

1 Attitudes toward Immigrants in rural Norway. A rural-urban
2 comparison

3

4 Abstract

5 Successful integration of immigrants is vital for rural areas facing population decline and
6 labour shortage. Yet little is known about the role civil society plays in this process and
7 about the factors that promote or hamper acceptance of immigrants by the local population.
8 By using data from a national survey of the Norwegian population, this paper examines
9 rural-urban differences in attitudes toward immigrants and immigration, and what
10 characteristics rural and urban residents consider important for immigrants who may settle
11 in their locality. The results indicate that people living in rural areas express more negative
12 attitudes toward immigrants and immigration compared to people living in urban areas.
13 Additionally, rural residents place greater importance than their urban counterparts do on
14 immigrants' participating in local events, speaking the native language, and being willing to
15 adapt to Norwegian values.

16

17 Introduction

18 Over the last few decades, European countries have become major destinations for
19 international migrants. Czaika and Di Lillo (2018) claim that with a growing foreign-born
20 population, xenophobic attitudes against immigrants have increased. They point to the
21 rising support for radical right-wing populist parties whose political agendas centre on
22 opposition to immigration. Since recent immigrants live mainly in urban areas, research has
23 focused primarily on integration challenges in metropolitan settings (Berg et al. 2007). Yet
24 increasing immigration to peripheral and rural areas has stimulated academic interest in its
25 potential and impact (Simard and Jentsch 2009; Kasimis et al. 2010; Hedberg and do
26 Carmo 2012; McAreavey 2017; *Journal of Rural Studies*, Special Issue vol. 64, 2018).

27 Successful integration of immigrants is vital to many rural areas facing demographic
28 and economic challenges posed by an ageing population, youth out-migration, and labour
29 shortage. Integration includes not only economic integration, but also social and cultural
30 interaction between the native-born majority and immigrant newcomers in everyday life.
31 These integration processes involve mutual adaptation between immigrants and the host
32 community and facilitate immigrants' participation in and sense of belonging to civil
33 society. Given the challenges many rural areas face, it is important to recognise the
34 potential benefits of immigration and address potential obstacles to the attraction and
35 retention of immigrants.

36 Living in rural areas is generally thought to be associated with heightened
37 opposition to immigrants (Pettigrew 1998; Mayda 2006; Markaki and Longhi 2013; Czaika
38 and Di Lillo 2018). This attitude may be an obstacle that hampers the successful integration
39 of immigrants in rural areas, as the process of integration depends not only on the desire

40 and capacity of the immigrants to adapt but also on the willingness of the residents in the
41 host community to accept them. General attitudes are good predictors of broad behavioral
42 patterns (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980). As Birkmose and Thomsen (2012) point out, existing
43 attitudes among the members of the host community toward immigrants have major
44 implications for intergroup contact and integration. The retention of immigrants often
45 depends on how welcoming a community is, especially in rural areas that are less likely
46 than urban areas to have a critical mass of immigrants with a common origin.

47 Peoples' attitudes toward immigrants and immigration may also influence the
48 qualities they think are most important for the newcomers to have. These ideas may both
49 promote and hamper social and cultural interaction, depending on whether immigrants'
50 characteristics and behavior are consistent with the locals' preferences. As attitudes toward
51 immigrants and the qualities local residents consider most important may differ between
52 rural and urban areas, we need more empirical knowledge in order to deepen our
53 understanding of integration processes in rural areas. Using data from a national survey of
54 the Norwegian population, this paper explores rural-urban differences both in attitudes
55 toward immigrants and immigration and characteristics and behaviors that natives value
56 most highly in immigrants who may settle among them.

57

58 [Researching immigrants in rural areas](#)

59 In many European countries, rural areas are challenged by gradual population decline.
60 These communities are struggling to maintain a level of settlement that can secure basic
61 public- and private-sector welfare services (Almås et al. 2008; Aasbrenn and Sørli 2016;
62 Brown and Argent 2016). According to Hugo and Morén-Alegret (2008), international

63 migration will play an increasingly important role in rural areas in high-income countries,
64 as the settlement of immigrants in rural areas is a potential solution to persistent economic
65 and demographic decline. Recent studies show that the arrival of immigrants has
66 substantially reduced, or even reversed, depopulation in some rural regions (Bayona-i-
67 Carrasco and Gil-Alonso 2013; Collantes et al. 2014; Hedberg and Haandrikman 2014;
68 Båtevik and Grimsrud 2017). Nevertheless, while immigration can stimulate
69 socioeconomic revitalisation, some observers question the extent to which immigrants can
70 support an ageing population and reverse demographic and economic decline. Immigrants’
71 employment rate, their tendency to move to urban areas, and their sheer heterogeneity
72 should be taken into account before portraying international immigration as a potential
73 solution to these problems (Hedlund et al. 2017).

74 On a national level, the Norwegian welfare model is dependent on a high rate of
75 participation in the paid labour force (Meld. St. 29. 2016–2017). Thus, it is essential for
76 society that newly arrived immigrants, including refugees, enter the labour market as soon
77 as possible (Meld. St. 30. 2015–2016). Participation in the labour market is not only a
78 matter of immigrants’ ability and willingness to seek jobs; it also depends on the capacity
79 of the locality to facilitate their employment. Although some rural areas have limited labour
80 markets with relatively few employment opportunities, the public and the service sector are
81 the main employers in most rural and urban areas (KMD 2018). In addition, labour-
82 intensive forms of agriculture and horticulture, aquaculture, fishery and related processing
83 industries are important in many rural areas (Rye and Andrzejewska 2010; Holm 2012;
84 OECD 2014). Their ageing population will require more support and care services, and

85 there is growing concern about a future shortage of professional healthcare workers in rural
86 areas (Holmøy et al. 2014).

87 Mastery of the natives' language is an important factor for labour market
88 participation and social integration, and language training is the single most important
89 measure directed at immigrants. Since September 2005, Norway has required all newly
90 arrived immigrants from outside the European Economic Area who are not fluent in
91 Norwegian to take language and civic education classes (IMDi 2016; 2017). It is
92 compulsory for refugees to attend a two-year programme where the Norwegian language is
93 taught. Other immigrants have the right to receive language training, but have to pay for the
94 classes themselves.

95 Despite mastering the language, establishing new friendships and becoming a part
96 of informal networks in rural Norway can be especially challenging for immigrants (Aure
97 et al. 2016). Evidence from Sweden and Norway indicates that many job vacancies are
98 filled through informal contacts (Behtoui 2008 and Hagtvét 2005, cited in Liebig 2009),
99 showing that social networks serve as a gateway into the labour market. It is difficult for
100 immigrants to learn the norms and values of the host society and become familiar with
101 socially accepted ways of doing things because these are often unspoken and taken for
102 granted by locals. Moreover, as Valenta (2008, p. 222) argues, 'Being accepted into
103 Norwegian social networks presupposes that immigrants subordinate themselves to the
104 prescribed norms of the majority, but even this offers no guarantee that those who conform
105 will be granted entry'.

106 Several studies have explored immigrants' experiences of living in rural areas
107 (Søholt et al. 2012; Munkejord 2017). A recent study of living conditions among

108 immigrants in Norway shows that those in rural areas have fewer welfare problems than
109 those in urban areas (Tronstad et al. 2018). However, new immigrants might migrate from
110 rural areas for reasons related to the difficulties they encounter in finding jobs and social
111 acceptance. In general, immigrants who are not well integrated are less likely to stay. Many
112 of the refugees who are initially placed in rural areas choose to move to urban areas within
113 a few years (Ordemann 2017). A focus on the integration of immigrants is crucial for
114 communities striving to maintain an adequate population (Søholt et al. 2012). Thus,
115 knowledge regarding rural residents' attitudes toward immigrants is important in order to
116 understand potential obstacles to integration.

117 Although there is no unified theory for framing public attitudes toward immigrants
118 and immigration (Price and Oshagan 1995; Chandler and Tsai 2001, in Czaika and Lillo
119 2018), theories of identity and in-group/out-group sentiment are fundamental to most
120 explanations for why individuals oppose or support immigration. Berg (2015) argues that
121 differing explanations of attitudes are not mutually exclusive and that scholars would
122 benefit by using multilevel theories in order to attain a more nuanced understanding.

123 Sides and Citrin (2007) distinguish between theories based on interests and those
124 based on social identity. These approaches share the idea that immigrants represent a threat,
125 but differ in how that threat is conceived. Interest based theories focus on competition for
126 scarce resources, for instance when immigrants are perceived as competitors in the labour
127 market or as a burden on the welfare system. Theories of social identity, in contrast,
128 emphasise that members of the majority group feel that their cultural values, norms and
129 identity are superior to those of outsiders, leading to prejudices against immigrants whom
130 they assume hold different values, beliefs and customs. A group whose culture differs from

131 the majority culture in ways that the majority imagines in oppositional terms and regards as
132 inferior to its own might be regarded as a threat. In this framework, negative attitudes
133 toward immigrants are part of the process of defining group identity, 'us', through
134 distinctive opposition to an imagined 'them'. The majority group's conception that
135 immigrants represent a threat to their own social and cultural identity underlies their
136 negative attitudes toward foreigners in their midst.

137 Interest- and identity-based theories contribute to the understanding of educational
138 differences in attitudes toward immigrants, as higher levels of education are associated with
139 more liberal attitudes. Jenssen and Engesbak (1994) point out that differing interpretations
140 of the effect of education depend on their theoretical starting points. Interest-based
141 explanations often consider that higher levels of education lead to jobs with higher social
142 status and income, which to a considerable extent protect people from direct competition
143 with immigrants in the labor and housing markets. Identity-based explanations consider
144 that higher levels of education convey more liberal values, which consequently reduce
145 prejudice (Dustmann and Preston 2007). As levels of education are generally higher in
146 urban than in rural areas, this difference could explain why positive attitudes toward
147 immigrants are more common there (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007).

148 Furthermore, it is well documented that social interaction between immigrants and
149 the majority population results in a reduction of misconceptions and prejudice, while lack
150 of contact is the most important factor explaining the prevalence of stereotypical and
151 negative attitudes (Ellison and Powers 1994; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Schneider 2008;
152 Ellison et al. 2011; Blom 2017; Thanem et al. 2017). This is often referred to as the social
153 contact hypothesis. Hayes and Dowds (2006), for instance, conclude in a study of Northern

154 Ireland that social exposure, particularly having immigrant friends, is the most important
155 explanation for holding positive attitudes toward immigrants. Along with educational
156 differences, social contact is portrayed as a potential explanation for observed rural-urban
157 differences.

158 Ceobanu and Escandell (2010) argue that there are two distinct types of public
159 views toward immigration and immigrants: the first is based on reactions toward the
160 phenomenon of immigration, while the other is based on responses to people. These two
161 forms might intermingle; one might support or even contradict the other. Thus, a person
162 might support immigration in principle but be less positive toward immigrants settling in
163 the neighbourhood, or vice versa. The well-known Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY)
164 phenomenon suggests that negative attitudes toward immigrants are rooted in local contexts
165 and stem from strictly local concerns. While accepting the necessity of accommodating
166 immigrants in principle, people worry about the potential deterioration of local services and
167 facilities, based on a ‘selfish’ desire to safeguard local interests (Zorlu 2016).

168 Analysing data from a survey of the Norwegian population, this paper examines
169 rural-urban differences in attitudes toward immigrants and immigration and in assessments
170 of the qualities that people consider important in immigrants who move to their locality. By
171 examining these two dimensions in relation to each other, this study contributes to our
172 knowledge of social factors affecting attitudes toward immigrants.

173 The remainder of this paper is organised into three sections. The next section
174 presents the data and the methodology, the subsequent section presents the results, and the
175 final section interprets and discusses the findings, explaining the main conclusions and
176 implications of the study.

177 Data and Method

178 This paper is based on data from a representative national survey designed to gather
179 information about living conditions, local identity, social relationships, values, and attitudes
180 among rural and urban residents (Farstad 2016). A postal questionnaire was sent to a
181 random but stratified national sample of 7,000 Norwegians aged 18 years and above that
182 was drawn from Norway's Central Population Register. To ensure a relatively equal
183 distribution between people who live in sparsely populated rural areas and people who live
184 in urban areas, questionnaires were sent to 3,500 inhabitants in rural municipalities and
185 3,500 in urban municipalities. The survey has an overall response rate of 30.2 per cent.
186 After excluding respondents born outside the country from the analyses, the net sample in
187 rural municipalities consists of 1037 respondents, while that for urban municipalities
188 consists of 958 respondents.

189 Given the complexity of the group denoted by 'immigrants', the survey did not
190 specify a definition; rather, respondents applied their own perceptions of the term's
191 meaning. Consequently, differing perceptions might lead to differences in responses,
192 yielding biased results. According to Blom (2017), however, specifically excluding
193 immigrants from Western Europe and North America from the category seems to have no
194 effect on attitudes toward immigrants; results do not differ when compared to those for the
195 unspecified term. Arguably, respondents' own definitions of the term mainly refer to
196 immigrants from outside Western Europe and North America^(Note 2). By showing differences
197 in attitudes toward immigration, social contacts with immigrants, and the qualities
198 respondents regard as important for immigrants who may settle in their communities, the

199 analyses augment existing knowledge of factors that affect the acceptance of immigrants by
200 native-born residents of rural areas.

201 The classification of rural municipalities is based on three characteristics: centrality,
202 population density, and economic structure. To qualify as rural, a municipality has to meet
203 at least one of the following criteria: it is more than a 45-minute drive away from an urban
204 centre; more than 50 per cent of its residents live in sparsely populated areas; or more than
205 six per cent of its workforce is employed in primary industries (Storstad 2012). These
206 criteria are designed to exclude suburban areas and small towns in the countryside.
207 Municipalities that do not meet any of these criteria are defined as urban. In Norway, 64 per
208 cent of municipalities are classified as rural, and 19 per cent of the population lives in rural
209 municipalities.

210 [Measurements](#)

211 *Attitudes toward immigrants and immigration:* In the survey, respondents were asked
212 whether they agreed or disagreed with the following four statements: a) ‘Norwegian
213 culture, traditions and customs are generally enriched by people from other countries and
214 cultures’; b) ‘I fear that with increased immigration, there is an increase in crime’; c) ‘All
215 immigrants in Norway should have the same opportunity for work as Norwegians’; and d)
216 ‘Immigrants burden the social welfare system too much’. Responses to these statements
217 were measured on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items ‘b’
218 and ‘d’ were reversed in order to construct an internally consistent scale measuring
219 attitudes toward immigrants ($\alpha=0.74$). Respondents with missing values on more than
220 one item were excluded from the analyses, while respondents with a missing value on only
221 one item were given a mean score. Respondents’ mean scores on these four items yielded a

222 summary measure of attitudes ranging from 1 ('negative' attitudes) to 5 ('positive'
223 attitudes).

224 *Characteristics that residents consider important for immigrants:* Respondents
225 assessed the importance of specific characteristics for immigrants who may settle in their
226 community. This set of views was measured by the following questions: 'How important
227 do you think each of these factors is if someone from outside Norway moves to your local
228 community? How important is it that they: a) have a good education? b) can speak
229 Norwegian? c) want to adapt to Norwegian values? d) participate in local events?'
230 Responses to these questions were measured on a 7-point scale, from 1 (of very little
231 importance) to 7 (very important).

232 *Social contact with immigrants:* A variable that measures respondents' contacts with
233 immigrants is included in the analyses. The variable is based on the question: 'Do you have
234 contact with immigrants: a) at work? b) in the neighbourhood? c) among relatives? d)
235 among friends? e) in other places?' The variable was originally measured on a scale
236 ranging from 1 (daily) to 5 (never). We then created a dummy variable that identifies
237 respondents who have daily or weekly contact with immigrants in at least one of these
238 arenas. Daily or weekly contact with immigrants is coded 1, while less frequent contact
239 (i.e., monthly, less often than monthly, and never) is coded 0.

240 *Educational level:* The variable labeled 'higher education' is a dummy variable,
241 where respondents with an education on the university/college level is coded 1 and those
242 with an educational level lower than a university/college degree is coded 0.

243

244 Statistical analyses

245 In order to examine rural-urban differences, several t-tests and chi-square tests were
246 applied. Further, we conducted a multiple regression analysis (OLS), in which attitudes
247 toward immigrants and immigration were treated as a dependent variable, and rural or
248 urban residency, educational level, and social contact with immigrants were treated as
249 independent variables. In addition to this analysis, a correlation matrix was constructed in
250 order to analyse the correlation between attitudes toward immigrants and immigration in
251 general, and the assessments of qualities in immigrants who may settle in the local
252 community.

253

254 Results

255 The descriptive statistics of study variables and rural-urban comparisons are shown in
256 Table 1. The table shows the mean score for continuous variables and the percentage with
257 value 1 for the dichotomous variables. Rural-urban comparisons show that people living in
258 rural areas express significantly less positive attitudes toward immigrants and immigration
259 compared to people living in urban areas.

260

261 <Table 1 about here>

262

263 The table also shows the mean score on respondents' assessment of various
264 characteristics they consider important when immigrants move to their locality. The
265 majority of respondents living in rural areas regard Norwegian language skills, adaptation

266 to Norwegian values, and participation in local events as important. Urban residents
267 consider the same qualities important, but they regard them as significantly less important
268 than rural residents do. In both rural and urban areas, supplementary t-tests revealed that
269 immigrants' willingness to adapt to Norwegian values (Note 3) is assessed as significantly
270 more important than speaking Norwegian and participating in local events. Residents of
271 both rural and urban areas regard immigrants' education as less important than the other
272 three characteristics. Supplementary analyses show that in both rural and urban
273 municipalities, work is the most important arena for social contact with immigrants, along
274 with interaction in the neighborhood. However, as shown in Table 1, the proportion of
275 people who have regular (i.e., daily or weekly) contact with immigrants is significantly
276 lower in rural areas than in urban areas.

277 [Rural-urban differences in attitudes toward immigration and immigrants](#)

278 Table 2 shows a block-wise regression analysis of the differences in attitudes toward
279 immigrants and immigration (the dependent variable) between people living in rural and
280 urban areas. The bivariate correlation between rural-urban residency and attitudes towards
281 immigrants and immigration is presented in Model 1. Model 2 shows the correlation after
282 adjusting for the effect of differences in social contacts with immigrants, and Model 3
283 shows the correlation after adjusting for differences in both social contacts and educational
284 levels. A coefficient with a positive sign implies that an increase in the independent
285 variable leads to an increase in the dependent variable, which indicates an increase in
286 positive attitudes. A negative sign implies that an increase in the independent variable leads
287 to a decrease in the dependent variable, which indicates a reduction in positive attitudes
288 toward immigrants.

289

290

<Table 2 about here>

291

292 Model 1 shows that people living in rural areas express significantly less positive
293 attitudes toward immigrants and immigration compared to those living in urban areas.

294 Model 2 shows that people with regular social contact with immigrants express
295 significantly more positive attitudes. Inclusion of social contact with immigrants reduces
296 the effect of rural-urban differences in attitudes, although the effect is still statistically
297 significant at the 0.05 level. Model 3, which also adjusts for their level of education, shows
298 that living in a rural area no longer has a significant effect on respondents' attitudes toward
299 immigrants. In other words, rural respondents' more negative attitudes to immigrants seem
300 largely to reflect less social contact with them and lower educational level.

301 [Correlations between attitudes and assessments of immigrants](#)

302 Table 3 shows the bivariate correlation between the continuous variables presented in Table
303 1. The analysis shows a significant correlation between rural respondents' attitudes toward
304 immigrants and immigration and the importance of three of the assessments of the qualities
305 they value in immigrants who may settle in their locality. The more negative the attitudes
306 respondents express toward immigrants and immigration, the greater importance they place
307 on immigrants' willingness to adapt to Norwegian values, having a good education, and
308 speaking Norwegian. Differences in attitudes toward immigrants, however, are not
309 correlated with their evaluations of the importance of immigrants' participation in local
310 events.

311

312

<Table 3 about here>

313 Discussion and conclusion

314 This paper contributes to existing knowledge about the acceptance of immigrants in rural
315 areas by examining rural-urban differences in attitudes toward immigrants and
316 immigration, and what characteristics they consider important in immigrants who may
317 settle in their locality. As successful integration of immigrants is vital to many rural areas,
318 it is important to address potential obstacles that hamper the integration processes. One
319 obstacle may be the more prevalent opposition to immigration, which could lead to
320 immigrants feeling less welcomed by rural residents. In order to distinguish between
321 attitudes that are universal and attitudes that are particular to or more common in rural
322 areas, however, comparisons between rural and urban areas are necessary.

323 Our study confirms previous findings showing that people living in rural areas
324 express more negative attitudes toward immigrants and immigration than people in urban
325 areas (Blom 2017). The greater skepticism that people in rural areas express about
326 immigration seems to be related to the fact that they are less likely to interact regularly with
327 immigrants than their urban counterparts. In this respect, our findings confirm the social
328 contact hypothesis (Pettigrew 1998). Differences in social contact with immigrants,
329 however, do not fully explain the rural-urban differences in attitudes. These differences also
330 reflect the greater prevalence of persons with higher education in urban areas, which is
331 associated with more liberal attitudes toward immigration (Dustmann and Preston 2007).

332 The combination of differing levels of higher education and differing frequencies of social
333 contact with immigrants appears to explain the rural-urban differences in attitudes.

334 Even though rural residence per se is not correlated with negative attitudes toward
335 immigrants once differences in educational levels and in social contacts with immigrants
336 are taken into account, the skepticism about immigrants that is prevalent among native-born
337 Norwegians in rural areas may affect their reception and integration of newcomers. By
338 investigating what qualities local residents regard as important, we gain a better
339 understanding of what might facilitate integration in rural areas. Our analysis reveals that
340 respondents' attitudes toward immigrants and immigration are significantly correlated with
341 what characteristics and behaviors they value most in immigrants. The more negative the
342 attitudes people express toward immigrants and immigration, the more value they place on
343 immigrants' resemblance to themselves: they prefer that immigrants who settle in the
344 community be as similar to native-born residents as possible, speaking Norwegian and
345 adapting to Norwegian values. This finding is in line with previous literature (e.g., Kosic et
346 al. 2005) indicating that individuals with high levels of prejudice toward immigrants seem
347 to expect immigrants to assimilate into the host society, whereas individuals with low
348 levels of prejudice more easily accept a multicultural society that allows immigrants to
349 maintain aspects of their culture of origin.

350 Further, our study shows that the people living in rural areas consider it more
351 important that immigrants who may settle in their community are willing to adapt to
352 Norwegian values, speak the language, and participate in local events than their urban
353 counterparts do. More negative attitudes toward immigrants among the rural population
354 may partly explain this difference. Yet the value that rural residents place on these

355 characteristics and behaviors may also be a consequence of the expectations for reciprocal
356 personal relationships in rural communities. Rural community studies show that help-
357 giving and social obligations constitute a crucial component of rural society (see Little
358 2002; Kramvig 2005). In comparing rural and urban neighbourhoods, Parr et al. (2004)
359 found that people's sense of social obligation may be intensified and less easy to avoid or
360 ignore in rural places because of the 'visibility of rural life and of rural residents to one
361 another' (p.409).

362 As these assessments apply to immigrants who may settle in the respondents' own
363 community, people may be concerned about safeguarding local identities and interests.
364 Based on social identity theory (Sides and Citrin 2007), visible cultural differences might
365 appear as a threat to existing norms, social systems, and relationships. However, this
366 opinion does not necessarily mean that immigrants must renounce their own culture as the
367 price of assimilation; rather, it suggests that they should show an interest in adopting some
368 aspects of the local culture of native-born Norwegians. From an interest-based perspective,
369 immigrants may be perceived as a threat if they are not seen as contributing to its economy
370 and society. Thus, immigrants who do not speak natives' language or participate in local
371 events may be perceived as outsiders. However, these assessments might also reflect the
372 characteristics rural residents think would enable immigrants to fit into and be accepted by
373 the community. In this respect, considerations regarding local interests may be relevant.

374 For instance, speaking the language facilitates immigrants' contact with native-born
375 residents and their participation in various arenas within the local community. Previous
376 research indicates that local events, such as festivals and school-related activities, may
377 strengthen the sense of belonging to a place for the people involved and for the host

378 community (Follo and Villa 2010; Jaeger and Mykleturn 2013; Oncescu 2014). Local
379 events and voluntary work are important arenas in which natives and newcomers have the
380 opportunity to get to know each other and establish social relations and networks. By
381 engaging in local events, immigrants can strengthen their ties with locals and develop a
382 stronger identification with the community. According to the social contact hypothesis,
383 these contacts, in turn, foster more positive attitudes toward immigrants. Civic engagement
384 and participation nurture social ties. Choosing to remain aloof by holding on to their own
385 culture and avoiding interaction with native-born residents is hardly an option for
386 immigrants who live in rural communities. Keeping a distance from the host community is
387 easier in large cities, at least where immigrants can find other people from their country or
388 culture of origin.

389 In sum, this study shows that people living in rural areas express less positive
390 attitudes toward immigrants and immigration and place greater value on immigrants'
391 speaking the language, adapting to the local culture, and participating in local events than
392 urban residents do. Negative attitudes and their desire that immigrants resemble themselves
393 may hamper the integration processes, especially if immigrants do not exhibit the
394 characteristics and behaviors that the native-born residents value most highly. One potential
395 outcome may be that immigrants feel less welcome in rural areas. At the same time, these
396 assessments may also reflect the importance that rural residents place on integrating
397 immigrants rather than merely coexisting with them while maintaining social distance
398 between natives and newcomers.

399 Qualitative research could yield valuable insights into the social causes and
400 consequences of rural-urban differences in attitudes toward immigrants and in the qualities

401 that native-born residents regard as most important in the immigrants who may settle
402 among them. It would be interesting to see whether their evaluation of the relative
403 importance of specific characteristics and behaviors varies depending on the types of
404 immigration involved, for example, whether the newcomers are labour migrants or
405 refugees, as well as on the relative homogeneity or diversity of the local population. In-
406 depth interviews with native-born residents and immigrants living in the same rural
407 localities could advance our understanding of the possibilities and challenges of integration
408 in rural communities.

409 Notes

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411 ¹ ‘Immigrants’ refers to foreign-born persons with two foreign-born parents (Daugstad ed.
412 2009). Prior to a 2008 revision, Norwegian data used to distinguish between ‘non-Western’
413 and ‘Western’ immigrants. This distinction is now being abandoned, but integration policy
414 remains mainly concerned with ‘non-Western’ immigrants and their children (Liebig 2009).
415 In 2018 there were 746,700 immigrants in Norway, amounting to 14 per cent of the total
416 population (Statistics Norway 2018).

417 ² Blom (2017) focuses on immigration status rather than newcomers’ race-ethnicity,
418 culture, or place of origin. As Markaki and Longhi (2013) observe, studies of Europeans’
419 attitudes have focused mainly on their citizenship, ‘sometimes with the conditional
420 influence of the race and culture of the immigrants in question’.

421 ³ Although the definition of Norwegian values is much discussed, according to Hellevik
422 and Hellevik (2016) the vast majority of Norwegians agree on the values of democracy,
423 freedom of speech, and gender equality.

424

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613

614 Tables

615

616 Table 1. *Descriptive statistics of study variables and rural-urban comparisons.*

Continuous variables	Min.	Max.	Rural sample: Mean (SD)	Urban sample: Mean (SD)	Rural-urban comparisons: T-tests
Attitudes toward immigrants (1=negative, 5=positive)	1	5	2.97 (0.86)	3.07 (0.88)	2.669**
Immigrants' participation in local events (1=of very little importance, 7=very important)	1	7	5.60 (1.47)	5.13 (1.63)	-6.581**
Immigrants adapting to Norwegian values (1=of very little importance, 7=very important)	1	7	6.24 (1.20)	6.08 (1.32)	-2.722**
Immigrants having a good education (1=of very little importance, 7=very important)	1	7	3.93 (1.75)	3.91 (1.79)	-0.778
Immigrants speaking Norwegian (1=of very little importance, 7=very important)	1	7	5.70 (1.65)	5.46 (1.72)	-2.902**
Dummy variables	Min.	Max.	Rural sample: Percentage with value 1	Urban sample: Percentage with value 1	Rural-urban comparisons: Chi-Square tests
Regular contact with immigrants (yes=1, No=0)	0	1	56.48	64.07	11.222**
Higher education (yes=1, No=0)	0	1	33.74	50.39	53.206**

Note: Minimum, maximum and percentage with value 1 for dummy variables, and means and standard deviation (SD) for continuous variables. (Rural sample: n=972, Urban sample: n=899).

617

618

619 Table 2. *Block-wise OLS-regression analysis of natives' attitudes toward immigrants and*
 620 *immigration.*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Coef. (SE)	Coef. (SE)	Coef. (SE)
Independent variables:			
Living in a rural area (yes=1, no=0) (reference category: living in an urban area)	-0.107** (0.040)	-0.083* (0.040)	-0.012 (0.040)
Regular contact with immigrants (yes=1, no=0)		0.322** (0.040)	0.251** (0.040)
Higher education (yes=1, no=0)			0.456** (0.040)
Constant	3.074 (0.029)	2.867 (0.039)	2.683 (0.040)
R-squared	0.004	0.037	0.100

*n=1871. * P < 0.05 and ** P < 0.01 in two-tailed tests. SE, standard errors.*

621

622

623 Table 3. *Bivariate correlation between rural respondents' attitudes toward immigrants and*
 624 *evaluation of immigrants' characteristics*

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Attitudes toward immigrants (1=negative, 5=positive)	1				
2. Immigrants participating in local events (1=of very little importance, 7=very important)	-0.04	1			
3. Immigrants adapting to Norwegian values (1=of very little importance, 7=very important)	-0.37**	0.45**	1		
4. Immigrants having a good education (1=of very little importance, 7=very important)	-0.24**	0.20**	0.24**	1	
5. Immigrants speaking Norwegian (1=of very little importance, 7=very important)	-0.40**	0.27**	0.47**	0.37**	1

625 *Note: * P < 0.05 and ** P < 0.01 in two-tailed tests. SE, standard errors. (n=972). Supplementary analyses*
 626 *show no significant differences between the coefficients in the rural and urban sample.*

627