IMDi
Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet

What is the status of integration in Norway?

Indicators, status and development trends in 2025

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Preface

IMDi's Indicator Report provides an overview of the status of immigrants and their Norwegian-born children and how this develops over time. Successful integration is critical for how Norway is progressing, both socially and economically.

This year's edition of the Indicator Report is the sixth report in the series. The purpose of the report was to compile the most recently available knowledge about integration in different areas of society, such as working life, education and living conditions, and political and social participation. This knowledge base contributes to providing more targeted policy, more effective measures and a more fact-based public debate about immigrants and integration.

This year's report reveals that immigrants are less likely than the rest of population to complete upper secondary school, enrol in higher education and to be employed. People with immigrant backgrounds also more often experience financial difficulties and poorer living conditions. Immigrants are also slightly less likely to participate in organised activities and volunteering.

The status of children of immigrants has been described as the litmus test for integration. The report shows that there are small differences between people born in Norway to immigrant parents and the rest of the population when concerning indicators such as school results and workforce participation, and there is a high degree of social mobility in this group. This particularly applies to women with immigrant parents who, to a large extent, both pursue higher education and participate in the labour market. At the same time, people born in Norway to immigrant parents feel integrated more than they feel accepted as who they are in Norwegian society. Children of immigrants also report experiencing more discrimination than those themselves who have immigrated.

Successful integration depends on good dialogue between many different stakeholders. This includes the central government, municipalities, NGOs and the private sector. IMDi hopes that this year's report will help strengthen the knowledge and cooperation between all parties involved to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities, rights and obligations in a diverse society.

Libe Rieber-Mohn
Director, The Directorate of
Integration and Diversity (IMDi)

Summary

The population with immigrant backgrounds in Norway
The past 50-60 years have seen a major change in the composition of Norway's population: Immigrants made up only 1.5 per cent of the Norwegian population in 1970, while by the start of 2025 that number had risen to 17.3 per cent for immigrants and 4.1 per cent for people born in Norway to immigrant parents.

Immigrants are a diverse group of people. Half of the immigrants in Norway come from European countries, one in three are from countries in Asia, and 11 per cent come from countries in Africa. A relatively small proportion (just under 5 per cent) comes from countries in North, Central and South America and Oceania. Immigrants come to Norway for a variety of reasons. Some come to work, study or be reunited with their families, while others may be fleeing war or humanitarian crises.

What are the integration outcomes for immigrants and their Norwegian-born children?
There is considerable variation in terms of the outcomes of the integration indicators within the immigrant population. The outcomes of the indicators vary according to national background, period of residence, generation or level of education. For example, a number of indicators show that women with refugee backgrounds and short periods of residence in Norway have poorer outcomes than other groups. People born in Norway to immigrant parents, particularly girls, do better than their immigrant peers in several areas.

An increasing number of children and young people with immigrant backgrounds are enrolling in **education and qualifications.** When compared with 2015, more are attending kindergarten, completing upper secondary education and enrolling in higher education. At the same time, we still see differences in educational indicators between people with immigrant backgrounds and the rest of the population. On average, immigrants and people born in Norway to immigrant parents achieve lower grades in primary and lower secondary school than the general population. People born in Norway to immigrant parents enrol in higher education at higher rates than the rest of the population, and this group has a high degree of social mobility. However, immigrant boys complete upper secondary education at lower rates than both immigrant girls and the population without an immigrant background, despite the completion rate having increased significantly since 2015. A higher proportion of young immigrants are not in employment, education or employment schemes when compared with their peers without immigrant backgrounds. This difference has remained relatively stable over time.

Immigrants are less frequently **employed** than the rest of the population, however, since 2015 the employment rate has increased slightly more among immigrants than in the rest of the population. This has reduced the disparities between these two groups from 14 percentage points in 2015 to 12 percentage points in 2024. At the same time, since 2021 we have seen a sharp decline in labour market participation among immigrants with a period of residence of less than four years. This can be explained by record numbers of refugees having arrived from Ukraine - a large proportion of whom are still participating in the Introduction Programme

(Introduksjonsprogrammet) for newly arrived immigrants. Unemployment among immigrants is more than four times as high as in the rest of the population, however these differences have been reduced since the pandemic year of 2020. People born in Norway to immigrant parents are more often employed than their immigrant peers, but have lower employment rates than the population without an immigrant background. However, the differences in the employment rates between people born in Norway to immigrant parents and the rest of population have decreased by five percentage points since 2015.

Immigrants more often experience challenges with their **financial situation and living conditions** than the rest of the population. On average, immigrants have a lower median income and are overrepresented among people with persistent low incomes. 27 per cent of immigrants live with persistent low incomes, compared to seven per cent among the rest of the population. The proportion of children with immigrant backgrounds who live in persistent low income households has declined in recent years. The most probable explanation for this is low immigration due to the pandemic and lockdowns. Due to the arrival of large numbers of refugees from Ukraine it is uncertain as to whether this positive development will continue.

On average, immigrants in Norway have lower mortality rates and higher life expectancy than the population without an immigrant background, however, the health of immigrants worsens in relation to their period of residence in Norway. This means that the longer immigrants have lived in the country, the more their health situation more closely resembles that of the rest of the population. Immigrants, people born in Norway to immigrant parents and the rest of the population consider their quality of life and health to be about equally as good, however immigrants are more likely to experience mental health problems.

Both immigrants and their children have lower rates of **political participation** than the rest of the population. A significantly lower proportion of immigrants and people born in Norway to immigrant parents exercise their right to vote than the rest of the population. This low proportion has remained relatively stable, both over time and between generations. This applies both to parliamentary elections and municipal and county council elections. 80 per cent of the population without an immigrant background voted at the 2021 parliamentary election, compared with 50 per cent of immigrants and 52 per cent of people born in Norway to immigrant parents. While the proportion of people with immigrant backgrounds in the electorate who are eligible to vote has risen, the under-representation of immigrants in the municipal councils has increased in recent years.

Social integration is challenging to measure and is largely based on subjective experiences and attitudes. Rewarding social relationships in everyday life help to expand networks and create trust and a sense of belonging, while the absence of these relationships can result in loneliness and exclusion. Immigrants are slightly less likely to participate in organised activities and volunteering. People with immigrant backgrounds often experience unfair treatment, hate speech, discrimination and violence than the rest of the population. 66 per cent of people with immigrant backgrounds report that they have experienced discrimination during their lives, compared to 40 per cent among the rest of the population.

People born in Norway to immigrant parents have stronger social networks than immigrants, and have more contact with people without immigrant backgrounds. They see themselves as Norwegian to a much greater extent, and they feel much more integrated than those who have themselves immigrated. However, they do not feel that others view them as Norwegian to the same extent, and the result of this is a wider disconnect between their own identity and the recognition of others. They report more discrimination than immigrants, and they experience discrimination as being more upsetting.

For the second year in a row we have experienced a decrease in the proportion of people who have positive attitudes towards immigrants. Fewer people than before believe that most immigrants make a beneficial contribution to Norwegian working life, and more people believe that immigrants are a source of insecurity in society. Despite this decrease, a majority of people still express positive rather than negative attitudes. When viewed from a 20-year perspective, attitudes towards immigration and immigrants have become more positive.

Immigrants are overrepresented both among those who commit crimes and among the victims. However, overrepresentation varies in terms of factors such as gender, age, living conditions, national background, level of education and type of offence. Research shows that being outside of work or education, as well as experiencing challenging living conditions, are associated with higher levels of crime. Young men are overrepresented among people charged with crimes. This applies both among those with and without an immigrant background. But with and without immigrant backgrounds are also more likely to be victims of crime than women. People born in Norway to immigrant parents, both women and men, are more exposed to violence and abuse than both immigrants and the rest of the population.

Young people with immigrant backgrounds are more likely than others to be exposed to negative social control. Negative social control not only takes place between adults and young people, it also takes place between young people themselves. Girls face expectations of having to behave decently and respectably, and boys encounter pressures related to masculinity and control of their sisters.

What contributes to and what obstacles successful integration?
The integration process is unique to each immigrant, because it is influenced by a number of personal and societal factors. At a general level we see that education and Norwegian language skills are key factors for greater participation and integration in society. An individual's level of educational and language skills is particularly critical to participation in the Norwegian labour market, because there is increasing demand for highly qualified workers.

According to most of the indicators, a longer period of residence in Norway also gives better integration outcomes. Among other things, this applies to Norwegian language skills, completion rate of upper secondary education, labour market participation, income, living conditions and participation in civil society.

On the other hand, there are several factors that may hinder integration, such as unemployment, exclusion, financial difficulties, poor living conditions and negative social control.

Discrimination can also be an obstacle to achieving good living conditions, to entry into the labour market, to deriving benefit from education and training and to access to the housing market. Discrimination can lead to a weakened sense of belonging to the community and less trust both in society and in other people.

Being exposed to negative social control and honour-motivated violence can represent a barrier to good integration. Individuals who experience negative social control and honour-motivated violence may suffer harm that results in mental and physical health challenges, and those exposed to this may require extensive and long-term health care.

Content

Figures

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and purpose

Immigration to Norway in the past 50-60 years has changed the composition of the country's population. Immigrants currently make up over 17 per cent of the population in Norway, compared to 1.5 per cent in 1970 (Statistics Norway, 2024b, 2025h). People born in Norway to immigrant parents make up four per cent of the population (Statistics Norway, 2025h). The status of immigrants and their Norwegian-born children is therefore important to the development of society as a whole.

In 2019, IMDi was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Research to develop a set of indicators to measure and describe integration in different areas of society. The set of indicators was to be presented through an annual report that would replace "Mål for integrering" (Integration goals), a memorandum on integration in Norway that had been attached to the National Budget for 15 years prior to 2019 (Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion 2015).

This year's edition is the sixth report in the series. The purpose of the report is to collect, compile and present the most recently available knowledge about integration. The selected indicators show how the integration of people with immigrant backgrounds in Norway is progressing in areas such as working life, education and qualifications, living conditions and political and social participation. The report particularly examines differences between immigrants, people born in Norway to immigrant parents and the rest of the population, and developments over time.

The report is based on knowledge compiled from a number of sources. A particularly important source is publicly available statistics from Statistics Norway (SSB). We also obtain statistics prepared by, among others, IMDi, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), and the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir). These statistics are well-suited for comparing outcomes for immigrants, their Norwegian-born children and the rest of the population in a number of areas, as well as for monitoring changes over time. However, the figures from these sources are less suitable for elucidating the causes and mechanisms behind the development. Therefore, in the report we supplement the statistics with recent research in the field.

The report focusses primarily on integration outcomes at the national level. For some of the indicators, developments can also be monitored at county and municipal level. These categorised statistics are available on the Statistics Norway and IMDi websites.

IMDi works continuously to further develop and evaluate the indicators on which this publication is based in order to provide the most precise and relevant picture possible of the status of integration in Norway. The indicators that are included in the different reports may therefore vary somewhat from year to year. In preparing the indicators for this year's report, IMDi had good dialogue with several adjacent directorates and cooperative partners with

regard to their knowledge requirements and focus areas, including Bufdir, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Udir), NAV, Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir), and the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (FHI). We hope this makes the report relevant and useful to more people.

1.2 Key terms and definitions

Integration can be understood in different ways in different contexts, and there are differing viewpoints on what the term means in relation to the area of immigration (Proba, 2019). Assessments of whether integration can be considered successful may change over time, and also depend on societal norms and integration policy objectives. Integration can also be understood both as a process and as a state: One integrates and one is integrated (Proba, 2019).

In order to describe the integration process, it is common to apply a broad definition of integration as being "The two-way process of mutual adaptation between migrants and the societies in which they live, whereby migrants are incorporated into the social, economic, cultural and political life of the receiving community." (International Organization for Migration - IOM). Successful integration often means that people with immigrant backgrounds have the opportunity to achieve the same socioeconomic benefits as the majority population when taking their prerequisites into consideration (OECD/EU 2018). This is often referred to as *structural integration*. Furthermore, *social integration* will also involve social participation and inclusion, while *political integration* includes political participation and representation, as well as whether people have trust in key societal institutions (Barstad and Sørlien, Molstad 2020). At the same time, successful integration involves the majority community and stakeholders in the field of integration taking an active role in accepting, including and building relationships with immigrants.

Integration is an extensive term that is difficult to measure directly. It is therefore appropriate to use a number of quantifiable indicators to describe the success of integration. In order to measure integration we also require a basis for comparison – something with which we can compare the outcomes of the indicators (OECD/EU, 2018). In this report, the immigrant population's outcomes in the various indicators are therefore compared to the outcomes for the rest of the population. At the same time, it is important to note that not all differences between minorities and the majority indicate a lack of integration (Barstad and Sørlien Molstad, 2020). Brochmann (2024) notes that "(...) there is a clash between the right to be equal – and the right to be different". This report uses an understanding of integration in which it can be considered successful if "unreasonable and involuntary differences between the minority and the majority diminish over time and between generations" (Østby, 2016). The approach entails that, through their integration process, immigrants get closer to achieving the same outcomes as the majority population in some areas of society, while they preserve their distinctive characteristics in other areas.

With this understanding of integration as a starting point, it is important to pay attention to how these differences develop over time and generations. For most immigrants, it will take

time to acquire relevant skills, learn Norwegian, find employment and create a social network. It is therefore also important to examine the importance of period of residence. ***Period of residence*** in Norway is the term used to describe the number of years that have passed since the immigrant arrived in the country (calculated from the first registered date of residence) (Statistics Norway, 2024a).

The immigration category is in line with Statistics Norway's standard for grouping people according to immigration background, whereby we primarily use the categories of: immigrants, people born in Norway to immigrant parents and people without immigrant backgrounds. ***Immigrants*** are people who have immigrated to Norway themselves, were born abroad to two foreign-born parents and have four foreign-born grandparents.***People born in Norway to immigrant parents*** have two foreign parents and four foreign grandparents (Statistics Norway, 2025h). ***People with immigrant backgrounds*** refers to both immigrants and people born in Norway to immigrant parents. We group the remainder under ***the rest of the population/people without immigrant backgrounds***. These are broad categorisations and in many cases the differences within each category are greater than the differences between them. At the same time, this categorisation is appropriate because it makes it possible to measure integration by examining the development of indicators over time.

Reason for immigration refers to the reason for initial immigration to Norway. All first-time immigrants with a non-Nordic background who have come to Norway since 1989 are entered in the registers of the immigration authorities as having one of the following reasons for immigration: refugee, family reunification, work, education or other. Nordic citizens are not included in this statistic (Statistics Norway, 2025g).

When grouping people according to ***country of origin*** in this report, some distinctions are made between immigrants from EU/EEA countries, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (hereafter referred to as Country Group 1) and immigrants from countries in Asia, including Turkey, Africa, Latin America, Oceania outside Australia and New Zealand, and European countries outside the EU/EEA (hereafter referred to as Country Group 2). This is the same categorisation that Statistics Norway has used since 2008 (Høydahl, 2008).

In the chapter on social integration, Country Group 1 refers to immigrants from the EU/EEA, United Kingdom, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand minus "new" EU countries in Eastern Europe. Country Group 2 consists of countries incorporated into the EU in 2004 or later (Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania). Country Group 3 consists of countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Oceania except Australia and New Zealand and Europe outside of the EU/EEA, United Kingdom and Nordic region.

1.3 Content of the report

Integration takes place in the interaction and dialogue between people with immigrant backgrounds and the rest of the population in both formal and informal social arenas. The indicators in this report are divided into five thematic areas, which highlight key aspects

of the integration process: 1) education and qualifications, 2) employment, 3) financial situation and living conditions, 4) political integration, and 5) social integration. This form of categorisation is based on recommendations and existing frameworks for integration metrics both in Norway and internationally (see, for example, OECD/EU 2023; Barstad and Sørlien Molstad, 2020; Proba, 2019).

To begin with, we will present some basic facts and key figures about immigrants to Norway and people born in Norway to immigrant parents. The composition of the population with immigrant backgrounds by gender, reason for immigration, period of residence and educational level is an important context through which to better understand the outcomes in the various indicators. This is described in more detail in Chapter 2.

Having relevant education and qualifications is a crucial prerequisite for successful integration. Chapter 3 presents indicators in the field of education, and takes a closer look at participation, completion and results among immigrants and their Norwegian-born children at various stages of the education process - from kindergarten to higher education.

Chapter 4 describes immigrants' ties to the labour market. Indicators such as employment rate, working hours and unemployment are supplemented by selected indicators for working environment. We also examine differences in dropout rates from work and education among young people with and without an immigrant background.

A predictable financial situation coupled with good health and quality of life, can encourage immigrants and people born in Norway to immigrant parents to participate in multiple arenas. These topics are described in Chapter 5.

Chapter 6 takes a closer look at political participation and active civic participation, and provides an overview of areas such as trends in electoral participation, political representation and trust in social institutions.

Chapter 7 looks at a number of areas related to contact and social interaction that take place between people with and without immigrant backgrounds in various formal and informal arenas in everyday life. The indicators in this chapter include trust in others, social ties, participation in volunteering and leisure activities, as well as attitudes towards immigration and discrimination. We also look at the right to live a free life, which is defined as the absence of negative social control.

2025

Integration indicators

Education and qualifications

- Kindergarten attendance
- Results in primary and lower secondary school
- Upper secondary school completion rate
- Higher education participation and completion rates
- Participation in the Introduction Programme (introduksjonsprogrammet)
- Norwegian language test results

Work

- Employment rate
- Working hours
- Overqualification
- Working environment
- Sick leave
- Unemployment
- NEET

Financial situation and living conditions

- Income
- Persistent low income
- Children in persistent low income households
- Home ownership status
- Living conditions
- Physical health
- Mental health
- Quality of Life

Political integration

- Electoral participation
- Political participation
- Political representation
- Transition to Norwegian citizenship
- Use of media
- Institutional trust

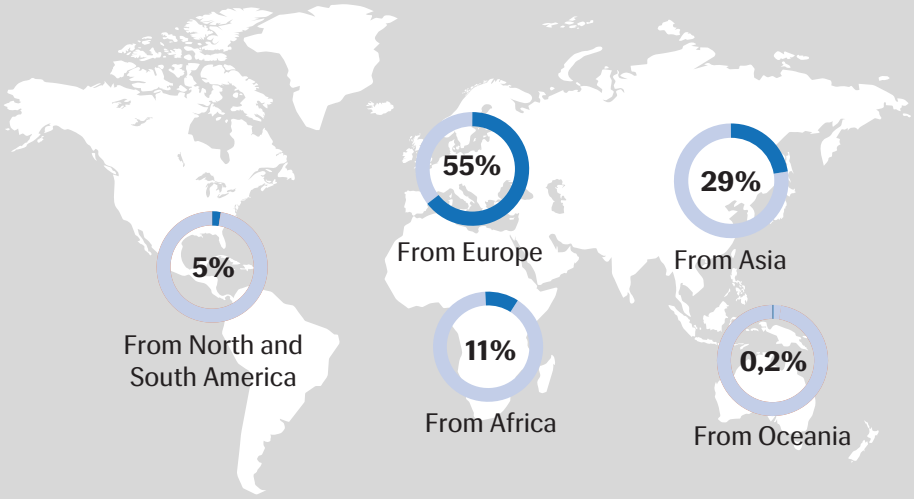
Social integration

- General trust
- Social networks and contact
- Sense of belonging and acceptance
- Participation in volunteering
- Children's participation in leisure activities
- Attitudes to immigration and integration
- Racism and discrimination
- Crime
- Negative social control

2025

What are the characteristics of the population with immigrant backgrounds in Norway?

Where do immigrants come from?

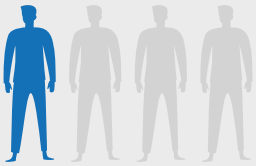


965 113

immigrants in Norway in 2025. 17 per cent of the population

230 237

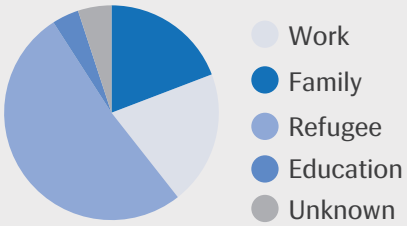
people born in Norway to immigrant parents in 2025. 4 per cent of the population



26%

of immigrants have lived in Norway for less than 5 years

Reason for immigration

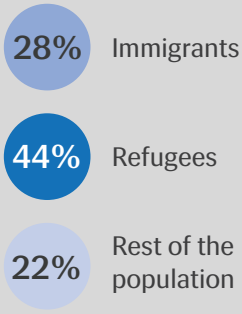


3 out of 10 immigrants...

2 out of 10 in the rest of the population...

...reside in the most central municipalities in Norway.

Education



have a primary and lower secondary school education or less

Sources: Innvandrere og norskfødte med innvandrerforeldre, Statistics Norway (2025), Befolkning, Statistics Norway (2025), Utdanningsnivå for innvandrere, Statistics Norway (2025), Innvandringer, Statistics Norway (2025)

2. The population with immigrant backgrounds in Norway

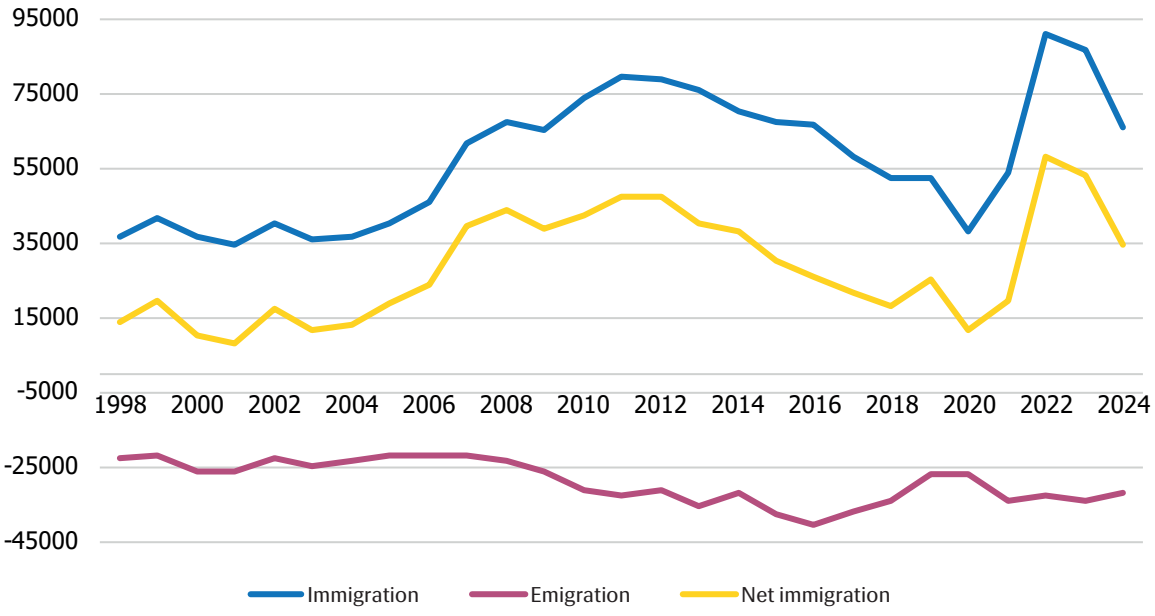
Immigration

2.1 How many immigrants are there in Norway?

At the start of 2025 there were approximately 965,000 immigrants residing in Norway. There were also 230,000 residents who were born in Norway to immigrant parents. In total, these two groups represent 21.4 per cent of the population of Norway.

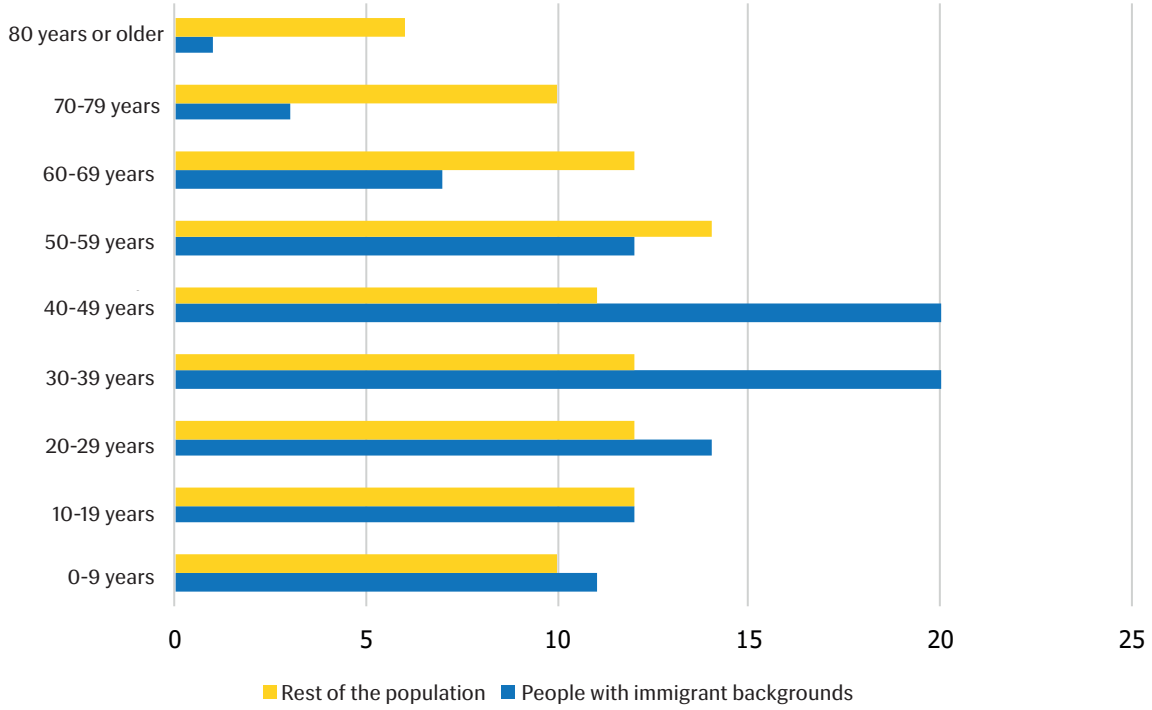
Figure 2.1 shows developments in emigration from and immigration to Norway since 1998. Since that year there have been major changes in the immigrant groups that have come to Norway. In the 1970s, immigration to Norway primarily consisted of family reunification for labour immigrants. Up until the 2000s, immigration largely consisted of asylum seekers and refugees due to events such as the Vietnam War, the Balkan Wars and conflicts in the Middle East. The expansion of the EU in 2004 to include countries such as Poland and Lithuania saw a sharp increase in labour immigration, followed by family reunification. A huge number Syrian refugees arrived during the refugee crisis in 2015-2016, and the wave of refugees from Ukraine since 2022 has produced a historic increase in the number of immigrants. The decrease in 2024 was primarily due to fewer arrivals from Ukraine (Andersen 2025; Statistics Norway, 2024b).

Figure 2.1. Immigration, emigration and net immigration to Norway. 1998–2024. Number (Statistics Norway, 2025i).



The composition of the immigrant population is different to the rest of the population in terms of gender and age. Nearly eight out of ten people with an immigrant background are under the age of 50, compared to six out of ten in the rest of the population. Immigrants have a lower percentage of older people than the population at large. People born in Norway to immigrant parents is a group consisting of a very high number of young people, and very few elderly people. Immigrants consists of both fewer older and younger people than the rest of the population. It is expected that the immigrant population of the future will consist of more elderly people and more people with a longer period of residence (Thomas, 2024).

Figure 2.2. People with immigrant backgrounds and the rest of the population, divided according to age. 2025 Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025ar).



At the start of 2025, 49 per cent of people with immigrant backgrounds were women, and 51 per cent were men. A majority of people with immigrant backgrounds from European and African countries and Oceania are men, while there are more women than men among those with backgrounds from Asia and North and South America.

In terms of family and household composition, a higher proportion of immigrants live alone, while a majority of the rest of the population live in households consisting of two people. At the same time, immigrants more often live in large households with five or more people, and it is also more common for multiple families or generations to live in the same residence (Steinkellner, Krokedal and Andersen, 2023).

People born in Norway to immigrant parents make up four per cent of the population (Statistics Norway, 2025h). This is a relatively small percentage of the population, however this group is still very interesting to look at from an integration perspective. Due to the fact

that they are born and raised in Norway, they will have a different skill set with which to succeed in Norway compared to their parents. Children born in Norway to immigrant parents tend to spend their entire childhood in Norway and to mostly be socialised in Norway. This means that their childhoods are characterised by the same institutional frameworks as those of children who do not have immigrant backgrounds (Kirkeberg et al., 2019). At the beginning of 2025, 73 per cent of people born in Norway to immigrant parents were under the age 20 (Andersen, 2025).

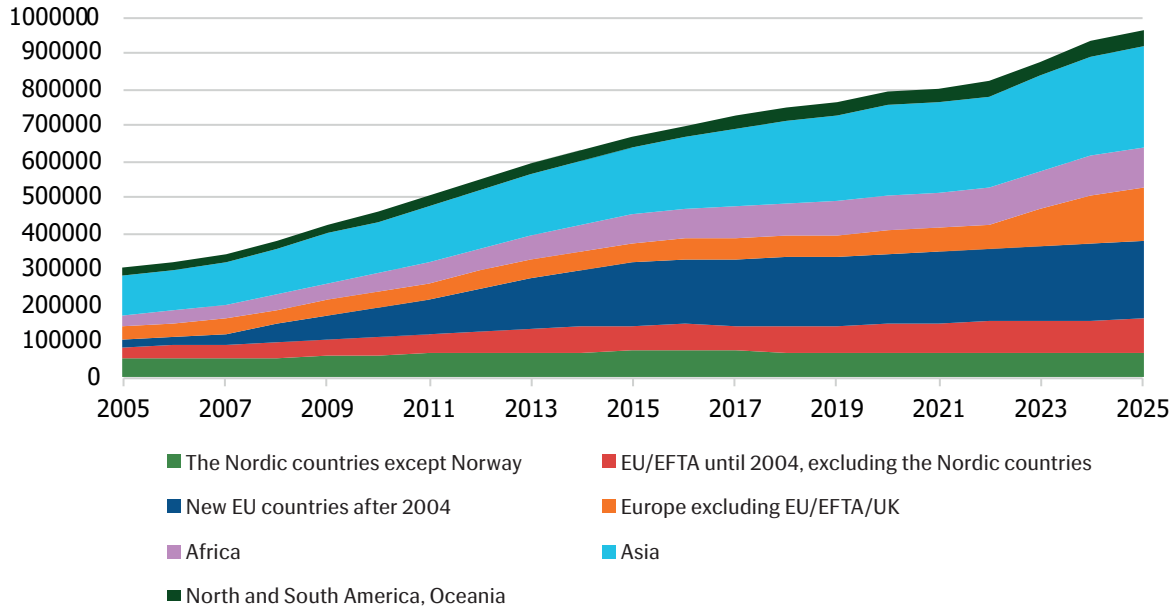
Immigrants by country of origin

2.2 Half of the immigrants come from European countries

Just over half of all immigrants in Norway have backgrounds from Nordic or other European countries. One of three immigrants come from countries in Asia, while 11 per cent are from countries in Africa. A relatively small proportion (just under 5 per cent) comes from countries in North, Central and South America and Oceania (Statistics Norway, 2025aw).

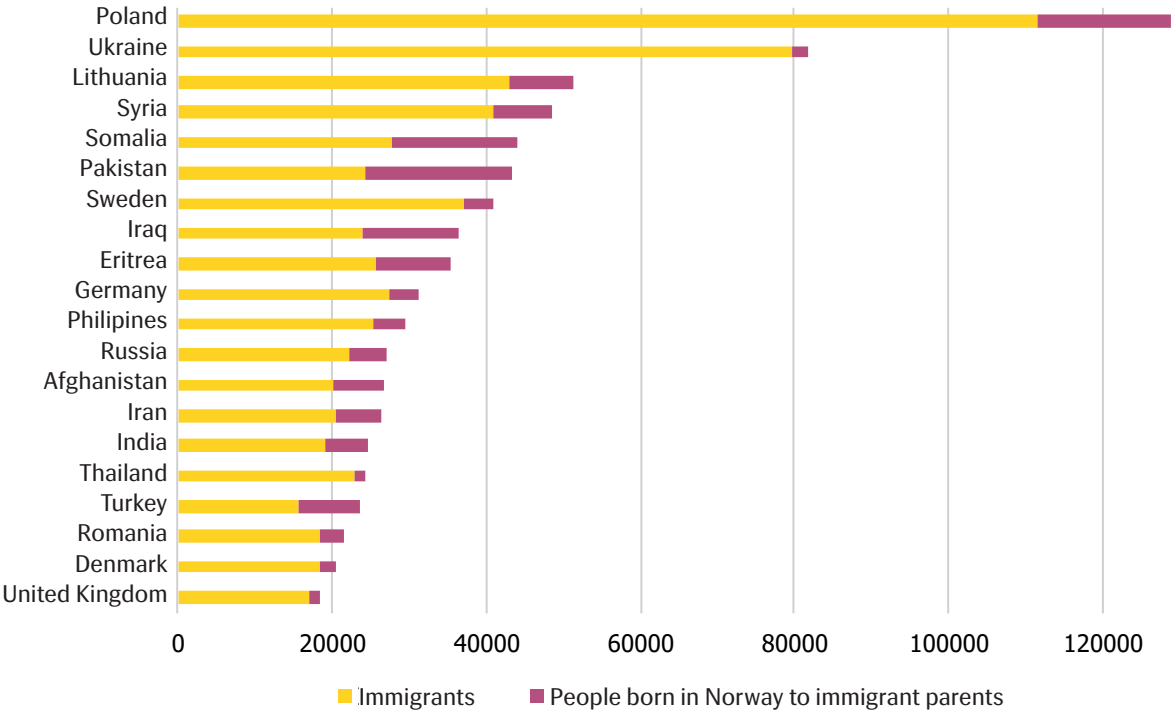
Figure 2.3 shows how the composition of the immigrant population by country of origin has changed over the past 20 years. Since the enlargement of the EU in 2004, the share of immigrants from EU countries in Eastern Europe has increased significantly. At the start of 2025, 22 per cent of all immigrants in Norway were from one of these countries, compared to just six per cent prior to the EU expansion. Immigrants from the Nordic countries on the other hand, make up an increasingly lower proportion of the immigrant population. Over the past 20 years, this proportion has decreased from close to 17 per cent to seven per cent.

Figure 2.3. Immigrants by country of origin (world region). 2005–2025. Number (Statistics Norway, 2025aw).



Broken down by individual country, immigrants from Poland make up the largest immigrant group in Norway. More than 111,000 Polish immigrants were residing in Norway at the start of 2025. The large increase in the number of Ukrainian refugees has resulted in people of Ukrainian national origin becoming the second largest immigrant group in Norway. More than 80,000 Ukrainians were residing in the country at the start of 2025 compared to about 6,500 Ukrainians just two years earlier (Andersen, 2025). Other countries with large immigrant groups in Norway in 2025 are Lithuania (43,000 people), Syria (40,700 people), Sweden (37,200 people), Somalia (27,600 people), and Germany (27,400 people). The 20 largest immigrant groups account for 80 per cent of all immigrants in the country (Statistics Norway, 2025aw).

Figure 2.4. Immigrants and people born in Norway to immigrant parents by country of origin. 2025. Number (Statistics Norway, 2025aw).



The majority in the relatively young group of people born in Norway to immigrant parents have a background from Asia (43 per cent), while one in three have parents who migrated from a European country. One in five people born in Norway to immigrant parents has parents from countries in Africa (Statistics Norway, 2025aw). When broken down according to individual countries, the majority of people born in Norway to immigrant parents are from Pakistan (19,000 people), Poland (17,500 people), Somalia (16,400 people), Iraq (12,700 people) and Vietnam (9,700 people). Three in ten people born in Norway to immigrant parents have backgrounds from one of these five countries (Statistics Norway, 2025aw).

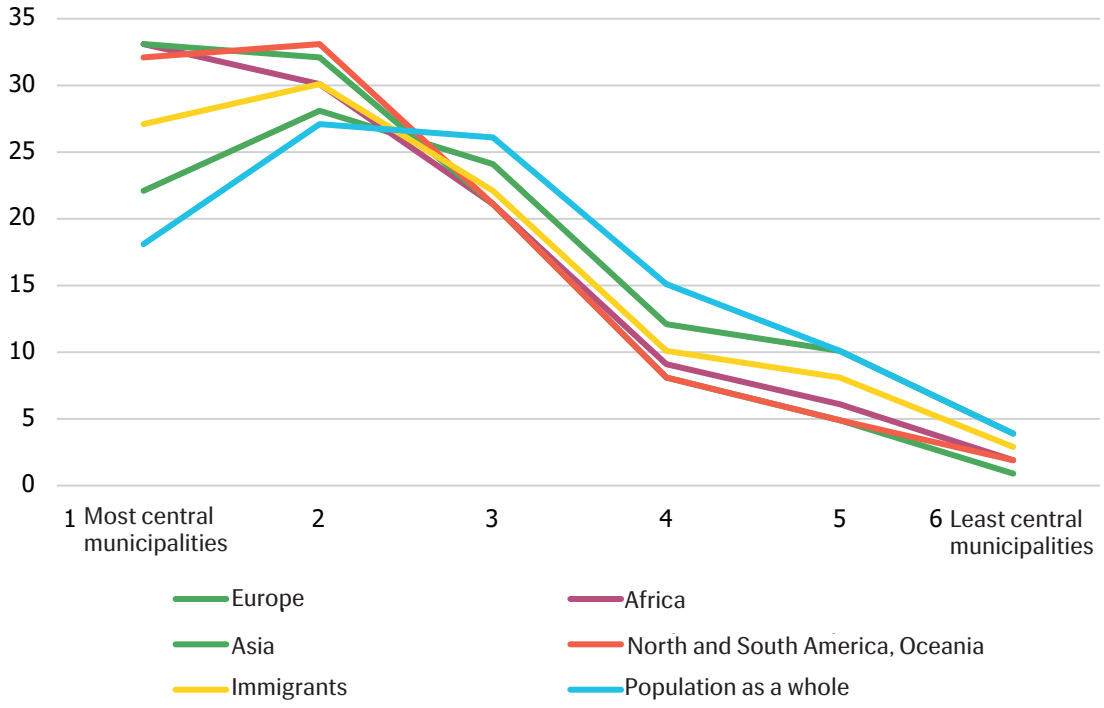
Settlement patterns

2.3 Trends towards decentralisation

How is the centrality of the municipalities calculated?
A centrality index has been formulated for all municipalities in Norway. Centrality is measured by looking at travel time to workplaces and service functions from all inhabited constituencies in the municipality. Based on the index, Norwegian municipalities are divided into six groups, ranging from the most central to the least central. The five municipalities that are the most central are Oslo, Lørenskog, Bærum, Rælingen and Lillestrøm.

As shown in figure 2.5, more than one in four immigrants live in one of the five most central municipalities in the country. The corresponding proportion for the population as a whole is almost two in ten (Statistics Norway, 2025l, 2025ba). 57 per cent of all immigrants are divided among the 25 most central municipalities in the country. The figure is 46 per cent for the population as a whole. Immigrants with backgrounds from European countries are somewhat less concentrated in the most central municipalities. Half of the immigrants from European countries live in the most central municipalities in Norway, compared to more than six out of ten immigrants from Asia, Africa, North and South America.

Figure 2.5. Proportion of different immigrant groups, immigrants and the entire population living in more/less central municipalities. 2025. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025l, 2025ba).



There are trends towards clear decentralization in immigrant settlement patterns in Norway since 2000 (Tønnessen, 2022). If we look at the entire population as a whole, a larger

proportion now lives more centrally than 25 years ago. Among immigrants, the proportion living in the most central municipalities is lower than in 2000 (Tønnessen, 2022). In other words, immigrants are more spread out across the country than was previously the case. There are several possible reasons for this. Among other things, recent arrival cohorts of immigrants have, in part, spent their initial period of residence in Norway in less central locations. Compared to the other Scandinavian countries, immigrants in Norway are more spread out across the country (Hernes et al., 2019).

The settlement pattern is linked to reasons for immigration. Since one of the goals of integration policy is managed and dispersed settlement, refugees are settled in municipalities across the country. Since Russia's invasion in February 2022, Ukrainian refugees have been settled in all but one of the country's municipalities. Immigrants who have come to Norway due to education most often reside in more central municipalities where university colleges and universities are located. Newly arrived resettlement refugees are often settled at less central locations. Labour immigrants are particularly inclined to settle in coastal municipalities in Northern and Western Norway. There is often a correlation between the proportion of family immigrants in the municipality and the proportion of labour immigrants and/or refugees living in the same municipality (Guldbrandsen et al., 2021).

The settlement pattern is also linked to period of residence. On average, immigrants move slightly more between municipalities in Norway than the rest of the population (Jakobsen and Villund, 2025). One explanation is that many immigrants are young and therefore more inclined to move. Like the rest of the population, immigrants will often move during the educational and establishment phase. Those who move from their first municipality of residence usually do this during the first few years. Those who have not already found employment move even more often (Jakobsen and Villund, 2024). When they move, they often move to more central locations. At the same time, we see that, on average, immigrants move less centrally now than they did before (Tønnessen, 2022). In addition, more recently arrived immigrants are increasingly remaining in the municipality in which they were settled. Resettlement refugees and reunified family members are more likely to remain where they are living than labour immigrants, refugees granted asylum and people who immigrate for education (Tønnessen, 2022).

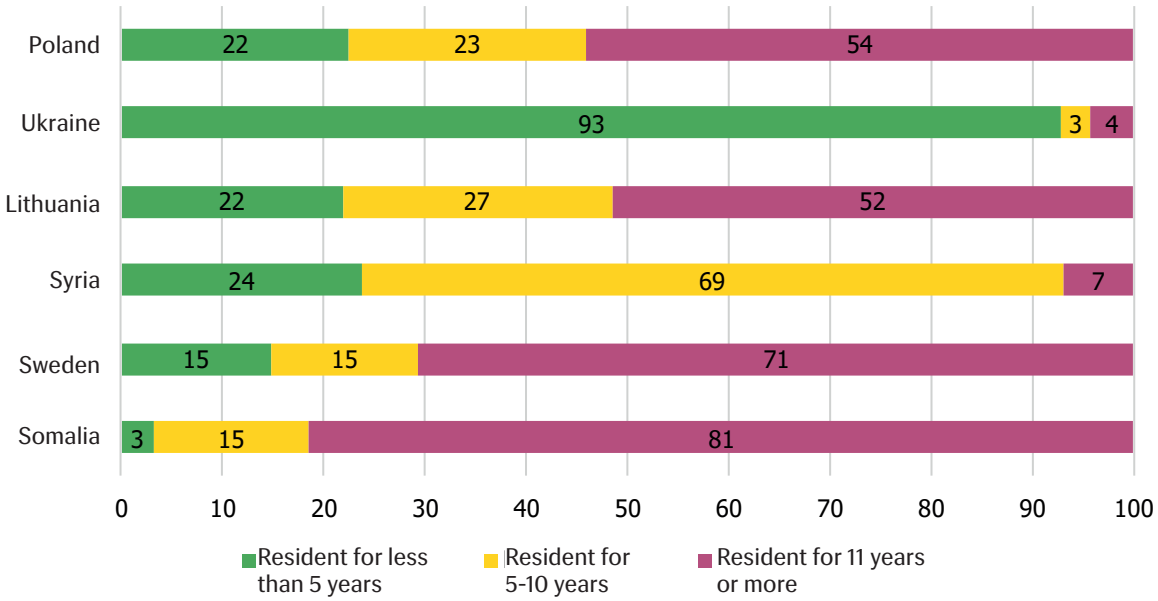
Period of residence

2.4 Higher proportion with short period of residence in 2025

Integration is a time-consuming process. It will take some time for most immigrants who settle in Norway to acquire relevant skills, find a job, learn the language and form social ties. It is therefore not surprising that there is often a positive correlation between period of residence and several of the integration indicators in this report. Both employment and participation in voluntary organisations increase with the period of time spent in Norway, and immigrants with a longer period of residence often have both higher incomes and better living conditions.

The proportion of immigrants with a short period of residence decreased in the years up to 2022 in line with the continually decreasing number of new immigrants settling in Norway. In January 2022, one of five immigrants had lived in Norway for less than five years. This situation has changed markedly as a result of the large influx of refugees from Ukraine. As of the present date, more than one in four immigrants (26 per cent) has resided in Norway for less than five years. In addition, 21 per cent have resided in Norway for between five and ten years, and just over half (53 per cent), have resided in Norway for eleven years or more (Statistics Norway, 2025w).

Figure 2.6. Immigrants from select countries, by period of residence. 2025. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025w).



There are significant variations in the distribution by period of residence between immigrants from different countries. Figure 2.6 shows this distribution for the six countries with the highest number of immigrants in Norway. 71 per cent of immigrants from Sweden and 81 per cent of immigrants from Somalia have lived in Norway for 11 years or more. The equivalent shares for immigrants from Poland and Lithuania are 54 and 52 per cent, respectively. Immigrants from Ukraine stand out as having a very high proportion with a short period of residence in Norway. 93 per cent of all Ukrainian immigrants in Norway have lived in the country for less than five years. Despite the fact that fewer Ukrainians were settled in 2024 compared to 2022 and 2023, this was still the immigrant group that increased the most in size (Andersen, 2025).

Reason for immigration

2.5 Escape the biggest cause of immigration in the last three years

Immigrants come to Norway for a variety of reasons. While some come to work, study or be reunited with their family, others are fleeing, for example, war or humanitarian crises. Since 1990, 32 per cent of all immigrants who have arrived in Norway have come to work. Nine per cent have come to study, 24 per cent have come as refugees, while 33 per cent have come for family reunification or family establishment. Three per cent have immigrated for other or unknown reasons (Statistics Norway, 2025k).

The gender and age composition varies between immigrant groups with different reasons for immigration. It is predominantly women who come to Norway because of family (65 per cent) or to study (60 per cent). For labour immigrants, as many as three in four are men. There is also a preponderance of men among refugees in Norway, despite the proportion of women having risen slightly since the outbreak of war in Ukraine. The vast majority of children under the age of 18 come to Norway as refugees or to be reunited with their families (Statistics Norway, 2025k).

In 2024, about 51,200 non-Nordic citizens immigrated to Norway. This is a decrease of 30 per cent since 2023, when the number of immigrants was over 73,000. The decrease was primarily due to fewer refugees from Ukraine in 2024 than in the previous years. Escape has been the biggest cause of immigration in the last three years, which is largely attributed to the flow of refugees from Ukraine. Other national groups with high refugee arrivals in 2024 were Syrians (1,420 people), Congolese (470 people) and Afghans (470 people) (Kirkeberg, 2025). In total, refugees from Ukraine now make up the largest refugee group in Norway. There were over 71,000 Ukrainian refugees living around the country at the beginning of 2025. Syrians make up the second largest refugee group with nearly 39,000 people who have been settled in Norway. Other large refugee groups come from Somalia, Eritrea, Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran (Strøm, 2025).

Figure 2.7. Immigration to Norway, by reason for immigration. 2005–2024. Number (Statistics Norway. 2025m)

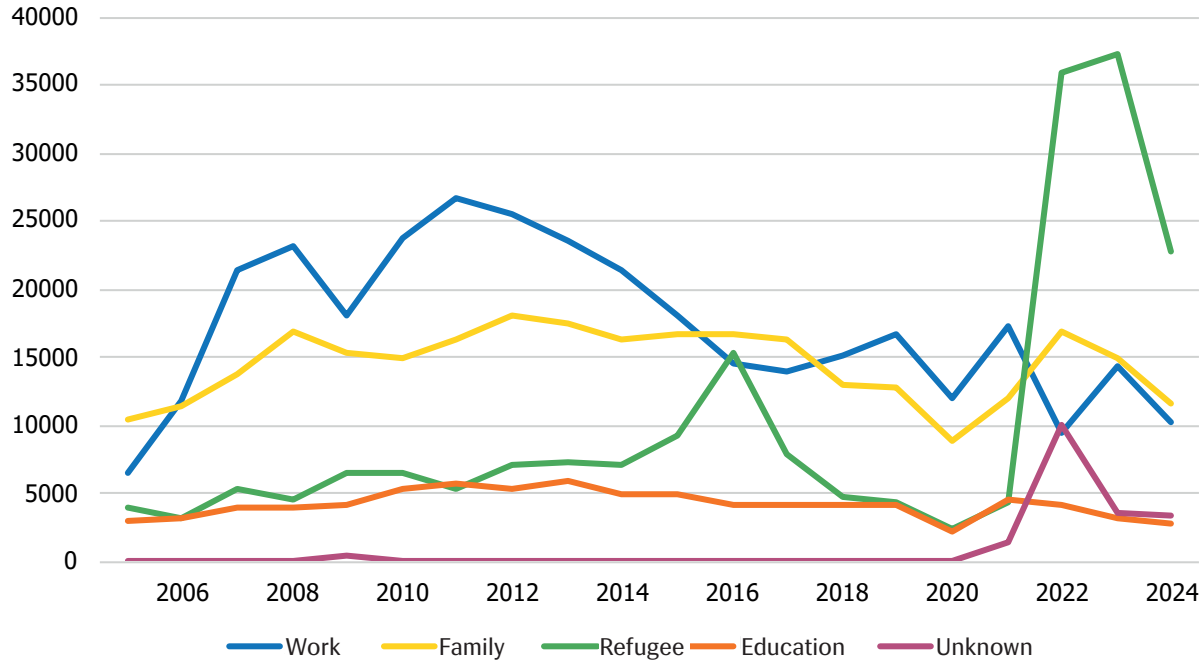


Figure 2.7 also shows that the number of immigrants with unknown reasons for immigrating has been relatively high over the past four years. This is primarily due to the fact that the reason for immigration is not registered for EEA nationals, who often come because of work or family reunification (Kirkeberg, 2025). Pursuant to the EU directive on the right to free movement, EEA citizens and their families can freely enter and stay in other member states (Norwegian Government, 2011). In other words, immigrants from these countries do not have to register with the police or immigration authorities when entering Norway. The largest national groups for which there is sparse information about their reasons for immigration are Poland, Lithuania, Spain and Romania (Kirkeberg, 2024). The decrease in the number of people immigrating due

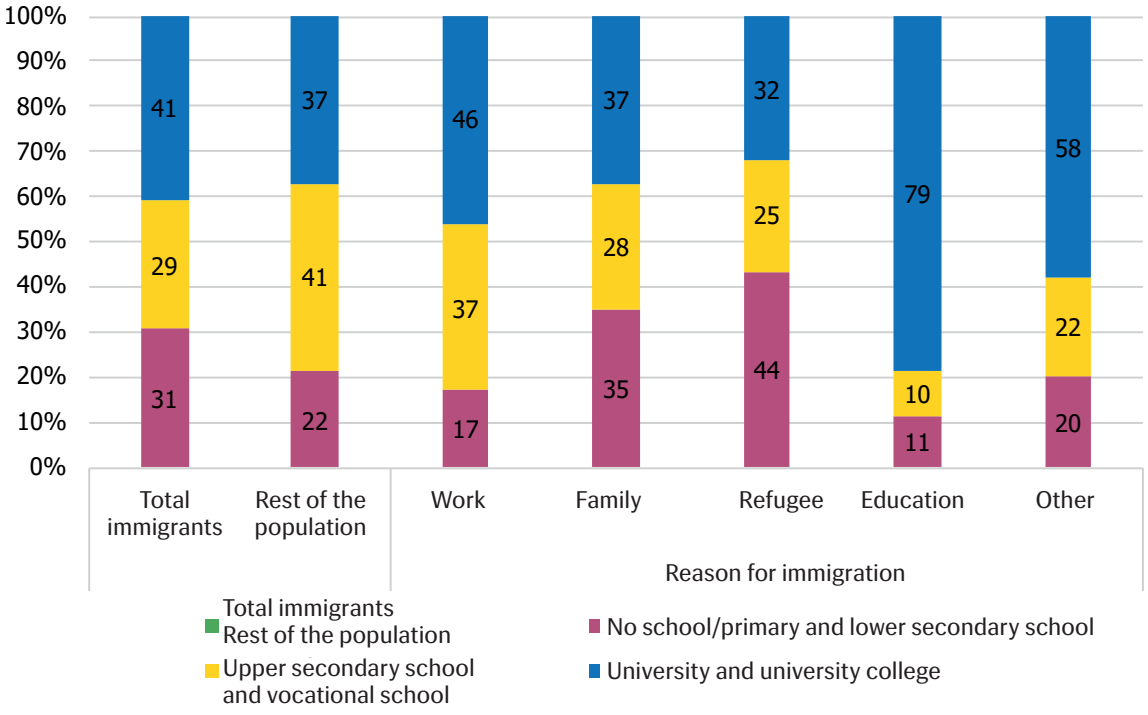
to work or family therefore needs to be interpreted carefully. There is reason to believe that the figures would look different if all EEA citizens disclosed a reason for immigrating.

Educational level

2.6 Significant differences in education between different immigrant groups

Compared to the rest of the population, there is a larger share of immigrants who have no education or only have primary and lower secondary school education. In 2023, 29 per cent of immigrants had either not completed schooling or primary and lower secondary school were the highest levels completed, compared to 22 per cent among the rest of the population. However, the proportion with a university or university college education was slightly higher among immigrants than the rest of the population, at 41 and 37 per cent, respectively (Figure 2.8).

Figure 2.8. Educational attainment, by immigration category and reason for immigration. 2024. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2024f, 2025bc, 2025r).



The figure also shows that there are significant differences in educational attainment between immigrants with different reasons for immigration. Four of five who have come to Norway to study have post-secondary education. Among labour immigrants, 46 per cent have higher education. This is a relatively high proportion. The distribution according to educational attainment among labour immigrants has remained unchanged since 2022. The proportion of refugees with an upper secondary school education or higher increased from 47 per cent in 2021 to 57 per cent in 2024. This increase was most probably due to the arrivals from Ukraine.

Education and qualifications

Kindergarten attendance

96%
non-minority language speaking children

90%
minority language speaking children

↑ Smaller differences since 2015

Primary and lower secondary school points

38 immigrants

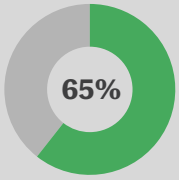
41 People born in Norway to immigrant parents

43 rest of the population

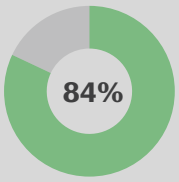
— Stable differences since 2020

immigrants · People born in Norway to immigrant parents · rest of the population

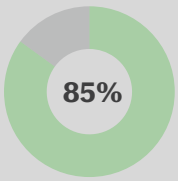
Completed upper secondary school within 5/6 years



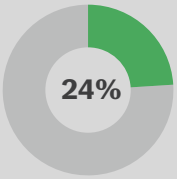
— Stable differences since 2015



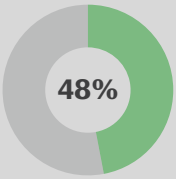
↑ Smaller differences since 2015



Enrolled in higher education



— Stable differences since 2020



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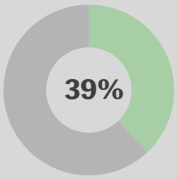
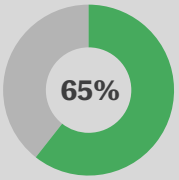
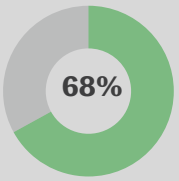


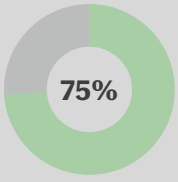
Students who complete bachelor's degrees



↓ Stable differences since 2018



↑ Smaller differences since 2018



Sources (top from left): Barnehager, Statistics Norway (2025), Karakterer og nasjonale prøver i grunnskolen, Statistics Norway (2024), Gjennomføring i videregående opplæring, Statistics Norway (2025), Studenter i universitets- og høgskoleutdanning, Statistics Norway (2025), Gjennomføring veduniversiteter og høgskoler, Statistics Norway (2025)

3. Education and qualifications

Education can be both a goal in itself and a means of success in other areas of society. Education provides people with opportunities to utilise their potential, to understand and assert their rights, and provides the possibility of social and financial mobility. For immigrants and their Norwegian-born children, the foundations that are laid through school and education provide opportunities to participate in the labour force and acquire more resources with which to create a good life in Norway. We know that a lack of education is an important cause of the disparities in employment rates between immigrants and the rest of the population (Olsen, 2020). Immigrants who have completed their education in Norway also have higher rates of employment than immigrants whose education is from another country. This applies irrespective of the level of education, but the difference is greatest for refugees who have completed higher education (Bye 2021; Official Norwegian Report – NOU, 2021).

Kindergarten attendance

3.1 Kindergarten attendance is increasing most among the youngest children

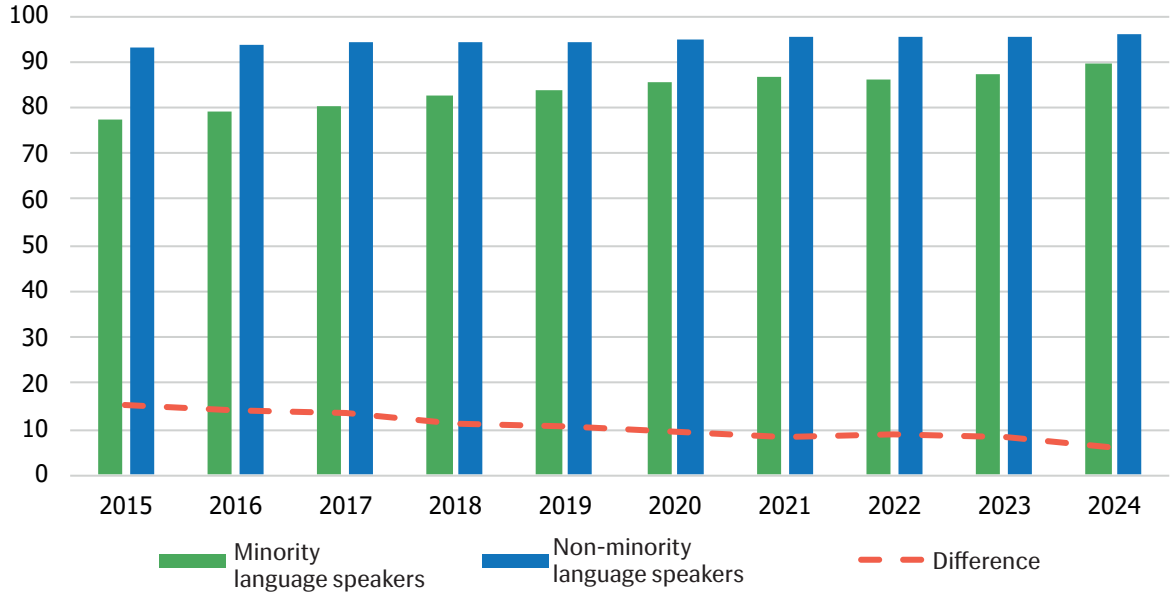
Attending kindergarten is good for the language development, school results and integration of children who speak minority languages. A number of Norwegian studies have found positive effects of kindergarten attendance and schemes such as “early start” and “free core hours” (Bråten et al. 2014; Drange 2018, 2021; Drange and Havnes, 2015).

The proportion of children aged 1–5 years who speak a minority language and attend kindergarten has increased from 78 per cent to 90 per cent in the period from 2015–2024 (Statistics Norway, 2025af). This share is still somewhat lower than the share of children in this age group who do not speak a minority language, but the differences have become significantly smaller over the past ten years.

How are children who speak a minority language in kindergarten defined?
In this report, children who speak a minority language are defined as children who have a first language other than Norwegian, Sami, Swedish, Danish or English. There are no available statistics about kindergarten attendance that make it possible to distinguish between immigrant children, children born in Norway to immigrant parents and children without immigrant backgrounds.

The proportion of children with a minority language background in the figure refers to the number of children with a minority language background in kindergarten, divided by the total number of children with immigrant backgrounds. The proportion of children with a non-minority language background refers to the number of children with a non-minority language background in kindergarten, divided by the total number of children who do not have an immigrant background.

Figure 3.1. Kindergarten attendance, children aged 1–5, broken down by language background. 2015–2024. Percentage (IMDi 2025; Statistics Norway, 2025af).



When broken down by age, the proportion who attend kindergarten is lowest among one and two-year-olds who speak a minority language (IMDi, 2025). At the same time, we see the highest increase in kindergarten participation among the youngest children. For one-year olds who speak a minority language, this share increased from 40 per cent in 2015 to 66 per cent in 2024. Among children who do not speak a minority language, 89 per cent of one-year olds attend kindergarten. From the time they turn three years of age, 95 per cent of children who speak a minority language and more or less every child who does not speak a minority language attend kindergarten (IMDi, 2025). Norway is among the OECD countries with the highest kindergarten attendance both among the immigrant population and the rest of the population (OECD/EU 2023; Van Lancker and Pavolini, 2023).

Research has identified several possible reasons for lower kindergarten attendance among children with immigrant backgrounds (Bove and Sharmahd, 2020; Van Lancker and Pavolini, 2023). The financial situation and level of education of parents may be reasons for some of the differences in kindergarten attendance (Drange and Telle, 2015; Van Lancker and Pavolini, 2023). More conservative gender norms may also partially explain the differences in kindergarten use between families with and without immigrant backgrounds (Seibel and Hedegaard, 2017; Van Lancker and Pavolini, 2023). Other explanations are that kindergarten is an institution that some immigrant groups have had less knowledge of. Access to information, language barriers and different and unknown cultural codes can thereby also contribute towards explaining differences in attendance rates (Lund 2022; Sønsthagen, 2020). At the same time, research points out that kindergarten attendance is higher among families who have been granted citizenship and who have a longer period of residence (Van Lancker and Pavolini, 2023).

Results in primary and lower secondary school

3.2 Differences in primary and lower secondary school results

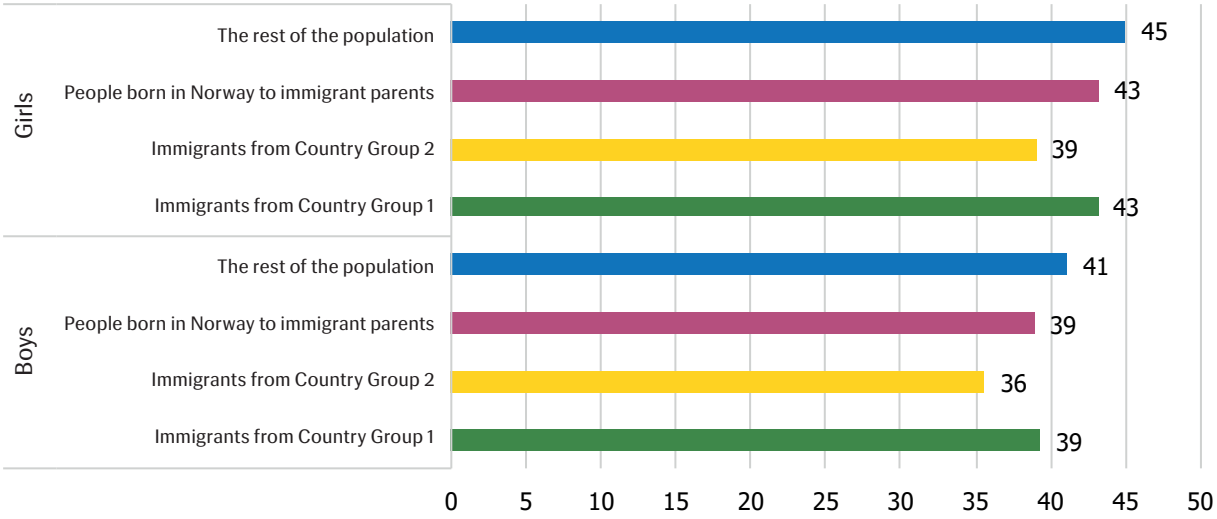
What is the difference between primary and lower secondary school points and grades?

Grades are assessments of student performance in some subjects on a scale of 1 to 6. Primary and lower secondary school points are calculated by adding together all the final grades on the diploma (final assessment and exam grades), and dividing this by the number of grades. The average is then multiplied by 10. Primary and lower secondary school points provide an overall picture of how a student is performing at school and form the basis for admission to upper secondary school.

Primary and lower secondary school points are used as an indicator of results achieved from primary and secondary education and formal qualification to upper secondary school. The grades achieved in primary and lower secondary school have a positive correlation with completion of upper secondary education (Perlic, Stolpe Foss and Moafi, 2020).

There are systematic differences in average primary and lower secondary school points for children with different immigrant backgrounds. On average, immigrants have lower grades on completion of compulsory primary and lower secondary schooling than the rest of the population. In 2024, the difference was just over 5 points, i.e. a difference of close to half a grade. There are also significant differences in grade levels achieved within the immigrant population and, on average, boys who have immigrated from countries in Africa, Latin America, Oceania except for Australia and New Zealand, and Europe outside the EU/EEA have the lowest grade levels (Statistics Norway, 2024i). Similar differences are also found when looking at results from national tests in English, reading and arithmetic. It is particularly children who have immigrated from countries in Africa, Latin America, Oceania except for Australia and New Zealand, and Europe outside the EU/EEA that achieve lower scores on all three of the tests than students from the rest of the population (Statistics Norway, 2024j). If we look at the developments over time, the reading skills of fifth graders dropped from 2022 and 2023 to 2024. This is particularly the case for students with immigrant backgrounds (Kool, 2024).

Figure 3.2. Primary and lower secondary school points, by immigrant category and gender. 2024 (Statistics Norway, 2024).



Primary and lower secondary school results correlate with the socioeconomic background of the students. On average, students who have parents with a lower level of education or who live in a low-income household achieve poorer grades than students with highly educated parents or parents with high incomes (Ekren and Arnesen, 2022). This is the case for students both with and without immigrant backgrounds. If socioeconomic characteristics are taken into account, the differences between students in different immigrant categories are significantly reduced (Statistics Norway, 2024i).

Upper secondary school completion rate

3.3 Four out of ten immigrant boys do not complete upper secondary school

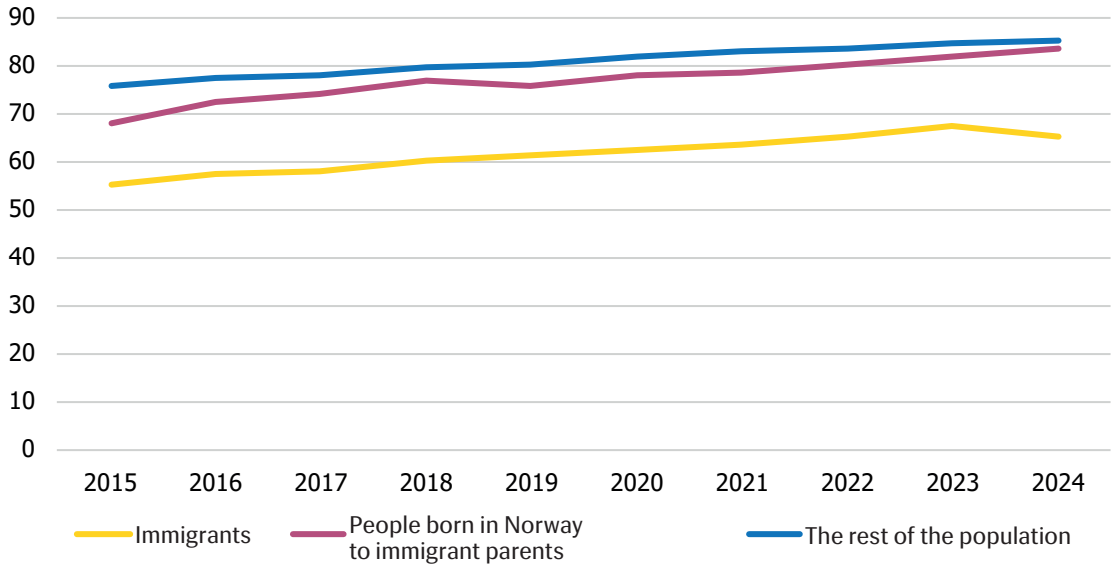
Young people with immigrant backgrounds completing or failing to complete upper secondary school can have a major impact on their future participation in the workforce and integration into society. Dropping out of upper secondary school is an important risk factor for exclusion among young people in Norway. Young people who do not complete upper secondary school are seven times more likely to end up outside of work and education than their peers (OECD, 2018).

The proportion of immigrants, people born in Norway to immigrant parents and the rest of the population that complete upper secondary school in the five or six-year period after starting upper secondary school increased in the period from 2015-2024. During this entire period, the completion rate among immigrants was at a lower level than among people born in Norway to immigrant parents and the rest of the population, and was 65 per cent in 2024 compared to 84 per cent, and 85 per cent, respectively.

How are upper secondary school completion rates measured?

To measure upper secondary school completion rates, Statistics Norway looks at the completion status for pupils at a particular point in time after they started upper secondary school. Pupils who started in one of the general studies programmes, where the stipulated time to completion is three years, are followed for five years in the statistics. Pupils who started one of the vocational programmes, where the stipulated time to completion generally is four years, are followed for six years from their start date.

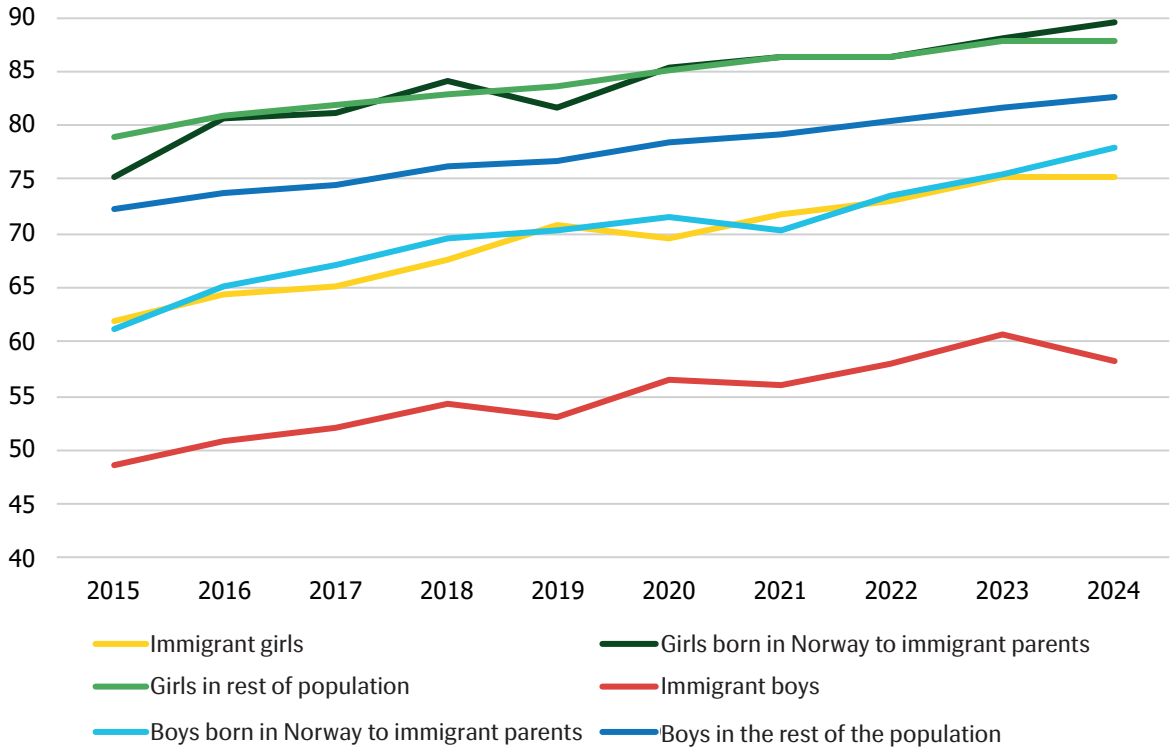
Figure 3.3. Share of pupils who have completed upper secondary education or training within five/six years after starting school, by immigrant category, 2015-2024. Percentage. (Statistics Norway. 2025ap)



For immigrants, people born in Norway to immigrant parents and the rest of the population, the completion rate is generally lower among boys than among girls. This proportion is lowest for immigrant boys (Figure 3.4). In 2024, 58 per cent of immigrant boys completed upper secondary school within five or six years, compared to 49 per cent in 2015. The corresponding share among boys in the rest of the population was 83 per cent in 2024 and 72 per cent in 2015.

There are smaller differences between girls with and without immigrant backgrounds than between boys with and without immigrant backgrounds. Immigrant girls also complete upper secondary school to a greater extent than immigrant boys (75 per cent versus 58 per cent in 2024) and almost in line with Norwegian-born boys with immigrant parents. Norwegian-born girls with immigrant parents have the highest completion rate among all upper secondary school students. In 2024, this group had a slightly higher completion rate (89 per cent) than girls without an immigrant background (88 per cent) (Statistics Norway, 2025ap).

Figure 3.4. Share of pupils who have completed upper secondary education or training within five/six years, by gender and immigrant category 2015–2024. Percentage. (Statistics Norway. 2025ap)



In addition to gender, there appears to be a positive correlation between the rate of completion and period of residence in Norway (Kalcic and Jiaying, 2023). Among students who had been living in Norway for three to five years when they started upper secondary school in 2018, 57 per cent had completed this in 2024. The corresponding share for students with a period of residence of ten or more years was 77 per cent in 2024 (Statistics Norway, 2025aq). There is also a positive correlation between completion rates and period of residence when we divide students by gender.

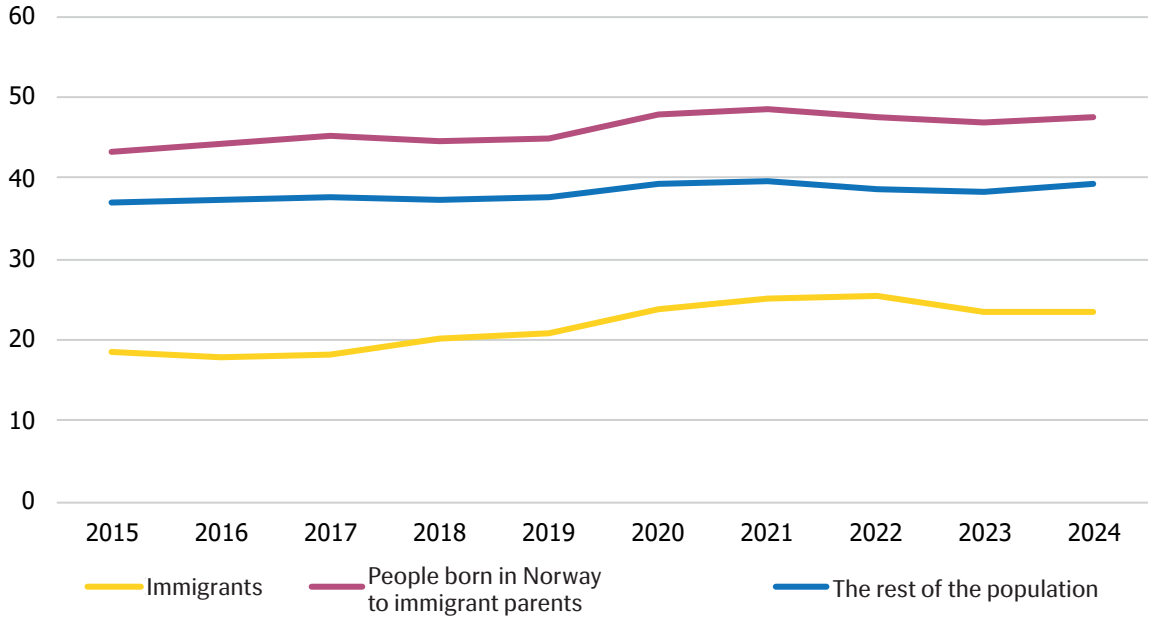
We also find differences when this is broken down according to educational programme. Immigrants have a lower completion rate than people born in Norway to immigrant parents and the rest of the population, and this includes both those who choose vocational programmes, and those who take general studies programmes. In 2024, 56 per cent of immigrants completed their vocational programmes. Among people born in Norway to immigrant parents the completion rate was 70 per cent, while the figure was 75 per cent for the rest of the population. When looking at those who attended a general studies programme, we see respective completion rates of 81, 89 and 93 per cent in 2024 (Statistics Norway, 2025ap). A slight majority of immigrants apply for vocational education programmes (54 per cent), while general studies programmes are most prevalent among people born in Norway to immigrant parents (66 per cent). However, since 2015, we have seen a slight increase among immigrants applying for general studies programmes and among people born in Norway to immigrant parents applying for vocational pathways (Statistics Norway, 2025as).

Higher education participation and completion rates

3.4 Nearly half of people born in Norway to immigrant parents enrol in higher education

The proportion of people aged 19–24 who enrol in higher education has increased steadily since 2015, both among young people with immigrant backgrounds and in the rest of the population. People born in Norway to immigrant parents stand out by virtue of the fact that 48 per cent were enrolled in higher education in 2024. The corresponding figures for immigrants and the rest of the population were significantly lower at 24 and 39 per cent respectively (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5. Proportion of students aged 19-24 in higher education in Norway, as a percentage of registered cohort, by immigrant category. 2015–2024. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025o).

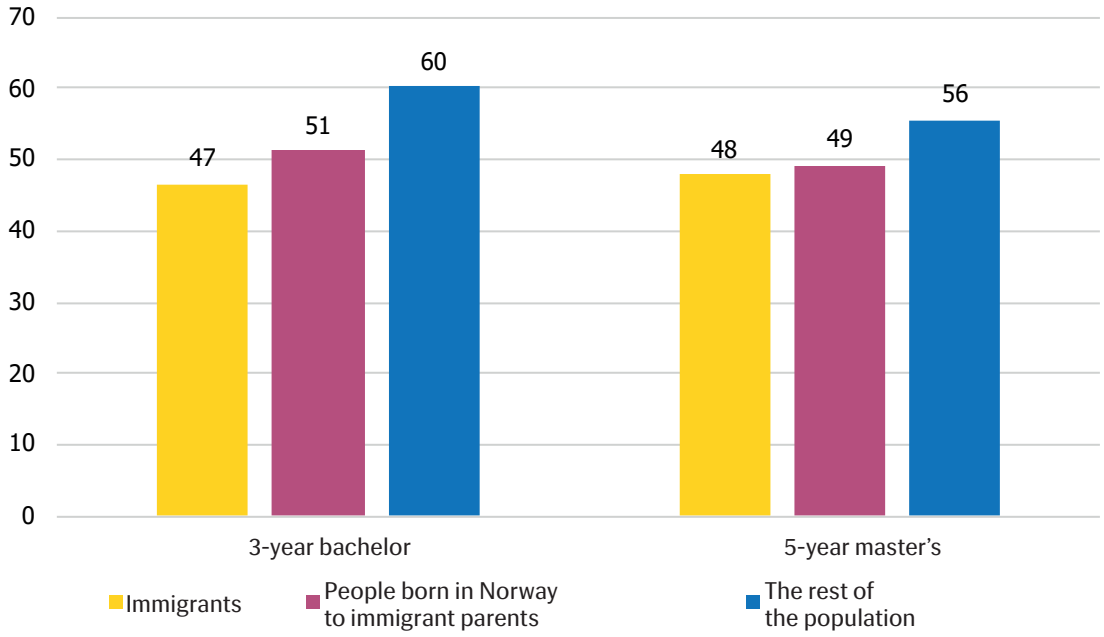


People born in Norway to immigrant parents are overrepresented in higher education (ISF, 2019). However, there are major differences between people born in Norway to immigrant parents based on their parents' countries of origin, both in terms of commenced and completed higher education. People born in Norway to immigrant parents from India, China, Sri Lanka or Vietnam are particularly likely to pursue higher education. A lower proportion of people born in Norway to immigrant parents from Turkey, Chile, Iraq, Somalia and Morocco enrol in higher education (Kirkeberg et al., 2019; Kirkeberg, Dzamarija and Dystland 2024). There are also differences between women and men with parents that have the same country of origin, and the overall pattern among both people born in Norway with and without and immigrant parents is that women pursue higher education more than men. Among people born in Norway to immigrant parents from Somalia, 41 per cent of women are enrolled in higher education, compared to 26 per cent of men (Kirkeberg et al., 2019). In terms of educational attainment, 58 per cent of people born in Norway to immigrant parents aged 30 to 34 have higher education, compared to 54 per cent in the rest of the population (Statistics Norway, 2025r).

Several studies have examined why people born in Norway to immigrant parents are overrepresented in higher education and often take more prestigious education, even when they have more difficult starting points than people without immigrant backgrounds (Borgen and Hermansen 2023; Friberg 2019; Kindt 2017, 2018; Leirvik 2016; Ljunggren and Orupabo 2020; Orupabo, Drange and Abrahamsen 2020). These explanations indicate that there is not only encouragement and support from family, but also explicit expectations regarding children's educational choices that are based on the parents' perception of higher education as being the only "correct" choice. It may also be about stronger family orientation, and that the children feel they owe it to their parents to work hard to realise the opportunities they have been given. However, many also state that their educational choices are less about pressure, and more about interests and self-realisation. A final interpretation is that the high level of ambition among people born in Norway to immigrant parents is also a means of achieving recognition and counteracting low expectations that the majority population may have of them.

Students with immigrant backgrounds have lower higher education completion rates than the rest of the population (Fazli, 2024). 47 per cent of immigrants who start a three-year bachelor's programme complete their bachelor's degree at the stipulated time. As the figure below shows, the equivalent share for the rest of the population is 60 per cent. For five-year master's programmes, the completion rate is also the lowest among immigrants and the highest in the rest of the population.

Figure 3.6. Number of students who completed their education at the stipulated time, by type of educational programme and immigrant category. 2017–2024. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025at, 2025au).



Like upper secondary school, the share that completes bachelor's and master's degrees is generally higher for women than for men. For immigrants, the completion rate also varies somewhat in line with the reason for immigration. Those who have immigrated to study or work are most likely to complete their degree at the stipulated time. Refugees and reunified family members who have started a programme in higher education complete their programme at lower rates than other immigrants (Statistics Norway, 2025av).

Participation in the Introduction Programme (introduksjonsprogrammet)

3.5 Record-high participation in the Introduction Programme

A key objective of integration policy is for immigrants to participate more in the labour market and civil society (Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, 2024). To achieve this, it is crucial that recently arrived immigrants and refugees are offered and complete qualification initiatives that can help give them stable ties to the labour market. The purpose of these qualification initiatives is to close the gap between the skills immigrants and refugees bring from their home countries and the skills the Norwegian labour market requires. Qualification services such as the Introduction Programme, Norwegian language and social studies training and other training, follow-up and work-oriented measures are important in this context.

Approximately 34,500 people participated in the Introduction Programme in 2024. There were approximately 2,000 more participants than the previous year, and almost twice as many as in 2022, when 17,900 were registered as participants (Statistics Norway, 2025s). Between 2008 and 2014, there was an even gender distribution of participants in the programme. From 2015 to 2019, the majority of programme participants were men. The majority of the participants have been women since 2020. In 2023, women made up two-thirds of the participants in the programme. In 2024, 56 per cent of the participants were women (Statistics Norway, 2025s). The age composition among participants has also changed slightly over the past ten years, with an increasing proportion of older participants aged 36 45 and among those aged 46 and over (Statistics Norway, 2025s).

Who participates in the Introduction Programme?

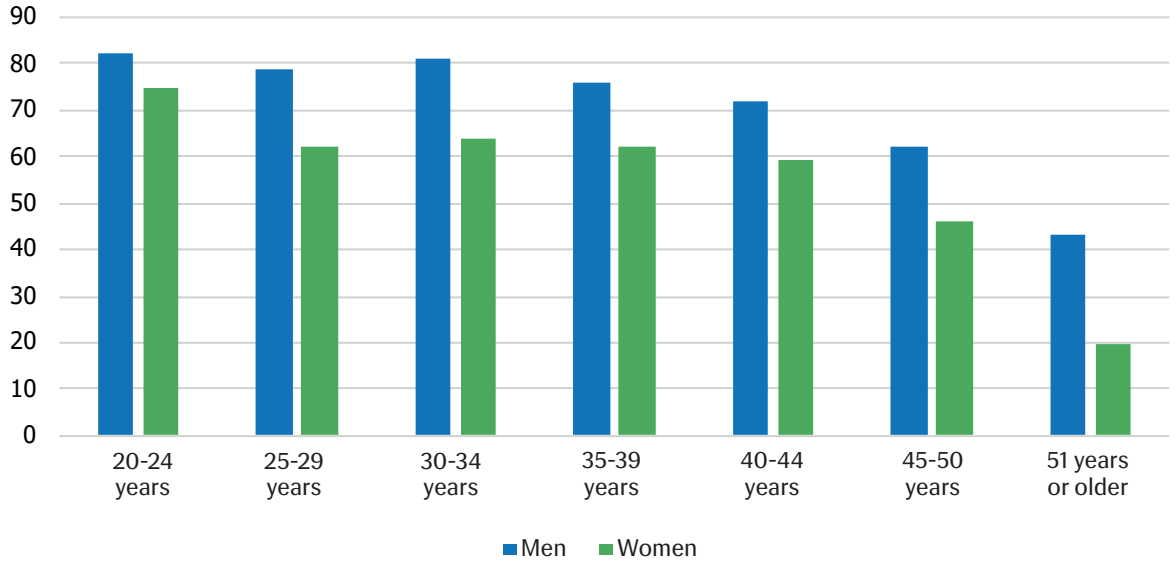
The Introduction Programme is a training programme designed to prepare refugees for participation in the Norwegian labour market and civil society. All refugees between the ages of 18 and 55 who arrive in Norway will participate in the Introduction Programme. The same applies to family members who arrive in the country later. Displaced persons from Ukraine with collective protection have the right, but not the obligation, to participate in the Introduction Programme.

Participants in the Introduction Programme are given the opportunity to learn Norwegian and gain basic insights into Norwegian civil society. Participants also receive training in and knowledge about the Norwegian labour market, and education if they so require. The aim is that the participants will be able to commence employment or education once they have completed the programme (IMDi, 2023).

In total, 65 per cent of the people who completed the Introduction Programme in 2022 were working or studying one year later. This is a higher percentage than among those who completed the programme between 2016 and 2021 (61-63 per cent). The only exception was 2019 (66 per cent).

The composition of the participant group correlates with results after the completion of the Introduction Programme, because the proportion that transitions to work or education varies significantly with gender and age. Figure 3.7 illustrates this. The proportion that transitioned to work or education one year after completing the programme is highest among the youngest participants and decreases with age for both men and women.

Figure 3.7. Share in work or education one year after completing the Introduction Programme, by gender and age. 2023. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025x).



There is still a significantly higher proportion of men who transition to work or education one year after completing the Introduction programme. Among men who completed the programme in 2023, 73 per cent were working or studying the following year, compared to 59 per cent of women. The transition to work or education from 2022 to 2023 fell by two percentage points for men and increased by one percentage point for women. With the exception of the oldest cohort, there were fewer differences between men and women in 2023 than in 2022 in all age cohorts. Since 2018 there has been a higher percentage increase in the proportion of women who are employed or studying than for men, i.e. the gender disparities when concerning status in the labour market one year after completion of the Introduction Programme have decreased (Statistics Norway, 2025y).

Recent research shows that, on average, the Introduction Programme contributes to positive integration outcomes when concerning employment and pay in the short term. However, there is no corresponding effect with regard to political or social integration outcomes (Ferwerda and Finseraas, 2024). If we break this down according to gender, we see that female refugees and reunified family members who have participated in the Introduction Programme are somewhat more likely to find employment in both the short and long term than those who have not participated. However, we do not see better wage development among women who participate in the Introduction Programme when compared with those who have not participated (Ugreninov and Turner, 2023).

Norwegian language test results

3.6 Better Norwegian language test results among women

Norwegian language skills are an important prerequisite for immigrants being able to participate in different arenas in Norwegian society. Among other things, the research literature shows a positive correlation between immigrants' language skills and health, income and employment (Chiswick and Miller, 2015; Djuve et al., 2017; Kindt and Bjørnset, 2023; Kjøllesdal, Gerwing and Indseth, 2023; Lunde and Lysen, 2022).

Pursuant to the Norwegian Integration Act, immigrants aged 18 to 67 with a residence permit that provides grounds for a permanent residence permit have a right and obligation to participate in Norwegian language training and social studies (Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, 2021). Examples of groups included under the scheme are refugees, their reunified family members and reunified family members of Norwegian citizens. In other words, the target group for Norwegian language training is larger than the target group for the Introduction Programme. In 2024, just under 58,000 people from 130 countries participated in Norwegian language training and social studies classes – making this the highest ever number of participants (Lunde, 2025). The increase in the number of participants was largely due to the arrival of refugees from Ukraine. Six out of ten participants last year were Ukrainians. There are still also many participants from Syria (5,100 in 2024) (Lunde, 2025).

47,500 Norwegian language tests were taken in 2024[1] (Lunde, 2025). The proportion of women among those who take Norwegian language tests has increased significantly over the past few years in line with a higher proportion of women among participants in the Introduction Programme. Last year, two-thirds of Norwegian language tests were taken by women. Just under half of last year's candidates were under the age of 36.

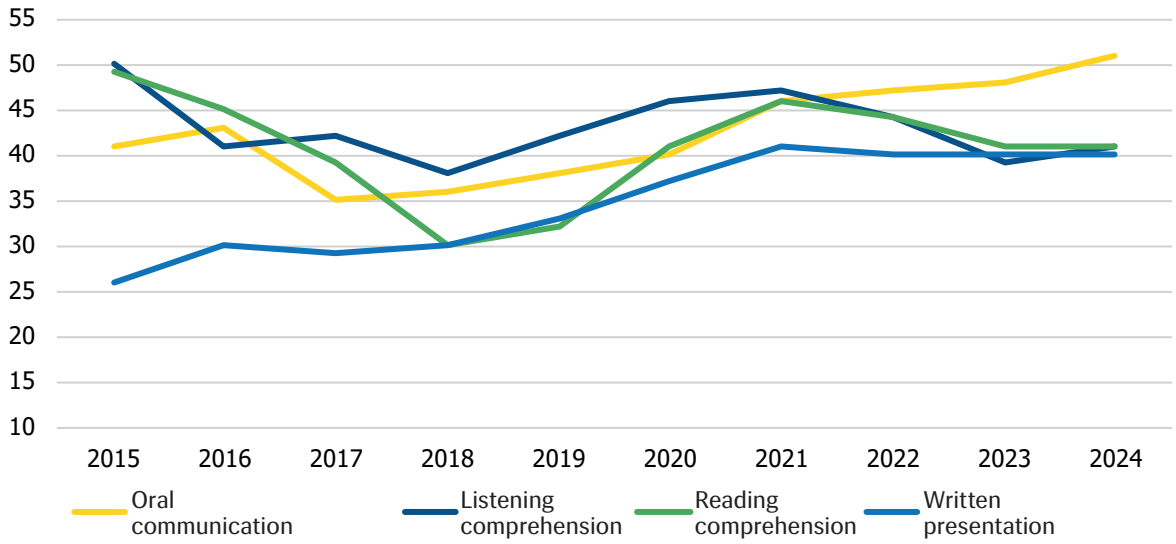
How is the proficiency level measured after the Norwegian language test is taken?
The Norwegian language test consists of four segments in listening comprehension, reading comprehension, written presentation and oral communication. It is possible for a person to take the test segments multiple times during a calendar year. The results of the Norwegian language test are evaluated based on a framework that divides language skills into three overall levels: basic user (A), independent user (B) and advanced user (C). Each of these levels consists of two sub-levels (A1 and A2, B1 and B2, C1 and C2).

At the same time, there has been an increasing proportion in older age groups among those taking the tests (Statistics Norway, 2025ac).

1 The figure applies to the target group who have a right and obligation to receive training in Norwegian and social studies, i.e. anyone who has the right and obligation to participate in the Introduction Programme, as well as others who have a residence permit that provides grounds for a permanent residence permit. The latter are primarily people who have a residence permit through family reunification.

4 out of 10 of those who completed training in 2024 achieved the grade of independent user level (B1 or better) in the test segments of listening comprehension, reading comprehension and written presentation, while 5 out of 10 achieved an independent user level in the test segment of oral communication. The results from the test segments over the past ten years indicate that immigrants have had somewhat greater difficulties acquiring writing skills, while they have generally had better results on tests in oral communication and listening comprehension.

Figure 3.8. Share of Norwegian language tests achieving proficiency level B1 or higher, by test segment. 2015–2024. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025ac).

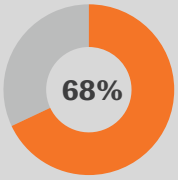


Participants receiving Norwegian language training who have completed higher education more often achieve proficiency level B1 or higher. Norwegian test results also vary according to gender and age. 46 per cent of the tests completed by women in 2024 were graded at independent user (B1 or higher) compared to 39 per cent of the tests completed by men. There is a higher proportion of women than men who have taken tests at independent user level or better for all test segments. The greatest difference can be seen in writing, with 44 per cent of women and 32 per cent of men taking tests at an independent user level or better. The cohort aged 26-35 has the largest share of tests graded at level B1 or better, at 51 per cent. Thereafter, the share of tests at this level declines with age (Statistics Norway, 2025ac).

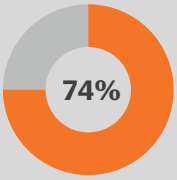
In 2024, about 8,600 tests on social studies were also taken. 94 per cent of those who sat the tests passed, and the proportion of those who passed was the same for women and men. The proportion of those who passed tests increased by 14 percentage points compared to 2015 (Statistics Norway, 2025ai).

Work

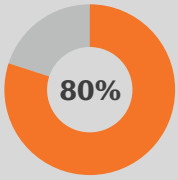
Employed



immigrants



people born in Norway to immigrant parents



rest of the population

Smaller differences since 2015

Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET)

23% of young immigrants are not in work and education

7% of young people in the rest of the population

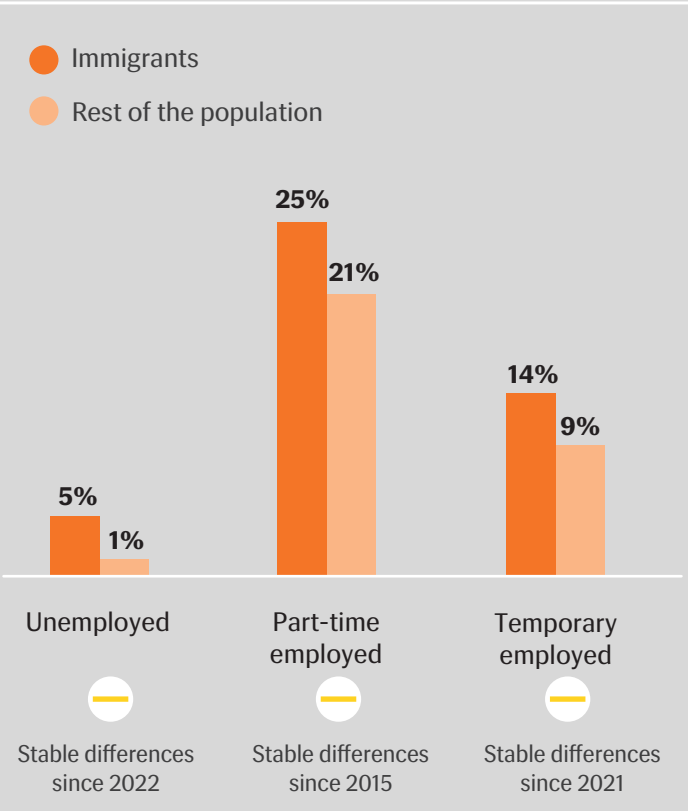
Smaller differences since 2015

Overqualified

38% of immigrants

14% in the rest of the population

Stable differences since 2015



Sources: Sysselsetting blant innvandrere, Statistics Norway (2025), Helt ledige, NAV (2025), Sysselsetting blant innvandrere, Statistics Norway (2024)

4. Work

An overarching goal of integration policy is for more immigrants to participate in the labour market. Work gives one greater financial independence, self-realisation, and social networks. Workforce participation is therefore often considered the most important single indicator of integration (OECD/EU, 2018). A high employment rate is also crucial for the welfare state, for reducing poverty, for evening out social disparities and for achieving gender equality (Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, 2024).

Immigrants are a complex group, and participation in the labour market varies in terms of country of origin, reason for immigration, period of residence, gender, age and existing skills. Women with refugee backgrounds in particular have low employment rates. The working conditions of many immigrants are typified by temporary and involuntary part-time employment and low incomes. Therefore, a key objective in integration policy is to contribute to more immigrants having a stable connection to the labour market (Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, 2024).

Employment rate – immigrants

4.1 Employment rate is lowest for recently arrived refugees

On average, immigrants have lower employment rates than the rest of the population. In 2024, 68 per cent of immigrants were employed, compared to 80 per cent in the rest of the population (Olsen and Jakobsen, 2025). At the same time, there are significant differences between groups in terms of reason for immigration, period of residence and gender.

How is the employment rate defined?
A person is considered employed if the person performed income-generating work of at least one hour in duration during the reference week, or has such work, but was temporarily absent due to illness, holiday, paid leave or similar (Register-based Employment Statistics, Statistics Norway).

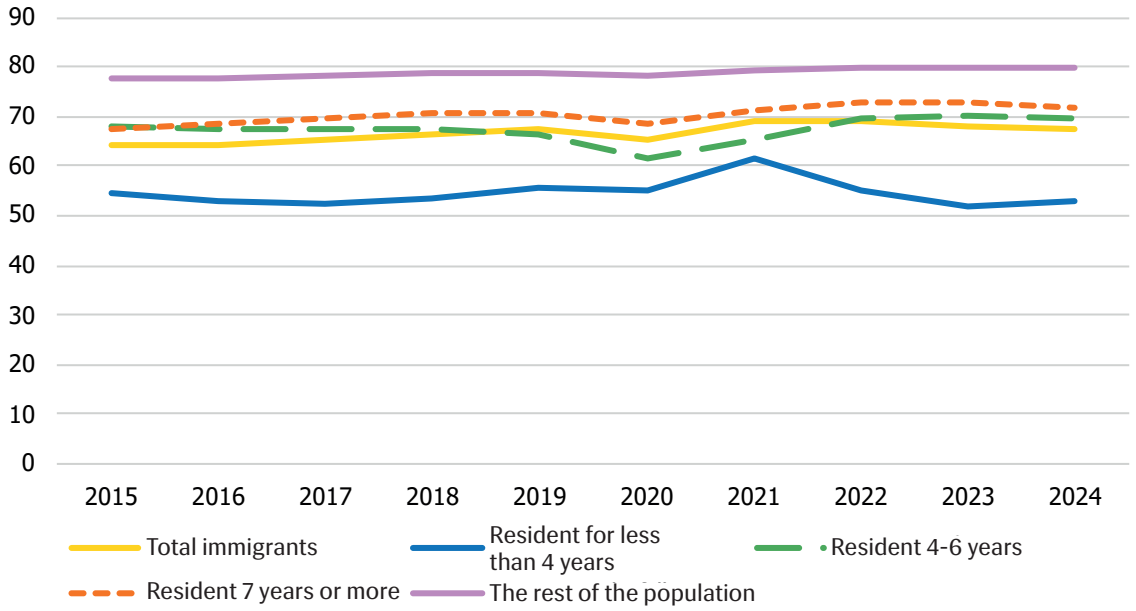
The employment rate for labour immigrants is at the same level as the rest of the population and, unlike for other immigrants, period of residence does not influence this percentage (Statistics Norway, 2024g). It often takes longer for refugees and their reunited family members to enter the workforce. Most people in this group participate in the Introduction Programme during the first years, and it can take time to acquire relevant skills.

Figure 4.1 shows the development in the employment rate for immigrants and the rest of the population since 2015. These differences were relatively stable until the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Infection control measures in connection with the pandemic had significant consequences for social and economic activities. Some immigrant groups were hit harder than the rest of the population, both through higher rates of infection and hospitalisations and in the labour market (Indseth et al. 2021; NOU 2022).

As a result of the very high numbers of arrivals of Ukrainian refugees, since 2022 we have seen a clear decrease in the employment rate among immigrants with a short period of residence in Norway. The proportion of people with a period of residence of less than four years who are employed fell from 62 per cent in 2021 to 53 per cent in 2024 (Statistics Norway, 2025ae).

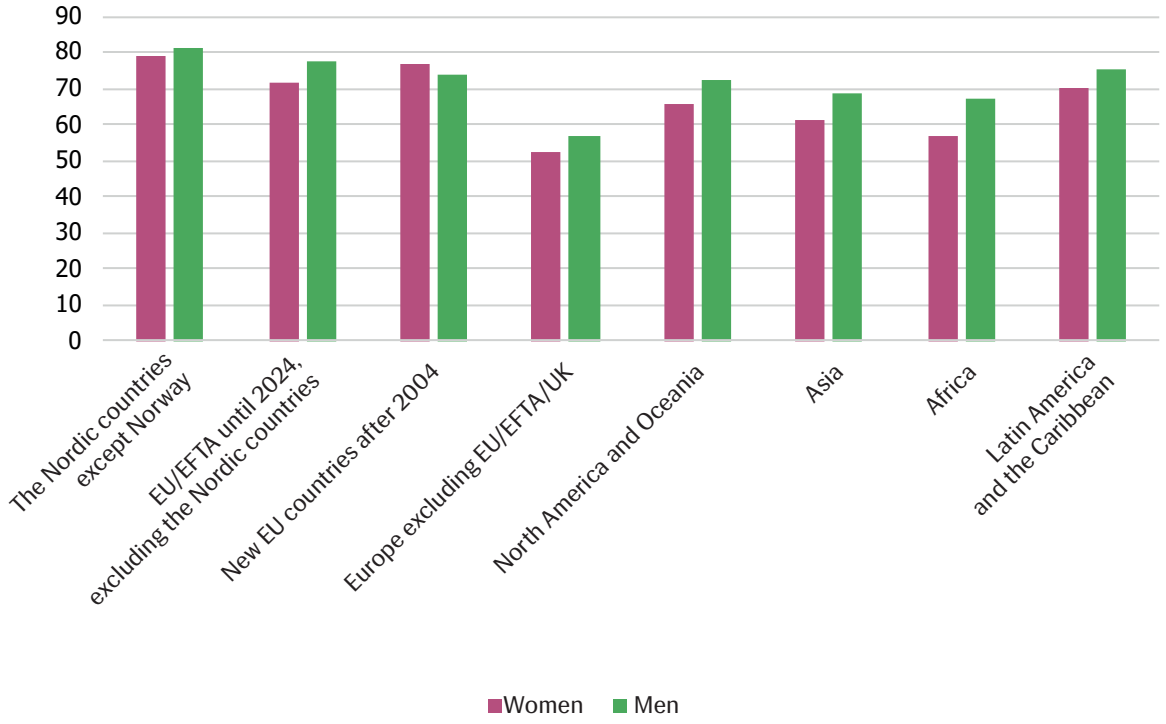
Despite this decline, immigrants averaged slightly higher levels of employment in 2024 than in 2015,and the difference in the total proportion of people employed between immigrants and the rest of the population decreased during this period. Immigrants from Africa had the highest growth in the proportion of people employed, from 44 per cent in 2015 to 62 per cent in 2024. However, for immigrants from countries outside the EU/EFTA, the same period saw a decrease in the proportion of employed persons: from 65 per cent in 2015 to 54 per cent in 2024 (Statistics Norway, 2025ae). This decrease is most probably due to this group largely consisting of Ukrainians with a relatively short period of residence.

Figure 4.1. Employment rate, by period of residence and immigrant background. Ages 20-66. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025ae, 2025ad).



A larger proportion of immigrant men are employed than immigrant women. In 2024, 71 per cent of immigrant men and 65 per cent of immigrant women were registered as employed (Statistics Norway, 2025ae). As shown in Figure 4.2, low employment rates can particularly be found among immigrant women from countries in Asia and Africa and European countries except for the EU, EFTA and United Kingdom. The gender differences in employment are greatest among recently arrived immigrants, i.e. those who have lived in Norway for less than four years. These differences level out in proportion to the period of residence in Norway.

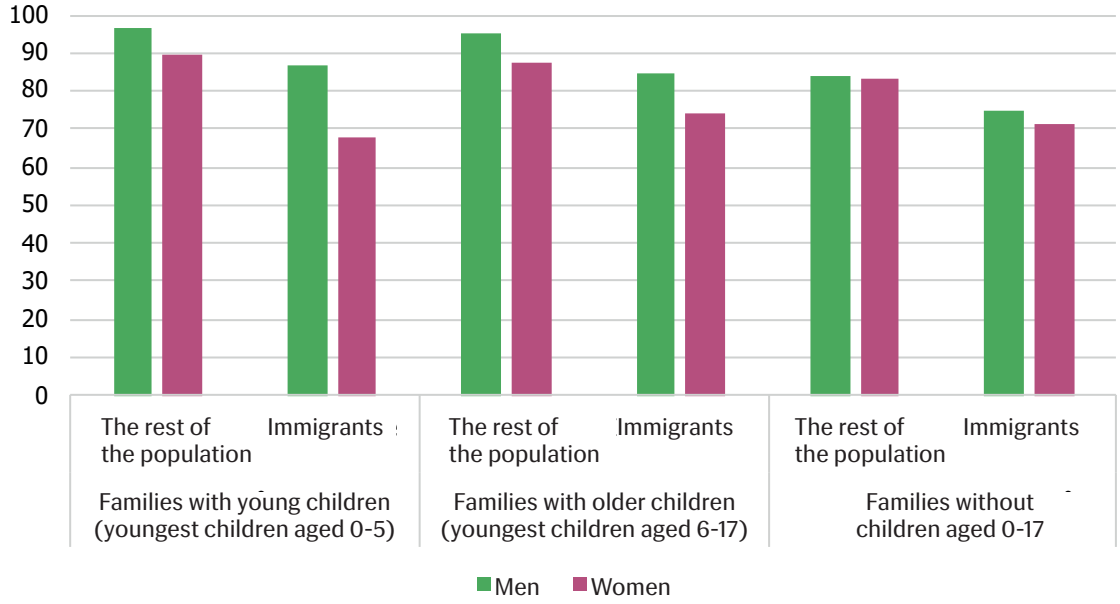
Figure 4.2. Employed immigrants by country of origin and gender. Ages 20-66 2024. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025ad).



Lower labour market participation among immigrant women may be due to them having few formal qualifications, poor Norwegian language skills, temporary positions, poor health, caregiving duties, complementary gender roles and discrimination (Kanas and Müller, 2021; Khoudja and Fleischmann, 2015; Tallis, 2024; Umblijs, 2020).

Starting a family has a more negative effect on the connection immigrant women have to the labour market than for women without immigrant backgrounds (Lund, 2025). Figure 4.3 compares the proportions of workforce participation among men and women aged 25-44 in different family phases. Immigrant women in families with young children, i.e. families where the youngest child is under 6 years of age, clearly stand out as having the lowest proportion who either have or are looking for income-generating work (Statistics Norway, 2025al).

Figure 4.3. Proportion of workforce participation by gender, immigration category and family type among people aged 25-44. 2023. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025al).



Employment rate - people born in Norway to immigrant parents

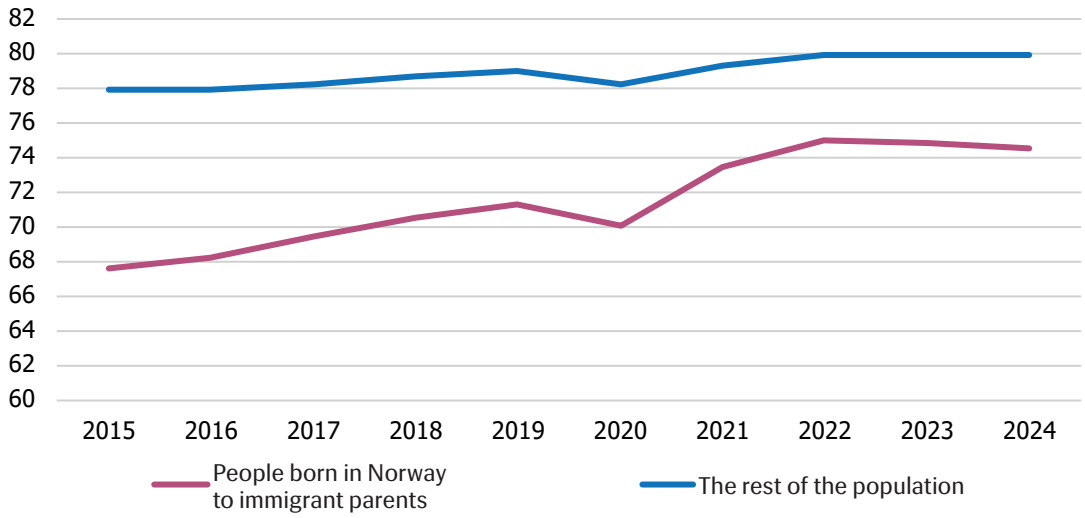
4.2 Small gender differences among people born in Norway to immigrant parents

As shown earlier in the report, most people born in Norway to immigrant parents are relatively young – seven out of ten are under the age of 18. However, it is interesting to look at their connection to the workforce when compared with immigrants and the rest of the population, particularly in light of the relatively large proportion of people born in Norway to immigrant parents who are enrolled in higher education.

Several studies show that, on average, people born in Norway to immigrant parents do better in the labour market than their parents, but worse than the rest of the population. At the same time, significant differences are found within this group, and these are often linked to background factors such as gender, and their parents' country of origin and level of education (Hermansen 2016; Umblijs, 2020).

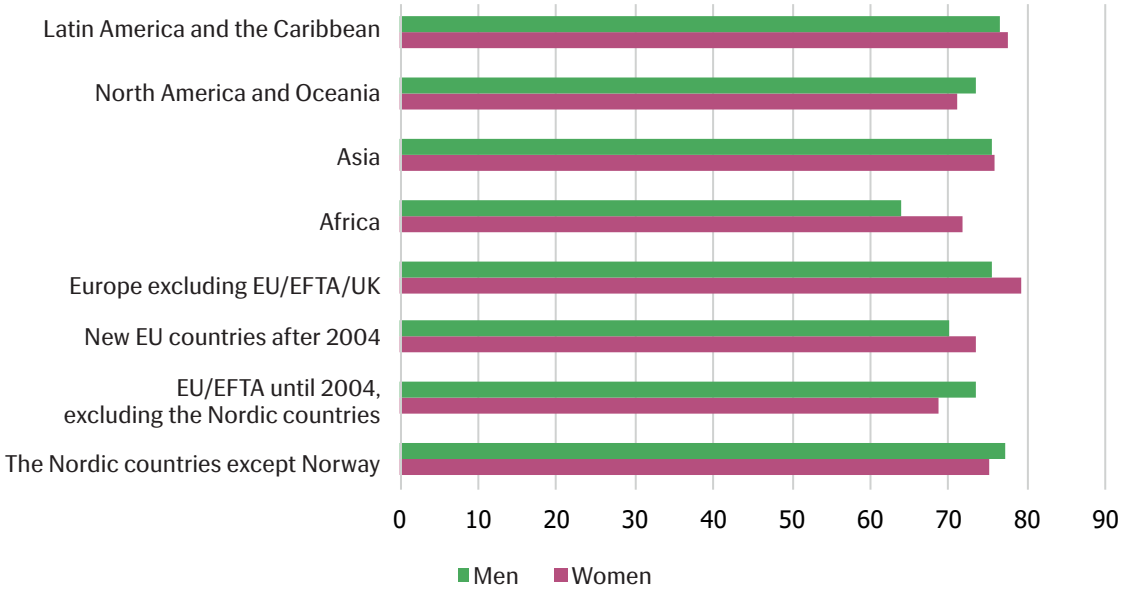
In 2024, 74 per cent of people born in Norway to immigrant parents between the ages of 20 and 66 were employed, compared with 68 per cent of immigrants. Of the population without immigrant backgrounds, 80 per cent were employed (Statistics Norway, 2025ae). As shown in Figure 4.4, the differences in employment rates between people born in Norway to immigrant parents and the rest of the population were marginally higher in 2024 than they were in 2023. However, with the exception of the pandemic year in 2020, the primary trend since 2015 has been a decrease in the differences in the employment rates between these groups (Statistics Norway, 2025ae).

Figure 4.4 Employment rate by immigration background. 2015–2024. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025ae).



We see small gender differences in employment rates among people born in Norway to immigrant parents, and workforce participation is higher among women than among men in this group. In 2024, 74 per cent of men born in Norway to immigrant parents were employed, while the corresponding proportion for women born in Norway to immigrant parents was 75 per cent. When broken down according to the parents' country of origin, the proportion employed was lowest among Norwegian-born men with backgrounds from African countries. Just under two out of three in this group were employed in 2024 (Statistics Norway, 2025ae).

Figure 4.5. Employment rate among people born in Norway to immigrant parents, by gender and the parents' country of origin. 2024. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025ae).



In recent years, multiple studies have examined possible reasons for people born in Norway to immigrant parents having both higher labour market participation and smaller gender

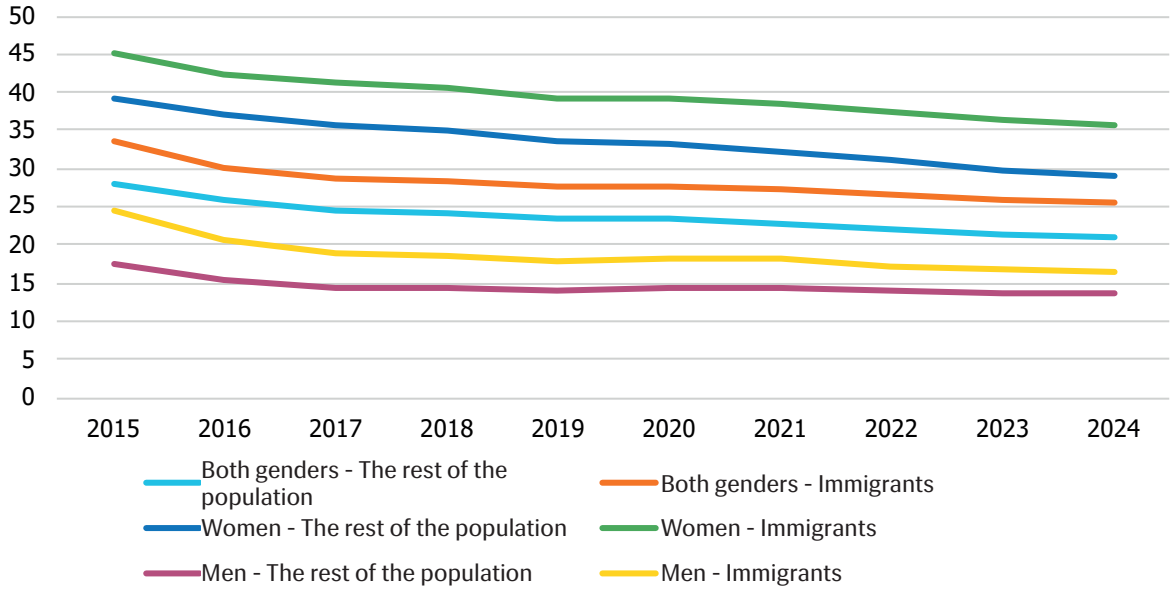
differences in terms of participation than immigrants (Egge-Hoveid and Sandnes, 2015; Hermansen, 2017; Midtbøen and Nadim, 2022; Olsen and Bye, 2023). The high levels of education among both women and men in this group are highlighted as being an important explanation for this. Other factors that may have contributed to evening out the differences in employment rate are the Norwegian unitary school system, which has a high degree of standardization and little variation in quality and learning content between schools, as well as free higher education. In addition, schemes such as paid parental leave and subsidized kindergarten places encourage and enable both men and women to find employment (Kitterød and Nadim, 2020; Midtbøen and Nadim, 2022). Studies also show that people born in Norway to immigrant parents appear more likely than their parents to adapt to Norwegian gender equality norms when concerning work and caring for children (Birkelund et al. 2014; Kirkeberg et al. 2019; Kitterød and Nadim, 2020; Lund, 2024; Nadim and Midtbøen, 2023).

Working hours

4.3 Four of ten immigrant women work part time

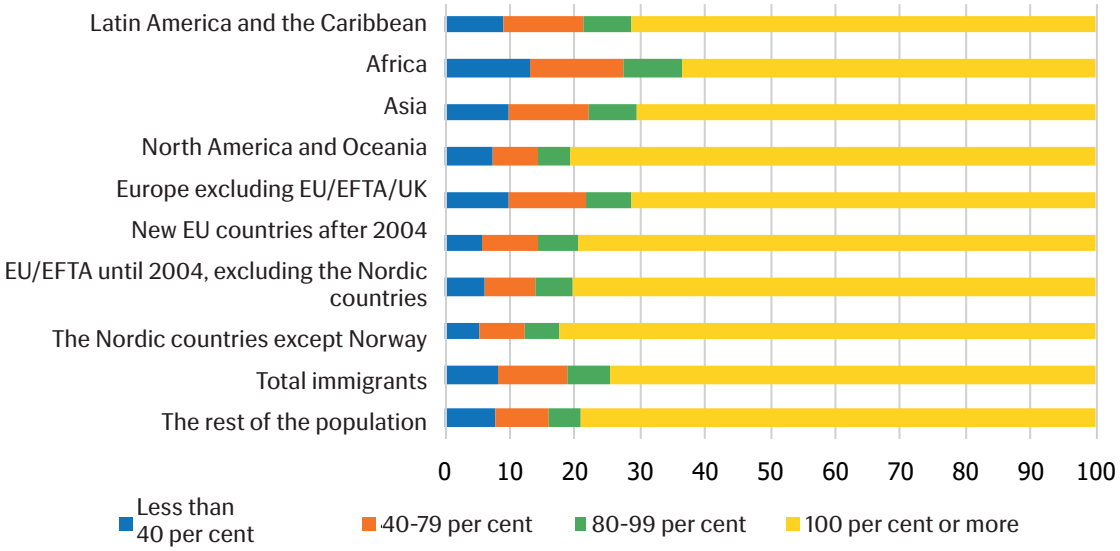
Immigrants work part-time relatively more often than the rest of the population. In 2024, 25 per cent of employed immigrants worked part-time, compared with 21 per cent of the rest of the population. As shown in Figure 4.6, the proportion of part-time employees has decreased both among employed people with and without immigrant backgrounds, and the differences in the proportion of part-time employees between immigrants and the rest of the population have been reduced during this period. In 2015, 34 per cent of immigrants worked part-time, while the corresponding proportion for the rest of the population was 28 per cent (Statistics Norway, 2025ak).

Figure 4.6 Proportion of employed people in part time work by immigrant background. 2015–2024. Percentage



Women are generally overrepresented among part-time employees. In 2024, women had approximately twice the rate of part-time employment compared to men, and this applied to employees both with and without immigrant backgrounds. The highest proportion of part-time employees is found among immigrant women (36 per cent). Among women without an immigrant background, 29 per cent work part-time. Among men, 17 per cent with an immigrant background and 14 per cent with no immigrant background are employed part-time (Statistics Norway, 2025ak).

Figure 4.7. Distribution by percentage of FTE, employed immigrants by country of origin. 2024. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025ak).



As shown in Figure 4.7, the part-time status among immigrants also depends on country of origin. Part-time work is relatively more common among immigrants from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe except EU/EFTA/UK, while immigrants from the Nordic countries, North America and Oceania have a lower rate of part-time work compared to the rest of the population. The differences in the proportion of part-time employees between immigrants from different world regions must be viewed in the context of the types of occupations they have. Immigrants from Africa and Asia are overrepresented in industries in which part-time work is common, such as cleaning and sales and service jobs (Pettersen, 2024).

Figures from the labour force survey show that immigrants more often have involuntary part-time work. More people from the immigrant population than among the rest of the population report that they have to work part-time because they cannot find a full-time job and that they want longer working hours (Lien, 2022).

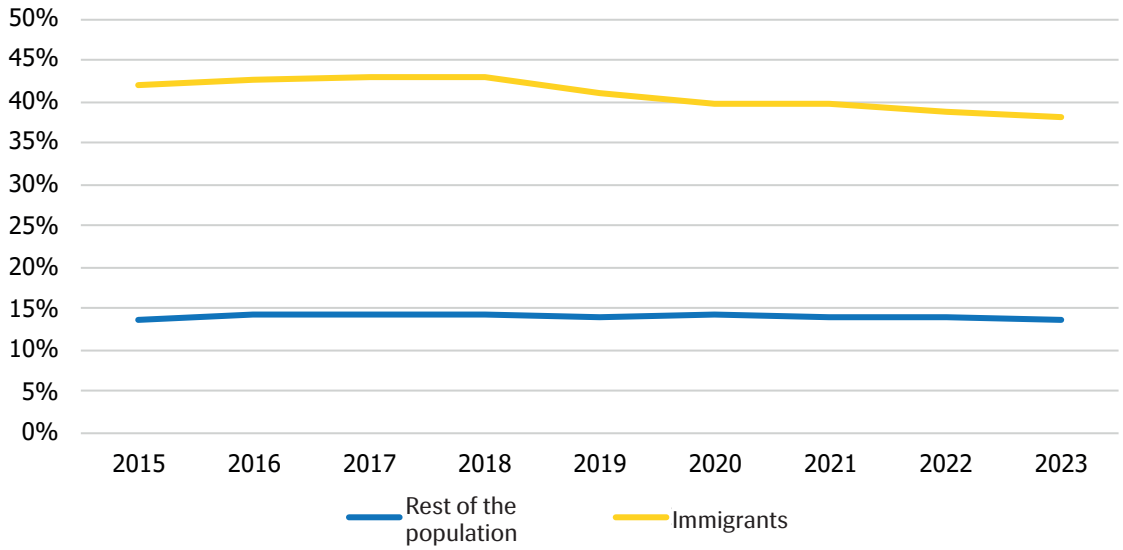
Overqualification

4.4 Immigrants are more often overqualified

Immigrants also have poorer opportunities to use their education and work experience in the workplace than the rest of the population, and they are, to a greater extent, overqualified for the jobs they are employed in. This applies irrespective of country group, but the proportion of overqualified people decreases in line with period of residence (Larsen, Rogne and Birkelund, 2018; Pricila Birgier and Cantalini, 2024).

What is meant by over-qualification?
Formal overqualification refers to people who have completed university college and university education, but who are employed in jobs that do not require these qualifications (Edelmann and Villund, 2022).

Figure 4.8. Overqualified, by immigrant background. 2015–2023. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2024h).



Four out of ten immigrants work in occupations that require lower qualifications than their education would suggest. In the rest of the population, 14 per cent are overqualified for their jobs. These differences have remained fairly stable since 2015 (Statistics Norway, 2024h).

Working environment

4.5 Poorer working environment and more uncertain everyday working life

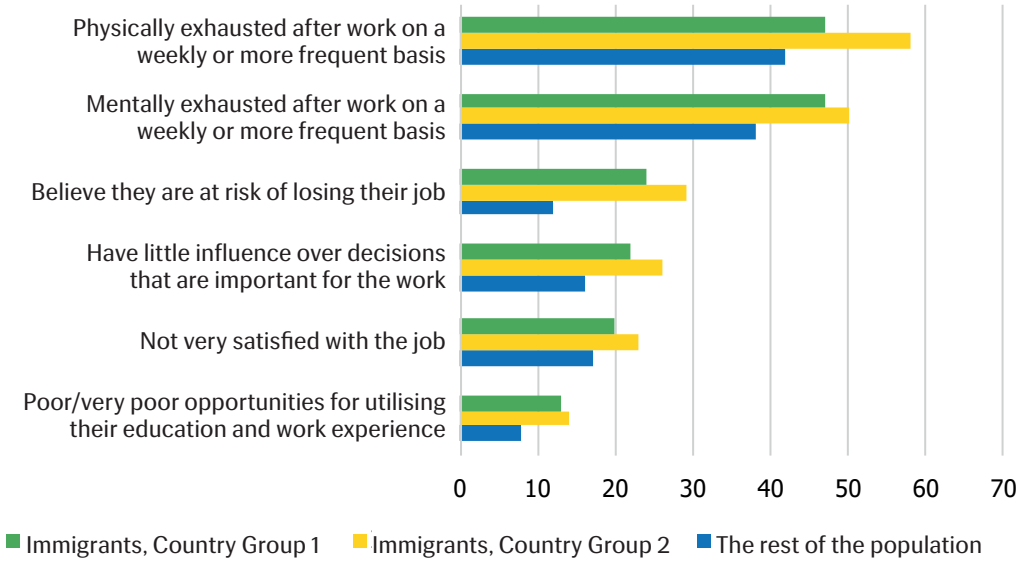
Employment rate and job percentage are important indicators of workforce integration, but they do not tell us much about how immigrants experience their everyday working life, what opportunities and barriers they face, and whether their connection to work is stable and lasting. Other

key aspects that can shed light on the situation of immigrants in the labour market therefore include working conditions, working environment, wage development and career opportunities.

Immigrants are overrepresented in occupations that involve more physically burdensome work tasks, they experience more work-related health problems, and they have a more uncertain connection to the workforce (Statistics Norway, 2023a; Sterud et al., 2018; Vrålstad and Wiggen, 2017; With, 2019). Immigrants also experience several stress factors in the working environment, such as discrimination, harassment, threats due to ethnic background and a lack of social support (Akay and Ahmadi, 2022; Lien, 2022). Workplace injuries are also more prevalent among immigrants (Sterud et al. 2018).

Figures from Statistics Norway's survey of living conditions indicate that immigrants are more often exposed to a poor working environment than the rest of the population. This applies most to immigrants from Country Group 2, of whom over half experience being physically or mentally exhausted after work on a weekly or more frequent basis. Nearly three in ten immigrants in Country Group 2 also experience that they are at risk of losing their job, compared to just over one in ten in the population at large (Statistics Norway, 2023a).

Figure 4.9. Utvalgte arbeidsmiljøindikatorer, etter todelt landbakgrunn. 2022. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2023a).



A 2018 study shows that immigrants are more than twice as likely to lose their jobs (in the private sector) as people without immigrant backgrounds (Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed, 2018). Losing one's job also has particularly negative consequences for immigrants from Country Group 2 in terms of future job prospects and wage development. Researchers have found no clear explanation for this connection, however have noted that limited language skills may have more of an impact on opportunities for finding new work than lack of education or seniority (Bratsberg et al., 2018).

The everyday working lives of immigrants are also typified more by temporary work than the rest of the population. At the end of 2024, 14 per cent of immigrants aged 20-66 were

employed in temporary positions, compared to 9 per cent for the rest of the population. However, the proportion in temporary positions decreases in line with period of residence (Taha, 2023). Furthermore, immigrants from African countries are particularly overrepresented among temporary employees. 21 per cent from this country group worked in temporary positions in 2024 (Statistics Norway, 2025ax). This is due to the fact that many immigrants from Africa work in health and social services – which are among the industries with the largest proportion of temporary positions (Taha, 2023). Nordic immigrants have the lowest share of temporary employees among all immigrants (8 per cent) (Statistics Norway, 2025ax).

There is a great deal to indicate that the differences in employment between immigrants and employees without an immigrant background vary by occupation. There are fewer differences in regulated professions in health, law, finance, education and public administration, and in industries with a high proportion of trade union members. For example, immigrants in professional occupations such as doctor, dentist, nurse and teacher have significantly less risk of being subjected to wage discrimination than immigrants in other occupations (Drange and Helland, 2018). One explanation is that a limited supply of labour in some industries greatly reduces the employer's ability to discriminate. Research suggests that education which leads to a profession in the healthcare sector provides immigrants with labour market protection and thus smaller differences in wages between people with and people without immigrant backgrounds (Drange, 2016). However, not all of the differences in wage development can be explained by occupation. Some wage differences exist between employees with and without immigrant backgrounds who are otherwise equal in terms of a wide range of characteristics, such as education, gender, age and career path. The differences occur within the same industry and occupation, as well as within individual businesses (Fedoryshyn and Falch-Monsen, 2024; Kolsrud et al., 2016). On average, immigrants earn less than the rest of the population in all occupational groups other than academic professions (Statistics Norway, 2025aj).

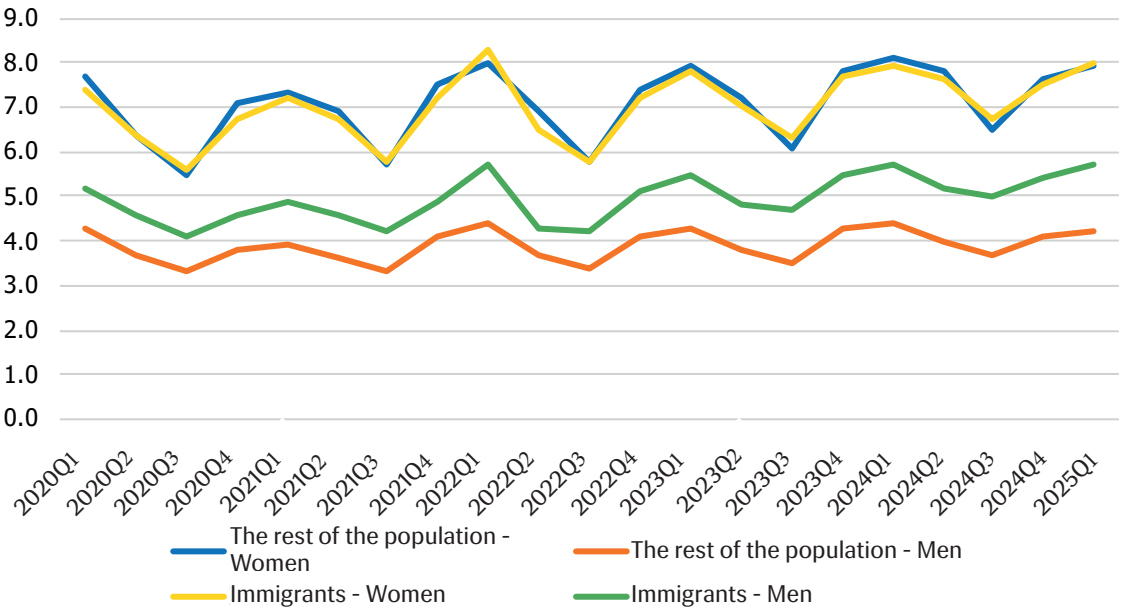
Sick leave

4.6 Sick leave increases more with age among immigrants

Norway has a higher level of sick leave and more widespread long-term sick leave than several other European countries (Køber and Lien, 2025; Ugreninov, 2023). On average, immigrants have slightly higher doctor certified sick leave than the rest of the population. In Q1 2025, 6.7 per cent of immigrants had doctor certified absence from work, compared to 6.1 per cent for the rest of the population (Statistics Norway, 2025ah, 2025ao).

However, the average figures hide a certain amount of variation within the immigrant population. Women both with and without immigrant backgrounds have higher rates of sick leave than men (Statistics Norway, 2025ay). As shown in Figure 4.10, there are small differences in sick leave between women with and without an immigrant background. This means that the differences in sick leave between immigrants and the rest of the population are primarily due to differences in sick leave between men with and without immigrant backgrounds (Statistics Norway, 2025ay).

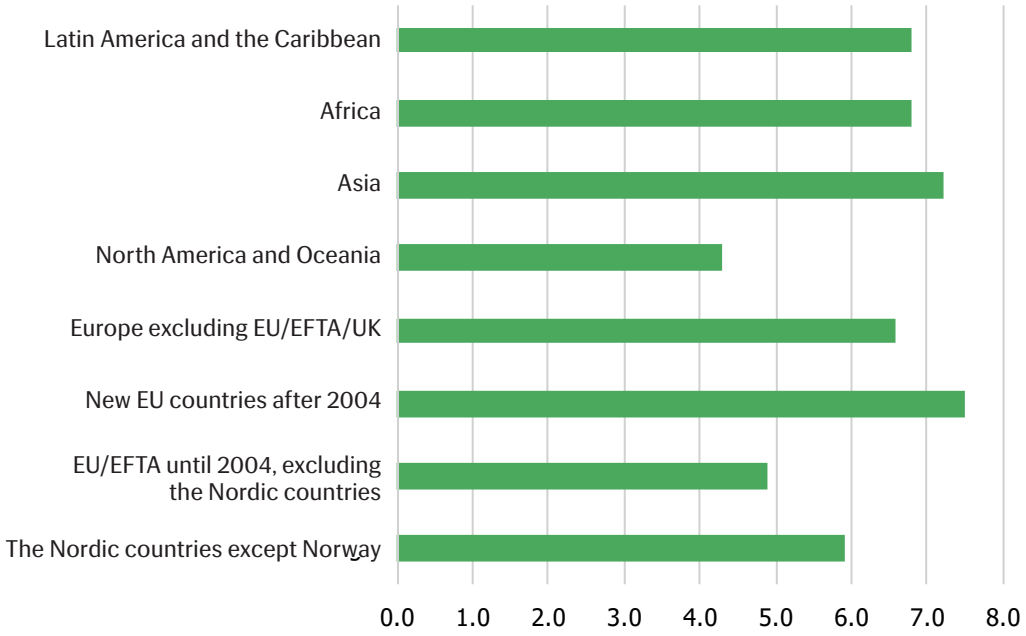
Figure 4.10. Doctor certified sick leave for employees, by immigration category and gender. Q1 2025. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025ay).



In addition, sick leave increases with age at a faster rate among immigrants than in the rest of the population (Bruer-Skarsbø, 2020). Immigrants from new EU countries and Europe except EU/EFTA/UK have the highest rates of sick leave among those between the ages of 60 and 66, at 11.2 per cent and 10.7 per cent respectively (Statistics Norway, 2025an).

There are also differences in sick leave percentages for immigrants from different country groups. The highest rates of doctor certified sick leave are found among immigrants from the new EU countries (7.5 per cent), while immigrants from North America have the lowest rates of sick leave (4.3 per cent) (Statistics Norway, 2025an) (Figure 4.11).

Figure 4.11. Doctor certified sick leave among immigrants, by country of origin. Q1 2025. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025an).



Rates of doctor certified sick leave also vary according to the occupations immigrants work in. Not surprisingly, the sick leave percentage is higher in jobs where employees are more exposed to a harmful working environment and physically demanding work. This applies, for example, to nursing assistants, cleaners, workers in the process industry and employees in sales and service occupations (Bruer-Skarsbø, 2020).

There are also differences in the likelihood of returning to work in the event of long-term sick leave. We see that the risk of family immigrants and refugees not returning to work after a long period of illness is equally as high as for the rest of the population, while the risk of a labour immigrant dropping out of the labour market is almost twice as high as for a person without an immigrant background (Snilsberg and Kvile, 2024).

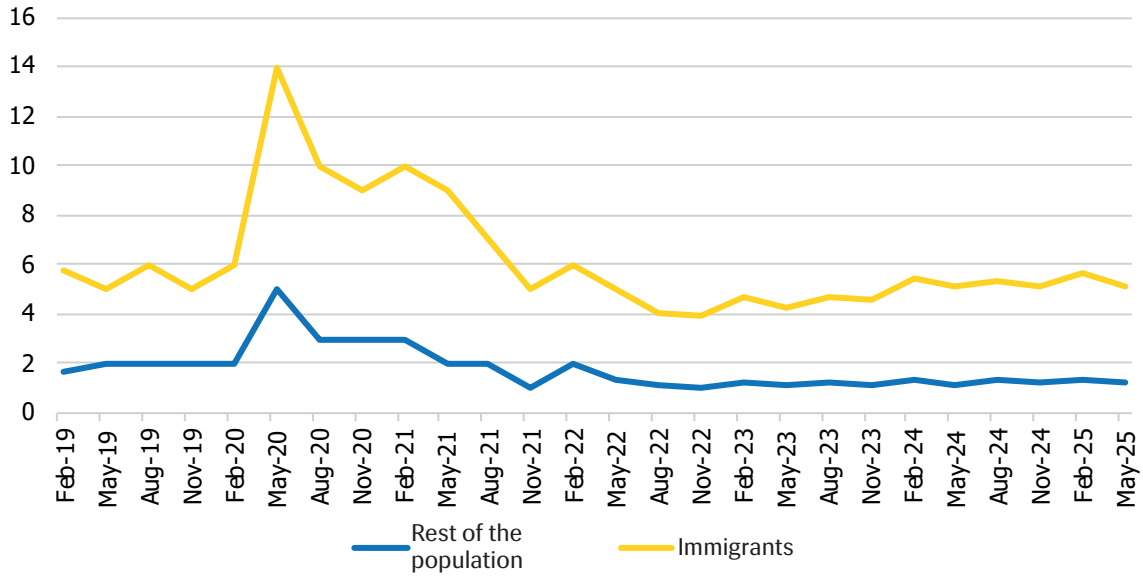
Unemployment

4.7 Higher unemployment among immigrants

What does it mean to be unemployed?
Statistics compiled by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) of the "totally unemployed" include people who have been out of income-generating work for the past two weeks, and who are looking for and available to work. Being unemployed therefore means that the person is actively looking for work and is available to start work but has not received a job offer.

Unemployment among immigrants is more than four times as high as in the rest of the population. In both groups, unemployment is highest among those between the ages of 25 and 29. In May 2025, the unemployment rate was 5.1 per cent among immigrants, while the corresponding figure for the rest of the population was 1.2 per cent. Men have a higher unemployment rate than women, both in the immigrant population and in the rest of the population. In particular, immigrants from countries in Africa are overrepresented among unemployed immigrants. 6.7 per cent with backgrounds from this continent are registered as unemployed (NAV, 2025). Figure 4.12 shows that the difference in the unemployment rate between people with and without immigrant backgrounds was particularly high in the pandemic year of 2020.

Figure 4.12. People registered as totally unemployed as a percentage of the workforce, by immigration category. 2019–2025.
Percentage. (NAV, 2025; Statistics Norway, 2020).[2]



Compared to the rest of the population, immigrants are also more likely to be long-term unemployed, which means being unemployed for at least six consecutive months. In May 2025, 31 per cent of unemployed immigrants were long-term unemployed, compared to 27 per cent of unemployed people in the rest of the population (NAV, 2025). The longer a person has been unemployed, the lower the likelihood of being employed, and the probability of transitioning to health-related benefits increases. The negative consequences of long-term unemployment are more applicable to immigrants than the rest of the population (Bratsberg et al., 2018; Kann, Dokken and Yin, 2019).

2 Prior to 2021, the statistics for people registered as totally unemployed were compiled and published by Statistics Norway. NAV has assumed responsibility for publishing these statistics since 2021. Therefore, the figures from before and after 2021 are not directly comparable.

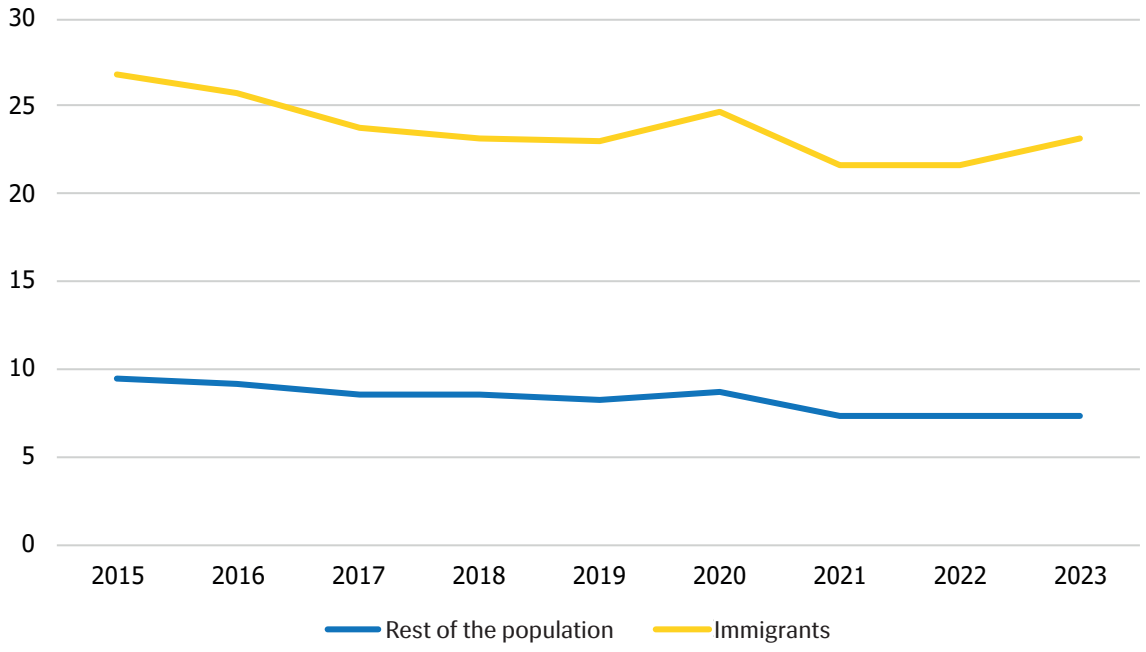
NEET

4.8 Young immigrants are more vulnerable to exclusion

Young people who are not in employment, education or employment schemes are often referred to as "NEET". This is a heterogeneous group that is composed of young people in different life situations. Some fall under this designation because they choose to take a year off after completing their education. Others may experience more prolonged periods of exclusion even if they want to work or study, for example due to unemployment or disability. Prolonged exclusion is also linked to a weaker connection to the workforce and poorer income development later in life (Normann and Hetland, 2021).

The most recently available figures from Statistics Norway show that 23.1 per cent of young immigrants were not in work, education or training in 2023, compared to 7.3 per cent of young people in the rest of the population (Statistics Norway, 2025ag). There is a somewhat higher proportion of immigrant women than immigrant men in the NEET group – 25.0 per cent versus 21.3 per cent. Figure 4.13 shows that the large difference in the proportion of young people not in work, education or training between immigrants and the rest of the population has persisted over time.

Figure 4.13. NEET percentage among young people aged 15-29. 2008–2023. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025ag).



Low educational attainment and dropping out of upper secondary school are the greatest risk factors for NEET status among young people in Norway (OECD, 2018). Other potential risk factors include demographic characteristics, socioeconomic backgrounds of parents, and physical and mental health (Phyhn, Radlick, and Sveinsdottir, 2021).

Financial situation and living conditions

Children in persistent low income households

42% of immigrant children...

5% of children without immigrant background...

26% of people born in Norway to immigrant parents...

....live in households with persistent low incomes.

Smaller differences since 2015

Persistent low income

27%

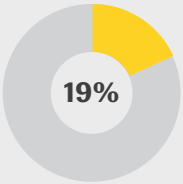
of immigrants live in households with persistent low

7%

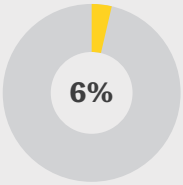
in the rest of the population

Smaller differences since 2016

Financial difficulties



of immigrants respond that it is difficult to make ends meet



in the rest of the population respond that it is difficult to make ends meet

Larger differences since 2015

Mental health

19%

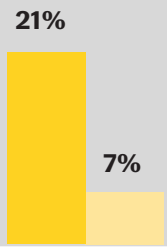
in the rest of the population experience a preponderance of negative emotions

1 in 4

of immigrants experience a preponderance of negative emotions

Smaller differences since 2020

Crowded housing



immigrants

in the rest of the population

Smaller differences since 2015

Sources (top from left): Inntekts- og formuesstatistikk for husholdninger, Statistics Norway (2025), Boforhold, registerbasert, Statistics Norway (2025), Livskvalitetsundersøkelsen, Statistics Norway (2024), Levekårsundersøkelsen, Statistics Norway (2024).

5. Financial situation and living conditions

People with immigrant backgrounds face several barriers to integration in the form of poor living conditions, persistent low income and unsatisfactory housing conditions, which prevent participation in important arenas (Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, 2024). Financial situation, health and living conditions are also closely linked (Barstad, 2020). A safe financial situation and good living and housing conditions are essential for ensuring good integration. For example, housing conditions such as owning your own home or living spaciously, are linked to more active participation in local volunteering and leisure activities, and to better health (OECD/EU, 2023; Revold and With, 2022). Significant differences in income and living conditions between people with and without immigrant backgrounds can increase the risk of marginalization and prevent immigrants from participating in different social arenas.

The interaction between health, labour force participation, educational opportunities and participation in other social arenas is therefore important from an integration perspective. Good health can enhance the integration process by facilitating financial, social and political participation, while poor health can prevent participation in these areas. For example, good health increases opportunities for labour market participation, which is one of the cornerstones of successful integration. The workplace is often an arena for experiencing recognition and mastery, which in turn can have a positive impact on health. On the other hand, barriers to integration such as poor Norwegian language skills or weak sense of belonging to the community, constitute an increased risk of health challenges (Spiker et al., 2022).

Income

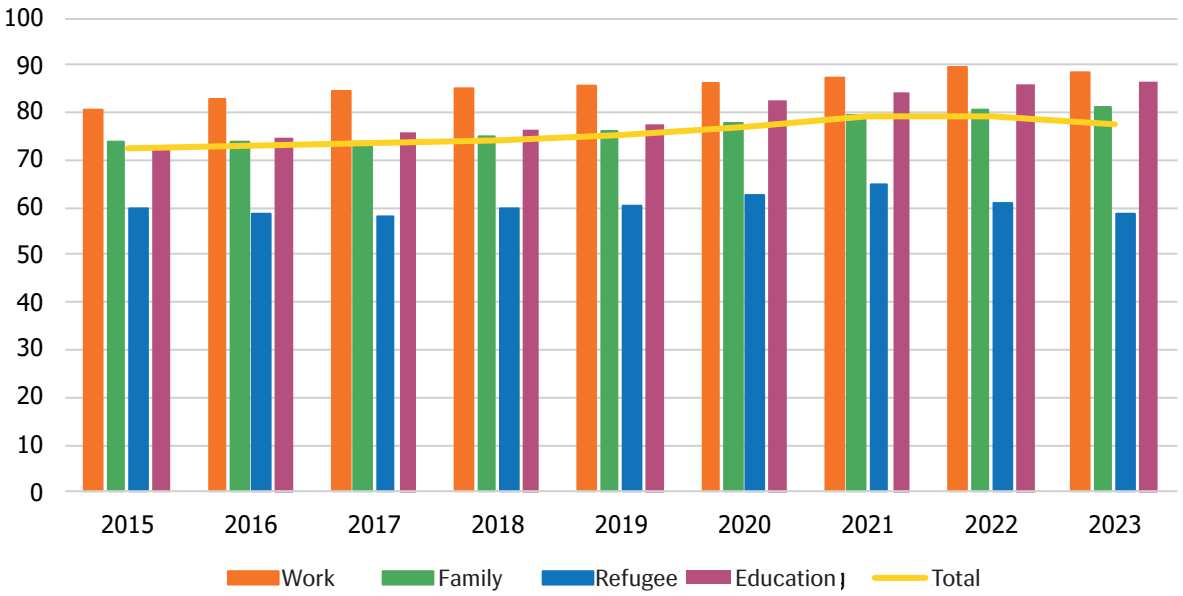
5.1 Immigrants have lower incomes

Immigrants have a lower average income than the population as a whole. In 2023, the median income for immigrants was approximately NOK 372,000 compared to NOK 481,000 for the population as a whole. The income disparity between immigrants and the entire population was therefore approximately NOK 108,000, which is an increase compared to 2022, when the difference was NOK 94,000 (Statistics Norway, 2025v).

Income levels within the immigrant population vary according to reason for immigration and period of residence. In Figure 5.1, the median income for different immigrant groups is shown as a share of the entire population's median income. In 2023, refugees had a median income of NOK 281,000. This amounts to 59 per cent of the Norwegian population’s median income, a reduction of six percentage points and two percentage points from 2021 and 2022 respectively. Among other things, this reduction is due to the large number of Ukrainian refugees who arrived during 2022 and 2023 only having resided in Norway for parts the year, and therefore not having been in Norway for a full income year.[3] Caution should therefore be exercised when interpreting the change in figures between 2021 and 2023.

3 Median income is the amount of income that divides a distribution into two groups of equal size, after the income has been sorted in ascending (or descending) order. If the distribution applies to households, there will be as many households with incomes above the median income as below it (Statistics Norway, 2025f).

Figure 5.1. Median income for immigrants as a proportion of the entire population's median income, by reason for immigration. 2015–2023. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025v).



A higher proportion of immigrants receive social assistance than the rest of the population, and in 2023, 53 per cent of all those who received social assistance were immigrants (Statistics Norway, 2024d). The proportion of immigrants receiving social assistance remained stable at around eight per cent during the period from 2015 to 2022. The proportion of people born in Norway to immigrant parents and the rest of the population who receive social assistance is somewhat lower at four and two per cent respectively since 2015 (Kjeka Broen, 2023; Lima, 2024). Refugees have a specific need for social assistance, and the number of recipients is influenced by refugee flows.[4] There was an increase in social assistance payments from 2021 to 2023, and the majority of this increase was due to high numbers of newly arrived Ukrainian refugees (Lima 2024; Ulstein and Maan 2024).

Persistent low income

5.2 Immigrants more often experience financial difficulties

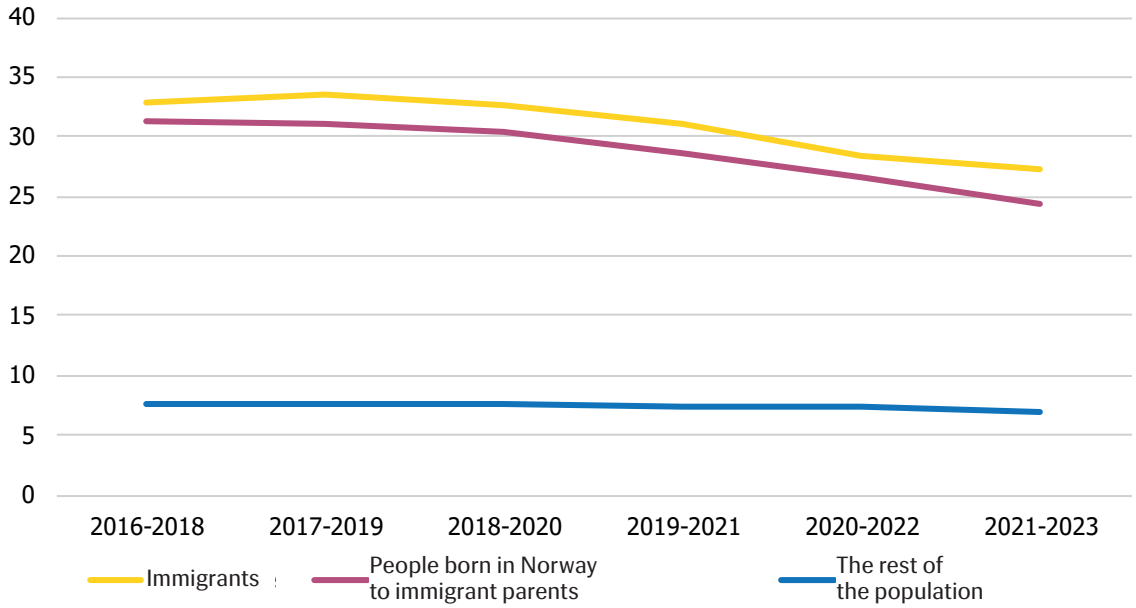
How is persistent low income measured?

Low income is defined as income (after tax and adjusted for household size) that is below 60 per cent of the national median income. Persistent low income is defined as having a low income for a period of three years (Normann, 2025). Low income and persistent low income are often used as indicators of poverty.

4 Some municipalities make decisions in accordance with the Social Services Act when settling refugees and as income security before starting the Introduction Programme, which means that all newly settled refugees in these municipalities are automatically receiving social assistance.

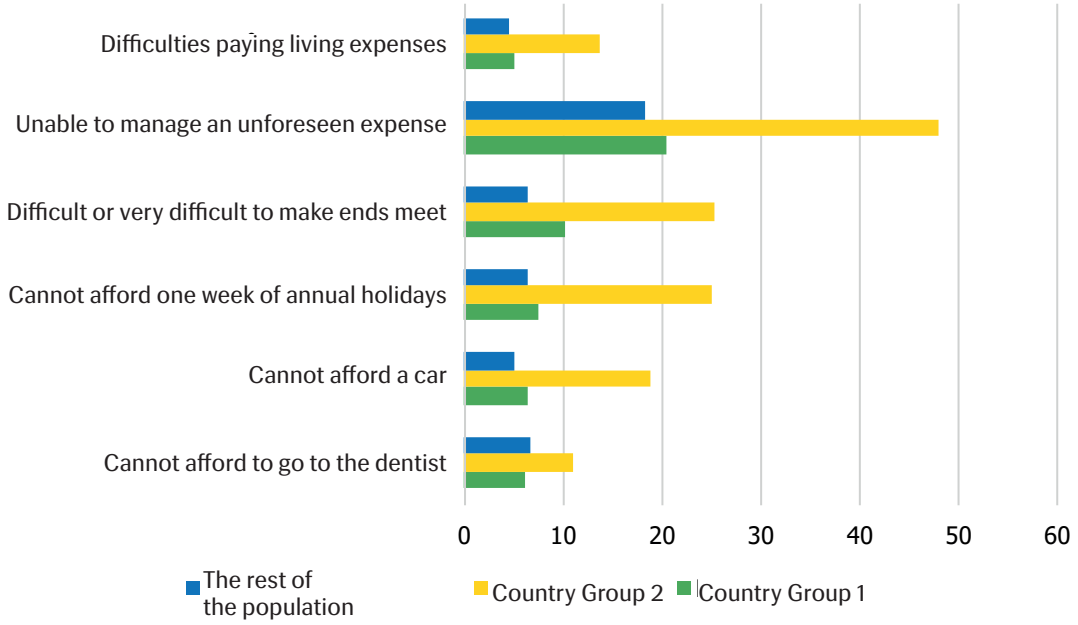
In the period 2021–2023, 27 per cent of all immigrants aged 0 to 39 and 24 per cent of people born in Norway to immigrant parents lived in households with persistent low incomes. The corresponding figure for the rest of the population was 7 per cent. The proportion was particularly high among immigrants (33 per cent) and people born in Norway to immigrant parents from Country Group 2 (28 per cent). 19 per cent of immigrants from Country Group 1 live with persistent low incomes, and for people born in Norway to immigrant parents from Country Group 1 this figure is 12 per cent (Statistics Norway, 2025am). Age also has an impact on the probability of being in a low-income household. For the age group of 18 to 24, the proportion of people in low-income households was 43 per cent among immigrants, 30 per cent among people born in Norway to immigrant parents and 12 per cent for the rest of the population. The corresponding percentages for the age group of 35 to 39 were 18, 9 and 5 per cent respectively (Statistics Norway, 2025am).

Figure 5.2. People aged 0-39 in households with persistent low-incomes. Three-year period, by immigrant background 2016–2023. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025am).



Immigrants more often experience challenges in their financial situation than the rest of the population. The proportion who report that it is difficult or very difficult to make ends meet is three times as high as in the rest of the population, (6 per cent versus 19 per cent) (Statistics Norway, 2025d). Country Group 2 in particular faces challenges related to personal finances. In this group, one in four reports that it is difficult to make ends meet, 11 per cent report that they cannot afford to go to the dentist, and a total of 48 per cent report that they are unable to manage an unforeseen expense (Statistics Norway, 2025b, 2025d).

Figure 5.3. Perceived challenges with access to benefits, financial flexibility and payment difficulties by country of origin. 2024. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025b, 2025c, 2025d).

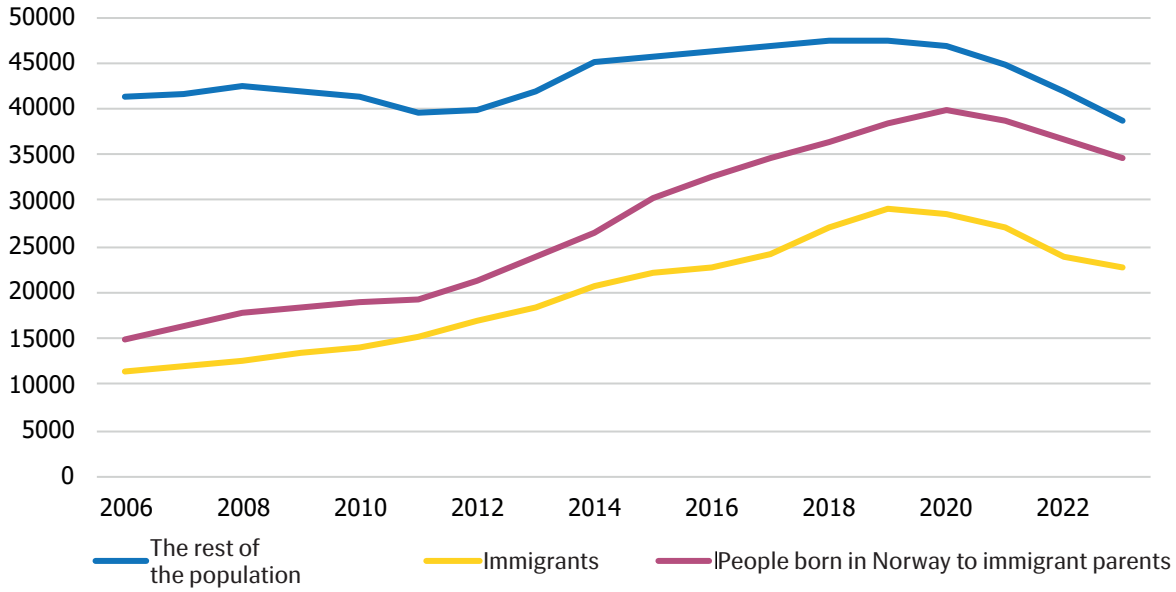


Children in persistent low income households

5.3 Immigrant children still heavily overrepresented in households with persistently low incomes

For the third year in a row, the number and proportion of children in low income households has fallen. For the first time in a decade, a slight decrease in the number of children growing up in persistent low-income households was recorded in 2021. Approximately 110,700 children lived in households with persistent low incomes in 2021, compared to 115,000 the previous year. This figure further decreased to 102,600 children in 2022, while in 2023, 96,200 children were registered as living in households with persistent low incomes (Normann, 2025). This positive development was observed among children both with and without immigrant backgrounds, but children with immigrant backgrounds are still strongly overrepresented.

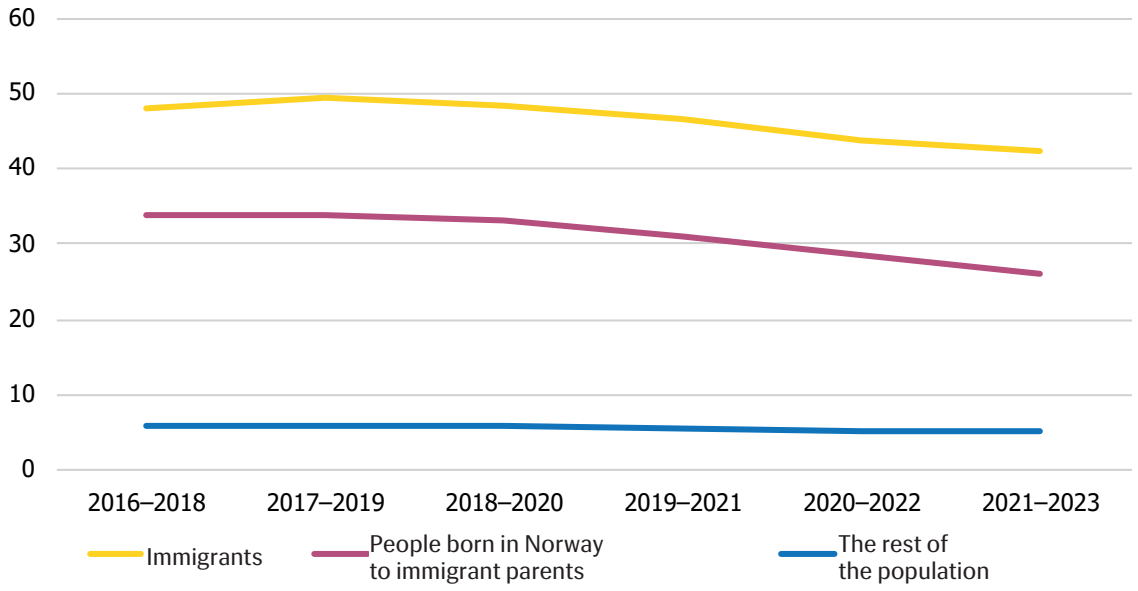
Figure 5.4. Children in households with persistent low incomes by immigrant background. 2023. Number (Normann, 2025)



Two out of ten children in Norway have immigrant backgrounds, however among the children who grow up in persistent low-income households, a total of six out of ten have immigrant backgrounds (Normann, 2025).

As we can see in Figure 5.5, children with immigrant backgrounds are strongly overrepresented among households with persistent low incomes. While five per cent of children without immigrant backgrounds live in persistent low-income households, this applies to 42 per cent of immigrant children and 26 per cent of children born in Norway to immigrant parents (Statistics Norway, 2025am).

Figure 5.5. Children (aged 0-17) in households with persistent low incomes by immigrant background. 2016–2023. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025am).



The decrease in persistent low-incomes may be due to low immigration during the period resulting from, among other things, the lockdown of the country caused by the pandemic. Low immigration means there will be an increase in the average period of residence and newly arrived refugees are particularly susceptible to having persistent low incomes. Since spring 2022, Norway has accepted a record high number of Ukrainian refugees. This group is not included in the figures of persistent low incomes, because the statistics do not include people who have resided in Norway for less than three years. The Ukrainian refugees who arrived in 2022 will be included in the statistics for the period 2022–2024. There is thus uncertainty as to whether the positive development will continue.

The likelihood of growing up in a persistent low income household varies significantly according to the country of origin of the children's families and reason for immigration. Children with refugee backgrounds are particularly susceptible to living in persistent low-income households. When divided according to country of origin, the proportion living in persistent low-income households is highest among children with a background from Syria (68 per cent in the period 2021-2023). The proportion was also high among children with a background from Somalia (66 per cent). In comparison, approximately ten per cent of children in families with backgrounds from the Philippines, and seven per cent in families with backgrounds from India, live in persistent low-income households (Statistics Norway, 2025u).

When concerning children with backgrounds from Poland and Lithuania, countries from which there are a high number of labour immigrants, we see a reduction in the proportion of children who grow up in persistent low-income households from around 28 and 27 per cent respectively in the period from 2006 to 2008 to 14 per cent for both country groups in the period from 2021 to 2023 (Statistics Norway, 2025u).

Household size and composition are closely related to persistent low incomes in families with children and may help explain the differences by country of origin. Children with immigrant backgrounds are more likely to live in large households. The number of labour-market participants in the household and the period of residence in Norway are also factors that impact the families' income levels (Epland and Normann, 2021).

Parents who live in persistent low-income households report more often than the rest of the population that they cannot afford vacations and that they have high living costs. They also more frequently report that the children do not participate in leisure activities and that the children are in poorer health. There are also more low-income families than high-income families with children who report that their children do not attend kindergarten. Children in low-income families are more likely to have lower grades, to not complete upper secondary school, and to end up outside the workforce as adults (Ministry of Children and Families, 2023).

People born in Norway to immigrant parents who grow up in low-income households have a higher rate of graduation and labour-market participation than immigrants and people without immigrant backgrounds in the same situation. This indicates that those born in Norway to immigrant parents are less impacted by growing up in low-income households (Ekren and Grendal, 2021). This in turn suggests that there is high educational and income mobility in this group, something which has been previously described in several studies (Hermansen, 2016; Kirkeberg et al., 2019).

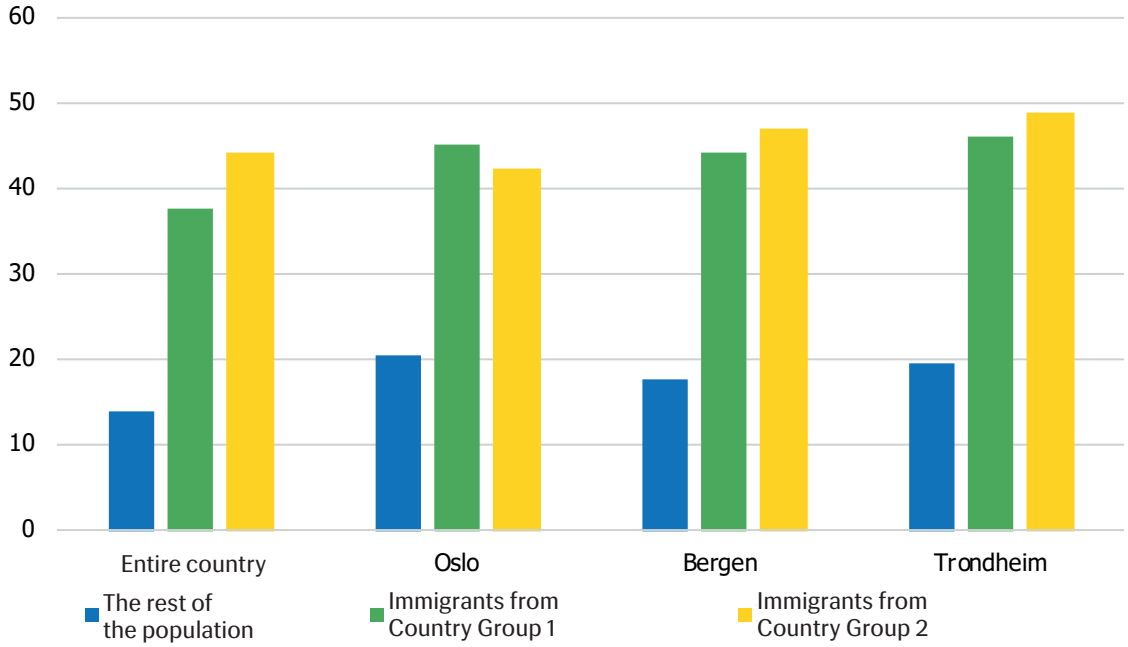
Home ownership status

5.4 Immigrants more likely to rent their home

While almost 90 per cent of the non-immigrant population own their home, it is more common among immigrants to rent. The proportion of immigrants who are renters is more than twice as high as the population without immigrant backgrounds (Oppøyen, 2025). In 2024, 38 per cent of immigrants from Country Group 1 rented their home. This proportion has fallen by three percentage points since 2015. 43 per cent of Country Group 2 lived in rented housing. This proportion has increased by four percentage points since 2015 (Statistics Norway, 2025k). Immigrants generally make up an increasing proportion of people living in rented homes (Husbanken, 2025).

The personal finances of immigrants, reasons for immigration, plans for future establishment in Norway or conditions in the local housing market often determine whether they rent or own their home. Becoming established in the housing market requires a certain income level, and immigrants are overrepresented in low-income households. On average, immigrants with the longest periods of residence in Norway have higher incomes than those with shorter periods of residence in Norway. This may be part of the explanation for why the proportion who own their homes increases in line with the period of residence (Normann, 2021; Oppøyen, 2023). Previous studies also show that labour immigrants are more likely to rent than buy a home, and that this may be linked to uncertainty regarding how long they will be staying in Norway (Ødegård and Andersen, 2021).

Figure 5.6. Proportion who rent their homes, by immigrant background and place of residence. 2024. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025z).



Regional differences in the housing market also influence the proportion who rent their home. It is more difficult to enter the housing market in large cities such as Oslo, Bergen or Trondheim. It is therefore not surprising that a relatively higher number of people in these

municipalities rent their homes, both among immigrants and the population at large. In Oslo, 45 per cent of immigrants from Country Group 1, 42 per cent of immigrants from Country Group 2, and 20 per cent of the rest of the population rent their homes (Statistics Norway, 2025z).

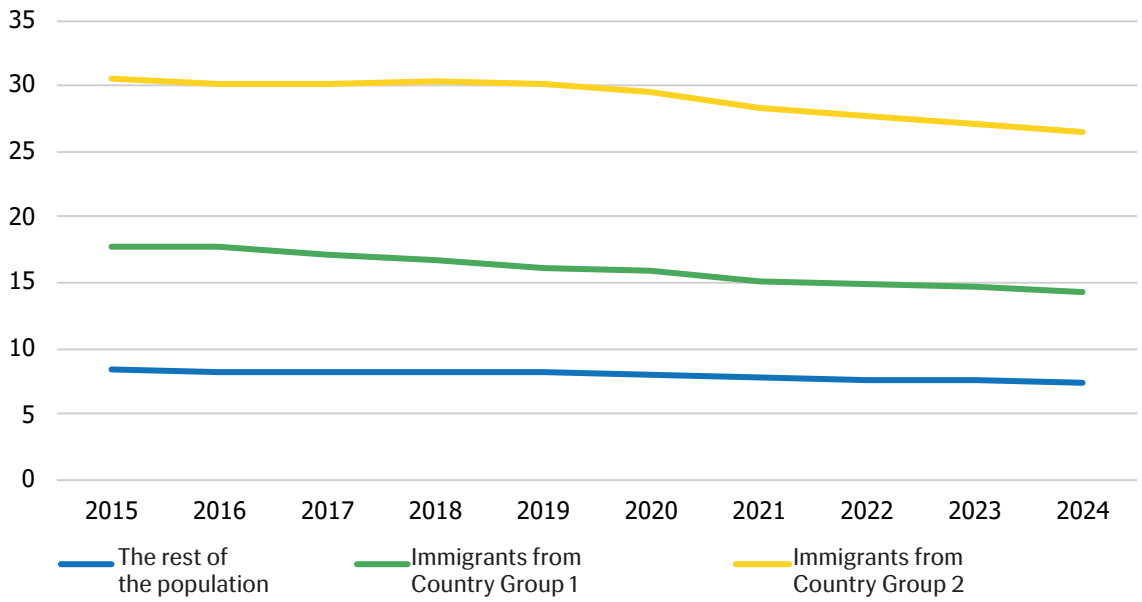
Living conditions

5.5 One in five immigrants have cramped living conditions

What are cramped living conditions?
Households are considered cramped if the following two conditions are met: 1. The number of rooms in the dwelling is less than the number of people or if one person lives in one room. 2. The size of the dwelling (the "per person floor space") amounts to less than 25 square metres per person (Statistics Norway).

On average, immigrants live in more cramped conditions than the rest of the population There is also significant variation between different immigrant groups. In 2024, 14 per cent of immigrants from Country Group 1 and 26 per cent from Country Group 2 had cramped living conditions. The proportion of people in the rest of the population living in cramped conditions was much lower, and amounted to seven per cent. In addition, Figure 5.7 shows that there has been a slight reduction in the differences in cramped living conditions since 2015 (Statistics Norway, 2025ab).

Figure 5.7. Proportion living in cramped conditions, by immigrant background. 2015–2024. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025ab)



The proportion with cramped living conditions is higher among refugees and those who arrived in Norway through family reunification and lower among labour immigrants. This means that cramped living conditions are associated with the reason for immigration. Larger households and low-income households more often have cramped living conditions, and younger people more often live in cramped conditions than older people. Cramped living conditions decrease slightly in relation to period of residence (Arnesen, 2020; Oppøyen 2023).

If we look at housing type, immigrants are less likely to live in detached housing than the rest of the population. This is particularly true for immigrants from Country Group 2. In this group, 32 per cent lived in detached housing in 2024, compared to 48 per cent of immigrants from Country Group 1. In the rest of the population, 57 per cent lived in detached housing in 2024. Correspondingly, the proportion of immigrants from Country Group 2 who lived in blocks of flats was almost twice as high as for the rest of the population (35 per cent vs 19 per cent). In Country Group 1, 24 per cent lived in blocks of flats (Statistics Norway, 2025aa).

Physical health

5.6 Immigrants have higher life expectancy

There are significant differences when it comes to health in different immigrant groups. Their health status varies according to gender, age, country of origin, reason for immigration and period of residence in Norway (Texmon and Thonstad, 2024). According to the Norwegian Institute of Public Health, refugees and older immigrants may be particularly susceptible to poor health (Spilker et al., 2022).

Immigrants are often in better physical health than the population at large when they come to Norway. Among the reasons for this is the "healthy immigrant effect". This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that it is often the healthiest and most resourceful people who choose to move to another country (Dzamarija, 2022; Ichou and Wallace, 2019). However, the health of immigrants with a longer period of residence becomes more similar to the health of the rest of the population (Spilker et al. 2022). This may be due to the fact that, on average, immigrants have poorer living and housing conditions, lower incomes and possibly poorer physical and psychosocial working environments than the rest of the population (Dzamarija, 2022).

Figure 5.8. Proportion who consider their own health to be good or very good, by age and immigration category. [5] *Average from the quality of life survey. 2020–2023. Percentage (Texmon and Thonstad, 2024)*

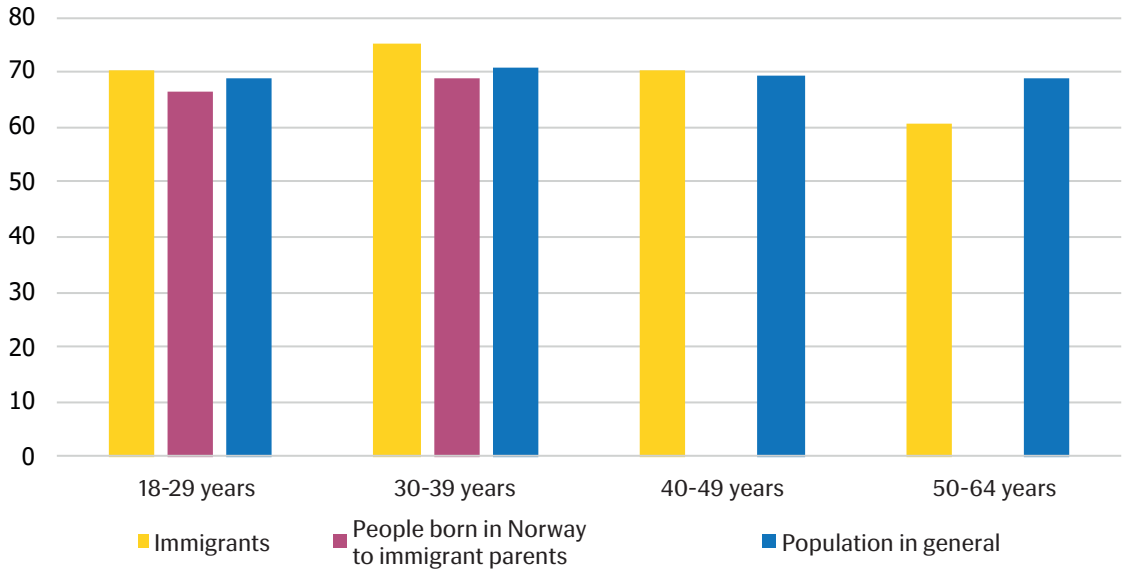
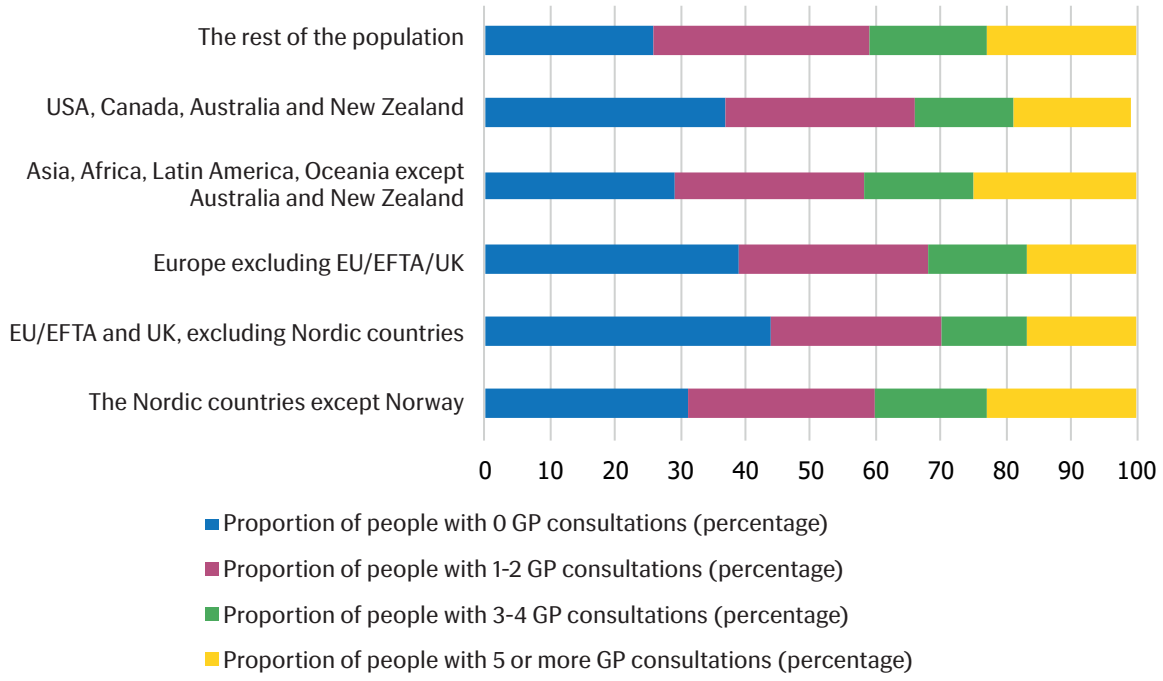


Figure 5.8 shows the proportion of immigrants, people born in Norway to immigrant parents and people without immigrant backgrounds, broken down by age, who consider their own health to be good or very good. There are minor differences between the three aforementioned groups in the average assessment of own health. The exception is among people aged 50-64. While 60 per cent of immigrants in this age group consider their own health to be good or very good, the corresponding proportion among people without immigrant backgrounds is 69 per cent (Texmon and Thonstad, 2024). More knowledge is required about why immigrants are more inclined to consider their health to deteriorate with age than people without an immigrant background, however a possible explanation could be that the immigrant population has, on average, poorer living conditions (Dzamarija, 2022; Texmon and Thonstad, 2024).

The average use of health services such as general practitioner or emergency room is lower among immigrants than in the general population. 65 per cent of immigrants had at least one consultation with their general practitioner during 2024, compared to 74 per cent in the population without an immigrant background (Statistics Norway, 2025bb). The use of general practitioners varies significantly according to an immigrant's country of origin. Immigrants from countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Oceania (other than Australia and New Zealand) use general practitioner services more often than other immigrant groups. Other factors that affect the number of general practitioner visits are age, gender and period of residence in Norway (Lunde and Texmon, 2013).

Figure 5.9. General practitioner consultations, by country of origin. 2024. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025t).

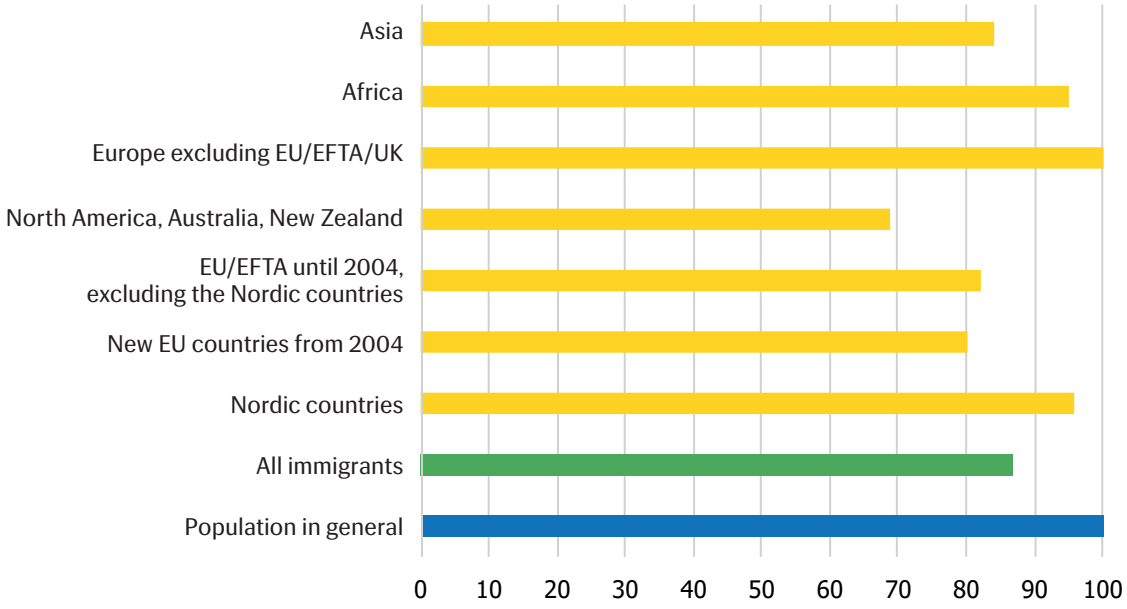


More knowledge is required about the extent to which the differences described above arise due to barriers to access to health services among immigrants and their Norwegian-born children. Examples of such barriers may include lack of information about health and care

services, language barriers, financial challenges, inadequate knowledge of diversity among employees and perceived discrimination (Spilker et al. 2022).

On average, immigrants in Norway have lower mortality rates and higher life expectancy than the population without immigrant backgrounds (Wallace et al. 2022). For example, in 2019, immigrant women had almost two years higher life expectancy at birth than Norwegian-born women, while immigrant men had just over one year higher life expectancy than Norwegian-born men (Spilker et al. 2022). As shown in Figure 5.10, the mortality rate among immigrants aged 50 to 69 in the period 2018–2022 was 87 per cent relative to the rest of the population (Texmon and Thonstad, 2024). The mortality rate is calculated based on death rates, which is the number of deaths during a period per 1,000 people (Texmon and Thonstad, 2024).

Figure 5.10. Relative mortality rates for immigrants aged 50-69, by country of origin. Rest of the population = 100. 2018–2022. Percentage (Texmon and Thonstad, 2024)



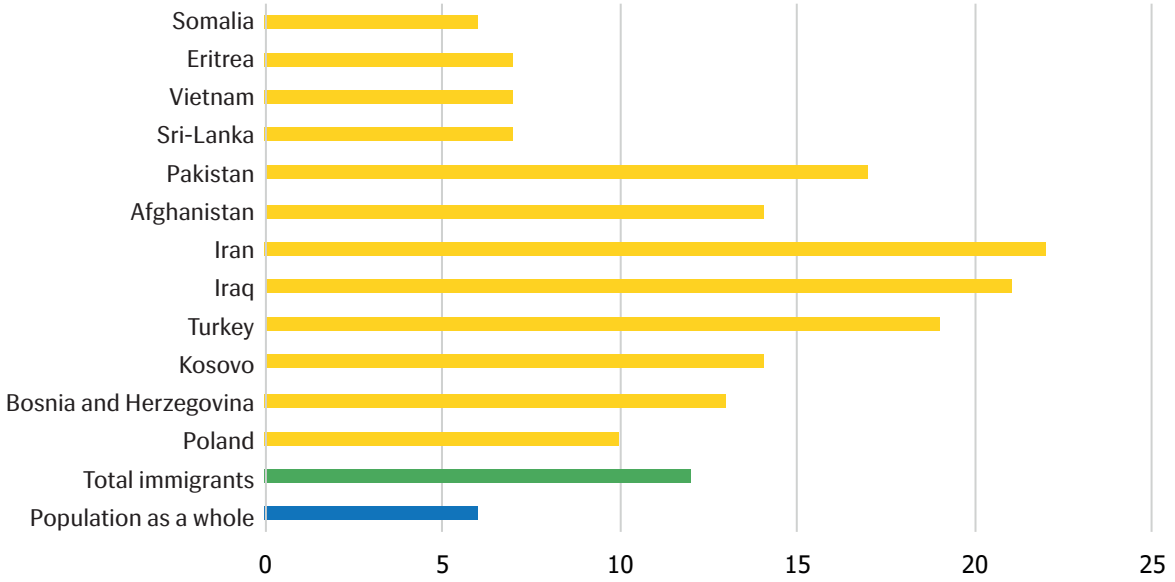
At the same time, the mortality rate varies between different immigrant groups. Among other things, it appears as if country of origin, reason for immigration and period of residence provide some explanation for the mortality rates. Immigrants who have come to Norway for work or to study have lower mortality rates than refugees (Dzamarija, 2022). The mortality rate also increases in line with period of residence and is highest among immigrants who have lived more than 40 per cent of their lives in Norway, i.e. the longer the immigrants have lived in Norway, the more similar they become to the rest of the population (Dzamarija and Syse, 2016).

Mental health

5.7 Mental health problems most common among immigrants

Immigrants generally have poorer mental health than the general population. According to the 2016 living conditions survey of the immigrant population, the proportion who experienced mental health problems was twice as high among immigrants as in the entire population – twelve versus six percent (Vrålstad and Wiggen, 2017). The proportion who report mental health problems varies according to country of origin: while just over one in five immigrants from Iran and Iraq report mental health problems, the proportion of Somali immigrants who report having mental health problems is equal to the proportion in the population as a whole (six per cent) (Vrålstad and Wiggen, 2017).

Figure 5.11. Proportion with mental health problems. 2017. Percentage (Vrålstad and Wiggen, 2017)

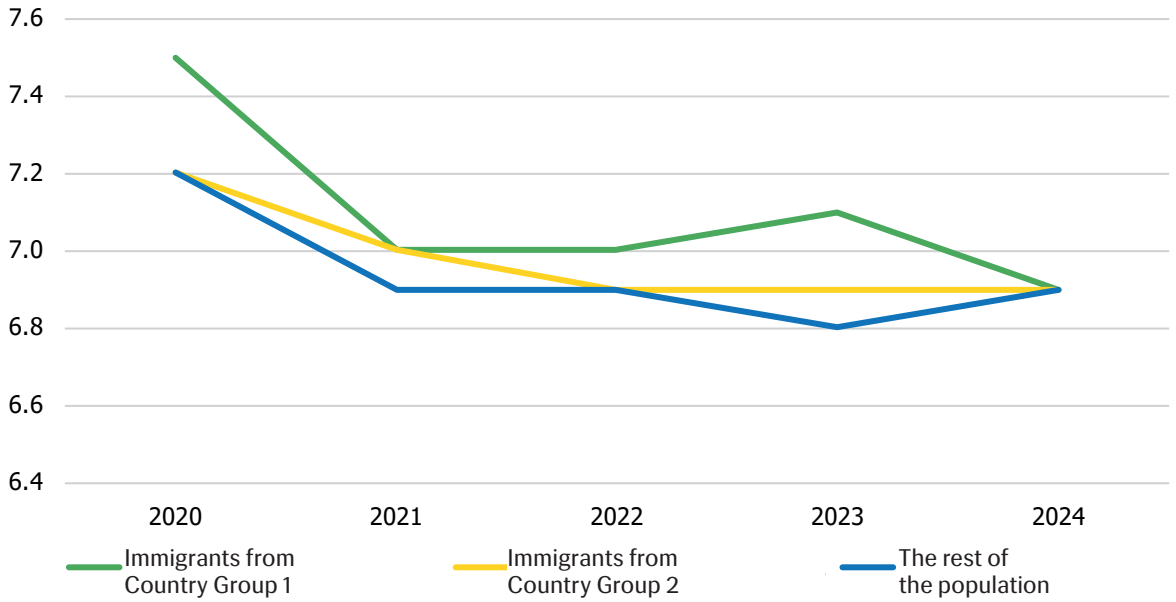


On average, immigrants with a high level of education and high incomes have better mental health than other immigrants (Spilker et al. 2022). There is also a correlation between discrimination and health outcomes, whereby perceived discrimination is associated with poorer mental health and other health problems (Spilker et al. 2022). For example, the proportion of immigrants who report having mental health problems is twice as high among those who have experienced discrimination when compared to those who have not experienced discrimination (Kjøllesdal et al. 2019).

International research shows that, on average, refugees and asylum seekers have more mental health problems than the population without an immigrant background (Blackmore et al., 2020). While 16 to 19 per cent of adult refugees in Norway visit their general practitioner due to mental health problems, the corresponding figure for the rest of the population is 10 to 12 per cent (Straiton, Reneflot and Diaz, 2017). At the same time, there are differences

in mental health between both people with different countries of origin and ages at which they immigrated (Ekeberg and Abebe 2021; Straiton, Abebe and Hauge 2024). For example, a recent study shows that people born in Norway to immigrant parents and immigrants who came to Norway as children have a higher probability of suffering from mental illnesses than the general population, while immigrants who migrated in adulthood have a similar probability to the population without an immigrant background (Straiton et al. 2024).

Figure 5.12. Average satisfaction score for own mental health (scale 0-10), by immigrant background. 2024. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2024k).



However, as we can see in Figure 5.12, when it comes to self-assessed mental health there are no differences between immigrants and the rest of the population. Both immigrants from Country Groups 1 and 2, as well as the rest of the population, have an average satisfaction score of 6.9 (on a scale of zero to ten) (Statistics Norway, 2024k). Both more and updated knowledge are required about the extent of and mechanisms behind mental health among immigrants in Norway.

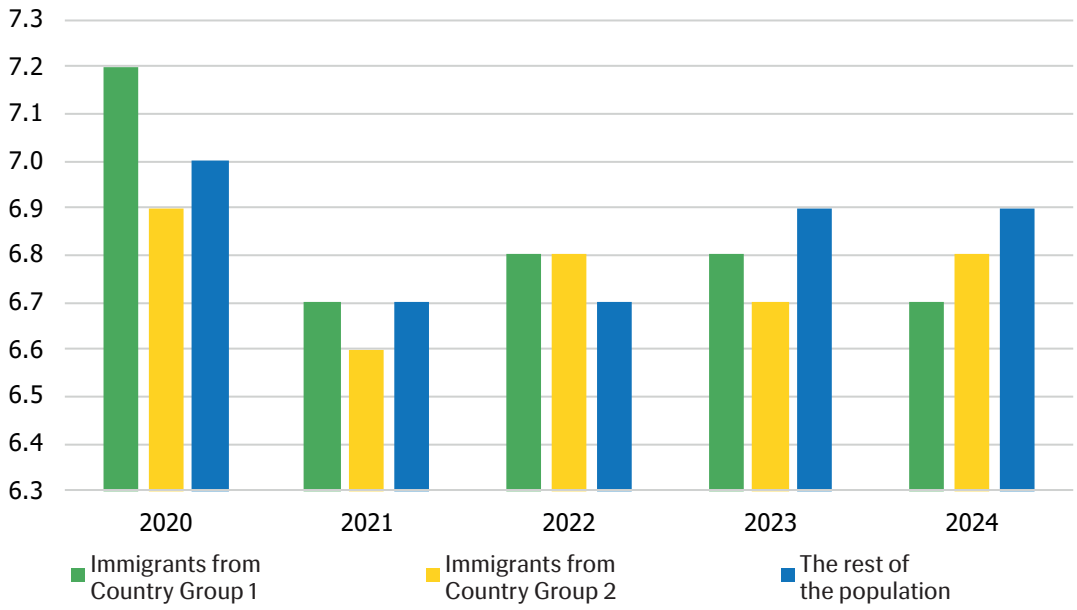
Quality of Life

5.8 Minor differences in life satisfaction between immigrants and the rest of the population

Quality of life is a comprehensive term and relates to subjective opinions of how satisfied someone is with their own life situation and everyday life. Quality of life is closely associated with living conditions and health, and is measured using a number of indicators such as satisfaction with life, meaning and mastery, as well as the absence of mental health problems and negative emotions.

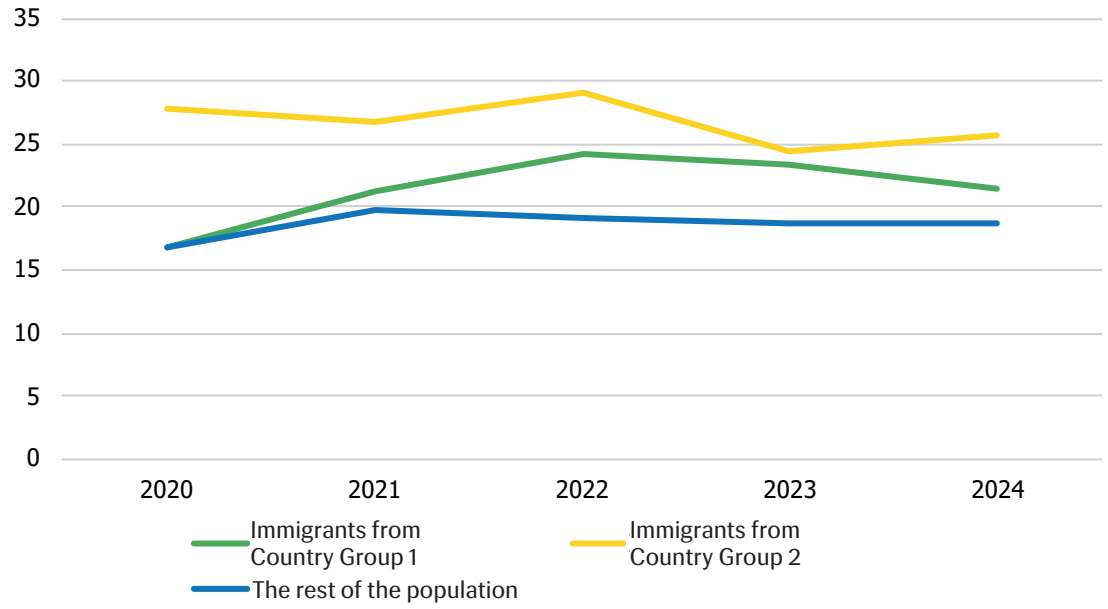
Statistics Norway's quality of life survey shows that the average life satisfaction score for the immigrant population is quite similar to that of the rest of the population. In 2024, the average life satisfaction scores were 6.7 for immigrants from Country Group 1, 6.8 for immigrants from Country Group 2 and 6.9 for the rest of the population (Statistics Norway, 2024k). While immigrants, on average, have about as high a subjective quality of life as the rest of the population, there are differences between immigrants from different geographical regions. Immigrants from the Middle East, and Central and South Asia are least satisfied with life, while immigrants from South and Central America are most satisfied with life (Dalen and Larsson, 2022).

Figure 5.13. Average satisfaction score for life on the whole (scale 0-10), by country of origin. 2020–2024. (Statistics Norway, 2024k).



Factors such as low income, unemployment and disability are associated with poorer quality of life. This applies to people both with and without immigrant backgrounds. Young people and people who live alone are also among the groups that are more susceptible to poorer quality of life (Dalen and Larsson, 2022).

Figure 5.14. Proportion of people with a predominance of negative emotions. 2020–2024. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2024l).



Immigrants more often report experiencing a predominance of negative emotions, such as being worried, anxious, lonely or stressed. Among immigrants, this proportion increased from 23 per cent in 2020 to 27 per cent in 2022, and decreased to 24 per cent in 2024. In the rest of the population, this proportion increased from 17 per cent to 19 per cent during the same period. Immigrants from Country Group 2 have the highest proportion with a predominance of negative emotions, followed by immigrants from Country Group 1 (Statistics Norway, 2024l).

Political integration

Electoral participation

50%

of Norwegian citizens, immigrants participated in the 2021 parliamentary elections

52%

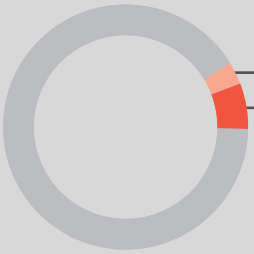
of Norwegian citizens, born in Norway to immigrant parents

80%

of Norwegian citizens without immigrant backgrounds

Larger differences compared to 2017

Political representation



3% of municipal council members have immigrant backgrounds

6% of candidates in municipal elections have immigrant backgrounds

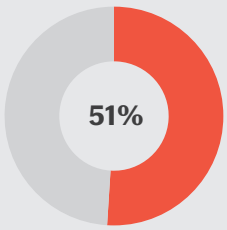
Immigrants increasingly more underrepresented since 2007

Trust in institutions

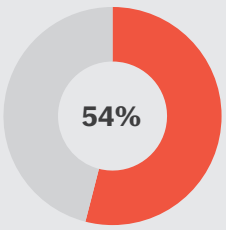
8 of 10

immigrants and the rest of the population have a high level of trust in the police

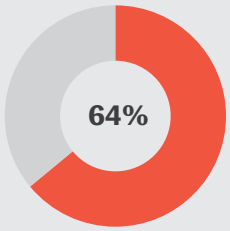
Use of media



people born in Norway to immigrant parents read online newspapers on an average day



immigrants read online newspapers on an average day



in the rest of population read online newspapers on an average day

Sources (top from left): Valgstatistikk, Statistics Norway (2022), Kommunestyre- og fylkestingsvalget, kandidater og representanter, Statistics Norway (2024), Dalen et al (2024), Mediebruksundersøkelsen, Statistics Norway (2022).

6. Political integration

Active civic participation, co-determination and democracy are important values in Norwegian society. Political integration relates to whether immigrants participate and are represented in the political arenas, as well as the extent to which they have trust in the political system, government authorities and public institutions in Norway (Proba, 2019).

Electoral participation

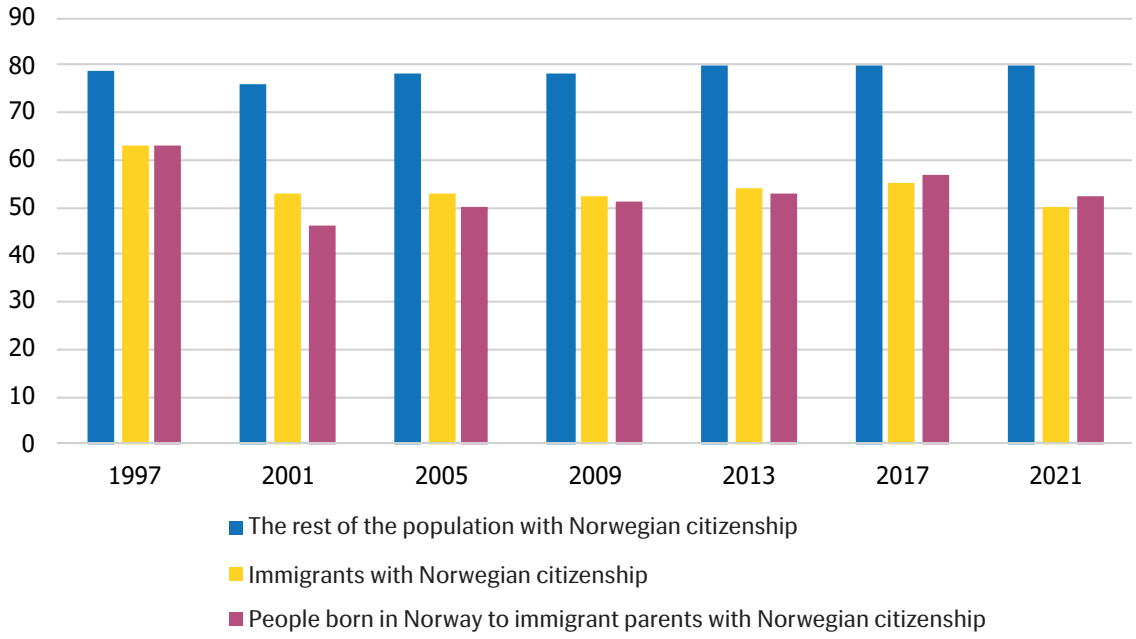
6.1 Immigrants and people born in Norway to immigrant parents have lower electoral participation

Who is eligible to vote in elections in Norway?
Only Norwegian citizens can vote in parliamentary elections in Norway. However, foreign citizens with at least three years of legal residence in Norway can vote in municipal and county council elections. Citizens of Nordic countries who are registered as residents of Norway on 30 June of the election year also have the right to vote in municipal and county council elections.

The number of eligible voters with immigrant backgrounds has grown in recent years (Statistics Norway, 2023c). Whether or not immigrants exercise their right to vote can be used as a measure of how well they are integrated into Norwegian society. Low participation can be viewed as a sign of low integration, while high participation is considered a sign of high integration (Kleven, 2019). Elections represent a vital form of political participation and enable people to influence policymaking and to have their voices heard. Elections are also an important basis for legitimacy and contribute to an affiliation with and loyalty to the political system. Significant differences in electoral participation can therefore be an indicator that the political system lacks legitimacy among some groups. Electoral participation can also be understood as an expression of affiliation and commitment (NOU, 2011).

Both immigrants and people born in Norway to immigrant parents vote less than the rest of the population. This applies both to parliamentary elections and municipal and county council elections (Corneliussen 2024).

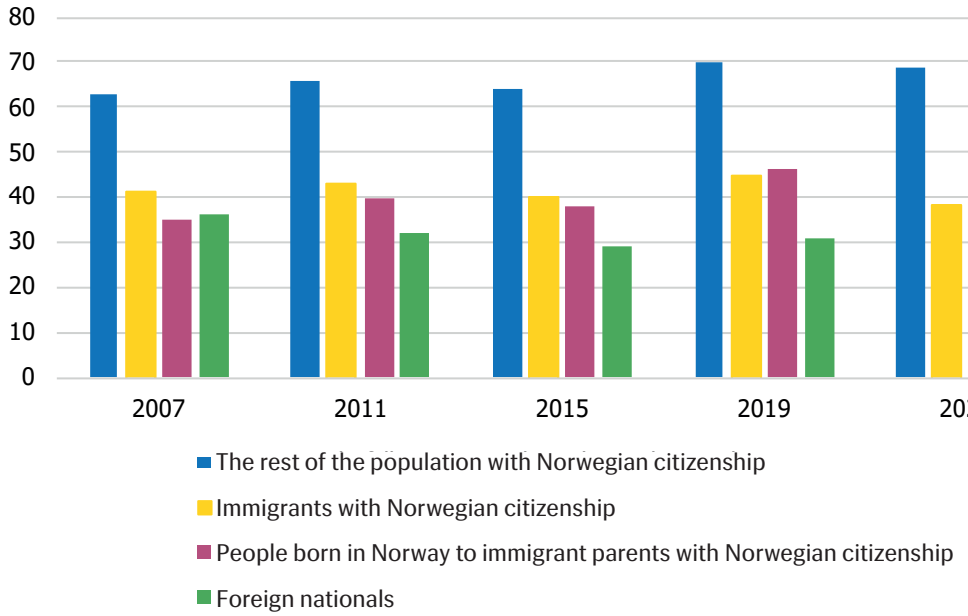
Figure 6.1. Electoral participation at parliamentary elections, by immigration category. 1997–2021. Percentage (Corneliussen, 2024)



The differences in electoral participation between immigrants and the population without immigrant backgrounds have remained relatively stable for parliamentary elections, with a marginal increase in differences from 2017 to 2021 (Figure 6.1). Electoral participation among immigrants decreased from 55 per cent in 2017 to 50 per cent in 2021. Among people born in Norway to immigrant parents, electoral participation decreased from 57 per cent in 2017 to 52 per cent in 2021. The decrease was highest among people born in Norway to parents from African countries - 53 per cent in 2017 compared with 45 per cent in 2021 (Kleven et al., 2022).

Figure 6.2 shows that while there were about the same number of people without an immigrant background who voted in the municipal council and county council elections in 2023 as in 2019, the proportion who exercised their right to vote decreased among immigrants both with and without Norwegian citizenship and people born in Norway to immigrant parents.

Figure 6.2. Electoral participation in municipal and county council elections, by immigration category. 2007–2023. Percentage (Corneliussen, 2024)



The reasons for there being lower electoral participation among people with immigrant backgrounds may include so-called compositional effects – due to the composition of the immigrant population, it is not surprising that electoral participation is lower among this part of the population. Immigrants are, on average, younger, have lower levels of education, employment rates and income, and these factors generally have a negative correlation with electoral participation (Christensen et al., 2025).

Electoral participation also varies with gender. Participation is higher among women than among men for voters both with and without immigrant backgrounds. For immigrants, the proportion of women who voted at the 2021 parliamentary elections was four percentage points higher than for men, (52 per cent versus 48 per cent). Corresponding figures for people born in Norway to immigrant parents were 57 per cent versus 47 per cent, while among Norwegian citizens without an immigrant background, 82 per cent of women and 79 per cent of men voted at the 2021 parliamentary elections (Statistics Norway, 2022a).

Voting is also influenced by country of origin. At the parliamentary elections, participation among immigrants from Nordic and Western European countries increased from 71 per cent in 2017 to 74 per cent in 2021, while among immigrants from African and Asian countries, participation decreased from 54 per cent in 2017 to 48 per cent in 2021 (Kleven 2021).

There is also a correlation between level of education and electoral participation: On average, electoral participation is higher among immigrants with a high level of education than among those with a lower level of education. At the same time, the positive importance of education for electoral participation is lower among immigrants than the rest of the population (Kleven and Bergseteren, 2022).

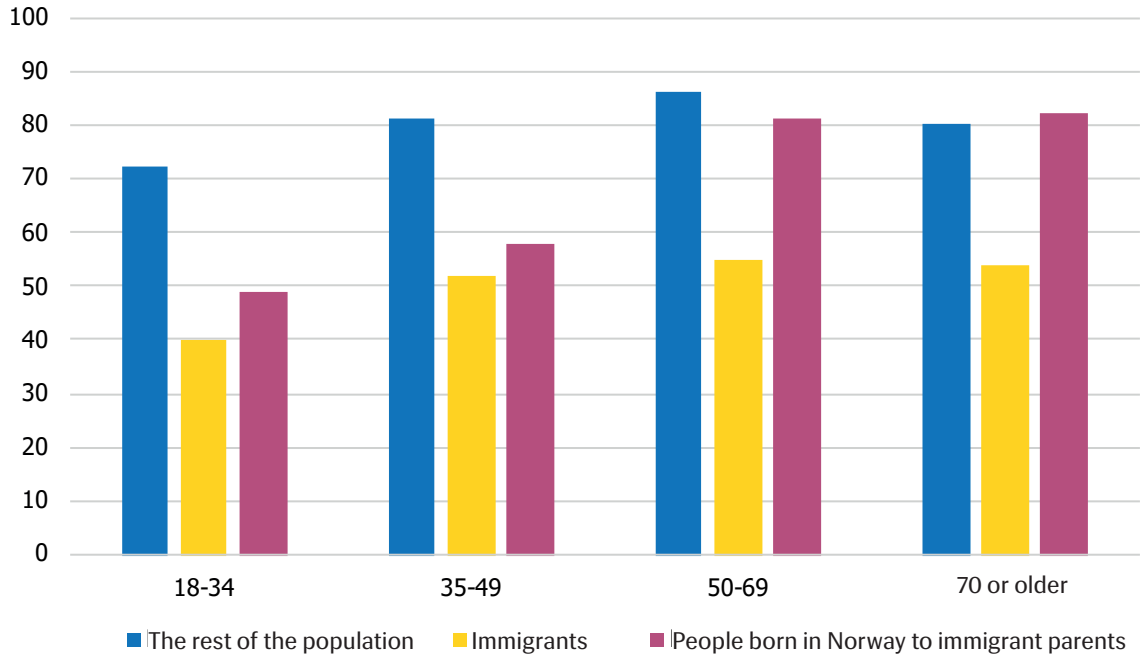
There is a weak positive correlation between period of residence and electoral participation among immigrants. The extent to which period of residence is of importance to electoral participation also varies according to which countries immigrants are from. For example, electoral participation at the 2021 municipal elections averaged 47 per cent for Norwegian citizens who immigrated from North America and Oceania 5 to 9 years ago, while this figure increased to 65 per cent for the same group that has resided in Norway for more than 20 years. The corresponding figures for Norwegian citizens who immigrated from Africa are 43 and 45 per cent respectively (Kleven and Bergseteren, 2022).

Research suggests that information and awareness campaigns in different languages that are targeted at immigrant communities, organisations and networks have a positive impact on electoral participation (Bergh, Christensen and Matland, 2020, 2021; Kleven and Bergseteren, 2022). Electoral participation among immigrants would probably be lower without these types of mobilisation initiatives (Kleven and Bergseteren, 2022). Initiatives involving personal contact (such as visiting voters at their homes) are often more effective than more impersonal mobilisation efforts (Christensen et al., 2025). In addition, immigrants who settle in neighbourhoods with high electoral participation and who are involved in local social networks are more likely to vote (Bratsberg et al., 2021).

People born in Norway to immigrant parents have grown up in Norway, have completed all of their schooling here and have been exposed to the same institutional frameworks as people without immigrant backgrounds (Kirkeberg et al., 2019). While the preceding sections of this report have shown there are minor differences between people born in Norway to immigrant parents and the rest of the population when concerning indicators such as school results, education levels and employment, we do not see the same trend when it comes to exercising the right to vote. The level of electoral participation among people born in Norway to immigrant parents is closer to that of immigrants than the population without immigrant backgrounds.

Part of this difference may be due to the fact that people born in Norway to immigrant parents are a relatively young population group, and that electoral participation increases with age, both among those with and without immigrant backgrounds (Corneliussen, 2024). This is shown in Figure 6.3, where we see that the difference in electoral participation between people born in Norway to immigrant parents and people without immigrant backgrounds is lower among the oldest age groups. Growing up in countries with democratic institutions contributes to higher electoral participation, particularly among women born in Norway to immigrant parents (Finseraas, Kotsadam and Polavieja, 2022).

Figure 6.3. Electoral participation at the 2021 parliamentary elections, by immigration category and age. Percentage (Kleven et al., 2022).

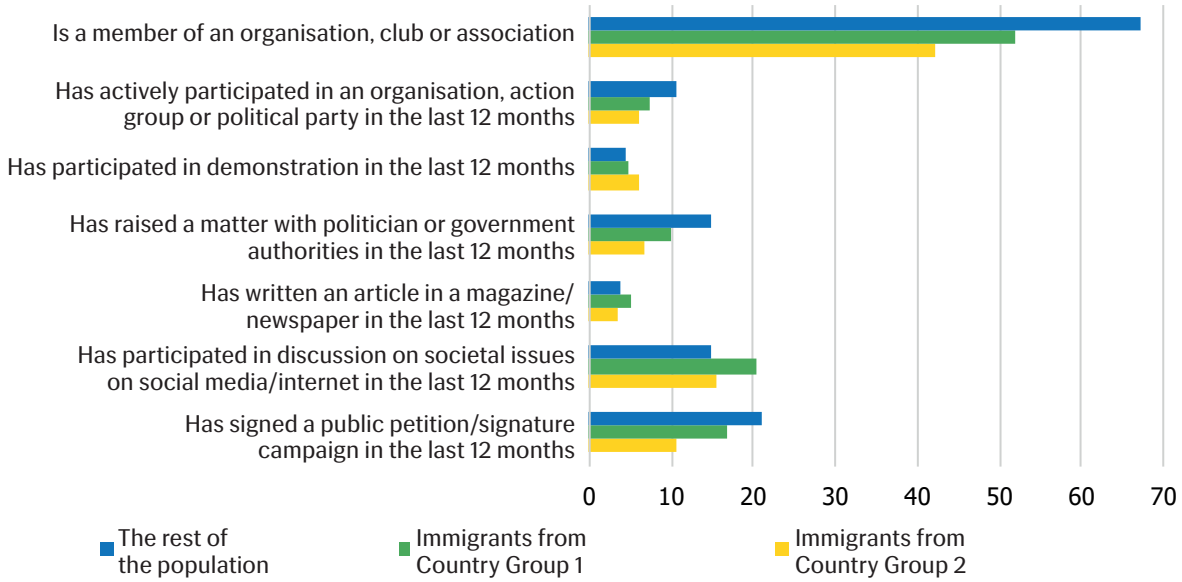


Political participation

6.2 Immigrants have lower levels of political participation

Electoral participation is only one form of political participation. Other forms of political participation include membership in associations, participation in demonstrations, and signing public petitions. A significantly higher proportion of the majority population than immigrants are members of a political organisation, club or association – 67 per cent versus 52 per cent in Country Group 1 and 42 per cent in Country Group 2 (Figure 6.4). When compared with membership, relatively few people engage in non-organised forms of political participation, such as bringing issues to the attention of politicians or public authorities, participating in discussions about societal issues on social media, or writing newspaper articles. This applies both to immigrants and the rest of the population.

Figure 6.4. Political participation based on activity in the last 12 months. 2022. Percentage (Living Conditions Survey, Statistics Norway, 2022).



Multiple studies show that political participation among immigrants is related to socioeconomic background (Dalen, Flatø and Friberg, 2022; Eimhjellen and Arnesen, 2018). Immigrants in full-time employment, who have higher levels of education and good Norwegian language skills are more likely to be politically engaged (Dalen et al., 2022). While immigrants have lower electoral participation, this group has a relatively strong interest in Norwegian politics and civil society, and those who show the greatest interest in politics and social relations in their country of origin are also the same people who are most interested in political matters in Norway (Dalen et al., 2022).

Analyses of political participation among minority young people reveal similar patterns to those among adults with immigrant backgrounds. Participation in political organisations and elections is lower in this group than among young people in the majority population. Girls participate more in political activities than boys, and this applies to young people with both majority and minority backgrounds. It is somewhat surprising that socio-economic resources have no pronounced significance, and the primary factor which explains the differences in political participation among young people is whether or not they come from families that are organisationally active and willing to engage in discussions, (Ødegård and Fladmoe, 2017).

Political representation

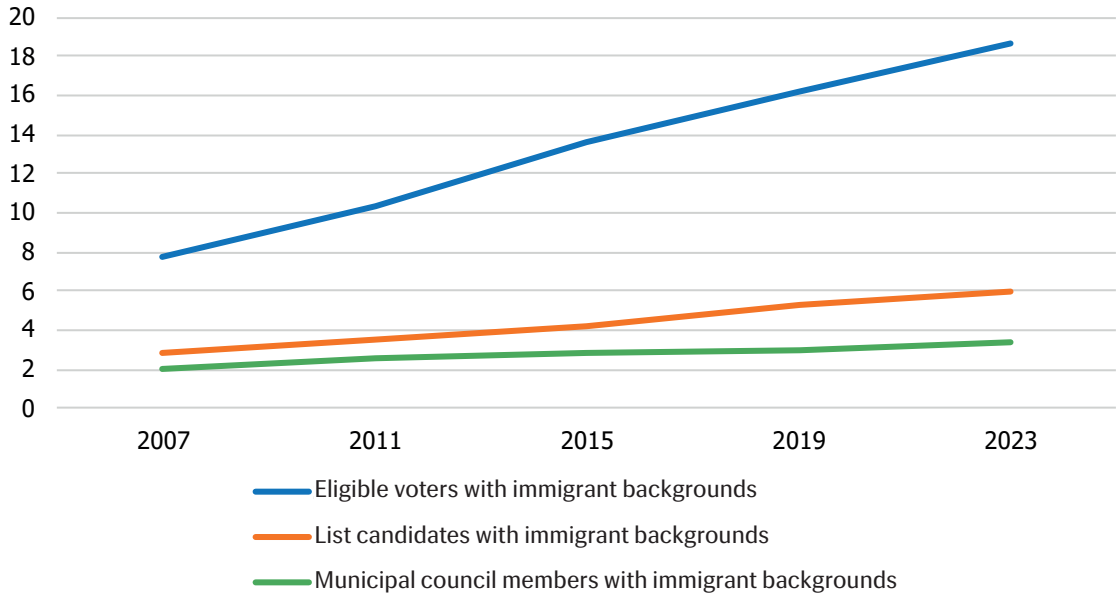
6.3 Immigrants are underrepresented in politics

While the proportion of people with immigrant backgrounds in the electorate who are eligible to vote has risen, the under-representation of immigrants on the municipal councils has increased. In the 2023 municipal elections, over 800,000 people with immigrant backgrounds

were eligible to vote, almost 3,200 stood as candidates for election, and just over 300 were elected to a municipal council (Statistics Norway, 2023b, 2023c, 2023e).

The share of municipal council members with immigrant backgrounds has grown marginally since 2007, from two per cent to three per cent in 2023 (Statistics Norway, 2023b). There has also been an increase in the proportion of candidates with immigrant backgrounds - from 3 per cent in 2007 to 6 per cent in 2023 (Statistics Norway, 2023d, 2023e).

Figure 6.5. People with immigrant backgrounds as a share of eligible voters, candidates and representatives in municipal elections, 2007–2023. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2023b, 2023c, 2023d, 2023e).

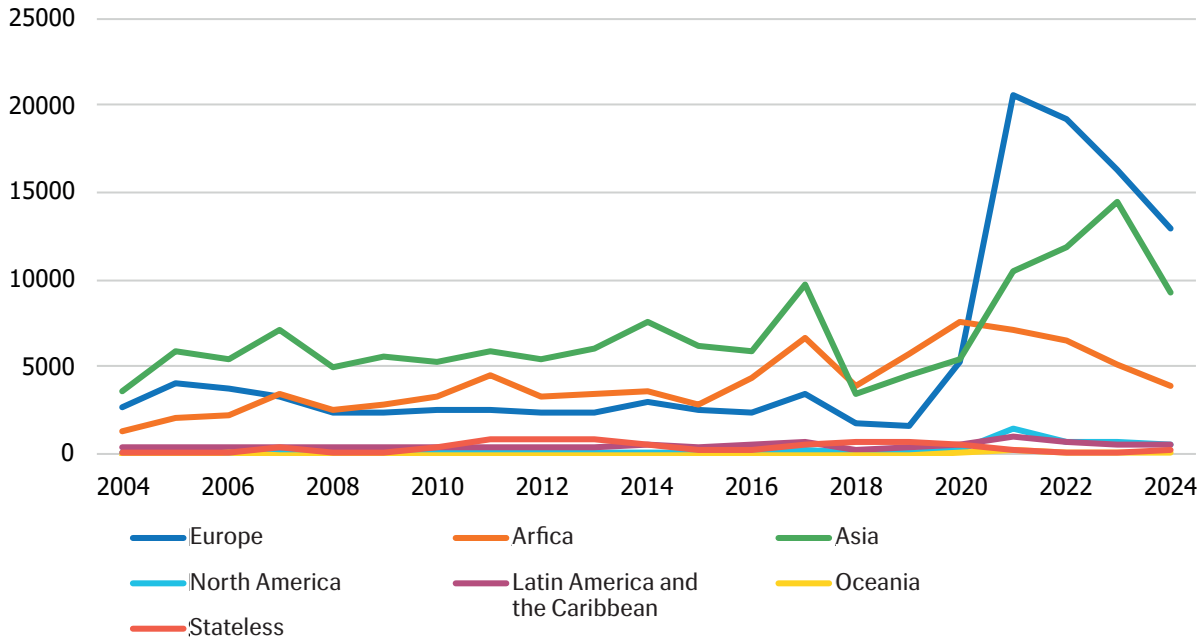


Transition to Norwegian citizenship

6.4 There are still many who obtain Norwegian citizenship

In 2024, just over 27,000 foreign nationals were granted Norwegian citizenship (Statistics Norway, 2025j). There has been a significant increase in transitions to Norwegian citizenship since 2020. This relates to the statutory amendment of 1 January 2020, which permitted one or more additional citizenships to Norwegian citizenship. 2024 was the first year since the statutory amendment in 2020 that the number of people transitioning to Norwegian citizenship dropped significantly when compared to the previous year (Molstad, 2025). While approximately 37,000 foreign nationals were granted Norwegian citizenship in 2023, this figure was just over 27,000 in 2024 (Statistics Norway, 2025j).

Figure 6.6. Transition to Norwegian citizenship, by country of origin. 1990–2023. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025n).



In the final three years before the statutory amendment for dual citizenship came into effect in 2020, two out of ten people who received Norwegian citizenship had lived in Norway for eight or more years. A relatively higher number of people with long periods of residence have obtained citizenship since the statutory amendment entered into force. In 2021, five out of ten of those granted citizenship had a period of residence of eight years or longer (Molstad, 2022). One possible explanation for this may be that many European citizens waited until the statutory amendment regarding dual citizenship had entered into force before applying for Norwegian citizenship.

The relationship between naturalisation – being accepted as a new citizen of a country – and different integration outcomes such as social integration, employment, wage development and electoral participation is well-documented in the international research literature (Bevelander and Pendakur, 2011; Goodman, 2023; Hainmuller, Hangartner and Pietrantuono, 2017; Peters, Schmeets and Vink, 2020; Peters, Vink and Schmeets, 2018). For example, a study from Switzerland found a causal link between being granting citizenship and long-term social integration. The link is stronger if not many years pass from when someone immigrates until they are granted citizenship (Hainmuller et al., 2017).

In Norway, researchers have examined the link between naturalisation and sense of belonging to Norwegian society (Erdal, Doeland and Tellander, 2018; Erdal and Midtbøen, 2023). These findings show that citizenship has something to say about ones' sense of belonging, but that this link is not unambiguous. For example, some immigrant groups report that they see citizenship as a means of acknowledging their sense of belonging, while others have a more pragmatic and practical relationship to citizenship (Erdal et al., 2018). Several also report that they find some form of security in obtaining a Norwegian passport, including as evidence of national affiliation, as insurance against being deported and as protection when people question how Norwegian they are (Erdal et al., 2018).

Use of media

6.5 Immigrants are increasing their use of digital media

Keeping up-to-date with news and public discourse can be an indicator of social engagement, sense of belonging and participation. Therefore, in this chapter we describe whether, and how, different parts of the population use news media.

Media use among people with immigrant backgrounds largely reflects the use of media by the population at large, particularly when age is taken into consideration (Schiro, Foss and Bekkengen, 2023). 85 per cent of the immigrant population access daily news on one or more of the most common media channels (newspaper, online newspaper, radio, TV or social media). 53 per cent of people with an immigrant background read online newspapers on an average day, compared to 64 per cent among the population as a whole. Among people aged 25-44, four out of five people born in Norway to immigrant parents read online newspapers daily. This is a marginally higher proportion than for the same age group in the population as a whole (Schiro et al., 2023).

Nine out of ten people with immigrant backgrounds who read newspapers or online newspapers read newspapers in Norwegian, while 25 per cent read newspapers in English, and 20 per cent read newspapers in another language (Schiro et al., 2023). While people with immigrant backgrounds are somewhat more internationally oriented when it comes to the news they read, a lower proportion in this group reads Norwegian local and district newspapers than the population as a whole. There are minor differences in the news that is read by people with immigrant backgrounds from Country Groups 1 and 2 (Schiro et al., 2023).

Figure 6.7. Media use on an average day according to immigrant category. 2022. Percentage (Schiro et al., 2023).

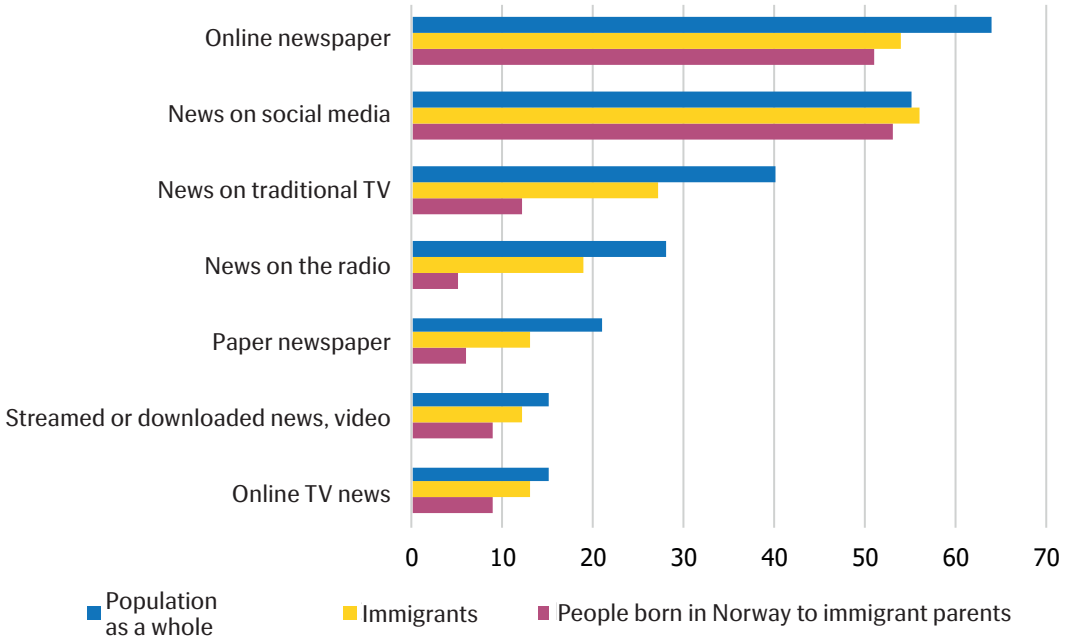


Figure 6.7 shows that social media and online newspapers are the most common platforms for consuming news. One explanation for people with immigrant backgrounds being more inclined to use digital media for news than print newspapers, linear TV and radio is that people with immigrant backgrounds are, on average, younger than the rest of the population (Bekkengen and Foss 2023). 27 per cent of immigrants and 12 per cent of people born in Norway to immigrant parents watch news on traditional TV on an average day. Among the population as a whole, four out of ten watch news on traditional TV. Nearly two out of ten immigrants listen to news on the radio, and of these, nine out of ten listen to the radio in Norwegian. However, people with immigrant backgrounds are more than three times as likely to listen to the radio in languages other than Norwegian and English than the population as a whole (Schiro et al., 2023).

Institutional trust

6.6 There are varying degrees of trust in different social institutions

A high level of trust among the population is an important factor for a well-functioning society. Trust is also described as a crucial prerequisite for several important areas in society, including economic growth, low corruption and good health (Dalen et al. 2022). It is common to distinguish between trust in other people in society (horizontal or general trust) and trust in societal institutions (institutional or vertical trust). Institutional trust is shaped by specific experiences with institutions, and has a direct consequence for the relationship between the state and its citizens (Andreasson, 2017; Dalen et al. 2024, 2022).

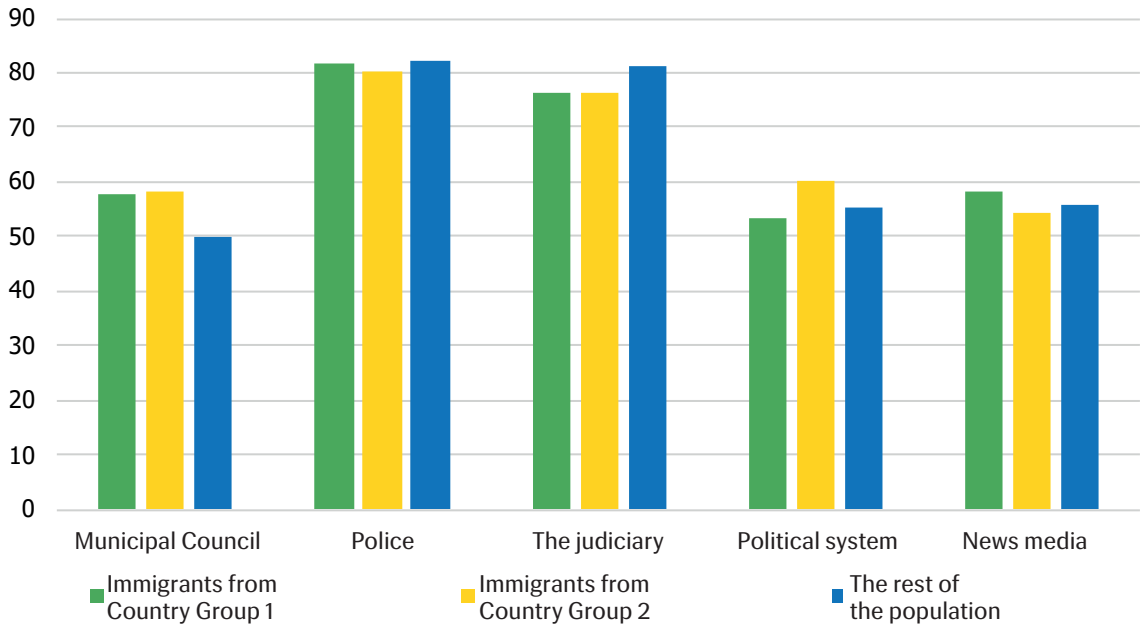
What is institutional trust?
Institutional trust, also known as vertical trust, refers to the trust people have in political and public institutions within society, such as the government, state apparatus, police or health services.

Several studies have found that immigrants express a higher level of trust in institutions than the rest of the population (Röder and Mühlau, 2012; Støren, 2019). There are also differences in trust in the political system between immigrants from different countries. For example, immigrants from Eritrea express a particularly high degree of trust (69 per cent), while the share with the least degree of trust is found among Polish immigrants (28 per cent) (Støren, 2019). International research has found that immigrants with low expectations of the state in their countries of origin develop a high level of trust when they encounter institutions that provide more equitable and fair treatment (Quaranta, 2024; Röder and Mühlau, 2012). The level of institutional trust among immigrants decreases in line with period of residence, however this may also be due to immigrants from certain countries and with different reasons for immigration being categorised differently in terms of period of residence (Støren, 2019).

Immigrants who came to Norway as children, and people born in Norway to immigrant parents, express about the same degree of institutional trust as the population as a whole at the same age (Støren, 2019). These two groups have largely grown up under the same institutional conditions as the majority population.

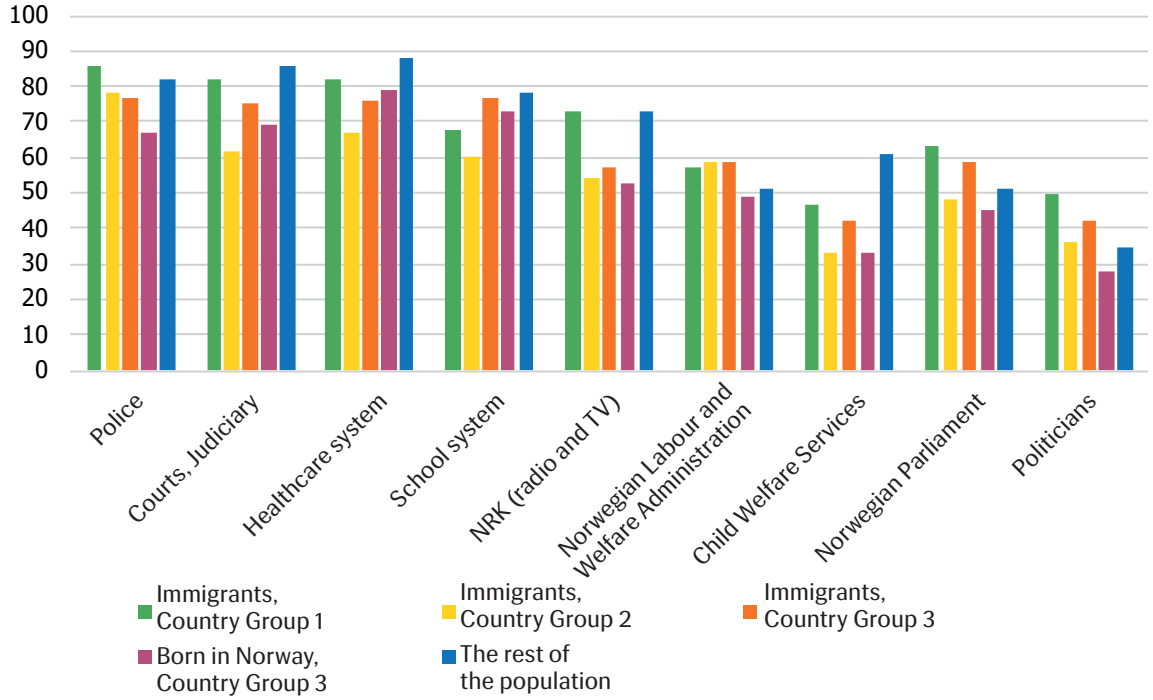
Statistics Norway's living conditions survey has found virtually no differences in the level of trust in various institutions between immigrants and the rest of the population. In both groups, eight out of ten expressed a high level of trust in the police and the judiciary in 2022. Trust in the political system, municipal councils and the news media was somewhat lower (Figure 6.8).

Figure 6.8. Proportion who express a high level of trust in various institutions, by immigrant category. 2022. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2022d).



A 2023 survey found that immigrants have a relatively high level of trust in institutions. The same survey also found that the degree of institutional trust among immigrants varies according to the applicable social institution (Dalen et al., 2024). As illustrated in Figure 6.9, there are also differences in the level of trust in institutions between immigrants with different countries of origin. While the level of trust in the police, courts/judiciary and health services among immigrants from Country Group 1 is, on average, relatively high and in line with the general population, there is a somewhat lower level of trust among immigrants from Country Groups 2 and 3, as well as among people born in Norway to immigrant parents from Country Group 3. However, if we look at trust in the Norwegian Parliament, we find the highest level of trust among immigrants from Country Group 3 (Dalen et al. 2024). Furthermore, on average, people born in Norway to immigrant parents express a lower level of institutional trust than immigrants, women express somewhat less trust than men, younger people express less trust than the elderly, and people who have completed upper secondary school or higher education have, on average, less trust than people with a low level of education (Dalen et al., 2024).

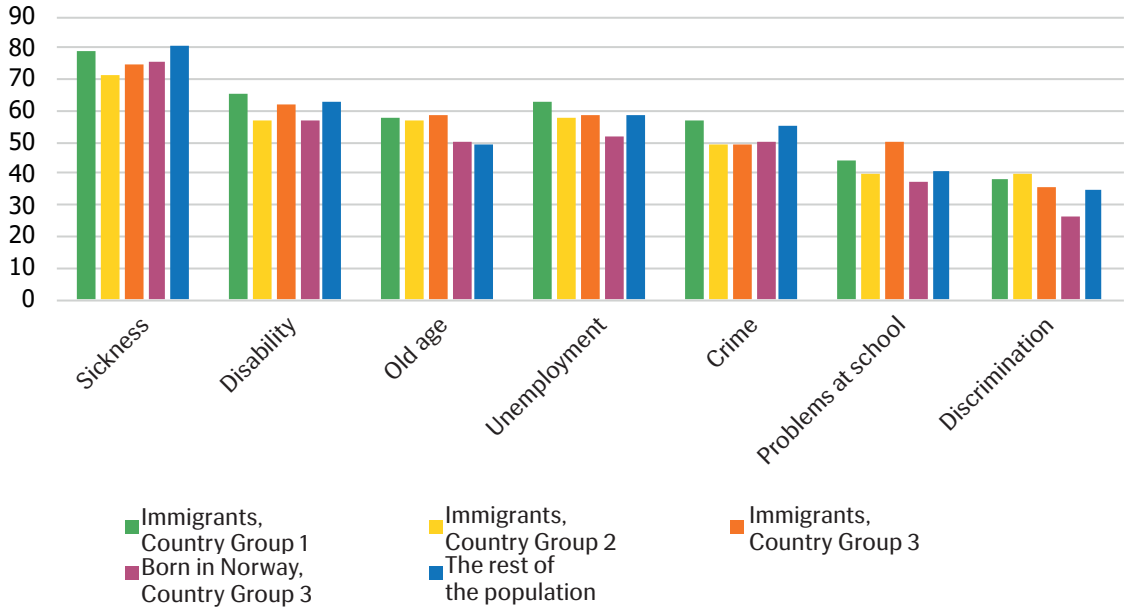
Figure 6.9. Proportion of the population with a very high or reasonably high level of trust in the following Norwegian institutions by immigrant background. 2023. Percentage (Dalen et al., 2024).



A recent study that examined trust in NAV among immigrant users found that trust in NAV erodes over time. Immigrant users with a long period of residence have significantly less trust in NAV than both people without an immigrant background and newly arrived immigrants. There may be several reasons for why this trust erodes, however, poor user experiences and the feeling of being powerless when encountering the system most probably play a role (Friberg, Volckmar-Eeg and Andresen, 2024).

Belief that you will receive the help you need from the state can be interpreted as trusting that society is there to assist you, and that you are viewed as an equal part of that society (Dalen et al., 2024). Figure 6.10 demonstrates that there are relatively minor differences between people with and without immigrant backgrounds, as well as between immigrants with different countries of origin, in terms of the degree of trust in obtaining the help that they need in different situations.

Figure 6.10. Proportion of the population who have a high level or relatively high level of trust that they will obtain help from the state in the event of various types of incidents or conditions. 2023. Percentage (Dalen et al., 2024).

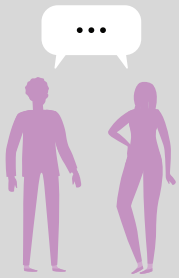


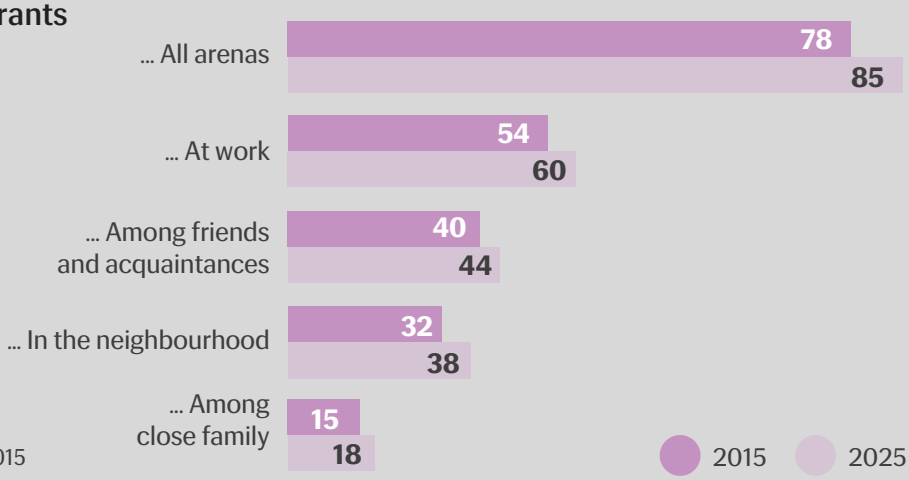
Unemployment, poor advice and perceived discrimination reduce trust in public institutions (Støren, 2019). For example, unemployed people have the lowest level of trust in the political system. This applies both among immigrants and people born to immigrant parents – compared to people who are in the labour market and students (Støren, 2019). Furthermore, for people born in Norway to immigrant parents, a negative correlation has been found between poor advice and the degree of institutional trust (Støren, 2019). Experiencing differential treatment also has a negative correlation with trust in the political system. This applies both to immigrants and people born in Norway to immigrant parents (Støren, 2019). The same can apply to trust in the police. Studies show that young men with minority backgrounds experience more frequent police checks without them receiving explanations as to why they are being checked. Several people experience that the checks are due to their skin colour or ethnic background. These types of experiences can challenge the trust that this group has in the police (The Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, 2022; Solhjell et al., 2019).

2025

Social integration

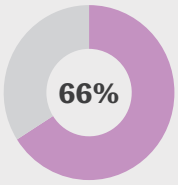
Contact with immigrants



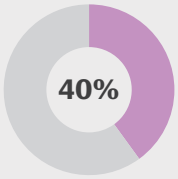


More contact since 2015

Discrimination



of people with an immigrant background have experienced



in the rest of the population

Acceptance

9 out of 10

people born in Norway to immigrant parents feel integrated, but only 7 out of 10 feel accepted

Attitudes towards immigrants

82%

believe immigrants make an important contribution to working life

22%

believe immigrants are a cause of insecurity in society

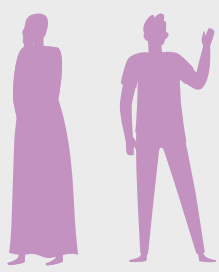
Trust in other people

57%

of immigrants find that most people can be trusted

69%

in the rest of the population



Sources (top from left): Holdninger til innvandrere, Statistics Norway (2025), Dalen et al., (2024).

7. Social integration

Interpersonal contact in different formal and informal arenas, in both small and large communities, is of crucial importance in the integration process. Rewarding social relationships in everyday life help to expand networks and create trust and a sense of belonging. However, the absence of these relationships can result in loneliness, exclusion or segregation. Experiencing prejudice or discrimination can have negative consequences for integration, health and quality of life. Another important aspect of social integration is self-determination, or the freedom to decide for oneself how to live one's life.

Social integration, also known as everyday integration, is a two-way process that is about building bridges between the minority and majority. By promoting meeting places and a common understanding of fundamental values and norms in Norwegian society, social integration contributes to immigrants experiencing a greater sense of belonging, inclusion and participation in society. Social integration is not only important for the individual, but also for the cohesion of society as a whole (Nordic Welfare Centre, 2024). This therefore requires both effort from each immigrant and that immigrants are met with openness and are given the opportunity to participate in the same way as others are.

Unlike, for example, indicators of connection to the labour force and education, for which good indicators exist, social integration is more difficult to measure. For this we need to rely more on subjective experiences and attitudes in different groups of the population. This also makes it more difficult to measure and compare indicators of social integration over time, and there may be greater uncertainty associated with the research findings related to certain topics in the field. [6]

General trust

7.1 Immigrants have less trust in other people

Trust lays the foundation for contact, cooperation and cohesion, and is therefore a vital aspect of integration. It is important both to have trust and to gain trust, and building trust is a two-way process (Barstad 2024). Research also shows that a high degree of trust is linked to many positive outcomes for individuals. Trust is also described as a crucial prerequisite for several important areas in society, including economic growth, low corruption and good health (Dalen et al. 2022). General trust is also a difficult metric to use in the context of integration, because it is uncertain whether it should be understood as a prerequisite for integration, or as a result of integration (Dalen et al., 2024).

Several studies have examined the connection between the trust immigrants have in other people and previous experiences and socialisation in their home country (Dinesen 2012; Nannestad et al., 2014).

6 It is also worth remembering that the most marginalized groups in society are probably not included in surveys.

Immigrants in Norway often come from countries where a low level of trust is more prevalent, and this can have a sustained effect on their level of trust, even after having immigrated. However, studies also show that immigrants adapt to the higher level of horizontal trust in the receiving country. The empirical evidence therefore points in both directions.

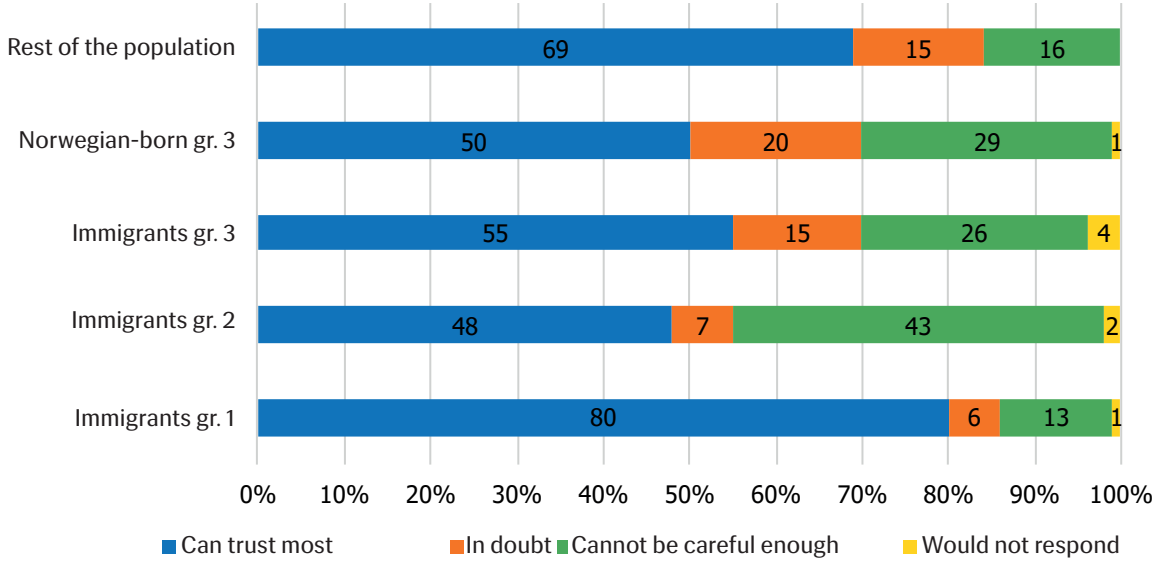
What is meant by general trust?

Horizontal trust can be defined as the tendency to trust other people, and this type of trust is therefore also called interpersonal trust. It is common to distinguish between **general trust**, i.e. trust in strangers in a society, and specific trust, which is about how much one trusts specific people or groups.

A question that is often used when measuring horizontal (general) trust is: "Do you think you can generally trust most people, or do you think you cannot be careful enough when encountering other people?" In response to this question, 57 per cent of people with immigrants background stated that most people can be trusted, compared with 69 per cent of people without immigrant backgrounds (Dalen et al., 2024). Several studies have found that, on average, people with immigrant backgrounds are somewhat less trusting of other people than the rest of the population (Dalen et al., 2024, 2022; Støren 2019; Vrålstad and Wiggen 2017).

General trust also varies between different groups with immigrant backgrounds. Immigrants from Country Group 1 (Western Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand) distinguish themselves by the fact that they are far more likely to state that other people can be trusted. A total of 80 per cent believe this, compared to 48 per cent in Country Group 2 (new EU countries in Eastern and Central Europe), 55 per cent in Country Group 3 (countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America) and 50 per cent among people born in Norway to immigrant parents from Country Group 3. When divided among individual countries, people from Germany and Sweden express the highest level of trust, while people from Poland, Syria and Lithuania express the lowest level of trust (Dalen et al., 2024).

Figure 7.1. General trust, measured by the question "Would you say that you can generally trust most people, or do you think you cannot be careful enough when encountering other people?" 2023. Percentage (Dalen et al., 2024).



Part of the explanation for the differences between people born in Norway to immigrant parents and immigrants can be age, because people born in Norway to immigrant parents are a relatively young group. Older people with immigrant backgrounds are more inclined to trust others in comparison with young people with immigrant backgrounds (Dalen et al., 2024). Other characteristics that may have a positive correlation with horizontal trust include longer period of residence, better Norwegian language skills, higher education and a stronger connection to the labour force (Dalen et al., 2022; Støren, 2019). However, the experience of being discriminated against can have a negative correlation with trust in other people (Støren, 2019).

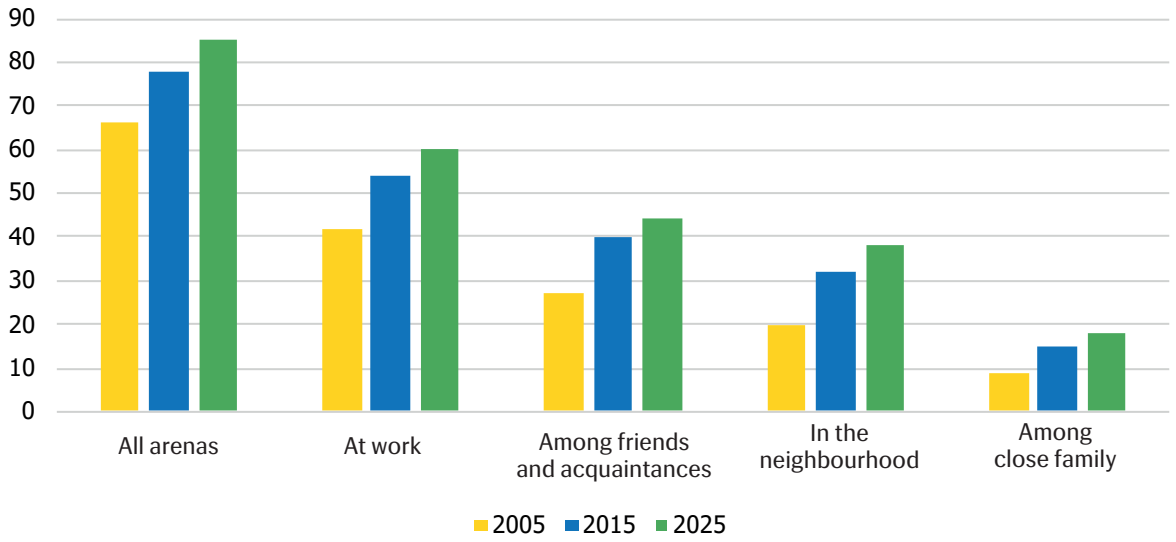
Social networks and contact

7.2 Increasingly more contact with immigrants in different arenas

As the number of immigrants in Norway has increased, so has the number of people in the general population who have had contact with them. The proportion of the population who report that they have contact with immigrants increased from two of three in 2004 to over four of five in 2024 (Statistics Norway, 2025a). The workplace, circle of friends and acquaintances and neighbourhood were the most widespread contact arenas between 2005 and 2025. There has also been an increase among those who have contact with immigrants in multiple arenas, and this development would indicate that there are more diverse points of contact in the population (Strøm, Arnesen and Kvalø 2025). The majority of those who have contact with immigrants also report that they have daily or weekly contact. There is also a clear majority who report having positive experiences associated with the contact they have with immigrants. This share has increased from 69 per cent in 2003 to 82 per cent in 2025 (Strøm et al. 2025).

Studies also show that a large majority are willing to have social relationships with immigrants. More than 9 out of 10 responded with a yes to questions about whether they are comfortable having a doctor who is an immigrant or having a close colleague who is an immigrant. 8 out of 10 responded that they are comfortable themselves or with someone in their immediate family marrying an immigrant (Strøm et al. 2025).

Figure 7.2. Contact with immigrants, by arena. 2005-2025. Percentage. (Statistics Norway, 2025a)



There is a correlation between personal contact with immigrants and more positive attitudes towards immigration and greater trust in general (Brekke et al., 2024; Finseraas et al., 2019). It is particularly those who have contact with people with immigrant backgrounds in connection with work, volunteering or leisure activities who are more positive towards immigration (Brekke et al., 2024; Strøm et al., 2025). At the same time, it is not a simple task to demonstrate whether someone becomes more positively inclined towards people with immigrant backgrounds by meeting them, or whether it is those who are already positively inclined who seek out arenas where they can meet people with immigrant backgrounds (Brekke and Fladmoe, 2022).

Among immigrants, there is also a connection between having personal contact with people without immigrant backgrounds, greater experience of integration and increased trust (Dalen et al., 2024). This applies to those who have contact with people without immigrant backgrounds in connection with work, in the neighbourhood and through leisure activities. Those who state that they have a lot of contact with people without immigrant backgrounds in different arenas report fewer experiences of being discriminated against than those who state that they have little contact with people without immigrant backgrounds (Dalen et al., 2024).

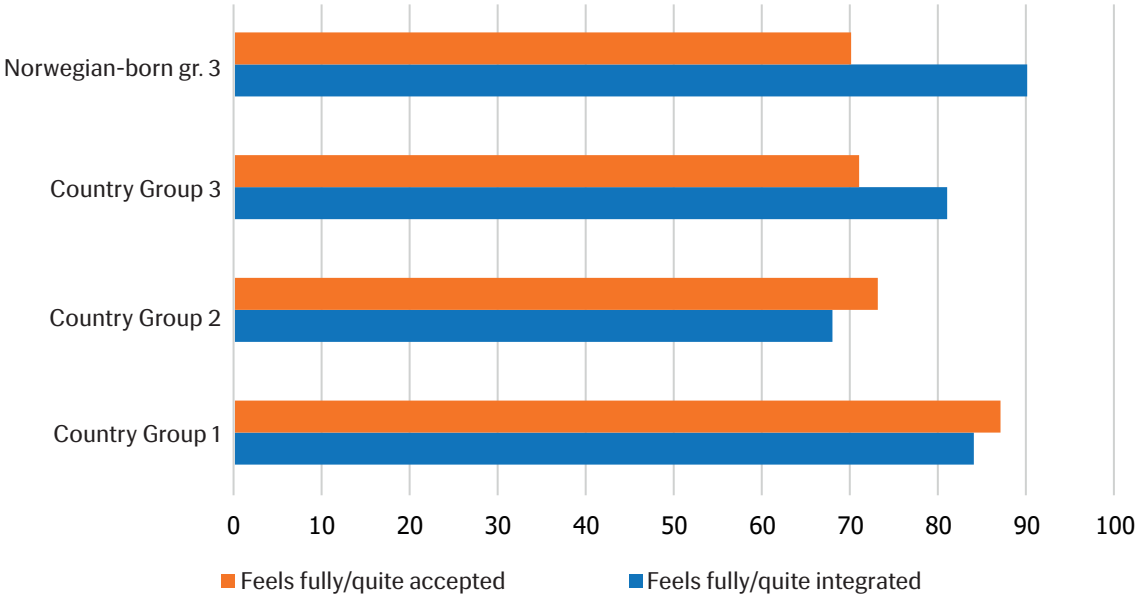
Sense of belonging and acceptance

7.3 People born in Norway feel integrated but not accepted

The population of Norway is becoming increasingly more diverse, and the concept of "Norwegianness" is not unambiguous. Young people with immigrant backgrounds gradually acquire an identity as Norwegian. At the same time, a significant proportion experience that others do not recognize them as being Norwegian (Friberg, 2021). The question of perceived "Norwegianness" can be problematic, because it suggests that immigrants must or should identify as being Norwegian. However, it can be a question that reveals one's connection to the community and sense of belonging in Norway. A study of immigrants' everyday lives and integration shows that 56 per cent of people with immigrant backgrounds consider themselves as being completely Norwegian or quite Norwegian. A significantly lower proportion, 32 per cent, believe that others view them as being completely Norwegian or quite Norwegian. There is a thus a large disconnect between one's own perception of "Norwegianness" and how others may view this. Furthermore, this disconnect is about the same for people born in Norway to immigrant parents as for immigrants (Dalen et al., 2024).

In the same study, 80 per cent of people with immigrant backgrounds responded that they feel fully or quite integrated into Norwegian society. 74 per cent feel fully or quite accepted. The gap between feeling integrated and accepted is widest for people born in Norway to immigrant parents. In this group, 90 per cent reported that they feel fully or quite integrated, but only 70 per cent feel fully or quite accepted.

Figure 7.3. Proportion who feel completely or relatively integrated and completely or relatively accepted in Norwegian society. 2023. Percentage (Dalen et al., 2024).



It may appear paradoxical that children of immigrants who are born and raised in Norway feel less accepted than their parents. This is a known phenomenon and is referred to in the research literature as the integration paradox (Dalen et al., 2024; Midtbøen and Kitterød, 2019; Schaeffer and Kas, 2023). Increased integration does not necessarily entail a stronger experience of acceptance and sense of belonging. There can be a number of different reasons for this. Immigrants and their Norwegian-born children who participate in multiple social arenas and have more contact with the rest of the population are more exposed to unlawful discrimination and exclusion. Another theory is that the more integrated someone is, the more inclined they are to interpret different experiences as discrimination, because they have higher expectations of receiving equal treatment and greater awareness about discrimination as a social problem.

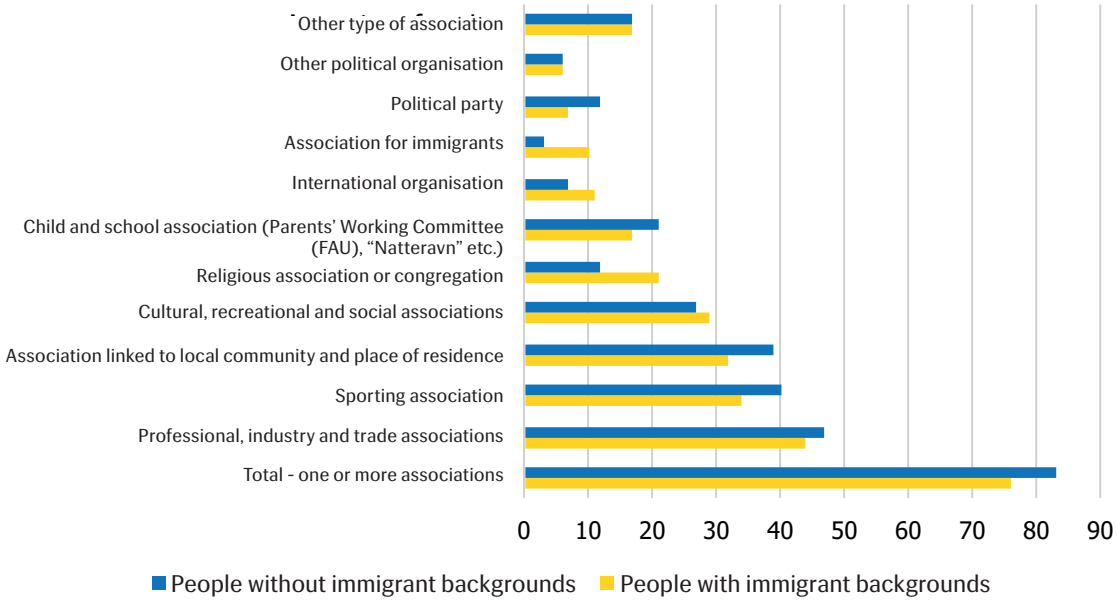
Participation in volunteering

7.4 Poor Norwegian language skills are the biggest obstacle to volunteering

Voluntary organisations are important arenas for integration and participation in the community. Through participation in voluntary work and various leisure activities, people have access to more social meeting spaces and get the opportunity to build social networks and to be included in local communities. Research also reveals a positive, albeit weak link between volunteer work and quality of life (Skiple, Eimhjellen and Christensen, 2024).

Immigrants participate to a somewhat lesser extent in organised activities and volunteer work than the rest of the population (Eimhjellen et al., 2023; Eimhjellen, Bentsen and Wollebæk, 2020; Haugland and Dalen, 2023; Jacobsen et al., 2021). A survey of the immigrant population shows that 76 per cent of people with immigrant backgrounds have participated in at least one voluntary association in the past two years, and the same applies to 83 per cent of people without immigrant backgrounds (Dalen et al., 2024).

Figure 7.4. Proportion who have participated (member, attended meetings and/or contributed as a volunteer) in different types of associations over the past two years. 2023. Percentage (Dalen et al., 2024).



Gender, age, period of residence education and Norwegian language skills influence the likelihood of participating in volunteering. Immigrant women, older immigrants and immigrants with low levels of education and poor Norwegian language skills have lower participation rates (Eimhjellen and Arnesen, 2018). Having inadequate Norwegian language skills is the single factor that most immigrants themselves highlight as preventing them from participating in volunteer work (Espegren et al., 2022). A lack of information and knowledge about what characterises volunteering in Norway can also constitute barriers to participation. Other reasons may include factors related to life situation, financial challenges, bureaucracy and lack of meeting places (Espegren et al., 2022).

The participation of immigrants in volunteering may also vary depending on the type of organisation or how the voluntary efforts are organised. For example, immigrants participate to a lesser extent the more formalized the involvement is, and the more time it takes to participate (Statistics Norway, 2022b, 2022c).

In addition, some immigrants come from countries with different traditions and systems for volunteering, and different means of organisation. Experiences from one's country of origin provide different prerequisites for inclusion in volunteer work in Norway. When compared

to volunteering in other countries, volunteering in Norway generally has a strong link to the government authorities through financial support, cooperation and agreements, and this link can represent a challenge for some. For immigrant groups who have experience with less bureaucratic volunteer work from their country of origin, it can take time to understand and build trust in Norwegian civil society. Experiences with government authorities and public institutions in one's country of origin can vary between different immigrant groups, and this can contribute towards explaining the scepticism towards organisations that cooperate with the government authorities (Espegren et al., 2022).

Children's participation in leisure activities

7.5 Financial situation plays a major role in whether children participate in leisure activities

Having the opportunity to participate and be active in one's leisure time is a fundamental right of all children and young people, cf. Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Being involved in leisure activities contributes to a sense of belonging, community and mastery, as well as to better physical and mental health (Eime et al., 2013). Leisure activities are also an important integration arena. While young people with minority backgrounds who participate in volunteering or sport are more socially engaged, no equivalent correlation is found among young people without minority backgrounds (Ødegård and Fladmoe, 2020).

There are differences between children and young people with and without immigrant backgrounds in terms of how many participate in leisure activities (Bakken and Strandbu, 2023; Myrli and Mehus, 2015; Walseth and Strandbu, 2014). This particularly applies to organised sports, which is the single activity that organises the most children and young people. A 2023 survey revealed that 63 per cent of young people with minority backgrounds participated in sports during their teenage years. The corresponding figure for young people without immigrant backgrounds was 79 per cent (Bakken and Strandbu, 2023). Furthermore, 20 per cent of young people with minority backgrounds have never participated in organised sports. The same applies to 6 per cent of young people without minority backgrounds. The degree of participation is higher among young people with immigrant backgrounds who were born in Norway, or who came to Norway before the age of five. However, there are also more people in this group than young people in general who have never participated (Bakken and Strandbu, 2023).

Figure 7.5. Participation in sports during childhood. 2023. Percentage (Bakken and Strandbu, 2023).

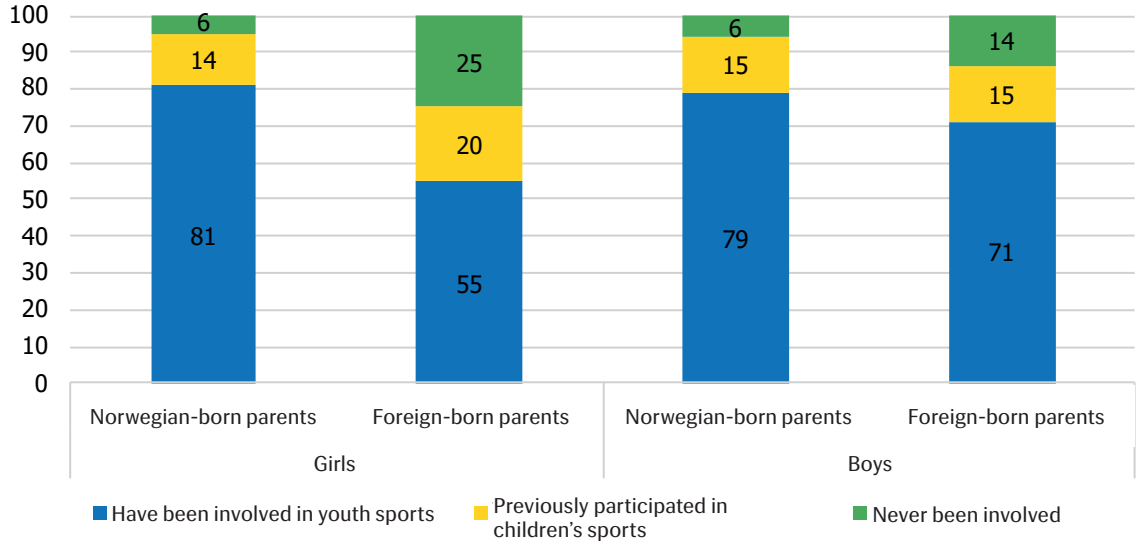
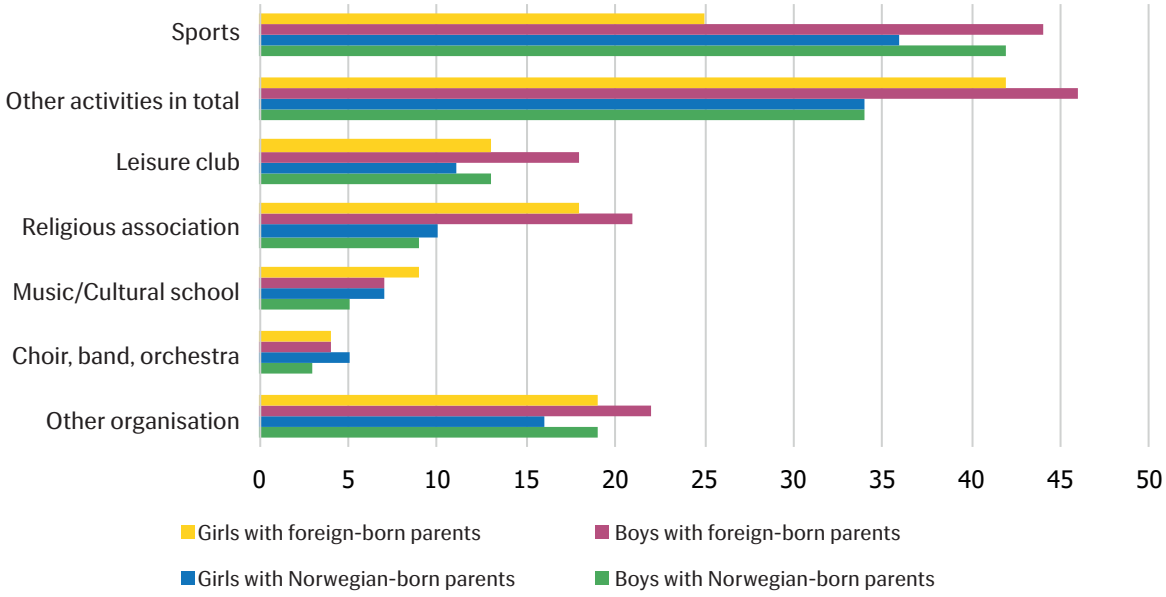


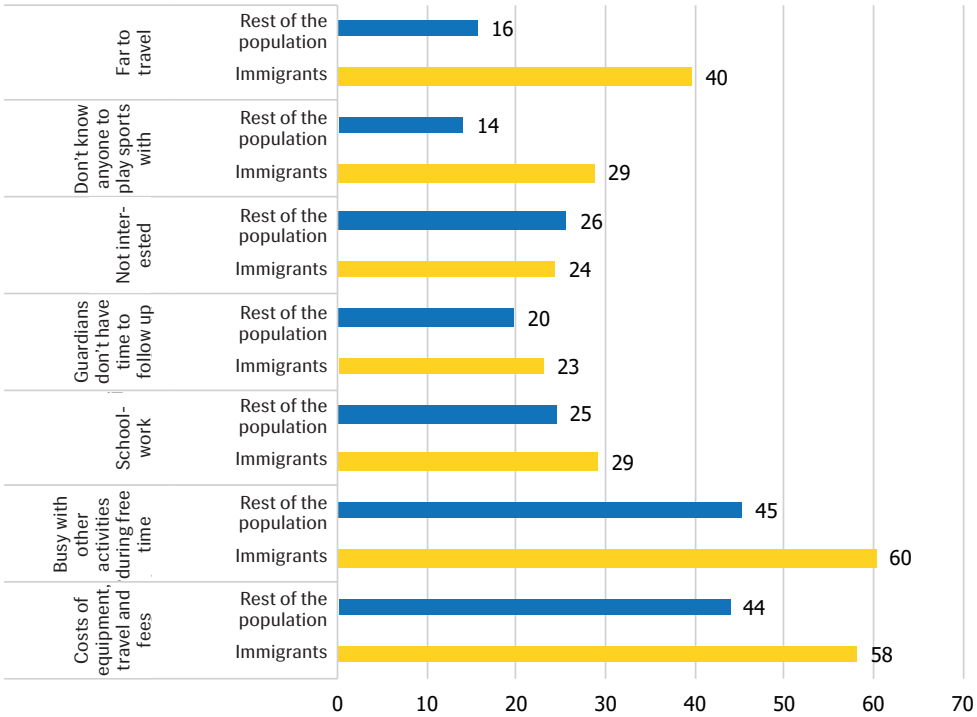
Figure 7.5 shows that girls with immigrant parents in particular are overrepresented among those who have never participated in organised sports. 25 per cent of this group has never participated in organised sport, compared to 6 per cent of girls with Norwegian-born parents. The gap is smaller among boys with and without minority backgrounds. Girls also stop participating in sports at an earlier stage than boys. Socioeconomic background explains part of the difference between the groups with and without minority backgrounds, particularly for boys (Bakken and Strandbu 2023; Strandbu, Bakken and Sletten 2020).

Figure 7.6 shows how many girls and boys have participated in leisure activities in the last month. This provides a more nuanced picture of the level of participation among minority young people. Both girls and boys with immigrant backgrounds participate in a broader range of other organised leisure activities than girls and boys without minority backgrounds. Among other things, girls with immigrant backgrounds are somewhat more often involved in religious associations, music or cultural schools or other associations (book clubs etc.) compared to girls without immigrant backgrounds (Bakken and Strandbu 2023).

Figure 7.6. Participation in leisure activities during the last month. 2023. Percentage (Bakken and Strandbu, 2023).



Differences in class backgrounds and financial situation are part of the explanation for why fewer children and young people with minority backgrounds participate in organised leisure activities (Bakken and Enstad, 2023; Jacobsen et al., 2021; Strandbu et al., 2020). As shown in Figure 7.7, there is a much higher proportion of children and young people with immigrant backgrounds who report cost as being an obstacle to participating in sports compared to children and young people without immigrant backgrounds – 58 per cent versus 44 per cent respectively (Statistics Norway, 2025az). In addition, research points to factors such as discrimination, the ability of parents to follow up their children's activities, culture and traditions as barriers to participation in leisure activities (Nygård, 2022; Strandbu, Bakken and Sletten, 2019).

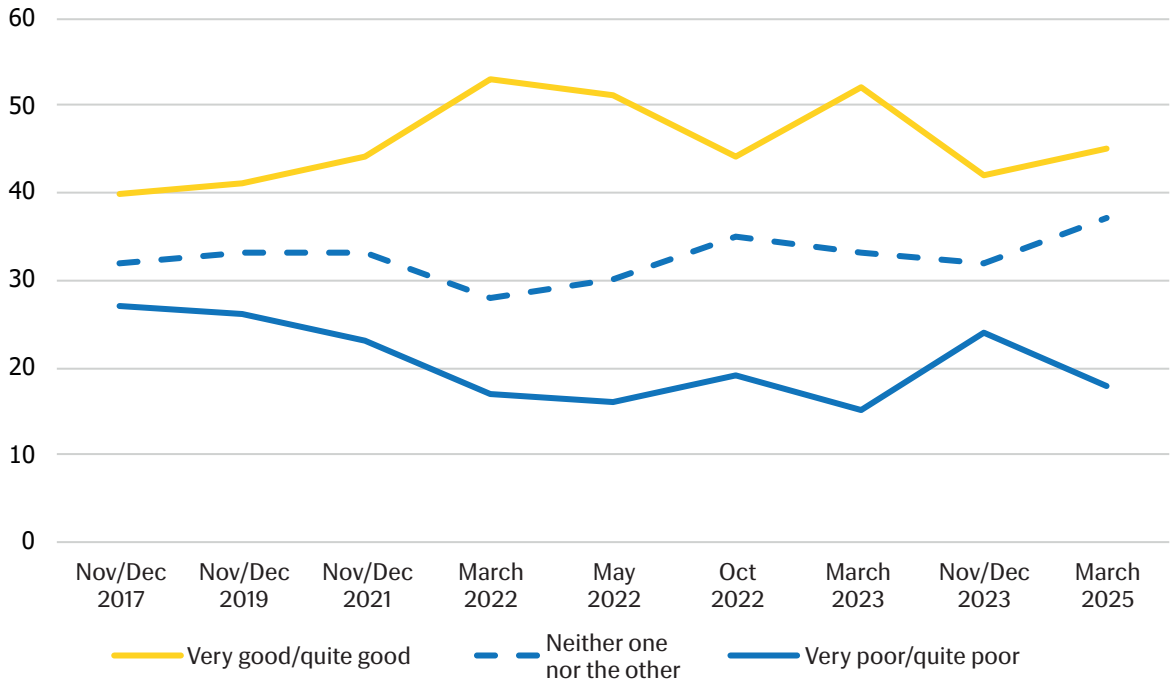


Attitudes to immigration and integration

7.6 Decline in positive attitudes

A number of comprehensive surveys are conducted at regular intervals of the population's attitudes to immigrants and immigration are conducted. These surveys include Statistics Norway's survey of attitudes (Statistics Norway, 2025e) and IMDi's Integration Barometer (Brekke et al., 2024).

Figure 7.8. "Do you think that immigration is generally a good thing or a bad thing for Norway?" 2017–2025. Percentage (Fladmoe et al. 2025).



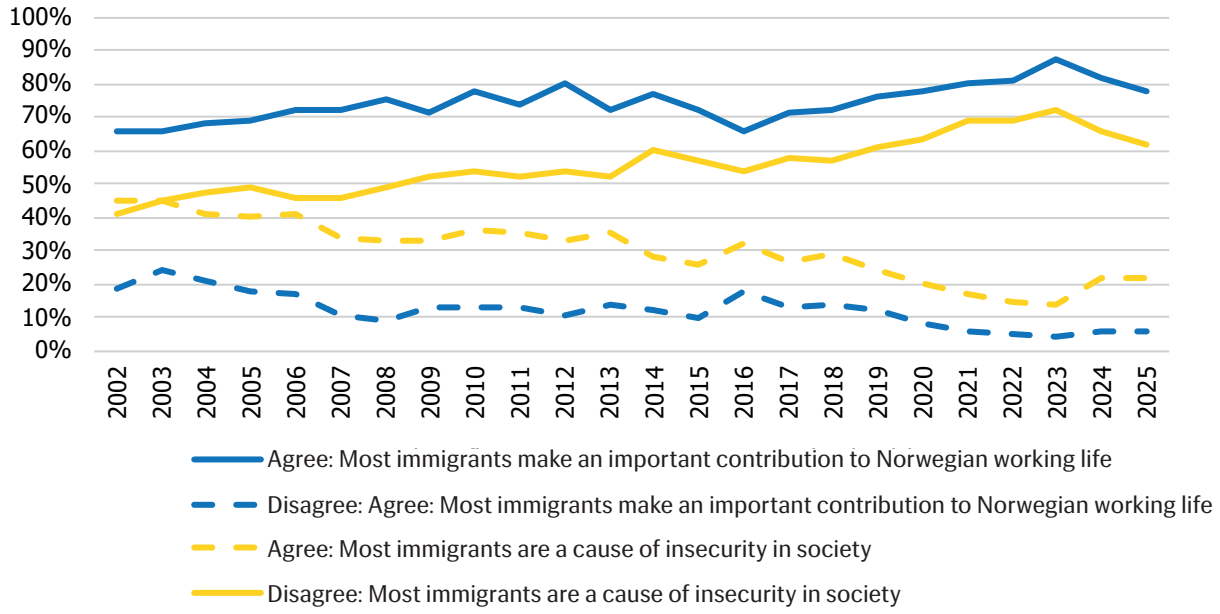
Variations in attitudes over time can be viewed in the context of various events and cycles in society. In the months following the outbreak of war in Ukraine in 2022, a significant increase in positive attitudes towards immigration and greater support among the Norwegian population for accepting refugees were registered. At the end of 2021, four out of ten people believed that Norway should accept more refugees. In March 2022, six out of ten gave the same response. The proportion who believed immigration is generally good for Norway, and that integration is, on the whole, going well, increased significantly over the same short period of time (Brekke and Fladmoe, 2022).

However, the past two years have seen a decline in positive attitudes (Kvalø and Arnesen, 2025). For example, there has been an increase in the proportion of people who consider immigrants to be a source of insecurity, while the proportion who disagrees with this claim has decreased. The proportion who respond that immigrants make a useful contribution to the labour market and that they enrich cultural life in Norway has also decreased. At the same time, the proportion who believes that it should be more difficult for refugees and asylum seekers to stay in Norway has increased over the past couple of years. In 2025, a larger

proportion believe that Norway should accept more labour migrants than believe that Norway should accept more refugees, asylum seekers and family members (Fladmoe et al. 2025).

The general decline in positive attitudes means that these are now at the same level as where they were prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Less positive attitudes over the past two years can therefore be seen as a normalisation (Kvalø and Arnesen, 2025). Despite this decrease, a majority of people still express positive rather than negative attitudes. When viewed from a 20-year perspective, attitudes towards immigration and immigrants have become more positive. In 2025, for example, two out of ten agreed with the statement that immigrants are a source of insecurity, while four out of ten agreed with this 20 years ago. The proportion that believes it should be more difficult to stay in Norway has decreased from 45 per cent in 2006 to 24 per cent in 2025. There are also more people than before who state that foreign labour is important for ensuring the provision of welfare services, and there is generally strong support for immigrants having the same opportunities in the labour market as the population in general (Brekke et al., 2024; Kvalø and Arnesen, 2025).

Figure 7.9. Percentage who strongly/somewhat agree and strongly/somewhat disagree with two statements. 2002–2025. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025p).



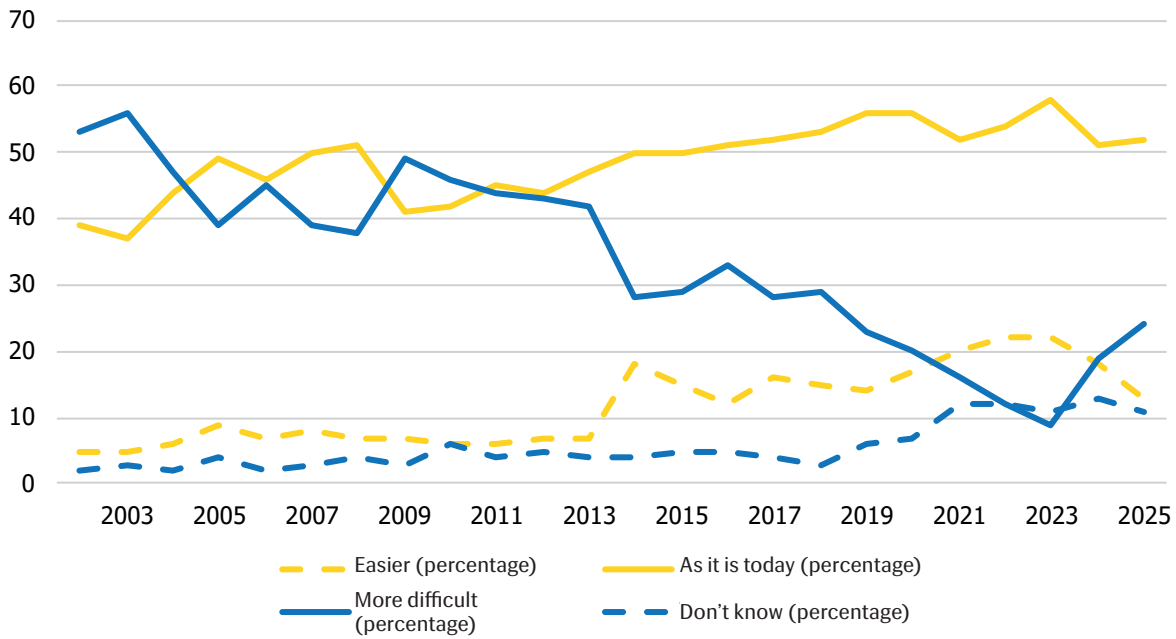
Attitudes towards immigration, integration and diversity vary between different parts of the Norwegian population. Women are more positive about immigration than men, and people with higher education are more positive than people with lower levels of education. People who often have contact with immigrants are consistently more positive in their attitudes towards immigrants than those who rarely have contact with immigrants. Historically, young adults have been more positive towards immigrants than older people. The difference between younger and older people has now decreased. This may be partly due to the fact that younger men have become slightly more negative towards immigration. There are also clear differences in attitudes between different voter groups, where people who vote for the Socialist Left Party (SV), Red Party (Rødt), Green Party (MDG) and Liberal Party (Venstre)

are the most positive, while people who vote for the Progress Party (Frp) and Industry and Business Party (INP) are the most negative (Brekke et al., 2024).

The population is divided in their view of how well integration is going. 40 per cent respond that it is going rather badly or very badly, 33 per cent think it is neither good nor bad, while 27 per cent state it is going quite well or very well (Fladmoe et al., 2025). However, there is a slightly higher number of people now than there were in surveys prior to the war in Ukraine who have a positive impression of how integration is progressing. There are also more people who believe that integration is going better in the area where they live than integration in Norway as a whole (Brekke et al., 2024). In terms of factors that prevent good integration, more people still place emphasis on the characteristics and composition of the immigrant population than on discrimination in society or government integration initiatives. The proportion who believes that immigrants should strive to become as Norwegian as possible has risen over the past few years (Kvalø and Arnesen, 2025).

Attitudes towards immigration, integration and diversity therefore also appear to depend on the country of origin, reason for immigrating or religion. Research also shows that religious minorities, and especially Muslims, face some negative attitudes and prejudices in Norwegian society (Moe and Døving, 2022). For example, 41 per cent of the population report that they are sceptical of people with Muslim beliefs, and 60 per cent believe that Islamic values are not compatible with the fundamental values in Norwegian society (Brekke et al., 2024). In comparison, 16, 19 and 23 per cent respectively believe that Christian, Jewish and Buddhist values are incompatible with fundamental values in Norwegian society (Brekke and Fladmoe, 2022). 31 per cent of the population has what can be characterised as pronounced prejudices against Muslims by supporting claims such as "Muslims themselves bear much of the blame for growing hatred of Muslims", that "Muslims pose a threat to Norwegian culture", and that "Muslims do not fit into a modern Western society" (Moe, 2022).

Figure 7.10. Attitudes towards the right of refugees and asylum seekers to stay in Norway. Should it be easier, more difficult or the same as it is today? 2002–2025. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2025q).



Racism and discrimination

7.7 Children of immigrants experience more discrimination

Racism and discrimination can often be obstacles to achieving good living conditions, to entry into the labour market, to deriving benefit from education and training and to access to the housing market. This can lead to negative outcomes between different population groups. Discrimination can lead to a weakened sense of belonging to the community and less trust both in society and in other people.

It can be difficult to detect and measure discrimination. A number of different methods are used for this in studies of discrimination, including experiments, observation and surveys that examine immigrants' own experiences.

What is meant by racism and discrimination?

The Norwegian Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act defines **discrimination**as "direct or indirect differential treatment." Pursuant to the Act, direct differential treatment "means treatment of a person that is worse than the treatment that is, has been or would have been afforded to other persons in a corresponding situation", while indirect differential treatment "means any apparently neutral provision, condition, practice, act or omission that results in persons being put in a worse position than others."

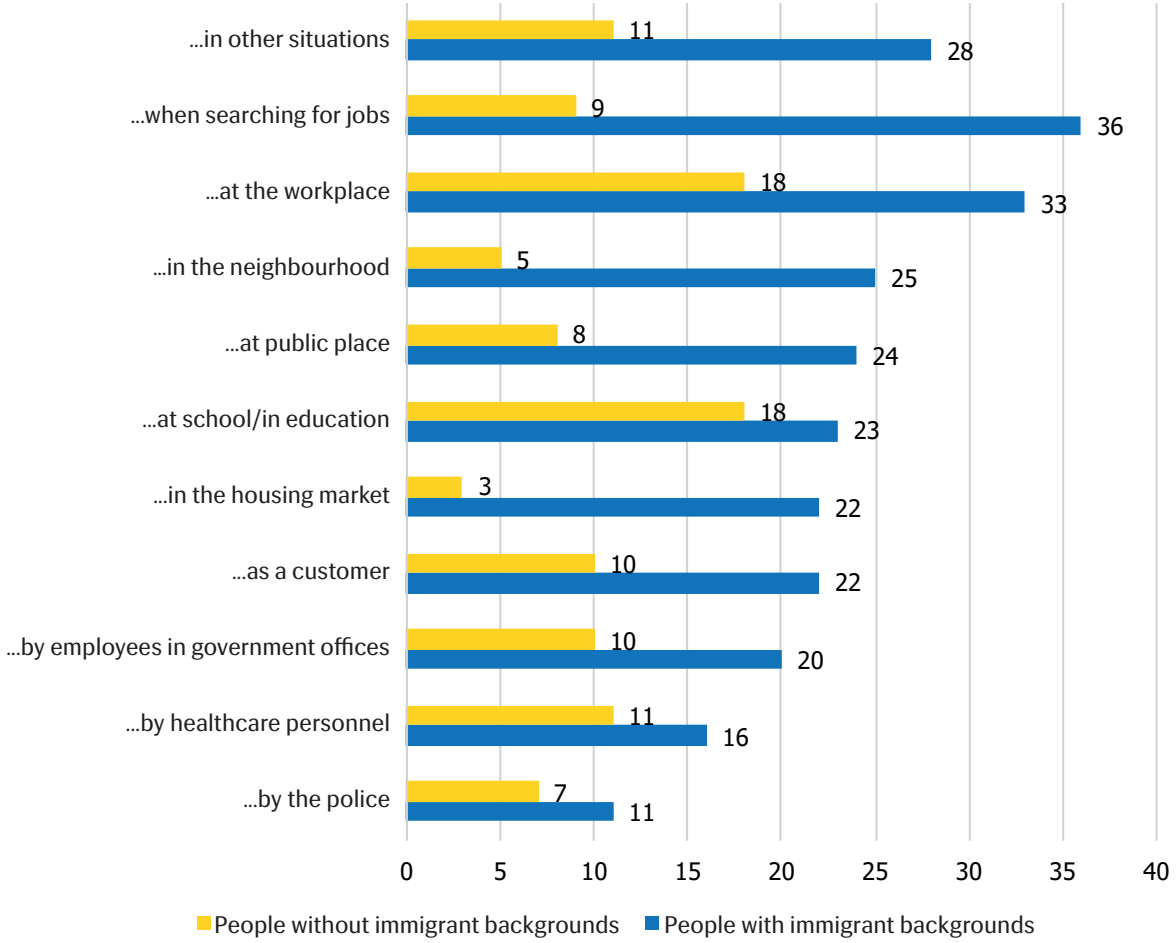
Racism can be defined as ideas, ideologies, statements or actions that divide people into "races" or ethnic groups, where some are claimed to be of less value than others (Proba, 2024a).

The difference between racism and discrimination is not clearly defined, however the concept of racism has traditionally had a greater emphasis on intentionality, while discrimination focusses more on behaviour, practice and outcomes. In Norwegian social research, the concept of discrimination has been more commonly used than the concept of racism.

Section 185 of the Norwegian Penal Code prohibits discriminatory or hateful statements based on someone's skin colour, ethnicity, religion, life stance, sexual orientation or disability.

66 per cent of people with immigrant backgrounds report that they have experienced discrimination during their lives, compared to 40 per cent of the rest of the population. In other words, immigrants and their Norwegian-born children are significantly more susceptible to discrimination than the population without an immigrant background. Discrimination occurs in many different social arenas. As shown in Figure 7.11, most people report that they have experienced discrimination in the workplace or when looking for work (Dalen et al. 2024).

Figure 7.11. Have experienced being discriminated against or treated worse than others in different arenas during their lives. "Have experienced discrimination..." Percentage (Dalen et al., 2024).

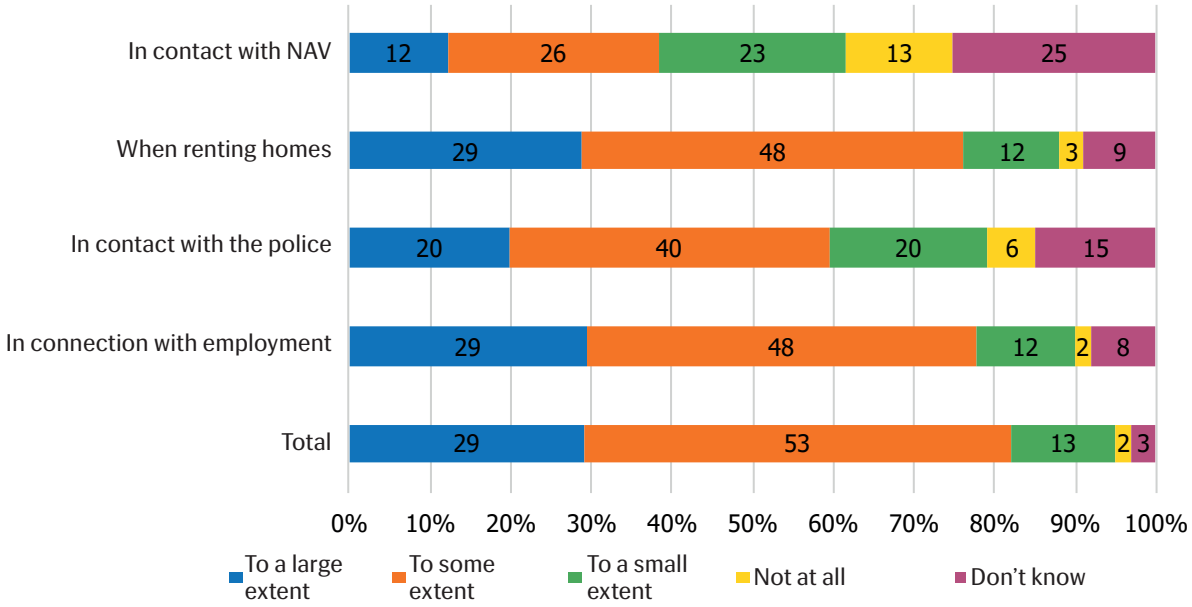


Discrimination is considered one of the biggest barriers to integration, both among immigrants themselves and in the population as a whole (Brekke and Fladmoe, 2022; Dalen et al., 2022).[7] Eight out of ten people believe that discrimination against immigrants takes place in Norway. In 2023, 29 per cent of the Norwegian population responded that discrimination occurs to a large extent. This is more than a tripling compared to 2013, when nine per cent were of the same belief. In addition, more than half of the respondents in 2023 (53 per cent) stated that discrimination occurs to some extent (Brekke et al., 2024). This indicates that there is a growing and fairly common perception among the population that discrimination of immigrants occurs.

Figure 7.12 shows that almost eight out of ten people believe that discrimination occurs in employment and when renting out homes. Six out of ten people believe discrimination takes place in contact with the police, and four out of ten believe it occurs in contact with NAV (Brekke et al., 2024).

7 See also (Ellefsen, Banafsheh and Sandberg, 2022) and (Ellefsen and Sandberg, 2022) on how people with immigrant backgrounds experience and encounter racism and discrimination in everyday life.

Figure 7.12. Proportion of the population who agree or disagree that discrimination occurs, and in what arenas it occurs. 2023. Percentage (Brekke et al., 2024).



In Norway, (access to) the workforce is the arena where most research has been conducted on the prevalence of racism and discrimination. Applicants with immigrant backgrounds are significantly less likely to be called in for a job interview (Birkelund et al., 2019; Midtbøen, 2015a, 2015b, 2016; Midtbøen and Rogstad, 2012). This particularly applies to applicants with names originating from Africa, the Middle East and South Asia (Larsen and Midtbøen, 2024).[8] Unfair discrimination against ethnic minorities occurs at all stages of the recruitment process – including in public enterprises (Bjørnset, Sterri and Rogstad, 2021). Discrimination also occurs in connection with wage setting and development, however there is significant variation between sectors, industries and job types when concerning the extent of this (Alecu and Drange, 2019; Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed, 2017; Drange, 2016; Drange and Helland, 2018).[9]

School and education are another arena where racism and discrimination have an impact on integration. There is a correlation between perceived discrimination, racism and educational achievements. Discrimination can lead to a reduction in academic confidence and less belief in success at school, lower well-being, poorer results, socio-emotional difficulties (for example, depression) and negative behavioural consequences (for example, drug use and anti-social behaviour) (Wollscheid et al., 2022). In a recent survey, 21 per cent of respondents with parents born outside of Western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand reported that they had been exposed to racist speech at school in the past year (Proba, 2024a). Among children of immigrants who enrol in higher education, it is found that even the expectation of encountering discrimination can lead to them lowering their hopes for their educational pathway and career (Orupabo, 2018; Orupabo et al, 2020).

8 See (Birkelund et al., 2020) about employers' own reflections on employing or not employing people with immigrant backgrounds.

9 See also Chapter 4.5 on working environment and everyday working life.

How is hate speech defined?
The Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud uses a broad, social science definition, which includes both lawful and unlawful hate speech. According to this definition, hate speech is degrading, threatening, harassing or stigmatising speech which affects an individual's or a group's dignity, reputation and status in society by means of linguistic and visual effects that promote negative feelings, attitudes and perceptions based on characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity and age (The Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, 2015).

Discrimination also takes place in the rental market. People with immigrant backgrounds more often rent their homes than the rest of the population, however are less likely to have a rental application approved (Andersson, Jakobsson and Kotsadam, 2012; Flage, 2018). A field experiment demonstrated that the probability of receiving a positive response from landlords is more than 16 percentage points lower for applicants with Arabic-sounding names than for applicants with Norwegian-sounding names with the same job, and that there is no less discrimination in the current rental market than there was ten years ago (Benedictow et al., 2023).

People born in Norway to immigrant parents experience being discriminated against on the basis of ethnic background, skin colour and religion/life stance to a greater extent than immigrants. 75 per cent in this group responded that they have experienced discrimination due to ethnic background, 53 per cent due to skin colour and 32 per cent due to religion/life stance (Dalen et al., 2024).[10] Racism or other negative attitudes towards ethnic groups can be expressed as hateful or derogatory speech (Dalen et al., 2022). More immigrants experience different forms of hate speech and violence compared to the population at large.[11] Among people with immigrant backgrounds, 12 per cent report that someone has said something hateful to them in the past year, compared to 6 per cent in the rest of the population. Immigrants and people born in Norwegian to immigrant parents from Asia, Africa and Latin America are particularly vulnerable (Dalen et al., 2024). For example, 17 per cent of people born in Norway to immigrant parents from this group report that they have experienced someone having said something hateful to them, compared to 14 per cent of their parents, 11 per cent of immigrants from new EU countries in Eastern and Central Europe and 6 per cent of immigrants from Western Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand.

The Norwegian National Police Directorate's report on hate crime in Norway reveals that for six out of ten hate crime reports that were filed in 2024, the motives were coded based on skin colour or ethnicity. There has been a steady increase in the registration of reported hate crimes in this category in recent years (National Police Directorate, 2025).

10 We know less about the extent of racism and discrimination against people who were adopted from a foreign country, however preliminary findings show that this is also a group that experiences significant discrimination (Stærkebye Leirvik et al., 2023).

11 See Chapter 7.8 Crime.

Young people with ethnic minority backgrounds more often experience hate speech on the basis of ethnicity, skin colour or religion/life stance than young people who have parents born in the Nordic region. This group is particularly vulnerable if a person belongs to a religion other than Christianity, and if a person goes to school with a low percentage of students with an immigrant background. The risk of being exposed to hate speech increases significantly if the person belongs to multiple different minority groups, for example if they are LGBTQ+, have a family background from an indigenous group, are a national minority, or have a visible physical disability (Nadim and Fladmoe, 2021).

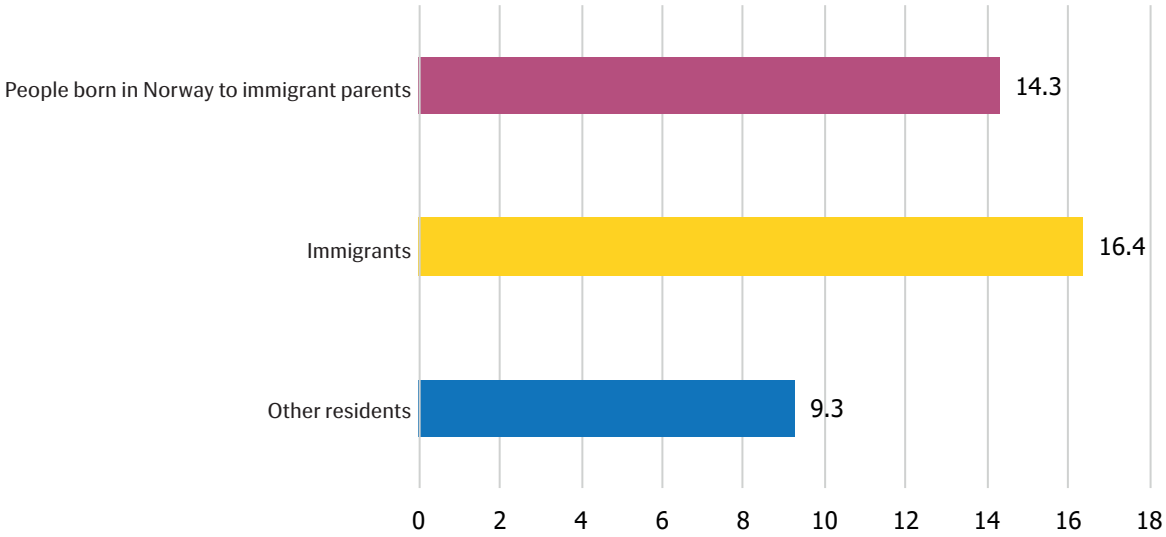
Crime

7.8 People with immigrant backgrounds overrepresented among people who are charged with criminal offences

Crime can be viewed as an indicator of a lack of social integration because criminal behaviour suggests failure to adhere to common norms and rules of behaviour in a society (Proba, 2019). Effective measures to prevent and deter crime depend on there being good knowledge about the connections between integration and crime.

As shown in Figure 7.13, immigrants and people born in Norway to immigrant parents are overrepresented among people charged with criminal offences. The respective figures for these groups were 16.4 and 14.3 people charged per 1,000 inhabitants.

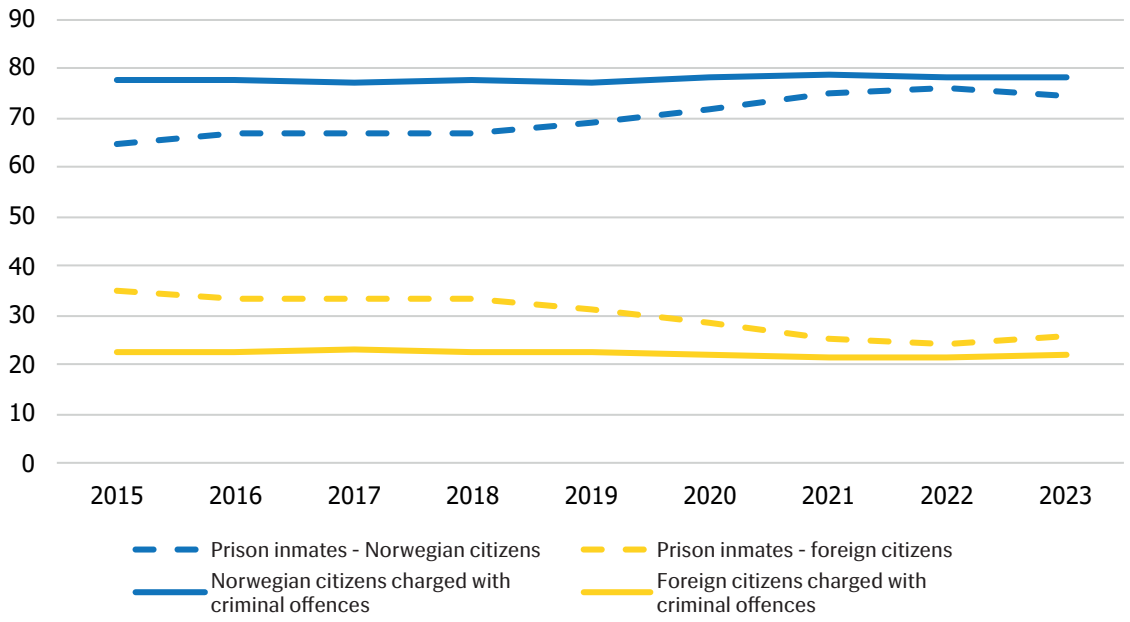
Figure 7.13 People charged with criminal offences by immigrant background. Annual average for 2021-2023. Per 1,000 inhabitants (Fossanger, Dyrstad and Mohn, 2024).



Since 2015, the total number of people charged with criminal offences per year has decreased from about 80,000 to about 60,000. The proportion of people with foreign citizenship

charged with criminal offences has remained relatively stable at just over 20 per cent during the same period (Statistics Norway, 2024c). The number of prison inmates[12] decreased from about 4,000 people in 2015 to just under 3,400 in 2023. This decrease is primarily due to a fall in the number of prison inmates with foreign citizenship. In 2023, prison inmates with foreign citizenship accounted for 26 per cent of all inmates, compared to 35 per cent in 2015 (Statistics Norway, 2024a).

Figure 7.14. Prison inmates and people charged with criminal offences, by citizenship. 2015–2023. Percentage (Statistics Norway, 2024c, 2024e)

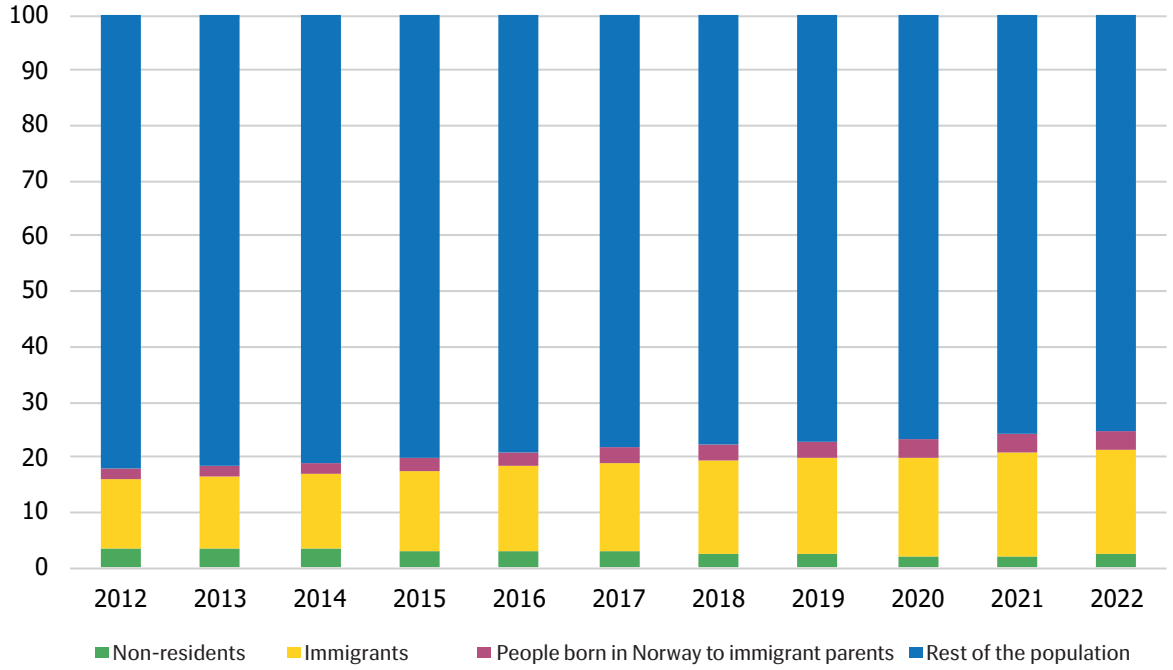


There are significant variations in terms of country of origin and different types of offences (Statistics Norway, 2019). The figures for 2020–2023, show that male immigrants aged 15–24 years from Iraq and Somalia have higher rates of being charged with criminal offences than that the rest of the population, with nearly 1,200 charges per 1,000 inhabitants for this four-year period, compared to just over 280 per 1,000 in the population without an immigrant background. However, young male immigrants from, among other countries, the Philippines (170 per 1,000) and Thailand (270 per 1,000), have lower rates (Fossanger, Dyrstad et al., 2024). Immigrants with refugee backgrounds have a higher proportion of people charged with crimes, while people who have immigrated due to education have lower rates (Andersen, Holstmark and Mohn, 2017).

In 2022, over 28,000 immigrants, over 5,000 people born in Norway to immigrant parents, and over 114,000 people among the rest of the population were victims of reported criminal offences. In 2015, immigrants accounted for 15 per cent of all victims, while the figure for Norwegian-born children of immigrants was 2 per cent. In 2022, these proportions had increased to 19 and three per cent respectively (Fjelldalen and Mohn, 2024).

12 Applies to all types of incarceration (custody on remand, prison sentence, detention and sentence of imprisonment in default of fine).

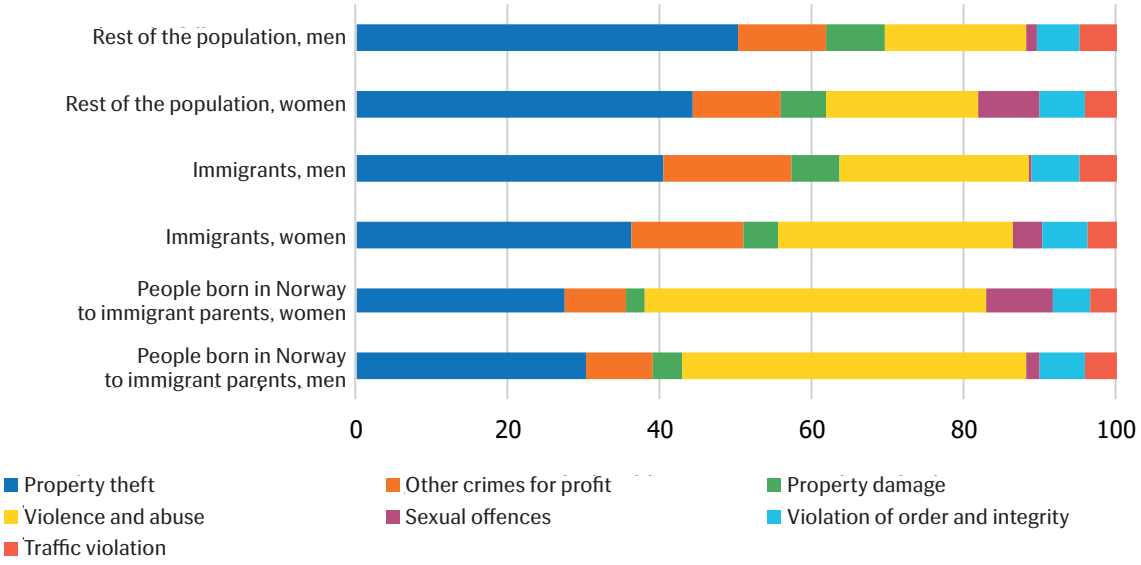
Figure 7.15. Victims of reported criminal offences, by immigration background. 2012–2022. Percentage (Fossanger, Fjelldalen et al., 2024).



However, there is significant variation between different groups and different types of criminal offences. Immigrants are heavily overrepresented among those who are susceptible to violence, abuse, threats and fraud (Fossanger, Fjelldalen, et al. 2024). Of young immigrants, 12.8 per cent report that they have been exposed to violence or threats in recent months, compared to 6.9 per cent of young people in the entire population (Vrålstad and Wiggen, 2017). However, there are far fewer registered victims of sexual offences among immigrants (Fossanger, Fjelldalen, et al., 2024).

Men with and without immigrant backgrounds are more likely to be victims of criminal offences than women. The exception to this is sexual offences. Immigrants have the highest percentage of people who are victims of crimes for profit. People born in Norway to immigrant parents, both women and men, have the highest proportion exposed to violence and abuse (Fossanger, Fjelldalen, et al., 2024).

Figure 7.16. Victims of reported criminal offences, by immigration background, gender and primary offence group. Annual average 2017-2022. Percentage (Fossanger, Fjelldalen and Mohn, 2024).



Immigrant children and young people are heavily overrepresented as victims of domestic abuse, compared to both the rest of the population and children born in Norway to immigrant parents (Fossanger, Fjelldalen, et al., 2024). An average of 300 male immigrants are registered as victims of domestic abuse each year, of whom nine out of ten are children under the age of 18. The corresponding figure for women is 35 per cent. However, overrepresentation among female immigrants is greatest in the 12-16 age group, where the number of victims is over seven times as high as for girls of the same age in the rest of the population (Fossanger, Fjelldalen et al., 2024).

There are several underlying factors that can explain crime among immigrants – both as offenders and victims. Immigrants and the rest of the population have different population compositions, and this can provide some explanation for the crime statistics. For example, the immigrant population consists of a larger proportion of young men than the population without immigrant backgrounds, and young men are also overrepresented in the crime statistics. However, gender and age do not fully explain the difference. Crime is linked to both social and economic factors such as poor living conditions and unemployment (Andersen et al., 2017). People with lower levels of education and who are in a poorer financial situation are more susceptible to violence and abuse than people who higher education and a better financial situation, and there is also a higher proportion of people with immigrant backgrounds who are not working or studying (Dale et al., 2023; Fossanger, Fjelldalen et al., 2024).

More knowledge is required about the links between crime and possible underlying factors, such as unemployment, financial difficulties and poor living conditions. We need to understand more about the mechanisms behind being susceptible to and committing criminal acts.

Negative social control

7.9 The right to live a free life

Everyone has the right to live their lives free from negative social control, honour-related violence, forced marriage and genital mutilation. This right is reflected both in our national laws and in international conventions that Norway has committed to (NOU, 2024). Efforts to combat these serious forms of control and abuse have long been part of Norwegian integration policy. As time has progressed, parents using more diffuse forms of control, pressure, threats and restrictions that strongly violate the autonomy and life development of children and young people has also become an important issue (Friberg and Bjørnset, 2019). Children and young people have extensive legal protections which grant them the right to a private life and a greater degree of self-determination as they get older. These principles also manifest themselves in the field of integration.

What are negative social control, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and honour-motivated violence?

In the action plan, *Sjef i eget liv (Boss of your own Life),* **negative social control** is understood as being pressure, surveillance, threats or force that systematically limit someone's life or repeatedly prevent them from making independent choices about their own life and future (Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, 2025).

Forced marriage is understood as being a marriage where one or both spouses cannot choose to remain unmarried without being subjected to violence, deprivation of liberty, other criminal or unlawful conduct or undue pressure.

Female genital mutilation is understood as being different types of procedures that damage the genitalia of girls and women. Female genital mutilation may have serious physical and psychological consequences for those subjected to such procedures, and is often associated with pain, abdominal ailments and sexual problems. Female genital mutilation is prohibited under the Norwegian Penal Code

Honor-motivated violence is used for physical and psychological violence committed against a person in order to prevent **loss of honour** or restore honour to families, relatives or communities where social standing is considered a collective concern.

Social control is found in all societies and cultures and is not something that is negative in itself. Too little control can be harmful, and setting limits is a necessary part of caring for a child. At the same time, children and young people have the right to participation and self-determination in line with their age and level of development. Consideration of the child's best interests constitutes a limit to a parent's right to raise/control the child, cf. Article 104 of the Constitution of Norway and Sections 31-33 of the Norwegian Children Act.

The distinction between social control and negative social control is fluid. There is no clear means of operationalizing the concept. The extent of negative social control is therefore difficult to measure. There are no definitive figures. However, surveys on parental restrictions provide an indication of how many are affected.

A new report reveals that few students in Norwegian schools experience strong restrictions and controls from their parents (Froyland, Mathisen and Smette, 2025). More than 95 per cent state that it is true or very true that they can decide for themselves which friends they can spend their free time with, what education they want to pursue, and that they will be able to choose for themselves who they wish to marry. 93 per cent state that it is true or very true that they are allowed to have a romantic partner and 89 per cent state that it is true or very true that they are allowed to have sex before marriage (Frøyland et al. 2025).

Some groups of young people experience far more extensive restrictions and control from their parents than others. The degree of parental restrictions varies according to gender, country of origin, socioeconomic status, period of residence, characteristics of the local community, school grades, religious affiliation, and degree of religiosity of the parents (Friberg and Bjørnset 2019; Frøyland et al. 2025; Proba 2021; Smette, Hyggen, and Bredal 2021).

Research shows that young people with immigrant backgrounds, and particularly girls with backgrounds from Asia and Africa, are the most vulnerable to parental restrictions, particularly in areas that concern romance and marriage. In their report which was based on data from the survey, UngVold (Youth Violence) 2023, Frøyland, Mathisen and Smette (2025) found that 88 per cent of girls with a Muslim background are not allowed to have sex before marriage, 68 per cent are not allowed to have a romantic partner, and 13 per cent are not allowed to choose who they wish to marry. When it comes to friends and education, around 10 per cent of girls with a Muslim background stated that they are not permitted to decide for themselves (Ferøyland et al., 2025).

Research shows that queer people with immigrant backgrounds constitute one of the groups that is particularly vulnerable to negative social control (Frøyland et al. 2025; Proba, 2021). One in three people experience exclusion from minority communities on the basis of their sexual identity (Eggebø, Karlstrøm and Stubberud, 2020).

Other particularly vulnerable groups may include newly arrived refugees and immigrants, unaccompanied minor asylum seekers and refugees, people with disabilities, elderly people living in a dependent relationship, and people in certain religious and ideological communities (Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, 2025).

Negative social control not only takes place between adults and young people, it also takes place between young people themselves – and it takes place at school and on social media (Proba 2021, 2022). Students control each other on the basis of sexual orientation, gender expression and religious practice, particularly in connection with fasting during Ramadan. Girls and boys experience different forms of control. Girls face expectations of having to

behave decently and respectably, and boys encounter pressures related to masculinity and control of their sisters (Proba, 2024b). Nearly one in ten high school students responded that they are controlled by fellow students in the classroom or during break times (Proba, 2021).

Recent years have seen an increased focus on involuntary stays abroad in surveys of negative social control, honour-motivated violence and forced marriage. The motives vary, and may include a desire for a stronger cultural foundation, alternative schooling, family situation, preventing "Norwegianization", removing young people from an environment of substance abuse, or behavioural problems (Ministry of Health and Care Services, 2020; Lidén, Bredal and Reisel, 2014; NOU, 2024). Involuntary stays abroad can cause people, and particularly children and young people, to lose their connection to Norway, Norwegian language skills, schooling and access to public benefits. Such stays are also linked to concerns about violence, deprivation of liberty, forced marriage and genital mutilation (NOU, 2024). In a 2021 survey, 13 per cent of high school students with immigrant backgrounds reported that they were afraid of being abandoned abroad against their will. Of those, seven per cent said they had been threatened with this. Very few report that they have actually been subjected to an involuntary stay abroad (Proba, 2021).

In addition to violating fundamental rights, negative social control and honour-motivated violence are associated with multiple negative effects. For example, a survey of Norwegian school students reveals that between 31 and 54 per cent of those who report having strong parental restrictions in different areas of life are also subjected to mental abuse and violence (Froyland et al., 2025). Those at risk more often report depressive moods, sleeping problems and poorer self-perceived health than others (Frøyland et al., 2025). Young people who are subjected to strict control at home often live a mentally stressful double life. They participate less frequently in recreational activities and have more mental health problems and poorer self-esteem than other adolescents (Friberg and Bjørnset 2019). Furthermore, a longitudinal study shows that school students who experience strong parental restrictions at the age of 16 have a higher tendency to drop out of school later in their schooling life and more often become users of social assistance in their early 20s than those who do not experience such forms of control. Girls who experience strong parental restrictions also have a higher probability than other girls of being married and having children in their early 20s (Friberg and Sterri, 2023).

People living with negative social control and honour-motivated violence sometimes choose to break away from their spouse and/or family to escape from the violence and control. In cases such as this, the person concerned can be left alone and be ostracized by the extended family and networks. Severing contact in this manner is often a very painful experience (Bråten and Lillevik, 2021; Nadim and Orupabo, 2014). Many choose to return to their family/spouse. In 2024, 18 per cent of stays in shelters by residents with immigrant backgrounds ended with them returning to the person committing the violence, which was a slightly higher proportion than for those without immigrant backgrounds (15 per cent) (Bufdir, 2025).

In emergency situations when the person's safety is threatened, many seek refuge in the country's crisis shelters (krisesentre). In 2024, 61 per cent of the residents in crisis shelters

had an immigrant background. 10 per cent of residents with an immigrant background were the victims of honour-motivated violence, 1 per cent were victims of human trafficking and 2 per cent had been subjected to forced marriage. In comparison, when concerning residents of crisis shelters without an immigrant background, 1 per cent were victims of honour-motivated violence, while less than 1 per cent were subjected to human trafficking or forced marriage (Bufdir, 2025).

The most serious form of honour-motivated violence is honour killing. Between 2000 and 2022, 24 murder cases were identified as possible honour killings. These cases accounted for 3.8 percent of the total number of murder cases during the same period (Norwegian Police, 2024). It is probable that there are significant dark numbers, and that more murders are committed in the victim's country of origin.

Specialist services combatting negative social control and honour-related violence:

Diversity advisors
Just under 70 diversity advisors have been deployed at selected lower secondary and upper secondary schools in every county in Norway, in addition to selected adult education centres. They provide advice and guidance to students and engage in preventive initiatives to raise student awareness about their rights and choices. An important task is also to enhance the expertise of employees in various support services. In 2024, diversity advisors provided advice and guidance in 1,031 cases.

Special envoys for matters concerning integration
There are special envoys for matters concerning integration at the foreign service missions in Ankara, Amman, Islamabad and Nairobi. They provide consular assistance to victims of negative social control, honour-motivated violence, involuntary stays abroad, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. They also contribute to enhancing expertise at the foreign service mission and the support services in Norway, to prevent people from being sent abroad against their will. In 2024, special envoys provided advice and guidance in 310 cases.

Expert team against negative social control and honour-based violence
The Expert Team is a national interagency team that assists the support services throughout the country in connection with cases involving negative social control and honour motivated violence, including forced marriage, involuntary stays abroad and female genital mutilation. In 2024, the Expert Team provided advice and guidance on 1,402 cases.

(Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, 2025).

The specialized services against negative social control (see box above) provided guidance in a record number of cases in 2024 (Bufdir and IMDi, 2025). Several of the services have also undergone more competence enhancement than in previous years. The figures from the specialized services for 2024 show that the services are being used and that they are in demand and needed (Bufdir and IMDi, 2025).

Research shows that families who have lived in Norway for a long time are, on average, more liberal and less restrictive in their parenting and social control than families who have recently immigrated to Norway (Friberg and Bjørnset, 2019). Young people born in Norway are less subjected to parental restrictions than young people who have immigrated themselves, and the degree of parental restrictions decreases markedly in line with the parents living in Norway longer (Friberg and Bjørnset, 2019). Furthermore, a recent qualitative study found that young people are constantly negotiating with their parents about who they can be together with and what is acceptable. Many succeed in pushing the boundaries of what kind of romantic relationships their parents can accept (Aarset, Rosten, and Shirazi, 2024).

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