

Overcoming Hiring Discrimination in Europe



PATHS2INCLUDE



1. Study aim and rationale

- State of the art:** migrants have lower hiring chances than natives; mothers than childless women.
- Research gap:** Limited knowledge on why some firms are more likely to discriminate than others.
- Aim of the study:** To identify which organisational features influence recruiters' tendency to discriminate based on care responsibilities and ethnicity, in four countries: Germany (DE), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), Romania (RO).

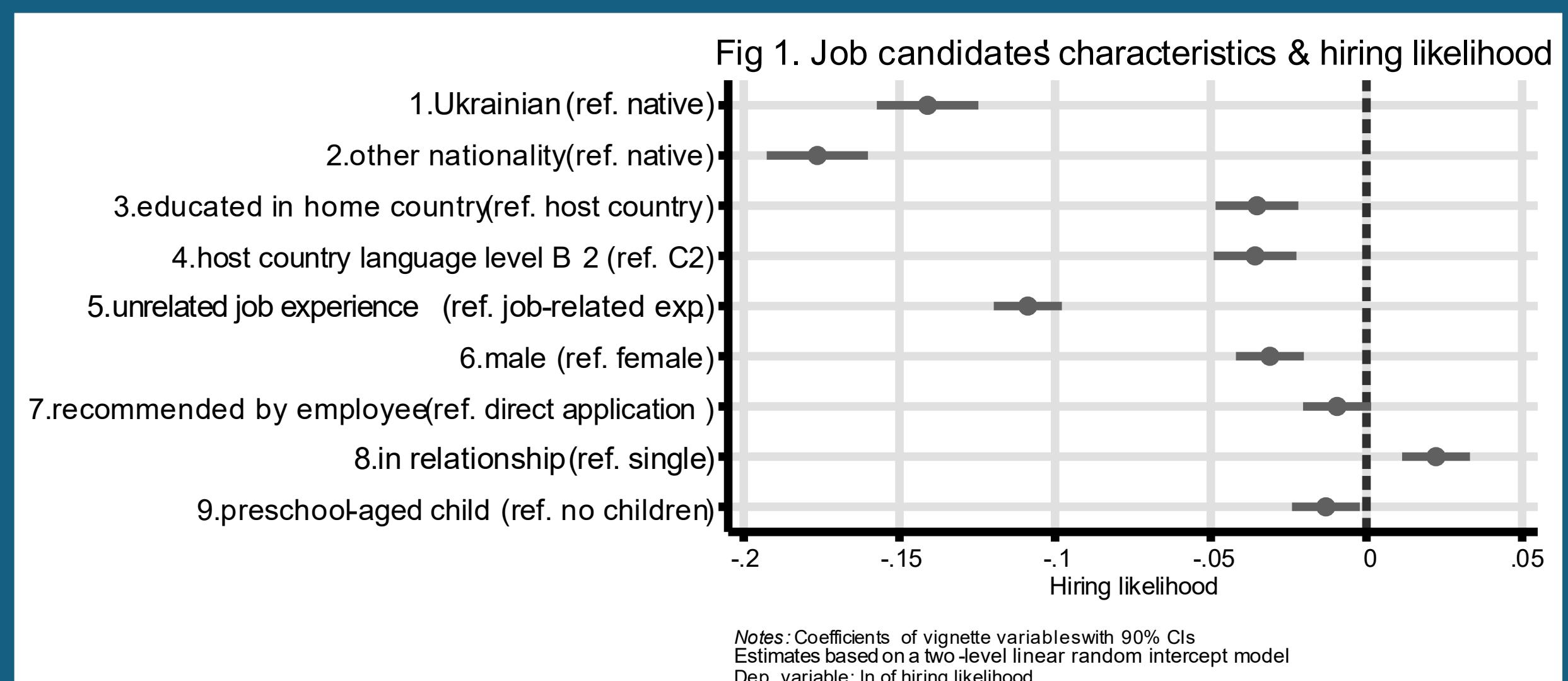
2. Methods

- Factorial survey experiment (FSE):** Experienced recruiters evaluated hypothetical job candidates applying for one of five jobs (ICT technician, secretary, office clerk, accounting clerk, sales worker). Respondents assessed the hiring likelihood (0–10) of hiring six hypothetical candidates with randomly assigned characteristics (see Fig. 1).
- Survey questionnaire:** Collected information on firm characteristics (for example, diversity policies).
- In-depth interviews with recruiters:** To obtain a more nuanced understanding of hiring discrimination in organisational contexts.
- Ethnic discrimination:** Measured by comparing hiring likelihoods of native candidates with two immigrant groups — Ukrainians and one country-specific migrant group (Syrians in DE and NO; Nepalis in RO; Belarusians in PL).
- Care-based discrimination:** Measured by comparing hiring likelihoods across groups defined by parenthood and partnership status.

3. Sample

- FSE & questionnaire:** 500 recruiters in each participating country (DE, NO, PL, RO), totalling 2,000 respondents assessing 12,000 vignettes.
- In-depth interviews:** 15 recruiters per country, 60 in total.

4. Results: Job candidates' characteristics



- Clear signs of ethnic discrimination:** Ukrainians (line 1) and other immigrant groups (Syrians in NO & DE; Belarusians in PL; Nepalis in RO; line 2) had lower hiring chances than natives by 14% and 17%, respectively.
- Additional hiring penalties for migrants:** Compared with natives, non-native candidates faced reduced hiring chances due to foreign educational credentials (line 3) and lower proficiency in the host-country language (line 4).
- Evidence of care-based discrimination:** A small parenthood penalty (line 9) and a relationship premium (line 8) led to single parents being the least employable. This effect appeared only among female candidates (not shown in Fig. 1).
- Discrimination against male candidates:** Likely reflects occupational selection (see methods section), as the jobs included were skewed toward female-dominated sectors.
- In-depth interviews reveal that **language needs vary by sector and country**. In DE and PL, the local language is crucial in admin and customer-facing roles, and lacking it can exclude candidates. IT often works in English; production may accept multiple languages. In NO, Norwegian is important for integration and communication, though English is common in IT. In RO, international firms often prioritize English, but local language can still be needed for some tasks. Overall, high local-language proficiency is not required for every job, but it remains important.

5. Results: Organisational features affecting care-based discrimination

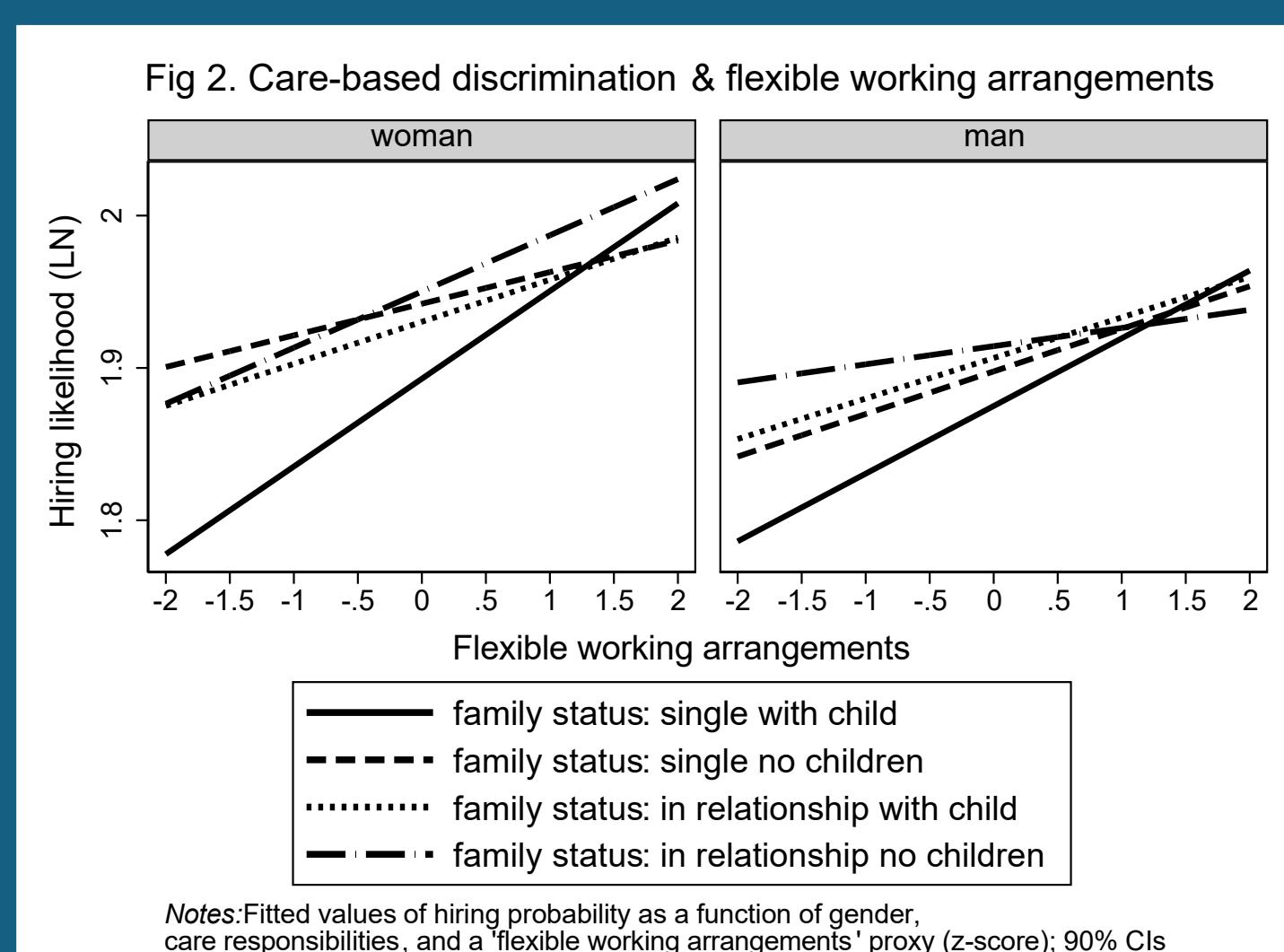


Fig 2. Care-based discrimination & flexible working arrangements

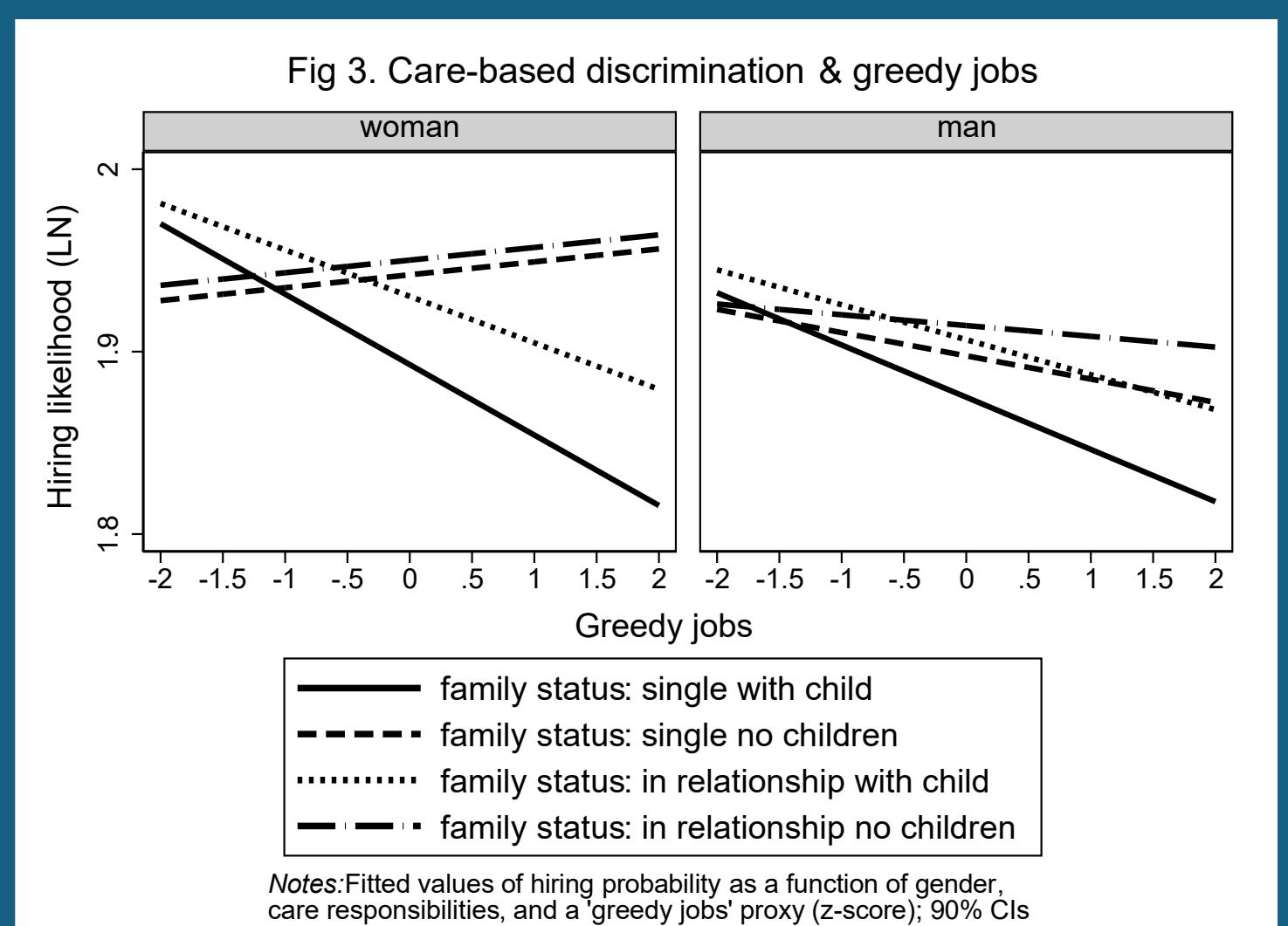


Fig 3. Care-based discrimination & greedy jobs

- Flexible working arrangements:** The disadvantaged position of single parents (Fig. 2, solid line) improves in firms that offer more flexible working options (e.g., variable start/end times, remote work, short-notice leave), these benefit single mothers in particular. A **similar pattern** appears in firms implementing **diversity policy measures** (not shown).
- Greedy jobs** (unpredictable, long hours, unsocial times, frequent trips) reduce mothers' hiring chances regardless of partnership status; men are not penalized (see Fig. 3, left panel).

6. Results: Organisational features affecting ethnic discrimination

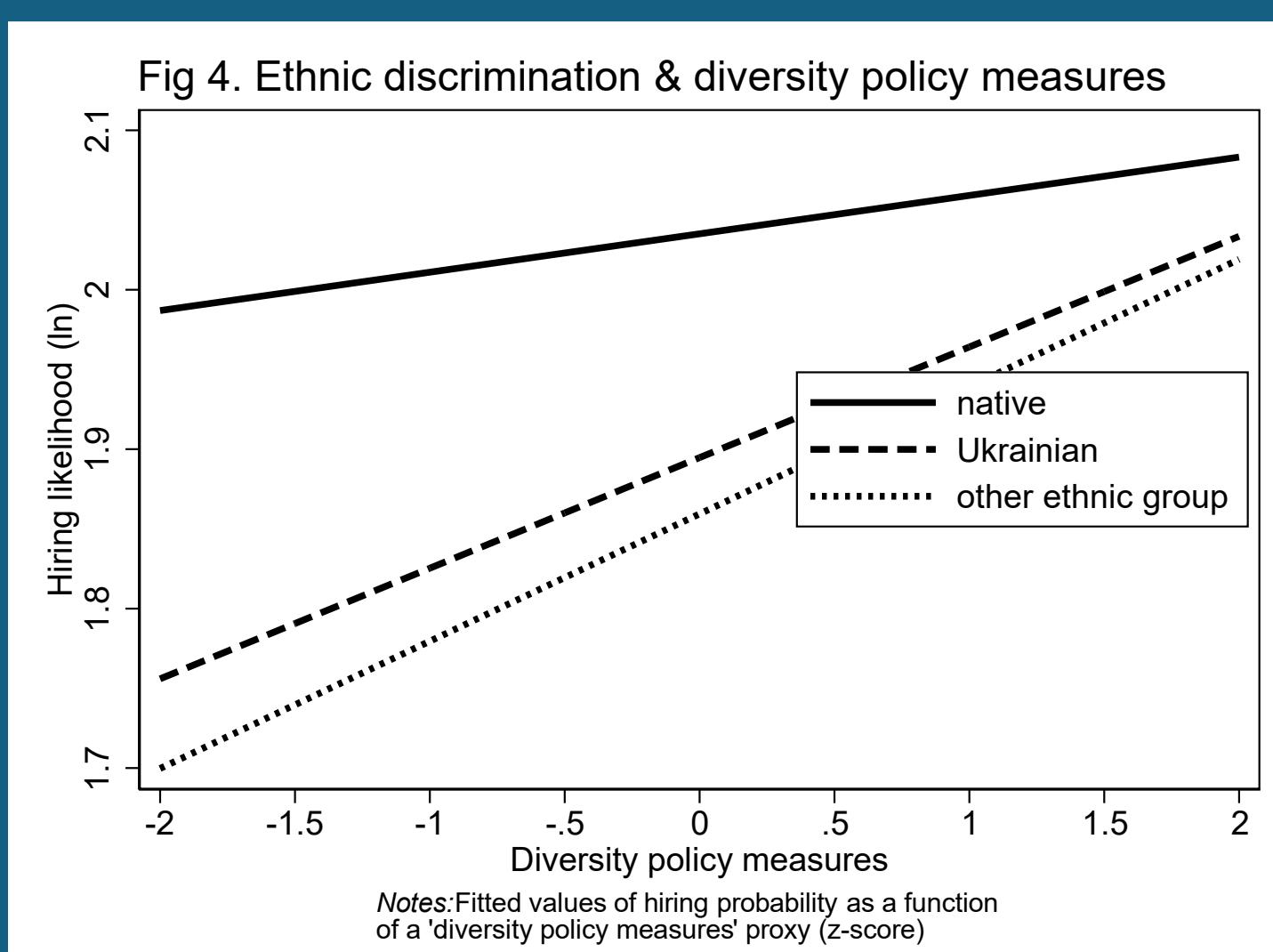


Fig 4. Ethnic discrimination & diversity policy measures

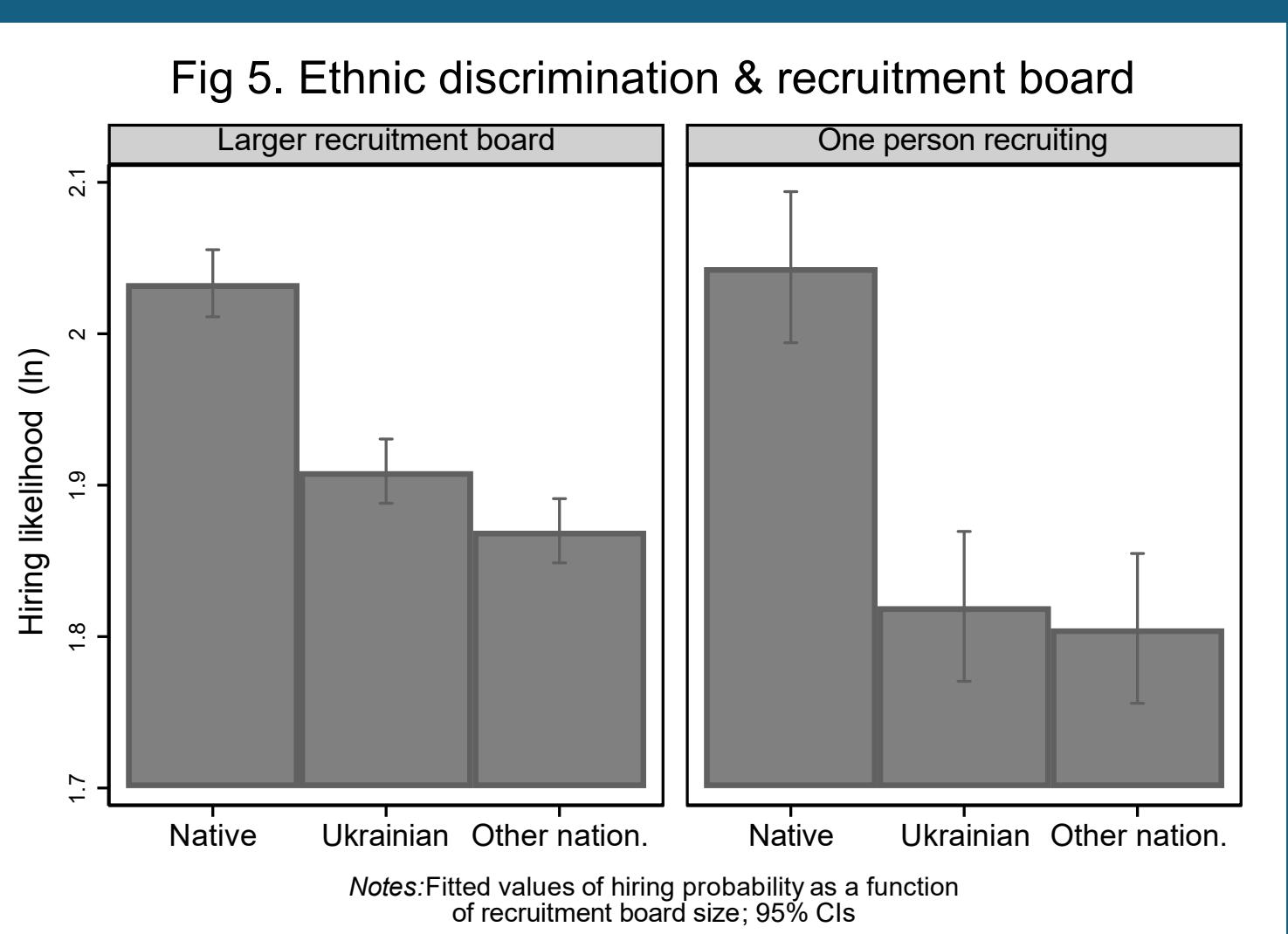


Fig 5. Ethnic discrimination & recruitment board

- Diversity policy measures:** Stronger diversity measures (mentoring/buddy programs, training, diversity-oriented hiring, task forces, support for foreign staff) reduce disadvantages for non-native candidates (see Fig. 4). Interviews show tailored support for migrant workers is rare; informal help and general programs prevail.
- Recruitment panels:** The hiring likelihood gap is smaller in firms with more developed recruitment panels (including not only the recruiter but also, e.g., a direct supervisor, HR specialist, or another co-worker) (see Fig. 5). A **similar pattern** appears in companies offering strong opportunities for **professional training** (not shown).

7. Policy recommendations

- Flexible working arrangements:** Expand flexible and inclusive options (flex hours, remote work, short-notice leave) and support them through incentives or regulations, including in high-demand "greedy" jobs.
- Recruitment processes:** Promote collective hiring panels and formalized procedures with clear criteria, structured evaluations, and transparent guidelines to reduce bias.
- Fair assessment of soft skills:** Clearly define relevant social skills, specify their weight in hiring, and use structured tools to ensure consistent evaluation.
- Diversity goals and concrete measures:** Set clear diversity objectives supported by real actions such as inclusive hiring, mentoring, and targeted support for foreign employees.
- Training opportunities:** Expand technical and soft-skill training — including tailored and multilingual options — to build confidence, close skill gaps, and reduce discrimination risks.

PATHS2INCLUDE is a 3-year research project funded by Horizon Europe that investigates the multi-dimensional aspects of discrimination, policies that could reduce inequalities and promote social inclusion in European labour markets and risk factors of vulnerability that may arise in the future of work. The research focuses on three key labour-market processes: recruitment; career paths; and early exit from working life, giving particular attention to labour-market participation at the intersection of gender, ethnicity, age, health, disability and care responsibilities.



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