

## WELCOMING ATTITUDES TOWARDS SYRIAN IMMIGRANTS: DOES RELIGIOUSITY AND CULTURAL AWARENESS MATTER?

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### **Abstract:**

Personality characteristics can influence the reaction of individuals towards immigrant minorities. In the relevant literature, the effect of religiosity and cultural awareness, as two of the main personal traits, on the attitudes towards migrants is studied. In terms of religiosity, often the effect of Christian religiosity- represented by affiliation and church attendance- on the attitudes towards migrants, who belong to other religions, has been widely investigated. On the other hand, factors such as living, working or studying abroad as proxies for cultural awareness are used to examine whether cultural awareness has power to affect attitudes towards immigrants. However, no study in the literature has documented evidence regarding the influence of religiosity and cultural awareness of Turkish people on the attitudes towards Syrians. We use a unique data set covering 1031 individuals who were born in different cities of Turkey. The data were collected by a reputable market research and consultancy company in İstanbul but carried out our research in Mersin, Adana, Mardin, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa and Hatay, where a higher number of Syrians residing compared to other provinces of Turkey. Attitudes towards Syrian immigrants are measured by two statements about whether the Turkish government should provide welfare benefits to Syrian immigrants and citizenship. Findings show that those who have been and lived abroad in the past, know at least one foreign language and participated in cultural activities while being in another country are more tolerant to immigrants. Even though Islam is a shared religion by Turkish and Syrians, being religious and attendance to mosque do not make Turkish people tolerant towards the provision of welfare benefits and citizenship to immigrants.

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