



2024-2025

# Migration and Integration

Report for Norway to the OECD



**IMDi**  
Integrerings- og  
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# **Migration and Integration**

## **2024-2025**

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# Preface

This report is Norway’s official contribution to the OECD’s Continuous Reporting System on Migration (the SOPEMI network), which tracks international migration trends and related policies. It offers a comprehensive overview of Norway’s key migration and integration policies, recent developments, and includes descriptive statistics on migration flows, foreign-born and immigrant populations, as well as integration outcomes.

We extend our gratitude to experts from the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Education and Research, Statistics Norway (SSB), and the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR)—authors of last year’s report—for their valuable input.

Oslo, December 2025

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# Summary

## Migration trends

As of January 2025, Norway's foreign-born population stood at 1,045,658 individuals, representing 18.7 per cent of the total population—a 3.7 per cent increase from 2024. The population with immigrant backgrounds (immigrants plus Norwegian-born to immigrant parents) now accounts for 21.4 per cent of the population. Immigrants alone make up 17.3 per cent of the population, while Norwegian-born to immigrant parents represent 4 per cent.

Norway remains a net immigration country, with inflows consistently exceeding outflows. Immigration peaked at 90,000 in 2022 and 86,000 in 2023 before declining to 66,000 in 2024, still well above pre-2022 levels. Emigration has remained stable at around 32,000 annually since 2021. Net immigration in 2024 was +34,000, compared to +52,000 in 2023 and +58,000 in 2022.

Excluding Ukraine, the top nationalities of newcomers in 2024 were Poland, Lithuania, Syria, Sweden, India and Germany. Refugees represented 45 per cent of all immigration, family migration 23 per cent, labour migration 20 per cent and education 5 per cent. Poland remains the largest immigrant group overall, with more than 111,000 residents, while Ukrainians have become the second largest group, increasing from 6,500 in 2021 to 80,000 in 2025.

Annual asylum applications fell from 5,735 in 2023 to 4,970 in 2024, with preliminary 2025 data indicating the lowest level in a decade. Applications from unaccompanied minors also declined—from 504 in 2023 to 420 in 2024, and 264 by October 2025. In 2024, Syrians made up 43 per cent of all applicants, followed by Ukrainians (16 per cent), Eritreans (6 per cent), Turks (5 per cent), Colombians (3 per cent), and Afghans (3 per cent). By October 2025, 34 per cent of applicants were from Ukraine, followed by Syria (11 per cent), Eritrea (7 per cent), Afghanistan (5 per cent), and Palestine (5 per cent).

Permits for asylum applicants dropped from 2,190 in 2023 to 1,518 in 2024, and 563 so far in 2025. As of October, only 89 rejections have been overturned by the Immigration Appeals Board (UNE). In 2024, 9,800 permits were issued to third-country labour migrants (skilled, seasonal and other), with 9,300 issued so far in 2025. Family immigration permits have reached 10,211, surpassing 9,094 in 2024, with Syrians being the largest group. Education-related permits decreased from 4,042 in 2023 to 3,894 in 2024.

## Key policy developments

In 2024–2025, Norway introduced several significant changes to migration and integration policies. The most notable adjustments concern permanent residence requirements: from September 2025, applicants must pass an oral Norwegian language test at level A2 and a social studies test, replacing the previous obligation to complete courses. Salary thresholds for skilled

workers were also raised to reflect current wage levels, and a renewed action plan against social dumping and labour market crime was launched to strengthen protections for foreign workers.

The government continued its temporary collective protection scheme for displaced persons from Ukraine, extending eligibility to a fourth year and signalling a possible fifth-year extension. At the same time, restrictions were introduced for applicants from areas in Ukraine deemed safe, shifting them to individual protection assessments. The resettlement quota for refugees was reduced from 1,000 places in 2024 to 500 in 2025, partly due to capacity constraints following the influx of Ukrainians.

Norway is preparing to implement key elements of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, including the Screening Regulation, Return Border Procedure Regulation and Eurodac, with legislative and operational changes scheduled for completion by mid-2026. A constitutional proposal to enshrine the right to seek asylum remains under consideration, while a temporary suspension of asylum processing for Syrian nationals was introduced in June 2025 following regime change in Syria.

Integration policy developments include raising the language requirement for permanent residence, expanding the introduction programme's age limit from 55 to 60, and revising programme duration rules from January 2026. Temporary provisions for Ukrainians will be repealed, restoring full rights and obligations under the Integration Act. New measures were also adopted to improve recognition of foreign qualifications and to strengthen anti-discrimination efforts, including three new national action plans targeting racism and hate speech.

## Public debate and opinions on immigration

Recently, Norway's migration debate has shifted from being dominated by the war in Ukraine to a more fragmented discourse shaped by specific events. While the initial influx of Ukrainian refugees in 2022 triggered broad political and public support for protection measures, this consensus has gradually eroded. Current debates often center on integration challenges, but also on hate crimes, racism, and the risks of polarization. Despite these tensions, immigration has not been a top electoral issue; only one in ten voters ranked it as decisive in the 2025 parliamentary election.

Public attitudes reflect both continuity and change. Sympathy for Ukrainians drove a surge in positive views in 2022, but these have since returned to pre-war levels. Current surveys show that about half of the population believes immigration is generally beneficial for the country, while one in five disagrees. A quarter think it should become harder for refugees and asylum seekers to obtain residence, whereas half prefer no change. Support for admitting labour migrants is higher than for refugees or family migrants, reflecting a growing perception that foreign labour is essential for sustaining welfare services.

Over the past two decades, attitudes have become more positive overall. Far fewer people believe immigrants are making the country less safe—22 per cent compared to 45 per cent twenty years ago—and most agree that immigrants contribute to the labour market and enrich cultural life. More than 90 per cent are comfortable with immigrants as colleagues, doctors, or caregivers, and over 80 per cent would accept an immigrant as a family member by marriage.

Despite this general openness, scepticism persists in certain areas. Expectations for immigrants to assimilate with Norwegian values have grown. Views on integration outcomes are mixed: 40 per cent think integration is going poorly, while 27 per cent believe it is going well. People tend to see integration as more successful locally than nationally.

# 1 Migration to Norway

## 1.1 Migration flows

Norway has historically functioned as a net immigration country, consistently recording higher inflows than outflows of migrants. Over the past five decades, the only instance of negative net immigration occurred in 1989. During the last decade, net immigration has ranged from 11,301 in 2020 — a year marked by pandemic-related mobility restrictions — to 57,939 in 2022. Both 2022 and 2023 represent unprecedented peaks in both immigration and net immigration, and the net immigration figure for 2024 remains higher than any year prior to 2022, including the previous high in 2015 when there was a large influx of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Eritrea.

Emigration patterns have been relatively stable, fluctuating between 34,000 and 40,000 annually until 2019, followed by a sharp decline to 26,774 in 2020, likely attributable to pandemic constraints. Post-2020, emigration has remained below pre-pandemic levels.

Migration dynamics are primarily driven by foreign nationals, who exhibit a persistent trend of higher inflows than outflows (table 1.1). In contrast, Norwegian citizens display a reverse pattern, with more individuals emigrating than returning from abroad. Consequently, the net migration balance for Norwegian citizens has been consistently negative, whereas for foreign nationals they have remained steadily positive.

Excluding Ukraine, the main countries of origin of individuals immigrating to Norway in 2024—covering both foreign nationals and Norwegian citizens—include Poland, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Germany, the United Kingdom, Lithuania, India, Syria, and the United States (table A4). When focusing exclusively on foreign nationals, the leading countries are Poland, Syria, Sweden, India, Lithuania, Germany, Romania, and the Philippines (table A7).

Regarding emigration from Norway in 2024, apart from Norwegian citizens, the largest groups consist of nationals from Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, Sweden, India, and Denmark (table A8).

Table 1.1. Registered immigration and emigration by citizenship. 2015-2024.

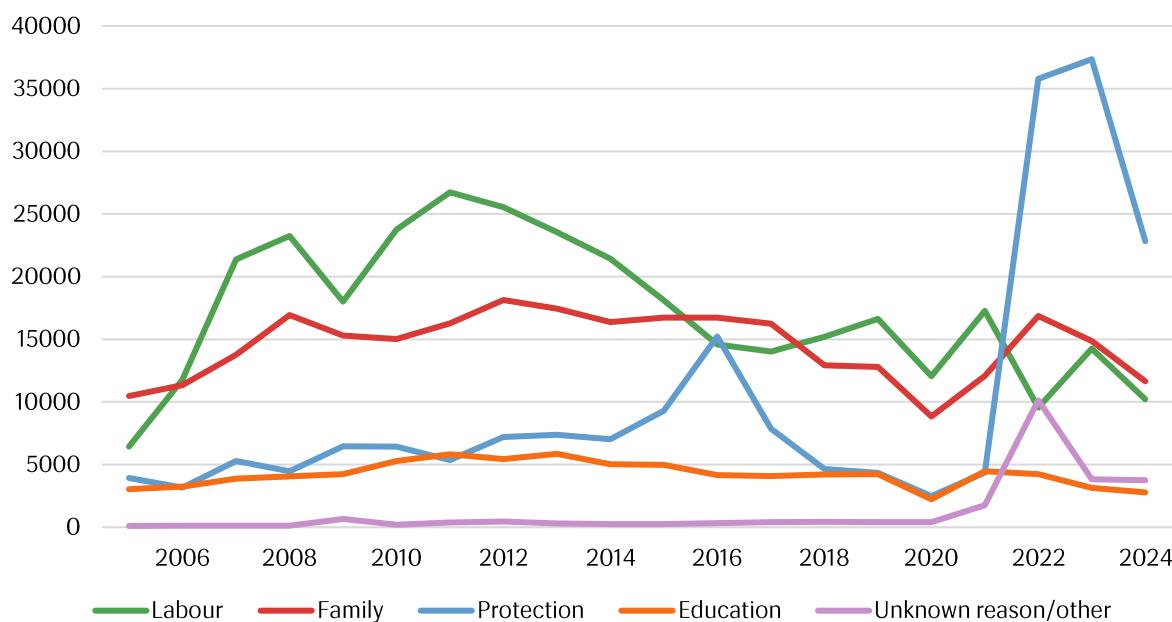
Registered immigration and emigration by citizenship	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Immigration	67276	58192	58192	52485	52153	38075	53947	90475	86589	66077
Foreign	59068	58508	49774	44406	44570	30818	46604	83281	79493	58814
Norwegian	8208	8292	8418	8079	7583	7257	7343	7194	7096	7263
Emigration	37474	40742	36843	34382	26826	26774	34297	32536	34011	31968
Foreign	27384	30730	26623	24526	17570	19860	26009	23122	23831	22809
Norwegian	10090	9994	10220	9856	9256	6884	8288	9414	10180	9159
Net migration	29802	17450	21349	18103	25327	11301	19650	57939	52578	34109
Foreign	31684	27778	23151	19880	27000	10958	20595	60159	55662	36005
Norwegian	-1882	-1702	-1802	-1777	-1673	373	-945	-2220	-3084	-1896
<b>Immigration and emigration of legal migrants</b>										
Immigration	67276	66800	58192	52485	38075	38071	53947	90475	86589	66077
Emigration	37474	40724	36843	34382	26744	26744	34297	32536	34011	31968
Immigration (share of total population)	1,30	1,30	1,10	1,00	0,70	0,71	1,01	1,65	1,56	1,18
Emigration (share of total population)	0,70	0,80	0,70	0,70	0,50	0,50	0,64	0,59	0,61	0,57
Difference	0,60	0,50	0,40	0,30	0,20	0,21	0,37	1,06	0,95	0,61

## 1.2 Main reasons for immigration

Since 1990, immigration to Norway has primarily been driven by labour migration, which accounts for 32 per cent of all arrivals. An additional 9 per cent migrated for educational purposes, while 24 per cent entered as refugees. Family-related migration—including reunification and formation—constitutes 33 per cent of the total, and approximately 3 per cent of immigrants arrived for other or unspecified reasons.<sup>1</sup> Over the past three years, however, forced migration has been the predominant driver of immigration (see figure 1.1). This is primarily due to the influx of refugees from Ukraine.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Norway: [06313: Immigrations, by reason for immigration, sex and age 1990-2011 - 1990-2024. Statbank Norway](#)

Figure 1.1. Non-Nordic immigration by entry categories and year of immigration. 2005-2024.<sup>2</sup>



In 2024, approximately 51,200 non-Nordic citizens immigrated to Norway—a 30 per cent decrease from 2023, when arrivals exceeded 73,000. This decline is largely explained by the reduced number of Ukrainian refugees compared to previous years. Still, refugees accounted for 45 per cent of total immigration in 2024, while labour migrants accounted for 20 per cent and individuals arriving for family reunification or family establishment for 23 per cent.

The proportion of immigrants whose reasons for migration are unregistered has remained relatively high over the past four years. This is largely attributable to the fact that immigration motives are not recorded for EU/EEA nationals, who typically migrate for employment or family-related reasons. Under the EU directive on free movement, EU/EEA citizens and their families can enter and reside freely in other member states. Consequently, immigrants from these countries are not required to register with Norwegian police or immigration authorities upon arrival. The largest national groups for which migration motives are underreported include Poland, Lithuania, Spain, and Romania. Therefore, figures for work or family purposes should be interpreted with caution, as they would likely differ if all EU/EEA citizens disclosed their reasons for migration.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Norway [07113: Immigrations, by reason for immigration, first citizenship and year of immigration 1990 - 2024](#). [Statbank Norway](#)

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Norway: [Lavere innvandring i fjor – SSB](#)

Table 1.2. Non-Nordic immigration by entry categories and share of total. 2022–2024.

Entry Category	Labour	Family	Protection	Education	Unknown reason/Other	Total
2022	9539	16850	35800	4241	10133	76563
Share of total	12,5 %	22,0 %	46,8 %	5,5 %	13,2 %	
2023	14249	14873	37354	3142	3819	73437
Share of total	19,4 %	20,3 %	50,9 %	4,3 %	5,2 %	
2024	10222	11638	22823	2771	3757	51211
Share of total	20,0 %	22,7 %	44,6 %	5,4 %	7,3 %	

## 1.2.1 Labour migration

Table 1.3 gives an overview of the composition and volume of work-related residence permits granted to third-country nationals between 2016 and October 2025.<sup>4</sup> Skilled work permits grew steadily from 2016 through 2019, reaching a peak before the pandemic, which caused a decline in 2020. This category rebounded in 2021 and reached its highest level in 2022 but declined again in 2023 and continued downward through 2025. Seasonal work permits have followed a different trajectory. They remained relatively stable until 2020, dropped significantly in 2021, and then surged in 2022, continuing to grow through 2024 and 2025. By 2025, seasonal work accounted for the largest share of permits, overtaking skilled work for the first time in the ten-year period. Overall, permit volumes peaked in 2023 after a pandemic-related low in 2020, but have declined slightly since then.

Table 1.3. Work-related residence permits granted to third-country nationals and EEA registrations. 2016–2025 (Oct).

Permits	Skilled work	Seasonal work	Other	Total	Skilled work %	Seasonal work %	Other %	EEA reg.
2016	2488	2401	2187	7076	35 %	34 %	31 %	23496
2017	2815	2647	2584	8046	35 %	33 %	32 %	22995
2018	3771	2905	2428	9104	41 %	32 %	27 %	21195
2019	4398	3414	2416	10228	43 %	33 %	24 %	19285
2020	2967	2363	1475	6805	44 %	35 %	22 %	12951
2021	4145	1402	1801	7348	56 %	19 %	25 %	14429
2022	5731	2860	2107	10698	54 %	27 %	20 %	16970

<sup>4</sup> For a recent in-depth report on labour migration to Norway, see Kirkeberg et al. (2025): [Monitor for arbeidsinnvandrere fra land utenfor EØS-området. 2025](#) (in Norwegian).

2023	5444	3109	2590	11143	49 %	28 %	23 %	16408
2024	3877	3746	2200	9823	39 %	38 %	22 %	.
2025 (Oct)	3173	4165	1960	9298	34 %	45 %	21 %	.

Both in 2024 and so far in 2025, seasonal workers from Vietnam make up the largest single group granted work permits (18 per cent of all approvals in 2024 and 21 per cent in 2025). Vietnamese nationals also represent the largest labour immigration group overall, irrespective of permit category, in both 2024 and 2025.<sup>5</sup>

Regarding skilled labour migration, the largest share in 2024 originated from India (17 per cent), followed by the United Kingdom (10 per cent), Ukraine (8 per cent), Pakistan (6 per cent), and the United States (5 per cent). So far in 2025, most skilled workers have come from the United Kingdom (19 per cent), India (13 per cent), Ukraine (9 per cent), the United States (6 per cent), and Pakistan (5 per cent).<sup>6</sup>

Among seasonal workers granted permits in 2024, the largest groups came from Vietnam (46 per cent), the Philippines (13 per cent), Thailand (10 per cent), and Belarus (6 per cent). The same countries top the list so far in 2025.

For other types of work permits, labour immigrants from the United Kingdom, India, Argentina, the United States, South Korea, and Australia topped the list in 2024. So far in 2025, India ranks first, followed by the United Kingdom, Argentina, the United States, Australia, and South Korea. Together, these account for over 70 per cent of all other types of work immigration permits.

Ukrainian nationals granted work permits represent a relatively recent addition to these statistics. This development may partly reflect a shift among refugees with temporary collective protection who have opted to apply for a work permit instead. In a recent survey among Ukrainian refugees, almost half of the respondents said they plan to apply for a work visa as soon as they meet the criteria to do so.<sup>7</sup>

## 1.2.2 Refugees

Refugees made up 6 per cent of the entire population at the start of 2025, and almost 35 per cent of all immigrants. Among the 333,500 people with a refugee background, 261,500 have arrived as primary refugees, while 72,000 have come through family reunification or family formation with a

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<sup>5</sup> [Innvilgede arbeidstillatelser for tredjelandsborgere etter statsborgerskap og type tillatelse \(2025\) - UDI](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Innvilgede arbeidstillatelser for tredjelandsborgere etter statsborgerskap og type tillatelse \(2024\) - UDI](#)

<sup>7</sup> NIBR-report [2024-10.pdf](#)

primary refugee.<sup>8</sup> Ukrainians are now the largest refugee group in Norway, followed by refugees from Syria, Somalia, Eritrea, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran and Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>9</sup>

Among primary refugees, 45 per cent have been granted asylum or residence on humanitarian grounds, while 20 per cent have arrived as resettlement refugees. Among other primary refugees, the vast majority have been granted collective protection.

Among those family-related to a previously settled primary refugee, 72 per cent have been reunited, while 28 per cent have come to establish a family.

In 2015, asylum applications surged to an extraordinary peak of 31,000, driven largely by arrivals from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Eritrea. Following this influx, application numbers declined sharply and remained at substantially lower levels until an upward trend emerged after 2021. Unaccompanied minors follow a similar trend, with number dropping from 2016 to 2021 before an increase occurred in 2022, coinciding with the Ukraine crisis.

Since 2022, inflows have been dominated by refugees from Ukraine granted temporary collective protection. In both 2022 and 2023, just over 33,000 refugees from Ukraine were registered. In 2024, the number dropped to just under 20,000. So far in 2025 (January–October), a little over 10,000 have arrived.

Resettlement of refugees to Norway has fluctuated between 2016 and 2024. The highest number of resettled refugees was recorded in 2021, with 3,638 individuals, while the lowest occurred in 2024, with 1,468. In total, 23,400 refugees have been resettled over the last ten years, with an average of approximately 2,600 resettled annually. There has been a consistent decline over the last three years, from 3,638 in 2021 to 1,468 in 2024.<sup>10</sup> The reduction is attributable to a decrease in approved quota placements, primarily resulting from capacity constraints associated with the reception and settlement of refugees from Ukraine (see chapter 2.4.4).

In the last ten years, 57 per cent of all refugees resettled to Norway have been Syrian nationals (approximately 13,000). 22 per cent are from the Democratic Republic of Congo, 7 per cent from Afghanistan and 4 per cent from Sudan and South-Sudan, respectively.

Table 1.4 gives an overview of asylum applications by category (convention refugee status, other refugee status and residence permits on humanitarian grounds).<sup>11</sup><sup>12</sup> Permits are classified according to the initial processing by UDI and, subsequently, by UNE, which adjudicates appeals against UDI rejections. The figures reported for applications and case processing by UDI and UNE, however, are

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<sup>8</sup> Statistics Norway: [Nesten 90 000 flere bosatte flyktninger siden 2022 – SSB](#)

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Norway: [Nesten 90 000 flere bosatte flyktninger siden 2022 – SSB](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Overføringsflyktninger etter statsborgerskap, innvilgelser og ankomster \(2024\) - UDI](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Vedtak om beskyttelse \(asyl\) 2013–2024 - UDI](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Statistikk og analyse: Statistikk om innvandring - UDI](#)

not directly comparable. Applications submitted in a given year may be processed in subsequent years, and decisions on appeals by UNE often take longer.

*Table 1.4. Refugees to Norway, applications and permits. 2016-2025 (Oct).*

Refugees to Norway 2016-2025, applications and permits	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 (Oct)
Collective protection	.	.	.	.	.	.	33534	33417	19870	10110
Asylum applicants	3460	3560	2655	2305	1386	1656	4919	5735	4970	3088
Unaccompanied minors	320	191	159	135	89	181	1224	504	420	264
<b>Permits UDI</b>										
Total	12451	4385	1453	1789	1140	1105	1101	2190	1518	563
Convention	11560	3832	1333	1647	1011	926	1015	1982	1318	438
Other refugees	399	149	52	47	50	136	57	119	131	65
Humanitarian	492	404	68	95	79	43	29	89	69	60
Convention %	93 %	87 %	92 %	92 %	89 %	84 %	92 %	91 %	87 %	78 %
Other refugees %	3 %	3 %	4 %	3 %	4 %	12 %	5 %	5 %	9 %	12 %
Humanitarian %	4 %	9 %	5 %	5 %	7 %	4 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	11 %
Rejections	5966	1807	548	589	354	170	252	547	841	.
<b>Permits UNE (Appeals)</b>										
Total	420	499	298	230	169	199	193	148	89	.
Convention	132	145	113	83	49	74	57	50	26	.
Other refugees	61	79	27	25	4	5	8	8	13	.
Humanitarian	227	275	158	122	116	120	128	90	50	.
Convention %	31 %	29 %	38 %	36 %	29 %	37 %	30 %	34 %	29 %	.
Other refugees %	15 %	16 %	9 %	11 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	15 %	.
Humanitarian %	54 %	55 %	53 %	53 %	69 %	60 %	66 %	61 %	56 %	.
Total permits UDI+UNE	12871	4884	1751	2019	1309	1304	1294	2338	1607	.
<b>Resettlement</b>										
Offers	3170	3097	2124	3100	2401	3468	2816	1651	1176	.
Arrivals	3291	2829	2481	2803	1527	3638	3124	2242	1468	.

From 2016 to October 2025, permits issued show a clear dominance of the convention refugee category (78 – 93 per cent). Applications for residence permits on humanitarian or other grounds consistently represented a smaller proportion.

For UNE appeals, the pattern differs significantly. Granted permits on humanitarian grounds dominate, accounting for more than half of all UNE permits granted every year (ranging from 53 to 69 per cent). Permits for convention applications are less prominent, representing 29 to 38 per cent of all permits, while permits granted for other reasons are marginal in appeals.

For permits granted in the period 2024-2025 (Oct), applicants from Syria make up the largest group in the convention category (49 per cent), followed by Turkey (12 per cent), Eritrea (11 per cent) and Afghanistan (6 per cent). Together, they account for 79 per cent of all permits granted under the convention category. In 2023, the same countries accounted for 92 per cent of permits granted. Among those who have been granted a permit on other grounds, 41 per cent are from Afghanistan, followed by Yemen (13 per cent), Sudan (12 per cent), Eritrea (10 per cent) and Colombia (10 per cent).

Afghans also dominate among those who have been granted a permit on humanitarian grounds. 56 per cent of all permits on humanitarian grounds have been granted to applicants from Afghanistan, followed by applicants from Eritrea (5 per cent), Somalia (5 per cent) and Russia (5 per cent).

With respect to UNE's handling of appeals, decisions to overturn rejected applications on humanitarian grounds have made up between from 53 per cent to 69 per cent of all UNE permits between 2016 and 2025. Permits for convention applications have a share varying between 22 per cent and 38 per cent, while permits granted on other grounds vary from a mere 2 per cent to 16 per cent.

### 1.2.3 Family-related migration

So far in 2025, 10,211 individuals from third countries have been granted a family immigration permit, either through family reunification or family formation. The figure already surpasses the total for 2024, when 9,094 people entered through family immigration. In both 2024 and so far in 2025, Syrian nationals have constituted the largest group of family immigrants. In 2024, 14 per cent of all family immigration permits were issued to Syrians, followed by India (9 per cent), Pakistan (7 per cent), and the Philippines (6 per cent).<sup>13</sup>

The inflow of Ukrainian nationals through family immigration has remained comparatively low over the past two years (1,5 per cent of the total in 2024 and 2,5 per cent in 2025). Those who have applied for a family immigration permit have primarily come to reunite with or form families with members of the general population or with labour migrants. This pattern is likely linked to the provision of temporary collective protection for Ukrainians arriving after February 2022.

Family immigration from EU/EEA countries has been most prevalent among Polish, Lithuanian, Romanian and German nationals in recent years (UDI has yet to publish figures for 2024). However, as mentioned in chapter 1.1, the exact figures are uncertain since immigrants from the EU/EEA are not obliged to register with the police upon entry. A significant share of immigration from EU/EEA

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<sup>13</sup> [Innvilgede familietillatser for tredjelandborgere etter måned og statsborgerskap \(2025\) - UDI](#)

countries in recent years has consisted of labour and family immigration, and it must therefore be assumed that the figures for these categories are underestimated. Consequently, the total figure for family immigrants in the past couple of years should be interpreted as a minimum.

## 1.2.4 Education-related migration

Education-related immigration to Norway includes categories for pupils; individuals attending primary or secondary education programmes or folk high school; higher education students, such as those attending universities or colleges; researchers engaged in postdoctoral studies or research programmes; individuals participating in cultural exchange programmes while assisting a host family with household tasks (au-pairs); and a catch-all category for education-related permits that do not fall into the aforementioned categories, possibly including short-term study programmes or specialised training. The au-pair scheme was terminated in March 2024.

From 2023 to 2024, the total number of permits under the education category decreased from 4,042 to 3,894.<sup>14</sup> The distribution of permits across educational levels and categories reflects notable variation between countries, with a few countries accounting for a particularly large proportion of permits. Students make up the largest group of individuals granted residence permits for education. China and the United States account for the highest proportion, followed by the United Kingdom and Canada. China and the United States are the top contributors of students, accounting for nearly 12 per cent and 8,8 per cent of all the students. China also dominates among postdoctoral researchers, accounting for 26,5 per cent of the total. Among au pairs, individuals from the Philippines overwhelmingly dominate, representing 83,7 per cent of the total share.

*Table 1.5. Migrants on study permits. 2022-2024.*

Migrants on study permits	Pupils	Students	Postdocs	Au pairs	Other	Total
2022	365	3943	293	737	292	5630
Share of total	6 %	70 %	5 %	13 %	5 %	
2023	360	2756	253	466	207	4042
Share of total	9 %	68 %	6 %	12 %	5 %	
2024	372	2699	230	283	310	3894
Share of total	10 %	69 %	6 %	7 %	8 %	

## 1.2.5 Irregular migration and expulsion

There are no reliable data sources enabling us to estimate the extent of irregular immigration or the number of individuals currently living in Norway without legal permit. UDI and the Police, however,

<sup>14</sup> [The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration](#)

provide annual statistics on the number of individuals compelled to leave the country and the number of individuals subject to enforced departure based on the following grounds:

- Asylum – everyone who has applied for protection (asylum) in Norway and has received a final rejection of an asylum application that has been substantively processed in Norway. Individuals in this category often have a deportation order in addition to the asylum decision.
- Dublin – those who have been refused residence in Norway under the Dublin III Regulation, including those who also have a deportation order. The regulation determines which member state is responsible for processing an asylum application. This category also includes individuals who have been granted asylum or other residence in other European countries (safe third country).
- International protection – Returns of third-country nationals who have been granted international protection (IP) in other Schengen countries. IP cases were previously included in removals under the Dublin category but are now separated as their own category because these cases are not handled under the Dublin Regulation.
- Refused Entry – a foreign national who does not meet the conditions for staying in Norway and is obliged to leave the country. A refusal of entry decision does not entail an entry ban.
- Expelled – everyone who has been issued a deportation order and who has not applied for protection (asylum). Most in this category are expelled due to criminal convictions and receive a temporary or permanent entry ban to Norway and the Schengen area. Persons who have not applied for asylum in Norway but have done so in another Dublin country are also included.
- Other – persons who do not fall under any of the other categories.

*Table 1.6. Forced return by the Police and decisions on forced return by the UDI. 2021-2025 (Oct).*

Forced returns	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 (Oct)
<b>Forced returns by the Police</b>					
Rejected asylum	96	163	209	236	234
Dublin cases	177	366	664	710	462
Internal protection	.	.	.	102	75
Refused entry/stay	1505	1343	745	635	495
Expelled		823 <sup>15</sup>	701	775	726

<sup>15</sup> Prior to 2022, statistics on cases involving refused entry or expulsion were grouped together under a single category.

Total	1778	2695	2319	2458	1992
<b>Decisions on forced return by UDI</b>					
Refused entry/stay	1347	1732	1317	1216	.
Expelled	1210	1894	2893	3302	.
Total	2557	3626	4210	4518	.

As shown in table 1.6, there has been a decline in the number of individuals who have been refused entry/stay, while Dublin procedure returns and returns based on rejected asylum applications have risen. The total number of returns of individuals without legal residence has remained stable over the past four years. So far in 2025, 1,992 individuals have been returned, compared to 2,100 individuals at the same time in 2024. It is likely that the total for 2025 will resemble the pattern from previous years. Individuals from the EU/EEA account for 18 per cent of forced returns in 2025, while 82 per cent have been third country nationals. Approximately 30 per cent of those returned have been subject to criminal penalties during the last two years.<sup>16</sup>

## 1.3 Trends in foreign-born and immigrant population stocks

### 1.3.1 The foreign-born and immigrant population by country of birth and gender

As of January 2025, Norway's foreign-born population reached 1,045,658 individuals, representing a 3.7 per cent increase from 2024. Most of this growth was driven by immigrants, while the number of foreign-born individuals with one or two Norwegian-born parents remained largely unchanged. In 2025, these groups numbered 41,355 (0.05 per cent increase) and 39,190 (0.006 per cent decrease), respectively. Overall, foreign-born individuals make up 18.7 per cent of Norway's total population.

The immigrant population in Norway has increased over fivefold since 1990 and more than doubled since 2010. The population with immigrant backgrounds has increased sixfold over the past 35 years.<sup>17</sup> While accounting for only 3.5 per cent of the total population in 1990, they make now make

<sup>16</sup> The Police: [oktober---uttransporteringer-fra-norge.pdf](https://oktober---uttransporteringer-fra-norge.pdf)

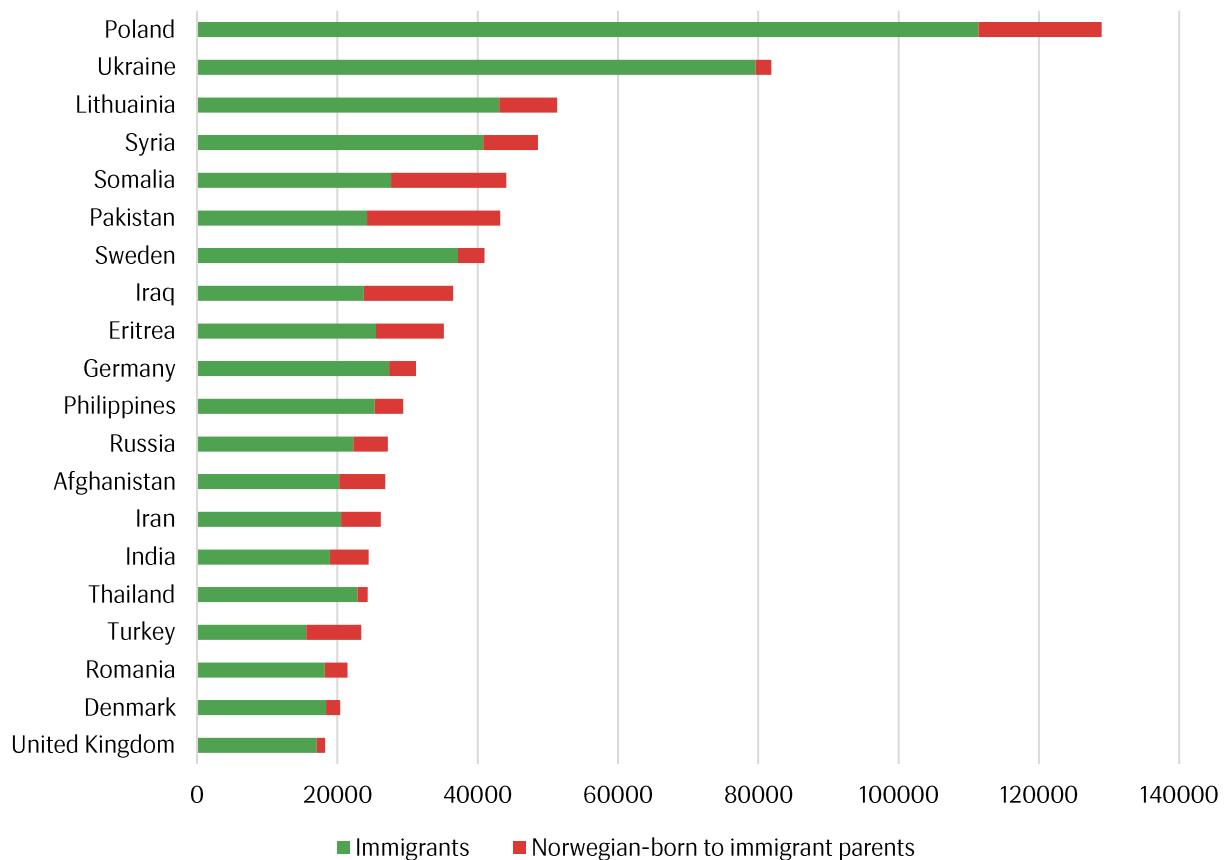
<sup>17</sup> The *immigrant population* refer to immigrants, while the *population with immigrant backgrounds* refer to both immigrants as well as their Norwegian-born children. *Immigrants* refer to persons born abroad of two foreign-born parents and four foreign-born grandparents. *Norwegian-born to immigrant parents* are born in Norway of two parents born abroad and in addition have four grandparents born abroad.

up 21,4 per cent. From 2024 to 2025, the immigrant population increased by 3,7 per cent. Immigrants now make up 17 per cent of the total population and non-naturalised immigrants account for 11,5 per cent. Of all immigrants, 26 per cent have lived in Norway less than five years, 21 per cent between five and ten years, and 53 per cent eleven years or more.

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

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

*Figure 1.2. Immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents by country. 2025.<sup>18</sup>*



<sup>18</sup> Statistics Norway [13880: Immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents, separately, by sex and country background 2004 - 2025. Statbank Norway](https://www.ssb.no/tema/13880)

Broken down by country origin, immigrants from Poland make up the largest immigrant group in Norway. More than 111,000 Polish immigrants were residing in Norway at the start of 2025. The large increase in the number of Ukrainian refugees has resulted in people of Ukrainian origin becoming the second largest immigrant group in Norway. More than 80,000 Ukrainians were residing in the country at the start of 2025 compared to about 6,500 Ukrainians just three years earlier. Other countries with large immigrant groups in Norway in 2025 are Lithuania (43,000), Syria (40,700), Sweden (37,200), Somalia (27,600 people), and Germany (27,400 people). The 20 largest immigrant groups account for 80 per cent of all immigrants in the country (figure 1.2).

*Table 1.7 Population with immigrant backgrounds. 1990-2025.*

Population with immigrant backgrounds	1990	2000	2010	2020	2024	2025
Immigrants	150 973	238 462	459 347	790 497	931 081	965113
% of women	47,6	50,4	48,7	48,1	49,0	49,0
% of total population	3,6	5,3	9,5	14,7	16,8	17,3
Foreign citizenship	.	.	.	604 525	633 406	645 629
% of total population	.	.	.	11,3	11,4	11,5
Norwegian-born to immigrant parents	17 324	44 025	92 966	188 755	221 461	230 237
% of women			49	49	49	49
% of total population	0,4	1,0	1,9	3,5	4,0	4,0
Immigrants + Norwegian-born to immigrant parents	168 297	282 487	552 313	979 251	1 152 541	1 195 349
% of total population	4	6,3	11,4	18,2	20,8	21,4

### 1.3.2 Norwegian-born to two immigrant parents

Table 1.7 provides data on the number of Norwegian-born to immigrant parents between 1990 and 2025. In 1990, Norwegian-born to immigrant parents made up a tiny fraction of the total population (17,300, or 0,4 per cent). In 2025 their numbers have increased to over 230,000, making up 4 per cent of the total population. In the last 15 years, the stock of Norwegian-born has increased by a factor of 1.48. 73 per cent are still under 20 years of age.

The majority of people born in Norway to immigrant parents have a background from Asia (43 per cent), while one in three have parents who migrated from a European country. One in five born in Norway to immigrant parents have parents from countries in Africa. Distributing Norwegian-born individuals by parent country background, the largest groups have origins from Pakistan (19,000), Poland (17,500), Somalia (16,400), Iraq (12,700), Vietnam (9,700) and Eritrea (9,700). Roughly one out of three people born in Norway to immigrant parents have backgrounds from one of these six countries (figure 1.2).

20 origin countries account for 75 per cent (168,000) of all Norwegian-born to immigrant parents. However, the 20 countries from which the largest share of parents of Norwegian-born originate, are not entirely the same as the top 20 countries immigrants come from - reflecting a degree of divergence in generational demographic composition. While Ethiopia, Morocco, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Sri Lanka are among the top 20 origin countries from which parents of Norwegian-born originate, these five countries fall out of the list of immigrants' top countries of origin.

### 1.3.3 Naturalisations

27,460 people were granted Norwegian citizenship in 2024. This was nearly 10,000 fewer than the previous year.<sup>19</sup> After a statutory amendment in 2020 (see chapter 2.4.8), in which individuals were permitted to hold more than one citizenship, the number of transitions to Norwegian citizenship increased significantly. 2024 is the first year since dual citizenship became allowed where the number of naturalisations has dropped considerably.<sup>20</sup> Between 2015 and 2024, the acceptance rate for citizenship applications fluctuated between 87 per cent and 96 per cent.

In the three years before the statutory amendment for dual citizenship came into effect, two out of ten people who received Norwegian citizenship had lived in Norway for eight or more years. Since the statutory amendment entered into force, a higher number of people with long periods of residence have obtained citizenship. In 2021, five out of ten of those granted citizenship had a period of residence of eight years or longer.<sup>21</sup> A likely reason is that many European citizens waited until the statutory amendment regarding dual citizenship had entered into force before applying for Norwegian citizenship.

Over the past three years, Syrians have been the largest group granted citizenship. In 2024, 14 per cent of all who became naturalised were from Syria, followed by individuals from Poland (8 per cent), Sweden (7 per cent), and Eritrea (7 per cent). Together, these groups accounted for over one-third of all naturalisations in 2024.

Syrians also represent the largest share of those granted permanent residency in 2024 (12 per cent). The subsequent groups include nationals from India (7 per cent), the Philippines (6 per cent), Turkey (5 per cent), the United Kingdom (5 per cent), Eritrea (5 per cent), and Thailand (5 per cent). Applicants from these seven countries make up just under half of all those granted permanent residency in 2024. The acceptance rate for permanent residence permits have altered between 88 per cent and 94 per cent in the last ten years.

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<sup>19</sup> [Innvilgede statsborgerskap etter opprinnelig statsborgerskap \(2024\) - UDI](#)

<sup>20</sup> Statistics Norway: [Nesten 10 000 færre overganger til norsk statsborgerskap i 2024 – SSB](#)

<sup>21</sup> Statistics Norway: [Rekordmange fikk norsk statsborgerskap i 2021 i kjølvannet av ny lov – SSB](#)

Table 1.88 Applications and acceptance rates for Norwegian citizenship (naturalisation) and permanent residence permits. 2015-2024.

Year	Applications for naturalisation	Accepted (%)	Applications for permanent residence permit	Accepted (%)
2015	12432	89	18431	94
2016	13712	91	16837	94
2017	21648	90	17086	90
2018	10241	87	14594	91
2019	13201	91	20558	89
2020	19698	94	17981	90
2021	41100	95	14548	90
2022	39369	94	10915	88
2023	37278	96	11335	89
2024	29017	94	11729	90

# 2 Developments in migration policy

## 2.1 Migration to Norway

Norway has three main legal migration pathways:

- Citizens of Nordic countries enjoy free mobility within the Nordic Passport Union. Established in 1954 and implemented in 1958, the passport union enables citizens of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden<sup>22</sup> to travel freely across borders without a passport or visa. This agreement also allows Nordic citizens to live, work and study in any member country without requiring permits. Nordic residents staying longer than 6 months must report a move to the National Registry.<sup>23</sup>
- Citizens of EU and EFTA countries benefit from the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement, which facilitates free movement between member states<sup>24</sup>. This pathway provides broad rights for EU/EEA nationals to live, work and study in Norway. They must register with the authorities if they stay longer than three months but do not require a work permit.
- Third-Country nationals: Non-EU/EEA nationals must apply for specific permits to live or work in Norway. These permits include work, family, education and protection permits. From autumn 2025 the Entry/Exit System (EES) will start operations. EES will be an automated IT system for registering travellers from third countries each time they cross an EU external border. The system will register the person's name, type of the travel document, biometric data (fingerprints and captured facial images) and the date and place of entry and exit.<sup>25</sup>

## 2.2 Legislation

The Immigration Act of 15 May 2008 regulates the right of foreign citizens to enter, reside and work in Norway. The Immigration Act and the corresponding Immigration Regulations entered into force

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<sup>22</sup> [Schengen- og Dublin-samarbeidet - regjeringen.no](http://Schengen- og Dublin-samarbeidet - regjeringen.no)

<sup>23</sup> Norwegian Directorate of Immigration: [Nordic nationals who are going to live in Norway - UDI](http://Nordic nationals who are going to live in Norway - UDI)

<sup>24</sup> The EU Member States, along with three EFTA countries – Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway – form the EEA Contracting Parties, commonly referred to as the EEA States. To differentiate Switzerland, which is also an EFTA member but not part of the EEA Agreement, [Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are collectively termed the 'EEA EFTA States'](http://Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are collectively termed the 'EEA EFTA States').

<sup>25</sup> [Entry-Exit System - European Commission](http://Entry-Exit System - European Commission)

on 1 January 2010. According to the regulations, following an individual assessment, citizens of third countries<sup>26</sup> may qualify for one of the following main residence permit categories:

- Labour, i.e. persons who have a concrete job offer
- Family, i.e. persons with close family ties to somebody residing in Norway
- Students, trainees and participants in an exchange programme
- Refugees and persons who qualify for a residence permit on humanitarian grounds

A permanent residence permit is normally granted after three or five years of continuous residence, provided the third-country national has:

- passed an oral Norwegian language test at level A2 or higher
- passed a social studies test in a language he or she understands
- been self-supporting for the past 12 months.

## 2.3 Actors

In Norway, the *Ministry of Justice and Public Security* is responsible for immigration policies. The *Norwegian Directorate of Immigration* (UDI) processes applications for protection (asylum), visitor visas, family immigration, residence permits for work and study purposes, citizenship, permanent residence permits and travel documents, and it is responsible for asylum reception centres. It also makes decisions on rejection and expulsion. UDI further considers cases that the Foreign Service and the police are not authorised to decide and cases where it is uncertain whether a residence permit should be granted. As the superior expert body, UDI instructs the police and foreign service missions in immigration cases, while the *Immigration Appeals Board* (UNE) processes appeals against the UDI's decisions. The National Police Immigration Service (PU) registers asylum seekers, investigates asylum seekers' travel routes, ascertains their identities, and prepares and implements final rejections in asylum cases. PU coordinates and quality assure all deportations from Norway. The *Directorate of Integration and Diversity* (lmdi) is responsible for settling refugees in municipalities and coordinating integration measures.

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<sup>26</sup>Countries not covered by the EEA Agreement or the EFTA Convention.

## 2.4 Migration policies and changes

### 2.4.1 Legislation regulating permanent stay

Several changes have been introduced regarding permanent residency, the most important being new requirements for Norwegian language skills and social studies to obtain a permanent residence permit.

As of April 2024, receiving financial assistance under the Social Services Act in the past no longer automatically disqualifies an applicant. However, applicants must still demonstrate that they currently have a stable income when applying. The change is part of the Directorate of Immigration's efforts to simplify existing regulations and streamline case processing.

Beginning 1 September 2025, completing courses in Norwegian and social studies will no longer be a requirement for obtaining a permanent residence permit. Instead, applicants must pass an oral Norwegian language test at level A2 or higher and a social studies test in a language they understand.<sup>27</sup> This means that the Norwegian language requirement is being raised one level, from A1 to A2. The requirements apply to individuals between the ages of 18 and 67 and applications for permanent residency received after 1 September.

Exemptions from the oral Norwegian language test may be granted if the applicant provides documentation of sufficient proficiency through formal education, such as a grade of 2 or higher in Norwegian or Sámi in adult education, primary, lower secondary or upper secondary school, through completion of relevant university studies, or fulfillment of language requirements for higher education. Exemptions may also be considered in cases of health-related or significant personal circumstances, or if granted by the municipality. Similarly, exemptions from the social studies test may be granted based on documented academic achievement in social studies at school or university level, or under exceptional personal or health-related conditions. Exemptions by the municipality may also apply.

From 1 September 2025, all requirements for obtaining a permanent residence permit in Norway must also be fulfilled at the time the application is decided—except for the financial self-support requirement, which can be met either when the application is submitted or at any point before a formal decision is made.

This means that applicants should wait to submit their application until they are certain that all other requirements are met, such as:

- Having lived in Norway on qualifying permits for the required period (usually 3 years, or 5 years for refugees and their families and individuals residing on humanitarian grounds)

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<sup>27</sup> [Changes to the requirements for Norwegian language skills and social studies to obtain a permanent residence permit - UDI](#)

- Passing an oral Norwegian language test at level A2 or higher
- Passing a social studies test in a language they understand
- Not exceeding the allowed absence limit (maximum 7 months abroad in the last 3 years)
- Maintaining a clean criminal record

To gain more time to meet these requirements, applicants may choose to renew their current residence permit instead of applying for permanent residence immediately.

## 2.4.2 Labour immigrants

Third country nationals—those from outside the EU/EFTA—who wish to work or run a business in Norway must obtain a valid residence permit. A key requirement for all work-related permits is that the salary and working conditions must be equivalent to those offered to Norwegian employees in similar roles.

The main types of work-related residence permits for individuals from outside the EU/EFTA include:

- **Skilled worker:** Applicants with higher education or vocational training equivalent to Norwegian upper secondary education may qualify if their expertise matches the job requirements. Skilled workers can apply for family reunification and may be eligible for permanent residence after three years. They can also change employers without needing a new permit, provided the new job aligns with their qualifications.
- **Skilled Service Supplier / Posted Worker / Independent Contractor:** These individuals perform temporary assignments in Norway either for a foreign employer or their own business abroad. Independent contractors work under contracts with Norwegian companies. While they may apply for family reunification, they are not eligible for permanent residence. Those formally employed and paid by a Norwegian-registered employer are considered skilled workers.
- **Skilled Self-Employed Person:** Entrepreneurs who play a key role in establishing or running a business in Norway may qualify for a residence permit. They can also apply for family reunification and permanent residence.
- **Seasonal Worker:** These permits are granted for up to six months for specific jobs. They do not allow for family reunification or permanent residence and are tied to a specific employer and job. Employers must obtain confirmation from the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav) that it is not possible to recruit enough workers from Norway or the EU/EEA to perform the job. If the work is in the agriculture or forestry industry, it is not necessary to obtain confirmation from Nav.
- **Jobseeker:** Researchers and recent graduates from Norwegian institutions can receive a 12-month permit to search for relevant employment. During this time, they may work in any job but must meet financial requirements.
- **Student:** Students with a valid study permit are allowed to work part-time (up to 20 hours per week) during the academic term and full-time during holidays.

There have been few regulatory changes concerning labour immigration in Norway during 2024 and 2025. However, a minor adjustment has been introduced for labour immigrants with higher education qualifications. Additionally, the government has launched a new action plan against social dumping and labour market crime, which includes several targeted measures aimed at protecting foreign workers.

Starting 1 September 2025, Norway has increased the salary thresholds for work-related residence permits for those with higher education to better reflect current wage levels.<sup>28</sup> To be granted a permit, your salary and working conditions must match what is considered normal in Norway. If your job falls under a collective agreement, you must be paid according to that agreement. If not, your salary must meet the new minimum levels: at least NOK 599,200 annually for positions requiring a master's degree, and NOK 522,600 for those requiring a bachelor's degree. These changes aim to ensure that foreign workers receive fair compensation aligned with Norwegian standards.

In August 2025, the government unveiled a renewed *Action plan targeting social dumping and labour market crime*.<sup>29</sup> Building on previous initiatives, the plan introduces new measures alongside reinforced actions aimed at better enforcement, protecting workers' rights, and curbing exploitation—particularly among foreign nationals in vulnerable employment situations.

Foreign workers engaged in occupations requiring low formal qualifications are disproportionately exposed to exploitation by employers and criminal networks. To address this, the government has proposed a series of regulatory amendments designed to prevent such abuse and to ensure that foreign workers are provided with safe and adequate working and living conditions. Among the proposed measures is an expansion and tightening of the penal provisions in the Immigration Act, intended to offer stronger legal protection to individuals subjected to exploitative practices that fall outside the scope of existing human trafficking legislation.

### **2.4.3 Bilateral agreements on the recruitment of foreign workers**

Norway does not currently maintain formal bilateral agreements dedicated to the recruitment of foreign labour. Recruitment is primarily facilitated through the European Economic Area (EEA) framework, which guarantees the free movement of workers within the EU/EEA. For individuals originating from outside the EU/EEA, Norway relies on its national immigration and employment legislation rather than specific bilateral arrangements, requiring applicants to obtain work or residence permits designed for skilled workers or other defined categories.

### **2.4.4 Asylum seekers and refugees**

UDI is responsible for processing asylum applications in accordance with the Immigration Act and Immigration Regulations. Under Norwegian law, a refugee is defined as a foreign national who meets the criteria outlined in Article 1A of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, or who qualifies for protection under other international obligations, such as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Individuals seeking asylum must be present in Norway or at its border and must demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution due to factors like ethnicity, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, or face a real risk of being subjected

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<sup>28</sup> [New salary levels in Norway from 1 September 2025 for those with higher education - UDI](#)

<sup>29</sup> [handlingsplan-mot-sosial-dumping-og-arbeidslivskri.pdf](#)

to the death penalty, torture, or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment upon return to their home country. If an applicant does not meet the criteria for refugee status, UDI will assess whether they qualify for a residence permit on humanitarian grounds.

Norway is currently preparing to incorporate key elements of the EU's new migration and asylum framework (the Pact) into national legislation. Five acts will have direct implications for Norway: The Screening Regulation and the Return Border Procedure Regulation, both of which are Schengen-relevant, as well as the Eurodac Regulation, the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR), and the Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation, which partially fall under Norway's association agreement with the Dublin framework. To meet the implementation deadline by summer 2026, the government has allocated NOK 200 million to support the efforts of the Police, UDI, and UNE in preparing and executing the necessary legislative, procedural, and operational changes required for implementation. In addition, NOK 28,7 million is expected to be financed through the EU's Border and Visa Management Instrument (BMVI).

In 2024, six members of Parliament put forward a constitutional proposal to enshrine the right to seek asylum in the Constitution.<sup>30</sup> The representatives view the right to seek asylum—and to be granted asylum if one is genuinely at risk of persecution—as a human right that should be codified at a higher constitutional level than the current Immigration Act. The proposal argues that there are strong reasons to make the right to asylum visible in the Constitution, especially at a time when the right to seek asylum is under increasing pressure. The proposal is still under consideration.

As of 24 June 2025, the Ministry of Justice and Public Safety formally ordered a temporary suspension of processing applications for protection (asylum) from individuals from Syria that may last until 24 December 2025.<sup>31</sup> The decision was made following UDI's decision in December 2024 to postpone the processing of asylum applications from Syrian nationals. Suspending cases means that UDI and UNE are waiting to process cases until there is sufficient information on the developments in Syria under its new regime.

The law sets out provisions for how long cases can be suspended, and UDI must evaluate whether there is enough information to begin processing cases again within six months. The suspension can be extended for another six months, i.e. 24 June 2026, depending on how the situation in Syria unfolds.

Since April 2011, UNE has maintained a general suspension of the duty to return for Syrian nationals. Following a new assessment, the suspension will remain in effect until 24 December 2025, meaning that Syrian nationals who have received a final rejection of their asylum case and who do not have a new case under consideration are still not obligated to return to Syria.

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<sup>30</sup> [Sak - stortinget.no](#)

<sup>31</sup> [Asylsøknader fra Syria er stilt i bero \(engelsk\)](#)

#### 2.4.4.1 Resettlement refugees

Norway resettles a fixed number of refugees each year under its annual quota system (see chapter 1.2.2). The Parliament determines the number of refugees to be resettled in Norway annually. The Ministry of Justice and Public Security, in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labour and Inclusion, determines which groups are prioritized within the quota, based on recommendations from UDI, Imdi, UNHCR, and input from Norwegian voluntary organizations. UDI is responsible for carrying out the selection of resettlement refugees in cooperation with the police and Imdi. When resettlement refugees arrive in Norway, they are, as a general rule, settled directly in a municipality.<sup>32</sup>

The quota includes refugees whose applications are submitted by the UNHCR, other intergovernmental organizations, Norwegian foreign missions, international criminal courts, and Norwegian voluntary organizations, under certain conditions. The quota places can also be used for other types of government-controlled transfers of people fleeing persecution. However, refugees registered by UNHCR are prioritized. Unused quota places can be carried over for up to three years, and it is also possible to use places in advance from the following year's quota. Additionally, Norway contributes funding to UNHCR to support staff and activities aimed at strengthening the capacity to identify and refer cases for resettlement.

All quota refugees accepted for resettlement to Norway are obliged to participate in the Norwegian Cultural Orientation Programme (NORCO), currently facilitated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The core of the programme are the pre-departure orientation (PDO) courses. These courses, conducted in the refugees' host countries prior to their departure, provide essential information about life in Norway. Participants are grouped by age, and each group follows a tailored curriculum with varying durations to ensure age-appropriate content.

Another key component of the NORCO programme is the organization of Country Information Seminars (CIS) for municipalities that will receive quota refugees. The seminars aim to equip local stakeholders with insights into the refugees' countries of origin and cultural backgrounds. Topics typically include the reasons for displacement, health and security challenges encountered during transit, cultural norms, and potential integration issues.

In 2024, the Parliament approved a resettlement quota of 1,000 places, in addition to 247 places carried over from 2023. Of these, 510 places were designated for Syrian refugees to be resettled from Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan; 227 places were allocated to refugees from various countries, primarily Congolese and Eritrean nationals via Rwanda; 200 places were reserved for individuals of different nationalities, with a particular focus on Eritrean and Sudanese refugees evacuated from Libya through Rwanda and Romania; and 210 places were assigned to Afghan refugees residing in

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<sup>32</sup> Imdi is responsible for allocating resettlement refugees to municipalities across Norway. Imdi assigns a settlement municipality to resettlement refugees before they arrive in the country. Generally, they are only accommodated in asylum reception centers in extraordinary cases while awaiting settlement.

Turkey. Furthermore, a sub-quota of 100 open places was established. The overall quota also included 40 places for individuals with medical needs and 40 places for unaccompanied minors.

In 2025 the government reduced the quota for resettlement refugees and related categories from 1,000 places to 500 places, 100 of which were reserved for medical evacuation of Gaza patients (Medevac) including accompanying persons. The remainder of the quota was reserved for refugees evacuated from Libya via Romania, or from Tunisia (200 places) (mainly Eritrean and Sudanese)), Afghan refugees in Turkey (100 places), Syrian refugees in Turkey and/or Jordan (50 places) and 50 unallocated places. The overall quota also included 10 unaccompanied minors with their families. In addition, 97 unused slots from 2024 were carried over and distributed between the situations in Libya and Turkey. A selection mission to Jordan in late 2024 was stopped due to change of the regime in Syria, leaving slots unused.

Generally, families with children, women and LGBTQ people are prioritized within all sub quotas.

For 2026, the government proposes further reduction of the quota. The decision to receive fewer resettlement refugees is partly due to the influx of displaced persons from Ukraine, which has placed substantial pressure on municipal services in the communities where they are settling.

## **2.4.5 Displaced persons from Ukraine**

Norway is continuing its temporary collective protection scheme for displaced persons from Ukraine. Individuals who have held such a permit for three years are now eligible to extend it for a fourth year, under the same conditions as previous extensions.

Norway introduced its temporary collective protection scheme for displaced persons from Ukraine in March 2022. Under this scheme, those covered were granted a one-year residence permit through a simplified procedure, without an individual assessment of their need for protection. Today's regulatory amendment grants individuals who still fall within the scope of the scheme the right to extend their permit for a fourth year. UDI will renew the permits upon expiration, so those covered do not need to apply for the extension. UDI and the police will also ensure that expired residence cards are renewed.

The EU's Temporary Protection Directive has been extended until March 2027. Following assessments of the uncertainty of future developments in Ukraine, collective protection in Norway may also be extended by a fifth year, but this is yet to be decided.

In September 2024, immigration regulations were amended so that the collective protection scheme no longer applies to applicants who have had permanent residence in an area of Ukraine considered safe by the Norwegian immigration authorities (UDI and UNE). Initially, six oblasts in Western Ukraine were defined as safe. In January 2025, the authorities carried out additional safety assessments, adding another eight oblasts in the western and central parts Ukraine to the list. Application for protection from individuals from these 14 oblasts are now assessed according to the regulations for individual, rather than collective, protection. The new regulations do not apply

to patients who have been evacuated from Ukraine to Norway, nor do they apply to close family members of displaced individuals already under the collective protection scheme. Lastly, individuals that have been granted temporary collective protection, and have resided in an area in Ukraine that the Norwegian authorities define now as safe, can still have their permit extended.

Norway's repatriation scheme applies to individuals who have been granted a residence permit following an application for protection, their family members, and quota refugees. The scheme saw limited use prior to September 2022, when Ukrainians were granted access to apply. In 2025, however, there has been an increase in the number of Ukrainians seeking to return to Ukraine. In connection with the Revised National Budget for 2025, the forecast for repatriations was raised from 1,000 to 4,450. Consequently, the appropriation for repatriation support was increased by NOK 61,6 million for 2025.

The repatriation scheme aligns with the government's policy concerning Ukrainians. From 2022 through the first half of 2025, more than 7,000 Ukrainians have applied for repatriation support, while nearly 3,319 have returned. Forecasts remain uncertain, and future funding requirements will depend on developments in Ukraine. For 2026, the government forecasts 4,800 repatriations.

## 2.4.6 Family

Family immigration to Norway typically occurs through family reunification or family establishment with a reference person who has legal residence in the country. Family permit applicants are often the spouse, partner or child of someone living in Norway. However, other categories, such as parents of children residing in Norway, individuals intending to marry someone in Norway, foster children or full siblings can also apply. The regulations also allow for other family members to apply for family immigration if warranted on humanitarian grounds. Family immigration applies to various groups, including Norwegian citizens, refugees, labour migrants and others holding residence permits that qualify for family immigration. The requirements vary based on the type of family relationship and the circumstances of both the applicant and the reference person.

Generally, the reference person must be an adult, have documented identity, a residence of their own and meet the income requirement.<sup>33</sup> The income requirement is adjusted annually based on changes to the basic amount<sup>34</sup> and applies to both previous and future income. For applicants who have applied from 1 February 2025<sup>35</sup>, the requirements are at least NOK 330,008 before tax for the income year 2024 and at least NOK 416,512 in future income.<sup>36</sup> Children may also serve as reference person, for example on behalf of their parents. If the reference person is under 18 years of age, an exemption from the income requirement applies.

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<sup>33</sup> In family immigration cases, the housing requirement only applies to cases under Sections 46 to 49 of the Act, which include residence permits for a single mother or father with a child over 18 years old in Norway, short-term stays to visit a child in the realm, residence permits to enter into marriage, and situations involving strong humanitarian considerations.

<sup>34</sup> The basic amount in the National Insurance Scheme (grunnbeløpet (G)).

<sup>35</sup> If the application is processed before 1 February 2026.

<sup>36</sup> [Income requirement in family immigration cases - UDI](#)

For spouses or fiancés, additional conditions apply. Both parties must be at least 24 years of age, and the marriage must not be forced or entered solely for immigration purposes.<sup>37</sup> However, some exception to this rule is recognized, such as if the applicants married, had children together or had lived together as cohabitants for more than two years prior to the reference person's entry into Norway. If the applicants married or established cohabitation in Norway while both held residence permits or Norwegian or Nordic citizenship. Or if there is reason to conclude that marriage or cohabitation is clearly voluntary.<sup>38</sup>

In May 2024, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security issued a directive to the UDI, introducing revised criteria for assessing deportation cases involving violations of the Immigration Act. These criteria specifically apply in situations where the continuation of family life with minor children in the country of origin is deemed unfeasible. The directive has now been codified into the Immigration Regulations.<sup>39</sup>

The core provision of the newly adopted regulation is the establishment of a general requirement for extended residence duration in Norway as a prerequisite for obtaining permanent residency. This requirement serves as an alternative to deportation in applicable cases. The regulations apply only when the foreign national has minor children residing in Norway and where the preservation of family life in the country of origin is not viable. Furthermore, the scope of the regulation is limited to deportation proceedings based solely on breaches of the Immigration Act; they do not extend to cases where the individual has been convicted of other criminal offenses.

## 2.4.7 International/foreign students

International students from EU/EEA countries planning to stay in Norway for six months or more must register with the UDI within three months of arrival.<sup>40</sup> Admission to an accredited institution or upper secondary school is required, along with proof of self-sufficiency for themselves and accompanying family members. A European Health Insurance Card or private health insurance is mandatory.

Non-EU/EFTA students must apply for a study permit, which costs NOK 5,400 for those over 18 and is free for minors.<sup>41</sup> Applicants must be admitted to a full-time programme at a university or college and demonstrate sufficient financial means, which is currently NOK 15,169 per month or NOK 166,859 for the entire academic year (excluding tuition). Students with a study permit can work part-time without needing an employment offer prior to immigration.<sup>42</sup> After graduation, they may apply for a temporary one-year permit to seek skilled employment. Qualified skilled workers

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<sup>37</sup> [Meld. St. 17 \(2023–2024\) - regjeringen.no](#)

<sup>38</sup> [Requirement to be at least 24 years old in applications for family immigration](#)

<sup>39</sup> [G-02/2025 - Ikriftredelse av endringer i utlendingsforskriftens regler om utvisning av utlending som har barn i Norge - regjeringen.no](#)

<sup>40</sup> [Students who are EU/EEA nationals - UDI](#)

<sup>41</sup> [Fees - UDI](#)

<sup>42</sup> Work is permitted for a maximum of 20 hours a week during term, while full-time work is allowed during the academic breaks.

needing additional education or practical training for professional recognition in Norway can receive a residence permit for up to two years to meet language or other requirements.

Until 2023, public higher education institutions in Norway have not charged tuition fees for ordinary study programs. In the budget for 2023, the government proposed that from the autumn semester of 2023, universities and colleges should charge at least cost-covering tuition fees from new degree students from outside the EU/EEA and Switzerland. The proposal for tuition fees was passed by Parliament. However, in 2025, the government proposed to remove requirements for high tuition fees for foreign students.<sup>43</sup> Similar to practices in other countries, Norwegian universities and university colleges will still be able to charge tuition fees, but the government will give institutions the flexibility to set the fee lower. This has not yet been adapted.<sup>44</sup>

#### 2.4.7.1 Au pair scheme

In March 2024, the scheme for cultural exchange for individuals assisting a host family with household tasks (au-pairs) was discontinued. The discontinuation of the scheme means that third-country nationals are no longer eligible for residence in Norway as au-pairs. However, it remains possible to host au-pairs or trainees from the EU/EEA area, in accordance with the standard EEA regulations on free movement. A transitional arrangement allowed au-pairs who held a residence permit prior to March 2024, or who had a registered application at that time, to apply for residence in Norway as an au-pair for up to two years from the date of their initial permit.

### 2.4.8 Naturalisation policy

In March 2025, it was determined that stateless individuals can apply for Norwegian citizenship after three years of residency.<sup>45</sup> Previously, there was a requirement of five years of residency to obtain a permanent residence permit, and this was also one of the main requirements for applying for citizenship. As a result, most stateless individuals had to wait five years before they could apply. According to new instructions from the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, stateless individuals can now apply for citizenship without having to meet the requirement for permanent residency. However, applicants must still meet the other requirements for permanent residence under the Immigration Act, such as identity verification, language skills, and no criminal record.

As Norway has formally recognized Palestine as a state (the formal recognition entered into force in May 2024), persons who are registered in the civil registry in the West Bank, Gaza or East Jerusalem and have been assigned a Palestinian ID-number, are no longer covered by the citizenship rules that apply to stateless persons.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> [Vil fjerne krav om høye studieavgifter for utenlandske studenter - regjeringen.no](#)

<sup>44</sup> [Public hearing](#)

<sup>45</sup> [Instruks om avklaring av praksis om botidskravet for statsløse - regjeringen.no](#)

<sup>46</sup> [Clarifications in the wake of Norway's recognition of Palestine as an independent state - UDI](#)

## 2.4.9 International agreements regarding readmission and the return of foreigners

Norway prioritises limiting the arrival of asylum seekers without protection needs and returning of those without legal residence. Policies focus mostly on deterring irregular migration through strict legal measures (see also chapter 7). Norway also places strong emphasis on encouraging voluntary returns, primarily through programmes like the Voluntary Assisted Return Programme (VARP), which are carried out in collaboration with both transit and destination countries, through bilateral and multilateral arrangements, with the support of IOM. Per January 2025, Norway has signed bilateral readmission agreements with 31 countries, with the most recent agreements entering into force in 2019 (Ethiopia and Pakistan).<sup>47</sup>

Norway offers financial support to promote voluntary return, including cash incentives and tailored return assistance programmes for countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Morocco and Somalia.<sup>48</sup> This approach is part of a broader strategy aimed at encouraging individuals to choose voluntary return over forced removal. Special arrangements are in place for unaccompanied minors, whose cases are managed through a coordinated process involving UDI and the Police.

A regulatory amendment on return cases involving minor children entered into force on 20 January 2025. If a foreign national has minor children in Norway and cannot maintain family life in their home country, the regulation now prescribes a longer residence period as a condition for permanent residency—rather than deportation. However, the new rule is limited to deportation cases based solely on violations of the Immigration Act and do not apply if the individual has been convicted of other criminal offenses (See chapter 2.4.6).

The Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has prepared a new *Return strategy for 2025–2030*, prioritising continued bilateral return cooperation with key countries and European cooperation to facilitate returns out of the Schengen area.<sup>49</sup> The government has also proposed to incorporate the Eurodac Regulation into Norwegian law with amendments to the Immigration Act.<sup>50</sup> One of the stated objectives is to collaborate with member states participating in the Dublin System to collect biometric and other relevant data—such as fingerprints and facial images—from asylum seekers, helping to identify the country responsible for processing each asylum application. The government aims to support efforts through Eurodac to manage irregular migration, track secondary movements within the EU, and identify individuals residing unlawfully, including storing personal data in the Common Identity Repository (CIR), and ensuring interoperability with other systems such as the EU’s Visa Information System (VIS) and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) (See also chapter 2.4.4).

<sup>47</sup> Readmission agreements - regjeringen.no

<sup>48</sup> Norway also offers financial assistance for those with a valid residence permit who wish to apply for repatriation. [Returning home: Apply for repatriation - UDI](#)

49 return-strategy-2025-2030.pdf

50 Better Measures to Detect Irregular Migration - regjeringen.no

## 2.4.10 Migration and development

Norway continues its efforts for displaced people, contributing to coordinated and long-term responses to the major refugee and displacement situations around the world. Since 2021, Norway has increased humanitarian aid supporting people affected by crises and displacement. Funding is disbursed across three of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' main budget chapters:

- Chapter 153: Refugees, Displaced Persons and Host Communities
  - *Item 70: Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons*
  - *Item 71: The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*
- Chapter 159: Regional Allocations

Together, these allocations form the foundation of Norway's engagement for refugees and displaced persons globally. In 2025, funds supporting refugees, displaced people and host communities disbursed through chapter 153 decreased compared to funding levels in 2023 and 2024.<sup>51</sup> There is also a small reduction in regional allocations. Emergency aid, funding for multilateral financial institutions and debt reduction, ODA-eligible refugee expenditures, food systems, climate and environment initiatives, and gender equality initiatives have increased since last year.

Norway's development aid priorities in 2024 and 2025 are shaped by ongoing crises, including protracted armed conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan and Syria, evolving international commitments, and significant transformations within the broader aid sector. Most notably the freeze in U.S. aid has triggered a funding crisis affecting humanitarian operations in vulnerable regions.

Among the largest multilateral recipients of Norwegian aid in 2024 was UNHCR (NOK 1,36 billion). In March 2024 the government decided to donate an extra NOK 70 million to the IOM and their work for displaced persons and migrants. The donation was also intended to boost the collaboration between IOM and European partners to alleviate the situation for many migrants in countries in North Africa. The Norwegian Refugee Council was the largest recipient among independent humanitarian organizations (NOK 1,75 billion).<sup>52</sup>

Norwegian financial support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) amounted to NOK 546 million in 2024. In January 2025, the government announced another NOK 275 million to UNRWA contributing to the organisation's efforts for Palestine refugees in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

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<sup>51</sup> The allocations disbursed through Chapter 153: Refugees, Displaced Persons and Host Communities make up most of the so-called Solidarity Fund established following the 2021 Hurdal Platform. The efforts covered by the fund are primarily directed toward low-income countries experiencing crises that have led to displacement, forced migration, and refugee flows.

<sup>52</sup> The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad): [Tall som teller - Statistikk over norsk utviklingsbistand i 2024 | Norad.no](https://www.norad.no/tall-som-teller-statistikk-over-norsk-utviklingsbistand-i-2024)

The two largest country recipients of aid in 2024 were Ukraine (NOK 9,95 billion) and Palestine (NOK 1,3 billion). In 2024, Norwegian direct financial assistance to Ukraine was predominantly channelled through the Nansen Support Programme for Ukraine, which was launched in 2023 and is administrated by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). Through the programme, Norway has committed to a seven-year support package (2023-2030) for Ukraine, totalling NOK 205 billion. In December 2024, both the programme's budget and duration were extended, and in March 2025, the budget was further increased by NOK 50 billion. Norway also provided NOK 552 million in aid to Moldova last year. As in 2023, the support was almost exclusively disbursed through the Nansen Programme. A significant part—NOK 199 million—was emergency assistance aimed at alleviating Moldova's situation as a host country for Ukrainian refugees.

The war in Ukraine led to a significant increase in refugee-related expenses in Norway funded through the aid budget in 2022, and these expenses remained at a high level in 2024. In 2024, ODA-eligible refugee expenditures amounted to NOK 4 billion – equivalent to 7,2 per cent of total Norwegian aid. This is a decrease from NOK 4,5 billion (7,7 per cent) in 2023 and NOK 5 billion (10 per cent) in 2022. In 2025 the budget proposal was set to NOK 4,1 billion.

Norway's aid to Sudan has also increased, from NOK 521 million in 2023 to 562 million in 2024, and over sixty per cent of the support was emergency aid. 2024 was the first year Sudan appeared on Norway's top ten list of recipient countries since South Sudan became an independent state in 2011. In addition, Norway provided emergency aid to neighbouring countries Egypt and Chad to help alleviate the situation for Sudanese refugees.

A new strategy for Norway's humanitarian efforts in the Sahel region (2024-2030) is set to alleviate humanitarian challenges, enhance food security, increase stabilisation, improve local capacity to combat violent extremism, and in the long-term facilitate sustainable development, rule of law, democratic development, human rights and gender equality. The strategy also highlights these efforts as important in countering irregular migration.<sup>53</sup>

The government has proposed to increase support to Syria by NOK 57,9 million (20 million to the UN and 37,9 million for reconstruction of electricity supply and health services). With the increase, Norwegian support in 2025 will amount to nearly NOK 400 million.

In response to the ongoing funding crisis triggered by the freeze in U.S. aid, Norway is providing a targeted contribution of at least NOK 300 million to support individuals affected by conflict and displacement. Of this amount, a minimum of NOK 220 million will be made available to Norwegian strategic partner organizations whose activities have been directly impacted by the U.S. aid freeze. These funds will be directed, among other things, toward protection efforts for displaced populations.

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<sup>53</sup> [Strategy for Norway's efforts in the Sahel region \(2024–2030\)](#)

# 3 Developments in integration policy

The main goal of the Norwegian integration policy is to provide refugees and other immigrants with incentives and opportunities to participate in the Norwegian labour market and society. This goal is considered important both for the immigrants themselves and to maintain a robust and sustainable welfare system.

The current political goals, as expressed in the government's political platform<sup>54</sup>, are higher employment among immigrants, to build strong local communities and well-functioning community arenas, to promote equality and to combat negative social control.

## 3.1 Actors

*The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion* is responsible for integration policies. The Ministry is responsible for policies and measures that aim to increase labour participation and participation in society in general. The Ministry is also responsible for coordinating integration policy across sectors. The Department of Integration<sup>55</sup> has a special responsibility for the settlement of refugees, grants to municipalities for integration work and the Integration Act, the Nationality Act and the Interpretation Act.

*The Directorate of Integration and Diversity* (Imdi<sup>56</sup>) implements the government's integration policies. The directorate is tasked with strengthening the competence of municipalities, sector authorities and other collaborative partners in the field of integration and diversity.

*The Directorate for Education and Training* (Udir)<sup>57</sup> is the executive agency for the Ministry of Education and Research, and is responsible for kindergartens, as well as primary and secondary education.

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<sup>54</sup> Hurdalsplattformen [2021](#) (in Norwegian only)

<sup>55</sup> [The Department of Integration](#)

<sup>56</sup> [Imdi.no](#)

<sup>57</sup> [Udir.no](#)

*The municipalities* are largely responsible for implementing the integration policies locally (including offering integration programmes), along with non-governmental organisations and in cooperation with the regional counties.

After 2021, *county municipalities* gained formal integration responsibilities, including recommending refugee settlement numbers for municipalities, offering career guidance to introduction programme participants, and providing Norwegian and social studies training for those in full-time upper secondary education.

## 3.2 Important principles

The Norwegian integration policies build on some core legislation and measures:

- *The Integration Act*: This act regulates the introduction programme, Norwegian language training and social studies for newly arrived immigrants. It also contains provisions concerning the responsibilities of the municipalities and counties.
- *The Norwegian Nationality Act*: This act regulates how persons can become Norwegian nationals and how they may lose their Norwegian nationality.
- *The Interpretation Act*: This act covers interpretation services in the public sector, which implies a duty for public agencies to use qualified interpreters when this is necessary to ensure the rule of law or to provide proper assistance and services. There is an exemption from the act regarding qualified interpreters until 31 December 2026.
- *The Education Act*: This act applies to primary and secondary education, as well as activities related to education, and it aims to ensure that children, youth and adults receive good education in a positive environment

## 3.3 Integration policies and changes

### 3.3.1 Measures while staying in an asylum reception centre<sup>58</sup>

Children staying in an asylum reception centre are not legally entitled to kindergarten placement. However, municipalities are strongly encouraged to make kindergarten places available for them. Since 2021, UDI has offered a grant scheme that reimburses municipalities for their expenses if they provide free kindergarten places to children living in reception centres, including those in emergency accommodations. The government has proposed to continue offering free kindergarten

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<sup>58</sup> For other arrangements, namely alternative reception placement (AMOT) and private accommodation, see last year's report: [NIBR-rapport](#).

places for all children residing in asylum reception centres, starting from the age of one until they begin school. All municipalities that provide such placements will still receive funds to cover the associated costs of kindergarten provision.

Those who are below school age, and who are likely to remain in Norway for more than three months, also have the right to special educational support if needed (section 31 of the Kindergarten Act). Special educational support can be provided in a kindergarten setting, and the right applies regardless of whether the child attends kindergarten or not.

Children (aged 6-15) of asylum seekers who are awaiting a decision on their application have the right to attend school if it is likely that they will be granted a residence permit, or if processing the application will take more than three months.

Those between 16 and 18 have the right to preparatory education (aimed at those who have not completed Norwegian primary school or an equivalent abroad) in the host municipality, or upper secondary education in the county where the host municipality of the reception centre is located. Those who receive a rejection of their residence permit application are only entitled to upper secondary education until the date of the final decision on their application.

The Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir) runs a grant scheme for education for children and young people applying for residence in Norway. The grant is intended to provide financial support and encourage municipalities to offer primary education to the target group. Host municipalities do not need to apply to receive funding for education for children between the ages of 6 and 15.

UDI administers a grant scheme for activity programs for children residing in reception centres. The purpose of the grant is to ensure that children have a meaningful daily life through activities tailored to their age, developmental needs, and interests. Funding may be awarded to individuals, voluntary organizations, and other non-profit entities that organize activities for children.

Asylum seekers over the age of 18 who live in an asylum reception centre have a statutory right and obligation to take part in Norwegian language instruction. The language programme consists of 175 hours of training and is to begin shortly after the individual arrives in Norway.

A new programme for social studies instruction was also introduced in 2022. It consists of three modules. Residents are to complete twenty-five hours at the reception centre, while those who are granted protection are to take the remaining 50 hours after they are settled in a municipality.

For individuals who have been granted a residence permit under Section 9 of the Integration Act, the host municipality has a mandate to gather information on their educational background, work experience, professional qualifications, language skills, and other relevant skills. The aim is to ensure that settlement and integration measures, including the Introduction Program, are tailored to each person's needs and potential.

Host municipalities may also offer courses from the introduction program and other integration-promoting measures to individuals in reception centers who have been granted a residence permit as specified in section 9 of the Integration Act. The aim is to facilitate a smoother transition to the introduction program in the settlement municipality. However, host municipalities are not obliged to provide this.

Asylum seekers may be granted a temporary work permit while their application is being processed if they have attended the asylum interview (with certain exceptions), hold a valid passport, and have not yet received a decision from UDI or have been granted a suspension of enforcement while their case is under review by UNE. They cannot obtain a temporary work permit if they lack a valid passport, have not attended the interview, are subject to transfer under the Dublin Regulation, have received a rejection of their asylum application, or have been issued or warned of a deportation order.

Lastly, asylum seekers are entitled to the same healthcare as everyone who lives in Norway, for example doctor's appointments, hospital treatment and some types of medicine. The right to healthcare applies from the day one arrives in Norway asking for protection. One may also apply to have medical expenses or medical treatment covered by UDI if they are essential to one's life and health.

There have been no significant changes in 2024 or 2025 to any of the measures described above.

### **3.3.2 Language training and other courses**

The target group for Norwegian language training and social studies is newly arrived adult immigrants between the ages of 18 and 67 holding a residence permit that constitutes the basis for permanent residence. This also applies to foreign family members of immigrants in Norway and to family members of Norwegian and Nordic nationals.

Those residing in Norway based on the EEA/EFTA agreements are not covered by the Integration Act, and they are not entitled to free tuition in Norwegian language and social studies, nor are they obliged to participate in such training.

All participants in Norwegian language training must achieve a minimum level of proficiency in Norwegian, which also constitutes their language goal. Those who have both the right and the obligation to attend training retain this right until they reach their language goal or until they have used the maximum time allocated. A maximum time limit has been set for how long the training may last. The time limit depends on the participant's educational background:

- Participants with upper secondary education or higher have the right and obligation to attend training for up to 18 months.
- Participants without upper secondary education or higher have the right and obligation to attend Norwegian language training for up to three years.

For participants who only have an obligation to attend Norwegian language training, the obligation applies until the language goal is achieved, with a maximum training time of 225 hours. Training in social studies consists of 75 hours for all participants and must be completed within one year from the offer to start.

The goal of the scheme for Norwegian language training and social studies is that an adult immigrant, after their first years in Norway, should sufficiently master Norwegian to be able to find employment and participate in greater society. As soon as possible after settling in a municipality, eligible immigrants are expected to enrol in language training.

Beginning 1 September 2025, completing courses in Norwegian and social studies will no longer be a requirement for obtaining a permanent residence permit. Instead, applicants must pass an oral Norwegian language test at level A2 or higher and a social studies test in a language they understand.<sup>59</sup> This means that the Norwegian language requirement is being raised one level, from A1 to A2. The requirements apply to individuals between the ages of 18 and 67 and applications for permanent residency received after 1 September.

### **3.3.3 Introduction programme**

The aim of the introduction programme is to provide each participant with fundamental skills in the Norwegian language and to prepare them for employment or further education as well as participation in Norwegian society. The target group for the introduction programme is refugees and their family members, in addition to persons granted residence on humanitarian grounds and their families. The rights and obligations of individuals under the Integration Act only apply to those between the ages of 18 and 55 who are settled by an agreement between Imdi and the municipality. In June 2025, the Parliament passed a legislative amendment to the Integration Act to expand the target group for the introduction programme from the age of 55 to 60.<sup>60</sup> It has not been determined when the amendment will come into force.

The Integration Act differentiates the scope and contents of the introduction programme so that the participants are offered a programme that is adapted to their background and individual programme goals. The participants must undergo competence mapping and career guidance before starting the programme (offered by the county). The introduction programme may last from three months to four years, and the duration of the programme will vary depending on the participants' educational background, competence and their individual programme goals.

Participants who have already completed upper secondary education will undergo a shorter programme period, lasting between three and six months, which may be extended up to a year. The goal for this group is to qualify for higher education or the labour market. As of 1 January 2026, the maximum duration of the introduction programme for this group is changed to a program of up to

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<sup>59</sup> [Changes to the requirements for Norwegian language skills and social studies to obtain a permanent residence permit - UDI](#)

<sup>60</sup> [Lovvedtak 115 \(2024-2025\) - stortinget.no](#)

twelve months, without the possibility of extension. There will no longer be a minimum duration requirement.

The primary programme goal for young people under the age of 25, who have not completed upper secondary education, is completion of upper secondary education. For this group, the programme can be extended up to four years. In addition to language and social studies, the introduction programme consists of work or education-oriented measures.

From 1 January 2026, the maximum duration of the introduction programme for participants without education at upper secondary level or higher is changed. The maximum duration of the program for this group is extended by one year for participants whose primary programme goal is to complete all or part of their upper secondary education within the program period. For those with a primary goal of completing all or part of their upper secondary education, this means that the program can last up to four years with the possibility of an extension of up to one year. For those whose primary goal is to complete part of their upper secondary education, this means that the program can last up to three years with the possibility of an extension of up to one year. Introduction programs for participants who are to qualify for work shall only last up to two years, without the possibility of an extension of a third year.

In addition to language training, social studies and work or education-oriented measures, every participant must participate in an empowerment course<sup>61</sup>, and parents with children under the age of 18 must participate in a parental guidance course.

As of 1 January 2026, immigrants in the target group for the introduction programme who are employed or have an offer of employment of 30 hours a week or more will no longer be eligible and obliged to start an introduction program. Persons in this group will still be eligible and obliged to an introduction program if the employment relationship ends or the offer of employment expires within two years of the person concerned having settled in a municipality. The eligibility and obligation to training in Norwegian and social studies remains for this group and must be completed alongside work.

### **3.3.3.1 Introduction programme for displaced persons from Ukraine**

In June 2022, the Parliament passed the Act on temporary changes in legislation due to the arrival of displaced persons from Ukraine.<sup>62</sup> The act is valid until 1 July 2026, and encompasses temporary changes in many different acts, including the Integration Act.

In principle, all protection beneficiaries in Norway have the right and duty to participate in an introduction programme. To make it easier for the municipalities to quickly settle displaced persons from Ukraine granted temporary protection, several temporary changes were implemented in

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<sup>61</sup> The empowerment course *Mastery of life in a new country* consists of minimum 10 hours on the topic area Migration, Health, and Diversity and minimum 15 hours on the topic area Career Competence, including knowledge about work and education. The purpose of the course is to strengthen participants' motivation and coping skills.

<sup>62</sup> [Prop. 107 L \(2021-2022\) - regjeringen.no](https://www.regjeringen.no)

different acts. Statutory requirements were reduced, such as those in the Integration Act that regulate the duration and obligation to participate in the introduction programme and Norwegian language training.<sup>63</sup> Important adjustments include:

- A right, but not an obligation, to participate in an introduction programme for six months, with a possible extension of up to six months.
- For those who do not have an education at upper secondary level, the programme can last for up to three years, with a possible extension of up to one year.
- The programme shall consist of work or education-oriented elements, an offer of Norwegian language training and parental guidance (for parents with children under 18). The other obligatory elements (civics course, empowerment course, career guidance and competence mapping) were not made obligatory initially.
- A right to Norwegian language training after settlement applies for one year from the start-up of the training, with a possible six-month extension of language training, for participants with secondary education or higher. Those without education can receive further extension.
- No right or obligation to receive education in social studies.

During the initial phase, Ukrainians were allowed to choose to participate in the introduction programme part-time. In June 2024, this option was removed, and Ukrainians (along with other refugees) were only allowed to participate part-time in the event of capacity challenges in the municipality.

From July 2024, some temporary changes were made to the introduction programme for displaced persons from Ukraine. After the first three months in the introduction programme, work-related elements for participants with an end goal of labour market participation were on average to constitute at least 15 hours a week of programme time.<sup>64</sup> The minimum requirement for work-related elements is fulfilled by practical training at a workplace, part-time work, short professional or industry courses, labour market measures under the direction of Nav or other similar measures. The municipality can also deny participation in the introduction programme for people who have a job or a job offer on an almost full-time basis.

In June 2025, Parliament adopted a series of amendments to the integration regulations.<sup>65</sup> Among these changes is the repeal of the temporary provisions governing the introduction programme for individuals with temporary collective protection. This means that this group will have both the right and the obligation to participate in the introduction programme, and municipalities will no longer have the option to offer the programme on a part-time basis. This will come into force 1 January 2026.

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<sup>63</sup><https://lovdata.no/dokument/LTI/lov/2022-06-10-35>, Cf. Chapter 9.1.

<sup>64</sup> Regulation: [Forskrift til integreringsloven \(integreringsforskriften\) - Lovdata](#)

<sup>65</sup> [Prop. 81 L \(2024–2025\) - regjeringen.no](#)

### **3.3.4 Introduction benefits**

Participants in the programme are entitled to an introduction benefit. The benefit is twice the basic amount (G) in the National Insurance Scheme (Folketrygden). In 2025, 2 G is NOK 260,320 per year. The benefit is taxable. All participants in the introduction programme receive the same benefit, with a few exceptions. Participants under the age of 25 who are living with one or both parents receive one-third of the benefit. Participants under the age of 25 who are not living with their parents receive two-thirds of the benefit. From July 2024, the government reduced the introduction benefit for some specific groups. Spouses or cohabitants who both participate in the introduction programme and do not have children receive 5/6 of the amount each.

Further, in June 2024, the government implemented a requirement of 12 months' prior membership of the National Insurance Scheme (Folketrygden) to be entitled to a one-off benefit in connection with birth and adoption.<sup>66</sup> Ukrainians with temporary protection were also no longer eligible for a back payment for child benefits for the first 12 months in Norway.<sup>67</sup>

### **3.3.5 Assessment and recognition of schooling and qualifications**

The Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-Dir) is a national agency under the Ministry of Education and Research. It is responsible for the recognition of foreign education and training, as well as for providing information and guidance on the recognition of foreign educational, training, and vocational qualifications.

For most professions and occupations there is no specific official recognition required before a person can take up work in Norway. However, for around 170 professions, the qualifications required are regulated by law and regulations. This means that individuals who want to be able to practise these professions in Norway must require an authorisation/recognition from the competent authority in charge of the profession. Most of the regulated professions in Norway are regulated by the EU Professional Directive. HK-Dir is the assistance centre for the EU Professional Qualifications Directive in Norway and provides information to professionals about the directive, Norwegian legislation and regulated professions.

HK-dir also manages the scheme for general recognition and verification of foreign higher education. The scheme is primarily aimed at occupations for which there are no legal qualification requirements.<sup>68</sup> Decisions on general recognition help employers understand and trust the value of foreign higher education qualifications.

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<sup>66</sup> Prop. No 101 to the Storting (Bill) (2023-2024). <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/prop.-101-i-20232024/id3037628/?ch=1>

<sup>67</sup> Press release: <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/changes-to-the-regulations-for-displaced-ukrainians/id3017444/>

<sup>68</sup> See <https://hkdir.no/en/foreign-education/education-from-outside-of-norway> for more information.

In June 2025, HK-dir expanded its service for employers who want a quick assessment of higher vocational education or higher education from abroad. The service provides a brief assessment of the scope and level of the foreign education and whether it can normally be considered equivalent to Norwegian tertiary vocational training or higher education. New rules for academic recognition of foreign higher education at universities and colleges were adopted, effective August 1, 2025. The government will continue to develop recognition schemes for foreign education to make it easier to utilize competence from abroad in the Norwegian labour market.

Automatic recognition is an alternative to the ordinary recognition of foreign higher education. Automatic recognition is not a formal recognition, but downloadable statements by country on how specific degrees are normally assessed.<sup>69</sup> Experience shows that in many cases, such a document is sufficient for a job application. There has been a clear reduction in the number of applications for general recognition for the countries where automatic recognition has been available for some time.

HK-Dir is also responsible for an interview-based recognition procedure for applicants without verifiable documentation (UVD), meaning those unable to obtain recognition through the standard process due to missing, incomplete, or unverifiable documents. The procedure is aimed specifically at refugees and people in a refugee-like situation and helps Norway fulfil its obligations towards Article VII of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Foreign students can also apply to higher education institutions with similar study programmes for academic recognition of their qualifications. Such recognition concerns parts of, and full, study programmes and degrees. Academic recognition is most relevant for immigrants interested in further studies in Norway.

Applicants with completed foreign vocational education and training from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland or Sweden can apply to HK-Dir's recognition scheme for upper secondary vocational education and training currently. As of November 2025, the scheme can assess vocational education and training in comparison with 25 Norwegian craft and journeyman's certificates. The scheme is gradually being expanded to new qualifications and countries.

As of 1 February 2023, the Norwegian Public Roads Administration implemented a policy extending the recognition of Ukrainian driving licenses in Norway from 12 months to the duration of collective protection for Ukrainian refugees, up to three years. The policy now also recognises all driving license categories, not just for passenger cars.<sup>70</sup>

Effective January 1, 2026, an appeals board will handle complaints regarding decisions on recognition of foreign education and complaints in cases concerning approval as a teacher in

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<sup>69</sup> [Automatic recognition – a quicker alternative | HK-dir](#)

<sup>70</sup> [Ukrainian refugees are having their right to drive in Norway expanded - regjeringen.no](#)

schools and as a manager or pedagogical leader in kindergartens for individuals with foreign qualifications.

### **3.3.6 Early childhood education and care**

The Kindergarten Act<sup>71</sup> is the key piece of legislation that regulates the activities and education provided in kindergartens. All children who reach the age of one by the end of November have the right to attend kindergarten if they have a permanent residence permit and a registered permanent address in a municipality.

There is a broad political consensus in Parliament to grant children born in December the same right to attend kindergarten the month they turn one year old. The Standing Committee on Education and Research has formally requested the government to initiate the necessary legislative amendments.<sup>72</sup> While the proposal has not yet been formally adopted into law, the Minister of Education has confirmed that the government will follow up on the parliamentary decision.

As of August 2025, the maximum monthly fee for attending kindergarten has been reduced to NOK 1,500. For residents of the least central municipalities, the maximum fee is NOK 700 per month, and in certain municipalities in Northern Norway, kindergarten is offered free of charge for all children. Discounts are available for siblings, including free kindergarten for the third child and any subsequent siblings enrolled simultaneously. The fee structure is uniform regardless of household income. However, national subsidy schemes are in place to support low-income families:

- A national subsidy scheme ensuring that low-income families pay no more than 6 per cent of their income for a full-time kindergarten place.
- A national subsidy scheme granting children aged 2–5 from low-income families the right to 20 hours of free core time per week in kindergarten.

Children from asylum-seeking families are not entitled to attend kindergarten until their application has been approved and the family has obtained a permanent address in a municipality. However, children residing in an asylum centre may attend kindergarten if places are available in the municipality where the centre is located. A government grant provides funding for full-time kindergarten places for all children aged one to five living in asylum centres, regardless of the status of their asylum application.

Municipalities receive grants based on the number of minority-language children in ordinary kindergartens. Minority-language children are defined as those with a mother tongue other than Norwegian, Sami, Swedish, Danish, or English, and whose parents also have a different mother tongue. The grant aims to strengthen language development by supporting measures that

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<sup>71</sup> The Kindergarten Act

<sup>72</sup> Request from the Standing Committee on Education and Research – regjeringen.no

promote Norwegian skills while maintaining the child's mother tongue.<sup>73</sup> Municipalities automatically qualify for funding if:

- At least 10 per cent of children in kindergarten are minority-language speakers, and
- At least 50 minority-language children are enrolled.

In certain cities and areas with concentrated socio-economic challenges, the Norwegian state and municipalities engage in long-term, agreement-based cooperation through area-based initiatives. Municipalities participating in these initiatives may apply for grants to increase staffing in both municipal and private kindergartens. The purpose of the scheme is to enable kindergartens receiving funding to increase the number of qualified kindergarten teachers and/or overall staffing levels. Municipalities must prioritize kindergartens with a high proportion of minority-language children when they distribute the funds.<sup>74</sup>

### **3.3.7 Primary and secondary education**

A central aim in Norwegian education policy is to reduce social disparities and provide equitable opportunities for all children. To ensure this the education system must provide learning opportunities tailored to the needs of specific groups, such as language minority students and children requiring special educational support.

The principal legislative framework governing this area comprises the Education Act, the Act Relating to Universities and University Colleges, and the Integration Act. These statutes are supplemented by detailed regulations that address a wide range of issues, many of which are particularly significant for language minority students and the educational integration of migrants.

According to the Education Act section 2-1, children and young persons have the right to attend primary and lower secondary education and in accordance to have the right to a public primary and lower secondary education. This right applies if the child is expected to stay in Norway for more than three consecutive months. The municipality must fulfil this right as soon as possible and no later than three months after the child has arrived in Norway.

In accordance with section 2-2 of the same Act, children are obliged to attend primary and lower secondary education from the year they turn six until they have completed the 10th grade. The obligation applies when it is probable that the child will reside in Norway for a period of more than three months. These rules apply to every child, including children of asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors seeking asylum and irregular immigrants.

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has resulted in a substantial influx of children and young people seeking refuge. To enable municipalities to respond effectively to the current refugee situation, the

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<sup>73</sup> [Udir.no - Tiltak for å styrke språkutviklingen blant minoritetsspråklige barn i barnehage](#)

<sup>74</sup> [Udir.no – Tilskudd til økt pedagogitetthet og grunnbemannning i barnehager](#)

government proposed temporary legislative amendments, which were subsequently approved by the Parliament.<sup>75</sup> The most significant temporary amendment to the Education Act stipulates that all children must be granted access to schooling as soon as possible and no later than three months after arrival, compared to the standard one-month requirement. The temporary legislation means that the municipalities have more time to prepare and provide full-time education according to the Education Act. However, they have to offer the best possible education as soon as possible.

Youth who have completed lower secondary school in Norway or a comparable education in another country, have the right to upper secondary education. The application deadline for admission to upper secondary school is 1 February or 1 March each year, but the county municipality must also consider applications they receive after the deadline. Some counties also provide activities for youth prior to attending upper secondary school.

Pupils whose mother tongue is not Norwegian or Sami have the right to special language instruction until they know Norwegian well enough to follow ordinary teaching. This includes intensified Norwegian instruction and, if necessary, mother tongue instruction, bilingual subject teaching, or both. This right is defined by the Education Act, section 3-6 for students in primary education and section 6-5 for students in upper secondary education.

Local authorities may provide all or part of the education for pupils who have recently arrived in Norway and have been granted adapted language education, in specially organized groups, classes, or schools at all levels. If a pupil is placed in such a setting, this must be stated in the decision on adapted language education and must be based on the pupil's best interests. Introductory education can last for up to two years, with decisions renewed annually. During this time, teaching may differ from the standard curriculum to meet individual needs.

Normally, such arrangements require consent from the pupil or their parents/guardians. However, in accordance with temporary legislation provisions, consent requirement does not apply when a specially organized offer is necessary to ensure an adequate education for newly arrived pupils in situations where a large number of displaced persons from Ukraine arrive.

The government introduced free part-time participation in after-school programmes for all first-grade pupils in 2022. The scheme was extended to also include second- and third-year students from 2023 and 2024.

### **3.3.8 Grant schemes**

Imdi<sup>76</sup> manages various grant schemes aimed at municipalities and counties, voluntary organizations and employers. The main goal of the grant schemes directed towards organizations is to support initiatives that creates opportunities for immigrants and people with migrant backgrounds to participate in Norwegian labour market and society. In 2025 Imdi introduced a new

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<sup>75</sup> <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/prop.-107-l-20212022/id2910763/>

<sup>76</sup> [Imdi – Grant schemes](#)

grant scheme dedicated to creating social meeting places for young men that lives in areas with major challenges in living conditions, as a measure to prevent crime.

The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir)<sup>77</sup> manages multiple grant scheme on behalf of the Ministry of Culture and Equality. One of these schemes is aimed at initiatives against racism, discrimination and hate speech based on ethnicity, religion or belief. The scheme is targeted to help support local, regional and national initiatives that promotes anti-racism, diversity and dialogue, and seeks to increase knowledge and awareness among the general population about these issues.

### **3.3.9 Anti-discrimination policies and diversity programmes**

#### **Legislation**

Over the past 25 years, Norway has strengthened its legal framework to promote equality and prohibit discrimination on multiple grounds. The central piece of legislation is *the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act (2018)*<sup>78</sup>, which replaced several earlier laws addressing different forms of discrimination. Its purpose is to ensure equal rights and prevent discrimination based on ethnicity—including national origin, descent, skin colour, and language, as well as religion, belief, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, and other factors.

In addition, hate speech and racist acts are addressed under the Norwegian Penal Code (Sections 185–186), which contains provisions against discriminatory acts and hate crimes.

*The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act* states that all employers have a duty to make active efforts to promote equality and to prevent discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, religion and belief. This includes a duty to seek to prevent harassment, sexual harassment and gender-based violence. The equality efforts shall encompass the areas of recruitment, pay and working conditions, promotion, development opportunities, accommodation and the opportunity to combine work with family life.

#### **Actors and action plans**

Since 2013 Bufdir<sup>79</sup> has been tasked with promoting equality and combating discrimination across various discrimination grounds, such as ethnicity, religion and belief. Bufdir coordinates the Forum on Ethnic Discrimination, which brings together government actors to prevent ethnic discrimination in public services. It also organizes dialogue meetings with immigrant organizations and national minorities. In addition, the directorate implements government measures against

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<sup>77</sup> [Bufdir - Grants for Initiatives Against Racism, Discrimination and Hate Speech](#)

<sup>78</sup> [Act relating to equality and a prohibition against discrimination \(Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act\) - Lovdata](#)

<sup>79</sup> [Bufdir.no](#)

racism and provides an online resource offering data on living conditions and equality for ethnic and religious minorities.

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud<sup>80</sup> (LDO) works proactively to promote equality and provides advisory services to individuals, employers, and public authorities. LDO monitors compliance with Norwegian law and ensures that administrative practices align with international conventions such as CERD, CEDAW, and CRPD. It is also responsible for supervising public authorities and employers in their equality efforts, including fulfilling the activity duty and the obligation to issue statements under the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act. To ensure proper implementation, LDO can conduct follow-up visits.

The Anti-Discrimination Tribunal<sup>81</sup> is an independent public administrative body that, with a few exceptions, makes decisions in specific complaints regarding violations of the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act. Together with the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, it plays a central role in enforcing anti-discrimination legislation.

The Tribunal offers an alternative to the ordinary courts, designed to be simpler, faster, and less costly. However, in some areas, its authority is more limited than that of the courts. It can rule on most provisions of the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, as well as discrimination-related provisions in other laws, such as the Working Environment Act, the Tenancy Act, and others.

Imdi<sup>82</sup> plays a key role in promoting diversity and integration in Norway. It is mandated to implement government policies on integration, with particular emphasis on strengthening the inclusion of immigrants and ethnic minorities within society. This mandate encompasses the development and support of initiatives that promote diversity and actively prevent discrimination.

In recent years, the Norwegian government has introduced multiple action plans aimed at combating racism and discrimination:

*The Action Plan to Combat Racism and Discrimination Against Muslims – 2025-2030* continues and strengthens the efforts stipulated in the prior action plan against racism and discrimination.<sup>83</sup> The action plan entails 30 measures to strengthen and renew the efforts to combat racism, harassment and discrimination towards Muslims. The plan includes 30 measures related to four key areas: Dialogue and Well-functioning Democracy, Safety and Security, Knowledge and Competence, and Efforts outside Norway. The plan includes efforts to reinforce ongoing initiatives, while also addressing the need to collect and disseminate knowledge about the living conditions and quality of life of Muslims in Norway, as well as the discrimination and racism to which they are subjected.

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<sup>80</sup> [The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud – LDO](#)

<sup>81</sup> [Anti-Discrimination Tribunal](#)

<sup>82</sup> [The Directorate of Integration and Diversity \(Imdi\)](#)

<sup>83</sup> [The Action Plan to Combat Racism and Discrimination Against Muslims – 2025-2030](#)

*The Action Plan Against Antisemitism 2025-2030* is the third of its kind.<sup>84</sup> The action plan outlines the government's strategy to prevent and counteract racism, discrimination, hate speech and antisemitism. The plan includes 22 measures aimed to continue the efforts to combat antisemitism and ensure the safety of Jews in Norway and cultivate dialogue and bring awareness to the Jewish history and cultural heritage in Norway.

In 2025, the government presented the first national *Action Plan to Combat Harassment and Discrimination of the Sami 2025- 2030*.<sup>85</sup> The action plan is comprised of 32 measures distributed across the same key areas as the national action plans. The measures aim to enhance intercultural dialogue, foster mutual understanding, and proactively prevent hate speech and discrimination directed at the Sami population.

The three action plans against racism and discrimination must be seen in conjunction with the overarching action plan against racism and discrimination.

*The Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination – New Efforts 2024–2027* continues the work of the previous Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnicity and Religion for 2020–2023. The plan outlines the government's strategy for combating racism and its impacts. The aim is to help build a society with stronger communities and equal opportunities for all inhabitants. The action plan builds on existing laws and international conventions, incorporating results from recent studies and feedback from various stakeholders, including public institutions and civil society organisations. The focus of the plan is racism and discrimination in the labour market and in other areas that particularly affect young people. The action plan also has a focus on initiatives in municipalities and local communities.

The action plan focuses on five key areas: 1) workplaces, 2) youth, 3) local initiatives, 4) increased knowledge, 5) enhanced efforts. It contains a total of 50 different measures to be implemented by several of the ministries.<sup>86</sup>

### **3.3.10 Measures countering negative social control**

There are three central government specialised services committed to the prevention of negative social control. The specialised services aim to identify and follow up individuals who may be subjected to negative social control and honour-motivated violence. The specialised services consist of the expert team against social control and honour-based violence, special representatives on integration issues at the Norwegian foreign service missions and the diversity advisors.

The expert team is a national inter-agency team assists the service system nationwide in cases involving negative social control and honour-motivated violence, including forced marriage,

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<sup>84</sup> [The Action Plan Against Antisemitism 2025-2023](#)

<sup>85</sup> [Action Plan to Combat Harassment and Discrimination of the Sami 2025- 2030](#)

<sup>86</sup> [The Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination - New Efforts 2024-2027](#)

involuntary stays abroad and female genital mutilation. The team provides competence enhancement and guidance to the ordinary service system and voluntary organisations that interact with victims in their work. They also provide guidance to victims on how to receive assistance.

The special representatives, located at the Norwegian foreign missions in Ankara, Amman, Islamabad and Nairobi, provide consular assistance to individuals experiencing negative social control, honour-motivated violence, involuntary stays abroad, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation. They also contribute to enhancing competence within the foreign service and the service system in Norway to prevent individuals from being sent abroad against their will.

The final part of the specialised services is the diversity advisors deployed at selected lower and upper secondary schools in all the country's counties, in addition to selected adult education centres. They provide advice and guidance to pupils and carry out preventive measures to make pupils aware of their rights and choices. Another important task of theirs is to enhance the competence of employees in the various support services.

The government has also established specialised schemes for individuals who are at risk of or have been subjected to forced marriage, honour-motivated violence and/or negative social control, in addition to the specialised services. The specialised schemes include the national housing and support service for individuals at risk and in need of accommodation, a scheme for covering expenses to return to Norway, a mentoring scheme for victims and regional networks for competence enhancement.

With the new action plan, *In Charge of Your Own Life – Strengthened Efforts against Negative Social Control and Honour-Motivated Violence 2025-2028*<sup>87</sup>, the government has made targeted efforts to combat negative social control. The action plan encompasses four key areas: legal safeguards, prevention, competence enhancement in the service system and involuntary stays abroad.

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<sup>87</sup> [In Charge of Your Own Life – Strengthened Efforts against Negative Social Control and Honour-Motivated Violence 2025-2028](#)

# 4 Main changes in integration outcomes of immigrants and their children

## 4.1 Schooling

An increasing number of children and young people with immigrant backgrounds are enrolling in, and completing, education. Compared to 2015, a larger proportion now attend kindergarten, complete upper secondary education, and pursue higher education. Nevertheless, disparities in educational outcomes persist between individuals with immigrant backgrounds and the majority population. On average, both immigrants and individuals born in Norway to immigrant parents achieve lower grades in primary and lower secondary education than their peers in the general population.

The proportion of minority language children<sup>88</sup> aged 1–5 years attending kindergarten has increased from 78 per cent to 90 per cent in the period from 2015–2024. This share is still somewhat lower compared to other children in this age group, but the differences have become significantly smaller over the past ten years.

There are systematic differences in average primary and lower secondary school points<sup>89</sup> for children with different immigrant backgrounds. On average, immigrants have lower grades on completion of compulsory primary and lower secondary schooling than the rest of the population. In 2024, the difference was almost 5 points, i.e. a difference of close to half a grade.<sup>90</sup> Substantial variation in academic achievement is observed within the immigrant population. On average, boys

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<sup>88</sup> Children who speak a minority language are defined as children who have a first language other than Norwegian, Sami, Swedish, Danish or English. There are no available statistics about kindergarten attendance that make it possible to distinguish between immigrant children, children born in Norway to immigrant parents and children without immigrant backgrounds.

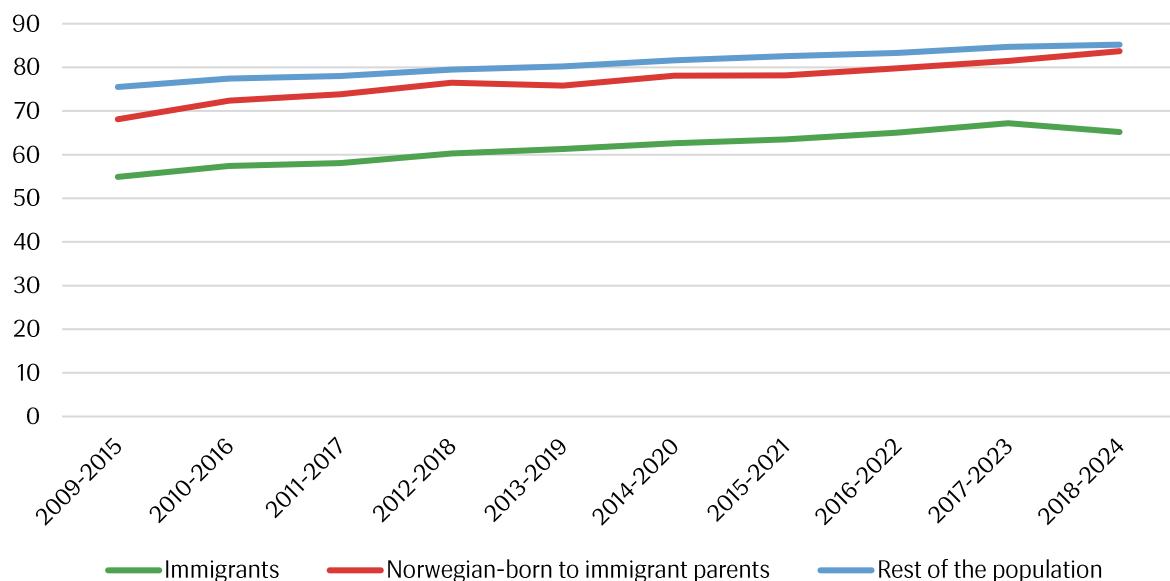
<sup>89</sup> What is the difference between primary and lower secondary school points and grades? Grades are assessments of student performance in some subjects on a scale of 1 to 6. Primary and lower secondary school points are calculated by adding together all the final grades on the diploma (final assessment and exam grades) and dividing this by the number of grades. The average is then multiplied by 10. Primary and lower secondary school points provide an overall picture of how a student is performing at school and form the basis for admission to upper secondary school.

<sup>90</sup> It should be noted that assessing the academic performance of immigrant students presents considerable challenges. Many cannot be evaluated according to standard curricula, as they require additional time to acquire a new language. In 2024, 22 per cent of immigrant students did not have their lower secondary school points calculated. This issue is particularly pronounced among students with 0–2 years of residence, of whom 62 per cent lacked calculated points. By comparison, the corresponding shares were 17 per cent for students with 3–4 years of residence and 14 per cent for those with 5–6 years of residence.

who have immigrated from countries in Africa, Latin America, Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), and non-EU/EEA European countries exhibit the lowest grade levels. Comparable disparities emerge in national test results in English, reading, and numeracy. Children who have immigrated from these regions consistently score lower across all three domains compared to students from the majority population. Longitudinal data further indicate a decline in reading proficiency among fifth-grade students between 2022 and 2024, a trend that is particularly pronounced among immigrant students.

The proportion of immigrants, individuals born in Norway to immigrant parents, and the majority population completing upper secondary education within five or six years of enrolment has increased during the period 2015–2024. Throughout this period, completion rates among immigrants have consistently remained lower than those of individuals born in Norway to immigrant parents and the majority population. In 2024, the completion rate among immigrants was 65 per cent, compared to 84 per cent and 85 per cent for the latter two groups, respectively.

*Figure 4.1. Share of pupils who have completed upper secondary education or training within five/six years. 2009-2024. Per cent.<sup>91</sup>*



Completion rates for upper secondary education are generally lower among boys than among girls across all groups—immigrants, individuals born in Norway to immigrant parents, and the majority population. The lowest rates are observed among immigrant boys. In 2024, 58 per cent of immigrant boys completed upper secondary education within five or six years, compared to 49 per cent in 2015. For boys in the majority population, the corresponding figures were 83 per cent in 2024 and 72 per cent in 2015.

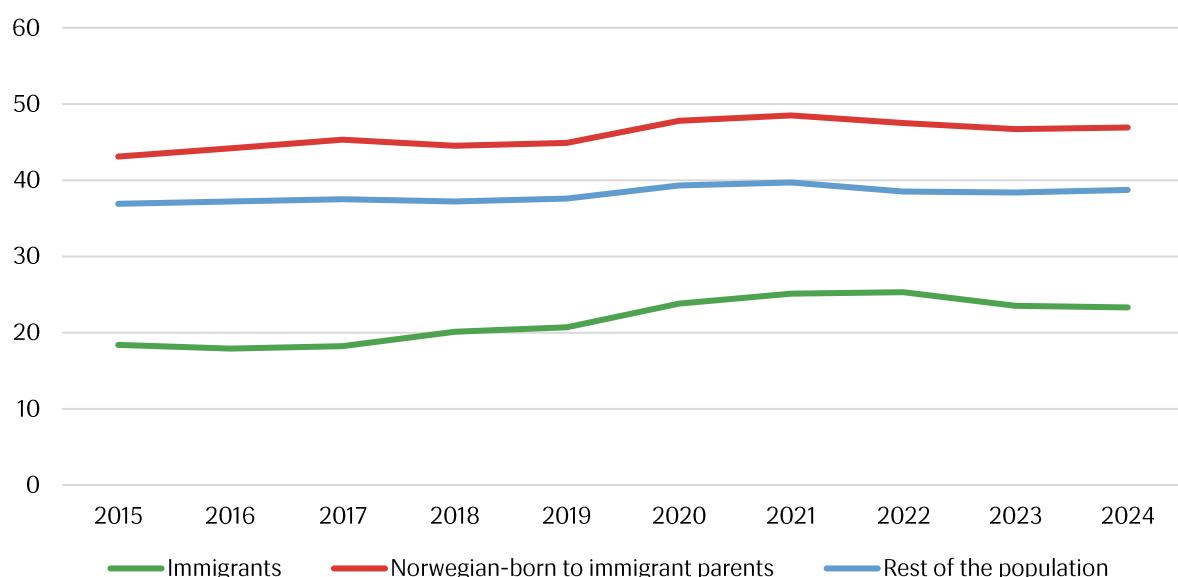
<sup>91</sup> Statistics Norway: [12969: Completion rates of pupils in upper secondary education, by degree of completion, education programme, sex and immigration category 2006-2012 - 2018-2024. Statbank Norway](https://www.ssb.no/tema/12969)

There are smaller differences between girls with and without immigrant backgrounds than between boys with and without immigrant backgrounds. Immigrant girls complete upper secondary education to a significantly greater extent than immigrant boys (75 per cent versus 58 per cent in 2024) and almost at the same level as Norwegian-born boys with immigrant parents. Norwegian-born girls with immigrant parents exhibit the highest completion rate among all upper secondary students. In 2024, this group achieved a slightly higher completion rate (89 per cent) than girls without an immigrant background (88 per cent).

## 4.2 Higher education

The proportion of individuals aged 19–24 enrolling in higher education has shown a steady increase since 2015, both among young people with immigrant backgrounds and within the majority population. Notably, individuals born in Norway to immigrant parents stand out, with 48 per cent enrolled in higher education in 2024. In comparison, the corresponding shares for immigrants and the majority population were significantly lower, at 24 per cent and 39 per cent, respectively.

*Figure 4.2. Resident students in higher education in Norway and abroad, in per cent of registered cohort, by immigration category and year. 19-24 years. 2015-2025.<sup>92</sup>*



Individuals born in Norway to immigrant parents are overrepresented in higher education. However, substantial variation exists within this group depending on parental country of origin, both in terms of enrolment and completion rates. Those with parents from India, China, Sri Lanka, or Vietnam are particularly likely to pursue higher education, whereas lower enrolment rates are observed among

<sup>92</sup> Statistics Norway: [08091: Resident students in higher education in Norway and abroad, in per cent of registered cohort, Immigration category, sex and age 2009 - 2024. Statbank Norway](https://www.ssb.no/en/08091)

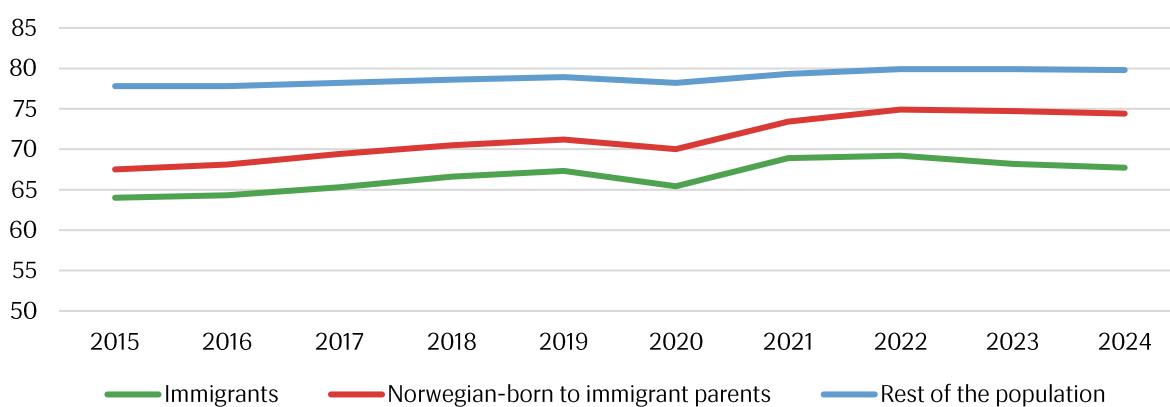
individuals with parental origins in Turkey, Chile, Iraq, Somalia, and Morocco. Gender differences are also evident within these groups, with women generally exhibiting higher participation rates than men—a pattern consistent across the population regardless of immigrant background. For example, among individuals born in Norway to Somali parents, 41 per cent of women were enrolled in higher education in 2024, compared to 26 per cent of men.

58 per cent of individuals aged 30–34 who were born in Norway to immigrant parents have completed higher education, compared to 54 per cent in the majority population. However, completion rates in higher education remain lower among students with immigrant backgrounds than among their peers in the majority population. Among immigrants enrolled in a three-year bachelor's program, 47 per cent complete within the stipulated time, whereas the corresponding figure for the majority population is 60 per cent. For five-year master's programs, completion rates are lowest among immigrants and highest among the majority population.

## 4.3 Work

On average, immigrants exhibit lower employment rates than the majority population. In 2024, 74 per cent of individuals aged 20–66 who were born in Norway to immigrant parents were in employment, compared with 68 per cent of immigrants and 80 per cent of those without an immigrant background. Since 2015, however, employment among immigrants has increased slightly more than among the majority population, narrowing the gap from 14 percentage points in 2015 to 12 percentage points in 2024. At the same time, a marked decline in labour market participation has been observed since 2021 among immigrants with less than four years of residence. This development is largely attributable to the unprecedented arrival of refugees from Ukraine, many of whom remain engaged in the Introduction Programme for newly arrived immigrants.

Figure 4.3. Employment rate by immigration background. 2015–2024.<sup>93</sup>



<sup>93</sup> Statistics Norway: [11711: Employed persons of different immigrant categories, by sex, age and country background 2015–2024. Statbank Norway](https://www.ssb.no/en/11711)

Individuals born in Norway to immigrant parents are more frequently employed than their immigrant peers, yet their employment rates remain below those of the majority population. Nevertheless, the gap between these two groups has narrowed by five per centage points since 2015.

Gender differences in employment rates among individuals born in Norway to immigrant parents are minimal, with employment slightly higher among women than men in this group. In 2024, 74 per cent of men born in Norway to immigrant parents were employed, compared with 75 per cent of women.

## 4.4 Income

Immigrants have, on average, lower incomes than the population as a whole. In 2023, the median income among immigrants was approximately NOK 372,000, compared with NOK 481,000 for the overall population. The income gap between immigrants and the total population was therefore around NOK 108,000, representing an increase from 2022, when the difference was NOK 94,000.

Between 2021 and 2023, 27 per cent of all immigrants aged 0–39 and 24 per cent of individuals born in Norway to immigrant parents lived in households with persistently low incomes. The corresponding figure for the majority population was 7 per cent.

## 4.5 Housing

On average, immigrants live in more crowded housing conditions than the majority population, although there is considerable variation between different immigrant groups. In 2024, 14 per cent of immigrants from EU/EEA countries, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand lived in cramped conditions, compared with 26 per cent of immigrants from Asia (including Turkey), Africa, Latin America, Oceania outside Australia and New Zealand, and European countries outside the EU/EEA. By contrast, only 7 per cent of the majority population experienced cramped living conditions.

Immigrants are considerably more likely to rent their homes than the majority population. While almost 90 per cent of individuals without an immigrant background own their homes, renting is far more common among immigrants. The proportion of immigrants who rent is more than twice that of the majority population. In 2024, 38 per cent of immigrants from EU/EEA countries, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand rented their homes, representing a decline of three per centage points since 2015. By contrast, 43 per cent of immigrants from Asia (including Turkey), Africa, Latin America, Oceania outside Australia and New Zealand, and European countries outside the EU/EEA lived in rented accommodation, an increase of four per centage points since 2015. Overall, immigrants constitute an increasing share of those living in rented housing.

## 4.6 Social integration

As the number of immigrants in Norway has increased, so has the interaction between immigrant groups and the rest of the population. The proportion of the population who report that they have contact with immigrants increased from two in three in 2005 to over four in five in 2025. The workplace, circle of friends and acquaintances and neighbourhood were the most common arenas for such contact between 2005 and 2025. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the share of individuals who interact with immigrants across multiple arenas, suggesting that points of contact within the population have become more diverse.

There is a correlation between personal contact with immigrants and more positive attitudes towards immigration, as well as higher levels of general trust. Individuals who interact with people of immigrant background through work, volunteering or leisure activities tend to express particularly positive views on immigration.

Among immigrants, there is also a correlation between having personal contact with individuals without an immigrant background, a stronger sense of integration and higher levels of trust. This applies particularly to those who interact with people without an immigrant background through work, in their neighbourhood or during leisure activities. Respondents who report frequent contact with individuals without an immigrant background across different arenas experience discrimination less often than those who report limited contact. Nevertheless, several studies indicate that, on average, people with an immigrant background are somewhat less trusting of others than the majority population. A question that is often used when measuring horizontal (general) trust is: "Do you think you can generally trust most people, or do you think you cannot be careful enough when encountering other people?" In response to this question, 57 per cent of individuals with an immigrant background stated that most people can be trusted, compared with 69 per cent of those without an immigrant background.<sup>94</sup>

## 4.7 Discrimination

Discrimination constitutes a violation of human rights, harming not only individuals but society as a whole. All people should be treated equally, regardless of factors such as gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity or religion. Furthermore, everyone should have equal opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their own lives. Legal and policy measures should aim to promote equality and ensure the absence of discrimination.

A relatively large proportion of individuals with an immigrant background report experiencing discrimination. Immigrants most frequently encounter discrimination in relation to employment

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<sup>94</sup> Integration in Everyday Life: [English summary](#) (2024)

and job searches, but many also report discriminatory experiences in their neighbourhoods, in public spaces, at schools, within the housing market and from staff in public offices.

A recent study found that 31 per cent of individuals with an immigrant background reported experiencing discrimination during the past year. Young immigrants and those born in Norway to immigrant parents report higher levels of discrimination than immigrants themselves, and in many cases, they also perceive such experiences as more distressing. Overall, 66 per cent of people with an immigrant background state that they have experienced discrimination, compared with 40 per cent of the majority population. In other words, immigrants and their Norwegian-born children are significantly more vulnerable to discrimination than individuals without an immigrant background.<sup>95</sup>

In 2023, 29 per cent of the Norwegian population stated that discrimination occurs to a large extent. This represents more than a threefold increase compared to 2013, when only nine per cent held the same view. In addition, more than half of respondents in 2023 (53 per cent) reported that discrimination occurs to some extent.<sup>96</sup> These findings suggest a growing and widespread perception among the population that discrimination against immigrants is prevalent.

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<sup>95</sup> Integration in Everyday Life: [English summary](#) (2024)

<sup>96</sup> The Norwegian Integration Barometer: [The Norwegian Integration Barometer - Institute for Social Research](#) (2024)

# 5 International migration in the public debate

## 5.1 Media and political discourse

A systematic and empirically grounded analysis of the immigration and integration discourse is inherently complex, and there is no straightforward way to give a comprehensive or unbiased account of the media and political discourse over time. The overview presented below is therefore primarily based on selected happenings, recent reports and peer-reviewed research articles.

In the past two years, the political discourse has been shaped by a series of incidents, rather than one singular, defining event, such as the influx of refugees from Ukraine, which until the beginning of last year had dominated the public debate on immigration and integration.

A stabbing incident at Aker Brygge in August 2024, in which a gay couple was attacked by a group of minors with minority backgrounds, reignited a debate concerning the extent to which the cultural orientations of certain immigrant groups align with the liberal values underpinning Norwegian society. The event was classified as a hate crime and drew further attention to youth violence and challenges related to social integration, with some commentators advocating for lowering the age of criminal responsibility. There were also arguments over the need for changes in the systematization and publication of official statistics on immigrant-related crime.

Crime among minority youth continues to receive a lot of media attention. The fear of a deteriorating situation like what has been seen in Sweden, has been a recurrent theme. A lot of concern has been raised about marginalized youth with immigrant backgrounds and gang recruitment linked to Foxtrot and other international criminal networks.

In September 2024, the government recognized six areas in Western Ukraine as safe, excluding refugees from these areas from the right to collective protection. In January 2025, another eight areas in Western and Central Ukraine were added to the safe list (see chapter 2.4.5). The decision came on top of a series of restrictions regarding Ukrainian refugees. Critics have argued that designating parts of Ukraine as safe is irresponsible and goes against Norway's international obligations, while proponents of a more restrictive approach have maintained that such measures are necessary to retain control, alleviate pressure on reception and settlement systems, and ensure sustainable welfare services.

A debate on the potential return of Syrian refugees was triggered following the regime change in Syria in December 2024. The fall of Bashar al-Assad and the rise of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham prompted several European countries—including Norway—to suspend the examination of asylum

applications from Syrian nationals. While some advocated for repatriation, humanitarian organizations and legal experts emphasized that the conditions in Syria remain volatile and do not meet the criteria for safe and voluntary return under international law. There has also been concern about the wellbeing of 2,170 Syrian refugees currently staying in asylum reception centers who have had their applications for asylum suspended following the fall of the Assad regime.

There has been some dispute on *protection elsewhere* practices, following the European Commission's proposed amendment regarding the application of the safe third country concept as part of the Asylum Procedures Regulation in the Pact on Migration and Asylum, but a motion in parliament in April 2025 to join the United Kingdom's migration deal with Rwanda was voted down. Discussions about the potential relocation of asylum seekers to a third country while processing their asylum applications formed part of a broader debate on the merits of the current (international) asylum system.

The politically motivated killing of Tamima Nibras Juhar, a child welfare services employee of Ethiopian descent, in August 2025, was the last of a series of far-right attacks in Norway in recent years. The murder prompted a wave of statements in the media and a march in Oslo expressing solidarity with Tamima and her family and denouncing racism. It also ignited a debate on *lone wolf* theories, on the framing of immigrants in public discourse and the ways in which extreme rhetoric may lead to violent outcomes.

While debates on immigration and integration have surfaced intermittently, the issue has not been prominent in the lead-up to the 2025 parliamentary election. National security, US trade policies and the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine long overshadowed debates on domestic policies. During the campaign, however, attention shifted to issues like cost of living, inequality and taxation. Only one in ten cited immigration and integration as very important to their vote ahead of this year's election, while social inequality ended up being the most critical issue among the electorate (24 per cent).

## 5.2 Public attitudes towards immigrants

For insights on public attitudes towards immigrants, we rely on data from Statistics Norway (time series data all the way back to 2002), the European Social Survey (ESS) and the Norwegian Integration Barometer. The latter is a survey conducted every other year to a sample of roughly 3,000 respondents, measuring the population's attitudes towards immigration, immigrants and diversity.<sup>97</sup> The researchers behind the Barometer have also conducted additional polls to measure potential effects of the war in Ukraine on attitudes, with the latest figures reported in March 2025.

In the months following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, there was a significant increase in positive attitudes toward immigration, as well as increased support for receiving and

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<sup>97</sup> The Norwegian Integration Barometer: [Institute for Social Research - Open Arcive: Holdninger til innvandring, integrering og mangfold. Integreringsbarometeret 2024](https://www.ssb.no/statistikkbanken/holdninger-til-innvandring-integrering-og-mangfold/integreringsbarometeret-2024)

accommodating refugees. It is likely that the increase in positive sentiment was partly driven by sympathy for refugees from Ukraine. Over the past two years, however, there has been a decline in positive attitudes, returning to the levels observed prior to the war in Ukraine.

Survey data from 2025 show that half the population believes that immigration is generally beneficial for the country, while one in five holds the opposite view.<sup>98</sup> One in four believes it should be more difficult for refugees and asylum seekers to obtain residence in Norway, whereas half it should neither be more difficult nor easier to obtain residence. In 2025, a larger share of the population supports increased admission of labour migrants compared to refugees, asylum seekers, or family migrants. This may be related to the fact that more people than before hold the view that foreign labour is important for maintaining welfare services.

From a 20-year perspective, attitudes toward immigrants have become more positive. Far fewer people now perceive immigrants as a source of insecurity (22 per cent) compared to two decades ago (45 per cent).<sup>99</sup> People are more likely now than before to agree that immigrants make a valuable contribution to the labour market and enrich the country's cultural life. Well over 90 per cent express they are comfortable in having immigrants as colleagues, doctors or caregivers, and over 80 per cent would be okay with having an immigrant as their daughter-in-law or son-in-law. Evidence from ESS also places Norway in the upper tier among European countries in terms of openness towards immigrants.<sup>100</sup> Compared to most countries in Europe, the Norwegian public is more inclined to agree that we should allow in immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe and/or of a different ethnic group than the majority, and less inclined to agree the immigrants undermine the country's economy and cultural life.

The public is divided on whether integration is progressing in the right direction.<sup>101</sup> 40 per cent believe it is going poorly, while 27 per cent say it is going well. Notably, 27 per cent represents an increase compared to surveys conducted before the war in Ukraine. Also, people are more likely to think that integration is going better in their local area than on a national level. When asked about integration barriers, respondents tend to emphasize immigrant characteristics, the composition of the immigrant population, and neighbourhood segregation rather than discrimination or ineffective integration measures. For example, expectations for immigrants to assimilate with Norwegian values have increased in the last couple of years. People are more likely to believe that Ukrainian refugees are easier to integrate than refugees from Asian or African countries. Studies also show that attitudes are in part conditioned by scepticism towards Islam, and that Islam is among the more polarizing issues in debates on immigration and integration.<sup>102</sup> Muslim immigrants are generally perceived to have more difficulties with integrating than other immigrants with other religious backgrounds.

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<sup>98</sup> Statistics Norway: [Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration – SSB](#)

<sup>99</sup> Statistics Norway: [08778: Attitudes towards immigrants, by contents, statement and year](#). Statbank Norway

<sup>100</sup> European Social Survey: [ESS11 - integrated file, edition 3.0 | ESS - Sikt](#)

<sup>101</sup> The Norwegian Integration Barometer: [Institute for Social Research - Open Arcive: Holdninger til innvandring, integrering og mangfold. Integreringsbarometeret 2024](#)

<sup>102</sup> [Polarization in a consensual multi-party democracy – attitudes toward immigration in Norway](#)

# 6 The reception and integration of refugees from Ukraine

Since February 2022, approximately 96,000 Ukrainian refugees have applied for protection in Norway under the collective protection scheme, with 93,000 granted protection. Around 80,000 remain in the country. Women make up 57 per cent of the Ukrainian refugee population. Although the initial influx following the full-scale invasion consisted largely of adult women, the proportion of men has steadily increased.

A majority—60 per cent—previously lived in Eastern or South-Eastern Ukraine, regions that are most affected by the war. Just under 40 per cent came from areas that were either formerly or currently occupied by Russian forces. Most Ukrainian refugees have family ties in Norway, with 78 per cent reporting that they now have relatives living here. About half are accompanied by a partner, and 41 per cent have children under the age of 18.

On average, Ukrainian refugees have higher education levels than other refugee groups in Norway. Educational attainment is relatively consistent across gender and age groups. However, education levels vary by year of arrival. Those who arrived in 2022 generally had higher levels of education than those arriving in 2023 and 2024. Despite their educational background, English proficiency among Ukrainian refugees is limited. Only 38 per cent report having basic English skills.

To gain insights into the reception, settlement, and integration of Ukrainian refugees in Norway, we primarily draw on data from Statistics Norway and survey findings from an ongoing research project conducted by the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (commissioned by Imdi).<sup>103</sup>

## 6.1 Reception

There have been three rounds of surveys to refugees from Ukraine (conducted in 2022, 2023 and 2024) measuring how they have experienced the reception and settlement phase in Norway.<sup>104</sup> In general, respondents consistently express high satisfaction with their overall reception, and high

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<sup>103</sup> [ODA Open Digital Archive: Settlement, integration and employment under a temporary perspective: Experiences and perceptions of Ukrainian refugees and municipal refugee services \(2023-2024\)](#)

<sup>104</sup> [ODA Open Digital Archive: Settlement, integration and employment under a temporary perspective: Experiences and perceptions of Ukrainian refugees and municipal refugee services \(2023-2024\)](#)

satisfaction with most services and procedures, related to the registration, reception and settlement.

Schools and kindergartens receive exceptionally high ratings, indicating that Ukrainians have felt welcomed by the Norwegian school system.<sup>105</sup> In contrast, healthcare services, access to essential medication, recognition of educational qualifications, and support in job search or application processes receive lower and more varied evaluations.

Most respondents report having received adequate information about various services and procedures related to registration and settlement. However, assessments vary more when it comes to information about the process for permanent return to Ukraine and possibilities for short-term visits. While information regarding access to the labour market and education in Norway is also viewed positively, it tends to receive slightly lower ratings.

Among those who indicated a need for psychological services, more than half report having not received such support yet.<sup>106</sup> A related concern is that teachers may not have relevant competence for handling pupils who struggle with war trauma.

Regarding financial circumstances, one in three state that they are fully self-sufficient, while the remainder relied on partial financial or housing assistance from public sources. One in ten report that they struggle to make ends meet. Respondents currently residing in reception centres assess their financial situation as more challenging compared to those who had been settled.

Respondents generally express satisfaction with the quality and flexibility of Norwegian language training. However, a considerable number have felt that the language training they have received was insufficient for achieving full integration. This concern is also reflected in mixed opinions regarding the introduction programme and work practice, particularly following the shift in late 2023 toward a more work-focused approach. The main criticism of work practice has been that it offers limited opportunities to practice Norwegian, which is also frequently cited as the main barrier to employment.

## 6.2 Integration outcomes

By the end of June 2025, approximately 58 per cent of refugees from Ukraine who had completed the introduction program were employed. 11 per cent of all individuals who so far have completed the program have emigrated from Norway.

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<sup>105</sup> 86 per cent of the parents with children aged 1–5 report that their children attend kindergarten, and almost all children of school age under 18 attend Norwegian schools.

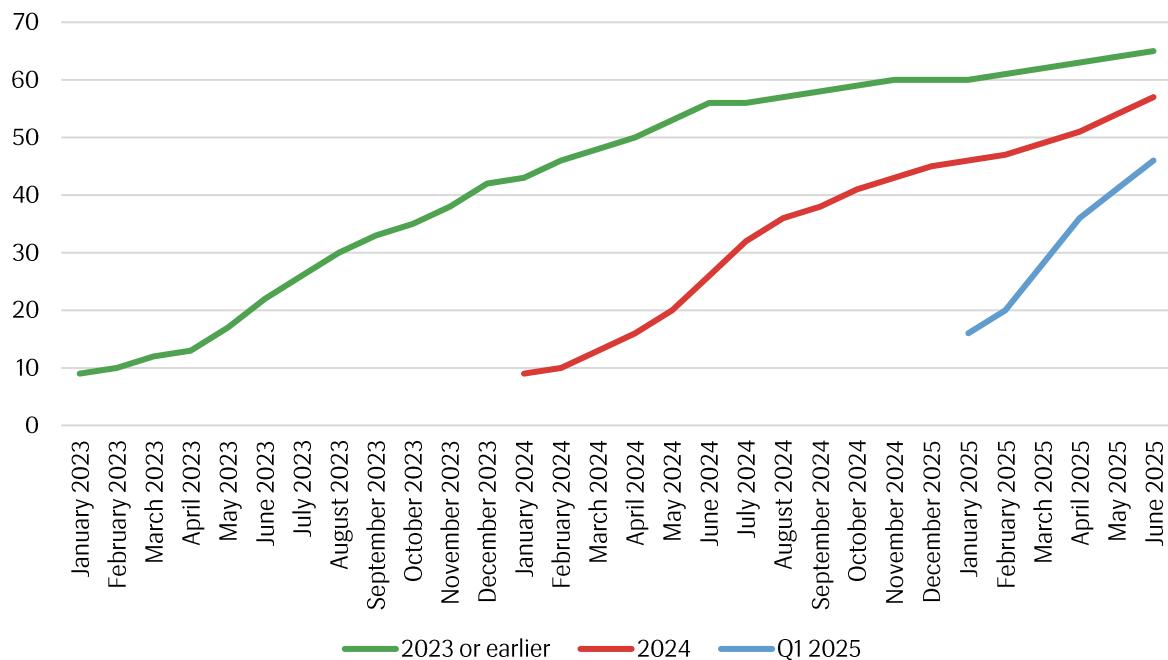
<sup>106</sup> Experiencing psychological problems such as anxiety, restlessness, worry, nervousness and despair about the future is three times as common among refugees from Ukraine as among the population as a whole. They also report more long-term physical or mental health challenges than what is the case for the Norwegian population.

65 per cent of individuals who completed the introduction program in 2022 and 2023, and about 57 per cent of those who completed it in 2024, were employed as of June 2025. Figure 6.1 shows that employment rates for the 2022 and 2023 cohorts remained stable at around 60 per cent throughout autumn 2024, before rising to 65 per cent in 2025. For the 2024 cohort, employment increased from 45 per cent in December 2024 to 57 per cent by June 2025.

Employment rates also rose notably among individuals who completed the program in the first quarter of 2025. This pattern aligns with trends observed in previous quarterly cohorts, where employment tends to increase substantially in the months immediately following completion of the introduction program.

About two thirds have found jobs in the private sector, and one third in the public sector, with the top three branches being the service industry, retail and education. Among women in the population, half are employed in sales and service occupations, compared to just one in five men. Around 20 per cent of men work in craft trades and in process or machine operator roles, while only 2 per cent and 7 per cent of women are found in these occupations, respectively. A significant share of both men and women—21 per cent—are employed as cleaners or general labourers. For occupations that require a university or college education, 12 per cent of employed women work in such roles, compared to 7 per cent of employed men.

*Figure 6.1. Monthly employment rates among refugees with collective protection who have completed the Introduction Programme, by completion cohort. January 2023 - June 2025.*



Survey data indicate that around 50 per cent are able to apply their previous work experience to a large or moderate extent in their current job. A smaller share—43 per cent—are able to make use of their prior education in their current job in Norway. Notably, 37 per cent indicate that they were

unable to make use of their education at all. Nevertheless, the majority express relatively high levels of satisfaction with most aspects of their current working conditions.

When asked about barriers to securing employment—or finding more relevant work for those already employed—limited language proficiency emerges as the most cited obstacle.<sup>107</sup> Self-assessments of language proficiency vary depending on length of stay. Among those who arrived in 2022, 10 per cent report speaking fluent Norwegian, while 50 per cent assess their skills as basic. In comparison, 26 per cent of those who arrived in 2023 and 5 per cent of those who arrived in 2024 report having at least basic proficiency. Seven out of ten respond that they receive additional language learning through channels outside the publicly offered programmes.

Despite having a relatively short period of residence in Norway and uncertainty related to temporary protection needs, Ukrainian refugees express both high trust in public institutions, a strong sense of belonging to Norway and a desire to remain in the country. Two-thirds report that they engage in some form of local social activity. Interviews highlight how involvement in these activities play a key role in the social integration of Ukrainian refugees, particularly in fostering friendships with Norwegians in the local community.

Roughly two-thirds of those aged 6 to 15 take part in after-school activities. However, participation is lower among older teenagers (aged 16–17), with only 43 per cent involved. A similar trend is observed in the extent to which children are reported to have Norwegian friends. Overall, parents of younger children report few obstacles to integration, while those with teenage children report more challenges.

An in-depth analysis of return aspirations among Ukrainian refugees in Norway show that only one in ten intend to return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends (figure 6.2).<sup>108</sup><sup>109</sup><sup>110</sup> Over time, a growing number express a desire to remain in Norway permanently—especially families with children, who are satisfied with the Norwegian education system and concerned about the potential impact of another relocation on their children’s well-being.

At the same time, concerns about temporary residency status have become increasingly prominent in this year’s interviews and survey responses. These uncertainties are shaping both the motivation and integration strategies of refugees. Many are actively exploring alternative pathways to secure a more stable legal status in Norway, including plans to transition to a work visa once they meet the necessary criteria.

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<sup>107</sup> Additionally, nearly half believe that temporary residence permits make employers hesitant to hire Ukrainians. Others mention relevant networks and relevant skills as major obstacles

<sup>108</sup> Data from UDI show that approximately 13,000 have emigrated. 3,000 have returned to Ukraine with a repatriation grant.

<sup>109</sup> [ODA Open Digital Archive: Settlement, integration and employment under a temporary perspective: Experiences and perceptions of Ukrainian refugees and municipal refugee services \(2023-2024\)](#)

<sup>110</sup> [ODA Open Digital Archive: Why return to Ukraine? An analysis of Ukraine’s evolving return policies and the motivations of refugees to return.](#)

Figure 6.2 Return aspirations among refugees from Ukraine under different scenarios. 2024. Per cent.



# 7 Regularisation programmes

There are no available or reliable data sources enabling us to estimate the extent of irregular immigration or the number of individuals currently living in Norway without legal permit. UDI, however, provides statistics on the number of individuals staying in an asylum reception center with an expulsion order. As of August 2025, there were 265 individuals staying in an asylum center whose applications had been rejected and who were under duty to leave the country. 28 of them had stayed in Norway for over 15 years. Over the past ten years, the number of individuals with an expulsion order has dropped significantly, from 3,013 in 2015 to 265 in 2025 (August). Norway's country report to the EMN-study on existing policies and practices towards irregular migrants suggests that the number of irregular migrants residing in Norway is low compared to other European countries.<sup>111</sup>

In Norway, regularization of irregular migrants has primarily been linked to asylum seekers whose applications have been rejected, and regularization programmes that have been implemented have only applied to groups considered especially vulnerable. While other countries have regularization schemes also based on labour market participation or country attachment, there are no such provisions in the Norwegian Immigration Act.

Norwegian authorities have facilitated the possibility of regularization for irregular migrants on two occasions in the past 15 years. In 2014, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security initiated a one-time regularization scheme, in which long-term resident families with children (defined as children who had been living in Norway for three years or more after submitting their asylum application) were given the opportunity to apply for a residence permit.<sup>112</sup>

In 2021 another one-time regularization scheme was issued which granted legal residency on humanitarian grounds for elderly irregular migrants that had lived in Norway for at least 16 years by no later than October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021.<sup>113</sup> The scheme applied to (a) foreign nationals who had applied for asylum in Norway and had not left the country following a final rejection of their application, (b) individuals who were previously granted asylum, but who later had their permit revoked, and (c) those who, for certain periods, had held residence permits on other grounds. Several additional requirements had to be met to qualify for regularization under the scheme, including

- that the individual's age and length of stay totalled at least 65 years
- that the total length of stay amounted to 16 years or more (time spent abroad would be deducted)
- being physically present in Norway at the time of the request for a residence permit

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<sup>111</sup> [Faktaflak regulære irregulære migranter.pdf](#)

<sup>112</sup> [G-03/2014 Inkrafttredelse av ny § 8-13 i utlendingsforskriften – engangsløsning for lengeværende barn - regjeringen.no](#)

<sup>113</sup> [inkrafttredelsesrundskriv-engangsløsning-for-utlendinger-med-mer-enn-16-ars15271.pdf](#)

- not having a criminal record

UNE received a total of 140 applications to have their asylum case reassessed under the scheme, with the bulk of applicants from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Iran. In the end, 65 were granted a permit.<sup>114</sup>

In January 2023, seven MPs introduced a private member's motion in Parliament regarding another one-off solution for long-term irregular migrants and stateless individuals.<sup>115</sup> The motion called for the government to (1) appoint a committee to evaluate the 2021 regularization scheme for long term elderly asylum seekers, (2) ensure that those who had their applications rejected under the previous scheme were given a new assessment, (3) propose a new one-time scheme for irregular migrants regardless of age, where those who have resided in Norway for more than five years are given the opportunity to apply, (4) settle on a definition of statelessness into national legislation, (5) let those who are granted residence permits also apply for family reunification, (6) ensure that they are given the same rights as Norwegian citizens, and (7) guarantee those who have not been granted residence access to health services, dental care and mental health support. The motion was voted down with the justification that the previous regularization scheme was implemented as intended, and that the proportion of those granted residence was in line with expectations. A central point was made regarding the importance of upholding the principle that asylum seekers are obligated to comply with legally binding decisions. It was also noted that there are provisions in the law for cases where the enforcement of an exclusion order is not possible. UNE may, upon request for reversal, grant a residence permit pursuant to Section 38 of the Immigration Act to an asylum seeker who has received a final rejection. The following conditions must be met for such a permit to be granted:

- Three years must have passed since the case was initiated without the rejection being enforced, and it is also not likely that enforcement will be possible.
- There is no doubt about the applicant's identity. As a rule, the applicant must have contributed to clarifying their identity during the period as an asylum seeker, cf. Section 17-7.
- The applicant has contributed to making return possible, including having assisted in obtaining a travel document from their country of origin.

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<sup>114</sup> [Temporary regulation: approximately 140 have applied within the deadline - UNE](#)

<sup>115</sup> [Dokument 8:85 S \(2022-2023\) - stortinget.no](#)

