

Research briefing

University of Sussex School of Global Studies



Research assistants during the training programme at the University of Sussex, November 2013

Optimising refugee resettlement in the UK: a comparative analysis

Update two years into the project

Summary

Two years after the start of the project:

- Two PhD students from the University of Sussex and eleven formerly resettled refugees were recruited to work as research assistants on the project. All RAs followed a week long training course at the University of Sussex before research began.
- An advisory committee consisting of members of local authorities and support organisations was assembled and consulted before starting data collection, and after data analyses.
- Data collection took place among resettled refugees who arrived in 2010 or earlier in Brighton & Hove, Greater Manchester, Norwich, and Sheffield and included 8 focus groups, 280 questionnaires, and 30 semi-structured interviews during the first stage (Jan-May 2014). At the second stage (Dec 2014-Feb 2015), 221 of them filled out a second questionnaire, and 30 were interviewed.
- Data from the first stage has now been analysed. Presentations have been made to an international panel on refugee resettlement at the Nordic Migration Conference in Copenhagen in August 2014, and to various other academic and non-academic audiences.
- Dissemination will continue through reports and presentations to key partner organisations and through academic publications, while the last stage of research is prepared to begin in November 2015.

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Research methods

Training

Two PhD students from the University of Sussex and eleven formerly resettled refugees in Brighton & Hove, Greater Manchester, and Norwich were recruited and trained to work as research assistants on the project. Everyone spent a week at the University of Sussex, focussing on research methods and strategies for data collection, while research assistants also provided the research team with helpful advice from their own experiences. Following this, a new version of the main questionnaire was produced and a schedule for questions during focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

Advisory committee

There were two meetings with the project advisory committee (Dec 2013 and Nov 2014). This group consists of invited representatives of local city or county councils, the UK Refugee Council, the Home Office, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Refugee Action, the Norwich Asylum-Seeker and Refugee Forum (NASREF), the Brighton & Hove Refugee & Migrant Forum, a Gateway refugee representative, and academics.

The meetings allowed the research team to present the research project and receive feedback on the research design, survey materials, and results. In a detailed discussion, members gave advice from their practical experience of working with resettled refugees. Research materials were adjusted accordingly before starting data collection.

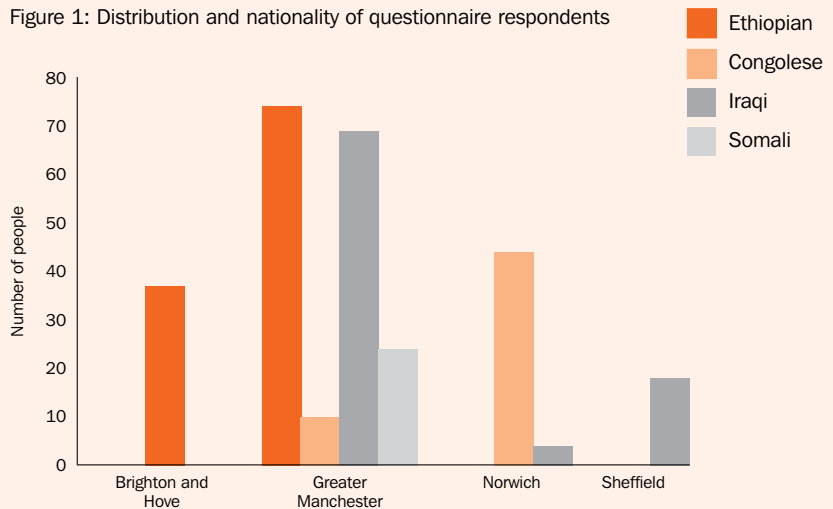
Research design

This research has a longitudinal design. The first stage of the research was completed Jan-May 2014, the second stage Dec 2014-Feb 2015, while the last stage is planned for late 2015.

Research began with focus groups in Norwich, Greater Manchester, and Brighton & Hove which were used to discuss key elements of the questionnaire. This was followed by quantitative data collection, which also took place in Sheffield in addition to the three initial cities. Questionnaires were completed with 280 resettled refugees (148 men and 132 women).

The number of respondents by location and original nationality is displayed in Figure 1 below. Their mean age was 36 years old, ranging from 18 to 80. Of these 280 people, 221 filled out a second questionnaire almost a year later. Both years, semi-structured interviews were completed with 30 refugees.

Figure 1: Distribution and nationality of questionnaire respondents



Challenges

During data collection, we came across two challenges. The first was a greater than expected level of intra-national conflict. In several cases people found it difficult to respond to questionnaires conducted by someone of the same national but different ethnic origin, particularly where the two ethnic groups had a history of conflict in their country of origin. This was resolved through discussions with community groups and individuals, employing additional refugee research assistants, or completing questionnaires with one of the

researchers without a refugee background. In some cases, people were so suspicious of research assistants belonging to different ethnic groups that they refused to be part of the project. This led to the second challenge: it took a long time to reach a satisfactory number of respondents. To compensate for the lack of numbers in Brighton & Hove, Greater Manchester, and Norwich, we decided to include resettled refugees living in Sheffield as well, since one of our research assistants had connections in this city.

Research process

Three types of data have been collected: focus groups, questionnaire and semi-structured interviews:

- **Focus groups** sought information on how refugees interacted with the broader UK population and what terminology was appropriate for investigating those relationships in the questionnaire. This resulted in a final version of the questionnaire.
- **Questionnaires** started with background questions about gender, age, cultural background, time spent in a refugee camp, and year of moving to the UK. The following sections considered refugees' family situation and levels of education and employment, housing situation, language capabilities, citizenship, and religiosity. The final sections investigated the more psychological concepts: well-being, acculturation, quantity and quality of contact with various cultural groups, social capital, perceived discrimination, attitudes towards British people, intergroup anxiety, identity, self-efficacy, cultural understanding, and their expectations of resettlement versus the reality they had experienced.
- During **semi-structured interviews** at the first stage, respondents were asked about their quality of life, social networks and contacts, feelings of belonging and citizenship, and whether they had any advice on how the resettlement process could be improved based on their experiences. During the second stage, we asked about experiences with the Job Centre, ESOL classes, gender and generational differences, and about maintaining one's heritage culture while living in the UK.



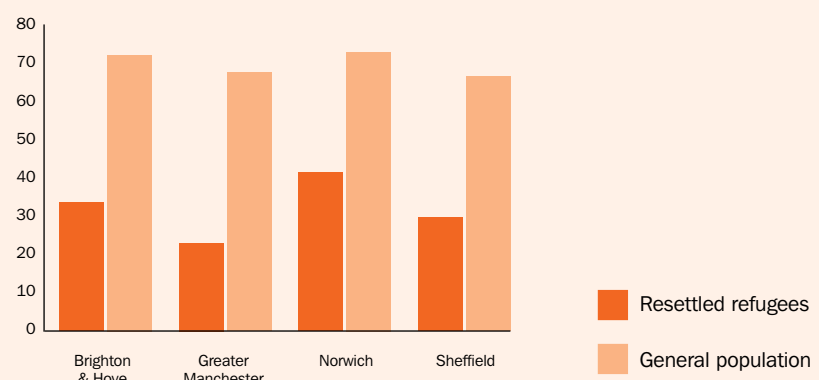
Results

Location differences

The first aim of the research was to find out how the different cities compare in terms of well-being of resettled refugees. No significant differences were found: well-being was the same in all locations. There were however differences in the number of people employed. Figure 2 displays the percentage of respondents in each city who were employed in comparison to

the general employment rates in each location. The highest percentage of employed people among our respondents was in Norwich, while the lowest was in Greater Manchester. Yet, in all locations, less than 41% of respondents was employed – this includes part time and temporary employment, much less than the general employment rates in each location.

Figure 2: Percentage of respondents employed in each city (general population data taken from the ONS data on region and Country Profiles, Economy, June 2013)



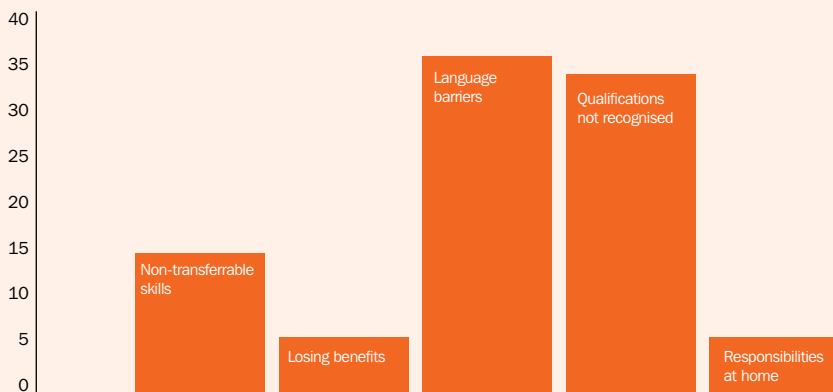
Results

Barriers

To those who were looking for work, but had not found any work yet, we asked about the main difficulties when finding work (Figure 3). Language barriers were mentioned most often, closely followed by qualifications not being recognised in the UK. Both issues were also highlighted in

many interviews, and were indicated as the reason why those respondents who did have a job, had one at a much lower level than their potential. Language barriers were often seen as a more general barrier against participation in society as a whole.

Figure 3: Frequency of reasons cited for difficulty finding work.



Influences on well-being

The second aim of the project is to find the key determinants of well-being among resettled refugees. We currently have analysed data from only one time point, therefore we can only talk about correlates with well-being: we do not know whether X predicts well-being or vice versa.

There were many significant correlations with well-being. For example, strongly positively related to well-being were: social capital, self-efficacy, intergroup confidence, cultural understanding, quantity of contact with people of the same cultural background and with British people, and satisfaction with one's job, house, and education. Strong

negative correlates were: perceived discrimination, intergroup anxiety, and negative contact experiences with British people, with people of the same cultural background, and with people back home, and finally, a longer duration of a search for a place in education.

Based on these correlates, several interesting statistical models have been developed. Those are not all displayed in this briefing, but to summarise: contact with different cultural groups plays an important role in explaining well-being. For example, respondents who have a lot of contact with both British people and people of the same cultural background as themselves have the highest well-being scores.

Key information

Further information

For further information and to access materials please contact:

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