

Understanding who is granted asylum and how their reception center experiences vary

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Introduction

Reception centers and the welcoming of refugees had received much attention in Europe over the last decades, and especially since 2015 due to the war in Syria. The number of asylum-seekers increased rapidly, and reception centers and further integration of newly arrived immigrants became focus on the agenda in all of Europe. As the first point of interaction between the hosting country and asylum seekers, reception centers can influence the individual's further life and integration in their host country. Norway received more than 30 000 asylum-seekers in 2015, and most of these were placed in reception centers. On average, individuals live in reception centers for well over a year and a half in Norway, and for some groups the period is substantially longer.

As the reception centers is the first placement for the asylum-seekers, and these placements usually lasts over a longer period of time, the centers have a potential large impact on the asylum seekers first opportunities for integration. Despite the large interest for understanding integration, little quantitative research exists on the impact of reception centers on asylum-seekers' further integration. The research that exists, the clear majority uses interviews and survey data. The existing research shows that the period and the length stay at the centers is largely found to have a negative effect on the individual. These findings are explained by insecurity about the future, trauma from the travel or their home country, small social network, lack of opportunities at the centers and low living standards. (Weiss et. al, 2017; de Vroome & van Tubergen, 2010; Hainmueller et.al, 2016).

Some studies find that the stay in reception centers can have a positive effect on later-in-life outcomes. Comparing asylum-seekers with resettlement refugees suggest that the asylum-seekers improve their long-term integration through receiving country-specific knowledge, developing language skills and establishing a social network when living in the centers (Bevelander, 2011). Damen et. al (2021) finds both negative and positive relationships from reception center stays, concluding that this period could be both an obstacle and a facilitator. However, a large-scale impact study has not yet been conducted. While quantitative research on asylum-seekers and life outcomes is largely focused on economic integration in the host country, these studies can to little or no extent control for the individuals first period in the country, which in most European countries is through a stay in reception center(s) (Djuve, A. B. & Grødem, A. S., 2014).

A first step to include this first period in a new country for asylum-seekers is to understand how this process can differ for different groups. This paper attempts to understand the selection into asylum, and the paths through reception centers that the individuals have before a decision on their asylum claims is made. This paper aims to provide an understanding of the (in)stability of different groups in their application process and to further explore the heterogeneity of this period of for the asylum seekers that will move on to live in Norway.

This is done using Norwegian register data from arrival of the asylum-seekers, their application process and stays in reception centers. The findings will contribute to understanding how this first period can vary in for example length and number of relocations, that can create (in)stability for the asylum-seekers. This study maps out the different paths of the reception center period for different groups and identifies the selection process of who is granted asylum. This leads to the two research questions:

- 1) Who is granted asylum?
- 2) How does the reception center period vary for asylum-seekers?

Data and methods

This project will use register data from Statistics Norway and the Norwegian Immigration Authority on asylum-seekers and reception centers. This is a unique and unused dataset that follows the asylum-seekers stay in different centers and their application process. I follow individuals placed in centers from 2005 to 2015. The dataset consists of about 100 000 individuals, where about 56.000 were granted asylum by 2017.

With this data, it is possible to follow the asylum-seekers from their first registration in Norway and until today, with individual background variables such as education and length of stay in a center, as well as step-by-step follow the application process before being granted asylum in Norway. The average time spent in centers is approximately 1,5 years, with large differences between individuals and different characteristics, such as time of arrival, country background, family type, age and sex. Most individuals live in more than one center during their application process. The majority lives in three reception centers on average, but the variation is large.

To explore the different paths for the asylum-seekers, an event-history approach is used. The analysis will include arrival cohorts from 2005 to 2015 and focus on two outcomes – result of the asylum claims and number of relocations in the application period. With these outcomes it is possible to explore who is selected into asylum in Norway, and how the reception center period differs among the asylum-seekers.

Table 1: Sample of dataset by status, year of arrival, gender, and larger country backgrounds

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Days in reception	
		centers	Nr. of relocations
		Mean	Mean
<i>Status:</i>			
Granted	55.966	478.9	3.4
Not granted	46.309	408.8	3.5
<i>Year of arrival:</i>			
2005	5.342	444	3.1
2019	17.082	644.6	3.7
2015	31.132	300.7	3.4
<i>Gender:</i>			
Women	30.692	478	3.3
Men	82.193	405.4	3.5
<i>Country background:</i>			
Afghanistan	15.361	469.4	3.7
Eritrea	15.753	427.41	3.4
Somalia	9.793	505.2	3.6
Syria	14.174	349.4	3.7
Iraq	10.695	450.5	3.7

Preliminary results

The preliminary results show that there are differences in the length of reception center stay until (not) granted asylum. There are clear differences between arrival year, suggesting that arriving in 2008 and 2009 lead to longer stays before a decision on the asylum claim. This correlates with the large increases in arrivals in those years, suggesting that time of arrival can impact the reception center period. There are also large differences between the largest country backgrounds, where Eritreans and Syrian more quickly moves through the system, while Iraqis and Afghans have a longer waiting process.

Table 2: Survival curve for the total population before granted asylum

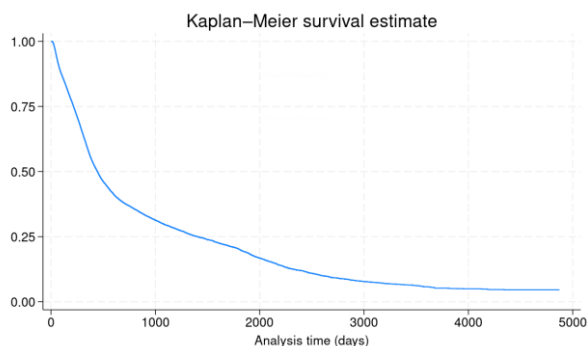
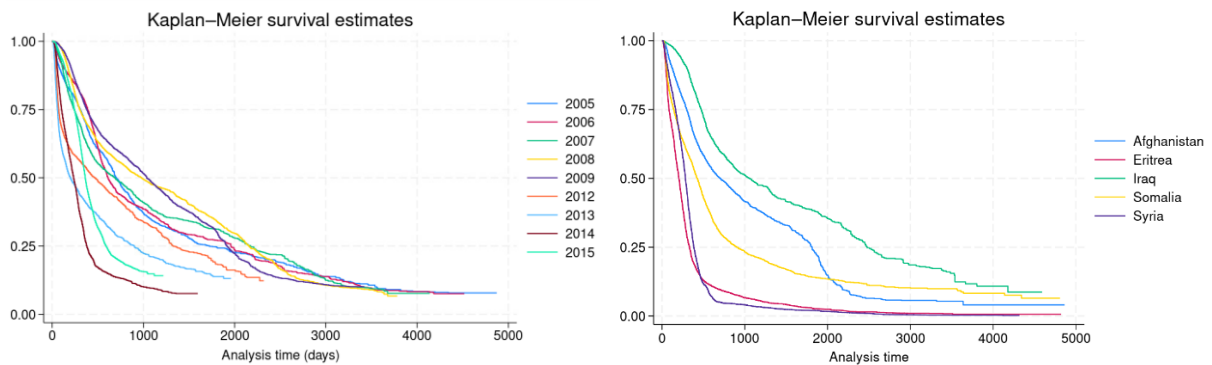


Table 3: Survival curves for granted asylum by year and by country background



Discussion/Conclusion and further analysis (next steps)

The preliminary results show that there is heterogeneity in the rate and selection into asylum in this process. Time of arrival seems to be important, as arriving in larger cohorts seem to increase waiting time and instability in their reception center period. Further analysis will also include relocation as a measure of instability and change in the reception center period.

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