What Explains US Local Government Officials' Receptivity to New Refugees?

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Local leaders possess significant and growing authority over refugee resettlement, yet we know little about their attitudes towards refugees. In this article, we use a conjoint experiment to evaluate how the attributes of hypothetical refugee groups influence local policymaker receptivity toward refugee resettlement. We sample from a novel, national panel of current local elected officials, who represent a broad range of urban and rural communities across the United States. We find that many local officials favor refugee resettlement regardless of refugee attributes.However, officials are most supportive of refugees whom they perceive as a strong economic and social fit with their communities. Our study is the first in a growing literature on individual attitudes toward refugees to systematically examine the preferences of local elected officials, and offers unique insights into the views of this important and policy-relevant group.

1. Introduction

What factors lead local elected officials to support refugee resettlement in their communities? Local leaders' attitudes towards refugees significantly influence refugee resettlement outcomes. Sympathetic local elites can facilitate the social and economic transition for resettled refugees by easing access to social services and economic assistance. By contrast, less receptive local officials can introduce hostile regulations or stir up resident resentment (1, 2). Since newly settled refugees are more reliant than established residents on community assistance, these obstacles represent real barriers for successful resettlement.

Recent executive actions have expanded US local elected officials' already-critical role in the refugee resettlement process. In September 2019, President Donald Trump signed an executive order requiring the federal government to obtain consent from state and local governments before settling refugees in their jurisdictions. In the following months, local governments in North Dakota, Minnesota, Virginia, Colorado, and beyond voted on whether to consent to refugee resettlement.[1] Due to legal challenges, the final status of the executive order is uncertain. However, regardless of outcome, the order highlights the importance of local policymakers' decisions to support refugees throughout the initial resettlement process. And these decisions have global implications due to the United States' prominent position in the refugee resettlement ecosystem. Until 2018, the United States accepted the most refugees of any country,[2] with more than 500 US cities accepting over 100 refugees from 2002-2018.[3]

This article investigates the attitudes of local elected officials toward refugees, with a focus on the ways in which refugee group attributes affect officials' attitudes. While US Refugee Assistance Program's stated intent is humanitarian, an abundance of scholarship shows that members of the public favor refugees with particular attributes and skills, such as language proficiency and in-group religious identity. We intervene in this literature by providing the first large-scale, systematic study of *local elected officials' views* on refugee resettlement. To do so, we fielded a conjoint survey experiment asking local elected officials to read pairs of randomly-generated refugee group profiles, and recorded whether respondents were receptive to such groups settling in their communities. This design allows us to build on existing knowledge while generating novel insights into the views of the population of local elected officials, who exert a powerful influence over refugee resettlement outcomes.

We find that many local elected officials support refugee resettlement, regardless of refugee characteristics. While substantial variation in preferences exists, approximately half of our respondents supported all refugee group profiles they considered, while approximately one in ten opposed all such profiles (see also 3). Though local officials in Democratic-voting counties supported more refugee groups on average, their counterparts in Republican-voting counties also supported over half of the profiles they viewed.

However, this pattern of support conceals differential receptivity towards some attributes. Our experimental evi-

Significance Statement

The recent global surge in forcibly displaced persons has had grave humanitarian consequences. This surge has highlighted debates over refugee policy among the national governments and mass publics of recipient countries. Yet, less attention has been paid to local governments, despite the important authority they wield over refugee resettlement. We provide the first experimental study of US local elected officials' attitudes towards refugees seeking to settle in their communities. We find that local elected officials support a broad range of refugee groups, though they are most supportive of refugees they believe will contribute to the local economy and fit with community values. Our results offer guidance to advocates seeking to improve resettlement outcomes and a rejoinder to national-level suspicion towards refugee resettlement.

J.C. and L.P. led on initial project development. J.C., L.P., R.S., and B.S. contributed to research design. J.C. led on design of the questionnaire. R.S. programmed the survey. J.C., L.P., and R.S. contributed to pilot and final data collection. L.P. and R.S. analyzed data. L.P. and R.S. led on writing the manuscript. J.C., L.P., R.S., and B.S. all provided critical feedback and survey/manuscript revisions, and shaped the research, analysis, and writing.

Author order was determined randomly and does not reflect degree of contribution. Please see note for description of contributions.

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[1] Field, Andy Tsubasa. "Burleigh County OKs refugee resettlement after passionate testimony." *The Bismark Tribune* December 10, 2019; Kaul, Greta and Tom Nehil. "How every Minnesota county has voted on refugee resettlement so far." *The Minnesota Post* January 16, 2020; Tyree, Elizabeth, Valencia Jones, and Kaicey Baylor. "Appomattox Co. passes resolution refusing to become refugee sanctuary." *WSET* December 16, 2019; Aguilar, John. "Colorado communities welcome refugee resettlement." *The Denver Post* January 8, 2020.

[2] Radford, Jynnah and Phillip Connor, "Canada now leads the world in refugee resettlement, surpassing the U.S." Pew Research Center, June 19, 2019.

[3] See the New American Economy Research Fund's data for details.

dence shows that officials favor refugee groups that are better-educated, possess stronger English skills, are predominantly female, and identify as Christian. Local officials are also more likely to support refugees who are sponsored by a business compared with refugees without sponsorship. Descriptive data from an open-ended follow-up question suggest that a plurality of respondents focus on refugees' economic contributions, potentially eroding the stated humanitarian intent of the US resettlement program. Approximately 40% of respondents mentioned refugees' economic contributions or local resource constraints, compared with approximately 25% who mentioned refugees' social or cultural fit.

Our study encourages researchers to pay closer attention to the role of local governments in refugee resettlement. Though we caution against re-orienting resettlement policy discussions towards refugees' economic contributions, our research provides guidance for stakeholders in refugee resettlement.

2. Policy Context

A refugee is "any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality [...] and who is unable or unwilling to return [...] or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion."[4] Refugee resettlement in the United States is a multi-stage, multi-level process. Each year, the US government sets a cap for refugee admissions. Based on this cap, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees submits cases to the US from a pool of approved applicants. Upon referral, potential refugees undergo an interview, security clearance, and assignment process. Successful applicants are paired with one of nine non-governmental resettlement agencies, which coordinate with federal agencies on location selection and services.

Before 2019, US law required the Department of Health and Human Services's Office of Refugee Resettlement to regularly consult state and local governments about the sponsorship process and geographic distribution of refugees prior to resettlement.[5] Local governments have occasionally used this consultation process to voice grievances with resettlement decisions. For example, after the 2008 Financial Crisis, officials in Fort Wayne, Indiana and Manchester, New Jersey requested moratoria on refugee resettlement due to funding constraints and lack of economic opportunity (4). But formal state or local consent was not required for refugee resettlement.

More recently, local policymakers have assumed new, formal powers over refugee resettlement decisions. In September 2019, President Trump issued an executive order directing the Secretaries of State and Health and Human Services to create a process for states and localities to provide written consent for initial resettlement of refugees.[6] Starting July of 2020, the order directed federal agencies to resettle refugees only with the consent of *both the state and local governments*.[7] Refugee resettlement agencies sued to block the order,[8] which led to a preliminary injunction halting implementation[9,10] and a subsequent appeal.[11] Nevertheless, more than 111 localities gave written consent for refugee resettlement ahead of the injunction. Some forty-one states also provided affirmative consent.[12] Texas was the only state to explicitly refuse.[13]

Whether or not the executive order stands, the political debate surrounding the order highlights the importance of local governments in the refugee resettlement process.[14] Deliberation and votes on refugee resettlement by local elected officials represent an important statement of community priorities.[15] Since communities may not evaluate refugees based on legal criteria for refugee admission, empowering local leaders to debate and vote on refugee resettlement could affect resettlement outcomes for refugees within and beyond the US.

3. A Local Government Perspective on Refugees

Determinants of Officials' Receptivity Toward Refugees. In this study we examine local elected officials' attitudes towards refugee resettlement in their communities. We investigate two broad sets of factors that might lead to greater receptivity towards some refugee groups: economic/material and social/cultural factors. While these considerations are not mutually exclusive, and indeed often influence one another, they are useful to distinguish conceptually.

Beginning with economic and material considerations, we expect local elected officials to favor refugee groups that can participate in and contribute to the local economy (see, e.g., 5–7, for related findings).[16] Local officials are particularly attuned to budgetary issues and economic constraints in their districts. We expect signals of employability and self-sufficiency to be especially attractive to resource-conscious officials. Refugee education, business sponsorship, language skills, and status as working-age adults are likely to influence perceptions of refugee economic contributions and reduce concerns that newcomers might create a fiscal burden for local governments, which in turn increase officials' receptivity towards refugee groups..

We also expect local elected officials to favor refugee groups they view as a cultural or social fit for their communities. Whether because of in-group favoritism or out-group bias, existing scholarship reports that members of the public favor migrants who share their religion, language, and other

[4] 8 USC §1101(a)(42)(A).

[5] 8 USC § 1522(a)(2)(A).

[6] Trump, Donald J. "Executive Order 13888 of September 26, 2019, Enhancing State and Local Involvement in Refugee Resettlement," *Federal Register* 84(190):52355-52356.

[7] However, the order allows the federal government to override a locality's decision in order to remain consistent with other federal laws.

[8] Rose, Joel. "Advocates Challenge Trump Administration Plan To Let States and Towns Block Refugees." *NPR* November 21, 2019.

[9] Jordan, Miriam. "Judge Halts Trump Policy That Allows States to Bar Refugees." *The New York Times* January 15, 2020. Monyak, Suzanne. "Md. Judge Says Trump Can't Let States Refuse Refugees." *Law360* January 15, 2020.

[10] The Trump administration has since noted to the Fourth Circuit that the executive order is not a veto since it provides a "mechanism for the Secretary [of State] to resettle refugees in nonconsenting jurisdictions" Dreid, Nadia. "Gov't Tells 4th Circ. Refugee Order Gives States Input Not Veto." *Law360* March 25, 2020.

[11] Kunzelman, Michael. "Feds Appeal Order Blocking Trump Refugee Resettlement Limit." *The Associated Press* February 12, 2020.

[12] "Latest Developments on Refugee Resettlement Consent." *Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.*

[13] Monyak, Suzanne. "Texas Is First To Refuse Refugees Under Trump Order." *Law360* January 15, 2020.

[14] An earlier executive order stated that "state and local jurisdictions [should] be granted a role in the process of determining the placement or settlement in their jurisdictions of aliens eligible to be admitted to the United States as refugees." Trump, Donald J. "Executive Order 13769 of January 27, 2017, Protecting The Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into The United States," *Federal Register* 82(20):8977-8982.

[15] For example, during public debates on a refugee resettlement consent vote, citizens in Burleigh County, ND emphasized the need to create a welcoming community for refugees, and worried about the impact of a negative vote on integration. Field, Andy Tsubasa. "Burleigh County OKs refugee resettlement after passionate testimony." *The Bismark Tribune* December 10, 2019.

[16] Alternatively, local elected officials may be more skeptical of refugees who may compete for their constituents' jobs. However, (8) report that fears of individual-labor competition have a limited influence over perceptions of potential migrants. We therefore view this possibility as unlikely.

attributes associated with sociocultural distance (see, e.g. 5–7, 9, 10). In the context of our survey, refugees' language skills, religion, religious sponsorship, gender/family composition, and age align with social and cultural fit. Since English and Christianity are the modal language and religion in the US, we predict that local elected officials will favor refugees with strong English skills, Christian-identifying refugees, and refugees who are sponsored by faith-based organizations. We further predict that local officials will be more inclined to support older and female migrants compared with younger male migrants, since residents might associate an influx of young, male residents with a higher probability of criminal activity (9). This expectation also reflects conventional gender-based notions of vulnerability, which advocates and refugee resettlement organizations have been known to replicate (11). An additional possibility is that respondents may be biased against refugees originating from particular regions, but we do not view this scenario as likely once education, language skills, religion, and other demographic attributes are taken into account.[17]

Lastly, while these economic and social factors imply that local officials' attitudes will depend on refugee group attributes, there are also reasons to believe otherwise. The legal designation of refugee status is based on a well-founded fear of persecution, rather than an individual's ability to contribute materially or assimilate culturally. If local officials are aware of or have internalized this legal designation, then they should be unconditionally receptive to refugees. In this scenario, we should expect officials to be receptive overall towards refugee resettlement, and that their level of receptivity should not significantly vary by refugee attributes.

Examining Elected Local Officials. Our theoretical expectations draw from a substantial empirical literature on individual—as opposed to *local official*—attitudes toward refugees and immigrants more broadly. While officials clearly share some of their constituents' concerns and attitudes, we should be wary about generalizing from the mass public to learn about officials' attitudes towards refugee resettlement.[18] To be clear, our study does not attempt to test hypotheses about whether citizen and elite attitudes diverge, which is outside the scope of this study. Instead, in this section we outline *ex ante* why scholars and policymakers cannot necessarily generalize from existing public opinion scholarship to understand official attitudes.

First, local government officials represent jurisdictions, and rural, sparsely-populated localities are more common than denser ones. As a result, the average local official's district is older, whiter, poorer, and has lower educational attainment compared to the overall US population.[19] Furthermore, rural communities like those in our sample contain relatively homogeneous social networks (15), and local jurisdictions are more conservative, contain more Christian constituents,[20] and are more ethnoracially homogeneous than the broader US public (15). Imbalances in political participation also lead to overrepresentation of white, wealthier, more educated, and older voters within these relatively rural and poorer districts (16–19). These demographic and turnout patterns likely bias officials' attitudes towards those of their more politically engaged constituents, and away from those of the overall US population.

Second, owing to their professional responsibilities and experiences, local officials may differ systematically from the citizens they represent. Because they manage their governments' personnel and budgets, local officials are likely to be acutely aware of the resource constraints their communities face. Since rural communities tend to face tight budget constraints (20), the average local government official might be more sensitive than ordinary citizens to refugees' impacts on schools, public transportation, and other public goods. In sum, local leaders not only represent a different demographic than the general public, but they are also likely to consider a different set of factors when evaluating refugee policy.

Table 1. Demographics of Localities Represented by Sample

Demographics	Counties	Municipalities & Towns
Population	221,973	38,007
Proportion Urban	48%	72%
2016 GOP Vote Share	59%	52%
Proportion College Educated	24%	29%
# of Gov. Official Respondents	100	474

To study local elected officials' views on refugee resettlement, we contracted with CivicPulse to deploy an online survey experiment to a sample of local government officials in the United States in the first half of April, 2020.[21] Our sample of jurisdictions was randomly drawn from the population of all US town, municipal, and county governments with populations above 1,000 (see Table 1). Geographically, our 574 respondents are divided across 48 states. More than 60% serve in municipalities, with the rest split almost equally between townships and counties. The localities represented by officials in our sample are modestly larger, more urban, more educated, and less conservative than the average locality in the United States.[22] However, the average locality represented in our sample is still much less urban, less educated, and more conservative than the population of the United States as a whole. Individual respondents display a similar pattern. Compared with the American public, our sample of local government officials is conservative-leaning with 39% of respondents self-identifying as conservative, 30% as moderate, and 29% as liberal. 66% received at least a college degree and 69% identify as male, with an average 12 years of experience in the government.[23]

4. Experimental Design

We use a paired conjoint design to identify the causal effects of group-level attributes on local elected officials' receptivity towards refugee resettlement.[24] Though officials are not provided with the demographic characteristics of potential refugee groups when voting to allow refugee resettlement, basic information about past and current refugees is publicly available

[17] Members of the American public express little preference for migrants of any specific ethnicity or national origin (5), though results from Europe are more mixed (contrast 6, 12).

[18] See (13) as an example of the role of local governments in refugee resettlement.

[19] See CivicPulse Omnibus Survey Reference Guide in SI, and (14)'s Appendix B.

[20] As of 2019, approximately two-thirds of Americans identified as Christian, with higher rates in rural and suburban communities overrepresented in our sample. See "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace." Pew Research Center, October 17, 2019.

[21] Prior to the receipt of the data, this design was registered with EGAP (#20200417XX). This study qualifies for exemption to human subjects review under 45 CFR 46 101(b)(2). The University of Pennsylvania's Human Subject Committee granted exemption on March 30, 2020 (UPenn HSC Protocol #842736).

[22] See CivicPulse Omnibus Survey Reference Guide in supplementary materials.

[23] See Appendix 1 for survey administration, sampling details, and sample demographics.

[24] See Appendix 2 for question wording, survey delivery, design, and randomization.

and often informs public discourse surrounding refugee resettlement decisions. As a result, this design presents respondents with a hypothetical that more closely resembles their real-world decisions while allowing us to identify key concerns that underlie respondents' preferences.

Survey respondents first read a short prompt, which included a definition of a "refugee," and then viewed two randomly generated refugee group profiles, labeled "Group A" and "Group B." These profiles consisted of one randomly selected value for each of seven theoretically relevant attributes that might affect a local government official's receptivity towards refugee group resettlement: education, sponsorship status, language skills, religion, gender/family makeup, age, and region of origin. Respondents then indicated whether they were receptive to either group, Group A only, Group B only, or neither group settling in their community. We coded the responses to this question as a binary variable—*Refugee Group Receptivity*—which took a value of 1 if a given refugee group profile or "either group" was chosen, and 0 for other responses.[25] We repeated this process two additional times, yielding three total paired-conjoint tasks for each respondent.

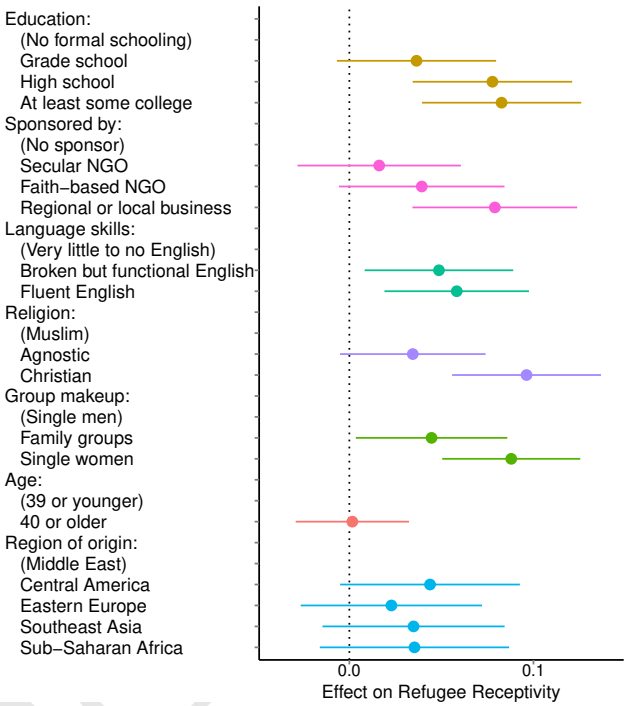
Compared with other immigration conjoint surveys (e.g. 6, 12, 21), our design is parsimonious. We chose this design to optimize for our specific target population and policy scenario. Since local elected officials are difficult to contact and time-constrained, we were limited in both the number of responses we could collect and the number of tasks we could serve to each individual. And, since we ask respondents to consider *groups* of refugees rather than *individuals*, including some standard conjoint attributes in our experiment would have presented respondents with an implausible hypothetical. We discuss our specific choices in more detail in Appendix 2, but we chose a design that respects respondents' time and real-world policy experience while allowing us to build on existing results.

5. Results

Conjoint Findings. Our survey reveals that elected local officials generally support a broad range of refugee profiles. Of the 534 respondents who answered all three paired-profile questions, 51% indicated that they would accept any of the six profiles that they were presented with, compared with less than 13% who were unwilling to accept any of the six profiles. The remaining 36% of respondents varied substantially, with a roughly even distribution over the remaining set of values.[26] Given the relatively conservative individual- and district-level demographics of our sample, this finding is noteworthy, and offers a rejoinder to national-level opposition to refugee resettlement.

Figure 1 reports the effect of each attribute value on the respondent's probability of receptivity towards a refugee group—the average marginal component effect (AMCE).[27,28] Estimates are drawn from a regression model in which *Refugee Group Receptivity* is regressed on indicator variables for each level of each refugee group attribute, with baseline categories excluded and standard errors clustered by respondent.

Fig. 1. Estimated effects of refugee profile attributes on local leaders' receptivity



Dots mark point estimates and lines indicate cluster-robust 95% confidence intervals for the AMCE of each attribute value on the probability that respondents were receptive to a particular refugee group. The comparison category's AMCE is the difference in the probability of receptivity between that category and the baseline category in parentheses (observations= 3324; respondents= 574).

We find strong evidence that US local government officials are more receptive towards refugees with greater potential for a positive economic impact. First, local officials are significantly more receptive towards potential refugee groups with higher levels of education. Respondents are 7.7 and 8.3 percentage points more likely to support refugee groups with a high school education and at least some college, respectively, compared with refugee groups with no formal schooling. This relationship may suggest that respondents view more educated refugees as more likely contributors to the local economy. Second, local elected officials are 7.9 percentage points more likely to support refugee groups sponsored by a regional or local business compared to refugees with no sponsor, which suggests respondents are likely prioritizing economic integration for refugees. Direct sponsorship from a business group is likely associated with employment opportunities.[29]

We also find evidence that local officials are more likely to support refugees they believe will integrate more easily into their communities. First, respondents are 9.6 percentage points more likely to support Christian refugees settling in their communities compared with Muslim refugees. While officials prefer agnostic refugees to Muslim refugees (3.4 percentage points more), this difference is not statistically significant at the .05 level. This finding suggests that respondents may hold

[25] This design also acknowledges the set of preferences respondents are likely to possess. When asked whether they are receptive to two refugee groups, local elected officials can express opposition, support regardless of group attribute, or selective support for refugees with certain attributes. Our design offers all of these options, rather than forcing a relative choice between profiles.

[26] See Appendix 3 for further details.

[27] The average marginal treatment effect of each component is identifiable under a set of assumptions likely to hold in a typical conjoint experiment (21).

[28] See Appendix 3 for marginal means.

[29] Business sponsorships are not currently part of the refugee resettlement process in the United States. However, we included the option in our profile design since other countries, including Canada, allow for private sponsorship.

in-group preferences for Christian refugees rather than out-group animus directed specifically at Muslim refugees, though future work should investigate this possibility further.

Second, local officials are 4.4 and 8.8 percentage points more likely to support refugee groups primarily consisting of families and single women, respectively, compared with the baseline group of single men. This difference likely results from a perception that single men are more likely to participate in socially disruptive behavior (see also 9). The support for family groups over single men suggests that respondents are focused on the societal fit of the group's composition rather than the potential fiscal burden of families alone.[30]

Local elected officials are also 5.8 and 4.8 percentage points more likely to support refugee groups with fluent or broken but functional English skills, compared with a baseline of "very little to no English." Since officials likely associate refugees' English-language proficiency both with refugees' social and cultural fit and their ability to participate in the local economy, we cannot definitively associate this finding with a particular mechanism. However, officials clearly prefer English speakers to non-English-speakers, even when refugees' English skills are imperfect.

Local officials do not appear to possess a significant preference with respect to refugee age or regional origin. The null result with respect to age may be due to the age cutoff we use in our study. Since adults above or below age 40 can plausibly be within prime economic productivity years, if respondents prioritize refugee economic contributions they may be roughly indifferent between these two categories (see, e.g. 6). By contrast, our null result on regional origin may be due to respondent political knowledge. Holding all other attributes constant, local officials may not have sufficient information about specified regional groupings to express a preference.[31]

Open-Ended Responses. We concluded our survey with an open-ended question, in which we asked local elected officials to identify the most important issues to consider when assessing how a group of refugees might settle into their community. Out of the 574 respondents who answered at least one conjoint question, some 439 (76%) offered at least some response to this question. Since open-ended responses are necessarily unstructured, any analysis of their contents is exploratory by nature. However, examining open-ended responses can reinforce the findings we describe in the previous sections and reveal the logic that underlies them.

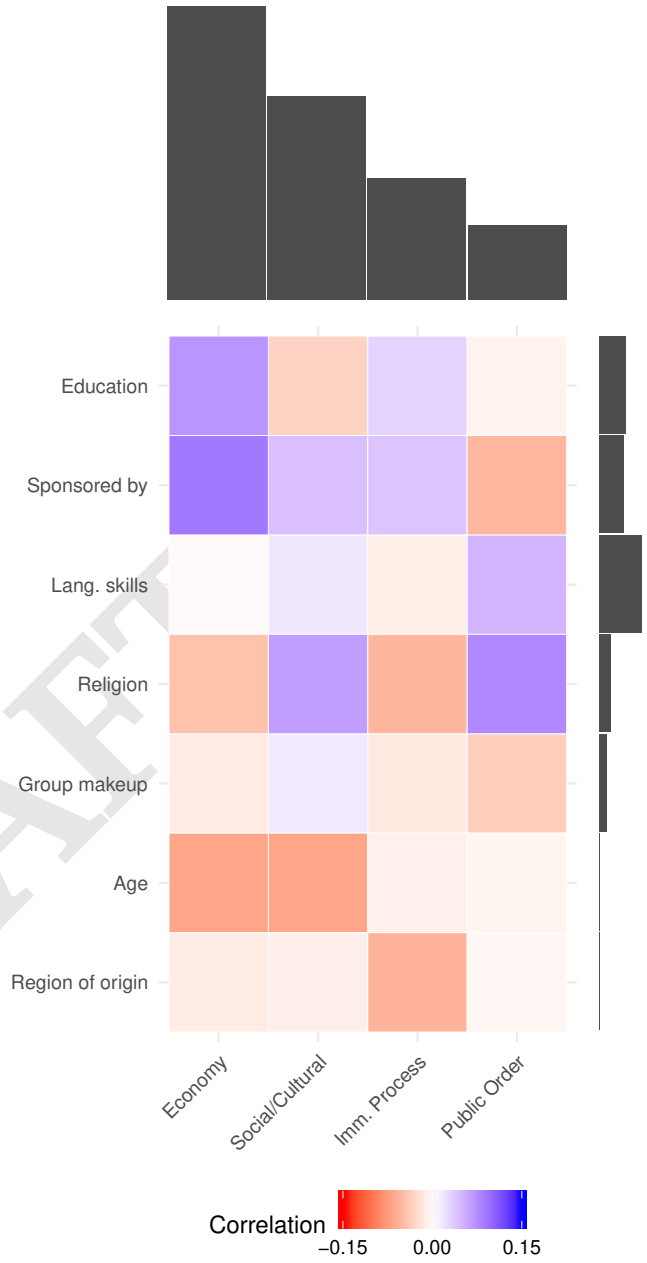
To summarize these responses, we nonexclusively coded each response based on two sets of categories. The first set consisted of our seven conjoint attributes. The second set consisted of four abstract categories: "Economy," "Social/Cultural," "Immigration Process," and "Public Order." These categories represented the four most prominent themes we identified by reading a sample of open-ended responses. All responses were double-coded, with disagreements adjudicated by a third coder.[32]

[30] This finding may also stem from our focus on refugee *groups* instead of *individuals*. Respondents may be particularly wary of groups consisting of largely single men, especially in cases where the hypothetical group is larger.

[31] As shown in Appendix 3, as a robustness check, we pooled all non-Middle East regions to compare whether there is a systematic bias against refugee groups from the Middle East. The difference between the Middle East and non-Middle East categories is not statistically significant at the .05 level.

[32] See Appendix 4 for definitions, examples, intercoder reliability, and per-attribute summary statistics.

Fig. 2. Frequency and correlation of descriptive categories in open-ended responses



Counts of each attribute are shown in marginal histograms. Cell hues denote correlation between attribute pairs ($n = 574$) See Appendix 4 for visualizations of attribute counts and co-occurrences.

The marginal histograms in Figure 2 illustrate that respondents most frequently identify refugee language skills as a key area of concern, followed by education and sponsorship status. These three attributes reaffirm the set of influential attributes identified in the conjoint portion of the survey. Surprisingly, gender/family group makeup and religion were not frequently mentioned despite their effect in the conjoint portion of the survey. One possible explanation for this divergence is social desirability bias. Though some respondents may be wary of primarily Muslim or male refugee groups, they may be more

willing to express this preference in the conjoint portion of the survey than in an open-ended response (22).

We also coded several substantive policy concerns distinct from the conjoint attributes. As suggested by their professional responsibilities and experiences, the most common issues local elected officials raise are economic in nature (see marginal histograms in Figure 2). Nearly half of all open-ended comments mentioned some kind of economic issue with respect to refugee resettlement, while approximately one-third mentioned concerns related to social/cultural fit. Since these categories are broad, the specific concerns within most of these categories varied substantially. For example, some 60% of respondents who raised economic concerns cited availability of jobs in their community, while 29% mentioned suitability of housing, transportation, or other physical infrastructure concerns. A smaller number of respondents also mentioned concerns about the broader immigration process, and about refugees' impact on public order.

Open-ended responses also allow us to explore context for our experimental findings. As the heatmap in Figure 2 shows, mentions of education and sponsorship were most highly correlated with economic concerns, which suggests that some respondents evaluated these categories primarily through their association with refugees' perceived economic contributions. By contrast, language skill mentions were not correlated with any of our abstract categories. This finding suggests that language plays a more complex role, which spans respondents' perceptions of refugee contributions to the local economy, the social/cultural milieu, and public order.

Subgroup Analyses. We also explore whether local officials' refugee receptivity preferences differ by their county's partisanship, their own level of interaction with non-Americans, and the locality's population.[33,34] First, we compare officials by whether their jurisdiction is located in a county that voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential election. We observe significant differences—ranging from 7.9 to 22.8 percentage points—between the two groups of respondents on every attribute level, with officials in Republican-leaning areas showing a lower level of support across all attributes. Officials in Republican-voting counties showed more differentiation in their receptivity towards refugee group religion and education. In particular, we find more than 13 percentage points more support for Christian refugees compared to Muslim refugees and refugees with education at high school or above compared to those with no formal education. In comparison, officials in Democratic-voting counties did not significantly discriminate among refugees' religious backgrounds or education levels.

Second, local government officials who interact more frequently with non-US citizens are significantly more receptive to all refugee group attribute levels, with per-level differences ranging from 6.7 to 18.3 percentage points. This finding aligns with prior research suggesting personal interaction with immigrants moderates preferences (12). Third, officials in more populous localities express more support for most refugee group attribute levels than officials in less populous localities, though not all differences are significant. Across all three subgroup divisions, we find wide divergences in levels of support in essentially *all* attributes, instead of concentrating in attributes associated with economic impact or social fit.

[33] We follow (12, 23) and use marginal means to compare subgroups instead of AMCEs.

[34] See Appendix 3 for subgroup variables, marginal mean plots, and F-test results for each subgroup.

6. Implications

This analysis of local government officials' receptivity towards refugees offers two primary conclusions. First, in line with the stated humanitarian focus of the US Refugee Admissions Program, we find that many local elected officials are supportive of refugee resettlement regardless of refugee group attributes. Approximately half of all local policymakers favored refugee admission for all profiles viewed, and almost all favor refugee admission for at least some types of refugee groups. This pattern is strongest among officials in Democratic-voting counties, but officials in Republican-voting counties still supported over half of all refugee group profiles they viewed. While our research design focuses on the attitudes of local officials, future research should work to further connect this broad pattern of support for refugee resettlement expressed by local elected officials to more qualified patterns of support expressed by members of the general public (see, e.g. 24).

One possible explanation for this limited level of attribute-based discrimination is social desirability bias. However, if local officials are concerned with the social acceptability of their answers in an anonymous survey, they are also likely to modulate their positions in public-facing policy discussions. Though the answers to our survey might potentially overestimate respondents' "sincere" support for refugee admissions, they provide a reasonable representation of respondents' publicly expressed beliefs.

Second, we find that local policymakers are concerned both with refugees' ability to fit with local values and participate in the local economy. This pattern is stronger among officials in Republican-voting than Democratic-voting constituencies on at least some attributes, including education and religious preferences, but is present among both groups. We cannot adjudicate between respondents' motives, on average, for preferring refugees with particular attributes. Such preferences could reflect apprehension towards refugees or concern for their community's ability to provide refugees with the necessary support. Descriptive data from our open-ended follow-up question suggest that officials may be more strongly motivated by refugees' perceived economic contributions than by refugees' perceived community fit. This result matches our theoretical expectations regarding the relative importance of economic issues to local elected officials' attitudes, but future experimental work should investigate these mechanisms more closely.

Local officials are crucial to refugee resettlement, and yet their attitudes have been understudied. Based on our findings, emphasizing business sponsorship programs, skill development, language training,[35] and explicit financial support to local communities likely represent high-impact public engagement strategies for refugee resettlement stakeholders seeking to bolster refugee receptivity. When federal or state funding for these programs is not available, refugee settlement agencies may find less expensive interventions more sustainable, such as placing refugees to optimize employment opportunities (26) or highlighting how refugees make a positive net fiscal impact across levels of government.[36]

We emphasize that concerns about economic contribution and community fit are neither legal nor normative reasons for rejecting refugees, who are resettled once the United States

[35] Notably, far less than half of all arriving refugees in the United States speak any English (25).

[36] US Department of Health and Human Services draft report. July 29, 2017.

determines their claim of persecution in their home or other country is well-founded. Engagement strategies that focus on these factors should not undermine the humanitarian purposes of the US refugee resettlement program, which is designed to settle the most vulnerable. We do not contest a robust right to apply for refugee status or seek asylum in the United States or any other country. However, our results do reveal policy-relevant information about the attitudes of an understudied and increasingly important group of refugee resettlement gatekeepers. Overall, we find that officials across the political spectrum are receptive to a broad range of refugee groups, which offers a timely rejoinder to suspicion towards refugee resettlement prevalent in national-level US politics.

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Supplementary Information for

What Explains US Local Government Officials' Receptivity to New Refugees?

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This PDF file includes:

1. Survey administration and sample

Procedure and response rates. Survey administration was contracted to CivicPulse, a nonprofit organization that administers surveys to US local government officials. Before being fielded, our survey instrument was subjected to peer review conducted by both CivicPulse and a panel of academic reviewers. Once approved, CivicPulse distributed our survey via email to the local policymakers. See (1) for an example study that uses CivicPulse data. CivicPulse recruits survey participants through an email invitation process. They begin with a sampling frame that consists of essentially all (98%) local elected officials serving a township, municipality, or county government with a population of over 1,000. Emails are sent to a simple random sample from that list and the officials opt into the survey. After the initial email invitation, nonresponding participants or incomplete responses are given up to two reminder emails. In this survey, the response rate was about 7%. As a comparison, the surveys used by (1) had approximately 12% and 7% completion rates by local government officials, with lower completion rates by state and federal officials.*

In total, 574 local officials responded to at least one of our conjoint questions. Of these 574 respondents, 534 answered all three conjoint profile questions, 20 answered two questions and the remaining 20 answered only one. In addition to the 574 respondents included in our analysis, 83 further respondents did not answer any of the three conjoint questions, and 31 encountered internet connectivity issues that prevented the conjoint portion of our survey from loading. As shown below, we observe no statistically significant differences between respondents with missing and complete outcome data on observable locality-level, coarsened demographic characteristics. We include locality-level variables in this comparison since locality-level demographic characteristics are drawn from data sources outside the survey and cover all but three respondents out of the 688. Respondents who did not answer conjoint questions were also less likely to self-report individual-level demographics, reducing the use of reporting similar results at the individual level.

The localities represented by officials in our sample are modestly larger, more urban, more educated, and less conservative than the average locality in the United States. The CivicPulse reference guide appended to the Supplementary Information provides a comparison table. CivicPulse provides survey weights following procedures outlined in (3) for the American National Elections Study, but because these weights are designed for *all* respondents (rather than only the 574 who answered at least one conjoint question), we do not include them in our experimental analysis.

Table S1. Locality-level demographics do not predict probability of any conjoint profile response.

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept)	0.7842	0.0658	11.92	0.0000
Population_median	-0.0230	0.0303	-0.76	0.4494
Urban_prop_3	0.0202	0.0203	0.99	0.3221
Votes2016_majority_trump	0.0202	0.0316	0.64	0.5245
College_prop_3	0.0024	0.0194	0.12	0.9016
N = 685 respondents				

OLS regression. Dependent variable is *Any Answer*, which is a binary variable that takes on a value of 1 if a respondent answered at least one conjoint question, and 0 otherwise.

Table S2. Locality-level demographics do not predict the number of conjoint profile responses.

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept)	4.5095	0.4027	11.20	0.0000
Population_median	-0.1599	0.1858	-0.86	0.3897
Urban_prop_3	0.1176	0.1245	0.94	0.3452
Votes2016_majority_trump	0.0949	0.1938	0.49	0.6246
College_prop_3	0.0391	0.1190	0.33	0.7423
N = 685 respondents				

OLS regression. Dependent variable is *Answer Count*, which denotes the number of conjoint questions a respondent chose to answer. Ranges from 0 to 3.

*While some nationally representative online public opinion survey panels report particularly high response rates, those surveys recruit by mail and provide high monetary incentives for respondents (see, e.g., 2). Yet outside of such panels, public opinion response rates are lower and access to elite opinion remains limited. Many public opinion and even elite opinion surveys fielded by academics use opt-in samples—made up of respondents who click on either a specific social media ad or post, or a particular survey within a surveying platform or crowd-source tasking site. Such online opt-in surveys present other methodological difficulties beyond low response rates.

Demographic data. Table S3 provides an overview of the sample's personal and professional demographics, while Table S4 provides an overview of descriptive statistics focused on the localities in which respondents are based.

Table S3. Summary Statistics of Respondent Demographics

	Overall (N=574)
Birth, yr	
N-Miss	97
1926 - 1930	1 (0.2%)
1931 - 1935	1 (0.2%)
1936 - 1940	10 (2.1%)
1941 - 1945	30 (6.3%)
1946 - 1950	69 (14.5%)
1951 - 1955	85 (17.8%)
1956 - 1960	68 (14.3%)
1961 - 1965	59 (12.4%)
1966 - 1970	52 (10.9%)
1971 - 1975	37 (7.8%)
1976 - 1980	25 (5.2%)
1981 - 1985	24 (5.0%)
1986 - 1990	14 (2.9%)
1991 - 1995	1 (0.2%)
1996 - 2000	1 (0.2%)
Sex	
N-Miss	6
Female	177 (31.2%)
Male	391 (68.8%)
Education	
N-Miss	63
Less than high school	2 (0.4%)
High school graduate	41 (8.0%)
Technical/trade school	27 (5.3%)
Some college	106 (20.7%)
College graduate	122 (23.9%)
Some graduate school	44 (8.6%)
Graduate degree	169 (33.1%)
Ideology	
N-Miss	79
Very liberal	51 (10.3%)
Somewhat liberal	92 (18.6%)
Moderate, middle of the road	151 (30.5%)
Somewhat conservative	140 (28.3%)
Very conservative	52 (10.5%)
Not sure	9 (1.8%)
Party Id	
N-Miss	82
Democrat	175 (35.6%)
Independent	102 (20.7%)
Other party (please specify):	21 (4.3%)
Republican	194 (39.4%)
Party Id Lean	
N-Miss	451
Democratic Party	41 (33.3%)
Neither	39 (31.7%)
Republican Party	43 (35.0%)
NonHispanic White	
N-Miss	66
Mean (SD)	0.854 (0.353)
Range	0.000 - 1.000
Level of Government	

county	100 (17.4%)
municipality	356 (62.0%)
township	118 (20.6%)
Government Experience, yrs	
N-Miss	80
Mean (SD)	12.962 (12.315)
Range	0.000 - 63.000
Electoral Competition	
N-Miss	82
No	193 (39.2%)
Other	16 (3.3%)
Yes	283 (57.5%)
Ambition	
N-Miss	83
I am actively considering running for elected office.	215 (43.8%)
I am open to the possibility of holding elected office in the future.	227 (46.2%)
I have no interest in holding elected office at any time in the future.	49 (10.0%)
Professionalization	
N-Miss	84
Full-time salary	50 (10.2%)
No salary	76 (15.5%)
Other	70 (14.3%)
Part-time salary	294 (60.0%)

Table S4. Summary Statistics of Respondent's Locality Demographics

	Overall (N=574)
Population, median split	
Mean (SD)	0.495 (0.500)
Range	0.000 - 1.000
Prop. of residents residing in an urban area, terciles	
N-Miss	1
Mean (SD)	2.257 (0.777)
Range	1.000 - 3.000
Prop. of residents who have completed a 4-year college degree, terciles	
N-Miss	2
Mean (SD)	2.182 (0.804)
Range	1.000 - 3.000
2016 GOP Presidential majority vote share	
N-Miss	1
Mean (SD)	0.590 (0.492)
Range	0.000 - 1.000
State	
AK	2 (0.3%)
AL	7 (1.2%)
AR	3 (0.5%)
AZ	2 (0.3%)
CA	36 (6.3%)
CO	6 (1.0%)
CT	4 (0.7%)
FL	15 (2.6%)
GA	15 (2.6%)
IA	11 (1.9%)
ID	3 (0.5%)
IL	26 (4.5%)
IN	15 (2.6%)
KS	7 (1.2%)
KY	11 (1.9%)
LA	4 (0.7%)
MA	9 (1.6%)
MD	8 (1.4%)
ME	8 (1.4%)
MI	52 (9.1%)
MN	16 (2.8%)
MO	12 (2.1%)
MS	1 (0.2%)
MT	3 (0.5%)
NC	17 (3.0%)
ND	3 (0.5%)
NE	6 (1.0%)
NH	3 (0.5%)
NJ	13 (2.3%)
NM	5 (0.9%)
NV	4 (0.7%)
NY	27 (4.7%)
OH	25 (4.4%)
OK	2 (0.3%)
OR	16 (2.8%)
PA	45 (7.8%)
RI	2 (0.3%)
SC	3 (0.5%)
SD	2 (0.3%)
TN	16 (2.8%)

TX	24 (4.2%)
UT	13 (2.3%)
VA	17 (3.0%)
VT	9 (1.6%)
WA	10 (1.7%)
WI	33 (5.7%)
WV	2 (0.3%)
WY	1 (0.2%)

2. Survey instrument design

Randomization, prompts, and directions. See below for screenshots of example conjoint prompts and profiles. Each respondent viewed the introductory prompt, then three replicates (with randomly drawn values) of the conjoint comparison profiles and question, and finally the open-ended response question. In line with the ethics of voluntary participation, our IRB exemption application, and CivicPulse's omnibus guidelines, respondents were not forced to answer and could skip questions if desired. As a nudge, Qualtrics requested that respondents confirm their selection before proceeding if they left a question blank. For the conjoint comparison profiles, the order of the conjoint attributes was randomized across respondents but fixed within respondents, such that the conjoint attributes were ordered in the same fashion for all three profiles pairs that any given respondent viewed. The attribute values were fully randomized for each conjoint profile.

The "group size" value in the explanation for each paired profile comparison was determined based on the size of the constituency each respondent represents. To convert constituency sizes into refugee group sizes, we used a simple step function, which mapped binned population values to a set of five possible group sizes. We set cutoff points for this function to roughly correspond to five-year average refugee resettlement data for California's county-level refugee resettlement dataset, which was the most comprehensive source for local-level refugee resettlement data we were able to locate.

The specific values in this function are in Table S5. In our sample, the overwhelming majority of respondents viewed group sizes of 10, 25, or 50.

Table S5. Survey prompt refugee group size values.

Locality Size	Refugee Group Size
<= 50,000	10
> 50,000 & <= 250,000	25
> 250,000 & <= 400,000	50
> 400,000 & <= 750,000	100
> 750,000 & <= 750,000	250

Local governments play an important role in determining how refugees settle in the United States. Refugees are people who have fled their country to escape persecution, war, or violence.

Next, we will show you the profiles of hypothetical refugee groups, and ask whether you would be receptive to settling any of them into your community. We will show you three pairs of profiles.

Each profile will describe several attributes, some of which may be important to you, while others may not (see below). We understand that this is a complex decision, but given the information we provide you, try to imagine whether you would be receptive to any of these groups.

Attributes
Language skills
Sponsored by
Religion
Group makeup
Age
Region of origin
Education

Below are two potential refugee groups. There are 50 refugees in each group, and all of them have been approved with background checks by the US government.

Most of the adults in each group have the following attributes:

	Group A	Group B
Education	At least some college	High school
Language skills	Broken but functional English	Broken but functional English
Sponsored by	Regional or local business	Faith-based NGO
Region of origin	Central America	Sub-Saharan Africa
Age	39 or younger	40 or older
Religion	Christian	Muslim
Group makeup	Single women	Family groups

Would you be receptive to either, one, or neither of these refugee groups settling in your community?

- Either group
- Group A only
- Group B only
- Neither group

Now, we'd like to ask you a general question about refugees. In your opinion, what are the most important issues to consider when assessing how a group of refugees might settle into your community?

Conjoint design. See below for a list of conjoint attributes and values. We chose these attributes and values to build on existing immigration conjoint studies while balancing constraints imposed by external validity, respondent political knowledge, and statistical power. Since local elected officials (as opposed to the general public) are difficult to contact and limited in the time they are willing to devote to an academic survey, we were constrained both in the number of individual respondents we could contact and the number of conjoint profile replicates we could serve to each individual. As a result, we designed a more parsimonious experiment than other studies in the literature, which limited both the number of conjoint attributes and the number of values within each attribute.

Our first point of departure was to have local officials compare the profiles of groups of refugees rather than individual refugees. We made this design choice for reasons of external validity. When US local communities consider resettlement proposals, they are generally thinking in terms of a group rather than single refugee, unlike in other country-contexts like Sweden.

Turning to the specific attributes, of the attributes we included, all attributes besides sponsorship are standard in immigration conjoint studies, and have been shown to influence respondents' choices in at least some situations. Education, language skills, age, gender/family status, and place of origin are all included as attributes in some form in nearly all immigration conjoint studies of which we are aware. Occupation is a standard additional category in immigration conjoint studies. However, since we did not believe it would be plausible that a local elected official would be asked to compare a *group* of (say) 10-50 doctors to a *group* of 10-50 construction workers, we chose to eliminate this category. Since education is strongly associated with occupation, we believe that education largely captures occupation-based variation in respondent preferences. We also eliminated extreme attribute levels in the age and education categories, since we viewed refugee groups consisting of mostly people with professional degrees and mostly very young or very old people as similarly implausible.

Since our focus in this study is on refugees—who usually enter the United States with explicit support from the US government and a sponsor NGO—we included sponsorship as an additional attribute in our study. Under the current system, refugees are paired with one of nine secular or religious refugee resettlement agencies. Officially, all refugees are paired with a resettlement agency, but we included "no sponsor" as an additional option to capture hypothetical scenarios in which a refugee's resettlement organization either is not known to local elected officials or chooses not to advocate strongly on the refugee's behalf. Business sponsorships are not officially available as an option to refugees in the current United States refugee resettlement process. However, official sponsorship by private groups was previously an option in the United States from 1986-1995, and private sponsorships remain an option in Canada. As a result, we viewed this hypothetical attribute as plausible enough—and policy-relevant enough—to warrant inclusion in our design.

A final area in which our design departs somewhat from the conventional conjoint design is in our "region of origin" category. Typically, immigration conjoint designs provide an explicit list of countries of origin as potential attribute values. However, in our case, we chose to coarsen countries to regions of origin. We made this choice for two reasons. First, not all individuals may be familiar with all refugee-sending countries, and perceptions of specific countries may shift substantially in response to current events. Relatedly, while people may not have impressions/stereotypes/etc. about specific countries (e.g., Ukraine), they are more likely to make judgments based on their impressions/stereotypes/etc. about regions (e.g., Eastern Europe). These factors may all dramatically increase the variance of country-level treatment effects relative to region-level treatments, both across individuals and within individuals over time. Second, not all countries are compatible with all combinations of other attributes. For example, Afghanistan is a major refugee-sending country with very few individuals who identify as Christian. As a result, by specifying country of origin, we risk presenting respondents with implausible attribute combinations, which impacts the external validity of our experiment. Coarsening "country of origin" to "region of origin" addresses both of these problems.

Table S6. Conjoint attributes and values.

Attribute	Values
Education	No formal schooling, Grade school, High School, At least some college
Sponsored by	No sponsor, Faith-based NGO, Regional or local business, Secular NGO
Language	Very little to no English, Broken but functional English, Fluent English
Religion	Agnostic, Christian, Muslim
Group makeup	Family groups, Single men, Single women
Age	39 or younger, 40 or older
Region of origin	Central America, Eastern Europe, Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia

3. Conjoint analysis

Descriptive information. Figure S1 illustrates the frequency with which conjoint attributes were randomly assigned to respondents. Figure S2 illustrates the number of respondents who supported each number of profiles, among respondents who answered all three conjoint questions.

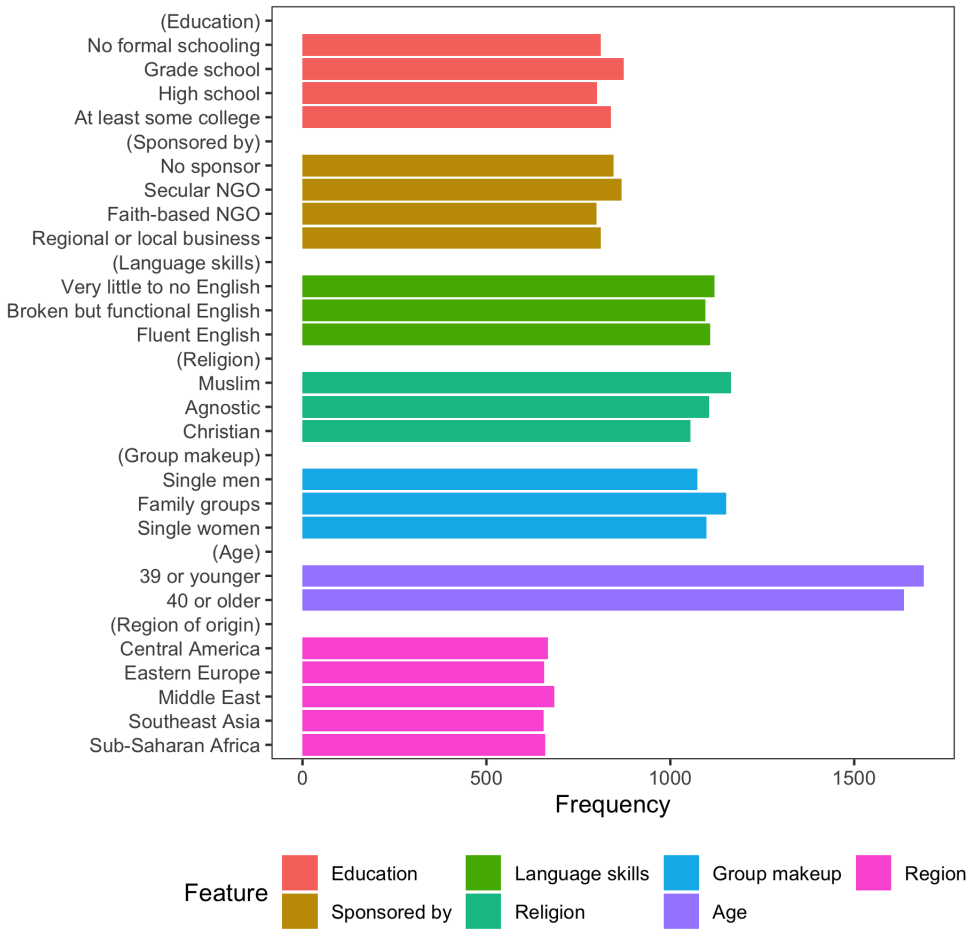
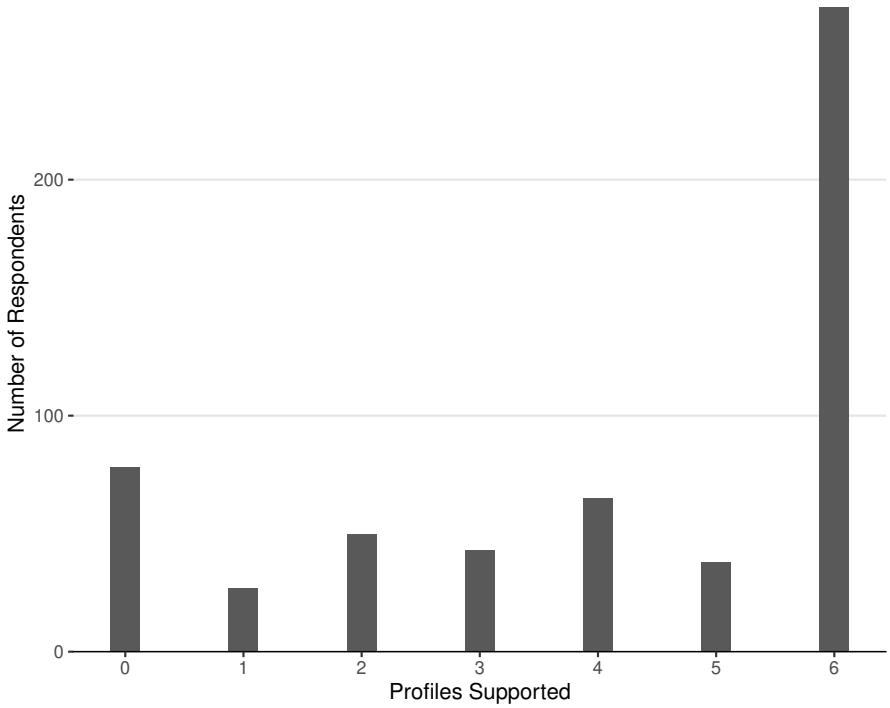


Fig. S1. Frequency of Conjoint Attribute Assignment

Fig. S2. Number of Profiles Supported by Each Respondent ($N = 534$)



In-text model supplements. Table S7 details the main AMCE results, illustrated in text in Figure 1. The lower and upper bounds report the cluster-robust 95% confidence intervals for the AMCE of each attribute value on the probability that respondents were receptive to a particular refugee group. Each comparison category's AMCE is the difference in the probability of receptivity between that category and the baseline category in parentheses (observations= 3324; respondents= 574).

Table S7. AMCE Results for Main Text Figure 1

	feature	level	estimate	std.error	z	p	lower	upper
1	Education	No formal schooling	0.00					
2	Education	Grade school	0.04	0.02	1.66	0.10	-0.01	0.08
3	Education	High school	0.08	0.02	3.52	0.00	0.03	0.12
4	Education	At least some college	0.08	0.02	3.76	0.00	0.04	0.13
5	Sponsored by	No sponsor	0.00					
6	Sponsored by	Secular NGO	0.02	0.02	0.72	0.47	-0.03	0.06
7	Sponsored by	Faith-based NGO	0.04	0.02	1.72	0.09	-0.01	0.08
8	Sponsored by	Regional or local business	0.08	0.02	3.47	0.00	0.03	0.12
9	Language skills	Very little to no English	0.00					
10	Language skills	Broken but functional English	0.05	0.02	2.37	0.02	0.01	0.09
11	Language skills	Fluent English	0.06	0.02	2.92	0.00	0.02	0.10
12	Religion	Muslim	0.00					
13	Religion	Agnostic	0.03	0.02	1.71	0.09	-0.01	0.07
14	Religion	Christian	0.10	0.02	4.67	0.00	0.06	0.14
15	Group makeup	Single men	0.00					
16	Group makeup	Family groups	0.04	0.02	2.13	0.03	0.00	0.09
17	Group makeup	Single women	0.09	0.02	4.61	0.00	0.05	0.13
18	Age	39 or younger	0.00					
19	Age	40 or older	0.00	0.02	0.10	0.92	-0.03	0.03
20	Region of origin	Middle East	0.00					
21	Region of origin	Central America	0.04	0.02	1.76	0.08	-0.00	0.09
22	Region of origin	Eastern Europe	0.02	0.03	0.91	0.36	-0.03	0.07
23	Region of origin	Southeast Asia	0.03	0.03	1.38	0.17	-0.01	0.08
24	Region of origin	Sub-Saharan Africa	0.04	0.03	1.35	0.18	-0.02	0.09

Figure S3 illustrates the marginal means of *Refugee Group Receptivity* for each attribute value (point estimates and 95% confidence intervals). These values can be interpreted as the average probability that a respondent will support each profile with a given attribute level, marginalized over all other attribute values. This plot parallels the AMCEs reported in Figure 1 in the main text.

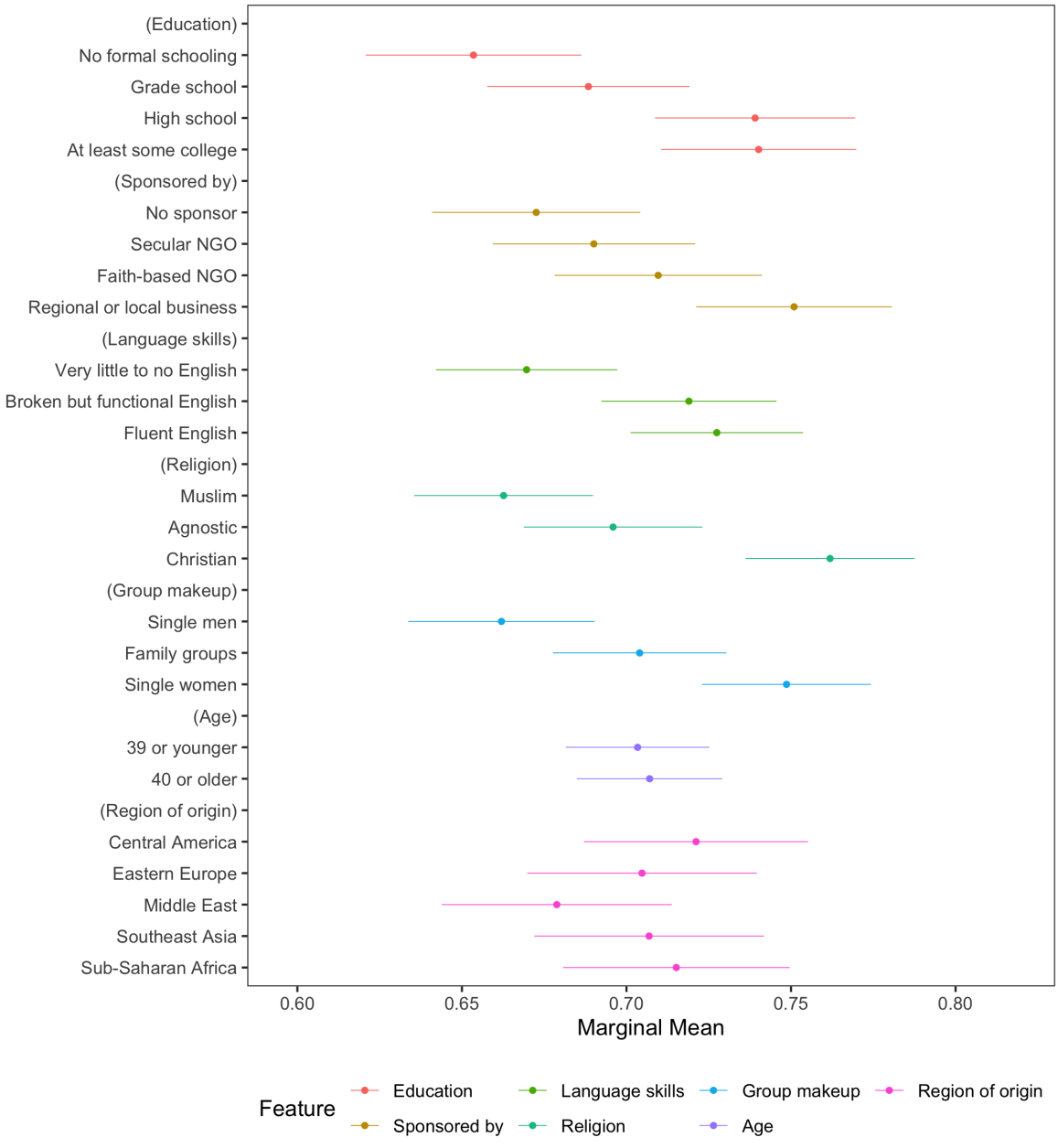


Fig. S3. Marginal Means of Refugee Group Receptivity

In line with our preanalysis plan, we ran several exploratory analyses of Average Component Interaction Effects (ACIEs) including interactions between sponsorship and language, sponsorship and religion, language and religion, and language and education. Statistically significant interactions would have potentially helped adjudicate between economic and cultural logics. However, none of the interactions were significant at conventional levels. These results are reported in Tables S8–S11, (Number of observations = 3324, number of respondents = 574 for all interaction result tables.)

Table S8. Average Component Interaction Effects - language and sponsorship

	feature	level	estimate	std.error	z	p
1	Education	No formal schooling	0.00			
2	Education	Grade school	0.04	0.02	1.62	0.10
3	Education	High school	0.08	0.02	3.51	0.00
4	Education	At least some college	0.08	0.02	3.74	0.00
5	Sponsored by	No sponsor	0.00			
6	Sponsored by	Secular NGO	0.02	0.02	0.73	0.47
7	Sponsored by	Faith-based NGO	0.04	0.02	1.73	0.08
8	Sponsored by	Regional or local business	0.08	0.02	3.43	0.00
9	Language skills	Very little to no English	0.00			
10	Language skills	Broken but functional English	0.05	0.02	2.28	0.02
11	Language skills	Fluent English	0.06	0.02	2.85	0.00
12	Religion	Muslim	0.00			
13	Religion	Agnostic	0.03	0.02	1.73	0.08
14	Religion	Christian	0.10	0.02	4.67	0.00
15	Group makeup	Single men	0.00			
16	Group makeup	Family groups	0.04	0.02	2.13	0.03
17	Group makeup	Single women	0.09	0.02	4.60	0.00
18	Age	39 or younger	0.00			
19	Age	40 or older	0.00	0.02	0.08	0.94
20	Region of origin	Middle East	0.00			
21	Region of origin	Central America	0.04	0.02	1.75	0.08
22	Region of origin	Eastern Europe	0.02	0.03	0.86	0.39
23	Region of origin	Southeast Asia	0.03	0.03	1.33	0.18
24	Region of origin	Sub-Saharan Africa	0.03	0.03	1.33	0.18
25	Interaction	Very little to no English:No sponsor	0.00			
26	Interaction	Broken but functional English:Secular NGO	0.02	0.05	0.30	0.77
27	Interaction	Fluent English:Secular NGO	-0.01	0.05	-0.25	0.81
28	Interaction	Broken but functional English:Faith-based NGO	-0.04	0.06	-0.67	0.50
29	Interaction	Fluent English:Faith-based NGO	-0.06	0.06	-0.99	0.32
30	Interaction	Broken but functional English:Regional or local business	-0.05	0.05	-0.84	0.40
31	Interaction	Fluent English:Regional or local business	-0.04	0.06	-0.73	0.46

Table S9. Average Component Interaction Effects - religion and sponsorship

	feature	level	estimate	std.error	z	p
1	Education	No formal schooling	0.00			
2	Education	Grade school	0.04	0.02	1.59	0.11
3	Education	High school	0.08	0.02	3.44	0.00
4	Education	At least some college	0.08	0.02	3.70	0.00
5	Sponsored by	No sponsor	0.00			
6	Sponsored by	Secular NGO	0.02	0.02	0.65	0.51
7	Sponsored by	Faith-based NGO	0.04	0.02	1.70	0.09
8	Sponsored by	Regional or local business	0.08	0.02	3.43	0.00
9	Language skills	Very little to no English	0.00			
10	Language skills	Broken but functional English	0.05	0.02	2.31	0.02
11	Language skills	Fluent English	0.06	0.02	2.91	0.00
12	Religion	Muslim	0.00			
13	Religion	Agnostic	0.03	0.02	1.73	0.08
14	Religion	Christian	0.10	0.02	4.64	0.00
15	Group makeup	Single men	0.00			
16	Group makeup	Family groups	0.04	0.02	2.09	0.04
17	Group makeup	Single women	0.09	0.02	4.56	0.00
18	Age	39 or younger	0.00			
19	Age	40 or older	0.00	0.02	0.11	0.91
20	Region of origin	Middle East	0.00			
21	Region of origin	Central America	0.04	0.02	1.71	0.09
22	Region of origin	Eastern Europe	0.02	0.03	0.92	0.36
23	Region of origin	Southeast Asia	0.04	0.03	1.40	0.16
24	Region of origin	Sub-Saharan Africa	0.04	0.03	1.37	0.17
25	Interaction	Muslim:No sponsor	0.00			
26	Interaction	Agnostic:Secular NGO	-0.10	0.05	-1.78	0.08
27	Interaction	Christian:Secular NGO	-0.06	0.05	-1.06	0.29
28	Interaction	Agnostic:Faith-based NGO	-0.01	0.06	-0.11	0.91
29	Interaction	Christian:Faith-based NGO	-0.04	0.06	-0.65	0.51
30	Interaction	Agnostic:Regional or local business	-0.02	0.05	-0.41	0.68
31	Interaction	Christian:Regional or local business	-0.04	0.05	-0.70	0.48

Table S10. Average Component Interaction Effects - language skills and religion

	feature	level	estimate	std.error	z	p
1	Education	No formal schooling	0.00			
2	Education	Grade school	0.04	0.02	1.67	0.09
3	Education	High school	0.08	0.02	3.52	0.00
4	Education	At least some college	0.08	0.02	3.74	0.00
5	Sponsored by	No sponsor	0.00			
6	Sponsored by	Secular NGO	0.02	0.02	0.77	0.44
7	Sponsored by	Faith-based NGO	0.04	0.02	1.72	0.09
8	Sponsored by	Regional or local business	0.08	0.02	3.40	0.00
9	Language skills	Very little to no English	0.00			
10	Language skills	Broken but functional English	0.05	0.02	2.38	0.02
11	Language skills	Fluent English	0.06	0.02	2.93	0.00
12	Religion	Muslim	0.00			
13	Religion	Agnostic	0.03	0.02	1.70	0.09
14	Religion	Christian	0.10	0.02	4.67	0.00
15	Group makeup	Single men	0.00			
16	Group makeup	Family groups	0.05	0.02	2.16	0.03
17	Group makeup	Single women	0.09	0.02	4.60	0.00
18	Age	39 or younger	0.00			
19	Age	40 or older	0.00	0.02	0.07	0.95
20	Region of origin	Middle East	0.00			
21	Region of origin	Central America	0.04	0.03	1.77	0.08
22	Region of origin	Eastern Europe	0.02	0.03	0.89	0.37
23	Region of origin	Southeast Asia	0.04	0.03	1.41	0.16
24	Region of origin	Sub-Saharan Africa	0.04	0.03	1.34	0.18
25	Interaction	Very little to no English:Muslim	0.00			
26	Interaction	Broken but functional English:Agnostic	0.05	0.05	0.97	0.33
27	Interaction	Fluent English:Agnostic	-0.02	0.05	-0.39	0.70
28	Interaction	Broken but functional English:Christian	0.04	0.05	0.78	0.44
29	Interaction	Fluent English:Christian	0.03	0.04	0.78	0.43

Table S11. Average Component Interaction Effects - education and language skills

	feature	level	estimate	std.error	z	p
1	Education	No formal schooling	0.00			
2	Education	Grade school	0.04	0.02	1.66	0.10
3	Education	High school	0.08	0.02	3.50	0.00
4	Education	At least some college	0.08	0.02	3.74	0.00
5	Sponsored by	No sponsor	0.00			
6	Sponsored by	Secular NGO	0.02	0.02	0.75	0.45
7	Sponsored by	Faith-based NGO	0.04	0.02	1.71	0.09
8	Sponsored by	Regional or local business	0.08	0.02	3.47	0.00
9	Language skills	Very little to no English	0.00			
10	Language skills	Broken but functional English	0.05	0.02	2.34	0.02
11	Language skills	Fluent English	0.06	0.02	2.87	0.00
12	Religion	Muslim	0.00			
13	Religion	Agnostic	0.03	0.02	1.66	0.10
14	Religion	Christian	0.10	0.02	4.60	0.00
15	Group makeup	Single men	0.00			
16	Group makeup	Family groups	0.04	0.02	2.08	0.04
17	Group makeup	Single women	0.09	0.02	4.50	0.00
18	Age	39 or younger	0.00			
19	Age	40 or older	0.00	0.02	0.10	0.92
20	Region of origin	Middle East	0.00			
21	Region of origin	Central America	0.04	0.03	1.77	0.08
22	Region of origin	Eastern Europe	0.02	0.03	0.89	0.37
23	Region of origin	Southeast Asia	0.04	0.03	1.41	0.16
24	Region of origin	Sub-Saharan Africa	0.04	0.03	1.34	0.18
25	Interaction	No formal schooling:Very little to no English	0.00			
26	Interaction	Grade school:Broken but functional English	-0.01	0.06	-0.22	0.83
27	Interaction	High school:Broken but functional English	-0.02	0.06	-0.41	0.68
28	Interaction	At least some college:Broken but functional English	-0.05	0.06	-0.87	0.39
29	Interaction	Grade school:Fluent English	0.03	0.05	0.46	0.65
30	Interaction	High school:Fluent English	-0.05	0.06	-0.90	0.37
31	Interaction	At least some college:Fluent English	-0.05	0.06	-0.94	0.35

Table S12 reports the main AMCE results with the region of origin collapsed to compare groups originating from the Middle East to all other groups. The findings show no significant difference at the .05 level. The lower and upper bounds report the cluster-robust 95% confidence intervals for the AMCE of each attribute value on the probability that respondents were receptive to a particular refugee group. Each comparison category's AMCE is the difference in the probability of receptivity between that category and the baseline category in parentheses (observations= 3324; respondents= 574).

Table S12. AMCE with collapsed region of origin comparison

	feature	level	estimate	std.error	z	p	lower	upper
1	Education	No formal schooling	0.00					
2	Education	Grade school	0.04	0.02	1.64	0.10	-0.01	0.08
3	Education	High school	0.08	0.02	3.52	0.00	0.03	0.12
4	Education	At least some college	0.08	0.02	3.73	0.00	0.04	0.13
5	Sponsored by	Faith-based NGO	0.00					
6	Sponsored by	No sponsor	-0.04	0.02	-1.73	0.08	-0.08	0.01
7	Sponsored by	Secular NGO	-0.02	0.02	-1.00	0.32	-0.07	0.02
8	Sponsored by	Regional or local business	0.04	0.02	1.86	0.06	-0.00	0.08
9	Language skills	Very little to no English	0.00					
10	Language skills	Broken but functional English	0.05	0.02	2.37	0.02	0.01	0.09
11	Language skills	Fluent English	0.06	0.02	2.92	0.00	0.02	0.10
12	Religion	Muslim	0.00					
13	Religion	Agnostic	0.03	0.02	1.71	0.09	-0.01	0.07
14	Religion	Christian	0.10	0.02	4.67	0.00	0.06	0.14
15	Group makeup	Single men	0.00					
16	Group makeup	Family groups	0.04	0.02	2.12	0.03	0.00	0.09
17	Group makeup	Single women	0.09	0.02	4.62	0.00	0.05	0.13
18	Age	39 or younger	0.00					
19	Age	40 or older	0.00	0.02	0.11	0.91	-0.03	0.03
20	Region_2	Middle East	0.00					
21	Region_2	Not Middle East	0.03	0.02	1.70	0.09	-0.01	0.07

Subgroup analyses. Figure S4 illustrates the vote share subgroup analysis. For *Vote Share*, we compare officials by whether or not their local government is in a county that had a majority vote share for Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election.

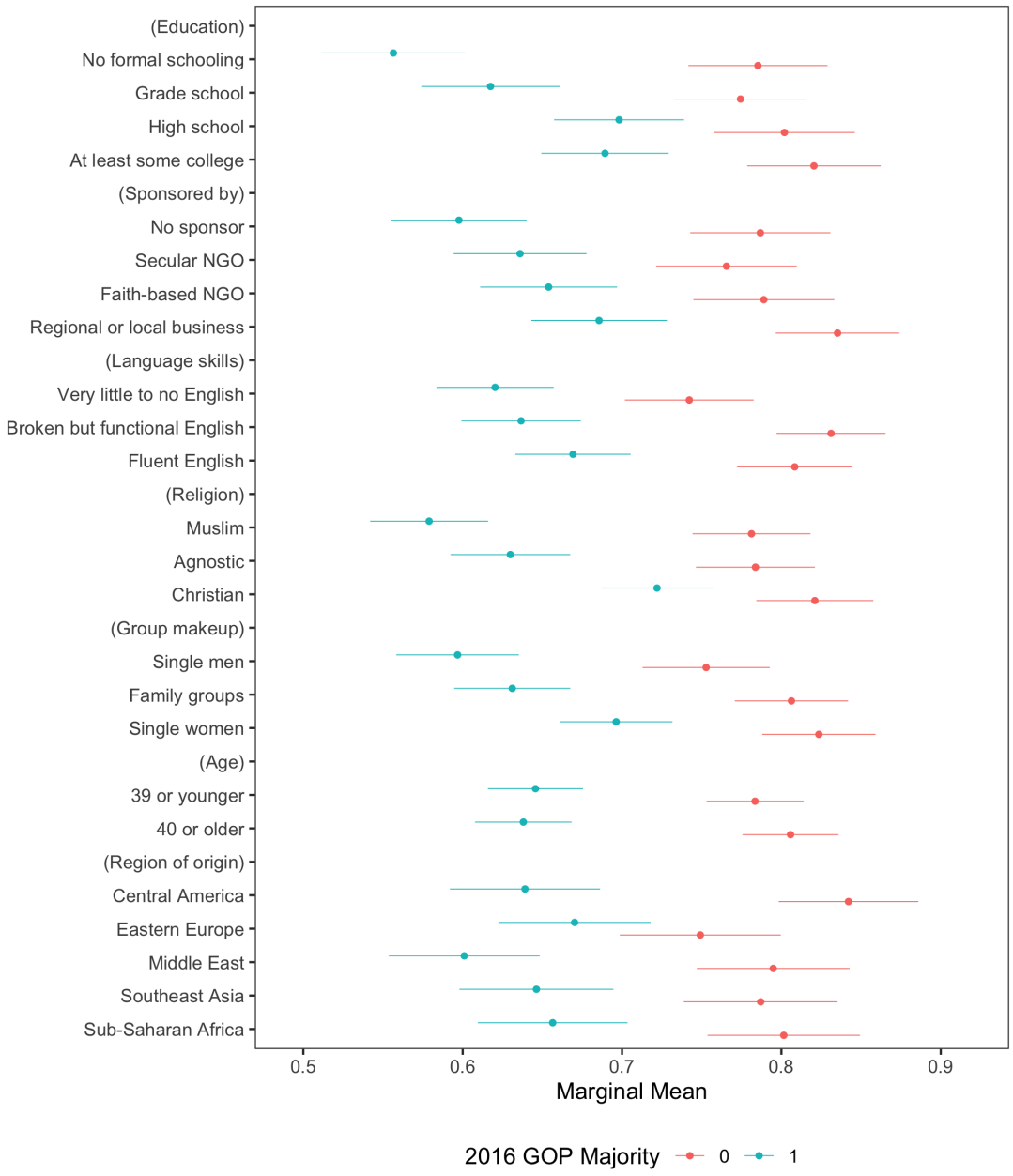


Fig. S4. Marginal Means and 95% CIs of *Refugee Group Receptivity*, split by partisan *Vote Share*.

Figure S5 illustrates the non-US citizen subgroup analysis. For *Interaction with Non-US Citizens*, prior to the conjoint experiment respondents were asked "About how often do you directly interact with non-US citizens?". We divide respondents into two groups by whether they report a few times a year or less versus a few times a month or more.

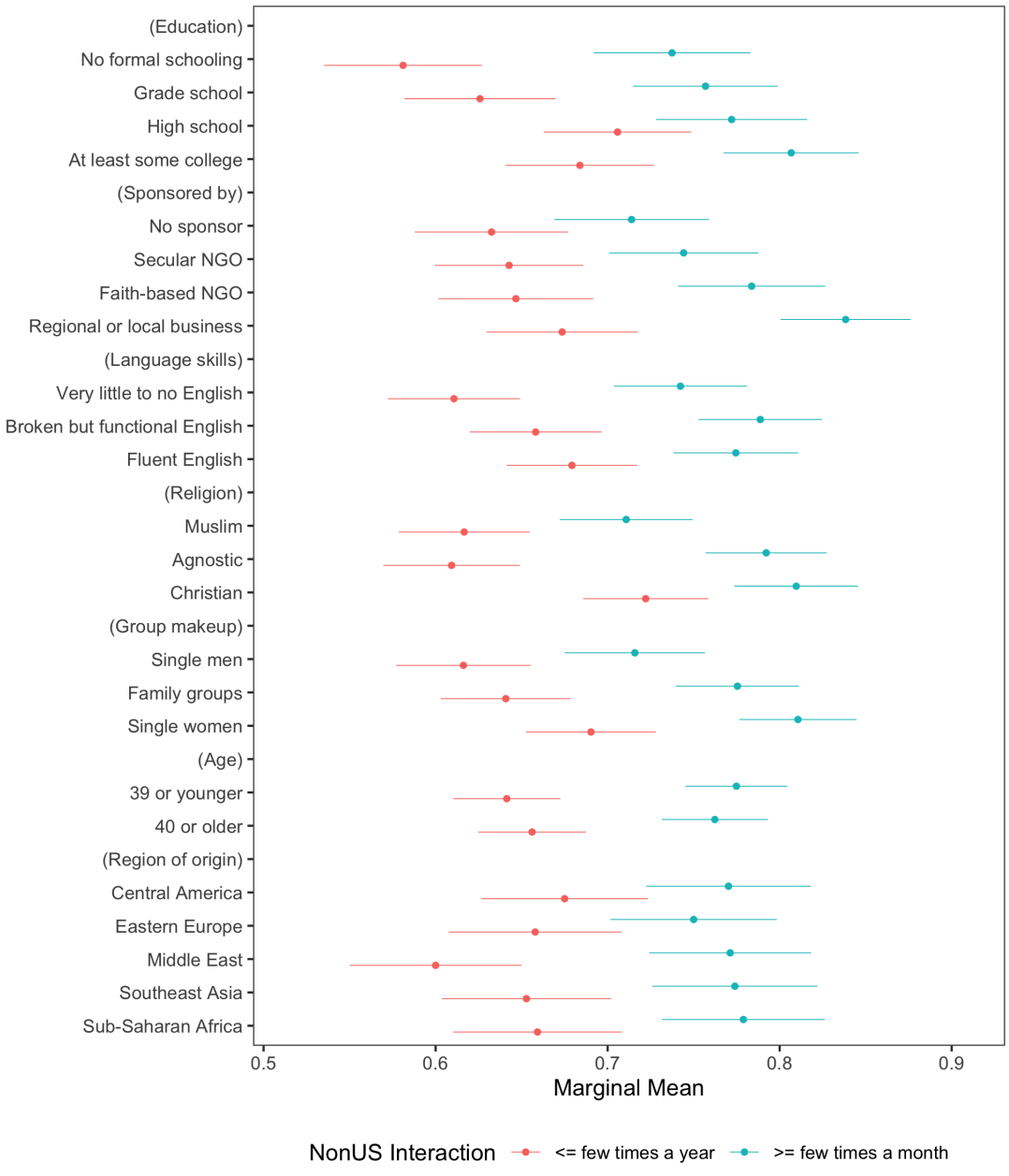


Fig. S5. Marginal Means and 95% CIs of Refugee Group Receptivity, split by *Interaction with Non-US Citizens*.

Figure S6 illustrates the population subgroup analysis. For *Population*, we split respondents according to whether they represent a jurisdiction with an above- or below-median population, relative the respondents in our sample. The population data is based on the total number of residents living in the given geographic unit and is drawn from the 2015 American Community Survey.

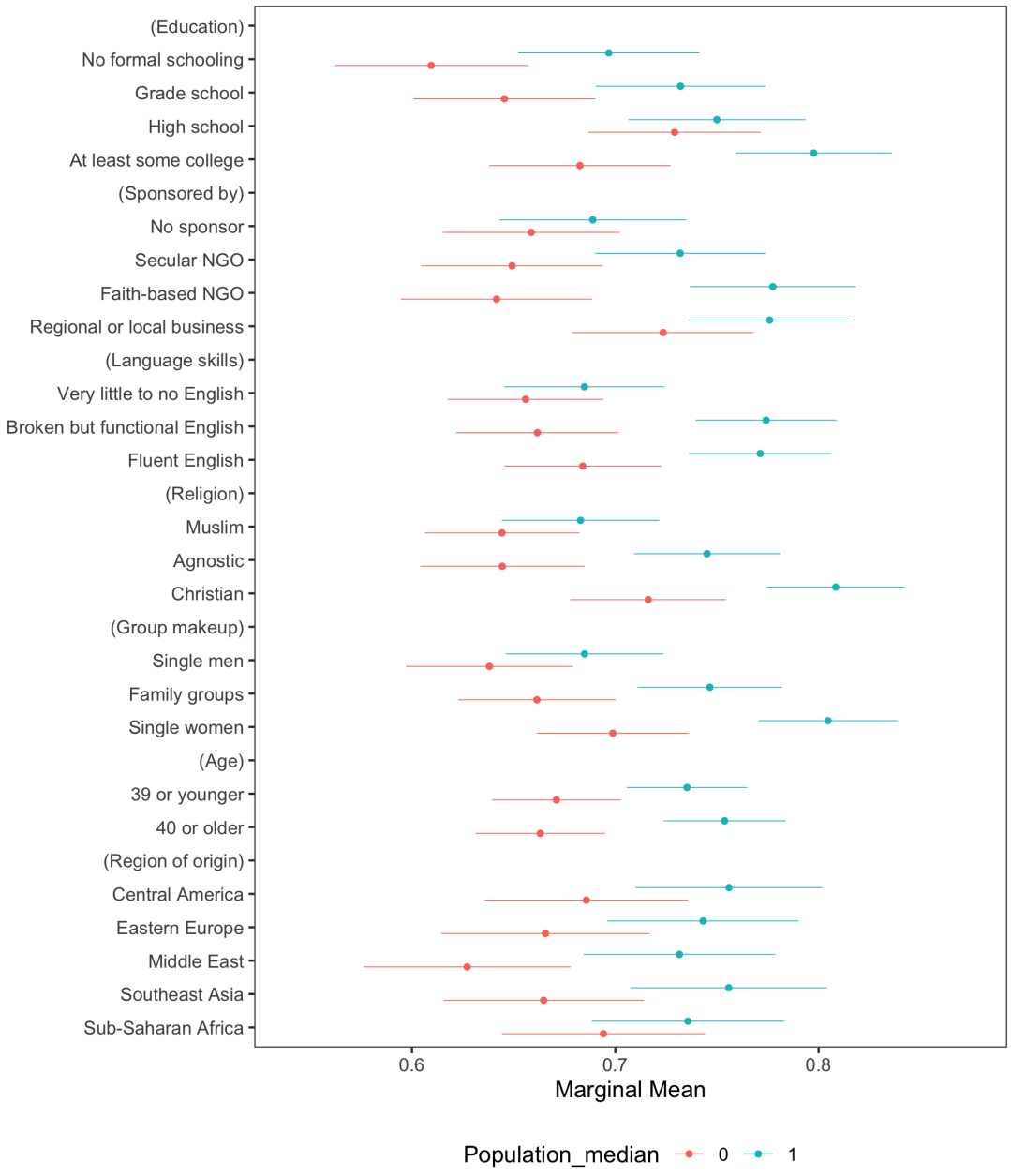


Fig. S6. Marginal Means and 95% CIs of Refugee Group Receptivity, split by *Population*.

Following (4), we also conduct a more formal test of the difference in subgroup preferences. Through a nested model comparison, we compare the fit of the regression without interactions or a subgroup variable with the fit of the regression that allows for interactions between the subgroup identifier and feature levels. Below are the F-tests of the null hypothesis that all interaction terms are zero. Results are significant at conventional levels.

Table S13. F-test of Vote Share

	Resid. Df	Resid. Dev	Df	Deviance	F	Pr(>F)
1	3300	671.34				
2	3282	645.45	18	25.89	7.31	0.0000

Table S14. F-test of Non-US Interaction

	Resid. Df	Resid. Dev	Df	Deviance	F	Pr(>F)
1	3268	666.49				
2	3196	633.36	72	33.13	2.32	0.0000

Table S15. F-test of Population

	Resid. Df	Resid. Dev	Df	Deviance	F	Pr(>F)
1	3306	671.76				
2	3288	662.07	18	9.69	2.67	0.0002

4. Open-ended analysis

Coding procedure. To describe the content of the open-ended responses we collected, we coded each open-ended response according to sixteen non-exclusive categories. These categories can roughly be categorized into two groups: conjoint attribute categories (Table S17), and abstract categories (Table S18). We also coded an additional constructed category—titled "Valence"—which describes whether the comment took an explicitly pro- or anti-refugee position. The seven conjoint attribute category labels were pre-defined and pre-registered before fielding the survey. However, all other labels were defined after reading a sample of comments to identify the most prevalent themes described by respondents.

To code each comment, we used a two-step process. First, each comment was read by two independent coders. For each category, each coder assigned a code of 1 if the comment mentioned the category as an important consideration in deciding whether or not to support a potential refugee, 0 if the comment did not mention the category, and -1 if the comment mentioned that the category should *not* be considered. For the "Valence" category, a code of 1 indicated support for refugee resettlement, 0 indicated no position, and -1 indicated opposition to refugee resettlement. Second, we reconciled coding decisions. For comment-category combinations where the two original coders agreed, their consensus coding decision became the final coding decision. Otherwise, the comment was read by a third independent coder, who acted as a tiebreaker between the two original coding suggestions. We then repeated this process for all 439 comments we collected.

After completing the coding process, for ease of interpretation we aggregated the "Economy/Infrastructure", "Physical Infrastructure", "Jobs", and "Soft Infrastructure" categories and the "Security" and "Rule of Law" categories" into higher-level "Economy" and "Public Order" categories, respectively. Our aggregation rule privileged in creating these higher-level categories was to assign each comment a value of 1 on a given category if any of the sub-categories took on a value of 1, 0 if all sub-categories took on a value of 0, and -1 otherwise. This coding rule privileges coding decisions of 1 in a case where a mix of -1 and 1 coding decisions were present; for example, if a given comment was coded -1 in the "Jobs" category and 1 in the "Physical Infrastructure" category, it would receive a code of 1 in the higher-level "Economy" category. However, since coding decisions of -1 were rare in most categories, this situation almost never arose.

Category descriptions, examples, and co-occurrence. See Table S16 for a brief description of each category. See Tables S17 and S18 for examples of each category. See Figure S7 for the frequency of descriptive categories in open-ended responses and Figure S8 for scores between the seven conjoint categories and the four high-level constructed categories.

Table S16. Open-ended comment category descriptions.

Label	Type	Description
Language	Conjoint	Refugee group's existing English language skills.
Education	Conjoint	Refugee group's existing level of education.
Sponsorship	Conjoint	Refugee group's sponsorship status (e.g. by a government or community group).
Religion	Conjoint	Refugee group's religious affiliation.
Group makeup	Conjoint	Refugee group's gender and/or family composition.
Age	Conjoint	Refugee group's approximate age.
Region	Conjoint	Refugee group's ethnic or national origin.
Economy/Infrastructure	Abstract	Community's economic resources and/or refugees' perceived impact on those resources.
Social/Cultural	Abstract	Refugees' perceived "fit" with community mores or values and community's acceptance.
Immigration Process	Abstract	Focus on the broader immigration system or refugee resettlement process.
Valence	Abstract	Explicit support or opposition to refugee resettlement.
Security	Abstract	Refugee group's existing criminal history or background.
Rule of law	Abstract	Refugee group's perceived willingness to follow US law.
Soft infrastructure	Abstract	Community social resources (e.g. job training, healthcare).
Physical infrastructure	Abstract	Community physical resources (e.g. transit, housing).
Jobs	Abstract	Community employment opportunities, or refugees' perceived employability.

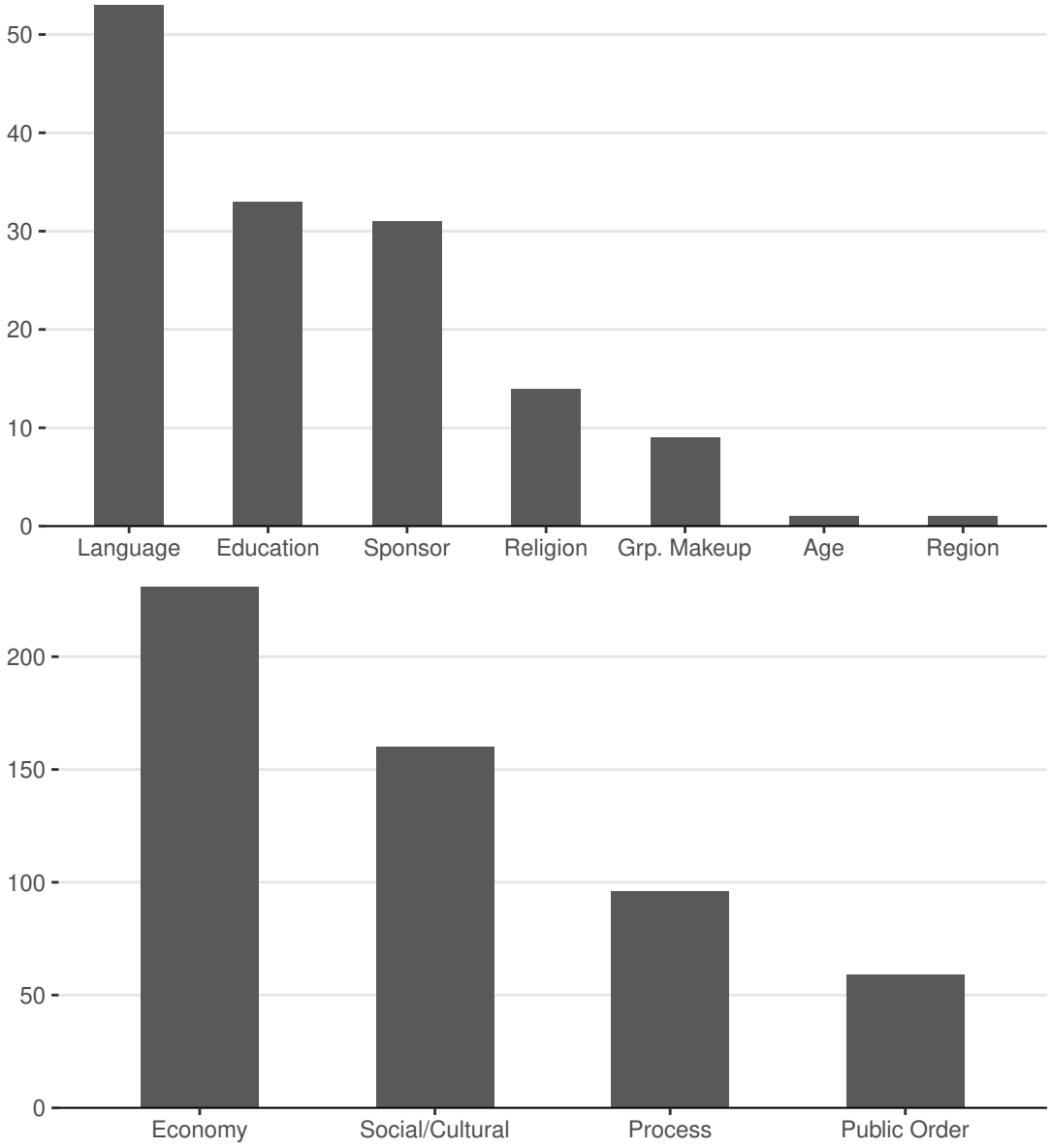
Table S17. Sample comments and inter-coder agreement rates (ICA), conjoint coding categories.

Label	ICA	Example
Language	0.97	Being able to speak English.
Education	0.94	Education.
Sponsorship	0.97	Connecting with mentors who can help them in transition.
Religion	0.99	Ability to support themselves. Christian.
Group makeup	0.98	English language. Families.
Age	1.0	Language, age.
Region	0.99	[...] The Village government does not consider [...] race or origin [...].

Table S18. Sample comments and inter-coder agreement rates (ICA), abstract coding categories.

Label	ICA	Example
Economy/Infrastructure	0.89	Do they work.
Social/Cultural	0.89	Ability to assimilate within the community.
Security	0.98	Criminal history.
Rule of law	0.97	Good work ethic, law abiding persons.
Soft infrastructure	0.89	Support services provided by partner agencies.
Physical infrastructure	0.97	Housing.
Jobs	0.83	Safety, housing, and employment.
Immigration Process	0.92	They MUST follow all immigration laws and protocols.
Valence	0.91	Everyone is welcome.

Fig. S7. Frequency of descriptive categories in open-ended responses



For each category, each local government official's response was scored 1 if the respondent mentioned that a category was important, 0 if the category was not mentioned, and -1 if the respondent described a category as unimportant. Scores were then aggregating by summing per-response scores for all open-ended responses ($n = 574$).

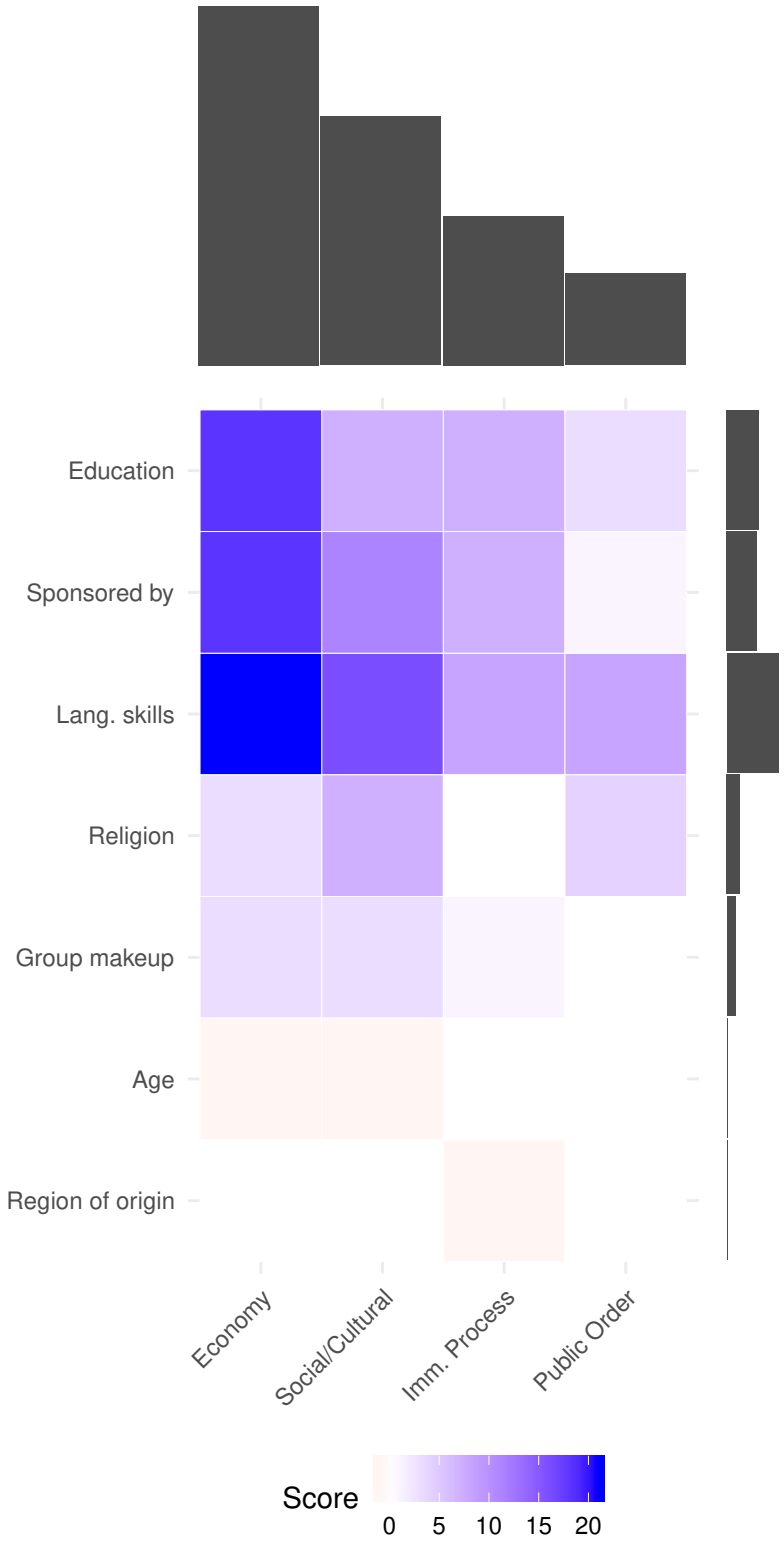


Fig. S8. Scores for documents containing combinations of conjoint and constructed categories, derived from open-ended responses. "Score" represents the summed coding decisions in a given category for all comments in the dataset.

References

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4. TJ Leeper, SB Hobolt, J Tilley, Measuring subgroup preferences in conjoint experiments. *Polit. Analysis* **28**, 207–221 (2020).