

Migrants' Destination Choice

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Introduction

The recent surge in asylum applications in Europe has citizens and politicians worried about attracting a large influx of migrants from the Middle East. Many politicians have suggested that countries should limit the number of people granted refugee status in order to reduce the financial and cultural strain on receiving nations. In a speech given at the Conservative Party Conference on October of 2015, British Prime Minister Theresa May said that “At the moment, for example, workers coming to the UK on very low salaries can claim over £10,000 on top of their salary in benefits which makes the UK a hugely attractive destination. This is not good for us or for the countries those people are leaving.”¹

While these concerns over migrants’ refugee status are often political ploys to win votes from citizens concerned about an influx of foreigners, they do, nonetheless, raise the question of how migrants choose where to move. Individuals fleeing violence still decide where to try to settle and apply for asylum. Some politicians assume that migrants select countries that provide welfare benefits, and conversely, the extension of welfare benefits can turn receiving countries into “welfare magnets.” However, relatively little is known about how migrants, and particularly those fleeing violence or natural disasters, make the choices they do. When migrants have options, do they prioritize access to welfare benefits? Or are there other considerations, such as jobs, asylum procedures, the extent of religious tolerance, or family and friends networks that they weigh when selecting a destination?

Existing research has examined migrants’ destination choices by looking at the countries that attract asylum seekers. Wealthier countries, those with larger social welfare states, and those with large populations of earlier migrants tend to have the highest number of asylum applications (Neumayer 2004; 2005). Other work shows that refugees often end up in neighboring countries, which do not necessarily provide the greatest economic opportunities (Moore and Shellman 2007). But most studies look at where asylum applications were filed,

¹“Theresa Mays Speech to the Conservative Party Conference,” *The Independent*, Oct. 6, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/theresa-may-s-speech-to-the-conservative-party-conference-in-full-a6681901.html>.

and thus assume that migrants applied to their ideal location. However, case studies of asylum seekers find that the process of migration can change where asylum seekers go and that they do not always end up at their intended destination (Day and White 2002; Rossi and Vitali 2014). The main contribution of this paper is to explore migrants' preferences directly. Thus, we look beyond behavioral outcomes and instead ask migrants where they ideally want to settle using survey and experimental approaches.

In this paper, we focus on the destination choices of what we call humanitarian migrants, those fleeing situations of war, persecution, conflict, or natural disaster.² Our basic premise is that humanitarian migrants above all seek safety and stability. These migrants primarily want to move to a country where they can work and be safe until they can return home. For this reason, we argue that these migrants will prioritize two things in selecting a destination: the ease of receiving asylum and the ability to gain employment. While other factors may shape their decisions, such as social networks, religious community, or access to state benefits, these will be secondary to work and legal stability.

To test our theory, we conducted a survey of 1500 humanitarian migrants in Jordan and Turkey and of potential humanitarian migrants (individuals in conflict zones with reasons to seek safety) in Iraq and Syria during the summer of 2016. The civil war in Syria and incursions by ISIS in the region have produced the largest refugee crisis since World War II. The scale of the migration makes it a particularly good and important context to study the destination choices of humanitarian migrants. Using a forced-choice conjoint experiment, we are able to test to the relative importance of different factors in the choice of destinations. We therefore are able to analyze the relative importance of various factors that migrants value. In addition, open-ended responses and traditional survey questions provide additional insight into which migrants want to reach Europe and how they choose their destinations.

Understanding what migrants value can help to formulate policy that takes their needs into account, rather than only the recipient states' preferences. In particular, we find that

²We do not focus on economic migrants, those moving for work, or family migrants, those moving to join family abroad; although, the migrants in our study may move in part for economic and family reasons.

most migrants want to return to their home countries, but they value most is work in the interim. Policies that provide temporary work permits, rather than permanent asylum, may be preferred by both migrants and receiving countries.

This paper is broken up into five sections. We first provide a brief overview of the European migrant crisis and the asylum regime. We then discuss existing research on migrant destination choices, followed by a section introducing our own theory, research design, and testable hypotheses. The fourth section presents the results. We conclude by offering thoughts about avenues for future research and the policy implications.

Context: The Migrant Crisis in Europe

The Syrian civil has produced an enormous outflow of refugees. An estimated 13 million people have been displaced by the war (seven million inside Syria and 6 million outside). Of those, almost one million have gone to Europe in search of asylum. Along with Syrians, asylum applications from Iraqis, Afghanis, and a host of other nations reached record numbers in 2014 and 2015. Without a robust system of international rules to ease the burden on refugee-hosting countries, certain countries like Germany received the lion's share of asylum applications. The crisis revealed deep flaws in the system of international protection for refugees. In this section, we briefly outline the refugee regime and how it makes destination choice a relevant issue for many humanitarian migrants.

The refugee regime was largely a product of the Second World War.³ After World War II, the massive number of displaced persons spurred international action on refugees with the eventual creation of the the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). UNHCR, and the legal definition of a refugee that it promoted, was a product of its time: the 1951 Convention of refugees only applied to those displaced during World War II in Europe.

³The refugee regime first developed after World War I under the auspices of the League of Nations to deal with, first, the massive numbers of Russians fleeing the Revolution and, later, with the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire. However, refugee crises in China after the Japanese Invasion of Manchuria and in Europe after Kristallnacht proved the limitations of the refugee regime as millions were denied refuge throughout the world.

Further, due to ideological disagreements over the definition of refugees and the politics of the Cold War, many humanitarian migrants— those fleeing war or natural disasters— were not included. Later crises, including the Hungarian Crisis in 1956 and the Czech Crisis in 1968, led to the creation of permanent refugee and asylum policies in Europe.

The end of the Cold War presented many challenges to refugee and asylum policy in Europe. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of travel restrictions in many Communist states led to a flood of migrants. The breakup of Yugoslavia led to another wave of refugees. Finally, advances in air travel allowed migrants from the developing world to travel to Europe relatively cheaply, further increasing the numbers of asylum seekers. Combined with increased restrictions on low-skill immigration from outside of the EU (Peters 2017), these flows led to a backlash against asylum seekers. Politicians began to complain that asylum seekers were economic migrants in disguise.

With increased opposition to asylum seekers (and low-skill immigration in general Peters 2017), the geography of Europe began to play a larger role in determining where migrants could apply for asylum within Europe. With the Dublin Regulation, adopted in 2003 and recast in 2013, the EU established that asylum seekers should be registered in the country where they arrive.⁴ Asylum seekers can apply for asylum in other member states, but EU members can send asylum seekers back to their country of first contact by making “take back” requests. The system thus favors EU countries in the north, the desired destination for many asylum seekers, which are able to deport migrants back to the south where geography dictates that most asylum seekers first arrive. The Dublin system was designed to protect those in need while discouraging abuses of the system by those who try to “shop” for the EU member with the most favorable asylum practices or reception conditions.

The system gradually broke down informally and formally, however. Its breakdown makes

⁴Even before the adoption of the Dublin II regulations in 2003, many Northern and Western European states sought to keep asylum seekers from reaching their borders and to make asylum procedures more difficult, implementing laws that prohibited asylum seekers who had traveled through other member states or another “safe third country” from applying for asylum. In many cases, they signed bilateral repatriation treaties in which non-member states, especially those on the eastern border of the EU took back their own citizens and *non-citizens* who had traveled through their country, in return for generous aid packages.

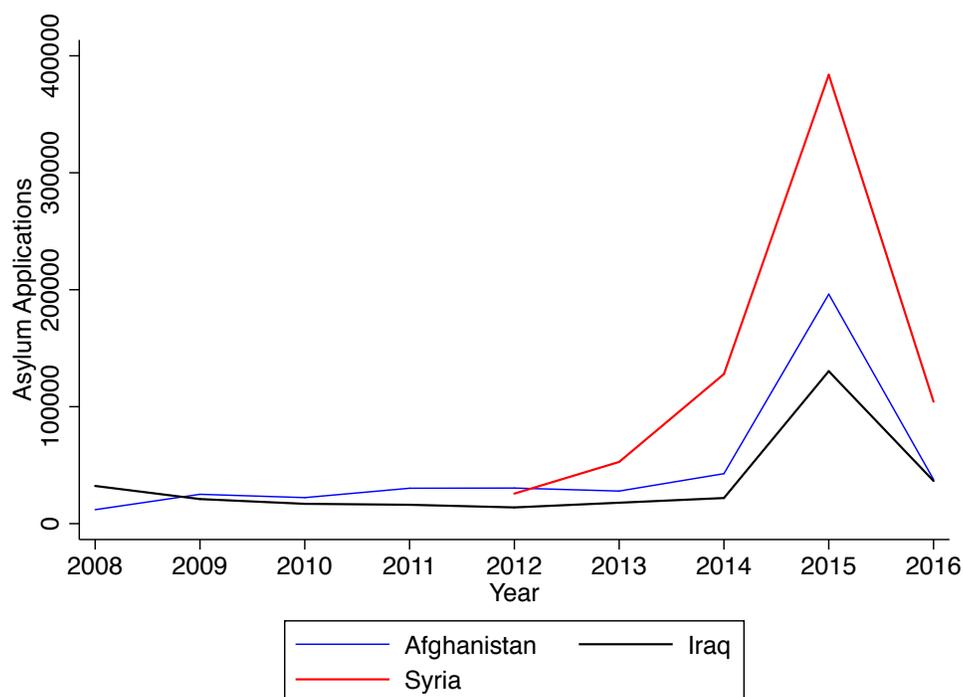
the question of where migrants want to go more relevant. Migrants often refuse to be registered at their country of arrival so that they can reach a favored destination. High rates of secondary movement among asylum seekers have undermined the Dublin system. Transfers to Greece also were suspended in 2011, as it was overwhelmed and accused of violating the rights of asylum seekers, reducing the effective transfer rates between member states.

The civil war in Syria and incursions of ISIS into the Middle East put further strain on the asylum system. As Figure 1 shows, Europe received a surge in asylum applications from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Most migrants traveled through Greece in hopes of reaching Northwestern Europe. The spike led some countries, like Germany, to suspend obligatory deportations of Syrians migrants to their first-contact country in August 2015. Others, like Sweden and Austria, first suspended these rules only to increase border controls as the crisis grew. Other countries, like Hungary and Denmark, increased border controls and sought to deter migrants from seeking asylum in their country. Nonetheless, the massive flow of asylum seekers has made the question of where migrants want to go in Europe, beyond geographic proximity, much more relevant than it had been in the past.

Several important puzzles emerged in the choices of migrants liberated from the Dublin restrictions. For instance, while Germany has coped with a vast flood of Syrian refugees, France attracted only a trickle. In 2015, 158,657 Syrians completed asylum applications in Germany, compared with only 3,553 in France. Officials from the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) even traveled to Munich to persuade refugees to settle in France and to help relieve the pressure on the Germans.⁵ Observers blamed high unemployment, terrorist attacks in Paris, xenophobic far-right parties, bans of headscarves, and slow asylum procedures for the differences. But how do migrants explain their choices?

⁵ “Non, Merci,” *The Economist*, Jan. 30, 2016.

Figure 1: The Increase in Asylum Applications to the European Union, 2008-16



Source: Eurostat. Statistics only available for the first quarter of 2016.

Existing Research

The literature on migrants' decisions largely has focused on *why* migrants choose to move rather than *where* they choose to move. Nonetheless, this literature offers some insight into where migrants prefer to go. Neoclassic economic explanations suggest that migrants balance economic returns (wages and their uncertainty in gaining employment) against the costs of migration. Similarly, the new economics of migration literature argues that migration decisions are household decisions, in which a household tries to mitigate risk by diversifying their portfolio of locations. If risk mitigation is driving migration choice, again we would think that migrants prefer locations with relatively high wages, low unemployment, and low prices, in order to remit as much as possible to their home country. These economic models suggest that migrants will choose relatively wealthy, low-unemployment countries. They tell us less about how migrants choose between two wealthy, low unemployment countries, say

Germany (4.6% unemployment in 2015) and the UK (5.3%) , or why they might choose a country that has higher unemployment, like Sweden at 7.4% (Eurostat 2016).

An alternative approach, developed largely by sociologists, study how migrant networks facilitate migration and channel migrants to some locations over others. Massey et al. (1993) argue that previous waves of migrants often provide information on destination countries, funds for migrating, and support once migrants arrive. This information and support lowers the costs of migration and makes migration a realistic possibility for poorer migrants. Yet, while there has been a large North African and Turkish population in Europe since the 1960s, there were not large numbers of Syrian migrants in Europe prior to 2011, when fighting broke out. This suggests that, while migrant networks may impact migration decisions once a sufficient number arrive from a given country, they cannot explain why migrants initially select one country over another.

Finally, politicians, especially those belonging to right-wing parties, argue that migrants move to countries with greater social welfare benefits. While scholars have found little evidence for this (see for example Zavodny 1997), it is possible that social welfare benefits shape refugee flows. Unlike economic migrants, humanitarian migrants may have few resources given that their possessions may have been destroyed and/or they may have had to leave their home, making it impossible to convert immobile assets to mobile ones. Further, economic migrants often have some connection in the receiving country to help them find employment, unlike humanitarian migrants who sometimes lack any connections. This means that humanitarian migrants may be more reliant on the social welfare state than economic migrants. Paradoxically, politicians who criticize “bogus refugees” for depending on social welfare benefits may be criticizing the most deserving asylum seekers.

In the context of the current crisis, it is not clear if humanitarian migrants prioritize access to welfare benefits. On the one hand, when choosing among a set of already developed countries, the marginal difference in benefits from one country to the next may play little role. On the other hand, it is possible that humanitarian refugees are aware of differences

in access to key benefits, like housing and food subsidies, that provide greater economic security.

Theory

We seek to explain the destination choice of humanitarian migrants deciding whether to leave their home country and during their secondary migration from a country that neighbors their home country (*neighboring country*) to their final destination. For some humanitarian migrants, especially those not fleeing an active conflict zone but instead fleeing persecution, this decision may be made prior to leaving their home country. Regardless, we argue that migrants value access to jobs and asylum rights more than other factors such as the state of the economy of the receiving state, religious affinity, and migrant networks. Humanitarian migrants are likely to prioritize safety and security in their decision. What safety and security entail for migrants consists of two factors: meeting their basic needs and security of their person(s). In other words, what migrants will be most concerned with will be having a steady source of income coupled with a safe environment. Having a stable location where they are not in danger of lacking basic goods or suffering physical harm will be a priority.

For humanitarian migrants a job will be preferred to receiving aid, either in the form of state benefits or through an organization or living in a refugee camp, because it is less dependent on budgetary cycles or politics. Not being dependent on other actors for their subsistence provides migrants with a sense of security.

In seeking to have security of their persons, migrants will also value political rights. While political rights matter for all types of migrants (Fitzgerald, Leblang and Teets 2014), they will be especially salient for humanitarian migrants. Many of them are fleeing war zones or natural disaster zones from which they cannot return as their homes may no longer exist and/or their hometowns may lack basic services. Further, most humanitarian migrants flee because they are facing some form of violence or even death if they return home. Given these

factors, humanitarian migrants will want to move somewhere they can plan to stay until it is safe to return home.

In addition, migrants are likely to prioritize countries in which the citizenry is likely to be more welcoming. As Fitzgerald, Leblang and Teets (2014) has found, migrants in general prefer to move to places with low levels of anti-immigrant sentiment, as measured by support for far right parties. This desire may be even stronger for humanitarian migrants for two reasons. First, humanitarian migrants, especially those who may be under a temporary protected status rather than full refugee status, may fear that their protection may be taken away if an anti-immigrant party comes to power. Second, they may fear that if there are high levels of anti-immigrant sentiment, that they may face discrimination, harassment, and/or violence. Together, this suggests that migrants are likely to go to countries in which the asylum process is seen as relatively quick and generous, in which there is respect for human rights, and in which there are low levels of anti-immigrant sentiment.

After these conditions are met, the other factors will likely have an effect. If given the choice between countries, humanitarian migrants are likely to want to move to a country with a safety net to help them until they can get a job and with large numbers of migrants from their home country or, in cases in which there have not been previous waves of migrant from their home country, migrants who are culturally similar to them with whom they can more easily relate.⁶

How does our argument compare with what the literature has found thus far? We argue that these cross-national results may be due to the correlation between economic conditions and generosity of the asylum regime and not due to migrants' preferences over destinations. Wealthy democracies tend to have much more generous and expedient asylum regimes than poorer democracies. Even within Europe, the contrast between Germany and Italy is striking. Germany has a stronger economy, and it also processes asylum applications much more

⁶On the other hand, depending on the number of different factions at home, it is possible that humanitarian migrants do not want to resettle near other migrants from their home country for fear of discrimination or reprisals.

quickly and allows asylum seekers to gain work permits while waiting for a verdict on their case. Italy, in contrast, has a much weaker economy. It also faced a lawsuit in 2014 in the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) for the shortcomings in the Italian asylum reception system.⁷ Thus, based on where migrants apply for asylum, it appears as if they prioritize economic conditions, when they may be prioritizing other variables that correlate highly with economic conditions.

It is also the case that most asylum seekers come from countries with long-standing conflicts. Given that asylum policy moves slowly (Peters 2017), states that have more generous policies today tended to have generous policies in the past and thus likely attracted many asylum seekers from the same conflict zones. One of the main reasons for migrants in Europe to apply for asylum in a country other than where they arrived is family reunification; therefore, many asylum seekers may go to where their family is located not by choice, but based on a calculation about the probability of asylum.

Patterns of asylum applications in the European refugee crisis also raise several empirical questions. In particular, almost no humanitarian migrants from this current crisis have tried to enter France, despite a large Muslim community and welfare state. In 2015, 158,657 Syrians completed asylum applications in Germany, compared with only 3,553 in France. The explanation may include France's weaker economy, with 10% unemployment, or specific features of the asylum process (France does not allow refugees to work for nine months). The xenophobic National Front, the ban on headscarves, and hardened public sentiment following terrorist attacks in Paris also may have scared refugees away.⁸ A survey experiment allow us to disentangle the different factors that shape migrants' preferences about where to apply for asylum.

⁷“Not Adding Up: The Fading Promise of Europe's Dublin System,” Migration Policy Institute, March 2015, p.10.

⁸“Non, merci,” The Economist, January 30, 2016.

Research Design

Our design seeks to overcome the problem of studies that deduce preferences of migrants from their behavior. While looking at where migrants actually sought asylum is a good indicator, there are reasons to be wary of that measure. First, migrants might not seek asylum where they would want to, but where they can reach, or where they foresee the ease of getting asylum to be relatively easy. This means migrants may go where they can, not where they would want to. In addition, these studies do not allow researchers to evaluate the relative weight that migrants give to various factors that drive their decision making. By conducting surveys of migrants in transit or those deciding whether to migrate, we seek to pin down with more specificity what are the factors that motivate them and which ones are more important than others.

We fielded a large survey of international migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and non-migrants from Syria and Iraq in Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and Syria. We will begin by discussing the setting and sample, and proceed to discuss the specifics of the survey design.

Study Setting and Sample

Our survey was fielded from 30 June 2016 to 2 September 2016 in Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and Syria. The survey was implemented by the independent polling firm, Proximity International, using a gender-balanced team of Syrian enumerators. In total, we surveyed 1605 respondents face-to-face.⁹

Constructing a sample of migrants in transit and displaced peoples is complex because it is a population in flux. Very basic statistics are available about the nationality and gender of migrants (generally registered by UNHCR affiliates), but even these statistics may be misleading, given how quickly the migrant flow changes. Likewise, internal displacement within Syria and Iraq has made traditional sampling frames, such as household censuses, largely obsolete. At the time of the survey, there were no preexisting sampling frames, such

⁹A pre-analysis plan was registered with EGAP before the survey was fielded.

as complete registries of migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs), or censuses that we could draw on to determine our survey locations or our sampling frame.

Given the constraints, we chose locations where it was likely that there would be many international migrants in the case of Turkey and Jordan; and many internally displaced person in the case of Iraq; and locations that we could safely access in Syria. We were unable to gain access to any refugee or IDP camps and, thus, surveyed migrants and others who were not living in camps, likely making our sample somewhat wealthier than the total migrant population. In Turkey, we fielded our survey in neighborhoods of Gaziantep, a city about an hour north of the border with Syria, and Istanbul, where many Syrians and Iraqi migrants are known to live or to transit through. In Jordan, we conducted our surveys in Amman and Marfaq, a city about a half hour south of the Syria border and a half hour from the large Zatari refugee camp. In Iraq, the survey was administered in Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, and Duhok, a city in Iraqi Kurdistan about an hour north of Mosul and an hour west of the Syrian border.¹⁰ Finally, in Syria, we were only able to conduct our surveys in Western-ally controlled areas due to security concerns. Originally, we had planned on surveying in Aleppo, but due to events of the war were unable to survey there. Instead, we conducted our surveys in Idlib, about an hour southeast of Aleppo, and Maarrat al-Nu'man, a city in between Aleppo and north of Homs. Idlib has been outside regime control since 2012, but it has experienced extensive aerial bombing and shelling has occurred. It is very important to note that the areas surveyed in Syria and Iraq are not representative of the country at a whole, due to security concerns for the enumerators, but they have drawn substantial internally displaced populations and have experienced substantial violence.

The survey was conducted through the last week of Ramadan, the Eid-al-Fitr celebrations, the month of Shawwal, and the month of Dhu al-Qadah. During Ramadan, surveys were administered after the sunset meal (between 8 and 12 PM) or in the early morning when energy levels were higher. A potential concern about Ramadan is that respondents are more

¹⁰The sampling concentrated on a 6700-apartment housing complex called Avro, where Iraqis and some Syrians live.

honest and altruistic. However, the additional honesty associated with Ramadan should be an advantage for survey research. It is unclear how more altruistic behavior would influence responses about past migration choices or future desires. During the month of Dhu al-Qadah, warfare is forbidden by the Qur'an, but this was not observed in either Syria or Iraq, and thus is unlikely to affect our survey.

The period when the survey was administered was an unexpectedly eventful time. The survey began just after the bombing of Istanbul's airport on June 28, and was ongoing during attacks on the holy city of Medina on July 5. These attacks may have heightened concerns about terrorism in the region, and ISIS in particular. If anything, these events should have increased desires to migrate. A coup attempt in Turkey on July 15 led us to stop the Turkish survey implementation. Luckily, at that point, almost all the responses in Turkey had been collected. It is possible that the Turkish coup affected the perception of individuals in other countries about the safety and stability of migration through Turkey. For both events, we therefore include a dummy variable for the pre- and post-period to test for possible changes in popular concerns (see Appendix).

In the case of Jordan and Turkey, we focused on neighborhoods and public locations where migrants tend to gather. The survey teams had extensive local knowledge, and therefore attempted to rotate among sites where migrants gather roughly every hour to create a more representative sample and also to avoid security problems (especially in Turkey where the government had clamped down on academic research on migrants). In public areas, enumerators used skip rules to avoid snowball sampling. Although public locations where migrants congregate were relatively obvious in Turkey because migrants are concentrated in certain areas of the city, it was much more difficult in Jordan. Recent migrants largely have moved into camps in Jordan, making it difficult to locate migrants within urban areas. We asked enumerators to sample at local aid distribution points as a way to locate recent migrants living outside of the camps.

In Syria and Iraq, security concerns prevented enumerators from surveying in public

areas. Instead, they conducted household surveys, following a skip rule in between houses and apartments. The enumerators generally surveyed whomever answered the door. This sampling technique, however, resulted in fewer religious women and older respondents. We therefore requested that enumerators ask to speak to female and older members of the household when possible. Enumerators listed all members of the household so that we could detect biases in the population that answers the door. In general, this procedure produced a sample close to the household population and to the available statistics, as we discuss below.¹¹

In all sites, survey enumerators worked in pairs including both a woman and a man to ensure we can survey respondents of both genders. All surveys were conducted in Arabic. Enumerators used smart phones in order to ease data entry, minimize enumerator error, and allow for the administration of complex treatments. However, reliable Internet connections were not available at all the sites. This intermittency prevented the real time upload of data, especially in Iraq and Syria. We used Qualtrics off-line application in sites without reliable wireless connections, but unfortunately bugs in the software and enumerator error mean that some responses were lost. The median survey duration was 24 minutes.¹² To encourage participation, respondents were offered the chance to participate in a raffle of 100 phone cards, each containing about \$25 of credit.

Survey Experiments and Non-Experimental Questions

To examine the destination preferences of migrants we used both experimental and non-experimental questions. Our non-experimental questions asked whether the respondents wanted to go to Europe, to another country, stay where they are or return home. We asked several questions to understand their choice, including both closed and open ended questions about the reasons for migrating or not and, if they want to continue on elsewhere, why they want to move to a given country. We also asked a series of questions to understand the conditions

¹¹See Appendix B for more on the survey demographics.

¹²Due to some issues with the off-line applications, some surveys were listed as lasting extremely long, making the mean survey time 97 minutes, much longer than our enumerators reported.

respondents faced when they left home or their current conditions for the non-migrants and IDPs; their social networks and migrant solidarities; their transit experiences (for migrants); their political and legal knowledge; and their demographics.¹³

In addition to the non-experimental questions, we fielded a humanitarian-choice conjoint experiment in which respondents choose between hypothetical countries. In the real world, many attributes cluster together, such as a strong economy, a generous welfare state, and greater acceptance toward migrants. In a conjoint experiment, we can allow each of these attributes to vary independently and thus understand their relative importance of each attribute. As is standard, we estimate the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto 2014), meaning the effect of each attribute when randomizing over all other attributes. Conjoint experiments have been used to understand opinions on immigration in host nations (e.g. Hainmueller and Hopkins (2015)), but to our knowledge, this is one of the first conjoint experiment conducted on migrant populations.

We use the conjoint experiment to understand which attributes matter most to respondents when choosing between hypothetical destination countries. We ask the following: Below you will be given information about two hypothetical countries where you could seek to settle permanently. Which country would you prefer to settle in? We included five different attributes to test our argument and competing hypotheses, including the length of the asylum process, the extent of support for anti-immigration political parties, labor market conditions, the size of the Muslim population, and access the social welfare system. As we are interested in heterogeneous treatment effects (more below), we limited ourselves to the following two levels of each attribute to have sufficient statistical power:

- Anti-immigration parties: *Many/few anti-immigrant political parties*
- Social welfare access: *Access/no access to social welfare benefits*
- Muslim populations: *Small/large Muslim populations*

¹³We additionally had two other survey experiments on how information about the current migrant wave affects their views and experiments probing the ethics of the current refugee regime.

- Legal process for asylum: *Slow and hard to get asylum/Quick and easy to get asylum*
- Labor market conditions: *Opportunities to work/No work*

Figure 2: Screenshot of Destination Conjoint Experiment

Q367.

يوجد لدى البعض خيارات معينة فيما يتعلق بالمكان الذي يرغبون بالعيش فيه بالنهائية في حال قرروا الهجرة إلى أوروبا. سنقوم تالياً بإعطائك معلومات عن بلدين افتراضيين لاختيار أي منهما تفضل العيش فيه. ملاحظة للباحث: سيتم وضع المعلومات على نموذج وسيتم تزويدك بالصور. في حال كان المستجيب لا يستطيع القراءة، فقم بقراءة التوضيحات الموجودة تحت الصور. أعلى خمسة صفوف

جولة 1

	الدولة 1	الدولة 2
Work	فرص العمل	عدم توفر العمل
Anti-Immigration	عدد قليل من الأحزاب التي تعمل ضد المهاجرين	عدد قليل من الأحزاب التي تعمل ضد المهاجرين
Benefits	تتوفر ميزات الرعاية الاجتماعية	لا تتوفر ميزات الرعاية الاجتماعية
Ease-of-Asylum	عملية الحصول على لجوء سياسي سريعة وسهلة	عملية الحصول على لجوء سياسي سريعة وسهلة
Muslim-Pop	عدد السكان المسلمين كبير	عدد السكان المسلمين كبير
STOP	STOP	STOP
Country-of-Origin	العراق	إيران
Religion	مسيحي	مسلم
Education	شهادة جامعية	شهادة بكالوريا
Reason-for-Leaving	تهديد بالموت	خوف من التعذيب
Gender	رجل	امرأة

الدولة 1

الدولة 2

Note: Screenshot is taken from the survey preview on a computer to show the entire table. It is not possible to show the entire table on most phones.

Figure 2 provides a screen shot of the conjoint as it was presented to the respondent. The presentation of the conjoint differs from an ideal design in a few ways. First, due to limited internet access in our survey sites, we had to use the off-line software application

which has less flexibility in the randomization of attribute categories.¹⁴ We included two conjoint experiments on the survey, which were divided with a “STOP” line. In an ideal setting, we would have randomized the order of each attribute and allowed respondents to see the conjoint attributes separately. Randomization protects against order effect in which respondents focus on the first or last attribute listed. Given these concerns, we placed labor market conditions first and Muslim population last to bias us against finding support for our main hypotheses about the importance of legal asylum and country climate (see below). One advantage of including two experiments is that we can test for possible order effects across the experiments. Below, we find that the placement of attributes did not have a large effect. A second constraint is that enumerators had to be able to show the entire half of the table to the respondent on their phone screen, limiting the length of each attribute description. Finally, to ensure the attribute levels were recorded, we had to list the attribute categories in English. Nevertheless, we found that the attribute levels were not always collected. We believe this was a function of the device that enumerators were using; there are no systematic patterns of missingness by country location or whether the survey was completed using the online or off-line application. The enumerators went through several rounds of training with the conjoint experiments to ensure that they understood how to administer them.

Hypotheses

Main Hypotheses for the Conjoint Experiment

The attributes are used to test hypotheses from the literature and our own arguments about the importance of legal recognition and a clearer legal path to residence; the likelihood that migrants will have their rights respected and are less subject to crimes against them; and the importance of the labor market.

We argue that safety concerns will be very important for asylum seekers and therefore

¹⁴To implement the conjoint experiment in the off-line app, we used the software designed by Meyer and Rosenzweig (2016).

they will choose countries in which they are most likely to gain asylum.¹⁵ This leads to our first set of hypotheses.

H1: Migrants are most likely to choose states with high acceptance rates for asylum applications.

H2: The acceptance rate for asylum seekers will have the greatest effect on migrants who have experienced the most violence personally.

We suspect that support for far right parties should signal to migrants that the country is likely to be hostile to migrants and less likely to protect their civil rights or allow them to easily integrate into society.¹⁶ Indeed, Fitzgerald, Leblang and Teets (2014) have argued that support for far right parties leads to fewer migrants because migrants want a welcoming environment. This leads to our next set of hypotheses.

H3: Migrants are likely to choose states with low electoral support for anti-immigrant parties.

H4: Muslim migrants are especially likely to choose states with low electoral support for anti-immigrant parties, as they fear discrimination against them will be high.

Work may be important as it give humanitarian migrants stability and allows them to recover the possessions, and in many cases dignity, that they have lost in their flight to safety. Access to the social welfare system also may be important to refugees as they have lost many of their possessions and may need help getting back on their feet. Alternatively, a common hypothesis from the popular press and in some of the literature is that asylum seekers are “bogus refugees,” who seek access to the social welfare system or the labor market in wealthy countries (Neumayer 2004; 2005; Shellman and Stewart 2007).

¹⁵Rossi and Vitali (2014) find in their survey that most asylum seekers base their location choice on information they have received from others as to general likelihood of receiving asylum in that state.

¹⁶Similarly Rossi and Vitali (2014) argue that the reception that refugees get helps explain their final choice of location.

Economic 1: Work opportunities should have a large positive effect on the choice of country while few opportunities should have a large negative effect.

Economic 2: Access to the social welfare system should have an overall large effect on the choice of country.

If networks and cultural ties explain the choice of where people want to go, then the number of Muslims in a country should have a large effect on the choice of destination.¹⁷ This leads to two alternative hypotheses.

Network 1: The number of Muslims should have a strong effect on the choice of country

Heterogeneous Treatment Effects of the Conjoint

We have already noted two heterogeneous treatment effect above; namely, that respondents who have been personally affected by violence will choose a country that has high rates of asylum since they are seeking safety and that Muslim migrants will choose countries that have less electoral support for anti-immigrant parties due to the discrimination associated with anti-immigrant parties towards Muslims. We also hypothesize the following heterogeneous treatment effects.

Heterogeneous 1: Migrants with children will prioritize access to the social welfare system as a signal that they will be able to enroll their children in school and get adequate medical and psychological treatment for them.

Heterogeneous 2: Elderly migrants and those traveling with elderly relatives will prioritize access to the social welfare system as they or their relatives will likely be unable to work once resettled.

Heterogeneous 3: Migrants with more education will prioritize access to the labor market as they will think they will be able to use their skills.

¹⁷Day and White (2002) argue that networks play a large part in the choice of destination country.

Heterogeneous 4: Migrants with less education will prioritize access to the social welfare system as they will think it will be less likely they will get a job.

Hypotheses for Non-Experimental Questions

We also have hypotheses for the non-experimental questions.

NE Hypothesis 1: The most important factors to the majority of respondents in their choice of country will be the ability to stay there legally, to live in a country that seems welcoming to migrants, and to live somewhere where it is easy to find jobs.

NE Hypothesis 2: Respondents will apply for resettlement as long as they believe that they are eligible.

Economic NE Hypothesis: Migrants will list the wealth of the country, the ability to work, and the fact that the government gives refugees income as their top three items.

“Bogus Refugee” NE Hypothesis: Migrants will avoid applying for resettlement because they want to choose their own destination in Europe and believe that it will hurt their chances if they decide to cross illegally.

Results

Migrant Preferences

First, we asked respondents whether they want to migrate to Europe. A surprisingly small fraction of respondents said that they hope to reach Europe: just 27 percent want to migrate in our sample. However, there is substantial variation across our interview sites. Most strikingly, less than 10 percent of respondents in Syria want to migrate to Europe. In contrast, 38 percent of respondents in Turkey want to reach Europe, 32 percent of those in Jordan,

and 41 percent of those in Iraq. It is not the case that all migrants want to reach Europe or that they only are limited by their finances or opportunities to make the trip.

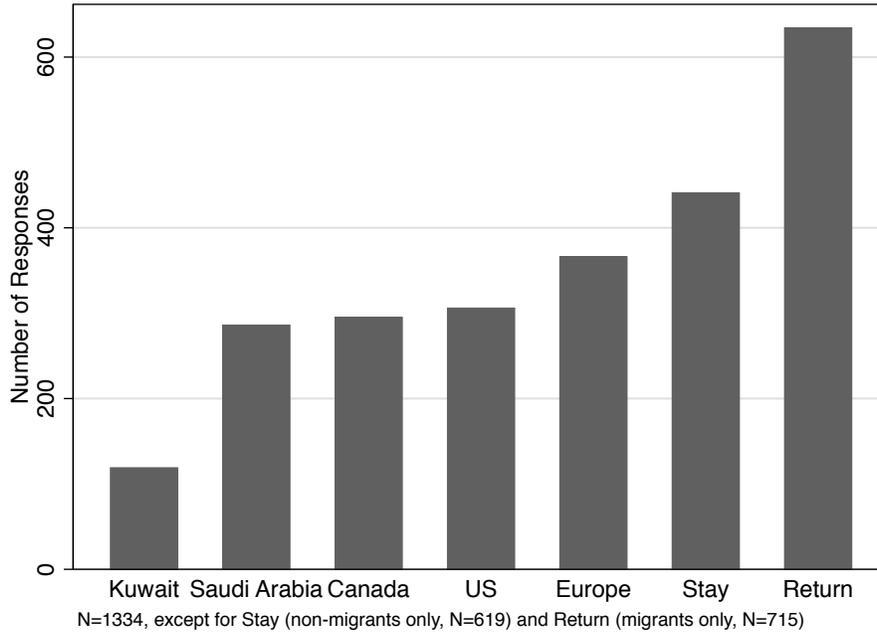
Why do so few Syrians want to migrate to Europe? It is possible that security concerns led Syrians respondents to mask their true intentions. But respondents in Syria were more likely to answer sensitive questions than those living elsewhere, and a battery of related questions confirm that our Syrian respondents are very committed to staying through the war. Only 16 percent of Syrians had talked to a smuggler about leaving for Turkey (and 7 percent discussed heading to Europe).¹⁸ Understandably, Syrians who have stayed through five years of fighting and tremendous violence want to stick it out. Our respondents also were relatively optimistic that the opposition would win the war. Three-quarters believed that the opposition was winning, and 91 percent wanted the opposition to win the war.

More generally, opinions were very mixed about wanting to reach Europe. A large number of respondents expressed a desire to return to their home country. We asked migrants in transit whether they would return to their home country “if the fighting were to end this year.” Amazingly, 89 percent said that they want to return, and 83 percent find it likely or very likely that they eventually will return to their home country.

Desires to migrate were not driven by a particular affinity or dislike for Europe, either. We asked respondents if they would prefer to go the United States, Canada, Saudi Arabia, or Kuwait, rather than somewhere in Europe or remaining at home (for those who had not left). About a quarter of respondents said they would prefer to go to the United States, Canada, or Saudi Arabia (only 9 percent said Kuwait). This question likely captured an underlying desire to migrate, however. Many respondents picked multiple country options, and there is a strong correlation ($\rho \approx 0.3$) between expressing a desire to migrate to Europe and to other Western countries. Figure 3 summarizes respondents’ stated interest to migrate to different countries. The right-hand columns show the number of non-migrants who prefer to stay in their home country, and the number of migrants who express a desire to return home when

¹⁸In contrast, 57 percent of Iraqis who remained in Iraq had spoken with a smuggler about getting to Turkey and 19 percent had discussed going to Europe.

Figure 3: Stated Desires to Migrate and Return or Remain Home



it is safe. Again, far more migrants and non-migrants expressed a desire to stay or return home than wanting to migrate to a foreign country.

Respondents' stated desires to return home are confirmed by their behaviors. Of those who left their home countries for Turkey or Jordan, only 12 percent have applied or plan to apply for resettlement to Europe. The vast majority explained their choice not to apply as the result of wanting to return home (51 percent) or wanting to stay in Turkey temporarily (29 percent) or permanently (9 percent).¹⁹ While skepticism about the resettlement process could explain these responses, this does not seem to be the case: 52 percent of migrants thought that it is likely that applicants would be resettled and very few (5 percent) have attempted to cross to the EU with a smuggler instead.

What explains the desire among some respondents to migrate to Europe but not others? In separate work, we explore the motivations for migration in greater depth and run logit

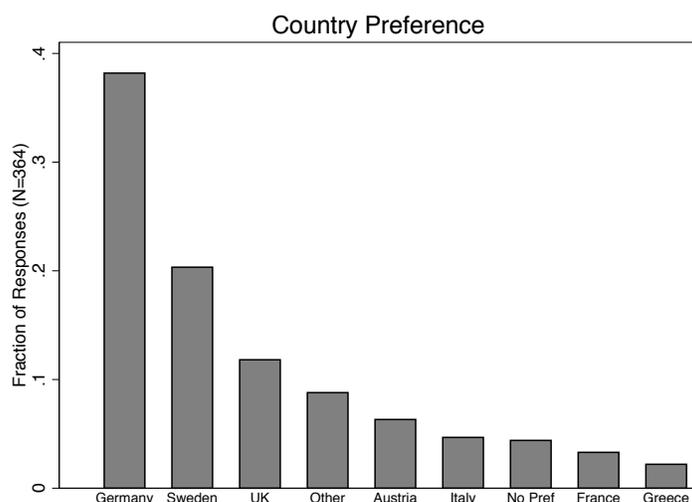
¹⁹The remaining minority thought they were not eligible, that an application would harm their chances to stay in Europe if they went with a smuggler, or that they would be unable to choose where they were resettled.

models using stated interest in migrating to Europe as our dependent variables. We find that a number of demographic features predict greater interest in migration. Less educated and less wealthy respondents are substantially more likely to want to migrate. A natural interpretation is that individuals with higher socioeconomic status have a greater stake in returning to their home country. Educated respondents also may not be satisfied with the menial jobs that they would find in Europe. As one man put it in our open-ended questions, “My life was good before the war in Syria and I have not thought about [going too far].” More religious individuals, and especially those with children, are less likely to want to migrate. Intuitively, more religious respondents are more interested in migrating to Saudi Arabia; they are less likely to want to migrate to Europe and the United States. Having a family member in Europe already also predicts greater interest in migration. One Syrian woman captured the greater concerns of religious respondents about migration: “I fear that [I], people of my religion, and my children will be exposed to evil in European countries.” Lastly, legal expectation matter. Most respondents are optimistic about the prospects that they can stay in Europe if they migrate. But those who doubt that they can stay are very unlikely to want to migrate. Among those who wanted to migrate to Europe, most open-ended responses mentioned an exhaustion with the war, a desire for work, education, housing, and safety.

Turning to the focus of this paper on destination choices, we also asked respondents which country they wanted to migrate to and why. As Figure 4 shows, the majority of respondents wanted to migrate to Germany, followed by Sweden, in line with data on actual asylum applications. The least popular options were France and Greece.

When asked why they picked a given country, respondents preferred countries in which they had family members, where they expected to be able to find a job, and where they could access welfare benefits (see Figure 5). Interestingly, having a large Muslim population (or more generically, a welcoming environment for refugees) was less important. Issues around the legality of migration, such as whether it is easy to gain legal status to stay permanently or whether the government deports migrants, also were chosen less frequently.

Figure 4: Destination Choice



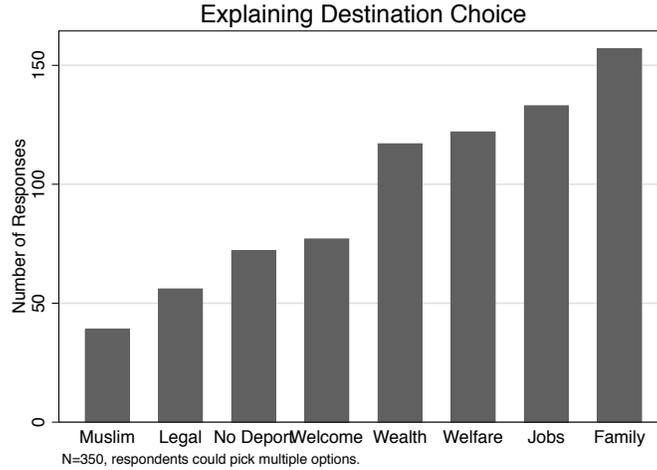
Conjoint Experiment

In short, the observations results suggest several important trends. First, it is a myth that all migrants are trying to reach Europe or that they want to stay permanently. The majority want to return to their home countries. Second, those most interested in migrating to Europe have fewer opportunities at home—they tend to be poorer and less educated. They also tend to be less religiously observant, and have better expectations of their chances to stay. Finally, as can be observed in actual migration patterns, those who want to migrate focus on Germany and Sweden. Migrants explain these choices based on their family connections and their perceptions of the labor market, welfare state generosity, and wealth of the host country. Cultural affinity and legal procedures are less important in selecting a destination.

Main results

We now turn to our experimental results. As noted above, due to technical problems capturing the attribute levels along with non-response, not all respondents have usable responses to our conjoint experiment. Nonetheless about half our sample, 814 answered the conjoint experiment; 413 in Turkey, 107 in Jordan, 161 in Syria, and 133 in Iraq. Table 1 lists the

Figure 5: Explanations for Destination Choice



demographics for those who successfully took the conjoint as well as for those who did not. As shown in the table, more women, younger respondents, and more migrants saw the conjoint experiment. Respondents were also slightly poorer, slightly more educated, and slightly more religious than our full sample.

Figure 6 presents the results of the conjoint experiment for all respondents. To analyze the conjoint experiments, we followed the procedures laid out in Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto (2014) to recover the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) for each attribute level. The outcome variable is the (binary) choice between two hypothetical countries. The dots represent the point estimate and the lines represent the 95% confidence interval for the AMCEs. Dots without confidence intervals are the reference categories.

Similar to the non-experimental results, we find that the labor market conditions in the destination country have the largest effect at almost twice the magnitude of the eligibility for welfare benefits and the ease of gaining asylum, the next largest effects. Shifting the labor market conditions from a lack of jobs to many employment opportunities increases the probability that our respondents choose the hypothetical country by 11 percentage points ($se = 0.01$).

Consistent with Hypothesis 1 but in contrast to the non-experimental results, the ease of

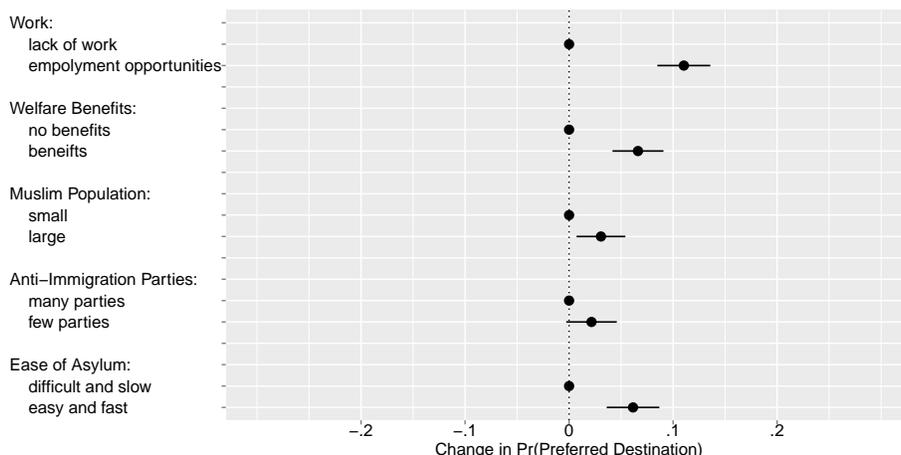
Table 1: Demographics of Respondents who Did and Did Not Answer Conjoint Questions

Demographics	No Conjoint Sample	Conjoint Sample	Significance
% Women	19%	43%	$p = 0.000$
Age	37	30	$p = 0.000$
% Non-Migrant	51%	14%	$p = 0.000$
% Internal Migrant	9%	23%	$p = 0.000$
% International Migrant	40%	63%	$p = 0.000$
Pre-Migration Wealth Index	6.23	5.9	$p = 0.23$
Pre-Migration Income	2.28	2.43	$p = 0.01$
Education	4.68	4.92	$p = 0.02$
Religiosity	2.18	2.41	$p = 0.000$

Notes: This table presents the demographics of those who we could and could not analyze the conjoint experiment due to either technical problems or non-response. Pre-migration wealth index is the number of durable goods the respondent owned prior to migration/owns now. Pre-migration income is a subjective four-point measure of how well income covered household outlays, ranging from (1) able to save to (4) significant difficulties paying for expenses. Education is a 7 point scale ranging from (1) no formal education to (7) post-graduate work. Religiosity is an index of four questions on religious activities and attitudes on women’s dress.

gaining asylum has a relatively large effect as well. A change from a slow and difficult to an easy and fast process increased the probability of choosing the country by 6 percentage points ($se = 0.01$). Why do these results diverge from the non-experimental questions? One possibility is that our survey respondents were very optimistic about their chances to stay in Europe. More than 85 percent thought that migrants have a “good” or “very good” chance of being allowed to settle in Europe. Given this optimism, they may not have listed legal treatment and deportation as key decision factors, since, in their minds, these features do not vary much between European countries. It was only when prompted to make a choice between two different legal regimes (and possibly more radical ones than they believe exist in Europe) that the ease of asylum began to matter. We think that any concerns about social desirability bias—e.g. fear that saying that asylum is easy to get would portray them as not deserving of refugee status—is unlikely given the willingness to answer sensitive questions about smugglers elsewhere in the survey, and the fact that most believe that they would be

Figure 6: Conjoint results



able to settle in Europe.

The other results from the conjoint experiments are consistent with the non-experimental results. Ability to access the welfare state has a similar sized effect on destination choice as legal status. Contrary to the network or social dynamics theories, both the size of the existing Muslim population and the support for anti-immigration parties are smaller and in the case of anti-immigration parties is (marginally) not statistically significant at conventional levels ($p = 0.08$), providing less support for Hypothesis 3. This suggests that migrants prioritize the ability to support their family, followed by the ability to gain legal status and associated social welfare benefits.

Given that our sample is 67% men, we might be concerned that the results, and especially the importance of labor market conditions, are driven by the preferences of men. Yet, the results hold when we split the sample by gender (Appendix A Figure 10). It is not the case that only men, who tend to have higher rates of labor force participation, prioritize employment; instead women also prioritize the ability to find employment, followed by ease of asylum, and access to welfare benefits. Women and men value community and the political environment at roughly the same levels as men. There is no statistically significant effect of the size of the Muslim population or the size of anti-immigration parties when the sample is divided by

gender.

As discussed above, one potential caveat to these results is that in all the conjoint experiments shown, the ability to work was listed as the first attribute of the country. It is plausible that at least some of the respondents focused most on this attribute due to its placement as the first item. We think this is unlikely given that respondents overwhelmingly listed labor market conditions as a major factor in their destination choices on the non-experimental questions. Nonetheless, to examine whether attribute order effects may drive our results, we examined the results of the other conjoint experiment as the placement of attributes was not randomized for that conjoint either. We find that the AMCEs of characteristics of the first attribute did not have much larger point estimates than the later attributes suggesting that respondents were not satisficing by using the first attribute listed (Appendix A Figure 17). Also recall that we included two conjoint experiments on our survey and that they appeared as part of the same block of text. To prevent any order effects between the two conjoint experiments, we randomized their order. If attribute placement affected our results, the effect of the first attribute should be larger when the destination choice conjoint appeared first. We find remarkably similar results regardless of the experiment order (Appendix A Figure 18).

Experience with Violence and Destination Choice

Next, we turn to examining the support for hypothesis 2, that the asylum rate will have the greatest effect on those who have experienced the most violence personally. We operationalize experience with violence using our questions on the types of violence that took place an individual's neighborhood to create an index of violence.²⁰ We asked respondents whether any of the following occurred in their neighborhood in the month before they left for migrants (mostly those in Turkey and Jordan) or in the last month for those who still lived in their place of usual residence (most of those in Syria and Iraq): barrel bombs, airstrikes, mortars,

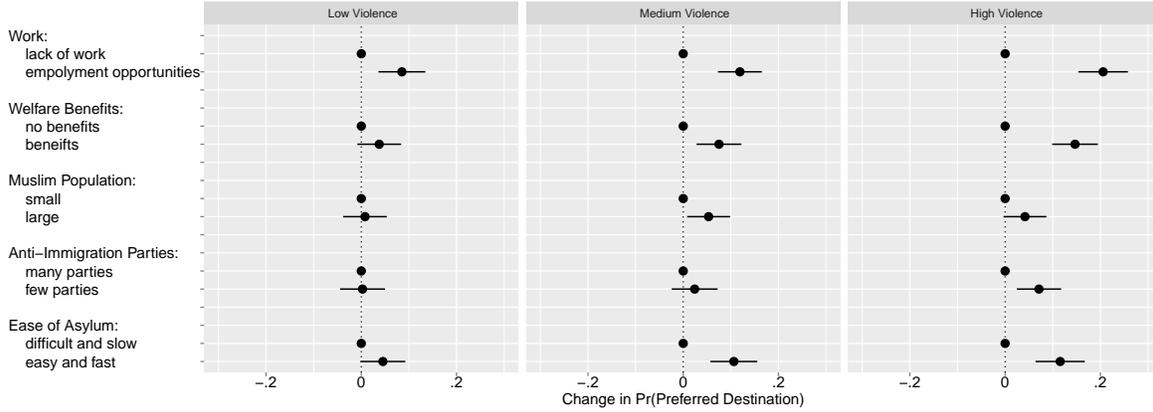
²⁰For those who had left their place of usual residence, we asked, "Were any of the following types of dangers occurring in your neighborhood in the month when you left?" and for those at their usual place of residence, we asked, "Were any of the following types of dangers occurring in your neighborhood in the last month?"

snipers, car or roadside bombs, chemical weapons attacks, humanitarian conscription, sexual assault, kidnapping/disappearances, executions, arbitrary arrests, or corporal punishment. From these responses, we created a basic index of the proportion of these dangers that the respondent experienced. We split the sample into three levels of violence, cutting at the 33rd and 67th percentile, with 225 respondents experiencing a low level of violence (two or fewer of the types of violence), 222 experiencing a moderate level (two to four types), and another 188 experiencing a high level of violence (more than four types). It is important to emphasize that almost all respondents experienced substantial violence, and migrants cited violence and generalized fear as the reason for leaving their homes.

Our results suggest that it is not the case that economic migrants pretend to be refugees, at least in our sample. Instead, refugees, and especially those who have suffered the worse violence, want to move somewhere they can have a good, stable life and work. Figure 7 presents the results based on experiences of violence. Those who suffer the most violence were most moved by opportunities to work. Increasing the opportunity to work from a lack of work to substantial opportunities increased the likelihood that those who had faced the most violence would choose the hypothetical country by 21 percentage points ($se = 0.03$). For those who faced a moderate amount of violence, the change was just 12 percentage points ($se = 0.02$) and for those who faced low amounts of violence, it was 9 percentage points ($se = 0.03$). While the large effect of work opportunities may be a product of its placement in the conjoint, we have no reason to believe that the placement would have disproportionately affected those who had experienced great levels of violence. The estimated magnitude of the effect of work conditions may be biased by its placement, but the relative effects should not be.

Similarly, we find that those who suffered the most violence are most likely to prioritize access to welfare benefits. Welfare benefits had about twice the effect on those who suffered high levels of violence than those who suffered a moderate or low amount. In fact, welfare benefits had no statistically significant effect on those who suffered from the fewest types of

Figure 7: Conjoint Results by Experience with Violence



violence. Our open-ended responses shed some light on these heterogeneous effects. Many of those who wanted to migrate mentioned the importance of housing, linking it to additional security and safety for their families.

Ease of asylum also had strong effects on those who experienced more violence. For those who were affected by high or moderate violence, a change from slow and difficult asylum procedures to fast and easy increased the probability of selecting the hypothetical country by 12 ($se = 0.03$) and 11 ($se = 0.03$) percentage points respectively. For those who suffered from only a few forms of violence, ease of asylum had a smaller effect (5 percentage points) that is not quite significant at the 95% level ($p = 0.06$). Nonetheless, asylum had a larger effect on low-violence respondents than the change in welfare eligibility.

Those who suffered the most violence were also the only group that was concerned with the strength of the anti-immigrant parties. For this group, a change from many anti-immigrant parties to few increased their probability of choosing the hypothetical country by about 7 percentage points ($se = 0.02$). In contrast for the other two groups, the point estimate of the AMCE is close to zero and not statistically significant.

Finally, the size of the Muslim population also affects those with greater experience with violence to a larger extent. The effect is basically zero for those with low levels of experience with violence but increases to about 4 or 5 percentage points with an increase in violence.

We conducted several robustness checks using different questions about violence. First, we examined whether worsening violence has the same effects on destination choice. We ask respondents whether violence has gotten worse in the last week, month, and year for those at their usual place of residence or had gotten worse in the last week, month, and year before migrating for those who had left. We find largely similar patterns (Appendix A Figures 11-13), with larger, although not statistically different, effects for the opportunity to work, ease of asylum, and access to the welfare state for those who suffered from worsening violence. We consistently find little effect of the size of anti-immigrant parties and Muslim populations. The main difference with these measures is that for those who suffered worsening violence in the week before they left home placed less weight on working conditions and ease of asylum and more weight on accessing the welfare state than those who did not; however, the point estimates are not statistically different.

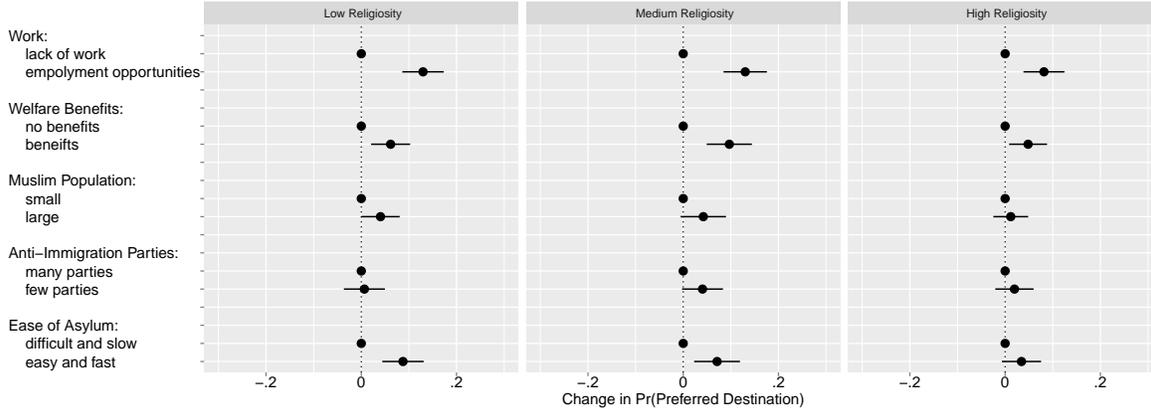
Second, we examine the differences between those who said they left for reasons of generalized fear or targeted violence (or, in the case of those who remained in their home countries, said that they faced these threats) and those who said that they left primarily for family or economic reasons (or had not faced these threats).²¹ Again, the results are similar.

Religion and Destination Choice

Next we turn to examining the support for Hypothesis 4 that Muslim migrants especially choose states with low electoral support for anti-immigration parties, where discrimination may be rampant. Unfortunately, we were unable to survey many non-Muslims (only 50 non-Muslim respondents provided answers to the conjoint experiments). Instead we examine this hypothesis by splitting the sample by religiosity. If Muslims should care about the effect of the prevalence of support for anti-immigration parties on discrimination or climate, than highly religious Muslims should care more strongly as they are often visible due to dress or Mosque attendance and thus more likely to be the targets of discrimination or violence. We create

²¹The question asked “For what reasons did you decide to leave your usual residence?” for those who have left and “Have you faced any of the following threats in your usual residence?” for those who have not left.

Figure 8: Conjoint results by Religiosity of Respondent

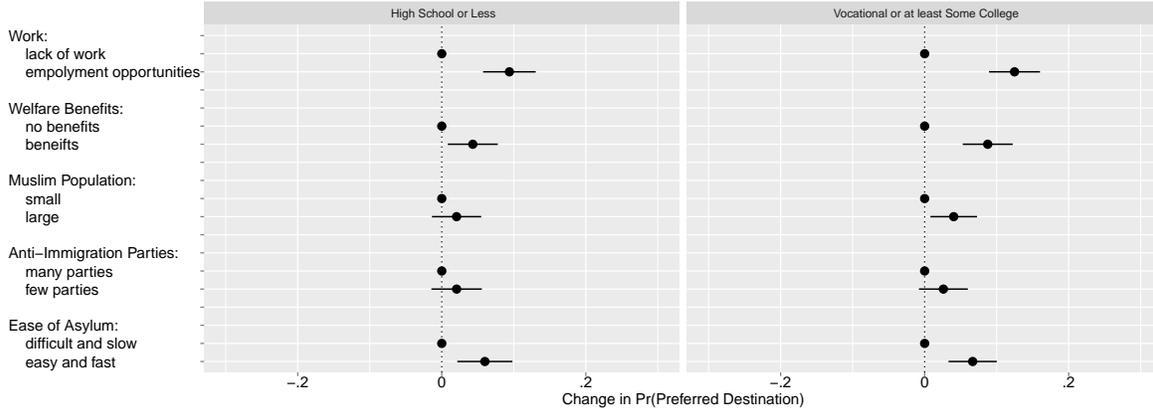


a religiosity index from questions on whether respondents pray daily, whether they attend Friday services, whether they read the Qur'an and their views on the appropriate dress for women.

There is little support for Hypothesis 4. As we can see in Figure 8, the effect of anti-immigration parties is not statistically different from zero at conventional levels in any of the groups and is not larger for those who are highly religious. We might have expected that the most religious Muslims would also want to live in a country with a large existing population of coreligionists, but more religious Muslims were not concerned with the size of the existing Muslim population either. Instead, the availability of jobs, ease of asylum, and access to the social welfare system mattered most and about equally between groups.

These findings are robust to other codings of religion and religiosity as well. We examined difference in opinions for how women should dress, dividing the sample between those who think women can dress how they please or who think women should dress modestly and those who think women should wear the hijab or be more covered (Appendix A Figure 15). We found similar results to the religiosity index. We also examined the differences between the Muslim respondents and the few non-Muslim respondents and found similar results (Appendix A Figure 16).

Figure 9: Conjoint Results by Skill Level of Respondent



Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

We hypothesized that migrants might place different weight on the access to the social welfare system and on labor market conditions depending on their family structure or education. Specifically, we hypothesized that respondents with children, elderly respondents, and respondents with elderly family members might place more weight on access to the social welfare system, as they are more likely to use it (Heterogeneous Hypotheses 1 and 2). We found no such effect (Appendix A Figures 19 and 20). Instead, respondents with and without children valued the labor market conditions most followed by welfare benefits and then, for those without children, ease of asylum. Similarly, there is not statistically significant difference on the importance of access to the social welfare system for elderly respondents and those traveling with elderly family members and others.

We also hypothesize that there might be differences in priorities depending on the skill level of the respondent (Heterogeneous Hypotheses 3 and 4). In particular, we hypothesized that high-skill respondents should be more concerned about labor market conditions and that low-skill respondents should be more concerned about access to the social welfare system. However, there are no statistically significant differences between low-skill and high-skill respondents (Figure 9). If any thing, high-skill respondents value access to the welfare system more than low-skill respondents. Again, these results suggest that these migrants are looking

for a situation in which they can have a fulfilling, stable life in a new country and that this importantly includes having a job.

In sum, the evidence provides support for Hypotheses 1, and 2, but less support for Hypotheses 3 and 4 and Heterogeneous Hypotheses 1–4. Those who experienced greater levels of violence do place greater weight on the asylum procedures. However, the political climate, as measured by support for anti-immigration parties, does not play a role in destination choice except, perhaps, through their potential effects on policy. The strength of anti-immigration parties is likely to affect the ease of asylum and access to the social welfare system. While the strength of anti-immigration parties may not (often) have a direct effect on labor market conditions, they can affect rules on work permits and licensing that may make finding a job more difficult. Thus, it could be the case that while migrants do not use anti-immigration parties as a heuristic on discrimination in this case, in the real world they use support for anti-immigration parties as a heuristic to judge immigration and immigrant rights policy. By controlling for these policies, then, we may be finding no effect for anti-immigration parties. Likewise, Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Lawrence (2016) find that the length of time that refugees wait in limbo for a decision on their asylum claim affects their subsequent ability to find a job. Migrants therefore may value quicker asylum procedures if they understand that they improve their labor market prospects and include work permits.

These results also suggest the prior Muslim population does not have an effect on destination choice. That said, our non-experimental questions do indicate that respondents with family members in Europe and those who are less religiously observant are most inclined to want to migrate in the first place.

What is most surprising about these results is how much weight respondents place on labor market conditions and the ability to use the social welfare system. Those who faced the greatest number of kinds of violence prioritize the employment the most. Those who faced the fewest kinds of violence prioritized access to the welfare system the least. This suggests that real refugees — those most likely to be granted refugee status due to their history with

violence — seek not just legal security but economic stability as well.

Conclusion

In this paper, we examined what factors affected the destination choice of international migrants, internal migrants, and likely migrants displaced by civil violence and the economic deprivation that goes along with it. We argued that the legal environment would in the potential host state would be paramount, followed by the discriminatory culture (or lack thereof) signaled by the size of support for anti-immigration parties, and that labor market conditions and access to the social welfare system would be less important.

What we found was much more complicated but perhaps more hopeful. First, the majority of our respondents do not want to move to the EU or indeed to any wealthy country. Instead, they want to return home as soon as it is safe to do so. When they do contemplate moving further abroad to developed countries, their first concern is the labor market—will they be able to find a job to support themselves and their families. This priority placed on working was strongest, indeed, for those who had suffered the most violence. After the labor market, they cared about the ease of the asylum process and access to the social welfare system about equally. These migrants cared little about support for anti-immigration parties or about the size of the existing Muslim population; although, unsurprisingly, those that had a relative or friend abroad hoped to live in the same country.

This paper, then, has important policy implications. As the world has failed to respond to the largest refugee crisis since World War II, there have been calls to reform the refugee regime. Our research suggests that instead of focusing on permanently resettling refugees, which usually involves a lengthy legal process, the regime should focus on giving more migrants temporary work permits, through something like temporary protected status. This would also allow for a more expansive definition of a refugee—instead of proving that s/he had a well-founded fear of persecution based on being a member of a class, migrants could be provided

refuge when fleeing a conflict or high levels of civil violence. These work permits would allow these migrants to begin to rebuild the life they have lost. Further, the temporary nature might make the program more palatable to natives who are worried about the cultural and political changes that might come with thousands of new citizens.

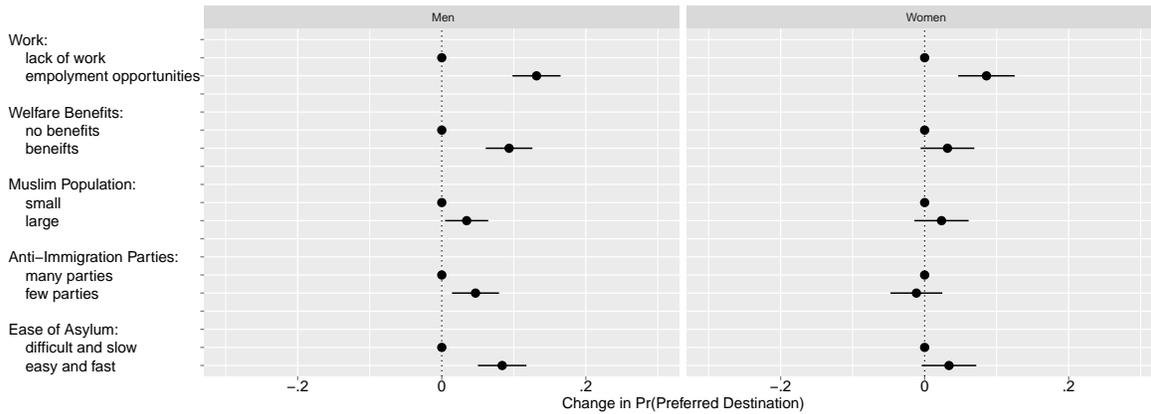
Finally, the new regime should focus on how to repatriate migrants when conflicts end. Many migrants plan to be temporary migrants (Waldinger 2007) but end up staying permanently. In part this is due to the ties they make while in the host country, but it is also often the case that migrants are asked to return to states that lack functioning economies and governments. Greater economic development prior to repatriation would help as might programs that help returnees start or restart a small business or farm or otherwise help them regain their former lives. A program like this would be able to quickly help more people, in a way that they prefer, likely in a way that would engender less anti-immigrant sentiment than the current regime.

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Figure 10: Conjoint Results by Gender



Appendix A: Additional Statistical Results

Robustness checks

Gender

Worsening violence

For those who say that violence has/had increased in the last month/ month before leaving and the last year/ year before leaving, the AMCE of many employment opportunities has a strong, statistically significant effect that is larger in magnitude than for those who were not affected by worsening violence. Access to the welfare system and a fast and easy asylum process have slightly smaller effects than work but still of similar magnitudes and significance and these effects are larger than for those not suffering from increased violence. The AMCE for few anti-immigration parties is statistically significant but small for those

Reason for leaving

Second, we examine whether the respondents say they left their home due to or, for those still living at home, were currently experiencing fear of generalized or more targeted violence or whether they left due to or were experiencing poverty, better economic circumstances abroad,

Figure 11: Conjoint results by Worsening Violence in the Last Week

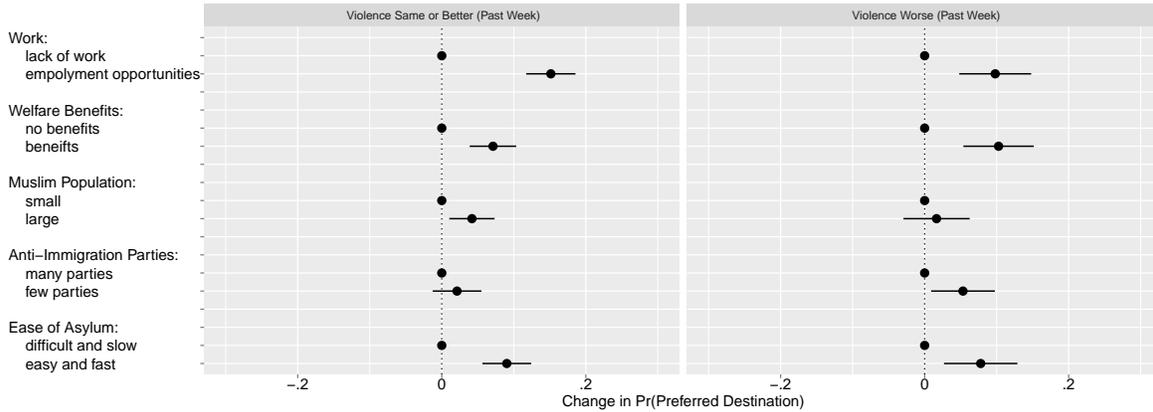
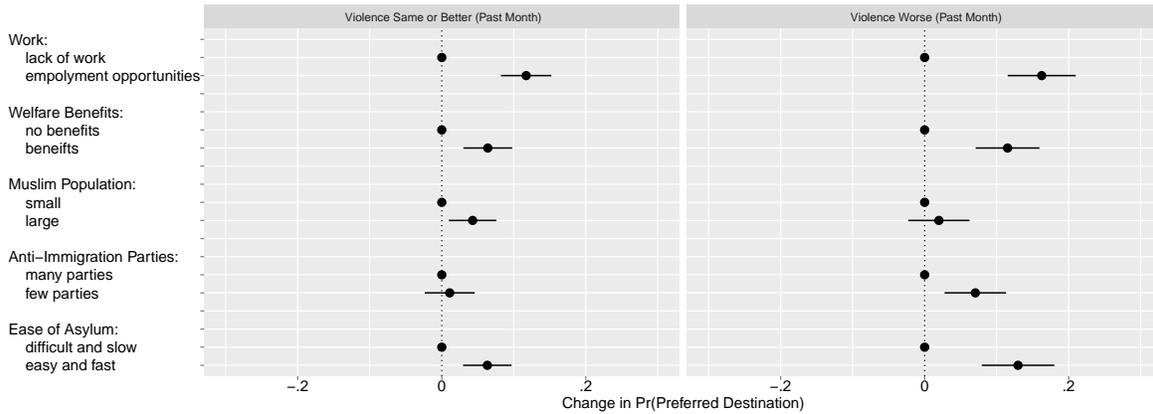


Figure 12: Conjoint results by Worsening Violence in the Last Month



or to join family already abroad. The majority of our sample, 631 respondents, answered both that they left home due to safety concerns or currently had reasons to fear for their lives and answered at least one conjoint question (for a total of 5033 conjoint responses) and another 59 who answered that they left home due to economic or family reasons and answered our conjoint questions (for a total of 472 conjoint responses).

We find results that are fairly consistent with the level of violence measure. Figure 14 presents the results of the analysis by reasoning for leaving/ experience with violence. Given the smaller sample size for those who said they left for economic or family reasons, the results are less precisely estimated. Both those who left for economic reasons and those who

Figure 13: Conjoint results by Worsening Violence in the Last Year

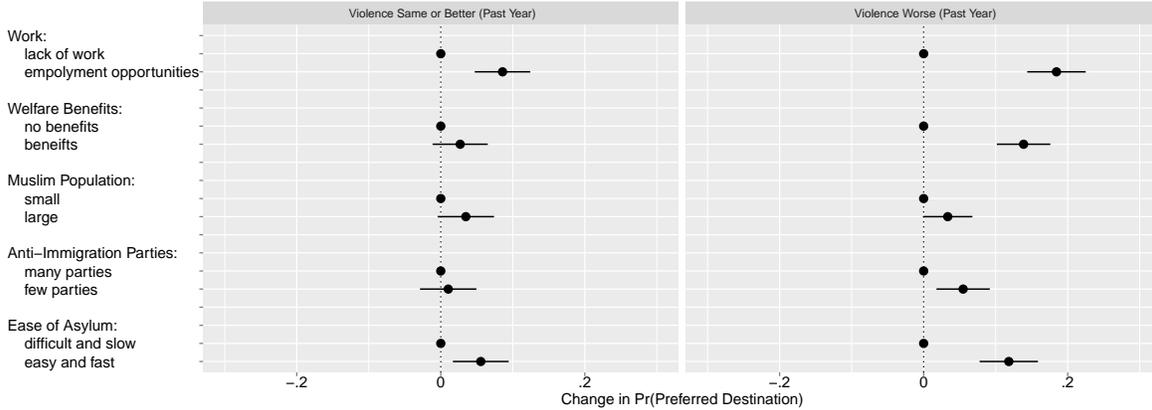
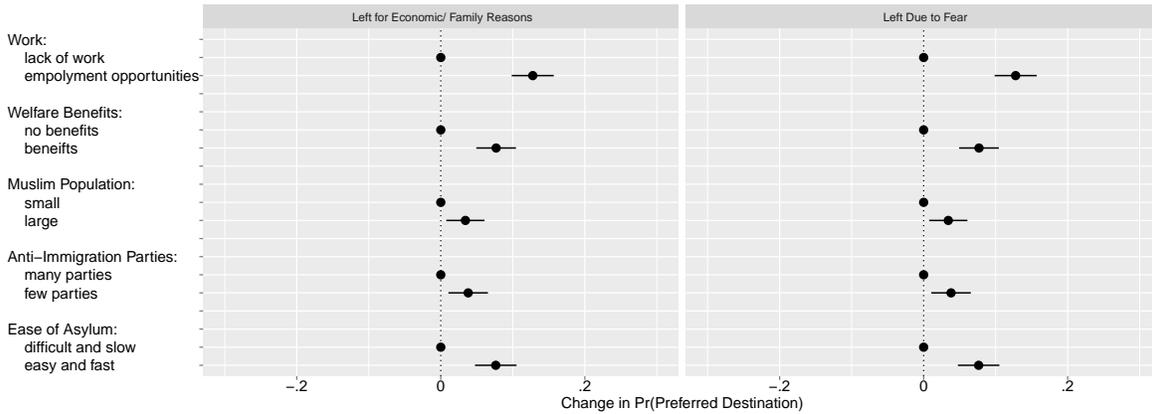


Figure 14: Conjoint results by reason for leaving/ experience with violence



left due to fear want to move to countries with more opportunities for work; the coefficients are 0.14 and 0.13 respectively. Again, part of this result may be driven by placement of work as the first category. We also see that both groups value the ease of obtaining asylum about equally, at 0.07 and 0.08 respectively, and value access to welfare benefits equally, at 0.05 and 0.08, although again the estimates for those who left for economic reasons are less precisely estimated. Where those who left for fear likely differ from those who left for economic reasons is in the import they place on the Muslim population and the opposition to immigration. For those who left for economic reasons the coefficients on both these measures is close to zero while for those who left due to fear these coefficients are statistically greater than zero.

Figure 15: Conjoint Results by Support for the Hijab

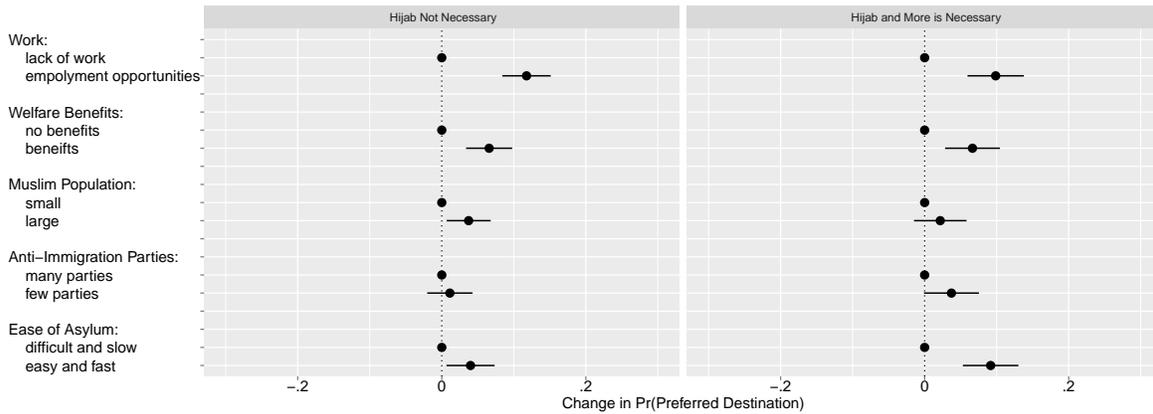
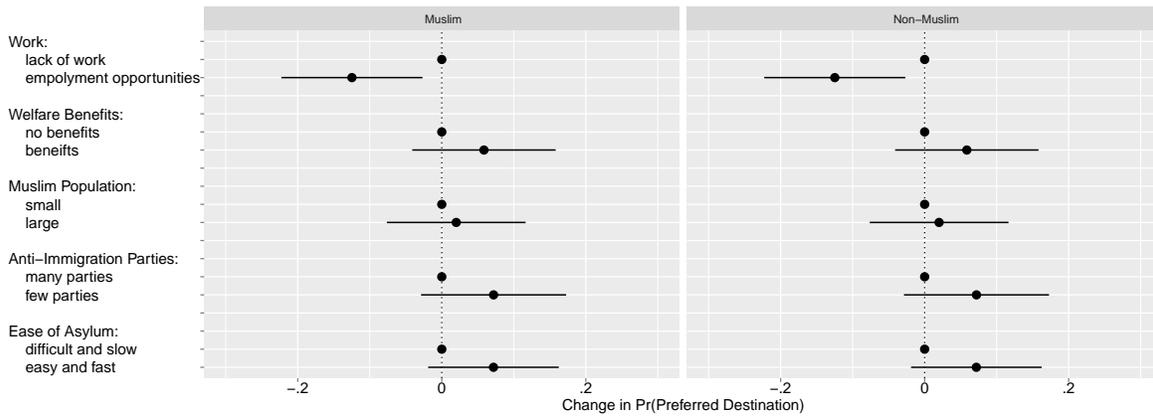


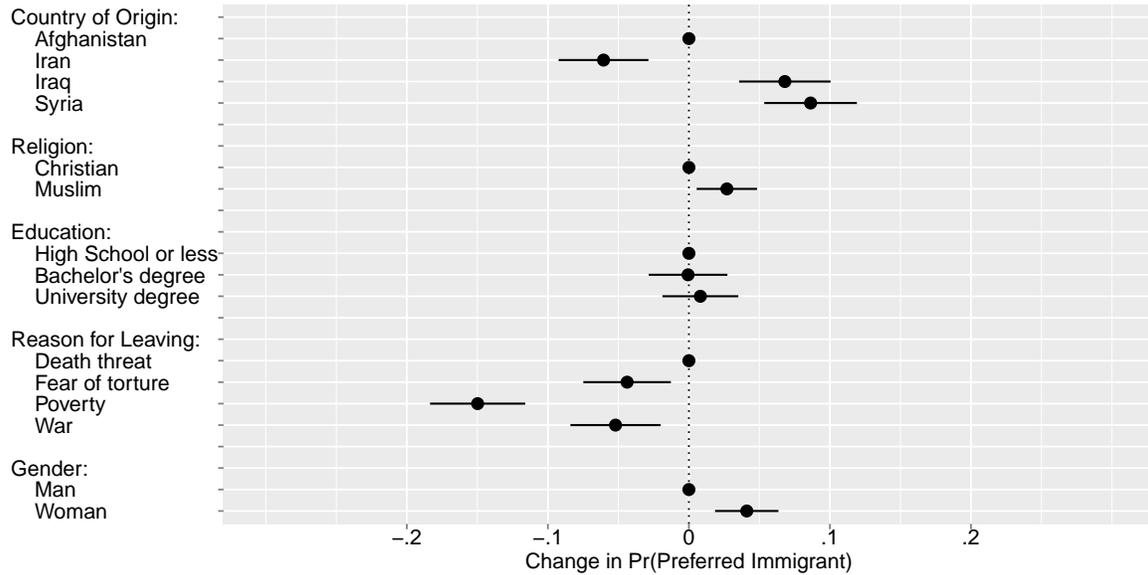
Figure 16: Conjoint results by religion of respondent



Religion and Religiosity

Figure 16 presents the results by splitting the sample between Muslims and non-Muslims (all types of Christians, Yazidis, other religions, non-religious, and Atheists). We had very few non-Muslims in the sample; only 50 non-Muslim respondents provided answers to the conjoint experiments. The point estimate of AMCE for few anti-immigrant parties is larger for the non-Muslim sample; although it is not statistically significant at conventional levels nor is it statistically different from the coefficient for Muslims. This suggests less support for Hypothesis 4.

Figure 17: Conjoint Results of Other Conjoint Experiment



Survey Design Effects

Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

Additional Analyses

Figure 18: Conjoint results by Block Order

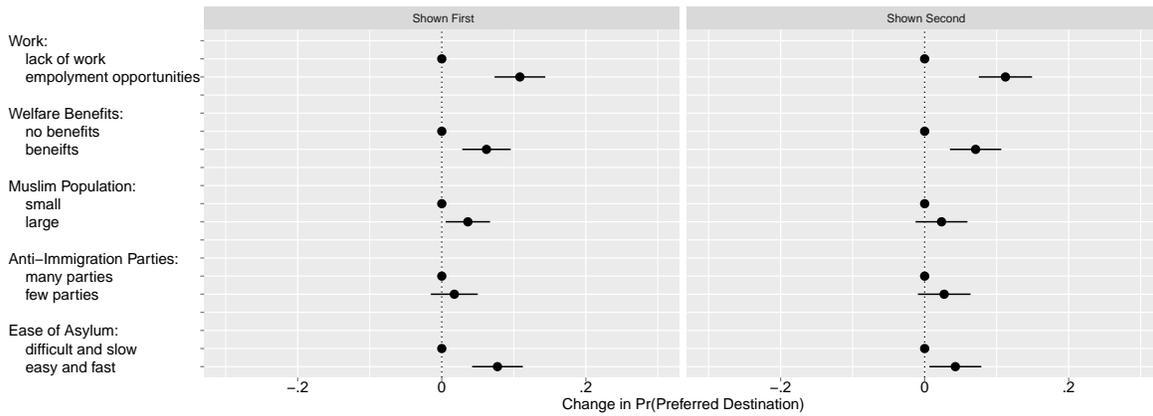


Figure 19: Conjoint Results for Respondents with and without Children

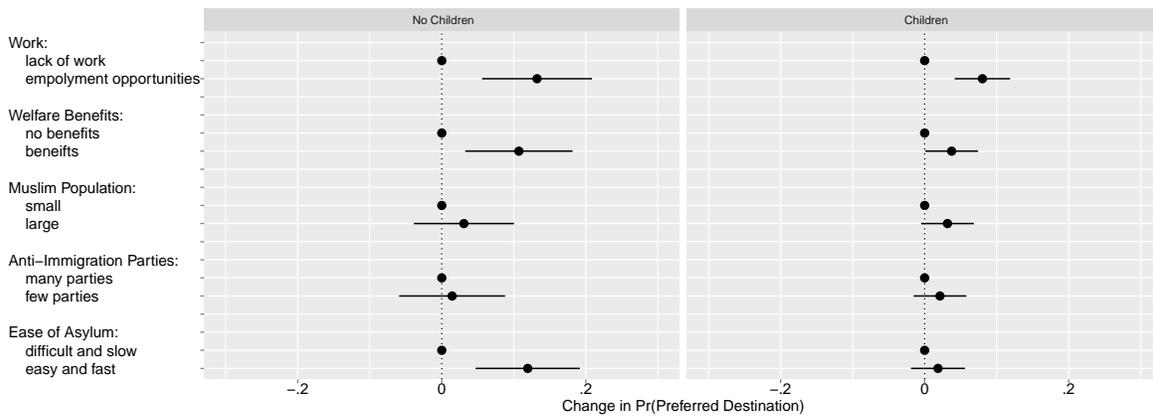


Figure 20: Conjoint Results for Elderly Respondents and Respondents with Elderly Family Members

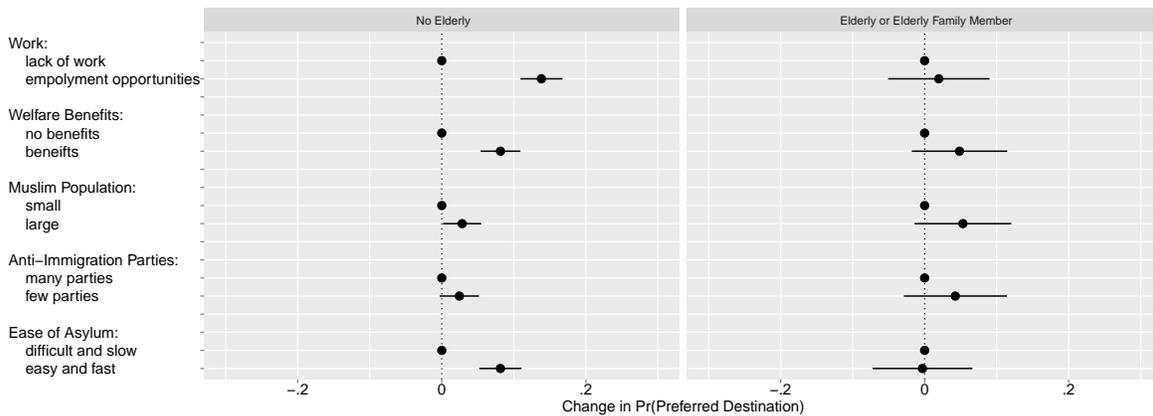


Figure 21: Conjoint Results by Political Knowledge

