

# Randomized to Opportunity: Estimating Place Effects for Refugee Children

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## Motivation

A large literature in economics documents substantial geographic variation in intergenerational mobility across countries including Australia (Deutscher, 2020), Brazil (Britto et al., 2024), Canada (Laliberté, 2021; Connor and Storper, 2020), Germany (Dodin et al., 2024), France (Kenedi and Sirugue, 2023), Great Britain (Bell et al., 2023), Italy (Acciari et al., 2022), Israel (Aloni and Avivi, 2025), the Netherlands (Beekers, 2024), the United States (Chetty and Hendren, 2018a,b), Sweden (Heidrich, 2017), and Spain (Soria and Medina, 2025). Denmark also exhibits substantial spatial variation (Eriksen and Munk, 2020). For example, Danish children who grow up in the municipality with the highest upward mobility earn over \$6,000 more per year in adulthood than those raised in the lowest-mobility municipality (Cholli et al., 2024). This marked heterogeneity has spurred interest in whether neighborhoods causally shape children’s long-run outcomes through local economic opportunities. **Our key question is whether and by how much neighborhoods influence the long-run outcomes of refugee children in Denmark.**

Understanding how neighborhoods influence refugee integration is increasingly important. Globally, the refugee population has risen to 42.7 million (as of April 2025), with Europe hosting 13.2 million. Denmark began receiving substantial inflows in the mid-1980s and 1990s, averaging around 2,500 annual admissions but punctuated by major waves (Bosnians in the early 1990s and Syrians after 2015) each exceeding 30,000 resettlements within short periods. Although Danish asylum and integration policies have become more restrictive since the early 2000s, refugee inflows continue to respond to global crises: in 2022 roughly 30,000 Ukrainians received temporary protection under the Special Act, and in 2023 over 1,300 refugees were granted residence permits. Refugees typically arrive with substantial disadvantages—disrupted schooling, trauma exposure, limited Danish proficiency, and weak local networks—making them an especially relevant population for studying how neighborhood opportunity shapes long-run outcomes. Moreover, as we detail below, the quasi-random assignment of families under Denmark’s dispersal policy allows us to identify causal neighborhood effects.

Our project uses population-wide administrative data from 1980–2023 to construct two complementary measures of neighborhood opportunity and implements two empirical strategies to assess how local environments influence refugees’ socioeconomic trajectories. Our opportunity measures are variations of absolute upward mobility, defined as the predicted adult income rank for children whose parents are at the 25th percentile of the national income distribution. One measure, *Realized Opportunity*, varies by municipality and year and captures the prevailing social mobility of local residents at the time of arrival

of the refugee child. The other, *Ongoing Opportunity*, follows the approach in the existing literature and is based on native children from the same birth cohort as the refugee child who live in the municipality of arrival. It thus represents the mobility potential faced by children growing up in that local environment.

We begin by providing descriptive evidence on how these two opportunity measures relate to one another and to a rich set of municipality characteristics in the year of refugee children’s arrival. We then turn to the causal effect of neighborhoods. We first use Denmark’s Refugee Dispersal Policy, which quasi-randomly assigned families to municipalities, to generate exogenous variation in childhood neighborhood exposure and estimate its causal impact on adult outcomes. We complement this with a mover design that exploits variation in the age at which children relocate across areas. Leveraging multiple measures of opportunity and two distinct research designs allows us to deliver robust evidence on how neighborhoods shape refugee children’s long-term integration.

Our project makes several contributions. We add to the growing literature on neighborhood opportunity and long-run outcomes. Despite strong academic and policy interest, there is no consensus on the magnitude of neighborhood effects: some studies find direct causal impacts on children’s outcomes (Kawano et al., 2024; Miller and Soo, 2021; Chetty and Hendren, 2018a,b; Chyn, 2018; Chetty et al., 2016), while others argue that much of the observed spatial variation reflects compositional differences from family sorting (Beekers, 2024; Cholli et al., 2024). Part of this disagreement likely reflects differences in research designs, populations, and periods. We implement a unified empirical framework that applies two complementary designs to a common setting, shared cohorts, and a broad outcome set. We also study refugees, a population largely absent from prior work, thereby informing integration policy. Finally, we construct two complementary opportunity indices that capture opportunity in different periods.

Our work also relates to studies evaluating integration policies for refugees. Most of this literature examines policies aimed at integrating adult refugees into the labor market, such as language training, welfare benefits, and active labor-market programs (see Foged et al., 2024; Arendt et al., 2022; Brell et al., 2020, for a review).<sup>1</sup> Closest to our setting is work that leverages refugee settlement policies to estimate how neighborhood characteristics affect refugee outcomes (see Foged et al., 2024; Arendt et al., 2022, for recent reviews). Most studies focus on the effects of initial local labor-market conditions and the size of co-ethnic networks on the labor-market integration of adult refugees. We are aware of only three studies that use dispersal policies to examine how initial neighborhood conditions affect short-term outcomes for children. Damm (2005) shows that exposure to higher local crime raises youth crime. Åslund et al. (2011) document that a larger share of highly educated peers in the local ethnic community improves compulsory school grades. Damm et al. (2025) find that a larger co-ethnic presence lowers refugee students’ GPA rank at the grade-9 exit exam. We contribute to this literature in two

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<sup>1</sup>A smaller set of papers studies effects on refugees’ children. For example, Foged et al. (2023) and Pesola and Sarvimäki (2024) exploit Danish and Finnish expansions of language training for adult refugees and find improved educational outcomes and lower juvenile crime among their children. Dustmann et al. (2024) show that Denmark’s Start Aid reform, which substantially reduced cash benefits for refugee immigrants, worsened children’s educational outcomes and increased teen crime.

ways. First, we study neighborhood economic opportunity, a dimension that has not been examined before. Second, we consider a broad set of child and young-adult outcomes, including long-run labor-market attachment, welfare take-up, crime, and health, which allows us to map local opportunity to multiple margins of integration.

Our results speak directly to current policy debates. The scale of forced displacement makes effective integration urgent: UNHCR projects 2.5 million refugees will require formal resettlement in 2026 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2025). Our two opportunity indices provide practical guidance for placement. If neighborhoods causally influence refugee children’s outcomes, municipalities with higher predicted upward mobility can be prioritized in settlement, housing allocation, and school-catchment planning, while persistently low-opportunity areas can be targeted with place-based investments (e.g., enhanced language support). Evidence shows that children of immigrants often experience higher upward mobility than natives (Abramitzky et al., 2021); emerging work suggests similar patterns for refugees: in Canada, children of refugee parents at the 25th income percentile reach about the 49th percentile in adulthood, versus the 44th for Canadian-born families (Adnan et al., Forthcoming). Placing refugee families in higher-opportunity settings can therefore yield downstream gains in intergenerational mobility and help narrow inequality.

## Empirical Strategy

**Construction of Neighborhood Opportunity** Following prior literature (Chetty and Hendren, 2018a,b; Chetty et al., 2014), our opportunity measures represent upward mobility: we estimate, within each municipality, the rank–rank relationship between parents’ and children’s incomes and calculate the predicted adult income rank (ages 26–30) for a child whose parents are at the 25th percentile of the national income distribution. However, they differ in the timing and cohorts used.

The first measure, Realized Opportunity, varies by municipality and year and captures the level of mobility already achieved by local residents at the time a refugee child arrives. For example, consider a six-year-old refugee arriving in Odense in 1986. To construct the Realized Opportunity for Odense in 1986, we identify all 30-year-olds in Denmark in that year and link them to their parents, focusing on parents who lived in Odense during 1980–1984. We compute average parental income over that period and the adult children’s income at ages 26–30, estimate the municipality-specific rank–rank relationship, and record the predicted child rank for parents at the 25th percentile.

The second measure, Ongoing Opportunity, is cohort-based and reflects the mobility potential of native children from the same birth cohort as the refugee child. Returning to the same example, we take all six-year-olds in Denmark in 1986 (the same birth cohort as the refugee child) and link them to their parents. We focus on parents who lived in Odense during 1991–1995, when these children were aged 11–15, and measure parental income over that period and children’s adult income at ages 26–30. We then estimate the local rank–rank relationship and again record the predicted child rank for parents at the 25th percentile.

**Descriptive Analysis** The first part of the project examines what drives variation in neighborhood opportunity. The richness of the administrative data allows us to link each municipality to a detailed set of area characteristics, including average earnings, employment rates, educational attainment, crime, the share of immigrants, degree of urbanization, poverty, and local income inequality. We conduct this analysis for both opportunity indices to assess whether the determinants of realized and ongoing opportunity differ. This enables us to shed light on how short-run local conditions compare to longer-term structural factors in shaping economic mobility.

**Danish Refugee Dispersal Policy** We next turn to the causal impact of neighborhood opportunity on refugee children’s long-run outcomes. Our first empirical strategy exploits a Danish Refugee Dispersal Policy, implemented between 1986–1998, that distributed refugees evenly across the country to prevent concentration in major cities. Refugees were first assigned to counties and then to municipalities roughly in proportion to local population. Crucially, the allocation was based only on basic demographic information, such as age, marital status, number of children, and nationality, collected through a short questionnaire. There was no personal interview and no information on education, earnings potential, or other unobserved characteristics at the time of placement. As such, the policy generated plausibly exogenous variation in refugees’ initial municipality, conditional on family size and nationality.

Focusing on refugees that arrived during this period, we estimate models of the form:

$$y_{imoT} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Opportunity_{m(T)} + \theta X_i + \kappa_T + \mu_o + u_{imoT}, \quad (1)$$

where the unit of observation is refugee child  $i$  from country of origin  $o(i)$  assigned to municipality  $m(i)$ .  $T$  represents year of arrival when using the Realized Opportunity measure and the refugee child’s birth cohort when using the Ongoing Opportunity measure.  $y_{imoT}$  denotes an outcome for refugee child  $i$  (e.g., income rank at ages 26–30, years of schooling, or the number of criminal convictions up to age 30);  $Opportunity_{mT}$  is the measure of neighborhood opportunity;  $X_i$  is a set of refugee child and parental characteristics measured at arrival;  $\kappa_T$  are year-of-arrival or birth cohort fixed effects; and  $\mu_o$  are country-of-origin fixed effects. Under the assumption of quasi-random assignment, the parameter of interest  $\beta_1$  estimates the causal effect of neighborhood opportunity on child outcomes in adulthood.

We enrich this model in three ways. First, we estimate horse-race specifications that add a broad set of municipality characteristics to gauge the relative importance of neighborhood opportunity compared to other local determinants of socioeconomic success. Second, we interact neighborhood opportunity with age at arrival to study exposure effects; in these models we can also include family fixed effects to absorb unobserved traits shared by siblings that may be correlated with opportunity. Finally, we examine how neighborhood opportunity affects parental outcomes as a potential mediating channel for children’s long-run outcomes.

Figure 1 provides preliminary evidence on the effects of neighborhood opportunity on refugee children’s income rank at age 30. The left panel relies on Realized Opportunity

and the right panel on Ongoing Opportunity. For both measures, we find a clear positive association between the opportunity level of the host municipality and refugee childrens' adult income, suggesting that settling in higher-opportunity areas is systematically linked to better long-run economic outcomes.

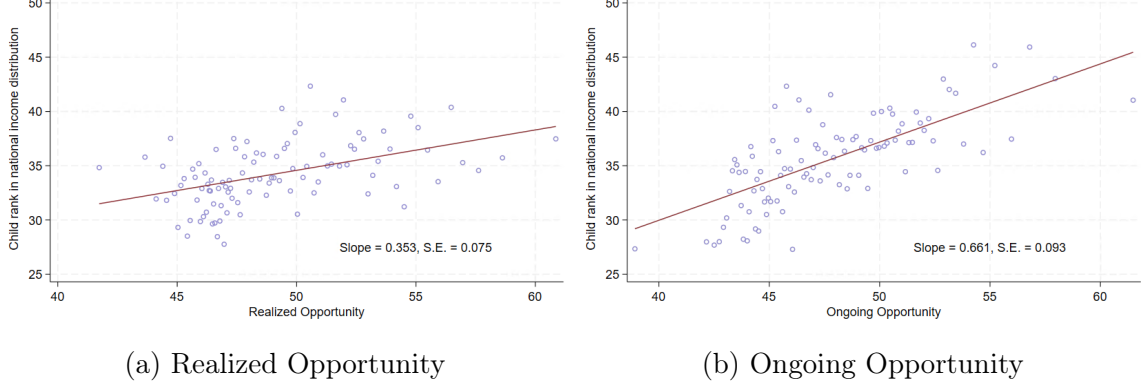


Figure 1: Relationship between refugee child income in adulthood and neighborhood opportunity

**Movers Design** Our second empirical strategy is a movers-design (Chetty and Hendren, 2018a). The main specification is given by:

$$y_i = \alpha_{opmc} + \sum_m \beta_m \mathbf{1}\{m_i = m\} \Delta_{odc} + \sum_c \kappa_c \mathbf{1}\{c_i = c\} \Delta_{odc} + \varepsilon_i \quad (2)$$

where  $y_i$  denotes an outcome measured in adulthood for child  $i$  from birth cohort  $c$ , who moves from municipality  $o$  to municipality  $d$  at age  $m$ , and  $p$  is the parent income rank.  $\Delta_{odc} = Opportunity_{dc} - Opportunity_{oc}$  is the difference in opportunity between origin and destination municipalities, allowed to differ at the birth cohort level, and  $\alpha_{opmc}$  are origin $\times$ parent-rank $\times$ age-at-move $\times$ cohort fixed effects. The coefficients  $\beta_m$  are intent-to-treat exposure effects by age at move. We identify  $\beta_m$  under the assumption that the way families select into destinations does not vary with the child's age at move. If this assumption holds, variation in  $\beta_m$  recovers exposure effects while the fixed effects absorb level differences in selection across origins, cohorts, parent-rank cells, and age at move. Finally, we follow prior literature and add family fixed effects to remove unobserved, time-invariant factors shared by siblings (e.g., ambition, grit) that may be correlated with both neighborhood opportunity and adult outcomes (Chetty and Hendren, 2018a).

## Research Team, Estimated Timeline and Project Feasibility

The research team includes N. Meltem Daysal (PI, KU), Joseph Doyle (MIT), and Mircea Trandafir (ROCKWOOL Foundation). The team has substantial expertise on neighborhood effects, causal inference, and working with Danish administrative data. We have secured access to the necessary registers, and preliminary analysis indicates sufficient statistical power. We request funding for a 4-month Scientific Assistant to support data construction and empirical analysis. We plan to complete a full working paper by late 2026 and submit the paper for publication by mid-2027.

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## N. MELTEM DAYSAL

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### EMPLOYMENT

Associate Professor, University of Copenhagen, October 2020 – present

Associate Professor, University of Southern Denmark, March 2014

Assistant Professor, University of Southern Denmark, August 2013

Assistant Professor, Tilburg University, September 2009

### EDUCATION

Ph.D. Economics, University of Maryland at College Park, 2009

M.A. Economics, University of Maryland at College Park, 2005

B.A. Economics, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey, 2003 (with High Honors)

### AFFILIATIONS

Research Fellow, RFBerlin, October 2025 – present

Research Fellow, CESifo, January 2022 – present

Research Fellow, IZA, November 2011 – present

Research Fellow, Netspar, Tilburg University, November 2009 – December 2015

Fellow, CentER, Tilburg University, September 2009 – July 2013

### KEY PUBLICATIONS

Germes in the Family: The Short- and Long-Term Consequences of Intra-Household Disease Spread (with Hui Ding, Maya Rossin-Slater and Hannes Schwandt). Conditionally accepted at *American Economic Review*.

Do Medical Treatments Work for Work? Evidence from Breast Cancer Patients (with William N. Evans, Mikkel H. Pedersen and Mircea Trandafir). *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 17 (October 2025): 379–409.

The Correlation of Net and Gross Wealth across Generations: The Role of Parent Income and Child Age (with Michael Lovenheim and David Wasser) *AEA Papers and Proceedings* 112 (May 2022) 73-77.

Spillover Effects of Early-Life Interventions (with Marianne Simonsen, Mircea Trandafir and Sanni Breining). *Review of Economics and Statistics* 104 (January 2022) 1-16.

Home Prices, Fertility, and Early-Life Health Outcomes (with Michael Lovenheim, Nikolaj Siersbæk and David Wasser). *Journal of Public Economics*, 198 (June 2021) 104366.

Low-risk isn't no-risk: Perinatal treatments and the health of low-income newborns (with Mircea Trandafir and Reyn van Ewijk). *Journal of Health Economics*, 64 (March 2019) 55-67.

Saving Lives at Birth: The Impact of Homebirths on Infant Outcomes (with Mircea Trandafir and Reyn van Ewijk). *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 7:3 (July 2015) 28–50.

Impact of Bilingual Education Programs on Limited English Proficient Students and Their Peers: Regression Discontinuity Evidence from Texas (with Aimee Chin and Scott Imberman). *Journal of Public Economics*, 107 (November 2013) 63-78.

Does Uninsurance Affect the Health Outcomes of the Insured? Evidence from Heart Attack Patients in California. *Journal of Health Economics*, 31:4 (July 2012) 545-563.

## **SUBMITTED WORKING PAPERS**

Parental Leave and IPV (with Dan Anderberg, Line Hjorth Andersen, and Mette Ejrnæs).

Antidepressant Treatment in Childhood (with Sonia Bhalotra and Mircea Trandafir).

Child Disability and Effects on Sibling Mental Health (with Janet Currie, Mette Gørtz, Jonas Hirani).

Child Health, Parental Well-Being, and the Social Safety Net (with Achyuta Adhvaryu, Snaebjorn Gunnsteinsson, Teresa Molina, Herdis Steingrimsdottir).

The Oral Contraceptive Pill, Adolescents' Mental Health and Socio-Economic Outcomes (with Ana Costa-Ramón and Ana Rodríguez-Ganzález). **Revise & Resubmit at Economic Journal.**

Intergenerational Transmission of Housing Wealth (with Mike Lovenheim and David Wasser).

## **RESEARCH GRANTS**

Rockwool Foundation, “Public Policies and the Integration of Vulnerable Populations into the Danish Health Care System” DKK 3.7 mil (PI), 2025-2027

Rockwool Foundation, “Significance of Depression” DKK 7.5 mil (co-PI), 2024-2027

Rockwool Foundation, “A Social Scientific Approach to Intimate Partner Violence” DKK 6.9 mil. (co-PI), 2024-2026

Rockwool Foundation, “Health Management and Health Inequalities” DKK 6 mil. (co-PI), 2024-2026

Rockwool Foundation, “The Role of Nature and Nurture in the Intergenerational Transmission of Mental Health” DKK 3.8 mil. (co-PI), 2023-2025

Center for Population Dynamics, University of Southern Denmark, “Housing Wealth, Grandkids and Retirement Decisions in Denmark,” DKK 65,000 (PI), 2020

University of Southern Denmark Faculty Research Advancement Grant, DKK 50,000 (PI), 2017

Independent Research Fund Denmark | Social Sciences, “Breast cancer treatment and socioeconomic outcomes of treated women and their families,” DKK 4.8 mil. (PI), 2015-2020

Independent Research Fund Denmark | Social Sciences, “The impact of antidepressant use on socioeconomic outcomes of treated individuals and their families,” DKK 1.4 mil. (co-PI, PI: Mircea Trandafir), 2015-2019

## **KEYNOTE ADDRESSES (\* indicates scheduled)**

Keynote Address, SEHO Meetings (June 2026)\*

Keynote Address, American European Health Economics Study Group (June 2026)\*

Keynote Address, VERB-IHEA Seminars, October 2025

Keynote Address, Essen Economics of Mental Health Workshop, 2022

Keynote Address, 37th Nordic Health Economists' Study Group Meeting, 2016

## **INVITED SEMINARS**

2021-present (\* indicates scheduled): University Paris Dauphine-PSL\*, University of Barcelona\*, IFS\*, University of Strathclyde\*, Linnaeus University, SUNY, Princeton University, Tinbergen Institute Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Economics of Child Health Workshop (Institute for Advanced Studies Vienna), Paris School of Economics, TOBB, Bosphorus University, USC Center for Economic and Social Research, Virtual Seminar on the Economics of Risky Health Behaviors, Arne Ryde Gender and Family Wellbeing Workshop Lund University, University of Bristol, Catholic University Milan, Catholic University Rome, Ca' Foscari University, University of Milan, University of Bergen

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2025 EEA, 2024 VIVE Workshop on 'Health Innovations, Vaccines, Individual Behaviors, and Inequalities in Health and Care', 2024 NBER Summer Institute, 2023 EEA, 15<sup>th</sup> Nordic Summer Institute in Labor Economics, 2021 ASHEcon, 2021 EALE, 2021 EEA, 2021 IIPF, 2021 IZA Economics of Time Use and Mental Health, 2021 NBER Summer Institute, 2020 PROMETEO Workshop at University of Alicante, 2017 IHEA, 2015 Copenhagen Education Network Workshop, 2014 ASHEcon, 2013 EEA, 2012 IZA Meeting on the Economics of Risky Behaviors, 2012 ASHEcon, 2010 ESPE, 2010 ASHEcon

## RESEARCH STAYS

Visiting Research Scholar, Center for Health and Wellbeing, Princeton University, January-June 2024  
Visit to UC Berkeley, February 2020  
Visit to Aarhus University, April 2010

## PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

### *Editorial Service*

Editor, *Journal of Health Economics*, January 2025-present  
Associate Editor, *Journal of Health Economics*, January 2019-2024  
Editorial Board, *American Journal of Health Economics*, 2023-present  
Editorial Board, *Journal of Labor Research*, 2016-present

### *Referee*

American Economic Review, Econometrica, Journal of Political Economy, Review of Economics Studies, Journal of Political Economy: Micro, Review of Economics and Statistics, AEJ: Applied Economics, AEJ: Economic Policy, Economic Journal, Journal of the European Economic Association, Journal of Labor Economics, Journal of Public Economics, Journal of Human Resources, Journal of Health Economics, Journal of Development Economics, Journal of Applied Econometrics, European Economic Review, Economics of Education Review, Health Economics, Labour Economics, American Journal of Health Economics, Economic Development and Cultural Change, Economics and Human Biology, Industrial and Labor Relations Review, Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, Journal of Population Economics, Scandinavian Journal of Economics, Social Science and Medicine

Grant Proposal Reviewer: The European Research Council, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, Hungarian National Research Development and Innovation Office, Swiss National Science Foundation, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, United States-Israel Binational Science Foundation

### *Conferences*

Organizer: EEA (Area Coordinator, 2023, 2024), Zeuthen Workshop on Child Health and Public Policy (2023), SDU Workshop on Applied Microeconomics (2014-2020), Medical Interventions and Socioeconomic Outcomes (August 2017), 25<sup>th</sup> European Workshop on Econometrics and Health Economics (Fall 2016)

Session Organizer: EEA (2023), 77th Annual Congress of the IIPF (2021), American Society of Health Economists Meetings (2014)

Scientific Committee Member: EuHEA (2024), SEHO (2023), ESPE (2022), Barcelona GSE: Children's Health, Well-Being, and Human Capital Formation (2018, 2020, 2022, 2024), 77th Annual Congress of the IIPF (2021), Workshop on the Law and Economics of Health Care (2016)

### *Department Service*

Organizer, CEBI Seminar Series, University of Copenhagen, 2020-present  
Member, Assessment Committee for PhD applications University of Copenhagen, 2022-present  
Member, Assessment Committee for MSc applications University of Copenhagen, 2021-present  
Project Dignity Core Working Group Member, University of Copenhagen, 2021  
Member, Junior Recruiting Committee, University of Copenhagen, 2021-present

Organizer, COHERE/Applied Economics Seminar Series, University of Southern Denmark, 2013-2019  
Coordinator, Network on Health Economics (NHE), SDU, 2019-2020  
Research program coordinator, COHERE, SDU, 2016-2017

Chairman, Assessment Committee for Postdoc Position in Applied Econometrics, SDU, Spring 2018  
Member, Assessment Committee for Assistant Professor at the Department of Business and Economics, SDU, Fall 2019

### *Mentoring*

Invited Speaker, WINE Retreat, EEA-ESEM Virtual Conference, 2021  
Invited Networking Session Leader, Health Economics, 77th Annual Congress of the IIPF, 2021  
Mentor, ASHEcon Mentoring Program, 2020 – 2021  
Representative, Gender Equality Committee, University of Southern Denmark, 2018-2020  
  
Internal Supervisor, Lecturer Training Program, Spring 2019  
Member of Job Placement Committee, Tilburg University, 2011-2012 and 2012-2013

### *Other*

Editor, American Society of Health Economists Newsletter, Fall 2015-Winter 2016  
Editorial Board, American Society of Health Economists Newsletter, Winter 2016-2020  
Certificate of Excellence in Reviewing, Labour Economics, 2016

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

### *Graduate*

University of Copenhagen: Advanced Health Economics with Stata, Health Economics  
2nd CINCH-dggö Academy in Health Economics: The Economics of Mental Health  
University of Southern Denmark: Advanced Health Economics I, Advanced Health Economics II, Statistics  
Tilburg University: Health Economics, Empirical Research in Business

### *Undergraduate*

University of Southern Denmark: Econometrics, Statistics  
Tilburg University: Econometrics II, Econometric Methods  
University of Maryland: Intermediate Macroeconomics

### *Management*

Organizer, Machine Learning for Health (Instructors: Jon Kolstad and Ziad Obermeyer), University of Southern Denmark, 2019  
Organizer, Topics in Health Economics (Instructor: Kitt Carpenter), University of Southern Denmark, 2015  
Organizer, Topics in Health Economics (Instructor: Frank Sloan), University of Southern Denmark, 2014  
Committee Member, Design of the curriculum for the Talent Program, 2015  
Coordinator, Health Economics and Aging, Tilburg University, 2012

## **PhD ADVISING**

Adviser: Astrid Louise Waltenburg (exp. 2029), Naeim Samandari (exp. 2027), Elin Ingrid Fanny Colmsjö (co-supervisor, exp. 2026), Mikkel Hasse Pedersen (2020), Nikolaj Siersbæk (2019)

PhD Committee Chair: Shan Huang (2023), Petra Cavalca (2021), Esteban Miralles (2021), Peter Juul Egedesø (2018), Christian Skovsgaard (2016)

External PhD Defense Opponent: Nina Schwarz, University of Duisburg-Essen (2021); Yi Zhang, Tilburg University (2020); Benjamin Ly Serena, University of Copenhagen (2019); Leroy Andersland, University of Bergen (2018); Thomas Hofmarcher, Lund University (2018)

# Joseph J. Doyle, Jr.

MIT Sloan School of Management  
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Cambridge, MA 02139  
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## Experience

- Erwin H. Schell Professor of Management, Applied Economics, MIT Sloan School of Management, Cambridge, MA, July 2013-present (at MIT Sloan since 2002)
- Visiting Scholar, Taubman Center for State & Local Government, Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Cambridge, MA, July 2024-June 2025
- Visiting Professor and Braudel Fellow, European University Institute, Fiesole, Italy, September 2017-June 2018
- Alfred Henry and Jean Morrison Hayes Career Development Associate Professor, Applied Economics, MIT Sloan School of Management, Cambridge, MA, July 2010-July 2013
- Visiting Professor, Paris School of Economics and L'École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris, France, Fall 2010
- Assistant Economist, Federal Reserve Bank of New York, New York, NY, 1996-1998.

## Education

- University of Chicago, Department of Economics, Ph.D. 1998-2002.  
Fields: Econometrics, Public Sector
- New York University, Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences, non-degree program. September 1997-May 1998.
- Cornell University, Policy Analysis, B.S. (with honors). 1992-1996

## Publications

Unwarranted Racial Disparity in U.S. Foster Care Placement (with Jason Baron, Natalia Emanuel, and Peter Hull). *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. forthcoming.

Effects of Enhanced Legal Aid in Child Welfare: Evidence from an Experimental Design of Mi Abogado (with Ryan Cooper and Andres Hojman). *American Economic Review*. 115(7). July 2025: 2306-42. Earlier version: *NBER Working Paper*. No. 30974

Physician Group Influences on Treatment Intensity and Health: Evidence from Physician Switchers (with Becky Staiger). *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*. 17(2). May 2025: : 471–505.

Discrimination in Multi-Phase Systems: Evidence from Child Protection (with E. Jason Baron, Natalia Emanuel, Peter Hull, and Joseph Ryan). *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. Volume 139, Issue 3, August 2024: 1611–1664.

The Effect of Food as Medicine on Health and Healthcare Utilization: A Randomized Controlled Trial (with Marcella Alsan, Yutong Lu, Nicholas Skelley, and John Cawley). *JAMA Internal Medicine*. December, 26 2023.

Health Care Hotspotting and Ambulatory Care: A Randomized Trial of the Camden Coalition Core Model (with Amy Finkelstein, Joel Cantor, Jesse Gubb, Margaret Koller, Aaron Truchil, and Annetta Zhou). *Health Affairs*. December 20, 2023.

The Role of State Policy in Fostering Health Information Exchange in the United States (with Ari Bronsoler, Cason Schmit, and John Van Reenen). *NEJM: Catalyst* January 2023.

The Impact of Healthcare IT on Clinical Quality, Productivity and Workers (with Ari Bronsoler and John Van Reenen). *Annual Review of Economics* 14. August 2022.

Economics of Foster Care (with Anthony Bald, Max Gross, and Brian Jacob *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 36(2). Spring 2022.

Health Care Hotspotting – A Randomized, Controlled Trial (with Amy Finkelstein, Annetta Zhou, and Sarah Taubman). *New England Journal of Medicine* 381. 2020: 152-162.

Causal Effects of Foster Care: An Instrumental-Variables Approach. *Children and Youth Services Review*. 2013. 35(7): 1143-1151.

Birth Order and Delinquency: Evidence from Denmark and Florida (with Sanni Breining, David Figlio, Krzysztof Karbownik, and Jeffrey Roth). *The Journal of Labor Economics* 38(1). 2020: 95-142.

Evaluating Measures of Hospital Quality (with John Graves and Jonathan Gruber). *Review of Economics and Statistics* 101(5). 2019: 841-852.

Clinical decision support for high-cost imaging: A randomized clinical trial (with Sarah Abraham, Laura Feeney, Sarah Reimer, and Amy Finkelsten). *Plos One*. 14(3). 2019.

Economics of Child Protection: Maltreatment, Foster Care & Intimate-Partner Violence. (with Anna Aizer). *Annual Review of Economics*. 2018.

Uncovering waste in US healthcare: Evidence from ambulance referral patterns. (with John Graves and Jonathan Gruber). *Journal of Health Economics* 54, July 2017: 25-39.

Juvenile Incarceration and Adult Outcomes: Evidence from Randomly-Assigned Judges (with Anna Aizer). *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 130(2). 2015: 759-803.

“Measuring Returns to Hospital Care: Evidence from Ambulance Referral Patterns. (with John Graves, Jonathan Gruber, and Samuel Kleiner) *Journal of Political Economy*. 123(1) February 2015: 170-214.

“Causal Effects of Foster Care: An Instrumental-Variables Approach. *Children and Youth Services Review*. 2013. 35(7): 1143-1151

“After Midnight: A Regression Discontinuity Design in Length of Postpartum Hospital Stays. (with Douglas Almond) *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 3(3). August 2011: 1-34.

“Returns to Local-Area Healthcare Spending: Using Health Shocks to Patients far from Home. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*. 3(3). July 2011: 221-243.

“Returns to Physician Human Capital: Analyzing Patients Randomized to Physician Teams. (with Todd Wagner & Steven Ewer) *Journal of Health Economics* 29(6). December 2010: 866-882.

“Evaluating the Effectiveness of Child Safety Seats and Seat Belts for Injury Prevention among 2-6 year olds in Motor Vehicle Crashes. (with Steven Levitt) *Economic Inquiry*. 48(3). July 2010: 521-536.

“Estimating Marginal Returns to Medical Care: Evidence from Low-Birthweight Infants (with Douglas Almond, Amanda Kowalski, and Heidi Williams). *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. 125(2). May 2010: 591-634.

Edgeworth Cycles Revisited (with Erich Muehlegger & Krislert Samphantharak). *Energy Economics*. 32(3). May 2010: 651-660.

Child Protection and Adult Crime: Using Investigator Assignment to Estimate Causal Effects of Foster Care. *Journal of Political Economy*. 116(4). August 2008: 746-770.

\$2.00 Gas! Studying the Effects of Gas Tax Moratorium Across State Borders (with Krislert Samphantharak). *Journal of Public Economics*. April 2008.

Child Protection and Child Outcomes: Measuring the Effects of Foster Care. *American Economic Review*. 97(5). December 2007: 1583-1610.

The Market for Foster Care: An Empirical Study of the Impact of Foster Care Subsidies (with H. Elizabeth Peters). *Review of Economics of the Household*. 5(4). December 2007: 329-351.

Can't Buy Me Love? Estimating the Effects of a Change in the Cost of Caring for Related Children. *Journal of Public Economics*. 91. February 2007: 281-304.

Health Insurance, Treatment, and Outcomes: Using Auto Accidents as Health Shocks. *Review of Economics and Statistics*. 87(2). May 2005: 256-270.

## Current Funding

- 2019-present MIT Sloan Health Systems Initiative Grant. Co-PI
- 2019-present NIH P30 Grant: NBER Roybal Center for Behavior Change in Health, Co-PI
- 2018-present NIH P01 Grant: Improving Health Outcomes for an Aging Population, Data Core Leader

## Awards

- 2021 MIT Teaching with Digital Technology Award; 2023, 2022, 2021 Excellence in Refereeing Award, *AER: Insights*; 2018, 2017 and 2013 Excellence in Refereeing Award; *American Economic Review*; 2014 National Council on Crime and Delinquency Baird Award for Outstanding Applied Research; 2013 J-PAL pilot award for "Health Care Hotspotting: A Randomized Controlled Trial"; 2011 Garfield Economic Impact Award; 2011 KPMG Convention on Health Analysis and Management Prize for the Best Publication of the Year in Health Economics; 2010 Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP) Outstanding Article of the Year Award



## Professional Activities & Affiliations

Co-Director, MIT Sloan Initiative for Health Systems Innovation, 2014-present; Co-Director, NBER Roybal Center for Behavior Change in Health, 2019-present; Co-Chair, Health Sector, Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), 2015-present; Research Associate, National Bureau of Economic Research, 2004-present; Scientific Advisor, The Ragnar Frisch Centre for Economic Research, University of Oslo, 2022-present; NBER Institutional Review Board Member, 2015-present; NBER CMS Data Technical Advisory Committee, 2017-present; Economic Consulting, Berkeley Research Group, 2023-present; Economic Consulting, Analysis Group, 2022-present; Economic Consulting, Global Economics Group, 2017-present; Editorial Board Member, American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, 2019-present; Member, American Economics Association, 2002-present; Member, American Society of Health Economists, 2015-present; Co-Editor, *Journal of Human Resources*, 2012-2020; Co-Editor, *Journal of Public Economics*, 2012-2016; Member, PEPReC Technical Advisory Council Meeting, Veterans Administration, 2016-2019; Research Fellow, The Danish National Centre for Social research (SFI), 2013-2018; Faculty Associate, Chapin Hall Center for Children, University of Chicago. 2002-2010;

Referee for: *American Economic Review*, *Journal of Political Economy*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *Review of Economics Studies*, *Econometrica*, *Children and Youth Services Review*, *American Sociological Review*, among many others



Grant Proposal Reviews for: *National Science Foundation*, *National Institutes of Health*, *Radcliffe Institute Fellowship Program*, *MIT J-PAL*, *MIT J-WAFS*

Conference Committee Member: *American Society of Health Economists*; *Econometric Society World Congress*

# Mircea Trandafir

Updated: November 3, 2025

Rockwool Foundation Research Unit  
Ny Kongensgade 6  
DK 1472, Copenhagen  
Denmark

mt@rff.dk   
<http://www.mirceatrandafir.com> 

## Current Employment and Affiliations

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| 2022– | Senior Researcher, Rockwool Foundation Research Unit.    |
| 2014– | Research Fellow, Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA). |

## Education

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 2009 | PhD in Economics, University of Maryland, College Park.                      |
| 2002 | MA in Economics, Central European University, Budapest (Hungary).            |
| 2000 | BA in Finance and Banking, Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest (Romania). |

## Previous Employment and Affiliations

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 2015–2022 | Associate Professor, Dept. of Business and Economics, Univ. of Southern Denmark. |
| 2013–2015 | Assistant Professor, Dept. of Business and Economics, Univ. of Southern Denmark. |
| 2009–2013 | Assistant Professor, Dept. of Economics, Université de Sherbrooke.               |
| 2008–2009 | Consultant, Development Research Group, The World Bank.                          |

## Research Interests

Health Economics, Labor Economics, Applied Microeconometrics.

## Publications

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 2025 | “Do medical treatments work for work? Evidence from breast cancer patients” (with N. Meltem Daysal, William N. Evans, and Mikkel H. Pedersen), <i>American Economic Journal: Economic Policy</i> 17(4): 379–409.  |
| 2022 | “Spillover effects of early-life medical interventions” (with N. Meltem Daysal, Marianne Simonsen, and Sanni Breining), <i>Review of Economics and Statistics</i> 104(1): 1–16.                                   |
| 2019 | “Low-risk isn’t no-risk: Perinatal treatments and the health of low-income newborns” (with N. Meltem Daysal and Reyn van Ewijk), <i>Journal of Health Economics</i> 64: 55–67.                                    |
| 2015 | “Quality of higher education and the labor market in developing countries: Evidence from an education reform in Senegal” (with Dorothée Boccanfuso and Alexandre Larouche), <i>World Development</i> 74: 412–424. |

- “Saving lives at birth: The impact of home births on infant outcomes” (with N. Meltem Daysal and Reyn van Ewijk), *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 7(3): 28–50.
- “Legal recognition of same-sex couples and family formation,” *Demography* 52(1): 113–151.
- 2014 “The effect of same-sex marriage laws on different-sex marriage: Evidence from the Netherlands,” *Demography* 51(1): 317–340. Winner of the 2008 Award for the Best Comparative Article Presented at an APPAM Research Conference.

## Working Papers

- 2025/07 “Antidepressant Treatment in Childhood” (with Sonia Bhalotra and N. Meltem Daysal). **Submitted.** An earlier version circulated under the title “Teen antidepressant use and academic achievement.”
- 2025/01 “Employee health and firm performance” (with Daniel A. Rettl and Alexander Schandlbauer). **Revisions requested by *Journal of Financial and Quantitative Analysis*.** An earlier version is available as IZA Discussion Paper No. 15147.
- 2024/01 “An economic approach to machine learning in health policy” (with N. Meltem Daysal, Sendhil Mullainathan, Ziad Obermeyer, and Suproteem K. Sarkar). Currently revising.
- 2021/10 “The effects of education policy on teen pregnancy” (with Dieudonné Tamfutu Muni).
- 2021/10 “Language of instruction and educational outcomes: Evidence from an education policy in Rwanda” (with Dieudonné Tamfutu Muni).
- 2021/10 “Education policies and the intergenerational transmission of health: Evidence from Rwanda” (with Dieudonné Tamfutu Muni).

## Work in Progress

- “GPs and inequality in health” (with Janet Currie and N. Meltem Daysal).
- “Nature and nurture in the intergenerational transmission of mental health” (with Sonia Bhalotra, N. Meltem Daysal, and Jakob Søgaard).
- “The labor market consequences of perinatal depression” (with Sonia Bhalotra, N. Meltem Daysal, Priyama Majumdar, and Tom Zohar).
- “Disability benefits and risky behavior” (with N. Meltem Daysal, Mikkel H. Pedersen, and Jonathan Zhang).
- “Stock market fluctuations and mental health” (with Alexander Schandlbauer and Daniel Rettl).
- “Health shocks and risk aversion” (with Alexander Schandlbauer and Daniel Rettl).

## Comments and Policy Briefs

- 2023 “Medical treatments and social mobility” (with N. Meltem Daysal), *Samfund-søkonomen* 2023:2: 18–26.
- 2016 “Re: A recent study by economists on the impact of home births on infant outcomes confuses the debate on home birth” (with N. Meltem Daysal and Reyn van Ewijk), *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology* 123:10: 1713–1714.
- “Thuisbevallig riskanter in arm gezin” (with N. Meltem Daysal and Reyn van Ewijk), *Medisch Contact* 13: 16–18.
- 2014 “Reply to comment on ‘The effect of same-sex marriage laws on different-sex marriage: Evidence from the Netherlands’,” *Demography* 51:6: 2349–2350.
- 2011 “Banking sector stability, efficiency, and outreach in Kenya” (with Thorsten Beck, Robert Cull, Michael J. Fuchs, Jared Getenga, Peter K. Gatere, and John Randa), *Kenya: Policies for Prosperity (edited by Christopher Adam, Paul Collier, and Njunga Ndung’u)* Oxford University Press: 2349–2350. Also available as World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 5442, October 2010.

## Permanent Working Papers (RIP)

- 2016/11 “Heterogeneous effects of medical interventions on the health of low-risk newborns” (with N. Meltem Daysal and Reyn van Ewijk). An earlier version is available as IZA Discussion Paper No. 9810.
- 2013/12 “Returns to childbirth technologies: Evidence from preterm births” (with N. Meltem Daysal and Reyn van Ewijk). An earlier version is available as IZA Discussion Paper No. 7834.

## Research Grants

- 2022–2025 The Danish Council for Independent Research | Social Sciences, “Employee health, risk aversion, and firm policies,” DKK 1.9 mil. (co-PI, PI: Alexander Schandlbauer).
- 2015–2019 The Danish Council for Independent Research | Social Sciences, “Breast cancer treatment and socioeconomic outcomes of treated women and their families,” DKK 4.8 mil. (co-PI, PI: N. Meltem Daysal).
- 2015–2018 The Danish Council for Independent Research | Social Sciences, “The impact of antidepressant use on socioeconomic outcomes of treated individuals and their families,” DKK 1.4 mil. (PI).

## Awards and Fellowships

- 2009 Best Comparative Article Presented at an APPAM Research Conference in 2008 for the paper “The effect of same-sex marriage laws on different-sex marriage: Evidence from the Netherlands.”

## Invited Seminars and Conference Presentations

2025	Vive.
2024	Center for Health and Wellbeing at Princeton University, NBER Summer Institute, RWI Essen.
2022	Rockwool Foundation, Health and Inequality Workshop at Copenhagen Business School, WOLFE Workshop at University of York.
2021	Essen Health Conference, International Institute of Public Finance, European Association of Labor Economists, ERMAS Econometrics and Applied Microeconomics seminar.
2019	Workshop on Applied Microeconomics at ISER/University of Essex.
2018	SOFI Stockholm, University of Mainz.
2017	iHEA (discussant).
2016	WZB Berlin, Health and Gender Workshop at the University of Essex.
2015	Concordia University, 2nd SDU Applied Microeconomics Workshop, Joint SFI-Lund Workshop on Health Economics, Copenhagen Education Network.
2014	Lund University, University of Hamburg, ASHEcon (discussant), European Workshop on Econometrics and Health Economics, Annual Health Economics Conference.
2013	Impaq International, Aarhus University, University of Southern Denmark, Canadian Economics Association, European Economic Association.
2012	Cornell University, ASHEcon (discussant).
2011	Concordia University, Tilburg University.
2010	McGill University, IZA/SOLE Transatlantic Meeting of Labor Economists, European Society for Population Economics, Paris School of Economics, University of Notre Dame.
2009	Université de Sherbrooke.
2008	Tinbergen Institute, Technical University of Delft, Population Association of America, Society of Labor Economists (poster), Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, Southern Economic Association.

## Research Visits

2024/ Jan-Jun	Departmental Guest, Center for Health and Wellbeing, Princeton University.
2020/Feb	University of California, Berkeley.
Fall 2011	Department of Econometrics and OR, Tilburg University.
Fall 2010	Department of Econometrics and OR, Tilburg University.

## Referee

American Economic Review, AEJ: Economic Policy, Economic Journal, Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control, Journal of Health Economics, Journal of Human Resources, Journal of Labor Economics, JPE Microeconomics, Demography, Applied Economics, Canadian Journal of Development Studies, Canadian Public Policy, China Economic Review, Danish Journal of Economics, Health Economics, Journal of Development Studies, Journal of Economic Surveys, Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, Journal of Population Economics, Labour Economics, Policy Studies Journal, Social Science & Medicine, World Development.

## Teaching Experience

### Undergraduate:

*University of Southern Denmark:* Labor Economics, Research Methods in Social Sciences, Statistics (Economics, Business Economics, and Engineering programs).

*Université de Sherbrooke:* Introduction to Econometrics, Cost-Benefit Analysis, Introduction to Microeconomics.

*University of Maryland:* Financial Markets and the Macroeconomy, Money and Banking, Intermediate Microeconomics.

### Graduate:

*University of Southern Denmark:* Applied Econometrics, Demography and Economics, Topics in Econometrics – Big Data, Causation (European Doctoral School of Demography).

*Université de Sherbrooke:* Labor Economics, Econometrics I.

*Other:* Efficiency and Productivity Analysis Summer Programme (co-taught, University of Rome Tor Vergata)

- 2013 Dean's "honor roll" for teaching achievement (course evaluations above 3.7/4), Université de Sherbrooke: *Introduction to econometrics* (undergraduate) and *Labor economics* (graduate).
- 2012 Dean's "honor roll" for teaching achievement (course evaluations above 3.7/4), Université de Sherbrooke: *Introduction to econometrics* (undergraduate) and *Labor economics* (graduate).

## Advising

Supervisor or secondary supervisor (University of Southern Denmark): Dieudonné Tamfutu Mushi (2024), Nis Vestergård Lydixsen (2021), Mikkel Hasse Pedersen (2019).

University of Southern Denmark: 8 Master's students, 10 Bachelor's students.

Université de Sherbrooke: 9 Master's students.

Committee member/opponent: Derek Asuman (Lund University, 2023), Hanna Mülhrad (University of Gothenburg, 2017), Mesbah Sharaf (Concordia University, 2012).