

# Refugee Settlement and Social Integration: Evidence from Turkey

Thomas Gautier\*

Boston University

September 25, 2020

**Abstract.** How do networks of immigrants influence the social integration of their members into the host community? Using mobile phone data collected from Syrian refugees living in Turkey, I document that refugees tend to make significantly more phone calls with locals as well as other refugees in villages with more refugees. I argue that this relationship is likely causal by using a distance-based instrumental variable strategy. The positive effect of refugee networks on social integration is more important when the concentration of refugees is low, and when the cultural gap between refugees and locals is wider. I argue that my results are consistent with the hypothesis that immigrant networks make it easier for refugees to interact with locals, by sharing information on local norms and creating new opportunities to meet locals. Refugees who do not have access to a large refugee-network find it difficult to identify which locals they should interact with, and will, therefore, be more isolated. My results suggest that countries hosting refugees should make sure that refugees are not physically isolated from individuals with whom they could share their experiences.

---

\* I am grateful to Sam Bazzi, Dilip Mookherjee, Daniele Paserman, and Yuhei Miyauchi for the numerous discussions we had about this work. I am also extremely grateful to the D4R team for sharing the mobile phone data with me. This work greatly benefited from comments made by seminar participants at the Development Reading Group (BU), Friday Lunch (BU), and the NBER-DEV pre-conference meeting. I would finally like to thank Jeremy Schneider for excellent research assistance.