

Frontline experiences of newly arrived refugees in Norway and Denmark

Karen N. Breidahl*, Anne Britt Djuve**, Hanne C. Kavli***, Christian Albrekt Larsen*,
and Rasmus S.H. Nielsen**

* Aalborg University

** Oslo Metropolitan University

*** FAFO

Presented by Rasmus S.H. Nielsen

Overall aim and research questions

- The overall aim is to bring new insights into how refugees experience their encounters with integration work at the frontline of Nordic welfare states
- Two interrelated research questions:
 1. How do Syrian and Ukrainian refugees experience their encounters with municipal integration workers – and to what extent do these experiences vary between Norway and Denmark?
 2. To what extent are differences in experiences a reflection of the individual resources that the refugees are in possession of?

Some context

- Double comparative research design: Syrian and Ukrainian refugees in Norway and Denmark
 - Two largest influxes of refugees in the last decade
 - Across Norway and Denmark:
 - Denmark as most restrictive and Norway as less restrictive
 - Heavy state involvement in refugee resettlement in both countries
 - Previous research has offered limited comparative insight into how these general characteristics are reflected in the lived experiences of newly arrived refugees
 - Within Norway and Denmark:
 - Differential treatment of Syrian and Ukrainian refugees in both countries
 - More restrictive conditions for Syrians in both countries
- Testing the ideal of equity in service delivery
 - In both Norway and Denmark, the ethical foundation of social work emphasizes equal treatment of all individuals, regardless of their cultural background or personal resources.
 - If this hold true in practice, we should not find individual-level resources to be associated with frontline experiences

Theoretical framework – Street-level theory from a claimant perspective

- What can we learn from studying SLB's from a claimant perspective?
 - From one-sided to dyadic research contexts
 - Comparative research designs enables studying how social structures can condition individual-level experiences (Breidahl & Brodtkin, 2024)
- Further inspired by broader migration research and the literature on administrative burdens (Herd & Moynihan, 2018)
 - Migrants' experiences with state institutions
 - Encounters with the administrative side of the state can involve a considerable amount of costs
 - Psychological costs (e.g., stigma, loss of self-worth and loss of autonomy due to entering specific programmes)
 - Uneven distribution of costs across and within groups

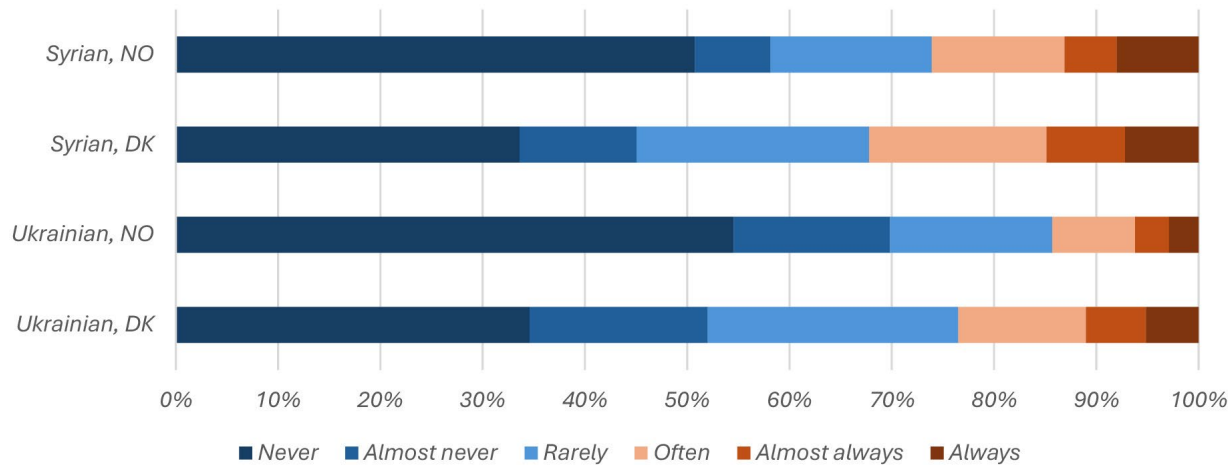
Data and methods

- MIGTRUST-project
- Cross-national survey conducted in Denmark and Norway combined with register data
- Cross-sectional (for now)
- Three measures of frontline experiences from encounters with municipal integration workers
 - Perceived communication efficacy, service outcome satisfaction, psychological costs
- Individual-level resources
 - Language proficiency
 - Education level
- Descriptive statistics and OLS regression analyses

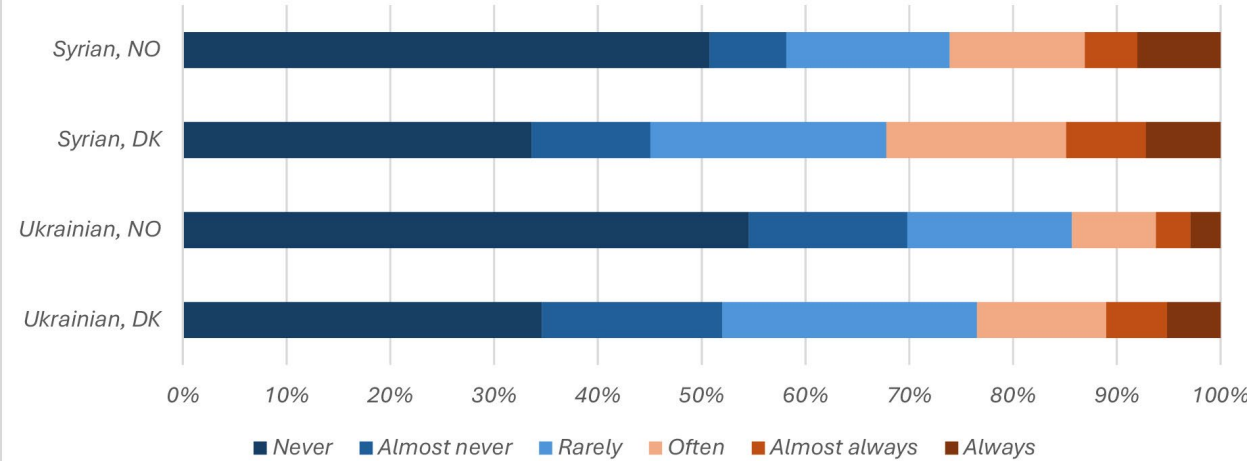
Strata (Refugees only)	Freq.	Percent
DK, Syrian refugees	1,659	25.32
DK, Ukrainian refugees	1,012	15.45
NO, Syrian refugees	1,138	17.37
NO, Ukrainian refugees	2,742	41.86
Total	6,551	100.00

How do Syrian and Ukrainian refugees experience their encounters with municipal integration workers – and to what extent do these experiences vary between Norway and Denmark?

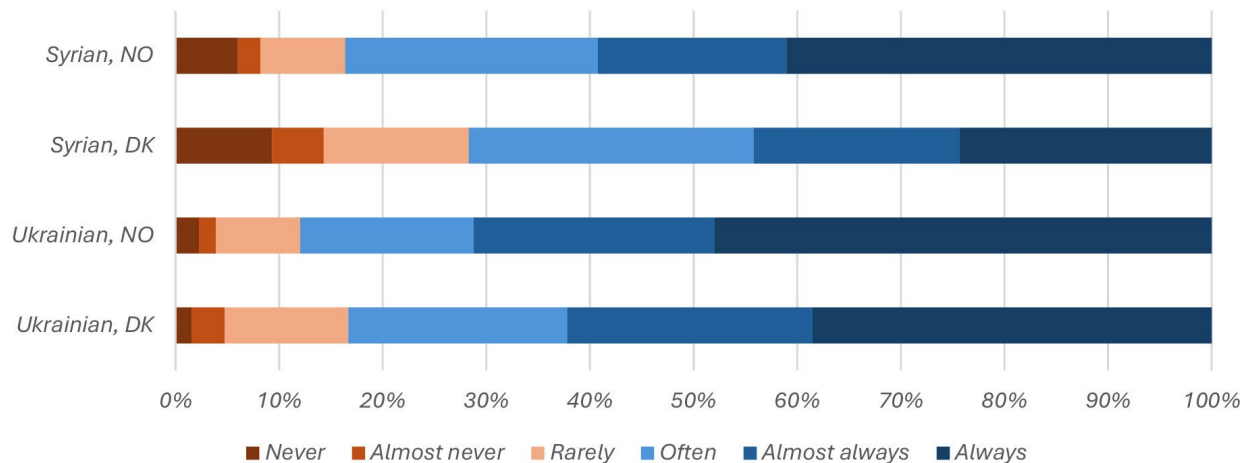
"Did you have difficulties understanding what was communicated?"



"Did you feel lower self-worth after interacting with integration service employees?"



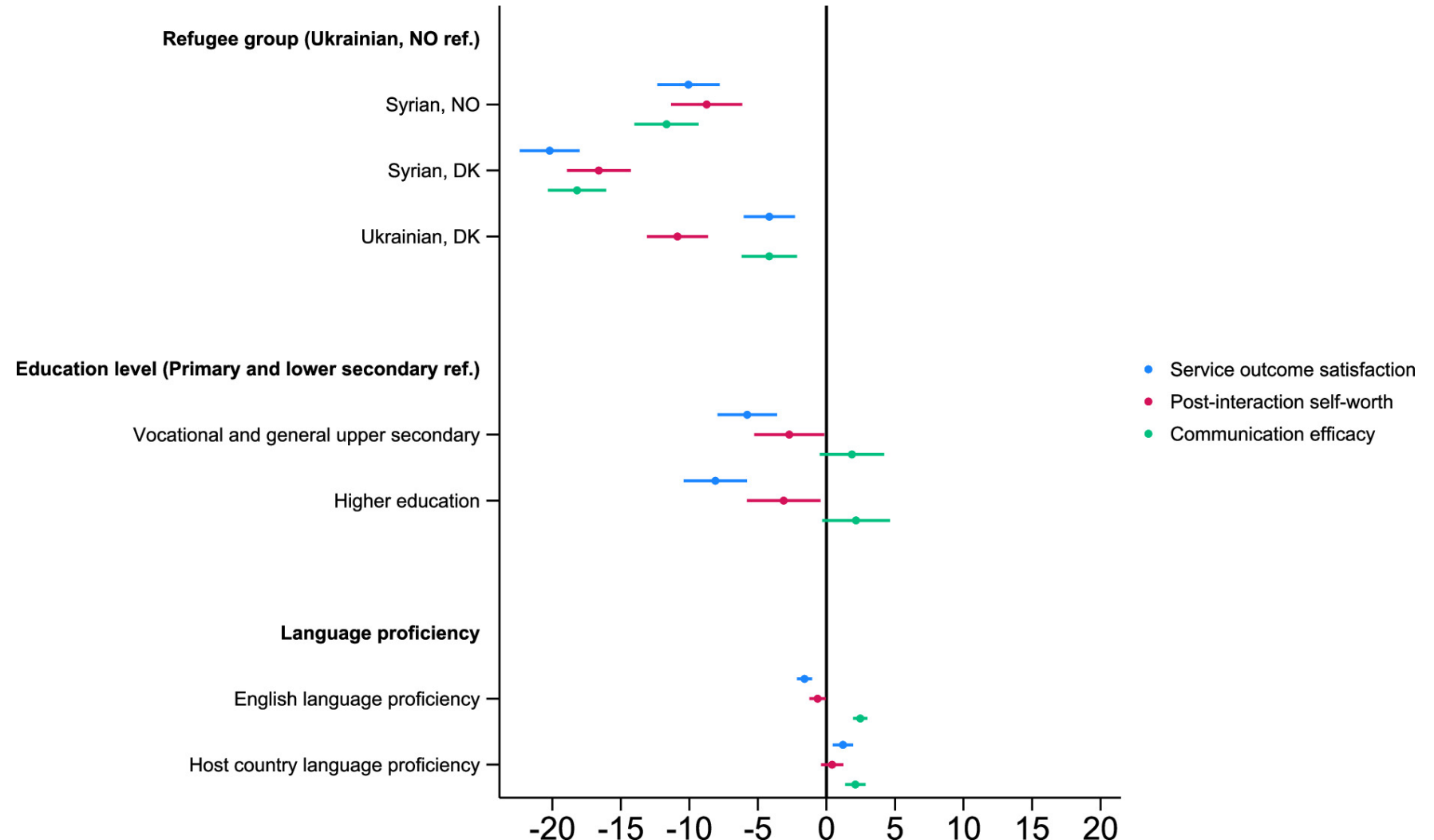
"Did you receive the help you needed?"



- Generally positive experiences
- Across all three measures, experiences tend to be more positive in Norway than in Denmark
- More positive for Ukrainians than for Syrians in both countries

To what extent are differences in experiences a reflection of the individual resources that the refugees are in possession of? (1)

- Group differences remain after controlling for individual-level resources and variations in demographics
- Individual-level resources tend to be associated with frontline experiences
- Syrians in Denmark have the least positive experiences while Ukrainians in Norway have the most positive



To what extent are differences in experiences a reflection of the individual resources that the refugees are in possession of? (2)

- Frontline experiences tend to be more equitable in Norway compared to Denmark
- Across our three measures, refugees resettled in Norway report experiences that are approximately 8–11% more positive than those of refugees resettled in Denmark.

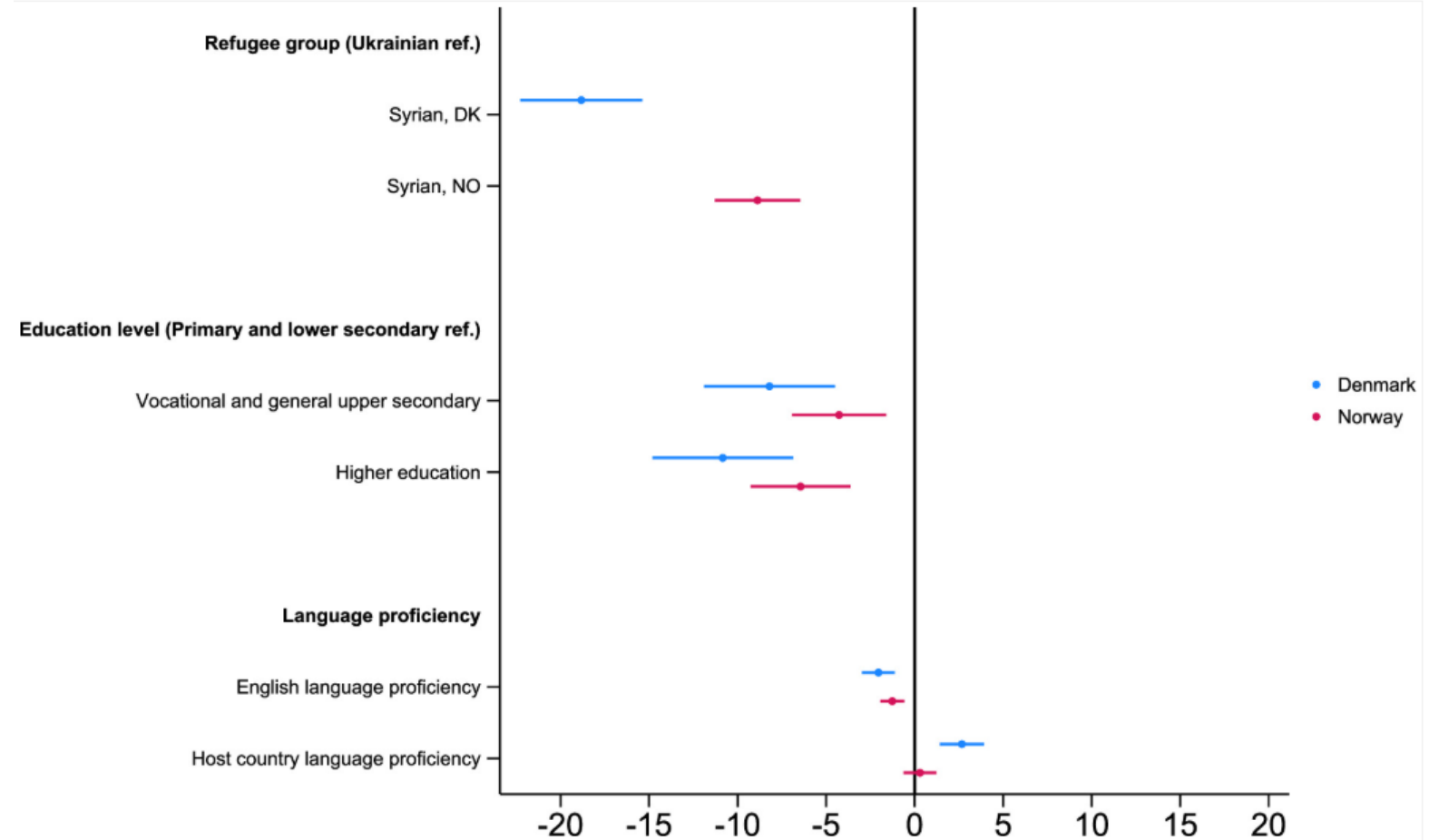


Figure 3.2. Individual-Level Predictors of Experienced Service Outcome Satisfaction in Integration Services, Multiple Linear Regression (OLS)

Concluding remarks

- The ideal of equity in welfare services is not met in neither Denmark or Norway
 - Syrians have more negative experiences than Ukrainians
 - Individual-level resources tend to affect (perceived) frontline experiences
 - Greater disparities among less resourceful refugees
 - Example: Refugees with a high level of individual resources experience somewhat similar communication efficacy across Norway and Denmark, while there are greater differences for refugees with less resources
- What did we learn about street-level integration work from applying a claimant perspective?
 - Findings that could indicate that features in the policy regimes systematically influence frontline practices and how individuals experience these practices
 - Policy contexts hold potential to condition frontline experiences, posing a larger challenge for integration work in restrictive policy contexts
 - More restrictive → Less positive frontline experiences
 - More restrictive → Less equity in frontline experiences