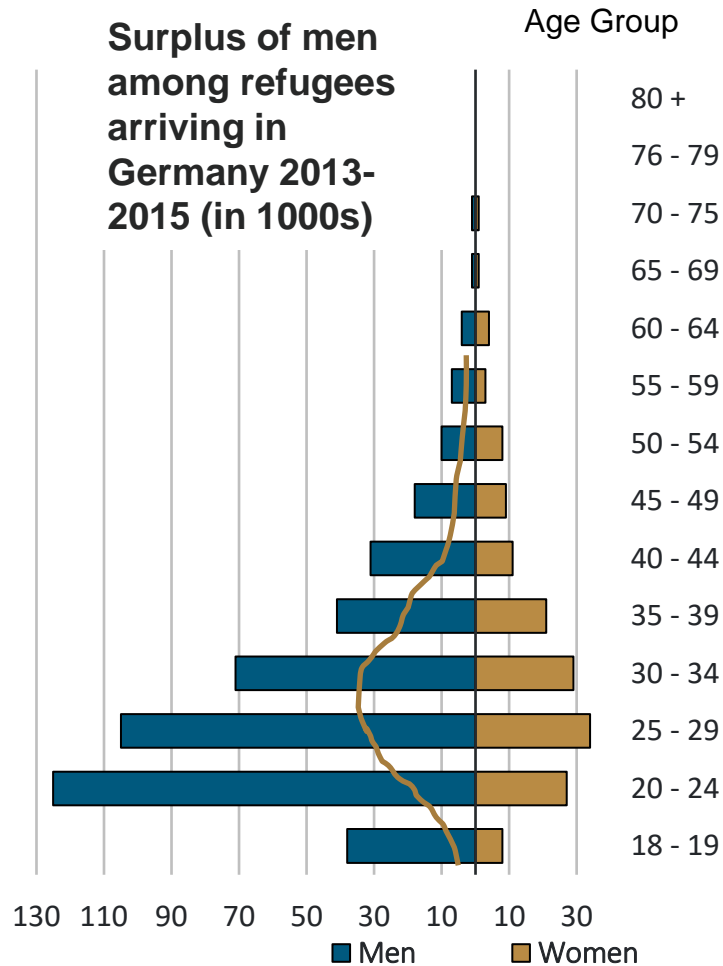# Partnership formation in the context of refugee migration: What role do partner preferences among refugees and the German population play?

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together with Stefanie Heyne and Jana Kuhlemann
MZES, University of Mannheim

Motivation and aims of the PARFORM project

Surplus of men among refugees arriving in Germany 2013-2015 (in 1000s)

Age Group

Men	Women
80 +	
76 - 79	
70 - 75	
65 - 69	
60 - 64	
55 - 59	
50 - 54	
45 - 49	
40 - 44	
35 - 39	
30 - 34	
25 - 29	
20 - 24	
18 - 19	

130 110 90 70 50 30 10   10 30

■ Men   ■ Women

Imbalanced sex ratios

■ foster the formation of mixed unions due to a shortage of potential partners of the opposite sex within one's own group (Nauck, 2008)

■ also increase immigrants' propensity to marry transnationally (González-Ferrer, 2006)

Source: Brücker et al. (2019), based on the data from the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Sample, 2016

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Theoretical framework

Factors influencing partner search (e.g. Kalmijn 1998)

- Individual preferences (for homophily)
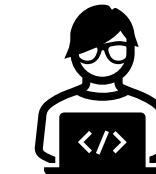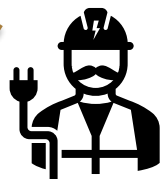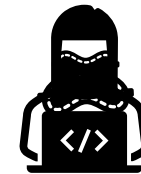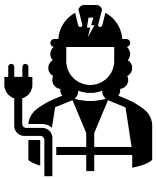- Opportunity structure of the partner market ("who does not meet, does not mate")
- Third-party influence (e.g. parents, peers, ethnic or religious community)

Focus on individual preferences and their manifestations into partnership patterns:
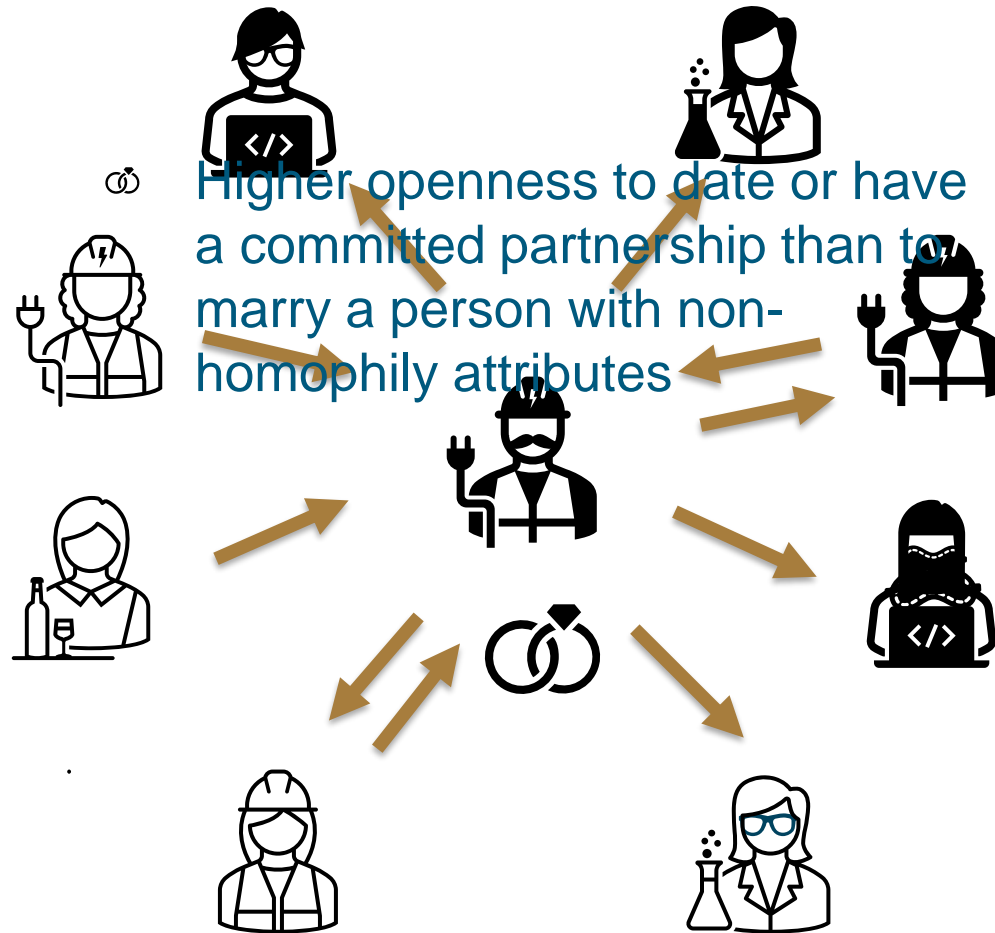
- Homophily preferences
- Winnowing

Homophily

- Preferences for partners who share similar characteristics, such as educational level, race, religion or ethnic background (Buss 1985)
- Economic theory: higher utility of homogeneous partnerships (Becker 1974)
- Importance of cultural similarity: individuals prefer partners who share similar norms, values, attitudes, beliefs and worldviews (Kalmijn 1998)

Homophily: Expectations

⚭ Higher preferences for person with similar characteristics in terms of

  ⚭ Ethnic origin

  ⚭ Religious denomination

  ⚭ Religiosity

  ⚭ Education
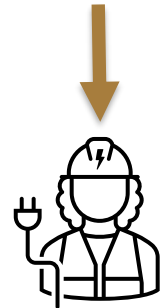
Winnowing

- Idea: Strength of endogamy depends on the level of commitment

- Increases from dating over cohabitation to marriage (e.g. Munniksma et al. 2012; Blackwell & Lichter 2004)

    - Utility of homophily increases with level of commitment (e.g. raising children)

    - But also third-party influences (peer pressure, parental influence, ethnic or religious community)

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Winnowing: Expectations

Higher openness to date or have a committed partnership than to marry a person with non-homophily attributes

Marital or non-marital relationships?

- Established link between **religiosity** and restrictive attitudes towards non-marital relationships or pre-marital cohabitation (Adamczyk 2013, Lewis and Kashayp 2013, Marsiglio and Shehan 1993, Ahrold and Meston 2010, Simon 2008, Röder 2015; Scheepers et al. 2002)

- **Islam** denounces sexual liberalisation most strongly of other major religions in Western countries (Finke and Adamczyk 2008; Hennink, Diamond and Cooper 1999; Jelen 2014; Yuchtmann-Yaar and Alkalay 2007)

- Higher levels of rejection of non-marital relationships among refugees than the established population
  - Muslims should reject non-marital relationships stronger than non-Muslims

Data

PARFORM

- survey of male refugees
- with Syrian or Afghan citizenship
- who arrived in Germany between 2014 and 2018
- unmarried
- and who were born between 1986 and 2002

- PARFORM wave 1 (collected in 2022/23, respondents are ~28 years old, only men);
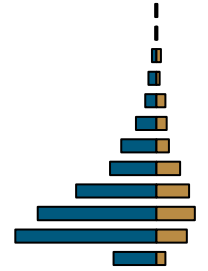- CAPI and CAWI modes

CILS4EU-DE

- longitudinal cohort survey of young people
- with and without migration background
- Youth with migration background are predominantly children of immigrants

- Wave 9 (year 2022, respondents are ~27 years old);
- CAWI and PAPI modes

Descriptive characteristics of the samples

	PARFORM data			CILS4EU-DE data	
	Refugees	Syrians	Afghans	Migrants	Natives
Education					
No university degree	80.70	76.00	89.12	64.69	57.91
University degree	19.30	24.00	10.88	35.31	42.09
Religious denomination					
Muslim	82.60	82.69	82.45	16.64	0.35
Christian	5.18	5.45	4.70	47.88	60.00
Other religion	9.21	7.66	11.99	3.06	0.70
No religion	3.01	4.21	0.87	32.43	38.95
Religiosity					
Religion not important	39.93	37.52	44.25	72.16	87.44
Religion important	60.07	62.48	55.75	27.84	12.56
Timing-related					
Age (mean)	28.67	29.52	27.16	26.86	26.80
Years dating in Germany (mean) (for migrants and natives: time since age 14)	7.68	7.72	7.62	12.86	12.80
Interview mode					
CAPI	*37.89*	*53.10*	*10.63*	*0*	*0*
PAPI	*0*	*0*	*0*	*18.51*	*15.12*
Phone	*0*	*0*	*0*	*7.47*	*6.86*
CAWI	*62.11*	*46.90*	*89.37*	*74.02*	*78.02*
Total	2,259	1,450	809	589	860

Partership Preferences

Factorial survey experiment (FSE)

ParForm

- FSE on partnership preferences of refugees (PARFORM data), natives and established migrants in Germany (CILS4EU-DE data)

- FSE allows to measure (homophily) preferences (more) directly and allows

  - to disentangle highly correlated characteristics (e.g., country of origin and religious denomination)

  - to examine rare combinations of characteristics in the analysed population (e.g., Christian Afghan men)

- Variation in the level of commitment / different types of partnership

  - dating, casual relationship

  - committed partnership (engagement)

  - marriage

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Vignettes (English translation)

ParForm

You have met a <u>Syrian woman, who lives in Germany</u>. This woman is <u>Muslim</u>, but <u>religion does not play a big role</u> in her life. The woman has <u>never attended a university</u>.

In general, can you imagine <u>getting married</u> to the woman described?

CILS4EU-DE

You have met someone, who <u>came to Germany as a refugee from Syria a few years ago</u>. This person is <u>Christian,</u> and <u>religion plays an important role</u> in his (her) life. The person has a <u>university degree</u>.

In general, can you imagine having a <u>committed romantic partnership</u> with the person described?

11-point answer scale from 1 (least preferred) to 11 (most preferred) in both data sets

Dimensions and levels

ParForm

Dimensions	Levels	
	PARFORM	**CILS4EU**
Type of partnership	1. Marriage 2. Committed romantic partnership 3. Casual romantic partnership	
Characteristics of the described partner		
Origin	1. German 2. Neither German nor Syrian/Afghan, lives in Germany 3. Syrian/Afghan, lives in Germany 4. Syrian/Afghan, does not live in Germany	1. Born in Germany, without migration background 2. Born in Germany, with migration background 3. Syrian refugee 4. Afghan refugee
Religious denomination	1. Christian 2. Muslim	
Religiosity	1. Religion does not play a big role in the person's life 2. Religion plays an important role in the person's life	
Educational attainment	1. Never has been enrolled in tertiary education 2. Has a tertiary educational degree	

Research methodology

Factorial survey design:

- total of 96 vignettes

- 48 vignettes employed (D-efficient design accounting for all 2-level interactions)

- 6 (PARFORM) and 4 (CILS4EU-DE) vignettes per person; randomized order of vignettes

Data analysis method:

- Regression analyses with clustered standard errors (controlled for order of vignette and survey mode)

- PARFORM: 15,505 vignette evaluations by 2,577 male refugees

- CILS4EU-DE: 4,542/4,313 vignette evaluations by 1,136/1,079 women without/with migration background respectively

Partantnership preference structure

Partnership preference structure by respondents' religious affiliation

Casual partnerships are **least** preferred by both **Muslim** refugees and **Muslim** migrants,

Of all partnership constellations, **co-ethnic partners from abroad** are a **least preferred** option for both **Muslim** and **non-Muslim refugees**

Partnerships with refugees **are least favoured** by all women from established population, but the **rejection** is the highest among **Muslim migrant females**

Winnowing

Male refugees
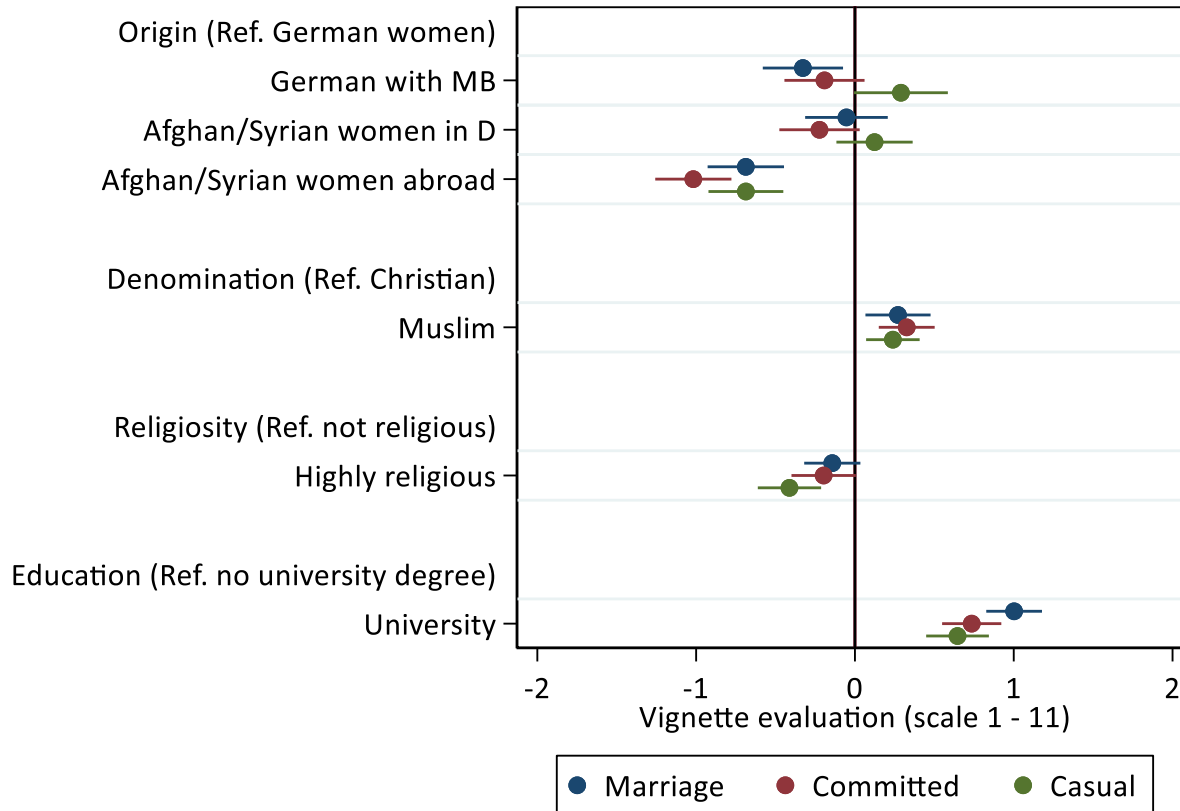
- Male refugees **prefer individuals with migration background** over majority native-born **for casual relationships**
- They **prefer native Germans** over individuals with migration background for **marriages**

Interim summary 1

- **Male Muslim refugees**—similarly to **female Muslim migrants**— prefer **casual** partnerships **least** of all other relationship types
  - female natives evaluate casual and committed partnerships as similarly more attractive than marriages
- **Male refugees** are the **least preferred** group; but the **rejection** is the **highest** among **Muslim migrant females**
- Male refugees **prefer co-ethnic partners** from abroad **least**
- Male refugees **prefer** women, who themselves have **migration background for casual relationships**

- **Options:**
→ **Given limited number of female co-ethnics in Germany, quickly find a co-ethnic marriage partner in this country**
→ **If not successful, settle for options provided by non-co-ethnics, which are casual or committed partnerships**
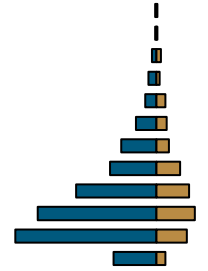
Partnership History

Partnership history: Measurement

ParForm

Previous dating history (as dependent variables)

- Partnership status: Has ever had a partner vs not
- Partnership type: Has ever had a casual / committed partnership vs not
- Partners' characteristics: Has had a **high share** of
    - interethnic vs. not interethnic partnerships
    - interreligious vs. not interreligious partnerships
    - partnerships with Germans vs. non-Germans
    - partnerships with highly educated partners vs not
- **Logit models** with the following control variables: age, survey mode, denomination, religiosity, own education, parental education, years dating in Germany (for migrants: age-14)
- Total sample of 3,708 **men**
    - refugees (60.92%)
    - migrants (15.88%)
    - natives (23.19%)

Partship status and types
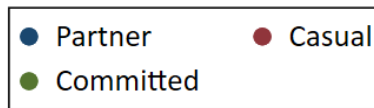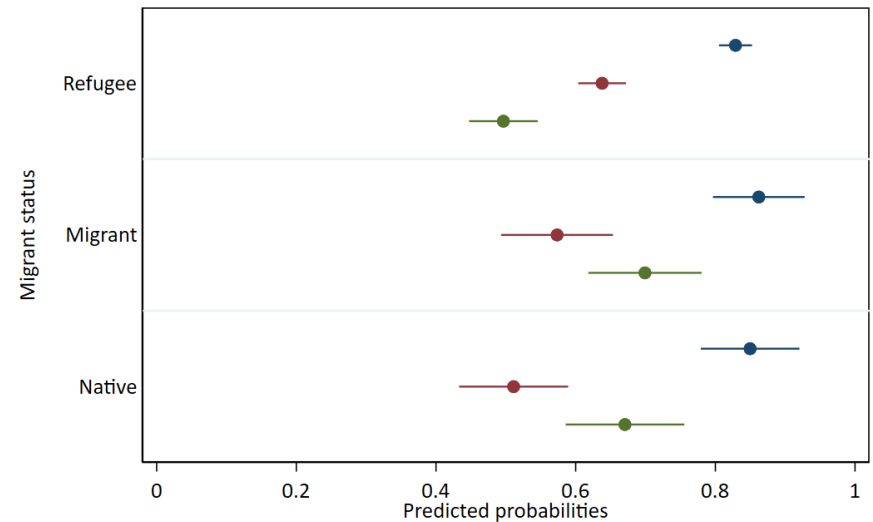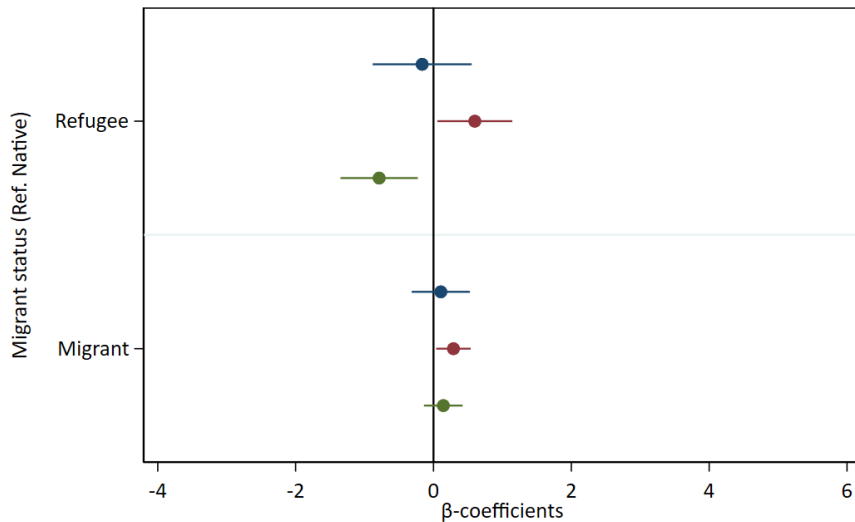
- ☞ In contrast to their preferences, male refugees are **more likely** to have **casual and are less likely** to be in **committed** partnerships
- ☞ Established minorities are also more likely to be in **casual partnerships** than the native majority
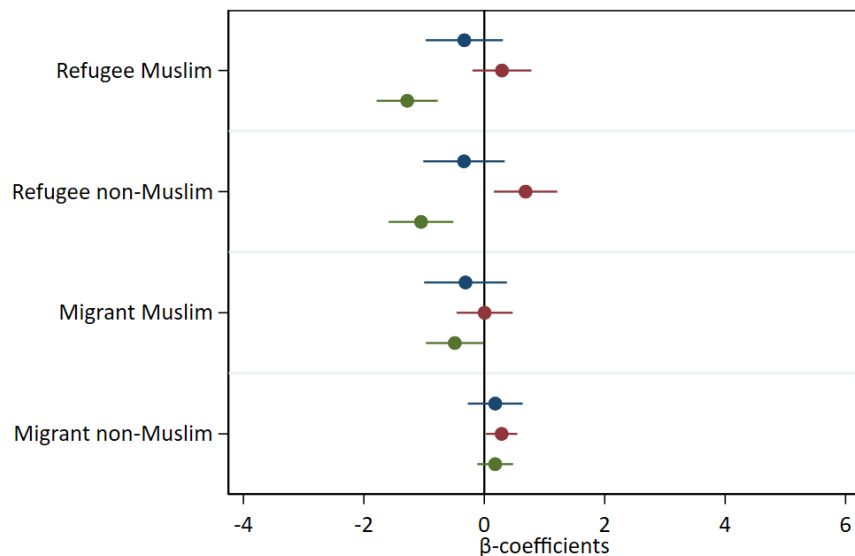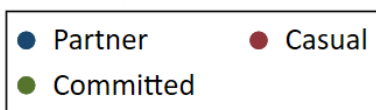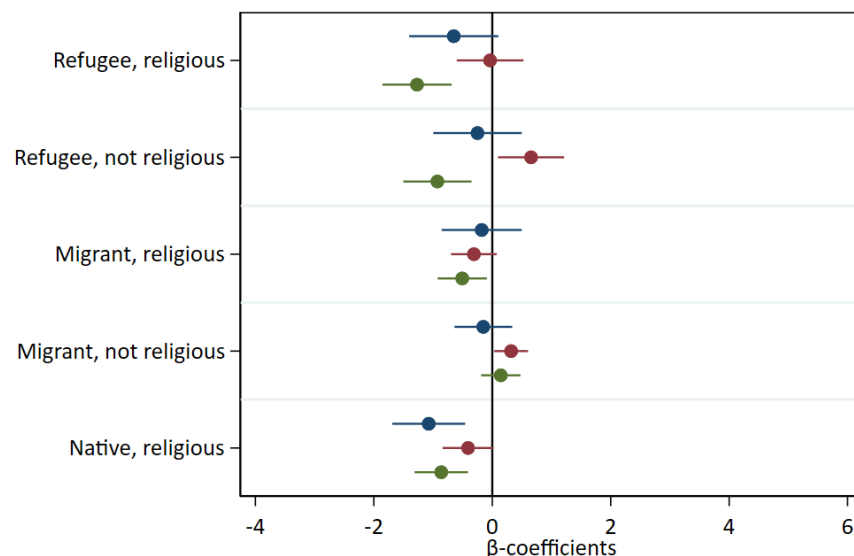
Partment characteristics
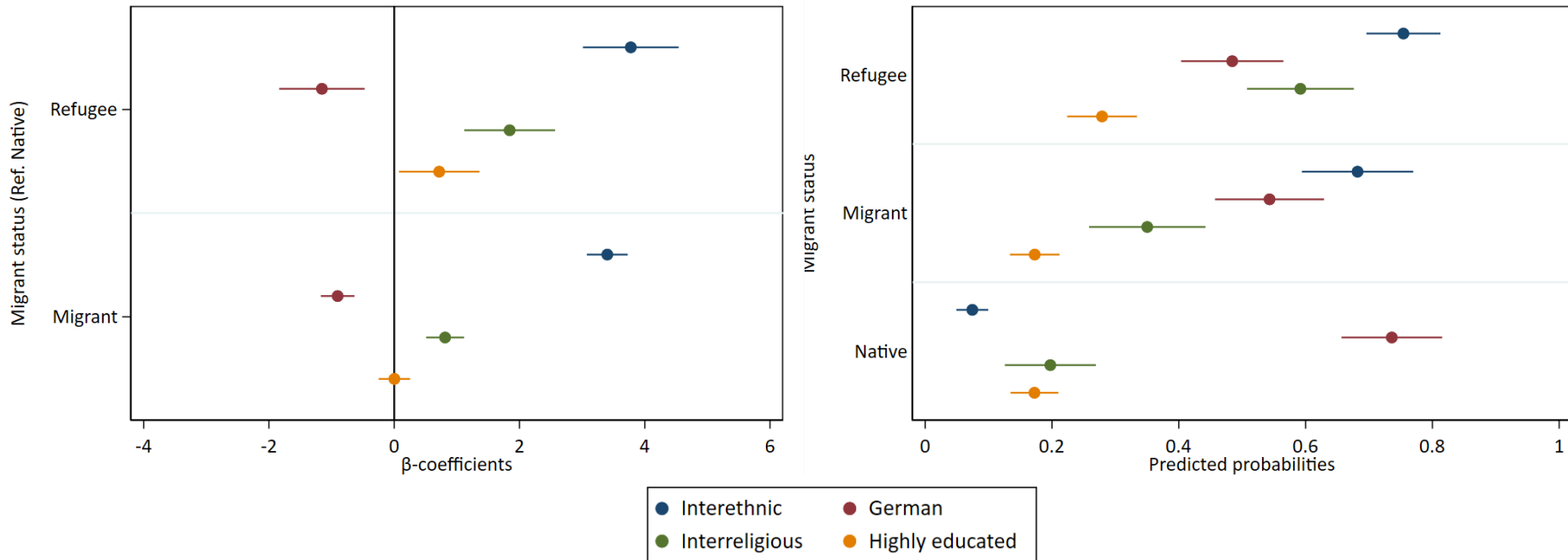
- ⚭ Refugees (and established minorities) are **more likely** to be in **interethnic** partnerships and **less likely** to be in **partnerships with Germans** than natives
- ⚭ Refugees are **more likely** to be in **interreligious** partnerships, significantly more than established minorities and natives
- ⚭ Refugees **are more likely** to be in partnerships with **tertiary educated** persons than natives

Religious affiliation, religiosity and partnership type

- Ⓢ **Non-Muslim** refugees (and non-Muslim minorities) are **more likely** to have **casual** partnerships
- Ⓢ **Non-religious** refugees (and migrants) are more likely to have **casual** relationships
- Ⓢ Also (not shown): Refugees—**both Muslim and non-Muslim as well as religious and non-religious**— are **mor**e likely to be in interreligious partnerships

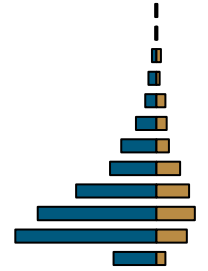# Education, partnership types and characteristics
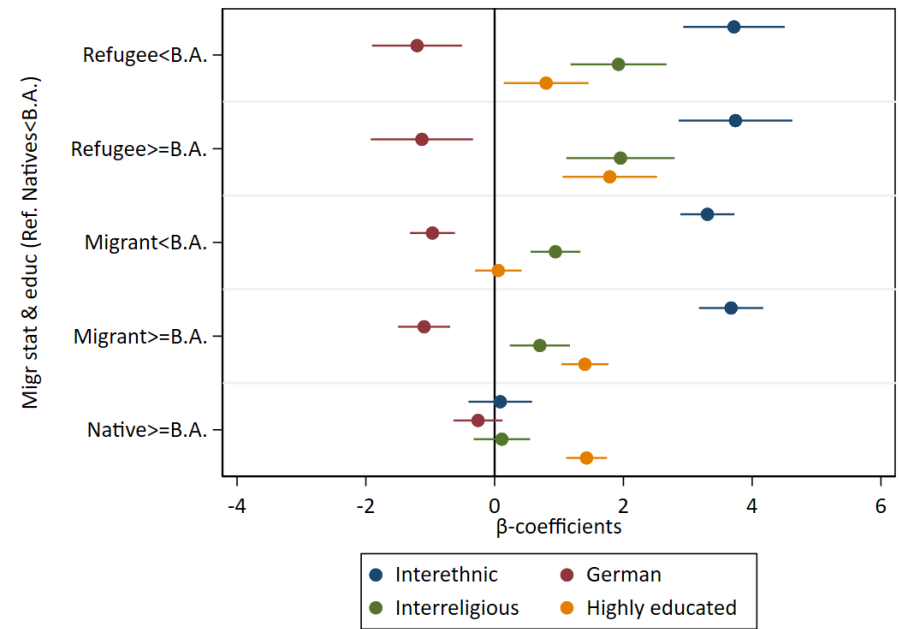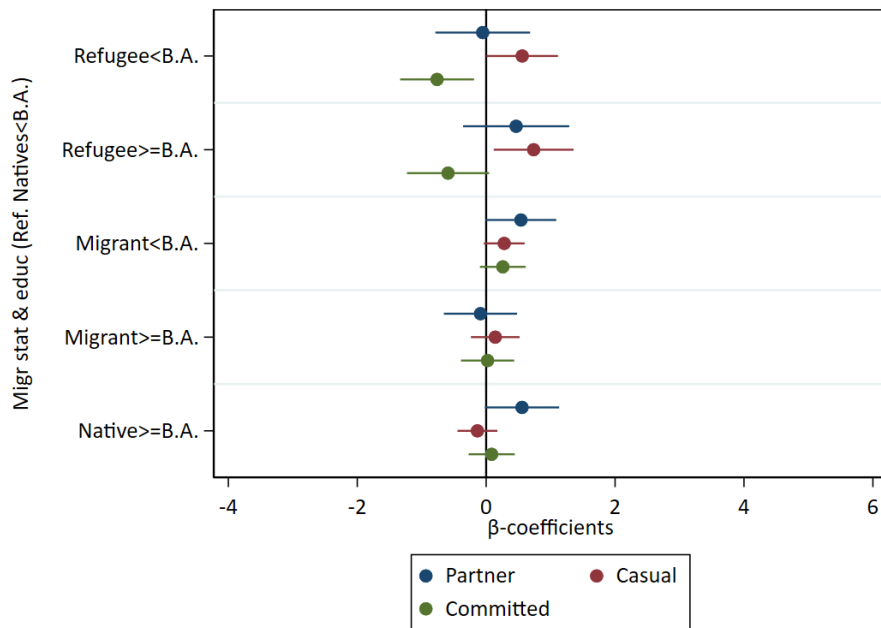
- Refugees—both **tertiary and non-tertiary educated** — are **more likely** to be in **casual** and **less likely** to be in **committed partnerships** than native-born men
- Compared to non-tertiary educated natives, **non-tertiary educated refugees** are **more likely** to be in partnerships with **tertiary educated**

Interim summary 2

- Male refugees are **more likely to have casual partnerships**, but are **less likely to be in committed partnerships**
  - Particularly **non-Muslim and non-religious refugees** are more likely to have casual relationships
- Refugees are **more likely** to be in **interethnic and interreligious** partnerships and **less likely** to be in **partnerships with Germans**
  - This is **independent of their religious denomination and religiosity**
- Refugees are more likely to be in partnerships with tertiary educated women
  - Particularly **non-religious immigrants are more likely** to be in partnerships with tertiary educated

- **Most probable type of a partnership (particularly for non-Muslim or non-religious refugee): casual**
- **A profile of a most probable partner: tertiary-educated non-German woman practicing religion different from that of a respondent (non-Muslim)**

Marriage as Outcome

Descriptive evidence

	Refugees	Syrian	Afghan	Migrants	Natives
% Married out of total	22.39	23.74	19.98	9.62	6.46
Total N	2,233	1,432	801	582	852
% Married out of all in partnerships	47.30	48.99	44.08	16.18	10.11
Total N	1,057	694	363	346	544

Characteristics of refugees' marriage partners (compared to those of a current or ex-partner)

Legend:
- Interethnic
- Interreligious
- Same origin
- German
- Highly educated
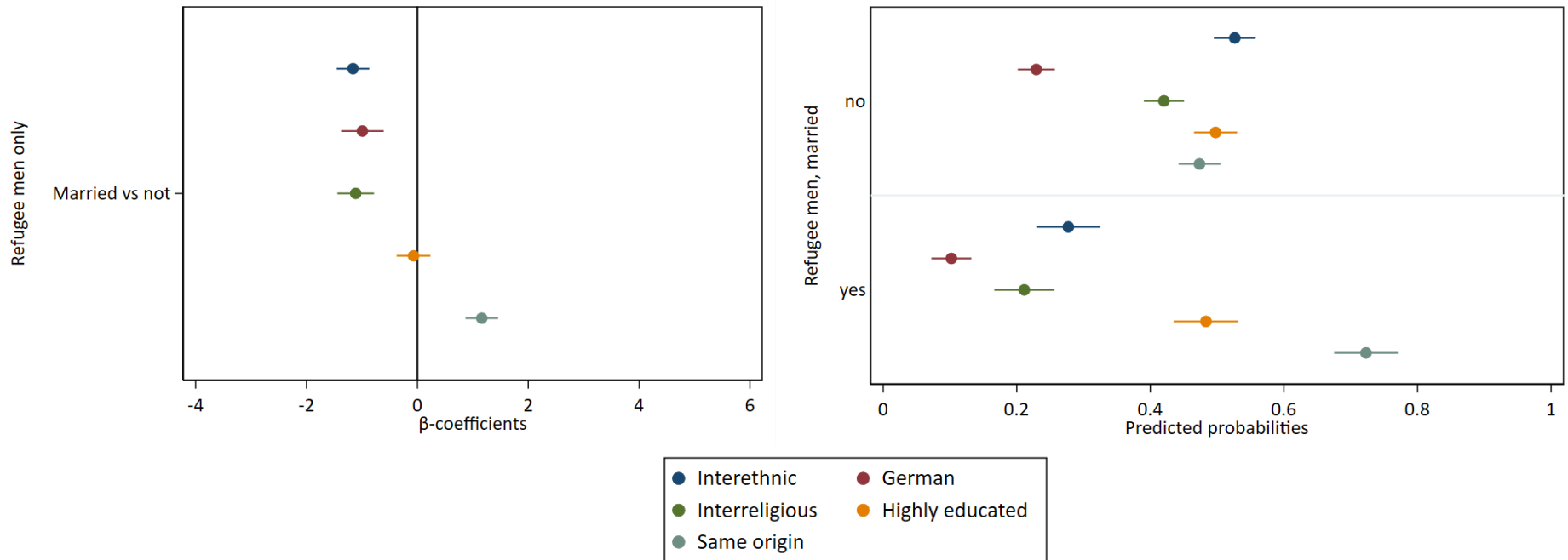
⚭ **Married refugees** are **less likely to be in interethnic or interreligious partnership or a partnership with a German woman**, but are **more likely to be** in a **partnership with a co-ethnic woman** compared to those who are in unmarried partnerships

Conclusions

Male refugees

- Refugees' partnership preferences often align with norms prevalent in their origin countries, prioritizing engagement leading to marriage

- Religion and religiosity remain significant predictors of partnership choices

- Casual relationships, however, offer freedom from cultural constraints

- There is a trend towards liberalization from heritage culture, with refugees rejecting "transnational" arrangements

Women from the established population

- Refugees are the least preferred partnership partners for the established population, regardless of migration background

- Muslim migrant women exhibit a particularly strong rejection of partnering with refugees compared to other groups (Kogan et al. 2023)

- Women from the established population are more likely to express a preference for either casual or committed relationships

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Discussion

ⵁ On one hand, **refugees' partnership patterns** tend to align with the **partnership preferences of the established population**:

    ⚭ **Casual relationships with non-co-ethnic tertiary-educated woman** practicing **religion different** from that of the respondent (predominantly non-Muslim woman)

ⵁ On the other hand, refugees tend to adhere to culturally imposed preferences:

    ⚭ **Co-ethnic marriage partners, but those preferably residing in Germany**

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Partnership formation in the context of refugee migration: What role do partner preferences among refugees and the German population play?

- ⚭ Refugees' **own** (and/or their families') **partnership preferences** are reflected mainly in refugees' **marriage** choices
- ⚭ Refugees' **non-marital** (mostly casual) **relationships** are shaped by **partnership preferences of the established German population**
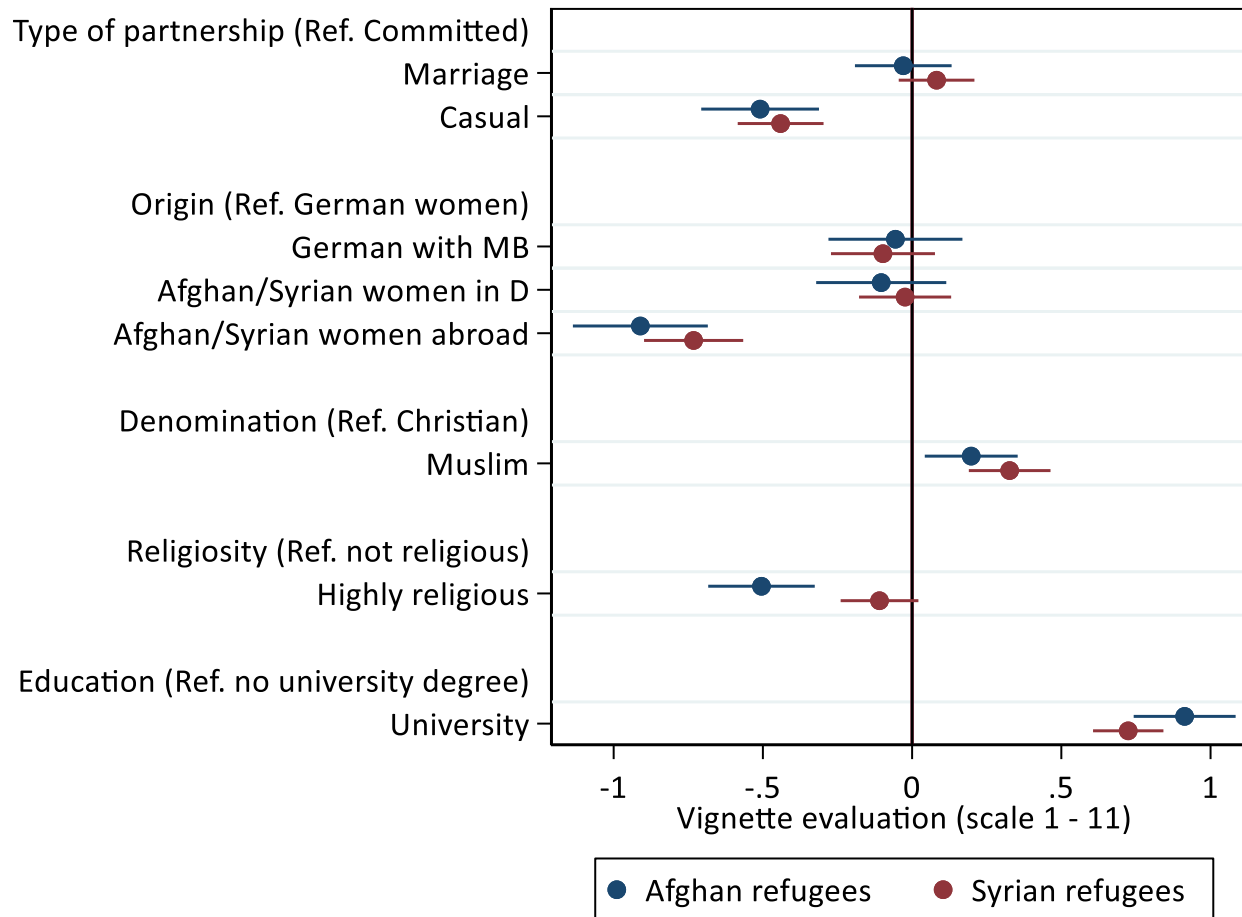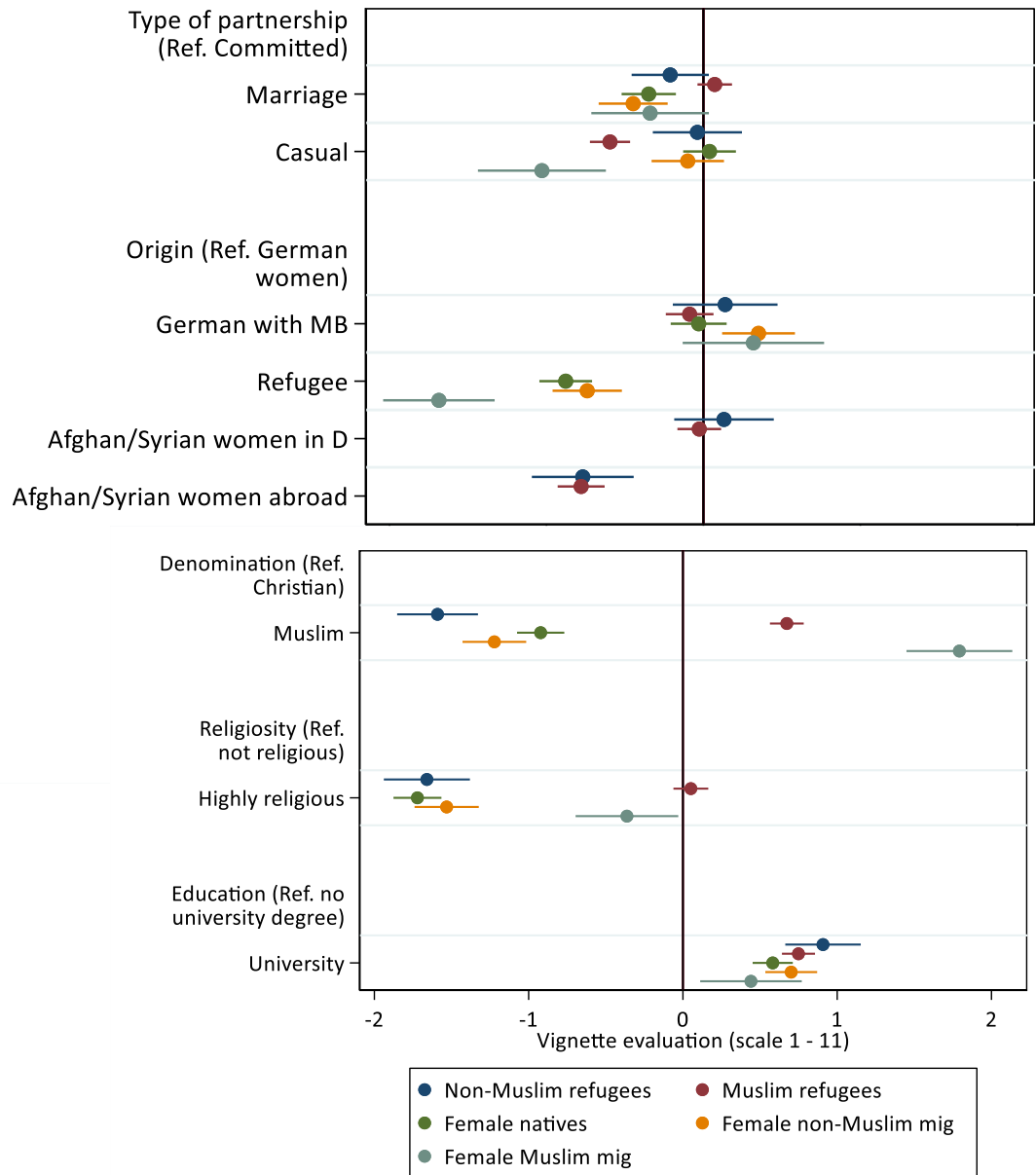
Thank you!

Irena Kogan
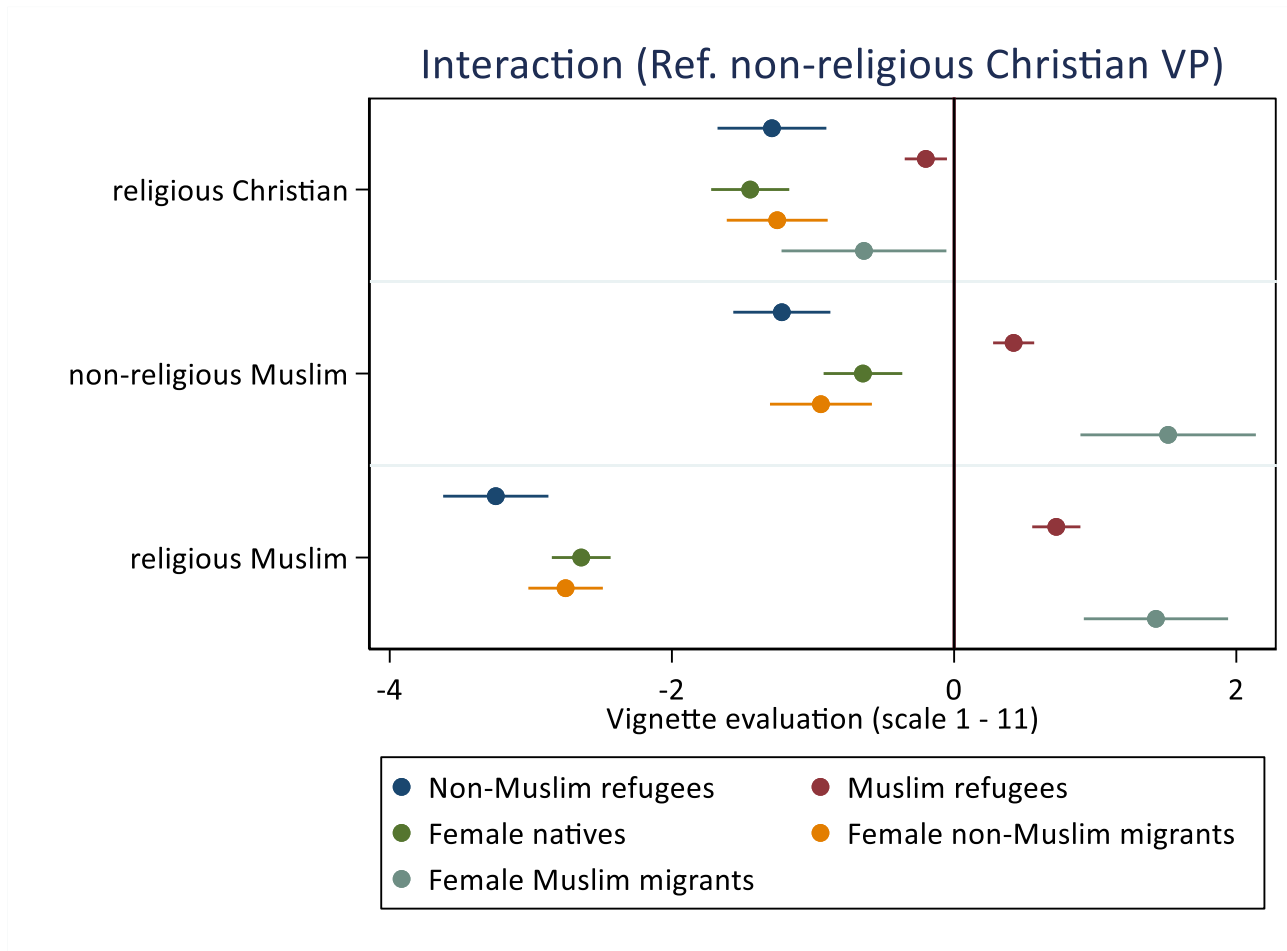irena.kogan@uni-mannheim.de

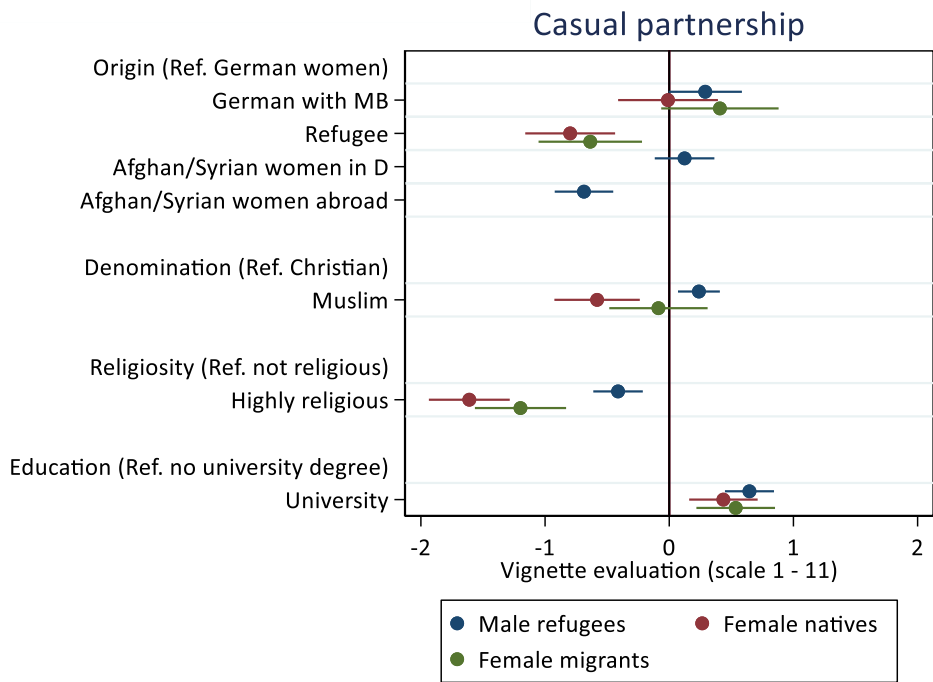# Appendix

Differentiation between Afghan and Syrian refugees

Partnership preference structure by respondents' religious affiliation

Type of partnership (Ref. Committed)
- Marriage
- Casual

Origin (Ref. German women)
- German with MB
- Refugee
- Afghan/Syrian women in D
- Afghan/Syrian women abroad

Denomination (Ref. Christian)
- Muslim

Religiosity (Ref. not religious)
- Highly religious

Education (Ref. no university degree)
- University

Vignette evaluation (scale 1 - 11)

Legend:
- Non-Muslim refugees
- Muslim refugees
- Female natives
- Female non-Muslim mig
- Female Muslim mig

Religious homogamy

Interaction (Ref. non-religious Christian VP)

Vignette evaluation (scale 1 - 11)

Legend:
- Non-Muslim refugees
- Muslim refugees
- Female natives
- Female non-Muslim migrants
- Female Muslim migrants

Winnowing

Marriage

Origin (Ref. German women)
German with MB
Refugee
Afghan/Syrian women in D
Afghan/Syrian women abroad

Denomination (Ref. Christian)
Muslim

Religiosity (Ref. not religious)
Highly religious

Education (Ref. no university degree)
University

Vignette evaluation (scale 1 - 11)

- Male refugees
- Female natives
- Female migrants

Committed partnership

Origin (Ref. German women)
German with MB
Refugee
Afghan/Syrian women in D
Afghan/Syrian women abroad

Denomination (Ref. Christian)
Muslim

Religiosity (Ref. not religious)
Highly religious

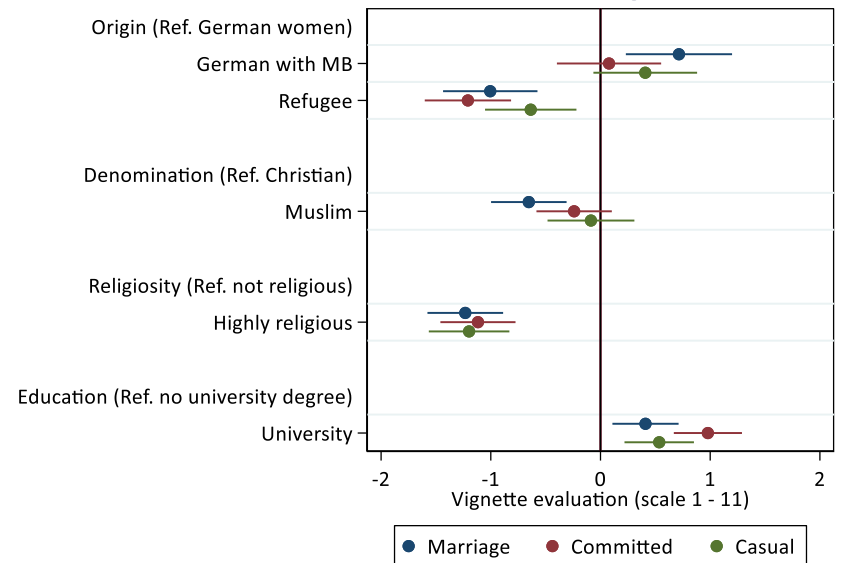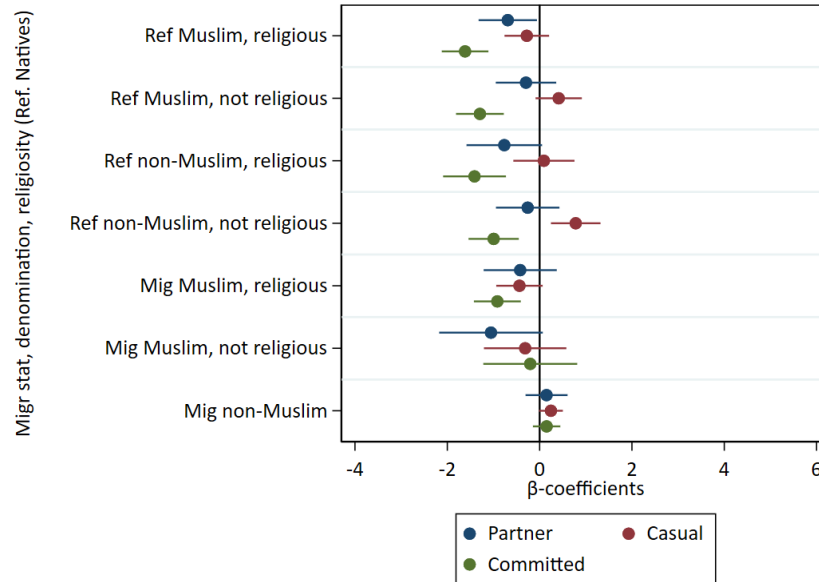Education (Ref. no university degree)
University

Vignette evaluation (scale 1 - 11)

- Male refugees
- Female natives
- Female migrants

Casual partnership

Origin (Ref. German women)
German with MB
Refugee
Afghan/Syrian women in D
Afghan/Syrian women abroad

Denomination (Ref. Christian)
Muslim

Religiosity (Ref. not religious)
Highly religious

Education (Ref. no university degree)
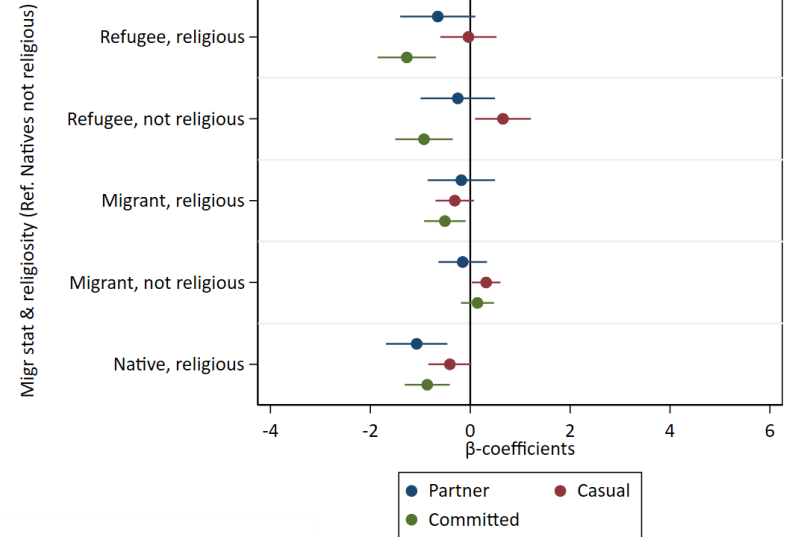University

Vignette evaluation (scale 1 - 11)

- Male refugees
- Female natives
- Female migrants

Male refugees

	Vignette evaluation (scale 1 - 11)
Origin (Ref. German women)	
German with MB	
Afghan/Syrian women in D	
Afghan/Syrian women abroad	
Denomination (Ref. Christian)	
Muslim	
Religiosity (Ref. not religious)	
Highly religious	
Education (Ref. no university degree)	
University	

● Marriage ● Committed ● Casual

Female natives

	Vignette evaluation (scale 1 - 11)
Origin (Ref. German women)	
German with MB	
Refugee	
Denomination (Ref. Christian)	
Muslim	
Religiosity (Ref. not religious)	
Highly religious	
Education (Ref. no university degree)	
University	

● Marriage ● Committed ● Casual

Female migrants

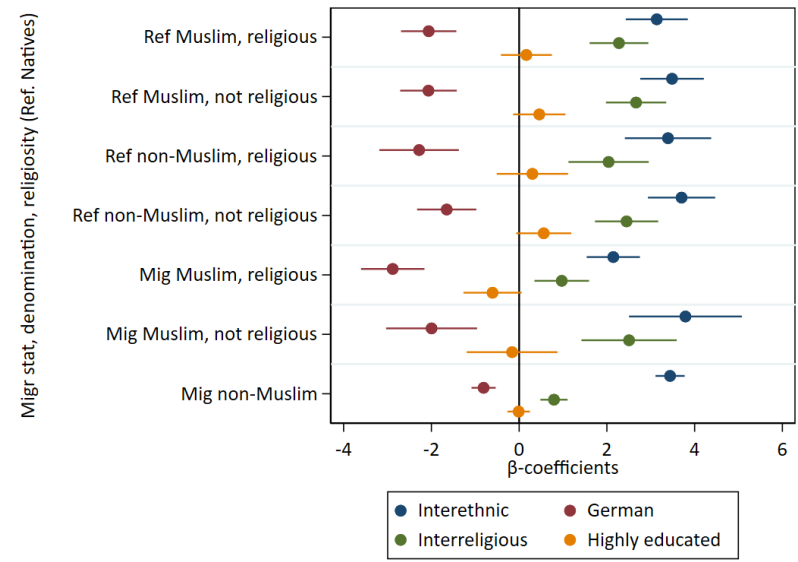|	Vignette evaluation (scale 1 - 11)
Origin (Ref. German women)	
German with MB	
Refugee	
Denomination (Ref. Christian)	
Muslim	
Religiosity (Ref. not religious)	
Highly religious	
Education (Ref. no university degree)	
University	

● Marriage ● Committed ● Casual

Religious affiliation and partnership type

Control variables: age, survey mode, own education, parental education, years dating in Germany (for migrants: age-14)
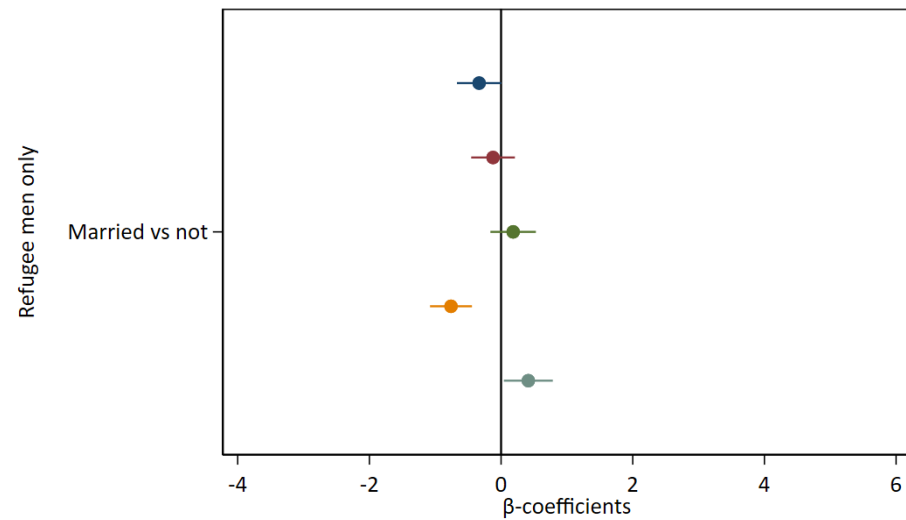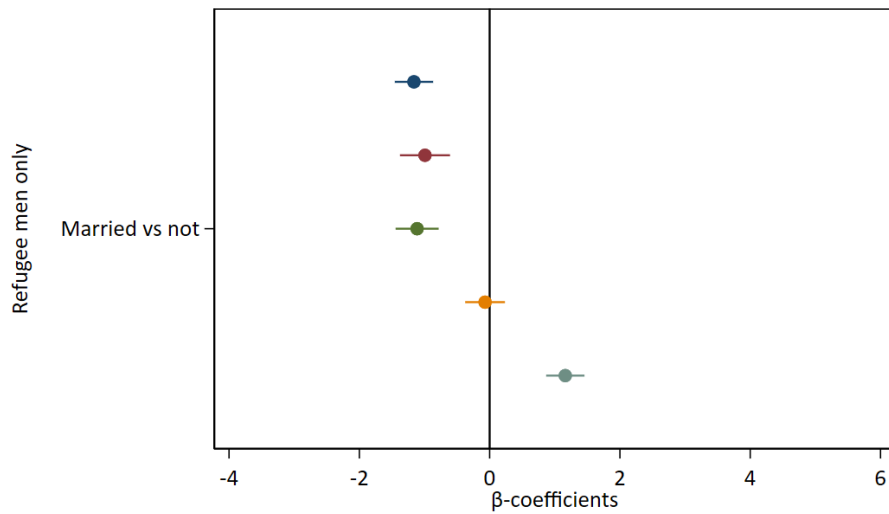
Religious affiliation and partnership characteristics

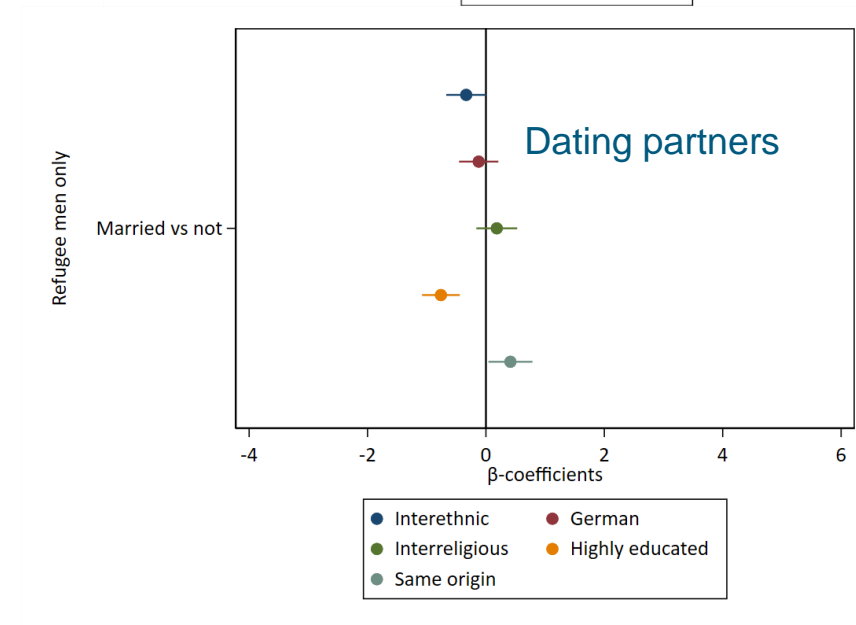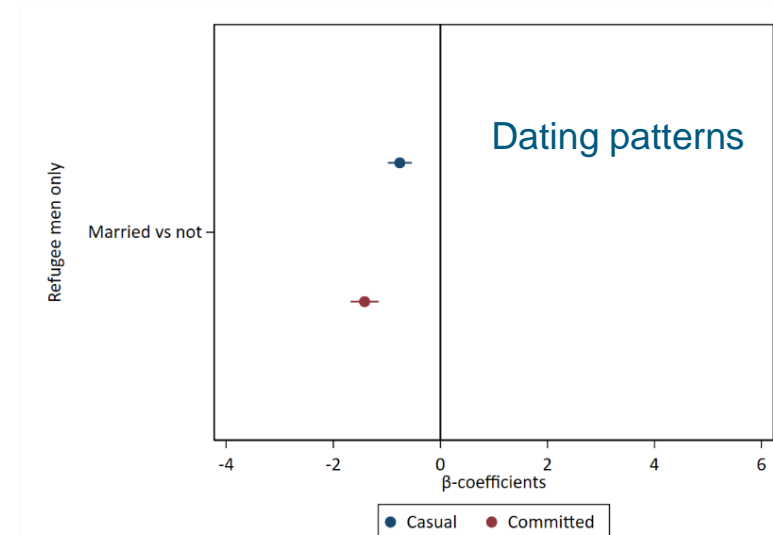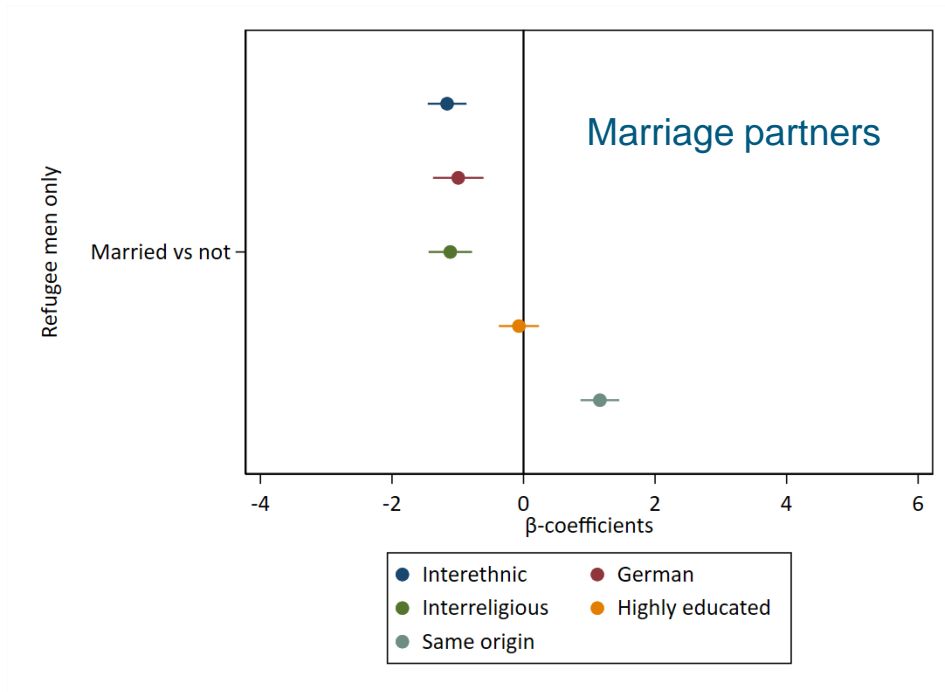Control variables: age, survey mode, own education, parental education, years dating in Germany (for migrants: age-14)

Comparison of refugees' marriage and dating patterns

Comparison of refugees' marriage and dating patterns

Control variables: age, survey mode, denomination, religiosity, own education, parental education, years dating in Germany (for migrants: age-14)