OSLOMET

NORWEGIAN INSTITUTE FOR URBAN AND REGIONAL RESEARCH NIBR

Integration trajectories and future prospects:

Experiences and perceptions of Ukrainian refugees and municipal refugee services in Norway (2024–2025)

Vilde Hernes, Aadne Aasland, Oleksandra Deineko, Marthe Handå Myhre
Trine Myrvold and Martine Uttersrud Hjelle

NIBR REPORT 2025:11

Vilde Hernes
Aadne Aasland
Oleksandra Deineko
Marthe Handå Myhre
Trine Myrvold
Mathilde Uttersrud Hjelle

Integration trajectories and future prospects:

Experiences and perceptions of Ukrainian refugees and municipal refugee services in Norway (2024-2025)

NIBR-rapport 2025:11

Other publications from NIBR:

NIBR Report 2025:4	Why return to Ukraine? An analysis of Ukraine's evolving return policies and the motivations of refugees to return
NIBR Report 2025:3	Privat bolig i stedet for asylmottak? Erfaringer med oppfølgning og bosetting av ukrainske flyktninger som bodde privat, 2022-2024.
NIBR Report 2025:6	Følgeevaluering 'Flyktninger i jobb'. Delrapport 1.
NIBR Policy Brief 2025:7	Ukrainske flyktninger i Norge: Hvorfor bli, hvorfor vende tilbake?
NIBR Policy Brief 2025:1	Reception, integration and future prospects of Ukrainian refugees in the Nordic countries.
NIBR Report 2024:10	Settlement, integration and employment under a temporary perspective: Experiences and perceptions of Ukrainian refugees and municipal refugee services (2023-2024).
NIBR Policy Brief 2024:19	Nordmenns holdninger til Russland, russere og norsk russlandspolitikk i perioden 2022 - 2024.
NIBR Report 2024:4	Strengthening Ukraine's Democracy through Education During the War: Second Mid-Term Evaluation of the European Wergeland Centre's Schools for Democracy Programme
NIBR Policy Brief 2024:103	The new mobilisation act: policies, target groups and consequences for Ukrainians living abroad.
NIBR Policy Brief 2024	Reception and integration policies for displaced persons from Ukraine in the Nordic countries – a comparative analysis.
NIBR Report 2023:11	Reception, settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees in Norway: Experiences and perceptions of Ukrainian refugees and municipal stakeholders (2022-2023)
NIBR Report 2023:8	Governance and policy changes during times of high influxes of protection seekers. A comparative governance and policy analysis in eight European countries, 2015-June 2023.
NIBR Report 2022:11	Ukrainian refugees – experiences from the first phase in Norway

Title:	Integration trajectories and future prospects: Experiences and perceptions of Ukrainian refugees and municipal refugee services in Norway (2024-2025)
Author:	Vilde Hernes, Aadne Aasland, Oleksandra Deineko, Marthe Handå Myhre, Trine Myrvold and Mathilde Uttersrud Hjelle.
NIBR Report:	2025:11
ISSN: ISBN:	1502-9794 978-82-8309-453-4 (PDF)
Project number:	203181
Project name:	Knowledge development about Ukrainian refugees' experiences with integration and public services in Norway (UKRAFLY4)
Financial supporter:	The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi)
Head of project:	Vilde Hernes
Abstract:	This report is part of a yearly research project which maps and analyses how Ukrainian refugees have experienced the settlement, integration and employment in Norway, and also, what their prospect are for the future. Further, the report maps and analyses the experiences, challenges and opportunities for municipalities, and particularly the municipal refugee services, concerning the settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees. The report focuses on policies and experiences in late 2024 and 2025, but also include analyses of development over time since 2022.
Summary:	Norwegian and English
Date:	December 2025
Pages:	223
Publisher:	Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University Postboks 4 St. Olavs plass N-0130 OSLO Telephone: (+47) 67 23 50 00 E-mail: post-nibr@oslomet.no http://www.oslomet.no/nibr

Preface

This report has been written in response to a yearly assignment from the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi). We want to start by thanking our contact person at IMDi, Konstantinos Skenteris, for very pleasant and constructive cooperation throughout the project period.

The assignment was carried out by a team of researchers at the Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) at OsloMet consisting of Vilde Hernes (project manager), Aadne Aasland, Marthe Handå Myhre, Oleksandra Deineko, Trine Myrvold and Mathilde Uttersrud Hjelle.

We are very grateful to all the Ukrainians and frontline stakeholders who shared their experiences with us in interviews and/or the survey.

We also want to thank the project's reference group for stimulating discussions and comments on the project design and preliminary findings.

NIBR, December 2025

Kristian Rose Tronstad
Head of Research, NIBR

Table of contents

Summary

Part 1: Introduction

As of November 2025, over 100 000 displaced persons from Ukraine (hereafter referred to as ‘Ukrainian refugees’) had applied protection in Norway since the Russian full-scale invasion in February 2022, and over 83 000 had a valid collective protection permit (UDI 2025a).

This report examines the reception, settlement, and integration of Ukrainian refugees in Norway, addressing three key questions:

1) How do Ukrainian refugees experience these processes and services, and what are their future aspirations?
2) How do municipalities assess the challenges and opportunities of working with Ukrainian refugees?
3) How have these assessments changed over time?

Research design

The study is part of an annual research project (UKRAFLY) by the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR), commissioned by the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi). The study uses a mixed-methods approach combining:

1) Policy analysis of national policies related to Ukrainian refugees and official statistics from Statistics Norway, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration **(**UDI) and Eurostat on immigration and settlement patters.
2) Qualitative interviews with 18 Ukrainian refugees, including 10 follow-ups from previous studies (2022–2024) and 8 new participants.
3) Two surveys—one with Ukrainian refugees and one with municipal refugee services– conducted in October 2025
4) Synthesising analysis: Insights from interviews and surveys were integrated to analyse both refugees’ and municipal service leaders’ experiences and the mechanisms behind their assessments.

Further, the yearly data collection as part of the UKRAFLY project enabled longitudinal analyses providing a nuanced understanding of developments over time.

Inflows and settlement of Ukrainian refugees in Norway

Based on official statistics from Eurostat, UDI, and IMDi, we contextualize the influx of protection seekers from Ukraine and describe how it compares to previous large-scale arrivals.

Norway has experienced significant fluctuations in asylum applications over the past decade, with an unprecedented surge following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. In 2022 and 2023, Norway received record-high numbers of asylum applications, around 40 000 annually, with most applicants rapidly granted temporary collective protection. In 2024, the numbers dropped to about 22 000 applications. By October 2025, applications had further decreased to about 10 000 applications and 8 000 protection permits granted, reflecting a continued downward trend.

Focusing on arrivals from Ukraine, applications for temporary collective protection peaked in March–April 2022 (over 7 000 monthly) and saw another spike in fall 2023 (5 000 monthly). From 2024 onwards, arrivals steadily declined, fluctuating between 1 000–2 000 per month. In 2025, fewer than 1 000 applicants arrived monthly, though a increase occurred following Ukraine’s legislative change in August 2025, allowing younger male adults (18–22 years old) to leave the country.

Since 2022, over 100,000 refugees, primarily Ukrainians, have been settled across Norwegian municipalities. Settlement levels from 2022–2024 were unprecedented, remaining high for three consecutive years. Although 2025 saw a decline in settlements, levels remain high compared to previous situations with high number of arrivals (e.g. after 2015), maintaining pressure on municipalities to accommodate new arrivals.

Recent Policy Developments

In March 2022, Norway introduced temporary collective protection for displaced persons from Ukraine. The initial period, Norway introduced several selective and liberal policies for Ukrainian refugees. However, after a rise in arrivals in late 2023, Norwegian policies took a restrictive turn, including:

- Travel to Ukraine was limited to specific legitimate reasons.
- Ukrainians with dual citizenship in safe third countries were excluded from the scheme.
- Eligibility was restricted to six counties (*oblasts*) designated 'safe zones' in Ukraine, with additional eight counties classified as safe in January 2025.

The collective protection scheme was extended by one year in February 2025. The Norwegian temporary collective protection may be extended for a fifth year, but as of November 2025, there is no official plans or policies for a path towards more permanent residence options or concerning what will happen after the five year-period with temporary collective protection expires.

Concerning reception, refugees must now reside in reception centres during the application process if they want public financial help, with only a few exceptions. After a residence permit is granted, the Norwegian settlement model, combining state-municipality agreements has ensured settlement throughout all of Norway. Options for agreed self-settlement remains in place (which depends on municipal approval), but this option is less frequently used since 2023.

Unlike in many other European countries, Ukrainian refugees in Norway have been granted rights to integration measures through the Integration Act of 2021. Their rights were largely similar to those of other refugees, but with some modifications which have been regulated in a temporary act for Ukrainian refugees. However, after a revision of the Integration Act in June 2025, many of the temporary revisions for Ukrainian refugees will be phased out, and they have similar rights and obligations related to the introduction programmes, which implies that the new revisions also will address Ukrainian refugees. Key revisions in the Integration Act are:

- Refugees employed or with confirmed job offers (30+ hours/week) are no longer eligible for the introduction programme.
- Stricter requirements for work-related activities (e.g., 15 hours per week after the fourth month).

Part 2: Ukrainian refugees' experiences and aspirations

Who are the Ukrainians who fled to Norway?

Based on data from UDI and the survey, we present statistics on Ukrainian refugees in Norway, including gender and age distribution, education, work experience, language skills, region of residence in Ukraine, family situation, and pre-existing networks in Norway.

During the first months after the full-scale invasion, there was a significant majority of women among Ukrainian adult refugees arriving, but it quickly became more gender balanced. In 2025 (as of November), there is for the first time an overweight of adult men, with 47% women and 53% men. However, as the highest number of arrivals came in 2022 and 2023, there is still an overweight of women in the total number of arrivals as of November 2025,

with 60% women and 40%. The age composition has shifted in 2025, with more arrivals in the 18–25 age group, especially men aged 18–22 years, following the 2025 Ukrainian legislative change allowing young men to leave the country. This shift corresponds to a decline in the 26–45 age group.

Most Ukrainian refugees in Norway previously lived in the eastern and southeastern regions, which have been hardest hit by the war. Refugees from these regions report higher levels of destruction to infrastructure, neighbourhoods, and homes than those from other parts of Ukraine.

Ukrainian refugees are highly educated, with 70% having higher education (completed or incomplete). However, newer arrivals tend to have lower levels of completed higher education but higher vocational-technical training. While most respondents speak Ukrainian (90%) and/or Russian (92%) fluently, only 13% speak fluent English. Although those who arrived in 2022 demonstrate better English skills than later arrivals, this difference in fluency appears to result from the 2022 cohort having lived in Norway for three years and improved their skills, rather than the 2025 arrivals having lower initial English proficiency.

The majority of Ukrainian refugees in Norway have relatives with them. 42% have children under 18 in Norway. However, many refugees still have family members in Ukraine, particularly parents (51%) and adult children (13%).

Nearly half of the respondents had no pre-existing network in Norway before arrival. Among those with connections, prior networks consisted of other Ukrainian refugees (33%), Ukrainians already living in Norway before February 2022 (13%), or Norwegians (10%). Newer arrivals have mostly networks among other recently arrived Ukrainian refugees.

How and why did they come to Norway

Although most Ukrainian refugees (76%) came directly to Norway, one fourth stayed (not just transited) in other countries before their arrival in Norway. While the share that arrived from other countries more than doubled from 2022 and 2023 (from 12% to 29%), the share has gradually declined after 2024. Of those arriving in 2025, one out of five had lived in other countries before arriving in Norway.

Of those who stayed in other countries on their way to Norway, 36% came from Poland, followed by Germany, Bulgaria, and Romania (of around 5-7%). Very few respondents came from other Nordic countries.

Why did they choose Norway as a destination country?

Almost half of the respondents chose Norway because they considered that refugees' rights are well protected in this country, and just over one-third had considered different countries but decided that Norway would be the best choice (multiple options were possible). Another third chose Norway because they already had family or friends living here and about one in ten answered that they came to Norway simply by chance, or because they were brought here by volunteers.

Prior network has increased as a reason for choosing Norway among those arriving in 2025. Overall, our findings suggest that while those arriving in 2022 must have made a rather rapid decision to flee, those arriving after 2023 have had more time to think about conditions in different destination countries and chose Norway because of good conditions for Ukrainian refugees and/or because they were recommended Norway by others.

When asked about more specified reasons for choosing Norway, safety considerations was the absolute main reason for choosing Norway, and education for their children was emphasised by parents as important. Generally, the Norwegian reception and integration system is highlighted by many, along with the Norwegian society and country characteristics, such as a stable democracy, Norwegian nature and culture.

Fewer than 5% of the survey respondents say they regret that they chose Norway as a destination country.

Stable and positive assessments of actors and services

Overall, Ukrainian refugees are still very satisfied with their overall reception in Norway, and national and local actors, all with scores of minima 4 out of 5. The scores are almost identical to the assessments in the 2024 report, indicating a general pattern of stable and positive assessments. There are only minor differences between subgroups. Generally, older respondents are somewhat more satisfied than the younger age groups, and those arriving more recently are more satisfied than those with increased residence time.

Information

Ukrainian refugees use a variety of sources for obtaining the information they need, mainly websites of Norwegian public actors, through their networks and social media channels, and contact persons at Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav) or the municipality, and language teachers.

Most of the respondents confirm having received sufficient information regarding rights and obligations related to the collective protection permit and settlement procedures. Otherwise, there are overall positive, but more moderate and varied opinions about the information about how to find work in Norway and labour-market rights, what happens after the introduction programme and possibilities for higher education. As in previous years, the respondents ranked information about how to start a business in Norway the lowest, with an average score of 2.8 (on a scale from 1-5).

Interpreting services

26% of the respondents answered that they had not needed interpreting services (up from 14% in 2024). The majority—three out of four—received interpreting services every time they needed it, while one fourth answered that they had only received it on some occasions.

The majority of those who received interpreting services were satisfied with these services, but one in four indicated that the skills and qualifications of interpreters vary. Only 5% indicated poor or very poor interpreting.

Of those who had experienced challenges, the main challenges mentioned resembled the concerns that were raised in the 2023 and 2024 reports: 1) incorrect or low-quality translation, often involving omissions, oversimplified summaries, or changes in meaning, 2) lack of professionalism and neutrality among some interpreters, and 3) unwanted use of Russian-speaking instead of Ukrainian-speaking interpreters.

Psychological health and assistance

In the survey, we used a standardised question battery to measure psychological distress, based on the Hopkins Symptom Checklist-5 (HSCL-5). The respondents were asked whether, during the past week, they had been bothered by nervousness and inner turmoil, constant fear or anxiety, feelings of hopelessness about the future, depression or melancholy, and excessive worry or unease. The cut-off score for indicating psychological distress is often set at >2 on a 4-point scale.

65% among our respondents have score over 2, indicating psychological distress. Among our respondents, the average score was 2.3 for men and 2.6 for women, indicating high average scores. Further, when comparing the mean score for both genders with the NOR survey (2020-2022), we see that the average score is much higher among Ukrainian refugees than the average in the Norwegian population.

There are also subgroup differences. Women and the younger age groups have higher scores for psychological distress. Socio-economic integration also correlates with mental health challenges. Those who have stayed longer in Norway—who arrived before 2024—report higher levels of mental health issues than those arriving after 2024. The qualitative

interviews exemplify how pressure and insecurity of employment and the future negatively affect the mental health of those who have stayed in Norway for several years.

Although the HSCL-5 measure indicates that 65% of our sample experience psychological distress, on a direct question, only 28% answer that they have needed psychological services in Norway, while about 14% answer 'prefer not to say'. For those who answered that they had needed psychological services, the respondents were split; about half of the respondents had received such services, while the other half had not.

Financial situation

About 40% reported to be financially self-sufficient. Half of the respondents reported that their household's current economic situation is satisfactory. 37% reported that it was neither satisfactory nor difficult. One in ten was struggling to make ends meet, and 1% said that they live in poverty.

By comparing their current financial situation in Norway with their prior financial situation in Ukraine, we also investigated the share that had an improved, similar and worsened financial situation now. The analysis shows that there is a lot of internal mobility—both upwards and downwards. One third has a lower assessment of their financial situation in Norway than in Ukraine, one third reported to have a similar financial situation, while the last third assessed their financial situation in Norway as better than their prior situation in Ukraine.

Interviewees express that there has been a general improvement in their financial situation, however, most still assess their financial situation as fragile and insecure. Those in adult education or the introduction programme describe more challenging financial situations.

Dispersed settlement, good assessments but hopes to own their own home

About two-thirds lived in housing organised by the municipality, while one third lived in housing organised privately. There are large differences between cohorts in this regard: while about half of those who arrived in 2022 live in housing organised privately, only 16% of those who arrived in 2024 organized their own housing.

Ukrainian refugees are settled in line with the Norwegian government's strategy of dispersed settlement across the country, and the large majority live in mixed neighbourhoods or with predominantly Norwegian neighbours. Only 6% state that they live in areas with either predominantly other immigrants or other Ukrainian refugees.

Overall, the Ukrainian refugees are very satisfied with different aspects of their housing situation, including the social environment, size, and quality, and the geographical location. However, those in living rural areas rate their housing situation somewhat more negatively than those in big cities and smaller towns.

In the qualitative interviews, many expressed plans to apply for a mortgage in Norway to buy their own home, and some had already done so. Based on our longitudinal data, we see that the desire to purchase a home in Norway has grown over time and become increasingly relevant and often connected to a long-term strategy to stay in Norway and tackle the uncertainty of their situation on temporary permits. However, the interviews reveal very varied experiences of their interactions with the Norwegian bank systems when applying for a mortgage.

Plans for secondary migration in Norway

Secondary migration (*sekundærflytting*)—implying that refugees move from their initial settlement municipality to another Norwegian municipality—is a politically salient issue in Norway. Overall, the majority (44%) are unsure whether they want to move to another municipality or not, 41% say that they do not plan to move, while 15% say that they plan to move. However, the centrality of their current municipality is very important—those from more rural areas are much more prone to planning to move than those living in urban municipalities. Also, the younger respondents and those without children are more inclined to

want to move. Although employment status does not affect aspirations to move, the financial situation is important: those who report to have a good financial situation for their family are less likely to want to move.

There are very different perceptions about moving among the respondents and interviewees; while some are eager to move to improve job opportunities, desiring an urban lifestyle, or challenging weather conditions, others harshly refuse the thought of moving as yet another uprooting for themselves (and their children).

Integration measures

Compared to the 2024 survey, a larger share has now completed the introduction programme, while a similar lower share is currently participating. About half found it useful, one third found it a little useful, and only 9% of the respondents did not find the introduction programme useful.

Generally, the different integration measures offered to Ukrainian refugees get good assessments—most integration measures scored above 4 on a scale from 1 to 5. We find slightly lower satisfaction levels for three of the measures, namely career guidance, English language training and work practice. Compared to the 2024 survey, there were no major differences in the respondents' assessments.

Assistance from Nav after the introduction programme

After the introduction programme, one fourth has not needed any type of assistance from Nav: 58% had got some type of financial support from Nav, and 54% had got help to find a job.

For those who've needed employment-related assistance, we find large differences between cohorts when it comes to what employment measures they have received from Nav. A larger share of those who arrived in 2022 and 2023 has received work practice and subsidised employment than those who arrived in 2024. However, more of those who arrived in 2024 have received (continued) Norwegian language training.

The assessments of Nav's services are moderately positive, with mean scores ranging between 3.3 and 4.1 on different statements about having a designated contact person in Nav, sufficient consultations, good guidance, and whether their skills and/or previous education have been taken into account in job measures. Most assessments are somewhat lower compared to the 2024 survey. Although the interviews exemplify both positive and negative experiences with Nav's employment services, the more common experiences among our informants were feelings of being alone in the job search and receiving insufficient support from Nav.

Related to Nav's social services, there is also a variety of experiences, from smooth and supportive interactions to extended waiting times, limited communication and difficulties accessing information. For those who called for improvements, better access, clearer communication, more timely processing, less dependence on individual employees, and more systematic information about available support, were the most frequently mentioned priorities.

Language skills and training

Not surprisingly, there are large differences in Norwegian language fluency depending on time of arrival in Norway. Among those who arrived in 2022, two-thirds say that they speak either fluently or basic Norwegian, while this declines with decreased residence time. We see clear improvements in Norwegian levels when comparing self-assessed Norwegian levels across the 2025 and 2024 survey for different cohorts. However, it is worth noting that for the 2022 cohort, about one third of those who have been in the country for over three years still have very limited Norwegian skills.

The respondents are on average satisfied with the quality and flexibility of the Norwegian language training, but with more moderate assessments of the progress/intensity and with scope and sufficiency to become integrated into Norwegian society.

Based on the longitudinal interviews, even two to three years after arriving in Norway, many Ukrainian refugees continue to face significant challenges with the Norwegian language. These challenges limit their opportunities in both the labour market and their social integration, and it is also a defining factor in how some individuals perceive their identity and place in Norwegian society.

The large majority continue some form of language learning after the introduction programme (and often in combination with employment). However, several point out the challenges of juggling language learning with job searching or work. Nevertheless, the qualitative interviews reveal a sustained demand for language learning that extends beyond the formal integration measures Ukrainian refugees are entitled to. What has become increasingly evident in this year's round of interviews is that motivation to learn the language often grows over time—particularly when individuals begin to experience language as the key obstacle standing between them and better job opportunities or the chance to start their own business.

Work Practice

In the overall assessment of integration measures, work practice received the lowest mean score of 3.7 out of 5. More detailed assessments reveal mediocre assessments of the different aspects of the work practice, such as its usefulness for practicing Norwegian, getting sufficient job experience, and alignment with previous qualifications. For most statements, +/- half of the respondents responded either 'strongly disagree' or 'strongly agree', implying very diverse experiences with work practice. There are somewhat better assessments for more recent cohorts, indicating a small improvement.

There are also very dispersed perceptions among Ukrainian refugees related to the statement whether employers exploit the arrangements of work practice to get free labour. While 31% strongly disagree with this statement, 28% strongly agree (while the rest gave more moderate assessments).

Adult education and upper secondary schooling

In 2025, several interviewees we had been in contact with since 2022 or 2023 had enrolled in upper secondary school or adult education to improve their language skills of other qualifications, often part-time. Interviewees with these experiences were generally very satisfied.

For those attending part-time, some experience that municipal or Nav employees discourage them to enrol in upper secondary schooling but rather focus on getting rapid employment.

The younger interviewees (in their early twenties) that had gone to upper secondary school full-time were also very satisfied but pointed to certain challenges: to combine school and extra jobs to supplement the student grant from the State Educational Loan Fund (*Lånekassa)* and socializing with the younger students.

Improved employment rates over time

Official statistics from Statistics Norway show that employment levels for Ukrainian refugees have risen steadily since 2022. During 2024, it rose from 17% to 30%, and in 2025 it further rose to 42% as of October 2025. From our survey, we also see that a lower share is currently enrolled in the introduction programme, while there is a rise in those who report to be retired and students.

But what are the determinants among those who are employed and unemployed?

Gender, having children, having a prior network, and municipal centrality did not have a significant correlation with employment. The younger and older age groups have lower

employment rates compared to the middle age groups. Norwegian skills is a very strong determinant of employment.

Not surprisingly, those arriving more recently have substantially lower probability of being employed compared to those with longer residence time. However, rather surprisingly, we find that those with lower education levels (maximum 11 years of schooling from Ukraine) have higher probability of being employed than those with some higher education. This trend could be a reflection of the mismatch between the type of higher education and opportunities for using it in Norway, due to for example higher language requirements for obtaining positions that require higher education.

Where have they searched for and found jobs?

Half of the respondents had registered with Nav as a jobseeker, but many also applied for advertised jobs or contact employers directly. Only 5% had tried to start a business.

For those who were employed, there were varied ways to employment. The most common ways were to approach an employer directly or apply for an advertised position. We see an increase in these strategies compared to the 2024 survey, indicating that the Ukrainian refugees are more actively searching for jobs on their own. One fourth found their job through their work practice.

What type of employment?

For those who were employed, 61% had fulltime employment. 26% reported to work part time (20-34 hours per week), and the remaining 14% worked less than 20 hours per week.

There is also a positive development concerning job contracts, with an increase of those having a permanent contract, from 40% in 2024 to 49% in 2025.

However, the interviewees reported several challenges with juggling part-time jobs and temporary contracts, such as navigating different work schedules, working weekends, work overload, and uncertainty in prioritizing and planning for the future. It is worth mentioning that all informants who combined several jobs reported that they sought psychological help during the past year.

Just over half of the survey respondents were able to use their previous work experience to a large or some extent in their current job. A lower share was able to use their previous education in their current Norwegian job, but 41% still answered that they use it to a large or some extent. However, 37% reported that they were not able to use their education at all. There are relevant subgroup differences. Those who live in big cities used their education and especially previous work experience more often than those living in smaller towns and rural areas. Increased residence time also helps, as respondents from the 2022 cohort used their previous education to a somewhat higher degree than the other cohorts.

Among the employed, the majority were very satisfied with most aspects of their work conditions, with mean scores higher than 4 out of 5 on questions related to social environment, safety, work tasks and hours, salary, etc. However, opportunities for career development received the lowest score and showed a decline compared to the 2024 survey. In the interviews, many highlight that they really enjoy the work-life balance in Norway, the egalitarian structure and the absence of corruption. However, the interviewees also echoed the pessimism concerning future career development in Norway, which also affected their mental health negatively.

Ukrainian refugees are generally motivated to find a job in Norway even if it does not exactly fit with their previous education or experience. Only 5% were categorically against taking such a job, while 6% were unsure. 39% said that they would take any kind of job, while 45% stated that they would be willing to take a job not related to their previous education and qualification, but that it would depend on the type of job.

Barriers for finding (more relevant) employment

The vast majority (75%) mentioned insufficient Norwegian skills as the main barrier to get a job or a job more in line with their prior qualifications. Further, almost half of the respondents also highlighted that the temporary permits make employers sceptical of hiring Ukrainians. One fifth said there was a lack of opportunities in their municipality. Among those who are unemployed, health issues and discrimination by employers are also voiced challenges. One third said that lack of networks was a hinder to getting a job in Norway.

Plans for advancement and upskilling

We see that a larger share has had their education approved, from 20% in the 2024 survey to 27% in the 2025 survey. Correspondingly, fewer are awaiting an answer. There is also a lower share that now plan to apply.

We also asked whether respondents have thought of enhancing their education in order to qualify for a new profession in Norway. Only 17% said 'no', while one fourth were unsure. For those who planned for further upskilling in Norway, attending shorter courses or qualification programmes, starting Norwegian university and planning for other longer professional education programmes were the most desired strategies.

Challenges with starting a business in Norway

Among our respondents, 18% were self-employed in Ukraine before they fled. Meanwhile, only 2% currently report that self-employment is their main activity in Norway. Information about how to start a business in Norway also got the lowest score when assessing information about different topics. Thus, we asked the respondents whether they had thought about starting a new business in Norway. Just under half of the respondents had considered starting a business, but only 3% had succeeded (but not necessarily as their main activity or source of income). 28% have considered it, but not yet realized their plans, while 12% had considered it but decided not to go forward with it.

In the open-ended questions, only a small number of respondents described positive experiences or specific support measures related to starting a business in Norway. Among those who did, the examples mainly concern access to courses, information, or personal encouragement. However, respondents who had considered or attempted to start a business in Norway described a wide range of obstacles. These barriers relate primarily to lack of accessible information, language challenges, financial constraints, administrative complexity, and uncertainty linked to temporary protection. Several respondents also pointed to local conditions in the place of settlement as a hindrance.

Closely linked to the barriers mentioned, the respondents had a wide range of suggestions for how Norwegian authorities could improve support for Ukrainians who wish to start their own business. Their proposals centred around a number of major themes: better access to information, targeted courses and practical guidance, financial support, reduced bureaucracy and simplified procedures, and greater stability in residence status in Norway. Many also stressed the importance of receiving encouragement rather than scepticism when seeking help from public service providers.

Work in the informal sector and exploitation

Similarly to the 2024 report, only 5% answered that they had been *offered* to work in the informal/unregistered sector of the economy in Norway (e.g. without a contract or without paying taxes). 84% answer that they had not heard of other Ukrainians working in the informal job market, which is up from 78% in last year's survey. Only 2% report to have had informal work themselves, while 15% report to know other Ukrainians who work in the informal labour market.

We further asked whether the respondents in their current or former jobs in Norway had experienced any forms of exploitation. Almost 80% reported that they had not experienced any types of exploitation in their jobs in Norway. 11% had experienced not receiving correct

salary (e.g. not being paid for overtime), and 7% not getting a formal work contract. 4% reported having too extensive work hours, and 1% reported experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace.

Children's social integration and education

Almost all children participate in obligatory schooling (up to lower secondary) in Norway (98%). The attendance in Norwegian high schools (for those aged 16-17 years) is somewhat lower but highly dependent on time of arrival: while only 43% of those arriving in 2025 attended school among in this age group, around 90% attended among those who arrived before 2025.

Similarly to previous reports, we find that kindergarten and schools are ranked at top when assessing the parents' satisfaction with different services in Norway (scoring 4.6 out of 5). The parents' assessments of whether their children thrive at school are also very positive for all age groups. The interviews highlight the good support system in Norwegian schools for those who may struggle at school as a very positive feature for the children's motivation.

Although the vast majority attend Norwegian schools, over half of the respondents' report that their children still attend some form of Ukrainian teaching or schooling, which is about the same level as in the 2024 survey. The interviews reveal that for some parents, their children's engagement with the Ukrainian education system gradually shifts from active involvement—such as participation in distance learning—to a focus on formal enrolment. In such cases, the children's substantive learning takes place within Norwegian schools, yet maintaining official enrolment and ties to the Ukrainian system remains significant.

There is still insecurity connected to how the Ukrainian government will assess their children's schooling abroad upon a potential return to Ukraine, and whether their children will be placed in a lower grade. These narratives highlight the need to improve the information campaign of the Ukrainian Ministry of Education, aimed at providing clear explanations and better understanding of the reintegration process for Ukrainian children returning to the national education system.

Concerning children's social integration, we still see a difference between age groups (related to having Norwegian friends and participating in after-school activities). Teenagers struggle more than younger age groups. However, parents experience a clear improvement for those teenagers who have lived in Norway for a longer period. Thus, although it takes time for teenagers to adapt and integrate, we see a positive trend.

However, there are still some who describe social and psychological challenges—particularly among more newly arrived teenagers. In general, among parents,14% answer that their child/children had needed psychological services, while another 4% answered that only some of their children did. Of those who reported that their children needed such services, only half answered that their children had received help with these challenges. Lastly, although unaccompanied minors are not a focus of this research project, the interviews revealed concerns for this growing group, and particularly their psychological state and support system.

Adults' social integration and sense of belonging

Concerning participation in social activities, two thirds participate in some form of formalized activity or organisation, mainly related to their children's leisure activities, cultural organisations or voluntary work for Ukraine or Ukrainians.

When asked whether they have *Norwegian* friends or acquaintances, we find—not surprisingly—that those who have lived in Norway for a longer time more often had Norwegian close friends and acquaintances. While only 11% of those who arrived in 2022 answered that they had no Norwegian friends and acquaintances, over half of the respondents in 2025 stated the same. Still, even among those who have lived here for over

three years, only 22% report to have *close* Norwegian friends, illustrating the challenge of getting to know Norwegians more closely, even after several years of living in Norway.

This trend is supported by the qualitative interviews, which indicate that it is not challenging for Ukrainian refugees to contact locals or make new acquaintances, but that real and close friendships with Norwegians are uncommon.

Ukrainian refugees report a higher sense of belonging to Norway than to Ukraine. On a scale from 1 (low belonging) to 7 (high belonging), they give a score of 4.8 for their belonging to Norway and 4.1 for Ukraine.

Differential treatment

A new topic in this year's survey is questions about differential treatment, building on and comparing results with a national survey (*Levekårsundersøkelsen for innvandrere - LKI)* to immigrants from Statistics Norway (2016). Although this survey is ten years old and conditions may have changed, we use its results as a benchmark to compare whether Ukrainian refugees experience more or less differential treatment than other immigrant groups in Norway across various areas.

We find that almost one third answered that they had experienced negative differential treatment because of their immigrant background in a job searching process, and one in five in the housing market. 17% had experienced it in the workplace. There are fewer experiences with differential treatment in the healthcare system and educational system.

All in all, 37% of the respondents answered that they had experienced negative differential treatment in at least one area.

We also see interesting differences between Ukrainian refugees and other immigrant groups, when comparing the 2025 survey with the LKI survey. A larger share of Ukrainian refugees answered that they had experienced differential treatment in a job search process, the healthcare system, and in other situations. The same amount answer that they had experienced differential treatment in the workplace, but a lower share of the Ukrainians had experienced differential treatment at educational institutions.

Using regression analyses, we find interesting subgroup differences among the Ukrainian refugees: there are no gender differences, but the youngest and eldest age groups experience less differential treatment than those in the middle age groups. Those who have lived longer in Norway, those with mental health issues, and those living in more urban areas have a higher probability of experiencing differential treatment. Education is not significant, but the better the Norwegian and English skills, the more likely the respondents are of reporting experience with differential treatment. Also, the financial situation in Ukraine and Norway matters, though with opposite signs: Those with a had a better financial situation in Ukraine (before they fled) were more likely to report about differential treatment, while those who currently struggle financially in Norway are more likely to have experienced differential treatment.

Future prospects

The Ukrainian refugees did not think that the war would end anytime soon, although two-thirds did not make any predictions. Of those who did provide an estimate, half believed that the war would last until 2029 or longer. Only 7% believed that the war will be over by the end of 2026.

When comparing results from the surveys from 2022 to 2025 concerning Ukrainian refugees' future prospects for return to Ukraine when the war ends, there is a clear trend with gradual lower return aspirations from 2022 to 2024, but the 2025 survey shows a stagnation. There are almost identical return aspirations in 2024 and 2025, where only 11% answered that they would return as soon as the war ends, 43% was unsure, while 47% did not plan to return.

Just over one third planned to get additional family to Norway, one third were unsure, and the last third had no such plans. Very few planned to move to another country—only 3%—while 29% were unsure.

When comparing return aspirations among subgroups, we find that men still have lower return aspirations than women. Concerning age, we see an interesting pattern: both the younger and older age groups have higher return aspirations compared to the middle age groups. Contrary to last year's finding, having children in Norway does not affect return aspirations in this model, but those with close family remaining in Ukraine are more inclined to want to return.

We also find another contrary finding from the 2024 survey: previously, we found that the most recent arrivals had lower return aspirations, but in the 2025 survey, we see lower return aspirations among those with longer residence time.

Prior education, English skills or employment status do not show significant correlations with return aspirations, but those with better Norwegian skills have lower return aspirations. Also, financial upwards mobility in Norway (compared to the financial situation in Ukraine) and social integration in Norway increase the probability for wanting to stay in Norway.

Why stay or return?

We identify many of the same reasons for not wanting to return as proclaimed in previous reports, such as not having a home to return to, fears of an unstable peace and that a conflicted society awaits them in Ukraine after the war, and yet another uprooting and prospects of an unstable future for their children. Among the interviewees that were open to or unsure whether they would return, professional or social reasons dominated. Interviewees who feel they have been unable to realize themselves professionally in Norway or to socially become fully part of Norwegian society, state these as important reasons for considering a future return to Ukraine when that becomes possible.

Some also envisioned or hoped for a transnational life in two countries, where they could keep close contact with Ukraine at the same time as they could make use of their Norwegian connection. Others highlighted how conditions in both Ukraine and Norway would affect their decision, and that they just had to wait and consider the situation in time.

Transition to work visa as a strategy for some, but not for all

A temporary collective protection permit does not count as residence time on the path to a permanent residence permit, but a possibility is to transition to a permit that qualifies for permanent residency, such as a work permit. In a survey question, half of the respondents either planned to apply (9%) or planned to apply when they fulfil the criteria for a work permit (43%). 41% had not considered this. Many of the interviewees had also considered this as a strategy to be able to stay in Norway. However, others rejected this as an option because they evaluated that they would not qualify for it, as the Norwegian work permit includes strict criteria for qualification and earnings. This year, we also met scepticism to switching permits. One interviewee argued that a work visa did not reflect the reason why she arrived in Norway, nor did it in her view provide the same level of protection if she lost her jobs, thus pointing out the potential risks in switching permits.

Perceptions of Norwegian policies and conditions in Ukraine for future return

In the midst of war, both Ukraine and Norway continuously have to develop and adjust policies for those who fled from Ukraine. As a background, we first present the Ukrainian refugees level of trust in the political system in Norway and Ukraine. It shows that Ukrainian refugees generally have exceptionally high trust in the Norwegian political system (mean scores of around 8 out of 10), and exceptionally low trust in the Ukrainian political system (2.4 out of 10).

Norwegian current and future policies for Ukrainian refugees

Among the Norwegian policy restrictions introduced for Ukrainian refugees after 2023 are limits on temporary visits to Ukraine and reduced eligibility for collective protection for new arrivals from areas designated as 'safe zones.' These two restrictions set Norway apart from other European countries, but what do the Ukrainian refugees in Norway themselves think about these restrictions?

Respondents are very divided when it comes to both restrictions and it follows the same pattern: about one third strongly disagrees, one third strongly agrees, while the remaining third were in a more moderate or middle position. In the interviews, there is mostly critique of the travel prohibition, with varying justification such as practical challenges with following Ukrainian education, a sense of imprisonment and discrimination and being separated from family members. In an open-ended question in the survey, many argued that the current rule was both emotionally and practically damaging, and that the ban on short visits was counterproductive in relation to long-term return.

The temporary collective protection status created a sense of uncertainty for many, given its lack of a built-in pathway to permanent residency. As individuals become increasingly integrated into Norwegian society, some begin to experience a growing disconnect between their legal status and their deepening sense of belonging. This tension was echoed again in the current round of interviews, where participants described the temporary nature of collective protection as a persistent source of psychological stress and in some cases depression.

Interviewees were lacking clarity from Norwegian authorities about whether staying on in Norway will be possible or not and pointed to mixed signals. Concerning their future expectations, the interviewees are very divided in their optimism and predictions of future policies. However, a common prediction was the prospects of differentiated policies—for example by distinguishing between people from different regions in Ukraine and/or based on employment or self-sufficiency status.

In an open-ended question, the respondents were asked what Norwegian authorities could do to make it easier for Ukrainians to return to Ukraine after the war. A substantial share expressed uncertainty or emphasised that decisions about return must rest entirely with refugees themselves, or with Ukrainian authorities. Otherwise, the travel restrictions were mentioned as counterproductive in relation to long-term return. A second major theme concerns economic and practical support for returnees, not only individually, but also the importance of supporting Ukraine's economic and political recovery. For these respondents, meaningful return depends less on individual assistance and more on Ukraine's post-war reconstruction, stability and governance.

Finally, a smaller group of respondents also highlighted the psychological impact of living for years with uncertainty regarding the future of temporary protection. Rather than suggesting concrete measures to facilitate return, they argued that Norwegian authorities could help by reducing anxiety and unpredictability. In their view, clearer information about future rights and expectations would make it easier to plan, whether the goal is eventual return or continued stay.

Conditions in Ukraine for potential return

The conditions and policies in Ukraine may also be decisive for future return decisions. We find that for parents, the fear of an unsure or unstable future for their children and/or insecurity about how to reintegrate their children are the top concerns. Other top concerns are security and political conditions, including political instability, fear of new Russian attacks and the general security situation. The fear of negative attitudes towards returnees is also mentioned by more than half of the respondents and is a general concern for men and women alike. Just below half of the respondents also highlight damaged infrastructure, employment possibilities and the housing situation as relevant factors. Lastly, only one fourth

answer that a repatriation programme with economic support for refugees is a relevant condition.

When asked what Ukrainian authorities could do to encourage return after the war, interviewees' responses centred around three key themes: 1) the necessity of fighting corruption, strengthening the rule of law and reducing social inequality, 2) the need for Ukraine to foster strong, positive relations with its diaspora abroad and hinder stigma and resentment from those who remained in Ukraine during the war, and 3) the importance of creating favourable working and living conditions, such as better healthcare, reliable public services, adequate housing, stable infrastructure and protection from arbitrary mobilisation. Probably these expectations reflect the fact that many by now have lived for several years in Norway and have become accustomed to more predictable systems of welfare and governance.

Overall, our analysis indicates that the willingness to return after the war depends not only on peace, but on whether Ukraine succeeds in creating a state that is secure, fair and inclusive for all its citizens—whether they stayed in Ukraine or left for another country.

Part 3: The municipal refugee services' experiences with Ukrainian refugees and related policies

Part 3 is based on a survey of leaders in the municipal refugee service in 266 municipalities (64% response rate from all Norwegian municipalities). The analyses also compare results from the previous surveys from 2023 and 2024, allowing for analysis of development over time.

Organisation of municipal refugee services

Norwegian municipalities are central to refugee settlement and integration, providing frontline services, introduction programs, and Norwegian language training.

The majority of municipalities still organises the refugee services in a separate refugee office (68%). There is a small rise in the share that organises the services in a separate refugee office or through an inter-municipality service in 2025. About one out of four organise it through Nav, and this share is stable over time. Large municipalities have chosen the Nav option to a greater extent than small municipalities.

New concerns about down-scaling capacity after upscaling the last three years

The influx of Ukrainian refugees from 2022 necessitated significant upscaling in refugee services, and almost all municipalities had to up-scale their capacity. Capacity was increased primarily through permanent and temporary hires. The analysis indicates that the pressure on municipal refugee services is less severe in 2025 than the two previous years. Lower numbers of arrivals in 2025 have led many municipalities to worry about how to downsize their refugee services. Three of four municipalities report that they already have downsized their service, plan to downsize or both. There are great differences between municipalities when it comes to the need for downsizing. Among the larger municipalities, almost all have already downscaled their services or plan to do so. Among the smallest municipalities, more than one of three reports no need for downscaling.

The most commonly used ways to downsize municipal refugee services is to not prolong contracts with temporary staff. Other used measures include reducing costs in general, relocating permanent employees and keeping positions vacant when people quit their jobs. However, the open-ended answers show how municipalities face challenges retaining competence and flexibility when scaling down.

In summary, while municipalities have successfully scaled up and down their refugee services, challenges remain in balancing capacity, competence retention, and fluctuating demands.

Good, but varying assessments of cooperation with national and local actors

Municipal refugee services assess cooperation with local actors positively, especially with education providers (e.g., kindergartens, schools, and adult education). Health services received lower ratings, reflecting the refugees' assessments as well. Cooperation with voluntary organisations slightly declined in 2025.

IMDi is highly rated for its information and guidance activities, scoring 4.1 out of 5. Smaller municipalities, which gained more experience with refugee settlement, now rate IMDi's support similarly to larger municipalities. However, some larger municipalities find certain IMDi resources less relevant. Cooperation with county governors is assessed as adequate, though with significant regional variation.

Voluntary organisations remain vital in supporting refugee integration, particularly through language practice and internships. Larger municipalities benefit from a broader range of voluntary activities. In line with national policies, there has been a shift towards labour-market-focused activities, but this may also have reduced attention to social programs for families and children.

Scope of introduction programme

Ukrainian refugees aged 18–55 have access to introduction programmes, which include language and work-oriented elements. By 2025, 92% of municipalities offered full-time introduction programmes, an 8 percentage points increase from 2024, reflecting reduced strain due to fewer arrivals.

Almost all municipalities say that they prolong the introduction programme period more than the initial 6 months for all (11%) or based on individual assessment (85%). However, we find an increasing tendency to prolong the programme after an individual assessment.

Increased work-orientation

Since 2024, introduction programmes for Ukrainian refugees are required to include at least 15 hours of work-related activities weekly for participants aiming for employment. By 2025, 55% of municipalities met this requirement, which is an improvement from 2024. Larger municipalities are more likely to achieve the target. Work-related activities such as information about Norwegian working life, work practice, career guidance, and CV workshops are widely offered. However, except for work practice and information on Norwegian working life, which are offered by practically all municipallities, smaller municipalities has a less differentiated work-related content in the introducion programme compared to larger muicipalities.

Language Training

Norwegian language training for Ukrainian refugees is generally limited to one year, with some municipalities offering six-month extensions. In 2025, 44% of municipalities provided extended language training for all refugees who requested it, a six percent points increase from 2024. However, there is also an increase in the share answering that only a minority are offered extended language training, illustrating an increased diversity in practices across municipalities. Among those who do not prolong the language training, the most common reasons are scarce resources and capacity.

Our 2025 data convey a moderate development in flexible language training. The share offering evening courses and digital training are relatively stable, but there is a small increase in municipalities offering differentiated training according to level or preferences. There is a

substantially larger share of the large municipalities offering different form of flexible Norwegian language training.

In 2024, the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir) launched a package of digital Norwegian language courses targeting municipal refugee services. The services can buy these courses for their refugees. The municipalities increasingly use digital Norwegian courses offered by HK-dir, with usage growing by over 50% since 2024. Larger municipalities are more likely to adopt these courses, while smaller ones report insufficient information about them. While some respondents praise digital courses as a supplement to in-person training, others criticize their cost, lack of availability in nynorsk, and limited uptake by participants.

Some respondents highlight that digital Norwegian training should have been developed and offered for free by a national provider to everyone who comes to Norway and wants to learn Norwegian—all types of immigrants, including refugees. In this regard, it is worth mentioning a new national language training initiative (nafoki.no) that was launched in November 2025—a website that offers language chatbots powered by AI. This tool is free and open to all immigrants in Norway at no cost for the municipalities.

Related to language training, key challenges mentioned by the municipalities include insufficient state funding for language training and a lack of flexible options, which can force refugees to choose between work and education. However, teacher and classroom shortages have eased since 2023.

Cooperation on labour-market integration of Ukrainian refugees

Municipal refugee services report generally positive cooperation with actors such as adult education providers, Nav offices, and private employers, with scores above 4 out of 5. Cooperation with adult education, voluntary organisations and county authorities has also improved since 2024.

Refugee services organised within Nav rate their collaboration with other Nav units higher, while services organised outside Nav assess cooperation with other actors such as municipal employers and adult education more positively.

Capacity challenges in Nav as a main concern

Concerning the use of labour-market measures such as wage subsidies and market expertise, which was highly rated in 2024, we find a significant decline, reflecting strained Nav resources in 2025. A key finding is that municipal refugee services highlight capacity and resource shortages in Nav as barriers to effective follow-up of refugees after the introduction programme. Also, those refugee services that are organised within Nav emphasise such challenges in state-level resource allocation. An overall concern is that resource shortages, including cuts to wage subsidies, have hindered refugees' integration into stable employment, leading to concerns about long-term social assistance dependency. Further, several argue that municipal budgets often compensate for Nav's shortcomings, particularly in staffing and funding.

Barriers and Opportunities in the Labour Market

When having to prioritize different integration goals for Ukrainian refugees, the refugee services ranked teaching Norwegian and securing quick employment the highest and most important ones. Ensuring work aligned with qualifications is given lower priority, reflecting the national political focus on rapid employment rather than long-term career alignment.

Work practice is now a key component of work-oriented introduction programmes, with 98% of municipalities including it for at least some participants. Respondents highlight its benefits, such as networking opportunities and language practice. However, challenges include fewer opportunities for work practice in the public sector compared to private businesses, and concerns about employers exploiting work practice for free labour.

In the report, we distinguish between individual and structural barriers for labour-market integration. In the view of the refugee service leaders, the most significant individual barriers are insufficient Norwegian and English language skills, lack of work experience, and unrecognized qualifications, as well as the relation between refugees' expectations and actual opportunities in the local labour market.

Compared with the individual factors, local and systemic factors are, on average, perceived as less important barriers to labour-market integration than the individual factors. Nevertheless, systemic barriers include high language requirements, particularly in the public sector, and poor alignment between refugee skills and local-labour market needs.

Municipalities as employers

Despite staff shortages in many municipal services like healthcare, schools, and kindergartens, hiring refugees remains challenging. Formal qualifications and language requirements are key obstacles. Refugees are most commonly placed in internships or temporary roles in kindergartens, schools, and care services, with permanent employment more frequent in cleaning roles.

A minority of the refugee services report that they cooperate closely with the HR department responsible for recruitment in the municipality. Nearly half of the respondents say that they cooperate somewhat with the HR department, while one in three refugee services say that they have no cooperation with HR.

The qualification principle is an important rule in the Norwegian public sector: the person who has qualifications best fitted to the position, should be employed. In 2024, however, an exception from the qualification principle in the municipal sector was introduced. The exception allows for bypassing the qualification principle if it is done for reasons of inclusion of persons who are outside employment, education, and training, as well as individuals with disabilities. About one third reports that they do not use this option, while the other third reports that they do not know, indicating an unused potential for the municipalities in using this option to increase the labour-market integration of both Ukrainian and other refugees.

Possibilities and challenges in future refugee settlement

The last three years, record-high numbers of Ukrainian refugees have been settled all over Norway. Although the last reports largely showed over-pressured and constrained municipal capacity due to high arrivals for three years, there is now a new development. While only 3% of municipalities reported having capacity to settle significantly more refugees in the last two years, this has risen to 15% in 2025, probably reflecting reduced strain from fewer arrivals and prior upscaling. Larger municipalities are generally more open to additional settlement.

While challenges such as available housing remain significant, other issues—such as refugee service capacity, language education, and interpreting services—are less pressing compared to previous years. Limited municipal finances and capacity in somatic and mental health services continue to pose challenges, but political will is rarely cited as a barrier.

Secondary migration (moving from the initial settlement municipality) within Norway remains low, with 80% of the municipalities reporting little to no movement of refugees between municipalities. Larger municipalities, especially in the Oslo area, report higher in-migration from other municipalities. Around 55% of the municipalities report some degree of re-migration of refugees back to Ukraine.

Respondents highlight key benefits of refugee settlement, such as addressing labour shortages in private and municipal sectors (76% and 58%, respectively) and countering population decline (68%). Smaller municipalities are particularly positive about these benefits, viewing Ukrainian families as vital contributors to local communities and services.

When asked what type of state support they need for continuing refugee settlements, municipal refugee service leaders emphasize the need for increased financial support, particularly for refugees with disabilities, elderly individuals, and those with significant health

challenges. They request more predictable funding to ensure sustainable services and gradual downscaling when refugee numbers decrease. Respondents also advocate for regulatory clarity and flexibility, particularly regarding introduction programme duration and Norwegian language requirements. Enhanced resources for Nav, including wage subsidies, industry-specific courses, and mentorship programs, are also highlighted to improve the labour-market integration of Ukrainian refugees.

Part 4: Synthesising analysis and conclusions

From a longitudinal perspective, this study finds that Ukrainian refugees have remarkably stable and positive assessments of the Norwegian reception, settlement and integration system, with most actors and services get mean assessment scores above 4 out of 5. Thus, a main conclusion is that Ukrainian refugees in Norway are generally very satisfied with their reception and services in Norway.

This stable trend of positive assessments, however, does not imply the absence of challenges and highly diverging experiences, both among the Ukrainian refugees in Norway and among Norwegian municipalities. In the synthesising analysis and conclusion chapter, we highlight and discuss some of these challenges.

Challenges and opportunities for increased labour-market integration

The labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees is steadily rising, and up to 42% as of October 2025 (Statistics Norway 2025). However, behind these aggregated numbers of employment, there are important nuances.

Despite the positive rise in employment numbers among Ukrainian refugees, it is important to emphasise that these numbers often include unstable and temporary employment.

In this regard, one repeating challenge—voiced both by the municipalities and refugees alike—is the time-limited right for Norwegian training to one year. This short window of opportunity for rights to publicly funded Norwegian language training creates dilemmas of how to prioritise work and language training the initial year. Many highlight the need for more flexible and continued language training. One example is the Danish model, where rights to language training continues for up to five years, making it possible to take up employment or focusing on job-oriented measures the initial period without losing rights to language training in the longer run.

Other challenges related to the labour-market integration of Ukrainian refugees (and unemployed immigrants in general) are concerns about capacity challenges in Nav. Several municipalities argue that municipal budgets often compensate for Nav's shortcomings, particularly in relation to staffing and funding. Further, we find unexploited potential in two areas for the municipality as an employer: 1) closer cooperation with the municipality's HR department, and 2) use of the 2024 exception to the qualification principle.

Concerns about downscaling after three years of upscaling

After three years of expanding municipal refugee services, the pressure has eased in 2025 compared to the previous two years. However, municipalities now face challenges in reducing capacity, particularly with fewer arrivals anticipated in 2026. Three out of four municipalities report having already downsized, planning to downsize, or both. Many express concerns that downsizing will strain municipal budgets as grants for settling new refugees decrease or end. Municipalities emphasize the need for greater financial predictability and state support to ensure a gradual and sustainable reduction of services.

Temporary protection and uncertainty about the future

A new topic in this year's report is the Ukrainian refugees' mental health challenges. We find several examples of how the continuing temporary and uncertain perspective takes a psychological hold, and two-thirds report symptoms of psychological distress. The interviews

portray how the combination of uncertainty about the future and an unstable and uncertain labour-market attachment is psychological demanding for many Ukrainian refugees. The lack of normalisation after almost four years is challenging, with no prospects of certainty in sight.

In this regard, both Ukrainian refugees and municipalities alike call for answers to what will happen after the temporary protection period expires and/or after a potential peace agreement. Several municipal respondents call for more predictability regarding what will happen with the Ukrainian refugees in the future. Predictability is important not only for the municipalities' work with individual refugees, but also more broadly, as a potential large-scale return would greatly affect local labour markets and societal services.

In the absence of clarity, many speculate about what future policies will be, but most foresee the introduction of selective policies, either based on prior region of residence in Ukraine or employment and self-sufficiency. Some point to how other European countries have introduced pathways to permanent residence through employment, and the EU's recent proposal encouraging member states to find pathways for more permanent solutions for Ukrainian refugees.

Conditions for return

In debates about future return of Ukrainian refugees, structural conditions such as employment, housing and infrastructure are often the dominant topics. However, our study indicates that political and societal concerns are also very prominent among Ukrainian refugees, including political stability, anti-corruption, and whether Ukrainians returnees will be welcomed or stigmatized by those who remained in Ukraine. The analyses also reveal how experiences with Norwegian society and particularly Norwegian work culture and practice have changed many Ukrainians' perception of what acceptable (or ideal) norms are.

Lastly, the low return aspirations among Ukrainian refugees in both Norway and other European countries indicate that there will be a challenging situation after a potential peace agreement, and that large scale *voluntary* return is less likely. In recent proposal by the EU Commission, they highlight how 'exploratory visits' is an important measure for more voluntary return. However, Norway is currently the only European country with restrictions on temporary visits to Ukraine for those on collective protection permits, which may be counterproductive if the goal is voluntary return. Given Ukrainian refugees' low return aspirations, policies allowing transparent and well-regulated travel for family, property, or community reasons could support the voluntary return potential.

Part 1

Introduction and background

1 Introduction

As of December 2025, over 100 000 displaced persons from Ukraine (hereafter referred to as 'Ukrainian refugees') had applied protection in Norway since the Russian full-scale invasion in February 2022, and over 83 000 had a valid collective protection permit (UDI 2025a).

In this study, we ask:

1. How do Ukrainian refugees experience their reception, settlement and integration in Norway, and what are their aspirations for the future?
2. What are the municipalities' assessments of the challenges and opportunities related to the reception, settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees?
3. For both refugees and municipalities—how have their assessments developed over time?

This report is part of an annual research project conducted by the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) on assignment from the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi).

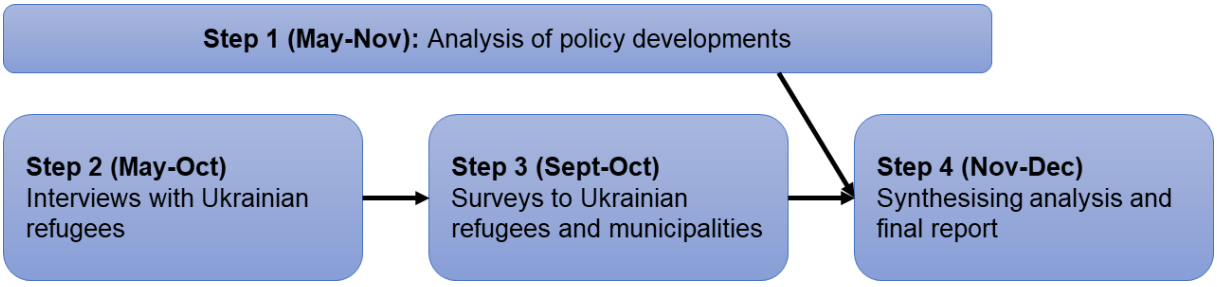
As previous reports, this fourth report is structured in four parts:

- Part 1: Introduction and background
- Part 2: Ukrainian refugees' experiences in Norway and future aspirations
- Part 3: The municipal refugee services' experiences with Ukrainian refugees and related policies
- Part 4: Synthesising analysis and conclusions

1.1 Overall research design

In this study, we have a research strategy where we actively build on data and preliminary findings from preceding steps in the research process. In this section, we present the overall research design for the whole research project. More detailed descriptions of the types of data and methods of data collection used for the respective sub-reports (parts 2 and 3) are provided in the introduction to each of the sub-reports (chapter 4 and 16).

Figure 1.1: Overall research design.



Step 1: Policy analysis

Throughout the project period, we have conducted an ongoing mapping of the national policy development related to the reception, settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees. An updated analysis of policy developments has been necessary to ensure that the interviews and surveys include questions about recent developments and the current situation for Ukrainian refugees and municipalities in Norway. Further, the situation in Ukraine—and their policies for return and reintegration—may also affect Ukrainians in Norway, and we have

built on insights from a recent NIBR-report on policy developments in Ukraine (Holm-Hansen et al. 2025).

In this report, chapter 2 provide descriptive statistics of protection seekers to Norway and their settlement. Chapter 3 describes the current situation and policies for Ukrainian refugees in Norway, with a specific focus on policy developments from late 2024 to November 2025.

To ensure that we include the relevant data and information about policy developments, we have been in correspondence with IMDi, The Directorate of Immigration (UDI), the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav) and the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir) and asked them about relevant data and policy developments for Ukrainian refugees within their field.

Step 2: Qualitative interviews with Ukrainian refugees

This study draws on data and insights from qualitative interviews conducted in spring/autumn 2025 with 18 Ukrainian refugees. The interviews included 10 follow-up interviews with Ukrainian refugees that we had interviewed previously for the 2022, the 2023 and/or the 2024 studies. In addition, we conducted 8 interviews with new interviewees: 5 interviews with Ukrainians undergoing individual protection consideration and three with collective protection holders (one who arrived in 2022 and two who arrived in 2024). For a more detailed description of the data collection and method of analysis for the qualitative interviews with the Ukrainian refugees, see chapter 4.1. The interviews were analysed independently, but they have also been used as important background information to develop the surveys to Ukrainian refugees and Norwegian municipalities.

Step 3: Survey to Ukrainian refugees and municipalities

To ensure longitudinal analysis, the two surveys in this project largely build on the previous surveys to ensure comparability. However, the surveys are adapted to recent changes and to include new topics of relevance.

First, in August 2025, the whole project team had a meeting with the reference group, consisting of representatives from IMDi, UDI, Nav, HK-dir, the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS), the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority, the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO), the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) and the Norwegian-Ukrainian Advocacy Hub. In the meeting, all representatives had the possibility to read through the 2024 survey and discuss which new (and old) topics that were important for their organisation's work with Ukrainian refugees and municipalities in this year's surveys.

For the survey to Ukrainian refugees, we also used the qualitative interviews with Ukrainian refugees in the development and adjustment of the survey.

This year's project did not include new interviews with frontline workers, but the NIBR team built on insights from frontline workers from another research project called 'Refugees at work' (*Flyktninger i arbeid)*[1]. Further, we also built on a recent survey on the same topic to NAV-offices as part of the UKRINT-project where KS and NAV are project partners[2]. In both these projects, Trine Myrvold—which also has been responsible for the municipal survey for this report—was in charge of the data collection.

The two surveys conducted for this report were developed in August/September, and data collection took place in October. For a more detailed description of the data collection and

[1] https://www.oslomet.no/forskning/forskningsprosjekter/folgeevaluering-av-utviklingsnettverket-flyktninger-i-jobb

[2] https://www.oslomet.no/en/research/research-projects/preparing-long-term-stay-fast-return-labour-market-integration-of-ukrainian-refugees-norway-ukrint

method of analysis for the surveys, see chapter 4.2 on the survey of Ukrainian refugees, and chapter 16 on the municipal survey.

Step 3: Synthesising analysis

In the synthesising analysis, we actively combined insights from the qualitative interviews with and the survey of Ukrainian refugees. The survey enables analysis of the scope and extent of different experiences and background factors, in addition to more complex analyses of how different background variables correlate with selected dependent variables. In addition to providing important knowledge used to develop the survey, the qualitative interviews also enable more in-depth analysis of the mechanisms behind different assessments and experiences, and the respondents' rationales in this regard. In this report, we have also exploited the unique longitudinal data we have from both the interviews and surveys through four years of data collection.

The analysis of the surveys to the Ukrainian refugees and to the municipalities includes both quantitative statistical analyses and qualitative analysis of open-ended questions in the two surveys.

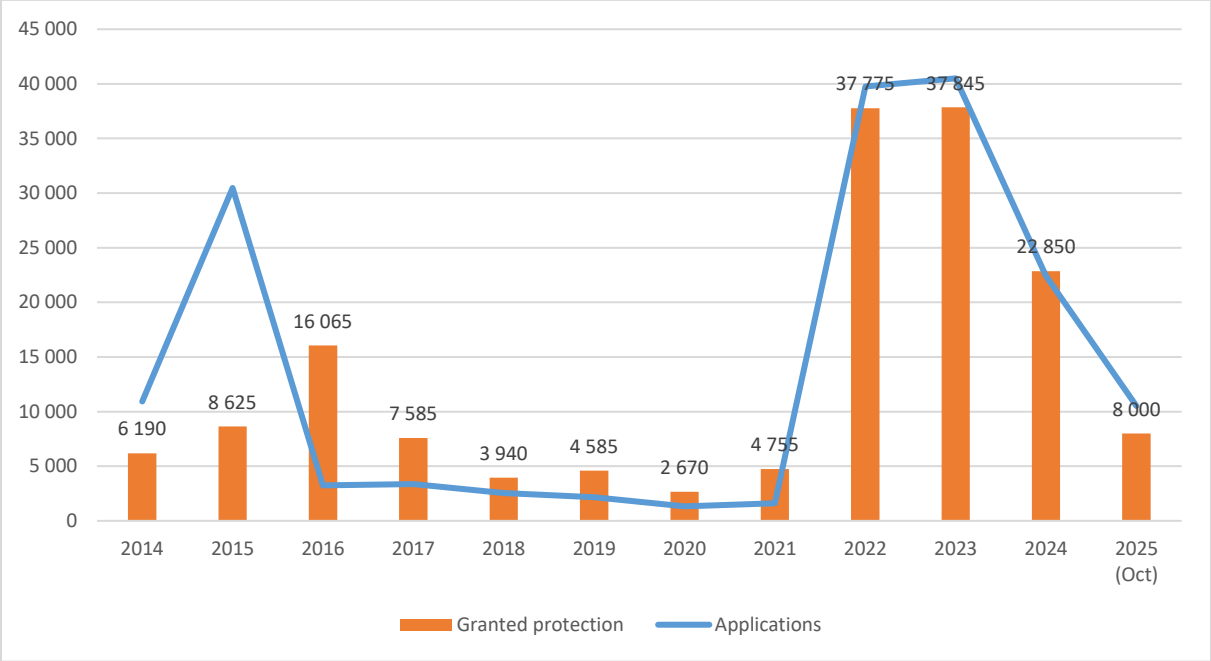
The report has been co-written by all the project members and quality assured by the project manager. The first draft of the report was finalised 28 November 2025 and sent to IMDi, Nav, and KS for comments and clarification. Based on their comments and clarifications, NIBR revised the report and submitted the final version on 12 December 2025.

2 Protection seekers and settlement in Norway—past and recent developments

To put the current influx of protection seekers from Ukraine and its development into context, we first present official statistics from Eurostat, UDI and IMDi, showing how the current situation differs from previous large influxes of protection seekers. Then, using data from UDI, we narrow in on developments after the full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022.

2.1 Inflows of protection seekers to Norway

Figure 2.1: Logged asylum applications and persons granted protection in Norway 2014–Oct 2025.



*Data: The figure is based on data from Eurostat (2025a-g) on all persons granted protection (all statuses, including collective temporary protection and resettled refugees). UDI data is used for applications of temporary collective protection. For resettled, there is not available data for 2025. However, the Norwegian government had decided to accept 500 resettled refugees in 2025, so these numbers would (by October) constitute only a small increase in the total number of granted protection permits.

As shown by Figure 2.1, Norway has experienced large fluctuations in the number of persons seeking protection the past decade, but the situation after 2022 is unprecedented, both related to the number of applications for protection (blue line) and the number of persons granted protection (orange stacks). In 2022 and 2023, Norway received record-high number of arrivals, with about 40 000 asylum applications each year. Since the majority of persons who fled Ukraine were eligible for temporary collective protection, almost all of them were rapidly granted protection, and more than 37 000 persons were granted protection each year (the large majority being displaced persons from Ukraine).

In 2024, there was a large decrease in both applications and granted protection, with about 22 000 applications and protection permits granted.

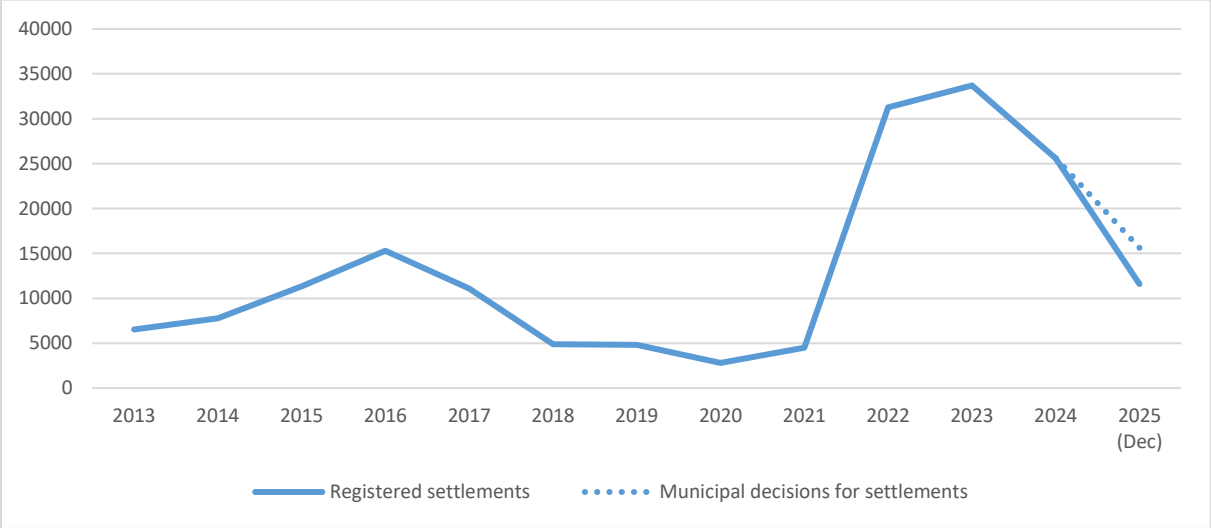
The preliminary number for 2025 by October 2025 also indicates a substantial decrease compared to the last three years, with current numbers at just over 10 000 applications and 8 000 protection permits granted.

As of October 2025, the prognoses for number of protection seekers to Norway in 2026 was 16 000 (UDI 2025c)

2.2 Settlement in municipalities

With a continuing and steady high flow of arrivals, Norwegian municipalities has settled over 100 000 refugees (both Ukrainian and other nationalities) the last 3.5 years.

Figure 2.2: Number of publicly registered settlements in Norwegian municipalities, 2011–2025 (December 10th).



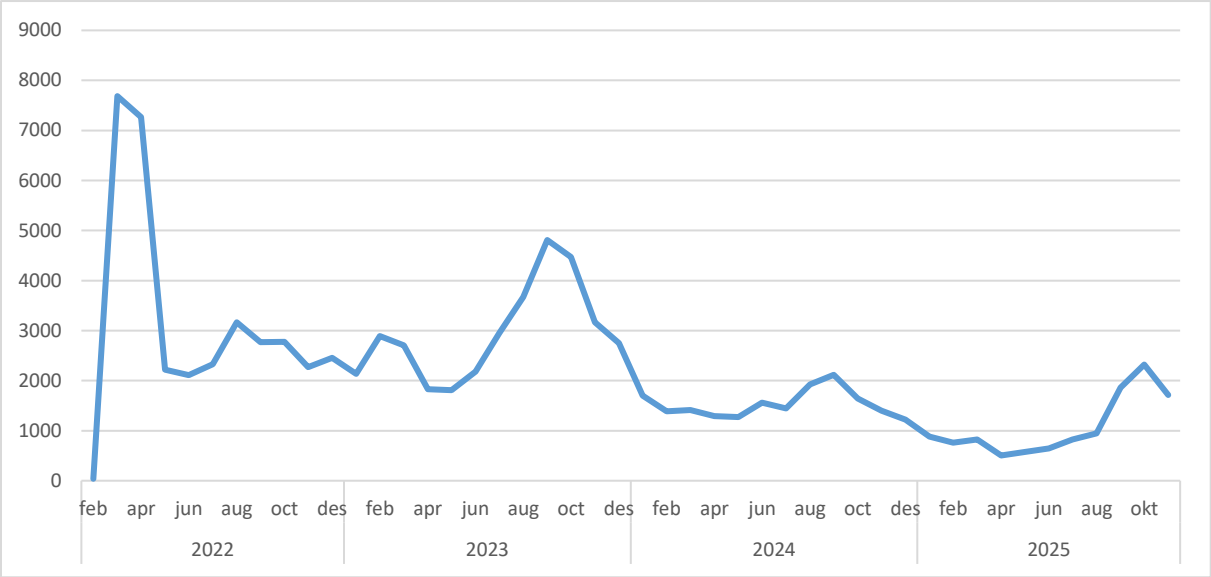
*Data: IMDi (2025a).

Figure 2.2 shows the annual number of registered settlements by those who have been granted protection in Norway and municipal decisions for settlements for 2025. The figure illustrates how the situation after 2022 is unprecedented, both related to the actual number of settlements and the high settlement levels that have sustained over several years. First, although there is a substantial decrease in the number of settlements for 2025 (both actual settlements as of December 10th and municipal decisions for 2025) compared to the levels in 2022-2024, the prognosis for 2025 are still at the same levels as the previous peak in 2016. Further, while the peak in 2016 was followed by a clear decrease the following two years, the settlement levels are record-high compared to previous years for the fourth year in a row, implying a continuing pressure for new settlements in Norwegian municipalities. As of December 2026, the national petitions for settlements for 2026 (based on temporary prognoses) was 13 000 (IMDi 2025b).

2.3 Developments in the total number of Ukrainian refugees after February 2022

There have been great fluctuations in the numbers arriving from Ukraine since February 2022.

Figure 2.3: Total number of applications for protection from Ukrainian citizens per month, February 2022–November 2025.



*Data: UDI (2025a): Registered applications for collective, temporary protection.

Figure 2.3 shows the number of applications for protection from displaced persons from Ukraine in Norway from February 2022 to November 2025. The largest inflows came in March and April 2022 (with over 7000 applications each month), and there was a new peak in fall of 2023 with around 5000 applications per month. From 2024, the number of arrivals dropped significantly, and fluctuated between 1000-2000 applicants per month. In 2025, there was a further decrease in arrivals, with less than 1000 applicants per month. However, after a Ukrainian legislative change in August 2025—allowing 18–22-year-olds to travel out of the country—there was a new rise in arrivals in September and October, but with a decline again in November.

2.4 Transition to other permits and repatriation

As of December 9th 2025, over 101 000 displaced persons from Ukraine had applied for protection, and 98 500 of this group had been granted collective temporary protection. However, UDI reported that as of December 2025, about 83 500 persons had a valid collective protection permit at that time (UDI 2025b). Thus, about 17 000 have previously had a collective protection permit in Norway but no longer has one. Of these, UDI has registered that 2 844 have transition to other permits (57% to work permits, 37% to family immigration permits, and 6% to EEA permits)[3].

This implies that about 14 000 (14%) of those who have been granted a collective protection permit in Norway has presumably left, either back to Ukraine or to other countries.

About 4 500 of these have received repatriation support from UDI. The repatriation support is a sum of NOK 17,500 per person (also per child) in support to return home[4]. 90% of these were granted in 2024 and 2025[5].

[3] Data received from UDI, including data until November 2025

[4] https://www.udi.no/en/return/apply-for-repatriation/#link-30773

[5] Data received from UDI, including data until November 2025

3 Recent policy developments

In this chapter, we review the major legislative changes concerning reception and integration that have occurred since late 2024. For each area, we first summarize the initial policy developments from 2022-2024 (drawing on previous reports), before presenting an overview of the changes introduced after October 2024. For more thorough descriptions of the earlier policy development from 2022-2024, see the 2022 report (Hernes et al. 2022), the 2023 report (Hernes et al. 2023), and the 2024 report (Hernes et al. 2024).

We will start by summarizing the restrictive policy shift that occurred after September 2023 related to permits, which introduced several new regulations affecting displaced persons from Ukraine (as described by Hernes et al. (2024)), before we describe the more recent restrictions introduced in 2025. Thereafter, we review the modifications to the introduction programme outlined in the Integration Act and describe their implications for Ukrainian refugees. A minor amendment to the Interpreting Act will also be addressed. Lastly, we present some employment-oriented initiatives.

3.1 Protection permits for displaced persons from Ukraine

In March 2022, following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Norwegian government introduced temporary collective protection for displaced persons from Ukraine under § 34 of the Immigration Act. The legislation aligns with the EU Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), as adopted by the European Council (EU Directive 2001/55/EC).

After the outbreak of the full-scale invasion in 2022, Norway started out with more liberal policies. After Norway experienced a rise in arrival numbers during the fall of 2023, there was a restrictive shift in policies towards Ukrainian refugees, and the government implemented a series of restrictive and structural changes to its temporary protection scheme for displaced Ukrainians (Danielsen & Hernes 2025).

Initially, displaced persons from Ukraine were allowed to make short visits to their home country, a freedom generally not granted to refugees in Norway. However, in December 2023, the government revoked this exemption and introduced strict criteria for what constitutes legitimate reasons to travel back to Ukraine. Furthermore, eligibility for temporary collective protection was narrowed by excluding Ukrainians with dual citizenship in a safe third country and, retroactively, by preventing permit renewal after March 2024. In May 2024, reapplication rights were further restricted for Ukrainians whose permits had been revoked or not extended, citing resource considerations as justification. In September 2024, Norway became the first European country to restrict eligibility for temporary collective protection to specific regions of Ukraine, designating six western counties as 'safe zones'. According to UDI, 'safe zones' are areas where Ukrainian authorities have a high degree of control, and where Russia has little or no control or influence (UDI, 2025d). This implied that persons from these six western counties would have to fulfil the regular criteria for an asylum assessment under the regular asylum system (which are much stricter than those for temporary collective protection). It is important to emphasise that this latter restriction only applied to new arrivals, and not to those who already had been granted a collective protection permit. Overall, these two measures indicate a broader shift toward stricter regulations aimed at ensuring that Norway does not maintain more favourable policies for Ukrainian refugees than those of other European countries (see Hernes et al. 2024 for more details).

3.1.1 Changes after the fall of 2024

Some modifications have been made to the protection permit for displaced persons from Ukraine following autumn 2024. As noted, Norway had already introduced geographic

limitations, restricting eligibility for collective protection for new arrivals from counties in Ukraine that the UDI evaluated as 'safe zones'. As of October 2024, six counties in western Ukraine were officially classified as safe (Hernes et al., 2024), but in January 2025, another eight areas were added to this list.

In February 2025, the government decided to extend the collective protection scheme by one year. This decision was partly based on the extension of the EU Temporary Protection Directive, which remains in effect until March 2026 (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025a). This means that individuals with collective protection can have their permits extended for an additional year, including those who have already held collective protection for three years. Those covered by the scheme were granted a one-year residence permit through a simplified procedure, without an individual assessment of their need for protection (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025a).

In September 2025, the government raised the requirement for Norwegian oral skills for foreign nationals seeking permanent residence in Norway for all immigrants. The language requirement was increased by one level, from A1 to A2 (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025b). However, as the collective protection permit does not qualify for permanent residency (at least with the existing legislation), this policy implication is less relevant for Ukrainian refugees.

As part of the projections in Norway's National Budget for 2026, presented on 15 October 2025, the government emphasized a responsible and sustainable immigration policy. The government emphasised that it would continuously assess whether changes to regulations or practices were needed to ensure that Norway did not appear more attractive as a country to seek protection in than other comparable countries (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2025c).

The Norwegian temporary collective protection may be extended for a fifth year, but as of November 2025, there is no official plans or policies for a path towards more permanent residence options or what will happen after the five year-period with temporary collective protection expires.

3.2 Application process and settlement in a municipality

There have been no major changes to the application process for displaced persons from Ukraine since November 2024. The only modification (as mentioned above) was that applicants from the fourteen designated safe counties now undergo individual assessment of their asylum applications (UDI, 2025a).

There were also no changes in the reception or settlement policies during this period. In March 2022, the MAMOT (Temporary Alternative Reception Placement for persons displaced from Ukraine) scheme was launched and administered by UDI. It provided municipalities with funding to follow up on refugees living in private accommodation and enabled Ukrainians to live in private accommodation and still be able to get financial assistance during the application stage. However, this scheme was discontinued in spring 2024, partly because there was little demand for the scheme at the time (Myhre et al., 2025). Thus, Ukrainian refugees now have to live in reception centres until they are assigned a municipality if they are in need of public assistance, for example financial support and interpreting services (with a few exceptions[6]) (UDI 2025c).

The settlement process for displaced persons from Ukraine after they are granted protection also remained the same throughout 2025. Norway operates with a publicly managed settlement model in which refugees are allocated to municipalities through agreements

[6] For exceptions from this rule, see rules for *alternative accommodation to reception centres:* https://www.udi.no/en/have-applied/protection-asylum/ordinary-asylum-reception-centre/alternative-reception-centres/

between the state and local authorities. There is also a possibility for 'agreed self-settlement,' allowing refugees to secure their own housing. However, they must still apply to the municipality for formal settlement to maintain eligibility for financial assistance and participation in introduction programmes (Søholt & Dyb, 2021). Although this form of settlement was widely used in the initial phase after 2022 (Hernes et al. 2022), it has become less common after 2022. For example, while 1791 were settled through agreed self-settlement in 2022 (in IMDis system), only 50 individuals were registered with such agreements in 2025 (as of November 2025)[7].

3.3 Integration measures

Unlike in many other European countries, Ukrainian refugees in Norway have been granted rights to integration measures that are largely similar to those of other refugees (Hernes & Łukasiewicz 2025). Norway has rather extensive integration measures regulated by the Norwegian Integration Act of 2021, which regulates rights and obligations for introduction programmes for refugees, as well as Norwegian language training and civic training for immigrants. However, there have been some modifications to the Ukrainian refugees' rights and obligations (particularly related to the Norwegian introduction programme), which have been regulated in a temporary act for Ukrainian refugees[8] (for descriptions of these specific adjustments, see Hernes et al. 2024).

In June 2025, the Norwegian Parliament adopted a series of changes to the integration regulations and the Integration Act, which also have implications for Ukrainian refugees. The goal of the legislative changes was to promote stronger employment orientation and formal education within the introduction program, as well as to establish a clearer and simpler regulatory framework. Some of the changes have already been implemented, whilst others will be introduced in January 2026 or at a later stage (IMDi 2025a).

As part of these revisions, persons on temporary collective protection will be subjected to the same rights and obligations as other refugees, in line the revised regulations in the Integration Act concerning introduction programmes. However, there have been no changes to the access displaced persons from Ukraine have to Norwegian language and societal orientation classes. This group still has the right to attend Norwegian language classes, but they do not have societal orientation classes as an obligatory element in the introduction programme (although municipalities may choose to include this) (IMDi 2025c).

The general changes to the Integration Act (which will also affect Ukrainian refugees) include the following revisions:

First, the new Act includes a clarification that those who are already employed or have a confirmed job offer of at least 30 hours per week will no longer be eligible to participate in the introduction programme. Individuals in this category will retain the right and obligation to participate only if their current employment or job offer ends within the first two years of settling in a municipality (IMDi 2025c). However, working migrants are expected to attend Norwegian language classes in addition to their work (Integration Act 2021).

Second, there are some alterations concerning the duration of the introduction programme. The duration of the introduction programme will be limited to a maximum of 12 months for individuals who have completed high school or higher education. The programme cannot be extended for this group, and there are no regulations regarding a minimum attendance period. For employment-oriented programmes, a minimum requirement for work-related activities is introduced (which was already the case for Ukrainian refugees in the temporary

[7] Formal numbers received from IMDi's data management system.

[8] Chapter 6A, 'Temporary rules for persons who have been granted a residence permit in conformity with § 34 of the Immigration Act,'

legislation). Starting from the fourth month of the programme, at least 15 hours per week must be dedicated to work-related activities (IMDi 2025c).

Third, for individuals who have not completed high school or higher education, the duration of the introduction programme may be extended by one year if the participant intends to complete high school, either fully or partially, during the programme. In such cases, the programme may last up to four years, with an additional year available to complete high school. Alternatively, it may last three years, with a one-year extension to partially complete high school. For participants in this group who are attending work-qualifying programmes, the introduction programme may last a maximum of two years, with no possibility of extension. For employment-related programmes, a minimum requirement of 15 hours of work-related activities per week will be introduced starting from the seventh month of the programme (IMDi, 2025c).

Fourth, the target group for the introduction programme will be expanded to include individuals aged 55 to 60. Previously, the upper age limit was 55. This change has not yet been implemented but will take effect soon (but with no specified deadline as of December 2025). The group that has the right and obligation to attend the programme will then be persons of 18 to 60 years old. Individuals aged 60 to 67 may be considered for participation on a case-by-case basis, depending on whether the programme is deemed to be significantly beneficial (IMDi, 2025c).

Fifth, further amendments to the Integration Act clarify the purpose and scope of the different types of introduction programs offered, regardless of participants' previous educational background. A new provision requires municipalities to ensure that program content is comprehensive and well-coordinated. Municipalities must also inform participants about the rights to get a 'real competence assessment' (*realkompetansevurdering)* in line with § 18-8 of the Education Act (Education Act, 2024).

Lastly, participants' long-term goals will now be set out in their integration plan rather than in the integration contract, as was previously the case (IMDi, 2025c).

3.4 The Interpreting Act

Effective as of January 1, 2022, the Interpreting Act's purpose is to 'uphold legal safeguards and ensure the provision of proper assistance and services to persons who are unable to communicate adequately with public bodies without an interpreter' and 'ensure that interpreters uphold proper professional standards' (Interpreting Act Section 1[9]).

According to §7, public authorities are mandated to use qualified interpreters. Exceptions apply in emergencies, when waiting is impractical, or for reasons such as high refugee arrivals. Due to a shortage of qualified interpreters, particularly for the Ukrainian language, a temporary exemption allowing the use of unqualified interpreters was introduced in 2022 (Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, 2022).

The exemption period for §7 of the Interpreting Act expires on December 31, 2026. From that date, interpreting must, as a general rule, be carried out by qualified interpreters who fulfil the requirements for being listed in the National Register of Interpreters (Interpreter Act, 2021).

3.5 Other measures and employment-oriented initiatives

The sudden and substantial influx of Ukrainian refugees following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine required all Norwegian municipalities to participate in refugee settlement and integration. Many smaller municipalities had little or no prior experience in this work. For

[9] https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2021-06-11-79

larger municipalities, the significant influx of refugees also posed a major challenge for local administrations. In the spring of 2024, the municipal organization KS launched the development network ‘Refugees at Work’ (Flyktninger i jobb) in close collaboration with IMDi, Nav, and the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO). The network’s purpose was to support and inspire municipalities in their efforts to help resettled refugees enter the labour market (Myrvold, Hjelle, & Tronstad, 2025).

Starting in 2022, IMDi has organized annual conferences for professionals working in the field of integration, titled ‘*Fagverksted’*. These conferences serve as a platform for sharing experiences, learning, and inspiration to strengthen efforts related to settlement, qualification, and labour market inclusion of immigrants. The target audience typically includes program advisors, refugee consultants, teachers, and others, who work directly with immigrants, often at the municipal level (IMDi, 2025d).

Since January 2025, Briga, a certified training, competence, and inclusion enterprise, has been offering AMO courses (Employment Market Training) for displaced persons from Ukraine in the hotel, restaurant, and catering sector (HORECA). This is part of a national project, funded and organized by Nav. Admission to the course is managed through Nav. The schedule consists of 8 weeks of digital training available to all participants nationwide, followed by 10 weeks of practical experience in HORECA businesses for participants based in Oslo. The intake consists of approx. 120 participants. During the digital training, the course content is available in Norwegian and Ukrainian, and tailored to the participants' language level (Briga, n.d.). By participating in the course, attendees satisfy the mandatory 15-hour weekly work-related activity requirement under the introduction programme (IMDi, n.d.).

Part 2

Ukrainian refugees' experiences in Norway and future aspirations

4 Data and methods for analysing Ukrainian refugees' perceptions and experiences in Norway

The overall research design is presented in chapter 1.2. In this chapter, we present more detailed descriptions of the data collection process, methods and ethical assessment of the qualitative interviews with, and the survey of, Ukrainian refugees.

4.1 Qualitative interviews with Ukrainian refugees

In the period May 2025 to early October 2025, we interviewed 18 Ukrainians who had arrived in Norway since winter/spring 2022. Ten of the interviews were longitudinal follow-up interviews with interviewees recruited for the 2022, 2023 and/or the 2024 report. Eight new interviewees were recruited this year. Out of these, five interviewees were under consideration for individual protection, whereas the remaining three had collective protection in Norway but arrived in 2024 or 2025.

We refer to the longitudinal interviewees as N1—N10, the interviewees under consideration for individual protection are marked: NI2,NI3,NI4,NI5, NI8 and the other three new interviewees are marked as NN1, NN6 and NN7.

In this year's interviews, we placed special emphasis on the longitudinal perspective, focusing on how interviewees' perceptions and experiences evolve or remain consistent over time. We also put particular emphasis on Ukrainians' experiences with working life in Norway—be it through work practice or regular employment, and therefore all interviewees this year are working age. Ukrainian refugees, who are under individual consideration is a topic we have formerly offered little attention, and therefore we included new interviews with this group.

Summarised, the sample of interviewees consisted of:

Year of arrival:

- 2021:1
- 2022: 11
- 2023: 3
- 2024: 2
- 2025:1

Age:

- 20-30: 3
- 30-50: 12
- 50-60: 3

Gender distribution:

- Women: 13
- Men: 5

The project investigates the experiences of a complex group. To ensure that we captured the perspectives of a wide range of people, we have in all rounds of recruitment sought to recruit interviewees who differed in terms of the following characteristics (in addition to age, sex and year of arrival):

- arrived in Norway with/without children
- participation in the introduction programme or language courses
- employment in Norway or not
- geographical location in Norway
- geographical region of residence in Ukraine

The interviewees included persons from all parts of Ukraine (north, south, east, west, centre), both large cities and small towns. Interviewees were from the following regions: Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Kyiv, Odesa, Ivano-Frankivsk, Irpin, Lviv, and Crimea.

At the time of the interviews, the Ukrainian refugees were spread geographically throughout Norway, staying in municipalities of various size and centrality located in Vestfold and Telemark, Vestland, Innlandet, Møre and Romsdal, Østfold and Akershus.

The eight interviewees who were interviewed for the first time in 2025 were recruited through several channels: 1) social media (an announcement was posted on the Facebook group 'Ukrainske flyktninger til Norge\Біженці з України до Норвегії'), 2) the researchers' networks among Ukrainians and locals in the municipalities; 3) through contact with Ukrainian communities in Norway.

In the longitudinal interviews, we began by asking about the major changes that had occurred since our last interview. Further, we asked about their evaluation of the introduction programme in hindsight and their current situation with or without work. We also asked about language learning, their financial situation, everyday life and communication in Norway, school/kindergarten for children, thoughts about the status of collective protection, contact with Ukraine and thoughts about the future and potential return to Ukraine. In the interviews with interviewees recruited in 2025, we also included questions about their background and their migration history. In the interviews with people undergoing individual protection consideration, we included questions about conditions in reception centres, their communication with Norwegian authorities and the reasons for why they were not considered eligible for collective protection.

Two researchers participated in all the interviews. One was responsible for taking notes while the other conducted the interview. Interviews were mostly conducted in Ukrainian, but two interviewees preferred Russian and two Norwegian. The interviews lasted between 40 and 90 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed with Autotekst (https://autotekst.uio.no/nb), a digital tool for transcribing text from audio files. Transcripts were made in the original language of Ukrainian, Russian and Norwegian.

For the report, the two researchers who conducted the interviewees did a systematic reading of the material and combined insights for the topics to be included into the report.

4.2 Survey of Ukrainian refugees in Norway

The development of the 2025 survey questionnaire to Ukrainian refugees was based on the 2022-2024 surveys and the preliminary analysis of the qualitative interviews.

To enable comparisons, the questionnaire included questions asked previously about Ukrainians' experiences with various Norwegian authorities and services, labour-market integration and strategies, work and working conditions in Norway, social integration, children's integration, and future prospects. In addition, we asked about background characteristics such as gender, age, language skills, network, formal education, place of residence, family ties in Ukraine and in Norway, etc.

The adjusted questionnaire was first developed in English and sent to IMDi, Nav and KS for comments. After revisions based on their (minor) comments, and a thorough internal quality assurance by project members at NIBR, the revised parts of the survey were translated into

Ukrainian and Russian by one of the team members who has both languages as a mother tongue.

As previous years, we had a twofold recruitment strategy. First, in the previous surveys, we invited respondents to leave their email address if they were willing to be contacted for future research purposes. In total 1984 respondents had left their email address in at least one of the previous surveys. These respondents were then sent a personal invitation (with a link) to participate in the 2025 survey.

Second, we also recruited new respondents through a variety of channels (see description below).

Data collection took place between 25 September and 26 October ('old' respondents from the previous surveys) and between 8 October and 1 November (new respondents). We received 731 valid responses from respondents who had participated in one or more of the 2022-2024 surveys and 1511 valid responses from new respondents.[10] The two data files were merged and made up a joint data file. For analysis in this report, we removed respondents who had not arrived in Norway due to the Russian full-scale invasion of 2022, and those who reported that they had later returned to Ukraine or moved onward to other countries. This report focuses on the 2149 respondents living in Norway at the time of the survey.[11]

4.2.1 Recruitment through different channels

Recruitment to the survey took place through several channels:

1. We sent emails to the respondents who had left their email address in the 2022, 2023 and/or 2024 surveys with an information letter about the new survey and an invitation to participate (personal link). Two reminders were sent.
2. We prepared a short information video about the survey in Ukrainian and shared it in multiple social media and online fora for Ukrainians.[12]
3. The information about the survey was published in Ukrainian on the online media platform Gromada.no, which targets Ukrainian refugees in Norway.
4. Emails with information about the survey (and links to all social media posts) were sent to all reception centres and municipalities in Norway and relevant volunteer organisations, inviting them to distribute the survey. The email was also distributed through an UDI user network of 3 760 frontline workers in municipalities, volunteer organizations, children expertise networks, and legal aid organisations. In these emails, we also included a flyer with a QR code that could be printed and displayed in relevant places. All members of UKRAINETT, a network of researchers on Ukraine in Norway with large networks in the Ukrainian community, also received an email with information about the survey which they were asked to help distribute.

[10] 41 respondents did not respond affirmatively to the statement 'Are you a Ukrainian who stays (or has stayed) in Norway as a result of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and who is willing to participate in the survey?' and were therefore removed from the rest of the questions in the survey.

[11] For later research purposes, we are also interested in the experiences of those who have left Norway, but they are not the focus of this report.

[12] The Facebook groups 'Ukrainske flyktkninger til Norge – including info/Біженці з України в Норвегії', 'Ukrainians in Norway (Українці у Норвегії)', 'Допомога біженцям у Бергені/Hjelp til ukrainske flyktninger i Bergen', 'Help Ukrainian refugees', 'Ukrainere i Bodø/Українці в Будо', 'Ukrainere i Horten/Українці в Хортені', 'Ukrainere i Fredrikstad/Українці у Фредкістаді', 'Ukrainske flyktninger i Stavanger/Українці в Ставангері', 'Ukrainere i Skien/Українці в Шиєні', 'Ukrainere i Egersund/Українці Егерсунда', 'Ukrainere i Bergen/Українці в Бергені', 'Ukrainske flyktninger i Asker/Українські біженці в Аскері', 'Ukrainere i Larvik/Українці у Ларвіку', 'Ukrainere i Molde/Українці в Мольде', 'Українці в Норвегії (Møre and Romsdal)', 'Ukrainere i Gjørvik og Toten/Українці в Йорвіку та Тотені', 'Українці і Осло, Норвегія (Ukrainere i Oslo, Norge)', 'Ukrainere i Tromsø/Українці в Тромсьо', 'Ukrainere i Lillestrøm/Українці у Лілестрьомі'.

1. We sent emails to participants in the qualitative interviews, inviting them to answer and to share the link with their networks and with refugees in the reception centres.
2. IMDi, UDI, Nav and KS shared the survey through their networks.

4.2.2 Sample and methodological limitations

The survey was conducted through open recruitment and voluntary participation, rather than through a random sample[13]. This means that we do not fully control who chose to participate and who did not. If the pattern of non-participation were random, this would not create significant problems. However, if certain types of people are more or less likely to respond, this can introduce biases into the data and reduce the extent to which the findings can be generalised. One consequence of using a non-random sample is that we cannot calculate a reliable margin of error in the usual statistical sense, nor can we be certain about how closely the sample reflects the broader population of Ukrainian refugees in Norway in terms of key background characteristics that we do not have statistical data about.

The survey is designed to cover adult displaced Ukrainians who have arrived in Norway after Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. Although some individuals have returned to Ukraine or moved to other countries, we assume that the age and gender distribution of those who have left does not differ substantially from those who remain; this is the best available approximation of the population composition.

Table 4.1: Differences between surveyed population and registered applications for collective protection by October 2024. Weights applied for survey respondents (N=2148).

	WOMEN			MEN		
AGE GROUP (YEARS)	**Population (%)**	**Sample (%)**	**Weights**	**Population (%)**	**Sample (%)**	**Weights**
GENDER TOTAL	61	67		39	33	
18–25	16	8	2.10	19	12	1.63
26–35	23	24	0.96	25	29	0.88
36–45	26	37	0.69	26	34	0.79
46–55	15	21	0.70	13	16	0.78
56–65	12	8	1.45	10	8	1.37
66+	9	2	4.86	6	2	2.78
TOTAL	100	100		100	100	

*Population: Data from UDI (2025a). Sample: Respondents in the 2025 survey.

Table 1 shows that the unweighted sample over-represents women (67% in the sample versus 61% in the population). For both men and women, the sample under-represents the youngest and the oldest age groups. This reflects the recruitment mechanism (open online self-selection) and the demographic composition of those who appear to be more active in refugee networks. Older respondents (particularly those aged 66 and above) are the most underrepresented in the sample. This is probably caused both by practical and structural factors: the oldest groups are generally less likely to participate in online surveys and they are less prominent in arenas where information about the survey has been distributed.

To address the mentioned imbalances, we have applied post-stratification weights based on the age- and gender-distribution of Ukrainians who have applied for collective protection, with statistics obtained from UDI, reflecting the population at the time of the survey (October

[13] There has not been room within the budget of this project to conduct a survey based on a random sample.

2025). After weighting, the distribution in our dataset more closely aligns with the known demographic structure of the population.

Weights were calculated by combining age (six categories) and gender (male/female). For each age–gender cell, we computed a ratio of the population proportion to the observed sample proportion. Respondents (7 in total) who answered 'other / prefer not to say' on gender, or who lacked valid age information, were assigned a weight of 1 to avoid introducing artificial distortions. The resulting weight variable is used for all weighted descriptive analyses presented in the report.

It is also worth noting that in our survey (as described further in chapter 10.2), 40% of those between 20-66 years reported to be employed, which is just below the official statistics from Statistics Norway on the share of Ukrainian refugees who were employed in October 2024 (42%).This indicates that our sample is well balanced in terms of the number of individuals who are employed and those who are not.

Despite these controls of the sample's representativeness, it is important to emphasise the limitations for generalizations with a non-random sample. This is, however, mainly an issue for descriptive statistics, and less so for regression analyses.

Since we conducted different types of analysis on the survey data, the statistical methods used are described in the relevant chapters of this report.

4.2.3 Ethical reflections and measures for interviews with and surveys of vulnerable groups

The overall project—along with the specific data collections—has been registered and approved by the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (SIKT) (formerly NSD) and has followed the research ethics guidelines from the National Research Ethics Committee for Social Sciences and Humanities (NESH).

All interviewees and survey respondents were provided with a detailed consent form that contained general information about the research project, voluntary participation, the participants' rights in terms of withdrawing from participation, and the researcher's obligations with regard to data storage, etc. In the survey, respondents had to actively accept these conditions before answering the rest of the survey. The interviewees received their consent forms via personal emails and consented in writing or orally before the start of the interview. All interviewees received written information about the project and their rights as research participants in Ukrainian or Russian.

All survey respondents were informed that participation was voluntary and that the information they provided would be treated anonymously and on an aggregate level, so that no individuals could be identified. Interviewees were further informed about the voluntary nature of participation, that information which could identify them would not be used in the report, and that we would ensure their anonymity and integrity.

Throughout the analyses, we have taken care to treat the research data in ways that ensured confidentiality. Data from the survey and interviews have been stored on OsloMet's password-protected server, accessible only for researchers involved in the project. In this report, we have anonymised any information that might make it possible for individuals to be identified.

Ukrainians who have fled the war and arrived in Norway often find themselves in a vulnerable situation. As researchers, we should take care not to add stress to an already difficult situation. Although Ukrainians' experiences with the war are not in focus in this study, such experiences could surface during the interviews. A difficult topic for this group could be family members and friends still in Ukraine. Thus, it was important for project researchers to be prepared for emotional reactions from the Ukrainian refugees. We believe that it has been an advantage that the researchers who conducted the interviews have substantial familiarity

with Ukrainian contemporary history, culture and language, because such knowledge enhances their understanding of the situation of the interviewees.

Several research participants saw the interviews as a welcome opportunity to share their needs and experiences so that we could convey them to Norwegian authorities.

5 Who are the Ukrainians who fled to Norway?

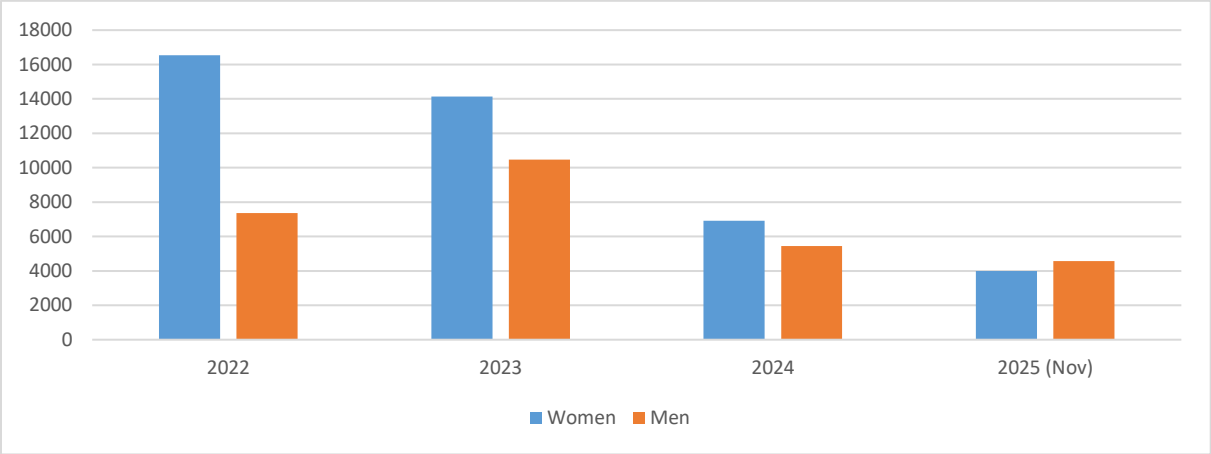
In this chapter, we present background statistics about the Ukrainian refugees in Norway, and the development over time. We first present the gender and age distribution, based on data from UDI. Based on the survey, we continue with describing background factors such as educational background, work experience, language skills and where they lived prior to February 2022. Finally, we analyse their current family situation and network, both in Norway and in Ukraine.

We mainly present the numbers from the whole sample in the figures, but we have also conducted cross-tabulations of the main variables with relevant background variables (gender, age and cohort) to explore whether there are relevant subgroup differences. The analyses of these cross-tabulations are commented on in the text below the figures (when there are relevant differences).

5.1 Gender composition

After an initial overweight of female protection seekers from Ukraine the initial months after 2022, the gender balance—both in Norway and other European countries—has gradually evened out.

Figure 5.1: Number of adult (18+ years) male and female protection applicants from Ukraine separated by men and women, 2022-2025 (until Nov) (N=69 445).

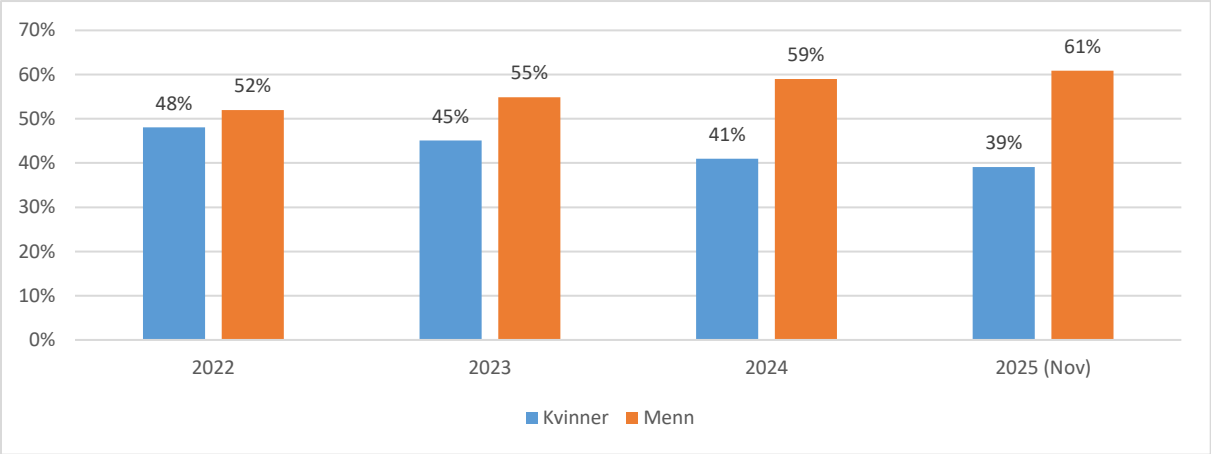


*Data: UDI (2025a).

For adults, figure 5.1 shows that there was a large majority of women in 2022, but that the gap has gradually narrowed the following years. In 2025, there is for the first time an overweight of adult men, with 47% women and 53% men. As presented below, this is partly caused by a rise in male arrivals in the age groups 18-22 years. However, as the highest number of arrivals came in 2022 and 2023, there is still an overweight of women in the total number of arrivals as of November 2025, with 60% women and 40%.

We also see interesting developments in the gender balance for different age groups of children below 18 years.

Figure 5.2: Share of **children** who applied for collective protection separated by age groups, 2022-2025 (until Oct) (N=30 513).



*Data: UDI (2025a).

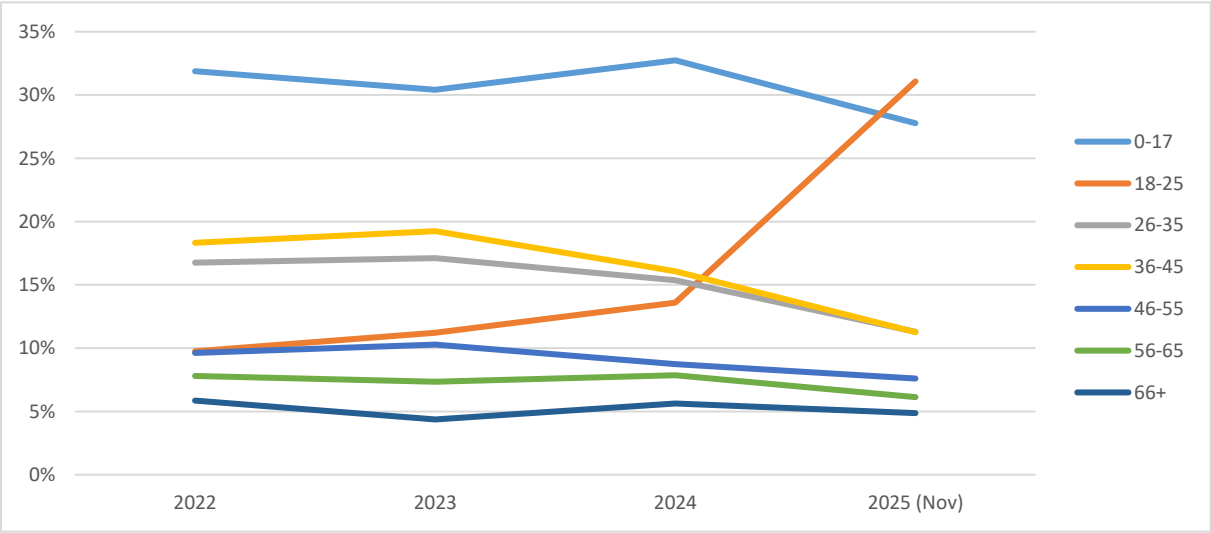
Figure 5.2 shows that among those under 18 years; there has been a higher share of boys than girls. In 2024 and 2025, there has been about 60% boys and 40% girls among those under 18 years.

As shown in the 2024 report, the relative rise in the share of males, are mostly due to a rise in those aged 16-17 years (who was assumed to move from Ukraine while it was still legal for them to leave the country). The pattern is also apparent in 2025. 27% of children who arrived in 2025 are between 16-17 years, while this age-group only constituted 11% in 2022.

5.2 Age composition

What recent changes have occurred in the age composition of the Ukrainian refugees since February 2022?

Figure 5.3: Ukrainian refugees by age composition from 2022-2025 (Nov) (N= 100 702).



*Data: UDI (2025a).

Figure 5.3 shows that there are minor changes in the share of different age groups the first two years. However, there is one notable development in 2024 and particularly 2025, namely a first gradual and then exponential rise in the of the age group 18-25 years, with a corresponding decline in the share from the age groups between 26-45 years and among

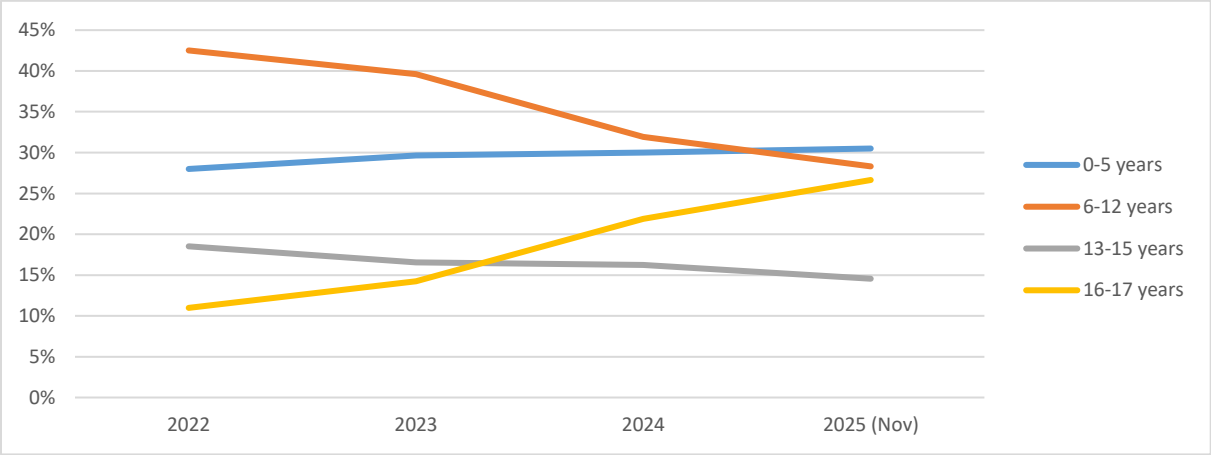
those under 18 years. This pattern is apparent for both men and women, but the increase in 2025 is much higher for men.

The rise in the age group 18-25 for men is mainly caused by a rise in those aged 18-22 years. This is related to the recently Ukrainian legislative change in August 2025, when the Ukrainian government lifted the travel ban for those aged 18-22 years, which we see reflected in Norwegian arrival numbers from September 2025. The share of the age groups between 18-22 years for men was only between 6-8% in 2022 to 2024, but in 2025, they constituted 35% of arrivals among male applicants.

5.2.1 More male teenagers among those below 18 years

Children under 18 years constitute about 31% of those who have been granted collective protection in Norway (as of November 2025).

Figure 5.4: Age distribution for children from 2022-2025 (Nov) (N= 31 257).



*Data: UDI (2025a).

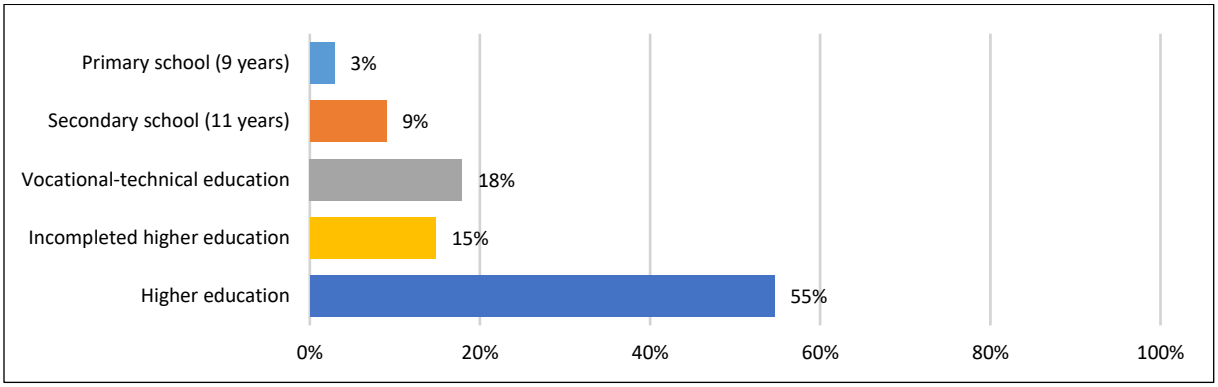
Figure 5.4 shows a continuation of the trend from the 2024 report. There has been a large increase in the share of those aged 16-17 years, which is mostly driven by more male teenagers in this age group. There is a decline in the share of those aged 6–12 years from 2022 to 2025, while the other age groups are relatively stable.

5.3 Previous education, work experience and language skills

What levels of education do the Ukrainian refugees in Norway have, and has it changed with newer arrivals in 2025?

Ukraine has a highly educated population. The length of compulsory education in Ukraine is nine years, and upper secondary education lasts for two years. The length of formal education is therefore 11 years (compared with 13 years in Norway).

Figure 5.5: Education level (N=2147).

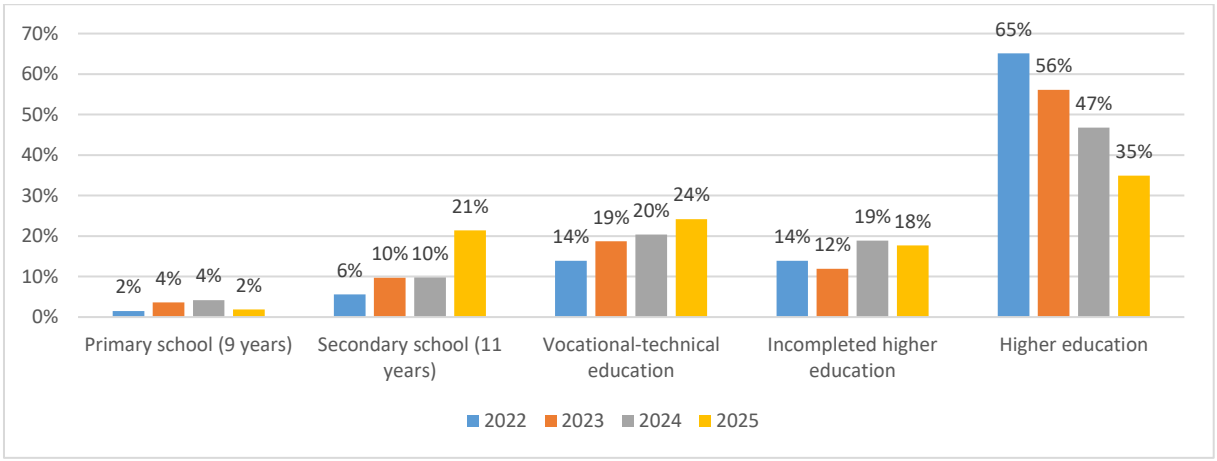


*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 5.5 reflects that Ukrainian refugees generally have high education levels, with only 3% that only have primary levels. 70% have some sort of higher education, either incomplete (15%) or completed higher education (55%). 18% have vocational-technical education.

However, as shown in the 2024 report, we see a continuing development in the educational composition of different cohorts.

Figure 5.6: Education level separated by time of arrival in Norway (N=2147).

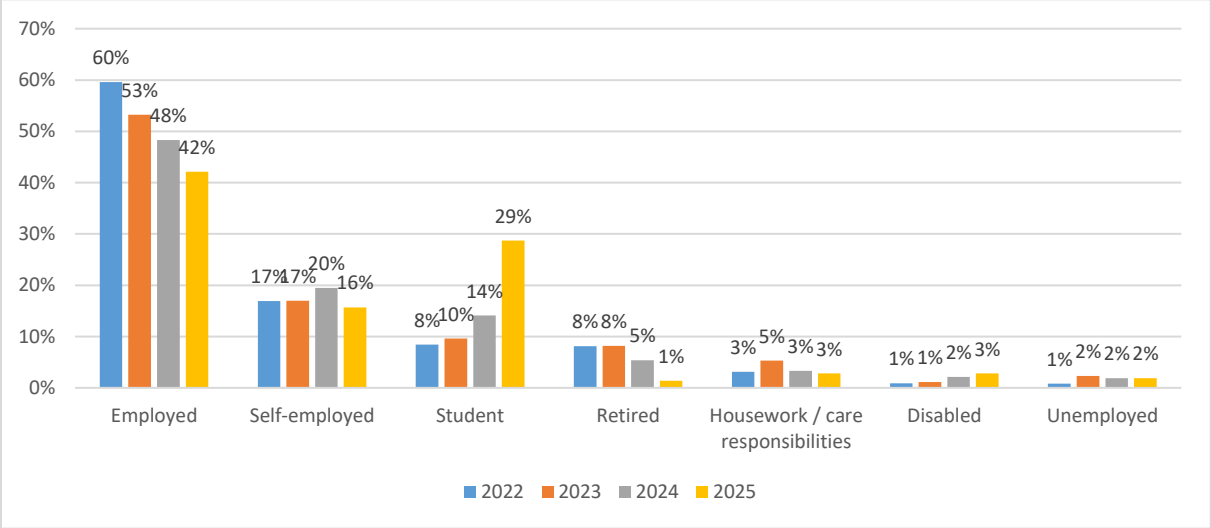


*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 5.6 shows the differences in education levels between cohorts, depending on time of arrival in Norway. The figure shows a clear trend of lower shares with completed higher education among the newest arrivals. However, the share of vocational-technical education has risen during the same period.

Part of this reduction in persons with completed higher education may be related to the developments in the age composition in recent cohorts. As shown in figure 5.3, the share of those aged 18-25 has risen during the last two years, and there will naturally be fewer among those that have completed their higher education (compared to those aged 26-46 years, who have had a similar decline in their share of arrivals). However, crosstabulations of age, education level and cohorts (not portrayed in the figure), still shows a general trend that those who arrived particularly from 2024 an onwards have a lower share with completed higher education.

Figure 5.7: Main activity before arrival in Norway, separated by cohort (N=2147).

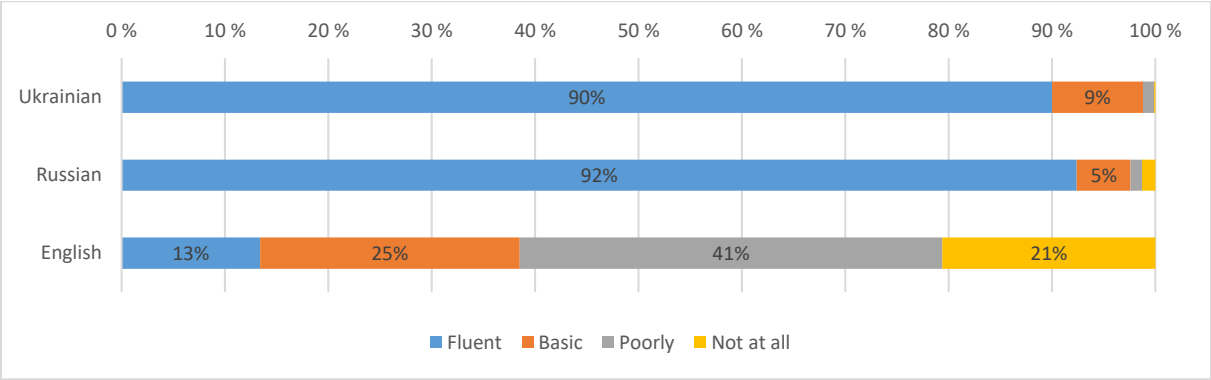


*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 5.7 shows the main activity the respondents had at the time of the February 2022 Russian full-scale invasion. We see a gradual decline in the number of employed across cohorts, but simultaneously a steep rise in the share of students, particularly among those who arrived in 2025. Again, these changes are likely linked to the more recent rise in a higher share of younger age groups arriving (see figure 5.3).

In a follow-up question, we asked whether they had used their education in previous work in Ukraine. About one-third answered no, while two-thirds had used their previous education. Not unexpectedly, among those aged 18-29 years there was a higher share that had not used their education in their job (only 47%).

Figure 5.8: Language proficiency (Ukrainian, Russian, English) (N=2147).

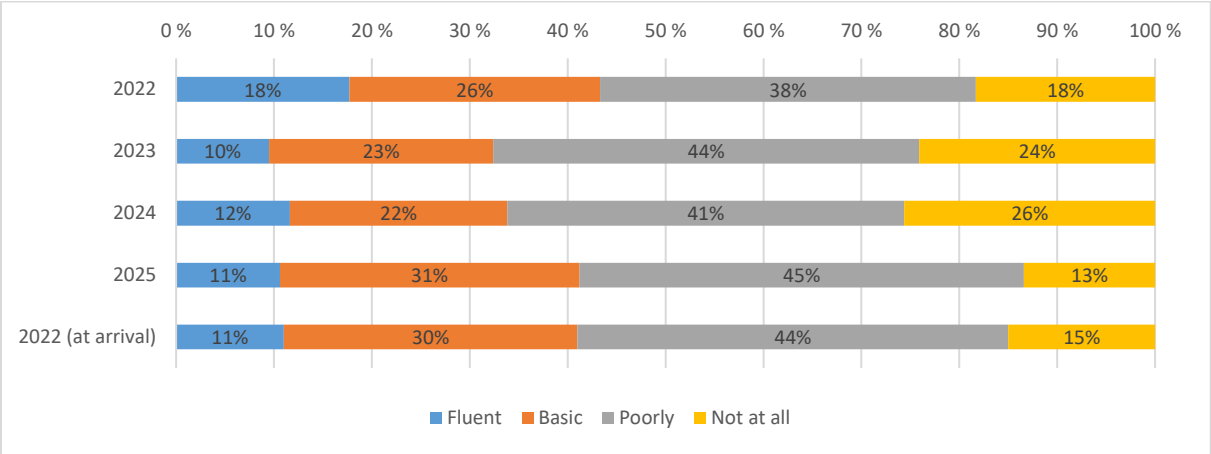


*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 5.8 shows that over 90% answer that they speak fluent Russian (92%) and Ukrainian (90%) respectively. Their English levels vary much more: only 13% reported speaking English fluently, 25% assessed their own English skills as basic, and almost two-thirds (62%) reported speaking English poorly or not at all.

The English proficiency substantially decreases with age. While about two-thirds of those aged 18-25 years report to speak either fluent or basic English, only between 12-18% of those over 46 years reported the same.

Figure 5.9: English proficiency by year of arrival (N=2147).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**The numbers for the 2022-cohort at arrival is retrieved from the 2022-report (Hernes et al. 2022).

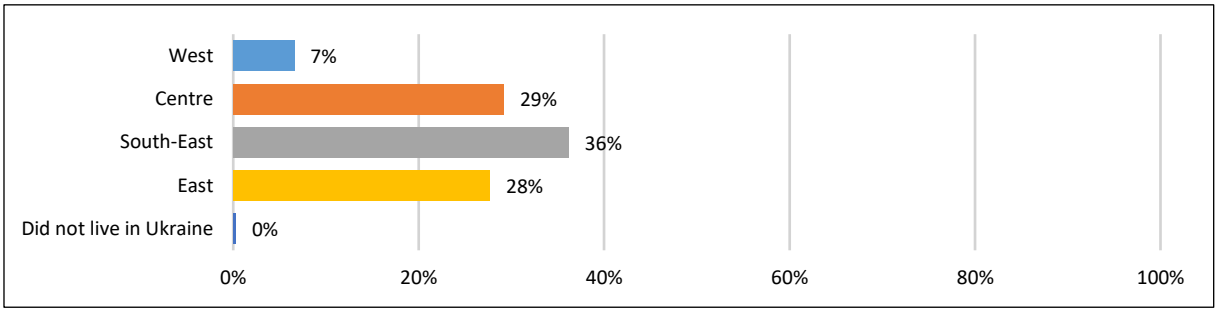
Figure 5.9 compares self-assessed English skills across cohorts in the 2025 survey. Additionally, it includes the original assessments for the 2022 cohort based on the survey conducted in 2022 when they had just arrived (Hernes et al. 2022).

The figure provides two main take-aways: First, the 2022 cohort now has better English skills than the other cohorts. However, when we compare the initial English levels reported in 2022, they are almost identical to the levels reported by the 2025 cohort. This finding indicates that the difference in fluency levels may be due to that those who have lived in Norway for three years have improved their English skills, and not that those arriving later have initial lower English skills than the first arrivals.

5.4 Region of residence in Ukraine before the full-scale invasion

Where did the Ukrainians refugees who fled to Norway live before February 2022?

Figure 5.10: Residence in Ukraine before the full-scale Russian invasion February 2022 (N=2108).



*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 5.10 shows that, before arriving in Norway, the majority of Ukrainian refugees in Norway resided in the eastern or south-eastern parts of Ukraine—the parts that have been hardest hit by the full-scale invasion—about two thirds (see the footnote below for the

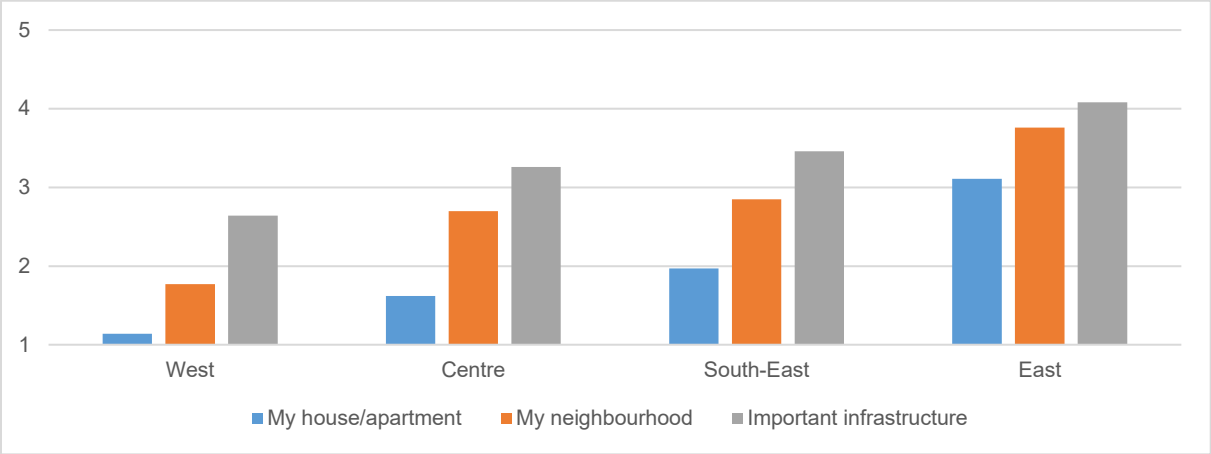
distribution of counties (*oblasts*) into different regions)[14]. 29% lived in the central part of Ukraine. Only 7% resided in the western part of Ukraine.

A larger share of the men come from the eastern and south-eastern parts than women. Furthermore, following the restriction on eligibility for temporary collective protection for residents of western Ukraine—implemented in late 2024 and expanded in January 2025—we observe that there are no respondents from the western regions in 2025.

Further analysis (not portrayed in the figure) shows that a majority (62%) reported that, at the time of the full-scale invasion, they lived in a place which had not been occupied by Russia. Another 11% lived in a place which had previously been occupied but which was no longer occupied, while 25% lived in a place which was occupied by Russia at the time of the survey.

We also examined the regional differences when it comes to the local and individual level of destruction on housing, neighbourhoods and the local infrastructure in the respondent's homeplaces.

Figure 5.11: Assessment of destruction by region of residence in Ukraine prior to February 2022 (N=2147).



*Scale: 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Complete destruction).

Figure 5.11 shows the respondents' assessment of the statement 'The war has caused severe physical damage to…' the three alternatives: 1) their house/apartment, 2) neighbourhood and 3) important infrastructure (e.g., schools, roads, power supply etc). They were asked about the level of destruction for these three alternatives on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (complete destruction).

Not surprisingly, there is a clear pattern between region and level of destruction, where those living in the south-eastern and, especially, eastern parts have experienced higher level of destruction, than those in the western parts. Considerably more people answered that there has been damage to infrastructure or neighbourhoods than to their house and apartment.

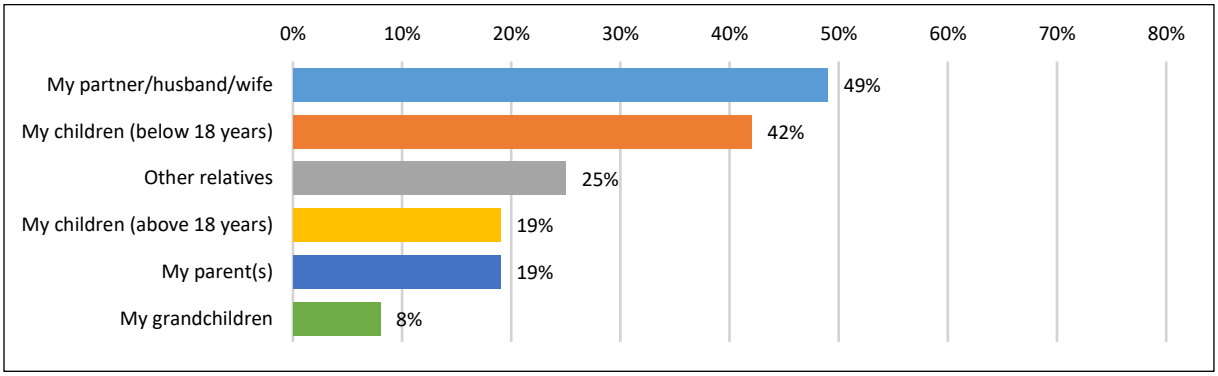
5.5 Family situation in Norway and Ukraine

What is the family situation of Ukrainian refugees in Norway; what family members do they have with them in Norway, and do they have family members remaining in Ukraine?

[14] The following oblasts are included in the different parts of Ukraine in the figure (with number of respondents in parenthesis): **West**: Volyn (1%), Ivano-Frankivsk (1%), Lviv (2%), Rivne (1%), Ternopil (1%), Khmelnytskyi (2%) and Chernivtsi (2%). **Centre**: Vinnytsia (2%), Zhytomyr (1%), Kyiv oblast (10%), Kirovohrad (1%), Poltava (2%), Sumy (1%), Cherkasy (1%), Chernihiv (2%), and Kyiv city (7%). **South-east**: Dnipropetrovsk (6%), Zaporizhia (6%), Mykolaiv (2%), Odesa (8%), Kherson (11%), and Crimea (1%). **East**: Donetsk (14%), Kharkiv (10%), and Luhansk (3%).

The majority of respondents (82%) have some sort of relatives from Ukraine living in Norway, implying that 18% do not have any relatives in the country. 23% of the respondents report that they are in Norway without any *close* family (partner, children, parents or grandparents).

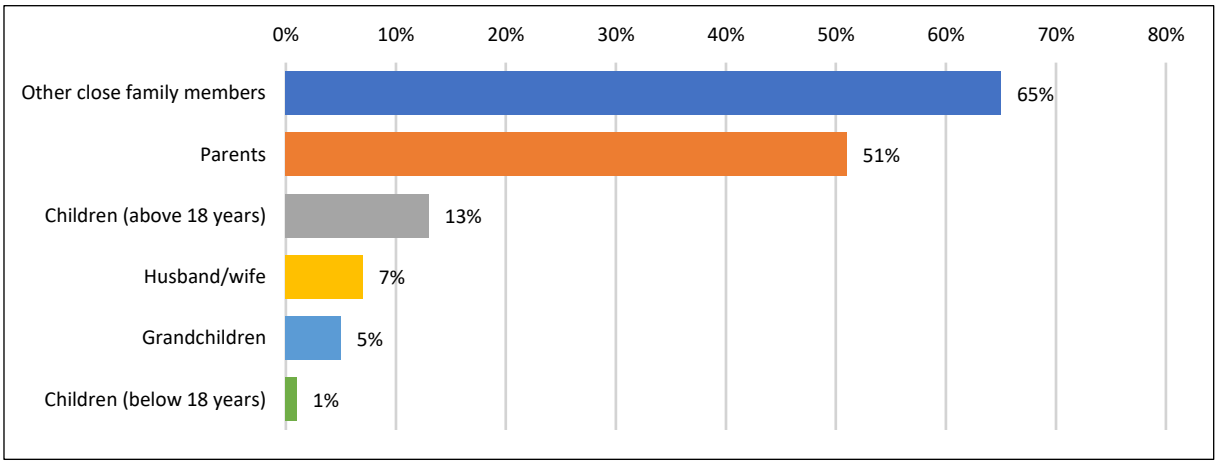
Figure 5.12: Family in Norway (multiple options possible) (N=2147).



*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 5.12 gives an overview of the respondents' current family members in Norway. About half of the respondents are in Norway with their partner, and the share is higher for men (57%) than women (45%). 42% of the respondents have children under 18 years with them in Norway. The share is lower among men, 36%, compared to 44% among women. The majority of the parents have one (54%) or two (32%) children. Fewer of those who arrived in 2024 and 2025 have children, but this may be partly explained by the higher share of adults in the youngest age group (18-25 years). About 20% have their parents or children aged 18 years or older living in Norway, and 25% have more distant relatives.

Figure 5.13: Family remaining in Ukraine (N=2147).



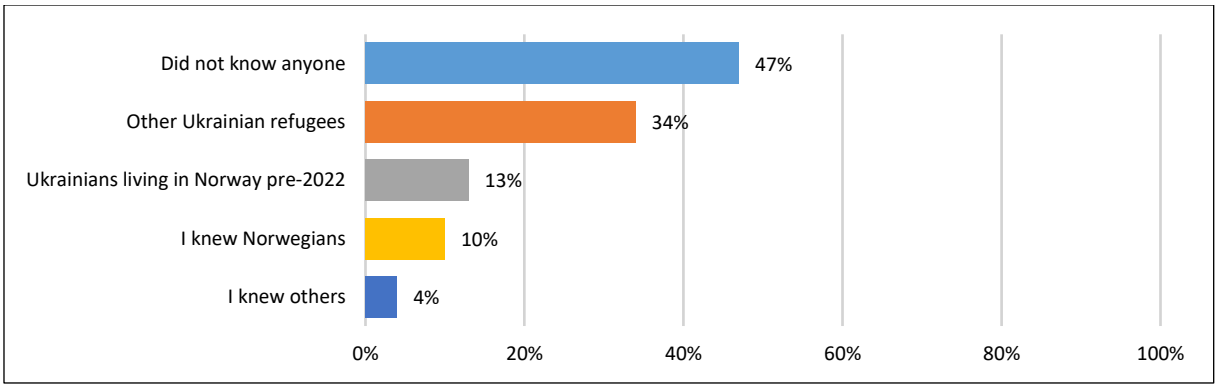
*Weighted by gender and age.

Concerning family remaining in Ukraine (figure 5.13), only 14% answer that all of their **close family** has fled Ukraine. The type of family remaining is influenced by different age-related life situations. Over half of all respondents have parents left in Ukraine, but for those under 45 years, almost two-thirds have their parents remaining. 13% have children above 18 years remaining there, but between 30-50% have older children among those over 45 years. Only 7% have their partner in Ukraine. Only 5% of the total sample have grandchildren left in Ukraine, but among those over 66 years, half report to have grandchildren in Ukraine.

5.6 Prior network in Norway

How many respondents had a pre-existing network in Norway before arrival, and what type of network was it?

Figure 5.14: Previous networks in Norway (multiple options possible) (N=2147).

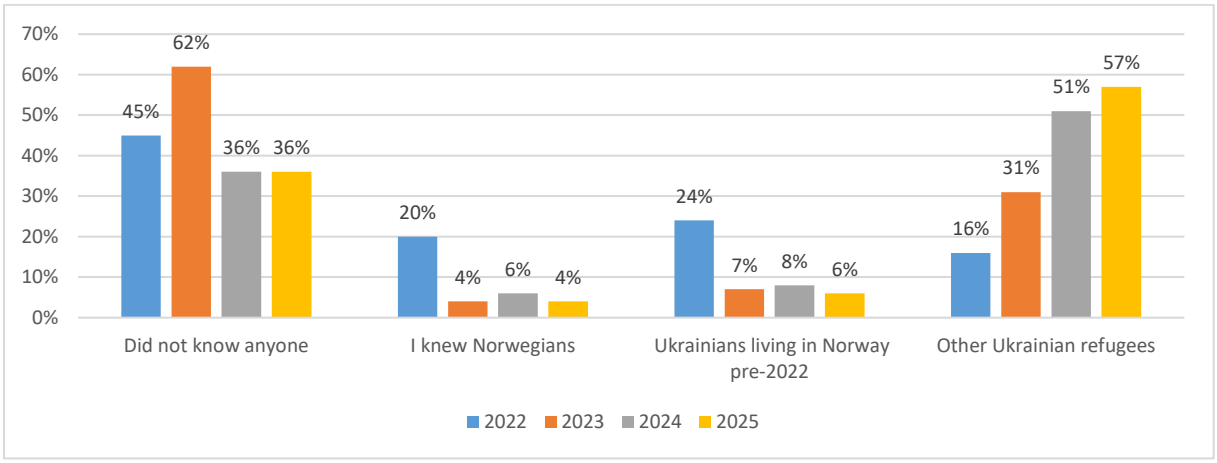


*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 5.14 shows that just under half did not have a pre-existing network in Norway before they arrived. One third knew other Ukrainian refugees, and 13% Ukrainians who lived in Norway pre-2022 and 10% knew Norwegians.

However, there are large differences between cohorts concerning whether and what type of prior network they had in Norway.

Figure 5.15: Previous networks in Norway (N=1941).



*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 5.15 shows that a higher share of those who arrived in 2024 and 2025 had prior network than those who arrived earlier. Particularly those arriving in 2023 stand out, with 62% not having prior network. However, there are large differences in what type of network they had prior to their arrival. Those arriving in 2022 had a larger share of prior network among Norwegians and Ukrainian diaspora that lived in Norway before the full-scale invasion started in 2022. After 2022, there is a gradual increase in the share that had prior network among other Ukrainian refugees.

6 How and why did they come to Norway?

In this chapter, we investigate if Ukrainian refugees lived in other countries before arriving in Norway and analyse differences between cohorts. We document what countries they arrived from, before exploring the different reasons for why the Ukrainian refugees chose Norway as a destination country.

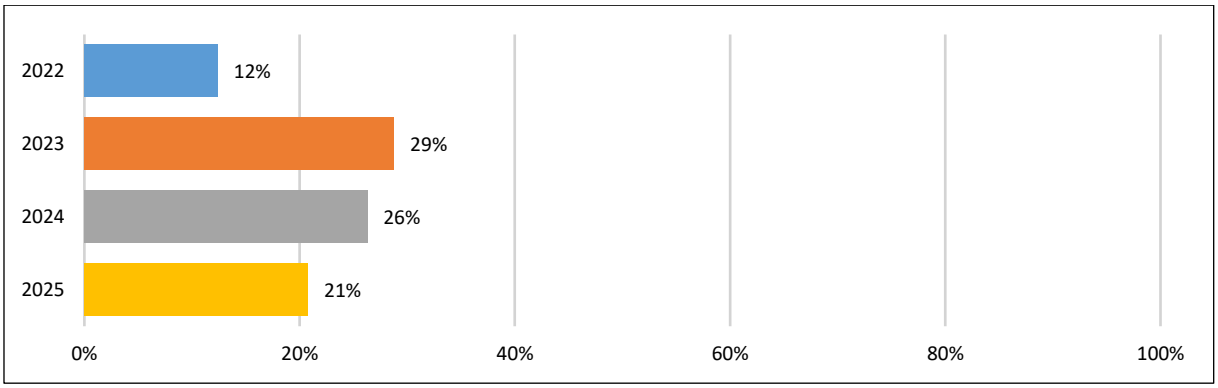
6.1 Arriving in Norway: directly or after a stay in another country?

How many Ukrainian refugees stayed in other countries before coming to Norway?

Overall, while most Ukrainian refugees (76%) came directly to Norway, one fourth stayed (not just transited) in other countries before their arrival. The overall numbers are almost identical as the 2024 survey.

However, there are large difference between cohorts.

Figure 6.1: Percentage that stayed in other countries on their way to Norway, by year of arrival (N=2057[15]).



*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 6.1 shows that while the share that arrived from other countries more than doubled from 2022 and 2023 (from 12% to 29%), the share has gradually declined after 2023. Of those arriving in 2025, one out of five had lived in other countries before arriving in Norway.

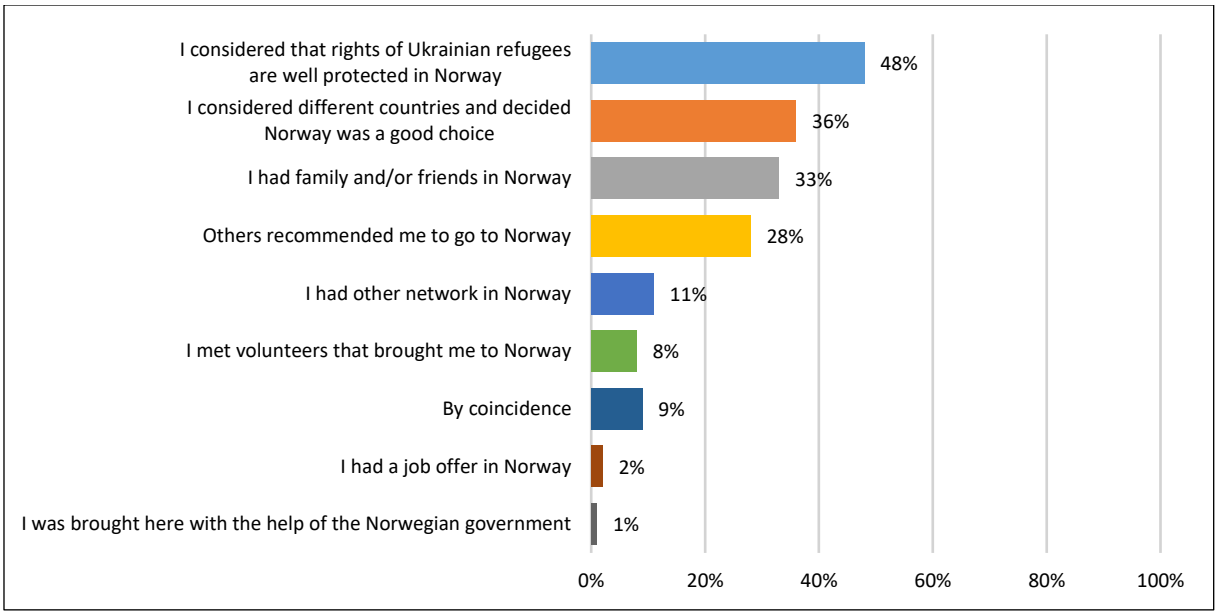
Of those who stayed in other countries on their way to Norway, 36% came from Poland, followed by Germany, Bulgaria, and Romania (of around 5-7%). About 11% also answered 'other non-European country'. Very few respondents came from the other Nordic countries, with 1.3% from Finland and 2.1% from Sweden (none from Denmark).

[15] Former respondents did not get this question again, but we have collected their answers from previous surveys. However, this question was not posed in the 2022-survey. Thus, former respondents' who only answered the 2022-survey previously are not included (N = 97).

6.2 Why Norway?

We also asked all respondents about their reasons for choosing Norway as a destination country.

Figure 6.2: Reasons reported for coming to Norway (multiple options possible) (N=1941[16]).



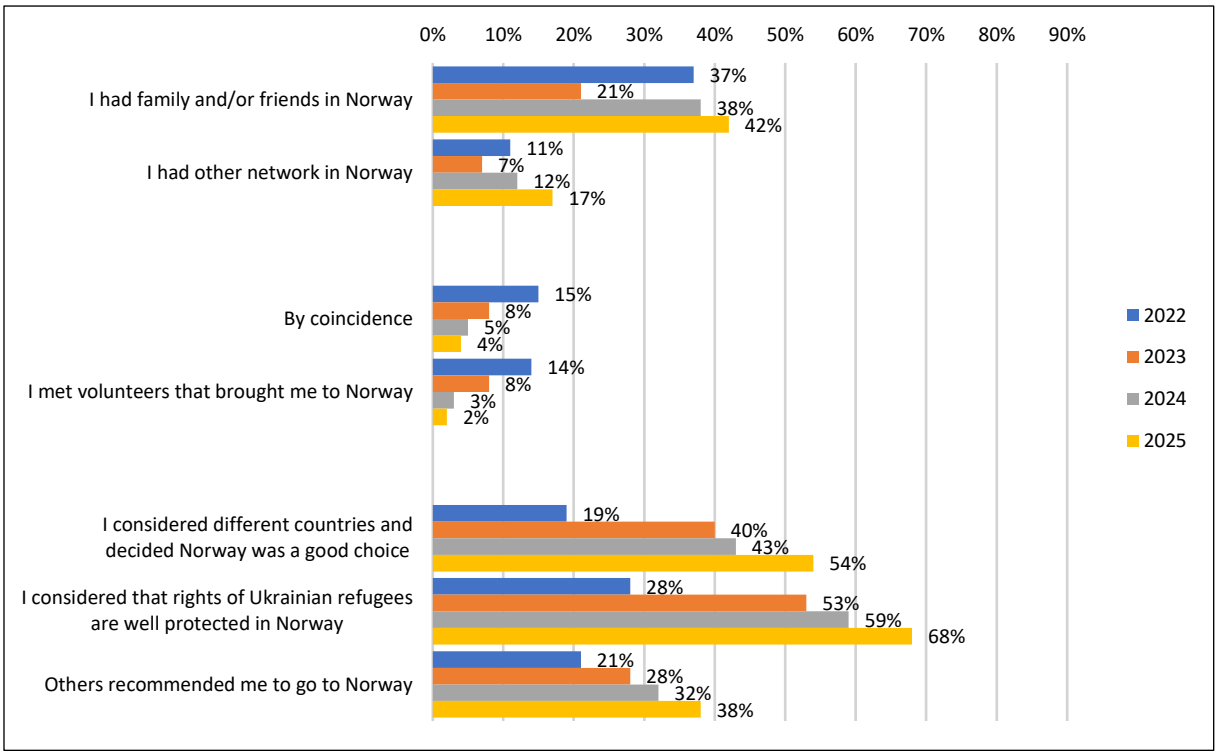
*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those who answered, 'I don't know' (1%) and 'Other reason' (8%) are not portrayed in the figure.

Figure 6.2 shows that that almost half (48%) of the respondents chose Norway because they considered that refugees' rights are well protected in this country, and just over one-third had considered different countries but decided that Norway would be the best choice. Another third chose Norway because they already had family or friends living here and another 11% mentioned other network as a reason for choosing Norway. About one in ten came to Norway simply by chance, or because they were brought here by volunteers. Only 2% came because they had a job offer in Norway.

As shown in the 2024 report, there are large differences between cohorts, and these differences has further intensified for the 2025 cohort.

[16] Former respondents who left their email addresses and who were personally invited to participate in this year's survey did not get this question again. Their answers are therefore extracted from earlier survey responses from 2023 and 2024-survey. However, this question was not included in the 2022-survey, thus, we do not have the responses for those who only answered the 2022 survey previously.

Figure 6.3: Reasons reported for coming to Norway separated by cohort (multiple options possible) (N=1941).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those who answered, 'I don't know' (1%) and 'Other reason' (8%), 'I had a job offer in Norway' (2%). 'I was brought here with the help of the Norwegian government' (1%) are not portrayed in the figure.

Figure 6.3 illustrates relevant differences between cohorts. First concerning prior network, we see that although a lower share of the 2023 cohort had prior network in Norway, a higher share of the 2025 cohort answered to have both prior family and friends and other network in Norway compared to the 2022 cohort.

There is, however, a clear pattern for those who arrived in Norway by coincidence and who were brought here by volunteers, as this has become gradually less common.

Further, clear patterns emerge showing that the choice of Norway as a destination country has become more deliberate among those arriving in recent years. The share of respondents who reported considering different countries, choosing Norway because of favourable conditions for Ukrainians, and/or being recommended Norway by others has gradually increased among the more recent cohorts. While those arriving in 2022 must have made a rather rapid decision to flee, those arriving in from 2023 and onwards had more time to think about conditions in different destination countries.

Among the interviewees that arrived in 2024, one of them was a mother of three school-aged children from a region near the frontline. The main reason for the family's departure from Ukraine was the inability to continue a proper educational process. Her children attended an underground school only two days a week and partially continued online education, which proved ineffective:

> We didn't want to leave Ukraine at all. We left because there was no proper education—we left for the children, so they could study. It was very difficult. Yes, in [city] they started opening underground schools, but it wasn't five days a week, only two. For the children to study there, I had to stay home and just drive them back and forth. And secondly, it was dangerous. Shelling started on the streets we used to travel for school. (NN2)

5% reported 'other reason'. Among those who selected 'other reason' in this year's survey, respondents expressed a wide variety of motivations for choosing Norway as their

destination. As in the 2024 survey, these reasons include practical considerations as well as personal preferences, family circumstances and long-standing aspirations.

A large group emphasised safety for themselves and their children, including distance from active conflict and a peaceful environment: '*Far from the war'*. Many mentioned family connections as a decisive factor. Some already had close family members in Norway, which made the decision easier and provided reassurance: '*My daughter lived in Norway, and I wanted to be nearby*'. A number of respondents also described choosing Norway because of the country's strong and inclusive education system, as well as good conditions for children with special needs: '*The best support for people with autism in the world—my child has autism*'.

Several participants highlighted positive previous experiences in Norway, either through work, study, tourism or earlier stays. During these visits they had built trust in the country and developed an image of Norway as safe, culturally appealing and supportive: '*I was here in 2019-2021. I really like the country, the people, the nature, the culture*'. A smaller group pointed to deeply personal motivations. Some described Norway as a long-held dream or ideal destination, often tied to nature, culture or values: '*Already from my childhood I dreamt of living in Norway. I'm thrilled by the beauty of the nature.*'

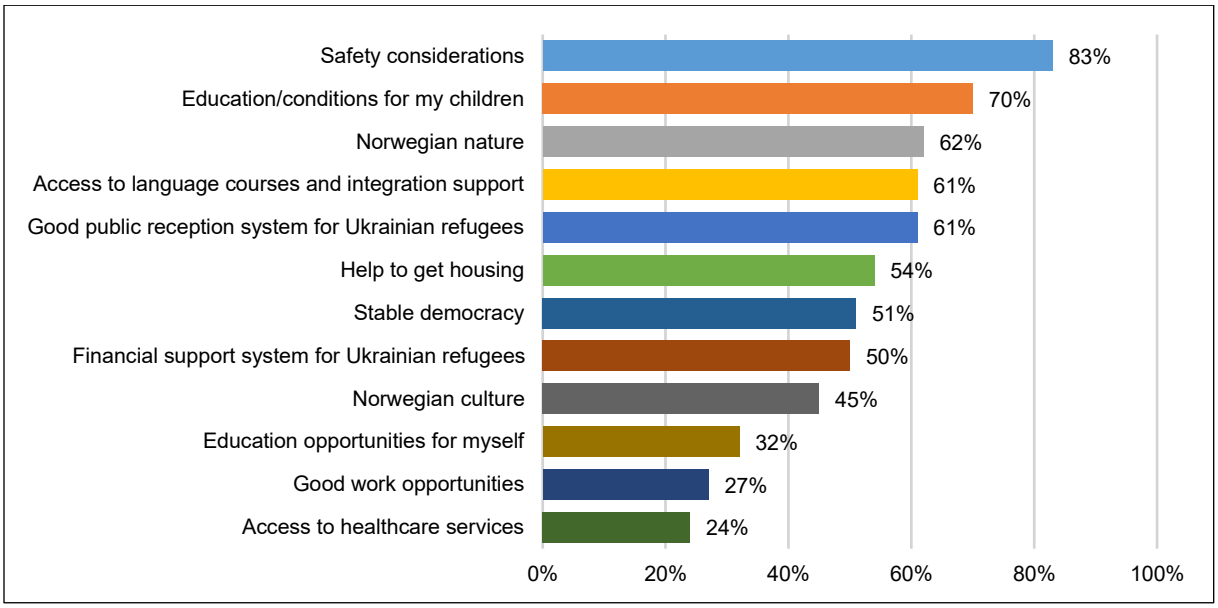
This year's survey also included respondents who pointed out specific needs such as war veterans '*medical evacuation*' or seriously ill patients '*I came for medical treatment. Cancer*'. Others came to Norway for work, sometimes in specialised sectors, such as fishing.

As in last year's survey, the 'other reasons' category continues to reflect a broad mix of personal, practical and emotional motivations. Often a combination of factors has been decisive for the decision, as the following statement explains:

> I looked at several factors—climate and nature, children's social protection, crime and corruption, as well as lawfulness. Norway clearly stands out and performs best in these areas compared with other countries.

For those who answered minimum one of the following options: 1) that they considered the rights in Norway to be good, 2) had considered different countries, and/or 3) was recommended to go to Norway by others, we asked a follow-up question about what were the main things that influenced their decision to go to Norway.

Figure 6.4: Think back to the time before you arrived. What were the main things that influenced your decision to go to Norway? (Multiple options possible) (N= 1018).



*Those who answered 'Other reason' (5%) are excluded from the figure.

Figure 6.4 shows that safety considerations was the absolute main reason for choosing Norway. For parents, 70% highlighted that education for their children was important[17] Generally, the Norwegian reception and integration system is highlighted by many, either the access to language course and integration support and good public support system for Ukrainian refugees (both at 61%), help to get housing (54%) and financial support system (50%).

Other important reasons are Norwegian society and country characteristics. 62% mentioned Norwegian nature as a reason. Norway being a stable democracy (51%) and the Norwegian culture (45%) were also ticked off by many respondents.

Those arriving more recently have a higher share that highlights good opportunities for work or education, Norwegian nature and the financial support system for Ukrainian refugees. Also, the younger age groups highlight work and education opportunities more often.

Those in later cohorts have generally ticked off on more options than those arriving early, shown by the following means: 5.1 options in 2022, 6.0 in 2023, 6.1 in 2024 and 6.7 in 2025. This could indicate that those who arrived later may have made more thorough assessments of different countries before travelling.

6.3 Regrets about choosing Norway as a destination country

Fewer than 5% of the survey respondents say they regret that they chose Norway as a destination country. There are no major differences between various categories of respondents in this regard (gender, age, cohort or type of settlement in Norway). In an open survey question, those who said that they had such regrets were asked to elaborate on their reasons for doing so. This resulted in 101 such statements.

Although there are many individual factors why some people regret the choice of destination country, there were also several recurring themes. First, many describe severe difficulties in entering the labour market, despite active efforts to learn Norwegian, apply for jobs and participate in qualification programmes. Lack of opportunities to build a career or use education and qualifications from Ukraine are also mentioned. Some respondents emphasise a sense that employers are indifferent or prefer locals or people from their own networks. Lack of work opportunities are by some linked to general uncertainty about the length of stay in Norway:

> Even finding a permanent job is practically impossible due to the peculiarities of the Norwegian labour market. We try our best, integrate, spend a huge portion of our free time studying Norwegian and English, learning about the law, paying taxes [...], knowing that we could be kicked out tomorrow and left with nothing—again.

Several regret their choice due to problems with local services and municipal follow-up. These include delays in payments, poor communication with NAV, lack of support for children, and struggles with accessing services due to lack of BankID. The lack of free choice of settlement in Norway was also mentioned as a drawback by respondents who had ended up in remote regions where they had difficulties finding work. Economic hardship due to high costs of housing and food was another recurring issue.

Others expressed regrets linked to what they consider to be poor healthcare quality in Norway. Several describe worsening health conditions after arrival and lack of adequate medical follow-up. Others find it difficult to cope with the Norwegian climate, affecting physical and mental wellbeing. One respondent highlighted the combination of alleged poor medical services and the Norwegian climate:

[17] This share is calculated based on those who had children in Norway.

> The climate does not suit me at all, which has affected my health, and the healthcare is far worse than in Ukraine. After several months of visiting doctors, I have received almost no medical help whatsoever.

The sudden introduction of restrictions on travels to Ukraine was mentioned by several of the respondents: '*The prohibition of travelling to Ukraine which has caused the children having not seen their father for 2.5 years*'. The '*constant changes*' and '*deteriorations*' in rules regarding conditions for Ukrainian refugees were also perceived negatively by several of the respondents.

Cultural differences and especially perceived closeness or coldness of Norwegians '*Norwegians are immensely hypocrite and cold people*' was also a recurring theme, making respondents '*isolated socially*'. Some respondents also pointed to unequal or unfair treatment. One respondent claimed that '*We're at the very bottom of the social class, and many aren't shy about reminding us about this*'.

There are also respondents who emphasise the emotional burden of legal uncertainty associated with temporary protection. For some, the absence of long-term prospects fundamentally undermines their ability to build a future in Norway, and some argue conditions are different in other European countries:

> Since Norway does not give any guarantees for future residence or the right to obtain a permanent status, I regret my choice. Ukrainians who chose other European countries at the start of the war already have permanent residency and are building their future there.

Although only a minority of the respondents express regrets about the choice of Norway as a destination country, their reflections offer insight into types of challenges that risk undermining refugees' well-being, integration and long-term prospects. While the reasons are diverse and often grounded in individual experiences, the recurring themes point to structural barriers that a small but still important share of Ukrainians struggle with. Difficulties in accessing stable employment, challenges in interactions with municipal services, frustration with healthcare, feelings of social isolation and the burden of legal uncertainty all contribute to a sense of insecurity and limited future outlook for a not insignificant number of Ukrainians who have chosen Norway as their destination country.

7 Overall assessment of reception, actors and services

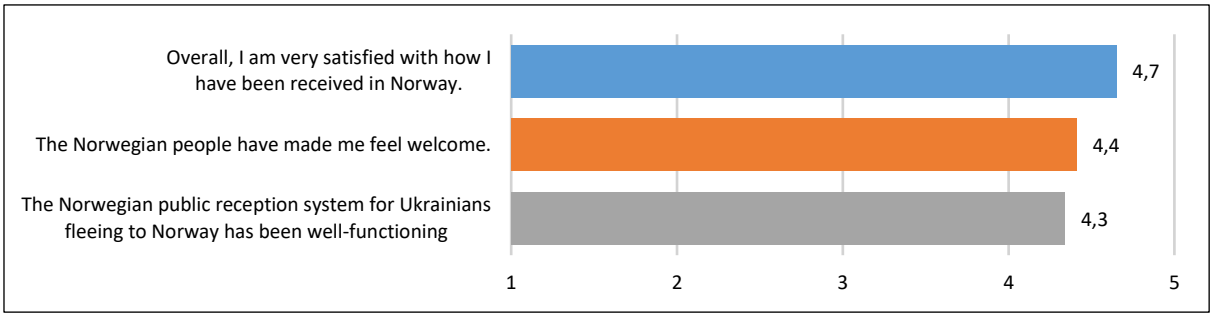
In this chapter, we examine the Ukrainians' overall assessment of their reception in Norway, and their assessments of national, local and non-government actors and various types of services. After the overall assessment, we present shorter analyses of selected topics that have been explored in the survey and interviews, namely information, interpreting services, psychological services, financial situation and experiences of Ukrainians who applied for individual asylum (who were not eligible for collective, temporary protection).

The descriptive analyses of the survey results in this chapter are presented as the average of the Ukrainian refugees' assessments, mostly on a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 is the most positive assessment. The figures in this chapter present the results from the 2025 survey, but when relevant, we also shortly comment if there are relevant subgroup differences and if there have been changes compared to the 2024 survey.

7.1 Ukrainians are still very satisfied with their reception in Norway

What are the Ukrainians' overall assessments of their reception in Norway?

Figure 7.1: Assessment of overall experience in Norway (N=2147).



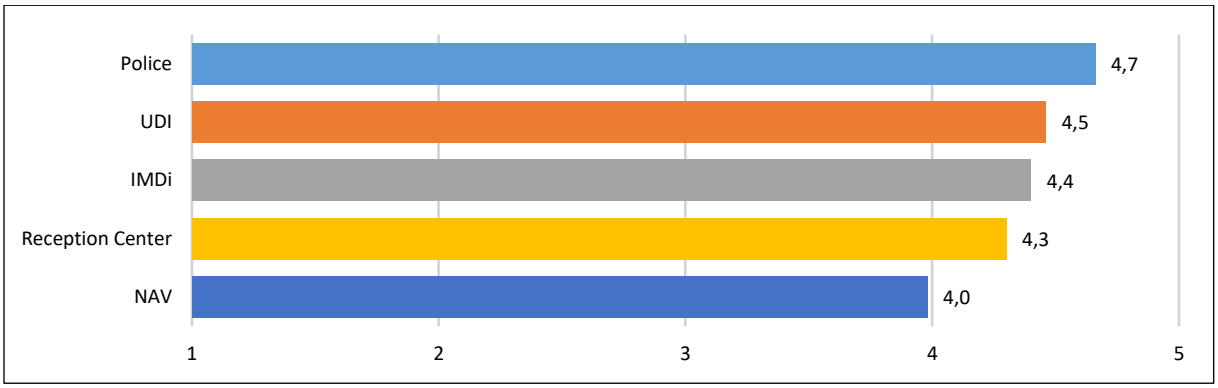
*Scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).
**Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 7.1 shows that the respondents are very satisfied with their overall reception in Norway, with mean scores ranging between 4.3 and 4.7. This overall score is almost identical to the 2024 report. Generally, there are small differences between subgroups (all with averages above 4 out of 5), but the older respondents are more satisfied than the younger age groups. Also, the satisfaction with the reception system for Ukrainian refugees is better among the newer cohorts.

7.2 Positive assessment of public and civil society actors

How do they assess different national and local actors in Norway?

Figure 7.2: Assessment of public actors (N = 1426–1902[18]).

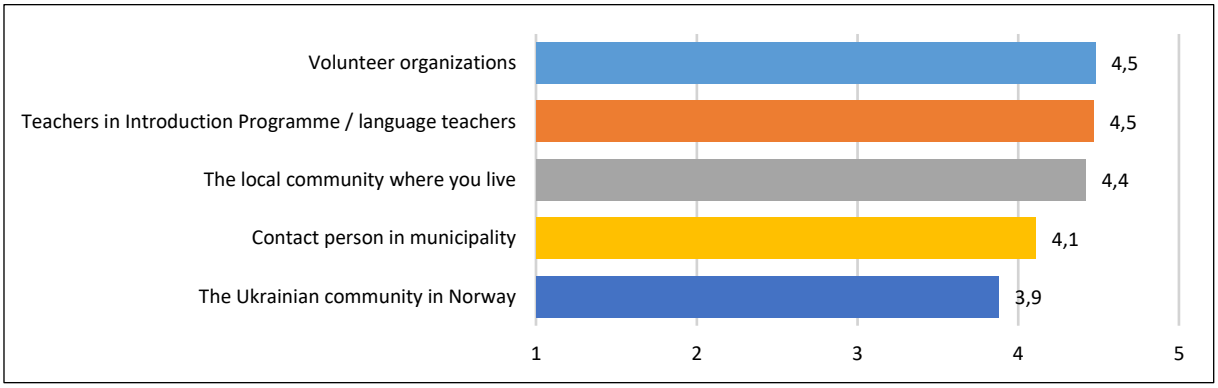


*Scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).
**Weighted by gender and age.
***Respondents indicating that they had not been in contact with or did not have any opinion about these actors are excluded from the analyses (see specified N for each actor in footnote).

Figure 7.2 illustrates very positive assessments of all actors, with especially high scores for the police and few differences from the 2024 report. There is one minor difference concerning the evaluation of Nav. Although Nav has a still good score of 4 out of 5, their score has decreased from 4.2 in the 2024 survey.

Overall, the positive assessment increases with age, but decreases with length of residence (implying that those arriving more recently are more satisfied than those who arrived earlier).

Figure 7.3: Assessment of local and non-governmental actors (N = 1232-2030[19]).



*Scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).
**Weighted by gender and age.
***Respondents indicating that they had not been in contact with or did not have any opinion about these actors are excluded from the analyses (see specified N for each actor in footnote).

Figure 7.3 shows that all local and non-governmental actors still get very good assessments, almost identical to the 2024 survey.

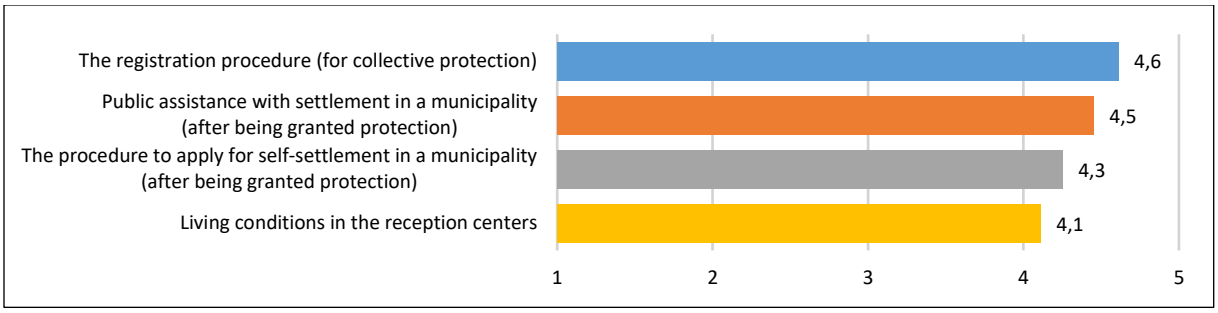
[18] UDI (N=1650), IMDi (N=1426), Reception centre (N=1856), the police (N=1721), Nav (N=1902)

[19] Contact person in municipality (N=2030), volunteer organizations (N=1232), the Ukrainian community in Norway (N=1414), the local community (N=1685), teachers in introduction programme/language teachers (N=1952)

7.3 More varying assessments of services and procedures

What are the respondents assessments of the services and procedures that they may have been in contact with after their arrival in Norway?

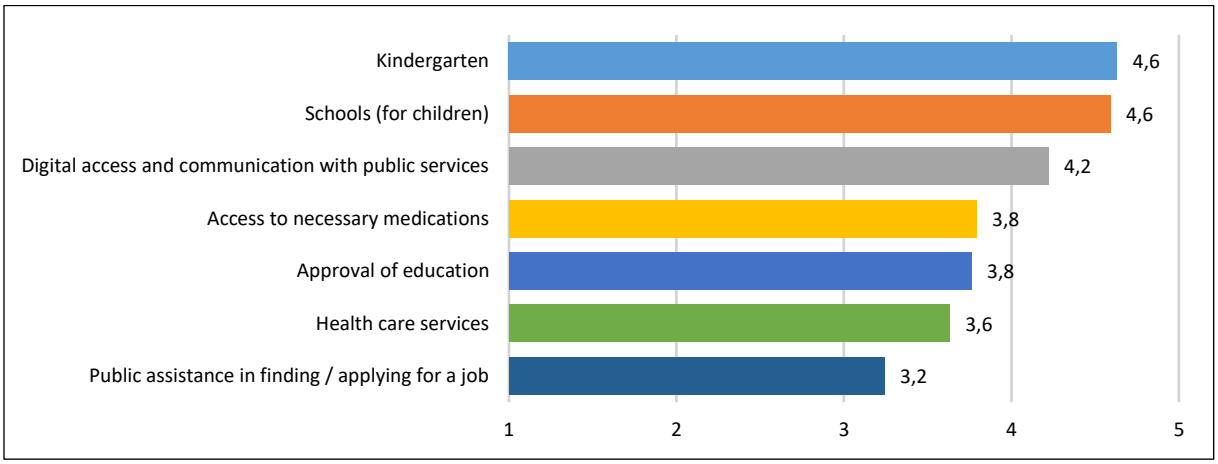
Figure 7.4: Assessment of services and procedures 1 (N = 827-2115[20]).



*Scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).
**Those answering 'not relevant' or 'don't know' are excluded from the figure.
***Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 7.4 shows the respondents' assessment of services related to the registration, reception and settlement. Overall—and similarly to the 2024 survey—most services get very good assessments, with minimum 4.1 out of 5.

Figure 7.5: Assessment of services and procedures 2 (N = 567-1993[21]).



*Scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).
**Those answering 'not relevant' or 'don't know' are excluded from the figure.
***Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 7.5 shows almost identical score as the 2024 survey. Schools and kindergarten get very high scores of 4.6, with digital access and communication with public services also ranked above 4 out of 5.

Similarly to the previous years, healthcare services and access to necessary medication and recognition of education are rated below the other services. Nevertheless, recognition of

[20] The registration procedure for collective protection (N=2115), living conditions in the reception centres (N=1854), public assistance with settlement in a municipality (N=1970), the procedure to apply for agreed self-settlement in a municipality (N=827).

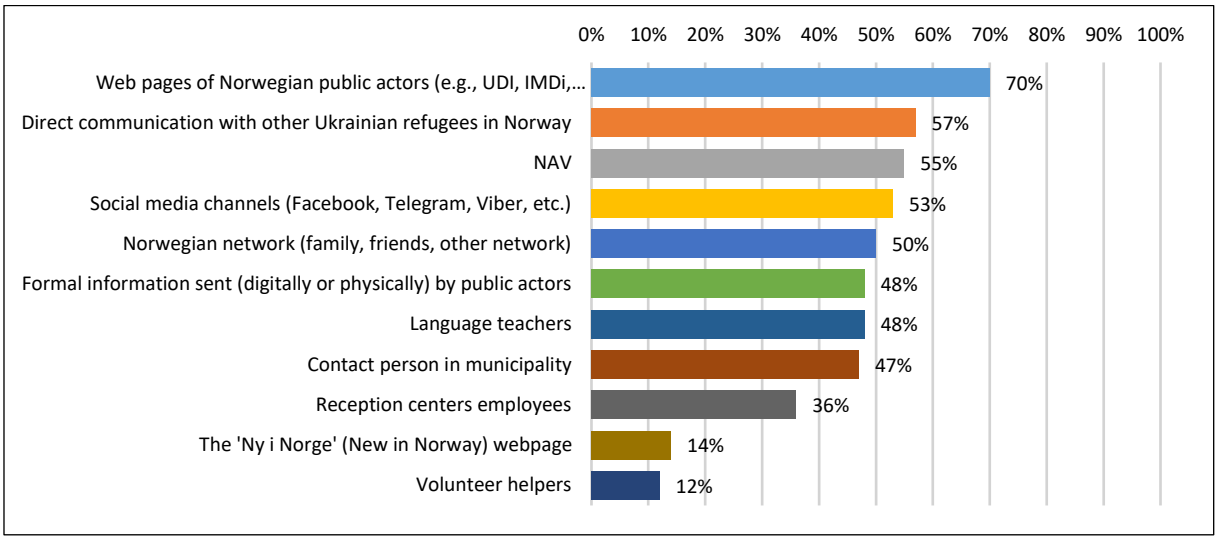
[21] Schools (N=957), approval of education (N=1143), kindergarten (N=567), health care services (N=1993), access to necessary medications (N=1726), public assistance in finding / applying for a job (N=1563), digital access and communication with public services (N=1718).

education has risen to 3.8—up from 3.6 in the 2024 survey. Once again, assistance in finding or applying for a job receives the lowest score (3.2).

7.4 Assessment of information provided by the public authorities

What main sources do the Ukrainian refugees use, and how do they assess the information provided to them about different rights and services?

Figure 7.6: Use of information sources (multiple options possible) (N=2147).

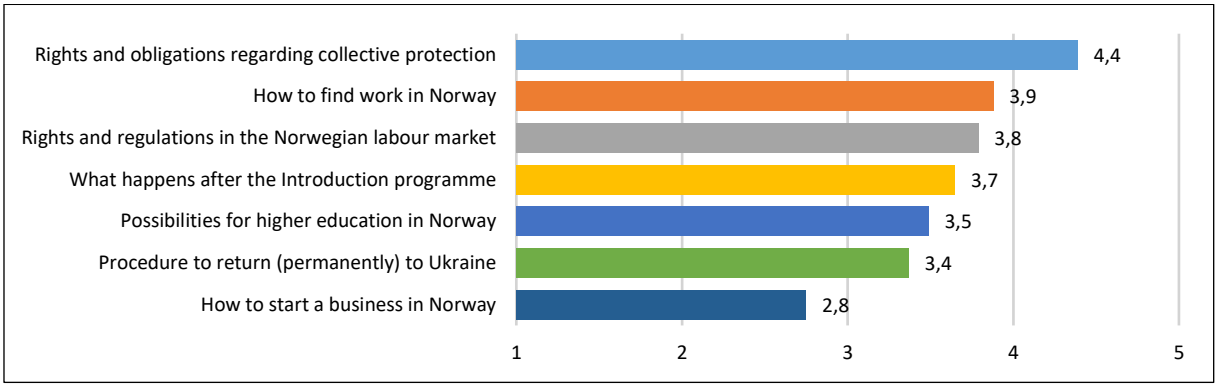


*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 7.6 shows that Ukrainian refugees use a variety of sources for obtaining the information they need. The table largely mirrors the finding from the 2024 report. The large majority (70%) use the websites of Norwegian public actors. Further, between 50-60% answer that they get information through their network (other Ukrainian refugees and Norwegians) and social media channels. Around half use their contact persons at Nav for information (55%), in addition to their contact person in the municipality, and language teachers.

However, how do they assess whether they have received sufficient information about different types of services in Norway?

Figure 7.7: Sufficiency of information (N = 748-1494[22]).



*Scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).
**Weighted by gender and age.
***The figure excludes those who have not been in contact with the respective service or procedure and those responding, 'don't know'.

Figure 7.7 shows that most of the respondents confirm having received sufficient information regarding rights and obligations related to the collective protection permit (4.4). Otherwise, there are positive, but more moderate opinions (between 3.5-3.9) about the information about how to find work in Norway and labour-market rights, what happens after the introduction programme and possibilities for higher education.

On the question concerning the information about the procedure for returning permanently to Ukraine, the respondents are widely divided, as also found in the report by Holm-Hansen et al. (2025) on return. As previous years, the respondents ranked information about how to start a business in Norway the lowest, with an average score of 2.8.

7.5 Interpreting services

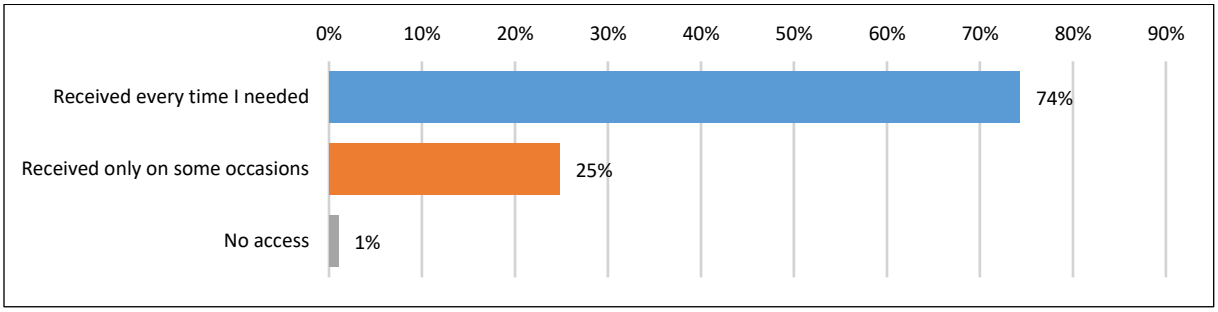
Have Ukrainian refugees received interpreting services when needed in Norway? How do they assess these services, and has this changed over time?

In this year's survey, we asked specifically whether the respondents had needed interpreting services during *the last 12 months* (this time-limited specification was not included in the previous surveys). This new phrasing was included to ensure that respondents evaluated the need and services over the past year, providing a more current picture rather than a general assessment of interpreting services during the last 3.5 years.

26% of the respondents answered that they had not needed interpreting services (up from 14% in last year's report), either because they understood Norwegian or English (23%) or because they got network (friends, family, other) that have helped them interpret when needed (3%). Not surprisingly, the need for interpreting services decreases with time of residence, most probably because more people learn Norwegian: while 46% of those who arrived in 2022 stated that they did not need interpreting services the last 12 months, the corresponding number is 11% for those arriving in 2025.

[22] Rights and obligations regarding collective protection (N=1494), rights and obligation when living in private accommodation (N=1117), the procedure of being settled in a municipality with public assistance (N=1413), the procedure to apply for self-settlement (N=748), procedure to return (permanently) to Ukraine (N=912), opportunities for short visits to Ukraine (N=1182).

Figure 7.8: Access to interpreters among those who needed such services (N=1584).

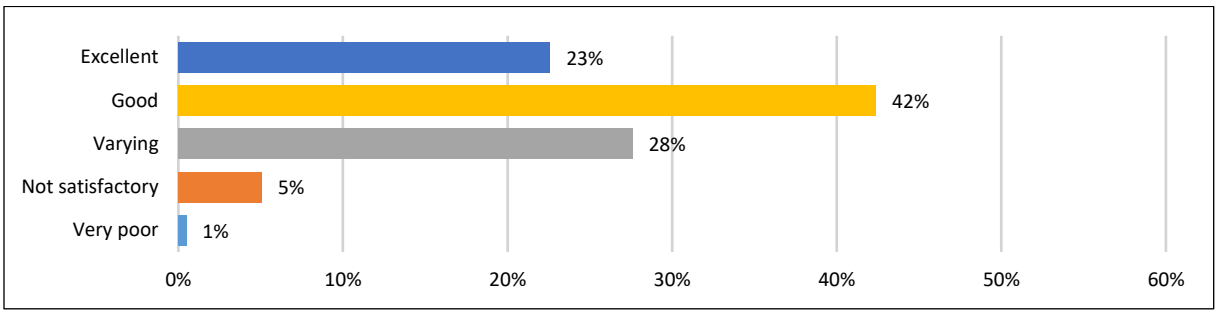


*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 7.8 shows whether those who answered that they were in need of interpreting services had access to such services. Although the wording of the questions differs slightly from previous years (focusing on the past 12 months), the figure largely mirrors the findings from the 2024 report. Only 1% answered that they had not had such access. Three out of four received interpreting services every time they needed it, while one fourth answered that they had only received it on some occasions.

The respondents who had used interpreters were subsequently asked to assess the quality of the interpreting services they had received.

Figure 7.9: Assessment of skills and qualifications of interpreters in Norway (N=1568).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**The 1.7% who answered 'don't know' are not included in the figure.

Figure 7.9 shows that two-thirds assessed the services as either excellent (23%) or good (42%). However, one in four indicated that the skills and qualifications of interpreters vary. Only 5% indicated poor or very poor interpreting. The results are almost identical to the 2024 survey. The elderly were more satisfied than the younger respondents, and those arriving more recently assessed the quality of the interpreting services higher than those who arrived in 2022. There may be multiple factors driving this latter finding. One the one hand, it may indicate an improvement in the interpreting services. On the other hand, it could also be that those with longer residence time have better Norwegian skills, and therefore more easily are able to notice if there are challenges with the quality of the interpretation.

We further asked those who had received interpreting services if there had been any challenges or concerns with these services, and 25% answered 'yes'. Women answered this to a higher degree than men, and also those in the younger age groups to a higher degree than older refugees. In line with the findings above, we also see that those arriving more recently reported challenges or concerns to a lesser degree. While 30% of those arriving in 2022 had experienced challenges or concerns, only 13% of those arriving in 2024 reported this.

Respondents who reported challenges or concerns with interpreting services were invited to elaborate in an open-ended question. A total of 358 respondents shared their experiences

and perspectives. To a large extent, the main challenges mentioned resembled the concerns that were raised in the 2023 and 2024 reports.

The most widespread problem was incorrect or low-quality translation, often involving omissions, oversimplified summaries, or changes in meaning. According to respondents, this typically resulted in misunderstandings between refugees and service providers, especially in critical contexts such as health care, NAV, police interviews, and schools.

Respondents also described a lack of professionalism and neutrality among some interpreters. This includes adding personal opinions, giving uninvited advice, interrupting, refusing to translate certain statements, showing irritation, or acting disrespectfully. Breaches of confidentiality and inappropriate personal comments were also mentioned by some respondents. Other challenges included insufficient competence in Norwegian or in specialised terminology, particularly within health services. This could, according to some respondents, lead to serious misunderstandings and, in some cases, incorrect medical guidance. In this regard, a recent report monitoring the use of interpreters in Norwegian public sector find that 30% of the public interpreting services in Norway is carried out by people without formal interpreting qualifications (Agenda Kaupang 2025). It may be that some of these experiences are related to situations where unskilled interpreters have interpreted.

Another, but sometimes related, issue raised is the unwanted use of Russian-speaking instead of Ukrainian-speaking interpreters, even when Ukrainian interpreters have been explicitly requested. Respondents emphasised both linguistic and emotional challenges. Being forced to communicate in Russian is by some of the respondents perceived as deeply uncomfortable or retraumatising due to the war. Several furthermore report political bias or hostile attitudes from Russian interpreters.

Practical problems were also mentioned, such as interpreters not being ordered, not showing up, leaving sessions prematurely, poor telephone sound quality, and situations where people are forced to use interpreters they do not need or want.

7.6 Psychological health and assistance

After fleeing from war and striving to settle and integrate into a new country, how is the Ukrainian refugees' mental health?

7.6.1 The majority experience psychological distress

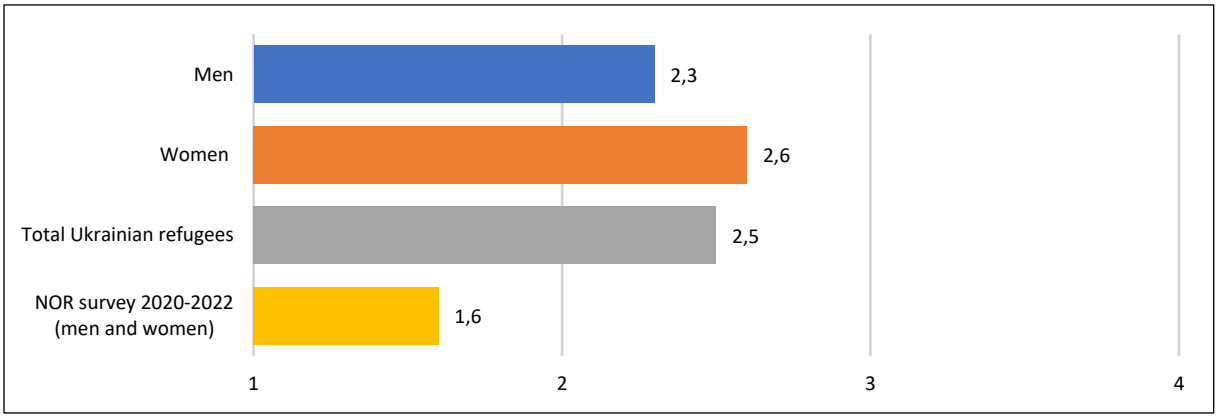
In the survey, we used a standardised question battery to measure psychological distress, based on the Hopkins Symptom Checklist-5 (HSCL-5). The HSCL-5 is a short, 5-item self-report questionnaire used to measure symptoms of anxiety and depression over the past week) (Nilsen & Pettersen 2025).

The respondents were asked whether, during the past week, they had been bothered by nervousness and inner turmoil, constant fear or anxiety, feelings of hopelessness about the future, depression or melancholy, and excessive worry or unease. For each of these statements they answered on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much bothered). Based on these items, we made a mental health index, ranging from 1-4. The index has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0,90, indicating very high internal consistency. Although debated (Kirkøen et al. 2025), the cut-off score for indicating psychological distress is often set at >2 (FHI 2023).

In figure 7.10 and 7.11 below, we compare the average score of the men and women in our sample, with the average score for the general Norwegian population. The data for the Norwegian population is derived from the FHI report 'Healthcare needs among refugees from

Ukraine arriving in Norway during 2022' (FHI 2023), which builds on data from the Norwegian Counties Public Health Surveys (NOR survey) 2020-2022 (N = 256 920).

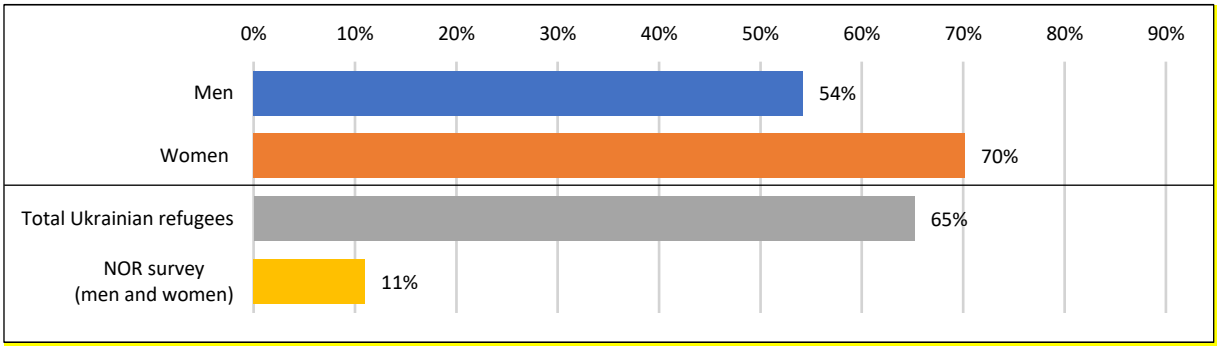
Figure 7.10: Average score for HSCL-5 index, comparing 2025 survey (N=2147) with NOR survey(N=256 920).



*Numbers on Ukrainian refugees from 2025 survey.
**Numbers from the NOR survey (FHI 2023).

Figure 7.10 shows that among our respondents, the average score was 2.3 for men and 2.6 for women, indicating high average scores. Further, when comparing the mean score for both genders with the NOR survey, we see that the average score is much higher than the average in the Norwegian population (FHI 2023).

Figure 7.11: Share with scores >2 on the HSCL-5 index, comparing 2025 survey (N=2147) with NOR survey(N=256 920).



*Numbers on Ukrainian refugees from 2025 survey.
.**Numbers from the NOR survey (FHI 2023)

Further, figure 7.11 shows that a majority of the respondents have scores above 2 on the Hopkins 5 index, indicating that a very high share of the Ukrainian refugees struggles with psychological distress. 65% among our respondents have score over 2, compared to 11% in the NOR survey. We also see that women have higher share with scores above 2 than men.

The longitudinal interviews conducted in 2025 highlight that many of our informants experienced problems with their psychological health during the past year. Three reported that they sought medical assistance and/or underwent treatment with antidepressants. Two others mentioned experiencing anxiety and a pre-depressive state but had not yet approached a doctor. Among the most common reasons mentioned for these situations are job insecurity, unsuccessful attempts to find employment, jobs where informants are unable to utilize their skills, and a general sense of uncertainty about the future. One of the informants began her story about key changes in her life during the past year by mentioning her mental health challenges:

> I have, of course, gone through major changes. The crisis caught up with me, and I ended up in the hospital with post-traumatic syndrome and depression. Now I am undergoing treatment

> with a psychologist and a doctor. I am on 50% sick leave. I continue working only in the shop because I don't want to lose contact and communication with people—trying to stay in some kind of social environment. (N5)

The main reason for this situation, she explained, was the transition from a job she was very satisfied with (working with refugees in the municipality) to the necessity of combining two jobs, which sometimes exhausts her, as she has to work weekends and deal with an unpredictable schedule. She came from an occupied territory and stressed that she has lost everything material she had in her life:

> I think all the events that happened didn't pass by without leaving a mark. It's like you were running, running, running, and then suddenly you can't run anymore. You stop and fall. That's what happened to me. (N5)

Further, she reflects on the importance of having a job that she enjoys and finds meaningful for her mental health:

> If I had continued working at [previous job], I think I wouldn't have had such depression. I loved that job so much—it inspired me. I knew I was in the right place and doing important things. I had amazing colleagues. (...) For a person who has lost so much, I would like to do something that speaks to my soul. (N5)

Another informant shared that she felt strong pressure from a Nav caseworker who insisted that she constantly look for a job. She sent CVs and applied for different positions, but without success. All these circumstances triggered psychological challenges, anxiety, and depression. Eventually, she had to see a doctor and received treatment. Another informant noted the necessity of seeking medical help due to unsuccessful attempts to find a job relevant to her professional skills and uncertainty about her future:

> It really happened to me around early autumn, closer to winter. I started feeling worse and worse—I just wanted to sleep. I couldn't handle work at all, which is very unusual for me. I understood that this was something I could no longer control. Neither my therapy nor any self-help techniques were working. So, I went to my doctor with a direct request—for the first time in my life—that I needed antidepressants. (N3)

For more examples of challenges with psychological distress, see chapter 10.2 on psychological distress related to their labour-market attachment, 15.3 about uncertainty and future prospects, and chapter 22.4 in the conclusion. See also chapter 11.4 for parents' assessments of their children and youth's psychological state and need of services.

7.6.2 Subgroup differences

Who are most prone to having mental health issues? For descriptive statistics and operationalization of variables, see appendix 1.

Table 7.1: Multiple linear regression. Dependent variable: HSCL-5 index measuring psychological distress (1-4). High value = higher psychological distress (N=2147).

	Unst. Coeff	**Stand. coeff.**
Background		
Male (vs female)	-0.32**	-0.17**
Age in years	-0.01**	-0.16**
Family situation in Ukraine		
Closest family/relatives have left Ukraine (vs not)	-0.13**	-0.05**
Year of arrival (ref 2022)		
2023	-0.07	-0.04
2024	-0.16**	-0.08**
2025	-0.52**	-0.18**

Financial situation (high value = very good)		
In Norway	-0.24**	-0.21**
In Ukraine	-0.02	-0.02
Employment status (ref. = employed)		
Unemployed	0.13*	0.06*
Introduction program	0.15**	0.07**
Student	0.10	0.03
Other	0.35**	0.15**
Social integration and welcome in Norway		
Have someone close in Norway (vs not)	-0.31**	-0.15**
Have Norwegian friends (vs not)	-0.09	-0.04
Feel welcomed by the Norwegian people (scale 1-5)	-0.09**	-0.11**
Constant	4.55	

Table 7.1 shows that men and elderly respondents report to experience less psychological distress than women and the younger age groups. Also, the family situation in Ukraine affects the situation: respondents who have no close family remaining in Ukraine have better mental health than those with close family remaining.

Quite interestingly, mental health issues and residence time corresponds. Those who have stayed longer in Norway—who arrived before 2024—report of more psychological distress than those arriving after 2024. This finding resonates with some of our stories from the longitudinal interviews described above, with several examples of persons who had experienced increased psychological challenges after several years in Norway.

Socio-economic integration also correlates with mental health challenges. It is, however, important to emphasise that mental health and socio-economic integration may be interdependent, and it is hard to conclude on the causal relationship between these variables. Mental health issues may affect socio-economic integration and vice versa. Still, we find that the financial and employment situation in Norway correlates with mental health issues. A better financial situation decreases the likelihood of having mental health issues, while the unemployed and those currently in the introduction programme have a higher likelihood to have mental health issues compared to the employed.

Lastly, having someone close in Norway is positively correlated with better mental health, and also feeling welcome in Norway. Having specifically Norwegian friends is not significant, indicating that the most important thing is to have a general feeling of being welcomed and having someone close, and not necessarily whether they have Norwegian friends or not.

7.6.3 Do those in need of help get assistance?

How many Ukrainian refugees report themselves that they have needed—and if so, received—psychological services in Norway?

Figure 7.12: Have you been in need of psychological services in Norway? (N=2147).

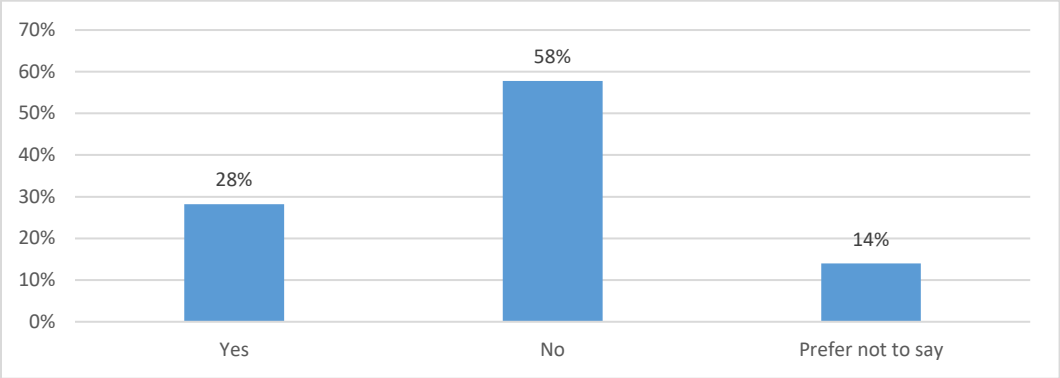


Figure 7.12 shows that 28% answer that they have needed psychological services in Norway, while about 14% answer 'prefer not to say'. The share that says that they have needed psychological services decreases with age but increases with residence time. Also, more women state that they have needed psychological services.

For those who answered that they had needed psychological services, we asked a follow-up question of whether they had received such services. 8% preferred not to say, otherwise it was split: half of the respondents had received such services, while the other half had not. Those who arrived in 2022 and 2023 had received such services more often than those who arrived in 2024 and 2025, implying that such services are often provided after settlement and after some time in the country.

Among our interviewees, all three who sought medical help to overcome psychological challenges were satisfied with the assistance and approach they received in Norway. One informant noted cultural differences compared to Ukraine, where psychological issues are often not taken seriously: 'In Ukraine, no one even considers such diagnoses—like depression. People think you're just making it up. Here, they take it seriously' (N5).

The informant was also very satisfied that she could receive help from a Russian-speaking specialist who understood her situation and mentality, which significantly contributed to her improvement:

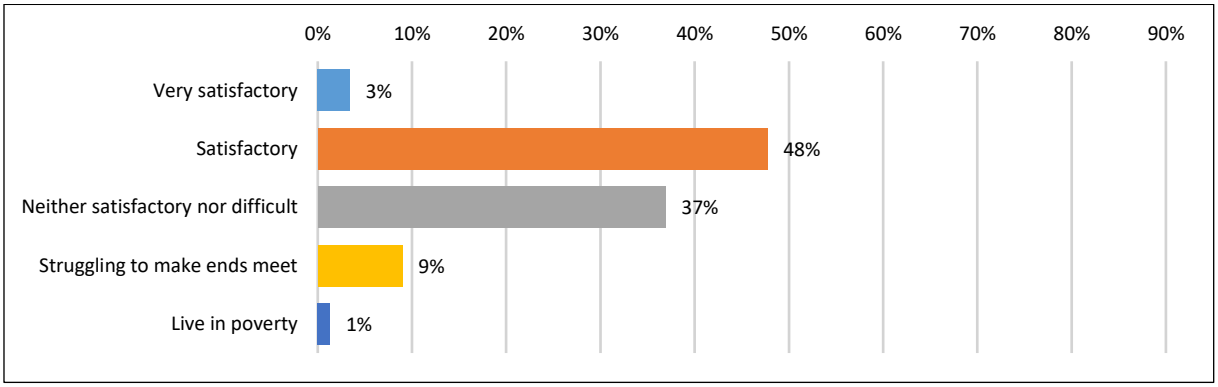
> I was very lucky—I got a psychologist who is Russian herself, and she also lived in Ukraine. The advantage for me was that she understands our mentality very well. From the very first session, I got answers to some of my questions. I am happy, very grateful. She really helped me. (N5)

7.7 Financial situation

How do the Ukrainian refugees assess their own financial situation in Norway?

In the survey, 39% reported to be self-sufficient, while 62% received (partial) financial or housing support from the public. Very few—only 2%—received (partial) financial or housing support from family/other network/volunteers. Further, we asked the respondents to assess their family's financial situation in Norway.

Figure 7.13: Assessment of household's current economic situation (N=2147).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**The 1,7% who answered 'hard to say/prefer not to answer' are not included in the figure.

Figure 7.13 shows that half of the respondents reported that their household's current economic situation is satisfactory, but only 3% answered 'very satisfactory'. 37% reported that it is neither satisfactory nor difficult. One in ten was struggling to make ends meet, and 1% said that they live in poverty. These figures are very similar to the 2024 survey.

In this year's survey, we added a new question about their financial situation in Ukraine before they fled to Norway, to indicate whether there has been a general deterioration of their financial situation.

Figure 7.14: Assessment of household's current economic situation (N=2147).

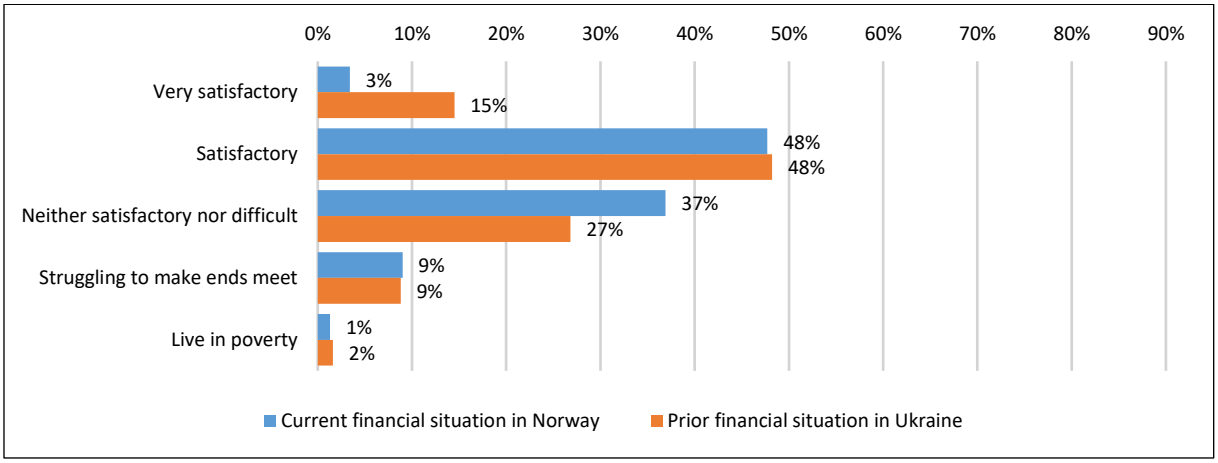


Figure 7.14 compares the aggregated assessments of the respondents' current financial situation in Norway with their prior financial situation in Ukraine. A larger share had a 'very satisfactory' financial situation in Ukraine compared to in Norway (15% versus 3%). Correspondingly, a similar lower share reports their financial situation as neither satisfactory nor difficult. Otherwise, there are not very large differences at the aggregated level.

However, further analysis of changes between categories at the individual level shows that there is not a general correspondence between the respondents' previous financial situation and their current situation in Norway. A correlation analysis shows that there is only a weak, and negative, correlation between the two financial situations (Persons Correlation at -0,05).

We also checked the share that had an improved, similar and worsened financial situation when comparing their answers in the two questions. The analysis shows that there is a lot of internal mobility between the categories. One third has a lower assessment of their financial situation in Norway than in Ukraine, one third reported to have a similar financial situation,

while the last third assessed their financial situation in Norway as better than their prior situation in Ukraine.

A regression analysis using downward financial mobility—operationalised as having a worse financial situation in Norway than their previous financial situation in Ukraine—showed few statistically significant results (table not portrayed). Neither gender, family situation (children) time of arrival, nor education showed significant correlations. However, the probability of downward financial mobility is lower among the younger cohorts, highest among the middle age groups, and somewhat lower again for the elderly. We also see that those with higher English skills have a higher probability of downward financial mobility. This could be interpreted as indicating that those with strong English skills typically come from socioeconomic backgrounds and professional sectors that do not translate easily into the Norwegian labour market. As a result, they are more exposed to relative status loss than those without such language skills.

7.7.1 Financial improvements for those employed, but still fragile and unstable situations

In the 2025 interviews, several of our longitudinal interviewees were managing quite well financially without relying on social support from NAV. This financial independence was partially achieved by combining several jobs (see more details on this subject in chapter 10). How satisfied they were with their financial situation varied, but those who were able to fully sustain themselves emphasized how important this independence was to them:

> I earn enough to cover monthly expenses—rent, transportation, clothing—without any subsidies or support. (…) So yes, I have enough for everything. And it's a matter of principle for me—to be a taxpayer, not someone who holds out their hand asking for help. (N9)

We also observed that interviewees who were entirely dependent on state support last year, have begun earning some income, although not yet enough to fully disengage from support:

> Even though I have a contract for a limited number of hours, I report my actual hours worked, and they pay me for all of them. (…) And then there's also the support [from Nav]. So, that it's enough. (…) Of course, it's not the full salary I would like to have, but I know I'll get there—I just need more time. (N1)

The overall impression is that some feel they are at least moving in the right direction financially. One interviewee, who had been in Norway since 2022 and currently lives on a combination of part-time jobs and a scholarship for adult education, reflected on how economic satisfaction is shaped by past experiences:

> Well, it depends on what you compare it to. If I compare it to pre-war times—our needs, desires, habits, and traditions back then—then no, it's not enough. But if I compare it to how things were three years ago or even two years ago, the situation is much better. I'm finally starting to allow myself to want things that used to be part of my life before the war. For example, not just any apartment, but one where I truly feel comfortable. (…) Of course, those heartfelt desires—we still can't fully satisfy them. But again, it depends on what you compare it to. The overall trend (…), we're moving forward. We're developing. (3N)

While people's economic situations were improving, several interviewees noted that they still did not feel fully financially secure. One woman, who was juggling two part-time jobs, shared that her family was currently self-sufficient. However, they were still awaiting a work contract for her husband, which she saw as essential for achieving a greater sense of economic stability:

> I can't say that I'm standing firmly on my feet, because to truly feel stable, my husband needs to have a contract. (…) They said that in August, he'll be given a full contract. That, of course, brings some sense of stability, you know? And for me, that's important. (N5)

A woman who was employed—though not in a permanent position—shared that her salary was both low and unpredictable, as she never knew how many hours she would be offered

from month to month. Since our conversation with her last year, her husband had secured a permanent work contract. Nevertheless, their overall financial situation still felt fragile:

> So, we can say that we have greater financial stability. We don't receive any support from Husbanken [the Norwegian State Housing Bank] or emergency aid—we haven't received it, only the intro support. So, we can say that we're standing on our feet, on one hand, but on the other hand, we still don't quite feel it. We don't feel like we're truly standing on our feet, because we haven't been able to build up savings or create any kind of economic plan. We've applied for credit several times, but unfortunately, the banks keep rejecting us. (N2)

The above citation illustrates how, over time, some individuals have begun to think more seriously about their prospects for an economically sustainable future in Norway and worried that it would become difficult. As one responded phrased it: 'We eat all the money. How can we buy an apartment or a house?' (N2). We observe a shift in perspective—from focusing on day-to-day survival to considering how to build a stable and fulfilling life in Norway. For example, some now express future expectations of being able to own their own apartment rather than continuing to rent (see more on this subject in chapter 8.3).

7.7.2 More challenging financial situations for those in education or introduction programmes

Two interviewees, however, who were enrolled in fulltime programs at upper secondary education described their financial situation as challenging and uncertain. They both got support from Lånekassen (the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund) and worked. One of them lived alone in an apartment that she had resided in since she was settled in the municipality. While aiming to be self-sufficient and managing without state support, she said that her salary would not be enough to cover her expenses during summer when there is no support from Lånekassen. She would then have to make a request to Nav again: 'I know that my salary from work won't be enough to cover living expenses and such. So, I'll go back to Nav, but only for the summer' (L8). She described her economic situation as very unstable:

> Because anything can happen. I could lose my job. I might not be admitted to the second school year [which is competitive]. Anything is possible. So, it's very unstable. It's very difficult because—prices are going up everywhere. (N8)

The other interviewee who was enrolled at a fulltime upper secondary education program was living together with other family members and contributing to their common household. He described their financial situation as quite challenging:

> We're struggling financially. I earn 14–15,000 NOK, plus 2–3,000 in grants. My mother lost her job—she worked in cleaning—and now receives support, about 8,000 NOK. We also get help from Husbanken. (N7)

From what he was telling, it seemed that he had refrained from taking a loan from Lånekassen and only received the scholarship, while the other interviewee enrolled in an upper secondary program was receiving both the scholarship and the loan.

The interviewee receiving also the loan had no clear understanding of whether she would have to pay back the money she received from Lånekassen when she had finished her studies: 'It's unclear with Lånekassen—should I pay it back or not when I finish school?' (N8).

A woman who arrived in 2024 with her husband and children—and was still in the introduction program—said that the financial support while at intro was not enough to cover their expenses: 'There are five of us, and our house is big, so even two intro program payments aren't sufficient. So, we get additional support from Husbanken and also from Nav' (NN7). Although being dependent on extra support from Nav to cover all expenses, the interviewee did not describe this as a great problem, but rather as a temporary arrangement with the municipality that worked well in their situation. However, the example illustrates how the introduction program benefit may not be sufficient to cover the living expenses of large families.

7.8 Individual asylum

Although the collective, temporary protection—at least initially—covered most displaced persons from Ukraine, people that did not qualify had to apply for regular asylum with an individual assessment. Further, as part of the Norwegian restrictive policy turn (see chapter 3), the Norwegian government limited the eligibility for the target group of temporary collective protection for those who previously lived in six western counties in Ukraine during the fall of 2024 and further extended this to 14 counties in January 2025. Those who applied for protection in Norway from these areas, would have to apply for regular asylum.

From 2023-2025, between 800-1200 persons from Ukraine have applied for regular asylum in Norway each year. In this year's round of interviews, we also conducted five interviews with Ukrainians who arrived in Norway and undergone the individual asylum procedure. At the time of the interviews,

- Two of the five informants had their cases eventually changed to collective protection.
- Two received a denial and left Norway (one returned to Ukraine, and the other moved to another European country and was granted collective protection there).
- One case was still under consideration.

To ensure anonymity for these individual cases, we have excluded certain details from their stories. Further, all quotes in this chapter are anonymised, so that it is not possible to track other quotes in the report to their individual stories.

7.8.1 Variety of reasons for being evaluated for individual protection

Among our interviewees, there were different reasons for why they were not eligible for temporary collective protection. The most precarious case involves a married couple with children that were still undergoing individual consideration. One partner is a Ukrainian citizen, the other Russian, and as of February 24, 2022, the did not live in Ukraine. After arrival to Norway, they had lived in various reception centres for over two years and had low expectations of receiving a positive response from Norwegian authorities. Unlike other informants who may be able to return to Ukraine, this couple was uncertain whether they would be able to return at all. They had contacted UDI several times but received no clear answers:

> When we called UDI, they said we just have to wait. They said our situation is unclear, and they don't know what to do with us. We have two different citizenships. So, we just have to wait. (*anonymised*)

Another case involves an informant who came to Norway as a tourist in 2021 and overstayed her visa in December 2021, thus she had no legal status of residency in Norway at the outbreak of the full-scale invasion. She first applied for, but was denied collective protection, and later she applied for individual protection, which was also refused after a significant waiting period of more than three years. She left Norway in summer 2025 and was in Ukraine at the time of the interview. The most difficult aspect of her stay in Norway was the immobility caused by lacking documents for a long time, which prevented her from visiting family in Germany:

> Just so you understand, I sat here for four years. I wasn't allowed to travel anywhere. During that time, my daughter got married—I couldn't attend the wedding because I couldn't leave. She got pregnant and gave birth. I missed all of it. (*anonymised*)

Despite this, she had a job and was able to renew her work permit several times, which gave her a sense of hope—contrasting with the letter instructing her to leave the country in summer 2025.

Another informant originally came from occupied territories in Ukraine. She first spent a year in another European country under collective protection, then returned to Ukraine and gave

birth in a ‘safe region’ as defined by UDI. After her husband was injured in the war, the family decided to move to Norway, where they had friends and relatives. They arrived in Norway in May 2025. The informant expressed frustration with the UDI officer who interviewed her:

> She told me I wouldn’t get anything because I came here for money, not protection. I cried three times during the interview. She pressured me to withdraw my application at the table. I said I needed to talk to my husband and make the decision with my family. She said, ‘No, withdraw now, because you won’t get anything anyway.’ *(anonymised)*

However, later the informant said the reception centre had informed her that her case had been reclassified and that they were now being given collective protection anyway. She was waiting for her documents: ‘They told us to prepare for relocation [to a municipality], and that our cases were changed to ordinary ones. I understood that we would be under [collective] protection.’ (*anonymised*).

Another couple, who had just received collective protection after more than two years of waiting under individual consideration, mentioned that they had to submit additional documents and photos to prove they did not have a residence permit in another European country they had previously lived in. Before the full-scaled invasion they worked in this country and, according to them, they obtained a residence permit there, but it expired after they left. After the full-scale invasion began, they moved to yet another European country and worked there without obtaining TPD-status. Although they were told they could not apply for collective protection from the beginning, they were not informed of the reasons, which became a major challenge:

> The hardest part... My first year was extremely difficult. I don’t think I’ve ever experienced such stress. You don’t clearly understand your status, like in our case. Why? You don’t know the reason. (*anonymised*)

They had tried to contact UDI, but communication was difficult due to the language barrier. However, staff at reception centres played an important role in helping the informants communicate with various authorities and services in Norway while they were staying there.

The final informant was in Poland when the full-scale invasion began and shortly afterwards moved to Norway and applied for individual protection. After more than two years of waiting, he received a denial and left Norway. At the time of the interview, he had been granted collective protection in another European country and was participating in the introductory programme there.

7.8.2 Life at the reception centre

In our survey, we only have 29 respondents who have applied for individual asylum, but these gave the Norwegian registration/application procedure for individual asylum a high score of 4.1 out of 5. In the interviews, most of the informants were satisfied with their living conditions during their stay in reception centres, although all of them mentioned that they had to change centres several times.

One informant suggested that those undergoing individual protection should be offered better living conditions than those staying for a short period. She explained this proposal by pointing to the process of ‘homemaking’ that occurs during long-term stays in reception centres, which helps reduce feelings of uncertainty and temporariness:

> Those under individual protection should have improved housing [during the application phase]. It’s very important. Why? Because people settle in—it becomes their home. It’s not a transit space like for those under collective protection who stay for 2–3 months and leave.’ (*anonymised*)

One challenge mentioned by all informants was a sense of existential uncertainty from being ‘on hold’ with no control over the outcome, lack of information about their case and their rights in Norway, the absence of documents (which made them immobile), and limited

opportunities to learn the language or pursue hobbies. While one informant mentioned contacting NOAS and receiving comprehensive information about her rights while waiting for a decision from the authorities, the overall impression is that all informants experienced an information vacuum and a sense of helplessness regarding the decisions on their cases.

7.8.3 Opportunities and challenges with temporary job permits

All informants reported knowing about the possibility of applying for a work permit and working while staying their application was being processed. Some applied for short-term work permits and received permission for six months. Those who found work described their experiences in the Norwegian labour market positively:

> I think it's possible to find work in Norway, but only if you go out, do something, and meet people. And when they see that you're a reasonable person and can work, they give you the opportunity. (*anonymised*)

On the other hand, the short duration of the work permit (six months) was a major challenge, as it discouraged employers from offering continued work opportunities: 'The work permit allowed you to work almost anywhere, but few employers were willing to hire, because it was only for six months.' (*anonymised*)

Opportunities to extend the work permit varied. One informant was granted an extension only once and then received repeated refusals, while two others were able to renew their permits several times.

7.8.4 Reflections about the future

The EU Temporary Protection Directive does not have the same limited geographical scope related to prior residence in Ukraine as the new adjustments in the Norwegian legislation. As mentioned, one of our informants left Norway after receiving a denial and moved to another European country, where he successfully obtained collective protection. The process did not take long, and at the time of the interview, he was participating in an introductory programme there: 'I applied in August and received status in October. They didn't even check where I came from.' (*anonymised*)

Another informant who successfully received collective protection in Norway shared that she had considered moving to Finland in case of a denial in Norway. She referred to the example of another Ukrainian woman who was denied protection in Norway but successfully obtained collective protection in Finland without difficulty:

> In Finland, they give protection to those who were denied here. And they do it very quickly. A friend of mine went there. (…) If we had been denied, we would have followed in her footsteps. (*anonymised*)

Another informant—before being transferred to and granted a collective protection permit—said that she and her family had not considered that a return to Ukraine was an option if declined, due to ongoing attacks and air raid alarms in various cities:

> There are no safe cities in Ukraine. When you're with a baby on the 9th floor and a missile hits five minutes away. I can't get down quickly enough, can't grab the baby from the 9th floor. Will I make it to the shelter or not? The shelter is 7–10 minutes away. (*anonymised*)

The informant, who had received collective protection at the time of the interview, expressed that she was looking forward to being settled and starting the introductory programme in Norway after such a long period of waiting.

8 Housing and settlement after granted protection

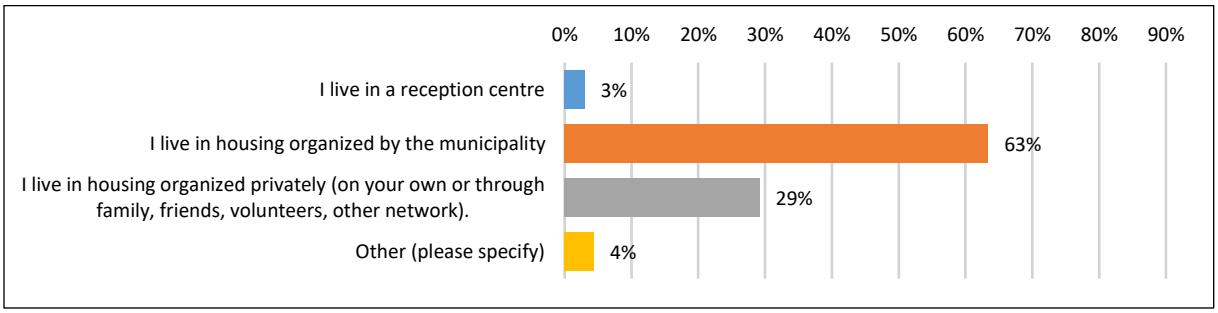
The Norwegian settlement model (for those who have been granted protection), mainly builds on publicly managed settlement, where refugees are assigned to municipalities on the basis of agreements between the state and the municipalities. The model also allows for so-called 'agreed self-settlement', where refugees may find their own housing and then apply for formal settlement in the respective municipalities to retain their right to financial assistance and introduction programmes (Søholt & Dyb 2021). Although there was an increased use of agreed self-settlement during 2022 and 2023 (Hernes et al 2023; 2024), most settlements now happen through the regular settlement procedure.

In this chapter, we first present Ukrainian refugees settlement patterns in Norway, before describing the assessment of their dwellings. Lastly, we present their potential plans related to moving to another Norwegian municipality.

8.1 Where do they live?

What type of accommodation do they currently live in—and have they found their accommodation themselves or gotten public assistance?

Figure 8.1: Current type of accommodation (N=2148).



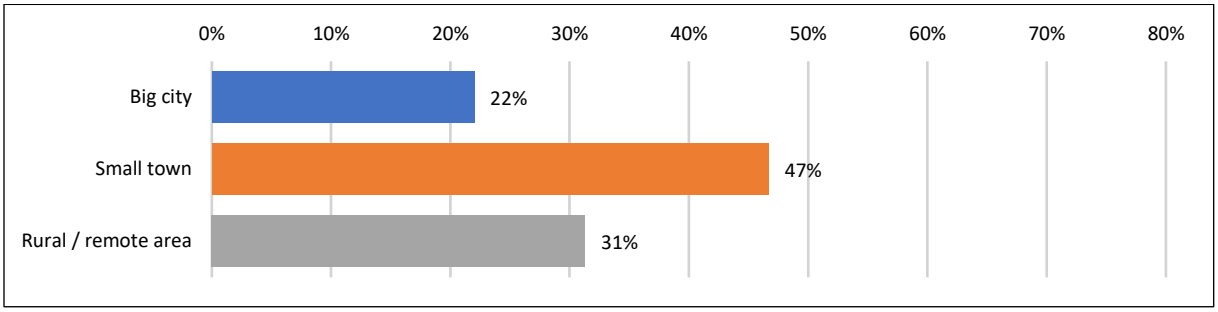
*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 8.1 shows that in our sample, only 3% of respondents currently lived in reception centres, which mostly included persons who arrived in 2025.

About two-thirds lived in housing organised by the municipality, while 29% lived in housing organised privately. There are large differences between cohorts in this regard: while about half of those who arrived in 2022 lived in housing organised privately, only 16% of those who arrived in 2024 organized own housing. This difference could be caused by two drivers: first, that more people who arrived in 2022 came to prior network in Norway, and found housing through this network. However, it is also likely that those who lived in Norway for a longer period may have gotten help from the municipality the initial period but later found their own housing.

How are Ukrainian refugees distributed across the country? Norway has an explicit goal of ensuring dispersed settlement of protection seekers, especially during situations with high arrivals.

Figure 8.2: Settlement distribution in urban and rural areas (N=2147).

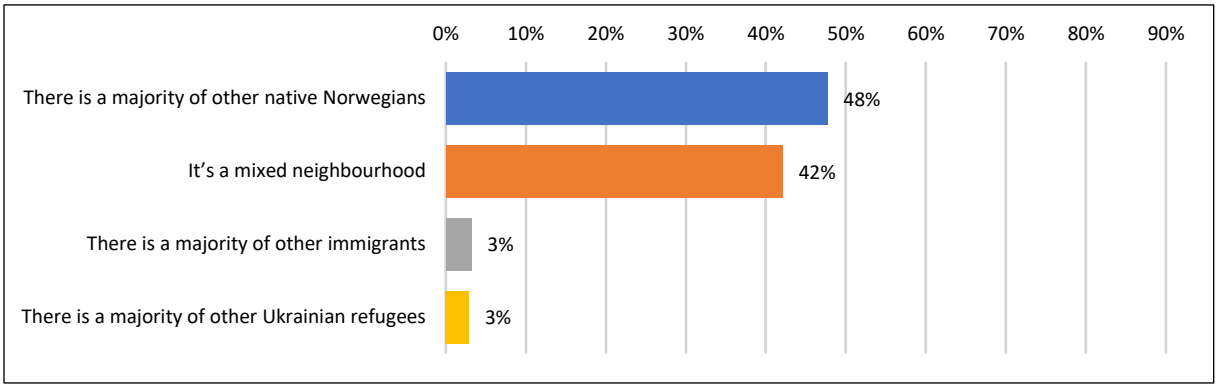


*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 8.2 shows that 22% reported that they were settled in a big city, while almost half were settled in what they define as a small town. 31% were settled in rural/remote areas. There are very small differences between subgroups, but there is a somewhat higher share of those who arrived the initial period after 2022 that lives in urban areas.

Further, an important goal of the Norwegian settlement policy for distribution is to avoid concentrated settlement with large populations of immigrants located in selected areas.

Figure 8.3: Ukrainian refugees' neighbourhood composition (N=2147).



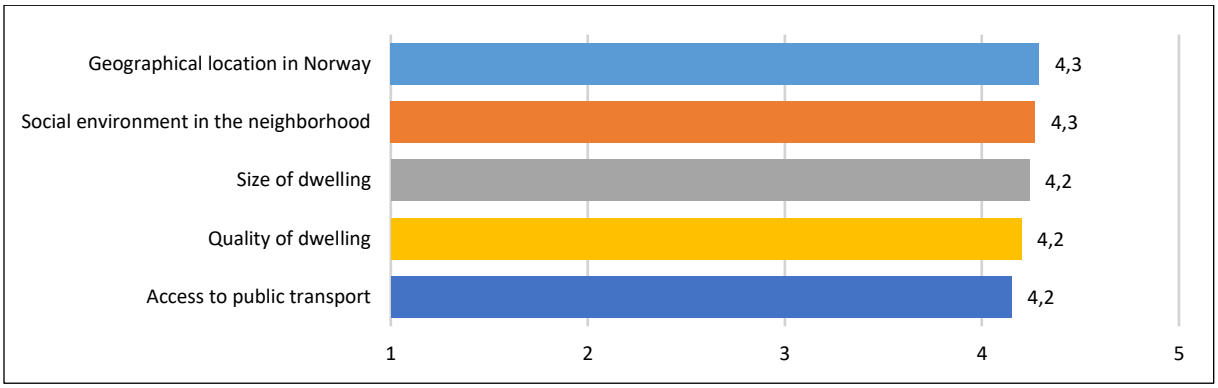
*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 8.3 shows, based on the respondents' subjective assessment, that almost half were settled in a neighbourhood with a majority of other native Norwegians, while 42% were settled in mixed neighbourhoods. Only 6% in total state that they live in areas with either predominantly other immigrants or other Ukrainian refugees.

8.2 Assessment of their current housing situation

How satisfied are they with their current housing situation and dwelling?

Figure 8.4: Assessment of housing situation (N=2147).



*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 8.4 shows that the respondents are very satisfied with different aspects of their housing situation, both the social environment, size, and quality. The responses mirror the satisfaction levels shown in the 2024 survey. In this year's survey, we also added a question about geographical location, because the 'whole of Norway' settlement strategy implies that refugees are settled throughout the country (Hernes et al. 2024). However, the Ukrainian refugees are also very satisfied with the geographical location of their dwelling.

There are few subgroups differences, but the elderly give somewhat more positive assessments than the younger respondents.

Further analysis nevertheless shows that people in urban and rural areas give somewhat different assessments on some of the items in the above figure. Most importantly, respondents in rural areas rate their housing situation somewhat more negatively than those in big cities and smaller towns when it comes to access to services (mean score 3.4) and public transport (3.5), as well as geographical location in Norway (3.9) and the social environment in the neighbourhood (4.0).

8.3 Homeownership aspirations and experiences

Ukraine—like Norway—is known as a country with a relatively high level of homeownership[23]. In other words, it is quite common for Ukrainians to own the housing they live in rather than rent them. Many of our informants mentioned their plans to apply for a mortgage in Norway to buy their own home, and some had already done so. Based on our longitudinal data, we can conclude that the desire to purchase a home in Norway has grown over time and become increasingly relevant. At the same time, experiences of their interactions with the Norwegian bank systems when applying for a mortgage have varied.

One of our informants shared a negative experience related to applying for a mortgage. Her family arrived in Norway from an occupied region of Ukraine, and the idea of owning an apartment became crucial due to the trauma of losing property in the occupied territories. The informant described how she applied to the bank several times but was denied without any explanation. She noted that this was not only her experience but also that of other Ukrainians in her municipality. Those who applied had stable jobs and no

[23] Current housing crisis in Ukraine—Ukraine | ReliefWeb

credit history; thus, they were of the impression that they met the formal requirements, yet all were denied. The impression was also that it has become stricter over time:

> They [Ukrainian acquaintances] say, we want to buy an apartment. Because we both have permanent jobs, we work. But now banks have started to refuse. Two years ago, surprisingly, and even a year ago, I know of cases where people managed to buy [housing]. Now, in literally the same cases [people in similar situations], Ukrainians are being denied [mortgages]. (N2)

The question of homeownership in Norway appears to be closely tied to informants' future plans. The possibility of obtaining a mortgage is seen as a way to manage the uncertainty surrounding their future, especially in light of the temporary nature of collective protection. The refusals from banks are experienced as deeply frustrating and lead to a rethinking of long-term prospects in Norway:

> This will be our number one issue in the next year or two, because we're getting older, not younger, and we need to think seriously. If we don't have the prospect of buying a home, it could change a lot. If an opportunity opens up somewhere else, we'll consider it. But if we manage to buy a home here, of course we'll be very happy, and logically, we'll settle here. (N2)

Completely different experiences were reported in another Norwegian municipality, where a Ukrainian refugee family successfully obtained a mortgage and bought a house. The informant described this as the most important achievement since arriving in Norway—an effective tool for overcoming wartime uncertainty and a reason to view the future in Norway with confidence. He noted that there were no difficulties in applying for the mortgage, and they succeeded without needing to make an initial payment, thanks to Husbanken:

> This is Norway—it's all online. We never met anyone in person. Everything was clear, everything was explained on the websites. As soon as my wife got a permanent job, we applied three months later. So, we were able to get a loan without a down payment. (N10)

We spoke with this informant a second time as part of our longitudinal strategy and observed that his sense of uncertainty regarding the temporary nature of collective protection had disappeared after buying a home. During his interview in autumn 2025, he expressed strong confidence in his future in Norway, linking this feeling directly to the mortgage:

> Everything is good, everything is great, everything has only improved. We finally managed to get a loan for a house. This loan created that stability, because everyone understands—if you've been given a loan, no one is going to deport you. When we took out a 30-year mortgage, there was no doubt—we're going to live in Norway. (N10)

Several other informants also mentioned that they are thinking about the possibility of buying their own home in Norway. However, they are currently unable to do so due to unstable financial situations or temporary employment. In contrast to the reflections of total uncertainty and living 'in between' two countries expressed by informants in 2023 and 2024, the new round of interviews shows that their desire and plans to continue living in Norway have become more pronounced. In this context, the idea of owning a home often emerges as an anchor for staying in Norway.

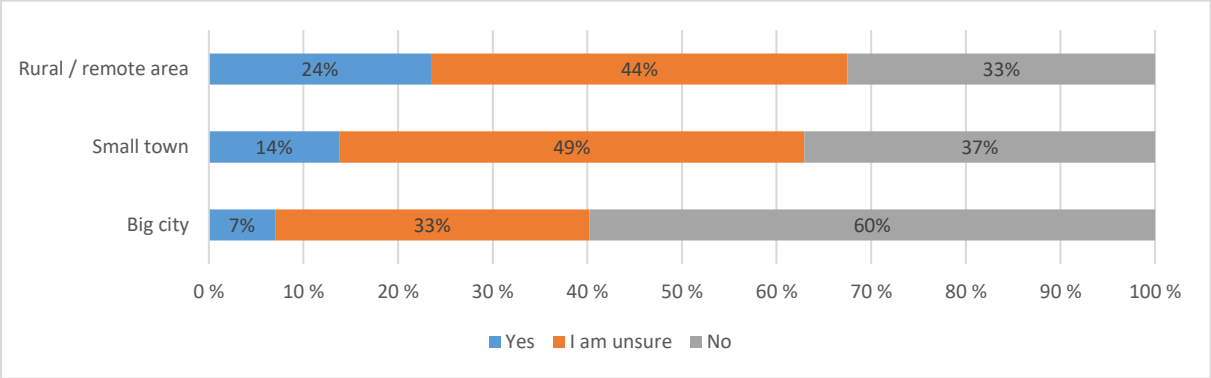
Some informants noted that their desire to acquire property in Norway is closely tied to the uncertain prospects for peace in Ukraine. For them, owning a home in Norway is a way to overcome this uncertainty

8.4 Plans to move to another municipality

Secondary migration (*sekundærflytting*)—implying that refugees move from their initial settlement municipality to another Norwegian municipality—is a politically salient issue in Norway. After Ukrainians have been settled all over the country, how many plan to move to another municipality?

Overall, the majority (44%) are unsure whether they want to move to another municipality or not, while 41% say that they do not plan to move. 15% say that they plan to move to another municipality. However, further analyses show that there are large differences between those who are settled in more urban or rural areas.

Figure 8.5: Plans to move to another municipality separated by centrality (N=2147).



*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 8.5 shows that a substantially larger share of those settled in rural areas plan to move to another municipality (24%) compared to those settled in big cities (7%), with those living in small towns situated in the middle.

We further explored through a regression analysis if there were other background and situational characteristics about their situation in Norway that affected aspirations to move to another municipality than where they were currently settled.

Table 8.1: Binary logistic regression. Dependent variable: Planning to move (vs. not planning or unsure) (N=2068).

	Coef. (B)	**Odds ratio / Exp(B)**
Background		
Male (vs female)	0.17	1.19
Age in years	-0.04**	0.96**
Family situation		
Children below 18 years (vs not)	-0.43**	0.65**
Year of arrival (vs 2022)		
2023	-0.24	0.79
2024	-0.14	0.87
2025	-0.53	0.59
Qualifications		
Completed higher education (vs not)	0.01	1.01
English level (high score = better skills)	0.07	1.08
Norwegian level (high score = better skills)	0.24**	1.27**
Employment status (ref. = employed)		
Unemployed	0.26	1.29
Introduction program	-0.46**	0.63**
Student	0.34	1.40
Other	0.27	1.32
Financial situation in Norway (high score = better financial situation)	-0.71**	0.49**
Centrality of settlement municipality (ref = low)		
High	-1.37**	0.25**
Medium	-0.49**	0.61**
Constant	**2.10**	**8.172**

*Significant at 0.05 level, **Significant at 0.01 level.
**Weighted for gender and age.

The regression analysis in table 8.1 confirms what is portrayed in figure 8.5 above, namely that the centrality[24] of their current municipality is very important—the more urban the current settlement municipality, the lower is the likelihood of planning to move to another municipality. Age[25] and family situation also matters: the younger respondents and those without children are more inclined to want to move. Increased residence time (time of arrival), higher education and English skills do not affect plans for secondary migration; however, Norwegian skills do. Those who speak better Norwegian are more inclined to want to move. Perhaps surprisingly, whether one is employed or unemployed does not affect the likelihood for plans to move, but those currently enrolled in the introduction programme are less likely to want to move. Lastly, the financial situation is important: those who report to have a good financial situation for their family are less likely to want to move.

In an open-ended question, respondents who answered affirmatively that they consider moving to another municipality were invited to elaborate on the reasons for doing so. A recurring theme was limited labour-market opportunities in smaller municipalities. Several respondents expressed a wish to relocate to a larger city in order to secure relevant or stable employment: 'In a larger city, I would have more opportunities to find a better job than I have now.' Some also highlighted the lack of activities or social life locally, particularly for children and youth. Several respondents in small municipalities miss the city life they were used to in Ukraine: 'I miss living in a city, with access to galleries, museums, theatres, and other weekend activities, not just being outdoors.'

From the qualitative interviews in 2025, the overall impression is that the topic of secondary relocation within Norway was not a major topic. As indicated in the regression analysis, the interviewees with children were strongly connected to local communities due to their children's integration, school routines, after-school activities, and friendships. Thus, for the interviewed parents, relocation was perceived as potentially traumatic for the children.

One informant also mentioned that the idea of moving again, or even changing apartments, feels difficult because of her experience as a 'double refugee.' She fled from occupied territory to a different city in Ukraine in 2014 and then fled again from Ukraine to Norway in 2022:

> Even moving to a neighbouring building, if I had to rent a new apartment, would already be hard for me... There have just been so many relocations in my life that... How many more will there be? I feel uncomfortable even thinking about it. (N6)

Several informants also mentioned plans to move to another apartment for various reasons—getting more space, paying less rent, or changing location within the municipality. However, all of them emphasized that they would like to stay in the same municipality.

However, some interviewees had experience with or aspirations of secondary migration, but for different reasons. That younger refugees were more inclined to want to move is also exemplified in the interviews. One informant told how her son (over 18) has already moved to a big city from a small municipality nearby because he found a job there. For some young Ukrainians, the desire to move to big cities is often linked to plans for work or higher education, as in the case of this informant's son:

> He studied in the *videregående* [upper secondary school], finished his university in Ukraine in parallel, then went for a work practice in a store. After the work practice ended, they hired him at the store. He worked there for six months and decided to move to Bergen. He got a job

[24] In this regression, we use SSB's centrality index (a 1-6 scale), but further compromised it into 3 categories: high (centrality index 1-2), medium (high (centrality index 3-4) and low (centrality index 5-6)

[25] We also tested here for a squared age variable, but it was not significant and was therefore not included in the final model.

> there and now works in a very good restaurant in Bergen. He has already been promoted and is now a department head. He plans to apply to a university there. (N5)

Another interviewee would like to move to Oslo due to better job opportunities there but exemplifies how complex family situations—where multiple needs must be balanced—may affect the situation. This informant currently combined several part-time jobs but was not satisfied with this situation. Whether the informant would move or not would however, be determined by whether her partner would be accepted to a local university (at the time of the interview, it was unclear). This could be decisive for staying in their current municipality:

> We would both have more opportunities in Oslo, and we are thinking about moving. But it all depends on whether he [her partner] gets into the university nearby. Then we stay in this town, and I will continue with these unclear jobs, the ones I have now. So sometime in the fall we will decide what to do next: either look for a permanent job here or move to Oslo. (N3)

Another informant would like to change the climate and move closer to her friend in the central part of Norway. Over the past year, she noticed that her psychological health has worsened, and she considered moving:

> By the way, I have a very strong desire to move. First of all, I came to Norway to my friend—I was specifically heading to her. But we live very far from each other, so my goal is to move closer to her. And the climate… The climate of Western Norway is, of course, rain, rain, rain. And I feel that it affects me. That's why I would like to move somewhere closer to the center, where the climate is different—where winter feels like winter and summer feels like summer. (N5)

9 Integration measures after settlement

Contrary to many other European countries, Ukrainian refugees in Norway have been entitled to participate in the introduction programme for refugees (Hernes et al. 2023a), although with some adjustments (Hernes et al. 2023b). In this chapter, we start by presenting the participation in the integration programme, the different integration measures offered and the participants' assessment of these measures. Second, we analyse the respondent's assessment of employment-related and financial services provided by Nav for those who have completed the introduction programme.

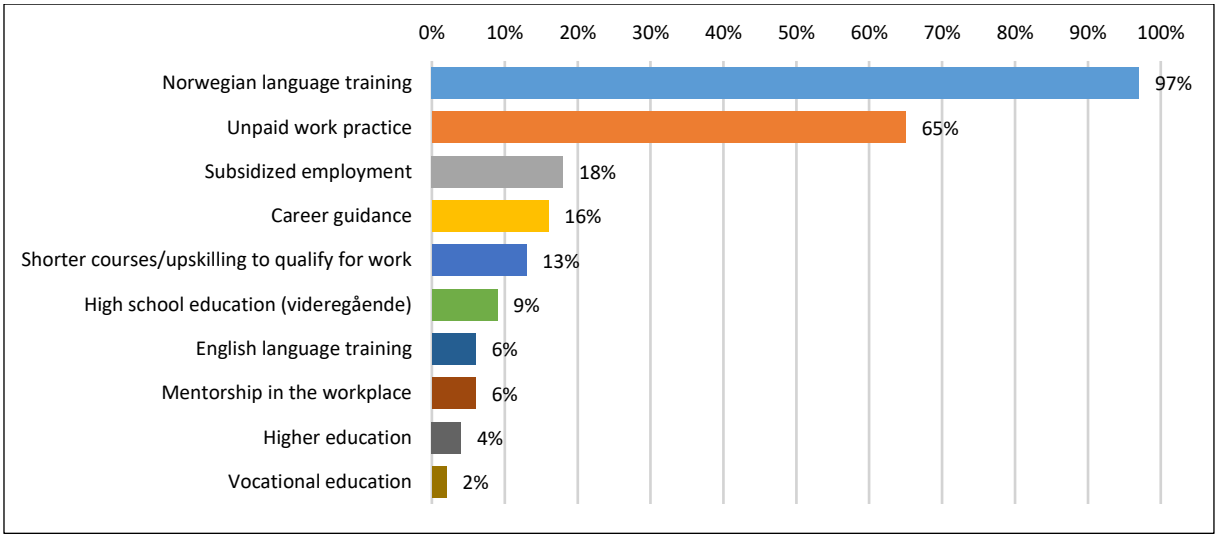
Lastly, we describe experiences with Norwegian language training, adult education, work practice and upper secondary schooling as integration measures.

9.1 Integration measures—content and assessment

As part of the introduction programme or through continuing assistance from Nav after the programme, the Ukrainian refugees may be offered different types of integration measures.

Thus, we asked those who had completed the introduction programme about what integration measures they had received during their time in Norway.

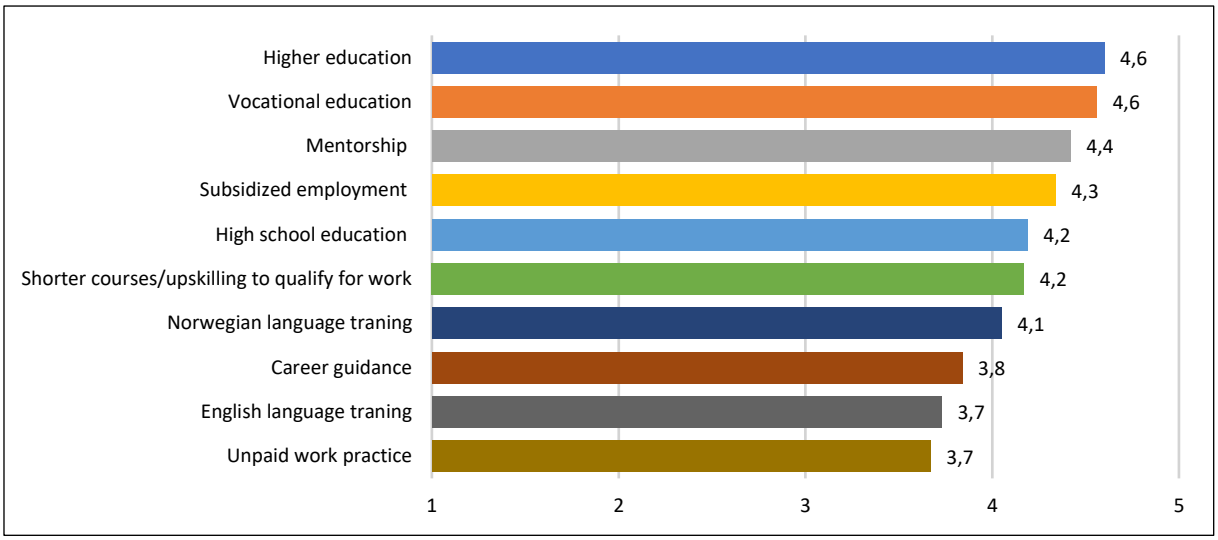
Figure 9.1: Integration measures among those who had finished the introduction programme (N=1145).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those who answered 'None of the above / do not know' are excluded from the table.

Figure 9.1 shows that virtually all respondents have had Norwegian language training. Otherwise, there is clearly a dominance of work-oriented measures. Two-thirds have had work practice, 18% have had subsidised employment, and 13% have had shorter courses/upskilling to qualify for work. One in ten has participated in education at high school.

Figure 9.2: Assessment of the quality of the various elements in the introduction programme (N= 27–1782[26]).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).
***Only those who have indicated each element has been asked.

Figure 9.2 shows that most of the items had mean scores above 4 on a scale from 1 to 5. Higher and vocational education have the highest scores (4.6), followed by mentorship and subsidized employment. We find somewhat lower satisfaction levels, all below 4, for three of the items, namely career guidance, English language training and work practice. Compared to the 2024 survey, there were no major differences in the respondents' assessments.

9.2 The introduction programme

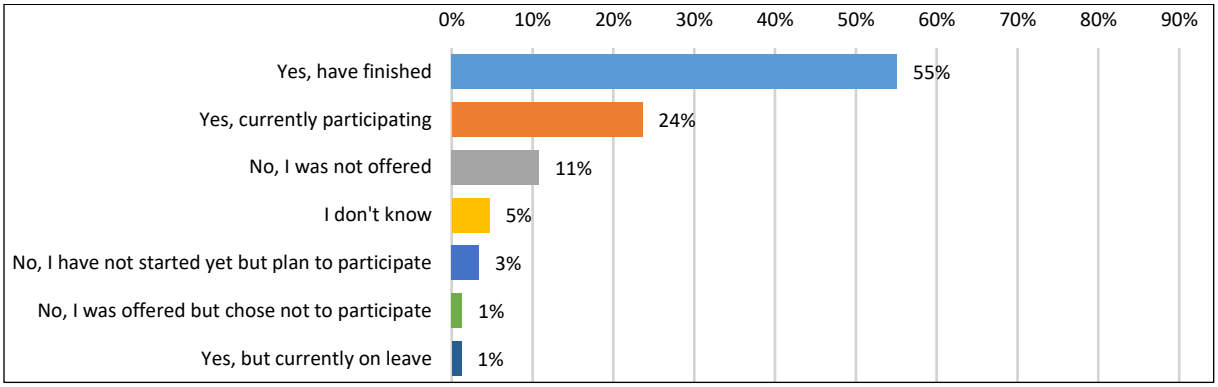
Official figures from IMDi show that about 91% of Ukrainian refugees between 18 and 55 years (the group that are entitled to an introduction programme) have participated or currently participate in the programme. For those aged 56–67 years, who are not entitled to introduction programmes but may be offered programmes by the municipality, the percentage was only 16%[27].

In our sample, how many of the respondents have participated, are currently participating or plan to participate in the introduction programme?

[26] Norwegian language training (N=1782), English language training (N=95), unpaid work practice (N=941), subsidized employment (N=213), shorter courses/upskilling to qualify for work (N=168), mentorship (N=72), career guidance (N=245), high school education (N= 149), Vocational education (N= 27), higher education (=47).

[27] The numbers build on data from the National Introduction Register (NIR) and include numbers up until November 2025.

Figure 9.3: Participation in the introduction programme (N=2076).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those who were still in the application phase (not yet received a residence permit) were excluded from the analysis.

Figure 9.3 shows that over half of the respondents have completed the introduction programme, about one fourth are currently participating (or on leave from the programme). 10% were not offered to attend the programme, but these are mainly those in the 60+ years age group. Only 1% were offered programmes but chose not to participate.

Not surprisingly, compared to the 2024 survey, a larger share has now completed the programme, while a similar lower share is currently participating.

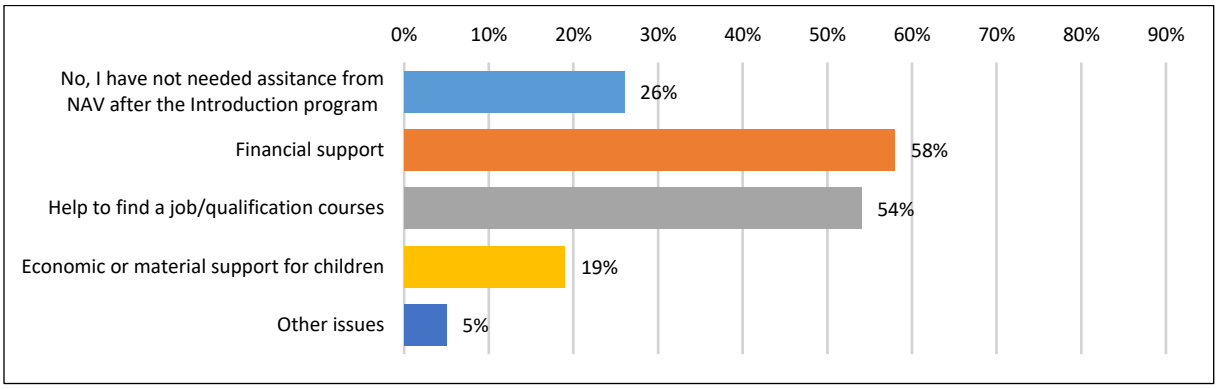
Of those who had completed the introduction programme (N= 1145), only 16% had attended for six months or less. The vast majority (72%) had attended between six months and one year, while 13% had attended for more than a year.

The respondents were further asked to assess whether the introduction programme is useful for finding work in Norway. About half found it useful, and 36% found it a little useful. Only 9% of the respondents did not find the introduction programme useful, (while for 4% the question was not considered relevant). These numbers mirror the results from the 2024 survey.

9.3 Services from Nav after the introduction programme

After the introduction programme, refugees who are not self-sufficient and/or have not found a job, transition to Nav, who are responsible for financial assistance and employment measures for unemployed.

Figure 9.4: Received services from Nav after the introduction programme (multiple options possible) (N = 1145).



*Weighted by gender and age.

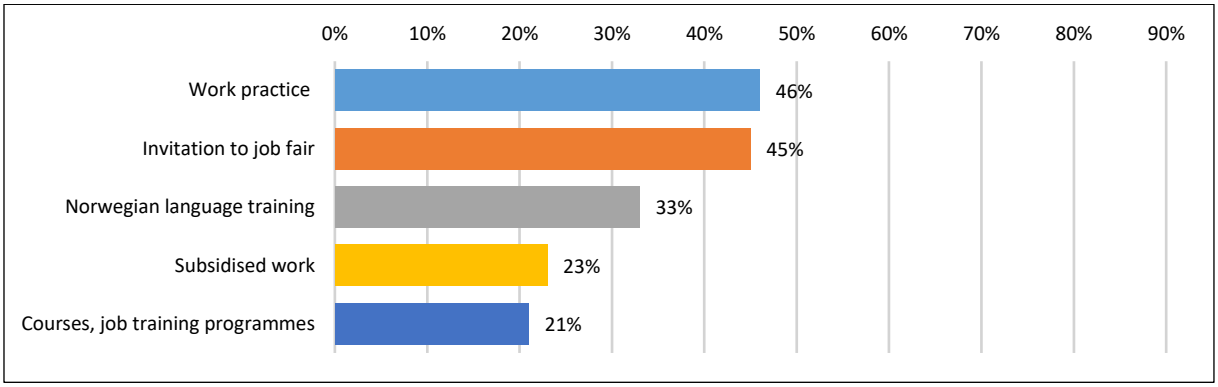
Figure 9.4 shows that only one-fourth of participants did not require any form of assistance from Nav after completing the introduction programme. A majority continued to rely on support: 58% received some type of financial assistance, 54% obtained help in finding employment, and one in five benefited from assistance related to children.

There are clear age differences. A lower share of the younger age groups has needed financial assistance from Nav compared to the oldest age groups. There are few differences between cohorts.

9.3.1 Type and assessment of employment services from Nav

What type of employment services have they received?

Figure 9.5: Type of employment services received from Nav (multiple options possible) (N = 621).



*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 9.5 shows that among those who had finished the introduction programme and received employment services, almost half of the respondents got work practice or had been invited to a job fair, while one third continued language training. Just above 20% answered that they got subsidised employment or other type of courses or job training programmes. There are some gender differences: Men get subsidized employment and qualification courses more often, but women more often get work practice.

However, there are large differences between cohorts.

Figure 9.6: Type of employment services received from Nav, by cohort (multiple options possible) (N = 621).

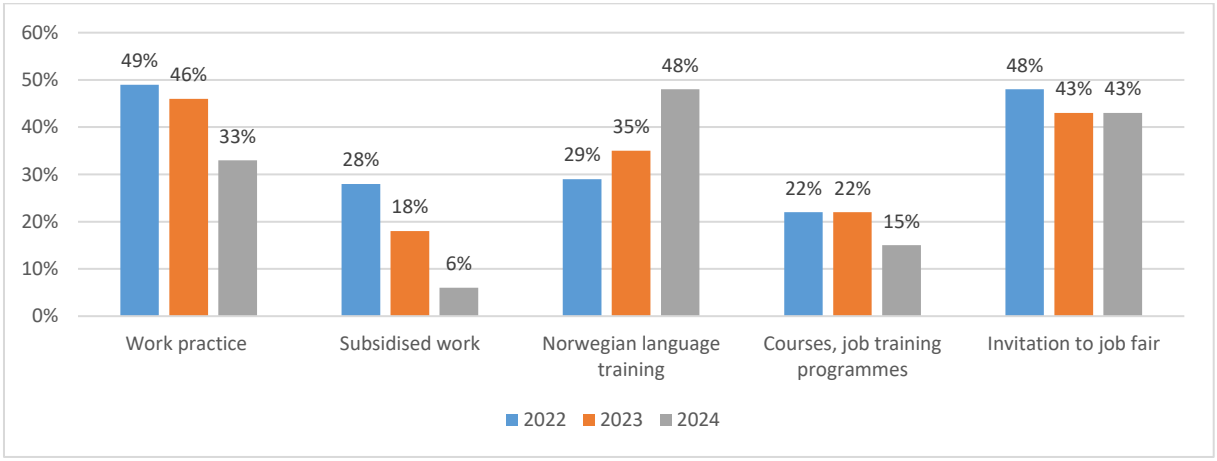
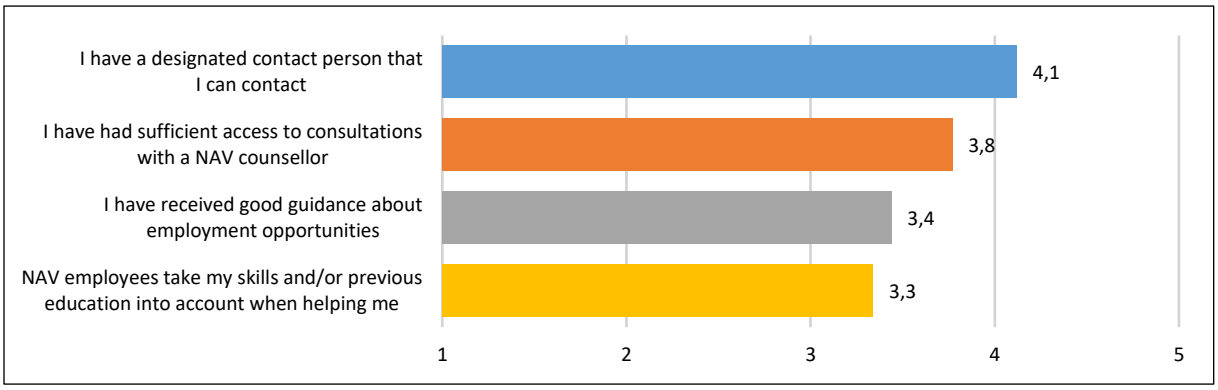


Figure 9.6 present large differences between cohorts when it comes to what employment measures they have received from Nav. A larger share of those who arrived in 2022 and 2023 has received work practice and subsidized than those who arrived in 2024, but this may

reflect that these measures are mainly used for those who have better Norwegian skills which increases with increased residence time. More of those who arrived in 2024 have received (continued) Norwegian language training. Recently, there has been increased focus on Nav being able to provide Norwegian language training as a labor market measure. Although Norwegian language is primarily a municipal responsibility, the Objectives and Allocation Letter to Nav county/region in 2025 (*Mål- og disponeringsbrev 2024 til NAV Fylke/Region)* stated it should be possible for more immigrants in need of Nav' employment services to be offered Norwegian language training as a labor market measure.

But what are their assessment of their services from Nav?

Figure 9.7: Assessment of various aspects of Nav's employment services (N = 574-613[28]).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).
***Those answering 'Hard to say/not relevant' have been excluded.

Figure 9.7 shows that most respondents agree with having a designated contact person in Nav (4.1). There are more varied assessments of the other statements, with mean scores between 3.3 and 3.8 concerning whether they have received sufficient consultations, whether they have received good guidance about employment opportunities, and whether their skills and/or previous education have been taken into account. These scores have declined between 0.2-0.3 points on the scale compared to the 2024 survey (except for the statement about sufficient consultations that had the same score of 3.8).

The 2025 interviews also illustrate this variance in the assistance that our informants received from Nav on their way to entering the Norwegian job market (after the introduction programme). Some interviewees noted that they received significant support from Nav employees, including a short course on how to find a job in Norway:

> I went to NAV and said, 'You know, I can't find a job, I need some help,' and… they eventually gave me help. I didn't know that was possible. They have a specialist who works with you, helps you build a plan, improve your CV, send it to employers, and get a job or training, etc. I also attended a job course—it lasted two weeks. After that course, I became more confident. (N1)

This informant appreciated the assistance she received from Nav and noted that her work preferences were taken into account. The Nav worker even arranged her work practice according to her education and previous experience at a local bank:

> When we met with the specialist, he asked, 'What are your plans?' I said, 'My plan—I want to work in a bank, of course, in a bank.' He said, 'Okay, let's see—we have two banks in town, I'll

[28] N for the different statements: I have received good guidance about employment opportunities (N=593). I have had sufficient access to consultations with a NAV counsellor (N=613). I have a designated contact person that I can contact (N=574). NAV employees take my skills and/or previous education into account when helping me (N=578).

> try to arrange something.' And he went to the bank, made an agreement, and scheduled an interview for us. (N1)

Meanwhile, another informant mentioned that she experienced pressure from Nav workers, who insisted that she needed to find a job as soon as possible, while her attempts were unsuccessful. This ultimately resulted in psychological challenges (see more details in chapter 7.6).

However, more common experiences among our informants were feelings of being alone in the job search and receiving no support from the municipality or Nav in this regard. Several informants mentioned that they paid for private courses on how to write a CV or consulted private coaches, while describing Nav's role as very passive:

> I created a LinkedIn profile during this time. I consulted privately with Norwegian coaches on how to look for a job and how to structure my LinkedIn. Nav didn't help at all. Neither Nav nor the Learning Center. Their advice… didn't help at all. They are not focused on finding professional jobs. When I found people through private contacts who help and consult, it was a completely different level of advice and support. (N3)

Similar variation in experiences was reflected in an open-ended question in the survey. A total of 334 respondents provided written comments about their experiences with Nav's employment services. A large proportion of these responses were very short and contained no substantive evaluation. Many simply wrote 'No', 'Don't have', 'No comments' or similar brief remarks.

Among those who did provide descriptive feedback, negative experiences were considerably more common than positive ones. Several respondents described Nav's assistance as insufficient, inconsistent or poorly tailored to their qualifications. One recurring theme was a feeling of being pushed into low-skilled jobs or unpaid practice, irrespective of education or experience. A typical statement is the following:

> Nav did absolutely nothing to help me find employment (…) I asked to be placed in an unpaid internship in a pharmacy (I am a pharmacist)—they refused (...) I had many different jobs as a temporary worker [*vikar*], but I achieved all of that on my own. (survey respondent)

Others reported long periods in work practice that never led to employment with statements like: 'Work practice lasted more than a year but didn't result in anything' and 'They continuously send us out on work practice, but they do not offer us any work after this'.

Other challenges noted by respondents were lack of continuity and poor communication with Nav employees: 'My contact person in Nav worked in two Nav offices at the same time. He never allocated time for me for a meeting. He never offered me work or work practice.'

Some respondents described emotionally difficult interactions, including pressure to accept what they consider unsuitable jobs: 'The caseworker resorts to intimidation, saying that my financial support will be reduced if I do not go into cleaning work.'

Several respondents noted that their experiences with Nav varied considerably depending on the municipality they lived in: 'In other cities, Nav works much better'. Some emphasised that opportunities, follow-up and the type of assistance offered differ between regions, and particularly between small rural municipalities and larger towns.

A few respondents even expressed strong frustration and mistrust toward Nav as an institution. One respondent wrote: 'I think it is just a waste of time at Nav. Nav creates more problems than it solves'.

Although negative experiences were more prevalent, a notable share of respondents described their encounters with Nav's employment services in explicitly positive terms. Many of these wrote only brief remarks such as 'Good' 'All is fine', 'I have nothing negative to say' and 'I'm very satisfied', without providing additional detail. Still, a substantial number gave fuller statements describing support and encouragement from Nav employees, and many of these also gave examples of successful job outcomes.

A recurring theme among the positive responses was effective and personalised follow-up from Nav employees. Several respondents emphasised that their advisers were attentive, responsive and genuinely interested in helping them succeed. A typical example is the following statement:

> I have not had any problems with this organisation. In various situations, I received quick and professional advice and assistance. My contact person is always in touch with me and responds to my questions. (survey respondent)

Such respondents often highlighted that Nav staff took time to understand their background, respond promptly to questions, and adjust plans based on individual needs.

While we saw from the negative statements above that some respondents feel stuck in unpaid practice, there were also respondents who described such practice as a crucial gateway into the Norwegian labour market. In several cases, respondents credited Nav with providing effective assistance in enhancing qualifications and entering work practice that later resulted in actual work:

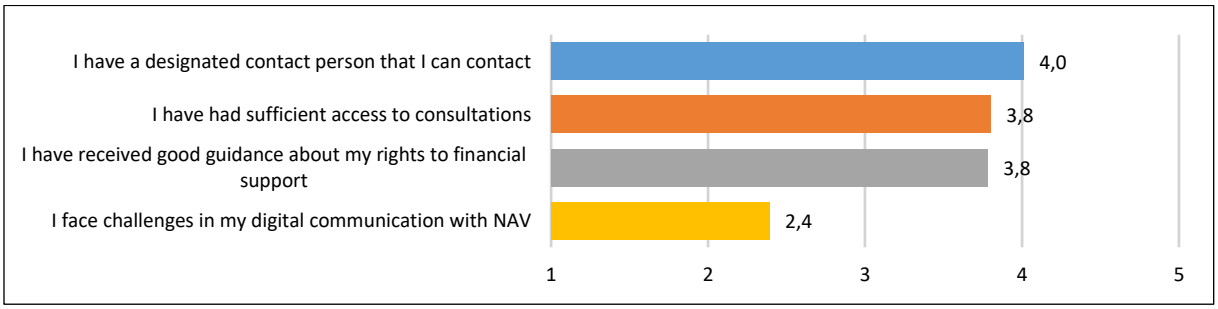
> I believe that my contact person at Nav does her job very well. She is a good, intelligent and kind person. With her help, I studied on courses and then obtained a practice placement and a summer job. (survey respondent)

Several respondents also emphasised motivational support and structured guidance. Nav was perceived as central to their integration and occupational transition.

As can be seen from the above, experiences with Nav vary considerably, and no clear pattern can be observed. It is likely that those who have succeeded in finding a job will have more positive experiences with Nav than people who are struggling to enter the labour market. Also, there may also be lower satisfaction among those who are less motivated to take any kind of job that does not match their prior qualifications. Answers to this open survey question should therefore not be interpreted as representative of how displaced Ukrainians in general perceive Nav's employment services. We expect that those with negative experiences are more inclined to respond to such an open question, whereas many of those who are satisfied may simply skip the question. Still, responses to the open question can give a better understanding of the challenges Ukrainians encounter in their interactions with Nav, and the types of barriers that are repeatedly mentioned. Such insights offer valuable nuance to the quantitative patterns and help identify aspects that may require further attention to ensure adequate access to employment support across the country.

9.3.2 Type and assessment of social services from Nav

Figure 9.8: Assessment of various aspects of Nav's services with social assistance (N = 598-652[29]).



*Weighted by gender and age.

[29] N for the different statements: I have received good guidance about my rights to financial support (N=652). I have a designated contact person that I can contact (N=607). I have had sufficient access to consultations (N=642). I face challenges in my digital communication with NAV (N=598).

Figure 9.8 shows again—as with employment services—that most respondents agreed that they had a designated contact person in Nav. Results were somewhat lower, but the majority also generally agreed (mean scores of 3.8 out of 5) with the statements that they had sufficient consultations and received good guidance about their rights to social services. For the first three statements, the younger cohorts are less satisfied than the older age groups. Compared to the other statements, relatively few respondents face challenges in their digital communication with Nav. However, there are more dispersed answers for this statement, indicating that it is a larger problem for some, but not for others.

In an open-ended question, survey respondents were asked if they had further comments about Nav's social services. While about 200 respondents filled in an answer, many of these were very brief and did not provide substantive feedback. However, there were also more extensive comments. These reveal a variety of experiences, from smooth and supportive interactions to extended waiting times, limited communication and difficulties accessing information.

Some described the system as working well and providing meaningful support: 'Everything was fine; I can't say anything bad about Nav', 'All is good', and 'I have the smartest and best contact person in Norway [...]. Her assistance is invaluable'. Several respondents highlighted that Nav assistance functioned as intended in difficult periods: 'I received enough money to last until my first salary. I am satisfied with the result'. Some also emphasised that the services are geared towards providing support: 'The structure is clear, directed towards helping people'.

At the same time, many respondents reported challenges related to accessibility and communication. Difficulty reaching Nav employees was a recurrent concern: 'I can't meet with the contact person when it is needed. I have been waiting for half a year' and 'It's hard to get in touch! Communication is not functioning properly!'. Some described long periods with no replies at all: 'Employees ignore people […]. They can go almost a month without replying'. Others noted that key information is not communicated proactively: 'Nav has not always communicated important information' and 'If a person does not start looking for information on their own [...] there is extremely little information'. The focus on digital information channels can have negative consequences for some: 'There is a category of elderly people or disabled who are not digitally competent, they find themselves in an information vacuum'.

Several respondents were dissatisfied with the quality of the information they received. For example, respondents reported that they do not receive clear explanations of their rights and available services: 'It would be good if Nav staff provided ALL information' and 'A lot of things are not explained'. One respondent claimed that Nav not only does not inform users, but even deliberately hides information about the full range of services: 'Nav does not provide – and even withholds – information about all available social services'.

Respondents also mentioned long processing times for financial support. Such delays had created acute financial challenges, as illustrated by one woman: [...] you are left with no money at all. I had 100 kroner [...], my child needed expensive medicine'.

Some respondents argued that too much depends on individual employees in Nav. Some emphasised the negative side, but others stated the positive impact of having a competent and engaged contact person: 'I had a fantastic contact person, Ingrid [fictive name]. She is a Person with a capital letter!'. Others described problems linked to frequent staff changes: 'More than 10 different case workers [...]. Every time you need to explain the situation from scratch' and 'We didn't have such problems with the previous contact person. He did his work 100%'.

There was also a small number of respondents who expressed feelings of individual Ukrainians or Ukrainians as a group being dismissed or treated unfairly: 'Nav is an organisation that humiliates Ukrainians'. After allegedly being systematically unfairly treated by a Russian employee at Nav, a respondent 'sent a complaint to Statsforvalteren (the

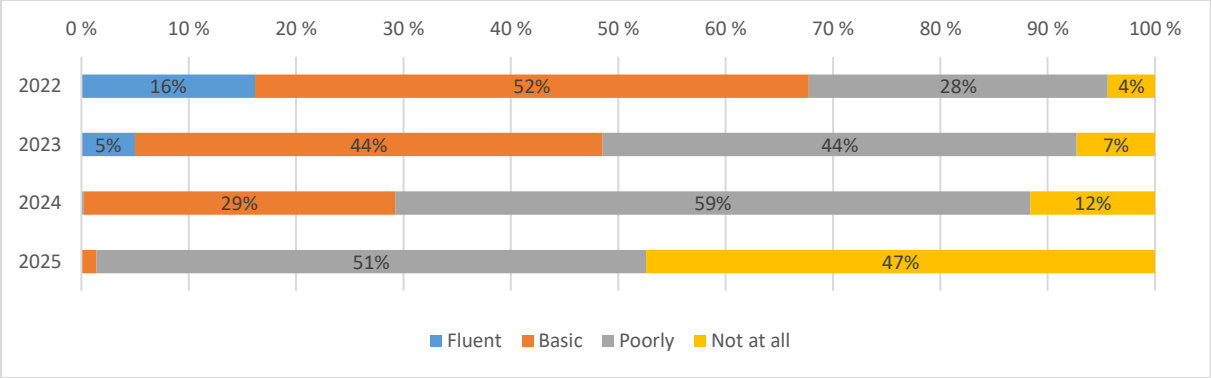
County Governor)', which, according to the respondent, resolved the issue. On the other hand, there was also criticism of Nav allocating too much financial support to people not deserving it: 'It absolutely does not motivate you to work [...] Why does NAV support those who do absolutely nothing?'.

To sum up, respondents who had comments about Nav's social services (which, it should be reminded, represent only a minority of all respondents) gave mixed signals. For those who called for improvements, better access, clearer communication, more timely processing, less dependence on individual employees, and more systematic information about available support were the most frequently mentioned priorities.

9.4 Language skills and training

What were the Ukrainians' self-assessed Norwegian language skills?

Figure 9.9: Self-assessment of Norwegian language proficiency (N = 2148).



*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 9.9 shows—not surprisingly—that there are large differences in language fluency depending on time of arrival in Norway. Among those who arrived in 2022, two-thirds say that they speak Norwegian either fluently or basic, while this declines with decreased residence time.

However, we see clear improvements in Norwegian levels when comparing self-assessed Norwegian levels across the 2025 and 2024 survey for different cohorts.

Figure 9.10: Self-assessment of Norwegian language proficiency, by cohort and across the 2024 survey (N= 1547) and the 2025 survey (N = 2148).

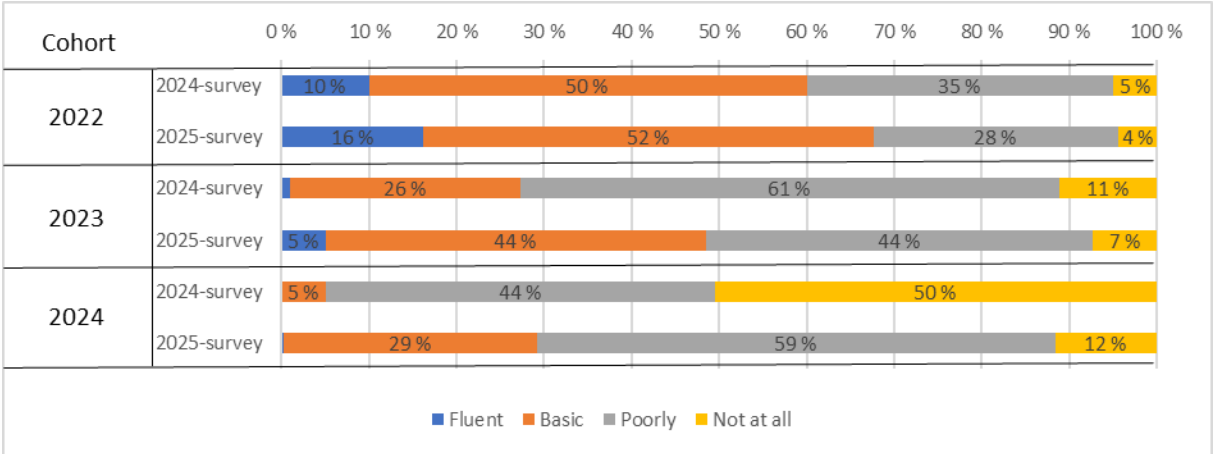


Figure 9.10 shows clear aggregated improvements from 2024 to 2025 for all cohorts. However, it is worth noting that for the 2022 cohort, the share that answer that they speak Norwegian poorly or not at all has only declined from 40% to 32%. This implies that about one third of those who have been in the country for +/- three years still have very limited Norwegian skills.

In addition to the public language training through the introduction programme or through Nav's services, two-thirds have also studied Norwegian through other arenas than those offered by the public. 11% had private Norwegian lessons. 17% participated in Norwegian training offered by organisations or volunteers, 61% also report to study Norwegian on their own (which could be in addition to the other forms of studies, or as the only form of Norwegian training). Women more often had private lessons or participated in training organised by NGOs, while men more often study on their own.

In the interviews, some highlighted that they had improved their language being in situations when they needed to use Norwegian, for instance at work:

> And then I tried to speak Norwegian. In real life, in everyday situations. A bit of daily life. And also, a bit at work. Maybe… because some people at work don't speak English, they only speak Norwegian. When customers ask you something, you try to help them—that helps me. Using the language. (N7)

Not all, however had a work environment that stimulated language learning: 'At work—well, if it's a job like mine, something quite basic, you learn a few phrases and just use them, and that's it… ' (N5) Conscious of that, some deliberately applied for types of jobs where they would be able to use more Norwegian (or English) :

> And for me, language learning also happens through the jobs I take. I try to choose jobs where I can speak Norwegian—or at least English. I avoid jobs where I'd be speaking Russian or Ukrainian. Because I understand that's a dead end. I won't learn the language that way. (N3)

Interviewees also reported that situations where they were 'forced' to use the language helped improving their Norwegian. An interviewee who had closely followed her parent who underwent serious surgery in Norway, said that she practiced a lot of Norwegian while assisting her parent at the hospital: 'I understood everything. I had to organise things and speak in Norwegian. I had meetings with the surgeon… I really improved my Norwegian there [at the hospital].' (N1) Another woman, who arrived in 2024 with her husband and three children, noted that by accompanying her children to various activities, she gradually became immersed in the Norwegian language.

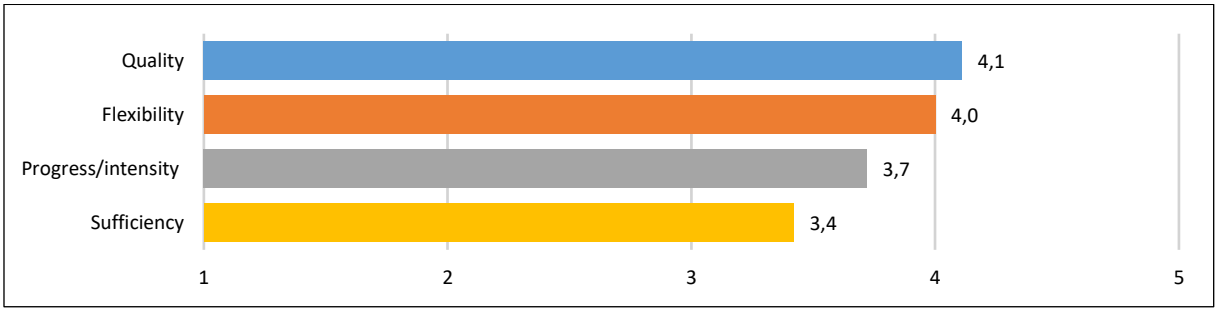
> Well, I'm not afraid to speak, of course, with mistakes—I often insert English words—but I've taken my kids to many leisure activities, so I've listened a lot [to Norwegian] over these six months. I understand spoken language a bit better than I can speak it, so everyone says it's very good. I think it's not the right level, really not the right level. I still need to study and study.

The importance of the language learning environment was highlighted by several interviewees. One interviewee, currently enrolled at a full-time program at upper secondary school stressed the importance and advantage of learning Norwegian together with other immigrants than Ukrainians or in a completely Norwegian environment: 'I was lucky and ended up in a class without any Ukrainian, because otherwise I could have talked to them instead of others. And then I wouldn't learn Norwegian.' (N7).

9.4.1 Assessment of the public Norwegian language training

In the overall assessment of introduction programme measures, the Norwegian language training received a high score of 4.1 out of a 5 possible (see Figure 9.2 above). Different aspects of the language training offered by the public were assessed in more detail by the survey respondents.

Figure 9.11: Assessment of various aspects of the public language training (N = 1607-1808[30]).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Scale from 1 'very dissatisfied' to 5 'very satisfied'.
***Those answering 'Hard to say/not relevant' have been excluded.

Figure 9.11 shows that the respondents are on average satisfied with the quality and flexibility (schedule of classes, combining with work, digital teaching, etc.) of the Norwegian language training, with a mean score of at least 4 out of 5. The assessment of the progress/intensity of the language training receives somewhat lower scores with 3.7 out of 5. Respondents also disagree more often with the statement that the language training they receive is sufficient to become integrated into Norwegian society.

9.4.2 Language as a prerequisite to integration

Two to three years after arriving in Norway, many Ukrainian refugees continue to face significant challenges with the Norwegian language. These challenges limit their opportunities in both the labour market and social integration. The language proficiency of our interviewees varied, spanning from around A2 level to individuals who had attained B2 certification. Language remains a defining factor in how some individuals perceive their identity and place in Norwegian society:

> I still feel like a refugee because I can't speak Norwegian freely. There's still a lot that needs to be explained. I will learn more Norwegian so that I won't have to use a translator to understand everyone. Then I will not feel like a refugee. (N8)

Interviewees who had been working in Norwegian-speaking environments for extended periods still expressed a lack of full confidence in their language abilities. One described the difficulty of following informal group conversations. While their Norwegian was sufficient for performing job-related tasks, many still felt limited when engaging with more complex topics:

> Of course, I make mistakes, and it's hard for me to build complex sentences. So, for work, I think my level is sufficient. (…) But when it comes to more complex topics, I freeze up, keep asking for clarification, and so on. (N2)

Language barriers also affected everyday social interactions. One interviewee described the difficulty of understanding casual conversations with neighbours:

> Well, sometimes it's not quite enough—for example, when I talk to my neighbour, he says words I don't understand. I don't even know how they're spelled to look them up. And… Sometimes I can ask again, but when it's a quick interaction, I need to understand right away what's being said. (N6)

Another interviewee, who arrived in 2022, noted that she sensed the language barrier very much when she was representing a voluntary organisation she was active in:

[30] N for the different statements: Sufficiency of language training to be integrated into the Norwegian society (N=1808). Quality of language teaching: (N=1830). The progress/intensity of the group I am/was studying in (N=1779). Flexibility (N=1607).

> I can understand what people are saying when I think carefully, but I don't have enough vocabulary to respond fluently, correctly, and in the context I need. Sometimes I need to speak quickly, respond sharply—and I just can't do that. (3N)

Despite these limitations and challenges, some interviewees reported noticeable progress. One reflected on their journey from needing to pre-plan conversations to speaking more spontaneously:

> A year ago, I had to plan in advance what to say, how to say it, even translate it somewhere to figure out the right way to express myself. Now, in most cases, I just open my mouth and speak. I know I still make mistakes sometimes. Maybe my pronunciation is still far from perfect. But my understanding of the language has improved a lot. And, overall, I can manage now. I understand that I still need to keep learning the language. And that will take years.' (N9)

This same interviewee emphasized the deeper role of language in integration—not just as a tool for communication, but as a gateway to meaningful connection and cultural understanding:

> My goal is to improve my language skills even more—because language truly opens the door to a life that's not just like that of a tourist, who comes, sees things, but doesn't have real interaction with people. Language gives you that real communication (…). That kind of communication is what truly integrates you, because through conversation you take something from each person—a little detail that fills you up. And through that, you begin to understand this world, this country, its mentality, its uniqueness—through connecting with people. (N9)

9.4.3 Increased incentives for language learning as time goes by

When asked to reflect on the most valuable integration measure during their two to three years in Norway, many interviewees pointed to language learning as the most useful. Several noted, however, that when they first arrived and began the introduction program, they had not fully appreciated its significance. The uncertainty surrounding the duration of the war meant that many did not initially expect to remain in Norway long-term. Over time, their perspective shifted: mastering Norwegian came to be seen not just as a practical necessity, but as a crucial stepping stone toward accessing better and more qualified employment opportunities:

> At first, maybe you don't really understand [the importance of] those homework assignments, but now you just save your time—you open the textbook and think, okay, now I need to go through five texts and write down all the words. So, you realize how important this is to you now, because you already know what you have to do, since your salary and the quality of your life depend on it. (N1)

Once interviewees recognized how essential Norwegian was for daily life and employment, their motivation to learn increased. As individuals began making long-term plans to improve their employment prospects and overall quality of life in Norway, the urgency of acquiring language skills grew—even among those who had initially focused solely on securing any type of job upon arrival.

> He has three children, and he [to begin with] knew he needed money to support his family. His kids are doing great in school, his wife is taking care of everything, and he said, 'I don't need courses, I don't need financial aid—I'm going to work.' And he worked all that time. He earned his own capital, got a permanent [work] contract, bought his own house, and now that he has everything, he says, 'I want to start my own business, and now I need the language. (N1)

Unlike the physical labour he had performed until now, the business that our interviewees' acquaintance planned to establish would require direct communication with customers—making proficiency in Norwegian a necessary skill. In this context, language became a prerequisite for professional advancement.

Another interviewee, who arrived in 2024, emphasized the importance of developing both Norwegian and English skills to broaden his future opportunities:

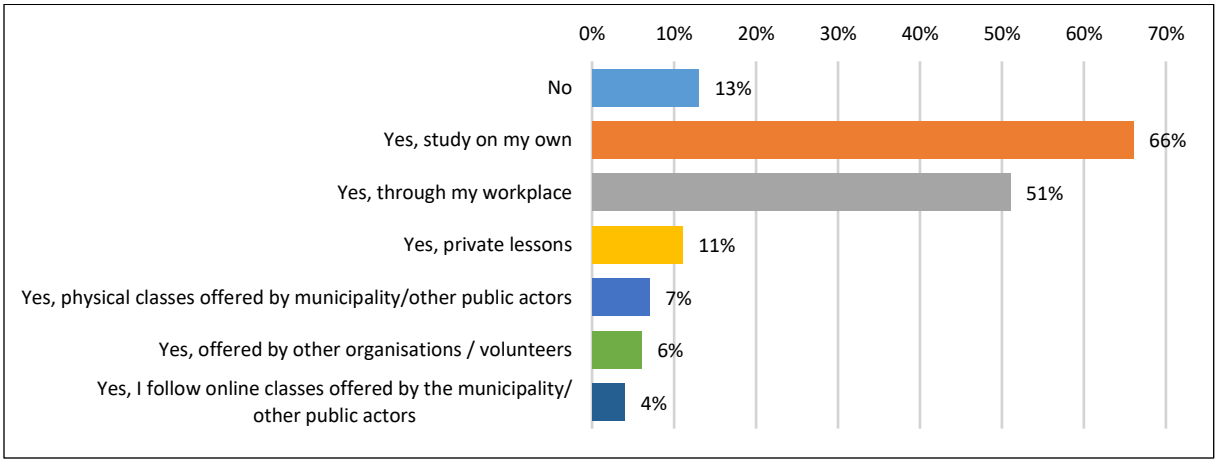
> Of course—that's why I'm learning the language: to be able to communicate freely here in Norway and maybe even get into sales. Or, if you know English, then you're not limited to just Norway. […] For that, I need language skills—at least English at level B1. (NN6)

For him, language learning was not only about integration into Norwegian society but also about keeping doors open to international career paths.

9.4.4 Continued language training when employed

For those employed, we also asked whether they continued Norwegian language training, and if so, where and how?

Figure 9.12: Combining work with continued language studies (multiple options possible) (N=785).



*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 9.12 shows that the vast majority continue language studies of some sort while working, with only 13% answering 'no'. Two-thirds continue with studies on their own, and half continue with language training through their workplace (which does not necessarily imply courses offered by the workplace but that they also practice the Norwegian language there). Only 7% continue with physical language training offered by the municipality or other public actors, and only 4% follow online classes offered by the public. These numbers are, however, not surprising because the rights to public Norwegian training is only for one year (with the possibility for a 6-months extension). Cross-tabulations shows that the majority of those following public language training arrived after 2024. 11% take private lessons and 6% follow language training offered by other organisations or volunteers.

Challenges with combining work and language courses

At the same time as incentives to learn Norwegian for some became more pronounced with time, finding time for language learning when incentives increased could be a challenge. By that stage, the language learning provided through the municipality had often ended, and many had to juggle language learning with job searching or work. As one interviewee noted:

> I've observed not only my own experience but also that of my fellow refugees. When the intro program ends, the opportunity to study language privately also ends. Because after that, you either don't have money to live or eat, or you're on Nav's balance and they push you not to study language but to find any job—any job at all—just to get you working. (N3)

Another interviewee said that she had tried to combine work and language courses for a while but found that she was simply too tired to focus on learning in the evening after a full day at a new job:

> I began working when my language skills were still very weak—I was also attending courses at the same time. Later, I switched to evening classes a few times a week, but I couldn't keep up… It's just me. My cognitive capacity has its limits. Working at a new job in Norwegian

> during the first months was extremely exhausting. My brain was just boiling. And attending evening courses wasn't very productive. (4N)

One participant had registered for a paid course but ultimately found it too demanding to balance with full-time employment: 'I completed part of it but never got to the rest. I just didn't have the physical possibility. And now it's finished—that's it.' (6N)

9.4.5 Demand for continued language learning after the introduction program

As shown in figure 9.11, the perceived sufficiency of the public language training receives a medium score. Realizing that Norwegian was necessary for prospering workwise and socially, several interviewees *had* put more effort into language learning after completing the language learning provided in the municipality:

> It's really not enough, because I want to communicate more. I understand that if I don't speak daily, the words I used can start to fade again. So, I try to read books—for example, I read a Ukrainian book, and I also have a Norwegian book from the library that I need to read. I also have all the B1 and B2 textbooks, and I try to study every day. (N1)

Some had been in contact with the municipality and asked for the possibility for more Norwegian learning:

> I asked, at the very least I needed more Norwegian language instruction, because the school didn't provide the level that could have been sufficient. I paid a bit for private lessons when I had the opportunity. But honestly, it's quite expensive. […] Twice, the curator [in the municipality] sent me links to online courses. Both times I wasn't accepted because the spots were already filled. Even though I registered immediately. (N2)

This interviewee told that while her oral Norwegian had been improving due to continuous practice at work, she felt that she lacked grammatical knowledge to improve further:

> I can express myself and even present arguments and counterarguments. I think I'm somewhere around a B1 level—that's how I feel. I have it, but I lack grammar knowledge. Right now, I'm taking a course—I bought an online grammar course because I had no other source [for learning]. (N2)

Another interviewee talked about how she was searching for free language courses herself and paid for one course herself when NAV had turned down her request to support it:

> During the process, look—I bought a course at kunnskap.no. I asked them [the municipality/NAV] to pay for it, but they didn't. Maybe I misunderstood them, or something like that. Anyway, I paid for it myself for six months. (…) So, I paid for it once. But all the other courses were free. I just found them myself. (N1)

Thus, several interviewees were searching for possibilities to improve their Norwegian language further. Some also emphasised that they put much effort into independent self-studies:

> I understand that if I don't speak daily, the words I've used might disappear again. (…) So, I study Norwegian every day—I read texts, write things down, repeat words—there's no way around it. (N1)

The above citations speak of a continued demand for Norwegian language courses also among interviewees arriving in 2022 and 2023, who finished the introduction program a long time ago. While some attended digital courses, we also noted this year that several interviewees had enrolled in adult education or upper secondary and attended physical classes in order to improve their Norwegian (see more on this topic in chapter 9.5).

One interviewee had noted that currently more profession-specific language courses was being offered to Ukrainian refugees. 'For example: for teachers, kindergarten workers, cooks, I think I saw one for mechanics, for tradespeople, for construction workers'(N3). Two of our informants mentioned that they applied for courses organized by non-governmental

organizations (Ukrainian communities) that focus both on teaching Ukrainian refugees professional language (for example, Norwegian for economists) and introducing them to the Norwegian system in the relevant field. One of them noted that this opportunity was very valuable because it could significantly increase her chances of getting a job according to her profession in Norway and it was the only chance to continue studying Norwegian:

> By the way, I'm currently participating in a course. I registered for it, and they approved my spot. It's free and will last for six months. We study taxes, accounting—everything related to economics. And the teacher is great. We have four hours of classes one day a week online, and it's very effective. (N1)

Another interviewee told that his mother, after the introduction program had started a Norwegian language course for healthcare professionals through NAV: 'she started there and got a work practice through it.' (N7)

While the Norwegian language continues to be perceived as a barrier even two or more years after arrival, individual experiences vary significantly. The qualitative interviews reveal a sustained demand for language learning that extends beyond the formal integration measures Ukrainian refugees are entitled to. What has become increasingly evident in this year's round of interviews is that motivation to learn the language often grows over time—particularly when individuals begin to experience language as the key obstacle standing between them and better job opportunities or the chance to start their own business. Although many interviewees used some Norwegian in their workplaces, not all felt that their work environment supported further language development. As a result, several considered it necessary to continue with self-study or to enrol in additional language courses.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning a new initiative that was launched in November 2025 by The National Centre of Multicultural Education (NAFO) at OsloMet. nafoki.no[31] is a national initiative on artificial intelligence for multilingual children, young people and adults. The website offers chatbots powered by AI—developed by NAFO in close collaboration with municipalities, directorates and other professional environments.

9.5 Work practice

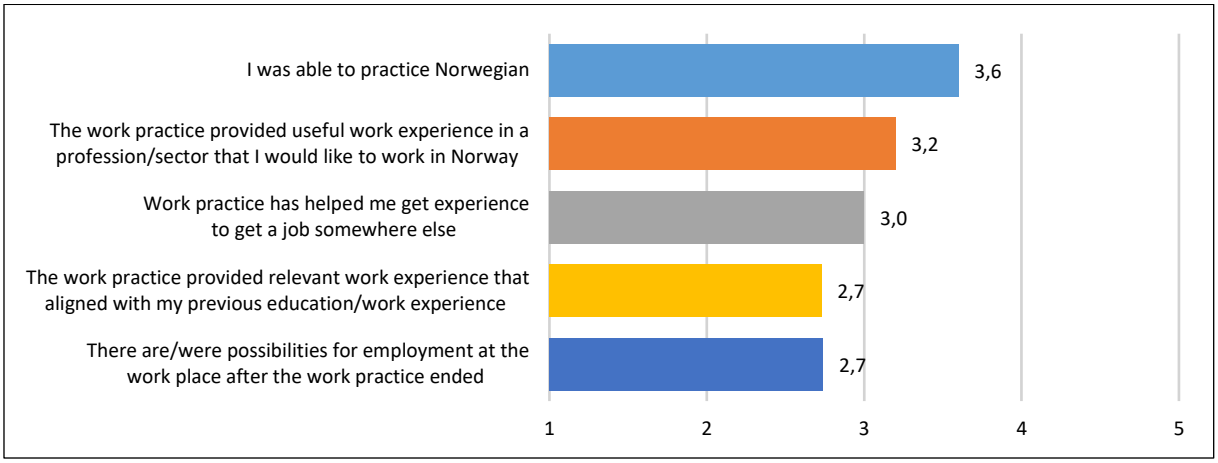
In the overall assessment of integration measures (see chapter 9.1), work practice received a mean score of 3.7 out of 5 (similar to the 2024 survey).

Whether the refugees had to find work practice themselves, or the municipalities found it for them, varied. 69% of those who had work practice received it through the municipality, while 18% found it themselves and 6% got help from their personal network.

Different aspects of the work practice were assessed in more detail by the survey respondents.

[31] https://ki.nafo.oslomet.no/

Figure 9.13: Assessment of various aspects of the work practice (N = 499-661[32]).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).
***Those answering 'Hard to say/not relevant' have been excluded.

Figure 9.13 shows mediocre assessments of the different aspects of the work practice. The averages also hide very dispersed answers across the 5-point scale. For most statements, +/- half of the respondents responded either 'strongly disagree' or 'strongly agree', implying very diverse experiences with work practice. There are somewhat better assessments for more recent cohorts, indicating a small improvement.

In the interviews, the longitudinal perspective shows that work practice has, in some cases, become an effective mechanism for obtaining a job. Those who had work practice at the time of the interview were quite satisfied with this opportunity and mentioned that it was a good introduction to Norwegian working life.

Whether work practice was adjusted to informants' education and previous work experience varied. However, several interviewees noted that they succeeded in getting a job after completing work practice. One of the interviewees, who worked with refugees in the municipality, shared her observations, emphasizing primarily positive experiences in this regard:

> I see this among the refugees in our municipality. Many were offered practice with the possibility of further employment. For those who were helped and matched with suitable work, everything turned out great. People are working and have received permanent contracts. This is a very, very big help, in my opinion. (N5)

Another interviewee mentioned that work practice at a nursing home created good opportunities for her to get a job there later. It was not automatic that a job offer appeared during the practice, but the interviewee was proactive, showed initiative, and officially applied for a job when a vacancy appeared on the website. At first, she worked only weekend shifts, but over time her contract grew to about 80–90% employment:

> It was my personal initiative. Initially, it was offered just as language practice, but I said, 'No, show me what to do, how to do it—I can do this, I can do that.' I started actively integrating into the work process, helping everyone. And it paid off. I found their vacancies on the website, submitted my CV, and then went to the manager to check if they had seen my application. I made sure they knew I wanted to work there and asked if I had a chance. That's

[32] N for the different statements: I was able to practice Norwegian (N=951). There are/were possibilities for employment at the workplace after the work practice ended (N=856). Work practice has helped me get experience to get a job somewhere else (N=770). The work practice provided useful work experience in a profession/sector that I would like to work in Norway (N=893). The work practice provided relevant work experience that aligned with my previous education/work experience (N=871).

> how I got the contract. So, in principle, we were a good match—they are very satisfied with my work and its quality. (N9)

In line with our finding that more recent cohorts are somewhat more satisfied, both informants who arrived in Norway in 2024 noted that they received work practice that matched (or to some degree matched) their previous education or job experience. They stated that their plans and preferences were taken into account in the integration plan they had developed, and they conveyed that they were satisfied with this part of their introduction to Norwegian society.

On the other hand, several informants expressed disappointment that some employers use work practice as a way to get 'free labour'. We also asked about this perception in the survey.

Figure 9.14: Assessment of the statement 'It is my impression that my employer (at the work practice) exploits the arrangements to get free labour.' (N = 964).

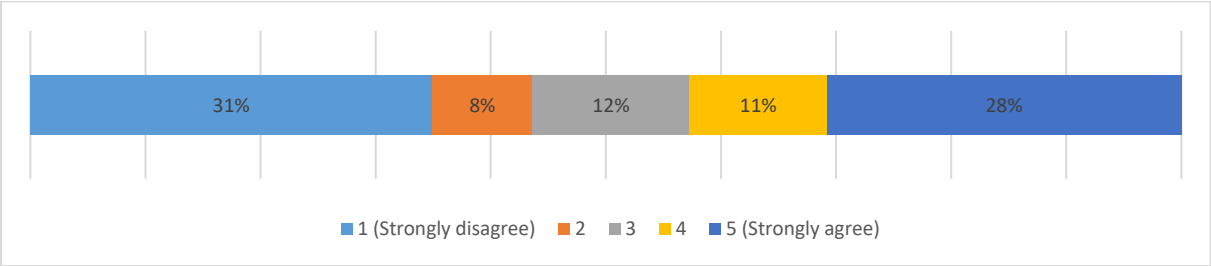


Figure 9.14 illustrates the dispersed experiences among Ukrainian refugees with work practice, related to the statement whether employers exploit the arrangements of work practice to get free labour. While 31% strongly disagree with this statement, 28% strongly agree.

Some interviewees talked about how some employers either continuously try to get new trainees or hire other candidates while the trainee does not get the position. One informant mentioned that she knew many such stories, especially in kindergartens and nursing homes:

> Just yesterday, someone came to me and said she has been working almost two years as a trainee in a nursing home. They tell her how great she is, how much they like her, but they say they can't hire her because there's no position available. Meanwhile, they hire other people—even though everyone knows this is a sector where workers are always needed. (N3)

Another interviewee mentioned that she applied for a job vacancy at a dental office but instead she was invited to do work practice and was not considered for employment:

> I found practice in dentistry. Well, how did it happen? I actually applied for an open vacancy at a dental clinic—they needed a secretary, an assistant. I went there; they interviewed me and then offered me a practice. Even though I came for a vacancy, they put me as a trainee and hired a Norwegian for the job. (N1)

9.6 Adult education and upper secondary schooling

In 2025, several interviewees we had been in contact with since 2022 or 2023 had enrolled in upper secondary school or adult education to improve their language skills or other qualifications, often part-time.

9.6.1 Part-time upper secondary and adult education as strategies for further qualification

Individuals of varying ages—some with concrete plans to qualify for university studies in Norway—used the opportunity for adult education and upper secondary schooling as an opportunity to strengthen their Norwegian and English language skills. A common trait was

that they had completed the introduction program and the language learning they were entitled to but not been able to reach the level of Norwegian sufficient for entering the university or getting a more qualified job. One interviewee shared that her husband was currently attending upper secondary school:

> He wants to continue his education here because he's currently working as a school assistant. He also needs a teaching diploma, because that's important—it means a higher salary right away. (N1)

One interviewee, who had adult children, enrolled in adult education alongside one of them. She managed to combine her studies with full-time work and planned to continue working if admitted to university. She was employed in the health sector as an unqualified worker and aimed to complete an education that would qualify her for skilled employment, a work permit, and eventually permanent residency in Norway: 'If for some reason I don't get a spot at the University of […], then I'll start upper secondary for healthcare worker.' (N9) For her, a full-time upper secondary program was also seen as a viable path toward further qualification.

Interviewees emphasized that financial support was available for those enrolled in upper secondary education. The interviewee whose husband was studying noted that he received funding from the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund (Lånekassen). Another interviewee highlighted the importance of the scholarship she received, which helped cover some expenses and made it feasible to dedicate 'working hours' to learning Norwegian:

> I started upper secondary to give myself at least some chance to continue learning the language and developing it. And I'm very grateful for this opportunity, and also grateful that they pay a scholarship there. Because if they didn't pay a scholarship, I wouldn't have had this opportunity. Even this small scholarship covers a portion of my expenses. And I can afford it. (N3)

She explained that during her first year, she did not receive grades but planned to continue into a second year, when assessments and grading would begin. Overall, she had positive experiences with adult education but found it difficult to balance school with multiple part-time jobs:

> Upper secondary keeps changing the schedule. I don't know why there's no stability in the Norwegian upper secondary system, but it's consistent. Sometimes they have classes, then they change them, then the teacher gets sick, then the teacher has a master's thesis, and everything keeps getting postponed, postponed, postponed. And I have to juggle all of this. Altogether, it creates a lot of stress. (N3)

Another interviewee had already completed her Norwegian and English exams after one year of adult education and had applied for a university program at the time of our interview. She had studied in an adult education program (*voksenopplæring*), not alongside Norwegian youth but with other adults originating from various countries. When asked near the end of the interview what she considered the most positive aspect of her experience in Norway, she responded: 'the opportunity for adult education—I truly enjoy it.' (N9)

However, some experience that municipal or Nav employees discourage them to enrol in upper secondary schooling but rather focus on rapid employment. One interviewee, who did not have specific plans to pursue higher education in Norway, enrolled in upper secondary school to improve her language skills. It was through other immigrants—who had themselves enrolled—that she became inspired to take advantage of the opportunity. However, her municipal contact person discouraged her:

> When I asked my contact person what *videregående* [upper secondary] was and whether I needed it, he told me: 'You don't need *videregående*, you have higher education—you should be working. (3N)

Despite this, she applied with help from acquaintances and was admitted. Through her work, she remained in close contact with other Ukrainian refugees and observed that many were not encouraged to apply for upper secondary education. Nevertheless, several of our longitudinal interviewees did take advantage of the opportunity.

9.6.2 Young people enrolling at full-time programs at upper secondary

This year we also conducted follow-up interviews with two young Ukrainians who in the previous year had applied or were planning to apply for upper secondary school (*videregående)*. Both had been accepted at the programs they had applied for. One chose a specialization in general studies with the goal of continuing to university, while the other applied to various vocational programs to gain a profession and begin working after completing upper secondary education.

Although both received financial support from the State Educational Loan Fund (Lånekassen), they found it necessary to work alongside their studies to cover living expenses. Combining fulltime studies at upper secondary with work was demanding. One interviewee believed he could have managed to get better grades if it had not been for work:

> I got good grades, even better than some Norwegians. But I feel I could have done even better if, unfortunately, not for work. Sometimes I had to not go to school because I worked until two or three in the night. I couldn't handle it.' (N7)

Both interviewees noted that being older than their classmates was a challenge. One felt somewhat isolated at first and observed that youth culture and behaviour differed from what he was used to in Ukraine. After a few months, however, he connected with older students in the International Baccalaureate program. The other interviewee also commented on the cultural differences in behaviour and mentality among Norwegian youth:

> Everyone there are teenagers, like 16–17 years old. And I'm over 20. It was a bit difficult because the connection with others is different. And our mentality is very different. Teenagers don't listen to the teacher. It's very rude. With us [in Ukraine], it's different. But I found a girl who I was with all the time, and she explained everything to me as much as possible. So, she helps me a lot. (N8)

Both expressed deep appreciation for the support they received from their teachers:

> I have to say thank you to my contact teacher. He gave me a lot of help during the first month. He knew I was feeling down and talked to me. He helped me understand that things get better over time. Other teachers also try to help me by explaining words. Some ask if I've understood everything, and they pay attention to me. I have to thank the teachers who understand that I need a bit more time. (N7)

The young man, enrolled in the general studies specialization, mentioned that the school offered weekly extra lessons in Norwegian. However, since they clashed with his second foreign language class, he decided he could manage without them. In Norwegian as an ordinary subject, he followed an adjusted curriculum: 'For Norwegian, I have a different learning plan. It's called 'Norwegian for students with a short period of residence.[33]' I have a different textbook. Everyone else in the class has the regular book.'(N7). In all other subjects he studied with the same materials as others.

Since Lånekassen does not provide support during the summer months, both interviewees anticipated needing to work full-time or seek assistance from Nav to manage financially until the new school year began.

[33] https://nafo.oslomet.no/norsk-for-elever-med-kort-botid-pa-videregaende-apne-laeringsressurser-fra-ndla/

10 Employment in Norway

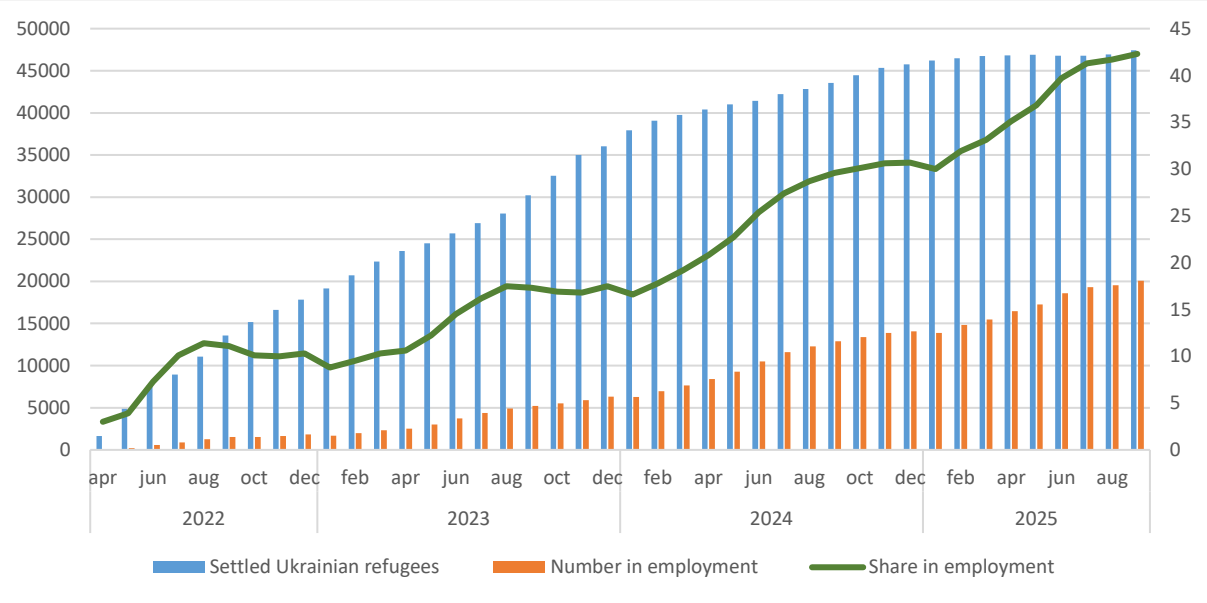
In this chapter, we first present statistics based on register data from Statistics Norway of the share of Ukrainian refugees that are employed as of September 2025. We continue with analysis (using survey data) of subgroup differences relating to employment status. Focusing on those who are employed, we investigate their job characteristics, including scope, sector and match with prior education and experience, and their assessment of their current job situation. Further, we study barriers when seeking (more relevant) employment in Norway. Lacking information about starting business is highlighted as a challenge in chapter 7.4, and we investigate more closely the respondents' plans for self-employment and related challenges and opportunities. Lastly, we present whether Ukrainian refugees have experience with jobs in the informal job market and exploitation in the Norwegian labour market.

10.1 Employment outcomes for Ukrainian refugees in Norway

How many Ukrainian refugees in Norway are employed in the Norwegian labour market?

Based on register data, Statistics Norway provides updated statistics on the share of Ukrainians who are employed. The statistics are based on Ukrainians between 20 and 66 years old who immigrated to Norway after the invasion in February 2022 and who have been granted protection and settled in a municipality (Statistics Norway 2025).

Figure 10.1: Number of settled Ukrainian refugees, and number and share in employment, aged 20–66, April 2022—October 2025.



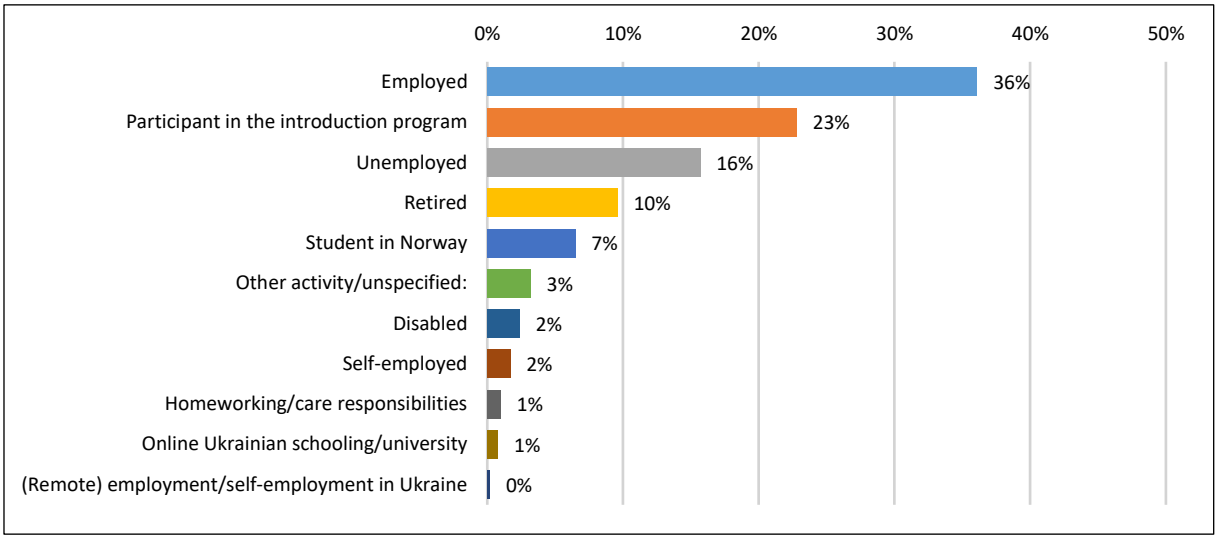
*Data and figure: Statistics Norway (2025).

Figure 10.1 shows an initial slow, but steady rise in the share of Ukrainian refugees in employment. During 2024, it rose from 17% to 30%, and in 2025 it further rose to 42% as of October 2025 (Statistics Norway 2025).

In our survey, we asked about the respondents' current main status (they could only choose one). Figure 10.2 shows the statistics for all age groups (18 year and with no upper age limit). However, when restricted to only include those in the same population used by Statistics Norway (between 20-66 years), our sample is relatively representative, with 40% employed or self-employed compared to 42% in Statistics Norway's register data. Statistics

Norway also includes all employment regardless of the number of hours worked - that is, not just those with work as their main activity as is the question in the survey.

Figure 10.2: Current main activity in Norway (N=2076).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those who have not been granted a residence permit were not asked this question.

Figure 10.2 shows that—in our total sample—36% were employed and 23% were introduction programme participants. 16% report that they were unemployed, and 10% retired (up from 7% in 2024). We see a rise in the number who are students from 3% in 2024 to 7% in 2025. Only (2%) are self-employed.

10.1.1 Determinants of employment

Who are most likely to have found a job in Norway?

To answer this, we conducted a logistic regression analysis with employment status (having or not having a job) as the dependent variable. The analysis included only those that we expected actively to seek work, namely respondents who had already settled in a municipality or found their own accommodation, and excluding those still living in reception centres. We also excluded respondents over the age of 65, those currently enrolled in the introduction programme[34], and those who identified as students, retirees, home/care workers, or disabled. This left a sample of 1214 respondents. Descriptive statistics and operationalisation of the variables are presented in Appendix 1.

Table 10.1: Binary logistic regression. Dependent variable: Having a job (vs. not working) (N=1214).

	Coeff (B)	Odds ratio / Exp(B)
Background		
Male (vs female)	0,24	1,28
Age in years	0,12*	1,12*
Age squared	-0,002**	0,998**
Family situation		
Children below 18 years	0,23	1,26

[34] We also excluded people currently enrolled in the introduction programme since most of them are not working, although some of them might be working part time.

Year of arrival (vs. 2022)		
2023	-0,74**	0,48**
2024	-0,68**	0,51**
2025	-2,90**	0,06**
Qualifications		
Maximum upper secondary education (vs higher)	0.78*	2,18*
Vocational education (versus higher)	-0,10	1,10
English level (high score = better skills)	-0,05	0,97
Norwegian level (high score = better skills)	0,87**	2,39**
Prior network		
Had network of Norwegians	0,55	1,69
Had network of Ukrainians	-0,11	0,90
Physical health (high value = good health)	0,61**	1,84**
Centrality of settlement municipality (ref = low)		
High	-0,14	0,87
Medium	-0,29	0,75
Constant	-4,64**	0,01**

Table 10.1 shows that there is no statistically significant difference between men and women. Age has a reversed u-shaped pattern, indicating that the younger and older age groups have lower employment rates compared to the middle age groups. Having children under 18 years in Norway increases the likelihood of being employed, but it is not significant at conventional levels.

Not surprisingly, those arriving more recently have substantially lower probability of being employed compared to those with longer residence time.

Quite surprisingly, those with lower education levels (maximum 11 years of schooling from Ukraine) have higher probability of being employed than those with some higher education. This trend could be a reflection of the mismatch between the type of higher education and opportunities for using it in Norway, due to for example higher language requirements for obtaining positions that require higher education.

English proficiency has only a minor and insignificant effect on employment, but high Norwegian skills are a very strong determinant of employment.

Having prior network does not show significant differences compared to those who did not have prior network before arrival in Norway. However, it is worth noting the direction of the coefficient concerning the type of network. While those who have prior Norwegian network show a positive association, those with prior network of other Ukrainians have a small, but negative correlation.

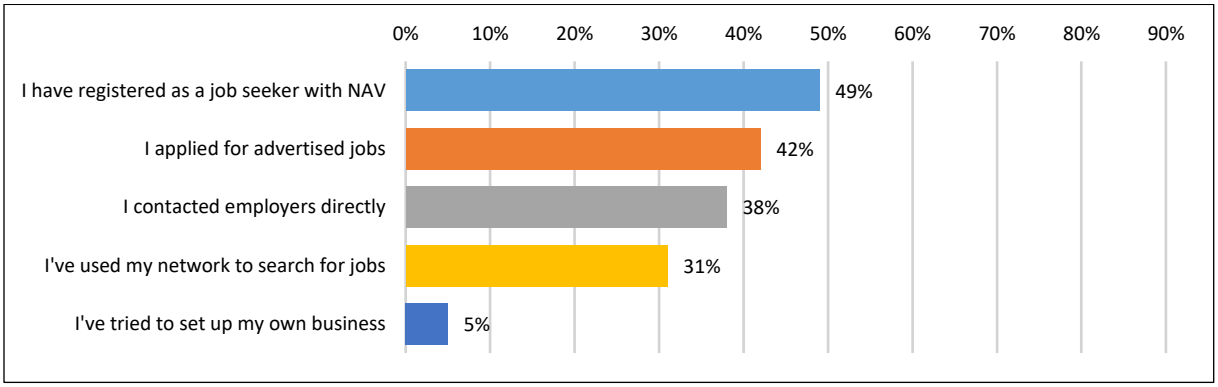
Self-reported good health increases the likelihood of employment compared to having poorer health. There were no significant differences between municipalities with different levels of centrality.

10.1.2 Where have they searched for and found jobs?

In the survey, we asked all those who had been granted a residence permit if they had tried to find a job in Norway, and if so, how?

19% answered that they had not yet applied but planned to actively apply for jobs in the future (the majority of these arrived in 2024 or 2025), and 5% answered that they did not plan to work in Norway (mostly the oldest age groups).

Figure 10.3: How respondents have applied for jobs (multiple options possible) (N=2076).

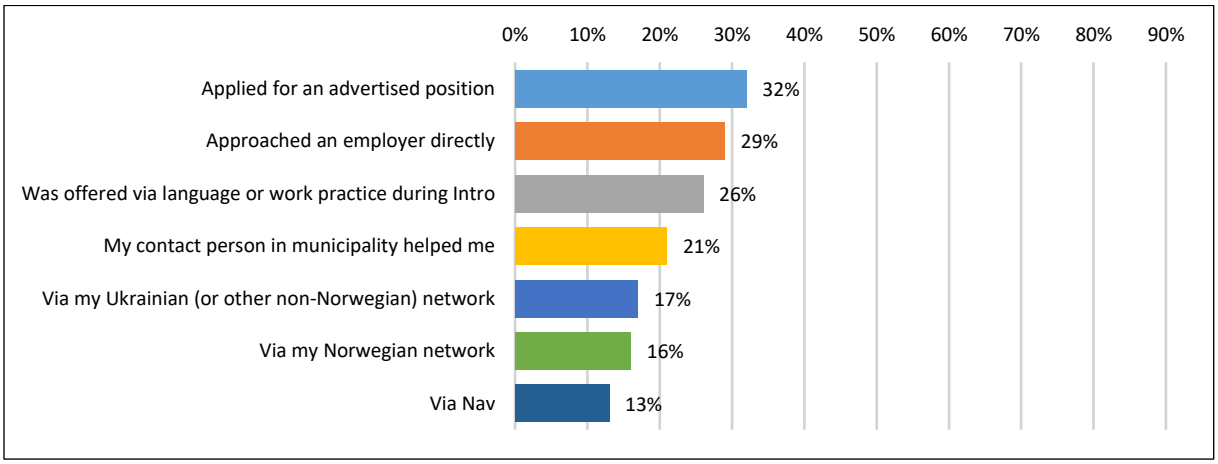


*Weighted by gender and age.
** Those who answered 'No, I do not plan to work in Norway' (5%), 'No, but I plan to actively search for jobs in the future' (19%) and 'Other' (15%) were excluded from the table.

Figure 10.3 shows that half of the respondents had registered with Nav as a jobseeker, and 42% had applied for advertised jobs. 38% contacted employers directly and one third used their network to search for jobs. 5% had tried to start a business (see more on this topic in chapter 10.6).

Among those who were employed, how did they find their jobs?

Figure 10.4: How respondents found their jobs in Norway (multiple options possible) (N=785).



*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 10.4 shows that there are many ways of entering the Norwegian labour market. The most common ways reported were to approach an employer directly or apply for an advertised position. There is a 3-4 percentage point increase in these alternatives compared to in 2024, indicating that the Ukrainian refugees are more actively searching for jobs on their own. For example, approaching an employer directly was a considerably more common reason among the 2024 cohort (39%) compared to the 2022 cohort (25%).

One fourth found their job through their work practice. Others got help from the contact person in the municipality, but only 13% report that they got it through Nav. 16-17% answer that they got help from their Ukrainian or Norwegian network respectively.

10.2 The employed—where and what?

What type of work has the Ukrainian refugees found, and to what extent are they able to use their previous education and work experience? And were they satisfied with their employment?

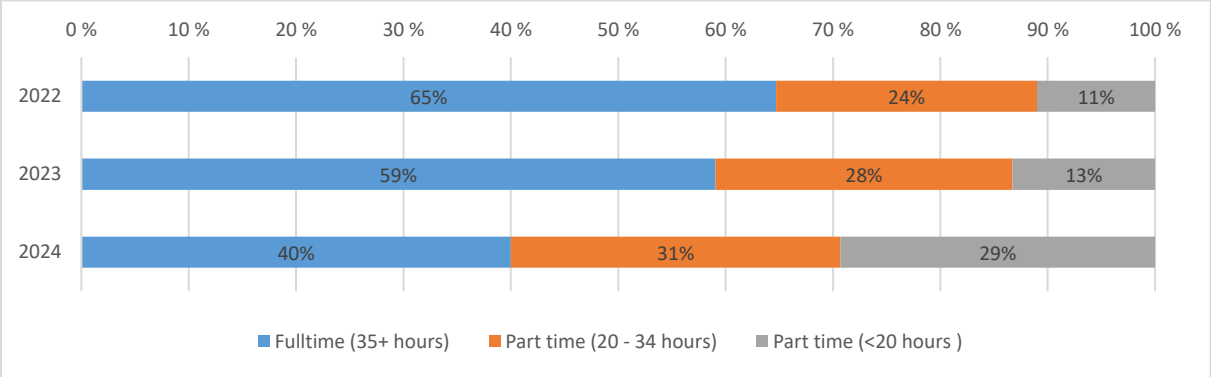
10.2.1 Scope and type of work

Official register data show that 61% have fulltime employment[35]. In the survey, we also asked about this, and the exact same share of the employed respondents reported to work fulltime––61% (either employed or self-employed).

In the survey, 26% reported to work part time (20-34 hours per week), and the remaining 14% worked less than 20 hours per week. These aggregated numbers are almost identical to the results in the 2024 survey. Similarly to last years' report, we also find large differences between men and women in this regard, as women much more frequently have part-time employment.

Increased residence time also corresponds with more working hours.

Figure 10.5: Hours per week separated by cohorts (N=785).

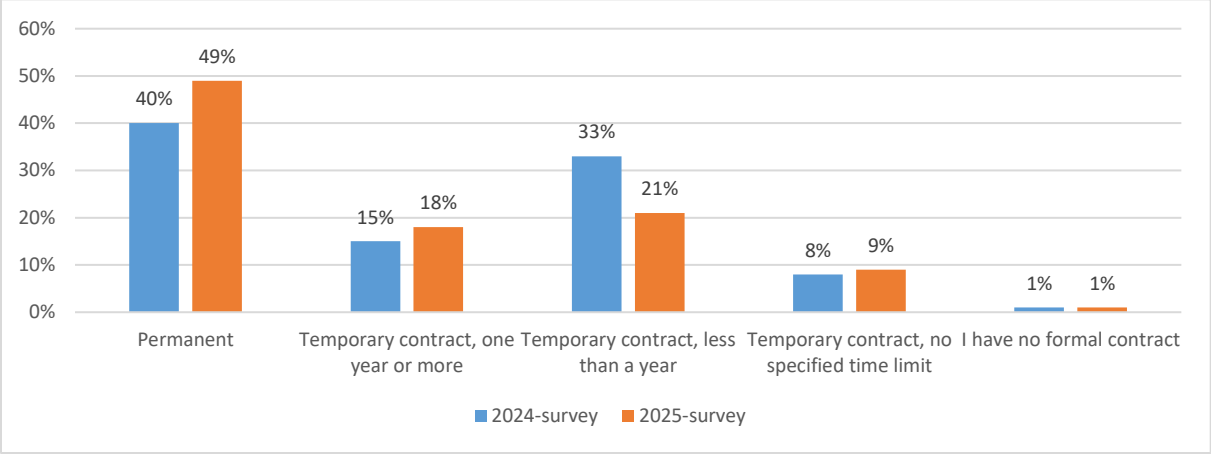


*Weighted by age.
**The 2025 cohort is excluded from the figure because there were only four respondents in this cohort that were employed.

Figure 10.5 illustrates that those who arrived in 2022 have to a larger degree a fulltime job (65%) compared to the 2024 cohort (40%).

[35] Statistics based on ongoing analysis of SSB statists conducted as part of the UKRINT and NOR-RETIN projects.

Figure 10.6: Type of job contract, comparing the 2024 survey (N=450) and 2025 survey (N=750).



*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 10.6 shows a positive development concerning job contracts when comparing the 2024 and 2025 survey. We see an increase from 40% to 49% that have permanent contracts, with a similar decline in the share that has temporary contracts of less than a year.

For the 2025 survey, men more often have a permanent contract than women (66% versus 44%), and increased residence time also increases the likelihood of having a permanent contract.

10.2.2 Uncertainty and challenges with temporary positions and unpredictable work schedules

Several informants noted that during the past year, they needed to find additional jobs to cover their financial needs and achieve economic independence, as previous positions were part-time or seasonal. On the one hand, these informants were quite satisfied that they could find one or more additional workplaces and appreciated this opportunity. On the other hand, it led to several challenges, such as navigating different work schedules, working weekends, work overload, and uncertainty in prioritizing and planning for the future. It is worth mentioning that all informants who combined several jobs reported that they sought psychological help during the past year.

One informant who combined two types of work mentioned that sometimes she received double shifts, which overloaded her. Her desire was to get a job with ‘a normal schedule’:

> It’s hard sometimes, for example, to switch from one job to another. There are even days when I’m needed at both places. Sometimes I work in the [workplace] in the morning and then go to the [workplace] to work there. It’s hard for me. If you asked me now, ‘[Name], what do you want?’ I want to work five days a week, with Saturday and Sunday off. That’s what I’m striving for, so to speak. (N5)

It is worth mentioning that some informants who have part-time jobs or temporary jobs try to apply for other positions continuously. So far, these attempts have not been successful, but the strategy of ‘permanent search’ remains on the agenda.

Another recurring topic in our interviews was the unpredictability of work schedules for those working in temporary positions (as substitutes) and the difficulties in planning their routines: ‘I don’t understand how much workload I’ll have or what I’ll end up with at the end of the month. It’s a bit hard because planning is difficult.’ (N2) While some accepted this situation, others felt unmotivated: ‘I decided for myself that I won’t make any plans for this job or rely on it. If there’s a shift—great. If there’s no shift, I’ll manage without it.’ (N3)

As a reaction to this unpredictability, some informants decided to look for additional work opportunities. One informant mentioned that she combines four jobs. She was frustrated because none of these jobs she wanted to keep permanently, and it was difficult to combine them all. On the other hand, she appreciated the opportunity to work a lot and remain economically independent:

> For now, this suits me because I have other jobs—I can mix between 4–5 types of activities and earn money. Plus, they really pay extra for evening shifts and weekends, which is very motivating. (N3)

One reason she decided to combine several jobs was the temporary nature of her positions and the existential unpredictability that made it impossible to plan for the future:

> Now I have a third job for the summer—I can work in a restaurant. I don't know what will happen next. I want to take this restaurant job because I understand that I can earn [some money] for autumn there, since I don't know what autumn will bring. (N3)

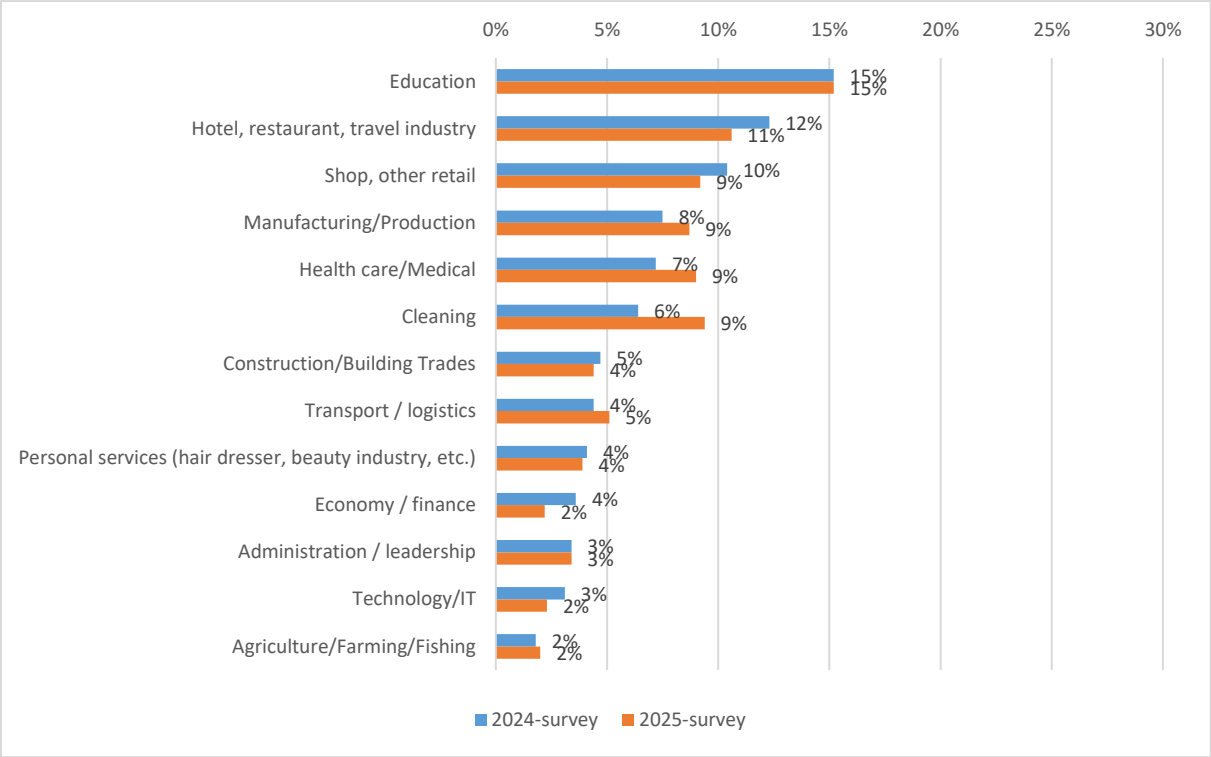
Another interviewee, who had a permanent contract and worked in the fast-food sector, mentioned that she always received shifts on weekends and Friday evenings, which are considered the most demanding. However, she does not want to ask her manager about the reasons or request a change to avoid misunderstandings and worsening the social atmosphere at work: 'Refusing means you have to explain, and such things tend to cause misunderstandings' (N6).

Two informants worked in the municipality focusing on assisting Ukrainian refugees, but both had temporary positions that could not be prolonged due to budget cuts. They were very satisfied with their tasks, colleagues, and the work they were doing. This situation—where they unwillingly had to leave a job where they really thrived—was also experienced as challenging and triggering depressive thoughts.

10.2.3 What sector do they work in?

59% have found jobs in the private sector, and 36% in the public sector (5% were unsure). A larger share of men works in the private sector compared to women (79% versus 50%). As shown in both the 2023 and 2024 report, there are still large differences between the private and public sector regarding types of contracts for Ukrainian refugees, with the private sector more commonly offering permanent contracts (63%) than the public sector (29%).

Figure 10.7: Sector of employment comparing the 2024 survey (N=450) and the 2025 survey (N=785).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**The categories 'I don't know' and 'other' is not portrayed in the table.

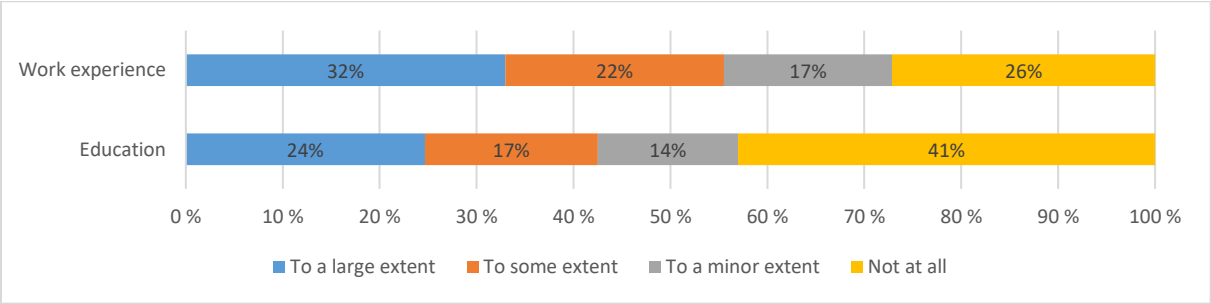
Figure 10.7 compares the answers from the 2024 survey and the 2025 survey. It shows that the education sector is still the most common work sector, followed by hotels, restaurants and the travel industry. There are small increases in the shares that have employment in the manufacturing, healthcare and cleaning sectors.

10.2.4 Use of previous education and work experience

Many Ukrainians had prior education and work experience, but are they able to use these qualifications in their jobs in Norway?

It is important to emphasise that not all respondents had used their education and qualifications while working in Ukraine. According to our survey data, one-third of those who had worked in Ukraine had *not* used their education in their previous jobs there.

Figure 10.8: Use of previous education and work experience in current job (N=748 (education) / 755 (work experience).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those answering, 'Not relevant/I don't know' (1-2%) have been excluded.

Figure 10.8 shows that the extent to which respondents use their previous education and work experience in their current jobs in Norway varies widely. Just over half were able to use their previous work experience to a large or some extent in their current job. The aggregated results are similar to the results in the 2024 survey, but with somewhat lower scores for those who used their experience to a large degree (down 2-4 percentage points).

A lower share was able to use their previous education in their current Norwegian job, but 41% still answer that they use it to a large or some extent. However, 41% reported that they were not able to use their education at all.

There are relevant subgroup differences. Probably due to a more diverse labour market, those who live in big cities used their education and, especially, previous work experience more often than those living in smaller towns and rural areas. Among respondents in big cities 44% had used their previous work experience to a large extent, while the corresponding figures for smaller towns and rural areas were respectively 32% and 28% Respondents from the 2022 cohort used their previous education to a somewhat higher degree than the other cohorts.

It is worth mentioning that none of our informants this year work directly in positions related to their education or previous work experience. Not surprisingly, as in 2023 and 2024, the dilemma of accepting any type of job versus finding employment aligned with education and prior experience remains on the agenda in 2025. On the one hand, informants express gratitude for the opportunity to work in Norway. On the other hand, the new round of interviews clearly shows some personally negative consequences of taking any available job—such as depression and low levels of work motivation.

Some informants shared that they receive a clear message from street-level bureaucrats that they need to find a job as soon as possible, regardless of the type of work, while they themselves feel an internal protest against this state of affairs:

> They told us, you must look for any job—from cleaning to cashier work. I don't condemn these jobs, but it's sad inside when you've invested four years in yourself, studied, and now you have to take something that… well, something any teenager here in Norway could do without education or anything. (NN1)

Another informant, who enjoyed working with refugees in the municipality but had a temporary position, noted that it is her dream to continue working in this area or in an area more similar to her previous work in Ukraine. To achieve this, she planned to move to another municipality with broader work opportunities:

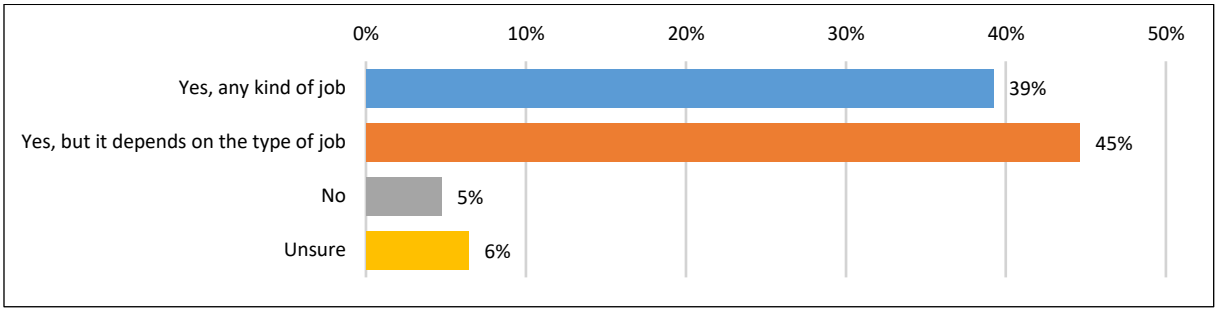
> I really want to find a job that is at least somewhat similar to what I did in Ukraine. I have a higher economic education and worked according to my degree all my life—10 years in a bank, including as a manager. For the last six years, I worked at a very large enterprise—(…) with 4,000 employees—where I was head of the finance department. This is the field that interests me. And in the municipality here, I really liked working with people. I've always enjoyed working with people, with clients—that's my direction. (…). Thus, I really want to move to another municipality. (N5)

Several informants expressed a desire to work with Ukrainian refugees, as this field is familiar to them and allows them to use their mother tongue:

> I see that I am good at working with refugees, especially Ukrainian refugees, because I can explain things in a way that is interesting and understandable, so people can quickly use the opportunities they receive. I think this shortens their integration period and saves the municipality some costs during this time. And I enjoy it—I can speak my own language while constantly practicing Norwegian. That's why I really like it. (N4)

In the survey, we also asked whether the Ukrainian refugees were open to finding work that did not correspond with their previous education and work experience.

Figure 10.9: Willingness to work outside previous education and qualifications (N=2147).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those answering 'It is not relevant for me to take a job in Norway' (4%) have been excluded.

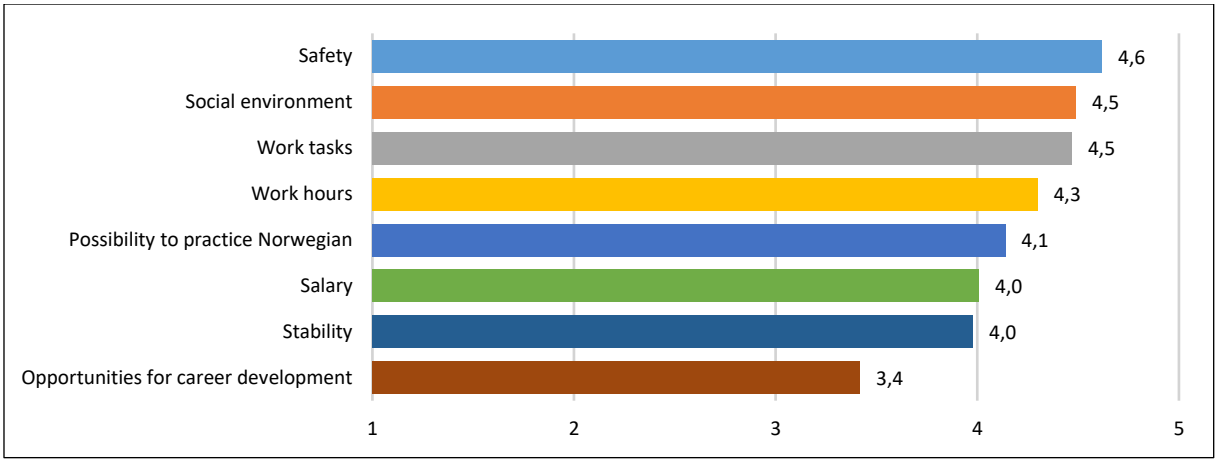
Figure 10.9 indicates that Ukrainian refugees generally are motivated to find a job in Norway even if it does not exactly fit with their previous education or experience. Only 5% were categorically against taking such a job, while 6% were unsure. 39% said that they would take any kind of job, while 45% stated that they would be willing to take a job not related to their previous education and qualification, but that it would depend on the type of job.

Men and the older age groups were over-represented among those inclined to take any kind of job.

10.2.5 Satisfaction with different aspects of the job

How do the Ukrainian refugees assess their new job in Norway?

Figure 10.10: Satisfaction with different aspects of the job (N = 785).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Means and standard deviations. Responses on a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).
***Those answering 'Hard to say' (2–21%) have been excluded.

Figure 10.10 shows that the majority were very satisfied with most aspects of their work conditions, with scores higher than 4 for almost all aspects. The results are almost identical to the 2024 survey. However, opportunities for career development gets the lowest score with 3.4 and has declined substantially from 3.9 in the 2024 survey.

Satisfaction with the social environment at work

In line with the 2025 survey, and our conclusions from 2024, the overall impression from the interviews in 2025 is that Ukrainian refugees are quite satisfied with their social environment at the workplace. They encounter friendly attitudes, support, and inclusion from both colleagues and management. Informants are invited to participate in communal events such

as birthday celebrations, lunches, Christmas parties, and similar activities. Those who participated in work practice also gave very positive feedback:

> The way they welcomed me on the first day! Such great colleagues, such a wonderful team—I was thrilled. We met everyone, had a joint lunch. They told me not to worry at all because I'm used to working with full dedication. They just said, 'Relax, have some coffee. Everything step by step.' We always have lunch together. (N1)

No one expressed challenges or difficulties related to the social environment at work. Several informants work in multicultural environments and are also very satisfied with the social atmosphere there: 'The team accepted me—I like the team. It's multicultural. There's understanding and a good boss.' (N2)

Like in the 2024 report, many highlight that they really enjoy the work-life balance they experience in Norway, which contrasts with the work reality in Ukraine. They also emphasise the high level of salaries, good planning of the work process, and a non-stressful way of working:

> I couldn't even allow myself to think about starting a family because I was always working… Here, I like that they start work at eight in the morning. They come in, have a meeting, drink coffee, gather, communicate, and set tasks. A client can come at 8 a.m., even though the bank opens at 10. But they must book an appointment because everyone here plans their time. And I like that work ends at four, that after four you have the right to your own life, and you receive a decent salary. (N1)

Among the positive aspects of work life in Norway, the absence of corruption was noted, as well as equality and no need to compete with others: 'I don't feel corruption here. I often feel fairness. The absence of competition as such is relaxing. Quite a friendly atmosphere.' (N2)

Some informants were positively impressed by the 'easy access' to administration and employers, with a horizontal model of communication and a lot of attention to employees' needs:

> There are many work-related and organizational aspects that are well thought out, implemented, and functioning. Things like feedback between the manager and the employee. If something needs to be clarified or communicated, the management responds. They pay attention and listen. (N9)

Something that was challenging for one of our informants was the lack of understanding of work criteria and work quality, as well as the absence of feedback on whether tasks were done correctly:

> Here they don't set specific tasks. I have no understanding of the criteria for evaluating work quality. There are very few explanations. I can't say that I had any kind of training period. So, for now, I just do things somehow, but I don't know if it's okay. (N4)

Less optimism concerning career development

The analysis of the longitudinal interviews echoes the finding about declined expectations for career opportunities shown in figure 10.10. This year, our informants focused on their ongoing experiences of being employed in Norway, whereas in 2024 the emphasis was primarily on securing a job.

Among our interviewees, the most common areas of employment are fast food, the service sector, and positions related to working with Ukrainian refugees (in municipalities, as assistants, and similar roles). Several informants shared that they had to change jobs during the past year because their positions were temporary, which for some provoked anxiety and psychological challenges. Additionally, many of those we spoke to had to combine several jobs to achieve economic independence, as the jobs were only part-time.

A recurring theme in most interviews this year is the 'consequences' of working in jobs that do not align with education, previous work experience, or personal aspirations—leading to

self-reported depression among several informants (see details in the chapter 7.6 on psychological health).

The overall impression from the data analysis is that the wave of optimism expressed in 2024, as a result of getting a job in Norway, has shifted to partial pessimism stemming from combining multiple jobs, highly challenging schedules, and the lack of self-realization through their current work.

A recurring theme across several interviews is the feeling of uncertainty and unpredictability that Ukrainian refugees experience regarding collective protection and their long-term prospects. As a result, some struggle with internal existential conflicts related to building a professional future:

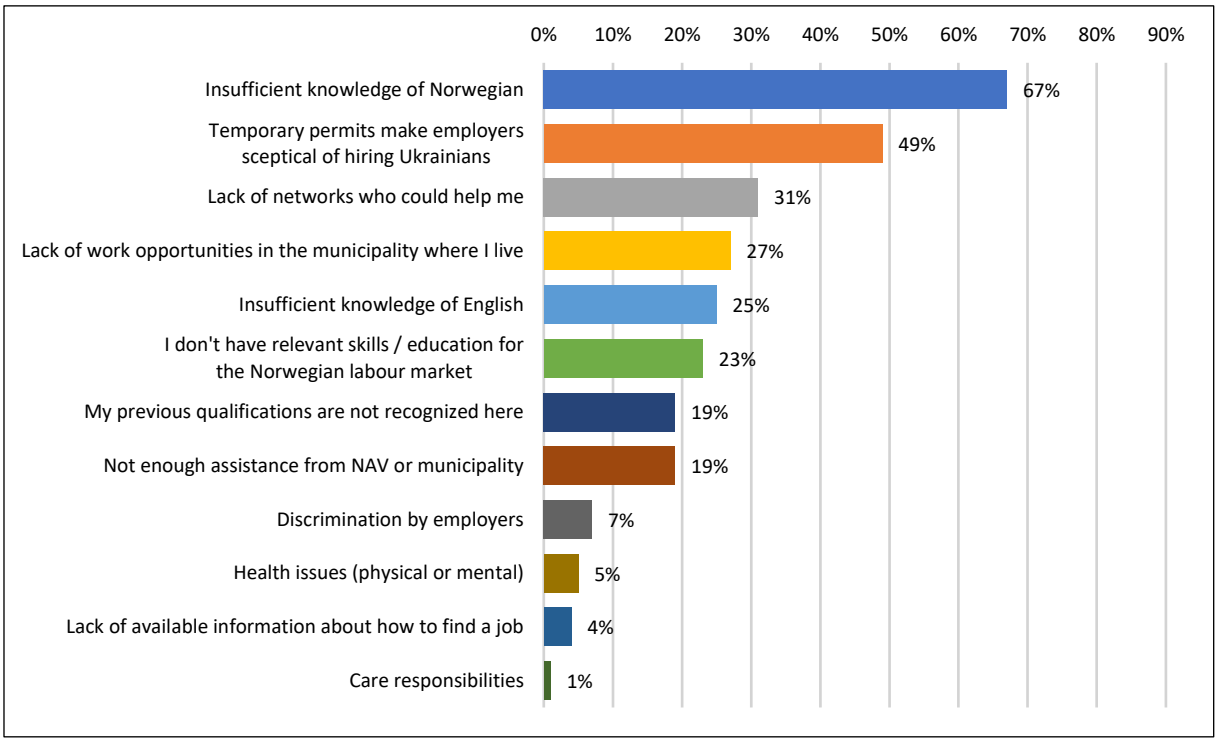
> I would, of course, like to have a permanent job, a permanent contract. I really want stability; I'm very tired of this instability—it's exhausting. Right now, I have this unresolved internal conflict between continuing in the field of [expertise], which I really like, but where there are very few chances to get a permanent job to change my visa type [to a work permit), implying that I could stay in Norway. Or I could go into accounting, which I know, I can do, and have a confirmed education in. That's a shorter path to achieving this [getting a work permit]. It's a compromise I haven't reached within myself yet. (N3)

10.3 Barriers for finding a (more relevant) job in Norway

For those who were employed and answered that that they do *not* get to use their previous education or work experience in Norway (at all or to a minor extent), we followed up by asking if they had plans to try to get a job in line with their education in Norway in the future. 49% responded yes, while 24% said no and 27% were unsure. Men were more inclined to want to get a job in line with previous qualifications than women (57% versus 46%).

Further, we asked about what obstacles they encountered when searching for a job in Norway (more) in line with their previous education and/or work experience.

Figure 10.11: Hinders to get a (more) relevant job among those who are employed (multiple options possible) (N=423).

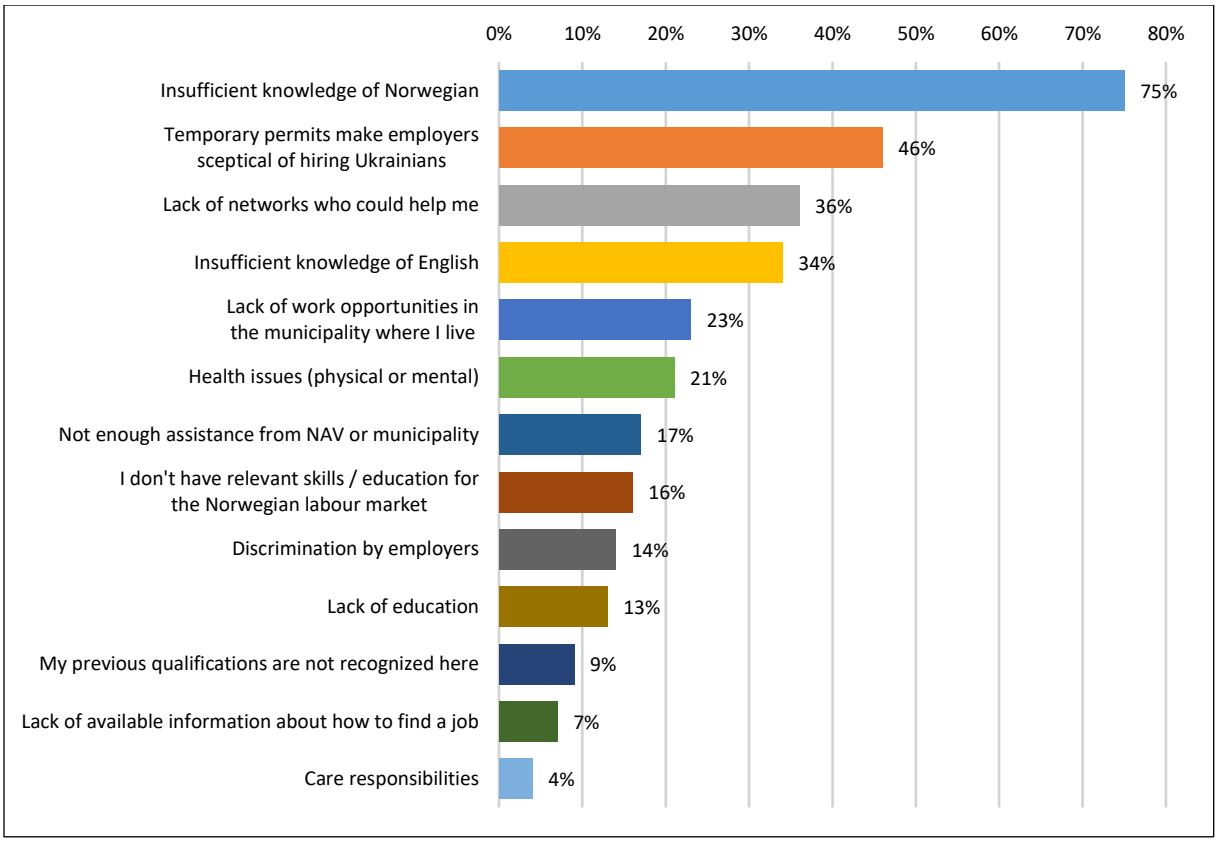


*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those answering, 'Not relevant/I have a relevant job' and 'other' are excluded from the figure.

Figure 10.11 shows that insufficient Norwegian (67%) is still the main barrier to getting a more relevant job in Norway, but almost half of the respondents also highlighted that the temporary permits make employers sceptical of hiring Ukrainians. 27% highlight lack of work opportunities in the municipalities (up from 21% in the 2024 survey). 31% also highlight lack of networks is a hinder to getting a (more) relevant job in Norway (up from 26% in the 2024 survey).

For those who were *not* employed, we posed the same question about hinders to get a job in Norway.

Figure 10.12: Hinders to get a job in Norway among persons not employed (multiple options possible) (N=1214).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those answering 'Not relevant/I'm not going to work in Norway' (5%) and 'other' (5%) are excluded from the figure.

Figure 10.12 shows that the vast majority mentioned insufficient Norwegian (75%) skills as the main barrier to getting a job in Norway. Similarly to figure 10.11, almost half of the respondents also highlighted that the temporary permits make employers sceptical of hiring Ukrainians. One third said that lack of networks was a hinder to getting a job in Norway. One fifth said there were lack of opportunities in their municipality. About 21% also listed health issues (physical or mental) as a hinder to getting a job in Norway. As to other hinders, 14% list discrimination by employers (up from 11% last year).

10.3.1 Norwegian versus Ukrainian networks

In figures 10.11 and 10.12, about one third highlight lack of networks as a barrier to get employed or to get more relevant employment. In figure 10.4 above, we find that an equal amount had found employment through their Norwegian and Ukrainian network, but it was only 16% (Norwegian) and 17% (Ukrainian) who answered these options. An interesting recurring theme across several interviews was the informants' disappointment with networks

as an effective channel for finding a job in Norway. Here, we need to distinguish between a "Norwegian network" (connections with locals) and a "Ukrainian network" (connections within the Ukrainian diaspora or among other Ukrainian refugees). Several interviewees were very disappointed that the advice they received about building Norwegian networks did not work in their case. One informant was extremely socially active, participating in and holding positions in several organizations. However, her main conclusion after more than two years of local engagement was quite frustrating:

> When they told us in the integration school to rely on Norwegian networks, I fully tested that theory. It doesn't work the way they say in the integration school. I was a party member, participated for almost two years, attended all their meetings and activities. That's a very big network in our region. It didn't work at all—not even a little. In the end, I found both practice and a job on my own. (2N)

On the other hand, several informants mentioned that they received significant help with employment through Ukrainian networks—when someone from the community could recommend, advise, or share information about a workplace. One informant who got a position through a Ukrainian network noted that it was very useful to communicate without a language barrier and to receive feedback, which is often lacking when applying for jobs in Norway:

> I found this job thanks to Ukrainians, by the way. I saw a post on Facebook from a man—he's Ukrainian and has a disability, he uses a wheelchair. He got a job at this company, and they launched a project friendly to Ukrainians. They were looking for Ukrainians who could work. There were contacts in the post, so I called him, and we talked several times. He helped me fill out the applications. Thanks to the absence of a language barrier, he was able to explain a lot to me and ease my fears because I had never faced such work before. He supported me—he gave feedback, suggested what to write, and told me which forms to fill out. (N3)

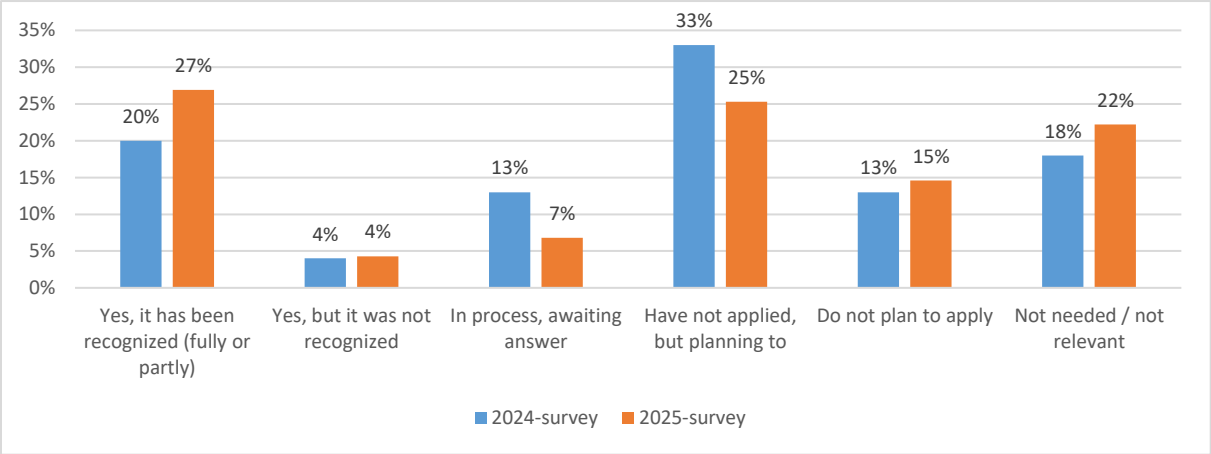
Two other informants also noted that they obtained jobs through strong recommendations from other Ukrainians already employed at the companies, as they were trusted by the employers.

10.4 Formal recognition of education from Ukraine

To have educational qualifications recognised in Norway, one can apply to HK-dir. Degrees or educational programmes are then evaluated against the Norwegian degree structure (HK-dir 2023c). HK-dir also offers automatic recognition of some qualifications from selected countries.[36] In the overall assessment of services presented in chapter 7.3, recognition of education got a score of 3.8, up from 3.6 in the 2024 survey.

[36] Automatic recognition is a standardised statement describing the Norwegian degree to which a foreign degree may be equated. The document can be used without having to apply for recognition or upload documents for assessment. It is not, however, a recognition procedure and involves no assessment of your ID and academic qualifications (NOKUT 2023 https://www.nokut.no/en/news/recognition-of-education-and-qualifications-from-ukraine/).

Figure 10.13: Current status of recognition of formal education from Ukraine (N= 2024 survey: 1558) / 2025 survey: 2147).



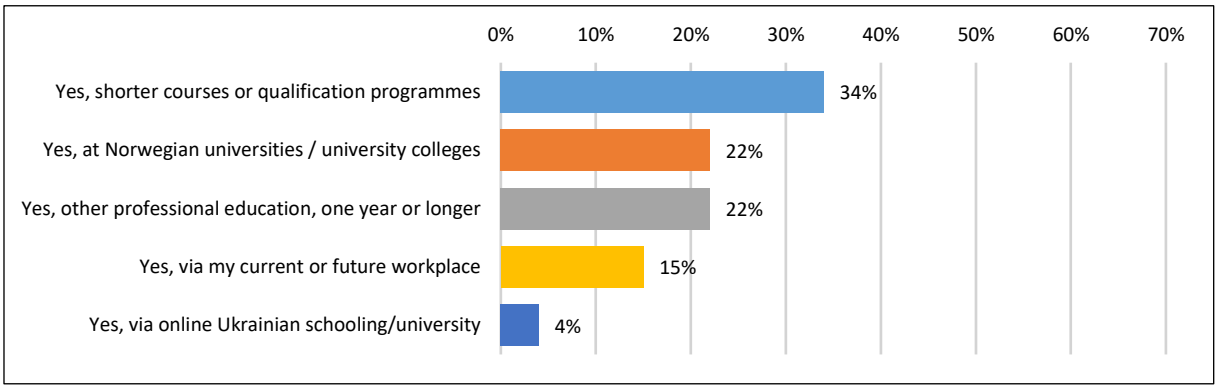
*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure10.13 compares answers from the 2024 and 2025 surveys. It shows that a larger share has had their education approved (from 20% in 2024 to 27% in 2025). Correspondingly, fewer are awaiting an answer. There is also a lower share that now plan to apply (from 33% to 25%).

10.5 Plans for further education or upskilling in Norway

We also asked whether respondents have thought of enhancing their education in order to qualify for a new profession in Norway. Only 17% said 'no', while 25% were unsure.

Figure 10.14: Plans for further education or upskilling in Norway (multiple options possible) (N=2147).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those answering 'Other', 'No' and 'Unsure' are excluded from the figure.

For those who planned for further upskilling in Norway, Figure 10.14 shows that one third plan for shorter courses or qualification programmes (down from 43% in 2024), but about one fifth want to start Norwegian university and a similar share plan for other longer professional education programmes. 15% also plan for upskilling through their current or future workplace.

An important logic in the Norwegian strategy for integration and the so-called 'workline' (*arbeidslinja*), is that the workplace should also work as a good arena to practice the Norwegian language. Therefore, we asked about their colleagues composition.

Figure 10.15: Colleagues' composition (N=785).

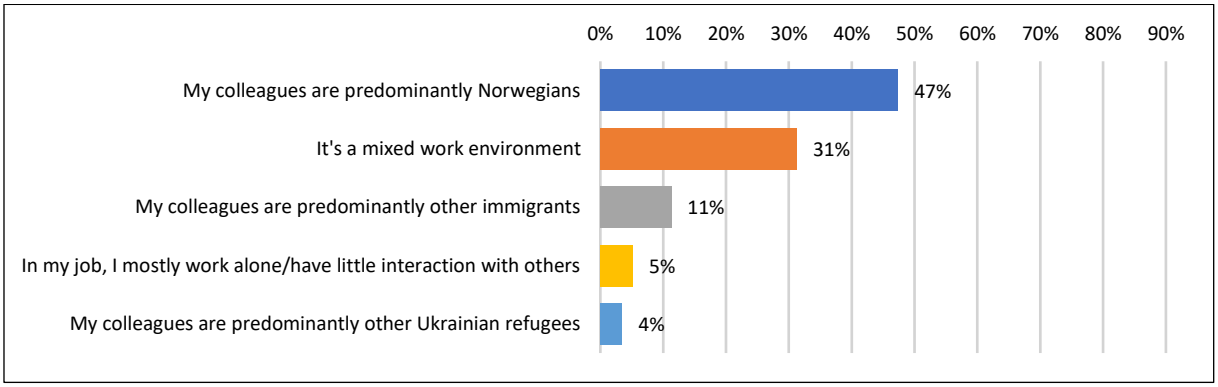


Figure 10.15 shows that almost half of those employed had predominately Norwegian colleagues, and that one third had a mixed work environment. However, about 20% had either predominantly other immigrants or Ukrainians as coworkers or mostly worked alone, making the workplace less relevant as an arena to practice Norwegian.

There are large differences between cohorts. While 55% of those arriving in 2022 worked with mostly Norwegians, only 28% of those who arrived in 2024 did. Also, twice as many of those who arrived in 2024 worked with predominately other immigrants and Ukrainians or alone, than those arriving in 2022.

10.6 Starting a new business

Among our respondents, 18% were self-employed in Ukraine before they fled. Meanwhile, only 2% currently reports that self-employment is their main activity in Norway (see figure 10.2). Both in this year's survey and previous years' surveys, information about how to start a business in Norway has gotten the lowest score, with a mean of 2.8 on a scale from 1 to 5 (see figure 7.5). Thus, we asked the respondents whether they had thought about starting a new business in Norway.

Figure 10.16: Have you considered starting your own business in Norway? (N=2147).

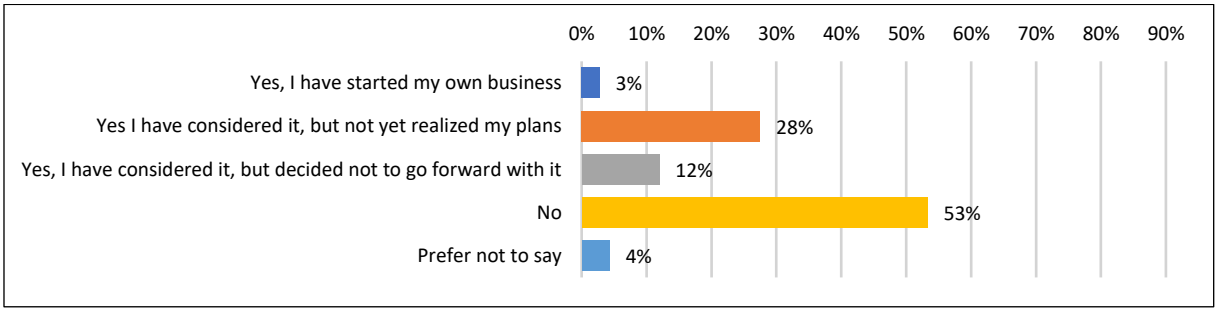


Figure 10.16 shows that just over half of the respondents had not considered starting a business, while just under half had considered it. Of the latter, 3% report that they have started a new business in Norway. 28% have considered it, but not yet realized their plans, while 12% had considered it but decided not to go forward with it.

A higher share of the earlier cohorts had considered it but decided not to go forward with it than among the more recent arrivals.

Two of our informants mentioned that they (or members of their families) have established their own businesses in Norway. However, for neither of them is this the main source of financial support; rather, it was a way to turn their hobbies into financial profit. One informant noted that his wife is a professional musician who was unable to find a job corresponding to

her education. Meanwhile, she performs at various concerts in her free time and is already well-known in the municipality.

Another informant, who also established her own business, plans to work as a local guide and organize tourist tours as well as provide consultations. However, at the time of the interview, she had not yet started these activities. She shared that after registering, she received a course from the municipality, but before that, she purchased a private online course with detailed instructions because it was difficult to understand what to do next:

> It's [how to start a business in Norway] hard to figure out—almost impossible on your own. I bought a special course where everything is explained step by step: how to register, which button to click, when to submit taxes, what expenses can be deducted, and so on. (N1)

10.6.1 Opportunities and barriers

To explore experiences with starting a business in Norway further – and respondents' proposals for how this process could be made easier – we included three open questions in the survey. These were directed at respondents who had indicated that they had considered starting a business (whether they later decided not to pursue it, had not yet realised their plans, or had already established a business).

The first question asked respondents to describe any positive experiences or specific support measures that helped them when considering starting their business. The second invited them to outline obstacles that delayed or hindered the process, while the third asked for suggestions on what Norwegian authorities could improve to better support Ukrainians who wish to start their own business.

Positive experiences

In practice, only a small number of respondents described positive experiences or specific support measures related to starting a business in Norway. Among those who did, the examples mainly concern access to courses, information, or personal encouragement, such as 'help with formulating a business plan'.

A few respondents reported that it is rather easy to establish a business in Norway: Yes, it is quite easy to start your own business here. The system for registration and paperwork is very simple and easy to understand.

Several respondents highlighted that structured learning opportunities were helpful. Respondents emphasised the value of formal training and municipal courses. Some had appreciated practical guidance after registration. Others, however, emphasised that what they had learnt mainly came from other Ukrainians who already had experience with running a business in Norway or that acquiring the right information on their own had been necessary for establishing their own business: 'I bought a special course where everything is explained step by step: how to register, which button to click, when to submit taxes, which expenses can be deducted.'

Thus, while positive examples exist, they are relatively few and relate primarily to training opportunities, information resources, and instances of individual support rather than broad structural measures.

Challenges and obstacles

While positive experiences were limited, respondents who had considered or attempted to start a business in Norway described a wide range of obstacles. These barriers relate primarily to lack of accessible information and language challenges, lack of municipal support, financial constraints, and uncertainty linked to temporary protection. Several respondents also pointed to local conditions in the place of settlement as a hindrance.

First, a central theme was the difficulty of finding clear, comprehensible information about the formal requirements for registering and running a business: 'Lack of information and support'.

Others described confusion about taxation and administrative requirements ‘I simply did not understand the taxation system’. Language barriers were also highlighted as a major obstacle. Respondents reported that many instructions exist only in Norwegian, making it difficult to be confident in fulfilling legal obligations correctly:

> The main problem is the language barrier and the difficulty of understanding legal and tax requirements. Many instructions are only in Norwegian, so it is difficult to be sure everything is done correctly.

Second, several respondents also noted that they did not feel encouraged by municipal or state services when raising questions about starting a business. Rather than receiving guidance or support, some reported reactions that discouraged them from pursuing their plans. As one respondent wrote: ‘The reaction of municipal employees, when I start asking about this, only provokes sarcastic smiles.’

Third, financial barriers were also mentioned by several respondents. They especially reported difficulty in accumulating the capital needed to launch a business, either because of high costs, lack of savings, or limited access to credit: ‘Yes, I only had my own savings and did not have enough start-up capital to work fully’ and ‘The main difficulties were the high cost of renting premises and the difficulty of finding start-up capital’.

Fourth, uncertainty related to temporary collective protection status was another concern. Some respondents stressed that it was difficult to plan long-term investment or take financial risks when their right to remain in Norway remained unclear. One respondent noted to our question about negative experiences: ‘Yes, temporary collective protection. It is difficult to start and plan a business when you are uncertain about the future. Whether there will be an opportunity to stay or not.’

Lastly, several respondents also emphasised obstacles tied to structural conditions in the municipality to which they had been assigned. One respondent described being moved from a larger town to a remote place with little economic activity:

> UDI and IMDi, having heard that I wanted to start my own business in the [anonymised] sector, intentionally sent me from the large town of [anonymised] to the town of [anonymised], where there is no development, and businesses are shutting down in the form of closed factories, and so on.

Another respondent likewise described how the settlement location itself made entrepreneurship impossible:

> The first and most important problem is the settlement. For some reason they placed me [...] in a remote place in the mountains, where there is not a single large enterprise. What kind of business can be organised there?

In summary, respondents described a landscape where insufficient information, language barriers, financial limitations, administrative challenges including discouragement from public services, and the constraints of temporary protection together create significant obstacles for Ukrainians interested in starting a business in Norway.

10.6.2 Suggestions for improvement

Respondents had a wide range of suggestions for how Norwegian authorities could improve support for Ukrainians who wish to start their own business. Their proposals centred around a number of major themes: better access to information, targeted courses and practical guidance, financial support, reduced bureaucracy and simplified procedures, and greater stability in residence status. Many also stressed the importance of receiving encouragement rather than scepticism when seeking help from public service providers.

A recurring theme was the need for clearer and more accessible information about the rules that regulate business activity in Norway. Respondents repeatedly called for information in

Ukrainian or English, presented in a systematic and easily understandable form. One respondent wrote in detail:

> Create an information portal or a short online course in Ukrainian with step-by-step instructions, video explanations and examples on how to open a business, which documents are needed, how to pay taxes, how to register expenses. Currently this information is scattered across different sources, and it is difficult to understand where to start.

Several respondents proposed the establishment of courses, online resources and mentoring programmes, specifically adapted for Ukrainian entrepreneurs, and some also described their desired content:

> More transparent and accessible information related to taxes and fees, rules, responsibilities and opportunities for your business, finding your niche in Norwegian business life. How to build a business without going bankrupt.

Financial support was another topic frequently mentioned. Some respondents pointed to the need for start-up capital, grants or subsidised loans: ‘Start-up capital and support during the first year of activity’, while others suggested financial relief in the initial phase: ‘Do not pay tax the first year, or pay 10%’.

A third theme was related to bureaucracy and the need for clearer or simplified procedures. Respondents frequently requested direct, personalised guidance from municipal or state services: ‘Municipalities could offer some consultations or short courses [...] especially help with tax-related questions would be useful’.

A number of respondents emphasised that the introduction programme should provide more relevant orientation, including business-related content: ‘Include business legislation in the introduction programme’.

Several respondents also highlighted the importance of greater encouragement from the service system, noting that they sometimes experience scepticism rather than support from local officials: ‘NAV is not interested in this at all, and they did not answer a single question I asked about it’.

In addition to information and training, some respondents further stressed that stable residence status in Norway would be crucial for making long-term investments: ‘Give those who are ready to work and pay taxes the opportunity to obtain residency.’

Overall, respondents stressed that better access to information, more tailored training, financial support, clearer procedures and a stable legal status would significantly facilitate entrepreneurship among Ukrainians in Norway.

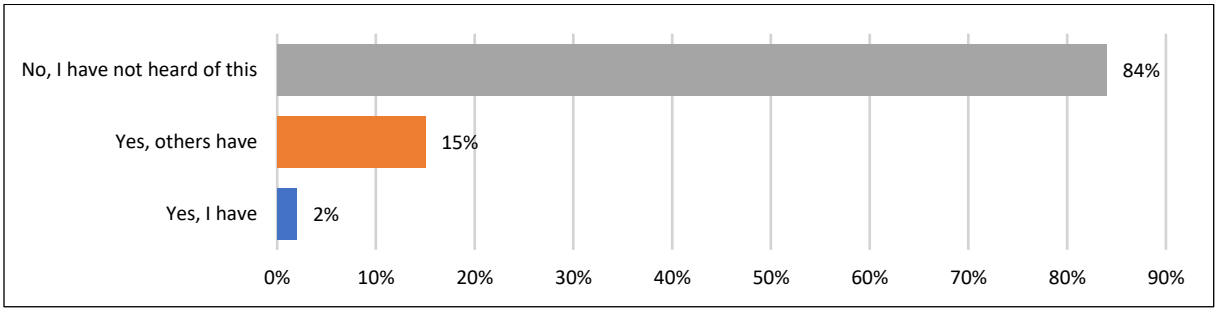
10.7 Work in the informal economy and exploitation

Questions about offers or participation in the informal job sector may be perceived as sensitive. Thus, the respondents were assured that the responses would be treated anonymously and confidentially and would not lead to any negative consequences for them. Nevertheless, on this topic, there is a potential for underreporting on such matters, particularly when respondents are asked to share details about their own involvement in such activities.

First, the respondents were asked whether they had ever been *offered* to work in the informal/unregistered sector of the economy in Norway (e.g. without a contract or without paying taxes). Similarly to last year, only 5% answered ‘yes’. Although there were generally low shares overall, a larger share of men than women had been offered such work, and a larger share of the younger age groups compared to the older age groups.

The respondents were then asked whether they or any Ukrainian refugees they knew have had paid work in Norway's informal/unregistered economy, such as working without a contract or without paying taxes.

Figure 10.17: Work in the informal job market (N=2147).



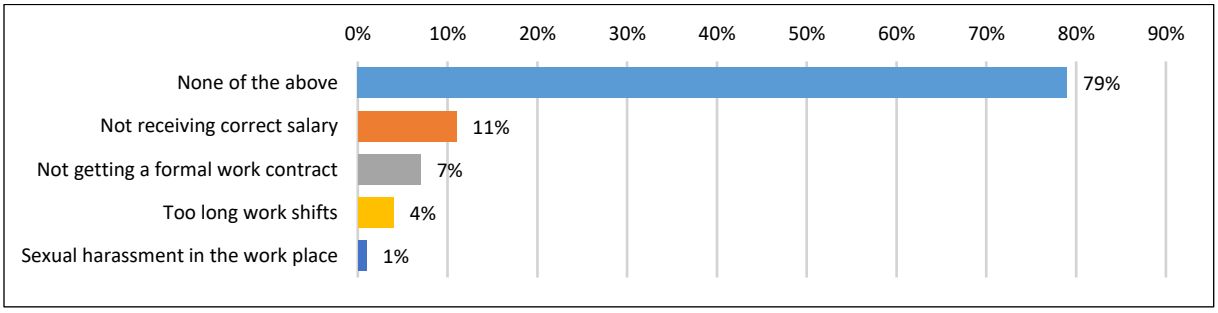
*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those who answered, 'Don't know / don't want to answer' (4%) are excluded from the figure.

Figure 10.17 shows that 84% answer that they had not heard of other Ukrainians working in the informal job market, which is up from 78% in last year's survey. Only 2% report to have had informal work themselves (similar as in the 2024 survey), while 15% report to know other Ukrainians who work in the informal job marked (up 2 percentage points from 13% in the 2024 survey).

There is a higher share among the younger age groups and those arriving to Norway the first years that have heard of other Ukrainians who had worked in the informal job market.

We further asked whether the respondents in their current or former jobs in Norway had experienced any of the following forms of exploitation.

Figure 10.18: Experience of exploitation in current or former jobs in Norway (multiple options possible) (N=758).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those who answered, 'I have not had a job in Norway' (51% of the sample) are excluded.

Figure 10.18 shows that almost 80% reported that they had not experienced any types of exploitation in their jobs in Norway. 11% had experienced not receiving correct salary (e.g. not being paid for overtime), and 7% not getting a formal work contract. 4% reported having too extensive work hours. However, 1% reported experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace.

In the interviews, all the employed informants had work contracts and employers who followed work instructions and rules. No one mentioned working overtime or not receiving payments for vacation or extra compensation for work on weekends or during night shifts. However, one of our informants shared that she knew several cases where Ukrainian refugees were significantly limited in their rights:

> Unfortunately, such cases do exist. For example, when a woman works in cleaning, and her company treats her very unfairly—she is not given vacation, vacation pay is not calculated, and additional payments are not made. None of this is done. I know this. I also know cases when guys work at car repair shops in freezing, bad weather without being provided with any additional protection. They do some work under contract and some outside the contract. (N2)

11 Children's social integration and schooling

Just over 30% of the Ukrainian refugees who have arrived in Norway are children below 18 years at the time of arrival. In this chapter, we first present whether Ukrainian parents report that their children attend the Norwegian school system, and their assessment of how their children and teenagers thrive there. Further, many parents report that their children still participate in different types of distance teaching from Ukraine, and we explore how this differs between cohorts and age groups. Lastly, we present the parents' assessment of their children's and teenager's social integration and psychological health.

11.1 Children's age distribution

First of all, in what age groups do the respondents' have children?

Figure 11.1: Age groups of the respondents' child/children (multiple options possible) (N=899).

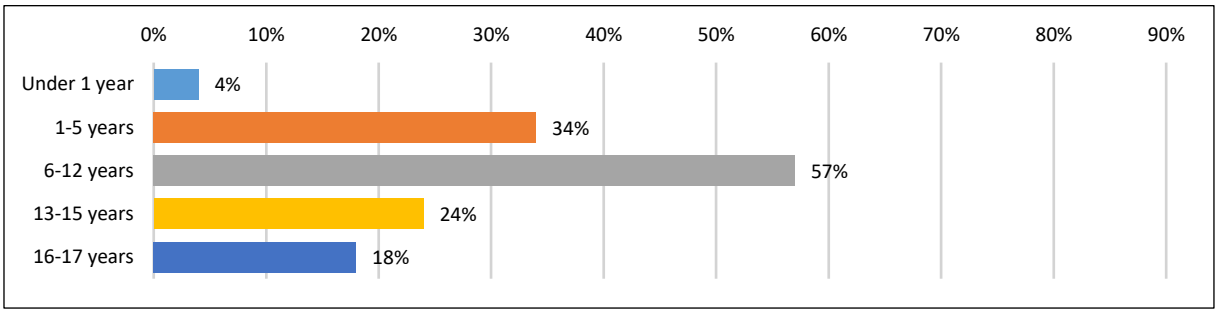


Figure 11.1 shows in which age groups the respondents had children. They could tick off for several age groups but would only tick off once if they had several children in the respective age group. 4% had infants under 1 year, and one third had children in the age group in the target group for kindergarten. 57% had children in the age for primary school (*barneskolen*) (aged 6–12 years). One forth had teenagers aged 13–15 years (who normally participate in lower secondary school (*ungdomskole*) and 18% in upper secondary (*videregående*)—aged (16–17 years).

11.2 Children's education

11.2.1 Kindergarten

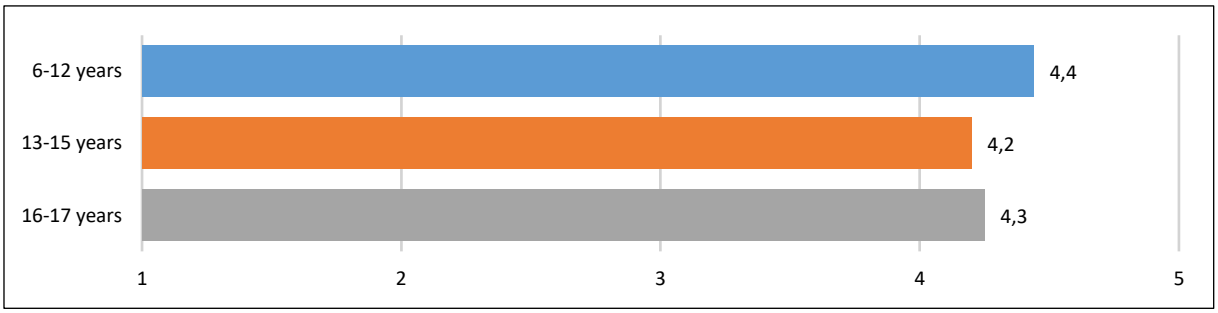
Similarly to the previous surveys, kindergartens get the highest scores among different services, with a mean score of 4.6 out of 5 (see Figure 7.5). Among those who had children aged 1-5 years, 93% reported that their children attended Norwegian kindergarten (up from 86% in 2024). 2% reported that 'one/some do, others don't', and only 5% did not attend Norwegian kindergarten.

11.2.2 High attendance in and satisfaction with Norwegian schooling

The survey shows that almost all children under 18 in school age (6-17 years) attended Norwegian schools, but there were minor differences between age groups[37]. Of those in the target group of primary (*barneskole*) and lower secondary (*ungdomskole*), 98% participated in Norwegian schools. Among those who had children aged 16–17 years, 90% reported that their children in this age group attended Norwegian schools, but attendance rates were strongly correlated with year of arrival: 92-94% attended among those who arrived before 2024, while only 43% of those arriving in 2025 attended school among in this age group at the time of the survey.

As shown in figure 7.5, in the overall assessment of services, Norwegian schools are also one of the services that the Ukrainian parents were most satisfied with, with mean scores of 4.6 out of 5 possible. However, we also asked the parents to assess how satisfied or dissatisfied they thought that their children were with Norwegian schooling.

Figure 11.2: Parents assessment of children's school satisfaction for different age groups (N=101-348).



*Scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).
**Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 11.2 shows that generally, the parents evaluated that their children of all ages were satisfied with Norwegian schools, with scores between 4.2–4.4. out of 5.

Along with our research in 2023 and 2024, the 2025 interviews also portray that children of Ukrainian refugees in Norway generally enjoy their education and after-school activities (with a few exceptions). Some of our informants contrasted the Ukrainian and Norwegian education systems, highlighting differences in pedagogical approaches that make Ukrainian children more satisfied with attending Norwegian schools:

> In Ukraine, teachers tried to find those who hadn't studied well. Those who didn't know the material were given bad grades. Here, you receive support. They try to motivate you to learn. If you do something, they support you. This gives you a sense of confidence that you can study. And the teachers' approach—how they communicate, how they present the material—is very appealing. So, my son is happy to be studying here. (N9)

11.2.3 Double schooling is still common

Ukrainian government—through the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine—encourages Ukrainian children abroad to at least partly follow online Ukrainian schooling for

[37] It is important to emphasise that we have not asked the respondents about each child, but whether they had children (one or more) in the different age groups, and further whether their children in these specific age groups attended Norwegian schooling (and different types of (online) Ukrainian schooling, described in chapter 11.2.3). They had the option to answer 'yes", 'no", and 'some do, others don't" (the latter for those who had several children in the same age group). However, very few chose the option 'some do, other don't", which could provide unsure results about the actual number of children. In the statistics we present here, those who have answered 'some do, other don't" are included in the percentage that attend school (equal to answering 'yes").

selected subjects (e.g. Ukrainian language, literature, and history). These subjects are also needed for pupils to move from one grade to another (Hernes et al. 2024). But how many of the Ukrainian children continue to follow Ukrainian online teaching in different forms?

In the survey, we asked the respondents whether their children in the different age groups followed different types of digital education/schooling from Ukraine: 1) 'follows distance education', 2) 'follows individual education (family education/home school)' and 3)' has only private lessons with Ukrainian teachers'. We also added the category 4) 'other', as an alternative for respondents who did not feel the three categories proposed were fitting.

Overall, 56% answered that their children participated in some form of distance education from Ukraine (down only 2 percentage points from last year). Thus, about the same share of children continue to follow some form of Ukrainian schooling. However, there are differences depending on time of arrival and between age groups, as portrayed in the figure below.

Figure 11.3: Share of children who continue some form of digital teaching/schooling from Ukraine separated by time of arrival and age group (N=166-512).

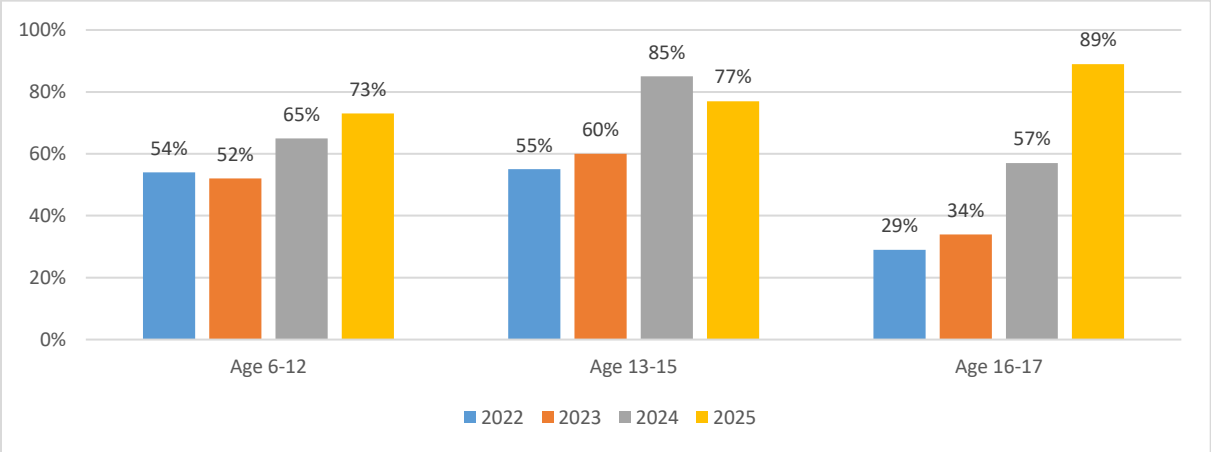


Figure 11.3 shows that there are both large differences between cohorts and the children's age. Generally, the share that participates in any form of schooling in Ukraine is higher among the new arrivals compared to those who have lived in Norway for a longer time. Still, over half of the children below 16 years participate in some form of distant teaching even after 3,5 years in the country.

There are larger differences for those aged 16-17 years. Here we see that while a large majority (89%) participate in only teaching of those who arrived in 2025, the share is only 29% for those who arrived in 2022.

But how many participate in the different types of distance education from Ukraine?

Figure 11.4: Children's attendance of different types of Ukrainian digital/online education separated by age groups (multiple options possible) (N=166-512).

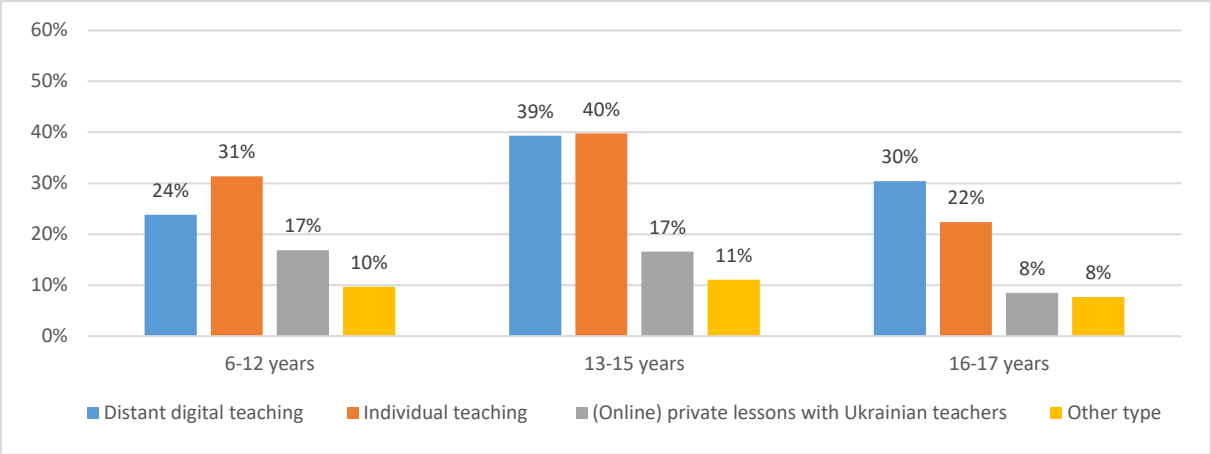


Figure 11.4 shows that individual teaching was the most common form of distance education from Ukraine for the 6–12-year-olds, with one third following this form, while one fourth following digital teaching. These numbers are somewhat lower than in the 2024 survey. For those aged 13–15 years, digital and individual teaching was equally common, with about 40% for each category. Among those aged 16–17 years, distant digital teaching was most common, and fewer have individual teaching. There are generally lower shares that have Ukrainian private teachers, but this is more common among those under 16 years than those aged 16-17 years.

11.2.4 Ukrainian online schooling—more as a formal procedure and insurance?

Among our informants in 2025 (many of them longitudinal), some decided to discontinue their children's education in Ukrainian schools, while a few confirmed that their children continue to study both in Ukrainian and Norwegian schools. However, a clear priority is given to Norwegian schooling. One of the most frequently mentioned reasons for discontinuing Ukrainian school attendance was the double workload and the need to prioritize one educational system:

> It would be possible to try studying in parallel, but in reality, it's fictitious learning... It's just about getting a piece of paper. It's better to put more effort into one direction than to try to ride two horses at once. (N9)

From a longitudinal perspective, parents' engagement with the Ukrainian education system gradually shifts from active involvement—such as participation in distance learning—to a focus on formal enrolment. In practice, children's substantive learning takes place within Norwegian schools, yet maintaining official enrolment and ties to the Ukrainian system remains significant for some families. One informant explained that her son does not invest much time or effort in Ukrainian schooling, and Ukrainian teachers accept this approach as they are motivated to preserve ties with children living abroad:

> Honestly, the external study format in our school is quite formal, just so children can get a certificate. He didn't study in the Ukrainian school for a year. He was simply sent a link with tasks for all subjects and unlimited access to the internet. The teacher said, 'Just do something, we're not monitoring it.' So, I think this situation is designed to help students stay connected... He just downloads something. This isn't learning—it's just a piece of paper. The actual learning happens here, following the Norwegian curriculum. (N4)

This informant linked her decision to continue Ukrainian schooling to the possibility of returning to Ukraine when collective protection expires. She contrasted the Norwegian and Ukrainian school systems, noting that Norwegian schools accept all Ukrainian pupils without

evaluating their academic level and automatically place them according to age. In contrast, she fears that upon returning to Ukraine, children who studied abroad may face restrictive and socially exclusive treatment. To avoid this, she aims to obtain a Ukrainian school certificate to ensure her son is not being placed in a lower grade:

> What motivates me is the uncertainty and unpredictability... Here, we were accepted without anyone asking about grades or completed subjects—the school just took you in. In Ukraine, it's different. They'll say you don't have enough points and send you back a grade or two. So, I don't know what the status will be for those who haven't been in Ukraine for years. I want to be cautious and avoid exposing my son to unnecessary difficulties. I want to avoid contact with a system that might not be very friendly.' (N4)

This narrative highlights the need to improve the information campaign of the Ukrainian Ministry of Education, aimed at providing clear explanations and better understanding of the reintegration process for Ukrainian children returning to the national education system. As shown in previous studies, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has developed a detailed plan to minimize the risks described by the informant (Holm-Hansen et al. 2025). However, our research indicates that Ukrainian refugees in Norway are not receiving these messages from Ukrainian authorities.

11.3 Children's social integration

Do the children participate in after-school activities and have Norwegian friends?

Figure 11.5: Children's attendance in after-school activities (N=166-512).

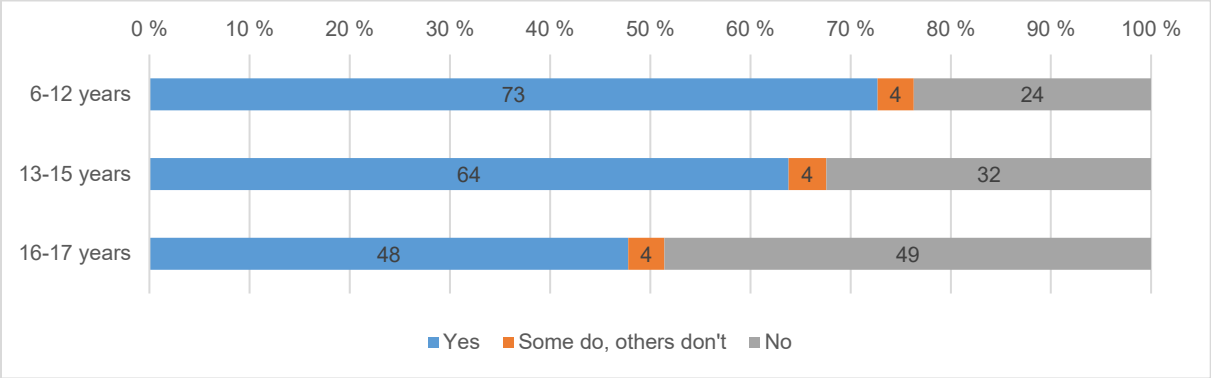


Figure 11.5 shows that participation in after-school activities correlates with age. While over 70% of the 6–12-year-olds participated in after-school activities, only about half of the older teenagers (aged 16–17 years) participated in such activities. A much larger share of those who have lived here for a longer time have children who participate in after-school activities, with between 20-30 percentage points differences between those arriving in 2022 and 2025. The numbers in 2025 largely mirrors those from the 2024 survey, but with a somewhat higher share that participate in the oldest and youngest age group (2-4 percentage points).

Figure 11.6: Do your children have Norwegian friends? (N=166-512).

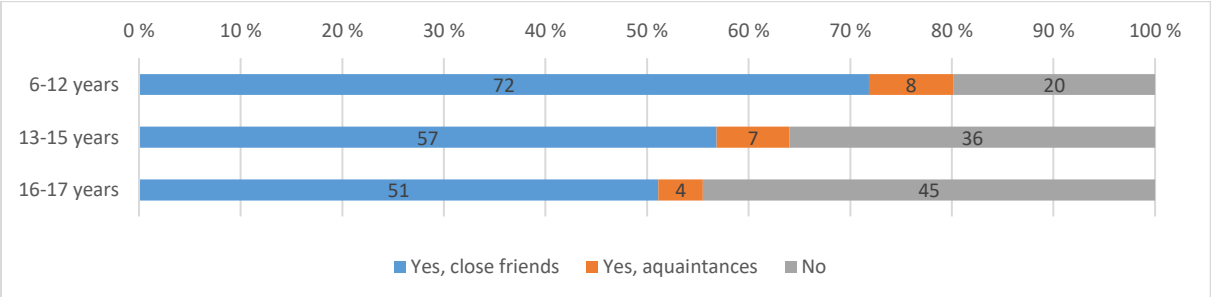


Figure 11.6 shows the similar pattern as with organised after-school activities. While two thirds of the youngest age group (6–12 years) had Norwegian friends, only half of those with children aged 16-17 years answered 'yes'. However, the aggregated numbers show an improvement from the 2024 survey of between 6-7 percentage points higher shares that answered that their children had close Norwegian friends. This aggregated finding is not very surprising, because residence time is a strong predictor for the likelihood of having Norwegian friends.

11.3.1 Improved social integration over time for teenagers

Compared to 2024, the longitudinal perspective shows progress in the integration efforts—particularly for Ukrainian teenagers that may have struggled more with social integration in Norway. In our interviews (according to their parents), by their third year in Norway, Ukrainian teenagers were able to significantly expand their social networks with local youth, make Norwegian friends, develop interest in the educational process, and 'begin a new life' in Norway. It seems that integration of teenagers took longer than that of younger children, but efforts are visible in several areas—education, employment, and social integration. Several informants mentioned that their children plan to pursue higher education in Norway and are generally succeeding at all levels of school education.

All three informants who, in 2024, expressed serious concerns about the well-being and psychological support of their teenage children, noted significant integration progress in 2025. One interviewee laughingly mentioned that her son had become 'one of them' (one of the locals), as his behaviour at school was not ideal due to active interaction with classmates:

> He has both Ukrainian and Norwegian friends, and he enjoys spending time with them. I recently had a serious conversation with his teacher because he was misbehaving together with Norwegian boys. For me, that was good news—it means he finally found a Norwegian group where he is accepted as one of them. The teacher also laughed and said, 'This is probably integration.' (N4)

Another informant who last year observed her daughter struggling with the educational process in a Norwegian school, reported significant progress in 2025. She emphasized that her daughter started receiving good grades, which had a motivating effect and sparked her interest in schooling in Norway:

> Her grades have improved. Yes, grades aren't everything, but when a child comes home with failing marks, it says something. Now she participates in learning, she takes part in projects, she's enthusiastic, and she's getting high grades. And she likes it. I'm very happy, because for our family, this was one of the hardest issues—when she couldn't be interested in learning at all after fleeing occupation.' (N2)

Parents of teenagers also mentioned that their children found new interests and hobbies in Norway, as well as made new friends. Their leisure time is now filled with social interactions, and their psychological condition has improved:

> He has many interests, he's rarely at home, and he spends little time on his phone because he's involved in all sorts of exciting activities. Most of these are with Norwegian friends. (…) So, he feels at home here too.' (N4)

A mother of an 18-year-old girl noted that her daughter met a Norwegian boyfriend, and communication with him has had a positive impact on her language skills and social connections: 'She has a Norwegian friend, kind of a boyfriend. They mostly communicate in English—he's Norwegian. He helps her improve both her English and Norwegian. It's a nice relationship.' (N6)

Several informants also mentioned an additional factor contributing to teenagers' integration efforts over the past year—their first job experience in Norway (summer job). All informants whose children worked during the summer noted that it helped them become more familiar

with Norwegian society, make new friends, and 'start life again' after a long period of uncertainty.

11.4 Psychological needs and services for children

Figure 11.7: Children's need for psychological services (N=899).

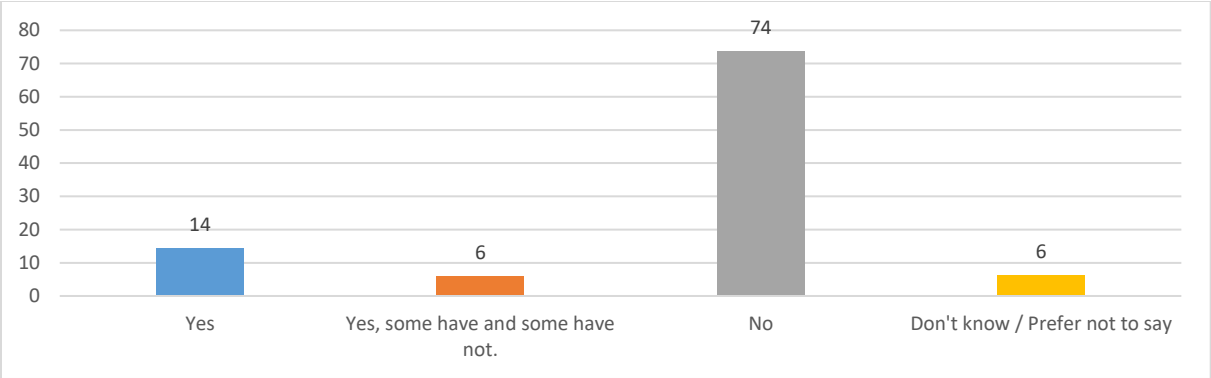


Figure 11.17 shows that 14% answer that their child/children had needed psychological services, while another 6% answered that some did.

Those who answered 'yes' or that (some of) their children had been in need of psychological services (N= 182) were further asked whether their children had received such services. One third answered that they had not received such services. About half had received it, while 8% had only received help for some of their children. Another 8% preferred not to answer.

While the overall picture suggests significant progress in the integration of Ukrainian refugee teenagers in Norway (see chapter 11.3), a few nuances should be emphasized, which closely relates to questions of psychological challenges.

First, newly arrived refugees with teenage children noticed a similar situation to what we observed from the very beginning: newly arrived teenagers experience difficulties in making new friends, adapting to local schooling, and generally finding their 'place' in the new social environment. One of our interviewees, who arrived in Norway in 2024 with three children of different ages, described a huge difference in their integration. Not surprisingly, the most challenging integration was for the eldest son, aged 17, who needed psychological help and remained quite isolated from the new social circle.

Another important case that emerged this year concerns unaccompanied minors coming from Ukraine—a group that has grown significantly since 2024. It is important to emphasise that unaccompanied minors are not the target group of this project (which focuses on adult Ukrainian refugees and their experiences). However, one informant, who encountered this group through her work in the municipality, expressed deep concerns regarding their well-being in Norway, their lack of desire to come here, and the serious psychological challenges they face while staying here. In her job, she organizes different social events for young refugees, and she shared her observations and worries:

> I am deeply concerned about the category called unaccompanied minors. These boys are here for the first time without their father, without their mother, in another country. Many of them did not come because they wanted to leave, but because they were taken out to save them from mobilization. And what we observe here… we had a precedent of an attempted suicide. We have several participants who simply stopped attending school and just sit at home playing computer games. (N4)

As it stems from the informant's reflections, this group feels lonely, lacks social contacts, and is not interested in the life around them. This often leads to depression and other psychological challenges:

> Some chose to come here; some aim to get an education. Everything is fine for them. But for those who either came with some motivation and then faced difficulties here, or were separated from their family, it is very hard… They sleep poorly, look unwell, and are either in a pre-depressive or in a depressive state. (N4)

As this group was not the main focus of our research project, we highlight the relevance of further research on this group of Ukrainian young refugees in Norway.

12 The adults' social integration in Norway

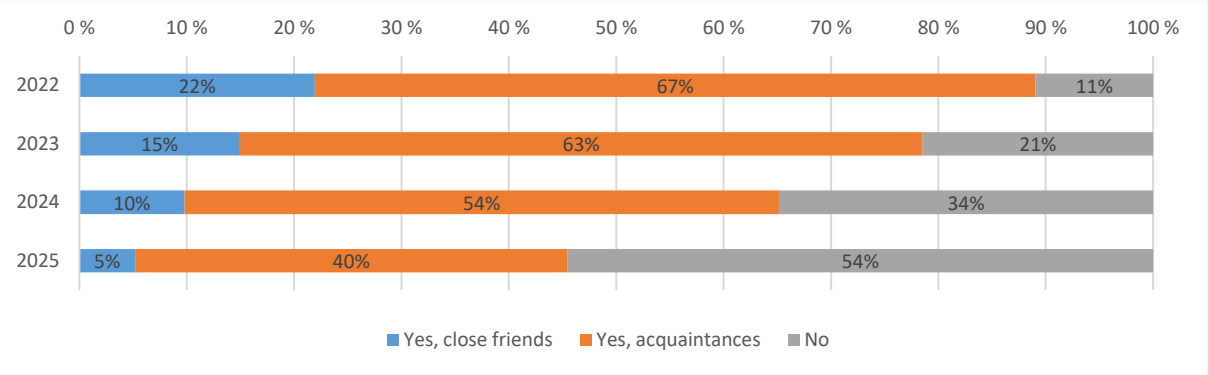
In this chapter, we explore the adults' social integration in Norway. We first account for how adult refugees have socialised in the local communities (concerning friends and social activities). We further analyse refugees' sense of belonging to Ukraine and Norway.

12.1 Social contact in Norway

We asked the respondents about factors that could indicate their social integration into the Norwegian local communities, namely if they had Norwegian friends or participate in different types of local activities.

In the survey, we asked the respondents whether they had someone who is close to them in Norway, and with whom they could talk about personal issues. 74% answered yes, while one fourth did not have such a person. There is a higher share of those who recently arrived that lacked a person close to them.

Figure 12.1: Norwegian friends or acquaintances by time of arrival in Norway (N=2147).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those answering, 'I don't know/prefer not to answer' (1%) have been excluded.

When asked whether they have *Norwegian* friends or acquaintances, figure 12.1 shows large differences by time of arrival in Norway. Not surprisingly, those who have lived in Norway for a longer time more often had Norwegian close friends and acquaintances.

While only 11% of those who arrived in 2022 answered that they had no Norwegian friends and acquaintances, over half of the respondents in 2025 stated the same. Still, even among those who have lived here for over three years, only 22% report to have Norwegian friends.

Although we see an improvement when comparing cohorts, we do *not* see a major improvement when comparing the surveys in 2024 and 2025 for the 2022-cohort, with only a very small increase in the percentages that have close friends and acquaintances (+2 percentage points). These findings may illustrate the challenge of getting to know Norwegians more closely, even with more than three years of living in Norway.

This trend is supported by the qualitative interviews. Interviews conducted in 2025 show that, over time, people's contacts with locals become stronger and their networks wider, although the quality and depth of these interactions vary significantly. The overall impression from the qualitative data is that it is not challenging for Ukrainian refugees to contact locals or make new acquaintances, while close friendships are rarely mentioned in this regard.

As almost all of our informants interviewed in previous years are now employed, the main arena where they meet friends and acquaintances was the workplace. However, several informants mentioned that combining multiple jobs takes a lot of time, leaving little

opportunity for social contacts outside the family circle. Those who gained many new acquaintances at work also often noted that none of them had become close friends:

> Norwegian friends—well, acquaintances appeared through work. But friends… Everyone who was in the category of acquaintances stayed there. This status remains quite distant. Although formally, my circle on Facebook has grown a lot. And I know that when I post something, Norwegians read and share it. But this hasn't led to any real closeness. (N1)

Some express that they do not have a strong desire or need for forging closer friendships with Norwegians:

> I have acquaintances in Norway. I have very good relations with my neighbours—really good. (...) When I was volunteering, I could say I knew a lot of people here. And people knew me. But finding friends, for example… I honestly don't have that goal. (N5)

Some informants mentioned having good relationships with neighbours and occasionally being invited for dinner or to visit a cottage. The overall impression is that many of these interviewees do not lack attention from locals. Nevertheless, several informants noted that they primarily communicate with other Ukrainians, while contact with Norwegians is quite limited:

> Only with Ukrainians. We met some Ukrainian girls our age here. For these three years, we've been hanging out with them all the time. (...) But real Norwegian friends—none. (NN1)

Another informant, who generally assessed her integration in Norway as low, noted that it is difficult for her Norwegian acquaintances to understand the realities she lives with—having family members and friends in Ukraine under constant shelling. She emphasized that there is nothing wrong with this lack of understanding, but she feels that Ukrainians and Norwegians are 'from different worlds.' She believes that if not for the war, her integration could have been much smoother:

> I don't want to integrate further. (...) Maybe my integration would have gone much better if there were no war in Ukraine. Because, no matter what, when there's another shelling and I realize I can't reach the people living in my apartment—I don't even know if I still have an apartment, or if my friends are alive—and upstairs neighbours are laughing over champagne and asking me how I'm doing, and immediately say, 'Well, you're fine,' without waiting for a real answer. (…) Our realities just don't match—they simply don't. It's not their war. For now. (N3)

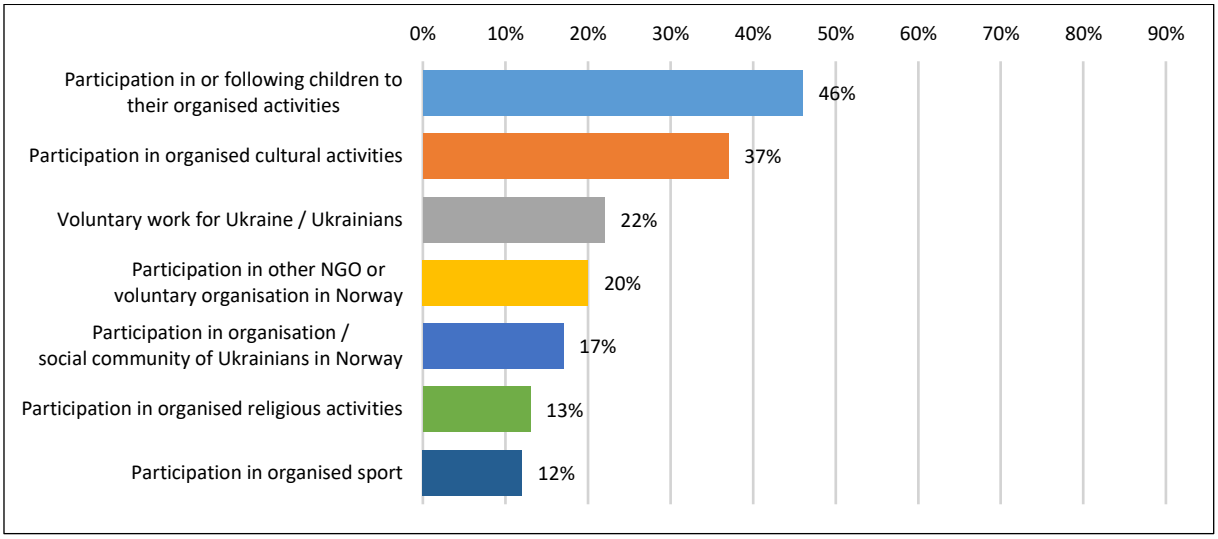
A few had, however, found Norwegian partners, which led to what one informant called 'turbo-integration' in terms of language, culture, and society: 'Well, with him I, of course, have access to parts of Norwegian life and society that I would hardly ever reach on my own.' (N4). Another informant, a mother of an 18-year-old girl, noted that her daughter also met a Norwegian boyfriend, which helped her improve her Norwegian and overall integration in Norway.

12.2 Participation in local activities

How many have participated in voluntary or organised activities in the local community?

A majority (62%) of the respondents say that they participate in at least one of the activities listed in Figure 12.2 below.

Figure 12.2: Participation in social activities during past 12 months (N=2147).



*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 12.2 shows that among parents; activities related to their children's organised activities is common (46%)[38]. Otherwise, participation in organised cultural activities is the most common activity. Many were also involved in voluntary work for Ukraine and Ukrainians (22%), but this has declined from 30% in the 2024 survey. One in five reported to participate in other (as in non-Ukrainian) NGOs or voluntary organisations, and 17% are in organisations or local communities with other Ukrainians.

Two of our informants this year mentioned that they run their own non-governmental organizations focused on assisting Ukrainians who have arrived in Norway and supporting Ukraine through various activities and humanitarian aid. One informant shared that she currently works on several projects in close cooperation with other Ukrainians and locals. Among these are Ukrainian language classes for children and activities for elderly refugees:

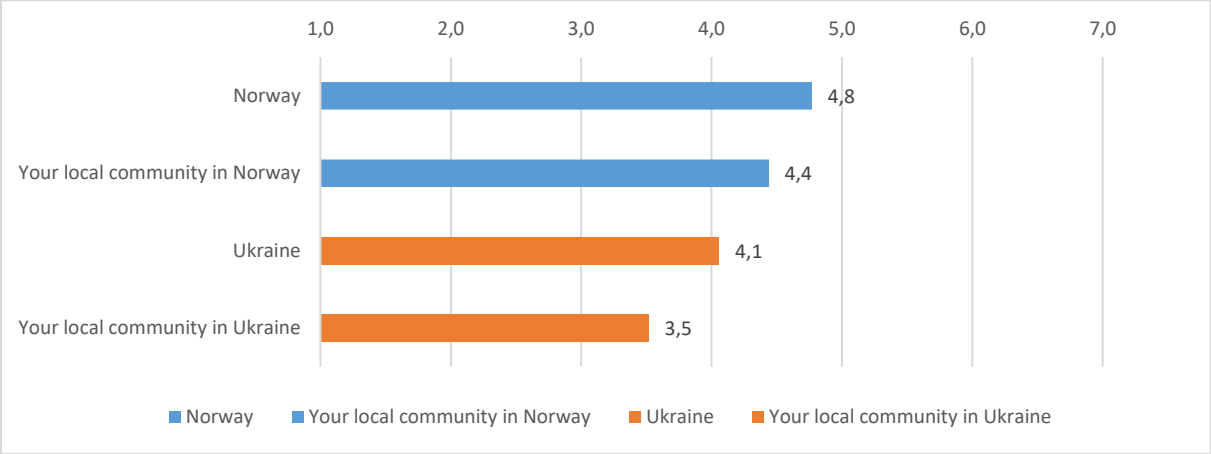
> Then the second ongoing project is meetings with pensioners. We organise support meetings for lonely pensioners because this is quite a big problem. Our pensioners who don't have integration programs just sit locked up at home. They constantly need consultations about medical assistance and basic everyday support. Mapping where things are located. Sometimes we literally drove with them, showed them places, took them somewhere, got them free clothes. Because people in such a state and age, you understand, they are not able to arrange their lives on their own. (N2)

[38] The share for this option is calculated only for those who report to have children under 18 years in Norway (N=521).

12.3 Sense of belonging

In what degree to the Ukrainian refugees feel a sense of belonging to Norway and Ukraine?

Figure 12.3: Sense of belonging to Norway and Ukraine (N=2147).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Scale from 1 (no belonging) to 7 (strong belonging).

Figure 12.3 shows that Ukrainian refugees report a higher sense of belonging to Norway than to Ukraine. While they give a mean score of 4.8 out of 7 for their belonging to Norway, it is 4.1 for Ukraine. Further, there are even lower scores for their belonging to their local community in Ukraine, with only 3.5. As also found in the 2024 report, men report a higher sense of belonging to Norway than women (0,4 scale units) and have particularly lower sense of belonging to Ukraine (-0.7 scale units).

The youngest (18-25 years) and oldest (66+ years) have somewhat lower sense of belonging to Norway than the others. Further, those over 66 years have a much higher sense of belonging to Ukraine than the rest. There are small differences between cohorts, but those arriving in 2025 have a stronger sense of belonging to their local community in Ukraine than those arriving earlier.

Although the sense of belonging varies, one informant—which had also gotten a Norwegian partner—described why she feels very well integrated and truly at home in Norway:

> I feel completely at home here now. I've been working for several years, I speak the language, I watch their TV series. My child attends a regular school, has lots of Norwegian friends, plays football, and is a fan of a Norwegian football team. My mother even chats a little in Norwegian with the neighbour and comes to tell me what she learned. I ask, 'What language were you speaking?' She says, 'Maybe Norwegian.' So, the whole family has settled here, and we feel at home. (N4)

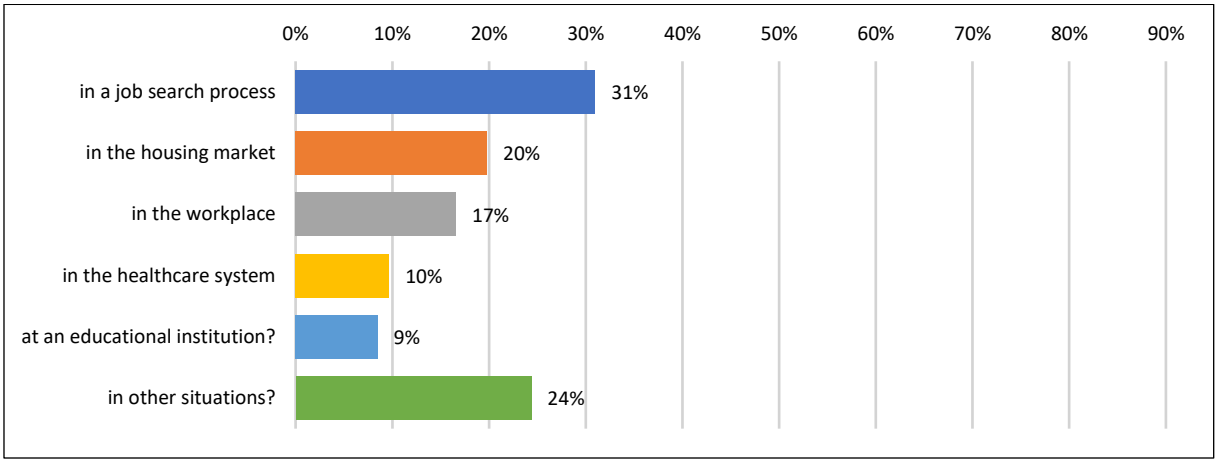
13 Negative differential treatment

A new topic in this year's survey are questions about negative differential treatment. We have built on standardised questions from a national survey (*Levekårsundersøkelsen blant innvandrere*—hereafter referred to as LKI) to immigrants in Norway from 2016[39] (Statistics Norway 2018). Although this survey is ten years old and conditions may have changed, we use its results as a benchmark to compare whether Ukrainian refugees experience more or less differential treatment than other immigrant groups in Norway across various areas.

Although we built on the questions from LKI, we have also made some necessary modifications. One debate in both Norway and other European countries has been whether Ukrainian refugees have been more positively treated than other immigrants and protection seekers (Hernes & Łukasiewicz 2025). The questions in LKI asked whether respondents had experienced differential treatment in Norway in the last 12 months, without specifying whether this was positive or negative. While it is typically understood to refer to negative treatment, the public debate on the positive treatment of Ukrainian refugees could have led to mixed interpretations. To avoid this ambiguity, we explicitly phrased our question as: 'In the past 12 months, have you experienced (negative) differential treatment in Norway due to your immigration background...' to ensure responses were not based on experiences of positive discrimination.

13.1 Experiences with negative differential treatment

Figure 13.1: Experiences with negative differential treatment (N=1260-1767[40]).



*Weighted for gender and age.
**Those who answered 'Not relevant', 'Prefer not to say' or 'I don't know' are excluded from the calculation.

Figure 13.1 shows that almost one third answered that they had experienced negative differential treatment because of their immigrant background in a job searching process, and one in five in the housing market. 17% had experienced it in the workplace. There are fewer experiences with differential treatment in the healthcare system and educational system.

But how are the Ukrainian refugees' experiences compared to other immigrants' experience with differential treatment? Although we need to take large precautions because the two surveys have been conducted at very different points in time (2016 and 2025), and with some minor differences in the wording, it is still interesting to compare the overall levels for

[39] The survey is conducted every tenth year, so there are no newer results.

[40] Job search (N=1260), workplace (N=1484), educational institution (N=1624), healthcare system (N=1767), housing market (N=1369), other situations (N= 1578).

Ukrainian refugees with other immigrants in Norway, as an indication of whether Ukrainian refugees' experiences differ substantially from those of other immigrants in Norway. For a description of the data in LKI, see Statistics Norway (2016).

Figure 13.2: Experiences with negative differential treatment the last 12 months, comparison with LKI and the 2025 survey (N=2147).

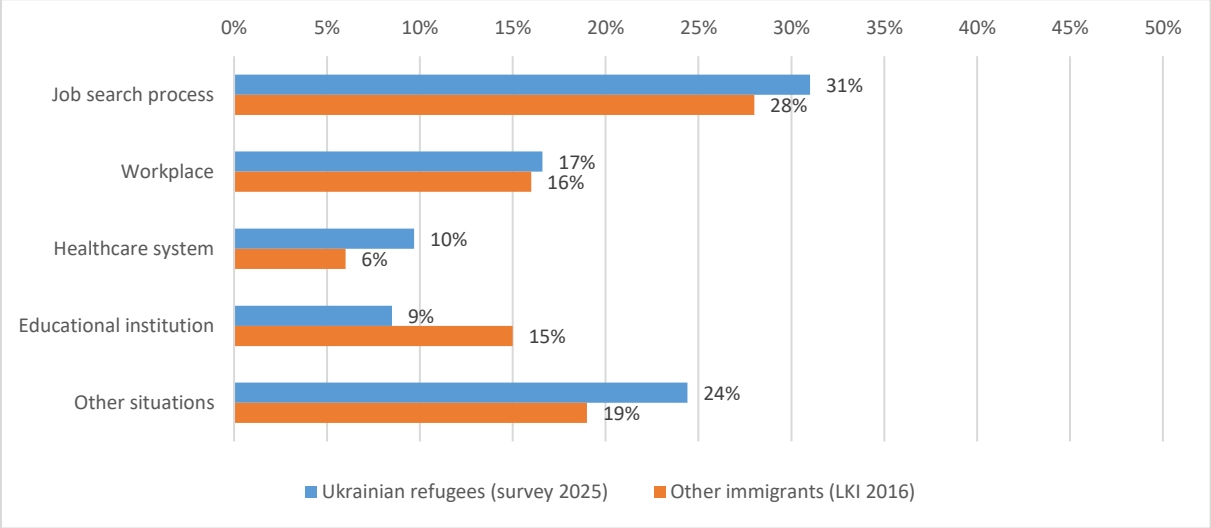
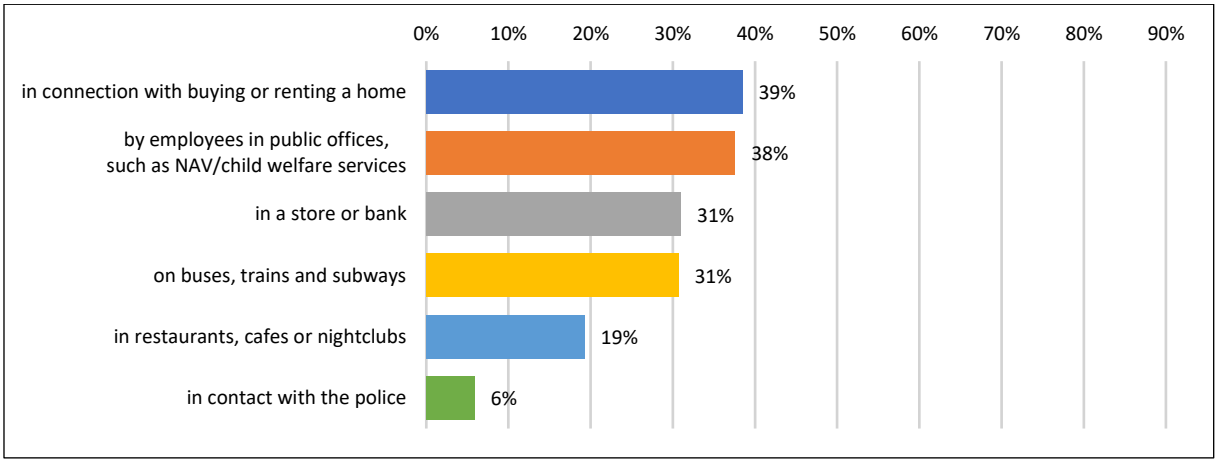


Figure 13.2 shows interesting differences between Ukrainian refugees' and other immigrants' experiences with differential treatment in Norway. A larger share of Ukrainian refugees than other immigrants (in the LKI-survey) answered that they had experienced differential treatment in a job search process, the healthcare system, and in other situations, between 3-5 percentage points higher for Ukrainians. The same amount answers that they had experienced differential treatment in the workplace, but a lower share of the Ukrainians had experienced differential treatment at educational institutions.

The ones that have answered that they had experienced differential treatment in 'other situations' (N=385), were asked in what other areas they had experienced this.

Figure 13.3: Specification of arenas for those who crossed off that they experienced differential treatment in 'other arenas' (N=385).



It is important to emphasise that Figure 13.3 only portrays the share of those who answered that they had experienced differential treatment in 'other situations' and thus illustrates which other areas that are most common among them (it should therefore *not* be read as a percentage of how many in the total population that have experienced differential treatment in these areas). That being said, we see that it is more common to experience differential

treatment in connection with buying a house, in contact with public office, stores and banks and on public transport. It is interesting to see that very few have experienced differential treatment in contact with the police, which resonates well with the consistent findings over the years that the Ukrainian refugees are very satisfied with police services (see chapter 7 in this report).

13.2 Subgroup differences?

Do selected subgroups experience more differential treatment than others?

To investigate subgroup differences, we have conducted regression analysis. The dependent variable is dichotomous and compiled based on whether the respondents answered that they had experienced (negative) differential treatment for at least one of the main categories: in job searches, at the workplace, in an education institution, in the healthcare system or in other arenas. If they had answered 'yes' to any of these arenas, they were coded as 1, otherwise as 0.

While 63% had experienced no such forms of differential treatment, the remaining 37% had experienced it in at least one arena. 17% had experienced such treatment in one category, 9% in two, and 11% in three or more of the listed categories. Only nine respondents – 0.4% – ticked for all six categories). Descriptive statistics and operationalization of the variables are presented in Appendix 1.

Table 13.1: Binary logistic regression. Dependent variable: Experienced differential treatment the last 12 months (vs not) (N=2035).

	Coeff (B)	**Odds ratio / Exp(B)**
Background		
Male (vs female)	0.22	1.24
Age in years	0.09**	1.09**
Age squared	-0.001**	0.999**
Year of arrival (vs 2022)		
2023	-0.05	0.95
2024	-0.34**	0.71**
2025	-0.80**	0.45**
Qualifications		
Completed higher education (vs not)	-0.07	0.93
English level (high score = better skills)	0.27**	1.30**
Norwegian level (high score = better skills)	0.27**	1.30**
Financial situation (high = very good)		
In Norway	-0.38**	0.69**
In Ukraine	0.20**	1.22**
Mental health index (high value = poorer mental health)	0.68	1.9
Centrality of settlement municipality (ref = low)		
High	0.34**	1.40**
Medium	0.33**	1.39**
Constant	-4.073.00	0.02

*Significant levels: *Significant at 0.05 level, **Significant at 0.01 level.
**Weighted for gender and age.
***We also tested for other variables 'children under 18 years'.

Table 13.1 shows some very interesting subgroup differences in the Ukrainian refugees' assessed experiences with (negative) differential treatment. The model has high explanatory power (Nagelkerke R Square = 0.27), which implies that the included variables in the model accounts for 27% of the variation in the outcome.

Although one might assume that Ukrainian men might have experienced more differential treatment than women because of potential negative stigmatization of men who fled Ukraine (Nordmo 2024), there are no statistically significant gender differences. However, there are relevant age differences, and it follows a u-shaped pattern: the youngest and eldest age groups experience less differential treatment than those in the middle age groups.

Those who have lived longer in Norway and arrived before 2024 answered that they experienced differential treatment the last 12 months to a larger degree than those arriving in 2024 and particularly 2025. This could have to do with those staying longer being more exposed to the different arenas asked about in the survey.

Earlier studies of differential treatment often finds that those with higher status and qualifications more often report that they have experienced differential treatment (Schaeffer & Kas 2023; Tuppat et al. 2020; Steinmann, 2018). We do not find a higher likelihood of those having completed higher education to report experience with differential treatment, however, language skills are relevant: the better the Norwegian and English skills, the more likely the respondents are of reporting experience with differential treatment. Also, the financial situation matters—both the prior situation in Ukraine and the current situation in Norway. A better pre-war financial situation in Ukraine is associated with a higher likelihood of reporting differential treatment. In Norway the pattern is reversed: those who currently have a poorer financial situation are more likely to report having experienced differential treatment.

Mental health—operationalised as an index based on a standardised battery of questions on mental health issues (see chapter 7.6 for operationalization)—is also strongly associated with experienced differential treatment, also in line with previous studies (Bhui 2016; Vargas et al. 2020). It is important to emphasise that in this analysis, it is not possible to determine the causal relation between differential treatment and mental health, as it may have both an interdependent and a reinforcing effect. Experienced differential treatment may deteriorate a person's mental health, but prior mental health issues may also affect both the extent of and the interpretation of incidents with discrimination.

Lastly, we find that those who lived in more urban municipalities (both high and medium centrality) experience more differential treatment than those who live in more rural municipalities.

14 Future prospects

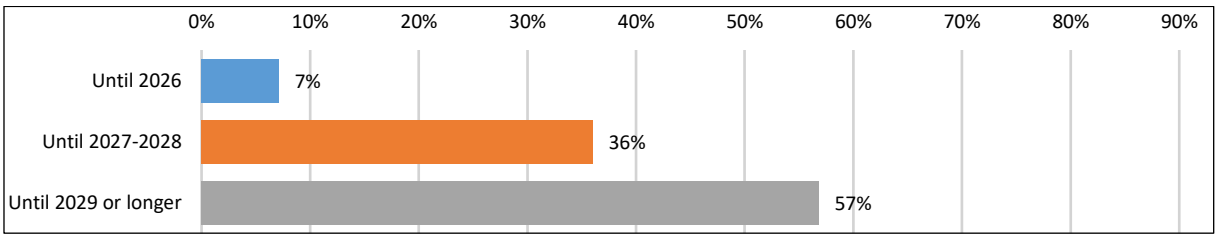
In this chapter, we explore the respondents' future aspirations. We first present their thoughts about how long the war will last. We then analyse their return aspirations, examining how these have evolved between 2022 and 2025 and the factors that influence them. Lastly, we build on the qualitative interviews to explore the rationales underlying these different positions and the dilemmas that people face when assessing their future.

14.1 Thoughts about how long the war will last

How long do the respondents think the war in Ukraine will last?

Most respondents find it hard to estimate how long the war will last, and 62% of the respondents answered, 'Hard to say/I don't know' to this question. However, 38% provided an estimate.

Figure 14.1: Estimation of the duration of the war (N=831).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those who answered, 'Hard to say/don't know' (59%) have been excluded.

Figure 14.1 presents the respondents' estimated duration of the war (excluding the 62% who expressed uncertainty about its end). Over half of these respondents believed that the war would last until 2029 or longer. Only 7% believed that the war will be over by the end of 2026.

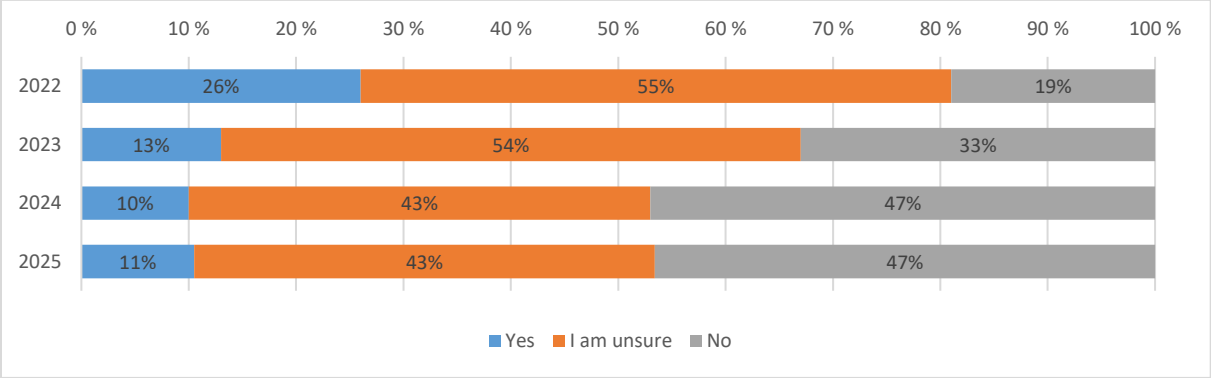
In the interviews, the informants had no illusions that the war would end anytime soon. As of spring 2025, interviewees did not foresee peace in Ukraine emerging in the near future:

> There's no pressure on Russia whatsoever. Why would Russia stop? From their side, there's no need to end it. Things are going well for them, and there are no significant consequences. So why should they stop? The U.S.—well, it doesn't look like they plan to get more involved or apply pressure. Europe isn't taking any practical steps to apply pressure either. The support for Ukraine is not enough to end the war. That support allows us to keep fighting, but it doesn't create conditions that would make Russia stop fighting us. (…)So, I don't see how it can end under the current circumstances. I don't think it will end anytime soon. (N4)

14.2 Mostly stable return aspirations

How have return aspirations changed between 2022 and 2025?

Figure 14.2: Statement: 'I will return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends', comparing answers from the 2022 (N=680), 2023 (N=1596), 2024 (N=1548) and 2025 (N=2147) surveys.

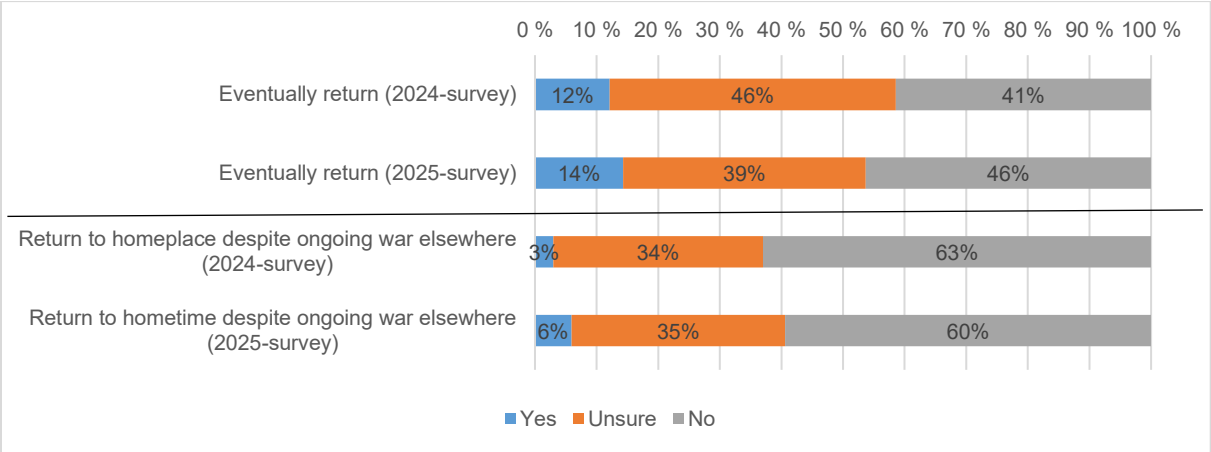


*Weighted by gender and age in all surveys.

Figure 14.2 compares results from the 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 surveys related to the Ukrainian refugees' future prospects for return to Ukraine when the war ends. Although there has been a clear trend with lower return aspirations from 2022 to 2024, the 2025 survey shows a halt in this development, with almost identical return aspirations as in 2024. Only 11% answered that they would return as soon as the war ends, 43% were unsure, while 47% did not plan to return.

However, we see a small development when comparing the 2024 and 2025 survey on two other alternative scenarios: 1) whether the respondents eventually wanted to return to Ukraine, and 2) if they would return if it became safe in their hometown, even while the war was still ongoing in other parts of Ukraine.

Figure 14.3: Statements of return aspirations under different scenarios, 2024 (N=1548) and 2025 (N=2147) surveys



*Weighted by gender and age.

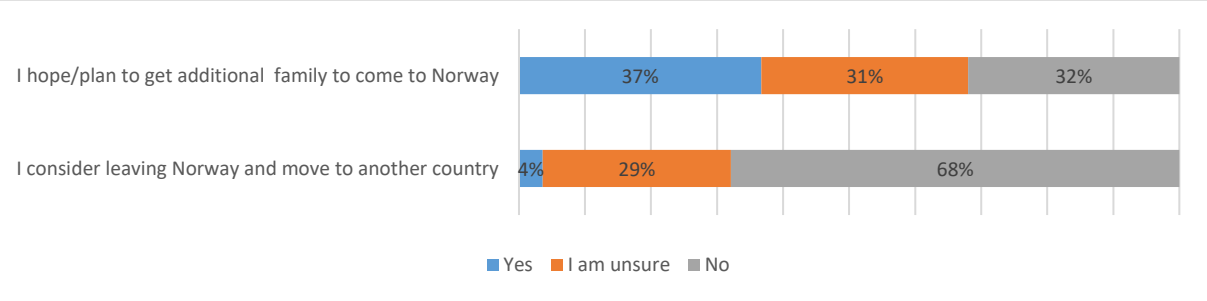
Figure 14.3 shows that fewer respondents are now unsure whether they eventually want to return to Ukraine. There is a small increase (from 12 to 14%) among those who plan for eventual return to Ukraine, while there is also an increase in the share who are determined not to eventually return Ukraine—up 5 percentage points. A very low share is determined to return to Ukraine if their homeplace is safe, but other parts of Ukraine are still at war, only 6%, but this percentage has doubled from 3% in 2024.

Further, very few want to return if it implies starting again in a different part in Ukraine than their homeplace. 83% answered positively to the statement that they would rather continue to live in Norway than to restart their life in a new city in Ukraine. Only 3% were negative to this statement while 14% were unsure.

14.2.1 Plans to move or get additional family to Norway

Do the respondents have future plans to move to another country or bring additional family to Norway?

Figure 14.4: Plans for family reunification or move to another country (N=2147).



*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 14.4 shows that just over one third planned to get additional family to Norway, one third were unsure, and the last third had no such plans. Very few planned to move to another country—only 4%—while 29% were unsure. These numbers mirror the 2024 survey.

14.2.2 Who wants to return and who wants to stay?

Which subgroups of Ukrainian refugees were more inclined to want to stay in Norway or return to Ukraine, and what situational factors affect their return aspirations?

To analyse this question, we use the questions of return in various scenarios to compute a return index. Based in initial analyses exploring the internal correlation between the variables that indicate inclination to return to Ukraine, inclination to remain in Norway or being uncertain, we continued with an index of three variables[41] that showed high internal correlation (Cronbach's alpha = 0.8). For the index, a high score indicates inclination to return, and a low score indicates motivation to stay in Norway (or alternatively not to move back to Ukraine). Those who are unsure are given a medium score. This index was used in a multilinear regression analysis presented in Table 15.1. Descriptive statistics and operationalization of the variables are presented in Appendix 1.

[41] We used the following variables for computing the index: I will return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends; I will return to Ukraine as soon as it is safe in my hometown; I will eventually return to Ukraine. The index was computed by recoding and calculating the mean score on these variables for each of the respondents.

Table 14.1: Multiple linear regression. Dependent variable: Prospects to return to Ukraine index. High value = expressed high motivation to return (i.e., to stay in Norway) (N=2101).

	Unst. Coeff	**Stand. coeff.**
Background		
Male (vs female)	-0,20**	-0,16
Age in years	-0,04	-0,23
Age squared	0,00**	0,45
Family situation in Norway and Ukraine		
Children below 18 years in Norway	0,00	0,00
Partner left in Ukraine	0,12**	0,05
Any children left in Ukraine	0,17**	0,10
Closest family has left Ukraine	-0,16**	-0,09
Year of arrival (vs. 2022)		
2023	-0,01	-0,01
2024	0,08*	0,06
2025	0,11*	0,06
Qualifications		
Maximum upper secondary education (vs higher)	0,00	0,00
Vocational education (vs. higher)	-0,01	-0,01
English level (high score = better skills)	0,01	0,02
Norwegian level (high score = better skills)	-0,10**	-0,14
Employment status (ref. = employed)		
Unemployed	0,04	0,02
Introduction program	0,04	0,03
Student	-0,06	-0,02
Other	0,01	0,01
Financial status (ref. = higher in Norway than in Ukraine)		
Equal status	0,11**	0,09
Lower status	0,06*	0,05
Social integration and welcome in Norway		
Have someone close in Norway	-0,06*	-0,05
Have Norwegian friends	-0,06*	-0,04
Feel welcomed by the Norwegian people	-0,06**	-0,09
Physical health (high value = good health)	-0,07**	-0,11
Believe the war will last until 2029 or longer	-0,20**	-0,14
Constant	1,38**	

*R square = 0,27.

The statistical model presented in table 14.1 has very high explanatory power (R squared = 0.27), which implies that the included variables in the model accounts for 27% of the variation in the outcome.

As previously, we see that men have lower return aspirations than women. Concerning age, we see an interesting pattern in which age operates in a non-linear way (the linear term is not statistically significant). Return aspirations follow a U-shaped curve: younger respondents report relatively high return aspirations; these aspirations decline through midlife and then rise again among the oldest age groups.

Contrary to last year's finding, having children in Norway does not affect return aspirations in this model. However, the family situation in Ukraine is of importance: Those who have a partner or children (below or above 18 years) remaining in Ukraine are more inclined to want to return.

We also find another contrary finding from the 2024 survey: In the 2024 report, we found that the most recent arrivals had lower return aspirations, but in the 2025 survey, we find the opposite. Those arriving more recently (in 2024 and 2025) have higher return aspirations—which aligns with general theories that increased residence time affects return aspirations negatively (Hernes et al. 2025; Balcilar and Nugent 2019; Brekke 2001; 2001b; Willmann-Robleda 2022).

Prior education and English skills do not show significant correlations with return aspirations, but Norwegian skills do—those with better Norwegian skills have lower return aspirations.

Perhaps surprisingly, the employment status in Norway does not affect return aspirations, but the financial status in Norway compared to Ukraine (see chapter 7.7 for operationalization) matters. Those whose financial situation in Norway has not improved compared to in Ukraine – whether equal or lower – show higher return aspirations. Conversely, those who report an improved financial situation in Norway compared to Ukraine have lower return aspirations.

Social integration also matters. Those who have a close friend in Norway, Norwegian friends, and feel welcomed by the Norwegian people are less likely to want to return. Those with good health also have lower return aspirations.

Like in our former surveys, the respondents' estimation of the duration of the war has a large effect on considerations about future residence: those believing that the war will last until 2029 or longer, have considerably lower motivation to return.

14.2.3 Reflections and reasons for aspirations to return or stay

The desire to stay in Norway as the sense of belonging grows

When asked about their future—and whether they see it in Norway, Ukraine, or elsewhere—some expressed a clear desire to remain in Norway and spoke about their plans to build a life here. The reasons provided for not envisioning a return to Ukraine included concerns that even if peace is declared, it may not be a stable peace, and fear of what society awaits them in Ukraine after the war:

> The war might pause, Russia will start preparing again, building up its forces, and then it might return. In Ukraine, even if everything stops, many people are traumatized. They might carry weapons. So, conflicts could arise there. (N1)

Other interviewees conveyed that they neither had an apartment nor people to return to in Ukraine:

> In Ukraine I don't have many friends, and almost all my family is in other countries. I don't know what will happen to my hometown. My apartment was bombed not long ago, so I don't know where I would return to. (N8)

Some of those who certainly wanted to stay in Norway had taken concrete steps toward securing work visas and permanent residency—for example, by pursuing education in fields with high labour demand:

> I would really love to stay here. (…)I will do everything that is required of me. I will get an education in order to try to obtain a work visa as a specialist. I've heard from many people that we Ukrainians live in uncertainty, so they say: 'I won't do anything, I'll just sit and wait.' No. I have a path. I want to stay here, and I'm doing everything I can. (N9)

As described in chapter 8.3, some interviewees had already purchased homes in Norway, viewing this as a declaration of their intent to stay. One homeowner emphasized that Norway had offered them more opportunities than Ukraine ever had:

> We've never considered returning to Ukraine because of the inhumane living conditions there. Unconstitutional laws and the [lack of] desire to live in a state of war. (…) Not only here, but in many countries, you have good roads, less corruption. In three years, we've achieved what we never could in Ukraine. (N10)

Another interviewee, currently enrolled at upper secondary school, also underscored that he had gained increased possibilities in Norway for personal and professional development through education: 'I am from a small village. Now I am in [place], a gigantic city with schools. I have opportunities to earn money. (…) And I could get a European education' (N7).

As in 2024, the desire to provide children with a stable educational process emerged as one of the key reasons for parent's intention to stay in Norway. However, the positive picture of children's integration is challenged by the uncertainty stemming from the temporary nature of collective protection. This uncertainty—whether the future will be in Norway, Ukraine, or another country—provokes reflections on the future paths for their children. Both integration into a new country and reintegration into Ukraine are perceived as difficult:

> My daughter has made progress. I'm very happy about it because it was extremely hard. And only in the last six months has she finally started to adjust to this country. That's why I think that if we have to change countries, it will be very hard. Imagine when people say teenagers integrate quickly. It took her three years. Just to go to school with her head held high and a smile. And not be afraid to stay for pizza. And I can't imagine if she has to go to a Ukrainian school—she's changed so much already. (N2)

Professional and social reasons for return

While some had achieved more in Norway than they felt they could ever have achieved in Ukraine, others were not able to reach the same level of professional and social satisfaction in life that they had known in Ukraine. In this respect, we see that people's previous situation and background in Ukraine also influence their thoughts of the future and a potential return. Interviewees who feel they have been unable to realize themselves professionally in Norway or to socially become fully part of Norwegian society, state these as important reasons for considering a future return to Ukraine when that becomes possible. One woman, who viewed return as an option, stressed that it was much because she did not feel socially adjusted and that she was not happy with the payment and possibilities for professional growth at her current job:

> It's still a relevant question [to return]. You wouldn't hear that from my husband, but for me—yes, because I don't feel socially integrated here. And financially, I haven't reached a level where I feel satisfied, so of course the question remains open. I see my colleagues [in Ukraine] building careers, having influence, feeling fulfilled. Plus, I've been approached several times by people who could help facilitate a return—professionally—in Ukraine. And each time, I can't say 'no'. I hesitate, because honestly, I want to grow professionally, help my country, or at least help Ukrainians here—to feel useful. I don't feel that useful here. (L2)

While many interviewees were worried about how the state and society in Ukraine would be after the war and envisioned difficulties to reintegrate, there were also those who imagined that peace in Ukraine could mean possibilities for them professionally. An interviewee who arrived in Norway in 2024, much because of difficulties to run his private business during wartime, did not exclude a potential return to Ukraine:

> I can't tell you for sure. It depends on how things develop. I don't know whether I'll succeed here, or whether it will make sense to start a business, run my own business here—or maybe in another country. In Ukraine, I know that once the war ends, the opportunities will be completely different—for growth, for earning. And those who want to earn will be able to earn a lot, because everything will be rebuilt and restored—housing, infrastructure, the service market—everything will be brand new. So again, I can't say anything definitively, because there's no stability. (…) You have to be able to adapt. I'm simply ready for any challenge, that's all. (NN6)

While some could imagine returning to Ukraine, others envisioned or hoped for a life in two countries, where they could keep close contact with Ukraine at the same time as they could make use of their Norwegian connection, taking a transnational perspective on their future:

> So much effort has been put into building a life here. To leave it all behind and go back to a place that has changed so drastically—it's hard to imagine. I understand that I could do it, and it might very well happen. But I also understand how much it would take—how much strength, health, energy, and everything else it would cost. I would really like to get a job that connects my Norwegian experience with my Ukrainian background, where I could work with both countries and live in both places. Or live here and travel there for project-based work. I want to have a choice—and for my child to have a choice. So, if you ask me now what I'd like to do, if such an opportunity existed, I'd want to work on Norwegian-Ukrainian projects. That way, no matter how things develop, I could maintain contact with Ukraine and use the results of my integration into Norwegian society—so that this period wouldn't feel wasted. (N4)

One interviewee, who said she felt strong attachments to Ukraine and had close family members still residing there, once had a house in a city which in her words 'simply doesn't exist anymore' (NN1). She was uncertain whether she would like to stay in Norway or not, and much depended on how her life in Norway had developed at the time when return to Ukraine was deemed possible:

> We'll see—if nothing works out here at all. Of course, once there's peace—though I don't know at what cost. If absolutely nothing works out here, no prospects at all, then of course we'll return somehow, figure things out. But if things work out here—if we manage to get a job—then of course we'll stay. (…) Or maybe, I don't know, once the war ends in Ukraine, we'll live between two countries. (NN1)

Her mother had already returned to Ukraine because she fell into a depression in Norway when she felt that nothing worked out for her:

> Mom was used to dancing in Ukraine. She used to go to dance classes, she worked. Constant activities. She was always out in the city, constantly meeting up with her girlfriends. Here, she had no friends. (NN1)

Others highlighted how conditions in both Ukraine and Norway would affect their decision. One interviewee arriving in 2024—who had stayed in a Ukrainian city highly affected by the war—hoped to be able to return. However, she stressed the importance of a well-functioning education system:

> The end of the war and the reopening of all educational institutions—so that kindergartens and schools operate in a normal mode. Not the way things are now, but in a truly normal way. Then yes, maybe then. (NN7)

Although she hoped to return, she said it also depended on their employment and overall situation in Norway at the time when return would become possible:

> We have nothing there. No job, nothing. So, if we go back… What do we do next? We have to think. So, we'll make decisions when that time comes, depending on our employment situation. (NN7)

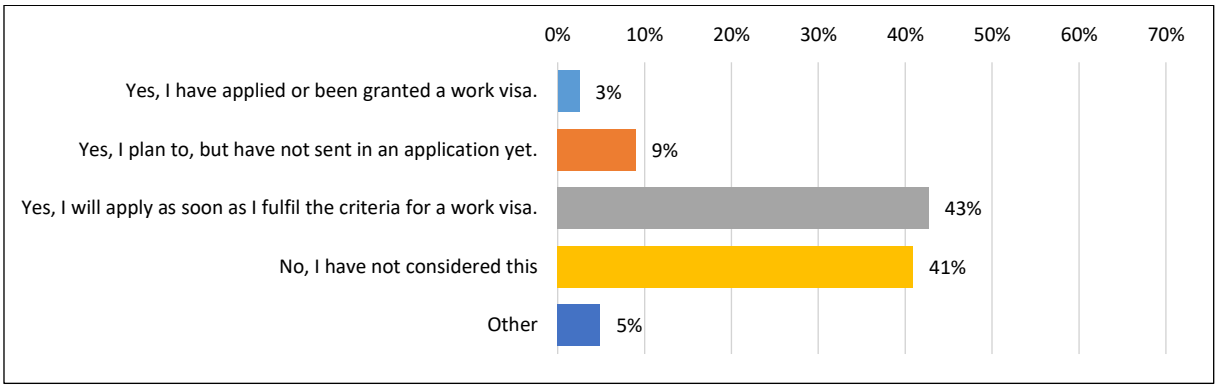
14.2.4 Work visas as a path towards a more secure residence status

With temporary collective protection, Ukrainian refugees have an uncertain future in Norway, and the years on this permit does not count as residence time on the path to a permanent residence permit. One possibility is to transition to a permit that qualifies for permanent residency, such as a work permit. This strategy aligns with EU's recent recommendations to their member countries (EU Commission 2025), where transitions to regular residence permits is seen as a recommendable path out of the temporary protection schemes. As of

November 2025, only 484 persons on collective protection permits had transitioned to work permits[42].

We therefore asked the respondents if they had applied or planned to apply for a work visa instead of collective protection.

Figure 14.5: Share that plan to apply for a work visa (N=2147)



*Weighted by gender and age.

Figure 14.5 shows that although very few have already applied or been granted a work permit, half of the respondents either planned to apply (9%) or planned to apply when they fulfil the criteria for a work permit (43%). 41% had not considered this.

Also in the interviews, several interviewees had started thinking about switching to a work visa, and they mentioned that as a possibility to secure a more permanent residence status in Norway. In this round of interviews, however, one interviewee also voiced her scepticism to such a transition. In her opinion, a work visa did not reflect the reason why she arrived in Norway, nor did it, in her view, provide the same level of protection:

> We're from an occupied territory, and we didn't come here for work. We came because of the war. (…) What is a work visa, really? It has its downsides too. Tomorrow that job might disappear. (…) Many people are starting to understand this now. A year ago, that understanding wasn't there. People said, 'Great, let's switch to a work visa.' Maybe that's fine—if you literally have somewhere to return to. (N2)

Even with a permanent job contract, she noted there were moments of uncertainty in a work visa: 'Okay, but what if it's a private company—they go bankrupt, and I end up on unemployment benefits for eight months. We've thought about this, and we know of such cases.' (N2)

Some interviews did not envision switching to a work visa simply because they had realised that they would not qualify for one:

> Sometimes I read posts on Facebook about how to switch to a work visa. It all feels so distant to me. Because without a profession that Norway truly needs, I probably can't stay here. I understand that. (N6)

[42] Official number received thorough correspondence with UDI.

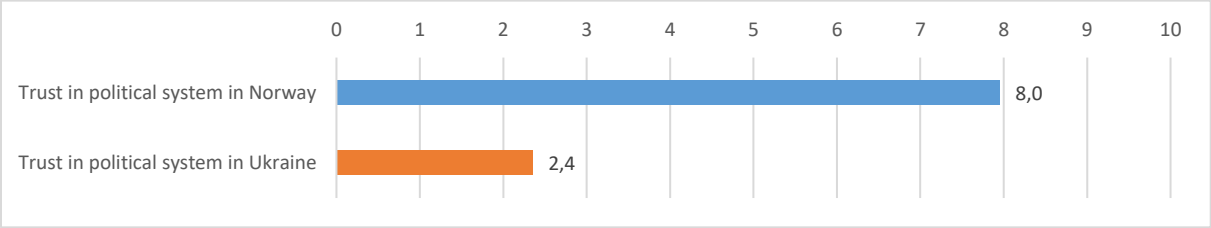
15 Perceptions of Norwegian policies and conditions in Ukraine for future return

In the midst of war, both Ukraine and Norway continuously have to develop and adjust policies for those who fled from Ukraine.

In this chapter, as a background we first present the survey respondents' trust in the political systems in Norway and Ukraine. Thereafter, we present their opinions on two Norwegian policy restrictions (prohibition for temporary visits to Ukraine and the introduction of 'safe zones' in Ukraine), before we describe their experiences and aspirations related to their temporary status, and how Norwegian authorities can ease a potential future return to Ukraine. Lastly, we present what conditions in Ukraine the respondents and interviewees assess as important for a potential return.

15.1 Trust in the political system in Norway and Ukraine

Figure 15.1: Trust in the political system in Norway and Ukraine (N=2147).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Scale 0 (no trust)—10 (fully trust).

Figure 15.1 shows that Ukrainian refugees generally have exceptionally high trust in the Norwegian political system (mean scores of around 8 out of 10), and exceptionally low trust in the Ukrainian political system (2.4 out of 10). Men are generally more negative towards the political system in Ukraine than women. The oldest age groups (from 50+ years) have, higher levels of trust in the political systems in both Norway and Ukraine. Those arriving more recently have higher levels of trust in Norway and lower levels of trust in the political system in Ukraine than those who arrived in 2022.

15.2 Assessment of Norwegian policy restrictions

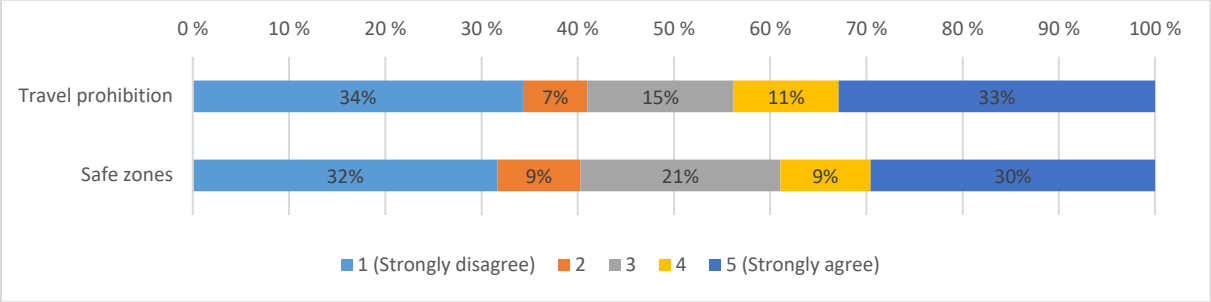
After the rise in arrivals from Ukraine during the fall of 2023, the Norwegian government introduced several restrictive measures for Ukrainian refugees. Among them are restrictions on temporary visits to Ukraine and limiting the eligibility for collective protection for new arrivals from selected parts of Ukraine defined as 'safe zones' (see chapter 3 for more detailed descriptions).

These two restrictions set Norway apart from other European countries. The EU has explicitly highlighted temporary visits to Ukraine as a key measure to help and enable more returns to Ukraine (EU Commission 2025). Norway has, until recently, been the only European country that had introduced 'safe zones', limiting the eligibility for collective protection for those fleeing from only selected areas in Ukraine (Switzerland introduced similar restrictions in November 2025[43]).

[43] https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/humanitarian-aid/switzerland-breaks-ranks-with-eu-on-ukrainian-refugee-policy/90169946

But what do the Ukrainian refugees in Norway themselves think about these restrictions?

Figure 15.2: Assessment of prohibition for short visits to Ukraine (N=1995) and limited eligibility for collective protection for persons from 'safe zones' ' (N=1809).



*Weighted by gender and age.
**Those who answered 'I don't know/No opinion'—7% (travel prohibition) and 16% (safe zones)—are excluded from the calculation.

Figure 15.2 shows that the respondents are very divided when it comes to both restrictions and it follows the same pattern: about one third strongly disagreed, one third strongly agreed, the remaining third were in a more moderate or middle position.

Although we had no specific question in this year's interviews about restrictions for Ukrainian refugees, the prohibition to travel to Ukraine was nevertheless mentioned by several of the interviewees. A young interviewee, whose mother and other close relatives were in Ukraine, highlighted how problematic the travel prohibition was for her:

> The thing is, right now we simply can't go to Ukraine—and that's a really painful issue for us. Before, at least we could go (…) for a short while to Ukraine, just to see our family. Just to see our loved ones. (…) And now we just can't, because if we go to Ukraine, then our protection status—everything—would be gone, just like that. (NN1)

One interviewee stated that if it were not for her boyfriend who was determined to stay in Norway, she would have gone to another country where she could practice her profession and where travels to Ukraine were allowed:

> This restriction feels like imprisonment—it feels like discrimination and racism. The ban on visiting home. Especially when there's no clear perspective for the future. It feels like manipulation and blatant double standards from the Norwegian system. So, at this point, honestly, if it weren't for certain opportunities—like the ones my partner currently has—I would have already left because of this. (3N)

The restrictions, however, can have consequences that go far beyond the inability to reunite with family or maintain physical ties to one's country of origin. A woman in her twenties shared that she had been continuing her university education in Ukraine remotely from Norway since arriving in 2023. This year marked the final year of her six-year program, culminating in a crucial final exam. Although her Ukrainian university had allowed her to stay enrolled from abroad and follow the educational program, there was no flexibility with regard to the final national exam that had to be attended physically. Despite submitting multiple applications to UDI requesting permission to travel to Ukraine to sit for the exam, she was denied the opportunity. The fear of losing her residence status in Norway prevented her from making the trip:

> I sent a lot of documentation to UDI and IMDi and asked many times if I could go home to take the exam, because it was an exam I couldn't take in Europe or online. I had to take it at the university, but I kept getting the same answer: no. Unfortunately, that meant I couldn't complete my degree. (L8)

15.3 Perceptions and expectations about collective protection and the path afterwards

While individuals respond differently to the uncertainty inherent in temporary collective protection, they also hold varying interpretations of the signals sent by Norwegian authorities regarding their status of residency. Expectations diverge around what might happen when collective protection eventually ends—whether it will open pathways to other forms of residency and continued stay in Norway, or whether it will lead to a motivated or even forced return to Ukraine.

15.3.1 Temporary collective protection and an uncertain future

In the 2024 report, we wrote about how temporary collective protection created a sense of uncertainty for many, given its lack of a built-in pathway to permanent residency. As individuals become increasingly integrated into Norwegian society, some begin to experience a growing disconnect between their legal status and their deepening sense of belonging. This tension was echoed again in the current round of interviews, where participants described the temporary nature of collective protection as a persistent source of stress and discomfort:

> It's stressful for everyone because we wait every year. Will we still be allowed to live here or not? And what are we supposed to do if we don't get collective protection anymore? So, during the time we're waiting for that document [the yearly extension of the temporary permit], we're all stressed because—if we're not accepted, what do we do? We'll have to go home. But what do we do at home if we have no home? (…) So, we're all stressed. (L8)

The interviewees explained how the uncertainty with regard to the status of residency added to other factors of uncertainty such as the lack of a permanent job contract and restrictions on traveling to Ukraine. Altogether this uncertainty and instability had brought some interviewees into a stage of depression (see more on mental health in chapter 7.6).

While some interviewees were clearly troubled by the uncertainty associated with temporary collective protection, others acknowledged the uncertainty but appeared less affected by it. One interviewee, who was also open to relocating to other countries—such as the UK or the USA if the opportunity arose—expressed a more relaxed attitude toward the potential end of collective protection and the prospect of having to move again. This contrasted with others who felt they had made a substantial investment in their integration into Norwegian society and therefore viewed the possibility of relocation with greater concern.

While the temporary nature of the collective protection permit was highlighted, some also stressed their gratitude for the protection given, and the fact that Ukrainians were granted protection collectively without restrictions or quotas limiting how many could be accepted across different European countries:

> This is, in my view, an incredible level of support. I thank you every day for this support, for that first step, that initial help. (…) For Ukrainian citizens to have the opportunity for collective protection in any country is a huge thing. (9N)

15.3.2 Unclear and mixed signals

Interviewees were lacking clarity from Norwegian authorities in whether staying on in Norway will be possible or not, and some argued that such clarity would be helpful in several ways:

> I can't control Norwegian politics, but I believe it would be better for everyone if Norway finally clarified its priorities. Any kind of certainty is better than uncertainty. (…) But if they said: 'People who are working, who at the time of peace agreements in Ukraine have been working for two years and haven't received social benefits, have the right to stay in Norway', that would be a huge incentive. People would look for better jobs, they'd try harder, they'd learn the

> language. But this uncertainty, this silence, this avoidance of decisions and conflict. In my opinion, it harms not only Ukrainians, but the Norwegian system itself. (N3)

One interviewee said that she experienced signals from Norwegian authorities to be contradictory. According to her, municipal workers had motivated Ukrainian parents to let their children focus on Norwegian school only and stop digital schooling in Ukraine. For her that was a paradox, if eventually Ukrainians were to return to Ukraine willingly or unwillingly:

> And when it comes to children—is it fair to uproot them after three years? Everyone told us, 'Leave Ukrainian schools, it's too hard, it's not good, it's stressful for children. (…) It was said at Nav—directly during integration courses, and in many cities across Norway. (N2)

Through the capacity of her work, this interviewee had a large network of Ukrainian and municipal staff. She described what she saw as a growing tendency during the last year that Ukrainians are being told that they will have to return to Ukraine:

> There's been a strange trend over the past year. People are being told directly, 'You'll be sent back.' And this is said openly at official meetings. I think that's wrong. We even considered writing a letter from our organization, but people weren't ready to go public—they didn't want to harm themselves. So, we didn't write the letter. This kind of communication is wrong. First of all—how can a Nav employee even know government policy? If such a policy exists and we don't know about it, then the government isn't being honest. (N2)

15.3.3 Varying hopes, but predications of a more differentiated approach

Some interviewees, though, were quite optimistic about their opportunities to stay on and live in Norway also after collective protection. They expected that Norway would give people the choice of whether or not to return to Ukraine:

> My feeling is, of course, that they [Norway] won't abandon us. They'll give people the chance to make a decision, and if Norway negotiates with Ukraine, then I think Norway will offer each person currently here under protection the choice to either return home—with financial support from Norway, and many will go. And those who don't want financial aid to live in Ukraine, if they have jobs and can support themselves, there should be some possibility to stay here. Because, after all, a lot of life has already happened here. In August, it'll be three years for us. Children are being born—they're fully living here now, you know? (N1)

Another interviewee had misunderstood the legislation and seemed to think that there would be an automatic transition to permanent residency after collective protection:

> I just see it like this: they extended it for us this week for two years, but still up to five, right? According to the law as I read it, there will be some kind of automatic permit that guarantees residence here, and then you can apply for permanent residency. (N10)

Others expressed a more cautious outlook, grounding it in recent restrictions and political adjustments implemented by Norwegian authorities. These changes had shaped their expectations about future policies. For instance, Norway had already begun differentiating between Ukrainians from various regions, deeming individuals from certain areas ineligible for collective protection. As a result, some interviewees anticipated that Norway might continue this differentiated approach—potentially determining, in the future, who would be permitted to remain in the country and who might be required to return:

> We've all understood by now that Norwegians are very rational. Very rational—and we no longer have the illusions we had in the first year. (…) And rationally, it would make sense to divide people into categories. (…) Look—they divided Ukraine without long moral deliberations. They split it into 'safe' and 'unsafe' zones. So why not apply that to people too? There could be separation based on employment status, whether someone comes from occupied or non-occupied territories, or from hot zones like Sumy or Kharkiv. These aren't occupied, but can you really live a full life there? If such divisions are made, they'll be perceived as fair. Because this difference is already felt among Ukrainians. Not tension

> exactly—I wouldn't call it tension—but different circumstances leave a mark. So maybe the government should pay attention to that. It would motivate some people to work. (L2)

Another interviewee predicted that:

> I think there will be some forms of support and possibilities to stay, but probably on an individual basis. What those forms will be, and whether it becomes a widespread practice or remains very much a case-by-case decision—I don't know. (N4)

One interviewee conveyed that in private conversations with Norwegian citizens, she got the impression that Ukrainians were viewed as a resource in Norway, however she was still slightly pessimistic in her outlooks:

> In private conversations, they say that Ukrainians will probably be allowed to stay. On what terms—I don't know. I can't imagine. But I don't believe that Norway, based on everything it has done so far, will create conditions that truly respect human rights. It could be a situation where, after the end of collective protection, Ukrainians are allowed to live here for another 5–7 years— without voting rights, without the right to citizenship— and still have to prove for seven more years that we are worthy of being here, of becoming citizens. (N3)

While some had quite clear expectations—or at least ideas—of what would await them after collective protection, some refrained from having any expectations. One interviewee conveyed that she had learned how to live in the 'hear and now' and was focusing on making the most out of current everyday life in Norway and following the integration measures offered:

> I don't know, to be honest. You know, since the war started, we stopped thinking ahead. I just think about today. Honestly, I don't know. I think we just have to act. If something needs to be done today, then we do it. Because we don't know what tomorrow will bring. So, we're putting in all our effort—learning the language, going to practice, doing everything they tell us. And then we'll see how things go. (NN7)

15.3.4 How Norwegian authorities can ease return

More than 900 of the survey respondents gave a response to an open-ended question on what Norwegian authorities could do to make it easier for Ukrainians to return to Ukraine after the war. The responses reveal considerable variation in how respondents view the role of Norwegian authorities in facilitating eventual return to Ukraine. While a substantial share expressed uncertainty, many also explicitly stated that Norway should not play a role in influencing whether and when Ukrainians return. Many wrote simply *'Nothing' or 'That's an individual and a family choice'* or emphasised that decisions about return must rest entirely with migrants themselves, or with Ukrainian authorities. Such statements indicate that many respondents do not perceive return as something Norwegian authorities should actively be involved in.

Many respondents also used this item to express gratitude to Norway and Norwegians for everything they do by receiving and protecting Ukrainians, and some opined that Norway should just continue to do what it is already doing or that what Norway has already done is more than sufficient.

Among those who did provide concrete suggestions, one theme concerned travel restrictions. Many respondents pointed to the current rule that visiting Ukraine leads to potential loss of collective protection, describing it as both emotionally and practically damaging. The ban on short visits was by many seen as counterproductive in relation to long-term return. Rather than encouraging eventual reintegration in Norway, such restrictions are perceived to weaken ties to Ukraine and therefore make return *less* likely. One respondent explained:

> Norwegian authorities could soften this ban or create exceptions that would allow families to see each other, even for a short time, without risking the loss of their protection status. This would help preserve families and social ties and would also make our return to Ukraine easier

> after the war, because we would not lose contact with our loved ones and with our home country. (survey respondent)

A second major theme concerns economic and practical support for returnees. Although such measures were not strongly emphasised in the qualitative interviews, several survey respondents mentioned that Norwegian authorities could help by providing financial assistance for travel, housing or rebuilding destroyed homes. Many requested only some modest support to make the transfer easier. For example, one respondent noted that Norwegian authorities could:

> (…) provide some financial support for transport to Ukraine and for living expenses during the first months until a job is found. (survey respondent)

Others mentioned needs more directly associated with reconstruction:

> Assistance with housing or property that has been damaged in Ukraine. Because there is absolutely nowhere to return to. (survey respondent)

A third group of respondents shifted focus away from individual return and towards the broader context. They emphasised that Norway could contribute indirectly by supporting Ukraine's economic and political recovery. For these respondents, meaningful return depends less on individual assistance and more on Ukraine's post-war reconstruction, stability and governance. One respondent asked for 'support for Ukraine's economic recovery, assistance with rebuilding infrastructure and especially housing for those who have lost it.' Several argued that if Norway and other Western countries help rebuild Ukraine, people will return on their own initiative once conditions allow for it.

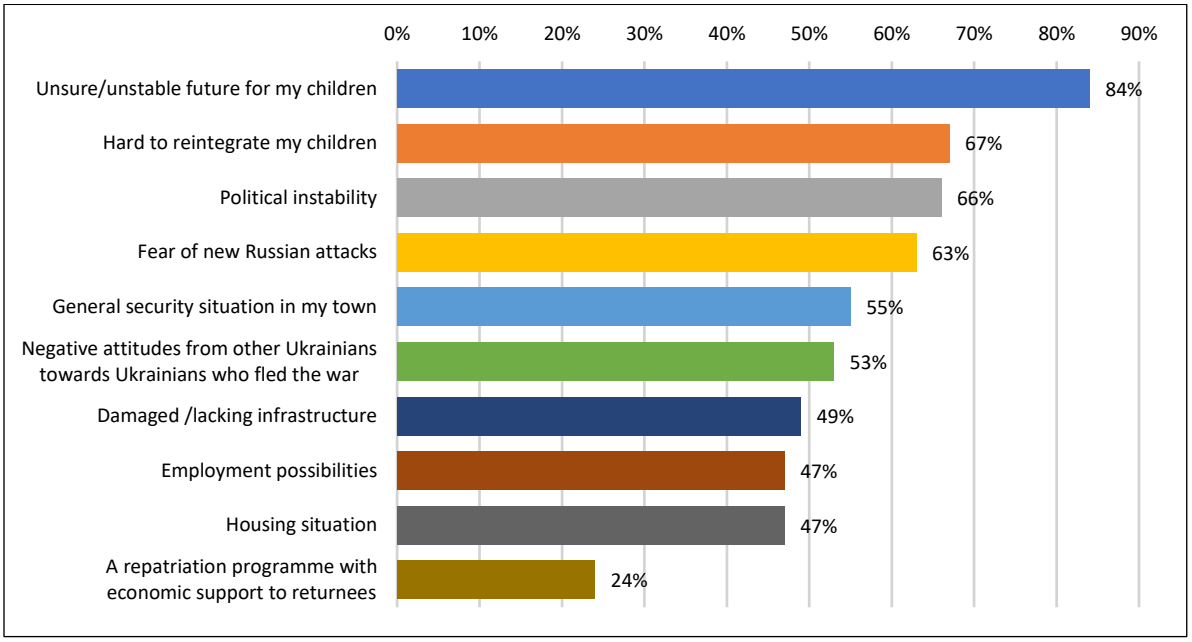
Finally, a smaller group of respondents also highlighted the psychological impact of living for years with uncertainty regarding the future of temporary protection. Rather than suggesting concrete measures to facilitate return, they argued that Norwegian authorities could help by reducing anxiety and unpredictability. In their view, clearer information about future rights and what to expect would make it easier to plan, whether the goal is eventual return or continued stay. As one respondent explained:

> People have now lived for four years in uncertainty and in fear of being sent back to Ukraine at any moment. This creates mental pressure on them and on their children, hinders integration, and reduces their motivation to seek employment. Therefore, in my view, Norwegian authorities should give people a sense of stability and confidence about the future. (survey respondent)

15.4 Conditions for return in Ukraine

Conditions and policies in Ukraine may also prove decisive for future return decisions. After the war, which specific circumstances in Ukraine would influence whether respondents choose to return or not?

Figure 15.3: Conditions in Ukraine that would affect return aspirations after the war (multiple options possible) (N=2147).



*Weighted for gender and age.

Figure 15.3 shows how that for parents[44], the fear of an unsure or unstable future for their children (84%) and/or insecurity about how to reintegrate their children (67%) are the top concerns.

Security and political conditions follow among top concerns, including political instability, fear of new Russian attacks and the general security situation (even though the premise of the question concerns conditions after the war, it often reflects the doubts many Ukrainians have about the prospects for stable peace). The younger age groups are more concerned about these aspects than the older age groups.

The fear of negative attitudes is also mentioned by more than half of the respondents. Although this is somewhat more prominent among men (58%), also 50% of the women answer that they fear negative attitudes. Thus, this fear is not solely connected to a fear of stigmatization of men who fled, but a more general concern for men and women alike.

However, just below half of the respondents also highlight damaged infrastructure, employment possibilities and the housing situation as relevant factors. This is interesting, because in debates and articles about future return and reintegration of Ukrainian refugees, infrastructure, housing and employment are often highlighted as the main topics (Kulu *et al.* 2023; Yeo & Pysmenna 2024). However, these findings indicate that the respondents' evaluation is more complex—focusing even more on political and societal aspects than practical challenges.

[44] Figures for the first two statements about children are calculated for those who reported to have children under 18 years (N=902).

Lastly, it is worth noting that only one in four answers that a repatriation programme with economic support for refugees is a relevant condition for return.

15.4.1 Expectations towards Ukraine in order to return

When asked what Ukrainian authorities could do to encourage return after the war, interviewees' responses centred around three key themes: 1) the political situation and social equality, 2) the need for Ukraine to foster strong, positive relations with its diaspora abroad, and 3) the importance of creating favourable working and living conditions within the country. These were seen as essential steps toward making return a realistic and appealing option for those who have settled elsewhere.

Political corruption and social equality

Political stability is mentioned as an important condition for potential return by two-thirds in the survey. In the interviews, working to prevent corruption and to promote equality in society was also put forward as important:

> Making sure that in Ukraine, corruption is truly eradicated. And that people stop doing things that are just absurd when it comes to official positions and all that. Right now, it's clear that there's inequality—some people remain in safe places, driving around in fancy cars. They're not concerned with the war at all. They have their own goals, their own life plans. We need to make society more balanced—take examples from countries that have succeeded. Not in the sense that everyone is treated the same, but we shouldn't allow such a huge gap between the elites and those working in factories or as cleaners. There shouldn't be this attitude that cleaners are somehow lesser. But that attitude still exists, doesn't it? (N6)

Building good relations with the Ukrainian diaspora abroad

In the 2024 report, interviewees voiced concerns about how Ukrainian society might receive returnees after the war. This year's round of interviews echoed those worries, with several participants emphasizing that it is a crucial responsibility for Ukrainian authorities to actively prevent—and avoid contributing to—the emergence of a social divide between Ukrainians who remained in the country during the war and those who lived abroad.

> They [Ukrainians abroad] feel shame, first and foremost. For being safe. (…) Someone who wants to post [on social media] about their life can't do it, because they're afraid of hate and judgment. 'You left, saved yourself, and we're still here,' and so on. Plus, that hate is reinforced by the state—by Ukraine—because the country hasn't developed a policy toward the diaspora. (N2)

In this regard, it is worth mentioning that in late 2024, the Ukrainian government did establish a Ministry of National Unity, which had the overarching responsibility for Ukrainian citizens living abroad, aiming to support their rights and interests and to create conditions for their voluntary return (Holm-Hansen et al. 2025). The ministry was, however, closed down in July 2025, and remaining tasks were transferred to the Ministry of Social Policy.

One interviewee highlighted the importance of what messages Ukrainian officials are sending to Ukrainians residing abroad:

> Let's start with stopping the kinds of statements our president and other politicians are making. That alone would be enough. Because when our leaders say that Ukrainians 'ran away,' that they should pay double taxes, that they owe something to someone—those who left—this does absolutely nothing to encourage people to return. (…) Perhaps the turning point will come when Ukrainians abroad see that Ukraine is actively fighting the information war. And that Ukraine values its diaspora. That it sees the diaspora as a resource. (3N)

In the survey, we find that only one fourth mentioned a repatriation programme with economic support for returnees as an important condition for return. The interviews shed light on this hesitancy for such programmes. In addition to precenting cleavage between 'stayers' and 'goers' rhetorically, several interviewees underlined the importance of *not* implementing

‘privileges’ for returnees that could contribute to a feeling of injustice among those who had stayed in Ukraine during the war.

> I think that if the state starts talking about and creating special conditions for those who left to return, it could create a fairly strong divide in society. Because for those who stayed behind and won’t be offered such special conditions, I think it will be very painful. Like, ‘Seriously? Those guys left, we sat in bomb shelters, and now they’re getting perks to come back? And we, who stayed in the shelters, don’t need any perks?’ I think this is a very complex situation with many layers—from political to social. (N4)

Creating good conditions for employment, businesses and working life in Ukraine

The third core issue that the interviewees emphasised was that Ukrainian authorities should prioritize is the creation of conditions that enable not only earning a livelihood, but also living a dignified and fulfilling working life:

> Well, first and foremost, what people need in their own country is jobs—without question. I believe they will come. Right now, there’s already a significant shortage of workforce in Ukraine. But Ukraine must understand that those who have already worked in European countries, where the relationships between employers and employees are different—and in Europe, especially in Norway, they truly are different—Ukraine needs to realize that people won’t want to return to the old conditions. Where a manager decides whether you’re allowed to take vacation, or in some cases, whether you can leave work on time or have to stay late to finish something without extra pay, because ‘it needs to be done,’ right? (9N)

As evident from the citation above, staying abroad shape Ukrainians expectations also towards conditions in Ukraine after the war and not all would be willing to readjust to a Ukraine that had not undergone the same development as themselves.

One interviewee had run a private company before arriving in Norway in 2024. In the end before leaving, he had experienced difficulties getting staff because his male employees were afraid to leave their homes and go to work because of mobilization. He emphasised security for private businesses as crucial for people’s return to Ukraine:

> It’s not even about the conditions… Again—what conditions? At the very least, just don’t interfere. That’s all. Nothing more is needed. We won’t have the kind of conditions in Ukraine like we do here in Norway, where you get payments and support. Just don’t obstruct or pressure us. At least give us the assurance that my employees won’t be taken off the street on their way to work. I trained them for a whole year, spent a lot of time and energy. I need them right now. At least give guarantees that no one will come and force you to pay a bribe just to keep your business running. That’s it. Right now, there’s no certainty in Ukraine. (NN6)

Improving living conditions for people in ‘ordinary jobs’ and people on pension was brought up by several interviews:

> Ukraine needs to at least raise salaries and pensions, because they’re just so low. (…) Really, the wages and pensions are extremely low. My mom barely gets by on her salary. We help her out.

However, this interviewee also questioned whether employment and money would be the main factors driving Ukrainian refugees’ decisions to return, and that it was more of an emotional decision driven by belonging and patriotism:

> But I think motivation comes from within. If someone truly wants to return, they will. From an inner love, a sense of belonging—’I’m from Ukraine, I should live there.’ I think that’s the only thing that can motivate people. Because there are no conditions there. People will return purely out of patriotism. When there’s a peaceful sky, people will go back—maybe if they still have apartments or houses. (NN1)

What do survey respondents say?

In an open-ended question in the survey, respondents were asked what Ukrainian authorities could do to make it easier for Ukrainians to return to Ukraine after the war. More than 1000

respondents provided an answer to this question, although a considerable share just stated that they were unsure, didn't know, found it difficult to answer, etc. However, many of the respondents gave long and detailed answers. The responses largely confirm the three core themes identified in the qualitative interviews: demands for political reform and social equality, the need for Ukraine to build a constructive relationship with its diaspora, and the importance of creating favourable living and working conditions in the post-war period. In line with the qualitative interviews, respondents often emphasise that meaningful return will only be possible in a Ukraine perceived as more transparent, predictable and socially just than before the full-scale invasion.

As in the interviews, a large number of the survey respondents stress the necessity of fighting corruption, strengthening the rule of law and reducing social inequality. Several highlight how arbitrary decision-making, unequal treatment and the expectation of informal payments currently undermine trust in public institutions in Ukraine.

The second theme—relations between Ukraine and its diaspora—is also strongly reflected in the written responses. As also reflected in figure 15.3, many respondents express concern that returnees may face stigma or resentment from those who remained in Ukraine during the war. They call on Ukrainian authorities to acknowledge the contributions of Ukrainians abroad, avoid divisive rhetoric and promote a sense of national unity that includes the diaspora.

Third, respondents emphasise economic and social conditions as central to their return decisions. While interviewees from the qualitative interviews mostly spoke of jobs, wages and business conditions, survey respondents also mention the need for safe working environments, better healthcare, reliable public services, adequate housing, stable infrastructure and protection from arbitrary mobilisation. Probably these expectations reflect the fact that many by now have lived for several years in Norway and have become accustomed to more predictable systems of welfare and governance.

Together the interviews and the responses to the open-ended question indicate that the willingness to return after the war depends not only on peace, but on whether Ukraine succeeds in creating a state that is secure, fair and inclusive for all its citizens—whether they stayed in Ukraine or left for another country.

Part 3

The municipal refugee services' experiences with Ukrainian refugees and related policies

16 Data and methods for analysing municipal refugee services' work and assessments

A description of the overall research design is presented in chapter 1.1. In this section, we describe the data and methods of analysis of the municipalities' refugee services.

This years' analysis of municipal refugee work is based on data from a survey to all municipal refugee services. The survey contains several questions identical to questions in the 2023 and 2024 surveys, which makes it possible to analyse developments over time. In the 2025 survey, we have, however, included some new, relevant topics (for instance downsizing of refugee services, secondary migration within Norway). We have also elaborated somewhat the topics of labour market inclusion and the municipality as employer for refugees. Inspiration to new questions comes from other NIBR-projects, particularly a survey (conducted in the UKRINT project) to leaders and employees in Nav in June 2025 and the assessment of the 'Flyktninger i jobb' ('refugees at work') network (Myrvold et al. 2025). The researchers also got input on relevant questions in the current situation from the project's reference group.

The survey was conducted in October 2025. The questionnaire was distributed by e-mail to all municipal e-mailboxes, requesting it to be forwarded to the leader of the refugee service in the municipality. A similar survey was sent to Oslo's 15 city districts in parallel with the survey sent to the municipalities.

226 municipalities answered the survey, a response rate of approximately 64%. Some municipalities cooperate closely on the refugee services, and a couple of the service leaders contacted us to communicate that they would only complete the survey for the host municipality. We have not taken this into account when calculating the response rate. Eight of 15 city districts in the municipality of Oslo completed the survey, representing a response rate of 53%. The results of the two surveys were combined in the analyses.

68% of municipalities participating in the 2025 survey also participated in 2024 (not including the city districts of Oslo).

Quantitative data material

The main data material from the survey consists of quantitative data on a wide range of issues concerning the refugee services. The respondents appear to have completed the survey very conscientiously. Few data are missing, apart from answers to questions obviously not relevant for all the respondents.

Data from the survey were combined with register data from Statistics Norway about the municipalities, namely population, location/centrality, finances, number of refugees settled in 2022-2025 and unemployment.

The analyses conducted in this report are mainly simple means, frequency distributions and bivariate correlations. There is substantial variation in the data. We have analysed the material with the general hypothesis that municipality size (population), location and refugee settlement experience are variables that may explain some of the variance. However, these three variables are highly correlated. Usually, we show the results for one of the variables and only make comments on correlations in the text if there are results of particular interest.

Qualitative data material

In addition to the quantitative data, we asked several open-ended questions in the survey, where respondents were asked to formulate their viewpoints in their own words. We also asked informants for supplementary comments on several issues. These answers constitute almost 70 pages of text. Due to the time available to prepare this report, we have not yet

been able to analyse this qualitative data material systematically. These data are therefore used mainly for illustrative purposes, and all quotes in this part of the report are from open questions in the survey. The quotations and examples from the open questions are used partly to show 'typical' arguments and partly to illustrate the variation in respondents' views.

Dropout analysis

In order to see whether the participating refugee services are representative, we conducted a dropout analysis. We primarily analysed the distribution of participating municipalities on two main variables: population size and location (county).

Table 16.1: Participating municipalities as share of all municipalities, by population size. Oslo's eight participating city districts are counted as one large municipality.

Municipality size	Number of municipalities	Participating municipalities	Percent participating
3000 and fewer	129	78	61%
3001-9000	104	75	72%
9001-30000	87	45	52%
30001 and more	37	29	78%
Total	357	227	64%

Table 16.1 shows that all categories of municipalities (by size) are represented in our material, ranging from 52% of the total number of municipalities to 72%.

Table 16.2: Participating municipalities as share of all municipalities in the county. Oslo: number and percent of city districts.

County	Number of municipalities	Number of participating municipalities	Percent participating
Agder	25	17	68 %
Akershus	21	13	62 %
Buskerud	18	8	44 %
Finnmark	18	11	61 %
Innlandet	46	33	72 %
Møre og Romsdal	27	21	78 %
Nordland	41	24	59 %
Oslo	15	8	53 %
Østfold	12	6	50%
Rogaland	23	16	70 %
Telemark	17	11	65 %
Troms	21	12	57 %
Trøndelag	38	26	68 %
Vestfold	6	5	83 %
Vestland	43	23	53 %

Table 16.2 shows that all counties, except Buskerud, are represented by at least 50% of the municipalities in the county. While 83% of the municipalities in Vestfold have answered our survey, Buskerud has 44% and Østfold 50% of their municipalities participating. Buskerud's relative low response rate may be due to extensive inter-municipal organization of the refugee services.

All in all, we conclude that there are no obvious regional biases in the material since all main parts of the country are well represented in the survey data material.

17 Organisation, cooperation and governance of the settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees

Norwegian municipalities play a crucial role in the settlement and integration of refugees. Through local refugee services, they are responsible for providing all frontline public services to refugees within their municipalities and for providing introduction programmes and Norwegian language training.

Municipalities have significant flexibility in how they address their tasks. There are considerable differences between municipalities in their follow-up of 'their' refugees. Some of these differences occur due to the wide variation between Norwegian municipalities, both in population, capacities, competence and location. Basically, irrespective of population size and location, they have the same responsibilities towards refugees settled in their area.

This section of the report addresses four main questions:

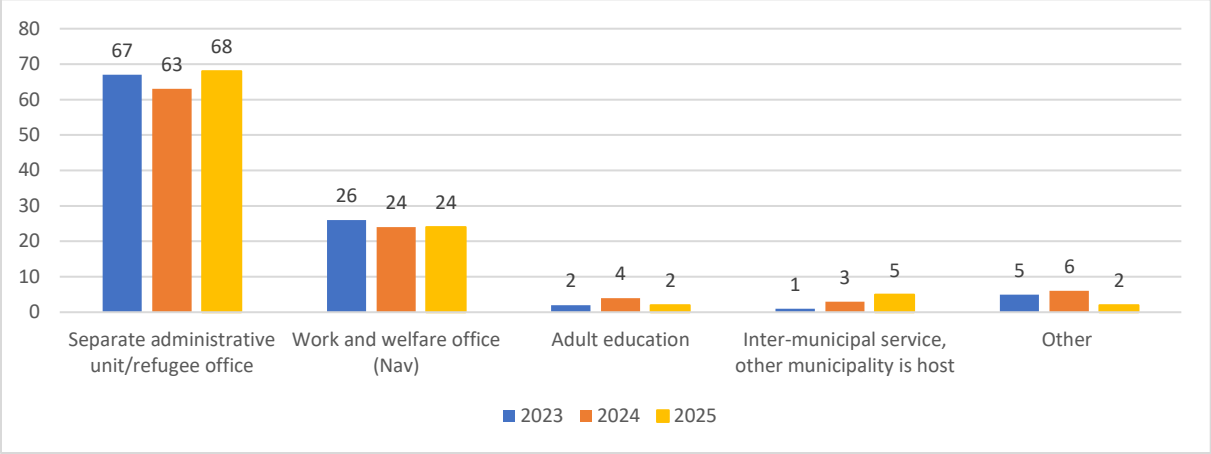
- How do the municipalities organise their work with refugees?
- How is the capacity in the municipal refugee services developing, and how did the municipalities upscale their capacity in face of the large increase in refugees from 2022?
- Are municipalities now downscaling their services, and if so: how are they downscaling?
- How is cooperation between local actors and services working with refugees assessed?
- How do leaders of local refugee services consider information and guidance from national authorities?

In our 2023- and 2024 reports (Hernes et al. 2023; 2024), we documented how the municipalities organise their work with refugees, their cooperation with other municipalities and local actors on this issue, and how refugee service leaders assessed information and guidance from IMDi. In this chapter, we will update our knowledge on these issues. Since most organisation structures appear to be quite stable, we give a relatively brief report of these results. More weight is put on analysing whether and how the refugee services downscale when the number of refugees decreases.

17.1 Organisation of municipal refugee services

Local refugee services are most often organised either as a separate administrative unit or as an office within the broader Nav office. The 2024 numbers are very similar to the results from 2023.

Figure 17.1: Which municipal unit is responsible for newly arrived refugees? (N_{2023}=215; N_{2024}=230; N_{2025}=233).



*Frequencies, percent.

Figure 17.1 shows that the majority of municipalities still organises the refugee services in a separate refugee office in 2025 (68%). There is a small rise in the share that organised the services in a separate refugee office or through an inter-municipality service in 2025. About one out of four organise it through Nav, and this share is stable over time. To investigate whether this change represents a real change or merely an effect of (partly) different municipalities answering our surveys, we have analysed the answers from municipalities answering our survey both in 2024 and 2025 (154 municipalities, 68% of the 2025 respondents not counting Oslo's city districts). The differences then appear even more pronounced: The proportion of refugee services reporting that their service is organized in a separate municipal office has increased from 66% in 2024 to 73% in 2025. The proportion answering that they are organized within Nav has also increased somewhat, from 20% to 21%. There has been a decrease in respondents reporting that their service is organized within adult education (from 4% to 2%) and in responding answering 'other organization' (from 7% to 2%). It is worth noting, however, that the questions about organization were formulated somewhat differently in 2025 compared to 2024, which may be a source of differing results. But since we have been checking the answers carefully, we do not think this is the sole (or main) reason for the differences between 2024 and 2025.

More detailed analyses reveal that large municipalities have chosen the Nav option to a greater extent than small municipalities. Whereas 8% of municipalities with a population of 3000 or less, have the responsibility for refugees organized within Nav, this holds for 39% of the largest municipalities (over 30 000 inhabitants).

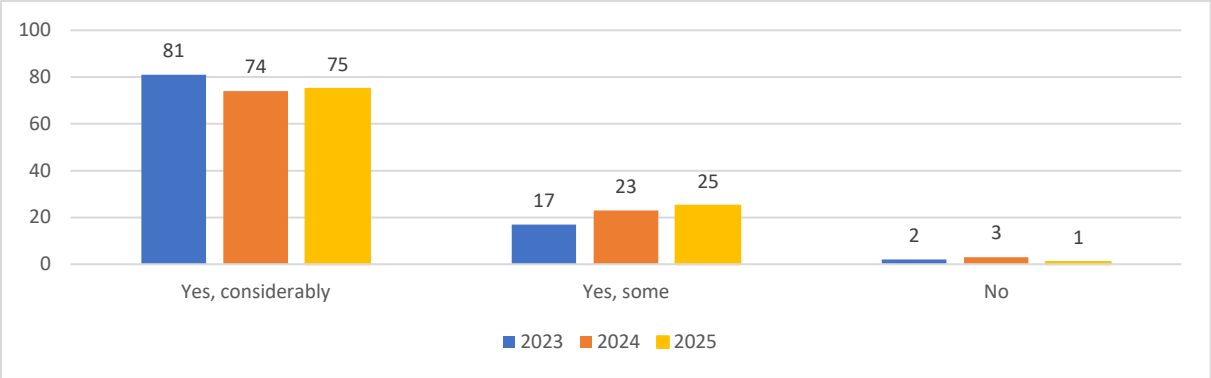
The survey data may underestimate the number of municipalities in intermunicipal cooperation somewhat, because municipalities purchasing refugee services from others may have decided not to participate in the survey due to scarce information about the services.

17.2 Capacity in the refugee service: upscaling and downscaling

With the large number of Ukrainian refugees arriving from February 2022 onwards, Norwegian municipalities have settled refugees as never before. Even the smallest of municipalities have received refugees, many of them with no previous experience in this work. Municipalities with experience with refugee settlement, had usually downscaled their refugee services due to the low arrival numbers from 2017 onwards (Hernes, Danielsen et al. 2022).

Our reports from 2023 and 2024 documented how the influx of Ukrainian refugees from early spring of 2022 onwards resulted in capacity challenges in many municipalities (Hernes et al. 2023; 2024). The survey data from 2025 confirms this situation.

Figure 17.2: Has the settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees resulted in the need for increased capacity in the municipality's refugee service? (N_{2023}=215; N_{2024}=224; N_{2025}=229).

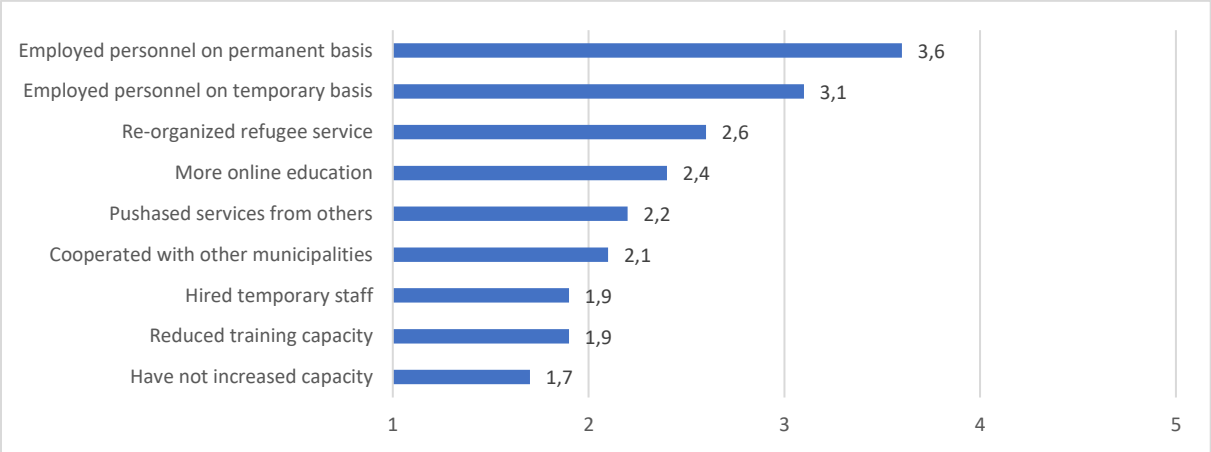


*Frequencies, percent.

Figure 17.2 shows that only 1% of the municipalities report that they have not been in need of upscaling their capacity in refugee services from 2022 (Figure 16.3).

The municipalities in need of higher capacity have used different strategies to meet this challenge.

Figure 17.3: What has been done to accommodate the need for increased capacity? (N_{2025}=159-222)*

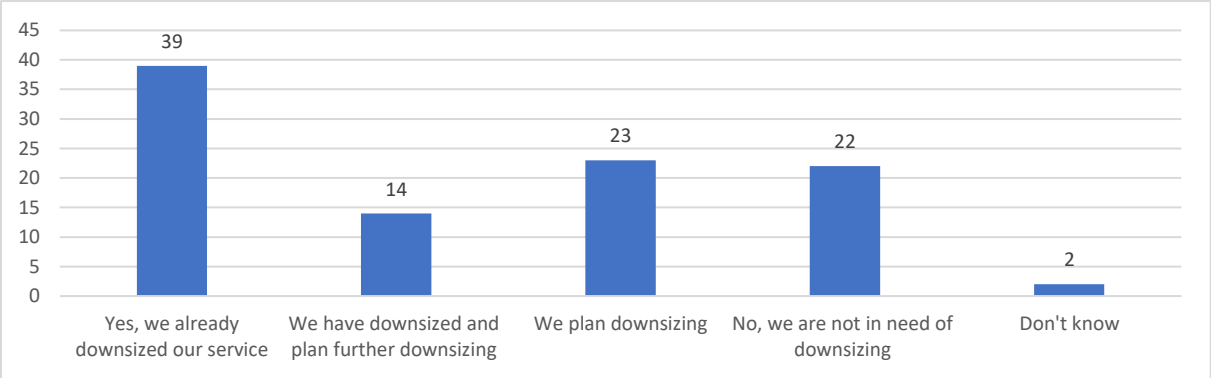


*Means. Scale: 1 = Not at all, 5 = To a very large degree.
**Those who answered ''Don't know/not relevant' are excluded from the calculation.

Permanent and temporary employment are the most common ways to increase capacity (figure 17.3). Very few municipalities report that they have hired personnel from staffing agencies or reduced the Norwegian training services offered to refugees due to capacity issues.

Compared to 2024 data, the figures from 2025 may indicate that the pressure on municipal refugee services is less severe now than the two previous years. On the contrary, lower numbers of arrivals in 2025 have led many municipalities to worry about how to downsize their refugee services. In our 2025 survey, we asked the municipalities whether they have downsized their services or plan to do so.

Figure 17.4: Has your municipality downsized the refugee service, or are you planning to do so? (N=225).

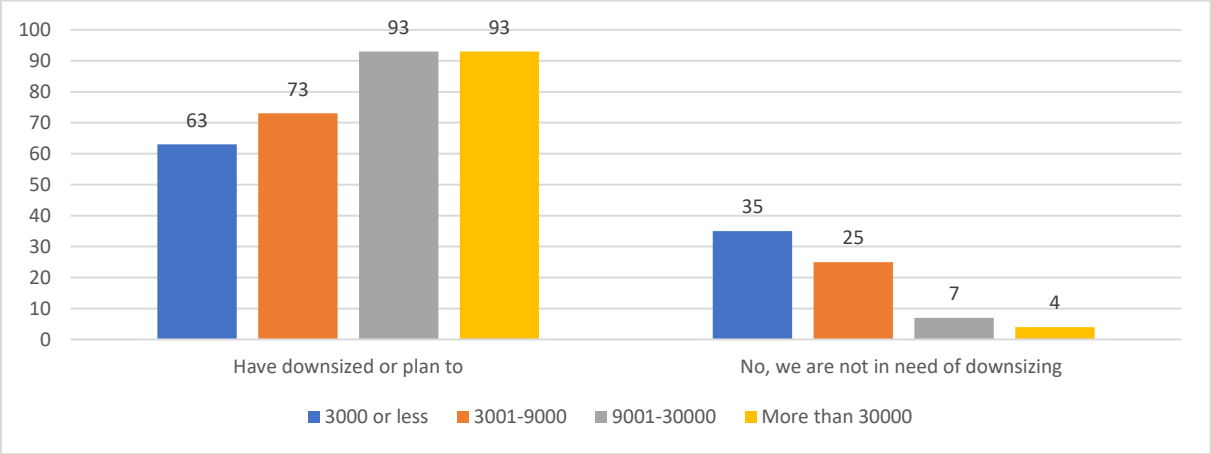


*Frequencies, percent.

Figure 17.4 shows that three of four municipalities (76%) report that they already have downsized their service (39%), plan to downsize (23%) or both (14%). Only 22% say that they are not in need of downsizing their refugee service.

There are great differences between municipalities when it comes to the need for downsizing.

Figure 17.5: Has your municipality downsized the refugee service, or are you planning to do so? By population size. (N=225). Percent



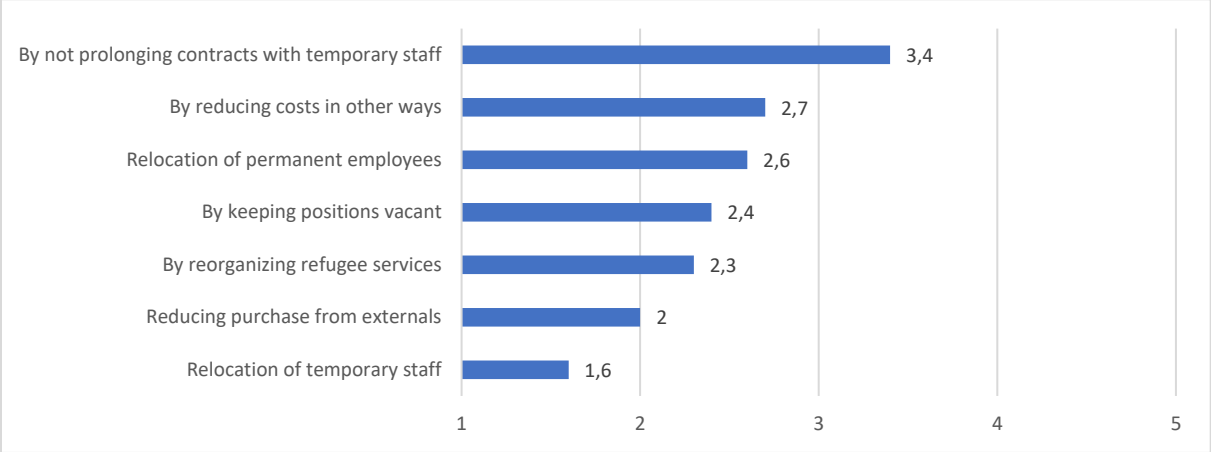
*Frequencies, percent.

Figure 17.5 shows that among the larger municipalities, almost all have already downscaled their services or plan to do so. Among the smallest municipalities, more than one in three report no need for downscaling.

Further, we find that the need for downsizing the refugee service capacity is larger in municipalities where capacity increase was most needed in face of the many arrivals from Ukraine. 82% of municipalities reporting that they were in need of considerable upscaling, report that they now have downsized their service or is planning to do so. Among municipalities reporting that they needed some capacity increase, 64% answer that they have downscaled their service or plan to downscale.

Many municipalities have increased their refugee service capacity by employing new personnel permanently. According to Norwegian law, these employees are not easily fired or reassigned to other tasks when the need for their work is decreasing. We have asked the municipalities how they are (planning to) downscaling their refugee service.

Figure 17.6: How is your municipality downscaling the refugee service? N=138-159



*Means. Scale: 1 = Not at all, 5 = To a very large degree.

Figure 17.6 presents the measures most commonly used to downsize municipal refugee services is to not prolong contracts with temporary staff, whereas relocation of temporary staff is less common. Other relatively 'popular' measures include reducing costs in general, relocating permanent employees and keeping positions vacant when people quit their jobs.

A bivariate correlation analysis shows that the measured used for downscaling services by and large mirror the measures used for upscaling. Municipalities which increased their capacity by employing staff permanently, to a greater extent than others downscale services by relocating employees to other tasks ($r=.335$, $p<.001$)[45] or by keeping positions vacant ($r=.178$, $p=.029$). Municipalities which primarily have employed staff on a temporary basis have to a large degree ended their contracts ($r=.478$, $p<.001$). Likewise, municipalities buying services from private actors or other municipalities, reduce their purchases in face of reduced number of refugees ($r=.284$, $p<.001$). And those who reorganized services to accommodate the need for increased capacity, reorganize again when the arrivals decrease ($r=.231$, $p=.004$).

We have conducted factor analyses in search of distinct up- and downscaling strategies of the refugee service in face of variations in influx of refugees. Factor analysis is a statistical technique used to identify patterns in data by grouping variables that are closely related to each other. The analyses indicate two different strategies. One strategy implies that the municipality employs people permanently in the refugee services, and at the same time limit the workload by purchasing services from others, providing more digital training, and reducing the services somewhat. The other strategy is to focus on temporary employment and the hiring-in of labour.

For the downscaling phase, three distinct strategies can be observed. Two of these strategies are rather 'simple': the first is not prolonging contracts with temporary employees, while the second is to relocate temporary employees. The third strategy, however, includes a long range of measures: it implies relocating permanent employees, re-organizing the service, letting positions stay vacant and reducing costs generally.

Our hypothesis was initially that different types of municipalities would use different strategies for up- and downscaling their services. Bivariate correlations between these

[45] In statistical analyses r indicates the strength of the correlation between two phenomena. A higher value indicates closer correlation. The p-value indicates whether the correlation is 'real' or not only random. A low p-value shows that there is very little chance that the correlation is random. The figures mentioned in this paragraph show relatively strong correlations with very low p-values, indicating that there is a real correlation between the strategies on the mentioned factors.

strategies and municipal population size does not, however, show significant correlations between municipal size and strategy. This topic needs to be further explored.

We have asked our survey respondents if they have any further comments about the up- and downscaling of the refugee service in their municipality. Many respondents used this opportunity to talk about their experiences and express their opinions on this matter. Some say that they meet the need for downscaling by letting positions stay vacant when people quit their jobs or retire. Respondents where refugee services are organized within the Nav system say that they have a certain flexibility in moving personnel between tasks.

Other respondents underscore the loss for the municipality, for the service and for the individual when employees must go:

> There is a lot to keep track of in such a service, and it's very unfortunate to lose competence, as we now see that we are at risk of doing. It takes a lot of time to train new staff, which we often have to do, because this is a service where the workload fluctuates greatly.

A respondent from a small municipality in the northern part of Norway in need for both inhabitants and workplaces, says it this way:

> Restarted the integration service in 2022 after it was shut down in 2018. We have now built up competence and experience. The consequence for those who already live here is that the service must now be scaled down, with the risk of losing valuable competence already at this stage. We are a municipality that wants to work continuously to support people so that they will continue to live here if they are granted, and wish to stay, when the war ends.

Some respondents report that their service has not downscaled yet, but they are awaiting the consequences of reduced numbers of refugees. There are also municipalities trying to avoid downscaling, because of the costs of upscaling if arrivals of refugees increase again.

The leader of a refugee service in a larger municipality sums up their experiences:

> The municipality finds it problematic and resource-intensive to scale up – that is, to bring in new employees who, in a short period of time, must take on roles and responsibilities as settlement workers, environmental workers, program advisors, public health nurses in migration health, and so on. Experience in working with refugees is gained through practice; there are no dedicated educational programs for refugee work. After a short time (2–3 years), the municipalities often find themselves having to scale down again — meaning ending or not renewing contracts, reassigning employees, etc. The municipality then loses competence, staff with valuable experience, culture-bearers, and colleagues. At the same time, we know that 'the next wave of need will come' and once again, we will have to rebuild the services. What does this do to the services, to their quality, and to the long-term ability to recruit people into this type of work? The state should consider providing greater stability to the municipalities in this area.

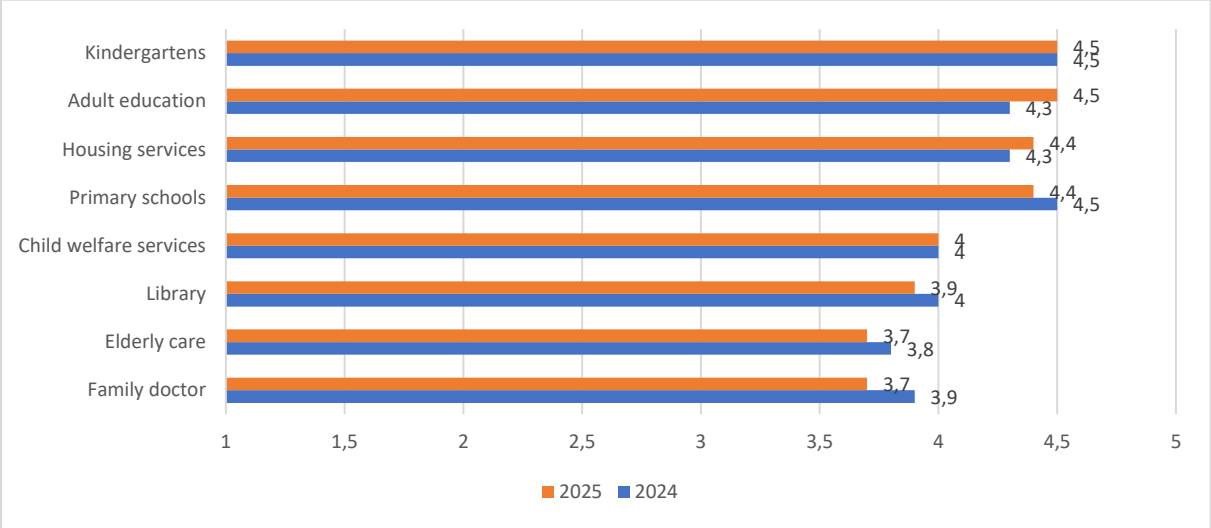
The role of the state is also a matter in the respondents' comments to our last open question in the survey: 'What will your municipality need from the state in order to meet the situation of Ukrainian refugees in the future?'. One responds, with caps-lock on: 'PREDICTABLE FINANCING SO THAT WE CAN RETAIN COMPETENCE, EVEN DURING 'QUIETER' PERIODS'. We will discuss the financial situation for the municipalities later in this report.

17.3 Cooperation with local and external services and actors

Refugees need a range of services in their daily lives. Most of these services are provided by municipalities. The municipal refugee service will often have to cooperate with several other services to secure that refugees are provided with services according to their needs. In 2023 and 2024 we found that almost all municipalities had anchored their refugee work with political and administrative leadership in the municipality. Fewer reported that they had developed a comprehensive plan for the work. In 2025 this has increased: 60% of the respondents say that their municipality has a comprehensive plan for their services to refugees, rising from 49% in 2024.

A plan for how all municipal services should work with refugees living in the municipality, may constitute a good framework for cooperation between services. We have asked our respondents from the refugee service how they experience cooperation with other municipal services. The results from 2023 to 2024 are very stable. Therefore, in Figure 17.7 we only show the figures from 2024 and 2025.

Figure 17.7: How do you assess the cooperation with the following local actors and services in facilitating the integration of Ukrainian refugees? (N_{2024}=218-222; N_{2025}=186-219).

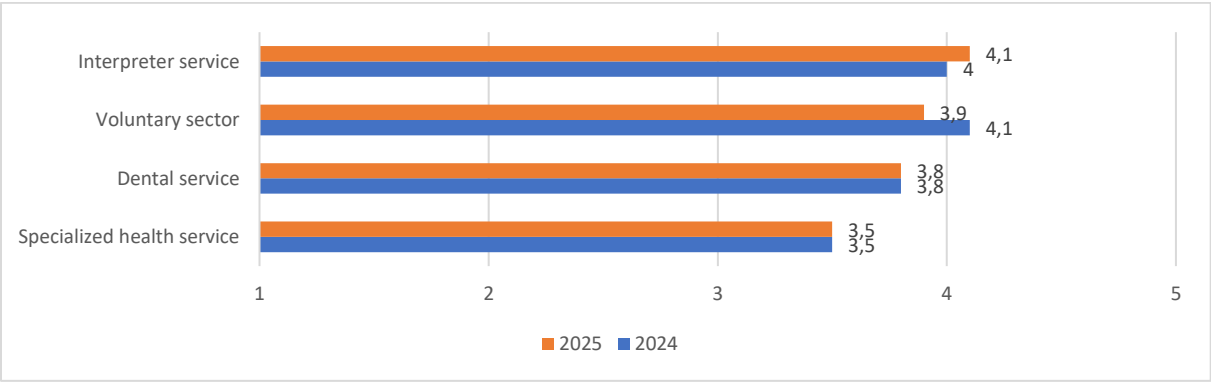


*Means. Scale: 1 = Very bad, 5 = Very good.

Figure 17.7 shows that refugee service leaders generally find the cooperation with other local services on refugee-related issues to function well. As in 2024, cooperation with educational services, such as kindergartens, primary schools and adult education is ranked as particularly good, while the scores for health services are somewhat lower. These assessments align with the refugees' own assessment of services, where kindergarten and schools are ranked very high, while healthcare services get lower scores (see chapter 7.3).

Some external (non-municipal) actors also provide services relevant for refugees.

Figure 17.8: How do you assess the cooperation with the following actors and services in facilitating the integration of Ukrainian refugees? (N_{2024}=224; N_{2024}=191-215).



*Means. Scale: 1 = Very bad, 5 = Very good.

Again, we see in figure 17.8 that assessments are stable and that health-related services are rated somewhat lower than other services. The cooperation with voluntary organisations is marginally lower in 2025 compared to 2024. This may indicate a certain fatigue among some voluntary organisations due to several years of massive work with refugees.

17.4 Multi-level governance of refugee settlement

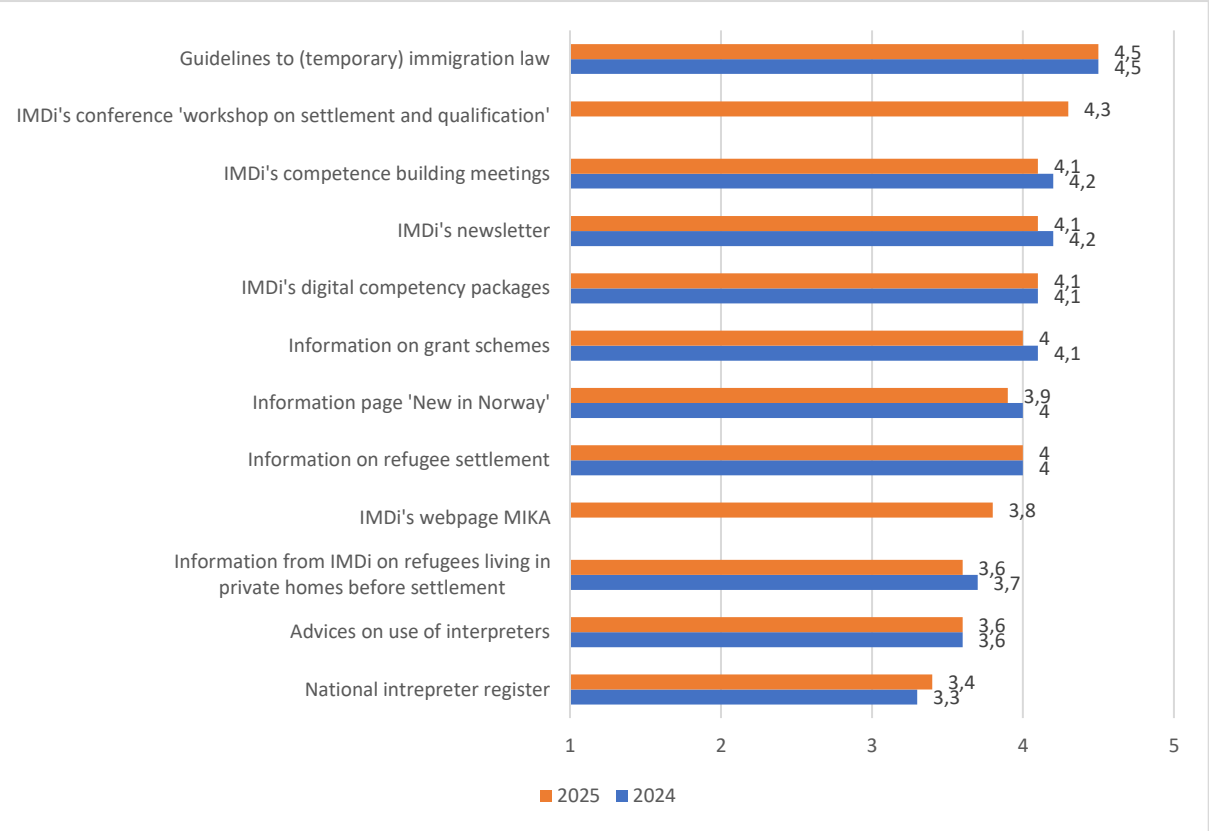
In this section, we look at how the local refugee services assess cooperation with national authorities. Particularly, we look closer at the activities of the national integration authority, IMDi.

We have asked municipal refugee service leaders about their experience with cooperation with three national authorities: the Directorate for Integration and Diversity (IMDi); the Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir) and the Directorate of Health (Hdir). Their answers demonstrate clearly that IMDi is seen as the most relevant cooperation partner for the refugee services. Only two respondents report that they do not know how to assess IMDi, because they do not cooperate with the directorate. The assessment of IMDi is overall very good, with a mean score of 4.1 (on a scale from 1 to 5).

17% of the respondents report that they do not cooperate with HK-dir and 44% say that they have no experience in cooperating with Hdir. Among respondents with cooperation experience, the mean assessment scores for the two national directorates are 3.6 for HK-dir and 3.3 for Hdir.

IMDis information and guidance activities were upscaled after February 2022 to provide information to the many inexperienced and overloaded refugee services, and to secure a minimum level of quality and equal treatment across municipalities. Moreover, with the increasing number of Ukrainian refugees, there has been several changes in national policies addressing this group (see chapter 3). These changes also had to be communicated to the municipalities in charge of implementing those policies. In 2023, 2024 and 2025 we asked the leaders of the municipal refugee service about their assessment of IMDi's information and guidance activities. Since these activities over time have been changed according to changing needs, we do not have scores for all activities for all three years. Given only minor differences between the 2023 and 2024 scores, Figure 17.9 shows only the 2024 and 2025 results.

Figure 17.9: How do you assess the following activities, information and services from IMDi? (N2024=224; N2025=208)*



*Means. Scale: 1 = Not at all useful, 5 = Very useful.

Figure 17.9 shows that the refugee service leaders' assessment of IMDi's activities and information measures are quite stable. Generally, the mean scores are high and above the average of 3 for all. This means that the municipal refugee services are generally quite satisfied with IMDi's information and guidance activities, even though we observe variation on certain issues. Eight of twelve activities get a score of 4 or more on a scale from 1 to 5. Refugee service leaders are most satisfied with IMDi's 'guidelines to (temporary) immigration law' and IMDi's conference 'workshop on settlement and qualification' (Fagverksted for bosetting og kvalifisering). Two activities concerning interpreters get the lowest score, namely 'advice on use of interpreters' and the 'national interpreter register'. However, also for these two activities the average satisfaction is on the positive side. We have no further information on why IMDi's interpreter activities receive lower scores than other activities. There are no comments about this topic in the answers to the open-ended questions. Moreover, Figure 17.8 showed that refugee services are satisfied with the cooperation with interpreters, with an average score of 4.1 out of 5.

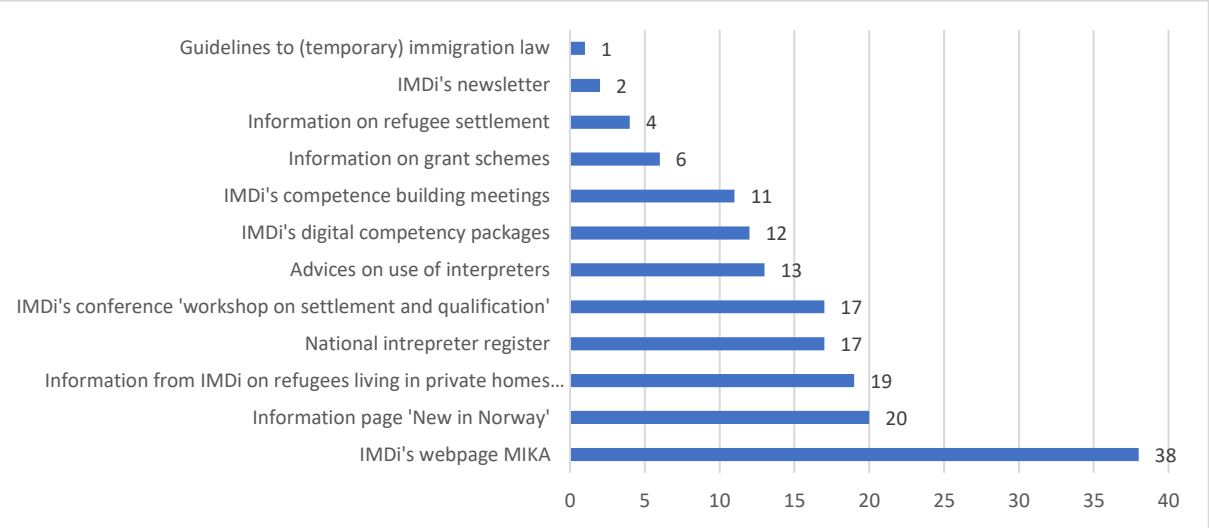
Since municipalities of different sizes may have different in-house capacities, we could expect to find variations in how they assess IMDi's activities. In our data, we find that the largest municipalities are somewhat less appreciative of some of IMDi's activities: both the information materials concerning interpreting, information on refugee settlement, information on refugees living in private homes before settlement and the information page 'New in Norway'. This may indicate that the largest municipalities with large and competent refugee services have less use for some of the information materials from IMDi. For other activities, we find only minor differences.

In our 2023 report, we concluded that respondents from municipalities with less experience with settling refugees (often the smallest municipalities) were generally less satisfied with IMDi's activities. In the 2025 survey, we find that these differences are evened out.

Compared to 2023, in 2025 also the smallest municipalities have gained experience in refugee settlement.

Figure 17.9 shows the assessment with IMDis activities, information and services by respondents who have experience with these activities. It may, however, be interesting to see which IMDi activities refugee services actually have used, and which they have no experience with. Figure 17.10 shows how many respondents report that they are unable to assess an activity because they have not used it.

Figure 17.10: Respondents answering 'do not know/have not used this measure.' (N=210). Percent.



*Frequencies, percent.

Almost all respondents are familiar with the guidelines to immigration law, IMDi's newsletter and the information on refugee settlement. On the other hand, almost four out of ten leaders of municipal refugee services have no experience with IMDi's webpage MIKA, which is recently launched.

County governor

We find it appropriate to mention the role of the county governors in this section where we discuss multi-level governance of the local refugee work. The county governor is an important institution in conveying information from state agencies to municipalities – and vice versa: from the municipalities to the state governing bodies. We have asked the municipal refugee services to assess their cooperation with the county governor on settlement of refugees. On a scale from 1 (very bad) to 5 (very good), the average score in 2025 is 3.8, the same as in 2024. Compared to other services and actors, county governors score relatively low, but there are large variations. The 'best' governors score 4.4 and 4.1, whereas the lowest scores are 3.3 and 3.4. There is no obvious correlation between the number of municipalities within the governor's area of responsibility and refugee services' assessment of the cooperation. These discrepancies between county governors align with previous studies showing that the municipalities' assessments of the country governors' role in the integration field vary widely for different counties (Hernes et al. 2020).

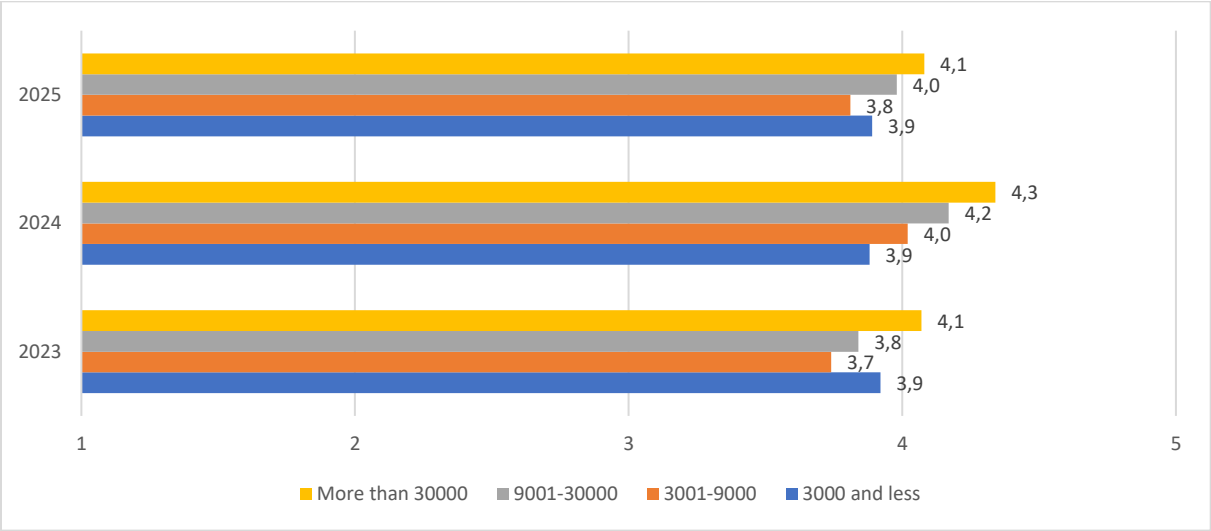
17.5 Voluntary organisations' role in refugee settlement

Civil society and voluntary organisations may be important supplements to services provided by the municipality. In our 2023 and 2024 reports, we documented that many municipal refugee services cooperate with local voluntary organisations to provide a wide range of services to Ukrainian refugees (Hernes et al. 2023; 2024). In Figure 17.8 we saw that municipalities assess their cooperation with voluntary sector somewhat less positively in

2025 compared to 2024 but matches the level from 2023. However, the differences are small.

Further, we asked the respondents from municipal refugee services about their general impression of the local voluntary organisations' activities targeting Ukrainian refugees.

Figure 17.11: Assessment of cooperation with voluntary organisations locally (N_{2023}=215; N_{2024}=224).

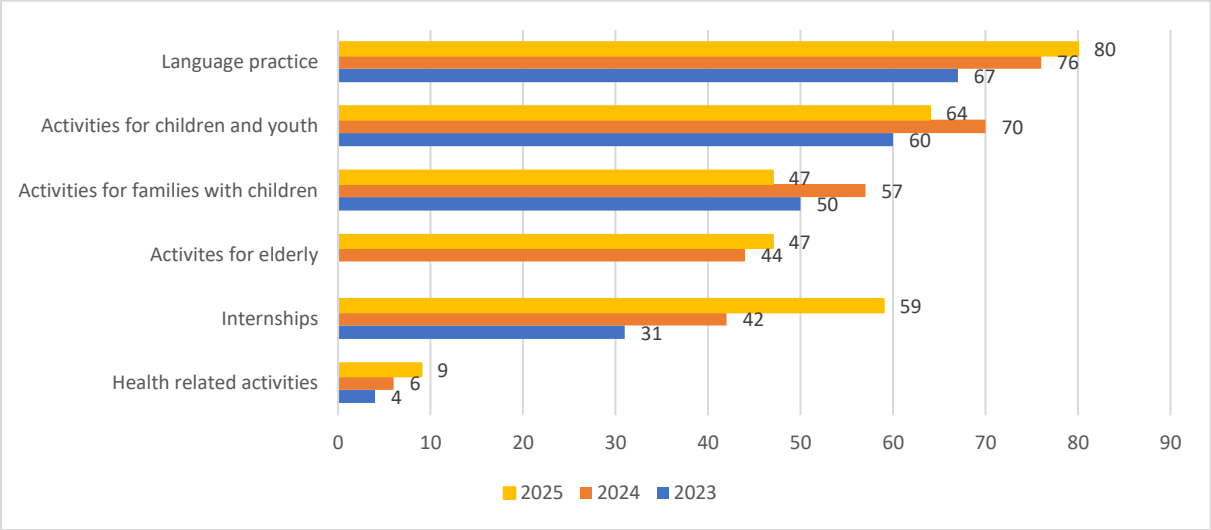


*Means. Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree/Very bad, 5 = Strongly agree/Very good.

In 2024, we found differences between municipalities according to size. This was interpreted as a result of the larger municipalities having a more numerous voluntary sector. Figure 17.11 demonstrates that there are still some differences between municipalities in their assessment of voluntary sector cooperation, but in 2025 the differences are very small.

In our surveys from 2023, 2024 and 2025 we asked about what kind of activities for refugees voluntary organizations engage in.

Figure 17.12: Does your service cooperate with civil society organisations in providing services to Ukrainian refugees on these tasks? (N_{2023}=215; N_{2024}=224; N_{2025}=213).



*Frequencies, percent.

Figure 17.12 shows that compared to the 2024 data, in 2025 we see a tendency that voluntary organisations play a more important role in organising activities like language practice and internships, while there has been less attendance to activities for families with children and activities for children and youth. These results may mirror the national political

emphasis put relatively more weight on activities directly aimed at getting refugees into the labour market – which may have come at the expense of other more socially oriented activities.

Not surprisingly, we find that voluntary organisations provide a wider range of activities in large municipalities than in small municipalities. As in 2024, services to families with children and elderly are particularly more common in larger municipalities also in 2025. When it comes to services concerning health and work practice, however, the difference between municipalities of different sizes is negligible.

18 Introduction programme and language training

Ukrainian refugees between 18 and 55 years have the right to attend an introduction programme. Although it is not obligatory, those in need of financial assistance after settlement may be obliged to participate to be eligible for such financial assistance. The introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees should – similar to the regular programme – contain language- and work-oriented elements, but the programme consists of fewer obligatory elements. As described in chapter 3, the Integration Act was revised in June 2025. However, as these revisions were not implemented at the time of the survey, the assessments in this year's survey should be interpreted as an assessment of the experiences with the exiting legislation as of October 2025.

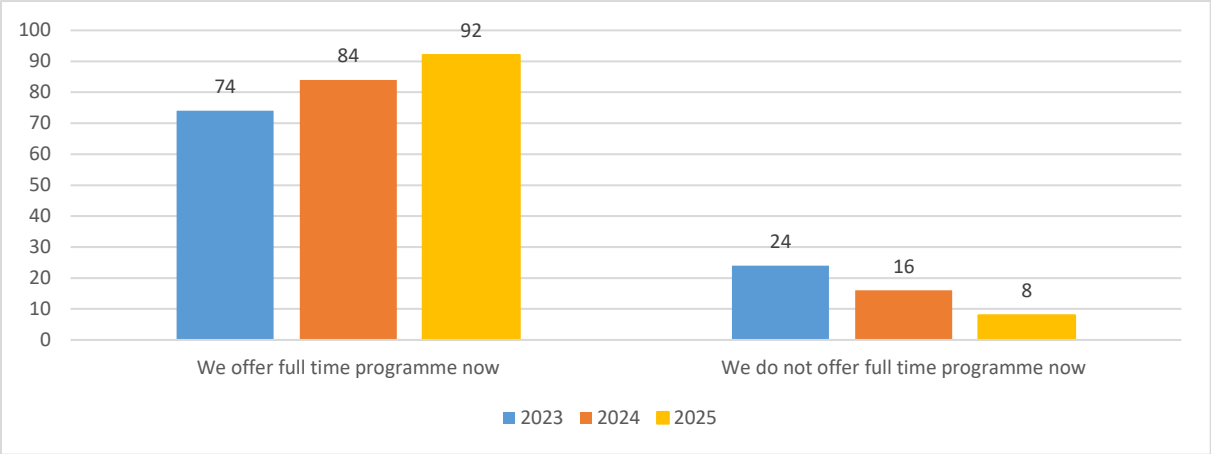
As we saw in chapter 17, many municipalities had to quickly upscale or (re-)establish refugee settlement and integration services as a response to the arrival of Ukrainian refugees. In our previous reports (Hernes et al. 2023; 2024) we have thoroughly discussed the municipalities' provision of introduction programme and the content of the programme. Here we will be briefer on these matters but put more weight on how the municipalities work-orient their introduction programme, which is an important goal for national authorities. We investigate the following questions:

- Have the municipalities been able to provide full introduction programmes and language training for the Ukrainian refugees, and what challenges have they faced in their service provision?
- To what degree have the municipalities been able to work-orient their introduction programme according to the 2024 regulation?
- What kind of work-oriented activities are included in the introduction programmes? Are there variations between municipalities in their work-orientation?

18.1 Introduction programme: scope of provision and extensions

Because the arrival of Ukrainian refugees happened suddenly and in large numbers, it took time before some of the refugee services were fully operational. In our 2023 report, we documented that some municipalities needed some time to establish a full-time introduction program. Other municipalities started out with full-time programs, but realised that this was too ambitious, and had to make cuts (Hernes et al. 2023). In the 2024 survey – and again in 2025 – we asked the respondents in the refugee services whether their municipality has the capacity to offer a fulltime introduction programme.

Figure 18.1: Does the municipality have the capacity to offer a full-time introduction program for Ukrainian refugees? (N_{2023}=215; N_{2024}=224; N_{2025}=217)*



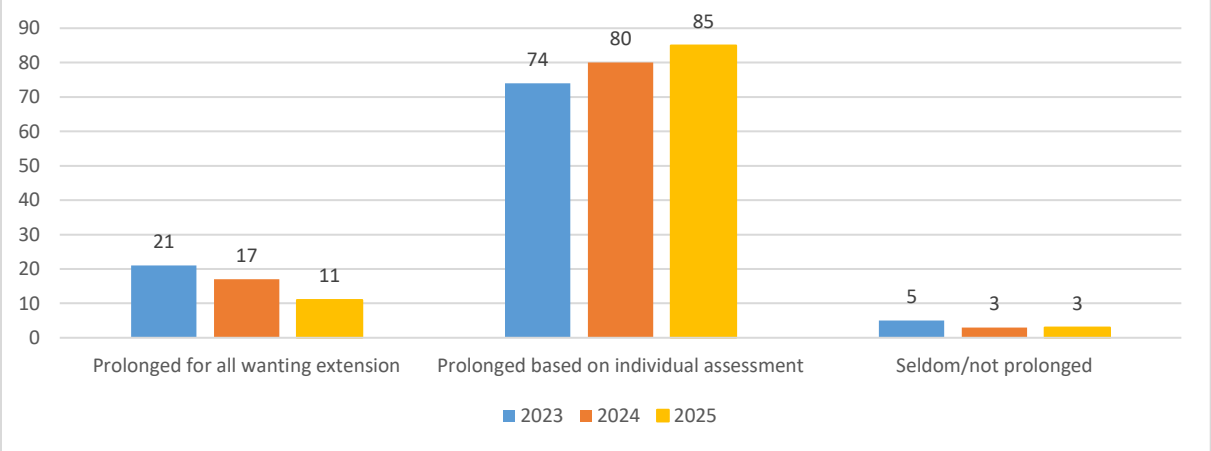
*Frequencies, percent. Respondents answering 'Do not know' are not included in the figure.

Figure 18.1 shows that the number of municipalities providing a full-time introduction programme is steadily increasing from 2023 to 2025. 92% of the respondents report offering full-time introduction programme in 2025, an 8 percentage points increase from 2024. The large number of arrivals seems to have stretched the capacity of some municipalities so far that they were unable to offer full-time programmes initially, but along with the lower number of arrivals, the capacity is less strained. Whereas the 2024 data indicated that some of the smallest municipalities (less than 3000 inhabitants) were not able to provide a full-time programme, the 2025 survey shows a somewhat greater proportion among the largest municipalities (more than 30 000 inhabitants) not offering full-time introduction programme for their refugees.

In line with the Integration Act before the revision in 2025 – and temporary legislation for Ukrainian refugees – Ukrainian refugees should first be enrolled in the introduction programme for six months and then have an assessment of the need for prolongment up to one year.

The 2023 survey showed that one in five local refugee services reported that they extend the introduction programme for all Ukrainian refugees, whereas three in four extend the programme based on individual assessment.

Figure 18.2: How common is it for the refugee service to extend the introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees? (N_{2023}=215; N_{2024}=224; N_{2025}=217)*



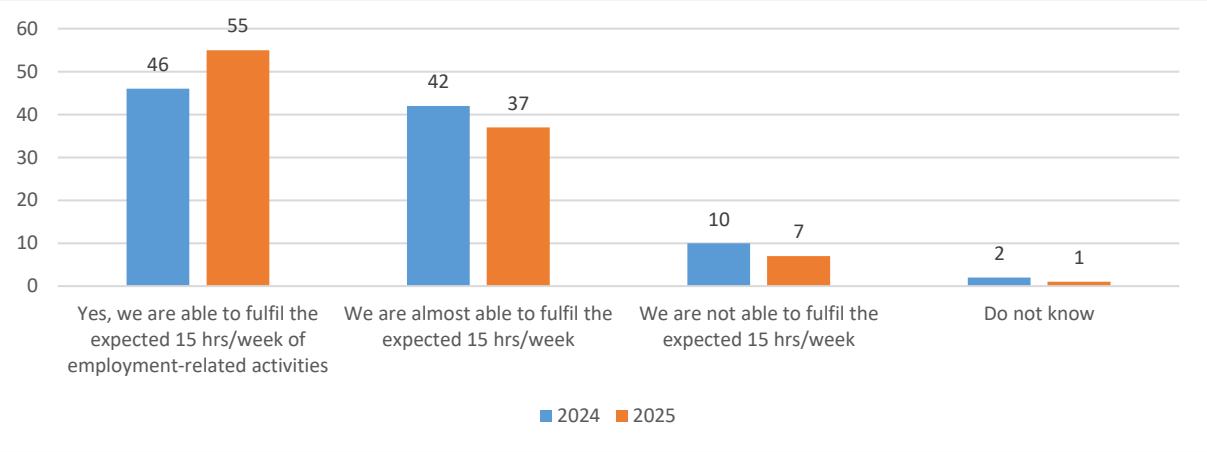
*Frequencies, percent.

Figure 18.2 shows that very few reported that they rarely or never extend the programme. In 2025, almost all municipalities say that they prolong the introduction programme period for all (11%) or based on individual assessment (85%). We find an increasing tendency to prolong the programme after an individual assessment. As in previous years, the smallest municipalities are more inclined to prolong the introduction programme for all refugees. Whereas 18% of the smallest municipalities say that they prolong the programme for all, none of the largest municipalities extend the programme for all.

18.2 Work-orientation of the introduction programme

Although the introduction programme should be individually tailored to each participant, over the past two years, there has been increasing attention to how the introduction programme can put more emphasis on work-related issues. According to national regulations from February 2024, the programme is now expected to have a minimum of 15 hours per week of employment-related activities from the fourth month for those who have work as their programme goal, with the aim to get more refugees into employment earlier. We have asked the municipal refugee services whether they were able to adjust the introduction programme to contain more employment-related activities.

Figure 18.3: Is your municipality able to provide work-orientated introduction programs for Ukrainian refugees? (N_{2024}=224; N_{2025}=217)*

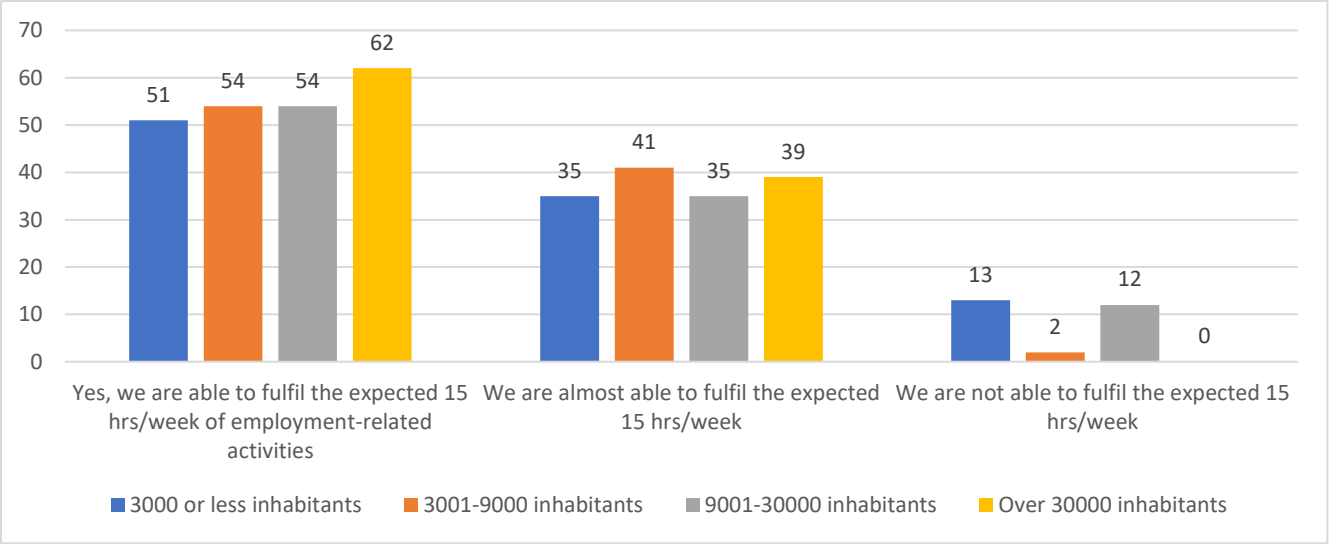


*Frequencies, percent.

Figure 18.3 shows a positive development from 2024 to 2025. In 2025, 55% of the refugee services report that they fulfil the expected 15 hours per week of work related content. 37% say they are almost able to meet the expectations, whereas 7% are not able to fulfil the expected 15 hours per week.

There are also differences related to municipal size and type of organisation in this regards.

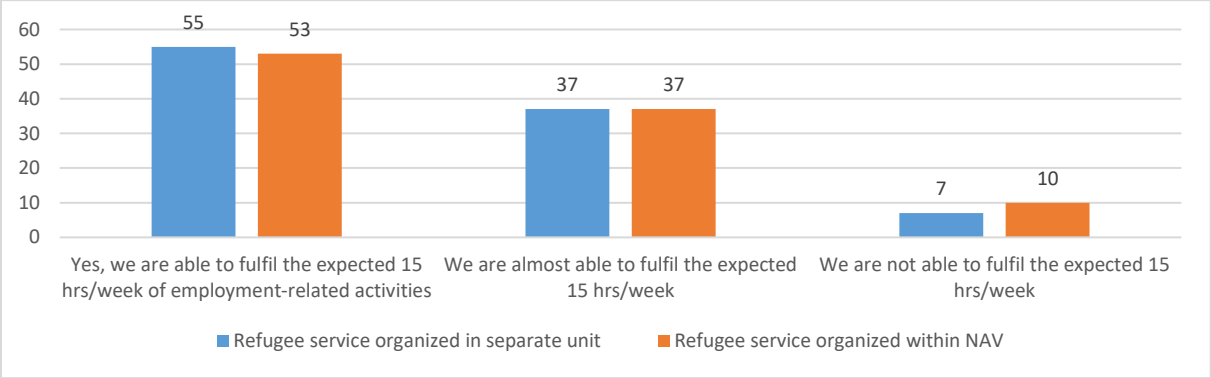
Figure 18.4: Is your municipality able to provide work-orientated introduction programs for Ukrainian refugees? By municipal size. 2025 (N = 217).



*Frequencies, percent.

Figure 18.4 shows that the largest municipalilties (more than 30 000 inhabitants) on the average reach the goal of 15 hours per week of work-related content more frequently than other municipalities.

Figure 18.5: Is your municipality able to provide work-orientated introduction programs for Ukrainian refugees? By organisation in/outside Nav (N = 217).



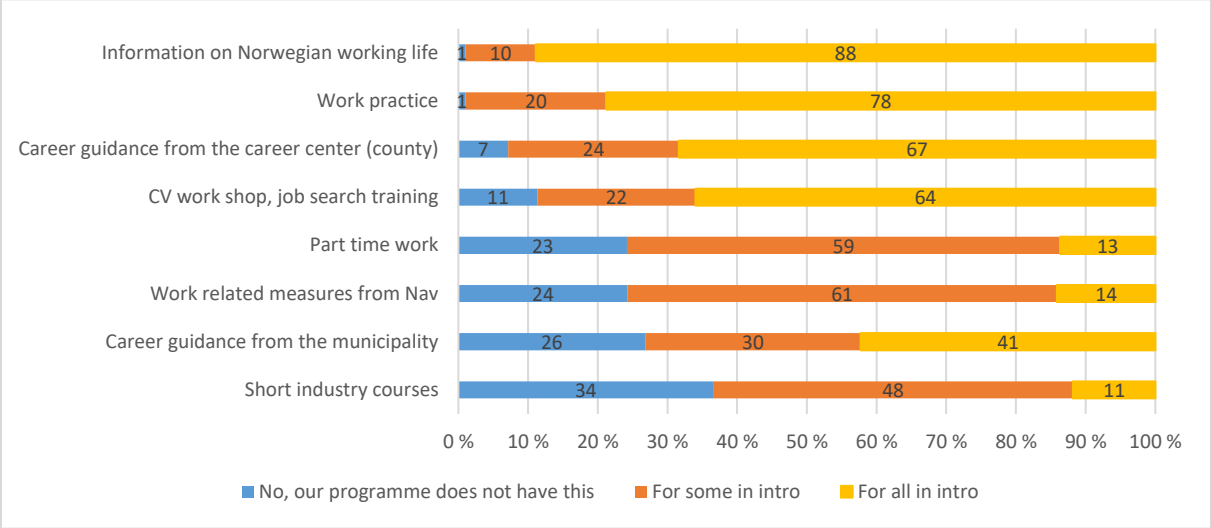
*Frequencies, percent.

Interestingly, figure 18.5 shows that the differences between refugee services organised inside and outside Nav that were appearent in the 2024 data, are now almost eradicated. In 2024 48% of refugee services organized in a separate unit outside Nav reported to be able to fulfil the expected 15 hours per week of work-related content, while 40% of services organized within Nav reported that they were able to reach this goal. In 2025 there are very marginal differences between the two groups of municialities in their reporting of their ability to fulfil the expected 15 hours per week of work-related content.

Work-related content of introduction programme

In the 2025 survey, we wanted to investigate furher *how* the municipalities make their introduction programme work relevant. We asked whether the municipality offers different activities as part of the introduction programme, and if they offer it to all or some participants.

Figure 18.6: Does your introduction programme offer these activities? (N=216)*

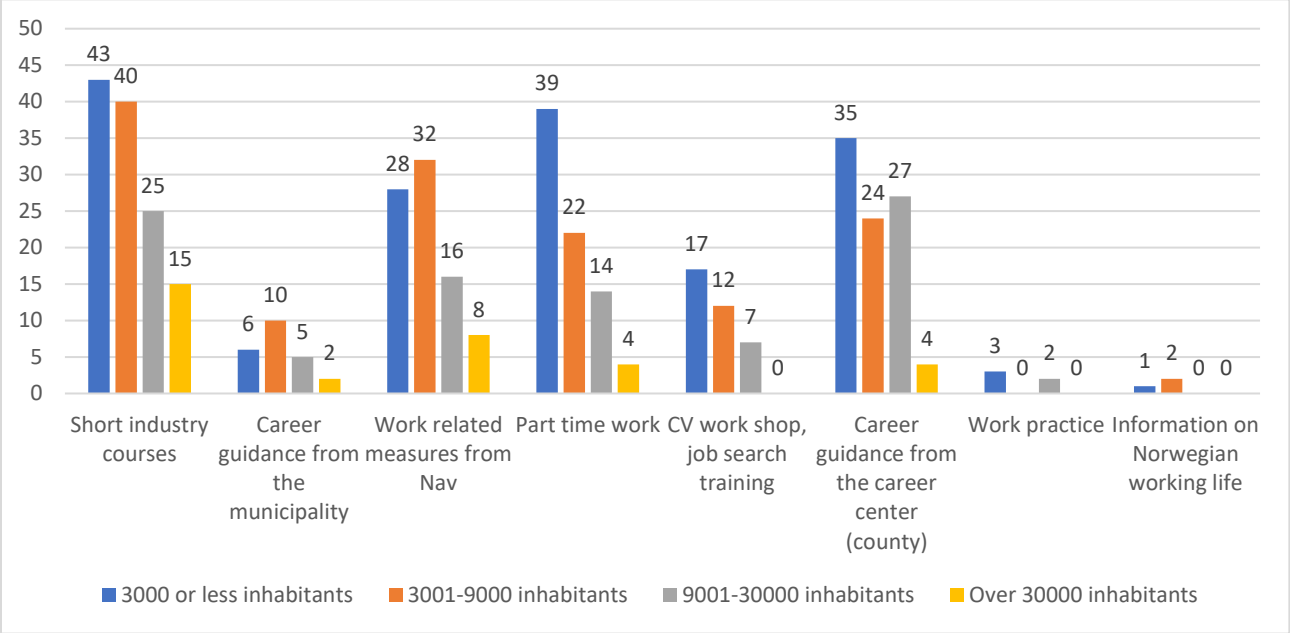


*Frequencies, percent. 'Do not know' is not displayed In the figure.

Figure 18.6 shows that almost all municipalities report that they inform introduction programme participants about Norwegian working life. Likewise, almost all have work practice as a part of the programme, most of them (78%) offer this for all participants. Career guidance, particularly from the county's career center is also very common – more than 90% say they offer this to all or some refugees in the programme. Career guidance from the municipality is less common, but is offered to all or some by 71% of the municipalities. CV work shop and other courses in applying for jobs are included in the introduction programme in 86% of the municipalities. Part time work and work related measures from Nav seem to be more targeted towards some participants, and about one in four municipalities do not offer this. Short industry courses are also less frequently offered as part of the introduction programme. One in three municipalities report that they do not have such courses in their programme.

A closer analysis of the data shows that the tendency not to offer a differentiated work related content in the introducion programme is closely correlated to municipal size.

Figure 18.7: No, we do not have this in our introduction program' (N=210).



*Frequencies, percent.

Figure 18.7 shows that except for work practice and information on Norwegian working life, which are offered by practically all municipallities, smaller municipalities offer other activities less frequently.

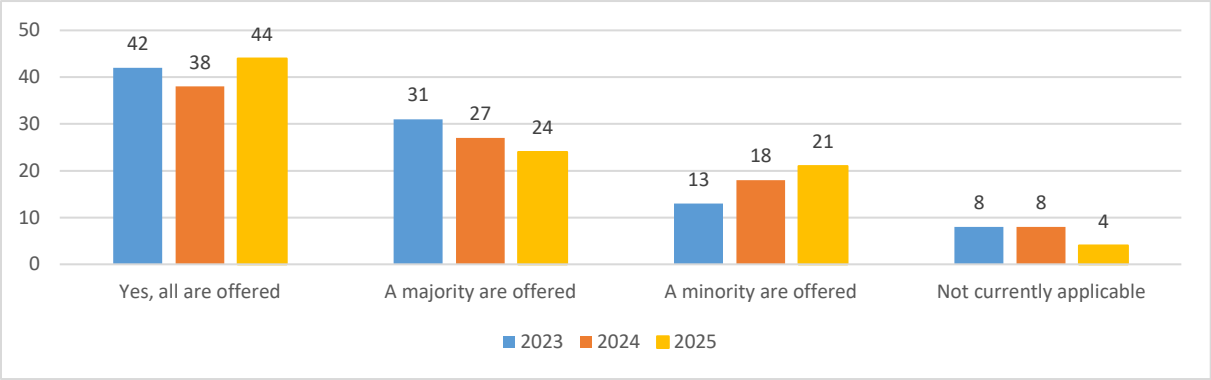
In section 20.2, we will look closer into the importance of work practice and the challenges the municipalities meet in finding work practice for Ukrainian refugees.

18.3 Language training

All refugees under the age of 67 are entitled to Norwegian language training. For refugees with higher education (upper secondary level or higher), the right to language training is restricted to one year, compared with the general rule of 18 months. Since the majority of Ukrainians have higher education, most of them have the right to one year of Norwegian language training. The municipalities may provide an additional six months of such training (which will trigger extra state subsidies), but this extension is not an entitlement for Ukrainian refugees (Hernes et al. 2024).

We asked respondents from local refugee services whether their municipality offers more than one year of language training to Ukrainian refugees.

Figure 18.8: Are Ukrainian refugees in your municipality offered more than one year of Norwegian language training? (N_{2023}=215; N_{2024}=224; N_{2025}=217).



*Frequencies, percent.

Figure 18.8 shows that 44% of the refugee service leaders report that their municipality provides extended Norwegian language training to all Ukrainian refugees who request more training. This is a six percent points increase from last year, which may indicate less strained capacity in 2025. However, there is also an increase in the share answering that only a minority are offered extended language training, illustrating an increased diversity in practices across municipalities.

The tendency from 2023, that small municipalities to a larger degree offered language training for more than one year to all Ukrainians refugees, is not present in the 2024 or 2025 data.

In an open-ended question in the survey, we asked the municipalities who do *not* prolong the language education why they do not do so. As in 2024, the most common reasons are scarce resources and capacity. One of the respondents wrote that:

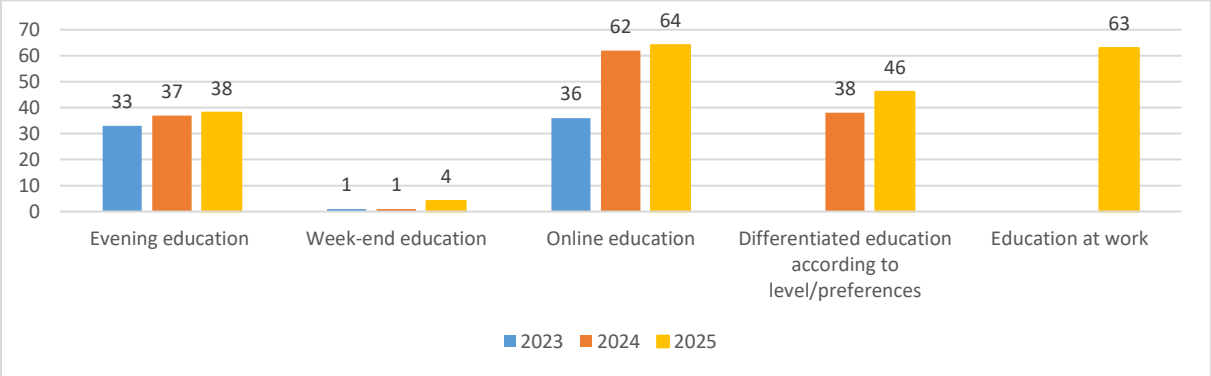
> We want to do it, but we haven't had the resources. We hope to manage it in the long run. But now we have just arranged with volunteers that they will provide Norwegian practice/oral practice one day a week for those who have finished their Norwegian classes.

18.4 Flexible language training

Lack of opportunities to learn Norwegian outside normal working hours has been seen as a hindrance for Ukrainians' integration into the labour market. Many have perceived that they have to choose between (less skilled) work or to continue in language learning, which could lead to better and more permanent work. More flexible language training opportunities could help solving this problem.

In the 2023 report, we documented that about one-third of municipalities offered the possibility for evening language classes for refugees who work during the day or are otherwise prevented from attending classes during the daytime. Likewise, one-third provided online language training. There were, however, large differences between municipalities in this respect. Almost 80% of the largest municipalities offered evening education compared with only 9% of the smallest municipalities. The same tendency, though not as pronounced, was observed for online education.

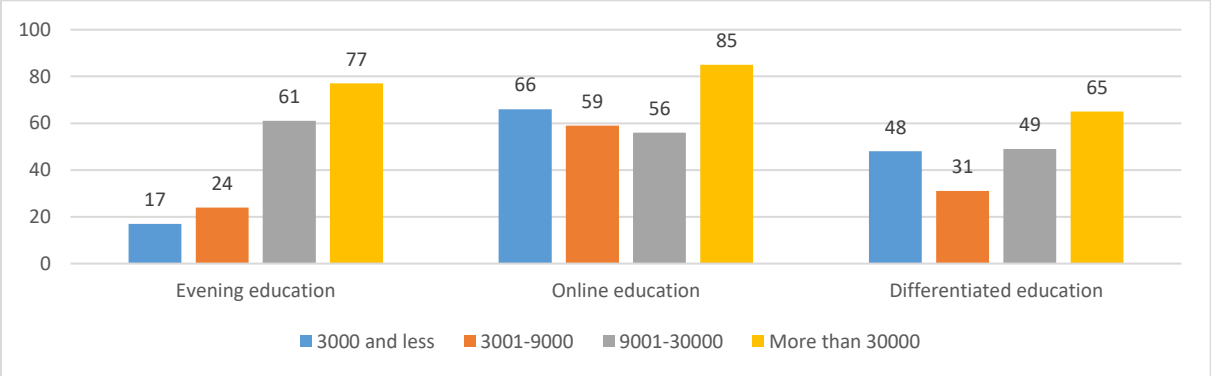
Figure 18.9: Are refugees in your municipality offered flexible Norwegian language training? (N_{2023}=215; N_{2024}=224; N_{2025}=214).



*Frequencies, percent.

Figure 18.9 shows that our 2025 data convey a moderate development in flexible language training - first and foremost when it comes to education differentiated according to level or preferences. The steep increase from 2023 to 2024 in the proportion of municipalities offering online education has not continued. In 2025 we asked the refugee service leaders whether they offer the refugees to have Norwegian education at the work-/practice place. Almost two of three (63%) report that they have this opportunity for refugees working.

Figure 18.10: Are refugees in your municipality offered flexible Norwegian language training? By municipality (population) size* (N = 208). Percent answering 'yes'.

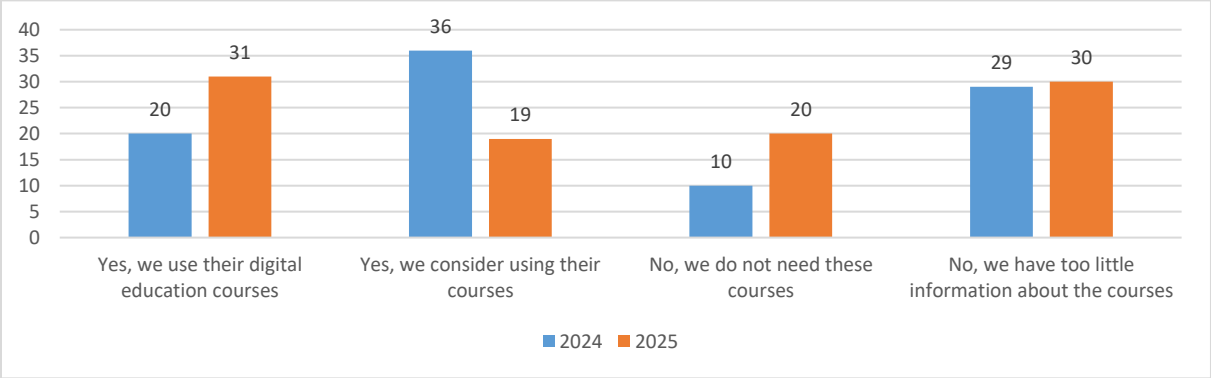


*Frequencies, percent.

Figure 18.10 shows variation between municipalities. Among the largest municipalities there is a substantially larger share offering flexible Norwegian language training. Compared to the 2024 data, we find that the number of municipalities with a population between 9000 and 30000 offering evening education has increased considerably. There are also great changes when it comes to online education. Whereas we can see that there is an increase among the smallest and largest municipalities offering online education, this has decreased among municipalities in the two middle categories (3001-30000 inhabitants).

In 2024, the HK-dir launched a package of digital Norwegian language courses targeting municipal refugee services. The services can buy these courses for their refugees.

Figure 18.11: Has the refugee office in your municipality considered to use digital Norwegian education offered by the HK-dir? (N_{2024}=224; N_{2025}=214).

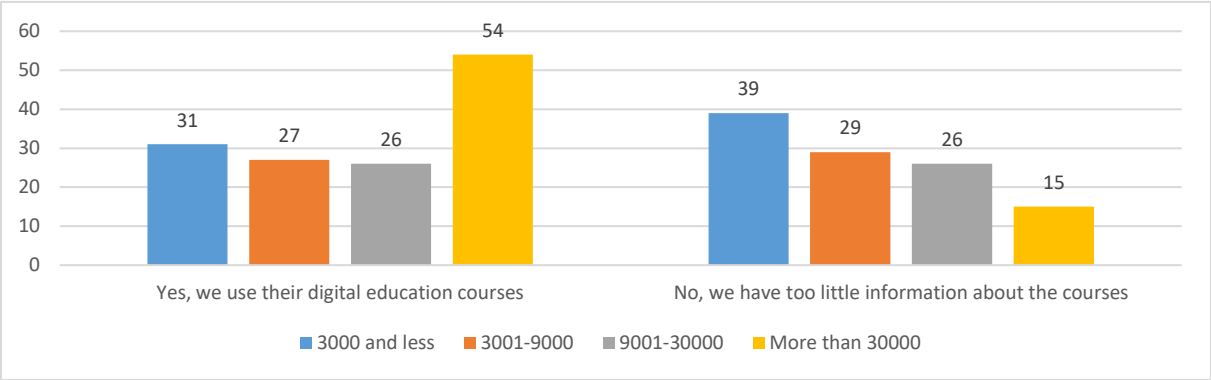


*Frequencies, percent.

Figure 18.11 shows that the share of municipalities using HK-dir's digital Norwegian courses has increased by more than 50%. Parallel to this, there has been a decline in municipalities considering using these courses. One in five municipal refugee services (20%) report that they do not need these courses. Interestingly, the proportion of municipalities reporting that they have too little information about these courses has not declined, taken into consideration that the courses were newly launched when we asked about them in 2024.

In figure 18.12 below, we take a closer look at which municipalities report that they have used HK-dir's digital courses, and which say they have too little information about the courses.

Figure 18.12: Has the refugee office in your municipality considered to use digital Norwegian education offered by the HK-dir? By municipal size. (N_{2025}=214).



*Frequencies, percent.

There is a much larger share of the largest municipalities answering that they have used the digital courses offered from HK-dir compared to other groups of municipalities. At the same time, information about the courses seems to be distributed according to municipal size: the smaller municipalities report to a much higher degree that they do not have enough information.

In an open-ended question in the survey, we have asked our informants if they have any comments on the digital Norwegian education offered by HK-dir.

Several respondents have commented on this. Some of them express having positive experiences with the courses, primarily as a supplement to ordinary education: 'Very satisfied. Adapted to different levels, and participants can work with the digital courses in the evenings and on weekends.' One of the respondents with long experience puts it this way:

> Our municipality was the first in the country to start using Lingu's digital Norwegian course, and we have had good experiences with it. Those who use Lingu in combination with in-person Norwegian instruction and/or work practice have better language progression than those who do not use Lingu – that is, those who we see are not as active on their Lingu account.

As in 2024, some refugee service leaders are sceptical to the courses because they only come in *bokmål*, not in *nynorsk* (New Norwegian) language[46].

Some respondents have experienced that participants don't use these courses: 'We have used them but have moved away from them because the participants don't use them. They primarily want in-person attendance, preferably in the evening.' Several respondents say that they have their own language courses, and that the municipality is unable to cover the costs of additional courses. The matter of costs is important for some of the municipalities:

> The courses are too expensive for the municipality to offer them in addition to the regular Norwegian instruction. I believe it would be more appropriate if the funds tied to the framework agreement with providers of digital Norwegian courses were instead given to the municipalities as earmarked money to strengthen Norwegian instruction locally.

A related, but different, suggestion is promoted by this respondent:

> Our view is that digital Norwegian instruction should have been developed and offered without limitation by a national provider to everyone who comes to Norway and wants to learn Norwegian — all types of immigrants, including refugees. The most important integration-promoting measure should be available 24/7 to anyone who wants it. Language is the key in every area, and the best investment Norway can make to integrate people.

In this regard, we refer to our notion in chapter 9.4.5, about the new national language training initiative that was launched in November 2025 by The National Centre of Multicultural Education (NAFO) at OsloMet. nafoki.no[47] is a national initiative on artificial intelligence for multilingual children, young people and adults. The website offers chatbots powered by AI—developed by NAFO in close collaboration with municipalities, directorates and other professional environments. This tool is free and open to all immigrants in Norway at no cost for the municipalities.

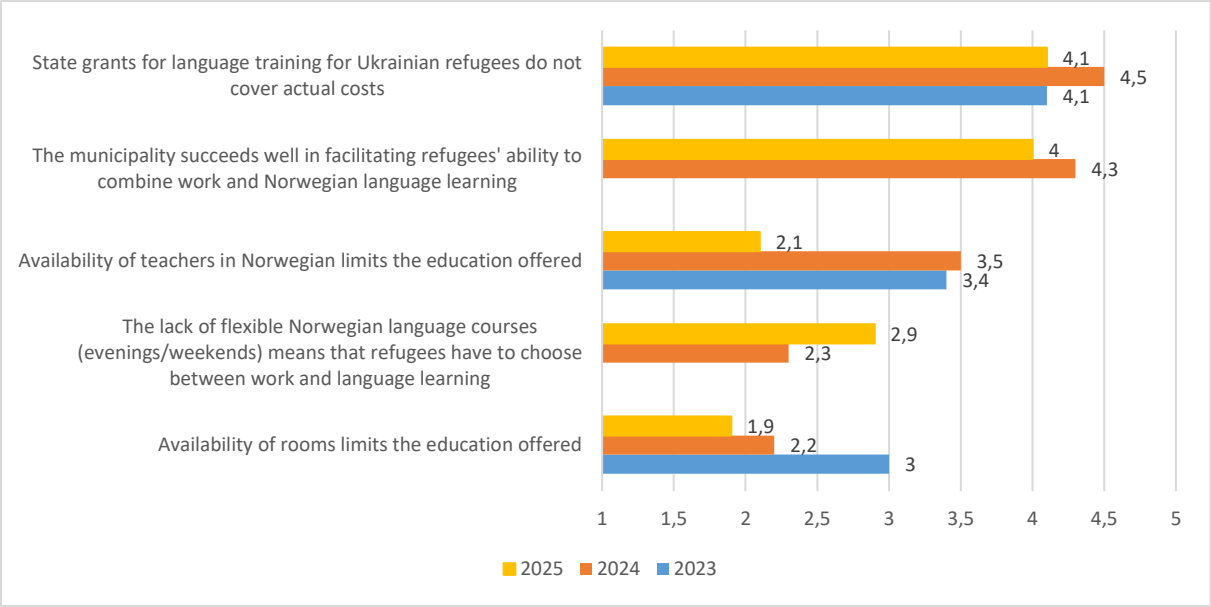
Challenges with providing sufficient Norwegian language training

In the survey, we asked respondents from local refugee services to assess selected statements concerning the language training for Ukrainian refugees in their municipality.

[46] The Norwegian language has two formal written languages; *bokmål* and *nynorsk*.

[47] https://ki.nafo.oslomet.no/

Figure 18.13: Please state to what extent you agree with the following statements concerning Norwegian language training (N_{2023}=215; N_{2024}=224; N_{2025}=214).



*Means. Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree.

Figure 18.13 shows that there is overall agreement among the leaders of the municipal refugee services that the government grants for language training for Ukrainian refugees do not cover the municipal costs for providing this service. In 2025, the level of agreement with this statement is back on the level from 2023. A striking feature in 18.14 is the decrease in agreement with 'Availability of teachers in Norwegian limits the education offered'. The teacher capacity appears to be less strained in 2025 than in 2024. The same holds for the availability of classrooms, which was particularly strained in 2023.

There are relatively small differences between municipalities of different sizes. The largest municipalities are somewhat less inclined to agree with the statement 'The lack of flexible Norwegian language courses (evenings/weekends) means that refugees have to choose between work and Norwegian education', whereas the smallest municipalities are more worried about the availability of teachers. Larger municipalities are more critical to whether the state grants cover actual costs.

19 Cooperation on labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees

In this chapter, we address how municipal refugee services cooperate with other services and actors in their efforts to integrate Ukrainian refugees into the labour market. Nav's role and cooperation with Nav is particularly important in labour market integration, and Nav-related topics will be handled more thoroughly than other actors. Barriers for employment are addressed in chapter 20.

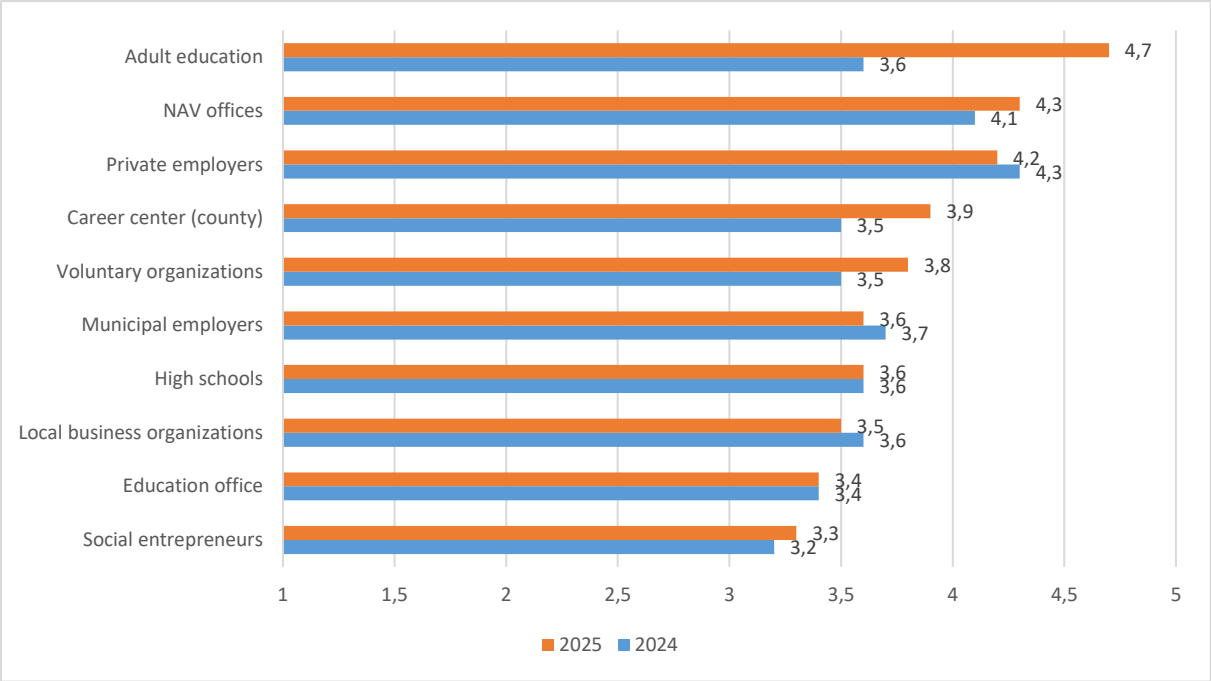
This chapter discusses the following issues:

- How do local refugee services assess their cooperation with relevant actors on education and training of refugees?
- What role does Nav have when the refugees are still participating in the introduction programme in order to prepare them for entering the labour market?
- In what ways do the municipal refugee services cooperate with Nav in their efforts to assist Ukrainian refugees to integrate into the labour market?
- How does the organisational structure of the refugee services (within Nav or in a separate unit) influence cooperation between services locally?
- How is Nav's resources to work with refugees perceived by the refugee services?
- What measures does Nav employ to facilitate the labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees after finishing the introduction programme?

19.1 Cooperation on education and labour market integration

In addition to Nav, several other actors may also play a role in facilitation of refugee integration in the labour market. These include schools and regional education offices, employers, businesses and their organisations as well as voluntary organisations. We have asked the refugee service offices how they assess the cooperation with relevant actors on education and training of Ukrainian refugees. Since our report from 2024 indicated relatively marginal changes from 2023, figure 19.1 shows the development only from 2024 to 2025.

Figure 19.1: How would you rate your cooperation with other services on education and training of Ukrainian refugees? (N_{2024}=224; N_{2025}=214).



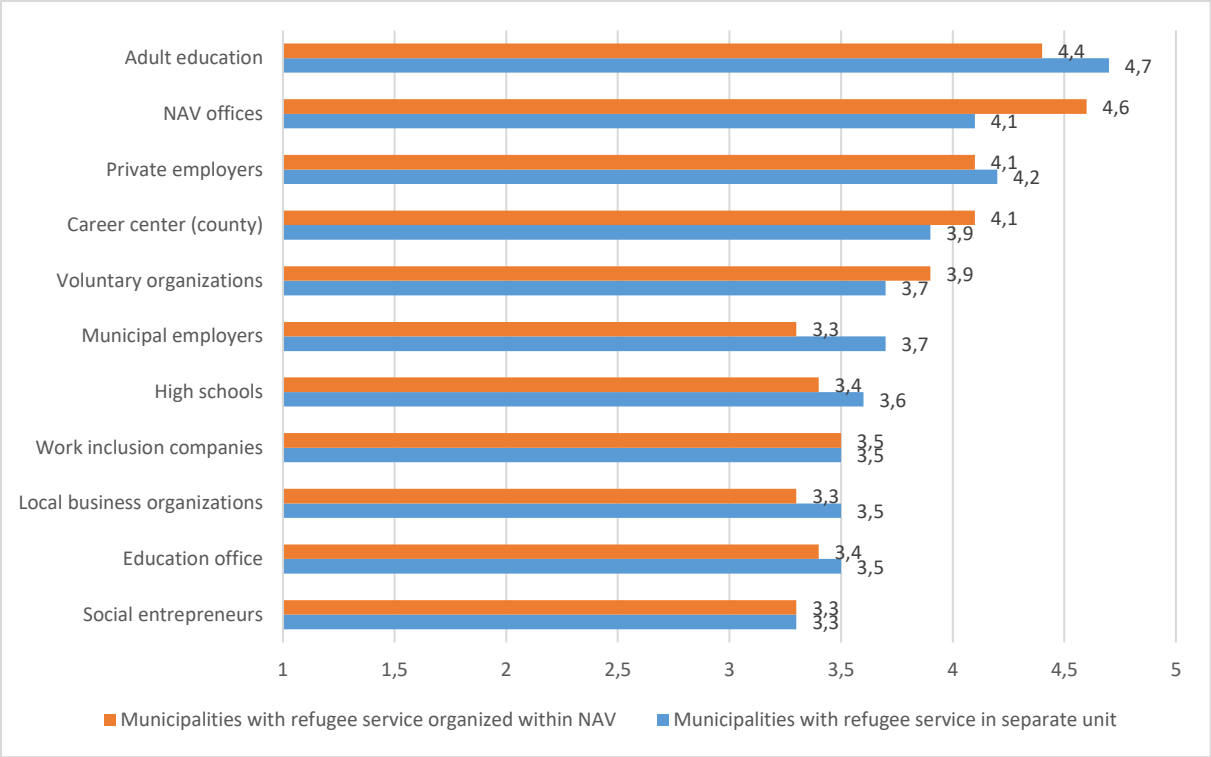
*Means. Scale: 1 = Very bad; 5 = Very good.

The respondents from the refugee services show relatively high rates of satisfaction generally (figure 19.1). Most positive is their cooperation experiences with adult education, Nav offices and private employers, with scores above 4 out of 5 (where 5 is 'very good). The development for adult education is not easy to explain: the cooperation score fell dramatically from 4.5 in 2023 to 3.6 in 2024 and is now above the 2023 level. If we look only at municipalities responding both in 2024 and 2025, this difference is reduced (to 4.4 in 2024 and 4.6 in 2025), indicating that some of the difference may be due to different municipalities participating in the survey. Moreover, relatively few respondents have answered this question item, implying that the results should be handled with care.

The assessment of Nav cooperation increases to 4.3 from 4.1 in 2024 (which was up from 3.7 in 2023). Cooperation with the county and voluntary organizations are also rated more positively in 2025 compared to 2024. For the other actors, we find marginal changes. Figure 19.1 shows that social entrepreneurs receive the lowest score, but it is still on the positive side of the scale.

It is interesting to investigate whether refugee service organisation is important for the cooperation assessments.

Figure 19.2: How would you rate your cooperation with other services on education and training of Ukrainian refugees? (N=213).



As we can see in figure 19.2, refugee services organised within the Nav system rate the cooperation with other parts of Nav far better than refugee services organised outside Nav. The opposite holds for municipal employers: refugee services organized in separate municipal unit (outside Nav) assess the cooperation with the municipality as employer considerably higher than do refugee services organized within the Nav system. Generally, even if most of the differences are small, refugee services outside Nav tend to rate cooperation with other services better compared to refugee services in Nav. Exceptions to this general trend are cooperation with the career centre and voluntary organization.

19.2 Nav's role in settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees

Nav is an important actor in Norwegian welfare service provision, also when it comes to refugees. In many municipalities, Nav has a triple role: as an administrative unit for refugee services, as an entity providing social assistance and other benefits, and as a central actor in helping refugees enter the labour market. Since many Ukrainian refugees who arrived in Norway in 2022 and 2023 now have finished their introduction programme and are getting assistance from Nav, the 2025 survey puts more weight on Nav's role and resources in the work with Ukrainian refugees.

Nav's role when refugees are in the introduction programme

Cooperation between the municipal refugee service and Nav is often crucial for the integration of refugees into the labour market. Our 2023 report (Hernes et al. 2023) pointed to great variation among municipalities when it comes to *when* Nav gets involved in the process of refugee integration.

We have asked our respondents on their agreement with the statement: *NAV becomes involved early in the work with Ukrainian refugees, so that we get a good transition from the introduction program to work/education*. About one in four respondents disagree with this

statement, another one in four agree to a certain degree, whereas almost 50% agree to a great or very great extent. The mean score is 3.4 on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Figure 19.3: Please state your agreement with*: Nav becomes involved early in the work with Ukrainian refugees, so that we get a good transition from the introduction program to work/education*. By refugee service organization. (N=208).

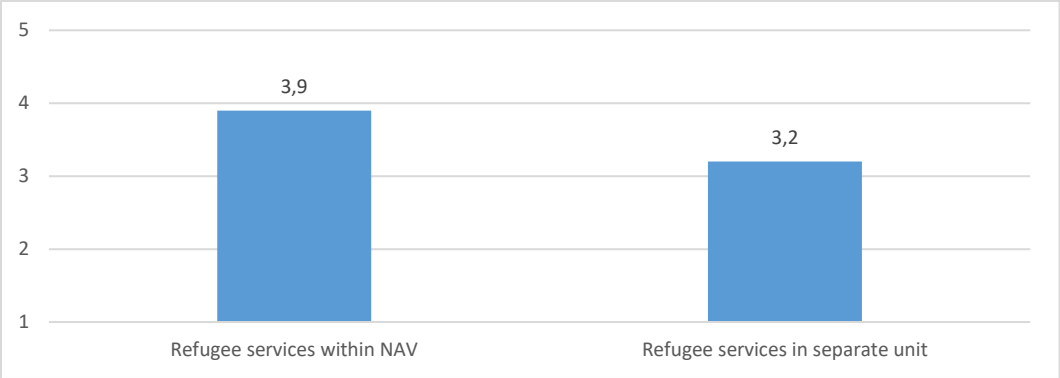
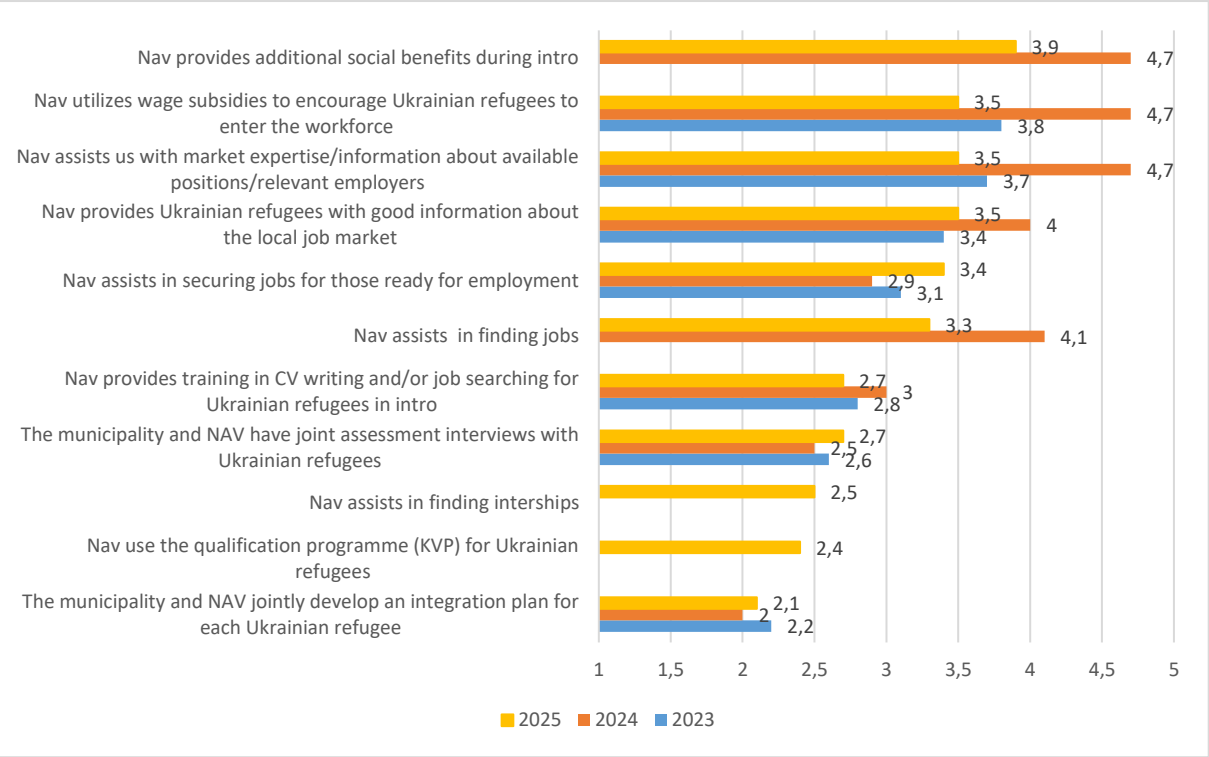


Figure 19.3 shows relatively large differences in scores between refugee services organized within and outside Nav. Compared to other respondents, respondents from services within Nav report that Nav becomes involved earlier in their work with Ukrainian refugees.

On this matter, there are some differences according to municipal size. The smallest (score 3.1) and largest (score 3.2) municipalities are less inclined to think that Nav becomes involved early, whereas municipalities with a population between 9000 and 30000 have the highest score (3.7).

In our surveys from 2023 to 2025, we have asked what kind of activities and measures Nav uses when refugees are in the introduction programme.

Figure 19.4: Please state to what extent you agree with the following statements about cooperation with Nav * (N_{2023} = 215; N_{2024}=202; N_{2025}=207).

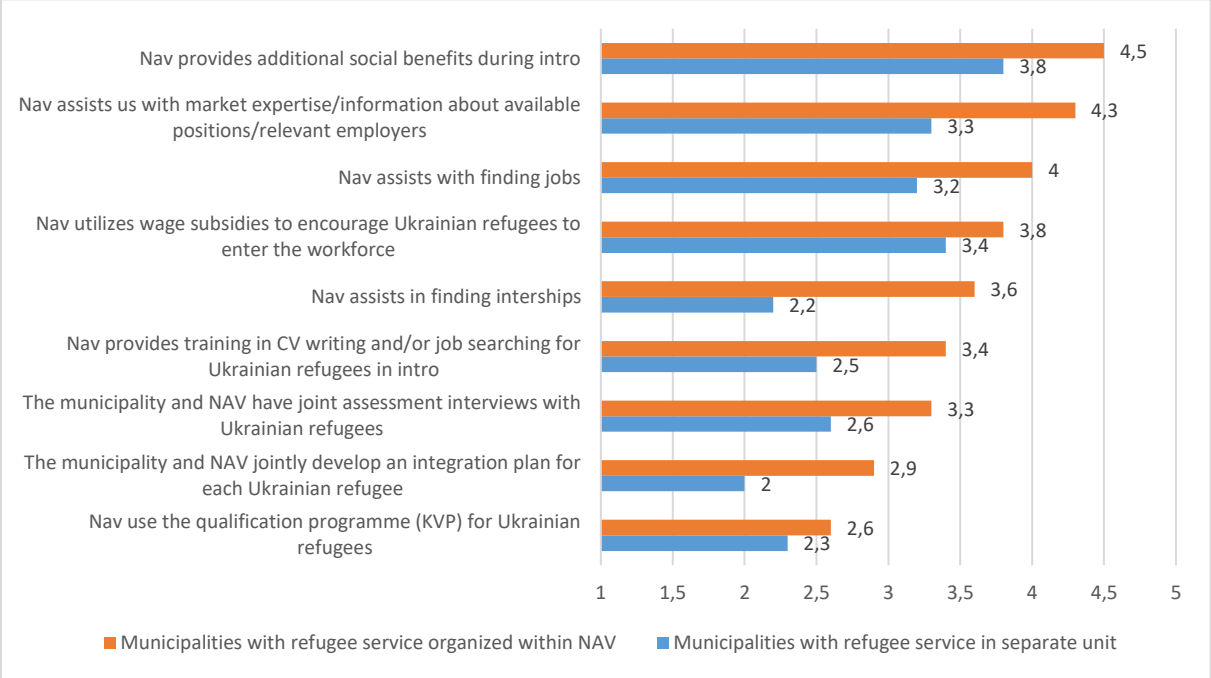


*Means. Scale: 1=Do not at all agree; 5=Fully agree.

Figure 19.4 shows some interesting developments. Compared to the 2024 figures, the scores on several statements have decreased considerably, back to the 2023 level or more. Whereas almost all respondents agreed that Nav assists with market expertise and information about available positions and the local job market situation in 2024 (score 4.7), this is down to 3.5 in 2025. Likewise, the score for *Nav provides additional social benefits during intro* is down from 4.7 to 3.9 and for *Nav utilizes wage subsidies* from 4.7 to 3.5. This development may indicate that Nav's capacity and resources are significantly more strained in 2025 compared to 2024. We look more into this later in this chapter.

In section 17.1, we observed that about one in four refugee services are organised within Nav and that two in three services are separate administrative units in the municipality. One obvious hypothesis is that refugee services operating within Nav have a closer relationship with other parts of Nav than do refugee services that are organised differently. Our analysis clearly confirms this hypothesis.

Figure 19.5: Agreement on the statements about Nav, by refugee service organisation* (N = 204).



*Means. Scale: 1=Do not at all agree; 5=Fully agree.

Figure 19.5 shows the 2025 scores from refugee services within and outside Nav on the different statements concerning Nav involvement. It shows that respondents in municipalities where the refugee service is organised within Nav generally rate the various forms of cooperation and involvement as more comprehensive than respondents in municipalities where the refugee service is a separate unit. This could indicate better access to Nav services and measures both for the refugee service and for the refugees in these municipalities.

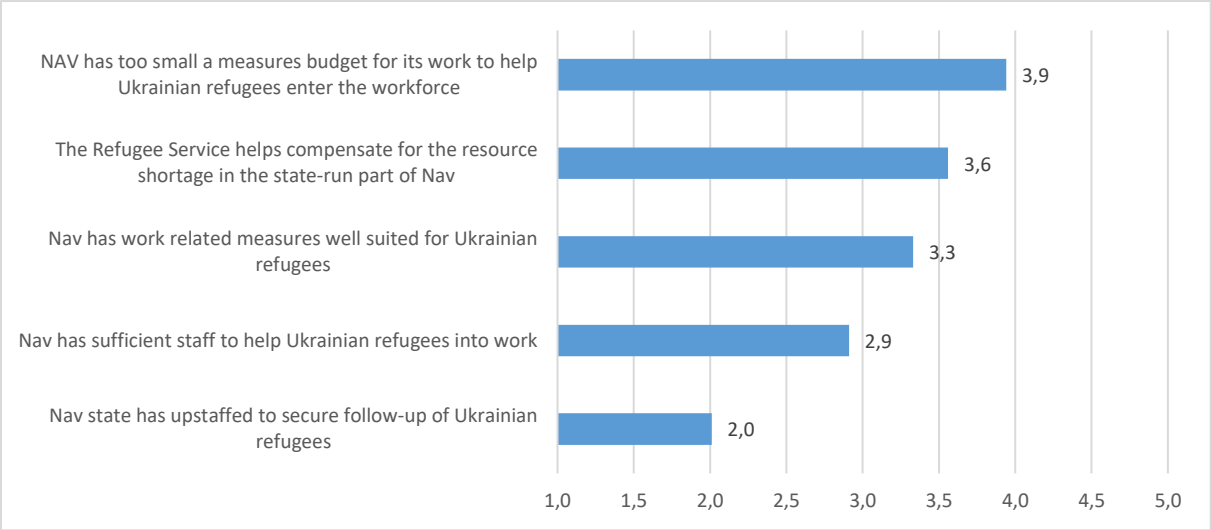
There are, however, several respondents from the municipal refugee services voicing cooperation challenges with Nav. This is mostly due to capacity challenges in Nav.

Nav's role and resources when refugees have finished the introduction programme

Many respondents from the refugee services in our 2024 survey commented on Nav's scarce resources in following up refugees. In the summer of 2025, it became known that Nav had overspent its measure funds compared with the budget, and for some weeks there was uncertainty whether they would have to reduce the resources used on getting refugees into work.[48] In our survey in the fall of 2025, we included some questions about the refugee services' perceptions of Nav's resources (figure 19.6 below).

[48] Refugees from Ukraine is a group using these Nav-measures to a great extent. The overspending in some Nav regions implied a certain brake on the resources spent on these measures in the second half of 2025. Still, a large proportion of Ukrainian refugees participate in Nav's labour market measures. In October 2025, 24% (4220 individuals) of all Ukrainian refugees registered with Nav made use of such a measure.

Figure 19.6: How do you perceive Nav's resources in working with refugees? Please state your agreement with the following statements

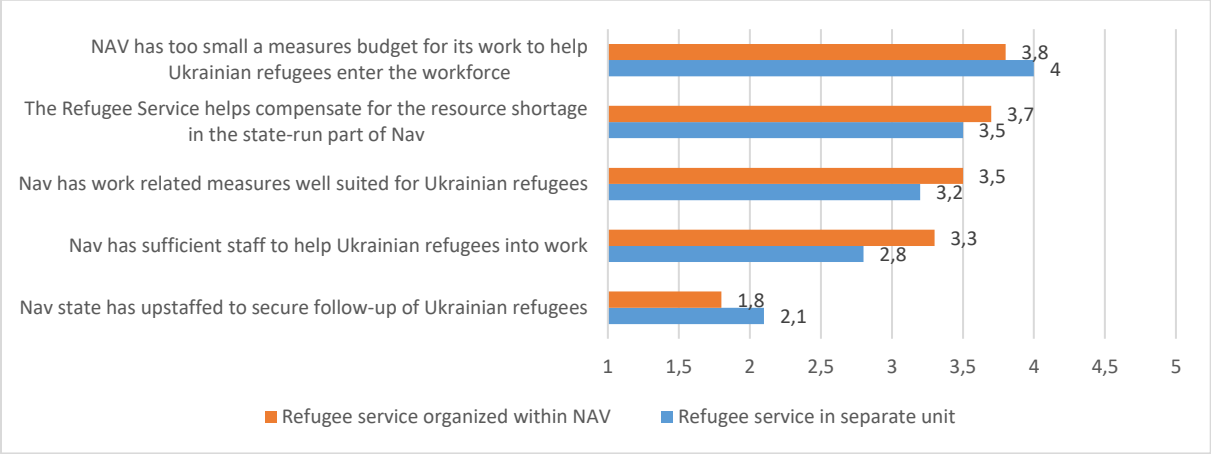


*Means. Scale: 1=Do not at all agree; 5=Fully agree.

The most striking feature in figure 19.6 is the low agreement with *Nav state has upstaffed to secure follow-up of Ukrainian refugees*. The predominant view seems to be that Nav has not increased their staff to accommodate the situation with a high number of refugees. The mean score for the statement about whether Nav has sufficient staff is also low and on the negative side of the scale. The other mean scores are low, but affirmative. The highest agreement score is on the statement *NAV has too small a measures budget for its work to help Ukrainian refugees enter the workforce*. The score, 3.9, is up from the 2024 score of 3.3. All in all, the impression is that our respondents find Nav (state) resources as scarce compared to the workload, and that the scarcity appears more prominent in 2025 compared to 2024.

About one in four refugee services are organized within Nav. We could expect that respondents from these services have more information – and maybe a different perception – of the resources in Nav state.

Figure 19.7: How do you perceive Nav's resources in working with refugees? Please state your agreement with the following statements. By refugee service organization (N=195)*



*Means. Scale: 1=Do not at all agree; 5=Fully agree.

Figure 19.7 shows the scores for respondents according to the organization of their service. Interestingly, respondents from services within Nav are somewhat *more* likely to answer that the refugee services compensated for lack of resources in the state-run part of Nav. At the

same time, they are less likely to answer that Nav state has upstaffed. On the other statements, respondents from services organized in Nav are more positive to Nav's measures and capacity compared to respondents from services organized outside Nav.

The results from the 2025 survey to the refugee services are very much coherent with the results from a survey to employees in Nav conducted in the spring of 2025. In this survey, the respondents disagree strongly with the statement *Nav state has upstaffed to secure follow-up of Ukrainian refugees* (score 1.4 on a scale from 1 to 5). On the other side, they agree strongly with the statement *The municipal part of Nav has upstaffed to secure follow-up of Ukrainian refugees* (score 4.0). The agreement with the statement that *the municipal part of Nav helps compensate for the resource shortage in the state-run part of Nav* is 3.5.

One of our respondents pointed to Nav's lack of resources as an important hindrance for getting refugees integrated into the labour market:

> NAV had to cut the use of measure funds and wage subsidies. This means that participants who were well on their way to gaining a stable attachment to working life are now left without work placements or temporary employment. They become demotivated and will most likely end up as long-term social assistance recipients.

20 Barriers and opportunities in the labour market

The number of Ukrainian refugees entering the labour market is steadily increasing (see section 10.1). However, for many Ukrainians, the path to entering the workforce is much longer than first anticipated. In this chapter, we ask the following questions:

- What do refugee service leaders perceive as the most important to do in their work with Ukrainian refugees?
- What is the importance of work practice for the refugees, and what are the main challenges in getting work practice?
- What barriers can be identified as hindering the Ukrainian refugees' labour market participation in terms of both individual factors and more local and/or systemic factors?

20.1 What is most important?

In our survey to Nav employees in the spring of 2025, we asked them to assess (on a scale from 1 to 5) the importance of five possible goals for their work with Ukrainian refugees. The results indicated that they had problems in prioritizing: getting Ukrainians in work as soon as possible and their learning of Norwegian language both got a score of 4.2. Getting jobs for Ukrainians according to their qualification got the lowest score, of 3.2. In our survey to the refugee services, we wanted to force the respondents to prioritize, by introducing a question where they had to rank the five goals (figure 20.1).

Figure 20.1: What is most important in your work with Ukrainian refugees? Higher score=higher priority.

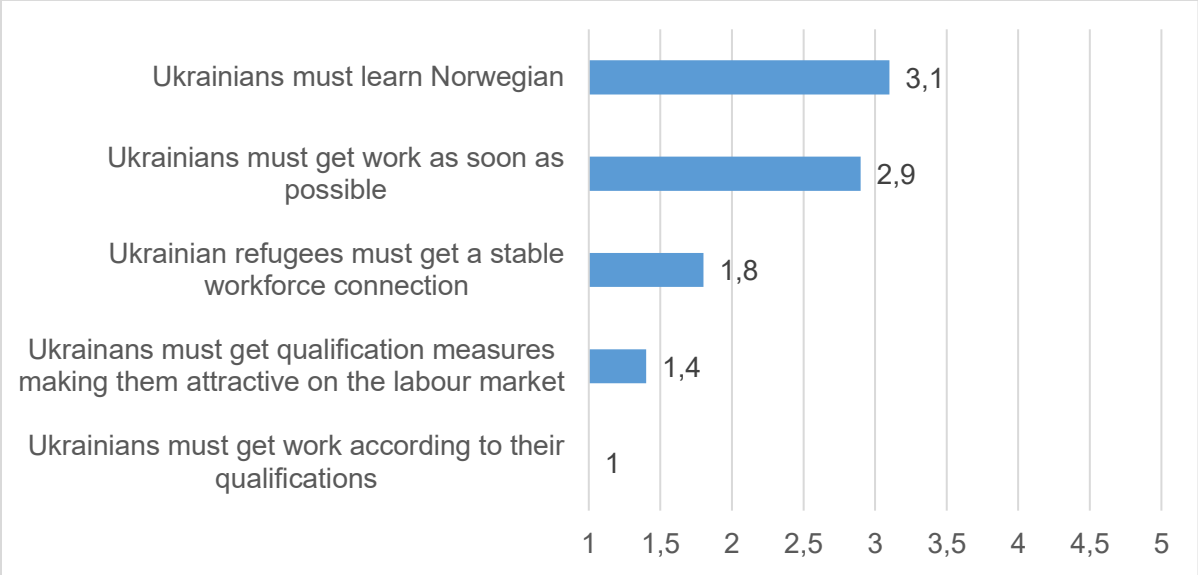
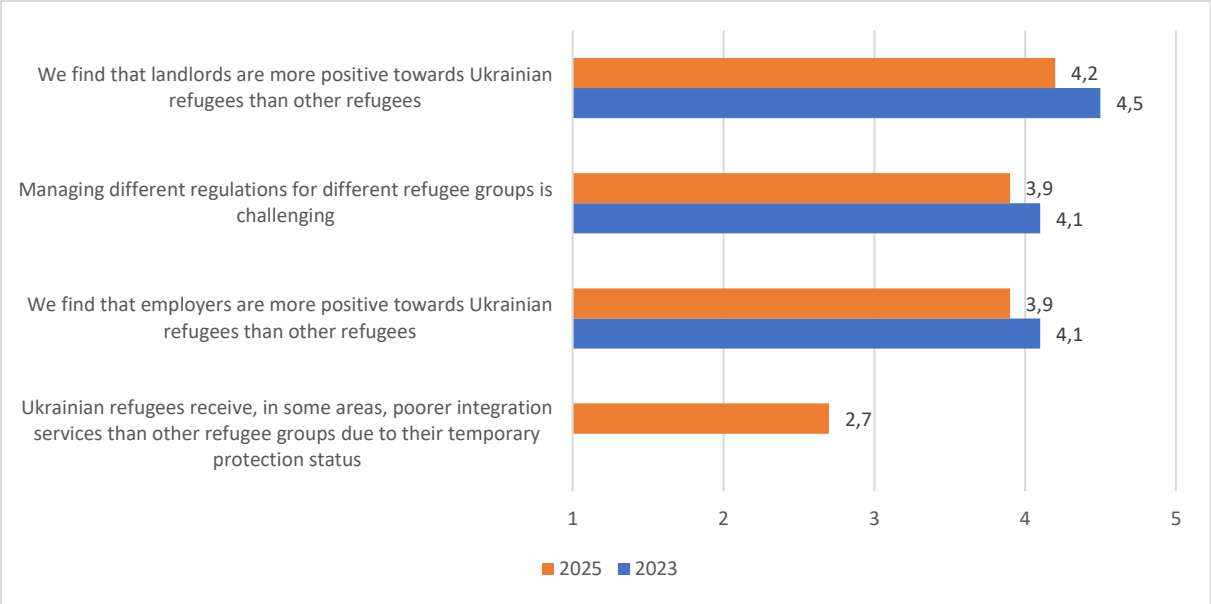


Figure 20.1 shows that 'Ukrainians must learn Norwegian' has the highest priority among our respondents, with 'Ukrainians must get work as soon as possible' very close. This mirrors the results from the Nav survey: these two goals are most important in their work with Ukrainian refugees. 'Ukrainians must get work according to their qualifications' gets the lowest priority of the five goals in our survey. A stable connection to the workforce in ranked three, and qualification measures to make Ukrainians attractive on the labour market is ranked second lowest of the five.

20.2 Are Ukrainians handled differently from other refugees?

In 2023 and 2025, we asked our respondents how they perceive the situation for Ukrainians compared to other refugee groups.

Figure 20.2: Are Ukrainian refugees handled differently from other refugee groups? (N=189)*



*Means. Scale: 1=Do not at all agree; 5=Fully agree.

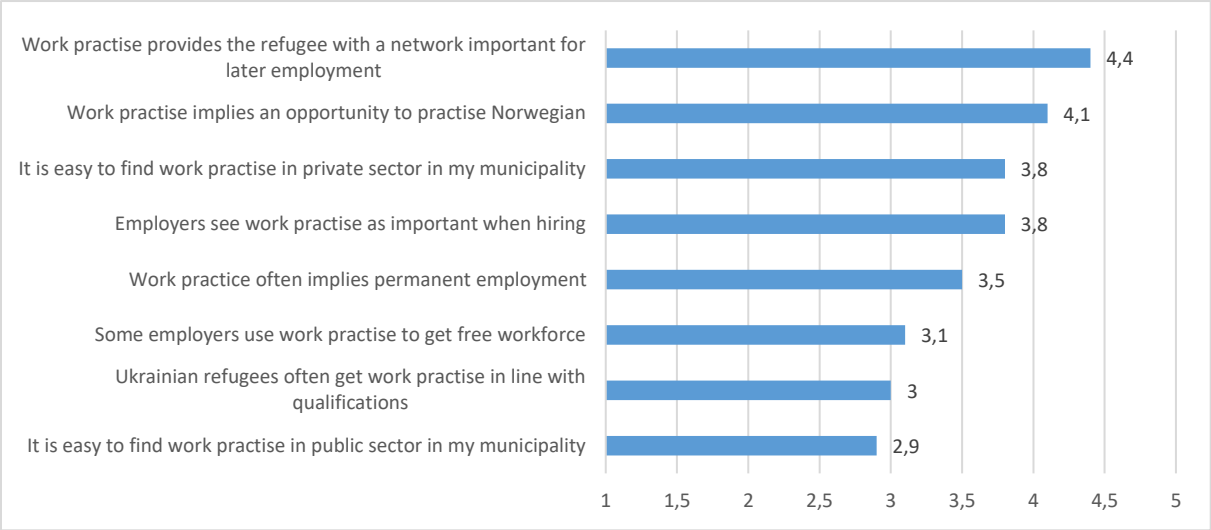
Landlords, employers and voluntary organizations are perceived as more welcoming to refugees from Ukraine than to other refugee groups (figure 20.2). Ukrainians' position is, however, assessed somewhat less favourable in 2025 than two years earlier. Relatively few respondents agree that Ukrainians receive poorer services due to their temporary protection status.

We also asked whether refugee service leaders find it challenging to manage different regulations for different refugee groups. The mean score for the agreement with this statement was 3.9 In 2025, down from 4.1 in 2023. It seems reasonable to assume that the (admittedly quite small) decline partly is due to more harmonized regulations over time, partly to the respondents acquiring more experience handling the regulations.

20.3 Work practice

As we have seen, both national authorities and local refugee services put much weight on work-orienting the introduction programme. Almost all respondents report that their introduction programme contains work practice for all (88%) or some (10%) participants. We asked our respondents about the importance of work practice and challenges in finding such practices.

Figure 20.3: What role does work practice play on the road to employment? Please state your agreement with these statements. (N=210)



*Means. Scale: 1 = Very small extent, 5 = Very large extent.

Figure 20.3 shows that there is large support among our respondents for the positive effects of work practice: it provides refugees with a network (score 4.4) and it gives an opportunity to practice Norwegian language (score 4.1). There is less support, but still clearly on the positive side, for the statements about employers' attitude towards work practice (score 3.8) and that work practice often leads to permanent employment (score 3.5). Our respondents are, however, more split about whether employers use practice to get free workforce (score 3.1). 26% disagree/disagree strongly with this statement, whereas 36% agree/agree strongly. 38% answer that they neither agree nor disagree. Relatively many report that it is easy to find work practice in private businesses (score 3.8), whereas in public sector it appears to be more difficult (score 2.9). The question of practice and employment in municipal services will be addressed later in section 20.5.

Bivariate correlation analyses show strong positive correlations between the respondents' assessment of the local labour market situation and their response to the statements about work practice. Particularly strong is the correlation between labour market situation and the view that it is easy to find work practice in private sector businesses.[49] The only exception to the positive correlations is the statement about employers' potential misuse of work practice, which shows no significant correlation with labour market situation.

Our analyses show mostly minor differences between respondents from refugee services organized within and outside Nav, with some interesting exceptions. Respondents from offices outside Nav (in separate municipal service) tend to assess the possibilities to find work practice in public sector somewhat easier than respondents in Nav-organized offices (score 2.9 vs. 2.7). There is no such difference when it comes to work practice in private sector (3.8 for both).

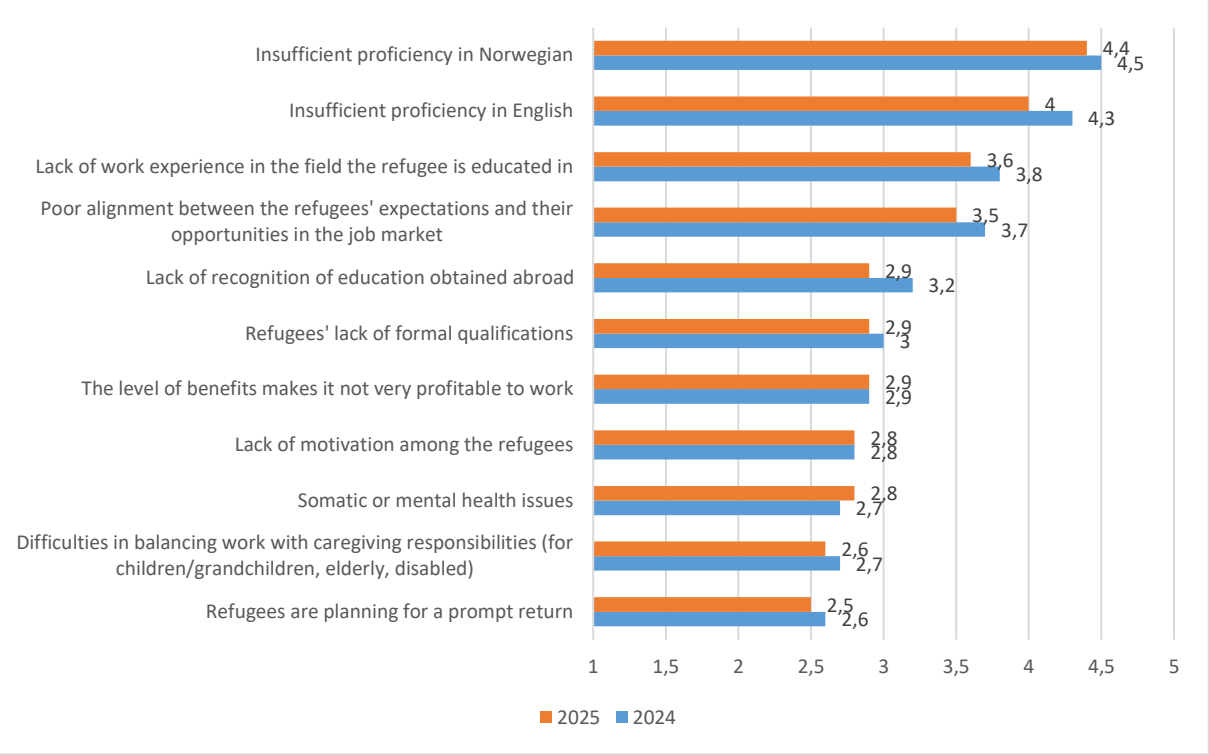
[49] The correlation between labour market situation and the view that it is easy to find work practice in private sector businesses is strong and significant (r=.44; sig.<.001), indicating that there is a real correlation between the two: it is much easier to find work practice in the private sector in municipalities with a beneficial labour market.

20.4 Individual factors

In our previous reports, we have addressed the topic of barriers to employment. We look at individual and systemic barriers separately, but for the individual refugee these two barriers often interact.

What individual factors associated with Ukrainian refugees as a group do the refugee service leaders perceive to be the main barriers to employment?

Figure 20.4: Barriers to integration of refugees in the labour market, individual factors (N = 224).



*Means. Scale: 1 = Very small extent, 5 = Very large extent.

Figure 20.4 illustrates that the scores for 2025 are similar to the 2024 scores, but that for many of the factors, the barriers are perceived a little less important now. According to our respondents, the most important barriers at the individual level are insufficient Norwegian and English language skills (4.4 and 4.0 out of 5 on the scale). This finding is in line with what we find in the survey to Nav employees, who score insufficient Norwegian 4.5 and insufficient English 4.2 on the 1-5 scale.

Lack of work experience and formal (or recognised) qualifications are also seen as barriers to labour market integration, as well as the relation between refugees' expectations and actual opportunities in the local labour market. Motivation challenges, health problems and caregiving responsibilities are seen as somewhat less important.

In the 2024 and 2025 surveys, we asked the respondents to state their agreement with 'The level of benefits makes it not very profitable to work'. Both years, the mean score of this statement is 2.9, a middle range score, both on the scale and among the factors mentioned in the survey.

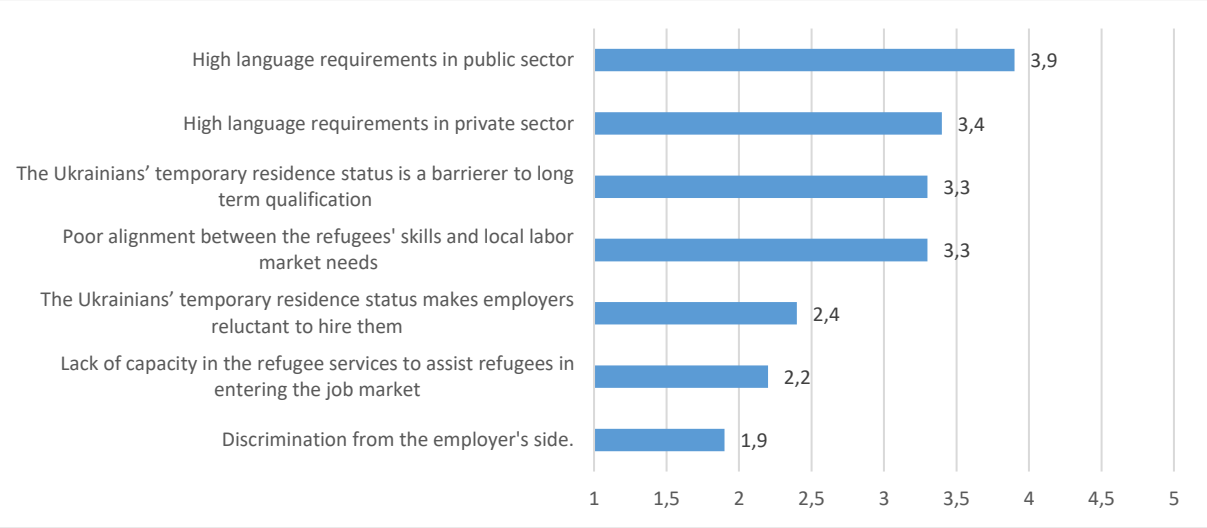
A bivariate correlation analysis between labour market situation and barriers show that some of the possible barriers are perceived less important when the labour market is advantageous. In municipalities with a good labour market situation, the respondents tend to be less inclined to think that the benefits represent a problem, or that insufficient language skills or lack of recognition of education is a major challenge in integrating Ukrainians into the

labour market.[50] In other words, the labour market plays an important role in integration processes.

20.5 Local and systemic factors

Compared with the individual factors, local and systemic factors are, on average, perceived as less important barriers to labour market integration than the individual factors described above.

Figure 20.5: Barriers to integration of refugees in the labour market, local/systemic factors (N = 210).



*Means. Scale: 1 = very small extent, 5 = very large extent.

Figure 20.5 shows that high language requirements, particularly in the public sector, is perceived as a relatively important systemic barrier of refugee employment (score 3.9). Language requirements in the private sector are scored as somewhat important (score 3.4), like the impact of the temporary residence status on qualification and poor alignment of skills and local needs (both 3.3). Less important factors are reluctant employers (2,4), lack of capacity in the refugee service (2.2) and employer discrimination (1.9).

In our 2024 survey, we found a decline in the scoring of 'Lack of capacity in the refugee services to assist refugees in entering the job market' from 2023 (from 2.7 to 2.3). We interpreted this as an indication of less pressure on local refugee services capacity. In 2025, the score for this factor is further reduced to 2.2.

Bivariate correlation analyses show that particularly one factor correlates negatively with the local labour market situation: Poor alignment between the refugees' skills and local labour market needs appears to be less important in municipalities with an advantageous situation in the labour market (r=-.36, sig<.001).

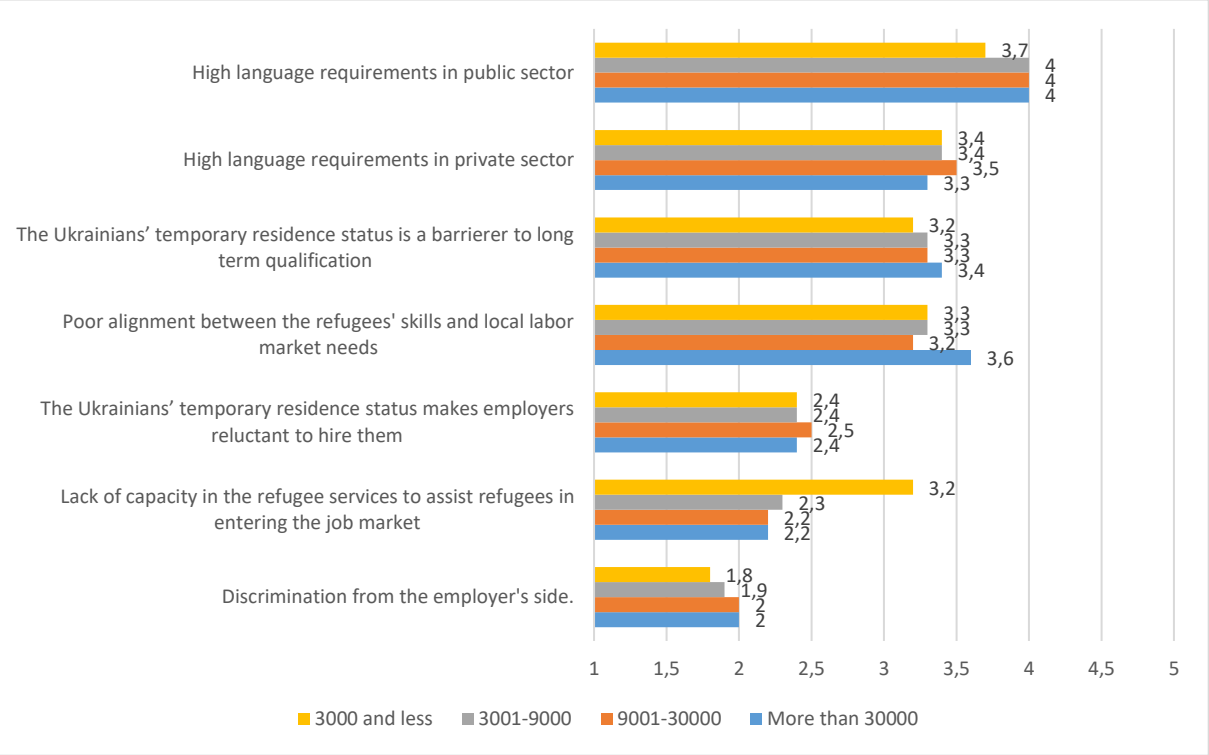
Barriers depending on municipal size

Some of the local or systemic barriers may be closely linked to the population size of the municipality (which, again, is linked to centrality). There are, however, relatively small differences between municipalities of different sizes (Figure 20.6). The largest municipalities perceive poor alignment between the refugees' skills and local labour market needs as a more dominant barrier than other municipalities, whereas the smallest municipalities

[50] The negative correlation is most pronounced for 'the level of benefits makes it not very profitable to work' (r=-,25, sig<.001), but also 'insufficient Norwegian skills' (r=-.22, sig=.001) and 'lack of recognition of education' (r=-.19, sig=.007) show significant correlation with the labour market situation.

experience lack of capacity in the refugee services as a more pronounced challenge compared to larger municipalities.

Figure 20.6: Barriers to integration of refugees in the labour market, local/systemic factors, by municipality size (N = 199).



*Means. Scale: 1 = very small extent, 5 = very large extent.

Figure 20.6 shows that the largest municipalities perceive poor alignment between the refugees' skills and local labour market needs as a more dominant barrier than other municipalities, whereas the smallest municipalities experience lack of capacity in the refugee services as a more pronounced challenge compared to larger municipalities.

20.6 Barriers to work – in respondents' own words

We asked the respondents in the survey to elaborate on the barriers they face in helping Ukrainian refugees into work practice in municipal services or private businesses.

Many of the responses confirm that lack of language proficiency and mismatch between formal education and experience are important barriers. They also point to the too short period of Norwegian training and want more flexibility in what they can offer the refugees.

Several respondents from small municipalities say that there are few positions locally, and that vacant positions do not match refugees' skills. Some say that the companies in their municipality are very small, making it difficult for them to take in refugees. Others report that they cooperate closely with private businesses and have succeeded well in getting Ukrainian refugees into practice or work, but that they now have reached a 'saturation point' and more or less exhausted the possibilities with their municipality. A respondent from another small municipality, highlights the benefits in receiving refugees: 'Our municipality needs everyone who comes here, so most businesses are positive about helping people into work/integration'.

Lack of documentation on previous experience or formal education implies challenges for some refugees. Others emphasise that it is difficult to find work to skilled refugees in their

local community, because there are few vacant positions and because this kind of work requires language proficiency. Sometimes the refugees have ambitions that the refugee service find difficult to satisfy within their local context. Some may have too high expectations on their own behalf:

> Many of the Ukrainians have high language expectations for themselves and want to stay in Norwegian language training as long as possible before starting a job or a work placement. They do not always share our view that one learns Norwegian through practical work. Some have declined job offers because they want to continue with language training. They do not always understand that the introduction program is meant to lead to employment but believe it is a program they must complete before applying for work.

In this regard, as described in chapter 3.3, it is relevant to highlight that one of the revisions in the Integration Act from June 2025 includes a clarification that those who are already employed or have a confirmed job offer of at least 30 hours per week will no longer be eligible to participate in the introduction programme (Integration Act, 2021).

Some of our respondents point to what implications the temporality of the Ukrainians' stay has for work integration:

> Temporary residence makes employers somewhat more reluctant to invest in Ukrainian workers, as they are unsure whether their investment will pay off over time. Temporary residence also affects the motivation of the Ukrainian refugees. They are uncertain whether they will be allowed to stay in Norway, and therefore less motivated to commit to Norwegian language training and to make a full effort to enter the workforce.

Our respondents have different explanations of the relatively low rate of refugees getting work practice or employed work in the municipal sector. One says that the cooperation between relevant services is not functioning well, and that no one takes responsibility for getting refugees into municipal services.

There are also respondents pointing to that the capacity of employees in their municipality is already stretched, so they cannot take on refugees needing help to function at work. Some refugee services say that they lack capacity to follow up refugees and employers during practice or work.

One of our respondents has summed up what several of the refugee service leaders express:

> We have chosen to use extra integration funds for following up refugees in work placements within the municipal care services. This has given some refugees the opportunity for permanent jobs/temporary positions/on-call work. Some have had work placements in schools and later gotten jobs to follow up Ukrainian children. In those cases, we selected participants with relevant background competence and experience. Otherwise, limited capacity is used as the reason for not taking in refugees for work placements in municipal services.
>
> We have found that formal qualifications among the Ukrainian refugees often have little practical value. They have an education but have never practiced it. To a large extent, it's about being able to 'hang the diploma on the wall.' They have a completely different type of work experience. We have also uncovered that some have purchased their diplomas.

A couple of our respondents report that they experience great differences between municipal sectors when it comes to accommodating for refugees. One is quite outspoken in the characteristics of some services:

> Our municipality is divided in terms of what they offer. Some units are fantastic; others are absolutely terrible. The ones that are terrible set conditions they know the refugees cannot meet. At times, it borders on institutional racism.

This respondent sees different individual and systemic barriers in combination:

> Often it is a combination of too low a Norwegian language level, too little funding for employment measures in the Nav system (which has been used up to help many others into work, but this affects those who enter the Nav system later), too few staff who can help the

> resettled refugees get started, access to transportation to and from jobs in nearby municipalities, and the municipality's extremely poor finances — all of which make everything more challenging.

And what facilitates integration?

We asked our respondents what they see can facilitate labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees.

Some mention factors connected with the local labour market, for instance: 'In our municipality, there is a large availability of vacant jobs for unskilled workers, including in the salmon industry.' More Norwegian training is highlighted by many refugee service leaders:

> A longer introduction program and more time for Norwegian language training for those with higher education from their home country could contribute to a better transition into employment.

Several mention that special courses in workplace Norwegian or industry-specific courses would be useful. Many reports good experiences with measures like mentors, wage subsidies and work practice:

> Most employers do not dare to hire someone permanently before they have 'tried' them in a position for a while. We have good experience with work practice and wage subsidies. With this, almost everyone has found work after some time. Most Ukrainians want to work and do a good job if they are just given the chance. So, the use of wage subsidies and work training makes integration into the workforce easier.

Several respondents underline the positive effects of close follow-up of both the refugee and the employer in the beginning. The employer needs to get acquainted with the candidate and be reassured to have a back-up in the refugee service or Nav if somethings doesn't work. One mentions that voluntary organizations can help:

> Good cooperation with the voluntary sector to 'showcase' the refugees, as well as participation by various actors at, for example, the village café, People Meet People events, and other gatherings.

It is documented that small Norwegian municipalities tend to have better results when it comes to refugee labour market integration (Myrvold, et al. 2025). One of our respondents from a small municipality puts it this way:

> We are a small municipality (with good oversight of municipal and private workplaces, as well as needs). The distance between units is short. It is easier to tailor arrangements adapted to each individual refugee.

Well-functioning cooperation between refugee services, adult education and Nav is also mentioned by many as important to get refugees into work. Some want Nav earlier in.

One respondent puts weight on the importance of children and recommends: 'Increased focus on ensuring a good start for the children, which creates a sense of security for the adults, and in turn opens the door for better learning.'

The situation – and barriers – differ among the municipalities. Some rural municipalities say that they hire out cars to refugees and also give them the option of municipal loans for buying a car, in order to enable them to drive from their home to the workplace.

One of our respondents writes that the refugees need:

> Clear requirements and clear signals from the state that self-sufficiency is expected from everyone of working age, so that it is sustainable to provide for those who are younger, older, or ill.

20.7 The municipality as employer

The municipality itself is the main employer in many local communities in Norway. The municipality is in charge of large workplaces such as nursing homes, kindergartens, primary schools, etc. In many municipalities, there is a high demand for labour in some sectors, especially in healthcare. Despite this, it has been documented challenges in getting municipal workplaces to accept Ukrainian refugees (or refugees in general) for work practice placements or regular work (Myrvold et al. 2025).

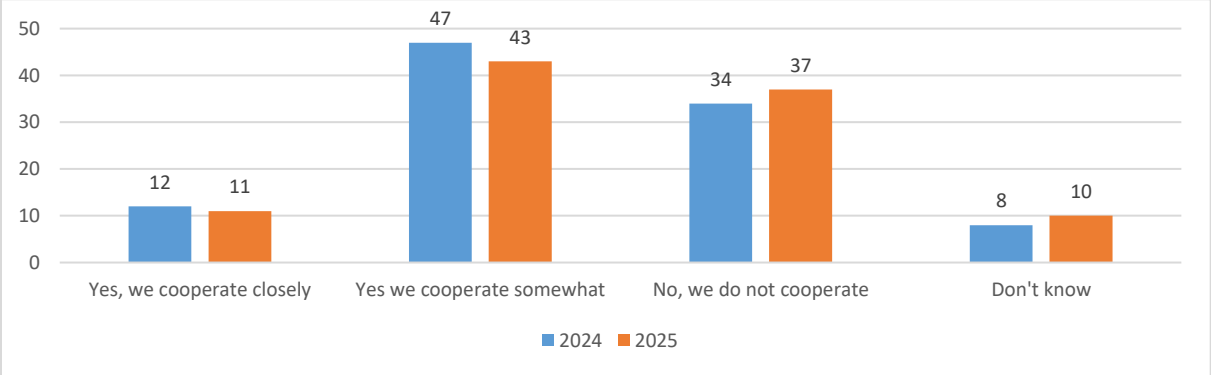
It would therefore be a win-win situation if more refugees could be employed in municipal services with a lack of manpower. But municipalities often demand formal qualifications, including language proficiency. National authorities have set requirements for some sectors, such as kindergartens, whereas in other sectors it is up to each municipality to set the requirements. Municipalities are sometimes perceived to be more bureaucratic and rigid than employers in the private sector, who are described as more open and flexible, and less concerned with formalities (Hernes et al. 2023).

Language barriers are treated as an individual barrier earlier in this chapter. But language requirements are also systemic factors, and challenges emerge when high requirements are not met by corresponding qualifications. Earlier in this chapter, we documented that language requirements are perceived as a considerably larger barrier in the public sector compared to private sector (figure 20.5).

Cooperation between the refugee service and the municipal HR department

In order to get internship or employment for refugees, the refugee service may cooperate with those responsible for recruitment in the municipality, for instance the HR department. We asked our respondents from the local refugee service whether they cooperate with the HR-responsible in the municipality.

Figure 20.7: Does the refugee service cooperate with the municipal HR department? (N_{2024}=222; N_{2025}=210)*



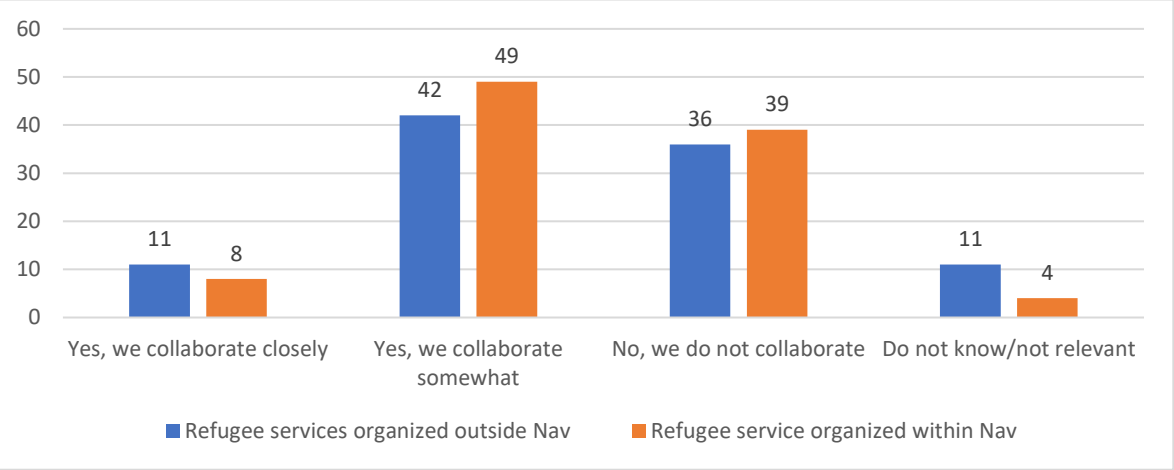
* Frequencies, percent.

Figure 20.7 shows that a minority of the refugee services report that they cooperate closely with those responsible for recruitment. Nearly half of the respondents say that they cooperate somewhat with the HR department, while one in three refugee services say that they have no cooperation with HR. We can note a certain decline in the reported cooperation between refugee services and municipal HR from 2024 to 2025. This is a bit surprising, since there has been some public attention on this topic the past year, for instance through the project 'Refugees at work', organized by the municipalities' organization, KS. On the other side, the decline in refugee arrivals may imply that cooperation is perceived as less needed now.

As in 2024, the smallest municipalities report that they cooperate with HR to a larger degree than more populous municipalities. While 24% of municipalities with less than 3000 inhabitants say that they do *not* cooperate, the proportion among larger municipalities varies

between 39% and 54%. There are, however, a larger share among respondents from the smallest municipalities answering that they do not know or that it is not applicable.

Figure 20.8: Does the refugee service cooperate with the municipal HR department? By organization of refugee service (N_{2025}=210)*



* Frequencies, percent

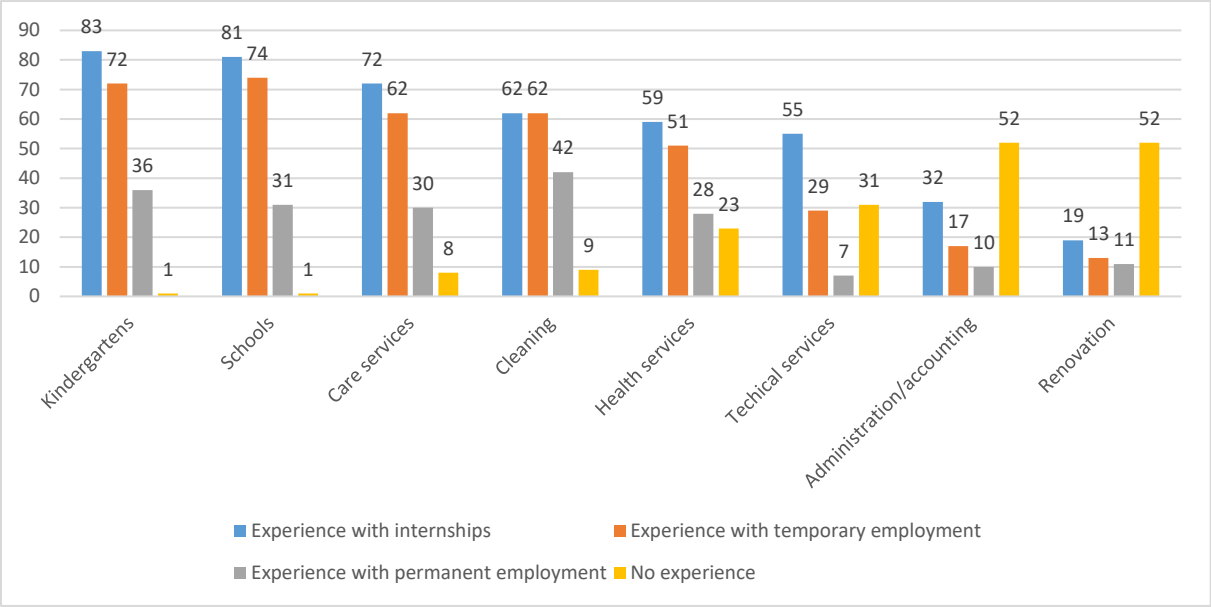
Figure 20.8 shows that it is somewhat more common that refugee services organised in separate units outside Nav cooperate closely with the HR-responsible unit, but the differences are small.

In which municipal services are refugees employed?

As already pointed out, many municipalities are in lack of personnel in services provided by the municipality. Particularly health and care services, but also schools and kindergartens, often experience recruitment problems. Investing in refugees to make them qualified to fill positions in these services, could prove to be worthwhile for the local community.

We asked our respondents if they have experience with refugee work practice and temporary or permanent employment in their municipal services.

Figure 20.9: Experience with refugee work practice and temporary or permanent employment in municipal services (N=207).



*Frequencies, percent.

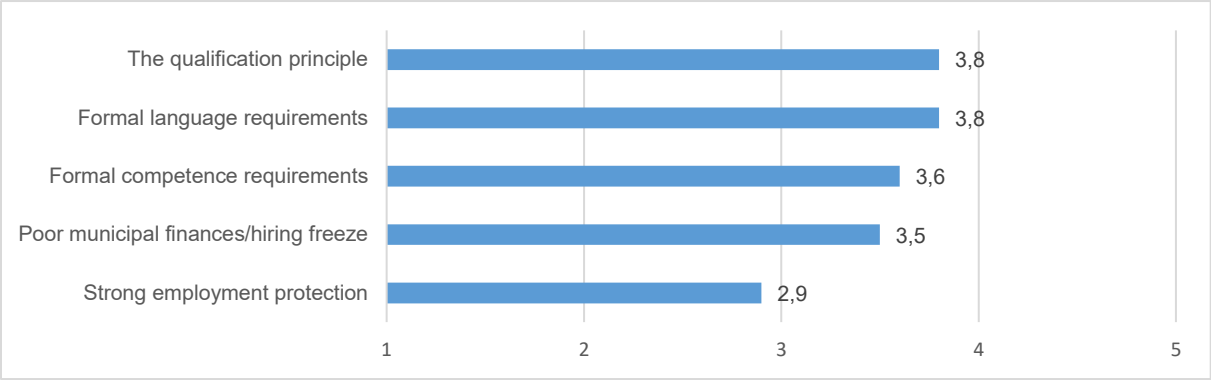
Figure 20.9 shows that refugees most often are in internship or employment in kindergartens, schools and care services. 83% report having had refugees in internship in kindergartens, 81% in schools, 72% in care services and 62% in cleaning. Employment is also quite common in these services, with almost three out of four having experience with temporary employment in kindergartens and schools, and more than 60% in care services and cleaning. Permanent employment is most common in cleaning services. Many municipalities struggle to find personnel to their health services. Therefore, it is interesting to notice that the proportion of respondents with experience with Ukrainian refugees in permanent employment in health services has increased from 18% in 2024 to 28% in 2025.

In municipal administration services and renovation, to a certain degree also in technical services, there are still relatively few refugees. Half of our respondents have no experience with refugee work practice or employment here. This may seem puzzling, since language requirements would be less important in these services One possible explanation can be that there are relatively fewer positions within these sectors compared to in kindergartens and schools. Moreover, renovation and technical services are organized in inter-municipal units in many municipalities, or services are operated by private companies working on commission from the municipality. All in all, there appears to be untapped potential in utilising refugees' labour within municipal services, benefiting both the refugees themselves and the municipality.

Challenges for municipal employment of refugees

Despite needing staff in many services, municipalities are perceived a more reluctant employer than private sector businesses. We asked our respondents what they see as the most important challenges for municipalities in hiring refugees.

Figure 20.10: To what degree are these factors challenging for municipalities in hiring refugees? (N=207)*



*Means. Scale: 1 = very small extent, 5 = very large extent.

Figure 20.10 shows that the factors mentioned in the survey appears to be only moderately important. The highest scores are 3.8 for the qualification principle and formal language requirements, and 3.6 and 3.5 for formal competence requirements and poor municipal finances. Strong employment protection is perceived as less important, with a significantly lower score of 2.9.

Exceptions to the qualification principle

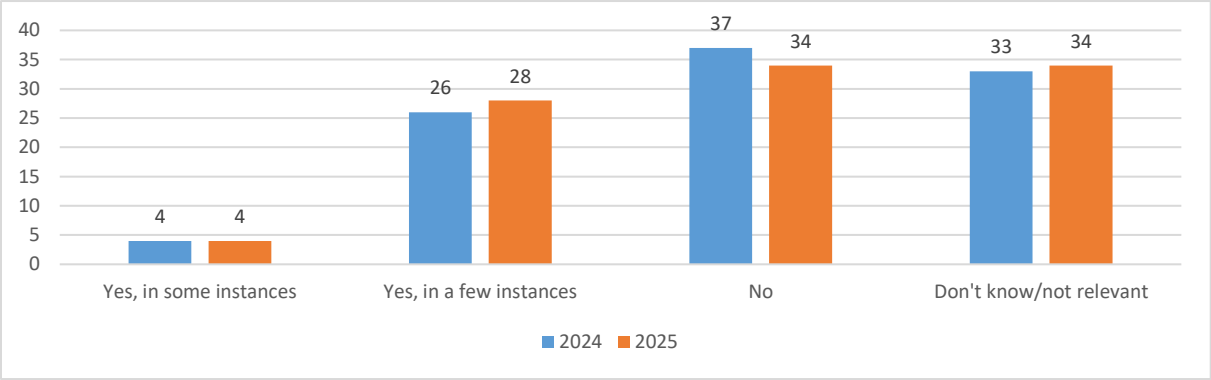
The qualification principle is an important rule in Norwegian public sector: the person who has qualifications best fitted to the position, should be employed. There are, however, exceptions to this rule. An agreement in March 2024 between the Ministry of Labour and Inclusion, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) and local labour unions, established a new understanding of the possibility of making exceptions to the qualification principle in order to include more people in work in the municipal sector[51]: It would be allowed if it was done for only a few positions, and if it was done for reasons of inclusion of persons who are outside employment, education, and training, as well as individuals with disabilities.[52]

When we conducted our 2024 survey, the exception from the qualification principle was recently established. Still 30% of our respondents reported that their municipality made use of exceptions in some/a few instances. The figures are not dramatically changed from 2024 to 2025, but we see a weak increase in respondents answering that they use the exception possibility in a few instances (from 26% to 28%).

[51] Opptak: Arbeidslivsfrokost om kvalifikasjonsprinsippet og inkludering i arbeid - Hjem

[52] https://www.ks.no/ks-advokatene/nyheter/mulighetene-for-unntak-fra-kvalifikasjonsprinsippet/

Figure 20.11: Are exceptions to the qualification principle used to hire refugees for municipal services? (N_{2024}=208; N_{2025}=207).



*Frequencies, percent.

About one third says that they do not use this option, while the other third says that they do not know (figure 20.11). The proportion answering that they do not know is stable and may indicate an unused potential for the municipalities in using this option to increase the labour market integration of both Ukrainian and other refugees.

21 Possibilities and challenges in further refugee settlement

Ukrainian refugees have been settled all over Norway, even in the smallest municipalities and in local communities with no previous experience in refugee settlement. Local refugee services have been upscaled in most municipalities. However, the refugees need a wide range of services in their new community, and there may be several local obstacles and capacity challenges in the settlement and integration of refugees in the time to come.

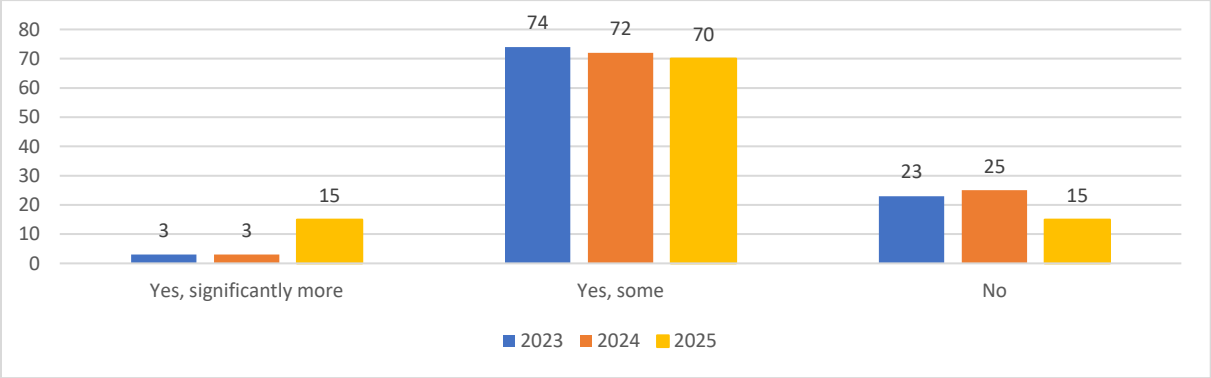
In this chapter we address the following questions:

- Are the municipalities able to settle more refugees than they already have?
- What factors are perceived as the main obstacles to further settlement?
- What opportunities do Ukrainians represent in their local community?
- What are the experiences with secondary migration within Norway?
- What would the municipalities need from state authorities to be able to settle more refugees?

21.1 Capacity to settle more refugees?

We asked the refugee service leaders whether their municipality has the capacity to receive more refugees than they already have. In our 2024 report, we noted no substantial changes from 2023 in the response to this question.

Figure 21.1: Does your municipality have the capacity to settle more refugees? (N=215).

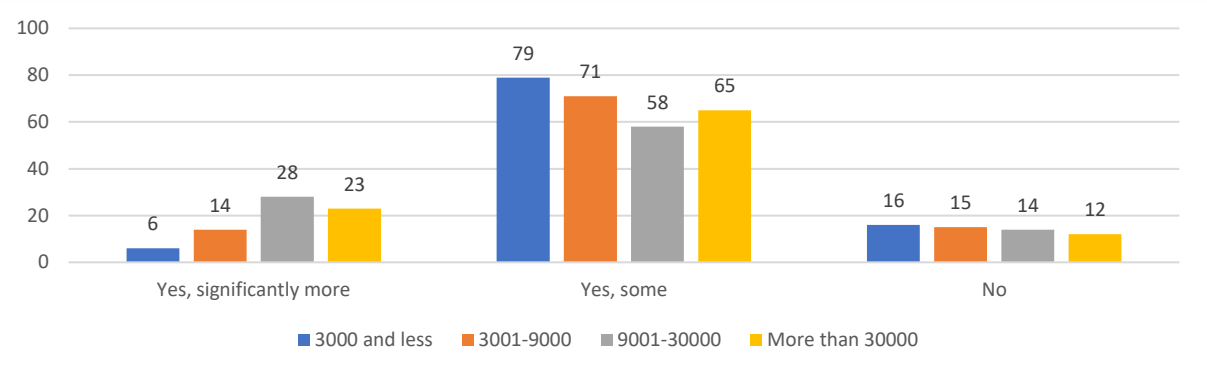


*Frequencies, percent.

This year however, the proportion of respondents answering that they have capacity to settle significantly more refugees is 15%, up from 3% the previous two years (figure 21.1 above). Likewise, there is a reduction in municipalities reporting that they do *not* have capacity to settle more refugees from 25% in 2024 to 15% in 2025. 70% respond that they are able to settle some refugees.

The results in figure 20.1 indicate that the refugee service capacity – and maybe the general municipal capacity – in many places is less strained in 2025 than in 2023 and 2024.

Figure 21.2: Does your municipality have the capacity to settle more refugees, by municipality size? (N=215).



*Frequencies, percent.

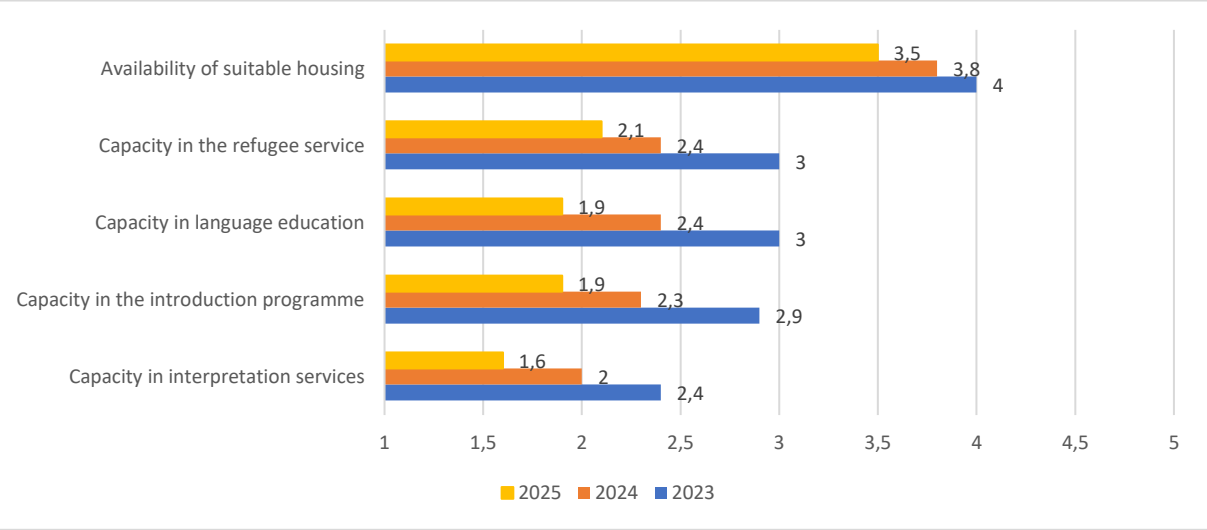
Figure 21.2 shows how our respondents from municipalities of different sizes assess their capacity to welcome more refugees. The larger municipalities appear to be more positive to further settlement of refugees. Compared to the 2024 figures, where 35% of the second largest and 26% of the largest municipalities denied the possibility of taking in more refugees, the figures in 2025 are 14% and 12% for these municipalities.

Additional analysis shows that regional variation is relatively limited, except for municipalities in 'Agder og Sør-Østlandet' somewhat more often answering that they can settle significantly more, and correspondingly fewer answering 'some more'.

21.2 Barriers towards settling more refugees

The respondents were also asked about issues that challenge further settlement of refugees in their municipality.

Figure 21.3: To what extent do these issues challenge the settlement of refugees in your municipality? (initial services/aspects) (N_{2023}=204; N_{2024}=208; N_{2025}=177).



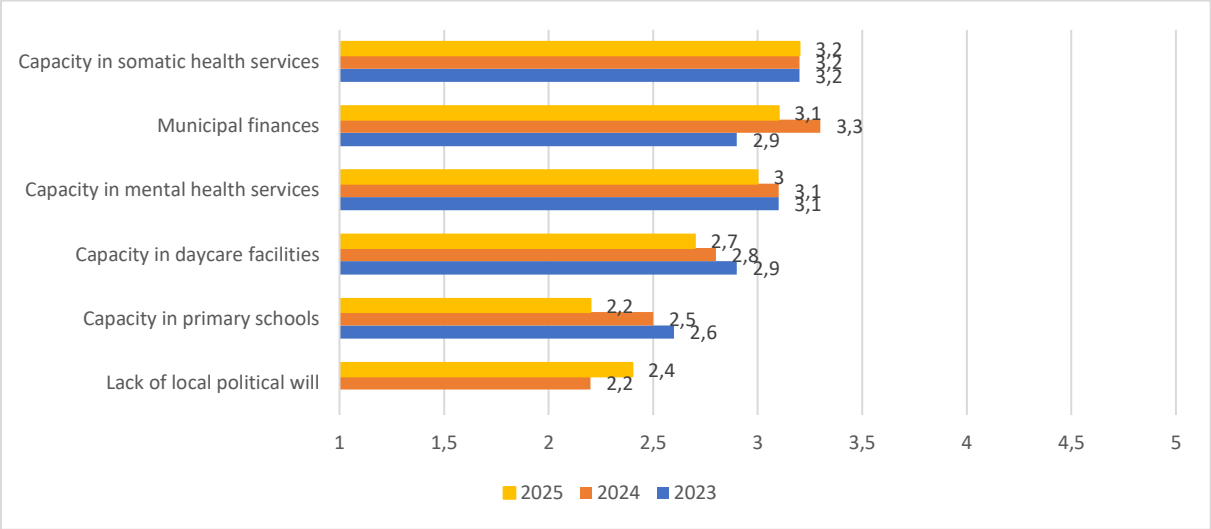
*Means. Scale: 1 = Very small degree; 5=Very large degree.

Figure 21.3 shows that all issues are considered less important in 2025 compared to 2024 (and much less prominent than in 2023). Available housing is still seen as the main challenge for further settlement. As in 2024, capacity in the 'direct' services for refugees seems to be less stretched now than earlier. Capacity of the refugee service, language education,

introduction programme and Interpreting services are all deemed less challenging in 2025. This may be due to the large upscaling of these services the past years. As we documented in chapter 16, many municipalities are now in need of downscaling their services because of relatively few new arrivals.

Moreover, these services are particularly important in the first period of settlement, whereas other services that fill more permanent needs for the settled refugees are assessed below.

Figure 21.4: To what extent do these issues challenge the settlement of refugees in your municipality? (other services/aspects) (N_{2023}=204; N_{2024}=208; N_{2025}=177).



*Means. Scale: 1 = Very small degree; 5=Very large degree.

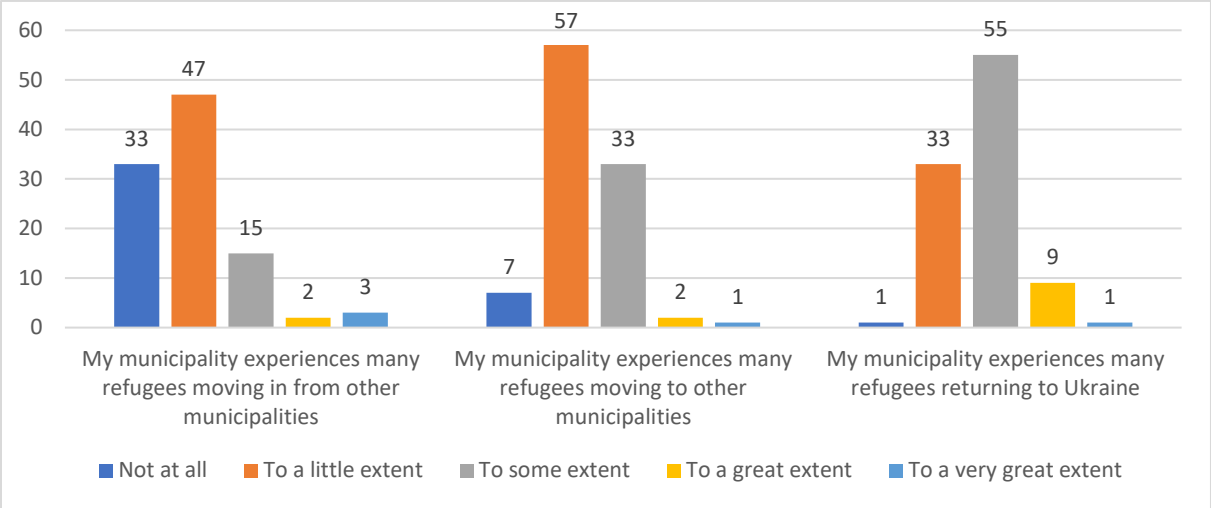
Figure 21.4 shows that only one issue increase in score for the 2025 survey: Lack of political will. There are rather few respondents putting weight on this factor, but the average hides very diverse responses. Closer analysis shows that 19% report that lack of political will to a large/very large degree is a barrier in their municipality. 20% answer that it is a barrier to a certain degree (middle category). 61% find that lack of political will is of minor importance in their municipality.

Municipal finances are still important, but not as urgent as in 2024. Limited capacity in the somatic and mental health services is rated as important challenges in all three years, while there are less challenges with daycare facilities and primary schools.

21.3 Secondary migration within Norway and re-migration

In the Norwegian public debate, there is some attention on refugees who relocate within the country, often to more central municipalities. We have asked our participants whether they experience that refugees move from their municipality to other municipalities or back to Ukraine, or if refugees are moving into their municipality from other districts.

Figure 21.5: To what degree is your municipality experiencing secondary migration or remigration? (N=210)*

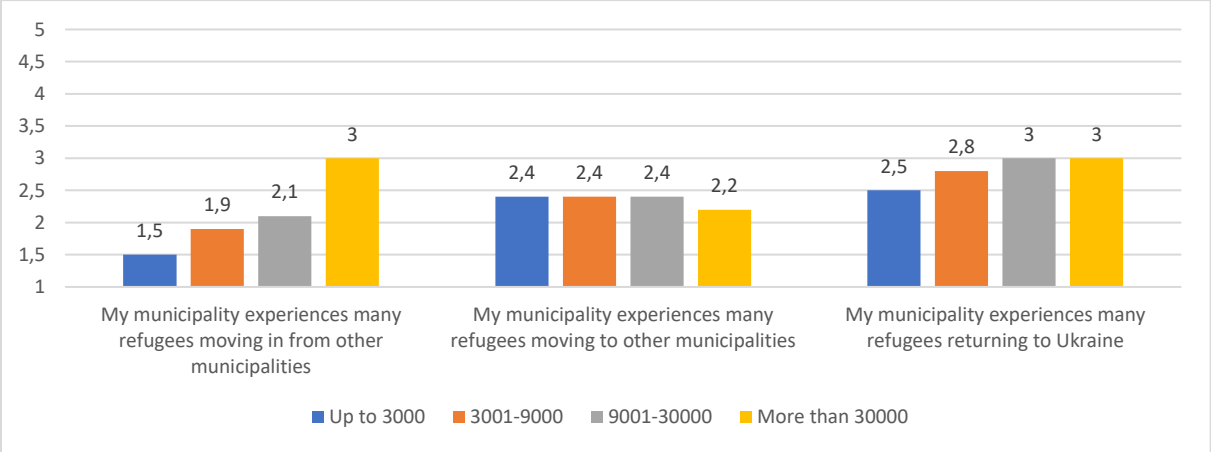


*Percent. Frequencies.

Our data does not indicate that secondary migration is perceived as very frequent (Figure 21.5 21.5). On the two statements about secondary migration between municipalities, a majority answer 'not at all' or 'to a little extent'. 80% say that their municipality not at all or to a little extent experiences many refugees moving in from other municipalities, and correspondingly 64% for the statement 'My municipality experiences many refugees moving to other municipalities'. There are more respondents (55%) answering that they 'to some extent' experience refugees returning to Ukraine.

Not surprisingly, it is particularly the largest municipalities that experience receiving many refugees moving from other municipalities. There is less variation in relocation out of the municipalities.

Figure 21.6: To what degree is your municipality experiencing secondary migration or remigration? By municipality size (N=210)*



*Means. Scale: 1 = Very small degree; 5=Very large degree.

Figure 21.6 indicates that the smallest municipalities to a lesser degree report that Ukrainian refugees move back to Ukraine. It is worth noting, however, that the statement reads: 'My municipality experiences many refugees returning to Ukraine'. In a tiny municipality, the number of refugees will be relatively low, so that 'many refugees' may be interpreted differently in these municipalities. Oslo and municipalities located in the greater Oslo area

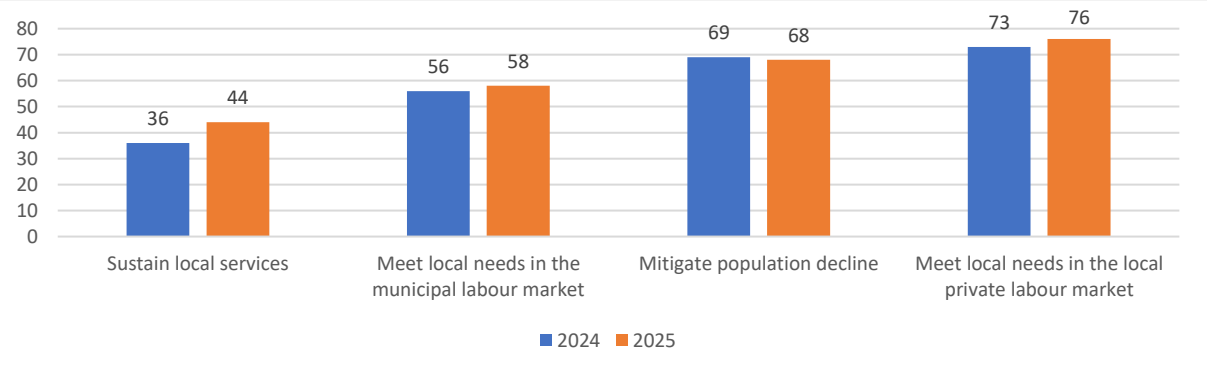
experience relatively more in-flow of refugees from other municipalities, whereas municipalities in the north of Norway experience less.

In a separate analysis, we have explored whether respondents from municipalities experiencing many refugees moving in from other municipalities are less willing to settle more refugees. We do not find any indication of this in our material. There is a tendency that municipalities reporting that many refugees are moving back to Ukraine are more willing to settle more refugees, but the tendency is weak.

21.4 Benefits of refugee settlement for the municipality

We have earlier in this report discussed how refugees may fill positions in the local labour market, and in this way be an important resource for the local community. We have asked our respondents from the refugee services how they perceive the possible positive effects of settling Ukrainian refugees.

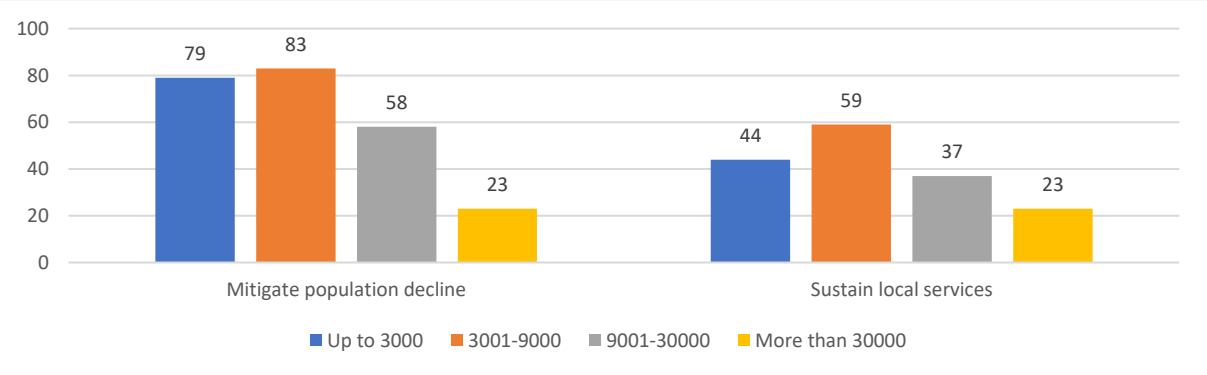
Figure 21.7: What are the most prominent benefits for your municipality in settling Ukrainian refugees? (N_{2024} = 208; N_{2025} = 212)*



*Frequencies, percent.

Figure 21.7 shows that many respondents believe that Ukrainian refugees can be a resource in meeting the needs of the local private labour market (76%) and to mitigate population decline (68%). More than half of the respondents (58%) think that refugees can meet needs in the municipal labour market. Their presence can also contribute to sustaining local services, although fewer respondents consider this to be important. There are minor differences in the responses from 2024 to 2025, but a higher share highlights the sustainment of local services as a benefit.

Figure 21.8: What are the most prominent benefits for your municipality in settling Ukrainian refugees? (N2024 = 208; N2025 = 212)*



*Frequencies, percent.

Refugees may, however, play a larger role in mitigating population decline and sustaining services in municipalities with a scarce population (figure 21.8). Among respondents from municipalities with less than 9000 inhabitants, around 80% state that refugees can help mitigate population decline. Around +/- 50% think settling refugees in the municipality may have a role in sustaining local services. Ukrainian families, particularly refugees with children, are very welcomed as an important contribution to the local communities in many of these municipalities.

21.5 What would the municipalities need from central authorities?

In an open-ended question in the survey, we asked the respondents from municipal refugee services what they would need from the state to settle more refugees. Their answers fill 11 densely written pages.

It is important to note that it is refugee service leaders who completed the survey, not top political or administrative leaders in the municipality. Further, the following description is merely a summary of the challenges and wishes posed by the municipalities in the survey. The aim is to give a picture both of 'typical' topics, but also the variation in viewpoints. It has not been NIBR's assignment to evaluate or make recommendations based on these suggestions.

Financial support

Almost all municipal refugee service leaders speak for better financial support from the national authorities. Particularly prominent is the need for better conditions for municipalities resettling refugees with disabilities, elderly or refugees with somatic or mental health problems. These groups represent a heavy burden on the municipality's economy, and many point to the fact that the support from the state is not covering the costs and that the application procedure to get extra economic support is very challenging. One respondent has this experience:

> In our municipality, we have resettled one person who is in an institution and who alone uses up half of the entire municipal integration grant. We do not get any extra coverage beyond a small additional grant, and this is a crisis for small low-income municipalities.

Another highlights this more general problem:

> In 2026, many refugees will be in their fifth year in Norway. The integration grant rates for year five are low, and the municipality will have to spend more money on the target group, as quite a few refugees have no attachment to working life. This is due to various reasons: age, health challenges, caregiving responsibilities for family members, ambivalence about the future, and so on.

A couple of respondents want earmarked grants for refugee work, because they distrust their municipality's will to distribute framework grants to refugee services. Several respondents mention the difficult economic situation facing many municipalities:

> More money so that it actually covers most of the expenses of resettlement, and so that the municipalities do not feel they are contributing more to the collective effort than the state. Many municipalities are experiencing high strain, and with such poor municipal finances, this is an item that could be cut because it is not legally required. If that happens, it will be challenging to make this work, to achieve good cooperation between the state and municipalities, and to achieve good integration.

As last year, also in 2025 many respondents ask for grants for buying, building, hiring or renovation of houses for refugees, including adaptation of houses for refugees with special needs.

> Many refugee service leaders ask for more predictability in the state support. They wonder what will happen with the financial support from the state when the war ends. Will there be a

restructuring phase, so that the municipalities can downscale their services gradually? One says it this way:

> We need to receive refugees every year to maintain good services, programs, and jobs in the municipality. If we lose the opportunity to receive refugees, it will lead to downsizing services that are also needed to provide good support for the refugees who are already settled.

Predictability for the refugees and municipalities alike

Several respondents want more predictability about what will happen with the Ukrainian refugees in the future. Predictability is important for the refugees themselves, but also for the municipality:

> We need good information, at the right time, to be able to provide guidance regarding the situation of return for Ukrainian refugees when the time comes. We must take into account that these are people who have started a new life in our municipalities, and their return will also greatly affect the labour market in our municipality.

Some argue that the requirements for a work visa should be reduced, and that refugees who are established with families and work, should be able to stay in Norway:

> It is also worth noting that national policy creates a lot of anxiety locally, and the insecurity that arises for those who wish to remain in Norway is at times very great. It would be a loss to lose many of these residents—families with children who are well integrated, parents who are working, and who want to stay in Norway. We wish we could reassure them that everything will work out!

One of the respondents puts it this way:

> There should be a clarification regarding the future of Ukrainian refugees who have been in Norway for several years. For example, a Ukrainian under collective protection who has been in Norway since 2022, has steady employment and a family here, should be able to obtain either a work-immigrant residence permit or permanent residence in the country, so that they can establish themselves more permanently and have a clear understanding of their own future.

Nav's resources and measures to get refugees in work

Some of our respondents from refugee services request more resources for Nav, so that Nav can develop and maintain their measures to get refugees integrated in the labour market. There is great need of measures like mentors and wage subsidies.

A couple of our respondents demand shorter industry courses (*bransjekurs*) for refugees aiming for work in specific industries.

Regulations and information

Several of our respondents demand similar regulations for Ukrainians as for other refugees. One asks for: 'A clear set of regulations that is easy to relate to/interpret, and that does not differ too much from the rules that apply to other refugee groups'.

Others find existing regulations inconsistent:

> Greater flexibility for individual assessments of the duration of the introduction program and Norwegian language training. There is a conflict in the law between the goal of a rapid transition to work and the high Norwegian language requirement. A less politicized and more knowledge-based design of the regulations is needed.

This is closely related to better information about existing regulations. Several refugee service leaders demand better and more easily accessible information and guidance. One respondent from a small municipality, requests: 'Focus on those of us who work in small municipalities with 1–3 employees in the refugee service and who do everything from A to Z. Simpler digital information.'

Other inputs

Other issues mentioned by our individual respondents include:

- Quicker approval of education/competence
- Mental health help in the mother tongue
- Better dental help
- Youth should be guaranteed a place in high school soon after arrival
- Youth 16-17 years should have statutory rights to Norwegian education
- Stricter expectations to take up work and possibility to impose sanctions when refugees choose to refrain from working
- Nations ID replacing BankID

Part 4

Synthesising analysis and conclusions

22 Synthesising analysis and conclusions

22.1 Largely stable and positive assessments

From a longitudinal perspective—building on and comparing 2025 results with previous surveys—an overall conclusion is that Ukrainian refugees have remarkably stable assessments of the Norwegian reception, settlement and integration system. On most subjects, the 2025 survey largely mirrors the results from the 2024 survey, which demonstrates very positive assessments of most actors and services (with mean assessment scores above 4 out of 5). Thus, taken as a whole, a main conclusion is that Ukrainian refugees in Norway are generally very satisfied with their reception and services in Norway.

This stable trend of positive assessments, however, does not imply the absence of challenges and highly diverging experiences, both among the Ukrainian refugees in Norway and among Norwegian municipalities. In this chapter, we identify some of the main insights, challenges and dilemmas from this year's report based on synthesising analyses across different topics and data sources.

22.2 Challenges and opportunities for increased labour-market integration

The labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees is steadily rising, and up to 42% as of October 2025 (Statistics Norway 2025). However, behind these aggregated numbers of employment, there are important nuances.

61% of those who were employed report to be working full-time. However, this includes persons who are working full-time by combining multiple jobs. Half of the respondents had temporary contracts. In the interviews, we encountered examples of the challenges faced by people juggling multiple part-time and temporary contracts—often in areas outside of their previous qualifications and work experience. While the survey finds that Ukrainians who are employed generally are very satisfied with their job, there was more pessimism concerning future career prospects. The interviews also revealed that juggling multiple temporary jobs, alongside continuous job searching— was taking a toll, and in some cases, was an important factor in developing depression. Thus, despite the positive rise in employment numbers among Ukrainian refugees, it is important to emphasise that these numbers often include unstable and temporary employment.

More extensive rights to flexible Norwegian language training?

Although we find clear improvements in Norwegian language skills with increased residence time in Norway, it is worth noting that about one third of those who have been in the country for over three years still have very limited Norwegian skills. The interviews also exemplify how even after two to three years of living in Norway, many Ukrainian refugees continue to face significant challenges with the Norwegian language, which restricts both their employment opportunities and social interactions.

In this regard, one repeating challenge—voiced both by the municipalities and refugees alike—is the time-limited right for Norwegian training to one year. The municipalities may offer a six-month extension, but our analysis indicates increased variation in how such extensions are implemented across different municipalities.

This short window of opportunity for rights to publicly funded Norwegian language training creates dilemmas of how to prioritise work and language training the initial year, and this well-known challenge has been raised in previous reports (Hernes et al. 2023; 2024). In this

year's study, several refugees also highlighted how they shortly after arrival to Norway were not mentally prepared or motivated to learn Norwegian, largely because the future prospects in the initial phase were very unclear. However, the motivation to learn the language often grows over time—particularly when individuals begin to experience language as the key obstacle standing between them and better job opportunities or the chance to start their own business. Interviews show that seeking additional opportunities to study Norwegian after completing the introduction programme and language courses is a common practice among Ukrainian refugees.

The temporary amendments to the Integration Act for Ukrainian refugees (now included in the revisions for the revised Integration Act of 2025 for all refugees) include an intensified work-oriented focus, requiring a minimum of 15 hours of work-oriented measures for participants whose primary goal (*sluttmål*) is employment. This work-intensified orientation is inspired by the Danish integration programme, which has similar regulations of minimum work-oriented requirements (Integrationsloven 2020). However, Norway and Denmark have different regulations concerning language training, where Denmark has a much more flexible approach. In Denmark, rights to Danish language training continues for up to five years (Danskuddannelsesloven 2019, § 2 e), making it possible to take up employment or focusing on job-oriented measures the initial period without losing rights to language training in the longer run.

Facilitating flexible language training may be challenging for municipalities that have to plan their capacity. Some municipal respondents highlight that digital Norwegian training should have been developed and offered for free by a national provider to everyone who comes to Norway and wants to learn Norwegian—all types of immigrants, including refugees. In this regard, it is worth mentioning a new national language training initiative (nafoki.no) that was launched in November 2025—a website that offers language chatbots powered by AI. This tool is free and open to all immigrants in Norway and at no cost for the municipalities.

Capacity challenges in Nav as a main concern

The 2024 report presented a creeping challenge with Nav's capacity to follow up the large share of Ukrainian refugees that were not self-sufficient after the introduction programme, and would therefore need both financial and employment-related assistance from Nav. This challenge has intensified in 2025, exacerbated by a situation in which Nav faced budget challenges related to labour-market measures. For several weeks, there was uncertainty as to whether additional resources could be allocated to support refugees in gaining employment, and many regions had to downscale the use of selected labour-market measures. In the municipal survey, refugee service leaders' assessment of the employment-related assistance from Nav during and after the introduction programme, has substantially decreased. Further, several municipalities argue that municipal budgets often compensate for Nav's shortcomings, particularly in relation to staffing and funding.

Unused potential for the municipality as an employer

Many municipal services experience staff shortages. Still, formal qualifications and language requirements are identified as key obstacles for municipalities in hiring refugees. Despite increased political focus on the municipality as an employment area during the last year (e.g. with the 'Refugees at work' network; Myrvold et al. 2025), we find unexploited potential in two areas: 1) closer cooperation with the municipality's HR department, and 2) use of the 2024 exception to the qualification principle, which allows bypassing it in the municipal sector to include individuals outside employment, education, and training, as well as those with disabilities. These two strategies are not only relevant to increase the labour-market integration for Ukrainian refugees, but also other groups currently outside the labour market.

New younger groups implying a potential future shift in integration measures?

In 2025, the share of refugees aged 18–25 increased, particularly after August, when the Ukrainian government lifted the travel ban for men aged 18–22 years. This policy change led to a significant rise in arrivals of men within this age group to Norway. The rise of younger age groups may have implications for the future integration measures and trajectories, as younger Ukrainians more often participate in education measures and may to a larger degree have enrolment in higher education as a primary integration goal for the introduction programme. Thus, it will be important to follow this group more closely[53].

22.3 Concerns about downscaling after three years of upscaling

After three years of upscaling municipal refugee services, we see that the pressure on municipal refugee services is less severe in 2025 than the two previous years. However, this year's municipal survey shows how concerns about downscaling capacity and services are growing, particularly with prospects of fewer arrivals in 2026. As of October 2025, UDI's prognoses for arrival of protection seekers to Norway are 16 000 applications for protection in 2026 (UDI 2025b)—about the same level as 2025.

We find that three out of four municipalities report that they already have downsized their service, that they plan to downsize, or both. Although we find that their downscaling strategies are highly linked to their upscaling strategies, many municipalities fear that the downscaling will imply financial strains on municipal budgets when grants for settling new refugees decrease or stop. The municipalities highlight how they need more predictability for future finances, and state support to ensure a gradual downscaling of services.

22.4 Temporary protection and future aspirations

The psychological burden of continuing uncertainty

A new topic in this year's report is the Ukrainian refugees' mental health challenges. We find several examples of how the continuing temporary and uncertain perspective—now in its fourth year after the full-scale invasion in 2022—takes a psychological hold on many respondents and interviewees.

Around two-thirds of the respondents report symptoms of psychological distress. It is also important to emphasise that this is not mainly among the newly arrived, but also very much apparent among those who have already lived in Norway for several years. The interviews portray how the combination of uncertainty about the future and an unstable and uncertain labour-market attachment, as well as the inability to find a job that matches their education or previous work experience, is psychological demanding for many Ukrainian refugees. The lack of normalisation after almost four years is challenging, with no prospects of certainty in sight.

A demand for more clarity about pathways out of temporary collective protection

The introduction of temporary collective protection has been a short-term solution to tackle capacity challenges when faced with a sudden and massive arrival of protection seekers. However, in the fourth year of temporary protection, both Ukrainian refugees and the

[53] In this regard, it is worth mentioning the RECO-YOUTH project – a NIBR-led research project financed by the Norwegian Research Council in cooperation with IMDi, HK-dir and Centre of Migration Research at the University of Warsaw. The project will focus on the integration of Ukrainian refugees aged 16-21 years and starts in January 2026. Link: https://www.oslomet.no/en/about/news/project-research-funding-inclusion-young-refugees

municipalities alike call for answers to what will happen after the temporary protection period expires and/or after a potential peace agreement.

Some interviewees stressed how mixed signals from Norwegian authorities cause confusion and uncertainty, e.g. pressure to prioritise Norwegian schooling over distant Ukrainian schooling for their children, simultaneously as the national government emphasises eventual return when the war is over.

In the absence of clarity, many speculate about what future policies will be, but most foresee the introduction of selective policies, either based on prior region of residence in Ukraine or employment and self-sufficiency.

The negative effects of unclear policies are also highlighted by the refugee services leaders. It is not only emphasised how an uncertain time perspective is challenging from a municipal planning perspective, but also how it may affect the Ukrainians refugees' motivation for integration, long-term career planning and involve psychological stress.

Therefore, several municipal respondents call for more predictability regarding what will happen with the Ukrainian refugees in the future. Predictability is important not only for the municipalities' work with individual refugees, but also more broadly, as a potential large-scale return would greatly affect local labour markets and societal services.

A proposal raised by both Ukrainian refugees and municipal refugee service leaders is the introduction of a form of work visa that would qualify for permanent residence but with less strict criteria concerning the qualification requirements than the current legislation. In Norway, most work permits include criteria for qualified labour, implying that you have to work in line with your prior qualifications. The suggestions includes that Ukrainians under collective protection who have steady employment—irrespectively of compliance with prior education and qualifications—should be able to stay in Norway. It is also presented as a way to incentivise more Ukrainian refugees to engage in rapid or increased labour-market participation.

Some point to how other European countries have introduced pathways to permanent residence through employment. An example is Austria, which in November 2024 introduced a pathway to permanent residence for Ukrainian refugees and family members who meet specific income, self-sufficiency and language requirements[54]. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the EU explicitly encourages its member states to find pathways for more permanent solutions for Ukrainian refugees, for example by transitioning to other residence permits, such as family and work permits (EU Commission 2025). These experiences appear crucial to take into account in future policy work aimed at shaping the prospects of this refugee group in Norway.

More focus on long-term strategies to stay or for a transnational life

Related to the uncertainty accompanying the temporary permits for Ukrainian refugees, in this year's interviews, we see a shift from more 'here and now' or short-term strategies towards more long-term strategies—as attempts to increase the stability, normality and agency in an otherwise uncontrolled situation. Examples include an increased focus on getting a mortgage to buy a home or getting a Norwegian education as a foundation for a more long-term career path in Norway.

In this regard, there is a clear clash between Norwegian authorities' focus on rapid employment versus many Ukrainians' strategies having a long-term perspective. There are several examples in our material of how Ukrainian refugees are discouraged by public employees to prioritise for example upper secondary education or starting their own business as a more long-term strategy instead of focusing on rapid employment.

[54] https://www.wien.gv.at/english/e-government/documents/residence/thirdcountries/rwr-card-plus-ukraine.html

An interesting perspective was that some interviewees now envision a more transnational future—including transnational lives and projects in Ukraine and Norway where they could make use of the competencies and networks they build up during their years in Norway. The interview material highlights that some Ukrainian refugees are eager to gain an 'education boost' while staying in Norway and view this opportunity as a win-win strategy, regardless of where their future lies.

22.5 Conditions for return: not only structural, but the necessity for societal and political change

In debates about future return of Ukrainian refugees after a potential peace agreement, structural conditions such as employment, housing and infrastructure are often the dominant topics (Kulu *et al.* 2023; Yeo & Pysmenna 2024). However, our study indicates that political and societal concerns are also very prominent among Ukrainian refugees, including political stability, anti-corruption, and whether Ukrainians returnees will be welcomed or stigmatized by those who remained in Ukraine. Concerning this latter aspect, several respondents and interviewees criticised what they perceived as the Ukrainian government's tendency to stigmatise those who fled, rather than actively engaging with its large diaspora population in Norway and other countries as a resource.

The analyses also reveal how experiences with Norwegian society and particularly Norwegian work culture and practice have changed many Ukrainians' perception of what acceptable (or ideal) norms is. Several interviewees and survey respondents praise the Norwegian work-life balance, the egalitarian work culture, and the regulated working conditions, while emphasising that returning to the 'old' conditions in Ukraine would be difficult and undesirable.

22.6 Paving the way for voluntary return with temporary visits?

In 2025, Norway's official policy is that Ukrainians on collective temporary protection should return to Ukraine after the war. However, the low return aspirations among Ukrainian refugees shown in this study indicate that there will be a challenging situation after a potential peace agreement, and that large scale *voluntary* return is less likely. With around 20% of Ukraine's population having fled abroad, low return aspirations—not only in Norway but in many European countries (Aasland & Hernes 2025; Panchenko & Poutvaara 2022)—are alarming for the country's post-war reconstruction efforts (Holm-Hansen et al. 2025; Malynovska, 2023) and may also lead to significant long-term demographic challenges (Kulu et al. 2023; Libanova & Pozniak 2023).

In June 2025, the EU Commission launched a proposal for 'a predictable and common European way forward for Ukrainian refugees in the EU'. In this proposal, they highlight how 'exploratory visits' is an important measure for more voluntary return:

> To pave the way for a gradual return and sustainable reintegration in Ukraine taking into account the needs and capacity of Ukraine: Allowing exploratory visits to Ukraine could help those considering a return home to make informed decisions. (EU Commission 2025)

A study on Ukrainian refugees in the Nordics shows that temporary visits to Ukraine are positively linked to return aspirations, as they help maintain social and emotional ties (Hernes & Aasland 2025). In this regard, Norway's restrictions on temporary visits may be counterproductive if the goal is voluntary return. Given Ukrainian refugees' low return aspirations, policies allowing transparent and well-regulated travel for family, property, or community reasons could support the voluntary return potential.

References

Agenda Kaupang. (2025). *Tolkemonitor LOV for rapporteringsåret 2024*. Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet (IMDi). https://www.imdi.no/globalassets/rapporter/tolk/tolkemonitor-lov-2024.pdf

Balcilar, M., & Nugent, J. (2019). The migration of fear: An analysis of migration choices of Syrian refugees. *The Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance*, 73, 95–109. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.qref.2018.09.007

Bhui, K. (2016). Discrimination, poor mental health, and mental illness. *International Review of Psychiatry*, *28*(4), 411–414. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540261.2016.1210578

Brekke, J.-P. (2001). The Dilemmas of Temporary Protection - the Norwegian Experience. *Policy Studies*, *22*(1), 5–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/01442870120047695

Briga AS. (n.d.). *Horeca*. Briga. Retrieved November 6, 2025, from https://www.briga.no/horeca

Council of the European Union. (2001). *Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof*. Official Journal of the European Communities, L 212, 12–23. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:32001L0055

Danielsen, Å., & Hernes, V. (2025). Turning Scandinavian integration policies upside down? *A comparative analysis of the Scandinavian governments' responses to the influx of displaced persons from Ukraine*. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2025.2565908

Education Act. (2023). *Lov om grunnskoleopplæringa og den vidaregåande opplæringa (opplæringslova)*. (LOV-2023-06-09-30). Lovdata. https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2023-06-09-30

European Commission. (2025, June 4). *Commission proposes predictable and common European way forward for Ukrainian refugees in the EU* (Press release). https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_1391

Eurostat. (2025a). *Decisions granting temporary protection by citizenship, age and sex—annual data.* Retrieved November 20, 2025, from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asytpfa/default/table?lang=en

Eurostat. (2025b). *Decisions granting temporary protection by citizenship, age and sex—monthly data.* Retrieved November 20, 2025, from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_ASYTPFM__custom_8150408/default/table?lang=en

Eurostat. (2025c). *Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex—annual aggregated data.* Retrieved November 20, 2025, from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_ASYAPPCTZA__custom_8092994/default/table?lang=en

Eurostat. (2025d). *Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex—monthly data.* Retrieved November 20, 2025, from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asyappctzm/default/table?lang=en

Eurostat. (2025e). *Resettled persons by age, sex and citizenship—annual data.* Retrieved November 20, 2025, from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asyresa/default/table?lang=en

Eurostat. (2025f). *First instance decisions on asylum applications by type of decision—annual aggregated data.* Retrieved November 20, 2025, from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00192/default/table?lang=en

Eurostat. (2025g). *First instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex—quarterly data.* Retrieved November 20, 2025, from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asydcfstq/default/table?lang=en

FHI (Folkehelseinstituttet). (2023). Helsetjenestebehov blant flyktninger fra Ukraina som kom til Norge i 2022 [Healthcare needs among refugees from Ukraine arriving in Norway during 2022]. https://www.fhi.no/publ/2023/helsetjenestebehov-blant-flyktninger-fra-ukraina-som-kom-til-norge-i-2022/

Hernes, V., Deineko, O., Myhre, M. H., Liodden, T. & Staver, A. B. (2022). *Ukrainian refugees—experiences from the first phase in Norway.* Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, NIBR. NIBR Report 2022:11.

Hernes, V., Aasland, A., Deineko, O., Myhre, M. H., Liodden, T., Myrvold, T., Leirvik, M. S. & Danielsen, Å. Ø. (2023). *Reception, settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees in Norway: Experiences and perceptions of Ukrainian refugees and municipal stakeholders (2022-2023)*. Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, NIBR. NIBR Report 2023:11.

Hernes, V., Danielsen, Å., Tvedt, K. et al. (2023a). *Governance and policy changes during times of high influxes of protection seekers A comparative governance and policy analysis in eight European* countries, 2015-June 2023. Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, NIBR. NIBR Report 2028:8.

Hernes, V., Danielsen, Å., Tvedt, K. and A.B. Staver (2023b). *Norway country report. Governance and policy changes during times of high influxes of protection seekers, 2015-June 2023*. Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, NIBR. NIBR Report 2028:113.

Hernes, V., Aasland, A., Deineko, O., Myhre, M. H., & Myrvold, T. (2024). *Settlement, integration and employment under a temporary perspective: Experiences and perceptions of Ukrainian refugees and municipal refugee services (2023–2024)*. Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, NIRB. NIBR Report 2024:10.

Hernes, V., Aasland, A., Deineko, O., & Handå Myhre, M. (2025). Where does the future lie? Initial aspirations for return among newly arrived Ukrainian refugees in Norway. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *51*(1), 79–100. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2024.2383729

Hernes, V., & Łukasiewicz, K. (2025). Restrictive, liberal, selective or universal? A cross-national analysis of European countries' policy response to forced migrants from Ukraine. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2025.2565907

Hernes, V. & Aasland A. (2025). How individual-level host- and home-country conditions affect return aspirations: The case of Ukrainian refugees in the Nordic countries. Working paper.

Holm-Hansen, J., Deineko, O., Myhre, M. H., & Aasland, A. (2025). *Why return to Ukraine? An analysis of Ukraine's evolving return policies and the motivations of refugees to return*. Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, NIBR. NIBR Report 2025:4.

IMDi (2025a). *Bosettingstall*. IMDi, Retrieved November 20, 2025, from https://www.imdi.no/om-integrering-i-norge/statistikk/F00/bosetting

IMDi (2025b). *Ber kommunane busetja 13 000 flyktningar i 2026*. IMDi. Retrieved December 10, 2025, from https://www.imdi.no/aktuelt/nyheter/ber-kommunane-busetja-13-000-flyktningar-i-2026/

IMDi (2025c, August 7). *Endringer i integreringsregelverket*. IMDi. Retrieved December 10, 2025, from https://www.imdi.no/aktuelt/nyheter/endringer-i-integreringsregelverket/

IMDi (2025d). *Fagverksted*. IMDi. Retrieved December 10, 2025, from https://www.imdi.no/kurs-og-arrangementer/kurs/fagverksted/

IMDi (n.d.). *AMO-kurs for fordrevne fra Ukraina innen hotell-, restaurant- og catering. Introduksjonsprogrammet.* IMDi. Retrieved December 10, 2025, from https://introduksjonsprogrammet.imdi.no/innhold/arbeidsmarkedstiltak-i-regi-av-nav/amo-kurs-for-fordrevne-fra-ukraina-innen-hotell--restaurant--og-catering/

Immigration Act (2010). *Lov om utlendingers adgang til riket og deres opphold her* (LOV-2008-05-15-35). Lovdata. https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2008-05-15-35

Integration Act. (2021). *Lov om integrering gjennom opplæring, utdanning og arbeid* (LOV-2020-11-06–127). https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2020-11-06–127

Interpreting Act (2021). *Lov om offentlige organers ansvar for bruk av tolk mv. (tolkeloven).* (LOV-2021-06-11-79). Lovdata. https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2021-06-11-79

Introduction Act. (2003). *Lov om introduksjonsordning og norskopplæring for nyankomne innvandrere* (LOV-2003-07-04-80). Lovdata. https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLO/lov/2003-07-04-80

Kirkøen, B., Ørstavik, R. E., Reneflot, A., Skogen, J. C., Sivertsen, B., & Knudsen, A. K. S. (2025). The Ability of the Hopkins Symptom Checklist-5 to Identify Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Major Depressive Disorder in the General Population. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, *22*(5), 698. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph22050698

Kulu, H., Christison, S., Liu, C., & Mikolai, J. (2023). The war, refugees, and the future of Ukraine's population. *Population, Space and Place*, 29, e2656. https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2656

Ministry of Justice and Public Security. (2025a, February 11). *Displaced people from Ukraine may have their residence permit for Norway extended by a further year*. Regjeringen. https://www.regjeringen.no/en/whats-new/displaced-people-from-ukraine-may-have-their-residence-permit-for-norway-extended-by-a-further-year/id3087364/

Ministry of Justice and Public Security. (2025b, June 26). *Strengere norskkrav for rett til permanent oppholdstillatelse*. Regjeringen. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/strengere-norskkrav-for-rett-til-permanent-oppholdstillatelse/id3112670/

Ministry of Justice and Public Security. (2025c, October 15). *Kontrollert og bærekraftig innvandring*. Regjeringen.no. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/kontrollert-og-barekraftig-innvandring/id3122330/

Myhre, M. H., Deineko, O., Hjelle, M. U., Hernes, V., & Tronstad, K. R. (2024). *Privat bolig i stedet for asylmottak? Erfaringer med oppfølgning og bosetting av ukrainske flyktninger som bodde privat, 2022–2024*. Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, NIBR. NIBR Report 2025:3.

Malynovska, Olena (2023). 'Forced displacement from Ukraine due to Russia's 2022 invasion and the likelihood of a new wave of emigration'. *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, 30(1), 65–79.

Myrvold, T., Hjelle, M. U., & Tronstad, K. R. (2025). *Flyktninger i jobb: Delrapport*. Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, NIBR. NIBR Report 2025:6.

Nilsen, S. A., & Pettersen, S. D. (2025). Måleegenskaper ved den norske versjonen av Hopkins Symptom Checklist-5 (HSCL-5). *PsykTestBarn*, *15*(1), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.7557/29.8046

NOKUT. (2022, March 25). *Recognition of education and qualifications from Ukraine*. NOKUT. https://www.nokut.no/en/news-2016/recognition-of-education-and-qualifications-from-ukraine/

Nordmo, P. L. (2024). *The restrictive turn: A critical discourse analysis of Norwegian policy response to the Ukrainian refugee influx in 2022-2024*. (Master's thesis, University of Oslo). DUO vitenarkiv. https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/112853

Panchenko, Tetyana, & Panu Poutvaara (2022). 'Intentions to stay and employment prospects of refugees from Ukraine'. *EconPol Policy Brief* 46. https://hdl.handle.net/10419/273441

Schaeffer, M., & Kas, J. (2023). The Integration Paradox: A Review and Meta-Analysis of the Complex Relationship Between Integration and Reports of Discrimination. *International Migration Review*, *58*(3), 1384-1409. https://doi.org/10.1177/01979183231170809

Steinmann, J. P. (2018). The paradox of integration: why do higher educated new immigrants perceive more discrimination in Germany?. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45(9), 1377–1400. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1480359

Statistics Norway. (2016). *Levekårsundersøkelsen for innvandrere 2016.* https://www.ssb.no/sosiale-forhold-og-kriminalitet/artikler-og-publikasjoner/_attachment/309211?_ts=177710adf90

Statistics Norway. (2025). *Hvor mange ukrainere jobber i Norge?.* SSB. Retrieved November 4, 2025, from https://www.ssb.no/arbeid-og-lonn/sysselsetting/statistikk/antall-arbeidsforhold-og-lonn/artikler/hvor-mange-ukrainere-jobber-i-norge

Sørholt, S. & Dyb, E. (2021). *Avtalt selvbosetting. En bærekraftig ordning for framtidig bosetting av flyktninger?.* Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, NIBR. NIBR Report 2021/18

Tuppat, J., & Gerhards, J. (2021). Immigrants' first names and perceived discrimination: A contribution to understanding the integration paradox. *European Sociological Review, 37(*1), 121–135. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcaa041

UDI. (2025a). *Data on applications for temporary collective protection, February 2022–October 2025*. Received (per email) from UDI Statistics department.

UDI. (2025b). *Statistikk om Ukrainasituasjonen*. UDI. Retrieved November 20, 2025, from https://www.udi.no/statistikk-og-analyse/ukraina/#

UDI. (2025c). *Økonomiske ytelser*. UDI. UDI. Retrieved November 20, 2025, from https://www.udi.no/har-sokt/beskyttelse-asyl/bor-i-vanlig-asylmottak/okonomiske-ytelser/#link-4069

UDI. (2025d, January 13). *Flere områder unntas fra retten til kollektiv beskyttelse*. UDI. https://www.udi.no/viktige-meldinger/flere-omrader-unntas-fra-retten-til-kollektiv-beskyttelse/

UDI. (2025e, October 8). *Scenarioer om antall fordrevne fra Ukraina: Oktober 2025*. UDI report. https://www.udi.no/globalassets/statistikk-og-analyse/ukraina/scenarioer-om-antall-fordrevene-fra-ukraina-oktober-2025.pdf

Vargas, S. M., Huey, S. J., & Miranda, J. (2020). A critical review of current evidence on multiple types of discrimination and mental health. *The American journal of orthopsychiatry*, *90*(3), 374–390. https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000441

Willmann-Robleda, Z. (2022). Negotiating Aspirations in Displacement: An In-Depth Study of Women Seeking Asylum in Norway. International Journal on Minority and Group Rights, 30(2), 254-273. https://doi.org/10.1163/15718115-bja10086

Yeo, J., & Pysmenna, O. (2024). Lives on Hold Between the European Union and Ukraine: Ukrainian Migrants' Return Before and After the War. In: Yeo, J. (eds) *Return Migration and Crises in Non-Western Countries*. *Mobility & Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-53562-8_6

Appendix

Table A 1: Descriptive statistics for independent variables in the regression models (not all variables are included in all models). Weighted percentages, means and standard deviations.

		N	%	Mean	SD	Comments / Question wording (For all scales: Higher = more/better)
Gender	Male	679	32.3			
	Female	1424	67.7			
	Other/Missing	*45*				
Age		2110		40.9	14.6	
Educational level	Primary (9 years)	60	2.8			
	Secondary (11 yrs)	199	9.4			
	Vocational-techn.	378	17.9			
	Incomplete higher	313	14.8			
	Higher	1160	55 .0			
	Missing	38				
English skills		2148		2.6	0.8	Scale 1-4; Which languages do you speak? English
Norwegian skills		2148		2.4	0.8	Index 1-4, Which languages do you speak? Norwegian
Physical health		3135		3.6	1.0	Scale 1-5; How do you assess your own health in general?
Mental health		3135		2.5	0.9	Index 1-4, based on 5 mental health items. High value: more probl.
Arrival year	2022 and before	754	35.7			When did you first arrive in Norway after the full-scale invasion?
	2023	659	31.2			

	2024	481	22.8			
	2025	216	10.2			
	Missing	*38*				
Financial situation in Norway		2111		3.4	0.8	How would you describe your household's current financial sit.?
Financial situation Ukraine		2106		3.7	0.9	Household's financial situation in Ukraine before February 2022?
Financ. status Norway	Lower than in Ukraine	809	37.7			
	Equal	745	34.2			
	Higher than in Ukraine	594	28.1			
Family situation in Ukraine	All have left	301	14.0			Do you have close family who stayed behind in Ukraine?
	Partner in Ukraine	145	6.7			(recoded)
	Children left in Ukraine	309	14.4			
Friends/acquaintances	Friends	327	15.2			Do you have friends or acquaintances in Norway? (recoded)
	Only acquaintances/no	1820	84.8			
Feel welcome by Norwegians		2147		4.4	0.9	Scale 1-4: The Norw. people have made me feel welc. (agree)
Lives with children below 18	Yes	899	41.9			
in host country	No	1249	58.1			
Employment status	Employed	860	40.1			Has your home place in Ukraine been occupied by Russian forces?
	Unemployed	326	15.2			
	Introduction programme	473	22.0			
	Student	136	6.3			
	Other	353	16.4			
Have someone close in	Yes	1592	74.1			Do you have someone who is close to you in Norway, and
Norway	No	556	25.9			with whom you can talk about personal issues?

Prior network in Norway	Network of Norwegians	128	6.0	Did you have a network in Norway before arriving?
	Network of Ukrainians	665	31.0	(Recoded: Multiple options were possible)
Expected duration of war	DNK / Over by 2028	1685	78.5	How long time do you estimate that the ongoing war will last?
	2029 or longer	462	21.5	(recoded)
Centrality of settlement	Low (5-6)	696	32.4	SSB Centrality index
	Medium (3-4)	861	40.1	
	High (1-2)	591	27.5	