Advances in Life Course Research 52 (2022) 100480

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Advances in Life Course Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/alcr

First union formation among the children of immigrants: A population-wide study in Norway

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
First union formation
Cohabitation
Marriage
Childhood immigrants
The Second generation
Generation 2.5

ABSTRACT

Using Norwegian register data on the total population of individuals who were native-born or who immigrated prior to age 18, this study investigated differences in first union formation across migrant generations, global regions of origin, and gender. Cohabitation was the preferred route into partnerships for all groups, but it was most common among those with either one or two native-born parents. Results provided evidence of a generational gradient in marriage, whereby the native-born children of two immigrants and those immigrating in ages below 13 were less likely to marry than immigrants arriving as teens. Those native born with one native and one immigrant parent were least likely to marry, but most likely to cohabit. The children of immigrants originating from Asia, MENA and Eastern Europe were more marriage prone, whereas those of South-American and European origins were more cohabitation prone, than those originating from elsewhere. Women of most origins and generations more often married compared with men, and this gender gap was largest among those originating from MENA.

1. Introduction

Over recent decades family demographic behavior in Western industrialized countries have undergone major changes, including lower marriage rates, sharp increases in cohabitation and non-marital childbearing (Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011; Holland, 2013; Perelli-Harris et al., 2012), and high rates of union dissolution (Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010). From the late 1960 s and onwards such changes in family behavior have been particularly marked in Scandinavia (Surkyn & Lesthaeghe, 2004). In Norway, over 90% of the general population choose cohabitation as first union (Wiik, 2009) and the average age at first marriage has increased steadily, now reaching the mid-30 s (Statistics Norway, 2022).

At the same time, populations in these countries are becoming more diverse, and new groups of young individuals with a migrant background are currently entering adulthood. The children of immigrants were either born in their countries of residence by two (the second generation) or one (generation 2.5) immigrant parents, or they immigrated as children or teens. They have thus been socialized within their countries of residence and share institutional contexts with majority populations. Research confirms that the socioeconomic outcomes and attitudes of the second generation and immigrants arriving as children more closely resemble those of majority populations, compared with immigrants arriving as adults (Heath et al., 2008; Hermansen, 2017; Kitterød & Nadim, 2020). Similarly, there is evidence of adaptation of family attitudes and behavior across migrant generations whereby "traditional" behaviors and attitudes, such as early childbearing and marriage, high fertility and endogamous spouse choice, are less common among the children of immigrants than among immigrants arriving as adults (Andersson et al., 2015; Dribe & Lundh, 2008; Holland & De Valk, 2013; Mussino & Ortensi, 2019). Yet, most of this research focus on marriage (Kulu & González-Ferrer, 2014; Pailhé, 2015; Song, 2009), and less is known about how these population sub groups, and particularly the native-born children of one or two immigrants, adapt to new family behaviors in their countries of residence, such as cohabitation and later union formation. Also, much research has focused on immigrants and descendants from contexts with high fertility and universal marriage, and it has tended to focus on women (Andersson, 2021).

Using Norwegian register data on all individuals born 1985–2001 who were either native born or who immigrated as children or teens (N = 1075,649, 20% migrant-background), this study investigates first union formation in the period 2005 through 2019. These all-encompassing data allow for fine-grained analyses of the union formation behavior of immigrant-background women and men originating from many countries, providing novel knowledge by including

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.alcr.2022.100480
Received 9 September 2021; Received in revised form 25 April 2022; Accepted 1 May 2022
Available online 4 May 2022

representative data on cohabiting unions. Specifically, I compare the first partnership behavior of the native-born children of two immigrants (i.e. the second generation) with that of individuals who immigrated as children or teens as well as those native born with either one (i.e., generation 2.5) or two native-born parents (i.e., majority). In addition, I assess differences across global regions of origin and gender.

Studying the first union formation behavior of the children of immigrants, often originating from countries characterized by early and universal marriage, informs our understanding on adaptation of the receiving country's family formation patterns and norms and values (De Valk & Liefbroer, 2007). Historically, intermarriage has been considered as the strongest indicator of "boundary crossing" between majority and minority groups (Alba & Nee, 2003; Song, 2009). However, endogamy is widespread and partner choice may not always capture more subtle forms of "boundary blurring" between groups (Alba, 2005). If the children of immigrants follow the prevailing Norwegian family life course and choose cohabitation as first union and defer first marriage it may be taken as evidence of such boundary blurring. Comparing behaviors across migrant generations, or between childhood immigrants with different durations of residence, shed light on changes in such adaptation over time and the importance of exposure to dominant family norms and values.

2. Background and prior research

Immigrants and their children born in Norway comprised nearly one-fifth of the total population at the onset of 2021 (Statistics Norway, 2021a). Nonetheless, the country has a short history of non-Nordic immigration, starting around 1970, with the arrival of labor migrants, mainly from Pakistan, Turkey, Morocco, and India (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008). Thus, studies of the immigrant population's family formation behavior have mostly considered first-generation immigrants, as is also the situation elsewhere in Northwestern Europe (De Valk & Milewski, 2011; Kulu & González-Ferrer, 2014). The native-born children of two immigrants (i.e. the second generation), on the other hand, have been so young that only a vague impression of their patterns of family formation has been gained so far. However, this is changing rapidly as more descendants of immigrants reach typical family formation ages. At the onset of 2021, there were nearly 200,000 second-generation immigrants in Norway, of which 27% were aged 18 and above (Statistics Norway, 2021b).

In the Nordic countries, cohabitation before an eventual marriage is nearly universal, and most couples are cohabiting when they get their first child (Holland, 2013; Noack et al., 2014). Although there are continuing socioeconomic differences across union types and cohabiting unions are less stable than marriages, cohabitation is highly accepted and institutionalized, and cohabiting and married couples have most of the same rights and responsibilities (Noack et al., 2014). The modern form of cohabitation, dating back to the late 1960 s in Norway (Noack et al., 2014), is partly a result of secularization and individualization of family life during the 20th century (Cherlin, 2004; Kreidl & Žilinčíková, 2021; Lesthaeghe, 2010). Marrying without prior cohabitation, on the other hand, is currently non-standard behavior, highly correlated with religiousness (Wiik, 2009).

Despite the increasing prevalence of cohabitation in many Western receiving countries, most research on the family behavior of the children of immigrants have focused on marital behavior (Kulu & González-Ferrer, 2014). Studies that have included data on cohabitation confirm that the children of immigrants are less likely to (expect to) cohabit and more likely to marry than natives. Less favorable cohabitation attitudes have been found among second-generation immigrants of Turkish and Moroccan origin in the Netherlands (Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 2018) and among Turkish-origin young adults in Sweden (Bernhardt et al., 2007). Similarly, in the UK, second-generation Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, and Indians had lower expectations for cohabitation and higher marriage expectations than natives, though second-generation women were less likely to expect to cohabit than men (Berrington, 2020). In the Netherlands, Turkish and Moroccan second-generation immigrants preferred younger ages at marriage than natives (De Valk & Liefbroer, 2007).

Regarding actual behavior, one in ten women and one in five men of Turkish descent in France chose cohabitation as first union, compared with 98% of natives (Milewski & Hamel, 2010). And, the children of immigrants of North African and Southern European descent less often than native French followed "new" forms of transitioning to adulthood, such as living single (Ferrari & Pailhé, 2017). The daughters of immigrants were also less likely to cohabit. Instead, the children of immigrants, especially those of North-African origin, stayed longer in the parental home (Ferrari & Pailhé, 2017). Similarly, in Germany, the native-born children of Turkish immigrants were most often living in the parental household or they were married (Kuhnt & Krapf, 2020). More than half of the Turkish second-generation were married by their mid-20 s, compared to 10% of native Germans (Soehl & Yahirun, 2011).

There is evidence that immigrants with longer durations of residence and the native-born children of immigrants adopt marital timing preferences (Holland & De Valk, 2013) and actual marital behavior (Abbasi-Shavazi et al., 2012; Sassler & Qian, 2003) that are more similar to native populations than those arriving as adults. In Sweden, immigrants with longer duration more often than their recently arriving counterparts married a native (Dribe & Lundh, 2008), though second-generation women and women who immigrated as children married at younger ages than those who immigrated as adults (Andersson et al., 2015). In France, second-generation immigrants formed their first unions at later ages, and more often chose cohabitation, than the first generation (Pailhé, 2015). In Norway and Sweden, second-generation immigrants who married endogamously deferred marriage longer than their first-generation counterparts (Wiik & Holland, 2018). A recent study on partner choice and transitions from first unions, on the other hand, found that the Norwegian-born children of immigrants were less likely to cohabit than childhood migrants and that cohabitation was particularly common among those with a majority partner. Only 7% of this latter group married, compared with nearly half of those partnering endogamously (Wiik et al., 2021). This study did not, however, explicitly investigate first union formation nor differences across fine-grained migrant generations and gender.

2.1. Generational adaptation

Individuals internalize expectations and attitudes from their social environment through childhood socialization. Individuals' own preferences for when and with whom to form the first union and what type of union to choose, and eventually their actual behavior, is thus indirectly a product of their parents' and other significant third parties' preferences and behavior (Barber & Axinn, 1998; Keijer et al., 2018; van Zantvliet et al., 2014). In this way, family behavior in the country of origin may continue to shape the preferences of immigrants after the arrival in their countries of destination, through links to family and co-ethnics in countries of residence and in countries of origin (Nauck, 2001).

The continuing importance of norms and behaviors of countries of origin may be most important for immigrants arriving as adults, but also among those who arrived as children or teens. Most of those comprising this latter group arrived in their destination countries with their parents, who will also have had an equally short duration of residence. The influence of Norwegian society may, however, increase with duration of residence, leading immigrants to adopt the prevailing pattern of family formation over time. Such adaptation may be a result of active strategies for socioeconomic mobility (Adserà & Ferrer, 2016) or of institutional contexts shared with native populations, such as educational institutions, the labor market and cultural outlets (Bernhardt et al., 2007; De Valk & Milewski, 2011; Huschek et al., 2010).

Second-generation individuals, who were born and raised in their countries of residence, and whose parents may have spent many years in

the receiving country, are often to a larger degree than immigrants influenced by the dominant family behaviors in society (Kulu et al., 2019). The children of immigrants born in Norway held more liberal attitudes towards issues such as gender equality and homosexuality compared with childhood immigrants as well as their peers living in their countries of origin (Friberg, 2016). Similarly, descendants of immigrants have more gender-egalitarian work-family attitudes than immigrants (Kavli, 2015; Kitterød & Nadim, 2020). These findings imply that there is a gradual value assimilation in the Norwegian society.

Those with one native-born and one foreign-born parent may identify less with the minority group than those with two immigrant parents. In the U.S., these children of majority-minority couples resemble the majority more than minorities in terms of their social characteristics and experiences, and they often marry a majority partner themselves. They are therefore key in the assimilation process and may be understood as an "expansion of the mainstream" (Alba et al., 2018). Similarly, research using data from Sweden, England, The Netherlands and Germany confirmed that these "mixed children" were in between the outcomes of immigrants and natives and that they had more contact with natives and held more liberal family values than those with two immigrant parents (Kalmijn, 2015). In Denmark, the educational outcomes of 2.5-generation children were similar to those of children with two native-born parents (Tegunimataka, 2020). In Norway and Sweden, there were few differences between the 2.5 generation and the majority populations with regards to partner choice and the timing of first marriage (Wiik & Holland, 2018).

Longer exposure to Norwegian society or having "one foot" in the majority group through a majority parent, could also lead to more diversified partner markets and increase the chances of cohabitation. Nonetheless, norms and behaviors of origin countries may continue to be transmitted and maintained through links to family and friends in countries of origin as well as co-nationals in countries of residence (De Valk & Liefbroer, 2007; Nauck, 2001). In addition to constituting such a "sociocultural middle ground" between their countries of origin and residence (Foner, 1997; Holland & De Valk, 2013), some groups are not fully integrated economically, partly due to discrimination in the labor (Midtbøen, 2016) and housing markets (Andersson et al., 2012). Although marriage requires a stronger economic underpinning than cohabitation, the latter are formed at younger ages (Wiik, 2009). So, poorer access to work and housing may lead to later home leaving and lower cohabitation rates at young ages compared with natives.

2.2. The importance of origin areas

Immigrant-background populations are highly heterogeneous and family adaptation across migrant generations and duration of residence varies with sociocultural distance between countries of origin and residence (Dribe & Lundh, 2008; Scott and Stanfors, 2011). Research confirms that the family behaviors of immigrants and their children are influenced by the norms and behaviors of their countries of origin (Adserà & Ferrer, 2016; Dribe & Lundh, 2011; Tønnessen, 2020). In Spain, second-generation immigrants originating from countries with a low mean age at marriage were less likely to reside outside the parental home without marrying than those from countries with higher marital ages (Vitali & Arpino, 2015).

As of January 2021, nearly half of the Norwegian migrant-background population (excluding the 2.5 generation) originated from countries in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa (Statistics Norway, 2021a). Many countries in these global regions have a predominantly Islamic cultural heritage (Dribe & Lundh, 2011; Elgvin & Tronstad, 2013), characterized by traditional family formation patterns centered on early and universal marriage, high fertility (Behrman & Erman, 2019; Blekesaune, 2020; De Valk & Milewski, 2011; Jones & Yeung, 2014), and patriarchal family patterns (Bernhardt et al., 2007). This contrasts with the dominant Scandinavian family formation system, with high rates of cohabitation, late first marriage, and fertility just below replacement level (Sobotka & Toulemon, 2008). Following the Balkan wars in the 1990 s and the EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007, there has also been sizeable immigration from Eastern European countries, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Croatia, Poland, and Romania. Marriage has a strong position in most of these countries, but premarital cohabitation is usual (Mynarska et al., 2014; Noack et al., 2014).

To be sure, cohabitation is common in some global regions of origin represented in Norway, such as South and Middle America (Esteve et al., 2012) and Western Europe (Noack et al., 2014). Little is known about the spread of cohabitation in Asia, a region in which marriage is universal, but cohabitation is increasingly popular in some East and South-East Asian countries, such as Japan, China, and the Philippines (Jones & Yeung, 2014; Yu & Xie, 2015). In many Sub-Saharan African countries, particularly in Central Africa and in urban and non-Muslim areas, cohabitation is increasingly prevalent (Odimegwu et al., 2018). Among the children of immigrants originating from these countries and world regions, the choice to cohabit rather than to marry could be shaped by behavior in countries of origin rather than social integration.

The children of immigrants originating from countries with more conservative family values than what is predominant in their countries of residence may experience competing pressures. That is, in their everyday lives they may encounter liberal values at schools and from their peers and the media, but at the same time be influenced by the conservative values they have been socialized into by their parents and in their ethnic community (Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 2018). Also, when there is large sociocultural distance between countries of origin and residence, socioeconomic integration may progress slower. Indeed, immigrants and their native-born children originating from non-Western countries (i.e., Asia, Africa, non-EU Eastern European countries, and South America) more often experience residential segregation and socioeconomic marginalization than those of Western origin (Bratsberg et al., 2014; Rogne et al., 2020). Further, the children of non-Western immigrants, and particularly those originating from Muslim countries, are more religious (Barstad, 2019; Friberg & Sterri, 2021) and hold more conservative social attitudes than those of Western origin (Friberg, 2016). Religion is an important relational divide, as evidenced by for instance low rates of religious intermarriage among second-generation Muslims in Europe (Drouhot & Nee, 2019). So, whereas some migrant-background individuals are socialized into mainstream culture and otherwise are socially and economically integrated, others may be more marginalized and influenced by a minority subculture, preserving the values, norms, and behaviors of their countries of origin (Kulu et al., 2019).

In line with these arguments, immigrant women and their native-born daughters from North Africa, the Arab Middle East, Turkey, and South Asia married at younger ages than those with Swedish-born parents (Andersson et al., 2015). In Norway, the second generation and childhood immigrants originating from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) as well as Asia had the highest propensities for marrying endogamously, followed by those originating from Eastern Europe. Those of Nordic and Western European origin were least likely to marry endogamously (Wiik et al., 2021). Individuals of Sub-Saharan African and Eastern European origin were more likely than the children of immigrants from other regions to cohabit endogamously. The chance of forming exogamous cohabiting unions was particularly high among those of European and South American origin (Wiik et al., 2021). The children of Sub-Saharan African immigrants in France delayed first union formation and had a low likelihood of direct marriage (Pailhé, 2015), whereas in Sweden the daughters of immigrants from the Horn of Africa postponed first marriage (Andersson et al., 2015).

2.3. Gender differences

It is well documented that women on average form their first unions and families at younger ages than men (Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011; Wiik, 2009). These findings also apply to individuals with a migration

background (Ferrari & Pailhé, 2017), and in Norway migrant-background women of non-Western origin are particularly likely to marry and have their first births at early ages (Lappegård, 2006; Tønnessen, 2014). This might have implications for these women's further education and labor market participation, with early onset of family formation being negatively associated with labor market outcomes (Birkelund et al., 2014; Dale et al., 2006). At the same time, those marrying at younger ages exert less autonomy over the timing of their marriages and their choice of partner than those deferring marriage (Elgvin & Grødem, 2011; Kalmijn, 1998). The same may apply to the choice of union type, and those who form their first unions early, among whom women are overrepresented, may be more susceptible to a social pressure to marry.

Women socialized within more gender-differentiated family contexts may face greater familial social control than men (Foner, 1997), particularly when it comes to partnering and reproductive behavior (Furstenberg, 2019; Wachter & De Valk, 2020). Indeed, the level of parental involvement in children's marriage is greater for immigrant women than men (van Zantvliet et al., 2014). Apart from often being younger than men, this could be due to gendered expectations that women prioritize family over career (Furstenberg, 2019; Xiao, 2000). Migrant-background women originating from countries with traditional and patriarchal family systems often have a central role in transmitting ethnic traditions to the next generation (Kalmijn & Van Tubergen, 2010; Liversage, 2012). Among many Muslim migrant groups in Western Europe, there is a high level of parental influence on children's romantic life (Buunk, 2015; Drouhot & Nee, 2019), particularly for women (Wachter & De Valk, 2020).

3. Hypotheses

As cohabitation before an eventual marriage is universal in the general Norwegian population, I first expect that majority individuals will form their first unions, irrespective of union type, at younger ages than the children of immigrants (*Hypothesis 1a*). Separating between marriage and cohabitation, however, the children of immigrants of all generations are more likely to marry and less likely to cohabit than majority individuals (*Hypothesis 1b*).

Next, the native-born children of two immigrants (the second generation) and immigrants arriving in ages 0–12 years are more likely to defer marriage and instead cohabit than those immigrating as teens, net of differences across countries of origin and socioeconomic characteristics. Those with one native-born and one foreign-born parent (generation 2.5), on the other hand, are more likely to cohabit and less likely to marry compared with the second generation and immigrants arriving as children or teens (*Hypothesis 2*).

The children of immigrants from countries in Asia, MENA as well as Eastern Europe are more prone to marry at earlier ages than those originating from other global regions (*Hypothesis 3a*). Those of South-American, European, Anglo-Saxon and Sub-Saharan African origin are more cohabitation prone (*Hypothesis 3b*).

These differences across regions of origin are smaller for the 2.5 generation than the second generation and immigrants who arrived as children and teens (*Hypothesis 4*).

Last, women who themselves or whose parents immigrated from countries in Asia and MENA are more likely to marry and less likely to cohabit than their male counterparts and these gender differences are larger than among those of other origins (*Hypothesis 5*).

4. Method

4.1. Data and sample

Data for the current study come from Norwegian population registers. Besides vital demographics such as age, dates of immigration and emigration, gender and country of birth, these data contain information on all marriages and, from 2005 onwards, cohabitation. These population data were supplemented with longitudinal register data on education (level and activity), annual total income, and place of residence. Such linking of data is facilitated through a system of universal ID numbers. The introduction of a unique address for all dwellings made it possible to identify opposite-sex cohabiting unions from 2005 onwards. A cohabiting couple is defined as a man and a woman aged 18 years or older residing in the same dwelling (shared-housing arrangements and institutions excluded), who are not relatives or married and whose age difference is no more than 15 years (Falnes-Dalheim, 2009). For parental couples, this latter rule on age difference does not apply.

Correspondingly, I focus on all opposite-sex first unions formed 2005 through 2019, among the total Norwegian population born 1985–2001 residing in the country at age 18 (N = 1074,943), of which 40,961 (3.8%) were second-generation immigrants, defined as being born in Norway by two immigrant parents. Next, 85,519 (8.0%) were immigrants who arrived prior to age 18, whereas 82,746 (7.7%) belonged to the 2.5 generation (i.e., native born with one immigrant and one native-born parent). Those born in Norway by two Norwegian-born parents, i.e. the majority (n = 865,717, 80.5%), were treated as comparison group in analyses of the full sample. Majority-background (n = 12,970, 1.5% of the majority) as well as 2.5-generation (n = 11,086, 13.4% of generation 2.5) individuals born abroad arriving in Norway prior to age 18 were included in the sample. 97% of those foreign-born to two and 76% of those foreign-born to one native parent arrived before they turned 7 years. As the population registers contain no information about immigrants' possible previous unions contracted abroad, immigrants who arrived at ages 18 or older were excluded from the analytic sample.

4.2. Dependent variable and analytic procedure

In discrete-time event-history analyses, individuals were followed from the year they turned 18 to the year of any registration of marriage or cohabitation or censoring due to death, emigration or the end of the observation period (i.e., December 2019). As the cohabitation data first became available from 2005, the cohorts born in 1985 and 1986 were followed from ages 20 and 19, respectively. To analyze the formation of first unions, irrespective of union type, I used discrete-time logistic models separating between entrance into a first co-residential union versus no union formation in year t, given no union formation in t-1. Multinomial logistic regression analysis was used to model the transition from being single to first marriage or cohabitation. Standard errors from these models were adjusted for clustering on individuals. Additionally, to properly assess generational differences within the migrant-background sub sample (Hypothesis 2), I estimated a multilevel multinomial discrete-time model including random intercepts for countries of origin to fully account for the heterogeneity of the children of immigrants in terms of their country backgrounds.

Although population register data are used, all estimates are accompanied by their 95% confidence intervals (CI). Survey sampling is not the only source of randomness in statistical results. Indeed, individual life histories may be understood as "realizations of stochastic processes each of which is subject to random variation" (Hoem, 2008, p. 439).

4.3. Independent variables

Individuals were grouped into five *migrant generations* based on their own and their parents' country of birth as well as ages at arrival in Norway: (1) majority individuals (i.e., native-born with two native-born parents), (2) generation 2.5 (i.e., native-born with one native-born and one foreign-born parent), (3) the second generation (i.e., native-born with two foreign-born parents), (4) foreign-born, immigrated in kindergarten or primary school ages (0–12 years), and (5) foreign-born, immigrated in ages 13–17. Based on their own (immigrants) or their parents' (native born) countries of birth, individuals were further

grouped into seven global *regions of origin*: (1) Nordic countries, (2) Western Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand, (3) Eastern Europe, (4) Asia and rest of Oceania, (5) Sub-Saharan Africa, 6) Middle East and North Africa, including Turkey (MENA); and (7) South and Middle America. In analyses of the full sample, the majority population was grouped with immigrants and descendants of Nordic origin. If parents of second-generation individuals were from different countries, information on the mother's country of birth was used (Dzamarija, 2014).

Several variables were included to control for potential confounders in the association between immigrant status, country/region of origin and first union formation. Prior studies show that these variables are associated with timing of first union formation as well as choice of union type (Andersson et al., 2015; Huschek et al., 2010; Mooyaart & Liefbroer, 2016; Wiik, 2009). First, in pooled models I controlled for *gender* with values 0 for men and 1 for women. Second, models were controlled for *education* using yearly updated information on educational level achieved as of October the previous year. This variable has four categories: (1) primary education (<11 years); (2) secondary education (11–13 years); (3) tertiary education (14 + years); (4) missing. Next, I made a variable measuring whether the respondents were *enrolled in full-time education* (1) or not (0) in year *t*-1. I also controlled for *total income* before taxes in year *t*-1. The income estimates were adjusted for inflation, and given in whole 10,000 s of 2015-Norwegian Kroner. Another potential confounder is size of *place of residence*. Those living in the municipalities of one of Norway's three most populated cities (Oslo, Bergen, and Trondheim) in year *t*-1 were defined as urbanites (1 = yes, 0 = no). The models also include a continuous time-varying variable for *respondent's age* reported in years above 18. This variable captures the duration dependence of the estimated hazard of first union formation. To allow for non-linearity, a quadratic term for age was included. Also, a continuous variable for *calendar year* of observation was incorporated.

5. Results

5.1. Descriptive results

Descriptive statistics by migrant generations are presented in Table 1. First, around two-thirds of the second generation and immigrants arriving as children or teens were single in the last year of observation, compared with 65% of the 2.5 generation and 56% of the majority. Larger shares of these two latter groups were cohabiting compared with those who immigrated as children or teens, and particularly the second generation, who were more often married than those native-born with one or two native-born parents. Table 1 further confirms that whereas Asia and MENA constituted the two largest regions of origin among the second-generation, those who immigrated as children and teens were more heterogeneous with respect to their geographical origin. Notably, larger shares of these childhood immigrants were born in European, Sub-Saharan African, or Anglo-Saxon countries. Around two-thirds of the 2.5 generation had one immigrant parent from Nordic or Western European/ Anglo-Saxon countries. The distributions of the largest origin countries by migrant generations are shown in Appendix 1.

Table 2 presents the type of first unions among partnered migrant-background men and women across migrant generations and global

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of variables used by migrant generations. Time-varying variables measured in last observation (i.e., year of first union formation or censoring). Individuals born 1985 through 2001 who were either native-born or who immigrated prior to age 18 (N = 1074,943).

Variable	Second generation *%/M (SD)*	Immigrated < 13 years *%/M (SD)*	Immigrated 13–17 years *%/M (SD)*	2.5 generation *%/M (SD)*	Majority *%/M (SD)*
Union status					
Single	76.8	71.0	74.2	65.3	56.4
Cohabiting	13.4	21.3	18.6	31.9	40.4
Married	9.8	7.7	7.2	2.8	3.2
Region of origin					
Norway/ Nordic	3.1	6.7	3.2	31.4	100.0
Western Europe[a]	2.8	7.6	8.0	32.5	–
Eastern Europe	11.7	27.4	20.8	6.9	–
Asia[b]	47.2	20.1	28.1	12.6	–
MENA	22.0	19.1	16.3	7.0	–
Sub-Saharan Africa	9.5	16.2	20.5	4.0	–
South America	3.6	3.0	3.1	5.7	–
N countries of origin	156	171	175	200	–
Gender					
Woman	48.5	48.5	41.1	48.5	48.6
Man	51.5	51.5	58.9	51.5	51.4
Education level					
Primary	40.9	49.9	54.1	37.7	34.9
Secondary	30.9	29.8	18.6	34.4	38.6
Tertiary	24.1	16.8	7.6	24.8	26.1
Missing	4.1	3.5	19.8	3.1	0.3
Enrolled in school					
Yes	51.1	47.1	40.7	49.7	47.2
No	48.9	52.9	59.3	50.3	52.8
Urban residence					
Yes	50.4	28.8	20.6	26.9	17.7
No	49.6	71.2	79.4	73.1	82.3
Annual income	16.9(20.1)	16.9(19.0)	14.8(47.5)	18.1(42.2)	22.6(26.8)
Age	23.3(3.8)	23.2(3.9)	22.6(3.8)	23.5 (3.9)	23.8 (3.8)
Calendar year	2018.0(2.4)	2017.4(3.2)	2017.1(3.4)	2017.2(3.1)	2016.8(3.4)
N	40,961	49,262	36,257	82,746	865,717
%	3.8%	4.6%	3.4%	7.7%	80.5%

Note: Second generation = Native born by two immigrant parents. 2.5 generation = Native born by one foreign-born and one native-born parent; Majority = Native born by two native-born parents.

[a] This category also comprises the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

[b] This category also comprises countries in the remaining parts of Oceania.

Table 2
Type of first union by migrant generations and global regions of origin. Partnered migrant-background men and women born 1985 through 2001. First unions formed 2005 through 2019. Per cent.

	Men							
	Marriage				Cohabitation			
Region of origin	Second generation	Immigrated 0–12 years	Immigrated 13–17 years	2.5 generation	Second generation	Immigrated 0–12 years	Immigrated 13–17 years	2.5 generation
Nordic	13.7	10.3	9.4	7.5	86.3	89.7	90.6	92.5
Western Europe[a]	14.3	12.1	10.2	8.4	85.7	87.9	89.8	91.6
Eastern Europe	21.3	25.4	25.3	7.9	78.7	74.6	74.7	92.1
Asia[b]	50.9	41.3	40.2	7.6	49.1	58.7	59.8	92.4
MENA	42.6	27.9	38.3	6.6	57.4	72.1	61.7	93.4
Sub-S. Africa	11.0	13.8	17.5	7.5	89.0	86.2	82.5	92.5
South America	8.5	8.4	11.7	6.6	91.5	91.6	88.3	93.4
N	1679	1582	1434	1004	2634	4688	3341	12,000
%	38.9	25.2	30.0	7.7	61.1	74.8	70.0	92.3
	Women							
	Marriage				Cohabitation			
Region of origin	Second generation	Immigrated 0–12 years	Immigrated 13–17 years	2.5 generation	Second generation	Immigrated 0–12 years	Immigrated 13–17 years	2.5 generation
Nordic	7.6	10.2	8.8	7.8	92.4	89.8	91.2	92.2
Western Europe[a]	19.2	13.9	14.6	8.4	80.8	86.1	85.4	91.6
Eastern Europe	29.4	27.0	19.3	5.7	70.6	73.0	80.7	94.3
Asia[b]	53.2	36.3	34.0	8.2	46.8	63.7	66.0	91.8
MENA	56.7	40.5	43.8	12.6	43.3	59.5	56.2	87.4
Sub-S. Africa	20.1	15.7	20.9	8.0	79.9	84.3	79.1	92.0
South America	13.7	15.4	14.7	6.8	86.3	84.6	85.3	93.2
N	2337	2215	1191	1292	2858	5793	3403	14,434
%	45.0	27.7	25.9	8.2	55.0	72.3	74.1	91.8

Note: Second generation = Native born by two immigrant parents; 2.5 generation = Native born by one foreign-born and one native-born parent.
[a] This category also comprises the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.
[b] This category also comprises countries in the rest of Oceania.

regions of origin. First, from the upper panel we note that 39% of partnered second-generation men married, compared with around one in four men who immigrated as children or teens. Only 8% of partnered 2.5-generation men married directly. Among partnered women (lower panel), overall higher shares chose to marry. Similar to men, however, marriage was most common among the second and least common among the 2.5 generations (Table 2). Together, 58% of the second generation, nearly three-quarters of those immigrating as children or teens and 92% of the 2.5 generation chose cohabitation as first union. Among majority individuals who had formed a union by the end of 2019, 93% chose cohabitation whereas 7% married (not shown in tables), in line with earlier Norwegian research using survey data (e.g., Wiik, 2009).

Cohabitation was most prevalent among men of South American, Sub-Saharan African and Nordic origin, across all migrant generations. Among male childhood and second-generation immigrants, marriage was most widespread among those of Asian origin, followed by MENA and Eastern Europe. Among men originating from MENA, larger shares of the second-generation and teen migrants married compared with those arriving in ages below 13.

As for men, higher shares of second generation women and female childhood migrants from Asia and MENA were married, whereas those of South-American, Sub-Saharan African and (particularly Western) European descent more frequently cohabitated. Except for those of Nordic descent, second-generation women and women who immigrated as children or teens were more often married, and less often cohabiting, than their male counterparts (Table 2).

5.2. Regression results

5.2.1. Generational differences

Results from two discrete-time models of first union formation of the full sample of individuals born 1985–2001 are presented as odds ratios with their 95% confidence intervals in Table 3. First, not separating between marriage and cohabitation in Model 1, all groups of migrant-background individuals except those immigrating as teens were less likely to form a first union at any given age than majority individuals, net of the other included variables (Hypothesis 1a). Notably, second-generation immigrants were 30% less likely to start a first co-residential union relative to remaining single at a given age than majority Norwegians. The children of immigrants of all origins deferred first union formation relative to those of Nordic origin (including majority individuals), except individuals of South-American (earlier) and Eastern European (not statistically significant, $p \geq 0.05$) origins.

Treating marriage and cohabitation as competing risks in Model 2, there were some important differences across union types. First, confirming hypothesis 1b, the chances that second-generation individuals and immigrants arriving prior to age 13 would marry relative to remaining unpartnered at a given age were more than two times higher relative to the majority, net of the other included variables. Next, immigrants arriving in ages 13–17 were nearly three times as likely to marry at any given age than the majority. 2.5-generation individuals, on the other hand, were less likely to marry than the majority.

Turning to the competing event, second-generation individuals were 51% less likely to start cohabiting relative to remaining unpartnered at a given age than the majority. Immigrants arriving prior to age 13 and teen migrants were respectively 26% and 15% less likely to cohabit than

Table 3
Results from discrete-time logistic (Model 1, first union formation versus remaining single) and multinomial models (Model 2, marriage or cohabitation versus no union formation). Odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals. Individuals born 1985–2001 who were native born or who immigrated < 18 years. First unions formed 2005–2019.

	Model 1		Model 2			
	First union		Marriage		Cohabitation	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Generation						
Majority[a]	ref.		ref.			
2.5 generation[b]	0.95	0.93–0.97	0.87	0.81–0.93	0.96	0.94–0.98
Second generation[c]	0.70	0.67–0.72	2.40	2.21–2.60	0.49	0.47–0.51
Immigrated, 0–12 years	0.87	0.85–0.90	2.09	1.93–2.26	0.74	0.71–0.76
Immigrated, 13–17 years	1.04	1.01–1.07	2.78	2.55–3.03	0.85	0.82–0.88
Region of Origin						
Nordic	ref.		ref.			
Western Europe[d]	0.89	0.86–0.91	**0.99**	0.91–1.08	0.88	0.85–0.90
Eastern Europe	**1.00**	0.97–1.03	1.46	1.34–1.59	**0.98**	0.95–1.01
Asia[e]	0.84	0.82–0.87	1.81	1.67–1.96	0.70	0.68–0.73
MENA	0.88	0.85–0.91	1.97	1.81–2.14	0.73	0.70–0.76
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.72	0.70–0.75	0.77	0.69–0.85	0.76	0.73–0.80
South America	1.06	1.02–1.11	0.86	0.75–0.98	1.12	1.07–1.18
Control variables						
Age, year *t*	3.31	3.27–3.35	4.01	3.86–4.18	3.35	3.31–3.40
Age^2	0.98	0.98–0.98	0.98	0.98–0.98	0.98	0.98–0.98
Woman (1 = yes)	1.76	1.75–1.77	1.82	1.79–1.86	1.75	1.74–1.78
Education level						
Primary	ref.		ref.			
Secondary	1.04	1.03–1.05	1.33	1.29–1.36	1.02	1.01–1.03
Tertiary	1.27	1.26–1.29	1.86	1.80–1.91	1.22	1.21–1.24
Missing	0.55	0.53–0.57	0.85	0.78–0.93	0.52	0.50–0.55
Enrolled in school (1 = yes)	0.73	0.72–0.73	0.74	0.72–0.76	0.73	0.71–0.74
Annual income	1.01	1.01–1.01	1.01	1.01–1.01	1.01	1.01–1.01
Period (2010 = ref.)	0.98	0.98–0.99	0.91	0.90–0.91	0.99	0.99–0.99
Urban residence (1 = yes)	0.96	0.95–0.96	0.85	0.83–0.87	0.97	0.96–0.98
N Events	439,511		40,250		399,261	
N Person-years	6998,905		6998,905			
X^2 (df)	270,907.479(20)		296,170.913(40)			

Note: Estimates not in bold, $p < 0.05$. OR = Odds ratio. CI = Confidence interval.
[a] Majority = Native born by two native-born parents.
[b] 2.5 generation = Native born by one foreign-born and one native-born parent
[c] Second generation = Native born by two immigrant parents.
[d] This category also comprises the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.
[e] This category also comprises countries in the rest of Oceania.

majority individuals. Again, differences between 2.5-generation individuals and the majority were smaller, though they too were less likely to form cohabiting unions than their counterparts with two native-born parents.

Results from separate models for men and women are shown in Appendix 2, confirming that the estimates for migrant generations went in the same direction and were of about the same magnitude for both genders. Differences between 2.5-generation men and majority men, however, were not statistically significant (Appendix 2).

To test Hypothesis 2, Table 4 presents two models including the children of immigrants only; one multinomial discrete time model (Model 1) and one multilevel multinomial discrete time model including random intercepts for the 211 single countries of origin (Model 2) to better account for the heterogeneity across countries. Across both models of Tables 4, 2.5-generation individuals were less likely to marry, but more likely to cohabit, than the second generation and both groups of childhood migrants. Teen migrants, on the other hand, were more likely to marry than all other groups. The difference in the marriage propensities of the second generation and teen migrants, however, was only statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) once the heterogeneity in terms of countries of origin was fully considered in Model 2.

Regarding cohabitation, second-generation individuals were less likely to start cohabiting than the 2.5 generation and both groups of childhood immigrants alike, irrespective of model specification. Last, as seen from the non-overlapping confidence intervals in both models of Table 4, teen migrants were more likely to cohabit than those immigrating as small children.

5.2.2. *Differences across global regions of origin and gender*

The findings presented in Model 1 of Table 4 further confirm Hypothesis 3a that the children of immigrants originating from Asia, MENA and Eastern Europe were more marriage prone than those originating from elsewhere. As further expected (Hypothesis 3b), the children of immigrants of South American origin were significantly more likely to cohabit than those originating from all other world regions, and particularly Asia, followed by those of Nordic, European, Anglo-Saxon, and Sub-Saharan African origins. Judging from the overlapping confidence intervals, however, there were no differences in the cohabitation propensities of those originating from countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and MENA.

To further investigate differences in the influence of regions of origin across migrant generations (Hypothesis 4), results from separate models by global regions of origin are presented graphically as predicted annual probabilities in Fig. 1. Main results from these models are presented in Appendix 3. First, Fig. 1 (upper panel) confirms Hypothesis 4 that differences in marriage probabilities across regions of origin are overall larger among the second generation and both groups of childhood immigrants compared with the 2.5 generation. Precisely, among the second generation and immigrants arriving as children and teens, those originating from MENA were significantly more likely to marry than those of other origins, followed by those of Asian and Eastern European origin. The difference in the marriage probabilities of teen migrants from Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa, however, were not statistically significant. Indeed, second generation and child migrants from MENA, as well as teen migrants of Asian and MENA origins, were more likely to marry than the children of immigrants of all other origins and generations. 2.5-generation individuals of MENA origin were more likely to marry than those of other origins, except Nordic and Western European.

Regarding cohabitation, the results presented in the lower panel of Fig. 1 confirm that second-generation individuals and both groups of childhood immigrants of Nordic and South-American origins were particularly likely to cohabit, followed by their counterparts of Western and Eastern European origin. Again, these differences across regions of origin were smaller among the 2.5 generation, though those with one Nordic or South American immigrant parent were more cohabitation prone than those of other origins, except Asian.

To test Hypothesis 5, Fig. 2 present results from models estimated separately by regions of origin including interaction terms between migrant generations and gender. Results are presented as average marginal effects of gender (men = reference) and generations on the probability of marrying (upper panel) or forming a cohabiting union (lower panel) at a given age. As seen from the upper panel of Fig. 2, second-generation women of Eastern European, MENA and Asian origins were significantly more marriage prone than men (reference line), as

Table 4
Results from discrete-time multinomial model (Model 1, left panel) and discrete-time multinomial multilevel model (Model 2, right panel) of marriage or cohabitation versus no union formation (base category). Separate models for migrant-background individuals born 1985–2001 who were native born or who immigrated < 18 years. First unions formed 2005 through 2019.

	Model 1				Model 2			
	Marriage		Cohabitation		Marriage		Cohabitation	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Generation								
2.5 generation[a]	ref.				ref.			
Second generation[b]	2.76	2.60–2.93	0.51	0.49–0.53	2.06	1.92–2.21	0.58	0.56–0.61
Immigrated, 0–12 years	2.35	2.21–2.49	0.77	0.75–0.79	2.24	2.09–2.40	0.80	0.78–0.83
Immigrated, 13–17 years	3.04	2.86–3.24	0.86	0.84–0.89	3.23	2.99–3.48	0.88	0.85–0.91
Region of origin								
Nordic	0.57	0.52–0.61	1.42	1.37–1.47				
Western Europe[c]	0.57	0.53–0.61	1.25	1.21–1.29				
Eastern Europe	0.83	0.78–0.88	1.39	1.34–1.44				
Asia[d]	ref.							
MENA	1.05	1.01–1.11	1.04	1.01–1.08				
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.41	0.38–0.45	1.09	1.05–1.14				
South America	0.45	0.40–0.51	1.61	1.53–1.69				
Control variables								
Age	4.16	3.88–4.45	2.90	2.88–3.09	3.91	3.64–4.20	2.99	2.88–3.10
Age^2	0.98	0.98–0.98	0.98	0.98–0.98	0.98	0.98–0.98	0.98	0.98–0.98
Woman (1 = yes)	1.87	1.79–1.84	1.62	1.58–1.65	2.02	1.94–2.10	1.64	1.61–1.67
Education level								
Primary	ref.				ref.			
Secondary	1.17	1.12–1.23	**1.02**	0.99–1.04	1.15	1.10–1.20	**0.99**	0.96 –1.01
Tertiary	1.34	1.27–1.42	1.18	1.14–1.21	1.31	1.24–1.38	1.14	1.11–1.18
Missing	0.77	0.69–0.85	0.66	0.62–0.70	0.83	0.75–0.91	0.72	0.68–0.75
Enrolled in school (1 = yes)	0.55	0.52–0.58	0.85	0.82–0.87	0.63	0.61–0.66	0.90	0.88–0.92
Annual **income**	1.01	1.01–1.02	1.01	1.01–1.02	1.03	1.03–1.03	1.02	1.02–1.02
Period (2010 = ref.)	0.89	0.89–0.90	**1.00**	1.00–1.01	0.90	0.90–0.91	1.00	0.99–1.00
Urban residence (1 = yes)	**0.98**	0.94–1.02	0.93	0.91–0.95	0.89	0.86–0.93	0.97	0.95–0.99
Random intercept for countries of origin	No				Yes			
N Events	12,734		49,144		12,734		49,144	
N Person-years	1279,401				1279,401			
N Countries					211			

Note: Estimates not in bold, $p < 0.05$. OR = Odds ratio. CI = Confidence interval.
[a] 2.5 generation = Native born by one foreign-born and one native-born parent. [b] Second generation = Native born by two immigrant parents. [c] This category also comprises the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. [d] This category also comprises countries in rest of Oceania.

compared with second-generation individuals of other origins. Within all generations, however, this gender gap in marriage was largest for those originating from MENA, though differences were not statistically significant from those of Asian (2.5 generation and immigrants arriving at ages 0–12) and Eastern European (second generation and both groups of childhood migrants) origins. Also, among the 2.5 and second generations, the gender gap in marriage was significantly larger among those of Asian origin than those originating from Nordic, Western European, and Sub-Saharan African countries.

Women of all origins and migrant generations were more cohabitation prone than their male counterparts, except second-generation women of Western European/Anglo-Saxon and Sub-Saharan African origins (Fig. 2, lower panel). The gender gap in cohabitation was smaller among the second generation and immigrants arriving as children or teens from Asia and MENA compared to those of Nordic origin. And, among the second generation as well as teen migrants, the gender gap in cohabitation was smaller for those originating from Asia, MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa than among those of Eastern European origin. Among the 2.5-generation, the cohabitation gender gap was larger for those of Eastern European and Asian origins than those of all other origins, except South American.

6. Summary and discussion

Using Norwegian register data on the total population of children of immigrants born 1985–2001, this study investigated differences in first union formation. The children of immigrants were either born in Norway by one or two Norwegian-born parents, or they immigrated prior to age 18. They have thus spent all or large parts of their lives in Norway, a context characterized by high rates of cohabitation and late marriage. Do the children of immigrants follow the prevailing pattern of union formation, and are there differences according to their number of immigrant parents, their length of residence in Norway and regions of origin?

Considering first union formation, irrespective of union type, results confirmed that majority individuals formed their first co-residential partnerships earlier in life than the children of immigrants. The only exception was migrants arriving as teens, who formed their unions earlier than the majority. This latter difference was small in magnitude, and mostly due to a higher marriage propensity (see below for details). This finding confirms Hypothesis 1a and aligns with research showing that the children of immigrants stay longer in the parental home before forming a first union (Ferrari & Pailhé, 2017; Kuhnt & Krapf, 2020). Whereas cohabitation in early adulthood is widespread in the general Norwegian population (Wiik, 2009), the children of immigrants could more often encounter socioeconomic difficulties during the transition to adulthood, resulting in later union formation. Also, some groups face discrimination in the housing market (Andersson et al., 2012), making it harder to establish separate households. Nine in ten Norwegians below the age of 25 residing outside the parental home are tenants (Normann, 2016), so poorer access to rented housing could partly explain this pattern. It could also be that the children of immigrants less often receive help and financial support from their parents to buy their first housing, particularly if they are not marrying. Many young Norwegian homeowners got such help and it increased with their parents' wealth (Sandlie, 2018).

Separating between marriage and cohabitation I further sat out to assess whether the children of immigrants were more likely to marry and

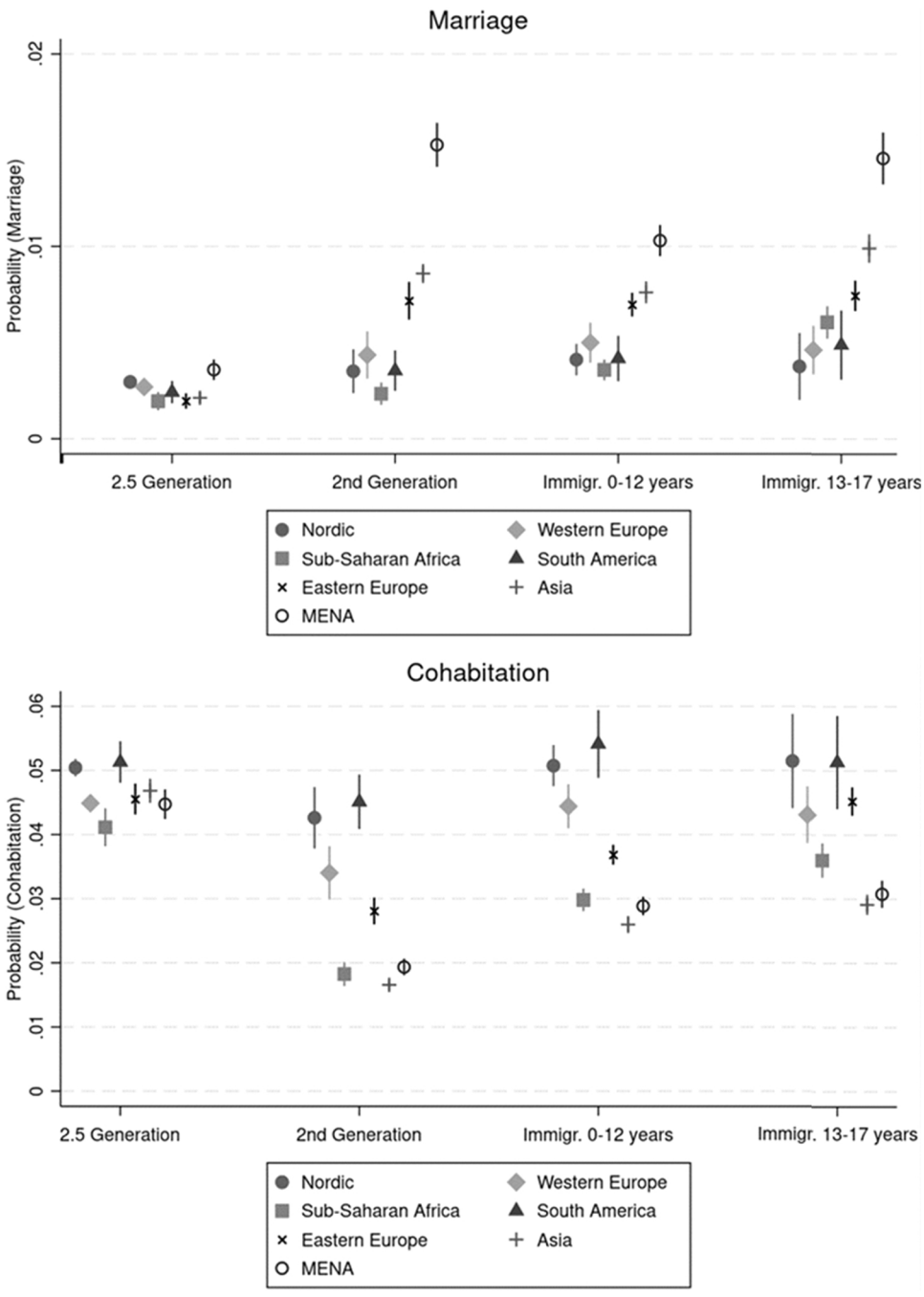

Fig. 1. Results from discrete time multinomial models ran separately by regions of origin. Predicted annual probabilities of marriage (upper panel) and cohabitation (lower panel), with 95% confidence intervals. *Note*: Second generation = Native born by two immigrant parents; 2.5 generation = Native born by one foreign-born and one native-born parent. All models include the following variables: Age (squared) education, school enrollment, annual income, period, and urban residence. Controls were set at mean values and standard errors adjusted for clustering on individuals.

less likely to cohabit than those without a migration background (Hypothesis 1b). As expected, cohabitation is currently the most common pathway to first partnerships for all groups, though it is most common among those without a migrant background as well as the children of one native-born and one immigrant parent: 93% of the majority and 92% of the 2.5-generation chose cohabitation as their first union, compared with 57% of the second generation and nearly three-quarters of those immigrating as children or teens. Multivariate results confirmed that the children of immigrants, regardless of whether they were native born and their ages at immigration, were less likely to cohabit, but more likely to marry, than Norwegians without a migration background. 2.5-generation individuals, on the other hand, were less likely to cohabit and particularly to marry than the majority. For many young Norwegians, cohabitation functions as a try-out phase, offering a more flexible and lower-threshold alternative to continue living in the parental home or single living than marriage (Syltevik, 2010). The results of the current paper imply that the children of immigrants instead delay first union formation, perhaps until they have established themselves on the labor market and are more certain about their relationships, and rather marry directly at somewhat later ages.

Given that they were born and raised in Norway, I further expected that second-generation individuals would be more likely to follow the prevailing Norwegian family life course and delay first marriage and to choose cohabitation as first union than individuals who immigrated as children or teens (Hypothesis 2). Results provided evidence of such a shift in marriage propensities across generations: The second-generation as well as those who immigrated at ages below 13 were less marriage prone than those with a shorter duration of residence in Norway. This finding corroborates earlier research showing that immigrants with longer durations of residence and second-generation immigrants adopt

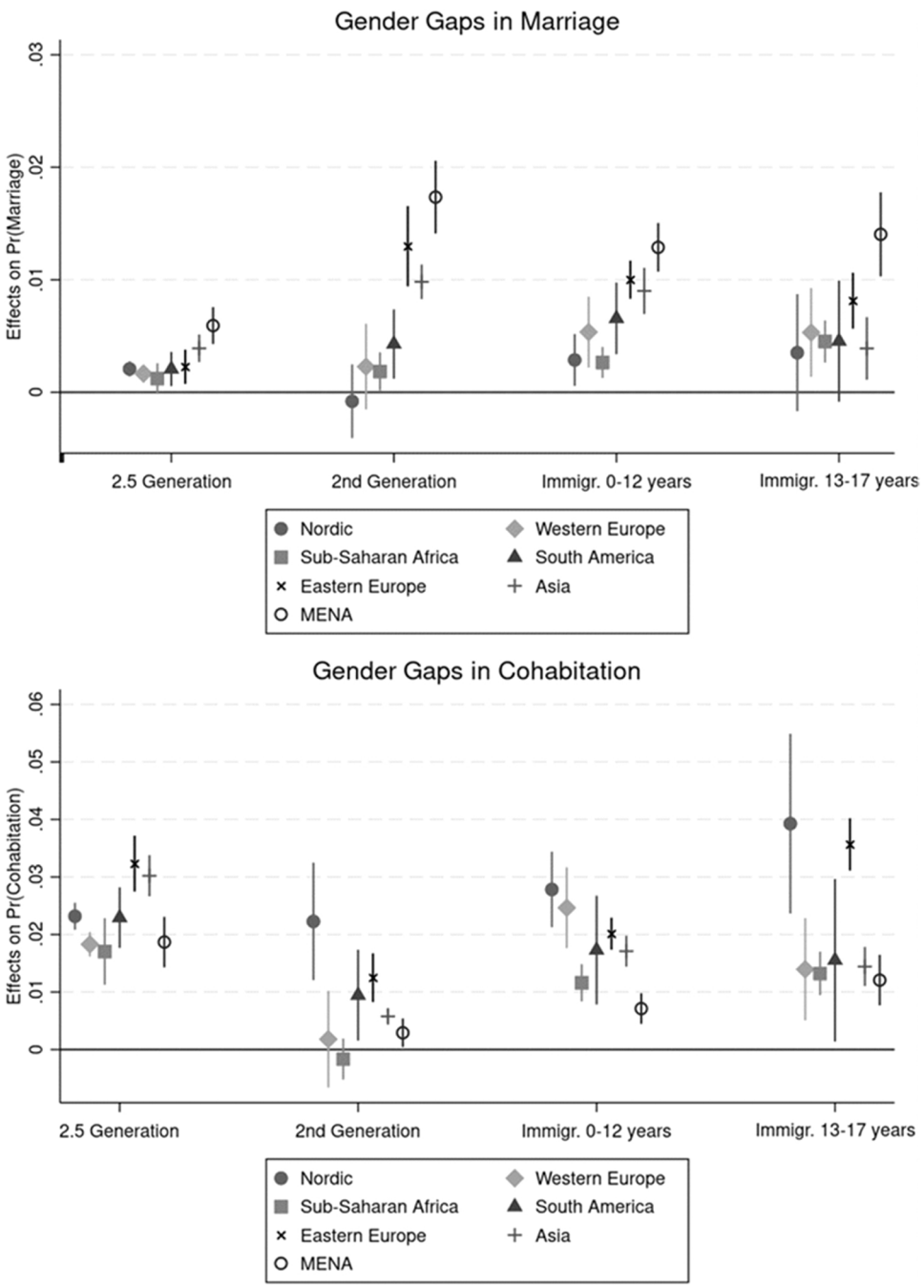

Fig. 2. Results from discrete time multinomial models ran separately by regions of origin. With interaction terms between gender (men=reference) and migrant generations. Average marginal effects on marriage (upper panel) and cohabitation (lower panel), with 95% confidence intervals. *Note*: 2.5 generation = Native born by one foreign-born and one native-born parent; Second generation = Native born by two immigrant parents. All models include the variables included in interaction terms as well as age (squared), education, school enrollment, annual income, period, and urban residence. Standard errors adjusted for clustering on individuals.

marital behavior that are more similar to majority populations, such as intermarriage (Dribe & Lundh, 2008; Sassler & Qian, 2003) and later marriage (Wiik & Holland, 2018). Second-generation individuals were born and raised in Norway, and their parents have spent even more time in the country before their children were born. Similarly, many of those immigrating as small children have also lived most of their lives in Norway. As both these groups have been socialized in Norwegian educational settings, speak the native language and have been exposed to other institutions, they are, on average, probably more influenced by the dominant family behaviors than immigrants with shorter duration of residence.

To be sure, second-generation individuals were less likely to cohabit than those who immigrated as children or teens. This finding was not as expected and signal that the second-generation have not fully adapted to the dominant union formation pattern. Instead, results showed that the second-generation form their first co-residential unions at later ages than the majority and childhood migrants, but that they marry instead of cohabiting. This finding echoes earlier Norwegian research showing that cohabitation rarely is an alternative for marriage among the children of immigrants in Norway (Wiik et al., 2021).

Although I accounted for regions and countries of origin as well as other relevant socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, there are likely remaining differences across these sub groups of the immigrant-background population. For instance, whereas second-generation individuals were born in Norway, childhood immigrants are heterogeneous with respect to reasons for migration. Although most childhood migrants arrived with their parents, many were minor refugees (Statistics Norway, 2019). As they arrived without their parents or other close relatives, they may be less influenced by the often conservative family formation values of their parents and ethnic community.

Also, there is a negative relation between religiosity and cohabitation (e.g., Wiik, 2009). Higher levels of religiosity among immigrants (Barstad, 2019) and their descendants, and particularly among those of Muslim origins (Friberg & Sterri, 2021), may therefore be another mechanism explaining why many second-generation individuals did not cohabit. Religious differences, and particularly between Muslims and non-Muslims (Alba, 2005), may also create social distance between these groups and a highly secular majority population, resulting in more distinct union formation patterns and less change across immigrant generations. Correspondingly, in Western Europe there are low levels of religious intermarriage among first- and second-generation Muslims alike (Drouhot & Nee, 2019). Regrettably, the data used here do not contain information on religiosity and other attitudinal variables associated with cohabitation. These issues should be addressed in future research.

The finding that there was no clear generational gradient in cohabitation could also be an indirect result of partner choice patterns. That is, the children of immigrants partnering a majority Norwegian more often cohabit than those partnering endogamously, and second-generation individuals less often partner out of their group than childhood immigrants (Wiik et al., 2021). Additionally, second-generation individuals from the largest and most established origin countries, like Pakistan, Turkey, Sri Lanka and Morocco, have a larger pool of potential co-national partners to choose among within Norway than many groups of childhood immigrants.

As expected, 2.5-generation individuals were less likely to marry, but more likely to cohabit than their native-born counterparts with two immigrant parents and immigrants arriving as children or teens. These differences between the second generation and childhood migrants, on the one hand, and the 2.5 generation, individuals with one majority parent, on the other, suggest that family socialization and the intergenerational transmission of family behaviors are important mechanisms explaining first union formation. The children of minority-majority couples grow up in other contexts, have more contact with, and identify more with, natives than those with two immigrant parents (Alba et al., 2018; Kalmijn, 2015). They also more often marry a non-migrant themselves (Alba et al., 2018; Wiik & Holland, 2018). The finding that these children of majority-minority unions overall follow the union formation pattern of the majority is indeed in line with the idea that they constitute an "expansion of the mainstream" (Alba et al., 2018) and confirm that majority-minority unions are key in the adaptation of immigrants and descendants into receiving societies.

Results further confirmed that the children of immigrants originating from Asia and MENA, but also Eastern Europe, were more marriage prone than those originating from elsewhere. These results confirmed Hypothesis 3a and are in line with Swedish findings showing that the daughters of immigrants from MENA and South Asia (Andersson et al., 2015) as well as Polish origin young adults (Bernhardt et al., 2007) married at young ages. Our results also corroborate findings from the UK (Berrington, 2020), the Netherlands (De Valk & Liefbroer, 2007) and France (Milewski & Hamel, 2010) showing that second-generation Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, Indians, Moroccans, and Turks often (prefer to) marry.

Regarding the transition to a first cohabiting union, results provided evidence supporting the hypothesis that migrants and descendants of South-American, European and Sub-Saharan African origin would be more cohabitation prone than those originating from elsewhere (Hypothesis 3b). As expected, and in accordance with research showing an increasing prevalence of cohabitation in this region (Esteve et al., 2012), South-American immigrants and descendants had the highest chance of forming cohabiting unions, followed by those of Nordic, European, and Anglo-Saxon origins. Sub-Saharan African migrants and descendants, in contrast, were amongst the least cohabitation prone, though they too more often chose to cohabit than their Asian counterparts. This group is primarily comprised of second-generation and childhood migrants from Somalia, Eritrea, and Ethiopia (see Appendix 1), countries in which cohabitation is uncommon (Mokomane, 2006; Odimegwu et al., 2018). Taken together with the finding that the children of Sub-Saharan African immigrants were among the least likely to marry, these findings echo prior research showing that this group delays first union formation in France (Pailhé, 2015) and that the daughters of immigrants from the Horn of Africa in Sweden postpone first marriage (Andersson et al., 2015).

These differences across global regions of origin were more pronounced among those who themselves immigrated and among those with two immigrant parents than among the 2.5-generation, confirming Hypothesis 4. Again, the children of one immigrant and one native parent seem to have adapted to the prevailing pattern of union formation, and the immigrant parent's region of origin was of less importance. Nonetheless, individuals with one immigrant parent from MENA were more likely to marry than those of most other origins. They were also less cohabitation prone than those of Nordic and South-American origin. A closer inspection of the country composition of this group revealed that Turkey and Morocco were the two numerically largest MENA countries of origin among the 2.5 generation (see Appendix 1). These countries are Muslim and characterized by a traditional pattern of family formation (Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 2018; Milewski & Hamel, 2010), and adaptation of the majority pattern may progress slower even though the other parent was native-born. A similar finding was reported in the U.S. where the children of white-black couples more often identified as members of the minority and experienced discrimination than other children of "mixed parentage" (Alba et al., 2018). It was outside the scope of the current article to fully assess differences within the 2.5-generation. For instance, future research should assess whether the influence of the migrant parent's country of origin differs according to that parent's gender, as well as the gender of the 2.5-generation individual.

Together, these results confirm that the union formation behaviors of the children of immigrants, and particularly among those with two immigrant parents or who themselves immigrated as children or teens, continue to be influenced by the norms and behaviors of their countries of origin and that family adaptation varies with sociocultural distance between countries of origin and residence. The higher marriage propensities of the second generation and childhood migrants, and particularly those originating from Asia and MENA, may be due to lower levels of sociocultural integration as well as childhood socialization, shaped by the preferences and behaviors of parents' and other co-ethnics in Norway and in origin countries.

I further anticipated that the gender differences in first union formation would be larger among the children of immigrants originating from "traditional" family systems in Asia and MENA than among those of other origins (Hypothesis 5). Correspondingly, women of all migrant generations originating from MENA, and female teen migrants from Asia, were more likely to marry than men of similar origins, and these gender marriage gaps were larger than among those of other origins. The gender gaps in marriage were particularly large among the second generation originating from countries in MENA, Asia and Eastern Europe.

At the same time, across all migrant generations, women were more likely to cohabit than men, irrespective of their global regions of origin. The only exception was second-generation women of Sub-Sharan African and Western European/Anglo-Saxon origins who were no more or less cohabitation prone than their male counterparts. Among the second generation and immigrants arriving as children or teens, however, the gender gap in cohabitation was smaller among those originating from Asia and MENA compared to those of Nordic origin. One reason for these gender differences, particularly in marital behavior, could be that these women are more susceptible than men to follow the prevailing family norms of their countries of origin. This could be due to social pressure from families, friends, and the co-ethnic community, or gender socialization teaching women to be relational (Sassler & Miller, 2010) and prioritize family over education and labor market participation (Furstenberg, 2019; Xiao, 2000). Those who choose to cohabit, on the other

hand, may be selected on unobserved characteristics associated with cohabitation, such as their values and personality. For instance, women who cohabit, and perhaps also their families, could be more secularized and individualized (Kreidl & Žilinčíková, 2021). It could also be that these women have already crossed boundaries by partnering a majority Norwegian, thereby more often choosing cohabitation (Wiik et al., 2021). These are matters for further research.

Using these register data, it was possible to study the formation of first marital and non-marital unions among the total population of children of immigrants from many countries of origin, often too small to be captured in representative surveys. We also avoided reporting and recollection errors as often found in retrospective union histories (Hayford & Morgan, 2008; Kreyenfeldt & Bastin, 2016). It could also be that behaviors that are considered "undesired" among those originating from countries with conservative family behaviors, like cohabitation and nonmarital fertility, are underreported in surveys. Despite these strengths, the register data used here contain no information on social pressure, attitudes and values. And, although most cohabiting unions were captured using these data, those cohabiting without reporting address change (e.g., students) were not counted as cohabiting, neither were unions entered at the beginning of one year that were dissolved later that year nor cohabiting same-sex unions. Also, there is evidence from qualitative research that some migrant-background groups in Norway, predominantly Muslims, but also others, such as Sikhs, only marry in unofficial religious ceremonies (Bredal & Wærstad, 2014). These are not always included in the population registers as marriages but rather as cohabitations.

Further, in the current analyses, the analytical "clock" stopped once individuals formed a first partnership. It is important to stress that cohabitation may have a different function and meaning across majority and migrant-background groups. Whereas cohabitation often functions as an alternative to marriage, or a short-lived try-out period in early adulthood, among majority Norwegians (Syltevik, 2010), it is more often an engagement period or a prelude to marriage among migrant-background cohabiting couples (Wiik et al., 2021).

To conclude, the findings from this high-quality nationwide study adds to the knowledge base of family behaviors of immigrant-background individuals. Notably, focusing on the children of immigrants from many countries of origin and including data on unmarried cohabitation, the current study confirmed that for most groups, cohabitation is currently the preferred route into family life. Also, results did provide evidence of a shift in marriage propensities across generations whereby the second-generation as well as those who immigrated at ages below 13, were less marriage prone than those with a shorter duration of residence in Norway. The native-born children of one immigrant and one native parent, on the other hand, by and large follow the union formation pattern of the general population. Taken at face value these findings imply that the children of immigrants increasingly adapt to the dominant Norwegian family formation pattern, and prevalent norms and values more broadly. Considering the timing and type of first union formation thus provided evidence of boundary blurring, highlighting the importance of considering family behaviors other than intermarriage when studying migrant-background family adaptation (Alba, 2005; Song, 2009). Given that cohabiting unions more often than marriages are ethnically exogamous (Blackwell & Lichter, 2000; Çelikaksoy, 2014; Wiik et al., 2021), such a development may promote more boundary crossing behavior and further social cohesion in Norwegian society.

Acknowledgements

This work was funded by the Norwegian Research Council through the project "The family lives of the children of immigrants in Norway" [grant number 250486]. I would like to thank participants at the Research seminar at Statistics Norway, as well as Lars Dommermuth, Janna Bergsvik and Astri Syse for constructive comments on an earlier version of this manuscript.

Declarations of interest

none.

Appendix A. Supporting information

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found in the online version at doi:10.1016/j.alcr.2022.100480.

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