

# Integration and discrimination of refugees: a lab - in - the field experiment with Syrian, South-Sudanese and a native-born in Cairo

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## Extended Abstract

How do refugees integrate socially in host countries? Is there any discrimination from the host country's population between different groups of refugees? Based on experimental data gathered via two well-known games in the experimental economics literature (the dictator game and the trust game), this article aims to answer to these questions. We study altruism and trust of native-born Egyptians and of two distinct groups of refugees in Cairo with whom Egyptians are culturally relatively close: Syrian and South Sudanese refugees. While Egyptians and Syrians share many cultural, historical and political characteristics and links, this is not the case between Egyptians and South-Sudanese. Egyptians and Syrians are mostly Arabs and Muslims, their countries were unified into one unique state (the United Arab Republic) between 1958 and 1961. Both countries belong to the Middle East and North Africa geographic and cultural bloc of countries. Egyptians and South-Sudanese instead are more culturally distant and share less common characteristics. The main point being that both countries are part of the African continent. Given the pro-integration cultural context experienced by Syrian refugees in Egypt, how likely are they to treat the hosting population as they would treat their own? And how would behave South-Sudanese who are more culturally distant? Moreover, will Egyptians treat Syrians more favorably than South-Sudanese because of their differential cultural distance? Or would they treat them similarly since both are refugees?

Our article contribute to the limited but growing migration economics' literature on the social and cultural integration of different immigrant groups ([Manning et Roy, 2010](#); [Cameron et al., 2015](#); [Cox et Orman, 2015](#); [Laurentsyeva et Venturini, 2017](#); [Hassan et al., 2019](#); [Gandelman et Lamé, 2021](#)). Specifically, we focus on the integration of distinct refugees groups. Our study extends the study of [Hassan et al. \(2019\)](#) which, to the best of our knowledge is the only ones which expressly study the particular case of refugee social integration, Syrian refugees in Egypt. They find through several experiments that Egyptians treat Syrian refugees more favorably than they treat each other whereas the behavior of Syrians did not depend on the identity of their interaction partner. Is this attitude of Egyptians toward Syrian refugees due to their

status, meaning that they should treat all refugees the same? Is it related to their proximity with Syrians meaning that they would have behaved the same even though Syrians were not refugees? Or is it a consequence of the two factors? To answer these questions, we choose to extend the study of [Hassan \*et al.\* \(2019\)](#) by including a different population of refugees and by considering an additional experimental game, the traditional trust game of [Berg \*et al.\* \(1995\)](#).

In an era of continuing growing migrant population, policy makers should be actively interested in how best to design policies that encourage social and cultural integration of immigrants. Indeed, as pointed [Manning \*et Roy\* \(2010\)](#), popular concerns surrounding immigration are as much about the social and cultural impact of immigration as about the economic impact. Moreover, [Laurentsyeva \*et Venturini\* \(2017\)](#) pointed that the extent of these non-economic challenges largely depends on how well immigrants can integrate socially. The first step in designing policy that encourage integration of immigrants, is certainly the search of a good understanding of the rate and process of social and cultural integration. It is what this study is all about.

By focusing on refugees, our hypothesis is that their social integration might differ from that of other immigrants. In fact, refugees face many uncertainties which may considerably affect their outcome and integration in the host country ([Hatton, 2020](#); [Bertoli \*et al.\*, 2022](#)). Contrary to voluntarily migrants, refugees generally do not prepare psychologically to leave their origin country and to accommodate within a new society. Moreover, the uncertainties on the time they will have to spend in the host country, and those on the return to a normal situation in their origin country may considerably impact their integration efforts. We also consider trust and altruism because they are linked to key issues regarding the outcome of refugees in the host countries. As noted [Cox \*et Orman\* \(2015\)](#) trust in immigrants by native-born citizens is important for their acceptance in participation in economic activities while distrust, malevolence aggravate social dilemmas and non-trustworthiness of immigrants can generate security concerns. A better understanding of altruism of natives toward refugees may also provide policy makers with ideas about the fiscal efforts they are willing to make to accommodate refugees.

420 participants were recruited by a private survey organization in Cairo in Egypt. Our sample is split into: 180 Egyptians, 120 Syrians refugees and 120 South-Sudanese refugees. Our protocol consists of six treatments across which the nationality and status of the participants change. The six treatments are as follows: Syrian refugees paired with other Syrian refugees, Syrian refugees paired with Egyptians, Egyptians paired with other Egyptians, Egyptians paired with South-Sudanese refugees and South-Sudanese refugees paired with other South-Sudanese refugees. Within this framework, we study whether there are varying levels of trust and altruism between natives and refugees. We also examine whether there are quantitative and qualitative difference in the behavior of natives regarding the distinct groups of refugees.

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