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Public Opposition to Refugee Resettlement: The case of Japan

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Abstract

Ferwerda, Flynn and Horiuchi (2017) showed a not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) attitude toward refugee resettlement among Americans and their responsiveness to threatening media frames. Our study extends their experimental study with a focus on Japan. We conceptualize two types of NIMBY-ism with regard to refugee resettlement within-country and between-country NIMBY-ism and manipulate the proximity to a threat in media frames. The findings suggest that Japanese people are not only prone to free-ride other countries' efforts to address the global refugee crisis, exhibiting a larger sentiment of between-country NIMBY-ism, but also susceptible to threatening frames regardless of whether a threat is directly relevant to Japan. While conscious interactions with foreigners make them less susceptible to those frames, such interactions are rare for most Japanese. These results imply a continued challenge for Japan to accept more refugees, at least in the short term.

Keywords: Refugees, NIMBY, Framing effect, Contact theory, Japan

JEL classification: D72, J15

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1 Introduction

The number of refugees—people who have been forced to leave their country due to civil war, violence, or persecution—is rapidly increasing. According to the UNHCR, more than 65 million people remain to be forcibly displaced from their homes, which is a record high number (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017). World leaders are discussing how to tackle this global refugee crisis, which requires international coordination and collective effort. Nevertheless, many developed countries are still reluctant to accept refugees for resettlement. Such restrictive government policies may be partly attributed to the general public’s prejudice and fear of refugees. In fact, anti-refugee politicians and some news media outlets are increasingly vocal in their attribution of terrorist attacks and other security threats to refugee inflows (Esses, Medianu and Lawson, 2013). This anti-refugee rhetoric by the elite and the media may further deepen the public’s anti-refugee sentiment (Esses, Hamilton and Gaucher, 2017).

A notable example is the United States. On January 27, 2017, President Donald Trump signed the controversial executive order, titled *Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States* (the so-called “travel ban” or “Muslim ban”), to significantly slow and halt refugee resettlement. As the name of this executive order implies, the Trump administration’s preconception is that refugees, particularly Muslim refugees from the Middle East, could be terrorists in disguise. To understand American citizens’ attitudes on this controversial issue, soon after the executive order was signed, Ferwerda, Flynn and Horiuchi (2017) conducted a survey experiment in the U.S., showing Americans’ not-in-my-back-yard (NIMBY) attitudes and their reactions to threatening media frames. Their findings suggest that a NIMBY syndrome is present among American people; namely, they are less supportive of resettlement in their local community than resettlement elsewhere in the nation. Ferwerda, Flynn and Horiuchi also discussed how contact with previously settled refugees could reduce the impact of perceived security threats on attitudes toward refugee resettlement.

Our study extends their study using the case of Japan. Following their research design while using alternative treatments and measures, we investigate three theories concerning public opposition to refugee resettlement: (1) NIMBY-ism, (2) effects of threatening frames, and (3) moderation by contact with foreigners. Specifically, we examine whether public opposition to refugee resettlement becomes stronger as the geographic location of resettlement becomes closer to a respondent’s area of residence; whether opposition to refugee resettlement is stronger when a respondent is exposed to a threatening media frame; and whether the effects of media framing on opposition to refugee resettlement are less pronounced among respondents who have contact with foreigners.

Japan is dramatically different from the U.S., as well as some other developed countries, such as Australia, Canada, France, and Germany, in that Japan maintains a highly homogeneous society, where citizens’ exposure to foreigners, not to mention refugees, is very limited. As a matter of fact, Japan’s refugee policy is the most restrictive among all OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries^[1] While the U.S. admitted more than 20,000 refugees in 2016, Japan admitted only 28^[2] The refugee problem has not been a priority for the Japanese government, and the minimalist response to the issue has predominantly been to provide only financial support (Yamagata, 2017)^[3] For example, at the U.N. general assembly held in September 2015, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledged to provide 810 million dollars to the Middle-Eastern countries for assistance of Syrian and Iraqi refugees, but he also told reporters that there were many other things the Japanese government should work on to solve domestic issues before accepting refugees. His comments

¹Japan interprets the U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees very strictly, and rejects asylum seekers in the screening process unless they can prove that they are personally targeted and persecuted by the government of their home countries (Flowers, 2008, 2009; Wolman, 2015).

²See Online Appendix A for refugee statistics among OECD countries.

³During the Indochina refugee crisis in the 1970s and 1980s, Japan accepted a substantially large number of refugees from Southeast Asia, established three regional centers for resettlement, and promoted refugee resettlement by helping them acquire language and job skills (Strausz, 2012).

clearly illustrate Japan’s limited motivation and engagement regarding this issue.⁴

Therefore, the Japanese context provides us with a hard test to identify conditions under which refugees could be welcomed into society. In this highly-homogeneous society with limited exposure to foreigners, Japanese citizens’ attitudes toward refugee resettlement and their responses to media frames could be different from those among American citizens. These differences, if any, are helpful to sharpen our theories on public attitudes toward refugees and refugee resettlement.

Theoretically, we conceptualize and identify two types of NIMBY-ism with regard to refugee resettlement: *within-country* NIMBY-ism and *between-country* NIMBY-ism. The results of our survey experiment suggest Japanese people are not only prone to free-ride other countries’ efforts to address the global refugee crisis, exhibiting a larger sentiment of between-country NIMBY-ism, but also susceptible to threatening news regardless of whether a threat is directly relevant to Japan. They also show that conscious interactions with foreigners make people less susceptible to threatening frames, though such interactions are rare for most Japanese. These results imply a continued challenge for Japan to accept more refugees, at least in the short term.

2 Attitudes Toward Refugee Resettlement

We extended the study by Ferwerda, Flynn and Horiuchi (2017) in three important ways. First, in our survey experiment, we asked participants questions about refugee resettlement not only in Japan and their own communities, but also in developed countries overall.⁵ By

⁴For media’s criticism, see, for example, Justin McCurry, “Japan says it must look after its own before allowing in Syrian Refugees,” *The Guardian*, September 30, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/30/japan-says-it-must-look-after-its-own-before-allowing-syrian-refugees-in> (last accessed on March 22, 2018).

⁵While “developed countries” in the question may include Japan, we interpret that any difference in the distribution of these two outcome variables comes from study participants’ comparison of Japan and *other*

varying geographic locations of resettlement, we are able to measure two levels of NIMBY-ism among participants. We call them *within-country NIMBY-ism* (whether Japanese people are less supportive of refugee resettlement in their own communities than in Japan as a whole) and *between-country NIMBY-ism* (whether they are less supportive of refugee resettlement in Japan than in other developed countries). This theoretical conceptualization of NIMBY-ism is important to understand Japan’s passive and restrictive refugee policy, as we can gauge to what extent the public would prefer to free-ride other countries’ efforts⁶

As we noted at the beginning, the cooperation of the international community is needed to solve this global refugee crisis. On humanitarian grounds, many Japanese citizens may support refugee resettlement in principle.⁷ However, the settlement of refugees *in their vicinity* may cause serious concerns about public safety and cultural conflicts (Esses, Medianu and Lawson, 2013; Milton, Spencer and Findley, 2013).⁸ Such concerns may lead them to exhibit stronger resistance to refugee resettlement in their local communities than resettlement elsewhere in Japan or outside Japan. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 (NIMBY-ism): Opposition to refugee resettlement becomes stronger as the geographic location of resettlement becomes closer to a respondent’s area of residence.

developed countries. We did not specifically ask a question about resettlement in other developed countries, because saying *other* explicitly could have primed NIMBY-ism or introduced social desirability bias.

⁶The Japanese government has been criticized for free-riding and urged by the international community to accept more Syrian refugees. See Thomas Wilson, “U.N. urges Japan to resettle more refugees after taking just three in first half,” *Reuters*, September 20, 2017, <https://reut.rs/2zPLgxP> (last accessed on March 28, 2018).

⁷Simon and Lynch (1999) and Simon and Sikich (2007) discuss some basic results of opinion polls about Japanese attitudes toward immigrants and refugees.

⁸There are numerous studies examining similar security and cultural concerns among natives toward immigrants (see, for example, Bove and Böhmelt, 2016; Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Fetzer, 2000; Kobayashi et al., 2015; Newman, Hartman and Taber, 2012; Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior, 2004).

Second, while Ferwerda, Flynn and Horiuchi (2017) used both threatening and counter-threatening frames, we did not use a counter-threatening frame.⁹ Instead, to examine how a variation in the physical and psychological proximity of the threats to respondents affects their attitudes, we used two different types of threatening frames. The first treatment group was exposed to an excerpt of an actual news article suggesting that refugees pose a threat to Europe. The study participants in the second treatment group were asked to read an excerpt of another actual news article specifically about potential threats of accepting refugees to Japan. We call these two types of frames a *foreign threat frame* and a *domestic threat frame*, respectively. Since the issues presented in the domestic frame are more directly relevant to respondents' perceived well-being than the issues presented in the foreign frame, we expect different effects between them.¹⁰ To be more specific, with these two treatments and three outcome variables, we test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a (Effects of Threatening Frames): Opposition to refugee resettlement (in one's local community, Japan, or developed countries) is stronger when a respondent is exposed to a (domestic or foreign) threat frame.

Hypothesis 2b (Differential Effects of Threatening Frames): The effect of the domestic threat frame on opposition to refugee resettlement (in one's local community, Japan, or developed countries) is larger than the effect of the foreign threat frame.

Hypothesis 2c (Effects of Threatening Frames on NIMBY-ism): The effect of a (domestic or foreign) threat frame becomes larger as the potential location of refugee resettlement becomes closer to a respondent's area of residence.

⁹Since the influx of refugees as a security threat is not a salient aspect of the debate on refugee resettlement in Japan, showing a counter-threatening frame could be out of context for study participants in Japan. Another reason for not using a counter-threatening frame is that Ferwerda, Flynn and Horiuchi (2017) showed its effect as statistically insignificant.

¹⁰The physical and personal proximity of terrorist attacks, indeed, has been shown to affect the public's threat perceptions (Avdan and Webb, 2018).

When people are primed with information suggesting that refugees pose a threat, they may become more concerned about accepting refugees for resettlement due to their intensified fear and prejudice.¹¹ Since Japanese citizens have very limited contact with refugees in their daily life, such media frames could play a particularly consequential role in shaping their attitudes toward refugee resettlement (Hypothesis 2a). In addition, the effect is expected to be particularly large when they are exposed to the domestic threat frame (Hypothesis 2b), because potential threats to Japan are more relevant for people’s daily life. In a similar vein, the effects may be larger when respondents are asked about resettlement in their local communities *vis-à-vis* elsewhere in Japan or in other developed countries, or in Japan *vis-à-vis* other developed countries (Hypothesis 2c).

Finally, the long-examined contact theory suggests that inter-group contact (in our case, Japanese people meeting non-Japanese people) reduces prejudice toward out-group members (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006).¹² This is because contact could reduce concerns about public safety and cultural conflicts (Al Ramiah and Hewstone, 2013; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2008; Riek, Mania and Gaertner, 2006). Ferwerda, Flynn and Horiuchi (2017) tested whether the contact with previously settled refugees reduces the effect of perceived security threats on attitudes toward refugee resettlement among Americans by using a single measurement of contact: whether or not a study participant is in a “refugee-dense” county. We cannot use the same measure in this study simply because there are no refugee-dense area in Japan. Even in municipalities with regional centers that hosted most of the refugees from Indochina, the share of those refugees in the population is still less than 0.005%.¹³

¹¹For instance, the perception of potential threat triggers public opposition to immigration policy (Brader, Valentino and Suhay, 2008).

¹²PALUCK, GREEN and GREEN (2018) conducted a meta-analysis assembling a total of 27 inter-group contact studies that employ random assignment and delayed outcome measures. They found the results consistent with the contact theory that suggests contact reduces prejudice.

¹³The regional centers were located in Himeji City (in Hyogo Prefecture), Yamato City (in Kanagawa Prefecture), and Shinagawa Ward (in Tokyo). According to the Refugee Assistance Headquarters entrusted

Instead, we employ the following measures of contact with foreigners: the percentage of the non-Japanese people in a population in a municipality where a study participant resides, how often he or she has contact with foreigners, and how many non-Japanese friends he or she has.

We note that these variables are about *foreigners* rather than refugees. Japanese public opinion toward foreigners in general could be different from their opinion toward refugees. That said, foreigners are often similarly considered as serious threats to public safety and cultural heritage in a homogeneous society (Ishii, 2001; Nukaga, 2006; Shipper, 2005). Another justification for the use of statistics on foreigners is that although the number of refugees resettled in Japan is extremely small, the number of foreign residents has been gradually increasing. In 2016, the number of foreigners was approximately 2.4 million, which was 1.8 percent of total population (*Jyūmin Kihon Daichō Jinkō*, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications). Although this percentage seems low compared to other developed countries, it was the record-high number for Japan. Some studies suggest that xenophobia is growing in Japan, but other studies suggest that Japanese people are increasingly welcoming of this influx of foreigners, including not only long-term residents but also short-term visitors and tourists (Chapman, 2006; Debito et al., 2006; Kashiwazaki, 2013; Park, 2017; Shibuichi, 2015). Therefore, examining how the increasing presence of, and interactions with, foreigners affect Japanese people’s attitudes is an important question for both scholarly and policy debates, in and of itself.

The contact theory suggests that Japanese citizens who often interact with foreigners in their local communities would be less likely to fear refugees and refugee resettlement than those with limited contact with foreigners. This leads to our third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3 (Moderation by Contact with Foreigners): The effect of a (domestic or foreign) threat frame on opposition to refugee resettlement (in one’s local community,

by the Japanese government, these centers accepted a total of 2,640, 2,641, and 6,242 Indochina refugees, respectively (<http://www.rhq.gr.jp/japanese/profile/outline.htm#03>, last accessed on March 22, 2018).

Japan, or developed countries) is smaller among respondents who have frequent contact with foreigners in Japan than among those who have limited contact with foreigners.

Based on findings from previous studies on attitudes toward immigrants (Ellison, Shin and Leal, 2011; Hopkins, 2010; Legewie, 2013; McLaren, 2003), we further expect that the mere presence of foreigners may not be sufficient to influence their attitudes. Some correlation may exist between immigrant population size and xenophobia (Jolly and DiGiusto, 2014), but we need to pay close attention to the nature of contact as well, because involuntary contact does not necessarily reduce prejudice toward out-group members (Newman, 2013). Some studies suggest that repeated and intimate contact work effectively to reduce prejudice and promote inter-group cooperation (Broockman and Kalla, 2016; Homola and Tavits, 2017; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006, 2013; Van Laar et al., 2005). Our three measures of contact with foreigners allow us to examine such nuanced effects.¹⁴

3 Research Design

To examine these hypotheses, we conducted an online survey experiment by using Qualtrics Panels from June 6 to July 3, 2017. The targeted population is Japanese citizens who are twenty years old or older.¹⁵ To obtain a sample that would represent the population as much as possible, we set sampling quotas based on the five demographic variables—respondents’ age, sex, level of income, level of education, and area of residence. The distributions of basic

¹⁴These moderation effects are by no means causal, because whether study participants have contact with foreigners is not randomly assigned. As in many experimental studies including Ferwerda, Flynn and Horiuchi (2017), however, we focus on a single theoretically-relevant moderator, which is in our case contact with foreigners.

¹⁵We decided not to include Japanese voters who are eighteen or nineteen years old. The minimum voting age was lowered only recently (i.e., in 2015), while the coming-of-age (i.e., twenty) was unchanged. For this reason, many Internet panels in Japan still do not have a sufficiently large number of underage Japanese voters.

demographic attributes in the population became fairly close to these distributions in our sample (see Online Appendix [B](#)). Therefore, although our sample is not a probability sample, we believe that it represents the population to a certain degree. The total number of valid responses is 2,549.^{[16](#)}

In our experiment, respondents were first introduced to the survey and asked to indicate whether they consented to participate. Respondents then went through multiple pre-treatment questions. The first set of those questions was mainly aimed to measure respondents’ contact with foreigners in Japan. These questions ask respondents which municipality they currently live in; how long they have lived in that municipality; how often they see foreigners in the municipality; and how many non-Japanese friends they have. Based on respondents’ self-reported municipality of residence, we subsequently merged our survey data with municipality-level data on the number of foreign national residents.^{[17](#)} The second set of questions is about respondents themselves—five-year age group, sex, the highest level of school they have completed or the highest degree they have received, and the total pre-tax income in their household in the last year. These questions, as well as the question asking participants’ place of residence, were used for quotas mentioned earlier. The third set of pre-treatment questions includes questions about society and politics—respondents’ satisfaction in life, sense of change in livelihood in the past year, and their sense of knowledge about politics. These questions were added only to make the flow of questions leading to

¹⁶To assure the quality of responses in our sample, we excluded those who failed to provide the correct answer to a screener question, those who spent a third of the median time (calculated based on a soft launch) to complete the survey, and those with IP addresses that were not within Japan. Almost all of the invalid responses screened out were satisficers. Since our questions for the attentive check were asked before the treatment was assigned, the exclusion of these respondents does not cause post-treatment bias ([Montgomery, Nyhan and Torres, 2018](#)).

¹⁷The counts of these foreign national residents are reported biannually by the Ministry of Justice. We used the statistics as of the end of December 2016.

the screener question at the end of this block more natural and less abrupt.¹⁸

Participants were then randomly assigned to one of the following three groups: one control group and two treatment groups. The participants in the control group did not read any news article excerpt. The respondents in the treatment groups were exposed to an excerpt of a news article that focuses on the extent to which refugees could pose risks to public safety. As we noted earlier, there are two versions of the threatening frame. The first treatment (*Foreign Threat Frame*) focuses on the security risk of accepting refugees in Europe, while the second treatment (*Domestic Threat Frame*) discusses the issue of “disguised refugees” associated with the government’s terrorist policy in Japan. Figure 1 shows the English-translated versions of these excerpts, which are from news articles published in the CNN Japan edition (top panel) and Sankei Shimbun (bottom panel).¹⁹

After randomly assigning participants to one of the three conditions, we asked the following question three times with the different geographical context of refugee resettlement to measure the outcome variables (“developed countries,” “Japan,” or “your municipality”): *Do you think refugees should be accepted in [developed countries/Japan/your municipality]?* Study participants chose their level of opposition using a six-point-scale set of options, ranging from 1 (“As many refugees as possible should be accepted”) to 6 (“No refugee should be accepted”), for each of the three questions.²⁰ The geographic location was randomly

¹⁸See Footnote 16 about the attentive check.

¹⁹The sources are <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/15/europe/paris-attacks-passports/>, November 16, 2015; and <http://www.sankei.com/affairs/news/160325/afr1603250024-n1.html>, March 25, 2016 (last accessed on March 29, 2018). We did not show the sources of these excerpts to our study’s participants to avoid any bias generated by the sources of information rather than the content of information. See Online Appendix C for the screen-shots of the original treatment materials in Japanese.

²⁰To measure opposition to refugee resettlement, we recorded these values after collecting data. In the original survey, we asked, “The following scale indicates the degree of agreement to the following opposite opinions. 1 indicates the position that ‘No refugee should be accepted’ and 6 indicates the position that ‘As many refugees as possible should be accepted.’ Please select a number that is closest to your position on

Paris suicide bomber smuggled in as a Syrian refugee: negative impact on open-door policy

November 16, 2015

On November 15th, at least one of the terrorists that attacked Paris and killed more than 120 people was found to be a smuggler posed as a Syrian refugee. This discovery is likely to fire up the security debate over the safety of admitting refugees.

More than 4 million refugees have fled to Europe since Syrian government forces and rebels started fighting.

According to a French senate who have been briefed by the Department of the Interior, one of the three suicide bombers who attacked the stadium carried a provisional passport. He pretended to be Ahmad al Muhammad, born on September 10th, 1990 and was allowed to enter Greece on October 3rd. From there he moved to Macedonia, then Serbia and Croatia, where he registered as a refugee. He eventually made his way to Paris, where he blew himself up at the stadium. Fingerprints on the passport matched those of the stadium bomber.

Disguised refugees surge into Japan: what to do with Japan's terrorist policy?

March 25, 2016

With refugees flooding into other parts of the world in addition to Europe, migrants to Japan are exploiting the Japanese refugee application policy as a loophole. They can obtain a temporary work permit in Japan if their reasons for application are deemed true and not punitive. Japanese law enforcement authorities have been alerted that there were occasions where terrorists entered Europe as Syrian refugees. They were also told how people disguised as refugees can threaten security.

Immigration officers claim that according to the Refugee Convention and humanitarian consideration, only three to five percent of applicants are probably eligible for protection.

Japan has been accepting applications even if applicants are not deemed refugees based on the convention. Applicants are allowed to re-apply after the first rejection.

Thanks to a 2010 law revision, applicants for refugee status can start working in Japan six months after filing. As long as applicants re-apply for refugee status, they can continue working in Japan. A law enforcement authority said, "As a result, the Japanese refugee application policy has been exploited as a loophole in South East Asian countries and beyond."

Figure 1: Foreign Threat Frame (Top) and Domestic Threat Frame (Bottom). *Sources: CNN Japan edition (November 16, 2015, Top Panel) and Sankei Shimbun (March 25, 2016, Bottom Panel)*

presented to avoid any order effect.

Finally, for manipulation checks, we also asked three questions relevant to the frames given to the treatment groups—whether respondents think accepting refugees into Japan has a positive or negative effect to the country; which region respondents think refugees seeking resettlement in Japan come from the most; and whether respondents think that many of those who apply for asylum in Japan do so for reasons justified under international laws.

4 Results

4.1 Not-in-my-back-yard Syndrome (Hypothesis 1)

We first assess the extent to which public opposition to refugee resettlement varies by the geographic location of potential resettlement. Figure 2 indicates the distribution of responses to each of the three outcome variables about attitudes toward refugee resettlement in the control group (i.e., respondents who were not exposed to media frames). As we noted above, the six-point scale ranges from 1 (as many refugees as possible should be accepted) to 6 (no refugee should be accepted). The percentage of participants who chose one of the three categories (4, 5, 6) indicating that they oppose refugee resettlement (highlighted in solid-line borders in Figure 2) is 58.7%, 66.6%, or 69.5% for “developed countries,” “Japan,” or “your local municipality,” respectively. Respondents are overall more opposed to refugee resettlement as the geographic location of potential resettlement gets closer to their own communities.²¹

this scale. Even if you are not entirely sure, please indicate which position you would to venture to take.” See Online Appendix C for the originals.

²¹The percentages of participants who chose one of the three categories (1, 2, 3) indicating that they *support* refugee resettlement are greater than 30%. They may seem high, but we argue that they are not implausible if study participants responded to the questions based on social desirability without rationally calculating the costs and benefits of accepting refugees. Importantly, these percentages of participants inclined to support

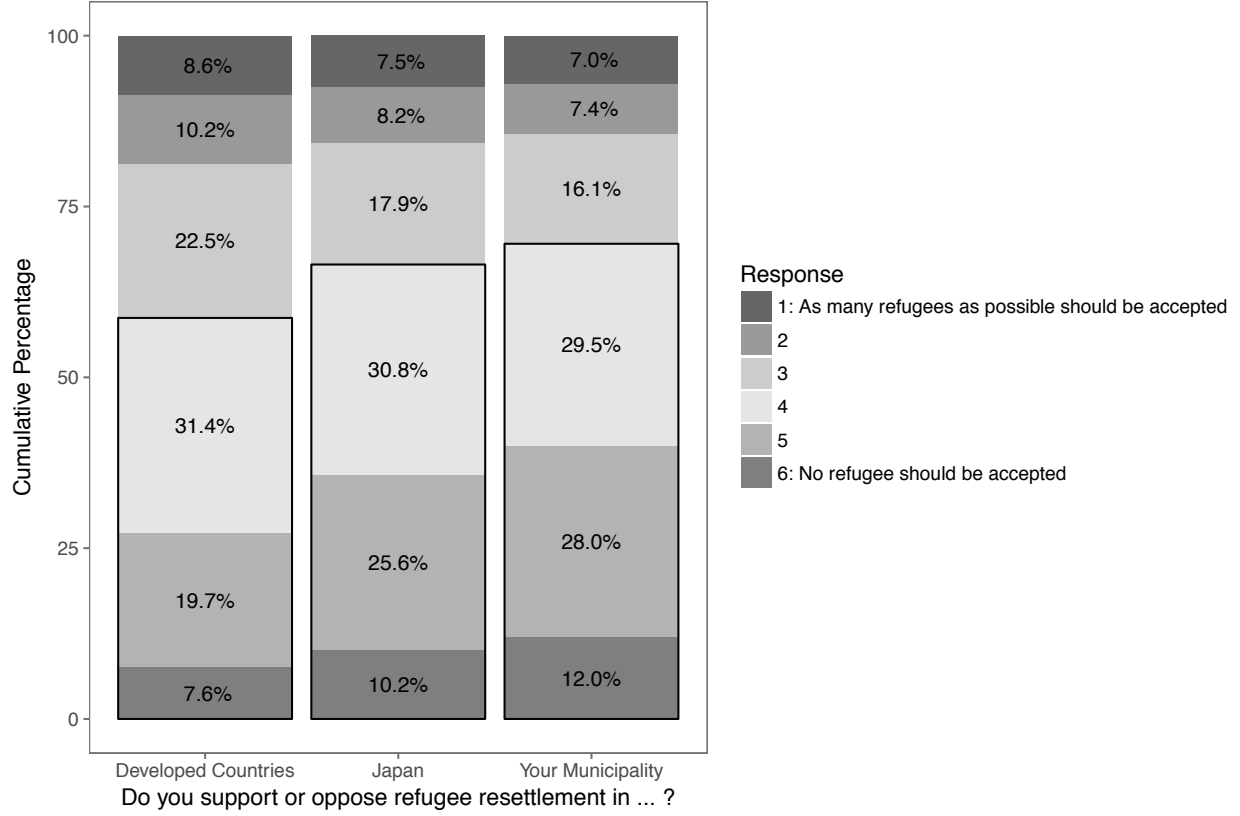


Figure 2: Opposition to Refugee Resettlement in Japan. *The figure shows the distribution of responses to each of the three outcome variables. The question is: “Do you think refugees should be accepted in [Developed Countries, Japan, Your Municipality]?” The six-point scale ranges from 1 (as many refugees as possible) to 6 (absolutely no refugee).*

The chi-square tests using the distribution of all these six categories, however, suggest subtle differences. The difference between the opposition to resettlement in “Developed Countries” and the opposition to resettlement in “Japan” is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($\chi^2 = 16.864$, $p = 0.005$), while the difference between the opposition to resettlement in “Japan” and the opposition to resettlement in “Your Municipality” is not statistically significant at any conventional level ($\chi^2 = 3.813$, $p = 0.577$). Therefore, our Hypothesis 1 is only partially supported. Specifically, while [Ferwerda, Flynn and Horiuchi \(2017\)](#) found clear within-country NIMBY-ism among Americans, we found only between-refugee resettlement are much lower in Japan than in the U.S. See Online Appendix [D](#) for the comparable results using a Amazon Mechanical Turk sample in the U.S.

country NIMBY-ism among Japanese but not within-country NIMBY-ism. Japanese people appear to be thinking that developed countries should accept more refugees out of humanitarian concerns, but when it comes to refugee resettlement in Japan, they would be more strongly opposed, regardless of the geographical context of resettlement within Japan.

The difference between the American and Japanese case in terms of within-country NIMBYism could be in part due to cultural and social differences (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989). In one way, Japanese people may be less self-centred and consider collective—rather than individual—benefits and costs of policy changes. But such collective attitudes may be found within the country’s border and they may be inclined to free-ride other countries’ efforts to “protect” Japan. Another possibility is simply that Japanese participants could not develop realistic images of accepting refugees in Japan or in their municipality when they were asked questions, and thus could not think of its negative consequences. Further investigation on the lack of within-country NIMBY attitudes in Japan is left for our future research. It is also important to examine whether citizens of other developed countries, including the U.S., have a similar between-country NIMBY syndrome. We will discuss more about the need to investigate the two-types of NIMBY-ism in the concluding section.

4.2 Manipulation Check

Before examining the treatment effects on our outcome variables, we discuss whether study participants were properly manipulated by our treatments in the manner we had expected. Since the two article excerpts used as our treatment materials are heterogeneous in many respects, it is possible that participants cognitively reacted to something other than what we intended to manipulate—whether the influx of refugees could be a threat to Europe or to Japan. This manipulation check, therefore, is important for us to properly interpret our treatment effects.

For this purpose, we asked the following three questions at the end of our survey instru-

ments. The first question is the following: *“Do you think accepting refugees to Japan has a positive effect or negative effect to the country?”* We coded responses to this question as the value of 1 if the response is “Has a negative effect” and 0 otherwise.²² The effect of being exposed to the domestic threat frame on this variable should be positive. The effect of being exposed to the foreign threat frame may still be positive if participants projected the image of a threat to Europe on the image in Japan. However, since the foreign threat frame does not mention the case of Japan specifically, its effect is expected to be smaller.

The second question for manipulation check is: *“Which region do you think refugees seeking for resettlement in Japan come from the most? Please select a region you think the refugees come from the most.”* Responses to this question take on the value of 1 if the response is “Southeast Asia” and 0 otherwise.²³ As the domestic threat frame mentions “South East Asian countries,” the effect of being exposed to this frame on this variable should be positive. Since this question is unrelated to the foreign threat frame, the exposure to the foreign threat frame should have no effect on this variable.

Finally, the third question is: *“Do you think that many of those who apply for asylum in Japan do so for reasons justified under international laws?”* Responses to this question take on the value of 1 if the response is “I do not think so” and 0 otherwise.²⁴ Again, the exposure to the domestic threat frame should have a positive effect on this variable because disguised refugees are mentioned exclusively in this frame. The effect of being exposed to the foreign threat frame could be positive if, similar to the case of the first question for the manipulation case, study participants projected the images of disguised asylum seekers in Europe to those images in Japan, but the exposure to the foreign threat frame is expected to have a smaller effect than does the exposure to the domestic threat frame.

²²They include “Has a positive effect,” “Has more or less a positive effect”, and “Has more or less a negative effect.”

²³They include “Africa,” “Middle East,” “Northeast Asia,” “South Asia,” and “Other region.”

²⁴They include “I think so”, “I think so to some extent”, and “I do not think so to some extent.”

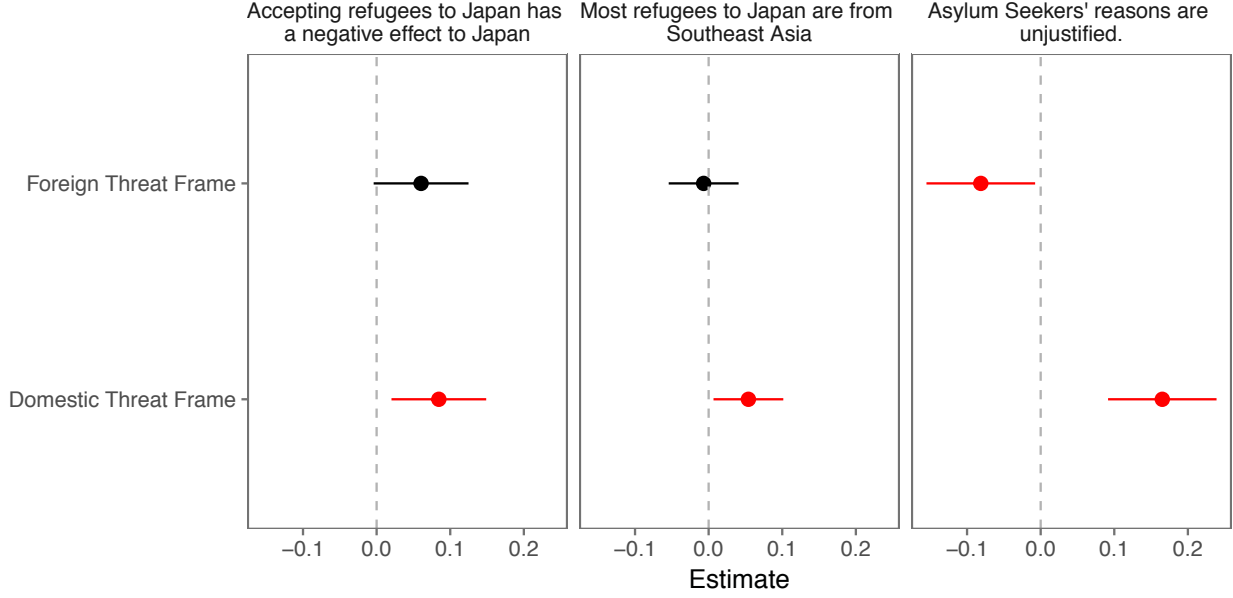


Figure 3: Manipulation Check. *The vertical bars represent 95% confidence intervals. The estimate effects that are significant at the 0.05 level are highlighted in red.*

The results are presented in Figure 3, which shows the point and interval estimates of the treatment effects. The horizontal bars represent 95% confidence intervals. The coefficients that are significant at the 0.05 level are highlighted in red. The results are mostly consistent with our expectations. The only exception is the effect of the foreign threat frame on the third variable, but it is negative and not logically contradictory to our intention.²⁵ Thus, we are confident that study participants were properly manipulated in the way we expected.

4.3 Perceived Threats (Hypothesis 2)

Given the results of manipulation check, we next focus on the effects of media frames on attitudes toward refugee resettlement and evaluate whether public support varies by media frames that depict refugees as potentially threatening to public safety. Table 1 shows the

²⁵One possible interpretation is that compared to participants in the control group who were exposed to no information, those in the foreign threat condition might have developed a *stronger* opinion that asylum seekers in Japan have legitimate reasons, although those in other countries are disguised.

Table 1: Results of Regression without Interactions

	<i>Outcome Variable:</i>		
	Developed Countries	Japan	Your Municipality
Constant (Control Group)	3.662*** (0.044)	3.893*** (0.044)	4.002*** (0.044)
<i>FT</i> : Foreign Threat Treatment	0.284*** (0.062)	0.291*** (0.062)	0.229*** (0.063)
<i>DT</i> : Domestic Threat Treatment	0.318*** (0.062)	0.301*** (0.062)	0.258*** (0.062)
$\hat{b}(DT) - \hat{b}(FT)$	0.035	0.009	0.029
<i>F</i> statistic	0.310	0.022	0.214
$P(> F)$	0.577	0.881	0.644
Observations	2,549	2,549	2,549
Adjusted R ²	0.012	0.011	0.007

Note: The standard errors are in parentheses. The outcome variable is opposition to refugee resettlement in developed countries, Japan, or a respondent’s municipality, ranging from 1 (“As many refugees as possible should be accepted”) to 6 (“No refugee should be accepted”). * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$ (two sided).

results of regression analyses. These results suggest that, compared to respondents in the control group, those who are presented with either the foreign threat frame or the domestic threat frame are more opposed to refugee resettlement, regardless of whether the potential location of refugee resettlement is in developed countries, Japan, or their local communities. This is consistent with Hypothesis 2a. The treatment effects are all positive (i.e., stronger opposition) and significant at the 0.01 level. In the six-point scale, either of the threatening frames increases opposition to refugee resettlement by about 0.3 points.

However, the results do not support Hypothesis 2b. While respondents who are exposed to the domestic threat frame are more strongly opposed to refugee resettlement than those

who are exposed to the foreign threat frames, the difference between the two media frames presented as $\hat{b}(DT) - \hat{b}(FT)$ in Table 2 is very small—0.035 points (developed countries), 0.009 points (Japan), or 0.029 points (your municipality), respectively—and not statistically significant at any conventional level. The physical and psychological proximity to the threat in the media frames does not change respondents’ attitudes toward refugee resettlement. Japanese people do not seem to distinguish between threats in Japan and threats in other countries when they are asked to express opinions about the resettlement of these refugees.

Interestingly, the results also do not support Hypothesis 2c, which is about the effects of threatening frames on NIMBY-ism. Contrary to our expectation, the effect of the domestic or foreign threat frames is the smallest (0.229 for the foreign threat frame, and 0.258 for the domestic threat frame) in the case of local resettlement. In other words, the threatening media frames do not cause much change in respondents’ attitudes toward refugee resettlement in their municipality. We suspect that the *marginal* effects of threatening frames were attenuated due to the ceiling effect because the baseline estimate for the opposition to refugee resettlement is the largest (4.002) in the case of local resettlement due to the tendency of NIMBY-ism among respondents (Hypothesis 1).

4.4 Contact with Foreigners (Hypothesis 3)

We finally turn to the moderation effects of contact with foreigners on Japanese people’s attitudes toward refugee resettlement. As we introduced earlier, we measured the degree of contact with foreigners in three ways: (1) the percentage of non-Japanese residents in a respondent’s municipality, (2) how often a respondent sees foreigners in his/her municipality, and (3) how many non-Japanese friends a respondent has. While the first one is an objective measure, the latter two are subjective measures based on the self-report of respondents. The results are shown in Figure 4, which displays the treatment effect estimates among respondents separately for those who have high, middle, and low levels of contact with

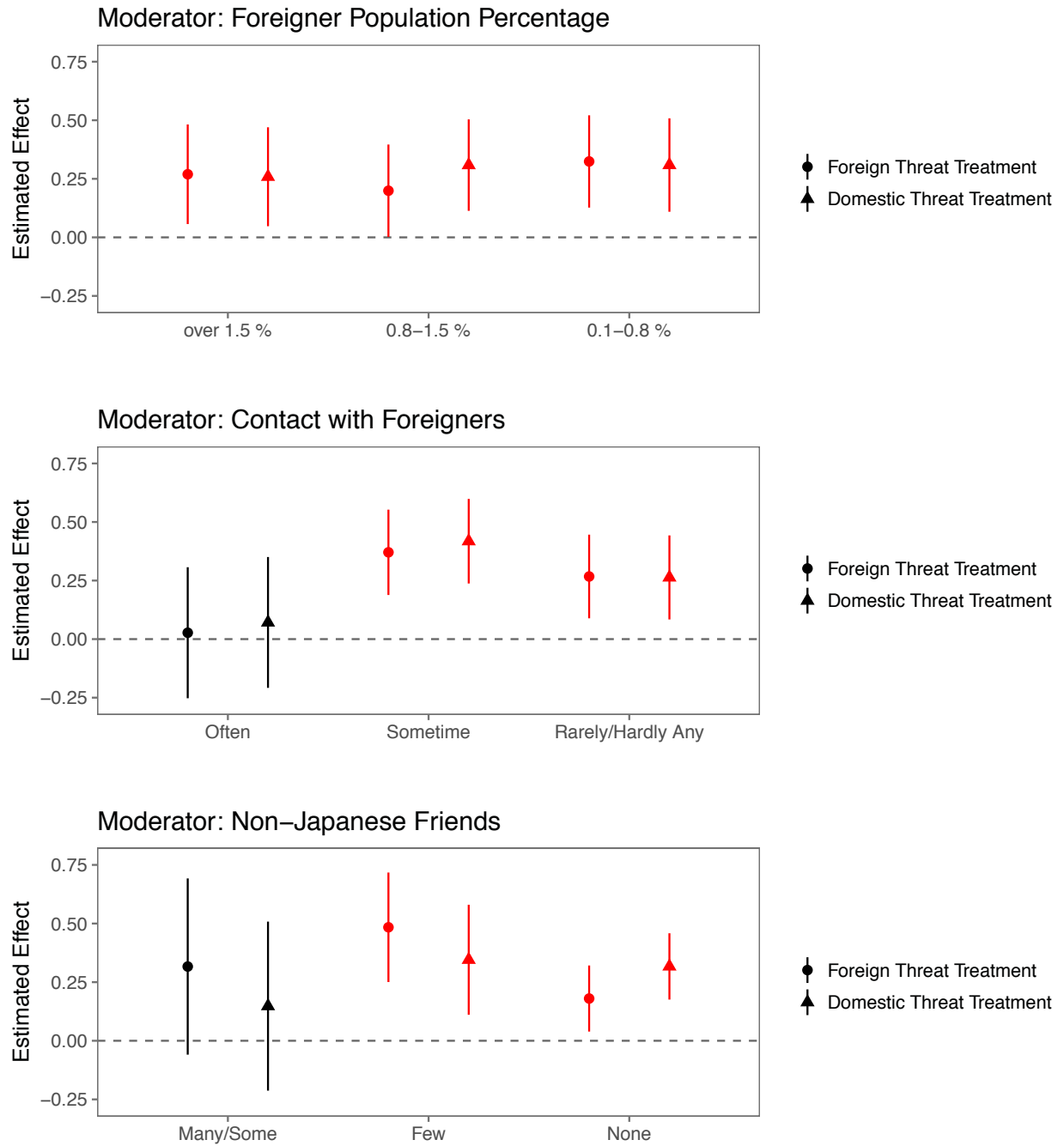


Figure 4: The Treatment Effects Moderated by Contacts with Foreigners. *The figure shows the treatment effect heterogeneity conditional on the percentage of foreigner population in respondents' place of residence (municipality), how often they contact with foreigners, and how many non-Japanese friends they have. The vertical bars represent 95% confidence intervals. The estimate effects that are significant at the 0.05 level are highlighted in red.*

foreigners.²⁶ For the outcome variable, we used the average response to the three questions about refugee resettlement (in developed countries, Japan, and your municipality.) The vertical bars indicate 95% confidence intervals, and the coefficients that are significant at the 0.05 level are highlighted in red.

The top panel of Figure 4 indicates that the effects of media frames do not vary across respondents depending on the share of non-Japanese residents in their municipality. Even if respondents live in a municipality with a relatively large share of non-Japanese residents (over 1.5%), they respond to threatening media frames in nearly the same way as do those in a municipality with the limited share of non-Japanese residents (0.1–0.8%). The treatment effects are all significant regardless of the non-Japanese population percentage in a respondent’s municipality. In short, we found the objective measure of a citizen’s potential contact with foreigners in his or her municipality has no moderation effect.

The middle panel of Figure 4 employs the frequency of a respondent’s daily contact with foreigners as a moderator. The results show that respondents who claim to see foreigners “sometimes,” “rarely,” or “hardly at all” are significantly influenced by the media frames. By contrast, those who claim to see foreigners “often” in their municipality are not influenced by the threatening media frames. The point estimates for the treatment effects are virtually null. That is, the effects of threat frames on opposition to refugee resettlement disappear among respondents with frequent daily contact with foreigners.

A similar pattern is observed in the bottom panel of Figure 4, which employs the reported number of non-Japanese friends as a moderator. The results indicate that respondents with few or no non-Japanese friends are significantly influenced by the threatening media frames. But the effects are not significant if respondents claim to have many or some non-Japanese friends. These results/effects are consistent with our hypothesis. That said, we need to

²⁶We divided respondents into the three groups by setting cut points (for the continuous variable) or combining some categories (for the ordinal variables) so that they are as evenly distributed as possible in terms of the number of responses.

interpret the results with caution because the point estimates for those who have many/some friends are not necessarily close to zero.²⁷

5 Conclusion

We found some patterns that were not discovered in the previous study in the U.S. (Ferwerda, Flynn and Horiuchi, 2017). First, unlike the case of Americans, Japanese people’s level of opposition to resettlement in their local community is *not* significantly different from their opposition to resettlement elsewhere within Japan. Yet, when it comes to resettlement in Japan, as compared to resettlement in other developed countries, their opposition to resettlement is significantly stronger. In other words, Japanese people are inclined to free-ride other countries’ efforts to address the global refugee crisis. This attitudinal pattern among Japanese voters is consistent with the Japanese government’s inclination for free-riding, which has been often criticized from international communities.

Second, Japanese people are more opposed to resettlement when exposed to frames that portray refugees as a threat, regardless of whether the threat is directly relevant to Japan or not. In other words, they are highly susceptible to *any* threatening frame regardless of the context. This means that even media reports portraying refugees as a threat to other countries could induce a feeling of fear among Japanese people and make them more opposed to refugee resettlement. With the increased accessibility to various types of news and social media around the world, including “fake news” and misinformation, these results raise concerns about the roles of media in shaping public opinion on refugee issues in Japan.

Finally, our results show that the mere presence of foreigners in local communities is insufficient to change attitudes among Japanese. Instead, conscious interactions with for-

²⁷These positive effects among respondents with many/some friends could be in part due to social desirability bias or measurement error. Refinement of variables to measure substantive contact with foreigners is left for our future research.

eigners, such as becoming personal friends with them, would make people less susceptible to frames that depict refugees as threatening. Although this is an encouraging result for advocates of greater refugee resettlement in Japan, it is still rare for most Japanese people to have such interactions with foreigners.

These findings point out a continued challenge for Japan to accept more refugees, at least in the short term. As long as the Japanese government is responsive to public opinion, it is unlikely to observe a major change in Japan’s highly restrictive refugee policy. Even if refugee policy becomes an important agenda in the political process (due to, for example, stronger pressure from other countries or the collapse of North Korean regime), Japanese voters’ predisposition to free-riding, their strong reaction to any threatening frame, and their limited contact with foreigners could trigger their strong opposition to accepting more refugees. This is particularly plausible if politicians scare citizens by emphasizing potential threats to the country, thereby persuading those citizens to support their policies and candidates (Jerit, 2004; Lupia and Menning, 2009; Marcus, 2000).²⁸

Theoretically, we are the first to conceptualize two levels of NIMBY-ism, *within-country* and *between-country* NIMBY-ism toward refugee resettlement. When natives have a strong within-country NIMBY syndrome, where refugees should be resettled could be a salient issue in domestic politics. By contrast, when there are many countries where natives have a strong between-country NIMBY syndrome, international coordination to address the global refugee crisis would become more difficult. Since refugee resettlement is both domestic and international issues, further study on public opinion based on this distinction is necessary to understand challenges and solutions to this problem.

Our study empirically identified these two distinct NIMBY syndromes in the case of Japan, but did not delve into the origins of (existence of) within-country NIMBY-ism and

²⁸Such rhetoric by politicians is not implausible in Japan. In September 2017, Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso said that Japan could face a wave of “armed” refugees from North Korea and Japan should consider whether to shoot them.

(lack of) between-country NIMBY-ism in Japan. We speculate that in countries with a relatively homogeneous society with limited exposure to “outsiders,” such as South Korea, Chile and Portugal, people have a similar public opinion about refugee resettlement. By contrast, in countries with an increasingly larger number of refugees and immigrants, such as Germany, France and Austria, both types of NIMBY-ism may exist. Yet, the degree of ethnic and cultural diversity should be only one factor explaining the existence—or lack thereof—of the two-types of NIMBY syndromes. Economic conditions of refugee-accepting countries, conditions under which refugees are accepted, governments’ and non-profit organizations’ efforts to promote the quality of refugee resettlement and the integration of refugees into communities are some of the other possible factors encouraging or discouraging natives to develop NIMBY-ism. We hope that our study paves the way for further development of theories on the causes and consequences of between- and within-country NIMBY-ism toward refugee resettlement.

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Online Appendix

A Refugee Statistics among OECD Countries

Table [A.1](#) shows the number of refugees admitted to each OECD member country in 2016. As shown in this table, Japan almost closes its borders to refugees and accepts the smallest number of asylum seekers among OECD member countries. Specifically, in 2016, Japan accepted only 28 refugees. In 2017, the recently released statistics show that although the number of refugee applications was record high (19,628), the number of asylum seekers given the refugee status was only 20. The percentage of admission is extraordinarily small in Japan compared to other countries on the list. In 2016, the Japanese government denied 99.8 percent of applications for refugee status. In 2017, they denied 99.9 percent.

B Population vs. Sample

Table [B.1](#) and Figure [B.1](#) show the differences between the general Japanese population and our sample. See Table [B.1](#) for codes added as labels in Figure [B.1](#). As we noted in the main text, the distributions of basic demographic attributes in the population are fairly close to these distributions in our sample because we set quotas in the process of recruiting study participants. Note that we loosened up some of these quotas at the final stage of our data collection process because we found setting the hard quotas had made our sample collection too difficult.

Table A.1: Cross-National Comparison of Refugee Resettlement in 2016

Country	Refugees Admitted	Percentage of Admitted	Number of Admitted per Population (million)
Germany	263,622	34.4	3,268.9
France	24,007	18.2	364.2
Austria	22,307	54.2	2,630.7
United States	20,437	23.2	64.6
Netherlands	19,597	53.3	1,166.2
Turkey	18,423	39.9	245.6
Sweden	17,141	13.4	1,785.5
United Kingdom	13,554	29.0	211.4
Belgium	12,494	40.6	1,117.2
Norway	11,688	40.2	2,301.0
Canada	10,226	62.2	290.9
Australia	6,567	32.8	284.0
Switzerland	5,985	19.1	739.9
Italy	4,798	5.3	79.7
Finland	4,586	16.3	843.2
Denmark	4,478	39.6	797.5
Mexico	3,282	43.9	26.5
Greece	3,236	7.4	293.4
Ireland	788	14.9	171.4
Luxembourg	774	34.5	1,424.5
Spain	369	4.0	7.9
Slovakia	167	59.4	30.8
New Zealand	165	31.0	37.1
Hungary	154	0.3	15.6
Czech Republic	148	10.5	14.1
Slovenia	138	12.3	67.0
Poland	112	0.9	2.9
Portugal	104	9.0	9.9
Iceland	97	13.7	299.6
Estonia	80	38.5	60.7
South Korea	57	0.9	1.1
Latvia	46	12.3	22.9
Chile	34	24.3	1.9
Japan	28	0.2	0.2

Note: The data source of refugee resettlement statistics is UNHCR Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016, Annex Excel Table 9. The number of admitted refugees are those who were given the convention status during 2016. The denominator for the percentage of admitted is the total number of decisions made during 2016. The denominator for the last column is the total population (`wdi_pop`) included in the Quality of Government Basic Dataset (version January 2017). The table includes OECD countries only. Israel's refugee resettlement data for 2016 are not reported in UNHCR Global Trends 2016.

Table B.1: The Population vs. Our Sample

Variable	Code	Category	Population (%)	Sample (%)
Region	1	Hokkaido	4.23	4.32
	2	Tohoku	7.07	7.14
	3	Kanto (excluding Tokyo)	23.20	23.26
	4	Kanto (Tokyo)	10.63	10.79
	5	Chubu	16.89	16.71
	6	Kinki	17.74	17.69
	7	Chugoku	5.85	5.85
	8	Shikoku	3.03	3.06
	9	Kyushu-Okinawa	11.37	11.18
Age	1	20-25	6.92	6.43
	2	26-35	13.54	17.97
	3	36-45	17.69	23.11
	4	46-55	15.66	21.18
	5	56-65	15.87	18.87
	6	66-	30.33	12.44
Sex	1	Male	48.66	48.65
	2	Female	51.34	51.35
Education	1	Primary school or junior high school	17.16	2.75
	2	Senior high school	43.77	36.25
	3	Professional training college	6.25	9.69
	4	Junior college	8.36	11.93
	5	College/university or graduate school	22.91	39.23
	6	Unknown	1.56	0.16
Income	1	0-1,990,000	22.38	12.36
	2	2,000,000-3,990,000	29.01	24.36
	3	4,000,000-5,990,000	19.90	24.87
	4	6,000,000-7,990,000	12.31	15.89
	5	8,000,000-9,990,000	7.44	10.59
	6	10,000,000-12,490,000	4.77	6.04
	7	12,500,000-	4.18	5.88

Note: The data sources for the population statistics are the Census (*Kokusei Chōsa*), the Employment Status Survey (*Shūgyō Kōzō Kihon Chōsa*), and the Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions (*Kokumi Seikatsu Kiso Chōsa*).

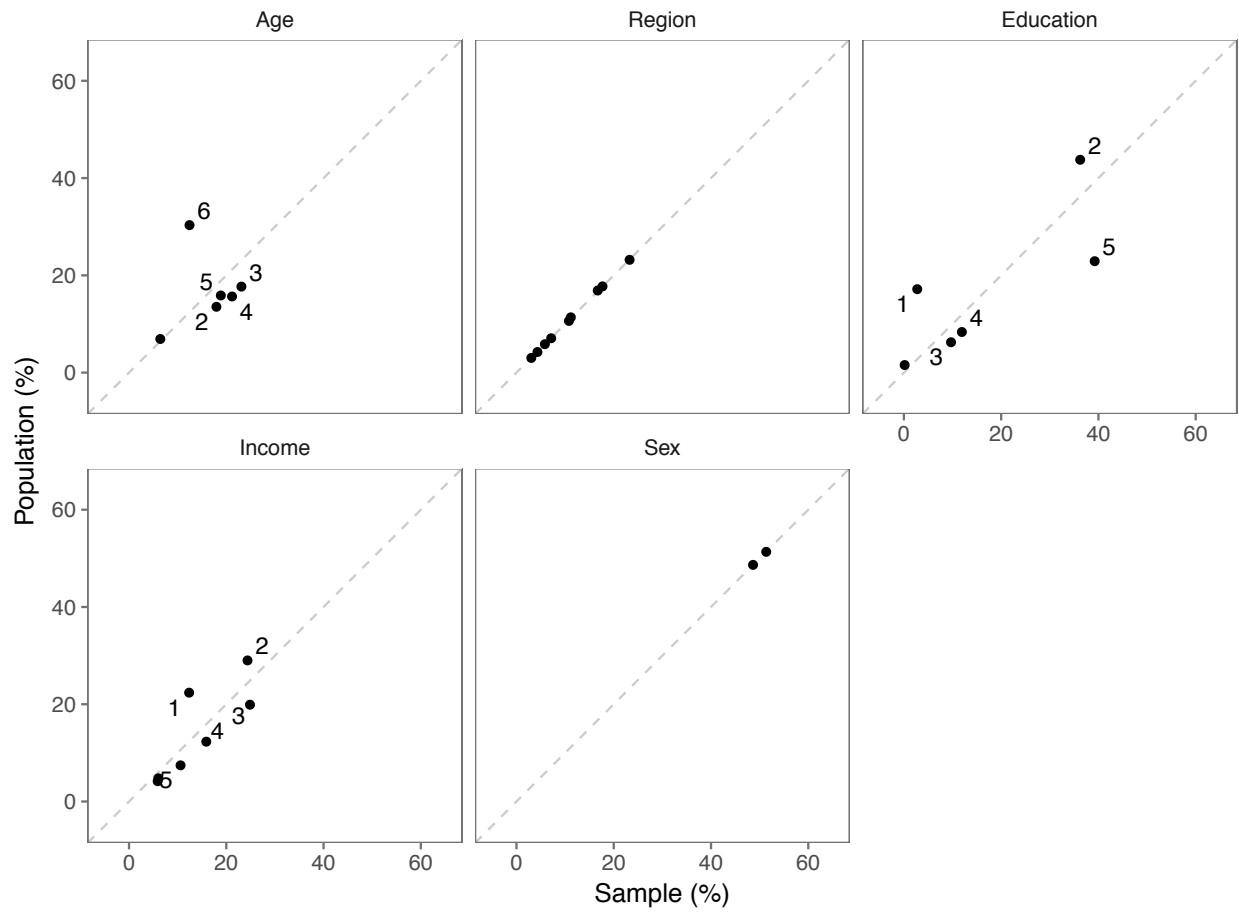


Figure B.1: The Population vs. Out Sample. See Table [B.1](#) for codes.

C Screen-Shots

Figures C.1 and C.2 show the treatment materials used in our survey experiment. Figures C.3 and C.4 show the screen-shot examples of the instruments to measure our outcome variables. The order of the three questions is randomized. For the second and third questions, an additional sentence asking, “What about the case of resettlement in ...?” is added (see Figure C.4).

パリ自爆テロ犯、シリア難民装い入国 受け入れ論議に影響も

2015年11月16日

120人以上の死者を出したパリの同時多発テロに関連して15日、実行犯の少なくとも1人が、シリアからの難民を装って入国していたことが分かった。難民受け入れの安全性を巡って対立が深まる事態は避けられず、今回の事件でシリアの難民危機が一層深刻化する可能性もある。

4年半前にシリア政府軍と反体制派の衝突が始まって以来、欧州に逃れた難民は400万人以上。流入が止まる兆しはない。

フランス内務省から説明を受けたという同国の上院議員によると、競技場で自爆した男3人のうち1人は臨時パスポートを所持していた。この男は1990年9月10日生まれのアフマド・ムハンマドというシリア人になりすまし、10月3日にギリシャ入国を許可されていた。

そこからマケドニア、セルビアを経てクロアチアで難民として登録され、パリに入って競技場で自爆したとみられる。パスポートの指紋は自爆した男のものと一致したという。

Figure C.1: Foreign Threat Frame – Originals in Japanese. *Sources: CNN Japan edition (November 16, 2015)*

日本にも押し寄せる「偽装難民」 どうするテロリスト対策

2016年3月25日

欧州に押し寄せる難民が国際問題化する中、日本の難民認定制度が「救済ビザ」と呼ばれ、就労目的で来日する外国人らに悪用されている。申請理由が虚偽でも罰則がなく、当座の就労資格を獲得できることが理由だ。テロリストがシリア難民を装って欧州入りした例もあり、“偽装難民”が治安問題に直結しかねないため、警察当局などは警戒を強めている。

「難民条約や人道的配慮にかんがみると、本当に保護が必要なのは3～5%程度ではないか」。入管関係者は難民申請の現状について、こう打ち明ける。

日本の制度は条約上の「難民」に該当しない理由でも申請を受理しており、不認定でも申請し直すことが可能だ。

さらに平成22年からは、申請から6カ月たてば国内での就労が認められるよう制度が改正され、申請さえ続ければ日本で就労することが可能となった。このため「東南アジアを中心に救済ビザと呼ばれ、悪用され続けているのが実態だ」（捜査関係者）という。

Figure C.2: Domestic Threat Frame – Originals in Japanese. *Sources: Sankei Shimbun (March 25, 2016)*

あなたは、先進国で、難民を受け入れるべきだと思いますか。次の尺度は、難民の受け入れに対する賛否の度合いを示しています。1が「一人たりとも難民を受け入れるべきではない」、6が「できる限り多数の難民を受け入れるべきである」、です。あなたの意見にもっとも近い数字を選んで下さい。よく分からない場合でも、あえて言うとどれか、選んで下さい。

1（一人たりとも難民を受け入れるべきではない）

2

3

4

5

6（できる限り多数の難民を受け入れるべきである）

Figure C.3: Measuring the Outcome Variable (if a question about resettlement in “Developed Countries” is asked first)

それでは、日本の場合ではどうですか？

あなたは、日本で、難民を受け入れるべきだと思いますか。次の尺度は、難民の受け入れに対する賛否の度合いを示しています。1が「一人たりとも難民を受け入れるべきではない」、6が「できる限り多数の難民を受け入れるべきである」、です。あなたの意見にもっとも近い数字を選んで下さい。よく分からない場合でも、あえて言うとどれか、選んで下さい。

1（一人たりとも難民を受け入れるべきではない）

2

3

4

5

6（できる限り多数の難民を受け入れるべきである）

Figure C.4: Measuring the Outcome Variable (if a question about resettlement in “Japan” is asked second or third)

D Two-Levels of NIMBY-ism in the U.S.

Ferwerda, Flynn and Horiuchi (2017) did not ask a question about resettlement in developed countries. They also used 11-point-scale questions rather than 6-point-scale ones. Therefore, to compare the results from Japan and the U.S., we recruited 300 respondents from Amazon.com’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk) and asked the same set of three questions about refugee resettlement to study participants in the U.S.²⁹ Figure D.1 demonstrates that Americans are much more supportive of refugee resettlement than Japanese. While *more than* 50% of Japanese respondents oppose (specifically, choose the three categories indicating that they oppose) refugee resettlement even when they are asked about refugee resettlement in developed countries, *less than* 50% of American respondents oppose refugee resettlement even in their local communities.

²⁹Since the MTurk sample is by not means a representative sample, we need to interpret the results with caution.

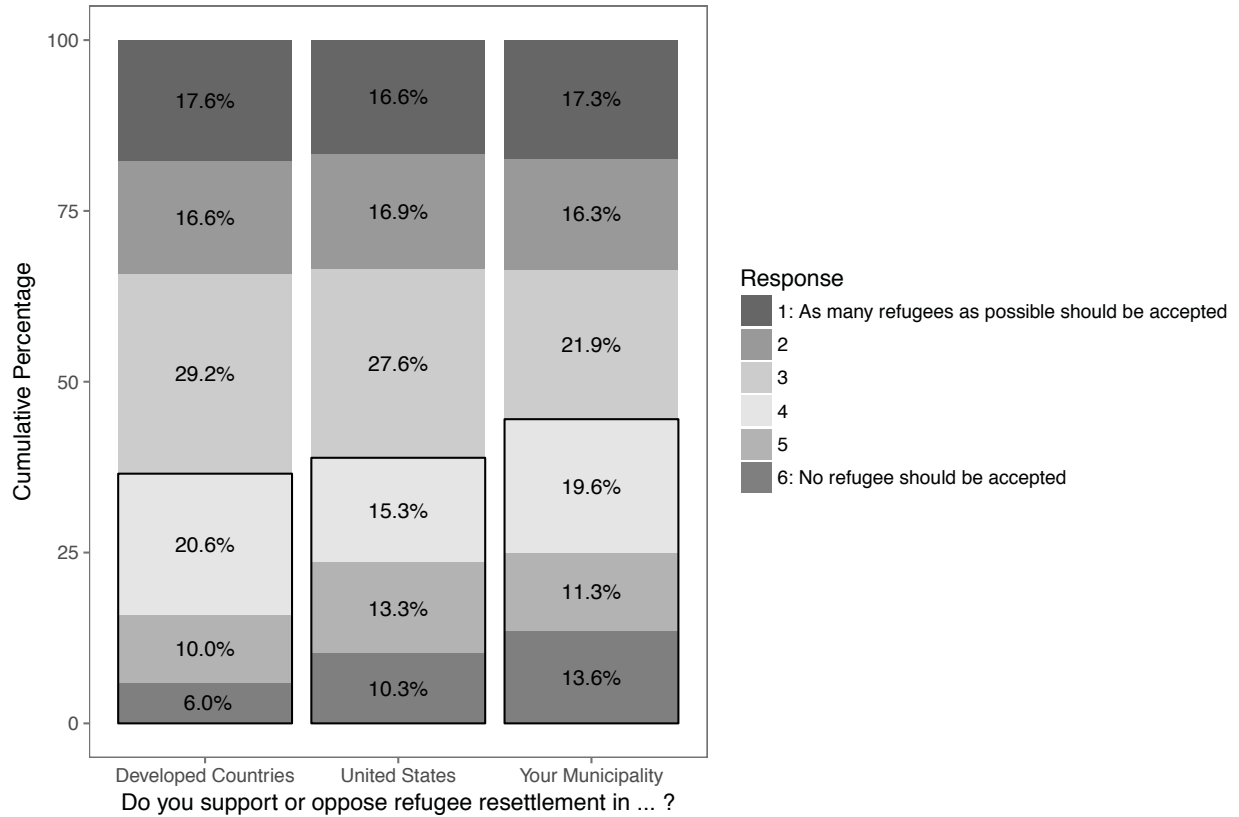


Figure D.1: Opposition to Refugee Resettlement in the U.S. *The figure shows the distribution of responses to each of the three outcome variables. The question is: “Do you think refugees should be accepted in [Developed Countries, the United States, Your Municipality]?” The six-point scale ranges from 1 (as many refugees as possible) to 6 (absolutely no refugee).*