

Understanding Syrian Refugee Wellbeing: Longitudinal insights from a panel study in Jordan

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KEY FINDINGS

- Most Syrian refugees do not plan to return home within the next two years.
- 48% of Syrian children are reported to have Jordanian friends.
- Half of all Syrian refugees experience symptoms of depression.

Background

The world faces the highest levels of displacement in recorded history, with over 100 million people displaced globally. Protracted conflicts have become the norm, with 80% of affected people experiencing displacement for at least five years (UNHCR 2022). Host communities struggle under the increased strain on resources and many are unable to meet the growing needs of displaced communities. But understanding how to best allocate scarce resources and support vulnerable people is challenging given the lack of longitudinal data.

Building a representative panel of Syrian refugees in Jordan will contribute vital evidence that addresses key policy questions. The Jordanian context offers a unique opportunity to understand a refugee population and investigate the ways that different subgroups experience displacement and hosting policies.

POLICY QUESTIONS

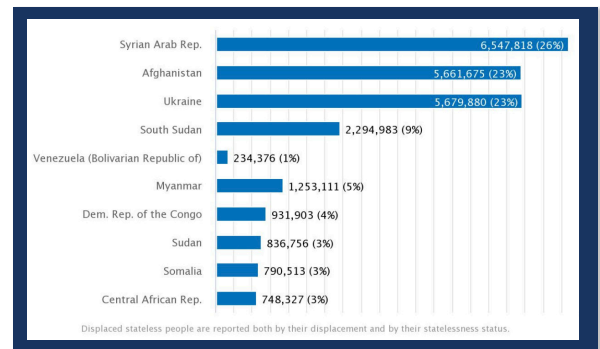
What factors (and characteristics) affect refugee flows and decisions about when to leave and where to go?

Which programs and policies most effectively drive better mental health outcomes for forcibly displaced populations?

What are the spillover effects of programs that target hosts or forcibly displaced people on one another?

What are the effects of living in camps versus in the local communities on refugee welfare?

Displaced Individuals by Country of Origin, 2022



UNHCR REFUGEE DATA FINDER

Design

The **Syrian Refugee Life Study (S-RLS)** is among the first systematic efforts to survey a large, representative refugee sample (using the universe of UNHCR-registered refugees) and follow that sample over an extended period, providing unique insights about how important outcomes may change over time. The panel sample comprises 2,500 Syrian households in Jordan, including both those residing in camps and settled in host communities. The survey collects detailed information on economic outcomes, migration, education, marriage and fertility, health, social attitudes, and preferences. By January 2024, S-RLS will include four full rounds of data and one partial round (affected by COVID-19) that span roughly four years. The four rounds are comprised of two phone surveys and two in-person surveys.

S-RLS will continue to track refugees as they settle in Jordan, return to Syria, or seek asylum in third countries. This panel will become a lasting public good for the research community and provide policymakers with insights into the long-run effects of refugee crisis responses, offering credible evidence for formulating policies in future crises.

Findings

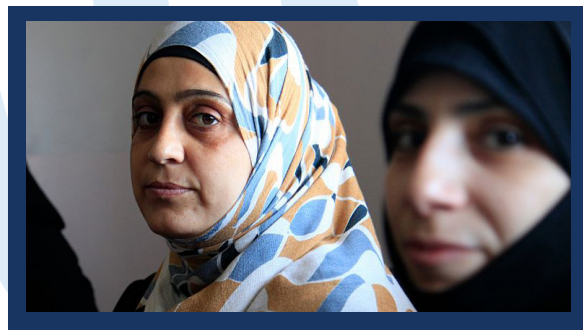
Demographic Outcomes: Syrian headed households are found to be larger than Jordanian headed households. On average, Syrian households have 5.96 members while non-refugee Jordanian households have 4.61 members.

While the Syrian refugee population has a similar gender distribution as the Jordanian population, the refugee population is on average younger than the non-refugee Jordanian population.

Health Outcomes: Data from our most recent survey (2022) indicates that 58% of Syrian refugees in Jordan likely suffer from depression. Furthermore, children of depressed parents are assessed to have worse socio-emotional outcomes than other children on average.

Social Outcomes: The vast majority of S-RLS respondents do not intend to return to Syria before the conflict is resolved (91%), which is something that few believe is likely in the next two years (< 20%). Fifty-seven percent of respondents would like to stay in Jordan after the Syrian conflict ends.

Syrian and Jordanian children are fairly interactive with one another: 48% of Syrian children are said to have Jordanian friends, and 45% share recreational spaces with Jordanian kids.



RUSSELL WATKINS, UK DFID

Do the children in this house have any Jordanian friends?	Percent
Yes	47.87
No	48.74
Do not know / depends	.14
<i>n</i>	2185

Do the children share recreational space with Jordanian children?	Percent
Yes	45.11
No	48.53
Do not know / depends	0.23
<i>n</i>	2127

Documentation & Acknowledgments

All future S-RLS data, code, and materials will be made publicly available on Harvard Dataverse. Funding for this project was provided by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, awarded through Innovation for Poverty Action's Peace & Recovery Program.



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