

## Authors

Ala' Alrababa'h  
Stanford University

Daniel Masterson  
University of California, Santa Barbara

Marine Casalis  
Immigration Policy Lab

Dominik Hangartner  
Immigration Policy Lab

Jeremy Weinstein  
Stanford University

## The Dynamics of Refugee Return: Syrian Refugees and Their Migration Intentions \*

Ala' Alrababa'h<sup>1,2</sup>, Daniel Masterson<sup>2,3</sup>, Marine Casalis<sup>2</sup>,  
Dominik Hangartner<sup>2,4,5</sup>, Jeremy Weinstein<sup>1,2</sup>

Word Count: 9,934

<sup>1</sup>Department of Political Science, Stanford University

<sup>2</sup>Immigration Policy Lab, Stanford University and ETH Zurich

<sup>3</sup>Department of Political Science, University of California, Santa Barbara

<sup>4</sup>Center for International and Comparative Studies, ETH Zurich

<sup>5</sup>Department of Government, London School of Economics and Political Science

August 18, 2021

\*The authors would like to thank Chire Adida, Stathis Kalyvas, Kelsey Norman, Stephanie Schwartz, Alexandra Siegel and workshop participants at the American University in Beirut, APSA 2019 and 2020, CalWEEPS III, EGAP 2018, and MESA 2018. We thank Nasser Yassin and AUR's Issam Fares Institute for hosting a research design workshop and providing input on several aspects of the research. We are grateful to Orlan and Amel for their support with several parts of the project and to CARE for sharing some of their data on the return intentions of Syrians in Jordan with us. We also thank staff at Hameh & Zeitounch, SMEX, IRC, DDP, and Human Rights Watch. Funding for this project was provided by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office awarded through Innovation for Poverty Action's Peace & Recovery Program, the Swiss Network for International Studies, the Leonhardine Trust, a consortium of the Wellcome Trust, the Riksbankens Jubileumfond, the Volkswagen Stiftung, and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. All analyses, unless otherwise noted, were pre-specified in EGAP registration 20190814AB. This project was reviewed and approved by the Stanford Human Subjects Committee under IRB protocol 49367 and by the Ethics Committee of ETH Zurich.

# The Dynamics of Refugee Return: Syrian Refugees and Their Migration Intentions

In order to understand how refugee crises end we require an understanding of when and why refugees return home. We study the drivers of refugees' decision-making using original observational and experimental data from a representative sample of 3,003 Syrian refugees in Lebanon. We find that conditions in a refugee's home country are the primary drivers of

return intentions. Refugees' decisions are influenced primarily by safety and security in their place of origin, their economic prospects, and the availability of public services. Personal networks and confidence in information are also important. By contrast, the conditions in refugee-hosting countries—so-called “push” factors—play a much smaller role. Even in the face of hostility and poor living conditions, refugees are unlikely to return unless the situation at home improves significantly. In addition to the data from Lebanon, we explore the generality of our findings using a second original survey of Syrian refugees in Jordan.

November 09, 2021