (Röder and Mühlau, 2011); - Discrimination in childhood (Fretheim et al., 2024); - Length of stay in host country (Yang et al., 2012; Superti and Gidron, 2022; Röder and Mühlau, 2011; Adman and Strömblad, 2015; Kazemipur, 2012); - Institutional performance (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a; Sun et al., 2024); - Acculturation (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a; Wals and Rudolph, 2019); - Frame of reference effect, experiences in origin country (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a; Superti and Gidron, 2022); - change of institutions' quality and functioning (Shaleva, 2016); - Generational status of immigrant (Maxwell, 2010; Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010); - Treatment received from host country (Michelson, 2016); - Original country's democracy (Cameron and Pietsch, 2021); - Institutional obligation (Koshy et al., 2023); - In the case of an election, when the side that the respondent supports loses (McCann and Jones-Correa, 2023); - Assimilation (Michelson, 2001); - Cynicism (Michelson, 2001, 2016); - Political behavior (Michelson, 2001); - In-group differences (Michelson, 2001); - Support for the regime (Munier et al., 2015); - Support for authorities (Munier et al., 2015); - Diversity in the workplace (Campbell, 2021); - Levels of civic knowledge (Azzolini, 2016); - Migrant Status (André, 2014); - Income (Yang et al., 2012; Wals and Rudolph, 2019); - Enforcement levels of punitive immigration policies (Rocha et al., 2015); - Culture (Shaleva, 2016); - Level of democracy (Sun et al., 2024); - Age of migration (Superti and Gidron, 2022); - Historical context (Superti and Gidron, 2022); - premigration political socialization (Wals, 2011); - Pre-migratory exposure to democracy (Wals and Rudolph, 2019); - Origin (Yang et al., 2012); - Age (Yang et al., 2012); - Area of residence (Yang et al., 2012); - Education (Yang et al., 2012); - Administration policy and rhetoric disproportionately targeting immigrants and racialized citizens (Ybarra and Lua, 2023); - History of Policing (Ybarra and Lua, 2023); - Negative experiences with safety net programs (Ybarra and Lua, 2023); - Fears of program enrollment and eligibility related to immigration status (Ybarra and Lua, 2023)	- Perceived or experience of personal discrimination in host country (Fernandez-Barutell, 2020; Röder and Mühlau, 2011; Jeong, 2016); - Citizenship status (Hill and Moreno, 1996); - Political interest (Hill and Moreno, 1996); - Income levels (Hill and Moreno, 1996); - Institutional performance (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a); - Frame of reference effect/experiences in the origin country (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a, 2011); - Acculturation (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a); - Social exclusion (Röder and Mühlau, 2011)	
Institutions in general	- Knowledge of Language (Arcand et al., 2021); - Educational level before immigration (Arcand et al., 2021); - Working in ethnically homogenous settings (Arcand et al., 2021); - National belonging (Breidahl and Gustavsson, 2022); - Negative experiences as migrants with welfare professionals (Fersch and Breidahl, 2018)		

the country are at risk from interactions with immigration officers and law enforcement, directly relating to their precarious legal status.

Given than very few studies looked and 2nd generation migrants, refugees and undocumented/illicit immigrants/migrants, we proposed that future research focuses on these populations

sub-groups, as comparisons to their 1st generation and citizens/born in the country counterparts, to inform trust strategies aimed to maintain and build trust over time within and across generations.

Further details as to how these factors shape institutional trust, such as whether they promote or hinder institutional trust is presented are presented in Extraction Tables 1, 3 in the Supplementary material. We propose stakeholders want to change policy or create trust strategies, take this into consideration.

3.2.4 Objective 4

This objective relates to how trust in institutions is defined for immigrant, migrant and refugee' groups. Despite the focus on institutional trust (or adjacent concepts), only a handful of studies ($n = 27$) explicitly defined the concept of focus for their readers in the background or theoretical section of their paper, and even fewer explicitly identified the dimensions of the studied/measured concept ($n = 8$). This is problematic when considering that how trust is measured and conceptualized can impact how trust interventions are developed and their success measured. Understanding how trust is defined or conceptualize may inform future items in trust measures, which can be tailored to immigrant and migrant population groups. Table 4 presents a summary of the definitions and conceptualizations of trust and adjacent concepts across included studies. To see the full definitions, see Extraction Table 2 in the Supplementary material.

From Table 4, however, we note inconsistencies in how trust and adjacent concepts are defined and conceptualized. For example, institutional trust was predominantly defined as the willingness of an individual to be vulnerable to the actions of others accepting a certain level of risk (Yoon et al., 2021; Arcand et al., 2021; Pass et al., 2020), but also defined as expectation that institution will act in the interest of individuals (Quaranta, 2024; Yoon et al., 2021), and that they will do what is right and fair (Yoon et al., 2021). This may become a problem, considering that consistency in how a concept is constructed is key for the reliability and validity of measures and consequently the quality of the findings generated from the used measures.

Further, while consistency is crucial when defining and conceptualizing the same concept across papers, so too is clearly outlining the differences between the different concepts. For instance, we note that perceptions of institutional performance (Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010; Michelson, 2016; Jang et al., 2019) is how both institutional confidence and political trust are conceptualized. Because evidence suggests that these two concepts are different, then this should also be reflected in the how they are defined in the papers (see conceptual framework section of this paper). As well we note an overlap between defining trust generally and institutional trust. Indeed, most studies included in this review had very broad definitions of trust and adjacent concepts, which not only could be applied to various institutions, but also applied to different population groups (outside of immigrants, migrants and refugees). Only two papers clearly conceptualized trust (institutional trust and political trust), in relation to the migrant population, such that trust exists immigrants' psychological integration related to feelings of identification, belonging, and commitment in the host society (De Vroome et al., 2013; Abu et al., 2017).

3.2.5 Objective 5

This objective relates to gaps in the literature and areas for future research related to promoting immigrants, migrants and refugees' trust in social institutions from included studies. Notable gaps and areas for future work have been identified for almost all studies included in this review (See Extraction Table 1 in Supplementary material). These were grouped together according to five different categories (i.e., population, variables/themes, theory, methods, and setting) outlining areas that future work should expand on (See Table 5).

The population category refers to specific populations that should be investigated in future research studies. Indeed, investigating institutional trust across different population groups and population make-ups, especially across minority groups, is something acknowledged by studies as needed in future work (Adman and Strömblad, 2015). Interestingly one study mentioned the need to look at international and domestic migrants (Superti and Gidron, 2022), which was part of our exclusion criteria. This means that it is likely that current work on this exists, but findings from these were not something we explored here.

The category of variables/themes speaks to variables, variables' relationship, themes that have not yet been investigated, or not investigated extensively enough, that researchers should consider investigating quantitatively and/or qualitatively in future research studies. We note that some of the variables listed in Table 5, such as generational status (Ali et al., 2023), the length of the stay in the host country (Sun et al., 2024), and others have already been included in some of the studies we reviewed. We advise researchers to focus their work on those still yet needed to be explored.

The category of methods speaks to different approaches to collect and analyze data not yet used that may be relevant for future work. Across the included studies we note the need to collect data on premigration, post migration and remigration, and how trust and institutions change over time. Indeed, a big emphasis across studies, is the need for longitudinal studies. Also, we note the need to include better measures, better sampling techniques, larger samples, more replication studies and more qualitative studies.

The categories with the least number of items are setting and theory, which speak to different countries within which to investigate institutional trust, as well as different theoretical or conceptual considerations needed for future research, respectively. For settings, authors propose looking at states that are not in favor of migration such as states that support and pass anti-immigrant laws, as well as other understudied countries in Europe. For theories, authors propose the comparison of theories, as well as expansion of existing theories.

Overall, there are various directions that future work can take when exploring the nature and the extent of institutional trust among different migrant groups. Most studies highlight that prominent areas of further investigation fall under the categories of methods and variables/themes. This makes sense as we showcase a wide variety of studies from across the world, which looked at various migrant groups from various backgrounds

TABLE 4　Definitions and/or conceptualizations of trust and adjacent concepts.

Trust (or adjacent) concepts	Definition/conceptualization summary
Trust (generally)	• Willingness to be vulnerable and accept risk during conditions of uncertainty (Bradford et al., 2022; Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010; Arcand et al., 2021; Pass et al., 2020); • Expectation of honesty and cooperation driven by shared norms (Ali et al., 2023); • Knowledge of trustworthiness of others (Bradford et al., 2017); • Believing others are like us (Bradford et al., 2017); • Response to the complexity in the world (Bradford et al., 2017); • Intrinsic feeling of trusting "just like that" (Renzaho et al., 2013)
Institutional trust	• Part of immigrants' psychological integration (feelings of identification, belonging, and commitment in the host society) (Abu et al., 2017); • Making assumptions about institutions future behavior (Van Craen and Skogan, 2015); • The willingness of an individual to be vulnerable to the actions of others (Yoon et al., 2021; Arcand et al., 2021; Pass et al., 2020); • Perception of how the social and organizational environment in a society operates (Hall and Werner, 2022); • Institutions' degree of honesty and care for individuals (Pryce, 2018); • Expectations institution will act in the interest of individuals (Quaranta, 2024; Yoon et al., 2021); • Expectation that institution will do what is right and fair (Yoon et al., 2021); • Levels of group consciousness (Rakiibu and Malatji, 2023)
Political trust	• Expectation that institution will do what is right and fair (André, 2014; Yoon et al., 2021; Wilkes and Wu, 2019); • Part of immigrants' psychological integration (feelings of identification, belonging, and commitment in the host society; De Vroome et al., 2013); • Belief in the benevolent motivation of institutions (Weber et al., 2023); • Perceptions of institutional performance (Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010; Michelson, 2016); • Extent to which institutions outcomes are consistent with their expectations (Wals, 2011; Wals and Rudolph, 2019); • Expectations institution will act in the interest of individuals (Yang et al., 2012)
Institutional confidence	• Perceptions of institutional performance (Jang et al., 2019); • Perception of institutional impartiality, kindness, honesty and equal treatment of individuals (Jang et al., 2019); • Evaluation of the quality of public good provisions (Röder and Mühlau, 2011)

(see the characteristics of the studies section of this review). From Table 5, we conclude that a lot of work is needed to better understand institutional trust (including political trust) formation and disintegration (André, 2014). This is especially important for understudied and underrepresented population groups, which could help establish generalizability and causality claims (Griffiths, 2018; Rahemi, 2019).

4 Discussion

Despite the importance of institutional trust for the wellbeing of populations and success of societies, not enough is known about the nature and extent of immigrants, migrants, and refugees' trust in social institutions, or why it may (or not) be declining over time. To fill this gap, we reviewed the breadth of literature on this topic with hopes to better understand the current factors and theories impacting and explaining trust, the different ways in which trust (and adjacent concepts) are conceptualized and measured, the current recommendations to build trusting relationships with migrant groups, and finally the current literature gaps and areas for future research.

An important focus of this review was the theories cited across papers, which were used to explain the relationships between migrant groups and social institutions as they relate to trust. We highlight how there was a lot of overlap in theories across different institutions and across concepts. This could mean that institutional trust, distrust and confidence may relate to one another theoretically, and that strategies to instill trust and confidence in immigrants on one institution, may be transferable and applicable to other institutions. This aligns with the systems theory we present in the conceptual framework section of our

review. Understanding these can help guide the development of potential interventions aimed at building or maintaining trust. For example, theories like institutional approach (Quaranta, 2024), argues that trust emerges when institutions are responsive and meet the expectation and preferences of the individual. From this, we could then hypothesize that institutional trust in the healthcare system would increase if the healthcare system were to become more responsive and better meet the expectations and preferences of the populations they serve.

On the other hand, we also acknowledge context-specific theories, whose application and interpretation varied depending on the specific situation, environment, or population under study. In this case, different migrant groups would have different trust needs. An example of this, is the sense-of-injustice model (Rakiibu and Malatji, 2023), which explains how immigrants (often members of minority groups) feel that they have been unjustly treated by the criminal justice system, including the police (Rakiibu and Malatji, 2023). In this case, it is not just about the performance and well-functioning of the institution to support immigrant needs, but beyond that, it is about addressing the prevailing stigmatization, exclusion, and discrimination faced by these individuals from these institutions. Indeed, we emphasize here that different theories may inform different avenues for action. Some theories suggest that institutional trust is something that is learnt throughout life, others that institutional trust is inherent to the individual, and others that institutional trust is a reaction to the institutions' functioning. Theories, models and frameworks are important as they help frame and explain phenomena, and as such we proposed that future work rely on these when investigating institutional trust among immigrants. We also propose that future studies attempt to build on already established theories or even generate new theories. This is consistent with our other finding that more

TABLE 5 Areas for future research as outlined by included studies.

Categories	Areas for future research across studies
Population	• Non-Mexican or non-Puerto Rican Latino communities (Michelson, 2001); • Different minority/ethnic diverse groups in Europe and elsewhere (Van Craen and Skogan, 2015; Mendoza et al., 2018); • Groups such as white immigrants or majority white non-immigrants for comparisons purposes (Pass et al., 2020); • International and domestic migrants (Superti and Gidron, 2022); • Specific Middle Eastern Muslim group from one country (Ali et al., 2023); • Different populations of various ages, social status, states of employment, and at different time points in their immigration (Mendoza et al., 2018)
Variables/themes	• Integration difficulties (Maxwell, 2010); • Individuals' political attitudes and actions in their nations of origin (Wals, 2011); • Individuals' apolitical levels prior to migration (Wals, 2011); • Political climate in individuals' nations of origin at the time that they left their country of origin (Wals, 2011); • Frames of reference linked to the origin country (Röder and Mühlau, 2012b); • Institutions' performance patterns (Röder and Mühlau, 2012a); • Effects of citizen–police contacts (Piatkowska, 2015); • Neighborhood characteristics and perceived quality of life (Piatkowska, 2015); • Indicators of immigrant assimilation (i.e., duration of residence in the country of destination and local language proficiency, information about the country of origin and immigrant background; Piatkowska, 2015); • Fear of deportation changes over time and its relationship to perceptions of the criminal justice system (Becerra et al., 2017); • Perceptions of Latinos among law enforcement officers (Becerra et al., 2017); • Immigration status (Becerra et al., 2017); • Family separations due to deportations (Becerra et al., 2017); • Transnational relationship (i.e., frequent visits to the country of origin, consumption of media from the country of origin, and interactions with relatives and friends from the origin country), and how these impact migrants' political trust (Voicu and Tufiş, 2017); • Regional cultures/Regional variation (Superti and Gidron, 2022; Voicu and Tufiş, 2017); • Groups' attitudes toward the legitimacy of the laws that the local police are seen to enforce (Griffiths, 2018); • Receptiveness (in contexts of immigrant settlement) and its relation to different views of the police, as well as, how these views may be sustained or changed over time (Jung et al., 2019); • Commonalities and variations in immigrant women's cultures, traditions, values, and experiences with police in their native countries and its relation to confidence level in the police in their adopted countries (Kaur, 2019); • Risks and threats (within and outside the household) related to the safety and security of migrants (Kaur, 2019); • Factors beyond direct discrimination (Wilkes and Wu, 2019); • Pre-migratory political trust variable (Wals and Rudolph, 2019); • Machismo attitudes and knowledge (Read et al., 2020); • Representative bureaucracy (Campbell, 2021); • Cultural values and beliefs of migrants (van den Broek, 2021); • Migrants' familiarity with the healthcare system in the host country (van den Broek, 2021); • Preconceived police bias (Madon and Murphy, 2021); • Experiences during the conflict and their relation to institutional trust, and which mechanisms can explain these relationships (Hall and Werner, 2022); • Mechanisms of system avoidance on the structural dynamics of distrust, discrimination, and avoidance, as a function of race and nativity (Sibblis et al., 2022); • Ways in which marginalized people inculcate systems avoidant habits into their own children (Sibblis et al., 2022); • Polish and Norwegian media and social media (Lajunen and Wróbel, 2022); • Exclusion and dissuasion from social provisions (Ybarra and Lua, 2023); • Experiences with the punitive arm of the state (Ybarra and Lua, 2023); • Effects of pandemic-era (Ybarra and Lua, 2023); • Perceived personal threat, risk perception, and perception of government competence in crisis management (Weber et al., 2023); • Generational status (Ali et al., 2023); • The length of the stay at the destination and explore the long-term effects of moving from high to low institutional performances (Sun et al., 2024); • Police institutions' response to crisis events (Nägel and Lutter, 2023); • Involvement with delinquent peers (Krieg et al., 2023); • Perspectives of police (Kogan et al., 2024).
Methods	• Collect remigration and postmigration observations (Wals, 2011); • Include comprehensive acculturation measures (van den Broek, 2021); • Data set recency (Piatkowska, 2015); • More robust research designs that can better highlight the predictive variables and the process by which these variables interact (Yang et al., 2012); • Double comparative research design, with multiple origin and destination countries (Johnson-Agbakwu et al., 2014); • Triangulated mixed methods capturing the varied perspectives across and within age groups (Johnson-Agbakwu et al., 2014); • Better measures such as, one or more multi-item scales need to be used to better test the procedural justice theory (Van Craen and Skogan, 2015); • More qualitative methods (Adman and Strömblad, 2015; Rahemi, 2019); • More tests that look into the causality of associations (Hall and Werner, 2022; Han et al., 2020a; Azzolini, 2016); • More replication studies (Becerra et al., 2017; Pass et al., 2020); • More longitudinal studies (Quaranta, 2024; Becerra et al., 2017; van den Broek, 2021; Krieg et al., 2023; Arcand et al., 2021; Voicu and Tufiş, 2017); • Regional analysis (Becerra et al., 2017; Voicu and Tufiş, 2017);

(Continued)

TABLE 5 (Continued)

Categories	Areas for future research across studies
	• Holistic analysis (Fersch and Breidahl, 2018); • Larger samples (Pryce, 2018); • Representative sampling techniques (Jang et al., 2019); • More multifaceted measures of acculturation (Wals and Rudolph, 2019); • More panel data (Wals and Rudolph, 2019); • Use of a variety of trust measures (Pass et al., 2020); • More comparison groups (Pass et al., 2020); • Measure to test the extent to which perceived neighborhood choice drives neighborhood decision-making (Cavanagh et al., 2020); • Employing vignettes and experimental methodology (i.e., police body worn camera footage) to better ascertain causal relationships (Madon and Murphy, 2021); • Internet-based methodologies with undocumented immigrants (Sudhinaraset et al., 2022); • Population-based random selection (Lajunen and Wróbel, 2022); • More comparable natural experiments (Nägel and Lutter, 2023); • More randomized control trials (Nägel and Lutter, 2023); • More systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Nägel and Lutter, 2023); • Single item measurements (Nägel and Lutter, 2023); • Recruitment of community leaders, gatekeepers, and culturally skilled recruiters to address linguistic diversity (Sibbie et al., 2024)
Setting	• Non-studied countries in Western Europe (De Vroome et al., 2013); • Countries besides Sweden (Adman and Strömblad, 2015); • Data from anti-immigrant states vs. no anti-immigrant laws states (Becerra et al., 2017)
Theory	• Dimensions of communal engagement need to be examined and addressed separately (Kazemipur, 2012); • Looking at discrimination from a distributive fairness perspective and comparing the explanatory power of performance and procedural justice theory (Van Craen and Skogan, 2015); • Include the benevolence component of the model and its contribution to trust in the healthcare systems (Pinchas-Mizrachi et al., 2020)

qualitative studies are needed to more comprehensively investigate institutional trust among migrant groups. Future studies should consider implementing methodologies such as Grounded theory methodology for this purpose (Mey, 2022).

Relatedly, institutional trust would then also vary differently across minorities groups and refugee groups. This becomes even more layered when considering the difference between the country of origin of immigrants and the host country (and respective institutions), and how these also play a role in how immigrants come to trust the institutions of the host country. A more important differentiation perhaps, may come from the different generations and different migration status (e.g., refugee status and undocumented status), and how these may shape trusting relationships differently. This makes sense as one of the main factors affecting all groups were the experiences in home country or political state of home country, and how these shape the perceptions and expectations toward the new host country. It is possible that the unique circumstances between the groups (i.e., reason of migration) may lead them to prioritize concerns that directly impact on their livelihood (e.g., deportation policies) beyond concerns toward institutions' general functioning. This supports the heterogeneity of immigrant groups that the papers acknowledge. Relying on an intersectionality framework [see (Macgregor et al., 2023)] would be recommended for future studies to adequately consider the diversity within migrants as a population group. More specifically we acknowledge the notable gap in the refugee perspective within the body of literature.

Various factors were identified as shaping the relationships between immigrants and social institutions, both positively and negatively, with factors such as discrimination standing out as prominent across population groups and institutions. These factors highlight some of the current challenges and barriers experienced by migrants which in turn may impact on their integration, as well as health and wellbeing post-migration. We also discussed

the importance of defining trust and measuring trust and the inconsistencies observed among papers. Lastly, we highlight how various papers failed to define or conceptualize trust and failed to provide recommendations for action.

Another important focus of the paper was on documenting different recommendations and strategies proposed that may help maintain institutional trust for these population groups. Few studies provided recommendations to improve, build, or maintain trust. The ones that did, focused on community-level interventions such as better communication strategies that institutions should rely on when communicating with immigrant groups or educational strategies aimed at better train representatives of institutions for when interacting with immigrant groups. There was also an emphasis on the need to better understand community-specific wants and needs. Interestingly, despite the large body of work on this topic, from the papers we reviewed only one paper published last year by Sibbie et al. commented on an established intervention and its effectiveness (Sibbie et al., 2024). The one intervention we captured, aimed to increase trust among migrant parents in Finland in child welfare and other services through a group programme (Sibbie et al., 2024). Despite its potential, the authors found no change in trust levels pre- and post-intervention (Sibbie et al., 2024). An area for future research is longitudinal intervention-based studies, as currently only one study explicitly examined the long-term effectiveness of a trust intervention. Regardless of the results, Sibbie et al.'s paper (Sibbie et al., 2024) should be used as a guide in the development, implementation and evaluation of future trust interventions for migrant groups. Also interesting is the finding that a lot of recommendations were made with the institution's representatives as the important actors, as opposed to the system at large. While these representatives (e.g., doctors, police officers and politicians), are part of the institutions, it does bring to the forefront all the different arguments pertaining to nature of the relationship

between interpersonal trust and institutional trust (please refer to our review's conceptual framework section). It could be that it is first needed to increase interpersonal trust relating to the relationship between migrants and immigrants, which will then lead to the increase in institutional trust toward the systems at large. This, however, should be further explored within the context of the immigrant, migrant and refugee groups. While it may be manageable to investigate and document trust, our findings suggest that it may be a lot harder to act on it. Further, our work also highlights how trust and confidence in institutions depends on both individual migrating and the institutions of the host country. Based on identified variables, we recommend that interventions be developed and implemented at all levels of the Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). Lastly, our findings revealed that only a small number of studies provided practical recommendations, and these were mostly focused on the local (area of the study) or community level. Consequently, we recommend that future research develop more generalizable guidance (i.e., broader policies and system-level strategies), strategies for adapting recommendations to different populations and contexts, and practical approaches for (re)building institutional trust among immigrant, migrant, and refugee groups.

All these important theories and considerations help paint a complex picture, one that suggests institutional trust is layered and nuanced. This is supported by our findings that showcase many different definitions and conceptualizations of institutional trust, various measures utilization, and inconsistencies across studies regarding these. Some studies used the terms of institutional trust and institutional confidence, interchangeably. For example, some studies defined institutional/political trust using the concept of confidence [see, (Yang et al., 2012; Yoon et al., 2021)], which may suggest that they are related to one another or the same. Furthermore, some studies measure confidence but then included trust items [see e.g., (Krieg et al., 2023)], or vice-versa. Despite very few papers reporting on the dimensions of the concepts measured, it seems plausible that institutional trust would be a multidimension construct. Future research on the development and/or validation of trust measures should report on this.

Our results demonstrate that there is a lot of literature that looks at institutional trust and similar concepts such as confidence and distrust, but that this is a growing field within the study of migrant population groups. For instance, important studies relating to institutional trust among migrant groups emerged during the COVID-19, a time of great uncertainty and risk for many [see (Lajunen and Wróbel, 2022; Yoon et al., 2021; Weber et al., 2023; Koshy et al., 2023; Ybarra and Lua, 2023; Duncan and Nabor Vazquez, 2023)]. Future research should focus on investigating trust changes over time. Not only in terms of how many years immigrants stay in a country, but also in terms of how societal norms, values and politics change during that time. Furthermore, we also recommend that future work consider the role of media in public perceptions of institutions. This relates to evidence suggesting that action should be taken to ensure that police are not perceived to be harassing specific immigrant groups in hopes to build trust in the police intentions (Pass et al., 2020). Considerations regarding transparency and accountability, as related to the need for greater checks and balances (Fersch and Breidahl, 2018), as well as how certain institutions or population groups are portrayed in media, would also be

important in future work. Another interesting variable that has not been fully explored is the different immigration pathways (i.e., whether the immigrant was "invited" or "forced" to immigrate), and how these relate to institutional trust. This may be especially interesting to study within circumstances where migrants feel "obligated" or "coerced" to engage with systems (i.e., adhering to healthcare recommendations) due to feelings of gratefulness toward institutions, and/or fear of repercussions for not doing so, that may impact their immigration status (Koshy et al., 2023). Additional interesting areas for future investigation not currently present in the body of literature would include, migrants' career and profession in the host country, immigrants' perspectives on immigrant policies/law changes, remigration (returning to home country post-emigration), investigating institutional trust for immigrants who have immigrated more than once, and finally, at the individual-level, how the trust level of second-generation immigrants (i.e., immigrants' children), as well as factors unique to them that shape this trust, may influence the trust of the 1st-generation immigrant parents. Lastly, considering the theoretical and empirical connection between social capital and trust (see our conceptual framework section), future research should explore how strengthening social capital, both within migrant communities and between migrants and institutions, may help foster interpersonal and institutional trust. Approaches such as community engagement initiatives or programs that facilitate interaction between migrants and institutional representatives may be particularly valuable. While our review did not search for studies on social capital, recognizing the relationship between trust and social capital highlights an important area for future investigation and practice.

5 Limitations

This review allowed us to showcase the breadth of literature on works investigating institutional trust among various immigrants, migrants, and refugee groups of individuals across the globe, which we did systematically and rigorously following the PRISMA-ScR's checklist and the Arksey and O'Malley's framework. Despite this, our work is not without limitations. Firstly, we did not publish or register a protocol in advance of this review. While this step is encouraged, it can be time-consuming, and the authors decided not to go this route. To maintain the integrity of the work, detailed reports were kept on the development of the review and decisions made along the way that all authors could refer to at all stages of the review. Secondly, we did not conduct a critical appraisal of the sources of evidence. As such, we make no claims about the quality, strength, or rigor of each of the studies included in this review. We do present information extracted from the included studies on reported limitations and methods used, including how variables were measured, that readers may choose to review (See Extraction Table 1 in the Supplementary material). Thirdly, while search terms were selected to create a comprehensive and exhaustive list of relevant studies for screening and later extraction, it is possible that some terms were missed. Consequently, some relevant studies may not have been captured by our search. For instance, while conducting this review, more specifically during the screening and extraction stages, authors noted that many different terminologies were used to characterize the migrant and immigrant groups,

such as illicit immigrants, 1.5 immigrants, expat/expatriate, and others. However, we were not familiar with these terms beforehand. Consequently, despite efforts to create an exhaustive list of key search terms, we may still not have captured all the different papers on our topic of focus. To minimize this risk, we consulted with a library scientist to help in the development of search strategies. Lastly, it is also possible that relevant information was missing from the development and interpretations of the inclusion and exclusion criteria. For instance, we only included empirical papers, and as such, other document types such as government documents, reports, and books, were omitted from this review.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, we hope that readers have come to appreciate the complexity of understanding and conceptualizing institutional trust. Many factors shape these levels of trust, and these factors vary slightly across different migrant groups, institutions, and contexts. As such we argue that institutional trust is complex and nuanced and must be addressed with strategies at the individual and organizational levels, as well as with both broad and tailored strategic goals. Despite the large body of work, there is still a lot that is not known. We outline key areas for future research with hopes to guide future studies. While trust is needed for the health and wellbeing of migrant groups and societies at large, trust is quick to weaken, and as such, trust in social institutions can no longer be taken for granted or expected. It must instead become something that institutions and organizations actively prioritize, promote, and nurture. We argue that this is especially important for immigrants, migrants, and refugees who are most impacted during times of greater risk and uncertainty. The information we present here can be used by researchers, industry, policymakers, and other important stakeholders to inform future research, health policy, and health promotion practices.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/Supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Author contributions

HGN: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. SA: Investigation, Writing – review & editing. GA: Investigation, Writing – review & editing. SM: Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Supplementary material

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpos.2025.1573017/full#supplementary-material

TABLE 1
Complete inclusion and exclusion criteria used for the selection of studies.

TABLE 2
Complete search strategy for each included database used for the acquisition of studies screened.

TABLE 3
Extraction table 1 summarizing key characteristics and findings of studies.

TABLE 4
Extraction table 2 conceptualizing institutional trust and adjacent concepts.

TABLE 5
Extraction table 3 reporting on determinants and the scope of institutional trust and adjacent concepts.

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