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Fairness or control: What determines elected local leaders' support for hosting refugees in their community?*

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Abstract

When it comes to successful refugee reception the local level matters. Research overwhelmingly examines host communities' attitudes, but endorsement from local politicians is equally important to resolve conflicts and facilitate harmonious interaction. Yet, the preferences of local leaders and their willingness to support the resettlement process are understudied. We conduct the first-ever conjoint experiment on a representative sample of local elected leaders in Greece, a heavily-impacted country with many active host sites. We elicit elite preferences regarding refugee resettlement and find that local leaders are more likely to support it if they are involved in the process and can control the frequency and intensity of local-refugee interactions. Heterogeneous effects reveal that polarizing tensions around refugee resettlement derive from elites' divergent conceptions of control as opposed to different perceptions of fairness. Overall, our results suggest that processes to mitigate early impact and exposure, combined with fair-share allocations, can dampen polarized reactions to future resettlement.

Keywords: refugee resettlement, local elites, contact, values, control, fair-share, conjoint experiment

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Among the determinants of refugees’ successful socio-economic integration into host communities, the local community’s attitudes and behavior are perhaps most important. As evidence suggests (for a summary, see [OECD 2018](#)) refugees’ long-run outcomes (economic, educational, and otherwise) depend on them living in more accepting social environments. Yet, local communities’ receptivity towards refugees –and thus the inclusiveness of the social environment refugees encounter– is also shaped by the rhetoric, actions and policy decisions of local political elites. In the words of the OECD and EU “[L]ocal authorities play a vital role in this process” ([OECD 2018](#)).

What, however, determines local political leaders’ attitudes and preferences towards refugee resettlement schemes? What types of policies and processes are they willing to endorse? These questions matter. Local elites are responsible for many aspects of resettlement and integration policy. Without their support, policy implementation can become significantly more challenging ([Betts et al. 2020](#)). Local leaders also act as mediators (or instigators) of conflict. Their reluctance –and sometimes outright hostility— to the resettlement processes mandated by central governments can stoke popular backlash and violence. The Greek island of Lesbos, where locals opposed to settlement camps fight violently with refugees and the organizations that serve them ([Editorial 2017](#)) is a case in point. Still, little is known about the preferences and attitudes of local political leaders with respect to the issue of refugee resettlement. There are very few studies ([Shaffer et al. 2020](#); [Doherty et al. 2019](#)) that focus on local politicians’ attitudes and even fewer –if any- that explore their policy preferences with respect to refugee hosting schemes. Interestingly, this stands in sharp contrast to an abundance of high-quality research on citizens’ preferences and attitudes about refugees and migrants (e.g. [Bansak et al. 2016](#); [Hangartner et al. 2019](#); [Adida et al. 2018](#); [Getmansky et al. 2020](#)). Whereas these papers inform us about the “profiles” of refugees that locals (and in one case) local politicians are willing to host, they cannot tell us about the actual policies deployed or political feasibility constraints that surround successful implementation of refugee resettlement.

We address this gap in the literature by fielding a conjoint survey experiment on a representative sample of locally-elected municipal officials in Greece ($N = 586$; AAPOR response rate 44.3%). Greece has been at the forefront of the ongoing European refugee crisis since 2015 and its level of exposure has been intense.¹ Moreover, in Greece, where dozens of active refugee reception facilities and host sites of various types and sizes are scattered across the country, the migration debate often centers around the local issues that arise with the presence of such sites and the challenges they pose for the harmonious symbiosis between locals and refugees. These challenges extend well beyond the identity characteristics of refugees, and include such practical considerations as settlement location, administrative oversight, funding, and the issue of refugee mobility. Local politicians become heavily involved in these debates.

The conjoint experiment asked elected local officials to choose between policy proposals (each containing five attributes) that were hypothetically submitted for approval at the municipal council. To increase policy relevance, the proposals focus on the characteristics of the refugee host sites (size, type, geographical location, and administrative authority) and the provision of additional municipal funds to hosting municipalities.

On the issue of size, our proposals draw directly on a ‘fair-share allocation’ approach endorsed by the Greek central government to ‘decongest’ the municipalities heavily impacted by the 2015 crisis. This approach spreads hosting obligations across municipalities in Greece, such that the size refugee settlements would not exceed 1% of the municipal population anywhere in the country. The latter is especially worth studying as some evidence at the European level suggests that citizens are in favor of such proportional allocation schemes (Bansak et al. 2017). Yet we lack evidence on whether such perceptions of fairness in sharing refugee-hosting obligations influence local leaders’ preferences or calculus. Put simply, *how* the refugee resettlement process is carried out and whether it is perceived to be *fair* might both be important factors in determining whether local elected officials will endorse it.

¹To put this in perspective, Greece received almost 50,000 new asylum requests in 2019 alone, whereas the USA with a population 30 times larger received only 30,000.

Our study design introduces several novelties. First, rather than focusing on politicians’ preferences over the identity characteristics of refugees, we elicit their preferences about hosting policies: How does refugee resettlement occur? Not only are the characteristics of hosting sites both logically and anecdotally critical to the success of integration and harmony, local politicians also have much more say over these policy elements than they do over the identity of the refugees arriving in their municipalities. This is especially the case in “transit states” like Greece, where many refugees and migrants “got stuck” seeking passage to other parts of Europe as borders closed in response to the 2015 crisis. Indeed, local government officials in Greece have been asked repeatedly by the central government about their preferences and suggestions on the size, type, and location of refugee host sites and facilities (see, e.g. [Georgiopolou 2021](#)). Thus, by explicitly asking local politicians how they would cast their votes should specific resettlement schemes reach the floor of their municipal council, we directly elicit political behavior that is consequential for policy. Second, this approach also allows us to focus on the *general equilibrium* effects of refugee resettlement schemes for small communities in a realistic way: hosting a refugee site is different from accepting a *single* hypothetical refugee based on their identity characteristics.

Finally, focusing on a highly-impacted country with existing sites is not only useful for policy purposes; it also allows us to answer substantive theoretical questions. In what ways are elites’ values correlated with divergent policy preferences for refugee resettlement? And how does past exposure to refugees ([Enos 2014](#)) and *experience with* the resettlement processes affect local political elites’ attitudes and preferences? In this respect, there is hardly a better group of local political elites whose study can provide some answers.

We report three main findings. First, local councilors are mostly willing to approve policies that do not exceed ‘fair share’ hosting obligations and that give them control in the process of hosting refugees. They support policies that allow for a more controlled and gradual exposure to refugees: sites that are small in size, geographically distant from the urban center and that restrict the mobility for refugees (e.g. closed sites) gain their overwhelming

support. Taken together, these findings imply that in order to accept refugee host sites in their municipality, local politicians value fairness and have a strong preference for controlling the likelihood and frequency with which refugees interact with locals. This implies, in turn, elites' preference for a more gradual process of exposure (and contact) between citizens and refugees. Second, these effects vary significantly with councilors own values, beliefs and ideology, but only when it comes to strategies of control. While perceptions of fairness are more universal and not polarized across ideological lines, preferred strategies of control do diverge substantially and in ways that potentially contribute to political polarization and culture wars about refugee hosting. Third, we find only one notable and surprising difference between elected officials serving in municipalities that already have refugee hosting sites versus those that do not: Elites serving in the former *care less* about minimizing the refugee site's size relative to the local population, demonstrating a more capacious/flexible understanding of fairness. This adds important nuance to existing theories about contact.

Our work makes several contributions. First, it offers concrete policy recommendations for the design and implementation of refugee resettlement schemes. Second, it points to the fact that much of the opposition to hosting refugees can be addressed, despite lack of control over refugees' identity characteristics, if local communities and their leaders regain some say over the design and implementation of the process. This is a wholly new insight that suggests a possible refocusing of public policies from trying to alter locals' attitudes –which is costly and must be long-run- into engaging local stakeholders in the process of policy design and implementation. It also echoes previous studies ([Hangartner et al. 2019](#)), which point to the difficulties local communities face in coping with the intensity of flows and managing effectively the situation as the main reasons behind the observed backlash against refugees. Equally, from a theoretical perspective, our work adds a significant qualifier on how contact with refugees works in practice ([Enos 2014](#)). If resettlement policy is framed within 'fair-share' allocation bounds, political elites in municipalities with refugee sites are *more* willing to accept proposals that increase (within limits) their hosting obligations.

DATA AND METHODS

We conducted our survey in October 2020 via an email campaign and recruited 586 councilors. Our study was pre-registered with OSF. We presented each councilor with three pairs of alternative policy proposals with randomly assigned attribute values and randomized the attribute order (between subjects). The policies varied on five attributes: (1) type of public good provision used for municipal compensation, (2) host site size, (3) who is in charge of the daily site administration, (4) site proximity to the urban center and (5) the type of site. After being shown a pair, councilors were asked to rate each proposal (Likert scale) and choose the one package they would vote for in the council (forced choice). To identify the causal effects of the different attributes of the council proposals on preferred proposal, we leverage the difference in attributes between distinct proposals to estimate the following OLS regression (AMCEs and MMs):

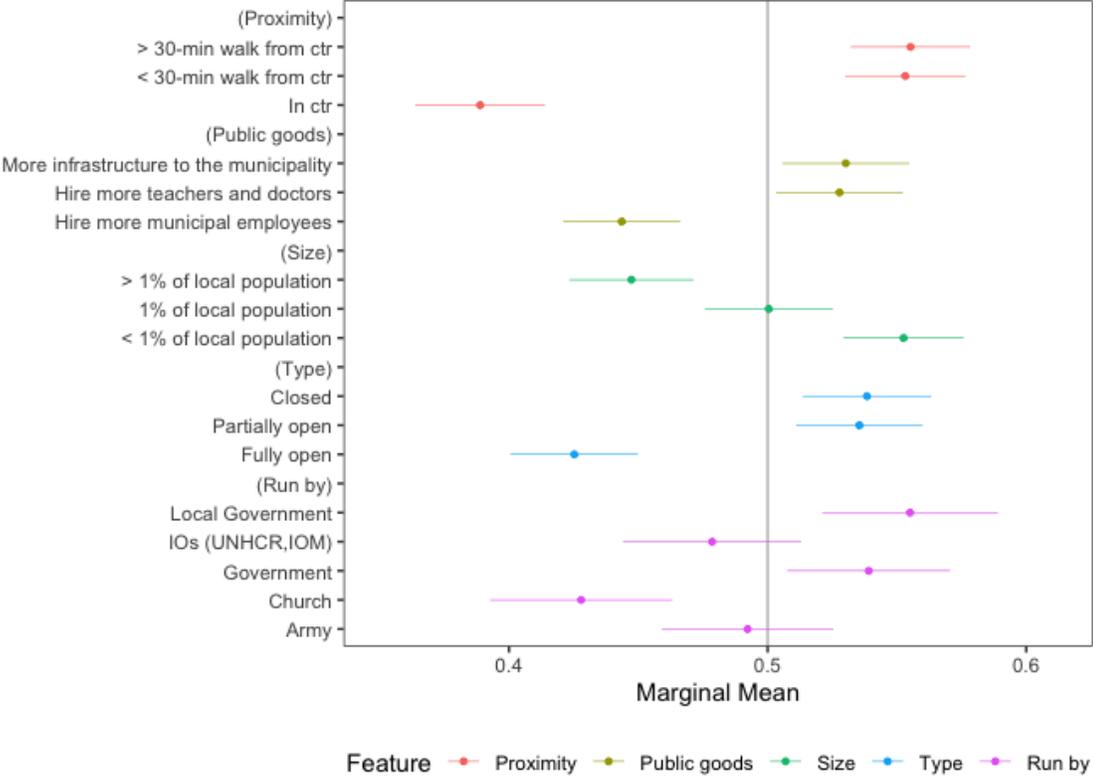
$$Y_{ijk} = a_0 + \gamma_k + \delta \mathbf{T}_{ij} + \epsilon_{ijk} \quad (1)$$

where T_{ij} is a treatment vector (containing five randomly assigned values, one for each of the policy’s j attributes) that indicates whether (or not) a policy proposal has a particular attribute value, and Y_{ijk} is the outcome variable (Likert scale and binary). We cluster the standard errors by respondent i . In some specifications we also use municipal FE and entropy balancing weights (see SI appendix Table C2 and Fig. B3). In the SI appendix (sections A and B), we also present more details on data collection and methods, including various covariate balance tests (Table B1 and Fig. B1).

RESULTS

We focus on the main findings regarding councilors’ preferences using the forced choice outcome. Fig. 1 displays marginal means for proposal choice (i.e. average choice probabilities given a specific attribute level) across all levels. Given the wording of our question, forced

choice and marginal means can be directly interpreted as the *expected support* that a policy containing this particular attribute value would receive if it were to come to a vote in the municipal council *ceteris paribus*. In the Appendix, we present alternative specifications and various robustness checks, including AMCEs (see Tables C2, D4 and D5) and the Likert-scale outcome (Fig. B2). Results are substantively identical with the ones presented below.

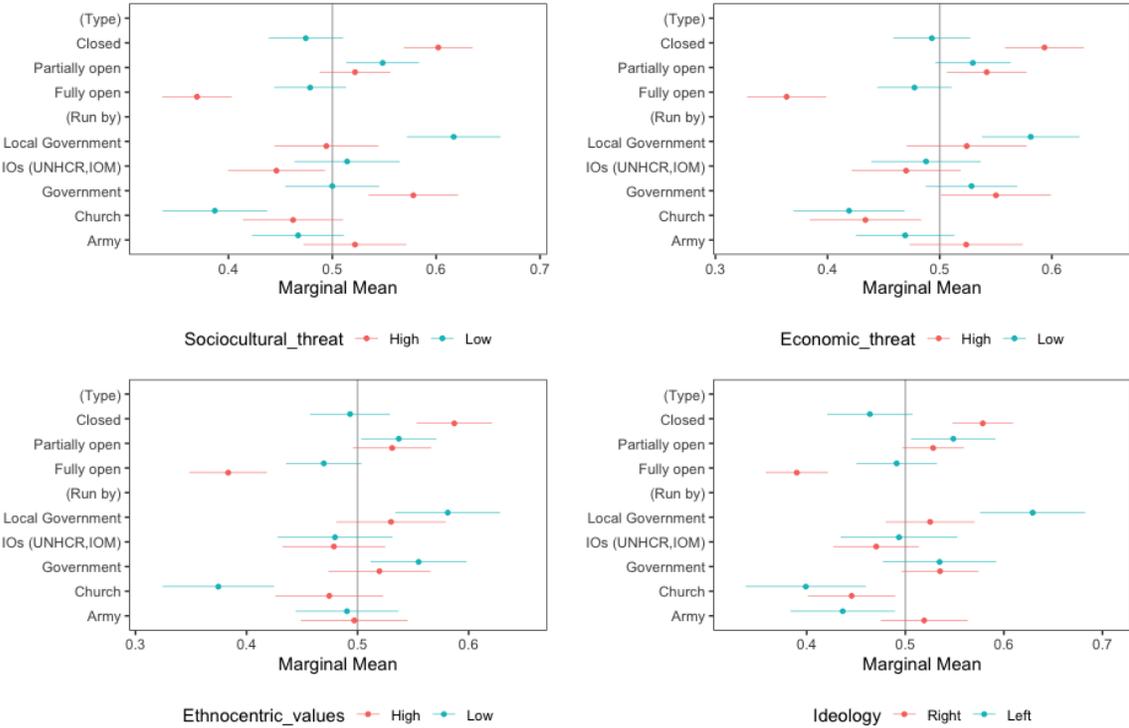


Note: Plot shows marginal means for each attribute value (point estimates and 95% CIs). These values can be interpreted as the average probability that a councilor will support each proposal with a given attribute level, marginalized over all other attribute values. SE's are clustered by respondent (N= 586); N= 3,516.

Figure 1: Aggregate marginal means (MMs)

Overall, the aggregate preference of local elected leaders that we identify is one of ‘conditional support’ towards hosting refugees. Councilors strongly object to any host site being set up in the urban center of their municipality (but additional distance from urban centers does not matter), and they clearly prefer small-sized camps and object to hosting more than the proportionally ‘fair’ 1% –coefficient point estimates are statistically different from each other ($p < .01$). That is, the ‘fair-share’ allocation rule appears to be a reasonable

compromise gaining just about sufficient support, but exceeding it draws strong objections. Councilors also want sites that limit refugee mobility (to a degree). Mostly clearly, they are likely to support the creation of a site in their municipality if they are responsible for managing its operation. Local elites are also more likely to support the creation of a site when it involves considerable public good investment in their municipality. Interestingly, and consistent with an emphasis on fairness, the type of municipal investments that elites' prefer are ones that increase management efficacy as opposed to simply extracting political rents through patronage (the latter being a common critique of Greek local elites). Taken together, these results suggest that local politicians are not adamantly opposed to setting up host sites in their municipalities; but they do want a fair process to guarantee an environment of limited, gradual, and mediated interaction between refugees and locals, most importantly, one being controlled and managed by them.



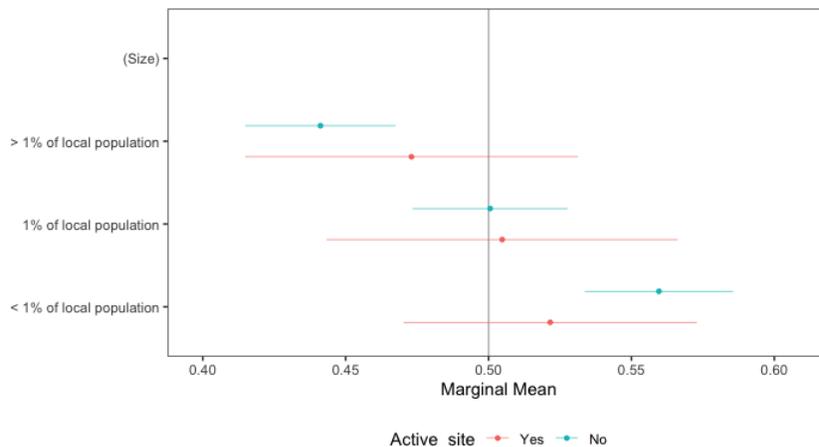
Note: Plots show marginal means for each attribute value (point estimates and 95% CIs). We present subgroup analyses by a) perceived socio-cultural threat, b) perceived economic threat, c) ethnocentric values and d) ideology. We constructed these metrics using multiple variables as factors in PCA analysis. SE's are clustered by respondent.

Figure 2: Subgroup marginal means (MMs)

Yet despite this aggregate pattern, there is also significant preference heterogeneity across ideological and cultural terms. In Fig. 2, we examine how councilors’ perceived economic and socio-cultural threat posed by refugees, their ethnocentric values and their ideology might polarize policy preferences. We only focus on two of the five attributes (type of host site and who manages it) because there is not significant divergence from aggregate preferences (see Fig. 1) with respect to the other three ones. Here we note that the absence of preference heterogeneity with respect to the host site’s size, in particular, further reflects the idea the proportional 1% quota is indeed perceived as the ‘fair-share’ allocation and is not polarized. Three findings stand out. First, councilors who are left-leaning, adhere less to ethnocentric values, and perceive a lower economic and (especially) socio-cultural threat do not oppose fully open sites or support fully closed ones; instead, a modest positive preference for partially open sites emerges. This stands in sharp contrast to elites with more conservative and ethnocentric values, who *perceive a trade-off between the rights of refugees and locals* and thus seek to minimize refugee mobility.² Second, there is clear polarization regarding the sites’ administrative authority. Councilors on the right with traditional values exhibit an aversion to international organizations (e.g. UNHCR, IOM) and a preference towards institutions (e.g. Orthodox church or the Army) that are identified with the core of the Greek nation. A similar contrast –albeit less stark– appears when we consider perceptions of cultural threat. These findings suggest that attitudes towards refugee reception map into the existing cleavage of cosmopolitan vs. ethno-nationalist values, thus resulting in higher preference polarization that hinders consensus over the resettlement process. Third, there is a clear dichotomy between left and right on the role of local government in managing the process, revealing a fundamentally different understanding of ‘control’; for the former it amounts to delegating responsibility to municipalities, while for the latter it implies restricting refugees’ liberties which they see as infringing on theirs. In sum, while concepts of control seem to be highly contingent on councilors’ ideology, beliefs and values, the same is

²The estimated coefficients are statistically different from each other ($p < .01$); CI’s do not overlap.

not true regarding perceptions of fairness towards refugee-hosting obligations; the latter do not appear to be polarized along those same lines.



Note: Plot shows marginal means for each attribute value (point estimates and 95% CIs). We present subgroup analysis by the presence of an active refugee host site in councilors’ municipality. SE’s are clustered by respondent.

Figure 3: MMs based on presence of active host sites

Finally, in Fig. 3, we examine whether the presence of an active host site in their municipality alters councilors’ attitudes towards the resettlement process. While we do not observe any major heterogeneity, there is one notable difference: councilors in municipalities with no previous exposure have a clear ranked order: they prefer small-sized camps (less than 1%) to larger ones ($p < .01$). In contrast, councilors in municipalities that already host refugees are *indifferent between large and small sites*. We interpret this as an important nuance to existing theories on contact: when refugee-hosting obligations are framed within ‘fair-share allocation’ bounds, elites in municipalities with experience in hosting refugees are more likely to support the resettlement process.

In sum, our results suggest that the way forward resembles a *saddle path*: a more controlled and scaled-down process, which allows for more gradual contact between locals and refugees, will likely get sufficient support and endorsement from local leaders. As municipalities begin to accept host sites, the sustained yet proportional (and, hence, perceived as ‘fair’) presence of refugees in the community will further dampen, or at the very least will

not exacerbate (see Fig. 3), reactions to the continuation of the resettlement process. Our findings, therefore, have clear implications for addressing the pressing humanitarian concerns for overcrowded sites in Europe (e.g. Mineo, Sicily) and elsewhere.

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A SURVEY PROCEDURE AND SAMPLING PROCESS

A.1 Fieldwork

Prior to launching the survey, we conducted six months of fieldwork including meetings with government officials (local and national), workers in health and education, and citizens. Furthermore, we visited refugee reception and host sites throughout Greece and interviewed members of the administrative staff as well as citizens residing nearby to help perfect our survey materials. Before being fielded, the instrument of the survey was approved by the Harvard IRB . We note that we use the term refugees for all persons being hosted in refugee reception and host sites during or after their asylum application process.

A.2 Recruitment, Survey distribution and Response rates

Interaction with research participants was through a Qualtrics survey distributed by electronic invitation. Invitations were sent with the help of the research organization Public Opinion Research Unit at the University of Macedonia (PORU UoM), which has performed a large number of prior surveys in Greece on similar topics. Working from publicly available contact information for all of Greece’s 332 municipalities, we contacted 4,463 council members with invitations. Participants were able to access the survey from a link, and if they expressed interest in the research by clicking the link, a written copy of the consent form was made available to the prospective participant. If consent was given, the survey proceeded. The anticipated completion time for this survey was 30-35 minutes. Also, we should note that the survey did not involve the use of deception or false information.

In the first round, 41.71% of invitations were opened and 10.22% clicked to proceed to the research. There were then two reminder rounds, which were accompanied by reminder phone calls to all municipalities (49.47% opened and 8.12% clicked and 25% opened and 5.76% clicked in these two subsequent rounds). To put this in perspective, according to PORU UoM, the average campaign statistics on the category of “Education Training” are 23.43% opens and 2.90% clicks, while in the “Government” category are 28.77% opens and 3.99% clicks.

Our response rate is 44.8%, which is very good compared to other comparative political elite surveys, (see for example [Deschouwer and Depauw 2014](#)) with reported response rates varying between 13% (France) and 43% (Netherlands) with an average response rate of 25%.³

³We calculate the Response Rate based on the following formula: $\text{Response Rate} = I / ((I+P)+(R+NC+O)+(UH+UO))$ where I=Complete Interviews, P=Partial Interviews, R=Refusal and break off, NC=Non-Contact, O=Other, UH=Unknown Household and UO=Unknown other. To calculate the outcome rates based on AAPOR’s Standard Definitions, Version 9 (2016) and e , which is

At the end of the campaign, 624 city council members completed the survey with 586 out of them completing at least one task of the conjoint experiment.

A.3 Sample representativeness

The localities represented by city council members in our sample cover a large portion of Greece. Specifically, we have respondents from 194 municipalities (60% of Greek municipalities), covering 100% of the 52 Greek prefectures and 100% of the 13 Greek peripheries. We used quota sampling based on three characteristics: gender, periphery and party affiliation. Gender-wise, we perfectly matched the actual distribution of elected councilors following the last election of 2019 (81% men to 19% women) with a ratio of 8:2. In terms of administrative/geographical distribution, we got responses from councilors from all the 13 peripheries of Greece. Our sample of councilors is proportional to the numbers of elected council members across each of the 13 peripheries.⁴ Regarding party affiliation, 55% of our respondents did not share their party affiliation. From those who indicated their affiliation, we had respondents from all eight parties represented in municipal councils across Greece and in proportions that closely match the actual distribution of seats in the municipal council across parties –the distribution of seats is not proportional to the actual distribution of vote-shares as Greece applies a party list formula that is distorting.

the estimated proportion of cases of unknown eligibility that are eligible. This estimate is based on the proportion of eligible units among all units in the sample for which a definitive determination of status was obtained (a conservative estimate). For more, see AAPOR’s 2009 Eligibility Estimates. We use the AAPOR Outcome Rate Calculator for Internet/ specifically named persons, Version 4.1 (web), March 2018.

⁴There are two peripheries (Thessaly and Peloponnese) where we the number of councilors we managed to recruit was slightly below the proportional threshold but the differences were marginal.

B THE CONJOINT EXPERIMENT

B.1 The survey instrument

We present here some key elements of our survey questionnaire. The full questionnaire instrument is included in the PAP and is available online.

Before taking the conjoint, respondents were prompted with the following text:

“Now we would like you to assess below some aspects of the possible scenarios where your municipality is in a position of deciding on the characteristics of the asylum-seeker host site (camp) and the areas that possible additional funds can be used. We present below two hypothetical proposals (A and B) which have been submitted for approval to the city council. Each of the proposal consists of 5 characteristics. Please consider each proposal (A and B) in its entirety. You will now be invited to choose between the two proposals. We will present you three such pairs.”

Each task consisted of a comparison between two randomly generated profiles (policy proposals). Each profile/proposal was populated with a *randomly assigned* value (drawn from the list below) for each one of its five attributes. The five attributes and the possible values that they could take were as follows:

1. Type of public goods provision

- More infrastructure to the municipality
- Hire more teachers and doctors
- Hire more municipal employees

2. Size of the host site for asylum-seekers

- 1% of local population
- Less than 1% of local population
- More than 1% of local population

3. Who is in charge of day-to-day administration of the camp

- National Government
- International Organizations (UNHCR, IOM)

- Local Government
- Army
- Church

4. Proximity of the camp to the urban center

- In the centre
- 30-minute walk or less from the center
- More than a 30-minute walk from the center

5. Type of site

- Fully open (site residents have unrestricted mobility)
- Partially open (site residents must check in and out before leaving)
- Closed (exit allowed by permission of authorities only for a specified amount of time)

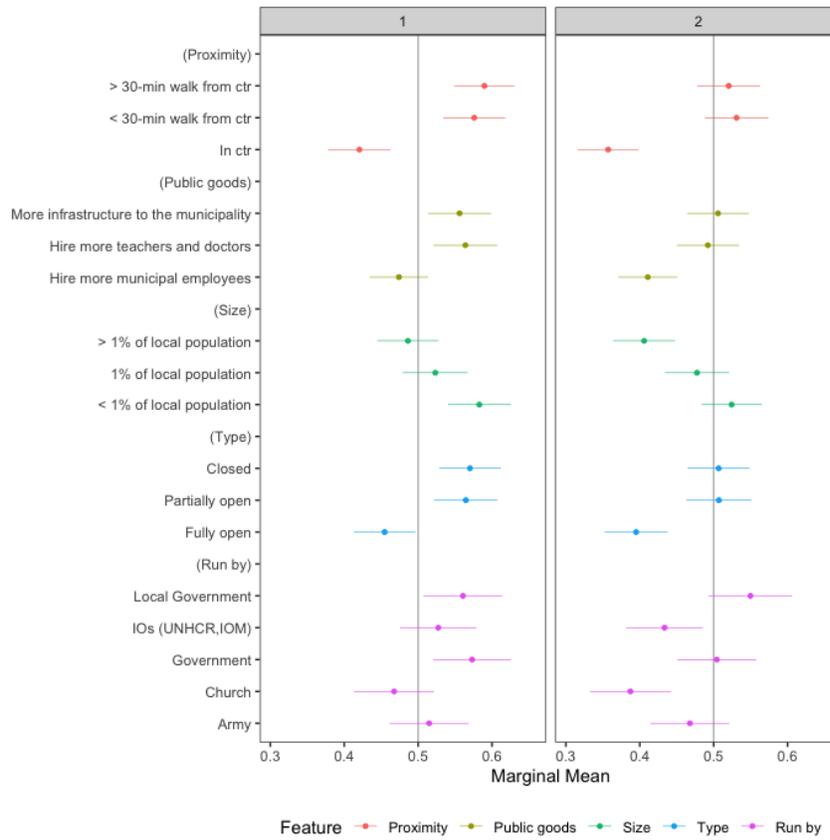
B.2 Further details to the conjoint design

In total, we had (2 profiles \times 3 tasks \times 586 respondents) 3,516 profiles shown. Given the number of attributes (five) and the possible levels/values for each one, we had a total of 405 unique profile combinations. This implies that each of these 405 *unique* profiles was shown (on average) about 8-9 times. The frequencies of the randomly displayed attribute levels, for each of the five attributes, are as follows (percentages in parentheses):

- *Proximity of the camp to the urban center:* (i) in the center: 1152 (32.9%) (ii) 30-min walk or less from center: 1157 (33%) (iii) more than 30-min walk from center: 1195 (34.1%)
- *Type of public goods provision:* (i) hire more municipal employees: 1190 (34%) (ii) hire more teachers and doctors: 1133 (32.3%) (iii) more infrastructure to municipality: 1181 (33.7%)
- *Size of the host site:* (i) less than 1% of local population: 1189 (33.9%) (ii) 1% of local population: 1117 (31.9%) (iii) more than 1% of local population: 1198 (34.2%)
- *Type of site:* (i) fully open: 1167 (33.3%) (ii) partially open: 1140 (32.6%) (iii) closed: 1197 (34.1%)

- *Who is in charge of day-to-day administration:* (i) army: 714 (20.4%) (ii) church: 641 (18.3%) (iii) national government: 716 (20.4%) (iv) international organizations (UNHCR, EU): 726 (20.7%) (v) local government: 707 (20.2%)

We conducted a balance test where rather than comparing outcomes across feature levels, we compared covariates across feature levels. We did not detect any imbalances for any of the covariates we use in the analysis. Table B1 reports those regression results. We also examined whether there is any preference for the left-hand or right-hand profile in our pair design. We did not observe any overall trends or any significant imbalances after performing this diagnostic test. In Fig. B1 we show those results.



Note: The plot illustrates the marginal means for each attribute value (point estimates and 95% CIs). These values can be interpreted as the average probability that a councilor will support each proposal with a given attribute level, marginalized over all other attribute values. SE's are clustered by respondent. N= 3,516; unique N = 586.

Figure B1: Aggregate marginal means showing left (1) - right (2) diagnostics

Table B1: Balance test (Covariates as dependent variables)

	SC threat	E threat	Ideology	Values	Camp
(Intercept)	0.20*	0.48*	4.91*	0.40*	0.18*
	[0.15; 0.25]	[0.30; 0.66]	[4.55; 5.28]	[0.27; 0.53]	[0.13; 0.24]
< 30-min walk from ctr	0.02	0.03	-0.06	-0.06	0.01
	[-0.01; 0.05]	[-0.06; 0.11]	[-0.26; 0.14]	[-0.12; 0.01]	[-0.02; 0.04]
> 30-min walk from ctr	0.01	0.03	0.08	-0.03	0.02
	[-0.02; 0.03]	[-0.05; 0.11]	[-0.11; 0.27]	[-0.08; 0.03]	[-0.02; 0.05]
Hire more teachers and doctors	0.00	0.02	-0.07	-0.06*	0.01
	[-0.02; 0.03]	[-0.06; 0.09]	[-0.26; 0.12]	[-0.13; -0.00]	[-0.03; 0.04]
More infrastructure	-0.00	-0.05	0.10	-0.03	-0.00
	[-0.04; 0.03]	[-0.14; 0.04]	[-0.09; 0.29]	[-0.07; 0.01]	[-0.04; 0.03]
1% of local population	-0.01	-0.03	-0.15	0.00	-0.02
	[-0.04; 0.01]	[-0.11; 0.05]	[-0.35; 0.06]	[-0.07; 0.08]	[-0.06; 0.01]
> 1% of local population	0.00	-0.05	-0.14	-0.04	-0.01
	[-0.03; 0.04]	[-0.13; 0.03]	[-0.36; 0.08]	[-0.09; 0.00]	[-0.05; 0.02]
Partially open	0.03	-0.04	0.17	-0.03	-0.00
	[-0.01; 0.07]	[-0.15; 0.08]	[-0.05; 0.39]	[-0.06; 0.00]	[-0.03; 0.03]
Closed	0.01	-0.04	0.13	0.01	0.01
	[-0.02; 0.05]	[-0.13; 0.05]	[-0.08; 0.35]	[-0.06; 0.07]	[-0.02; 0.04]
Church	-0.00	-0.06	0.18	0.01	0.02
	[-0.05; 0.04]	[-0.18; 0.06]	[-0.11; 0.46]	[-0.05; 0.07]	[-0.02; 0.06]
Government	0.01	-0.08	0.13	-0.02	0.03
	[-0.04; 0.05]	[-0.21; 0.04]	[-0.13; 0.39]	[-0.08; 0.05]	[-0.02; 0.07]
IOs (UNHCR,IOM)	0.00	-0.05	0.20	0.02	0.03
	[-0.04; 0.05]	[-0.17; 0.07]	[-0.06; 0.46]	[-0.04; 0.09]	[-0.01; 0.07]
Local Government	0.03	-0.05	-0.10	0.03	0.00
	[-0.04; 0.09]	[-0.18; 0.08]	[-0.39; 0.18]	[-0.04; 0.10]	[-0.04; 0.05]
R ²	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00
Adj. R ²	-0.00	-0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.00
Num. obs.	3504	3504	3294	3462	3504
RMSE	0.58	1.17	2.49	0.70	0.40
N Clusters	584	584	549	577	584

* Null hypothesis value outside the confidence interval.

B.3 Randomization and outcome variables

Each respondent received three pairs of proposals with randomly assigned attribute values. We also randomized the attribute order (between respondents). Two questions were asked for each pair. The first question asked respondents to rate on a Likert scale how likely it would be for them to vote for each of the two hypothetical proposals.

Specifically, the question was:

“On a scale from 0 to 7, where 0 indicates that you definitely will not vote for that proposal and 7 indicates that you will definitely vote for that proposal, how likely is it for you to vote for it?”

The second question (binary choice) asked them to choose between the two hypothetical proposals:

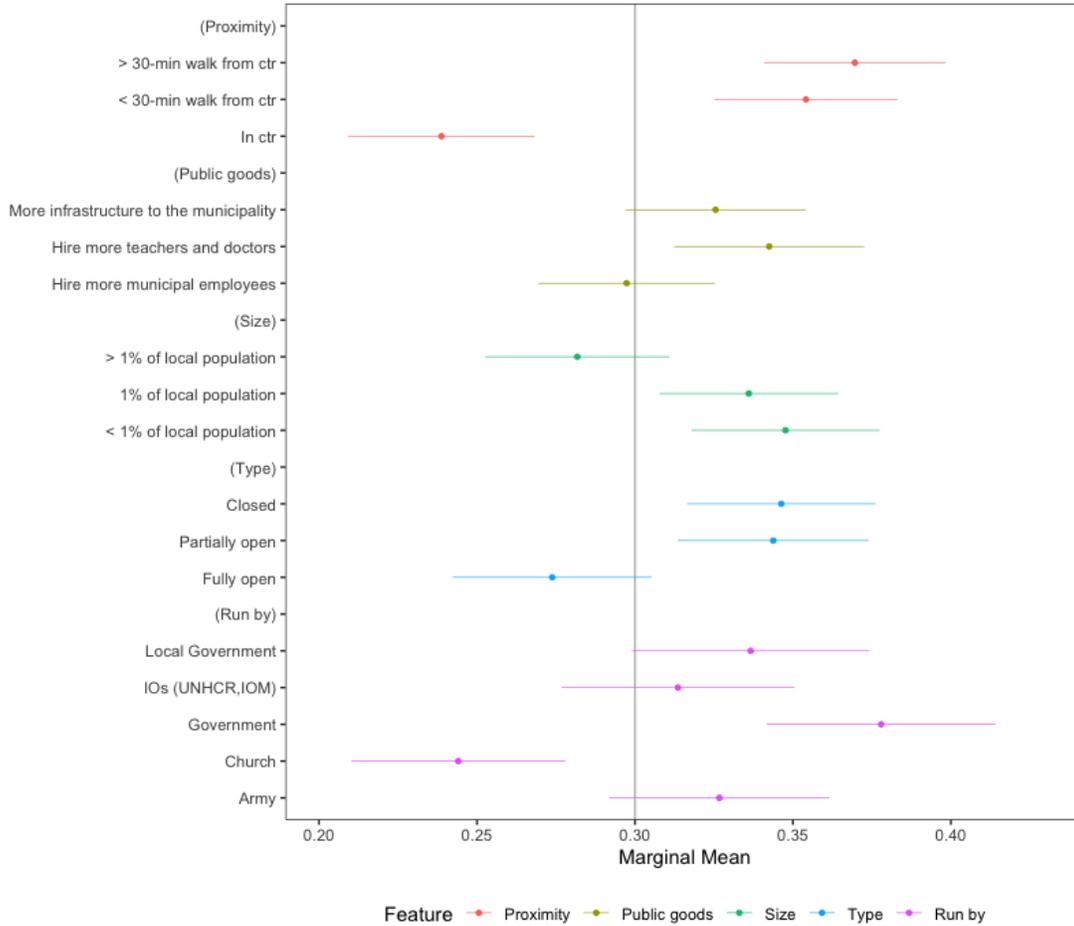
“Now, imagine if you had to choose between these two proposals, which one of two would you vote for if it reached the municipal council?”

We report forced choice results in the main text because we would like to know councillors’ vote (Yes or No), should a similar proposal reach the floor of a municipal council (for a detailed presentation of the conjoint experiment methodology, see [Hainmueller et al. 2014](#)). Nevertheless, we get substantively identical results when using the Likert scale-based variable. [Fig. B2](#) displays those results (with outcome being rescaled to vary between 0 and 1 for ease of interpretation).

B.4 Methodology

We estimated average marginal component effects (for a discussion of AMCEs, see [Hainmueller et al. 2014](#); [Abramson et al. 2019](#)) and marginal means (see, [Leeper et al. 2020](#)) to analyze the data recorded in the three choice tasks.⁵ We display marginal means (MMs) in the main text (also see [Tables C3, D6 and D7](#)). We report estimated average marginal component effects in [Tables C2, D4 and D5](#). In our forced choice conjoint design with two policy profiles per choice task, MMs represent the the average probability that a councilor will support each proposal with a given attribute level, marginalized over all other attribute values. The AMCE coefficients represent the average effect of a change from the omitted attribute level on the probability of a proposal being chosen. We report MMs and differences

⁵[Abramson et al. \(2019\)](#) make a critique of common practices employed in conjoint experiments using AMCEs to interpret majority vote shares. [Bansak et al. \(2020\)](#) differentiate the interpretation of effects of attributes on vote shares from the fraction of voters who prefer a specific attribute. [Leeper et al. \(2020\)](#) recommend focusing on marginal means because it conveys the absolute level of favorability of respondents toward all levels of each proposal attribute.



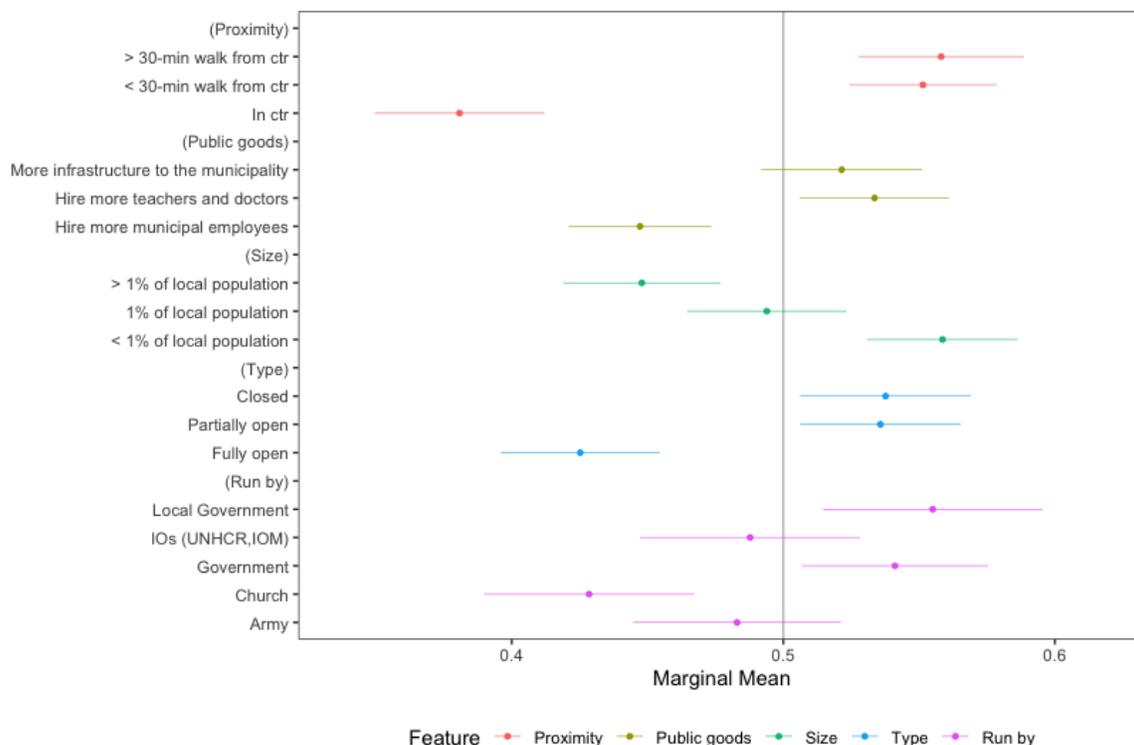
Note: The plot illustrates the marginal means for each attribute value (point estimates and 95% CIs). These values can be interpreted as the average probability that a councillor will support each proposal with a given attribute level, marginalized over all other attribute values. Likert scale outcome is rescaled to vary between 0 and 1 for ease of interpretation. SE's are clustered by respondent. N= 3,516; unique N = 586.

Figure B2: Aggregate marginal means with Likert scale outcome

in MMs in the main text so as to be able to show inferences on the absolute preference. We also employ this approach to demonstrate respondents' preferences in subgroups (for a detailed presentation of the methods, see [Leeper et al. 2020](#)). We report AMCEs in sections [C](#) and [D](#).

B.5 Robustness to the analysis

In additional specifications, we used (i) municipality fixed effects (see [Table C2](#) column 3) and (ii) (manually targeted) entropy balancing weights (see [Table C2](#) column 2 and [Fig. B3](#)) to further ensure that our estimates are representative of the councillor population (for a detailed presentation of the methods, see [Hainmueller and Xu 2013](#)). Specifically, we used



Note: The plot illustrates the marginal means for each attribute value (point estimates and 95% CIs). These values can be interpreted as the average probability that a councillor will support each proposal with a given attribute level, marginalized over all other attribute values. SE's are clustered by respondent. N= 3,516; unique N = 586.

Figure B3: Aggregate marginal means with entropy balancing weights

entropy balancing to re-weight our survey sample to known characteristics of the Greek councillor population based on gender and number of councillors in each municipality. Our results remain robust in both specifications.

B.6 Variables

In addition to the aggregate results, we reported subgroup analyses in the main text. In order to construct these variables, we created three indices using polychoric principle component analysis (PCA): (i) perceived socio-cultural threat, (ii) perceived economic threat and (iii) ethnocentric values. We normalized these variables to vary between 0 and 10. For the purposes of the analysis, we divided these indices by median values and assigned them to the categories of 'low' and 'high' for each index. We also used 'ideology' and 'presence of an active camp' in the subgroup analysis.

Perceived socio-cultural threat

To form an index of perceived socio-cultural threat, we used variables measuring respondents' perceptions on how refugees' presence affects tradition, religion, terror, crime, riots and language in the municipality. In particular, we used the following statements with a 5-scale outcome ranging from completely agree to completely disagree:

- Asylum seekers threaten our community because they don't follow our customs and traditions.
- Asylum seekers threaten our community because they are not Christians.
- Asylum seekers threaten our community because they do not speak our language.
- The presence of an asylum-seeker host site in our municipality threatens our municipality by increasing the risk of terrorism.
- The presence of an asylum-seeker host site in our municipality threatens our municipality by increasing crime.

Perceived economic threat

To create an index of perceived economic threat, we used variables measuring perceptions of how refugees' presence affects common resources and jobs available. In particular we used information from the following questions with a 5-scale outcome ranging from completely agree to completely disagree:

- Asylum seekers threaten our municipality by taking jobs from Greeks.
- Asylum seekers are a burden on the municipal budget and take up resources that are intended for locals.

Ethnocentric values

We created an index of ethnocentric values based on how important respondents thought one (or all) of the following elements are for someone to be considered a "truly Greek" with a 5-scale outcome ranging from completely agree to completely disagree (question adapted from [Poushter and Fetterolf 2019](#)):

- Being able to speak the Greek language
- Sharing Greek customs and traditions

- Having been born in Greece
- Being an Orthodox Christian

Ideology

We performed subgroup analysis by political ideology. To measure ideology, we asked "In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on the following scale?" and provided a scale ranging from 0 (left) to 10 (right). For the purposes of the analysis, we divided respondents by the mid-value.

Presence of an active camp

During our fieldwork, we collected data on refugee reception centers and host sites from each municipality. To measure the effect of a presence of an active camp on policy preferences, we created a binary variable where 1 indicates that there is a refugee reception and host site in the relevant municipality with a capacity of *at least 100* people, and 0 otherwise (there are 38 such sites in Greece distributed across 36 municipalities; the number of councilors in our sample, representing 27 out of these 36 municipalities, is 97 (or 16.6% of total respondents)).

C AGGREGATE RESULTS

Tables C2 and C3 report aggregate average marginal component effects (AMCEs) and aggregate marginal means (MMs), respectively. In AMCEs, the omitted categories on each attribute are the following: (1) in the center, (2) hire more municipal employees, (3) less than 1% of local population, (4) fully open and (5) army.

Table C2: Aggregate average marginal component effects (AMCEs)

	Main model (1)	Weighted model (2)	Municipality FE model (3)
< 30-min walk from ctr	0.16*	0.17*	0.17*
	[0.12; 0.21]	[0.12; 0.22]	[0.13; 0.21]
> 30-min walk from ctr	0.17*	0.18*	0.17*
	[0.12; 0.21]	[0.12; 0.23]	[0.13; 0.22]
Hire more teachers and doctors	0.08*	0.08*	0.09*
	[0.04; 0.12]	[0.04; 0.13]	[0.05; 0.13]
More infrastructure to the municipality	0.09*	0.08*	0.09*
	[0.05; 0.13]	[0.03; 0.12]	[0.05; 0.14]
1% of local population	-0.05*	-0.06*	-0.05*
	[-0.09; -0.01]	[-0.11; -0.01]	[-0.09; -0.01]
> 1% of local population	-0.11*	-0.11*	-0.11*
	[-0.15; -0.07]	[-0.16; -0.06]	[-0.15; -0.07]
Partially open	0.11*	0.11*	0.12*
	[0.07; 0.15]	[0.06; 0.16]	[0.08; 0.16]
Closed	0.12*	0.12*	0.12*
	[0.07; 0.16]	[0.06; 0.17]	[0.08; 0.17]
Church	-0.07*	-0.05	-0.07*
	[-0.12; -0.02]	[-0.11; 0.00]	[-0.13; -0.02]
Government	0.04	0.05	0.04
	[-0.01; 0.09]	[-0.01; 0.10]	[-0.01; 0.10]
IOs (UNHCR,IOM)	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02
	[-0.08; 0.03]	[-0.08; 0.05]	[-0.08; 0.03]
Local Government	0.06*	0.07*	0.06*
	[0.00; 0.11]	[0.00; 0.13]	[0.00; 0.12]
R ²	0.06	0.06	0.06
Adj. R ²	0.05	0.06	0.00
Num. obs.	3496	3496	3484
RMSE	0.49	0.49	0.50
N Clusters	586	586	584

Note: * Null hypothesis value outside the confidence interval. Weights in model 2 were computed using manually targeted entropy balancing.

Table C3: Aggregate marginal means (MMs)

	MMs and SEs	z-score
In ctr	0.388 (0.012)	30,36
<30-min walk from ctr	0.553 (0.011)	46,58
>30-min walk from ctr	0.555 (0.011)	47,27
More municipal employees	0.443 (0.011)	38,34
More teachers and doctors	0.527 (0.012)	42,14
Infrastructure to the municipality	0.530 (0.012)	42,38
<1% of local population	0.552 (0.011)	46,59
1% of local population	0.500 (0.012)	39,61
>1% of local population	0.447 (0.012)	36,53
Fully open	0.425 (0.012)	33,87
Partially open	0.535 (0.012)	43,02
Closed	0.538 (0.012)	42,44
Army	0.492 (0.016)	29,11
Church	0.427 (0.017)	23,83
Government	0.539 (0.016)	33,57
IOs (UNHCR,IOM)	0.478 (0.017)	27,26
Local Government	0.555 (0.017)	32,05

Note: SE's in parentheses are clustered by respondent. N= 3,516; unique N = 586.

D SUBGROUP RESULTS

Table D4 reports average marginal component effects (AMCEs) for subgroups of respondent based on their perceived sociocultural threat, perceived economic threat, ethnocentric values and political orientation (ideology). Table D5 displays average marginal component effects dividing respondents by the presence of an active host site in their municipality. Tables D6 and D7 shows marginal means for the same subgroups, respectively.

Table D4: Subgroup AMCEs

	Sociocultural threat-low	Sociocultural threat-high	Economic threat-low	Economic threat-high	Values-low	Values-high	Ideology-left	Ideology-right
(Intercept)	0.34* [0.26; 0.42]	0.28* [0.20; 0.36]	0.31* [0.23; 0.39]	0.31* [0.23; 0.39]	0.33* [0.25; 0.42]	0.28* [0.20; 0.36]	0.30* [0.20; 0.41]	0.31* [0.24; 0.38]
< 30-min walk from ctr	0.19* [0.13; 0.25]	0.14* [0.08; 0.20]	0.18* [0.12; 0.24]	0.14* [0.08; 0.20]	0.16* [0.10; 0.22]	0.16* [0.11; 0.22]	0.17* [0.10; 0.25]	0.16* [0.11; 0.22]
> 30-min walk from ctr	0.18* [0.12; 0.25]	0.15* [0.09; 0.21]	0.15* [0.09; 0.21]	0.18* [0.12; 0.24]	0.13* [0.07; 0.19]	0.21* [0.15; 0.26]	0.15* [0.07; 0.23]	0.18* [0.12; 0.23]
Hire more teachers and doctors	0.04 [-0.01; 0.10]	0.12* [0.06; 0.17]	0.08* [0.03; 0.14]	0.07* [0.02; 0.13]	0.08* [0.03; 0.13]	0.08* [0.02; 0.14]	0.09* [0.02; 0.17]	0.07* [0.02; 0.12]
More infrastructure	0.08* [0.02; 0.14]	0.10* [0.04; 0.15]	0.10* [0.04; 0.16]	0.08* [0.02; 0.13]	0.13* [0.06; 0.19]	0.05 [-0.00; 0.11]	0.09* [0.02; 0.16]	0.08* [0.03; 0.13]
1% of local population	-0.06 [-0.11; 0.00]	-0.05 [-0.10; 0.01]	-0.03 [-0.08; 0.03]	-0.07* [-0.13; -0.01]	-0.05 [-0.11; 0.00]	-0.04 [-0.10; 0.01]	-0.05 [-0.13; 0.02]	-0.05* [-0.10; -0.00]
> 1% of local population	-0.09* [-0.15; -0.03]	-0.12* [-0.18; -0.07]	-0.06* [-0.12; -0.00]	-0.16* [-0.21; -0.10]	-0.08* [0.02; 0.13]	-0.14* [-0.19; -0.08]	-0.07 [-0.14; 0.00]	-0.14* [-0.19; -0.09]
Partially open	0.06* [0.00; 0.12]	0.16* [0.10; 0.21]	0.06* [0.00; 0.12]	0.18* [0.12; 0.24]	0.07* [0.02; 0.13]	0.15* [0.09; 0.21]	0.06 [-0.01; 0.13]	0.15* [0.09; 0.20]
Closed	-0.01 [-0.07; 0.05]	0.24* [0.18; 0.29]	0.02 [-0.04; 0.08]	0.23* [0.17; 0.29]	0.03 [-0.03; 0.09]	0.20* [0.14; 0.26]	-0.03 [-0.10; 0.05]	0.19* [0.14; 0.25]
Church	-0.09* [-0.17; -0.02]	-0.05 [-0.13; 0.02]	-0.06 [-0.13; 0.01]	-0.09* [-0.16; -0.01]	-0.11* [-0.19; -0.04]	-0.03 [-0.10; 0.04]	-0.03 [-0.12; 0.06]	-0.08* [-0.15; -0.01]
Government	0.02 [-0.05; 0.09]	0.05 [-0.02; 0.12]	0.05 [-0.02; 0.11]	0.02 [-0.06; 0.09]	0.06 [-0.01; 0.13]	0.01 [-0.07; 0.08]	0.09* [0.01; 0.17]	0.01 [-0.06; 0.07]
IOs (UNHCR,IOM)	0.03 [-0.04; 0.11]	-0.08* [-0.15; -0.00]	0.01 [-0.06; 0.08]	-0.07 [-0.14; 0.01]	-0.01 [-0.09; 0.07]	-0.04 [-0.11; 0.04]	0.07 [-0.03; 0.16]	-0.07* [-0.14; -0.00]
Local Government	0.13* [0.06; 0.20]	-0.02 [-0.10; 0.06]	0.10* [0.03; 0.17]	-0.01 [-0.09; 0.07]	0.09* [0.01; 0.16]	0.02 [-0.06; 0.09]	0.19* [0.10; 0.27]	0.01 [-0.07; 0.08]
R ²	0.06	0.09	0.05	0.09	0.06	0.08	0.07	0.07
Adj. R ²	0.06	0.08	0.04	0.09	0.05	0.08	0.06	0.07
Num. obs.	1742	1742	1894	1590	1716	1746	1170	2124
RMSE	0.49	0.48	0.49	0.48	0.49	0.48	0.49	0.48
N Clusters	291	293	316	268	286	291	195	354

Note: * Null hypothesis value outside the confidence interval.

Table D5: Active host site AMCEs

	Active host site	No host site
(Intercept)	0.29*	0.31*
	[0.15; 0.42]	[0.25; 0.38]
< 30-min walk from ctr	0.12*	0.17*
	[0.04; 0.21]	[0.13; 0.22]
> 30-min walk from ctr	0.17*	0.17*
	[0.07; 0.26]	[0.12; 0.21]
Hire more teachers and doctors	0.08	0.08*
	[−0.00; 0.17]	[0.04; 0.13]
More infrastructure to the municipality	0.09	0.09*
	[−0.00; 0.19]	[0.04; 0.13]
1% of local population	−0.01	−0.06*
	[−0.11; 0.08]	[−0.10; −0.01]
> 1% of local population	−0.06	−0.12*
	[−0.16; 0.04]	[−0.16; −0.07]
Partially open	0.13*	0.11*
	[0.04; 0.22]	[0.06; 0.15]
Closed	0.14*	0.11*
	[0.04; 0.23]	[0.06; 0.16]
Church	−0.11	−0.06*
	[−0.23; 0.01]	[−0.12; −0.00]
Government	0.04	0.04
	[−0.07; 0.16]	[−0.02; 0.09]
IOs (UNHCR,IOM)	−0.07	−0.01
	[−0.19; 0.06]	[−0.08; 0.05]
Local Government	0.08	0.05
	[−0.05; 0.21]	[−0.01; 0.11]
R ²	0.06	0.06
Adj. R ²	0.04	0.05
Num. obs.	706	2778
RMSE	0.49	0.49
N Clusters	119	465

*Note:** Null hypothesis value outside the confidence interval.

Table D6: Subgroup marginal means (MMs)

MMs and SEs								
Level	Sociocultural threat		Economic threat		Ethnocentric values		Ideology	
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	Right	Left
Fully open	0.370 (0.017)	0.479 (0.017)	0.363 (0.018)	0.478 (0.017)	0.383 (0.017)	0.470 (0.017)	0.390 (0.016)	0.491 (0.022)
Partially open	0.522 (0.017)	0.549 (0.017)	0.542 (0.018)	0.530 (0.017)	0.531 (0.018)	0.537 (0.017)	0.528 (0.015)	0.549 (0.020)
Closed	0.602 (0.017)	0.474 (0.018)	0.593 (0.018)	0.493 (0.017)	0.587 (0.017)	0.493 (0.018)	0.579 (0.015)	0.464 (0.021)
Army	0.522 (0.025)	0.467 (0.022)	0.524 (0.025)	0.469 (0.022)	0.497 (0.024)	0.490 (0.023)	0.519 (0.022)	0.437 (0.022)
Church	0.462 (0.024)	0.387 (0.025)	0.434 (0.025)	0.419 (0.025)	0.474 (0.024)	0.375 (0.025)	0.446 (0.022)	0.399 (0.027)
Government	0.578 (0.022)	0.500 (0.023)	0.550 (0.025)	0.528 (0.020)	0.520 (0.023)	0.555 (0.022)	0.535 (0.019)	0.535 (0.031)
IOs (UNHCR,IOM)	0.446 (0.023)	0.514 (0.025)	0.470 (0.024)	0.488 (0.024)	0.479 (0.023)	0.480 (0.026)	0.470 (0.022)	0.494 (0.029)
Local Government	0.494 (0.025)	0.617 (0.023)	0.524 (0.027)	0.581 (0.022)	0.530 (0.025)	0.581 (0.024)	0.525 (0.022)	0.629 (0.027)

Note: Std. errors in parentheses are clustered by respondent. N= 3,516; unique N = 586.

Table D7: Active camp marginal means (MMs)

MMs and SEs		
Level	Active camp	
	No	Yes
<1% of local population	0.560 (0.013)	0.522 (0.026)
1% of local population	0.501 (0.013)	0.505 (0.031)
>1% of local population	0.441 (0.013)	0.473 (0.029)

Note: SE's in parentheses are clustered by respondent. N= 3,516; unique N = 586.